NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

WORKSHOP

15
STEPS TO COMIC COLOURING GREATNESS

WELLBEING

THINKING POSITIVE!
Escape that cruel cycle of self-doubt

CREATE EXPLOSIVE
COMIC ART

Fire up your art skills with help from our **best-ever** line-up of comic art heroes!

INSIDE! ADVICE AND INSPIRATION FROM…

| TONY S DANIEL | KEN LASHLEY | ADAM HUGHES | CAT STAGGS | DAVE McCAIG | DUSTIN NGUYEN |

FUTURE

ISSUE 160

ArtRage 5

Imagine Painting...

Win-Mac-iOS-Android

artrage.com/ifx

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
imagineFX

A few issues back I wrote here about how I sometimes struggle with having far too many negative thoughts on how things might go wrong. Since then I've received many emails from readers with similar stories and some from others offering support. Many thanks to those who took the time to get in touch.

Because of the response I received I decided to take a deeper look at how artists can be susceptible to doubts about their craft and the steps that can be taken to combat it. It's equally as surprising as it is inevitable that so many highly regarded professional artists suffer from crippling self-doubt. Turn to page 18 for the story. If you suffer from negative feelings about yourself, take a moment to read the article and realise that you're not alone. As a matter of fact, you'll see that you're in incredibly good company. Please let me know how you get on.

On another track, if you'd like us to focus on a specific art tool or software workshop, or can't believe that we haven't covered a certain theme or artist yet, just let me know at the address below and I'll see what I can do. We put this magazine together for you, so feel free to tell us what you want in it!
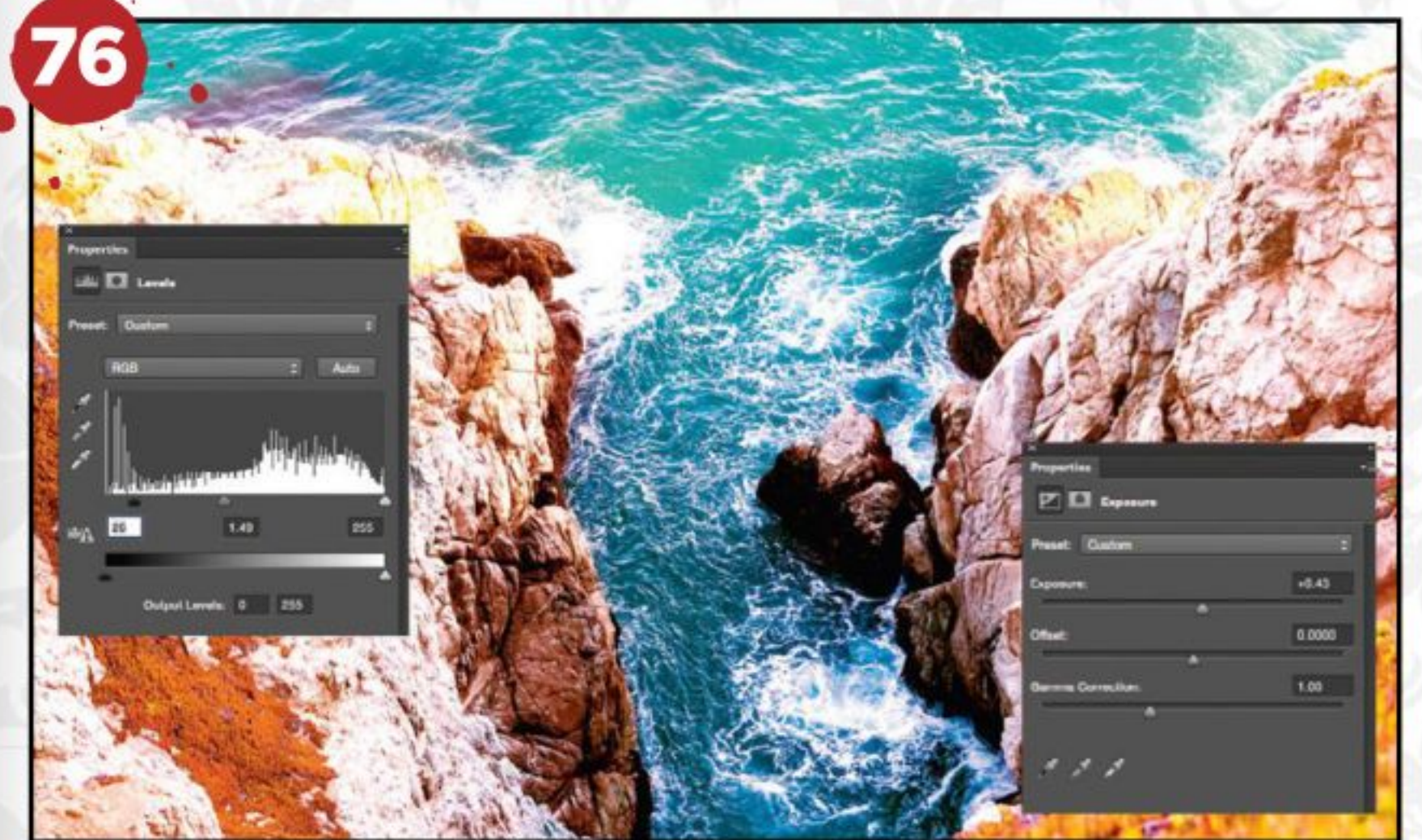
Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month…

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All hail ledkillah!
Feast your eyes on eight glorious pages of artwork and insight from the brilliant Ken Lashley.

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Get started in Photoshop
We're on part two of our back-to-basics series on Photoshop. It's a really good way to discover the tools.

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If you're happy and you know it…
How to portray the right emotion in your characters' faces with help from comic artist Neil Edwards.

FREE SOFTWARE!

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX
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TONY S DANIEL

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FREE EBOOK WORTH £7.99! SEE PAGE 6

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Resources

Get your free Comic Artist ebook and this issue's videos and custom brushes at **http://ifxm.ag/comic160art**

EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS

OVER 10 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

`00:56:34`

Create insect-based sci-fi imagery

In the Artist Q&A section of the ebook, Tony Foti advises taking a storytelling approach when considering what aspects from the insect world should make into your sci-fi art.

PLUS! 52 CUSTOM BRUSHES, AND EXCLUSIVE TOOL SETS

GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
http://ifxm.ag/comic160art

2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

3 Download what you need...
...and get hold of the free ebook of Comic Artist volume 3.

Learn how to paint Tank Girl

Brett Parson reveals how he paints the iconic character, in the ebook's Workshops section.
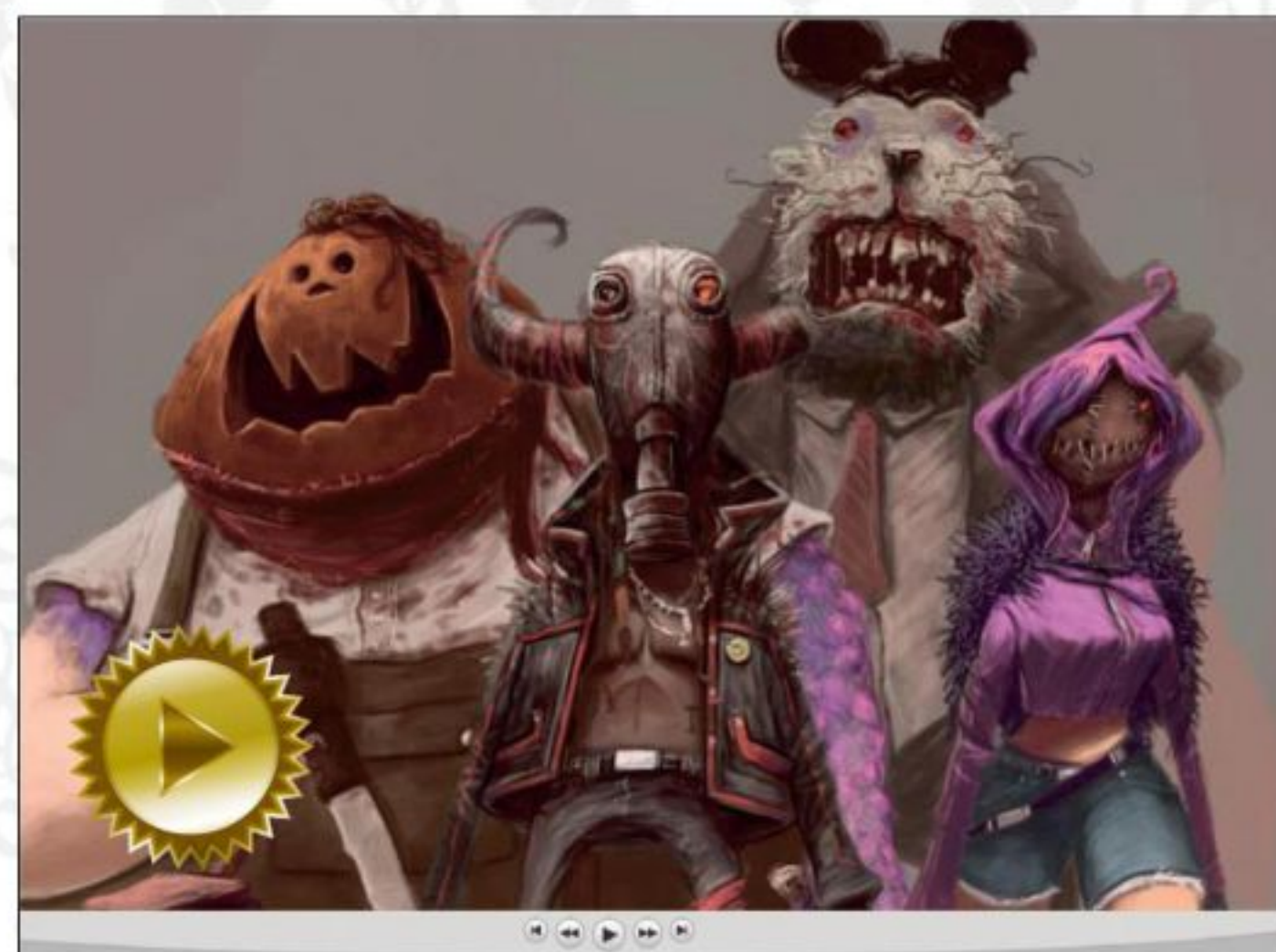
Create dynamic characters

The ebook's Workshops section also features Arthur Mask depicting a mix of unusual figures.

Discover caricature secrets by painting Hellboy!

Jean-Baptiste Monge takes you through his techniques for capturing the key features of a well-known character, before exaggerating them for comic effect, in this month's free ebook.

Techniques for drawing faces

In the ebook's Q&A section, Tom Foster shows how to create distinctive-looking characters…

Make your comic pages pop

…and then reveals the secrets for developing bold, timeless colours in your comic artwork.

PLUS!

Get the most from Photoshop's Adjustment tools

Watch how Mark White applies finishing touches to his art by editing the hues, colours and lighting using Photoshop's range of Adjustment tools. There's more over on page 76 of this month's issue.
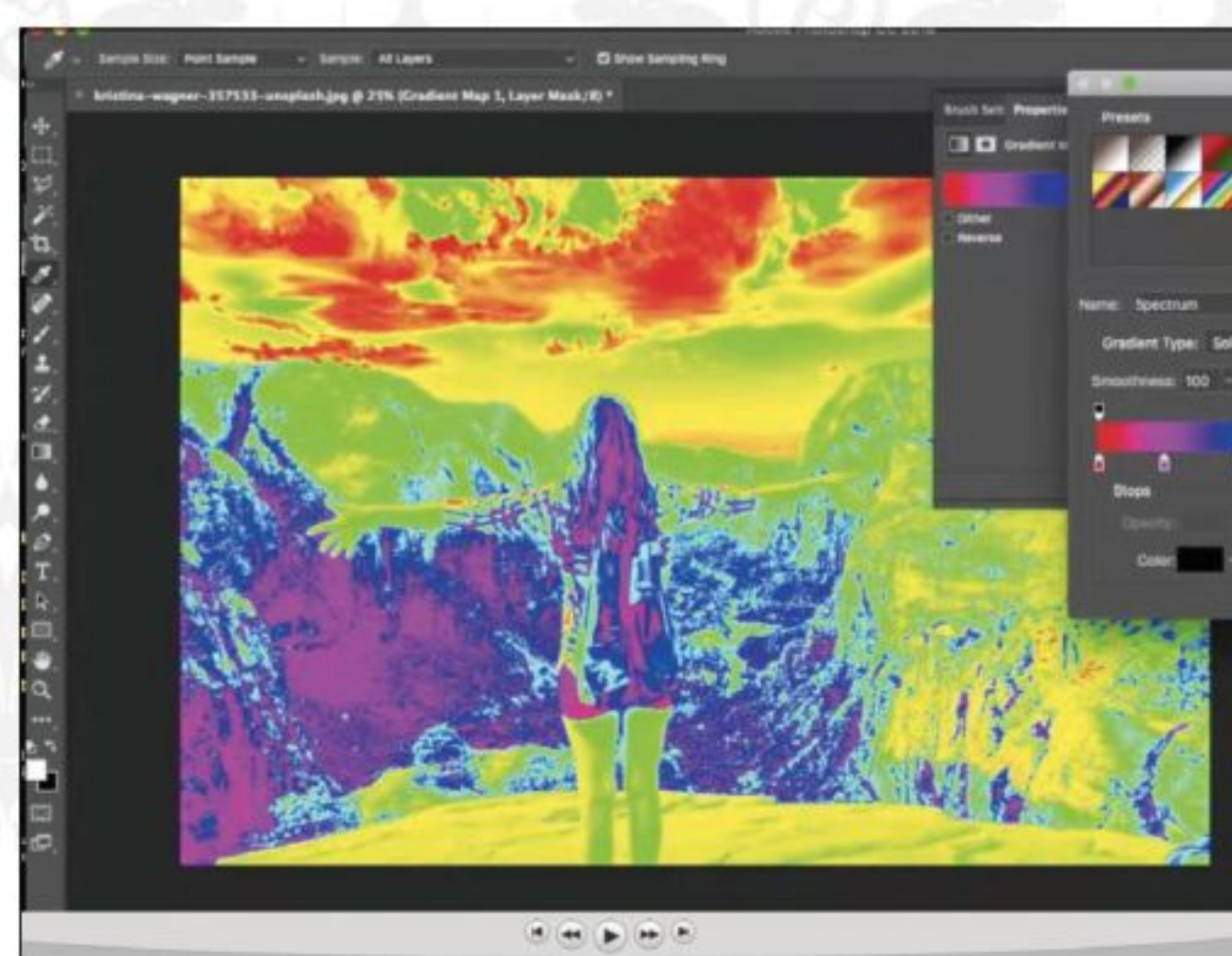
FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

2

Johnson Ting

LOCATION: Malaysia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/johnsonting

Concept artist Johnson is a huge fan of video games, which has had a big impact on his career. Currently, he's designing collectables for AAA titles.
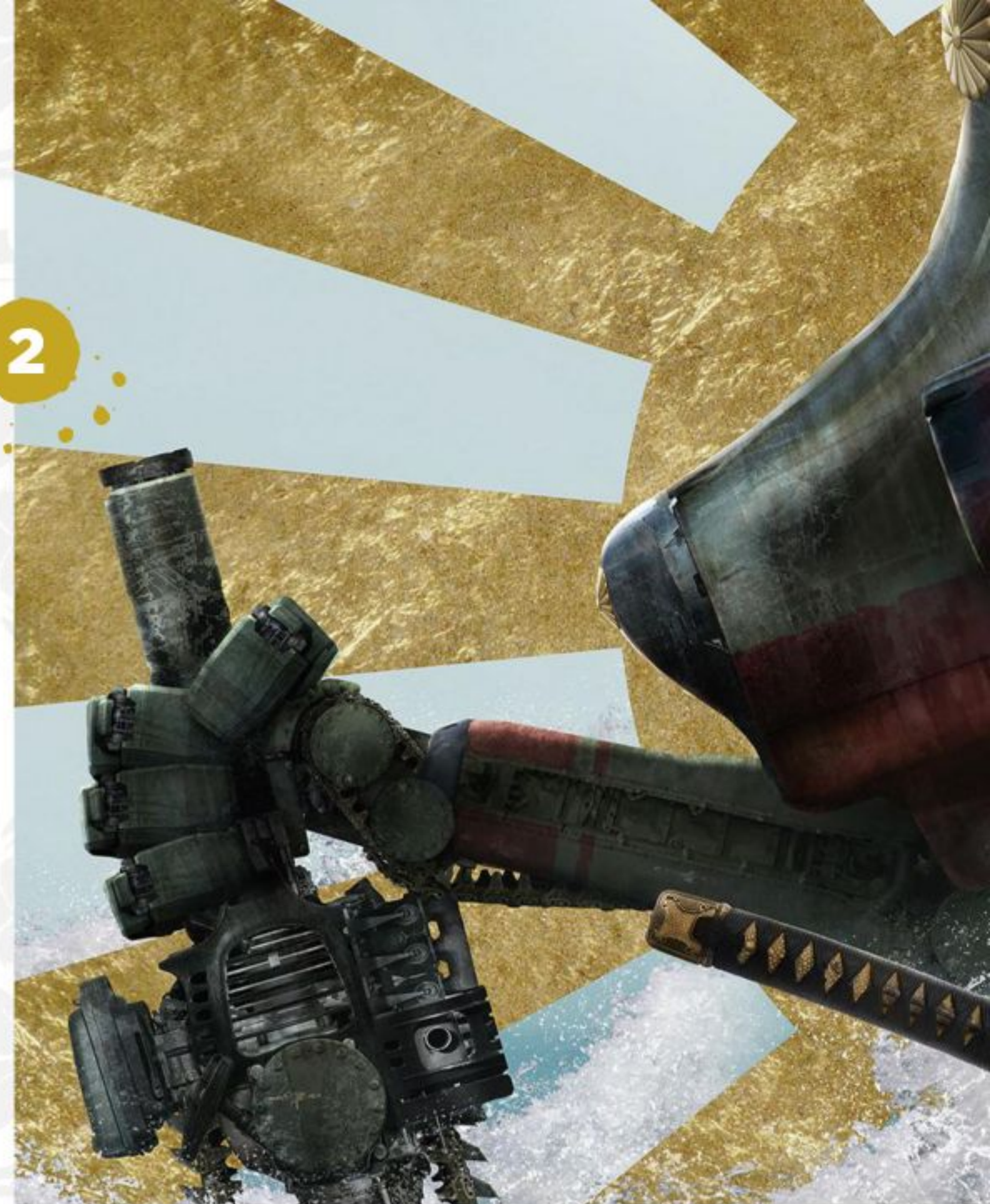
1

ImagineFX ARTIST *of the* MONTH

1 NEO JAPAN 2202: PHANTOMS

"I wanted to illustrate a moment showing so-called Phantom units in water training/test sessions. I was exploring the active camouflage strips a little more in this personal piece."

2 IRON BATTALION

"A painting from Milky Overload, an art book featuring work from myself and several other artists. It was published late last year. This shows a strong female commander directing a fleet of Iron Giants during WW2."

3 HORUS

"Here's Horus, Queen of Wings and one of the gods of ancient Egypt. Horus is traditionally depicted as a male character, but this was done for a character design challenge and I wanted to switch things up."

Axel Medellin

LOCATION: Mexico **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator, Clip Studio Paint, pencil, pen, ink
WEB: http://axelmedellin.deviantart.com

Axel is the artist on the Elephantmen comic book. "Most of the time I draw with pencil and add colour in Photoshop, to add an earthly feel," he explains.

1 LISA
"Lisa is an unparalleled creative force. She's closer to her mechanical creations than almost anyone. This is a concept I've been developing since 2006."

2 ROBOT
"Here's the blueprint for Lisa's mechanical chameleon. I went for a Renaissance/Da Vinci feel with this one. I'm fascinated by mechanisms and moving parts."

3 LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY MONSTERS
"This homage to the monsters from Universal Studios was done for CBR.com's The Line it is Drawn weekly gallery. It's based on Kevin O'Neill's cover for The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen."

4 FREEDOM
"This was a print for Heavy Metal magazine, distributed at the La Mole comic convention in Mexico. Robots, monsters and winged ladies are some of my favourite themes."

FXPosé

Kari Gunether

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint **WEB:** www.karipaints.com

Kari specialises in figurative work. She strives to bridge the gap between the nostalgia of the fantasy world and modern design, and seeks to be an asset to local and online communities.

1 PELICAN POWDER ROOM

"In this I was practising using the Fibonacci spiral. I also love to illustrate floaty figure work and animals; it gives me that feeling of surreal, suspended time."

2 THE AWAKENING OF INSECTS

This is a personal piece loosely inspired by a clip from the short story The Awakening of Insects, by Bobby Sun.
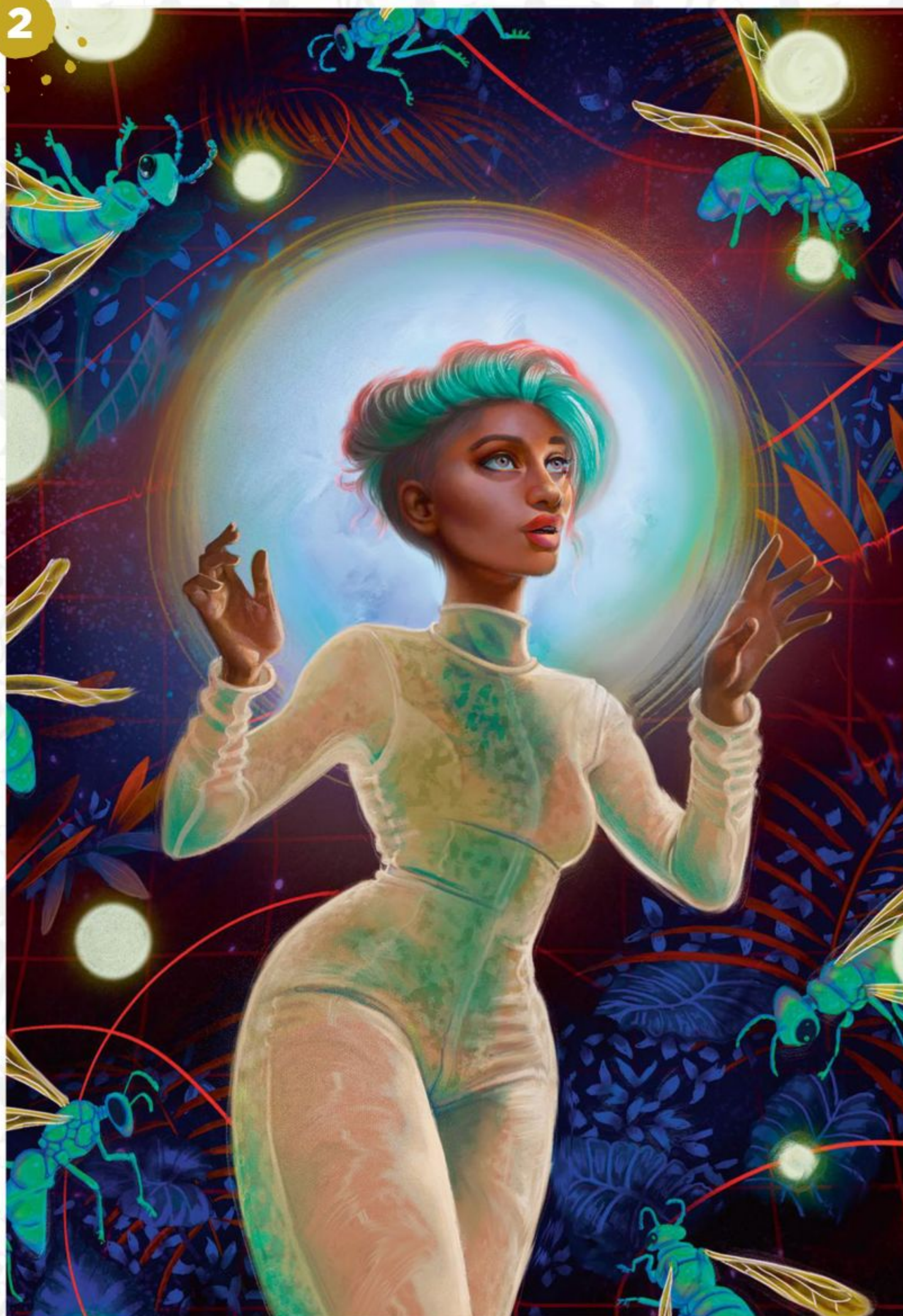
3 BEETLE LADY

"In this illustration I wanted to test out a new set of Photoshop brushes. The piece brings together two of my favourite motifs: beetles and empress-like female characters."

4 TINY CRYSTAL DRAGON

"A submission to ArtOrder's Kickstarter book, Tiny Dragons. I love any excuse to work in crystals and envisioned what it might look like to house a dragon inside one."

5

5 FKA TWIGS: I'M NOT A POP STAR

"I read a great article about one of my favourite musicians, FKA Twigs, and how she isn't a beauty to sit in front of a camera, but rather a creator. This explores her power and struggle."

FXPosé

Vasburg

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Maya **WEB:** www.vasburg.com

Vasburg is a concept artist who creates his 'impressionistic' works in Photoshop. "I often destroy an initial idea and replace it with unique designs drawn from my imagination," he says.

1

© Mongoose Publishing

1 HIDDEN CITY

"This is from the Traveller RPG. The composition breaks the rule of an in-focus focal point to convey the impression of a buried city. It's based around the abstract shape of an eye."

2 SPACE HUB

"Greyboxing complex perspectives like these in Maya helps me to find interesting angles and save me the time I would have invested in thumbnailing."

3 CRYSTAL JAHAI

"I used blue tones and white space to create the impression of a cold morning in the desert. Warm colours balance out the painting and define the focal points."

4 GUILD HALL

"In this environment concept, I sacrificed a clear focal point in favour of more complexity. The overgrown fort is mixed with elements of cathedrals to make it unique."

2

© Boomin Joy

© Zine magazine
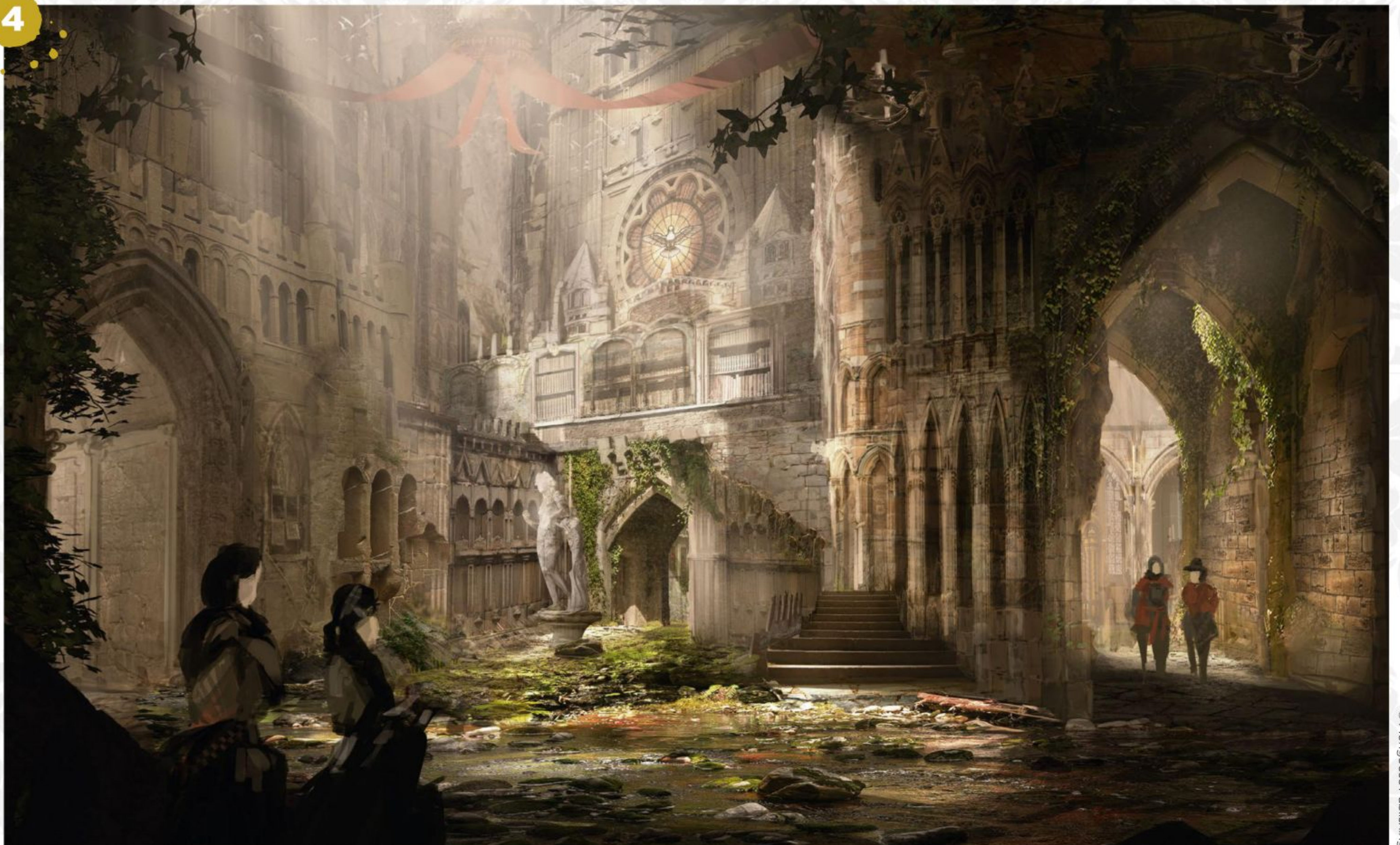
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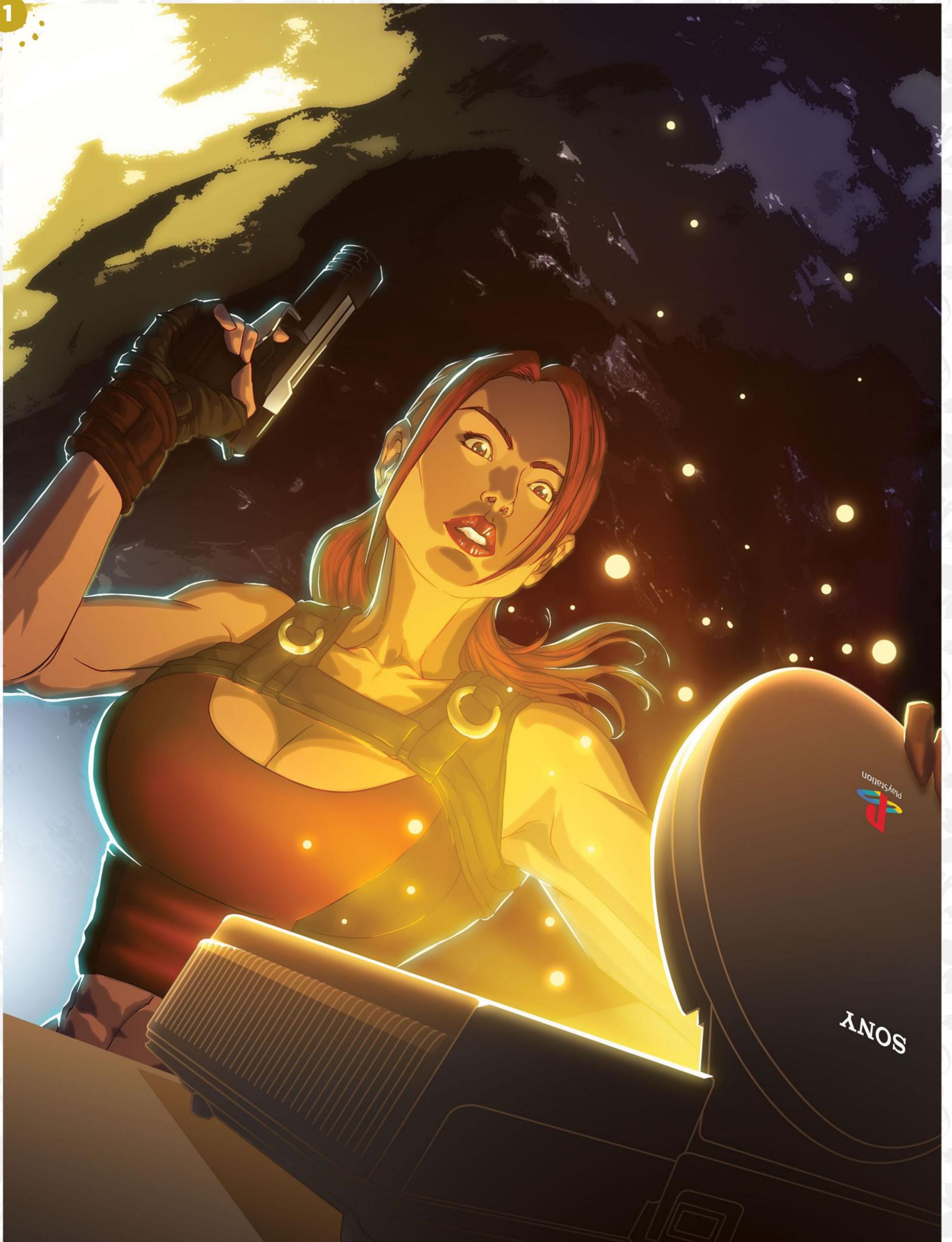
Filipe de Sousa Teixeira

LOCATION: Portugal **MEDIA:** Photoshop, mechanical pencil, Sakura/Copic markers **WEB:** www.artstation.com/zen_badger

Also known as Badger, game artist Filipe divides his spare time between illustration, gaming, reading comics, shooting inanimate objects, fencing and feeding his appetite for all things sci-fi and fantasy.
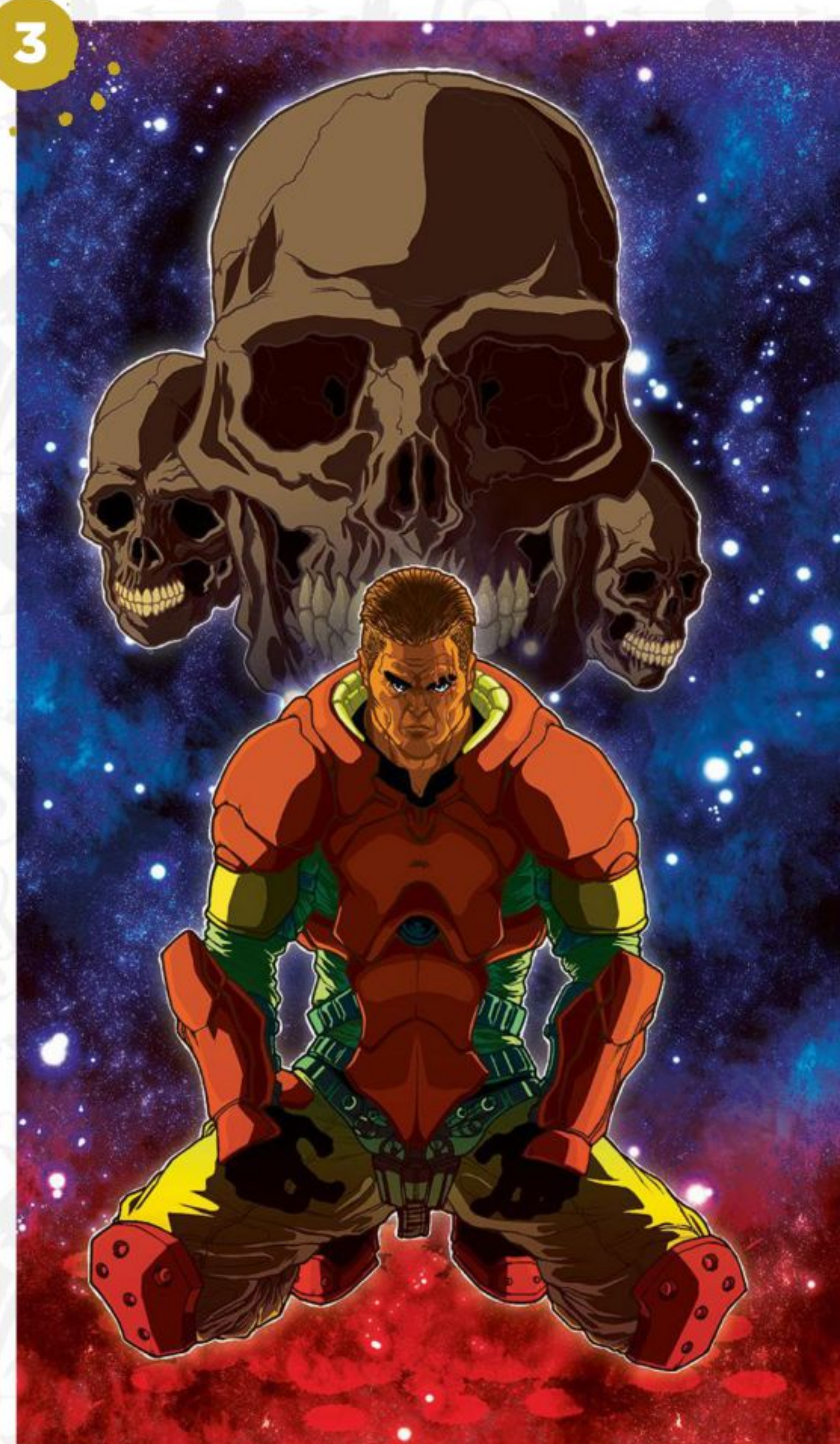
1 COVER FOR PUSHSTART #63

"This retro-gaming magazine commissioned me to do a cover for its PSX-themed issue. I chose Lara Croft because she's one of the console's most iconic characters."

2 GEMINI WARS PAGE 3

"A page from the collector's edition comic for the game Gemini Wars. An unidentified blip is picked up by the long-range sensors. Suddenly, all hell breaks loose when the ship is stormed by what will be the alien faction of the game."

3 GEMINI WARS COVER

"Here's the cover from the Gemini Wars comic. It was commissioned to serve as the backstory for the game's main character."

Gemini Wars art © Iceberg Interactive

Kelly McKernan is a big advocate of self-care. "If your body is suffering, so will your art."
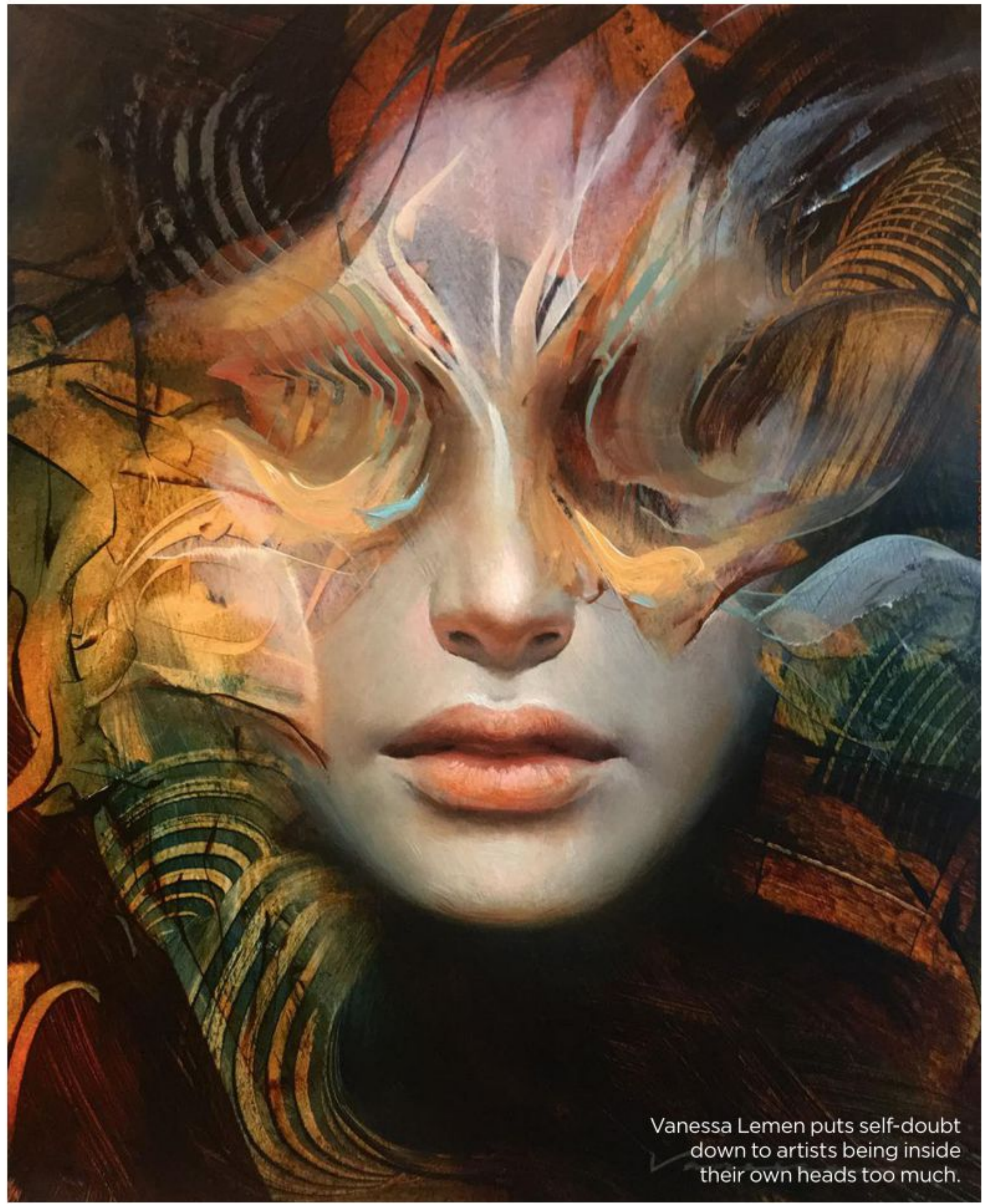
Vanessa Lemen puts self-doubt down to artists being inside their own heads too much.

How artists can beat back negative thoughts

Everybody hurts Anxiety can affect artists at any stage of their career. Top creatives talk to **Dom Carter** about how they deal with self-doubt and impostor syndrome

Self-doubt can strike anyone in any industry, but creatives in particular are closely associated with images of internal conflict. Is there truth behind the stereotype of the tortured artist finally emerging from their studio clutching a work of brilliance, and if so, where does it come from? Most importantly of all, how can artists deal with self-doubt?

Like all stereotypes, the idea of the troubled artist is neither nuanced nor useful. However, it does tap into a struggle that artists at every stage of their career appear to have to deal with: talent alone won't help you outrun confidence issues.

"Once I reached a point where I was making a living with my artwork and went full time, the doubts began to set in," says artist and illustrator **Kelly McKernan**, whose "fake it 'til you make it" attitude

> **❝ Once I was making a living with my artwork, the doubts began to set in ❞** Kelly McKernan

wore off when she started to rub shoulders with artists at the top of their game. "The prevailing feeling went from inspiration to shame. I truly didn't feel like I belonged."

Comic artist and illustrator **Adam Hughes** has worked for the biggest publishers in the business, and even he still wrestles with feelings of doubt.

"It's never changed, but I just do the work," Adam reveals. "Not as quickly as if I was burning with confidence, but I get it done. That's the only real ➤➤
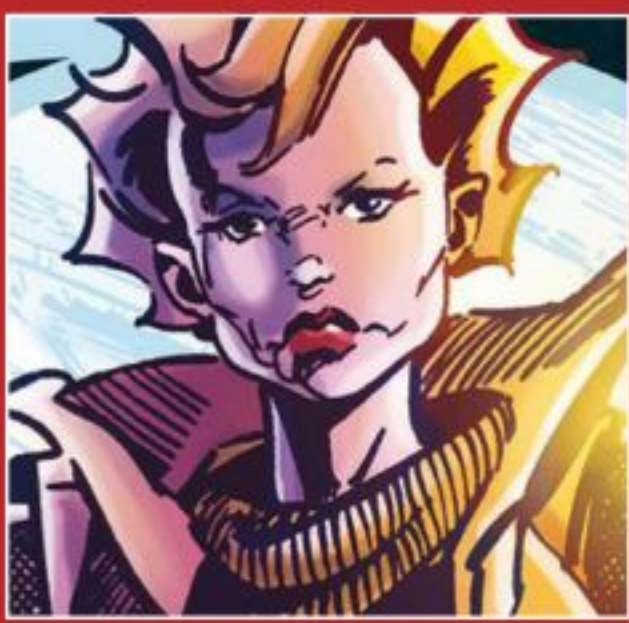
© Marvel Comics

Adam Hughes recommends combating doubt by being honest in praise and kind in criticism. "You've got to be cruel to be kind, but in the right measure."

VANESSA LEMEN

The mindfulness maven on how to keep your head above water

What are the warning signs to look out for when negative thoughts start to take over?
I think we each have our own warning signs that are based on the whole of our life experience. It can be helpful to be aware of that, to acknowledge it, and then move forward from there with that as part of the experience. To use it instead of fighting it or forcing it to be something it's not.

What are the best ways for artists to take a break, recharge their batteries and look after themselves?
Downtime can be a tremendous help to regroup and gain momentum again. Friends – good people to surround ourselves with, those people who listen, communicate, and who will challenge us in ways that will help us grow, who will be there for us in good times and in the tough times – well, there are few better ways in which to remind us why we're here, art or not.

How can artists draw a line between negative thoughts and criticism?
Try not to project your expectations on to the circumstance. Construct your experiences differently so that they're not solely based on how you think they might end up happening, but instead that anything can happen and you'd be able to roll with that. That's what we're all doing anyway, so the more that we can harness that, the more we're truly being.

With a background in online and in-studio instruction, Vanessa mentors artists alongside her husband, Ron.
http://ifxm.ag/vanessa-l

➤ issue: do your doubts actually stop you in your artistic tracks?"

For Kelly, this proactive approach forced her to confront insecurities about the work she was creating. "I took a hard look at my work, recognised that much of it felt shallow to me, and began taking steps to create more personally fulfilling work that addresses and explores my experiences," she says.

IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

In a cruel twist of logic, overworking is a sign that an artist could be experiencing impostor syndrome. This is the condition where a person feels like they could be exposed as a fraud at any moment.

"The nature of creative work makes everyone more vulnerable to feeling inadequate and even more so if you are not classically trained," explains author and impostor syndrome expert **Dr Valerie Young**.

"For one, your work is highly public. Not only are you defined by it, but by artistic and literary standards that are completely subjective. It's a challenge to maintain a consistent level of confidence when you know you're only as good as your last painting. Meanwhile, confidence can cause you

For Feng Zhu, social media posts can be deceptive. "We rarely see the hard struggles and failures on the path to success."

to question yourself even more because the reactions of those around you can be so skewed."

To conquer these nagging feelings of fraudulence, Valerie advises that you normalise them and reframe the idea of failure. "If you want to stop feeling like an impostor, you have to stop thinking like an impostor."

A positive attitude is what helps entertainment industry design veteran

66 Failure is a necessary part of the process of growing as an artist 99 Miles Johnston

Feng Zhu cope with the pressures of dealing with a client. "I remind myself that clients are coming to me because they liked my previous work. So, I just need to do what I do, instead of trying to become, match or out-do someone else.

"Design what you love best. You don't need to follow trends or do concept art for the sake of popularity. Don't worry about what others will think. If you're doing something you love, self-doubt and negative energy quickly fades away."

For illustrator **Miles Johnston**, embracing failure is an inevitable part of trying to do anything worthwhile.

"Failure is a necessary part of the process of growing as an artist," he argues. "It's also incredibly difficult to have a truly objective view of your own work. I think a lot of people slip into the false idea that when they see something ➤

Engaging in an activity is how Vanessa breaks out of a cycle of negative thoughts.

Incremental development helped Adam Hughes become more happy with the work he was producing.

To keep her mind active, Kelly listens to educational podcasts and radio plays.
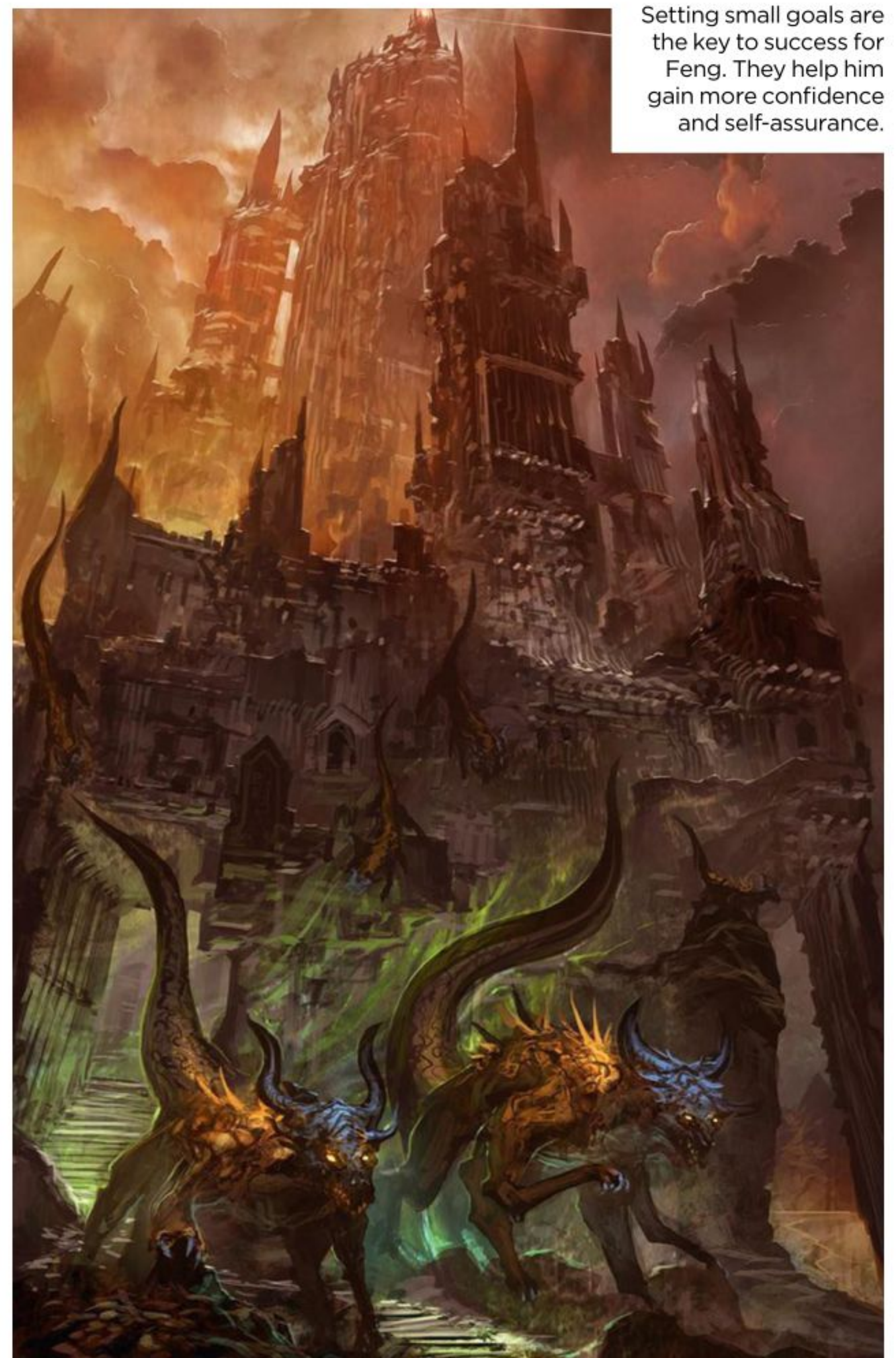
Setting small goals are the key to success for Feng. They help him gain more confidence and self-assurance.

Relaxing and exercising are how Miles Johnston unwinds. "It can be fun to interact with artists online, but I don't think it can replace the basics of a good life."

❝ **You can be fragile as long as you keep drawing** ❞
Adam Hughes

"Essentially, you're afraid of being judged for the truth of where you're at," warns Miles.

"Our career is not a popularity contest. Our job is to get ideas out on paper," says Feng.

➥ good in their work, this is wishful thinking, and when they see the bad, now they're truly being objective. Instead, keep your focus and passion on the work at hand."

SOCIAL ANXIETY

Concentrating on your own work and accomplishments is easier said than done, especially when you add social media into the mix. With plenty of artists using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to share their art, it's all too easy to get bogged down if your own work doesn't perform. This can lead to artists focusing on failure in the wrong way.
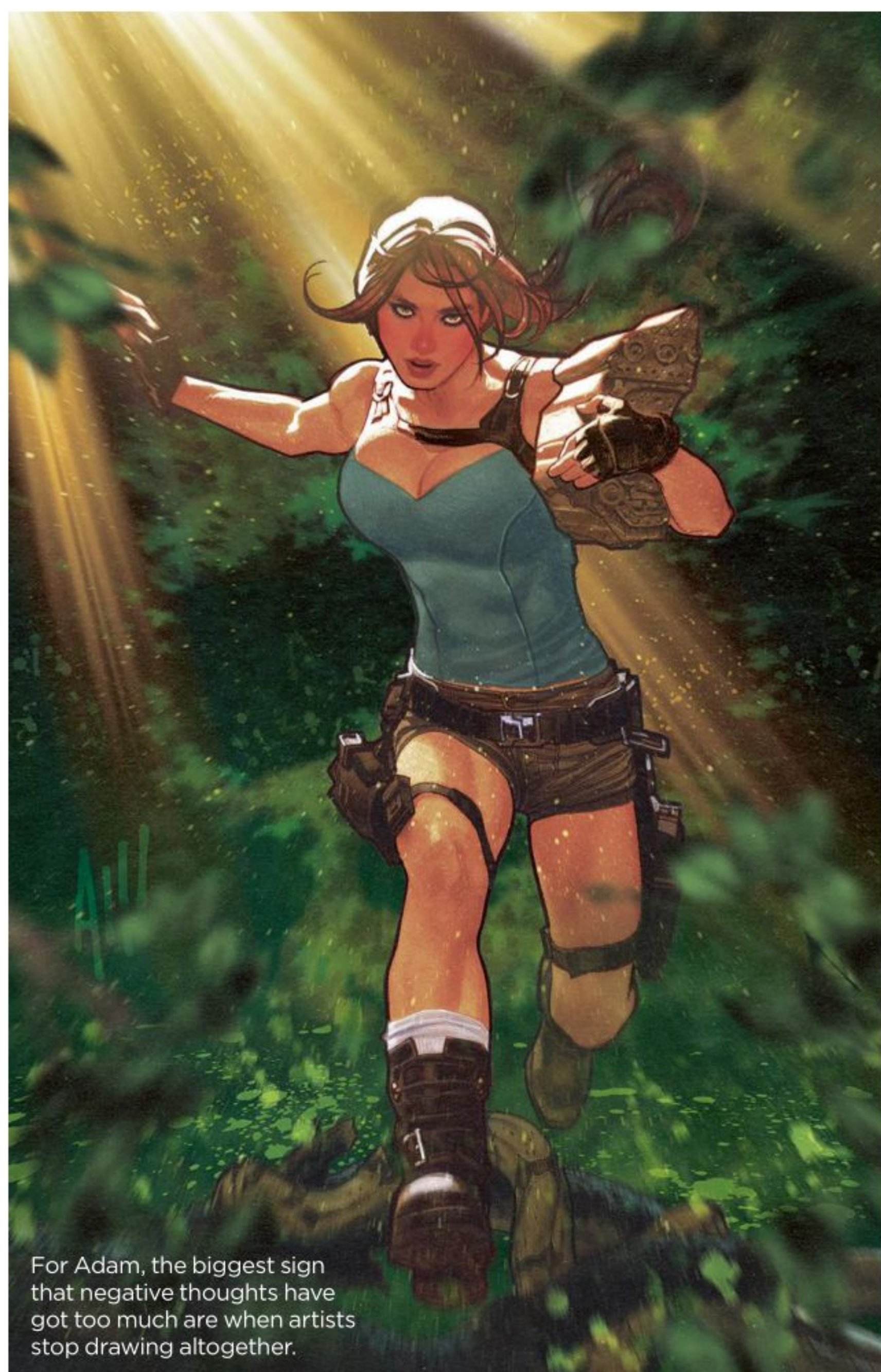
For Adam, the biggest sign that negative thoughts have got too much are when artists stop drawing altogether.

Vanessa looks after herself with a variety of pursuits. "I get outside, do something different, sleep, exercise, meditate, breathe, play music, and spend time with friends and family."

Adam remains forthright with his advice. "If sharing your work catastrophises anything, maybe you're in the wrong line of work. You can be fragile as long as you keep drawing. If feedback of any kind wrecks you, then maybe reconsider sharing your talent publicly. Many artists create just for themselves."

Miles takes the opposite approach, and encourages artists to put their work out there all the time. "I think being afraid to show your artwork ultimately comes down to a kind of ego," he says. "If people see you improve over time, then your old work won't be embarrassing or hold you back. Instead, it'll make people more inspired and interested in your journey."

THINKING POSITIVE

When handled well, apparently negative thoughts and observations can urge artists on to higher ground. "Imperfections (do not call them failures!) inform your future work," says Kelly. "Successes are the results of every piece that you've completed before, and that's something to be

Kelly restricts her social media usage for a healthy state of mind. "Social media can easily become an echo chamber of instant gratification."

proud of because it represents personal growth."

Artist and teacher **Vanessa Lemen** is of the same mind, as she gets to the root of how a fear of failure can be useful. "The aspect of self-doubt that stems from being challenged and comes from the understanding that there are an infinite number of things that we don't know – that the possibilities are endless, and that there is so much out there that we have yet to learn – can definitely play a positive role in the betterment of ourselves and our art."

Meanwhile, Adam observes "any artist who loves their own work too much isn't inclined to improve. I feel a little self-loathing goes a long way towards improving one's self. Dissatisfaction is a great motivator."

Miles agrees that dissatisfaction can push people to better work, but the secret is to develop positive habits so self-esteem will come naturally. "It's a meaningful and fulfilling life to get to do this every day," he says. "I love my job and don't regret a minute spent drawing."

Halo Jones shines again

True colours Halo Jones, the 2000 AD character and fan favourite, returns in a series of full-colour reprints

The Ballad of Halo Jones is regarded as one of the high points in the long and varied history of British comic 2000 AD. It was written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Ian Gibson, and told the tale of an ordinary female in the far future.

Originally published in 1984, the comic has been restored by publisher Rebellion in a new three-part collection that's been colourised by **Barbara Nosenzo**.

When it came to interpreting the strip, Barbara was unhindered by previous colour images of the series. "I just looked at some covers, such as the iconic pink and purple cover painted by Ian Gibson, to see how the author imagined Halo's skin tone, eyes and hair. From there I defined my own personal palette."

This artistic freedom helped Barbara solve some logistical problems while remaining true to the original art. "Many times I had to create continuity

> **❝ I tried to respect the line art, which wasn't always simple because the comic wasn't developed for colour ❞**

"I felt a huge responsibility working on this project because it's a milestone of science fiction and comics in general," explains Barbara, who reveals that she read the story for the first time after being assigned to the project. "I tried to be respectful of the atmospheres and the line art, which wasn't always simple because the comic wasn't developed for colours when it was originally came out."

solutions, such as when the floor in one panel becomes the ceiling in the next panel with no edges to separate them," she says. "In the end I used a gradient mode to connect the panels in a way that wouldn't look harsh or out of place."

Fans can expect to see the first of the three colourised volumes of Halo Jones in May, priced £10 and available to buy from **http://shop.2000ad.com**.

Each book in the series will have its own unique tone of background colours. Book one has a dirty green theme to reflect the deterioration of Halo's home city.

Barbara started working on the project in April 2017 and had to keep it a secret. She wanted her colouring to have a painterly style with a vintage paper effect

Barbara had to carefully decide which details deserved colour and when to leave the line work untouched.

Sean Phillips

Shock! Horror! Comic artist Sean Phillips tidies his studio before any cameras are allowed in…

I've been sat in a room by myself drawing comics for over 35 years, and in this particular studio in my house for ten years. I started drawing comics professionally when I was 15, at a drawing board my dad made for me in my bedroom.

I always wanted to have a studio of my own, surrounded by books and comics and art and cool stuff, and now I could think of nothing better. Occasionally I fantasise about sharing a studio somewhere outside my house with other like-minded artists, but I think I'd get easily distracted.

I'd be terrible at a real job, where I couldn't just stare out of the ➤➤

I recently drew a range of Femme Fatale beer labels for OK Comics, a comic shop in Leeds. Its owner Jared has always been good to me and my books. I did these as a thank you for him.

I've been working at my home studio for a decade now. That's plenty of time to build up a good book collection!

My original drawing of a one-page Spirit story drawn for an anthology I curated, published by the Lakes International Comic Art Festival held in Kendal, Cumbria.

Two of the three Eisner Awards I've won for my comic art over the years. The other one is still with Ed Brubaker in Los Angeles, because he hasn't posted it to me yet.

Original artwork by two of my favourite artists. A film poster by Arnaldo Putzu on top of the bookcase, and a Bionic Woman comic page by John M Burns on the easel.

Copies of all the comics I've drawn, from the first girl's comics I drew in the 1980s to my latest comic, Kill Or Be Killed. Plus all the DVD covers I've drawn for Criterion and Arrow.

Not very interesting, but a good chair is much better than a bad back!

Vintage Elvis magazine – a gift from my son Jacob who's also an illustrator. He's as big an Elvis fan as I am.

Too many books, not enough shelves! Book purchases from the past couple of months just waiting to be put away somewhere.

window or talk to my cats. I don't know how people manage in the real world. I'm pretty organised when it comes to work, though. This is a job: if I didn't draw then I wouldn't make any money. I find that a great incentive!

I've been drawing digitally off and on since 1998, but only on a few pages of short comics and covers. Since the beginning of The Fade Out a couple of years ago, all my comic pages are produced on a 21-inch Cintiq using Clip Studio Paint. Hopefully I'll upgrade to one of the massive new Cintiqs coming this year!

My Cintiq is the centre of my studio, with my drawing table mostly used as a surface to pile stuff up on. I still make the cover to Kill Or Be Killed with real paint every month, along with the occasional other project.

Switching to software and ditching paper really got me excited about drawing again. New tools have always have always been like that for me. Finding out when I was a kid that comics weren't drawn with ball-point pens, but with brushes and dip pens and Indian ink, was a real eye-opener. (Although I have drawn comics in ball-

The first DVD cover I drew for Criterion was for the old noir movie Blast Of Silence. It's director Allen Baron kindly sent me this poster from its original release in 1961.

point pen professionally, along with using everything else from acrylic paints, oils, charcoal and collage.)

Going digital meant all those tools are available to be combined in ways you never could in the real world. Although I've fooled plenty of readers into thinking my digital art was drawn on paper, including my writer and frequent collaborator Ed Brubaker!

Since the age of 15, Eisner Award-winning Sean has drawn all the superheroes and is now drawing creator-owned books written by his long-time collaborator Ed Brubaker. See more at www.seanphillips.co.uk.

This is my most recent Blu-ray cover for Arrow, for the 1947 Western film Ramrod. I tried to mimic the classic airbrush, coloured pencil technique that Drew Struzan did so well in his movie posters.

I've always drawn my thumbnails and sketches in sketchbooks rather than on loose sheets of paper. I had the idea of getting a sketchbook printed for each book's worth of comics, with pre-printed grids. Most of my comics are drawn on three-tier grids and this just makes it slightly quicker for this part of the job.

I've been drawing digitally on and off for 20 years, but decided to go for it seriously a few years ago. All my comic pages since the start of The Fade Out have been drawn on this old Cintiq using Clip Studio Paint.

66 Switching to software and ditching paper got me excited about drawing again 99

I've recently finished three paintings for Criterion's Blu-ray release of Night Of The Living Dead. I still like getting messy with real paints, especially if it's for something I know I can sell the original painting for.

My most successful superhero comic was Marvel Zombies, Marvel's biggest-selling book that year. There was some merchandise made, including these figures. Had to buy my own though – Marvel never sent me any.

After completing the survey, you'll receive a digital copy of the **ImagineFX Annual** as a thank you for your feedback.

FREE ImagineFX Annual worth £10!

Every issue, we do our best to create a magazine that inspires you to make art. But we're always looking for ways to make ImagineFX even better, so we'd like your help. To receive your free digital edition of the Annual, all you need to do is answer some quick questions about yourself and the magazine. We look forward to hearing from you!

Claire

Claire Howlett
Editor

Complete our reader survey at
http://ifxm.ag/ifx-reader-survey

Vicente Cifuentes's other comic work includes art for X-Men, Green Lantern, Justice League and Superman.
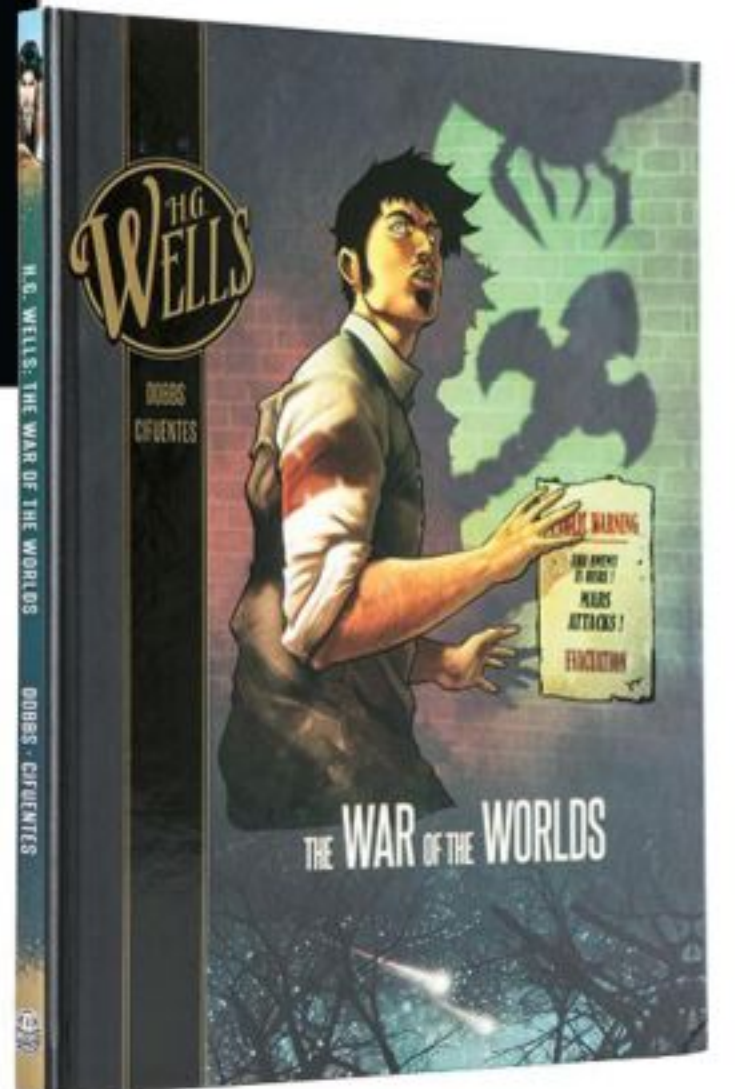
French author Olivier Dobbs has written a number of comics inspired by late 19th-century literature.

The eve of the war

Mars attacks HG Wells' seminal sci-fi stories become graphic novels, with The War of the Worlds spearheading the comic invasion

Mysterious cylinders from the planet Mars. Glittering tripod war machines destroying Victorian England. A malignant red weed choking the river Thames. These are some of the most distinctive images from HG Wells' The War of the Worlds, which is soon to be released as a graphic novel from Insight Editions.

Adapted by author Olivier Dobbs and illustrated by Vicente Cifuentes,

Familiar elements from the novel have been updated. The Martian cylinder containing the invaders now has an eldritch appearance.

the graphic novel is the latest in a long line of interpretations of the Martian invasion. "I knew the story and had already seen the Steven Spielberg movie, which I really liked," says **Vicente**. "So I didn't hesitate to get involved when I got the offer."

Just as the 2005 film used some artistic licence to tell the story, this new comic gives the classic story a fresh spin thanks to a more developed emotional angle. Familiar visuals have also been tweaked. "I didn't want to disappoint fans of the original book and classic films," says Vicente. "So I took elements from them to make this new adaptation and keep it recognisable."

Fans of the stories by the 'father of science fiction' can expect a similar approach when other titles in the Insight Editions HG Wells series are released, including graphic novels of The Time Machine and The Island of Doctor Moreau. Meanwhile, The War of the Worlds is available to purchase now from **www.insightedvns.com**, priced £18.

Olivier created new situations that show what a real human would do in this fantastical situation.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

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www.instagram.com/imaginefxmagazine

Thilo wants us to feature our Artist Q&A in every issue. Do you agree?

Bring back Q&A

I've been a subscriber to ImagineFX for several years. Unfortunately the past few issues have been a disappointment because the Artist Q&A section has disappeared! That's a shame, because it's one of the reasons why I'm reading the magazine at all. I'm not too interested in the long feature stories and traditional arts section, so I hope the distribution of subjects in the magazine doesn't stay like it is now.
Thilo Schön, via email

Claire replies I'm so sorry to disappoint you, Thilo! The Q&A has taken a bit of a hiatus. I felt that we needed to have more features on artists as there's plenty of technique in the workshop section. That's not to say that it won't come back, but not just yet. Do any other readers have comments on what's in the magazine? Let me know.

We need a promotion

A friend of mine would like to promote herself online more. She specialises in watercolours and digital art for children's books. As an aspiring digital artist in the fantasy genre, I know what sites I could use to promote myself, but I don't know if those sites are also usable for non-fantasy work (her forte).

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **http://ifxm.ag/159-ifx** for details.

Social media is still the best place where artists can publicise their work. How do you promote your art?

Since ImagineFX explores the artistic world online a lot, I was wondering if you might know some sites where my friend could get feedback and promote her work, other than the social media like Instagram/Facebook/Twitter?
Laura Heuijerjans, via email

Claire replies Laura, social media seems to be the best place right now for promotion. Is she using Vevo? That's another new-ish one to try out! I'm sure that there are endless places that your friend can promote her work, but it's probably best that she works out what she wants to do, where and when rather than me reeling off a list. I wish her the best of luck!

Plastic not fantastic

I love receiving my print subscription of ImagineFX every month, but I hate the environmentally unfriendly plastic wrap it comes in. Is there any way ImagineFX could switch to a paper envelope or something recyclable?
Dom, via email

Claire replies Dom, I wholeheartedly agree with your point. As I'm sure you're aware there's a big discussion around the overuse of plastics. Did you see the BBC's Blue Planet where David Attenborough explained what plastic is doing to our ocean? It's horrifying.

The plastic we use for our bags is fully recyclable at recycling centres, but not at kerbside yet in most places. This answer isn't ideal, but the decision to change to another option isn't mine. I've forwarded on your comments to the relevant department. Thank you for writing in – it's people like you who start long-needed discussions and from this changes are made.

In issue 158 we didn't credit Julian Steincke (https://krux-photo.myportfolio.com), who took the photo of Romain Van den Bogaert that appeared on pages 44-45 of our interview with the sculptor. Sorry Julian.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention

Shannon Rose @SacrinoxiaArt

niezam @niezamcomic

Barbara Samantha Lucas @sylthuria

If you have created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

Artist Portfolio

TONY S DANIEL

This artist has had a glittering career drawing and writing some of the best comics out there, says **Garrick Webster**

J ust like the Joker, Tony S Daniel is wrestling with Batman. As we're interviewing him, issue 45 of latest series is in its death throes, and it simply won't die.

Normally, Batman wouldn't be such a problem for the artist, who's returning to a character he's pencilled numerous times during his career. The trouble is that his inker has dropped out mid-issue, so he's on double duty, drawing and inking his boards on the fly, Fed Ex-ing them off to DC Comics while responding to our questions.

Long hours aside, Batman is where Tony's fans want him, and it's where he wants to be. "It's like that feeling you get when you go back to your favourite place," he says. "It's still what you remember, but you're older and wiser and maybe you can even appreciate a few details you didn't first time around. It's a good feeling."

Working with writer Tom King, this latest run is kicking off with a new time-travelling storyline featuring Booster Gold, Catwoman and, of course, the Caped Crusader. Tony has always been a fan of a bigger, darker and grittier Batman, a character whose moods are shaped by the murder of his parents in Gotham City. He's an artist who feels he's at his most effective when he's loose and spontaneous, ➤
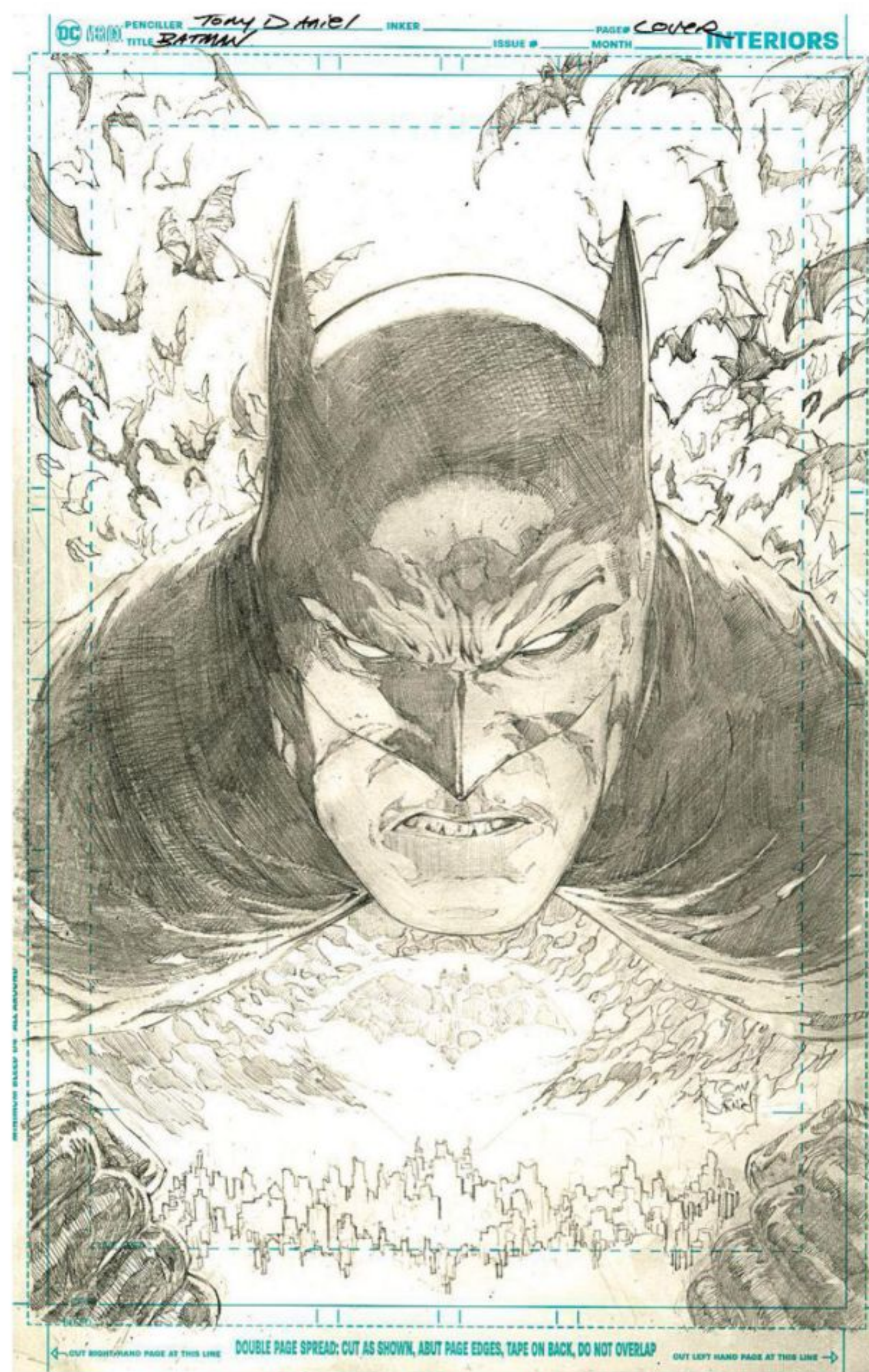
FROM PENCILS TO INK
A new era of Batman begins with the current series issue 45, as Tony S Daniel returns as the artist. Here's the first cover of the new run.

> 66 Working on Batman is like that feeling you get when you go back to your favourite place 99

SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER
This cover variant accompanied the 2017 issue of Justice League that DC published to coincide with the Warner Bros. film based on the series.

THE TENTH
Creator-owned books are a big part of Tony's career

It was back in the late 1990s that Tony S Daniel made his name in the comic book world with a creator-owned series called The Tenth. Beginning as a four-part mini-series with Image, it later returned for 14 more issues published by Dark Horse.

Fans constantly ask Tony if he'll ever return to it and while it's something he'd love to do, he doesn't want to make any promises.

"I've thought about the Tenth and for me, the concept and approach would need a complete reboot," he says. "I wouldn't approach the book the way I did back when I created it. It would serve me better to create a brand new property."

One option is for him to write it, and have someone else draw it. However, his instinct is to create something new that's creator-owned, or devote his time to a screenplay and push his career more towards Hollywood.

But back in the 90s, The Tenth opened the door for him to work on Teen Titans with another great writer, Geoff Johns. "A lot of people wanted to see me fail. I represented the 'Image era' and people were sick of that. But I came in and threw people a curveball. It was still me, but drawing in more of a mainstream style," he says.

HOLDING BACK MONSTERS
Esperanza del Toro and Zorina Fine team up with the tenth monster to fight Rhazes Darkk's army.

DEBUT ISSUE
Here's the inked version of issue one of The Tenth, with Tony working in that exaggerated Image Comics style.

© DC Comics 2011

FACES OF DEATH
Tony's unsettling cover for Detective Comics, volume 1 – part of DC's ambitious New 52 relaunch of its titles back in 2011.

© DC Comics 2015

DK III
As a past master of Batman, Tony was invited to create a variant cover for issue one of DK III by Frank Miller and Brian Azzarello.

THE HOLE IN THINGS
Brilliant pencil work from Batman 701, the R.I.P. storyline was written by Grant Morrison, with Tony drawing and inking.

© DC Comics 2010

and that could be the vibe when issue 45 lands this April.

There's a sense that Tony wants to get back on track with Batman. His last significant encounter with the character was during the New 52 reboot DC carried out in 2011. Tony relaunched Detective Comics at that time, which features Batman as its lead. The run ended prematurely with Tony feeling a little burned out. "I was overworked at that time, writing Hawkman, and writing and drawing Detective Comics. It caught up with me real fast and the quality wasn't what I demanded of myself," he says.

He continues: "I could've stayed on for a couple more years, but I knew it would best to take a break and regroup.

I've learned you have to say 'no' to things sometimes. It could be in your own best interest."

BATMAN AT HIS BEST

For Tony, the best Batman he's ever drawn was during the R.I.P. story arc with writer Grant Morrison. The partnership between Tony on pencils and Grant weaving a mad storyline began on Batman issue 670, in 2007, with The Resurrection of Ra's al Ghul. That first cover remains one of Tony's

favourites, and fans remember this period as one of the greatest in the character's history. With the spontaneity of Grant's plotting matched in Tony's pencils, many put the artist up there right alongside the likes of Frank Miller and Neal Adams in the Batman pantheon.

"That was a magical time for me. I was so into it," says Tony. "I couldn't wait to read each script from Grant, because like every other fan, I wanted to know what the hell was going on! It really was a classic story and I'm so proud to have been a part of it."

If it was this version of Batman that brought Tony into the mainstream, it was an earlier book called The Tenth that put him on the map within the

> 66 I couldn't wait to read each script – I wanted to know what the hell was going on! 99

❝ I love being the writer and artist. I do have a greater sense of being the storyteller ❞
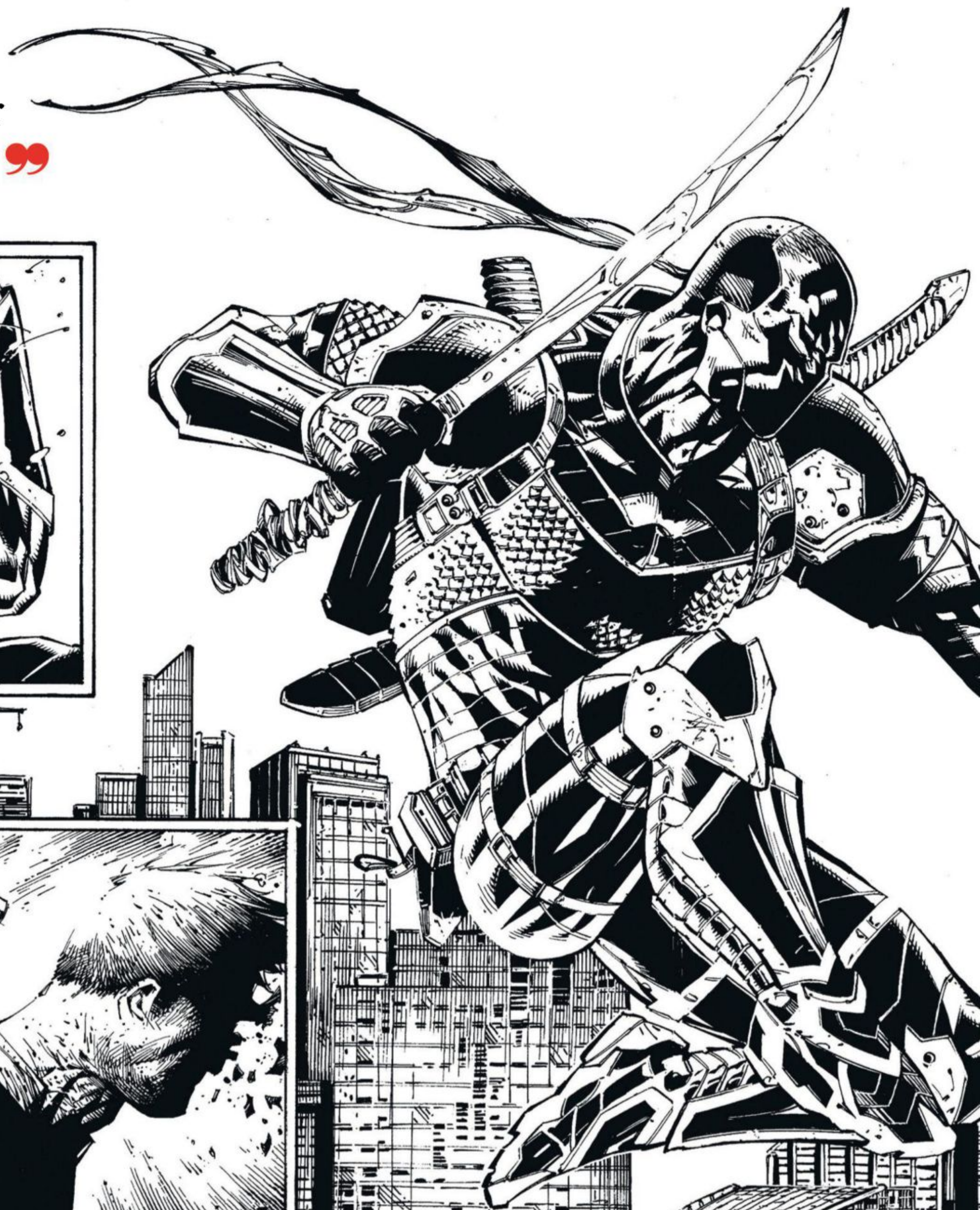
DEATHSTROKE #1 PANELS
In 2014 Tony Daniel wrote and drew the new series of Deathstroke, about an assassin and mercenary character that he was already used to drawing because it spun out of Teen Titans.

CONVERGENCE
A variant cover for DC's 2015 weekly, Convergence, with Tony pencilling in a classic team of heroes.

© DC Comics 2015

© DC Comics 2008

HEARTS IN DARKNESS
From the R.I.P. storyline, Tony drew this image for Batman issue 681.

LEARNING FROM THE GREATS

Tony talks about his comic art and writing influences…

Every comic artist remembers their early heroes, and for Tony S Daniel two early favourites were John Byrne and Mike Zeck. You might even be able to detect a touch of John's strong, simple forms and clean, direct line work in Tony's artwork today.

His tastes refined somewhat with Barry Windsor-Smith, an artist whose work is more rendered, detailed and nuanced. Tony still remembers buying copies of Machine Man at his local 7-Eleven. Later came the European comic maestros, like Moebius and Liberatore.

"Then Jim Lee and Marc Silvestri came around and changed things up with cool, big images and lots of razzle dazzle. I really got influenced by that, as did most everyone around that time. I started to come into my own a bit later after getting more manga-inspired," says Tony.

Today, he says, there's so much good art around it's not hard to find inspiration. In his opinion, there's more talent around now than 20 years ago when he started out.

When it comes to his writing, influences include Robert Ludlum's thrillers, the noir of Jim Thompson, and Robert Rankin's zany fantasy. "I love JK Rowling," he adds. "She's the one who ignited my passion for reading when the first Harry Potter came out. I read all the books and one day I'd like to read them all again. I can't think of any books I enjoy more than hers."

© DC Comics 2018

© DC Comics 2016

VIOLENT RETRIBUTION
Behold Deathstroke… when Tony drew this he wanted free rein to make it hard and bloody. It's about an assassin, after all.

CLASSIC GOTHAM
A new era of Batman begins with the current series issue 45, as Tony returns on pencils.

comics world. First published in 1997 by Image Comics, Tony owned the IP and The Tenth was a platform for him to both write and draw at the same time. Dynamic and different, it featured young people with supernatural powers, up against Rhazes Darkk and his evil supermonsters. Originally, the plan was for Tony to block out the story and for Beau Smith to write and letter it.

"After the first arc, I realised that I was doing more and more of the writing and dialogue, and thought I'd give it a try. It felt very natural for me," he says. "I love being the writer and
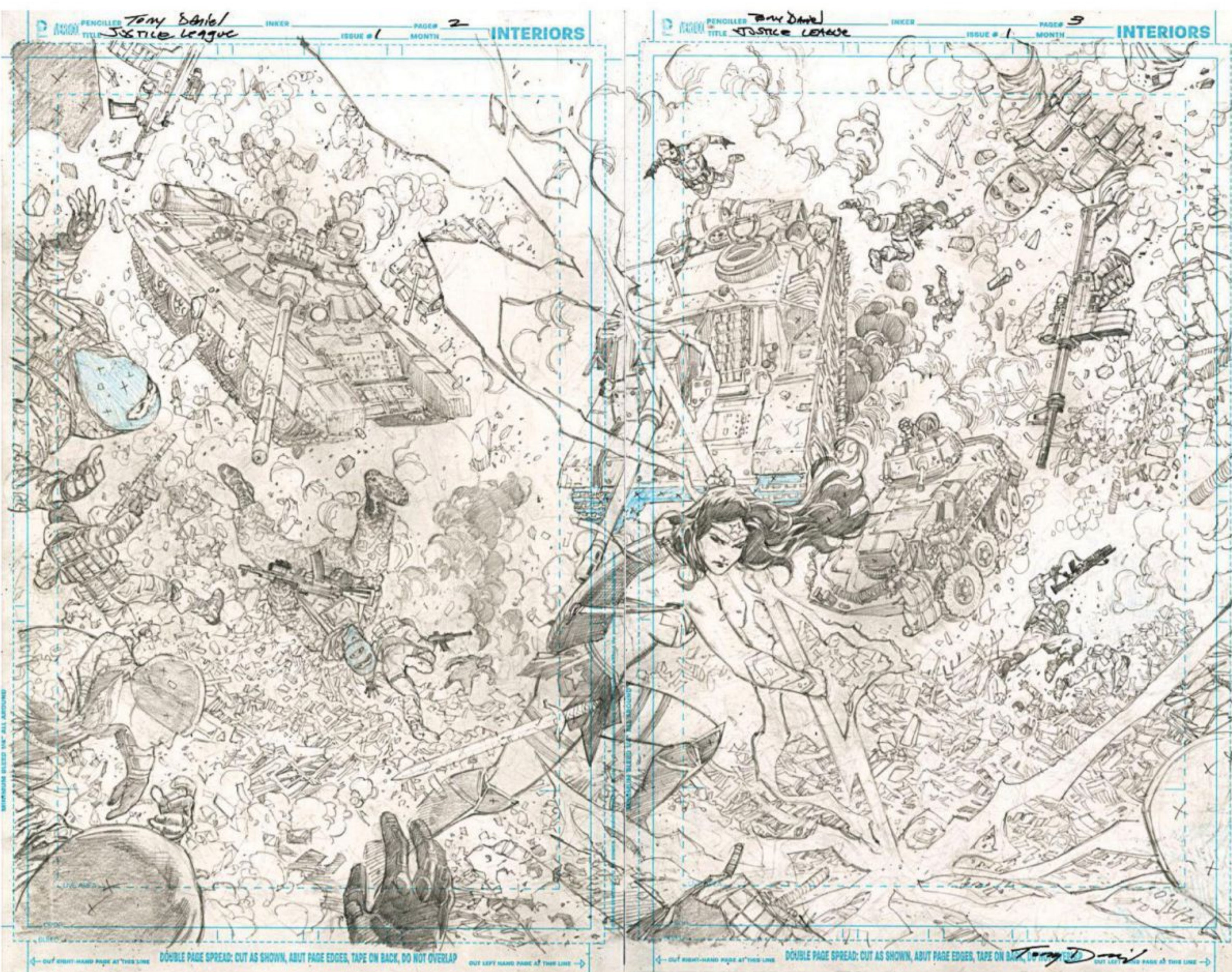
artist. I do have a greater sense of being the storyteller, as opposed to being the artist only. I will get back to creator-owned at some point. Maybe next year, I hope. Though there's risks with going down the creator-owned route, I've never shied away from risks."

WRITING ON THE SIDE

After writing and drawing other comics at Image and Dark Horse, Tony was so inspired by the writing side that he took time out of comics to become a screenwriter. Back in the world of comics, although he's written and drawn hits like the Batman story Battle for the Cowl, and relaunched Deathstroke as artist-writer, today he prefers to draw alongside a good writer, and keep his screenwriting going on the side. He's finishing a script with James Bonny, so watch this space.

At the moment, Tony has his hands full with his current comics. On top of Batman, he's drawing Damage. Although DC already had a character called Damage, to all intents and purposes the current series is a new launch. It's got that tell-tale strength and directness you expect from a Tony S Daniel comic, with a fresh feel and – literally – a smashing main character.

"My style has constantly mutated over the years," says Tony. "I don't think I've ever forced a style change – it's always happened slowly, organically. I think I have a mix of realism and cartoonishness that I try to balance. I find that if I go too realistic, the work ends up looking flat."

We'll see if Tony has managed to rein in his 'problematic' realistic drawing tendencies when his Batman series comes out in April. 🔴

OCEANS RISE
When DC started a new run of Justice League in 2016, Tony pencilled Bryan Hitch's story. This stunning work was the opening spread of issue one.

DEATHSTROKE 4
The cover to Tony's fourth issue of Deathstroke, featuring Harley Quinn helping to bring Gotham to its knees.

THE DAMAGE IS DONE
This incredible vertical, mural-esque image features four cover variants for the series Damage, which Tony is currently drawing.

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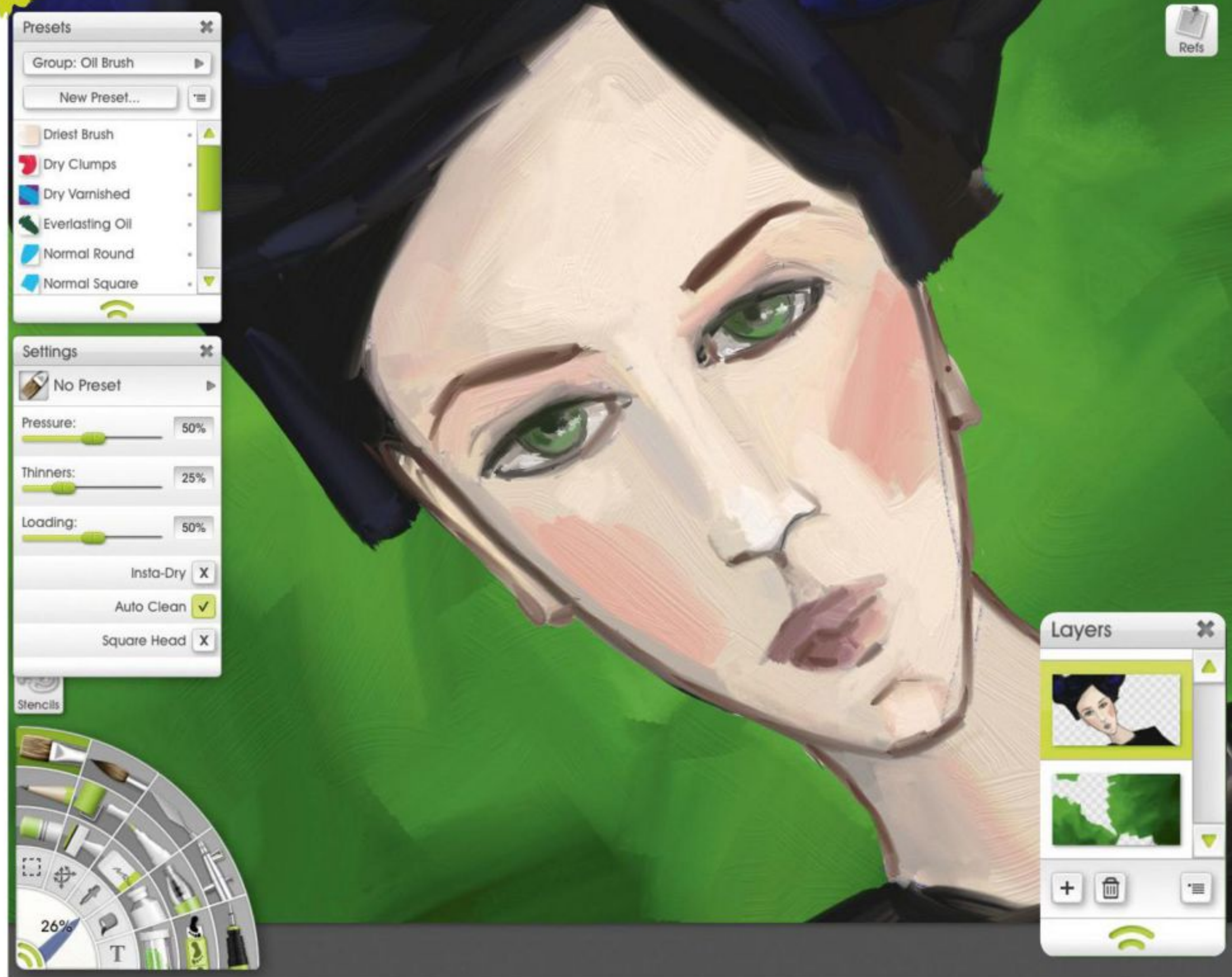
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Artist Portfolio
KEN LASHLEY

The Canadian artist tells **Gary Evans** about the Milestone reboot and how "the crazy 90s" changed comics forever

G rowing up, what was your dream job? Chances are Ken Lashley does it. The Canadian artist makes comics for Marvel and DC. He does design work for a big toy and games company. And he also draws for the Star Wars franchise: they commissioned him to cover a car with Stormtrooper and lightsaber art.

When Ken thinks of his own childhood, he's always on his way to the local variety store. "To get comics and snacks," he says. "Well, mostly comics. I spent about 90 per cent of my allowance on Marvel comics." He was also into TV cartoons about extraterrestrial characters, like

Herculoids, and the Galaxy Trio. He'd draw these characters while they were on-screen and put so much time into it that his mum signed him up for classes in animation.

"I think I went to two classes," Ken says. "I guess I really wasn't an animator, but more an illustrator. I really just wanted to draw things that I liked. Even now, when I get something I'm interested in, it's exciting and the work really flows."

YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG
Ken is a comics veteran with over 25 years in the industry. He's self-taught. He learned by doing it wrong, over and over, until it looked right. He still works that way today. Get him onto the craft, story structure, character development, and he has a lot to teach young artists.

Yet in other ways, Ken talks like he's just starting out in the comic book industry and feels like he has a lot to learn. "My pages are never finished," he says. "I just can't spend 11 hours on a foot. I gotta get rolling." ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

Ken Lashley
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: John Byrne, Barry Windsor-Smith, José Luis García-López, John Buscema and Iain McCaig
MEDIA USED: Pencil and ink
WEB: www.ledkillaboom.com

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
"This was for a request for someone's 40th birthday. He asked for the craziest fight ever."

© Marvel Comics

FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET
"One of my all-time favourites. Not only was it Superboy, but because it was one of the fastest covers I have ever done. I think the whole piece took three hours."

© DC Comics

HARLEY QUINN
"This was done for fun, and lots of people really enjoy the final look of this. The colourist Juan Fernandez really did a great job on this one."

“ Even now, when I get something I'm interested in, it's exciting and the work really flows ”

COLOSSUS AND KITTY
"This one was for a buddy who's a huge X-Men fan. He really wanted something with Colossus and Kitty. I kinda wanted different versions of the characters to do."

➤ Ken got his break when a friend put his portfolio in front of the right people at Marvel. He started out in "the crazy 90s" when there were lots of comics selling lots of copies. His first job was on X-Men offshoot Excalibur.

"I was awful," he says. "I really was too green to do a proper job. The 90s had so many opportunities that don't exist today and because of that, lots of books were being made by people like myself who were young and needed more time to learn the craft of creating comics. But on the flip side of that, you got to see new talent get a shot at books that had high exposure. Imagine, in a

IMAGINEFX COVER
"It's the Panther, my favourite character (well, besides Colossus). It was a great thing to get to draw the classic costume from the 70s."

> ❝ It was more about the X-Men characters than the person drawing them ❞

month, going from submitting samples to selling 400,000 issues. Crazy."

GETTING INTO CHARACTER

In 1992, some of the biggest illustrators in comics – Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld, Jim Lee, and others – left Marvel to start their own publishing company, Image Comics. This, Ken says, changed the way comics were made for good: "It's no secret that when the Image guys left, the comics

companies were very wary of making new creators the focus of the books. So it became about the characters. The new hires were there to work on the books. We became interchangeable. It was more about the X-Men characters than the person drawing them.

"I was part of this next wave of creators. No long runs. No spotlights. It was fun, don't get me wrong, but the Image guys really changed how larger companies viewed talent. If I got in ➤

DRAWING AN ICONIC SUPERHERO

Ken reveals how his upcoming DC/Milestone project, featuring Icon, came about

1 Jim Lee wants you

"I had to work fast because it was going to be showcased at New York Comic Con 2017. I had a few weeks. I was happy to stay at Marvel, but DC wanted me to be part of the launch and I couldn't refuse a call by the legendary Lee. The panel announcing the new Milestone books took place the first day of the show. So I looked at all the images created of Icon over the years and used them as inspiration."

2 A bald Icon?

"I use many digital tools these days, but drawing in a sketchbook is still my favourite. I can do pretty much anything I want in it. I went for a classic look for this piece: flying with a heroic pose. I spent quite a bit of time on the hair – short, long, dreads, you name it. I even considered bald. I had a few issue with the construction on Icon. The torso is a bit off, but when you have a deadline you've just got to let it go."

3 Just get rolling

"The way I approach a task is very chaotic. I do fairly loose roughs and then just get rolling. I ink myself, so instead of pencilling it all out, I just draw in ink. I know it sounds insane but for me it works. If I make a mistake then I just make it part of the work. If it's really bad I get the white paint out. I did this in about five hours – it's not my best work, but I got it completed and it looked okay for the panel."

4 Secret logo

"Finally, it was decided that Icon needed a logo like all the other superheroes. I went to town on that, but the final look will be saved for issue one. I don't think I have a style. I change it up depending on the project. I think that's smart, but of course it may make it difficult for people to recognise my work off the bat. But I guess my work has a more classic comic look and feel. I work at getting structure right."

THE COMEBACK
Ken puts his own stamp on Icon and Rocket, the superheroes created in 1993 by Milestone Media, a division of DC Comics.

ICON AND ROCKET
The alien traveller Icon teams up with human teenager Rocket to protect the fictional city of Dakota from criminals and other unsavoury riff-raff.

DAKOTAVERSE
Five titles set in the Dakotaverse are due out the this spring. Ken is working on the eponymous Milestone title.

© DC Comics

COWABUNGA!
"This was my first time drawing a cover for the Turtles. I loved it – may have been the first time. I don't think it'll be the last."

THE DARK KNIGHT
"Love drawing the Dark Knight! I really haven't drawn him much in print, so when I got the chance to do it, I went for it."

➤ a few years earlier, I would've had a much different experience."

Ken's workload mean he needs "a ton of time at the table." He gets up at 9am and works until 11pm, with short breaks for food or the gym. Old posters hang on the walls. Robots and vintage toys lie about his workspace in London, Ontario. Sketches and markers and papers cover the drawing side of the room.

He prefers his sketchbook, but these days works digitally too. His Cintiq tablet sits on another desk and he also uses 11x17-inch scanner. "It's a hot mess when I'm on deadline," he says. "Well, it's always a hot mess really!"

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Ken splits his time 60/40 between comics and design. As well as Marvel and DC, he also works for toy and board game company Hasbro, and Lucasfilm. The work he does in any industry is defined by his relationship with the art director. Hasbro, like Lucasfilm, lets "creatives be creative." The comic book business is a bit different, though. Here, the writer dictates the vision so Ken doesn't have

© Marvel Comics

the same level of input. Sometimes he's hired to do nothing but draw. He has no say on story, and in the past he's quit projects for that reason.

DC recently rebooted the Milestone universe. Ken works with Reggie Hudlin, a writer who does give him the chance to make the story his own – everything from overall direction to character costumes. Ken draws the superheroes Icon and Rocket. He fills several sketchbooks when starting a new projects. It's always better to have too much material than not enough.

66 My desk is a hot mess when I'm on deadline. Well, it's always a hot mess really! 99

FAST AND RIGHT
"The history on this page came from the many amazing past creators of the X-Men title. It took me a while to get it completed – say about three days. I'm fast, but I wanted it to be right."

So he sketches quickly, refining later, and tries multiple designs for each character. "It's important to push past what's expected and see where it goes," he says. "On Icon and Rocket, I did a bunch of designs that range from classic comic book to over-the-top crazy stuff. I landed somewhere in between the two extremes."

THE THRILL OF THE STORY
Ken says you need several things to make a good story. One is unpredictability. Another is what he calls "peril within peril." Take Star Wars: Luke must destroy the Death Star, and only a precise hit on a small thermal exhaust port will do it, and that's an almost impossible shot, and he needs to make that shot before ➤➤

© Lucasfilm

NEW LOOK FOR REY
"I was approached Hasbro about creating some new looks for Rey. The final look was a cross between this and development work done by a few other artists."

A LONG TIME AGO IN A COMIC-CON FAR, FAR AWAY...

Ken really came into his own as an artist while vandalising a Volkswagen Passat in front of the crowds at San Diego's Comic-Con

"By 2011, I was working for lots of different companies, but my Lucasfilm job was my favourite. I received a call to draw live on a 2012 Volkswagen Passat at San Diego Comic-Con International. It became one the most rewarding and scary jobs that I've ever worked on.

I was tasked with drawing images from the six movies. It was a lot more difficult then I had anticipated. The surface of the car had been wet sanded previously, but absorbed the materials I brought with me – all except my Sharpie. I went through 36 Sharpies that weekend.

My highlight was one of my good friends at Hasbro – actually, he is a lead art director – came over and brought me a drink. That's what I mean about having great friendships in the art business. It's really more about the people you work with.

But I also realised that I didn't need reference after about the first hour. Because I'm a Star Wars junkie, I knew enough to get the right look. I really grew as an artist that weekend. I gained a ton of confidence. After that, there was no looking back. So many awesome celebrities came by for photos with me and the car."

PARK IT
It took Ken two days straight to cover the specially prepared Volkswagen Passat with illustrations of key moments from the Star Wars films.

MAULED
The car Ken inked at San Diego Comic-Con was later auctioned to support a charity.

STAYING SHARP
Ken works with one of the 36 Sharpies he used to complete the four-wheeled artwork.

BRAND NAME
"It's not every day that you get to draw a toy blister packing for some the best heroes in comics."

DARTH VADER
"This was done for the Star Wars Celebration in Anaheim. It was meant to be an emotional shot of Vader as he wrecked havoc on Coruscant."

© Marvel Comics and Hasbro

© Lucasfilm

THE HAND THAT SPOKE
"I was tasked with doing an image for a charity poster as a giveaway. It may have been one the first time in years that I actual drew and inked Spider-Man. I really liked the hand – not sure why, but it spoke to me."

the Death Star kills everyone at the rebel base. When you stack peril on top peril in this way, it causes tension – and tension is what keeps us hooked.

Ken also believes in keeping a character true to themselves. "Nothing," he says, "is more frustrating then when characters do things not in their nature." But there is an exception to this: at a crucial point in the story, usually the end, a character should make an unexpected choice. It shows change, how a character starts a story one way and ends it another. "That's a clever twist, when used properly, " Ken says, "but it can be annoying if not. I really enjoy working on stories where the main character has to go through some kind of growth. And a relatable character is also a must."

STAYING SANE

Story rules are important in comics, but Ken also applies them to toy design, which is "the story in one image." A comic he illustrates could sell 50,000 copies. But his recent Darth Vader

A HOMAGE
"This is the variant cover for the Ghost Rider title. It was a homage to the classic X-Men #1, which showcased the new X-Men taking over. I replaced the X-Men with magic-users."

> 66 **I think what ties my work together is the energy: I try to put lots of it into my work** 99

illustration appeared on the packaging for 700 different kinds of toys, millions of individual items. The difference is, in toy art, the artist remains anonymous. Ken recently spotted a child wearing a T-shirt with his drawing on it. Unlike comics, the image didn't carry his name. What he likes is the balance that working between the two industries brings: "It keeps me sane."

He stopped reading reviews of his work years ago. Good or bad comments have little to do with his

day-to-day process. Either way, they do him no good. Ken's a bit of purist in that way. He's happy drawing for different industries as long as they let him do what he does best: be creative. The art is in the doing of it and everything else is just background noise. That's why he was happy sketching the Galaxy Trio as a kid, but didn't like formal animation classes. He just wants to get that flow going. He just wants to get rolling.

"I'm nowhere near perfect," he says. "But I try. I think what ties my work together is the energy: I try to put lots of it into my work. To be honest, I really try and draw things I would love to see. I have a long way to go, but I'm always working on my craft."

Sketchbook

Elijah McNeal

Industrial sci-fi floats this concept artist's boat, but he still makes room for the occasional character study in his sketchbook…

Artist PROFILE

Elijah McNeal
LOCATION: US

Elijah's a concept artist for the entertainment industry, and has worked on several video game, film and animation projects. His clients include Oats Studio, 20th Century Fox and Epic Games. His big break came when working on Star Citizen, and he became a full-time freelance artist after two years of studio work.
www.artstation.com/el1j4h

> **Less pew-pew and more research this time around**

DAKKA
"There's no such thing as enough Dakka."

POST
"This area is a shipping room. I'm more fond of worn-down sci-fi, rather than the constantly crisp and clean look."

RAY
"This a rather old drawing from when I was studying animation. Less pew-pew and more research this time around."

SPEED DRONE
"An autonomous assault drone with various armaments."
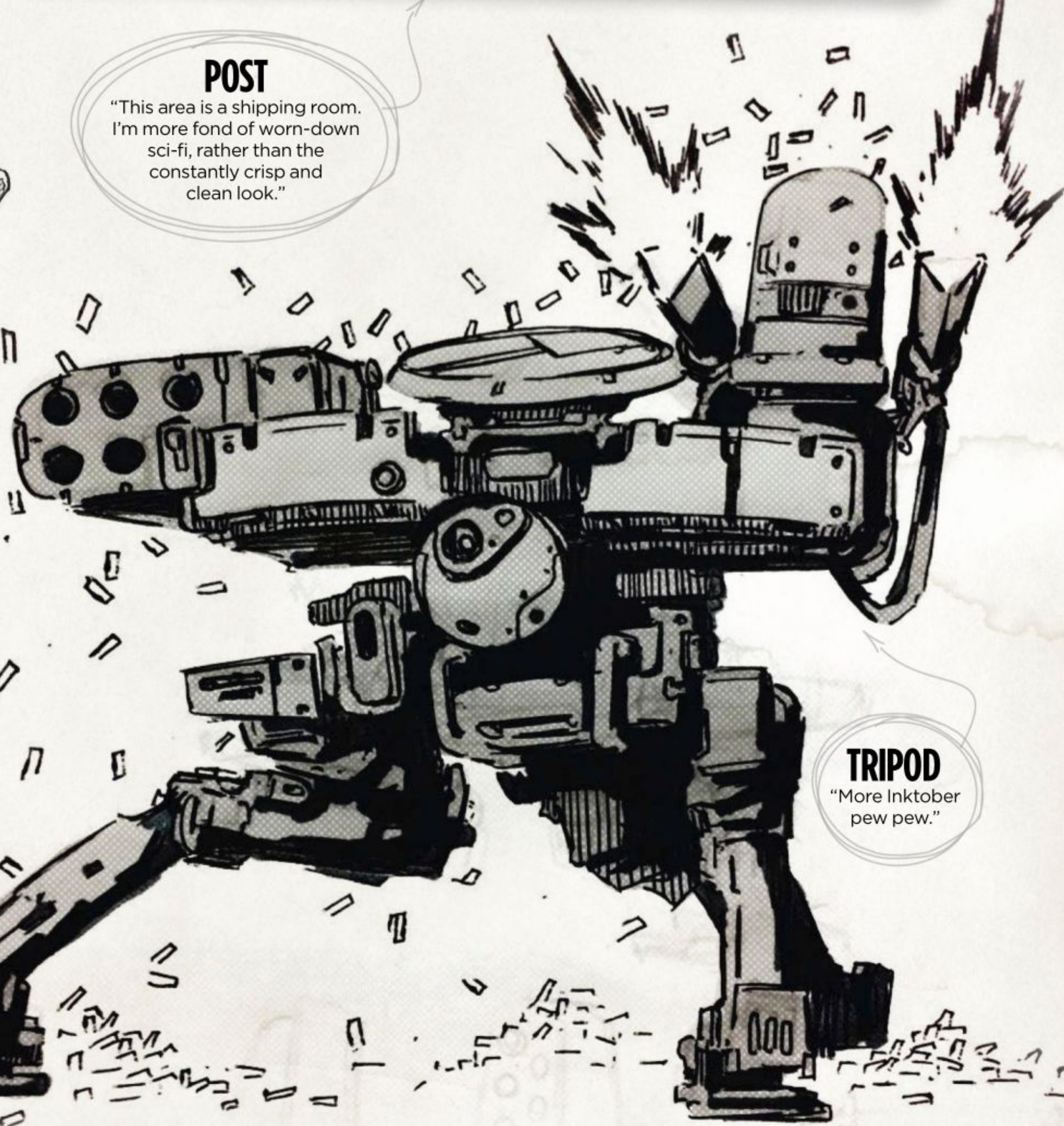
TRIPOD
"More Inktober pew pew."

JADE
"Here, I made an attempt at blending sci-fi with fantasy. What better way than to throw a exosuit on to an elf?"

SWALLOW
"Here's a sketch I did of a cosplay artist as a character I imagined briefly."

NOREN
"I'll peruse the internet in search of models, like anyone else. I found a photo of this person on Instagram."

OVERGROWTH
"I lived in Japan for some time and always enjoyed looking at the fine overgrowth in the small cities and towns."
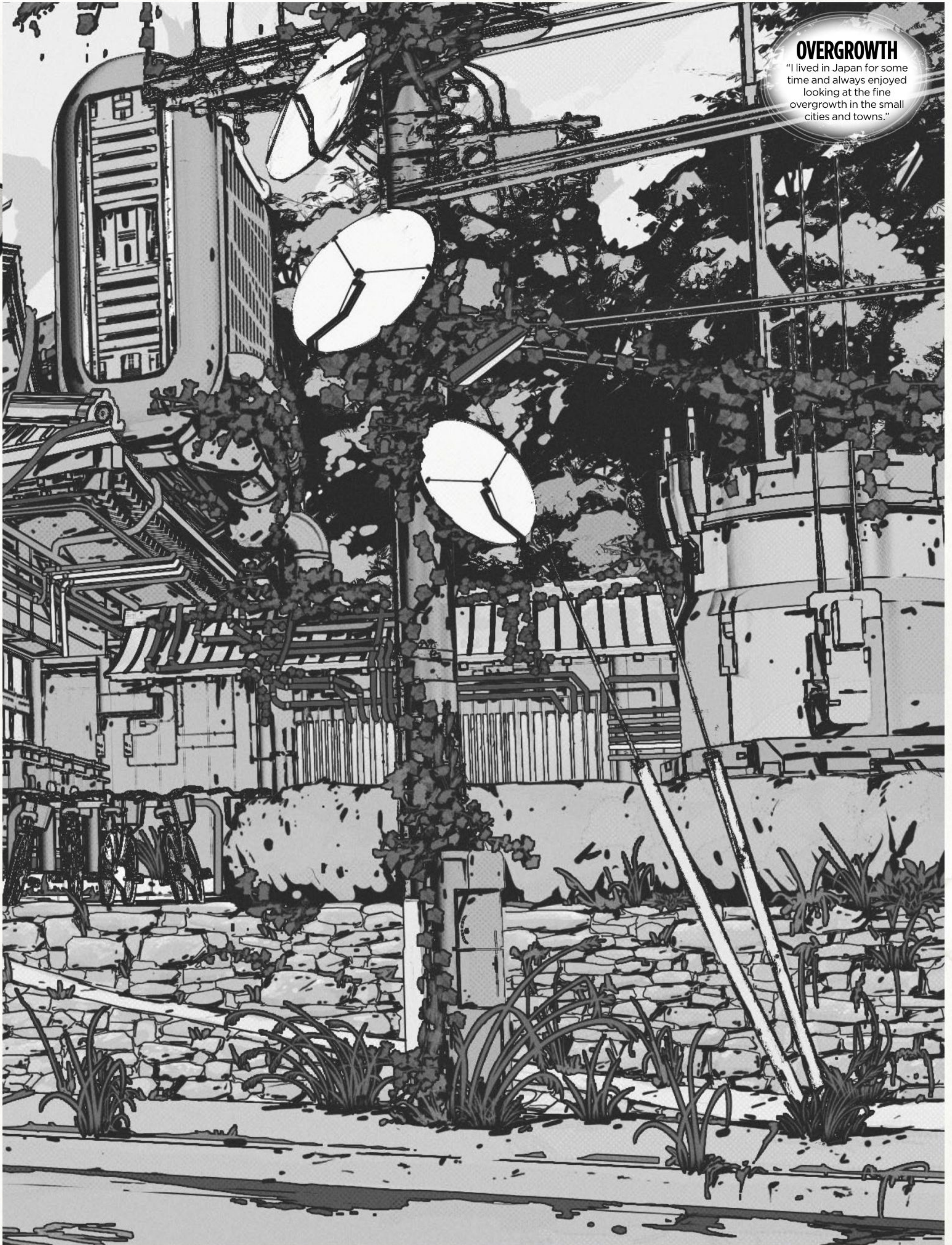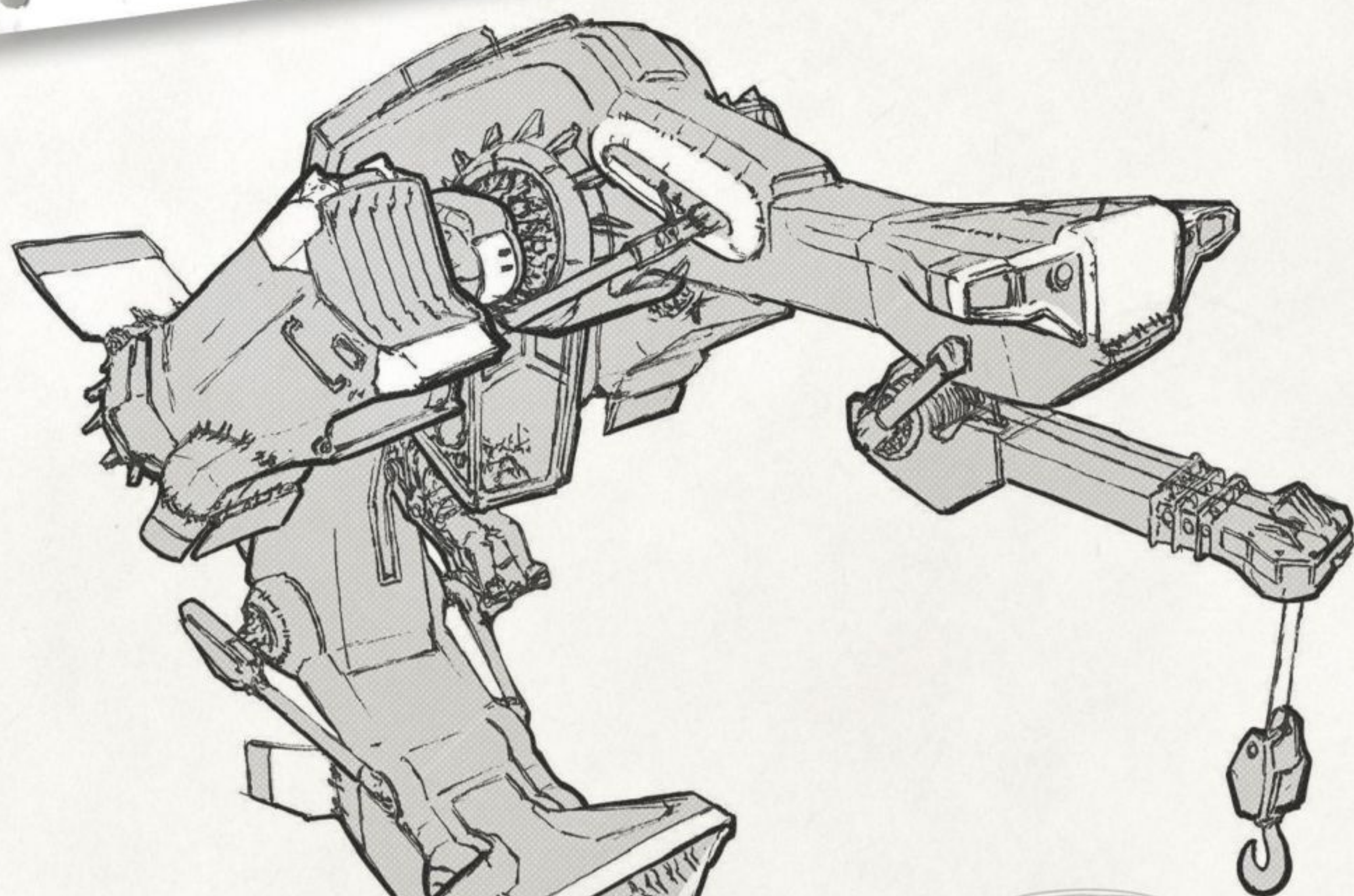
HANK

"This guy is a hover-crane to go along with the research vehicle. I imagined these guys are part of a terraforming crew."

WORK SPACE

"Engineering space on a space freighter. It's another example of the kind of heavy, lived-in, sci-fi that I like to explore."
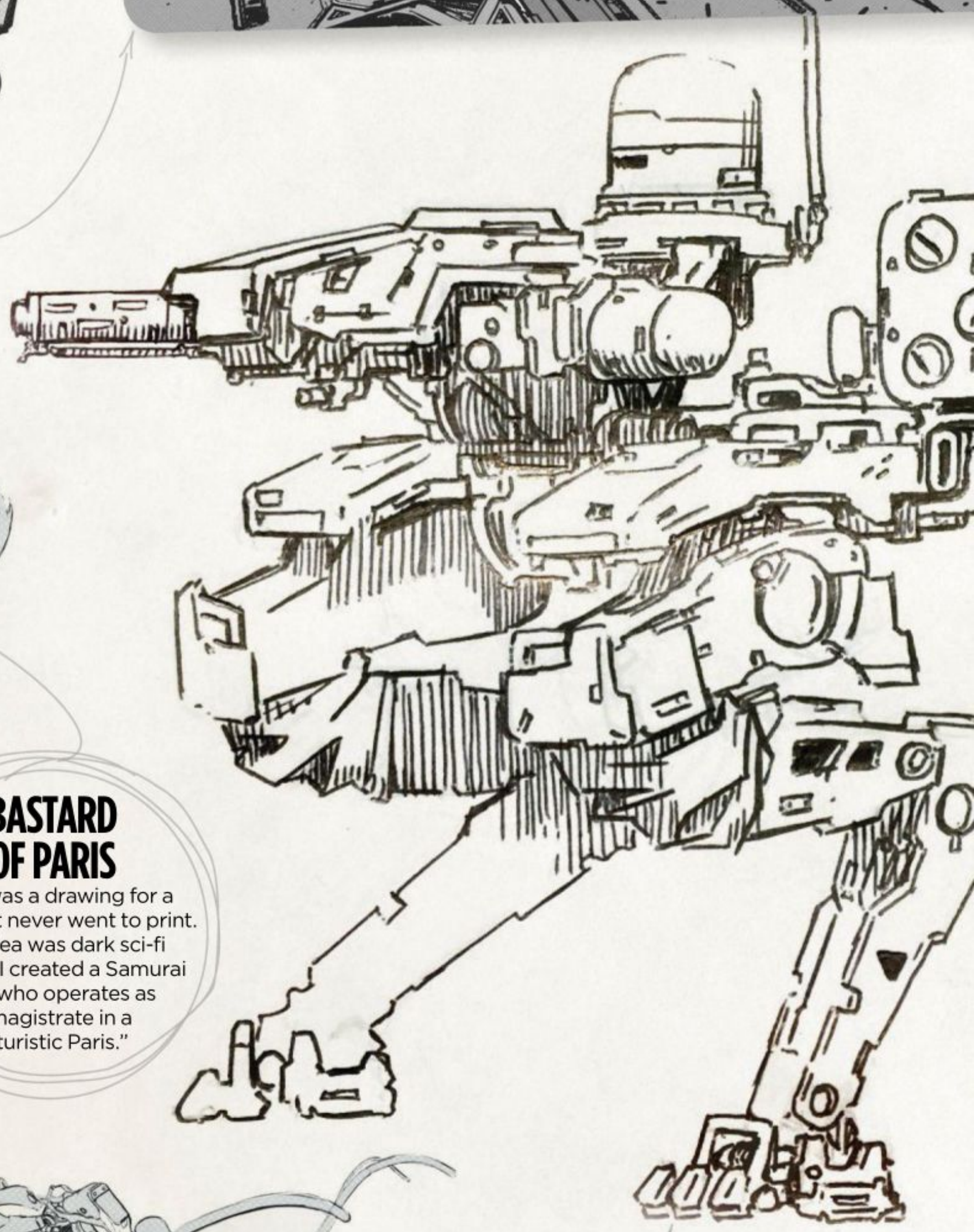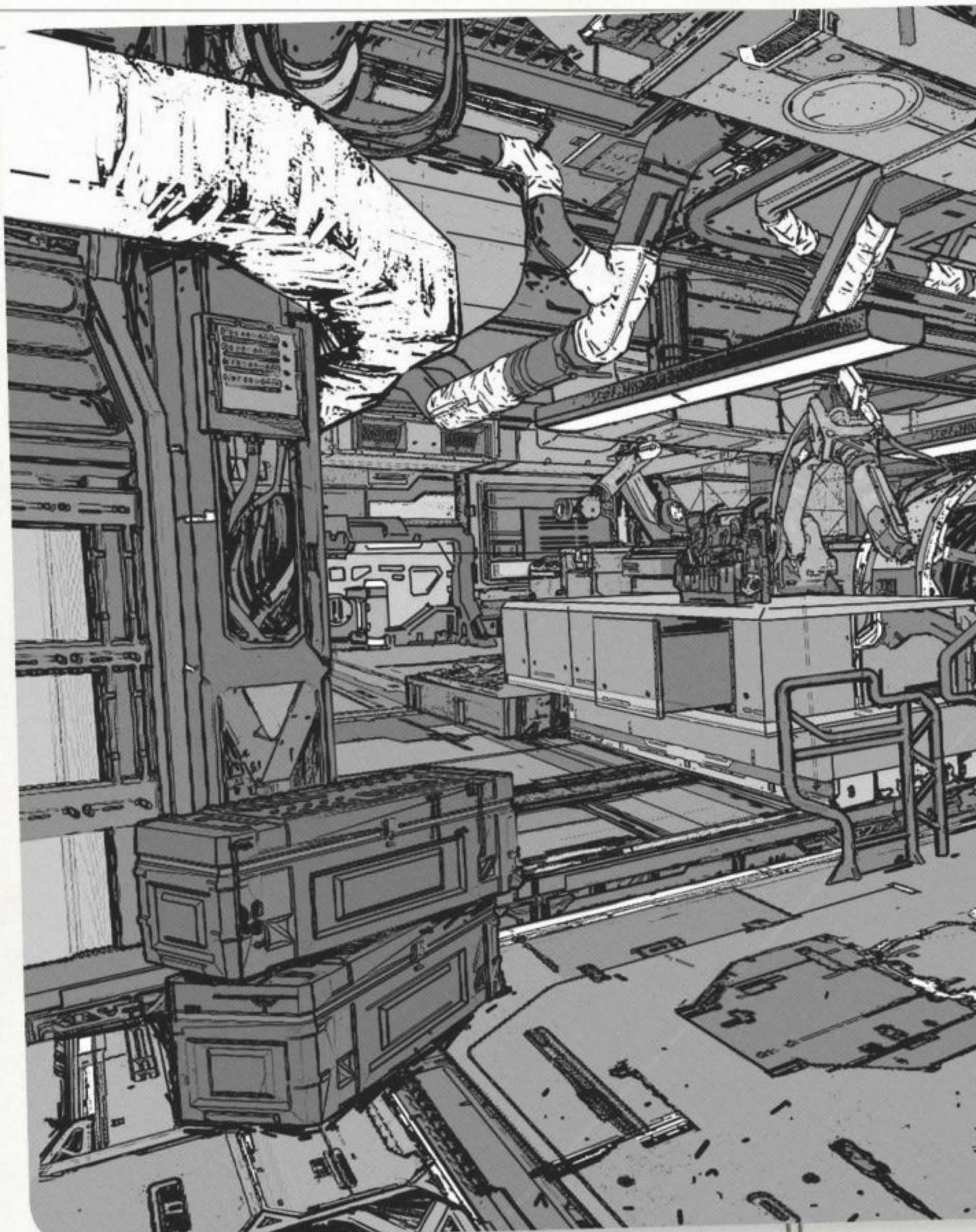
BASTARD OF PARIS

"This was a drawing for a book that never went to print. The idea was dark sci-fi fantasy. I created a Samurai Lord who operates as a magistrate in a futuristic Paris."

WALKER

"Yet another Inktober mech. This one's inspired by Metal Gear Solid."
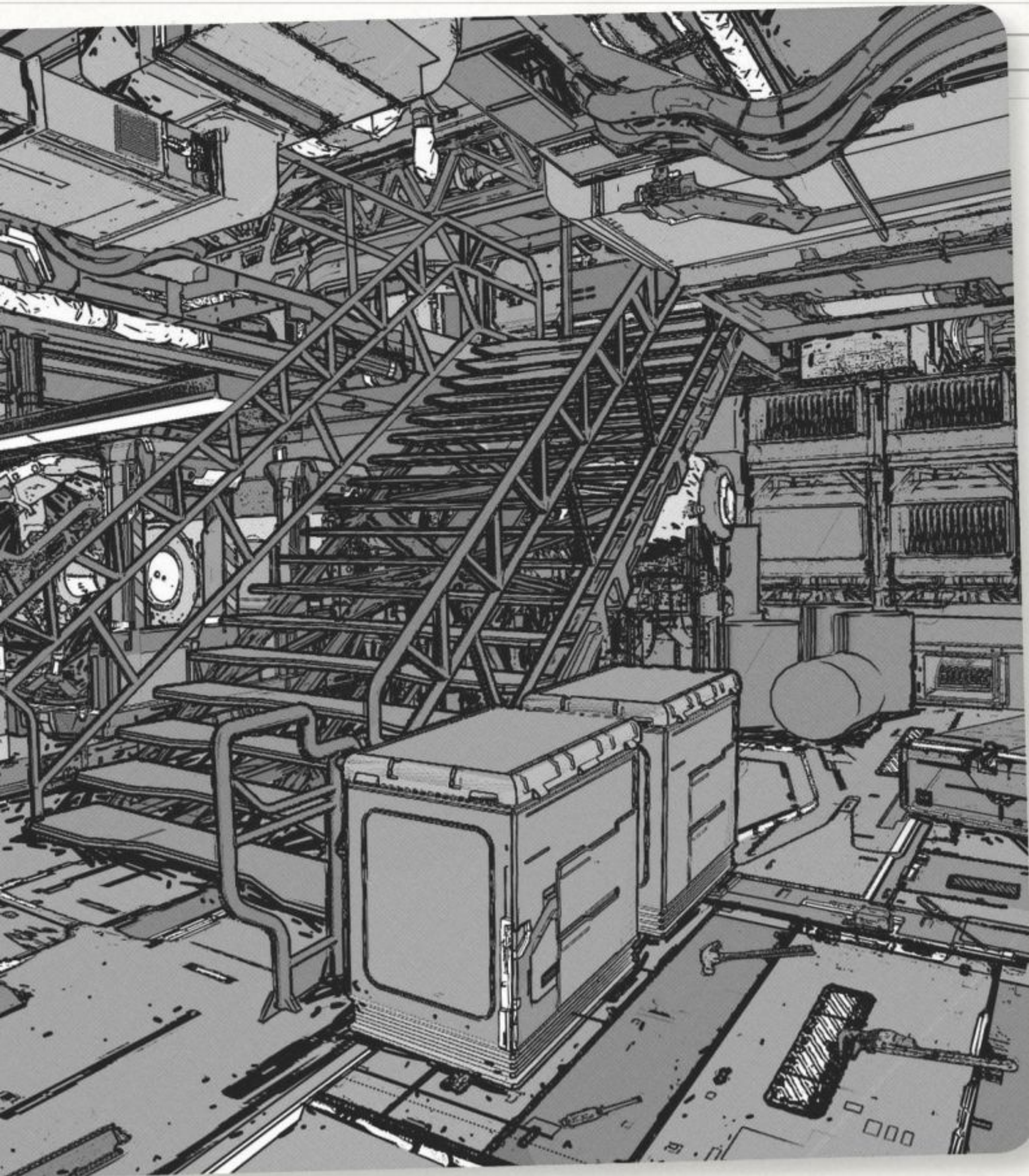
FRANK
"This is sketch of a character for a personal IP I had developed and then left behind some time ago."
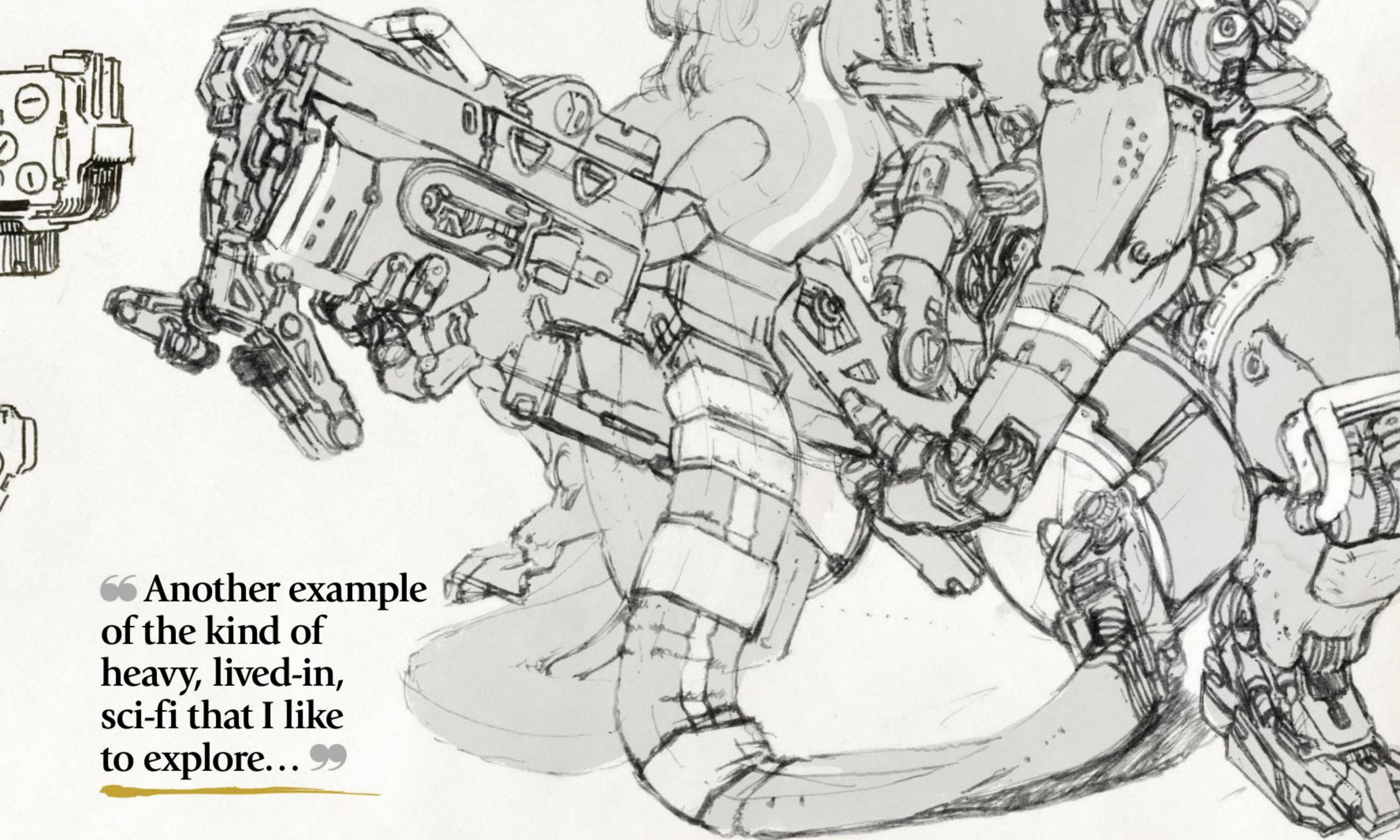
" Another example of the kind of heavy, lived-in, sci-fi that I like to explore… "

Art by Steve Prescott
Art by Jeff Miracola
Art by Aaron Miller

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VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

60

64

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86

This issue:

DRAWING KAL-EL, THE MAN OF STEEL

Jorge Jiménez shares his creative process for pencilling and inking a variant cover of the indomitable superhero in a classic action pose

Artist PROFILE

Jorge Jiménez
LOCATION: Spain

Jorge started at IDW Publishing in 2011, then joined DC in 2013 where he continues to work on series such as Super Sons and Superman.
http://ifxm.ag/jorge-j

This image is the coloured version of the variant cover from Superman Rebirth, issue 23. It was my first black and white cover that DC published. Because it's a variant, I was free to compose this artwork in any way I liked, with one condition: Superman had to look imposing.

Previously, I'd done several covers with Kal-El smiling, but now it was time to show his strength, so I placed the character in the centre of the composition. His stance conveys his steely resolve, while his determined expression remains unchanged even as the bullets fly.

I darkened down the gun barrels so as not to distract from Superman. In addition, I placed the numerous bullet casings in a chaotic and random way throughout the image to indicate that this attempt to stop our hero is both violent and excessive. Furthermore, he's staring right back at his assailants – and the viewer. This tells us that no matter how many acts of violence are directed against him, Kal-El will stand fast, because he is a super man!

The coloured image you see here and on the cover of ImagineFX, has been done by colourist Alejandro Sánchez, who does a great job of bringing life into the scene. ➤➤

How I create...
A BULLETPROOF HERO
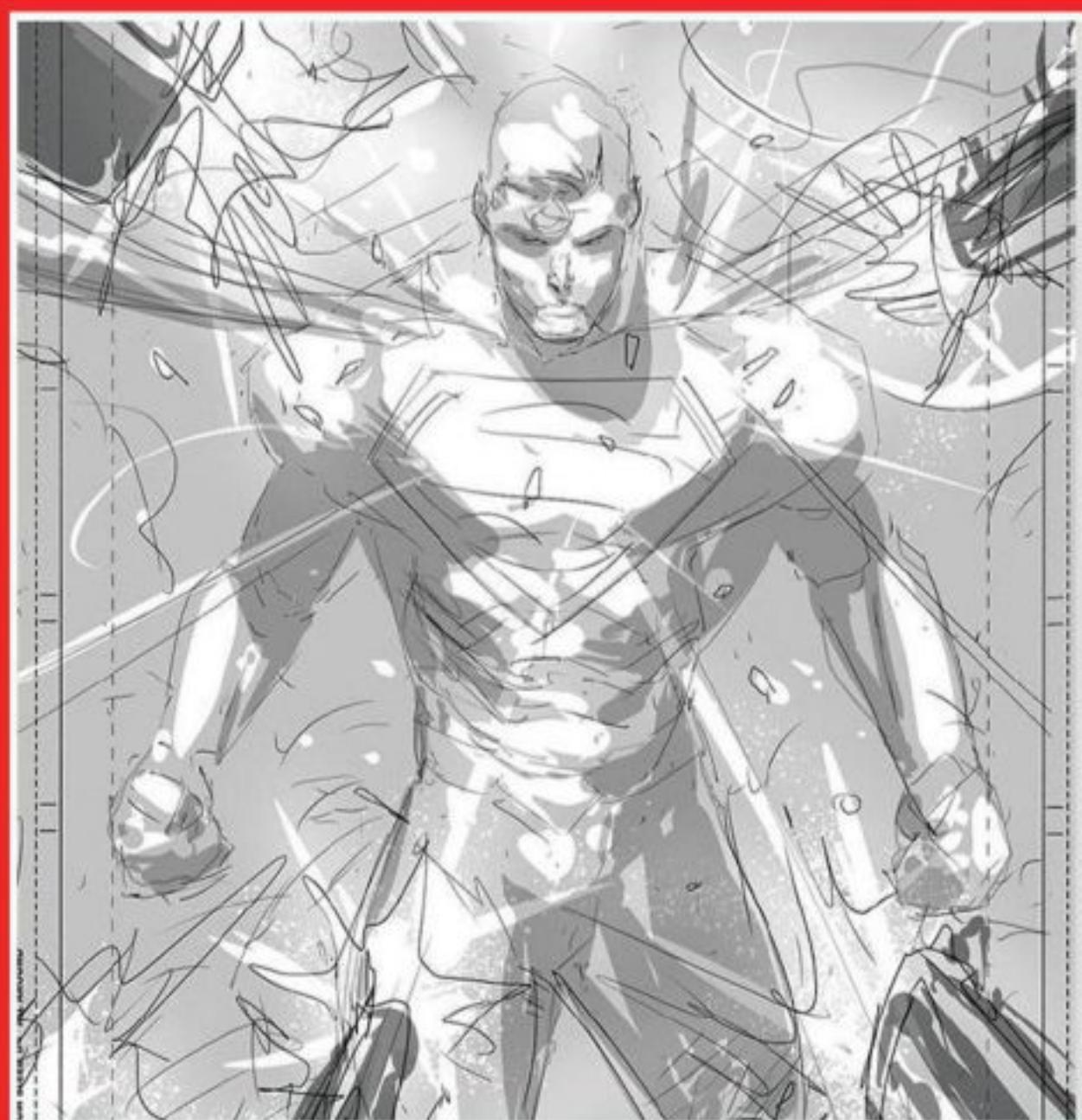
1 Sketch stage
I use this rough pencil stage to make it clear at a structural level what my intention is for the figure. Essentially, Superman's now fixed in place for the rest of the process. I'm happy with his strong pose and body language, and so I pencil in the remaining elements so that they act as a guide for how I see the image progressing. I show this version of the drawing to the comic's editors, for their approval.

2 Inking the lines
Now I define the final aspect of each line of the drawing. I work digitally, which enables me to apply the ink even to areas where my pencils are unfinished. This brings a noticeable spontaneity to the stroke. Now is the time to pay attention to the lines and really notice where they fall. I want to generate textures for greater realism. It's a balancing act of grounding the illustration without straying too far from my style.

3 Greys add volume
It's time to apply volumes, to give a three-dimensional appearance to the artwork. I use different textures to generate an atmosphere of chaos in the background, and manual brushstrokes alternating with gradients or flat tones (depending on their location) to give depth and plasticity to the figures. I also introduce a light source to illuminate the face and chest of Superman, which reinforces the scene's focal point.

Next month

Mixed-media artist Erik Jones creates our next issue's cover art!

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Surreal Portraits

How to add abstract and mystical elements to your next portraits

All this and more!

An homage to Beksiński
Raf Sarmento uses Procreate to delve into art history.

Iris Compiet workshop
Tell a story in a single image with pencils and watercolours.

Social media addiction
How to interact online without it taking over your life.

Costume design for film
Paul Gerrard reveals his process for concepting a look.

ISSUE 161 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 20 April*

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

Super-strength clothing

I work with Clip Studio Paint's texture brush called X1 Framework to create the volumes in areas of the Superman suit. I generate darker shades by increasing the number of strokes, going to flat black if necessary. I use this gradient of crossed lines to simulate the appearance of a strong, alien material.

Mixing things up

I emphasise Superman's head and shoulders by altering the thickness of the internal and external lines of the figure. For this I use the Saji nib of Clip Studio Paint on a Thickness of seven for the internal lines. The line is uniform and thin, in contrast to the external lines that have a Thickness of 16. This gives a more cartoon look to my art, which contrasts with other, more realistic elements. I've always loved mixing different styles in the same drawing.

Hands with an iron grip

I use photo reference to my hands to draw Superman's, although of course I have to bear the character's exaggerated anatomy in mind. I often refer to photographs if I have any doubts about drawing elements of a character's body, such as how an arm correctly fills the volume of a composition.

Giving it both barrels

To generate the blur effect of the moving shotgun shells, I decide to make use of Photoshop's Motion blur filter. The key is to treat the same elements within the drawing differently, because this gives the impression that they're moving at different speeds, which is just what would happen in real life.
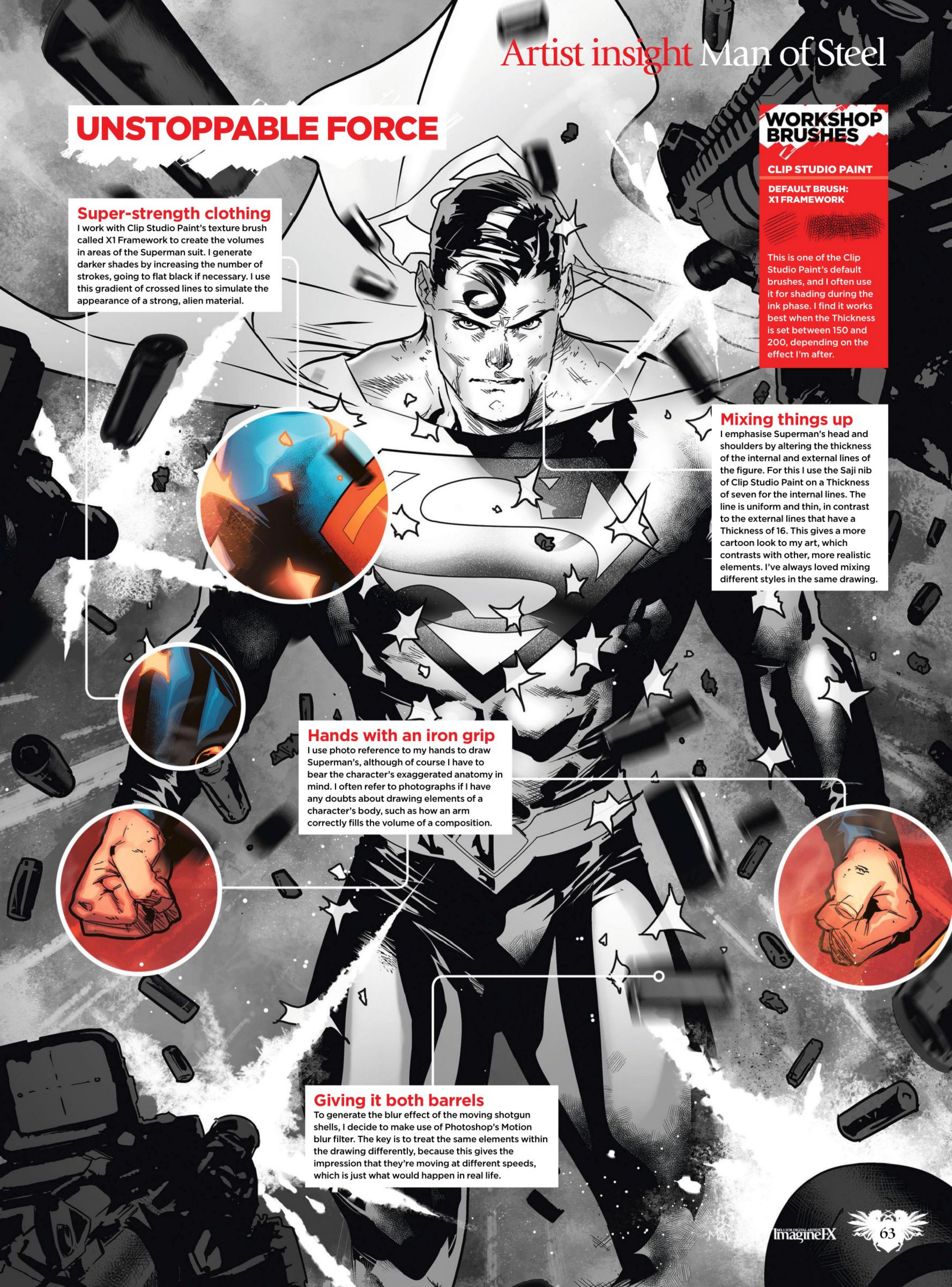
Artist insight
15 TECHNIQUES FOR COLOURING COMICS

Dave McCaig reveals the tricks and tips that he uses with colour to add extra layers of storytelling to black and white comic book art

Artist PROFILE

Dave McCaig
LOCATION: Canada

Award-winning Dave has spent over 20 years working with every major US comic publisher. He was also the colour supervisor on The Batman animated series.
http://ifxm.ag/d-mccaig

Colouring comics is the best job in the art world, as far as I'm concerned, because it leans heavily towards the fun part of art: the storytelling.

Colour can take a reader by the hand and lead them through pacing and mood, guide their eye to where it needs to go, and flesh out details in materials and lighting to suit the story. It's kind of like being the cinematographer and soundtrack composer for a film all in one.

The trick to successful colouring is to think about what's going on beyond the panels of the page, and have those outside elements and motivations influence the things we can see. That can mean a million different things. Maybe it's blazing hot outside. Maybe the environment your story takes place in is bleached by the sun and is as old as time. Maybe the journey of the characters involved takes monotonous hours.

Colour can help sell all of that, which can greatly expand the scope of a comic, turning each panel from a two-dimensional drawing into a window to a rich, nuanced world. The colour in those panels can flow together to set the pace, like a song.

1 WHY USE COLOUR?

This might seem like an inane question, but it's worth thinking about what benefits colour can bring to an illustration that black and white can't. Colour can convey things like mood, time of day, change of scene, image planes and depth of field. It can be a great visual shorthand to help a reader grasp what's going on, without hammering them over their head with dialogue or having to draw absolutely everything in a scene – when something as simple as a yellow background and blue shadows can tell you that it's sunrise.

2 SOFTWARE OPTIONS

Until recently, Photoshop was the de facto software used in comic book colouring, but Clip Studio Paint has been changing that. Clip is much faster with some tasks like laying in flat colours, primarily due to its advanced Paint Bucket tolerance settings that auto-trap and detect line gaps when filling inked shapes. A huge time saver! That said, I still prefer the brushes available in Photoshop for rendering. Beyond the desktop, I'll sometimes work on my iPad Pro using either Clip or Procreate as well.

Photoshop   Clip Studio Paint   Procreate

© Marvel Comics

3 STARTING WITH FLAT COLOURS

Laying in "flats" is a standard step for colourists in the US comic industry. Flatting is the process in which flat, contiguous, aliased shapes are laid in on a separate layer from the line art to facilitate selecting areas when rendering. Like most colourists, I usually subcontract this step to a professional flatter to save time, and once I get a batch of flats back I'll go over them all with a Paint Bucket to change the base colours accordingly.

> 66 Colour can turn each panel from a two-dimensional drawing into a window to a rich, nuanced world 99

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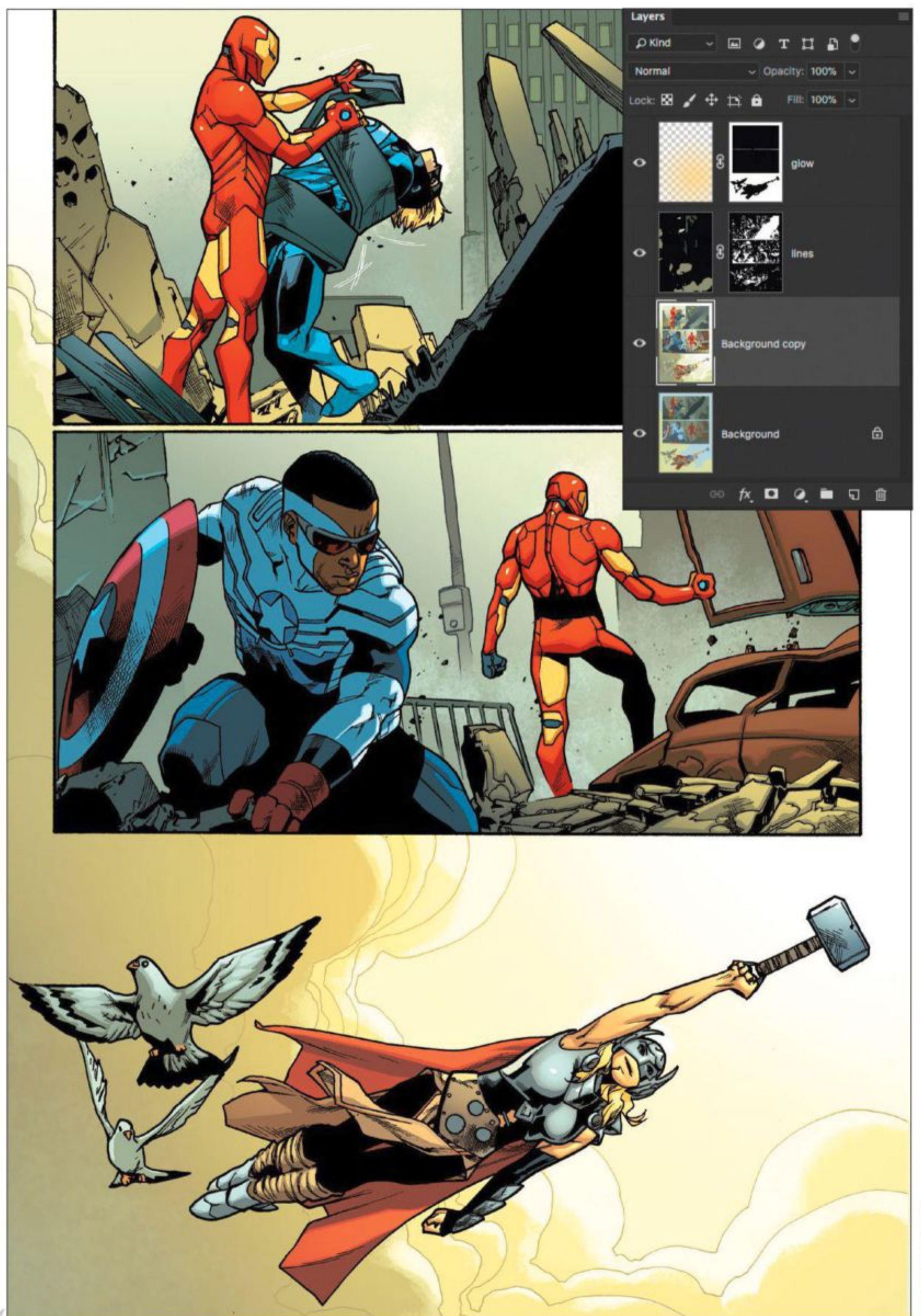
4 SETTING UP LAYERS

I've seen colourists use dozens of Photoshop layers on a page. I find it hard to keep track of so many (read: I think that's crazy), so I usually limit myself to three or four. This will generally consist of my flats, a duplicate of those flats to render on, and a layer with my lines on it. Clean and simple. I might have a layer or two for colour-holds (coloured line art) and/or glows and lighting effects, but that's generally it. ➤➤

5 PAINTERLY LOOK VS HARD EDGES

By using an aliased Lasso or the Pencil tool, I can render in a flat, "anime" colour style that's easy to edit with the Paint Bucket. Using an Airbrush or painterly brushes can be more artistically expressive, but makes changes more time consuming. Having the flats layer as a backup for each shape's selection makes that editing easier, however. Both styles have merits, and they can be combined. I'll often paint my backgrounds, and use flat shapes for characters. Or I might leave shadows flat and render into the highlight areas.

© Brian Wood and Garry Brown

© DC Comics

6 RENDERING TO SUIT THE STORY AND ART

A hyper-realistic, detailed style can add weight to a story via grit, texture, stubble and so on, while a simple style can let the reader mentally fill some blanks and speeds up the reading experience, without having to work through a glut of detail. Simpler can allow for more expressive hits of colour. I'm not trying to sell detail short here. Detail adds gravity and that counts for a lot. There are pros and cons to dropping out details, and I hum and haw over rendering options every time I start a new gig.

© Marvel Characters, Inc.
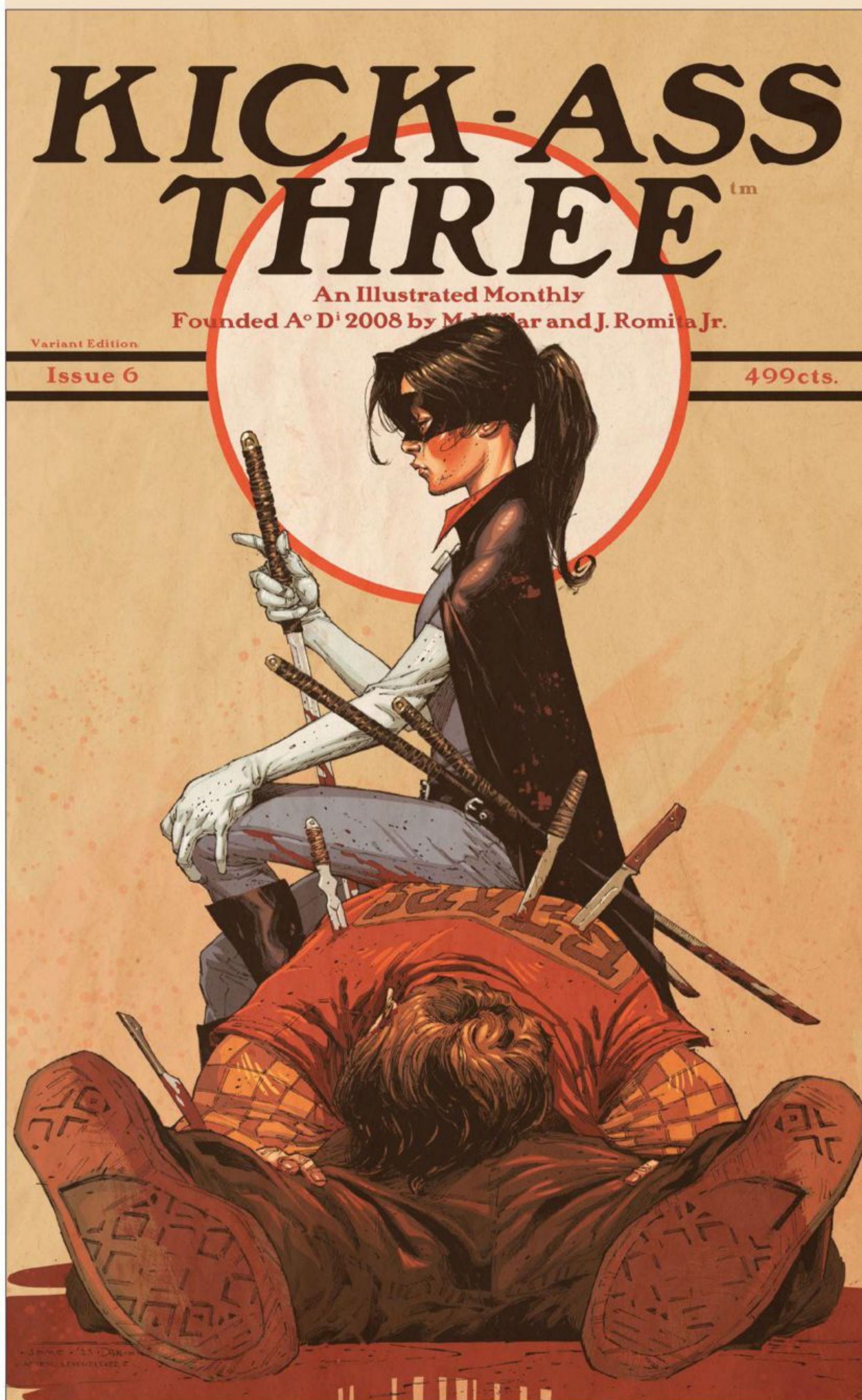
7 PERSONAL FLOURISH

A lot of colourists, veteran and newbie alike, worry that their colour should fade into the background to let the line art shine. I don't really subscribe to this school of thought. Collaborative art should be collaborative! I hope my work is recognisable regardless of the rendering style I use, through my colour choices and the sorts of shapes I use in my rendering. Collaborative art is like being in a band. Everyone needs to play to their strengths and show their personal style. Otherwise the art you make together becomes boring.

> "Colour can direct the reader's eye via shadow lines, patterns and the like"

8 STORYTELLING WITH COLOUR AND SHAPE

Colour can be a great way to direct the reader's eye via shadow lines, colour patterns and the like. While the main characters and action do their thing on the page, I can subtly reinforce the eye line and direct the action without clubbing people over the head with it. In the case of this page from LOW, I've used a triad of red shapes to quickly draw the eye to our heroes, despite the chaos of the rest of the image. ➤➤

9 MOOD THROUGH COLOUR CHOICES

I try to use colour to help support the story. There are plenty of standards like blue or desaturated tones suggesting quiet or melancholy, while orange or green might hint at toxic chemicals in the air. A saturated red warns of imminent danger. Colour shorthand like this can be a great way to help the reader understand what's happening beyond and between the panels, and help separate scenes. If I'm working on a longer project, creating custom colour cues (and sticking to them) can be a great way to set that project's world-building apart from the pack as well.

10 USE VALUE TO CREATE PLANES AND SILHOUETTES

I often use desaturated, dark values for one plane, and saturated, light values for another. Popping things off those planes in a third value range with as much contrast as possible helps to focus the eye on the subject of the panel. These values don't necessarily have to be different hues. I often find that when people think about colour they focus too much on hue, and forget about value. As far as I'm concerned, value is the absolute, most important element in a colour, then it's saturation and hue.
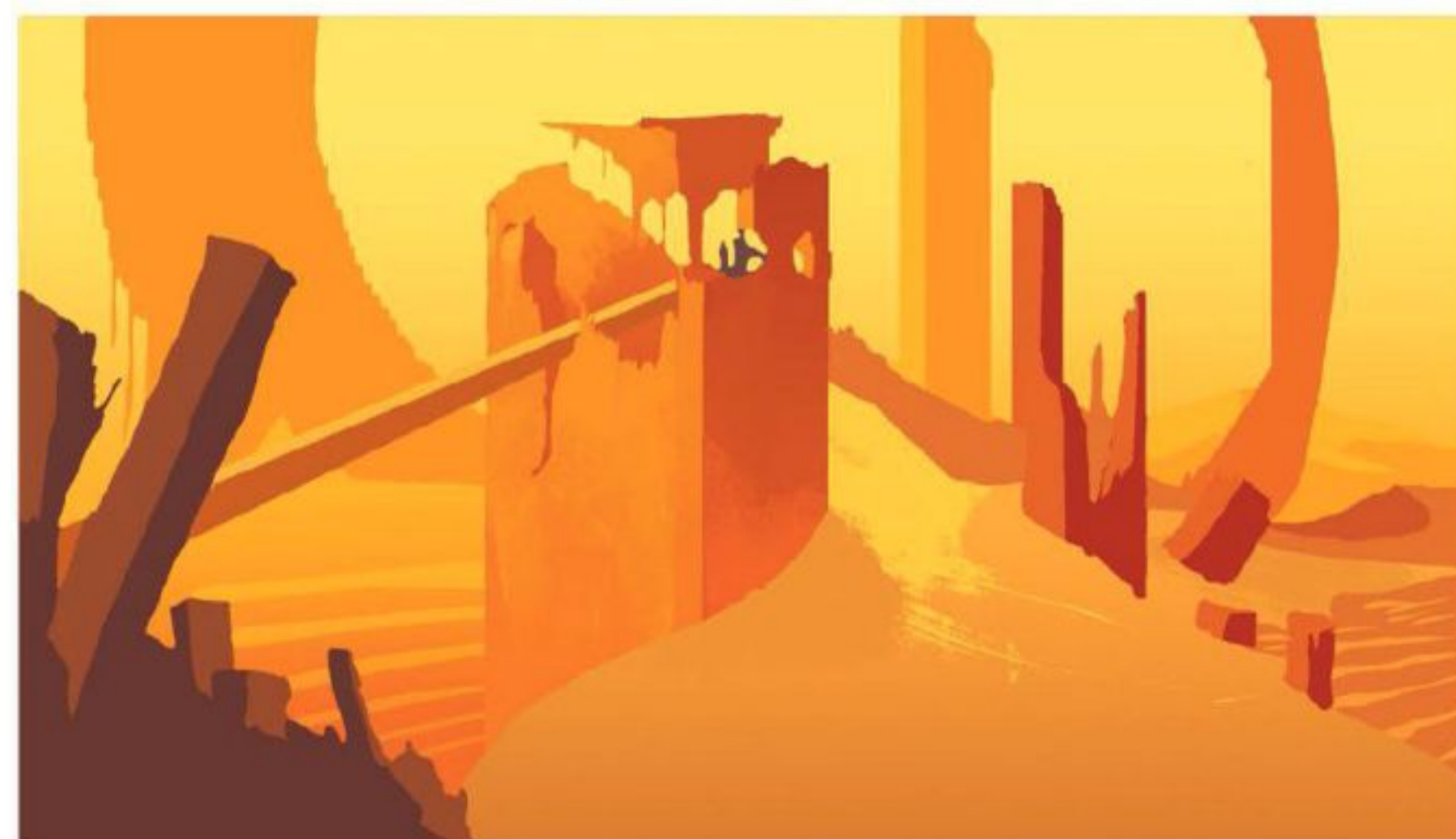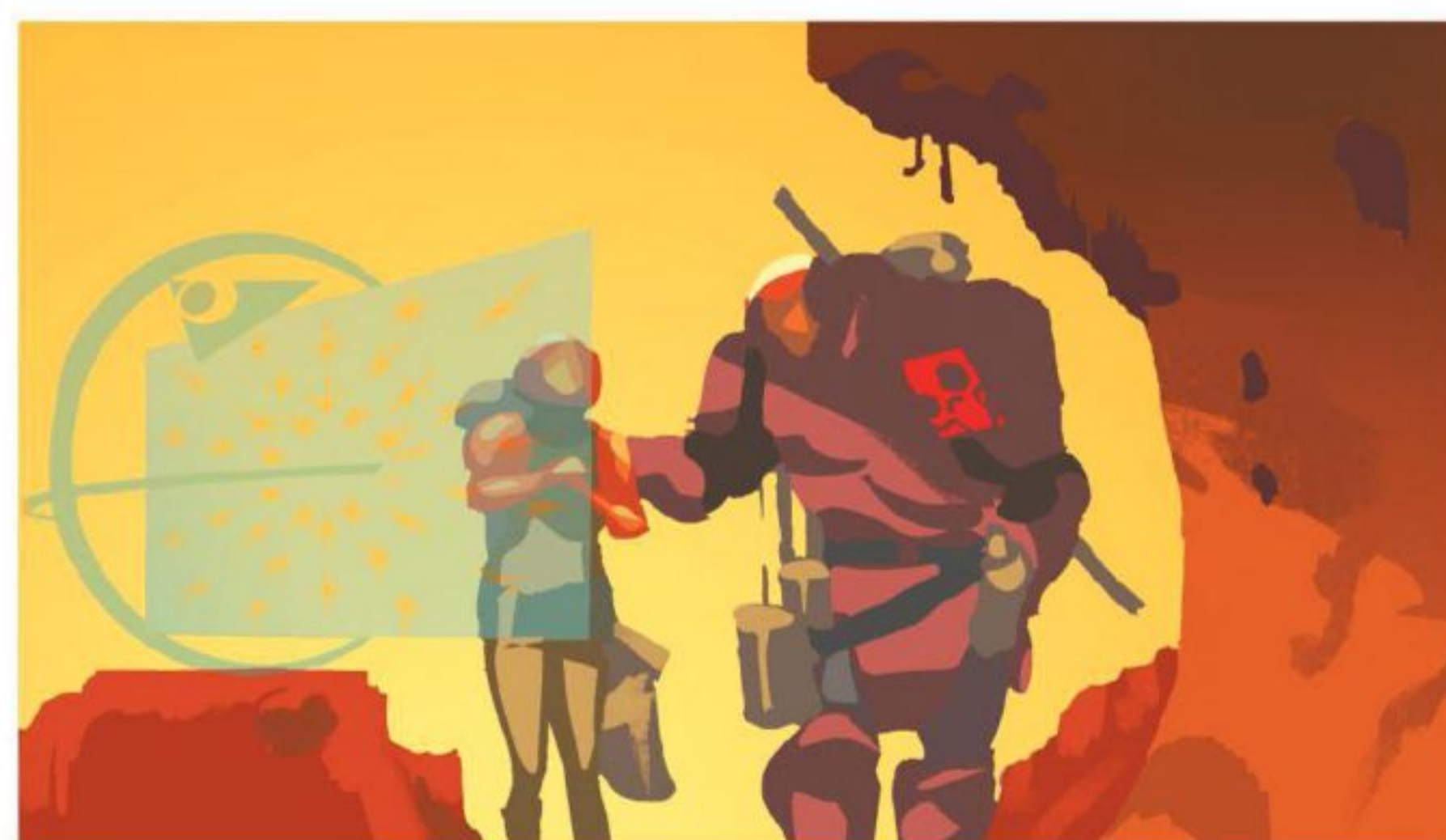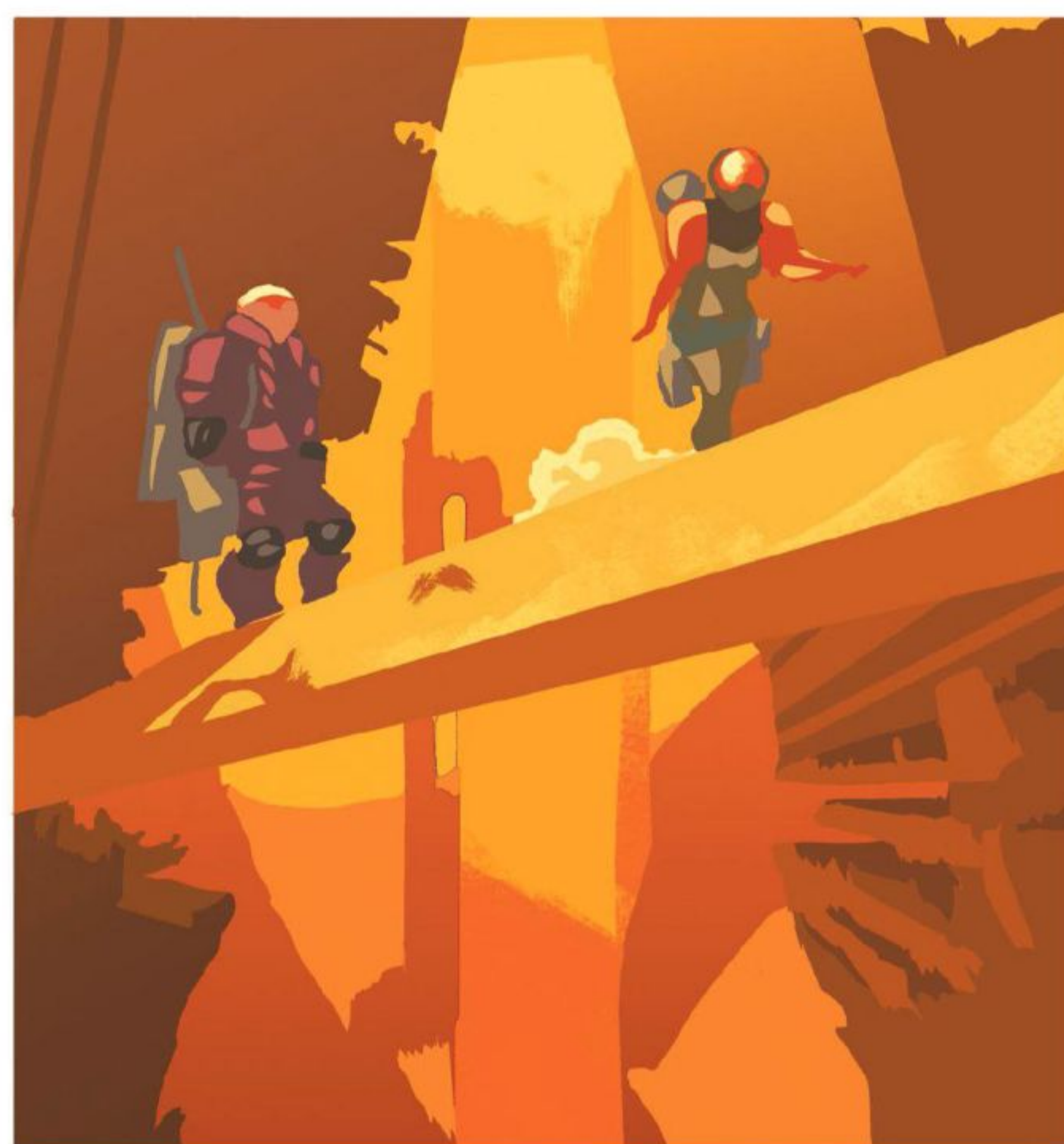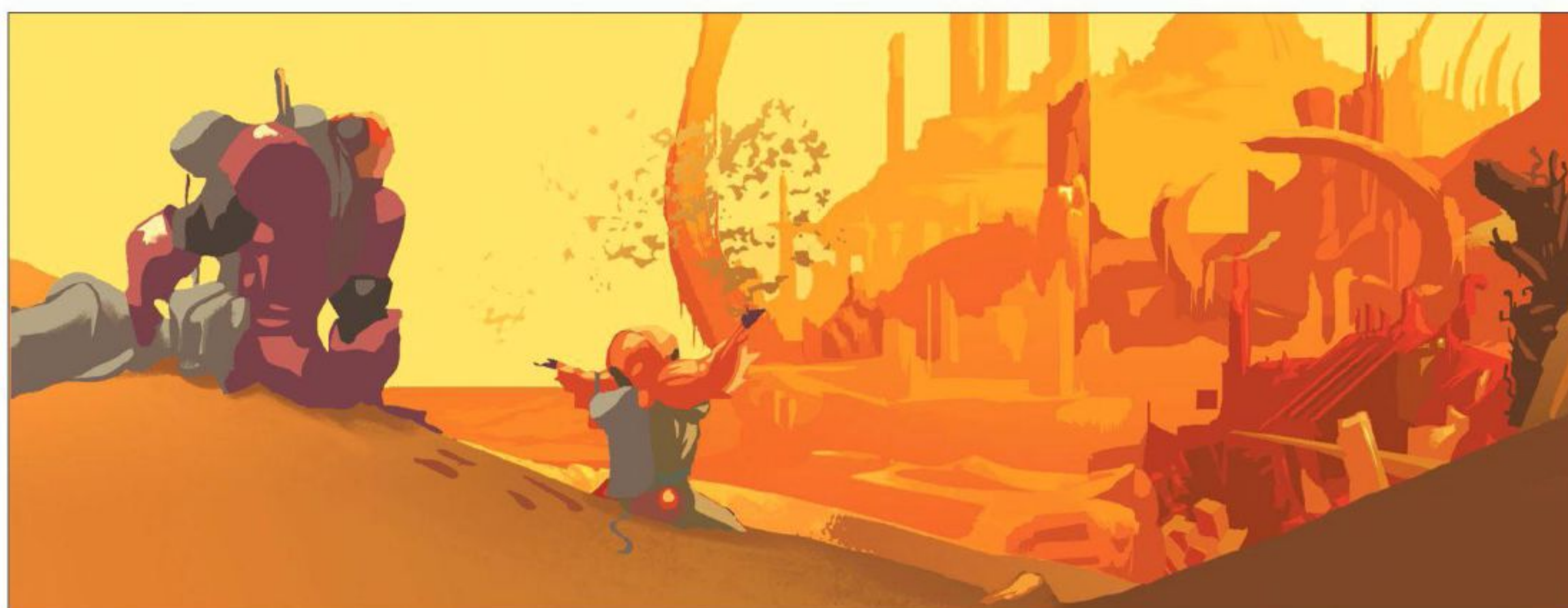
11 RENDERING A PANEL STEP-BY-STEP
Shadow and highlights can make a big difference in how a panel is viewed...

A Making a visual connection
First I lay in the flat colours, while limiting my palette where I can. In this instance, what would normally be the whites of the eyes on the white-skinned woman match the green of her outfit. Her blue irises match her captive's too, which creates a visual bond.

B Storytelling through shadows
I tend to work from a flat shadow colour and render towards light. I drop a jagged shadow over the captive's eyes to emphasise her stress level. This also mirrors the face-curve on the white-skinned character, which helps show that they're in some sort of mind-meld.

C Use specular highlights selectively
Once I've blocked in all of my light sources with flat colour, I use a combination of brushwork and flat-filled Lasso selections to render towards specular highlights. I leave the highlights in the characters eyes higher contrast than their skin so that they retain primary focus. ➤➤

12 CHECKING YOUR PAGE IN GREYSCALE

Photoshop makes it easy to check my values. If I'm working on something with complicated, overlapping planes, I'll open a new window for it and change the proof setup to Grey. This enables me to work on the colour file while getting real-time feedback for my values in that second tab. For less-complex pages, I'll just use a hotkey to flip to Grey proof mode from the regular view occasionally to keep myself in check, making sure that bright reds among other colours aren't throwing things off value-wise.

© Millarworld Ltd and Rafael Albequerque

14 EXPAND THE CANVAS THROUGH COLOUR

You can imply a whole world off-panel with colour, which is one of my favourite parts of being a colourist. I tend to put a lot of thought into the environment that a story takes place in. What materials are things made of? How dusty are they? What's the sun's position in the sky? How many minutes, hours or seconds have elapsed since the last panel? Are any lights turned on off-panel? I ask myself questions like this all day long. It's not just about colouring what you can see on the page.

13 KEEP COLOUR SIMPLE

I try to stick with value choices, and limit my colour palette to what's necessary to tell the story. Colour should have a reason for being there, and if something isn't key, it often helps the story to use values in some neutral colour instead of hues to help it sink into the background. The simpler you keep your colour, the more impact a change in colour will have, helping the reader understand that something important's happening.

© DC Comics

> 66 The simpler you keep your colour, the more impact a change in colour will have 99

© Rick Remender and Greg Tocchini

15 MUSICALITY THROUGH COLOUR BEATS

I take notes on a script before starting an issue – marking time of day, scene changes and emotional beats. Do this in advance if you don't have much artwork in and you need to get started anyway. That said, if time allows it can be useful to look at all your flat colours together for a book, to make sure that the "musicality" of that colour works. Building themes, carrying them across different scenes, maybe using pop colours to emphasise important story elements. You're taking the reader on a colourful journey, so make it enjoyable for them!

Artist insight
CREATE INTRIGUE IN YOUR WORK

Ann Maulina draws and colours promotional art for her own webcomic, which contains a teaser for the tale that lies ahead…

Raruurien is my ongoing original webcomic. The story is about Rien, a recently widowed witch who lives with her two sons in a traditional mountain village.

Because of my decision to introduce a young, beautiful widow character early in the story, I get many questions from the comic's readers. Who was the husband? Is he handsome? How did he die? I try not to reveal any spoilers related to him. But sometimes I tease the readers by featuring him in flashback panels without showing his face.

In this promo art, I'm drawing Rien's most beautiful memory of her late husband, which is their wedding scene. Again, I tease the reader by obscuring his face. ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

Ann Maulina
LOCATION: Indonesia

Ann is a game and comic artist. She's the author of the award-winning webcomic, Raruurien. She loves exploring various ethnic cultures and lore to create a concept-rich story.
www.raruurien.com

How I develop…
COLOURS THAT WARM UP THE COMPOSITION

1 Have fun with sketch designs
In this wedding scene I want to bring the most out of Rien's beautiful ethnic wedding dress. So I begin the process by producing a range of sketches that show off the design of her outfit.

2 Develop a colour composition
I pick a triad colour scheme and block the main objects with colours that determine the temperature of the scene. Adding more colours to the palette is key: it helps me visualise a rough version of the final image.

3 Adding detail to the colour sketch
Once I have the colour composition locked in place, the rest of the process is just detailing and finishing. I start by applying base colours, shading, reflected lights and highlights.

PAINTING WEDDED BLISS

Framing the scene and guiding the eye
I use the flag arrangement in this image to guide the viewer's eyes. The lines and wind direction flow across the image, which prevent the viewer from exiting the image, and focuses their attention on one area: the title logo.

RESOURCES
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SOFT SQUARE

MIRING

I use Soft Square and Miring as my primary brushes for painting the background.

WATER INK

This brush enables me to bring in a watery colour texture to the artwork. It has soft and hard edges.

Create a painterly background
I adopt a painterly drawing style for the background, using a Soft square brush for the flags and a water ink brush for the cloud. By using solid colours on the characters and painterly colours on the background I create a depth of field effect. The further an object is from a figure, the more painterly it becomes.

Reflected light for different materials

There are three levels of reflected light in this image. A metallic surface generates hard reflected lights with strong colours. Silk creates soft-edged reflected light with strong colours. Blurry, soft reflections are generated by light hitting regular fabric.

The story behind the tribal designs

There's a bit of subtle storytelling going on here. A wedding is the joining of two families. So I create different tribal symbols that represent each family. The symmetrical, insect-like designs are from the bride's clan, while the solid triangle shapes are from the groom's family.

Core skills: Part 2
USE PHOTOSHOP'S ADJUSTMENT TOOLS

Mark White gives an overview of how and where to use these key tweaking tools on your images in Photoshop, for those finishing touches

Artist **PROFILE**

Mark White
LOCATION: England

Mark is the techniques editor at Photoshop Creative magazine. He uses Photoshop almost exclusively, and has been using the software for over a decade.
**be.net/mrkjhnwht**

The final tweaks that you make to your image can be the most crucial part in your painting process. That's the part that you often agonise over, too. It's easy to create art, but to perfect it is a whole other story. The adjustment tools have always been a part of Photoshop for this reason. Long before so many other tools have been deemed important, tweaking your image in the closing stages always has been. They range from tonal corrections to colour-editing sliders, but they all hold their own uses in the program.

Everyone has their favourite adjustment tools, but while some people utilise them throughout their workflow, they're often seen as a unifier of a project at the end.

The adjustments are such an integral part of Photoshop, that it's worth learning what each of them do. They work best in tandem with one another, but the key is simply to experiment with what works for you, as many of the fixes overlap. Once you've mastered them, you'll never end a project without them again. We've used photography in this workshop to best explain each tool.
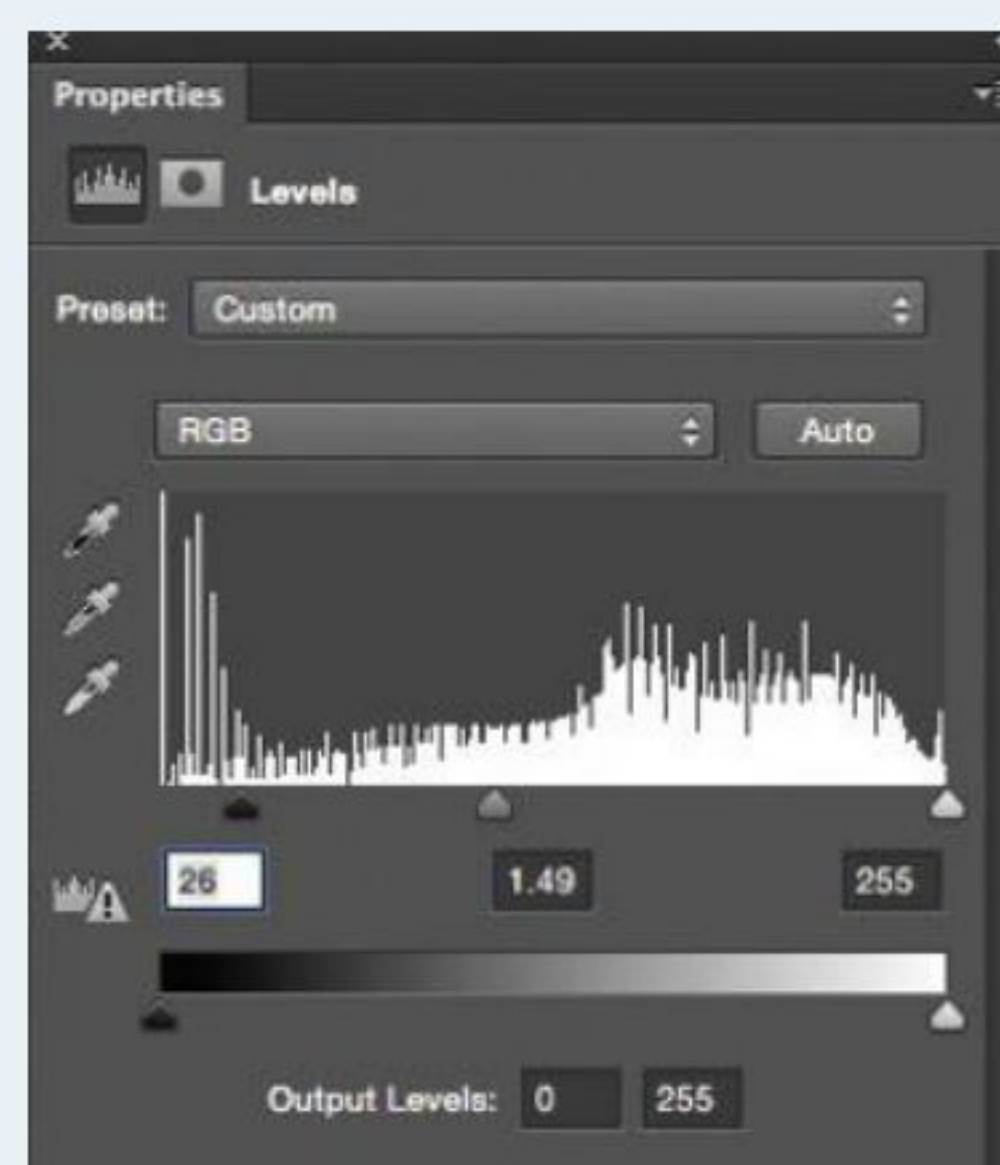
The Levels adjustment provides you with a histogram. It can control the brightness, contrast, lights and darks in your image, as well as colour.

In this adjustment window, you can alter the whites and blacks in your image to pick up more or less light and shade.

The Brightness/Contrast tool is another way to tweak images, and relies on sliders. It's a good second step after using Curves to correct the tone of your image.
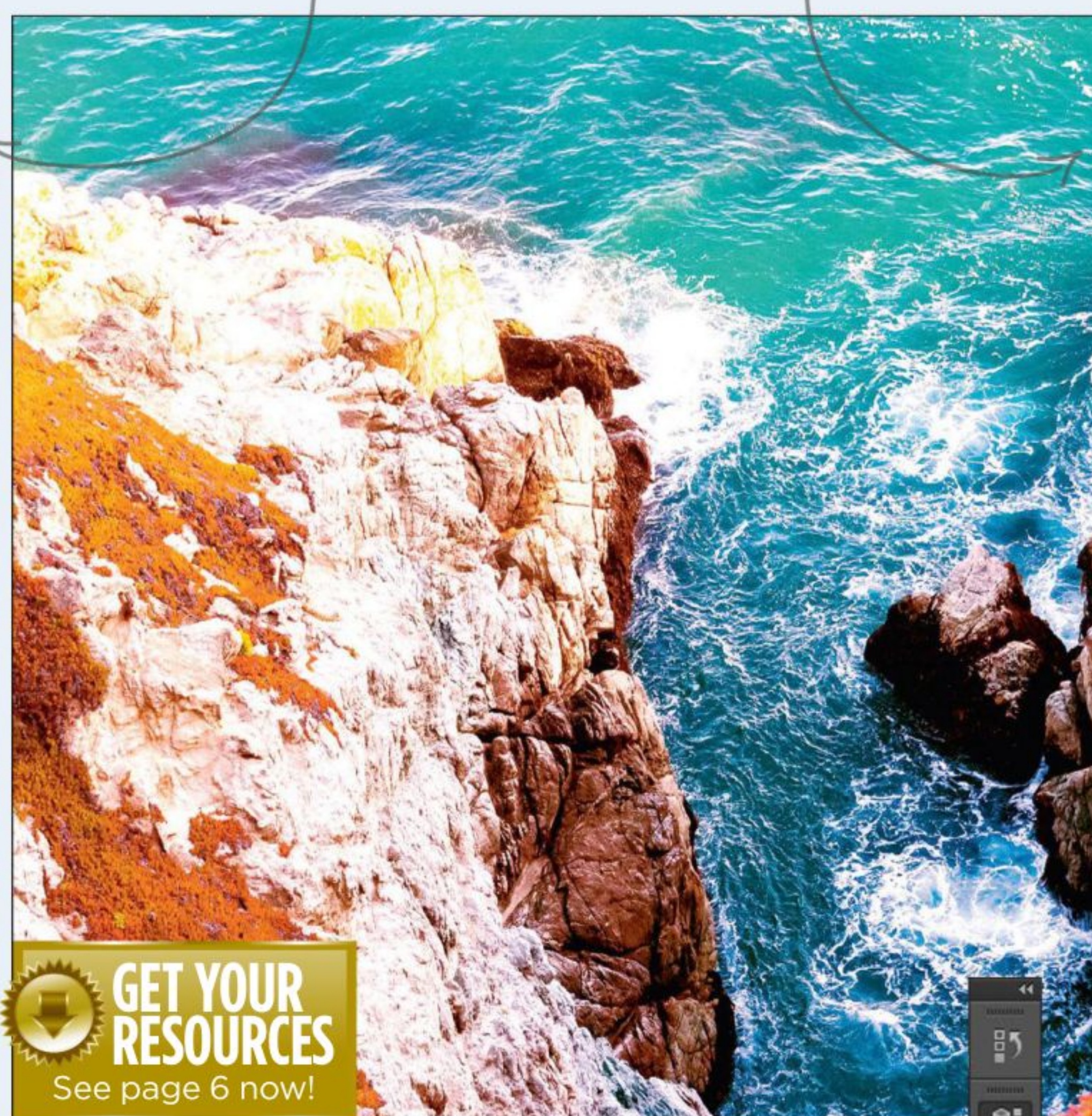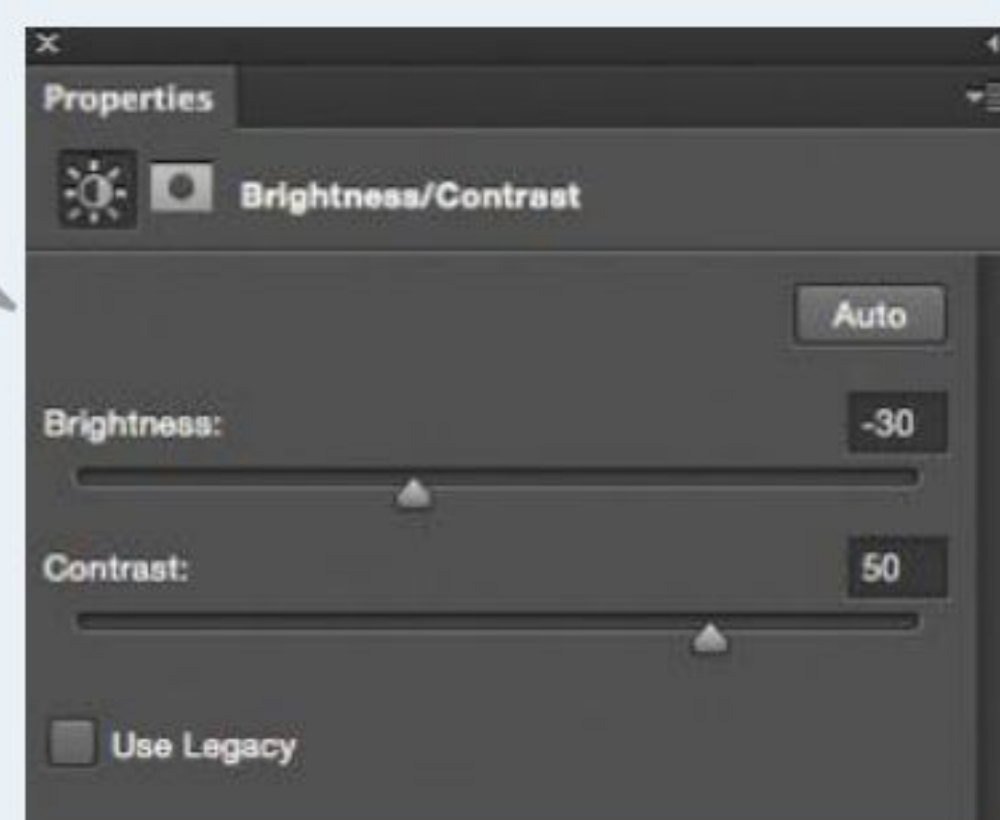
GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!
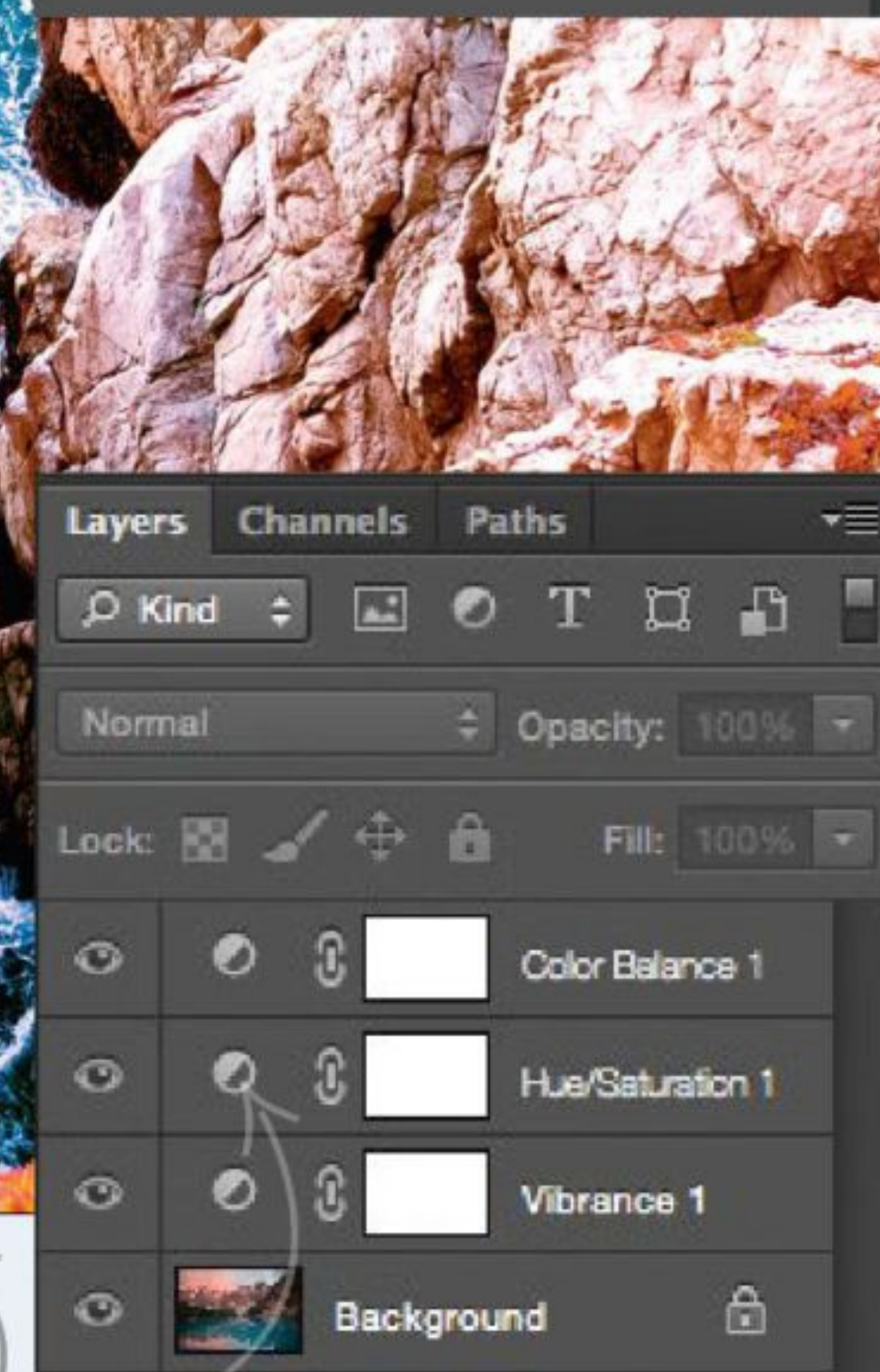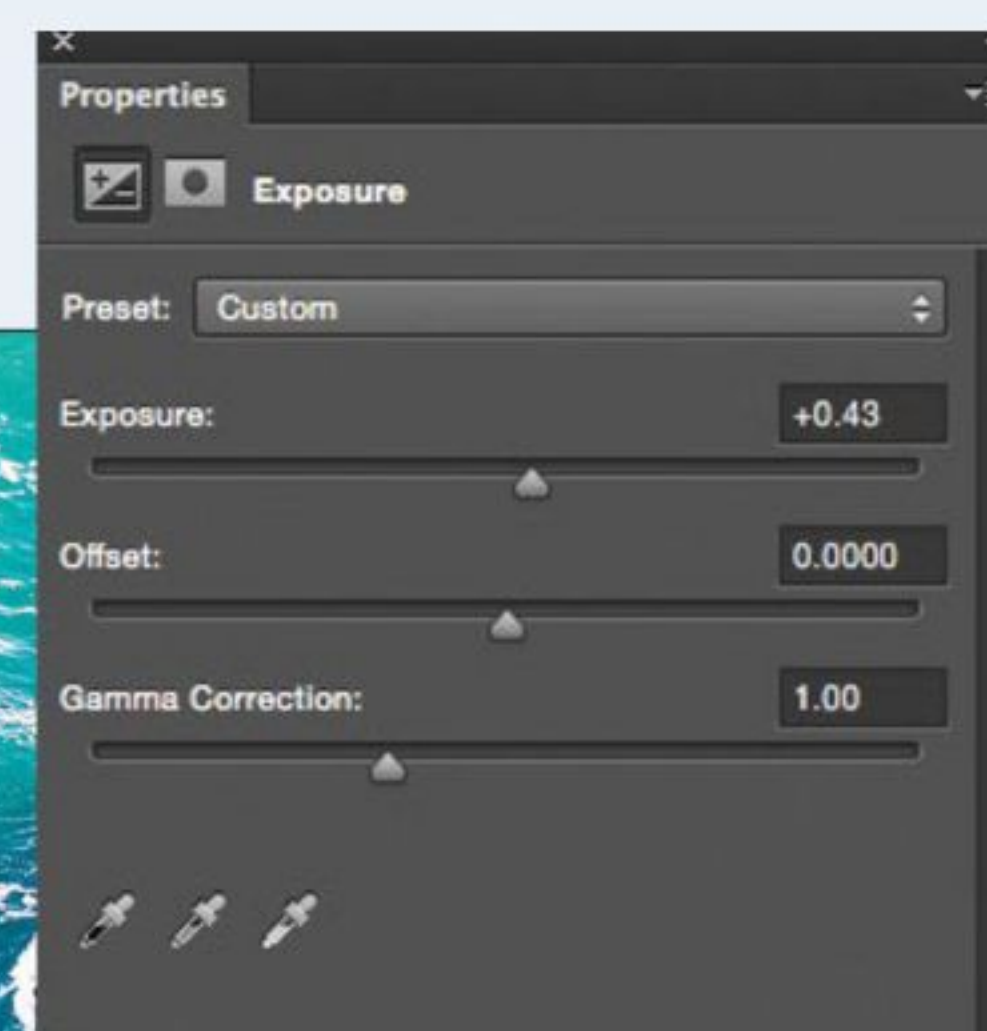
Click either icon to bring up the Properties menu for individual adjustment layers. This will enable you to adjust each layer.

1 Implementing tonal fixes to your image
There are many ways to add an adjustment layers. Either go to the top bar and click Layer>Adjustment layer, or add an adjustment panel from Windows>Adjustments. Alternatively, click the circle icon at the bottom of the layer panel. The Brightness/Contrast, Levels and Exposure tools give you control over blacks, whites, highlights and shadows in your artwork.

The Hue/Saturation tool can take individual shades to task with its drop-down menu, and is capable of editing the hue, saturation or lightness of any colour you choose.

Increase the Vibrance of your image without altering the Saturation with the Vibrance adjustment. This is great as a finishing touch to your artwork, because it can make your colours pop even further.

The Color Balance is similar to the Curves tool, only it provides a far more colour-centric edit, rather than one based on the tone of your picture.

2 Make the most of the colour tools

Once you've set the tone in your image, it's time to edit the colour. While Photoshop can't do anything too drastic with colour without the work looking distorted, it can provide useful edits to your image.

Black and White simply desaturates your image, but the adjustment comes in the form of sliders that offer you the ability to tweak the tones of each shade in your image.

If you wish to make one particularly shade stand out from the rest, then the Selective Color adjustment is perhaps the easiest way to do that. It gives you sliders to adjust, and is simple to use.

The Photo Filter tool creates a subtle warming or cooling effect, or a tint of a custom colour. This is useful for applying to subjects in a painting, to make them stand out from their backgrounds.

3 Going further with colour adjustments

There are plenty of tools in Photoshop to edit the colours in your images, and just as many to take these effects even further. Black and White, Photo Filter and Selective Color are all tweaks that offer subtlety in your image, but can be vital for finalising the overall look.

The Threshold adjustment consists of one balance slider. It turns colour or greyscale images into high contrast, black and white images, and produces interesting results when used at a low Opacity.

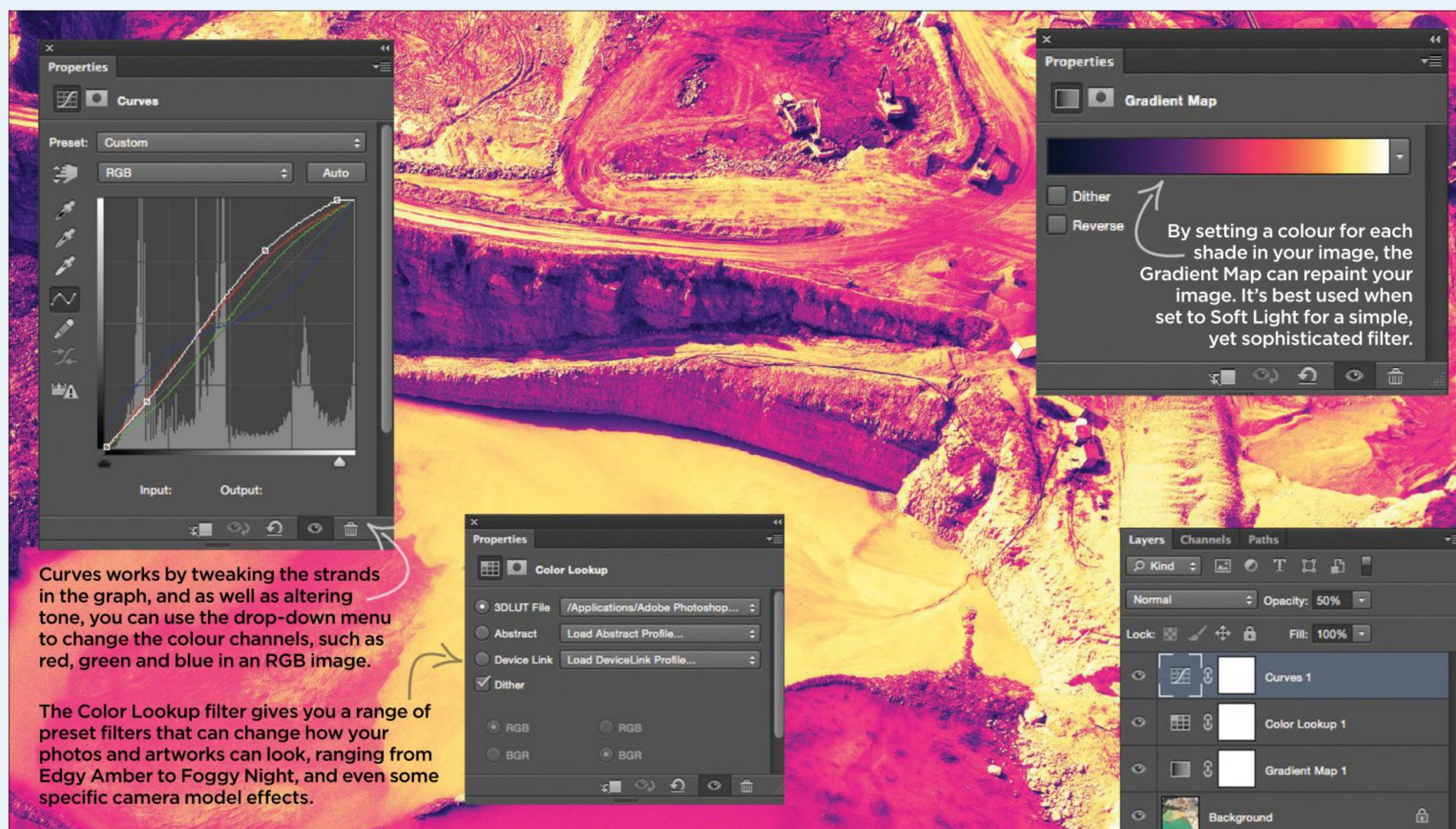Posterize is similar to the Threshold tool, but offers you as many levels of colours as you wish. When used as a final flourish in an image, it provides a lo-fi, comic book-style effect.

The Invert tool inverts every pixel to the opposite colour and shade. It has no other options. When used on a low Opacity, it can provide you with a foggier, non-contrasted image.

4 Quickly create comic book-esque effects

The adjustments aren't there to improve what you already have in Photoshop. In some cases, they can transform your work in the same way that filters can. Three of these adjustments – the Invert, Threshold and Posterize tools – can be combine for to create comic-style effects.

By setting a colour for each shade in your image, the Gradient Map can repaint your image. It's best used when set to Soft Light for a simple, yet sophisticated filter.

Curves works by tweaking the strands in the graph, and as well as altering tone, you can use the drop-down menu to change the colour channels, such as red, green and blue in an RGB image.

The Color Lookup filter gives you a range of preset filters that can change how your photos and artworks can look, ranging from Edgy Amber to Foggy Night, and even some specific camera model effects.

5 Apply a final filter stage and call your image done

At the end of almost any project, you'll use one of three adjustments: Curves, Gradient Map or Color Lookup. You may even end up using all three, for they each give you tonal and colour editing abilities to either improve or completely change your painting.

ENTER NOW
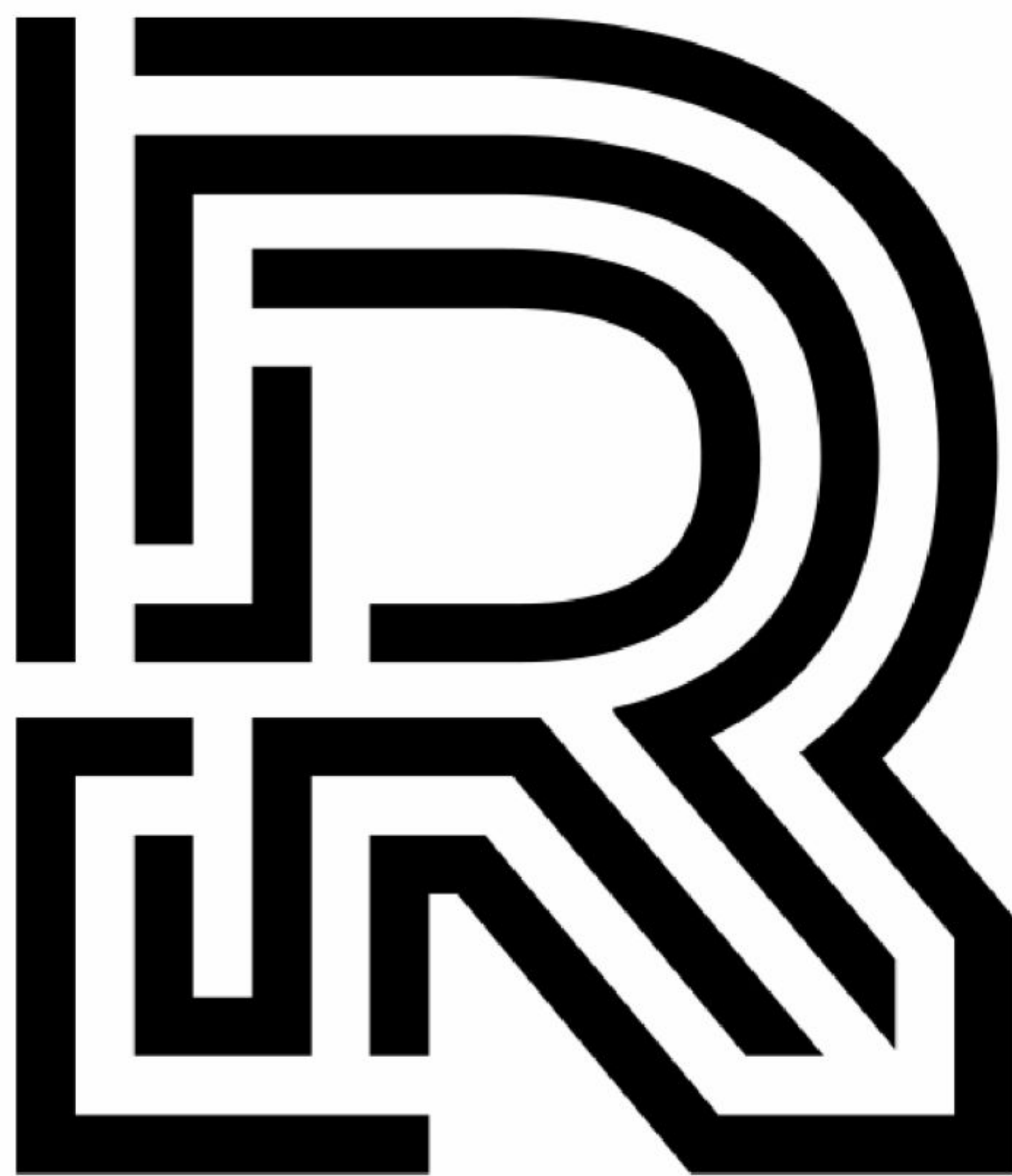
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Artist insight
DRAW EXPRESSIVE FACIAL FEATURES

Comic artist **Neil Edwards** takes you through the construction of a face and reveals how he's able to capture a character's emotions

Artist PROFILE
Neil Edwards
LOCATION: Wales

Neil is known for his work on Spider-Man, Dark Avengers, Fantastic Four and Herc for Marvel Comics; Justice League, Green Lanterns, Justice League United and Forever Evil: A.R.G.U.S. for DC Comics; and Dr Who and Assassins Creed for Titan Comics.
http://ifxm.ag/neil-ed

Drawing heads with emotions and expressive faces is always difficult and challenging. Even now I struggle with the odd face. However, perseverance and hard work will get the expressive look you're after in your drawing.

When it comes to drawing heads, nothing's set in stone because different characters have vastly different features. Yet a grounding in head anatomy will enable you to experiment confidently and it will certainly show in your drawing.

In this workshop I'll take you through how I go from initial drawings, using reference and my techniques when drawing heads. I use Clip Studio Paint, which I love, and I work on a Cintiq Companion for prelims and on the actual comic pages on a 27-inch Cintiq hooked up to a 21-inch iMac with 4GB of RAM.

Right, grab a sketch book or your Cintiq and let's get cracking!

1 CHARACTER HEAD VOLUME

Drawing two circles gives you a basis for the volume for the character you want to depict. The more squashed the circles, the wider and heavy the face, while the more elongated the circles, the longer head shape.

2 LIPS

I keep a little sketch book to practise different lip shapes for when the characters talk. Study films and TV programmes to see how actors exaggerate their mouths. Experiment and explore different mouth shapes. Try to convey "oh", "ah" and "esss": this will help when you want figures to look like they're having a conversation. ➤➤

"A grounding in head anatomy will enable you to experiment with confidence"
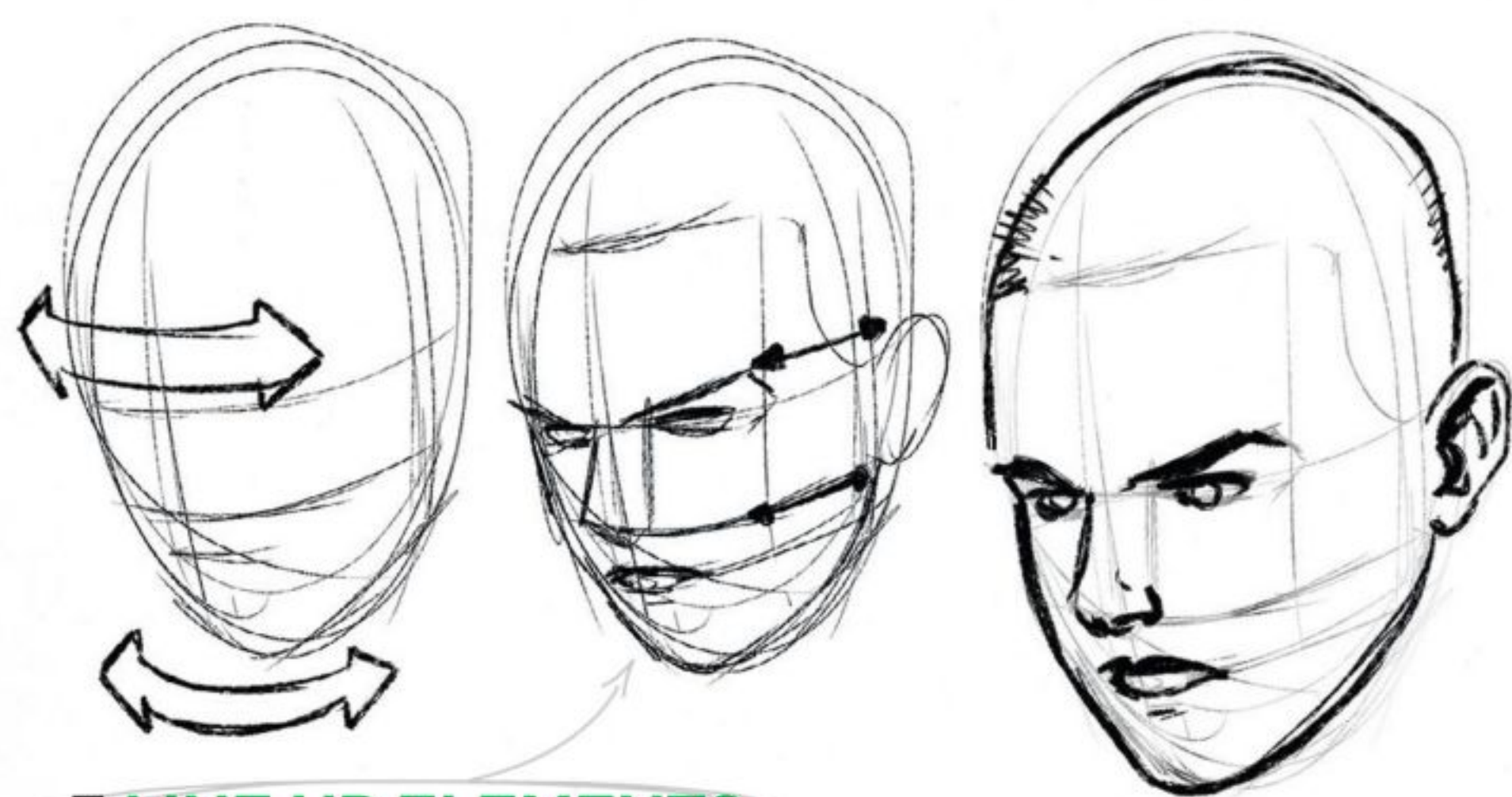
3 LINE UP ELEMENTS

Always remember that the eyes, nose and mouth are on the same plane on the face, otherwise things could go a bit lopsided and weird! Imagine that the facial features are warped around a cylinder so they have a natural curve. Align the top of the eyebrow and bottom of the nose so that they're lined up with the height of the ear. This helps the face look more natural; giving it a flow, and avoiding it from feeling flat.

❝ Look in the mirror and attempt to overexaggerate your facial features. Try to put feeling into the drawing ❞
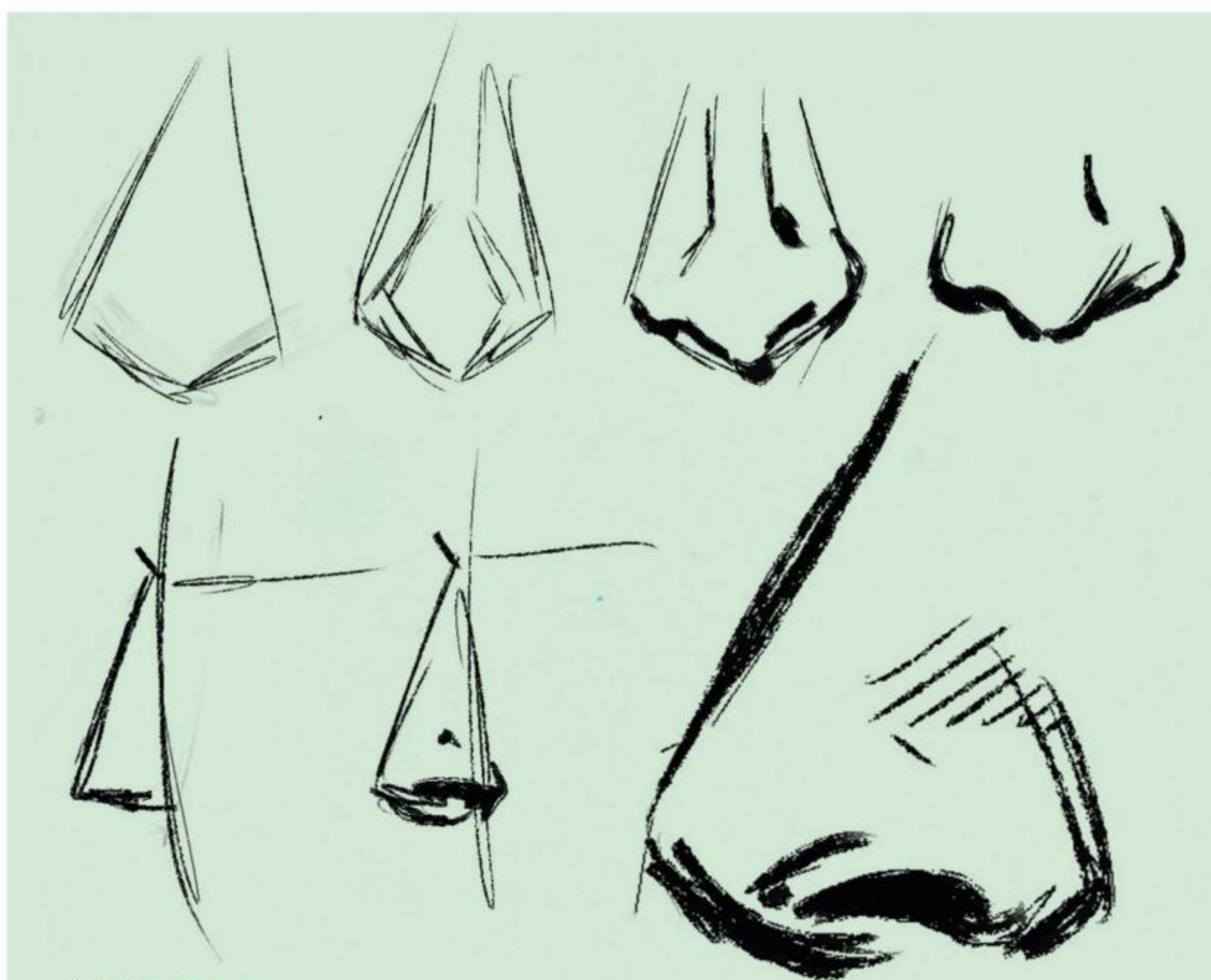
4 NOSES

Hoses can be pretty difficult to get right. I initially create a triangle with a diamond shape, which creates the tip of the nose. From there I draw nostrils, remembering to add line weight and shadow to the bottom of the nose. I keep the details light, adding only what's needed.
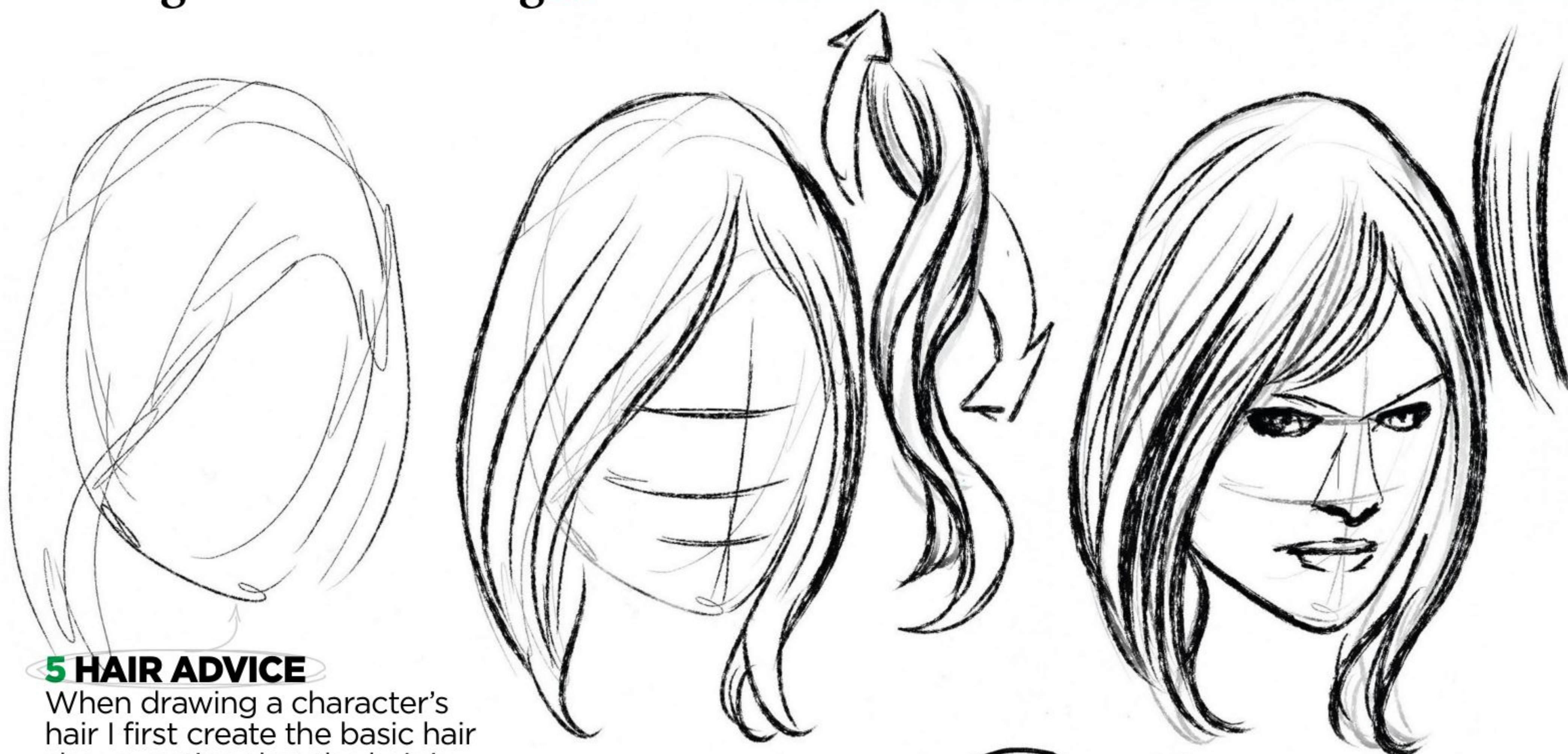
5 HAIR ADVICE

When drawing a character's hair I first create the basic hair shape, noting that the hair is bigger than the scalp. I then add direction to the hair, remembering to draw strokes from the crown of the head. To give hair a more natural appearance, I introduce a sense of weight to the bottom of the shape. Trying drawing the hair shape with a thicker outline and thinner internal lines. This gives it direction.

6 HAVING FUN

Once you've got the basics it's time to have some fun with your figures! As a general rule, try to make the character overact, to really convey the emotion in your drawing. I usually start with a super-quick gesture drawing to capture the emotion I'm after. Look in the mirror and try to overexaggerate your facial features. Try to put feeling into the drawing.
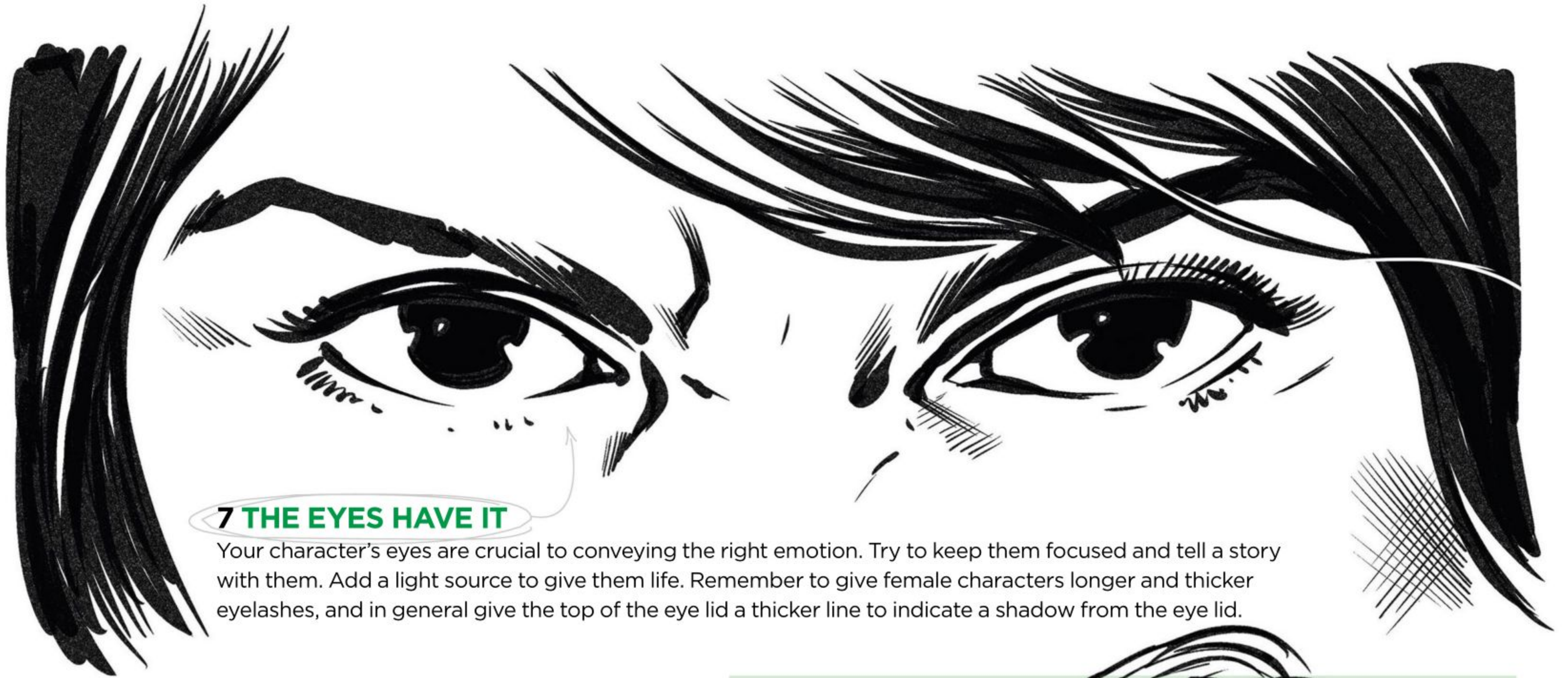
7 THE EYES HAVE IT

Your character's eyes are crucial to conveying the right emotion. Try to keep them focused and tell a story with them. Add a light source to give them life. Remember to give female characters longer and thicker eyelashes, and in general give the top of the eye lid a thicker line to indicate a shadow from the eye lid.

8 ACTING CLASSES

When drawing characters, try to get into their mindset: how they're feeling and where they're coming from emotionally. Then act out the expression, using a mirror or photo reference to capture the emotion. Always try to get that perfect snap-shot moment, and make it look as dynamic as possible.

9 BEING SUBTLE

Sometimes, though, subtlety is required. A slightly raised eyebrow or smirk can be very effective. Adding just a touch of emotion or quirkiness to the character can make them feel natural and life-like. ➤➤

10 DON'T BE SCARED

Grab every opportunity to experiment with the expressions. Try to push what you're used to drawing, and look at yourself in the mirror to see how the face can move. Try and be whacky with the different facial expressions, but be careful not to hold your breath for too long!


11 CHARACTER CLOSE-UPS

Both the eyes and mouth are expressive. A powerful technique when drawing a comic page is to use a close-up of one of them. Consider illustrating an open mouth, snarling teeth or stern lips. By using just one area of the face will really push you to convey the emotion and sell the drawing.

12 BASIC HEAD CONSTRUCTION

Neil reveals the basic concept he uses to construct a male and female head
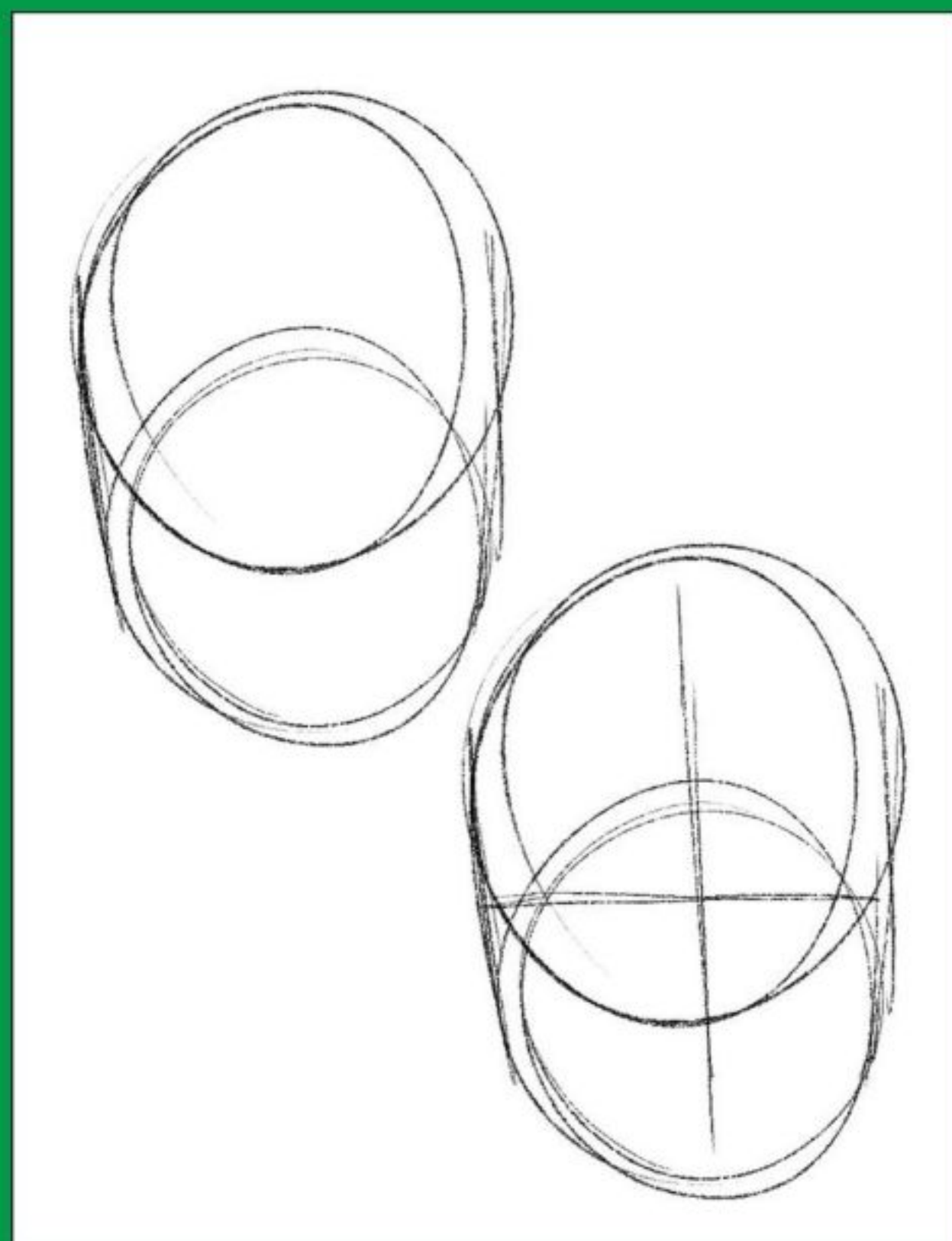
A Head basics

I start off by drawing two circles that are overlapping, You can experiment with different size circles to give different dimensions. Where they intersect is the eye level and from there I put a centre line down the two circles. This gives the basis of the human head.
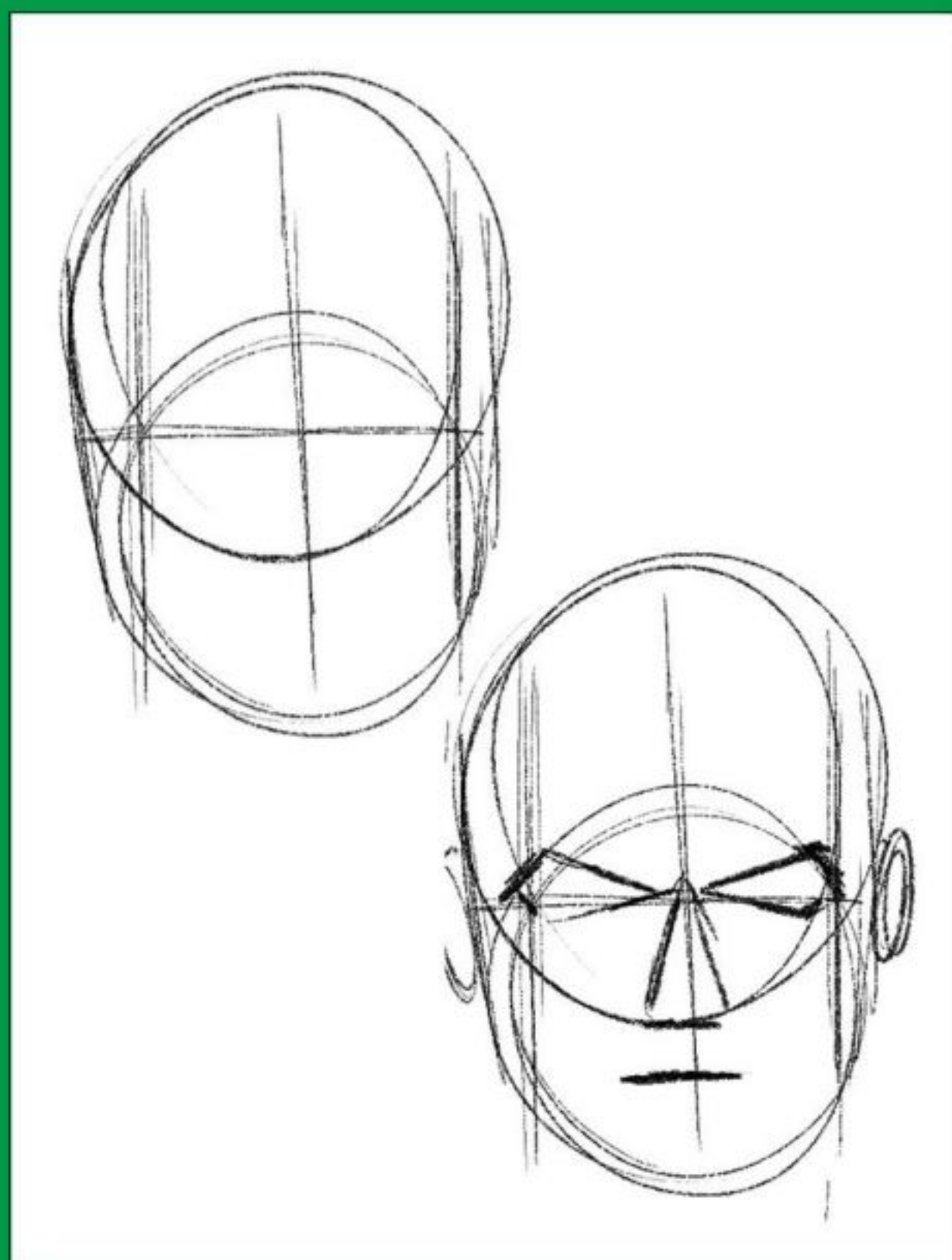

B Construction lines

I draw two lines slightly in from the side. This indicates the forehead and cheekbones. From the centre intersection I place a triangle for the nose and add where I want to put the mouth. I also add two triangles where the eyes are, which also locates the eyebrows and eye sockets.
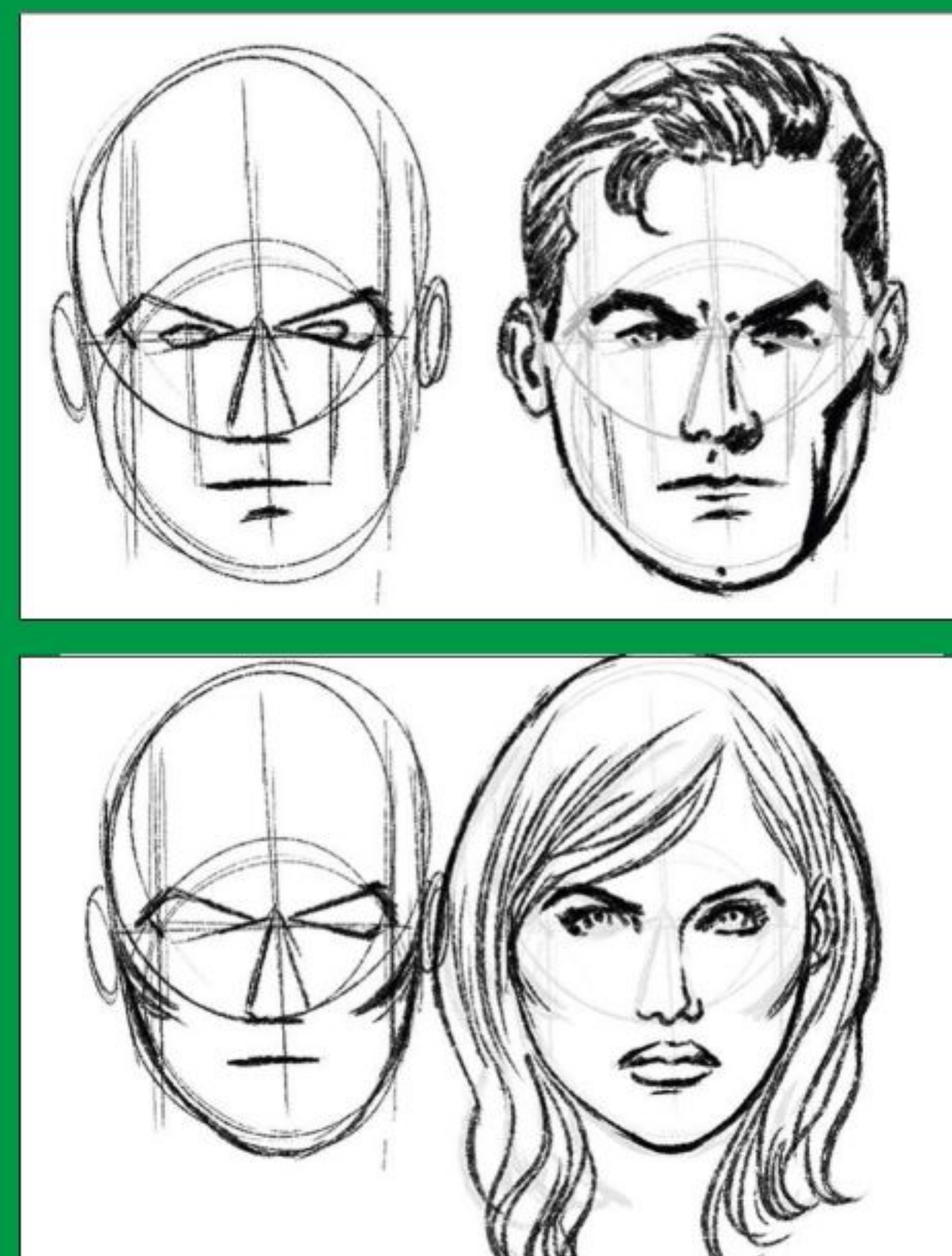
C Male and female faces

Once the ears, eyes and mouth are in place, it's a case of refining the face. The male face is a harder, angular shape. The female face is softer and rounder in general. For women, try to depict fuller lips, larger eyes and rounder cheeks. These are not hard and fast rules, though – just a guide.
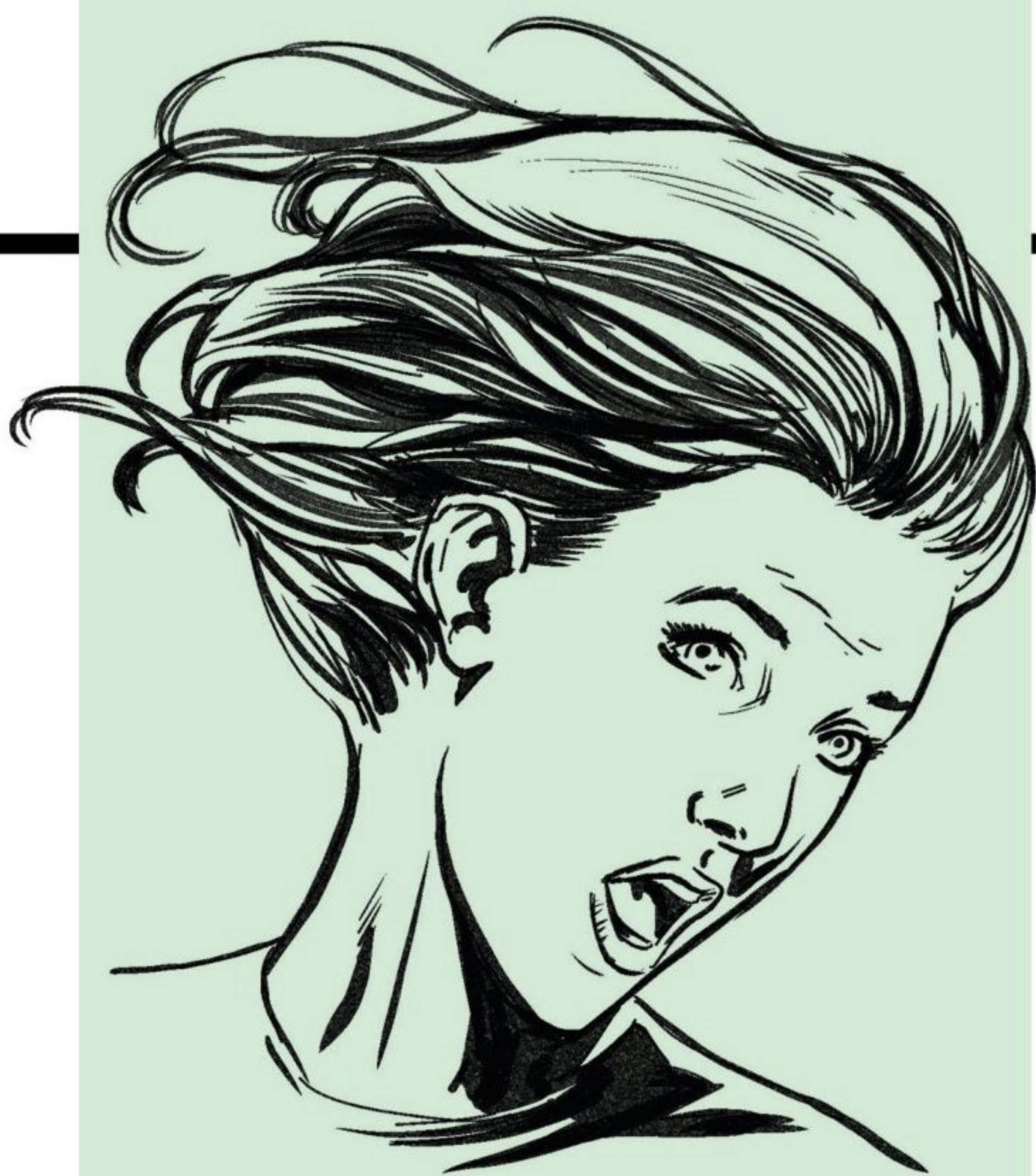
13 BODY LANGUAGE

While drawing heads you also have to think of the figure's body language, which will show in the close-up. A tilt of the head or shrug of the shoulders can emphasise an emotion. I draw beyond the panel to check that the body language is working and is anatomically correct. Remember to have fun and try out new things!

14 WRINKLES

Adding facial lines to characters can emphasise an expression, but it's important to bear in mind the age of the person. The more character lines and emotion lines you depict on a face, the older a character will look. Men usually have harsher lines and females have fewer. Younger characters will have also have fewer lines around the eyes, forehead and mouth. This is a good excuse to put together a reference library of faces young and old.

> ❝ Explore all forms of anger, whether it'd from a crazy villain or determined superhero ❞

15 ANGER

There's always a ton of angry characters in comics and it's the one emotion that you have to get right! So experiment with all forms of anger, whether it's from a crazy-eyed villain or determined superhero! Remember the eyebrows, too: they can be very effective – especially when using variations of eyebrows and eye shapes to convey the angry mood of the character.

Artist insight
PAINT A DECAYING COMIC LANDSCAPE

For the first issue of BOOM! Studios' Coda, **Matías Bergara** was tasked with creating a wrap-around cover for the title. Here's how he did it...

Artist **PROFILE**

Matías Bergara
LOCATION: Uruguay

Matías has been creating art for the comic industry since 2008, and his work has been published in Latin America, Europe and the US.
http://ifxm.ag/bergara

The image you see here is a wrap-around cover for the very first issue of Coda, a comic book series written by Simon 'Si' Spurrier, to be published in May by BOOM! Studios.

Because the story's an exciting, dark, witty and expansive new take on the fantasy genre, the main idea for the first cover was to provide a engaging introduction to the comic – a window into this new world, if you will. Much like the first scenes in a good film or comic book, it's important to establish the main elements and settings of the story. Yet I have to strike a balance between showing enough visuals to pique a viewer's interest, without giving away too much information about the story, characters and setting.

I chose to place the main character Hum and his pentacorn Nag near the centre of the composition, and filled the rest of the composition with decaying objects and creatures that survive in a world where magic once existed. My warm colours evokes the dawn of a new adventure, while atmospheric perspective hints at mysterious lands in the distance, waiting to be explored… ➡
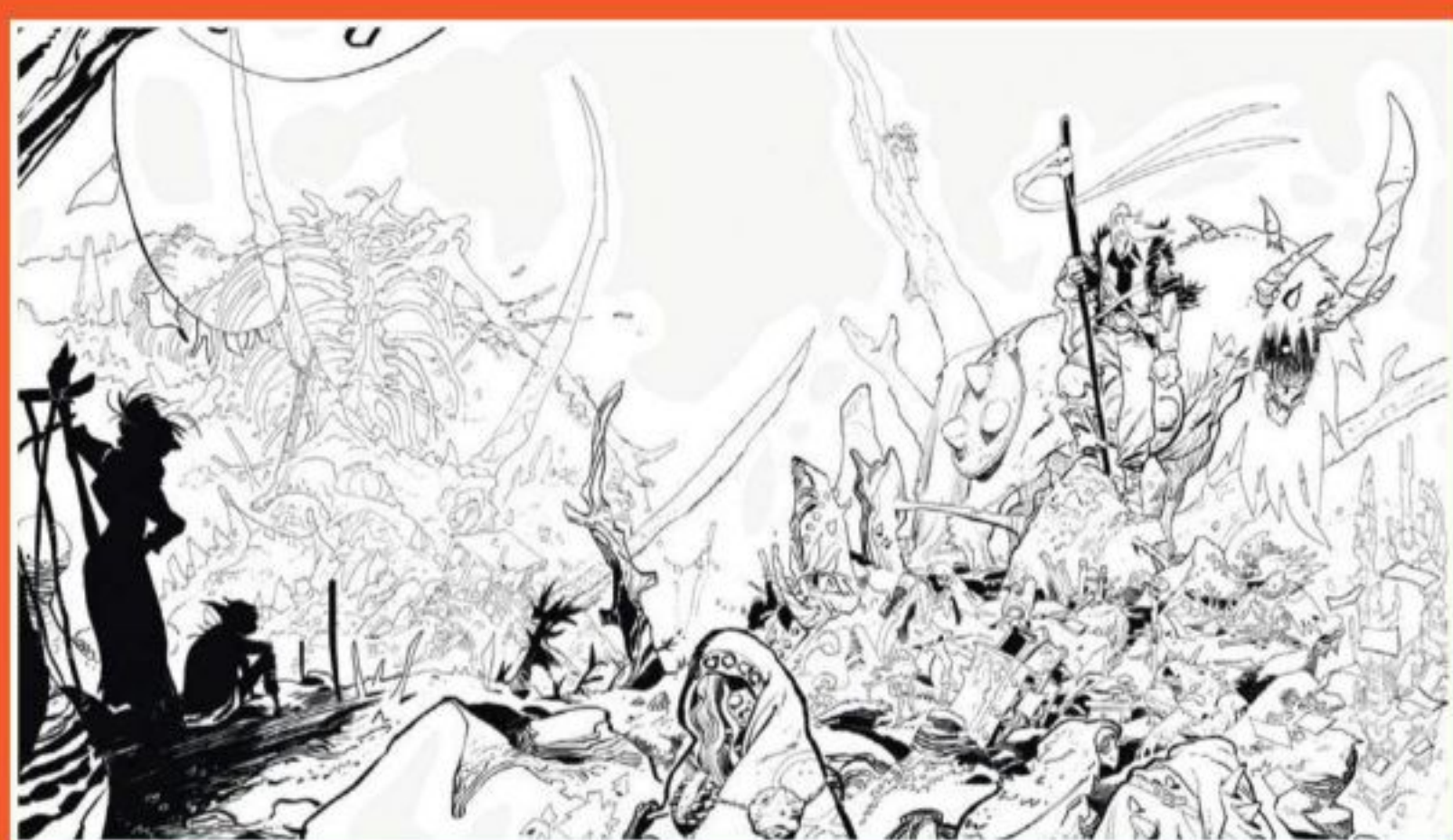
How I created...
A BROKEN WORLD

1 Laying out the image

My aim is to develop a strong composition, by effectively arranging the important elements of the scene. I start with very rough shapes, then proceed to define smaller objects and details while bearing in mind the larger compositional groups. I also explore colour in this early phase, following the same principle.

2 Inking the drawing

I work this part of the job in paper and ink. Two sheets of standard comic book paper were used because it's a double cover. Pen nibs and brushes enable me to turn pencil into inked lines. Varying the thickness and weight of lines will help develop the sense of distance in the scene, and a hierarchy of elements.
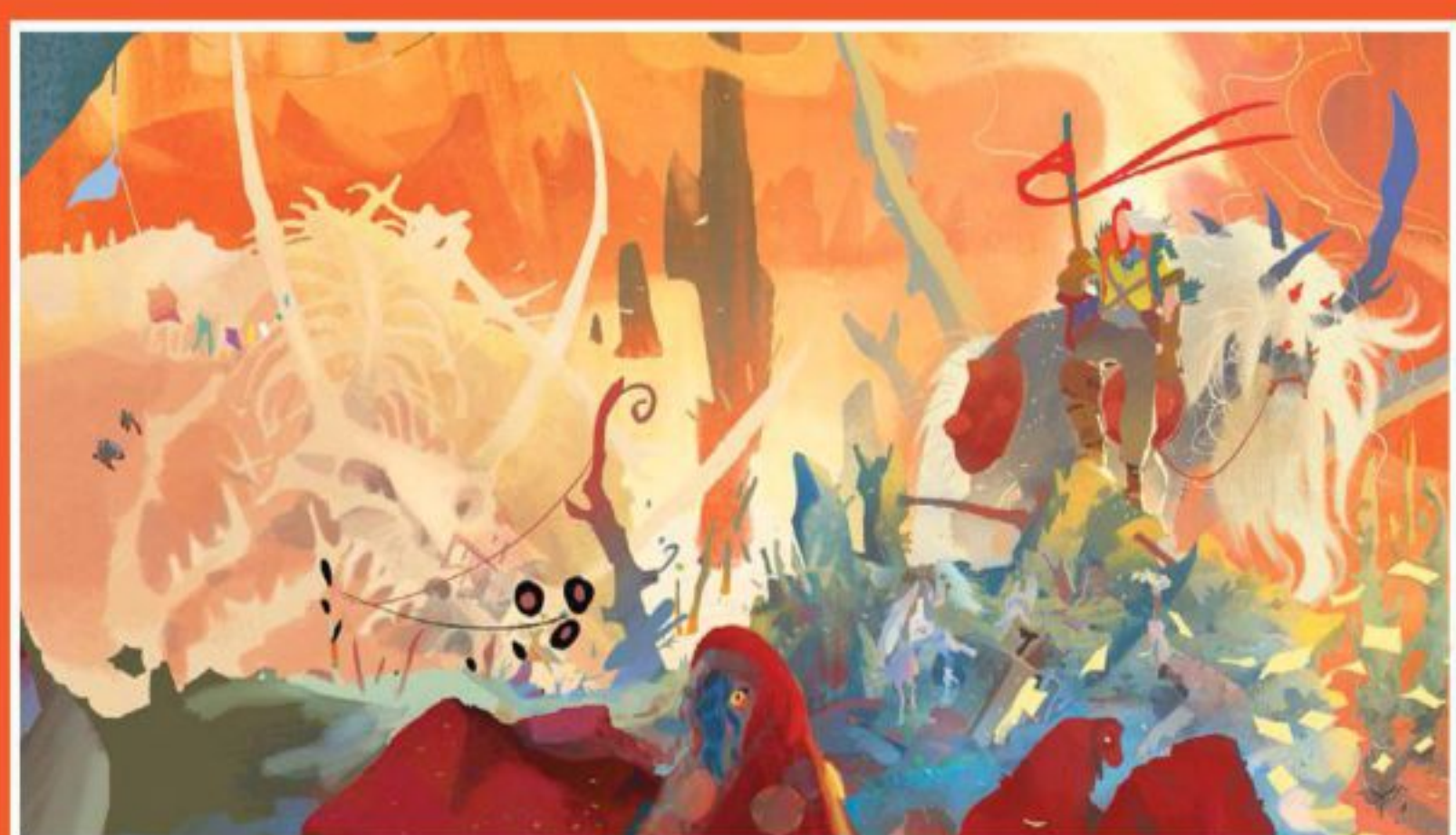
3 Colouring the composition

Once the art is scanned, I add colours in Photoshop on separate layers (many dozens in this case) that meet the image's many requirements: tonal variation, object separation, level correction... you name it! It's crucial that I produce a strong and clear image which is visually interesting, and not confusing.

WHEN THE MAGIC ENDS...

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: JAIME'S BRUSHES

I use traditional brushes for inking – in this case, a Raphael size 3. For the digital colouring, Jaime's set of brushes are great for definition, texture and for the delicate blending of colours. You can download them from **http://ifxm.ag/j-jones**.

Rocky setting

A huge monolithic structure adds to the mysterious geology of this faded world. It makes for an interesting backdrop to the scene.

Dwelling on a dragon

This is a ramshackle hut built on the remains of a long-dead dragon. It's important, but it doesn't necessarily have to be in the foreground. You don't need to overexplain these type of elements in an illustration. The reader will use their imagination to come up with a reason for its inclusion, and how this ties into the story of the comic.

A little head space
This dull, empty area is meant for the comic's title or logo. It should provide enough space for the design team to work with so that they can avoid obscuring any of the art.

Clash of colours
This little area shows how it's possible to organically blend seemingly discordant colours by using a porous and textured brush. It's very similar to real-world painting with gouache or watercolour.

Comic art without edges
Here, you can see how well the contrast is already working without any hard line edges between objects and areas. The colours guide the viewer's eyes to what's important, and also provide volume and tone.

At their lowest ebb
Lots of characters are sitting down or in passive and lethargic poses. This is to subtly give the idea of a weakened and ravaged populace trying to survive in a post-apocalyptic environment.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST
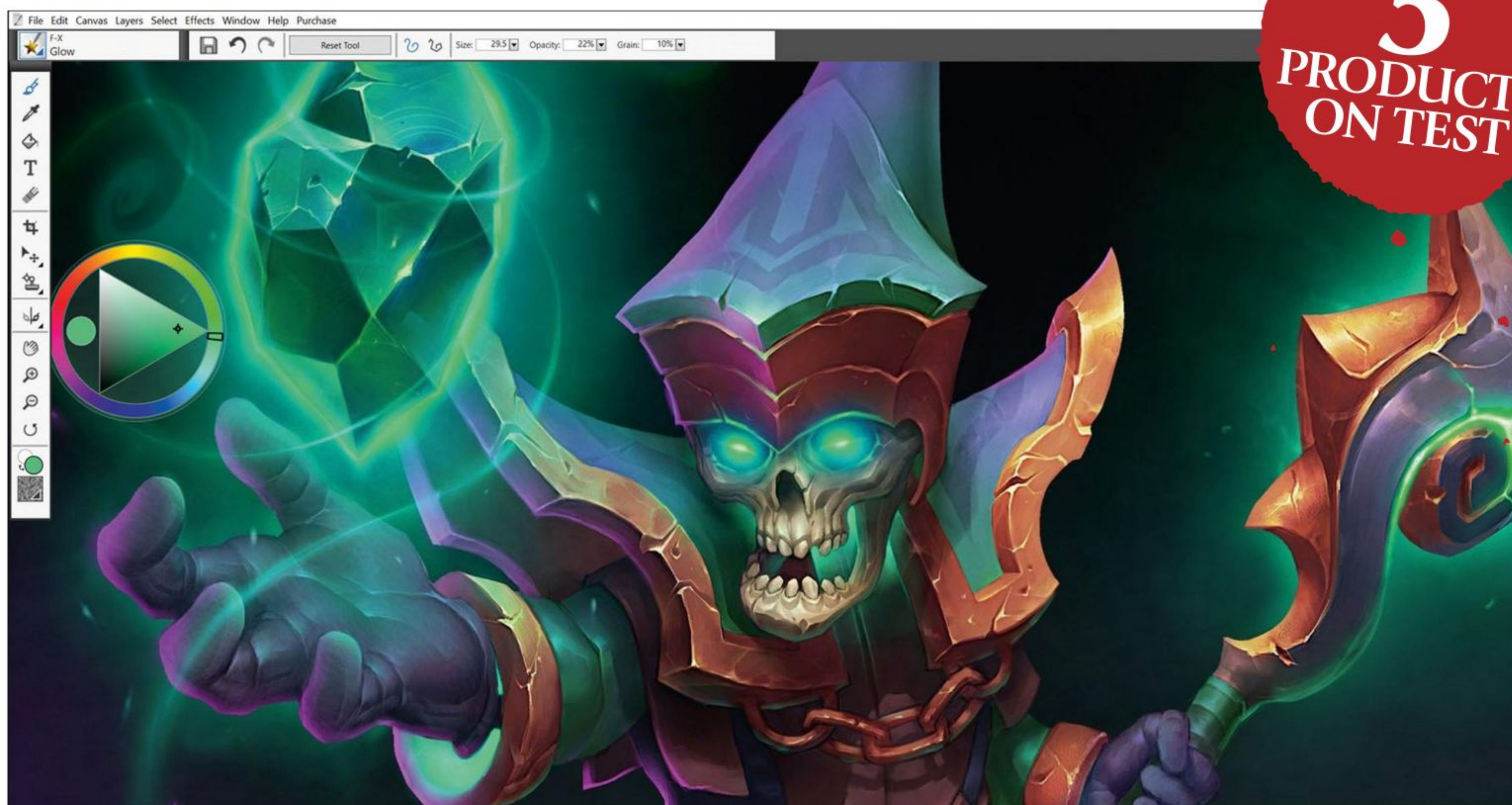
SOFTWARE

92 Painter Essentials 6
We discover if the latest version of Corel's stripped-back, cut-price version of Painter can hold its own against the big art guns.

TRAINING

94 Painting a Castle
In his Gumroad video, concept artist Greg Rutkowski explores the effect of light in a classically inspired landscape project.

BOOKS

96 The Shape of Water: Creating a Fairy Tale for Troubled Times
Immerse yourself in the aquatic visuals and behind-the-scenes insights of the latest film from Guillermo del Toro.

97 Sketching from the Imagination: Dark Arts
Take a trip to the frankly unsettling side with this collection of artists who explore all things macabre in their line work.

97 The Art of Destiny: Volume 2
Discover how the art team behind Bungie's first-person shooter managed to go deeper into the game's already expansive universe.
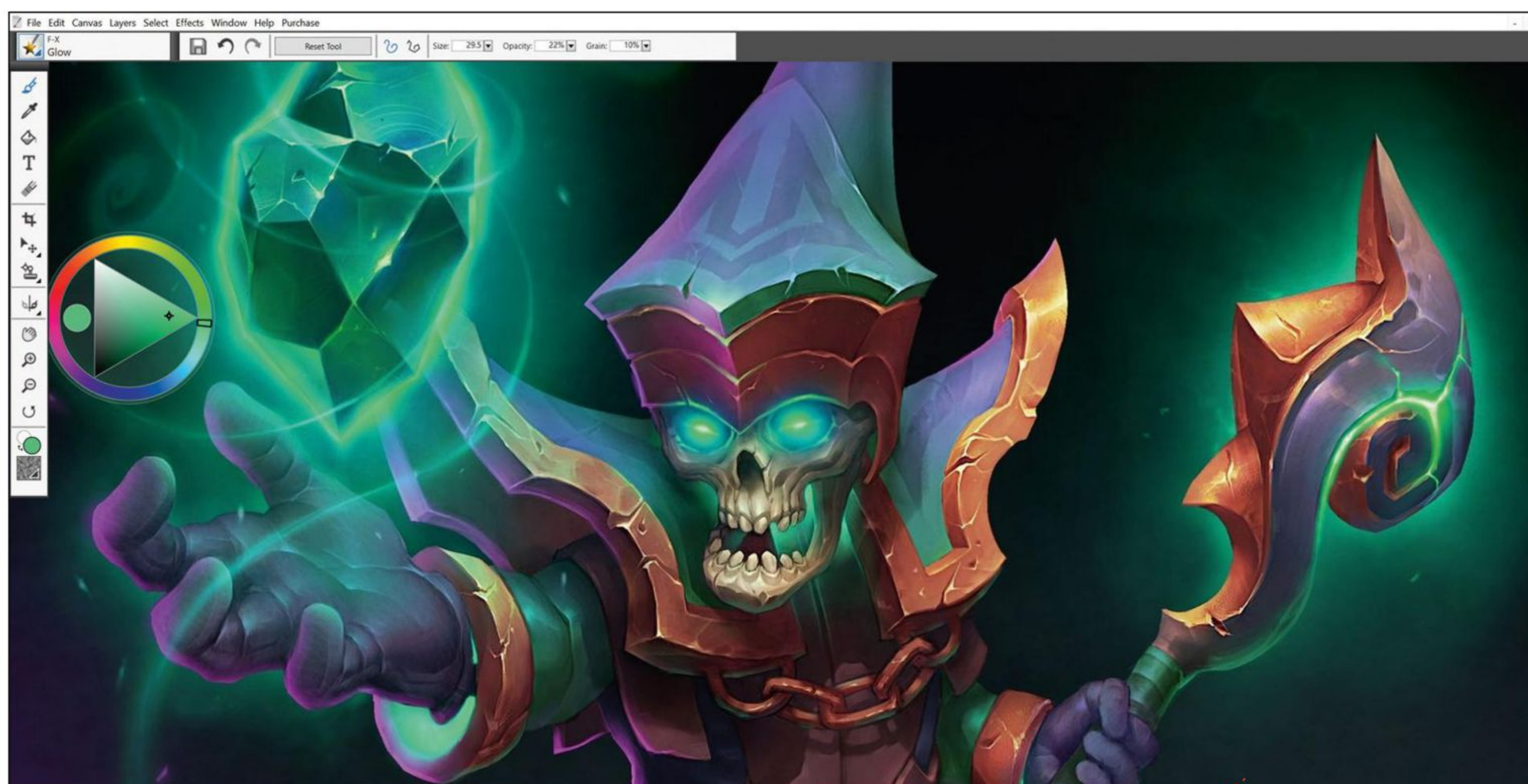

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent   ★★★★ Great   ★★★ Good   ★★ Poor   ★ Atrocious

Painter Essentials 6

MAC & PC

Brandon McDonald used Painter Essentials' natural media and special-effect brushes to create this character.

KEEPING IT REAL This cut-down version of Corel's popular software offers the basics for recreating the look of real-world, traditional media

Price £35 **Company** Corel **Web** www.painterartist.com

With a long history behind it, Painter is a great choice of painting software. Given its powerful features, though, one thing Painter isn't is cheap (£305 at time of writing).

That's why Corel continues to offer Painter Essentials, a cut-down edition of Painter with a price so enticing that it's practically an impulse purchase. It's a compelling starting point for anyone thinking of dipping their toes into digital art for the first time.
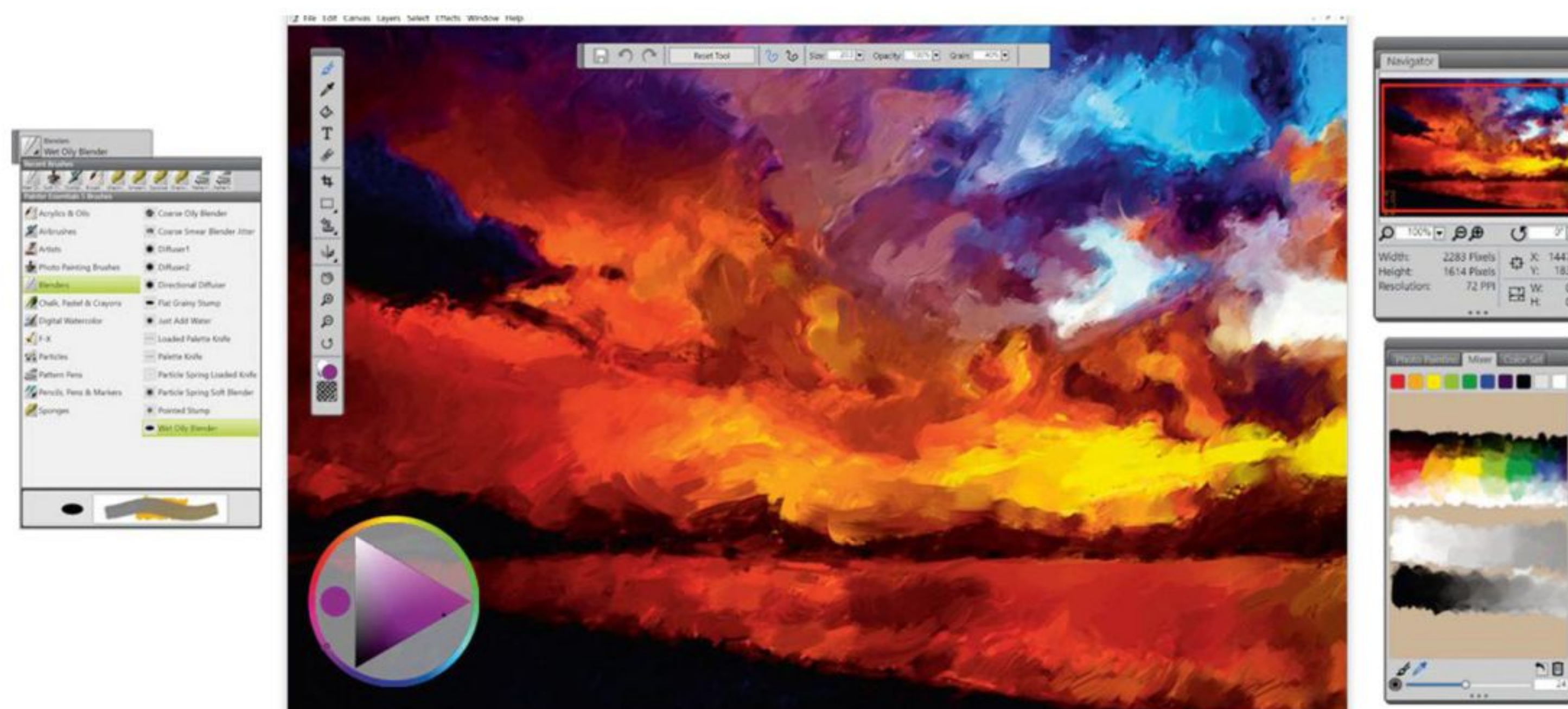
This updated release refines Essentials' successful formula. The core remains the array of natural media brushes with support for pressure-sensitive graphics tablets. The selection of brushes is limited compared with Painter, certainly, but there are dozens here for you to experiment with. Natural media styles

Killian Ward painted this dramatic sunset by using the program's Blender brushers, choosing to give the scene a wet oily look.

like watercolours and oils are accompanied by special-effect particle-based brushes to create glows and dust with ease.
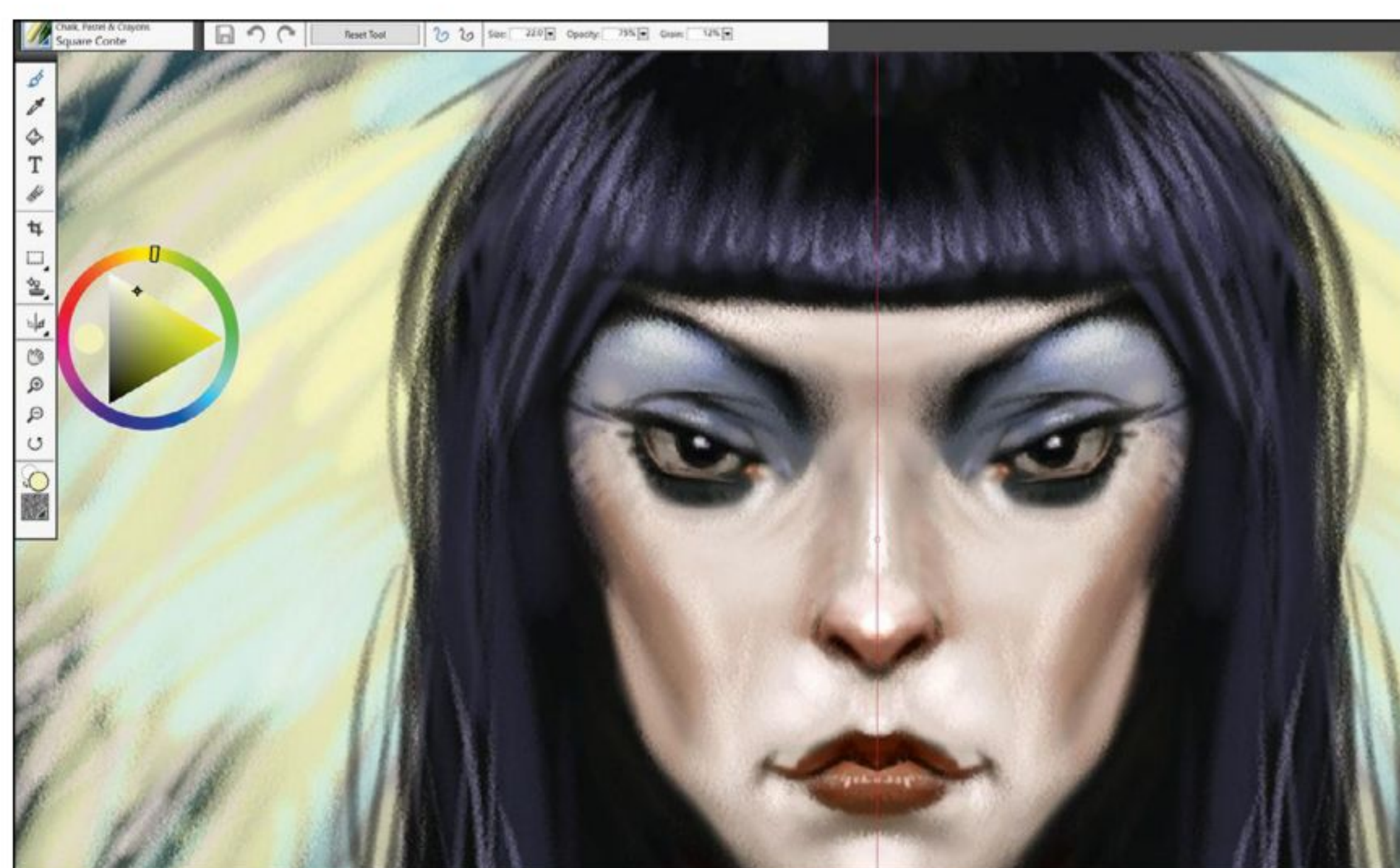
Corel claims that under-the-bonnet improvements to the speed of brushes make some up to 1.5 times faster than their equivalents in version 5. They definitely feel zippy in use: even when you're laying down computationally demanding blends, you shouldn't notice any lag or delay on the application of your brush stroke. There are a few other changes to the core functions of painting. A mirror mode is helpful for painting symmetrically, and there's also the logical next step after that of a kaleidoscope mode.

A revised Welcome screen adds community elements such as links to galleries and tutorials, which digital art newcomers will appreciate. Corel lays out its wares via a couple more new Welcome screen features, and both are good additions. As with its parent program, you can now buy Brush Packs online to extend the range of brushes you can use; around 150 are

Another of Brandon's figures that conveys the feel of natural media. See more of his art at http://ifxm.ag/brandon-md.

More art from Brandon. Corel missed a trick to improve on aspects of the program's interface: some controls within palettes remain small and fiddly.

Here, Don Seegmiller has used Painter Essentials' new Mirror tool to render both sides of the scene at the same time.

> ❝ **Corel claims that under-the-bonnet improvements to the speed of brushes make some up to 1.5 times faster** ❞

available, either to buy in one hit (£91) or in themed sets (£15 each). And Painter Essentials customers now get a discount if they want to upgrade to the full version of Painter (a very reasonable £180 as we went to press).

The user interface is little changed from Painter Essentials 5. It's functional rather than attractive; some controls, such as the Mixer palette's brush size slider, are small and fiddly. With a couple of clicks, you can resize the interface components to be more

pen-friendly: it's not a dramatic change, but it's effective.

There are no major surprises in this release of Painter Essentials, but it feels snappier than its predecessor and continues to offer compelling value, especially now that you can buy more brushes if you wish. Given the target audience of digital art newcomers, though, it's surprising that there are no built-in ways to share your artwork directly to social media like Instagram. It's 2018, Corel. 🔴

DETAILS

Features
- Natural media brushes
- Special-effect brushes
- Paint over photos
- Tracing paper
- Tablet support
- Mirror and kaleidoscope modes
- Brush Pack store
- Online tutorials

System Requirements
PC: Windows 7, 8.1 or 10 (64-bit editions), 2GHz Intel Core 2 or AMD Athlon 64 processor, 2GB RAM (8GB recommended), 1GB hard disk space
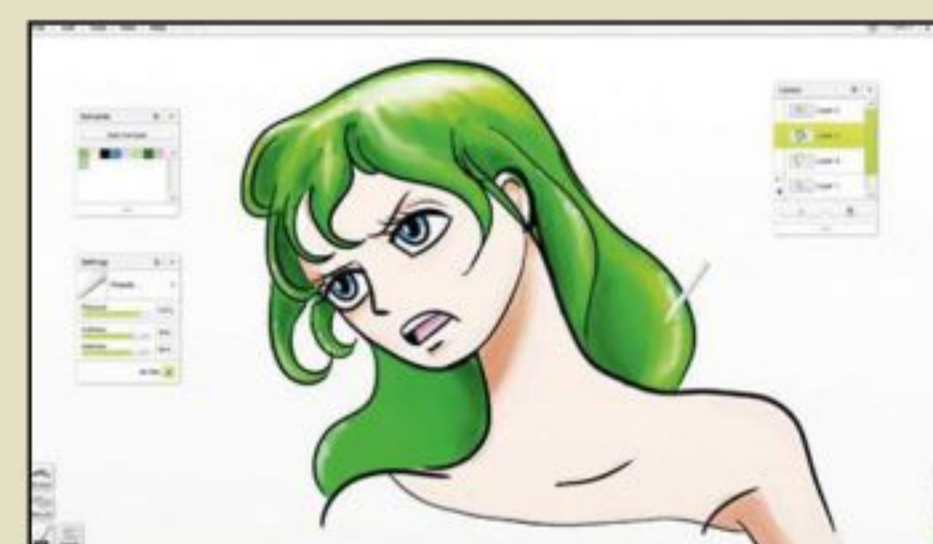**Mac:** OS X 10.10 or later, Intel processor, 2GB RAM (8GB recommended), 750MB hard disk space

Rating
★★★★☆

ArtRage Lite
Web www.artrage.com
Price £21

A cut-down edition of the popular ArtRage, ArtRage Lite offers fewer brushes than Painter Essentials, but each is more customisable. That's not as beginner-friendly an approach as Painter, but it may provide more longevity.

SketchBook
Web www.sketchbook.com
Price £22 (annual subscription)

Autodesk's accessible art program offers some delightful brushes and pencils for sketching. If the annual subscription model seems off-putting, bear in mind that this gives you SketchBook on your iOS or Android mobile device as well.

Artweaver
Web www.artweaver.de
Price £39

Artweaver offers natural media brushes that you can customise and save as new presets, together with some advanced features such as the ability for several artists to collaborate on one painting over the internet.

An entirely different subject in a reference photograph provides the inspiration for Greg's colour palette across the various depth planes.

An apparently straightforward painting of a castle is full of challenges to convey different types of light, in this video from Greg Rutkowski.

Greg scrubs and scuffs his way through this project with a variety of nature-inspired brushes, which are provided as part of the Gumroad download.
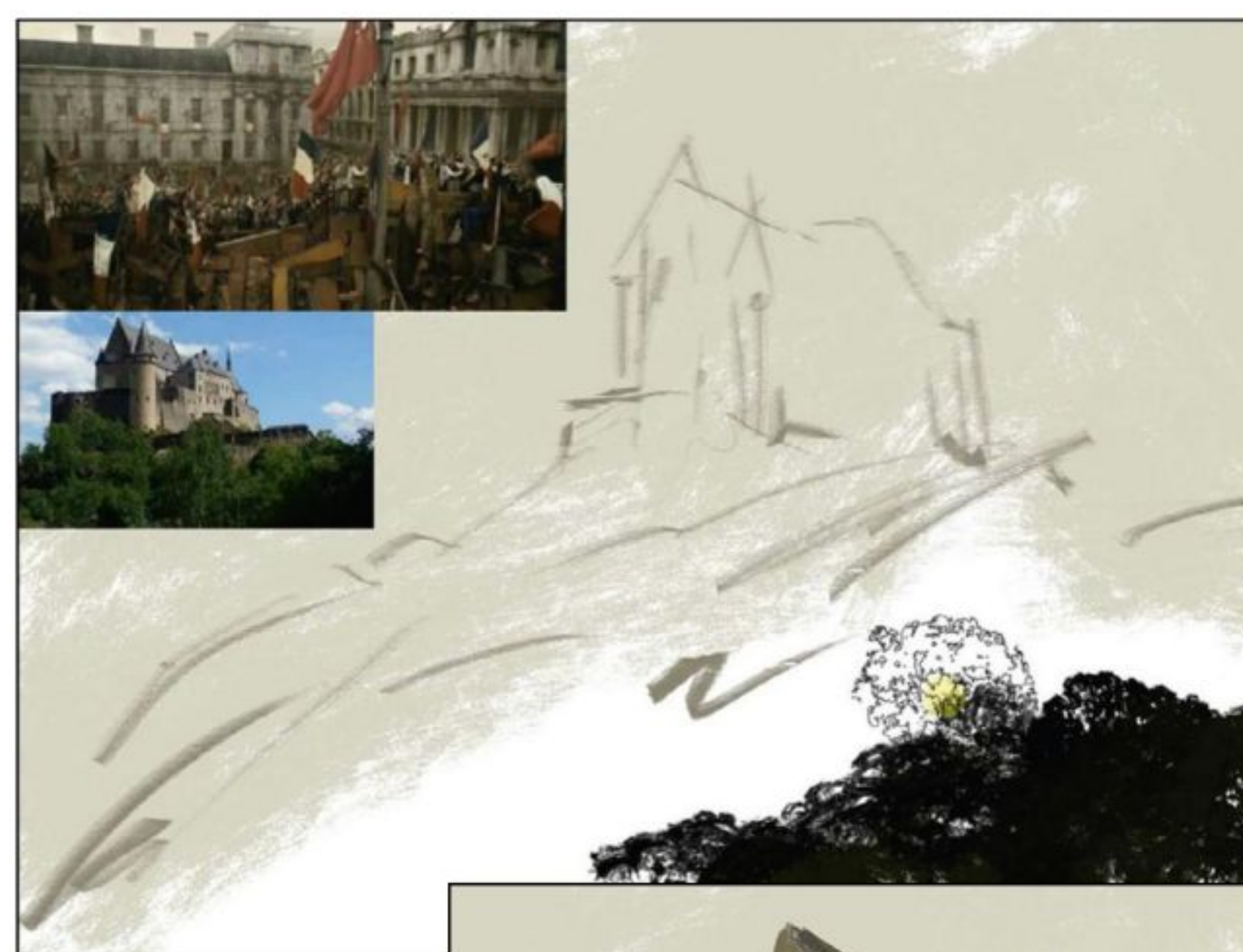
Painting a Castle

KING OF THE CASTLE Concept artist Greg Rutkowski explores the effect of light in a classically inspired landscape project

Greg works loosely to begin with – this gives him more leeway to alter shapes as he goes along.

Publisher Greg Rutkowski **Price** $9 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/grzegorzrutkowski

By his usual standards, Greg Rutkowski admits that this project is rendered so quickly that it's "almost a speed painting" – but the concept artist still covers plenty of classical painting territory over 91 minutes.

Light plays a fundamental part in any of Greg's images, and you'll learn a lot about how he controls light here. Starting with the broadest of strokes and painting very loosely, he works up a basic composition to establish values and planes of depth.

One reference photo gives him a leaping-off point for the outline of the castle, while a second photo proves the inspiration for his limited, near-monochromatic, palette. You'll see how Greg taps into the reference source intelligently, seeing the photo as planes of depth and using only the colours in each plane in the equivalent plane in his painting.

As the composition takes shape Greg's attention turns to detail. He works with both hard and soft lighting and manipulates the edges of various forms to build up an Old Master feel in this digital artwork. He also talks about how to apply the brightest highlights and deepest shadows sparingly, and where they belong.

Discussion of some other topics is left frustratingly fuzzy, though. Greg talks about why good design is important – even down to the shapes of the clouds – but doesn't get much into the specific design decisions he's making as concrete examples.

This isn't the most polished narration you'll hear in a training video, but it's full of quiet wisdom, with strong ideas to explore in your own paintings. As well as the video, the download includes the finished Photoshop document and a selection of the brushes Greg used in the painting.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Underpainting
- Values
- Adapting your reference material
- Photoshop's Mixer Brush
- Hard and soft light
- Painting edges

Length
91 minutes

Rating
★★★☆☆

ARTIST PROFILE
GREG RUTKOWSKI

Greg is a concept artist and illustrator. His work includes imagery for various projects, including card art for Magic: The Gathering for Wizards of the Coast, and artwork for the visual development company Karakter Studio, which is based in Berlin. The artist has also produced art for the upcoming game Ann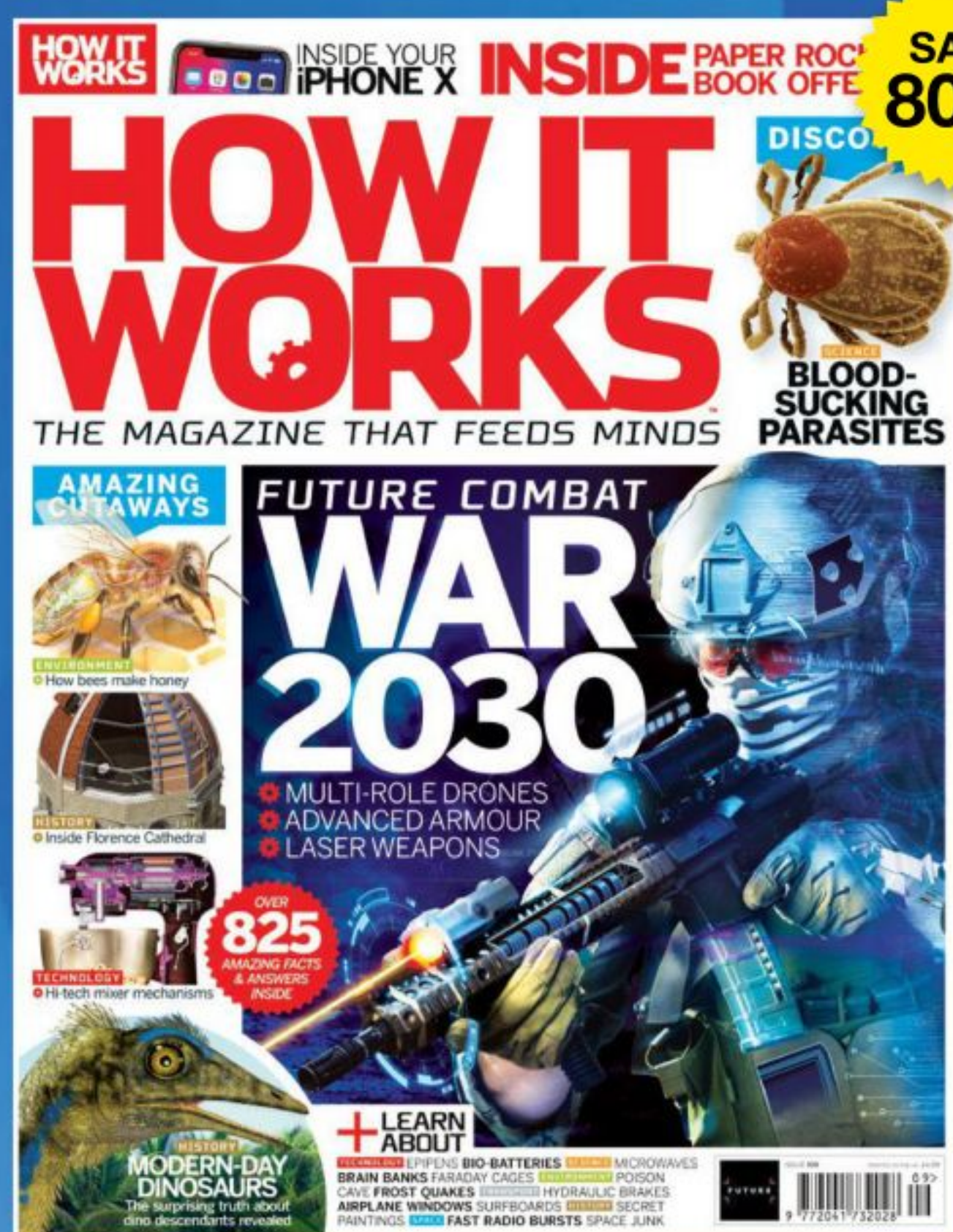o 1800, which is being developed by Ubisoft. He also creates book cover illustrations and promo art. Greg lives in Piensk, Poland.

www.artstation.com/rutkowski

The Shape of Water: Creating a Fairy Tale for Troubled Times

DEEP DIVE Immerse yourself in the aquatic visuals and behind-the-scenes insights of the latest film from Guillermo del Toro
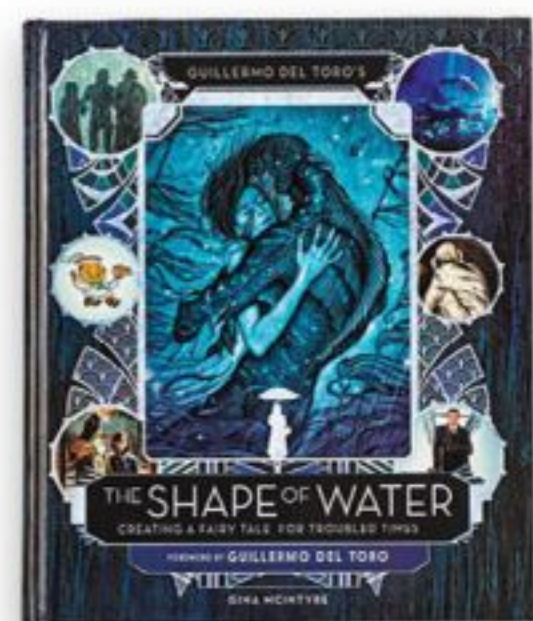
Author Gina McIntyre **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com

Nominated for 13 Oscars and taking home four, including best production design, The Shape of Water has already set the bar high for films in 2018. In this gorgeous making-of book we get to see how these stunning visuals came to be.

The fairy tale film, about a mute woman falling in love with a god-like sea creature, has a wide scope to blend the historical and the fantastical. Reading about how these different elements tie into the overall themes of the film enriches your understanding of the story if you've already seen it. And considering that major plot details are referred to throughout, you'll want to watch The Shape of Water before you explore this book.

Opening with a foreword from the film's writer and director Guillermo del

Numerous colour tests were conducted for the creature – even to see what it would look like had the director chosen to film in black and white.

Toro, we learn that The Shape of Water has been a life-long ambition of his ever since he watched the 1954 film Creature From The Black Lagoon as a young boy. It's easy to see the connection between the two films. However, it's the thoughtfulness of the story and production behind The Shape of Water that has won over viewers and critics.

> **66 There's plenty of fascinating creature design insight and problem solving to enjoy 99**

This thoughtfulness covers every aspect of design in the film, from the character's uniforms to the materials used to weather expensive wallpaper in an artistic way. It makes sense that the book is split into three sections to cover the characters, the creature and the film's production.

The underwater creature is given the most coverage. This makes sense given that he's the film's main draw, and there's plenty of fascinating design insight and problem solving to enjoy in this chapter. These range from how to construct a prosthetic for extensive use in water, through to how

The actor playing the creature endured three hours of makeup before stepping on to the film set.

to sculpt what lead actress Sally Hawkins describes as "a beautiful man-fish with a great butt."

Meanwhile, the character chapter takes more of a writerly approach to the casting and creation of each persona – complete with Guillermo's bios and journal sketches attached as inserts. These can also be found in the production chapter, which looks at the subtle VFX, as well as the set design, music, filming and more.

Brimming with fascinating details for both fans of the film and designers in general, this is one beautifully put-together companion book that you're not going to want to let get away.

RATING ★★★★★

Sketching from the Imagination: Dark Arts

GRIM GRAPHICS Take a trip to the frankly unsettling side with this collection of artists who explore all things macabre in their line work

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £20 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com

Horror is the order of the day in the latest book in the Sketching from the Imagination series by 3dtotal Publishing. Made up of the work of 50 artists, this collection features bizarre creatures, grotesque figures and morbid worlds.

Thanks to creative insights from the artists behind the nightmares, there's nothing to worry about, though. Each illustrator takes the time to share their

Jennifer Hrabota Lesser's Daughter of Arachne features subtle spider elements.
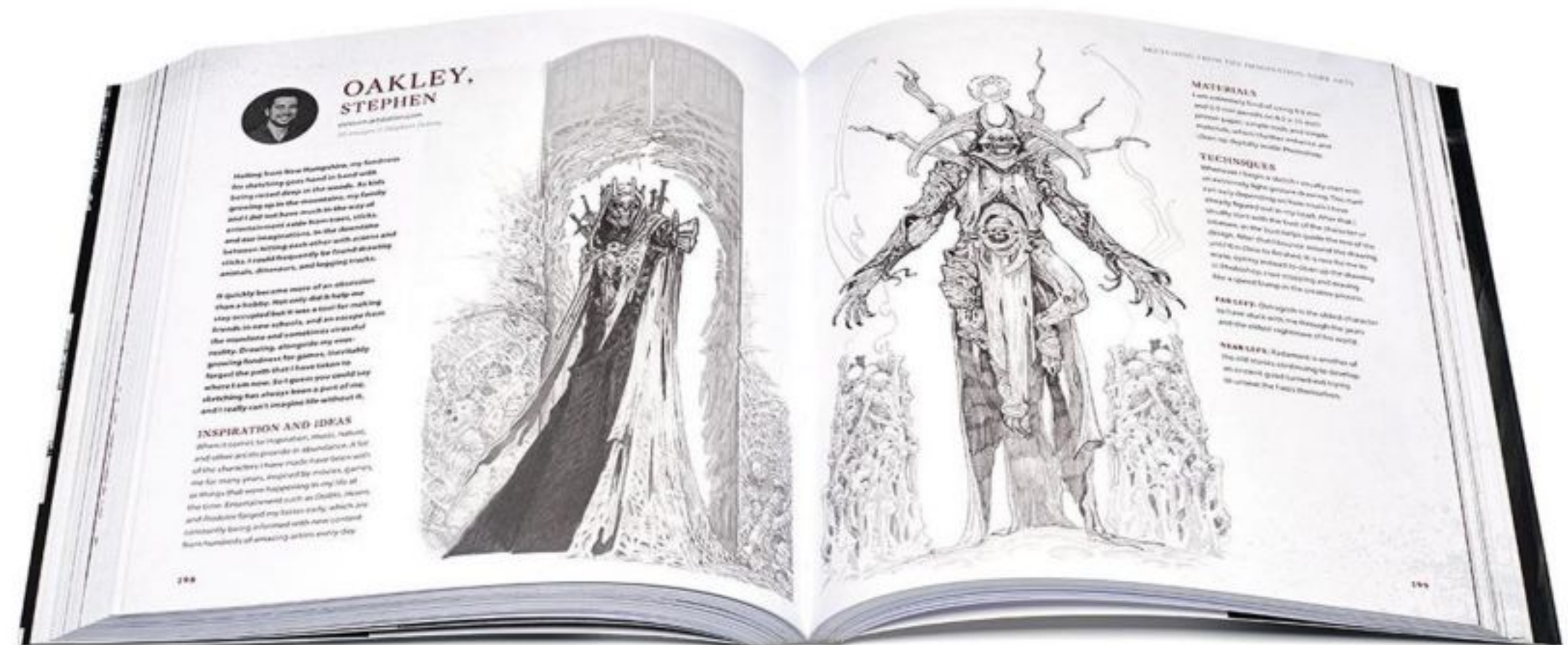
inspirations, materials and techniques so there's plenty to learn from here, especially seeing as there's a wealth of styles and methods on show.

Productivity tips are also scattered throughout the book, but the main draw is the wealth of imagery. Some of the art is hauntingly beautiful, while other pieces are unsettlingly grisly. However you like your horror, your tastes will be catered for here.

Considering that horror art is often overlooked in favour of the sci-fi and fantasy genres, this book dedicated to the disturbed is a welcome addition to 3dtotal Publishing's series. It should also comfort artists in those moments when they look on at the troubling work they've just created in fear – you're not alone.

RATING ★★★★☆

The Art of Destiny: Volume 2

DESTINY'S CHILD Discover how the art team behind Bungie's online first-person shooter managed to go deeper into the game's already expansive universe

Authors Eric Raab and Lily Yu **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com

How much creative freedom is too much? Blending visuals found in mythical fantasy and sci-fi, Destiny 2 posed a unique challenge for art director Michael Zak as he struggled to decide "what not to make".

Challenges often produce the strongest work, and in these pages of behind-the-scenes art for the second instalment of the massively popular multiplayer online shooter, the creative

Environment concept art of The Last City, painted by Jamie Jones. The celebratory mood doesn't last long in the game...

team's cohesion shines through despite the variety of concepts on show.

Split into 10 chapters that cover everything from characters and locations, to weapons, insignia and more, the Destiny universe is detailed with concept art taken from all stages of development. Dozens of artists have shared their illustrations here, and fans of the game will be delighted to pour over exclusive never-before-seen art.

Soundbites from the art team outline the thinking behind their creative work. It would've been nice to hear more from them, though: it's frustrating that not every element is accompanied by insights. Regardless, this is a visual feast that will delight both fans of the Destiny games and concept artists alike.

RATING ★★★★☆

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Traditional Artist
Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

104

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This issue:

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Chris Campana

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Pencil, Copic marker, Micron pens **WEB:** www.campanaart.store

Chris is a comic artist with credits including IDW and Dynamite. "I try to tell a powerful story through my art, and inspire young creators," he tells us.

1 SAJA AND ARANA
"Saja discusses how we control our oath by the choices we make."

2 SAJA AND HIS DRAGON
"Each dragon is matched with a temple and dragon. Together they work to keep the ancient secrets safe and protect the realm."

3 LORD CALRO
"Lord Calro is the leader of the dark army, which is also known as The Noctem. He believes the world needs to be cleansed by evil and death."

4 ARANA AND THE DRAGON KANTARA
"In a quest to find her way back home, Arana must learn the secrets of the 'path' from the dragon, Kantara."
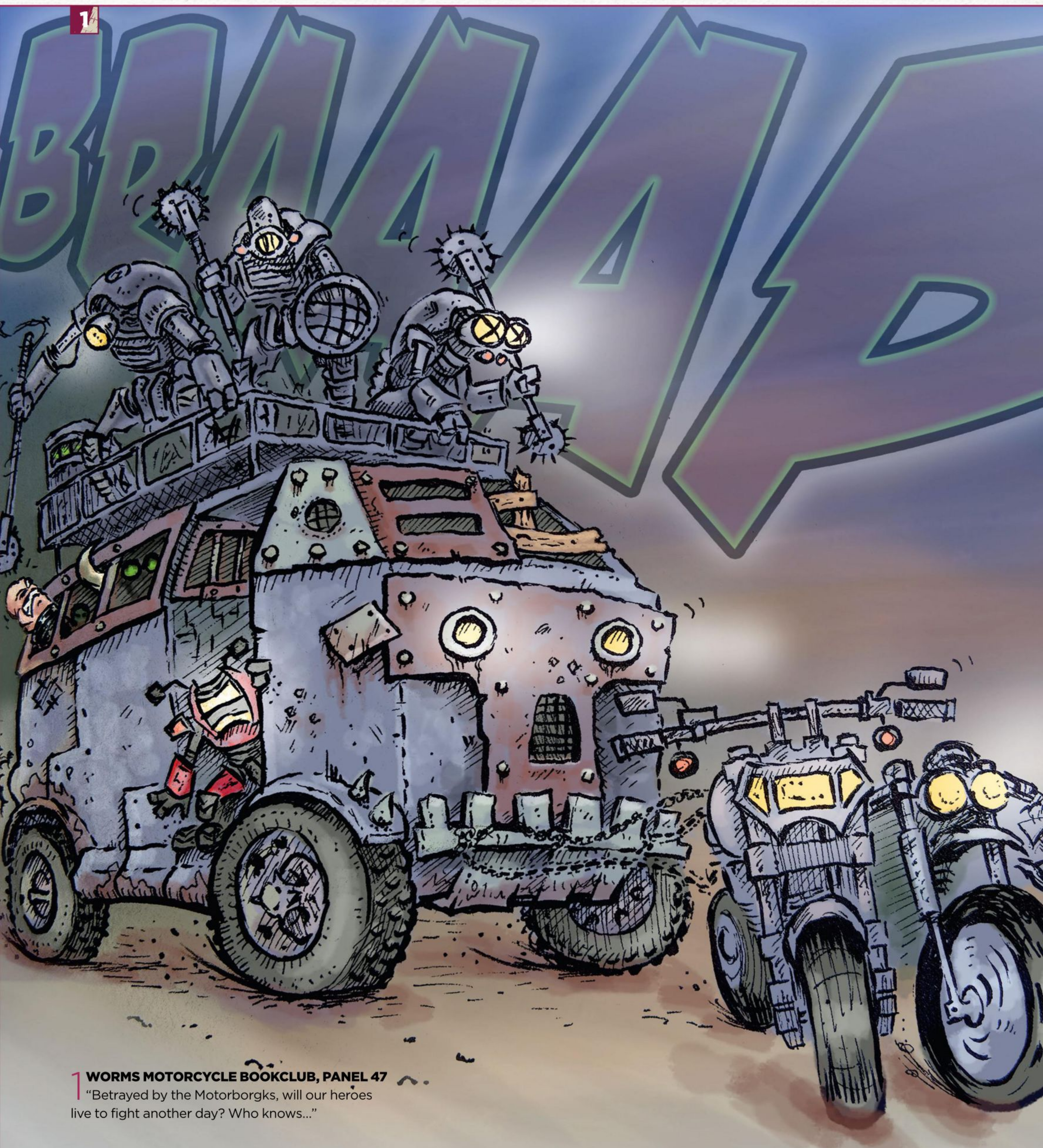
1 WORMS MOTORCYCLE BOOKCLUB, PANEL 47
"Betrayed by the Motorborgks, will our heroes
live to fight another day? Who knows…"

Matt Alishah

LOCATION: Australia **MEDIA:** Pencil, felt tip pens, Copic markers, Photoshop
WEB: www.instagram.com/wormsmotorcyclebookclub

Matt customises motorbikes, reads comics and works in tech, and is creating a graphic novel that revolves around those very things.

2 WORMS MOTORCYCLE BOOKCLUB, PANEL 43
"Thrown into the Sea Lubber dungeon, our heroes find Gobbo and an unlikely Motorborgk ally."

3 WORMS MOTORCYCLE BOOKCLUB, PANEL 40
"In a local town, our heroes run afoul of the Sea Lubbers, who don't like motorbikes and like bikers even less."

Watercolour

DRAW AND PAINT COMIC COVER ART

DUSTIN NGUYEN shares his watercolour process as he creates a cover for his Image Comics series, Descender, featuring a conflicted space heroine

G rowing up, my favourite comic covers were the ones featuring characters conveying strong emotion in tense situations. I was also fascinated with anything in watercolour. The way it bled off the page, the visceral nuances that the brush left, the splatter, the texture, the imperfections. Now that I'm creating covers myself, the attraction for this traditional medium is even stronger.

My process is pretty simple. I draw it, then colour it. I've always felt more of a storyteller than a painter, so I see it as less of a painter's way of thinking, and more of an illustrator's approach. Along the way, there might be some nuances and some happy accidents, but for me the initial sketch is the most important thing in my covers, I feel it should carry that emotion and weight to the final

ARTIST INSIGHT

TRY IT SOMEWHERE ELSE FIRST
Before I paint my art artwork, I try out the colour combination and line work on a simpler painting first, which might feature a different subject. This helps you learn how certain colours react together on paper.

piece. The paint should complement it in the finished piece.

For this workshop, I chose to go with a cover for a monthly comic series created by myself and writer Jeff Lemire. The series is Descender, a sci-fi and fantasy tale about a galaxy in conflict – but really, it all comes down to a very personal story following a young robot child trying to find his human brother, and their place in the madness of it all.

As much as I enjoy working on licensed properties, my biggest joy (and least amount of stress) comes from working on something that we own outright. We're able to make every decisions ourselves, sometimes on the fly, without needing approval from anyone. Going by our own judgment and imagination to create these new worlds and characters… that's where the biggest freedom in creator-owned comics lies.

This cover features a character who we created and then watched grow over the course of the series. The finished art is close to my heart, as all Descender covers are, so drawing each one is always a joy, even if most are rushed out over a weekend!

Dustin Nguyen is a New York Times Bestselling and Eisner Award-winning comic creator. Best known for his work with DC Comics, Batman: Li'l Gotham, Secret Hero Society and Descender. See his art at www.instagram.com/duss005. ➤➤

Traditional Artist Workshop

1 Some preliminaries

I start with a quick sketch. When working on a cover for a client, I'll normally provide between two and four different concepts for them to choose, but because Descender is a property that's owned by myself and Jeff Lemire, I can skip all that and go directly to what I want in an image.

2 Carrying the emotion

For me, faces are everything. Usually, I'll tackle the face first so it can carry the rest of the drawing for me. It's a bit of a motivational technique. Telsa was a character we created and watched grow throughout the series, so she's a very personal character to me to draw.

3 Pencil on paper

I lay out the rest of the cover, making sure to leave room for cover title logos and trade dressing (the Image Comics logo, credits, pricing and so on). One of the main differences between laying out a cover versus laying out just a pin-up or poster is making sure all those elements work together, and balance out in print.
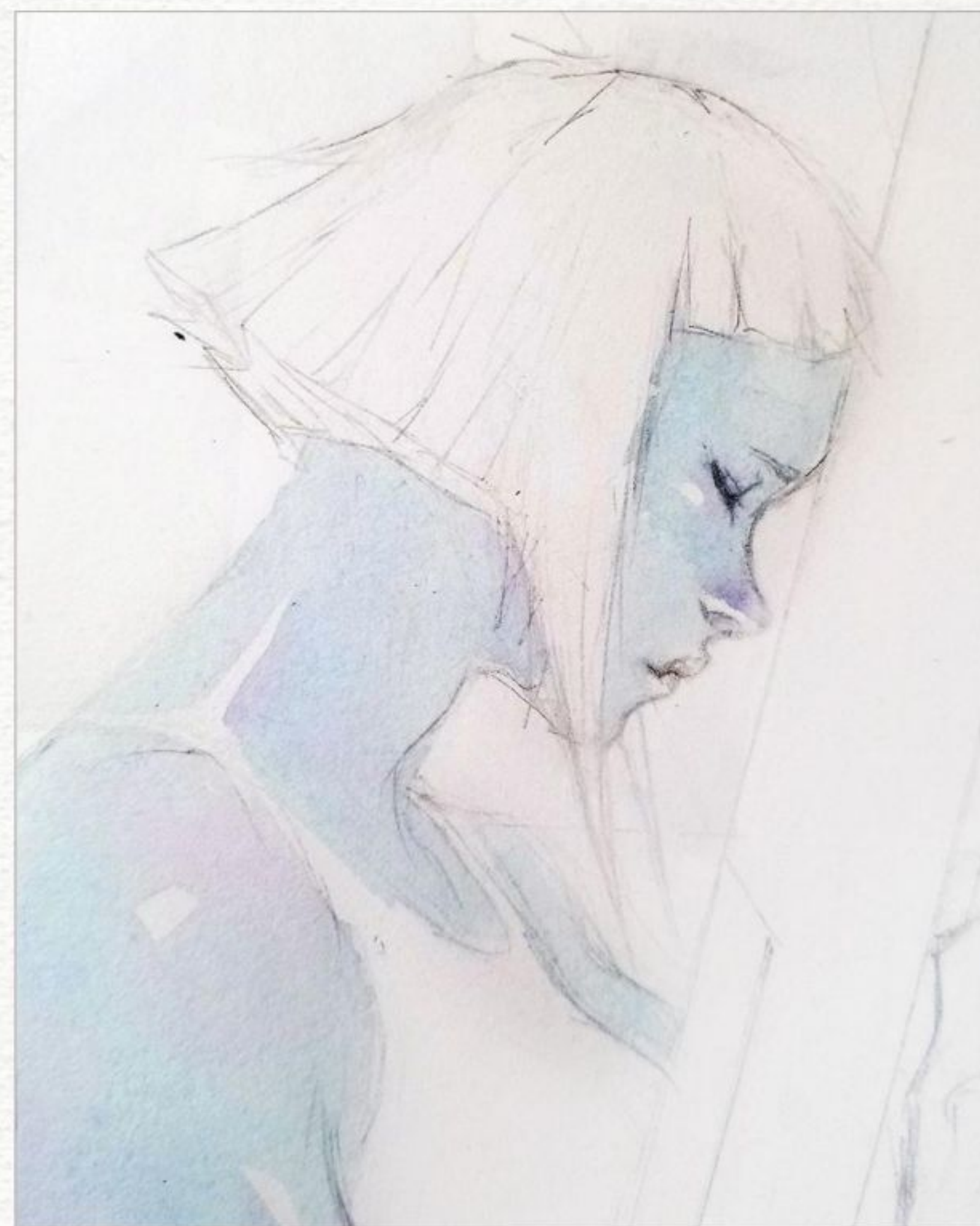
4 Skin tones

I normally start most paintings from the lightest colours first, which is usually skin tones and light sources. Even though Telsa has an alien blue-ish, purple-ish skin tone, I've become accustomed to starting with a character's skin. I tackle that first, using a combination of Sennelier Turquoise green with Holbein Watercolor's (HWC) Permanent violet and Prussian blue.

5 *Washing the walls*

I move on to a wash of the background. In this issue, Telsa's on an alien ship made up of mostly cold steel. There's not old tech or any rust, but at least a bit of age to the ship, so I try to give the background some texture. It should feel cold and harsh in this part of space.

6 *My favourite colours*

The few warm colours in this cover will be Telsa's hair and the tip of the laser rifle that she's carrying. I limit this warmth to these three colours (shown above). All my paints are usually kept in sealable containers with holes punched to the side so that they can dry, but not collect dust, for later use.

PAPER TIP
DO A TRIAL RUN
Always try out the paper first to see if it can actually hold the amount of work you'll put in.

7 *Carving out some details.*

Using a smaller 1/4-inch chiselled tip flat brush, I work in Telsa's hair and laser rifle tip, leaving nuances of highlights here and there. People often ask if I use liquid masking – I don't. It's just easier and more natural to just not paint in the areas you want highlighted.
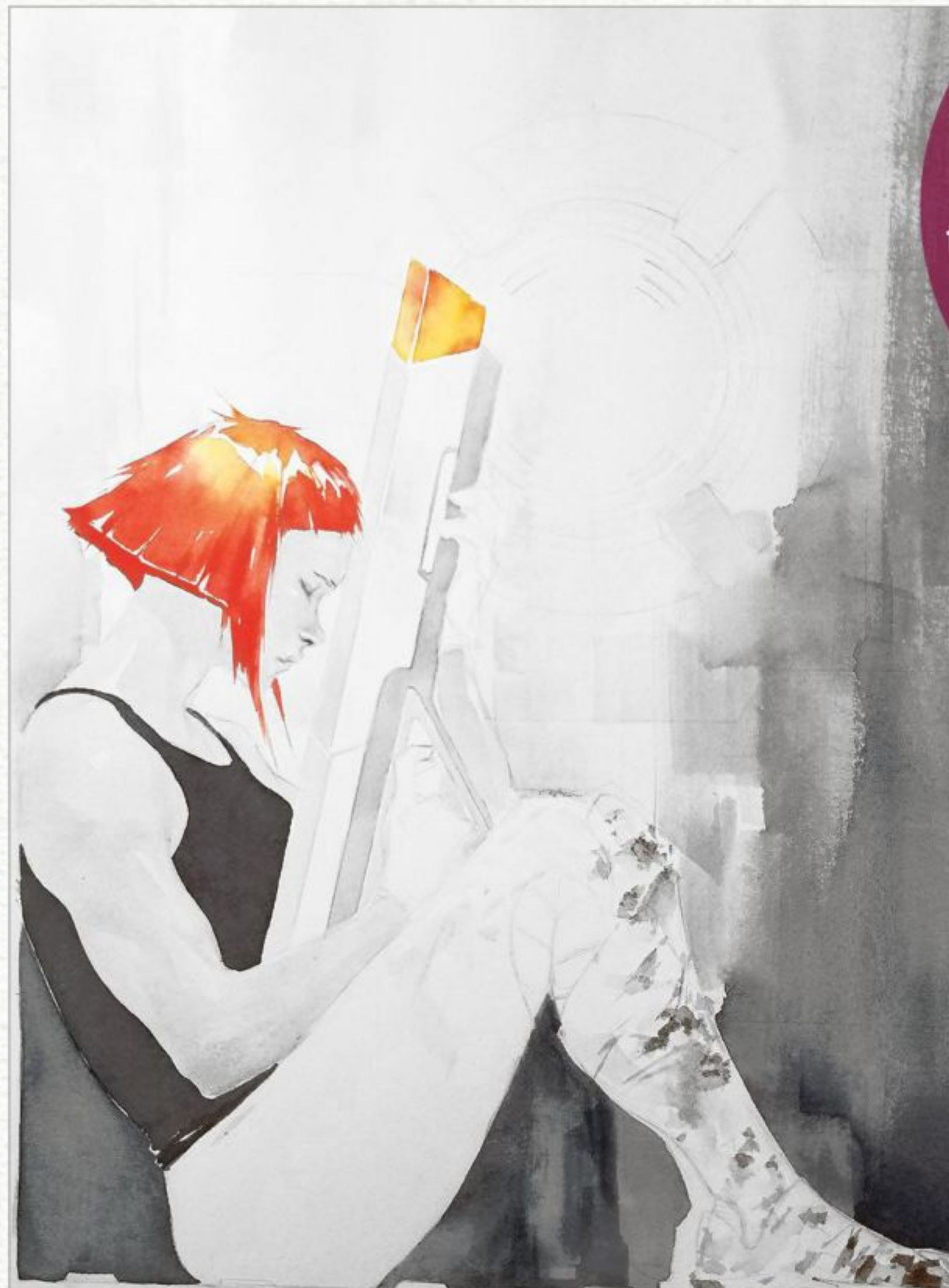
8 *Rough it up*

On to the rest of the costume, I go with a neutral tint for her top and use a bit of HWC's Vandyke brown and Ivory black to dirty up her boots a bit. She's been on quite a journey up to this point, and her once-pristine military uniform is now looking tired and worn out. ➡

ARTIST INSIGHT
DON'T OVERDO IT
Sometimes, trying to do too much too quickly will ruin a painting. Some of the best results come from taking a slower, simpler approach. Try to think about what you do before you do it. There's no undo button here!

9 Creating a claustrophobic setting

I move on to other parts of the page, giving the background some depth. I want her sitting near some sort of vent in the lower levels of the ship, holed up in a confined space with just a bit of room to think and breathe.

10 Laying down hard lines

I move on to finalising the image with some hard lines, using a soft mechanical pencil and thinner brushes for the smaller details. I use a 0.3mm pencil here for some of the details on her boots and the section lines on the wall. The fine lines become finer as I bear in mind that the image will be scaled down in print.

BRUSH TIP

VARY YOUR BRUSHES
Not all small brushes create the best thin lines, not all big brushes create the best big strokes. Experiment and mix things up.

ARTIST INSIGHT

THERE'S USUALLY ALWAYS TOMORROW
Sometimes it's better to start a new painting rather than trying to fix a dying one. Watercolour isn't acrylic, so your mistakes will be as transparent as watercolour itself. You may like the revised version better!

11 All done… give or take, anyway

I set the piece aside and give it some time to dry. My biggest fear is that I end up overworking a painting. I've never considered myself a real portrait painter, or even close to drawing any sort of likeness and realism, so it worries me when I spend too much time trying to perfect a painting.

12 *Clean up time*

I scan in the final piece for cleaning and touch ups in Photoshop. I spilled some paint inside the dome of the fan and decided to just make it a big hole. I had to move fast so that the paint would lay evenly, so didn't get a photograph of the accident. It turned out okay, though.

13 *Addressing the little things*

I touch up some highlights in the more saturated areas, the section lines along the walls, highlights on textures of her boots and bits of dirt. It's mostly whatever I forgot to do in the painting phase. This is also where I clean up any dust that I scanned in by mistake.

14 *Some final details*

Some more touch ups. Using Photoshop I highlight parts of Telsa's hair, the rifle tip and some more small details. My main focus, though, is Telsa's eyes, brows and lips. I want to convey a sense of conflict, difficult choices to be made, and the heartache in making them

15 *All done – honestly!*

Here's the final image of the cover. I clean up around the left and bottom, making room to cropping and text placement (that's what the white space is for). All looks good and we're ready to go to print, so thank you for reading! ●

Core skills: Part 5
PLEIN AIR PAINTING WITHOUT LIMITS

Don't let time or storage space hold you back from painting outdoors, says CHRISTOPHER MOELLER as he rounds off his series by exploring different media

When most folks hear the term 'plein air painting' they think of Claude Monet spending all day in a field, dabbing oil paint on to a huge canvas. While that kind of painting expedition is something I love to do, it's just one way to paint en plein air.

I want to bring my art with me wherever I go, even when my busy life doesn't allow for the grand painting adventure. For example, say I'm going on a long hike in the mountains. Carrying all of the supporting gear that oil painting requires would make it a very short hike! Must I abandon the idea of painting on the hike?

Or my wife and kids want to go to the lake for the afternoon. Setting up my easel means I can't enjoy time with my family. Must I abandon the idea of painting at the lake?

Working en plein air doesn't have to be a Broadway production. It can be easy. It can be portable. It can be something you do wherever you find yourself. Here, I'll discuss some ways to work en plein air, even when you leave your oil paints at home.

Christopher's a writer and painter who specialises in producing fully painted graphic novels. See more of his art at www.moellerillustrations.com.

MATERIALS
PAINTS
- Sakura Koi watercolour set
- Winsor & Newton gouache
- Golden Acrylics

PAPER
- Moleskine watercolour sketchbook

Moleskine manufactures a hardcover watercolour sketchbook that has dimensions similar to the Koi watercolour box. It's sturdy, attractive, very light, and I like the paper a lot. They also make a larger version.
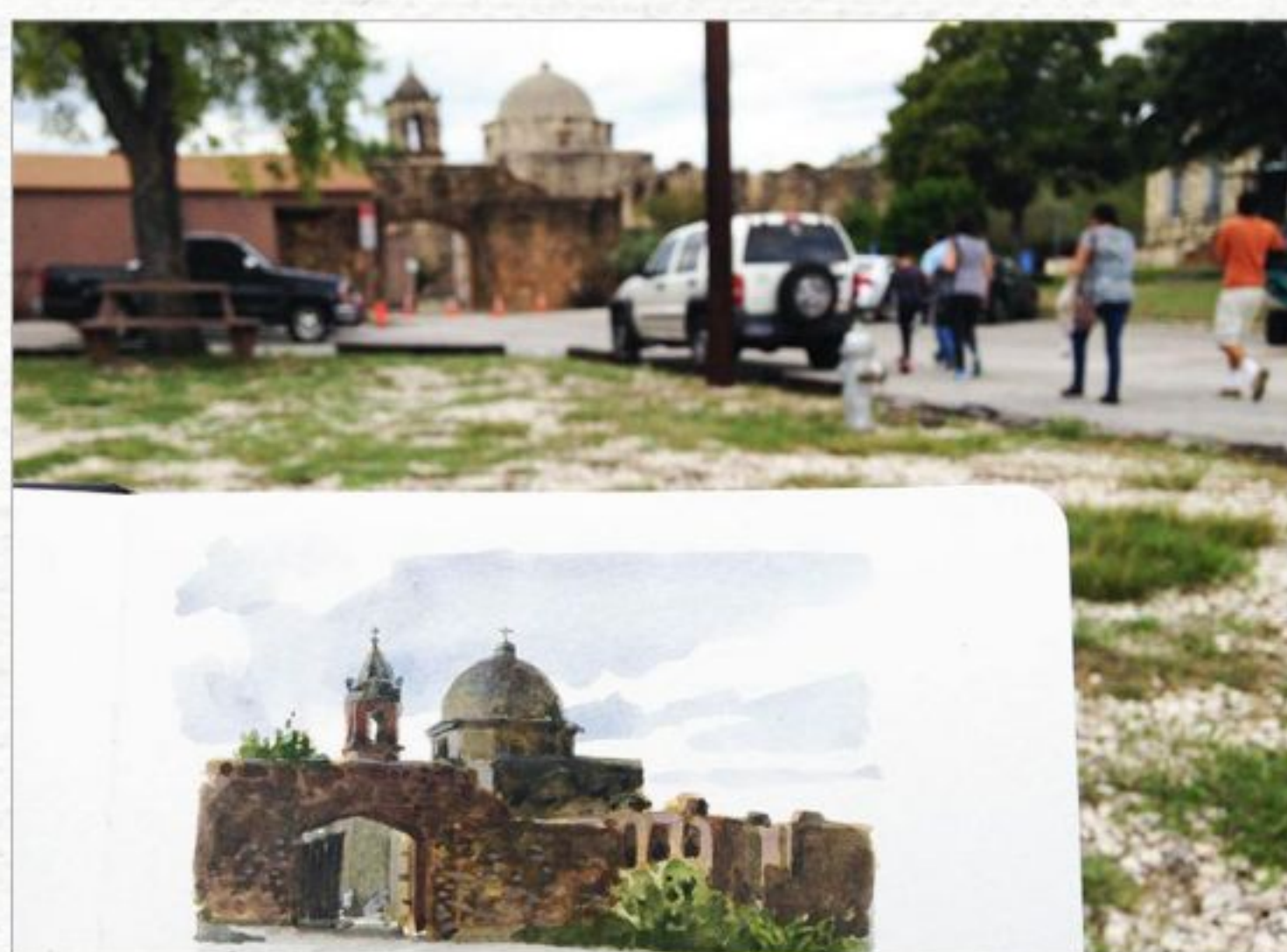
The Golden Dome, painted while at a football game with friends on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.
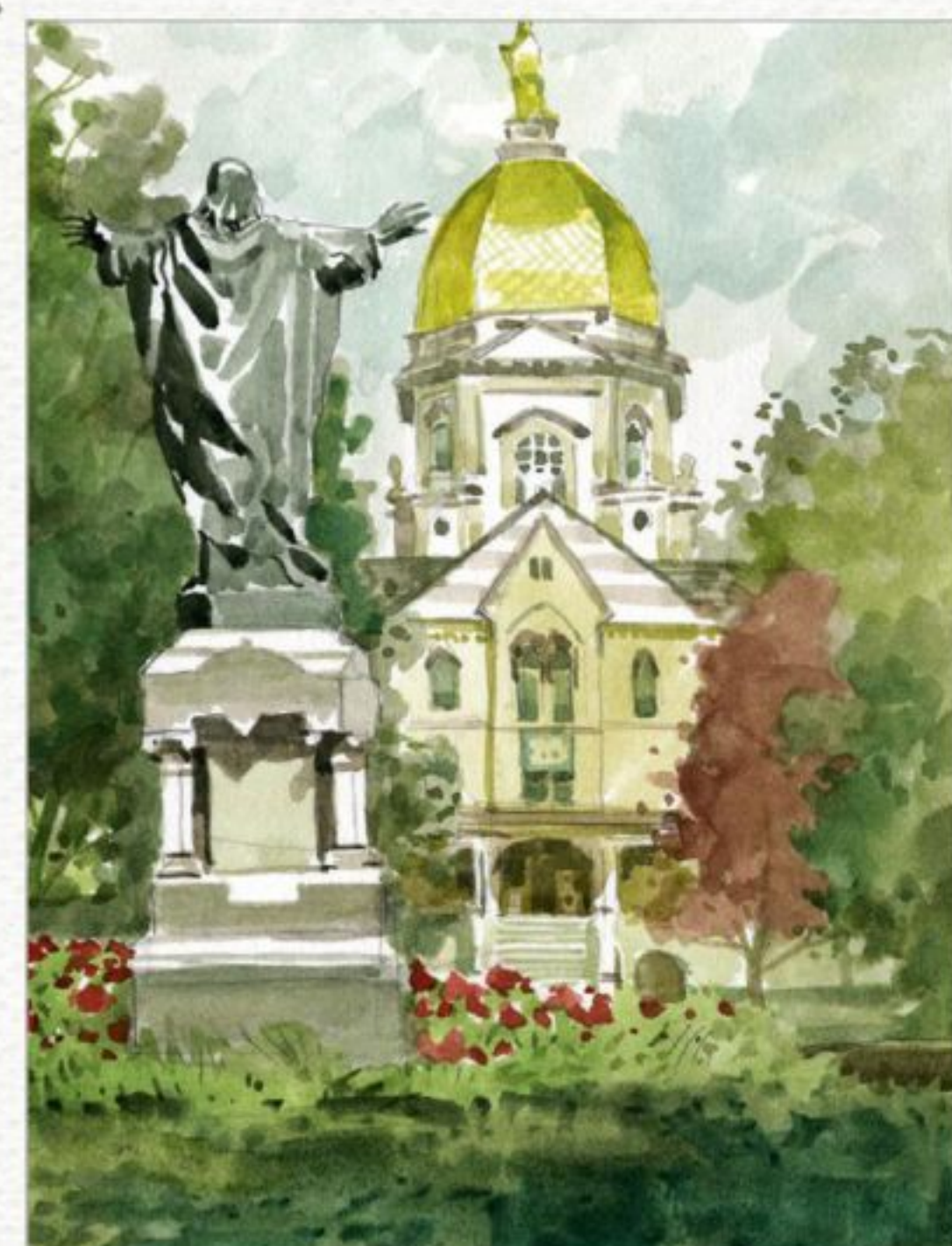
1 *Watercolour: a classic*
Since the mid-1700s, when cake-watercolours were first formulated in England by William Reeves, this versatile medium has been a go-to choice for artists painting in nature. Watercolour in this form is easy to transport and use on the go. Tube watercolour requires a bit more preparation than the cake form, but gives the artist broader control over values and chroma.

Sakura makes a lovely box of watercolours under the name Koi (which includes a surprisingly versatile brush). It's inexpensive and compact enough to slip into your shoulder bag.

I have a compact little kit that contains a few tubes of gouache, a brush or two, a plastic palette, a rag and a small bottle of water. It's small enough to fit in a large zip-lock bag.

2 *Gouache, the full-bodied watercolour*

For those who struggle with watercolour's transparent nature, gouache has many of the upsides of watercolour in tube form. It's transportable, water soluble, quick-drying and cleans up quickly. The downside is that it doesn't come in cakes, which limits its transportability. I use gouache when I know that I'll have an hour or so to paint, and I don't want the hassle of oil. It's ideal, for example, for an afternoon of hiking, biking or canoeing. ➤➤


Rather than doubling up, I use the same moleskine sketchbook for both my gouache and watercolour studies.

I find that gouache combines the transparency of watercolour with the opaque colour-mixing of acrylics.

3 Acrylics: fast and furious

Acrylic paint is essentially oil paint that dries quickly and, just as with oil paint, drying time is both its strength and its weakness. I've used acrylics in the studio for 30 years, and love them. Outdoors, their quick-drying nature becomes a challenge – particularly on hot or windy days – that borders on the comical. Still, I use acrylics en plein air when I want something less fussy than oils, but with a similar heft and finish.

Colour mixing with acrylics happens on the fly. Instead of modifying value and colour on the palette, you'll be working in layers on the canvas. That lends itself to a dynamic painting experience. If painting with oils is like a piano concerto, painting with acrylics is rock 'n' roll!
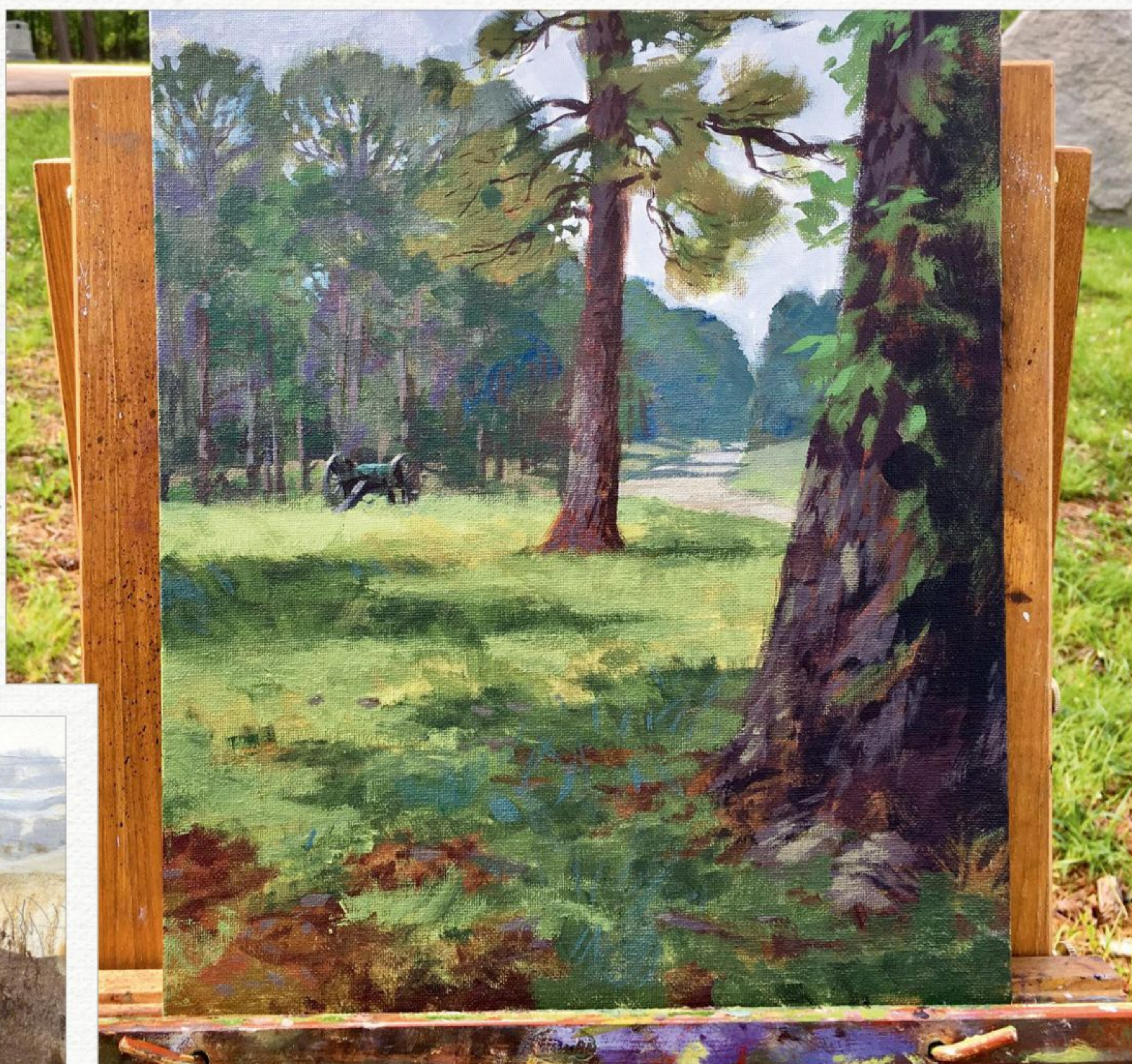
Acrylics is a tremendous medium for sketching quickly, exhibiting much of the flexibility of gouache.

One way to get around the problem of fast-drying colours while out in the field is to work from a limited palette.

I keep a moleskine sketchbook and set of pencils with me at all times. My phone, my car keys, my wallet, my pencils and the sketchbook... like a certain credit card, I literally never leave the house without them.

4 Graphite, the plein air champion

While watercolour is the easiest painting medium to transport, graphite is the easiest, period. No preparation is required, beyond having a pencil and a pad of paper in your pocket at all times. It's neat and tidy. It's discreet (you can sketch the person on the bench across from you without making a production out of it). Its only downside is that it's limited to value and line, but who doesn't need to practise those?

Several years ago, I realised my sketches emphasised line, and I made a distinct effort to start looking for values first. That shift led to a sea change in my painting.

Just as plein air isn't limited to oil painting, it's also not limited to the outdoors. It can happen anywhere, in any space, as long as you're working from life. In your living room, sketching your brother playing video games, for example, or in the studio, working from a life model.

5 Plein air: unlimited

The take-away of this article is that there are no restrictions on what mediums are available to you when you work en plein air. Do you prefer pastels? There are pastel plein air artists that will take your breath away. Coloured pencils? Sculpture? Print-making? I can imagine ways to work in all of those mediums out in the big wide world. I'm sure you can, too. ⬤

Still life and portraiture share the core artistic act of observing the objects that make up your immediate surroundings, and representing them with your medium of choice.

First Impressions

✳ Cat Staggs ✳

This comic artist has learnt much from films and television…

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado. Growing up surrounded by so much nature had a profound effect on how I see things. I would look for all the colours and study the textures of everything I came across.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your art over the years?
Movies and TV have been something I draw inspiration from all the time. Watching how scenes play out, the emotions of the actors, the action of the stunt teams, the visual choices of directors and cinematographers in setting the tone are all things I use in my comic work.

You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything… what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?
My grandmother had a giant coffee table book of the works of Norman Rockwell. I can't count how many times I flipped through the 200-plus

© DC Comics

SMALLVILLE SEASON 11: LANTERN #4 COVER
"This is artwork from 2014, created for Smallville's Lantern arc, in which Superman becomes a Green Lantern."

pages and studied every expression. I wanted to be able to capture a viewer's imagination the way he captured mine.

The second was a record and comic book combo that my mother bought me as a child. It was a Batman story and you would read the comic along with the record. I studied every panel, every line, of

> 66 Force yourself, no matter how much you hate math, to take a business class or two 99

the illustrations by José Luis García-López. I had that book memorised.

What was your next step in art? Did other interests vie for your time? What was the deciding factor?
I was interested in other things, but art was always there. For me it was more like an extra appendage. It was always attached to me, so I never thought it was going anywhere.

© Image Comics

CROSSWIND #1 VARIANT COVER
"This piece was originally done as the launch promotion image for Crosswind, then made into a variant cover."

Tell us about your first paid commission, Does it stand as a representation of your talent?
I don't remember my first. I would always draw things for my friends when I was growing up. I did some random things here as a teen – I'm sure one of them must have been a paid commission at some point.

As far as it representing my talent, I don't think so. My art has changed so much as I've grown up and I have experimented with so many styles and tools that I think the two would look like strangers now.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
A short story for John Carpenter's Tales for a Halloween Night. Other than the subject matter includes people, I'm sure they wouldn't relate in any other way.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Force yourself, no matter how much you hate math, to take a business class or two. Learn to manage the business side of the art career, something that's really lacking in art degree programmes.

How has the art industry changed for good since you've been part of it?
Opportunities for women and minorities are finally getting to the forefront. I hope this is something that keeps pushing forward. There are so many stories and images that need to be seen and shared.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
I don't know if I can name just one. I've been fortunate enough to be able to officially draw some of my favourite heroes from almost everything I grew up loving. All of those things helped to develop some part of who I am as a person.

Cat's best known for her comic work for clients such as DC Comics, Image Comics, IDW Publishing and Lucasfilm. See more of her work at www.catstaggs.com.