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# **NO.1** FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

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Turn this distraction into a way to build a fanbase

**ART & ADVICE**

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ENHANCE YOUR STORY SKILLS WITH IRIS COMPIET  
VISIT JAKE PARKER'S CREATIVE SPACE

**GET PAINTING**

# **SURREAL PORTRAITS**

How to take abstract shapes and turn them into stunning character art!

**27**  
**DREAMLIKE SKETCHES**  
TO FIRE YOUR IMAGINATION

FUTURE  
ISSUE 161

**PHOTOSHOP**

## **COSTUME DESIGN**

Create realistic outfits for your fantasy figures



**ALLEN WILLIAMS!** DISCOVER THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HIS GRAPHITE MASTERPIECES



## Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Inspiration and hard work! It's really as simple as that when it comes to making the most of your art. We can definitely give you plenty of the first – hopefully enough so that the hours and hours you put into your art doesn't really feel like work at all!

It certainly never seems like hard work on ImagineFX – not when you get the likes of Magic: The Gathering's art supremo Cynthia Shepherd revealing the thought process of the new card pack (page 28), or getting into the mind of legend Allen Williams (page 36) – an artist whose work I've enjoyed exploring through his great posts on Facebook. They're like delightfully disturbing treats nestling within an otherwise selfie-plastered wall. Allen has a knack for giving his fans just enough art and info on social media to make us want to know more about his projects. Over in the news feature (page 24), we discuss the different approaches that artists can take to social media, with a bunch of brilliant artists with a range of views on the subject.

And did I mention the amazing cover? Erik Jones has provided an eye-exploding surreal colour piece that's explored and explained on page 62. Enjoy!

*Claire*

Claire Howlett, Editor  
claire@imaginefx.com

### EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...



#### 30 Multi-purpose creative hub

I loved nosing around Jake Parker's studio. Such an inspiring space – and there's room for meditation, too!



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#### Sketchbook double-whammy!

Tobias Kwan and Daria Theodora's pencil art is a perfect fit for this issue's surreal theme, wouldn't you say?



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#### Being inspired by a surreal art master

I was more than happy to take up Rafael Sarmento's offer of painting an homage to the work of Beksiński.

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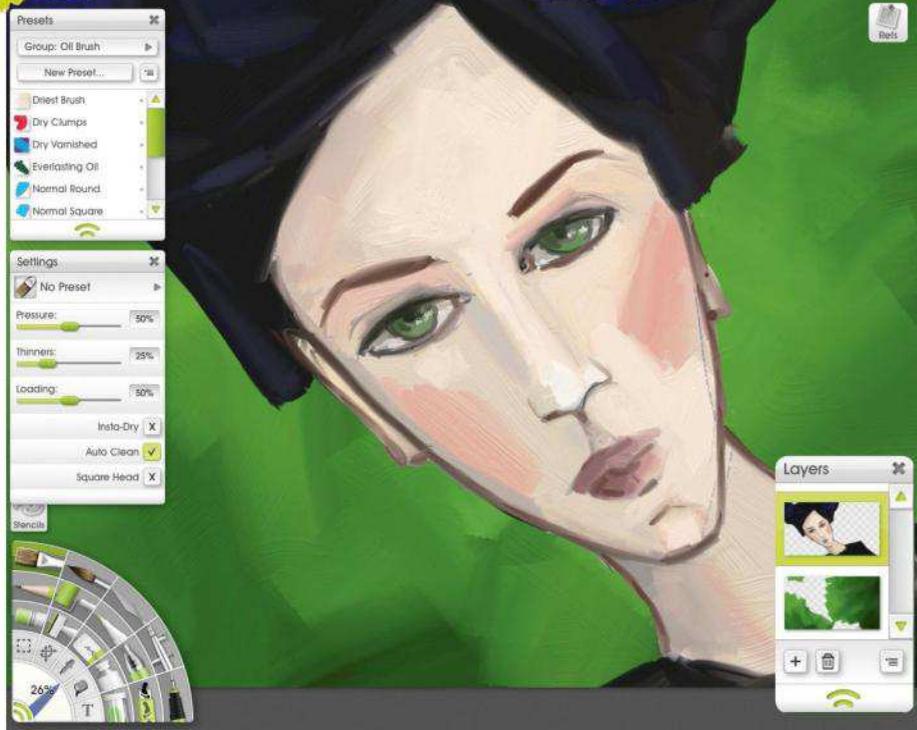
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# ALLEN WILLIAMS



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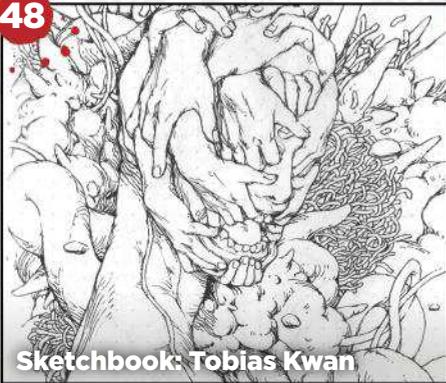
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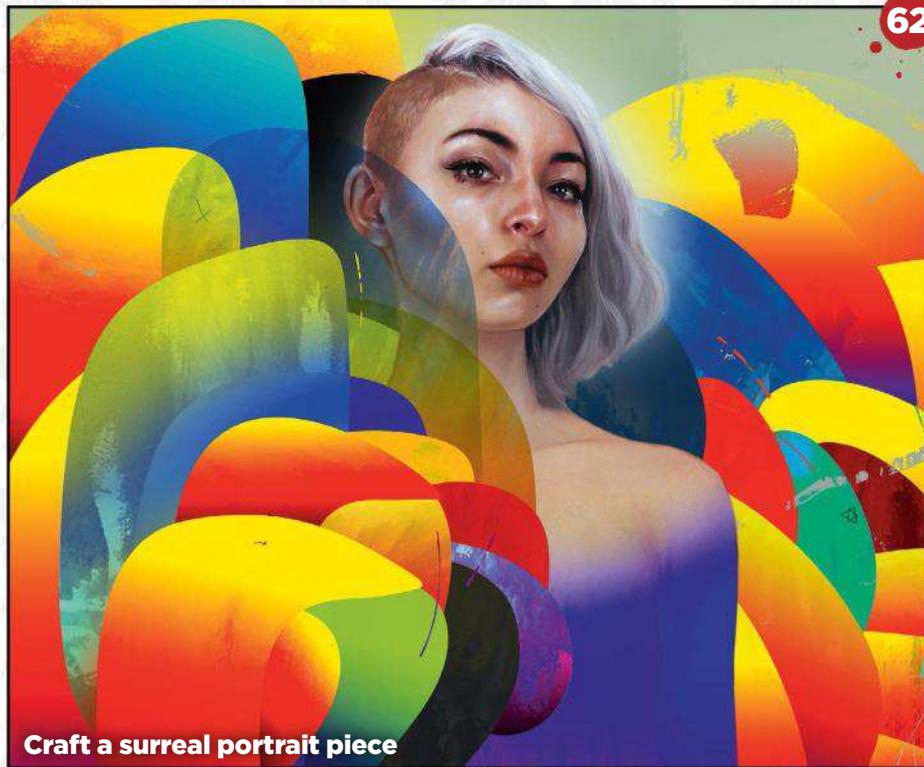
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# ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS Resources

Getting hold of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <https://ifxm.ag/surreal161portraits>

**OVER 5 HOURS**  
of video tutorials  
from pro artists  
to watch and  
learn from!

## COVER WORKSHOP



### 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):  
<https://ifxm.ag/surreal161portraits>
- 2 Find the files you want**  
Search through the list of resources to download.
- 3 Download what you need...**  
...or alternatively watch the videos on our YouTube page.

## Learn how to create a surreal portrait

You won't have missed Erik Jones' stunning cover art – in his video he reveals how he works both traditionally and digitally to produce such captivating portraits. Read his workshop on page 62.



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## Revisit Beksiński's surreal world

Watch Rafael Sarmento's workshop video as he channels his admiration and enthusiasm for the late Polish painter, then turn to page 68 to learn more about his approach.



## Use texture in a ghostly scene

See how AM Sartor adds visual interest in her video. There's more over on page 108.



## Paint a lively, colourful corpse

Watch Peter Polach use colour to great effect, then turn to page 74 for more ghoulish fun.



## Lesson 01: Ursus Warbear

Check out a clip from Weta artist Dongjun Lu's training video. We review it on page 93.



# EXPOSE

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Neeraj Menon

**LOCATION:** India **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush, KeyShot, Marvelous Designer

**WEB:** [www.artstation.com/neerajmenon](http://www.artstation.com/neerajmenon)

A fan of comics and animation from childhood, Neeraj felt it only natural to pursue a career in the visual arts. He now works as a comic colourist and concept artist.

1



2





3



### 1 MAN OF TOMORROW

"Fan art depicting the Man of Steel after he's outlived all of humanity. I keep a model skull handy, and I use a flashlight on it for a quick lighting reference."

### 2 QHEL

"The flagbearer of Death, rising up from her murky realm. I approached this like a photoshoot with a live model, using 3D geometry pinned and lit to look 'just right' only from this angle."

### 3 TSIII

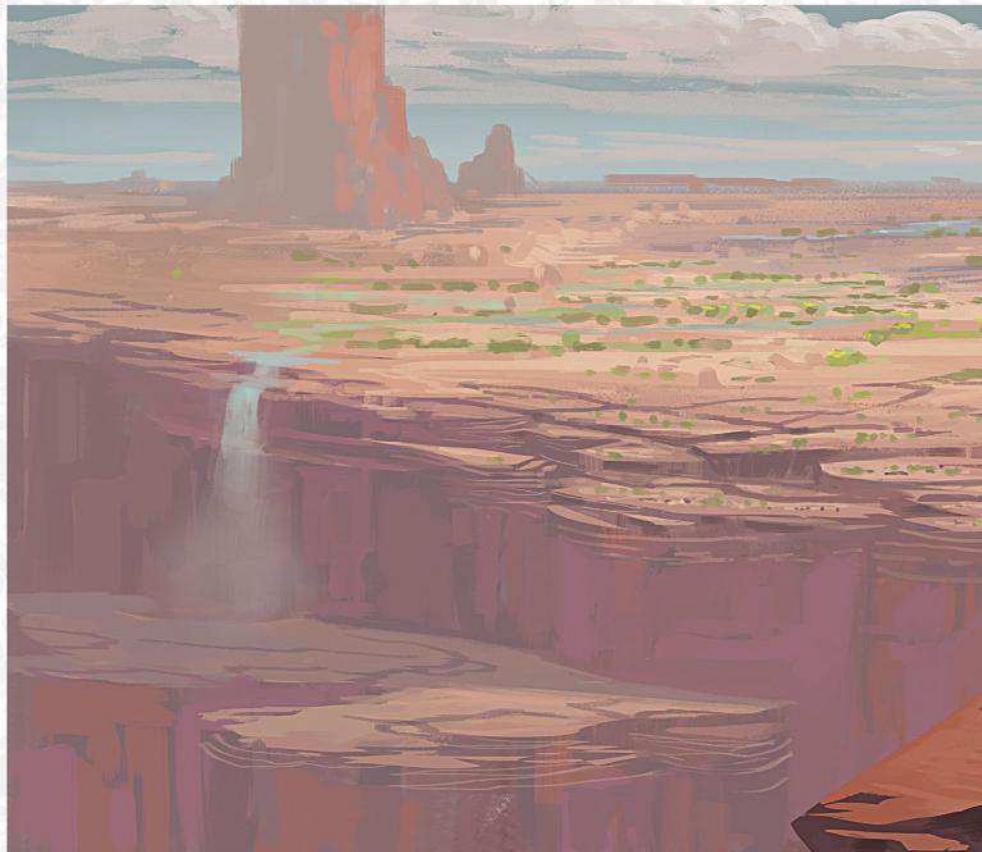
"A punk cyborg in standby mode. Learning to work with Marvelous Designer was very liberating for me, because I no longer need to find clothing references that fit what's in my head."



## Edmund Chan

**LOCATION:** Malaysia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator, SketchUp, ZBrush **WEB:** [www.artstation.com/popchan](http://www.artstation.com/popchan)

Edmund is a freelance concept artist from Malaysia. "I have great appreciation for natural environments and the culture that surrounds them," he says. He also finds inspiration in films and video games.





**1 POLLUTED SLUMS**

"I wanted to show that human beings are a greedy form of life. Even with a new Earth, pollution would not stop."

**2 RED PLANET**

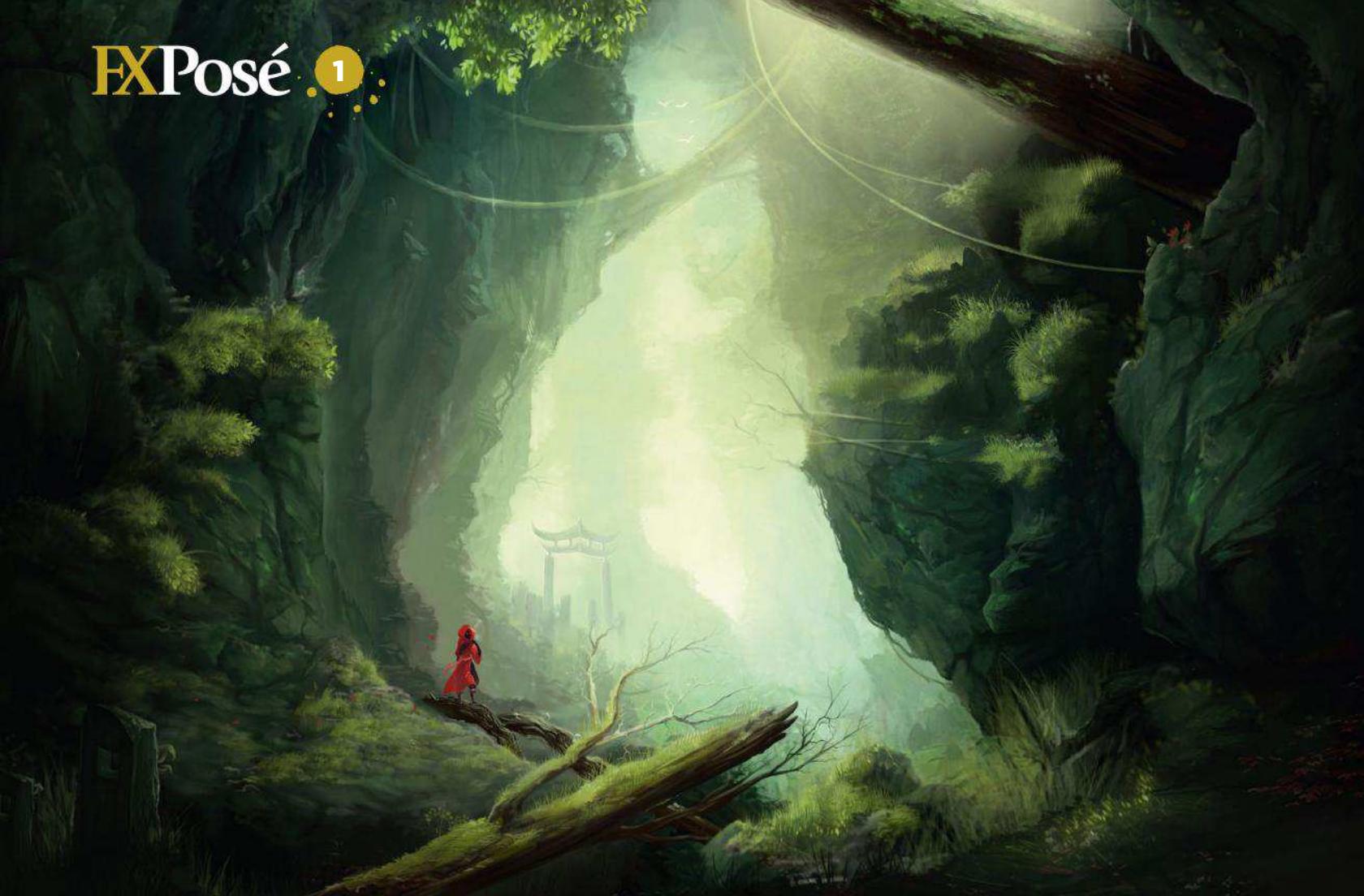
"A stranded astronaut discovers signs of life similar to ours on a distant planet."

**3 TRAVERSE**

"I'm always fascinated by space travel and the idea that someday, humans will find something familiar but yet alien."

**4 CANYON PARADISE**

"This piece is heavily inspired by classic cowboy movies. It depicts a traveller who stumbles upon a lush environment. It could be a mirage."



## Alicia Lamburd

**LOCATION:** Australia **MEDIA:** Krita, Photoshop, Sculpttris **WEB:** [www.artstation.com/alicialamburd](http://www.artstation.com/alicialamburd)

Aspiring concept artist Alicia taught herself digital painting using open source software such as Krita. “I always strive for a sense of scale in fantastical worlds filled with unknowns,” she says.

### 1 THE HIDDEN RAVINE

“This was my first digital landscape I drew back in 2015. I gave the original version a quick repaint in mid-2017 to bring it up to date a little bit.”

### 2 THE FORTRESS

“A quick piece to test new brushes and textures. I love the look of fortresses, especially those that sit in the kind of fantastical landscapes it would be impossible to construct such a thing in.”

2

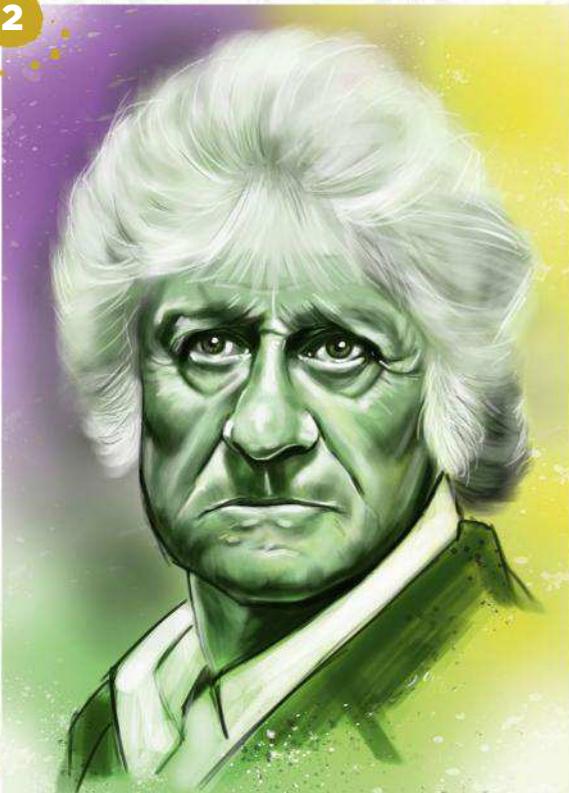
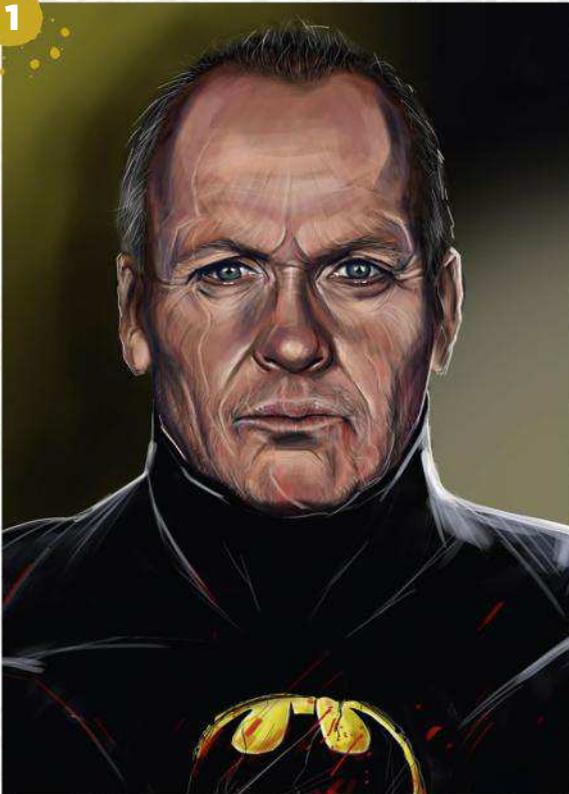




## Damian Edwardson

**LOCATION:** England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** [www.damianedwardsonart.com](http://www.damianedwardsonart.com)

Damian studied illustration before teaching himself digital art. “The best advice I got was treat digital painting like you would a traditional medium. It changed my whole approach,” he says.



### 1 **BATMAN: MY LIFE IS STILL COMPLEX**

“I’m intrigued by heroes and villains getting older and showing the signs of their past battles. For me Michael Keaton was, and still is, Batman.”

### 2 **THE THIRD DOCTOR**

“One of a series of pieces I’m doing on all the Doctors. Although Tom Baker was my Doctor, Jon Pertwee has a face that was designed to be painted. So I did.”

### 3 **DREDD: 40 LONG YEARS**

“I wanted to show the results of 40 years of patrolling the mean streets of Mega City One. I love Dredd - 2000 AD played a big part in my love of comics and art.”



## Erik Ly

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: [www.instagram.com/eriklyart](http://www.instagram.com/eriklyart)

Erik's work is characterised by crisp line work, powerful colours and thought-provoking imagery. As well as digital art, he also creates art videos for fun.

### 1 DROWNING

"The inspiration for this was my girlfriend's horrible commute to her tough job every day. This piece was very refreshing for me as I don't often use green colours in my artwork."

### 2 TO SERVE

"What can I say? I love samurai and skeletons. The original idea spawned from my back pain at the time and the back burster scene in the Alien Covenant trailer."



3



### 3 ASPIRATIONS

"I became obsessed with red-tailed monkeys after discovering them at San Diego Zoo, and was inspired to feature them in my art. This is my interpretation of a struggling artist."

## 4 ELEGY

"This started out as a material render test for myself, and developed into something very personal. I wanted to mix a very soft rendering style with my illustrative approach."



1



## Nicholas Stathopoulos

LOCATION: Australia MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: [www.nickstath.com](http://www.nickstath.com)

Nicholas works across the architecture and entertainment industries. His art combines destructive and overscaled structures with rural landscapes to create a sense of strangeness.

### 3 DOCK

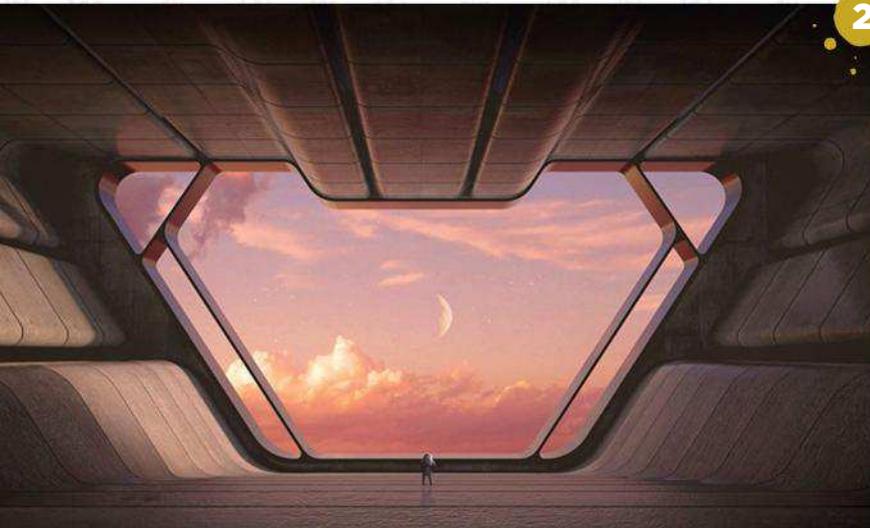
"The dystopic nature of this art depicts the start of a colonisation process taking place on another world, without any sympathy for the natural environment."

### 1 IN-HABITATION EPISODE 4

"Shipwrecks have played a role in representing untold stories and mystery. This image aims to pique the viewer's curiosity as this form washes up on a future coastline."

### 2 DUSK

"This image explores the purity of form and scale that's present in design, but also the importance of our view and our visual connection to the environment."



2



3



## Sandra Süsler

**LOCATION:** Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator **WEB:** [www.sandra-suessler.de](http://www.sandra-suessler.de)

Sandra is an illustrator, game artist and concept artist. She's studying communication design, but is also already working with clients on different game and film projects.

### 1 CONSTRAINED

"Sometimes you feel as if you're constrained by some invisible force, dragging you down. I have hope that I'll eventually break free from the chains made by myself."



## Eyal Navon

LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: eyaldraws.weebly.com

Eyal credits the online community with helping him develop as an illustrator. "At some point, my room became an oasis and I no longer felt alone as an artistic soul," he says.

1



### 1 BRING YOU THERE

"I love to bring stories into my pictures, and fill them with beautiful human emotions that I've experienced in my own life. Anyone should be able to understand or feel them."

### 2 YARA: NOT WITH ME

"Yara spearheads an anti-fascist movement in a post-apocalyptic age. Irrespective of her situation, she always has a good sense of humour. She's a bit like Deadpool, but more peaceful."

2

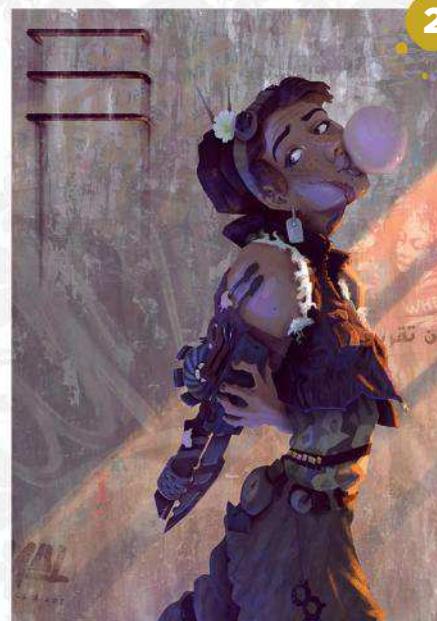
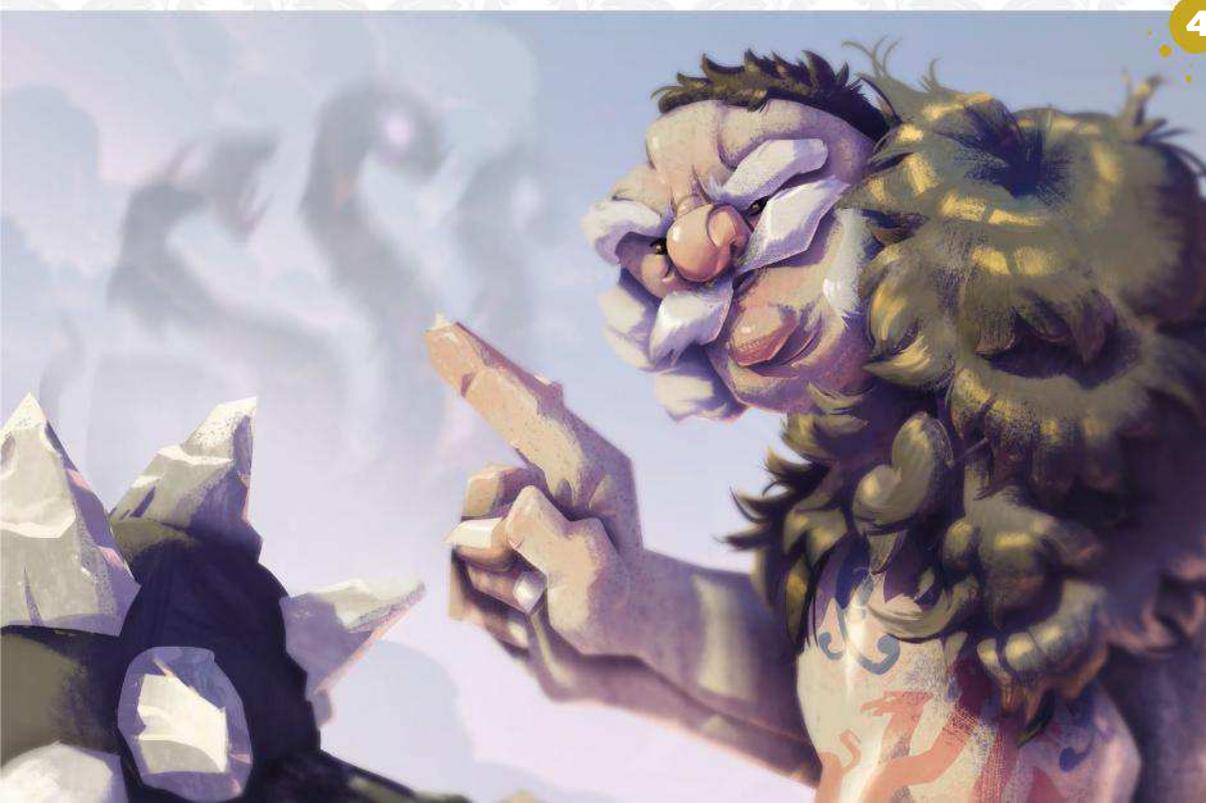


Photo by Alex Blainmayer



### 3 COWGIRL

"A wonderful young lady and her buddy. They wander among the red cliffs of Texas and embark on an adventure. Their goal? That's this magnificent madam's secret. The horse knows nothing about it."

### 4 BORIA'S LAST MISSION

"A portrait of Boria before his final fight against the three-headed Hydra. I created this character using the silhouette of a cloud from a photo I shot during a walk in the park."



## Siddhartha Valluri

**LOCATION:** India **MEDIA:** ZBrush, Photoshop, Blender, Fusion 360, SketchUp **WEB:** [www.siddharthavalluri.com](http://www.siddharthavalluri.com)

Siddhartha studied architecture before falling in love with game and film concept design. "I've travelled around India my whole life, which introduced me to a variety of cultures and architecture," he says.

### 1 STEALTH JET

"I did this to tweak my workflow between ZBrush, Blender and Photoshop. I drew inspiration from films to create a cinematic and atmospheric scene."

### 2 DEPARTURE

"This is my vision of an interstellar journey about to begin. The space elevator is a kind of umbilical cord connecting the space station to Mother Earth."





3

**3 CAPITOL COMPLEX**

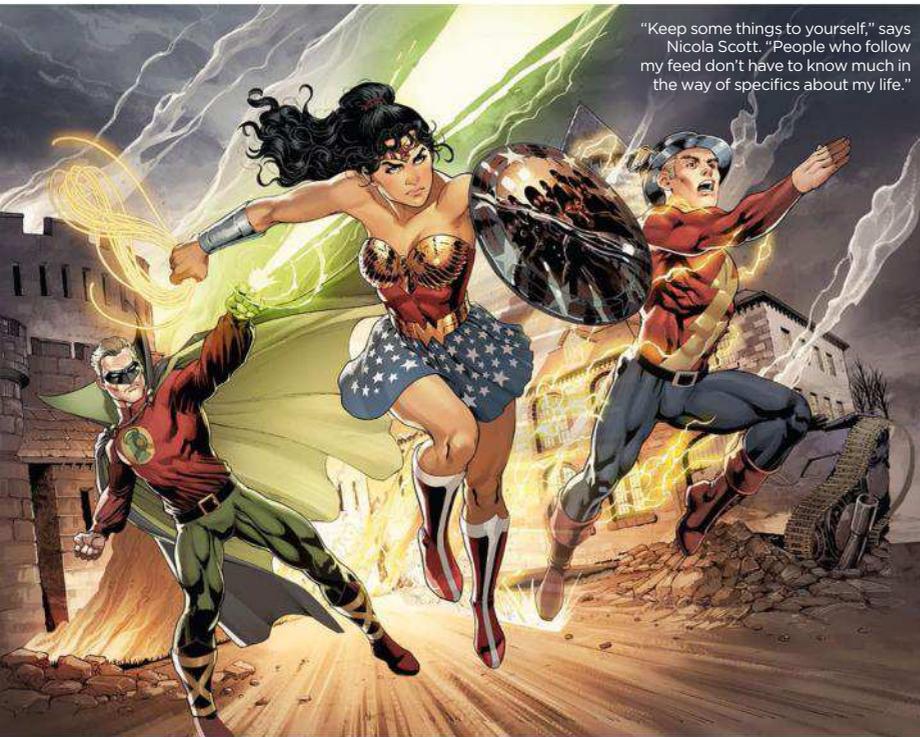
“The idea was to create an epic vista of a city with multiple points of interest, including the farmlands in the distance and a ring dividing the city into two.”



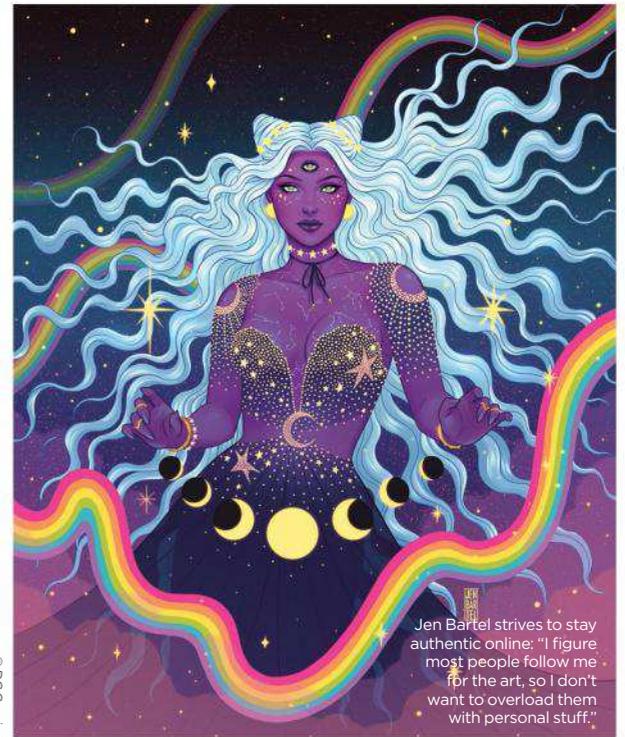
# ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY



"Keep some things to yourself," says Nicola Scott. "People who follow my feed don't have to know much in the way of specifics about my life."



Jen Bartel strives to stay authentic online: "I figure most people follow me for the art, so I don't want to overload them with personal stuff."

## Strike a balance between art and social media

**Sharing's caring** Can artists use social media without the platforms disrupting their work, asks **Dom Carter**

**Likes. Retweets. Upvotes. They've all become common ways to gauge the popularity of our thoughts, and for those in the creative industries, our work. But are sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram a blessing or a curse for artists?**

Just like any innovation, it all depends on how you use them. If you're monitoring the performance of your latest status before you go to bed, it might be time to reassess your relationship with social media. However, when used right, these platforms can reap amazing rewards.

"I've discovered so many new artists who inspire me every day just from their social media posts," says illustrator and Marvel comic artist **Jen Bartel**, who also uses social media to get her work in front of potential clients. "Working on comics often means working long hours in isolation, and finding those connections online is such an amazing lifeline for many of us," she says.

For Art Camp founder Noah Bradley, social media has overtaken traditional routes to exposure.



“Working on comics often means working long hours in isolation. Finding connections online is such a lifeline”



Despite the advantages of social media, Noah Bradley's wary of prioritising it. "Every minute posting on social media is a minute that you could have spent painting."



"I benefited from social media in building a fanbase for my work and connecting with fellow creators," **Noah** says.

"I think I'd have had a harder time becoming as well known as I am now without it."

It isn't all about business, though. For Sydney-based Wonder Woman artist Nicola Scott, living on the other side of the planet to where the rest



## CELEBRATE THE MAGIC

To mark 25 years of Magic: The Gathering, artists created imagery with 'vibrant renewal' in mind. Surprisingly, no one painted freshly baked birthday cakes. **Page 28**



## SPACE TO BREATHE

As well as containing digital and traditional workstations and a reference library, Jake Parker's studio also has a space for daily meditation. Ommm... **Page 30**



## GET A FREE ANNUAL!

Simply answer a few questions about the world's best digital art magazine and we'll give you a digital copy of the ImagineFX annual, worth £10! **Page 34**



Like many artists, Staz Johnson has benefitted professionally from social media. "I'm more visible as an artist. Offers of work have increased noticeably."

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

# STAZ JOHNSON

*Turns out there's an etiquette for everything, including social media*

### How do you juggle the personal and the professional on social media?

I keep anything personal to an absolute minimum, and I would never put photos of myself or my family on there. As much as possible, social media should be about the art.

### How do you use social media and stay productive?

I don't use Twitter on my phone so that's not a factor. I don't have any notifications going to my email if that's what you mean. If I have a spare five minutes, and I feel like dipping in, I will. I don't keep the Twitter window on my PC open at all times – that would be a risky mistake I think. I can resist anything except temptation, as they say.

### What should artists not do on social media?

I don't think there are any dos and don'ts specific to artists. Although, if you're a working professional, it's obviously not a good idea to tweet out artwork spoilers, so if I post 'work in progress' stuff, I try to make sure they're non-specific images, or zoomed-in close-ups.

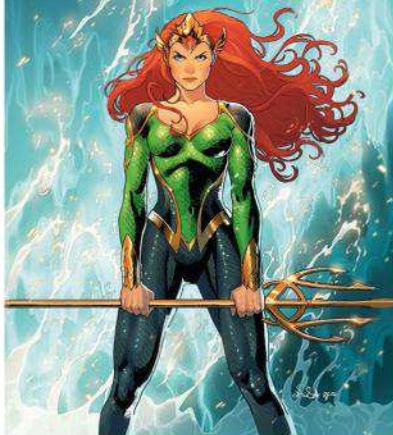
If you want to avoid controversy then it's probably not a good idea to get too outspoken about your own political outlook, as difficult as that is in the current political climate. That being said, it wouldn't take too much of a genius to see that I'm a lefty liberal at heart, by looking at a few of my retweets.



Staz is an English professional comic artist who has worked on *Batman*, *Spider-Man* and *2000 AD*.

<https://stazjohnson.deviantart.com/>

A love of work stops Nicola from getting distracted by social media. "I find it pretty easy to just not care what's happening on Twitter while I'm not there."



© DC Comics

of the industry is located feels less isolating thanks to social media. "I get far fewer opportunities to meet or catch up with peers, mentors and fans," **Nicola** says, "but through Twitter, Instagram and Facebook we can share in each others' triumphs and slumps, promote and share our work."



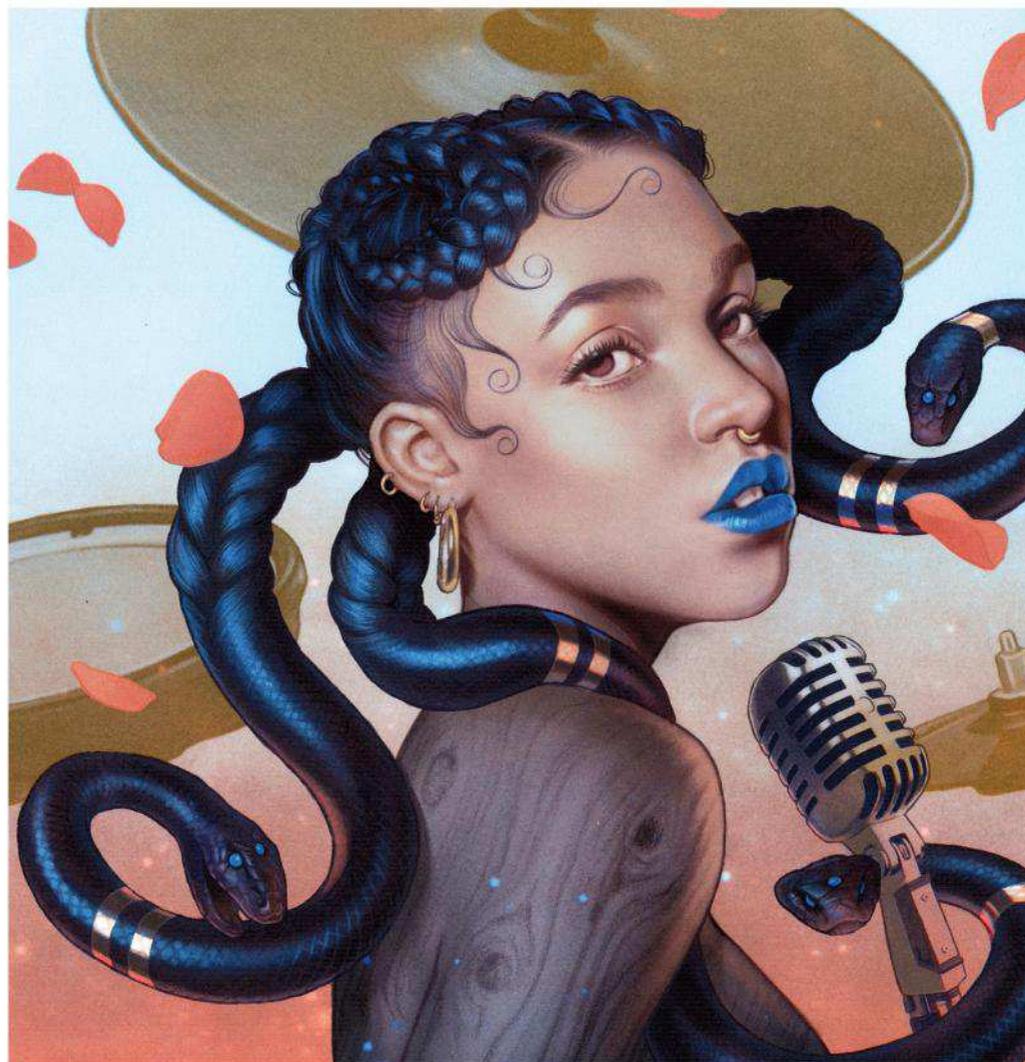
## TAKING TIME OUT

Despite these benefits, freelance illustrator **Charles Chaisson** is keen to



point out an important social media side-effect. "Social media prompts the release of dopamine, which is a chemical associated with pleasure in your brain," he says. "I think it's important to be cognizant of how that interaction affects us mentally."

Like many users, Charles is limiting his time on social media in reaction to this. "What I tend to do is make sure that my phone is out of my line of sight," he says. "It's pretty easy to forget about checking your phone



once it's not attached to your body, or sitting in front of you at all times."

However, there's more to managing a social media presence than willpower alone. With online profiles blurring the line between where a person ends and their work begins, it's important for artists to make clear the distinction between the two.

Jen uses her Twitter account for both work and fun, but errs towards the professional end of the spectrum. "I view social media as part of my

Charles reasons that social media has changed the industry landscape for the better. "Compared to the amount of access artists have to the world now, that reality happened for only a handful of artists before the age of the internet."

job," she says. "I also have designated times when I'm more active on it."

Yet even the best intentions can slip after a while. For artists struggling to use social media constructively, there are a few options to consider.

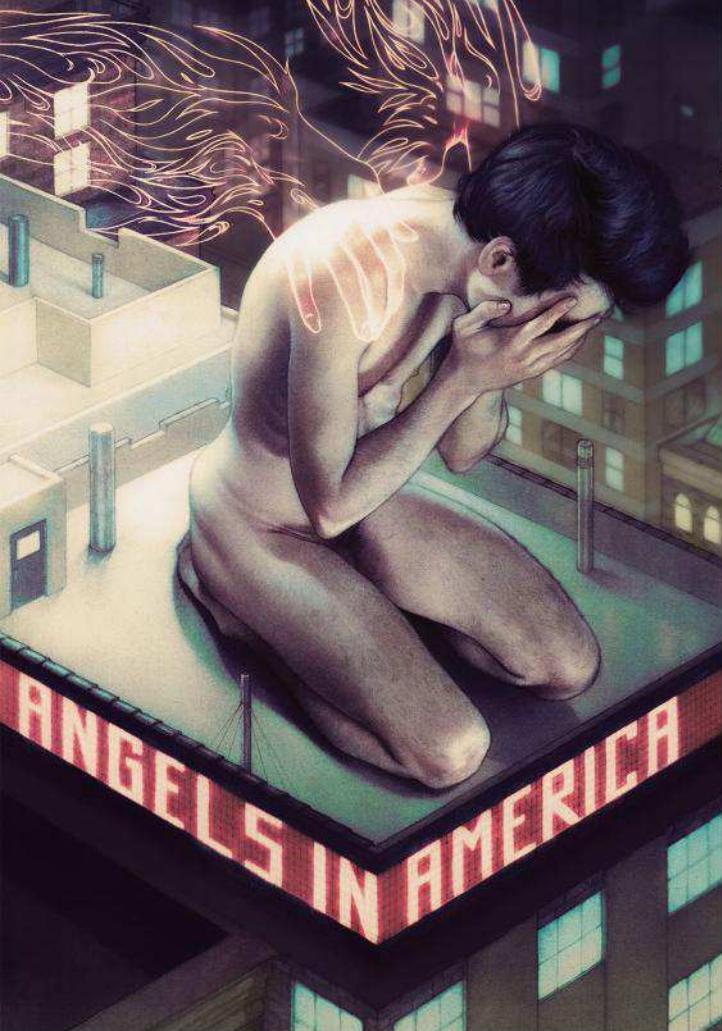
Scheduling updates through tools such as Hootsuite, TweetDeck or Buffer takes away the distraction of endlessly updating feeds. Users can simply plan their content in one batch and then check back in to take care of replies whenever suits them.

Another option is to set up a dedicated artist account across all platforms, while keeping personal profiles separate. This is a popular way to contain thoughts and opinions that don't need to find a wider audience. Although a batch of accounts isn't for everyone.

"That felt like way too much work for my taste," says Noah, who decided to step away from social media completely. "It was a source of stress I didn't need in my life."

Noah thinks that artists have a unique advantage on social media. "The majority of folks on the internet consume media, so the ability to produce media is powerful."

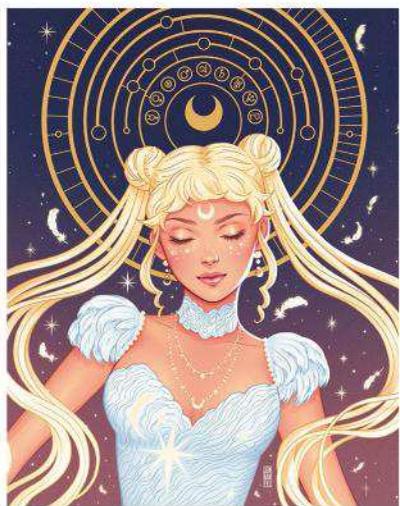




It turned out to be a good choice for Noah, with the cost of online popularity worth less than emotional wellbeing: "I'm free to dive right into my creations. There's no tickling feeling of social media at my back."

## ARTIST APPEAL

Artistic productivity isn't always hindered by social media. In fact, the platforms provide a useful way to work out a draft. "Sharing WIPs with followers usually gives me a sense of how people will respond to the final artwork," says Charles. "If you're friends with a lot of artists, sometimes they'll point out something



Internet popularity can be a double-edged sword, warns Jen Bartel. "The bigger your audience gets, the less you're viewed as a human being."

Social media helps Staz to combat self-doubt. "It's nice when people say good things about images you tweet, especially if it's people whose art you admire."



"Posting frequency as an artist tends to be important if you're trying to expand your following on social media," Charles says.

## “I love seeing other artists work, actually do the work, what their process is...”

that looks odd or needs to be tweaked that maybe you didn't notice while working on the image yourself."

"I love seeing other artists work," says Nicola. "It can be fascinating to discover where and when an artist chooses to 'finish' their work."

## DRAWN TOGETHER

Even with their tendency to play with algorithms and change how users see posts, social media sites remain popular with artists. "Social media gives artists publicity that enable us to show our art to people around the world – which is pretty incredible if you think about it," says Charles.

For artists, this publicity can be a revenue lifeline. "I think that just speaks to the fact that artists are



being increasingly devalued in the internet age, so any potential revenue streams are worth exploring," says comic book artist **Staz Johnson**.

Nothing's perfect though, and following a recent migration of artists to the promising new pastures of ad-free social media site Vero, Jen thinks a chronological timeline is what creatives are crying out for.

"Instagram's new algorithms have hurt a lot of people and the minute there's a comparable platform, they're going to jump ship," she says. "I'm not sure that platform is necessarily Vero, but fingers crossed something comparable will be released soon."

Ultimately, Jen still thinks that social media can be a force for good. "Before social media, artists had to rely a lot more on getting their work published through official channels. Now we control how much content we put in front of our followers. 🍷"



"First and foremost, the art needs to be an appropriate visual representation of the card mechanics," says Cynthia Sheppard.



Magic writers and artists work together to clearly illustrate in-game visual metaphors, such as drawing a card or countering a spell.

# Celebrating 25 years of Magic: The Gathering

**Magic marker** Visit the plane of Dominaria in the latest Magic: The Gathering set that salutes the trading card game's past, present and exciting future



"Card art has many jobs to do," says Magic: The Gathering senior art director **Cynthia Sheppard**. For the latest

set the card art not only had to celebrate the game's 25th anniversary, it also had to introduce characters and fit into a unique frame treatment for new card types.

Located on the plane of Dominaria - home to a wide variety of ecologies

and terrains - the illustrations in this set relied on Magic's detailed world guides to capture a specific visual identity. "'Vibrant renewal' was one key theme in Dominaria," Cynthia explains, "and one way that was expressed visually was by showing the plane during springtime."

Orchestrated by senior art director Mark Winters, the art in Dominaria features work by Jenn Ravenna, Manuel Castañón and Magic's in-house

graphic designer James Arnold, as well as Magic: The Gathering: Masters 25 artist, Jehan Choo. "We look for artists who demonstrate great craftsmanship," says Cynthia, "and who can illustrate things that don't

**“We all care about making a great game, just like our artists care about making great art”**



Magic art has evolved alongside its artists, gameplay, and the fantasy illustration community," says Cynthia.



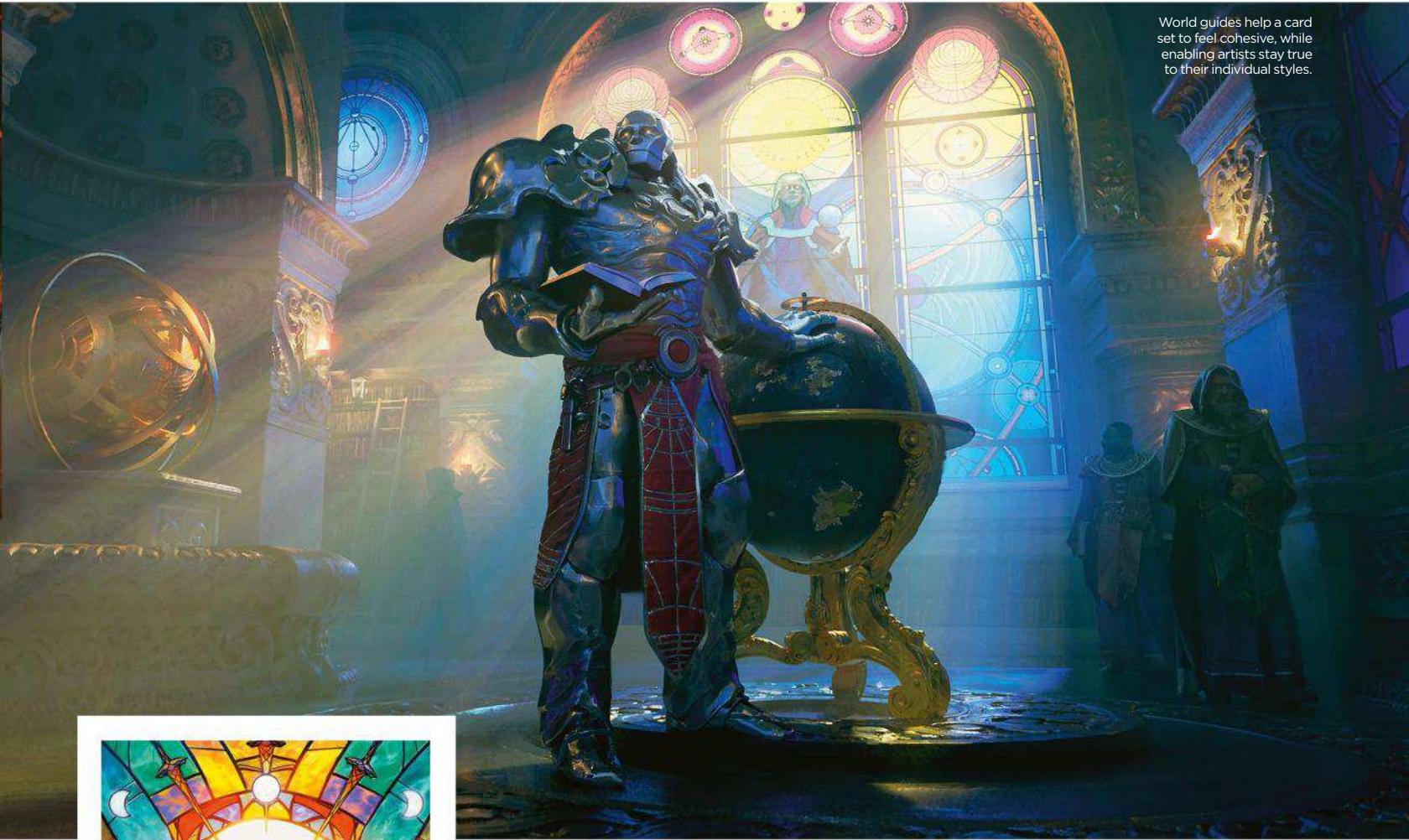
"Magic doesn't have a house style," says Cynthia, "though most card art is centred around imaginative realism."

exist in real life... and make them look awesome in a two-inch box."

Cynthia pinpoints the one trait that's contributed to the card game's success. "It's passion - we all care deeply about making a great game, just like our artists care deeply about making great art."

Visit <https://ifxm.ag/dominaria> to see more art from Dominaria. And if you're interested in working for Wizards of the Coast, the publishers of Magic: The Gathering, then learn how to submit your portfolio by visiting <https://ifxm.ag/wotc>.

World guides help a card set to feel cohesive, while enabling artists to stay true to their individual styles.



A new card type, called Saga, plays along a linear narrative and features vertical illustrations.



Visual information about environment, people, creatures and motifs are all recorded in Magic's world guides.

All images © Wizards of the Coast LLC



## Jake Parker

**Creatively engaged** From illustrating to studying, every aspect of this artist's studio is designed for a smooth flow of work



I've got a 120-square foot corner of a larger office space, and I love it here. It's located about 15 minutes from my house, in downtown Provo, Utah, which gives me just enough time to decompress during my commute.

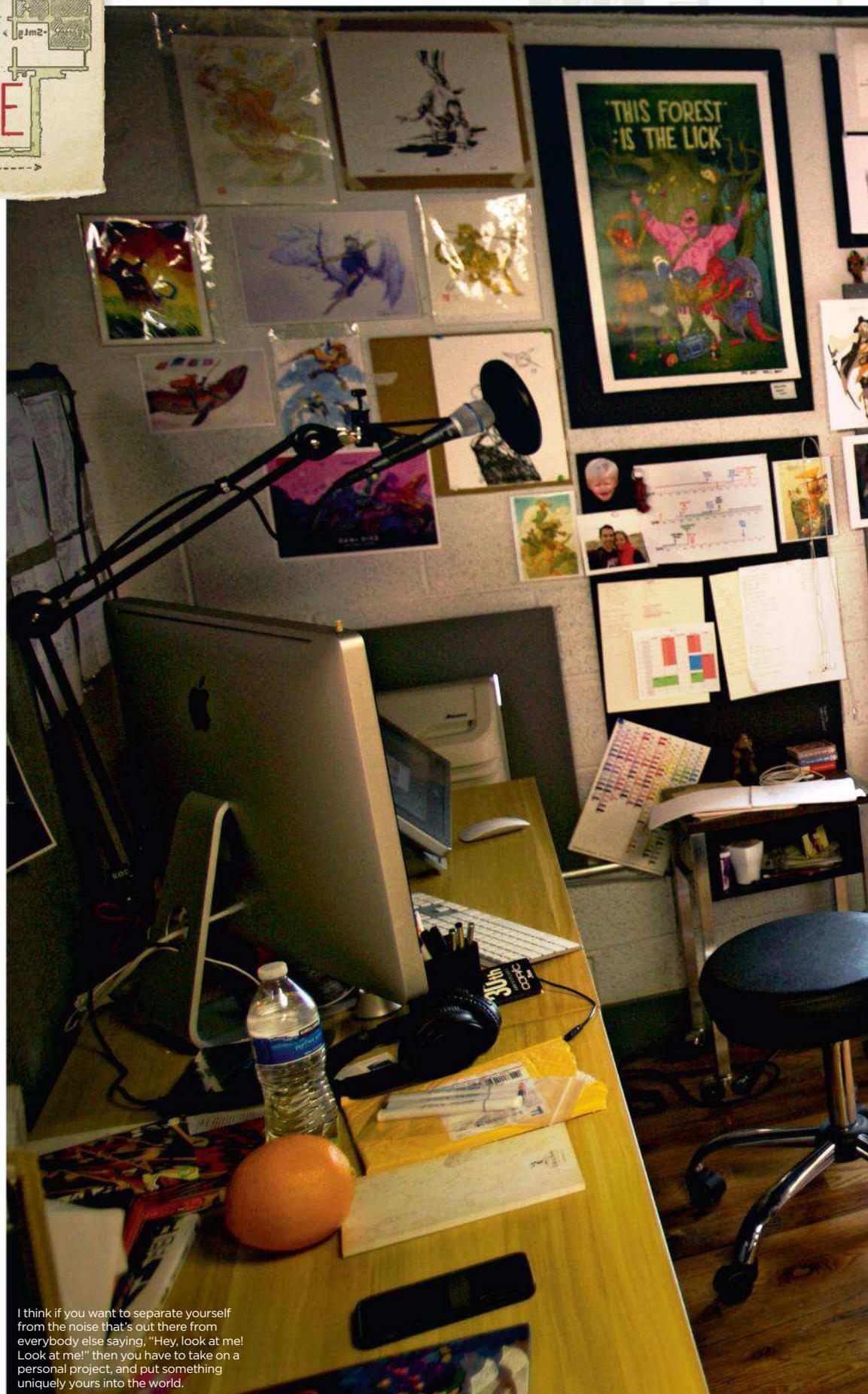
I designed my workspace for focus and productivity. For example, when I'm illustrating I don't want to be distracted by emails or Twitter, so I've put my computer on the opposite side of my drawing desk.

In keeping with the theme of focus I've divided the space into three sections. The first is my computer station. Here I have an oldish (2012) iMac and an even older (2007) Wacom Cintiq that's running Adobe CS6 software and my favourite program for making comics: Clip Studio Paint.

### TALKING PICTURES

I have a mic hooked up to my computer that I use to record audio for my podcast and YouTube videos. The left side of my computer station is where I keep my reading library and where I write my daily journal, study and meditate. The drawers that are beneath the table house art supplies and original art.

The second station is my reference library. I collect art books and graphic novels. My philosophy on book buying is that if it can help me become ➤➤



I think if you want to separate yourself from the noise that's out there from everybody else saying, "Hey, look at me! Look at me!" then you have to take on a personal project, and put something uniquely yours into the world.

Photo by Jake Johnson



“My office is located about 15 minutes from my house, which gives me just enough time to decompress during my commute”

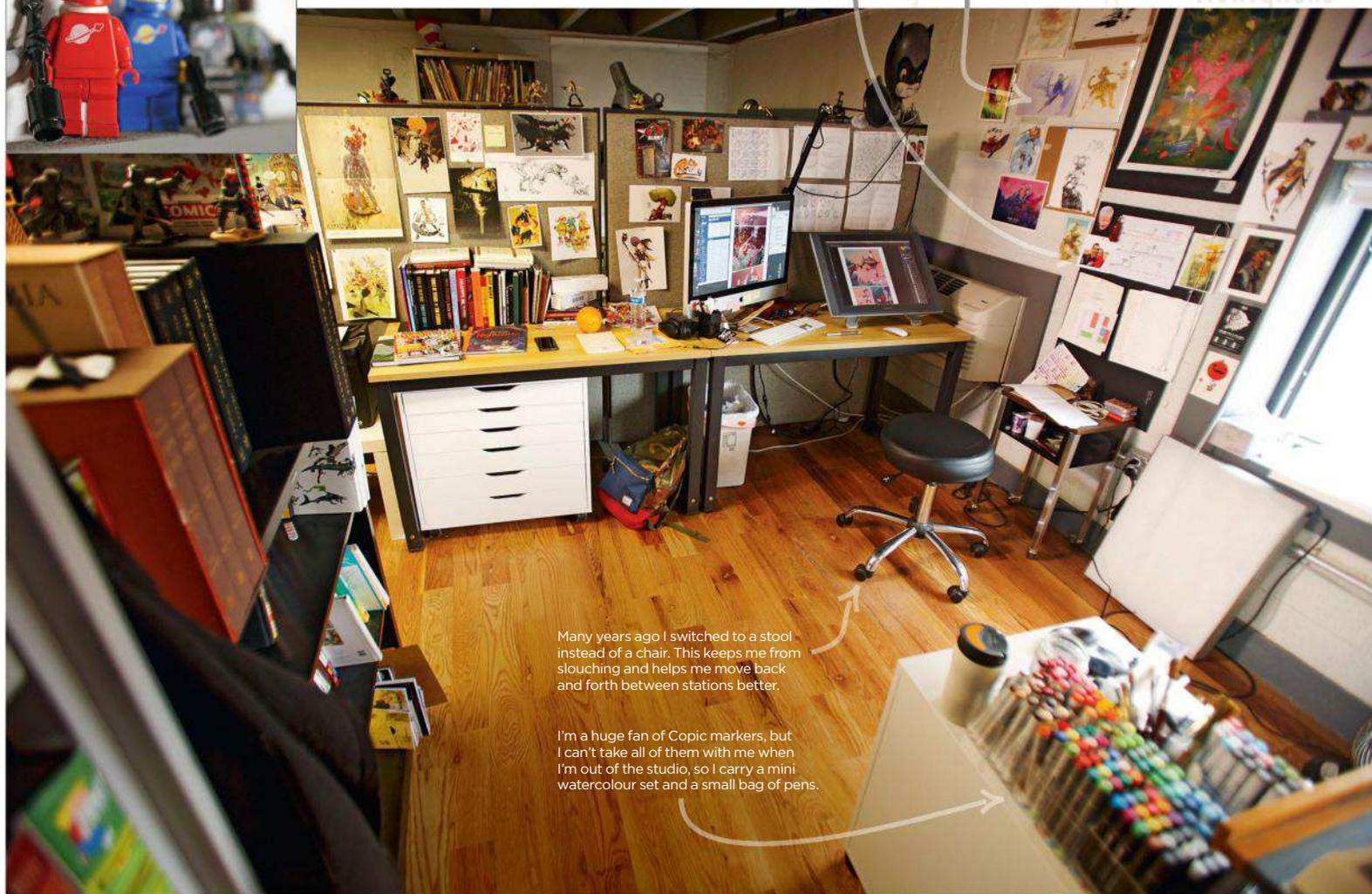
# ImagineNation *Artist in Residence*



I grew up spending days playing with LEGO, building little worlds in my bedroom. Recently I made a LEGO version of my comic character Skull Chaser.

This wall is where I keep a schedule and ideas for future projects. I like to be able to refer to the schedule quickly, which is why it's nearby and easily visible.

I like to keep images on my walls that inspire me. Many are small prints I've picked up at conventions, but there are a few original art pieces that I've traded with other artists.



Many years ago I switched to a stool instead of a chair. This keeps me from slouching and helps me move back and forth between stations better.

I'm a huge fan of Copic markers, but I can't take all of them with me when I'm out of the studio, so I carry a mini watercolour set and a small bag of pens.

➤➤ more creative or better informed on the craft of illustration and comics, then I buy a copy. Although I don't read every book regularly or consistently, it's nice to have them there in case I find myself in a pinch, and need fresh ideas for a project.

The books are organised by type. I have a section for foreign graphic novels, domestic graphic novels, how-to books, artist specific art books, animation art books, film/video game art books and sketchbook collections.

## MAKING LIGHT WORK

To the left of my reference library is my drawing desk. I've positioned it to the right of the window so the natural light doesn't cast a shadow over my drawing hand. I keep the table flat so I can put plenty of reference books around me. On top of the drawing desk is a "My Drawing Board" from France. This enables me to work

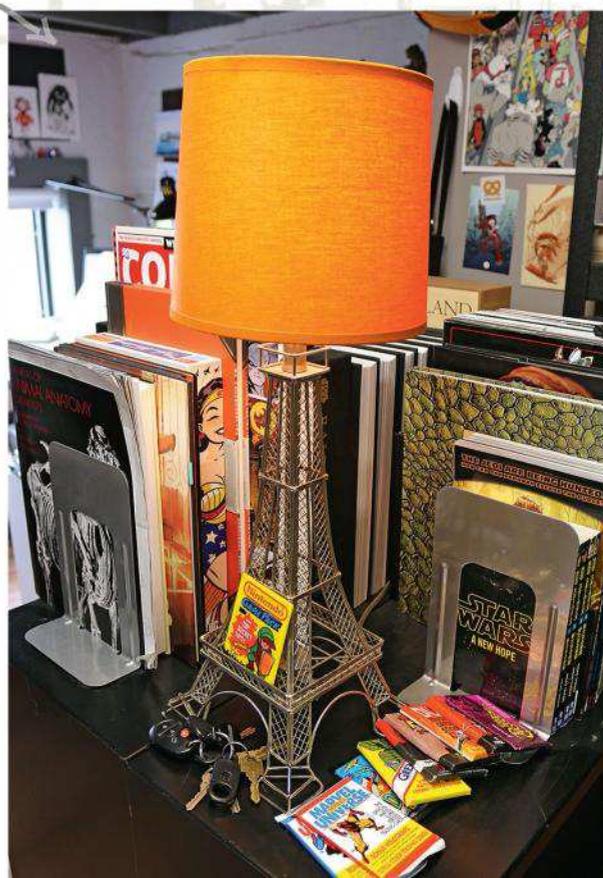
My wife got me this Eiffel Tower lamp almost 20 years ago. It's been a fixture in every studio I've worked in. I love its warm light; it reminds me of her.

upright, which saves my back from unnecessary strain.

To the right of my desk is another set of drawers. I keep my pencil sharpener, markers and brushes on the top for easy access. Inside the drawers are more art supplies.

The main thing I love about this space is the natural light. I worked for over a decade in a basement, so it's nice to finally see the light of day while I draw! All in all, it's a great space that gets me pumped creatively every time I sit down to work.

*Jake is an illustrator and cartoonist with several graphic novels and over 10 picture books to his name. For 12 years he worked on several animated feature films and other productions before pursuing a career as an independent artist. He launched Inktober in 2008. See his art at [www.mrjakeparker.com](http://www.mrjakeparker.com).*



# Artist news, software & events



I keep this Admiral Ackbar figure right next to my monitor to remind me to avoid traps, like spending too much time surfing the web.

The images in front of my drawing are reference images for the current project I'm working on. These images are changed out pretty regularly.

The university in my town was getting rid of these book shelves so I snagged them for \$30. It's the best \$30 I've ever spent.

My library editions are cherished treasures. Bill Watterson, David Roberts, Mike Mignola and Ralph McQuarrie have all been hugely influential in my work.

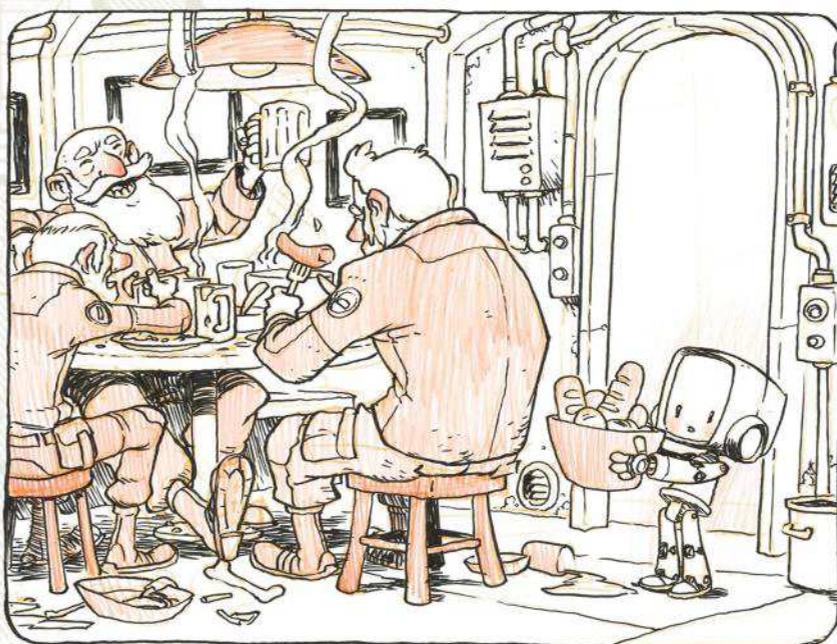
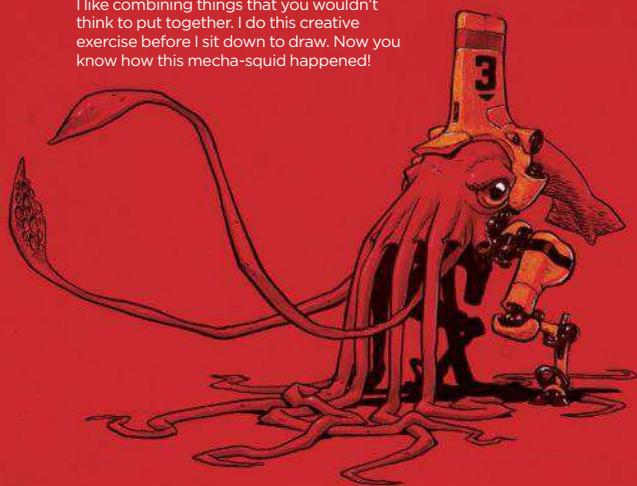


I've had a subscription to National Geographic for almost two decades. I find it to be a never-ending source of inspiration for characters, locations and situations for my comic stories.

Next to the National Geographics is my growing collection of Inktober books people have self-published and sent to me. I love seeing what people do with the challenge.

“ I worked for over a decade in a basement, so it's nice to see daylight while I draw ”

I like combining things that you wouldn't think to put together. I do this creative exercise before I sit down to draw. Now you know how this mecha-squid happened!



I try to tell little self-contained stories in my drawings. My hope is that the viewer is taken somewhere when they look at a piece. I want them to know what happened before this image and what happens next.



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>



# Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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



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## The traditional vs digital art debate rages on...

In response to the question on whether we'd like to have more traditional artwork in ImagineFX, I have to agree with the reader in the April issue. I buy the magazine because I want to improve my skills in digital painting. I do love the combination of articles about digital painting, 3D, traditional and so on because there's always something I can learn from it. But in the end, my interest doesn't lie in traditional art. ImagineFX should keep its main focus on digital art. The amount spent on traditional art is just about right for me.

**Laura Heuwerjans, via email**

**Claire replies** I hear you, Laura! Despite being a digital artist, you're happy with the current level of traditional art content in the magazine. I took the decision to include traditional artists in ImagineFX because I felt that we were excluding a rich seam of talent who could bring so much to our magazine. I also saw that lots of digital artists were experimenting with traditional methods, so I felt that I should explore a broader scope of mediums within our pages.

When I first began buying ImagineFX, six years ago, I was dedicated to digital art. Every issue that came through my door was a wonderful treat, full of inspiration and new things to try. But over time I became much more traditional – the digital nut who first bought ImagineFX wouldn't recognise the artist I am today! But I still savour every issue, and this is mostly due to the inclusion of traditional art.



We think featuring traditional artists is a great way to get insights and advice on different art techniques, as well as a more balanced view of the industry.



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?**

Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit <http://ifxm.ag/160-ifx> for details.



In issue 160 Dustin Nguyen painted this comic cover using watercolours with a touch of Photoshop.

The traditional art section gives a focus to an underrepresented section of fantasy art. Its cutting, or total removal, would alienate a portion of your readers and reinforce the misconception that good fantasy art is only ever digital. I hope to submit my work very soon, as a dedicated mixed media artist.

**Morrighan Corbel, via email**

**Claire replies** Thank you, Morrighan. I like to think that by reading ImagineFX, readers will get a taste of other art forms and styles, which will only enrich their endeavours. Lots of artists use mixed media, and I feel it would be a shame not to include these artworks.

I wanted to weigh in on the debate about traditional art versus digital art. First, an understanding of perspective, anatomy, lighting, colour and composition are of benefit to all artists regardless of their medium of choice. There's much to be learned from seeing how others approach their art that can be transferable to other mediums.

Let's also not forget Bob Ross was doing speed painting with his wet-on-wet oil painting technique well before digital speed painting was possible. I'd be fascinated to see how today's digital artists, more commonly associated with 'speed painting', might tackle the same kinds of subject matter as Bob.

How about taking a single subject and seeing how Bob Ross, or another traditional artist, would have tackled it. Then go on to show how digital artists can utilise tools available to them to also produce detailed paintings in 30 minutes or less. I think it would be fascinating to compare different approaches leading digital artists would use now, and compare the results.

**Jonathan Harley, via email**

**Claire replies.** I agree, Jonathan – regardless of the medium you choose, you still have to master the basics of art. I hope that we deliver this as a package.



New works that have grabbed our attention



**Kellie Marks**  
[@hellcat\\_illustration](https://www.instagram.com/hellcat_illustration)



**Patrick Jones**  
[@pjartworks](https://www.facebook.com/pjartworks)



**Carlos Suñé**  
[@carlos\\_sunye](https://www.instagram.com/carlos_sunye)

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





**FOREGONE KINGS**

"This piece is part of a larger story of mine. The story revolves around a young girl who's learned how to awaken the giants of the Earth, the Thirteen Kings."

# Allen Williams

The American illustrator and concept artist tells **Gary Evans** how he teases out imagery from his subconscious using prose and poetry



## FALL OF NIGHT

"I had an idea of the piece's direction from the start. It grew from the centre out and I used graphite on Stonehenge cream spiral journal paper."

**A**llen Williams moved around a lot when he was younger. A month here, six weeks there. In total, he attended more than 20 high schools.

His dad's job meant they were often on the road. They lived in small rental apartments or hotels, Allen's "most relied-upon distractions" became reading and drawing. "The easiest things to come by were paper and

pencils," the artist says. "They were nomad-friendly endeavours. I think the immersion into various genres of fiction coupled with the fact that I travelled so much combined to make me someone who spends a lot of time in my own world."

And what a world. Allen's art comes crawling off the page at you: weird monochrome figures, the human and the human-like. Something is ➤➤

## Artist PROFILE

**Allen Williams**

**Location:** US

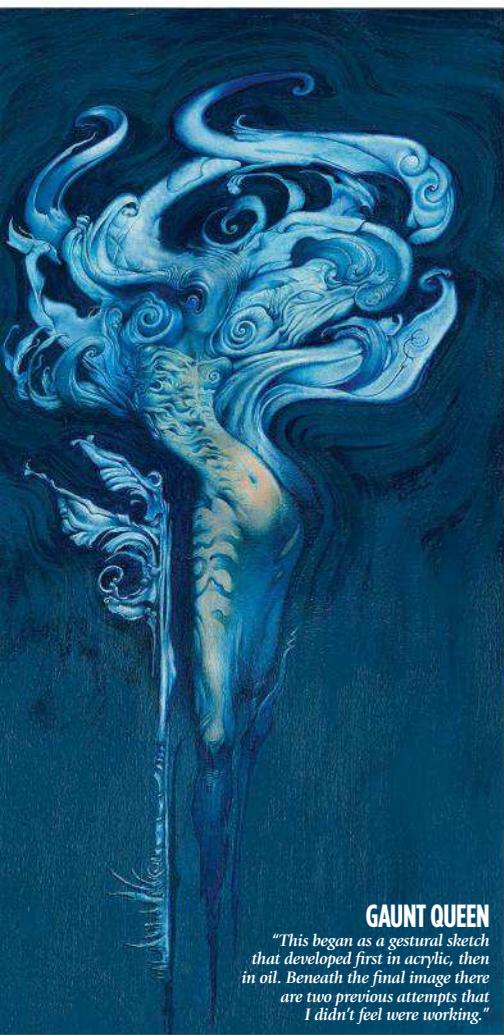
**Favourite artists:** John Jude Palencar, Hans Bellmer, Frank Frazetta, HR Giger, Zdzisław Beksiński, Andrej Dugin



and Olga Dugina

**Media used:** Pencil, graphite, oils and acrylics

**Web:** [www.allenwilliamsstudio.com](http://www.allenwilliamsstudio.com)



## GAUNT QUEEN

*"This began as a gestural sketch that developed first in acrylic, then in oil. Beneath the final image there are two previous attempts that I didn't feel were working."*

➔ always going on in his work, some story simmering away under the surface. Maybe a bit of free association too. Perhaps it's something in his subconscious that sees all those weird faces staring out at him from the graphite dust that he piles on to the page. His job is to tease them out. The result is occasionally dreamy, fantastical, but more often than not it's dark and unsettling. Allen believes his love for this dark world is a fire illuminating it.

## THE COLLEGE DROPOUT

Allen got into comic books before he could read. He remembers staring at the pictures for hours at a time. Long after becoming a capable reader, he continued to follow the stories through the pictures alone.

He liked horror and read William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* when he was seven. Allen found even the most horrific of horror plots "much less worrisome" than real life. He also trained in martial arts, specialising in



## OCCULTATION

*"I did this with graphite and oil on board. It was an effort to push my graphite wash process to a larger format."*

“Trail and error’s taught me a lot. If there’s something I want to know, I’ve become good at Googling”

the Shotokan style of karate. “It made me less... breakable. I loved to fight when I was younger.”

He never considered making a career out of art. He went to college as a business major – which lasted one day. He took the pre-entrance creativity test at the small community college and received the highest score of all first-year students. One of the college counsellors suggested that he should have a word with the art teachers.

Allen switched to a larger university, where he felt out of place in fine art classes, but got on well in illustration. He started to secure freelance work and steadily build up a portfolio. Someone told him nobody ever asks a freelance illustrator where they went to school. So he quit.

“The only people who usually ask where I went to school are students,” he says. “Most of what I’ve learned has been through trial and error, ➔”





## FINDING YOUR VOICE

Allen Williams explains how his unique art style comes from deep within

"I'd say my work is an exploration of my subconscious – at least, at the beginning. My conscious mind does eventually take the lead, but that's usually after I've started the process. I feel like you might describe my work as organically directed growth. In the past, I've equated it to a graphite virus, infecting the paper.

I usually have a narrative that starts developing, assembling itself as I go along, and frequently a written narrative accompanies the work. I'll often use words in this narrative that I don't know, but they sound correct, and when I have later done the research, they end up having a meaning that works – likely, because I've read so much that I've come across these words and phrases and forgotten them. Or it's magic. That works for me, too.

For my illustration the Stillborn King, I wrote the following piece of prose: 'He is borne from the broken heart of the world / He draws close / The Dread walker / The Stillborn king / The Unarmed man / Set in opposition to the men of violence, the men of pain / And their mouths shall be filled with molten lead.'

A common theme in my work, which many miss, is the idea that beauty doesn't equal good and the grotesque isn't an indication of evil. The same with dark and light: there are as many wretched things that happen in the day, as in the night, if you're paying attention. Many of the beings that inhabit my imagery are guardians of a sort, such as the Stillborn King.

I use visual metaphors to combat the violence I see. As an artist, it's one of the ways I speak against it. This happens frequently in my personal work. I think, as an artist, it's best to just do what you want, as well as you can, and let others decide how they want to define it for themselves."

### THE STILLBORN KING

*"At the time, this was one of my largest drawings. I developed it in pencil from a series of sketches and false starts."*



## HAND OF THE MOTHER

*"This piece began with a narrative about a mother seeking vengeance, and that informed the drawing."*



## THE LOTUS KING

*"He actually started out as a sketch about something else entirely, but with personal work, I always allow myself to follow the idea if it's working."*

## KITH

*"This piece was a representation of my frustration with current events and the tendency to exclude those whose differences make them targets."*



➡ seeking out focused seminars, such as the Illustration Master Class, and if there's something specific I want to know, I've become good at Googling."

Allen started full-time as a freelancer in 1988. In those days, he found it hard to get his work in front of the right people. And when he did, it didn't pay. Some jobs he earned just \$10. "I'd do just about anything," he says. "I guess I was willing to pay my dues."

He remembers a commission on a game, Car Wars: "They wanted mounted gun turrets on cars, all done with believable proportions – perfectly reasonable expectations for that kind of game, but it just wasn't me."

He stuck at it. Better jobs eventually found him. This sort of persistence is essential: as a freelancer, if you keep going long enough, eventually there's a snowball effect. More work, better jobs. A bit of luck helps. And you need to put the effort in, too. But the struggle can be beneficial: "I like to



**AETHER**

"An exploratory piece in powdered graphite, pencil and oil, where I made shapes and nudged them into representational elements."

“ I discovered very quickly that if I didn't have a work ethic, I'd never get anything done ”

say," Allen says, "I've never been cursed with early success."

Allen enjoyed freelance jobs for card game Magic: The Gathering, toy company Hasbro and publisher Tor, but he soon realised that most "contract work" didn't suit him.

It wasn't until his son was born in 2002 that Allen started to take his work seriously: "I discovered very quickly that if I didn't have a work ethic, a routine, I'd never get anything done, or not enough anyway. My output, my speed, increased exponentially after that."

### ADDICTIVE FILM WORK

It paid off in 2010 when Allen got a concept artist job for the director Guillermo Del Toro (Pan's Labyrinth, Pacific Rim, The Shape of Water). The film never came out. But Allen found out how exciting – and stressful – it was working in the movies. He was hooked. He went on to work on several



### WORMWOOD PRINCE

"The narrative for this piece begins: 'I was born in the heart of the fire that made the sun... all suns.' It's a small graphite piece of another guardian-type figure."

more films, including Darren Aronofsky's Noah.

Allen felt restricted by freelance jobs early in his career, but while working with people like Del Toro and Aronofsky, he learned to work with those restrictions rather than fight them: "To do contract work means that you understand your personal narrative may not be applicable to their story. Stylistically, process has to accommodate levels of approval. I can't just start and finish. I need the

director or production manager to be involved to ensure the direction is appropriate to the film. There are times when it's in perfect alignment with what I'd have done for myself, but you can't be too attached because often it's not and needs to be tweaked to fall in the right groove."

### IT'S LIKE EATING

A piece in graphite takes Allen between three days and three weeks to complete. It depends on the size ➡



## WORKSPACE

Allen's desk is often "littered with almost any pencil you can imagine." His favourites are the Tombow Mono 100 4B and Uni Mitsubishi Hi-Uni 10B.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

Allen can spend as long as three weeks on a single pencil drawing "depending on its size and complexity."

## THE MOON THIEF

Allen explains how he pushes and pulls an image from some graphite powder

"For this particular piece I started with a panel of Ampersand claybord. Initially, I took a damp magic-eraser sponge and used it to spread graphite powder about on the board until an interesting rhythm of shapes and textures emerged. I pushed and pulled the shapes using the damp sponge to lift up the graphite and move it around.

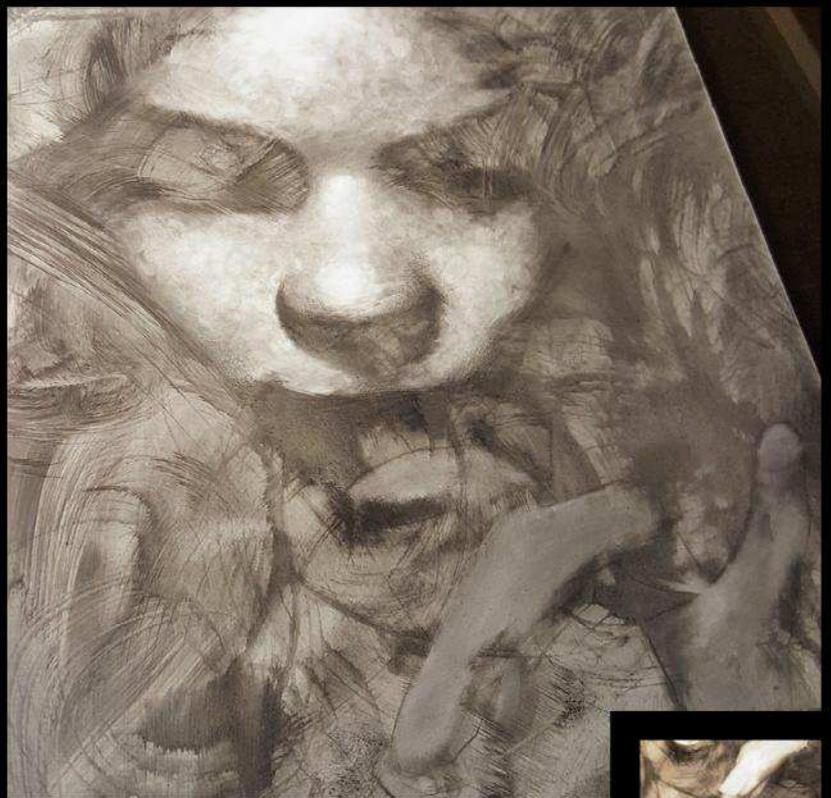
Once I was satisfied with the rhythm of the elements I started to define them by picking out and rendering little bits and pieces here and there. It's at this point the idea of a face come through.

I could see that the texture started to take shape, but the piece as a whole was still developing. I started placing the areas of a face by lifting out the highlight with a kneaded eraser, abrasive pencil-type eraser, and a small Sakura electric eraser. I further defined the facial features by drawing into it with very soft leaded pencils - 4B-10B.

To balance the composition I added a hand shape that was posed in the manner that you can see in the finished piece, but I still had no idea about what she might be holding, which would solidify the narrative.

Then I was listening to the news while working and heard someone say the words: 'They're stealing from us. It's not fair.' It was then that her narrative self-assembled in my head. It became: 'You have taken what does not belong to you. Five days hence I will take the Moon.' That's where the crescent moon idea came from.

I placed the crescent moon in the piece using the same additive-subtractive technique. I made a crescent-moon cut-out to use as an eraser shield and to create precise edges, a coat of spray gloss, acrylic-crystal, clear-type varnish, and I'm done."



You have taken what does not belong to you.  
Five days hence I will take the Moon.



## POEM

Many of Allen's pieces begin with a prose-poem narrative in which he introduces us to the story world and its characters.



**THE MOON THIEF**

*"I did this for an online gallery and, again, I was pushing the control of the chaotic medium on a small scale. I did this piece with powdered graphite and pencil on Ampersand claybord."*



➔ and the complexity. His favourite materials are the Tombow Mono 100 4B and Uni Mitsubishi Hi-Uni 10B pencils, graphite powder and kneaded erasers, usually on watercolour paper.

Paintings take longer. He likes Acryla gouache acrylics and Liquitex and Old Holland oil paints. He collects references, keeps sketchbooks, and journals. "Sometimes I'm just along for the ride and the piece is driving, other times I know where I want to go. I allow myself that freedom with personal work."

Freelance jobs need a bit more planning, more of a fixed routine. And family stuff comes first. After living in over 40 states, he's now settled on the Gulf Coast with his wife, children and dogs. His studio door is always open and his son and daughter like to work

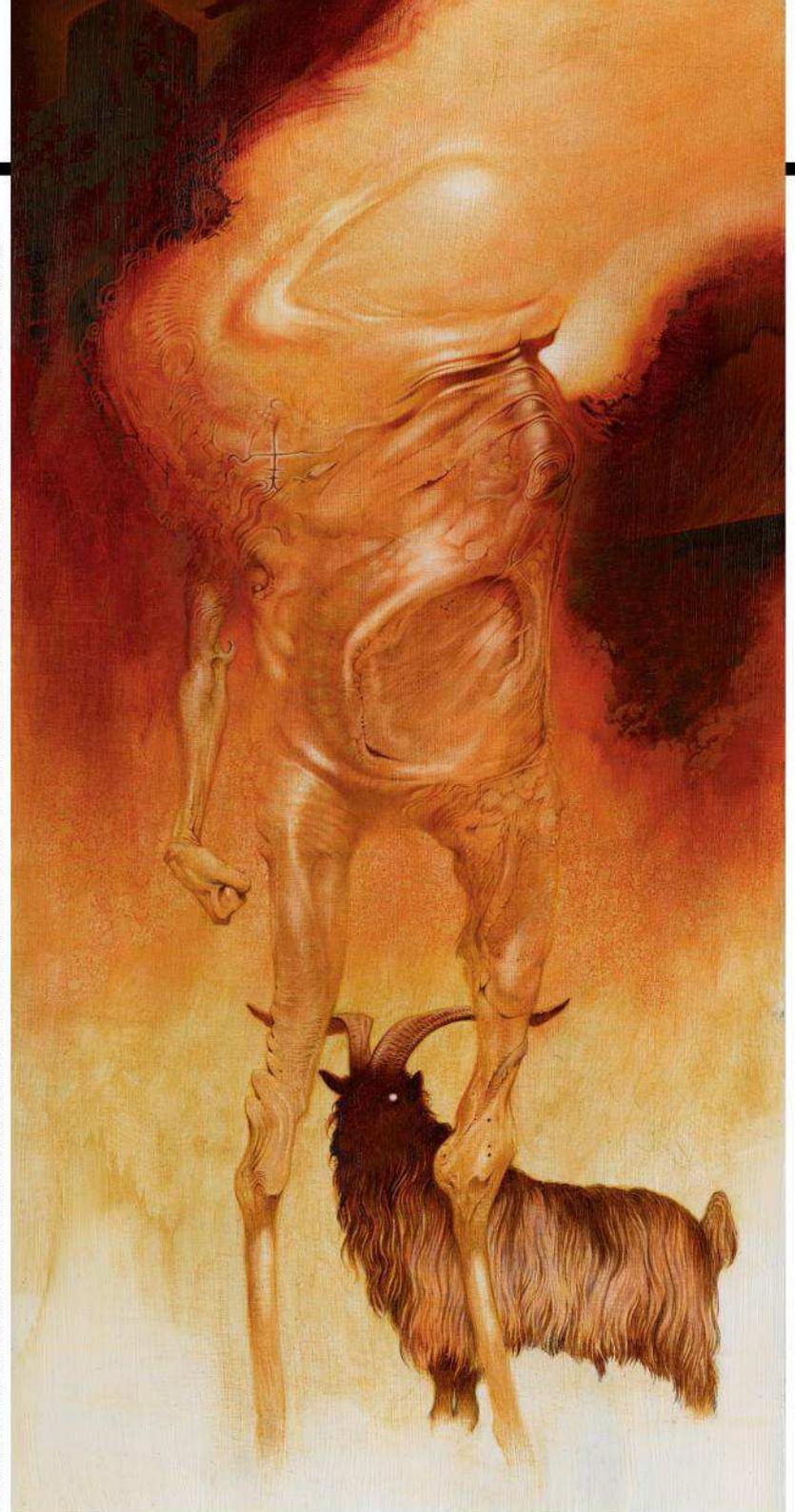
“ Sometimes I'm just along for the ride, and other times I know where I want to go ”

#### THE BIRTH OF DEATH

*"Here I was pushing a more wilful control into the process, which sometimes doesn't end well, but this time it was agreeable."*

#### THE HOBBS

*"This is an expression of dissatisfaction with the current political climate."*



in there with him. But generally, if Allen's awake, he's working.

When he was younger, art was a distraction. It took him a long time to turn that distraction into a discipline. And drawing still seems to fulfil some need. It's a necessity. He compares it to eating: he has to do it. Somewhere along the way, Allen Williams developed that thing every artist wants, the thing separates good art from great art: a voice of his own.

Allen's 'voice' will be seen at his first solo show in July, at the Copro Nason Gallery in Santa Monica, California. He's also working on his first art book,

The Book of Covenants, which he will Kickstart in the spring of 2019. Exciting times lie ahead...

"Great art feels like someone punched you in the brain," Allen says. "It drags you back to the museum or the gallery or the page of the book. You have to right-click and save and you're frustrated if you can't."

"If you're an artist then it isn't just the how or the why, but a wordless thing that feels both like something you may have dreamt and something you've never seen, but on some level you understand. It's more than the sum of its parts." ●

## THE CROOKT MAN

*"Stand thee well away o' wolf.  
This Shepherd does not sleep.  
Another guardian figure, where  
I mingled realistic elements with  
more abstract shapes."*



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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 160 May 2018

Comic artists assemble within this month's issue! We speak to Ken Lashley and Tony S Daniel, reveal how to draw expressive faces for your panel art, and then colour it effectively. Plus, how to beat back negative thoughts.



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Make your mark in the book industry, with pro advice from Wylie Beckert, Dave Kendall and Armand Baltazar. Illustrator Sam Weber talks about emotions, and we find out how fan art can lead to getting paid work.



### Issue 158 March 2018

Boost your anatomy drawing skills with Stan Prokopenko's tips. We talk to fantasy figure artist Julie Bell and soil scientist turned sculptor Romain Van den Bogaert. Plus, what it takes to launch a successful Kickstarter!



### Issue 157 February 2018

Pro artists from the video games industry pass on their advice on character design, weapon concepting and environment art. We also talk to Assassin's Creed visionary Raphael Lacoste, and Bungie's AD Jesse van Dijk.

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**Issue 156**  
January 2018



**Issue 155**  
Christmas 2017



**Issue 154**  
December 2017



**Issue 153**  
November 2017



**Issue 152**  
October 2017



**Issue 151**  
September 2017



**Issue 150**  
August 2017



**Issue 149**  
July 2017



**Issue 148**  
June 2017



**Issue 147**  
May 2017



**Issue 146**  
April 2017



**Issue 145**  
March 2017

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\*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

# Tobias Kwan

Disturbing intertwining elements share page space alongside delicate portrait pieces in this New York artist's sketchbook

## Artist PROFILE

**Tobias Kwan**  
LOCATION: Canada



Tobias is a freelance illustrator and concept artist from Ottawa. He studied animation at Sheridan College before moving to California to work in video games. He now lives and works in New York. Tobias' clients include Amazon Publishing, Sony Music Japan, Riot Games, Ready At Dawn Studios, Games Workshop, Cartoon Network, Sideshow Collectibles, Oakley, Li Ning, Chair Entertainment and Mattel.  
[www.tobiaskwan.com](http://www.tobiaskwan.com)

### LADY

"I tend to draw these kooshballs in areas where I can't think of something interesting."

### SEIFUKU

"This was a tattoo design for a buddy of mine. Hope it turned out okay!"



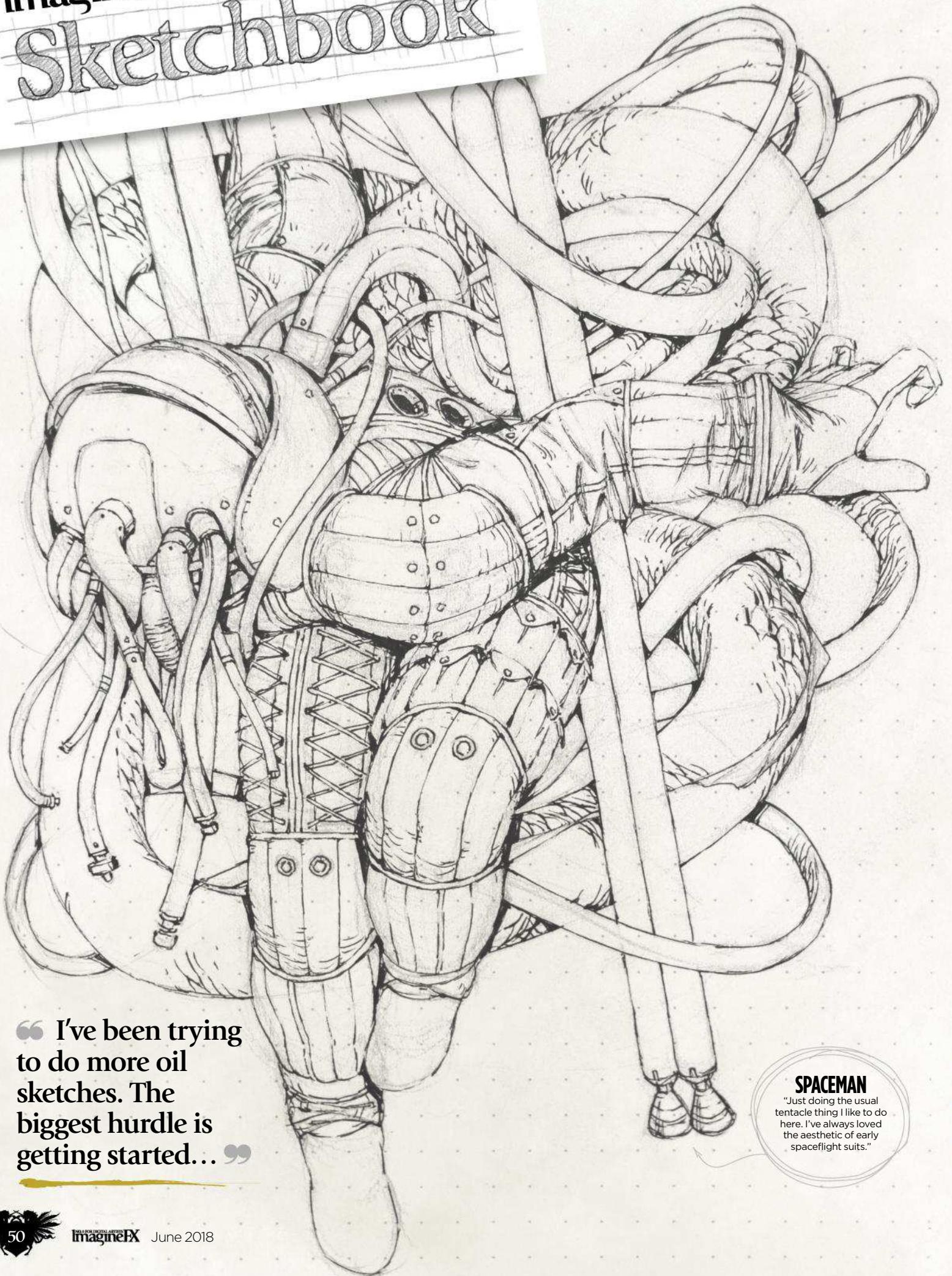
“ Bit of a horror vibe going on here... She'd have trouble with enunciation ”



**HELPING  
HANDS**

"Did this for last year's Inktober challenge. There's a bit of a horror vibe going on here. Looks like she would have trouble with enunciation."

# Sketchbook



“ I’ve been trying to do more oil sketches. The biggest hurdle is getting started... ”

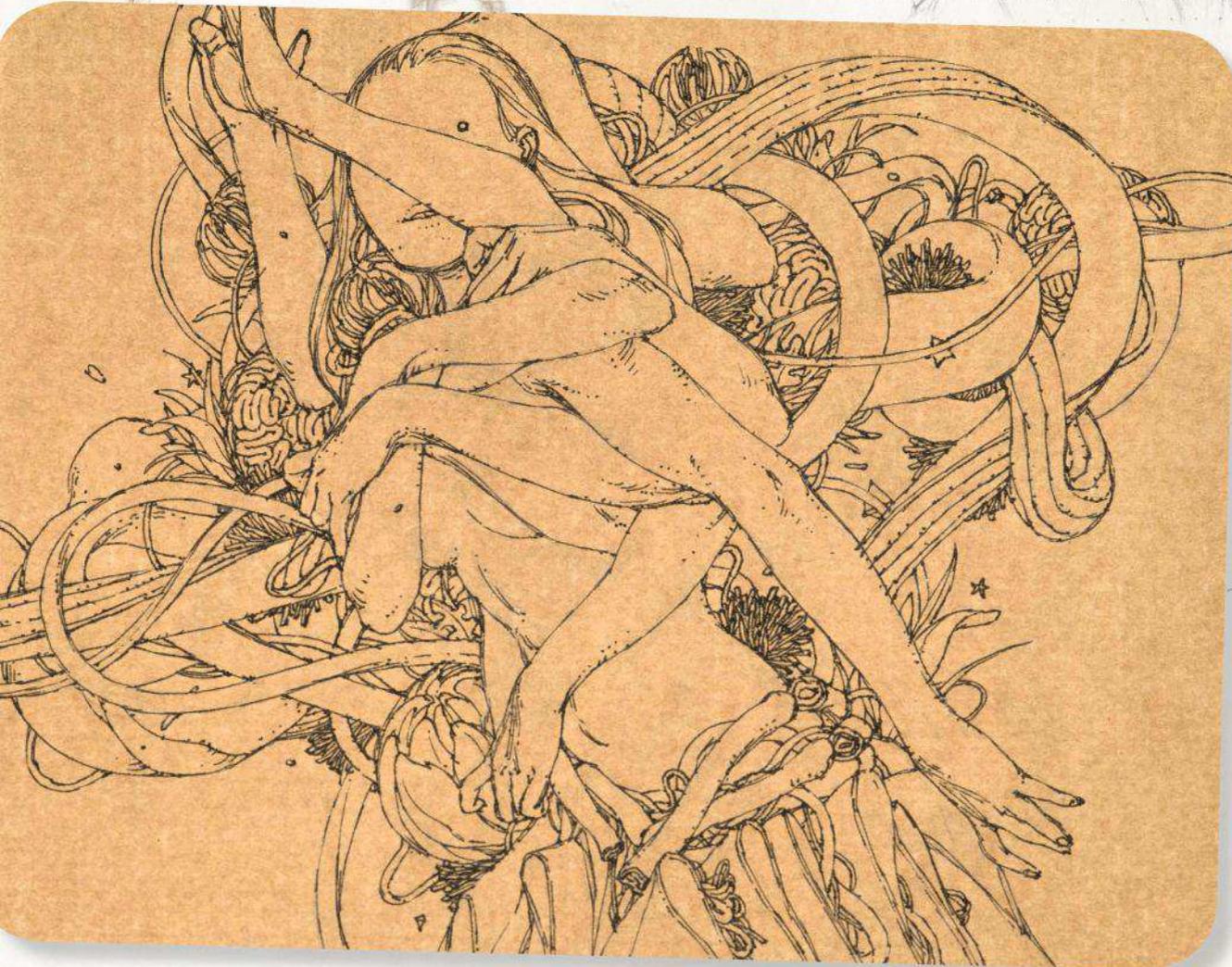
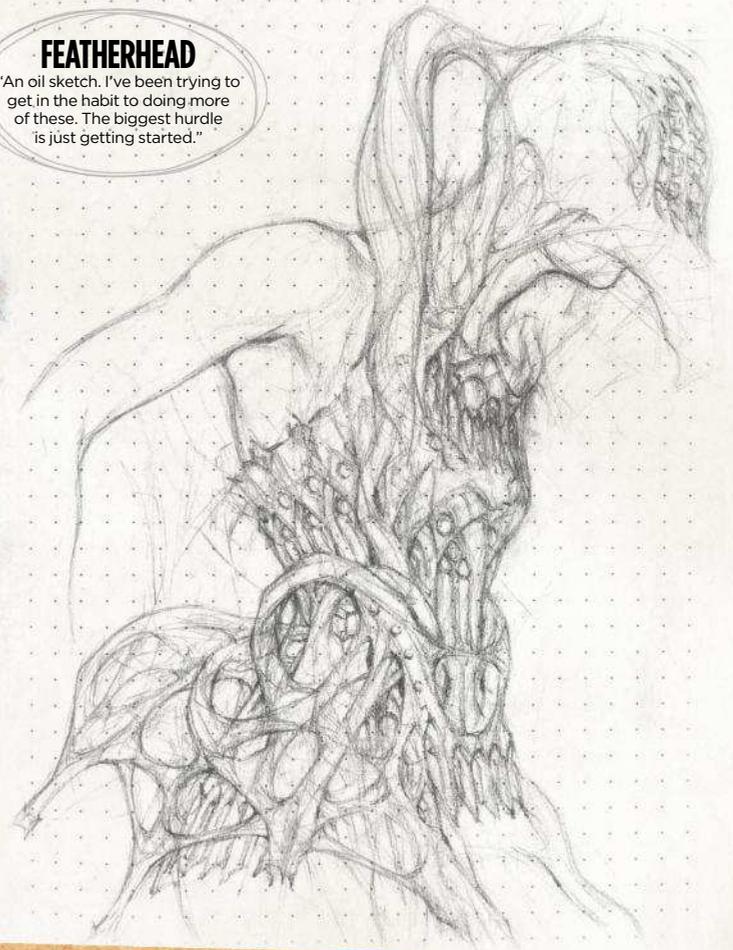
### SPACEMAN

“Just doing the usual tentacle thing I like to do here. I’ve always loved the aesthetic of early spaceflight suits.”



## FEATHERHEAD

"An oil sketch. I've been trying to get in the habit of doing more of these. The biggest hurdle is just getting started."



## DRESS

"Here I tried incorporating some Gothic architectural motifs, but mostly I was just scribbling in shapes and seeing where it takes me."

## INKTOBER 28

"This is pretty comfort zone stuff for me here: multiple limbs, tentacles, flowery bits of detail to help separate out the forms."

# Sketchbook

## FLOWERHEAD

"Is this the kind of bedhead you get from sleeping in a pile of flowers?"



## WITCH

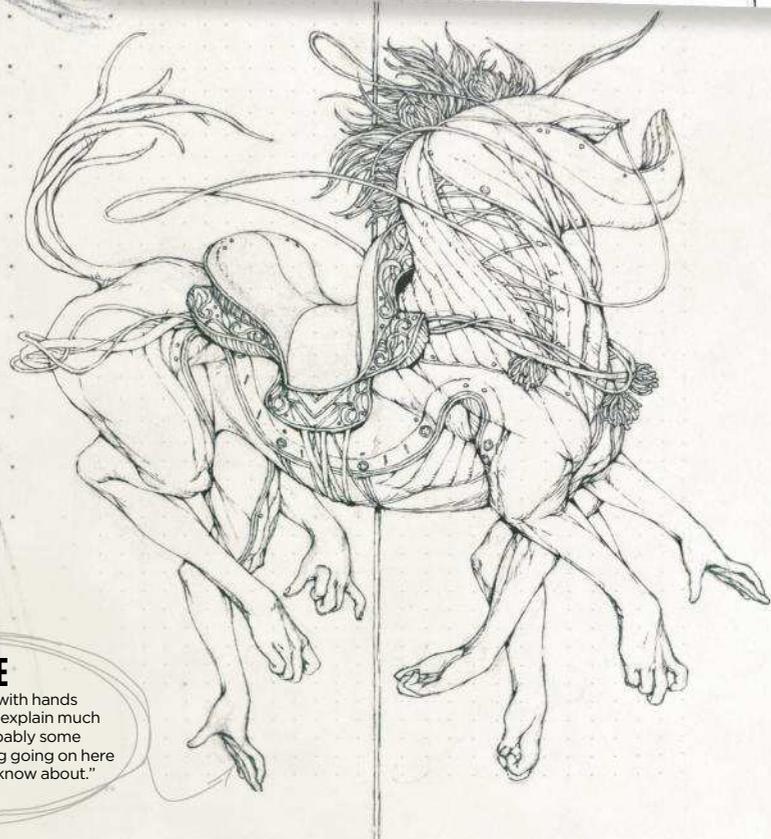
"Just a witch doing her thing. I drew this after watching and really loving the 2015 film *The Witch: A New-England Folktale*."

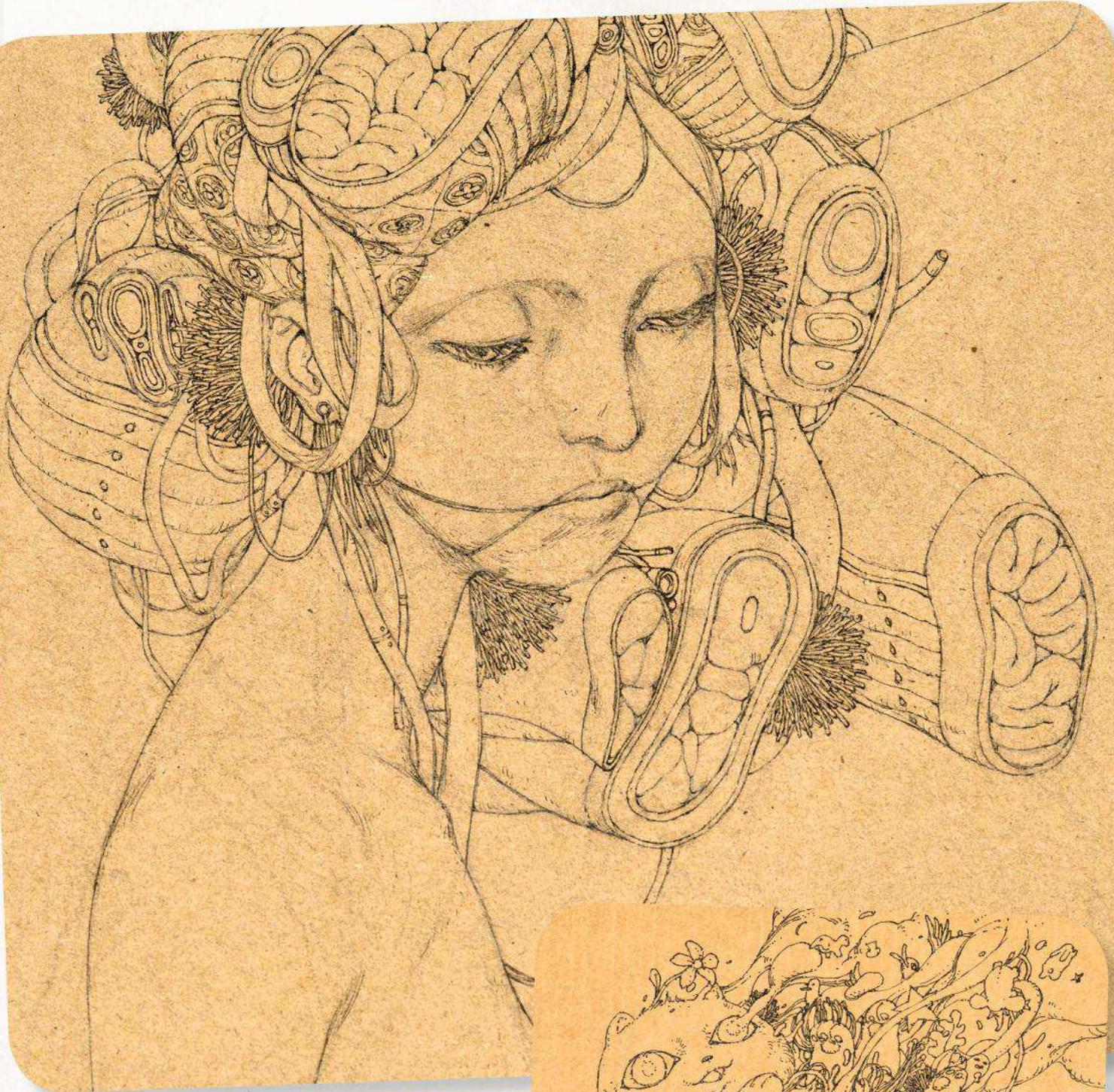


“I find it’s rather therapeutic to just turn off the brain and fill in the blank spaces”

## HORSE

"A horse of sorts with hands for feet. I really can't explain much more. There's probably some Freudian/Jungian thing going on here that I don't want to know about."





**INKTOBER 03**

"For pieces like this, I find it's rather therapeutic to just turn off the brain and fill in the blank spaces."

**CATBURST**

"I tend towards organic shapes, but I also suck at freehanding straight lines."

Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)

## Artist **PROFILE**

**Daria Theodora**

LOCATION: US



Daria's works feature delicate hand-drawn ink drawing, to which colours are applied digitally or traditionally. She was a gold medallist in the Gallery category of the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles' (SILA) 56th competition, and has been featured in Spectrum. In her spare time she enjoys leisurely strolls in the woods, biking and travelling.  
[www.xintheodora.com](http://www.xintheodora.com)

# Daria Theodora

This illustrator uses her sketchbook for visualising her ideas. Even if they remain there as rough drawings, the art is worth exploring...



### EXPLORATION 1

"I produce many sketches to generate ideas for my next painting. Some sit in the sketchbook for a long time before I get to pick it up again."

### WARRIOR AND CAT

"I very much admire Sergio Toppi for his use of lines in his illustrations. This drawing was one of many mark-making exercises using Sergio's art as reference."

“Some of my ideas sit in the sketchbook for a long time before I get to pick it up again”

**WELCOMING  
DUSK**

"The fantastic Mr. Fox  
(well, sort of) and an  
ornate lantern."



# Sketchbook



## EXPLORATION 2

"A pencil drawing when sitting in a café drinking coffee."

## BIRDS

"Part of a fun project, drawing a bird's skeleton and birds in flight."

## TRAVEL SKETCHES

"Just a doodle while travelling, using a fountain pen and watercolour in my Moleskine sketchbook."



“Just a doodle while travelling, using a fountain pen and watercolour”





**CORMORANT  
STRIKES**

"A literal take on Cormoran Strike, my favourite series from JK Rowling (writing as R Galbraith), that's not Harry Potter."

# Sketchbook

## MOUNTAIN GOAT

"When drawing from reference, I try to take the art into my own style while making sure that the result is still recognisable."

## MISCELLANEOUS WONDERS

"Where necessary, and especially when doing a big, complicated illustration, it's easier to draw each component separately, then rearrange their placement digitally."

## MISCELLANY

"Here are some more components from this sketch project. I had to make sure I kept a steady hand to draw the clean lines."



## HIDING IN LAYERS

"Here's an Inktober drawing that was supposed to be quick, but ended up taking me hours!"

## MELANCHOLIC SHUT-IN

"Here's the base of a piece, before my paints obscure everything."

“When drawing from reference, I try to take the art into my own style”



## MAKKUROKUROSUKE

"A sort of fan art of My Neighbor Totoro, a must-see Studio Ghibli feature."



Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)

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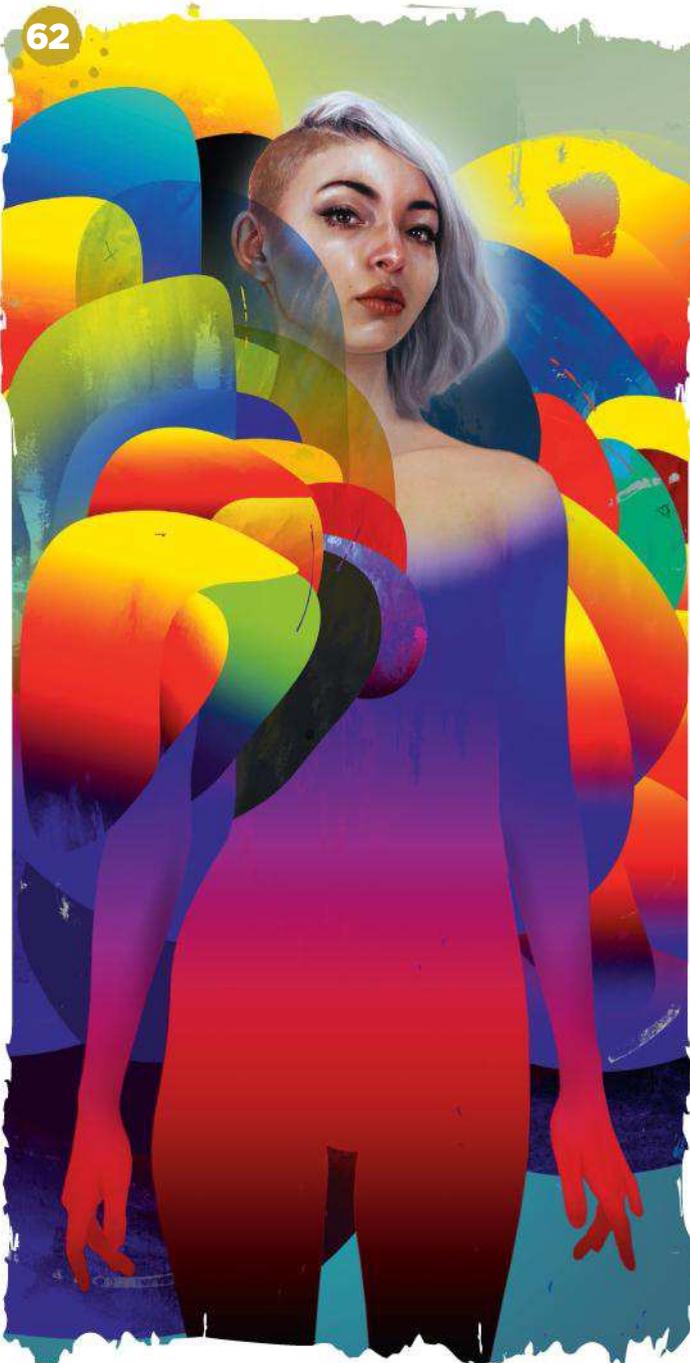
# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshops assets are available...**

Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 8. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



## Advice from the world's best artists



## This issue:

- 62 Learn to paint a surreal portrait**  
Erik Jones takes abstract shapes and transforms them into stunning character art.
- 68 Revisit Beksinski's surreal world**  
Rafael Sarmento pays tribute to one of the 20th century's most inspiring surreal artists.
- 74 Paint a corpse that's full of life**  
Peter Polach attempts to elevate the mood of a traditionally grim topic.
- 78 Core Skills: Photoshop**  
Mark White uses Layer Styles to improve his art and shows how to layer them effectively.
- 82 Streamline your costume designs**  
Paul Gerrard treads the fine line between concept art and workable costume designs.



## Traditional skills & Photoshop

# LEARN TO PAINT A SURREAL PORTRAIT

Straddling the worlds of traditional and digital art, **Erik Jones** takes abstract shapes and transforms them into a stunning character piece

### Artist PROFILE

**Erik Jones**  
LOCATION: US

Erik's a figure and abstract mixed media painter. He works on paper and wood with materials such as watercolour, pencil, wax pastel, acrylic and oil. [www.erikjonesart.com](http://www.erikjonesart.com)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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I'm a traditional painter who regularly uses digital elements as a tool throughout my creative process.

In this workshop, I'll take you through the digital techniques I use when overlaying elements on top of a

traditional figure painting. I'll also explore how traditional and digital painting can meet seamlessly through a series of very easy steps.

For this process you'll only need to know the basic functions of Photoshop. The trick is to keep it simple and let the program do most

of the work, such as gradients, colour adjustments and transparent overlays. Most of the hard work is done before you get to the digital part. I'll also show how I stitch together large paintings. This, too, is accomplished by letting Photoshop work its magic. Let's get going!

### WORKSHOP MATERIALS

**PANEL**  
In-house made, 1.5-inch birch wood panel

**PAPER**  
Legion Paper Lenox 100 (250gsm)

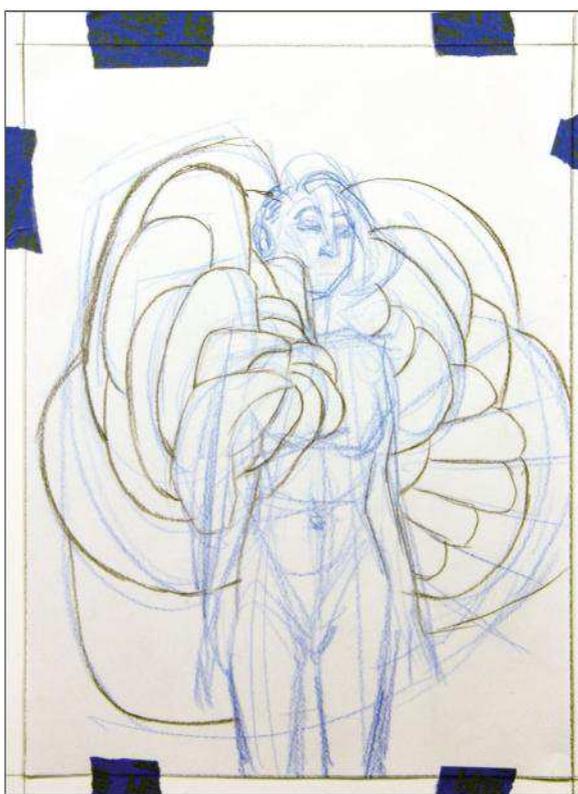
**PAPER ADHESIVE**  
Golden, Gel Matte Medium

**WATERCOLOURS**  
Winsor & Newton:  
Cadmium yellow hue  
Cadmium red hue  
Intense blue  
Burt sienna  
Chinese white

**COLOURED PENCIL**  
Prismacolor pencils in assorted hues

**PAINT**  
Acrylic latex paint in studio colour mix

**WAX PASTEL**  
Caran d'Ache Classic Neocolor II water-soluble pastels in assorted hues



#### 1 Produce a pencil sketch

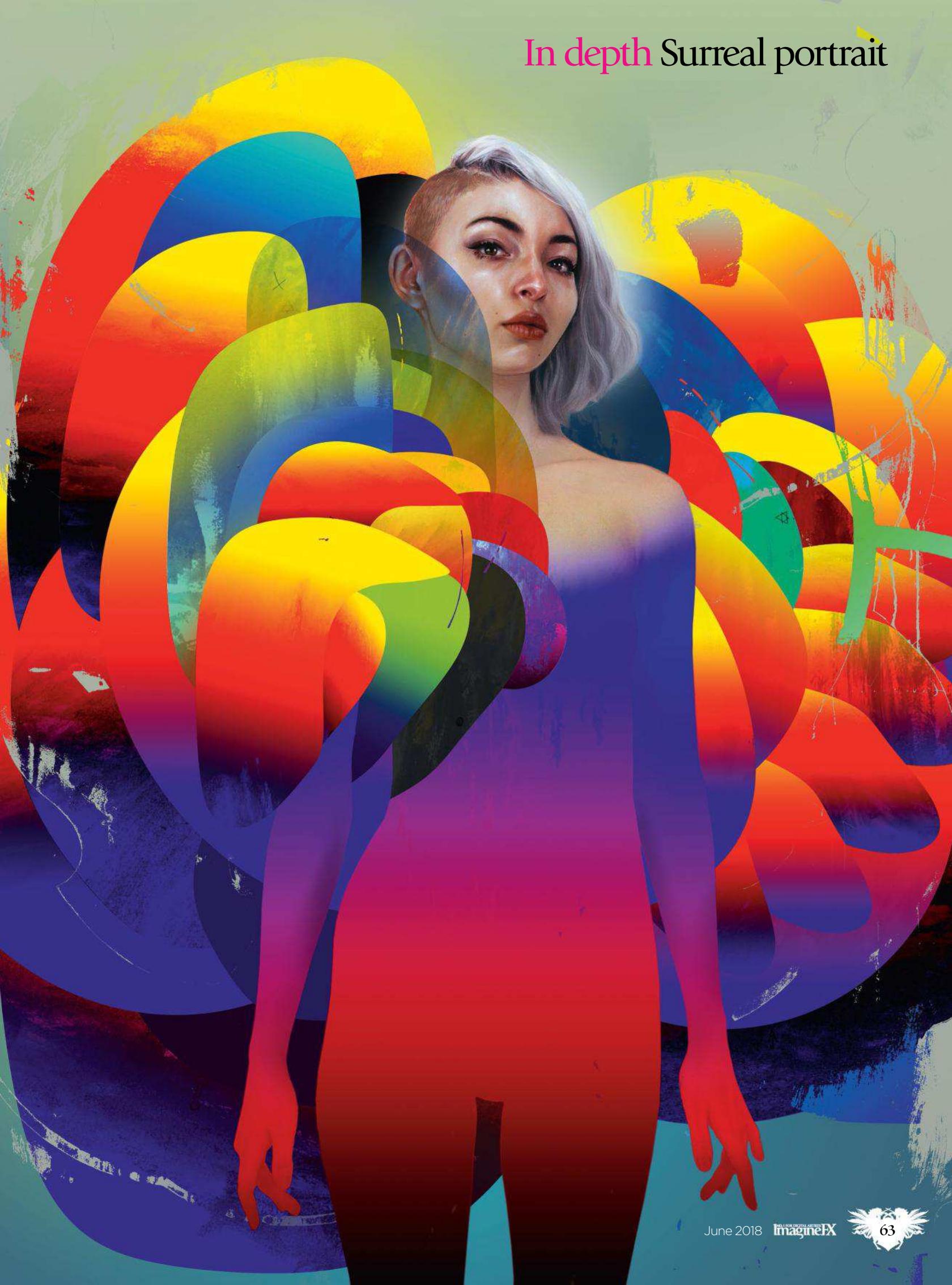
Like most art projects, I'm starting with a sketch. My sketches are more like large thumbnails. I'm looking to get a basic layout of the figure and the shapes. I almost never add details of any sort – this will come when I digitise the sketch. I work with two pencils: a light blue pencil for light lines and a bark brown pencil to solidify shapes. I usually use a scanner to digitise the drawing. However, my scanner has just bit the dust, so I'm going to use my digital SLR camera. You can also use your camera phone.

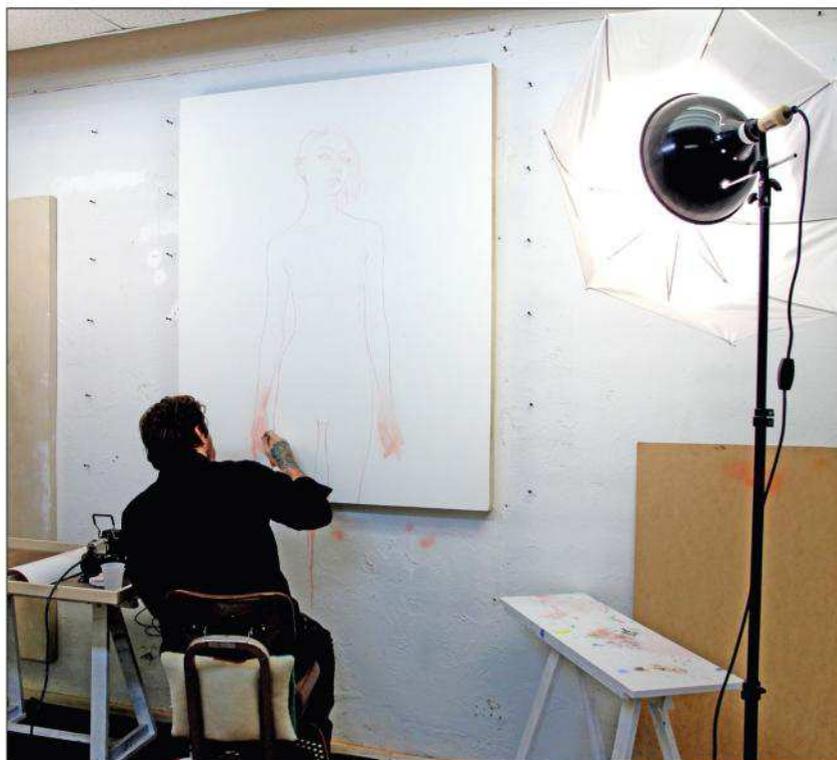


#### 2 Create a clean line drawing

Once my sketch is in Photoshop I open a new file at the size required, transfer the drawing to this file and then begin to create a clean line drawing on top of the loose sketch. I can then trash the loose sketch. My aim is to print the clean line drawing on to watercolour paper. I need the lines to be light and soft so that they don't show through when I'm painting traditionally. To do this I colourise the lines to a light brown colour. Next, I duplicate the layer and add a Gaussian blur to the top layer (Filter>Blur>Gaussian blur). Then I reduce the Opacity of the bottom line layer. Now it's ready to print. ➡➡

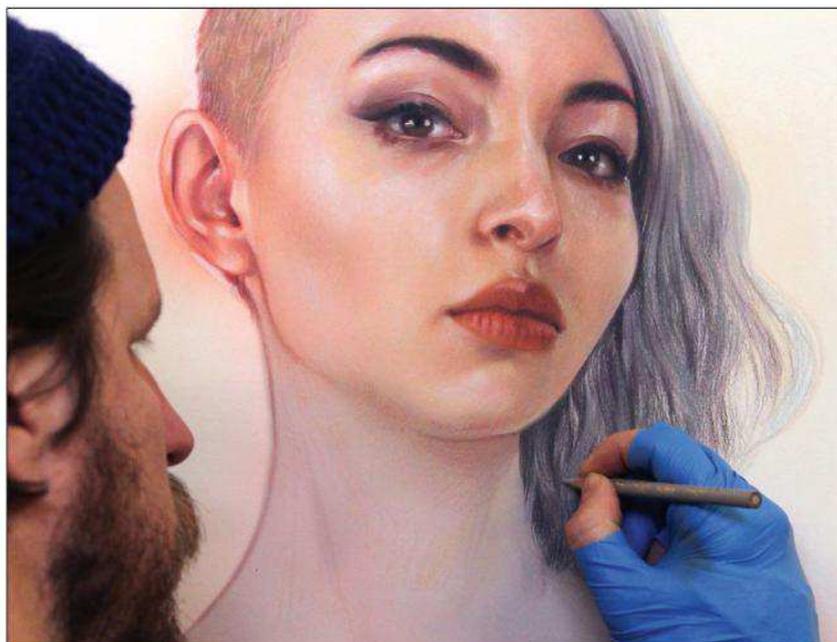
In depth Surreal portrait





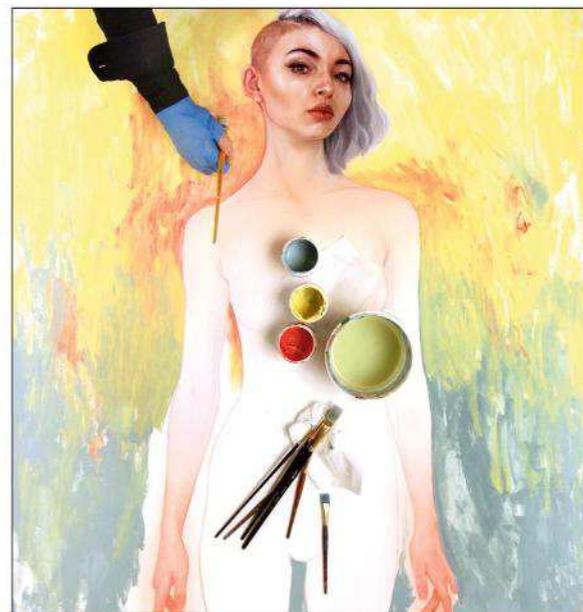
### 3 Printing and pasting my line art to the board

I start printing my line drawing on to watercolour paper, using paper rather than canvas, because I use mostly dry mediums to create the character's skin. However, I'll be starting with watercolour, so I need to adhere the paper to the wooden board so that the paper doesn't fold or wrinkle when it's wet. To do this, I use a gel medium as the binding agent. The idea is to create a panel with a smooth paper surface (with my drawing already on it). Once the paper is glued to the panel, I wait for about a day to let it fully dry.



### 4 Painting with watercolour and dry mediums

Once the panel is dry I can apply watercolours to create the base colours for the figure. I use an airbrush for this process. The trick is to get the values right and to make the base colours as soft as possible. Once the watercolour dries, I start to add details with coloured pencils. I start very light and soft, gradually building up more wax from the pencil by pushing harder into the paper. I'll spend about 10 hours rendering the figure with traditional mediums including coloured pencil, water-soluble wax pastels and more airbrushed watercolour.



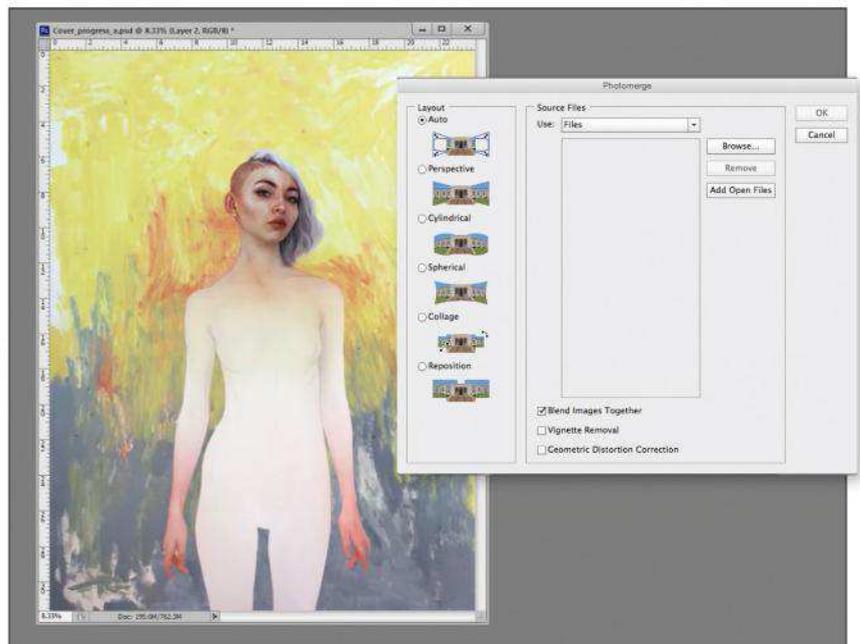
### 5 Generate textures with acrylic

I'm going to bring texture into my digital image, particularly in the abstract shapes. I pick three acrylic colours: a pale yellow, a grey blue and a desaturated red. I now go crazy with paint, splattering and mixing almost indiscriminately. The messier the better! Note, however, that I'm trying to keep the colours and marks articulate and clear, because I know I'll be selecting the colours individually in Photoshop to create more textures.



## 6 Photographing traditional work

Let me first say, this is the hardest part of the process. It's very important for me to get a perfect representation of my traditional work at this point. I can manipulate it later, but for now I need it to be spot on. The panel I'm working on is large: 48x60 inches (121.92x152.4cm). It's crucial to obtain a very large and clear image of this work. To do so, I use a digital SLR camera to photograph the work in sections. I take about 30 pictures of the painting, starting from the top right and then working my way down to the bottom left.



## 7 Photomerging my painting sections

Now that I have my painting in sections saved to my computer, I use the Photomerge function in Photoshop. This function is the best! To merge your tiled photographs together click File>Automate>Photomerge. Click the Browse button, select the files you want to be put together and click OK. This can take some time depending on how many files you have, and if there are too many files the program will get bogged down and freeze up... I think you can only do about 30-ish files at a time. Some of my paintings need over 100 tiled files. I have to do them in sections. This takes some time and can get complicated, but practice makes perfect.



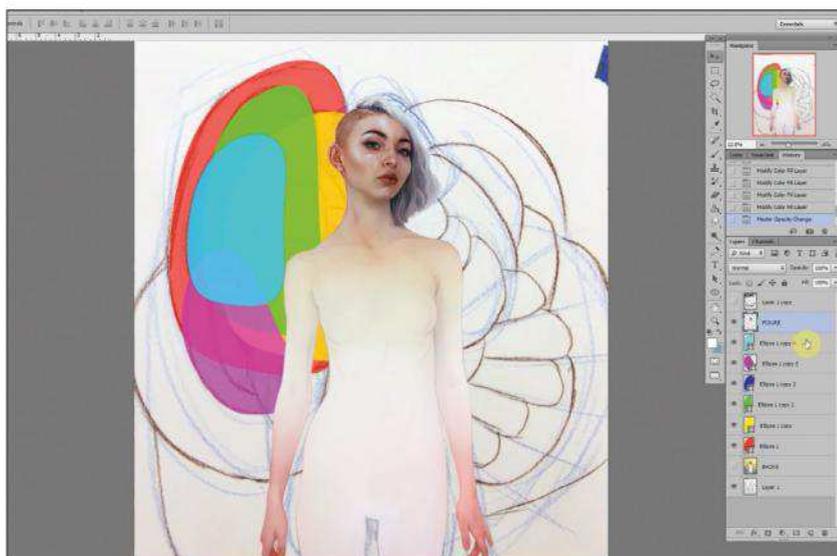
## 8 Adjusting a traditional painting in Photoshop

I now have a true-to-life (scale) image of my painting in Photoshop. However, the file's shape and colours are out of whack. I open a new file that's the same dimensions as my traditional painting at 200dpi. I select my painting layer, then click Edit>Transform>Scale, and adjust the painting to fit accurately in the panel. I need to make some further

adjustments so I click Edit>Transform>Wrap, and finish adjusting the file. I now need to make sure the painting is exactly the same dimensions as my original sketch. I open the line drawing file I used to print the initial sketch and drag it on top of the painting file. I now scale my painting to match the drawing using the same Transform functions. Once the painting file is matched up with the line layer, I delete the line layer.

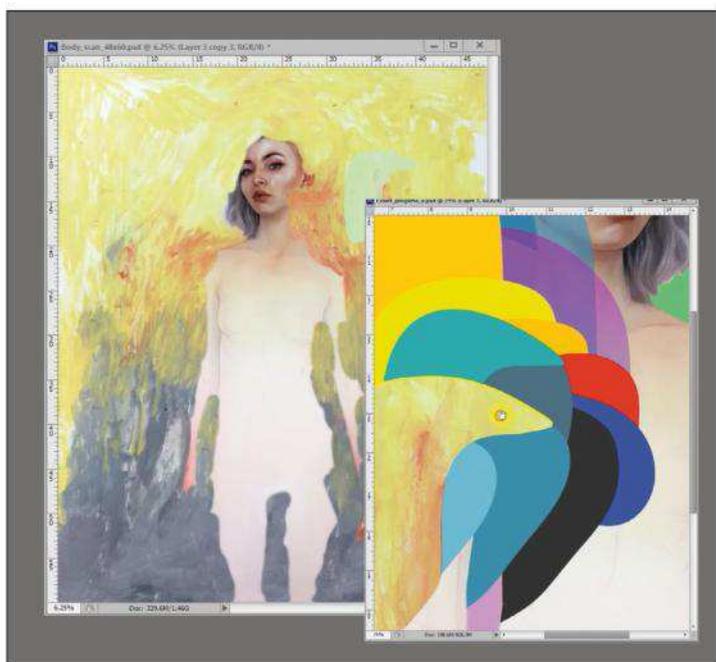
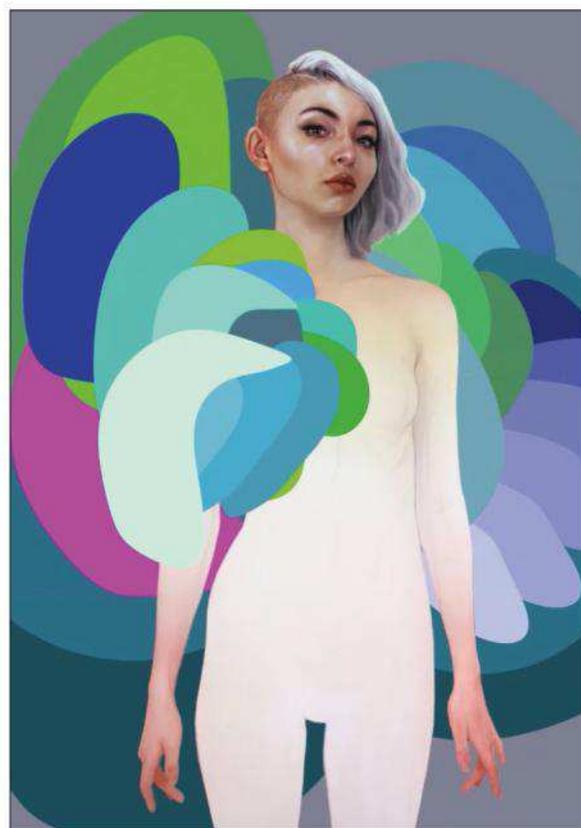


The last thing I need to do is cut the figure out of the painting, turning the figure into a separate layer. There are many ways to do this. I like to punish myself, so I use the Polygonal Lasso Tool. Once the figure is selected I feather the edges to give a more natural look (Select>Modify>Feather). Now that the figure's cut out, I can adjust the background layer and make the figure stand out even more. I use the Stamp tool for this step. ➡



## 9 Tracing shapes from my sketch

I'm now ready to start my illustration. I open a new file and drag the figure and background to this new file. The dimensions are a little off and I have to fill up the top of the composition with more of my painted background. I do this by using the Transform and Stamp tools again. I'm now ready to start creating my abstract shapes. I open my sketch file and drag it to the newly formed illustration file. With the Ellipse tool I generate large ovals and Free Transform the shapes to match the shapes in the sketch, again using the Wrap function by clicking File>Transform>Wrap. I keep every shape separate on individual layers.

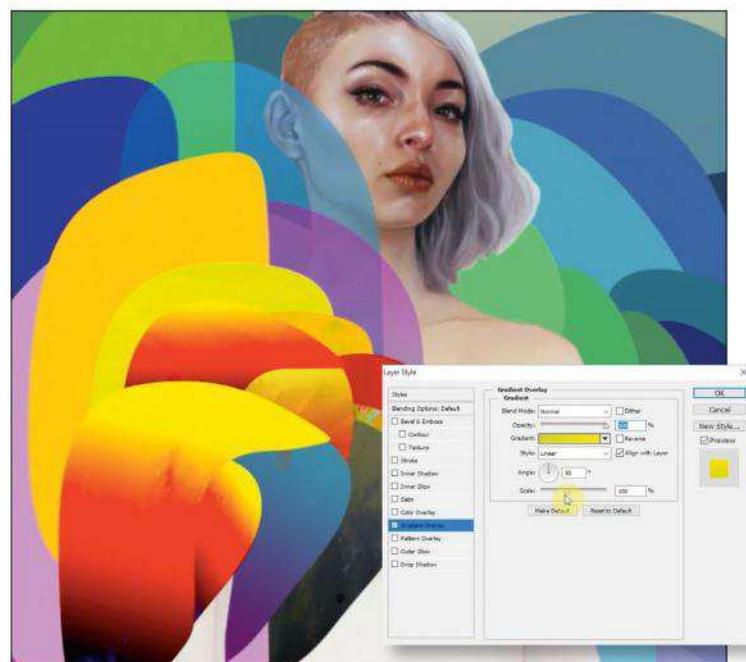


## 10 Texture and gradients

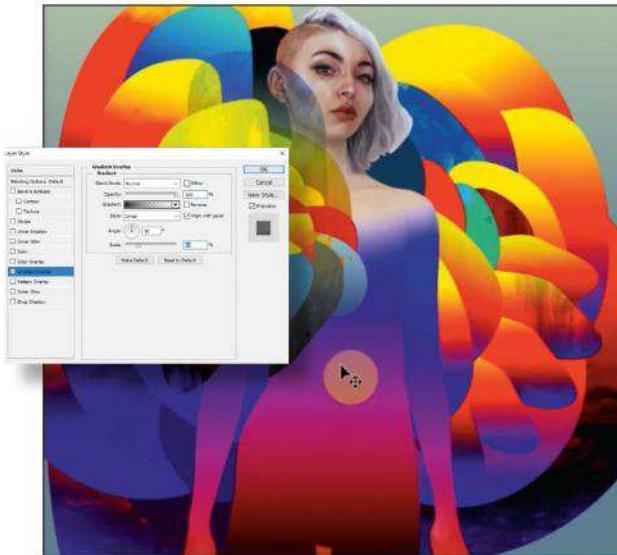
I'm pretty obsessed with the primary colour combination red, blue and yellow. Luckily for me there's a cheat (preset) in Photoshop that will make a gradient with these colours. I double-click the layer I want to add the gradient to, click the box next to Gradient Overlay, then click the words Gradient Overlay and the Gradient Overlay functions will pop up to the right. Click the

Gradient Editor and select the red-blue-yellow preset. Easy as pie, don't you think?

Now that I have my gradients done, I want to add some texture to the shapes to give them a traditionally painted look. I drag each shape layer to the file containing my original painting and use the (painted acrylic) background to add texture to the shape. I do this by selecting the shape layer with the Magic Wand tool to cut that exact shape out

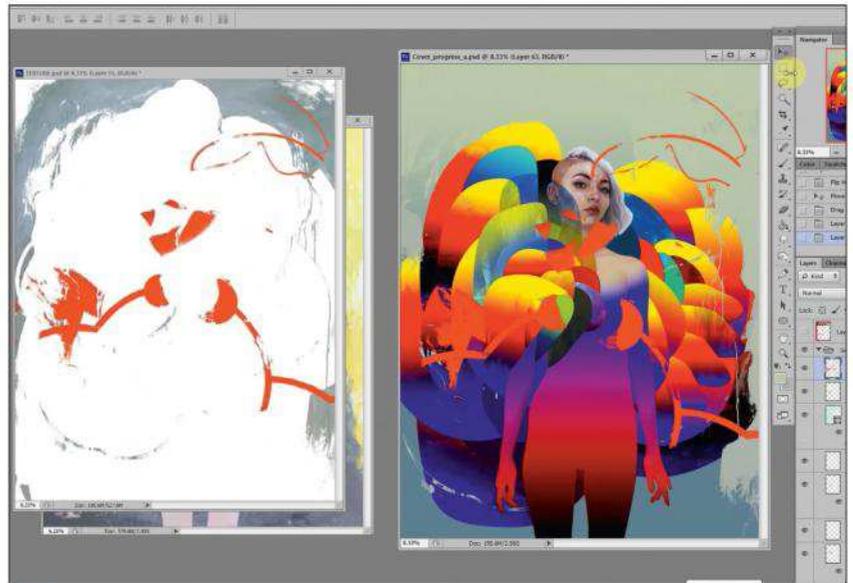


of the painted acrylic background layer (Edit>Cut, and then Edit>Paste) I drag the newly cut textured shape to the illustration file, then match up the textured shape with the gradient shape. I select the textured layer and explore the Blending mode preset options. I like using either Multiply, Color Burn or Screen, but I often just go through the entire set of options just to see what they look like. I do this to nearly every abstract shape.



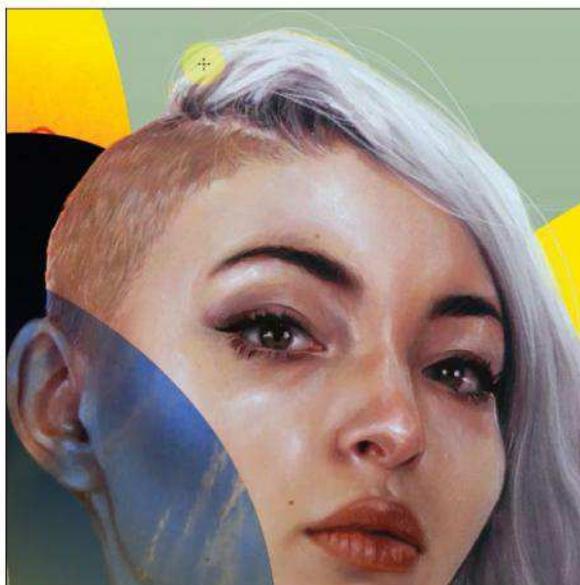
## 11 Develop figure gradients

I want the figure to look like she's wearing a gradient suit, almost as if it's painted on her. I want to stick with the red-yellow-blue colour scheme so I use the same gradient preset. I differentiate the arms from the body by putting the arms on another layer and adjusting the gradient subtly. I feather both gradients into her neck and head with the Soft Erase tool. The figure still needs some work, but I want to finish the background first.



## 12 Introduce more textures and noise

The illustration is coming along nicely now. It needs a little punch of texture, though. I want to make this feel like one of my traditional paintings. What better way to do this than to use one of my actual paintings? I select a painting that I made recently, use the Magic Wand tool to separate a particular texture and save it to a new file. I now drag the textured file on top of my illustration and Transform>Wrap the layer to fit the shapes in the illustration. I do this again, now to the figure, using the soft Eraser tool and by adjusting the Opacity of the textured layer over the body.



## 13 Enhancing the face and hair

I use the Magic Wand tool to select the perimeter around her hair. I then feather the selection and erase from the hair, eliminating that harsh "cutout look". I then create a new layer behind the figure and use the Soft Brush tool to paint wispy strands of hair. Then I use the Elliptical Marquee tool to create a white circle. I deselect the circle, click Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and adjust the blur to where it feels natural, giving the hair a soft glow.

Now I select her face with the Lasso tool and put it on a new layer, then adjust the Levels and the Hue/Saturation. I then use the Burn and Dodge tools to give her face a little more value and colour. I do the same to her arms.



## 14 Apply the final touches

I zoom into the image and look for little adjustments that need to be made. I make sure all my texture and shape layers line up, and get rid of any unwanted digital noise. I also tweak the background with large colour blurs that are barely noticeable, but help move the colour around the artwork. I use the Gaussian Blur function for this. And there we have it – a traditional/digital illustration! 🍷

## Procreate

# REVISIT BEKSIŃSKI'S SURREAL WORLD



In this workshop, **Rafael Sarmento** pays tribute to one of the most inspiring surreal artists of the 20th century

### Artist PROFILE

**Rafael Sarmento**

LOCATION: Brazil

Raf is an illustrator and coffee aficionado from southern Brazil. Clients includes Wizards of the Coast, Riot Games and many others.  
<https://ifxm.ag/rafael-s>



When I was invited to do this workshop, I immediately knew it wouldn't be an easy task. Revisiting the work of a surrealist artist was both a daunting and exciting quest! I was asked to choose the artist, and Zdzisław Beksiński was the obvious choice for me. His atmospheric, often sinister baroque paintings are like

windows on landscapes of relentless characters, striving to survive within forgotten worlds.

My chosen painting is AE85, a spectacular and emotional piece that has an enigmatic character at its core, whose body is involved in (perhaps) the very fabric of time.

Since I'm obviously not a genius like Beksiński was, I decide to approach the task as an ode to that

visionary mind, especially considering we're talking about reinterpreting a masterpiece of fine art (which is embedded with meaning and content that are totally subjective). I need to be as objective as possible, even if I'm filtering the original art through my own sensibilities, in order to pay homage to the late surreal master in a illustrative, graphic and fun way.



### 1 Finding the frame

I always begin a painting by doing small thumbnails (usually four) based on my initial research. Keeping the original painting as the base, I explore different combinations of compositions, poses and mood.



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### 2 Reshaping the masterpiece

After deciding on a preferred composition, I enlarge the loose sketch to the size of the canvas, and start finding the shapes and lines. This early stage is pretty intuitive, mostly guided by the mood I'm searching for rather than trying to refine specific forms. ➔

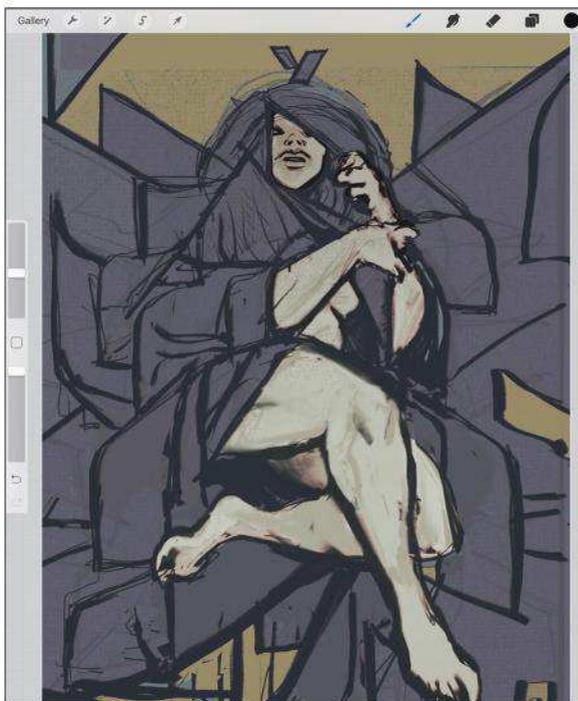
# In depth Revisit Beksiński



## PRO SECRETS

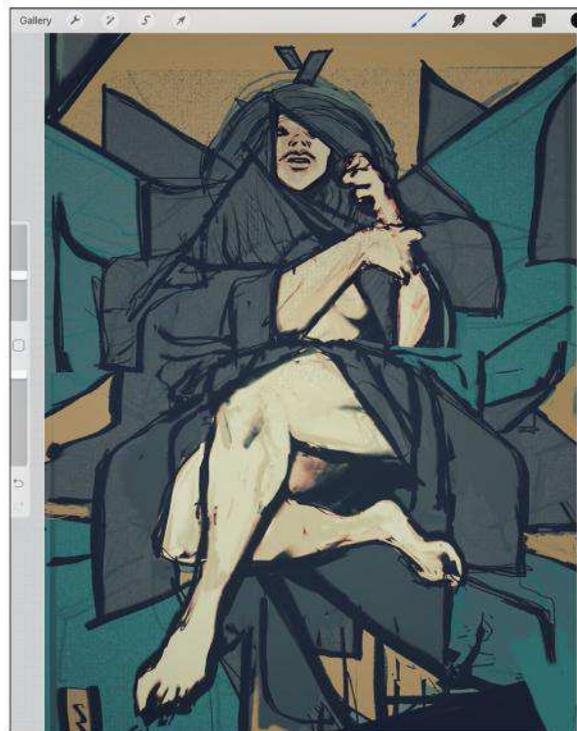
### Keep things lean and mean

Maintaining a streamlined workflow with only Procreate as my main tool and a few other apps for colour tweaks) drastically improved my painting process. It took me out of my comfort zone and forced me to paint more, and better. Having to rely on fewer art gimmicks ended up boosting my skills.



### 3 Playing with geometry

One of the most striking things about Beksiński's artwork is how he uses the fabric seamlessly to involve the character, giving it a dream-like quality. I aim to take a similar approach, using geometric shapes as unfolding parts of the cloth. I want to leave it up to the viewer to decide if it's the figure's clothing or part of her body.



### 4 Folding and unfolding

Now this is the beginning of the tricky part – making the folds work as the vessel for her body, conceptually speaking. Whether the fabric is unveiling or hiding her, a big part of the composition's weight will centre around the main figure.

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

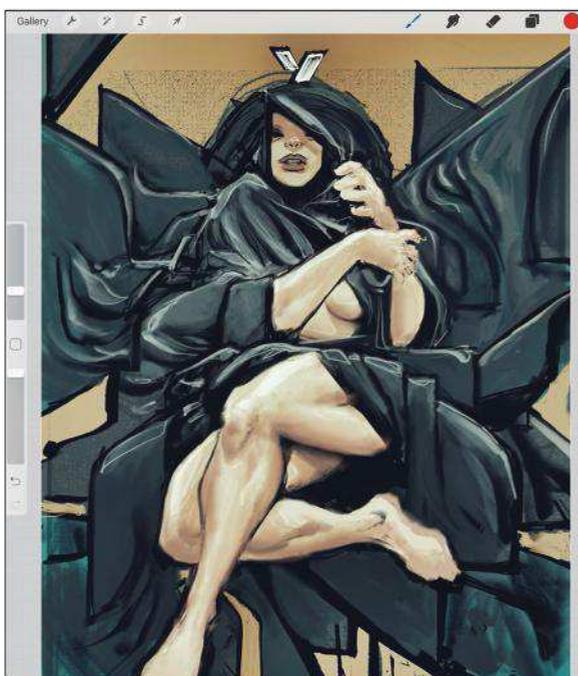
### PROCREATE

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES: THE FREAKING BRUSH

I use an altered version of Procreate's default 6B Pencil in Procreate for most of the illustration. I only need to change its size to take it from a drawing pencil to a thick painting brush.

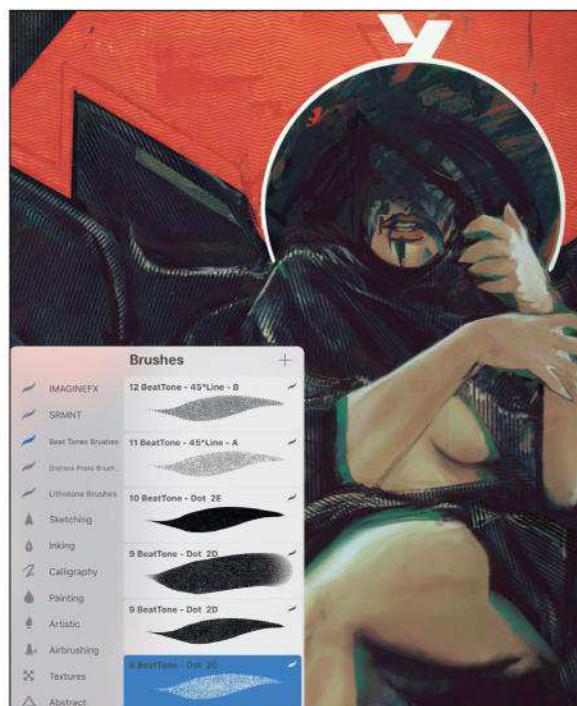
#### SPLITTER BRUSH

To add a bit of grain to the character's skin, I take the Spatter (also a standard brush in Procreate) and then work it on a low Opacity layer, with the brush mode set to Overlay



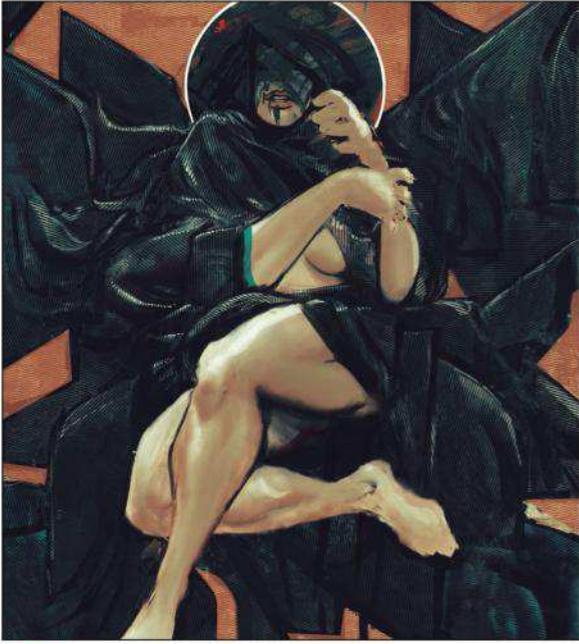
### 5 Portraying the figure

I'm working intuitively during this stage, and need to ensure that any decisions I make now won't be hard to modify at a later stage, as I adjust/update the composition. At this stage I'm certain she'll have a stylised appearance, to keep to the premise of making this artwork look and feel surreal, while tangible at the same time.



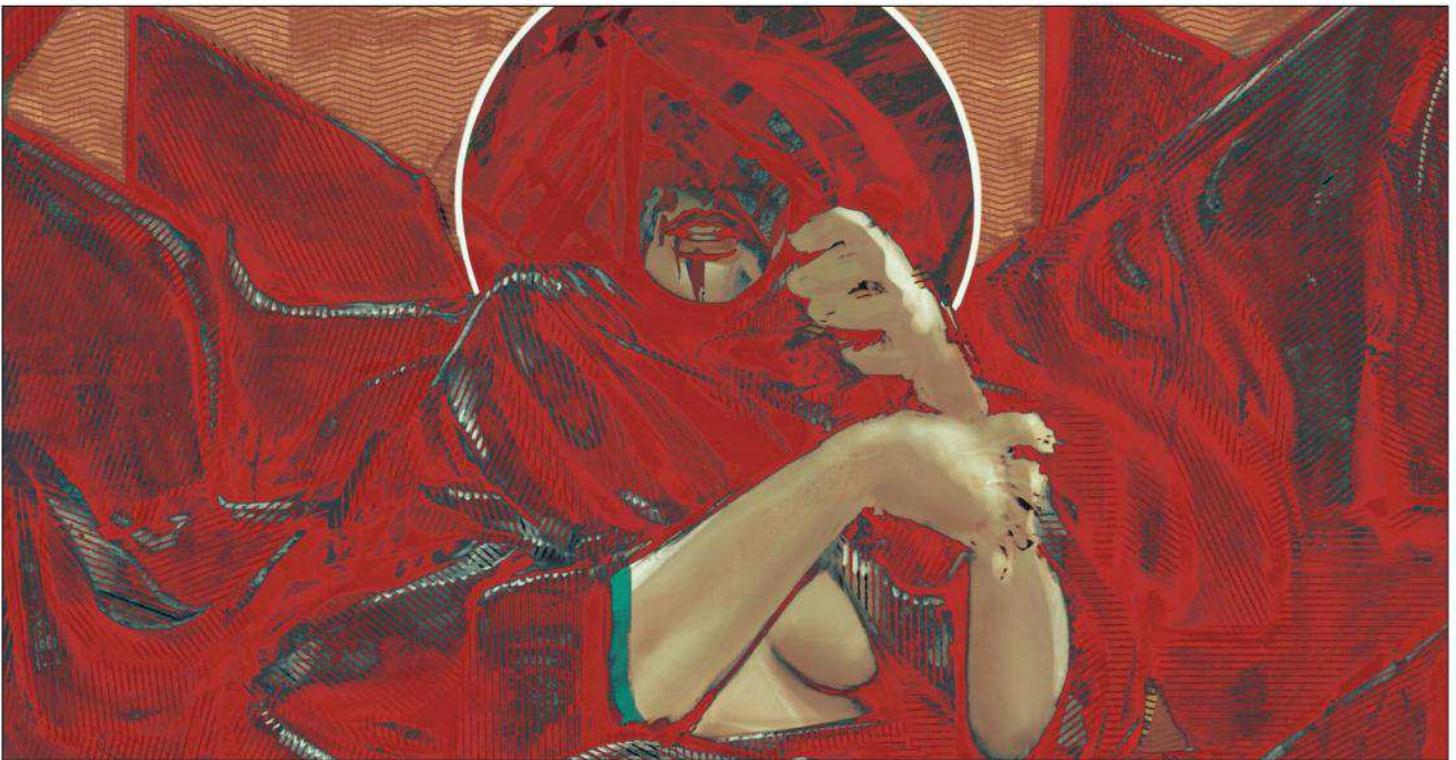
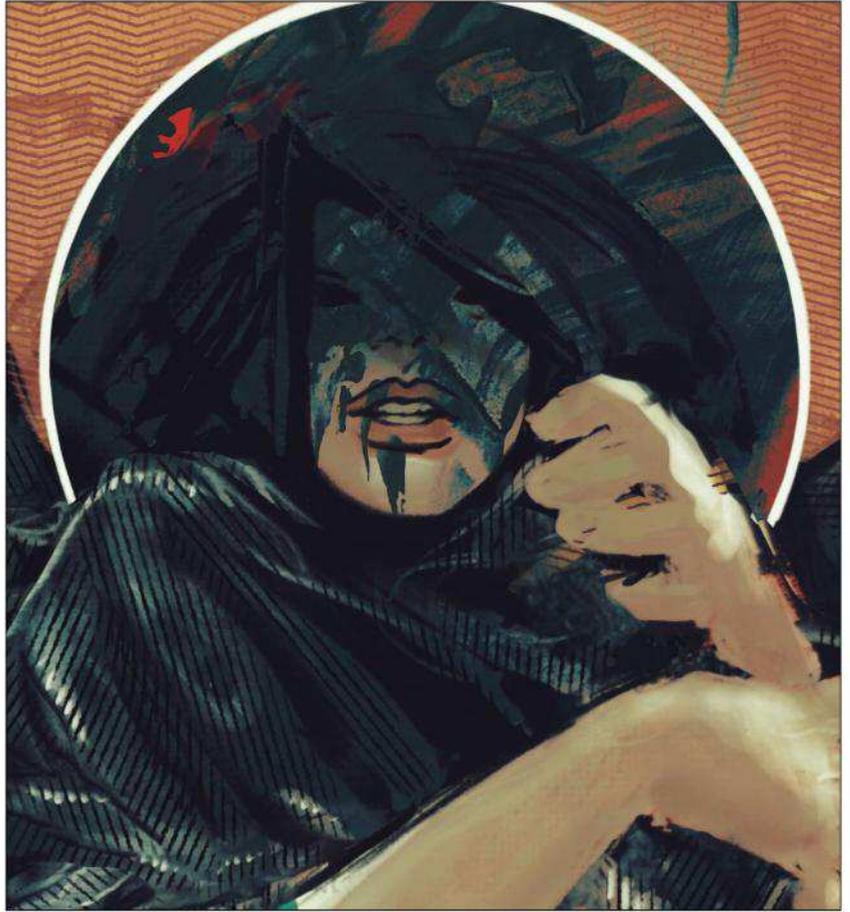
### 6 Applying texture

One of the key elements I usually work in my illustrations is texture. For this piece I'm using a mix of custom brushes created by True Grit Texture Supply ([www.truegrittexturesupply.com](http://www.truegrittexturesupply.com)) and some old paint textures that I rustled up myself ages ago.



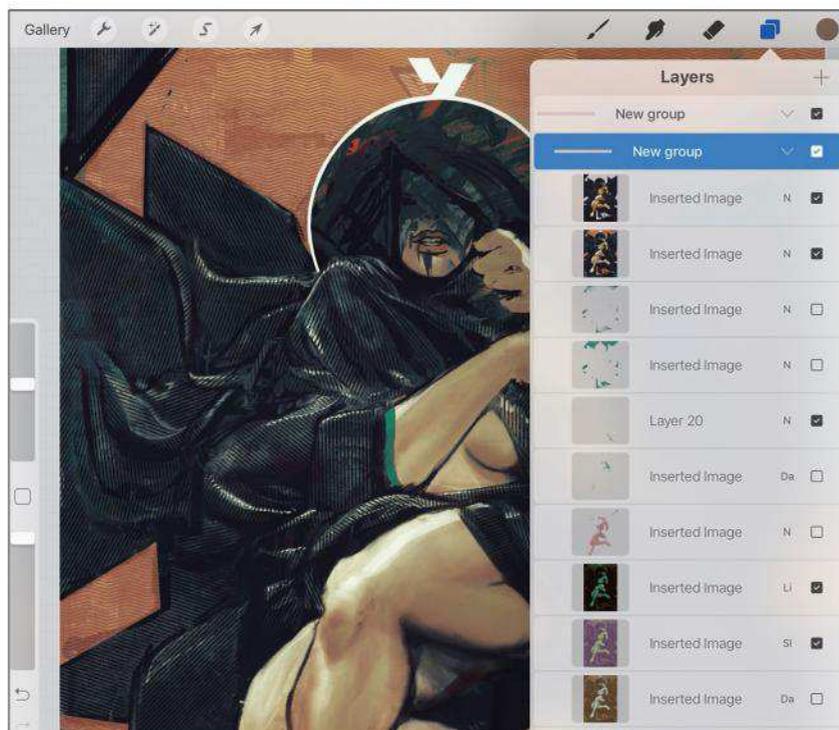
## 7 Adjusting my values and colours

Procreate is, in my mind, the best-designed program for drawing and painting. Unfortunately, it lacks certain colour settings and adjustment tools, so I move the image back and forth between some apps to adjust the colours and mood. Apps such as Snapseed and VSCO provide more than enough control over the atmosphere that I'm trying to achieve in the painting, and are ridiculously fast to use, too!



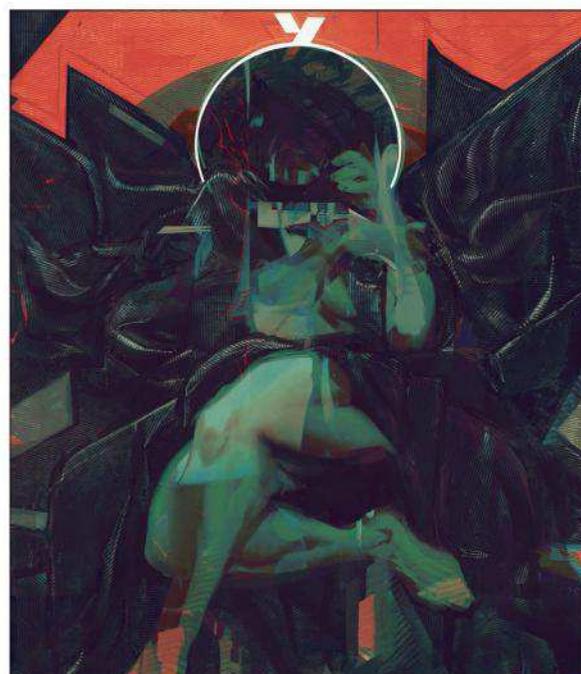
## 8 Colouring the shapes within the piece

One of Procreate's great features is the Color Drop tool. You "grab" the colour you're using with the Pencil and drag it over the part you want to colour (there's a threshold control after you drop it). I start using this to colour different parts of the fabric's shapes as I seek to achieve a balance of contrasting colours while creating the tension that will help drive the viewer (along with the shapes and lines) through the piece. ➔



## 9 Keeping things organised

Since I'm essentially creating visual chaos with elements that I can play with during the painting process, I try to at least keep things (slightly) organised. I place some of the texture layers apart from each other, as well as some elements of the painting that, at this point, I'm not sure how I'm going to finally place.



## 10 Having fun with layers

A fundamental part of how I create the overall mood and colours of a piece has a lot to do with experimentation, especially using layer properties. An example of what I do is creating a flat colour layer on top of everything, set it to Exclusion and then reducing the Opacity to around 50 or 60 per cent.



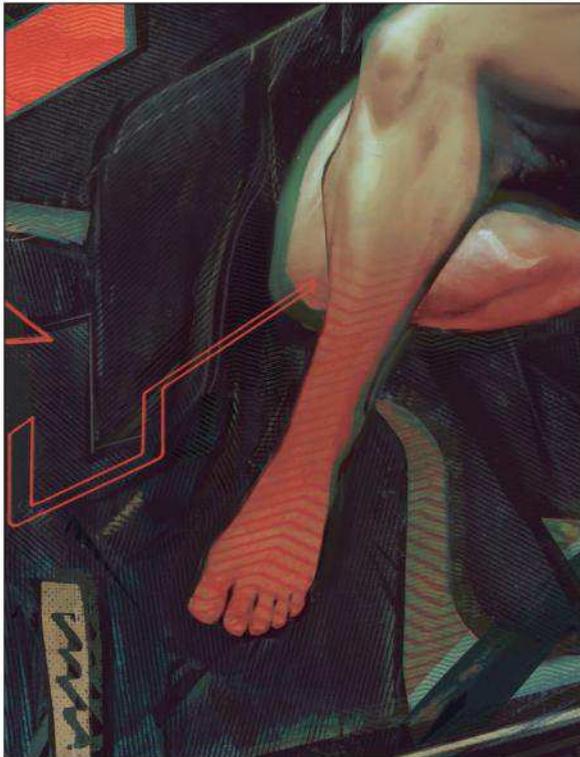
## PRO SECRETS

### Double the fun

One of the iPad Pro's coolest features is the Dual Screen, which enables you to keep your browser or references open on one side of the screen, and Procreate at the other! Since I'm using the 12.9-inch model, it can perfectly accommodate everything at a comfortable size, whenever I need it.

## 11 Selectively mixing and matching

Now that I've got my Exclusion layer established, I open the Cut/Copy/Paste menu, press Copy All and then Paste. This creates a flattened image with the altered colours, which I set to Lighten or Darken. Then I move, cut and paste elements from this flat layer, and add them to my work-in-progress artwork.



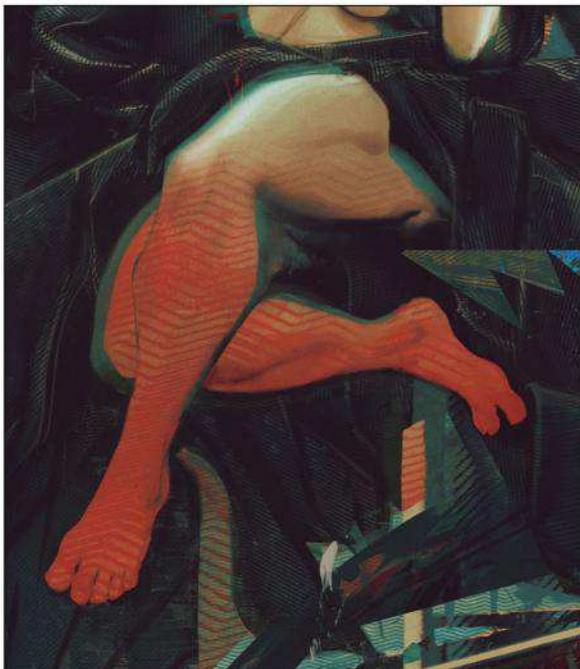
## PRO SECRETS

### Get in, quick!

Procreate has, among its many other features, a very effective Quick Menu that activated with a simple touch on the screen. You can customise it to contain whatever items you want, and this makes it a real time-saver that's sure to boost your productivity levels.

## 12 Designing the symbols

Graphical elements enable me to balance and contextualise the narrative within an illustration. I can juxtapose the organic forms and lines, creating a layer of abstraction that I think acts as a fun bridge between the atmospheric, dark worlds of Beksiński and the contemporary approach that I'm taking.



## 13 Fine-tuning the art

Now that we're nearly at the end of our journey, it's time to double-check everything and make sure the elements in the composition complement each other. This is where I make use of the layers I kept separate earlier (such as some textures or design elements) to be sure they're working together, before flattening everything so I don't end up with a large, unwieldy image file.



## 14 And it's a wrap!

Here we are! Before calling it a day, I make sure to keep some earlier steps for comparison, export the Time Lapse process video (one of the coolest features of Procreate), and we're done. Hope you've enjoyed this workshop. I can't match the mastery of Beksiński, but I hope I can honour him at least just a little bit. See ya! 🍀



# Artist insight PAINT A CORPSE THAT'S FULL OF LIFE

**Peter Polach** attempts to elevate the mood of a traditionally grim topic by focusing on joyful expressions and using bright, lively colours

## Artist PROFILE

**Peter Polach**  
LOCATION: Slovakia

Peter, also known as Apterus, is a freelance illustrator and concept artist who enjoys depicting creepy things and bright colours.  
<https://ifxm.ag/apterus>



I've always liked the undead, and will often root for the ragged underdog who's so often reduced to a moving target ("Headshot!"). Many of my works feature characters who have a ghoulish appearance, and here I've used an unnatural cold skin tone, with gangrenous fingers to depict that age-old trope of outstretched zombie arms. However, I've decided

to look at the bright side of death and painted them as colourful, friendly, magical people, expressing glee and enjoying their new lifestyle choice.

Colour is a dominant aspect in many of my works, and I like to experiment with it. Of course, one needs to understand the basics of colour theory before attempting to explore it further. I think that a combination of what should happen according to the laws of physics, the

artist's expectations, the glitches in one's vision, and the fuzziness of the brain's interpretation of what it thinks it sees, is the best way to express colour in a painting.

The 'deep dream' images created by an AI program have opalescent overlay that appeals to me, and so I've tried to clumsily implement this effect into my art. I've realised that using a colour which has no business being used can be a lot of fun. ➔

## How I create...

# A COLOURFUL ZOMBIE

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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### 1 Dealing with the consequences later

I readily admit that it's incredibly inefficient to start with only a vague vision of the main character. I have no idea what I want the picture to look like, but I tend to produce better results when I just skip most of the planning and get straight to it, leaving many aspects to fate. This approach happens to work for me, but I advise against it!



### 2 Firming up the elements and telling a story

Now I've got a good grasp of my composition, and have come up with some ideas on what should be added to make it work. I further define the scene, choose my colours and add secondary elements. In this case it's a collection of arms that support the main figure, while also adding more movement and a hint of a story.



### 3 Carrying out multiple rendering adjustments

My lack of planning means I have to make tweaks to many elements in the scene. Since I discovered programs like Corel Painter and Paintstorm Studio, I use them for brushwork, because their brush engines are more intuitive and better suited to my style of painting. Photoshop remains my first choice for large-scale adjustments.

Artist insight Painting a corpse





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## A LIVELY DEATH SCENE

### Making sure everything's in order

Human anatomy, especially hands and faces, are so familiar to us that even without any formal knowledge we can easily spot mistakes. Therefore, reference is extremely important for my work. I try to include something previously unexplored into each new illustration, to avoid getting stuck in a rut. I'll study the subject matter and immediately put my knowledge into practice.

### Visual padding

I often use swirling rich drapery for areas that have otherwise very little to offer, to balance the overall composition. My aim is to create a scene that's staged and tightly packed.

### Final touches

I always aim for a painterly look in my work, so towards the end of my process I import a photo texture of a painted surface, set it to Overlay mode and adjust it to match the shapes and main strokes of my painting with a strong smudge brush. I use the High Pass filter and a little bit of chromatic aberration to make the painterly structure pop even more.

### Bring in more light

Late on in the process I add a new, bright light source to introduce more drama and draw attention to the character's face. I use a masked Curves adjustment layer and a soft brush in Photoshop to preserve the details of my almost-finished painting.



### UV colour scheme

I start with conservative purple-grey tones and gradually mix them with random hues until a stronger palette begins to emerge. When I'm satisfied with what I see, I push the palette towards the toxic-looking, unnatural tones that can be seen under a UV light using soft colour overlays.



### RESOURCES

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

### PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSH: SOFT CHALK



This is the brush I use for almost everything, regardless of the software. It's a rectangle with natural edges and with a faint texture. I usually set my brushes to simulate soft chalk as much as the program makes it possible.

## Core skills: Part 3

# PHOTOSHOP: WORK WITH LAYER STYLES

**Mark White** takes a look at the world of Layer Styles in Photoshop, how they can improve your art and how you can arrange them effectively

### 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](http://be.net/mrkjhnwht)



Non-destructive editing is where you can make changes to images without having to make them permanently. Think masking on a layer mask rather than erasing parts of your layer forever, or even just duplicating your entire document to another folder while you do something a little risky to it.

Layer masks fit into this category, too. They're quick fixes that you can apply to layers to make them stand out from the layers below them. Best of all, anything you apply to your layers – whether it's a glow, a shadow or even a complete remodel of it via a bevel – doesn't have to be forever. Layer styles can be stacked too, just like other layers, and by using the Fill, you can reduce their Opacity

without changing the Opacity of the layer that they're applied to.

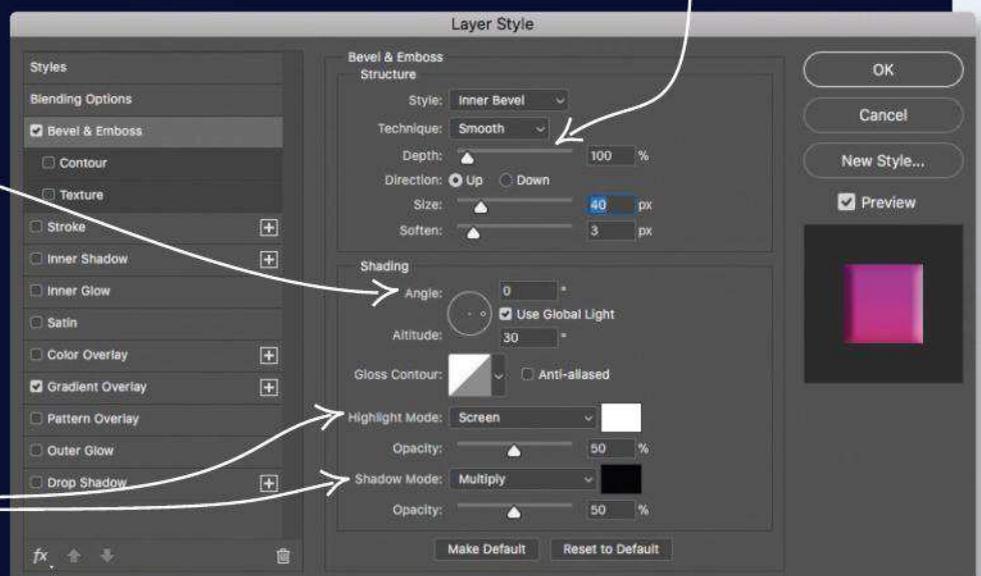
Remember, when you're finished, if you wish, you can use the Rasterize Layer Style option to set it permanently – destructively, if you like. Let's dive into how you use layer styles on a simple digital illustration of an apple, which is made up of a number of layers of selections, created with the Pen tool.

You can access the bevel and emboss options by clicking Layer>Layer Style>Bevel & Emboss. You can also choose other layer styles from this window.

Depth determines how dramatic the effect you're applying is, and creates more or less light and shade. Size will determine how big the effect looks on the object, while then the Soften slider creates a rounded finish to the bevel.

The Angle option will help you to align the light from a specific direction, and Global Light will enable you to have all objects with layer styles following the same light direction. Use the Contour feature to alter the texture of the bevel itself.

Highlight and Shadow Mode are two sliders for completely controlling the light and shade, from how severe it is to how it hits the object. Use Overlay for both for subtlety, and use Screen and Multiply respectively for a more severe effect, for example.



### 1 Make the most of the bevel and emboss options

Bevel and Emboss are shaping tools for giving your objects subtle contour and volume. They apply natural-looking highlight and shade to your selections, and you can even go as far as to pick a specific style and smoothness of the effect.

This should be used for selections of colour, in a similar way to how you might clip a layer to another layer as a clipping mask. Overlays are capable of altering the Opacity or Blend mode to react in different ways.

Choose a colour, pattern or a gradient that you wish to apply as an overlay by clicking the colour icon. Then apply either a preset gradient, or choose your own with the colour picker.

You can alter the direction that you wish for the gradient or pattern to follow, by using this icon.

## 2 Multiple ways of working with overlays

There are so many ways to fill a selection with colour, but Gradient, Pattern and Color Overlay in Layer styles are three of the most reliable. These colours will fill the object whether you move it or not, and you can even change the Overlay's Opacity and Blend mode.

**PRO SECRETS**

**Copy and paste styles**

Ctrl/right-click a layer in the layer palette and select Copy Layer Style to copy. Go to another layer and do the same to paste it.

Blend mode and Color are what determine how your drop shadow reacts with the layers below. Choosing a dark colour and Multiply will create a shadow effect, while a light colour and Screen will introduce more of a glow effect.

Distance can help position your shadow a little further away, and the Spread slider can control the density of your shadow. The size will determine how big it appears; reduce it right down to have a completely hard edge.

Just like with the Bevel & Emboss section, Contour can help you to change the actual texture of the shadow, when combined with Noise. This isn't commonly used, but is still worth experimenting with nevertheless.

## 3 Apply a drop shadow to your art

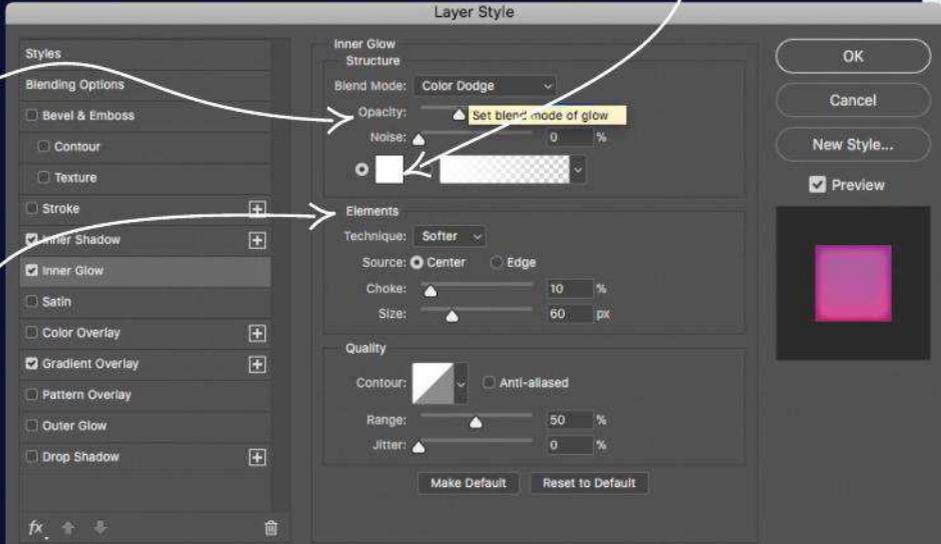
The Drop Shadow is one of the most versatile Layer Styles that you'll find in Photoshop. It's not only used for the obvious, fuzzy black space behind objects, but it can be used for an almost unnoticeable way to make an object stand out in a painting. ➡



Pick a colour and gradient with the options available. Using a gradient can be useful if you only want the glow to appear over some of the object.

Opacity and Noise can help to define exactly how bright and clear the glow itself looks. Change the Blend mode too to alter the way the glow looks against the colours behind it.

The Elements box will help you to set a Choke and Size. This controls the intensity of the glow to a degree; the smaller these numbers are, often the more realistic it looks.



## 4 Alter the intensity of light with the Glow layer styles

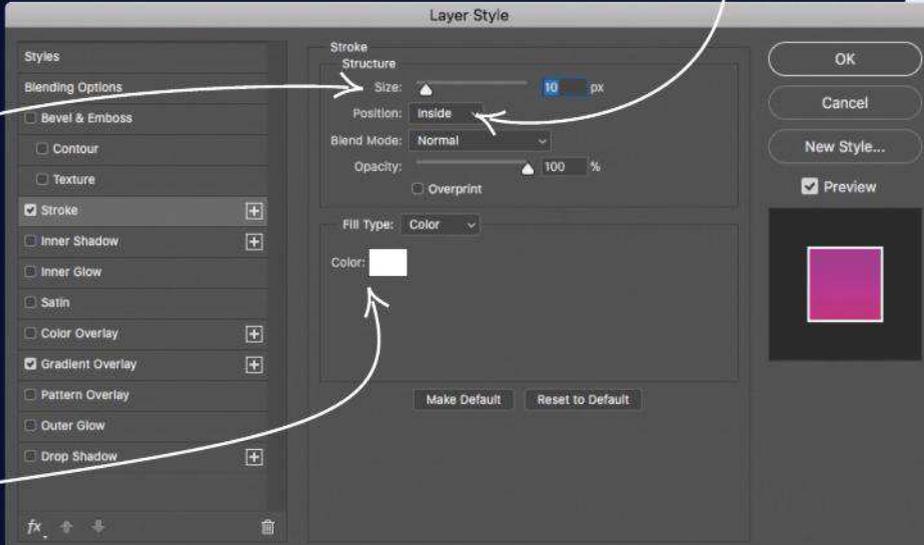
The Inner and Outer Glow layer styles are two of the most popular available for controlling light or shine. They're mostly used just with a bright white colour, but this doesn't mean you can't apply them to other colours.



If you choose the Inside option for the Position, the stroke will likely have sharper edges; if you choose Outside, the stroke will curl around pointy edges in your selection. Centre is the midpoint of these two styles.

The Size slider is the most important when it comes to Stroke. Use it to determine whether you want a thick, obvious line around your selection, or a hairline stroke to just subtly highlight a selection.

The Color and Fill Type options are there to choose the important details. Again, use a gradient if you only want a partial stroke around your object.



## 5 Emphasise an object's appearance with a Stroke

Perhaps the simplest layer style of all, the Stroke option is just a basic outline around the inside, outside or centre of your object. Change the colour and blend mode, and use it to make some selections stand out a lot more than others.

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## Photoshop

# STREAMLINE YOUR COSTUME DESIGNS

**Paul Gerrard** treads the fine line that exists between loose, conceptual illustration pieces and workable, tangible costume designs

### Artist PROFILE

**Paul Gerrard**  
LOCATION: England

Paul started out creating aliens for *Battle: Los Angeles*, and quickly got hooked on developing characters for films and TV. He's known for his dark and disturbing art. [www.gerrardart.com](http://www.gerrardart.com)



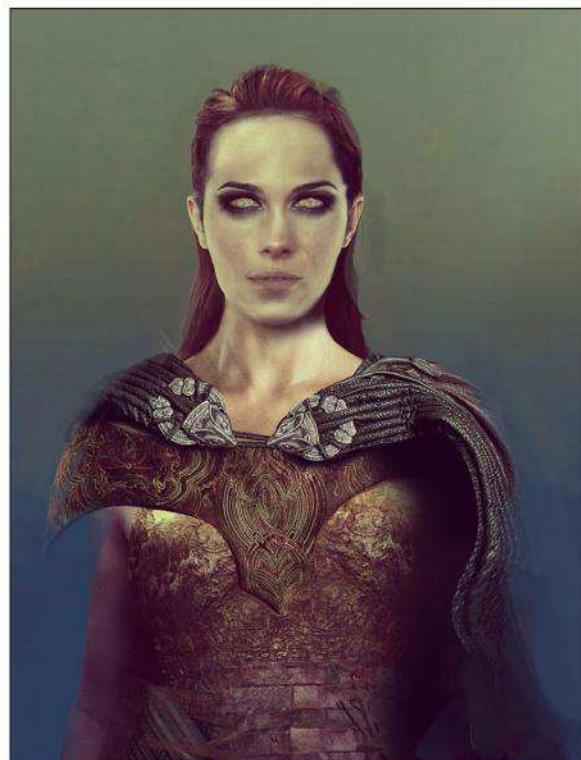
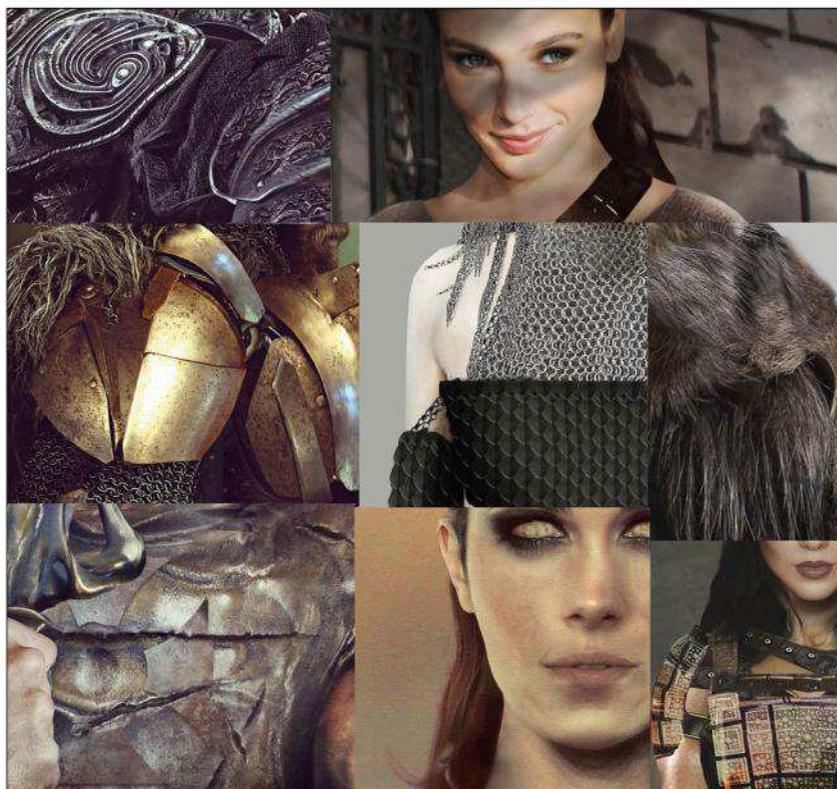
Designing for costumes requires a lot of research and many questions to be answered before you even begin your painting process. Skimp on this stage and your clothing ideas become little more than eye-catching concepts.

I was recently asked to work on *Hellboy: Rise of the Blood Queen*.

I presumed that it would be creatures, antagonists and mutants, as is normally the case in my dark corner of conceptual art. To my surprise, the commission was for pure costume design. I love a challenge, so I embraced it, but I had to adapt quickly. Costumes have always played an important role when concepting characters; they add to the visual tone. Costume design is a

different discipline, but all characters need clothes, so how hard could it be?

Turns out it requires far more precision and a hell of a lot of research! Here, I'll share with you my findings, work process and tips that will help the development of your characters' costumes. I'll be focusing on two costumes created for one character: a standard costume and a battle armour version. Let's suit up.



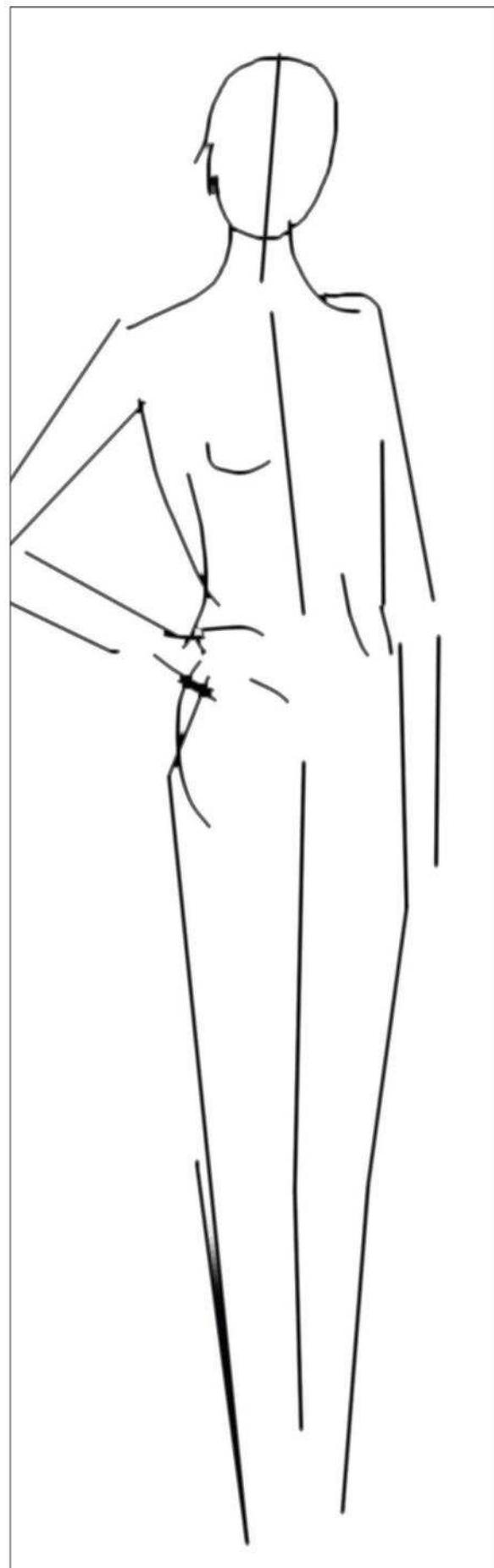
### 1 Outline your character's story

Who is your character? In my piece she's the captain of the royal guard in a fantasy world. A young princess, a warrior, a rebel. For her costumes I want to first present a formal/military outfit with the basic armour tech on show, and for the second, a battle-ready armoured uniform. I want them to work in unison and the armour to be a key feature in both designs. She has to be edgy and have attitude. I collect references of faces and costumes, and create a series of mood boards.

### 2 Reflect the world she lives in

This is a large part of the research phase. You have to understand the world that your character inhabits. In this instance I'm going for a futuristic world with a slight Renaissance vibe, so of course I'll need to show this in the design. I look through some of my older pieces to help me develop a starting point. I'm not looking to get down pose or detailing ideas – just the general tone of the piece. ➡





### 3 Consider tone and presentation

Decide on the right tone and maintain it throughout the design. A good way to do this is in the presentation style. I'm going for a semi-retro look: a pale beige background with a border. It helps to sell the tone from the outset, while ensuring your costume design is front and centre. I'd refrain from using any imagery in the background, although an exception would be a close-up of the character's head, such as in this earlier piece of mine: Evil Lyn from Masters of the Universe.

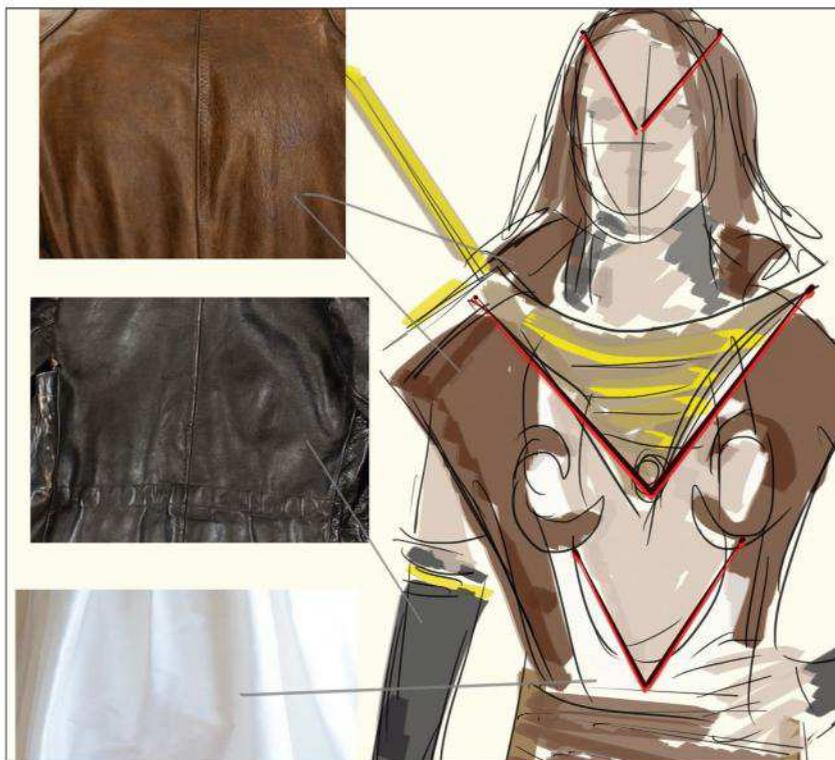
### 4 A question of pose

You'll need to pose your character so that the costume's clearly shown, but don't make the stance dynamic. The goal is to present the detailing of the costume, not create a character illustration. I often choose a simple fashion model pose. Look at fashion magazines and collect online gallery stills of fashion models in action. There are plenty of fashion croquis (quick sketch) templates available online, too.



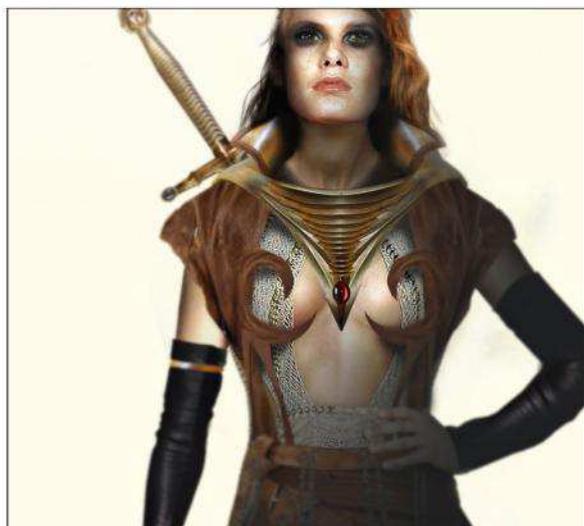
## 5 Everything starts with a sketch

I concentrate on lines that represent folds in any fabric, and create interesting shapes and patterns. For example, the V-shape in her armour is repeated in her dress and overcoat. I keep these initial sketches simple, and focus on flowing lines and blocks of colour.



## 6 Be inspired by your materials

As a concept designer, you don't really think too much about materials, fabrics or indeed how an actor would wear an outfit. But as a costume designer often your ideas come from a particular type of material, so keep that in mind when you're sketching. Create mood boards and place images of materials next to your design elements. Then explore different variations, colours and textures.



## 7 Don't overlight the design

On a standard character illustration I'd place a third of the figure in shadow to add more depth. I'd also add elements of dynamic lighting, and blur parts of the scene to enhance the mood. However, for costume design art you should forgo the shadows and keep the lighting to a minimum, to clearly show off the outfit. This might go against your instincts as an artist – the figure might look flat, like an unfinished painting – but resist the urge to properly render the scene. If you do, you'll only dilute the message that the design is trying to communicate.



## 8 Keep things clear and defined

Don't overwork the image. Maintain clear lines, defined details and recognisable textures. I keep my lines on a separate layer so I can quickly refer to them. A good design is not only recognisable, but easily recreated, too. Think about structure in relation to the material. For example, the armour's made from a bronze and steel material, so my lines are sharp and heavy to emphasise how tough it is. ➡



## 9 Creating the battle armour version

This is where it gets tricky, when you put on your practical hat and start asking more questions. Is the armour placed on or strapped on? How does it work? If it's high-end tech then perhaps it can be multi-layered and unfold from a central device. Furthermore, what's the theme of the armour? Here, I'm going for a subtle snake theme mixed with a retro 1920s vibe. I want it to look like it grows, so I create two versions: one before and one after it's activated. Again, take into consideration how this might look in real life. Something too big and bulky will look unrealistic.



## 10 Introduce motifs

Repeating motifs and identifiable fashion elements help to maintain a sense of consistency between the character's two outfits. For example, the triangle theme that's evident in the coat and dress now appears on the body armour. The snake motif, while subtle, appears on the helmet and the sword if you look carefully enough, as well as within the central body armour section.



## 11 Think ahead

Keep each piece of clothing on a separate layer. I create my imagery in black and white and then add a layer of colour followed by the texture or details. This enables me to change elements at any time. There's nothing worse than finalising your image, only for the client to request a quick colour change. Or even worse, ask to swap out the materials of a particular piece of clothing.



**12 Illustrate more than you can see**  
The final design with all its layers will often hide elements of the clothing that a client may want to see later. Pre-empt this by illustrating everything in layers and completing each layer of clothing. Think of the process like dressing a doll: start at the beginning and up build the layers. This will also help illustrate how one piece of clothing may hang or interact with another.



**13 Give your character suitable accessories**  
This is often an afterthought of costume designers. Designing accessories such as weapons – guns and swords, for example – is my favourite part of the process. I take the time to hone the design of these accessories so that they have a character all of their own. One approach is to imagine them as a toy line. What would make them stand out on the shelf? What would make you buy it? Note that the gun follows the same V-shape design elements as the costume itself.



**14 Prepare the modesty layer**  
Using Photoshop is extremely handy at times. You can anticipate most client changes ahead of time by simply working in extra layers. I always create modesty layers: one image to sell the sexy nature of the character and another more realistic 'costume' layer that covers up any exposed areas of skin deemed to be too racy.



**15 Bear in mind self-promotion opportunities**  
Once the design is signed off I often do a 'magazine' edition. This is a glossy showcase version that's for my own collection, and are perfect for promo work. Remember that your costume design images are often only ever seen in-house.

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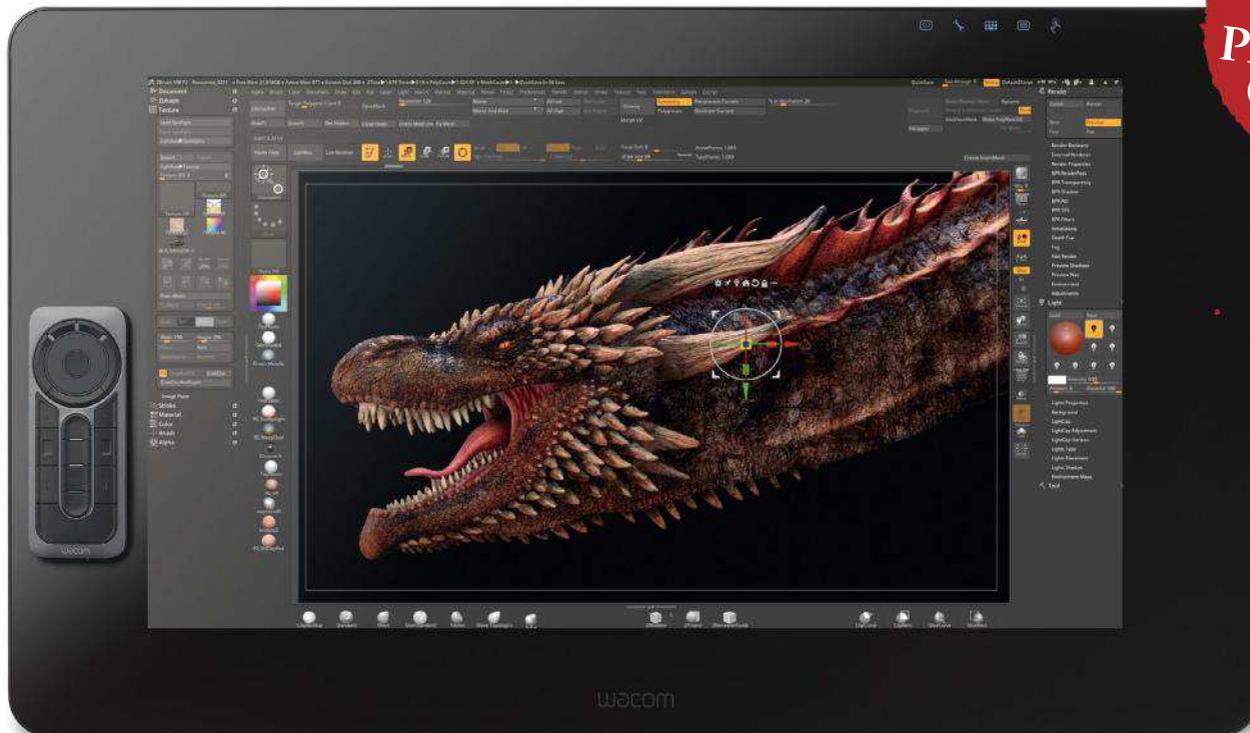
# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

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## HARDWARE

### 90 Cintiq Pro

An already strong product category is about to get stronger as Wacom adds two new Cintiqs and a new PC option.

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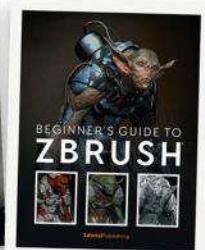
### 93 2018 Lesson 01: Ursus Warbear

Concept artist Dongjun Lu shows how to create games characters from scratch in this monster-sized Gumroad video.

## BOOKS

### 94 The Big Bad World Of Concept Art For Video Games

Concept art is a cut-throat career choice. Luckily, one industry pro guides you on your way with his hard-earned advice.



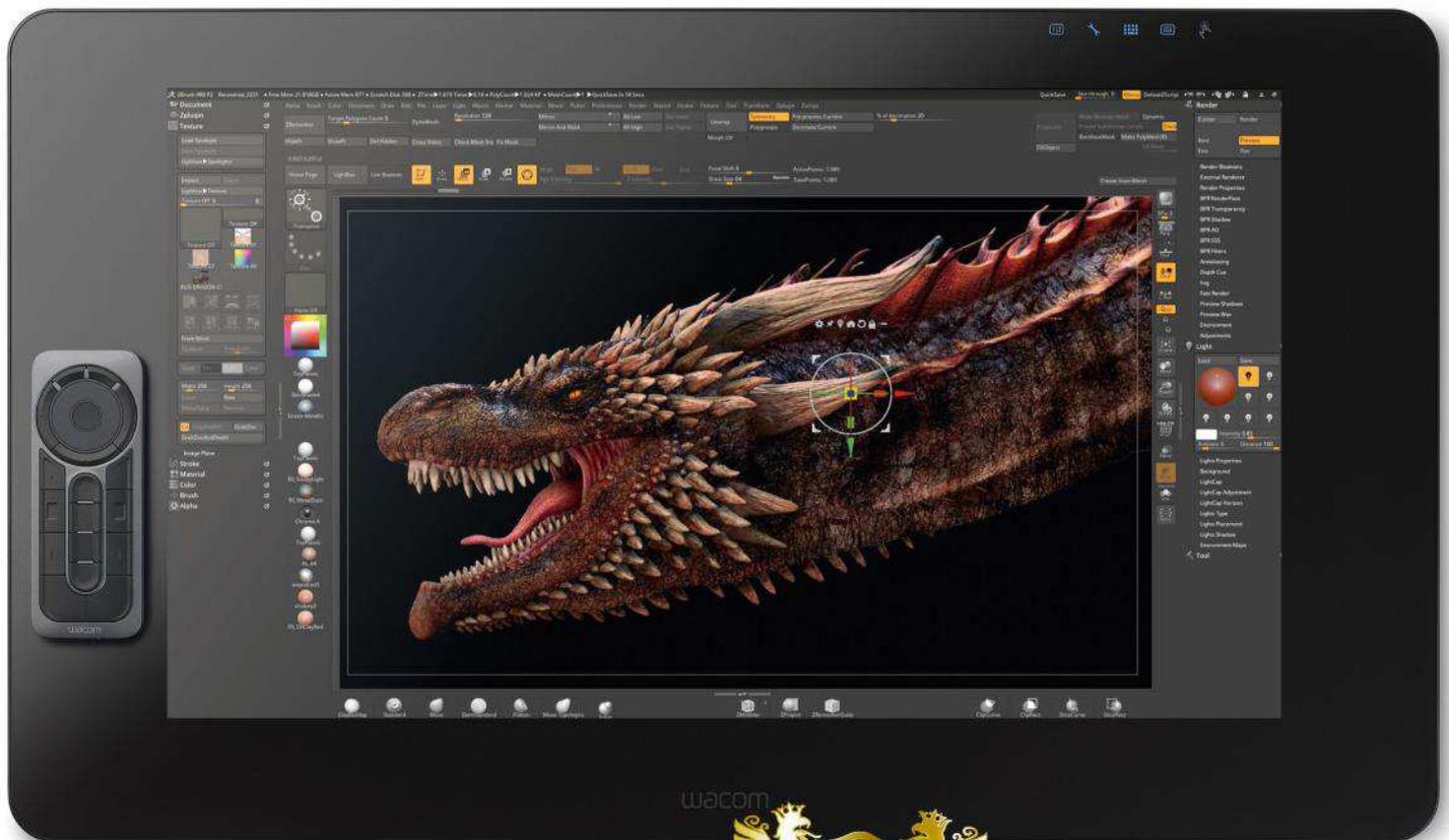
### 95 Okja: The art and making of the film

Unleash your inner animal activist with this behind-the-scenes book dedicated to the realisation of a giant man-made pig.

### 95 Beginner's Guide to ZBrush

Take your first steps into the world of 3D sculpting with this thorough and accessible guide that's aimed at newcomers.

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



# Cintiq Pro



There are two new 4K Cintiqs in the range: the 24-inch, available now, and a 32-inch to follow later this year. The ExpressKey Remote is a standard feature on the newer models.

**DOUBLE THE FUN** An already strong product category is about to get stronger as Wacom adds two new Cintiqs and a new PC option

**Price** £1,900 (24-inch, pen only); £2,400 (24-inch, pen and touch); 32-inch £TBC **Company** Wacom **Web** [www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com)

**T**he latest additions to Wacom's product line are two new Cintiq Pro displays. The 24-inch (Pen only and Pen and touch versions) will be released imminently, and the 32-inch follows later in the year.

With that we see the announcement of the new Cintiq Pro Engine. This is a PC that slots into the back of the new Cintiq models, and turns them into standalone computers. These modules go on sale in May (prices TBC). Both models of the Pro Engine performed well with all our tests. Even the lower-

The Pro Pen 2 comes with a wide range of nib types, which are found in the very solid Pen holder.

USB3 and an SD card reader on the side of the panel help with peripherals and adding your own files.



spec version that features an Intel i5 CPU turned out to be no slouch. If you're using it for 2D applications, you aren't going to push it to its limits.

Both new Pen displays have a whopping 4K screen resolution (otherwise known as Ultra HD, 3,840x2,160) and 99 per cent Adobe RGB - and they are stunning. You'll soon notice that each device features bright, punchy displays with an etched

glass finish. This improves the glare issues from earlier models and gives a slight 'bite' to the surface that's more akin to drawing on paper.

Wacom has reduced the parallaxing effect that some complained about in previous models, through what it calls 'optical bonding' - and it really does work. The pen nib feels tight on the screen and during all of our tests on both models we experienced zero



## ARTIST INTERVIEW

### GLEN SOUTHERN

*With 4K, this artist has taken his first step into a larger world...*

#### What's your favorite feature of the new Wacom product?

I was using the 27-inch model for several years and loved it, but the addition of the 4K resolution just improves things immensely. That amount of screen real estate is a game changer for me.

#### Why has that made such an impact on your work?

If you have bad eyes you're going to want to tinker in your OS with the text and icon sizes: at 4K everything is impossibly small at first! As soon as you tweak the size to work for you, it's amazing.

#### What software do you use with the Cintiq?

My main tool is ZBrush and the first thing I did was to configure the interface to suit a 4K panel. Now I can have more of my key tools pulled onto the interface, speeding my up workflow.

#### So have you moved away from multiple monitors?

I quite often used either a third of the screen from top to bottom or to the right side for reference material. I'm so used to having a Cintiq and an external monitor for reference so it's nice to fit it all into one screen. I don't think I need that extra screen at all now.

#### Has the newer specs of the panel made a difference?

The colours are vibrant and the new surface etching just gives a tiny bit of drag on the pen nib and feels very pencil-like. Using Mischief to concept ideas is liberating. Because it's an unlimited canvas and you're using it at 4K resolution, it gives you a wide open infinite canvas in all directions, including in and out.



*Glen runs SouthernGFX, a small studio specialising in character and creature design and look development.*

[www.southerngfx.co.uk](http://www.southerngfx.co.uk)

This side-on profile shows how steep the Cintiq is, even with a Pro Engine inside.

Both Cintiq models have pull-out legs on the rear of the panel. A new stand will be available as a separate purchase later in the year.

The Pro Engine simply slides in and docks to the connectors inside the back panel. It can also be used as a standalone PC with a standard monitor.

## “Both new Pen displays have a 4K screen resolution, otherwise known as Ultra HD – and they are stunning”

latency in any of the 2D and 3D programs that we used them with.

There's support for the Pro Pen 2 and that means there's now 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity. It's difficult to know if that improved the pen experience, because previously we thought that performance was pretty amazing at 2,048 levels! If you're willing to spend an extra £90 you can upgrade the included Wacom Pen to the newer 3D Pen that comes with three buttons.

One feature that we loved on the new screens is that Wacom has added an AV switcher to the onscreen controls. That means that even if you

have a hefty workstation attached to it in your studio, you can plug in your MacBook, say, and hot-swap between the two computers with a screen press. It's a tiny addition that will make a real difference to people's workflow.

Artists using 2D painting software or 3D programs such as ZBrush will love the high resolutions and huge screen real estate that you get with these 4K screens. The 32-inch model used standing up is pretty much like drawing on an A0 drawing board. Try the 32-inch before you consider buying it because it's a huge physical presence in your office or studio. Don't even consider it if it's for your bedroom!

### DETAILS

#### Features

- 4K Ultra HD display (3,840x2,160)
- 522x294mm active area (24-inch model)
- 1.07 billion colours (10-bit), 99 per cent Adobe RGB
- USB C, DisplayPort or HDMI2.0 graphic input options
- 1,000:1 contrast ratio; 350 cd/m2 brightness
- Four USB3 ports, one USB C port, one HDMI2.0 port, one DisplayPort.
- Audio headset jack, built-in microphone

#### System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later  
Mac: OS X 10.11 or later

#### Rating



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This imposing warrior is a character in a proposed game project. Dongjun Lu shows you how it was developed, from initial notes to finished concept.



The two videos in this package are over nine hours altogether, as well as the bear warrior, Dongjun crafts a jungle-dwelling hunter.

Dongjun shows how he adds colour over his preferred sketch, before bringing in the backdrop and piling on relevant details.

## 2018 Lesson 01: Ursus Warbear

**BEAR NECESSITIES** Concept artist and teacher Dongjun Lu shows how to create video game characters from scratch, in this monster-sized Gumroad video

**Publisher** Dongjun Lu **Price** £11 **Format** Download **Web** [www.gumroad.com/ludongjun](http://www.gumroad.com/ludongjun)

**W**elcome to the new era of online training, where artists and illustrators can teach their fans new skills.

At the same time, fans have the chance to support their inspirations through donations. It's a virtuous circle that enables artists to invest more time in creating richer, more rewarding training material.

Dongjun Lu offers a package of video and associated files every month. You have the option of choosing individual downloads via the online marketplace Gumroad or subscribing to all of his releases via the artist supporter website Patreon.

Dongjun's first release of the year sees him discussing the creation of characters (IP or intellectual property, to use the industry term) for an original game project he is working on with some friends. Across two videos, you'll see how he starts with simple



### DETAILS

**Topics covered**

- IP creation
- Using reference
- Initial sketches
- Introducing colour
- Adding detail

**Length**  
653 minutes

**Rating**  
★★★★☆

notes about the character and its environment, creates initial sketches to try ideas out, then works one concept up into a more finished piece.

The two videos here, clocking in at over nine hours altogether, show the making of a bear-like creature in an icy setting and a hunter in a jungle. You also get the full Photoshop documents of the concept pieces, and a selection of custom brushes Dongjun used.

The videos are in real time rather than being sped up, which means that some sections feature repetitive detailing, and Dongjun sensibly chooses to restrict his audio commentary to key moments rather than attempt to occupy hours of airtime. While this gives patient viewers the benefit of seeing the artist's entire process, perhaps some editing down or use of time-lapse would help to focus attention on the important steps of IP creation.

### ARTIST PROFILE DONGJUN LU

Dongjun Lu is a senior concept artist specialising in film and games projects. He was based in Singapore, but recently moved to Wellington, New Zealand to join Weta as a concept artist. Dongjun has worked on franchises such as Dragoborne, Toukiden, Ninja Gaiden, Nobunaga's Ambition, Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Uncharted Waters. He's also been teaching digital drawing for six years now, and releases an online lesson every month through his Patreon page.



[www.ludongjun.com](http://www.ludongjun.com)



Elliott's worked on big game franchises such as *Rage*, *Doom* and *Call of Duty*.



Although Elliott's art speciality is sci-fi, his advice can be applied to any concept genre.

# The Big Bad World Of Concept Art For Video Games

**HELPING HAND** Concept art is a cut-throat career choice. Luckily, one industry pro has put pen to paper, to guide you on your way with his hard-earned advice

**Author** Elliott J Lilly **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £28 **Web** [www.designstudiopress.com](http://www.designstudiopress.com)

**R**arely do career advice books acknowledge the competitiveness of an industry in their title, but with over a decade of professional experience under his belt, Elliott Lilly knows when concept artists need to be told the truth upfront. In this second book in the series, which picks up where its predecessor *An Insider's Guide for Students* leaves off, the sought-after concept artist for video games shares the hard-won lessons he's learnt over the years.

Aimed at upcoming professionals and artists looking to move into the entertainment industry, this book focuses on the real-world career hurdles that concept artists will need to be prepared to deal with. As Elliott repeatedly points out, you might be the best concept artist on the planet,



Elliott uses this example of a character concept to point out certain dos and don'ts.

but that won't help you get a foot in the door if you don't have the business nous to match.

Split into 10 chapters, this 120-page book rattles through the key challenges of promoting yourself, job hunting and dealing with setbacks in a refreshingly concise yet informative way. And while some sections are more thin on the ground than others (the opening chapter is a four-page

**“This book will streamline the process of putting together a job application”**

wake-up call dedicated to the truth about concept art and employment opportunities), each one will help readers hone in on how to take their first steps in the growing industry.

This doesn't mean that the book comes across as didactic when it's time for choosing a career path. In fact, Elliott goes to great efforts to provide a balanced and realistic look at how concept artists can expect to progress should they, for example, become a generalist or a specialist, or decide to work with a first-party or independent developer.

Some of the insights, such as how to network or construct a cover letter, might seem like fairly standard career



Advice is given on how to submit mailers to art studios. Elliott sent this package to Activision.

advice, but it's rewarding to see how it applies to concept artists specifically. If anything, this book will streamline the process of putting together a job application, distributing mailers and negotiating a salary.

Given the nature of how concept art is often retained by the employer, there's not much in the way of imagery to enjoy in these pages. But we're here for the guidance rather than the art, and in this regard Elliott successfully delivers a punchy introduction to the working world that doesn't shy away from the uncomfortable truth: you're going to have to work damn hard.

**RATING** ★★★★★☆



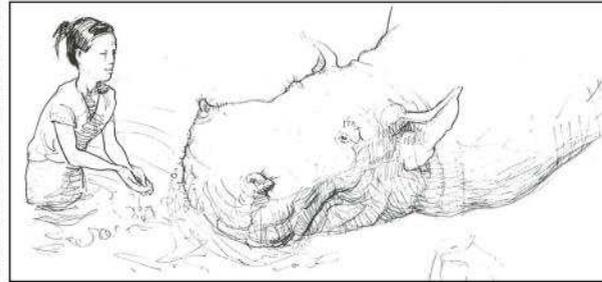
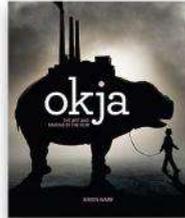
# Okja: The art and making of the film

**PRIME CUTS** Unleash your inner animal activist with this behind-the-scenes book dedicated to the design and realisation of a giant man-made pig

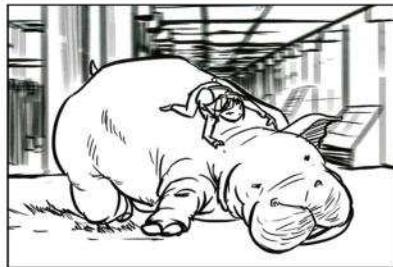
**Author** Simon Ward **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** [www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com)

**P**oignant storytelling can spring from surprising places. In the case of *Okja*, a film whose titular character is a super pig, even a sizeable creature's 'epic pooping' can set up a plot development. As director Bong Joon Ho puts it, "watching the scene where she's pooping, you feel the magic."

This bizarre revelation is indicative of the sort of creative decision-making



Okja gets a bit of a wash behind the ears from Mija, the lead human character in the film.



Storyboard from the climax of the film – a chase scene that takes place in a shopping mall.

you can expect to read about in this making of book. The film is a quirky beast that tackles big issues such as consumerism and self-worth, and has been described as possibly 'the most vegetarian film ever'.

Opening with a chapter dedicated to the design of the film's super pig, this book then takes us on a tour of the locations in the film and introduces us to the main (human) characters.

Besides *Okja*, most of the images here are limited to brisk digital concept paintings and storyboard art. Useful for animators, directors, and concept artists, and as a reference for fans of the film, this book is an odd yet engaging creature depending on what you want to get out of it. Rather like *Okja* herself.

**RATING** ★★★★★

# Beginner's Guide to ZBrush

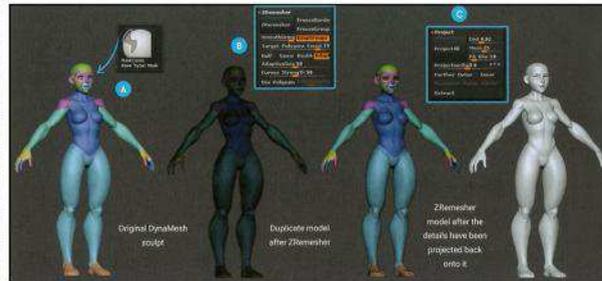
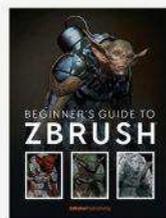
**NEW DIMENSION** Take your first steps into the world of 3D sculpting with this thorough and accessible guide that's aimed at newcomers



**Editor** Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** [www.3dtotalpublishing.com](http://www.3dtotalpublishing.com)

**A**s freelance ZBrush sculptor Maarten Verhoeven reveals in his introduction, once you start playing around with ZBrush you'll see that it's easy to work with and is designed to benefit users with existing art skills.

This is because ZBrush, instead of focusing on the technical side of creating 3D art, takes more of an accessible, spontaneous approach. And in this guide you'll find a similar



Downloadable resources such as videos and .ZBR files accompany the workshops in the book.



Raul Tavares' creation of his fantasy-themed character is described across 54 pages.

explanation of ZBrush's tools, workflows and systems to help you hit the ground running.

Established 3D artists, including Ruben Alba, Raul Tavares and Carsten Stüben, present chapters that tackle specific specialities of the software, such as hard surfaces, detailed sculpting and meshes. Elsewhere, Glen Southern gives a great overview of the program's interface and its key tools.

While it's aimed at beginners, this guide doesn't talk down to the reader. Key concepts are explained clearly, yet there's an element of having to read closely in order to keep up. The lessons quickly build up and pay off though, making this a rewarding and insightful introduction for artists looking to add a new dimension to their work.

**RATING** ★★★★★

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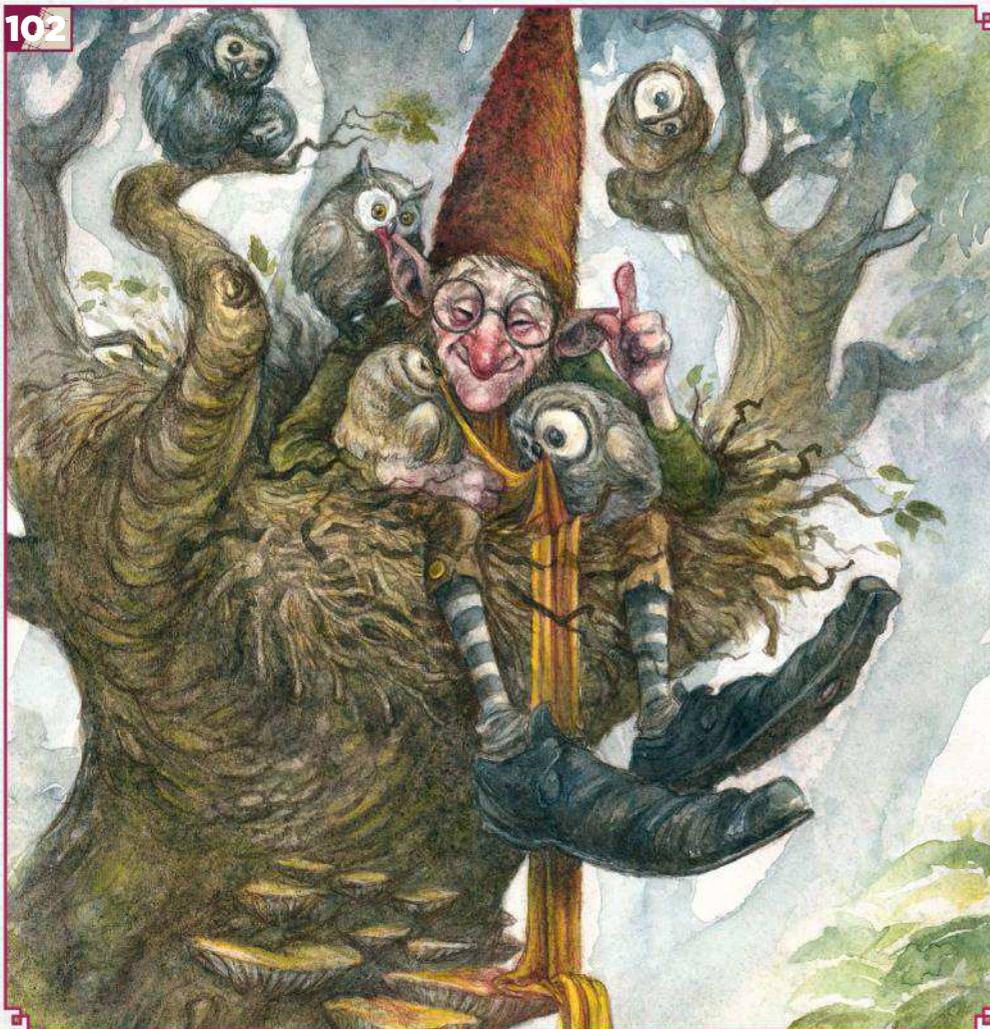
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# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

**Workshops assets are available...**  
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 8 to see how you can get hold of the video.



## This issue:

**98 Traditional art FXPosé**  
Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which was sent in by you!

**102 Workshop: The importance of storytelling**  
Iris Compiet reveals how she sketches and paints a fantasy character, and tells their story in a single image.

**108 Workshop: Use texture in a ghostly scene**  
See how AM Sartor takes an indirect approach to traditional art, as she creates a surreal take on a classic mythological figure.

**114 First Impressions: Jim Pavelec**  
This US artist found inspiration within a medieval grimoire.



# FXPosé

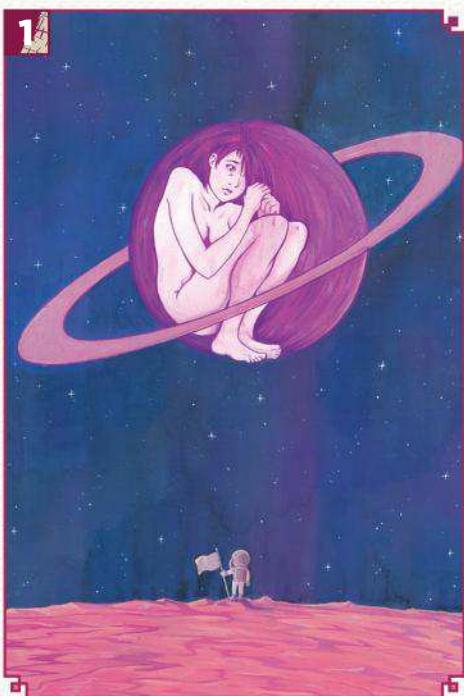
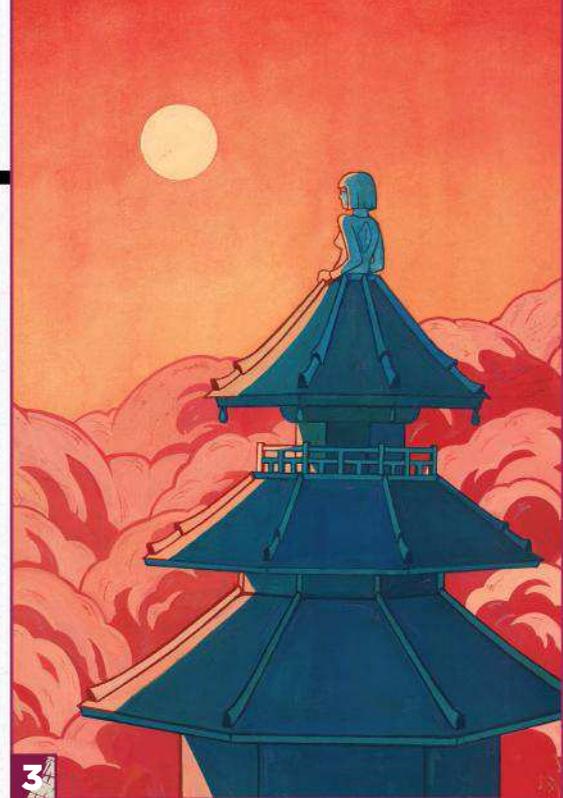
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Mike Stone

**LOCATION:** England **MEDIA:** Gouache, wax crayons, pencils **WEB:** [www.mikescribbles.com](http://www.mikescribbles.com)

Mike freelances as a creative and storyboard artist in advertising. He's working on a series of Siren paintings, each of which is rendered in a different colour.



### 1 THE PRIMROSE PLANET

"I opted to play with scale here. Most of the characters I create are small, cute and quirky, so taking a more realistic approach was a different sort of challenge."

### 2 COBALT QUEEN

"I first drew this in a sketchbook way back in 2009, and decided to recreate it in gouache. This is the first in my ongoing series of femme-themed paintings."

### 3 A VIEW IN VERMILION HUES

"Have you ever tried to paint straight with a paintbrush? It's harder than it looks! I had to buy an architect's tool to render the lines on the pagoda. It was worth it, though."



## 4 MELTING IN MAGENTA

"It took a few attempts to get the colours balanced correctly on this one, but it was absolutely worth the pain. I usually have a vague idea of how an image should look; however, it rarely pans out as you expect."





## Nadya Bonten-Slenders

**LOCATION:** The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Ink and watercolour **WEB:** [www.nadyart.nl](http://www.nadyart.nl)

Freelance artist Nadya enjoys creating whimsical worlds for adults to escape to and revisit their childhood. Her work often centres on small animals, venturing out to discover the world.



### 1 HYBERNATION ODYSSEY

"Three brave friends embark upon the unfamiliar adventure of winter sleep. After collecting all their treats, they hop aboard their leaf and sail the impetuous winds of autumn."

### 2 TAKING FLIGHT

"I'm always reinventing the modes of transport that my characters use as they explore the big wide world. I'm fascinated by magpies, and their monochrome feathers inspired me to make this painting during Inktober."

### 3 BRAVE THE STORM

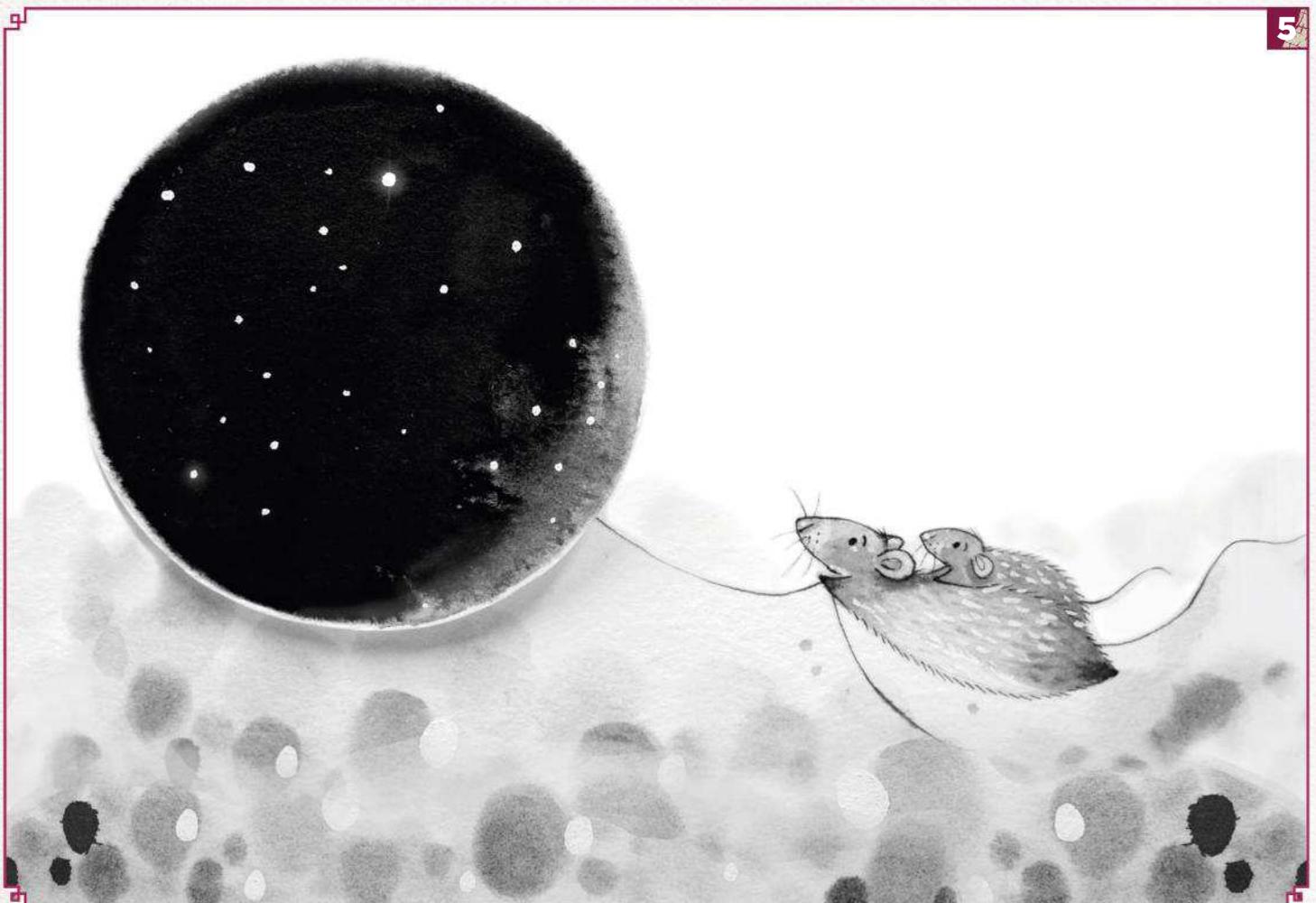
"I wanted to create an action shot for this painting. I used multiple painted layers to create the artwork."





**4 WINTER**  
"I love to experiment with multiple layers and contrast. Black ink offers me the freedom to explore these techniques. I'm intrigued by images that also incorporate a cute side with a tiny bit of dark."

**5 MY UNIVERSE**  
"Motherhood is a theme I like to feature into my work. This image portrays a mother and baby being carried by the night sky."







Pencil

Watercolour

# THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING

Make sure you're sitting comfortably, as IRIS COMPIET reveals how she sketches and paints a fantasy character, and tells their story in a single image

For my book *Faeries of the Faultlines*, I've been exploring the world of faeries, discovering new creatures and characters in every sketch I make. In this workshop, I'd like to show you how such characters evolve from a simple idea in my sketchbooks, how their story begins to form and how this will bring your characters to life.

For me, the story of a character, its purpose in life, his or her likes, dislikes, personality, clothing and so on can help to create an engaging image. I recently discovered a creature I've called Harry. Harry is a hobgoblin, and he takes care of orphaned owl chicks. That's his purpose, that's his story, and in this workshop I'll show you how I get from a single quick sketch of a rough idea to a final illustration that tells the story of Harry.

## ARTIST INSIGHT

### THE PERFECT PALETTES

If you want to avoid buying paint palettes, consider plain white plates! I like to use Ikea's square ones - they're actually for candles. I can stack them on top of each other in an attempt to keep cat hairs or dust from getting in when I'm not working.

I prefer to work in watercolour for these type of character illustrations. Watercolours have some great properties. For example, they dry quickly and you always have the option of using a hair dryer to speed up the process. But there are a lot of awkward aspects to watercolour. They're sometimes difficult to control, colours dry differently to their wet appearance, you need to plan ahead, and there's hardly a way to go back to the white of the paper if you make a mistake. Having said all this, it does offer the potential of plenty of happy accidents!

I prefer to work on Arches Hot Pressed 140lbs paper, stretched on a wooden board. I loosely transfer the final sketch on to the stretched paper using baking paper instead of vellum or tracing paper. Since you can't use a lightbox when you work on wooden boards, it keeps costs down. I only



trace the main lines and sketch the final details directly on to the paper very lightly. I don't want to leave too many marks on the paper - it might damage the surface and create unexpected problems as I go along.



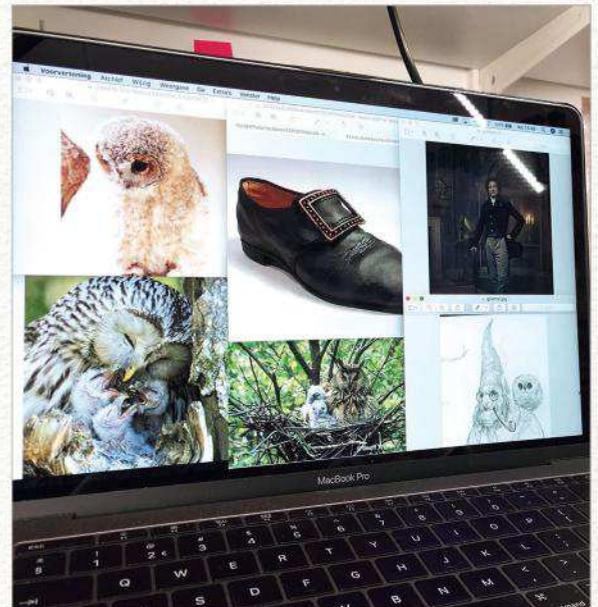
Iris lives and works in the Netherlands where she paints fantasy and folklore images of the weird and wonderful for a range of clients. She's the creator of the art book *Faeries of the Faultlines*. You can see more of her work at [www.eyeris.eu](http://www.eyeris.eu).

# Traditional Artist **Workshop**



## 1 **Getting to know my character**

Drawing full-body sketches of my character in simple poses helps me to develop his personality, and to see what I like about him. This also helps me to figure out how he moves or what his build should be. Exploring these body aspects is essential because they'll help shape the story. It'll bring your character to life.



## 2 **Gathering reference**

I find reference based on my sketches, although taking your own photos of objects or recreating a pose of the character is even better. My references are rough guides that give me ideas for colours and certain looks. I never copy from them. The clothing of your character is crucial: the way they dress says something about them.

### MATERIALS

#### PENCILS

- Graphgear 1000 Pentel, 0.7mm
- Prismacolor Col-Erase Tuscan red and Brown
- Faber-Castell Polychromos white and yellow

#### PAPER

- Arches Hot Pressed 140lbs, stretched on wooden board

#### BRUSHES

- Daler Rowney Rigger
- One very old watercolour brush
- Traditional Asian calligraphy brushes

#### WATERCOLOUR PAINT

- Daniel Smith: Van Dyck brown, Sepia, yellow ochre, Indian red, Deep scarlet, Potter's pink, Payne's blue gray, Mayan blue genuine, Cerulean blue, Shadow violet, Serpentine genuine, Olive green, Undersea green
- Sennelier: Greenish umber, Raw sienna



## 3 **Transferring the sketch**

I transfer the final sketch using baking paper. Graphite transfers easily on to the watercolour paper because of the anti-sticking coating. I transfer the basic shape and finish the final sketch on the paper. I keep my marks light so as not to damage the surface.



## 4 **First light watercolour washes**

After I wet the paper, I go in with a first wash – a mix of Shadow violet and Payne's Blue gray. I establish some base values, and find shadows and highlights. This doesn't have to be exact, and I'm not worried if the colour bleeds into areas I might not want it to.



## 5 *Apply more colour*

A second wash comprises some Ochre I blend into the still-damp first layer to warm up the nest and parts of the tree. There's no need to be precious in any of these initial washes – I like to keep things loose and translucent.



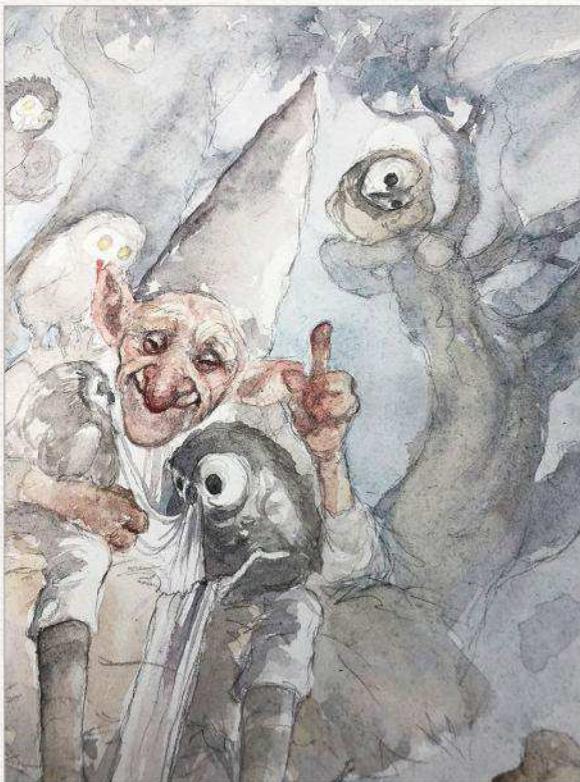
## 6 *Base tone for the face*

Because he's the focal point, it's important to get Harry's face established in the early stages. Light washes of skin tone help to build up his face, and using wet-in-wet technique on certain areas enables the red to bleed into the underlying washes. This gives his face a natural glow.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### SHARE YOUR ART

I like seeing how artists create more than their final pieces, so I urge you to share your process online. Sketches or WIP images will engage people in what you're working on. You might even get some helpful tips on how to fix something you're struggling with!



## 7 *Colouring the owls*

Even though the owls in this piece aren't meant to be lifelike, I want to keep their colouring true to nature, in line with the earthy palette I'm using. I want Harry to be the focal point, so your eye gets pulled towards him rather than darting around the painting.



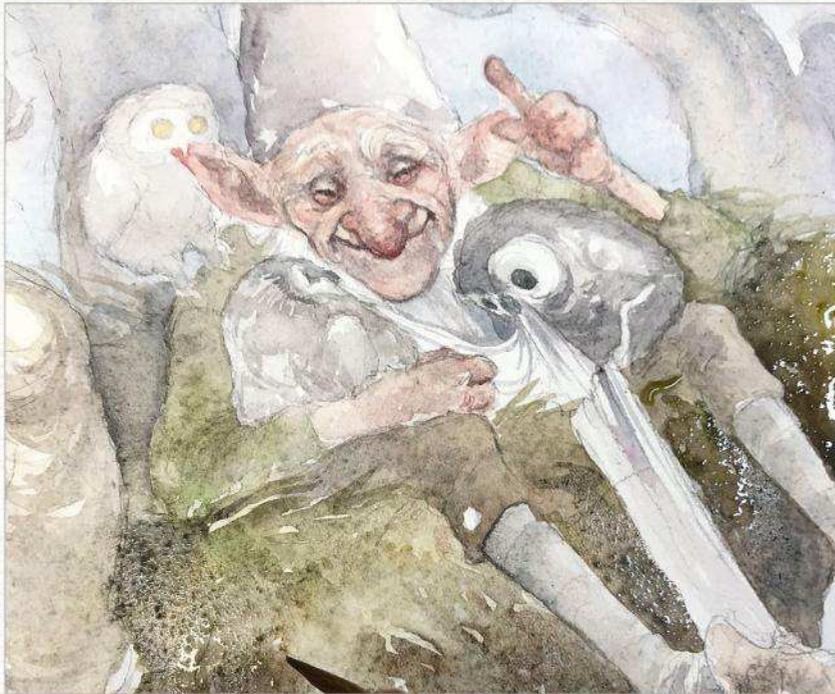
## 8 *Tap into the properties of paint*

Some of the Daniel Smith colours have certain properties, such as a granulation effect. This works perfectly to create the feel of fluffy owl feathers. So aside from using the wet-in-wet technique to help create textures, you can also use the properties of your medium. ➡

### WORK TIP

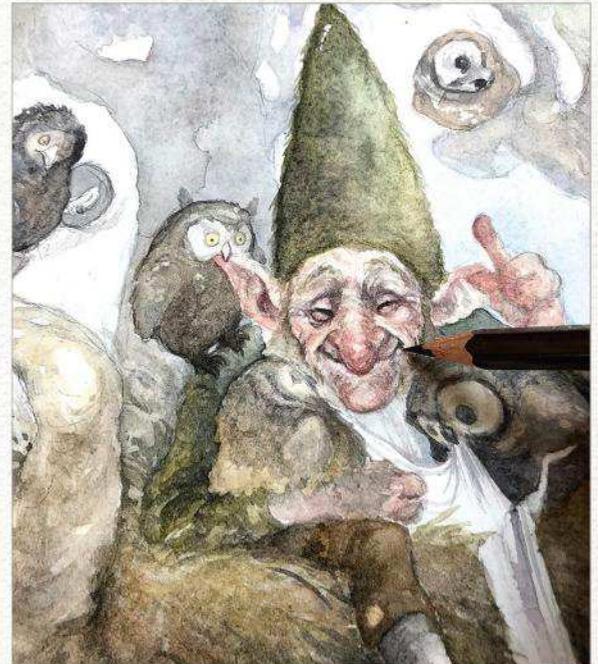
#### PAINT STEADILY

Rest between creative sessions. Refresh your mind, step away and then come back to your piece with fresh eyes.



## 9 *Continue with the washes*

I'm using the wet-in-wet technique a lot. I like the way the pigments mix while still wet, because it creates some natural colour variations. Particularly when painting objects like trees, this property can be very helpful in creating a realistic bark texture. In addition, I don't want too many hard edges at this stage.



## 10 *Defining detail*

I like to define certain details using a Col-Erase pencil. It generates a crisp line and blends well with watercolour. If you go over it with a damp paintbrush you can soften up the line. Don't push too hard, though. You don't want to make marks you can't erase or change.

### PROCESS TIP

#### EMBRACE MISTAKES

Don't be afraid to start over when a piece isn't working. Retrace your steps, see what's wrong and get to work.



### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Keep two containers of water at hand: one to rinse your dirty brushes in and one to use when you need to wet an area of your paper.

## 11 *Trail of mushrooms*

Adding mushrooms to the tree trunk creates an interesting visual. Using a mini mister (a small atomiser), I wet the paper. By using one of these I don't have to touch the paper and don't risk lifting pigment. I use the same colour for the mushrooms that I chose for the scarf. This helps me guide the viewer's eye towards Harry.



## 12 *Don't be afraid to make changes*

I take a step back from the piece and notice that there's too much of the same colour. I need a contrasting colour to attract attention towards Harry. I decide to change the colour of his hat from green to red, and this immediately solves my problem of the subject getting lost in his surroundings.



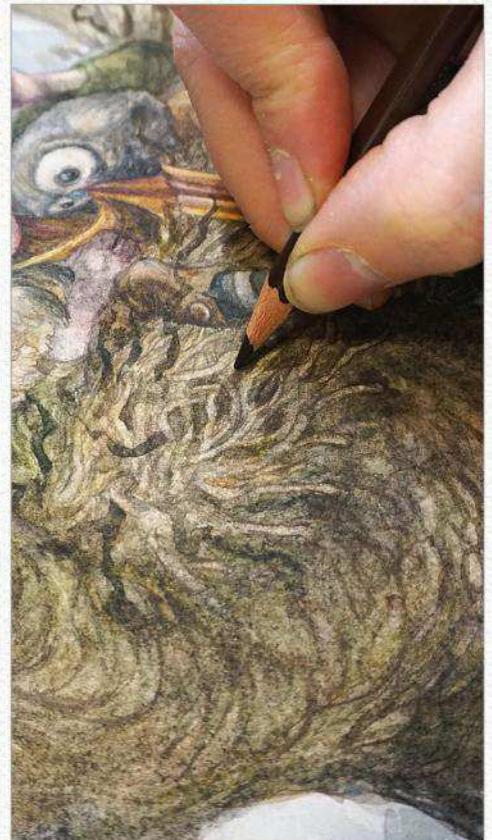
## 13 *A leafy illusion*

I paint the background with several washes of different colours. This creates the illusion of a leafy setting, without having to detail countless leaves. I use a brush with clean water to pick up the pigment in certain areas. This simulates light coming through the leaves and results in an interesting mix of detailing and suggestion.



## 14 *Painting bark*

I find the best way to add texture to the tree is to pick up and refine what's already there. The way the pigment, water and paper work together creates texture, and by refining what's already there I can create a natural texture. However, I don't refine everything and leave certain areas untouched.



## 15 *Bringing in some final touches to the painting*

For the final detailing, I use some Faber-Castell Polychromos white and yellow pencils to add some highlights on the rims of the mushrooms, Harry's hat, the scarf and in some owl feathers. The nest receives some final detailing touches using a Col-erase pencil. ●



Pencil

Marker

Gouache

## USE TEXTURE IN A GHOSTLY SCENE

AM SARTOR takes an indirect approach to a traditional painting – follow along as the illustrator creates a surreal take on a classic mythological figure

When I first started out as an illustrator, I painted everything traditionally. The software to create art wasn't as robust as it is now, so I couldn't produce the finished product that I wanted from the limited tools offered.

Once the software started to improve, I saw the potential of working digitally and developed a process to mimic my traditional style. It worked pretty well, and was much faster than working traditionally.

Yet my work seemed to lose some of the spontaneity that had been easier to achieve with traditional media. So with an improved skill set to apply to my work, I've developed a traditional process that takes advantage of some of the flexibility of digital tools while still incorporating the unpredictability of natural media.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### ANTICIPATING MISTAKES

I like to work in a way that allows me to make mistakes. Printing my underpainting onto my watercolor paper allows me to start over without having to redo my initial steps.

My favourite topics to paint are the surreal and supernatural. I often incorporate fairy tale symbolism into my work. Creating an atmosphere that's haunting is essential to my style. With this workshop I'll reveal how my tendency to build up details slowly and allow underlying layers to show through in the final can add an otherworldly quality. I also show how using mixed media can lead to interesting and unique results.

It's important to learn how to make mistakes. To understand a process I have to know how to correct it, and how to let some mistakes be. Confidence is something that shows through in your personal style. By knowing that if I mess up I can correct the mistake – and sometimes even improve on the final result – I feel a sense of security in taking risks on the canvas that I wouldn't otherwise feel comfortable making.

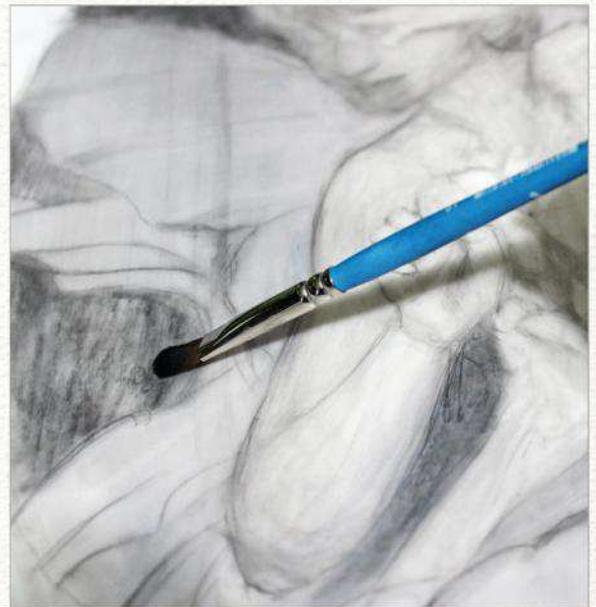
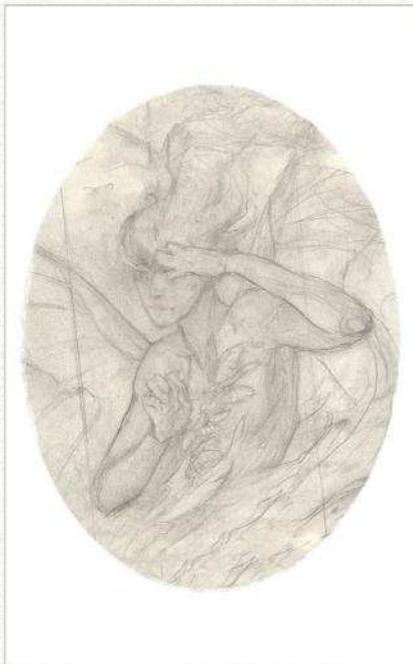
I work in a limited palette, almost grisaille, so that I can focus on form and value. The subtleties that I can express with a limited colour range are well suited to describing surreal and dreamlike scenes. When I establish a strong value structure and an interesting composition, adding colour becomes a much easier task. Knowing that placing a warm grey next to a cool grey will make the former read as brown and the latter as blue is essential to understanding colour. Most of my recent art is in a cool limited palette, and I occasionally add a key colour when it's important to the narrative.



AM Sartor is a freelance illustrator whose work has been featured at Krab Jab Studio, Light Grey Art Lab, Ghost Gallery, Every Day Original, Spectrum and SI-LA Illustration West. See more at [www.amsartor.com](http://www.amsartor.com).

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 8 now!





## 1 *Thumbnailing to generate ideas*

I start with a pencil sketch on cream-coloured paper. Originally I began this piece as a horizontal composition, so I had to make some changes to get it to work as a portrait. I usually spend less than half an hour on each thumbnail. This stage is for generating ideas and figuring out the general composition.

## 2 *Create a refined sketch*

At this stage I'm working on the computer. This enables me to quickly make corrections, add new layers for ideas, and refine without worrying about overworking media. I also double-check all my shapes and dimensions, because creating those on the computer is much more precise than drafting them by hand.

### TOOL TIP

**THINK LATERALLY**  
Household cleaning items sometimes make the best textures. When I want to fill a large space quickly, a paper towel is ideal.

### MATERIALS

#### MEDIA

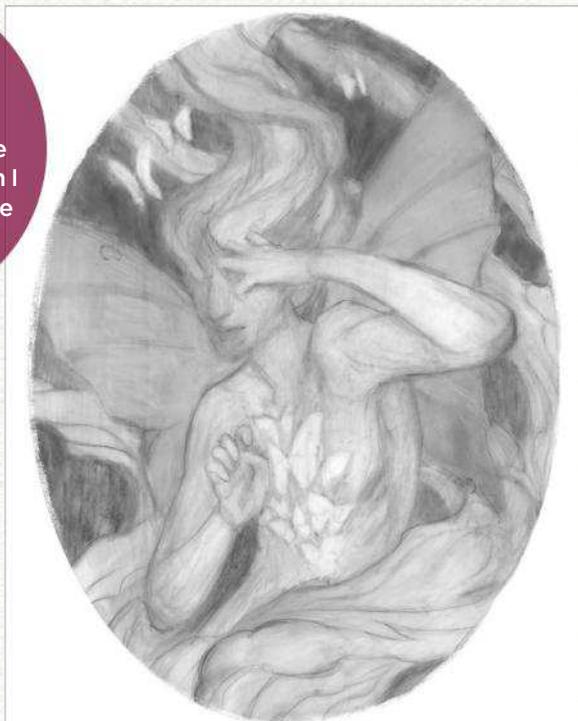
■ Faber-Castell Polychromos Cool grey coloured pencil, Faber-Castell Pitt artist pens, white gouache, white pastel, walnut ink, India ink, graphite

#### TOOLS

■ Molotow felt tips, Princeton Select Grainer brush, Liner brush and Oval mop, Q-tips, paper towels, paper smudgers

#### SURFACE

■ 140lb hot pressed watercolour paper, wood panel, PVA glue, white gesso



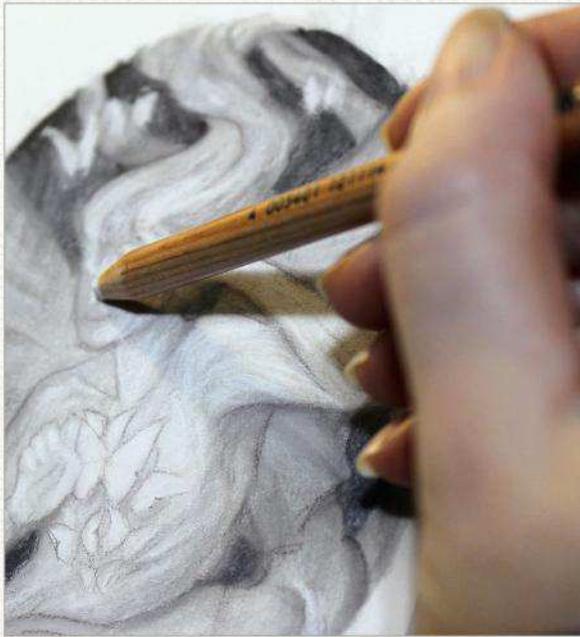
## 3 *Graphite underpainting*

I tape a sheet of polypropylene vellum to my screen, which acts as a light box. Now I can easily transfer the sketch by tracing and then refine the details. Working on polypropylene can be tricky to get used to, but it does allow for reworking. I can also build up some interesting textures at this stage, but I don't want to spend too much time on the underpainting.



## 4 *Underpainting with walnut ink*

This step is on the opposite side of the vellum from the graphite drawing. By painting freely with the walnut ink, I get a better sense of the flow of the painting, and create some interesting texture to work on top of. I'm also able to establish my value structure.



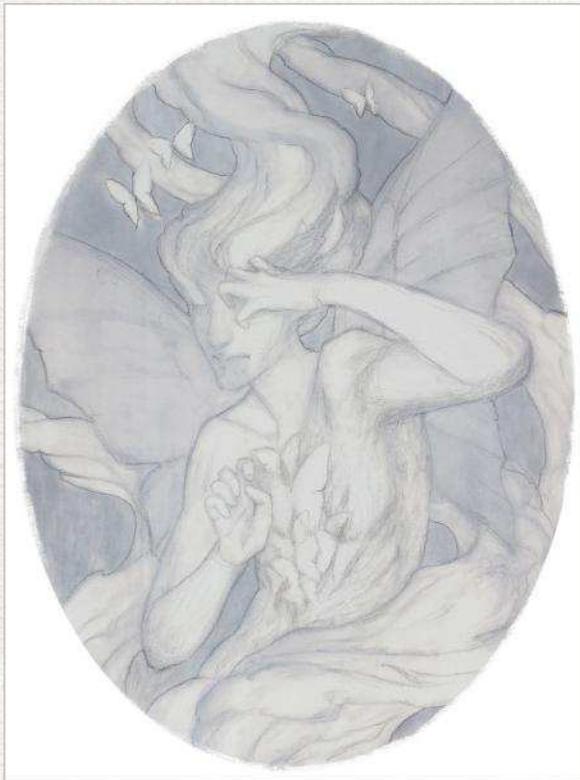
## 5 Produce a small-scale study version

I have an easier time and am more confident in my decisions when I create a small version of the larger painting I'm going to create. It doesn't need to be detailed, just large enough to test out the value structure and make sure the composition holds up when reduced.



## 6 Apply a layer of gouache

After printing my underpainting lightly on high-quality watercolour paper, I apply a thin layer of white gouache to the surface. It creates a barrier between the pigment and the paper so that I can move the media around and wipe away mistakes without doing too much damage to the paper. I use permanent white, but if it needs to be more translucent, zinc white can be applied.



## 7 Defining light shapes

Once I've applied the gouache layer I need to ensure my shapes are well defined before I make more decisions. I don't focus on the details inside of the shapes because these might be lost in a later step. I only tackle the areas where there's an abrupt change in value.



## 8 Bring in some dark shapes

Now I can fill in the dark areas with India ink. I leave a little room around the light shapes and then blend the ink to give it a soft edge. If I've applied enough gouache on the underlayer then the blending is easy. I do this with a spent felt tip marker or one of my Molotow refillables. ➤



## 9 *Building up texture*

Although I'll be building up texture throughout the process, now is a good time to lay down the broad strokes. I use a balled-up, damp paper towel and smudge the ink to create a sculptural sense of form. Sometimes the paper towel will start to dissolve, or the paper will begin to pill. Allow the paper to dry and then smooth away the raised texture with a dry, clean rag.



## 10 *Refining edges*

The painting looks pretty messy, so it's time to pull in some of those details. Edges are important. I try to avoid outlining, although it's a natural tendency for me. I try to turn my edges to create more depth, and give my work a sculptural quality. I use coloured pencils that smudge beautifully on the gouache surface. For a softer gradation I use a dry smudger, while for a more painterly stroke I use a felt tip marker filled with water.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### **STRETCHING YOUR PAPER**

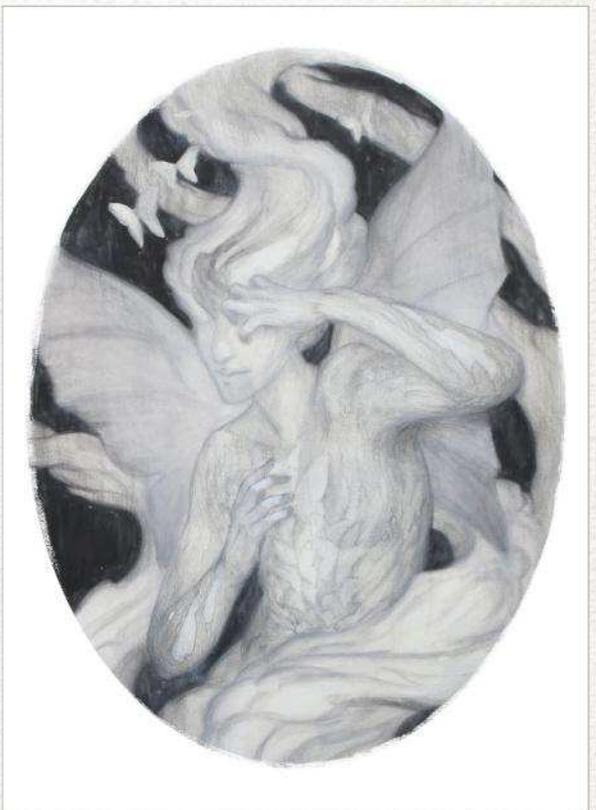
I permanently adhere my watercolour paper to a wood panel using archival PVA. No matter what I do to it the surface remains flat, and it looks clean for hanging or framing.



### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### **HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS**

For my process it's essential that I use well-sized paper that can take reworking. Arches 140lb hot pressed watercolour paper can be gently sanded and still take wet media without being destroyed.



## 11 *Correcting the ghostly hands*

The right hand feels inelegant to me, and is disrupting the flow of the painting. With a clean, damp felt tip marker I scrub out the hand. Once the paper is dry, I use a rag to smooth down any raised fibres, after which I put down a thin layer of gouache. Now I can redraw the hand from scratch.



## 12 *Emphasising the head*

The head, along with the hands, are easy focal points, so I spend time getting it right. Tackling modelling shadows and cast shadows below the nose and chin and getting the shapes correct will lend character to a face.



### RECYCLE TIP

**SPENT FELT TIP PENS**  
When a felt tip pen runs dry I'll use it for smudging and washes. They're also great for scrubbing out minor errors and blending.

## 13 *Drawing butterflies*

The butterflies are a key value, and also act as a focal point. I use gouache to highlight the wings, and a grey coloured pencil to draw subtle shadows. I want them to be otherworldly, so they require a light touch.



## 14 *Adjusting dark values*

I reapply my India ink in the dark areas. I lose some interesting texture, but the painting will be too busy if I don't even out these areas. I use a thin layer so there's still depth and I'm careful not to ruin the edges that I've carefully established. I use the wet paper towel to adjust the modelling shadows in lighter areas.



## 15 *Tweaking light values*

Now I can go back and fill in the lighter details. I also go over the dark areas with white pastel, which I smudge to create a gradation. For texture I use a Grainer brush that's been cut to resemble a comb. This part of the process is meditative for me: I enjoy drawing in small details and creating texture. Once the painting is finished I spray it with a casein-based workable fixative. ●



# First Impressions

✧ Jim Pavelec ✧

This US artist has found new inspiration within the pages of a medieval grimoire

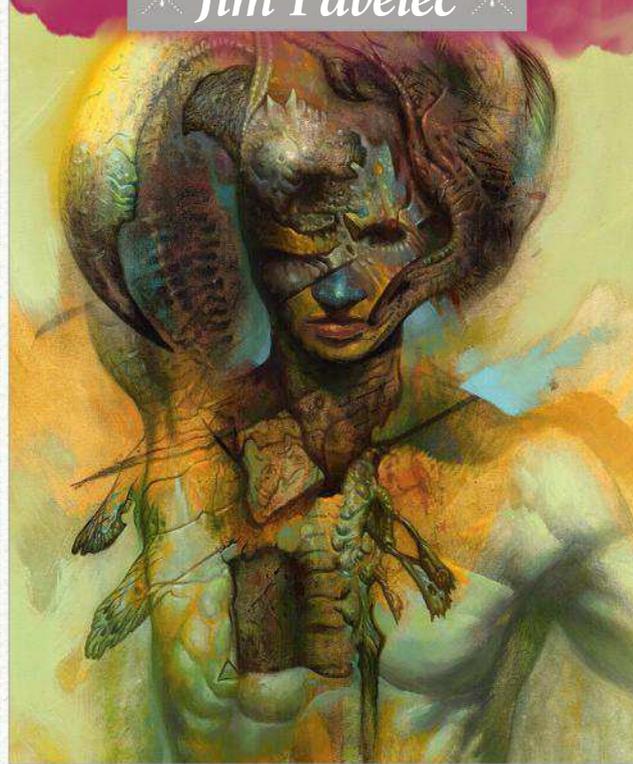


Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?

I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. It's a very conservative, Christian place and from a very young age I knew that mind set wasn't for me. I rebelled against the religious dogma being spewed at me, and that rebellion fuelled my artwork.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork through the years?

Music. The soundtrack to religious rebellion since the 1970s has been metal. Speed and Thrash, Death and Black. I love it all. When, at 14, you're hearing only one incredibly narrow point of view, and then you hear Slayer's front man bellow, "Learn the sacred words of Praise Hell, Satan!" over a thunderous drum beat and some of the most sinister guitar riffs ever... well, there's really only one path worth choosing after that.



**VASSAGO**

*Switching between digital and traditional media enables me to achieve colour palettes and edge work that I wouldn't have thought of in my old style.*

What was your next step in art? Did other interests vie for your attention? What turned out to be the deciding factor?

I was too stubborn to think about doing anything else, so after college I dove into a career in fantasy illustration. It took me almost 20 years of being a freelance

“ Since beginning this project, I've experienced an explosion of creative energy ”

illustrator to realise that I was making the wrong art. About four years ago I stopped taking almost all freelance gigs and focused on my current occult-themed work.

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years working as an illustrator?

During my early art career, I was fortunate to meet and develop a friendship with the great illustrator

William O'Connor, who unfortunately passed away recently. Bill showed me more about being a professional illustrator than any other person. He was a tremendous human being and a great artist.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way? Find a way to do what you really want to do, and focus on the quality of your work instead of the quantity.

What projects are you currently working on?

At the moment I'm working on reimagining the 72 demons of the *Ars Goetia*. This is a grimoire compiled in the Middle Ages, listing the demons King Solomon conjured to build the First Temple.

Once I gave up freelance I struggled to find the right venue for my new work. After finishing a drawing one day, I clearly realised that it was a demon of the Goetia. I grabbed my copy of the book and devoured it once again. How had I been so blind? It was with me all these years. Part of me believes my skills hadn't reached a high-enough level to embark on this journey previously. I don't think I was mentally prepared for it.

Since beginning this project, I've experienced an explosion of creative energy. I entirely changed the way I draw and paint to meet its demands. I have a new-found courage to explore techniques and media, which I was afraid to do during my illustration years due to the constraints of deadlines.

Upon completion of my interpretations of the demons, I want to publish a fully illustrated version of the book, complete with new descriptions of the demons based on my experiences with them. Watch this space!

*Jim has been illustrating and writing for nearly two decades. His books include Ink Bloom, and Hymns & Wretched Offerings To The Golden Ones. Keep up with his latest project at [www.arsgoetia.net](http://www.arsgoetia.net).*

**MALTHUS**

*I use both live models and photo reference from the internet to get the figure to where I want it.*

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