

ART FUNDAMENTALS

COMPOSITION - LIGHTING & COLORING - STORYTELLING - PERSPECTIVE & DEPTH - PORTRAYING EMOTION

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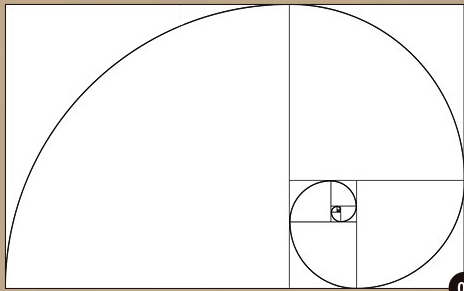


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01

COMPOSITION BY IOAN DUMITRESCU



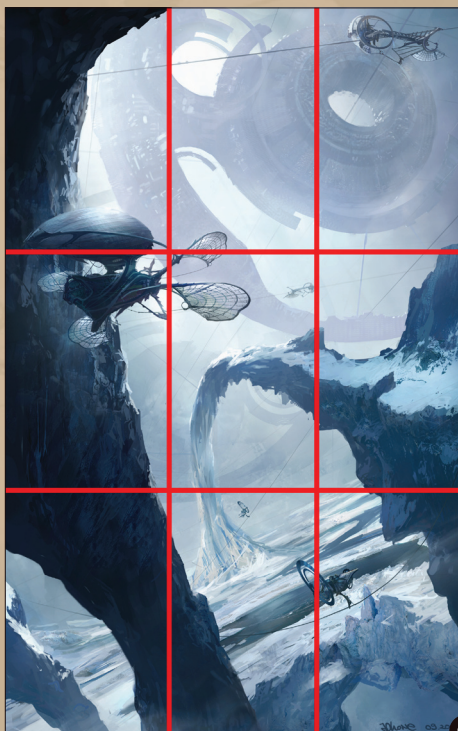
Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 01 - Composition

Software used: Photoshop

Composition is the first word on the best artists' lips when they start an image. But what is composition? It's basically the layout of elements and a visual vocabulary that leads your eyes around an image and makes it interesting. It's the first crucial step in making your image interesting from the get go. No detail, fancy colors, lighting or action will substitute composition. Even though composition theory has rules that have been used for hundreds of years, you can always find new and interesting ways to apply them to your compositions. Try to think outside of the box. I'm going to take you through a quick guide into composition and see where it leads us, and what we discover along the way.

The Ancient Greeks used the golden rectangle that had divine proportions. The golden rectangle is a rectangle that has sides which are approximately at a ratio of 1:1.618. By using these proportions you get a very balanced and pleasing composition, with a strong focal point. The divine proportions appear in many life forms, including humans (**Fig.01**).

Derived from the golden rectangle is the Rule of Thirds, which was adapted to cope with a wider range of aspect ratios. By dividing your frame into three equal parts from each side you create four power points where the lines intersect each other (**Fig.02**). For example, the image "Under A Rock" uses the principles of the rule of thirds, by having the converging lines create focal points.



You can see the main focal point is the building (A). Then I added secondary focus points near the converging lines: the windmill farm in the far background (D) and the actual rock structure, which has a great deal of importance in the concept and which runs along two other intersections (B and C).

If you have a vertical frame, the rule of thirds can also be applied. In the image "Queen of Candace" I placed the flying ship very close to the converging line (**Fig.03**).

Your main focal point should not always be on the intersection of the power lines. When considering your composition remember that contrast is important. It helps you to make areas



stand out even though they may not be near a power point.

Contrast can be achieved in many ways. The easiest is light and dark, followed by material contrast, contrast of hue or saturation, tension or balance and contrast of shapes, round or square etc. In **Fig.03** I kept the ship and huge structure close to the power points because, from a story standpoint, it was very important to show the direct connection between them. Then for the lower power points I left the environment where the action takes place.

Another easy trick I used in this image, which can be used for any aspect ratio, is provide a big foreground. Because we are used to



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reading from left to right, this pulls the viewer in and leads the eye more easily into the image providing a grounding point for the whole frame.

This leads to another simple composition trick, which can result in very beautiful images and that is very commonly used on book covers (**Fig.04**). It's based on having a frame for your image - in this case a big L - that leaves the rest of the image in focus and easy to see. It's a great and easy way to make things stand out and can help give monumentality to your image.

When using this rule, make sure you don't fall into a trap and follow it exactly. This can make your images boring and dull. Keep to the grid at first, but get rid of it as soon as possible so you don't start to repeat a few generic compositions.

In composition even a small change can have a great effect on the final image. Changes such as tilting your horizon line are a great way of making your image look more dynamic. In **Fig.05 – 06** the story was all about suspense, thrills and action. So tilting the horizon made all the difference; it adds more narrative to the image and depicts drama and action, which gets different reactions from the viewer.



06

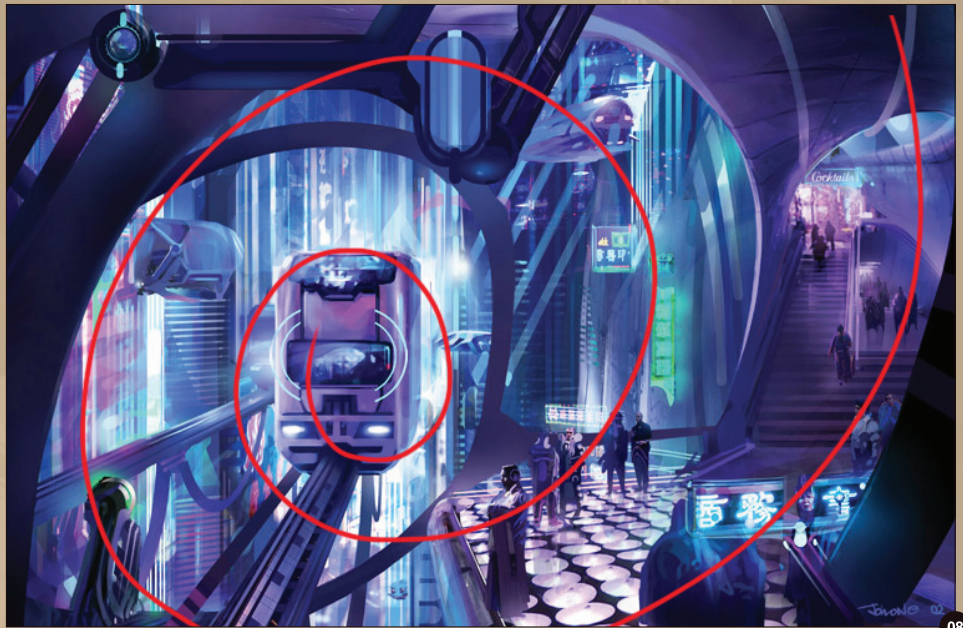


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Simple compositions can sometimes be the most effective. Sometimes less is more (**Fig.07**). For example you can use your perspective to lead the viewer into the picture and directly to your focal point. Now the power lines are your perspective lines. Use whatever objects you have in your scene to point at the focal point. You can also use a technique used in films, paintings and photography vignetting, which is basically darkening the edges and corners of your image so that the eye doesn't escape. It's very effective when dealing with quick sketches among other things.

Another quick and effective composition technique is basically having your image layout



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follow certain shapes, like a circle, cross, square, triangle, oval etc. By repeating those shapes to create a rhythm and a hierarchy in your image, it holds your eye inside those shapes and leads it more directly to a payoff spot.

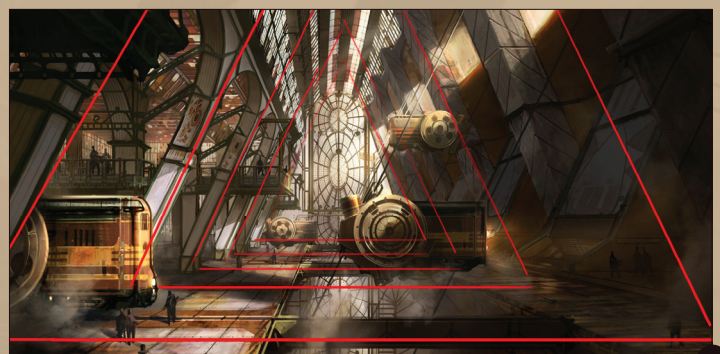
In **Fig.08** I used ovals to create a spiraling effect leading to the train, which is the focal point of the image, but I made sure I included the train stop as well. It made the image more dynamic and gave a sense of movement to the train.

For **Fig.09** I used a composition technique that is very common in the work of Frank Frazetta and that is basically a cross, with the hero on top of a pile. Placing the camera so it is looking up at the victorious heroes helps to convey the story better. Even though the composition might seem split by the wreckage between them, it's because this was part of the story - to show tension between them.

This was actually a tutorial for *2DArtist*, using a 3D base to paint over. Here I used a combination of the implied shapes, triangles and perspective. They keep the eye flowing along their edges very nicely until the payoff spot at the end of the hangar (**Fig.10**).



09



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This image uses radial power lines converging to one point, which makes the image menacing and intimidating (**Fig.11**). For storytelling purposes I brought in a circle shape, which becomes the second read and contrasts the hard edges of the huge structure in the background.

These are a few of the rules of composition. Don't be afraid to change them. For me, composition is something very organic and with practice it becomes more intuitive. As a self-taught artist I use my intuition and natural observations, and bring them into my work. I start my images with basic principles like having my image framed, having objects point at my focal point and using contrast for the payoffs, and along the way I gather a few more tricks and methods that make me want to explore composition beyond the usual rules. I'm not a good rule follower so, at the moment, I'm trying to give my compositions a continuous flow, and lead the eye throughout the image, in a guided tour if you wish, to discover light, color, details, action and loads of personal elements that I put into my images (**Fig.12 – 13**).

I hope you have enjoyed reading this.

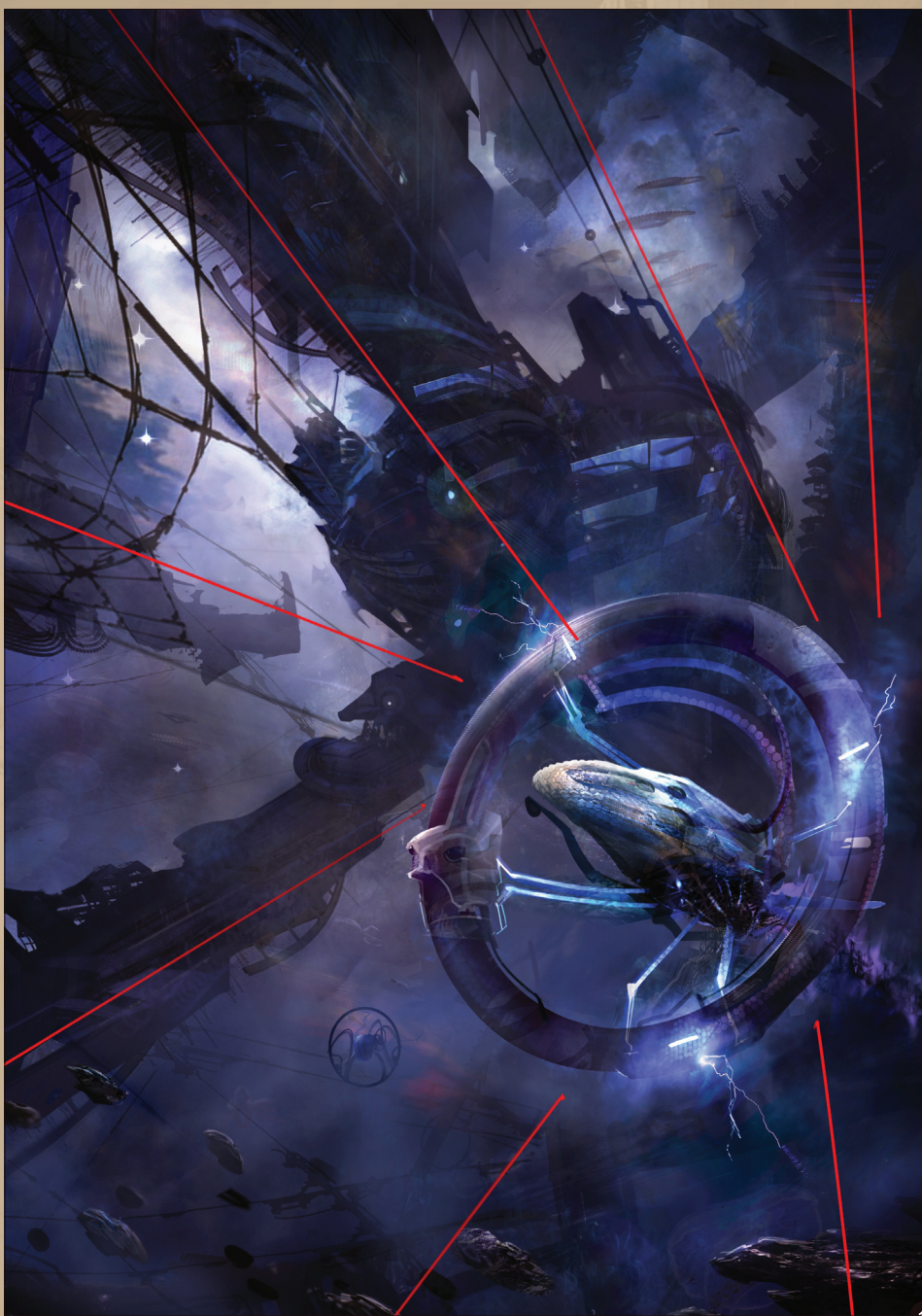
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02

LIGHTING & COLOR BY JESSE VAN DIJK



01

Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 02 - Lighting & Color

Software used: Photoshop

Lighting and color are two massively complex and broad fields, and it is by no means possible to fully discuss the theoretical principles of either in this article. There are many great resources out there that deal with these subjects in great detail, from many different angles. Here however, I'll provide some brief comments on some of the practical decisions concerning lighting and color while creating various concepts and illustrations.

Pitch

This image (**Fig.01**) shows a scene where many different elements are competing for the viewer's secondary attention. The "first look" is meant to go directly to the football field, which is why it is shown in a very bright green; a color which, in this image, is reserved for the actual pitch only and contrasts heavily with the predominantly bluish atmosphere. The "second look", however, is more diffuse. There are over-bright blue spotlights, lit advertisements, and the specks of saturated colors in the audience. The colors used for the crowds are of all hues, and to underline the large scale of the scene. These desaturate as the distance to the camera increases. Notice how at the far end of the



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stadium the distinction between the different colors in the audience has become almost negligible.

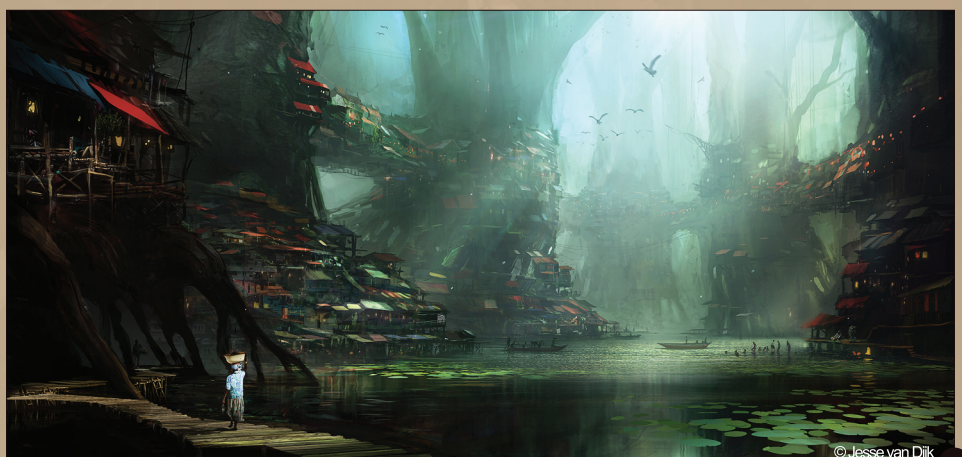
Cliff Dwellings

In terms of color, the approach for "Cliff Dwellings" (**Fig.02**) is simple. The scene is predominantly blue/greenish, but to ensure it's interpreted as a full color image, a strong "offset color" is used: the orange lava.

Because the orange is more or less the complementary color it immediately stands out. The lighting is diffuse as the sun is hidden behind the clouds, therefore the scene is hit by indirect light only.

Dzalou Freshwater Mangrove

In the swampy scene of "Dzalou Freshwater Mangrove", lights break through the dense canopy of the trees far above (**Fig.03**).



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In this case, patches of direct sunlight are used to guide the viewer around the image. They help to accentuate the important elements, such as the village in the tree roots, the fishing boats, and the woman carrying the basket. Because of the clear indication of where the sun is, there are also unlit areas that contain very little detail, which improves the composition. Color-wise, the approach of the image is similar to “Cliff Dwellings” as the dominant color (greenish blue) is offset by some small patches of very different and saturated pockets of color here and there.

Arctic Research Outpost

Whenever I paint snow I continually guard the readability of four different values: snow in light, snow in shadow, rock in light, and rock in shadow. Whenever the distinction between these becomes fuzzy, the image will become

harder to read. In reality however, the matter is often not as simple, as snow catching direct sunlight can be so bright it will push virtually every other value into the black.

However, when you’re doing a painting, you can “cheat” yourself around this exposure problem by making sure the snow and rock reads and the distinction between the four values is maintained. Keep in mind, the separation of these four areas is relative to the distance to the camera. For example, in this picture, the snow in shadow in the foreground is darker than the rock in shadow in the distance (Fig.04).

Project Indigo

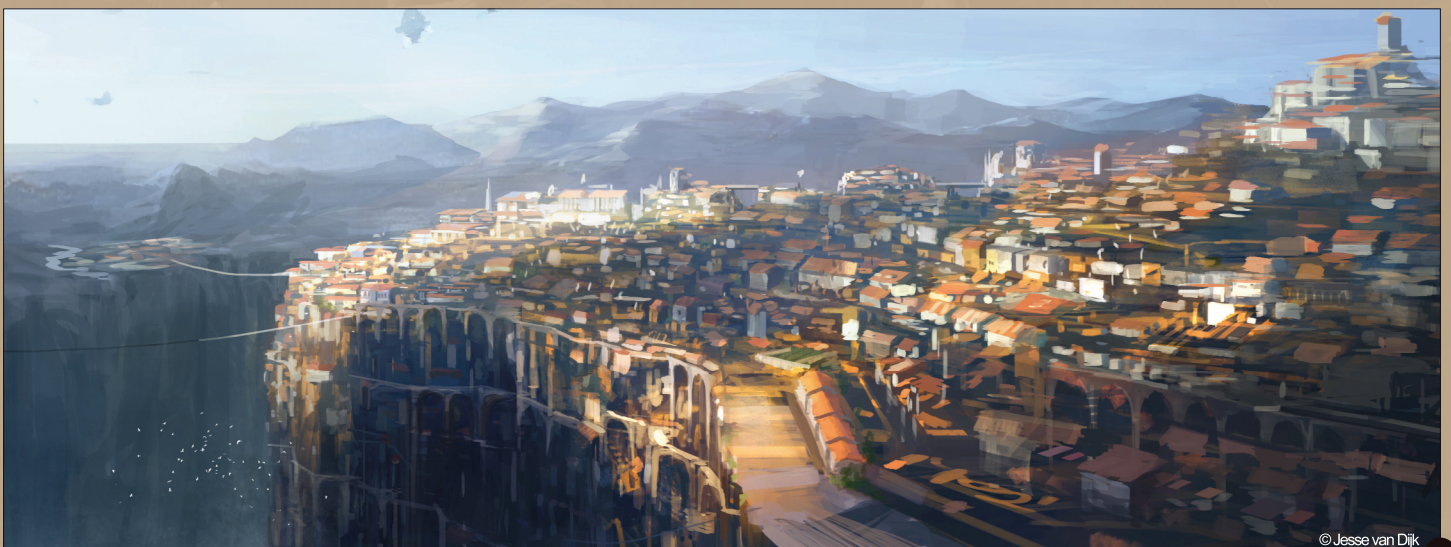
With the shot of the top of the pillar as shown in “Project Indigo”: (link: http://www.jessevandijk.net/g_08_76.html) the intent was to show not

only the pillar itself, but also some of its context – some of it even outside of the frame. It mainly employs lighting and color to achieve this. Color-wise, for example, the isolation of this crowded city state is underlined by the difference in color between the city (vibrant, warm yellows and reds) and the bleak, cold grays of the outside world (Fig.05).

Unspecified objects outside the composition cast shadows that help to make the sunlit areas seem even more inviting, as well as suggesting there is more going on in this world than merely that which is shown inside the frame.

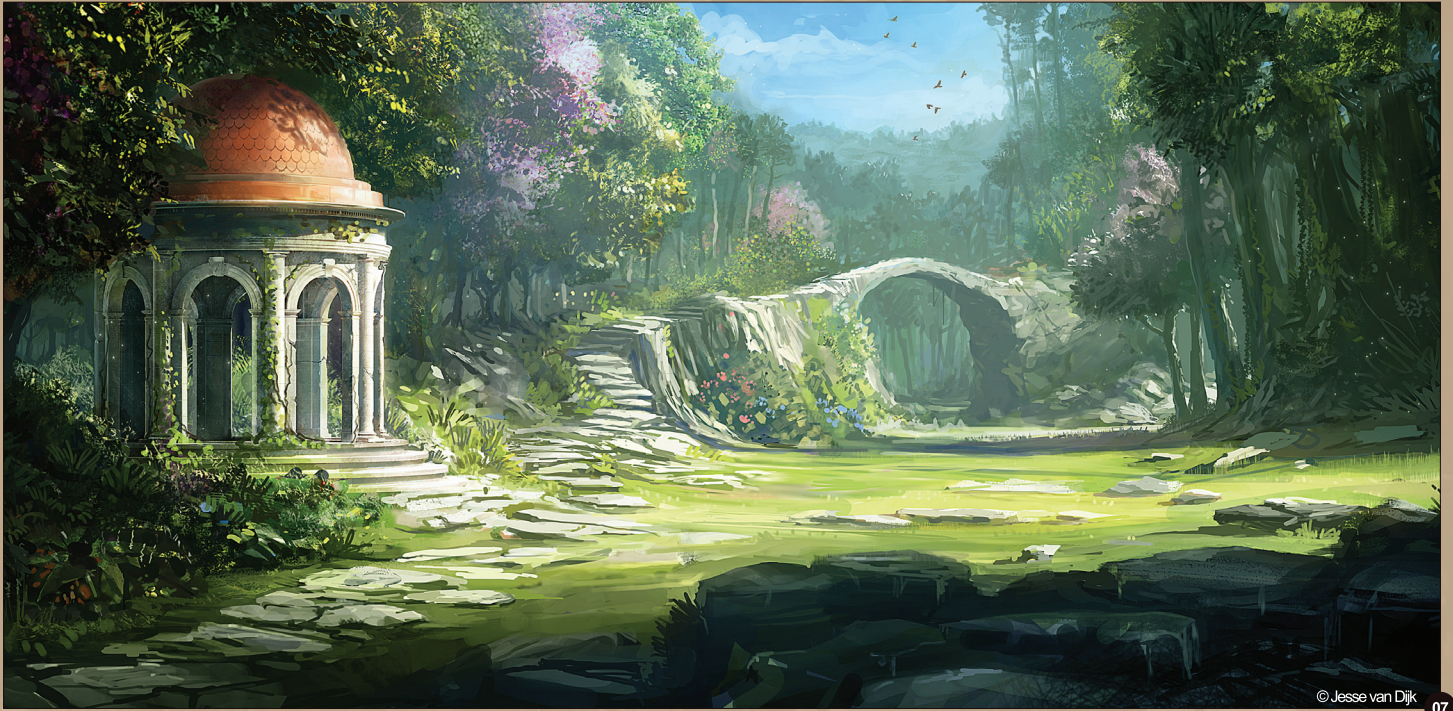
Netherworld Archipelago

In the image of the capital of the “Netherworld Archipelago” lighting is key, and in this case it’s far more important than color (Fig.06).



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The lighting clearly enters the cavern through some unseen hole in the ceiling, but individual colors are much harder to discern. The palette is mostly a warm greenish blue, except for the banners, which, in terms of color, are very deliberately different from everything else to make them stand out.

Spiritual retreat

The aim for the mood of this image was very clearly defined: it had to be a very sunny setting, with lush vegetation, and birds singing (Fig.07). A place you would want to relax; a veritable spiritual retreat. To prevent the entire image becoming overly green, many different colored plants and trees were added, such as the pink cherry blossom trees. For the “full color” feel of the image, the patch of blue sky is important, as it is one of the few instances of bright blue. To emphasize the brightness of the direct sunlight, the lit areas contrast strongly with the shadowed ones.

Procession of the Dead

As this image was used as a book cover, the color scheme needed to be simple, but striking (Fig.08).



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08



When you zoom out you can see all the major color essentially boils down to a linear gradient from warm browns in the lower left corner, to cold, deep blues in the top right corner. Book covers leave very little room for subtlety, as they need to stand out on shelves amongst many other titles. Brute force approaches such as the color scheme in this image are often employed because of this.

The lighting is vague, predominantly to allow for lots of darks around the lit character – the contrast needs to be highest here in order to properly catch the viewers eye.

Uriel 9

“Uriel 9” uses a similar approach to “Procession of the Dead” and “Netherworld Archipelago” (Fig.09).

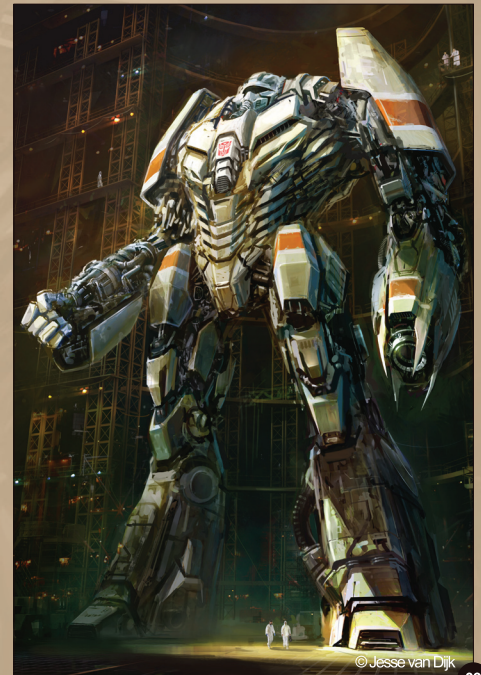
The overall color is quite muted, but the bright orange bands on his armor provide lots of color contrast. The other implementations of color are more subtle: colder shadows, greenish haze near the ground plane, warm spotlights. The dominant light source is directed to emphasize the most important part of the robot: the

upper torso and head. The images used for the Dutch *Duivel* trilogy by Adrian Stone are another example of the importance of forgetting about subtleties when doing book covers. The cover for part one needs to be immediately distinguishable from parts two and three, and vice versa.

The lighting is not very clearly defined, and in that sense the scene isn't very realistic. The main reason I wanted the background behind the characters to be so bright, was to ensure that their silhouettes stood out as much as possible in the scene (Fig.10).

About Jesse

Jesse van Dijk (1977) is a concept artist from Amsterdam, the Netherlands. His primary focus is world design for games and other entertainment media. Jesse currently works at Guerrilla Games / SCEE as a senior concept artist. He graduated from the Delft University of Technology with a Master's degree in Industrial Design Engineering in 2003. After his studies he worked for several game development studios prior to joining Guerrilla in 2009.



Jesse van Dijk

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Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 03 - Storytelling

Software used: Photoshop

I've been asked to write this tutorial about "storytelling with images". For me there is nothing to explain really because I began work as an illustrator and have always paid huge attention to the narrative value of my art. I guess there are a lot of people who just started digital painting, and it would be a shame if they never learn how important is to have a story incorporated into your image. This article will be specifically aimed at beginners, but may contain a few useful tips for experienced artists too.

So, why it is so important? You could say, "I am a painter not a writer, why should I care about the story behind my image?" Well if you take a step back and look at the past of our civilization you will learn that cave wall paintings were actually a way of recording culture, behavior and habits to pass it to the next generations, whilst ancient tablet writing followed shortly afterwards. As you can see, painting was our first form of communication. So when you start your painting it is important for you to think about the message you are trying to send. If you are sending someone a message you would expect them to understand what it means and find it interesting and worth responding to. And that's basically what our job is; we need to paint someone's (our) vision and make it readable at a basic level, and also make it interesting, involving and moving, particularly when working as a professional.

But let's start at a basic level. **Fig.01** shows the simplest way to describe a situation without words, using only drawing. As you can see at this stage we are able to tell a lot of things about this setting already. We can name the items, count them and what is most interesting is that we can even tell (roughly) what the items are made of, even though there is no color, value or shadows, just contours and shapes. That



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an example how amount of details determinates how accurate is our drawing to its original in other words how fast the viewer can tell what he sees.

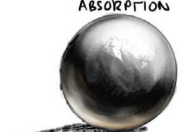
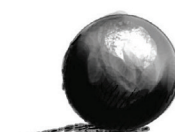
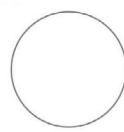
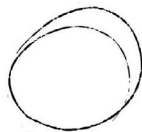
CONTOUR

SHAPE

SHADOW (3D)

VALUE OR COLOR

TEXTURE OR LIGHT ABSORPTION



AN OVAL

A CIRCLE

A SPHERE

MASSIVE BALL
KIND OF SPINY ONE

A BALL OF
METAL

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02

is because the drawing references our basic knowledge about the world surrounding us, and you will learn this is used often, e.g., when we see the shape of a bottle then we can already tell it is (most probably) made of glass.

So to make the image readable, we should keep it simple so that we can relate it to our common human senses, feelings and abilities. The most important sense for humans when looking at images is, of course, sight and this means we need to strongly consider light and shadow, which can make an image look 3D. This is quite tricky because not everyone sees images this way; sometimes no matter how hard we try some people will still see the picture flat. This is a problem, but is also quite rare. These people tend to see the main features but find it hard to interpret the light and shadow in an image.

Fig.02 shows how a simple contour can be developed and added to bit by bit. The important lesson here though is that the more we add to the light and shadow detail, the easier it is for the image to be interpreted correctly. By adding to the light and shadow detail we can eliminate misinterpretation of the image and the story behind it.

Now the second step is much more interesting and harder to achieve. We have discussed how to make the subject readable and unmistakable through the use of light and shadow. When telling a story with an image it is vital for the materials to be recognizable. Back to the next step, we need to draw the viewers' attention to our work and make the viewer remember it and hopefully smile or cry! We need to address the basic human senses and emotions. This is

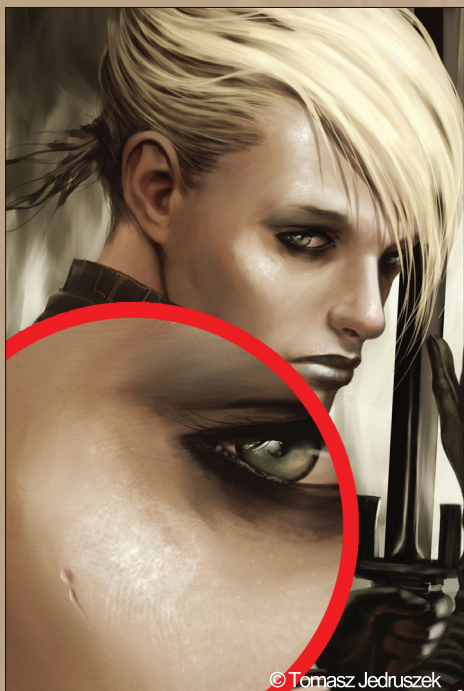


03

much harder than it used to be because there is such a huge spectrum of things that effect people (like movies, music, art etc..) and these things will vary from person to person. However, there are a variety of things that we can use that cover large groups of people. Most people have strong connections to their parents and family,

and remember the house from their childhood or perhaps had a dog or other pets. Also most people have experienced some sort of trauma or something that really frightened them and these memories stay with you like an animal instinct. We all find chilly, windy weather uncomfortable, so if you look at my image *Winter Blockade*

(Fig.03), you can see how the image plays on the dislike of cold, horrible weather and a fear of deep turbulent water. The truth is the deeper you go into your personal feelings, the better the effect is. As in the metal ball example in Fig.02, the more features you add, the more interesting and deeper the story behind your image. *Winter Blockade* wouldn't be the same image without the snow or waves, but the addition of the uncomfortable weather and fearful seas add to the story surrounding this frigate. They are very important as they play on the viewers' basic fears and emotions, and make the image much more believable. One of my friends who saw this image said, "My God, I feel salt in my mouth."



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Art Fundamentals

Chapter 03: Storytelling



It is not just the amount of detail that plays a role in telling a story, but also the composition. You can tell a story in an image any way you like by dragging the focus of the viewer from one narrative focal point to the next. You can see this in **Fig.05**. You can use effects like blur etc., to focus the viewers' gaze and then by carefully positioning elements you can lead your audience's eye to points of interest that each add to the story contained in the image (**Fig.06**).

So, to conclude, creating an image is just another way of transferring information. The more details provided, the easier it is to understand the illustration. Variety within the items in the scene means that the story has more room for development and interpretation. By adding features that provoke a response to these various items you will provoke a larger response from your audience and therefore create a bigger connection between them and the image. Illustration is not just about painting, but also about being able to convey a story or a message in an image.

Tomasz Jedruszek

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Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 04 - Perspective and Depth

Software used: Photoshop

This tutorial is about creating the illusion of a third dimension in a two-dimensional representation of our visual three-dimensional world. Or, put more simply: creating perspective and the illusion of depth.

Perspective is something that took mankind a long time to figure out. Nowadays it takes a lot of measuring and patience to do it right. If you do it right, your work will look about a million times better and solid. Yep, that's what you want.

But beware: perspective might not be so difficult to use when you have one vanishing point. But two can already start feeling like a chore. And with three I usually start crying like a baby in a corner, wanting the third vanishing point to go away (**Fig.01**).

So it's safe to say I'm not much for "official" or "correct" perspective. I'm not patient enough. So for this tutorial, I'll be dealing with the official stuff very quickly. Yes it is important, but if you want to know the real deal about perspective go buy a book about it.

But perspective is not the only subject I'm going to cover. I will be mainly talking about how to fake the illusion of depth (which happens to be the reason why you would use perspective in the first place). And hopefully when you're done reading this tutorial you'll have some ideas (or some more ideas) about how to create the illusion of depth in your paintings. That's what my aim is at least.

The illusion of depth

The illusion of depth, you ready? Here we go! Ok maybe not yet. Maybe we should first talk a bit about what depth (and on a smaller note





perspective) actually is. I already gave some things away in the above introduction, but I feel there is the need to create a good framework in which to discuss this topic.

What Is Depth?

So, what is depth? Well, depth in our case is the one dimension we do not have on a sheet of paper or on the screen in the painting application. It is the third dimension, or the Z axis. Basically depth is the illusion of objects being in front of other objects. Quite simple, right? (Fig.02).

Illusion!


The keyword here is illusion! An illusion as in: not real. Like my girlfriend or the monster under your bed! And if you think about it like that,

becoming a good artist means becoming really good at visually tricking the viewer! You are faking depth, light and everything else.

You are using the concepts existing in people's minds in order to give an illusion of something believable. (Unless you are creating abstract art, but I'm not going to touch that subject). You are not creating reality; you are creating a fictional representation of a truth.

I mention this because it makes me look smart (prime reason). But also because I noticed some people feel limited and even intimidated maybe, by this idea of "the rules of reality". You can cling to perspective and other formal rules as if they are the commandments. Or you can realize that you can do anything; that you are





God in your own painting. You can choose to give your Orc not only an epic blue glowing sword, but also pink fluffy bunny slippers! It's all in the power of the pencil!

Formal rules are good to know, but should not be considered all-important in my opinion. It's about explaining what you want to tell, and using the right tools to do so.

Tricking The Brain

You can see the illusion of depth as a big puzzle, where you have to combine perspective, shape, light, value, hue, saturation and other things in such a way that you make it easy for the viewers' brain to solve your visual puzzle. I'll be going through most of the subjects I can think of at this moment.

Earlier I mentioned being God in your own painting, and I still feel that's true. But it is also important to realize that when you are making an illustration with depth, you want people to understand it. You have to address the concept that exists in the viewer's mind about depth. In other words: you cannot go around and just add elements to your painting without adding perspective or color and value changes, and expect it to be perceived as depth. You have to know the way depth works in order to play with it and bend the rules (**Fig.03**).

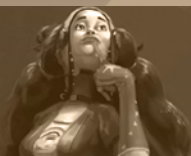
There are a lot of ways to create the illusion of depth. And almost always it's a combination of things that work the best. So it is good to realize that perspective is not a necessity to create depth; there are many more ways to do it.

Achieving The Depth Illusion

Now that you are nice and confused after my fuzzy introduction, let's start with the fun stuff!

On a side note: I'm not much for writing tutorials that will take you through the whole process and explain how to create one specific image, or how to use tricks only usable in one situation. I'd rather try to explain some of the fundamental tools in this tutorial. I think it's more interesting and valuable.





So if you were hoping you'll be able to make an uber-awesome piece of art after reading this tutorial... well sorry.

Tools

There are many tools available to create the depth illusion. From color to perspective, I'll go over each one shortly with some examples to go alongside.

I've listed them below. I'm pretty sure I missed some of them, but in a few years after you have taken everything I just said for absolute truth you'll suddenly find yourself in an argument with another artist that disproves everything I just said and you makes a complete fool out of yourself by defending it; you will suddenly realize the extent to which I was. Yes, that is actually the real goal of why I'm writing this tutorial, just to mess with your head. So don't believe anything I say. Or maybe you should?

So let's get started with the absolute truth about perspective!

Perspective

To explain perspective I'll start out with a quote from the all-knowing and always correct Wikipedia:

"Perspective (from the **Latin** *perspicere*, "to see through") in the graphic arts, such as drawing, is an approximate representation, on a flat surface (such as paper), of an image as it is seen by the eye. The two most characteristic features of perspective are:

Size: Objects become smaller as their distance from the observer increases

Foreshortening: The size of an object's dimensions along the line of sight are relatively shorter than dimensions across the line of sight"

What's interesting about this description is that it touches on the subject of perspective as a perspective. Perspective is not reality. Objects



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do not become smaller if they are further away from you. It just looks like that because of the way your eyes work. It's an "approximate representation". Meaning: it's not the truth, and it can be bent and broken as you see fit.

Perspective As a Depth Illusion

The basic thing about perspective is that it gives a great reference to how far away things are. It does this because it creates a rhythm that will

explain to your brain that things that are smaller, are further away. Now there are some tricks on how to create a strong depth feeling using this rhythmic perspective. I'm going to assume you already kind of know about vanishing points and parallel lines coming together at the horizon. I don't really feel like talking about how that works here because it's been done too often. If you want to know more about it: Google it. There's great information about it to be found, only one search away (**Fig.04**).



So how do you apply this perspective stuff for maximum effectiveness? Well, maximum I don't know, but I can tell you what has worked for me so far!

Again it's about creating a rhythm that your brain understands. If you create a perspective with not enough steps of explanation or wrong explanation your brain will be uncertain about how it works. And you will fail to see the depth you were looking for. Like everything within illustration it's about explaining. It's like a puzzle; the more pieces you fill in the correct places the more people will get your illustration. And if you don't give enough pieces, nobody will get it. So I find it very helpful to create some big guiding elements and a lot of small element that keep explaining the position in space. In **Fig.05** I've highlighted some of the things that I've used in this particular case. Some of the things that you can do are:

- Get the general perspective close to correct. If it's wrong your brain can tell
- Use the ground plane, or wall, or some plane that continues into the depth to show certain objects that have the same size (like trees or houses) or color brush strokes.

Make sure these objects get smaller in relation to the depth of where they are. And make sure to put enough of them spread out over the depth of the whole image to explain it. If you nail this trick, depth is guaranteed!

- Create a small detail in the foreground that will indicate the size of a human. This is a reference you put in your image to help the brain solve the puzzle of relative sizes.

Informal Perspective

Now I've said in the above text that it's very important to get the perspective correct. And it is! One mistake and your brain will know something is off. But that doesn't mean you have to calculate everything! Most of my perspective works (except for a few very complex things) are guesstimations. Meaning: I try to avoid things like parallel buildings that will require me to do it correctly. I tend to turn buildings, make them different shapes and sizes in order to make sure the lines aren't parallel and therefore they don't have to finish at the exact same vanishing point. (Of course you still have to make sure they all end up at the same horizon; you cannot have five different horizons where lines come together).

The basis of perspective is the horizon. And the horizon is always at eye level. If you look down, the horizon stays in the same place, and the same goes for when you look up. But if you crouch down, the horizon goes down as well! It is always at eye level. Another thing to realize when you guess your way through perspective is that if something is under the horizon you look on top of it. If it is above you look up. Not everything has to come together at the same vanishing point as long as all the lines come together at the horizon and the parallel lines come together at the same point on that horizon.

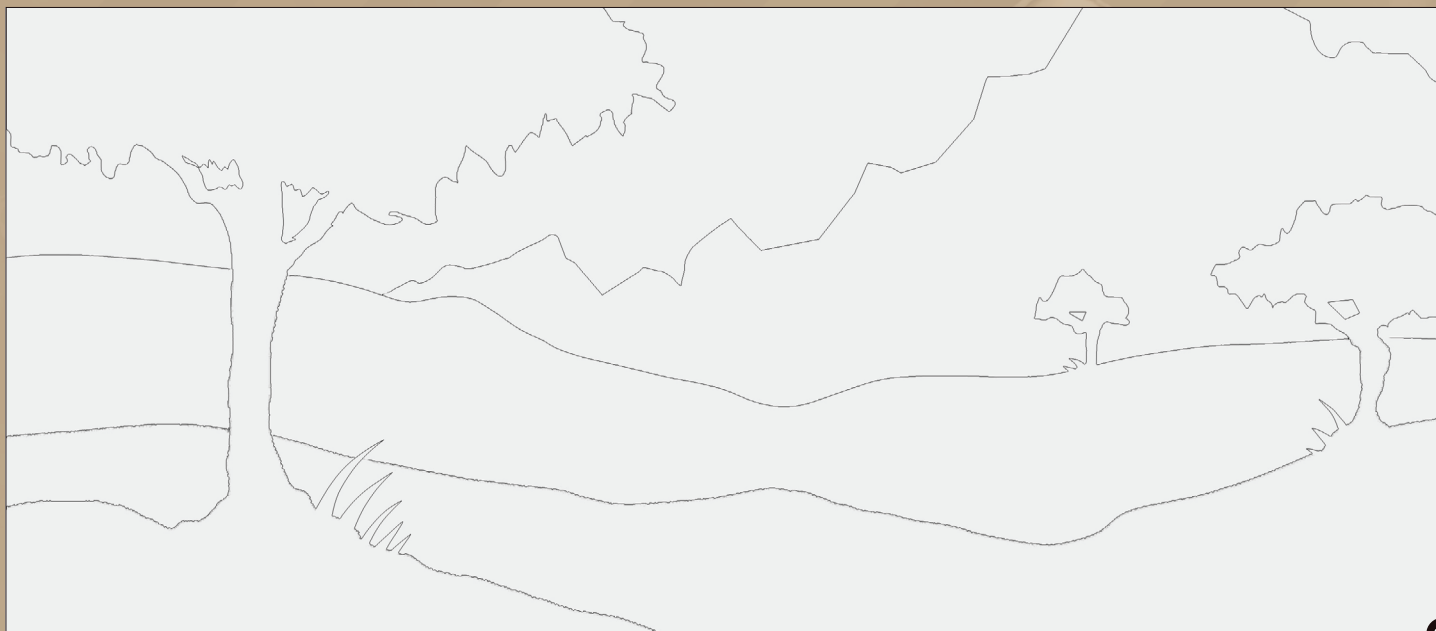
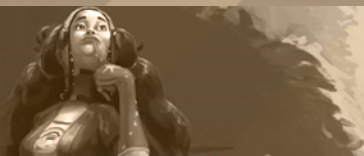
Layers

The easiest way to create the illusion of depth is by making something layered. This means putting something on top of something else. Do that often and you have yourself an illusion of depth. One of the things I want to be clear about; you do not have to have perspective in order to create the illusion of depth. With perspective it's easier and it will look more "real", but it's not a necessity.

Foreground, Mid-ground, Background

Something that helps build on the basic principles of layers is being aware of the





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foreground, mid-ground and background. This is probably one of the most used techniques in the digital painting world. It's exactly the same as what I said about the layers, only working front to back. What this means is that you create a couple of planes. It doesn't have to be three; it can be anything from three to one hundred million gazillion planes, but that takes too much time to describe (**Fig.06**). For the purposes of this tutorial I'm going to talk about the following three:

- The first plane, the foreground, which has details.
- The second plane, the mid-ground, which only has some big details.
- The third plane, the background, which has what? Guess! Yep, little to no details.

An important thing to remember with details and depth is that because of the decrease in contrast in depth, you also get a decrease in

visibility of details. That means that things do not become fuzzier, as some people tend to think, but rather the shape and shading becomes simpler. With the same strong edges! If you want to create a lot of depth, create more planes and make sure the perspective is correct on all of them. And voila, you've got depth.

Value

Now, to enhance that feeling of depth the best thing to do is to give it some value (**Fig.07**).



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It's not true in all situations, but it's widely accepted that the best way to do this is to make the foreground darkest, mid-ground medium, and background light. It doesn't mean there can be no light in the foreground, just that the contrast is strongest there. So if there's a light, the difference between lightest light and darkest dark is bigger than it would be if there is a light in the background.

Now this value thing is something you can easily mess up. It can be quite confusing. But

remember: it's about explaining, so you should make sure you do that with your image (**Fig.08**).

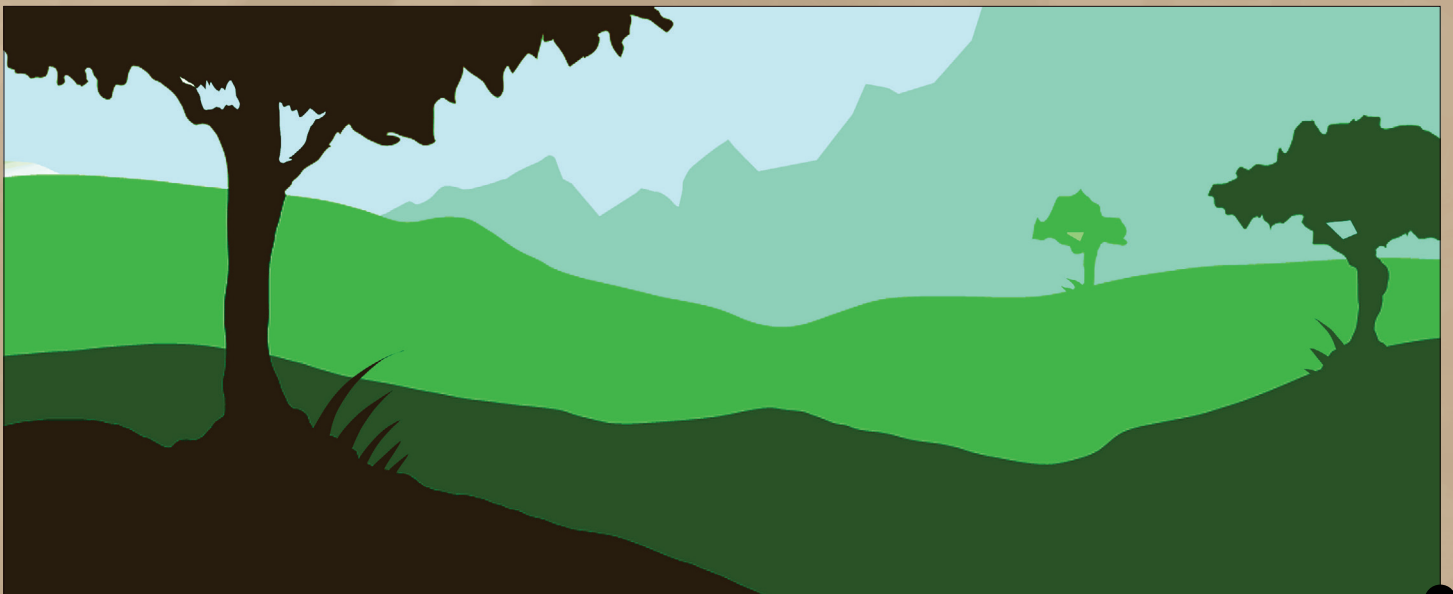
Color

Of course value isn't the only way to create depth. Color can help depth a lot. It's quite interesting how color works in our minds and our associations with it. You might think all colors are equal, and I would like to be non-discriminating about color, but I'm afraid it's not so. They are quite different. In our minds we connect to certain colors and to certain iconic

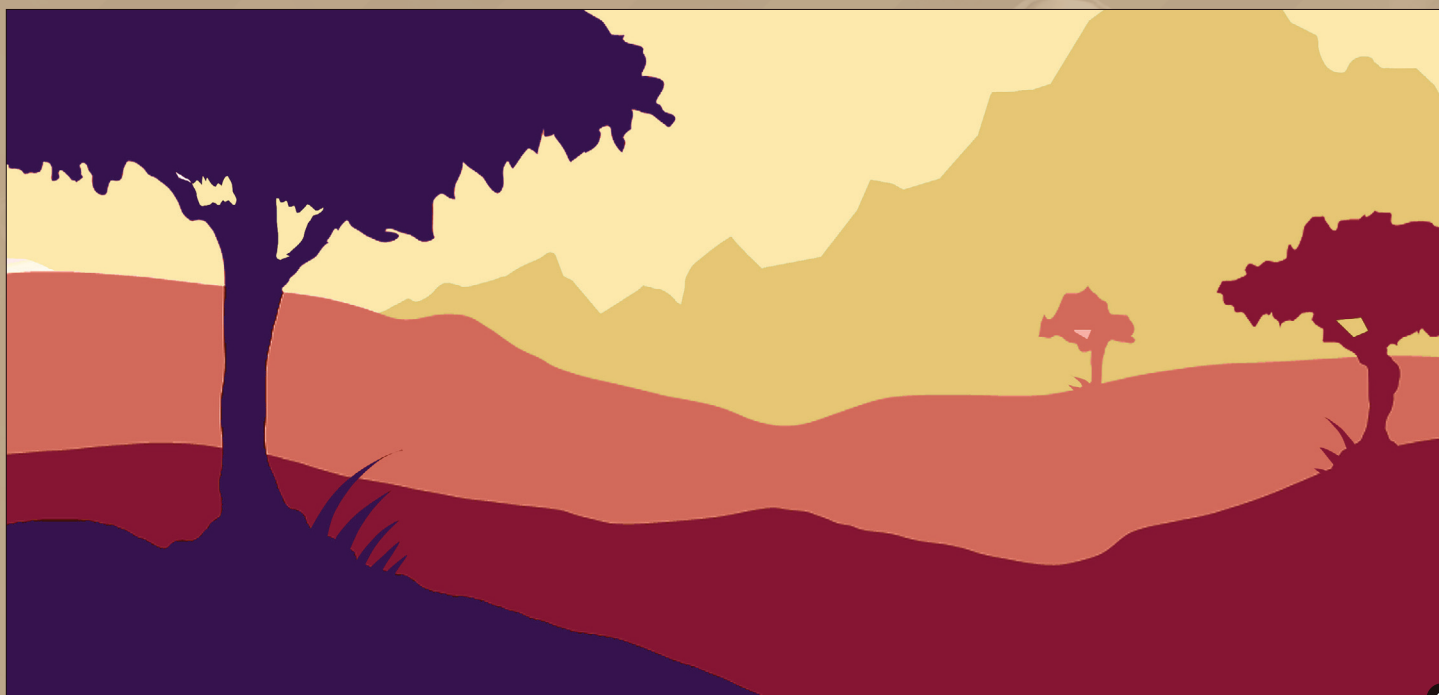
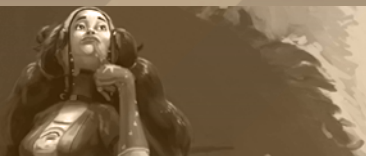
and conceptual presets. As you all know color consists of hue, saturation and value and since we've already discussed value, let's continue with hue.

Hue

It's important to know how certain hues are interpreted differently (**Fig.09**). For example, the blue spectrum is considered farther away than a hue in the red spectrum. Why? I'll have to guess the exact answer to that, but I think it has to do with the fact that our minds are used to things



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moving more and more towards a blue spectrum the further away they are. This is because of the small water particles in the air which reflect only a certain type of color. It doesn't have to be like that though. Sometimes, for example with a sunset, red is the far away color and blue the foreground color. But if you would have the exact same picture with the colors reversed, the one with the blue in the background would feel like it has more depth (**Fig.10**). The magical properties of color!

I find it fascinating to discover more and more about the properties of colors, but mainly how we interpret them. Colors have all these associations and emotional effects on us as a viewer. It's good to read up on that kind of stuff (in another tutorial perhaps).

But back to hues. As you can clearly see the hue also changes in relation to the depth position it is at. This means that in deep and epic settings hues often change gradually. This hue gradient is a good way to create, or stimulate, the depth effect.

Saturation

Now hue and value are not the only things of importance in depth. Saturation is as well. But

saturation is a bit more of a problem child in this little game of depth. Most of the time saturation decreases when objects are further away. And depending on the air (clean, dusty, filled with water particles etc.,) it changes the color and saturation. But it doesn't always become gray or unsaturated for that matter. I find it a good trick to do the same thing to saturation as I do with hue and value: create a gradient that obviously changes from close to far away (**Fig.11**).

Fog! (Cheat Warning)

Fog! Maybe the most used trick in the book of depth creation in digital painting. Select an object, paint fog between that object and the object behind it and, voila, depth. It's a great tool, and for all of you who only care about the result and not the theory behind it, it's the easiest way to create what you want.

But a note of warning: if you use it a lot – and many do – it's easy to see you are cheating your way through creating depth. And it will show that you don't know other tricks or even worse, the theory of why you are doing what you are doing. Fog is a trick and not the solution to the depth problem.

See fog, or that effect, is actually often not fog in real life. The thing that happens in real life is

that as light hits the ground, it bounces back up. Sometimes straight up, sometimes against the wall of, let's say, a mountain. This makes the ground part of the mountain lighter than the top part. Also, this will ensure that light bouncing back from the ground will hit small particles and close to the ground there tend to be more particles (dust, water, etc.,) thereby giving the effect of fog.

That's as far as fog goes or this tutorial for that matter. I won't be talking about what Photoshop filter you should use or what brush size. You figure that one out (and let me know when you do!). Enjoy your third dimension!

David Smit

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05

PORTRAYING EMOTION BY MARTA DAHLIG



Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 05 - Portraying Emotion

Software used: Photoshop

In the industry the concern over how we paint has always been bigger than what we paint. We tend to battle over which software we should use or discuss texturing techniques we ought to apply. Under pressure to constantly improve techniques, we sometimes forget about the reason that made us paint in the first place – the need to express our sensitivity.

Depicting emotions is a rather hard task and requires not only a great deal of personal involvement, but also a thorough knowledge of the ways they can be conveyed. Luckily, there are many ways to do so. Some means are quite obvious, such as character facial expression or posing, while some are much more subtle, like modeling facial features or specially adjusting color themes and composition. The best results, naturally, come from combining those ways within one image.

Firstly, let's discuss the easiest and most straightforward means of conveying emotions – the character facial expressions. When painting an expression, the most important rule to keep in mind is the unity of all facial features. Each and every facial expression is created by the face as a whole. If you want to check what I mean, take a picture of a smiling person and



cover the upper part of the face, so you can only see the lips and chin. Next, cover only the bottom half of the picture, so you can only see the eyes. As you can see, in both cases you could easily guess the expression of the person in a picture. That is to say that all the features, including the easy to omit cheeks, take part in creating a facial expression.

Knowing that, it won't come as a surprise that in order to paint a believable portrait, you cannot limit yourself to merely painting the right shapes of eyes or lips (Fig.01). That being said, it's important to always keep in mind the whole structure of the face, including muscle placement. And therefore, when you paint a

smile, aside from the stretched lips and slightly narrowed shape of eyes, you have to depict their context – the facial structure changed by the tightening of muscles. I marked all the “easy to forget” parts on the sketch in Fig.02.

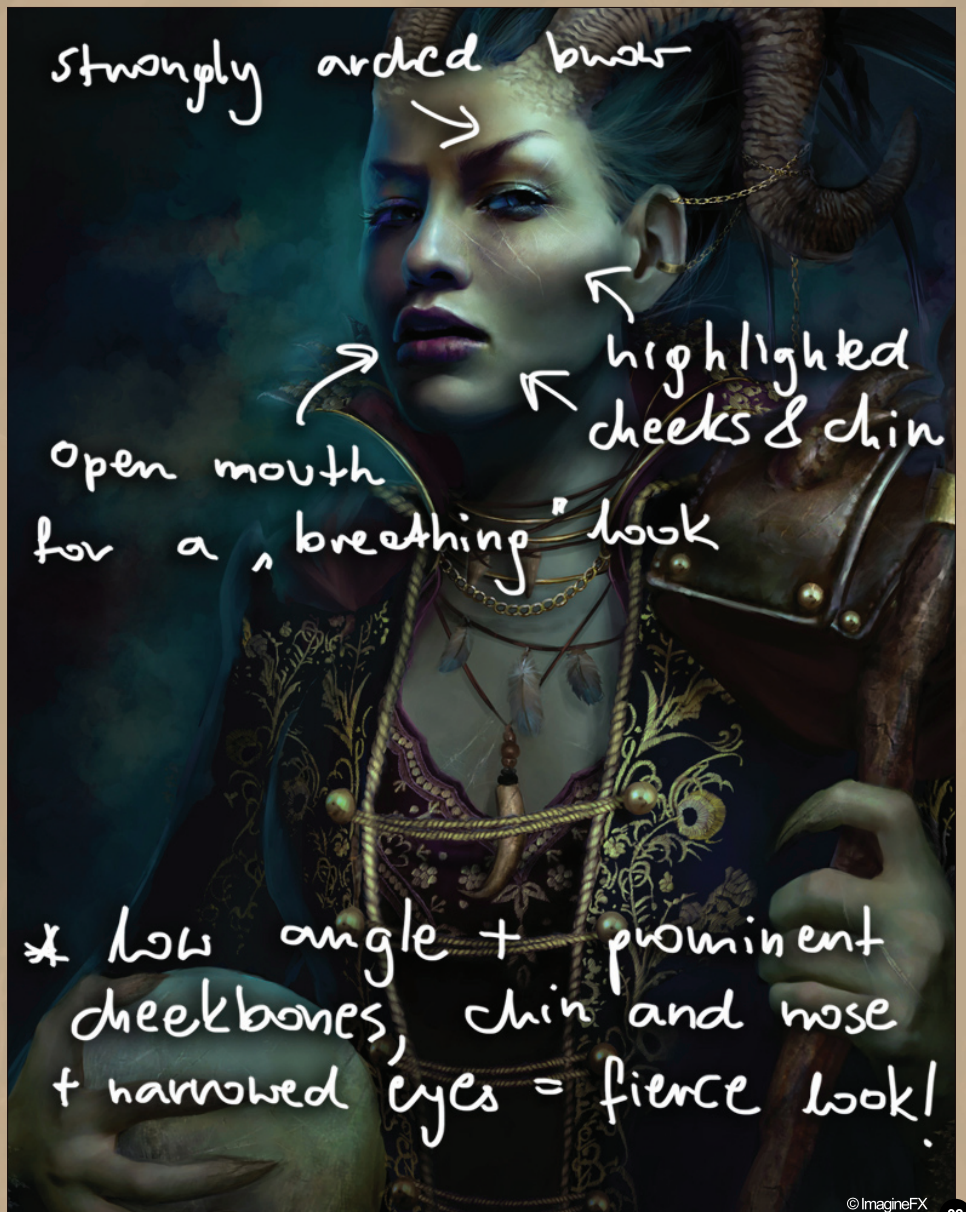
Now, let's move onto the more subtle means of conveying emotion – modeling of the facial anatomy. This element of painting is complementary and can be used to underline certain features of your character. If you are to paint a delicate, or intimate, scene you might want to make the character's face reflect this. For example, small chin and nose, and huge sad eyes will always look good if you want to express sadness. On the other hand, if you



are painting a fierce warrior, you might want to do the absolute opposite – paint a strong jaw, smaller eyes, thicker eyebrows and very prominent cheekbones (**Fig.03**). If I was to compare this stage to anything, I would say it's much like picking actors for movie roles - the person has to "fit" the role they play, just like the artist has to match the physiognomy to personality of their characters (**Fig.04**).

The third aspect that can be used for conveying emotion is character anatomy and posing. I find it a good idea to slightly exaggerate the pose if I want to achieve a more dynamic or dramatic atmosphere (**Fig.05**). For example, I usually depict my character with their muscles tightened. If you want to see why I do this, stand in front of a mirror, make a loose pose, and next make the same pose, this time tightening all your muscles. Do you see how your posture has changed, even though the pose itself remains unchanged? This trick is especially helpful when painting hands – depicting tightened tendons will add a great impact to your character (**Fig.06**).

Moving on to another element of depicting emotion, we have the color theme of a painting. As most of you probably already know or at least feel, there are certain situations where some colors perform better than others. And so,



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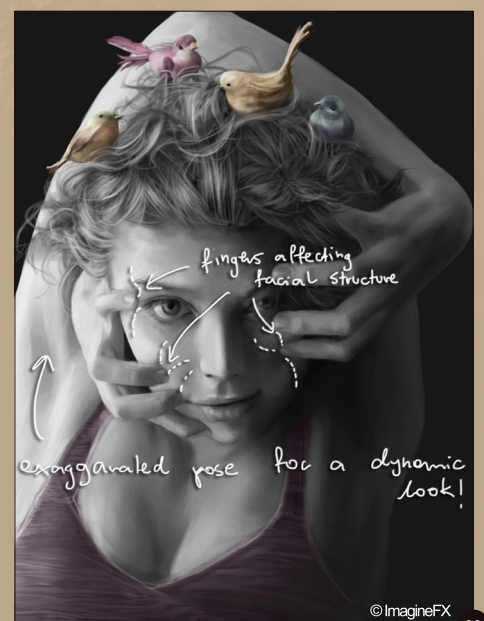


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for sentimental or sad paintings you will more likely use colder tones (grays, blues, violet), while to express energy, enthusiasm you might pick warmer hues (**Fig.07**). Extremely saturated colors and high contrasts can add a nice magical feel to a painting, while monotonous themes with a few contrasting hues are great for modern compositions. Understandably, all of the above are generalizations, but they work in most situations and can be used as a loose guideline for picking palettes.

Last, but not least, we have the actual composition of the painting. I would like to concentrate on two aspects that I believe play the most important role: perspective and storytelling elements.

The very same object depicted from a high and low angle perspective will look completely different. Low point perspective is a great means to underline a gloomy or menacing atmosphere. When portrayed from below, a human will naturally look taller and authoritative. That is why I always try to use the low point perspective when depicting stronger, bolder characters (**Fig.08**).

Another element that you should keep in mind is the narrative quality of your paintings. The main emotion does not have to come from your character, but can be underlined, or even fully created, by additional scene elements. To give an example, let's say we have a female character sitting at the window, looking somewhere into the distance. If we place a book and a dried flower on her lap, we will have a character drowned in thought over a bit of literature. If, however, we add some torn cloth and a smashed lamp at her feet, as well as a few scratches on her arm – we will hint that our character is in a state of trauma (**Fig.09**).

The narrative is very rewarding for an artist, but the hardest element to pull off successfully. It requires a much deeper thought process than the other elements as you cannot be



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straightforward. The artist cannot transmit their message directly by depicting raw emotion. Instead, it's about merely passing a hint which the viewer will have to chew on and deduct himself.

Now that you know how to create an emotional impact with your painting, you might wonder when each of these should be used. Truth be told, there are no golden rules for this! Generally, if you want a striking painting you might want to use all the mentioned ways. If you prefer an ambiguous image, you might want to use a limited number of techniques, or even stick to a single one. It is all a matter of the personal taste of the artist and the strength of the depicted mood. After all, we are talking about emotions, not painting techniques. So do not ponder too long on this, use the means that come naturally to you, and remember that the content of your paintings is equally as important as your technique!

Marta Dahlig

For more information please visit:

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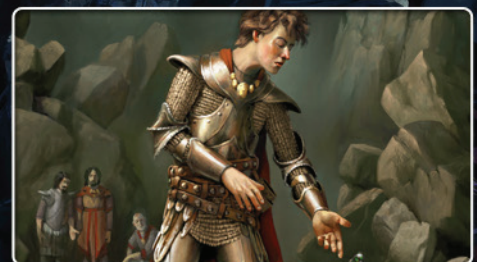
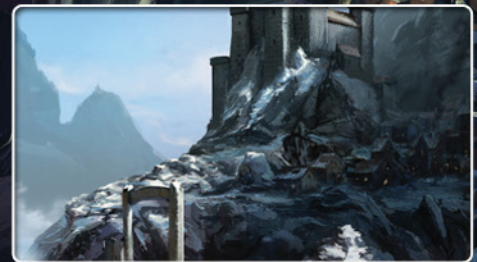
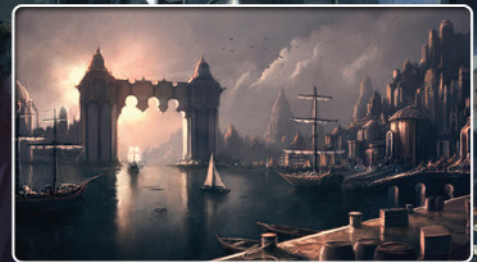
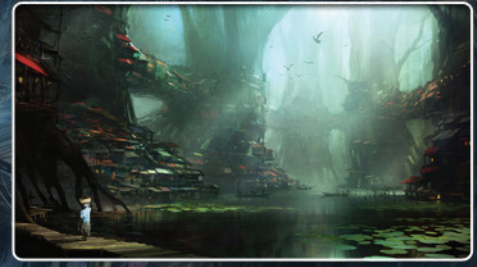
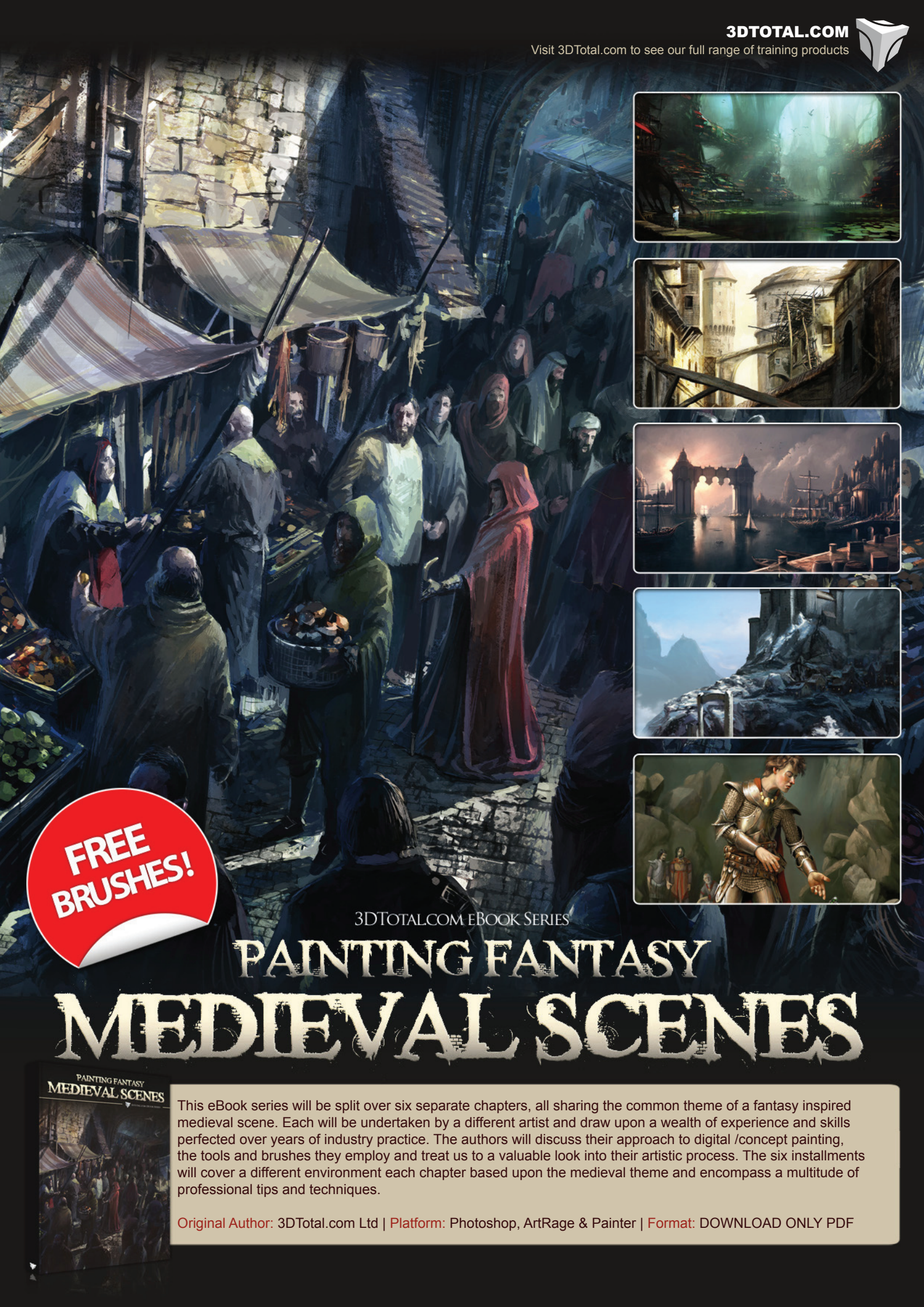
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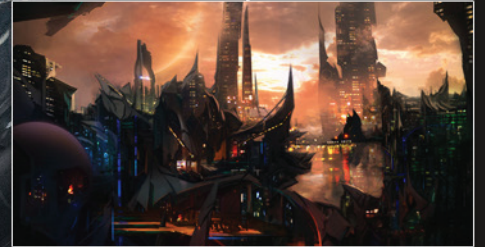
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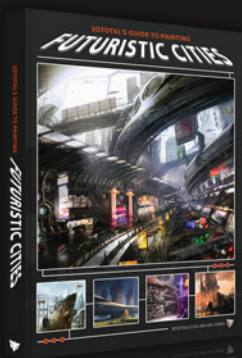
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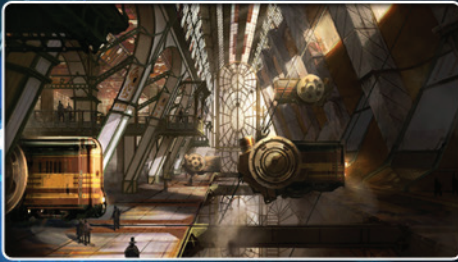
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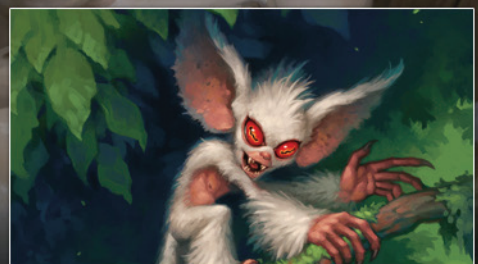
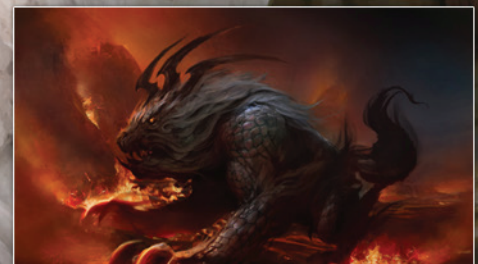
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PAINTING MONSTERS & BEASTS



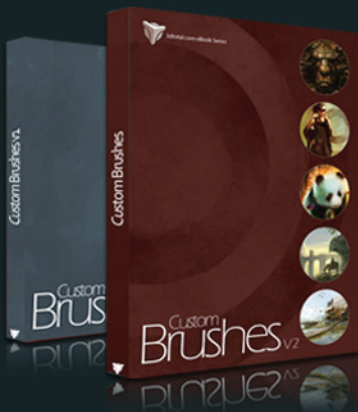
This eBook series will be split over six separate chapters all of which will be dedicated to painting monsters suited to a range of habitats spanning jungle and aquatic to mountainous and subterranean. Each will be covered by a different author who will discuss their approach to digital /concept painting, the tools and brushes they employ and how to create a final image. We shall gain an insight into the thought processes of each of our industry professionals and the ways in which they develop an idea from concept sketches through to a finished work.

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