

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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17 CHARACTER DESIGN TIPS

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*Lessons from a monochrome manga artist
See page 60*



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Learn to draw stunning black and white art with advice from Japanese superstar **Acky Bright**



Colie Wertz interview!
We chat to the Star Wars and Dune concept artist



Draw elegant fantasy art!
Discover how pro artists mix traditional with digital

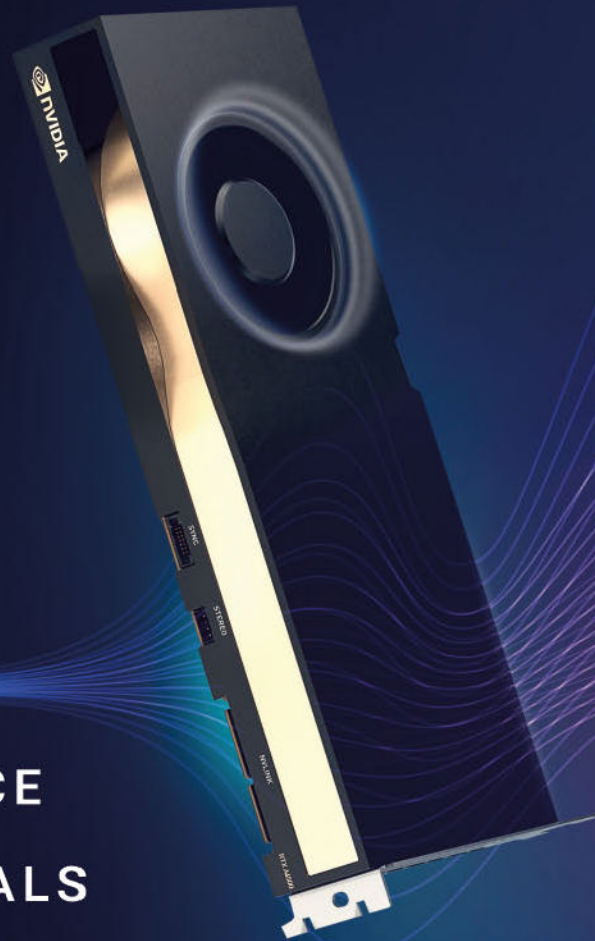


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Top advice to lift your output and stay creative

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Welcome to...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Hello and welcome to issue 224 of ImagineFX. This month we cover a lot of ground, starting with our fantastic cover art and its accompanying workshop, where Acky Bright shares his process for creating stunning black and white art.

Sometimes optimising your creativity can be hard, so head to our news feature where we talk to four artists to get fantastic insight into how they boost their design skills, which you can apply to your own projects.

We also have a wealth of training to help you improve your art, starting with a collection of tips that will raise your characters to the next level. Then we've got a great piece on combining your traditional and digital skills into one workflow, helping you reap the rewards of both.

For some inspiration we have the awesome Adrian Smith giving you a guided tour of his attic studio, as well as a wonderful interview with concept art veteran Colie Wertz, where he shares his thoughts on everything from Star Wars to Dune.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Three of my top picks this month...

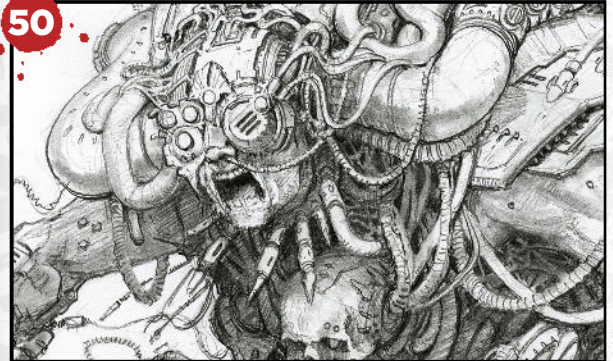
32



Artist in Residence

Illustrator Adrian Smith gives us a tour of his studio, and introduces his trusty companion Goblin.

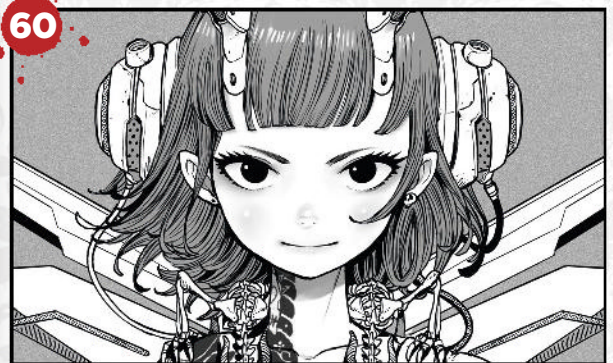
50



Thomas Elliott's sketchbook

Delve into the pages of Games Workshop artist Thomas Elliott's sketchbook for a wealth of wild creatures.

60



Secrets of black and white art

Learn to master your monochrome artwork with our inspirational tutorial from Acky Bright.

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Contents

Your art

10 **FXPosé**

A round-up of digital art, submitted by you.

News and events

24 **Boost your design skills**

Top tips from four artists on improving the design principles in your artwork.

30 **A day in the life of...**

Josh Herman

The Dungeons and Dragons studio art director guides us through his busy day.

32 **Artist in Residence:**

Adrian Smith

We sneak past the Goblin on guard to take a tour of the nocturnal artist's studio.

Features

40 **The Art of Colie Wertz**

The veteran concept artist talks about his career working on Star Wars and more.

50 **Sketchbook: Thomas Elliott**

Creature combinations of flesh and steel.

56 **Sketchbook: Iain Thody**

A love for all things sci-fi shines through.

Regulars

6 **Next month**

8 **Subscriptions**

22 **The Rookies**

39 **Letters**

48 **Recent editions**

32



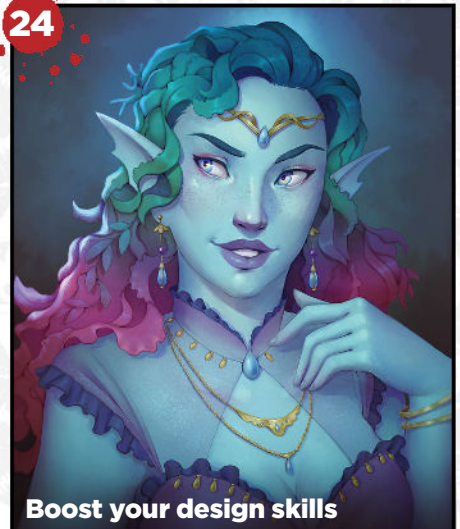
Artist in Residence:
Adrian Smith

10



FXPosé

24



Boost your design skills

40



The Art of Colie Wertz

50



Sketchbook: Thomas Elliott

56

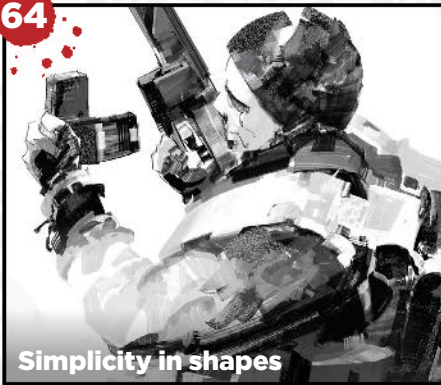


Sketchbook: Iain Thody



ImagineFX

64



Simplicity in shapes

66



Introduction to Gesture VR

60



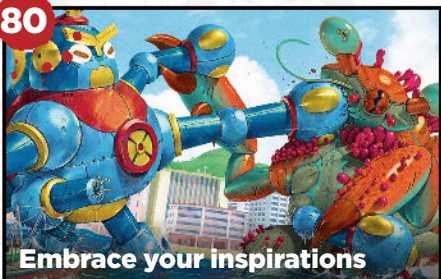
Secrets of black and white art

74



Character development tips

80



Embrace your inspirations

96



First Impressions:
Jacob Walker

Workshops

60 Secrets of black and white art
Monochrome specialist Acky Bright shares the approach to his fabled style.

64 Simplicity in shapes
Learn the base foundations that underpin Richard Anderson's creative process.

66 Sharpen your drawing skills with Gesture VR
Strap on your headset and get going with the basics of the at-home life drawing app.

72 Add impact to your fan art
Evan Liu details the small touches that bring extra life to his video game tribute.

74 17 tips to develop characters
Writer Isabel Armitage explains the tricks she uses to bring her characters to life.

80 Embrace your inspirations
Combine references like Adrien Cantone's epic mech vs monster battle render.

Traditional Artist

84 Traditional FXPosé
Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, sent in by you!

88 Workshop: Draw an ethereal fantasy character
Cameron Scott Davis creates a character from his personal IP SleepWalker.

94 Tending to a floral vision
Find out how Jason Mowry's mysterious art blossomed from its botanical roots.

96 First Impressions: Jacob Walker
The fantasy artist on how a convention visit kick-started his illustration career.

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.
<https://lfxm.ag/ackybright>

2 Open the Dropbox link
Find your files ready for download.

3 Download what you need...
Save the files or watch the videos.

Next month

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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CHARACTER DESIGN SKILLS

Learn to draw striking humanoid beasts with artist and tattooist **ZIUK**



Deak Ferrand interview

We speak to the veteran RodeoFX artist to explore his sci-fi concept art

Create stylised vehicle concepts

Get in-depth advice on how to draw stunning vehicle designs

Life, art and influences

Canadian artist Sarah Joncas shares her thoughts on her career to date

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Editorial

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EXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

1





Brahim Bensehoul

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop **WEB:** <https://ibralui.art/>

Character and creature designer Brahim grew up inspired by the few cartoons and games he had available in his small town, and hopes to make art that would make his 10-year-old self smile.

2



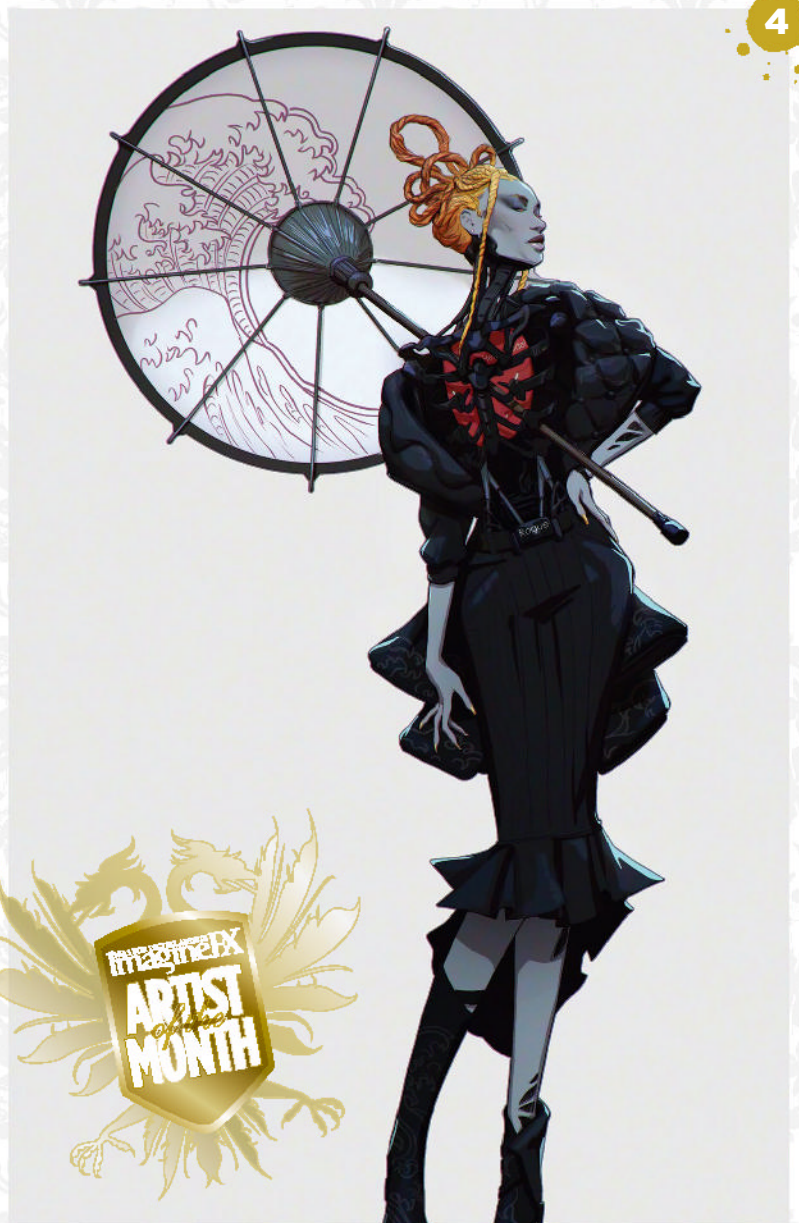
1 MONSTER OF WAR

"This image depicts my idea of a mind-controlled giant that people use to fight in a war."

2 EMOJI CHALLENGE

"This was a personal challenge to create a piece of artwork inspired by three random emojis, namely the snake, an oni and a chair."

4



3



3 DARKENED BEAUTY

"Another image based on three random emojis, this time it was a sheep, swords and a violin. I wanted to portray beauty within darkness."

4 CATWALK TECH

"This piece is based on the idea of a world that has robotic models that don't age. They do, though, have exchangeable parts, sizes and skins."



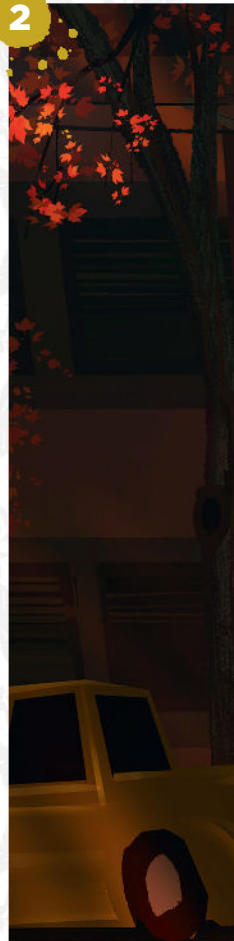


Gabriel Gomez

LOCATION: Belgium **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** <http://gabriel-gomez.com> (under construction)

Originally from France, Gabriel moved to Belgium to study illustration and comics. He has now worked within animation for 12 years as a background and visual development artist for Netflix, Disney and Paramount.

2

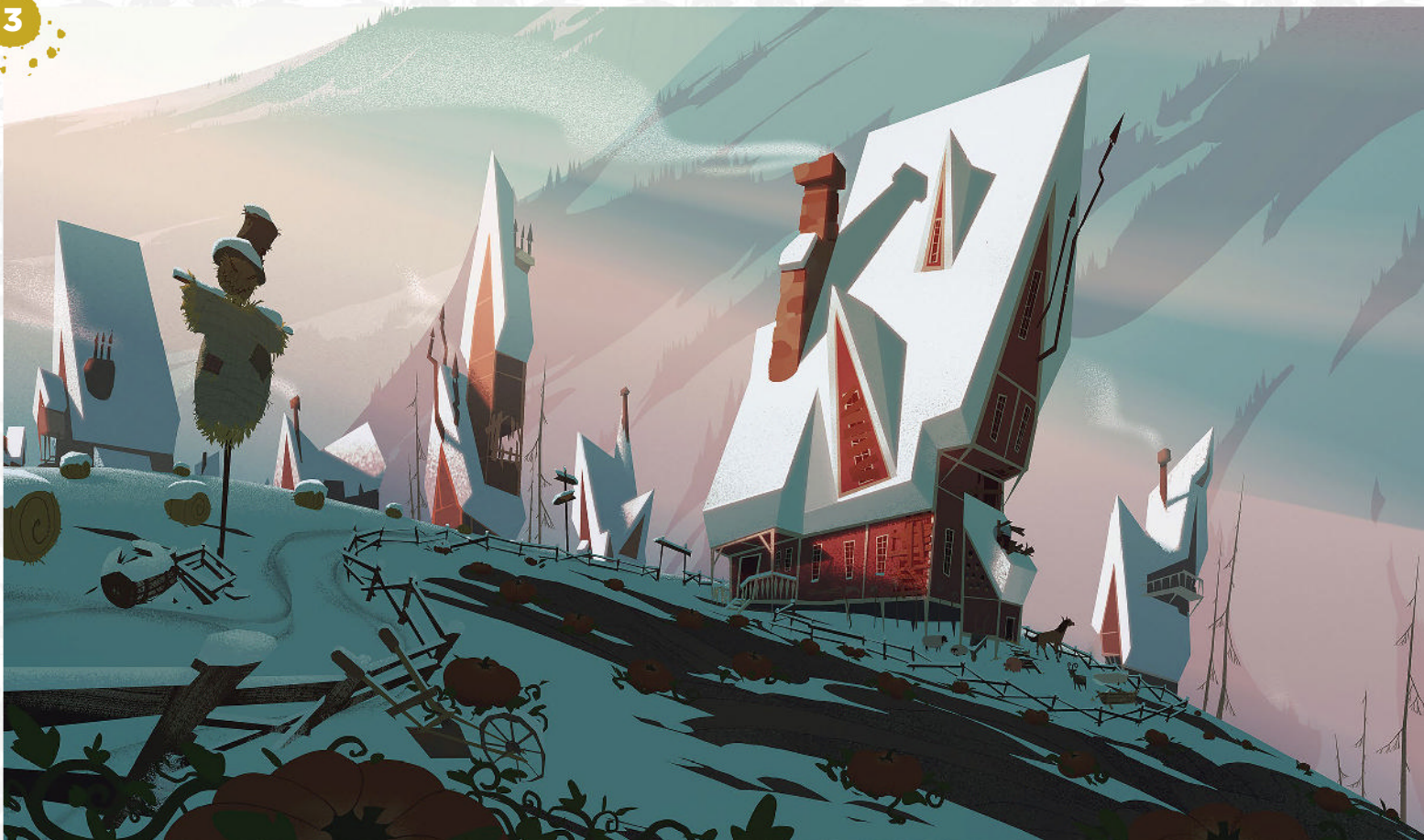


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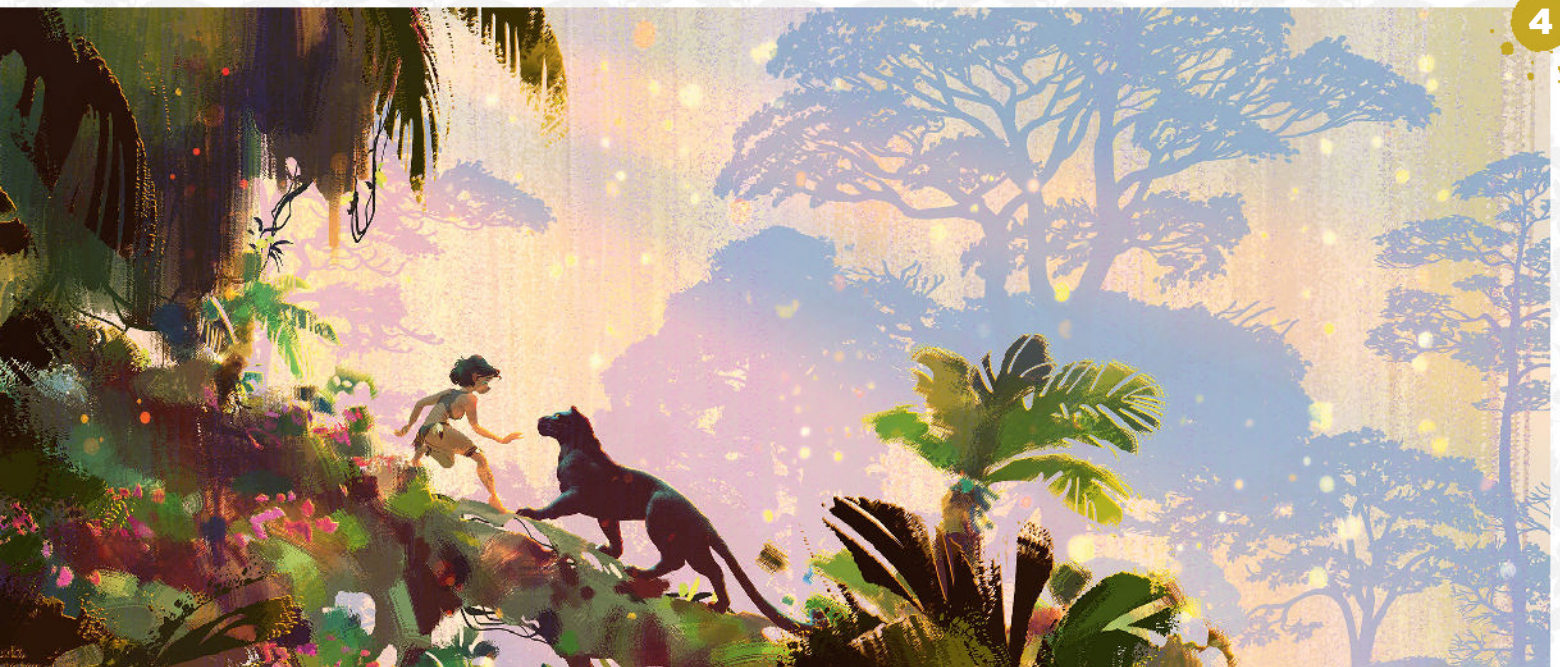


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3



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4

1 CANARY MINE

"An image for the short movie Canary made by Rodeo FX, and directed by Benoît Theriault and Pierre-Hugues Dallaire. The short is currently being presented at festivals around the world."

2 FACADE

"A personal work. In this one we can see a lot of my references and inspirations: Wes Anderson for the symmetrical composition, and Ken Anderson for the stylisation of the architecture."

3 KLAUS

"This is an image I made while working on Klaus. It was from the early days, designing the suburbs of the town where the story happens. The movie is available on Netflix."

4 MOWGLI

"Another personal piece. One of the elements that I like to paint and play with is light. This is a good example of that in an interpretation of an image from The Jungle Book."



Alix Harris

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop WEB: www.cyanaliart.com

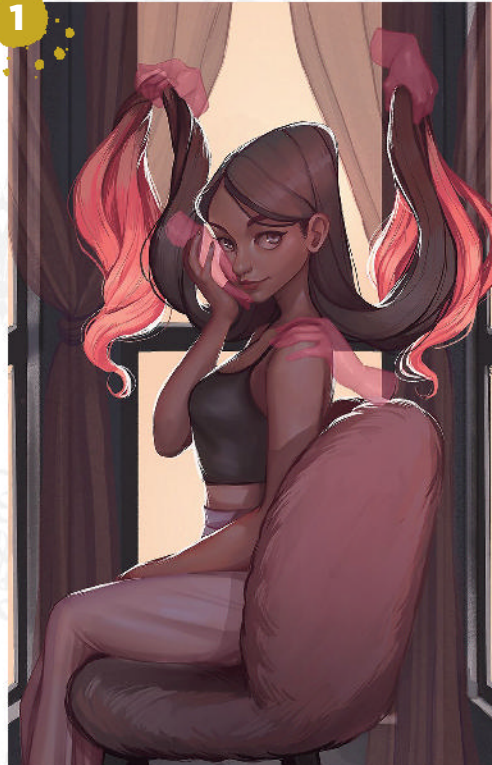
Alix is a digital illustrator and character artist whose inspirations include pop culture, manga and fashion. She loves creating expressive characters and using bold and bright colours.

1 HELPFUL HANDS

"I love the idea of a helping hand. I used a limited colour palette with a bright accent colour to add a level of magic to the illustration."

2 NOON ENCOUNTER

"An illustration of some friends stopping to chat during a busy day. I wanted to capture a quick break in a cosy, natural spot."



3 A WISHFUL STAR

"I wanted to create something that felt both magical and whimsical with my favourite colour palette and an original character of mine. She is a space-age magic girl, who is inspired by my love for astronomy."

4 RED GLAMOUR

"This illustration started out as an experiment in painting in greyscale. My inspiration was an old Hollywood glamour shot with some soft lighting, yet defined values."



1



Eunbi Kang

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender WEB: www.eunbikang.com

Eunbi Kang is a Korean visual development artist and illustrator who won the Independent Environment category at the 2022 Concept Art Awards. She has a fascination for vibrant colour palettes and fantasy themes.

1 VESPA

"One of my reasons to redesign the film Roman Holiday was the Vespa and beautiful Roman buildings. Their shape languages are always intriguing, and they also allow me to think about dynamic layouts."

2 ON ROOFTOP

"One of my dreams when I started out in my art career was to create scenes that look like paused moments in animations. I focused on capturing the mood and colour for this piece."



2



3

3 DEPRESSION

"This is one of the key scenes for my Roman Holiday redesign. Since the original film was in black and white, it was interesting to imagine the scene with colours."



Krzysztof Maziarz

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Unity3D, Blender **WEB:** <https://bit.ly/3GeGOZp>

Krzysztof started drawing after meeting professional artists while studying game development. "I bought a tablet and started to draw after hours. That was almost 10 years ago."

1 THE TINKERER GIRL

"Junky hardware is one of my favourite things to draw. This is part of a small postcard collection where junky hardware meets pin-up girls."

2 INVESTIGATION

"I just wanted to draw a filthy apartment with computers. The idea with the detectives came spontaneously after I drew the knife stuck in the sofa."

1



2

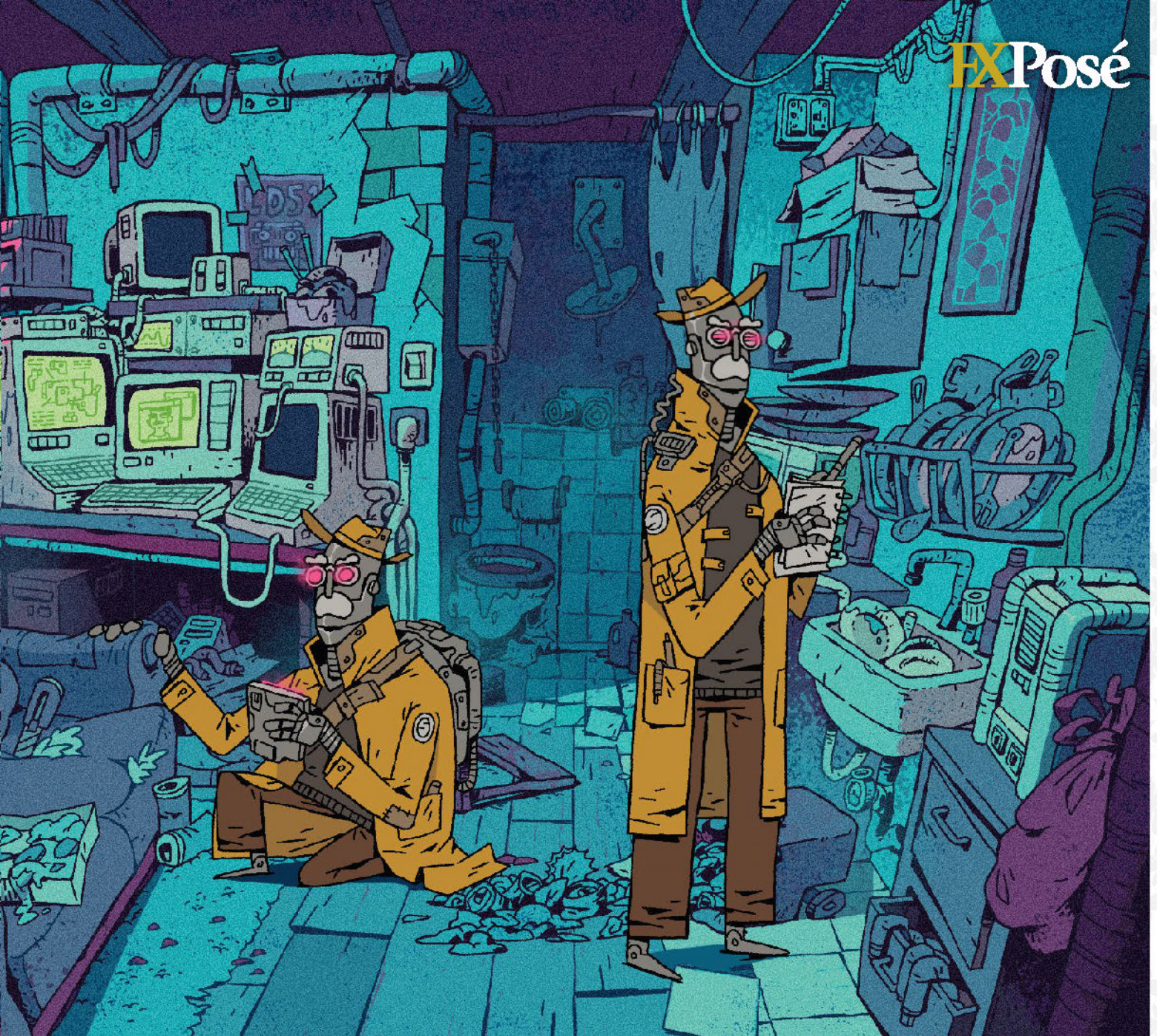


3 THE ROOM

"This is based on an AI-generated photo. I used AI for the first time here to find out if it could be useful as a rapid idea generator."

4 THE CHAPEL

"I really love drawing small dioramas such as this one. I found it fun to create something tightly packed with a lot of details."



3



4



Ömer Tunç

LOCATION: Türkiye MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/mertun

Ömer has been interested in painting since a young age, and has been creating digital paintings for 12 years. He often draws on fantasy themes, such as an ordinary, powerless character fighting a dragon or demon.

1 GALADRIEL VS SAURON

"A fan art from the world of The Lord of the Rings. Even though Galadriel isn't a warrior, I wanted to pit her against Sauron."



2 EXODUS

"Sometimes I start a drawing randomly and go wherever the line takes me. This is an example of one of those drawings."



2

3 BACK TO HOGWARTS

"The return of three characters I love to where they belong. But are they here to save Hogwarts or destroy it? Who knows..."

4 EVERYONE FALLS ALONE

"What you see is exactly what you get with this image. We all fall alone in this life, so I thought that I'd capture that feeling."



3

Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to fxpose@imaginefx.com





THE ROOKIES

The Rookies is a platform to help digital artists get discovered without having to compete with professionals for attention. You'll get to the front page of those sites one day, but for now, we've got your back and want to help turn your passion for creative media into a successful career.

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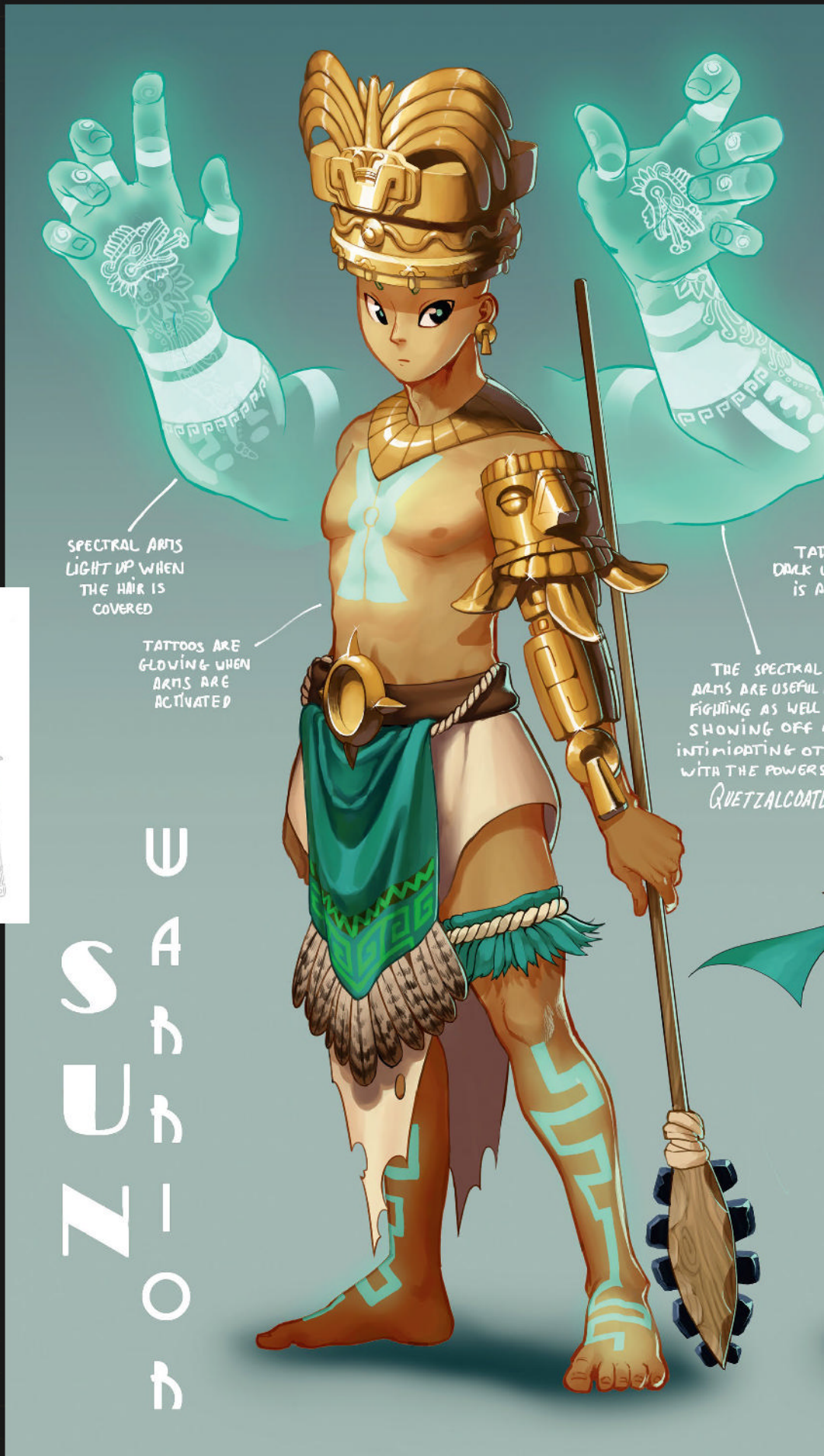
Sun Warrior

YEAR CREATED: 2022

MEDIA: Clip Studio Paint

+++++

"This character design sheet was a school project where the goal was to design a character with three alternative outfits. Prior to this project, I had to create a level design on which the character for this project would be based. The goal was to depict a powerful Aztec sun warrior, carrying the pride of his people with cultural symbols, who could also blend in for discreet missions. He would rely on his powers granted by the gods in difficult situations."





HAIR IS MADE OF BLUE FLAMES

TEPOZTOPILLI IS AN AZTEC POLE-ARM SIMILAR TO THE MACUAHUITL

RAZOR-SHARP OSSIDIAN ISLAPES

COLORS



EAGLE WARRIOR OUTFIT TO FIT IN THE UNIT AND BLEND IN

THIS WAY NOBODY CAN NOTICE HIS POWERS GRANTED BY THE GOD QUETZALCOATL

MACUAHUITL IS A WOODEN SWORD-LIKE WEAPON PRIMARILY USED BY THE AZTEC

Artist PROFILE

Sonia Martin

LOCATION: France



Sonia is a 3D animation and game art student at Brassart, who is passionate about concept art. She chose this direction for her studies to broaden her creative possibilities in order to keep creating better concepts. Deeply interested in stylised game art, she tries to develop her style accordingly.

www.therookies.co/u/MartinSonia



"Giving yourself design challenges, or finding them online, is a great way to build your design muscles," says Nika Lemut.



Lauren Brown suggests modelling characters on people you know. "Study people from life, not just from photos, but their movement as well."

Boost your design skills

The art of storytelling **Tanya Combrinck** talks to four artists about practical options for boosting creativity

Whether you're looking to give stronger personality to your characters, or perhaps make your environments more atmospheric, applying design principles to your compositions is a tried and tested way to make them stronger. Not only that, there are many design-related exercises you can try that will hone your skills and train your eye.

When designing characters, the advice from illustrator and character



artist **Nika Lemut** is to identify their defining features and then emphasise them strongly.

"When in doubt, try to think of it like you're playing around with the sliders in the character creator section of a video game," she says. "Move or resize some features to see what kind of feeling they evoke. Grab the brows and push them

downwards, or select the nose and try making it wider."

Keep tinkering until you feel you've captured a character's essence. "This has been a great method for me, as it helps me see when I haven't pushed features far enough in my original concept," says Nika. "I recommend it if you're someone that has trouble being bold with their original choices."

IN THE MOOD

Like many artists, Nika is a strong proponent of the mood board. "It helps with creating an overall understanding as opposed to trying to simply Frankenstein different elements together. I also look for recurring shapes, colours and patterns that are a common denominator in the references. I can then use that kind of pre-established recognition to add to my own designs." ➔



"You want to reach a point where no brushstroke can be taken away and none needs to be added," says Titus Lunter.

“Try to think of it like you're playing with the sliders in the character creator of a game”



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

D&D art director and former Marvel Studios artist Josh Herman introduces us to his busy day of meetings and artwork, with a bit of DIY sprinkled in. **Page 30**



NIGHT LIFE IN THE LOFT

Discover the treasure trove of miniatures and more that veteran artist Adrian Smith keeps in his attic studio space to inspire his late-night painting sessions. **Page 32**



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

We check out the best of your art that caught our eye on social media. Plus, discover the latest talking points from your fellow readers in our latest round of letters. **Page 39**



"Mood boards are one thing that I swear by. Having a lot of different references helps with not getting stuck in one lane," says Nika.



"Think about how your character emotes and walks, the differences between two characters in the same world, and how their personalities and looks feel distinct," says Lauren.



"Research is all about time management, which in turn is all about understanding exactly what is asked of you," says Titus.

➔ A design principle that has worked well for Nika is the Big/Medium/Small theory, which is the idea that good designs usually contain one large main shape, some medium-sized shapes and some small shapes.

"There are resources explaining this in greater depth online, but in its essence, the theory is about switching between different sizes of shapes to create appealing visual hierarchy," she says. "This shifted my perspective and helped me be more intentional when approaching design."

LEARN FROM OTHERS

Analysing the artwork of others is a powerful way to learn about design techniques and see how they work in the wild. "I find highly stylised artworks especially helpful, since they tend to push all aspects of visual language to the extreme," says Nika.

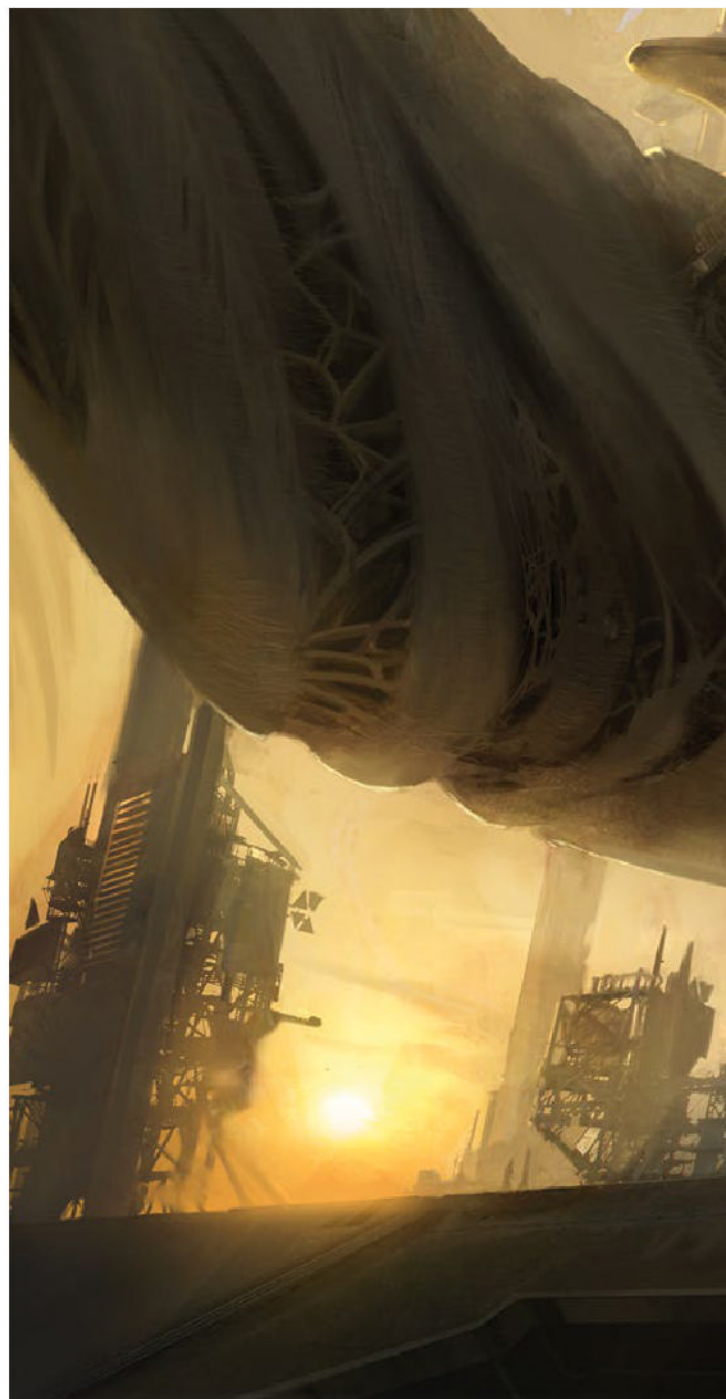
"I try to dissect them and see what type of design elements they incorporate. What shapes and colours do they use? When do they use them and why does it work? Making notes of these types of things can help

solidify my own choices later on. Seeing something work in practice helps me become more confident in implementing it in my own work."

Titus Lunter is an illustrator and concept artist specialising in both worldbuilding and environmental storytelling. Large scale scenes that make the viewer feel tiny in the face of an immense structure or vista are a big theme in his work, and he uses various design tricks to achieve this sense of size and distance. One of the most important is atmospheric perspective.

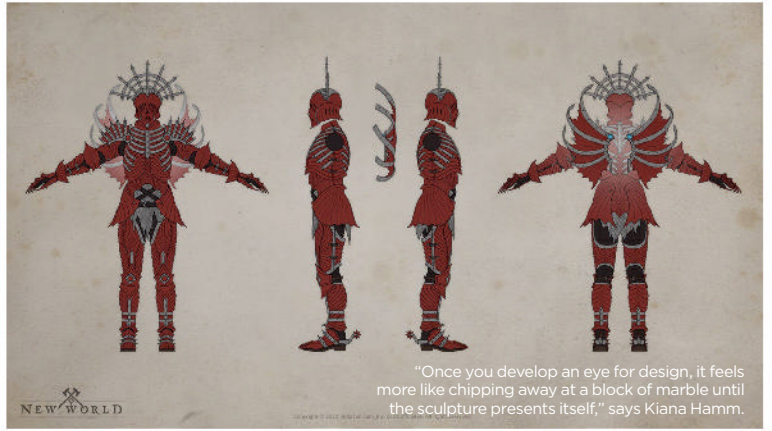
"The further into the distance you go, the more the atmosphere will block the scenery and landscape, and as such they become lower in contrast and pick up more of the atmosphere colour," he explains. "This works even better if some forms overlap with each other, think about one mountain receding behind another."

Another tip is to add scale elements such as trees and buildings. If these are tiny, they will look further away and your scale will seem even ➔



“ Seeing something work in practice helps me become more confident in implementing it in my own work ”

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"Reference is super important. It makes sure that what we design or paint looks like something others have seen before and recognise," Titus explains.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT LEARN TO ASK QUESTIONS

*Titus Lunter explains why
curiosity builds design skills*

Do you consciously apply formal design principles or is your work more intuitive?

It's something that has become more intuitive, but it was a conscious part of my decision-making process for a very long time! When something doesn't click, I always go back to these rules to check my process. These fundamentals don't make an image good by themselves, but they are some of the most important ways by which others can recognise what you want to both do and say.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to work on their design skills?

Learn how to ask questions and be curious. Your main tool for becoming a good designer is developing a skill for understanding the world that you're working in. Learn how to fill in blanks and how to work with extremely limited amounts of information. Figure out how you can find out stuff that you don't know by asking various sets of questions.

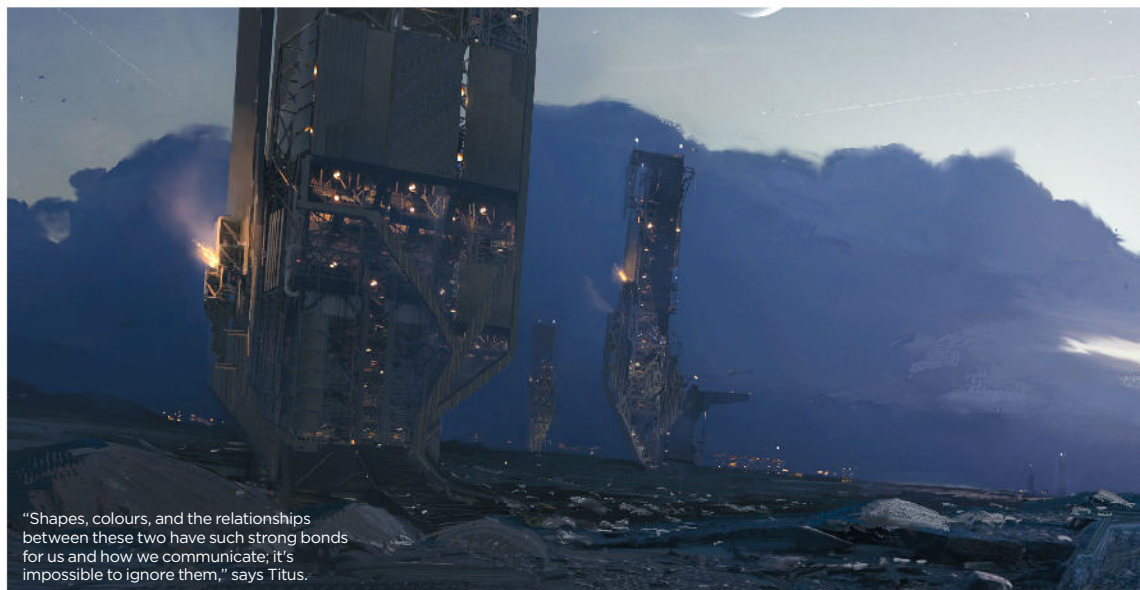
What is your approach to critiquing and developing your own designs?

Just like all the other steps, this is all about finding the right questions, answering them in the context of your goals, and then looking back to see how you did. Never critique yourself while you're working, just keep following the process! In short, once you learn how to ask questions, a lot of the hardship in design will begin to fall away, including the dreaded art block – have you ever heard of a question block?



Illustrator and concept artist Titus Lunter's credits include Magic: The Gathering and Dungeons & Dragons.

<https://tituslunter.com>



"Shapes, colours, and the relationships between these two have such strong bonds for us and how we communicate; it's impossible to ignore them," says Titus.



"I look for good visual balance, making sure there are strong focal points and detailed areas balanced with areas of rest," Kiana says.

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"I love to play around with different colour harmonies, such as complementary or triadic colour schemes," says Nika.

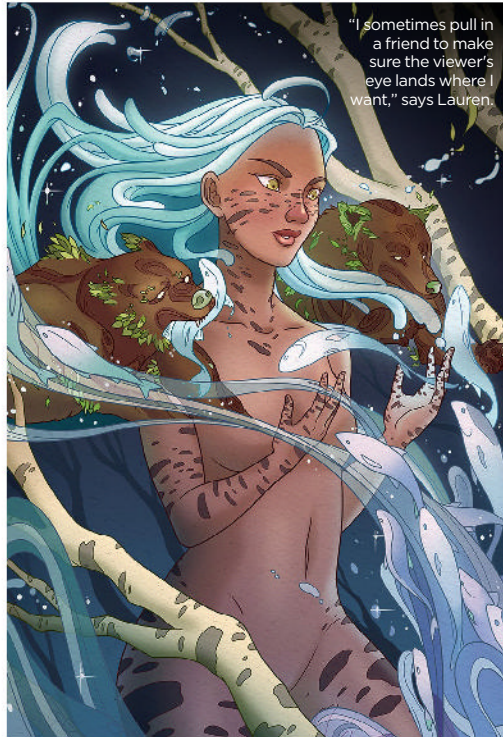
➤ bigger. "The best advice however will always remain 'look at reference'. Really take a close look at what makes it look big. Take elements away, add some, see what happens."

Titus's design process centres around the principle of 'form follows function', which is something he achieves by asking "a series of questions following the logic of the world". You can make up any rules you like for the world in which your art exists, but there needs to be an internal logic that is consistent within that world. Once you know what the rules are, you can ask questions that will tell you how what you are designing will fit into that world.

"Designing really is all about problem solving by finding the right questions," he says. "The more in



"Certain facial features or outfits can immediately signal a certain character archetype," Nika explains.



"I sometimes pull in a friend to make sure the viewer's eye lands where I want," says Lauren.

"Taking on the role of an industry artist and working within limitations while bringing your own perspective to the table is great for junior artists."

EVALUATE YOUR WORK

Lauren Brown is a fantasy illustrator whose work is based around natural elements. She's a believer in life drawing as an exercise that will strengthen the skills you need to be a better designer.



"I recommend it to everyone," she says. "Don't just practise it idly, do it with intention. Start a lesson with a goal in mind: 'I want to improve my observational skills' or, 'I will work on my rendering today'. This way, you're more focused and you know what you're trying to get out of the study."

Lauren has a particular process for critiquing her design during the final stages to keep everything on track and make sure that the image

“Being right doesn't always mean something is interesting”

achieves what she set out to do. "I always ask myself questions: 'Is this reading how I intended?'; 'Is this mood working?'; 'Does this detail clutter my composition?'," she says.

"Sometimes you may need to sacrifice a detail like for the sake of the whole piece. Try not to be precious. I've erased solid hours of work to make an entire piece more successful."

She also runs through a number of technical checks. "I always flip the canvas horizontally, which, as a lot of artists know, can be a heart-wrenching process as you see that eye in the wrong position on the face. I check my values using grey tones, using a Hue/Saturation layer that I keep on the top of my file. I also zoom very far out or have the Navigator open as a guide. It's easy to lose sight of your piece when you're always zoomed into it at 300 per cent."

Lastly, getting a second opinion is always valuable. "We artists need to utilise our communities more effectively," says Lauren. "It can be scary to put your unfinished work up for critique, but it's always worth it."



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depth you can get with these questions and their answers, the better the design will become."

This principle is closely followed by 'The Rule of Cool'. "If there is no practical solution, make it cool," says Titus. He also notes that sometimes the rule of 'form follows function' has to take a back seat if its results are not exciting enough. "Being right doesn't always mean that something is interesting. Should all your hard work only lead to a functional design that's in no way cool, change it."

CREATING WITHIN LIMITS



Kiana Hamm is a senior concept artist currently working on New World at Amazon Game Studios. She finds that designing

"In the early stages of a design, I'll find 'motifs' that communicate the right theme and personality, and they guide the rest of the process," says Kiana.

within the constraints of a video game does wonders for developing creativity and problem solving skills, so imposing limitations upon yourself is a great exercise for pushing your abilities on further.

"Blue sky designing can be fun, but in a real video game industry setting there are a lot of thematic and technical limitations that you need to be aware of, not to mention the tight deadlines," she says.

"We have to account for things like animation and rigging restrictions, game design mechanics, narrative consistency, player perspective, and more. This often requires a lot of creative problem solving, which really pushes you as a designer and can sometimes be the most fun part of creating concept art.



A day in the life of... Josh Herman

Ready to roll Join the D&D studio art director and former Marvel Studios artist for a non-stop day

“I wake up at 7am, make my son breakfast, and get us both ready for the day. I drive him to daycare and then get to the office around 9am after picking up a green tea or protein shake on the way.

I catch up with my team and jump into emails for an hour. Most of my meetings are from 10am-4pm. Every day is different depending on the priorities and projects. Today, before

taking lunch at noon, I met a business lead to let them know how a project was going, had three one-on-ones with my team, and went to an art department pitch session where I gave direction on where we should be going. I checked more emails, headed to lunch for an hour, and then came back to do paintovers and gave some feedback on the team’s work for a couple of hours.

A character called The Caregiver that Josh created while he served as chief creative officer at the Gnomon school.

After that we had a design leads meeting, followed by a meeting with production about long-term planning, and then our weekly stand-up on the upcoming project to remove any blockers teams are having. I checked in with my department manager and then headed home around 4:30pm.

DIY DUTIES

I come home around 5pm and hang out with my family. My wife normally cooks dinner and I’ll make a side or help, or we all go to a restaurant. Then we’ll start the bedtime routine and have my son down around 8pm.

I’m pretty much on Teams or emails 24/7, and two or three nights a week, my wife and I will go back to work till around 10pm, when I’ll do more art creation and paintovers. We do a lot of DIY projects, so on nights we’re not working, we’re usually ‘working’. Then we unwind by watching a show or playing a game and go to bed.

Watching movies and shows is one of the main ways that I consume reference outside of travelling a lot, experiencing nature, and having authentic experiences.

When I look at art online, I find that it’s toxic to my creative instincts and



Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art. conceptartassociation.com.

“We do a lot of DIY projects, so nights we’re not working, we’re usually ‘working’”

© Marvel Studios



A model of the Star-Lord helmet designed by Josh, before being painted over by Charlie Wen.

© Marvel Studios



© Marvel Studios

During his time at Marvel Studios, Josh was involved in work on Tony Stark's suit for Iron Man 3.



Josh's fan art tribute to the Silver Surfer.

draws me towards what has already been done, and I don't like seeing that reflected in my visuals.

The main advice I have, other than trying to find inspiration outside of the internet, is to work hard - there aren't a lot of shortcuts. And, most importantly, be kind."



Josh is an artist living in Seattle. He has worked on projects like Iron Man 3, Guardians of the Galaxy, and

all of The Avengers movies. See more of Josh's art at <http://droidsforsale.com>.

Early concept art produced by Josh for Groot in Guardians of the Galaxy.





This is a page taken from one of my Chronicles of HATE comic stories.



Adrian Smith

Mind the Goblin Head up top for an attic studio tour, but watch out for the chihuahua on guard



Welcome to my studio; this is the attic room where I spend most of my waking life. It's the room I can

sit down and feel safe from that scary thing people call real life.

Yes, it gets cold in winter and too hot in summer up here, but when I'm engrossed in a project, I don't tend to notice. Music is usually playing, or maybe an audio book, and sometimes I might play a movie on the laptop.

I know that sounds strange and you may wonder how I can look at what I'm working on while watching a movie, but it's usually just a bit of company in the early hours. I'm usually working until at least three in the ➔

My iMac. I still don't fully know how to use the infernal machine. I'm from a different era and my brain is just not made to deal with the language necessary to use these things, but I realise they are useful.

I'd be lost without my scanner. It means I can go totally traditional and still get the image quickly and easily via email.





I've had a lot of drawing boards in my life. This one I made myself from spare parts.

Brushes! I never seem to have enough and yet I rarely use more than two or three different sizes. I just can't resist them.

As most artists will attest, bad back can become a problem sometimes. So I invested in an expensive, fully adjustable chair.

The queen's throne. Goblin basically runs my life. Enough said.

Yes, I should look into a way of storing my finished art in a better fashion. But it's always good to finish something and put it away, because that means I can get on to something new!

ImagineNation *Artist in Residence*

My new studio! Pretty much ready to move in my home studio and merge it with the film studio. This is where friends, crew and I will work in the evening. We're working on a film adaptation of my first two *Chronicles of HATE* graphic novels.



“I’m usually working until at least three in the morning, nice and quiet, the world around me sleeping. Bliss”





A couple of the hundreds of sculptures and miniatures created using work and concepts of mine. I never get tired of seeing the end result, especially when working with some of the best sculptors around.

➔ morning, nice and quiet, the world around me sleeping. Bliss.

I assure you it's not usually as tidy as you see here, but the older I get the more careful I am to not leave rubbish lying around. Over 20 years of my wife telling me to tidy up is finally working.

My best mate, Goblin the chihuahua, is not always present. In the early days she'd sleep at my feet or chew stuff in a corner and be around most of the

time. Now that she's older, she only hangs around if I'm eating, if she misses me, or because I'm playing music she actually likes. She's one of my main muses.

SEPARATE WORKSPACES

In my studio, I've learned to keep the digital work area separate from my traditional working area. My most useful bit of tech is my A3 scanner.

“To avoid daydreaming any more than I already do, I sit away from the window”

This has helped me combine the traditional way of working with digital.

With this, I can start an image traditionally, drawing and painting. Then I can scan and finish the image in Photoshop and email the file off easily. The scanner also means I can do the image 100 per cent traditionally, then scan and email, rather than rely on postal services.

To avoid daydreaming any more than I already do, I sit away from the window. The view is very nice, and very distracting.

Adrian is an experienced freelance artist. He first entered the world of art at around age 19 with the then fledgling Games Workshop. Since then, he has worked for a number of big companies and many smaller ones. His main work now is with miniature and board game company CMON.

One of the many villains in my graphic novels. This one is the Tyrant from my Chronicles of HATE comic stories, and this particular image was used for the miniatures game HATE by publishers CMON.

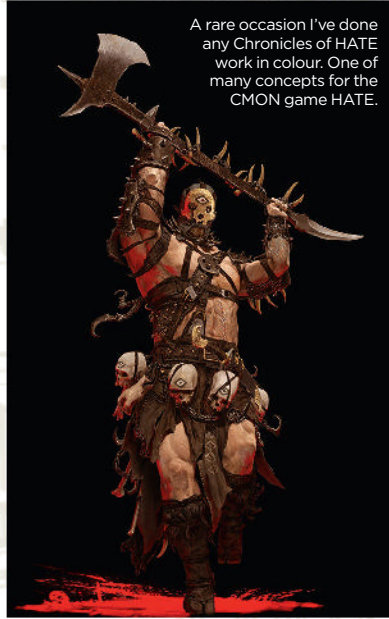


Artist news, software & events

The right-hand side of my painting table. It's not always as tidy as this, I must admit.



A rare occasion I've done any Chronicles of HATE work in colour. One of many concepts for the CMON game HATE.



My comfort zone. The place to hide. The place to forget that I'm supposed to be an adult. The good place.



The cupboard, where art materials are stored and usually forgotten. It's always a treat starting a new project and looking here to see what I'll work with.



Scanner corner. I love my scanner. I love my axe too. When they inevitably arrive, no zombie will be safe.



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Artists' studios

Hi ImagineFX team. I'm writing to thank you for all of the studio tours that you do. This is always so inspirational to me, but also scratches that 'Through the Keyhole' itch.

It's fascinating to see what these big names surround themselves with, or whether they are tidy and clean, or messy and chaotic like me. Keep them coming, please!

Jared, via email

Rob replies Hi Jared, thanks for writing in, and so glad you like the Artist in Residence section. I'm a big fan of that too and totally agree, it's a fantastic insight into the working lives and styles of different artists. Check out this month's feature where Adrian Smith shows us around his studio.

Sketchbook spectacular

Wow! I just picked up the latest issue and it's one of my favourites yet. The idea of a sketchbook special is so good. I love that section of the regular mag, so seeing such a huge array of awesome sketchbooks in one place was great.

The Artist in Residence section gives great behind-the-scenes insights into an artist's life.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 223 at ifxm.ag/single-ixf.



Our last issue was a Sketchbook Special, which has proved hugely popular. There's still time to get yours!

Please do more specials like that and keep up with the monthly sketchbooks. All the best.

Jenny, via email

Rob replies Hi Jenny. Thanks for the kind words! We're big fans of the Sketchbook section too and it felt like just the right time to do a special. I'm glad you liked it. Not to worry, we have plenty more coming, including this issue, where we focus on the stunning art of Thomas Elliott and Iain Thody.

With regards to other specials, are there topics you'd like to see? We're always looking for ways to give you what you'd like to see, so write in with your suggestions.

Stop the AI

Hello, I'm sure you are aware of the backlash against AI in the art community. I've noticed ImagineFX has given some coverage to AI art and all I can say is PLEASE STOP!

Thanks

Claire, via email

Rob replies Hi Claire, and thanks for writing in. We have definitely given some coverage to AI tools and how to integrate them into your work over recent months.

While I do see some positive opportunities, I completely agree that there are some big risks as well, and every artist should be both acknowledged and compensated when their work is used. On top of that, artists should always be asked for permission for their work to be used, in any way.

ImagineFX is on the side of the artist in this debate and in our next issue we'll be looking a bit more closely at this. For now, check out the campaign that's been pushed by our friends at Concept Art Association to find out more about this contentious topic.

There are definitely going to be ways that AI can benefit artists, but for now the industry and community needs to be listened to and artists' rights need to be recognised.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Joel Serrano
[@joelserranoart](https://instagram.com/joelserranoart)



Britt Berg
[@zpurplex](https://instagram.com/zpurplex)



Jason Rodriguez
[@jdr_pictures](https://instagram.com/jdr_pictures)

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, and use the hashtag #imaginefx

Interview

PICKUP

"An interplanetary hauler picks up goods by the sea. I enjoy designing vehicles with modular parts that govern some of their shapes. Pencil and pen sketch finished in Procreate on iPad."



THE ART OF COLIE WERTZ

Dominic Carter talks to the concept art veteran about his time on Star Wars, work on Dune and his recent contribution to Bullet Train





When you try to imagine what the future looks like, the chances are it's got Colie Wertz's fingerprints all over it. That's because for the last 20 years he's been shaping the look and feel of some of the biggest science fiction franchises around.

Outer space is a long way from his beginnings as an aspiring architect however, so we caught up with Colie to learn more about the path of his impressive career as an industry-leading concept artist and modeller.

Tell us about your background as an artist. How did you get started and what has your career been like so far?

I was educated as an architect in the Southeastern US. I loved doing the drawings and practical models in and out of school. I had an out-of-left-field opportunity to train on Photoshop for a project in LA early in my career, and that pulled me away from architecture.

[[John Knoll] asked me if I'd like to help him out at ILM on Star Wars. I said yes!]]

I got into modelling, painting, animation, and shaders while there.

I went to a lot of movies in Hollywood, and maybe the motion picture industry being there fostered my interest in the underlying process and art form of building a film. Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) VFX supervisor John Knoll noticed my work, as we were using similar software in the late 90s. He asked me if I'd like to help him out at ILM on Star Wars. I said yes! That led to a nearly 20-year VFX run in the San Francisco Bay Area.

I moved into more up-front concept work through my modelling and >>



➔ sketching skills on 2021's *Dune*, alongside George Hull and production designer Patrice Vermette.

What originally attracted you to becoming a concept artist?

I've always drawn. It relaxes me. My goal as an employee at ILM was to get to a point where I was generating sketches that I could hand off to a production modeller and they could more or less build it off my sketches.

Artist PROFILE

Colie Wertz



LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Joe Johnston, Ron Cobb, Syd Mead

MEDIA: Maya, 3D Coat, After Effects, Mq1 3D, Blender, Unreal

Engine, Substance Painter, Photoshop

WEB: www.coliewertzdesign.com

Being a modeller helped, as I included clues in all my sketches that I'd need for myself to attack the design as a modeller. I used my job as a modeller at ILM to improve my sketching and vice versa. I let one inform the other.

How has your art developed over the years, and what has been behind those changes?

My art over the last five years has changed in a few ways. Primarily, those changes are rooted in 'what is the deliverable?' To explain, working for a big post-production house like ILM for so many years, I aimed for the perfectly constructed model. Those traits, while useful in post, aren't necessarily your friend in pre-production. Good to know you have them if the situation calls, but you have to remind yourself those are post-production deliverable checkboxes, part of a different budget.

LANDING PAD

"Working at ILM for many years as a modeller and texture painter filled my head with a simple-yet-complex shape language to pull from. Made using Procreate on iPad."

Today, what I'm being asked to do, on a per-show basis, is understand what will help the production designer best communicate an idea to whoever they're communicating with. Getting on the same page, and getting a feel for who they're presenting to and when, is paramount to executing the task at hand for me, and determines the deliverable form of my 'art'.

Star Wars has been a huge chapter in your career. How did you come to be involved with it, and what did you make for those films?

I hit the ground running with *Star Wars* in 1998. John Knoll needed a

■ I included clues in all my sketches that I'd need for myself to attack the design ■



FILL 'ER UP

"My father was a fuel depot engineer for military helicopters. I never thought that gig was as 'cool' as flying jet fighters, but over time I saw the beauty that infrastructure brings to stories."



generalist who was working in the same software he was at the time. A small group of us were assembled at ILM outside the traditional pipeline, called the 'Rebel Mac Unit'. We were using off-the-shelf software on Macs at ILM, which was totally off-centre there, where a heavily modded version of SoftImage ran on Unix on SGIs.

I was one of the modelling pivots in the little studio within ILM, so I got to touch a lot of the hard-surface stuff for the Star Wars prequels, like the Naboo starfighter, a bunch of pod racers, and the Sith Infiltrator to name a few. As the films rolled out, the little Mac boutique fell victim to industrial practices and got rolled into the main pipeline at ILM. RIP.

I learned Alias modelling and Maya, as well as all the other ILM specific stuff from some really slick users. I borrowed their eyes and minds, ➡

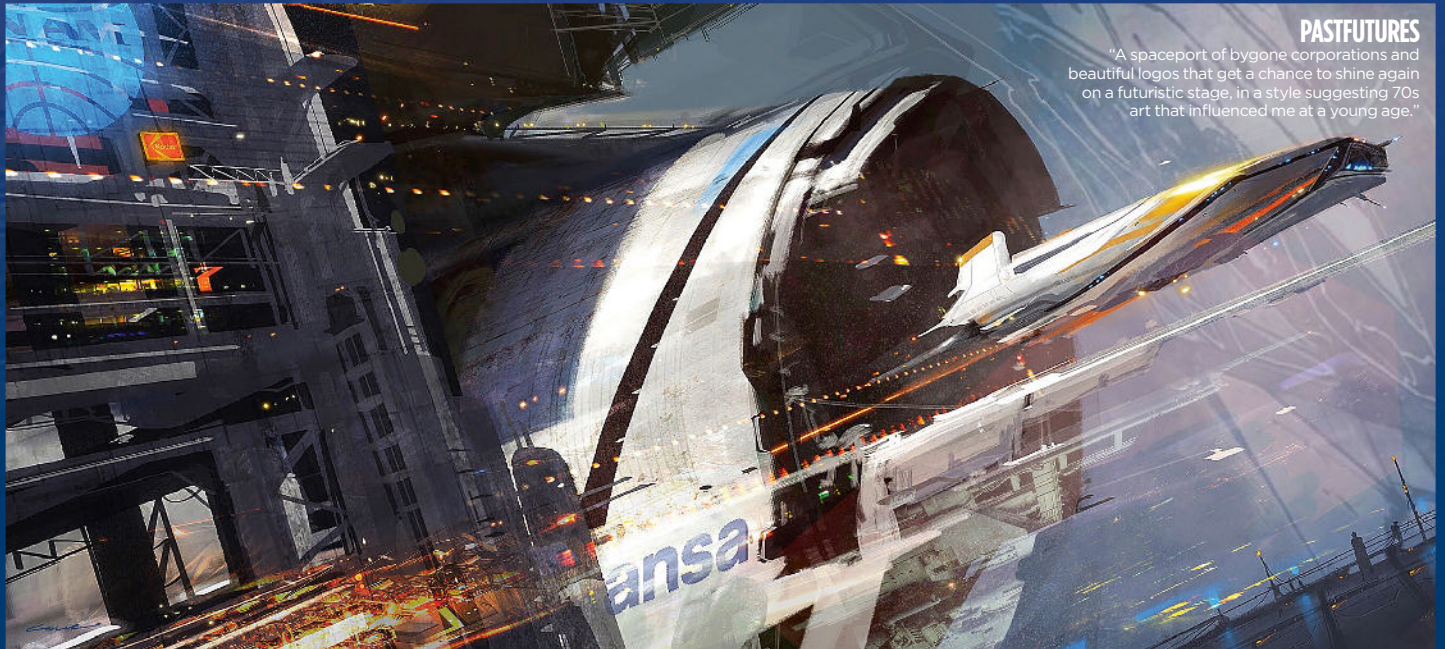


BIVOUAC

"A short-range vehicle used to hop between spacestations. Two of these back-to-back create a tent structure serving as a rest area on long trips. Modelled and textured in Maya, rendered in Octane."

IN THE CLEARING

"A ship in a clearing, inspired by my father's time in the military supplying fuel to helicopters. A simple exercise in composition and lighting."



PASTFUTURES

"A spaceport of bygone corporations and beautiful logos that get a chance to shine again on a futuristic stage, in a style suggesting 70s art that influenced me at a young age."

➔ and learned what essentially remains my skillset today.

The demise of the Mac Unit was a blessing in disguise. I've built and contributed to so many models in the Star Wars universe over 20 years. The U-wing fighter, Shield Gate, and the Death Star in *Rogue One*, paintjobs on others, and I helped out on the *Razor Crest*. All fun.

The biggest thing to take away from this is that I was never alone in any of it. Someone else before me touched these things, and someone after me took it further. It ends up on screen, and I get to see the evolutions. I learn from the before, the during, and the after. That's my big takeaway from Star Wars: passionate artists really advanced, appropriately, a look that had been established decades before, or took suggestions to adjust them in different directions as needed.

■ The biggest thing to take away from this is that I was never alone in any of it ■

Of all the work you've created so far, what are you most proud of and why?

Dune, by a long shot. I worked with my mentor and friend George Hull on the Ornithopters that he'd penned. I brought what I was good at to the table: modelling and engineering development of pieces and parts and their relationships to the whole.

The production designer (PD), Patrice Vermette, introduced me to London fabricators BGI, as they were manufacturing the Ornithopters. The relationship helped get that vehicle on-screen. I saw this thing happen!

I was actually on the front-end of a show. My models were going to both

set builders and VFX. I saw, for the first time in my career, where I fit in. At least on that show. And that's the beauty of it, every show is different, and how I'm able to mesh is fun to determine and develop per show!

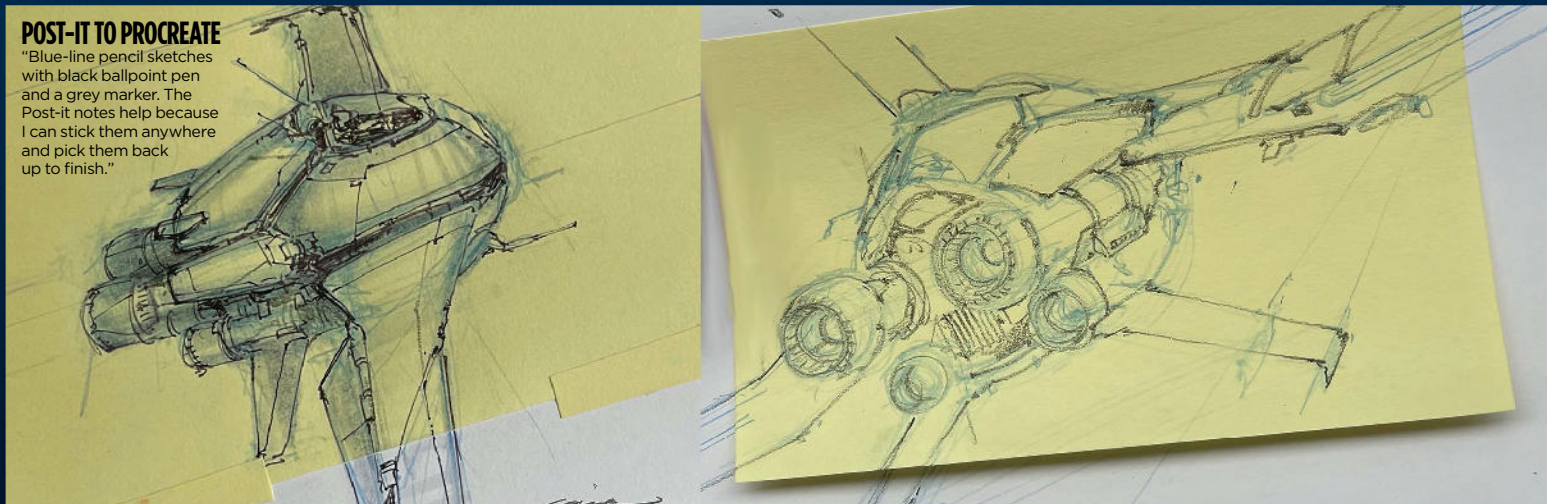
You recently worked on *Bullet Train*. Can you tell us about what you created for the film and what that experience was like?

I worked with production designer David Scheunemann and other artists to develop the look and feel of the train, some of its passenger car interiors, and a few of the train stations. For me, this project started in the midst of COVID, and it was interesting to hear how the show was planning on pushing a production forward in the midst of a pandemic.

'Volume shoots' were coming into their own at the time, with The

POST-IT TO PROCREATE

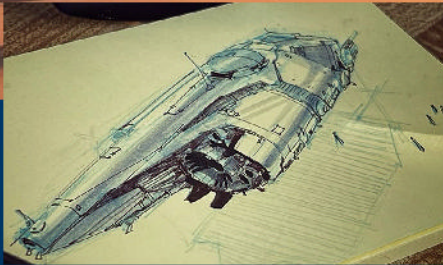
"Blue-line pencil sketches with black ballpoint pen and a grey marker. The Post-it notes help because I can stick them anywhere and pick them back up to finish."





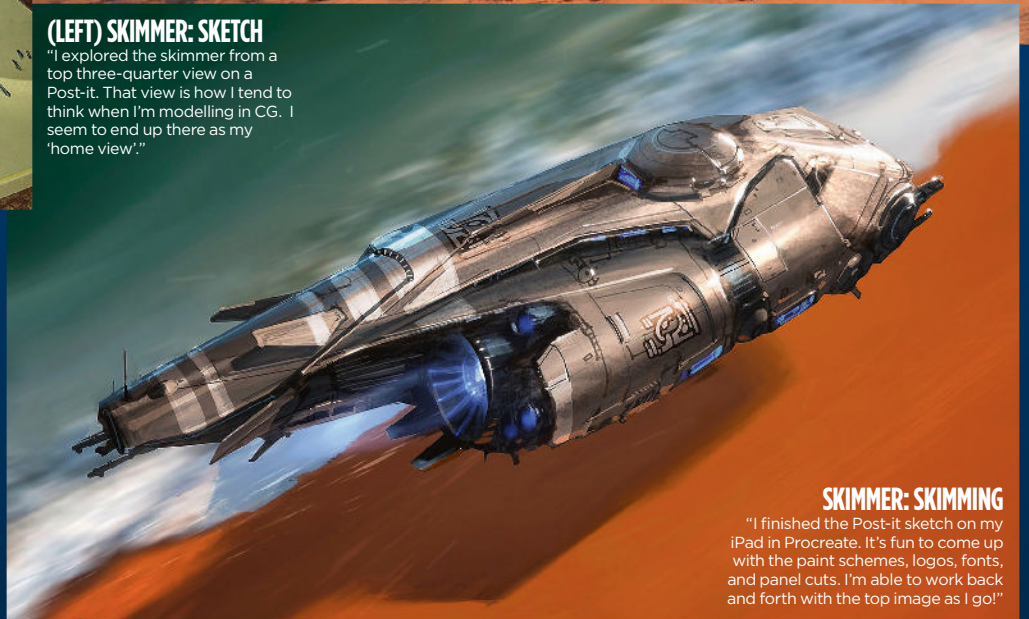
SKIMMER: LANDED

"A crew arrive back at their ship as the squadron takes off. Developed from exploration of the images below."



(LEFT) SKIMMER: SKETCH

"I explored the skimmer from a top three-quarter view on a Post-it. That view is how I tend to think when I'm modelling in CG. I seem to end up there as my 'home view.'"



SKIMMER: SKIMMING

"I finished the Post-it sketch on my iPad in Procreate. It's fun to come up with the paint schemes, logos, fonts, and panel cuts. I'm able to work back and forth with the top image as I go!"

Mandalorian having proved their value, especially with strict logistics presented inside the pandemic. The designs and planning reflected that learned knowledge.

Design-wise, David wanted the train to be contemporary, with some modifications more conducive to soundstage sizes. We were biased towards a new-generation Shinkansen train with its long nose. I did a good bit of research on the functionality of that nose, and modified it in a ➡



LADYBUG QUEEN

"Proof that you don't need an entire studio setup, or even a laptop, to play and practise your artistic craft."

MAKING A MECH

Colie reveals how he whipped up this Ladybug Queen robot on his phone

I started this sketch on my phone as pure folly in Procreate Pocket. I do this organic sketching a lot for no reason. As it's on my phone, it's not precious. To start with, I threw down a cool grey background, then a big, circular, shadow-value blob. Procreate Pocket is great for this kind of pulled-back massing of shapes. I sampled a few values that came from the mix, then added highlights and shadows in the simple hue range to start composing the form of the mech. I'm thinking about where light is coming from out of the gate, which allows me to craft an environment in reverse. I do this to force myself to commit to shapes and stay loose moving forward.

I'm in a juggling phase at this point. I thought, 'Cool, a mech. Maybe it's got a master and they are having a dialogue'. I now have a challenge to keep myself to that story. The next steps are me refining that thought. I put on some good tunes, and push the mech, then push the surrounds, developing scale but staying true to the original colours. Then I'll put it away and return later in the day when I get a second.

Without fail, I see something differently when I revisit it. I love that. I opened it and saw the mech as a ladybug. And maybe who it's talking to is its queen! I determine a good time to send it to Procreate on my iPad to get more details piled on, and do that over dinner. It's very relaxing, and I can call it done whenever I like.

CATTLE DRIVE

"In architecture school, I enjoyed making cultural statements. This group is heading off to work, again, on the bus, again. Made with Procreate on my iPad."



MIKOYAN X-PLANE

"An experimental Russian plane from the 80s that I made up. Surely it exists! Pencil sketch to Procreate on my iPad."

the next task. Forward momentum. Being a concept artist requires you to think up new ideas all the time.

What's one thing people should know about being a concept artist that isn't often talked about?

Communication is everything. Your job is to provide a deliverable that will stand on its own when you're not there to present it. So be humble and take criticism constructively. Getting on the same page as the people that you're communicating with, and on behalf of, is half the job.

What are you working on right now?

I'm finishing up on Marvel's film *The Marvels* with PD Cara Brower. A fantastic experience, and my first time working with Cara. Her design sensibilities are so sharp. How she navigated the demands of that show was such an inspiration.

Getting on the same page as the production designer. Period. It's the best

I've got a few industrial design projects I'm involved with. I love industrial design, as it's fractal. I usually learn something about manufacturing during the design processes that can spill over into my vehicle design contributions for shows.

What advice would you give to other artists hoping to become concept artists themselves?

Draw a lot, watch commentaries on movies, learn the industry lingo by getting near a production, study basic composition, study colour, learn a primary 3D package (Blender, it's free!), watch trends on social media. Be true to yourself there, don't get too bandwagon-esque.

Your opinion and perspective matters, embrace and foster relationships with similar artists with similar personalities to you in the field. Ask questions, be humble, be someone others want to work with.

Most importantly, don't let this be your life, pick up other hobbies to give your creative mind a break, you'll be surprised how those hobbies will feed your creativity. Be you. 🌟

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➡➡ believable way that didn't require it to be so long in the set build, since a lot of the shots were going to be on an LED volume soundstage.

The train station platforms were a lot of fun to research and develop, too. Each had its own particular vibe and aesthetic that was required to be recognisably different per stop. David's art directors and set designers did a fantastic job of executing the designs! Once again, it was a lot of fun to research and develop.

What are the best parts about being a concept artist?

Getting on the same page as the production designer. Period. It's the

HARKONNENS

"Long before I was asked to be a part of *Dune*, I sketched this on my iPhone, based on the Harkonnen ships from the 80s version of the film, then layered with my tech."

best. Every PD is different, comes from a different background, has a take on the show that they've hashed out with the director. Each also likes to communicate to the director or their art department differently.

They're juggling a ton of different tasks and have a much, much broader view of the show than I do, and they're hiring you to be a medium for them. They'll know your art, but how you integrate that into the vibe of how they're going to use it or present it is like a dance.

Submitting pieces and having the PD say, 'Yeah, they liked it... can you pack up the model and send it to so-and-so?' is great. A few words, on to

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Artist **PROFILE**

Thomas Elliott

LOCATION: England



Thomas is a professional illustrator who is currently working in-house at Games Workshop. When not making epic battle scenes and book covers at work, he loves to create personal art, drawing inspiration from a range of subjects. Dark sci-fi, Wild West characters, giant robots, mutant tentacle monsters, fantasy characters, and everything in between rub shoulders in his sketchbooks. Thomas has a background in classical oil painting and likes to make use of traditional and digital mediums in his work. www.artstation.com/thomaselliott

Thomas Elliott

Fascinating creature concoctions mix flesh and steel as the illustrator gives a unique spin to his sketchbook creations

INK STUDY FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE

"This ink painting is of Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson in Robert Eggers' *The Lighthouse*. The film is black and white and has beautifully composed shots, so it was the ideal movie to do studies from. In this painting, I was focusing on trying to get depth and subtlety into the darks of the picture."

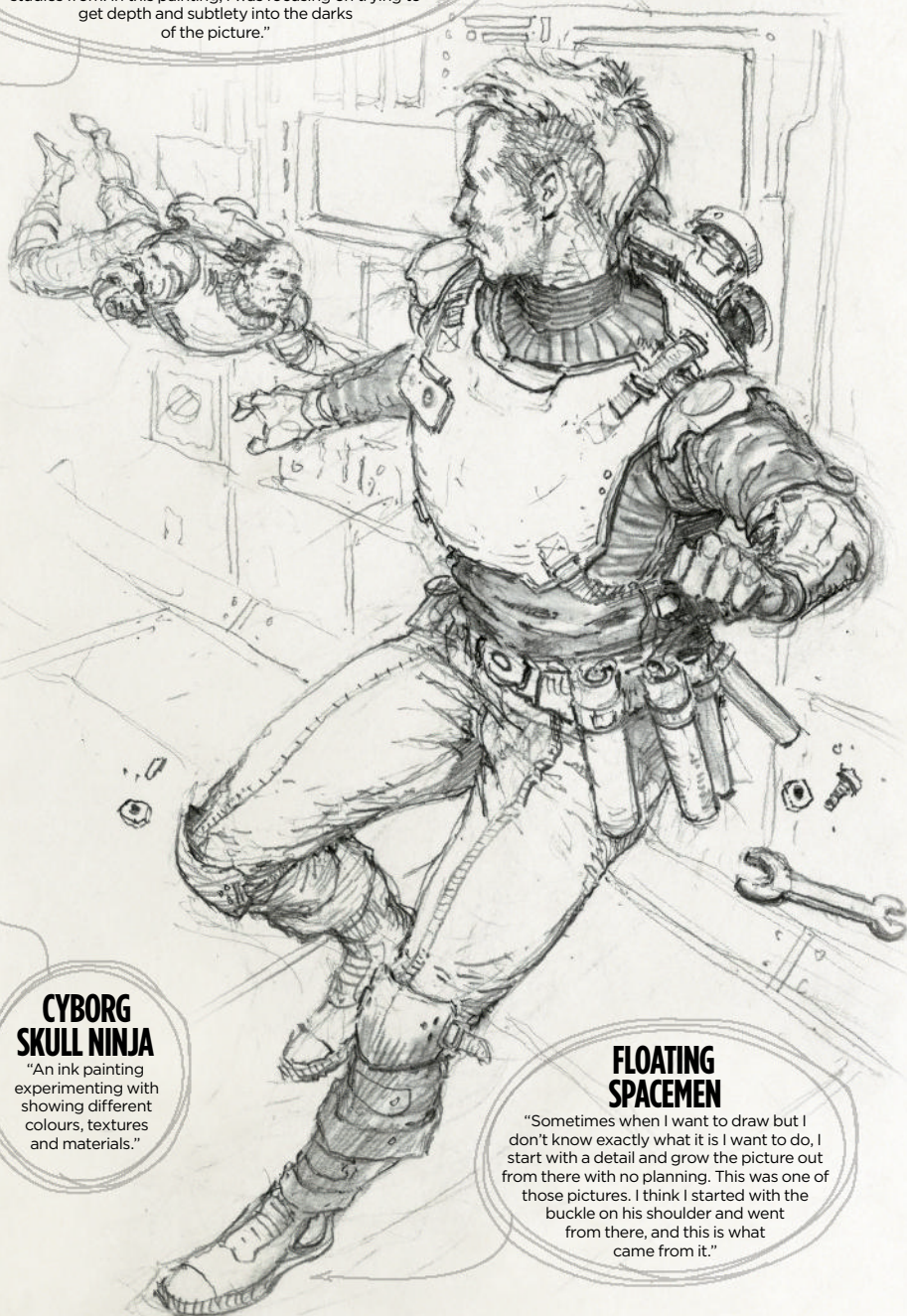


CYBORG SKULL NINJA

"An ink painting experimenting with showing different colours, textures and materials."

FLOATING SPACEMEN

"Sometimes when I want to draw but I don't know exactly what it is I want to do, I start with a detail and grow the picture out from there with no planning. This was one of those pictures. I think I started with the buckle on his shoulder and went from there, and this is what came from it."





**CENTIPEDE
CYBORG**

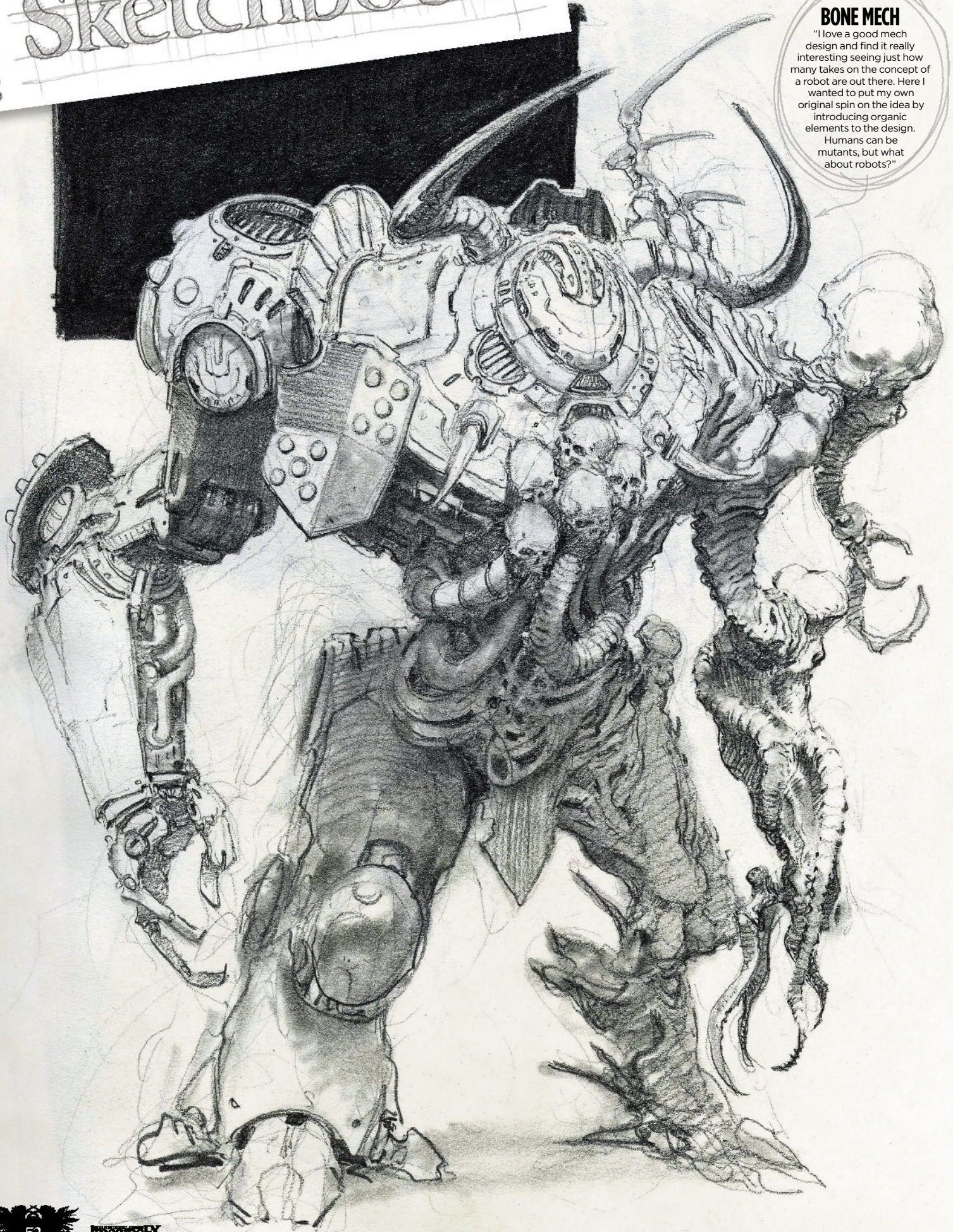
"I don't think this guy wanted to be a cyborg. I kept adding pipes, limbs and details until it seemed done, much like what his creators did to him, I guess."

“ Sometimes I start with a detail and grow the picture out from there with no planning ”

Sketchbook

BONE MECH

"I love a good mech design and find it really interesting seeing just how many takes on the concept of a robot are out there. Here I wanted to put my own original spin on the idea by introducing organic elements to the design. Humans can be mutants, but what about robots?"



“ Small details can add interesting angles to pictures with narrative ”



ALTERNATIVE MERMAID

“Mermaids always seem incredibly idealised, but if they were real they would be very far from our concept of beauty. Here, I put my own take on the idea by introducing crustacean elements to her.”



WILLEM DAFOE, AGAIN

“Who doesn't love an expressive lined face? This is another study created from The Lighthouse.”



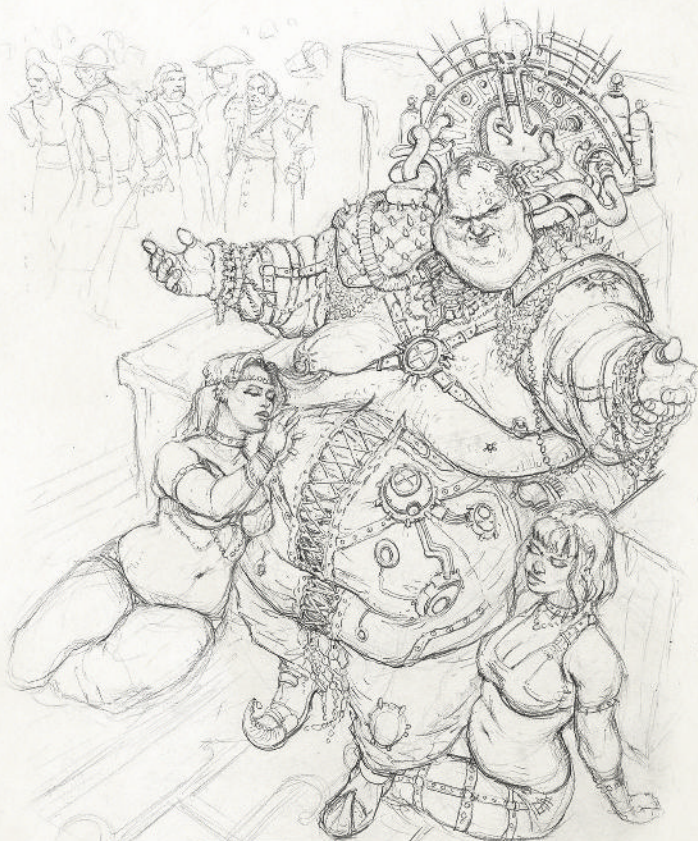
WILD WEST

“Small details can add interesting angles to pictures with narrative. In this drawing, our hero stands proud and triumphant over the would-be bandits. He reloads his revolver with an unhurried air, but something has caught his eye. What might happen next?”

Sketchbook

DOOM GOUACHE PAINTING

"I'm a huge fan of Doom, so when I got a set of gouache paints to play around with, there was no doubt about what I would be painting first. In this picture, I really wanted to give a hard, metallic feel to the armour."



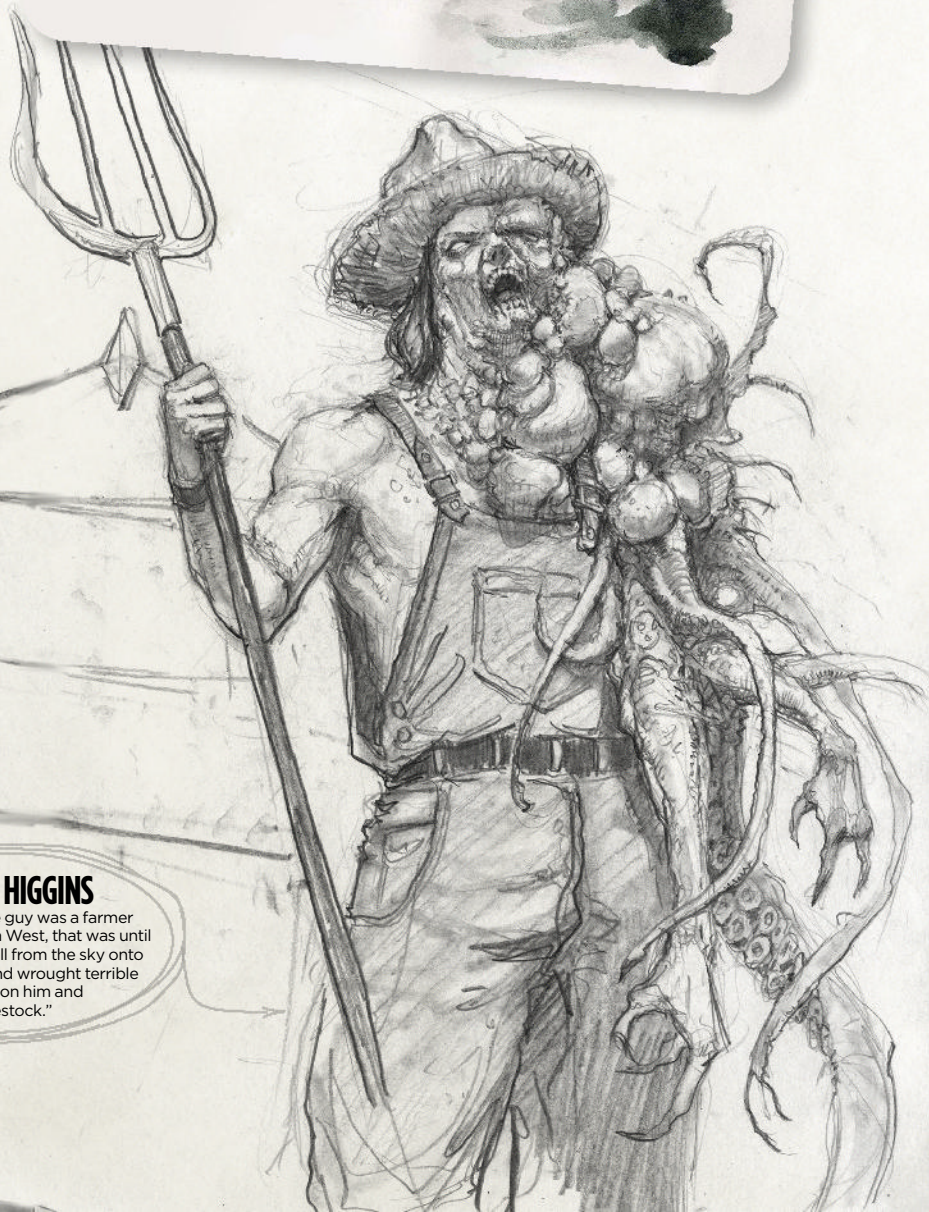
BARON HARKONNEN

"Dune has been depicted by generations of artists, each putting their own interpretation on how it would look. This is how I've always pictured Baron Harkonnen: arrogant, gross, and studded with jewellery and other augmentations."

“When I got a set of gouache paints there was no doubt about what I would be painting first”

FARMER HIGGINS

"This unfortunate guy was a farmer in the Old American West, that was until a strange object fell from the sky onto one of his fields and wrought terrible mutations on him and his livestock."



ALABAMA METAL MAN

"I find cryptids and real-life unsolved mysteries fascinating. This picture was inspired by the story of a cop in the 1970s encountering a strange being in a field when investigating UFO sightings in the area. The cryptid became known as the Alabama Metal Man, and he has yet to be spotted since."



Iain Thody

The concept artist's passion for sci-fi and comics shines through in the mechs, tech and more found throughout his sketches

Artist **PROFILE**

Iain Thody

LOCATION: England



Iain is a senior concept artist working in the video games industry. He first studied graphic design at Norwich University of the Arts and after graduating, a brief stint in exhibition design moved him towards illustration. He then started a career in game development where he has combined both illustration and graphic skills into concept ideas. Iain loves all things comics, games, movies and sci-fi fantasy.

www.artstation.com/iain

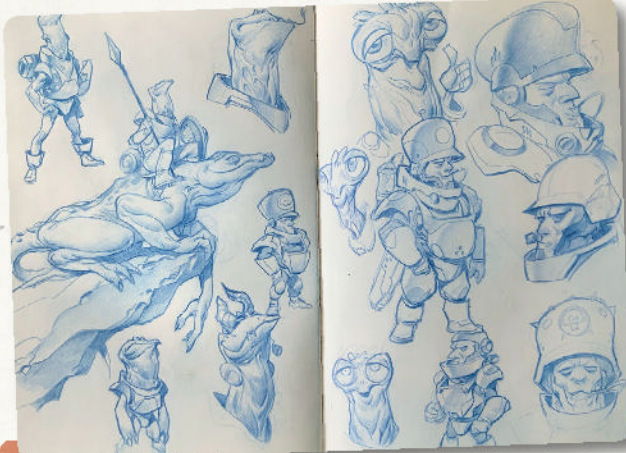
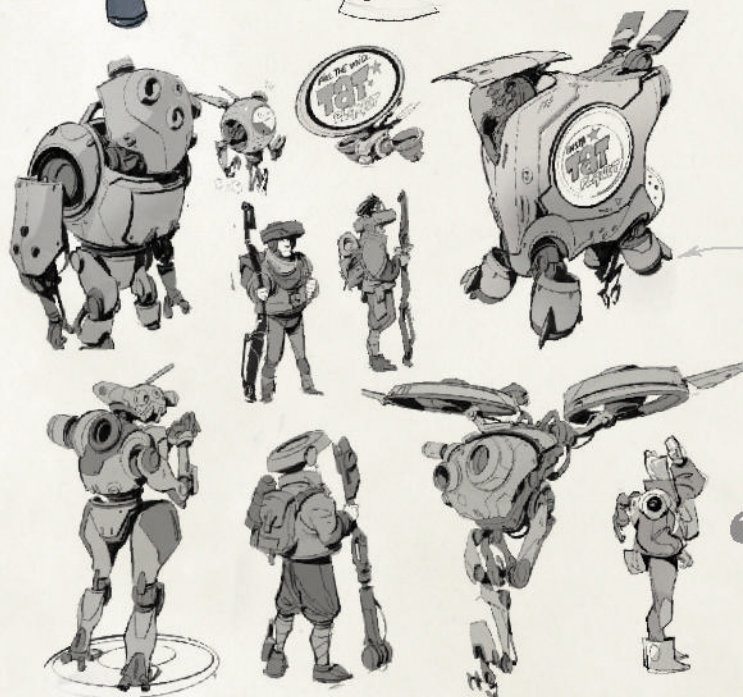
FEMALE CHARACTER IN BLUE SUIT

"One of many characters tooled up in some space tech suit. This one was female figure practice. A badass action woman ready to leap off a drop ship."



CHARACTERS AND ALIENS

"These doodles are a familiar go-to theme of mine; sci-fi and creatures, ideas for video games I fancy playing, and goofy aliens and chunky soldier characters."



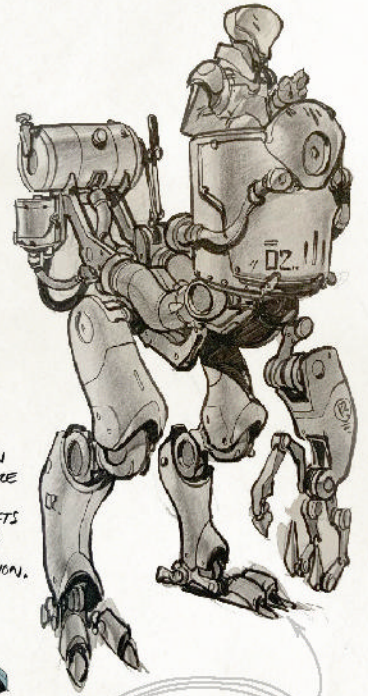
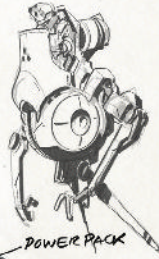
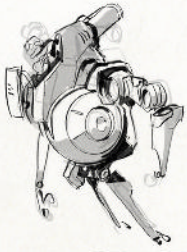
DIGITAL SKETCHES

"Warm-ups and whimsical ideas; cyberpunk stuff and dieselpunk. A large, clunky-looking sidekick robot is featured, plus flying future tech and a hero traveller."

PROCREATE BRUSH PRACTICE

"A Chris Foss-inspired sci-fi scene. A flying salvage craft in a post-apocalyptic setting."

“ Here we have some hero escaping undead creatures and a Mexican wrestler fighting bugs ”



TECH MECH STUFF

"A return to an ongoing game idea of fun worldbuilding and anything-goes combat tech. Flying military machines in a goofy world of conflict."

POWER PACK

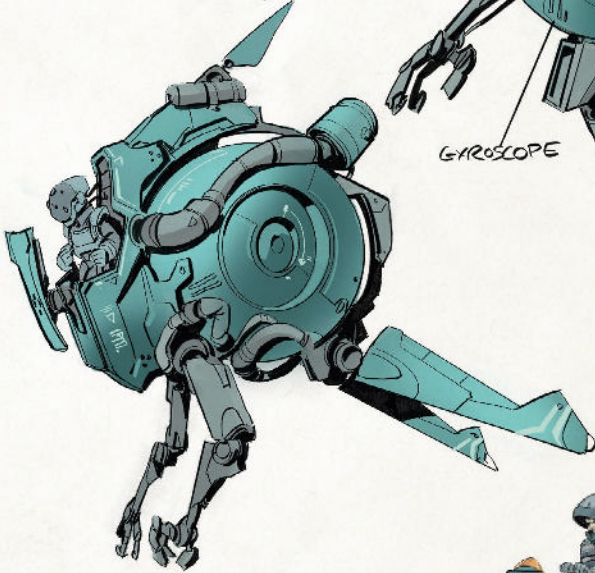
HI! I'M THE PILOT OF THIS GYROMECH. THE MAIN FEATURE BEING THE SPHERE OR THE GYROSCOPE. IT'S A CLEVER DEVICE THAT LETS OBJECTS INTO THE AIR. OTHER MAGNETS CAN INFLUENCE THE DIRECTION.

GYROSCOPE

STABILIZER LINED WITH MAGNETS.

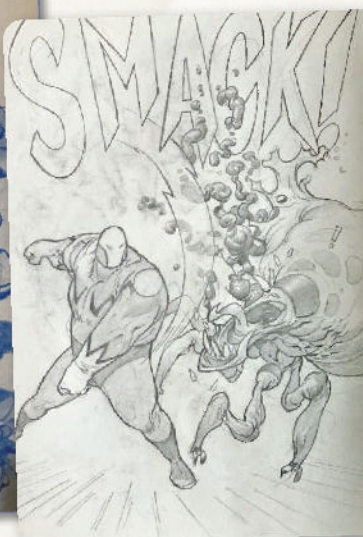
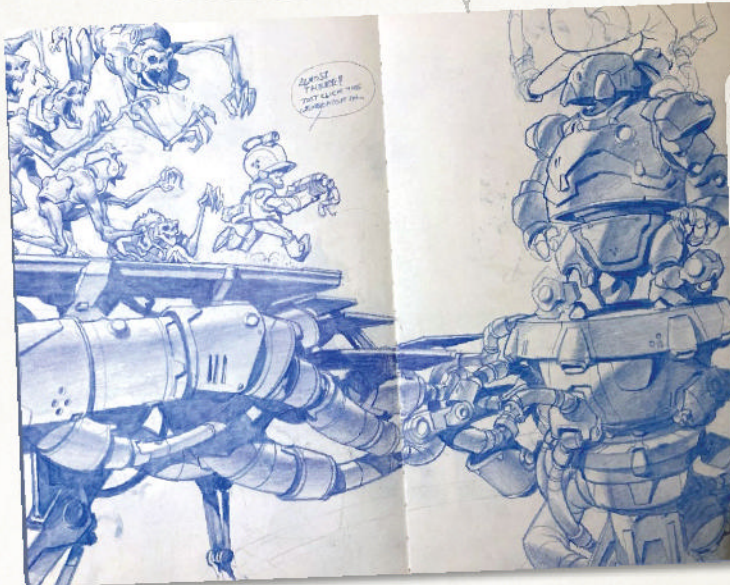
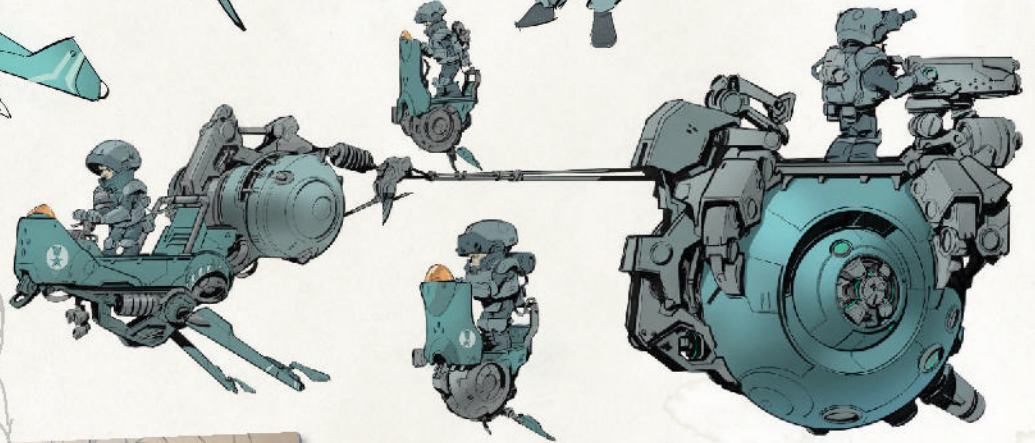
PENCIL SKETCH OF MECH

"Early pencil and pen design from my sketchbook. Part of my escapism into worldbuilding. A scavenger mech that wanders the desert wastelands."



GOOD OLD SKETCHBOOK AND PENCIL

"Game ideas and characters. Being a fan of comics, my work has a bias to comic style. Here we have some hero escaping undead creatures and a Mexican wrestler fighting bugs."



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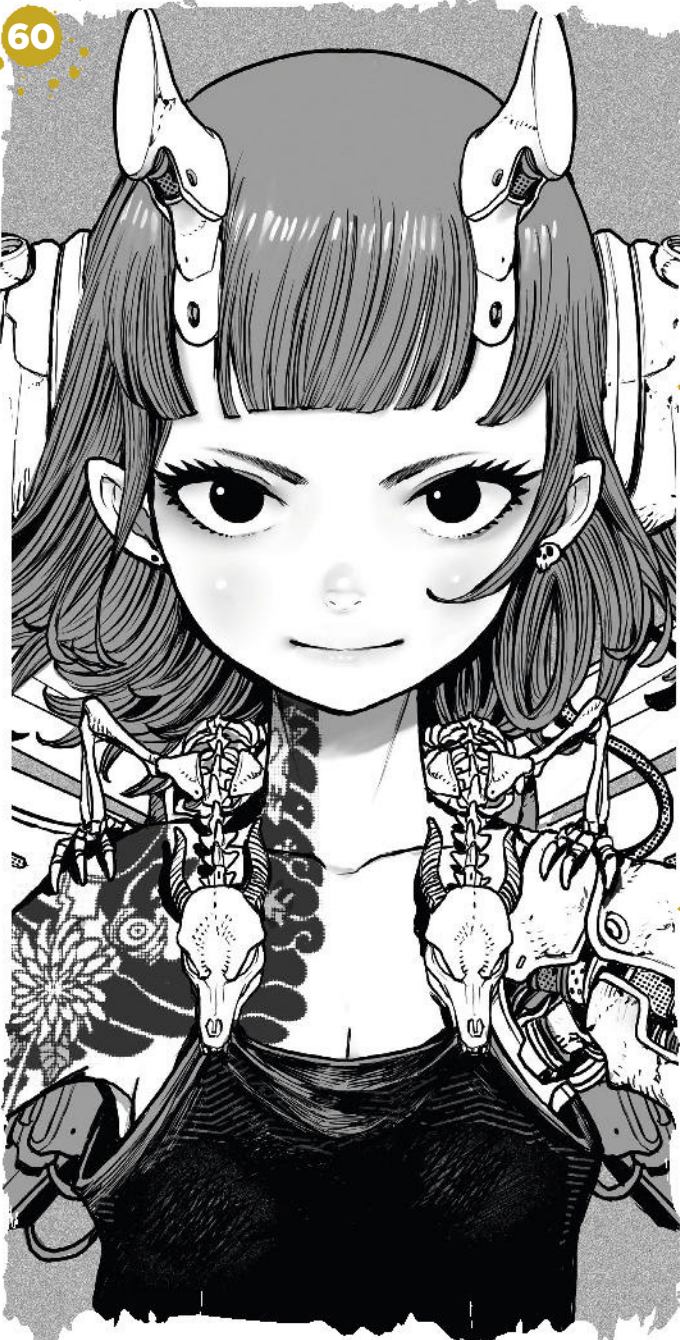
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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

- 60 Secrets of black and white art**
Expert insight from Acky Bright on his distinctive artistic style.
- 64 Simplicity in your shapes**
The building blocks that support Richard Anderson's artwork.
- 66 Sharpen your life drawing skills with VR**
Gesture VR creator Nick Ladd introduces us to his art app.
- 72 Add impact to your fan art**
Evan Liu gives dynamism to his God of War Ragnarök homage.
- 74 17 tips to develop new characters**
Writer Isabel Armitage on how she devises coherent backstories.
- 80 Embrace your inspirations**
Learn how to expand on your references with Adrien Cantone.

Procreate

SECRETS OF BLACK AND WHITE ART

Go in depth with **Acky Bright** as he explains the approach behind his synonymous style



ACKY HITS THE STORES

Brighten up your collection with Acky's artbook debut, available at pie.co.jp

Artist PROFILE

Acky Bright
LOCATION: Japan

Acky has created artwork for DC Comics and Hasbro, as well as vehicle manufacturer BMW, among others. acky-bright.com



The major theme of this artwork was to paint using nothing more than black and white. This time I used

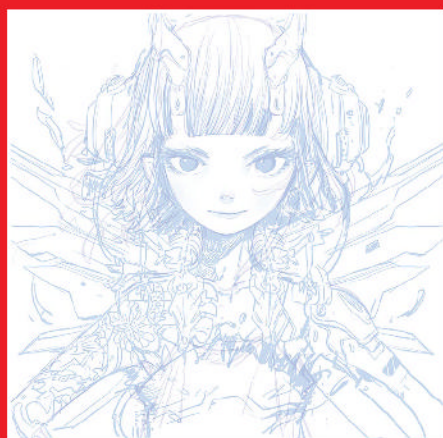
Procreate, for which I have provided official tutorial art in the past.

I set out to use only one default brush and a single colour, black, to create cover art that is stronger and richer than a full-colour illustration. The character I've painted retains a

sense of innocence, but she is also sure of herself, and looks to the future with a feeling of hope. In particular, her deep, black eyes emphasise that confidence.

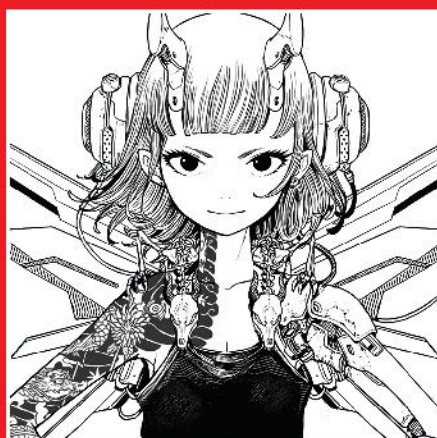
Check out the details, bold brushstrokes, and technique that I've used. Through these tools, you get more of a feel for her personality, while you can also imagine the world that she resides in from just this single, monochrome picture.

Top tips for... BUILDING YOUR IMAGE



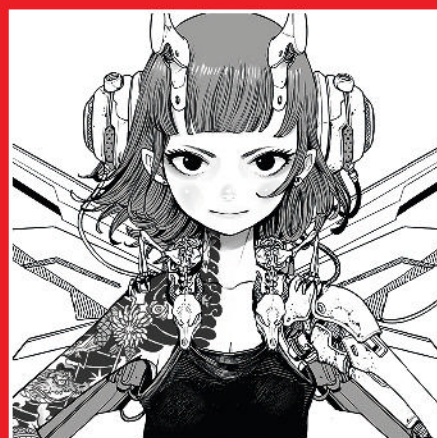
1 Sketch

First, I sketch a rough shape in blue. I use blue because I used to sketch analogue drawings in blue pencil, though sometimes I'll use black when I'm in the mood. Since this is a piece of cover art, I wanted to draw a fearless character, which is expressed by her looking straight ahead.



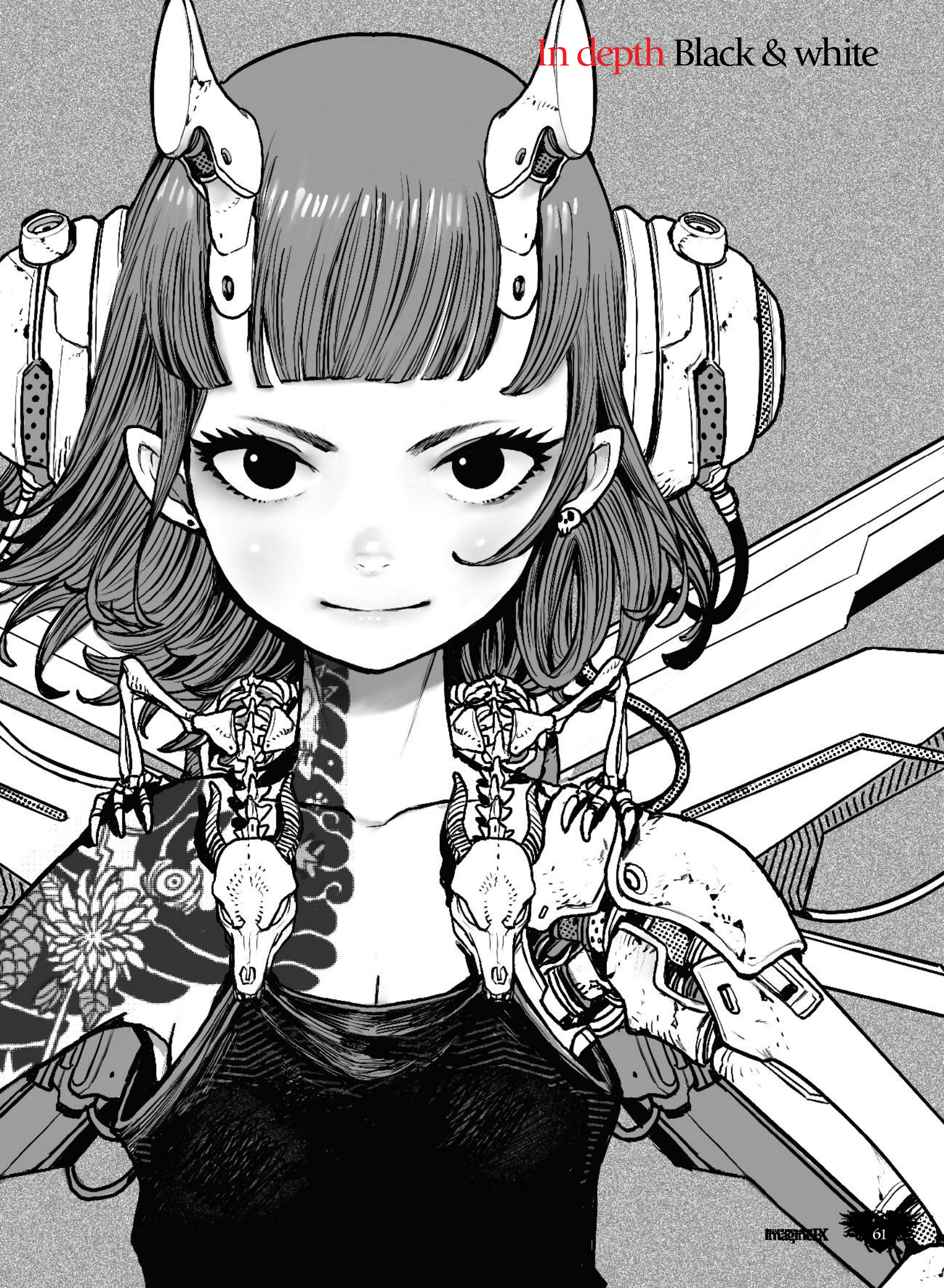
2 Line work

The outer lines should be thicker and the inner lines thinner, so I draw with that in mind while remaining aware of the pressure used. The important thing here is to draw the lines with confidence. If there are too many stray lines, I sometimes delete and redraw all of them.

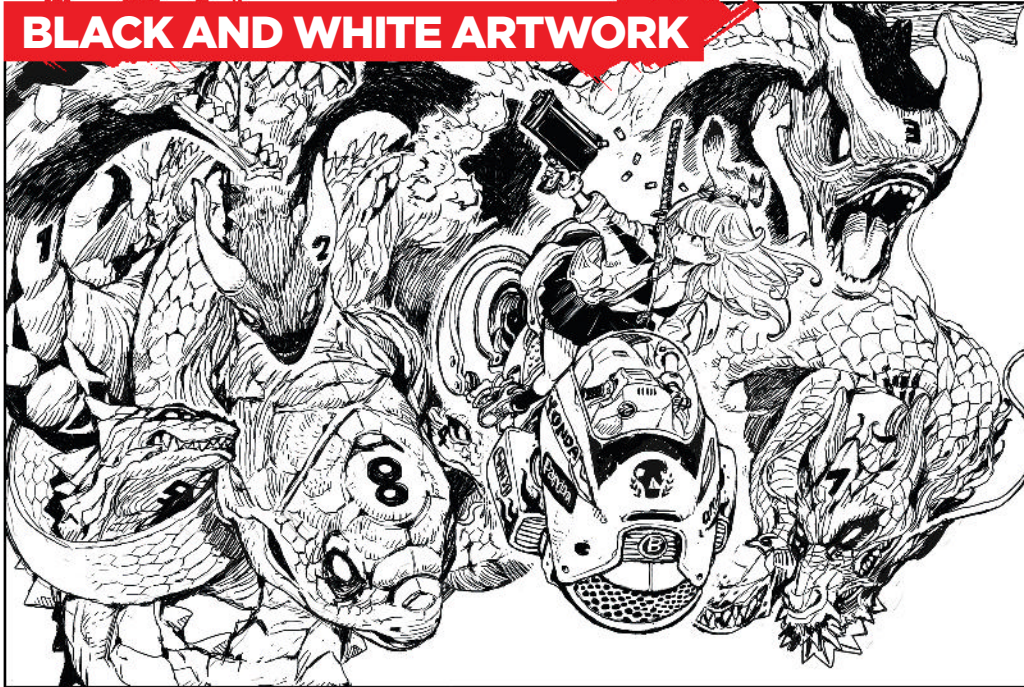


3 Grey tones

To further increase the three-dimensional effect, I pay attention to the light source and add shadows in grey. Shadows are sometimes created by hatching, but in this case, they are painted in grey as I wanted to emphasise the softness of the woman's skin.

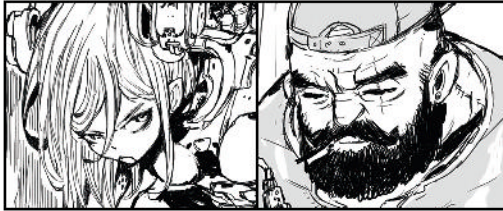


BLACK AND WHITE ARTWORK



Readability

This piece was created using only the binaries of black and white. The complexity and volume of its details are made easy to read with only precise usage of hatching and line intensity.



Storytelling

The story depicted in black and white artwork comes from scattering information in the characters' facial expressions, the situations they are in, and the background.



Contrast
This artwork uses a lot of black. You draw with the aim of carving out white areas from the silhouette. Done correctly, it looks sharp.

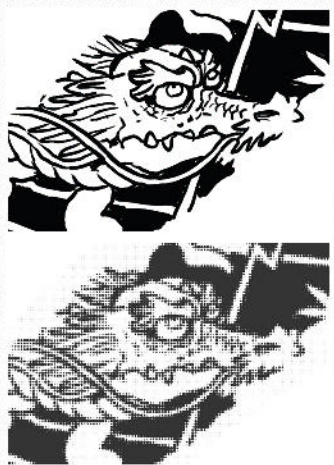
FINAL IMAGE

Background

By using a grey background, the main character can be highlighted and emphasised. Here, a Noise adjustment was applied to the grey to add depth.

Hair, skin and shadow

Paint the hair and shadow areas with grey tones. The hair is painted solidly because the texture is expressed by the lines, while the skin is painted with the Smudge tool to maintain its soft appearance as it's blended in.



Halftone filter

Her tattoo is a line drawing on a new layer. I also added the Newspaper effect found under Adjustments>Halftone.

Detail

The mechanical part is given realism by drawing it while also considering its structure. The hair, on the other hand, is carefully drawn with a soft touch, given its softness and lightness. This attention to detail makes the artwork much more believable.

Hatching

Rust on the machinery, the uneven surface of the bones, and fine hatching on the clothing give texture to the work. I believe that the hatching is where the artist's individuality resides.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

DEFAULT BRUSH:
TECHNICAL PEN

The settings are almost the same as the defaults, but with the Stabilization attribute instead set to 'None'. The intention is to make the lines feel more natural by making them less smooth.

Technique focus

SIMPLICITY IN YOUR SHAPES

Richard Anderson on the foundational philosophies behind his creative process



"Besides my love of sketching, my process comes down to two factors. The first is to simplify, simplify, simplify. In the world around us, we see shapes and the contrast between them. We subconsciously look for patterns. People draw with outlines, but we don't see the world that way. Naturally, we want to see shapes.

The second factor is my tools. I learned traditionally with brush pens, ballpoints, and markers. I moved into digital, with Procreate and Photoshop, and tried to mimic those tools digitally, which allows me to quickly block in shapes I see in reference or from my imagination with muscle memory. That only comes from practise, and if you love sketching, it comes fairly easily." ■



Artist **PROFILE**

**Richard
Anderson**

LOCATION: England

Richard is a senior artist in the entertainment industry who has worked for the likes of Marvel Studios, Warner Bros., Universal Pictures and many more.

www.flaptrapsart.com



Gesture VR

SHARPEN YOUR DRAWING SKILLS

Nick Ladd showcases how you can practise figure drawing in the virtual world using VR technology

Artist PROFILE

Nick Ladd

LOCATION: Canada

Nick is a VR artist with a history in illustration and 3D animation. He first created Gesture VR to make life drawing a more accessible hobby. nickladd.tv

GET YOUR RESOURCES
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Anybody who has attended an art school is familiar with figure drawing. It's a fantastic way for

students and professionals to sharpen their skills. But for many, life drawing can be expensive and hard to commit to. In addition, some cities may not have access to good classes, and some people may feel pressured drawing around others.

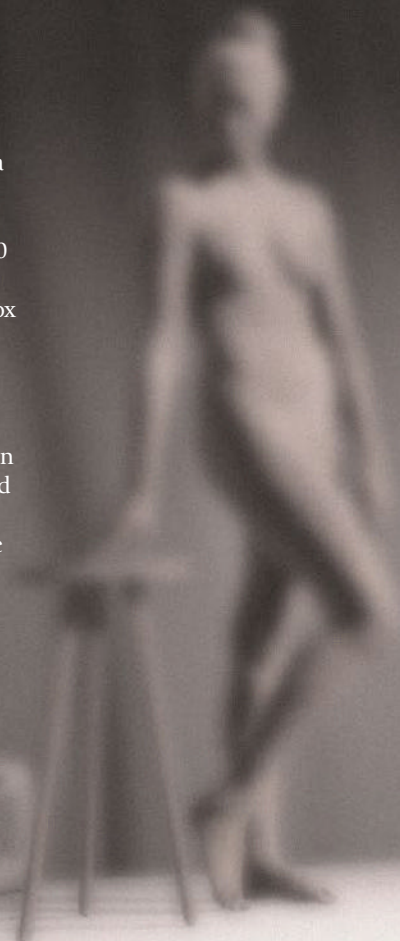
Gesture VR is a new virtual reality app that enables artists to practise life drawing at home. Artists can draw in 2D on virtual paper, in 3D space, and in mixed reality using the headset cameras to superimpose the model into the real world.

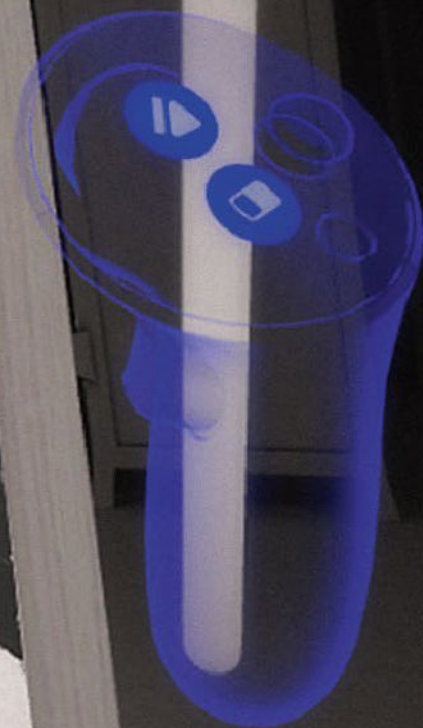
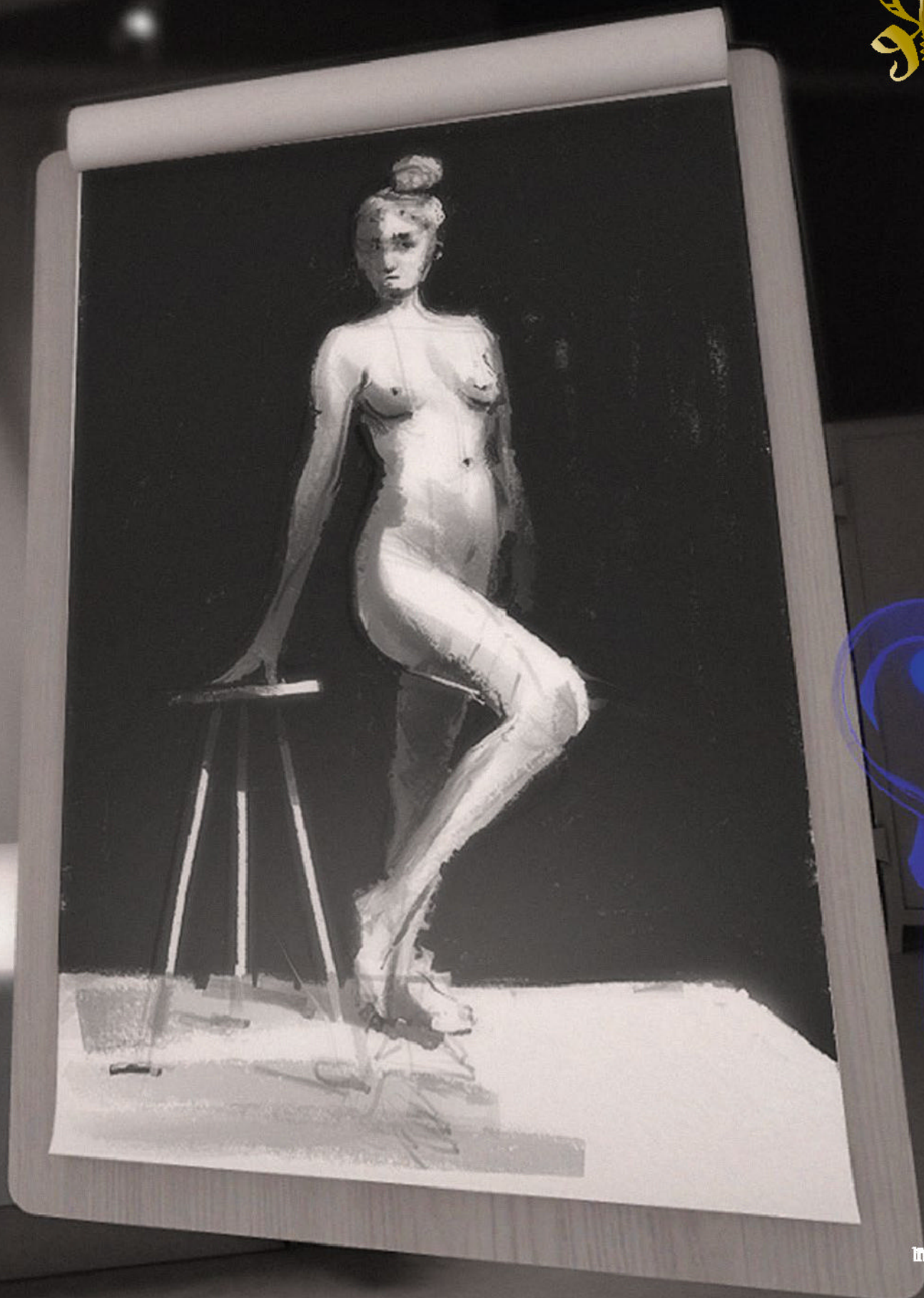
As technology advances, more and more traditional artists are starting to venture into the 3D and VR worlds. Gesture VR was created as a way to bridge that gap.

Life drawing has always been a great way to learn as a 2D artist, so that same principle should apply in VR. VR and augmented reality (AR) are growing industries that will shake the art world. It's important artists entering these realities have a comfortable app where they can sharpen their skills.

The software comes with over 140 unique poses 3D scanned from real models, and even includes proxy box models. Although most models are your typical life drawing poses, the app also contains miscellaneous models, including Michelangelo's David and fantasy goblins. Users can adjust the light, rotate the poses, and adjust the timers to customise the drawing experience in ways that are impossible in a studio.

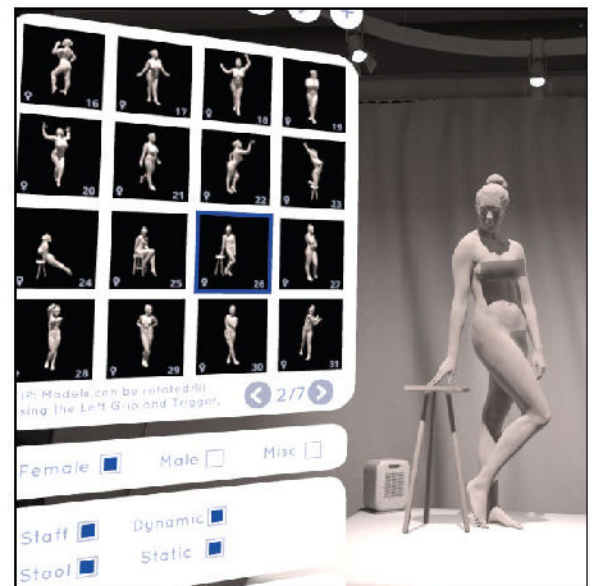
This tutorial will teach you key tools and techniques to take your drawings to the next level, both inside and outside of VR. ➡



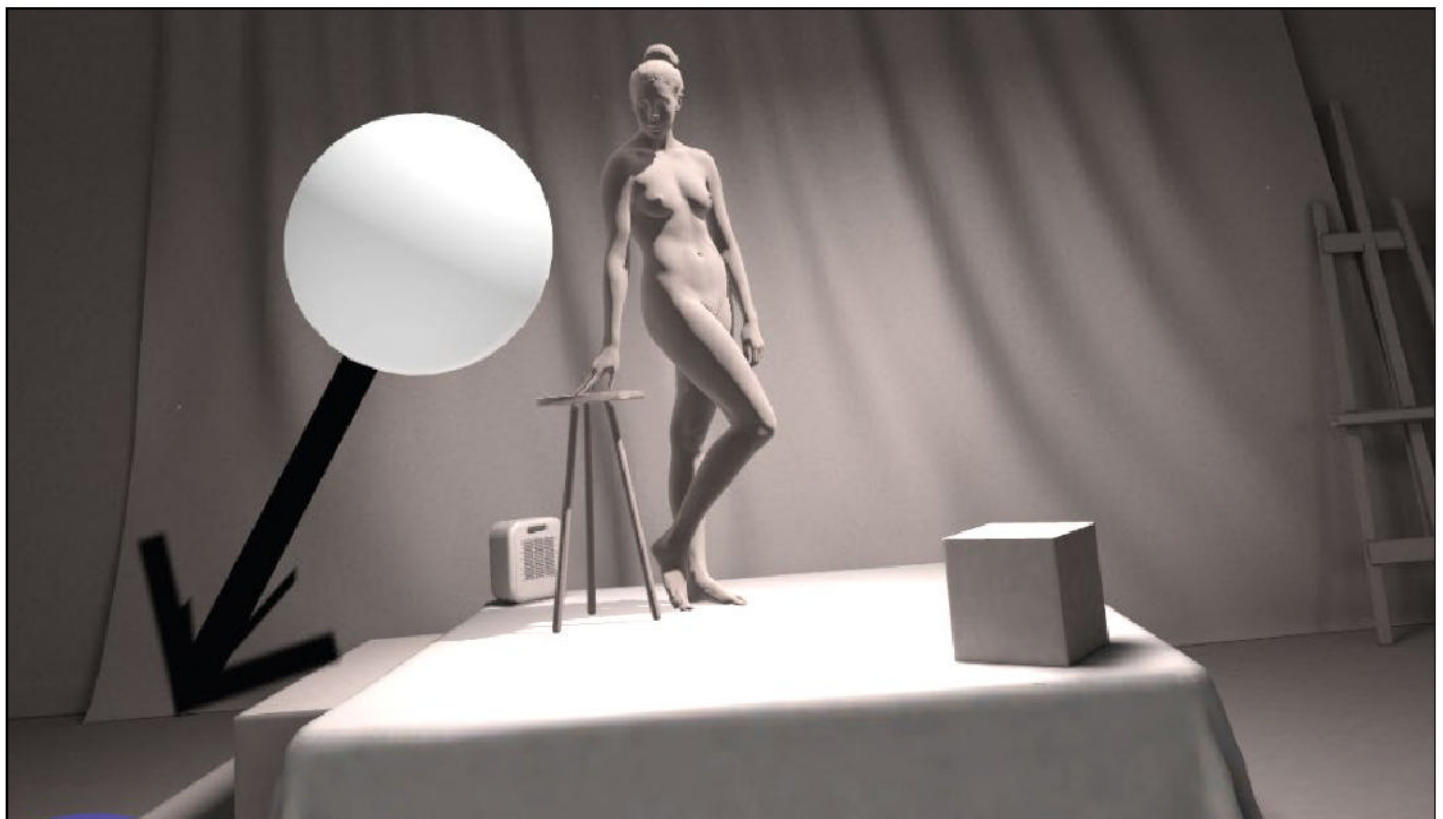




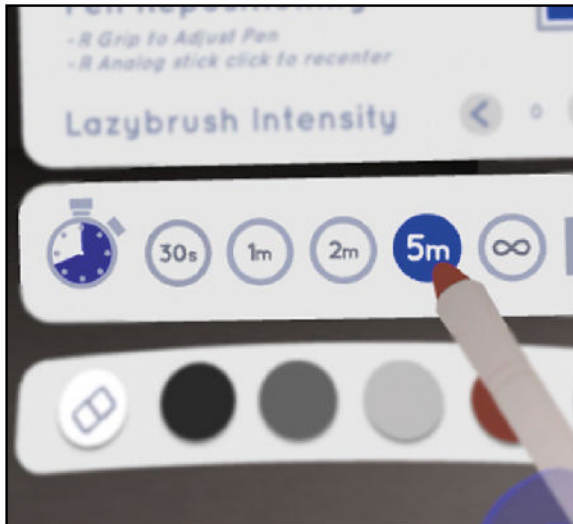
1 Enter the studio Gesture VR has four studios to choose from, each with different advantages. The default replicates a real studio, like what you might find in an art school. The alternate sets include both a black void and a white void, which are helpful if you want to draw with the 3D brushes, but also provide a nice distraction-free space. Lastly, there's a passthrough studio for artists working on a Quest, which allows you to draw in your home or play-space using the front-facing cameras. You can also use mixed reality mode to sketch the virtual model on physical paper.



2 Choose a model Gesture VR has over 140 models, most of which are 3D scans of real people. There are also anatomy study models like skeletons and offbeat figures like goblins or horses. You can browse the collection and filter from the model picker until you find a pose you like. The nudity can be toggled on or off, and proxy box meshes are also available for most models.

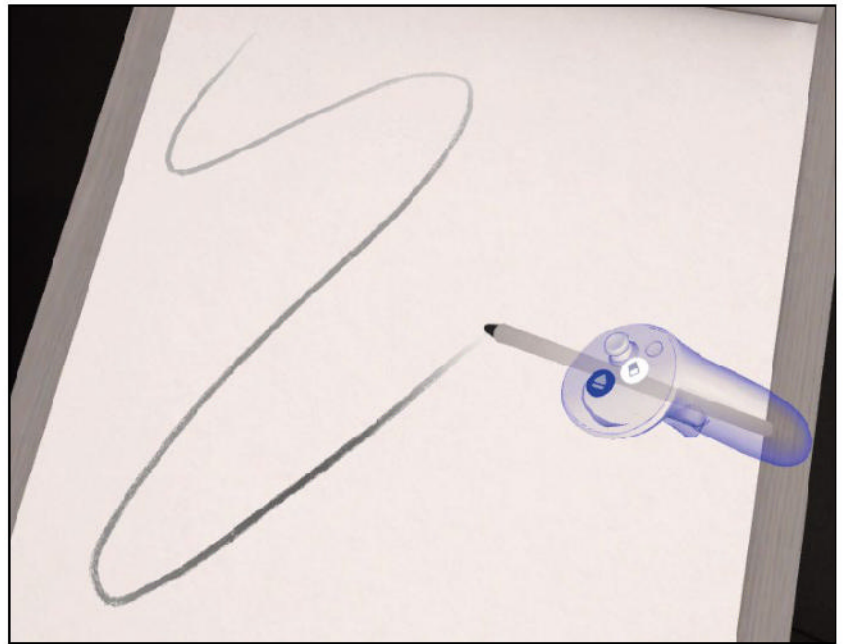


3 Lights and fine tuning Once you've chosen your preferred model, you can adjust the lighting. This can be done by holding the trigger on your off-hand controller and then dragging it in any direction to create a directional light source. This can be used to help you emphasise the forms. By default, the 3D model is given a randomised rotation to begin with, but you can also manually rotate the model by holding and dragging the off-hand grip button. Sometimes the right angle and lighting can make a pose feel completely different.



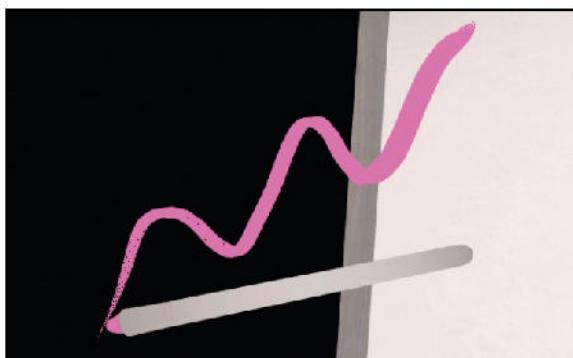
4 Set the clock

The last step before drawing is to ensure you've given yourself a comfortable amount of time. You can adjust the timer duration in the Draw tab. Your options are 30 seconds, one minute, two minutes, five minutes or endless poses. Short poses can be great for fast and loose gestural sketching, while the infinite timers are better if you want to sit down and take the time to study the pose. If you're new to life drawing, doing a lot of short poses can help you quickly build your confidence and skills.



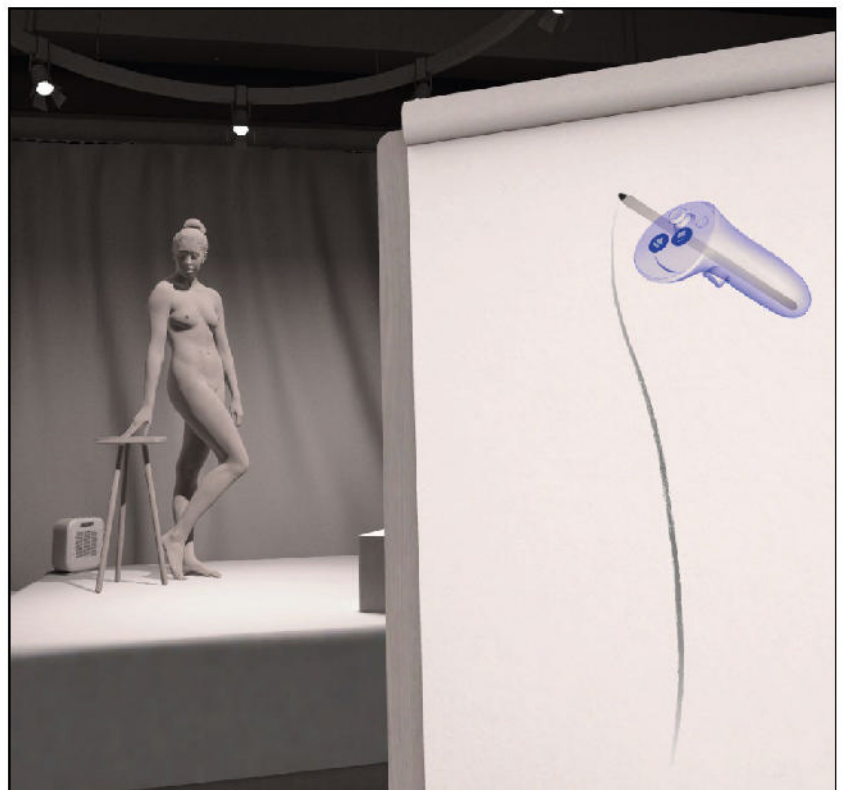
5 Multiple ways to draw

There are many ways to draw in Gesture VR. If you're taking the 2D approach, all you need to do is touch the virtual paper with your virtual pencil. The more pressure, the darker and thicker the line will be. You can draw with the right trigger while your hand is floating slightly above the page or enable the lazy brush, which gives a slight delay to your strokes for greater precision.



6 Colour changes

Some artists like to begin with a different colour for their base sketch. Starting with a light colour before switching to something darker can help separate the rough sketch from the final drawing. To change colours, tap on any of the palette swatches in the Draw tab. If you long-press any swatch, it brings up a colour picker. You can have up to five colours in your palette at once.



7 The gesture line

Many artists will start their life drawings with a single, confident line known as a line of action, or a gesture line. It should be done quickly and powerfully, and should capture the energy and life of the pose, often bending to follow the curvature of the spine. This line will be the first building block for your drawing. Don't be afraid to erase or undo the line until you get it just right! ➡



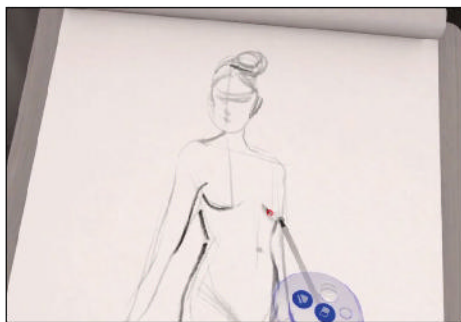
8 The sketch

Once your gesture line is drawn, it's time to start sketching the details. Use this time to get a sense of where all the key areas are. Draw a circle for the head, a line to represent the shoulders, and some quick lines to represent the arms. This step shouldn't take too long, and should still be loose, don't worry about perfect lines yet. Carefully observe the model and then try to capture the pose with fast strokes. Teleport around the room and view the model from different angles if it helps you visualise the forms better.



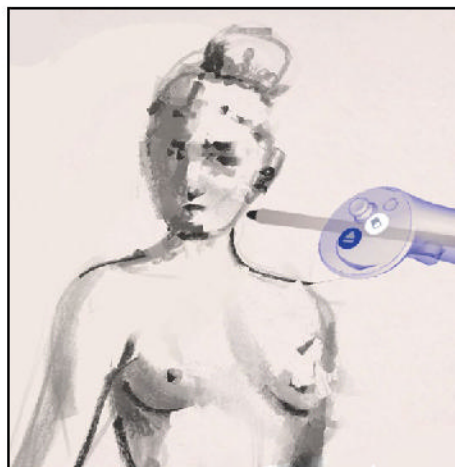
9 Continue to detail

Keep observing and correcting your drawing as you spot inconsistencies between the page and model. At this early stage, it's recommended that you continue drawing light, quick strokes. Unless you're doing a short pose, these lines will likely be drawn over later in the process, so don't get too attached. Feel free to use the undo or eraser as you tighten up the drawing.



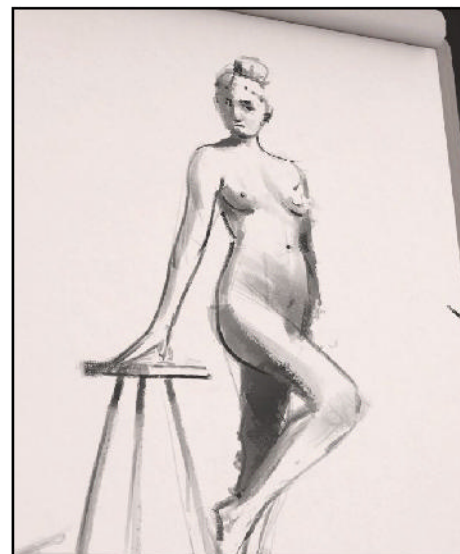
10 Darker lines

At this stage, your loose sketch should be finished, and you can start to work darker with more confident lines. There are a few good tools to help with this. One is drawing with the trigger while hovering your hand slightly above the page. This will let you control the pressure with the trigger rather than physical touch, which gives you better control over the darks. And for precision, the lazy brush is useful. Set this tool to a lower value, such as one or two, and then slowly drag out your lines. In real-life drawing, you can get dark lines by pushing hard and dragging slowly. Without the physical surface, the lazy brush can help emulate this feeling. You can add form to your model by using a combination of thin and thick lines.



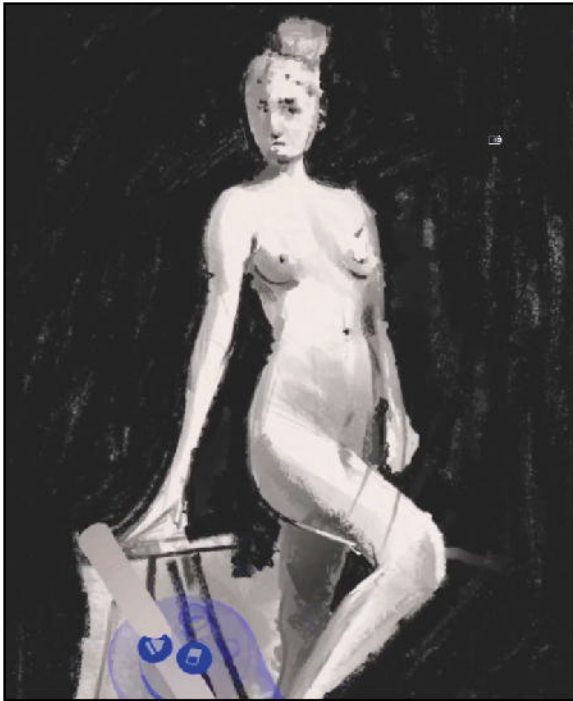
11 Face

At this stage, I like to start working into the face. This is a tricky process no matter what medium you're using, but it's especially tricky in Gesture VR because of the small scale. You can make it easier by grabbing your paper and scaling it by using the grip on both hands, making the head larger and easier to work with. The pad has a finite resolution though, so making the head larger won't necessarily allow you to draw extremely small details. This process involves trial and error, and switching between drawing modes.



12 Shadows

Shadows are a fun way to add realism and form. To do this, I scale my pen up a bit and press lightly against the paper. With a large pen, you can subtly add large gradients and then use the eraser to carve shapes out of the shadow to give the illusion of light and shadow. If the shadows on the model aren't suiting your needs, you can always change the lighting again.



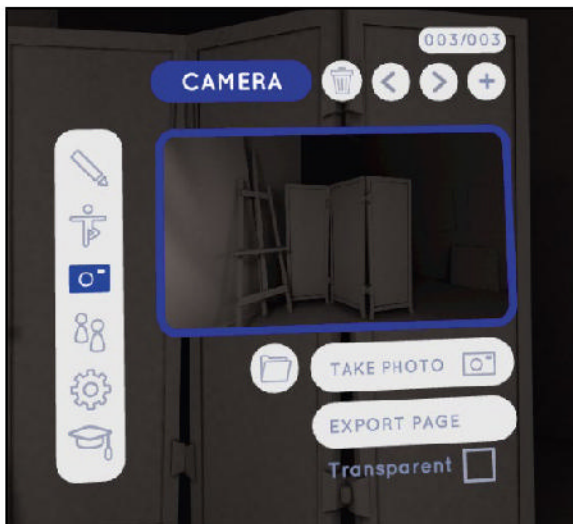
13 Background

This step is optional, but I like to add a solid background to really help make the model pop. This is a good chance for me to clean up my edges one last time, carefully tracing the model and using the eraser to carve out the blackness when I go too far. Observing the silhouette of the real model can inform this stage, and switching to the black environment can help.



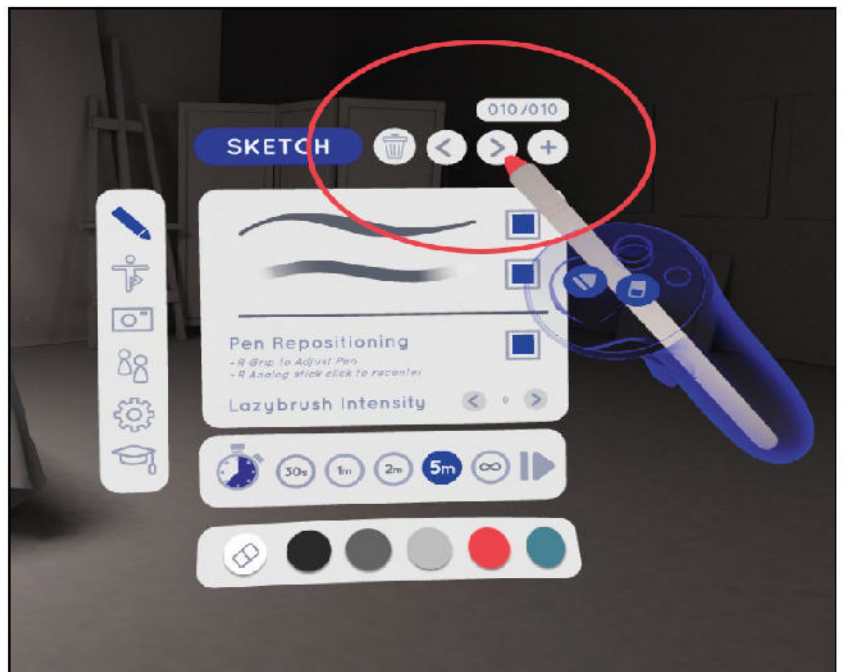
14 Finishing touches

By now, your drawing should be pretty well finished. Make your final observations and add any last strokes and details to your shadows or lines. It's also a good opportunity to take some artistic liberties that will help guide the eye to focal points in the scene. Try making areas fall into shadow, even if it doesn't necessarily match the lighting.



15 Export your drawing

Once your masterpiece is finished, you can share it in several ways. The Camera tab is where you'll find all of the export options. For 2D drawings, you can press Export to render the canvas as a 2D PNG file. You can choose to export with or without a transparent background. Alternatively, you can use the camera snapshot to capture an image of your drawing next to the model. It's also an excellent way to capture a picture of your 3D drawings, as there's no export functionality for those drawings at this time.



16 Sketchbook

This drawing is just one of the many that you'll create in your sketchbook. You can always return to your old sketches in future sessions, and even show off your drawings in multiplayer! If you're not satisfied with your work and want to get rid of any sketches, you can simply press the bin icon to clear off the page, or long-press the bin to delete it for good.



Technique focus

ADD IMPACT TO YOUR FAN ART

Evan Liu explains how he added dynamic edge to his God of War Ragnarök tribute



"This image depicts a fictional boss battle that pits Kratos and Týr against Thor. Týr's spear and his right arm, along with Kratos's right arm, form an arrow symbol that creates huge visual impact, which is what I

most wanted to achieve. By thinking of the human body as simple shapes, it's easy to find dynamic lines. Then I added a little force to those lines, which results in them taking on new shapes. This in turn creates a dynamic sense of force and thrust within the characters." ●



Artist
PROFILE

Evan Liu
LOCATION: China

Evan Liu is a senior concept artist and art director at Concept Labs, and has previously worked at Concept Art House. Alongside this, he is also the co-founder of 3rd Visual Studio.
<https://bit.ly/3XkQYyx>

Original concept by Sony/Santa Monica Studio

Artist insight

17 TIPS TO DEVELOP YOUR CHARACTERS

Writer **Isabel Armitage** shares her advice on building coherent characters for your artwork – Art by **Toby Hawksley**

Artist PROFILE

Isabel Armitage
LOCATION: UK

Isabel is the current in-house writer for RedHouse Originals, a Harrogate-based gallery specialising in modern and contemporary art. <https://bit.ly/3YOQvBZ>



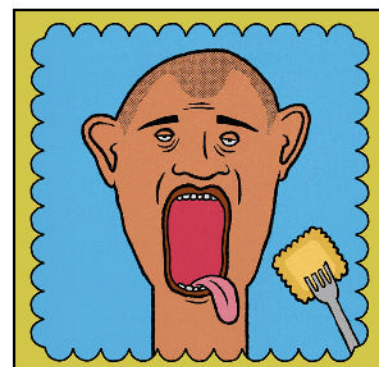
@Robin Clewley

I kind of stumbled upon my career in art. Way back when I worked at a brewery in Yorkshire I met the gallery director of RedHouse Originals, who took a liking to my relationship between art and words. The combination of literate descriptions with visuals is a winner, and since working at the gallery I've

been lucky enough to collaborate with artists across the globe.

I believe there is a lot of merit in making and creating away from your workspace, and in terms of character, where better place to explore that than the real world. Curiosity is an underrated attribute and I hungrily consume as much information as possible in life; catching knowledge within a metaphorical net.

These tips will guide you through exercises that can help your art in a way you may not have considered before, detached from a visual process, pushing you towards a broader outlook on how a good character is made. I hope they help you and can become an enjoyable part of your creative process that doesn't necessarily involve a drawing tablet and Procreate.



2 MAKE A PLAYLIST. YOUR CHARACTER LIKES MUSIC TOO!

I've always been a serial playlist maker and I often like making them for my friends, tailoring music to how I perceive them as a person. Almost all of us have some form of subscription to a one music sharing platform or another and, in theory, your character might too.

So why not craft them a playlist of their favourite songs? This can be a great tool to help you understand the emotions of your character and begin revealing their likes, dislikes and guilty pleasures, all of which will help you layer on a good narrative. Not only will this help your art, but it is a fun activity that I find is a great way of breaking up my day.

1 TRY FREE WRITING

It's undeniable that the creative industry is a stressful one. I find the pressures of freelance and working for myself a tough career path sometimes, and one tip I find extremely useful when I'm beginning the character development process is free writing.

Free writing is when you set a timer for five minutes and continuously write on a page without a second thought. I find this stream of consciousness an opportunity to write

effortlessly in a less pressured, less calculated manner. I often develop a character in my head to the point where my vision becomes far removed from my original idea. Free writing can literally free up the mind for a moment and allow you to create more openly.

You can really experiment here and work in a location that you might not normally work in. I like to get set up in coffee shops and natural environments the most. Take it in, write it down, and the best part is that you don't think.

3 TAP INTO YOUR EMOTIONS

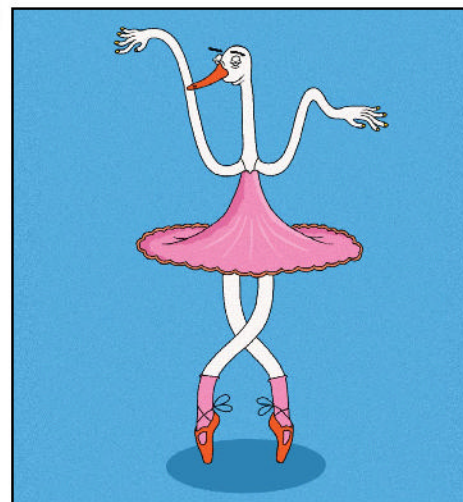
Characters are emotional and your artwork will illustrate a static emotion in time, so I find it best to write these emotions down. Think of as many emotions as you can and write a list of them.

I often spend a good 10 minutes doing this so that I can really get into the intricacies of a specific feeling. It's great to take yourself away from drawing with exercises like this, so that your mind has some space to breathe.

A few emotions I've thought of include the following:

Elated
Concerned
Distraught
Irate
Confused
Muddled
Ecstatic
Sorrowful
Bashful
Embarrassed

You can be as simplistic or elaborate as you like, the Seven Dwarfs aren't famous for nothing.



“It becomes easier to figure out the kind of characteristics the individuals might have”



4 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

I like looking to literature in these situations and Sally Rooney, author of best-selling novel *Normal People*, certainly has a sound understanding of character development. She describes her process by first creating a relationship between

two people, with their specifics coming in later.

By thinking about how two of your characters interact with each other, I find it becomes much easier to figure out the kind of characteristics the individuals might have, thus developing that richness we're so striving for.

In Rooney's case, she thought about taking the nerdy girl in school and pairing her with one of the popular boys, and went from there. Whether it's a mother-daughter dynamic or the love between a boy and his pet, developing the relationship first can be a great way for your character to form later. ➔



5 DISTINCTIVE MANNERISMS

We all have our unique quirks in life. In my case, I like textures and often find myself feeling the softness of my jumper between my thumb and index finger to calm me. Your character can possess these kinds of unique qualities too, so have an exploration of mannerisms.

You can achieve this in a multitude of ways. I enjoy various forms of media and like watching a film I know well to try to figure out what unique mannerisms each character possesses, and use them in my work. Absorbing as much information as possible from the world we live in can help within your art by making it seem more authentic. Most of my journalistic ideas come from experiencing life, the news, films, art; anything with substance.

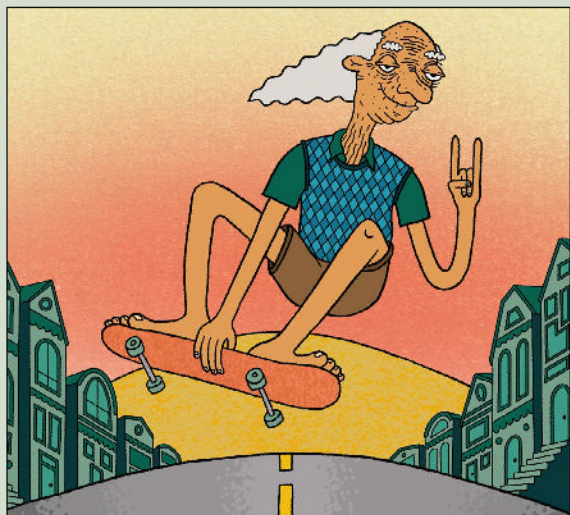
“It may be daunting to start drawing a stranger, so why not take it easy, perhaps by drawing someone’s dog first”

6 USE YOUR OWN RELATIONSHIPS

A spiders web, our relationships are what define us as humans and your characters can be relayed in the same way. Use your relationships to show this and use people you know to inspire how a character acts.

These relationships don't have to be restricted to close family and friends; remember that we build relationships daily, no matter how small. The shop keeper, the postman, or the doctor all have some form of relationship with you as an individual, and can be used to inspire the life in your work.

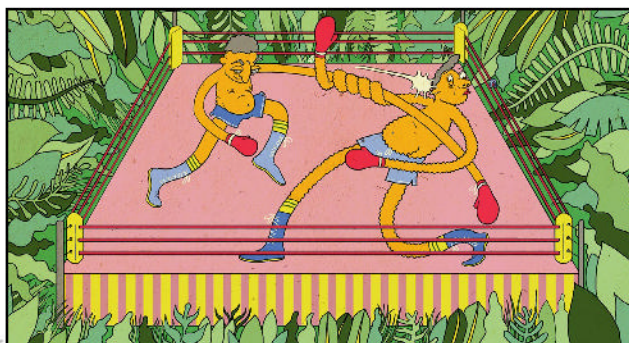




10 THAT'S ALL ANCIENT HISTORY

As you can see, a sense of character is achieved through layering and adding as much information as possible to make it feel believable. For me, history is integral to anything I write or draw about, so why not make a family tree and get creative about it? The history of your character will affect the way they act, so if they come from a family with 10 siblings they are bound to have a series of character traits that will relate to this.

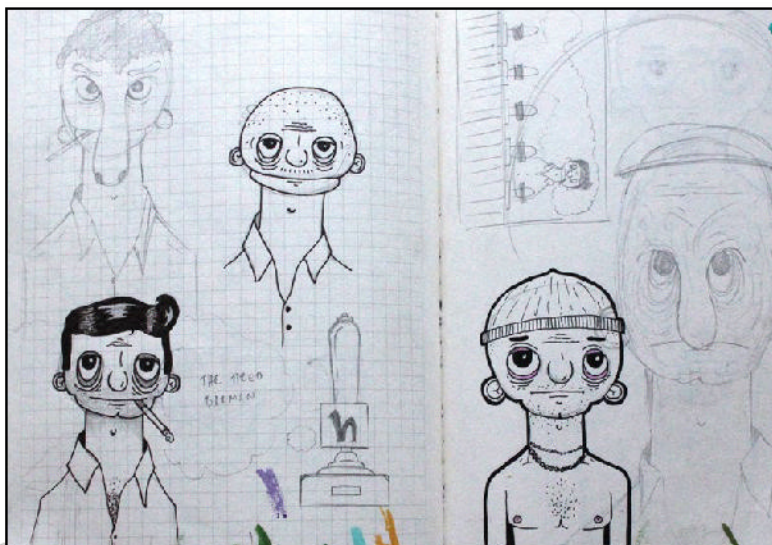
It's up to you how far you go with this, whether you opt for my technique of using an old scrap of paper and a trusty uni-ball pen, or if you want to go to town on Procreate and customise the tree to be a beautiful, tea-stained tapestry of times gone by.



12 DEVELOP A STRONG LINE OF ACTION

A great way of developing your character is with a strong line of action. Start by drawing a series of lines you think associate with a certain action. The slam of a hammer on a brick, for example, may be a fast movement with an explosive tailend, whereas an embrace between two long lost comrades will possess a soft curvature.

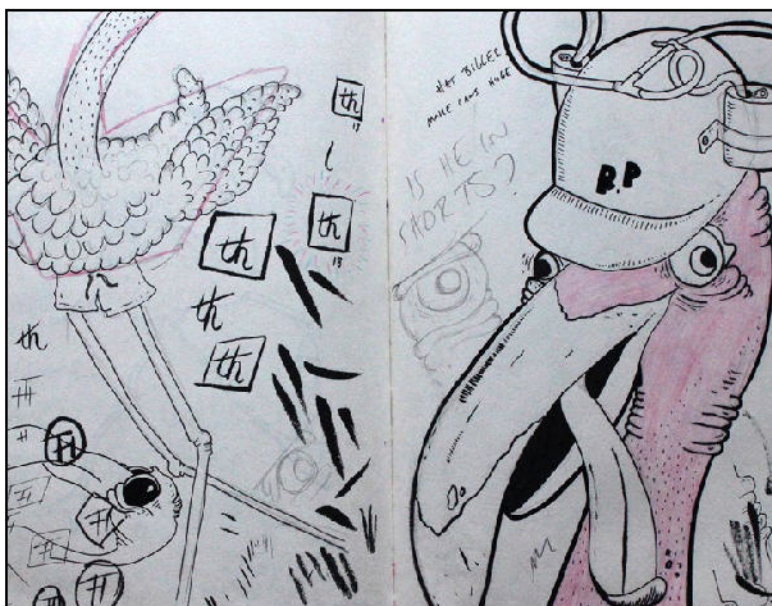
Fast drawings can allow your subconscious to speak up, and drawing a collection of strong lines of action can be a great way of understanding your character on a deeper level.



11 SKETCH FIRST AND SKETCH SMALL

The procreate ether can often be a daunting concept, I find there is a multitude of brushes, colours, depths and tones that can bring richness to your painting later on. Taking a step back and thumbnail drawing can be a great way to initially gauge the facial features of your character. Use a pencil or go for the digital approach, but starting off small can be a great way to quickly visualise the character you're focusing on.

“Spend a day researching with your friends – artists or not – to see how they react to a set of characters”



13 LINES, LINES, LINES

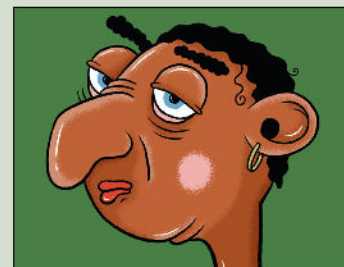
Speaking of lines, there are a number of ways you can use your drawing line to associate your character with the concept you've developed in your head. Think about the meaning of soft curved lines in comparison to sharpness.

Naturally we associate softness with a sweeter character, whereas harsh lines can correlate a tenseness or anger. Use this to your advantage by exploiting line shape and length for the character in question, using certain lines to reveal characteristics you've worked hard on so far.

14 TIME TO ACCESSORISE YOUR CHARACTERS

You've added the lines, the colours, the gestures and movements. Now it's time to accessorise. If you really think about it, do we as humans ever leave the house without the addition of some form of accessory? Maybe your mum is

deeply into gardening and never found without a trowel, or your mad uncle seems to be stuck with a beer in their hand. Your characters have these quirks too. So accessorise and choose wisely, because they might end up holding a specific item every time you wish to draw them.



15 THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOUR

Books have been written about the importance of colour. There is a universal scientific understanding of how colours interact with each other, so taking this into consideration, your colour palette is vital.

Your use of colour can link back to building a relationship with another character before you develop the character themselves. I like using complimentary colours for characters who are in love, or contrasting colours for characters who hate each other. You can really lean into colour to develop your character and reinforce the viewer's association with colour and emotion.

Read up about how different emotions can relate to different colours and keep that in mind when choosing your palettes. If you're stuck for palettes, take to the web. You can find a plethora of different options and even use websites to randomly generate a palette for you.



16 BE HONEST

One of the hardest parts to any form of creative outlet is to be honest with yourself about how the artwork is going. Self criticism is an art in itself and takes years to master, but openly engaging in your own flaws and recognising that something isn't working out is a tough but necessary part of character development.

Admitting that a feature isn't quite right is difficult, but a good way to get over this is practising drawing a multitude of eyes, for example, to see which one works best. Even if you do ultimately return to your original drawing, there's nothing wrong with experimentation. Just don't get too attached, as the separation will hurt too much.



17 ASK AROUND

One of my most important tips is to ask around. Your friendships are invaluable research to understanding how others interact with your character and whether or not it's the reaction you want.

Spend a day researching with your friends - artists or not - to see how they react to a set of characters. Ask them their favourites, their problems, you could even do this in a cafe with strangers. Being bold and fearless of your artwork is an essential element to developing a good character. You need to back your work. ●



Technique focus

EXPAND ON YOUR SOURCE MATERIALS

Discover how concept artist **Adrien Cantone** embraced the references that inspired his epic Mecha vs Kaiju battle render



"This piece is based on a character design by concept artist Soanja Connac, who designed a little beetle robot for a project we're working on. I designed a mecha version of her robot and a kaiju based on a mantis crab.



Artist PROFILE

Adrien Cantone

LOCATION: France

Adrien is a 25-year-old freelance concept artist. He earned a master's degree in illustration in 2021 and has since worked with studios such as Sony Pictures Animation, Amopix and Classics F5. <https://bit.ly/3iz2asR>

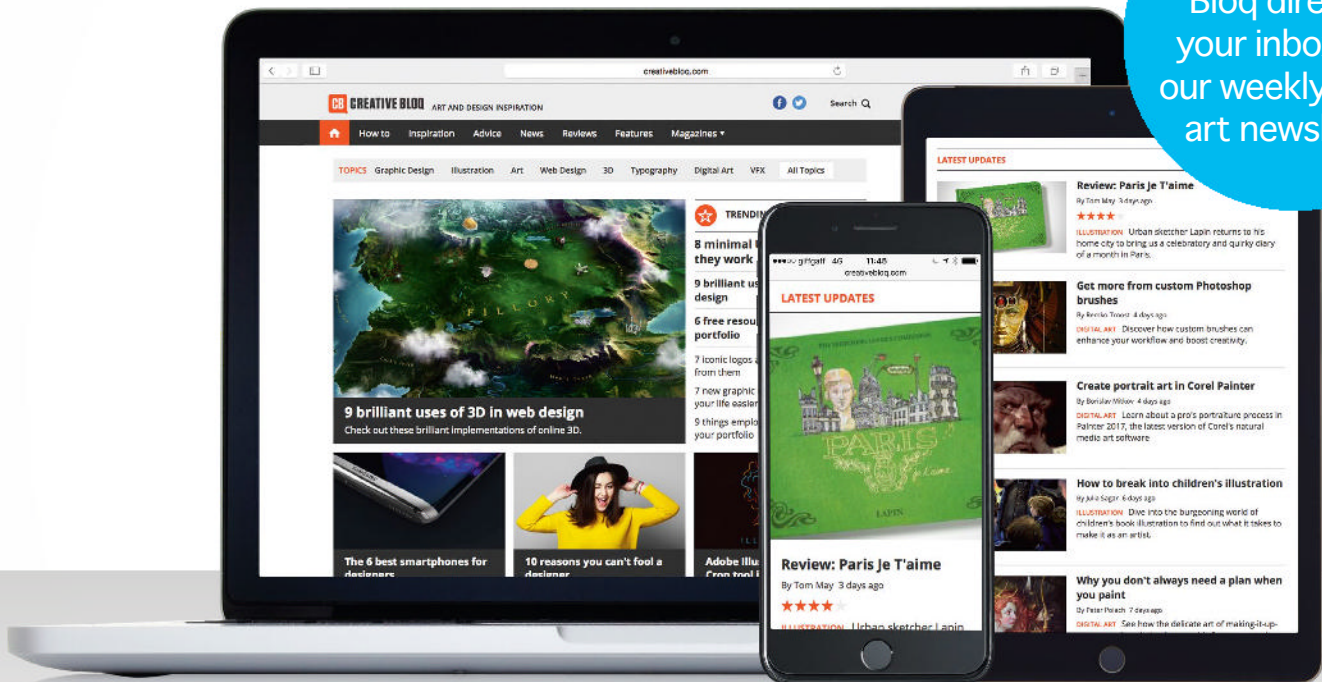
I modelled the two characters in Blender and assembled the scene using some assets from CGTrader. Once the scene was modelled and the camera angle and lighting chosen, I imported my grey render into Photoshop to work on the line-art, colours and textures.

I then used the 3D renders in combination with Photoshop's blending modes, including Multiply and Soft Light, to add shadows and highlights. Finally, I added some noise to my illustration to create a vintage rendering typical of the early Tokusatsu genre." 🌩



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Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

- 84 Traditional FXPosé**
Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!
- 88 Workshop: Draw an ethereal fantasy character**
Cameron Scott Davis keeps the traditional vibes in his artwork.
- 94 Tech focus: Tending to a floral vision**
The first shoots that sprouted into Jason Mowry's botanical art.
- 96 First Impressions: Jacob Walker**
Learn how a trip to Gen Con kickstarted the artist's career.

FXPosé

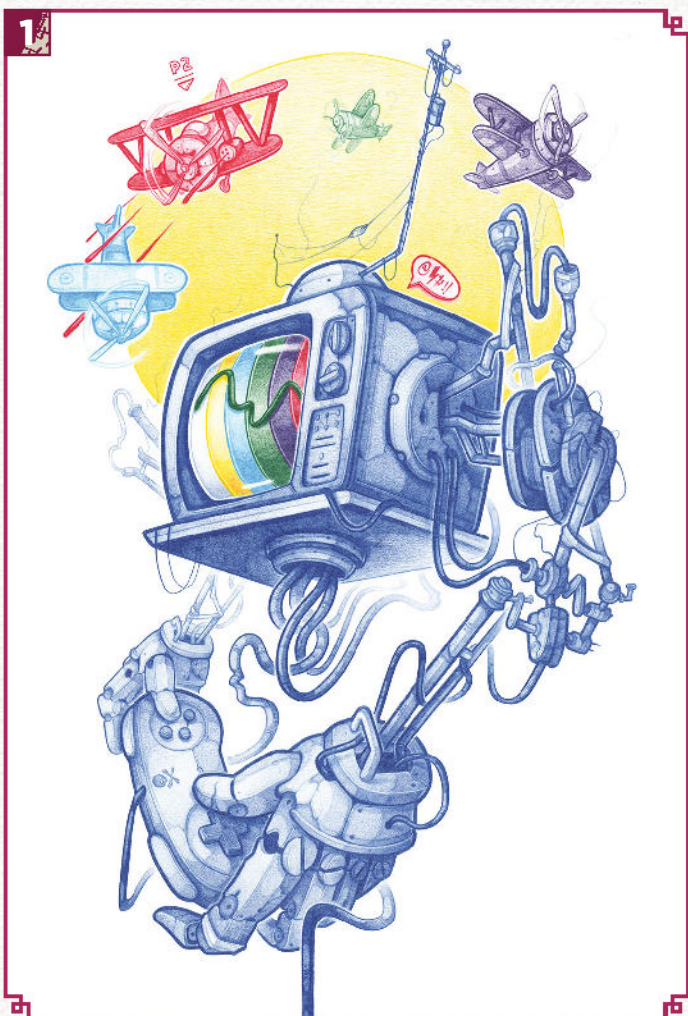
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Sean D. Price

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Coloured Pencil WEB: www.artofprice.com

Sean is a self-taught illustrator who has previously worked within the tattoo industry. He loves to mix fantasy-inspired imagery with bold shape language.

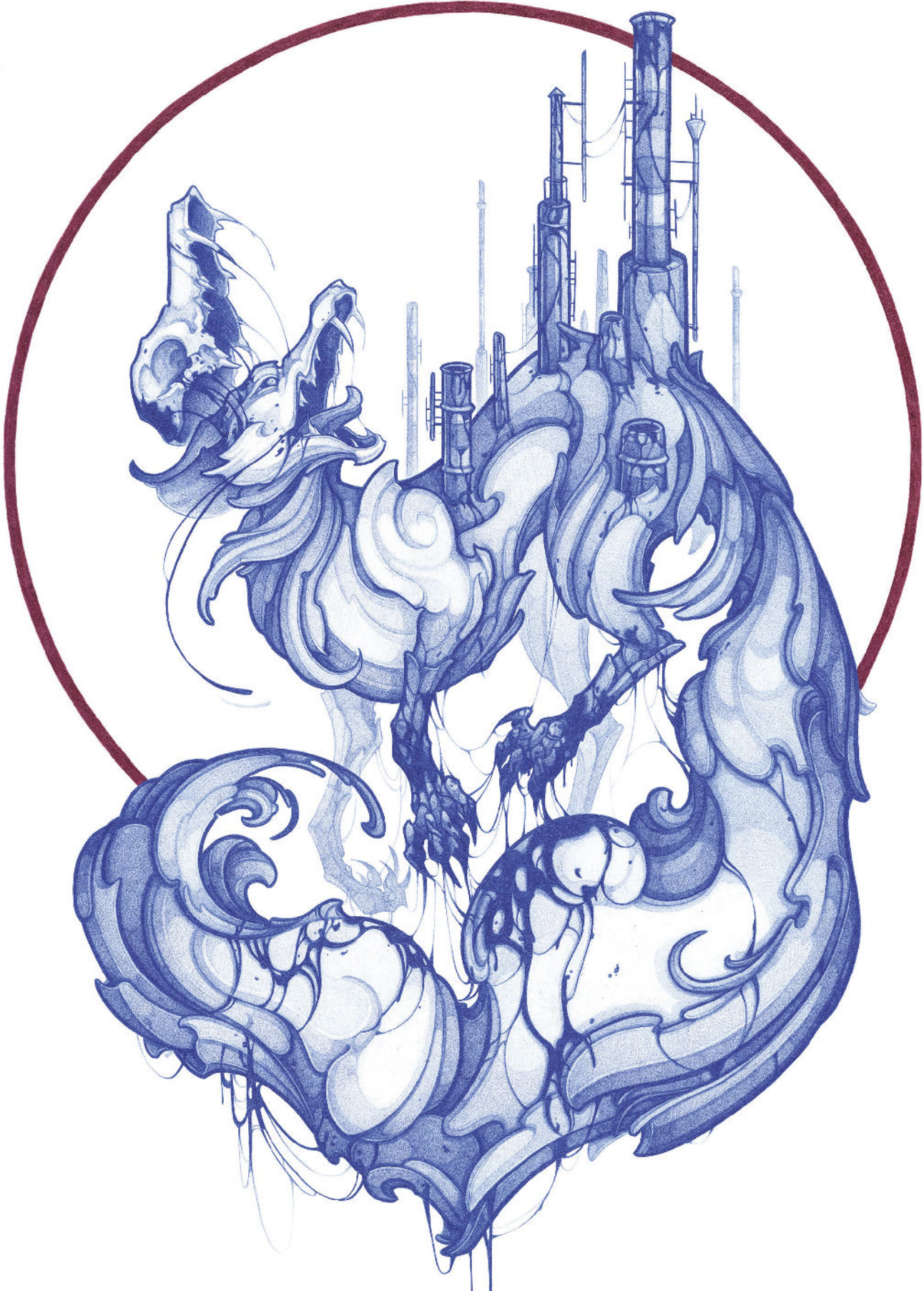


1 P.L.A.Y.E.R. 2
“Based on my sister and I when we were kids playing video games. She always beat me, but I still love her just the same.”

2 THE BROWN BEACON
“One of my personal favourite pieces. It has a lot of Easter eggs that reference my earlier work. I plan to do more pieces like this in the future.”

3 A PLACE FOR ME
“This is my interpretation of a lovely childhood memory that I hold very near and dear.”

4 YOU SHOULD THANK THE PLACES YOU KEEP BURIED DEEP...
“This piece represents a feeling of spiteful anger being used both with you and against you.”



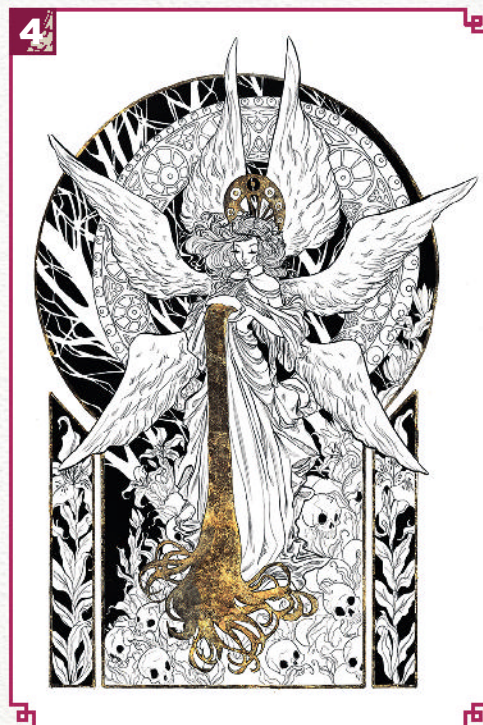


Ashleigh Izienicki (aka MissUpacey)

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Ink, watercolour, gouache, coloured pencil **WEB:** missupacey.com

Ashleigh developed her style from a love of fantasy themes, combined with an interest in all things macabre. Her work focuses on female figures that are frequently based on mythology and legends from other cultures.





1 BLACK WIDOWS

"An illustration that symbolises the nature of death, which I made during my tattoo apprenticeship."

2 TRANQUILITY

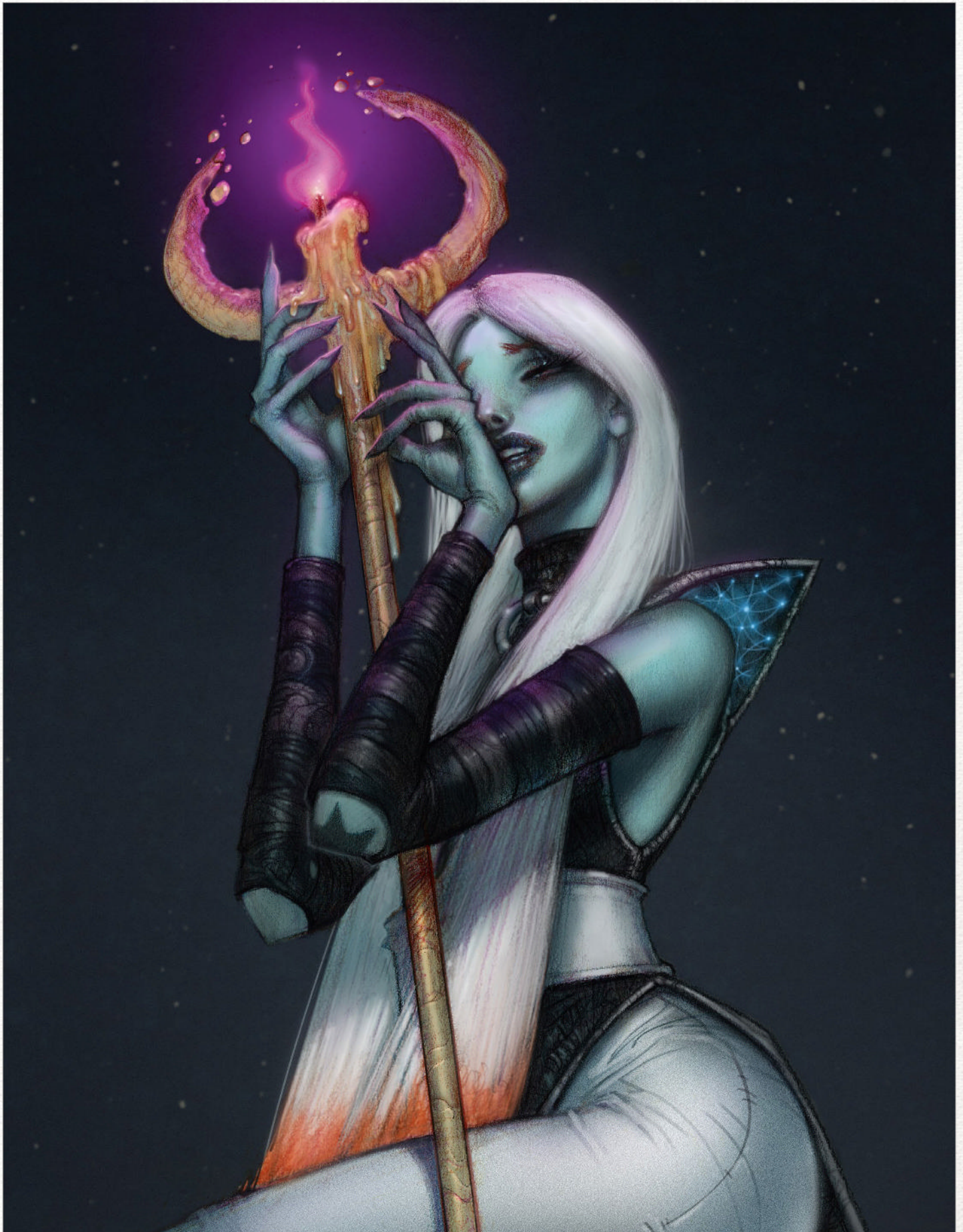
"This is a sister piece to Ignorance. It shows a demon that is sleeping peacefully, representing the truth setting someone free."

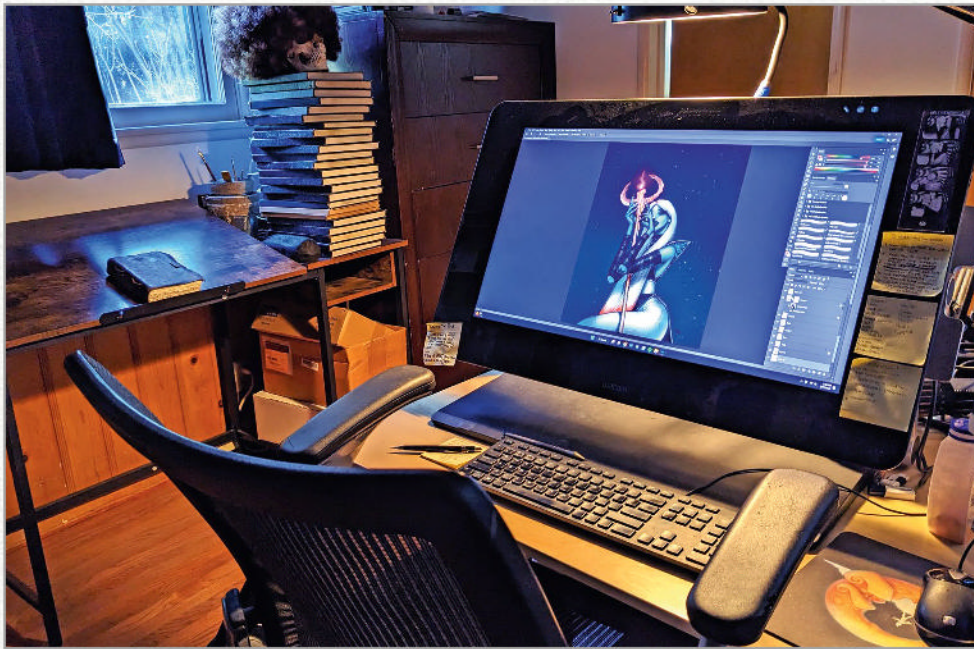
3 BLOOD

"I like leaving my original pieces a little messy and a little sketchy. I think it evokes more emotion that way."

4 IGNORANCE

"This piece depicts an angel covering skulls with gold. This concept is a visual representation of the saying 'ignorance is bliss'."





Pencil Photoshop

DRAW AN ETHEREAL FANTASY CHARACTER

CAMERON SCOTT DAVIS shows how to maintain a traditional feel when transferring your drawings to digital software for finishing touches

That feel of traditional media is something I've always loved, but is challenging to maintain in the digital world. In this tutorial I'll take you through my step-by-step process for creating an illustration coloured with the speed and freedom of digital, while keeping the classic traditional vibe.

I'll demonstrate how starting loose and messy will free you up creatively, as well as make it easier to compose accurately. From here, I'll sketch with different coloured animation pencils and build the image up using multiple layers and passes, focusing on angles and proportions observed from a reference photo. I'll slowly sneak up on the major shapes, smudging with fingers and erasing

MATERIALS

PENCILS

- Col-erase animation pencils
- Mars Staedler Lumograph 4H
- Pentel .05 mechanical pencil
- Artist's Loft black watercolour pencil

OTHER

- Kneaded eraser
- 12-inch ruler
- Photoshop

lines, before putting away the reference and going in with darker lines when everything feels right.

The final line-art is spray fixed before being scanned and cleaned up further with Photoshop. From there, it's a game of pushing and pulling values and hues beneath the line layer, and defining forms until all feels balanced and lit naturally. Then I'll be painting over the top in certain areas I want to draw the eye and focus of the viewer.

A digital painting is never 'done', so I may go in and add another level of detail at a later stage. Though it should be mentioned that over-rendering an image can squash the life and human touch from it.

Story, for me, is the most vital aspect of image creation. I've chosen

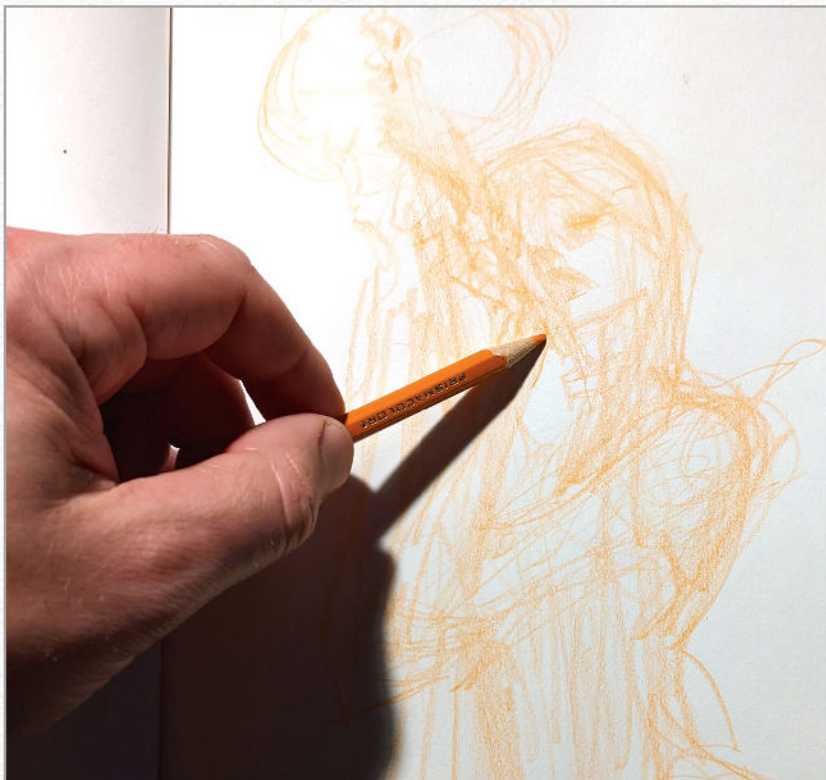
to illustrate a character named Luci from my original IP Sleep Walker, about lucid dreamers who possess the ability to physically travel between worlds through dreams.

Luci is trapped in a lighthouse in a world known as Hypnagogia, somewhere between the Dream Universe and the Waking World. Isolated in a world void of time, the only indication of her true age is the length of her once ginger hair. She's an old soul and going straight in with digital didn't seem like the right fit for conveying her personality.



Cameron has worked in entertainment for 15 years, and served as a character designer on the Guitar Hero

franchise and Tony Hawk's games. See more of his work at bit.ly/3EMqM8C.



1 *Rough layout*

I start loosely working from reference using a Col-erase animation pencil, holding it with an overhand grip so as to not get too tight too quickly. This stage is a purposeful mess. I'm exploring, working out angles, composition, and so on.



2 *Keep on sketching*

I want to keep it loose to avoid getting too precious early on and allow for happy accidents to present themselves. Here, I'm focusing on proportion and angles of the anatomy, and making sure the character feels like they're in a natural position. The reference is then put away so I'm not tied to it and am more open for imagination and play.



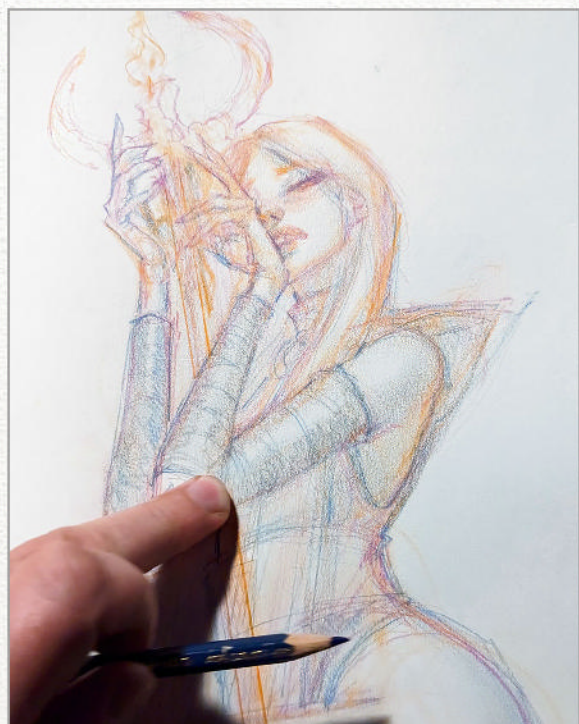
3 *Define details*

Next I'll make another pass with a different coloured animation pencil, typically something darker than the initial sketch. Here I'll begin to pull out details using a tighter grip on the pencil and define edges and different materials. What makes these Col-erase animation pencils special, or different, from Prismacolor is their ability to be erased, hence the name!



4 *Clean up*

For this, I'll use a kneaded eraser. I can press it over the entire image, pulling up excess pencil, or shape it with my fingers to create a sharper edge and pull out highlights, and completely get rid of the pencil lines.



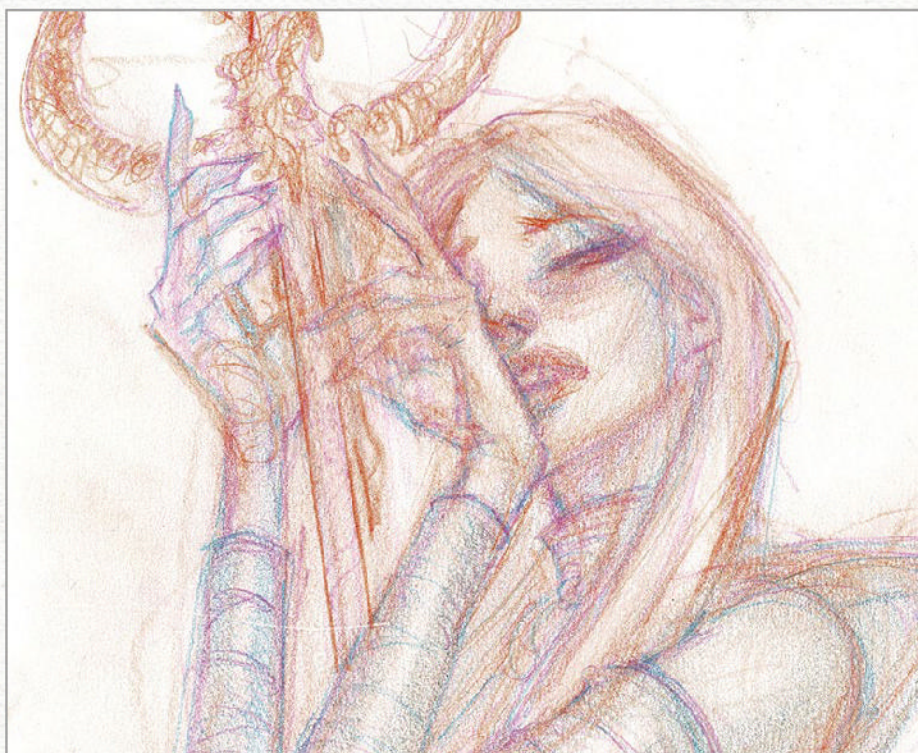
5 Smudging

Through the sketching process, I'm often rubbing and smudging the rough layout lines with my greasy little fingers. This will start to create value as well as a nice, traditional texture that will be useful in preserving that traditional feel when it has gone digital.



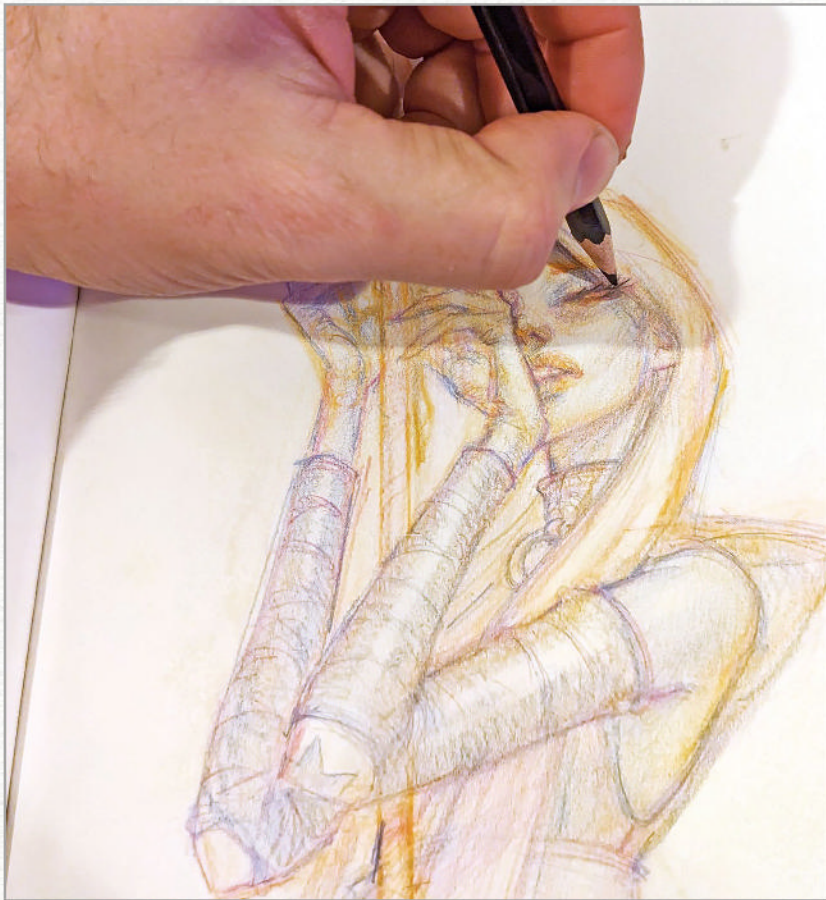
6 Spray fixing

Once I've laid in a series of passes that I'm happy with and cleaned up some of the lines, I'll spray down the drawing using a Workable Fixatif from Krylon. Make sure to do this outside or in a well-ventilated space. I assume this stuff is pretty nasty for your health if inhaled!

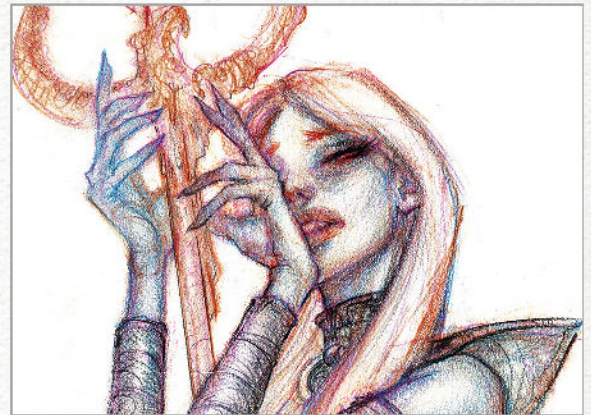
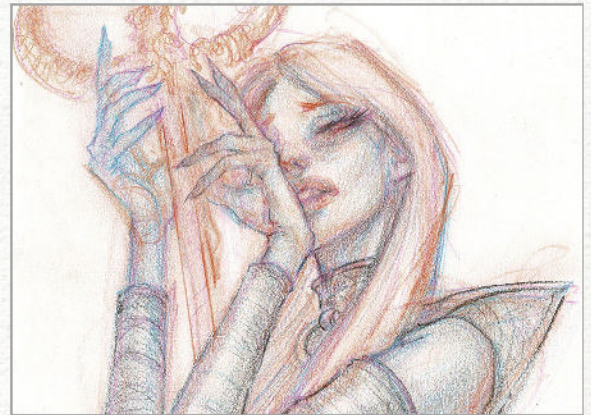


7 Let it dry completely

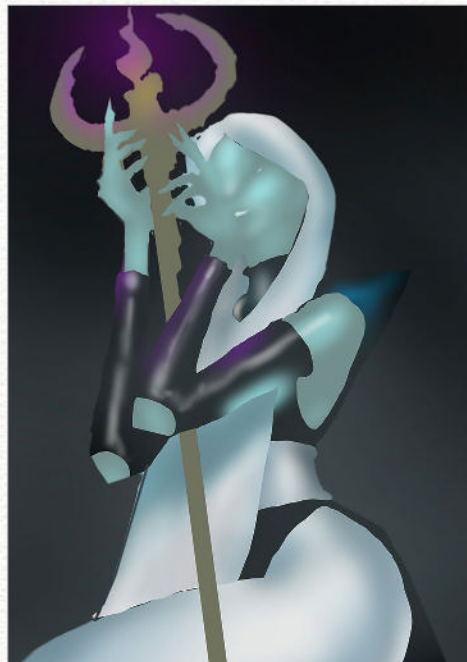
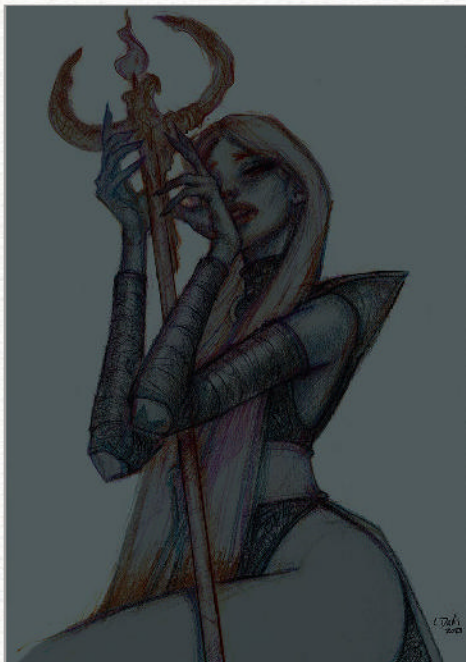
Allowing the image to fully dry will fix the pencil to the page, but still let you go over the top with more layers of pencil. Note that you won't be able to erase after spray fixing, but it also won't smudge, so make sure the image is where you want it. Wash your hands after working with the artwork as well, so you don't ingest it when you're reaching for your snacks of choice. ➡➡



8 **Final traditional step**
For the traditional process, I'll go over the top with a black pencil. I used a watercolour pencil in this case, but it isn't necessary. This is essentially the inking stage if you want to make a comic book analogy.



9 **Scan the image**
Next I'll scan the image and bring it into Photoshop for a clean-up and value adjustment. You can totally use a high-resolution photo from a smartphone if the lighting is sufficient. I use Levels and have the Dodge tool set to Highlights for digital clean-up.

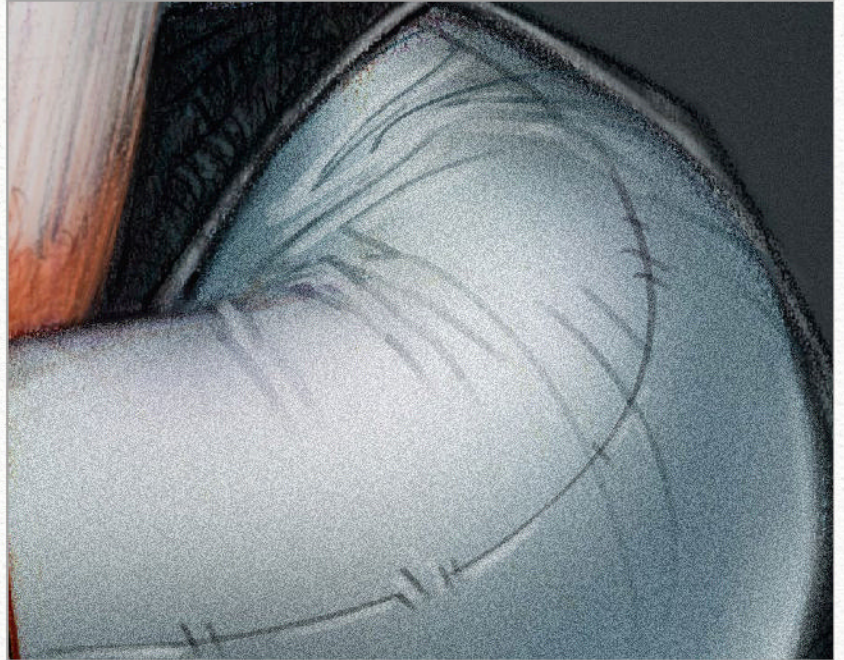


10 **Layers and blocking**
At this point I'll block in basic values and separate each material onto its own layer. I'll loosely block in local colour and begin to light it with value, locking down the layer and using an Airbrush with lowered opacity.



11 Search for details

This is one of my favourite parts. I love to zoom in on a particular area and be surprised by what the traditional texture of the pencil on paper will present. At this stage it's all about making things 'bump', that is in this case adding highlights to the top of edges and shadows to the underside.



12 Filter

For large, flat areas such as the thigh where line-work and texture is void, I'll throw a Noise filter over the layer. This will help once again with feeling less digital.



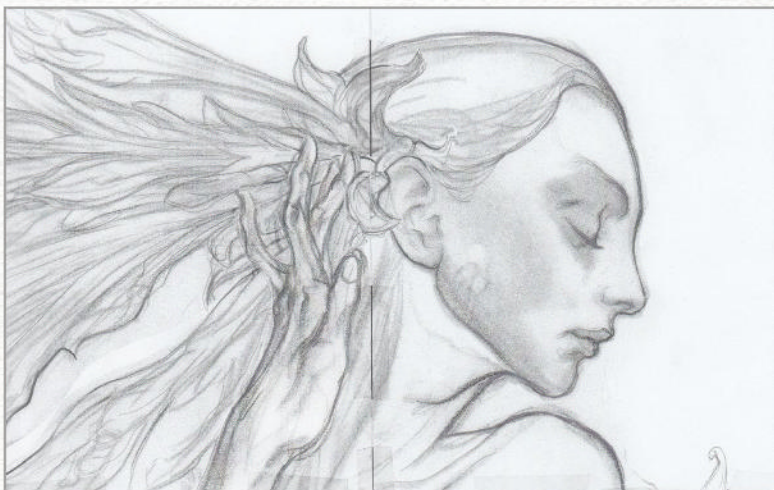
13 Make elements glow

For this, I may paint over the top with a layer set to Overlay or Screen. Alternatively, adding a layer set to Color Dodge and filling it with black, before airbrushing on it with a saturated colour, will really make things glow. It's like painting with a Glow brush in Corel Painter.



14 Finishing touches

Eventually I'll paint digitally over the traditional line layer in certain areas where I want the viewer to look. This is when the painting really begins to sing and the ugly duckling stage begins to fade away. I'll continue this stage to my heart's content, or until the client pulls the plug on my time. 🍷



Technique focus

TENDING TO A FLORAL VISION

JASON MOWRY talks us through the evolution that bloomed in his botanically inspired artwork

The early seed for this painting started as a garden of symbolic ciphers. The floral forms speak to the central figure and are collected around the character.

Many shapes have origins in botanical forms, but I wanted to avoid recognisable representations or studies, so I let the flowered forms evolve. Some started as ghost flowers and bloomed big, wet eyes. Many of the flowers are nods to Hieronymus Bosch and his painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, with soft and spiny elements making their way into the final artwork.

I made several simple gestural studies and worked with a model for reference. Arriving at the final pose for the central, emotionally charged figure was a confluence of study and serendipity. A solid line drawing was helpful when starting the painting, but I left room for the garden to bloom spontaneously.



Jason has exhibited globally in fine art galleries including Arcadia Gallery and Outré, and in 2019 and 2021

illustrated Thomas Harris's Red Dragon and Hannibal books. His third solo show for Haven Gallery opened in January.





First Impressions

✧ Jacob Walker ✧

The fantasy artist introduces his favourite work and early influences



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

I grew up in rural Indiana, in the US Midwest. I spent much of my time outside in the woods and have a love of nature. Many of my early art influences had great representations of nature in their work, such as Maxfield Parrish, Roger Dean and Alphonse Mucha.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your art over the years? Music! It's not visual but somehow seems relevant. Music puts me in the right space to paint, as if it can put me in the space I'm painting.

You're a child, you see a piece of art that changes everything. Where are you, what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?

I remember looking at my mom's album covers for the band Yes. She then showed me a book by the same artist, Roger Dean. I was glued to that book for a long time.

“ Music puts me in the right space to paint, as if it can put me in the space I'm painting ”

What was your next step? Did other interests vie for your attention?

What was the deciding factor?

I found comic books and fell in love with that medium for a while. Then when I was introduced to Magic: The Gathering, I found fantasy that felt fresh and weird, and I loved it. Anson Maddocks and Mark Tedin were my favourites in those days. They changed my direction. ➔



THE GREEN SEER

This creature sees all that nature sees. This piece came from a doodle in my sketchbook.



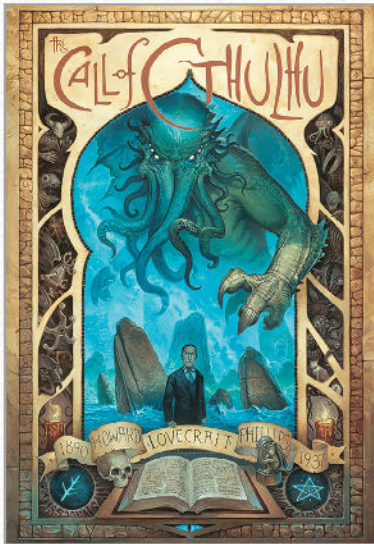
MUNINN

I love Odin's quest for knowledge and the part that his ravens play in it.

LINK VS GOHMA FAN ART

Sometimes I get private commissions that make me wonder, 'Why didn't I paint that sooner?'





CALL OF CTHULHU

When the pandemic hit and we were in lockdown, I channeled madness into it for three months.

➔ Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?

I went to Gen Con for the first time in 2002. I took a bunch of xeroxed copies of my pen and ink work and hit up some third-party Dungeons and Dragons publishers. I can't remember the first gig that I received, but it came from that. I cringe at the very thought of seeing those early pieces again.

What is the last piece that you finished? How do the two differ?

My new work is on par with a lot of what I wished I could do back when I started out. Seeing that growth makes me hopeful that I can continue to grow and not get burned out or too stagnant.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?

'Draw more' seems to be the answer to almost every problem. It seems like a boring answer, but it's the seed that everything grows from. Draw with the intent to learn.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?

I don't think I had the foresight to even ask myself what it would be like when I was a starry-eyed young

“ Seeing that growth makes me hopeful I can continue to grow and not get stagnant ”



HARVEST HULK

A witch's construct made for their protection during the harvest ritual.

artist. It's such a roller coaster of finances and emotion.

Workshops and schools focus on teaching art, but very few actually address how to make a living or a life out of it. I love discussing this topic with other artists.

How has the industry of art changed for good since you've been working in it?

Ways to make money have blossomed thanks to both the internet and conventions. Now, illustrators are no longer tied to or limited by what freelance work they can get. In many cases, freelance rates have made it much less

desirable than making creator-owned content instead.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?

My Call of Cthulhu poster probably has the biggest intersection of interest. I love poster art, Art Nouveau, cosmic horror, and painting monsters. None of my work says much about me, just the things that I like.

Jacob Walker is an illustrator and artist who primarily paints monsters using traditional materials. Outside of personal projects, he works for tabletop game makers and book publishers. See more of his art at www.jacobwalkerart.com.

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