NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

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KIM JUNG GI

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Follow how Kim Jung Gi creates this art over on page 64!

FUTURE
ISSUE 178

INSIDE **LINE-DRAWING SKILLS** • ARTRAGE TECHNIQUES • **FINNIAN MACMANUS' SKETCHBOOK** TIMOTHY VON RUEDEN INTERVIEW • **NEW KRITA SERIES** • YOUR ART AND LOTS MORE!

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Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



I'm honoured and excited to share our latest issue with you. It was incredible to work with the legendary Kim Jung Gi on the cover art. I asked him to create something that represented a world of artists creating art in a myriad of ways: digitally, in VR, or with a pen or pencil. I even got him to sneak in a copy of ImagineFX. This illustration represents your world and I sincerely hope you love it as much as I do.

As always, I strive to fill each issue with new skills. In the coming pages you will learn new techniques ranging from Autodesk SketchBook concept knowledge, to new ArtRage and Krita insights. My aim is for you to be the best artist that you can be!

Starting this month is a series on pencil drawing by Timothy Von Rueden. He also took time to chat with us about his life in art. His words revealed the state of affairs in art today – especially with the effects of social media. Some artists now feel pressured to paint for their audience and not for themselves. Timothy calls for you to only create work that brings you personal joy. I hope that you find a way to do this.

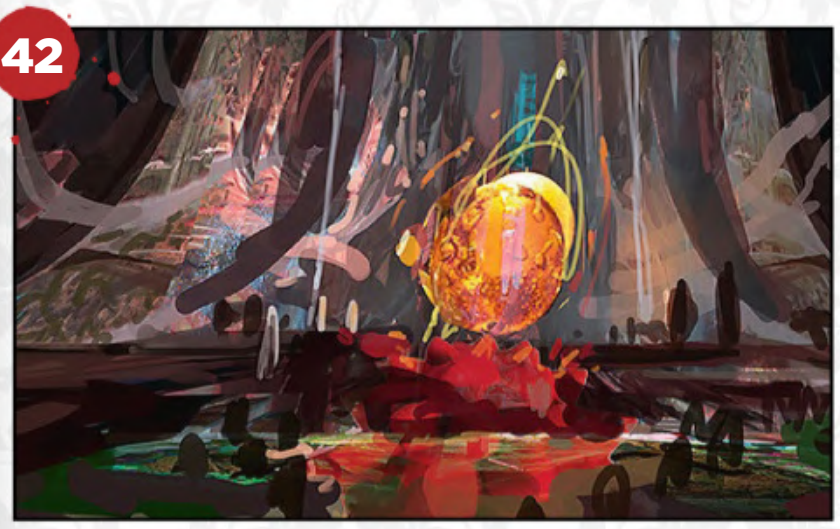
Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

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



Submit your work to ImagineFX!
I'll shout this from the rafters until I'm carted out of here! See the link on the bottom of page 10 for details.



Finnian MacManus's sketches
Finnian is a positive force in art today and our creative community is a better place for having him in it.



ArtRage 6
Our aim is to offer you painting alternatives to Photoshop. Find out if ArtRage could work for you.

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Cover art for issue 172 by Asia Ladowska

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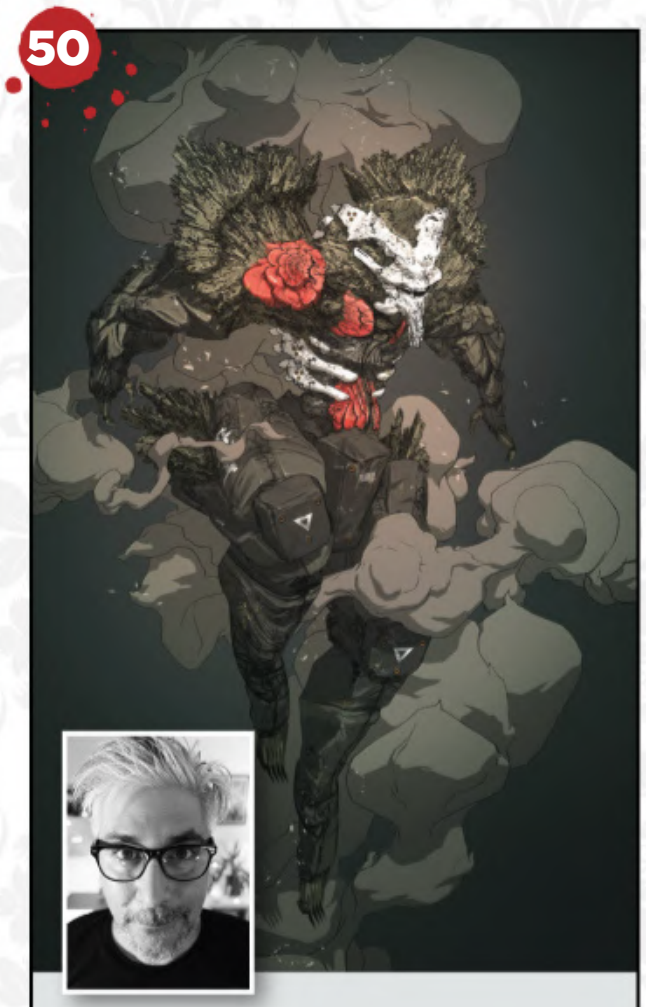
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The art of William Blake

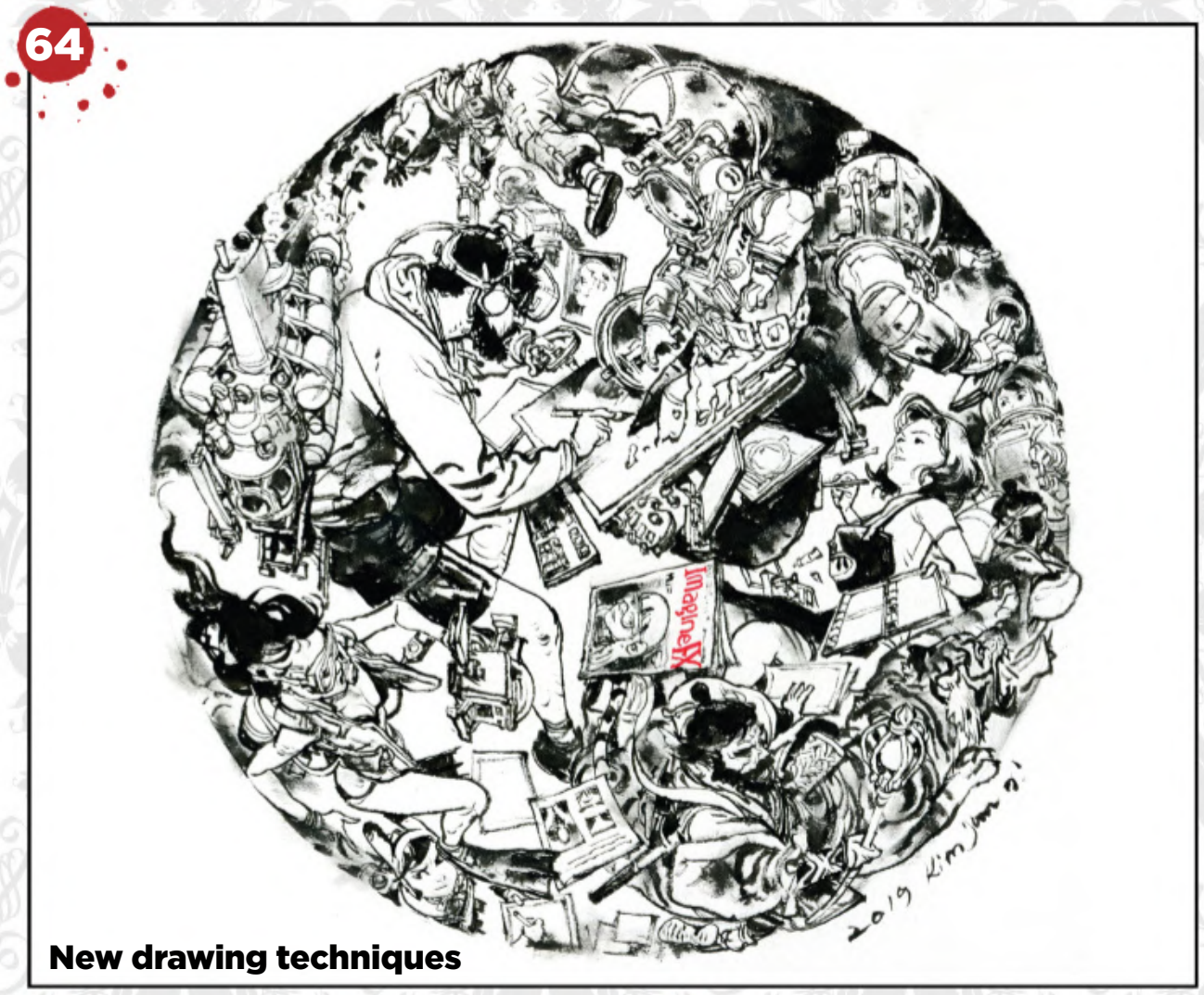
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Artist in Residence: Sam Flegal







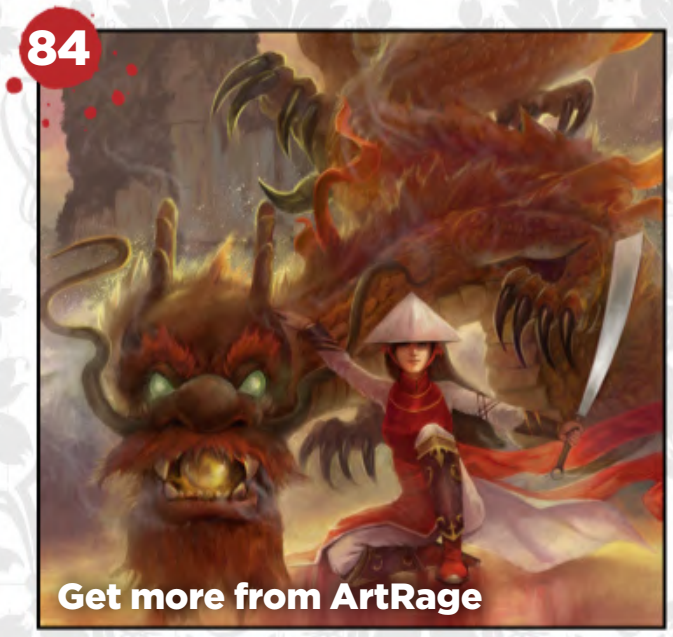
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This US illustrator and author adopts a pragmatic outlook to his career…

ImagineFX Resources

Getting hold of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **https://ifxm.ag/drawing178skills**

OVER 2 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

COVER WORKSHOP



GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): **https://ifxm.ag/drawing178skills**

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

3 Download what you need...
Download the files or watch them via a bespoke YouTube link.

See Kim Jung Gi's drawing techniques

Watch the master artist at work, as he gradually builds up a complex circular composition filled with characters and details. He makes it look so easy! Gain insights into his process on page 64.





WORKSHOPS



Streamline your ArtRage painting process

In his video, Steve Goad reveals how he gets the most from ArtRage's layer effects and natural brush engine, while becoming a more efficient artist. See his workshop on page 84.



Autodesk SketchBook skills

Watch Monika Zagrobelna create an original fantasy creature from scratch. See page 76.



Medusa in mixed-media

Watch how Kelly McKernan paints the mythical figure with added glow. Page 104.



Core skills: line drawing

Follow Timothy Von Rueden step-by-step advice to creating better line art.

TRAINING



Photobash a sci-fi scene

On page 95 we review Chris Madden's video on quickly creating spaceship concept art.

ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx



Pierre Santamaria

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3D-Coat, KeyShot, Modo **WEB:** www.artstation.com/pierresantamaria

"A friend once told me it was obvious I'd rather live in the worlds I created," says illustrator Pierre of his artistic approach. "I'm attracted to colourful yet dark science fiction."

2



3



1 TITAN'S PORTAL
"My first attempt at a book cover. It kicked off the story for my personal project about space colonisation. Every planet in the solar system can be reached via these portals."

2 THE BEGINNING OF THE END
"The main character looks back to the first days of the war, watching as her father leaves to embark on a senseless bloodbath. The sky is set to dawn to capture her mood."

3 RETURNING HOME
"After having explored a lifeless and deserted planet, a tired soldier returns home. I tried to depict how lonely you would feel in such a hostile place."



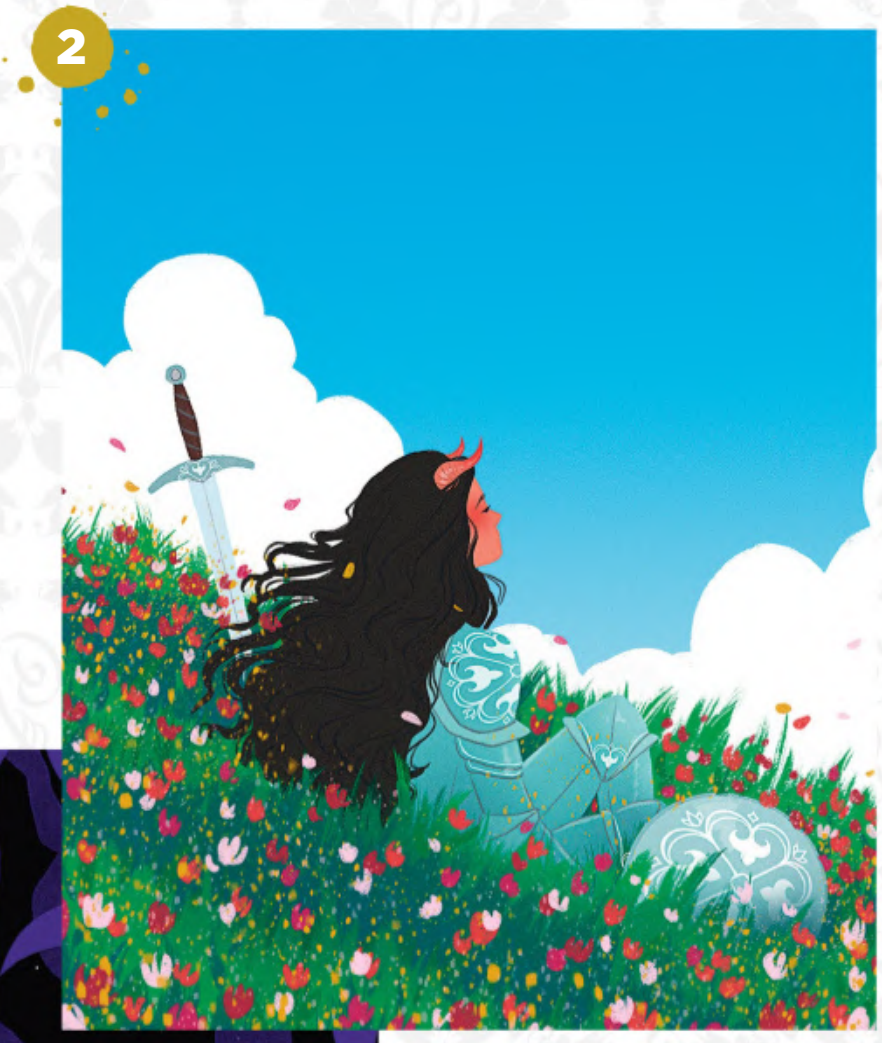
Kim Ekdahl

LOCATION: Sweden **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop
WEB: www.pinktofuart.me

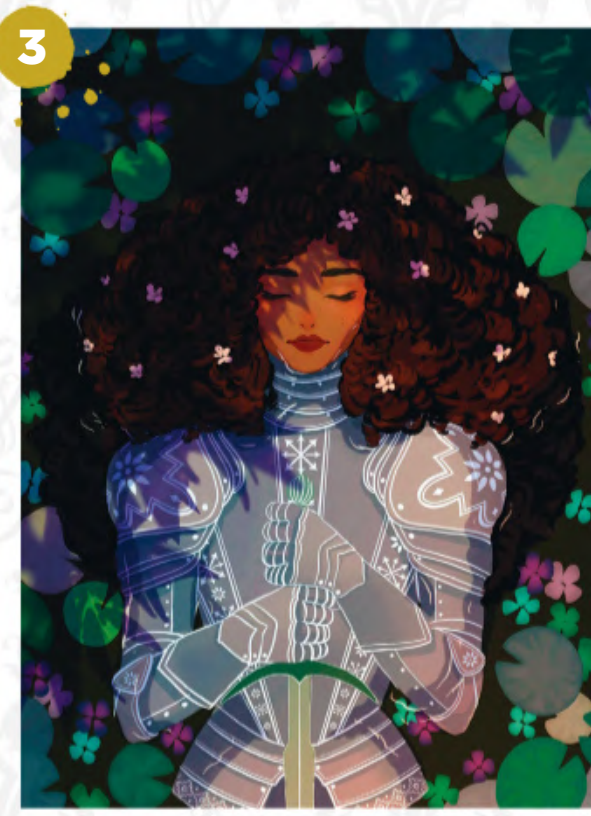
Kim worked as a games artist before becoming a full-time illustrator. "I enjoy creating characters that I hope different people can see themselves in," she says.

1 LETTING GO
"When I created this I was trying to improve my storytelling. It's also one of the first animated paintings I made, which you can view at my website."

2 A WELL-DESERVED REST
"Creating this was such a calming experience. Painting can be a way to take a break from reality and just get lost in the world you're creating."







3 THE KOI POND
"This is another version of an older illustration. It's nice to be able to recycle your art sometimes when you lack inspiration. This redraw eventually became one of my favourite pieces."

4 FLOW
"In this piece I was really inspired by old Japanese paintings. I take a lot of inspiration from how they're painted, especially natural elements such as waves, clouds and trees."

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4





Noé Leyva

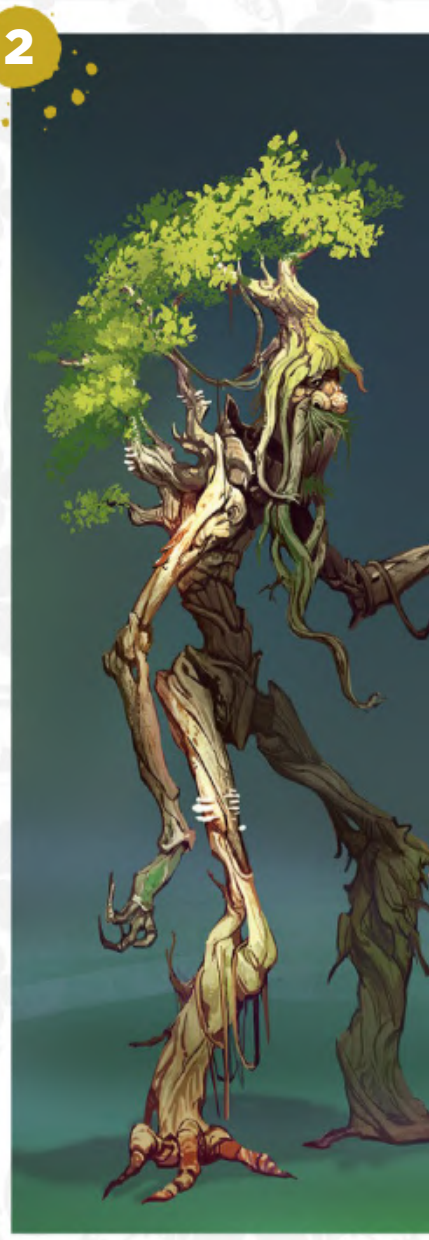
LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush, Unreal Engine 4, Cinema 4D **WEB:** www.artstation.com/noe-leyva

Noé is a freelance concept artist living in Los Angeles. He creates colourful worlds and creatures that are inspired by his Mexican roots and experience of desert border town living.

1



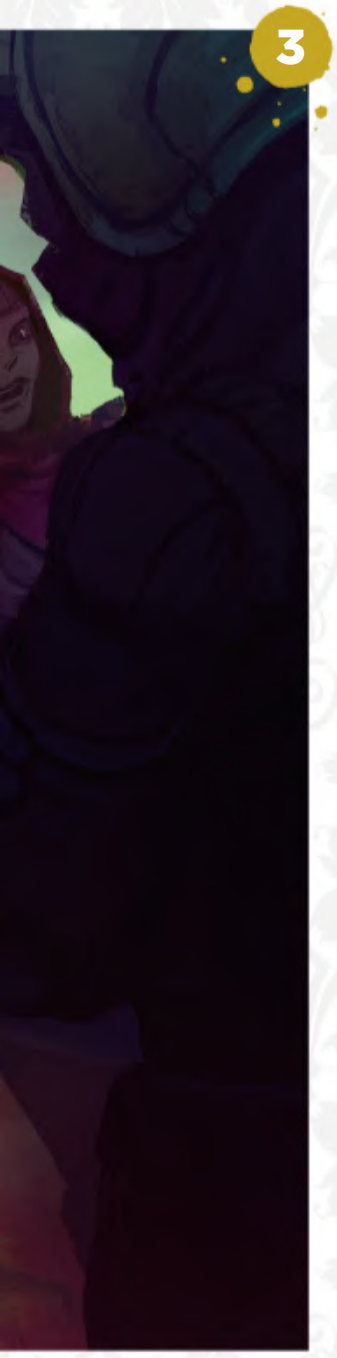
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1 THE DAM
"In this desert planet scene a guard observes a convoy arriving at the gate with precious cargo. I used some 3D as a base and rendered in Unreal Engine 4."

2 ENT GROUP
"I'm a big fan of Tolkein's The Lord of the Rings and wanted to create my own collection of Ents. I enjoyed playing with the different types and shapes."

3 RED PATH
"Part of a sci-fi story where the protagonists escape an opposing force. I wanted to portray a colourful and cramped street, full of lights and characters."

4 THE FUNERAL
"This was inspired by Mesoamerican culture. A funeral procession is headed towards the palace. The painting is part of a larger story that I want to develop."



M. Victoria Robado

LOCATION: Argentina **MEDIA:** Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop **WEB:** www.shourimajo.com

M. Victoria's works mix pastel and neon colours, and incorporate themes of Kawaii culture, space and magic. As a professional comic artist, she focuses on creating a narrative beyond her illustrations.

1 BUBBLE TEA
"I love bubble tea, and I love kawaii characters. With her candy coloured hair, this cutie is a perfect representation of everything that brightens up your day!"

2 AKUMA
"The devil is making her rounds – and she's spoiling for a fight. I love to illustrate my characters using clean lines and pastels, applying neon colours."

3 80S NEON
"Lasers and music, baby! She's not shy with her neon hair and loud makeup. Crank up the music and hit the dance floor. She'll be partying until the sun comes up."

1



2



3



4 FRAPPUNICORN
"A delicious magical drink for a magical cutie! This illustration led to a break in my style, and it made me fall in love with drawing again."

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FXPosé

4





Jay Lytwynenko

LOCATION: Scotland **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/mali-asunder

Jay – known as Mali Asunder – is an artist and lecturer with a background in animation and game design. "I'm interested in depicting stories through art," she says.

1



2





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1 CROSSING
"Fan art from Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild. Link wades through water, progressing on his journey. The woods look suspicious though – best be careful of those pesky Guardians."

2 CLIMBING FRAME
"A couple decides to expand their family with kittens, but forget how much work they can be. Goodbye expensive curtains! It doesn't look like the resident cat is best pleased, either."

3 PASSING
"Two very different people pass while out walking their dogs (or being walked by their dog, in one case) in the local park. They share a brief moment together before it quickly fades."

4 DEEP THOUGHT
"Sometimes, sound becomes muffled when you get lost in your own thoughts. It feels like being underwater. All you notice is your own breath."







Portrait of William Blake in his late 40s, painted by Thomas Phillips.

Thomas Phillips (1770-1845), William Blake (1807). National Portrait Gallery, London



The Ancient of Days is one of Blake's best-recognised pieces, completed from his deathbed in 1827.

William Blake, Europe Plate i: Frontispiece, The Ancient of Days (1827). The Whitworth, The University of Manchester

Behold the great dragon

Unearthly visions Truly original and a significant influence on fantasy art, William Blake is being celebrated with a major new exhibition in London. **Garrick Webster** finds out what's on show

London's art scene is bracing itself as a new William Blake exhibition opens at Tate Britain on 11 September. Over 300 works by the painter, engraver and poet are to go on display for the five-month show, together with a series of exhibits to emphasise Blake's relevance in the 21st century.

Often associated with patriotic fervour due to his poem Jerusalem, Blake was actually a maverick in his day and regularly clashed with authority. During the years of this life – 1757 to 1827 – Britain was in a state of political and religious turmoil, while revolution raged in Europe and the US. This fed into his work, but he allowed his imagination to reign supreme and, though often inspired by the Bible, Shakespeare and Milton, his paintings are dominated by spirits, visions and holy characters of Blake's own invention. Works such as The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea, and The Ancient of Days are among the paintings you'll be able to experience at Tate Britain.

The immediacy of Blake's style is what gives his work its impact, even if you aren't aware of the complex poetic and classical references that inspired the artist. "That was something which disturbed many of his contemporaries, but it's also his strength. It's something we want to emphasise in this show,



giving visitors a chance to encounter his art in an immediate and direct way," says **Martin Myrone**, the lead curator of pre-1800 British Art at Tate Britain.

> "We want the show's visitors to encounter Blake's art in an immediate and direct way"

PROJECTED ART

Despite his powerful compositions and the radical posturing of his characters, Blake never found public favour in his lifetime. With this in mind, the Tate is taking two images Blake intended



DEM BONES, DEM BONES...

Sam Flegal has filled his studio with objects to help inspire him, such as this shelf of skulls. You'll also find out how Kermit the Frog ended up there...

Page 24



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LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

Want to see your favourite artist or particular painting technique in the magazine? Then get in touch with us, and we'll try to make it happen!

Page 31

The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea is one of several red dragon images that Blake painted.

William Blake, The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea (c.1805). National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection, 1943



Artists Siggi Valur and Raffaella captured some of Blake's passion in their mural, which hangs in Café Loki, in central Reykjavik.



Wayne Barlowe painted Sargatanas Descending as a homage to Blake's distinctive style and influence.



William Blake, The Ghost of a Flea (c.1819-1820). Tate

Painted 200 years ago, the idea for Ghost of a Flea came from a seance that Blake participated in.

to recreate as vast frescos – The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan and The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth – and will project them on to the gallery wall at an enormous scale. Both are examples of how Blake would combine contemporary events and prophecy, baffling fellow artists and patrons.

In another move to give the artist the recognition he deserves, the Tate will recreate William Blake's only commercial show. Having fallen out with a gallery owner, Blake staged his 1809 exhibition in a room above his wife's hosiery shop in London. Visitors to the Tate will be able to step into a space replicating the scene and inspect the paintings on show.

AN EARLY INFLUENCER

Blake's work has resonated with artists through the ages. Whether illustrating Dante's Divine Comedy or his own invented crypto-Christian mythology, Blake was an artist who pushed the emotional content of his works to the threshold of madness. An early Romanticist, he's influenced everyone from Pre-Raphaelites such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the 1850s to 20th century surrealists such as Paul Nash.

Like Blake, US fantasy artist **Wayne Barlowe** has envisaged a range of biblical and mythological creatures, and has painted Hell itself. "While I love his palette and style, it's really the esoteric, symbolist nature of his interpretations of







The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan will be projected on a large scale on the walls of Tate Britain.

William Blake, The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan (c.1805-1809). Tate

Milton that have worked their way into my subconscious. One can view his work independent of the text and still be moved,” says Wayne.

Painted by Siggi Valur and Raffaella in 2014, the mural in Café Loki in Reykjavik is one of Iceland’s most famous renderings of the Norse gods yet is full of elements inspired by Blake’s paintings of his own mythological beings. Indeed, Loki strikes the same posture as Urizen in Blake’s The Ancient of Days.

“What fascinates me about Blake is the intensity in the body language, and how powerful his muscled bodies were,” says storyboard and fantasy artist **Siggi**. “There is such fire and intensity in Death on a Pale Horse, where anatomical correctness was put aside and exaggerated poses take over. I was bewildered with his drawing for The Divine Comedy of an impossible scene called The Circle of the Lustful – chaotic and horrible, as if driven by a fear of damnation.”

Above all, perhaps, Blake was a superb visual storyteller, and his ability to transcend the text of whatever he illustrated has influenced the graphic novels of Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison and Alan Moore, among others.

For more details of the William Blake exhibition visit www.tate.org.uk.



Photography by Loraine Posadas Flegal

I keep two Sansevieria plants in my studio. After reading an article by NASA, I learned that Sansevieria are useful for filtering out chemicals used in oil painting. Great for safety and making your studio look nicer!

Nord-Bibliothek.



“I wanted a space that truly reflected my needs as a professional artist”



Sam Flegal

Curios a go-go From medieval helmets and armour to skulls and art supplies, this illustrator's studio is a collection of oddities that delight the imagination



One of Odin's many names is Grimnir, meaning the hooded or masked one. He's a shapeshifter, a man of many faces, and I wanted to draw on that for this painting.



I've been a working illustrator for almost 10 years. During this time, my studio was a room that lacked functionality and design, consisting of old furniture and insufficient storage space. So in 2018, I decided to remodel my studio. I wanted a space that truly reflected my needs as a professional artist and showcased the things that inspired me.

The first step was putting in a laminate wood floor. I had beige carpet in my old studio and it was a nightmare. Guess what? It's really difficult to remove black ink from a beige carpet! As an artist, you must accept the fact that you're going to spill things on the floor, so make sure that you have a surface which can handle the mess.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



I'm primarily a traditional artist, working mostly in oil paint and ink. I collect a lot of art supplies, so it's important to have enough space to store all of these materials in my studio. Whenever possible, I mark up containers with a label maker and store them in easy-to-find places. Nothing is more frustrating than happily working away in an artistic groove and then having to stop and search around for the art supply that you suddenly need!

In addition, I needed to have a space in my studio that would enable my paintings to dry. My solution was to install a shelf with a lip above my work area. Now my wet paintings have a dedicated place in the studio and visitors can see my various works-in-progress without fear of accidentally knocking them over.

> **Now visitors can see my works-in-progress without fear of knocking them over**

Even though I focus on traditional art, I also love to sketch digitally. I use my computer to gather references, process all the reference photos I take, and handle all the marketing elements necessary for a thriving art career. I keep my digital area as clean and accessible as possible. There are no major frills here, just solid gear that gets the job done. Installed nearby is a microphone for when I'm

I love Jim Henson and, of course, Kermit the Frog. I had a doll just like this as a kid and expressed to my fellow artist and friend, Allen Panakal, that I missed having it. A few weeks later, this green wonder showed up at my door. I'm a lucky guy to have such wonderful people in my life!



The Nine Worlds rest imbedded in the World Tree that's grown around them, providing each world with the support it needs. The deeds of gods and humans, giants and elves, and the creatures of ice and fire, drain like rivers out of each world.





The Norman Rockwell book is one my grandparents gave me, and it's older than me! First published in 1970, it contains actual prints that have been attached to the pages.

I have a fully articulated knight, though he's only one foot tall. All the buckles actually buckle and the swords can be removed from their sheaths. Joining him on the shelf are a crystal skull and an Anglo Saxon-style helm I picked up at Pensacon.





Thor is a force of nature. He is the thunder, the tornado and the storm. His goats propel him through the sky and his red beard blazes through the heavens, as he brings his lightning hammer to bear against the foes of Asgard.

I created this shelf with a lip so that I'd have a good place to store oil paintings while they dry.



ImagineNation Artist in Residence

I bought this longsword when I was 16, while my dad gave me this replica of the MacLeod Clan sword from the Highlander TV show.

I like to load reference photos onto my iPad for use while painting. I have an arm attached to my table so I can easily move the iPad around.

I'm currently working on a painting of Odin's Ravens – Huginn and Muninn .

My wife is Filipino, so when we visited the Philippines I was shocked to find purses and wallets made out of frog hides! It even has a zip in its mouth so you can store things inside it!



I store all my paints on a rolling cart that's thin enough to perfectly slide into the space between my art table legs and the wall.

I converted a kitchen island cabinet into my art taboret. The top area acts as a paint palette by rolling out freezer paper and covering the surface. The paper is held down on the other side with a magnetic strip.

I co-host a web show called One Fantastic Week where we talk about the business of art. I occasionally will drink tea while I'm recording the show, so my wife designed a 1FW mug for me to use!

podcasting and recording audio for my YouTube channel videos.

Not surprisingly, I'm also an avid collector. One of the things I love about being an artist is it gives me an excuse to indulge my various interests. I have several art books, both for reference and inspiration, so sturdy bookshelves were a must! I also needed a place to display my collection of skulls, dragon toys, sculptures, reference maquettes, a one-foot-tall knight with fully articulated armour, and an Anglo Saxon-style helm. I love all these things both as reference and as cool curio cabinet oddities.

The walls of my home are filled with art that inspires me, and this decorating choice extends to my studio as well. I have several paintings and drawings from artists I admire hanging on the walls of my studio, and I also installed several cork bulletin boards so I can pin up ideas and reference images. You never know when the muse will strike, and I find it helpful to have a way to jot stuff down quickly, and pin it up for later review.

"I have several paintings and drawings from artists I admire up on the walls"

Sam is working on a series of oil paintings and drawings called Fateful Signs that delves deep into the ancient lore of the Vikings. More details at www.fatefulsigns.com.



I have all sorts of skulls: cow, beaver, house cat, otter, wolf, coyote, squirrel, muskrat and boar, just to name a few. My friends know I collect skulls, so when one of them found a dead snake while mowing their lawn, they gave it to me. Oddly enough, the snake carcass contained a partially eaten rabbit, so I ended up with a rabbit skull, too!



Having a dedicating cutting space has been amazing, and has saved so much time and back pain from setting a mat on the floor and doing my cutting on the ground!



Over the years I've amassed quite the brush collection. I always keep them handy while painting because you never know exactly which one you'll need.



I came across a sale at Home Depot for a Martha Stewart flat file cabinet. The only catch was its green colour! It's rated for a lot of weight, so I converted the top surface for use as a cutting, frame assembly and mailing station.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Strike a pose

I loved Chantal Horeis' cover art on issue 176 (August 2019) and her workshop. I do enjoy reading tutorials that explore ideas and techniques related to Photoshop, which show how fantasy or sci-fi art can be created in easy steps.

One thing I haven't seen much of in the magazine is using Poser as a starting point, before finishing the piece in Photoshop. I think there's a lot of scope for exploring how to incorporate 3D models into your 2D art: identifying where to purchase good models that can be imported into Poser, Blender or Unity, showing how to adjust them and then exporting the model to Photoshop.

I figured I would just offer that small bit of feedback because I've been subscribing to the magazine for the past two years. Otherwise, well done with this month's issue.

Sarah-Jane Moldenhauer, via email

Claire replies Sarah-Jane, thank you for your feedback and kind words about Chantal's wonderful cover art. We used to feature Poser quite a lot in the early years of ImagineFX. You're right that it's not been in the magazine for a while. I'm in talks with a few different companies that will hopefully provide the kind of 3D models you mention. More soon…



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **https://ifxm.ag/ifx-177**

Reader Sarah-Jane liked finding out how Chantal Horeis created the cover art for issue 176, and wondered if there's scope for more 3D model advice in the magazine.



Structured question

I've just found your magazine and it's amazing! I'm an apprentice at an architecture firm and am going to study postgraduate architecture this September. Could you include more tips and examples of digital communication for built form please? In issue 176 is an artist named Samantha Kung. I'd love to learn Samantha's process from scribbles of the concept to a skeleton of her model and the tips to form organic shapes.

Sarah Alrazak

Claire replies Sarah, this is a fantastic idea – I'll look into it ASAP!

Art challenges

I'm Beth and I'm going into my second year of studying concept art at university. I've been purchasing ImagineFX for over three years now. One of my favourite things about the magazine is the FXPosé and the Sketchbook section. They're full of amazing artists, feeding inspiration to me every time I look at them. I often find myself going back to older issues for inspiration on a new art piece.

While the magazine is filled with so much incredible inspiration, I wonder if adding a prompt for artists to join in on every month to potentially be featured in the next month's magazine could be a good idea? I love doing prompts – they keep you creative and keep you on the ball looking for inspiration.

Love the Letters page and the magazine all round. I hope to reach a level of skill like those in the magazine and maybe one day see my work and name in there, too (a girl can dream.)

Beth, via email

Claire replies Thank you for your wonderful email, Beth! I love your idea of prompts to get readers sending their art in. We used to do this when we had a forum. It was great fun, but perhaps a little tricky to get in art to coordinate with our printing schedules. I've been considering making more of our Fresh Paint section (right) as we get so many people tagging us on Instagram. Perhaps there's something here? Maybe we can link the two ideas together? I'll mull it over. Thanks for giving me a prompt!

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Bryn Jones
@artwithbryn



Aura
@aura.arts



Oliver Cuthbertson
@cuthbertsonart

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



ARTIST PORTFOLIO

TIMOTHY VON RUEDEN

The American illustrator describes to **Gary Evans** the eternal conflict between creating art that means something and art that makes money



BLIND CONFIDENCE
"I liked the idea of reversing the negative stigma of the phrase 'blind confidence' into something more of courage. Even though you don't know what lies ahead, you're ready for whatever's thrown your way with a few bruises and scratches to be expected."

There's a question that we like to ask artists. It's a slightly awkward and admittedly, slightly pretentious question. Sometimes the answer will be short, evasive, diplomatic. Other times the answer will be long, theoretical, philosophical. Either way, directly or indirectly, the answer always tells you something interesting about the artist and their work. The question is this: what's the difference between good art and great art?

Timothy Von Rueden understands – and partly agrees – with the usual objections to this question: that art

> **"Everyone has an opinion, but it's taboo to share it with others"**

shouldn't be judged, that art is subjective. "However," the American artist says, "over the years, I've found everyone actually does have an opinion, but it's taboo to share that opinion with others. I do believe there is a difference, and this belief often gets me in trouble."

Timothy doesn't have an "official job." He doesn't answer to clients or art directors. He doesn't have to adapt his style to fit game developers or animation studios. So it may seem

Artist **PROFILE**

Timothy Von Rueden
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Jeremy Bastian, Yuuki Morita, Alphonse Mucha, Akishi Ueda and Allen Williams
MEDIA USED: Pencil
WEB: www.vonnart.net



VINDICATION
"I drew this to give more people of colour representation in the fantasy realm."



QUIET STRENGTH

"This drawings represents feeling strong without being the centre of attention. As though you find your confidence in being quiet and by listening."



DANDELION WANDERER
"While outside on a summer day I started drawing the dandelions and then this small creature appeared to me."



CURIOSITY
"One of my 'bird helmet' creations that I often draw while on an aeroplane. They're a fun way to explore a familiar concept."

like Timothy has no problem giving an honest answer to our question because he makes art solely to please himself. Not the case.

Timothy's career is, in one sense, very modern: he uses social media to promote his own range of sketchbooks, original artwork, prints and enamel pins. However, he faces the same old problem that artists have always faced. The gallery is now Instagram. The patron is now the follower. But the aim is still the same: get the work seen and get the work sold.

"Social media has been so wonderful and connecting, but it's also been detrimental for many artists as we feel a need to cater our work for a reaction, whether it's likes or shares. I find that the top-followed artists are no longer passionate about creating work that's inventive, from a place of passion, but rather meeting quota and filling expectations.

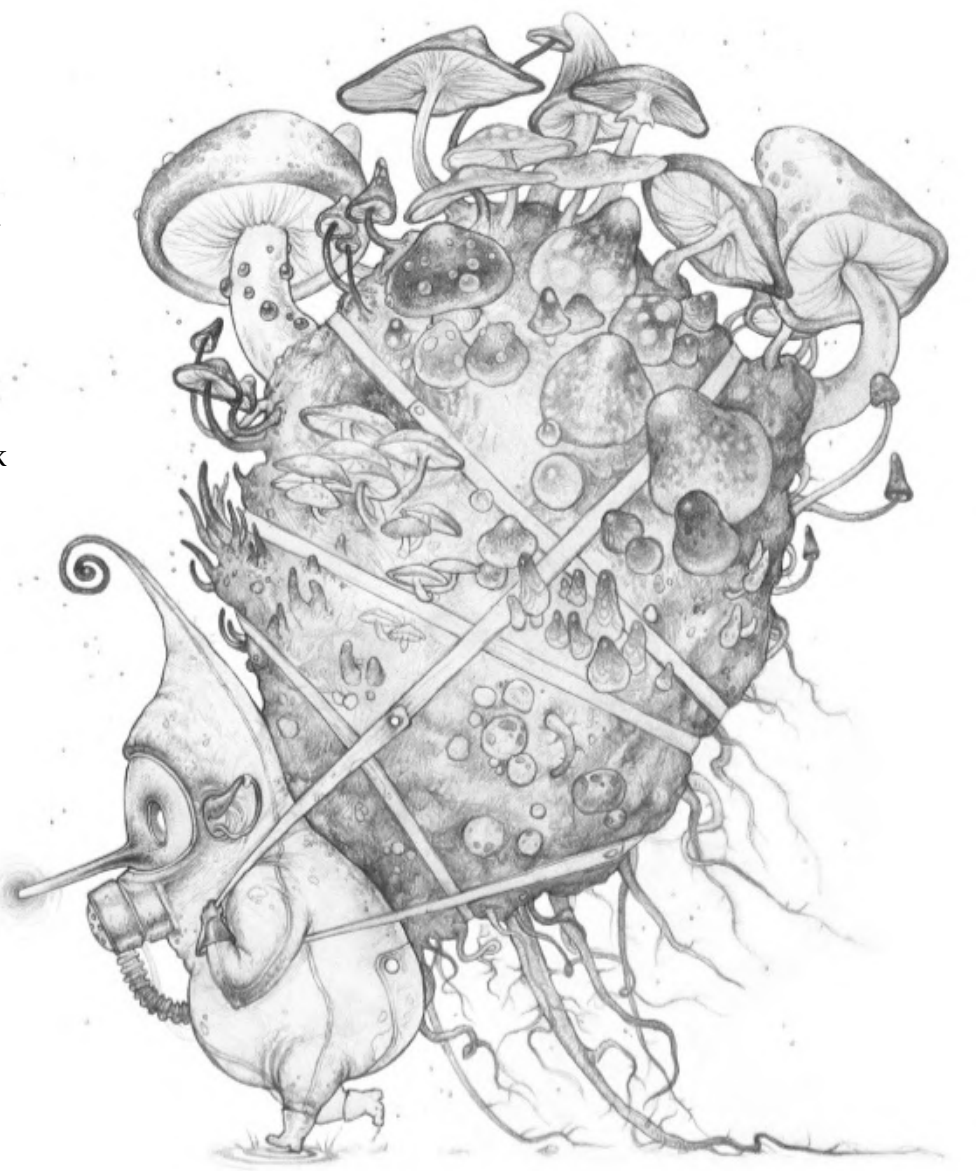
"So when an artist is just pumping out female portraits, and it seems as if they have to, rather than want to, that is the difference for me. Great art comes from a place of authenticity and is often a marriage between a creative pursuit and a technical prowess."

It's an annoyingly good answer. So our new, slightly more awkward, slightly more pretentious question is this: how do you make great art – work that comes from this place of passion, this place of authenticity – and still get likes, shares and make money?

"Social media has been so wonderful and connecting, but it's also been detrimental for many artists"

EXPLORING BIZARRE WORLDS

Timothy grew up in New Berlin ("small-town Wisconsin"). His big things were drawing and video games – particularly Final Fantasy X and Twisted Metal Black. He was interested in the "bizarre worlds" these games created. For the same reason, he was into movies like Spirited Away,



FUNGUS COLLECTOR
"A macabre representation of feeling introverted. He collects only poisonous shrooms to keep others away, while wearing a gas mask to stay immune."



BATTERED BUNNIES
"My unofficial mascots are a black and white bun. Contrast is in everything I create and these kids were another iteration!"

Moulin Rouge and The Rocky Horror Picture Show. His parents always encouraged him, but they didn't know much about art (much later, when people would ask what her son did for a living, Timothy's mother would say his job, 3D concept artist, was to "do things like Shrek").

"It was also apparent that I was different from other boys. I wasn't interested in football or girls and definitely didn't enjoy action movies. Instead, I delighted in writing my own piano songs and cried at the end of Digimon.

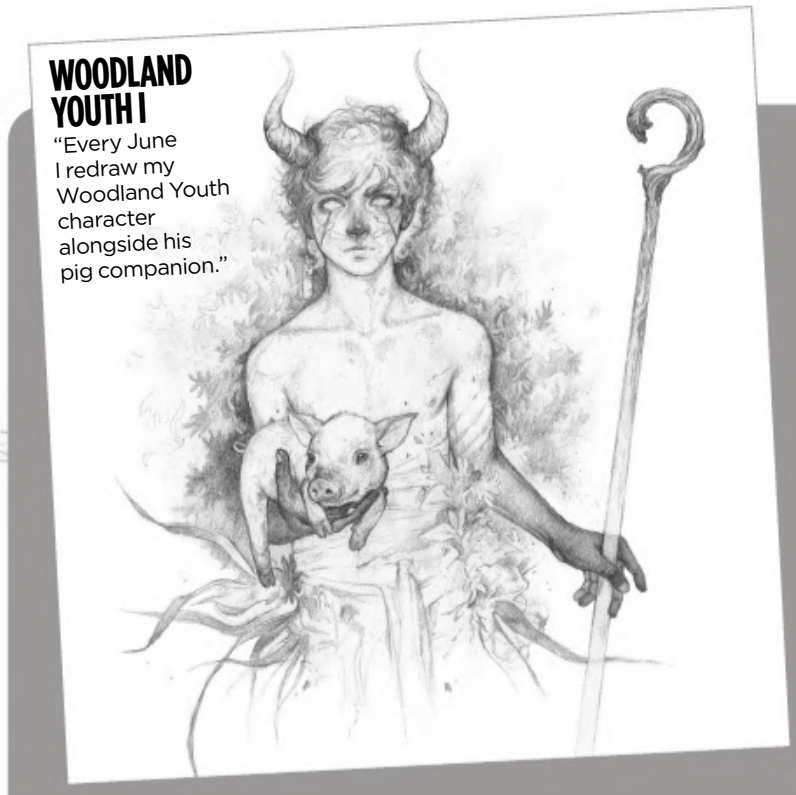
"I spent a lot of time by myself just creating and making things up. Hindsight would indicate that I drew to be heard – in a visual language that could be understood by others. I wanted to connect and so I kept on drawing."

In 2008, after high school, Timothy joined the three-year course in game art and design at the Illinois Art Institute. It was a good time for a couple of reasons ("not because of the quality of the education," says Timothy). First, he was surrounded by like-minded people: he could reference Studio Ghibli and they would know what he was talking about; he wouldn't have to awkwardly explain why the Kingdom Hearts soundtrack made him cry. And, second, these people were passionate, talented artists. It was healthy competition: "I give them a lot of credit for empowering me to be better and 'get good' quickly… I look back on these years fondly as no longer being the weird one who liked to draw, but rather another art fiend in a collection of misfits."

> **"I was different from other boys. I wasn't interested in football or girls and definitely didn't enjoy action movies"**

FROM PUPIL TO TEACHER

Timothy was 21 when he got a job with CG Cookie – a website doing tutorials for animation artists and game developers. He started out making



WOODLAND YOUTH I
"Every June I redraw my Woodland Youth character alongside his pig companion."

WOODLAND YOUTH SERIES

Timothy reveals how – and why – he draws the same image every year

"Woodland Youth III is part of an ongoing series: I redraw this character, and his pig companion, every June. The first time was to commemorate going vegetarian, and I had no plans to make it an annual thing. But it felt right to redraw him each year, and by the third time I went full vegan for a full year so I wanted a larger illustration to reflect that.

My work is all about intuition. So if a process feels right I'll see where it takes me. In most cases I usually have a rough outline of the concept and look for shapes and areas of focus that I can push out further with contrast or edging. For almost every piece I prefer starting light with a higher H pencil, then slowly build in my HB, 2B and 4B pencils.

You should also see the eraser as another important tool at your disposal. I use a mono zero eraser along with a kneaded eraser, and this helps keep the values in check. From there patience is the biggest tool I have to work with. I never rush an area just to get it done. I try to treat each area with respect and care. This makes the process take far longer, but the results are worth it.

Near the end of a drawing, polishing consists of one more pass to the entire drawing. This includes using the eraser to sharpen the edges and a dark-valued pencil to push the depth one step further. And if there's any area I believe feels unfinished or disproportionate, I'll erase hours of work to correct it. I can't call an image done if there is a glaring mistake that I still see. It will be all I can focus on.

I found this statistic on how many animals are eaten on average by an American each year: one cow, one turkey, one pig, 27 chickens, 40 fish, and 130 shellfish. The image of all these animals flooded my mind and became the composition seen in this piece. I took extra time to do my best and avoid tangents, with so many subjects in one piece, and I feel so much pride for this drawing. It represents my drawing career and of my personal life as well. Plus, I found out I really enjoy drawing fish and chickens!"

WOODLAND YOUTH III

"My vegan tribute piece: one cow, one turkey, one pig, 26 chickens, 40 fish, 130 shellfish. An average American animal consumption for every year."



YOUNG SUMMONER
"This is an apprentice who's pleased with his own ability to summon familiars, even if they do turn out to be a bit... underwhelming."

concept art for its 3D department, then became lead trainer in the concept art division. It was a promotion, but it came with problems: "As someone who was fresh out of school and having to teach others, I felt beyond unqualified."

A good artist knows what colour to use where. But that doesn't necessarily mean they can teach colour theory in terms that are simple and precise. Timothy found this out the hard way. He would have to study a given subject – sometimes for weeks – before putting together a tutorial.

Despite his formal education, Timothy says he learned "pretty much everything" from online resources and experimentation. A degree is good. But a strong portfolio is far more important when it comes to finding work. This was the idea around which Timothy would built tutorials. It worked. His courses attracted thousands of paying enrollees, but making those tutorials also forced him to be a better artist.

LUNAR MERMAID
"A piece blending Mucha's influence and my love for the nautical terrors. This one finds herself basking under the quiet moonlight."

Timothy recreated the atmosphere of art school when he moved into a house in Wisconsin with five artist friends. It sounds like the setup for a sitcom about millennials. The house had a party room. It wasn't uncommon to see somebody making sushi at midnight. There were competitions to see who could come up with the most over-the-top outfit to wear to the local roller rink. The house was "functional-dysfunctional," the artist says.

> **"I was in love with someone who loved someone else the way I loved them..."**

Timothy also saw the other side to life as a millennial, the realities of trying to make a living in creative industries that increasingly can't or won't support young people trying to learn their trade. This was a time when it was becoming more common to hear terms like "be your own brand", "side hustle" and "monetise." It wasn't enough for his housemates to make great work. They had to fight to get that work noticed. It became just as important to be "extremely proactive" and "put yourself out there."

Even Timothy had setbacks. In 2016, he entered an art competition. There would be 30 winners. Timothy, a graduate, an art teacher, an artist with a very respectable online following, was confident he'd be one of them. He wasn't. And the experience was humbling. The house also became more dysfunctional than functional: "I was in love with someone who loved someone else the way I loved them – and I had to live with both of them."

GOING IT ALONE

Timothy knew freelancing would be tough, but, in 2017, he decided to leave his full-time job at CG Cookie and go it alone. It meant giving up good, regular pay, benefits, and leaving behind people he liked working with. It was, frankly, terrifying.

The first three months were the roughest. Worrying about money was at times "overwhelming." He began to



doubt that he'd made the right decision. But these doubts "lit a fire under my bum that propelled me to work harder, faster and smarter."

Timothy set his own deadlines, made sure he drew every day, but also took time off when it felt right. He enjoyed the freedom of being a freelancer (he checks emails just once a week – "I despise emails"), but, if anything, he found himself putting in more hours than he did at CG Cookie, and, more importantly, he felt an increase in creativity.

The tough times at the house also led to big changes. He decided to switch his focus from digital to traditional art, which felt like a better fit for expressing himself. A lot of Timothy's work has a personal story behind it. Recent social media posts include an image depicting his distressing research into the workings of the dairy industry (Timothy is a ➳

ASCENSION
"Based on a giant tree that died in my backyard and having to watch it slowly erode so that its soul may ascend."

THE COLLECTOR

"When meeting the Collector, you choose a key. Pick the right hand and you unlock everything that hand acquired. Pick wrongly and the Collectors takes one of yours."



ART IMITATING LIFE

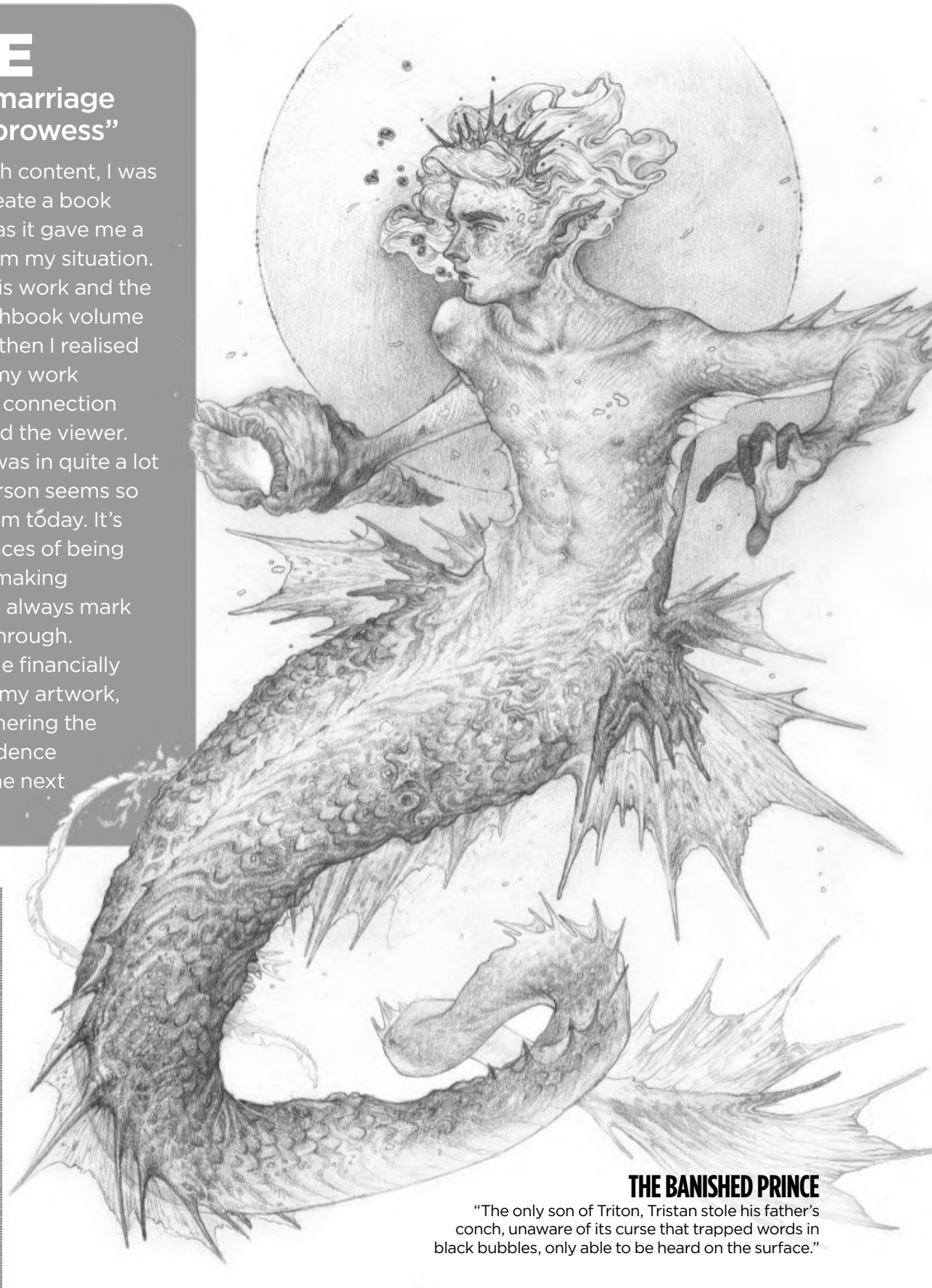
Timothy explains what he means by "the marriage between creative pursuit and a technical prowess"

"I was still primarily a digital artist, and going through the realisation that I wasn't enough for someone else and never would be. This was my first real heartbreak. Every day I was hiding my melancholy and teetering on the edge of exhaustion. I felt disposable and needed something to do to not think about it. I turned to my art as an outlet.

It was during this period that I changed my focus back to traditional drawings, and the work I created reflected this state of being. My drawings had characters that looked empty and defeated. I wasn't hiding how I felt any more and my strange mix of sadness and determination bled through the sketchbook pages.

Page after page told the story of how I felt without having to voice them. With so much content, I was then inspired to create a book from these pieces as it gave me a new distraction from my situation. The response to this work and the eventual first sketchbook volume was instant. It was then I realised how being true in my work garnered a deeper connection between myself and the viewer.

Looking back, I was in quite a lot of pain and this person seems so different to who I am today. It's one of those instances of being given lemons and making lemonade. This will always mark my biggest breakthrough. I starting to become financially independent from my artwork, but also finally gathering the strength and confidence I needed to start the next chapter in my life."



THE BANISHED PRINCE
"The only son of Triton, Tristan stole his father's conch, unaware of its curse that trapped words in black bubbles, only able to be heard on the surface."

> **Sometimes I work with soft, loose lines – like a whisper across the page**

vegan); an allegorical drawing and short story about almost giving up on relationships before meeting his partner; and an illustrated shout-out to supporters of Pride.

"I just go at it with good intention and see what turns out … this doesn't mean they always turn out," he says. "My drawing technique is a process that usually focuses on contrast, gradations, sharpness, negative space, and a heavy emphasis on detailing. The actual process, however, isn't very methodical. Sometimes I work with soft, loose lines – like a whisper across the page – while other times I start outlining bold lines right away. Many of the drawings I create take at least eight hours and upwards of 80."

LIFE ON THE FARM

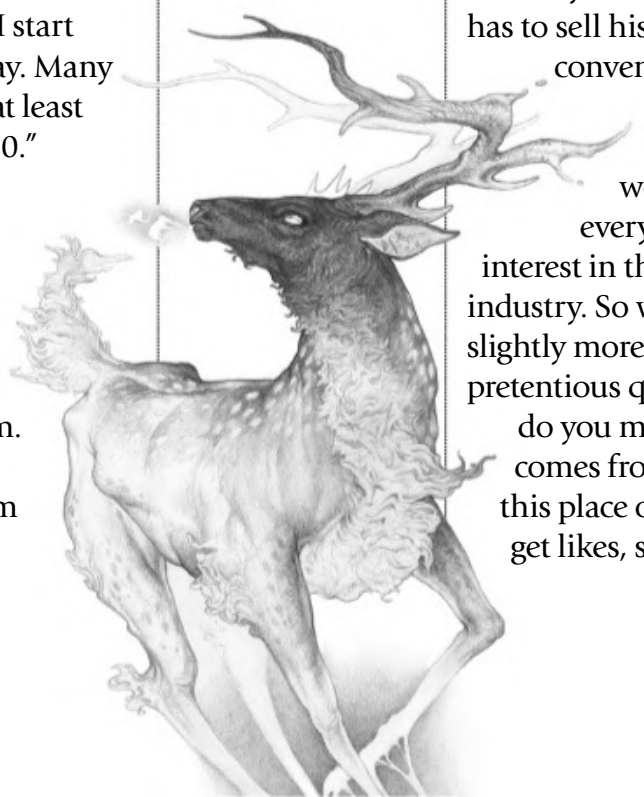
Timothy now lives in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Spare time is spent with nearby friends and family, and working on his backyard farm. If the right offer came in, he would be open to a job in film or games. He does accept the occasional commercial commission. But, mostly, he finds working for someone else "a hindrance." His own ideas take up all of his time, without taking on other people's.

Being an independent artist means Timothy is able to do this. But he still has to sell his art online and at conventions. Big artists wouldn't be pumping out those female portraits if they weren't popular. Not everyone shares Timothy's interest in the workings of the dairy industry. So we stand by our new, slightly more awkward, slightly more pretentious question from earlier: how do you make great art – work that comes from this place of passion, this place of authenticity – and still get likes, shares and make money?

"I find that a true artist's work is often a reflection of who they are. They choose not to hide themselves, but rather display who they are – not only at their strongest but also at their most vulnerable. If you're a patient person then it will show. If you're arrogant then it will show. If you're looking for money then it will show."

Timothy continues: "I see many unknown artists who pour their heart into their work and create pieces that I would consider great, even though the social construct may not reflect that. Despite how this may sound, I'm actually very optimistic these artists are finding that, even if they aren't well known, their work gives them joy. And that's what truly matters to me: creating work that's actually meaningful."

SHADOW PRINCE
"The feeling of being unable to escape your current situation while desperately trying to."



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook

Finnian MacManus

Between working on AAA-projects, this artist has produced an eclectic mix of VR sculpts, gouache studies and digital sketches

Artist PROFILE

Finnian MacManus

LOCATION: US



Finnian is a concept designer working in the film and games industry. He's contributed to titles such as Jungle Cruise, the Avatar sequels, Ad Astra, Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, and Solo. History, culture, architecture, science and nature are all inspirations in his work.
www.fmacmanus.com



LIVE DEMO
"Here, I was showing students how I design a hard-surface building mood shot, while still keeping a focal point and loose brush strokes."

RELIC OF THE SEVEN DAWNS
"Before jumping to a final 3D design, I'll often do multiple thumbnail sketches for the client."



Sketchbook Finnian MacManus

“Doing lunch sketches are a great way to try out new ideas and unwind!”



SIKRI

“This started as a lunch sketch when I was working on God of War. The sketch then set the palette for my project Blue Valley, which I developed for months. Doing lunch sketches are a great way to try out new ideas and unwind!”

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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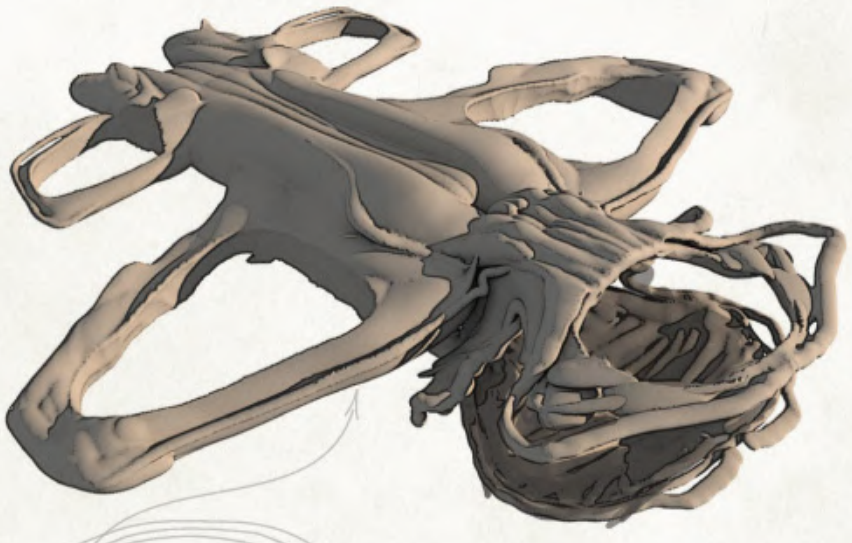
Sketchbook



FREMEN SIETCH

"This was done in around an hour, with many happy accidents occurring in this photo-bashed scene. Sometimes sketching like this with a rough idea can lead to great shapes and lighting out of nowhere."

> "Sometimes sketching with a rough idea can lead to great shapes and lighting out of nowhere"



HAMMER HEAD SKELETON FREIGHTER

"This sketch is a VR sculpt in Oculus Medium. It's a form language study, combining a hammer head skeleton with a sea freighter design. Exercises like this help with developing a design sense and memory."

LIZARD SKIN FIGHTER

"Here's another VR sculpt that mixes a submarine with a lizard's skin. The flaps on either side can move in and out to accommodate both ground and space travel."





BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

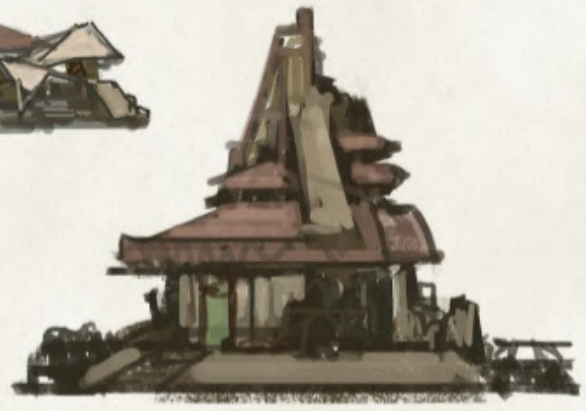
"Studies like this are always useful when trying to find a new style of architecture. These take elements from classic Byzantine buildings, but combined and designed in a new way to indicate a new culture."













OIL REFINERY STUDY

"This was part of a daily study routine I did after work. My colleagues and I would all pick photos online and try to do a 30 minute to one hour interpretation."





DRAGON SKETCH

"This is a VR sketch of a dragon with stretched and animated proportions, and a simple body type. VR sculpts like this can be done quickly, in around 10 minutes."

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook



TRAIL CHAMBERS TEXTURE STUDY

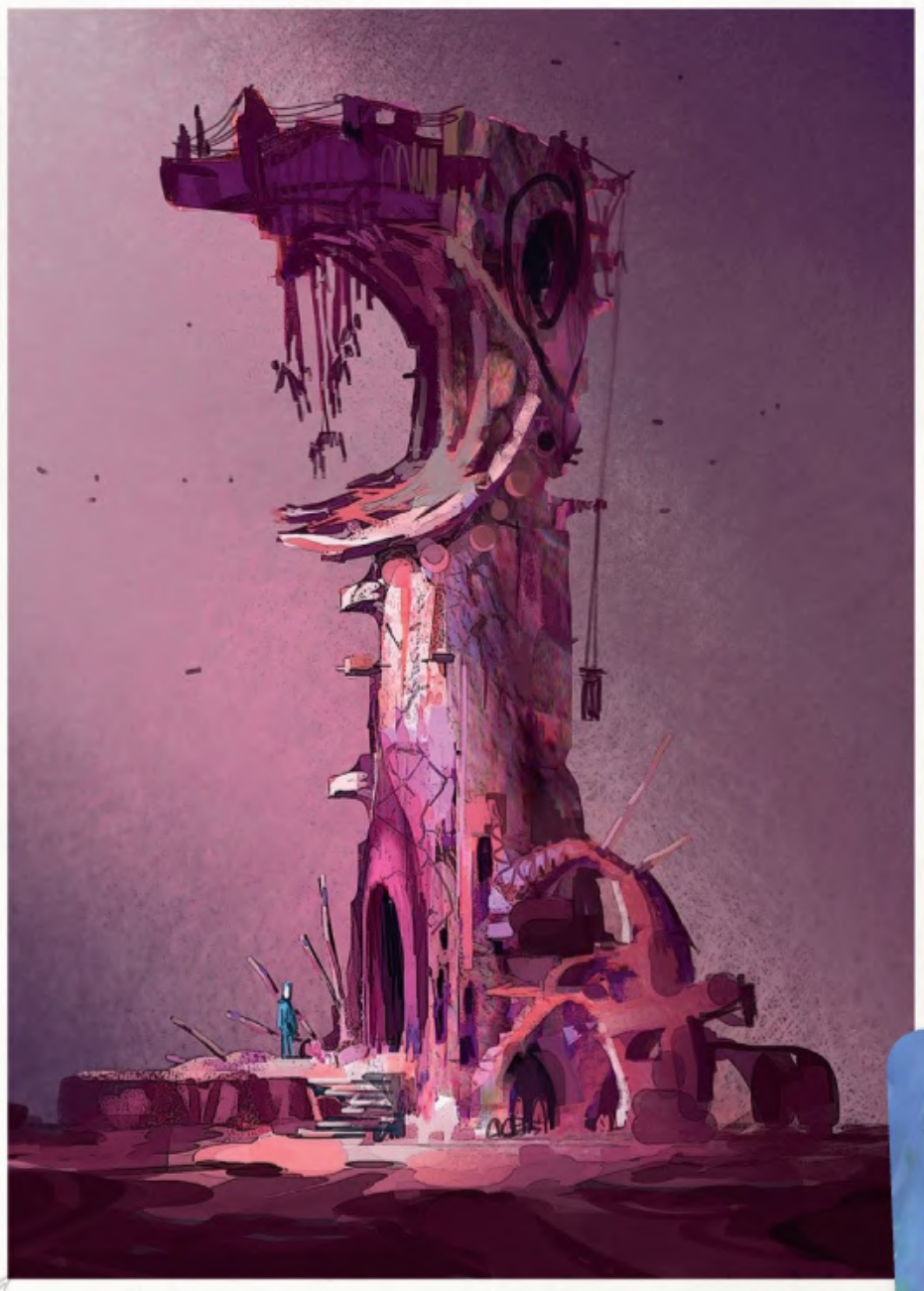
"I find that working with textures can contribute as much life to a world as pencil drawings and a finished render. I'll often carry out texture studies like this to see how much interesting colour information I can convey."



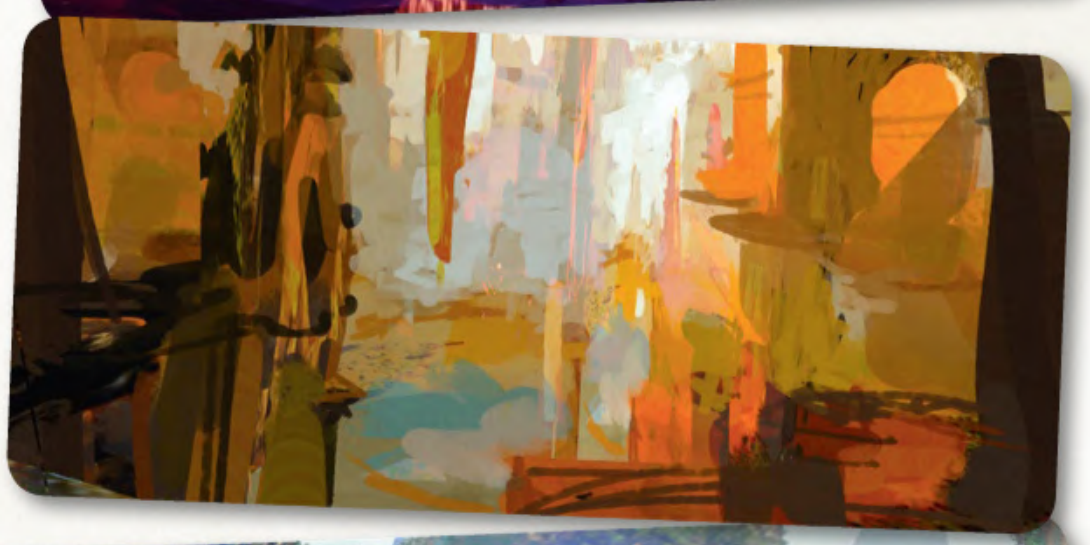


LUITHICA

"The rough and finished sketch of a cityscape for my project Luithica. Starting a black and white read is a great way to block in shapes abstractly, focusing on the composition and lighting, before refining a sketch."









CLASS DEMO

"I took the form language and colours of an earlier marketplace sketch and showed students how to do a call-out design, which is important in a video game portfolio."

SSE SPICER

"For the Spicer project I wanted to show the ship flying through alien worlds. These sketches symbolise different palettes, and helped me determine the most successful 'world' to explore."



> "I find that doing a traditional piece helps commit a scene to memory"

CHURCH IN PORTOFINO, ITALY

"A longer gouache study that took around an hour. I find that doing a traditional painting helps commit a scene completely to memory, which then can go on to inform aspects of digital and commercial pieces."

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

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Issue 177
September 2019

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Issue 176
August 2019

Chantal Horeis' gorgeous cover art is your gateway to interviews with JAW Cooper and Bastien Lecouffe Deharme, workshops on Procreate's new text tools and abstract mark-making, plus we reveal alternatives to Photoshop.



Issue 175
July 2019

Learn the art skills you need to break into the animation industry with pro advice on character art, lighting keys, portfolio work and visual development. Elsewhere, we talk to Florian Satzinger, and artist and animator Aaron Blaise.



Issue 174
June 2019

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ARTIST PORTFOLIO

NIVANH CHANTHARA

The Frenchman tells Gary Evans how his life as a street artist helped him build a career as a blockbuster concept artist

Nivanh Chanthara grew up in a working-class neighbourhood that was a mix of people and cultures from all over the world. He lived in a suburb seven miles east of the centre of Paris. Walking to and from school every day, Nivanh would see a lot of graffiti by "BZ" (Bavaria-Zetla). He reckons that this one crew was responsible for about three-quarters of all the graffiti found in the neighbourhood.

Not that Nivanh was particularly impressed. He had no interest in graffiti and "its codes." He did like to draw, though. Growing up in the 80s, he'd copy the cartoons he was into: G.I. Joe and He-Man, for example. The first Terminator movie – the metal endoskeleton, the military boots, the guns – made a big impression on

FUNGUS AND LICHEN
"This is an exploration of mineral and mechanics. I also tried adding some fungus and lichen. It is fun, but gorgeous at the same time."

NIVANH CHANTHARA



GOT MINERALS
"This an attempt to mix mineral, mechanical and biological parts into one character or creature."

him. So did the manga and anime that'd made its ways to France. Nivanh also had a friend whose dad was Japanese. This friend would return from his annual family holiday to Japan with toy catalogues full of pictures of weird mechs.

LATE TO THE DRAWING PARTY

"Although I always liked to draw during my childhood," the Frenchman says, "I never wanted to make art my career, to earn a living from it. I never had any particular talent for drawing things, but I was just that kid who drew more than the others."

Today, Nivanh is best known for his work as a concept artist, specialising in ape-like robots and post-apocalyptic worlds. He was at Canadian video game developer Eidos-Montréal for five years, working for the first three-and-a-half years on the Deus Ex franchise ("I can't talk about the last year and a half – I'm sorry"). He became a freelancer in 2017 and has contributed concept art to upcoming films Terminator: Dark Fate, Metal Gear Solid, Dune, TV series American Gods, several video games, and a comic ("I can't share any images for now – I'm sorry"). What's really unusual about Nivanh's career – something he is allowed to talk about – is how he became a blockbuster concept artist because of his work as an underground street artist.

> **"I never had any particular talent for drawing. I just drew more than the other kids"**

Nivanh was 20 when he joined the graffiti bandwagon. He was at a BBQ with a couple of friends from the neighbourhood, Dazer and Yoolk. They ate, they drank, they drew on this giant sheet of paper – big enough for six or seven people to work on at once. Dazer and Yoolk were members of the BZ crew, which was now 132 Crew (the "1" and "3" make the "B," while the "2" is the "Z"). Nivanh Chanthara became Duster132.

There are a handful of moments Nivanh sees as significant turning points in his life. This is one of them. There'd already been another – he just hadn't realised it yet.

SUCCESSFUL MULTI-TASKING

The year Nivanh got into graffiti, 1997, was the same year he quit school. His teachers were pretty good. He could do the work. But by then he'd decided the classroom didn't suit him. For Nivanh, the best way to learn was not by talking about it, but by doing it. Plus, he surrounded himself with mentors. He started drawing bits and pieces for a skateboard magazine called Tricks. Soon he was getting work elsewhere, not just



PUNK STYLE
"This is another image inspired by a love for the Japanese manga artist Tsutomu Nihei, whose work has a real cyberpunk style."

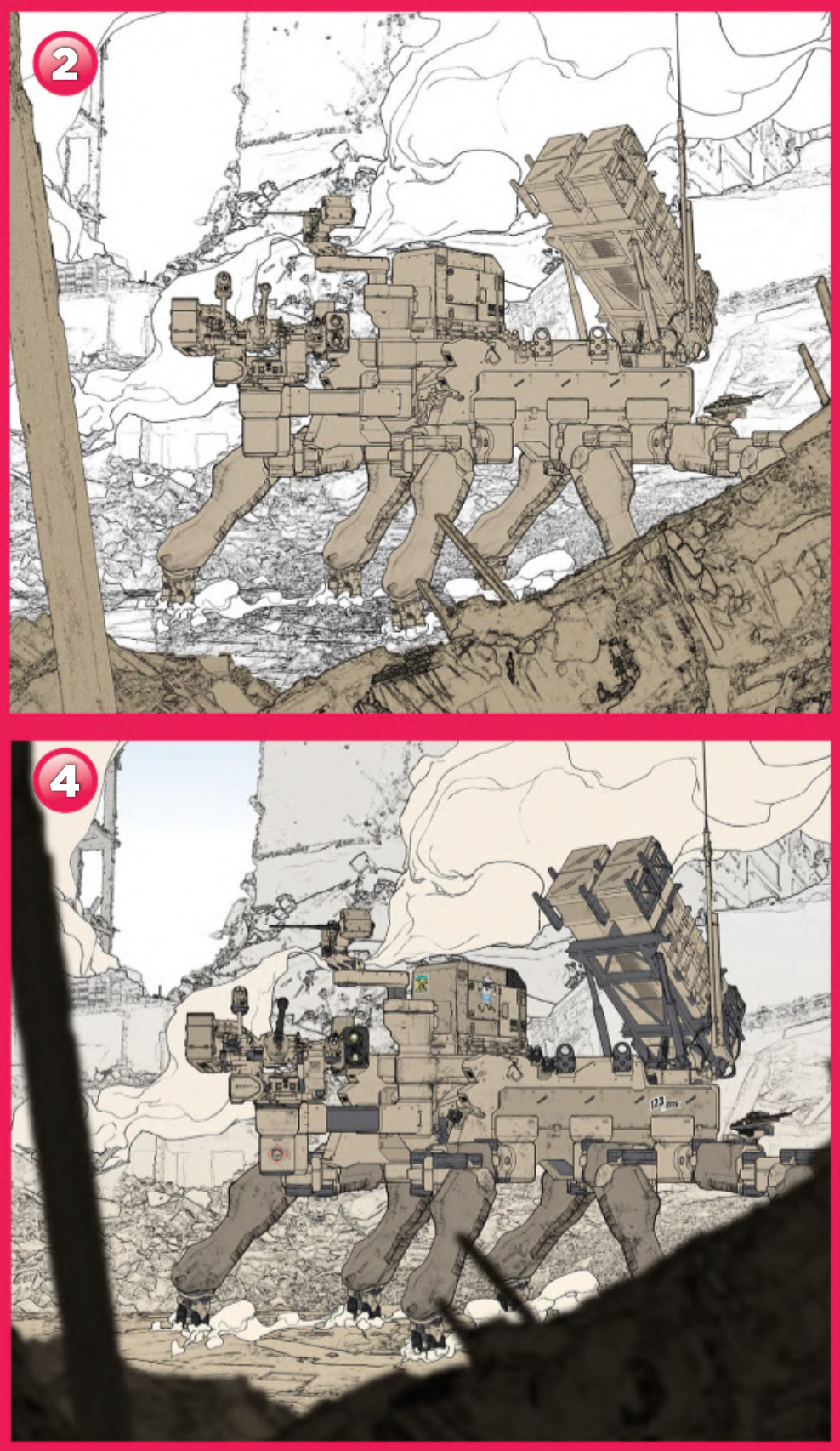
Artist PROFILE

Nivanh Chanthara
LOCATION: Canada
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Wayne Barlowe, Chris Foss, Frank Frazetta, HR Giger, Syd Mead, Katsuhiro Otomo and Yoji Shinkawa
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: www.artstation.com/nivanhchanthara



FURTHER EXPLORATION
Mixing mineral, mechanical and biological elements in this way is something I plan to explore even more.





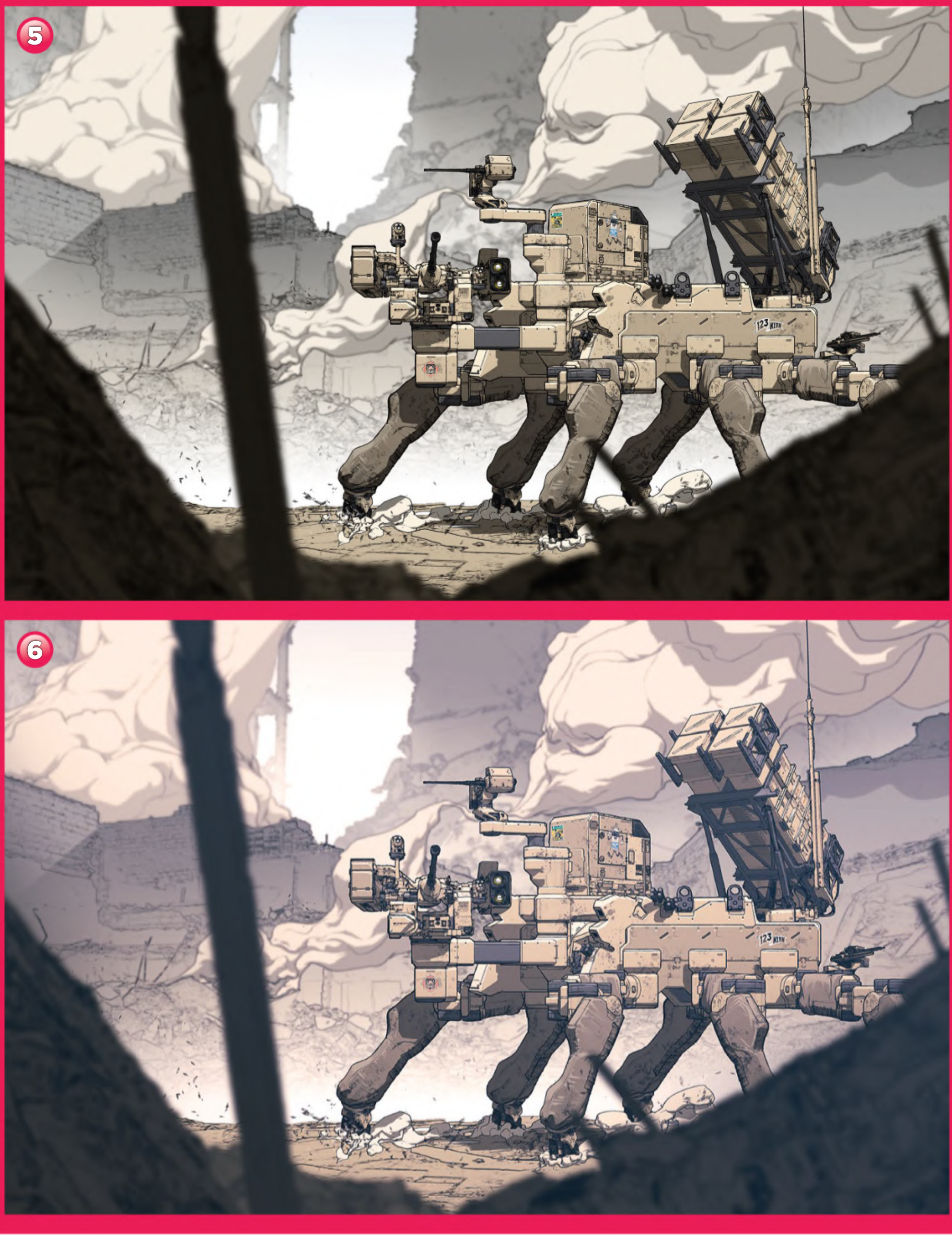
COMBINING ANIME, THE RUSSIAN MILITARY AND HP LOVECRAFT

Nivanh takes us through the inspirations and creative process behind his walking "drash"

"I wanted to work on an autonomous, walking multiple-missile launcher. I added some anti-tank and personal defence capabilities that are similar to some Russian army designs, where almost every available weapon is mounted on a single vehicle! This is a study that's done just for fun. The name of this image is Shub-Niggurath.

I have different ways of working, depending on my clients. My approach for this vehicle is a 'drash'. It's a made-up word – drawing and photobash – a joke with my friend, the artist Ben Mauro. This is my way of creating a detailed, anime-style image. It was inspired by the short anime A Farewell to Weapons by Katsuhiro Otomo. The name Shub-Niggurath comes from HP Lovecraft's mythology, which means The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young. I'll let you speculate on why I chose this name, but I found it appropriate for this design.

For me, it always starts in my photobank. I already have an idea of the overall design, so now I'm looking for some good photos that I could start from. I try to always use a large JPEG or PNG – nothing under 1,000x 1,000px, if possible. Once I've chosen an image, I make it black and white. I select the Filters menu and choose Find Edges. Then I adjust the amount of black and white using Levels to either show more material information or present a cleaner surface **(1)**. Then I draw or erase into the developing image. I press X to switch quickly between black and white, to avoid using the Eraser for now. I'll then paint using Multiply layers, and continue until I'm happy with the design **(2) (3)**. Next, I work on the decals, the weathering, the light and shadow **(4) (5)**. Once this stage is complete I add some effects and some blurring to help create some depth, then call the image done **(6)**."


5
6
123 KLYN



THE MACRO
"I'm going to buy a macro optic lens for my camera very soon, so I can take reference photos of minerals and other biological elements."



illustration work, but graphic design and shooting and editing video.

To support himself, he took a job as a postman ("you know, with a bike and all"). He didn't mind it. He worked early in the morning so the rest of the day was free for graffiti or graphic design. Military service was different. In 2000, he served a compulsory 10 months, which disrupted his progress as an artist. When he got out, he decided it was time for a change.

NIGHT-TIME ART MISSIONS

The early 2000s were some of Nivanh's best times. He would often leave his Paris apartment late at night and join friends on "street art missions." They would pick a spot, do their thing, photograph it, and make a speedy getaway. The idea was to "let the piece live its own life." That life was often very short. But Nivanh learned this was how street art worked: "The plan has always been to see a piece dying by itself in order to make free space for a brand new piece from me or from someone else."

By now, Nivanh's art was looking very different. Influenced by street artists 36Recyclab and WK Interact, he started mixing illustration and graphic design and even CG elements. He got into "wheatpasting" – taking pre-made posters and pasting them to walls, a technique that helped with the speedy getaway. "Perfectly matching the size, the impact and some of the spirit of graffiti, it became instantly my thing. I mean, it felt like it was natural for me to dig into this. And I did. A lot."

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Nivanh received a message from a friend who knew two directors looking for a concept artist. To be exact, they wanted a mech designer for an upcoming cartoon series, Iron Man: Armored Adventures. The directors gave Nivanh a three-month trial. Throughout that time, he felt uncertain of his skills as a concept artist. It was

INSPIRED BY NIHEI
"Inspired by the work of Tsutomu Nihei, but also representative of how I became confident in my taste while working within Jonathan's team."





WORKING FAST
"I was on vacation, but had to deliver a video for my Patreon page, so I had to choose this subject very fast, like I do in commercial work."



> **The plan has always been to see a piece dying by itself to make space for a new piece**

like starting from scratch, but it was exciting. There was an element of performance about concept art: he had to draw in front of people, have them watch over his shoulder, make comments. Nivanh was comfortable with this. It was like street art, like graffiti, like working on a giant sheet of paper with six or seven others. He got the job and, appropriately enough, appeared in the credits under his graffiti name, Duster132.

GOING DEEP WITH HIS CONCEPTS

Nivanh joined Eidos-Montréal in 2013, where he found a mentor in art director Jonathan Jacques-Belletête. Jonathan hand-picked his team and made sure they were given the freedom to bring their own ideas to projects. Nivanh's art improved dramatically during this time because the sheer quantity of work he was producing, but he also "went deep" with the work and encouraged to refine his art. Jonathan also protected his team from "internal political conflicts." Nivanh was free to focus on his art and art alone. It was "the best company in town."

But Nivanh was also very aware that he'd would never be able to share



PAINTERLY STYLE
"I did something in this painterly style for the first time in 10 years because a client asked for it. Afterwards, I did it for myself."

FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND
"This four-legged robot is something directly inspired by the short anime movie from Katsuhiro Otomo: A Farewell to Weapons."

Interview

BABIRU

"This is an image from Babiru, a world set in a speculative post-apocalyptic future that I created with Fred Rambaud."



“I have to adapt to the client’s needs. Sometimes it’s natural, sometimes it’s difficult, sometimes it’s weird”



SPECIAL EFFECTS
"Most of the time, effects do almost half the work of making an image look cool and take it up notch."

UNCANNY PARTS
"Here I was inspired by the flying landmate concept from anime move Appleseed – another image that includes uncanny biological parts."

most of the work he was doing. He made an effort to continue personal projects and freelance work so he didn't end up with a five-year gap in his portfolio, which paid off when he left in 2017 to focus on freelance full-time. This was a tough decision. He misses the work with Jonathan and the team. But it was time for a "different pace", and the space to develop his own work.

Back in February, Nivanh released his first book, Dreaming in Mech: The Art of Nivanh Chanthara. He's also working on his own IP. But he's also won some of the biggest commissions of his career so far, each coming with their own specific demands.

"I use all my past experiences in my job today. Maybe it's the good side of being a self-taught concept artist"

On Dune, Nivanh collaborated directly with the film's costume designers. On American God, he worked alongside the series director and production designer. Sometimes he'd be doing traditional line art, perhaps a couple of roughs to build the image step by step. Other times he's photobashing, jumping straight into what will be the final image, trying different combinations on the fly. It's this diversity that Nivanh likes most about freelance: "I have to constantly adapt to the client's needs. Sometimes it's natural, sometimes it's difficult, sometimes it's weird (and no, I won't give examples!)."



LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU EXIST

Nivanh's life as an underground street artist helped his career as a blockbuster concept artist in a number of ways. They both require performance, making art in front of people. They both aim to quickly and succinctly convey an idea or a message. And they both often require the artist to be comfortable working without direct recognition.

Street art taught Nivanh his most valuable lesson when he was a boy walking to and from school every day. In his working-class neighbourhood, with its mix of people and cultures, a hundred different types of food, dress and music, the brilliant noise at the core of all proper communities, the one thing that really stood out was the graffiti by "BZ."

Through quantity as well as quality, you need to let people know you exist: "If you don't do it, nobody will." That's not some hollow motivational quote. Nivanh – with all his experience – still has to be proactive about finding new work. At the beginning of each month, he searches jobs in the entertainment



ANIME MASHUP
"This is an attempt to couple my love of the Evangelion and the flying landmate from Appleseed. I also tried to play with biological parts."



RED CRAB KING
"For this one, I tried an improbable mix between the Gauna from Tsutomu Nihei and the real-life Kamchatka crab – also called the red king crab."

industry. He's not necessarily after the job itself. He uses LinkedIn to track down key people in companies that are advertising, then does the business equivalent of tagging their wall with "Duster132."

"I tell them that I exist, that I'm ready and willing to work with them. That's what I've done since the beginning, not just as freelancer, but with the street art. I'm sure of one thing: I use all my past experiences in my job today, and it gives me tons of ideas. Maybe it's the good side of being a self-taught concept artist. You may be able to bring something else, something new to the table. I'm not certain of that, but I like to believe it.

"I'm aiming for a certain place, and I'm trying to reach it by producing a lot and by releasing it in as many places as I can. I'm not afraid of failing. I'm afraid of doing nothing and not being able to express my ideas."

"I WAS CREATING TO PROVE SOMETHING WORKS"

Nivanh's five years at Eidos-Montréal helped him to improve quickly and dramatically as a concept artist, thanks to his mentor

"I've had the chance to walk many paths in my journey so far, and I hope there'll be more. They've all been equally important and decisive for me. But the first one that comes to my mind right now is the day I signed my contract at Eidos-Montréal.

I knew this company always aimed for the best quality (and still does). Being called by Eidos gave me a lot of confidence. I also knew that Jonathan Jacques-Belletête hired me to do my thing, the way I wanted, but for his project. It was the same for each member of the team.

During the first interview, Jonathan asked me if I considered myself either an illustrator or concept artist. Without hesitation I said I was a concept artist. I was creating to prove something works, either to myself or others. I also wanted to spend as much time as possible polishing each concept. Eidos and Jonathan gave me this opportunity.

This may be the very first time I delivered work that was very close to what I did in my personal work – for the simple reason that Jonathan was constantly pushing me to be myself and, at the same time, to be open to all of his references and ideas.

These kind of moments during one's life might be rare, so we have to cherish them when they happen. I earned so much more than my salary during those five years, and I still thank Jonathan for that."

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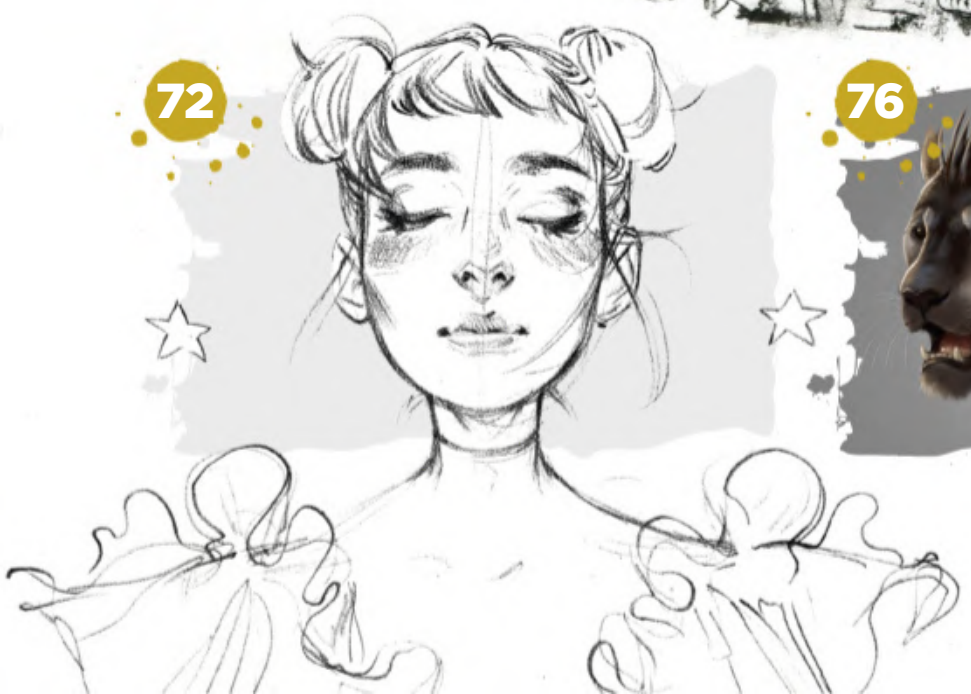
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Master artist Kim Jung Gi reveals how he projects himself into his imagination and visualises a complex composition, before bringing it to life.

72 Core Skills: Krita
In the first instalment of her series on using the free art program Krita, Sara Tepes shows how she tidies up her imported pencil sketches.

76 Quick digital sketching skills
Is it possible to design and illustrate a fantasy beast in about an hour? Monika Zagrobelna certainly thinks so!

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Steve Goad helps to streamline your ArtRage painting process, while putting the program's layer effects and natural brush engine to good use.

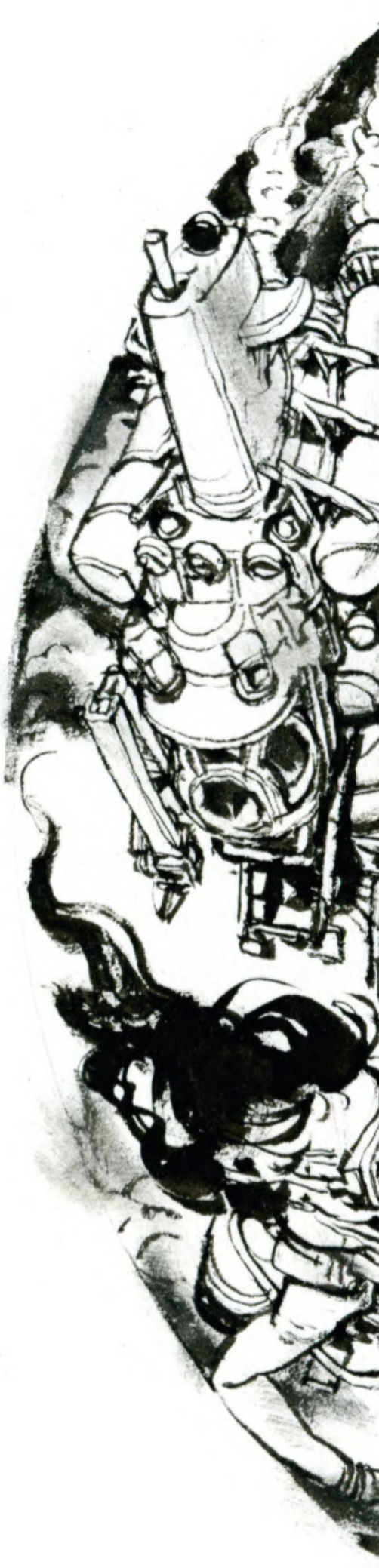






Traditional Skills DRAWING TECHNIQUES

Kim Jung Gi projects himself into his imagination and visualises a scene before bringing it to life



Artist **PROFILE**

Kim Jung Gi
LOCATION: South Korea

Kim's most notable creative asset is his memory, something he's developed over a number of years. He has the ability to render extremely complicated scenes near-perfectly, without the aid of references. Kim has six sketchbooks in print, which equate to about 4,500 pages' worth of drawings over 12 years.
www.kimjunggius.com

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I'm often asked questions along the lines of, "How do you draw without a reference?" and "Do you have a photographic memory?" In this workshop, I hope to answer these questions by taking you step by step through my creative process. I'll explain my thinking process, and how I pre-visualise an image before placing the first stroke on the paper.

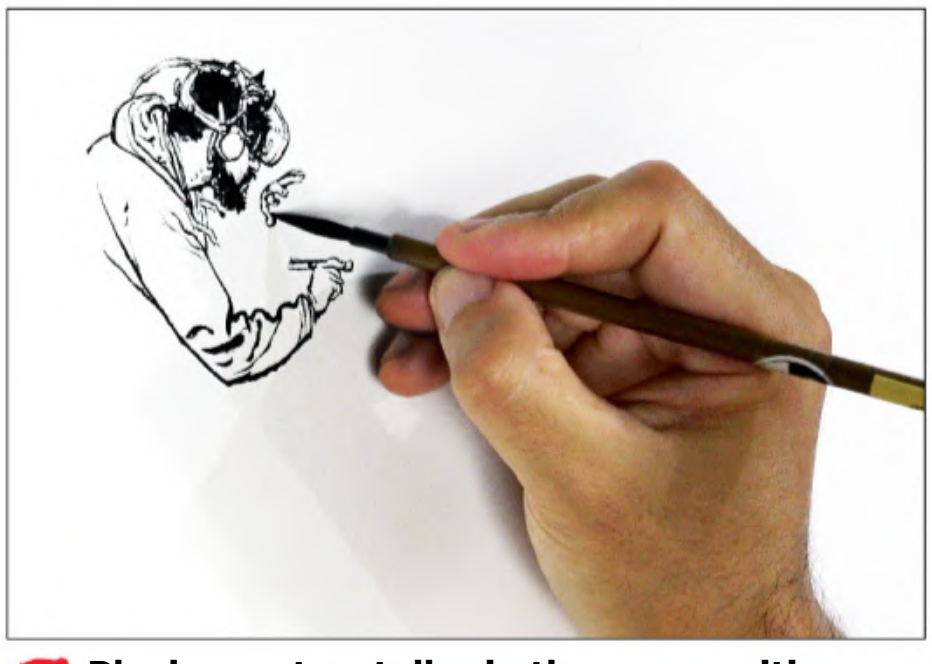
Ever since I was little, I've always enjoyed drawing. These days it doesn't matter what I draw or what I've been asked to draw – I still truly enjoy the simple act of putting marks on paper.

Growing up, I carried out direct observation studies, doodling things that were of interest to me. For instance, while saving up to buy a bicycle, I would draw a bicycle from many angles on my sketchbook, notepad and even on the table cover! After a few days I would have a visual library of the essence of a bicycle and how it was constructed. Yes, observation from life is important, but I believe that understanding the very nature of an object is crucial when studying art.

Believe it or not, I used to do detailed construction drawings, and inked them just like any other artist. After countless years of training, one day I realised that I could draw and paint without any preliminary drawing. And I've taken this approach ever since.

Once I have an idea of what to draw, I embark on the first step of my process. I call it "floating in the atmosphere". I start placing elements in the space that defines the overall theme, and float like a bird above the scene and observe which angle will best serve my story.

Then I place myself in the scene, walk around and see which angle will have the best shot at delivering my message to the viewer. All this takes place before a single line stroke. Now I'll take you through my drawing process and how I decide what to draw first. Then I'll show you how I build my values in the line drawing using a single pen.





1 Placing a storyteller in the composition

I draw a circle using a pencil to define the canvas area. Then I start on my focal point: the main character who's wearing a VR headset. I want my composition to revolve around this figure because he's the storyteller.


ImagineFX
2019 Jim Lee



2 Depicting the arrival of two floating figures

The story originates from the imagination from the main character. I add two astronauts who are floating in the atmosphere. I purposely depict the astronauts as not true to scale, because I want to show that it's the illustrator's pen which is bringing them to life.



3 Supporting storytelling elements

I add objects to make this story more interesting while maintaining the overall composition. It's important that these elements complement my main theme and aren't there just to fill the blank canvas.



4 A new angle to the tale

I introduced a new character to add a twist to the storytelling. This figure informs the viewer that this scene does not only take place in space. As I do this I pay attention to negative and positive shapes that are developing on the canvas.



5 Bringing balance

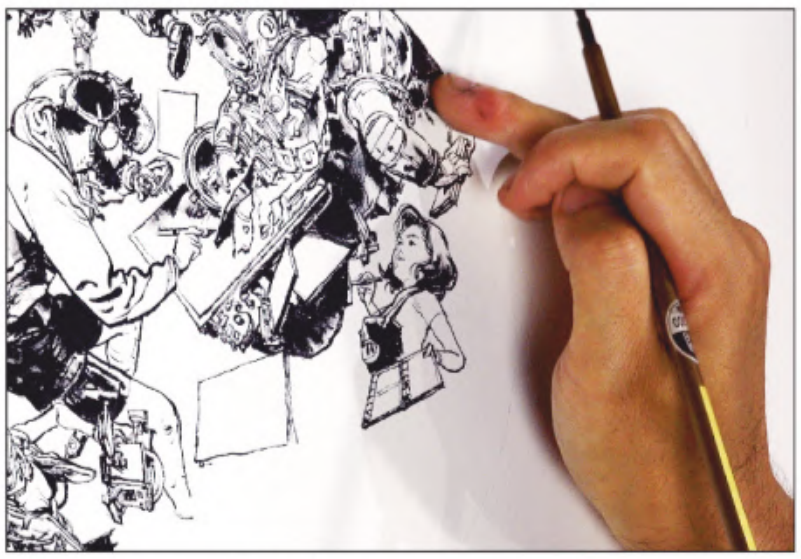
Now I add another character on the right-hand side to start to balance out my composition. Because I had dark values occupying the left corner, I want to add visual interest over on the right-hand side.





6 Increasing contrast within the composition

I draw another astronaut. His back is to the viewer so that he's not a distraction, but as an object he succeeds in creating contrast.





7 Roughing things up

I darken the background with a used brush pen – the worn-out bristles enable me to create more irregular-looking strokes. I also use my fingertip to smudge the hard edge of the circle.



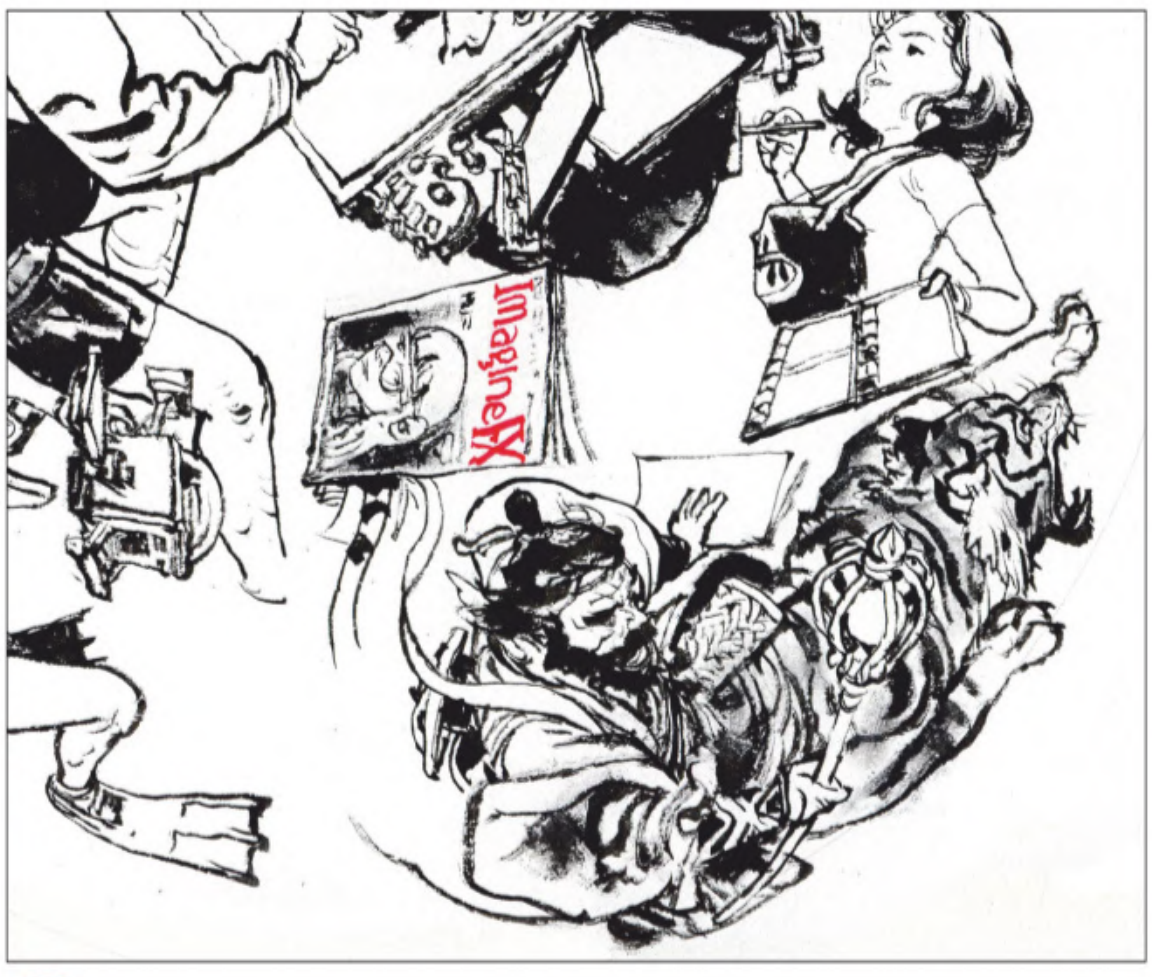
8 Red highlights the artist's perfect reading matter

Now I add the secondary focal point, which is a copy of ImagineFX magazine floating in the air. I also decide to introduce a new local colour. The red of the text ensures the magazine stands out despite its small size within the composition.



9 Going against received wisdom

I draw another supporting character to help enhance my story. If I follow accepted composition theory he should be facing left, but I decide to have him facing right to create another interaction moment.



10 Tiger tiger, burning bright

Now you can see why I placed the martial arts character facing right: I wanted him to support the momentum of the tiger. I had an idea to draw an organic element (the tiger) after I drew the train. Now I'm respecting composition theory!



11 Adding details and making ImagineFX stand out

I add more details to the martial arts character and darken the background to accentuate the presence of the copy of ImagineFX. I make sure that I don't inadvertently introduce awkward tangents around the magazine.





12 Populating the background

I continue darkening down the background so that my focal point is strengthened. But instead of simply colouring the background with just more shading, I put in story-related items to occupy the background space.



13 Selective emphasis of objects

I continue to fill the background with elements that will help in storytelling, but I'm purposely not adding any interesting line weights or contrast to objects that I think don't need emphasising.



14 Finishing touches and smudges

Finally, I accentuate the edge of the circle by adding more objects, and also by using a smudging technique that's only possible with a brush pen. I smudge its strokes with my finger: if you do this before the ink dries, it generates mid-tones.

Core Skills: Part 1

CLEAN UP YOUR SKETCHES IN KRITA

In the first instalment of her series on using the free art program Krita, **Sara Tepes** shows how she tidies up her imported pencil sketches...

Artist **PROFILE**

Sara Tepes
LOCATION: US

Sara is an illustrator who works with both digital and traditional mediums, and enjoys making YouTube videos teaching on various art topics.
www.sarucatepes.com

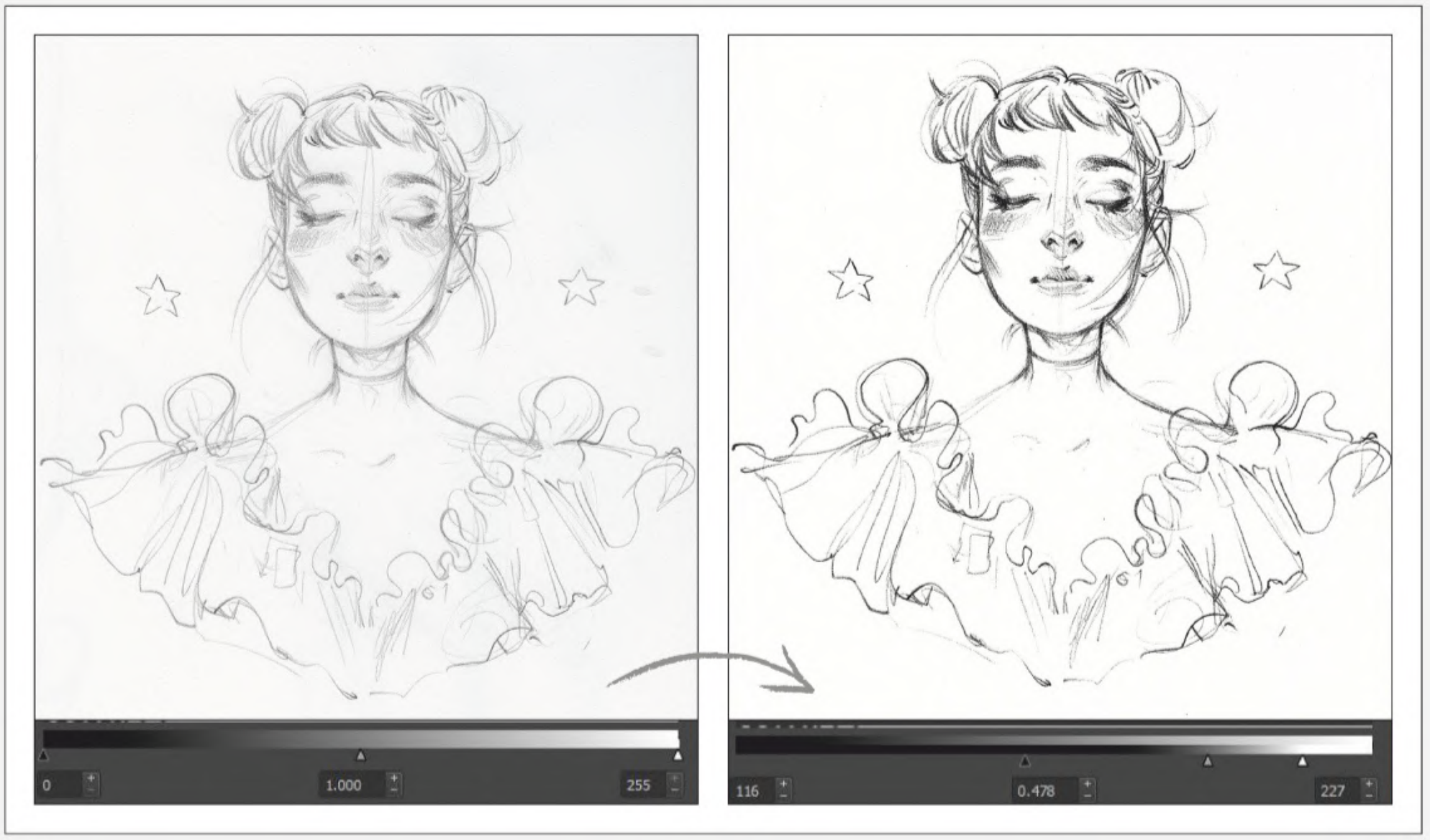


Krita is an extensive free digital painting program that can achieve professional painting and editing results. The interface is sleek and easy to use, making this platform a logical choice for users who want to jump into painting unencumbered by some of the superfluous features found in other painting programs.

This workshop will be simple for any user to follow, whether beginner or expert in Krita. Using only three adjustment layers and one brush, you can achieve a professional and clean edited version of your scanned sketches and drawings.

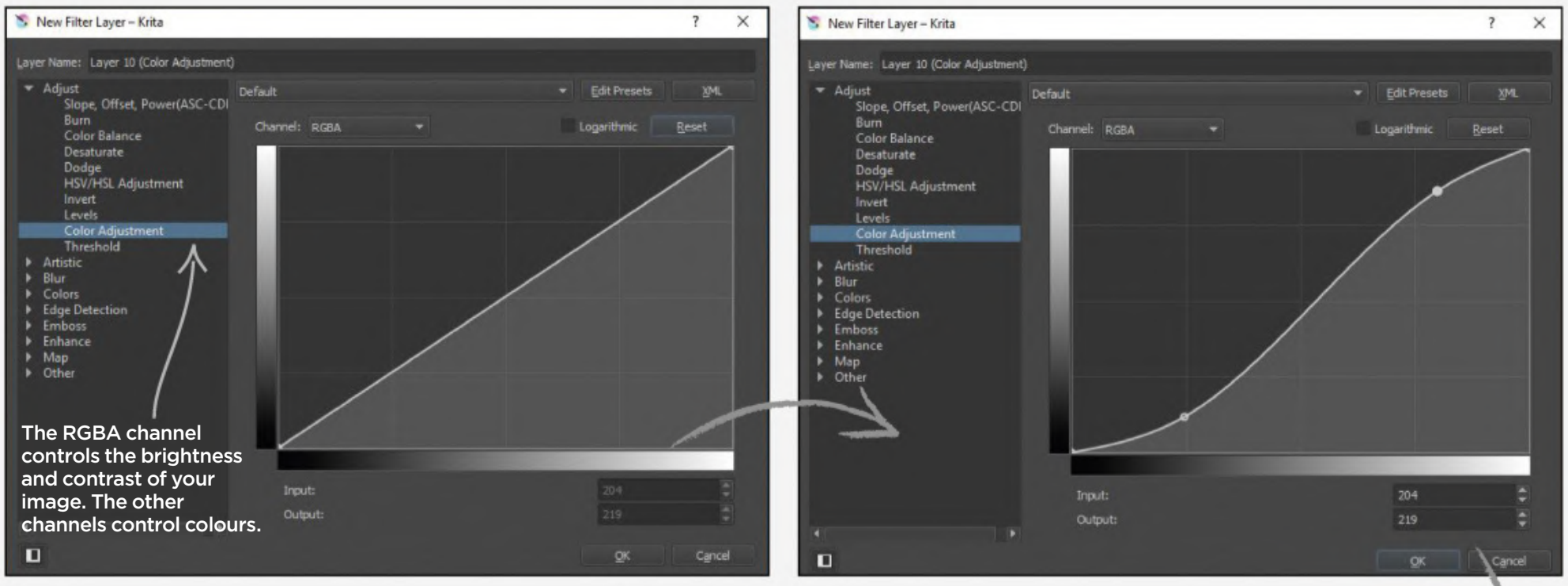
Begin with opening up a scanned image into Krita. For your scan settings, it's important to scan at 150dpi at the very least. This is what monitors use for displaying images. For print, scan at 300 or 600dpi. The former is sufficient, but I always scan at 600dpi to ensure I capture every detail, especially since my drawings are usually on the smaller side.

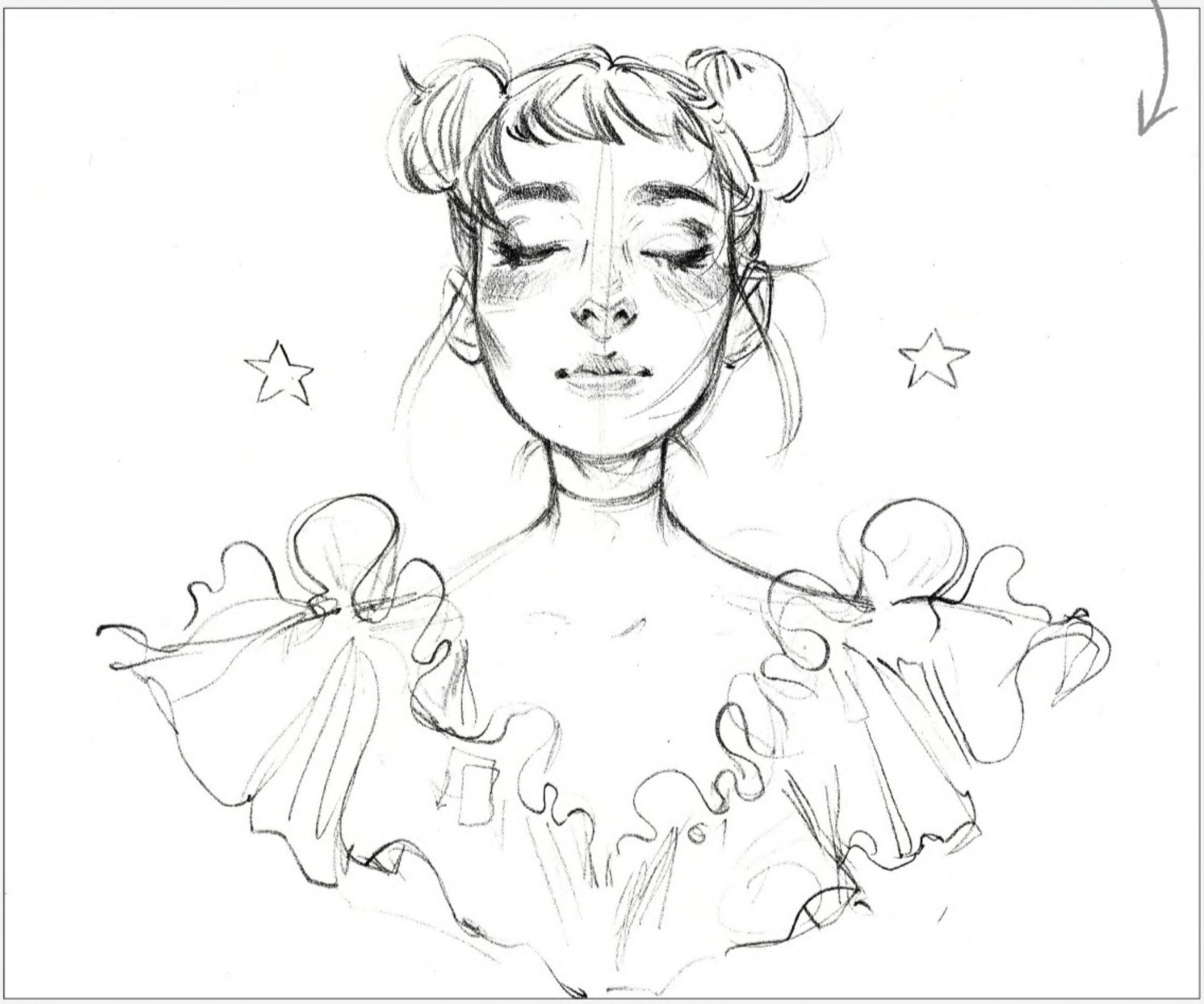
When saving the image, JPEG files are the most convenient. Always make sure to save at the highest quality if you intend to print out or post the final image on social media!



1 Adjust the brightness and contrast of your sketch

Create a new Filter layer and select the Levels tab. This will give you an easy way to adjust the brightness and darkness of your image. The first slider controls the blacks, the middle controls the midtones, and the last slider controls the whites. Bring the black and white sliders more towards the centre, until the paper is white and your pencil lines are sufficiently dark enough. If you've lost some of the detail, move your midtone slider to the right; this will help you recover some of the finer lines.



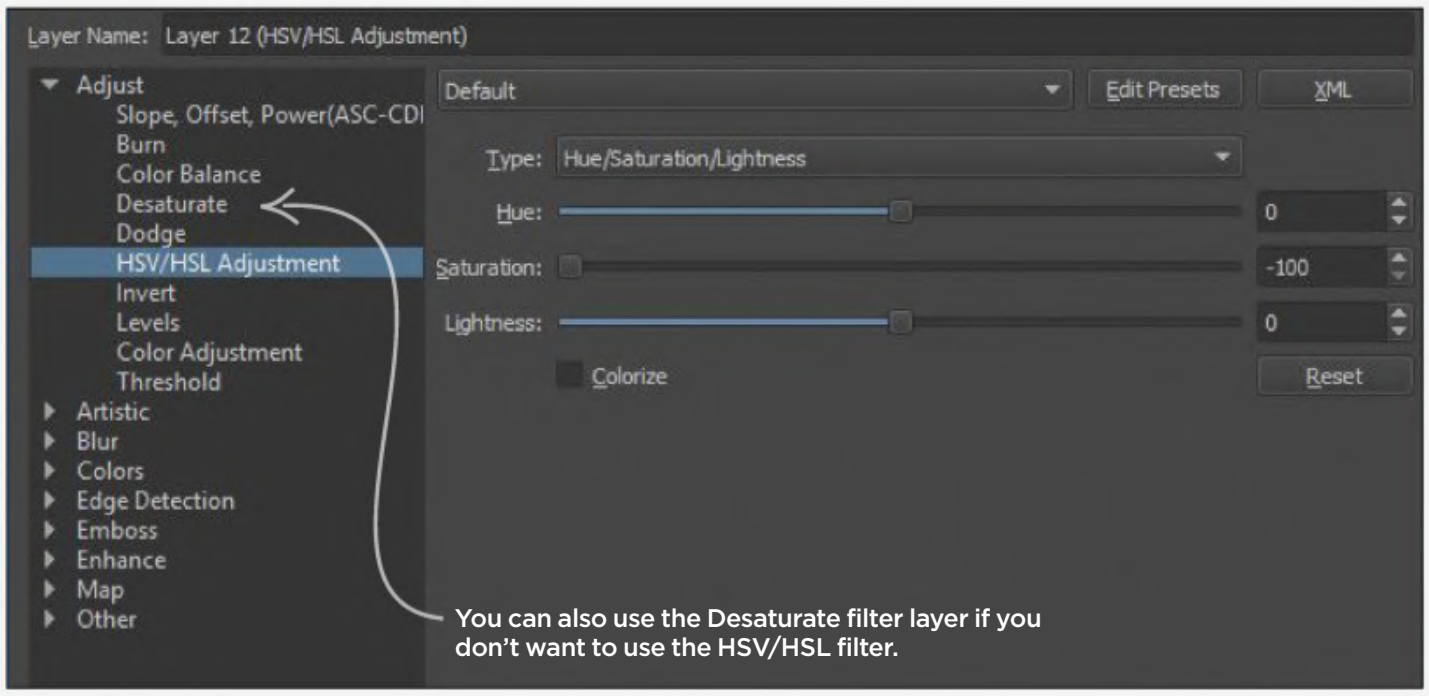


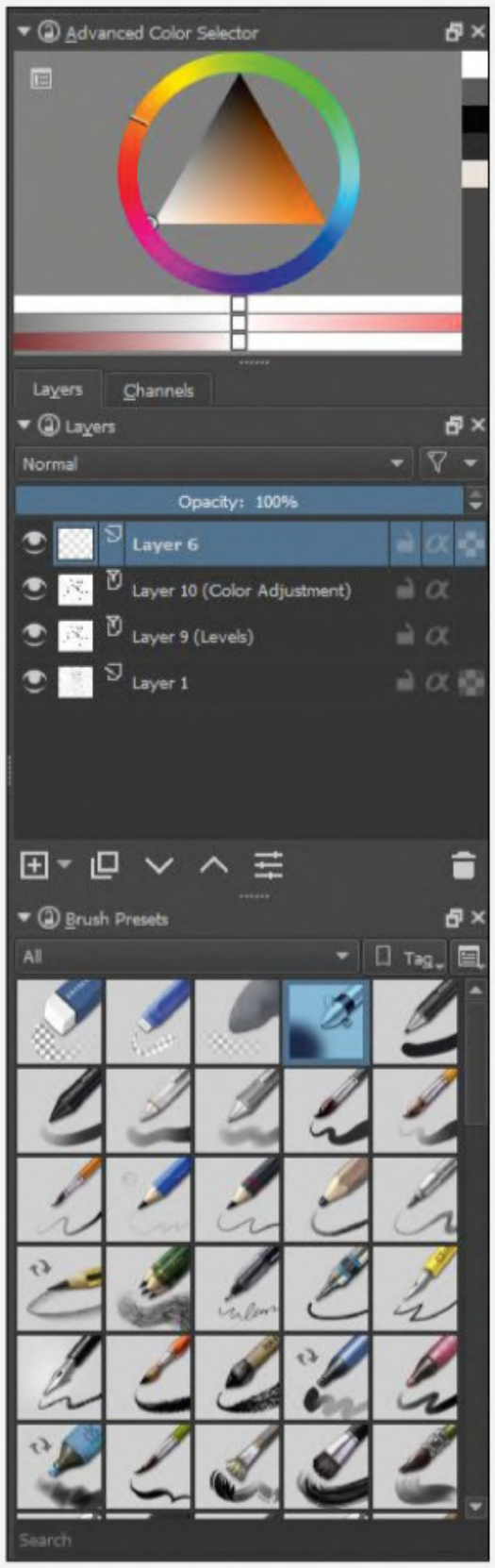
2 Use a filter to refine the tones

Another way to adjust your tones is to use the Color Adjustment Curves filter. You can refine the tones that you just created or use this instead of the Levels adjustment layer. Staying on the RGBA curve, use the same principles as in the Levels and tweak the curve accordingly.

3 Desaturate the image for a cleaner finish

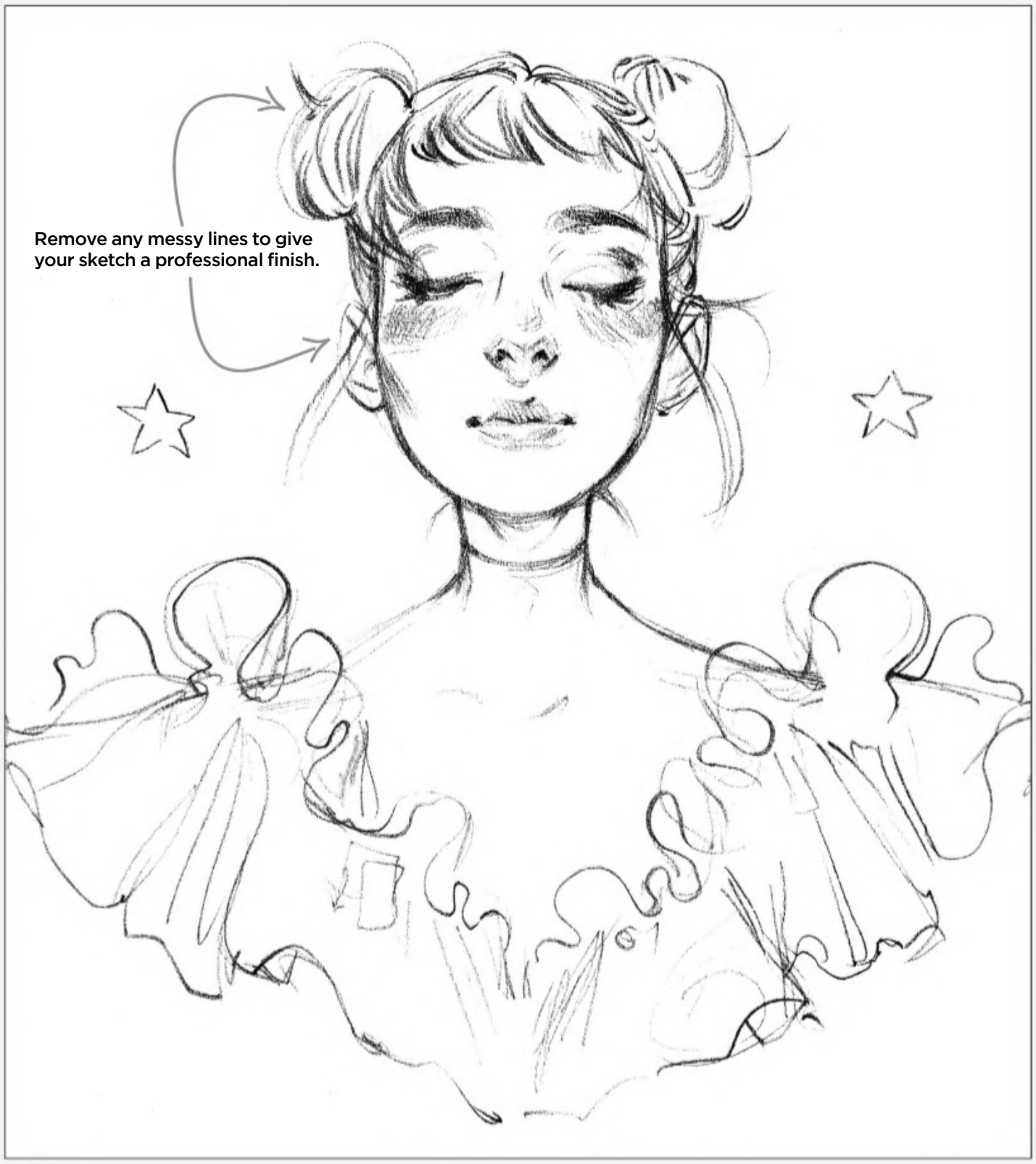
Next, open up the HSV/HSL (hue, saturation, value and hue, saturation, lightness) filter and pull the Saturation tab all the way down to -100. Desaturating your sketch will help get rid of any additional colours that the scan has picked up and provides a sleeker finish to your refined pencil sketch.





4 Select an airbrush

To clean up any dust or unwanted sketch lines from your image, create a new Paint layer and select a fluffy brush: I used Airbrush_Soft for this. Set the fill colour to white. Using an airbrush will ensure you don't add any harsh lines when painting over your image.



5 Painting over dust and lines

Zoom into your image and begin painting over the dust or eraser marks that your scanner picked up, as well as any unwanted sketch lines on your drawing. Depending on your desired result, you might want to leave some of the sketchier lines in the image, so only remove the dust if this is the case.

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SketchBook

QUICK DIGITAL SKETCHING SKILLS

Is it possible to design and illustrate a fantasy beast in about an hour? **Monika Zagrobelna** certainly thinks so!



Artist PROFILE

Monika Zagrobelna
LOCATION: Poland

Monika is a freelance artist and a tutorial author, passionate about both learning and teaching. Her speciality are animals and realistic imaginary creatures.
https://ifxm.ag/monikaz



I always wanted to draw my imaginary creatures as realistically as possible, but also as quickly as possible. While these goals may seem contradictory, after much trial and error I developed a method that produced decent results. I broke down the drawing process into stages based on their visual properties, similar to render passes used in 3D modelling.

My method involves following a specific order, drawing every stage on a separate layer. This enables me to add detail to the creature with every step, and each stage builds on the previous one. In the real world, the final look of every object is a composite of various effects, and I applied this thinking as I developed my approach. This turned out to be perfect for the process of designing a creature: I can decide on the colours, the 3D form and the texture of the body separately.

To optimise the process even further, I work with a few simple brushes, some fur brushes, and I make good use of SketchBook's smudge tools. To add a textured look to the body, I use custom texture brushes based on photos. SketchBook makes it simple to create these on the fly, and it takes me about an hour to draw a creature this way.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!



Cairomoon/Pixabay.com

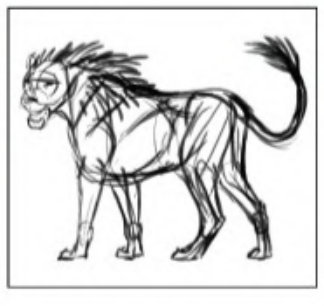
iggrz/Pixabay.com



SeaReeds/Pixabay.com

1 Prepare the references

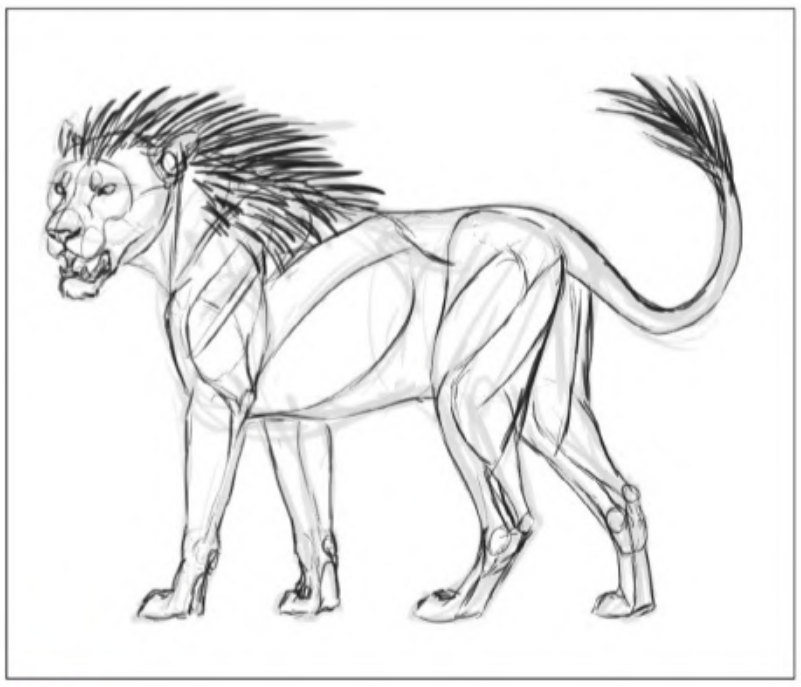
To make my creatures believable, I incorporate elements of real animals into their design. I do this by keeping a set of photo references next to me while drawing. For this concept I collected photographs of lions, okapis, porcupine and echidna, which I found on Pixabay (**www.pixabay.com**).



2 Sketch the silhouette

First I try to draw a miniature version of the creature. I focus on the general silhouette and the most prominent features, using a thin brush. Keeping it small stops me from adding unnecessary details. Usually, it takes me a few attempts to come up with a silhouette that I'm happy with.





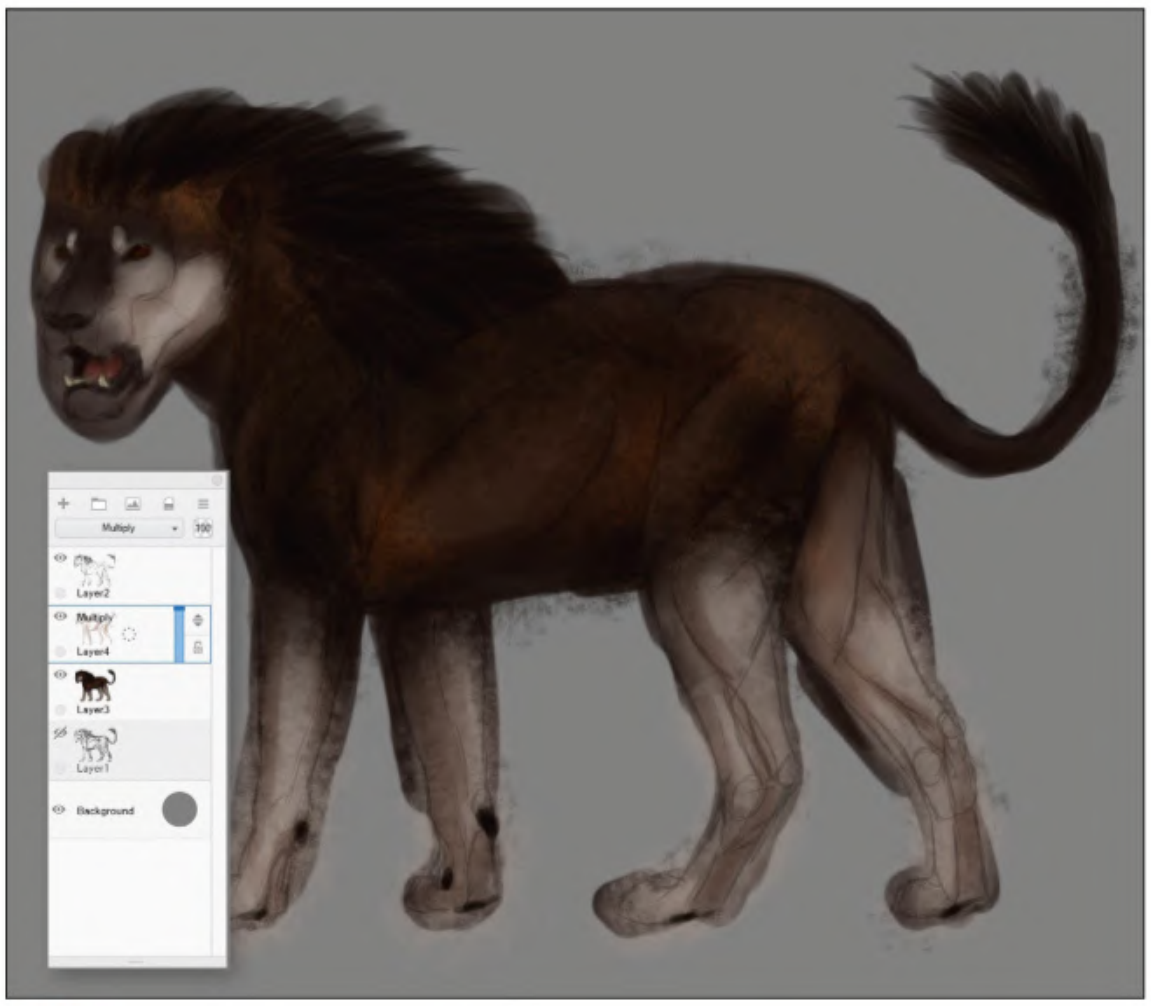
3 Draw the details

I enlarge the sketch to its intended size, and reduce the Opacity of its layer. Then I create a new layer and draw a more detailed version of the sketch, using the same thin brush. This time I focus on the muscles and the facial features, trying to not leave anything looking vague.



4 Apply basic colours

I reduce the Opacity of the second sketch and create a layer below it. Then I take a thick, Round brush and start adding colours without shading. I also use a textured brush to make the surface less even and more organic. I'm not overly precise at this point – I'm just defining the basic colour scheme.



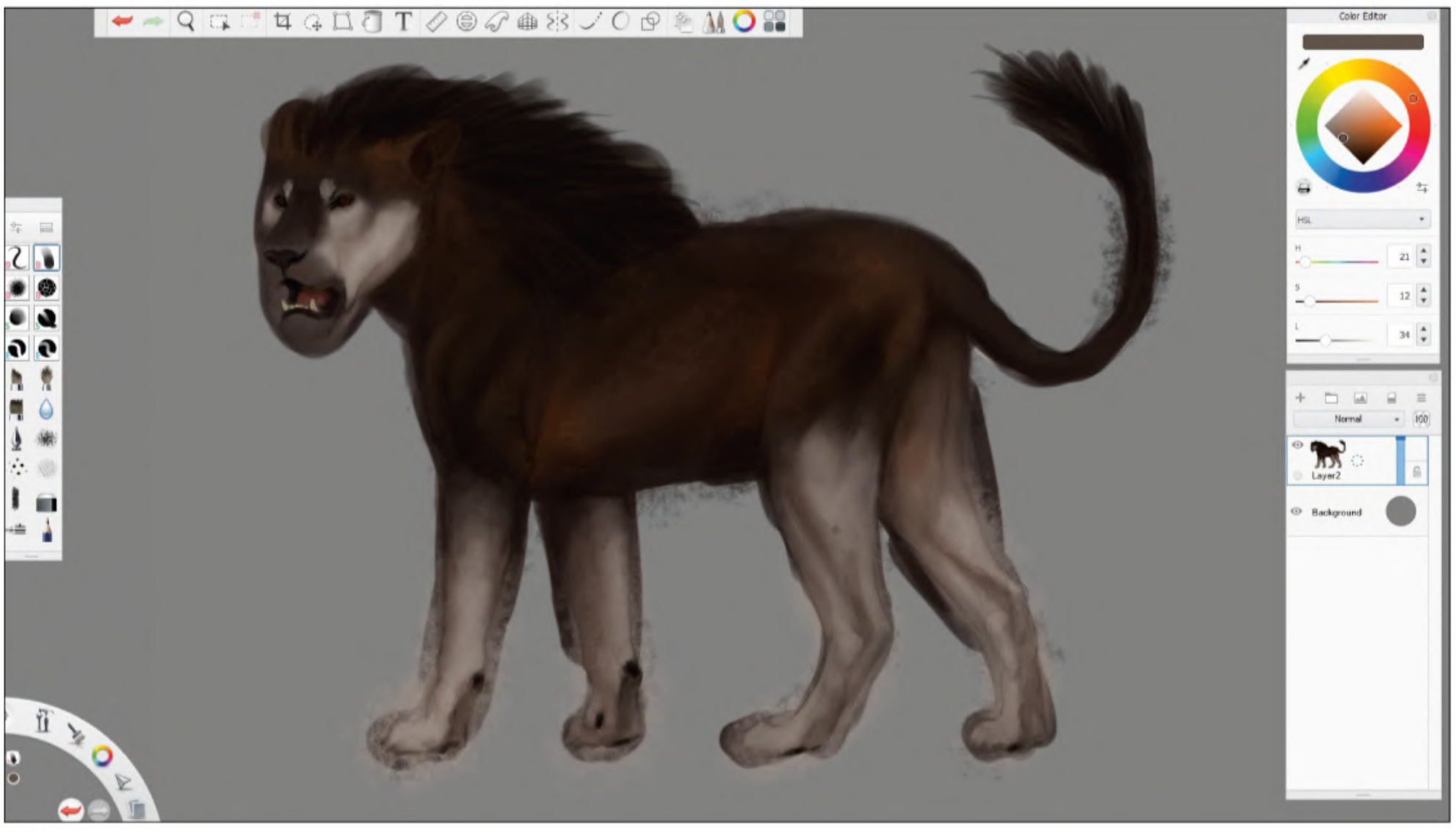
5 Introduce shadows on the beast

I add a new layer and set its mode to Multiply. I paint the shadows now, keeping them fairly light for a natural effect. I discovered that warm coloured shadows work best for furry creatures – this takes care of subsurface scattering of the fur. Again, I keep drawing pretty loose and fast, not trying to be precise yet.



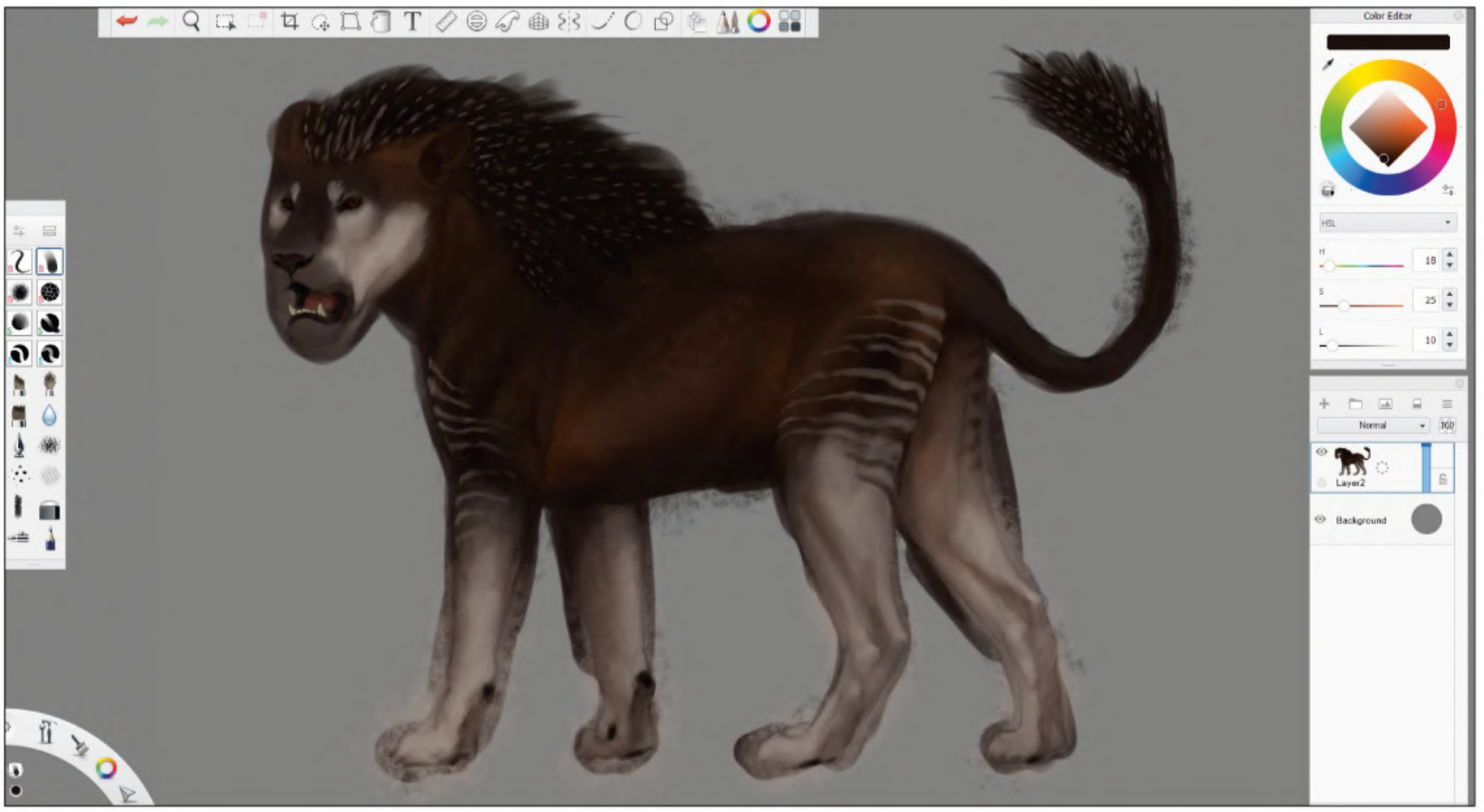
6 Remove the lines

I merge all the layers, along with the sketch, and use a textured Smudge brush to blend the lines into the body. This turns the lines into precise shadows, quickly and effortlessly. This brush works like a textured blender: it blends the colours without smoothing them too much.



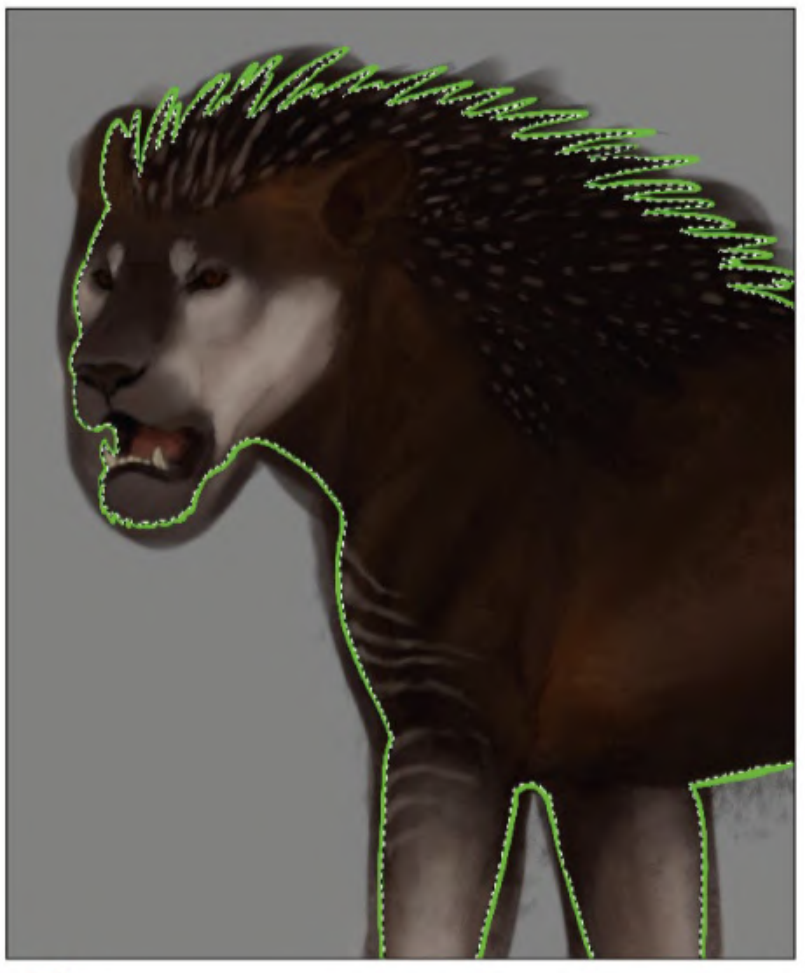
7 Start detailing the beast

Up to now I've been pretty loose with my strokes, but now it's time to slow down and address the details. I take my universal Round brush and paint over the areas that look unfinished. I pick colours directly from the piece. By keeping the brush small I leave the original texture intact.



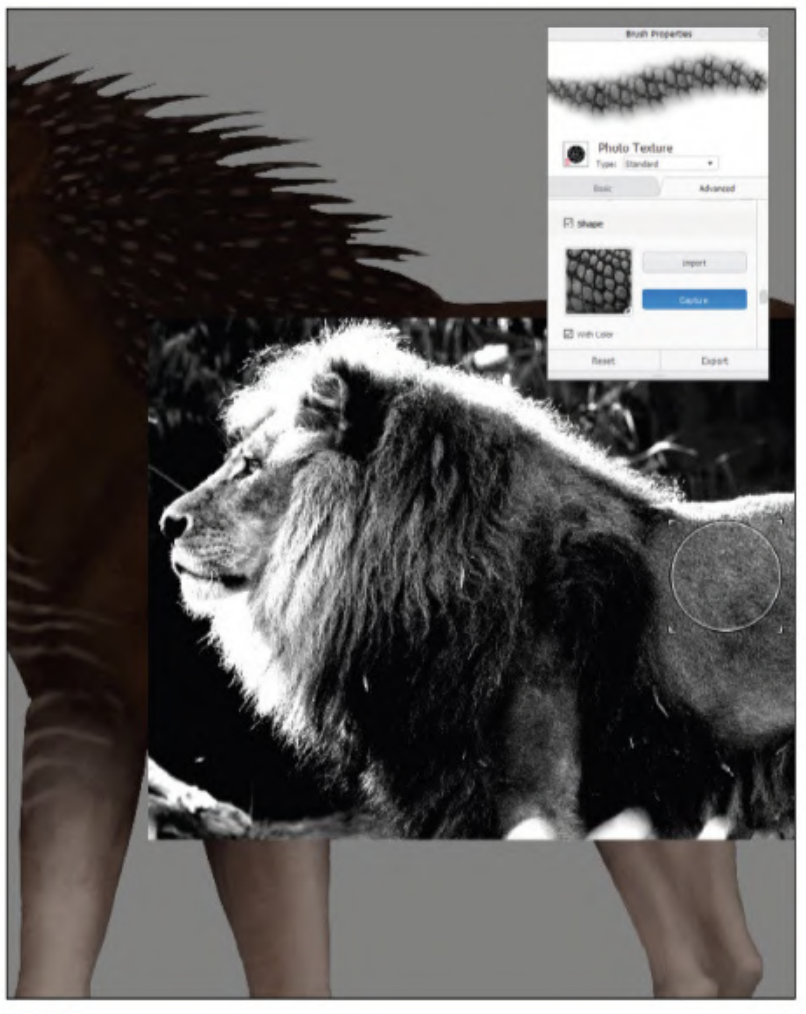
8 Create visual variety through the use of naturally occurring patterns

I avoided any patterns earlier, to stop them from being accidentally blended. Now that it's no longer a risk, I can add the stripes from the okapi and the bands on the spikes, just like a porcupine's. I keep the pattern shaded by controlling my stroke's Opacity with pen pressure.



9 Establish the background

The creature's shape is now defined, so I create a new layer and draw its outline with the Inking Pen. I use the Magic Wand to select the inside of it, then invert and fill the selection on a new layer with the background colour. This layer stays on top and covers everything outside of the creature.



10 Work with photo texture brushes

In SketchBook I can quickly load a brush with a texture taken from a photo. To do this, I paste a greyscale photo and capture the area that I want to paint with. I've created a special custom brush with settings adjusted to drawing textures, and load it when needed.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

AUTODESK SKETCHBOOK

CUSTOM BRUSHES: TEXTURE BLENDER

This brush blends colour and adds a subtle, universal texture.

PHOTO TEXTURE

This brush can be loaded with any texture present in a photograph.

FUR MAKER

This Smudge brush drags your colours, creating an impression of soft fur.

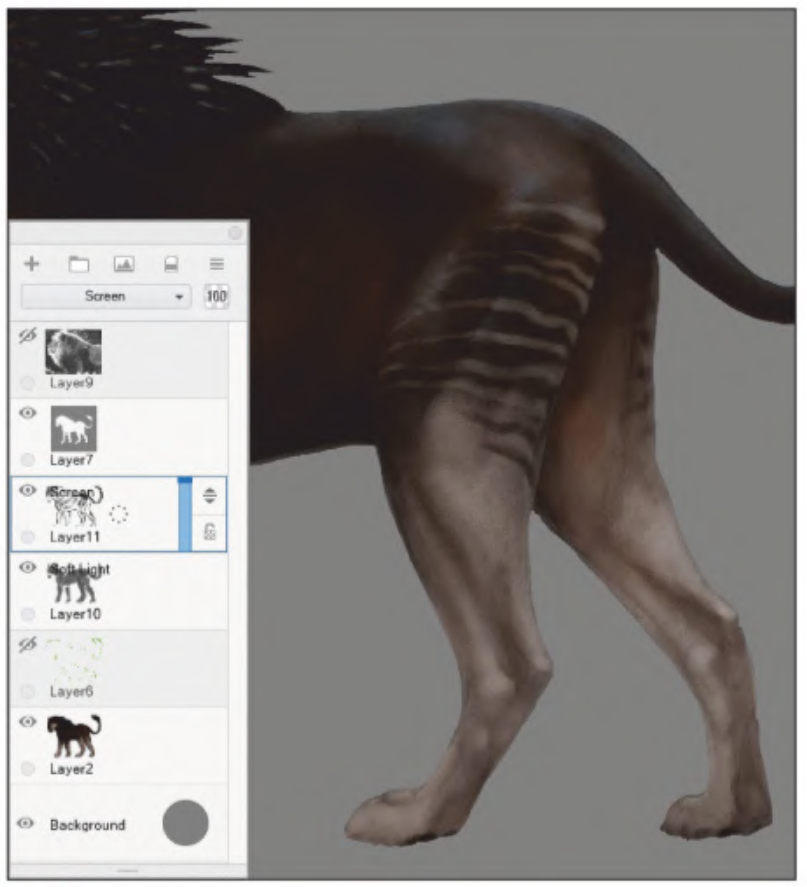
PAINTING

This simple brush is perfect for colouring and shading tasks.



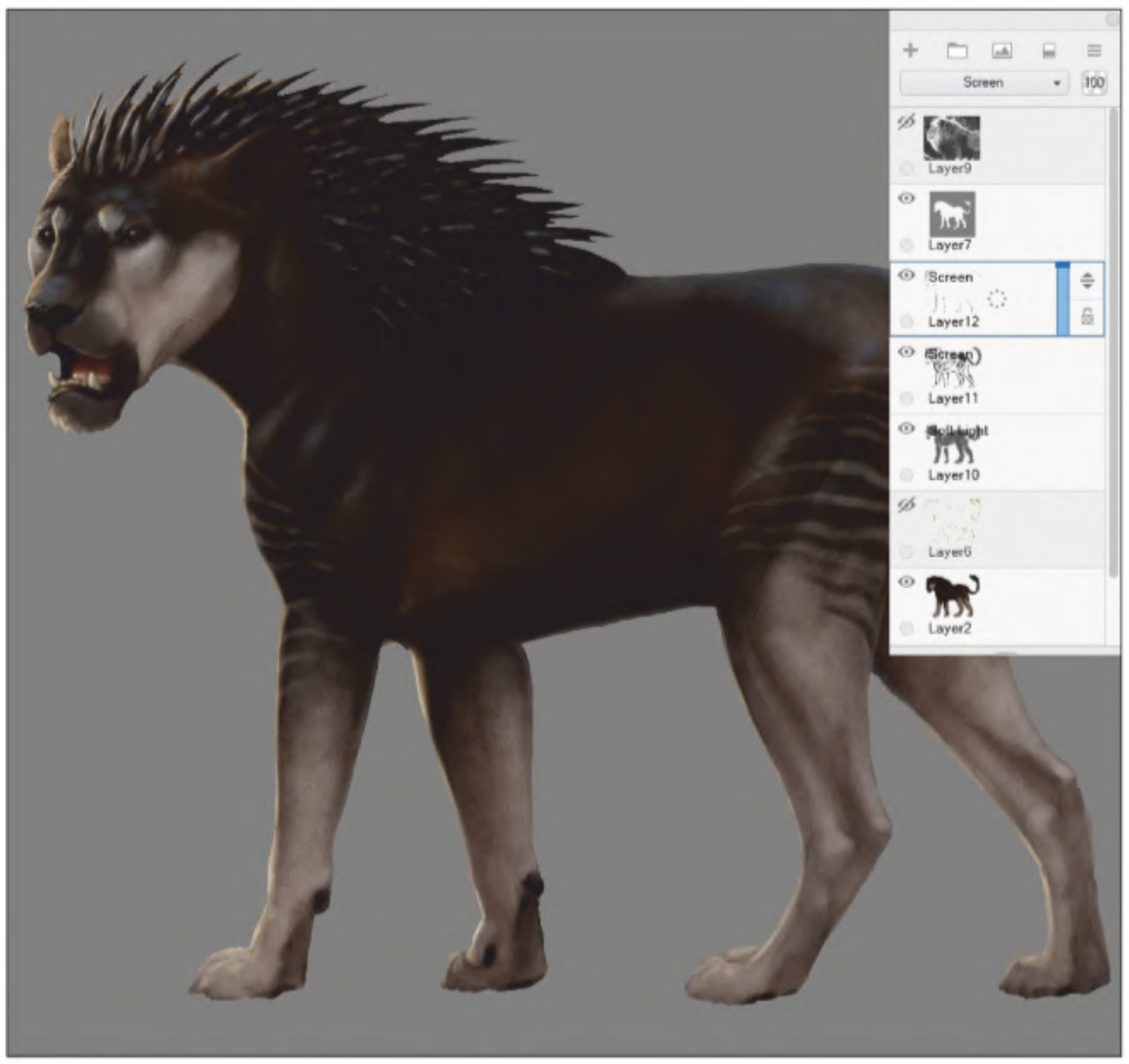
11 Apply textures from the photo brush

To paint with a photo brush, I create a new layer and set its mode to either Soft Light (for dark textures) or Multiply (for bright textures). I paint the textures, controlling the size all the time because I don't want to flatten the body. Next, I use my Texture Blender to vary the appearance of the textures.



12 Add shine to the scene

Now I add specular light, or shine. I create a new layer in Screen mode and paint with a dark blue to accentuate the shapes on the surface of the body. The smoother the surface, the brighter and sharper the shine. By adding large areas of undisturbed shine on the fur, I show that it's smooth like an okapi's body.



13 Bring in a rim light

If I have the time, I like adding special effects such as rim lighting. I create another Screen layer and paint with a dark yellow or orange to accentuate the edge of the body. This makes the whole artwork look a little more finished, despite it being sketched so quickly and loosely.



14 Final touches

Finally, I add shadows under the paws, and some glow behind the body to create contrast. I may add some minor details like whiskers, and smudge the edges a little to make them softer. I also use a custom smudge brush to create an impression of long fur, or spikes in this case.

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Illustrator Jenn Ravenna creates an out of this world landscape.

Pencil shading art skills
Timothy Von Rueden continues his core skills series in drawing.



ISSUE 179 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 09 August*

ArtRage 6

GET MORE OUT OF ARTRAGE

Steve Goad helps to streamline your painting process, while putting its layer effects and natural brush engine to good use

Artist PROFILE

Steve Goad

LOCATION: US

Steve paints using traditional and digital media to capture life and the imagination. He's worked as a concept artist, art director and game card illustrator.

www.stevegoadart.com



In this article I'll be providing advice and insights on ArtRage, a program I use quite a bit. I started painting with ArtRage when it was first released back in 2004, and it remains a primary tool in my workflow. It's great to see the advancements made in its custom brush engine, which is pretty much all I use in most of my work. I'll be going over some important areas during the painting process and revealing tips on specific tools that I feel might be beneficial.

My goal is to not only showcase the power of ArtRage, but to prove that you don't have to spend a fortune on certain tools to create professional art. If you're familiar with ArtRage but have yet to try the latest version (6), some of the new features include now being able to adjust paint depth and lighting to custom brushes. Smoothing has been added to the pencil, there's improved smoothing for the ink pen and you can create deeper impasto effects and adjustable gloss for the oil brush.

Finally, we live in a world where shortcuts are demanded to make a deadline. Those shortcuts can hurt you in the long run. I think it's important to forget about getting things done quickly, and concentrate on drawing or painting well.

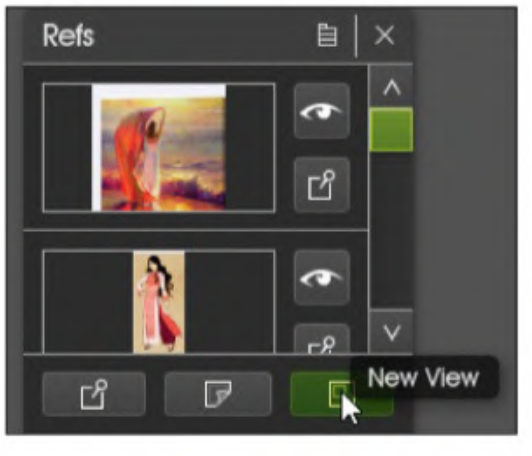


1 References and sketch

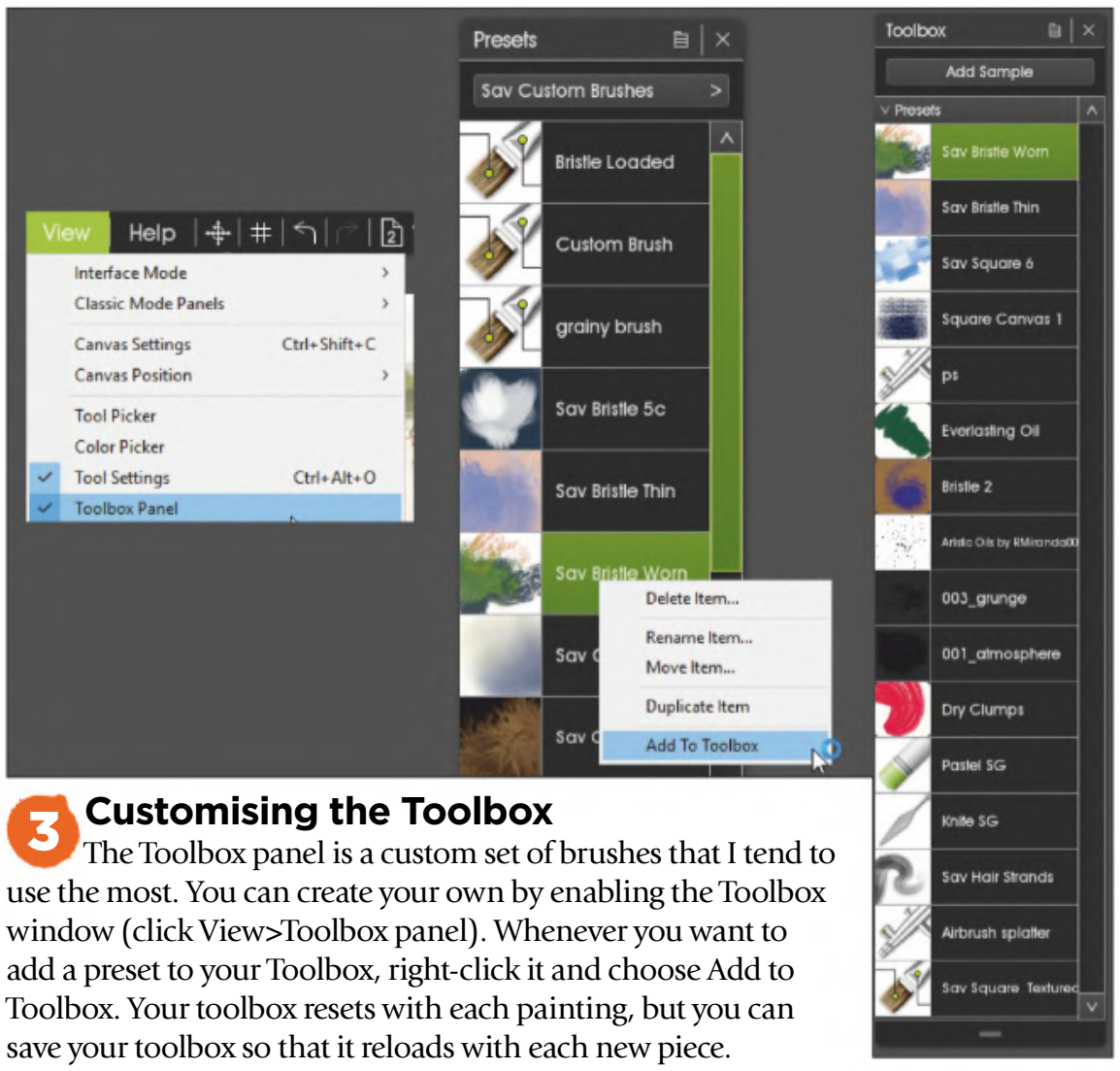
Once I have a rough idea of what I'd like to paint I'll do a search for suitable references, either online or through my own photo collection. I usually look for a colour palette that appeals to me and real-life references to help me paint accurately. The sketch itself at this point isn't that great – its purpose is to get the ball rolling. I like to build up the image on the canvas as I go, so I know that a lot of these details will start to develop as I paint.

2 Reference window

ArtRage has a unique feature when working with references. The program enables you to pin them up next to your work – just like you would when working with real paint! The identical version of my sketch to the right is a feature called New View. In the Refs window you can click New View to open a copy of your work. This comes in handy once you start to zoom in on your work to add those details, when you want to be able to see your painting in its entirety without having to zoom out.

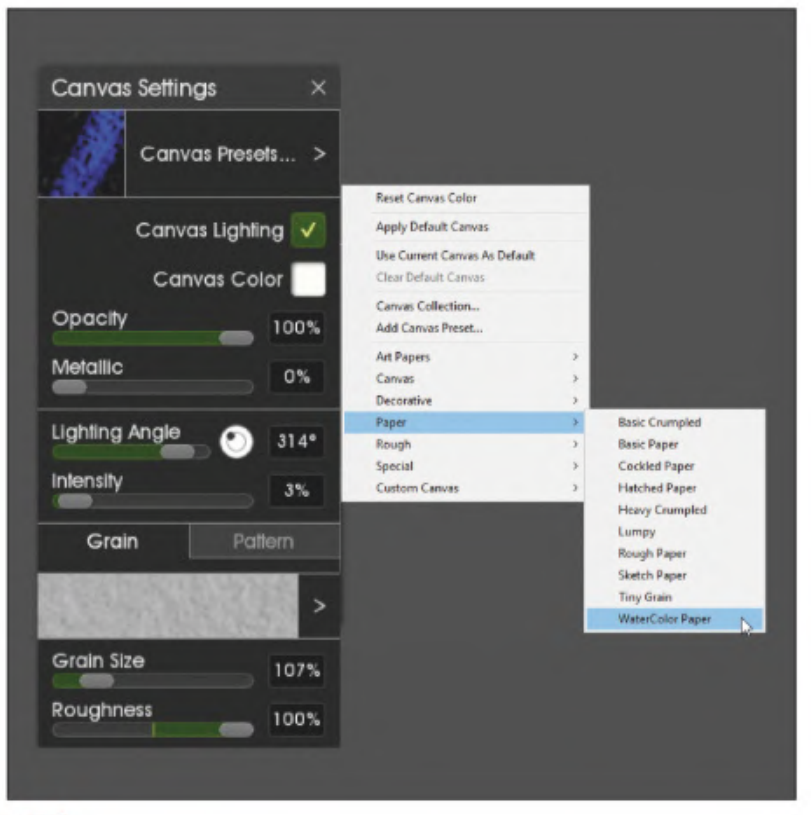






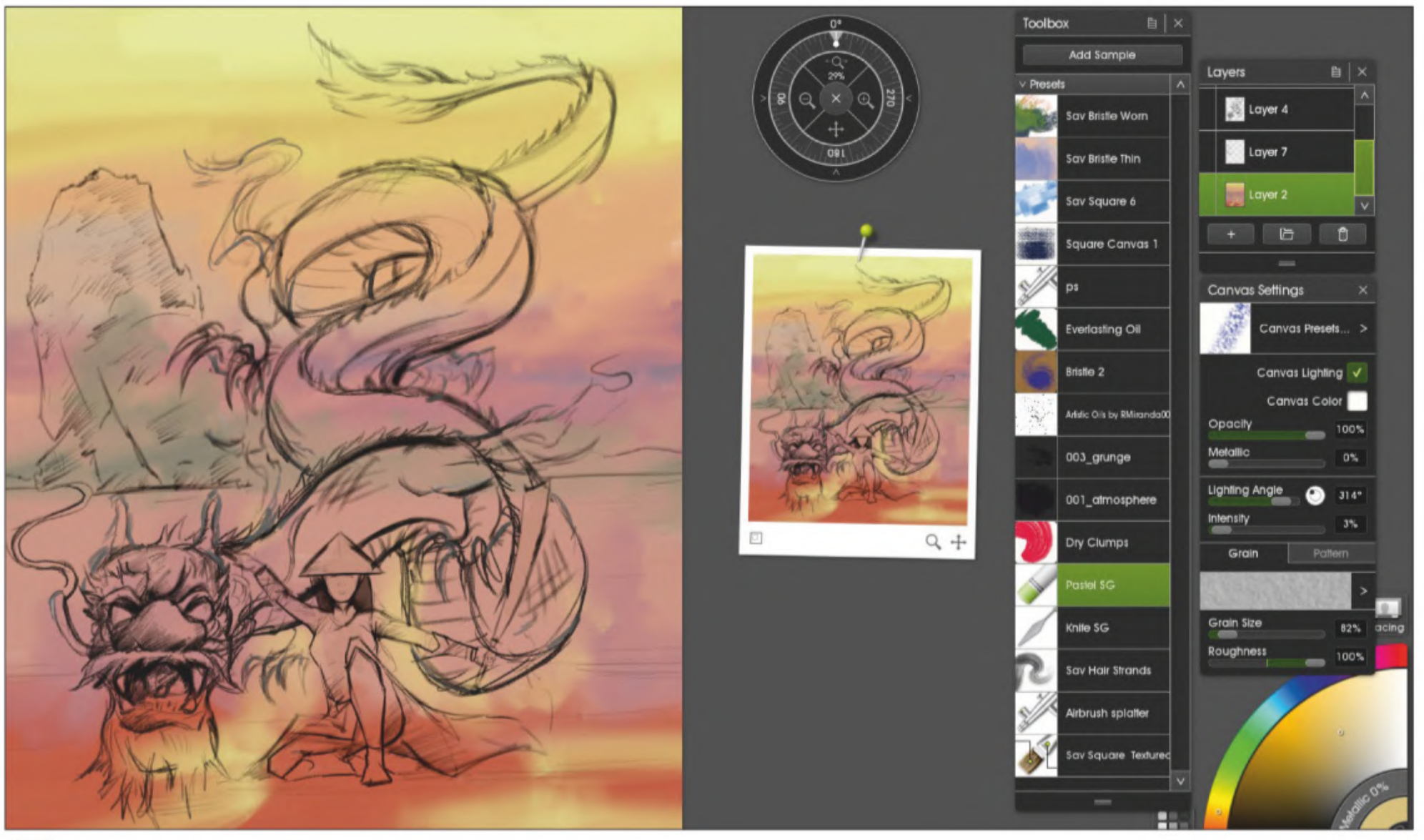
3 Customising the Toolbox

The Toolbox panel is a custom set of brushes that I tend to use the most. You can create your own by enabling the Toolbox window (click View>Toolbox panel). Whenever you want to add a preset to your Toolbox, right-click it and choose Add to Toolbox. Your toolbox resets with each painting, but you can save your toolbox so that it reloads with each new piece.



4 Setting the Canvas Texture

Next, choose your painting's canvas. This will help develop the mood of the piece as it reacts to your choice of brushes. It'll also be present throughout the painting process, giving you a consistent foundation to work from. I tend to stick with the watercolour paper canvas, because it creates a great visual effect.



5 Laying down the first layer of paint

I usually place the sketch on its own layer with a transparent background. I set the sketch layer to Multiply and then paint on the layer underneath. This enables me to lay down the colour without worrying about messing up the initial sketch, and is a quick way to fill in the background, too. When filling in with paint I use the Pastel tool. It's the perfect brush for tackling large areas and it doesn't have any additional features that might cause ArtRage to suffer lag when working with a large brush size.



6 Hiding the sketch and refining the background

Once I'm happy with the direction my background colours are taking, I'll hide the sketch and just focus on the background. I use the Color Sampler tool by holding down Alt and pulling colours from my reference images. At this point I've only used the Pastel brush and two custom brushes. You'll find that ArtRage has a unique way of blending and applying textures at the same time, while mimicking how colours are blended in real life on the canvas. This means you don't have a sprawling set of tools to try and choose from, which can be a distraction for some artists.



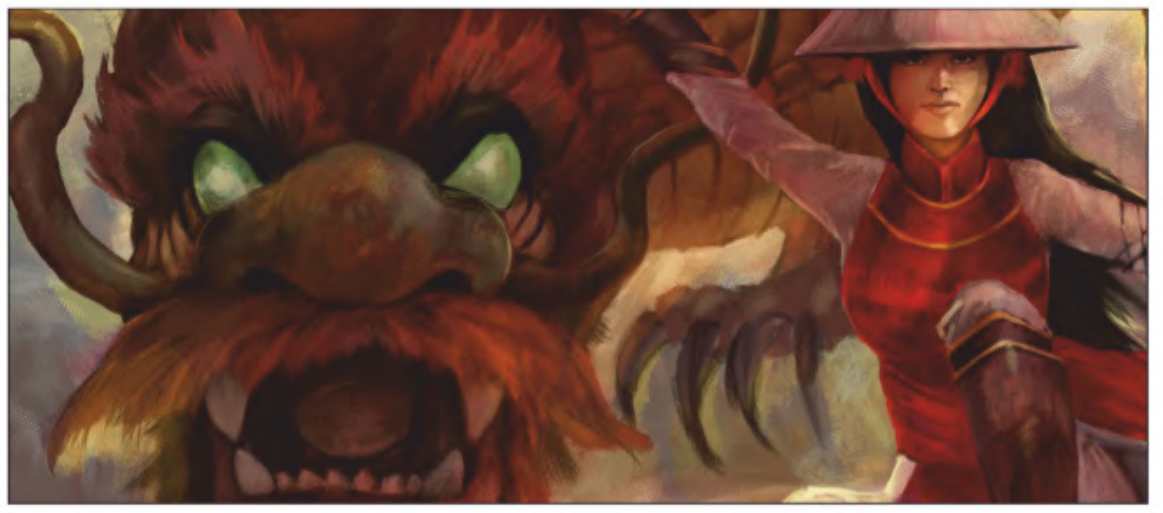
7 Bringing the sketches back

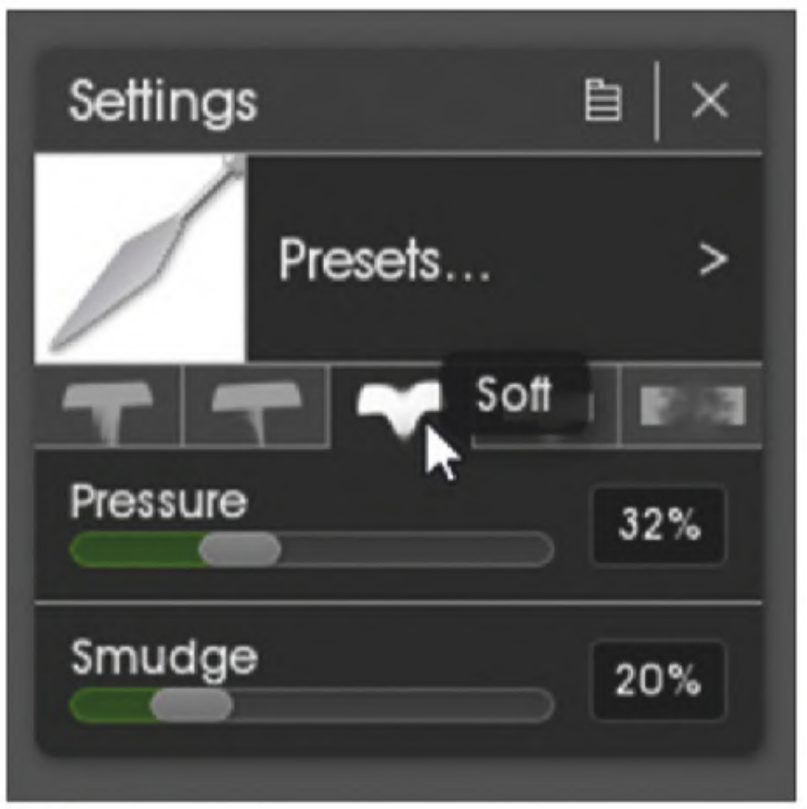
Once the bulk of the background is done, I'll start to bring the main subject matter into focus. I've found that if you complete the background first and then apply your main subject matter on a separate layer, it makes things easier when you need to do some cleaning up in the piece or even decide to resize your foreground elements. It'll save you some time in having to repaint them, too.



8 Time to focus on the details

At this point I have a good sense of colour and composition, so it's now time to focus on bringing those details out. This is where I try and find a nice balance between hard edges, blending and texture. I tend to use a custom airbrush tool and ink pen for the hard edge. The key is to choose an Opacity setting for your brush so that when you start to paint it acts like a wash building up when painting with acrylics. For blending and textures I'll use Sav Scatola's custom brushes (**www.boxy.co.uk**). They're perfect for creating chalk-like textures with a nice smudge/blend effect. Press down hard to produce the blend effect, then lightly tap to add texture.



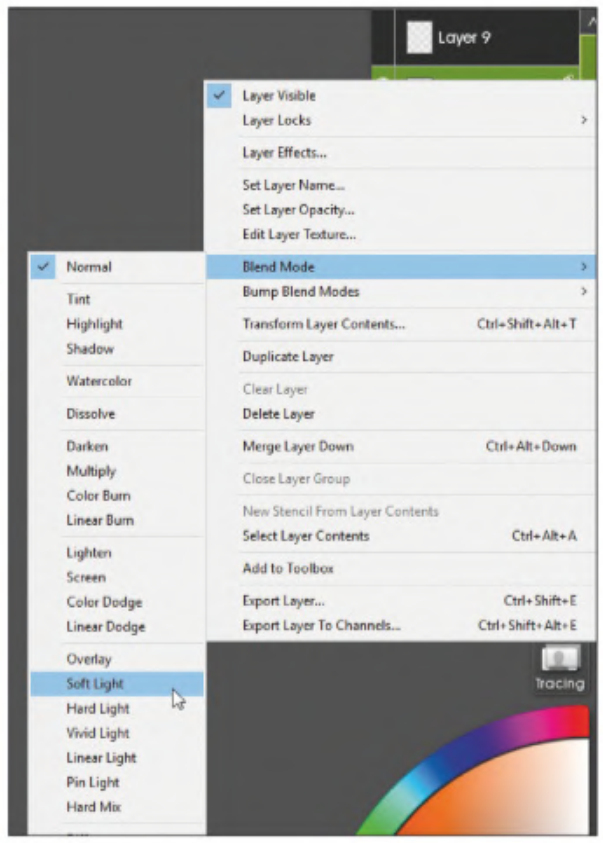


9 Depict realistic smoke

You can create a smoke effect by laying down paint on a new layer with the Watercolor brush, then using the Palette Knife with the Soft effect enabled to smear the paint around. Adjust the Pressure and Opacity for the desired effect. A perfect example of this in action is the smoke I paint around the ball in the dragon's mouth.







10 Use Soft Light layers to make your colours pop

Once I'm happy with the level of detail in the scene, I like to create new layers with the Soft Light blend mode. This helps to enhance the colour tone. Right-click your new layer and go to Blend mode>Soft Light. I usually reduce the Opacity anywhere from 20 to 50 per cent and use either the Oil brush or a custom brush that can lay down a lot of paint. To me this is the best way to mimic oil glazing, only instead of using linseed oil you're using a layer and blending mode. You'll soon notice your reds and orange start to become more vibrant.





11 Adjustments and finishing touches

The beauty of painting digitally is you can go back and change things. In the workshop video you'll see me making adjustments to the dragon's claw and warrior's foot, and shorten her arm that's holding the blade. Once I'm satisfied with the overall detail I'll create another layer with a low Opacity (say, 38 per cent) and select a textured Bristle brush. I'll then go around the edges of the subject matter and start pulling in colours from their surroundings. This will take off some of those hard edges and in some cases create a special effect. I want the dragon to look a little more magical; this technique enables me to put a soft glow around him.



12 Make sure your art tool works for you

And this is the finished painting! As artists, I think we should seek out tools that will complement our creativity and workflow. My advice is to find the tool that makes sense to you: one that works for you and not the other way around. For me, ArtRage is that tool, and I'm very glad that I found it all those years ago.

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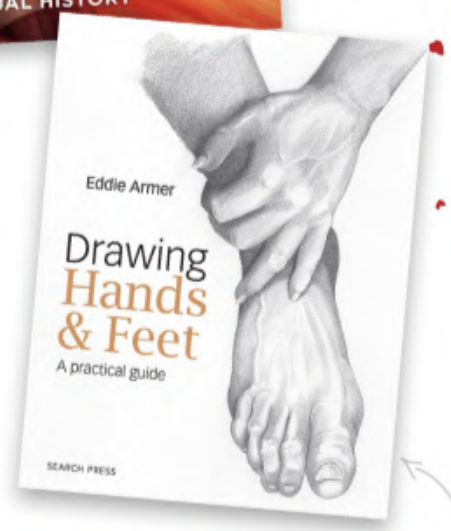
Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

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

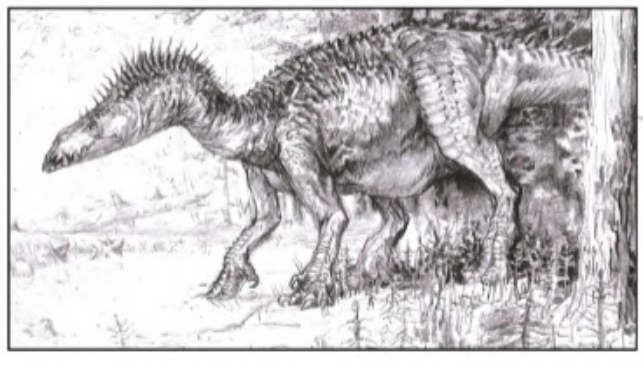




5 PRODUCTS ON TEST







HARDWARE

92 LG gram 17 laptop
We find out where LG's super-thin, super-lightweight laptop excels, and what design compromises have been made.

TRAINING

95 Concept Masters Vol. 3: Photobashing for Concept Art
Quickly paint awe-inspiring spaceship art with concept artist Chris Madden.

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Pro artists pass on their techniques for concepting original fantasy creatures.



97 Magic: The Gathering – Rise of the Gatewatch
This visual guide celebrates the history of the world's first trading card game.

97 Drawing Hands & Feet: A practical guide
All the expertise you need to help you depict hands and feet with precision.

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



The lightweight LG gram 17 comes with enough power to run complex creative tasks.

LG gram 17 laptop

LEAN MACHINE We find out where LG's super-thin, super-lightweight laptop excels, and what compromises have been made along the way

Price $1,700 **Company** LG **Web** www.lg.com **Release** UK – TBC

The LG gram 17 achieves a technical feat that's so far eluded most laptop manufacturers. The device is ultra-lightweight and has a slim design, yet is adept at running demanding creative software. It's available in four screen sizes, ranging from 13.3-inch to the largest 17-inch version we're reviewing here, which only weighs 1.34kg. Indeed, it's touted by LG as being the world's lightest 17-inch laptop.

Shaped in the familiar wedge that was popularised by the MacBook Air, the LG gram 17 measures just 1.7cm thick. This combination of thin design and minimal weight makes it fantastic for working when on the move. Despite its large physical size, it can be lifted with one hand and passed around like a tablet. Previously, 17-inch laptops have been the very opposite of portable! It won't add much weight to hand luggage and comes with a compact charger, too.

COMPACT COMPONENTS

The gram 17 achieves this feat of extreme weight reduction through the use of a carbon and magnesium alloy for the chassis, and ultra-compact components. Inside the 17-inch LG gram is a low-power (15 watt) quad-core Intel Core i7-8565U CPU that runs at 1.8GHz under normal operating conditions, but leaps to 4.6GHz when running complex processing tasks, such as exporting video.

Elsewhere, there's a 512GB solid-state drive and 16GB of memory – a specification that will be more than enough for the majority of creative professionals. It's up to the job of processing RAW images, carrying out multi-layered Photoshop work, editing HD video and crunching through the most demanding filter effects.



If the gram 17's screen isn't big enough for you, there's an HDMI port to connect it to a larger monitor.

"The LG gram 17's beautiful screen means that photo and video editing will be a fantastic experience"

The gorgeous IPS display is WQXGA (2,560x1,600) resolution, which is a 16:10 screen ratio. The bezels around the side measure only a few millimetres, providing (close to) edge-to-edge viewing. Furthermore, the 17-inch screen has been squeezed into a 15.6-inch body thanks to this reduction in bezel size. It isn't 4K, but is great for accurate graphics work with 96 per cent sRGB coverage. The screen has a glossy finish with a plastic film on it, so don't expect to be able to use the gram 17 in strong sunlight, but otherwise it looks particularly good, with high brightness and decent contrast. And its beautiful screen means that photo and video editing will be a fantastic experience.

One glaring omission from the specification is any kind of discrete graphics card from AMD or Nvidia. This is understandable: a graphics card would add weight and require more cooling, making it impossible for LG to create such a thin laptop. Instead, you have to make do with the integrated Intel UHD 620 graphics chip. In creative software terms, that means you won't be able to use Nvidia's Cuda acceleration, and while OpenCL will work it's not as good as using a discrete graphics card.

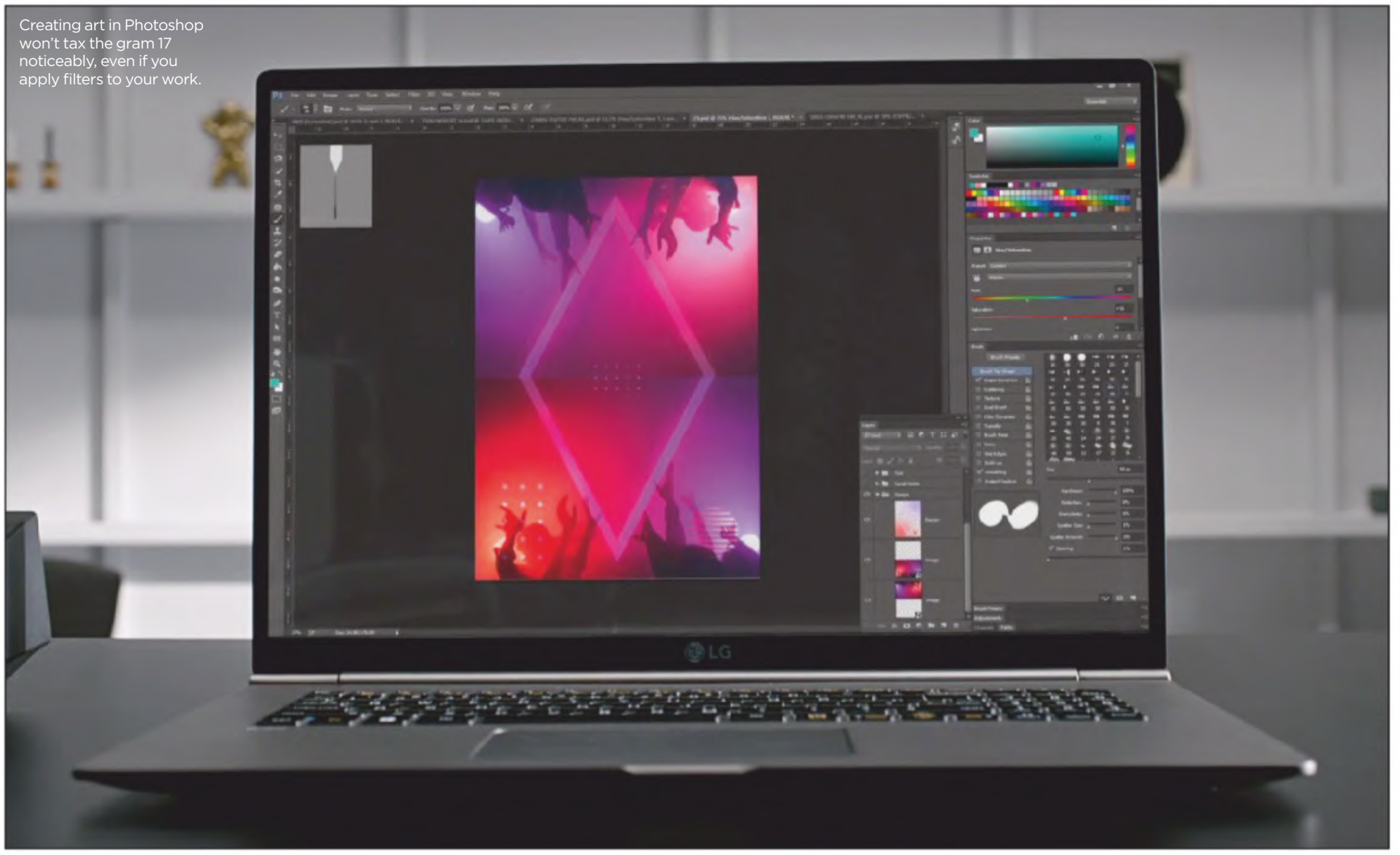
That's not to say the integrated Intel UHD graphics chip is hamstrung. You can still run 3D programs, but the LG gram is a system for 2D design, rather than high-end 3D. There are a few quirks with the gram 17's design, too. Although the base and hinge are solid, the screen wobbles in use, and the SATA SSD isn't as fast as the nVME SSDs that are supplied in other manufacturer's high-end laptops.



Ports on the LG gram 17 include three USB C and a MicroSD card reader.

A WELL-ENGINEERED DEVICE

Looking beyond these limitations, and the gram 17 is still one seriously impressive piece of engineering. When the CPU is being put to good use with the right software, it can deliver excellent performance. Basic Windows tasks, from web browsing to film



Creating art in Photoshop won't tax the gram 17 noticeably, even if you apply filters to your work.

watching, are quick and responsive and the 72Wh battery is quoted for 19 hours of basic use. The keyboard, which comes with a number pad, is shallow with great travel and we found it easy to hammer out words on. Elsewhere, the generously sized trackpad is smooth and accurate.

Ports on the side cater for a fair amount of peripherals: you get three legacy USB connectors, with a single USB-C port that supports Thunderbolt devices. A MicroSD card slot enables you to transfer media from cameras, phones and so on, an HDMI port can output the image to a larger display, and a fingerprint scanner is built into the power button. Audio is the weakest point in the design – it sounded a bit tinny to our ears.

WHAT OF THE COMPETITION?

The LG gram 17's performance is only relative to its size and weight, held back slightly by the low-power CPU. Competitors such as the MacBook Pro and Dell's XPS 15 offer faster CPUs, discrete graphics, more storage, more memory and an even higher resolution display as optional extras, all of which are superior for design work.

For example, the top-end Lenovo ThinkPad P1 can be kitted out with a brilliantly vibrant 4K display, six-core processor, a powerful Nvidia Quadro P2000 graphics card, up to 64GB of memory and 2TB of SSD storage, while still remaining eminently portable. However, you're looking at prices well above £2,000. The LG gram 17 is quoted as $1,700. Official pricing in the UK has yet to be announced; however, we expect it to cost around £1,300 when it hits UK stores this summer. When considering the price of some alternatives, this isn't extortionate given the large screen and decent all-round performance.

> **"The gram 17 is the thinnest and lightest general-purpose laptop on the market"**

The LG gram 17 is the thinnest and lightest general-purpose laptop on the market, and one that's more than up to the job of working with creative software. That said, the lack of any graphics card could prove to be restrictive if you find yourself in need of more complex programs. We'd pick it for the portability first and foremost, because it means never again having to feel bogged down by a heavy computer when travelling.



The gram 17 features a separate power input, which means you don't need to use the Thunderbolt 3 port for charging.

DETAILS

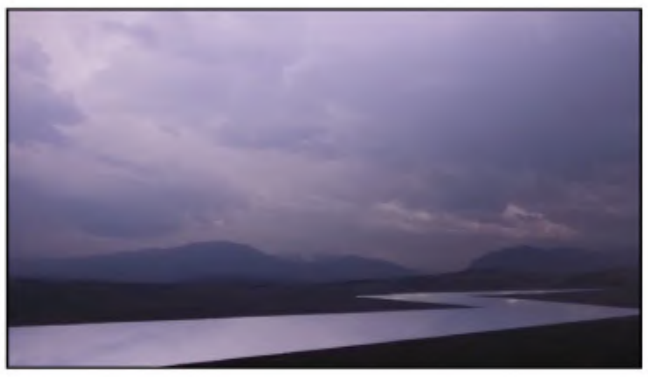
Features

- Intel i7 CPU (eighth generation)
- Windows 10 Home
- 17-inch WQXGA (2,560x1,600) IPS display
- 72Wh lithium battery (up to 19.5 hours)
- 16GB RAM
- 512GB SSD
- Thunderbolt 3 interface
- MicroSD card slot
- 3 x USB-C
- Fingerprint scanner
- Size: 38.1x26.7x 1.7cm; weight: 1.34kg

Rating

★★★★☆

Reference photos form the foundation of Chris Madden's epic environment concept piece, offering a fast track to creativity.



Smaller fighter ships launching from the main vessel are one of the finishing touches that Chris adds late on in his video.





After pasting a photograph of a helicopter into the shape of the ship, Chris simply moves it around to find inspiration from its forms.



Chris reveals that light falloff makes all the difference, depending on the size of the object it's hitting.

Concept Masters Vol 3: Photobashing for Concept Art

SHIPSHAPE Concept designer Chris Madden shows how some crafty techniques help you be creative and practical at the same time

Publisher JRO Tools **Price** $6 **Format** Download **Web** www.jrotools.com

Chris Madden's contribution to Concept Masters' series of workshops explores the potential of photobashing: bringing reference photos into your art that you then paint over. His video gaming background means his chosen scene of a giant ship over a landscape has an epic, cinematic feel – and throughout the video, you'll see how Chris uses photobashing to convey the required mood.

His use of photos in creating the landscape backdrop is straightforward: import a sky photo here and a ground photo there, then get to work with Blending modes and Transform tools to shape these elements into a coherent whole.

It's when Chris starts working on the spaceship that the video truly hits its stride. Pasting an incongruous photograph of a military helicopter into the shape of the ship, he moves the photo around within the silhouette, searching for moments when an element within the photo suggests a form on the ship. It's a fascinating approach to design that could yield unexpected bonuses as you develop one of your own pieces.

There are also some great insights about conveying scale – the ship in the painting is huge, but how do you suggest the size of an object that's floating over a landscape? Each choice Chris makes keeps this in mind, including 'roughing up' the ship outline with detailing and paying attention to the falloff area of lights. Photobashing makes a significant contribution as he builds up texture on this form.

There are a few audio issues when Chris uses his Surface Pro tablet computer on part of the project, but he's an engaging and knowledgeable host. Aside from some helpful techniques, you get a real sense from his narration of how a concept artist combines creativity with practicality – not balancing them, but rather making both pull in the same direction.

SAMPLE VIDEO

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Blocking out
- Photobashing basics
- Detailing the ship
- Photobashing detail
- Roughing up edges
- Conveying scale
- Light falloff

Length
171 minutes

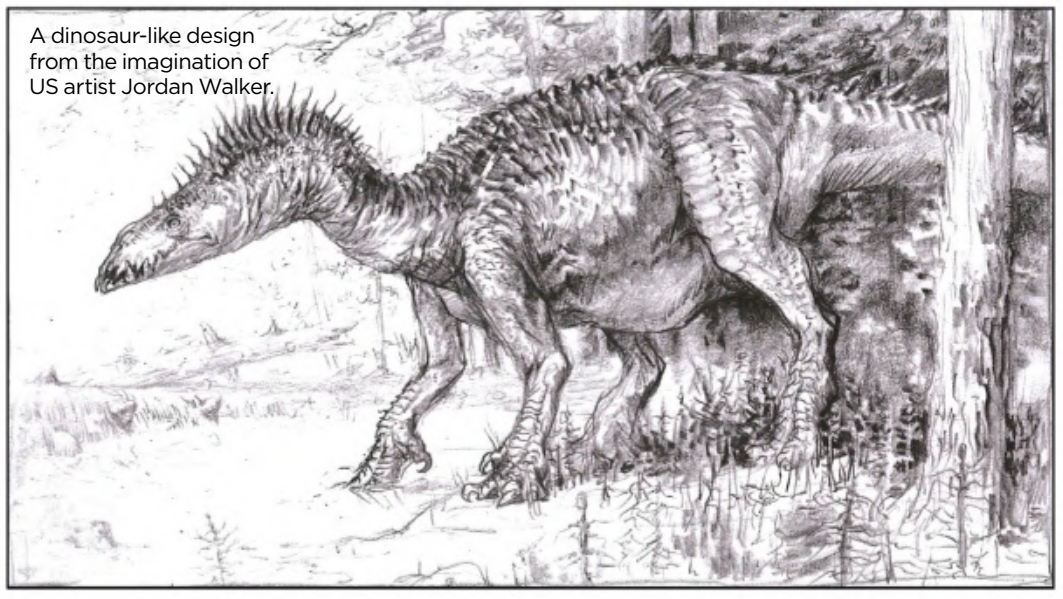
Rating
★★★★☆

ARTIST PROFILE
CHRIS MADDEN

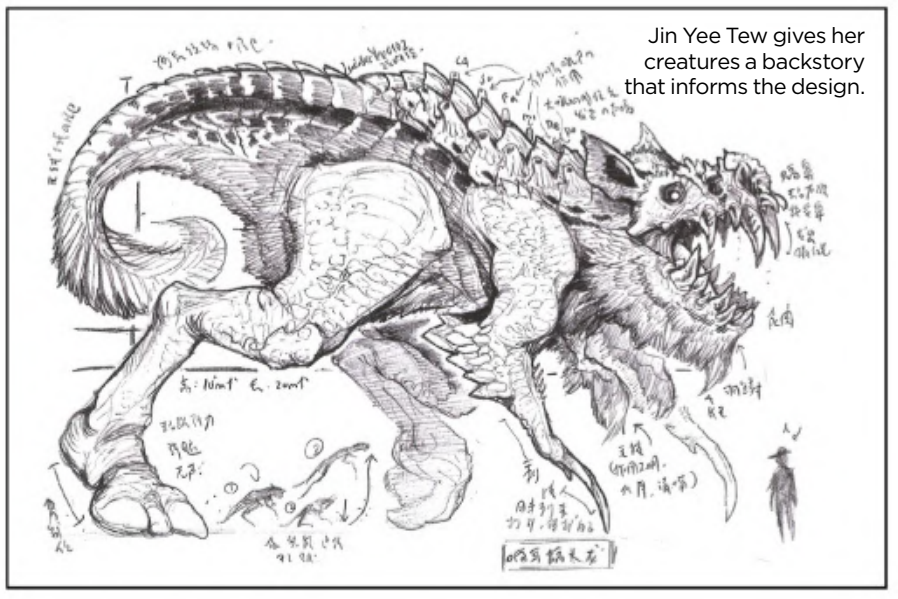
Currently a concept designer at Lucasfilm Animation, Chris specialises in concept art and art direction for games. His previous experience includes Amazon Games Studios, Microsoft and Airtight Games, on projects including HoloLens, Soul Fjord and Quantum Conundrum. Chris has also done comic book work, writing and drawing his own creation The Courier as well as pencilling Back To The Future and Danger Girl: Revolver. He says that his goal is to make cool things with cool people.



www.artstation.com/madman



A dinosaur-like design from the imagination of US artist Jordan Walker.



Jin Yee Tew gives her creatures a backstory that informs the design.

Sketching from the Imagination: Creatures & Monsters



FICTIONAL BEAST If you can think it then you can draw it, as this inspirational book on concepting original fantasy creatures proves

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £20 **Web** www.shop.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

Facing a blank canvas can be daunting, particularly when designing subjects not of this world. Just what and who do you turn to for inspiration when designing mythical creatures? The sixth in its series, Sketching from the Imagination: Creatures and Monsters is a fantastic place to start. It's an inspirational paperback that gathers artwork from 50 illustrators working in the field of creature design, while throwing in some valuable artist insight for good measure, too.

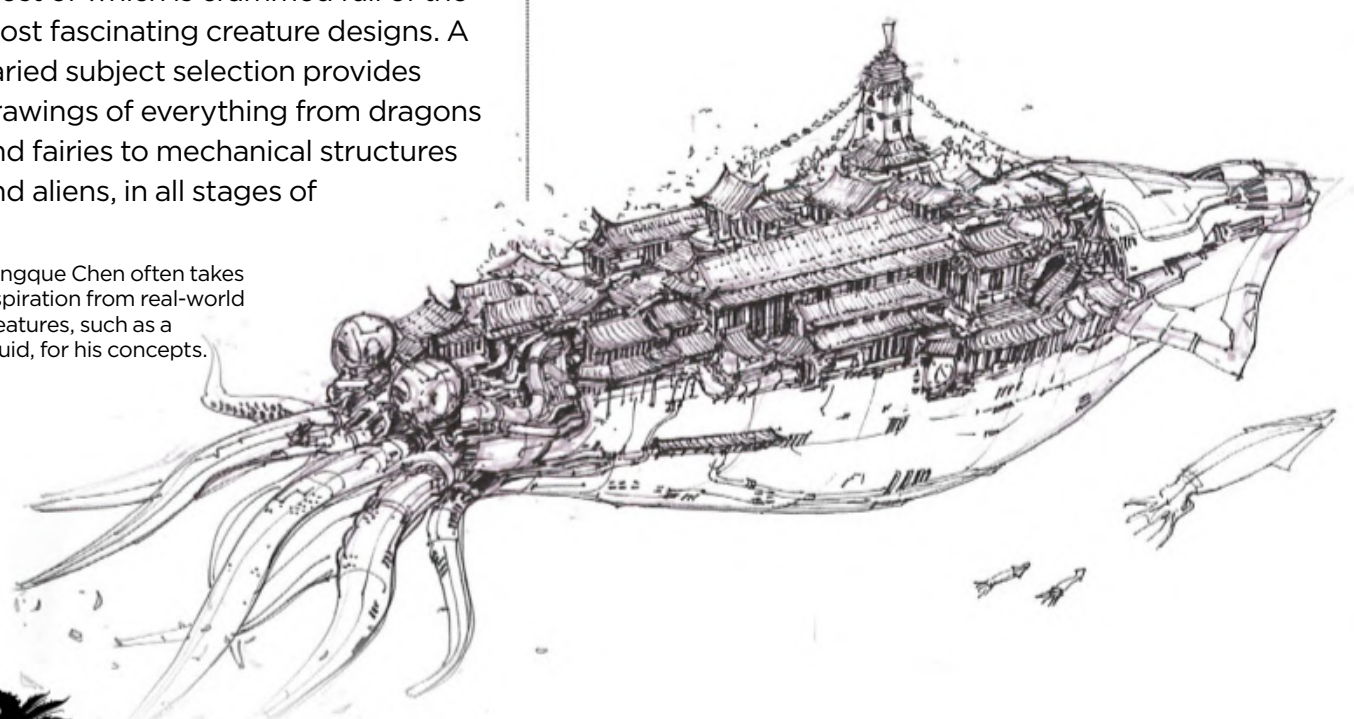
A glance through the book's 317 pages and its format quickly becomes apparent. Each artist has been allocated a similar amount of space, most of which is crammed full of the most fascinating creature designs. A varied subject selection provides drawings of everything from dragons and fairies to mechanical structures and aliens, in all stages of development. The majority of the artwork is in black and white; however, a number of full colour illustrations pop up randomly, making for a welcome change of pace in among the monochrome.



The image-to-word ratio is, quite rightly, weighted heavily in favour of the former, and the text featured is, for the most part, carefully placed so as not to intrude on valuable illustration space. Page layouts follows the same format for each artist – a short introduction followed by inspiration, materials and techniques sections – which can get a little repetitive. Highlighted boxouts, which feature individuals' artistic and professional advice are, overall, much more insightful (for a good example, see White Ink is Your Friend on page 17).

A slight downside to this softcover is that there's no easy way (unless you're familiar with every artist) to quickly find a specific subject matter or style of interest. Instead, you'll need to flick through the book's hundreds of pages to find those dragon designs you're looking for. If and when you do, however, artists are detailed in a summary of contributors at the back of the book, should you want to explore their body of work any further.

> "It's an inspirational paperback that gathers art from 50 illustrators working in the field of creature design"



Longque Chen often takes inspiration from real-world creatures, such as a squid, for his concepts.

On the whole there's very little not to like about this book. The art is accessible and fascinating in its variety, and the artistic insight is a nice added extra. Creature artists are sure to enjoy all the eye candy on view, and at less than £20, it's a bargain to boot.

RATING ★★★★☆

Magic: The Gathering – Rise of the Gatewatch

SIZE MATTERS This visual guide celebrates the history of the world's first trading card game by showcasing notable characters from Magic's Multiverse

Editor Eric Klopfer **Publisher** Abrams ComicArts **Price** £16 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

Magic: The Gathering has gained an army of approximately 20 million players since its inception 26 years ago. Documenting some of the game's rich history is Rise of the Gatewatch, which collects a number of Magic's first-ever Planeswalkers character designs.

Aimed primarily at Magic fans, this undersized hardback, which measures 19x15cm, is divided into sections that focus on key characters. Each section starts with a short biography before revealing at least a dozen illustrations, some never-before-seen, of the characters through the ages. The work of high-profile artists is on show, including Wesley Burt, Karla Ortiz, Raymond Swanland and Jason Chan.

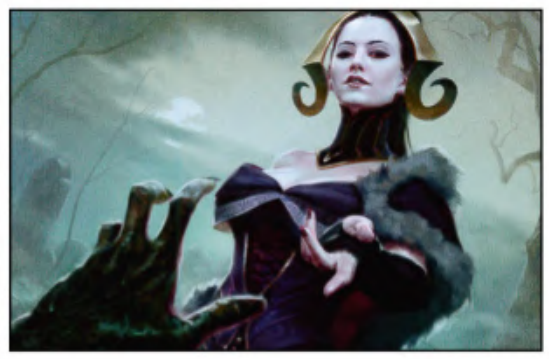
For those unfamiliar with the game, the contents will make little sense. However, the volume and quality of art showcased makes it an effective inspiration resource for any artist with an interest in fantasy character art.

Because much of the art was originally designed for and printed on small playing cards, it would have been great to see it on a much larger scale. But we've no doubt die-hard Magic: The Gathering fans both old and new will fully appreciate this revealing trip down memory lane.



Veteran British fantasy artist Wayne Reynolds draws Nissa Revane, Vastwood Seer.







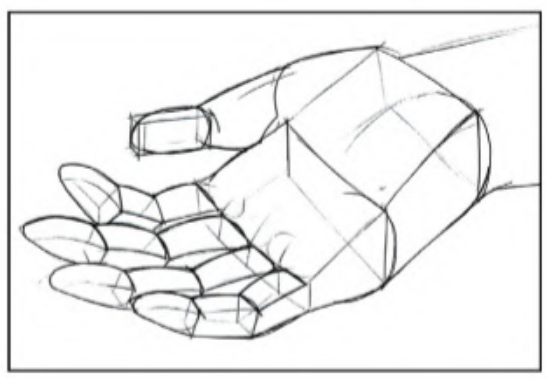
RATING ★★★☆☆

Drawing Hands & Feet: A practical guide

FIRM GRIP In less than 100 pages, this comprehensive guide provides all the expertise you'll need to help you draw hands and feet with precision

Author Eddie Armer **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £13 **Web** www.searchpress.com **Available** Now

The complex makeup and expressive nature of human hands and feet can make them challenging parts of the body to depict accurately and authentically. Drawing Hands & Feet by Eddie Armer, whose career in figure drawing spans more than four decades, combines a series of workshops and written theory to help artists master the art of illustrating both.



If you're having trouble drawing hands, Eddie Armer recommends the box approach, which dates back to the early 16th century.



Thoughtful and clever in its approach, this guide is formatted in a way that lends itself well to novices and more advanced illustrators alike. The practical elements come in the form of step-by-step guides, which are arguably some of the most informative anatomy breakdowns we've ever seen, due largely in part to the detailed illustrations clearly depicting each step.

The written theory is just as comprehensive, with the first 30 pages of the book featuring easy-to-read and helpfully illustrated advice on the best materials to use, backdrops and lighting, and the bone and muscle structure of the hand and foot. You have to get past quite a lengthy, somewhat indulgent introduction and personal history initially, but both provide insight into the author's extensive experience and obvious passion for life drawing, which can only be a good thing.



Eddie explains how best to capture feet in a variety of poses, using multiple drawing techniques.

An excellent, highly affordable resource that will go a long way to helping you draw realistic-looking hands and feet.

RATING ★★★★★

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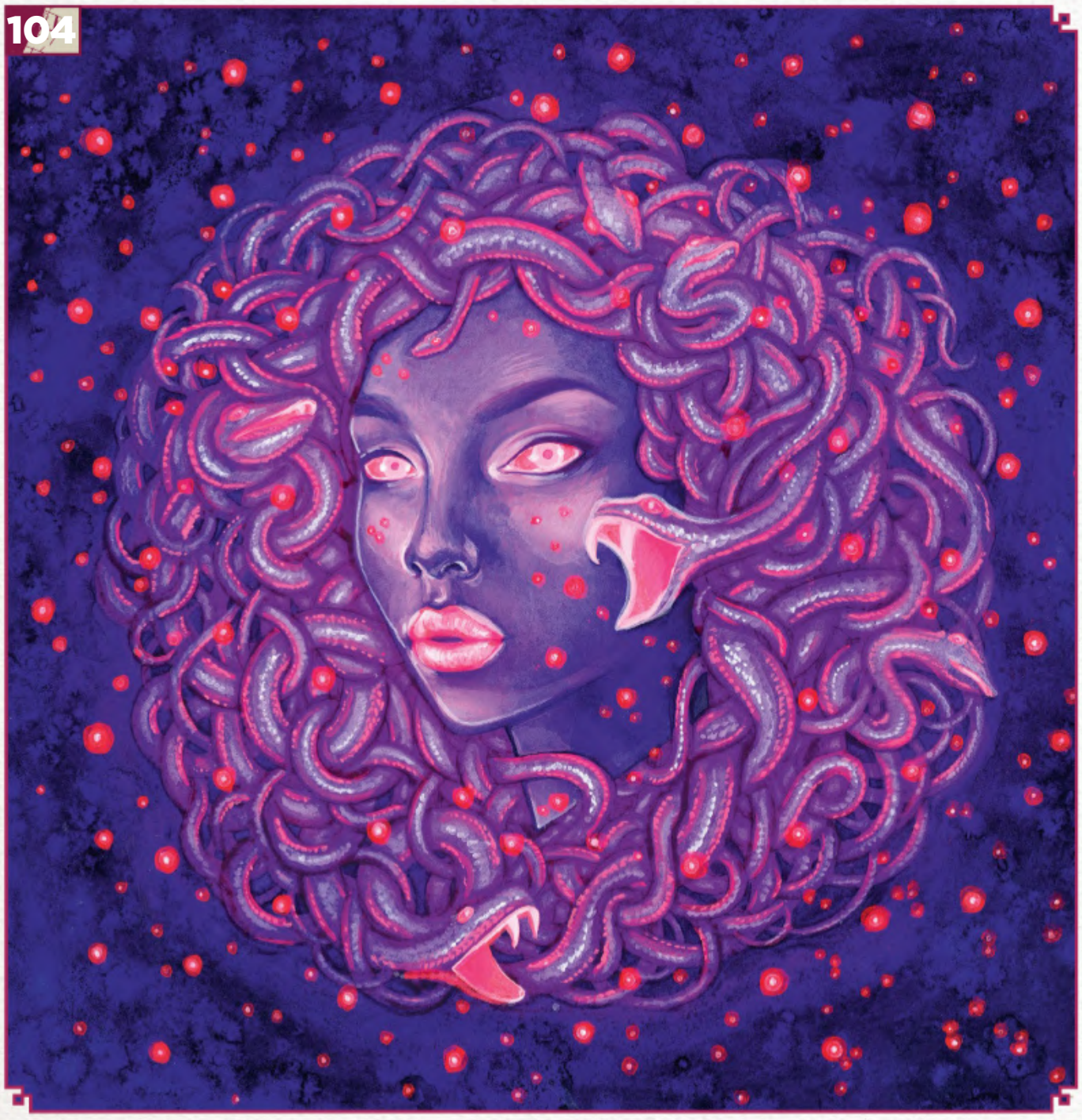
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See page 8 now!

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

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists





This issue:

100 Traditional art FXPosé
Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

104 Workshop: Create new effects in mixed media
Kelly McKernan shares her multi-layered mixed media process for creating a stylised portrait of Medusa.

110 Core Skills: Drawing techniques
Timothy Von Rueden launches a new series aimed at helping you to improve your pencil art and approach to drawing.

114 First Impressions: Travis Louie
This US illustrator and author adopts a pragmatic outlook…





FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Nikolaos Kafasis

LOCATION: Greece **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, inks, coloured pencils, metal leaf, acrylics, graphite, glitter, pastels, charcoal **WEB:** www.instagram.com/nikolas_tower

Nikolaos, working under the name Nikolas Tower, creates paintings of mysterious women. His aim is to visually convey a world of silent human feelings.



1 CALYPSO
"The story of Calypso is a melancholic one. She lingered on an untrue love for many years, but in the end she had to let go."

2 NEREID
"I've always felt a deep connection to the sea; it's unpredictable and powerful, yet calming and beautiful."

3 UNSEEN
"Sometimes, while searching for beauty, we lose sight of the beautiful and small things that pass right in front of us."

4 GALE
"In a sudden burst of uncontrollable emotions and abstract thoughts, we need to find a way to make everything peaceful."

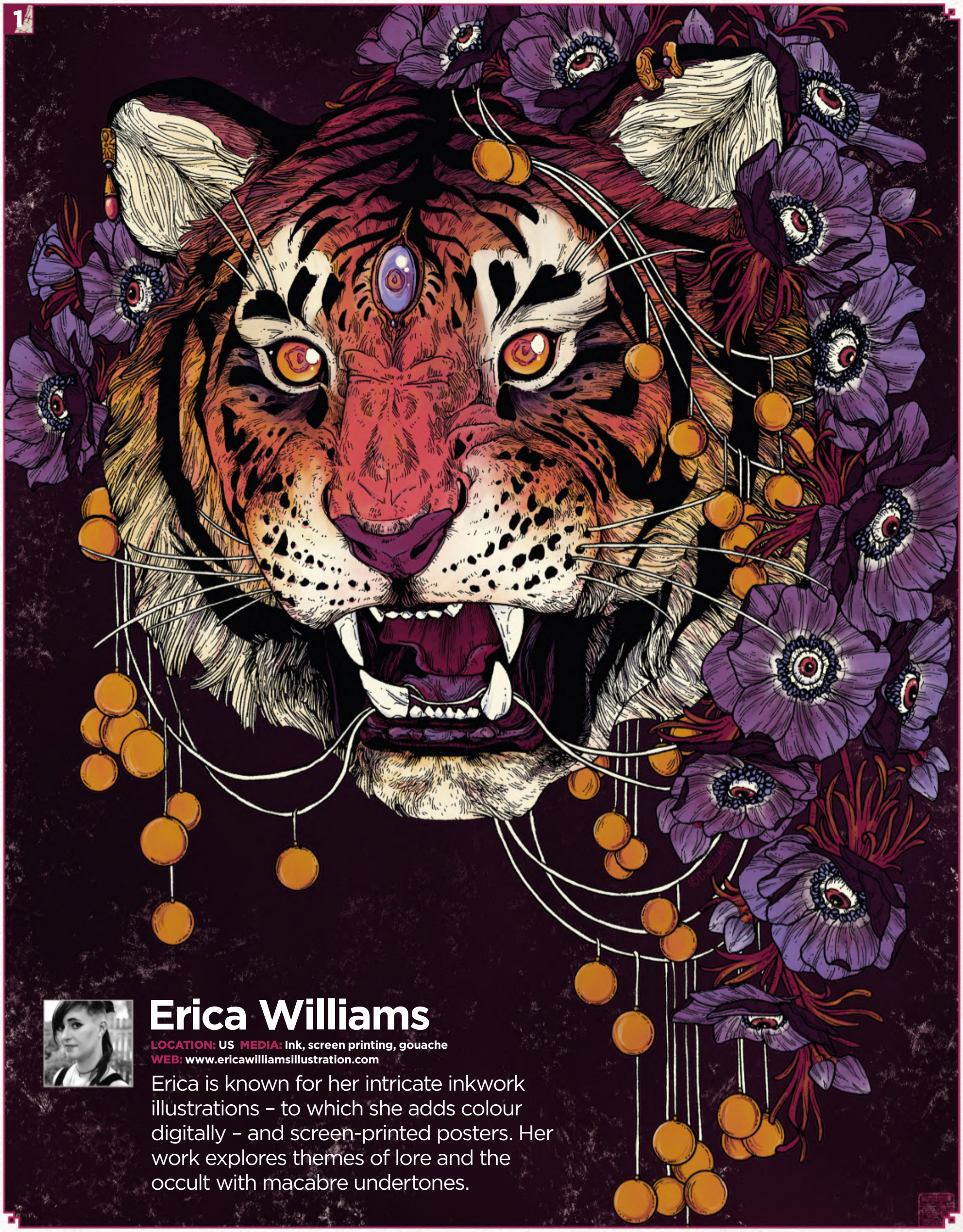




Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx

4





Erica Williams

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Ink, screen printing, gouache
WEB: www.ericawilliamsillustration.com

Erica is known for her intricate inkwork illustrations – to which she adds colour digitally – and screen-printed posters. Her work explores themes of lore and the occult with macabre undertones.

Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx









1 **SANSIN**
"In Korean lore, sansin are mountain gods who often keep tigers as companions. This was also used as a poster for Rise Against."

2 **LILLITH**
"Lilith was a woman made to be a demon because she didn't follow the rules of men and was sexually aware of herself. She's rad, so why wouldn't I draw her? Also demons are great, too!"

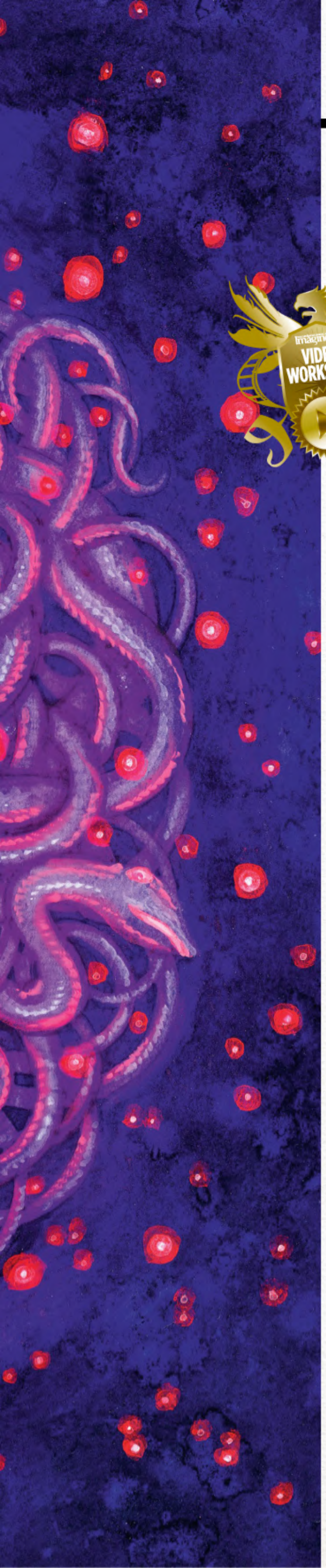
3 **RESTLESS**
"I love the idea of a sacrificial king and what it has meant to myth and magic throughout history. I wanted to create something based on that archetype."

4 **MIRAGE ADRIFT IN XANATHOS**
"A gouache painting I did for a show about spirits and ghosts. My cat had just died, so I painted him for the show."

5 **QUIVER**
"I adore borzoi, or Russian wolfhound, so I tend to draw them a lot. I also hate how humans destroy the natural world so I often show animals being hurt by man-made objects to highlight that."

Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx





Watercolour *Acrylics* *Digital*

CREATE NEW EFFECTS WITH MIXED MEDIA

KELLY MCKERNAN shares her multi-layered mixed media process for creating a stylised portrait of Medusa

Over time I've dropped the art school snob attitude about mixed media and embraced what various media can offer an artist. While I'm best known for my watercolour work, I feel that watercolour – or any single medium, really – can only offer so much before the limits of that medium are reached.

I came to realise that the image I create isn't bound by anything but my skill and imagination, and I began to bring the strengths of varying media into my work, combining them in ways that brings my vision further to life.

MIXING UP MY MEDIA CHOICES

What you're going to find in my process is that I hop around to different media based on what they offer me during that point in the creative process. I enjoy working on my iPad with Procreate during the earliest stages, since it makes this crucial part of concepting, sketching and mockup much easier than my previously traditional-only process.

However, I don't enjoy painting digitally, so I move the next part of my process to watercolour, where I'm most comfortable, loose and able to lay down a strong foundation for the painting. I know that watercolour has its limitations, especially when it comes to achieving luminosity in colour. I altered my process to bring in glazing with fluid acrylics over my watercolour underpainting, which brings in a new set of challenges as well as strengths. I don't like painting opaquely in acrylic, however, so an additional stage of my process includes the versatile acryla gouache. I'm able to get as detailed as I like, achieve vibrant colours that I can't easily create with other water-based media, and bring my vision to its furthest point yet.

This may sound like a lot of work – and it is – but as a process junkie, I truly enjoy the journey! Once I get too comfortable with my process, I like to change things up and push my favourite media to new places. Creating is magic, so keep developing your process, experiment with new materials, and combine them.

MATERIALS

SKETCHBOOK
- Moleskine

DIGITAL
- Procreate on the iPad

PAPER
- Arches Hot Press 140lb Watercolor Paper

SURFACE
- Da Vinci Cradled Wood Pro Panel

WATERCOLOUR
- Daniel Smith

ACRYLIC
- Golden Fluid Acrylic

ACRYLA GOUACHE
- Turner Acryla Gouache

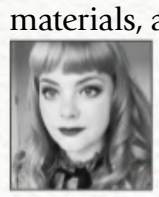
BRUSHES
- For watercolour, Winsor Newton Series 7, sizes 1 and 4
- For acrylic and acryla gouache, Creative Mark Polar Flo round sizes 2, 8 and liner

MEDIUMS
- Golden Matte Medium
- Golden archival spray varnish

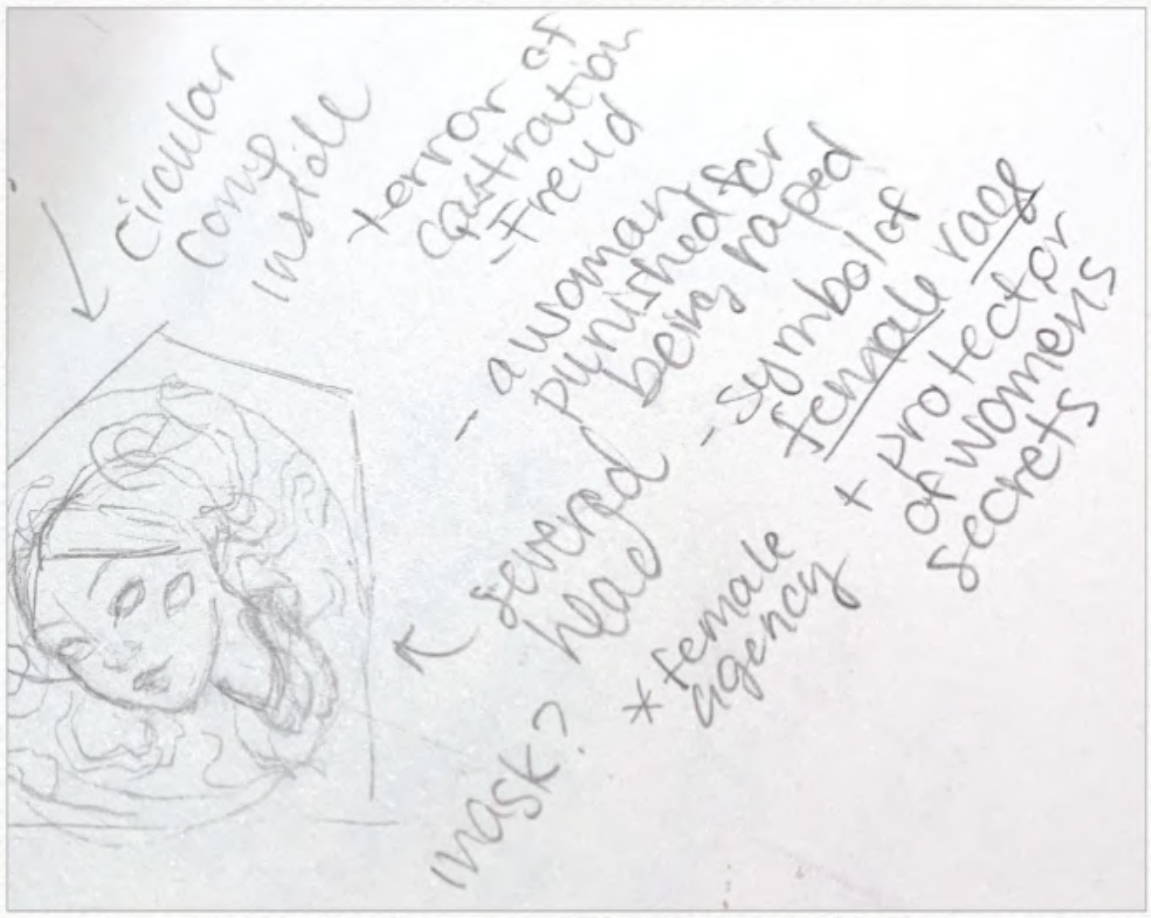
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Varying her choice of media has enabled Kelly to have more fun while improving as an artist.

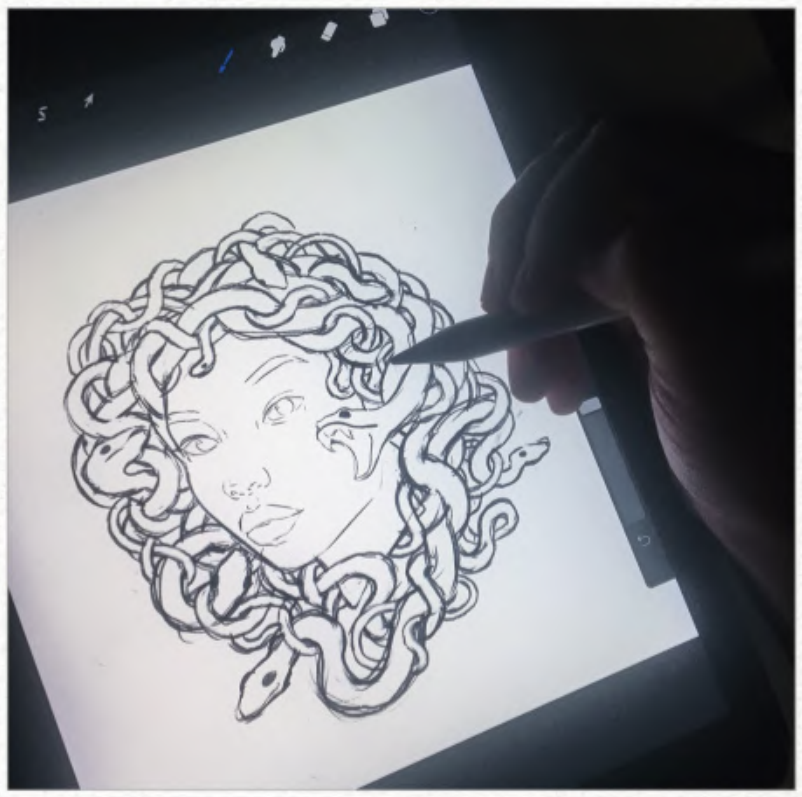


Kelly is an independent fine artist based in Nashville, Tennessee. Explore her art at www.kellymckernan.com.



1 *Create a concept thumbnail*

The majority of my pieces begin with a rough concept sketch. It's small and fairly nondescript, but the scribble gives me enough information to determine whether I want to pursue this idea further. In this case, I want to depict the head of Medusa, tangled with snakes, and featuring a piercing gaze.



2 *Develop the sketch*

I really enjoy using the Procreate app on the iPad to develop a concept further, especially since I'm not slowed down by erasing and redrawing with pencil. I'm a traditional artist, but digital tools like this one really speed up my process and enable me to be less deliberate in my choices, allowing opportunities for unexpected moments in the artwork to emerge.



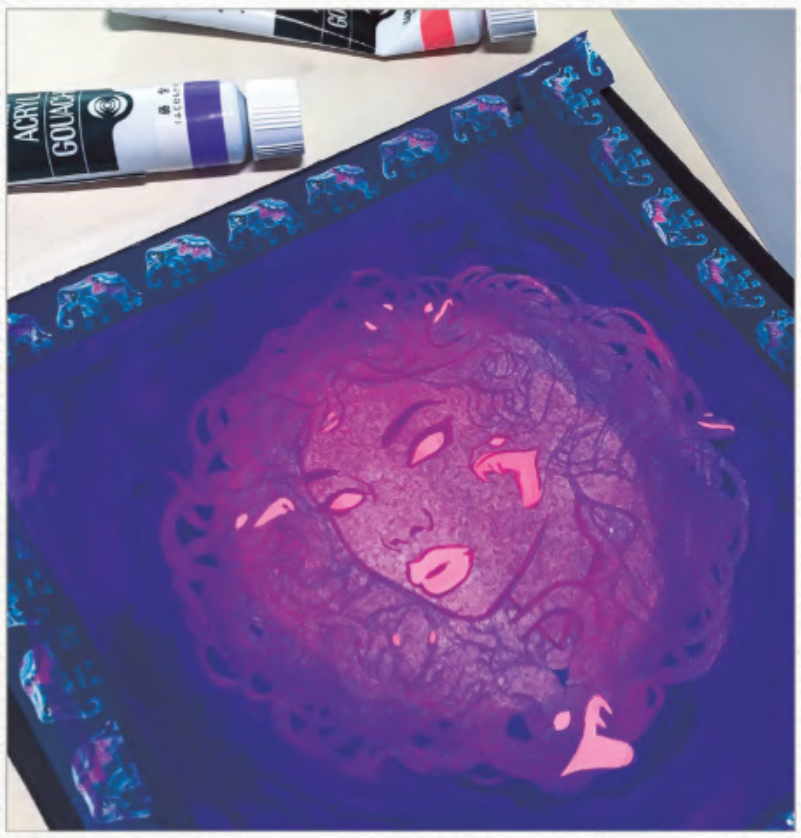
3 *Refine the drawing*

Once I'm happy with the basis of the sketch and placement of the snake heads, I'll refine the drawing down to essential lines so that it's ready for the next steps in my process. I don't really bother to clean it up just yet because I know that I'm going to redraw it later on my painting panel.



4 *Create a colour study*

One of the benefits of a digital drawing is that I can print it out on to a small scrap of watercolour paper and easily paint over it for a colour study. I've selected a few colours from my collection of acryla gouache that I hope to build a moody Medusa with.



5 *Choose a limited palette*

A limited palette helps me to simplify the decision process and it encourages a more cohesive image. A colour study like this one becomes a roadmap for the final piece, which I can refer back to during those inevitable moments in the final painting when I feel a little lost in the process and need to be reminded of the end goal.



6 *Transfer the final drawing*

After I've prepared my painting surface, which is watercolour paper mounted to a 10x10-inch cradled wood panel, I transfer the digital sketch by printing it out at the same size, then covering the back with graphite powder and tracing over it. What's left is a faint outline that I'll then refine with my mechanical pencil.



7 *Begin the underpainting*

To begin the watercolour underpainting, I'm adding a single wash of colour on the background and then creating texture with a couple of different watercolour techniques while the paint is still slightly wet. This includes using kosher salt to soak up the paint as well as adding water in other areas to create textured blooms.



8 *Create the watercolour texture*

Using a single watercolour to establish my underpainting's darkest values comes in handy later when I begin glazing. The texture created by the blooms and salt will still be visible as part of the underpainting, and although it takes some time to dry, I love seeing the texture peek through further on in the painting process.



9 *Develop the darks*

To continue the underpainting, I'm using the same colour to render the face, again developing the darkest darks and keeping in mind that the highlights will become the middle value once I begin glazing. I know that I don't have to get too detailed because I can do that later on when I finish the piece with acryla gouache.



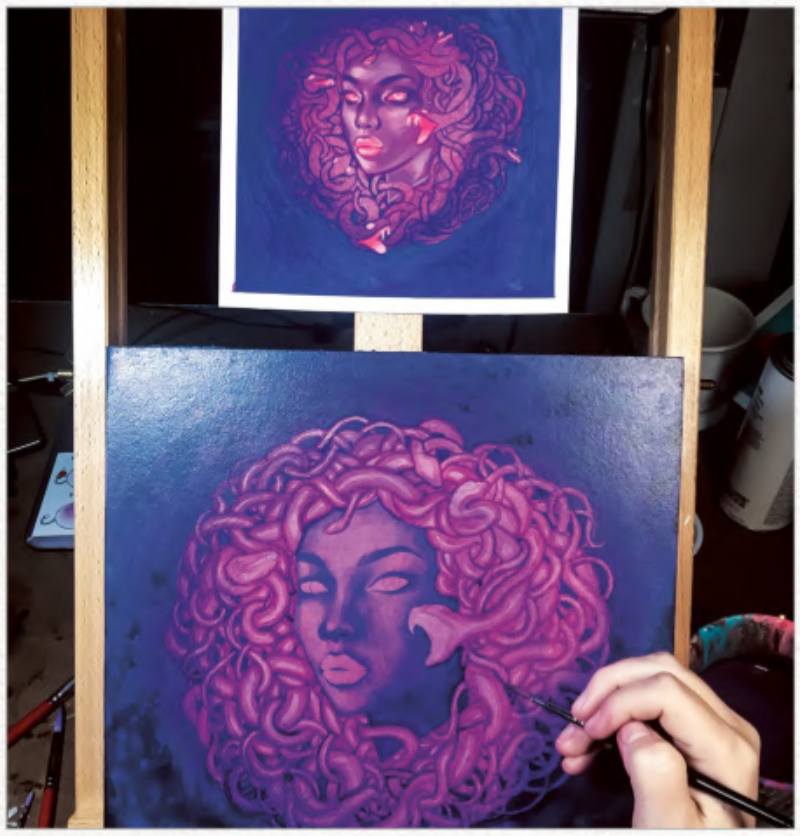
10 *Seal the underpainting*

Once I know that my underpainting is complete, I need to seal the watercolour before I begin glazing. This is done with three layers of gloss or satin spray varnish followed by two layers of slightly diluted matte medium, sanding lightly in between layers with 600 grit sandpaper to remove additional texture created by the spray.



11 *Glazing the piece with fluid acrylic*

The glazing begins! I love this step in my process because the pop of saturated colour is so exciting. I'm using transparent fluid acrylics diluted with matte medium to gradually build up the intensity, vignetting as I go and using a paper towel to blend the colour into the surface.



12 Build the depth

Once the initial glazing is complete, the painting moves to my desktop easel since I don't need to worry about gravity as much. Using the same transparent fluid acrylics, I'm now building up the tangled snake hair to create depth. Taping my colour study above the piece is a great reference point!



13 Lay down acryla gouache base layers

I'm satisfied with the glazing and will now move onto working with the acryla gouache. In order to build up the most luminous areas of my painting, I need to create an opaque base layer by using a combination of fluid titanium white acrylic and a pale pink acryla gouache.



14 Continue rendering

After my base whites have been added, I'm painting over some areas with the luminescent acryla gouache to add pops of saturated colour, and continue to render other areas with the acryla gouache including the facial features and scaly gleams on the snake bodies. I'm also mixing a deep violet to work those darks back into the snakes after so much glazing.



15 Adding magic glowy bits!

To pull the rest of the composition together and create a little extra magic, I'm adding "glowy bits" by creating white spots with the fluid acrylic and lifting the paint gently with a paper towel about 30 seconds into drying. This leaves behind a semi-transparent, textured circle. Glazing on top with the lumi red mixed with matte medium creates the saturated glow.

Core skills: Part 1

GET BETTER AT LINE DRAWING

In the first part of a new drawing series, TIMOTHY VON RUEDEN reveals some pencil line art techniques that he uses in his everyday work to create clean drawings

Creating quality line art with a pencil can be more difficult than with ink or a digital medium, so I'm going to give some tips on how to achieve work that is clean and easy to read. Since working with a pencil can have varying values, inconsistent mark making and tip widths, there's a need for consistency and patience. You have to be aware of the pencil pressure you're applying and how dark the result is.

Choose a pencil you feel comfortable with and take your time to keep it clean rather than feeling rushed. I work with my eraser just as much as my pencil, so I like to have both on hand to make switching between the two easier. This may take a bit of practice to get the results you desire but it has been a joy for myself to not only become comfortable with the technique but to be excited about tackling complicated designs or intricate patterns.

MATERIALS

PENCIL
- HB 0.2mm Orenz yellow mechanical pencil

ERASERS
- MONO Zero Eraser
- Kneaded eraser

SURFACE
- Strathmore Mixed Media paper

Let's first break everything down into simple techniques as I explain the main principles of how I create my own line work. Hopefully this will help you with creating your own lines and discovering how much fulfilment can be achieved when creating a finished, clean drawing!



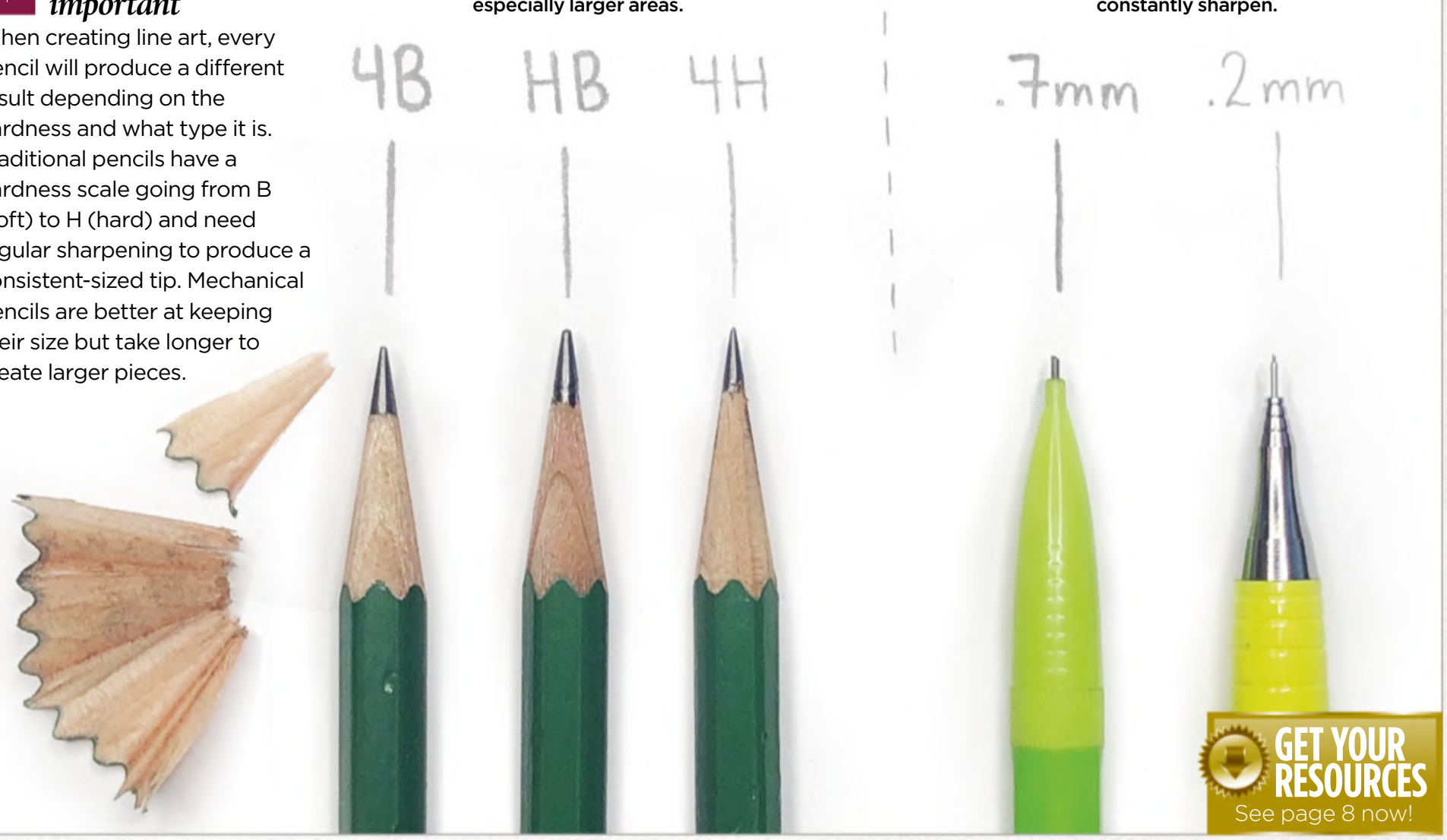
Timothy is an independent artist showing and selling his work at various conventions across the United States. Visit his site at: www.vonnart.net

1 Pencil choice is important

When creating line art, every pencil will produce a different result depending on the hardness and what type it is. Traditional pencils have a hardness scale going from B (soft) to H (hard) and need regular sharpening to produce a consistent-sized tip. Mechanical pencils are better at keeping their size but take longer to create larger pieces.

Traditional pencils tend to round out quickly at the tip and are great for shading, especially larger areas.

I use mechanical pencils when I want clean, crisp edges because I prefer to not have to constantly sharpen.



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See page 8 now!



2 *Underdrawing sets a foundation*

A great piece of line work usually starts with a messy, lighter underdrawing. Having a more fluid foundation helps you see the end result without the intimidating commitment of getting everything perfect. And keeping it lighter by using a traditional pencil such as a 2H means that you can erase mistakes with ease.

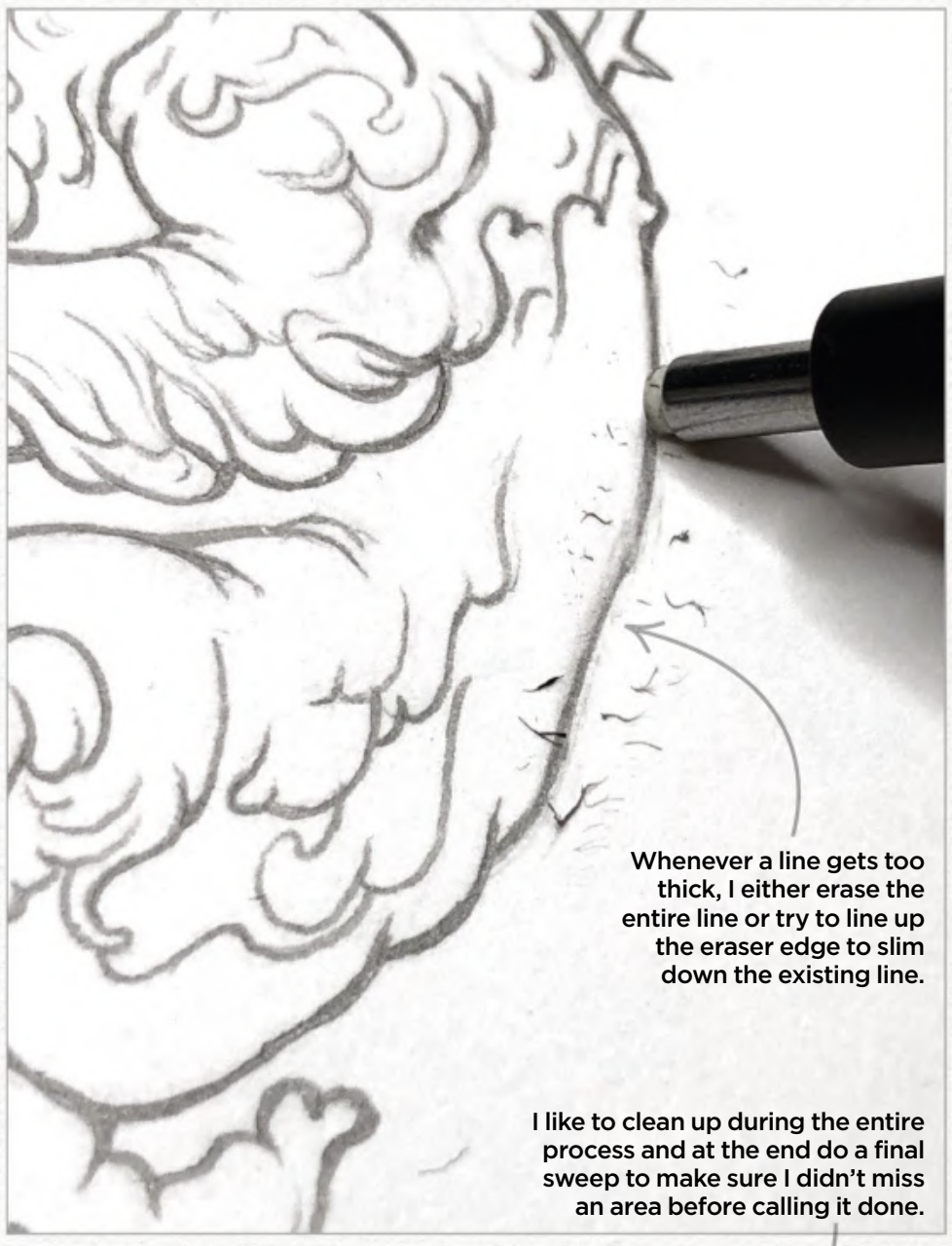


3 *Consistency*

When it comes to creating cleaner and tighter line work, staying consistent is key. Not only should you be aware of the look of your line but also the pressure you're applying to the pencil and on the paper. Be actively aware at this stage and don't rush it!



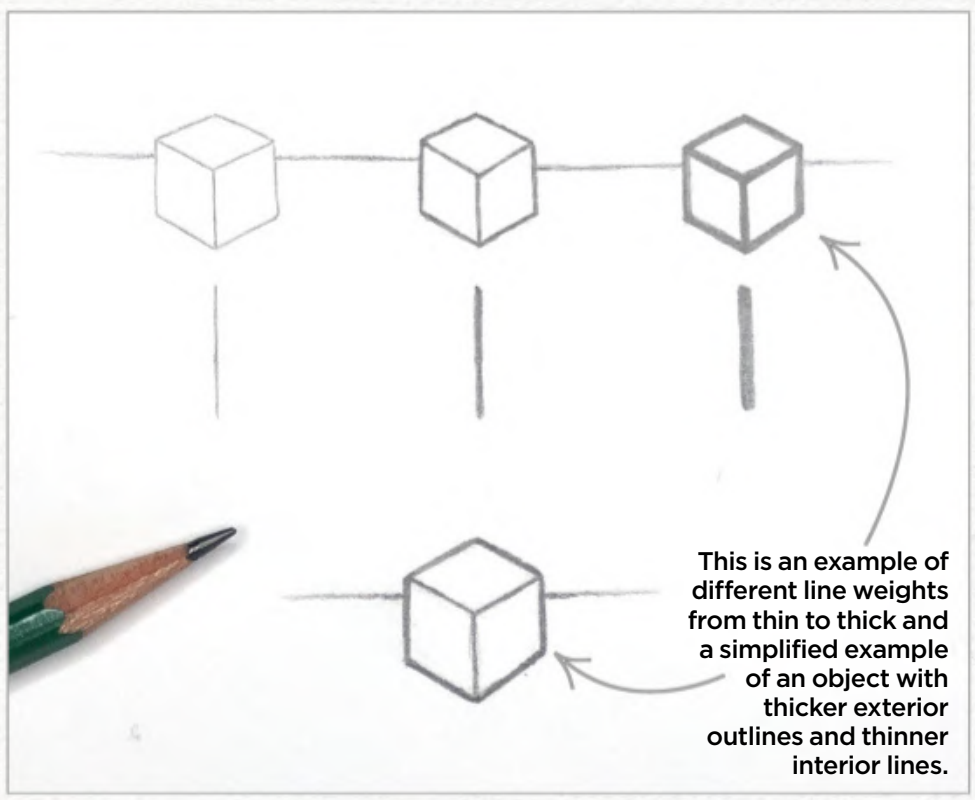
You can see how the outside line of this rabbit is thicker while the inside lines are thinner. This helps differentiate the outside lines of the subject matter from the lines that represent the details within.



Whenever a line gets too thick, I either erase the entire line or try to line up the eraser edge to slim down the existing line.

I like to clean up during the entire process and at the end do a final sweep to make sure I didn't miss an area before calling it done.





This is an example of different line weights from thin to thick and a simplified example of an object with thicker exterior outlines and thinner interior lines.

4 *Line thickness*

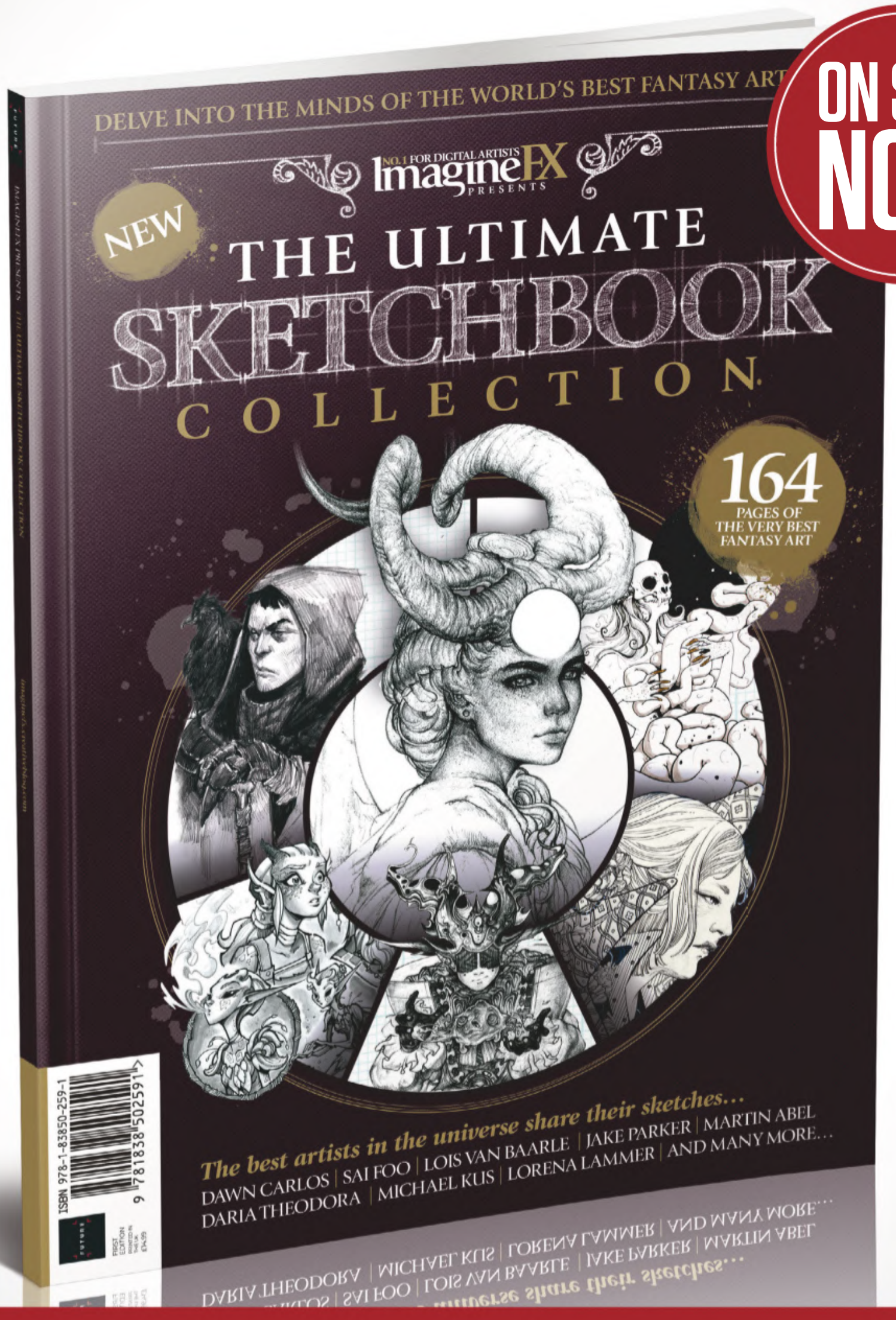
There are some neat tricks you can use for line thickness. Thicker lines often represent importance or are closer to the viewer in relation to other objects in the scene. They can also separate overlapping subject matter and the lines within tend to be thinner.

5 *Cleaning up*

An eraser is just as important for creating clean line art as the pencil itself. I tend to work with mine constantly when creating clean lines and the small eraser head is great at fixing lines that get too thick. However, a kneaded eraser is perfect for lifting up lines that are too dark, so having both is recommended.

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Travis Louie

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Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I spent most of my formative years in Queens, New York, about a mile or so from Shea Stadium. All of these great book shops with vintage comics, magazines, and collectible posters were within walking distance, which really informed what I'm doing now.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?
I try to keep my art studio with consistent lighting as I work around the clock. The lighting situation should be the same every time whether it's 9am or 3am. I have two work stations or drawing boards, with banks of overhead lights; a larger one 72-inch wide and a smaller one 60-inch wide. I like to keep a fish tank nearby – watching them swim around in the aquarium has a calming effect on me.

How has the art industry changed since you've been a part of it?
The industry is in a state of flux as technology and the zeitgeist move in directions that were not so easily predictable in the late 1980s. When I started out, we communicated with art directors by phone and fax. We could only fax a tonal or line sketch; anything with colour had to be shown in person or by quick delivery service. A meeting with the art director was inevitable whereas today, I've done illustration work without ever meeting the art director.

The marketplace always changes. Back then, most of us lived close to the city where the jobs came from. These days, because of email and overnight couriers, we can operate from great distances. I teach illustration classes in an art college, so I remind the students that their dream job may either disappear or be replaced by another kind of job by the time they graduate.



DARCY THREE FISH
"I was inspired by stories of a ghost who was reported to haunt an area of the north shore of Long Island, in the town of Sea Cliff."

BIRD WATCHING LEMUR
"This was painted for an exhibition called Animals That I've Known. It is inspired by my fascination with naturalists in the 19th century."



Is creating art as a career all you thought it would be?
When we were in school, there wasn't as much discussion about the longevity of the artist's career and how one would adjust to a changing job market in that field, because there were artists who had 40+ years in the illustration business. The thought was that if we could secure a foothold in the industry, we could operate like those who came before us. It was a very different time. There was no internet; no social media. It's not what I envisioned I would be doing as I pursued a career as a commercial illustrator. I remain thankful and optimistic since I've built a career in the section of the fine art world that I occupy. It's still a great deal of hard work and there are still deadlines, but it feels right.

> **When I finish I have a bit of single malt Scotch to celebrate**

Tell us about your first paid commissioned piece?
My first commercial job was for a New York bank called Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company. It was a painting of a hedge maze for a brochure about investments with higher yield rates. It was my first job right out of art school.

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two artworks differ?
What I do now is mostly my own personal work that I exhibit in galleries. My last show was called Animals That I've Known and featured paintings of animals that have inspired me, mythical or otherwise. It's obviously more fulfilling to make things for yourself and follow your own narrative.

What are your painting rituals?
I spend a few months drawing and planning a series of paintings based on whatever theme is running in my head. I gather reference materials, write background stories for the characters, and then I chose which ones to paint. When I finish a decent amount of them, I have a bit of single malt Scotch to celebrate.

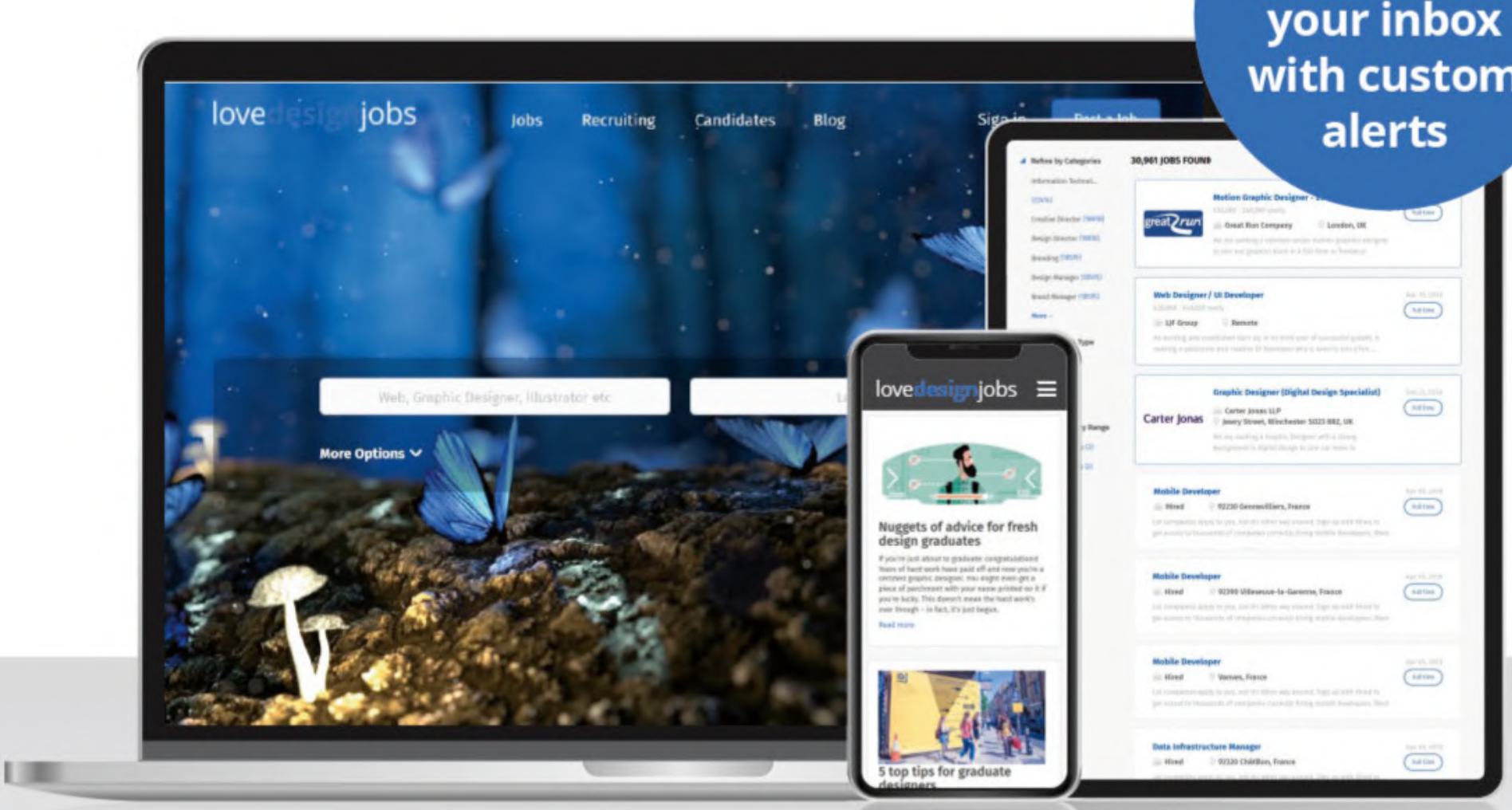
What does the future hold for you?
I'm writing the stories for my next book and preparing for my next solo shows at Roq La Rue Gallery in Seattle and then my show at KP Projects in Los Angeles.

New York artist, Travis Louie creates paintings of an imaginary world that is grounded in Victorian and Edwardian times. You can explore more of his art at www.travislouieart.com.

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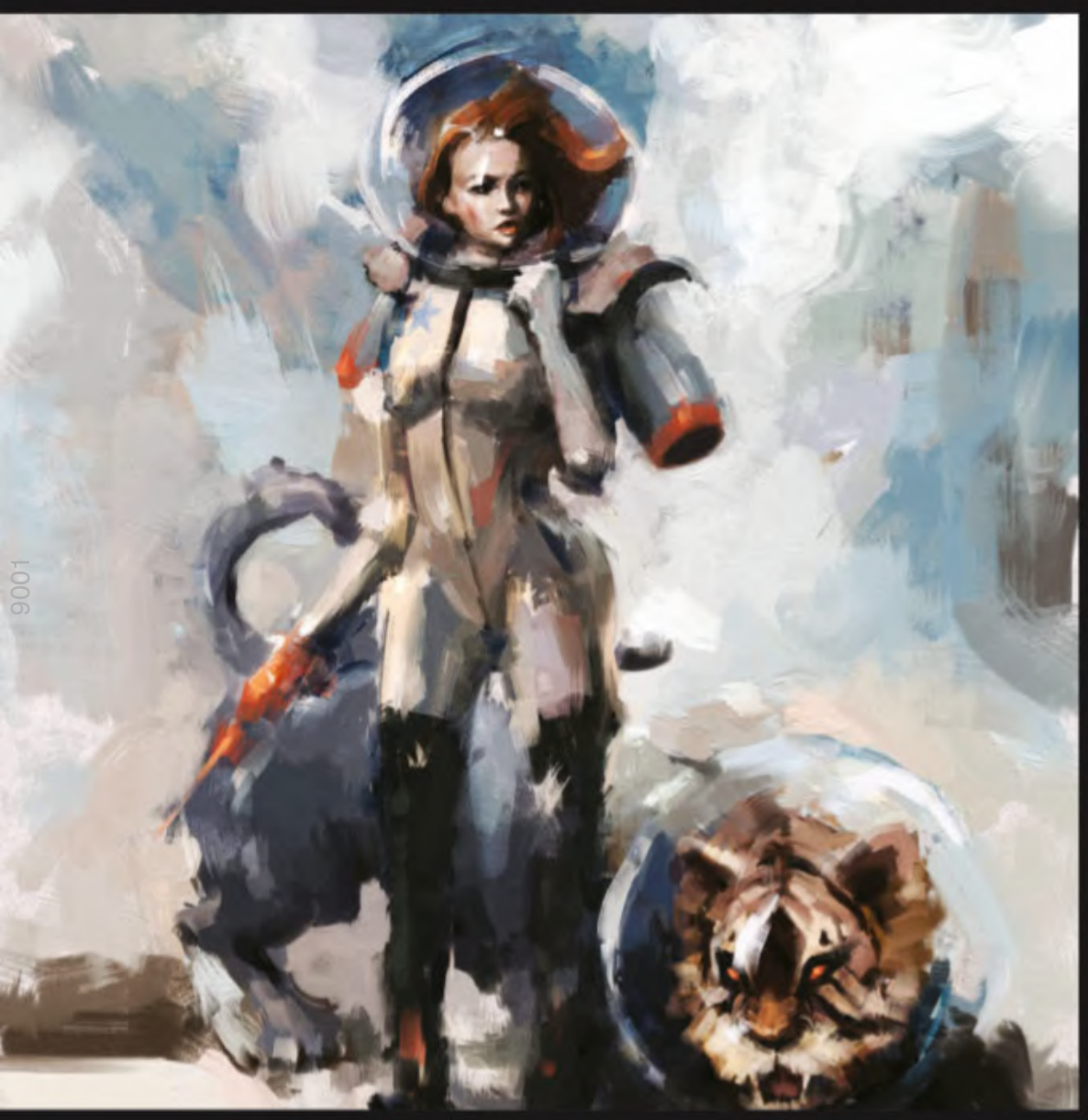
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