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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



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*Loish, Ross Tran and
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JC PARK'S SUBLIME ART

**CONTROL VALUES AND
COLOURS IN PHOTOSHOP**

TRADITIONAL ART

**FROM PENCIL
TO PAINTING**

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pencils and watercolours



PLUS!

**21
EPIC SCI-FI
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FROM SCOTT
ROBERTSON

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www.vondehl.com

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



Hello artists. Did you like the cover? I'm always happy when Mélanie Delon's art returns to our front page. We just love her style and I know that lots of you do, too. Do you have a favourite artist who you'd love to see on the cover? Is there someone whose artistic process you

would relish reading about? Please let us know and we'll see if we can get them into the magazine.

Also inside this issue, John Picacio (another fave of ours), was kind enough to share his work space in our Artist in Residence feature on page 26. He tells us he doesn't keep his numerous art awards where he works – because his 'space is about where he's going, not where he's been'.

I rather liked this as a concept. It certainly gave me pause for thought. We moved office recently, so had to sort through our belongings to work out what to take with us to the next space. It felt like a bit of an emotional upheaval at the time, but in reality (and while sat in our sparkly new office, with the benefit of hindsight) we were letting go of things from the past we no longer needed. Just don't ask me if I've done the same with my hard drive... oh lordy, that remains as bloated as ever!

Claire

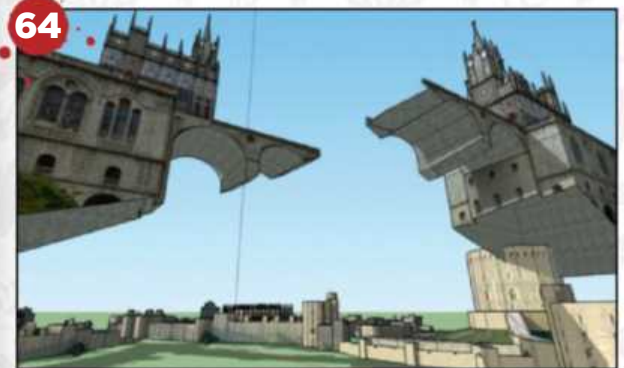
Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

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



Tell us what you think!

I always love to hear from you about what you're painting or your thoughts on the magazine...



3D world building

Imagine building your own castle in real life! I can dream... Donglu Yu shows how it's done in 3D.



Scraping your way to success

I'm really enjoying our core skill series on oil painting techniques. Howard Lyon is a great teacher...

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We're giving away a copy of Rebelle software with every print subscription! See page 38...





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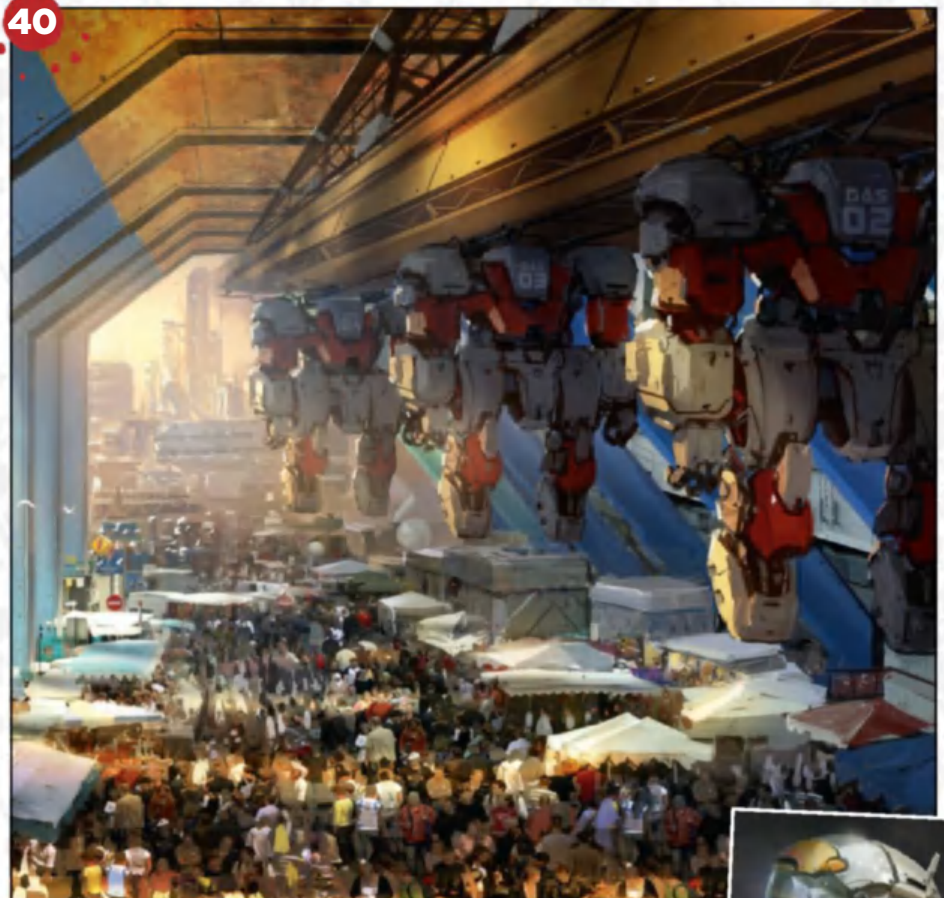
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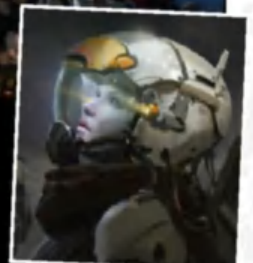
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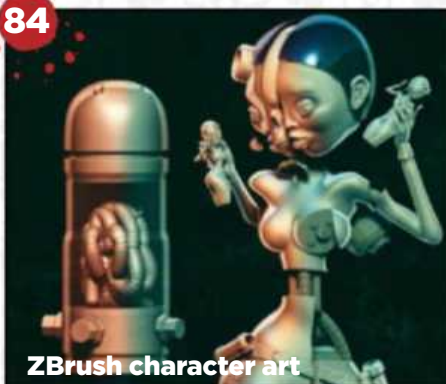


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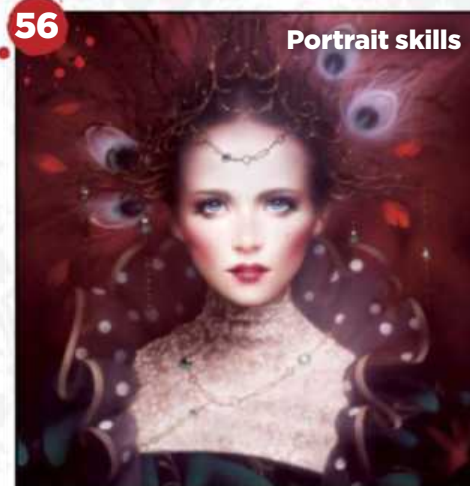
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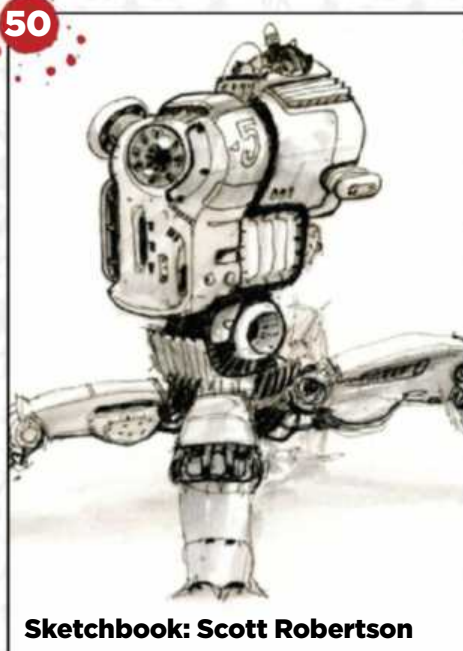
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Pencils and watercolours

ImagineFX Resources

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/digi147artist>

OVER 11 HOURS
of video tutorials
from pro artists
to watch and
learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

Use 3D tools to build a castle

See how Donglu Yu develops an eye-catching 3D base in SketchUp, before finishing it in Photoshop.



GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

- 1 Go to the website**
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/digi147artist>
- 2 Find the files you want**
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

ImagineFX

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE

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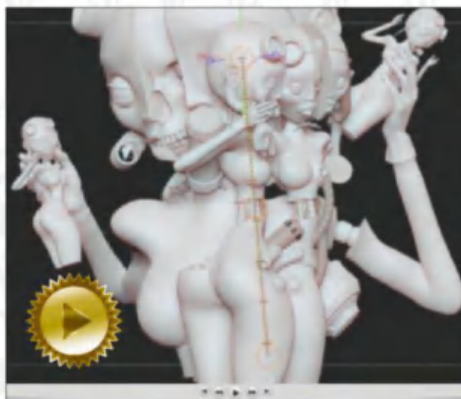
EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUITION!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art



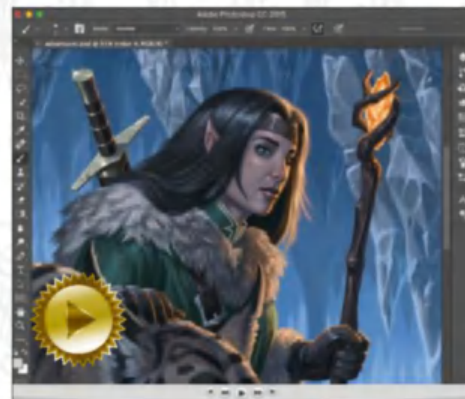
Katy Lipscomb

Watch how the animal illustrator brings a wolf to life, using watercolour washes and pencils to create a stylised scene.



John Mahoney

In part three of his ZBrush series, the artist takes his 3D concept character apart... so he can build it again.



Craig Spearing

See how the artist takes a slower approach, building a greyscale foundation before moving onto a frozen environment.



Q&A VIDEOS

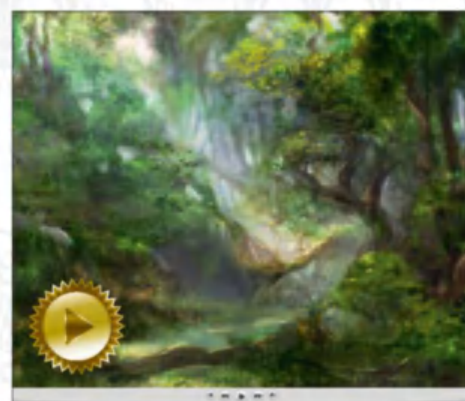
Alix Branwyn

Learn about Photoshop's Smart layers and how they can help you paint repeated designs and patterns, such as snake skin.



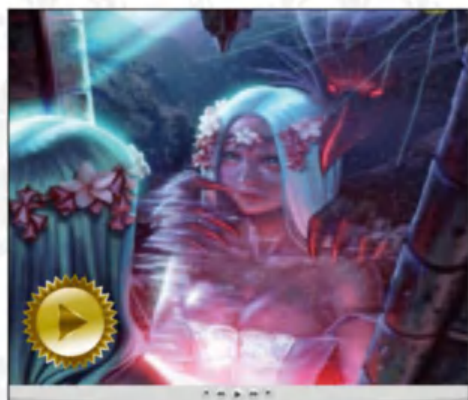
Sara Forlenza

Understand perspective and make the right colour choices in order to help paint a convincing-looking cobble path.



Belinda Leung

Look to the Old Masters to see how you can paint a dense forest scene, without it distracting the viewer's eye.



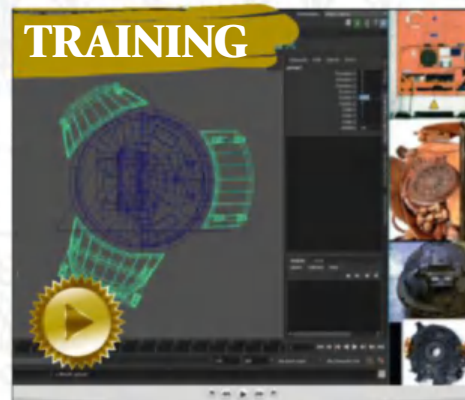
Sara Forlenza

Understand how to use Photoshop layers and the nature of glass, in order to paint a realistic reflection in a window.



Alix Branwyn

Think about how light interacts with anatomy, to help you create a scene where light glows within something else.



TRAINING

Nick Reynolds

The games environment artist shows how to make in-game objects that look the part, in Creating Props For Games, Vol 1.

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



1



Alayna Lemmer

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.alayna.net

Alayna loves to paint environments, and draws inspiration from the scenery surrounding her home in Seattle. "There's just something about painting wispy clouds and mountains," she says.

1ST LEVIN

"Steampunk city! I painted this after attending Gen Con. It was a great convention and it inspired me to try something challenging."



2

2 MYSTIC VALE: VALE OF MAGIC ELIXIR OF LIFE CARD

"For this piece, AEG wanted to depict an elf woman pouring out an elixir to help heal the forest. It was a challenging piece, but I think it worked out."



© Alderac Entertainment Group

3

3 DOMINION ADVENTURES: FIGHTER

"Part of a series of five cards showing the evolution of one woman throughout her warrior life, starting as a lowly page and ending as a champion. This middle piece shows her as a fighter in her heyday."



© Rio Grande Games



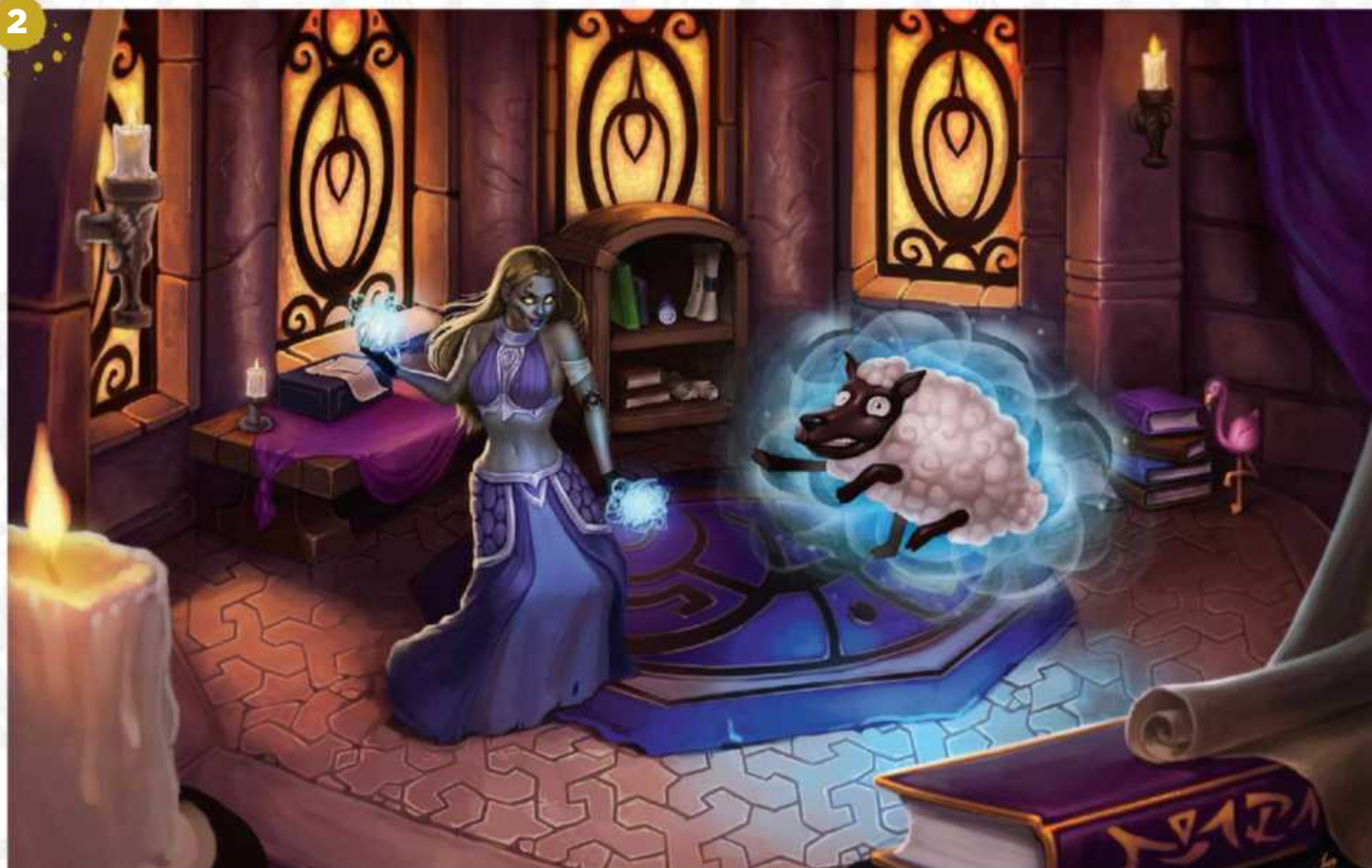


June Jenssen

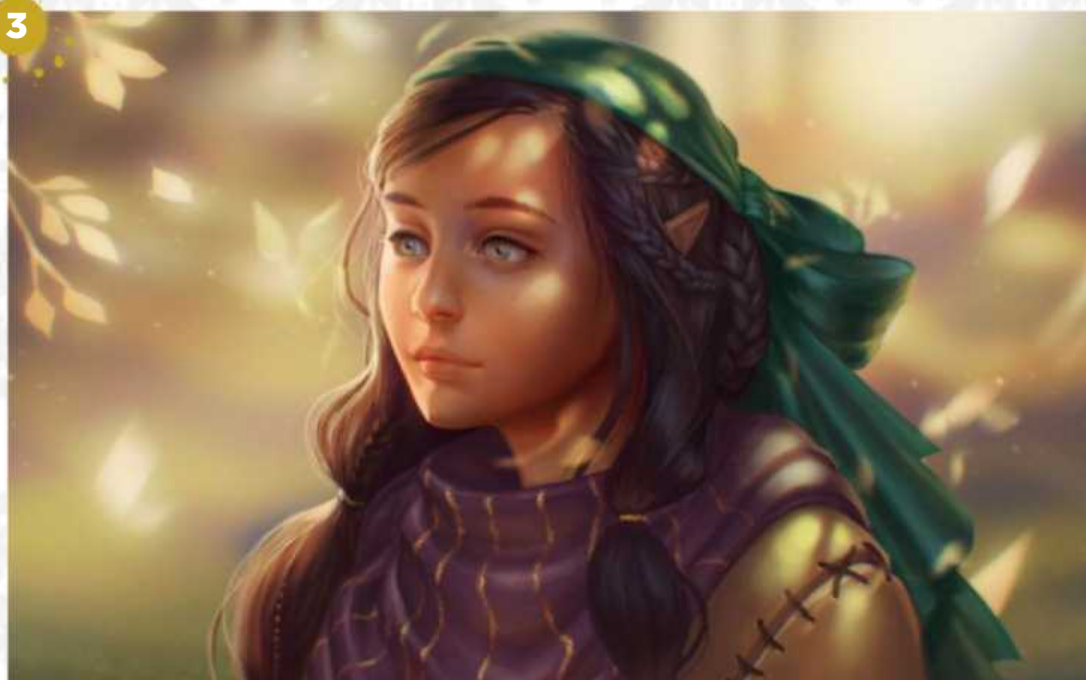
LOCATION: Norway **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.junejenssen.squarespace.com

Once an in-house game artist, June is now a freelance illustrator. "I love browsing through Instagram, Twitter and deviantART," she says. "Lots of inspiring artists come up through social media."

2



3



1 THER

"A character portrait that pushed me a bit out of my comfort zone. I put on some heavy metal and tried to channel my inner goth."

2 POLYMORPH

"As a long-time fan of World of Warcraft, I painted this homage to all mages and the poor recipients of the polymorph spell."

3 LET LINGER

"This was inspired by a song called Let Linger. I played around with the lighting a lot in this piece."



Neil Branquinho

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/artist/neilbranquinho

Concept artist Neil was lucky enough to meet a personal hero, Syd Mead. “The best advice he gave me was try to make your art your own, and put your own stamp on what you do,” he reveals.

1 RUNNER AVENUE

“Here’s one of a series of cyberpunk-inspired images. I was going for that density of information; the hustle and bustle of a future dystopia.”



2



3



4



2 OCEAN OUTPOST
 "I love anything with an epic feel. I've been a big fan of Star Wars since I was a child, so this is my homage to the alien planets of that imaginative universe."

3 LAVA RAIDERS
 "This is based on a thumbnail pen sketch I did while waiting for a train. It's my attempt at capturing that romantic, adventurous feel the best sci-fi art has."

4 TECH-COP
 "Syd Mead has a way of placing objects into a scene to give them a story and make them believable. This painting was my attempt at achieving a similar vibe."



Vagelis Petikas

LOCATION: Greece **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.behance.net/vpetikas

Vagelis is a Greek illustrator and graphic designer. "I'm inspired by anything that captures my imagination, from music and cinema to street art and surrealism," he says.



1 THE GATHERING

"This is a relatively straightforward depiction of an aggressive wolfpack."

2 MEDUSA

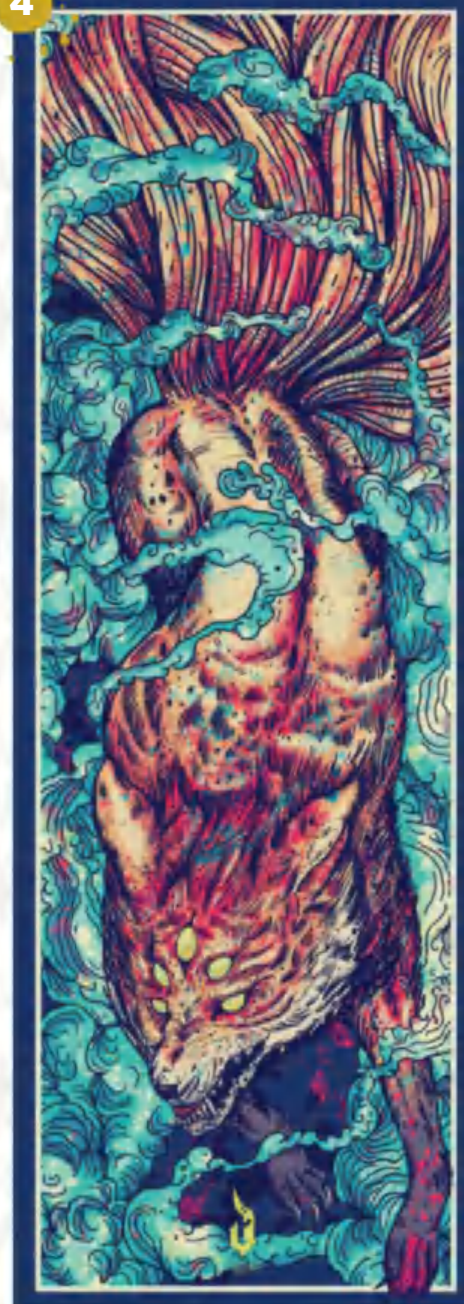
"Medusa was a Gorgon, described in Greek myths as a winged human female with a hideous face and venomous snakes in place of hair. Those who gazed on her face would turn to stone."



3



4



3 SHAMAN

"This was inspired by native American shamanism. Shamans are intermediaries between the human and spirit worlds. They're said to treat ailments by mending the soul."

4 KITSUNE

"Kitsune is the Japanese word for fox. According to Yōkai folklore, all foxes can change into human form. In some tales they use this to trick people, while other stories portray them as faithful guardians or friends."



Georgi Minkov

LOCATION: Scotland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, DAZ 3D, MODO **WEB:** www.georgiminkov.com

Freelance illustrator and concept artist Georgi was born in Bulgaria, but moved to Edinburgh to study in an atelier and learn about the basics of art, traditional drawing and craftsmanship.

1 ON A QUEST

"This was inspired by the Witcher universe. I used a character concept I already had, and then painted a scene with dramatic lighting."

2 PRINCESS MONONOKE

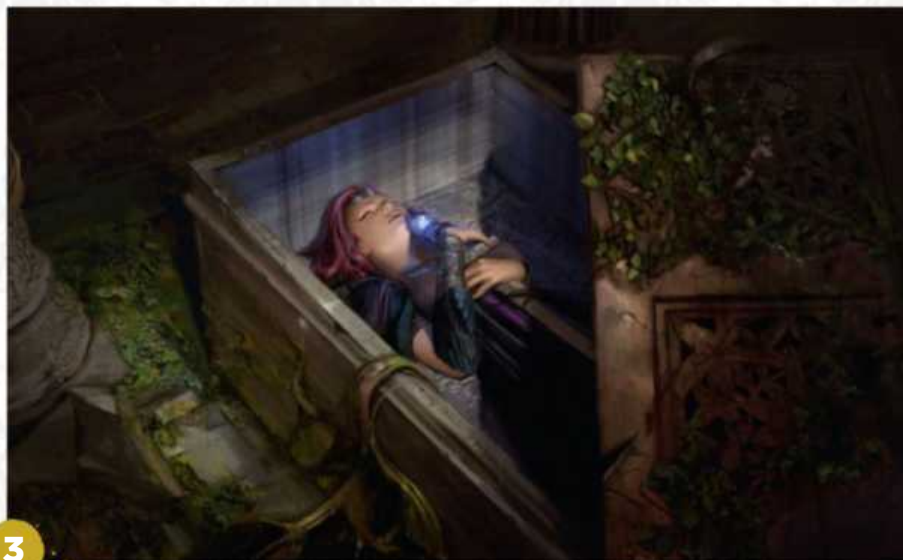
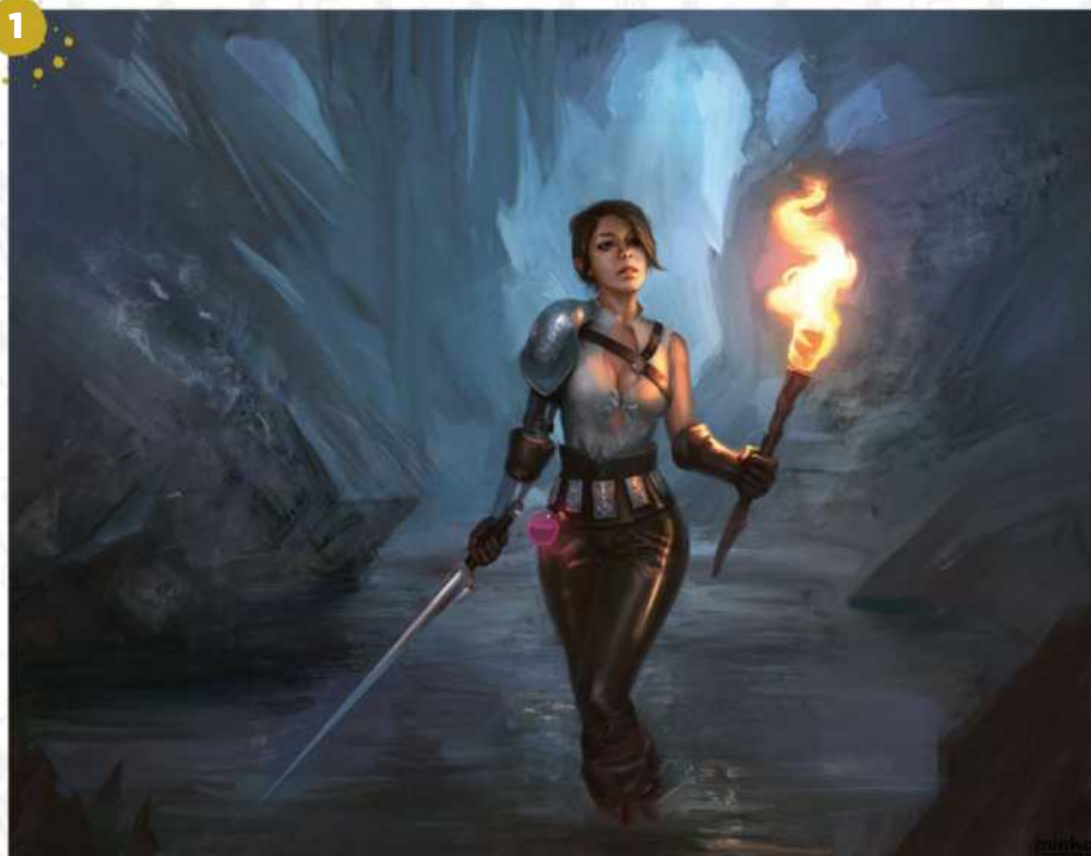
"Here's a tribute to my favourite anime. I used photo bashing, an imported DAZ figure rendered in KeyShot and a lot of painting on top."

3 SLEEPING BEAUTY

"Part of a personal project and is an introduction to the world the character inhabits. I focused on the contrast between her and the overgrown environment."

4 THE AWAKENING

"A portrait from the same personal project. My goal was to portray the character's immortal beauty as she awakens from an enchanted dream."



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



How to make social media work for you

Going viral Savvy online behaviour can take awareness of your art – and potential sales – to the next level. **Julia Sagar** talks to pro artists to find out how

With over two billion active users worldwide, social media offers a powerful channel for artists to connect with audiences, build awareness and increase sales. But the choices are legion: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, GooglePlus, LinkedIn... and that's before you consider creative communities such as Behance, ArtStation, Tumblr and so on.

Which options are best for getting your work out there, and how can you optimise your social media presence? To help you, we've put together the ultimate social media guide for artists.

First, some basics. Successful social media strategy is built on brilliant artwork, so creating the best possible

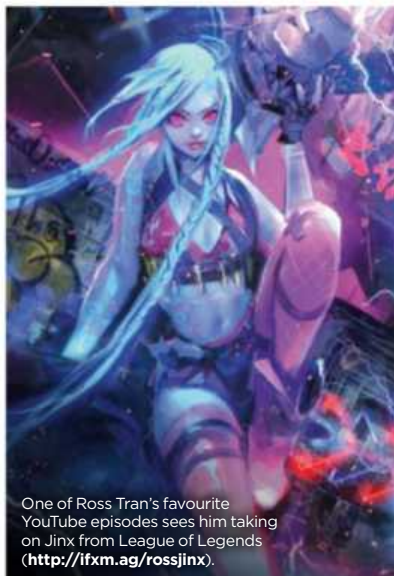
work should be your main focus.

Second, it's impossible to invest time in every platform, so don't sign up to them all – pick two or three primary channels and become an expert in those spaces. Which ones? Read on as we explore the leading platforms, with tips, tricks and techniques for increasing your social media reach...

DRIVE TRAFFIC WITH FACEBOOK

Choosing the best platform for your work is a numbers game. Despite reports of millennials moving away from Facebook, it remains the most-used social media site among all ages, with 1.65 billion monthly active users,

“Facebook posts showing my newest artwork generate a lot of interest. But it's not an ideal social network for sales”



One of Ross Tran's favourite YouTube episodes sees him taking on Jinx from League of Legends (<http://ifxm.ag/rossjinx>).

on average. Baby boomers are driving its current growth. According to a recent report from Pew Research Center, 79 per cent of online Americans use Facebook – with 76 per cent checking in daily – compared to Instagram (32 per cent), Pinterest (31 per cent), LinkedIn (29 per cent) and Twitter (24 per cent). But with ever-changing algorithms and Facebook increasingly wanting a slice of sales, how effective is it for artists?

“I've built a sizeable following on Facebook,” says Dutch artist and animator **Lois van Baarle**, aka **Loish**,



whose page has over 1.2 million likes. She recommends building your profile by regularly sharing process videos,



Iris Compiet created the card Justice for global art project 78 Tarot Carnival.

short tutorials and tips, as well as new artwork. Via these tactics, she has been able to successfully crowdfund her first artbook, smashing her £20,000 funding target to reach almost £250,000.

“Facebook posts showing my newest artwork particularly generate a lot of interest,” she says. “However, it's not an ideal social network for sales. When I post a link to my online prints shop or where to buy my book, only about a tenth of my followers end up seeing it because Facebook wants you to pay to boost these posts.” ➡



DOUBLE THE FUN

Design a character with Corel Painter and Clip Studio Paint Pro and you could win a mentorship with a professional illustrator and concept designer.
Page 25



SHARP THINKING

Find out how artist John Picacio maintains his drawing energy, and discover the one thing he doesn't allow in his "Swiss-Army knife" of a studio.
Page 26



CREATING SMARTER ART

How to use Photoshop Smart layers to help reproduce patterns is among other indispensable advice from pro artists, in our Q&A section.
Page 30



Lemonade, by Lois van Baarle, aka Loish, who has over 1.2 million likes on her Facebook page.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT IRIS COMPIET

The Dutch illustrator on how she got 30,000 Instagram followers

How effective is Instagram?

Since May last year, my Instagram has grown from 1,600 followers to almost 30,000. It's built awareness about my work and I've even got some jobs out of it.

What's the most you've benefited from Instagram?

My Faeries of the Faultlines book was born on Instagram. I began sketching daily mermaid sketches for #mermay and faeries in June for #junefae, and my Instagram exploded. I regularly post work from the project, which is going to be launched on Kickstarter in June. I've also just launched www.faeriesofthefaultlines.com.

Which is your most effective social media platform?

Instagram. But my personal Facebook page, too. I've got some contacts out of that which have proved very valuable, in terms of knowledge rather than financial gain. I use an app called If This Than That to post directly from Instagram to Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook. If you use the right hashtags or post work consistently around the same time, it does work.

Can you give any tips for getting more from Instagram?

Show you're the one doing the art – show your hand while sketching. It requires some acrobatics to take a picture, but it makes you a person and less of a 'perfect artist' who does magic. Also, I try to engage with people. It's important to be real.



Follow Dutch illustrator Iris on Instagram as she prepares to launch her Faeries of the Faultlines book.

www.instagram.com/iriscompiet



Haus, by Loish. "Using social media to help artists learn and connect can be very rewarding."



By posting new work - like this piece, Squeeze - on Instagram, Loish has seen a boost in print and book sales.



One of many illustrations from Iris Compiet's Faeries of the Faultlines project.

"Follow other artists, and use Instagram to have fun yourself," says Ilya, who created this piece More Books.



➡ In the past few years, organic reach has dropped by 49 per cent. Paid-for posts can be a relatively inexpensive method of expanding your reach, but there are also some creative tactics that can help increase your following organically. Facebook is still giving video top priority, for example, so try natively uploading a 30-second video for your next artwork (a sped-up screencapture, for example) with a call-to-action at the end and a link to your website.

Always avoid direct sales language and links in your updates. Not only is this annoying for followers, Facebook will penalise you unless you've paid for an advert. And make full use of Facebook Insights to better

understand your audience. Which posts do they best respond to? Once you know who they are and when they're on Facebook, you can tailor your posts accordingly.

INCREASE REACH WITH INSTAGRAM

"Instagram is the most effective platform for me, since it doesn't have the same limitations on post content as Facebook," continues Lois. "I can reach many more followers through my Instagram posts, and it has led to a boost in print and book sales."



Ilya Kuvshinov, the Tokyo-based illustrator, agrees. He has over 840,000 Instagram followers and says the



Promo art for Ilya Kuvshinov's ChromatiQ manga-comic project.

platform isn't just great for increasing awareness of his work, it's also boosted his Patreon following – converting his audience into paying fans. “However, Instagram posts don't allow you to insert clickable links,” he says. “If you want to send people somewhere, you have to ask them to check out the link in your profile, which isn't as effective as having a link to tap in front of you.”

Algorithmic changes have hit Instagram feeds in recent months, but some basic rules still apply for

and also integrate less-popular hashtags as well, so that you're more likely to appear at the top of these search feeds.

Another way to increase your reach is through ‘tag a friend’ posts, or by giving something away for free.

“When I reach a certain goal – say, when I hit 30,000 followers for



example – I'll have a giveaway,” says Netherlands-based illustrator **Iris Compier**. “I'll run a share contest



Red is a print by Ross Tran. “At conventions, many customers say: ‘I've seen that piece on YouTube/Facebook!’ before purchasing a print.”

“ People seem to love seeing work-in-progress pictures, so give them a glimpse into your world ”



growing your following. According to entrepreneur **Neil Patel**, hashtags are more important on Instagram than all other social media platforms.

“You won't need to worry about hashtag fatigue on Instagram,” he says in his article, *How to Build a Killer Instagram Following*. Instead, treat them like keywords: include relevant, popular hashtags with your updates (Webstagram has a useful list of these)

and the winner, picked randomly, will then receive an original piece of my art work for free.”

Iris credits Instagram with increased sales of her self-published sketchbook. But better still, she says that posting images from the project also led to new commissions from big-name clients who saw the work.

“Limit posts to three a day, tops, though,” she advises others. “But try to post daily, at around the same time. People love to see work-in-progress

pictures, so give them a glimpse into your world.”

SELL WITH PINTEREST

According to Shopify, some 87 per cent of Pinterest users have bought an item because they saw it on Pinterest, while 93 per cent have used the site to plan a purchase. With over 150m monthly users and growing fast, Pinterest isn't just a significant traffic driver to your website (second only to Facebook), the platform can increase your sales too... with the right strategy.

So how can artists get Pinterest to work harder for them? In short: with some savvy SEO. First, create boards that your target audience wants to follow, and add keywords to their ➔

TOP TIPS FIVE GOLDEN RULES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Apply these tips to each of your accounts for social media success

1 Create a strong profile
Provide as much professional information as possible, including your name, expertise, website, online shop or Patreon page, and links to all social media and creative communities, such as deviantART.

2 Share engaging content
Always post crisp, high-quality images of your work. Engaged followers are best, so share relevant, valuable content. Establish trust by replying quickly to enquires. Remember, the more comments a post has, the more it'll be shared.

3 Post frequently
The ideal frequency depends on your audience and what you have to say, so experiment for each platform. (Engagement rates on Facebook are 18 per cent higher on Thursdays and Fridays). Never post for the sake of it, though. Keep it meaningful.

4 Cross-promote
Different platforms have different strengths, so use them in tandem. Want to increase your YouTube subscribers? Do what Ross Tran did and create a teaser video to upload natively to Facebook. Looking for more Patreons? Share a tutorial on Instagram and link to Patreon.

5 Ditch the hard sell
The best way to increase sales is not to sell. Don't turn people off. Grow your audience organically and, as long as there's a clear link somewhere to your work, sales will follow. Help your followers spread awareness for you by giving them what they want: visual eye candy and engaging conversation.



➡ descriptions. Not only do boards rank on Google, this will help the right people find your work. Furthermore, give every pin you share an engaging but strategic description, not forgetting to include keywords and a call to action. Just make sure you include your own voice as well: if you go keyword mad, Google will penalise you.

To increase visibility, pin every new artwork or blog on to all your relevant Pinterest boards – not just one of them. And post regularly: Kissmetrics recommends scheduling between five and 30 new pins throughout each day. However, don't just pin your own work. Share relevant content from other people to increase the chance of your pins appearing at the top of someone's feed.

Finally, make it easy for others to share your work by adding the Pin It button to any image on your site. Whether you're looking to drive traffic

Faeries of the Faultlines was so successful for Iris Compiet that she recently launched a Patreon page.

or increase sales, Pinterest is a must for artists.

TWITTER: CALL TO ACTION

Should artists still have a presence on Twitter? The platform's revenue is down and shares have slumped. But monthly users rose three per cent in 2016, and opportunities to make money still exist.

Hashtags are important, but require a different strategy to Instagram. Don't go overboard, though: according to marketing agency Lynchpin, tweets with hashtags receive twice as much engagement as those without, but tweets with one or two hashtags have 21 per cent higher engagement than those with three or more. One benefit

“Be yourself. People subscribe to you because they relate to you and like you”



Another of Iris's paintings from her successful Faeries of the Faultlines project.



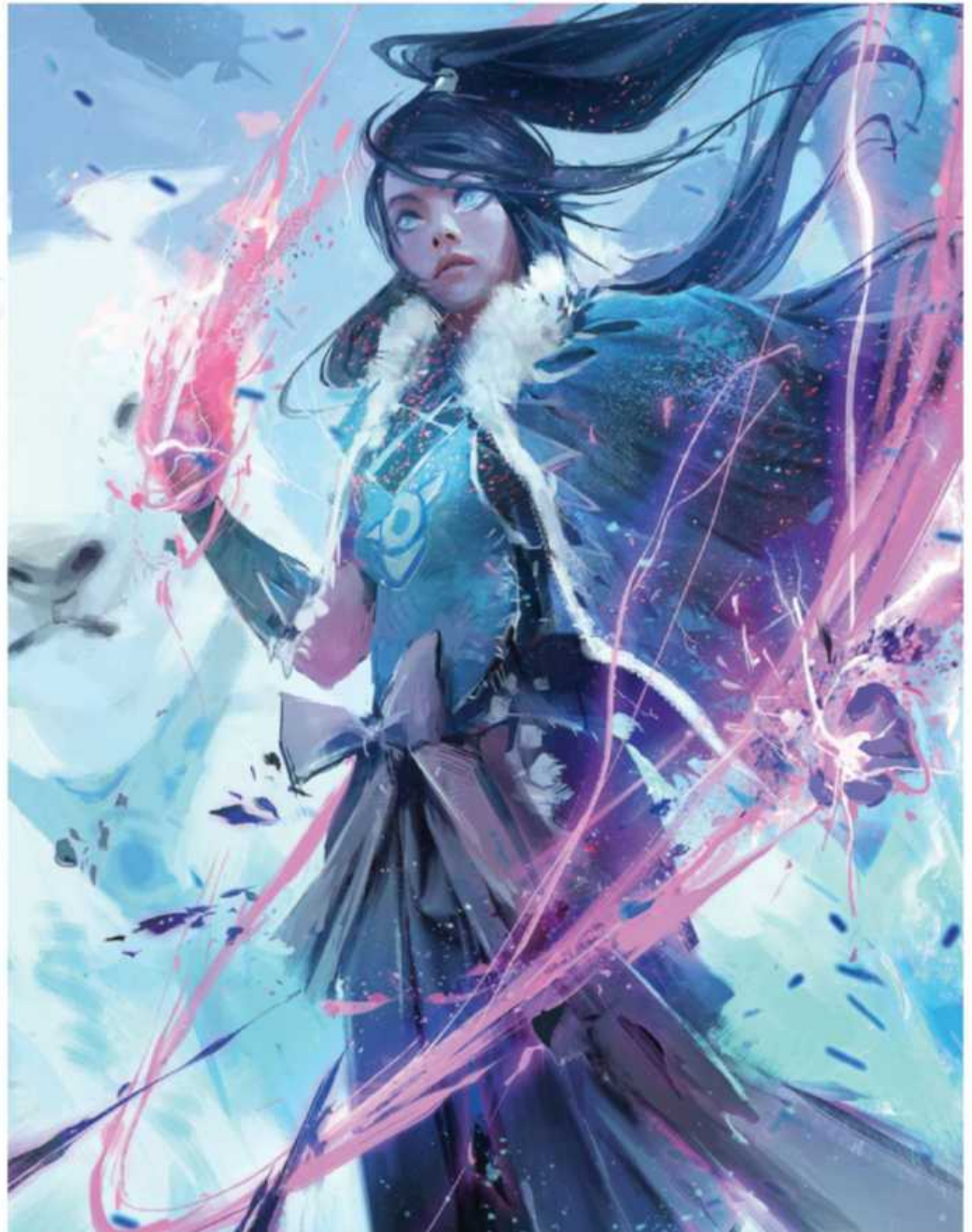
Ilya shared this promo piece for ChromatiQ through social media and deviantART.

of Twitter is that its users are among the most responsive to a call to action, so they're more likely to visit a link. However, tweets become lost quickly, so create a few different versions of each one and schedule them at least six hours apart, or over different days.

CONNECT WITH YOUTUBE

With YouTube ranked as the most popular platform among UK adults online (85 per cent use it, says London agency We Are Flint, rising to 96 per cent of 19-28 year olds), it can make sense to have a presence on it.

One artist reaping the benefits is **Ross Tran**, who boasts over 100,000 subscribers. In January this year, his Korra YouTube episode was a hit. "I uploaded an additional 1.30-minute teaser video to Facebook, which got almost 600,000 views and a few thousand shares," he says. "This led to me



Ross's Korra YouTube video put him on the map. "People always quote that video and then buy a Korra print."

receiving around 3,000 new YouTube subscribers, 3,000 new Instagram followers and new Facebook fans. My Patreon hit at an all-time high – about \$3,400 a video."

This isn't just a shining example of an artist getting the most from YouTube: it's a top-class lesson in cross-promotion to fully harness the power of social media. And that's the point. Used cleverly, social media should connect the dots, linking your different online presences together and channelling your audience in whichever direction you'd like them to go.

When it comes to YouTube, Ross has some key advice: "Attention spans are

getting shorter because more and more content is being shoved in our faces," he says. "Just accept it and learn how you can be a player."

He recommends utilising YouTube's Trends tool. "Often when a new movie or character comes out and I create a video, it performs better. Find hot and trending topics that appeal to your audience, to help grow your numbers."

However, his last tip is crucial to all artists, whatever platform you choose. "Be yourself," he urges. "People subscribe to you because they relate and like you. Remember: your experiences, vision and stories are unique to you. So share them."

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The Stag King is one of the many original designs that Harvey Bunda has conceptualized.



For this artwork Harvey drew the proportions of a human head and torso, before applying the robotic details.

Character art challenge – call for entries

Art contest Design a character to win one-on-one mentorship with a professional concept artist

If you've been sitting on an amazing character design, DrawCrowd's Epic Character Contest is the perfect opportunity to share it with the world. Running from now until 14 April, this competition is looking for original creations made in Painter and Clip Studio Paint Pro.

"We're excited to be kicking off the Epic Character Contest alongside



some of the biggest names in our industry," says **Chris Pierce**, product manager for digital arts at Corel.

"Painter and Clip Studio Paint Pro are both powerful art apps in their own right," Chris continues. "But when artists combine these tools, they'll discover a new way to ink and colour that's a real game-changer."

Submissions will be judged on their "wow factor", creativity, and composition and layout. With no

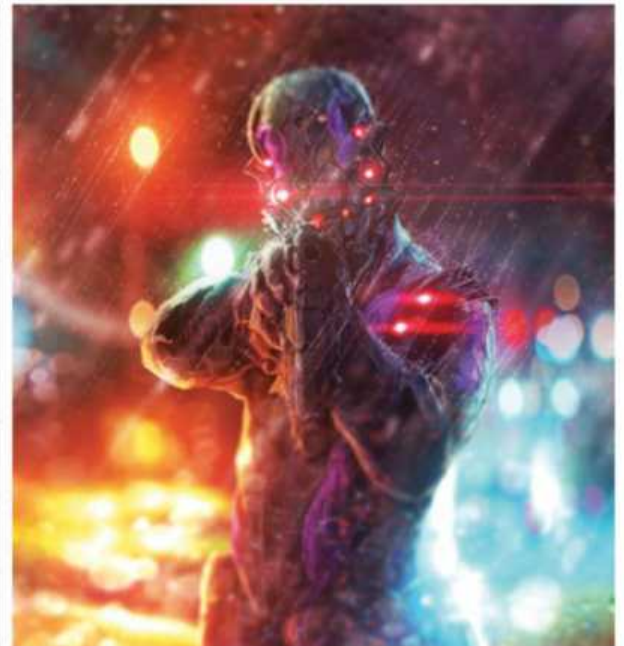
contest categories, there's plenty of room for artists and illustrators to let their imagination run wild.

The contest will be judged by representatives from Corel, Smith Micro, DrawCrowd and Wacom, along with pro illustrator and concept artist **Harvey Bunda** to find the overall champion.



The ultimate winner will receive an exclusive one-on-one mentorship with Harvey, who reveals: "I'll break down my personal sketch and paint workflow using Clip Studio Paint Pro and Painter 2017 while offering insights on how the winner can improve their own portfolio and character art."

“When artists combine these tools, they'll discover a new way to ink and colour”



Harvey's worked for the likes of Lucasfilm, Volta and Mattel, as a concept artist and illustrator.

The winner will also take home a Wacom Cintiq 13HD, Painter 2017 and its Manga brush pack, ParticleShop and its Fantasy brush pack, Clip Studio Paint Pro, Poser 11 Pro and a subscription to ImagineFX. Two runners-up will be awarded prizes that include a Nintendo Switch, a Wacom Intuos Pro Small and Painter 2017.

This is a unique chance for artists to show off their abilities and explore Painter and Clip Studio Paint Pro, so be sure to head over to the DrawCrowd site at <http://ifxm.ag/epic-comp> to read the full details and contest rules, where you can also download trial versions of the two programs.



I like to collect originals from artist friends. Here's an oil painting of a diving helmet by Greg Manchess. Below that, behind the Batman Black & White statues, are two Jeffrey Alan Love originals.

I'm working on a series of artworks inspired by Loteria, the Mexican game of chance. A giant pin board dominates the studio's western wall and helps me organise my design thoughts. This board is constantly changing with new bits pinned daily.

John Picacio

Looking forward Find out how this artist maintains his drawing energy, and discover the one thing he doesn't allow in his studio...



My home studio is like a Swiss-Army knife. It's an all-in-one workplace, archive, library, thinkspace,

print factory and sanctuary. However, there's one thing it's not, and that's a trophy room.

I've been fortunate to win Hugo Awards, Chesley Awards, Locus Awards, a World Fantasy Award and

Here's a detail shot from my ever-evolving Loteria design process board. Shown here are a sketch, notes and final design for my El Venado Loteria Grande card, inspired by Leigh Bardugo's novel *Shadow & Bone*.

an Inkpot Award. Yet, as proud as I am of them, I don't want them in my workspace. They're displayed elsewhere in my house, and even though I believe that true creatives can work anywhere through any conditions, I want my studio to be about where I'm going, rather than where I've been.

Most of my work is heavily graphite-based, and my final works are combinations of traditional pencil drawings and abstract acrylic paintings, layered together in Photoshop. So my main drawing table and my Mac desktop are opposite from each other.

Bridging between them, on the western wall, is a giant pin board that's currently filled with process work for my ongoing Loteria series. When I need to take a break from my main drawing table, I'll move over to a lower Aeron chair and a smaller drawing table, facing the eastern wall. Having



two dedicated drawing areas helps me to defeat fatigue.

I also keep a tabletop easel on the main drawing table. When I switch back and forth between projects, I can post a drawing and 'let it breathe', creating a punch list for improvement while working on something else.

This room is where I spend the lion's share of my days and nights, but the best thing about working where I live is my six-year-old has an open-door



Artist news, software & events

This is part of a suit of armour that I acquired for reference material when I was illustrating the 2012 George RR Martin A Song of Ice and Fire calendar. Next to it is a figure of The Spectre, one of my all-time favourite comic book characters. I'd love to cover-illustrate him someday if DC ever launches another Spectre book.

A table easel fills the right half of my large drawing desk and I often set artworks aside here so I can figure out how to make them better while I work on something else. Here's the final graphite drawing for La Corona.



Early in my career I experimented with shadowbox assemblages. Here's my triptych illustration that became the covers for Jeffrey Ford's Well-Built City trilogy. Lots of people thought these were digital. Nope - they're all oil painting and found objects, housed in a hand-built, custom-made box.

La Sirena won the 2013 Chesley Award for Best Product Illustration, and a banner of her now resides behind my drawing table. The final graphite drawing for La Pera is in the works here.



Here's another original work from an artist that I admire: Vincent Villafranca. He's a brilliant bronze sculptor and this bust features moveable goggles!



This is a reference model of the Invisible Man's head that I fabricated when I cover-illustrated Jess Nevins' The Companion to The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Volume One. It makes a handy bookend.

policy to visit any time - day or night. It's where I heard her utter her first word as a baby, and it's where she can dream with Star Wars figures while I dream my next piece of story art into reality.

John is an award-winning book and product illustrator, who has worked for the past 20 years creating artwork for clients such as Penguin Random House, Tor, Simon & Schuster and many more. You can see his work at www.johnpicacio.com.



Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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



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Meet other artists!

I have a question and unfortunately no one is able to give me a proper answer. So here goes. I'm just starting out in this form of art (I started drawing 10 months ago, working in Photoshop four months ago) and I'm trying to track down some conventions where I can meet up with some senior or experienced digital artists, either in France or the UK. Do you know any of them? Or is there a website where I can find the location of such conventions?

Thank you very much and good job on the magazine!

Hugo Benard, via email

Claire replies Hugo, I really enjoyed the Industry Workshops (www.industryworkshops.co.uk) event in London last year, so I would keep an eye out for them this year. There's also IFCC (<http://ifcc-croatia.com>) – a great art festival in Croatia in May, and Trojan Horse Was A Unicorn (<https://trojan-unicorn.com>), in Portugal in September. These events will give you access to pro artists, like-minded event goers and inspiration by the truck load. Good luck!

Text too small

I agree with Darren [a letter in issue 145 regarding ImagineFX's size of text]. Sadly, for me, the pages work in strong natural light, but anything else is too much trouble. And because 99 per cent of my reading isn't in strong natural light I'm reduced to looking at the pictures rather than reading the



London's Industry Workshops is great for meeting fellow artists.



DID YOU MISS OUR ISSUE ON COMIC ART?

Turn to page 48 to see how you can get hold of this and other past issues.



ImagineFX has had some design tweaks recently intended to make the magazine easier to read.

articles. Due to your font choice, background images and colours, articles such as Iris Compier's Artist in Residence are unreadable. I would love to continue to read the magazine and I was glad to discover I wasn't the only person challenged in this way. If you could do something to improve things, that would be great!

Eric, via email

Claire replies I'm sorry to hear you also had trouble reading the magazine, Eric. Since Darren contacted us, we've had a look at some of text design choices and decided to change some of the fonts and text sizes. I think the magazine is much improved because of it. I hope that you agree. If anyone has comments, please get in touch.

Video problems

First of all, thanks for a great magazine. At 55, I'm a latecomer to art and I learn something from every issue. I do however have one complaint. The videos often have playback issues even on an iPad Pro with fast fibre broadband. But even more problematic is the lack of commentary on most of them. They fly along and are really hard for a newbie to follow. I would get so much more from them if techniques were explained. More beginners articles, especially Photoshop or Clip Studio Paint ones, would be great too. Meanwhile, keep up the good work.

John McGuigan, via email

Claire replies Thank you for your comments, John. I agree with you about the videos – we would love more audio. We do try to get the artists to do audio, but some of them are just too shy. Sometimes there's a language issue, too. Furthermore, we compress the video for the iPad editions and have not noticed any lag or received any other complaints with these. Was it a particular video that was affected? Has anyone else had similar problems?



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Anand Radhakrishnan
[@an_anandrkr](https://twitter.com/an_anandrkr)

“Pencil to finish of something I did a few months ago.”



Liam Kelleher
[@liamkelleherart](https://twitter.com/liamkelleherart)

“First digital painting following @imaginefx on the Cintiq Companion completed :)”



Calum Alexander Watt
[@calumalexanderwatt](https://twitter.com/calumalexanderwatt)

“Pose created for animation model sheet. A little vacuum-bot on the wrong end of a foot...”

Just finished something that you want us to shout about? Then tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!



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Artist Q&A

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The NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX panel

Alix Branwyn



Alix is a Seattle-based illustrator working in the games industry.

Her art is primarily fantasy and horror, with a focus towards the dark and creepy.

www.alixbranwyn.com

Belinda Leung



Previously a lead artist in games, Belinda is now a London-based freelance illustrator

and concept artist who specialises in designing for films and games.

www.belindaleung.com

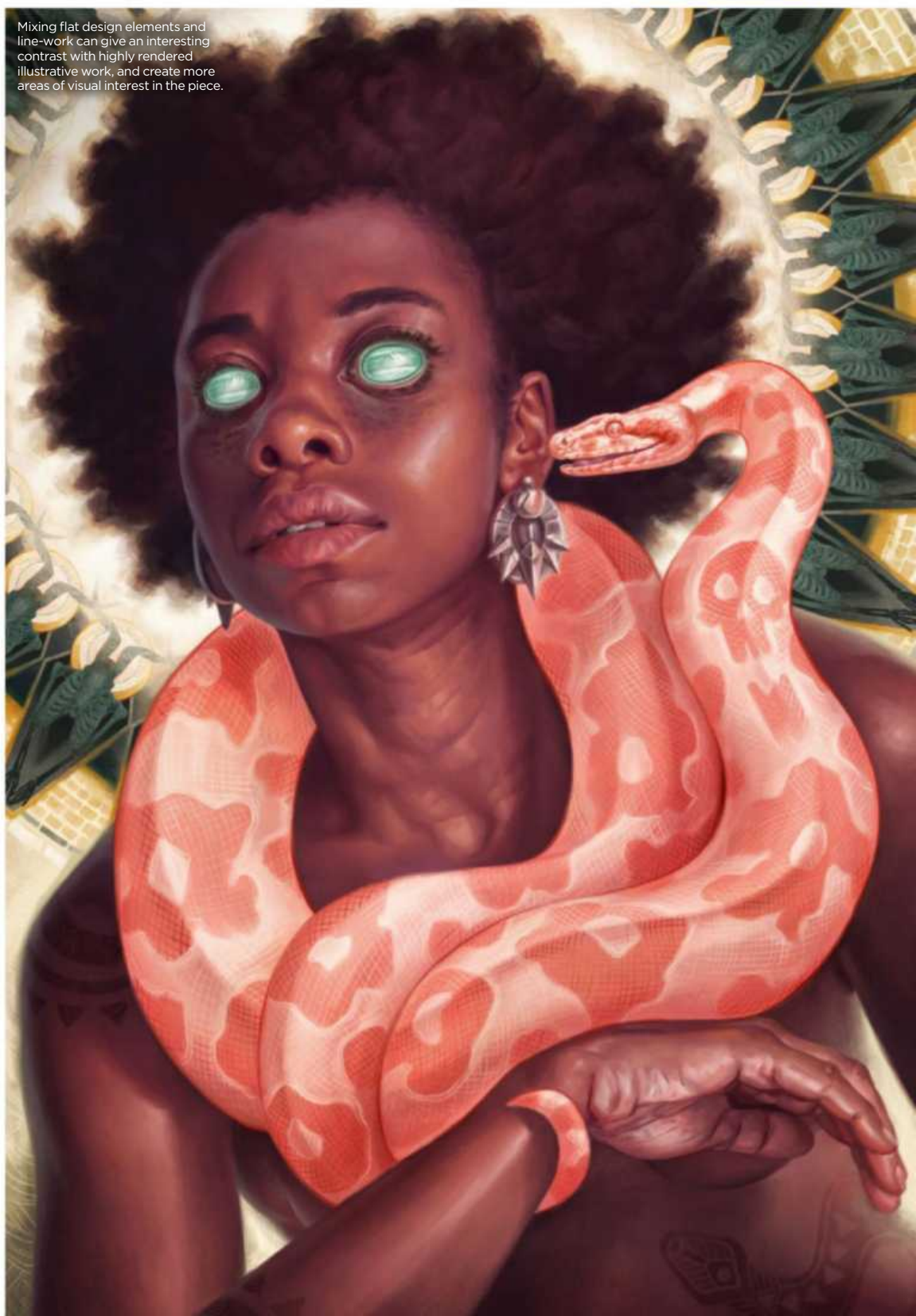
Sara Forlenza



As a freelance illustrator living in Italy, Sara works as a cover book illustrator and app artist. She also works on digital card games and RPGs.

<http://ifxm.ag/s-forlenza>

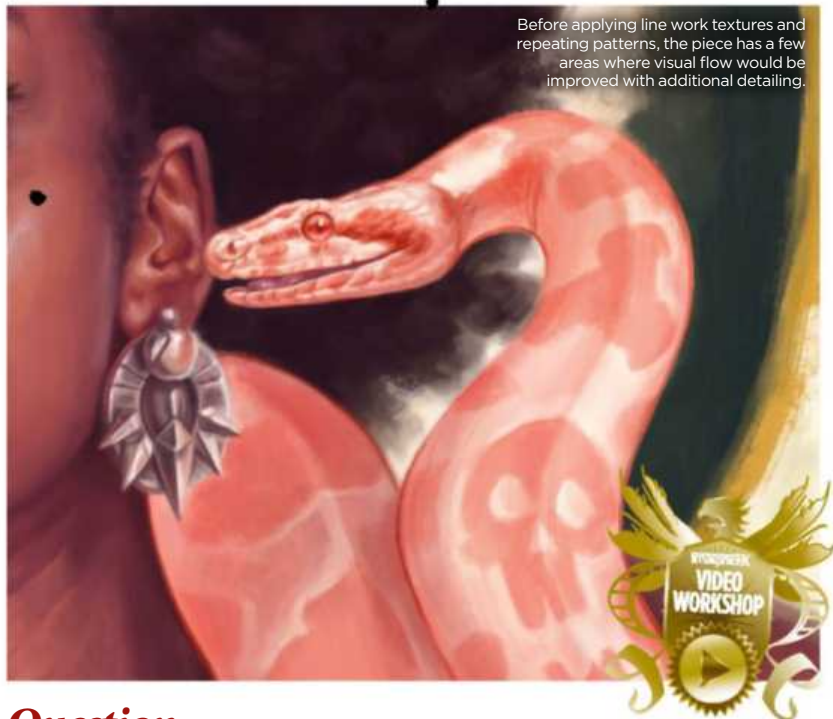
Mixing flat design elements and line-work can give an interesting contrast with highly rendered illustrative work, and create more areas of visual interest in the piece.



Artist Q&A Need our advice?

Email help@imaginefx.com with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!





Before applying line work textures and repeating patterns, the piece has a few areas where visual flow would be improved with additional detailing.

Question

I'm pretty clueless about Photoshop's Smart layers. What are they good for?

Aaron Wallis, England

Answer

Alix replies



When incorporating repeating designs and patterns into an illustration, few tools will be as useful or as powerful as Smart layers. Smart layers enable you to create a separate layered PSD that can be embedded into your original PSD, enabling you to create a large-scale design element that can be resized without losing fidelity.

Copied Smart layers function as Instances: when you update one of them it populates the changes through all of them at once. They can also be warped and transformed like a

standard layer while still maintaining their ability to be modified in their original format, and they save transform information such as the scaling and rotation for more precise measurements for future tweaks. In short, they're an incredibly valuable tool for many aspects of design.

In my example, I use an almost completed design in Photoshop as a base to add some design flair. In this case, I'll be using Smart layers to create a repeating spoked design around the figure's head to frame her and add some additional visual interest and texture.

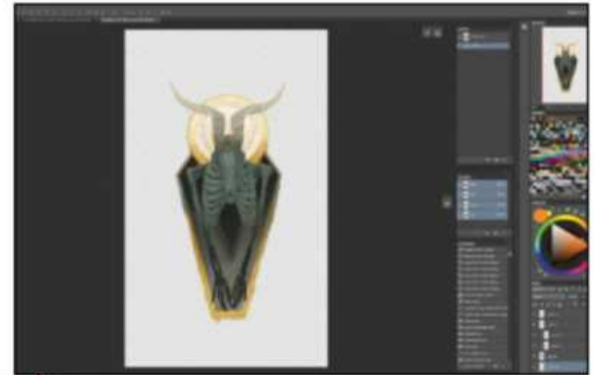
Artist's secret

Get lazy with your lines

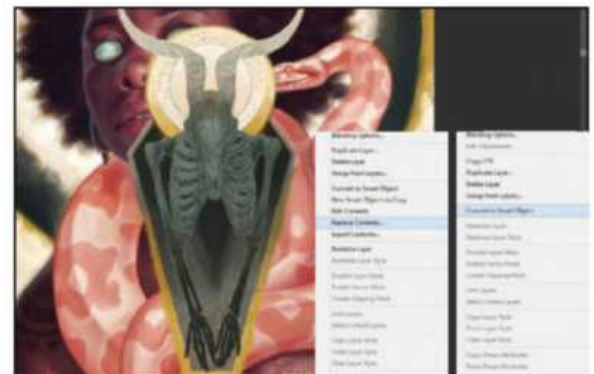
When creating line work in Photoshop it can be tricky to achieve smooth, unwavering lines with sharp tapered ends. I use a mouse plug-in called Lazy Nezumi Pro (www.lazynemezumi.com) to help pull clean, sharp lines and greatly speed up my workflow.



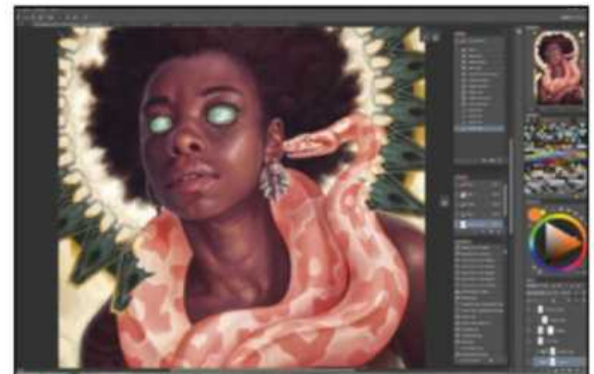
Step-by-step: Using Smart layers to quickly add design elements



1 I start by developing a repeating element in a separate PSD file on a transparent background. This piece will be placed in a way that will spoke outward around the figure's head in a circle, so I design a tapered vertical image with that in mind.



2 In my main file, I create a new folder specifically for these elements. I then create a new layer, and select Convert to Smart Object. I right-click the layer and choose Replace Contents to select the design PSD. I can now move the image into position.



3 After the design elements are in place, I apply a layer mask to the folder that holds all of them. I mask out areas of the piece where my rendered figure will overlap the background designs and use a textured brush to soften some of the hard edges.



Question

How can I paint a dense forest without it distracting the eye?

Tatiana Rogers, Australia

Answer

Belinda replies



Forests have been the quintessential subject for many landscape painters throughout art history, and no doubt they've caused many headaches, too.

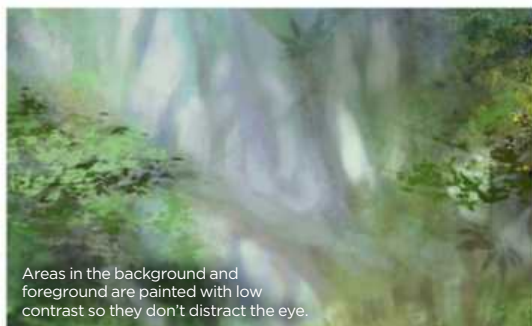
When choosing a classic, challenging scene such as this, I like to look at the work of the Old Masters to see how they tackled these problems. I often find that their solution was a good composition and the simplification of values and shapes. In this case I look at work of Russian master, Ivan Shishkin.

Effective compositions have a clear focal point and a flow that intentionally leads the eye around the image. In this sketch, I group my values into lights, mid-tones and darks and I compose my image starting from big to small shapes.

To draw the eye I place my smallest shapes and areas of highest contrast in the focal point and keep the contrast comparatively low everywhere else. I make the distant trees a similar value to the atmosphere, so as not to draw the eye too much, whereas foreground objects are close in value to the ground, which helps to bring them closer to the viewer's eye.



To stop the eye from becoming too distracted, I keep my areas of high contrast on the focal point and use contrasting angles to lead the viewer around the image.



Areas in the background and foreground are painted with low contrast so they don't distract the eye.

Artist's secret

Make use of colour temperature

Shifts in colour temperature have an amazing way of breathing atmosphere and life into areas of monotonous colour. A heavily green woodland can be brought to life with subtle shades of yellows and blues, giving it an organic feel that emulates the play of light in nature.

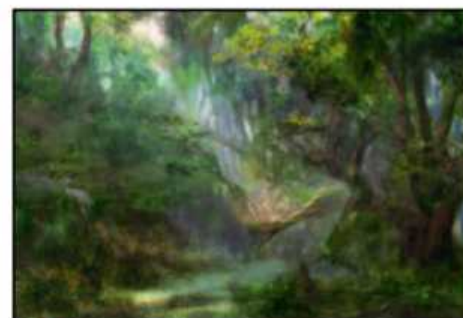
Step-by-step: Advice for illustrating a forest



1 I block out the general values, bearing in mind where I want my focal point. I use a textured Soft-edged brush to create an organic-looking underpainting to work upon, which helps create the randomness you see in nature. Keeping the colours simple helps to focus on the values.



2 Still staying relatively loose, I start to define some of the bigger shapes in the image such as the overall foreground silhouette, mid-ground and background. At this point I'm deciding what contours to give the trees, to create an interesting rhythm and avoid too much repetition.



3 I add some colour variation by using a Color Balance layer to create cooler tones in the shadows and warmer colours in the highlights. I also pick out some smaller shapes within my scene and use the Lasso tool to develop sharper edges in the focal point, to help draw the eye.



Question

Help me paint a reflection in a window

Christina Baer, Germany

Answer

Sara replies



Digital painting techniques make it possible to depict reflections in glass in a relatively straightforward manner. Certainly, it's much less laborious than taking the traditional media approach. And it's all down to the use of layers.

When painting the reflection of a person in a window, remember that it's not a mirror, which produces a sharp, well-defined image. A window works differently because of the transparent nature of glass. As such, a

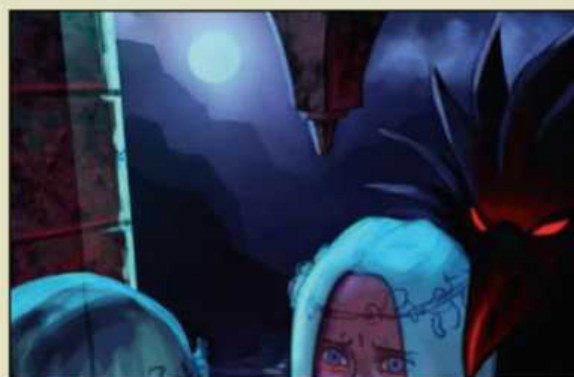
dark background on the other side of the window is what makes the reflection possible in the first place. Some aspects of the background will emerge in the reflection as part of the image, and so it's important not to overdo the transparency effect. I keep in mind that glass is a glossy surface, but also fragile. Elements such as dirt, erosion and cracks will give it an even more realistic look.

I begin by laying down the sketch, starting with the environment, which I paint on the glass surface.

Step-by-step: Take into account the nature of glass when painting a reflection



1 The focal point will be a reflection of the figure, so I place it in the middle. On a separate layer I draw the perspective lines. Getting the reflection and the perspective correct can be the difference between a successful image and a failed one.



2 I start on the background. I paint the girl's reflection on a new layer, without factoring in the transparency effect. Then I select the Layer dialog and I set the blending mode to Screen, so everything that's dark in the layer become transparent.



3 Now I adjust the Opacity and Fill settings in the Layer dialog, which affect the level of reflection. Then I add weathering effects to the glass: I create a new layer and paint dirt with a light grey and a scattered brush. I depict cracks on another layer.



It can be nice to keep some areas of flesh that are unaffected by the inner glow, such as the extremities, to give the interior lighting more impact.

Question

Can you help me create a light glowing within something else in Photoshop?

Sarah Davis, US

Answer

Alix replies



The main challenge here is determining how the anatomy will interact with the light. Planning out your internal structures before you start painting will enable you to create a more believable effect. Bones and large solid muscle forms will largely prevent the light from passing through, creating a dramatic pattern within the shapes the light creates.

Skin, which will mostly be translucent, will create brighter,

hotter, regions of interest. In the case of all internal forms, anything closer to the surface will have sharper, more defined edges pressed up against the skin, while the further away they are the more fuzzy their edges become.

In my example created in Photoshop, I also used a contrasting lighting scheme – cool light cast on to a creature with a warm internal light – to accentuate the forms with cool surface highlights that read well next to the warm inner glow.

Step-by-step: Discover how to give a creature a convincing internal glow



1 I want to maintain a humanoid base anatomy that will occlude the light on the creature's insides. To begin, I take some photos of a life-size skeleton model and use it to draw out the placement for the internal anatomy on top of my sketch.



2 I plot out a Multiply layer with a dark fill of the bones in front of a core light. I set the Opacity to 35 per cent and use a layer mask to erase out areas the opaque body forms will cover, and soften the edges on the bones that would recede back in space.



3 While most of the lighting effect is created with rendering of the spaces that are more transparent, I also use an Overlay layer to create a stronger glow effect in areas that are closer to the light source, and spaces that have thinner flesh.

Question

How should I approach a character costume brief?

Ernest Summers, Canada

Answer

Belinda replies



Dependant on the media that it's for, the costume design approach can be very similar to character design in the games industry, or to fashion design when used in films. However, every project should start with a good understanding of the brief and the story in which the costume and character are set.

In this quick demonstration, I've given myself the brief of designing the costume of a female Arctic mage and from there, I start researching the cultures of the indigenous people who live in the Arctic circle, such as the Inuit and Yupik. Getting an idea of the culture in which a character exists gives me more visual cues to integrate into my designs, such as the kind of materials they use and their roles in society.

Instead of silhouettes, I begin with line sketches over a posed mannequin, to rough out the flow and weights of the material. And because I'm inspired by the Arctic Tundra, I borrow colours from these landscapes to influence my design. Hopefully, the final result reflects the earthly hues of an icy world bereft of trees, but rich in tough flora.

I paint a mage costume inspired by the cultures of the Arctic circle and the contrasting browns and blues of the tundra landscape.



Putting a costume in context can help to sell the design, so I paint a quick tundra-like background with colours sympathetic to the clothing.



Artist's secret Cultural research

Costumes and clothing are steeped in culture, so a good understanding of the story and the brief can help to ground your design into the world it belongs, such as the materials used, and the shape language and era.

Step-by-step: Designing an Arctic Mage



1 First, I research on the cultures of the Arctic Circle and their lifestyles. I create a reference sheet that I keep open as I work and, instead of silhouettes, I start with line drawings over a posed figure to get an idea of the flow and weight of materials, and where fabrics overlap.



2 Next I paint over my lines with a silhouette and block in positive and negative shapes to give some visual interest based on the initial line-work. In this case I keep the number of iterations simple, but this stage can go on infinitely. Keep an eye on the time!



3 I want my mage to have the colours of the Arctic Tundra: rusty browns and oranges of wintery flora, against the icy blues and white of snow. I overlay some of these colours over my thumbnails, and take a couple of my favourites over to the next stage where I working up the details.



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Question

Can you help me paint a cobbled path?

Melisa Bengtsson, Sweden



Answer

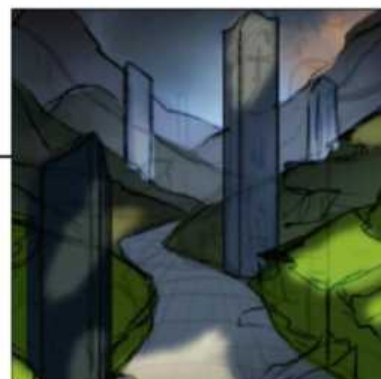
Sara replies



I choose to paint a cobbled path leading through a grassy valley between some monoliths to give the image an otherworldly appearance.

During the sketch stage I decide on a one-point perspective and lay down the meandering shape of the path between the other elements of the scene, such as mountains, sky, meadows and the alien columns. Then I start with basic colours and gradually add details. The cobbled path will be the most detailed element and so it'll be the last thing I paint in my artwork, and only when I'm happy with the composition, colours and atmospheric perspective. After creating the shape of the lane I paint it with the dominant colour – a bluish-grey – which becomes more saturated as the path enters the foreground of the scene.

I use a scattered brush and a darker colour to lay down some brush strokes that will simulate the rough texture of the soil. I also add touches of warm brown to act as contrast, and light green to imitate moss that can grow between cobblestones.



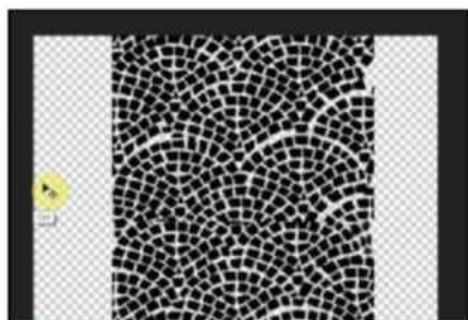
I put down all my colours over my sketch. This enables me to check that all the tones and hue in the illustration are working well together.



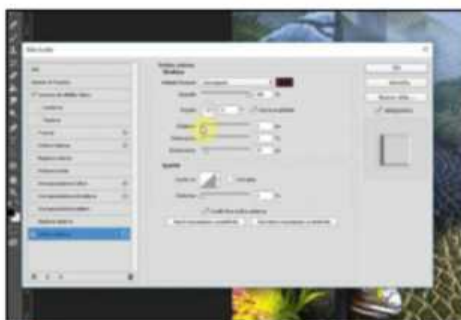
Artist's secret Paint multiple cobbles

Painting cobbles one at a time will take time and effort. Considering creating a custom brush based on a suitable stone pattern, perhaps achieved by gathering up some references, either from searching online or taking your own photos of cobbled paths and streets.

Step-by-step: Illustrate realistic-looking cobbles quickly



1 I create a new layer and paint the cobbled path with a brush I specifically created for this project. To avoid having the cobbles look too similar, I vary the shapes and forms of the stones using the Eraser tool. Then I go to the Edit menu and select the Transform tool. I choose Distort and adjust the layer so it matches the perspective of the image.



2 In the Layer palette I reduce the value of the Fill option to zero, which removes the cobbles temporarily. Next, I double-click the layer to access the Layer Styles menu. I select Bevel and Emboss, and the cobblestone reappear with an embossed effect. Among the various options, I choose a direction and colour for the lights and shadows.



3 The path is almost finished. Now I add some more details, such as tufts of grass that grow between cobbles, cracks, imperfections and grit. As a finishing touch I select a soft Round brush and choose a light grey. Then I enhance the atmospheric perspective with small brushstrokes, reducing the Opacity to 50 per cent where the path disappears from view.

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Artist Portfolio JC PARK

The South Korean concept artist tells **Gary Evans** that his best work was on a project which never saw the light of day...

JC Park planned to be an engineer. At least, that's the career his parents imagined for him. The South Korean didn't get the grades for engineering college. He eventually completed a major in digital cartooning and began working as an illustrator and concept artist. He's since built up a huge portfolio of mechs, vehicles and spacecrafts, with designs so intricate, so beautifully engineered, that even his parents must be proud.

Artist PROFILE

JC Park

LOCATION: South Korea

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Craig Mullins, Daniel

Dociu and Feng Zhu

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop

WEB: www.j-circle.net

JC wanted to work in comics. But when he graduated, a decade ago, the comics industry in South Korea was struggling. Meanwhile, the video games industry was expanding rapidly: PC bangs (LAN gaming centres) were growing in popularity and MMORPGs were attracting tens of millions of players. That was when JC landed a job at one of the country's best game developers.

"The games industry was growing," JC says, "because of games like Lineage, an MMORPG made by NCsoft. I sent a basic portfolio to NCsoft and the company invited me in for an interview. I was really lucky.

"Since I was seven years old, I enjoyed doodling for friends or family. When I drew something they were really happy; however, that wasn't my dream job – it was just a hobby. ➡



“I sent a basic portfolio to NCsoft and it invited me in for an interview. I was really lucky”



ROBOT MARKET

“When I painted this futuristic market I used some photo references for the texture on the side pillars, as well as for the overall composition.”

Artist Portfolio

THE WANDERER

"The vehicles of the Star Wars universe have clean shapes and simple colours. Here, I gave the vehicle a basic shape, and then worked up the details."



➡ I thought. I liked arcade games such as Tekken, sci-fi films like The Terminator, and fantasy stuff – Dungeons & Dragons, for example. All these factors encouraged me to work in the games and film industries. There are a lot of talented artists in South Korea, so I was lucky to break into the industry and meet all these skilled people."

JUST PART OF THE PROCESS

JC worked his way up to senior concept artist, a position he held on AION – another of NCsoft's hugely successful MMORPGs. When working on a game like this, JC usually receives a brief from the game designer. He gets to work on creating some concepts.

They then bring in a 3D designer to discuss whether or not his concepts are practical. It's at this stage, JC says, that he must make the most amount of compromises to his ideas. Next, the team speaks to the game director and

UNKNOWN PLANET

"I took inspiration from Ridley Scott's Prometheus to paint a mission on an uncharted planet. I wanted the foreground character to look both curious and anxious."



“ Concept art must help the overall production of game, so I should be thinking about the final 3D result, too ”

receives feedback to see if their concepts are in line with his overall vision. Once he gets the nod, JC can finalise them, before passing it on to the 3D artist, UI designer or level designer. "I think concept art," he says, "must help the overall production of game, so I should be thinking about the final 3D result, too."

Not all projects run this smoothly, of course. JC created concepts and illustrations for another NCsoft game, Steel Dog, which was never released. JC says he learned just as much from this failed projects as he did the more successful ones: "This was one of the best projects in my game career. I worked with one of my best directors, Mr Hwang, who had really creative ideas, a positive drive. I've never seen a game like this before. It called for really creative concepts. Unfortunately, this project was cancelled."

A quick look at JC's ArtStation or Facebook pages shows what a prolific

PRACTICE MAKES... AWESOME!

JC explains how a lunchtime sketch grew into an epic piece of concept art...



STARTING OUT WITH THE COMPOSITION BASICS...

"I drew this during one lunch break. I did it to practise scale, distance and developing a strong silhouette, and I drew it pretty quickly. I wanted to do something simple – it was just a bit of fun."



... BEFORE WORKING UP ELEMENTS IN THE PAINTING...

"I added the sky and desaturated the colour. Then I began to work on each of the characters, almost as if they were separate images, and then decided who would be the focus of the image."



... TO AN EPIC FINISH

"Then I looked at the position of the figures. The viewer should notice the visual flow: how it moves from in front of the characters to the huge beast and the background."

artist he is. When he's not working on a freelance project, he's spending time on a personal project. And when he's not working a personal project, he's planning his next piece.

"I'm constantly thinking about what my next drawing is going to be," JC says. "I'm also always gathering references, so when I do have time to draw, I can get to work straight away."

SPEED IS KEY

JC often works late into the night. Sometime's he draws while watching the TV or listening to a podcast. He doesn't have a dedicated workspace. Instead, he sets up his Wacom and

THE BIG REVEAL

"A moment of crisis at sea was the starting point for this painting. I imagined an attack by a huge, mysterious creature, but only wanted to show its tentacles."





DRAGON'S EYE VIEW

"In this concept I wanted to show a vast landscape and a castle town on the cliff. It's a fantasy world so I added dragons in flight, with the knights in the foreground."



“I’m always gathering references, so when I do have time to draw, I can get to work straight away”

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS ART FRIENDS

Discover why JC thinks online art communities are both crucial to his work and his continual self-development

"When I started getting more 'follows' on ArtStation, that's when I felt my work was going in a good direction. I got the same reaction from my Facebook page. Indeed, several companies contacted me through Facebook to offer freelance work. This was all relatively recently – almost four years ago.

The skills I have, my abilities, are never enough. So every day I feel thankful to the online community and the companies who contact me, because they encourage me to become better. I try to pursue more creative projects, and do work that makes everyone happy. I hope I'll be doing this for the rest of my life!"



FOLLOWING MY HAND

"This was done during a busy period of work – I treated it as a bit of relaxing down-time. I simply let my hand take the image forward."

➔ MacBook on the dining table in the living room of his house, which he shares with his wife and children. "I prefer a laptop to a desktop," he says, "because I like to be able to move my workspace easily. It means I can take it with me when I need to go on trips. Sometimes I work in a nearby café. That's really good for a diversion."

In May 2016, JC moved to Hamburg, Germany, where he now works for online games company Goodgame Studios. He also works as a freelancer, not just on games, but also creating art for everything from animations and feature films, to cover art and TV commercials.

During the early stages of a project, speed is key. JC carries a pencil and sketch pad with him, so he can quickly get down any ideas he has while on the move. If he's working on a particularly detailed concept or illustration, he might begin a project with a paper sketch, but usually he draws directly onto his tablet in Photoshop. It means he can easily modify, rotate and layer images. He uses a large brush and a mono colour – grey or dark brown. At this stage, he's concentrating on the overall composition as he adds simple colours. Next, he gives the images depth and lighting, then starts to work in more detail.

“So many talented artists are making lots of great concept art every day, and so much of it is lost or forgotten”



ONLINE ENCOURAGEMENT

With over 12,000 ArtStation followers and 6,000 plus Facebook followers, it's no surprise that JC says, "I felt my work was going in a good direction."



THE STAR WARS

"Sometimes I draw fan art while mixing in my own design ideas. Someone once asked me, 'Who's the guy at the front?' Well, he's just my character!"

"If something isn't working within a project," JC says, "then I take a breather for a few minutes – go out for a walk, or search the internet – then I go back to the image with an idea of how to fix it."

IMPRESSIVE STORYTELLING

JC uses Pinterest to gather references. Sometimes, he'll take a collection of images and combine them into a single, new image. Occasionally, if he really likes a picture, he'll recompose it.

"I could be watching a film or TV programme when inspiration hits," he says. "I try to remember what it was that fired me up. Sometimes the image



SEASIDE TOWN

"I rarely use custom brushes, but I wanted to try them for this piece, focusing on traditional painting techniques. It wasn't easy, and took me a long time to complete."



NUMEN VILLAGE

"I wanted to emphasise the village's small size, hence the huge head of a creature on the hill."

is so clear it comes quickly, but it's not always easy to maintain that positive feeling right up until the work's done. So I try to finish a piece very quickly, usually within three to four hours."

JC is currently creating concepts for a mobile role-playing game, and is hoping to work on a AAA console game in the near future. His dream job? The next Star Wars film. His style and his meticulous attention to detail seems a good fit for the franchise.

The artist says that his style has changed in recent years, but underpinning everything he does is the desire to tell a good story, to make

sure everything fits together properly, and to create something that's beautifully engineered.

"I'm focusing on more realistic concepts built around good storytelling," he says, "so every day I try to be more creative with that aim in mind. I want to create concept art that endures – for the audience and for me, too. So many talented artists are making lots of great concept art every day – basically every moment – and so much of it is lost or forgotten. When I reflect on my experiences of the art, it's something that has strong storytelling at the heart of it." 🍷

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Our comics special includes an insightful interview with Batman artist Jock, sketches from Mark Brooks and Joverine, two Wonder Woman workshops, a look around Ryan Sook's studio, and comics' unlikely heroes.



Issue 145

March 2017

Our animation issue emphasises why story is important in your art – a message that comes loud and clear from Kenneth Anderson's cover art, to Armand Serrano's background art tutorial and Matt Jones' storyboarding workshop.



Issue 144

February 2017

From Patrick J Jones's cover art, to creating faces full of character with Julián del Rey, to anatomy advice from tutor Glenn Vilppu, this is an issue that's guaranteed to boost your knowledge of anatomy and figure drawing.



Issue 143

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An interview with Ice and Fire illustrator Marc Simonetti headlines our book illustration special. There's also essential advice on getting into children's books, and workshops on colour and composition.

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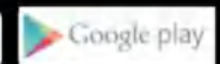
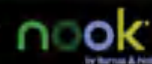
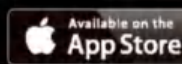


Issue 132
March 2016



Issue 131
February 2016

GET YOUR DIGITAL EDITION THROUGH THESE OUTLETS:



Sketchbook

Scott Robertson

Take a peek into the sketchbook of the famed vehicle concept artist, who has a clear love of the sci-fi genre and all its trappings...

Artist PROFILE

Scott Robertson

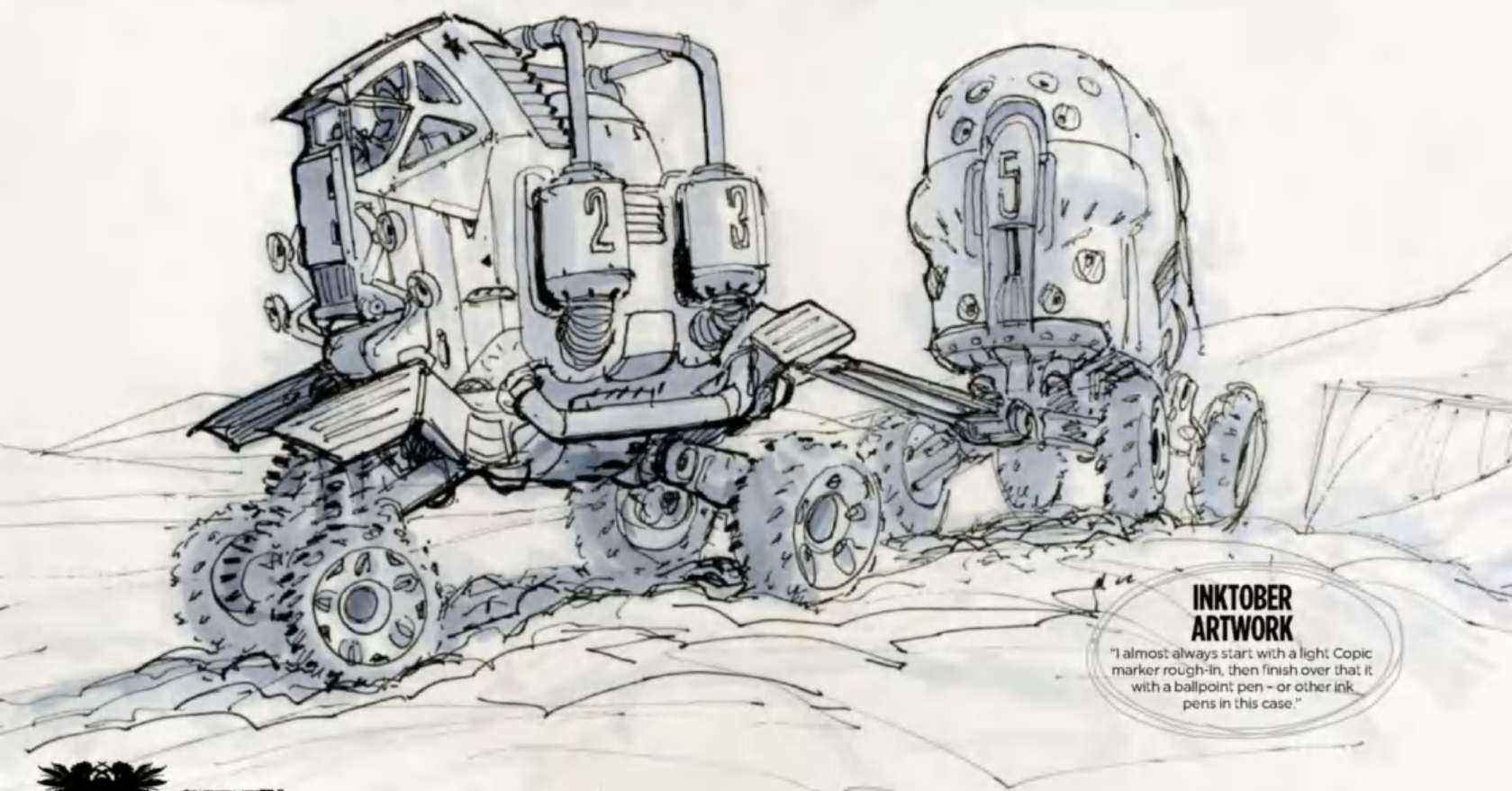
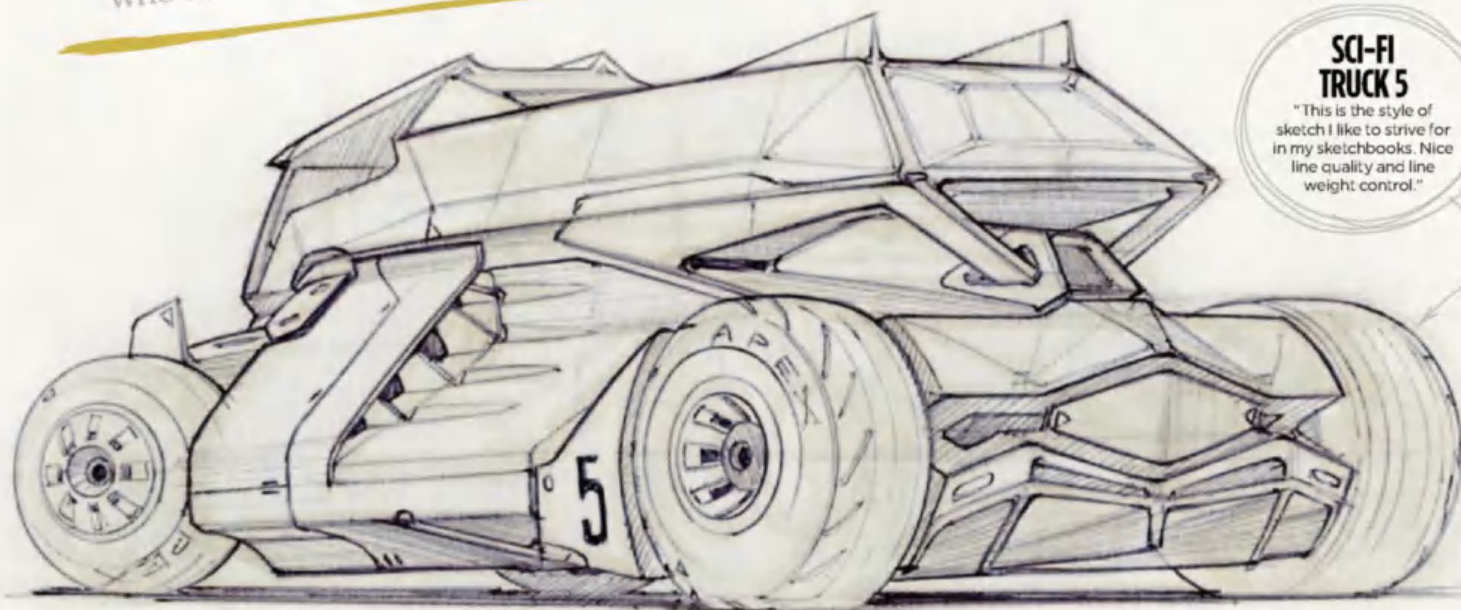
LOCATION: US



Scott has authored or co-authored 13 books on design and concept art. He frequently lectures around the world for various corporations, and colleges through his workshop brand, SRW, in addition to taking on the occasional freelance design job. His studio is based in Los Angeles, California.
www.drawthrough.com

SCI-FI TRUCK 5

"This is the style of sketch I like to strive for in my sketchbooks. Nice line quality and line weight control."



INKTOBER ARTWORK

"I almost always start with a light Copic marker rough-in, then finish over that with a ballpoint pen - or other ink pens in this case."



RANDOM SCI-FI HELMETS

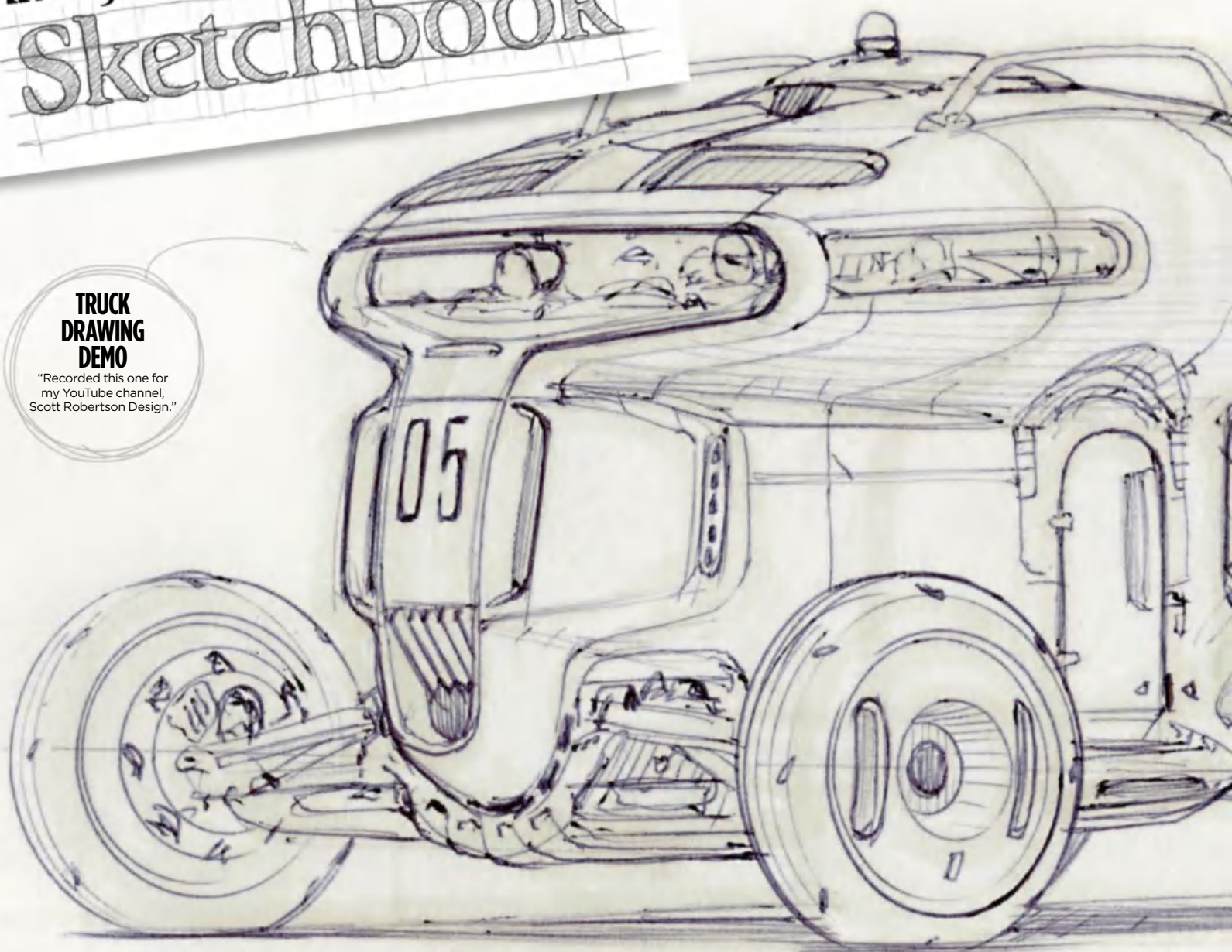
"No specific design brief here, other than to sketch fun helmets. Done with Copic marker and a Pilot HI-TEC pen."

“ Nice line
quality and line
weight control
– that’s my ideal
sketch style ”

Sketchbook

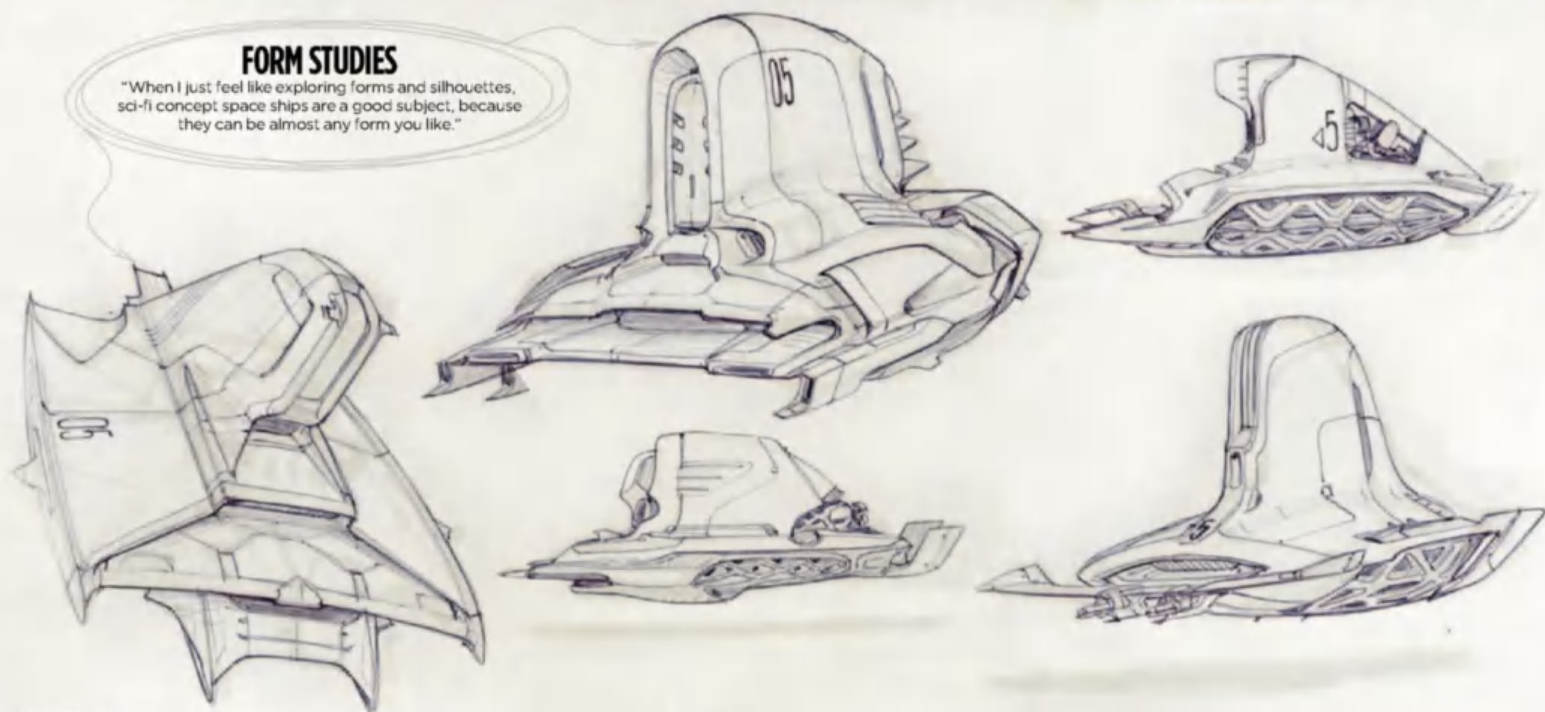
TRUCK DRAWING DEMO

"Recorded this one for
my YouTube channel,
Scott Robertson Design."



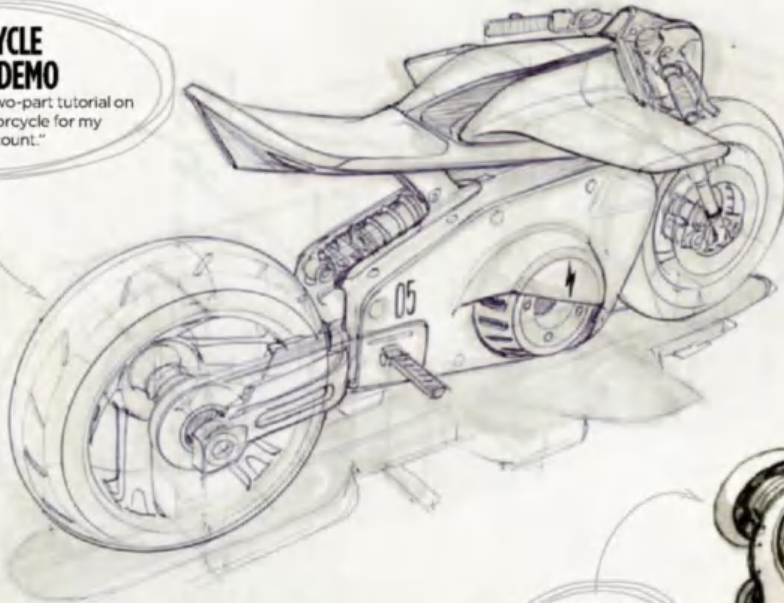
FORM STUDIES

"When I just feel like exploring forms and silhouettes,
sci-fi concept space ships are a good subject, because
they can be almost any form you like."



MOTORCYCLE TUTORIAL DEMO

"This sketch is part of a two-part tutorial on how to design a motorcycle for my Gumroad account."



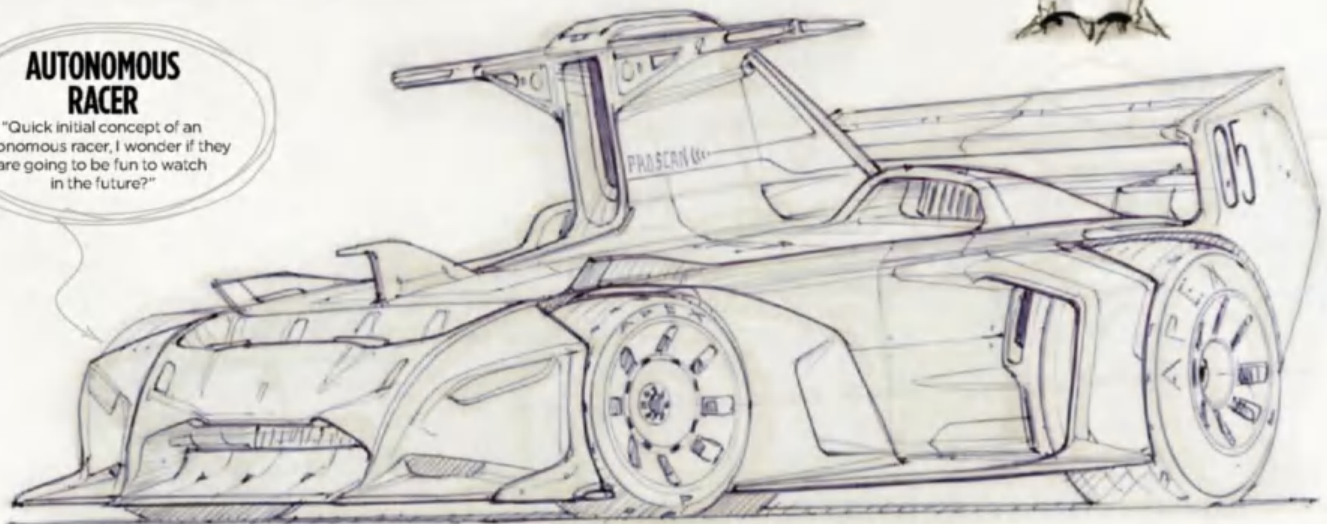
MECH WALKER

"In addition to space ships, mechs of all sorts are a fun default, sci-fi subject that I like to sketch."



AUTONOMOUS RACER

"Quick initial concept of an autonomous racer, I wonder if they are going to be fun to watch in the future?"



“Mechs of all sorts are a fun default, sci-fi subject that I like to sketch”

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Quickly develop an original building in SketchUp. Donglu Yu shows you how.

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Part three of John Mahoney's ZBrush series.

Photoshop

DISCOVER FRESH PORTRAIT SKILLS

Mélanie Delon explains how she uses light and avoids detail becoming too distracting, as she paints a figure inspired by the carnivals of Venice

Artist PROFILE

Mélanie Delon
LOCATION: France

Mélanie is a freelance illustrator specialising in fantasy subjects. She is a digital painting instructor at CGMA.
www.melanieledon.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!



Painting a portrait can be a difficult task, especially when you plan to add a lot of clothing details and jewellery. You can quickly become lost in your work! So before starting anything, have a basic rough idea of the final image. Here, I want to depict (with the help of the ImagineFX team) a kind of Venetian carnival-inspired costume – but without the mask, because we want direct eye contact in this illustration.

I draw a few quick pencil sketches and colour thumbnails, with the idea of a mysterious colourful lady in mind, to find a strong composition. At this stage I know the light will be a key part in this painting; this is always the case in a portrait piece. Light is how the character stands out – it brings volume, life and intensity – so it must be carefully worked. The light is challenging here, mainly because of the amount of detail.

Indeed, I don't want the detail to become too distracting, which can

soon be the case when there's a lot of it. So I start with basic, classic lighting: a main light coming from the top and the rest in shadow.

However, during painting I decide to change some elements, including the light. The image was too dark and the composition too boring. When I'm not satisfied, I never hesitate to go back and change the elements I don't like. Sometimes I even restart the entire illustration. For me, that's just a part of the painting process – and it's often for the best!



PRO SECRETS

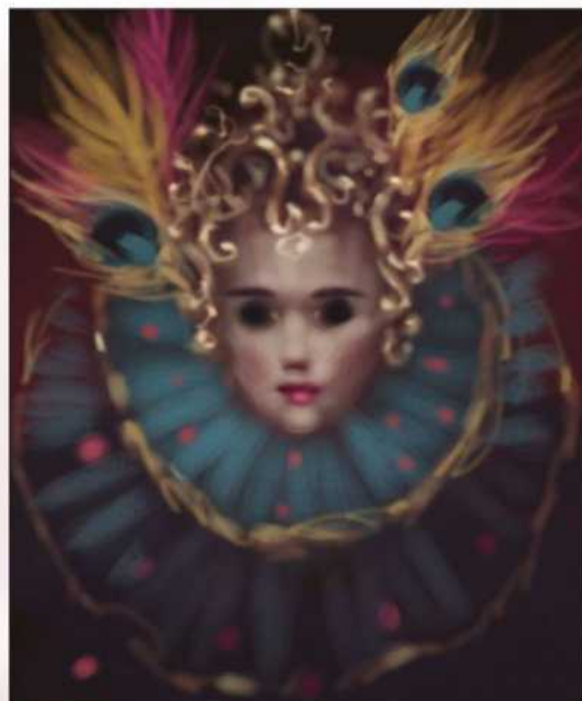
Make use of line drawings

When I have to paint specific decorative elements such as patterns, lace or – as in this instance – the crown, I always create a line drawing to follow while painting. It acts as a guide for keeping the design unified and consistent. I usually draw directly on the painting so that I can be sure the line art will suit my character or the element in question.



1 Assemble some concept sketches

The pencil sketch is an important step. I always do a few of these before starting the real painting. It helps me visualise where I want to go. I can quickly add details like the crown, or think about what kind of costume I want for my character. It's a good base to start from.



2 Create colour thumbnails

Then I scan the pencil sketch and do some quick colour thumbnails. I pick a harmonious colour scheme and start to mix those colours, to see whether they work well together. The challenge when there are multiple elements is to develop something consistent; I find doing a quick colour sketch really helpful in this respect. ➔





3 Laying down colour blocks

I start the face in huge blocks of colour, to quickly get everything placed correctly. I try to develop a lot of colour variations in this area because it's the focal point of my painting and so it needs to be realistic and feel alive. I mix some red and pink for the eyes, mouth and nose to help achieve this effect.



4 Adjusting the composition

At this point I change the composition and go for a classic dress instead of a neck ruffle collar. The dress will be covered with colourful patterns and some hints of golden embroidery. I always use a big, Round, soft brush to sketch patterns, because I need to blend colours quickly at this early stage. I find it helpful to ensure all the details work as a whole and are well integrated; the soft brush is ideal for achieving this.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
SOFT

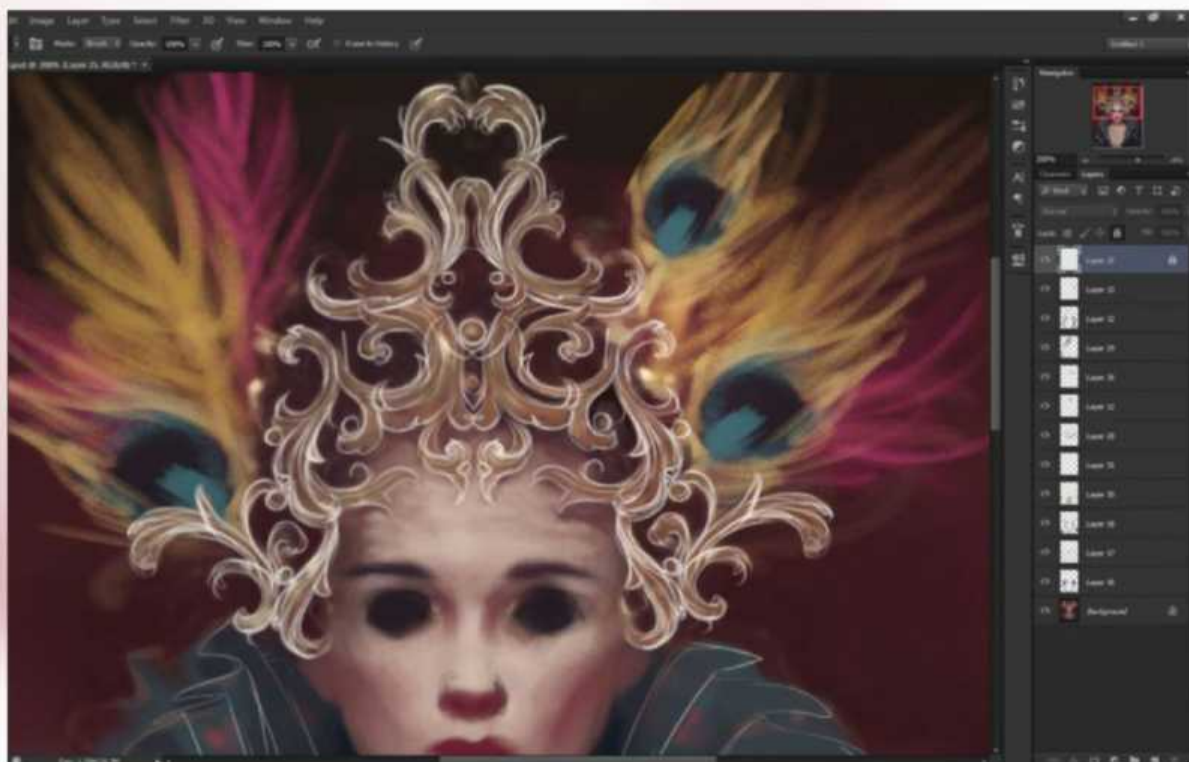
My favourite brush. It has the perfect level softness to develop quick colour blends on the canvas.

TEXTURE

I use this when I need to paint more precise elements or textures.

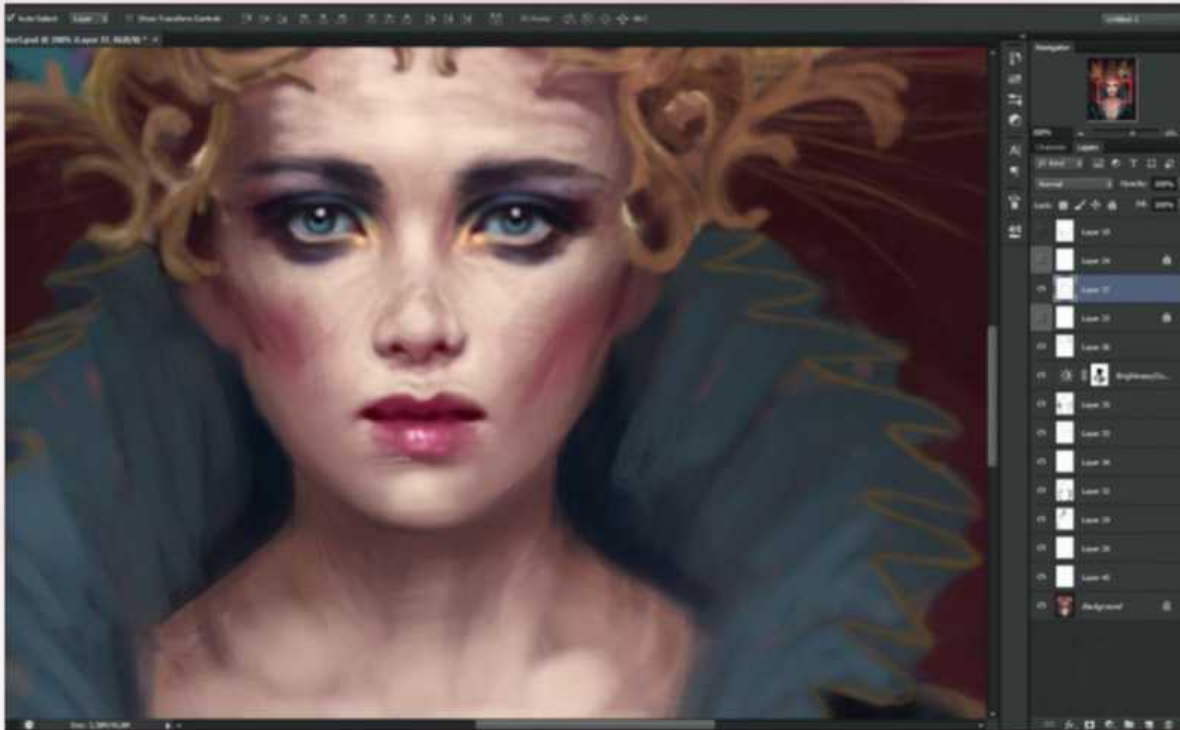
DETAIL TEXTURED

I use this Round edge brush to paint the many tiny details on show.



5 Developing the carnival-esque crown

This portrait is carnival inspired, so my character will be wearing an outlandish crown with feathers. I start with a pyramid shape made up of many little baroque-style curves. I visualise my idea on another layer and start to correct the previous shape based on this. I want the crown to be completely gold, so I pick a colourful yellow/brown to paint the base. I don't work up the light yet – before starting that, I need to refine the entire crown and add some texture.



PRO SECRETS

Begin small, then work up

I always start my paintings in a small file, something like 1,000 pixels at 72DPI. At this low level of resolution, I can't start working on the details, which helps me stay focused on the general shape, volume and light. I increase the resolution progressively (150, 200 and finally 300DPI) when I feel that, for example, the colour base is perfect and won't be changed.

6 Defining the facial features

Now I start to add more details to the face. I work the eyes, add eyelids and eyebrows – this is an important step because it's now that I decide what expression and attitude I want for my character. I choose to try to make her look mysterious, so her eyes will have a lot of makeup. I use some deep, dark violet to paint the eyelids. I never use pure black for shadows or creases, because that will only make other colours look muddy. Always colour your shadows!



7 Giving the skin a sense of texture

I'm happy with how the face looks and I can now start to work on texture. For this I use my scribbling technique. I add colour variations and volume all over the face with a one-pixel, Hard-edged brush. I work the light and shadows, but also on some details such as the eyelids. This is a long process but I like the final render – once it's smoothed it adds a lot of tiny texture or grain. A speckled brush also gives this effect. ➡



8 Designing the costume

I want my character to be colourful, so I create a specific pattern for her dress with turquoise and red. I keep the design simple because I don't want it to distract the viewer too much. I also refine the ruffles and crown. I leave the feathers very dark and blurred – they aren't the main decorative element and must stay discreet.



9 Revising the composition

I decide I'm not happy with the composition: it needs to be brighter because it's appearing on the cover. So I decide to change it. The character's position was too stiff, so I move her slightly to the side to develop a more natural pose. I also change the crown and the light on the upper part of the composition, opting to add more red instead of yellow, and bring in more light there, too.



10 Updating costume elements

I now take the opportunity to change the ruffles – I found the previous design too boring. I also quickly sketch some more rounded curves to give a sense of lightness to the dress and character. I bring in a degree of transparency, which will help an object look either very light or fragile. I approach the crown in the same way, painting thinner, longer, baroque curves to break the heavy style of the previous one to help produce a more feminine, delicate look.



11 Paint a lace collar

I decide to add lace fabric to increase the delicate look of my character and add some mystery. Lace is intricate, but it's easily done: I use a textured brush to roughly draw some curves and flowers – it doesn't need to be precise. I add a few dots of light on it to create some volume so that it doesn't look too flat and unrealistic.



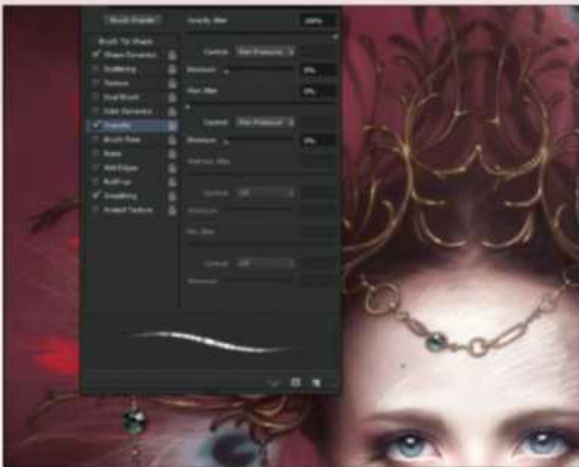
PRO SECRETS

Get some perspective

If I need to gain a fresh take on my work-in-progress, I simply flip the image. I do this regularly because it gives me a fresh look at the illustration, especially if I'm working on the same element for hours. I encourage you to do the same because it's also a useful way to spot any mistakes and quickly correct them. You'll find the command in the Image menu>Image Rotation>Flip Canvas Horizontal, or you can use the Ctrl+T shortcut.

12 Add more life to my carnival queen

I accentuate the colour of the character's lips and cheeks, picking a deep pink/red to do this. Red and pink are the perfect colours to add life to a character, especially on the face. Then I select a very small, precise brush and create some long, curvy eyelashes to give her eyes a more dramatic and mysterious look. I always blur the extremities to make them more natural. And finally I add some beauty spots here and there on her face – this quick extra detail is particularly effective when you want to create realistic-looking skin.



13 Introducing texture to the crown

Now I need to add more texture to the crown, especially on the feathers. I use a basic Round edge brush (with Hardness at 100 per cent and Opacity Jitter set to 100 per cent), and then paint some little brush strokes all over the feathers, to create a myriad of colour variations that mimic the texture of their real-world counterparts. I do the same on the crown to emulate the appearance of old, slightly tarnished gold. I don't want something clean. Including flaws helps to achieve more realism in the scene.



14 Making some final adjustments

Now it's time to add some extra light coming from the top. I choose to use a pink colour close to the one in the background, to retain some unity and bring in a colourful glow all over the crown and feathers. I use a big, Round, soft-edged brush to create this special effect, and adjust the layer's Opacity if I go too far with it. I repeat the same process on the face, this time picking a pale blue to contrast with the background colour. Finally, I use a Brightness/Contrast adjustment to slightly correct the general contrast of my illustration. And we're done!

Core Skills: Part 3

USING BRUSHES IN REBELLE

Martin Hanschild continues his series on Rebelle, the natural media painting program, and looks at more of the software's painting tools

Artist PROFILE

Martin Hanschild
LOCATION: Czech Republic

Martin is a 2D and 3D character designer who works in Prague for motion art house Eallin.
www.hanschild.com



Last issue we looked at the basics of the Watercolor tool. You could say that this tool is the best thing in Rebelle – certainly, it's the one I use most often. However, there are other painting tools in Rebelle that are well worth exploring.

They can be divided into two basic groups: wet media brushes (including Acrylic, Ink Pen and

Watercolor); and Dry media brushes, such as Pencil, Marker, Pastel and Airbrush. There's the Eraser too, which is dry by default but has some special features, as you'll see.

The parameters for all of Rebelle's tools are set to predefined values to start with, and they work fine 'out of the box'. But you can tweak them according to your preferences. You can always reset them to the defaults. Remember that the results depend

on how you use all of Rebelle's other features, such as Canvas Wetness, brush textures and so on.

Here I'll introduce these remaining painting tools, point out their specific attributes and behaviours, and demonstrate the range of effects you can achieve with them on the canvas. Rather than a step-by-step tutorial, I want to give you some tips and advice to help you better understand Rebelle's painting tools.

Dry Media

Pastel Marker Airbrush Pencil

Here you can reset the properties of the selected tool to its default.

Wet Media

Acrylics Ink Pen

Brush stroke preview.

1 Comparing painting tools

All tools have a Pressure parameter for controlling a brush's pressure sensitivity, and a Size setting to control the size of your brush stroke. The maximum size is always 100, but the actual size is different for each tool. Dry media tools don't have a Water parameter, and Pencil and Pastel will dry a wet canvas. You won't find an Opacity setting, as in other painting programs, but there's a Loading parameter that controls the amount of colour loaded on your brush.

Brush strokes with a high Loading value totally cover the canvas texture.

If you want to bring back some of the canvas' texture, start painting on a new layer.

You can change brush textures to achieve different impasto effects.

2 Working with the Acrylic tool

You'll find the same properties for the Acrylic brush as for Watercolor, but of course it works in a different way. Colour spread is reduced, and it occurs more slowly on the canvas. If you increase the Loading and Pressure values you'll have a thicker brush with a lot of mass, producing an impasto effect, which totally covers the canvas texture. For better colour blending, especially with a high Loading setting (close to 100), switch to Dirty mode.



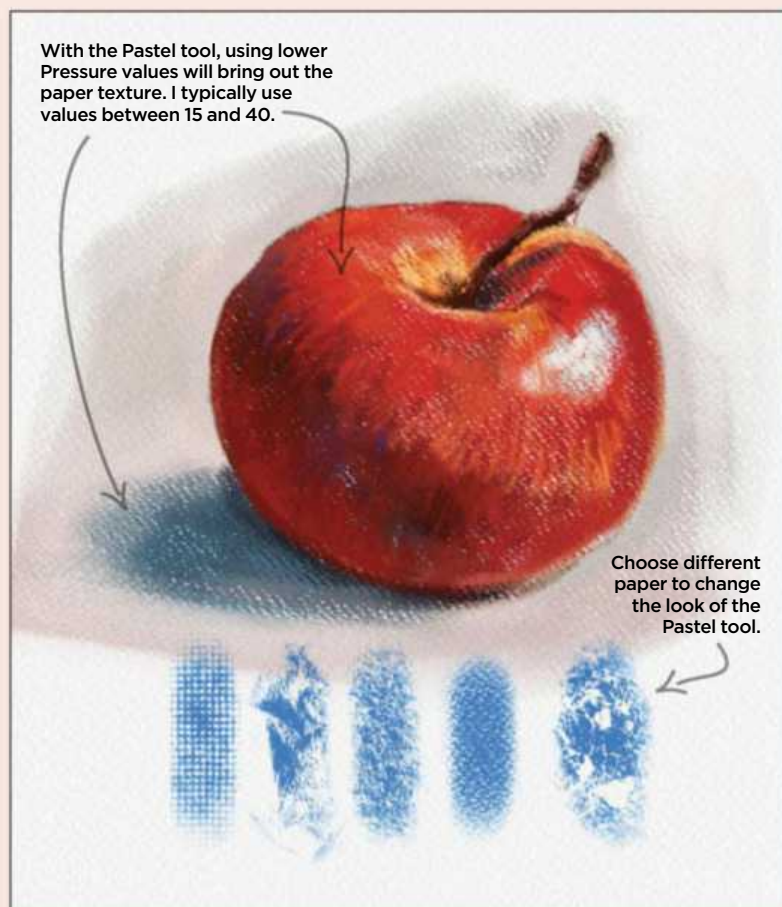
PRO SECRETS

Combine tools

Rather than using tools as standalone steps in your painting process, why not experiment by combining them for more interesting results? For example, I love to put together watercolour strokes with thin, sharp and sketchy lines drawn with the Pencil, and the fuzzy lines of the Ink Pen.

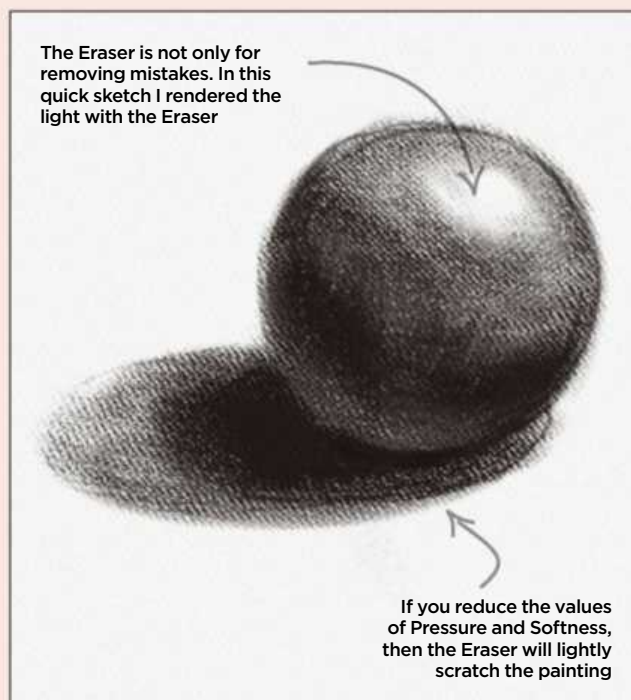
3 Using the Pen and Pencil tools on a wet canvas

The Pencil tool doesn't have a Water parameter, but you can use the Wet tool to dampen your artwork and produce an effect close to watercolour pencils. The Pencil also dries a wet surface and can stop or slow down the spreading of colours through the canvas, which can be used in a creative way. The Pen simulates drawing with ink pen, and it dries faster than the Watercolor brush, even if you draw on a wet surface.



4 Quickly fill up the canvas with the Airbrush

For one reason or another, I never used to work with the Airbrush, but I've subsequently realised that it has its uses. This brush has the biggest size compared to the others, so it's great for quickly filling big surfaces. And if you don't like its basic texture, use your own to create interesting structures.



5 The Eraser isn't just for handling errors

The Eraser has some specific settings of its own. A lower Softness value leaves the paper texture more visible, while a higher value leaves erased parts cleaner. By default, the Eraser completely dries the erased area, but if you turn on 'Keep wet' then the tool cleans colours, the erased area retains its wetness and colour continues to flow.

Exclusive subscriber offer!

Receive a free copy of Rebelle when you subscribe! See page 38 for more details



SketchUp & Photoshop

USE SKETCHUP TO BUILD A CASTLE

Donglu Yu shares her process for quickly developing an eye-catching 3D base in SketchUp, before taking the artwork to finish in Photoshop



Artist PROFILE

Donglu Yu

LOCATION: Canada

Donglu is working at WB Games Montréal as the lead concept artist on a secret AAA project.
<http://ifxm.ag/donglu-l>



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!



I've used a range of techniques for my digital paintings. However, it's always a challenge to pick the

best angle for a complex scene by starting off with black and white sketches. Moreover, I'm not a fast modeller, and attempting to make a 3D base has always slowed me down.

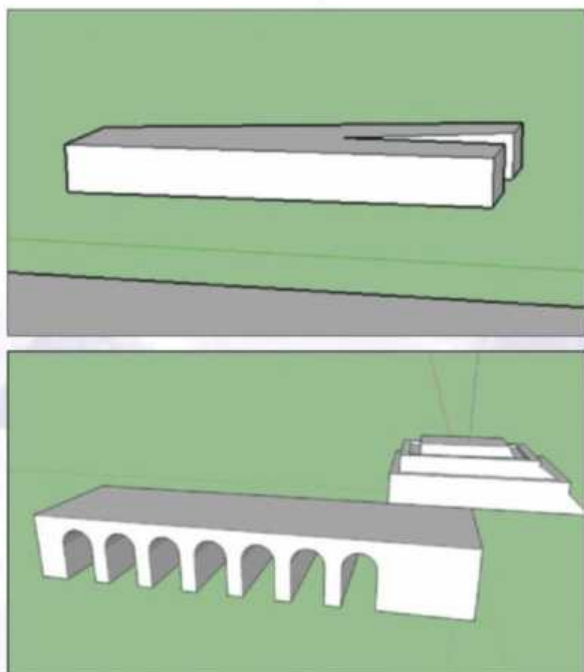
Two years ago, I started to experiment with SketchUp. I was surprised at its simplicity and how easy it was to learn. In this workshop,

I'll explain the main functions I use in SketchUp to speed up the painting process that later takes place, and how to understand a complex scene from every possible camera angle.

Another great advantage of the software is that it's completely free to use. And you can download it easily no matter which studio employs you. If you're a 3ds Max user and your studio is offering Maya to its employees, it would be very hard to convince the producer to buy another software licence just for you. With

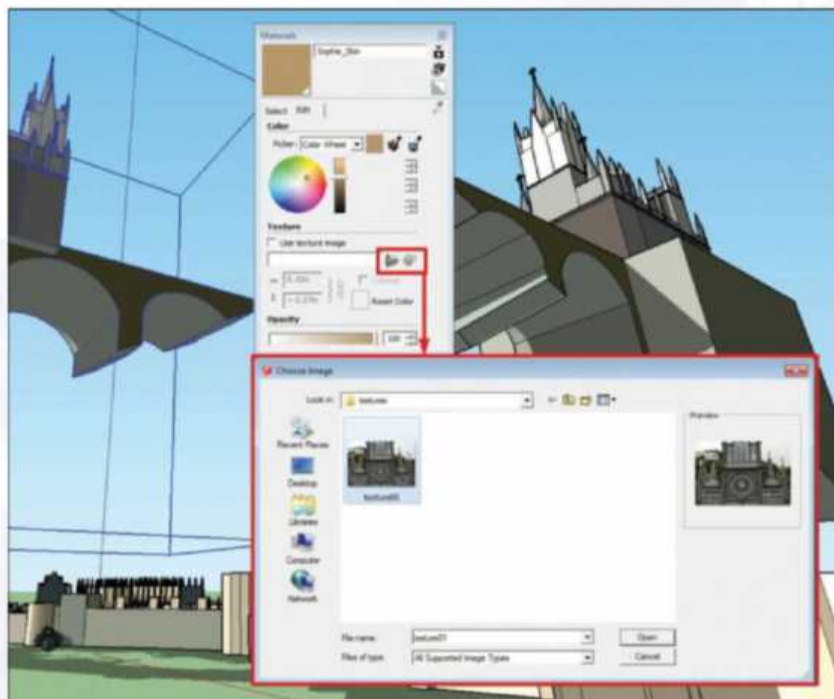
SketchUp, you're no longer bound with licence-purchasing issues.

In the second part of the workshop, I'll take the basic passes I get from SketchUp and bring them into Photoshop to start the painting process. I'll also explain a few important digital painting notions along the way, such as value structure, applying textured brushstrokes, adjusting colour temperature, painting over photo textures, adding character for scale and so on. So, let's get started! ➡



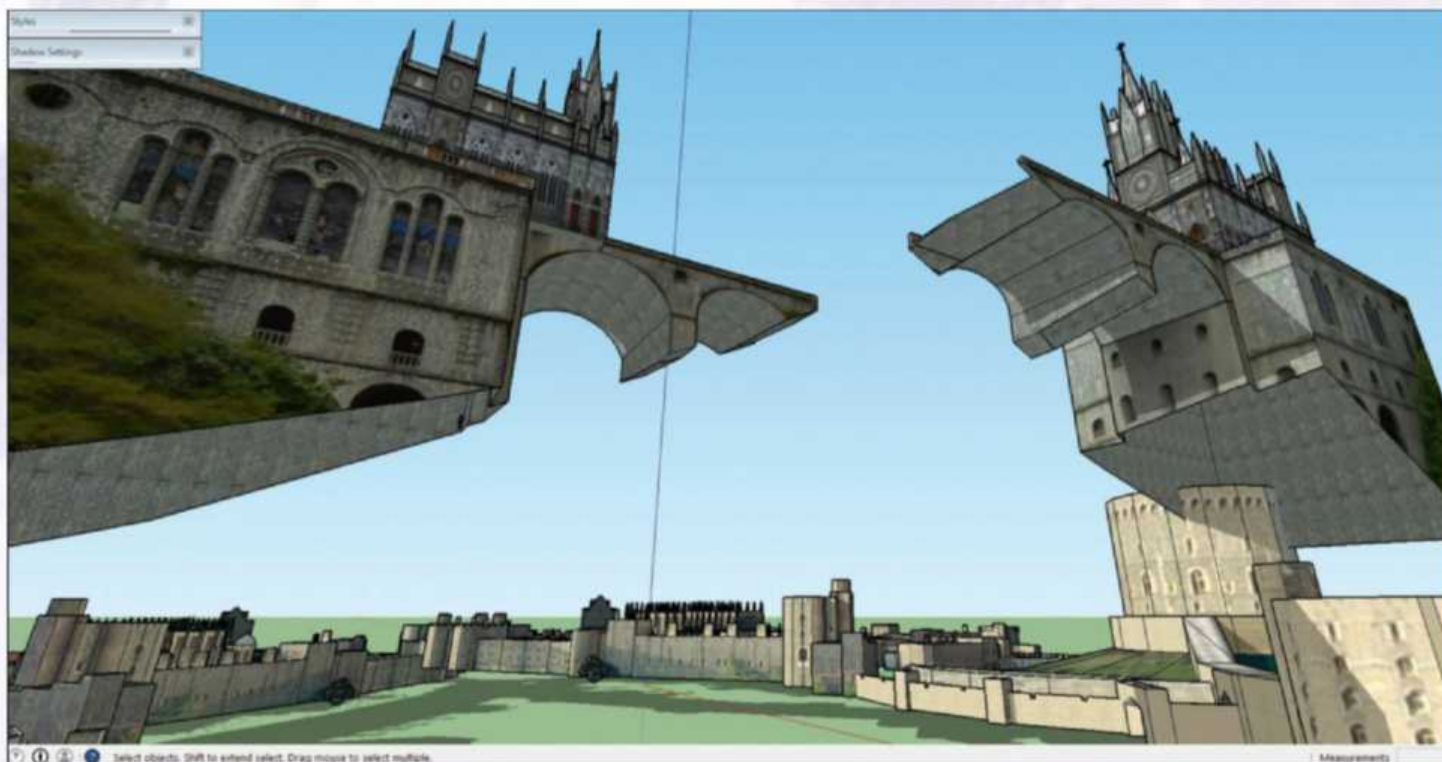
1 Make use of SketchUp's core tools

My goal with this software isn't to master it completely, but rather to concentrate my energy on getting to grips with the essential tools that I need to accomplish the modelling process quickly and effectively. The tools I use the most are the Line, Arcs and Rectangle tools, the Push/Pull and Offset tools and also the manipulation tools, such as Move, Rotate and Scale.



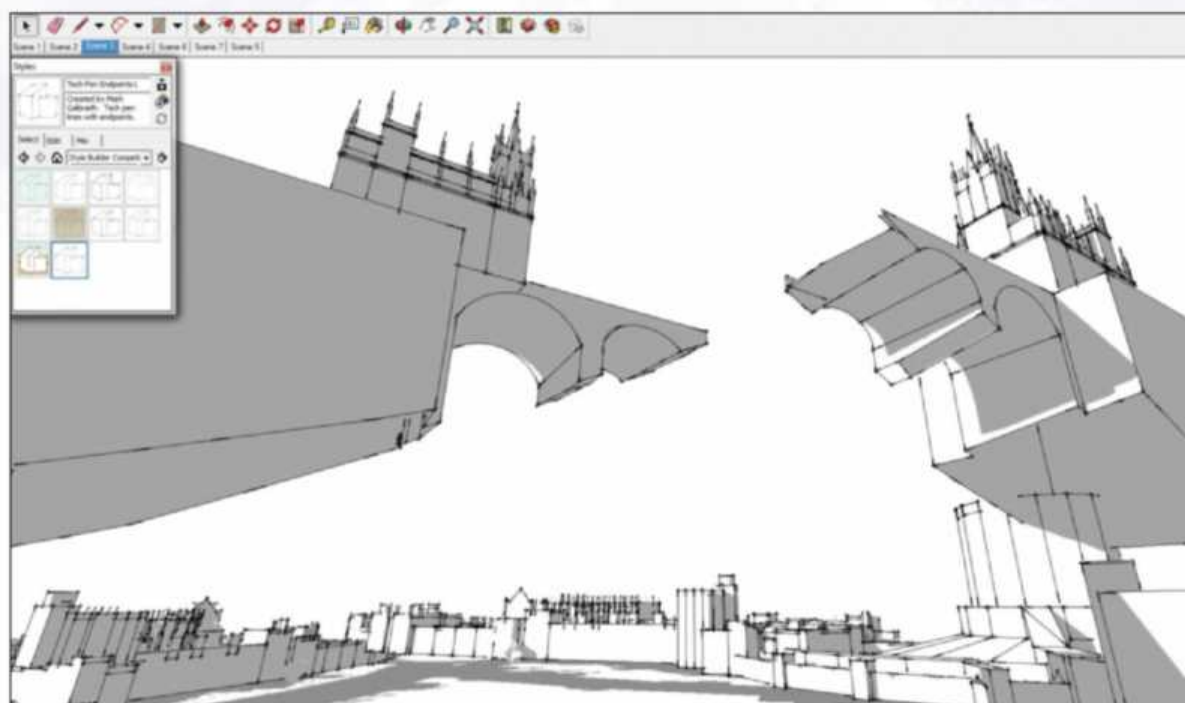
2 Add recognisable architecture

To speed up the modelling process, I use real-world architecture references to help me place the windows, arches and towers. I crop some photos that I took at Las Lajas Sanctuary, in the Columbian city of Ipiales. To apply the textures, I click the object faces, then select the small folder icon within the Material panel to browse to the texture I want to use. Placing this rough texture pass on the basic 3D volumes helps me decide when I'm ready to continue with a more detailed modelling pass.



3 Modelling a simple base

Here's the model I'm making in SketchUp. As you can see, this isn't a fully completely 3D scene. Some structures are floating in the air, and the edges can be worked on a little bit more. But this is more than what I need as the base of my painting. Don't fall into the trap of making everything perfect in 3D. We're making concept art here, not a 3D final product.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: LARGE TEXTURED BRUSH

I use this for painting large spaces, such as the sky and the ground, to add some textures.

HARD TRIANGLE BRUSH

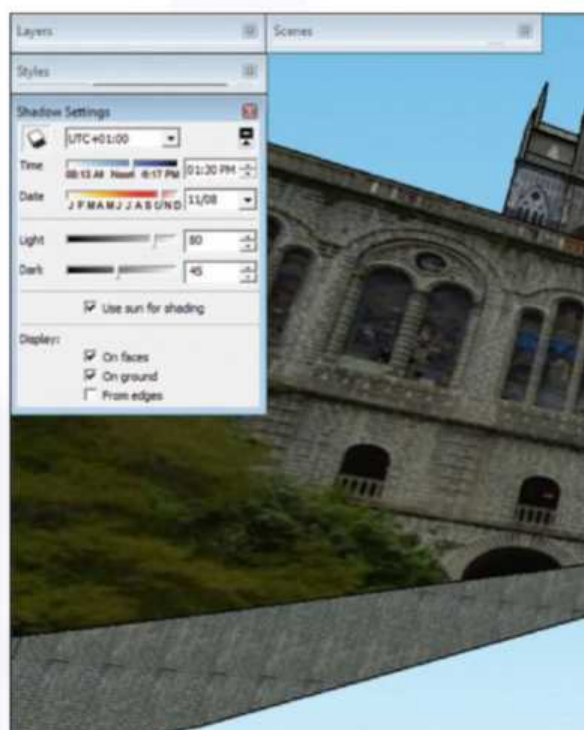
This brush is ideal for painting opaque and sharp edges, resulting in clean silhouettes.

VEGETATION BRUSH

I use this for painting the vegetation. It can create a nice framing device for my paintings, too.

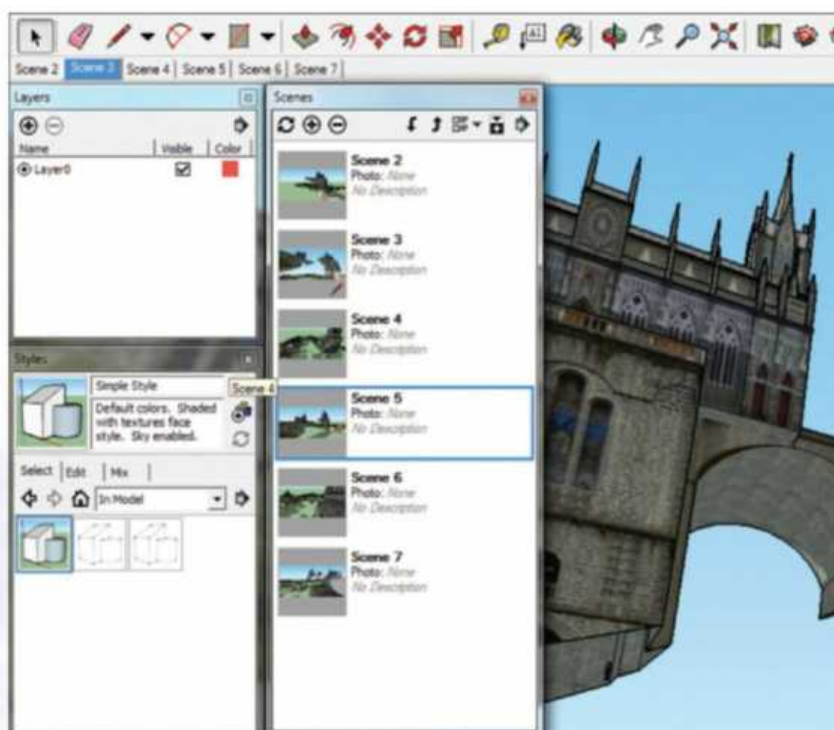
4 Use SketchUp's various Styles mode

Styles dictates how your model will be displayed in SketchUp, a bit like the filter effects on images in Photoshop, if I have to make a comparison. You can view the model as line art, brush work, simple textures and so on. For my painting base, I need two Styles: line art style and the simple style. I'll use them as passes to guide my painting process.



5 Enhancing the shadows

Shadow is a powerful tool to create interesting compositions. In my previous approach to thumbnail studies, it was always a challenge to imagine the lighting scenarios. However, it becomes simple with the Shadow setting in SketchUp, which enables you to pick a specific time zone, date and time of the day, to see the effect of the shadow and light on your model.



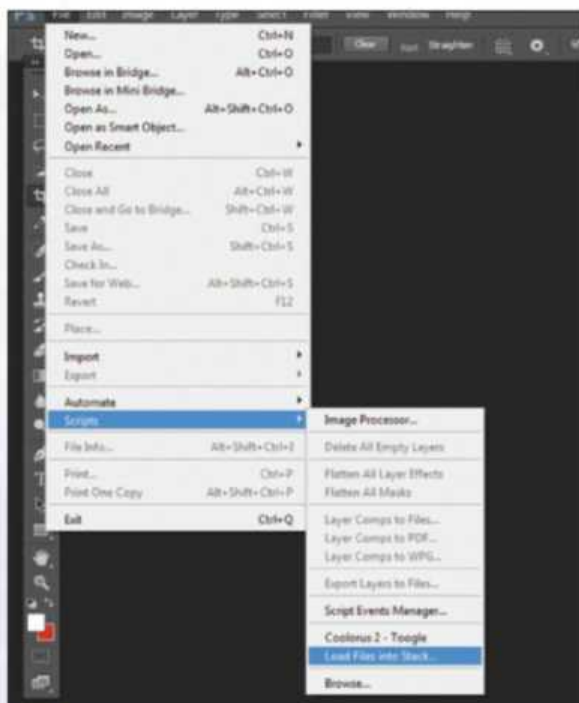
6 SketchUp's Scene Management tool

This is where I save the different camera angles that I'm happy with. Being able to examine your scene from 360 degrees is probably one of the biggest advantages of having a 3D base, compared to traditional thumbnail sketching. Not only you can rotate your camera freely, you can also easily adjust the field of view. This makes it possible to use a wide lens and telescopic lens. In the Scene Management window, you can click the different thumbnails to switch between the saved camera angles and to pick the best option for the painting. ➡

PRO SECRETS

Make use of the Navigator

I love to keep my Navigator window open, because it provides me the visual of my painting in a thumbnail size. It tells me if the changes I'm painting are effective. Otherwise, I'd have to constantly zoom in and out of my canvas to check if my painting is still solid in terms of composition and value structure. Keeping the big picture in mind prevents you from getting bogged down in the details too early on.



7 Moving into Photoshop

Now after all the hard work I've done in SketchUp, I'm bringing the passes that I need into Photoshop. Just in case there are many passes to be imported, you don't need to open each of them and drag them one by one into the painting window. Photoshop has a great function for this: simply go to File>Script>Load Files into Stack...



8 Spreading colours

It's important to let the 3D passes work as a guide for you, without allowing them to limit your creation process. I reduce the simple texture layer's Opacity and create a new layer on top of it. I then use my textured brush to spread colours freely on the canvas. As you can see, I don't even let the colours on the basic texture layer dictate my palette. I'm using a light purple/blue tone to bring up the colour vibrancy in the painting.



9 Overlaying the 3D layer

At some point during this freestyle painting process, I realise I need my 3D base back to give me more guidelines for the architectural structures. So I duplicate my simple texture layer and overlay it on top of my painting. I adjust the Opacity of the layer, to blend it with my image.



10 Value adjustment and adding depth to the scene

I take a step back from the painting and analyse my value structure. I plan to do a backlit lighting scenario, so I brighten the sky to pop out the castles' silhouette. I also apply a fog layer at ground level, which gives the foreground more breathing space and the image greater depth.



11 Bringing in photo textures

I apply photos to the top of the painting to add more details to the main castle structures. Here are some cathedral photos that I took during my trip to Mexico; the architectural details are ideal for the upper part of the castles. I cut out the parts that I need and use the Transform tools to distort the perspective so they fit nicely with my painting.



12 Painting over the photos

I'm being careful with this photo integration part, because I don't want it to destroy the nice brush feel that I've developed so far. I use a small textured brush to continuously paint on top of the photos so they can blend better with the rest of the painting. During my career I've developed my own process for this stage: photo-bashing, painting on top of the photos and erasing part of the photos. I repeat this cycle for as long as it's needed.

PRO SECRETS

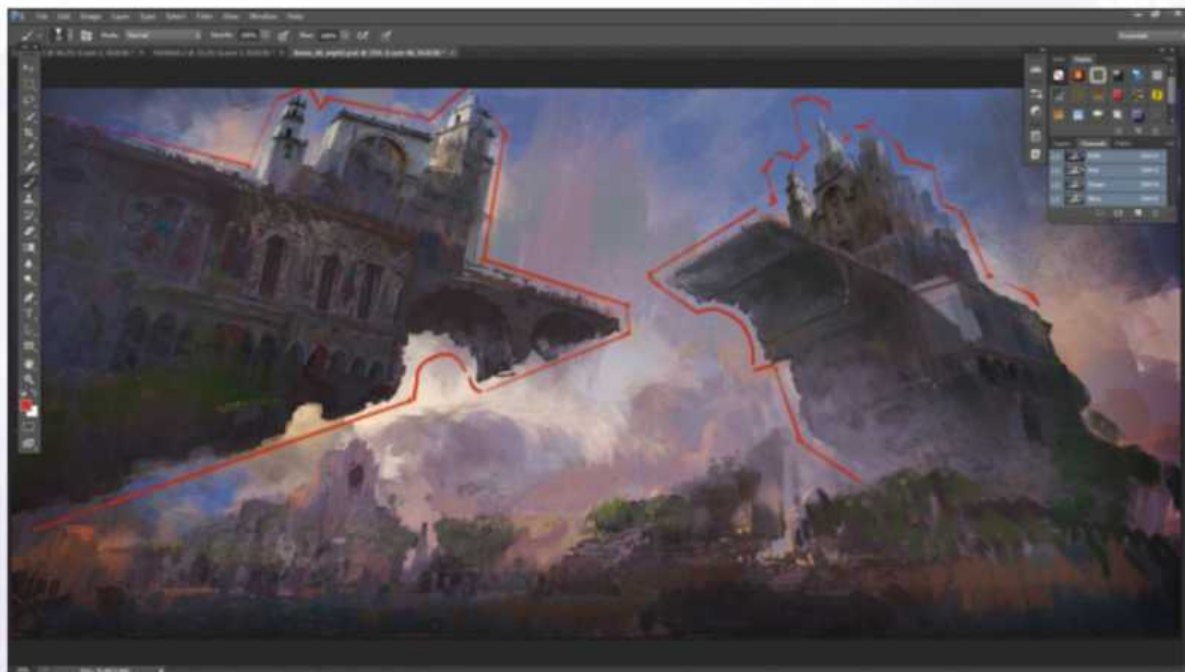
Don't jump into detailing

Many students show me their art and when I ask how long they've worked on it, their answers vary from 40 to 60 hours. Yet the art isn't up to the quality you'd expect from that length of time. That's usually because they spent hours polishing details, without getting the composition and value structure of the lighting right. Always look at the effectiveness of the big picture first, and worry about details later. Quality doesn't equate to the level of detailing. It depends on your understanding of the whole image.

PRO SECRETS

Relax during the 3D stage

The purpose of the 3D base is mainly to give you a thorough understanding of the 3D volumes, along with the chance to explore all the possible camera angles. There's no need to be overly accurate with the modelling and the texturing, because you're not producing a final 3D map. Any modifications you need to do can be easily and quickly handled in Photoshop later on.



13 Developing edge contrast

I love to keep the brush feel in my paintings, but how can I do it without the impression of losing details? The answer is edge contrast. Every important form, object and character in my art needs a clean silhouette. The silhouette can be painted with textured brushes, but its value needs to maintain certain contrast levels with its surrounding values. This ensures the viewer can distinguish the forms without being distracted by the brushstrokes.



14 Adding life and hinting at a story

We are almost finished. At this stage, I love to add some characters to show the scale of the scene and hint some vague storyline at the same time. I add a dragon to further enhance the fantasy theme of the painting. I also add some birds in the sky – an old but effective trick to bring in some life in large-scale compositions.



15 Final adjustments

I always finish my painting with a few adjustment layers, to tweak the contrast, colour temperature and brightness of the scene. I also like to apply a subtle chromatic aberration in the image (simply to go Filter> Lens Correction...> Custom, and play with the Chromatic Aberration sliders). I click OK once I'm happy with the result. I hope you have enjoyed this article and have learnt a few tricks to speed up your workflow!

Next month

Fresh new skills!
Jana Schirmer tells us
her art secrets using
Procreate!

Next month in...
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one cinematic shot,
with Pascal Campion.

Future of art?

We speak with the
artists creating
brilliant new worlds
in virtual reality.

Studio space

Rodney Matthews
reveals the space
where he creates
his iconic art.

ISSUE 148 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 21 April*





Photoshop

CONTROL YOUR VALUES & COLOURS

Craig Spearing takes a slower approach, building a greyscale foundation before taking his adventurer and her pet into a frozen environment

Artist PROFILE

Craig Spearing
LOCATION: US

Craig graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1992 and illustrated children's books before moving into gaming art. His clients include WotC, Paizo and Mage Wars. www.craigspearing.com



Jumping directly into a full colour piece can be daunting, especially for a beginner. Colours can become muddy, values can get lost, and the whole painting can turn into a confusing, frustrating mess very quickly. Slowing down, taking it step by step, and preparing for colour methodically will result in a better realised finish.

One of the most effective ways to control the value and colour is to start with a grisaille (monochrome or

greyscale painting). A fully rendered greyscale foundation helps establish the direction of the light source(s), placement of lighter and darker values, highlights and shadow cores, leading to a value map that will make the final image more dynamic. Using selections and photo filters on the greyscale offers infinite possibilities to add base colour without altering the values, similar to applying transparent oil or acrylic glazes.

Once the desired overall palette is achieved, flattening the image and doing final brush work on one layer

leads to looser edges (and happy accidents). This technique works equally well in traditional and digital mediums, making the transition from sketch to finish much easier.

I tend to carry my traditional background into digital, avoiding stamp brushes or dozens of effect layers. Nothing wrong with those; I just prefer a more hands-on approach emulating actual paint. For the most part I work with one brush on just one or two layers, reserving Color Dodge and Screen layers for magical or flame effects at the very end.



1 Lay down a contour drawing

On a transparent layer over a white background layer, I use a basic Round brush to do the contour drawing. The brush is black, set to about 20 per cent Opacity. This looks a lot like pencil, and keeping it light and transparent will prevent it from becoming too dark over the next steps.



2 Overall value blocking

Next I fill the background with 50 per cent grey, and block in the initial values. I keep it loose at this stage, not getting into too much detail, thinking about the direction of the light sources. The primary light source is coming from the left, and the secondary source is from her staff (because I love rim light). ➡



3 Go directly to the subject

I stamp the visible layers into one greyscale layer (Cmd+Shift+Alt+E), and start to define the shapes and values. At the beginning I go directly to the subject of the image first; all other elements need to support her visually. Once she's locked in, I save a selection around her to prevent painting over the character.



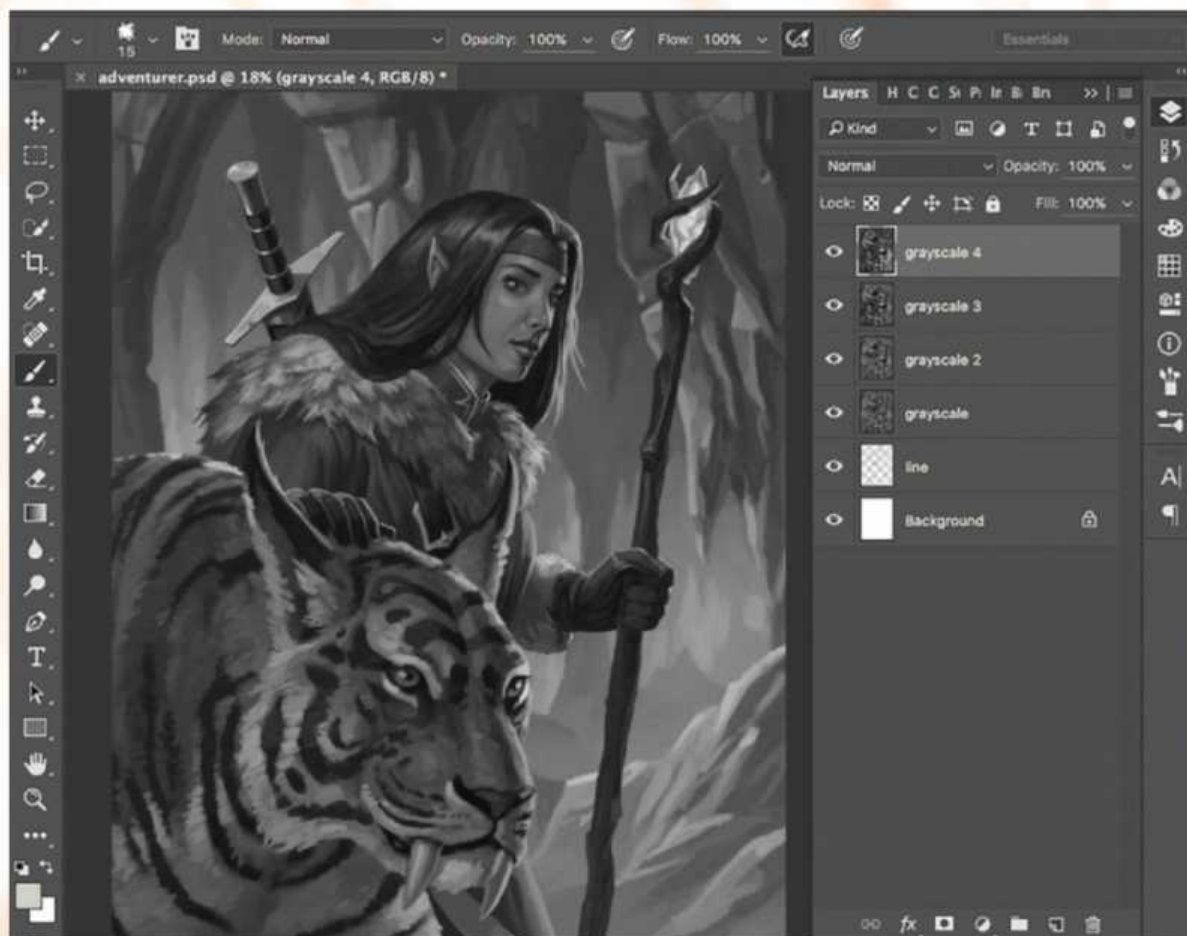
4 Supporting cast

On to her cat. Looking at numerous reference photos (always use reference), I define the greyscale on her pet. It's a hybrid between a tiger, a lynx and a saber-toothed tiger – a fantasy creature, but with a real-world vibe. The edges are too sharp, but at this point I'm focused on value relationships. More on softening edges later.

PRO SECRETS

Opening up your edges

When a very bright light source hits an object, our eyes perceive edges in a different way than a dimmer light source. The midtone colour becomes more saturated, and the highlight grows brighter as the light ricochets off the surface. To achieve this, use a soft brush and the midtone colour, at about 30 per cent Opacity, with the brush in Lighten mode. Run the brush along the highlight to open the edge.



5 Background and finishing greyscale

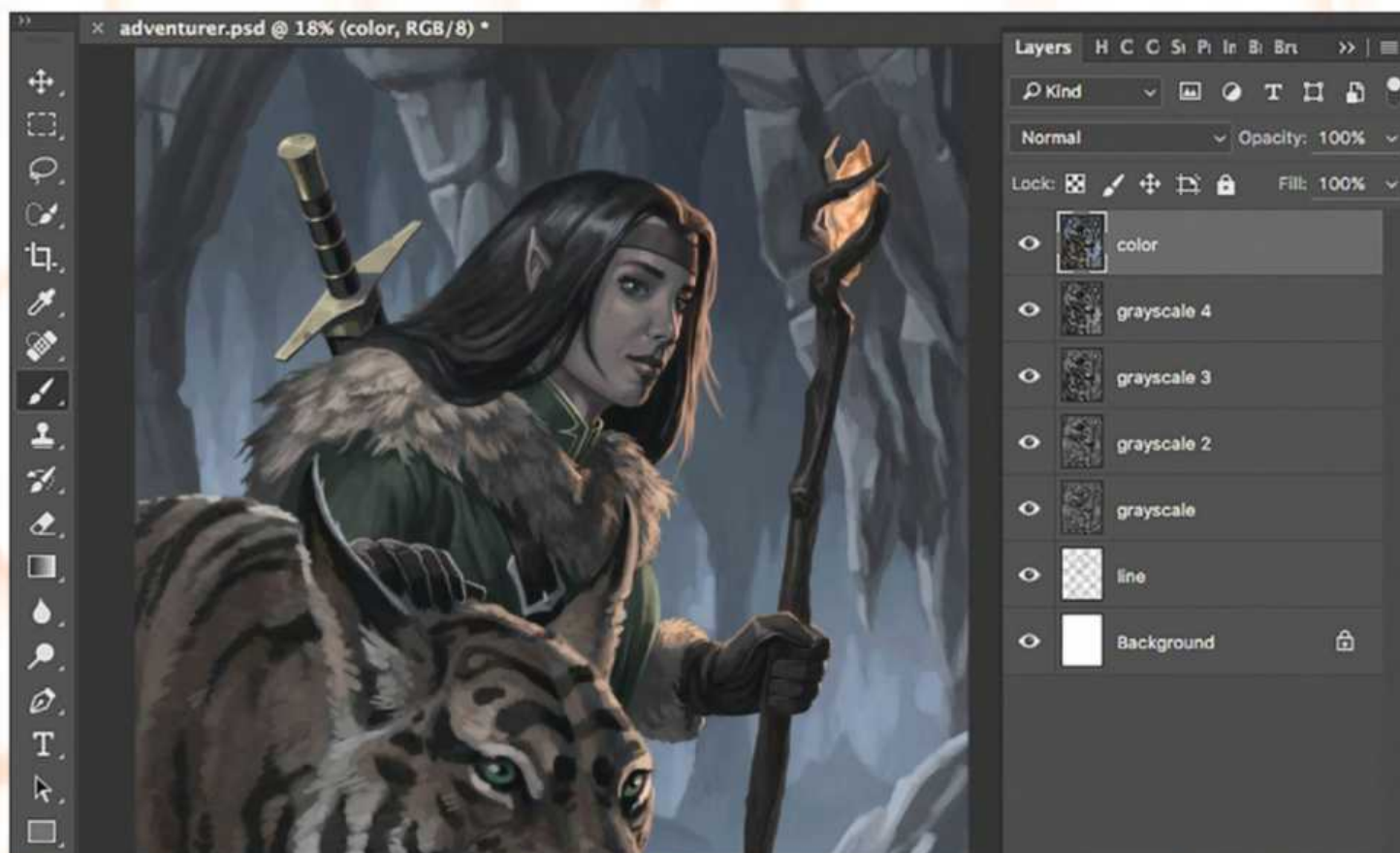
Next comes working the background details to establish an overall value map, making sure to have lots of counter changes – light on dark, dark on light – to move the eye around. I tend to make the final greyscale a little dark, because it usually lightens during the colour process and I don't want it to become too chalky.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: THE GO-TO BRUSH

From Kekai Kotaki's brush set. I use it for almost everything.



6 Finding a base palette

Using Image>Adjustments>Photo Filter (and making sure to click the option to Preserve Luminosity), I add a 5 per cent cooling filter to the grayscale. This sets a cold tone, and will affect all the colours that may be added afterwards. Then I duplicate the layer and add a 5 per cent warming filter to the bottom layer. Erasing out portions of the top layer then brings out the warm, much like painting a glaze.



7 Refining the palette

Using the same two-layer erase technique, I slowly amp up the colour, adding varying warm and cool hues until the image looks balanced. It's easy to oversaturate at this point, so I avoid going over about 10 per cent on the colour fills. It also helps for pre-saved selections, to add colour exclusively to one area.



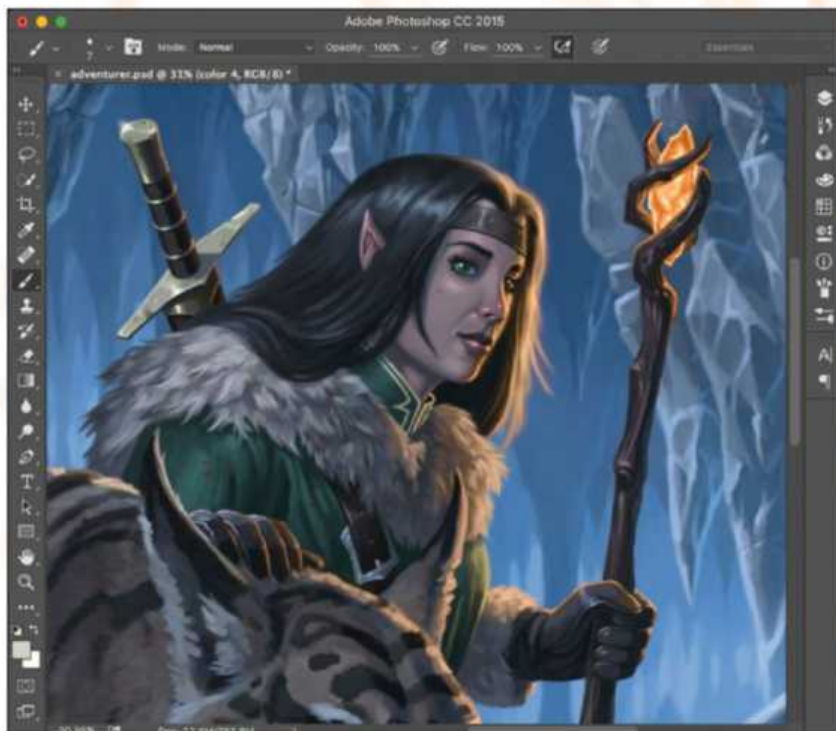
8 Finishing the background

I stamp the visible colour layers into one (Cmd+Shift+Alt+E) and start the final render on the background. It works just as well to start on the foreground, but I find it's easier to soften or harden edges over a finished background. To keep the palette intact, I Alt-click with the brush to pick colours from the image. ➡

PRO SECRETS

Softening textures

Think of hair and fur as having shape and mass, not just as individual strands. Painting every strand separately can lead to a sharp vibrating look, like the hair is wet or frozen. After painting hair or fur, select the area and soften it (Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise). This can also be done with a Soft brush, going over the strands and slightly blurring any sharp edges.



9 Final adventurer render...

Continuing the colour pick method, I finish the adventurer. For facial features in particular, using a soft-edge brush set to 50 per cent Opacity helps to smooth the transitions between the midtones and the shadow core. I double-check the values by converting the colour to greyscale, to ensure areas lit by the staff are brighter.



10 ...and the final cat render

Making my adventurer's coat green was intentional, because I wanted the warm colour of the cat to contrast but not be as warm as the staff light. I look at my big cat references again, for accurate fur direction. Side note: her hand is resting on his back as a sign of affection. He's a travelling companion, not a pack animal.



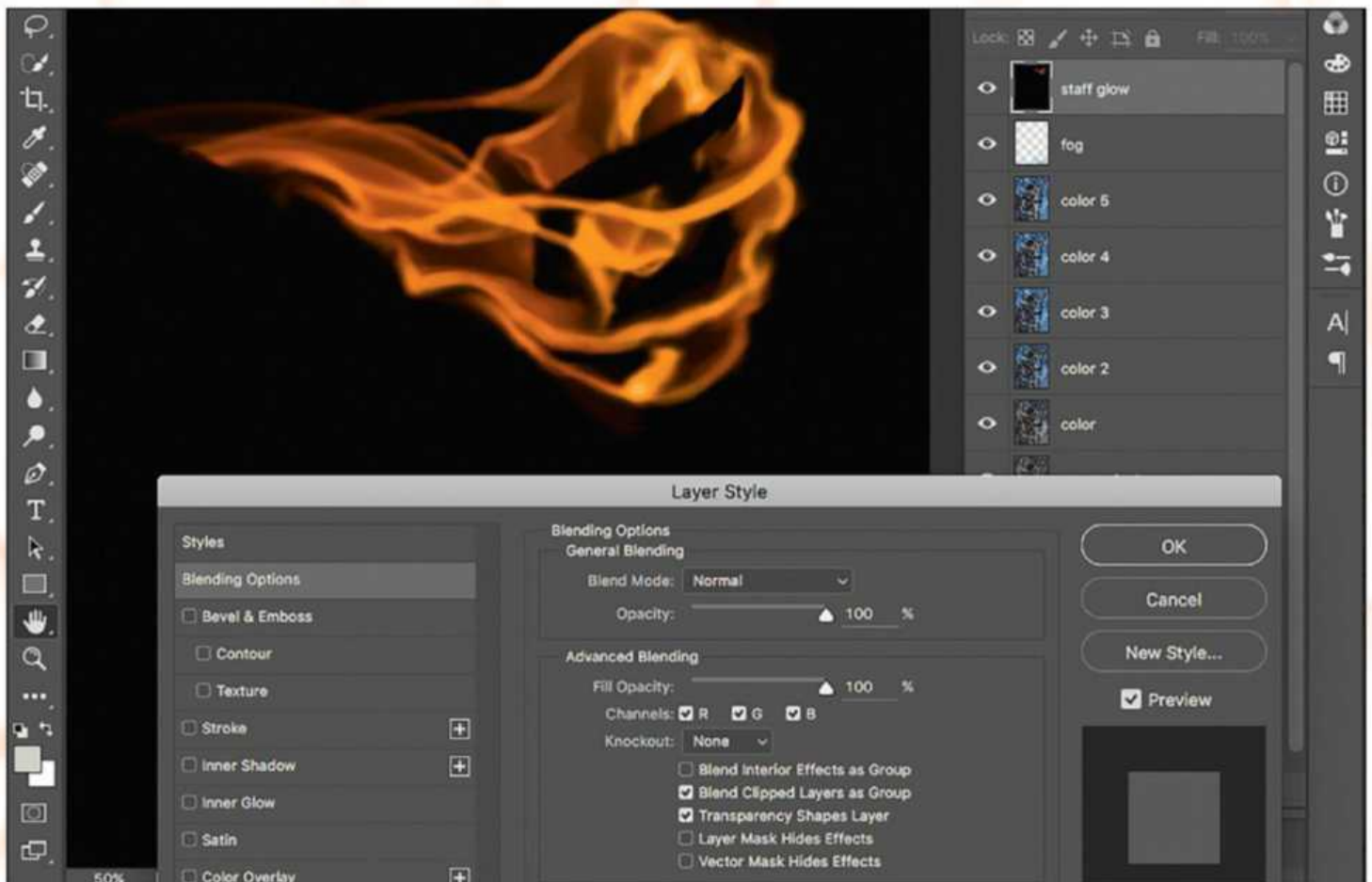
PRO SECRETS

Limit your colour palette

Pick an overall hue for a painting. This can be done with a filter or a brush set to Color mode. Mix a little of that hue in with all the other hues you paint with. This will set the tone for the palette. Use contrasting colour sparingly, saving saturated colour for focal points. Most printers have a gamut range. Routinely convert your image to CMYK to ensure that it stays within that range.

11 Adding atmosphere to the environment

On a new transparent layer I use the Gradient tool, in Normal mode, set to about 20 per cent Opacity, with a light blue colour picked from the image. Dragging up from the bottom edge, this creates some atmospheric fog, emphasising the icy feel. Selecting just the background, I drag another gradient to lighten the bottom a little more behind the figures.



12 Making the staff glow

On an opaque layer filled with 100 per cent black, I use Flame Painter (<http://ifxm.ag/flame-p>) to create glow for the staff, and the Smudge tool to soften the edges. Double-clicking the layer brings up blending options, and I set the blend mode to Screen, making the glow transparent. This is an easy way to make transparencies on an editable opaque layer.



13 Create a glow with Color Dodge

To brighten the glow, I duplicate the Staff Glow Screen layer and slide it under the previous layer, set its blend mode to Color Dodge and reduce Opacity to 50 per cent. This takes just the brightest values and burns out the background colour, giving the glow more of an inner light.



14 Apply finishing touches with fresh eyes

After sleeping on it, I go back the next day with fresh eyes and add a few finishing touches – whiskers on the cat, metal highlights, softening or hardening relative edges. This is a dangerous time, when an image can get overworked, so once it has a polished look (without zooming in) I call it done.



SketchUp Pro & Fusion 360

BUILD A SPY DRONE IN FUSION 360

Artist PROFILE

**Jort van
Welbergen**

LOCATION: Italy

A Dutch freelance concept artist, currently living in Rome, Jort specialises in hard surface and environment design with a strong preference for realism and believability.
<http://ifxm.ag/jortvanw>



Jort van Welbergen uses Fusion 360 to concept a drone, then gives tips on getting the most from the free software

Fusion 360 is relatively new, really exciting and – most surprising of all – free CAD modelling software, which has gained a lot of interest from the entertainment industry. you can get it from <http://ifxm.ag/f-360>.

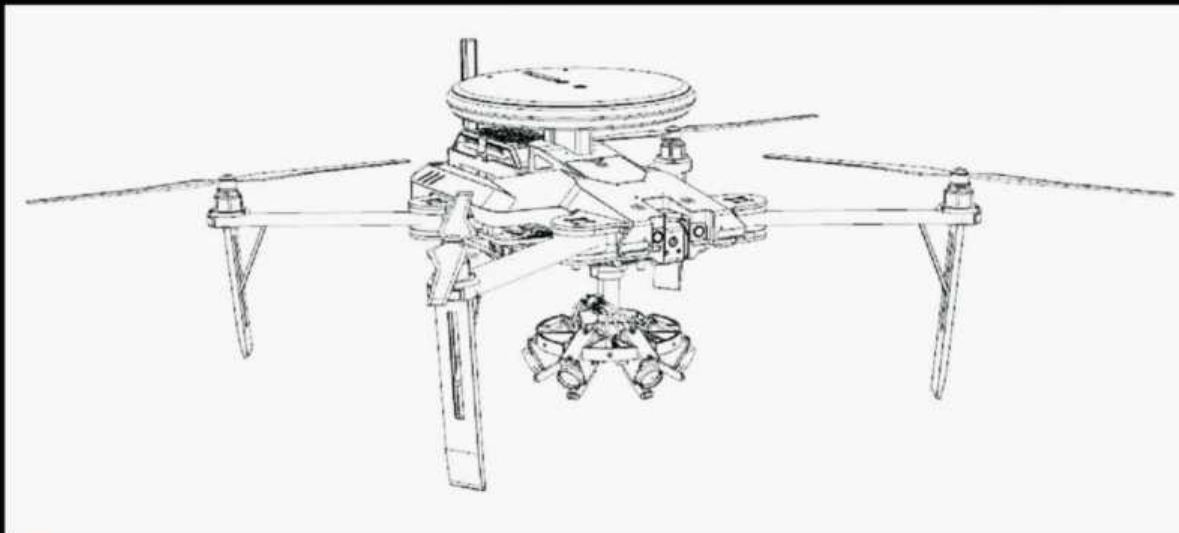
CAD software is used to design machine parts; it's Boolean based and uses methods that are quite different from polygonal modelling

software such as Maya or 3ds Max. It also directly interacts with both CNC milling and 3D printing machines, which enables rapid prototyping of whatever objects you want to model.

This makes it very interesting for the film industry for instance, where concept models can be printed on set and be used the next day. It also means that mechanical parts are far easier not just to make, but also to run multiple stress tests on.

In this workshop I'll show you the process that I used daily to make the props and even vehicles of the space simulation video game Star Citizen. I'll show how I solve realistic problems using this new software, and how I take a concept from a quick sketch to a fully working, realistic end product.

I hope I can get you excited to try it out for yourself and see what type of creations you can come up with!



PRO SECRETS

Navigation tricks

Navigation in new software can be initially frustrating. Fusion 360 works with the middle mouse button mostly. Hold it down to pan. Hold Shift and the middle mouse button to rotate. Hold Ctrl, Shift and the middle mouse button to zoom. Hold Shift and click the middle mouse button to set the camera orbit point.

1 Doing research and where to look

Every design starts with a brief. For this ImagineFX design I wanted to create a realistic reconnaissance drone, used by a fictional private defence force. It has to be portable, easy to repair and operate, and consist of high-end modular parts. Most of all, I want to make it feel as if it could be built straightaway by a film studio workshop.

Getting reference is crucial, but obtaining the right reference is even more important. As a concept artist it's your job to provide new and original ideas. Therefore, you should research as much as possible on everything related to what you're designing. Make sure to watch videos of things being taken apart, for instance, to gain a better understanding of whatever you're trying to create. ➡



2 Sketches and iteration

Fusion 360 is precise and accurate, but for the early sketching stage I prefer to use SketchUp Pro. I mainly work in cylinders and boxes and try not only to arrange them in a visually pleasing way, but also take into account how a device will be used – how would it be assembled, how would it fly, how would it land, and so on.



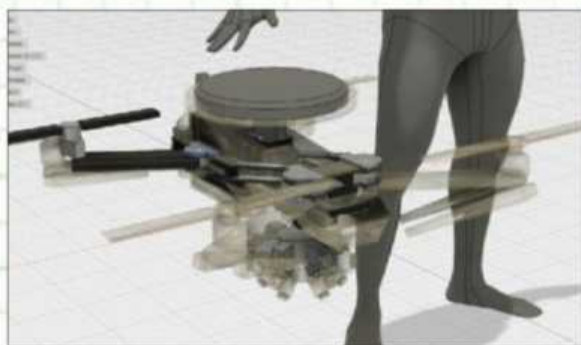
3 Import into Fusion 360

I upload my chosen blockout into the cloud of Fusion 360, so I can bring it in and start modelling on top of it. I also bring in a scale model, so I can easily see if, for instance, the buttons and bolts are the correct size. I tend to create a new project for every new design, so I can easily find all the parts without being distracted.

PRO SECRETS

Modelling tips

The Model tab creates standard solid Boolean objects. The Path tab enables you to create sub-division surfaces, modify them and weld these together to make solid objects. The Sculpt tab makes it possible to create soft body shapes that can be turned into solids. Try combining all three to create fantastic and creative designs.



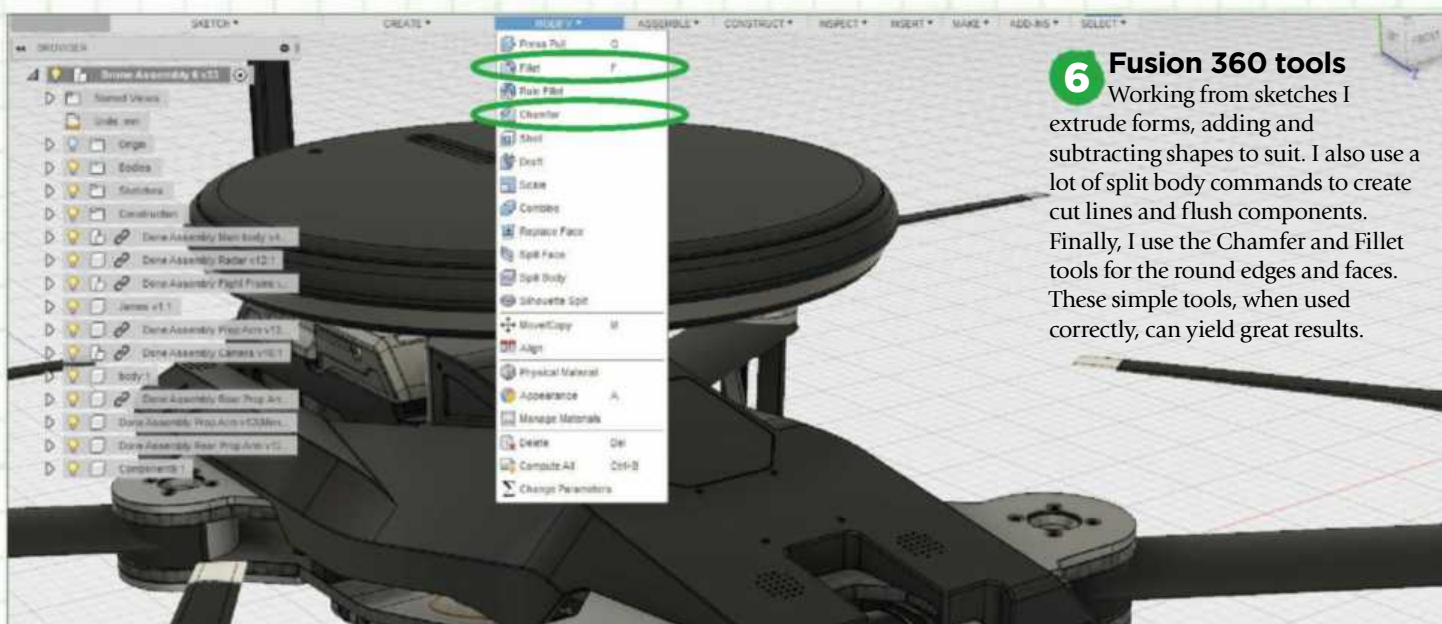
4 Block out in Fusion 360

I tend to remodel everything in Fusion 360 using boxes and cylinders. I start by copying my initial blockout but quickly separate the parts of my drone. From research I know I need components such as a battery, computer and motors. Here I used a two-part frame: a flight frame of carbon and a component frame out of 3D printed plastic.



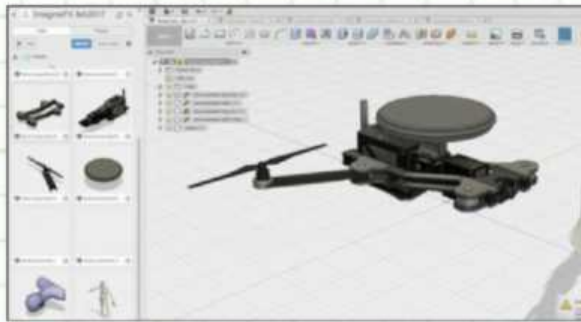
5 Fusion 360 workflows

My main workflow is working from sketches and with the timeline, which is the default. This enables you to reuse and adjust the steps you take. I use the Sculpting workflow for organic shapes such as the props, which is a form of Sub-D (sub-division) modelling. I try to use patterns a lot and will keep working in one component for as long as I can to keep things organised early on.



6 Fusion 360 tools

Working from sketches I extrude forms, adding and subtracting shapes to suit. I also use a lot of split body commands to create cut lines and flush components. Finally, I use the Chamfer and Fillet tools for the round edges and faces. These simple tools, when used correctly, can yield great results.



7 Finishing the blackout

Once I've blocked out all my main shapes and a mocked-up body that will serve as a guideline, I split up my main components so I can start detailing them out individually. This is especially useful for parts that I'll reuse, such as the propeller arms. Furthermore, as your models become more complex, Fusion 360 tends to get laggy. Splitting things up is the best way to deal with this.



8 The frame serves the features

The first thing I do when detailing is rework the frame. It's really only there to support the components that go into it. Make sure you don't have excess material, and try to use light reinforced structures wherever possible. Build the frame around the features and keep in mind where bolts and cables will be attached.



9 Keeping things organised

I've already mentioned that I split everything up into components. I then use a new main assembly where I bring these all together and update them every time I save a new version. This will enable me to look at the bigger picture. It's a bit confusing at first and not as fast as working in regular modelling software, but this is just the way Fusion 360 works.



10 Enhancing the bodywork

The body's main function is to protect vulnerable parts of the drone from the elements. I like to make it fit as tight as possible over the frame and parts while still maintaining an aerodynamic shape. Be sure to hollow it out too, and add a way to connect it physically to the frame. Intersecting geometry is physically not possible.



11 The smaller details

Every motor needs power, and every part needs to be attached to the frame in one way or another. I really like getting this deep into a design, although it's not always needed. I try to think about all my parts in a logical way, taking into account the effects of weight, material and force on the device. ➡

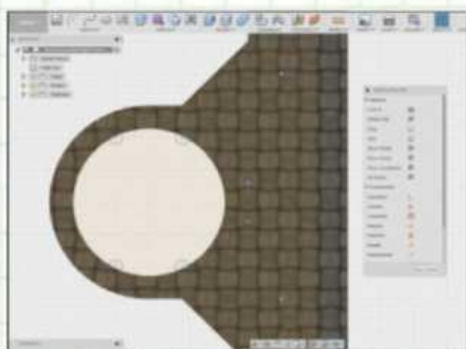
PRO SECRETS

Dynamic sketching

Sketches are dynamic in Fusion 360. This means that if you update a sketch that you used for an extrusion, the extrusion will update, too. If you gave that extrusion a pattern then everything will update. Working from sketches in this way will enable you to change features and implement feedback extremely quickly.

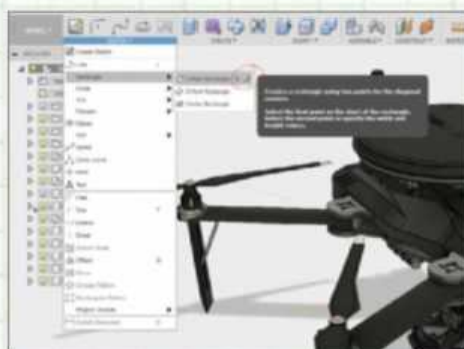
BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO USING FUSION 360

Want to try Fusion 360 out for yourself? **Jort van Welbergen** shares his enthusiasm for the software and some quick tips to get you started



1 WORK FROM SKETCHES

Draw the profiles you want to extrude in sketches in the top left corner. There are sketching tools for complex shapes such as centre slots and polygons. In Sketch mode, a toolbar appears that enables you to make lines perpendicular or parallel, for example.



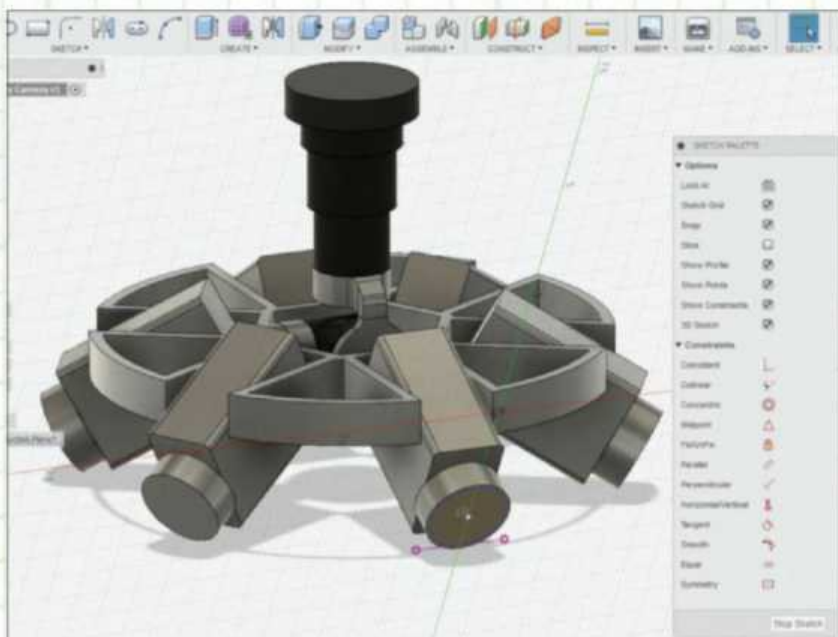
2 POPULATE YOUR TOOLBAR

It takes time to search through all the menus for your favourite tools. So hover over any tool in the menu until a small arrow appears. By clicking this arrow you can move the tool to the shelf above, so that it becomes easily accessible.



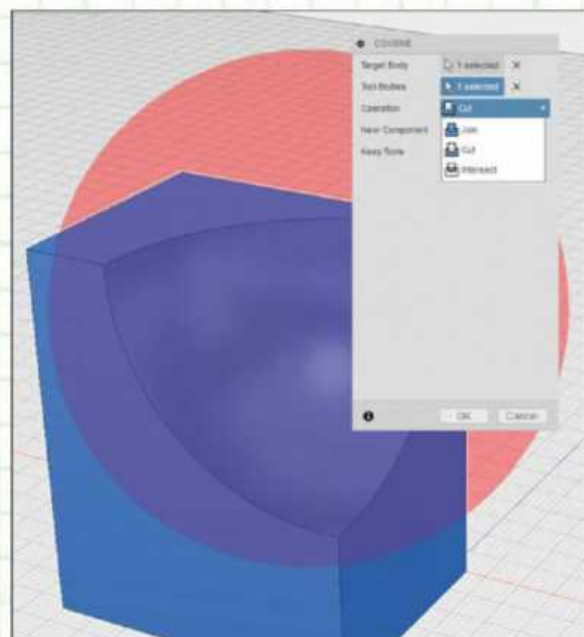
3 WORK IN REAL-SCALE

Always try to work in real scale or half scale. One thing CAD doesn't do well is scaling. You can save yourself a lot of trouble by working to true scale. There are plenty of free models online, and almost all of them will have been modelled this way.



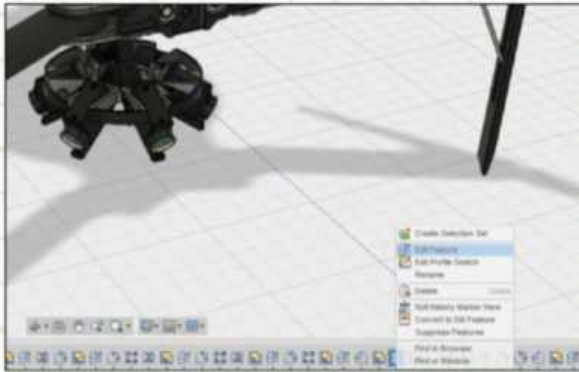
4 UNDERSTAND PATTERNS AND LINKED ACTIONS IN FUSION 360

By holding down either Ctrl or Cmd you can apply the action you've currently selected to other surfaces or edges. Try to group as many of these tools so they're quick to adjust later on if you have to. In addition, make use of patterns as much as possible. They'll greatly speed up your creative process.



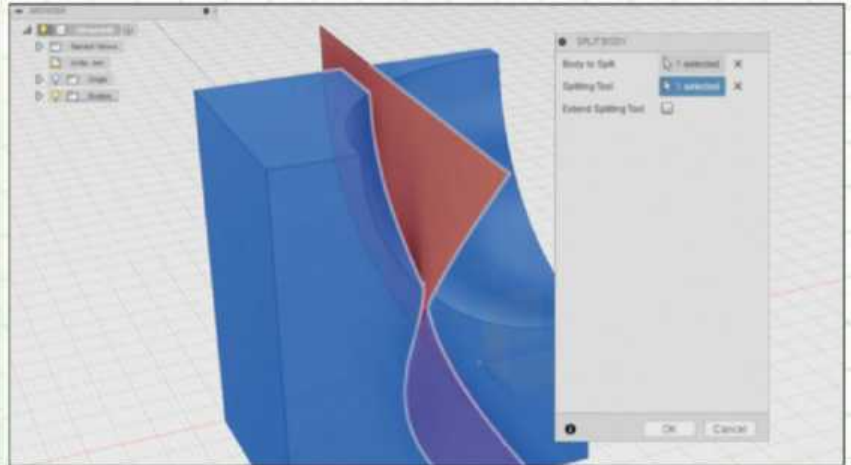
5 ADDING AND SUBTRACTING

This is what's more commonly known as Booleans and is the main power of CAD. Usually, you add or subtract from a profile sketch. You can also use the Modify> Combine tool that gives you options to add, subtract or intersect. In addition, make use of the Keep tools options. Booleans can also be combined with patterns.



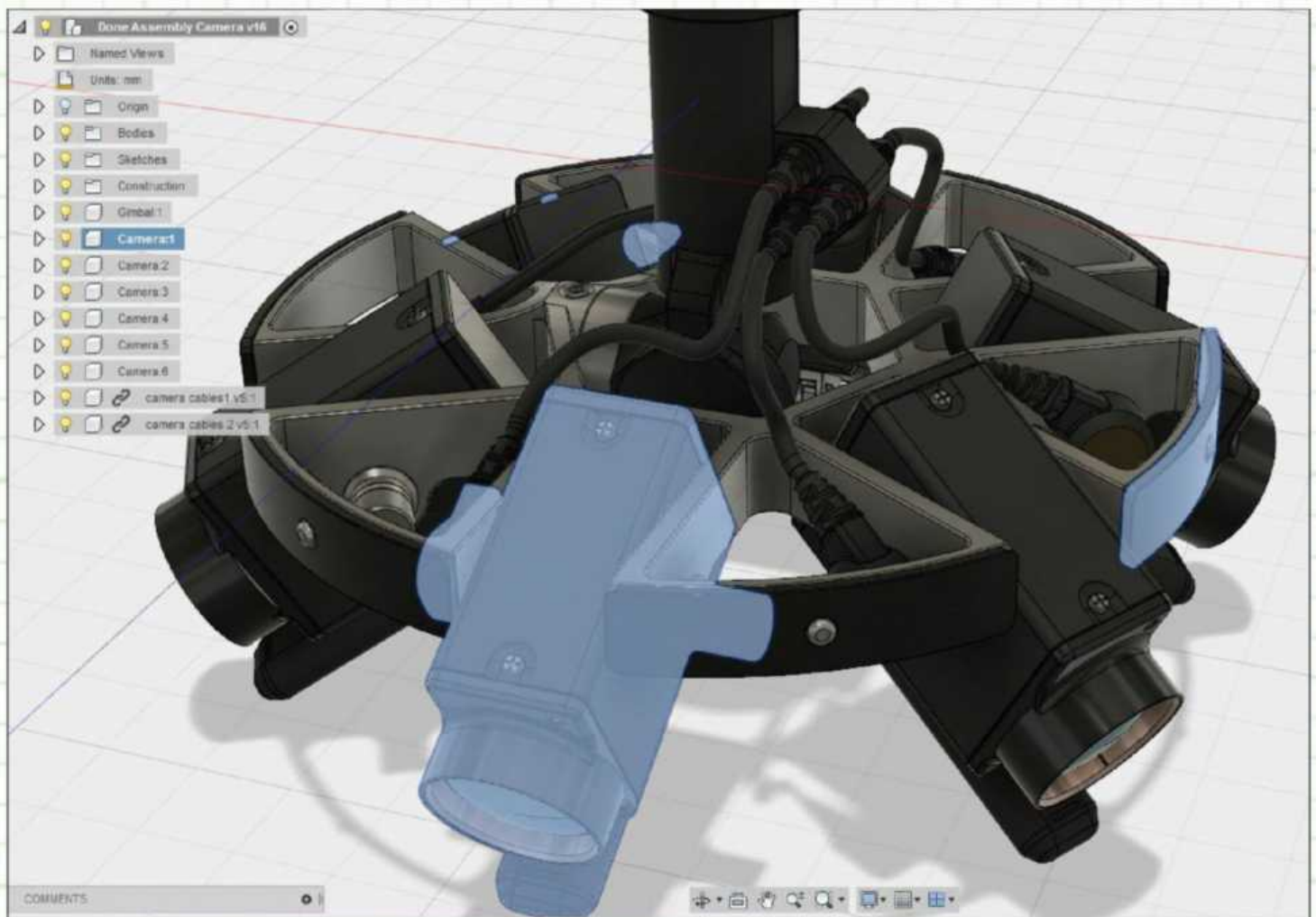
6 TRAVEL THE TIMELINE

The Timeline is a tool in its own right. Right-click and select Edit Feature to change any previous step. Clicking will highlight the edited surface. Dragging the big line backwards will enable you to go back in time and add new changes in between. You can even choose Create>Pattern with features in the Timeline.



7 SPLITTING BODIES

Often designs consist of multiple parts that sit flush in the same shape. This effect is created with the Modify>Split body tool. This needs either a profile sketch, or a profile surface from the Patch modelling mode. You can split with several profiles by chaining them with the Ctrl or Cmd key. And if you bevel these split edges then you can create a photo-realistic effect.



8 COMPONENTS AND ASSEMBLIES

You can create components by right-clicking a body in the top left area and selecting Create Component. Two or more components form an assembly. Copy-pasting or patterning components produces instances that work both ways. Work on one and see the other updates. Mirrored items don't work in this way. ●

ZBrush, Photoshop & Keyshot

BREAK UP & REBUILD YOUR 3D CONCEPTS



In **part three** of **John Mahoney's** ZBrush series, he concludes events by taking his character apart...

Artist PROFILE

John Mahoney
LOCATION: US

John has worked in many leading entertainment companies including Lucasfilm, Disney and Blizzard. He's recently produced Zentropa, his own graphic novel. <http://ifxm.ag/j-mah>

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!



This month, I'll show you how to take any ZBrush or OBJ character and make it into a more interesting, eye-catching image. I'll use the principals of cubism and futurism to break apart a figure, to create a much more complex presentation.

This is one of the key techniques I use to help me think outside of my own box. Once I start moving pieces and parts around, other parts of my brain click in and improvisation takes over. The beauty of ZBrush is

that your characters never have to be finished – you can continually revisit them and change them at will.

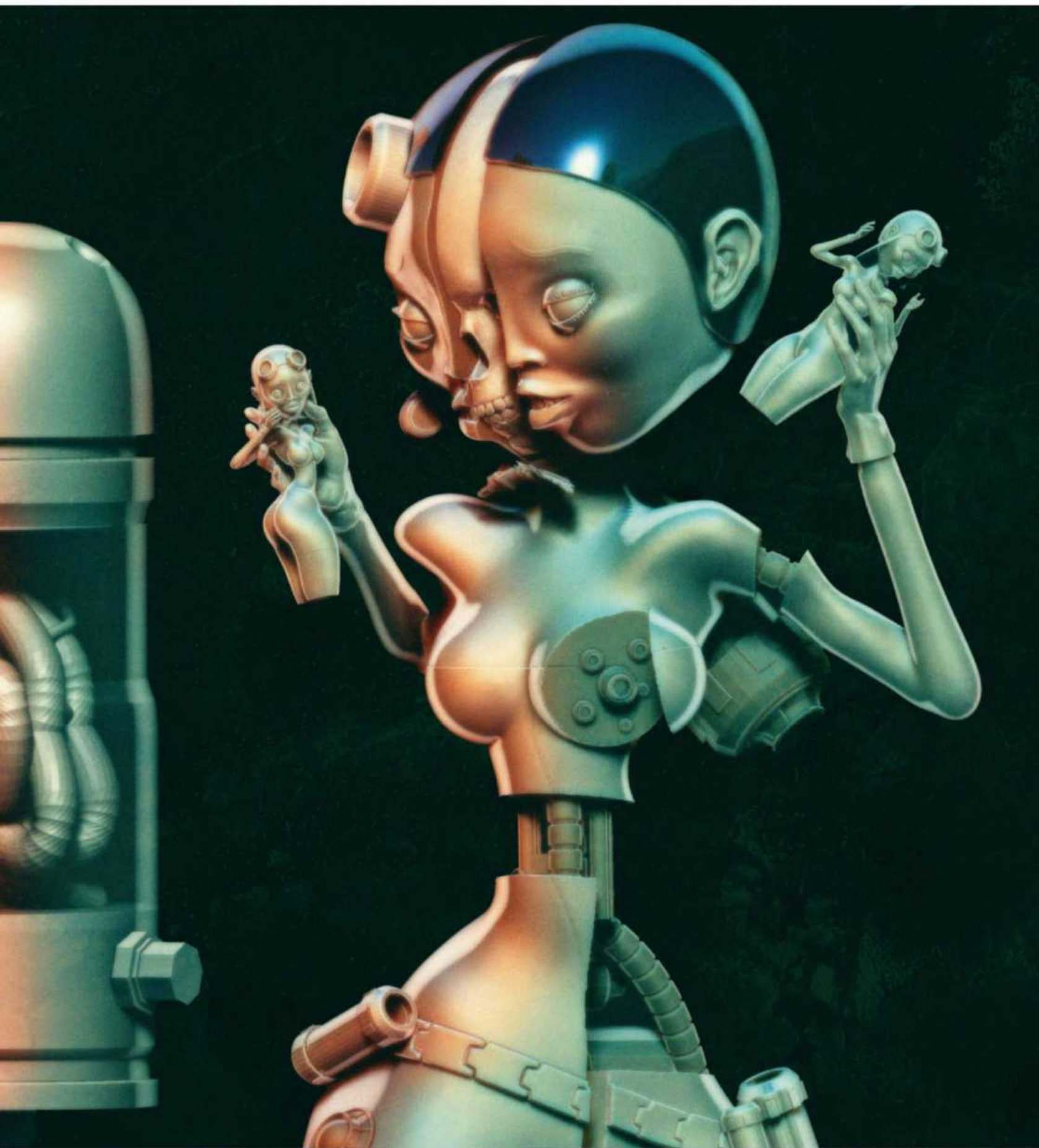
Here, I'll show you my method of cutting apart my character in a methodical way. I'll add a variety of mechanical inner workings with default Insert meshes. The workshop will also cover adding basic accessories to enhance the concept design. Then I'll move into Photoshop, taking multiple renders from ZBrush and stacking these elements in Photoshop for some interesting mixing and matching.



1 Segmenting an original character

I start with my character's head and select the head Subtool first. I duplicate the head, go to TrimRect and cut the first head in half. I then select the copied head and cut the reverse side in half, so I have two halves on separate Subtool levels. I hit the Transparent button to show which level I'm on. Now I can decide what I want to add to the inside of the split head. ➡







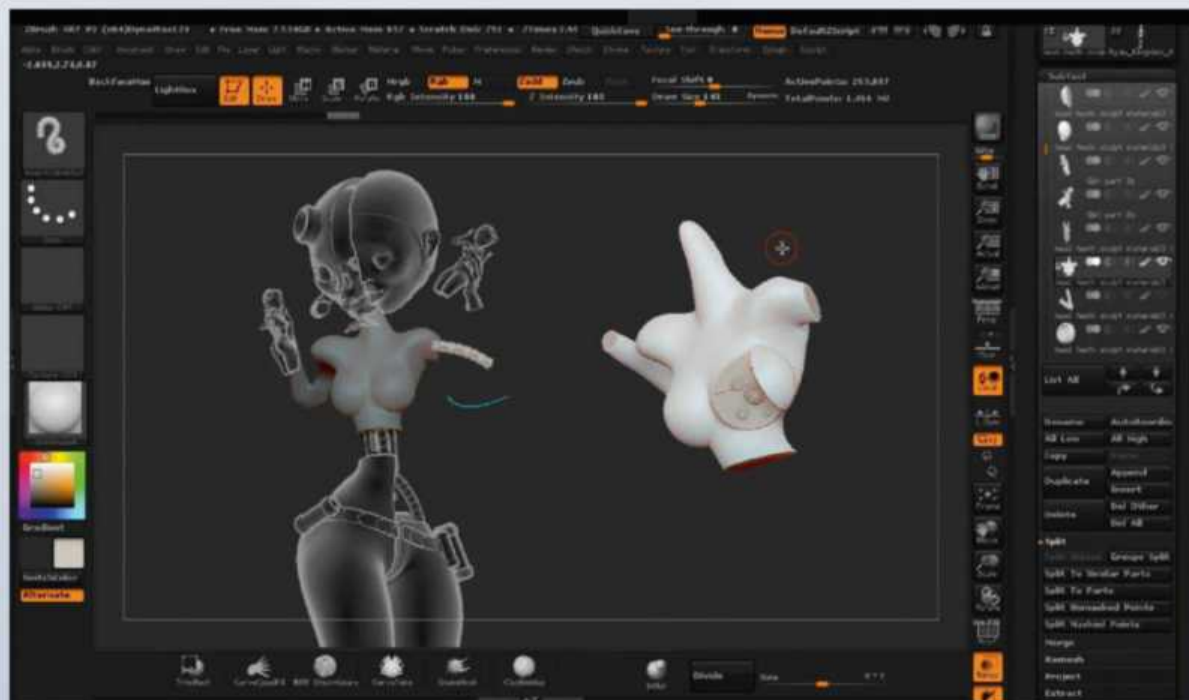
2 Adding a skull inside the head

I select the ZBrush's skeleton, mask off the skull and then go to the split masked parts, placing the skull on a separate Subtool. I go back to my female figure, select Append, then click the skull, which appears as a new Subtool in my female character's Subtool menu. I select the skull, then resize and move it into my figure's head. I configure bones to fit my cartoon head using the SnakeHook brush.



3 Dividing the waist and adding parts

I go through the same process with the waist. Once divided, I add hoses to resemble mechanical parts. To do this, I select the brush InsertCynendrExt, to draw hoses and give my character a robotic look. I divide her leg-pelvis section, cut off part of the pelvis and add more mechanical parts. I can add as many mechanical parts as I like, although I try not to get carried away!



4 Dividing the chest and arms

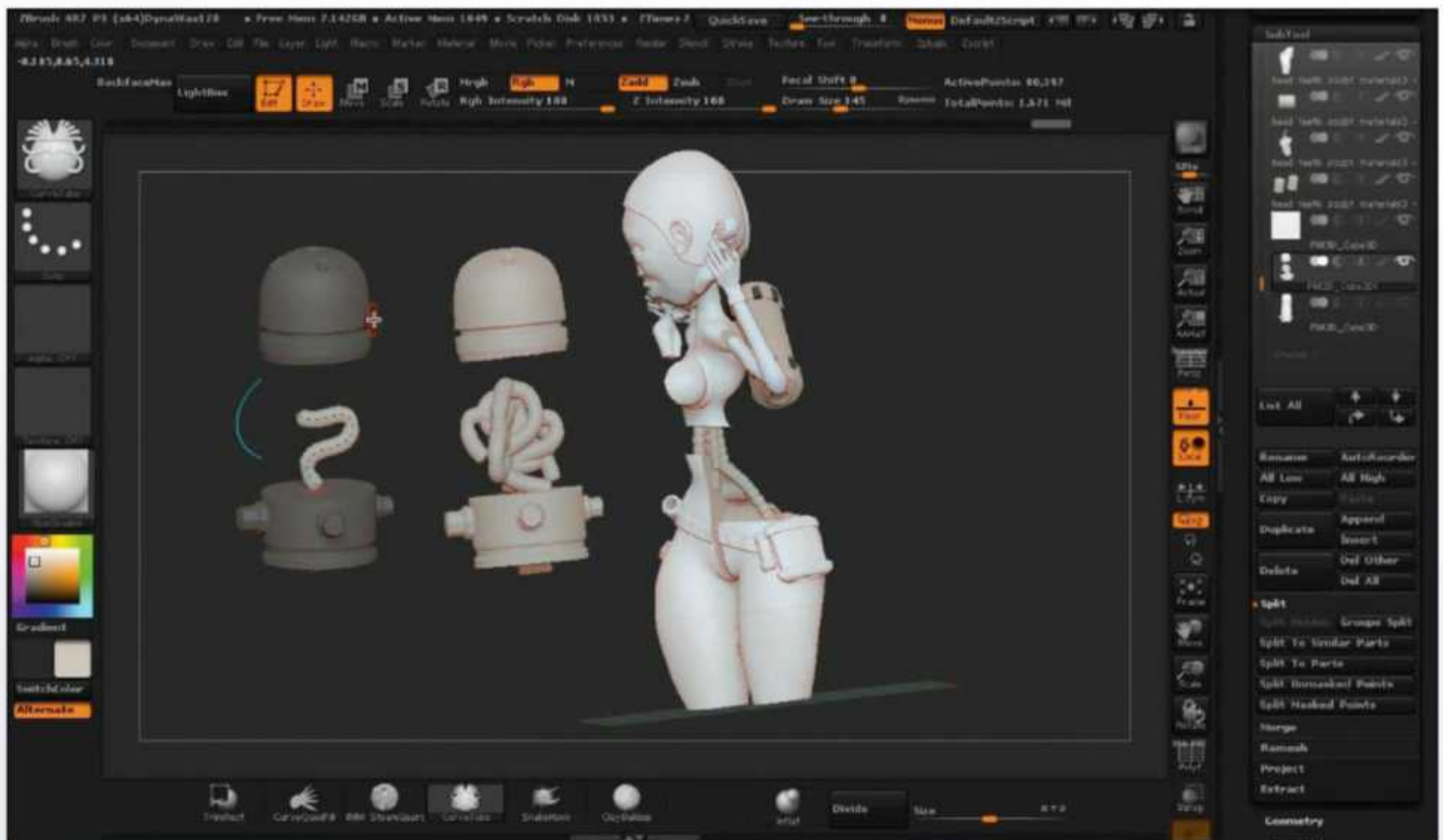
I cut off one of the arms and can now reposition it, like a mechanical doll. I add a hose inside the arm area, then create an opening hatch for the chest. I picture this being where you could plug her in for recharging. I duplicate the chest area, cut the hatch area on one chest, and then copy and cut the opposite section on the other chest copy.

PRO SECRETS

Improve your visual vocab

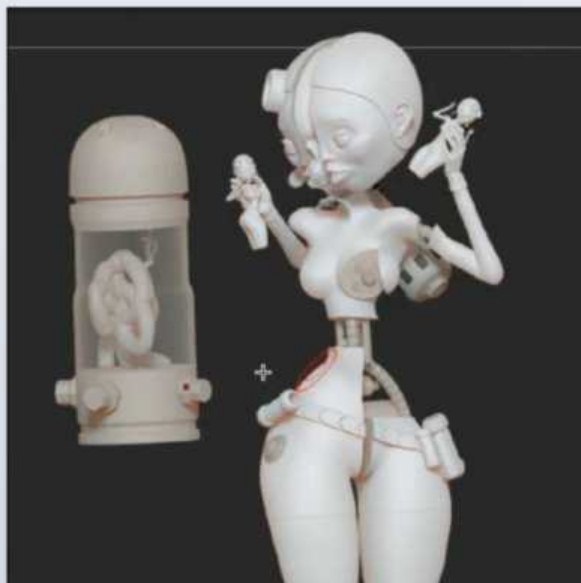
How do you make your art stand out? The key is to expand your visual vocabulary. Go to an art museum and seek out the most unusual thing you can find there. Do some sketching and note likes and don't likes about them. Dig through old book stores looking for something different. Look at artworks that are outside of your job description. If you've never seen it before and you're seeing it today, then you're expanding your visual vocabulary.

In depth Rebuild your 3D concepts



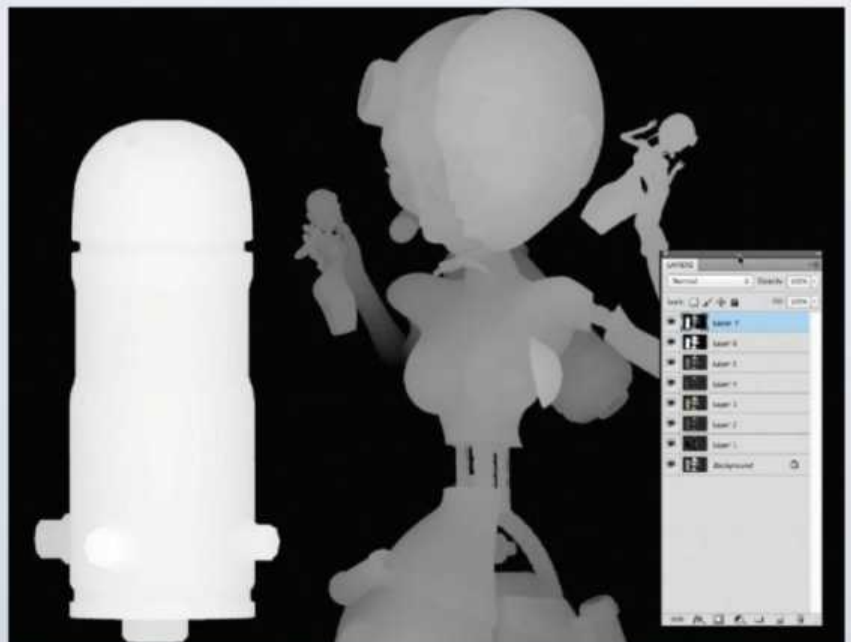
5 Adding test tube

Maybe she's looking at a floating test tube and a bizarre creature that's inside it? I find an insert piece in the Insert mesh brush that looks like a sci-fi test tube. Once positioned, I duplicate it to use as glass later on. I use the TrimRect brush to cut to the middle area. Next I use the CurveTube brush to draw intestine-like shapes inside the test tube.



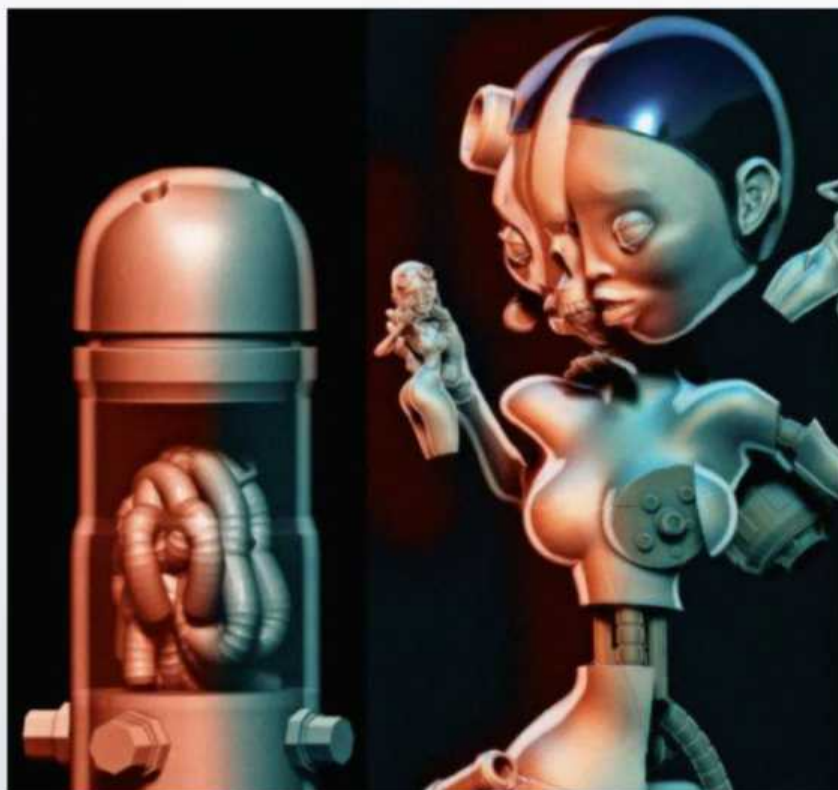
6 Rendering the test tube

I have a full test-tube shape on one Subtool layer and the tube with the creature on another. I select the test tube Subtool and select Display properties>BPR render settings>BPR Transparent shading. I click in the upper right-hand corner of the screen and select BPR. Once rendered, the test tube appears to have glass. I could pick more transparent sections, but don't want to overdo it.



7 Exporting multiple renders

I go to Materials and choose any that look suitable for my character. I select each one and then hit BPR, before selecting Document>Export. Then I go to Render>Render Pass Mask, and I can now export a mask here. This is the most helpful export for my Photoshop renderings. In the same menu, I export the Depth Pass, then stack all the renderings into one Photoshop file. ➔



8 Rendering in Photoshop

Once I produce a material blend I like, I flatten the image, then duplicate it, tint one layer red and the other blue. I erase half of the blue layer, so the character appears to have a red light on one side of her figure. I flatten the image again, soften it with Gaussian Blur, then add a subtle layer of rust from a photograph. I finally add film grain, to give the image a 1980s airbrushed look.



9 Rendering in KeyShot

I go to External Renderer and choose KeyShot. I turn off Auto Merge, then hit BPR, which sends my file to KeyShot. In KeyShot I choose Materials, then drag in selected materials one at a time to see what looks best. I choose an environment that gives me the best HDR lighting, then go to Backplate and choose a photo of a rusted wall, which I've blurred in Photoshop.

PRO SECRETS

Tap into new creative media

Anatomy is a fun thing to learn, but it isn't the only thing that can improve your art. You'll need many other influences to improve your art quickly. Look at graphic design, study typography, classic photography, costume design, wood working and dance choreography. These are all things that teach you design. Design flows through all mediums and once you embrace this, you'll be getting new ideas constantly, from all kinds of sources. To reach your full potential, no visual stone must remain unturned.



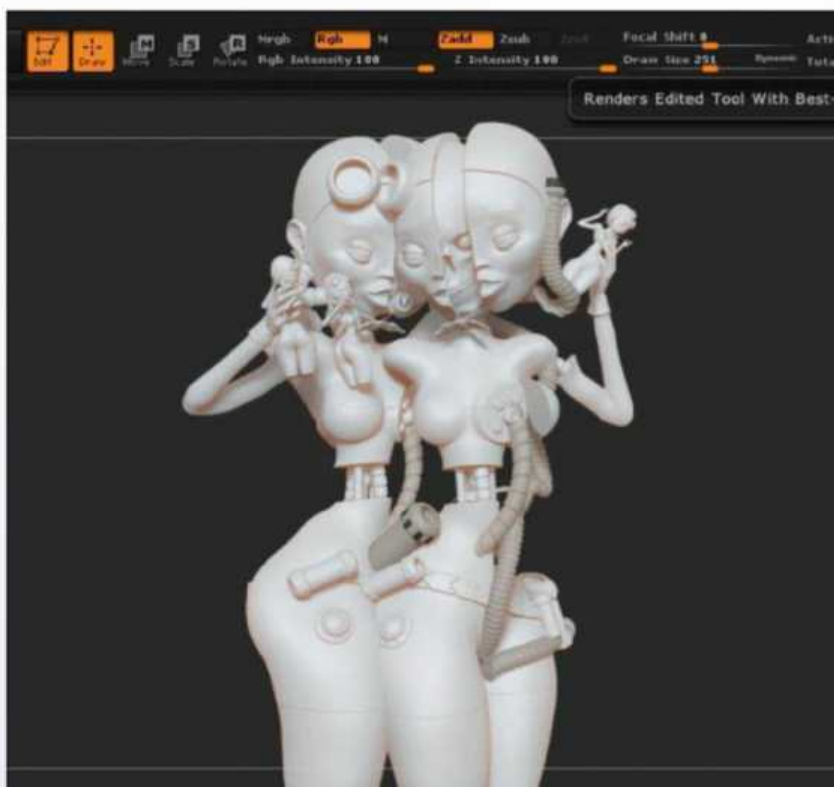
10 Adding sci-fi hoses

Once satisfied with the Photoshop and KeyShot renders. I experiment more with my character in ZBrush. I add more hoses and random insert meshes. I just scribble the hoses on, then move them into position. This is the most enjoyable phase of the process. I'm a great admirer of Terry Gilliam's film Brazil, which depicts a dystopian bureaucratic future that comprises mostly of junk reconfigured in an artistic, creative way.



11 Finalising characters

I open a new project using the DefaultWaxSphere and choose my final character. I really like the wax look of this project setting. I go in and fix any tiny areas that look out of place. I add a heavy corrugated hose along the side of her figure and a large canister on her back that resembles a sci-fi backpack. Here I usually create a turntable to record my work for my demo reel.



12 Duplicating characters

Using the concepts of cubism and futurism, I duplicate the character, and move one copy to the side, creating a double figure. This enables me to think outside the box. The configurations are incredibly stimulating to my imagination and I'm surprised what the split heads look like. On my first live-action short films I used to experiment with multiple mirrors, and this image reminds me of this.



13 Composing duplicated components

I continue to play with these duplications. I thought I might be able to enlarge one figure, as if she's a giant building behind my smaller figures. But when I enlarge one figure, I like how the big head looks next to the small figures. It reminds me of the film posters from the 1970s.



14 Choosing the final image

There are several images I like from these experiments. I choose this one based on the silhouette and the strange connection between the large female and the little figures. The Borrowers, a film about a boy who discovers tiny people living under a floorboard in his bedroom, is a huge influence on me. In a way, this image is a self-portrait, odd as it may seem!

PRO SECRETS

Don't be shy

How can you retain your self-expression in a world that's growing more conservative every day? Well, if you choose to be an artist of some kind, you need to express yourself. You don't have to be right, you just need to be honest about what you're feeling the moment you put pen to paper. If you're shy about a piece of art or an idea, do the art anyway. Remember: you don't have to show it to anyone. The important thing is you allowed yourself to get it out of your head. This will lead to more things coming out. It will unblock doors and put an end to procrastination. As an artist, the worst thing I can imagine is simply not being able to express yourself because of the fears and concerns of what others will think. Just do it!

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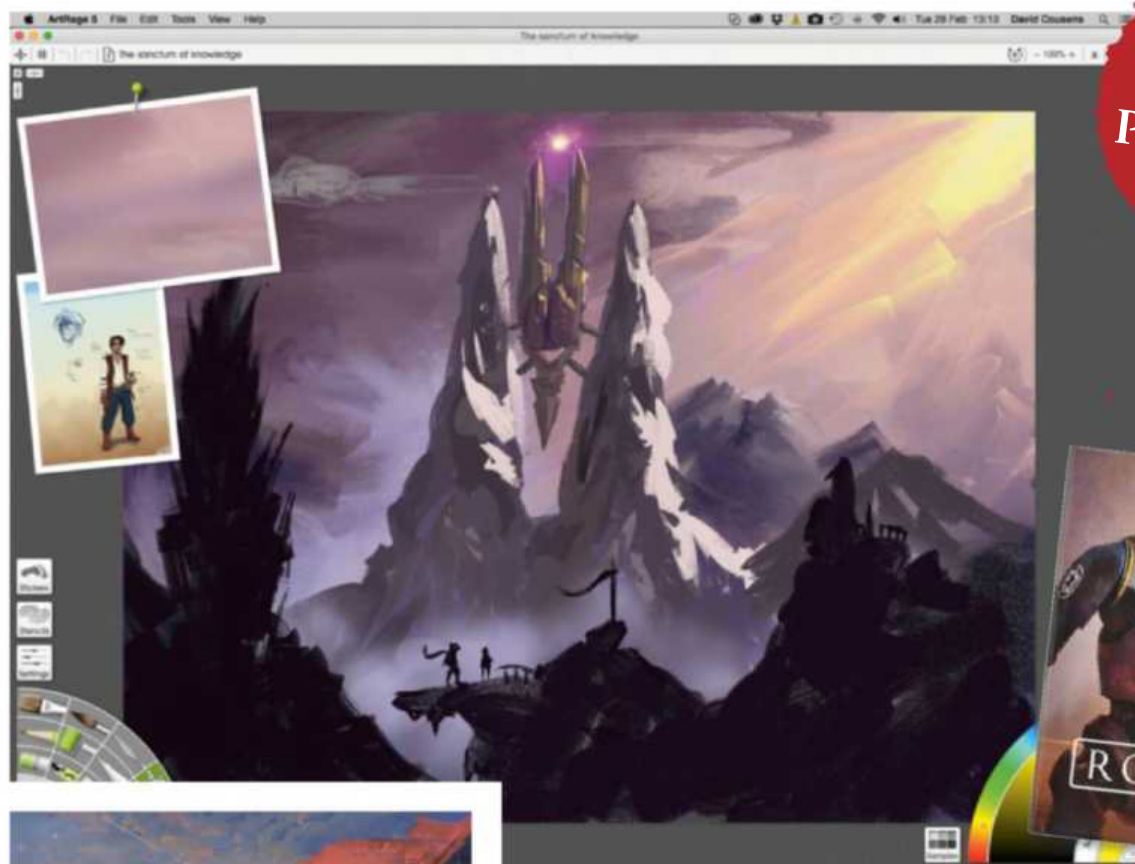
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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...



6
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



SOFTWARE

92 ArtRage 5

This latest update could be perfect for when you want to create a traditional-style painting, but keep the versatility of digital.

95 Black Ink

A new kind of painting program, featuring non-traditional brushes with a focus on customisation and experimentation.

TRAINING

97 Creating Props for Games, Vol 1

Environment artist Nick Reynolds shares his knowledge for creating in-game objects.



BOOKS

98 The Art of Rogue One

Explore the character, vehicle and environment concepts behind Gareth Edwards' standalone Star Wars film.

99 Thrill-Power Overload: 2000 AD

Celebrate four decades of 2000 AD with this in-depth, fully illustrated and eye-poppingly honest read.

99 The Line Art Challenge

Top artists from all around the world share their fantasy character sketches, which formed part of a unique drawing challenge.

RATINGS EXPLAINED



Magnificent



Great



Good

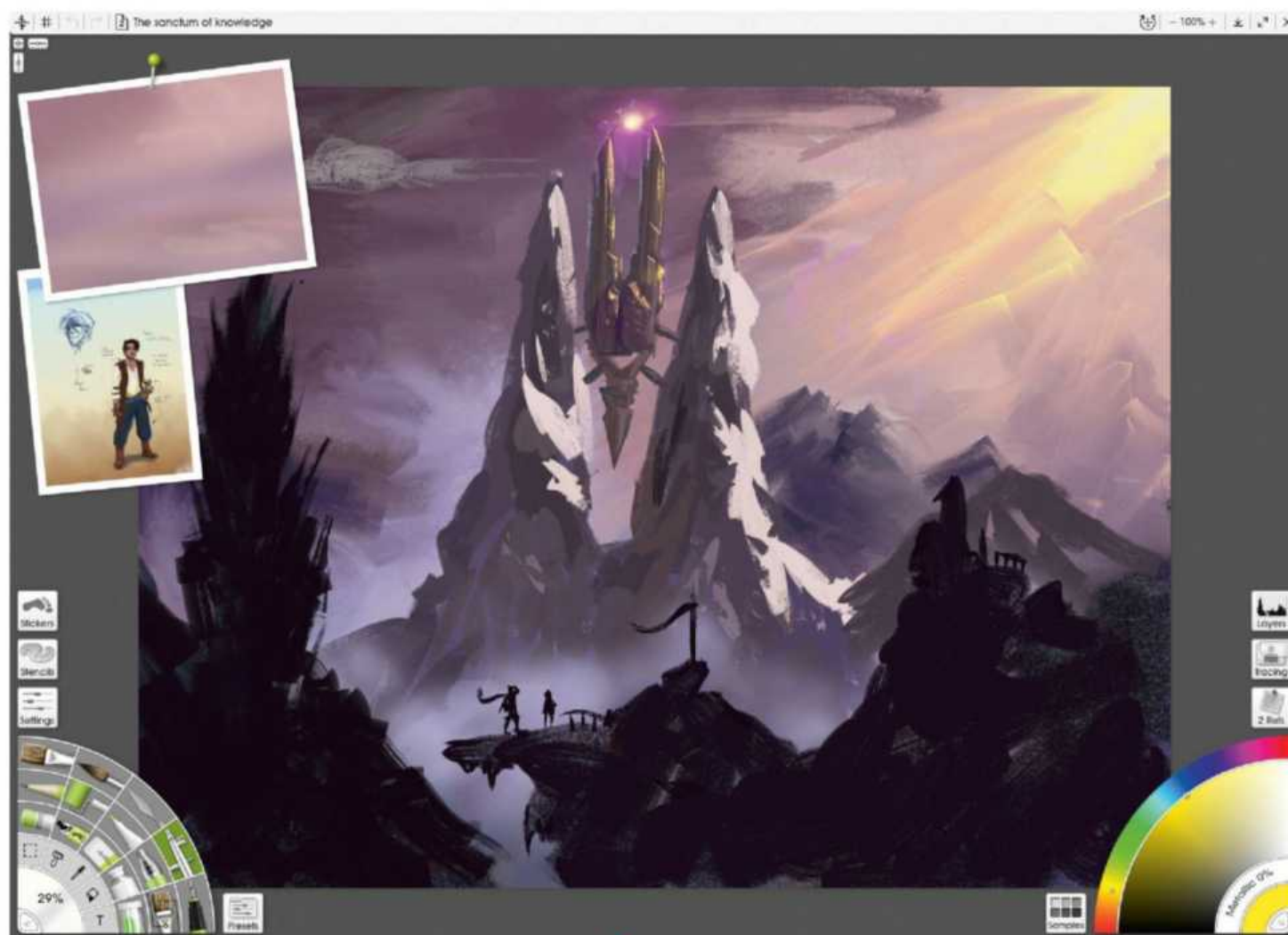


Poor



Atrocious





ArtRage 5



NATURAL TALENT For budget-conscious artists wishing to emulate traditional painting techniques on-screen, this software's hard to beat

Price £63; £32 (upgrade from 3, 3 Studio/Studio Pro, or 4); £44 (upgrade from Lite) **Company** Ambient Design **Web** www.artrage.com

Ambient Design's ArtRage 5 is the perfect program if you want to sit down and start painting straight away, but while other painting software boast this ability, under the hood ArtRage has enough customisable options to make it a professional-level experience.

The redesigned interface is intuitive and minimalistic; it's designed to ensure you can focus on your creativity. The interface vanishes when you start painting near it so that you can put down uninterrupted brushstrokes, and reappears as soon as you finish. These kind of helpful

design choices are prevalent throughout version 5, which is part of what makes ArtRage such a joy to use.

Essential options such as tool and colour selection are immediately visible in the interface, while other less-frequently used functions are concealed in Pods to avoid taking up too much of your workspace. The

The latest version of ArtRage enables you to pin references - which can be resized and manipulated - to your canvas, for ease of use.

“The interface vanishes when you start painting near it so that you can put down uninterrupted brushstrokes”

interface is organised to maximise the space you have for painting, but it's no bother to locate an option or menu when you need to.

The interface is customisable: most panels can be relocated from the canvas and moved to more convenient locations such as on a second monitor, and you can scale and rotate any of the floating panels.

The tools are located in the bottom left of the screen, with each tool acting much as you'd expect of their natural counterpart. They each have a number of different useful and realistic feeling presets available, and you can further customise their properties by clicking



the Settings box if you want to start fine-tuning effects. The option is there to create custom tools if you've got a modified brush that works well, but you'll find a lot of the presets are so good at replicating natural media, that you may not even feel the need to.

Another new feature in version 5 is its ability to import photos or images as both reference images and tracing images. Multiple Reference Images can be pinned to your screens so that you can use them as you paint, which is handy in itself, but they can be re-sized, repositioned and also zoomed into if you only need to look at one specific area. Again, this enables you

to make the most of your workspace. Additionally you can use your reference images to colour-pick, to make painting even faster.

Tracing images work differently. They appear translucently so that you can see your painting and use your brushstrokes to more creatively clone your photos, while ArtRage's Automatic Colour selection samples the relevant colours for you.

ArtRage 5 is straightforward to use from the outset, with a gentle learning curve. It helps you to produce fantastic, realistic-looking results, gives you a lot of customisation if you need it, and is a bargain buy to boot.

Phil Galloway is able to put his traditional art skills to work in ArtRage, making the most of the program's default brush set.

DETAILS

Features

- Tools and brushes mimic real-world counterparts.
- Redesigned customisable interface.
- Interface hides when you approach with brush strokes.
- Canvas Texture affects tools.
- Create multiple views to paint different areas of your main image independently.
- Paint with symmetry.
- Import photos as Tracing Images.
- Import photos as Reference Images.
- Multi-touch gestures to control the interface and the canvas.
- Create Scraps as floating canvases to mix paint.

System Requirements

PC: Vista, Windows 7 or 8 (requires Desktop mode for Windows 8), 1,024x768 screen size.
Mac: OSX 10.6 or later, Intel CPU, 1,024x768 screen size.

Rating



ARTIST INTERVIEW

PHIL GALLOWAY

This artist compares the benefits of traditional and digital mediums

What are your favourite new features in ArtRage 5?

The new Pencil tool is proving useful and I've just completed a full piece using only the Pencil and Watercolor tools. The new interface is smoother, has more options for personalisation and is more user-friendly, yet manages to feel like a professional tool.

The ability to be able to export to Photoshop is a godsend – the new version makes this even easier and swifter to utilise. I'm sure the Custom brush tool could sneak into my favourites list, though, as I play more with it in the coming months.

What would you like to see in the next version of ArtRage?

Coming from a more traditional background in fine art I'm all about the textures, the malleable qualities of paint and pastels and their interplay with each other. So I'd love to see more control over the digital medium's traits on the canvas, such as thick impasto paint you could push and smear with your thumb, through to dribbling washes and buttery pastels that drip or flake down the canvas as you tilt it. I'm still on the search for an art app or program that can recreate the crumbly behaviour of charcoals, too.

Would you ever switch completely to digital media?

This is a question I wrangle with on a daily basis. The main body of my work is digital and I love the freedom to experiment without fear of wasting paper or paint. However, I don't feel I could turn my back on traditional art media: there's no digital substitute for the smell of paint, the feel of charcoal on your hands and smudging a putty rubber around a sheet of nice paper!



Fine and digital artist Phil specialises in pencil and digital portraits with expressive realism.

www.treebeardstuff.com

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The more organic feel of the tools can add interest to all kinds of different subjects.



Black Ink PC ONLY

BRUSH SAFARI A new kind of paint program, with non-traditional brushes and a focus on customisation and experimentation

You can find out what each brush is capable of by using the sliders on the right-hand side of the screen.

Price £50 **Company** Bleank **Web** www.bleank.com

Compared to more traditional programs like Photoshop and Painter, Black Ink's brushes feel like taming a wild animal. It's hard to gauge if this would offer much of a benefit during straightforward representative drawing, but the unpredictability of the line work can be great for designing organic shapes and creatures that feature a lot of unexpected angles.

If you need to make a photorealistic portrait of an astronaut for class, say, Black Ink probably isn't going to give you an edge over your usual software. But now, suppose you need to draw the crystal-based alien inhabitants of

the planet our astronaut gets stranded on. Black Ink time, baby! The dynamic nature of the brushes is perfect because it puts variation and nuance throughout the shapes.

One nice feature is the brushes that enable you to change colour based on pen pressure. You choose the gradient you want, and as you paint, the pressure regulates the location on the gradient where you're getting your colour from. You might think mastering this would take some time, but it actually works great when you want a lot of colour variation without repeatedly going back to the palette.

Figuring out what each brush does can be difficult, but there's a handy

“Figuring out what each brush does can be difficult, but there's a handy preview”

preview window in the main UI that shows you how they will behave when you're choosing... and you can actually try it out in that little window, too.

Black Ink's most interesting feature is the Controller Editor. It creates a node map like the Shader Editor in Maya, but instead of creating textures, you're establishing the properties of new brushes. You can create nodes for Size, Pressure, Rotation, Add, Subtract, Distance, Dot, Noise (Triangle, Dot, Smooth or Square), Ease Power, and a surprising number of other properties.

Having all the nodes out on the screen can be confusing at first, but just play around a bit and it'll soon make sense. You can also adjust a lot of these by editing the actual code, though it may not come very naturally to most artists. Fortunately, there's the visual way to do it as well.

The learning curve is a little steeper, because the tools are unlike any you're used to. You'll want to spend a good chunk of time just experimenting. We recommend browsing through some tutorials before you get started with a trial version. The trial period is around four hours, which may not be enough time at Disneyland to go on all the rides, if you know what we mean.

DETAILS

Features

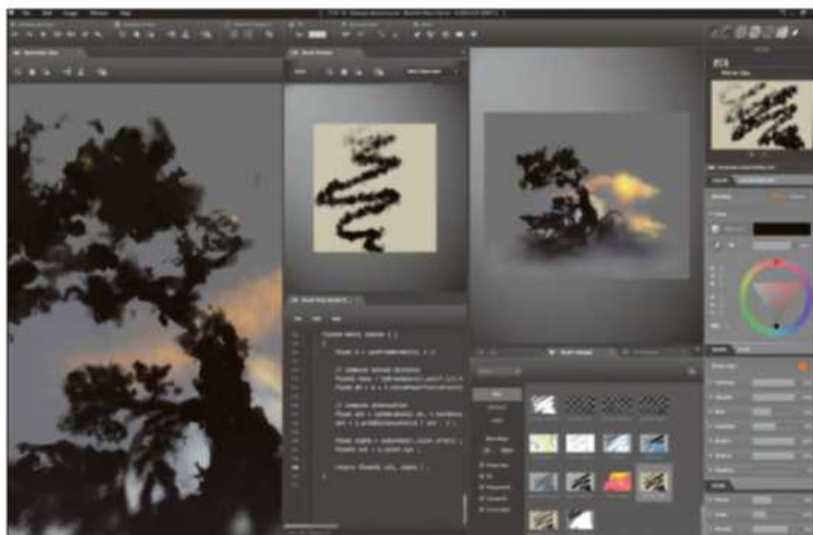
- Create new brushes using a huge range of controls
- Modify your strokes after you make them
- Dynamic brush tips change as you paint
- Paint directly into the preview window
- Brush chooses colour based on what and where you've already painted
- Interactive canvas fill textures

System Requirements

PC: Windows XP (SP3), single core CPU at 1.6GHz, 1GB RAM, graphics card with support for pixel shader 3.0 and 512MB of VRAM, DirectX 9.0, 50MB hard drive space

Rating

★★★★☆



In the Controller Editor you create new brushes with the same sort of dynamic features as the ones included.

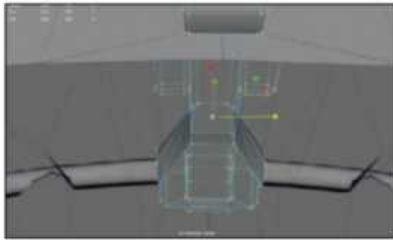
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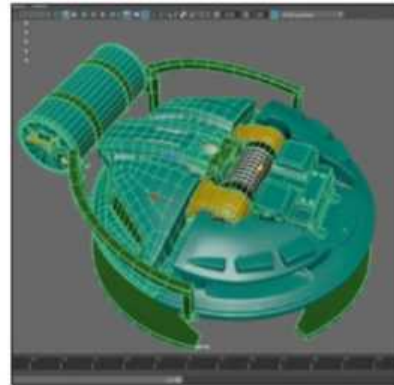
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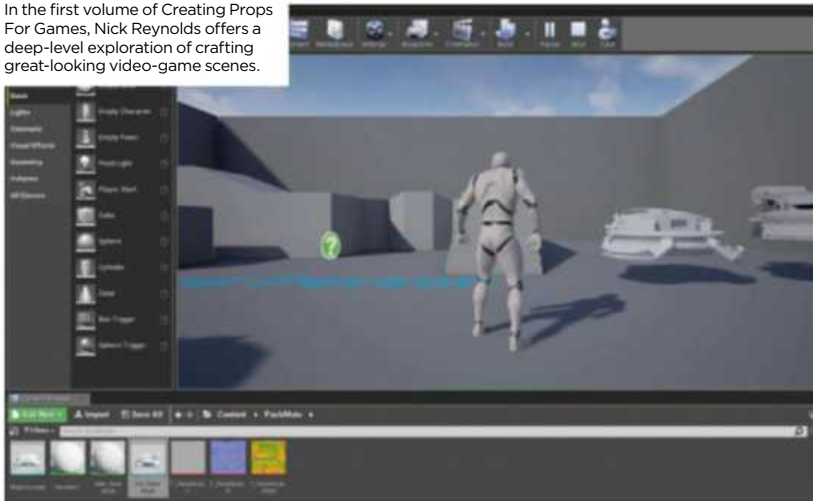


In the first volume of *Creating Props For Games*, Nick Reynolds offers a deep-level exploration of crafting great-looking video-game scenes.

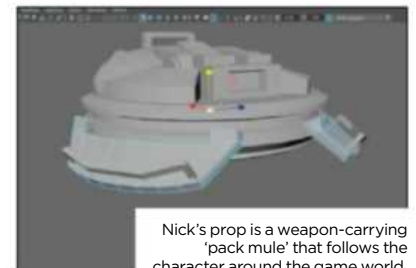


Discover how to make a low-polygon model look almost as rich as the high-poly version you create for renders.

Nick's demos show some alternative ways to present raised detail without adding polygons.



Creating Props For Games, Vol 1



Nick's prop is a weapon-carrying 'pack mule' that follows the character around the game world.

PROPS DUE Environment artist Nick Reynolds shares years of knowledge as he creates in-game objects that look the part

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** Subscription only (from £40 per month) **Format** Streaming video **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Creating a simple prop for a video game might not sound like the sort of in-depth topic that demands over seven hours of video training. But there's far more to it than you might suspect.

When you're creating a 3D scene whose visuals are being updated at up to 60 frames per second, every element in the scene needs to be built for super-efficiency. At the same time, though, everything has to look great.

In this video, Nick Reynolds drills into the complexity of modern games design and shows what you need to consider as you work to balance detail with efficiency. In particular, he explores the core technique of baking, which is essentially rendering visual information in advance so the computer or games console doesn't have to calculate it on the fly. You might commonly bake in an ambient



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Normal map basics
- Normal maps on common forms
- Blocking out
- High-poly models
- Low-poly models
- UV maps
- Baking techniques
- In-game testing

Length
435 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

occlusion map, for example, so that some light and shade information is already worked out.

So while the base software used here is the familiar combo of Maya and ZBrush, Nick spends much of his time in specialist apps including Marmoset Toolbag and Substance Painter, although most of the concepts are applicable regardless of tools. You'll discover a lot of ways to use all the tools 3D software can offer to get models looking the way you want, without piling on the polygons.

Nick's been very generous with his knowledge here, distilling years of experience into a few hours and sharing techniques that go deeper than your typical reference manual. His exploration of normal maps in particular will enable you to apply his knowledge to any model you create in the future, rather than imitating what he's done and then getting stuck.

ARTIST PROFILE

NICK REYNOLDS

Nick has extensive experience in video game development as an environment artist. He's worked for Sony Santa Monica, Red Fly Studio, Vigil Games, Red Storm Entertainment and Pandemic Studios. His resume includes major titles such as *God of War: Ascension*, *Inertia: Escape Velocity*, *Thor: God of Thunder*, *Force Unleashed II* and *Ghostbusters*. He's also an instructor at the Gnomon School.



www.artstation.com/artist/nreynoldsart



The Art of Rogue One

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE Explore the many concepts and behind-the-scenes insights that helped craft the first standalone Star Wars film

Author Josh Kushins **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £25 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available Now**

The weight of expectation that accompanies a new art book on a galaxy far, far away is immense, given how influential the classic trilogy's art of... books have been on today's concept artists. Thankfully, *The Art of Rogue One* picks up the lightsaber-shaped baton and runs with it.

Following forewords by art director Doug Chiang, the film's co-production designer Neil Lamont and director Gareth Edwards, the first text in this book lists all the artists featured, along with their job titles. You soon realise that *Rogue One* was a film where concept art mattered. "Of all the films



I've worked on, this one probably has had the most art, and that's all because of Gareth," it quotes Doug as saying. You then discover how the director worked closely with concept artists in both the US and the UK as both the narrative and the film's designs evolved simultaneously throughout its production.

The book follows the film's timeline. Chapters chart the different planets of

“The book's main draw is the acres of space given over to the evocative art”



This early illustration by costume concept artist Adam Brockbank captures the essence of militia leader Saw Gerrera.

Rogue One and the designs that first appeared onscreen in each locale, along with storyboards and imagined scenes. This self-contained approach means you can easily chart a concept's development, rather than have to flick back and forth through the book to see its next iteration, à la *The Art of The Force Awakens*.

Anecdotes a-plenty spice up the text. For example, the thinking behind the Imperial droid K-2SO was to make him a laid-back character, and so the designer gave him a stoop as a visual shortcut to his personality. Elsewhere, it turns out that coming up with a Rebel ship to rival the iconic X-wing was tricky; the team was only partly



Glyn Dillon, co-costume designer on the film, worked on the look of lead character Jyn Erso.

joking when they reveal they drew "a million ships" before locking in the look of the U-wing troop carrier.

While the text is comprehensive, the main draw is the acres of space given over to the evocative art. Each artwork is captioned; mostly just with title and artist credit (though some are more detailed). And it's all reproduced beautifully, enabling you to appreciate the finer details and be drawn back into the worlds of *Rogue One* all over again.

RATING ★★★★★

The Art of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story by Josh Kushins and Lucasfilm Ltd. © Abrams Books, 2016 © 2016 Lucasfilm Ltd and TM. All rights reserved. Used under authorisation

Thrill-Power Overload

ICONIC COMIC Celebrate four decades of 2000 AD with this fully illustrated and honest read, updated with six years of new material



Authors David Bishop and Karl Stock **Publisher** Rebellion **Price** £35 **Web** www.rebellion.co.uk **Available** Now

Back in 1977, few would have bet that a small British sci-fi comic would become a global sensation and launch the careers of legendary artists such as Neil Gaiman, John Wagner and Alan Moore.

Four decades on and 2000 AD is alive and kicking, and more influential than ever. So to celebrate, here's an updated version of its definitive history, first published in 2009.



Close-up of Jim Murray and Dondie Cox's cover art from Judge Dredd: Lawman of the Future, which was based on the Sylvester Stallone film.



In Thrill-Power Overload, former 2000 AD editor David Bishop and journalist Karl Stock describe in detail how the comic was first conceived and created, and its struggle for survival over the years. Some candid interviews pull no punches in describing the antagonisms, the industrial action and the creative fallouts that nearly led to the comic's demise on a number of occasions.

On a more positive note, there are also hundreds of illustrations, including single-frames, cover art and full strips, as well as a selection of rarely seen artwork, all reproduced wonderfully in full and vivid colour.

It's not a cheap buy by any means, but this is must-read for any fan of this unique, ground-breaking UK comic.

RATING ★★★★★

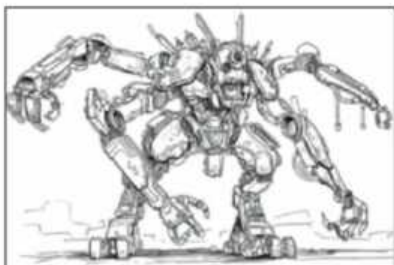
The Line Art Challenge

SKETCHBOOK SENSATIONS Top artists from all corners of the globe share their fantasy character sketches from a unique drawing challenge

Editor Eric Ng **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £22 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

Here's something you don't see every day. A softback, coffee table book filled with hundreds of line art sketches... and almost nothing else.

Fifteen international artists across 11 different countries were challenged by the publishers to each produce 100 sketches in 100 days. This wasn't a competition, though: the artists were encouraged to share their work online, and motivate and inspire each other



Spanish concept artist Isra Carrión says that his drawing style is a mix of Japanese and western influences.



along the way. In the end, 850 drawings were created, and they're displayed across this book's 226 pages.

And that's it, basically. There's the odd rare caption, and each artist gets a double-page spread explaining who they are and where they come from. But in the main, it's all about the art: sketch after line-art sketch of original sci-fi and fantasy figures and designs.

Yes, the project could have asked more from the artists: some insights into how they created their work, and exactly how they inspired each other would have been welcome. Yet if you just want to leaf through hundreds of character sketches and become motivated, this book will do the job.

RATING ★★★★★

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Workshops assets are available...
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.



This issue:

102 Traditional FXPosé
Showcasing some of the finest traditional artists around today.

106 Pencil and watercolour art
Animal illustrator Katy Lipscomb shows how to bring a stylised wolf to life, using watercolour washes and coloured pencils.

112 Core skills: how to apply your oil paints
Howard Lyon reveals the many ways of getting the versatile medium on to the canvas.

114 First Impressions: Dorian Iten
Passing on his hard-earned art knowledge to others pleases this Austrian artist immensely.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Tatiana Suarez

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Oil, aerosol, watercolour **WEB:** www.tatisuarez.com

Tatiana loves to juxtapose the beautiful with the exotic and creepy. "I want to create surreal, ethereal worlds filled with doe-eyed figures," she says.



1 PINK MATTER

"I began moving in a new direction with this painting. The eyes are getting smaller and features are becoming more realistic. I'm also introducing aerosol to my oil painting to achieve bright hues that are tricky to generate with more traditional mediums."

2 SACRADA VAQUITA

"This work depicts the Vaquita – the most endangered marine mammal in the world – in the gentle embrace of a saintly figure. The use of watercolour gave the piece a soft and celestial feel and conveyed a sense of protection for the creature."



3 SWAMP

"This painting became part of a group exhibition to help with the restoration of the Miami Marine Stadium. I wanted to leave aside the aerosols and experiment with a less-saturated medium."

4 CAIUBI

"I painted this piece for the third annual POW! WOW! X Thinkspace group exhibition, which was held in Honolulu, Hawaii at the beginning of last year."





1





Andrea Sipl

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Oils WEB: www.andreasipl.com

Venezuela-born, US-based illustrator Andrea holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in animation, and a master's degree in illustration.



1 FLIGHT OF THE ETERNAL DREAM

"Here's the most challenging painting I've ever done. My aim was to make it look more classical, but with a fantasy twist. I wanted the viewer to feel like time had stopped and this rare, intimate moment was captured."

2 FEATHERS OF GEMINI

"This explores the themes of secret friendships, a special connection between women and mystical animals. I wanted to show these two entities comfortable and yet vulnerable with each other."

3 SOLIS

"This image was more experimental for me. It's when I started playing with a softer and a lighter colour palette and adding gold leaf to detailed areas."



4 THE MOON GUARDIAN

"I was inspired by Arabian Nights and Prince of Persia. I wanted to try my hand at a night-time scene and fabric transparency."

5 AURI VELUM

"This painting is part of a small series of women and their giant Betta fishes. I wanted their friendship to be based on protection. The Betta fish is a living golden veil, covering and guarding her innocence from the world."

Fancy sharing your traditional art with your fellow readers? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each one, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to fxpose@imaginefx.com





Pencil

Watercolour

PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ART

Renown animal illustrator **KATY LIPSCOMB** reveals how to bring a wolf to life, using watercolour washes and pencils to create a stylised scene from nature

Get ready to learn how I colour a howling wolf using unconventional methods and materials! Here, I'll teach you my approach for creating my drawings using a range of media: watercolours, colour pencils and more.

I'll start proceedings with a light watercolour wash and move towards darker heavier marks with colour pencils. This workshop is focused on how to colour using a variety of materials rather than how to draw. To begin, you should first select some heavy-duty paper. I prefer to use Strathmore Smooth Bristol board; however, illustration board, a hot press watercolour paper or a cold press watercolour paper with a smaller tooth will also work.

You should also be ready with a watercolour brush. I enjoy using a range of brushes, from flat brushes to

ARTIST INSIGHT
CATALOGUE YOUR ART DIGITALLY
I create a digital catalogue of all my works, for posterity and just in the case the worst should happen. I scan my works in at least 300DPI as a PNG file. I then crop, rotate, and colour correct my image using image-editing software.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

round brushes to detail brushes; however, much of this is personal preference. If you're unsure about what to start with, I recommend a size four Round brush and a thin detail brush with a fine point.

As for media, I'll be working primarily back and forth between watercolours and colour pencils. In this workshop I'll specifically be using PH Martin's concentrated watercolours, but other watercolours and inks will do just fine. My colour pencil of choice is Prismacolor premier soft core, but as with the watercolour or ink, this is also very flexible. Last but not least, I'll be using a white gel pen and white liquid acrylic for finishing touches.

Other materials that will be important are an artist's watercolour palette. I find disposable palette sheets very useful, but you can also invest in a longer-lasting solution.



You'll also want a cup of water for cleaning your brushes between colours, a pencil for a primary sketch, an eraser and paper towels.

If you've gathered all of your materials, clean up your workspace and let's continue to the workshop!



Katy is famous for her fantastical scenes and representations of the beauty found in feral creatures. She's has gained attention from Time Magazine, National Public Radio and more. See her work at <http://katylipscomb.com>.

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Strathmore Smooth Bristol Board

BRUSHES

- Size 2 or 4 Flat, Round, and Detail watercolour brushes

PAINTS

- PH Martin's Concentrated Watercolors
- FW White liquid acrylic

PENCILS

- Prismacolor Premier Soft Core
- Faber Castel Polychromos

OTHER

- Mechanical pencil
- Eraser
- Gellyroll white gel pen
- Water cup
- Watercolour palette



1 Draw a basic outline

I begin by drawing the basic frame of the wolf's head. I find it easiest to block out large shapes when drawing, rather than trying nit-pick details when beginning a sketch. For example, here I've started with a circle for the head and a triangle for the ear.



2 Refine the sketch

I continue to block out details and define shapes into more organic forms. Now I have a more definitive shapes for the snout, ear and fur. It's important that the fur feels organic, rather than stiff. It can be tempting to want to draw pointy triangles; however, try to keep your wrist loose and let the shapes flow naturally.



3 Begin with a light watercolour wash

I always work light to dark when working with watercolour. This is because I can always add layers later, but watercolour isn't a media that can be 'erased'. In this step, I'm starting with the lightest of my watercolour washes. I do this by thinning the pigment with a lot of water.



4 Apply a darker wash

After my first layer has thoroughly dried, I begin adding a second layer to the wolf's fur using more concentrated pigment. Watercolour is a medium that layers beautifully due to its translucency. Even when you add another layer, you'll be able to see hints of the previous layers beneath.



5 Continue with light washes

I now start to work with lighter washes across the rest of the wolf. In this step, I've chosen to use a complementary colour (those colours located directly across from each other on the colour wheel) on the wolf's chest. Because I'm using blue for the top of the wolf, I choose a golden yellow-orange for the chest.



6 Put down a fourth wash layer

After waiting for the previous layers to dry, I continue with a fourth layer of wash. Once again I work from light to dark; this layer is slightly darker and more pigmented than the previous layers. I create the illusion of shadows and fur with a few selective dark strokes.

ARTIST INSIGHT PAINT REALISTIC FUR

The easiest way to learn how to create believable fur is to study photos of fur. Notice which way the fur flows over different contours of the body.

WATER TIP

LIMIT YOUR WATER APPLICATIONS

When working on Bristol board, limit the amount of water you use to prevent the paper from warping.



7 Tackle the background details

I'm now beginning to add background decoration using a painting technique called 'wet-on-wet'. I do this by placing non-pigmented water on the paper in swirling patterns. When the water is placed in the right locations, I then apply the watercolour pigment on to these wet areas. The pigment will flow freely and create swirling patterns in the water.



8 Start on the colour pencil detail

After the watercolour has thoroughly dried, I begin using colour pencil on top of the loose watercolour base. I use the pencil to sharpen the image and highlight details that I want the viewer to notice, such as the fur, nose and ear. I use a dark brown pencil to accent patches of the wolf's fur. ➡



9 Introduce reflective light

One way I like to tie the abstract background details to the rest of the drawing is by adding the illusion of reflective light. I do this by adding a colour that matches the background to the edges of the wolf. In this step I add warm yellows, pinks and oranges to the wolf's fur.



10 Continue the pencil fur detail

I continue to add detail to the fur using colour pencils. I add the illusion of detailed fur without actually drawing individual strands of hair. This can be done by selectively adding dark accents underneath patches of fur. I also darken areas such as the crevasse of the ear, the inside of the mouth and the nose.

COLOUR PENCIL TIP

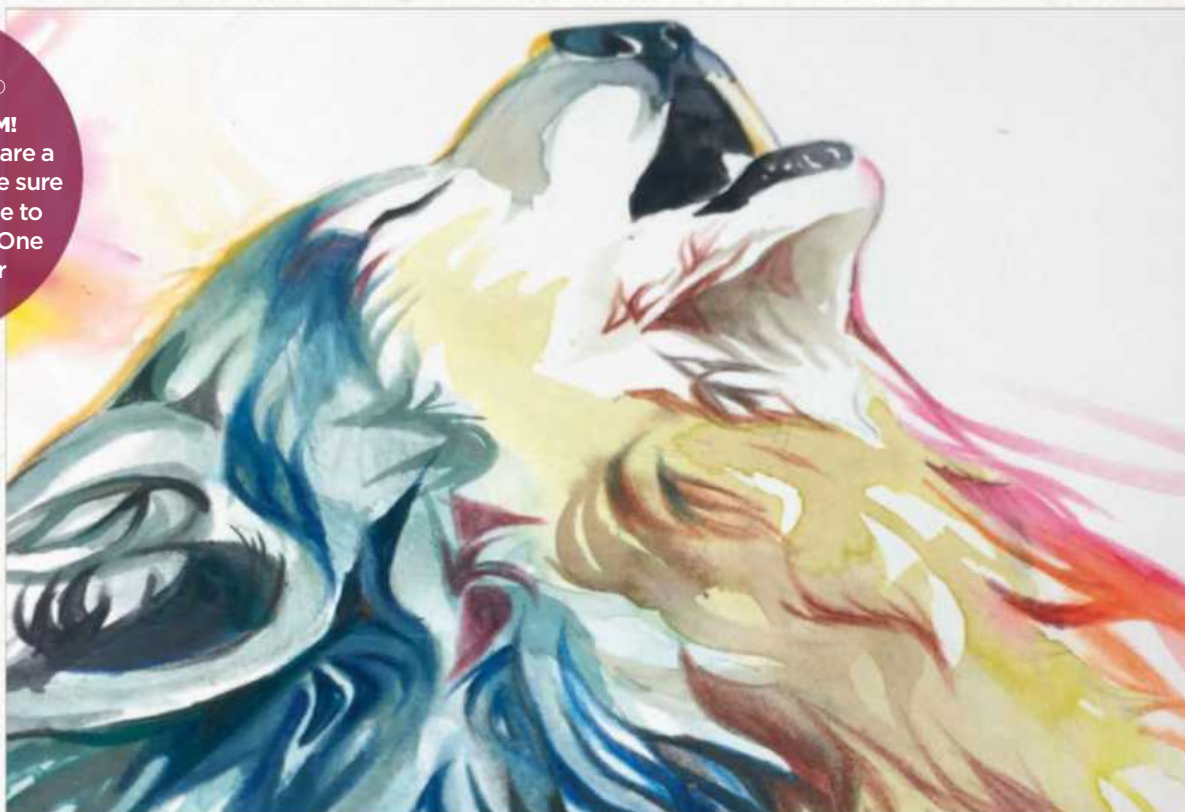
DON'T DROP THEM!

Prismacolor pencils are a soft lead pencil, so be sure to keep them secure to prevent dropping. One drop can shatter the lead.

ARTIST INSIGHT

BURNISHING WITH COLOUR PENCILS

Burnishing is a helpful technique when using colour pencils. To burnish, lay down a layer of colour pencil. Next, take a pencil of a lighter colour and then firmly press the two layers together.



11 Develop abstract fur patterns

When I draw my animals, I enjoy laying down abstract patterns and details to the surface to add visual interest. These patterns always flow with the natural forms of the animal and can either be interpreted as adornment or fur. In this step I use a burgundy and navy blue to bring in these surface details.



12 *Burnish layers with colour pencil*

At this point I've built up many layers with colour pencils. To create a smooth and polished surface look, I use a technique called burnishing (see Artist Insight, below left). To burnish the previous layers, take a lighter pencil colour and firmly press the previous layers together with broad strokes.



13 *Place a pencil layer on top of the burnished layer*

I now have a sleek and smooth layer of burnished colour pencil. At this point, the fur may look too polished and artificial, which is a common problem with burnishing animal fur. To combat this, I'll add another layer of pencil detail. The fur now features dark browns, burgundy and navy blue.



14 *Finish the final details*

During this step I work on finishing my final details with my colour pencils. This includes adding some finishing touches to the wolf's fur, nose, and ears. At this point, I use the darkest tones to pull forward areas of importance. For me this includes the eyes, nose, mouth and certain patches of fur.



15 *Adding white highlights*

In this final step, I highlight certain details with white liquid acrylic or a white gel pen. This includes adding white highlights to the nose and lips, creating the illusion of wetness. I also add highlights to certain patches of fur. Lastly, I add white highlights to the background for a 'magical' atmosphere.

Core skills: Part 3

HOW TO APPLY YOUR OIL PAINTS

HOWARD LYON continues his five-part series that will help you begin using oil paint. In this instalment he explains the many ways you can apply oils to the canvas

Oil paint is wonderfully versatile. It can be applied in thick expressive impastos, or thinned down and used almost like watercolours. It can be brushed or scrubbed, knifed on or scratched out, applied in washes or painted in patches. There are what seems like an endless variety of mediums and additives you can work with to create different effects.

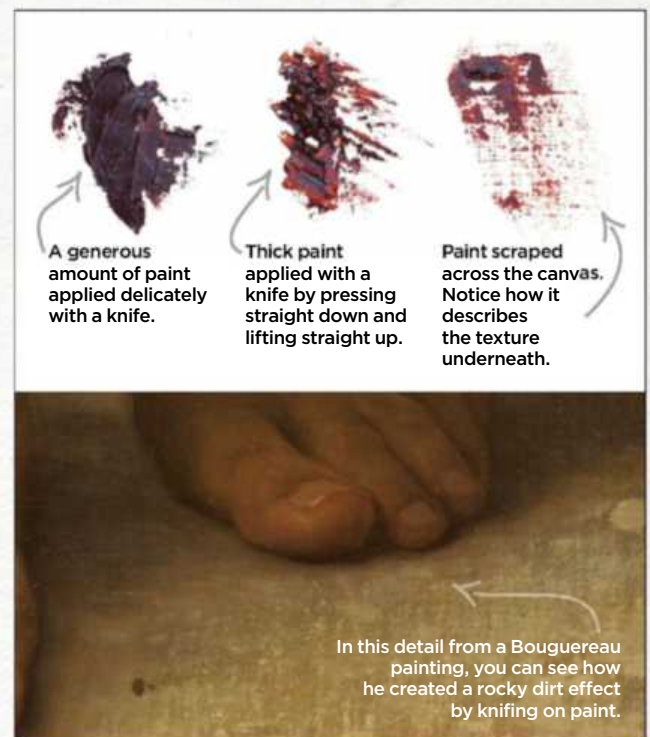
However, you can use oils without adding a medium. Most of my work is done with paint direct from the tube. Some mediums are added to shorten or lengthen drying times; others change the characteristics of the paint. Paint out of the tube is often called stiff or short, and will retain your brush stroke – especially with coarser brushes. If you add fluid medium, such as linseed oil or turpentine, it becomes what's known

as long. It won't retain the peaks of the brush strokes, but will level out.

Paintings are generally more interesting when you use a variety of techniques when applying paint. It's another form of contrast that provides variety and complexity.



Howard has worked as an illustrator and art director, as well as a fine artist for galleries and collectors. You can see his art at www.howardlyon.com.



1 Different brush effects

Depending on what type of brush you use and how hard you press, oil paint can look very different from one stroke to the next. In addition, adding thinner or medium to the paint, as well as changing the angle of the brush, will alter the texture and impact of the mark.

2 Using palette knives

Palette knives aren't just for mixing paint. In fact, you'll see some knives marketed as 'painting knives'. Really, just use whatever gets the job done. I've used large, plastic putty trowels for creating rocky textures in some larger paintings.

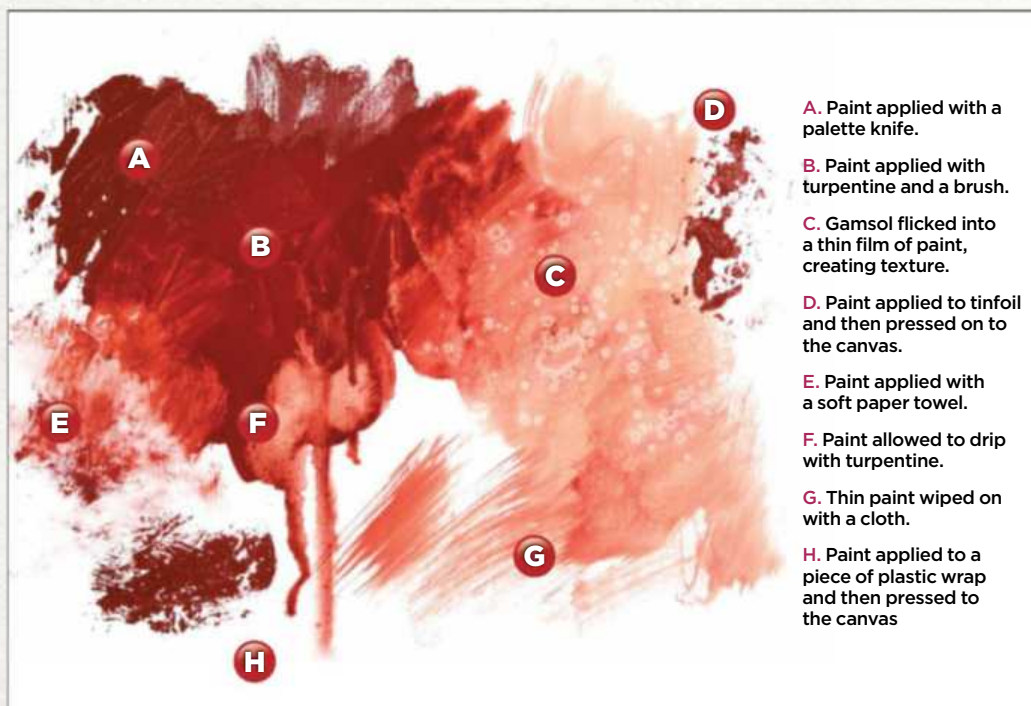


3 Scraping the paint

Removing paint can sometimes be as effective as adding paint. I've used cotton swabs, old brushes with dry paint in them, rags, knives and toothpicks to remove paint for effect. There are also rubber-tipped scrapers sold in art stores that work well to this end.

4 Different mediums

Don't become overwhelmed by the variety of mediums out there. Here's a photo of some of the painting mediums that I've tried. Enjoy the different effects you can achieve, but don't be afraid to keep things simple or simply to experiment.



ARTIST INSIGHT

LET PAINT BE PAINT

Oils are at their best when they're allowed to be paint. Don't work too hard to remove brush strokes and texture. Let the paint be a record of your actions.

5 Getting creative

Don't feel limited to just the tools you find in the art store. In the past I've used tinfoil, plastic wrap, toothbrushes, my breath to blow paint around, fingers and other miscellaneous tools. Norman Rockwell used anything around at the time, including sand, fur and straw to add texture.

First Impressions

✧ Dorian Iten ✧

Passing on his knowledge to others pleases this Austrian artist immensely...



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

I was born in Austria, but grew up in a rural area of Switzerland. I remember roaming the fields and climbing through the forest undergrowth. The tiny house we lived in was over 200 years old. Being a child in that environment, I forged a deep connection with the natural world. Books about faeries, gnomes and magic spurred my imagination.

You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything... what are you looking at?

I don't remember any moment like this as a child, but I had a powerful experience when I was 21. I had just moved to Florence, Italy, to start my academic training. One day I visited the Cenacolo di Andrea del Sarto, a small museum near my apartment. As I walked past all the frescos, I felt as if my artistic ancestors reached out to welcome me as one of them.

Did other interests vie for your attention as you were growing up? What was the deciding factor?

When I was 14, I launched the first version of my website. I had taught myself HTML and CSS, and enjoyed working with computers so much that I considered studying to become a mediamatiker (a media/technology specialist). I was probably on the fence until age 17, when I found out about the atelier schools in Florence and decided that I just had to go there.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?

For much of the past 10 years, my



CEECEE

A student piece from Grand Central Academy in New York. Pencil on paper, 2011.

“I felt as if my artistic ancestors reached out to welcome me as one of them”



SYLVIA

A student piece from Angel Academy of Art in Florence, charcoal on paper.

studio has travelled with me to different cities and countries. Each place changes how it looks and feels, but usually my work area is very organised. I like to have a few original pieces by friends up on the walls, as well as prints of favourite images from Old Masters and contemporary artists.

Is your art evolving? What's your most recent experiment?

I think it's always evolving, sometimes faster, sometimes slower. I'm currently exploring a project that involves a 3D scan of myself. It might turn into a 3D print, a painting, a VR experience, or all of it at once. I'm often pulled by many interests, which can be frustrating, but right now I'm appreciating the richness of my work and play.

Concept artists don't need in-depth anatomy knowledge – yes or no?

My gut reaction is to disagree. Knowledge is power. Studios hire people who can create believable designs. My relationship to art is all about drawing from a deep study of nature. That said, if I broaden my scope from “simply doing a job” to “making innovative discoveries”, I'm sure there are examples of concept artists who are empowered by their ignorance of classical information.

How much enjoyment do you get out of producing teaching courses?

Profound enjoyment. I cherish the freedom of developing my own materials and love the process. When I edit videos I lose myself in the work. I also like the challenge of changing hats. In the morning I'm an instructor, in the afternoon I'm an editor, the next day a marketer, programmer or accountant. It always stays interesting!

What's the most important thing that you've taught someone?

I think the most important thing that I've been able to impart is confidence. It's a beautiful thing when a person begins to trust in their own ability and stops relying on teachers and other external authorities. We must dare to make our own decisions. Only when we take responsibility can we also take credit.

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

First, it's okay to be quiet and introspective. Don't beat yourself up over it. That said, share what you think and feel, because the world will reflect valuable information back to you. Second, read less and do more. Third, be courageous. Be courageous. Be courageous!

Dorian draws, paints, sculpts and teaches.

He serves as the Digital Art Program

Coordinator at Barcelona Academy of Art in Spain and publishes free drawing tips every Friday at www.dorian-itlen.com.

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