

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

SKETCHBOOK SPECIAL!

OVER

300
NEW SKETCHES!

+ INTERVIEWS

- SLAWEK FEDORCZUK
- JAN WESSBECHER
- KYOUNGHWAN KIM

TURN OVER
FOR MORE

FEATURING...

- GEIZI GUEVARA • ANGELA SUNG • REKA HARTE • DOM LAY
- STEPHANIE MARZIAN • LUCIA PARVOLO • REZA AFSHAR
- GEORGE BRAD • SORIE KIM • AND LOADS MORE INSIDE!

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



We published our very first Sketchbook Special in January 2023, and so many of you told us you loved it that we just had to do it all over again!

The art community is awash with amazing talent and jaw-dropping artwork, but there's often a process involved in getting to that final piece. That can be the initial thoughts put on paper, a work in progress, or simply practice to retain and build muscle memory, line confidence and so on. This doesn't often get seen or appreciated, but it can be fascinating to view. That's why we reached out to a variety of incredible artists from across the industry, asking them to share some of their sketchbooks and explain a little about these more personal pages.

Being inspired and motivated by great art is fantastic, but I believe getting some advice on the how and why are just as important. With that in mind, we also spoke in detail with artists Slawek Fedorczuk, Kyoungwan Kim and Jan Wessbecher to get insight to help you improve your own work.

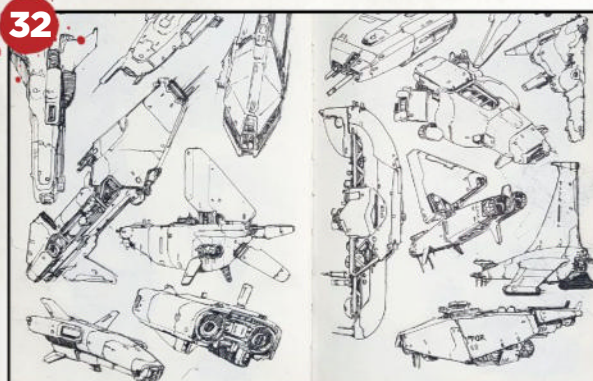
Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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

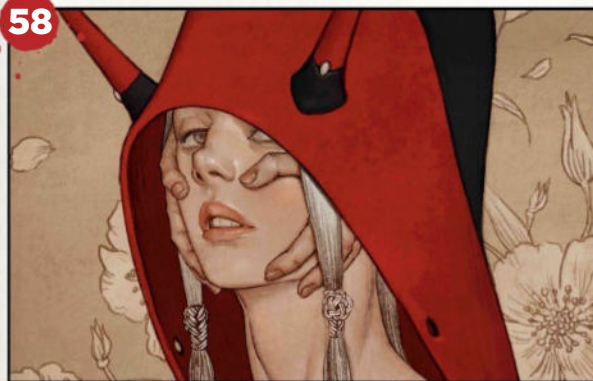
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Discover stunning science fiction

Braden May's sketchbook is bursting with sci-fi vehicles and mechs that have a unique design language.

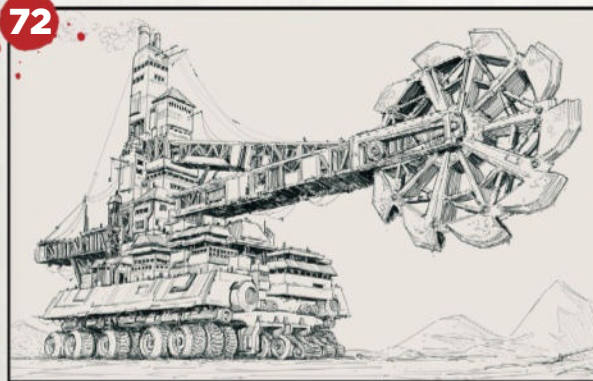
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The importance of drawing daily

Kyoungwan Kim talks to us about the unique route into his career and offers expert advice.

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Explore kooky industrial designs

Check out the exaggerated vehicle and architectural designs showcased in George Brad's epic sketches.

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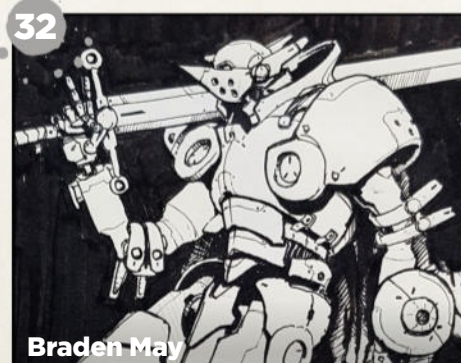
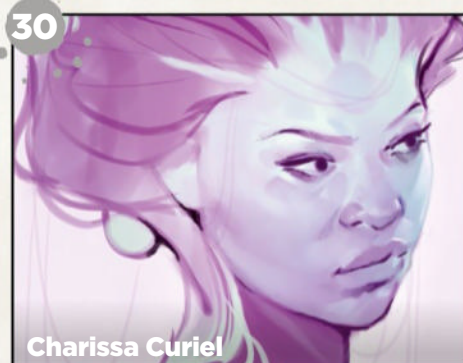
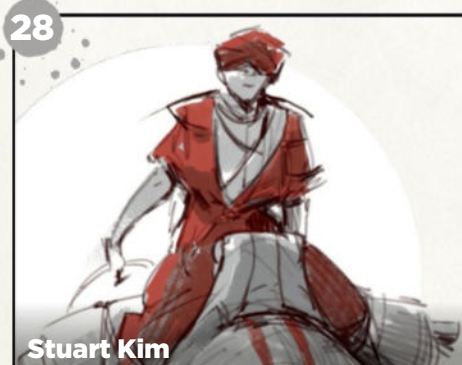
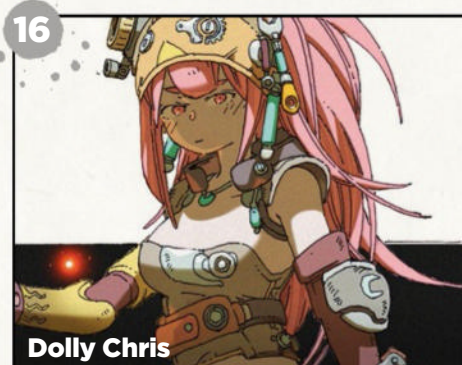
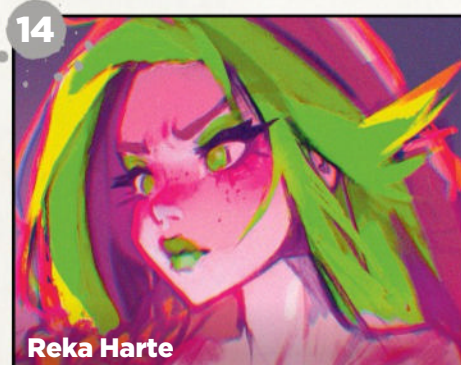
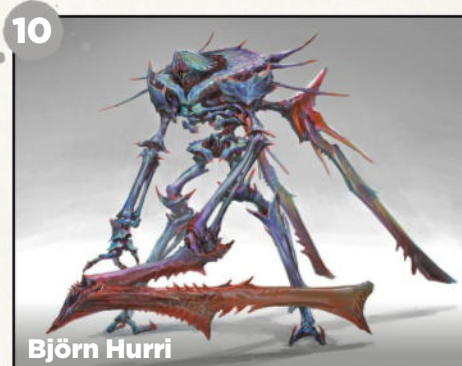
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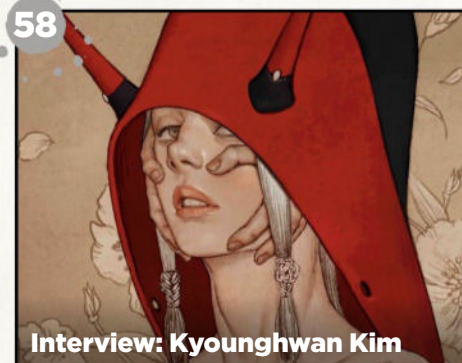
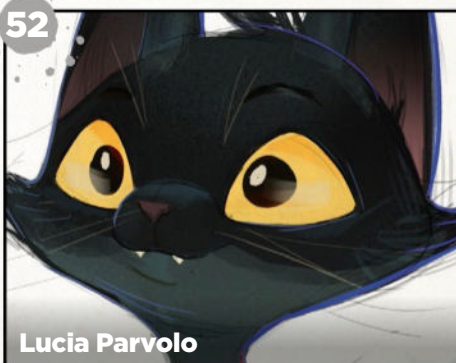
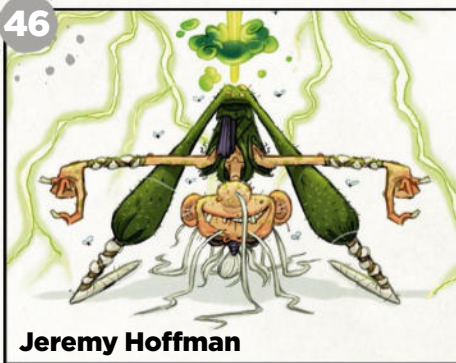
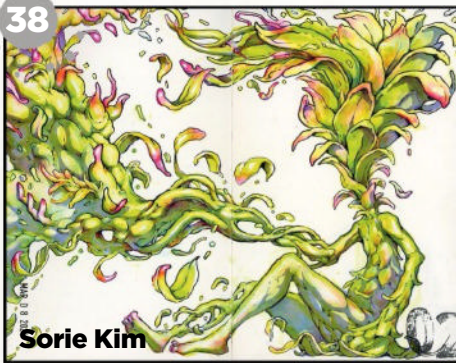
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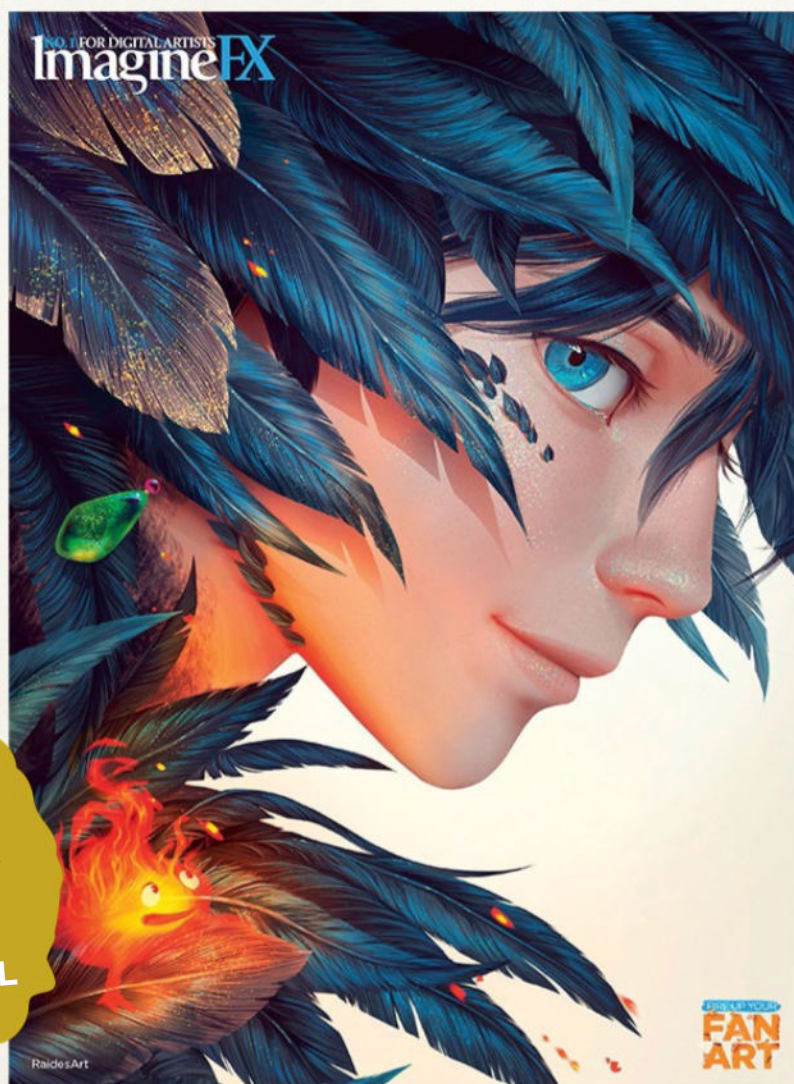
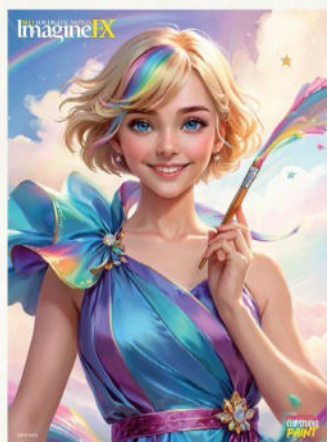
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Angela Sung

The art director captures treasured memories and stunning landscapes in her serene sketchbook

Artist PROFILE

Angela Sung

LOCATION: US



Angela is an art director at Sony Pictures Animation with a huge passion for visual development and traditional art. She also co-founded Warrior Painters and Warrior Art Camp. Alongside her role at Sony, Angela offers courses and workshops in background design and traditional and digital painting. She is dedicated to promoting artistry and education in the entertainment industry.
www.instagram.com/angothemango

VONDEL PARK

"When I went to visit Amsterdam in 2023, I had to capture the beauty of the city! This was done en plein air in winter."



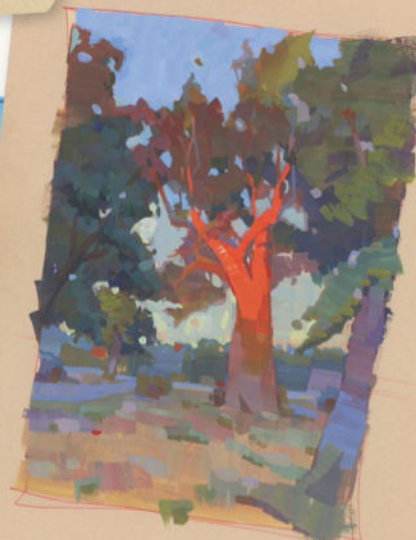
DAY DREAMING

"The thing I love most is travelling with my best friend and wife, Kayleigh. This moment she stood on a beach in Tasmania left such a huge imprint in my mind. I will cherish this memory forever."



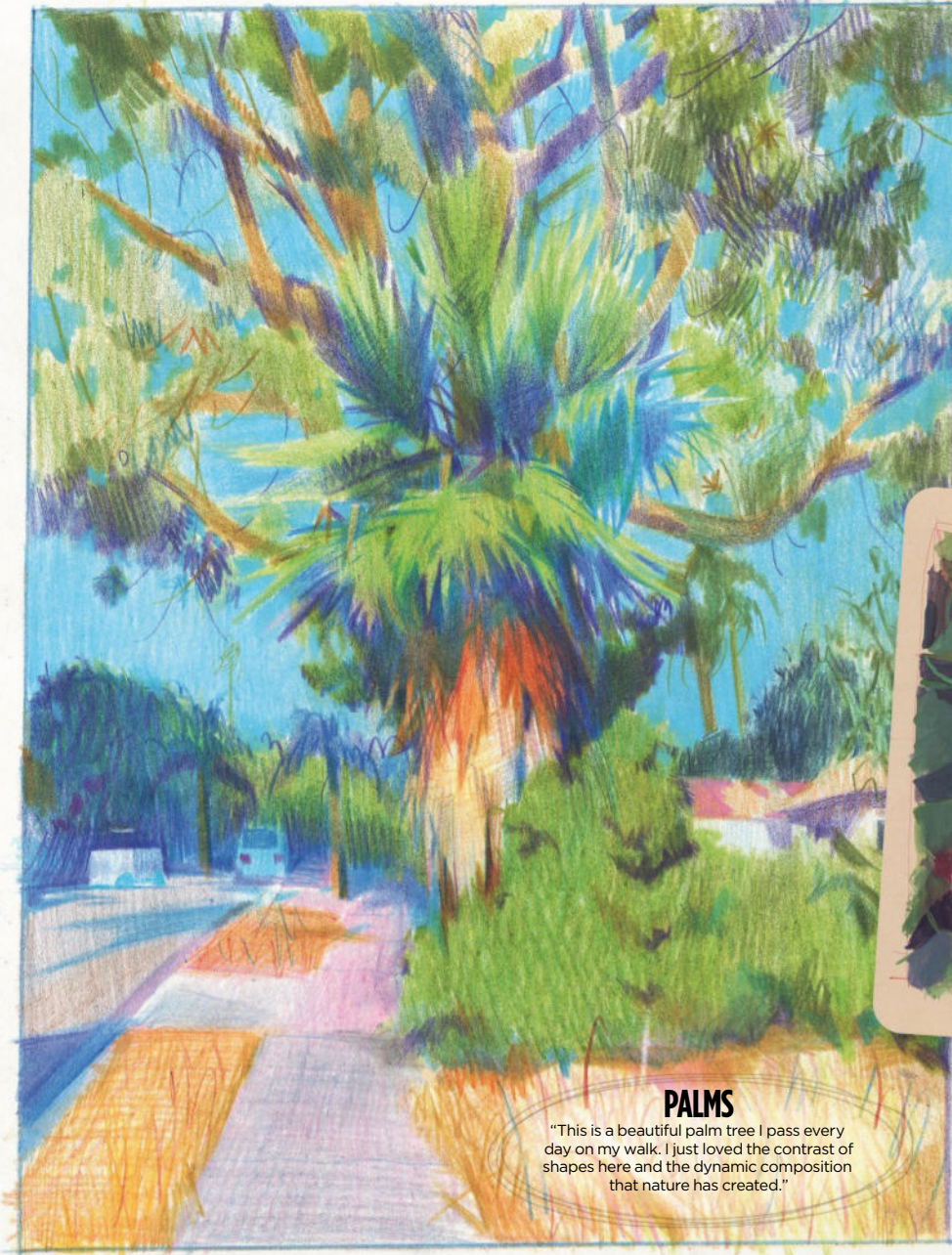
HOOLIGANS

"My friend, Jessen Cao, introduced me to these delicious fish from Alaska called hooligans. I've just been obsessed with them ever since."



PARK SUNSET

"I live near this cute little park and every time I come here with my dogs and wife, everything just feels at peace and beautiful. Cherish the little moments."



PALMS

"This is a beautiful palm tree I pass every day on my walk. I just loved the contrast of shapes here and the dynamic composition that nature has created."



SUNSET

"There's just something awesome about the light in Los Angeles. This was done with only three colour pencils!"



MORNING GLORY

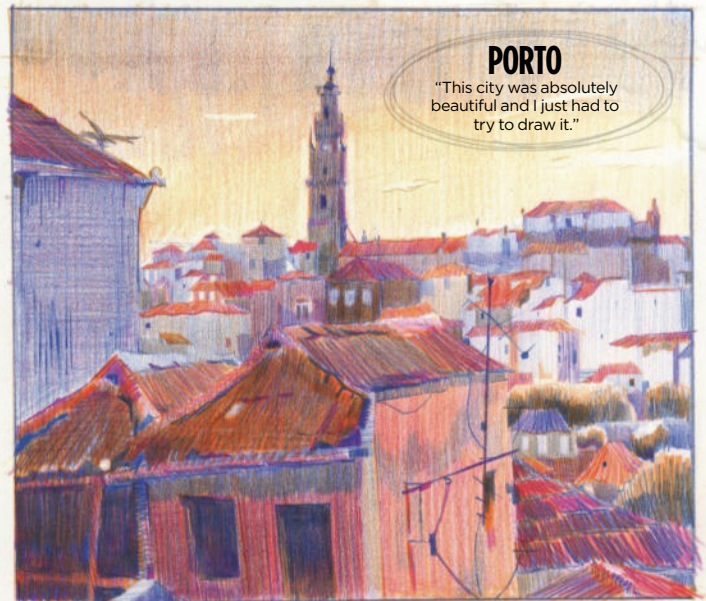
"I've always found it hard to tackle nature and I had the amazing opportunity to take a workshop with Christina Weaver at Warrior Art Camp. I learned so much from this painting! Done en plein air."

ALASKAN SNOW

"I wanted to capture the serenity and emptiness of Alaska. I limited my pencil choices to three colours for this drawing."



“The thing that I love most is travelling with my best friend and wife... I cherish this moment”



PORTO

"This city was absolutely beautiful and I just had to try to draw it."

Björn Hurri

The entertainment artist's sketchbook is a haven for breeding new ideas with a science fiction twist

Artist PROFILE

Björn Hurri

LOCATION: England



Björn Hurri is a veteran entertainment industry artist with more than 150 published titles over 20 years. He is currently an

art director and lead artist for an outsourcing company called Opus Artz. Björn has been educating artists for over 10 years on a wide variety of educational platforms and in hundreds of workshops across Europe. As an advocate for daily sketching, he has been making a daily one-hour sketch on his Discord channel for eight years.

www.artstation.com/bjornhurri

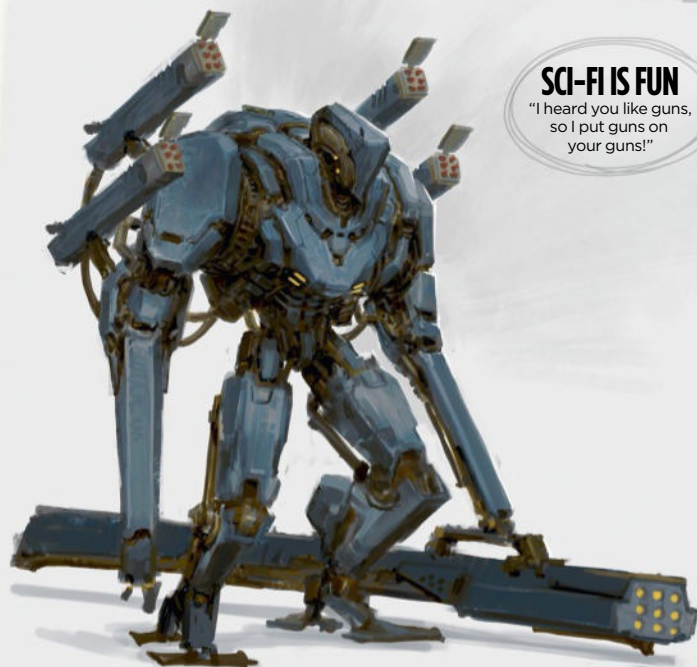
ALIEN SOLDIERS

"Some fun warm-ups that are all about searching for odd and alternative shape combinations."



SCI-FI IS FUN

"I heard you like guns, so I put guns on your guns!"



“I create key art moments now and then just to see what new ideas I could generate”





CRITICAL HIT

"I create key art moments now and then just to see what new ideas the approach could generate."



BLUE AND PEACH

"The starting point for this piece was two colours at opposing ends of the spectrum."



HEAT OF BATTLE

"I began this sketch with a selection of strong, clean bands of colour that I then tried to manipulate into something."

SACRED MAGIC

"A spellcaster who has become petrified by magical inscriptions."



SACRED SERPENT MONK

"A key art experiment on a random prompt. I wanted to pursue a dramatic moment."

"I love testing out new artistic recipes in my sketches"

CLAMPED VALUES

"I set up a gradient that clamped all the values into four bands and then sketched with it."

PLAYTIME

"I love testing out new recipes in my sketches. This piece came from trying another new approach."



DON'T STAND STILL

"Here I wanted to put the focus on the way I used the light, as well as the storytelling."

INETA

"A study of my mother-in-law, where I tried to push for a more painterly look."



EXPERIMENT

"This chap is one of my many explorations of cyberpunk themes."



MILESTONE

"This mighty fellow and his massive weaponry were created in celebration of me hitting 40,000 followers on Instagram!"



MOUTH IN MOUTH

"A fun experiment with forcing shapes into other shapes."

Reka Harte

A treasured creation finally hits the page among a variety of character designs both traditional and digital

Artist PROFILE

Reka Harte
LOCATION: US

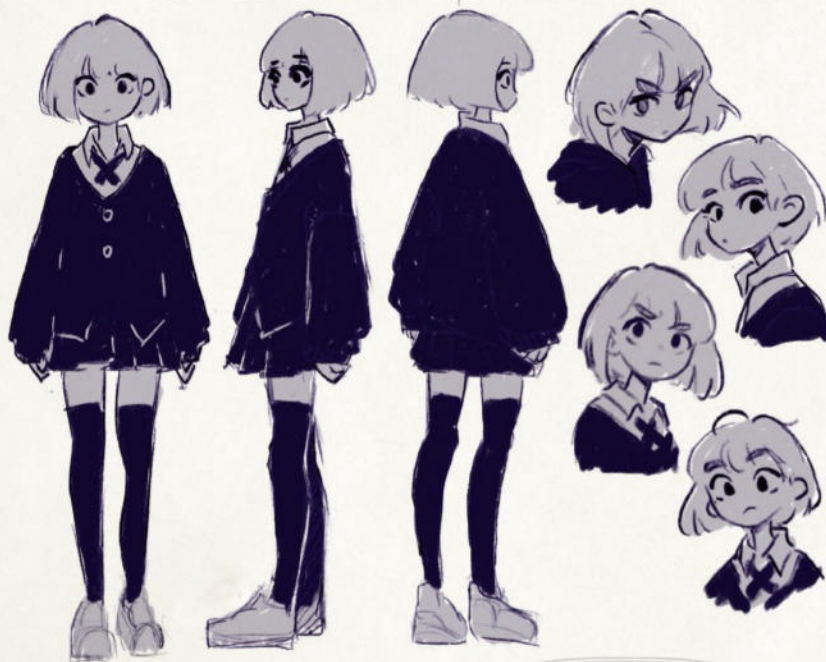


Reka is a comic artist, illustrator and designer from San Francisco. She started her career in game design and found a love for crafting stories and experiences that shift perspectives. Today, Reka runs a Discord community for other visionary artists, as well as creating zines, comics, fashion and videos to show her artistic process online and help inspire her fellow artists.

<https://rekaharte.com>

EMI

"The main character for my upcoming comic. She has been front of my mind for so many years now that it's incredible to see her come to life. My writer and I are both ecstatic to be able to reveal Emi and her mind-bending story to the world."



TRADITIONAL WORK

"I've been loving working traditionally lately because the marks I make feel real and complex. Even the mistakes feel valuable because they tell the story of how I create. Working in pen helped me learn to love the marks I used to call flaws."

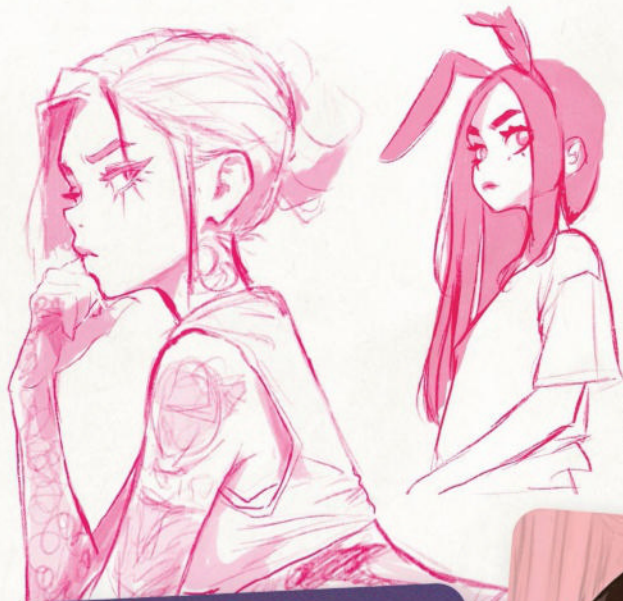
MY PROFILE IMAGE

"For years now, I've had the same profile concept of me with a baseball cap. I revamp it almost every year to stay up to date with my current style and branding."



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATIONS

"I will always love digital, because it allows me to fully play without fear and get surreal brightness in my colours. Often my favourite pieces come from warm-up sessions gone awry."

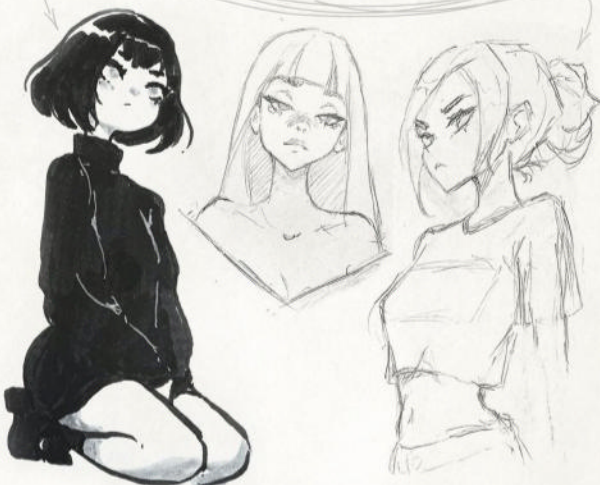


SIGNATURE DOODLES

"I offered tiny doodles to those who purchased my artbook and absolutely loved creating them. I used alcohol markers and Micron pens on mixed-media paper cut into two-inch squares."

SKETCHBOOK WARM-UPS

"I love filling my sketchbook with little warm-up sketches that get my hand ready for larger works. I use mechanical pencils, Micron pens and alcohol markers sporadically."



“I’ve been loving working traditionally lately... Even the mistakes feel valuable”

Dolly Chris

Venture into the brand new worlds dreamed up by the imaginative illustrator as he sketches sci-fi creations

Artist PROFILE

Dolly Chris

LOCATION: China



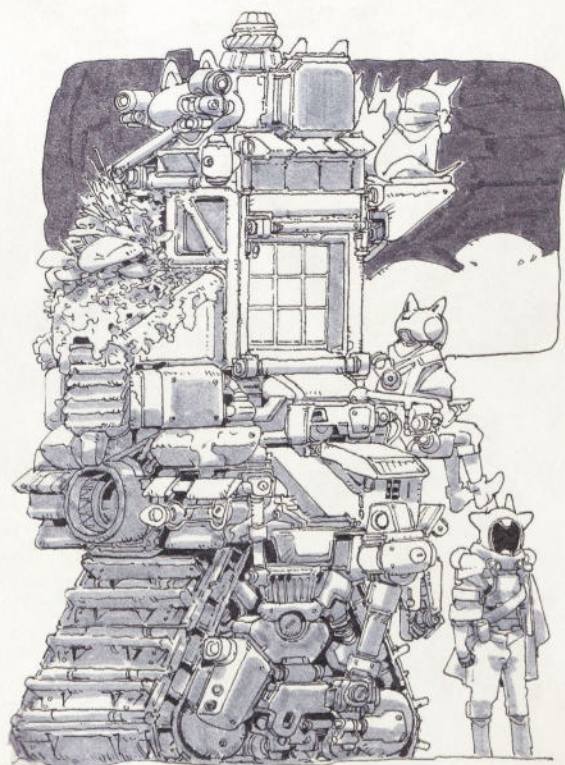
Zhiyang Fu, also known as Dolly Chris, is an illustrator from China with a passion for sketching and cats.

Over the past 14 years, his career has mainly been focused on creating concepts for characters and scenes, storyboards and illustration work, with plenty of stunning science fiction artwork to be found throughout his ingenuitive sketchbooks.

<https://chrisfzy.artstation.com>

OUTPOST

"Small mobile buildings that can provide shelter for inhabitants."



FEMALE MECHANIC

"A mechanic scans, inspects and repairs tech with the help of a handheld device."



FIGHTING

"Two bionic carriers are gunning for each other out in the Gobi Desert, manoeuvring and fighting in different areas like battleships in the Age of Discovery."

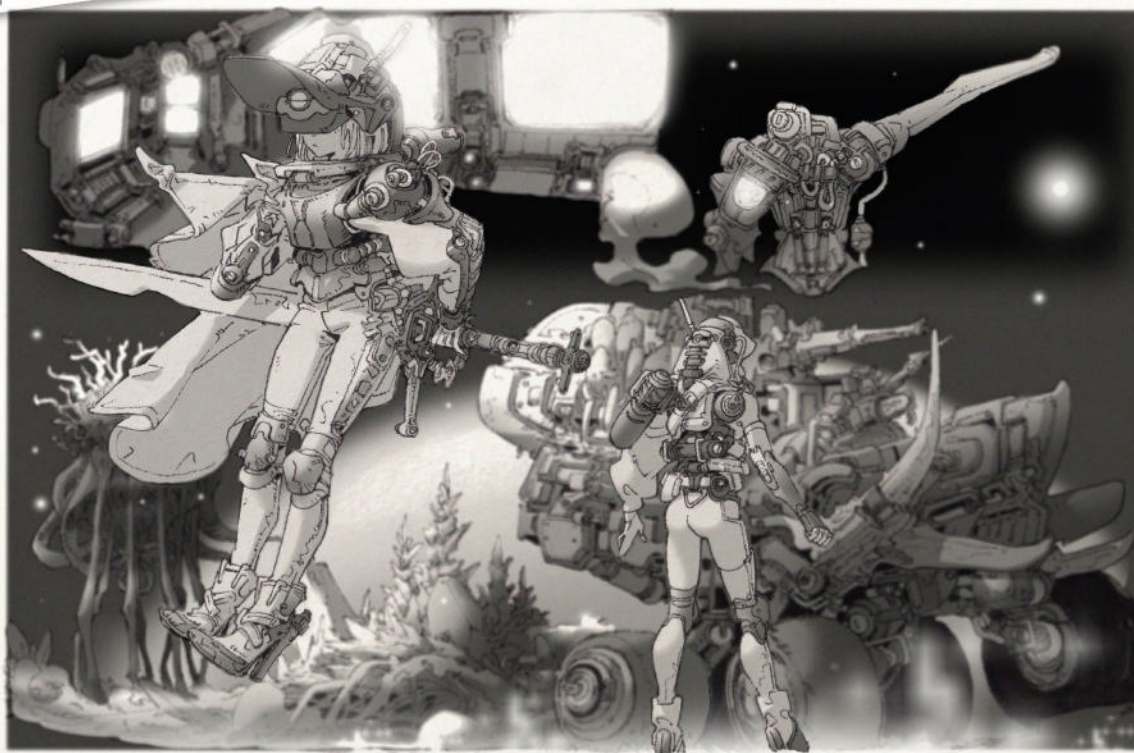


“They manoeuvre and fight a lot like battleships during the Age of Discovery”

WASTELAND WITCH

"The witches of this world must go through a long apprenticeship, and only after passing their mentor's tests and trials can they become a Wasteland Witch."





ADVENTURE TEAM

"Exploration vehicles and team members, who all have unique characteristics. The carrier has living quarters, mineral refining equipment, a small-calibre cannon, and even a harpoon gun for hunting."

LIGHT BULB ADVENTURER

"This race's source of life is in the bulb itself. Outside air is exchanged through the breathing valve to drive the spark that generates the being's energy."

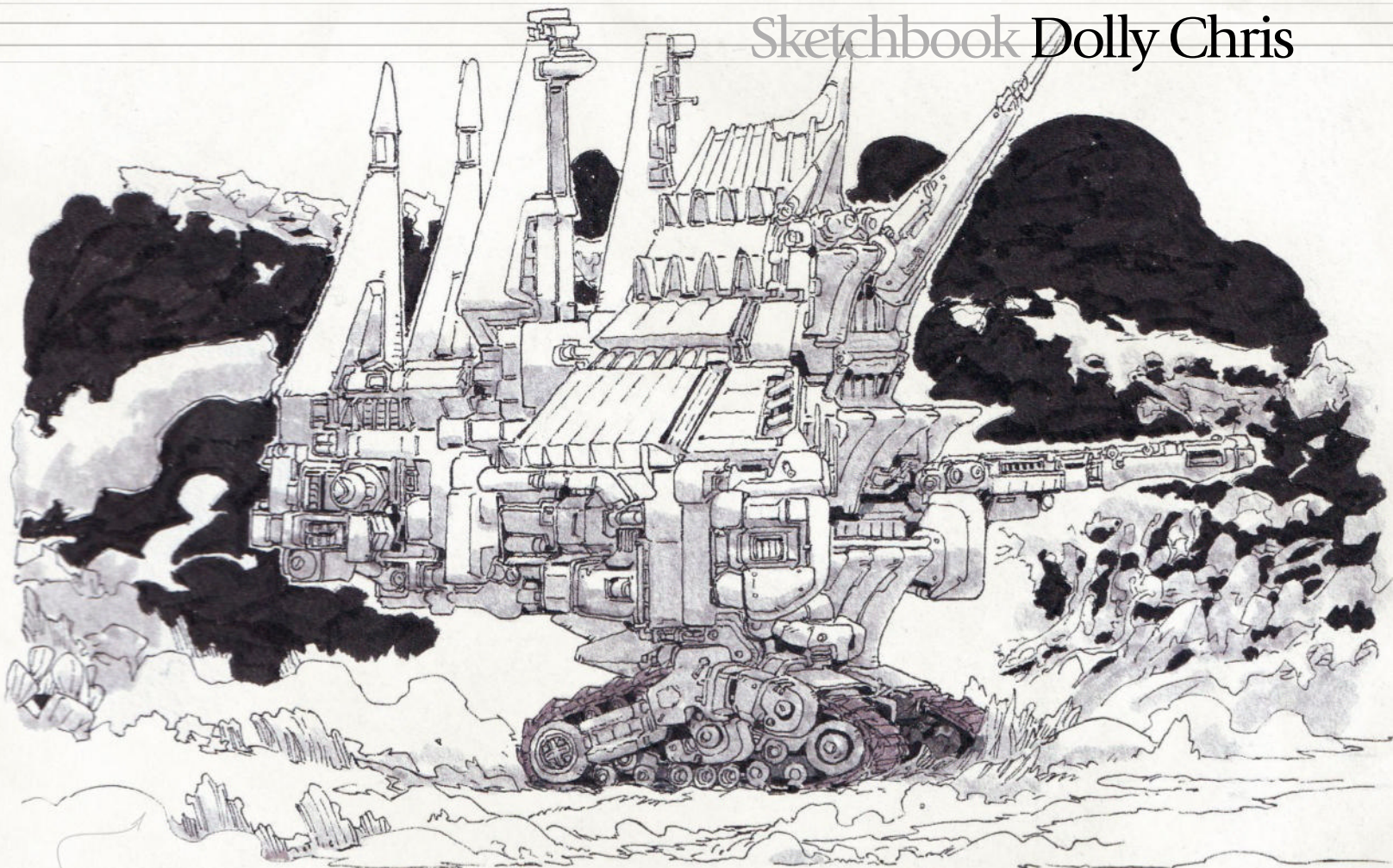
“The most famous and distinctive stores in the small settlements are run by a light bulb family”



SHOPPING TRIP

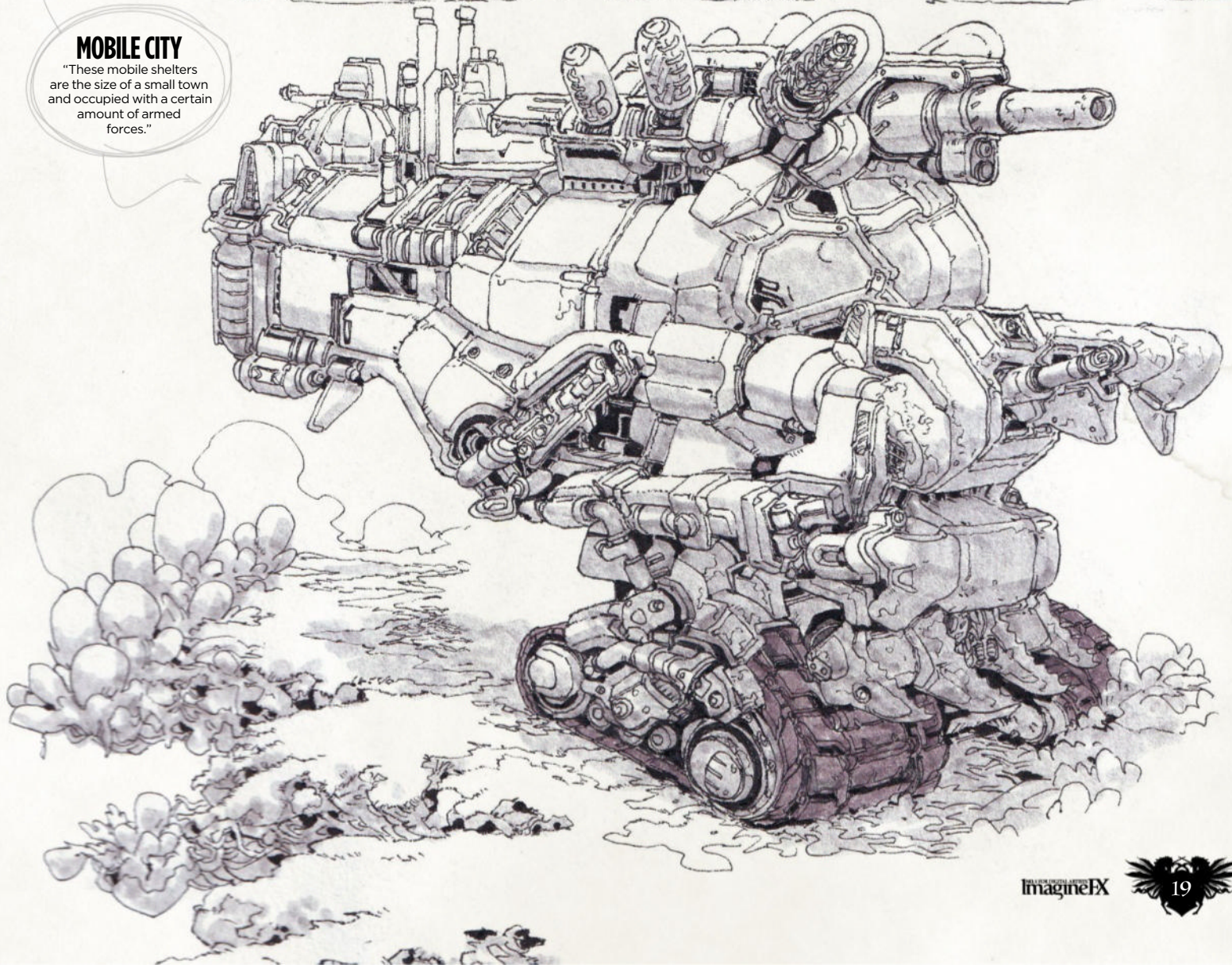
"A convenience store in a small settlement. The most famous and distinctive stores are operated by a light bulb family."





MOBILE CITY

"These mobile shelters are the size of a small town and occupied with a certain amount of armed forces."



Interview

Slawek Fedorczuk

Dominic Carter talks to the concept artist about what keeps him motivated and the advantages of using physical sketchbooks



Never think it's too late to follow your passions. Just look at Slawek Fedorczuk, who has created art for Blur Studio, LINE, Google and Valve to name but a few. He may be working for high-profile clients now, but even Slawek was worried he'd left it too late to break into the industry. We caught up with him to hear how he learned the skills, why he loves details, and what the online future looks like for creatives.

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

I started learning art seriously when I was 18. It might sound funny today, but at the time I felt really behind. Seeing people my age already drawing regularly since they were children, attending art colleges and joining fine art academies, I felt like I was too late to the party.



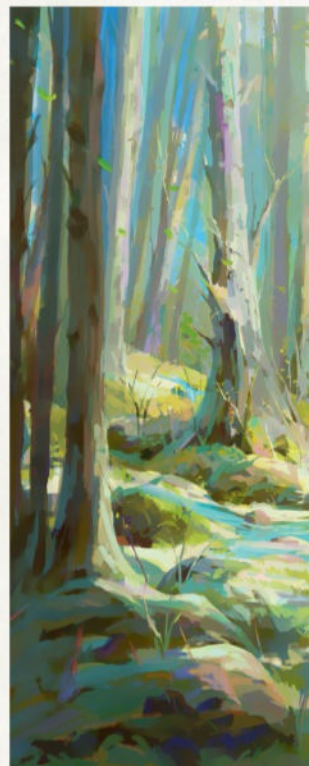
Because of that, I had a certain level of dedication to learning; I spent almost every weekend drawing. Not a healthy lifestyle if you think about being social! However, that practice and independent learning helped me get into 3D animation school, which was a fantastic experience, especially 13 years ago when places were rare.

After school, I got my first job in a local game studio. I worked in-house

VILLAGE

"I had great fun painting this, trying to make a winter snowy scene warm, welcoming and cosy."

for a couple of years, but I was well aware that there were no major studios in my area. Because of that, I asked if I could work part-time, dedicating the rest of the time to practice and learning. Once again, that discipline and taking the time to learn slower ➡



Interview Slawek Fedorczuk

“Practice and independent learning helped me get into 3D animation school, which was a fantastic experience”



EXPLORING

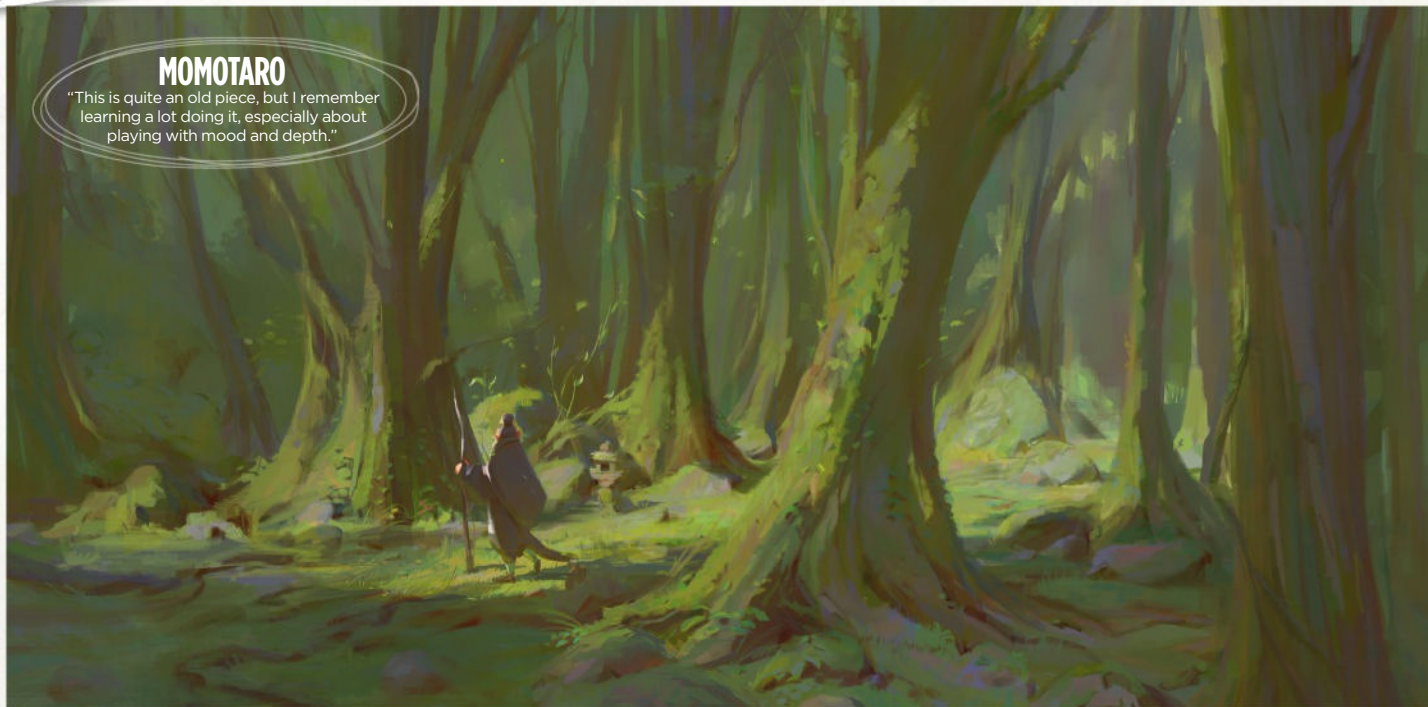
“This scene took so many attempts and I needed multiple sketches to get the readability, despite all of the busy details. It was a tough piece to do, but I’m glad I went through all the sketching early!”

EARLY SPRING

“Keeping a sketchbook around to write and scribble ideas is super helpful. Here I created an entire list of ideas for some characters and individual buildings.”

MOMOTARO

"This is quite an old piece, but I remember learning a lot doing it, especially about playing with mood and depth."



➤➤ started to show results: I began to get noticed by studios I admired and they offered me freelance work. I continue to do this today while teaching and mentoring other artists.

Which artists have inspired you the most and why?

This is something that has changed over the years and will likely continue to do so. In recent years, the biggest inspirations were traditional painters from the 19th and early 20th centuries: people like Frank Weston Benson, Edgar Alwin Payne, Joaquín Sorolla and Olga Boznańska. Nowadays I'm also looking more for people who can grab you and take you to their world.

As a kid, I was so excited to get a new volume of the Asterix comic book. It was less about the story – which I still love – and more about how each book was a new place and a new bunch of characters, filled with small details and funny gags starting from the first page. Years later, I was lucky enough to

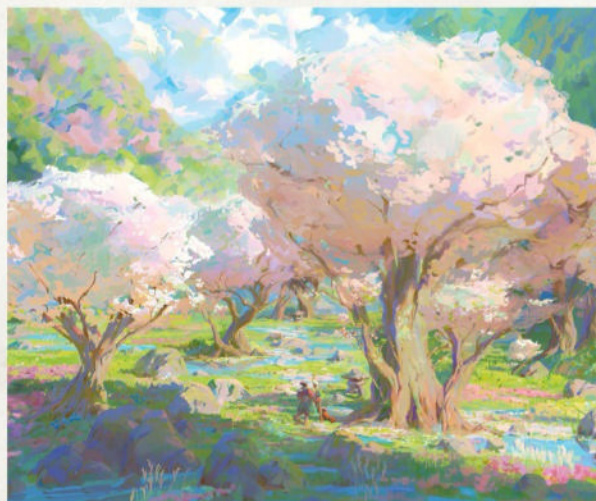
stumble upon a copy of *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. It's a wordless comic/ picture book with a gripping story and a unique, highly imaginative world. In my memory, discovering this book was almost like finding treasure. I find this kind of experience super inspiring.

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

To begin I was inspired by the current world of concept art and illustration. It took me a decent amount of time to start appreciating traditional art; I guess I was just ignorant. But when it finally happened, it was a life-changer. It also opened up my appreciation for observation and the idea that 'there is painting everywhere', which some painters tend to say. Many times it's about discovering brand new artists, learning about their inspiration, and then following that rabbit hole of what inspired them.

You specialise in environment design, colour scripts and early visual development. What attracted you to these areas?

I think these areas combine a lot of things I really enjoy. Creating worlds, having small details for the viewer to



CHERRY BLOSSOM

"Cherry trees are always my favourite to paint; it's always fun to find a way to make them a bit different from the previous attempts."

discover, getting the mood of the story, and giving you a sense of the universe with a single image.

Especially with colour scripts, there's almost a magical quality where you can clearly see the final product very early. That's rewarding, and from a production viewpoint gives you the confidence that you know where you're heading rather than trying to guess and hope for the best.

Which tools do you use to create your artwork?

Nowadays I prioritise efficiency, so I'm just using tools that are quick and easy for me. I mainly work digitally, on a desktop, because that's something I've done for many years at this point. I'll occasionally do something on an iPad or tiny sketches on paper, but that's a very small part of the process.

Artist PROFILE

Slawek Fedorcuk

LOCATION: Poland



FAVOURITE ARTISTS:
Frank Weston Benson,
Edgar Payne, Joaquín
Sorolla, Olga Boznańska

MEDIA: Photoshop,
Rebelle, colour pencils, gouache
WEB: <https://slawekfedorcuk.site>

“Nowadays I'm looking for artists who can grab you and take you to their world”

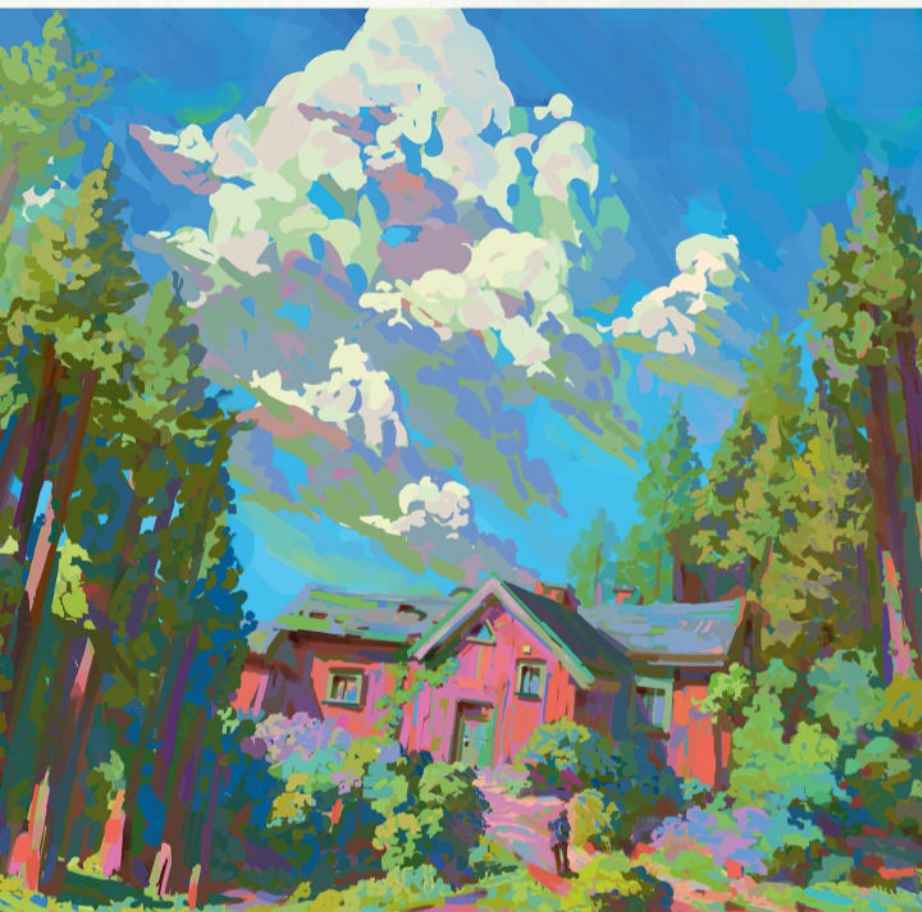


FLOWER POTS

"I enjoy filling spaces with small, fun details. Here I wanted to make all the flower pots different in shapes and colours to bring the scene to life."

RED CABIN

"This one started with just a quick study. That's why I like sketching: you never know if one of your sketches will become a bigger, finished work!"



FIVE TIPS FOR USING COLOUR IN LANDSCAPES

Slawek explains key factors that artists should keep in mind when building colourful environments

1 Start with the idea

Having some idea early on always helps. It can be open and vague, and somewhere down the road you can even go in a different direction, but you don't want to work randomly without any plan at all. The initial idea can be simple: depicting a warm sunset or covering most of the scene with deep blue shadows. When you have this idea, all the colour choices should support it, and you want to avoid everything that could weaken the landscape.

2 Organic construction

Most of the forms found in landscapes are soft and organic. Because of that, you want to push and describe the form as much as possible. For example, when you're painting the top of the tree, it can be just a sphere. If there's a rock, imagine it as a cube. The log could be another cube or a cylinder. The volume underneath helps to show both the colour of the object and the light clearly.

3 Figure out the lighting

Speaking of lighting, the more you know about it, the more nuance you can bring to your landscapes. If you learn more about sunlight, you can start showing things such as overexposure, bounce light, and light going through thin leaves. This will make your scenes more believable. Now you can add many layers of colour with clear reasons behind them.

4 Observe your surroundings

When you learn all that theory, it's great if you can put it into practice. But don't forget to look around and see it in motion in real life! If you learned about the atmosphere, start looking at things in the distance and ask yourself why you know it's far away, and begin to analyse that step by step. How much contrast is there? Do you see the local colour of the landscape, or is it affected by something? Is it as saturated as objects close to you? If you look at the landscapes and ask these questions, you'll start making the connection between what you learn and how it changes the colours.

5 Use references

Working from a reference can be difficult, and you'll recognise something is missing. You can address it more effectively by combining structure, theory and observation. You'll start noticing when more light should be in the shadow, but the photo does a poor job of depicting that. Or when there should be some bounce light. So next time you use reference, you'll know what to pick, alter, and do entirely on your own initiative!

DAWN

"I painted this inspired by the early morning view from my window. I loved the strong lighting, so even though the final scene changed a lot in the process, it still captured the initial mood and lighting."

➔ A lot of your work is digital, but are sketchbooks still an important part of your workflow? If so, how do you use them?

I still use sketchbooks to create thumbnails, write ideas, or figure out compositions. For me, they're also a great way to capture an idea quickly or just take a break from a screen.

Do you have a preferred type of sketchbook that you like to use?

I try not to be too precious with my sketchbooks. I know from personal experience that a cheaper, simpler sketchbook usually allows me to scribble and draw without any worry. I also prefer to keep the sketchbooks for myself, so I can be as rough as I need without having to worry that I'm creating bad sketches.

“It's important to recognise what energises me and what makes me more passive”

Why do you think sketchbooks continue to be invaluable today, even for artists who primarily work digitally?

This could be a me thing, but I notice that I make different choices when I'm using a different medium. I think there's also something about starting over and doing another sketch, rather than repeatedly changing the same image, which is so common when you're working digitally.

Your mentorship classes help other artists to stay motivated. But how do you stay motivated?

That's a great question! It heavily depends on the situation. There are moments where, quite frankly, it's mainly about pushing myself just to start the work. And then, after a moment, I'm already engaged. That's something I find happening within myself quite often.



SANDSTONE

"Scale is something that I like to push a lot. For this one, I kept changing the scale of characters and architecture to achieve a sense of space and depth within the scene."

Other times when I do that and it doesn't do the trick for some reason, I try to look at something else. This could be artists that I admire. Or perhaps some idea that I wanted to practise but never really committed to. Maybe even just doing a study to take the pressure off.

But with all that being said, there are also times when I, and probably many artists, just need a break. Go play, read or listen to something inspiring; go outside and grab the excitement from something you enjoy. For me, it's just important to recognise what energises me and what makes me even more passive. Watching a TV show can be relaxing, but it never gives me any spark. On the other hand, watching or reading an interview with an artist or a documentary from some production can be hugely inspiring. ➔

Interview Slawek Fedorczuk

FOREST SHRINE

"I tried to make this scene serene and dreamlike, with many soft edges and everything blending into big, abstract shapes."



SUNNY EVENING

"It may be tricky to imagine, but this started as a darker, blueish picture. I felt like it was perhaps boring, so I did a new sketch, trying something completely different."

➔ **Of all the work you've created, what are you most proud of?**

I've been very fortunate to work on a few dream projects. Once I was thinking about working on a card game, and then I was invited to do visual development for *Altered* early in the game's development. Another time I made a *Starfield* animation short while waiting for the game's release. I've had many situations like this.

But truthfully, I get the most satisfaction from working with my students. I've had many situations where, after the last meeting with a student or class, I get pretty emotional. I really care about these relationships and the future of these artists.

Like many artists you're moving from Instagram to Cara. What does the platform offer artists that other social media sites don't? And do you think it will be the best online home for artists in the future?

I'm not sure if I joined Cara because of any unique features. I think, like many artists, it's difficult for me to continue relying on other platforms with their current stance on AI.

Another of the challenges is that these platforms can often be pretty soul-crushing and ruthless with their



COPENHAGEN

"I started this image based on a photo I took. My photo wasn't great at all, so I relied much more on memory to capture the initial mood and intense sunlight on the street."



“One challenge is that social platforms can often be pretty soul-crushing and ruthless with their algorithms”

HAYSTACKS

"I wanted to challenge myself to work mainly with a single orange hue, using orange for both the light and neutral, cool shadow areas."



algorithms. It can be tough and hit you emotionally when you constantly lose viewership or don't get engagement. I talk with friends, and I recognise how often we start to doubt what we do. We tend to think this is because of the quality of the work, and perhaps that there's something wrong with what we're posting.

I hope Cara will solve some of these issues with the unpredictability of other platforms. There's a need for a place where artists can feel safe and not at the mercy of the trends seen in other tech companies. But it's not easy, and artists also need to show up and support the platform!

What's next for you? Do you have any exciting projects coming up, or areas you'd like to explore?

I mentioned earlier that I've started to appreciate more and more artists who create not only visuals, illustrations, concepts or designs, but also stories and worlds. With that in mind, I'm slowly working on a story that I want to turn into a game. At this point, it's more a side thing; I'm trying to learn about tools and writing in general. I'll continue doing freelance concept art and illustrations, plus teaching, but

this process will take over most of the time I previously dedicated to doing personal work.

What advice would you give to other artists thinking of becoming concept artists and illustrators?

The main challenge I see with upcoming artists is that social media can give you a highly distorted image of the industry. Sketches, studies and simple compositions are usually the most popular work on these platforms.

The problem is, I'm not sure if that's very helpful if you want to get a job. Usually, someone in a hiring position wants to have confidence that you can do finished work; ideally you should share examples of that. So it would be best if you found a way to create something that isn't half-baked.

This industry is also like any other competitive field: it can be tough. You can apply to many jobs and hear nothing back, or your project can be cancelled right before day one. That's painful but not that uncommon. I always remind myself not to get discouraged, and I recommend you do the same. With that plus dedication and commitment, I'm sure, eventually, you'll get your job as an artist! ●

SPRINGTIME

"As this piece is about blossoming trees, I tried to find any excuse to introduce pale pink everywhere; on signs, walls, flowers, and even the concrete!"



BLOSSOMING AVENUE

We get a walkthrough of Slawek's process for painting a street during spring and how his choice of colours reflects the season

This image showed me something I often see: having goals, moods and feelings that you want to depict makes future decisions much more manageable.

I struggled quite a bit to finish this piece. It initially started as a study of a street, but then I thought it would be fun to bring in a few cherry trees. It was way more tricky to add them than I expected. After a few different tries, I realised that the best way would be to focus on just a single tree in the middle and paint the other ones in a loose, suggestive manner. For springtime,

it makes sense to go with something much softer and suggestive rather than sharp corners and hard edges. So even though I wanted to paint them quite precisely, I ultimately didn't need to.

Finding a way to show the power lines gave me another headache. There would be many of them in real life, which would make the image super busy. But again, I didn't want too much tech or an industrial feel for a scene like this.

Lastly, and this is the crucial part, I wanted to make it clear that this is an early

spring scene with a lot of warmth and strong light. I tried to find every single opportunity to emphasise this with colour: the road is not a random grey but a mixture of warm orange and pink; and the signs, street lights, buildings and clouds are all warm, relying on a similar colour.

These choices can result in an image that is too one-note, too simple, so I wanted to find a way to balance them out. To achieve that, I wanted to have quite a few greener, cooler notes across the picture to give it that extra layer of variation.

Stuart Kim

Unique creatures and characters take centre stage in the video game artist's fantastically fluid sketches

Artist PROFILE

Stuart Kim

LOCATION: US

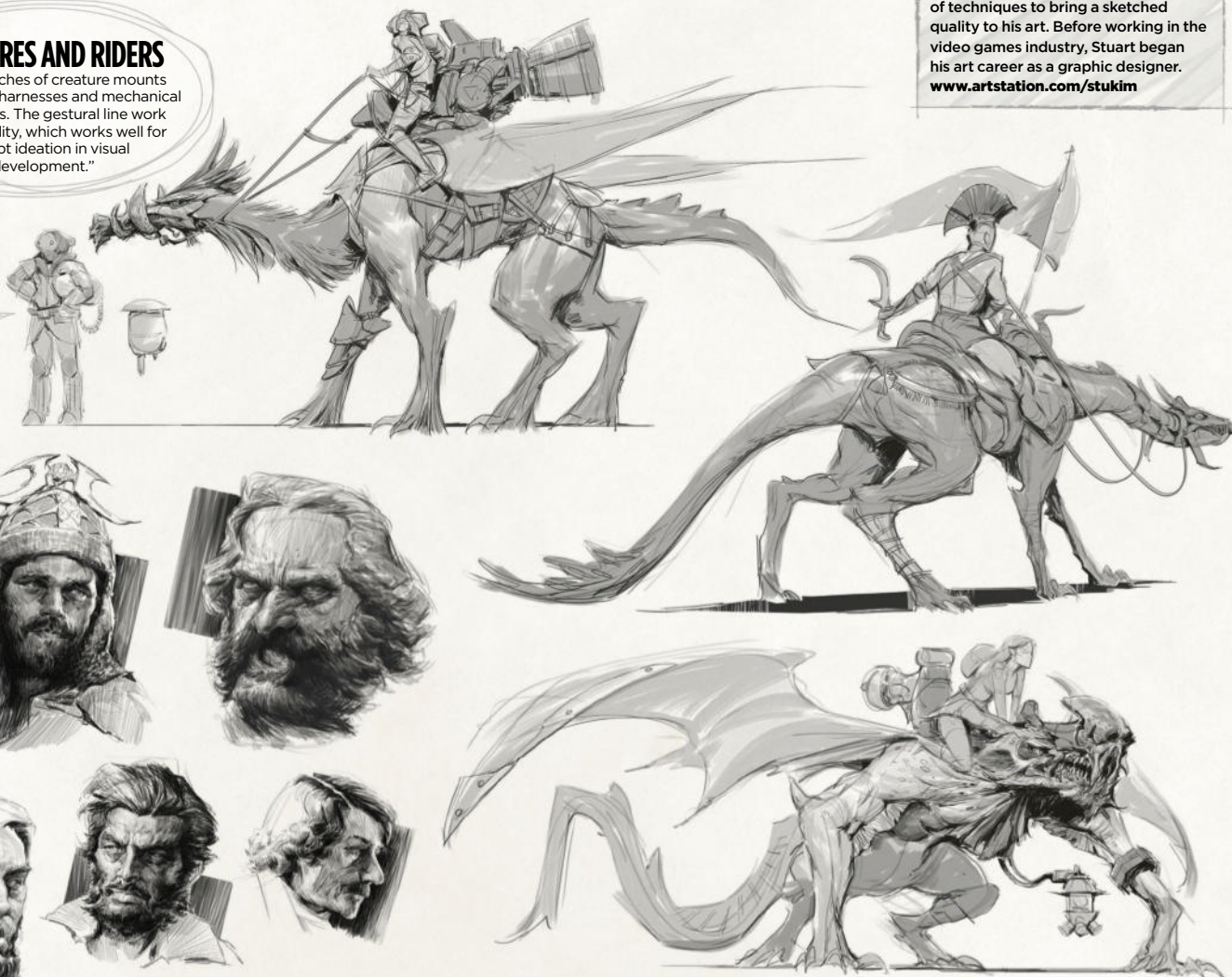


Stuart is a principal concept artist at Amazon Games. He mainly uses digital tools, but loves creating a traditional look in his work and enjoys using a variety of techniques to bring a sketched quality to his art. Before working in the video games industry, Stuart began his art career as a graphic designer.

www.artstation.com/stukim

CREATURES AND RIDERS

"Loose sketches of creature mounts adorned with harnesses and mechanical contraptions. The gestural line work evokes fluidity, which works well for concept ideation in visual development."



HEAD SKETCHES

"Drawing human heads is quite the challenge. I try to do them from time to time for practice. When doing so, I'm always trying to capture a sense of personality through facial expressions, even if it's subtle."

MURSI TRIBE

"Here are some sketches done from reference of the Mursi people with their elaborate head ornaments. They were done using a graphite pencil in a Moleskine journal."



LOXODONTA

"I enjoyed sketching this powerful elephant and rider, especially adorning the elements and patterning over the head, ears and ivory tusks. I also pushed the scale vertically to convey a feeling of grandness in the design."



MONSTER EATER TYPE-1

"This is a sketched character wearing urban-tech clothing with an oversized weapon. It was inspired by Japanese culture and manga, and integrated with graphical design elements using a colour scheme that I don't normally use."



モンスターを刈る

MONSTER EATER TYPE-2

"This is another sketched character wearing urban gear, equipped with a katana on her back. Again inspired by Japanese culture and manga, combined with graphical design elements in a blue and red colour scheme."



“The gestural line work evokes fluidity, which works well for concept ideation”

Charissa Curriel

Embrace the chaos as the digital artist experiments with colours and designs in her vibrant portraits

Artist PROFILE

Charissa Curriel

LOCATION: US

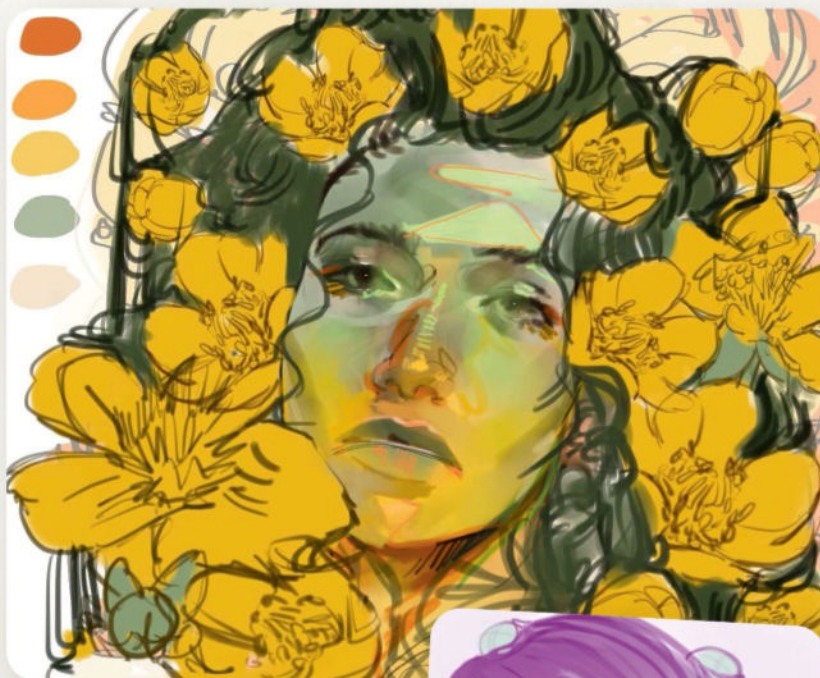
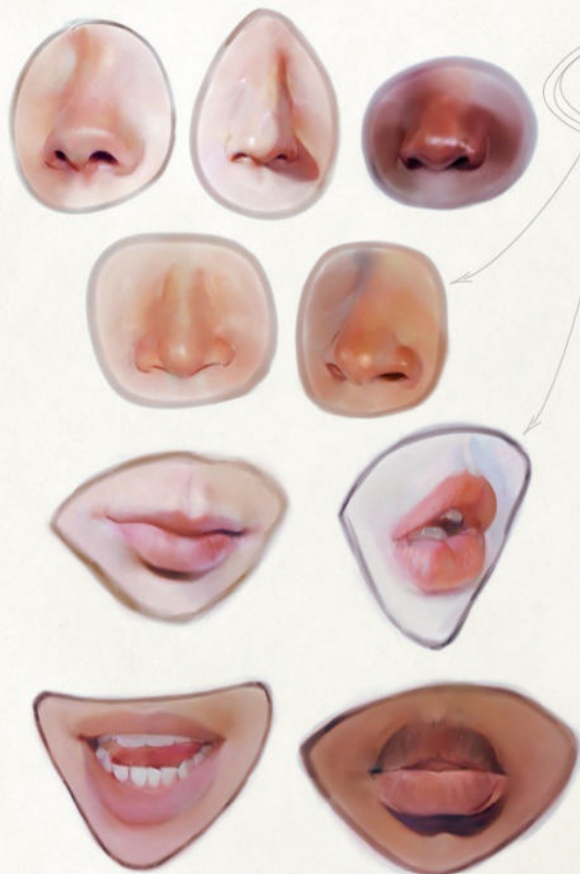


Charissa is a freelance digital artist who loves painting portraits, colour studies and concept art. Her art journey began with traditional mediums in college, but she predominantly works in digital art now. Charissa has painted illustrations for tabletop RPGs, TCGs and artbooks. She also loves travelling, music from all over, gaming and crochet.

www.charissacurriel.com

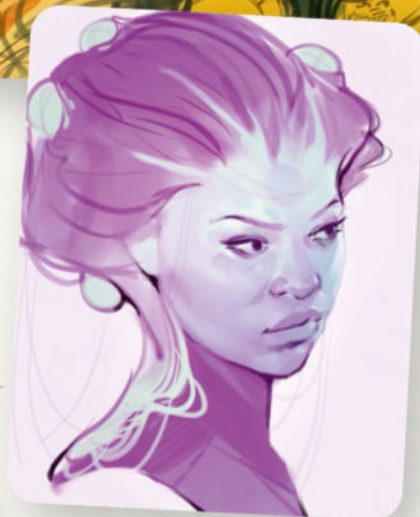
SEMI-REALISTIC STUDIES

"Diversity and inclusivity are important to me, so I enjoy studies involving a wide variety of skin tones. Painting skin is like painting rainbows; you can gently layer in so many colours to give it more life."



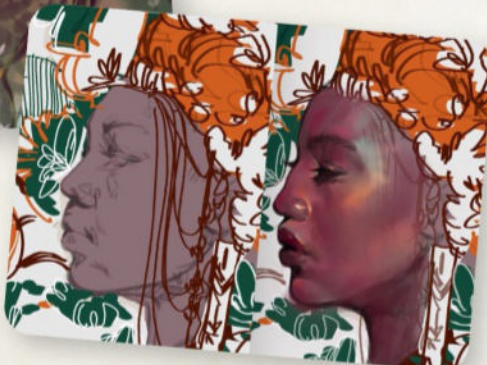
LIMITED PALETTES

"Figuring out how to make a set amount of colours harmonise is fun. These studies help me find combinations to add to my visual library, whether I like or dislike them."

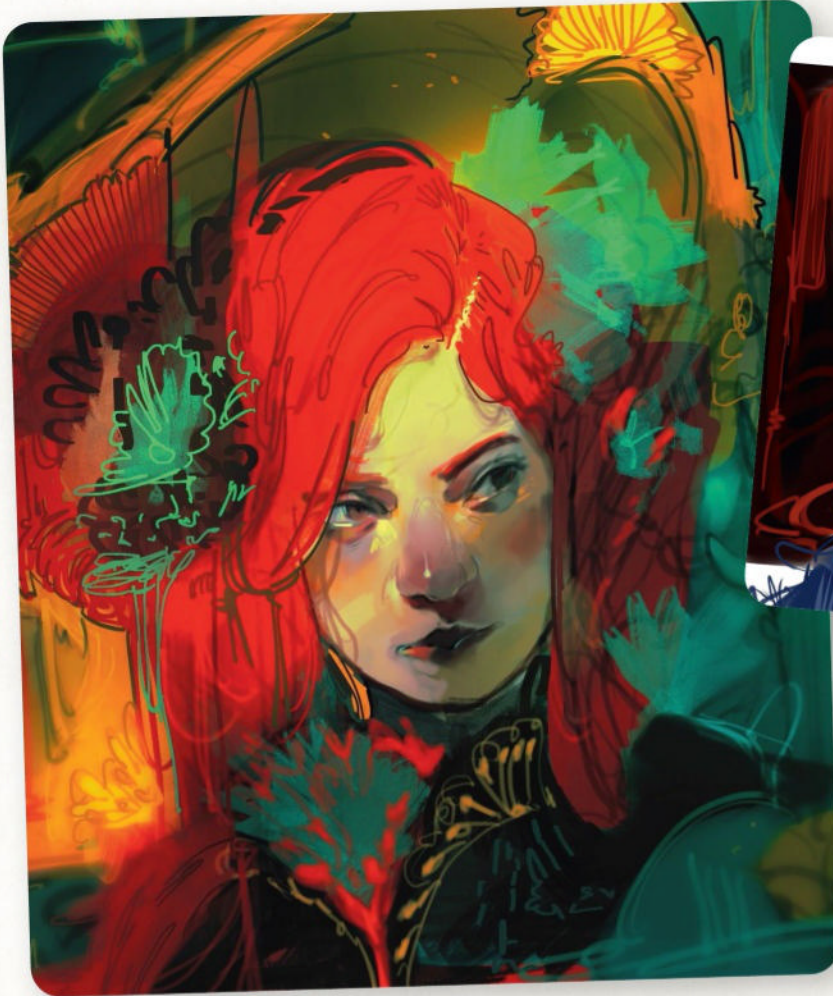


NEON HIGHLIGHTS

"My world changed when I started experimenting with non-white highlights. Why not neon oranges blending into teals along a cheek, a touch of lavender at the corner of an eye, or blue on the brow? It's all fun!"

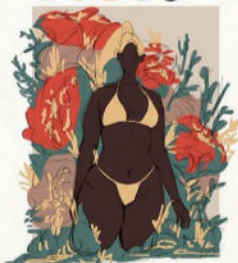


“Figuring out how best to make a set amount of colours harmonise is fun”



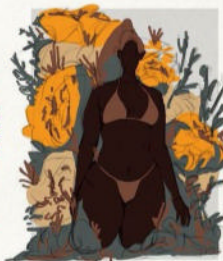
ENERGY

"Chaos in art is life-giving to me. I swirl colours around on the canvas, use the shapes as throwaway guidelines, and add lines for texture to decide where I want the flow of the piece to go."



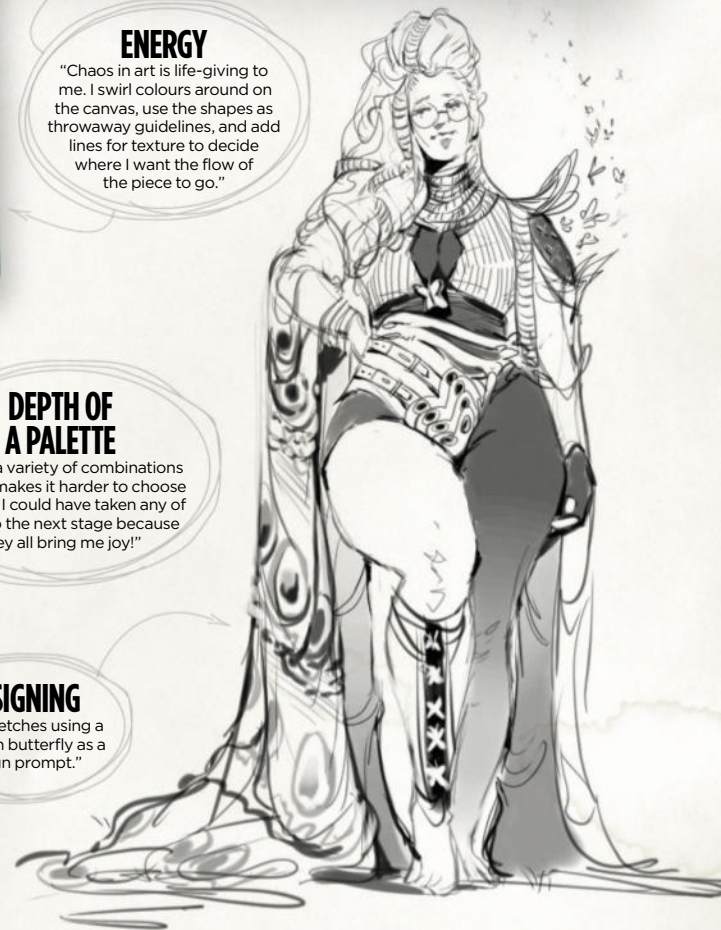
DEPTH OF A PALETTE

"When a variety of combinations work, it makes it harder to choose just one. I could have taken any of these to the next stage because they all bring me joy!"



DESIGNING

"Line sketches using a monarch butterfly as a design prompt."



Braden May

The sci-fi obsessed artist breaks out his sketchbooks to show us an electric series of designs from starships to mechs

Artist PROFILE

Braden May

LOCATION: England



A senior concept artist of eight years' experience in the video games industry, Braden currently works at DPS Games. He grew up playing Metal Gear Solid, Final Fantasy and Halo, which explains his love of sci-fi's many shapes and forms.

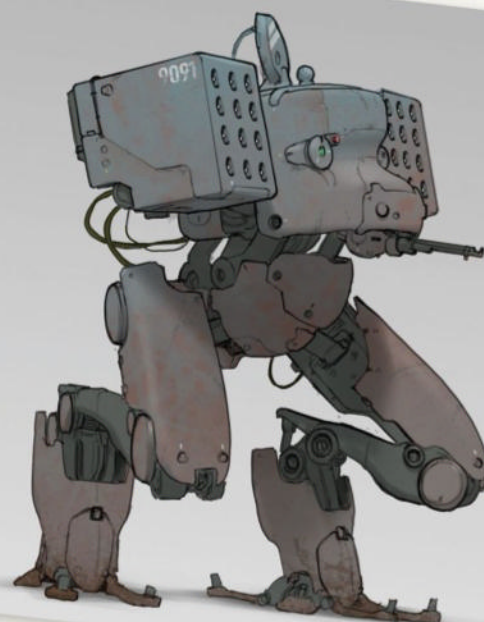
www.artstation.com/bradenmay

M25 3024

"I worked on this A5 page over a couple of months during coffee shop visits. I'd start with a light pencil sketch then use 0.05, 0.5 and 0.7mm pens to finish them off."

MECH 9091

"Very much a comfort-zone doodle for March of Robots 2023. Sketching digitally allows me to push drawings a bit further, as I can fix mistakes and add colour easily."



TUGM8

"If Inktober rolls around and I'm not feeling very creative, I'll use the time to do some studies. One year it was tugboats."

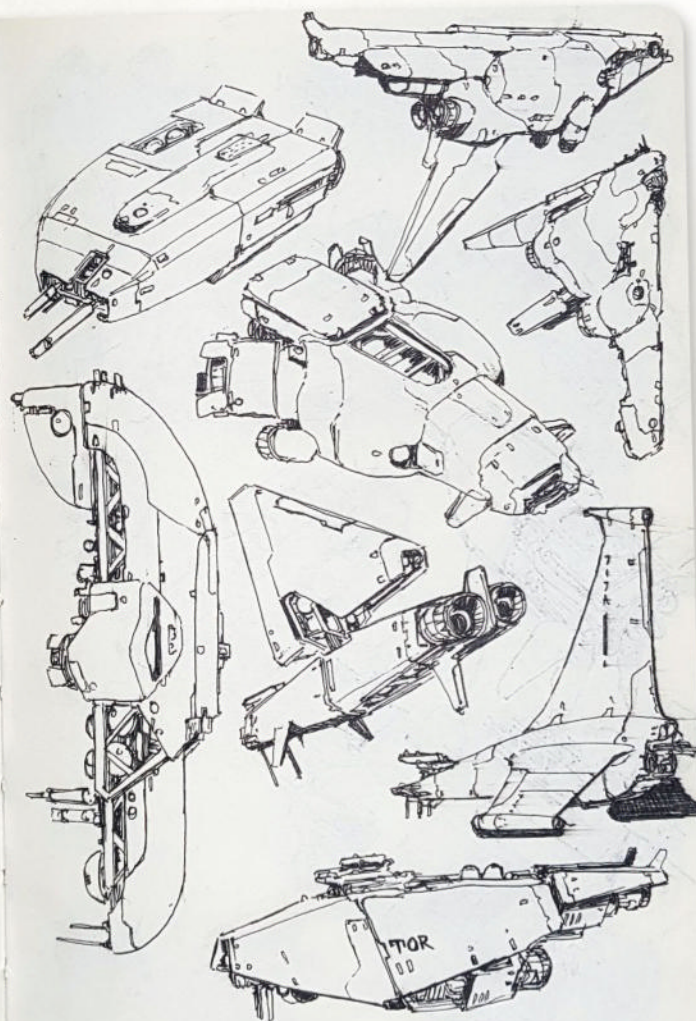
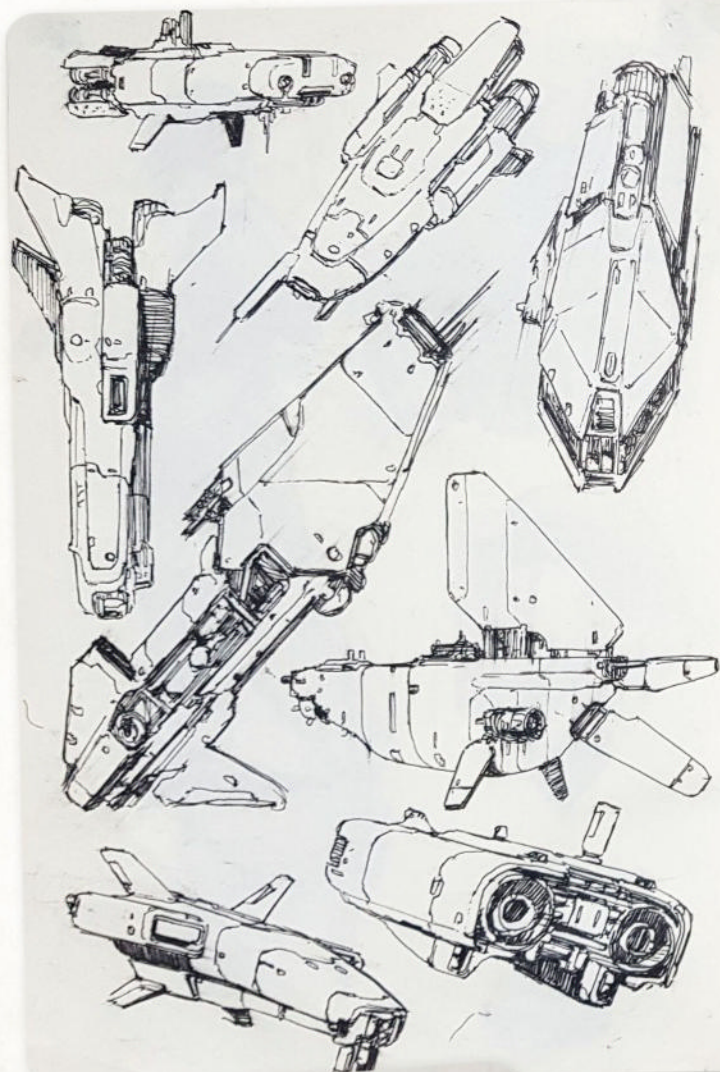


“Online art challenges can be a good source of inspiration”

CAT PUMPKIN

"I turned this Halloween Inktober into a gift for my partner, who loves all things spooky. It now takes pride of place on her bookshelf along with a few others in a similar style."





LOAD OF SHIPS

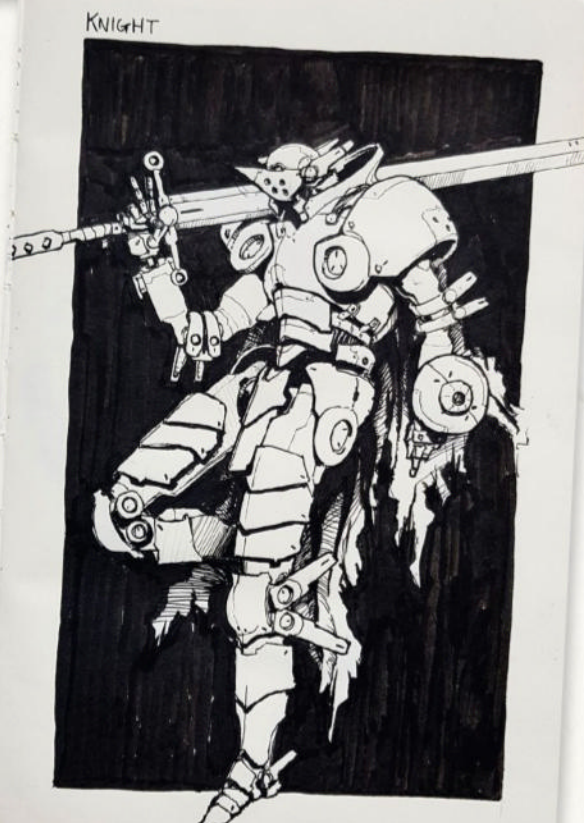
"Created in a similar manner to the spaceships on the previous page. These sort of pages can create some interesting design challenges as you try to fit ships into the remaining space."

GRACE

"For once I followed some of the prompts for 2022's Mechtobor. The plethora of online art challenges can be a good source of inspiration, or motivation, if it's needed."

KNIGHT

"I only ever do a handful of images for these types of challenges as I can never keep up with the daily prompts, but that's better than doing nothing at all!"



Natalie Andrewson

Fall under the fantasy fanatic's spell as she unveils the cast of magical creations found in her doodles

Artist PROFILE

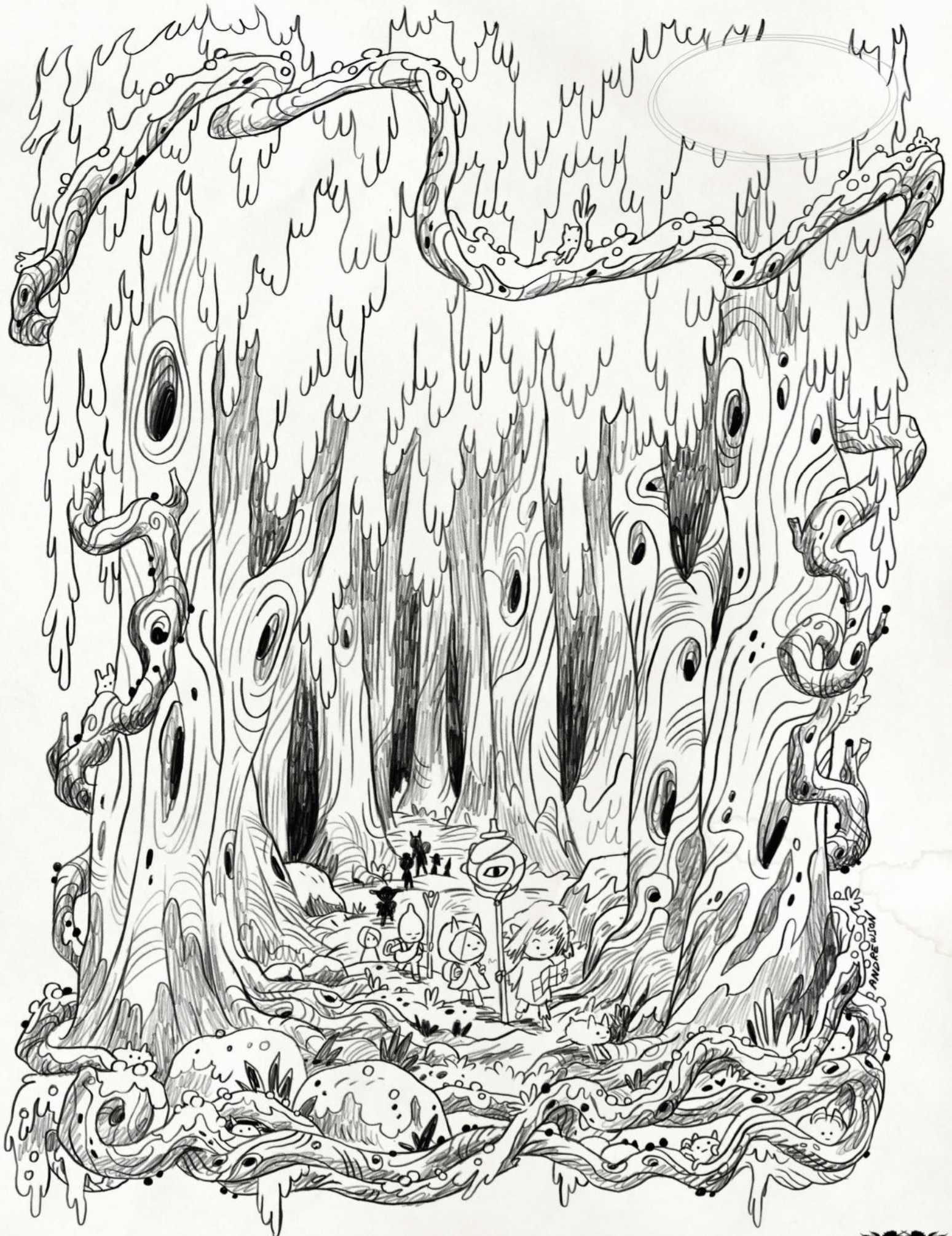
Natalie Andrewson
LOCATION: US

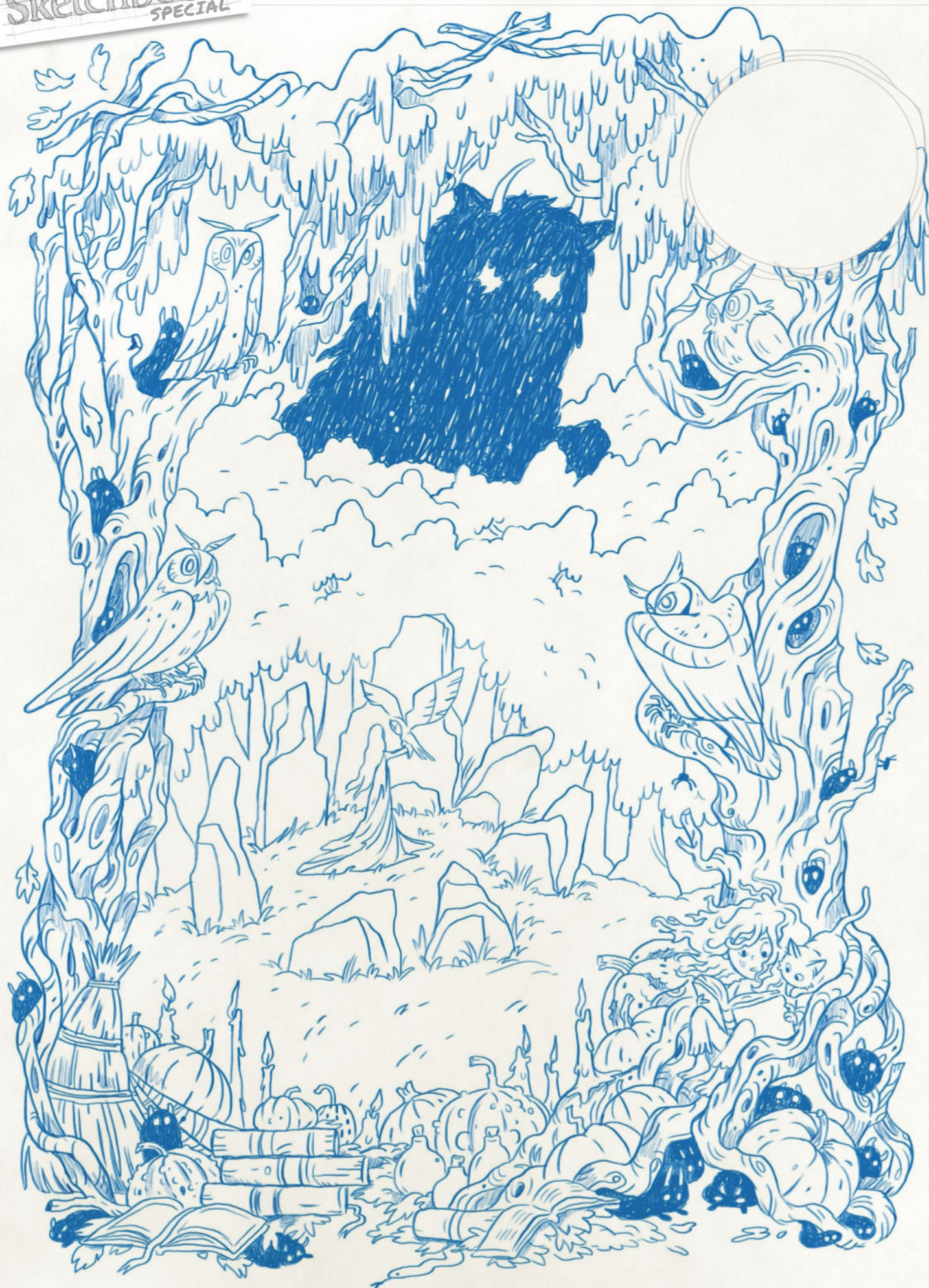


Natalie is an illustrator, comic artist and risograph printmaker who lives in Los Angeles. Growing up, she loved the woods and all things wild in the mountains, and now enjoys exploring waterfall trails. She has worked with a range of clients including Apple TV+, Wizards of the Coast, Disney and First Second Books, and always seeks to bring a touch of fantasy into the world. Natalie also produces fantasy-themed risograph prints each month for her subscribers. <https://natalie-andrewson.com>



“I consider what the entire print will look like in someone's hands”







“I love to use a pencil brush to sketch just like I do on paper, with messy, quick lines”



FALL DRAGON

“When I sketch, I’ll make colour notes to get an idea of the colour hierarchy with the values. This helps me get started quicker when colouring the tighter line art that sometimes feels overwhelming to dive into. But I still like keeping most colouring spontaneous.”



Sorie Kim

The natural world fires up the artist's imagination as she sketches real creatures and more innovative characters

Artist PROFILE

Sorie Kim
LOCATION: US



Sorie Kim is a Los Angeles-based artist and instructor who has taught courses for Domestika, Warner Bros. Discovery Access, Create Now, and more. She takes the majority of her inspiration from the natural world and loves to explore the balance between drawing from life and imagination in her sketches.
www.instagram.com/soriekim



RUBBER DUCKS

"I sketched out these ducks after some birdwatching at a park, focusing on forms and volume. The line work is done traditionally, with the colours and values on Procreate."



DEATH BLOOM

"This page was inspired by Akira and the cacti around my neighbourhood. I used pigment ink for the lines, markers for the base colour and Procreate for the core shadow."



WATERING HOLE

"The displays at natural history museums are some of my best references; I love how immersive they feel. This sketch was done on location."

ANIMAL ROOM

"These sketches are from my favourite room at the Natural History Museum in LA. I was trying to focus on bringing a sense of weight to the animals."

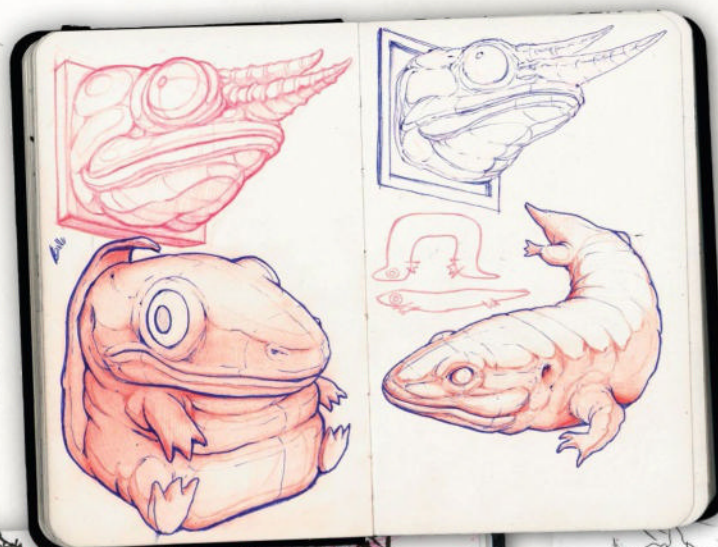


GUMMY

"This spread was from a visit to the St Louis Zoo. It was freezing that day so I spent most of my time in the reptile house."

NEW YEARS

"This page was from the day after Chinese New Year with a sketch group. I rarely sketch architecture on location, but this piece made me want to do it more often."

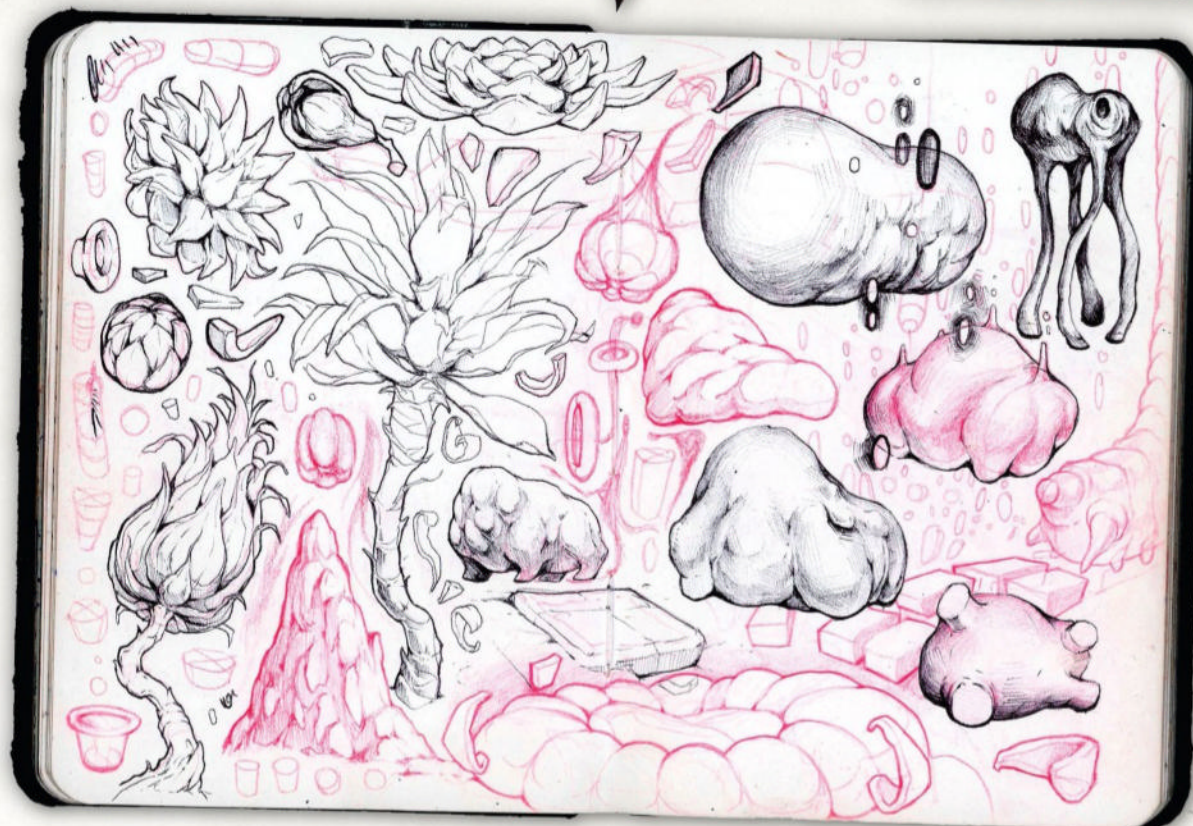


“Displays at natural history museums are some of my best references”



CHASE

"This page was based off a photograph I took at a natural history museum. I was trying to focus on bringing in more narrative and reworking composition. After sketching in pen and pencil, the values were done in Procreate."



CACTUS CRYPTIDS

"I remember this page fondly because my dog kept me company for it. These were studies and interpretations of some lovely sculptures by Peter Shelton and nearby cacti."

Anthony Jean

Legendary DC heroes make an appearance as the illustrator experiments in preparation for his commissions

Artist PROFILE

Anthony Jean

LOCATION: France



Anthony is a comic and concept artist. He traded his job in the aeronautics industry for the life of an artist and studied in Lyon, where he fell in love with the artwork of Mike Mignola, Bill Sienkiewicz, Jim Lee and Todd McFarlane. He has since worked for a variety of companies, including a role as reference artist for Monolith and DC Comics board game Batman: Gotham City Chronicles.
www.instagram.com/anthonyjeanart

THE CATS

"These cat drawings were preliminary research for a private commission for a Catwoman piece. In general, I experiment with a range of different poses and attitudes to make a decision on which one suits the best."



THE GRIFFIN

"These are preparatory research for an illustration intended for collectible card game Cross the Ages. As with the cats previously, I looked for several attitudes for this creature before I put a proposal forward to the editor."

PERSONAL SKETCHES

"I don't often have time to do things for myself, but it's important to keep the notion of fun in drawing. That's why I try to find time to test out things on smaller, more personal drawings without too much pressure. This is often when I try out more sensitive subjects in search of new techniques that I can transfer to larger projects later on."



“ I find the time to test on smaller, personal drawings without much pressure ”

X-MEN PORTRAITS

“Preparatory sketches for a private order. An X-Men collector wanted something in the way of the famous head icons in the top-left corner on US comics. He formed his team of favourites, and I drew their portraits. It was fun to bring out their personality with just faces.”



RUBY

"Ruby is a character that I designed for the collectible card game Cross the Ages, the same game as the griffin sketches you saw earlier. I needed to design the character in different attitudes for several cards. Here they asked me to create a unique card for a presentation of the game during a video games event in Tokyo."



PROCREATE PORTRAITS

"The idea here was to see what Procreate was capable of, testing the possibilities offered by the software to see if it would be possible to use it in my future professional projects. Portraits are a good exercise for that as a face is faster to draw than a whole body, and lets you quickly create something substantial."



© DC Comics



CATWOMAN

"Here's the Catwoman who was developed from the cats on the previous pages. I tried to highlight the character's playful and mischievous side through the lines and curves of her body."

POISON IVY

"What's interesting with private commissions of iconic characters such as Catwoman or Poison Ivy is that we can afford a little more freedom than on an illustration or official work for DC Comics, and create visions a little more decked out in the staging or costume."



THE BOOK OF FACES

"The idea with this portrait gallery is to break my habits as a cartoonist, trying to have a wide variety of faces and expressions while mastering Indian ink for my comic book. It's a little like a musician who makes their scales or an athlete who warms up before their training. The goal is also to go fast enough and capture the lives of the characters."



“The goal is to go fast enough and capture the lives of the characters”

Omar Gomet

Get acquainted with two African-inspired characters and the alien creatures they encounter on their cosmic journey

Artist PROFILE

Omar Gomet

LOCATION: US



Omar Gomet is a visual development artist and character designer in the San Francisco Bay Area.

He has previously worked with Marvel Studios Animation and multiple independent projects where he was among the creative teams developing character concepts. Omar works on designing and assisting the character concepts for movies, shorts or television shows, currently focusing on original characters for short films that emphasise greater diversity. With a love for classic action and science fiction movies, he is passionate about finding cool ways to implement these ideas into his creative process.
<https://bit.ly/4dJx0FO>

FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE!

"These are some of the creatures that Kymani and Leki might see on their journey through the stars. Many real-world creatures and masks were referenced to make something new and fresh."



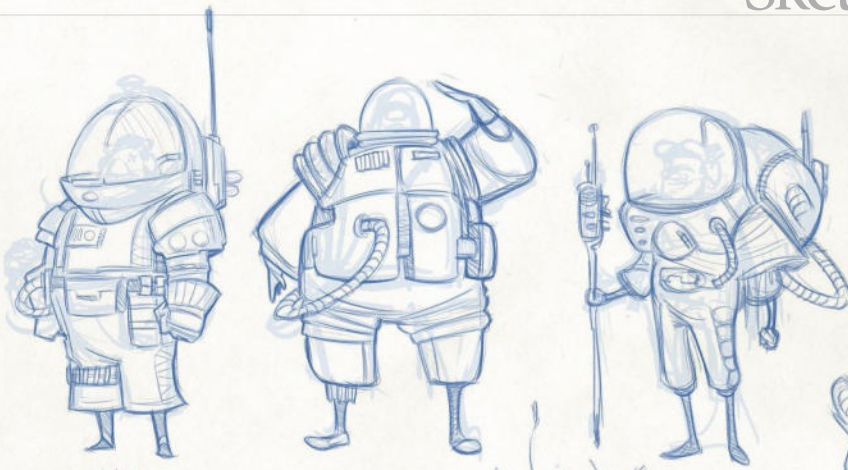
KYMANI AND LEKI'S DYNAMIC

"With these sketches, I wanted to show just how these two characters would interact with each other, really bringing out their personalities! I wanted to feel like Leki's energy was too much for Kymani, but that they could still find common ground."

KYMANI AND LEKI: EXPLORERS OF THE STARS

"My characters in all their glory. Playing on African culture was huge for these designs. Kymani's spacesuit ties in with African fabrics and colours, while Leki's patterns and features represent various animals like hyenas, zebras and the African fat-tailed gecko."





FROM THE BEGINNING

"The best part about designing a character is the many variations you go through to find that one sketch that really speaks to you. Here are some sketches I went through before landing on the final character designs. I wanted each version to tell a different story through their shapes and silhouettes."

CREATURES! CREATURES! CREATURES!

"Creature design is one of my favourite things when it comes to sci-fi films, as they can make or break a movie. In these sketches, I wanted to show appreciation to one of my favourite films, Ridley Scott's Alien, but throw an African twist into the design. I gathered a whole bunch of references to make something new, but still stuck to the essence of the original Xenomorph creature."



LEKI'S PERSONALITY

"Leki has all the energy and demeanour of a young Earth puppy! His name actually means 'little brother' in Swahili and he really evokes that when he's around Kymani. The expressions utilise his awesome features and showcase his dramatic nature. There's also a sketch of him laying on a rock in his downtime, just like actual lizards will do to catch some sunlight."



“I wanted to appreciate Alien, but throw an African twist into the design”



Jeremy Hoffman

From gassy ghouls to snappy dinosaurs, take a peek inside many sketchbooks filled with imaginative doodles

Artist PROFILE

Jeremy Hoffman

LOCATION: The Netherlands



Jeremy is a character designer working in the animation industry. As a young child he always knew that drawing was part of him. In his artwork, Jeremy follows his heart in what he creates. He loves to tell stories with his vibrant array of character designs, and uses his creative freedom and inner child to explore new characters and dream up appropriate, original ideas.

<https://bit.ly/3ziB69L>

DRAWING FROM LIFE

"One of my favourite exercises to improve my character design skills is drawing from life. I carry my little sketchbook with me everywhere so I can observe and sketch people, watching how they behave, what they look like, and finding a story in that."

CREATIVE FREEDOM

"I always use my creative freedom. When it comes to my personal work, I can do whatever I want and even when I work for a client, I take advantage of this freedom within the boundaries they give me."



Sketchbook Jeremy Hoffman

NO EXCUSES

"Personally, I don't like making excuses not to create. I adapt to what's there, making the best of what I have even if it's little information, poor drawing material, limited time or a bad location. I don't think in problems, I think in solutions."

INSPIRATION

"For me, inspiration comes from everything, everywhere and is endless. This way I can always be inspired by other artists, films, music, nature, museums, my childhood memories, other cultures, and so on. So I'm always curious and open to new brand things."



DIGITAL SKETCHING

"I love doodling in my sketchbooks, but that doesn't mean I don't sketch digitally. For personal work, I often switch to digital when one of my sketchbook ideas becomes more concrete. I also often work digitally for customers because it's easier to apply feedback and make adjustments to the artwork."

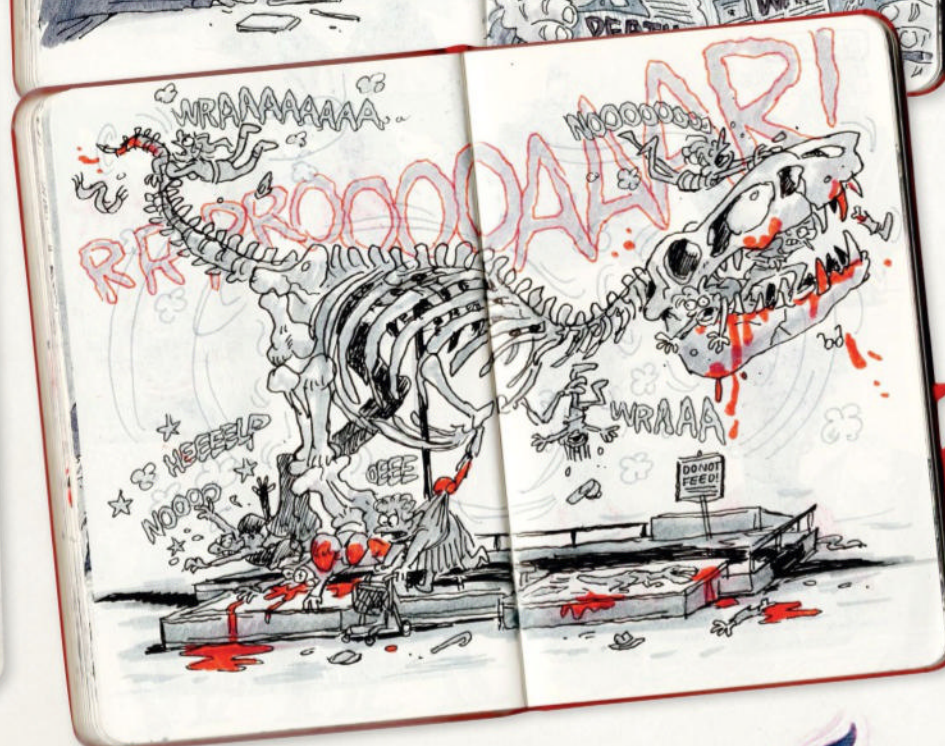
"I make the best of what I have, even if it's little information, poor drawing material or limited time"

DON'T BE AFRAID

"When I draw from life, I sketch in one go with markers. I don't erase a line if I make a mistake, as for me it's about not being afraid to make mistakes and learning from them."

EXPLORATION

"I have sketchbooks for all kinds of purposes. One of them I call my Story & Explore sketchbook. Here I can explore, come up with new personal story ideas, take notes and have fun with it. One small scribble can lead to a completely new story idea."



THE PERFECT SKETCHBOOK

"I fooled you! There is no perfect sketchbook! Each sketchbook is unique and has its own story. Every artist experiences a different journey in their sketchbook, driven by different interests, phases, goals and the like. Don't compare yourself and be proud of what you create."

“When I’m sketching, I often add notes to explain the reason for a particular design choice”



TAKING NOTES

"When I sketch, I often add notes to explain the reason for a particular design choice. I make decisions based on reasons, not random choices. It should add something to the character's personality or appearance so that it fits the story and makes sense."



Geizi Guevara

Centuries of inspiration combine with manga action in the illustrator's breathtaking character designs

Artist PROFILE

Geizi Guevara

LOCATION: US

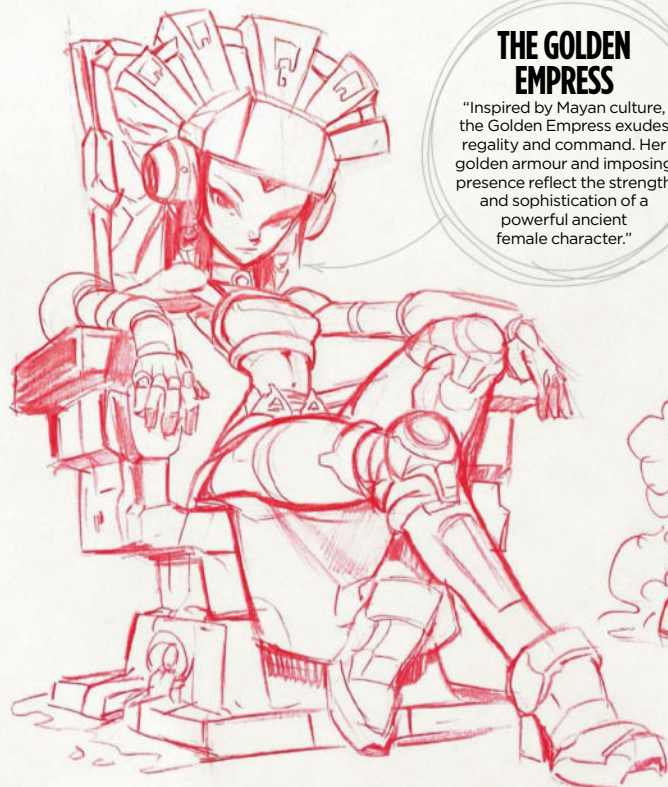


LA-based Geizi is an illustrator and designer with over 16 years of experience in the creative industry. Specialising in illustration, graphic design and creative direction, he's skilled in digital art using the latest software, as well as traditional media. Geizi is inspired by the ever-changing environment of the design world and strives to create work that will inspire others.

www.instagram.com/ggkoncepts

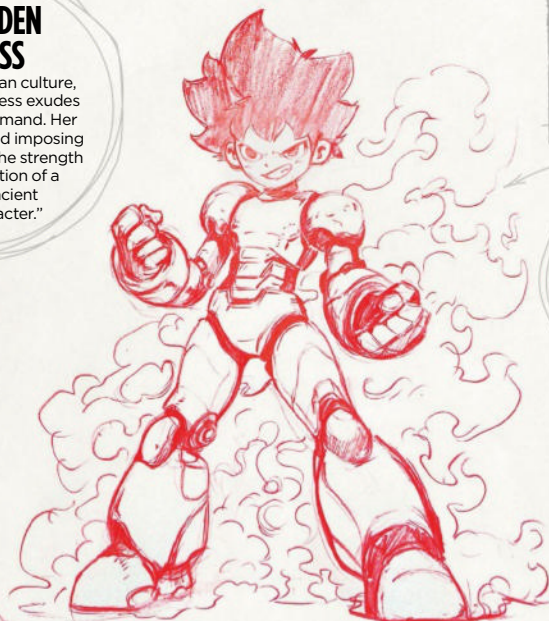
THE GOLDEN EMPRESS

"Inspired by Mayan culture, the Golden Empress exudes regality and command. Her golden armour and imposing presence reflect the strength and sophistication of a powerful ancient female character."



ROBO-KID UNLEASHED

"Robo-Kid is a marvel of metal and might. Balancing youthful exuberance and mechanical prowess, this hero embodies the spirit of futuristic adventure and dynamic character design."



EL GUERRERO DE PLUMAS

"El Guerrero de Plumas, adorned in majestic feathers and sacred symbols, honours his ancestors. Perched atop the stone guardian, he stands vigilant, ready to defend his rich cultural heritage."



PINK WARRIOR

"A little fan art never hurts. In the cosmic arena, the Pink Warrior stands strong, a beacon of hope and strength, her radiant armour gleaming under the starlit sky."



FUEGO

"With a roar, the fiery beast leaps into battle. Inspired by favourite digital artists, this piece captures dynamic energy and dramatic flair, bringing the character to life with vivid detail."



“Under the cosmos, a young dreamer gazes up in awe as vibrant hues paint the sky”

BLUE MAGIC

"This was inspired by the viral blue meteor video! Under the cosmos, a young dreamer gazes up in awe, with vibrant hues painting the sky and igniting dreams beyond the stars."

Lucia Parvolo

Get the behind-the-scenes information on a line-up of stylish characters from cute kitty to tattooed pirate

Artist PROFILE

Lucia Parvolo

LOCATION: Italy



Lucia is a freelance visual development and character design artist. She has always loved drawing and realised it could be her job after she started sketching to free her mind. Lucia began her career in 2D animation, which proved a significant influence on the flow of her line work. She later decided to focus on pre-production art because of her love for building personality and credibility in her characters. In her spare time, Lucia also loves to paint with gouache and take care of her many plants.

www.instagram.com/_iampurplee



STUDY MOMENTS

"I wanted to give these characters a tangible personality by drawing them in specific situations and, in doing so, showing each of their different reactions in order to preserve the believability."

WITCHY TWINS

"Here's the personal project I'm working on. Magical worlds are my favourites, and here you have three little witches whose personalities I wanted to make as clear as possible through the use of colours and gestures."



BEACH BANDANA

"I was inspired by a girl I saw at the beach, wearing this fantastic bandana in her hair. Living by the sea, every time I go there I take a moment to observe and study what's around me."



“Living by the sea, every time I go there I take a moment to observe and study what’s around me”

DOLLY CAT

“The challenge with this drawing was to create a cat, which is pretty hard for me as I don’t like them at all, so I tried to make it as cute as possible! I like to leave some of the initial roughness of the sketch in my drawings, together with a coloured outline in some places to put the focus on the shapes.”

CLOTHES

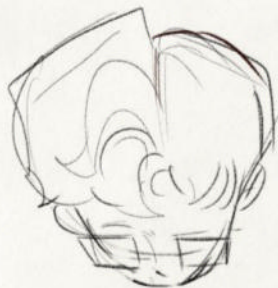
“Drawing clothes is difficult for me because I very rarely do it. Sometimes I’ll study references to make my clothing realistic enough, but always according to my taste. For this piece, I also had fun with the girl’s hair.”





LOUISE

"This is Louise, and these are some of my early character concepts. Exploration is my favourite step as it makes my mind feel so free, but I always have a clear idea of the personality before I begin to draw."



MYSTERIOUS

"For me, the important thing in a drawing is that it has to communicate something. Maybe by looking at this girl you want to know more about her, and that's the goal for me."



LINE-UP!

"How difficult is it to maintain consistency while at the same time making each character different? Very! But the colours and rendering help me a lot."

PLAYERS

"Sometimes I want to draw dynamic poses and capture the gestures. Showing energy and movement through the use of lines isn't easy at all, because you have to stay very loose but firm and solid at the same time. It takes practice, but it's so satisfying for me."



“ Exploration is my favourite step of the creative process as it makes my mind feel so free ”

PIRATE

"Sometimes I feel the need to get out of my comfort zone. Most of my drawings come from my imagination or from studying my own artwork. This kind of limits myself a bit more, but also gives me much more confidence about what I do and don't like. When I feel that I'm ready, I like to draw tougher and rougher characters, although I always demand a lot from myself, which is why I usually wait for the right time to start drawing something different from my usual style of work."



Mikel Mugica Amann

Discover the childhood memories and iconic figures that inspired the character and costume designer's path

Artist PROFILE

Mikel Mugica Amann

LOCATION: Spain



Mikel remembers being fascinated with the fashion and design of the cartoons and games that he loved while growing up, which

inspired him to become a character designer before he even knew it was possible. Mikel went to college in the US and hasn't stopped drawing ever since. He now works as a freelance character and costume designer for video games, mobile apps and toys, and loves every minute of it.

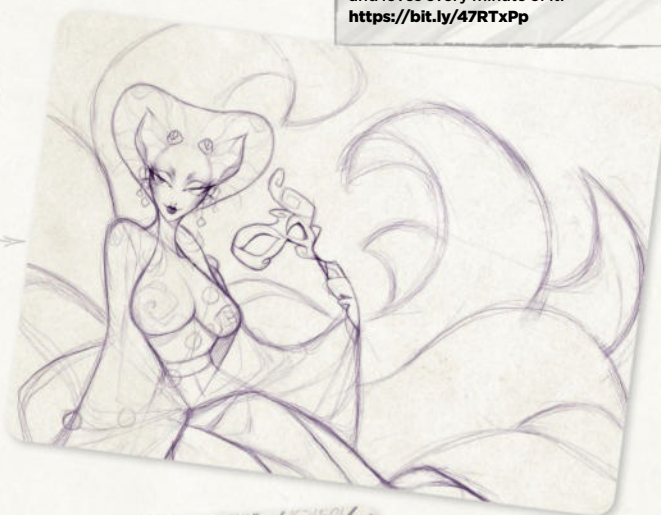
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CHILDHOOD ICONS

"A core memory of mine. Final Fantasy X-2 is what made me fall in love with costume design. These three ladies are the reason why I'm a designer and I had a blast giving them my own personal twist."

NINE-TAILED PLASTIQUE

"This was an impulse drawing that I later ended up rendering. It's based on Plastique Tiara's Nine-Tailed Fox look she showcased on RuPaul's Drag Race."



QUEEN OF SHAPES

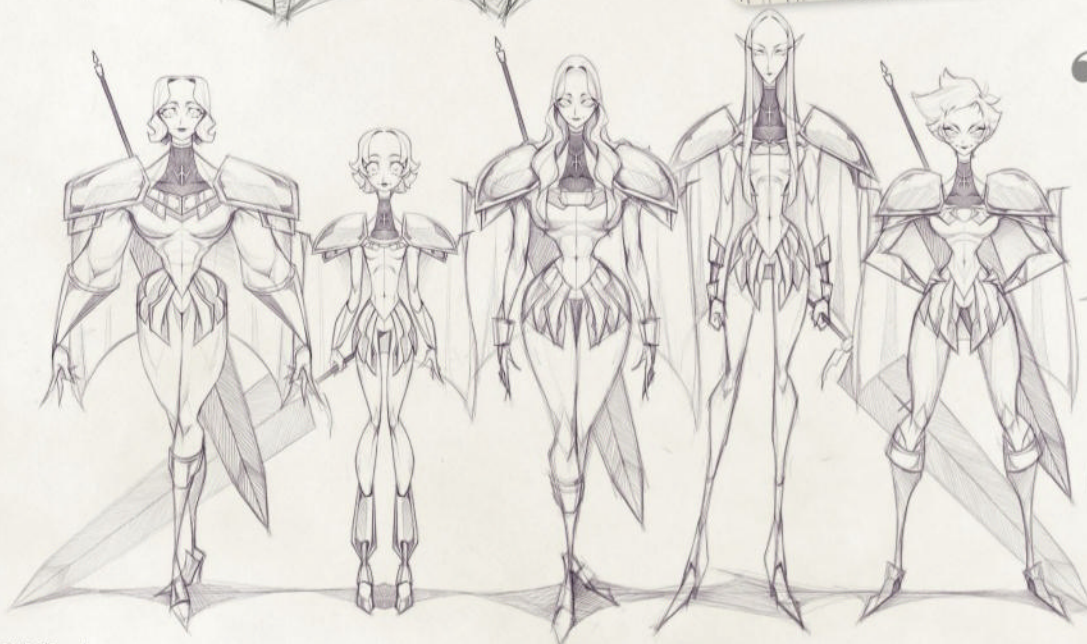
"These are sketches of two of my favourite queens: Raja Gemini and Trixie Mattel. I'm constantly being inspired by drag queens, as they're like fashionable, living cartoons for me. I love how these pieces turned out."

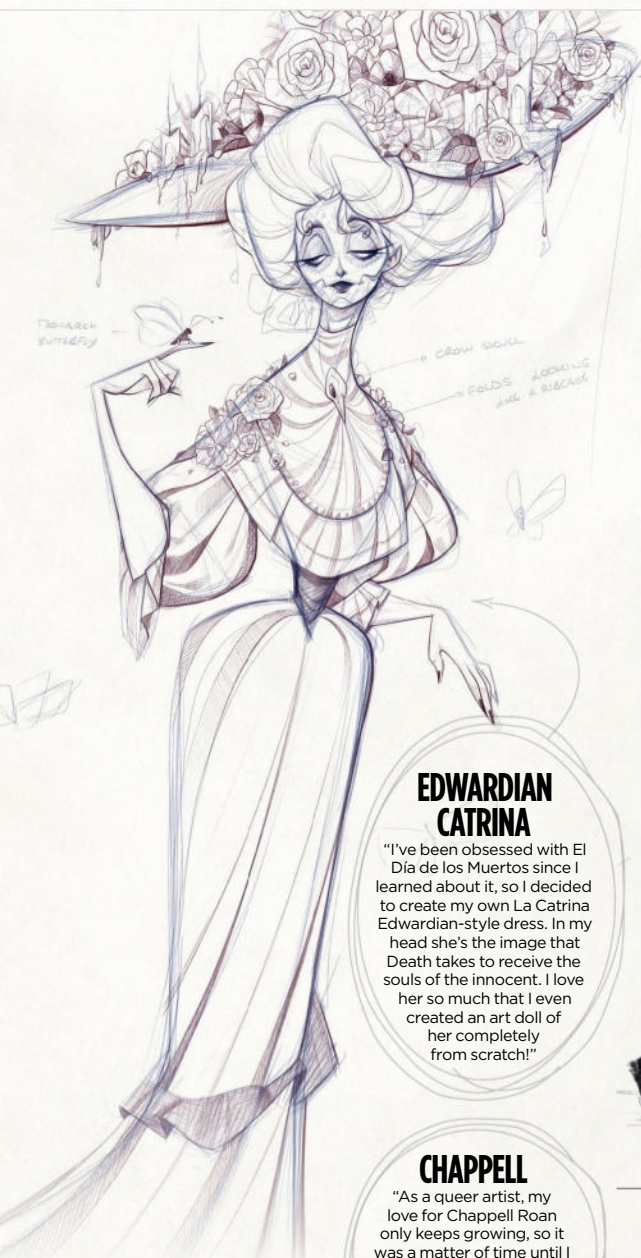


“Final Fantasy X-2 is what made me fall in love with costume design”

CLAYMORES

"I love depicting all types of bodies, playing around with the shapes and sizes. Here I chose one of my favourite shows called Claymore, about badass female warriors, and decided to sketch them out. I adapted each character's body to their fighting style and personality. It was a great exercise on shape language and variety in design."



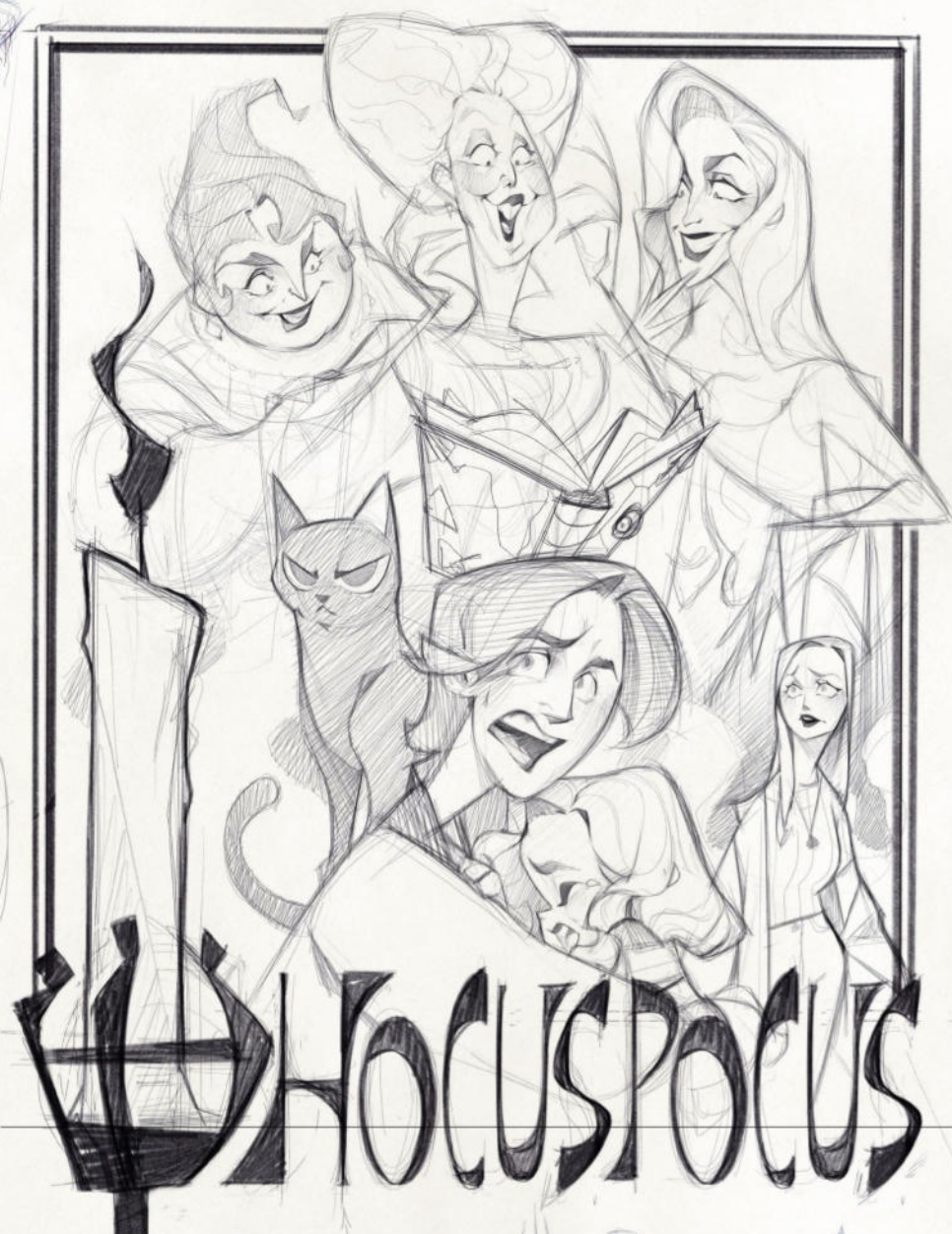


EDWARDIAN CATRINA

"I've been obsessed with El Día de los Muertos since I learned about it, so I decided to create my own La Catrina Edwardian-style dress. In my head she's the image that Death takes to receive the souls of the innocent. I love her so much that I even created an art doll of her completely from scratch!"

CHAPPELL

"As a queer artist, my love for Chappell Roan only keeps growing, so it was a matter of time until I drew her. This is the first of two pieces I've done of her, but a third one may be dropping soon too, who knows."



HOCUS POCUS

"I grew up watching this movie and have wanted to make a tribute piece for it since forever. To this day, this is one of my favourite pieces I've ever created. If you want to check out the finished piece, you can see it on my ArtStation page or my socials."



THE UNFINISHED PANTHEON

"I absolutely love Greek mythology and this is my painfully unfinished sketch of the Greek gods. I can't wait to design Zeus and Hades so I can finally colour them all. Hopefully soon!"



Interview

Kyoungwan Kim

The Korean character concept artist speaks to **Dominic Carter** about staying open to ideas and the value of drawing regularly

FACE AND HANDS
Kyoungwan says that hands are great ornaments and full of possibilities.

Interview Kyoungghan Kim

Freelance artist Kyoungghan Kim is known for creating genre-spanning characters incorporating just about everything from spacesuits to medieval armour and animals. In his recently released character concept art class, Kyoungghan breaks down how he works, and we decided to catch up with him to learn more about his career, what it takes to be a concept artist, and why sketchbooks are still valuable in the digital age.

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

I won the grand prize in a game character contest hosted by Nexon back in 2003. Starting with that award, from 2006 until now I've been a game character concept artist. ▶▶

Artist PROFILE

Kyoungghan Kim

LOCATION: South Korea

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:

Akira Toriyama, Yoshitaka Amano, Akihiko Yoshida, Kinu Nishimura, Range Murata, Shinkiro

MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate, Corel Painter

www.instagram.com/tahraart



COLOURFUL CHARACTER

Kyoungwan elegantly shows personality with colour and composition.



“I get inspiration from the countless art and content in the world... Going for walks also gives me time to think”

➤➤ I'm currently working as a freelancer and also conduct lectures.

Which artists have inspired you the most, and why?

I'm mostly influenced by Japanese artists. This is because the games I've played since I was young were all from Japan. Specifically, the game art in titles released by Capcom, Square Enix and SNK.

Which tools do you use to create your work?

At first I used Corel Painter, but I've been using Photoshop and Procreate together since 2017.

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

I majored in fine art when I was a student, so my early work was very painterly. But as I continue to work on

game character concepts and come into contact with game art, I'm able to make the shapes more concrete. This makes it easier for the viewers to see the direction I'm trying to convey. I think my art has changed accordingly as my understanding of the game industry has gradually increased.

Of course, originality is important as an artist. But as long as I'm not a fine artist rather than an artist in the games industry, I should be able to appeal to the public, and should never forget to collaborate with everyone in the studio.

What attracted you to working as a concept artist?

The first time I became aware of game artists as a profession was because of the Nexon contest. In fact, the reason I officially became a concept artist

KOI SAMURAI

It's impossible to land a surprise attack on this samurai, as he can see forwards and backwards at the same time.



was because I was contacted by a game company after they saw my work uploaded to an online art community. That's why I value online activities.

You're a prolific artist who keeps coming up with lots of character designs. How do you keep on producing fresh ideas?

I always try to get inspiration from the countless pieces of art and content in the world. As well as watching and enjoying movies, video games and cartoons, I also try to put them in the same context as my work as much as possible. Going for walks also gives me a lot of time to think. Then I just keep drawing whatever comes to my mind.

Some drawings have good results and others have bad results, but it's important to keep drawing regardless. That way, good ➤➤

FIVE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CREATING CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Kyoungghan explains the key points you need to remember for devising new character designs

1 Draw enough to communicate your ideas clearly

Basic drawing skills are necessary. At the very least, the standing pose should be drawn naturally.

2 The character's narrative

When you see a character, it's a good idea to make it possible to imagine their personality, as well as their past, present and future. When designing a character, think about why they need each specific design element.

3 Design direction

A good design doesn't necessarily include any unique elements. If all the elements that make up the character have a consistent direction, it's a good design. If you've considered why any elements are needed for your character, you should utilise them with a singular goal in mind.

4 Good visibility

Except in a few special cases, characters should be easy for the audience to read and recognise.

5 Characteristics of the genre

Make sure you distinguish whether the character is for a movie, a cartoon, or a game. Even if they span different forms of media, they can still affect each other. But in some cases, certain elements can be too complicated for a cartoon character or too simple for a game character. There are also certain costume builds and structures that are technically difficult to implement in animation for game characters.

CHARACTER CORNUCOPIA

These characters showcase the many and varied ways that Kyoungghan's tips can be put into action.



BLIND

Can this unnerving character see what others can't with his bizarre batch of eyeballs?



KNIGHT FAMILY

The contrast of helmets and everyday clothing makes for a powerful composition.

SECOND DAUGHTER OF THE SISTERS

This character is part of a trio of sisters, each with their own distinctive look and personality.



“ I think it’s okay to use any tool as long as I can draw a lot and often ”

» ideas are maintained, and those that aren’t are filtered out. Artists can never come up with only good ideas; It’s about picking out good ideas from countless drawings.

Of all the artwork that you’ve created, what are you the most proud of and why?

Funny you should ask, I’ve asked myself this question a few times, but it’s really hard to pick just one. If I had to choose, it would be my first piece of digital artwork. I remember the image, but unfortunately I can’t find the file at the moment.

A lot of your work is done digitally, but are sketchbooks still an important part of your workflow? If so, how do you use them?

I haven’t used pencils and paper since 2006. I do all of my drawings digitally. At home I use my desktop, and I use

my iPad outside. I think it’s okay to use any tool as long as I can draw a lot and often. I don’t think either is superior. If you like a pencil and paper, use that; but if you prefer a tablet pen, then use that instead. Just remember that drawing a lot is very important.

Why do you think sketchbooks continue to be invaluable, even for artists who mostly work digitally?

The reason we value sketchbooks isn’t that they’re physical tools, but because drawing a lot is so important. We want to see lots of colourful digital illustrations brought to life and paint them to a finished standard right away. So it’s understandable that you may want to focus on figuring out how to paint various colours, for example, but this isn’t the most important factor to concentrate on.

You can’t just skip the drawing process and start with those »

HOLY SHEEP

This sacred character is accompanied by a Holy Crab and a Holy Cow.



WALKING WITH CATS

The story behind a delightful illustration where a pattern of cats leap out from their clothing confines

This piece is kind of part of a series. Originally there was another piece depicting the flower pattern on the clothes becoming more substantial and flying in the wind, but then I thought about what it would be like if it was a moving animal. I thought of a cat first, then I wondered why that cat would be moving. By their very nature, cats react to swaying

objects and are connected to fish, so these elements came together naturally in this image. As for the blue clothing, I settled on the colour scheme because the clothes I'd drawn on another image in the series were red. I've uploaded a video to my YouTube channel where you can watch this image being painted.

FELINE FASHION

Where does the clothing end and the cats begin? Kyoungwan plays with expectations.



MASKED SPEARMAN

Thanks to his sketches, we can see how Kyoungwan develops this personal piece of concept art from an idea to a finished piece.



HORNED HERO

Over on his YouTube channel, you can watch a timelapse of Kyoungwan bringing this character to life with colour.

WALKING WITH DOGS

Look closely, and you'll see this character's coat coming to life to reach for the frisbee.

KNIGHT CONCEPT

Kyoungghan packs plenty of character-revealing details and textures into this piece of concept art.

KNIGHT SKETCH

We can see how Kyoungghan refined this noble knight character.

➤ elements that interest you. Without the basics of drawing, no matter how high the detail is, it will be a clumsy piece of artwork. If you happen to see a wonderful piece of art that opens your eyes, the reason why it's wonderful isn't because of fantastic art skills, but because great drawing has become the basis.

Your character concept art class has recently been released in English. What can people expect to learn when they sign up?

My video class covers all aspects of character concept art, but it's mainly focused on how to approach character design. Lots of people want to become video game character concept artists, but they value the technical side of illustration work more than the character design part.

No matter how well you draw, you can't be a character concept artist if you don't have a concept or a design in mind. That's why we mainly talk about how to come up with ideas and how to make the character persuasive.

“No matter how well you draw, you can't be a character concept artist if you don't have a design in mind”

Of course, there's also a video about drawing and texture expression.

What's next for you? Do you have any exciting projects coming up, or are there other areas of art that you'd like to explore?

The most important thing for me is to keep working hard on what I'm doing. Creating game characters, continuing to draw personal work, making videos, making music, and so on. Sometimes I work on pieces of art for publications and print media, and I want to increase my work in that field.

I also want to expand the scope of my art to include new ways of working, perhaps branching

into woodcut prints and sculptures. I want to experience various mediums.

What advice would you give to other artists thinking of becoming concept artists?

Stick closely to your preferences, such as what you want to draw, what you like, and so on. I think the clearer you are with what you like, the better an artist you become. Surprisingly, there are many cases where you'll find that you don't know what you like or what it is that you want to draw. It's good to make sure of that and then think about how to appeal to the audience. If I make something that I don't like very much, the job won't last long and the viewers won't like it either. ●

Derek Laufman

Say hello to the animal stars from *The Rats of Ironwood*, a story the comic creator hopes to turn into a new graphic novel

Artist PROFILE

Derek Laufman

LOCATION: Canada



Derek has been a pro comic artist and illustrator for 25 years. He has made his own graphic novels and comics including *The Witch of Wickerson*, *Ruinworld* and his newest series *Crimson Fall*. Derek is also a freelance illustrator who has worked with Marvel, DC, DreamWorks, Hasbro and Mattel. He is the designer of Marvel's *Super Hero Adventures* line as well as DC's *Super Friends*.

www.dereklaufman.com



ONWARD

"Our trio of friends sets off into the wild wilderness to face danger and peril in an attempt to secure food for their starving town."

GILLY

"Gilly is a fierce and courageous mouse who has had a longing for adventure and danger since she was young. However, after losing her parents during the destruction of Wickerson, Gilly has struggled to find her place in the world. This brave and cunning mouse is destined for great things, even if she doesn't realise it yet."



SPIDER NEST

"When developing a new story, I like to create concept art that puts the characters into dangerous situations. It helps me discover how these characters would react in the face of danger. What better danger than a nest of giant spiders?"



“Galant is a brave and grizzled veteran, and is afraid of no beast”

RASTER



THE GREAT OWL

“One of the main villains in the story is a large, murderous owl. Galant is a brave and grizzled veteran of the King's Guard and is afraid of no beast, not even the Great Owl.”

RASTER

“Raster is a brave and responsible young badger who doesn't compromise his morals. He believes in loyalty and friendship above all else. After the Witch destroyed Wickerson, he was one of the first to volunteer his services at the local shelter. Tasked with gathering food to help get the town through a dire winter season, Raster recruits his childhood friends to embark on a dangerous quest to travel across the grove to the town of Mulberry.”

FYNN

“Raised in the swamps of Sifton Bog, Fynn spent summers in the town of Wickerson living with his uncle, who trained him in the art of swordsmanship. During his time in Wickerson, he became best friends with Gilly and Raster. Fynn has a hatred of rats that stems from his uncle being killed in a melee with the Rats of Ironwood during a land dispute.”



Reza Afshar

Ethereal and atmospheric, peer into the fascinating alien worlds that fill the concept artist's sketchbooks

Artist PROFILE

Reza Afshar

LOCATION: Türkiye



A freelance concept artist and illustrator, Reza has more than 10 years of professional experience to his name. Specialising in

landscape and environment design, he draws inspiration mainly from nature. Over the years, he has worked on a wide range of projects including video games, board games and cover art, making him a sought-after artist in the entertainment and publishing worlds.

www.instagram.com/rezaa_afshar

KNIGHT

"A digital ink sketch inspired by the legendary works of Yoshitaka Amano, especially his Vampire Hunter D series. This design captures the ethereal elegance and dark mystique that define his style. The knight embodies a blend of fantasy and reality, paying tribute to Amano's timeless influence."



MOG

"This digital drawing was inspired by the ancient Persian magi. The figure stands on a rock, embodying wisdom and resilience."



LONE WARRIOR

"I first drew this with pencil on paper and then completed it with Procreate. A hero stands upon a hill to rest after a long battle. His two little companions visit and accompany him to his silent rest, and witness the time passing by in calm. This piece is simply depicted and combines the calmness of the hero with the nature and living beings around him beautifully."



“The knight embodies a blend of fantasy and reality, paying tribute to Amano's timeless influence”



HAZE

"This piece depicts two characters standing opposite each other on the branches of trees, enveloped in an ethereal mist. The interplay of shadows and light creates an atmosphere of tension and connection, inviting the viewer to ponder their relationship."



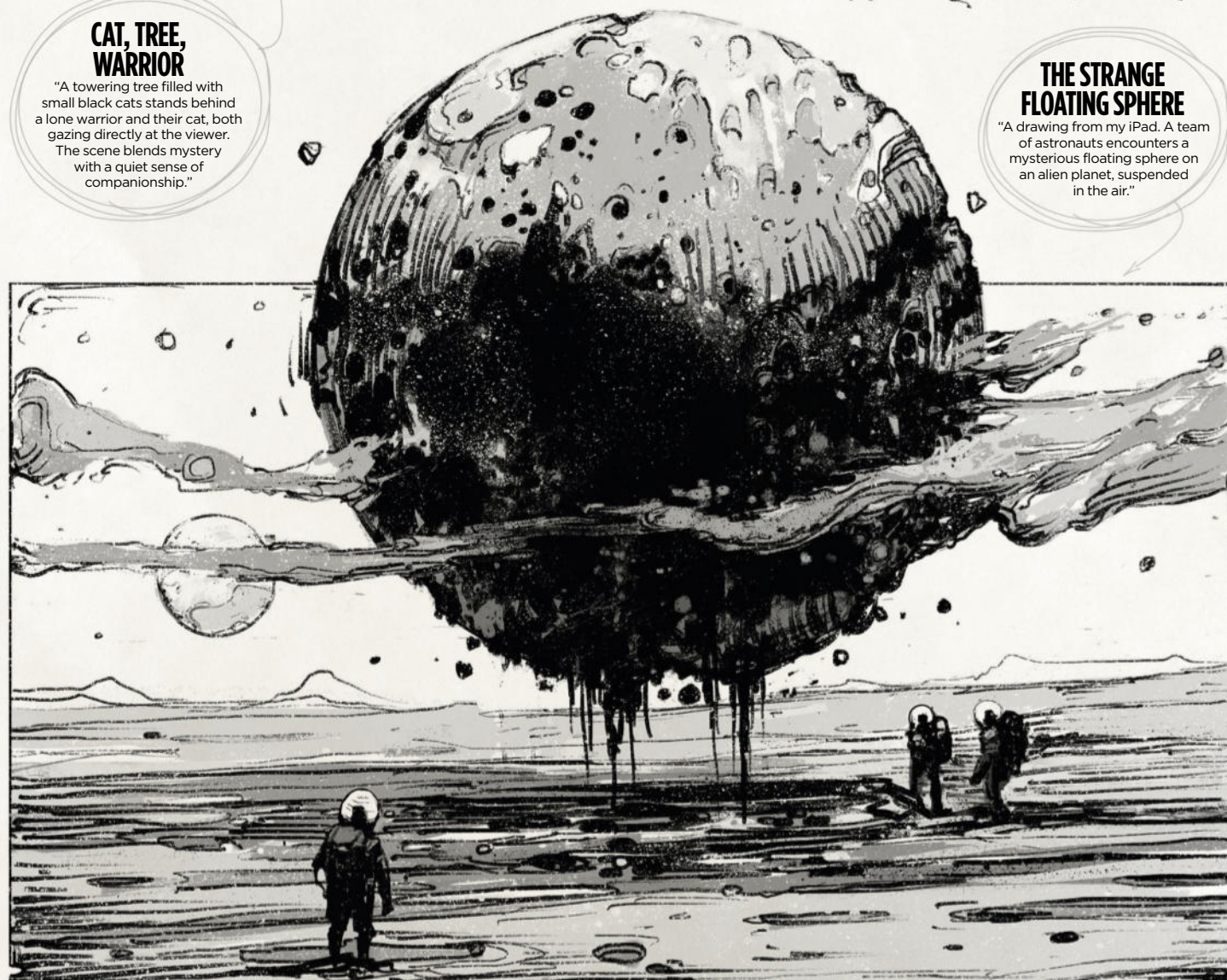
CAT, TREE, WARRIOR

"A towering tree filled with small black cats stands behind a lone warrior and their cat, both gazing directly at the viewer. The scene blends mystery with a quiet sense of companionship."



OLD STONE

"A pencil drawing inspired by the shapes on the rocks in the mountains around my place."



THE STRANGE FLOATING SPHERE

"A drawing from my iPad. A team of astronauts encounters a mysterious floating sphere on an alien planet, suspended in the air."

THE LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN SWORDS

"This sketch portrays a vast plain filled with colossal swords thrust into the ground; remnants of ancient battles. The character encounters this mystical landscape during their journey, standing amid the towering blades that tell tales of forgotten heroes.

The scene evokes a sense of awe and reflection, as the character navigates this land where nature and history intertwine."

“The towering blades tell tales of forgotten heroes...”



WANDERER

"This is a digital ink drawing about an astronaut discovering a lonely alien planet. Inspired by the legendary Moebius."



DISCOVERY

"I did this sketch for a personal series called Discovery about a team of astronauts exploring distant planets in search of extraterrestrial civilisations. Dressed in advanced space suits, they navigate alien landscapes that are filled with unique flora and fauna. The scene captures the spirit of adventure and curiosity, highlighting humanity's quest to uncover the mysteries of the universe. It's a traditional drawing in my sketchbook, done with pencil and marker."

George Brad

Go ape for a range of kooky vehicles and architectural wonders straight from the mind of the concept artist

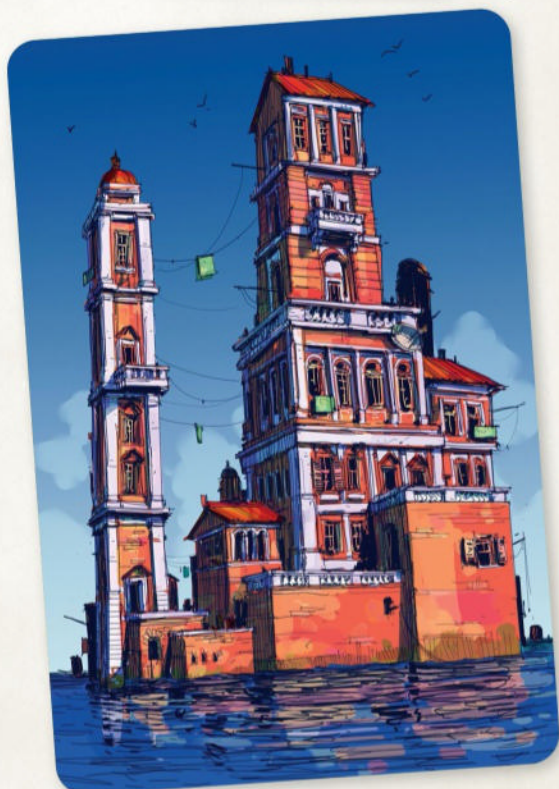
LAND BOAT

"A boat with wheels, tracks and some rocket engines to spice things up."



MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN

"Inspired by Venetian architecture, this house was built in the middle of the ocean."



Artist PROFILE

George Brad

LOCATION: Romania



George is a concept artist and illustrator with an architectural background. Over 10 years of freelance experience, he has had the

opportunity to collaborate with multiple clients including Yuga Labs, NetEase, Ilfonic and DreamWorks Animation. George enjoys drawing sci-fi and fantasy subjects including vehicles, environments and cities, plus the occasional monkey character. www.artstation.com/georgecata93

ENCOUNTER

"Two travellers stumble upon a group of monkeys who are also curious about them."

VILLAGE

"A cartoony doodle inspired by African huts."



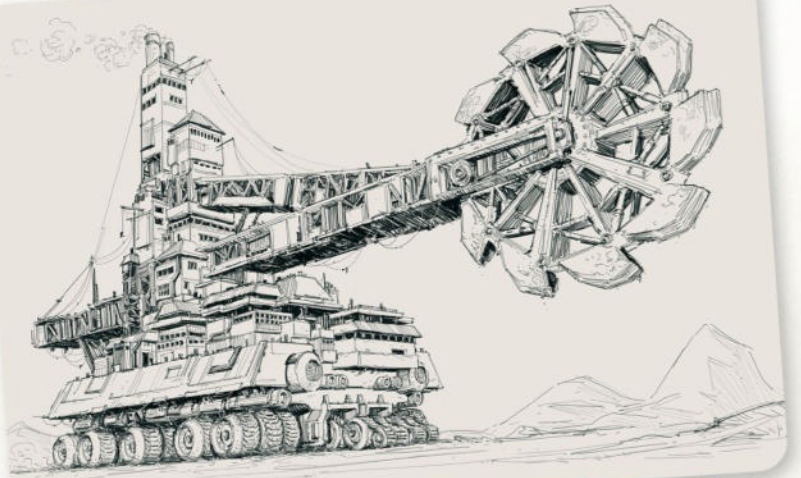


PATH-MAKER

"This factory-sized vehicle creates paths in the desert by cutting through the mountains."

SNOW

"A bored monkey clears some snow out of the road."



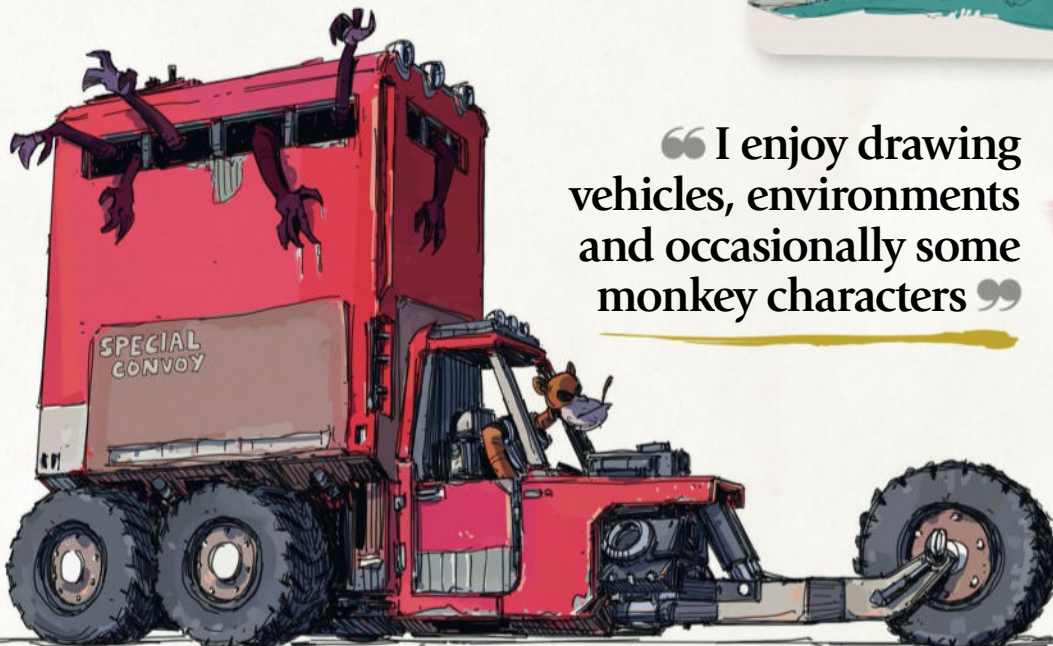
TWIN STATUES

"A pair of giant statues guard the entrance to the city's gate."



LANDCRUISER

"Believe it or not, this boat can trek across land thanks to its tracks."



“ I enjoy drawing vehicles, environments and occasionally some monkey characters ”

RED LIGHT

"This monkey is in a hurry to deliver his deadly cargo."

Dom Lay

The artist explains his thought process behind creating characters packed with believable emotion and detail

Artist PROFILE

Dom Lay

LOCATION: US



Dom was interested in creating stories and worlds ever since the start of his journey in 2014. His main goal is to help

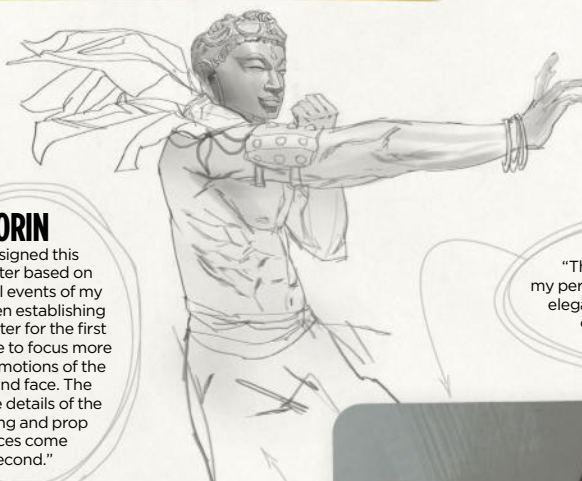
struggling artists find their purpose and identity in what is a competitive, challenging field. He also applies self-development and fitness to his art philosophies. In his spare time, Dom trains in calisthenics and enjoys riding his e-bike around the city.

www.artstation.com/dlartistry



ORIN

"I designed this character based on personal events of my life. When establishing a character for the first time, I like to focus more on the emotions of the pose and face. The intricate details of the clothing and prop pieces come second."



SINA

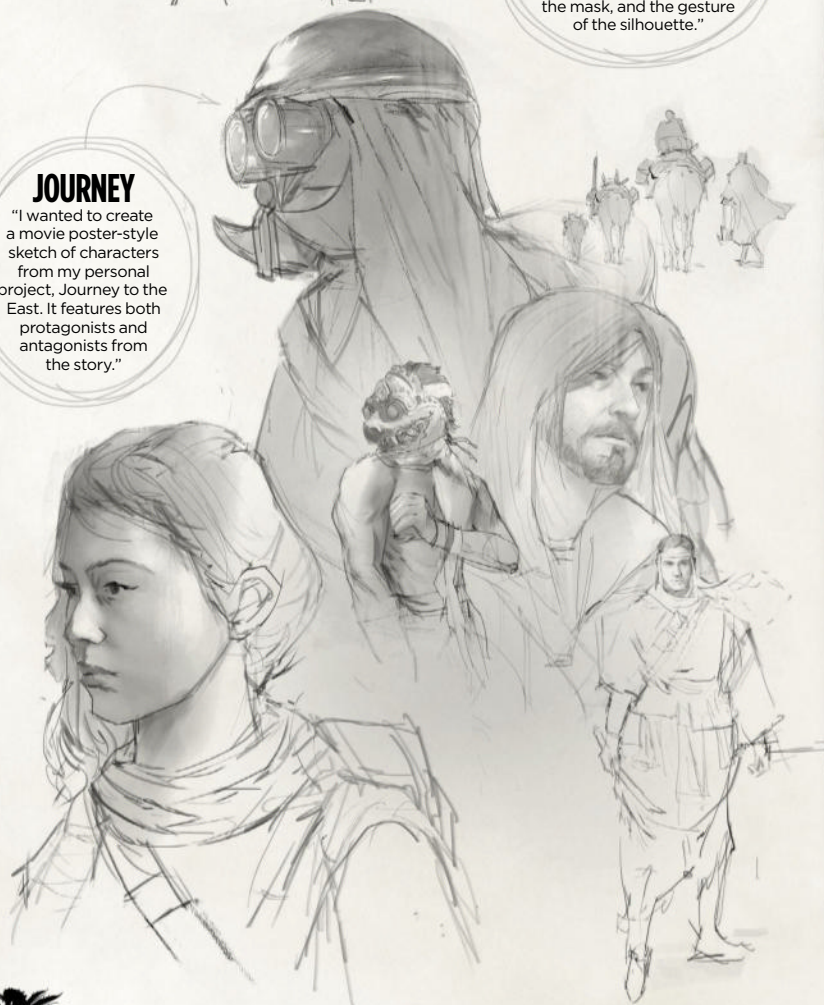
"This is another character I designed for my personal project. There's something nice and elegant about standing poses. I wanted this character to possess calmness and stillness within her silhouette."

DEKKA FIGHTER

"My favourite subject matter is exploring ancient cultures of different kinds. In this sketch I paid attention to detailing the mask, and the gesture of the silhouette."

JOURNEY

"I wanted to create a movie poster-style sketch of characters from my personal project, Journey to the East. It features both protagonists and antagonists from the story."



BOKKARONG

"This kind of very loose, painterly character sketch helps me to visualise the dynamic flow of the subject matter without being too precise with details."



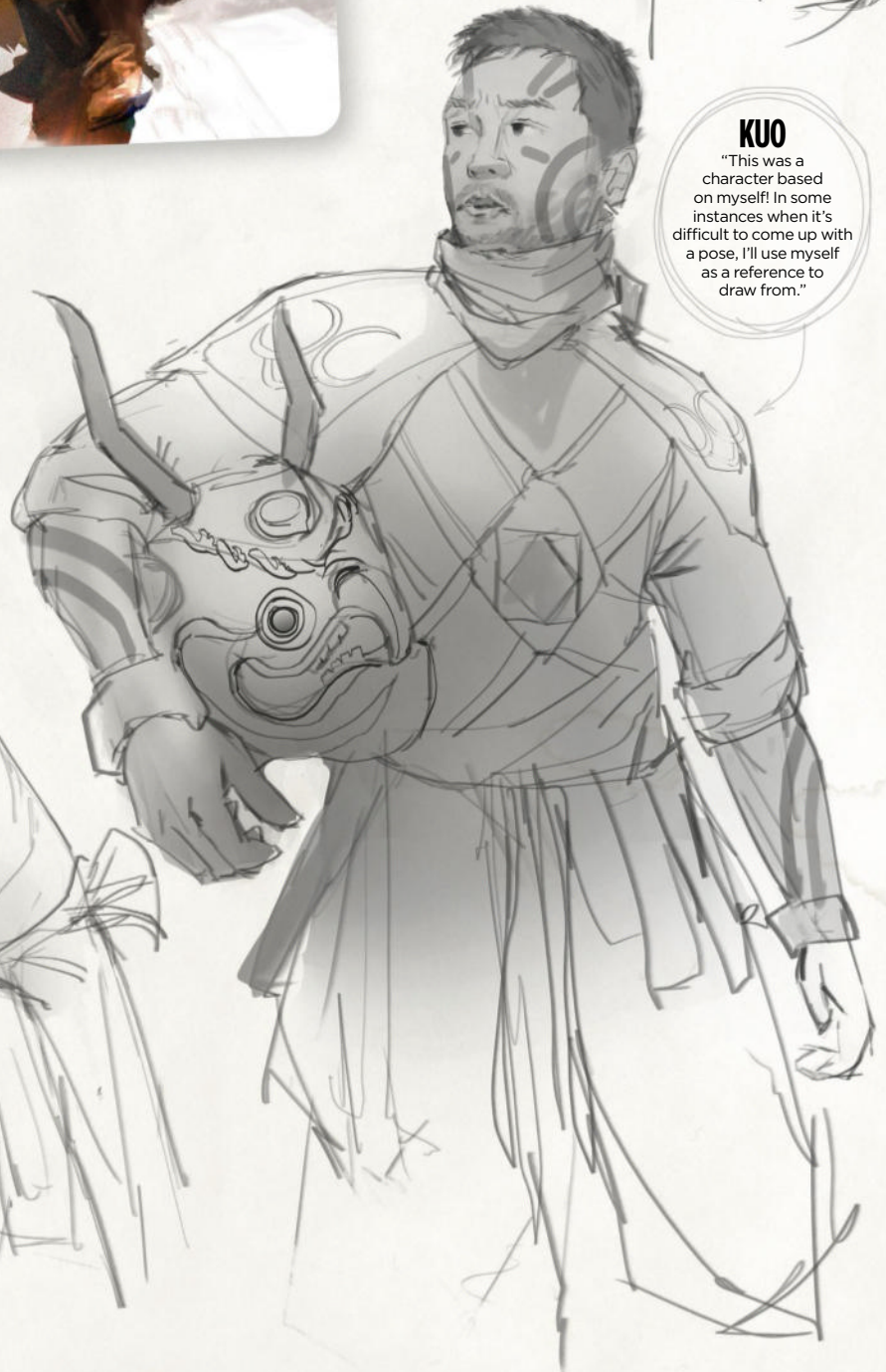
SOPHEA

"This sketch was created to explore a protagonist for my IP. I try to think about how each item a character wears correlates to their story and background. Sometimes they'll carry something distinguishable that's special to them."



KUO

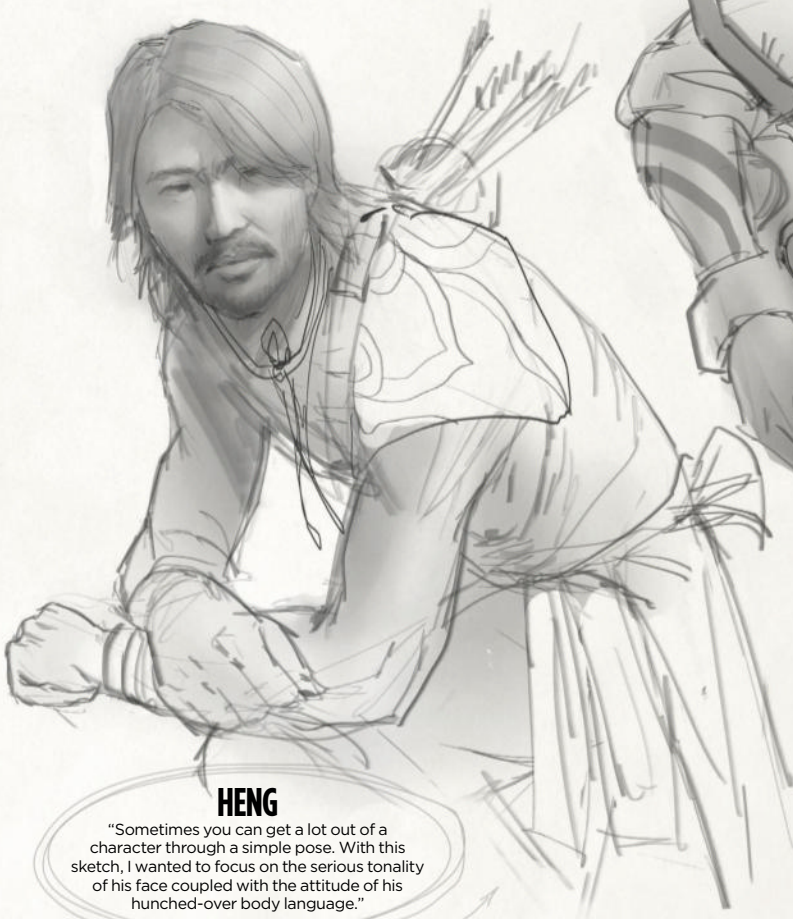
"This was a character based on myself! In some instances when it's difficult to come up with a pose, I'll use myself as a reference to draw from."



“I try to think about how each item a character wears correlates to their story”

HENG

"Sometimes you can get a lot out of a character through a simple pose. With this sketch, I wanted to focus on the serious tonality of his face coupled with the attitude of his hunched-over body language."



Kim JaeHyun

Enter the universe of EXTINCTION, a personal project that tells the story of humanity's survival in space

Artist PROFILE

Kim JaeHyun

LOCATION: South Korea



Kim JaeHyun works as a visual development artist for films and TV series, responsible for presenting new visual concepts and

solving production challenges. Away from his job, he's passionate about creating his own universe and is currently working on a project titled EXTINCTION, which depicts a bleak future for humanity as it's forced into space. The sketches here are all part of this EXTINCTION universe. His goal for the next decade is to continually push the boundaries of imagination. <https://ohajhk.artstation.com>

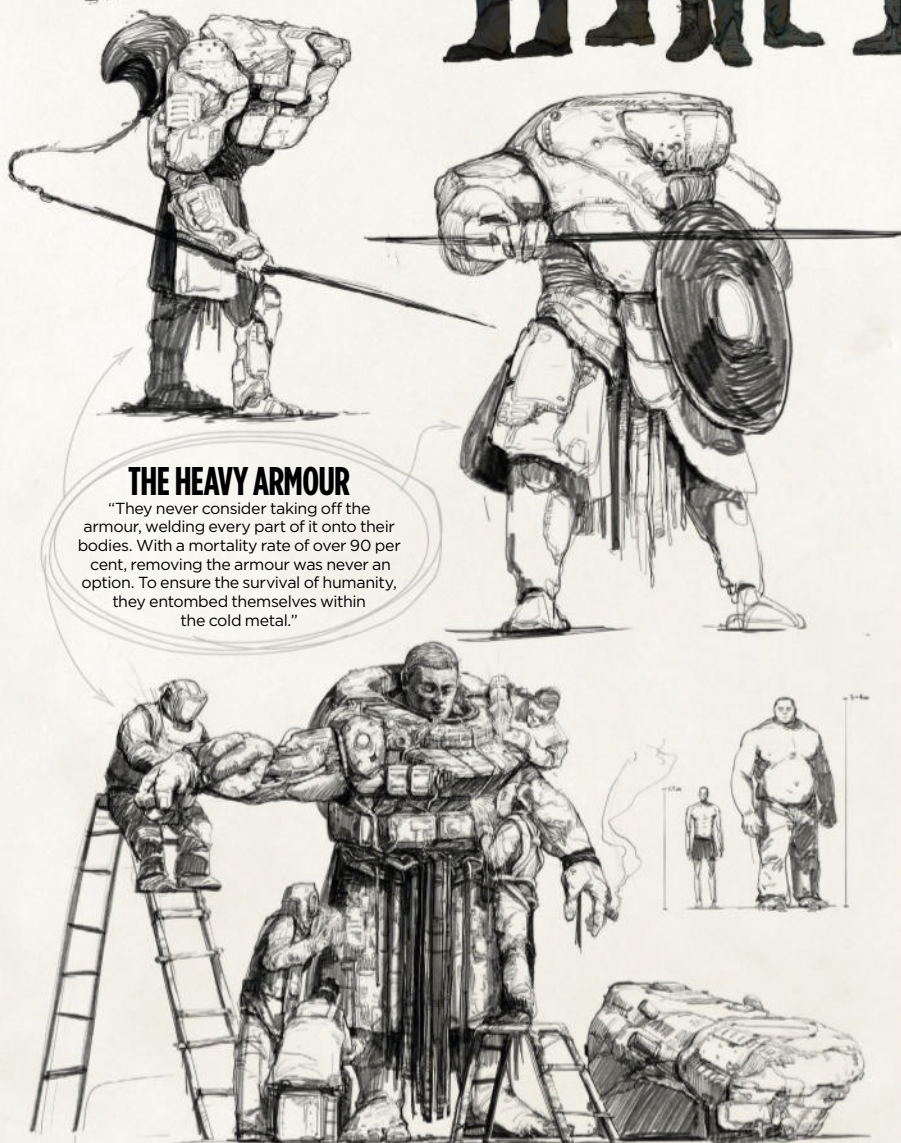
THE SQUAD

"The form of light armour built by humans who were pulled into space and had to adapt to limited environments. With no resources to focus on design, the armour is purely functional."

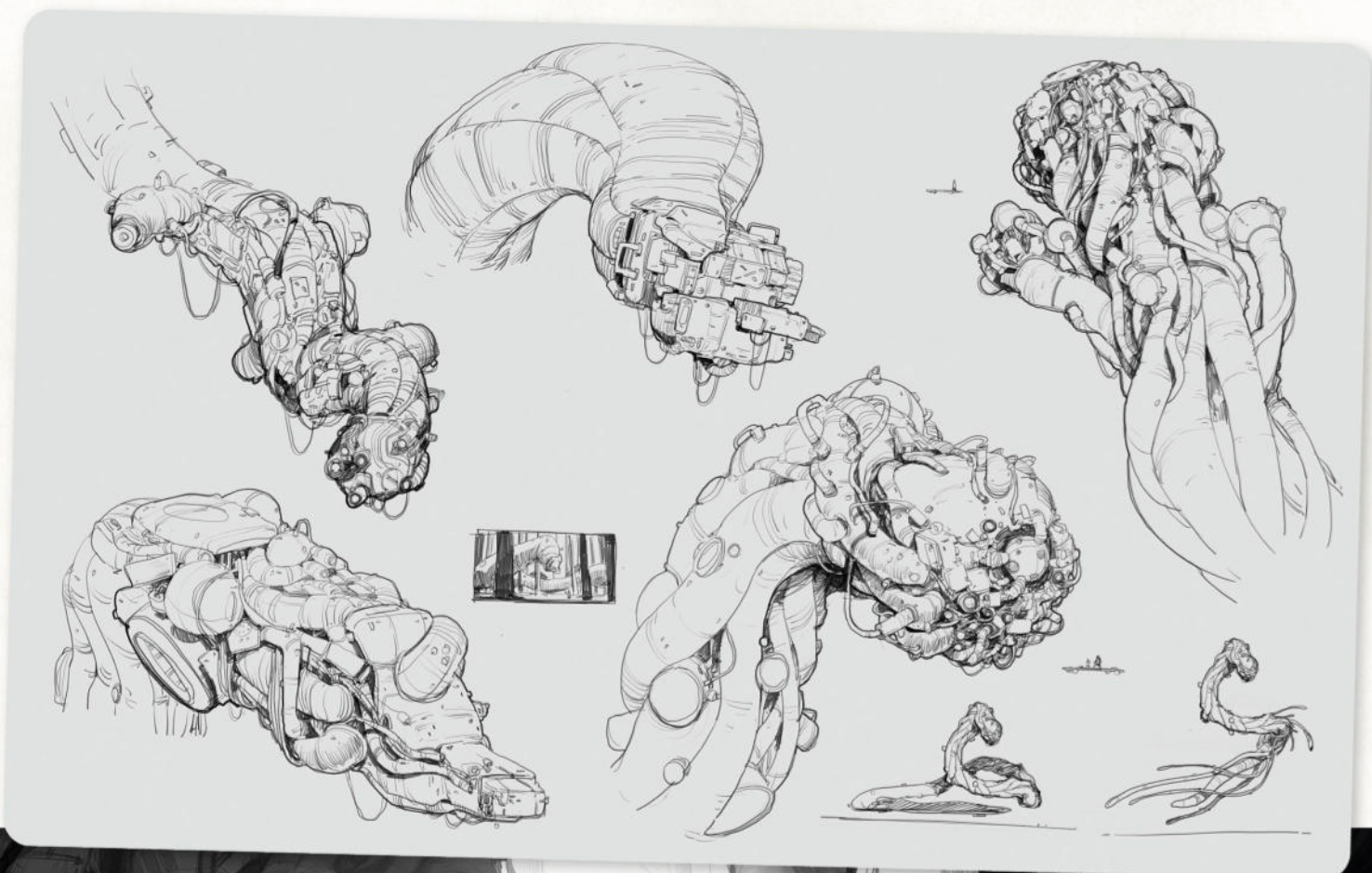


THE HEAVY ARMOUR

"They never consider taking off the armour, welding every part of it onto their bodies. With a mortality rate of over 90 per cent, removing the armour was never an option. To ensure the survival of humanity, they entombed themselves within the cold metal."



“The cult would rather be ruled by machines of its own creation than by alien overlords”



THE CATASTROPHE

"The pinnacle of AI, created by humans who ventured into space; a pseudo-scientific cult that would rather be ruled by machines of its own creation than by alien overlords."



“When I’m venturing into uncharted worlds, sketching becomes an invaluable tool”



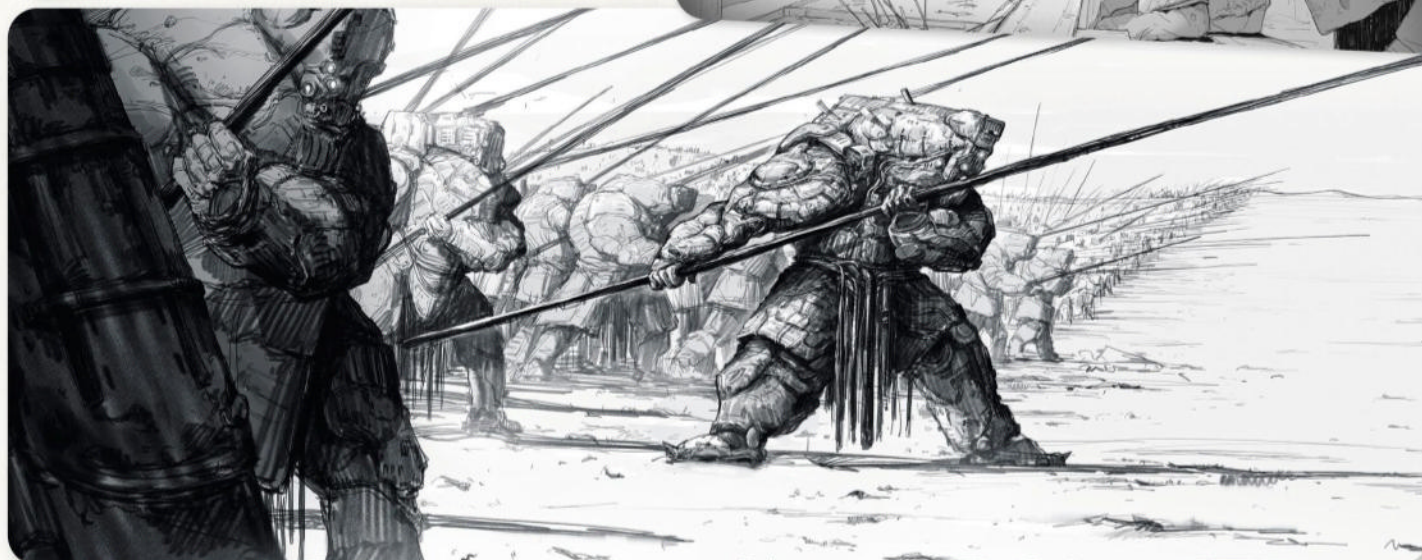
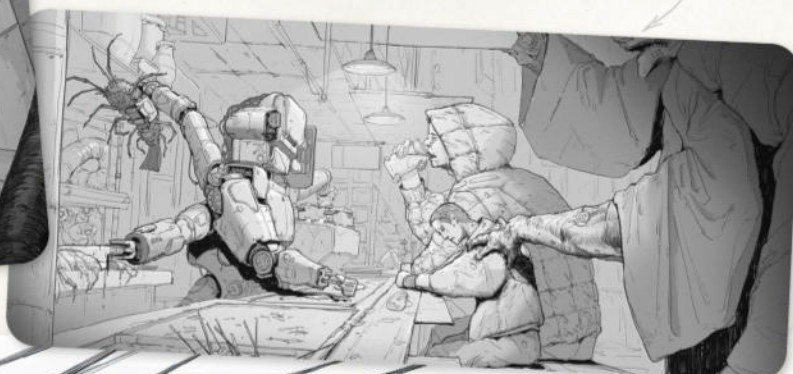
THE 10 CLANS

“Sketches of two of the 10 species that have mastered the principles of the universe. The focus is on expressing the look of mysterious, intelligent extraterrestrial beings.”



VISITING WORLD

"When I'm exploring new ideas and venturing into uncharted worlds, sketching becomes an invaluable tool. It allows me to quickly express my thoughts, making it a great way to unleash my imagination."



Stephanie Marzian

Wonderfully whimsical drawings leap off the pages of the artist's charming sketchbook and into our hearts

Artist PROFILE

Stephanie Marzian

LOCATION: Germany



A passionate artist, author and illustrator, Stephanie loves touching others' hearts by crafting fantastic worlds full of charming creatures. Besides digital painting, she enjoys drawing traditionally with paper and pencil. Stephanie is also well known in Germany for her Christmas-themed series of books *Fräulein Gewürztauber*. She can't imagine a world without creativity. www.stephanie-marzian.de

PHOTOBOMB RED PANDA, GIRAFFE AND BEAR

"They are special creatures from a series of drawings - curious animals that want to say hello."



NEIN- NINCHEN

"Every Monday morning I post a new drawing of my grumpy bunny as motivation for grumpy people."

PUMPKIN WITCH

"I drew this cutie for the Witchtober art challenge."



RODGER

"I immediately fell in love with this dog's picture on Instagram, so I just had to draw the lovely furry fellow."



CHRISTMAS MOUSE

"This little hero was created because of my deep love of Christmas."

BEDTIME MOUSE

"Sometimes I draw what I'm feeling. I think I was very tired in this moment."

FANTASTIC WOODS

"This scene is taken from an unpublished fable that I wrote for my children."

“Every Monday morning I post a new drawing of a grumpy bunny”



TEA TURTLE

"I love sketching cute and fantastical creatures. Why not a turtle with a tea cup shell!"



Wouter Tulp

Step into the wonderful world of the visual development artist, who shares a collection of his inksplorations with us

Artist PROFILE

Wouter Tulp

LOCATION: The Netherlands



Wouter Tulp is a character designer and visual development artist from the Netherlands, where he lives with his wife and son.

Besides his work in animation, Wouter loves to explore a range of styles and techniques. This comes through in the variety of subjects, techniques and styles you can find in his artwork.
www.woutertulp.com



KIND OF BLUE

"A drawing from a series of jazz-inspired designs."



LOUIS ARMSTRONG

"My Kind of Blue series was all done with just an indigo blue pencil. This portrait of Louis Armstrong is an exception, where I combined inks, coloured pencils and gouache."

HOLDING ON

"I created this drawing when I was on a vacation, realising how we're all connected."

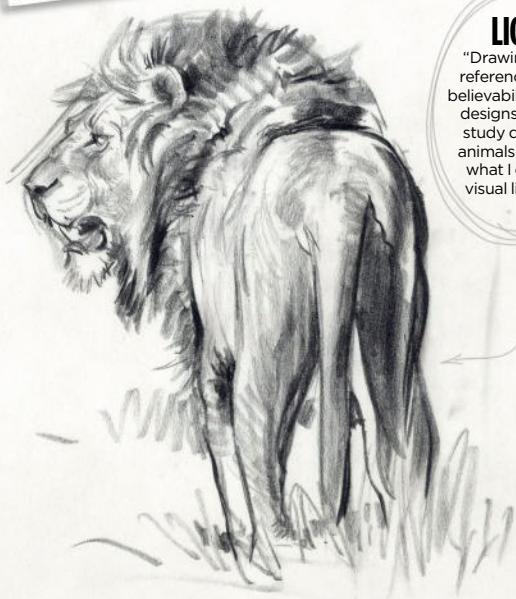


“For me, one of the most fun ways to draw is intuitive drawing. No plan, no concept, just go with the flow!”



KISS OF DEATH

"Sometimes I believe that it's better to let the drawing explain what it's about."



LION

"Drawing from reference gives believability to our designs. I often study drawing animals to fill up what I call my visual library."



INKSPLOSIONS 1

"I used coloured inks, washes and dip pens to create my inksploraions. They'll all be published in a book that will be available on my website."

“I used coloured inks, washes and dip pens in my inksploraions”

PORTRAIT PRACTICE

"Last year I filled a sketchbook with so-called inksploraions, where I took portraits as an excuse to experiment with different styles and techniques using my inks."

THE BAND

"Music has always been a subject I've been drawn to in my art. I played in a band myself for many years, and in this band the lead singer is my dog."





INKSPORATIONS 2

"In this inksploration, I experimented with vertical hatchings to portray the face of my subject."

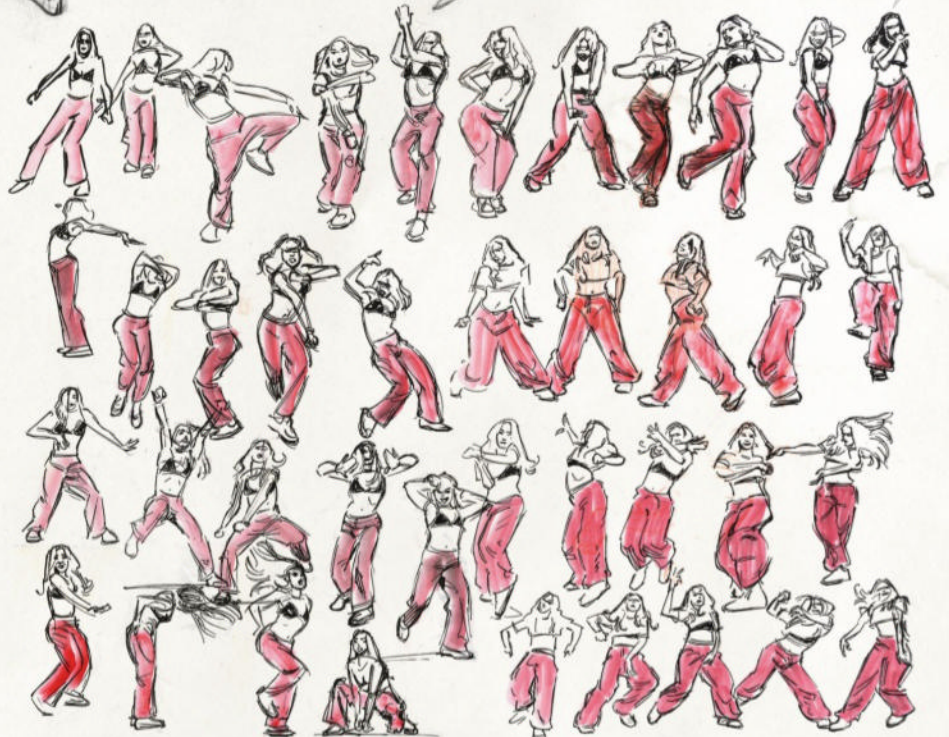


GIMME A LIGHT

"For me, one of the most fun ways to draw is intuitive drawing. No plan, no concept, just go with the flow and let things happen. In both the style and concept, this can lead to surprising results."

GESTURE SKETCHES

"I often do gesture sketches to warm up and keep my skills sharp."



Adam Du Buisson

The multi-talented artist creates a wealth of wonderful designs for charming characters in this loveable set of sketches

Artist PROFILE

Adam Du Buisson

LOCATION: England



Before entering the video games industry, Adam worked as a professional tattoo artist. For the past five years he has been a concept artist, most recently with PlayStation studio Firesprite. Adam is now a freelance character designer and illustrator, while also working on his own comic and children's books. www.adamdubuisson.com

THE TOY MAKER

"I've had this idea for a while. Spiders are crafty and creative in their own little ways."



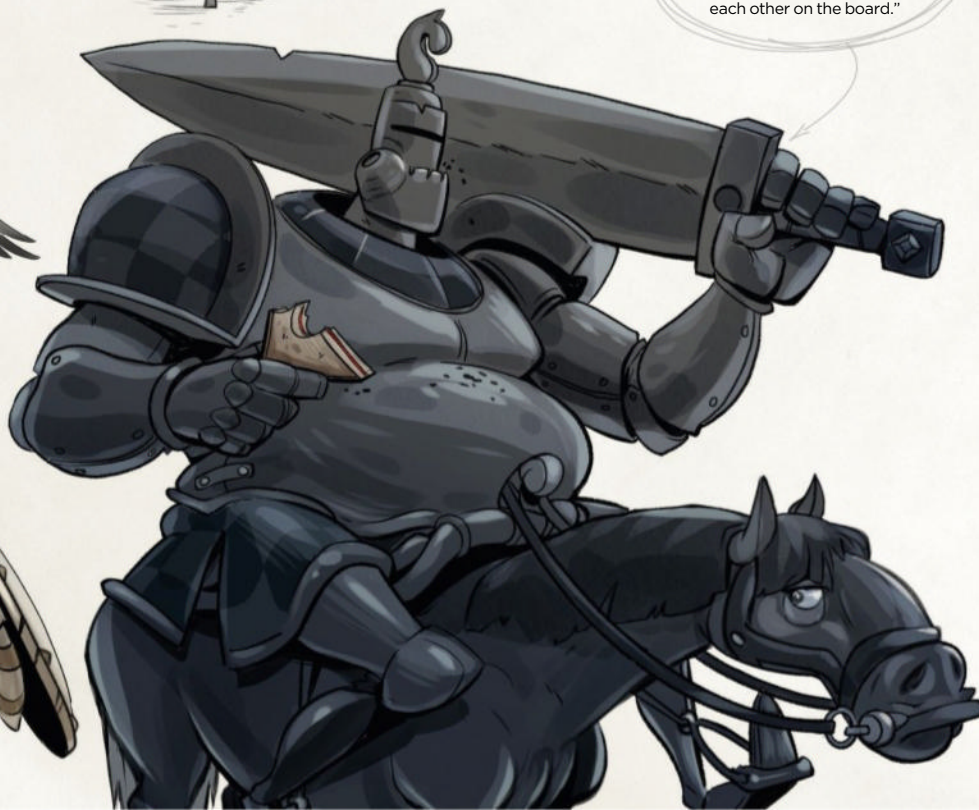
SELF PORTRAIT

"Once a year I like to do a quick self-portrait; usually something fun and light-hearted."



YOUR MOVE

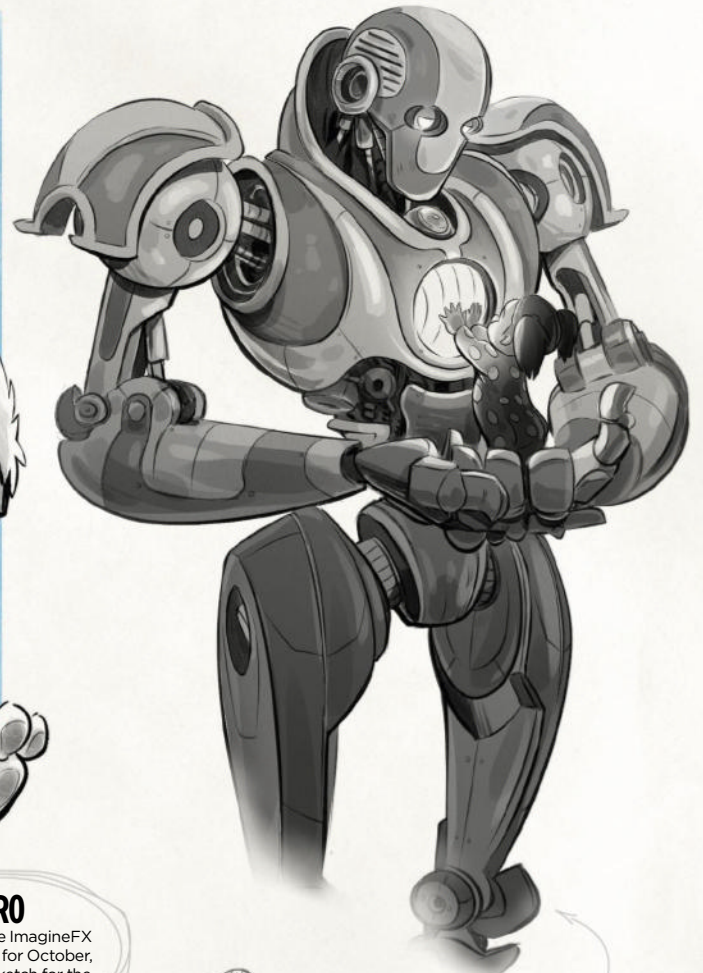
"I've been thinking about how chess pieces could interact with each other on the board."



LOVE BIRDS

"I recently bought a house with a garden, and didn't realise that I was intruding."





HERO

"As part of the ImagineFX Art Challenge for October, this was my sketch for the first prompt, Hero."

PROTECT PROTOCOL

"I don't draw robots too often, but I wanted to show love and protection while also drawing a cool bot."

KNOCK KNOCK

"Growing up, my dad introduced me to all things Monty Python. If I can inject some of that wit and charm into a sketch and it makes someone smile for a moment, then my job is done."



SEAFOOD, ANYONE?

"I love to draw sharks and chefs. And who doesn't enjoy sushi?!"



“If I can make someone smile for a moment, then my job has been done”



Interview

Jan Wessbecher

Dominic Carter talks to the visual artist about creating his own comic and why sketchbooks are great for creative experiments

that I was experimenting with as well, but once I delved into that different world and saw all the illustrations in those books, it kind of supercharged my imagination.

After that, I started attending an art course with a local artist, and that kept my interest strong until I discovered internet art forums. That's when I got more serious about a future in the creative field. I also got into gaming pretty hard with the release of World of Warcraft. All of the artwork and the possibility to explore a different world fitted right into what I saw online, so that's what I pursued back then.

Once I had a graphics tablet, things really took off and I started investing a lot more time into my drawing and painting. I'm not even sure anymore what exactly got me to the point of deciding on a career in concept art, but I just wasn't passionate about anything else. I kind of went all in.

Once I graduated from school, I applied to an internship with a local

When Jan Wessbecher realised that his illustrations were small windows into a brand new world, he knew that he would have to start gearing them towards comics. We caught up with the talented artist, who tells us all about how he's created his own graphic novel series, why concept art was a natural fit for him, and how he experiments with digital sketches.

Can you tell us a little about your background as an artist? How did you get started and what has your career been like so far?

I was always interested in art for as long as I can remember, but I think I started taking an interest specifically in fantasy illustration when I was a teenager and one day bought a set of the Dungeons & Dragons rule books. Until then I'd been doodling in class a lot and had been gifted some paints

CELSIUS PRIME

"A drawing from the world of Celsius Prime. This is a clan of mechanics living in the underbelly of a megastructure."

Interview Jan Wessbecher

Artist PROFILE

Jan Wessbecher

LOCATION: Germany

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:

Todd Lockwood, Wayne Reynolds, Katsuhiro Otomo, Takehiko Inoue, Shaun Tan, John William Waterhouse, James Jean

MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender, Clip Studio Paint

WEB: www.celsiusprime.com

LEADING ROLE

"An early sketch of the main character of my comic. The sketchbook it's in still isn't filled years later!"

“I just wasn't passionate about anything else. I went all in”

game developer called exDream using all the stuff I'd worked on in the previous years as a portfolio. Looking back now, I think my life could have taken a very different route had they not accepted me back then, but they did, which was very fortunate!

Once I finished my internship, I was thinking about studying art in some way at university, but it turned out that back in Germany in 2009, there weren't many options adjacent to concept art. There were some private universities, but I didn't want to fork over that much cash. The closest thing was a bachelor's in illustration at HAW Hamburg. You had to pass an ➤

TOWER TRIALS

"A collection of ideas for environments. Habitation towers that are crumbling with age and neglect."

WORK IN THE LAB

"An early experiment for a comic page design that never came to be. I like how evocative it came out."

OUTFIT INSPIRATION

"A spontaneous sketch when inspiration struck after perusing one of my reference books on clothing."



➤ acceptance test though, so I took my shot and once again got lucky.

And since then, I've been a concept artist for game development, working either in-house with a developer or as a freelancer, with the occasional illustration job sprinkled in between. Well, not exactly. At some point I also became a comic creator, but I'll expand on that a bit later.

What attracted you to working as an illustrator and concept artist?

I love games, I love art, and I love creative work. I've been an avid gamer ever since my mother bought us a computer back in the day. There are so many favourites that come to mind: Command & Conquer: Red Alert, Breath of Fire III, Tekken, Diablo II, World of Warcraft. It's a fascinating world that combines so many aspects of what I love about art. At some point I understood that it could be an actual career; one where I could flourish.

There's just something about designing a thing, object, character or landscape through many iterations and handing it to a team of passionate people who make that design spring to

life right in front of your eyes. It's a kind of magic that's still one of the most satisfying moments in game dev for me. I think that passion and magic is what one can glimpse in concept art, even if seen outside the context of the game it will be used in.

And my young brain was already primed by playing around in magical worlds on the screen and reading about

that outside of an aesthetic admiration for work like that, I just don't have as much of a connection to it.

Recently you've been working on your graphic novel, Celsius Prime. What's it about, and what made you want to tell this story?

It's a sci-fi drama that takes place on the icy colony world Celsius Prime and

“I think that passion and magic is what one can glimpse in concept art, even if seen outside the context of the game”

them in books, so I'm not surprised I latched onto what I could find online. Combine that with my connection to art already established during that time and you got a match!

My foray into illustration really isn't that much different. I think the lines blur at some point, since I landed mostly in sci-fi and fantasy illustration, much the same as my concept art career. Illustration focused on non-fiction has eluded me so far, and I fear

revolves around two people, Nico and Shirin. They meet at the lowest point in their lives and drag each other along in the wake of the mistakes that got them to this point.

Nico, a talented roboticist, hails from the rich and powerful core districts close to the ancient founding point of the colony, and is obsessed with redeeming a grave error that had her betray someone close to her and recapturing meaning in her life. ➤



THE KEY QUESTIONS FOR ILLUSTRATING A NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL

Want to make your own comic but never know where to get started? Jan shares his approach

The thing that I struggle with a lot is putting myself into the shoes of someone reading the comic for the first time, so I highly recommend searching out test readers so you can find out. Can the reader understand what's happening on the page? Did you make the things they should pay attention to stand out? Can the reader follow along

with the narration without getting confused? Can you simplify things for the readers' and your own sakes? Is that a plot hole?

Obviously all of those things are probably quite useful to ask yourself regardless of whether you have someone else around; I at least worry about that stuff a lot right now. Hopefully it'll pay off!



COVER ARTWORK

"An illustration meant to work as a book cover portfolio piece. The base for the gateway is a 3D render for paintover."

EMOTIONAL CHARGE

"I enjoy larger scenes that have the feel of a classical painting and are charged with emotion."



FRESH TAKE

"An alternate version of the drawing above. I'm not sure what drove me to do a second, but it resulted in a better composition for a painting I made later."

➤ Shirin, on the other hand, is a young street vendor who lives in a poor rim district of the enormous colony, and is a former member of a band of dock workers that rule their territory with a strict hand. An error of judgement also saw her lose something precious and kicked out to the streets as punishment by her community. Both have lost all solid ground under them and must find common ground to survive.

This story grew to its current size from a short story in the world of the fictional Celsius star system, which I'd started outlining in my personal work years prior. The more I thought about them, the more the characters became alive and I wanted to keep exploring their story. Once I started writing and delving deeper, it became clear to me that it would be the most challenging thing I'd ever attempted to create.

How has creating a graphic novel challenged you as an illustrator? And how have you been able to overcome these challenges?

At first, I tried to just use my typical style that I employ for illustrations to draw comic pages as well. It didn't work out at all! The balance of accuracy, how (not) crisp the line work is and how I distribute my tones didn't translate well to a multiple-panel approach, where there's a lot less space to work with for individual images.

I had to adapt, but it took quite a while until I hit on something usable, and many failed pages were thrown away. Once I found an approach I liked, I decided I needed to test it out on a separate, smaller project first. That became a 40-page prequel comic in itself. It's called Celsius Prime – Early

Days and it's a snippet looking at Shirin's childhood.

That paved the way and finally convinced me it could work out with the main comic, so I went ahead and started drawing pages. I managed to get the first chapter done, but by then the style and quality had changed again and I had to rework the entire thing from beginning to end. An endless cycle.

Making a comic is so hard it's unreal. I'd felt that maybe my work before the comic had stalled a bit, but now I'm constantly learning new things again. New ways to see narrative flow, timing,

COMIC CREATIONS

"With time, I changed the way I sketch digitally. It's now a much heavier influence of my comic style."

JAN'S TOP PICK

"One of my favourite drawing-styled illustrations. I should do another one, if I ever find the time."



pace, using values and detail, texture, economic drawing. It's so many things and so many new perspectives on how to achieve what I want.

And that's just the art side. My writing is much more untested than my drawing, but I also have the benefit of still being fresh-eyed. I can try stuff without already having preconceived notions of quality – the nice way of saying that I don't know enough about writing to know if my writing sucks. But it's still obvious if there's a weaker part of the comic. So hard!

Celsius Prime is currently a work in progress, but where can people read it and get involved with supporting the project?

I set up a website where you can read Early Days and Celsius Prime for free! www.celsiusprime.com, simple. The main comic isn't finished yet, but I add new content to the website whenever I have a batch. I also have a Patreon at www.patreon.com/celsiusprime.





There you can get access to plenty of behind-the-scenes material and many other benefits!

I wish I could support myself just through Patreon, but right now that's still a pipe dream, so on occasion I still have to take on some freelance work. However, I may be able to get the comic published in physical form at some point, and that could make it possible to work on it all the time. Wish me luck!

A lot of your work is done digitally, but are sketchbooks still an important part of your workflow? If so, how do you use them?

It's actually quite rare that I get out the paper sketchbook or books – I've got four or five that I've begun working on laying about. I mostly write notes about story tidbits in them now, or do a quick sketch when I'm in bed and an idea happens to strike my brain that must be recorded immediately, lest I forget it. But my general workflow has

CULTURE BUILDING

"The first of a series of illustrations dealing with funeral customs. World design stuff for my comic."

FESTIVAL OF LIFE

"Also a funeral, but this one I didn't want to be sombre or sacred. Instead I wanted to show it more like a festival or celebration of the life of the deceased."



moved to digital almost exclusively, and I've got a sizeable collection of digital sketches that would fill quite a few sketchbooks by itself.

To me, sketching digitally fills a slightly different role than sketching in a sketchbook. When I do sketches digitally, I'm also experimenting with specific tools and processes that I want to use for my work. I'm more focused

on the purpose. But in a sketchbook it's really more about the ideas, the act of drawing itself and just letting go of any expectations.

That's why I'd say it's not really a good thing that I haven't kept up the same quantity of drawing in my sketchbooks. But I'm also not always capable of bringing as much energy to drawing as I did 10 years ago. ➤

MAKE IT SHINE

"For this book cover, I wanted it to shine with a lot of light so I could play with a strong silhouette and backlighting."

MEDITATION

Jan talks us through the creation of this mock book cover for Celsius 13

I was going for a character that would be something like a hermit, seeking out enlightenment on a lonely mountaintop, but in this case the peak is an edifice of industrial architecture, and the harmony they're looking for is harmony with the machine.

This piece is part of an effort I made to expand my portfolio with book cover art, so it goes together with a few other pieces. I used displacement mapping to create those carpets in combination with a simple cloth simulation. Basically, I created the environment in Blender, then textured simple squares so they looked like carpet and let them drop over that 3D geometry to get a pleasing result. Then I used the displacement system in Blender to make it interact correctly with the light and give it thickness.



NEED
SOMETHING
FIXED?



PASSION FOR PEOPLE

"I enjoy drawing people the most. There's nothing that gives me as much satisfaction as getting a drawing of a person just right and full of life."

STRIKING THE PERFECT POSE

"I had some great pose reference for this character from my comic. It helped me understand him more, in a way."



people like me to let go of stubborn, preconceived notions.

Where else do you have the chance to be that free as an artist other than your sketchbook? You can express whatever you want, however you want and nobody ever needs to see it.

Well, I say these things, but I'm not that adventurous in my sketchbooks compared to some I've seen, but that's fine too. There should be no need for judgement in sketchbooks.

What advice would you give to other artists thinking of becoming illustrators and concept artists?

Keep your mind open. There are many ways to become a professional artist. And in many you might be underpaid too, so why choose one that doesn't fit you 100 per cent? It can be hard to push through if you're working on projects or in a type of work that you don't resonate with. It's a mental drain, because we need to invest ourselves into our work so much.

So if you have the chance, taste from many different pies while you can. It's great to see the creative industry from many angles and to broaden your horizons. There's always something new for you to learn. And since it's not exactly a steady field of work, it's also beneficial to have experience in more than one area. ●

» Creating the comic just takes so much time that it's hard to squeeze in even more drawing, and my wrist needs the rest too. I notice the changes though. My thought patterns and ideas are getting more rigid than they were when I was still studying illustration in technical college, where we were expected to fill multiple sketchbooks each semester. It's like a muscle, you want to use it so it doesn't atrophy.

ON THE BOARD

"Originally this image was supposed to be the image depicted on the billboard. Instead I changed it to be an image within an image."

Do you have a preferred type of sketchbook you like to use?

Yes! Moleskine-type sketchbooks, either small or book-size, are my jam! I really like the off-white, yellowish page

“It's great to see the creative industry from many angles and broaden your horizons”

colour and the thickness and texture is just right for me. During my studies I used a wider variety because I was experimenting with acrylics, and sometimes even oil pastel in my drawings, and the paper needs to be more stable for that. I can recommend that by the way: oil pastel sticks mixed with drawing can be super fun because it's a mess and you don't have the same level of control over it.

Why do you think sketchbooks continue to be an invaluable outlet, even for those artists who mostly work digitally?

They're all about not letting yourself fall into a rut when a lot of this type of work depends on coming at problems from all angles. And that's not only professionally; if you just look at it from the perspective of walking a mile in your mental world of ideas, it's a meditation and a constant push for

Riccardo Moscatello

Characters from the classic Fable video games are reimagined among an array of fabulous fantasy concept designs

Artist PROFILE

Riccardo Moscatello

LOCATION: Italy



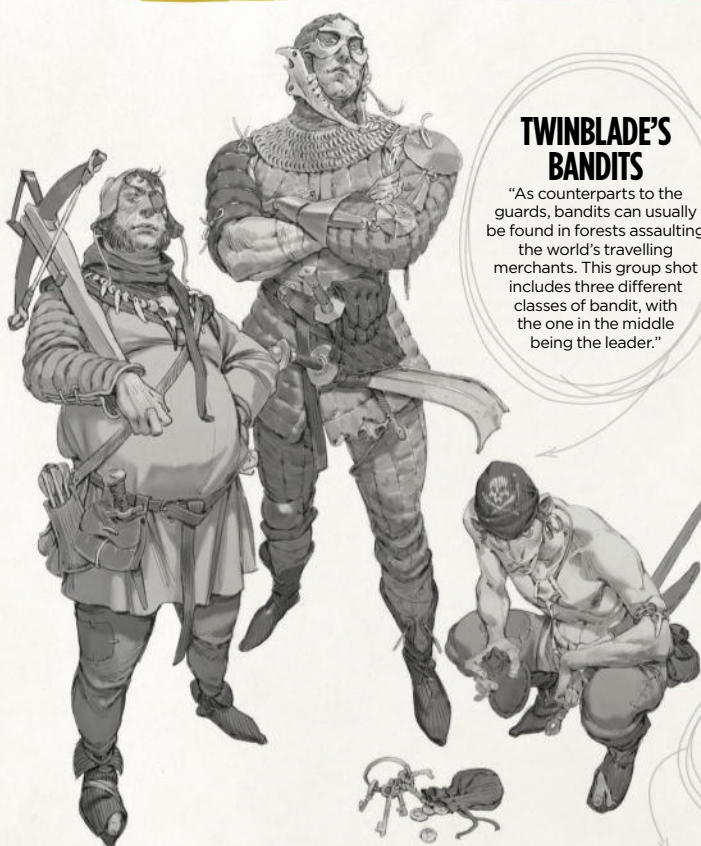
Turin-based Riccardo is a concept artist working on fantasy video games. He has created art for a wide variety of clients

including Volta, Creative Assembly and Wizards of the Coast, as well as many miniature and tabletop RPG publishers. In short, Riccardo has a passion for designing and telling stories through his character art.

www.artstation.com/riccardo

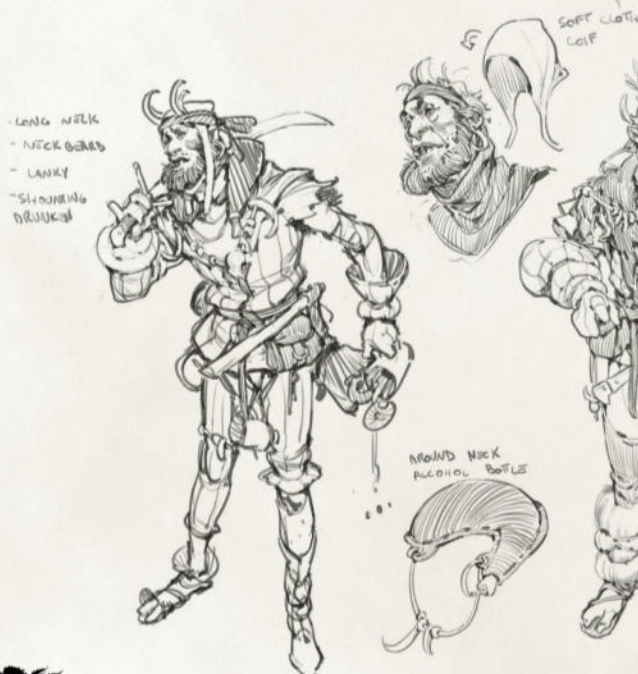
TWINBLADE'S BANDITS

"As counterparts to the guards, bandits can usually be found in forests assaulting the world's travelling merchants. This group shot includes three different classes of bandit, with the one in the middle being the leader."



DRUNKEN BANDIT

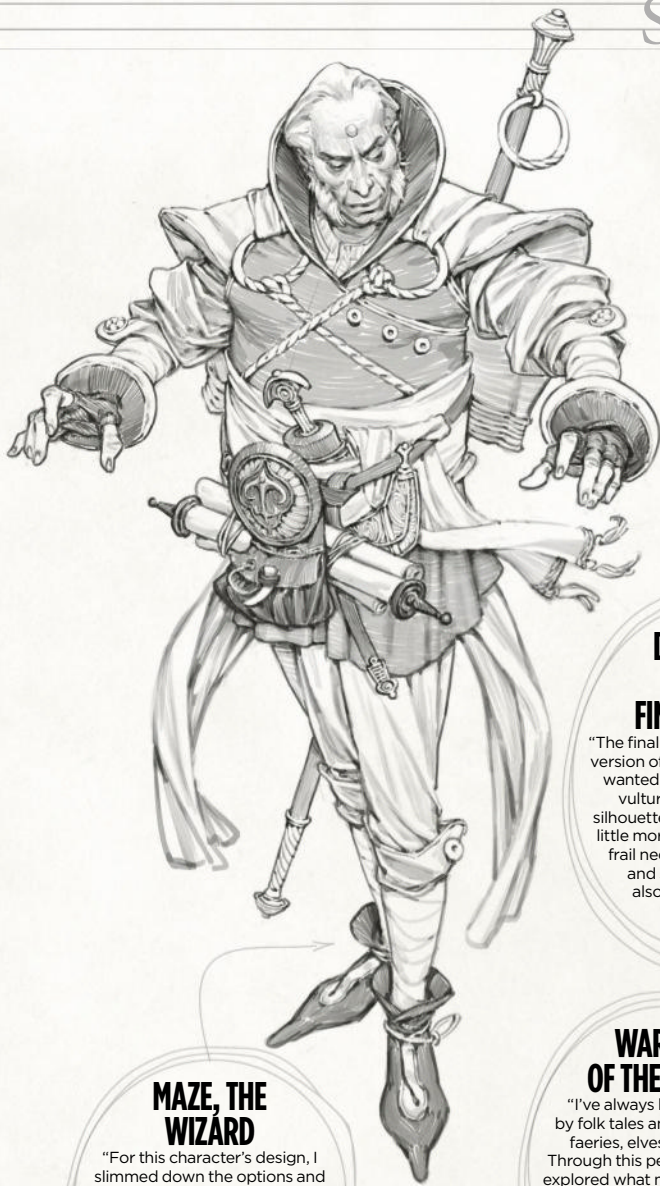
"With this character, I wanted to explore the idea of a bandit that could bargain with the player's character and potentially be bribed with beer. Again, I explored many possible personalities, shapes and postures during this rough stage."



BOWERSTONE GUARD

"I wanted to portray a scene that not only showcased the final designs, but also an interaction between the characters during their daily activity of patrolling the town."





MAZE, THE WIZARD

"For this character's design, I slimmed down the options and committed to the main aspects that I wanted to emphasise. In this case I kept the large belly as a major shape and added extra elements on the waist to give it even more volume."

DRUNKEN BANDIT: FINAL SKETCH

"The final design is an improved version of the previous sketch. I wanted to push the idea of a vulture-like posture and silhouette, so I made his build a little more slender with a long, frail neck and used the pelt and skull ornament to also suggest a more vulture-style head."



WARDEN OF THE GROVE

"I've always been inspired by folk tales and myths about faeries, elves and the like. Through this personal project, I explored what my interpretation of these creatures could look like and why. At the same time I'm slowly putting together a cohesive world around them."



BOWERSTONE GUARD: EXPLORATION SKETCHES

"In reimagining the Fable characters, I wanted to keep their core essence, but at the same time transport them into an imaginary 9th-gen reboot of the game. The slightly grotesque and pushed proportions are a key feature for me, and with these first rough sketches I wanted to explore the different possible shapes and personalities for the character."



“ In reimagining the Fable characters, I wanted to keep their core essence ”

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

To celebrate the iconic franchise's **50th anniversary**, we explore the history of its genre-defining art



PLUS
INSIGHT ON THE
ORIGINAL STARTER
SET BOX ART WITH
LARRY ELMORE

Learn to draw dynamic battles

Develop fearsome scenes in graphite with advice from Thomas Elliott

Inside a haven of collectibles

Illustrator Erik Ly takes us on the grand tour of his awesome studio

Discover epic comic doodles

Marvel and DC artist Raymund Bermudez opens up his sketchbook

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ImagineFX

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Printed by Buxton Press Limited, Palace Rd, Buxton, SK17 6AE

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
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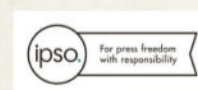
ISSN 1748-930X

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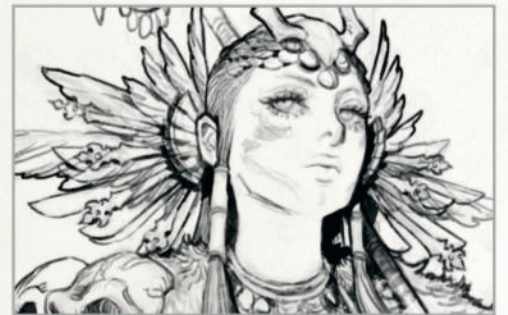
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