

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS **AT 50**

2HR VIDEO LESSON!
ICONIC ARTWORK!
ARTIST INSIGHT!
AND LOADS MORE INSIDE

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

INTERVIEW

LARRY
ELMORE

D&D LEGEND ON HOW HE MADE
THE ICONIC RED DRAGON
A CRITICAL HIT



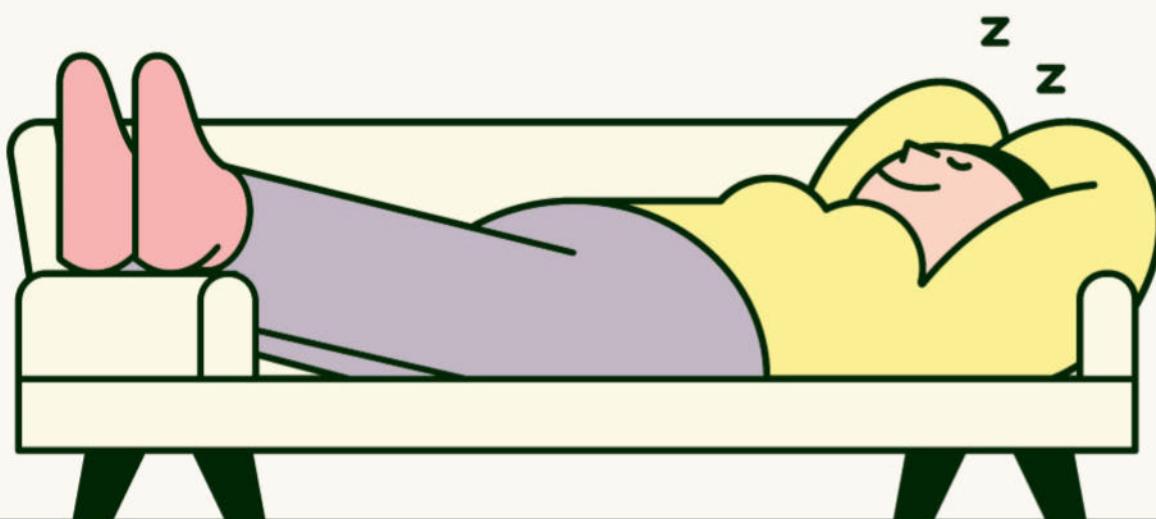
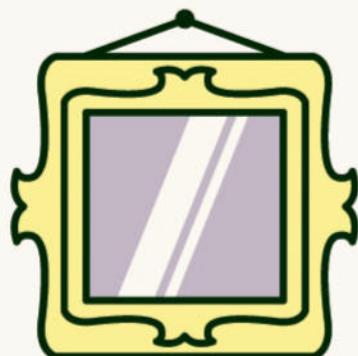
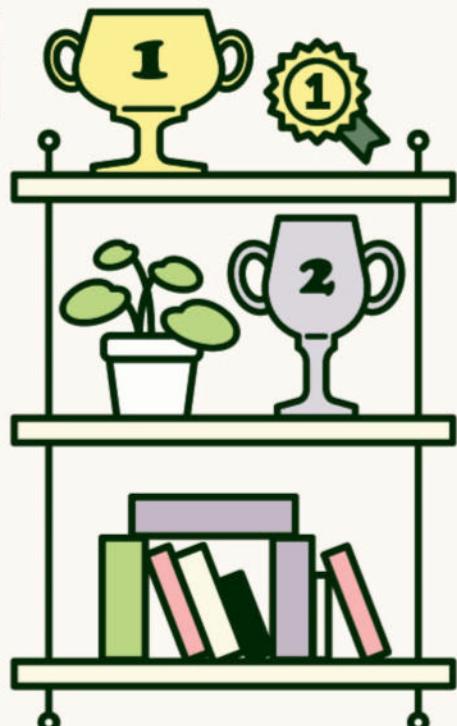
FEATURING
ART FROM

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ANNE STOKES EROL OTUS
TONY DITERLIZZI
RALPH HORSLEY

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There are some projects or worlds built that stand above the rest, influencing what's to come in immeasurable ways. Dungeons & Dragons is one of these few and it's impossible to quantify quite how the game's artwork has impacted fantasy worlds over the years.

Now in its 50th year, we thought it only right to join in the celebrations, so this month we have a huge feature on the art of this much loved universe, including our cover, which is an homage to iconic box art. We even talked to the legendary Larry Elmore, the artist behind it, to find out more.

Elsewhere we look at the convergence of 2D and 3D, which appears to be becoming more common every week. We also pick our favourites from the latest ImagineFX Art Challenge, as you took on daily prompts all the way through October.

For those of you looking to further your own skills, head to our workshop section for training covering everything from magical illustrations to a tips collection for mastering your character design.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor

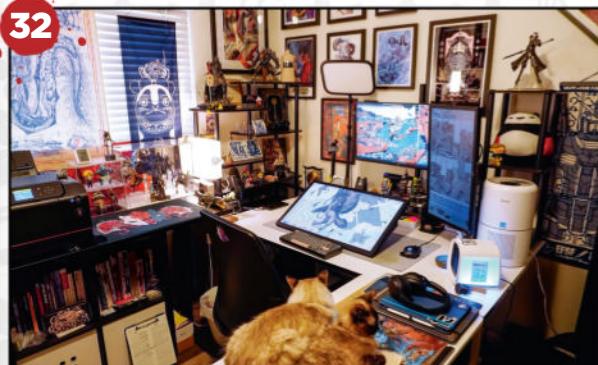
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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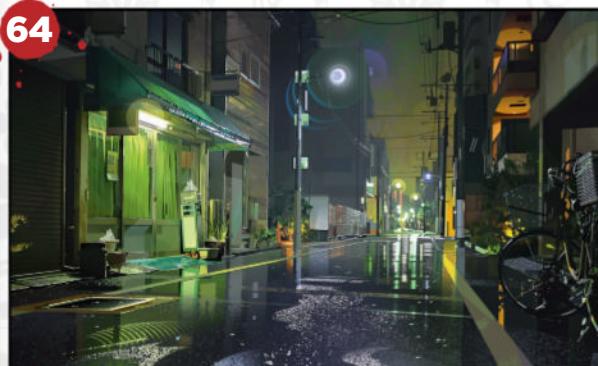
EDITOR'S CHOICE

Three of my top picks this month...



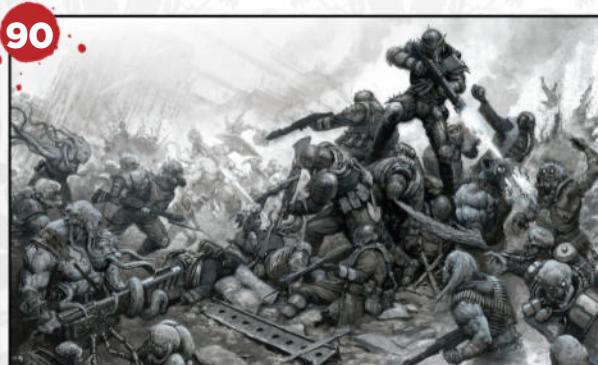
Head inside a stupendous studio

Explore the maximalist workspace of Erik Ly, chock full of incredible artwork and video game collectibles.



Build scenes using shapes

Push your design fundamentals to the limit with pro advice from visual development artist Léa Pinto.



Paint epic battles scenes

Thomas Elliott shows you how to create stunning science fiction conflicts using traditional inks.

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Contents

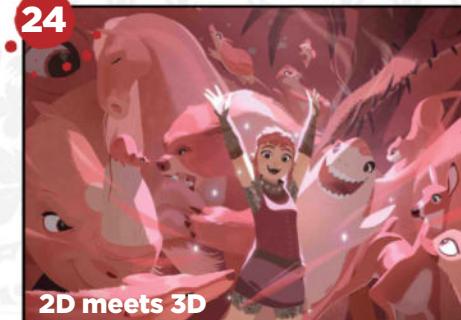
Your art

10 FXPosé

A round-up of digital artwork submitted by you, featuring Artist of the Month Vanessa Morales, Deborah Saez, Aemiron, Sophia Du, Labros Panousis and Zoe Badini.

22 The Rookies

Concept artist Jeremy Lee Jian Ming introduces his science fiction-inspired IP.



News and events

24 2D meets 3D: How the workflows are merging

We find out how the two mediums are gradually coming together for pro artists.

30 ImagineFX Art Challenge

A selection of our favourite entries for #IFXOctober, as we set a daily prompt list.

32 Artist in Residence: Erik Ly

Venture inside a studio filled to the brim with video game tributes and accessories.



Features

38 Dungeon Masters

As Dungeons & Dragons turns 50, we look at the history of the game's incredible imagery. Plus, learn how to paint like the legendary Larry Elmore in a special Q&A.

50 Sketchbook:

Raymund Bermudez

The artist explores Filipino mythology through his breathtaking personal project.



Reviews

78 Hardware

83 Software

Regulars

- 6 Next month
- 8 Subscriptions
- 36 Recent editions
- 37 Letters



Workshops

56 15 tips for stylish character designs

Discover how to create silhouettes brimming with personality thanks to Francois Bourdin's collection of pointers.

62 Go steady on storyboards

Expert artist Dan Milligan explains why you shouldn't get ahead of yourself.

64 Compose scenes with shapes

Learn how Léa Pinto develops a new composition for her street environment.

68 Use the power of suggestion

Why the hidden details found in Eduard Petrovich's art boost his storytelling.

70 Conjure magic illustrations

Follow along as Daria Anako casts her artistic spell over a beautiful scene.

76 Draw dazzling comic covers

Terry Dodson talks about making his art for Marvel's new Dazzler cover sing.

Traditional Artist

86 Traditional FXPosé

The finest traditional art, sent in by you! This month, we showcase stunning work from COTOH and Darko Stojanović.

90 Paint epic battles in traditional ink

Thomas Elliott teaches you how to create an action-packed sci-fi combat scene.

96 First Impressions: Marie-Alice Harel

Impressionist influences and enchanted rabbit holes inspire an artistic passion.



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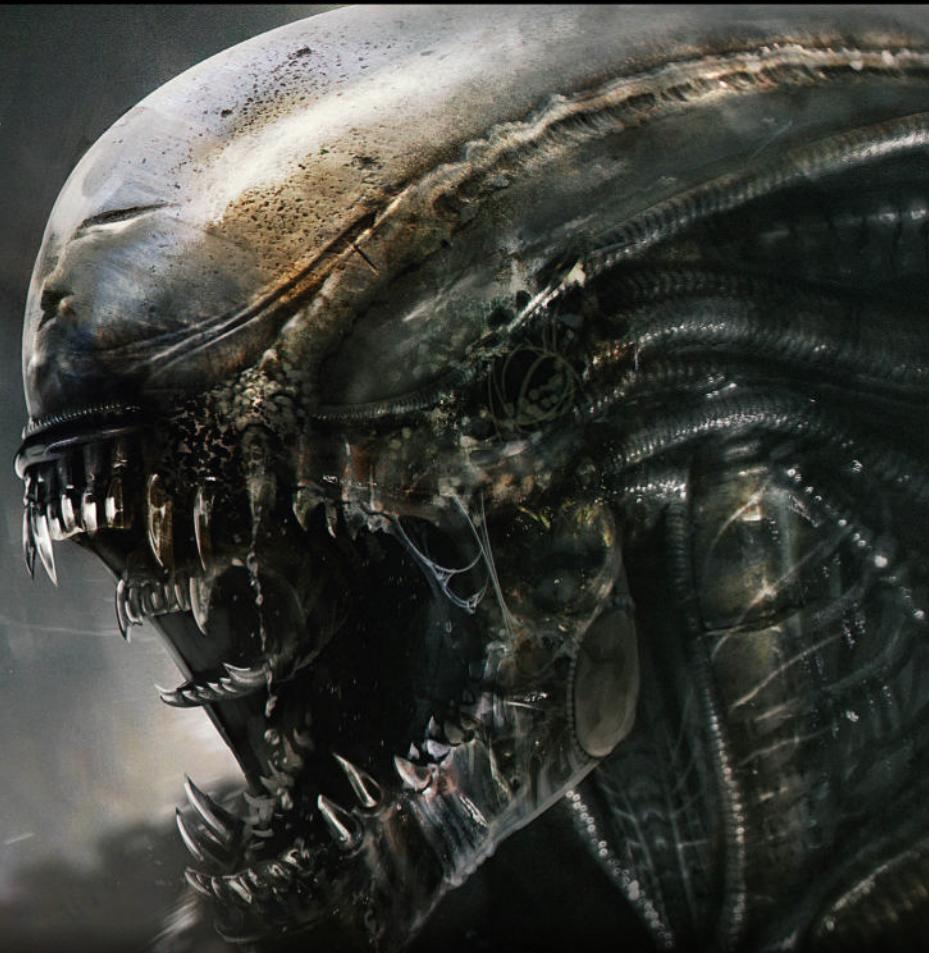
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Next month

Artwork by JDane Halett



Next month in...
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DESIGNING NIGHTMARES

We meet the artists behind **Alien: Romulus** and look back at the series' visual evolution

Boost backstory with interiors

Magdalina Dianova shows you how to give your artwork a major narrative lift

Build an eerie environment

Learn to create an atmospheric sci-fi setting ideal for a lurking xenomorph

How to render punchy comics

Discover the keys for getting more intensity in your comic artwork

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Editorial

Editor **Rob Redman** rob.redman@futurenet.com

Art Editor **Daniel Vincent**

Production Editor **Henry Burridge**

Contributors

Dominic Carter, Tanya Combrinck, Erik Ly, James Clarke, Raymund Bermudez, François Bourdin, Dan Milligan, Léa Pinto, Eduard Petrovich, Daria Anako, Terry Dodson, Ian Dean, Beren Neale, Paul Hatton, Ian Evenden, Glen Southern, Thomas Elliott, Marie-Alice Harel, Gary Stuckey

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Advertising

Chief Revenue Officer **Zack Sullivan**

UK Group Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

Advertising Director **Matt Johnston**

matthew.johnston@futurenet.com, 01225 442244

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Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

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Customer Revenues Director **Sharon Todd**

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Senior Production Manager **Matt Eglinton**

Senior Ad Production Manager **Jo Crosby**

Production Manager **Vivienne Calvert**

Digital Editions Manager **Jason Hudson**

Management

Group Art Director **Dean Usher**

Content Director **Chris George**

Global Head of Design **Rodney Dive**

Managing Director **Stuart Williams**

Commercial Finance Director **Tania Bruning**

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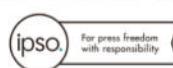
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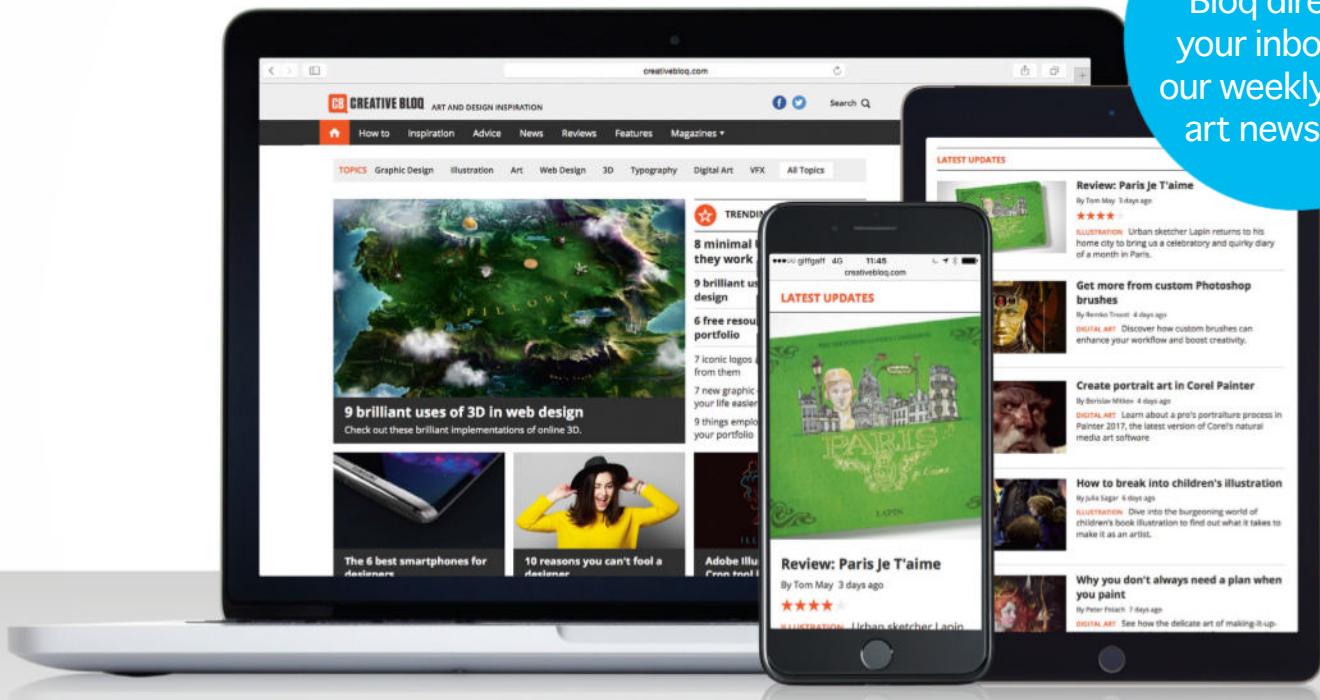


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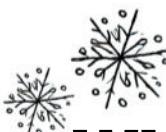


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EXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Vanessa Morales

LOCATION: Mexico MEDIA: Clip Studio Paint, Procreate WEB: www.phonemova.com

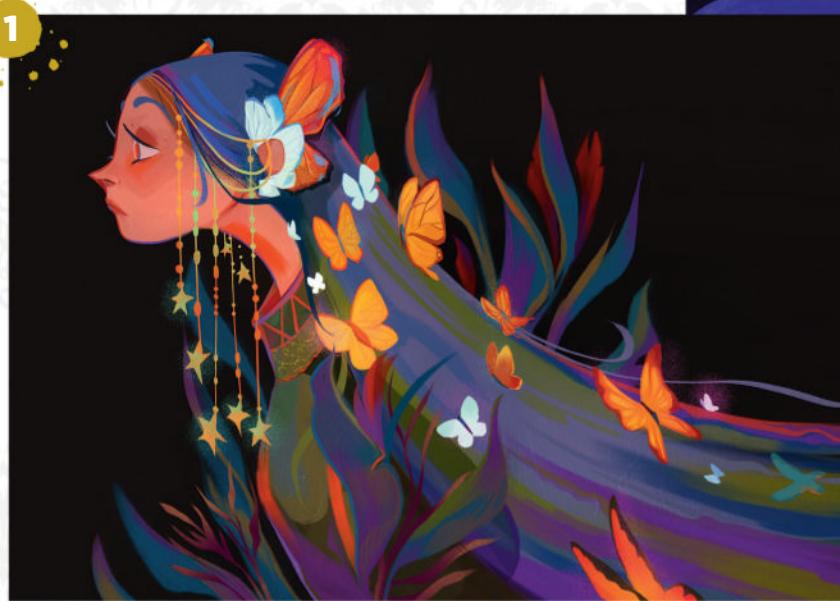
Vanessa is an illustrator whose personal work explores the world of plants and frogs. She plays with the energy of colour on dark backgrounds, inspired by the phrase 'the rainbow looks better at night'.

1 CRIMSON SPRING

"Every time the seasons change, inspiration flows again. In this case, as the name suggests, I was heavily inspired by tropical flowers."

2 RAINBOW RIBBON

"It's easier to handle any kind of illustrated project by starting with a simple idea. This sketch was inspired by hair braids and ribbons."



2



3

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4



5



3 RED CORAL

"The underwater world is one of my biggest fascinations. I feel so calm and comfortable when drawing water or painting fish shapes."

4 CHATTING MERMAIDS

"I've always been in love with flat and stylised shapes, and the painterly style of oils and gouache. So in this piece I blended them all."

5 OCEAN LILAC

"Approaching colour intuitively and with theory in mind is one of the main and ongoing goals of my work."



Deborah Saez

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.deborahsaez.com

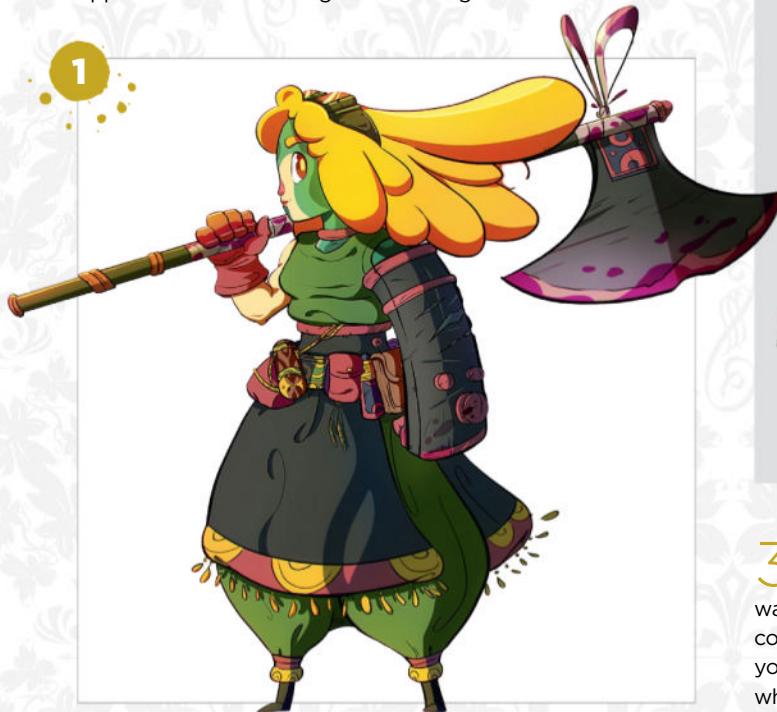
Growing up, Deborah was inspired by everything from cartoons to games and anime. But it was Fumi Ishikawa's work on *Suikoden II* that sparked her love of character design. "Her female designs were ahead of their time."

1 AXE WARRIOR

"This piece was an experiment to develop a cartoony style with my own touch. I started with a rough sketch, added fine lines, and applied basic cel-shading."

2 WHO IS IN CONTROL?

"I wanted to create a horror character that's more than it appears. I began with silhouettes, then painted in greyscale and finished by adding colour and details."

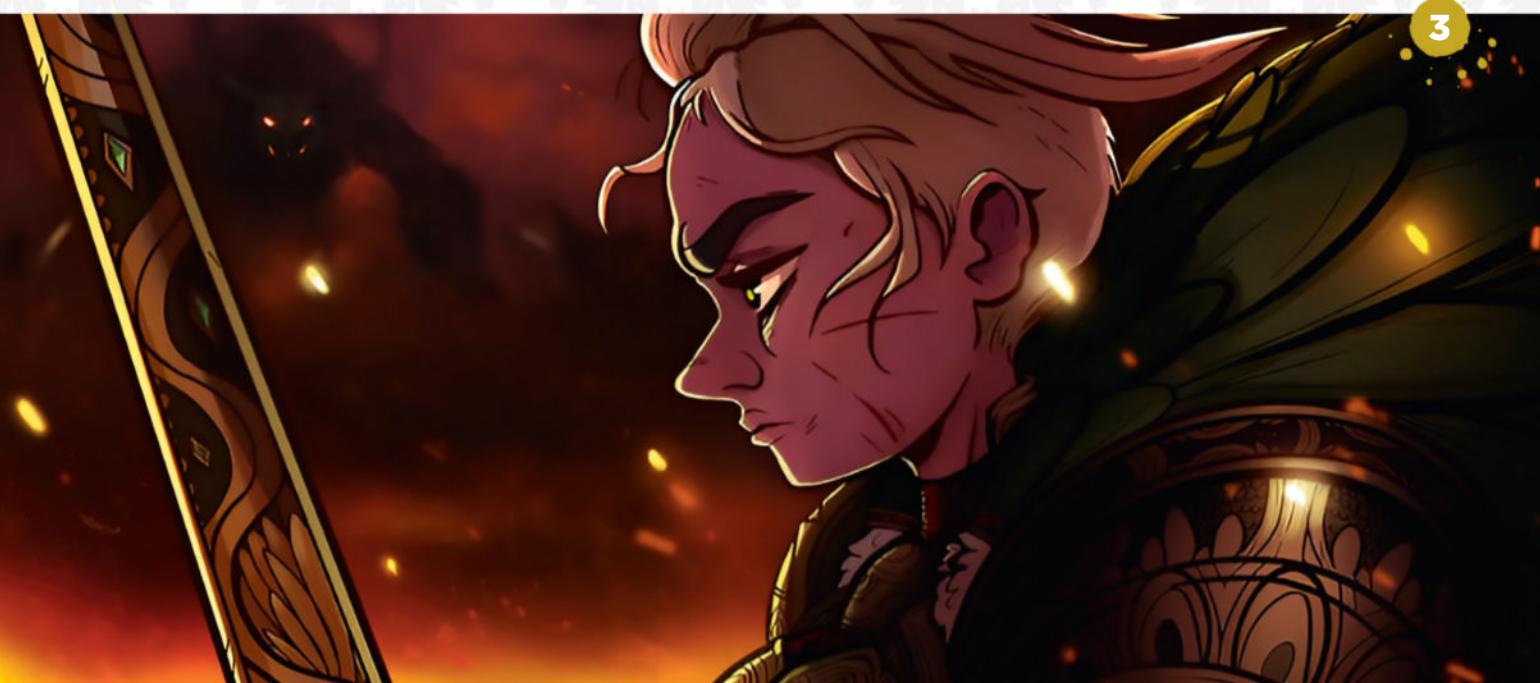


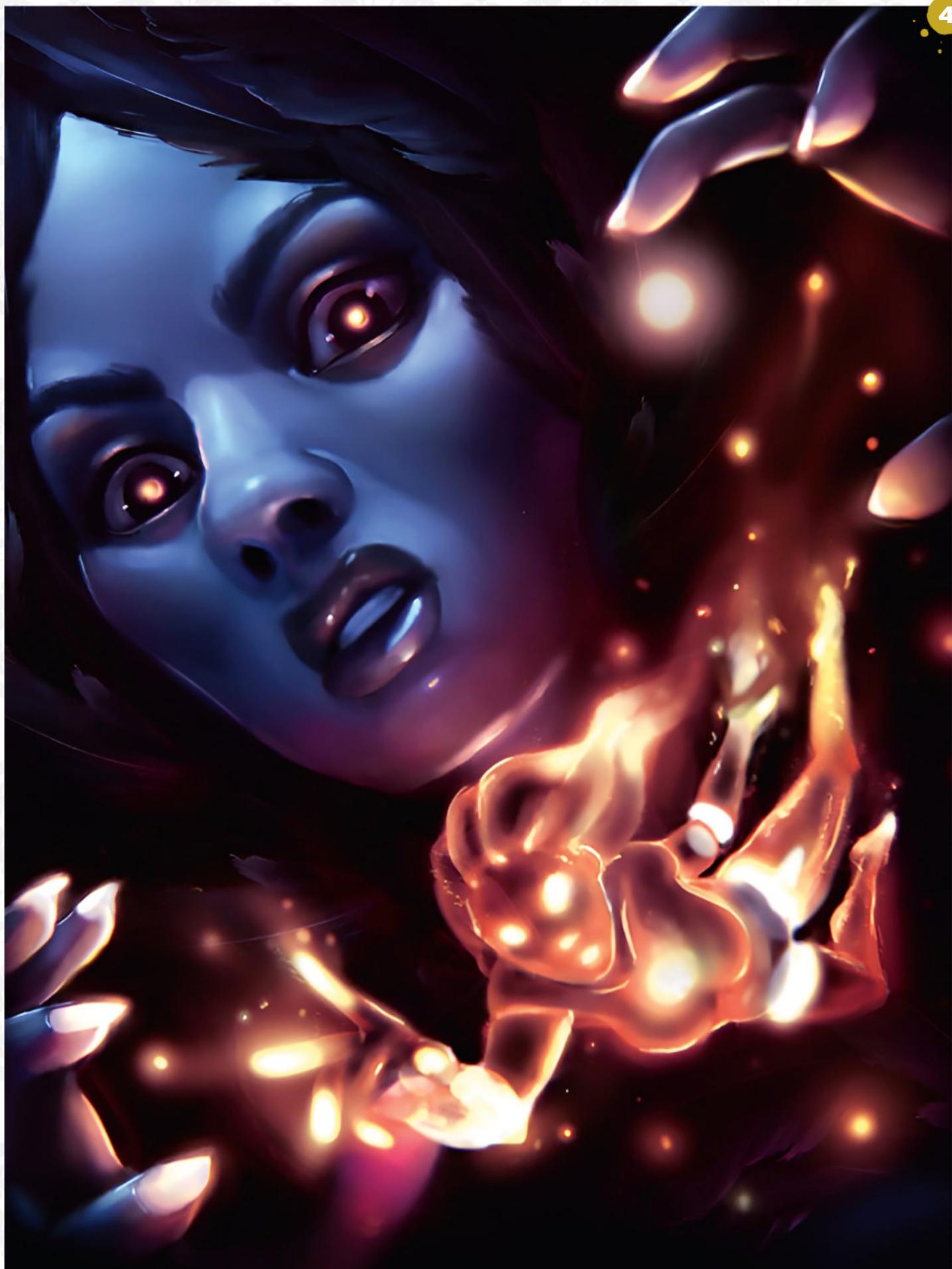
3 FOCUS

"My hope with this piece was to evoke the feeling of a still concept from an animated show. If you look closely, you'll see exactly why she's so focused."

4 POWER AND ENVY

"Sometimes as an artist, I get frustrated with my progress and need to vent. When that happens, I paint my frustrations on a blank canvas. This piece is the result."







Sophia Du

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop WEB: <https://sophiadu.myportfolio.com>

Sophia is a background and visual development artist from the San Francisco Bay Area. She has a passion for using colour, light, and design to capture mood in her digital paintings.

1



1 THE LAST OF US

"In the lonely wreckage of a world overrun by monsters, Ellie dreams of what used to be."

2



3



4

**2 RETURN**

"On the night of the Hungry Ghost Festival, a young woman returns to the ruins of her home village to honour a childhood friend."

3 REUNION

"After a decade spent apart, a hunter receives an unexpected visit at the Hungry Ghost Festival."

4 CATWOMAN'S ESCAPE

"Catwoman in her element, surrounded by a chaotic city and evading pursuit. The tilted angle and tight framing are intended to evoke a feeling of excitement and uncertainty."



Aemiron

LOCATION: Canada MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.aemiron.com

Aemiron has always loved drawing people, and tends to draw pretty men and terrifying women. Inspired by The Lord of the Rings and Oblivion, he uses flowy line work and painterly elements to merge fantasy and reality.

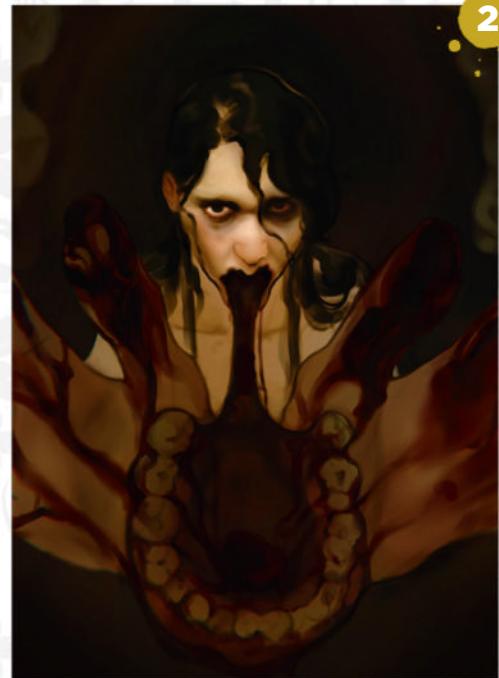
1 THE MOTH KING

"This moth-themed D&D character art was done using detailed, swirling lines to make areas like his wings mesmerising. The sleeves are inspired by cocoons!"



2 COMMUNION

"This painting is about guilt and what people do to avoid confessing secrets. She's torn her jaw off, offering it up and sharing it instead of revealing her secrets."



2

3



3 MODREL

"This is a character design for an eccentric, scatterbrained half-elf, Modrel, who creates and collects cursed art. Areas like his coat lapels and shirt collar have subtle M shapes."

4 THE BUTTERFLY PRINCE

"This is a painting of butterflies personified; gentle and aloof. To convey that aloofness, I averted his gaze and painted his side profile, so he's not looking at the viewer."





Labros Panousis

LOCATION: Greece MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/lambros_p

Games such as World of Warcraft and Skyrim developed Labros' love of well-crafted fantasy worlds. After studying computer science, he switched to teaching himself concept art to combine his passion for art and games.

1



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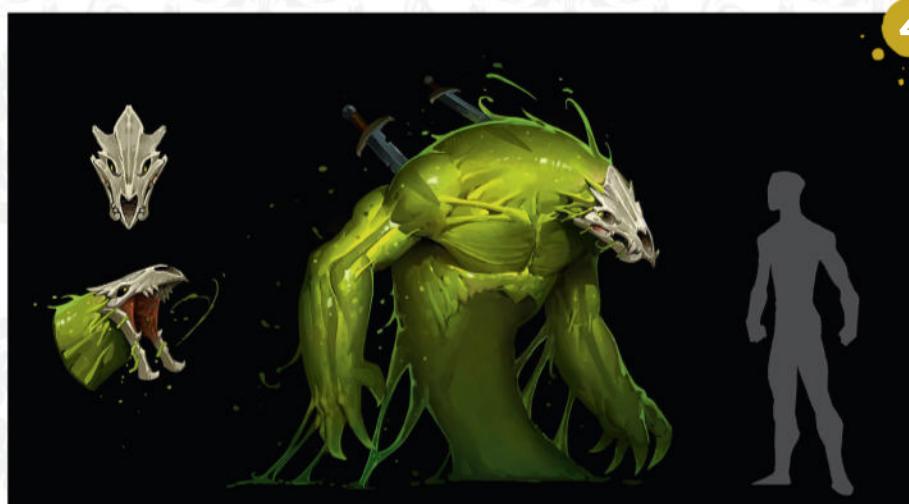
1 HIPPOGRYPH

"A concept from Omni Creator Products' IP Project Frontier. It's a simple design but highlights my love for drawing fantastical beasts and animals. Painting the feathery textures felt really cathartic."

2 YETI WARCHIEF

"Yetis are usually depicted as frosty white gorillas, so I went for a different approach by making this one look more intelligent. He's the alpha of his tribe, and warns off challengers with his bone club."

3



4

3 MUSHROOM WITCH

“Another creature that I made while working on Project Frontier. This piece was done in the blue-sky phase of development where there’s a lot of freedom for exploration and room for trial and error.”

4 ELITE OOZE

“You can’t have a good RPG without a cool ooze monster. I made this one more interesting than a standard green blob by giving it a humanoid body and a creepy skull for its head.”



Zoe Badini

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Krita, Blender, Photoshop WEB: <https://cara.app/zoebadini>

Zoe is a freelance illustrator who loves creating interesting characters and telling stories. She likes playing with light and colour to craft evocative scenes, and tries to bring pieces of her everyday adventures to her work.

1 GOLDEN DRAGON

"I sculpted a maquette to have a good lighting reference for this dragon. This is an important part of my process, whether a piece is made with physical media or using Blender."

1



2



2 RAVENOUS SWARM

"The inspiration for this piece came while reading a book. The original scene had little to do with the painting, but it gave me the idea to paint this insect swarm that's able to coalesce into an enigmatic figure."



3

3 THE BOTANIST

"If you've ever had a cat, then you'll know the struggle this botanist-necromancer lives through every day."

4 ANIMARIUM CODEX

"The aim here was to create a cosy scene involving an artificer gnome putting the finishing touches on her latest creation. I chose warm lighting to help set the mood for the scene."



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



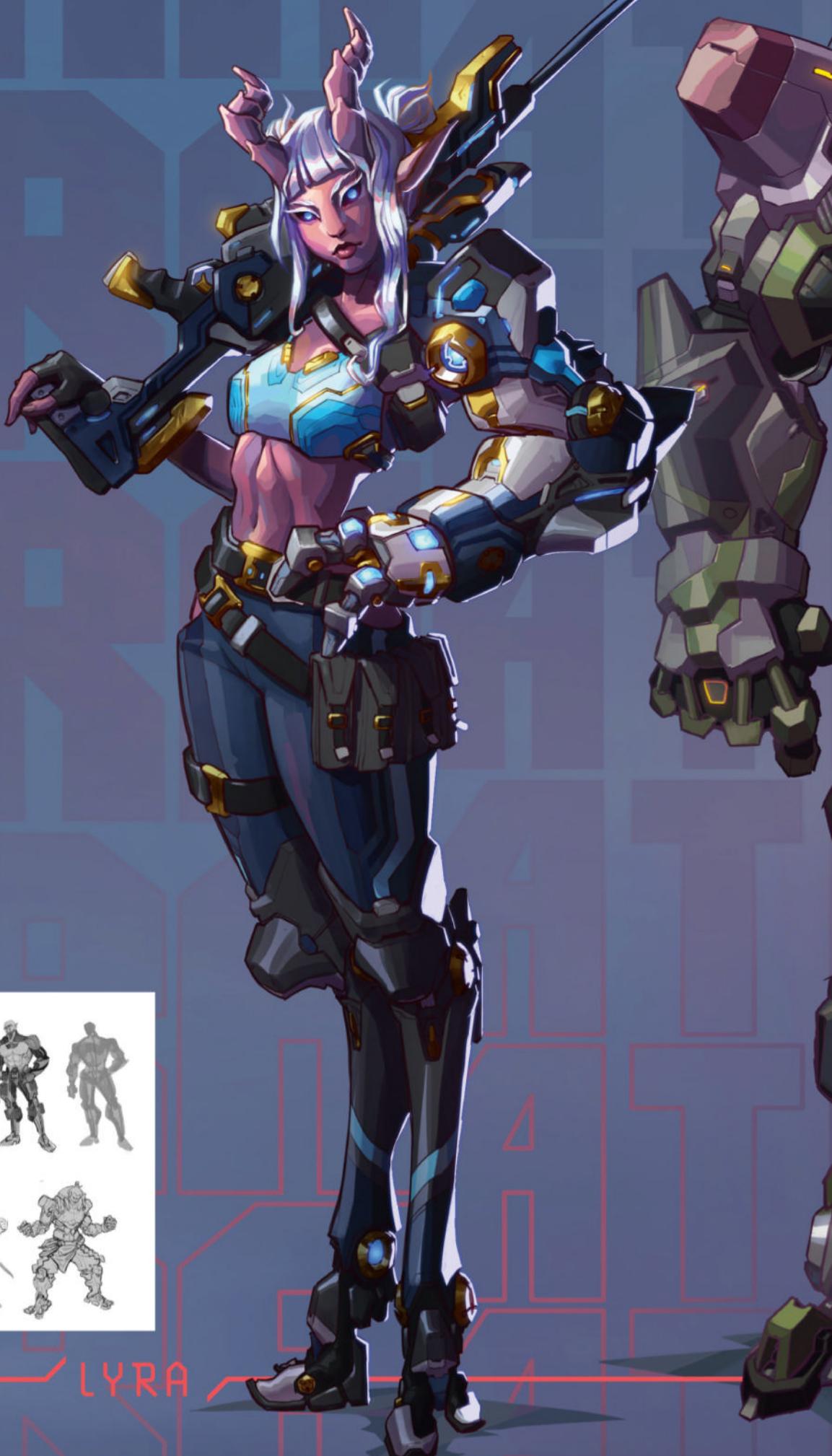
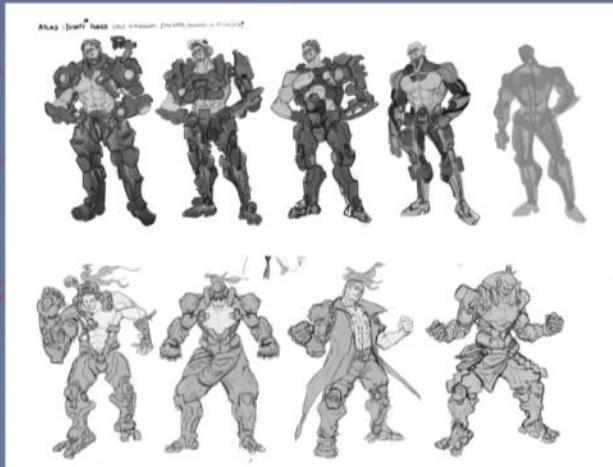
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Stellar Odyssey

YEAR CREATED: 2023
MEDIA: Photoshop

“I wanted to create an IP all of my own, where I could put together all the things that I love and interest me into one final project. I've always found my inspiration in the sci-fi genre and mechanical designs. Being able to illustrate and add in all of my favourite subjects while working on this project has been nothing short of fulfilling.”



Artist PROFILE

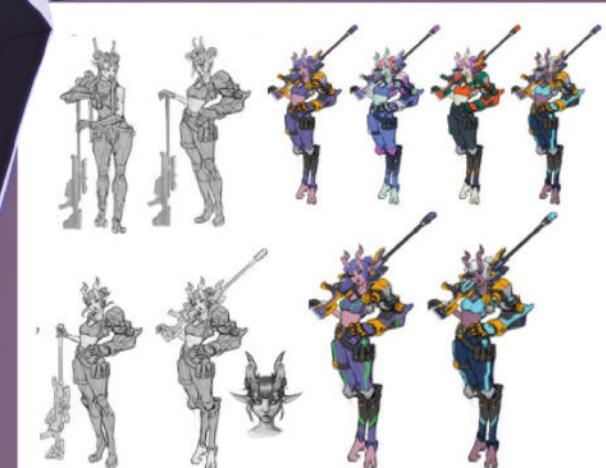
Jeremy Lee Jian Ming

LOCATION: Malaysia



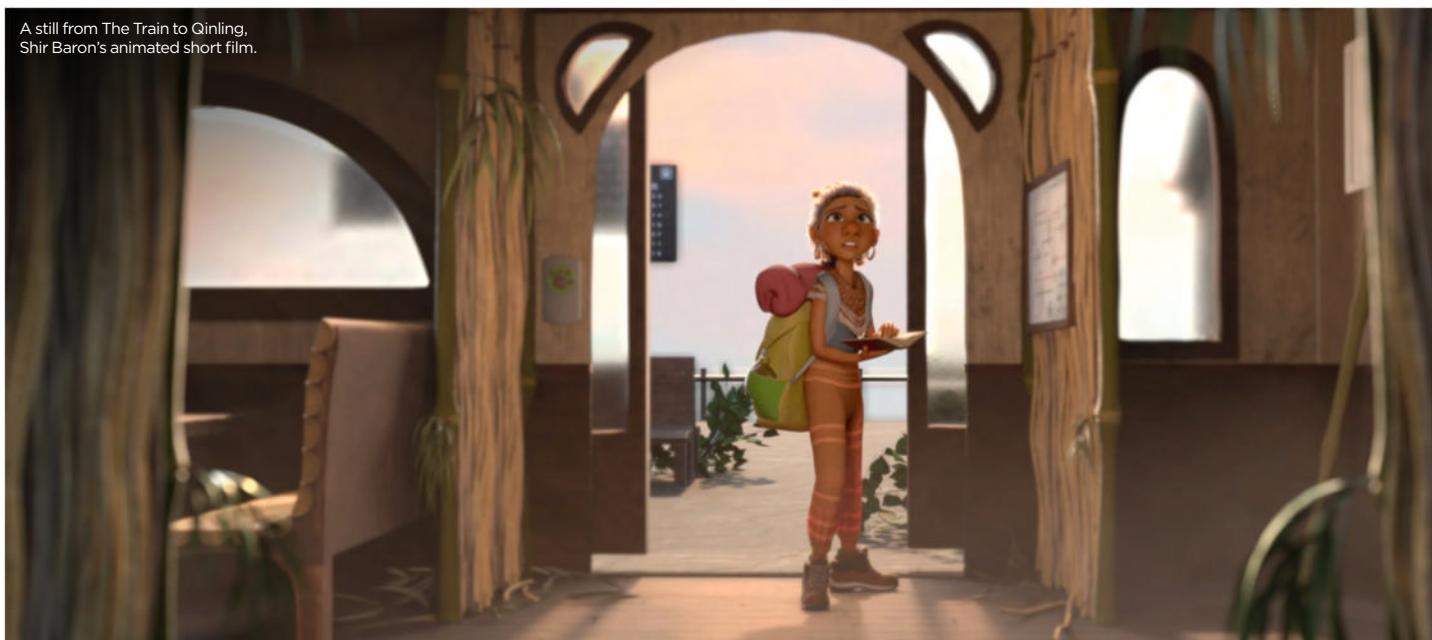
Jeremy has been drawing for as long as he can remember. Over the course of his art journey, refining his skills and testing out the countless possibilities, he has shifted towards creating concept designs, as he truly believes that developing cool, logical designs is what he was born to do.

www.therookies.co/u/jemlee



DES
JER

A still from The Train to Qinling, Shir Baron's animated short film.



2D meets 3D: How the workflows are merging

Interdimensional As VFX and animation evolve and tools become more accessible, **Tanya Combrinck** asks whether the separation between the mediums is reducing

We're used to thinking of 2D and 3D artists operating in separate spheres with different tools. But these days, artists are finding both efficiencies and creative opportunities by reaching into the other dimension. From personal workflows to large pipelines, across concept art, VFX and animation, teams and individuals are now starting to merge 2D and 3D techniques to work faster – and pioneer incredible new aesthetics.

The most visible manifestation of this to those outside the industry is the move away from the traditional CG look in animated films towards more creative, painterly styles. Rather than allowing 3D software to texture and light a scene in the usual way, artists have been using 2D techniques to paint 3D models of characters and backgrounds to create distinctive stylised looks.

VFX supervisor Archie Donato, a creator at the forefront of these techniques, has said that the aim is to create work that looks like paintings that have come alive. You can see it in projects such as the Spider-Verse films, *Nimona*, *I Lost My Body*, *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* and the 2022 Netflix series *Entergalactic*.

FRESH APPROACHES

For artists working within the industry, bringing 3D techniques into traditionally 2D realms, and vice versa, is bringing all kinds of benefits. **Shir Baron**, an

“You gain efficiencies and create shared understanding of the ultimate goal”

“3D enables us to create more realistic-looking worlds,” says Shir.



animator on *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* and *The Wild Robot*, explains that there's much to be gained from workflows that combine the freedom and creativity of drawing in 2D with the accuracy of 3D software.



“While 2D principles allow us endless flexibility, 3D has many



CELEBRATING YOUR WORK

The ImagineFX Art Challenge took a new route for October, as we set a daily prompt list to test your skills. Check out our favourite reader submissions! **Page 30**



A STUDIO'S FINAL FORM

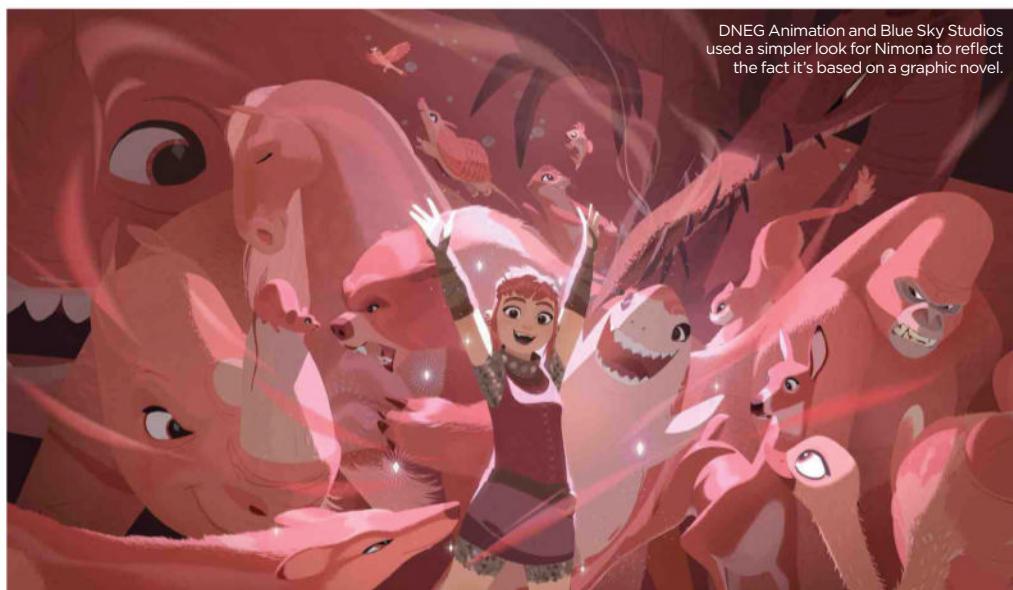
Illustrator Erik Ly tells us how he's created the perfect aesthetic in his home workspace, which is a tribute to his passions for video gaming, art and more. **Page 32**



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

Readers write in with their art news and opinions on what we've covered in ImagineFX. Plus, we feature your art that's caught our eye on social media. **Page 37**

Zac Retz says: "When I'm designing a new environment, I'll attack the assignment with different workflows and mediums. I see 3D as another way to help me sketch and come up with ideas."



DNEG Animation and Blue Sky Studios used a simpler look for *Nimona* to reflect the fact it's based on a graphic novel.

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INDUSTRY INSIGHT

CREATIVE COMBINATION

Denis-Jose Francois explains the power of teaming dimensions

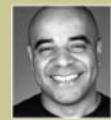
What can be achieved in artistic output by merging the two techniques?

Traditional artists can now fully utilise 3D and procedural techniques, benefitting from the efficiencies, reuse and toolsets that have been available to more technical artists for a long time. Conversely, the technical processes, output and realism more commonly associated with 3D artists can now adopt more stylised, natural or artistic looks, allowing them to break away from the harsh, precise realism that has often been prevalent in full CG production.

While various combinations of the two techniques have been used in the past – such as 2D backgrounds with 3D characters, complex 3D camera moves in 2D environments, or effects that look hand-painted – they can now be brought together much more convincingly into a single, harmonious look. Combined with non-photorealistic lighting, rendering and compositing techniques, the result is beautiful imagery that represents the best of both worlds.

How else do you see tools and workflows continuing to develop to facilitate new animation styles?

Real-time tools have potential for huge change for the future of animation production. Being able to iterate faster and see work in context allows everyone from artists to directors to make more informed creative decisions.



Denis-Jose Francois is a DFX supervisor at DNEG Animation who specialises in a range of 3D software.

www.dneg.com



© Marvel

► limitations; a rig will allow us to move our character around but in a restricted way," says Shir. "As the industry and tools evolve, flexibility expands, and 2D principles give us the push we need to break out of the 3D limitations and create something truly unique without relying on what we get for 'free'. As a 3D animator, I often draw a rough pass of my animation. In doing so, I have no limitations and can freely express my ideas, and push for a similar or even better result in 3D."

In a sense, every 3D project starts life in 2D. Shir says: "Before

Shir's short is about a traveller who gets lost on a train in China with a Panda and learns to communicate with him.



“While 2D principles allow us endless flexibility, 3D has many limitations”

we model a character or environment, we design it on flat paper. Before we create shots and do the virtual camera work, we create storyboards."

The trouble is that the freedom you get from two dimensions can give rise to inaccurate perspectives and an overall lack of 3D principles. "To solve this, some companies and individuals will create storyboards within a 3D environment, thus combining the two principles to provide them a better result," Shir explains.

A visual development artist who's an alumnus of both Spider-Verse films,



Zac Retz tells us that 3D tools are great for 2D artists who are working on environments with complex perspectives.

"We may not want to draw out the perspective for 10 different shots, so instead we can make a simple model,

then zoom around in 3D space and screenshot the interesting shots," he says. "This is a huge time-saver and will help us generate new shapes and camera angles we may not have otherwise thought of. Our hands get used to drawing the same shapes over and over again, or making the same compositions. 3D can help us expand our visual libraries."

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

When he began his career 25 years ago, **Phillip Leonhardt**, a VFX supervisor at Wētā FX, says 'Do you want to do 2D or 3D?' was the first question he was asked.

"I wonder whether that question remains the same today," he ponders.

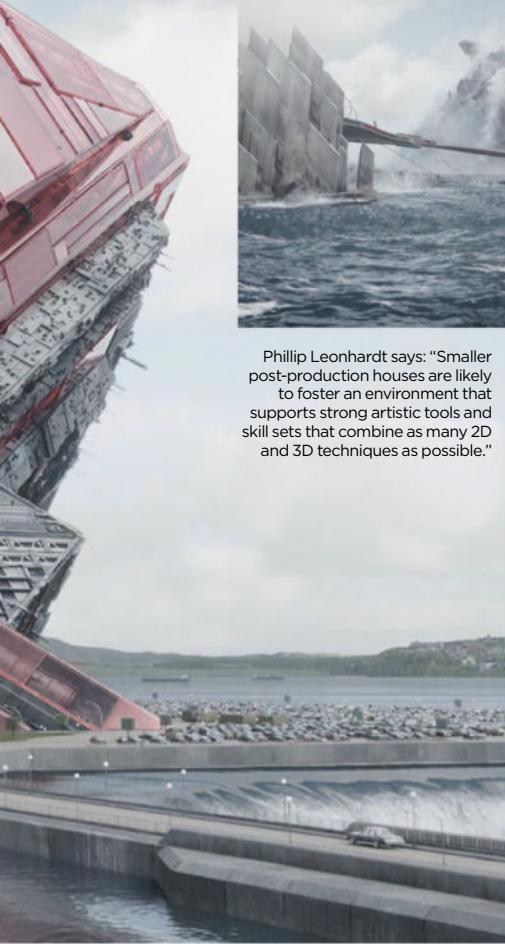
Over the years, he has seen toolkits for both 2D and 3D become much easier to use. "Techniques that 20

Artist news, software & events

© Marvel



Phillip Leonhardt says: "Smaller post-production houses are likely to foster an environment that supports strong artistic tools and skill sets that combine as many 2D and 3D techniques as possible."



"An understanding of both 2D and 3D principles can help us push our work further and create higher-level results," says Shir.



Animated features rely on custom tools written especially for that production to create their distinctive looks.

© 2023 Netflix

years ago might have been beyond the boundaries of an artist's expertise have become a lot more accessible, opening up the opportunity for all of us to craft more sophistication into the delivered work," he explains.

By merging 2D and 3D, Phillip tells us that "you gain flexibility and options that help improve the stability and quality of your final output". Concept images are a good example. "If those images are created with underlying 3D geometry, they can directly be passed down the production pipeline as a renderable asset," he continues. "This means you gain a lot of efficiencies and create a shared understanding of the ultimate goal that everyone is aiming to achieve across departments. It also means a compositor has accessible 3D tools that can generate basic render passes of elements, which ➤



Zac says: "I'm a 2D artist. I want to be the best painter I can be, not a modeller. I don't need to learn every part of Blender, just the basics, so it can help me be a better painter."



► helps with the integration of their image layers."

Another example of an area that has benefitted from the addition of 3D is 2D matte painting. "It has come a long way in recent years, embracing 3D workflows to render more realistic environments," Phillip says.

The tools of today have made it feasible for artists to operate outside of their specialisms. Phillip explains: "To become an expert in a particular artistic field within VFX, you have to

of every compositor's repertoire now, and interfaces are being established between the realms to allow artists to see their work in better context."

The rise of universal file formats is another factor behind the shift towards merging 2D and 3D. **Denis-Jose Francois**, a digital effects supervisor at DNEG who worked on *Nimona*, tells us: "These formats allow the interchange of data between different software and



“Procedural, node-based and layered workflows allow for combinations of styles and methods to be created”

focus on that specific subject. But be ready to reach across dimensional boundaries to gain supporting skills that help achieve your ultimate goals.

"For instance, When Nuke became the primary compositing application, it offered up opportunities to apply more 3D techniques and directly embed them into 2D compositing workflows. 2.5D projections, basic particle systems, and deep image pipelines for deep projections are part

platforms. This means artists and studios can more freely use specific tools they prefer or need, and still feed their output up and downstream in a large production, with increasingly fewer restrictions on which features and techniques they can make use of in a given piece of software."

In general, as technology evolves, artists on big productions are finding more flexible ways of working. "The overall workflows are becoming less



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linear and more non-destructive, allowing choices to be made both earlier and later in the process, and thus giving creatives much more freedom," Denis-Jose continues. "Additionally, procedural, node-based and layered workflows allow for combinations of styles and methods to be created, adjusted and reused in unique, efficient ways."

The trend towards stylised animation in CG films and TV shows has been under way for several years now, but what makes it exciting is that there's still so much fresh creative territory to be uncovered and explored. Every production has its own unique look that's facilitated by special tools and workflows, written and designed especially for that project, and artists will sometimes experience it as if they're working in a brand new medium.

At a time when the profession is under threat, the turn towards handcrafted looks combined with a new creative frontier could be just what we need. 



Artist news, software & events



Universal file formats such as USD (Universal Scene Description) and MaterialX are making it easier for different software packages to be used together.

Zac says: "I recommend Blender. It's free and does everything we could ever want it to do."



As tools become more flexible, it's easier for artists to experiment and scale new workflows across large teams.



Colour keys for Shir Baron's adorable short film, The Train to Qinling.



Magical month Our Art Challenge took a new form this time around with a daily prompt list for #IFXOctober

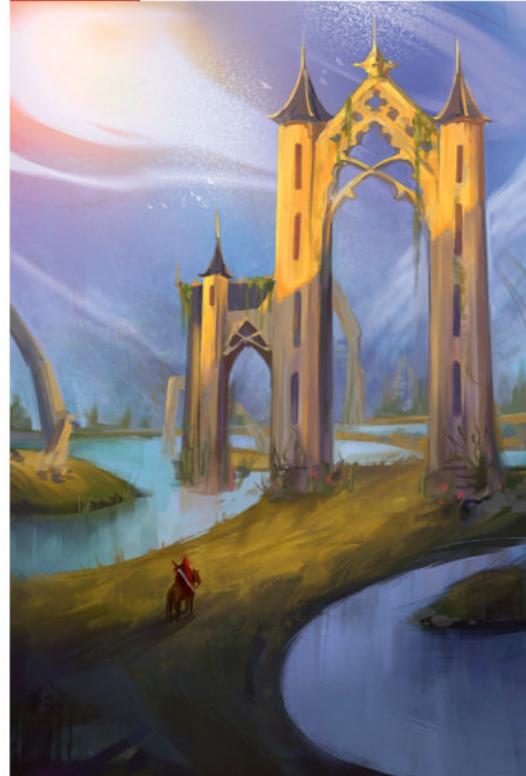
We wanted to give you something a little different to work on for the latest **ImagineFX Art Challenge – and that's why we dreamed up #IFXOctober**.

Rather than give you a single prompt, we set out 31 suggestions, one for every day during October, to really get your creative minds working. We just loved logging in every day to find a fresh batch of awesome artworks waiting for us!

With so much art – created in so many amazing styles – to choose from, we had a challenge of our own picking out just a handful to showcase. A massive thank you to everyone that submitted their artwork across the month.

Even though October is over, you can still catch up! Why not check out the full prompt list below to get some inspiration for your next daily doodle?

DAY 1: HERO



Caroline Gendron

Web: <https://cara.app/carolinegendronart>

#IFXOCTOBER PROMPT LIST

1. Hero
2. Squirrel
3. Mystic
4. Blade
5. Lost
6. Rift
7. Alley
8. Ninja
9. Portal
10. Robot
11. Guardian
12. Rebel
13. City
14. Dragon
15. Dream
16. Ruins
17. Corgi
18. Fairy
19. Shadow
20. Overgrown
21. Vampire
22. Autumn
23. Poseidon
24. Inferno
25. Rogue
26. Fortress
27. Sunset
28. Phoenix
29. Goblin
30. Huntress
31. Blaze

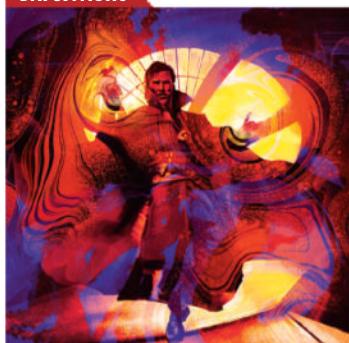
DAY 2: SQUIRREL



Esther Viola Piternella

Web: www.instagram.com/spectralstories

DAY 3: MYSTIC



RapscallionArt (Chris Miller)

Web: www.instagram.com/rapscallionart

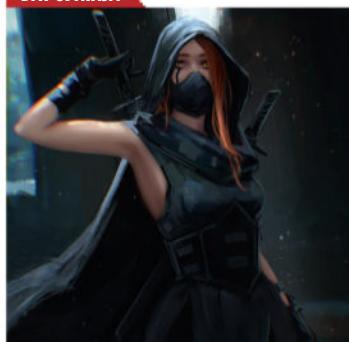
DAY 5: LOST



Adam Du Buisson

Web: <https://bit.ly/4fzMugC>

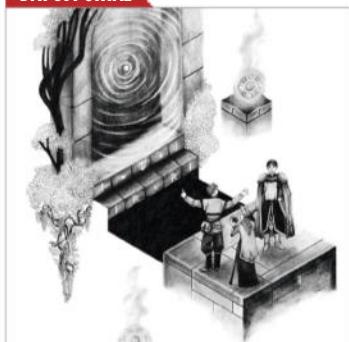
DAY 8: NINJA



Eloise Newman

Web: www.instagram.com/elletheartimage

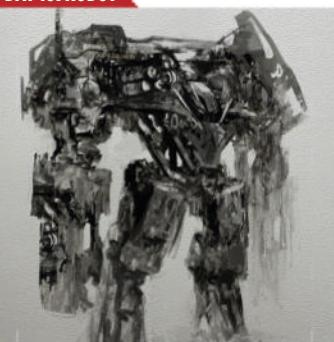
DAY 9: PORTAL



Stàrista Jacobsen Bravo

Web: www.instagram.com/starista

DAY 10: ROBOT



Andrés Guillermo Martínez Mongui

Web: <https://bit.ly/4faYg1u>

Artist news, software & events

DAY 12: REBEL



Josef Rahaman

Web: <https://linktr.ee/myarthandle>

DAY 14: DRAGON



Helga Sable

Web: <https://bit.ly/3YwWWyv>

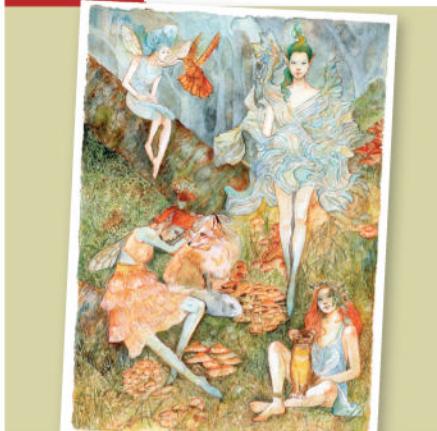
DAY 17: CORGI



Eleanor Bethany King

Web: www.instagram.com/pen.imp

DAY 18: FAIRY



Val G. Durán

Web: www.instagram.com/val.garciaduran

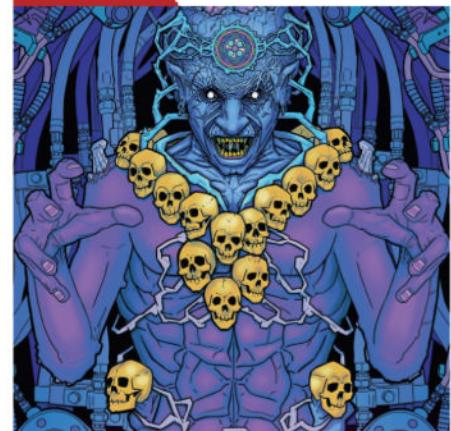
DAY 20: OVERGROWN



Alex Procter

Web: www.instagram.com/alexprocterart

DAY 21: VAMPIRE



Julius Caspar Zinsser

Web: www.instagram.com/jucazi_art

DAY 28: PHOENIX



Kate Becker

Web: www.instagram.com/katebecker.art

DAY 30: HUNTRESS



Jack McCarty

Web: www.instagram.com/jackmccartyillus

DAY 31: BLAZE



Georg Schwitters

Web: www.instagram.com/g.s.artworks

Challenge accepted Keep an eye on our social media channels for all the latest ImagineFX Art Challenge details and you could see your art in a future issue! **Visit page 3 for all our social channels**

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Erik Ly

Gamer's haven Why the artist enjoys a maximalist aesthetic more than the minimalist approach



I've been living and working out of this apartment for close to seven years now. It has seen so many updates as my tastes have changed and my equipment evolved over the years. This should be this apartment's final form! My wife and I plan on moving to something larger and more permanent, hopefully by next year.

I was once told that when humans spend such a large amount of their lives driving, they should invest in a car they actually like and want to drive daily. I've taken that sentiment to heart. The office chair of my studio is where most of my time is spent, so I've invested all my efforts into ➡



CRT is a personal, bittersweet illustration that won the best digital art award at Dragon Con 2024.



Printers like this one need to be used almost daily, or else they'll self-clean and waste a bunch of ink. When I'm travelling, I have friends and family stop by to feed our cats and do a basic nozzle check once a day to make sure it isn't wasting ink.

I have so many books spread across my apartment. They are all artbooks, but in future I'd love to have a large bookcase in the living room.

My own playmat I created. I think playmats are a great product to sell at shows, but they can get so heavy when travelling around. I felt like a little red would tie the room together nicely and make the desk feel less empty.

Artist news, software & events



A bottle of Highland Park scotch whisky from my best friend at the time. I only have two to five glasses a month. All good things in moderation!

I told my buddy that I was going to feature in ImagineFX, and he asked me to give him a shout-out. Go check out Alex Dos Diaz's art!

I set up this table for books and references, but when Luna and Leo started jumping up, it made for an extra bed.

A stuffed animal by PunchingPandas. I love boxing - I actually have a punching bag to the right of my desk! So when I saw this little guy at Emerald City Comic Con in 2019, I had to have him.

“All the artbooks, trinkets, figures and artwork on the wall make this a happy little studio space”



It's a tight little space, but I'm doing my best to utilise all of it. I'm a bit more careful with what I choose to collect these days.

“I go from zero to 100 so quickly and get hectic, but I take things in stride and I’m grateful I can do art for a living”

→ upgrading the space. All the artbooks, trinkets, figures and artwork on the wall makes it such a happy little studio space for me.

HOME SWEET HOME

My studio is covered with figures from my favourite series. FromSoftware has a strong presence, along with Berserk, Monster Hunter and Digimon. In the corner I have motorcycle equipment along with my accessories, like rings and bracelets. My Canon Pro-1000 is constantly pumping out prints I sell at conventions and in my online store. In future, I’d also like to make room for a drafting table to go back to my roots and focus on more traditional artwork.

My work has a balance between freelance, conventions and keeping up my social media presence. There are

times when I can take it easy and work on my own personal projects. Then there are months I have freelance coming from multiple directions, plus conventions! I go from zero to 100 so quickly and get hectic, but I’m always trying to take things in my stride and I’m grateful I can do art for a living.

I tend to travel a lot more these days for conventions. I generally have around 10 shows a year, and I maybe fly out for almost half of those. After spending usually a week away from home doing a show, nothing feels better than when I finally get to come home, relax and be back in my studio.

Erik is a contemporary illustrator who has worked on beloved series including Mortal Kombat, Mega Man, Sonic, Star Wars and more! Check out his art on Instagram @eriklyart or at www.eriklyart.com.

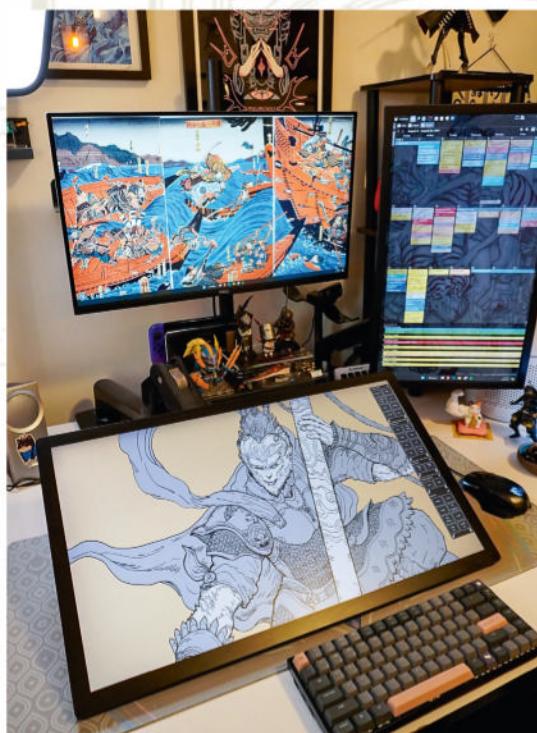


Here's some unsolicited advice: I just got into the Digimon Card Game with my wife. If you like money, then don't do that!

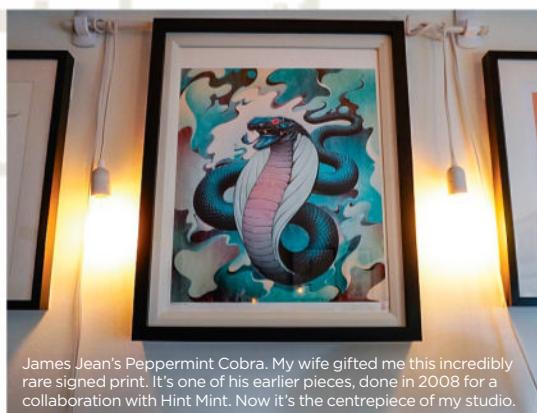
Artist news, software & events



When it comes to collecting toys, I usually choose action figures over statues. The simple pleasures of posing and accessorising a figure is something I take very seriously! They're also often much smaller than statues and space is in short supply here in my apartment. Because these can be posed, I also enjoy using them as reference for my work.



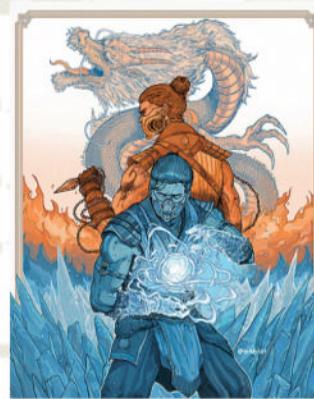
This is my Cintiq 27 Pro! It's the largest tablet I've ever owned. I just purchased this in 2023, and before that I used my Cintiq 13HD for close to eight years. You certainly don't need a massive tablet to produce good work, but it's a luxury that doesn't hurt, that's for sure.



James Jean's Peppermint Cobra. My wife gifted me this incredibly rare signed print. It's one of his earlier pieces, done in 2008 for a collaboration with Hint Mint. Now it's the centrepiece of my studio.



Ascension, a best-selling piece of mine that's based on the Chinese folk tale of the Dragon Gate. I love fighting games, and I thought it was about time I actually made my own custom stick! I even created custom artwork just for this niche controller. Tekken is my current jam.



Fire and Ice was a little dream of mine, being able to draw Sub-Zero and Scorpion from Mortal Kombat. This was commissioned by the franchise itself to promote the newest game.



I was able to acquire this original ink drawing by one of my favourite artists! I'm a sucker for crocodiles and alligators. I feel super lucky to purchase this piece at Tomer Hanuka's 2023 Gallery Nucleus exhibit.

Complete your collection!

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 246

Christmas 2024

Get inspired and discover brand new artists in our Sketchbook Special! From whimsical animals to gassy ghouls and more, there's something for everyone. We have extra insight too, as we interview a trio of super-talented artists.



Issue 245

December 2024

Meet the Rising Stars set to take over the art world in our special feature. We also speak to Cara's Jingna Zhang about the anti-AI app. Plus, fantastic character design tips and fun exercises to get your creativity flowing.



Issue 244

November 2024

Add urban style to your portraits thanks to our tutorial from cover star Alvaro Escobar. Elsewhere, we find out how to reach the top of the games industry with advice from the pros, and visit the studio of a horror manga artist.



Issue 243

October 2024

Dive into the world of concept art with oodles of expert insight. We speak to dino-loving film artist Gaëlle Seguillon about her career, and find out what it takes to work in costume design. You also learn how to create our wild cover art!

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Letters

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Sketches galore

I'm so pleased you guys did another Sketchbook issue. I absolutely adore seeing all the little doodles and sketches that artists do. And reading a little about why they make them. It's so insightful to see people's line work without it being fully rendered. More of these please!

Bexter, via email

Rob replies Hello Bexter, thanks so much for the kind words. I completely agree with you that it's really interesting to see the earlier stages of an artist's work, or even the different ways they go about it. We'll definitely be doing more of these in the future, so keep an eye out!

If you want more inspiration right now, our previous Sketchbook Special in issue 223 is still available to buy as a digital edition. Check out page opposite to see how you can bag a copy.

Staying regular

Hello ImagineFX. I'm an art student at the moment, so I still have lots to learn and try to find ideas on improving my

One of the Sketchbook spreads from our last issue, showing fantastic art from George Brad.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 246 at ifxm.ag/single-ifx.



We talked with Kyoungwan Kim about drawing habits and crafting character concepts in issue 246.

skills anywhere I can. I didn't expect to learn much from your Sketchbook issue, but how wrong I was. Not just from looking at such a wide variety of artistic styles and themes, but especially from the words of Kyoungwan Kim. I try to draw every single day, even if it's a simple doodle.

His tips on character design were useful too. I hadn't really thought about the differences of designing between various types of media but now I'll keep it in mind. Thanks so much!

Helen, via email

Rob replies Thanks for getting in touch Helen. You may be nearer the start of your artistic journey, but it sounds like you have the drive and passion for it. It can be difficult to consistently draw every single day (I probably manage every other day myself) so your muscle memory should develop nice and fast with a daily habit.

Kyoungwan's character design advice was also a real gem in that issue, so I'm very pleased you were able to pick up on it. We have a character workshop from François Bourdin on page 56 of this issue as well – it's worth checking out.

Issue of the year!

I've got to say, that was my favourite issue of the year – it might even be my favourite ever! That was brilliant; what a way to end another year of ImagineFX.

Sophie, via YouTube

Rob replies The team loves watching your video reviews Sophie. It's always a pleasure to see what you think about the magazine and your enthusiasm for art in general shines through. Such feedback is a joy to watch and useful for us to see, so we know what our readers find value in. And George the Giraffe's little kiss always brings a smile to my face too!

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Victoria
[@vfitzdraws](https://vfitzdraws)



Sandra Winther
[@sandrawintherart](https://sandrawintherart)



Hex
[@miss_debbi](https://miss_debbi)

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

Feature

TREASURE HUNTING

David C. Sutherland III
created the box art for
the original release of
the Dungeons & Dragons
Basic Set in 1977.

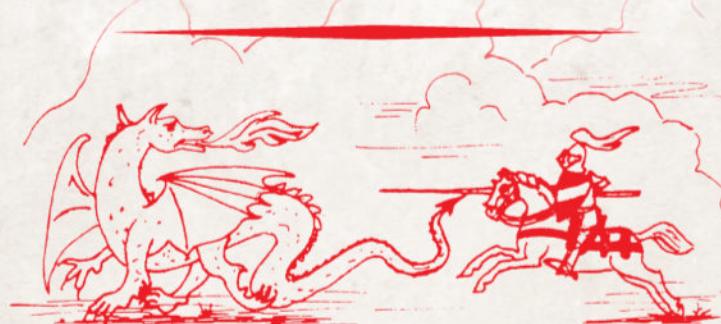




Dungeons & Dragons, Wizards of the Coast, the dragon ampersand, Wizards of the Coast & product names, their respective logos and artwork © Wizards of the Coast LLC

DUNGEON MASTERS

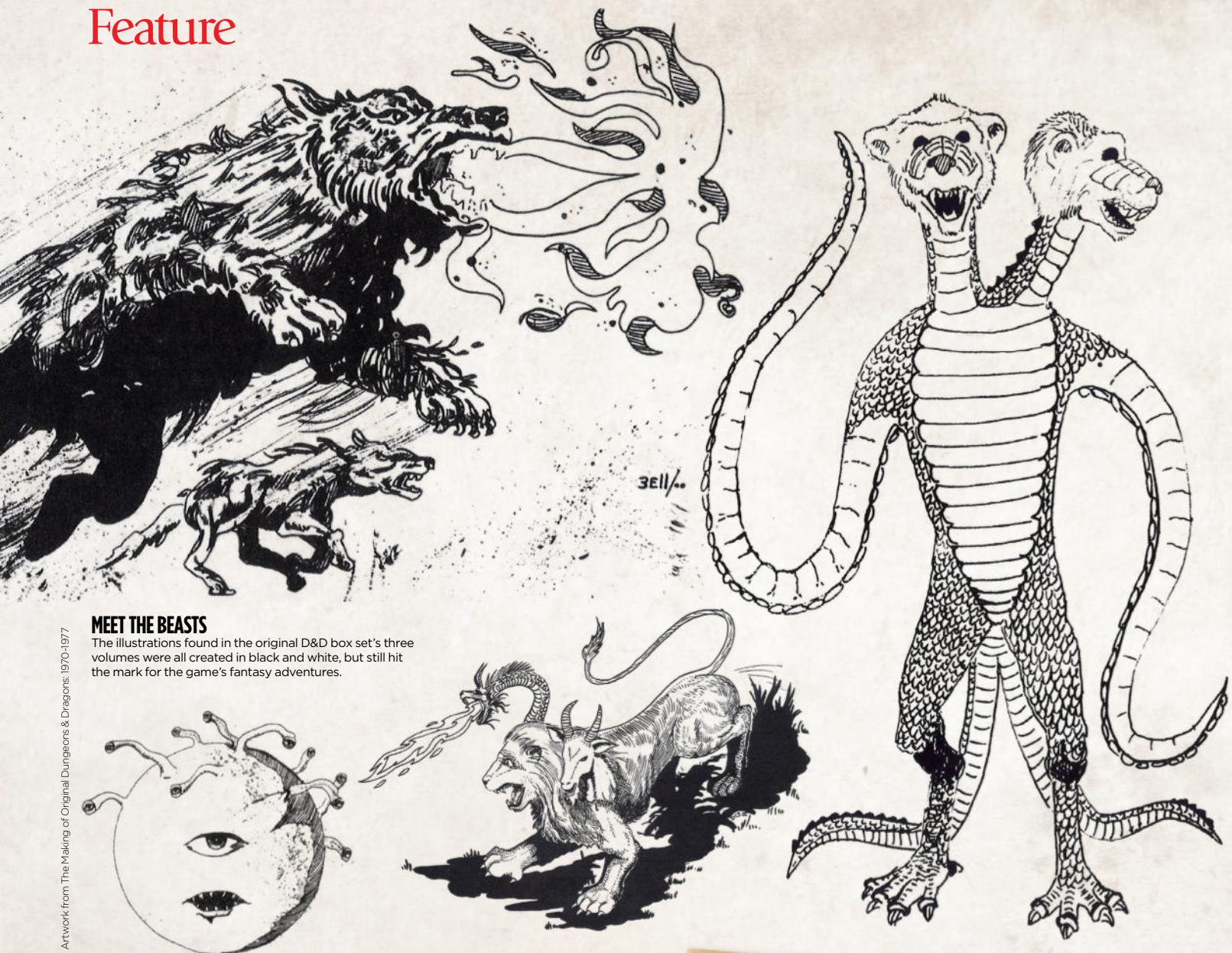
ImagineFX marks the milestone 50th anniversary of the launch of **Dungeons & Dragons** with a look at its rich tradition of illustration



The young protectors of an alien visitor played it in the movie ET: The Extra Terrestrial, and the young friends who venture into the Upside Down played it in the first season of Stranger Things.

Dungeons & Dragons, conceived by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, has become enshrined in pop culture over the five decades since it launched as a new kind of game in the early 1970s. Its vividly realised game mechanics and high-fantasy setting contributed to an ever-growing mainstream interest in fantasy that took flight half a century ago, building on an American fascination with the work of J.R.R. Tolkien that had flourished in the counterculture of the late 1960s. In turn, that moment impacted on the wider pop culture ➤

Feature



Artwork from *The Making of Original Dungeons & Dragons: 1970-1977*

MEET THE BEASTS

The illustrations found in the original D&D box set's three volumes were all created in black and white, but still hit the mark for the game's fantasy adventures.

► and fantasy storytelling space that developed in the 1970s.

Another decade on with the arrival of the 1980s, the excitement around Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) rested not just on its gameplay, but also on its increasingly sophisticated illustration and image material. That body of work has become key to the game's legacy, heritage and delight. Over the decades, the artists whose work has enriched the game includes Keith Parkinson, Clyde Caldwell, Tony DiTerlizzi, David C. Sutherland III and Daniel R. Horne.

THE ORIGINS OF A LEGEND

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the launch of D&D, and the journey of its creators Gygax and Arneson to

make the game a reality is charted in the recently published, immense and hugely detailed book *The Making of Original Dungeons & Dragons: 1970-1977*. It's a vast trove that offers a journey through the earliest documentation and artwork created for the game all the way back in the early 1970s.

In 1974, when D&D was first published, the original box set, as well as the Volume 1 rules booklet, featured a black and white image of a knight on a horse rearing up on its hind legs. The artwork that filled the original set's trio of booklets made the game's mechanics take on a sensory

power that fired up player imaginations. Those earliest illustrations have a naivete to their style, but immediately capture the invention of the game and the scope for such a diversity of the beings, entities and creatures of the fledgling game's world.

WHEN LARRY MET GARY

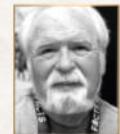
Key to the game's developing visual tradition was the landmark art of **Larry Elmore**. He became the first professional artist to be employed by TSR (Tactical Studies Rules), the company that originally produced and published D&D, to create the illustrations for the game as its popularity and presence became ever more established during the early 1980s. Particularly notable are his works that adorn the 1983 revisions of the Basic and Expert Set boxes. ►

“I was told the dragons in D&D were intelligent; they could use their front legs like arms, read and cast magic”



READY TO RIDE

This rearing horse and rider appeared on the box for the original D&D release, as well as the game's first volume.



Dungeons & Dragons



CELEBRATING A LANDMARK 50TH YEAR IN STYLE

The world of D&D continues to grow as the game records a special anniversary

D&D has enjoyed a rich and ever deepening visual heritage that has resonated with gamers and fantasy fans beyond the realm of the game, which has certainly offered a multiverse of worlds to explore. This summer in the UK, Royal Mail released a series of D&D-themed stamps illustrated by British artist **Wayne Reynolds**. Then there are events such as Virtual Play Weekends that take the game online, and D&D's presence at various conventions such as UK Games Expo. New campaign volumes and guides continue to provide narratives and lavish art, such as the recently published *Quests from the Infinite Staircase* (cover by **Syd Mills**, alternative cover by **John Patrick Gañas**) containing classic D&D adventures that have been updated for the fifth edition of the game and bring something of a science fiction aesthetic to the D&D worlds. Also released in 2024 was *Vecna: Eve of Ruin* (cover by **Kieran Yanner**, alternative cover by **Hydro74**).

SETTING THE TONE

The wealth of beings in the D&D world were captured across three booklets in the original 1974 release.



GETTING STARTED

Larry was the first professional artist hired by TSR.



ICONIC COVER

Larry's red dragon battle was front and centre for the 1983 Basic Set reprint.



EXPANDING THE STORYTELLING

D&D has grown beyond a tabletop game with films, comics and more

If you grew up in the 1980s, you might well have come home from school and watched the Dungeons & Dragons animated TV series. The show continues to enjoy a keen following today; so much so that action figures of the heroes and villains from the series have been produced by Super 7.

At the cinema, 2023 saw the release of a lavishly realised feature film adaptation entitled Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves, which found just the right

balance between tension, spectacle, lore and humour. Beyond movies and TV, D&D designs have even adorned clothing ranges including Converse sneakers.

The series has also ventured into video games, with recent release Baldur's Gate 3, which uses D&D's combat system, a major hit among critics. Neverwinter Nights, released in 2002, has spawned multiple expansions, plus a sequel and a massively multiplayer online RPG.

And perhaps unsurprisingly, the franchise has made it to comics as far back as 1981 and 1982, while in the late 1980s a fuller range of graphic novel adaptations were published. For 14 years (2010-24) IDW published a series of comics that included the Stranger Things and Dungeons & Dragons fusion. Coming right up to date, Dark Horse Comics is due to launch a brand new series of D&D stories in the summer of 2025.



“I left the military to go to TSR,” Larry explains of his route into the game’s real-life lore. “I loved D&D. It was the most unique game I’d ever played in my life. It played so uniquely that I thought it had to stick around. No game like that had been invented.

“Everything looked very cartoony before I arrived at TSR. It wasn’t very realistic art. I could paint realistic looking pictures and they had movement in them.”

The red dragon that stars on the revised Basic Set box is perhaps Larry’s most famous D&D artwork. “They wanted to redo the red box,” he recalls. “I thought, ‘Man, that’s important’, because that was the game at that time. I started doing some designs. I understood the D&D game system.

“Gary said, ‘See this here? That’s perfect. I want it simple – a dragon and fighter’

“I was putting in my roughs and had a fighter, thief, a magic user and a stick, and a dragon in the background. In one of my big drawings for the box cover, I was putting everything in. A note came back saying it had been rejected”. Gary Gygax had said that it was ‘too busy’.

“I went down the hall to see Gary. He was a nice guy; a creative person. I went in and asked, ‘What do you want?’ The last big drawing I’d sent through was one little scene from a

NEGOTIATING WITH A PIT FIEND

A battle scene made for The Planewalker’s Handbook by Tony.

bigger painting. Gary said, ‘See this here? That’s perfect. Can you do that big? I want it simple – a dragon and a fighter.’ I went back and drew that large for the red [Basic Set] and blue [Expert Set] boxes. I kept it very simple; just that dragon and fighter.”

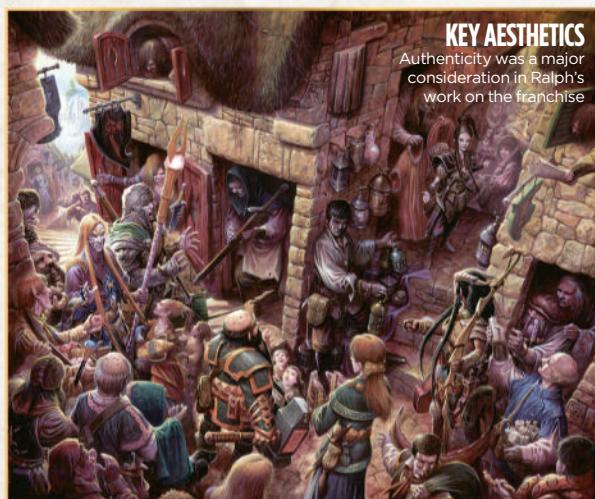
DRAGON DESIGNS

When he first began working with TSR, Larry says that getting the look and feel for D&D’s dragons was a campaign in and of itself. “The first dragon that I ever drew in my life was for TSR,” he explains. “I went home, got an encyclopaedia, looked up reptiles and dinosaurs, and looked at the teeth, mouths and skeletons.

“The only dragon I’d ever seen published at that time, in 1981, was from the Brothers Hildebrandt: it was a small picture of Smaug. After that I started looking up dragons in history, and I wanted to do these European-style dragons.

“I was told that the dragons in D&D were intelligent; they could use their front legs like arms, they could read, they could cast magic spells. That made total sense. In mine, the front legs become more like an extension of an arm. It’s all based on the same anatomical system.

“Other animals, they’ve got such a long forearm that their knee is almost a wrist. A lot of front legs on animals are like a human arm. Predators have eyes that look straight, animals





THE RENDEZVOUS
Artwork from 1996's AD&D Planescape gaming supplement *The Planewalker's Handbook*, created by Tony.

“I wouldn’t have the career or the success I have today were it not for the spellbinding power of D&D”

that get preyed upon have eyes on the side. Little things like that you start to remember. A dragon is a predator.”

FANTASTICAL REALMS

Another masterful fantasy artist and author, **Tony DiTerlizzi**, says he owes a lot to D&D – from young gamer and burgeoning illustrator to his career today. A little



MONSTER MASH

A young Tony practised his skills by copying drawings from the Advanced D&D Monster Manual.

encouragement from his friends was key along the way, too.

“For this nerd, Dungeons & Dragons has given so much over the past five decades,” Tony smiles. “It started with its meteoric popularity during the 1980s. As if overnight, everyone put down their Rubix cubes, picked up a 20-sided dice and were transported to an extraordinary world of bloodthirsty monsters, crumbling catacombs and glittering treasure hordes.

“For an anxious adolescent like me, facing off with a ferocious acid-breathing dragon was much easier than facing off with the school bully. I’d spend countless hours, engrossed, copying illustrations from the Advanced D&D Monster Manual.

“A decade later, I’d be hired to draw those same monsters. You see, at the urging of my gaming group, I’d submitted samples of my artwork to



TEENAGE DREAM

Ralph began playing D&D as a 13 year old, and says he found the game absorbing.

the publishers of D&D. Eventually I was hired, rendering images of rust monsters, owlbears and beholders for years to come.

“As I became more involved with visualising games, like Planescape, I learned that D&D wasn’t just about monsters, magic and treasure – it was about building a fantastical realm that you couldn’t wait to explore. This worldbuilding philosophy became my blueprint for creating books like *The Spiderwick Chronicles* and *WondLa*.

“I wouldn’t have the career or the success I have today were it not for the spellbinding power of D&D.”

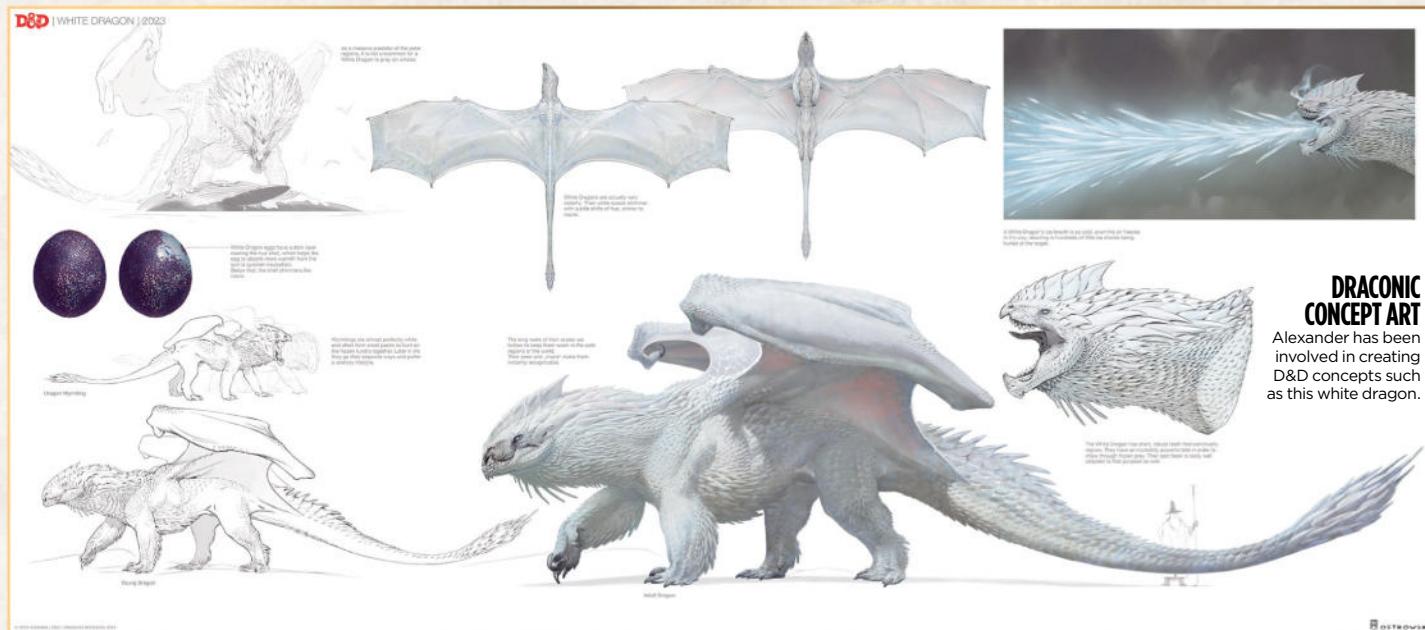
Creating a sense of authenticity was a key aesthetic challenge for artist **Ralph Horsley** in his work on the franchise. “I wanted the adventurers to look properly invested in their role,” he

Dungeons & Dragons

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Ralph's cover art for the Neverwinter Nights campaign setting.





explains. "To have the equipment and the accoutrements that go along with that; a plethora of conveniently placed pouches, scroll cases, weapons and assorted accessories."

Ralph is also eager to note what it means to him to have contributed to D&D. "I began playing the game when I was 13 and it completely absorbed me, and changed the direction of the art I was creating," he says. "It was that teenager's dream come true when I first had work published for D&D. I feel very appreciative of making art for D&D for over two decades."

BUILDING ON HISTORY

In the current day, concept artist **Alexander Ostrowski** is involved in determining the aesthetics of the creatures in D&D. He says working with the game's storied history, which has defined parts of the fantasy genre, can be a difficult, yet enjoyable, part of the job.

"Redesigning is always a challenge, but a fun one," Alexander reflects. "The dragons of D&D are very iconic

"I began playing D&D when I was 13. It changed the direction of my art"



and over the last 50 years helped to define what a dragon is in the cultural consciousness. With designs this well known and loved, it's challenging to figure out what to change or keep.

"We wanted to bring in fresh ideas and differentiate them more from each other, sort of distil them down to the core idea behind each dragon type. But we also needed to keep what makes each design so iconic, so it was a bit of a balancing act."

NEW LOOK
The classic D&D red dragon gets an update from Alexander.

Alexander holds a particular affection for one new design that he's worked on. "I'm personally fond of the new design for the green dragon," he says. "This one changed a lot, but it comes down to embodying what they are at their core: sneaky tricksters that lie and manipulate."

"To show this, we leaned a lot on a slender serpentine body plan, which was originally designed by Simon Lee, so the dragon can twist through their forest home easily. This way it never stands out much and can hide easily."

"On top of that we gave it a cobra hood, colour-changing abilities, retractable fangs, wings that can fold in stages, and a fin-like structure along its spine that can also fold in. That way this design is all about levels of reveals layered on top of each other."

Of being able to contribute to the visual heritage of D&D, Alexander adds: "I feel extremely fortunate and honoured to have been offered this opportunity, and also for all the trust my amazing art director Josh Herman put into me, especially with some of the most important creatures for this franchise. I play a lot of D&D, so contributing to this game makes my inner kid absolutely giddy with joy."

'GIRLS KICK ARSE IN ARMOUR'

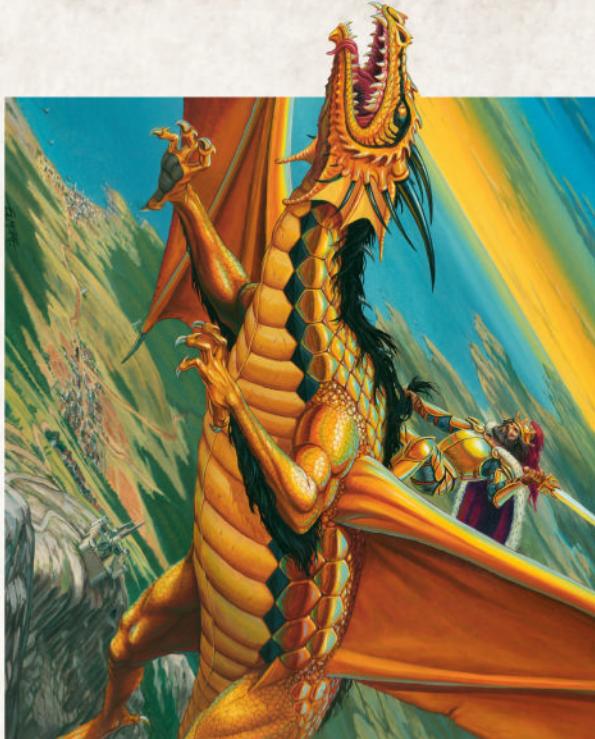
An artist who has worked on core rule books, supplements and miniatures, **Anne Stokes** says creating art for D&D has been a personally meaningful experience.

"Once upon a time a very young girl called Anne was read a bedtime story by her father, called *The Hobbit*," she



EPIC TRAPS

Anne says this dynamic artwork is her favourite made for D&D.



TAKING FLIGHT

If you want to learn how to create stunning dragons just like Larry, turn to page 48 for his special artistic insight.

A GOLDEN AFTERNOON

Tony's cover artwork for issue #242 of Dragon magazine.



CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Before creating artwork for D&D, Tony loved to play the game with his friends as a child.

reflects. "From then on, I was captivated by fantasy. I discovered D&D as a young person and was totally hooked.

"I was enthralled by the art of [Larry] Elmore and [Jeff] Easley, and wanted to be like them. I drew and drew to improve my skills, and when I started work I sent many submissions off for portfolio reviews. One amazing day I was phoned by the D&D head art director to ask if I'd work on their new release. I was over the moon.

"As a young artist trying to make it in a male-dominated games industry, I was told on more than one occasion to forget it. This only made me more determined to succeed."

There's one piece Anne created that she has a special fondness for. "My painting Epic Traps, an illustration for

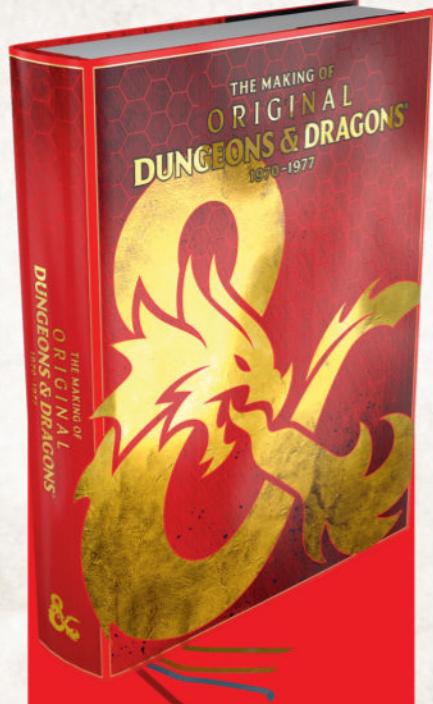


BREAKING BARRIERS

Anne was determined to break into what was a male-dominated games industry.

the 4E Dungeon Master's Guide, is perhaps my favourite," she says. "A challenging subject of a female warrior with very elaborate kit, having set off a trap by moving in front of a skeleton statue holding a crystal. This was made all the more complex by the fact that it was a very horizontal space for the art.

"I was quite often hired to paint the female characters as the art directors felt I did a good job on that, both with the anatomy, being a woman myself, and also not making them overly sexualised. Girls kick arse in armour and I'm the first to fly that flag."



BACK TO WHERE IT BEGAN

A compendium that explores the history of the original release

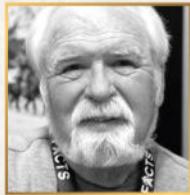
The book *The Making of Original Dungeons & Dragons: 1970-1977* is a hugely detailed and lavishly mounted volume that collates archival documents taking you right back to the genesis of the game. If you want to read the earliest notes **Dave Arneson** and **Gary Gygax** compiled as they worked out quite what their D&D world could be, then this is the book for you.

It features the first draft of the game's earliest published writings, notes and illustrations for what would become the Original D&D box set, as well as delving into the history of its precursors, including Gygax's medieval-inspired Chainmail.

Pages from the three volumes of the original D&D release are also included for those eager to go on an old-school adventure, or to simply discover how the game has grown and developed over the past 50 years. That includes a look at the earliest black and white illustrations created to enrich the game mechanics and characters, and fire up players' imaginations.

DRAGON FORCE

Legendary D&D artist **Larry Elmore** explains the keys to crafting timeless fantasy art



It's all in the name. Some of the most iconic artwork that has helped to bring the incredible, expansive world of Dungeons & Dragons to life over the last five decades has depicted the game's fearsome draconic beasts.

Among the many talented fantasy artists to craft dragons onto the pages of D&D's volumes and its boxed set covers is Larry Elmore. Perhaps his most recognisable pieces take pride of place on 1980s revisions of the Basic and Expert boxed sets, which feature epic dragons in the midst of battle.

Who better to share their knowledge of creating one of the fantasy genre's best-loved creatures. In this Q&A, Larry talks about the process behind his awe-inspiring dragons and how he builds a composition.

Could you break down how you start drawing a dragon?

Everything can be broken down into basic shapes: triangles, cubes, circles and tubes. Those basic shapes are the building blocks. In drawing, you lay the whole thing out roughly and then you come back and refine. I'll break it down into basic shapes, rough it in and redraw over it until I get exactly what I want at my comfortable size.

I've learned that dragon heads are broken down into two basic box shapes and I can rotate them. When I'm going to draw one, I want to draw the head in perspective. I'll find the centre line roughly on the box shape and swap from pencil to fine sharpie.

What about adding in the dragon's facial features?

When I'm drawing a face of any kind – an animal, dragon or person – once



I get the basic shape down in pencil, usually I start to locate the eyes. A dragon's got an eyebrow ridge; it's got muscle in there, so you can make him frown. I lay the muscle eyebrow edge in, but it's still just the basic shape at this point. You're going to fill the boxes in with flesh and muscle.

I'm going to put a narrower strip in for the nose, and with the Sharpie

LAVA DRAGON
A sense of colour informed by nature is found within Larry's work.



HOODED GIRL

This character shows the attention to detail of light and shade in Larry's drawings.

I define the eyebrow ridges and eyes. In my mind, I've decided on the light source too. I then want to soften up the edges of my basic box form and get the basic proportions done.

Next I establish where the horns are going to be. I always do the base of the tissue and scales with the horn protruding out, as well as the spikes on the top of the head to give them that mean look.

The jawbone comes down to the mouth and, for the opening part of the mouth, sometimes I'll put a little muscle or tissue on the jawbone. I'll then put flatter teeth, the molars, in at the back. The dragon would tear you up with its front teeth and then they'll crunch the bone and chew it up with the back teeth. Dragons have become more like real animals to me.

“ I've learned that dragon heads are broken down into two basic box shapes ”

THE CRYSTAL SHARD

This depiction of wilderness amplifies the fantasy adventure of novel *The Crystal Shard*.



I'm almost sculpting this thing and putting it together; everything can be constructed. My drawings don't go too much beyond the sketching phase as they're going to become the basis for a painting. I'll blow it up to the painting size, ready to put the transfer on the board to paint.

What's your method for organising a painting in terms of foreground and background elements?

I paint from back to front. So that means I paint the sky first, then come back and paint mountains or hills. If the figure is up front, that's the last thing I paint, or if there's grass right there that'll be it.

You never want to go back and try to paint behind something, as that's just asking for trouble. If you're doing figures in fog, paint the fog first, then paint the figure on top. Cutting around isn't the way to do it.

Then there are times you want your background and the figure, or whatever you're painting up front, to soften the edge as you're painting. You can handle that while it's still a little wet. Once you start painting enough and get over your fear of it, then you can start experimenting.

How do you think about colour in your paintings?

Somewhere along the line I quit thinking of colour as colour and think of it as taste, believe it or not. White and yellow, for example, are sweet and oranges and ochres were more of an earthy taste, like bread. Then you get potent colours



that taste like hot peppers. Hot and cool, sweet and sour. My palette is more like a bunch of ingredients and I'm mixing and cooking them.

I really started looking at nature for colour, and I became very aware that my colour was weak when I was working at TSR. Nature is a lot more subdued in its colour, even on a bright, sunny day. It's not like colours out of a paint tube. Ultimately, you've got to learn to see the colours that you're trying to paint.

What's the process for blending in your artwork?

I used to try to blend in one direction, but now I mix back-and-forth strokes and clean that up pretty easily. It's a slow process, I guess. There have been some eureka moments about that. If you're painting all the time, without making conscious decisions, the things that work you'll tend to remember and go back to.



COMPANION DRAGONBLADE

Imbuing the dragon with realistic muscles helps to emphasise its animalistic nature.

LOVE AND WAR

Larry's illustration for the first edition of the *Dragonlance* anthology entitled *Love and War*, published back in 1987.



Sketchbook

Raymund Bermudez

Filipino folk tales inspire a range of creatures for the artist's personal project *Balete*, plus other captivating doodles



FILIPINO MONSTER FIGHT

"One of many duels in *Balete*, as Bantay confronts a manananggal that's wandered too far. Since I'll colour this, I made the lines lighter than usual."

BALETE: PORTAL KAPRE GUARDIAN

"Bantay is no ordinary kapre, or tree giant. He makes sure none pass through the portal within the balete tree. He has extreme physical powers that, even without magic, makes him more than a match for any creature."



BALETE COVER

"Concept art that I made into a cover. It shows our heroes Raymund and Markus, named after my sons, and their tikbalang friend and guide on their adventure. You can definitely see the evolution of my line-art style from this image; I was more into shadows then."



Artist PROFILE

Raymund Bermudez

LOCATION: Philippines



Raymund honed his skills growing up in an artistic family. After finishing art school, his path eventually led him to concept and sequential comic art. Raymund has now worked on international movies and animation as a senior concept and keyframe artist, plus many well-known comics such as *Justice League 3000* and *Spider-Man*, to name just a few. www.instagram.com/artshaft

STEAMPUNK SAMURAI

"This one I had a bit of creative freedom in making. With the right amount of details for contrast, I wanted the viewer to focus on the head and armour plate details, which were important to the design."



Sketchbook Raymund Bermudez

ASWANG

"My interpretation of a local monster called an aswang. It has many forms but usually manifests itself as an odd-looking dog or wild pig. I imagined it as a pig with near-human proportions to make it even more unnatural."



“I tried to make it different from other shapeshifters that we've all seen in the past”



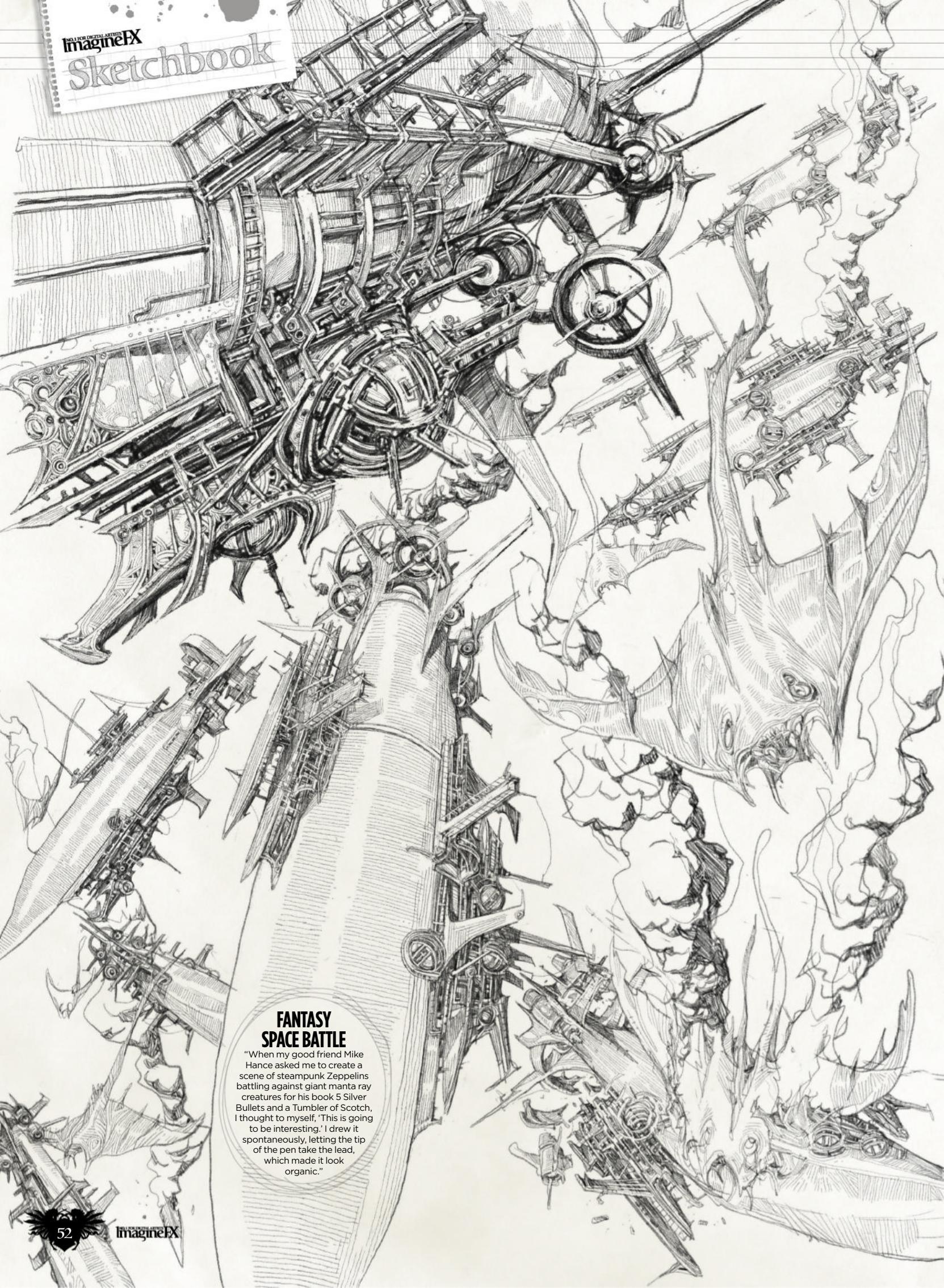
CAVE SHAPESHIFTER

"One of the first creatures I came up with for Balete. It's a ghoul our heroes came across on their journey. I tried to make it different from other shapeshifters we've seen in the past. This one is like a puppeteer that makes up only a part of the body, with the rest invisible to most."

OUR HERO BARA-BARA

"I never used to like creating environment concepts, but eventually they grew on me. This is my most recent concept for a local movie. Our hero is seen flying over a very busy, yet colourful background."





FANTASY SPACE BATTLE

"When my good friend Mike Hance asked me to create a scene of steampunk Zeppelins battling against giant manta ray creatures for his book 5 Silver Bullets and a Tumbler of Scotch, I thought to myself, 'This is going to be interesting.' I drew it spontaneously, letting the tip of the pen take the lead, which made it look organic."

Sketchbook Raymund Bermudez



EVIL SPIRIT

"My interpretation of a local ghoul. The manananggal, one of the more popular manifestations of the aswang, is the upper half of a woman that has grown wings and stalks villages in search of human prey. I made her face unpleasant enough to make her scary and unnatural, and also decided to extend the spine into a scorpion-like tail."



WARRIOR OVERLORD

"Right off the bat, with the jagged, unwelcoming armour, I wanted a feel of sinister ill-temperedness to the character."



APRIL AS A POST-APOCALYPTIC WARRIOR

"An original post-apocalyptic warrior in my wife's likeness, hence the name. Soft, subtle details contrast with a mechanical arm and weapons, hopefully making the viewer want to know more about her story."

BALETE: CREATURE

"Part animal, part human. I wanted the creature to have a wise, approachable look in spite of its odd features."



DIWATA

"Another concept for Balete. The diwata, or forest faerie, is as beautiful as she is mysterious. The folk story advises you not to follow her into the forest. If one does, the path back home becomes hard to find. I like this particular image so much that I'm planning to make it an alternate cover for my book."

“The diwata, or forest faerie, is as beautiful as she is mysterious”



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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

56 15 tips for stylish character designs

Learn to create striking stylised characters with expert advice from François Bourdin.

62 Go steady with storyboarding

Dan Milligan shares the process that he follows for developing storyboards for big-name films.

64 Compose scenes using shapes

Walk into an atmospheric night-time setting from visual development artist Léa Pinto.

68 Use the power of suggestion

We get the lowdown on Eduard Petrovich's colourful cover art for *The Magnificent Ms. Marvel*.

70 Conjure magic illustrations

Daria Anako delves into the step-by-step workflow she used to create a magical scene.

76 Draw dazzling comic covers

Why Terry Dodson's art for Marvel's new *Dazzler* comic series hits all the right notes.

Artist insight

15 TIPS FOR STYLISH CHARACTER DESIGN

Concept artist **François Bourdin** shares pro advice to help you achieve accurate proportions for engaging, stylised characters

Artist PROFILE

François Bourdin

LOCATION: France

François is a concept artist specialising in character creation. Over five years in the industry, he has worked on several video and board games and films, most notably for Netflix and Supercell. <https://bit.ly/4fmCp6G>



Achieving the right shapes in your characters is essential to getting messages across to the viewer effectively. In this article, I'll show you how to create effective character designs with strong, simple shapes.

To do this, I work with a lot of reference photos to find and build solid poses that match the spirit of my characters. I'll then compose a

colour palette that will match up with my character's personality. I love to mix pastel shades with neon hues in particular. I'll start with my base colours for clothes and skin, then shadows and highlights, and finally background colours and graphic touches. My backgrounds are often simple colour gradients with a few simplified elements.

Once I've completed these steps, I start sketching. As soon as I've found

the right shape, I'll use the Polygonal Lasso tool, which is also utilised at each subsequent stage. I love this tool because it allows me to create angular shapes that add intensity to the character. I then apply colours, followed by shadows and either warm or cool coloured lights depending on the mood I want to set in the illustration. Finally, I'll add in graphical elements to make my character stand out.



1 PICK YOUR COLOUR PALETTE

It's important to choose a primary colour palette that matches your character's personality. Don't hesitate to draw on existing colour palettes; there are millions of them on the internet, so why deprive yourself? They're a great basis for developing colours that work well together in your designs.



2 ADD A TOUCH OF MADNESS

Once you've found the basic colour scheme, it's important to find a complementary, more intense palette to highlight the character's main elements. In this case that meant the head, hands and shoes. These colours direct the eye straight to the most important elements.

3 SEPARATE DIFFERENT PARTS

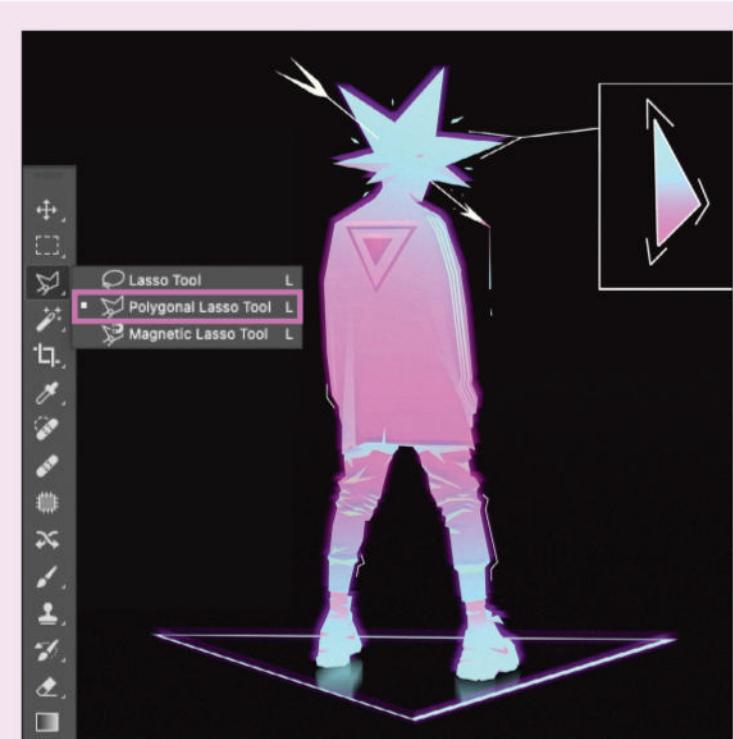
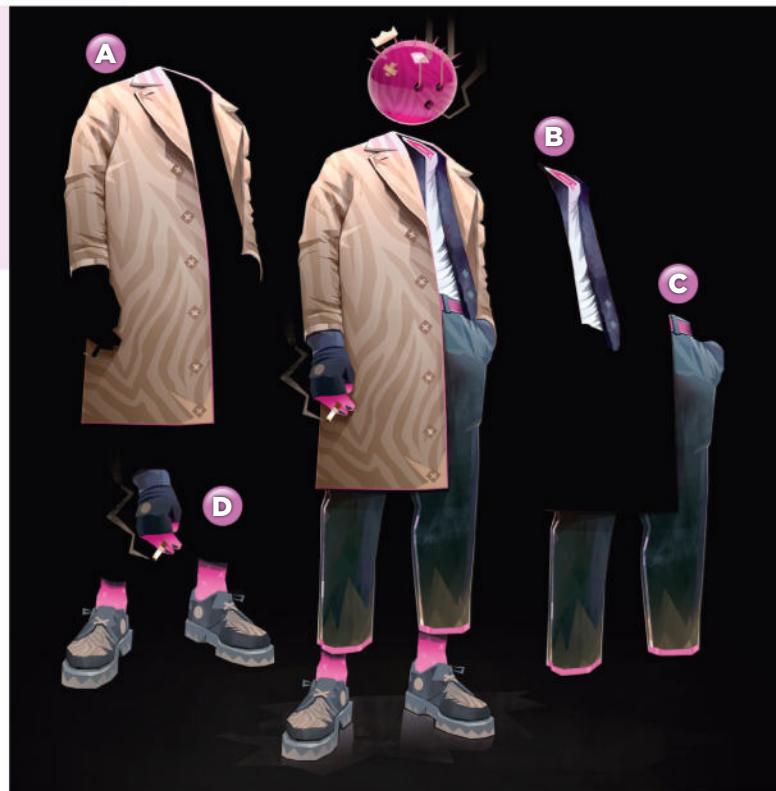
To avoid getting lost in the hundreds of different layers, it's important to segment parts of the character. Here, I've split the clothing up into four groups: the coat, the jacket and shirt, the trousers, and then everything else. The head is separate.

“The silhouette is the most important element, so I spend a lot of time creating it”



4 MATCH STYLISED ELEMENTS

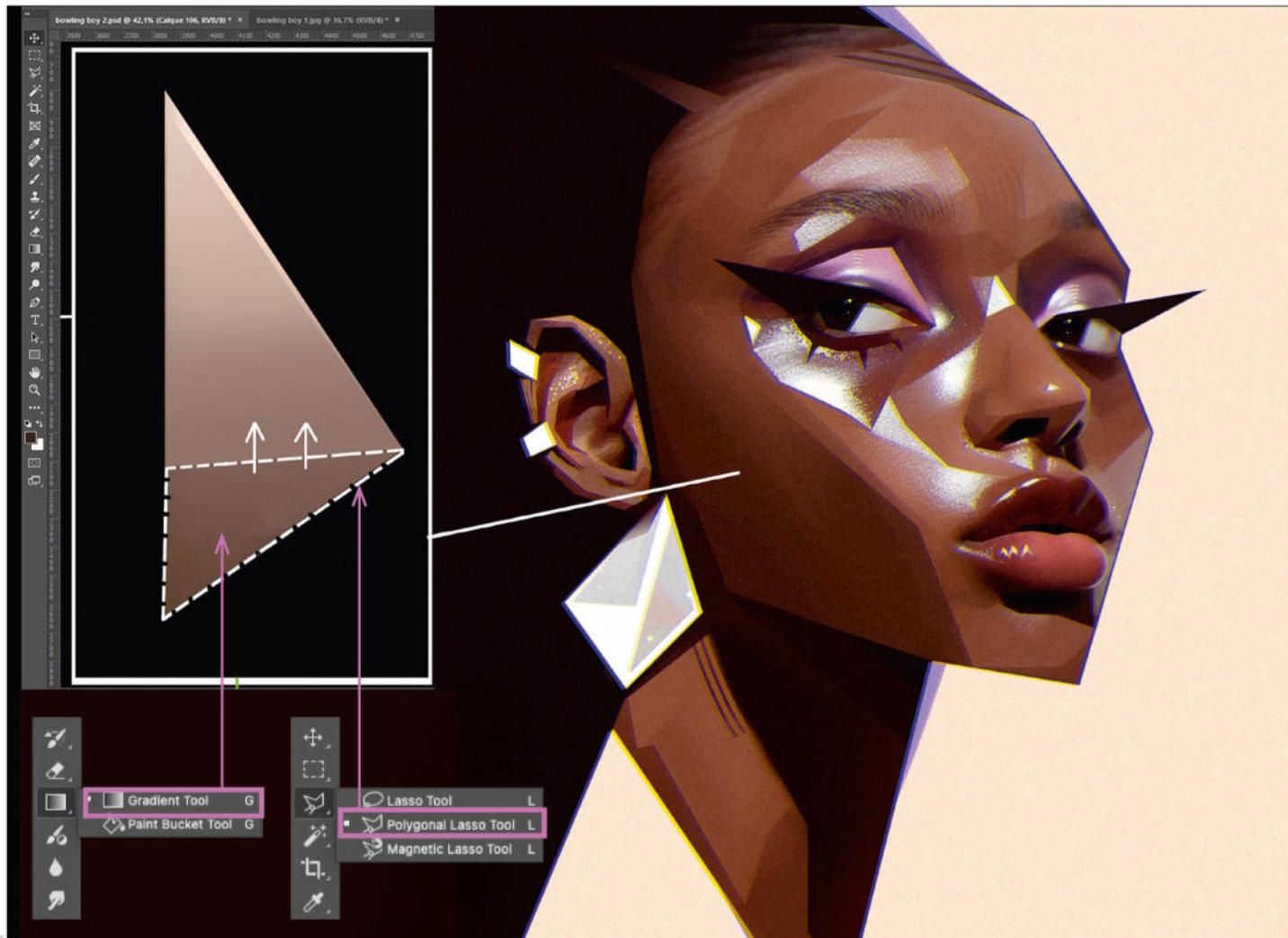
For the character to fully function, surrounding elements such as smoke, light and the ground must be stylised in the same manner as the character. For this chap, the design is semi-realistic with sharp shapes, so I worked the smoke and shadows in the same way using a textured brush.



5 CREATE THE SHAPES

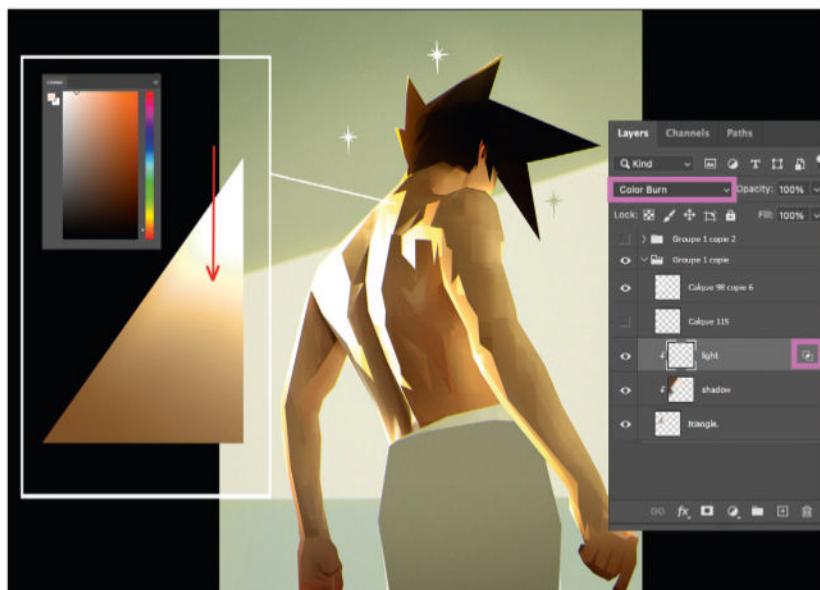
For me, the character's silhouette is the most important element, so I spend a lot of time creating it. Once I've finished my pose, I start to develop the character's general shape with the Polygonal Lasso tool, using a solid shape and then a fairly coarse gradient to create their shadows. ▶▶

Workshops



6 BUILD UP SHADOWS ON THE CHARACTER

In general, I choose to develop a contrast between the semi-realistic style of the proportions and colours by making realistic shadows that will bring life and realism to the character. I like to play with styles. To do this, select an area with the Polygonal Lasso, then within the selection make a gradient using the Gradient tool. Next, use the Multiply blend mode to make the effect as natural as possible. The advantage of Multiply is that it adds to the colour of the drawing by fading. I often use warm colours for creating my shadows.



“Using too many textured brushes can detract from the clarity of your image”

7 DEVELOP THE LIGHTING

Adding light is one of my favourite parts of creating. It's usually the last step in my working method. To begin with, choose a colour that stands out more than those of the clothes or skin so it works well. Once picked, create a special layer over the elements that will be lit. Set it to the Color Burn blend mode, which brings out the natural look of the shadows. In general, work over all the other layers to apply the light evenly.

Artist insight Stylised characters



8 BE SPARING WITH TEXTURE

In any image, texture is always important to add vibrancy and realism. I use a few textured brushes to add relief and life to the clothes. My advice is to try out a variety of brushes, but once you've found the right ones, it's best stick with a maximum of two or three. Using too many textured brushes can detract from the image's clarity, in turn making it distracting for the audience.



9 BRING PERSONALITY WITH GRAPHICS

Introducing patterns and other graphical elements is a major plus when you're creating a character, as they help to make the design that little more unique. A good motif is important for adding charisma to a character and supporting their personality. ➤

“I think it's important to add a touch of fun to my character designs”



10 CONSIDER THE BACKGROUND

I very rarely do elaborate backgrounds, as I find it creates a lot of unnecessary information around the character. Instead, I often use a few simple geometric shapes that highlight the most important and interesting parts of the character, such as circles, triangles or squares behind them to draw in the viewer's attention.

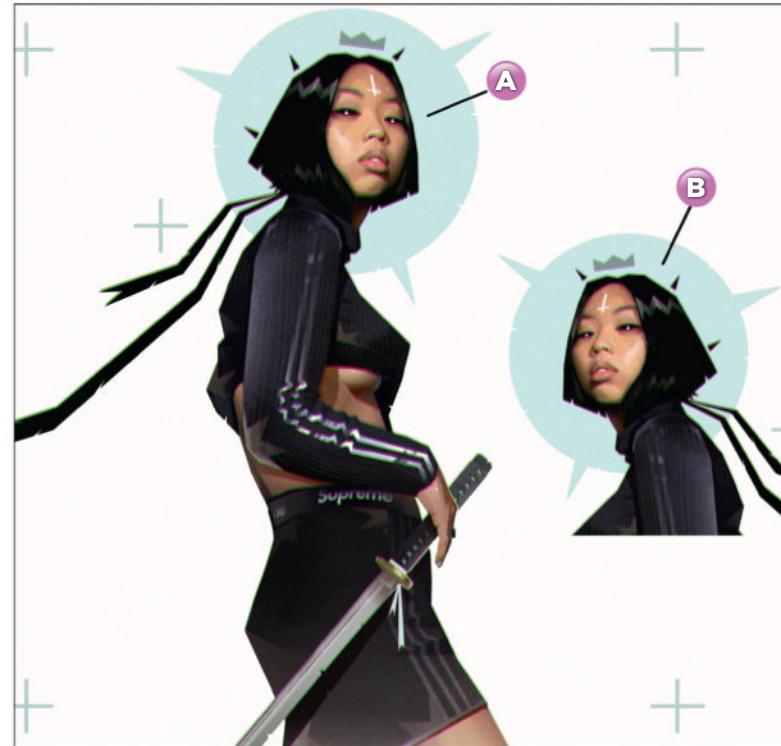
11 SHOW OFF THE MATERIALS

It's important to be able to simplify the various subjects using easy, effective tricks. For example, with glossy materials, a simple white highlight will immediately give an impression of volume, seen here in the edge light (A) that gives volume to the glove, and in the highlight (B) and bounce light (C) that reflects the light onto the metal.



12 DIVERT EXPECTATIONS

Here I've taken an old diving helmet and turned it into a machine that fills with beer, which swirls around the character's head. To accentuate the goofiness, I also attached beer bottles to the back of the device, as I think it's important to add a touch of fun to my character designs.



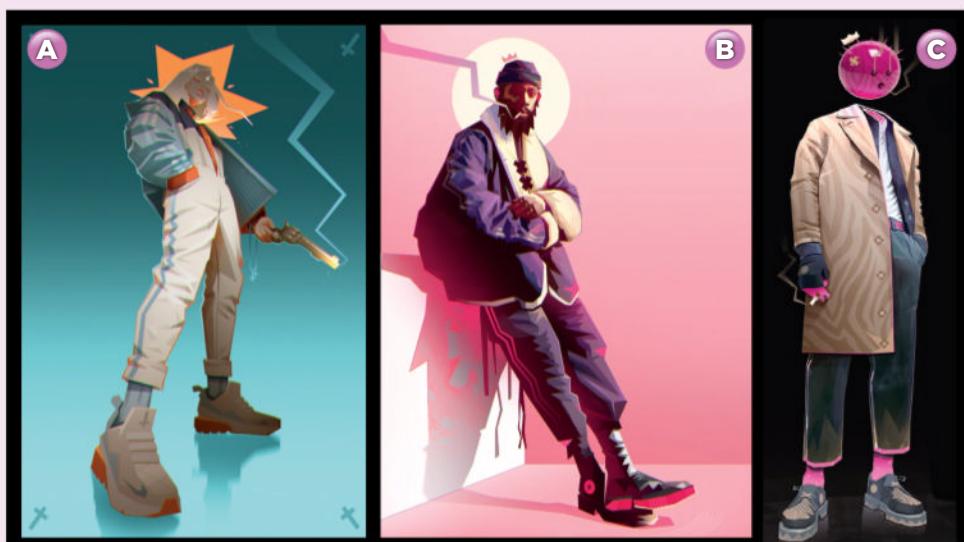
13 CREATE A SENSE OF COMPOSITION

Where the character looks is crucial, as it gives the viewer a sense of how to read the image. In general, to avoid blocking the composition, I'd advise having the character looking or turned towards the right (A) to let the drawing breathe. Conversely, if the character is looking to the left (B) then the atmosphere feels more closed off and less conducive to that sense of the image breathing that we're looking to create.



14 FIND A FOCUS

Focusing on the element you want to emphasise most is important to give meaning to the character and the image. Here, the focus is on the character's face and eyes. The lower part of the body is hidden and therefore more mysterious.



15 POSE THE CHARACTER

The pose and direction of the character's gaze is important for the atmosphere. The character seen from a low angle and looking at us (A), gives the impression of being threatening. The next character (B) is contemplative, posed and looking towards the viewer, so the feeling is calmer. The final character (C) is just standing stoic, looking into the distance at something that we can only imagine.

Workshops



Technique focus

GO STEADY WITH STORYBOARDING

Discover the expert know-how **Dan Milligan** used on *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes* and more

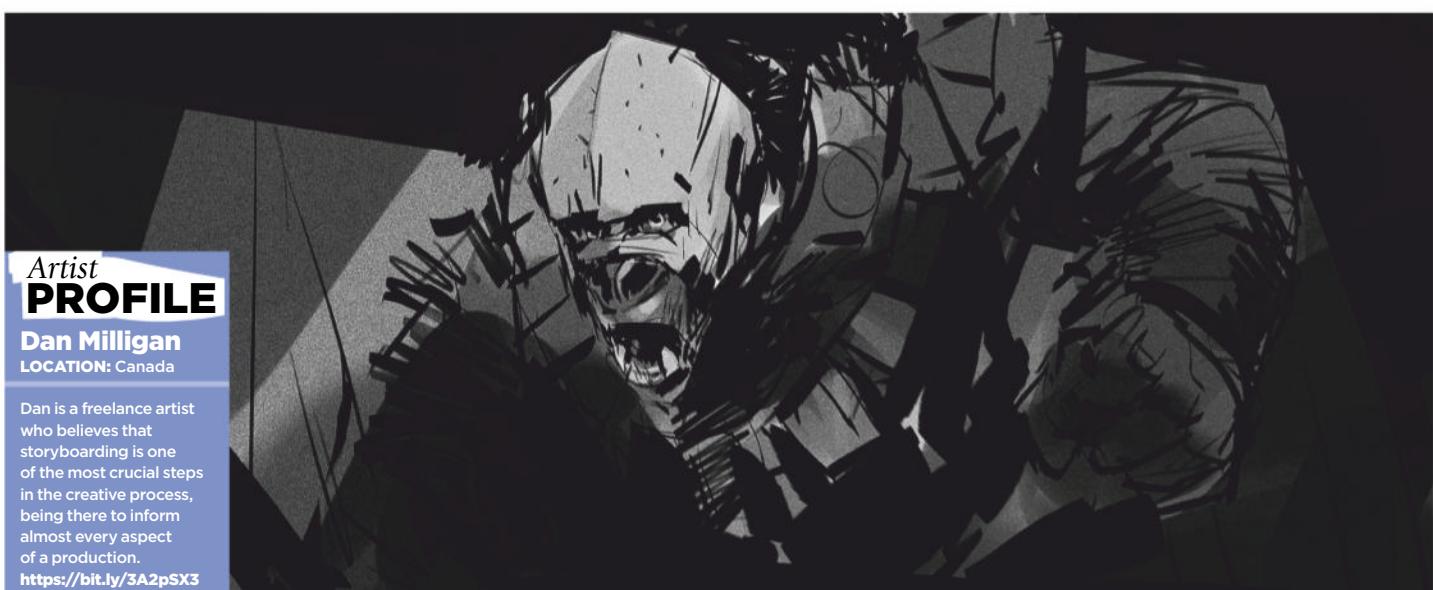
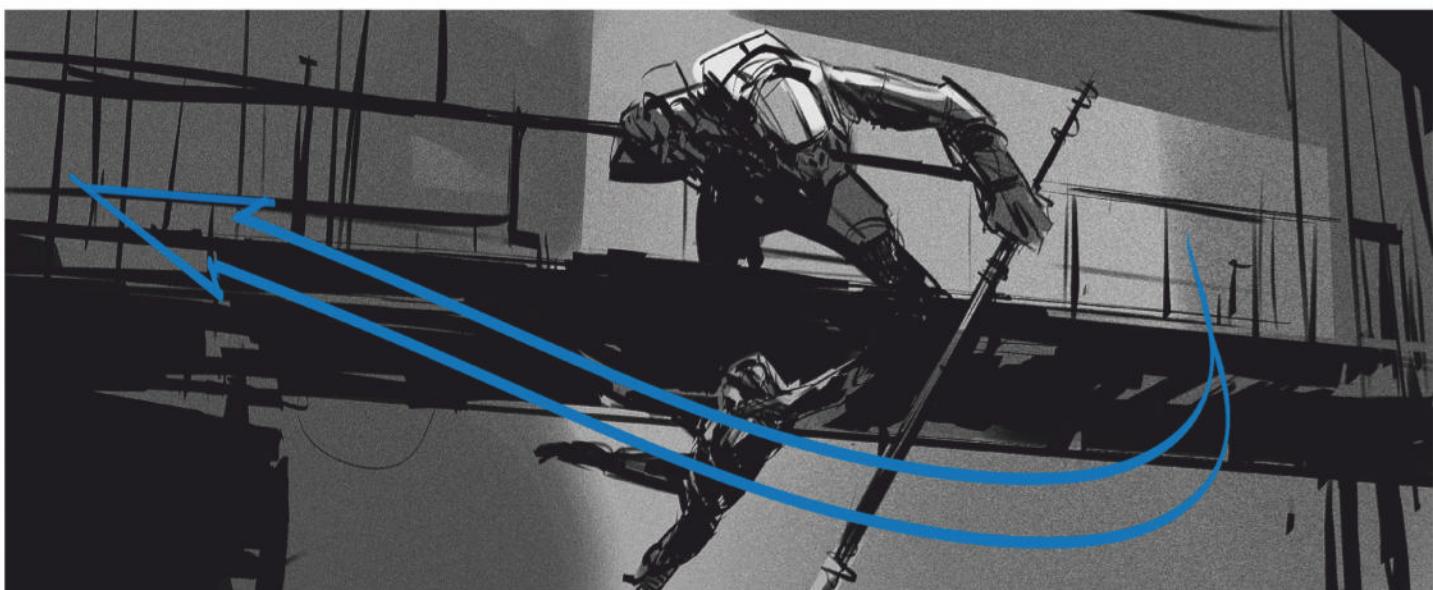


"Screenplays and scripts can often be vague in terms of the actual direction and action. Whenever I storyboard a complex scene, I like to start by sketching out general ideas, almost like doing a gesture drawing. I'm not pitching entire sequences yet,

just the concepts. Once the director and I agree on these big ideas, we can then dig into the shot-by-shot construction of each scene. This process allows me to spend more time iterating and exploring the 'what if we did this' path, rather than drawing hundreds of frames only to have the basic idea rejected."



Tech Focus Storyboarding



Photoshop COMPOSE SCENES USING SHAPES

Visual development artist **Léa Pinto** shares advice for pushing design fundamentals in environment artwork

Artist PROFILE

Léa Pinto

LOCATION: France

Léa is a freelance visual development artist based in Normandy, working in both video games and animation. She's currently working on a movie with Sony Pictures Animation and has been a part of Netflix features such as the Jibaro episode of Love, Death + Robots.
<https://bit.ly/48k1GMD>





This painting was inspired by one of my recent trips to Japan. I've been trying to travel more, exploring new countries and cultures to feed my paintings with new experiences. I take a lot of pictures everywhere, every day to capture all the details, designs, lighting and textures that delight and intrigue me.

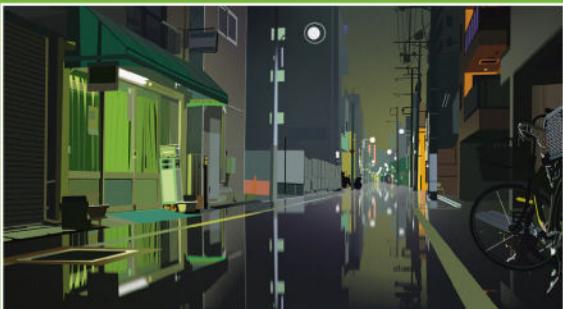
While painting, I always like to look at objects as shapes. If you look closely at my paintings, you'll mostly

see simple shapes everywhere. I mainly paint with my mouse, as it allows me to go steady with the details and prevents the need to zoom too much while painting, so I can better focus on the overall image rather than a specific area.

I also like to paint with a limited brush set, as this allows me to stay focused on the shape design and contrasts. I mainly use the default brush set from Photoshop, plus several other features such as the Lasso, Marquee and Gradient tools.



How I create... ENVIRONMENT COMPOSITIONS



1 Use big shapes for colour blocking

This step is one of the most important, as it's where you need to solve problems and express your ideas visually. Think of it like building solid foundations for a house. You'll want to consider your overall shapes and lines, and how they're working together.



2 Add details with small shapes

When you're happy with the colour blocking, you can start bringing more details into the image. At this point I'm typically trying to work when I have more energy. I find that I'm better energised at the beginning of the day, so I'll work on my focal point and the path that leads to it when I start a working session.



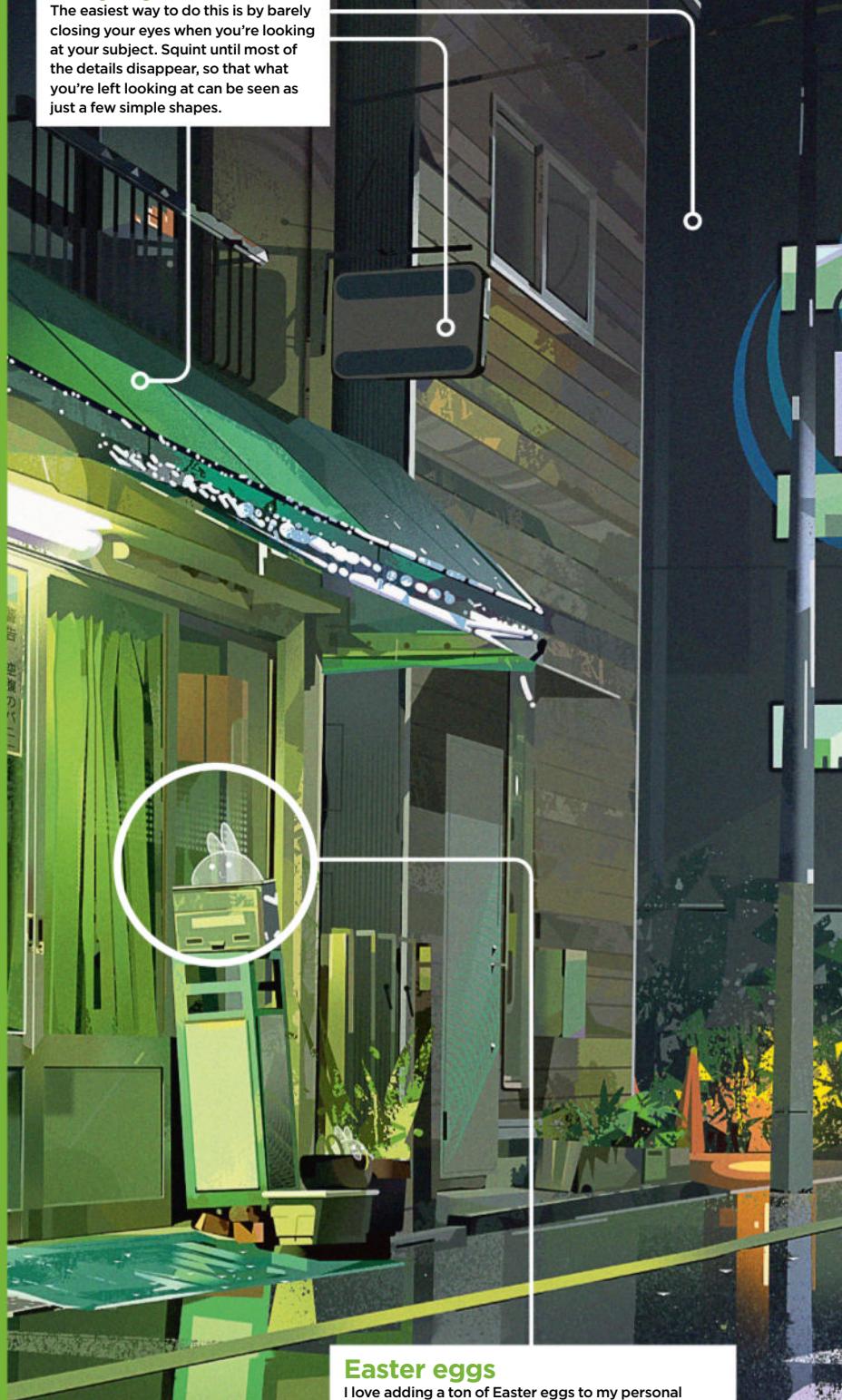
3 Develop textures

When texturing specific areas, such as the concrete in this painting, use more intricate brushes. These are mainly derived from basic brushes, so the Basic Round Hard will become a dot brush by adding spacing, scattering and texture. I do my best to design texture and create appealing shapes while texturing.

URBAN WONDERS

Simplify the scene

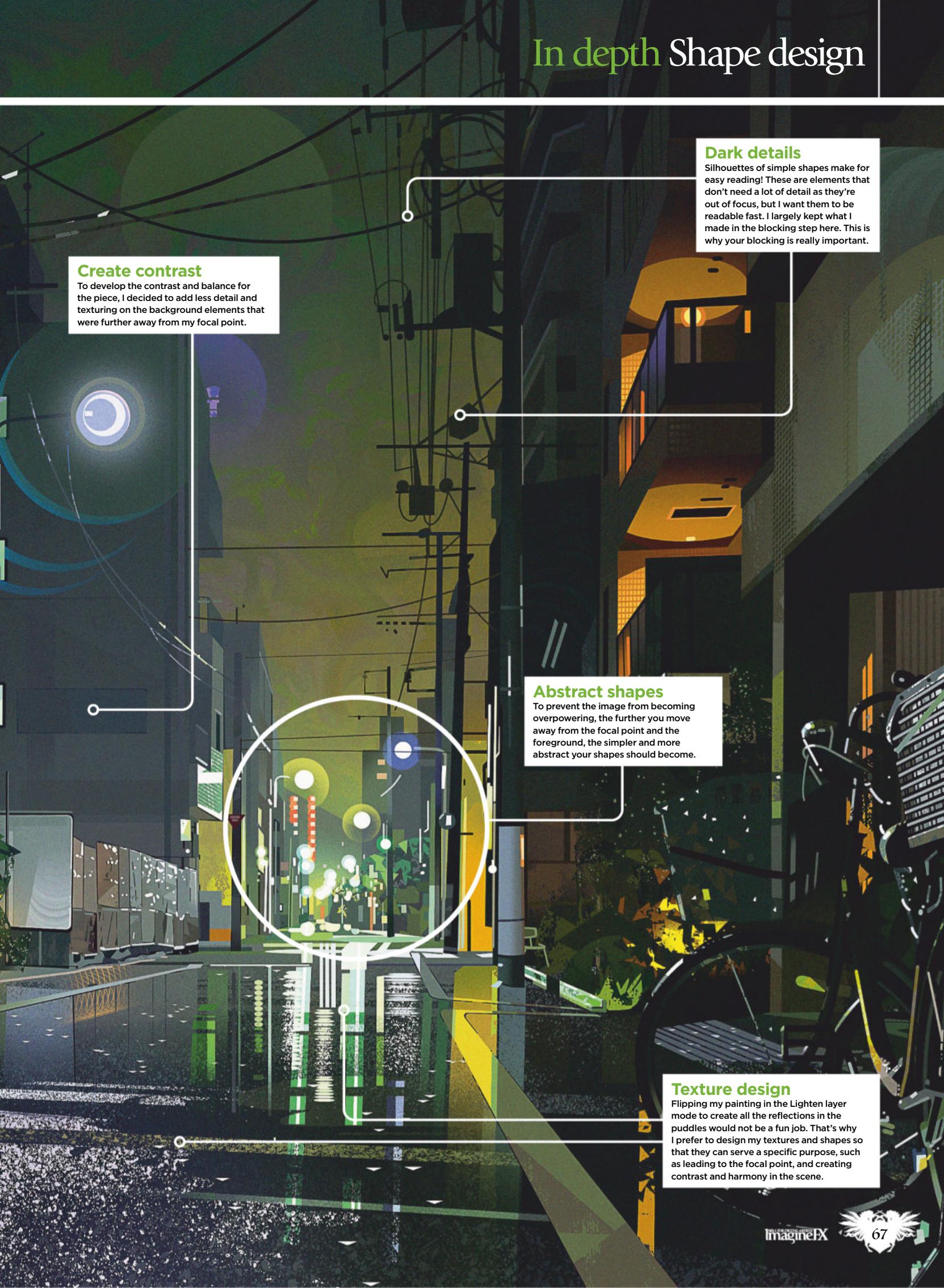
The easiest way to do this is by barely closing your eyes when you're looking at your subject. Squint until most of the details disappear, so that what you're left looking at can be seen as just a few simple shapes.



Easter eggs

I love adding a ton of Easter eggs to my personal paintings. These can be special dates that are dear to me, a person, a prop related to one of my latest hobbies – anything! You can find these little bunnies in almost all of my paintings, and some of them are also hidden in my professional paintings.

In depth Shape design



Technique focus

USE THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

Eduard Petrovich reveals the intricate details that help to push the story in his comic cover artwork



"I was asked to make this official cover for Magnificent Ms. Marvel look funny, even though there are aggressive zombies. Following the advice of the editor, my task was to make it as juicy as possible. In the sketch, the bonnet of the car takes up a lot of room. I needed to depict it in an interesting way so it didn't look empty. As luck would have it, there were few details on the bonnet, which would otherwise complicate the shape. Detailed reflections on the bonnet and windscreen gave it plenty of presence. As a result, it was possible to hint at zombies in front of the car without showing them. By taking the time to study reflections, I was able to create an informative cover." •



Tech Focus Suggestive details

Artist PROFILE

Edward Petrovich
LOCATION: Cyprus

Edward is a freelance artist who has worked for companies including Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and Dark Horse Comics. He constantly develops his skills so that his next piece of art is better than the previous one.
<https://bit.ly/4elE4ms>

© Marvel



Procreate CONJURE MAGIC ILLUSTRATIONS

Daria Anako demonstrates her process for creating a whimsical piece of art with some spellbinding touches



Artist PROFILE

Daria 'Anako' Widermanska

LOCATION: Poland

Daria is a professional artist specialising in character illustration, with many years of experience in game development, and working with various authors and publishers. www.anako.art



Magic has always sparked imagination. Since it doesn't exist in our world, there are countless ways to portray it through art. Will it be the blinding light from a wizard's wand? The shimmering mist from a witch's spell? Or the shadowy tendrils of a dark warlock? There are no rules, so we can let our creativity run wild.

I've had a soft spot for witches since childhood, which is why I

decided to create an illustration on my favourite theme for this tutorial. It depicts a young witch learning a new spell, accompanied by her feathered friends. I want to focus on highlighting the magical elements so the illustration bursts with life.

For some time now, I've been creating all my artwork in Procreate, which is not only convenient and simple, but also gives me full control over what I draw. In this tutorial, I'll share various tips that might make

your work easier or help you get acquainted with the software for the first time.

We'll talk about composition, finding inspiration, choosing colours, building atmosphere, and different rendering techniques. I'll show you some useful features found in Procreate and walk you through my process for finishing a new illustration. I'm really curious to see how my workflow compares to yours. Let's begin!

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 5 now!

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: ANAKO'S BEST PENCIL

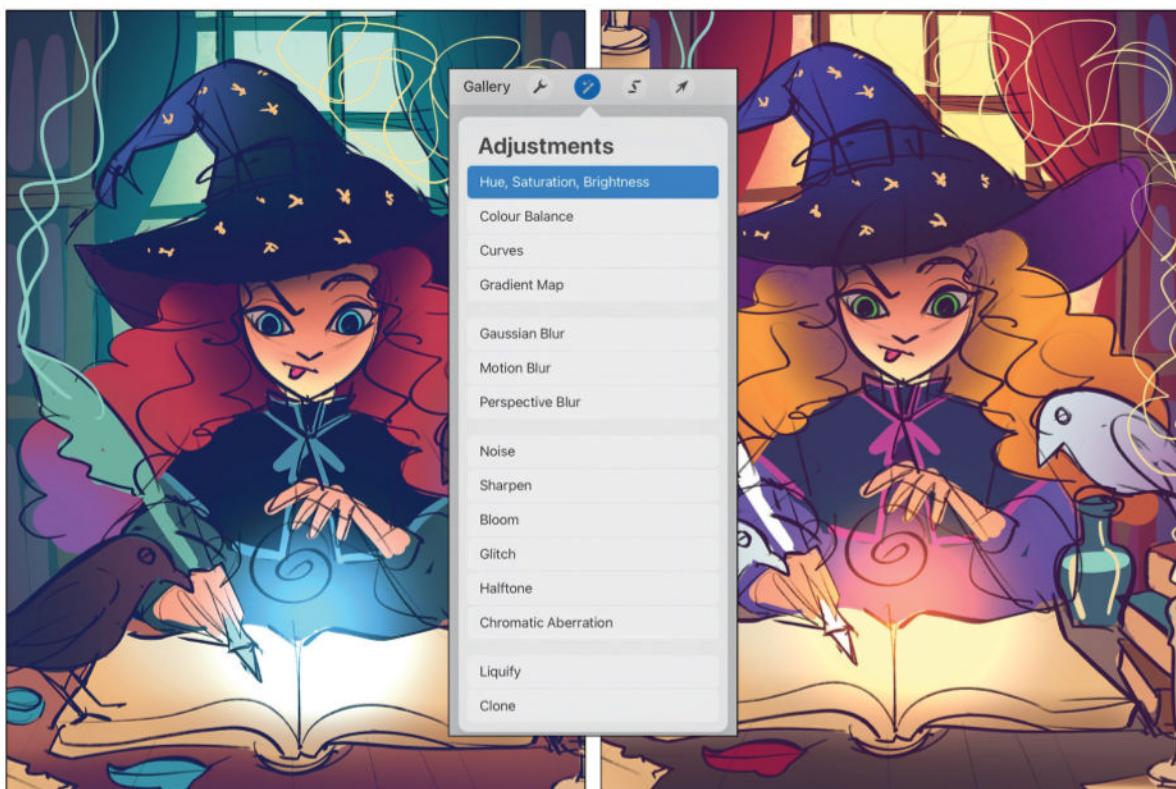
The modified pencil I use 90 per cent of the time. Perfect for sketching, line-art and rendering.

SOFT BRUSH TEXTURE

My airbrush is ideal for initial colours or painting light. The built-in texture provides varied effects.

SOFT BOKEH

An old brush, imported from Photoshop. Useful for painting big areas fast, and the best eraser.



1 Find inspiration and create thumbnails

My initial idea was to create a drawing of a young witch in the midst of her studies. After some research, I figured out which magical items would be essential in her room. You should start by sketching a quick thumbnail and testing different colour options. To make it easier to adjust the colours later, create each one on a separate layer, which allows you to use the 'Hue, Saturation, Brightness' option in Adjustments. ➤

In depth Magical illustration

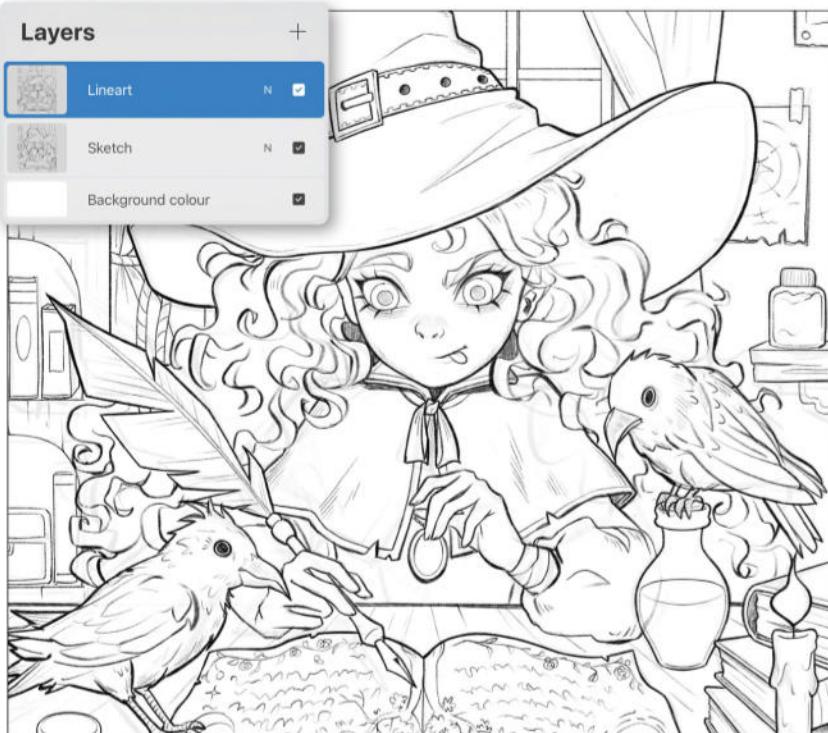


Workshops



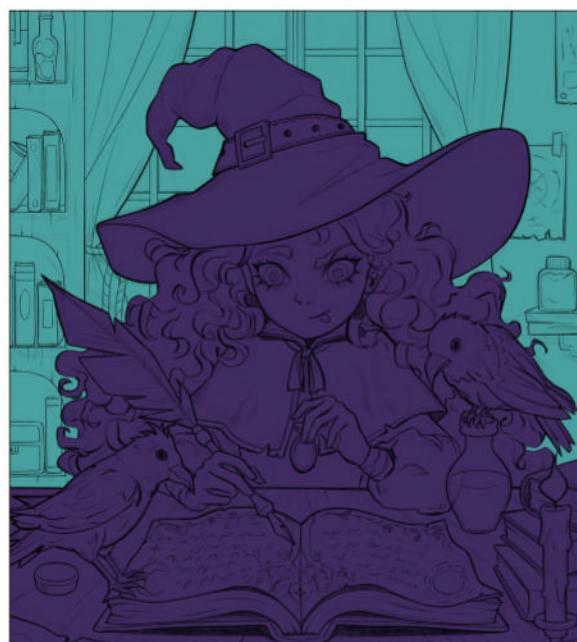
2 Make a rough sketch of your image

I chose a classic triangular composition where the pointed hat and flowing curls perfectly guide the viewer's gaze towards the centre, where the spell will appear. To draw the window and the book, I used Procreate's Symmetry tool, turning on Drawing Guide under Actions>Canvas and then selecting Symmetry in the edit options. It's important the layer you're drawing on has the Drawing Assist option enabled.



3 Draw the line-art

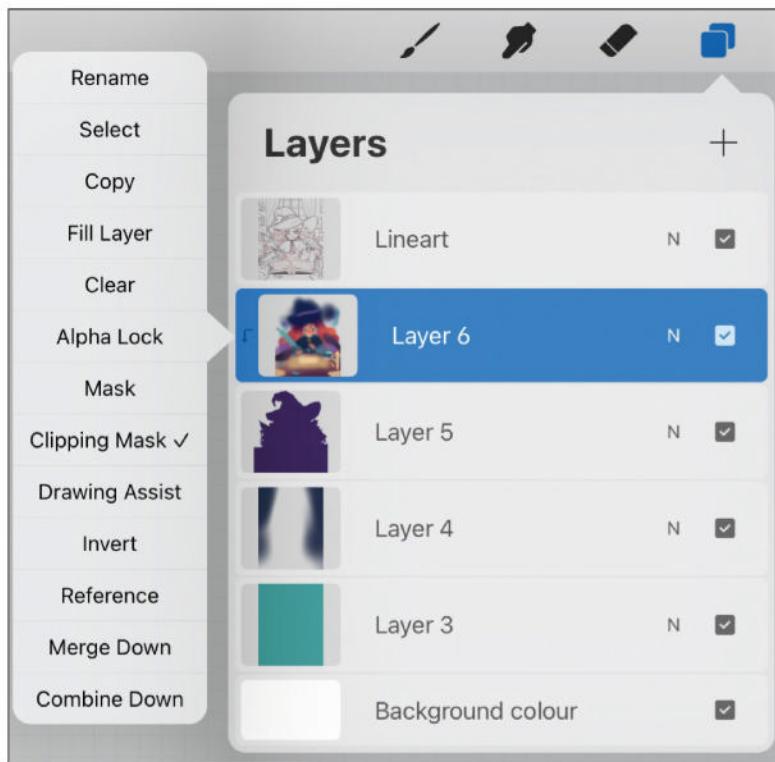
Lower the Opacity of the sketch to 10-20% and then draw detailed line-art over it. While it's enough to just refine the previous sketch, I prefer to redraw it from scratch. Initially, create each element on a separate layer so it's easier to move or resize elements later. Make the outer lines of larger objects thicker to improve the image's readability, while the background lines are the thinnest.



4 Separate the foreground from the background

Flatten all the sketch layers, done by simply pinching them with your fingers, and then create new layers underneath for the colours. Two will suffice for now: one for the foreground and one for the background. A handy method for filling a large area with colour in Procreate is to first outline it with a hard brush (just avoid leaving gaps) and then drag the selected colour into the centre.

In depth Magical illustration



5 Begin to lay down the image's base colours

Add an empty layer above the witch and set it to Clipping Mask. This allows us to colour without going outside her shape. Use an airbrush to apply the base colours from the thumbnail. Don't worry about going outside the lines, as the soft airbrush effect makes the image look more organic. Use the same method to colour the line-art and also make sure you get rid of the black lines.



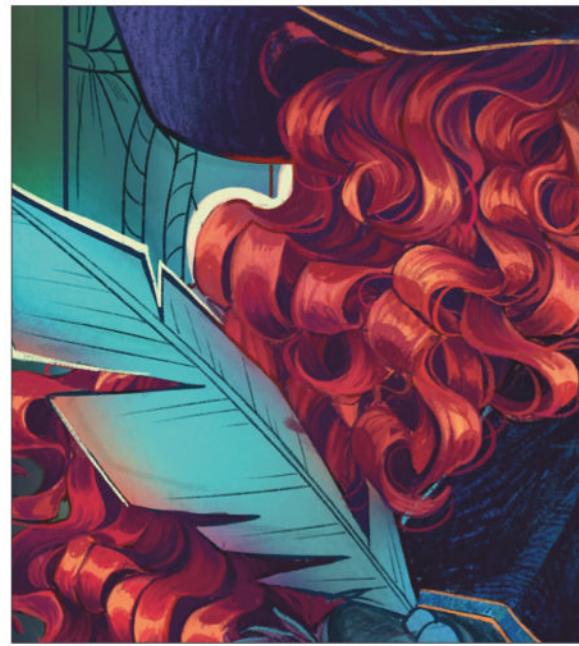
6 Illumination and atmosphere

Continue airbrushing on additional Clipping Masks to add lighting effects such as reflected light and rim light. The Overlay mode is helpful for enriching the colour palette, even with shades that might not seem to fit at first glance. Gently colour the background; I used a greenish moonlight to enhance the magical atmosphere. Finally, test the colour of the spell in Add mode.

7 Start rendering with the face

I always begin the rendering process with the face because it's the most crucial element in my character illustrations. I mainly use one brush, the same one that I used for sketching earlier, to add details to the shapes I've already coloured. First, work on the layers beneath the line-art, and then finish with those above it. This process gives you maximum control over the drawing. ➤

Workshops



8 Add a traditional feeling

I enjoy using Procreate because it allows me to easily achieve effects that resemble traditional media. I used the default 6B Pencil brush to create a traditional-style texture on the character's hat and cloak, as well as the birds. Additionally, I added sharp rim lighting to the hat and animals to maintain the form of the objects, despite the flatness of the texture.



10 Detail the foreground

Render the other objects in the foreground in a similar way, keeping in mind that the light source is in the centre. Paint the elements closer to the edges darker. I coloured all the magical objects, except for the book, in similar shades of turquoise and pink to maintain consistency. At this stage you can freely move between the different elements and treat the entire foreground as a whole.

9 Paint the hair

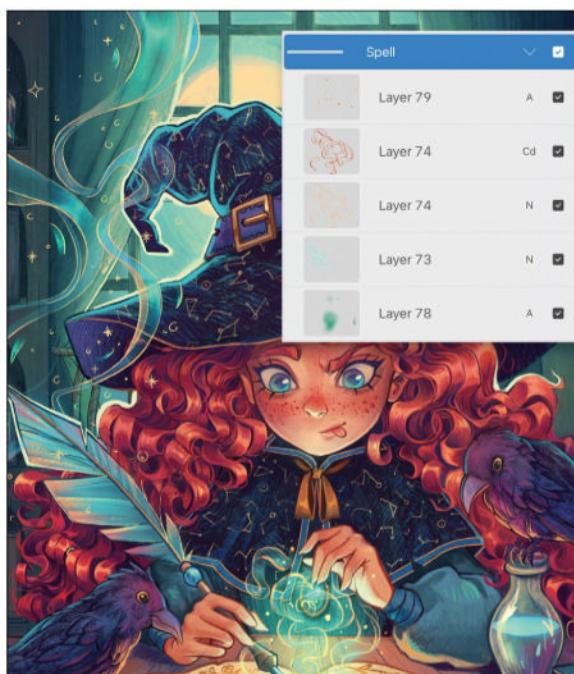
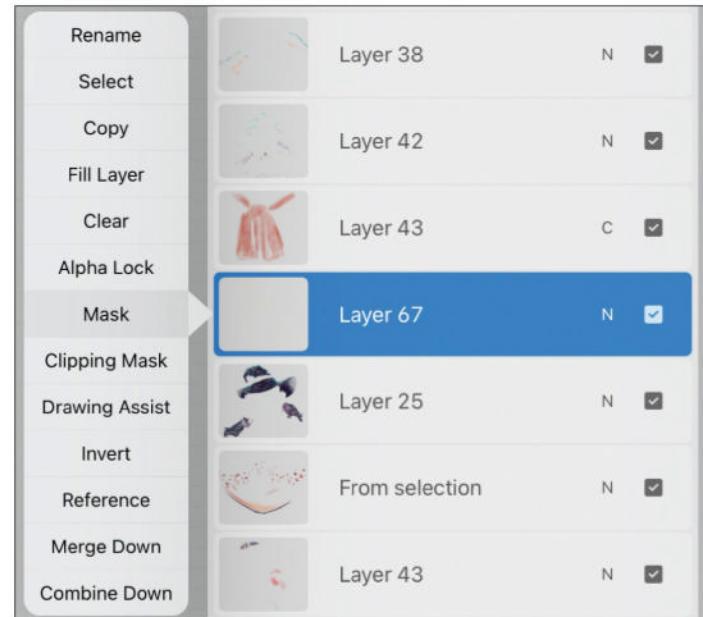
I love curly hair. When painting curls, it's important to remember that hair is divided into sections, and each section is a distinct part of the whole, has its own highlights, and casts its own shadow. At the same time, the curls overlap each other and are never perfectly even. I noticed the hair of my witch had too much contrast, so I toned it down using a layer in Darken mode.

When painting the background, work on the layers underneath the character. Try to use muted colours while keeping some variety. In this illustration, the background is only supposed to enhance the scene and create an atmosphere, so it shouldn't be too prominent. Use the Multiply mode on the layer to naturally darken the edges, and the Overlay mode to highlight the subtle moonlight.



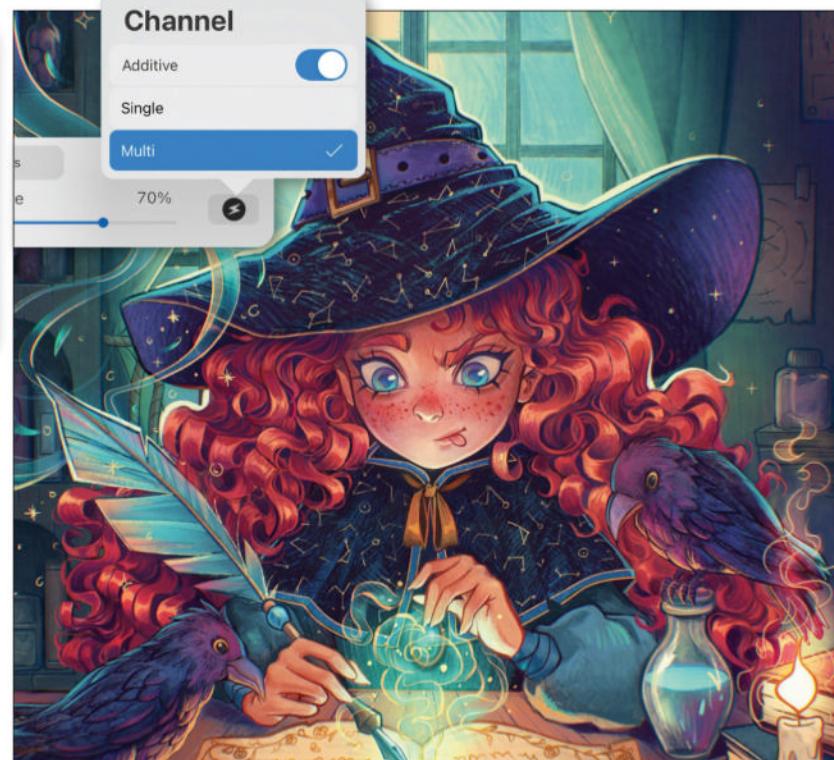
12 Bring in magical details

Before adding some magical elements to the image, take your time to enjoy drawing the details. I decorated the hat and cloak with constellations, added freckles to the character's face, and enhanced textures in other areas with extra lines. With the constellations drawn, I created a mask on the layer and gently masked out some sections with the airbrush and black colour to make the texture more natural.



13 Build up the atmosphere

To create the magical effect and the candlelight, use the Add or Color Dodge modes. You can make abstract shapes and erase them inside with the airbrush eraser to make them transparent. After that, gently blur the spell above the book using the Gaussian Blur tool found in Adjustments. Next, draw some intricate swirls and embellish them with magical dots, stars or little circles.



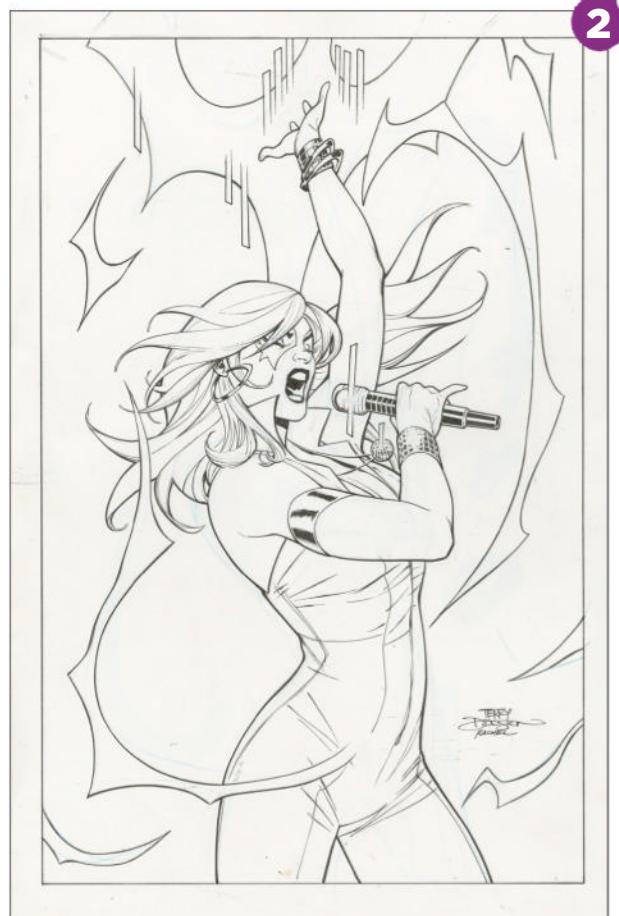
14 Wrap up with post-processing

After finishing the illustration, copy it into a separate file and flatten all the layers by grouping them and choosing Flatten, then gently increase the contrast using Curves, found under Adjustments. Finally, apply a slight Chromatic Aberration effect, at no more than 3%, and add grain with Noise set to Multi.

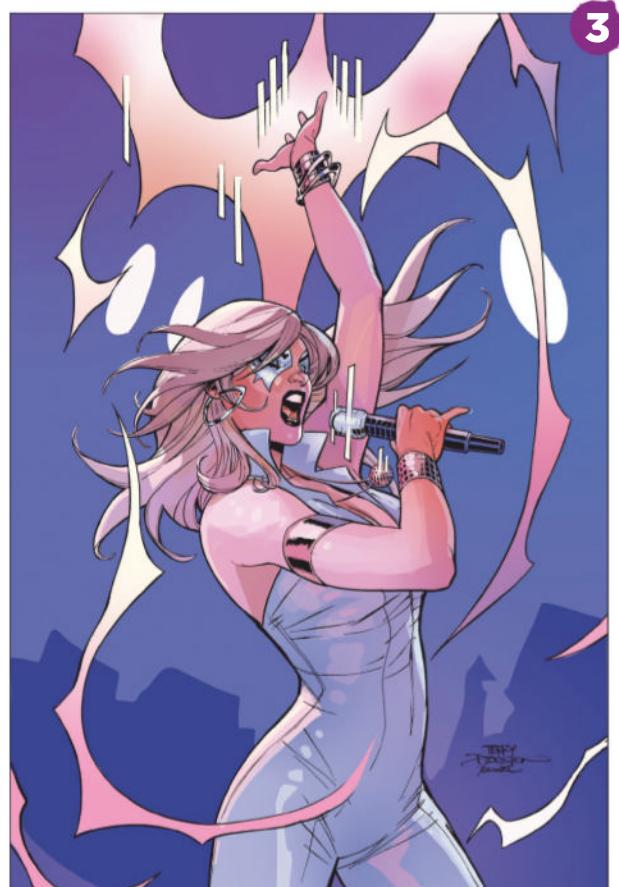
Workshops



1



2

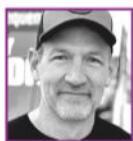


3

Technique focus

DRAW DAZZLING COMIC COVERS

Learn how **Terry Dodson** creates a chorus of action and emotion for a new Marvel launch



"This is the cover art for Dazzler #1 from Marvel. As this is the premier image for the launch of a brand new series, it's vital to encapsulate this character's personality and powers in one amazing shot that will grab the reader's attention.

I drew the pose and composition in my sketchbook, then cleaned it up

digitally and sent it to Marvel for approval. Once they were pleased with the idea, I started pencilling it using an HB pencil on Bristol board, before the inking work was done by my wife, Rachel Dodson. For the references, I decided to watch numerous videos of live music to find the right colours, then scanned the art into Photoshop to mimic the concert atmosphere."



**Artist
PROFILE**

Terry Dodson
LOCATION: US

Terry is an Eisner Award-nominated comic creator. He is also a character designer for video games and animation, and an in-demand cover artist for Marvel and DC.

<https://bit.ly/3UdwB7p>

© Marvel

Reviews



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

Artist's Choice Award

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



The 19-inch screen is a good balance between desk space and drawing size.

Huion Kamvas Pro 19

TABLET WARS An attractive pen display does an excellent job of balancing price and performance as it sets out to challenge its rivals in the mobile marketplace

Price £1,099/\$1,099 **Company** Huion **Web** <https://store.huion.com>

The new Huion Kamvas Pro 19 is the latest drawing tablet pen display to offer more for less. The world of pen displays has blossomed in recent years from the time when there was really only one option: Wacom. Now the competition is fiercer than ever, which is good for users, as it brings greater choice, more competitive pricing, and you should be able to find something that suits your needs and budget.

Everything about the Kamvas pro 19 is solidly built. It has good quality cables, the pen case – which doubles as a stand for both pens – is nicely weighted and feels secure.

The stylus pens feel good, although the back half, while it does work well

as an eraser, feels a little cheaper. That said, the nibs are fantastic and no special tool is needed to swap them. You get a set of harder nibs in the case, along with more felt-tip like nibs, which we much preferred. Both nibs perform well and have more levels of pressure sensitivity than you'll ever be able to tell (16,384 levels) and a resolution of 5,080 lines per inch (LPI). More than enough, and comparable to rival brand XP-Pen.

DIALLING IT IN

The Pro 19 ships with the Key Dial mini remote, a mappable keyboard shortcut device with a rotating knob in lieu of shortcut buttons on the tablet itself, and while this functions well it does feel cheap. A little more



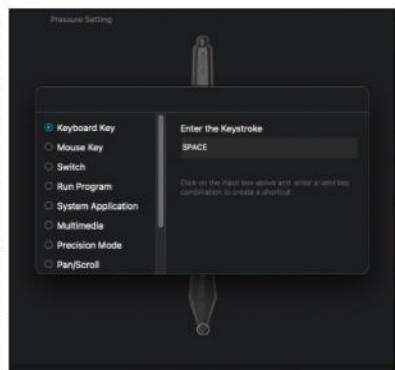
Control over strokes is excellent and you don't feel like you're fighting your software.

resistance to the knob wouldn't go amiss. Some artists won't use this, preferring to use their main keyboard, but for others it will work well, it just feels a little underwhelming, especially next to the premium-feeling tablet.

There's an anti-glare, etched glass coating on the screen and this does a



The Kamvas Pro 19 comes with two pens, one a slim Apple Pencil style and one a fatter, more traditional Wacom-like stylus.



You can tweak the stylus settings to take control of your software exactly the way you want.

That said, whether for home, office or studio work, the Pro 19's form factor is excellent. It has a couple of sturdy flip-out feet raising the screen to around 20 degrees.

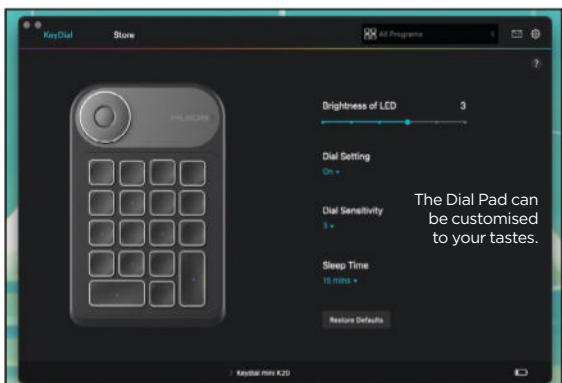
DISPLAY PERFORMANCE

The Pro 19 screen is good too. It boasts a 1,000:1 contrast ratio and a brightness of 220 nits. This wouldn't be suitable for working outside but any indoor environment will be fine. The laminated screen and pen calibration aid in making it feel like you're drawing on the pixels, rather than a thick sheet of glass. This is becoming more common and can make or break the experience.

And that experience of drawing and painting is fantastic. The screen could perhaps be a touch more vibrant but that might feel unnatural and quickly lead to eye strain. Pen responsiveness and consistency is hard to quantify, however the Pro 19 felt great in this regard. Using pressure to control thickness or flow of a stroke feels natural, controllable and consistent. Yes, this is partly down to the user but again, there are options to calibrate this to suit how you work.

Huion doesn't seem to be talking all that much about touch control, but the Kamvas Pro 19 has touch input with 10-point gesture control and it runs well. It can be turned off, but we found palm rejection to be excellent, so left it on during this review, making rotating and zooming in Photoshop natural and intuitive.

Colour accuracy is taken seriously here, with a colour calibration sheet shipped for each Kamvas Pro. Colour is a complex area where different users have different needs. For artists using Photoshop or Clip Studio, the Kamvas will be spot-on with 150% coverage of Adobe sRGB.



decent job. Sometimes these can detract from contrast performance on a display, which is probably true here, but it doesn't ever look milky. This coating isn't as coarse as some of the competition, which may well be the cause of the good contrast, but it also means the plastic nibs feel somewhat skittish under hand, which is why we preferred the felt nibs.

All in all, the Pro 19 is a premium device at a good price. Compared to a Wacom Cintiq Pro, it feels pretty close in build quality, let down mostly by the Key Dial remote and stylus, an area where Wacom still feels ahead of the

game. But then you have to consider that a new Wacom Cintiq Pro 17 will cost twice as much.

The Pro 19 measures in at a slim 2cm and a reasonable weight at 2kg. It feels robust and Huion has pitched this pen display at the growing mobile market; ideal for creatives to take to work on while in a cafe or travelling, in a similar vein to the Xencelabs Pen Display 16. This is true to an extent, although a device with a 19-inch display is probably too big for this purpose. It won't fit easily into the majority of laptop bags, meaning that trip will need an extra bag or case.

VERDICT

This is a nicely built, easy-on-the-eye pen display, and adaptable to different ways of working. The Kamvas Pro 19 is substantially cheaper than certain other brands and so represents excellent value for money. Yes, there are always some areas that could be improved upon, but what it costs balanced against what it offers, we'd be more than happy to invest in this top drawing tablet.

Pros

- Excellent build quality
- Responsive touch and pen input
- Multiple power options available

Cons

- Key Dial feels a bit plasticky

Rating



“The laminated screen and pen calibration aid in making it feel like you're really drawing on the pixels”



Buttons on either side double as quick keys so you can access the tablet's menu options.



You can access Wacom Center and the tablet's options from the on-display buttons.

Wacom Movink

ART ON THE MOVE This mobile pen display truly delivers with a vibrant OLED screen, accurate performance and an easy setup

Price £730/\$750 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com

The Wacom Movink is driving a wedge into the battle ground for mobile drawing tablets. The mobile market for those looking to draw on the go, or artists wanting to pack-up their home kit and take their work to the studio or office, is fast-becoming the thing everyone needs.

The Movink really is the slimmest, lightest and most accurate pen display we've used; we just can't get past the fact it's so incredibly skinny. It measures a mere 4mm and widens to only 6.5mm to create a softly sloped wedge, with a slightly wider bezel panel at its slimmest end.

As well as physical buttons for quick access to the Movink's customisation options and menus, the tablet features on-screen touch buttons; quick keys for accessing keyboard shortcuts. If

you're thinking of replacing your desktop setup you'll want more, but for a mobile drawing tablet the streamlined design works nicely.

Part of Wacom's appeal is its software support, which works with almost every digital art package you can get. Connecting the Movink for the first time brings up a quick onboarding guide, while afterwards you can dip into the Wacom Center's settings to adjust everything from pen and screen calibration through to shortcuts and pressure sensitivity.

Also included in the package is the new Wacom Pro Pen 3 stylus, which is excellent and offers 8,192 levels of pressure, 60-degree tilt and three customisable buttons. It's slimmer than the old Wacom Pro Pen 3D, more in-keeping with an Apple Pencil, but a customisation kit is also available.

“Part of Wacom's appeal is its software support, which works with almost every digital art package you can get**”**



© Wacom

The Movink comes with a Wacom Pro Pen 3 Stylus in the box.

VERDICT

Wacom's slim, mobile drawing display is the best that we've used. Accurate, light and well-made, it's near faultless. That said, a case would be a great addition to an already strong package.

Pros

- Slim, lightweight tablet design
- Super accurate
- Vibrant, colourful OLED screen

Cons

- No case included

Rating



As a mobile drawing tablet and pen display the Movink really is the best there is for specs, tech and overall performance. Our brushstrokes were accurate and sweeps across the display felt perfect. We performed standard tests such as drawing small circles, dots and strokes over one another to gauge accuracy and repetition, and it impresses.

Aside from the core value of drawing on a display, the Movink is simply easy to use. It's so light it can be held on one finger and it's the closest we've felt to scribbling on a real A4 drawing pad.

Overall the Movink performs well, though we did experience some slight lag when using the touch and gesture controls on an old MacBook Pro. The pen and brushstrokes are perfectly accurate, however, particularly for ink sketching lines of mixed thickness.

The Boulies Fit Pro looks good – and feels great if you prefer a firm office chair.



Boulies Fit Pro

SIT ON IT! A classy option for those who enjoy a firm finish

Price From £600/\$670

Company Boulies

Web <https://boulies.co.uk>

RATING ★★★★☆

The Boulies Fit Pro is a brilliantly designed chair that will look the part in any modern office – but it also won't be the chair of choice for a lot of people. Why? Because it has a firm finish and a lot of people will opt for the memory foam options rather than the solid, excellent leather chair here.

For those that do like a firm chair, you're in luck! This is a lovely chair with a lot going for it. It has a lot of the features that could make a great chair for those with back pain. Over a two-month period of using this chair, our reviewer quickly grew to appreciate its features.

The leather finish is a delight to sit on, and the firmer feel was great for all office work. However, for downtime, when your workstation might become a games HQ, the Fit Pro wasn't really up to the job.

As for its looks – we love it, from the rounded, soft edges of the headrest to the panelled back sections. This all suggests a chair that's been lovingly sketched and designed with both form and function in mind. Add to that the leather finish, and you've got a real classy chair from Boulies.

BenQ GW2786TC

GET AN EYEFUL Don't scrimp out on your health with a monitor that's kind on the eyes and good for creative tasks

Price £190/\$200 **Company** BenQ **Web** www.benq.eu

BenQ is loading the market with fantastic monitors and quickly becoming the go-to manufacturer for screens that target a specific niche.

The GW2786TC is for those who care primarily about ergonomics, eye comfort and screen positioning. BenQ has hit all the key markers here and done it incredibly well.

One standout design feature is the ability to adjust it into any position you could think of. There's a full 130mm height adjustment that has the ability to drop the bottom of the monitor almost down to the level of the base. Then there's a -5 to 20-degree tilt, a 45-degree swivel in both directions, and a 90-degree pivot. Being able to rotate the monitor into landscape and portrait orientations makes this a perfect choice for those who value productivity and making the most of their desk space.

Ports include a single HDMI, two DisplayPorts, one USB-C, two USB-A, and a 3.5mm audio port. Daisy chaining is possible via DisplayPort and USB-C for PC. For Macs you'll need a Thunderbolt docking station.

BenQ has put a lot of effort and energy into providing numerous



Buttons can be found on the bottom of the screen.

features that care for the eyes. The monitor has low blue light technology to ensure vivid colours are maintained, while at the same time filtering out shorter, higher-energy blue-violet radiation, which is known to be harmful to the eyes. Flicker-free technology also guarantees zero flicker at all possible brightness levels. This ensures eye strain, fatigue, and headaches are kept to a minimum.

While a 1,920x1,080 resolution can, at times, result in a lack of detail and clarity, there are no such problems here. If we didn't know the specs we might have mistaken it for a 3K monitor. As for audio, the monitor has a noise-cancelling microphone and built-in speakers, making it perfect for elevating your experience whenever you take a video call. 

VERDICT

The BenQ GW2786TC is the bee's knees if you care about eye comfort, ergonomics and productivity. This is an affordable monitor that will suit creatives working in generalist roles.

Pros

- Ergonomic design
- Smooth motion
- Many features for eye well-being

Cons

- Only Full HD resolution
- Just one HDMI port
- No Thunderbolt for Mac daisy chaining

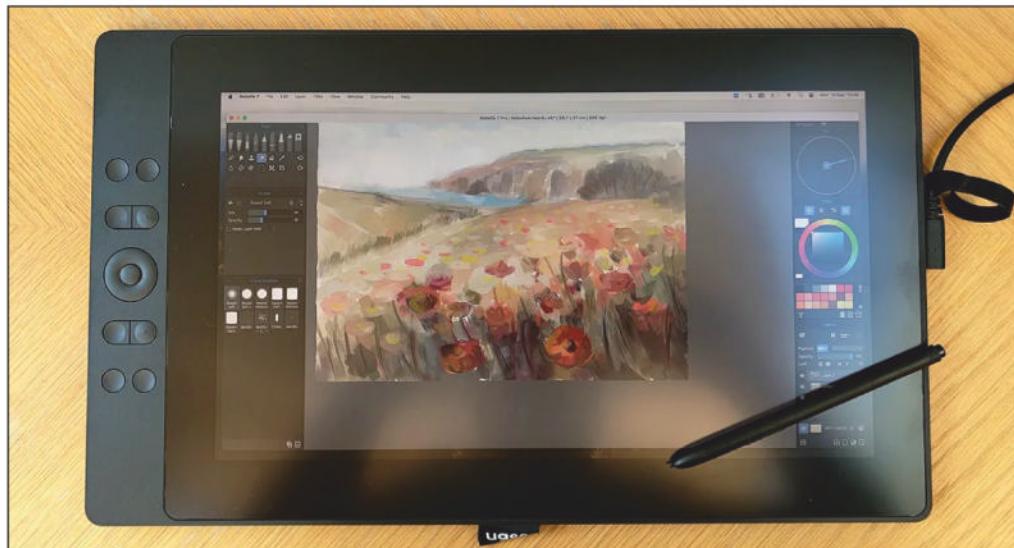
Rating

★★★★★



The monitor comes with an attractive white trim that frames the display beautifully.

Image: Paul Hatton



If you want an easy-to-use pen display, this is a great option.



We found the U-Pencil to be extremely accurate and responsive during our drawing sessions.



The Ugee 16 is a clean design, with simple on-off buttons to one side and USB-C ports the other.

Ugee 16

GEE WHIZ The budget drawing tablet gets so much right for new artists, but it's not quite the perfect display for professional users

Price £260/\$200 **Company** Ugee **Web** <https://shop.ugee.com>

The Ugee 16 is the latest budget drawing tablet with a high-end spec list to come out of China, and it's hard to not be impressed. The Ugee range may be fairly new on your radar, but with each release the brand gets better and delivers more.

As with its sibling drawing tablets and pen displays, the Ugee 16 feels aimed at newcomers to digital art or students wanting a good tablet for a term or two. It swerves the current

drawing tablet design trend for offboarding quick keys onto a remote, instead keeping things old-fashioned by positioning its 10 shortcut buttons and dial to the left of the display, on the frame itself. This choice arguably means Ugee can keep production costs down, but it also ensures the display is a little easier for first-time users to feel comfortable with quick keys. Each is customisable, and if you're left-handed the tablet can be rotated as well.

“Ugee brags this drawing display has a 143% sRGB colour gamut. At this price point that's an incredible offering”



Ugee has avoided the trend for adding shortcut buttons to a separate remote control.

The display itself is Full HD 1080p with full lamination and an anti-glare coating, but the big news is that Ugee brags this drawing display has a 143% sRGB colour gamut. For this price point that's incredible, but it also adds some extra issues newcomers may need to consider, for example if you don't get your software settings right, it could oversaturate the image.

In use the Ugee 16 feels responsive and accurate. The new U-Pencil boasts the same 16,000 levels of pressure as those supplied by XPPen,



A collapsible metal stand is included in the Ugee 16 box.

and it's equally sensitive to pressure, a mix of strokes, and dabs. We used a bunch of different strokes, from quick sweeps to dots and tight circles to form flowers, and never felt the U-Pencil was stuttering.

The U-Pencil generally feels good in the hand too. It's lighter and slimmer than an Apple Pencil 2 and Wacom's classic Pro Pen, but once you get used to the weight it's a neat stylus. There are two buttons close to the nib end, and an eraser button at the other end.

The display offers a smooth sensation to work on, too. We tested the anti-glare coating in direct sunlight and, after adjusting the stand, found the tablet worked just fine. In standard indoor lighting it's perfectly fine as well. However, it's not quite as striking as the OLED displays on the Wacom Movink and Xencelabs Pen Display 16, both of which cost considerably more.

VERDICT

The Ugee 16 delivers a smooth, responsive digital drawing experience for less, but pro artists will want more. An ideal first pen display for a beginner or hobbyist.

Pros

- Good drawing experience
- Comes with a metal stand
- Simple to setup

Cons

- Feels flimsy

Rating



The XS1000 comes in your choice of either a red or black shell, and a max capacity of 2TB.



Kingston XS1000 SSD

MINI MEMORY This budget external drive delivers handy speeds

Price From £75/\$85

Company Kingston

Web www.kingston.com

RATING ★★★★☆

Not too long ago, we'd have expected something the size of the Kingston XS1000 to extrude a USB-A plug and be a thumb drive. That's a testament to how small it is, though the built-in USB-C socket and the need to carry a cable limits its portability.

The drive comes with either 1TB or 2TB internals, and the yawning chasm of its abyssal depths is all you get. Unlike drives from the likes of Crucial, there are no links to backup software or anything else you'll probably disregard. It's a streamlined offering that doesn't need anything to be deleted off it before you start using it.

Kingston claims a maximum read/write speed of 1,050MB/sec, but in our tests it performed slightly slower. Using the bundled cable connected to a USB 3 port gave the slowest speeds; you'll need to make sure the port you're using is a Gen 2 to get the best out of the cable.

Connecting the drive to a USB 4 port with a Type-C cable provided the best speeds, doubling the drive's throughput. The problem then became the cable itself. We tried it out using three different cables, with the thick mystery cable found in a box of spares getting us closest to hitting the 1,050MB/sec mark for drive reads, though write speeds were still slower.

ZBrush for iPad

GAME CHANGER The desktop version of popular 3D sculpting software ZBrush has been redesigned for iPad – and it's brilliant

Price Limited free version / full access £10/\$10 monthly / £90/\$90 annual
Company Maxon **Web** www.maxon.net

Z Brush for iPad has finally stopped being a rumour, a leak and a tease and is now a real app. This new release feels like it could be breaking with the software's history to be something quite new and unique, for new and old artists alike.

One of the first things you'll notice when using ZBrush for iPad is that you have no keyboard, and ZBrush relies heavily on keyboard modifier keys and shortcuts. The fix? ZBrush for iPad uses an on-screen wheel with tools assigned to Shift, Alt and Ctrl equivalents. Combined with the iPad's excellent touchscreen, this makes it possible to pinch, swipe and rotate your sculpt directly.

Using the touchscreen, combined with Apple Pencil, to manipulate the sculpt is a personal choice, and every artist will have their own options when it comes to their favourite tools, but Maxon has tried to place the core tools front and centre. ZBrush for iPad has a more logical UI, which is also customisable. It's cleaner and clearer, lean and well thought out for a mobile device, and is in no way a lacklustre port of the desktop version.

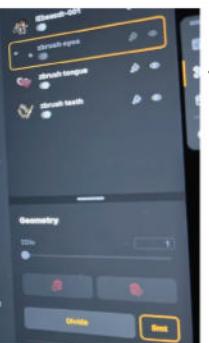
What brings the full ZBrush experience to iPad are ZSpheres. This is a unique way to create a sculpting armature out of spheres and then use this as your base to start sculpting on. Then we have some of the more obscure features including



Polygroups, Polypaint, Slime Bridge, Masking and DynaMesh among many others. Getting all of these powerful features, some of which you only see in ZBrush, is positive.

Impressively, Maxon has packed in a mammoth list of brushes that you'd find in the desktop program as well. While the free version is limited to a smaller number of the core brushes, we were disappointed that the Dam Standard brush, for making creases and wrinkles, was missing.

So who is ZBrush for iPad aimed at? One group consists of people who are new to 3D modelling or have previously struggled with complex programs. It's easy to forget just how overwhelming it can be when you're starting out. Mobile sculpting apps in general, while often lacking some more advanced features, let beginners jump in and create fairly impressive results with little knowledge or experience behind them.



ZBrush for iPad brings Maxon's sculpting and painting tool to a mobile device.

VERDICT

Easier to navigate and learn than its desktop counterpart, ZBrush for iPad is a rewritten app with almost all the tooling that you'd see in the full version. Powerful and feature-packed, this feels like a historic release.

Pros

- Huge amount of brushes
- Familiar sculpting experience
- Improved UX and interface

Cons

- No real-time rendering
- No ZModeler or UV option yet

Rating

★★★★★



A host of brushes have made the leap from desktop.



ZBrush for iPad could be a boon for 3D sculpting beginners.

Artwork by Glen Southern

Artwork by Glen Southern

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Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

90



96



86



This issue:

86 Traditional FXPosé

Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

90 Paint epic battles in traditional ink

Learn the ropes for creating an action scene with Thomas Elliott.

96 First Impressions: Marie-Alice Harel

Why a passion for world cultures is inspirational for the artist.

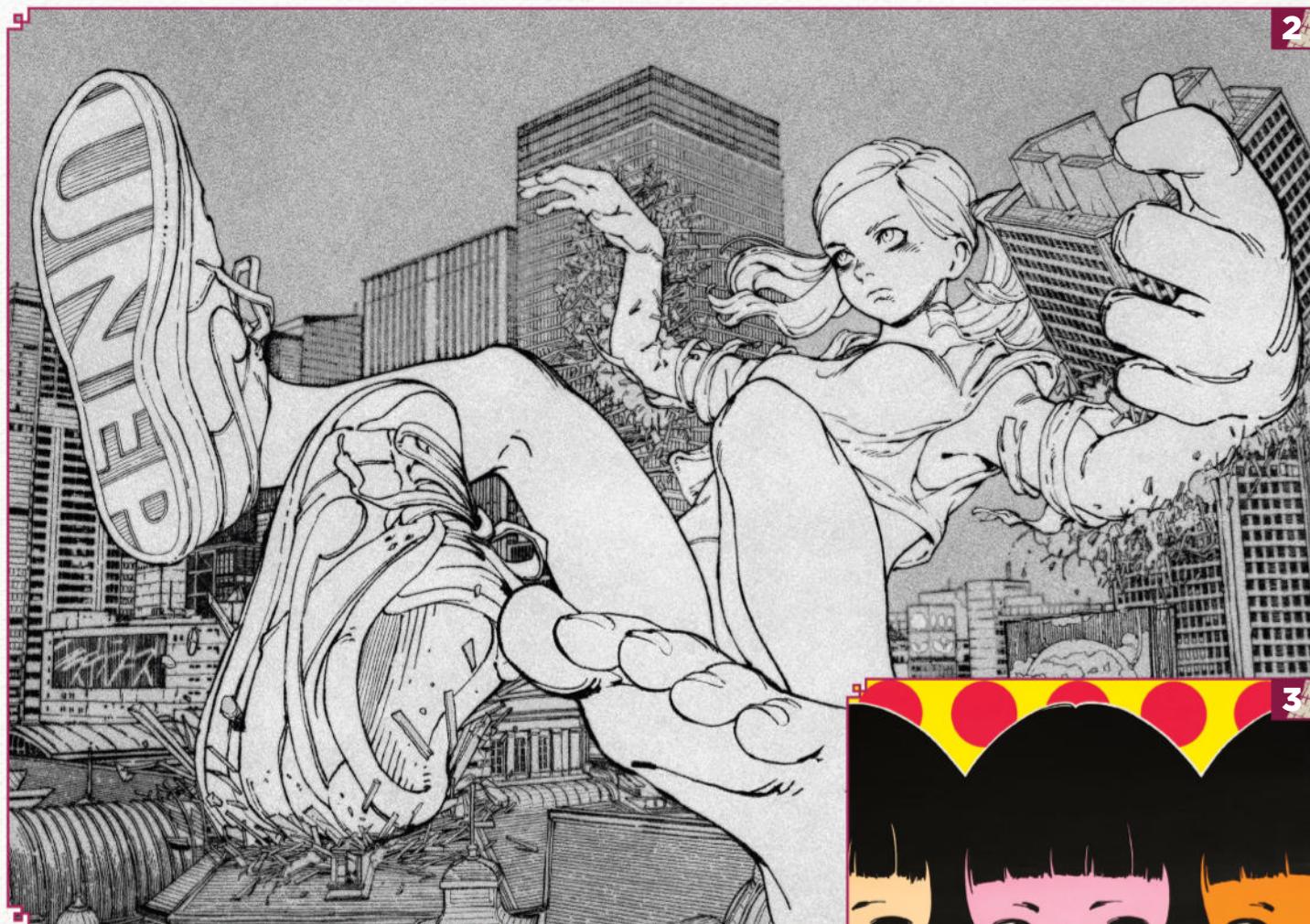
FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

COTOH

LOCATION: Japan MEDIA: Acrylic, oil WEB: www.instagram.com/cotoh_tsumi

COTOH has been an illustrator since 2017 and transitioned into contemporary art after collaborating with musicians and apparel companies. By using mass production techniques, COTOH challenges the traditional perception of commercial art in Japan.



1 NO.1510_A

"The French movie *La Femme Nikita*, released in 1990, was the model and inspiration for the character in this artwork, along with her Desert Eagle."

2 NO.1423

"I drew a character fighting a kaiju. Many buildings were destroyed during their epic battle. This piece was shown as part of the Art for LOHAS Exhibition in Hong Kong last year."



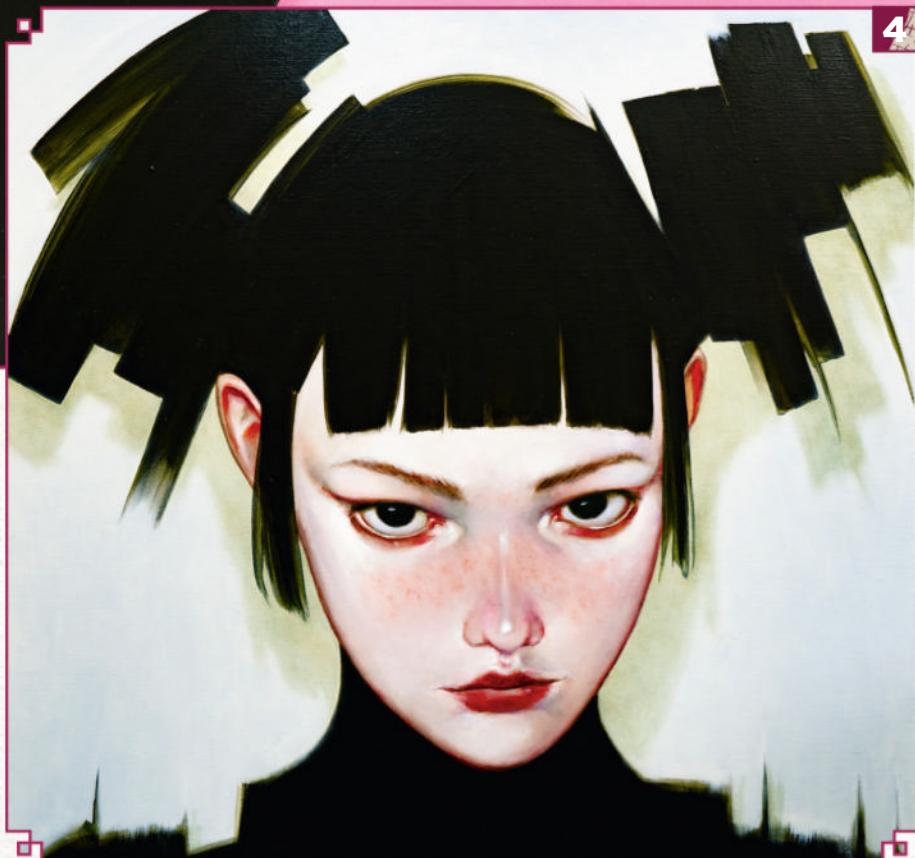


3 NO.1462

"As an illustrator shaped by consumer society, I express its distortions in my work. Like Warhol's famous Campbell's Soup Cans, my characters differ slightly, which reflects the fragmented and superficial choices that we make in modern life."

4 NO.1497 AND NO.1499

"Does she wear her accessory without discomfort, is it forced upon her, or is it a part of her head that she's born with and dislikes? Exploring the blurred lines between reality, the digital world, and the two-dimensional to question transformation and identity."





Darko Stojanović

LOCATION: Serbia MEDIA: Pencil, oil WEB: <http://darkostojanovic.com>

Darko is a painter of mighty heroes and epic scenes with a particular love of painting portraits and fearsome knights in armour. He also finds a lot of enjoyment in painting faces, fur, and anything that features shiny metal.



3 **VOJIN JUGOVIC**
"A painting of one of nine knightly brothers who fell for freedom back in the 14th century."

4 **FAFNIR RANN**
"A painting of my favourite Imperial Fist from Warhammer 40,000. He also has an amazing voice actor in the Templar audio drama."





Ink

PAINT EPIC BATTLES IN TRADITIONAL INK

Warhammer illustrator **THOMAS ELLIOTT** shows you how to create
an epic science fiction fight scene with this step-by-step guide





Traditional Artist Workshop

Awe-inspiring battles are one of my specialities, and in this tutorial I'll be sharing my process for painting one with inks. We'll cover everything from early considerations like composition and thumbnailing, to talking about materials and how best to create depth and volume. A lot of these approaches are applicable to images

MATERIALS

- **INKS**
■ FW Acrylic Inks
- **PENCIL**
■ 5B pencil
- **PEN**
■ Fountain pen
- **PAPER**
■ 180GSM cartridge paper

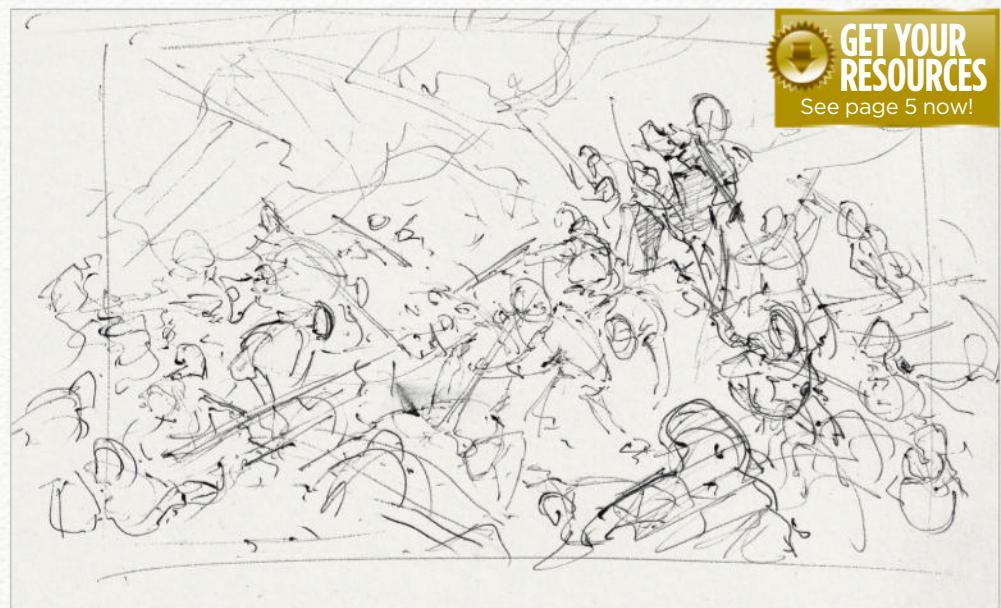
of any size and can be used in more than just battle scenes.

This painting will be done in acrylic inks, which are flexible and offer a huge variety of approaches. I'll be sharing the process that I've found works the best for me and offers a great end result, both on the page and when scanned in. It's worth mentioning that it can be hard to undo a mistake in this medium, so

it's worth exercising caution and working in a way that you can construct the picture carefully, making sure that you're building on top of successful elements.



Thomas Elliott is best known for his epic battle scenes and covers for Games Workshop. He's now a freelance artist and enjoys working in a range of mediums www.thomaselliottartist.co.uk



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 5 now!

1 Get started by creating some thumbnails

Any good picture begins with a hearty thumbnailing session! This is an important stage as it lets you experiment with ideas and make mistakes without investing too much time. I went into this picture with the rough idea that I wanted it to be an outdoor battle scene featuring a huge pile of figures, with lots of little duels playing out across the image. In my thumbnail sketches, you can see that I'm looking at the general shape of the composition as well as sketching out ideas for individual fights between the characters.



2 Draw an initial sketch

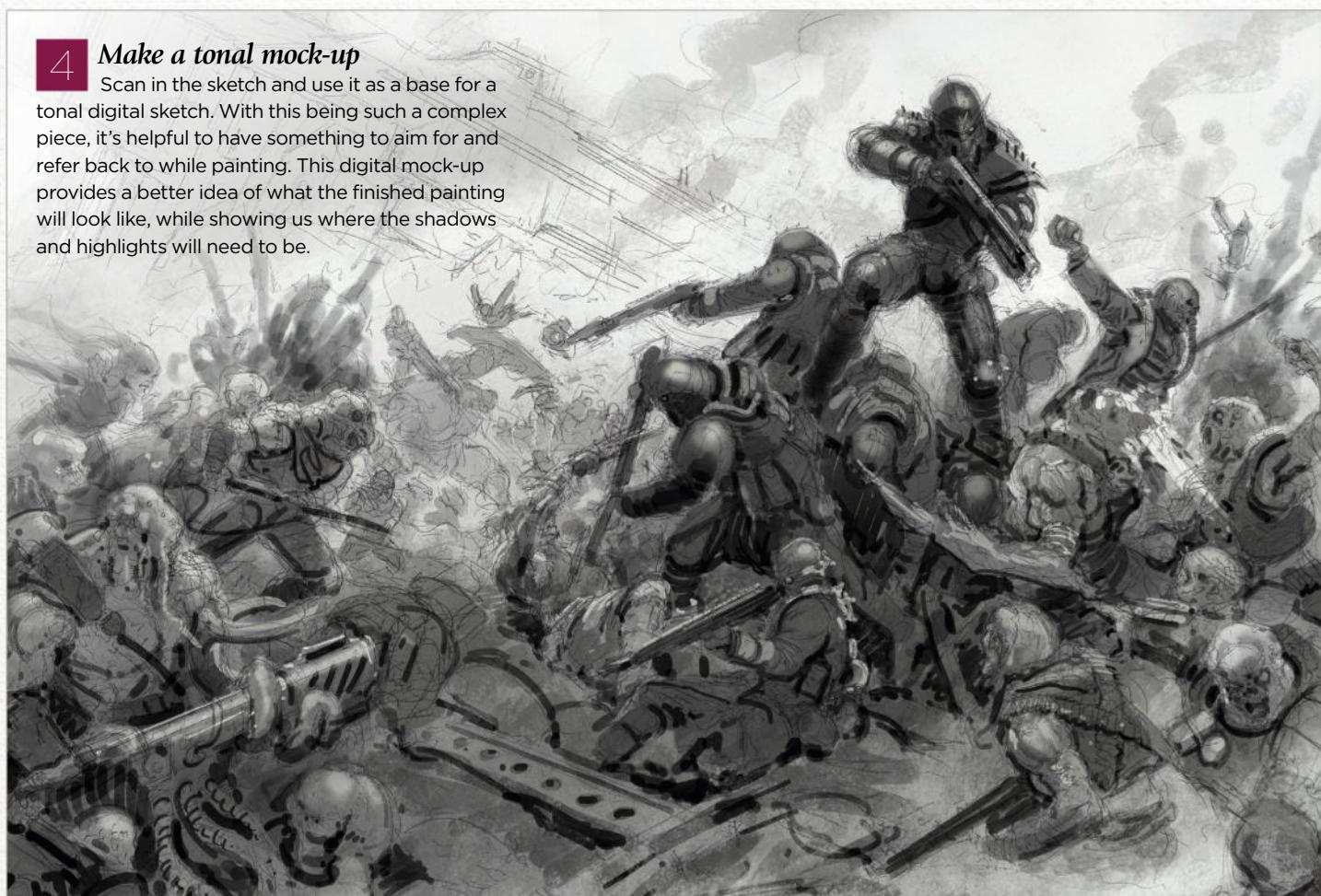
With this being a traditional picture, it's essential that everything is laid out successfully early on, as it will be hard to move elements once we start painting. To help achieve this, sketch everything super loosely to begin with. This allows you to rub out and move elements around to find the best possible composition. The important thing to get across at this stage is the general pose of the figures and the space they'll occupy.

3 Refine the image

Once you're happy with the initial sketch, head in and start adding details to the figures. We'll be refining and adding more details later on, so the sketch doesn't need to be super detailed or precise. The goal here is simply to have a solid framework that we can paint over.

4 Make a tonal mock-up

Scan in the sketch and use it as a base for a tonal digital sketch. With this being such a complex piece, it's helpful to have something to aim for and refer back to while painting. This digital mock-up provides a better idea of what the finished painting will look like, while showing us where the shadows and highlights will need to be.



5 Prepare your ink

The medium I'll be using for the majority of the painting is FW Acrylic Inks, which are wonderfully versatile. You can water them down and build up marks using the white of the paper like watercolours, or you can mix the white and black together straight from the bottle and paint with them like opaque acrylic. With this picture, I'll be using both approaches to create depth and give a diverse visual look to the painting.



6 Lay down the initial inks

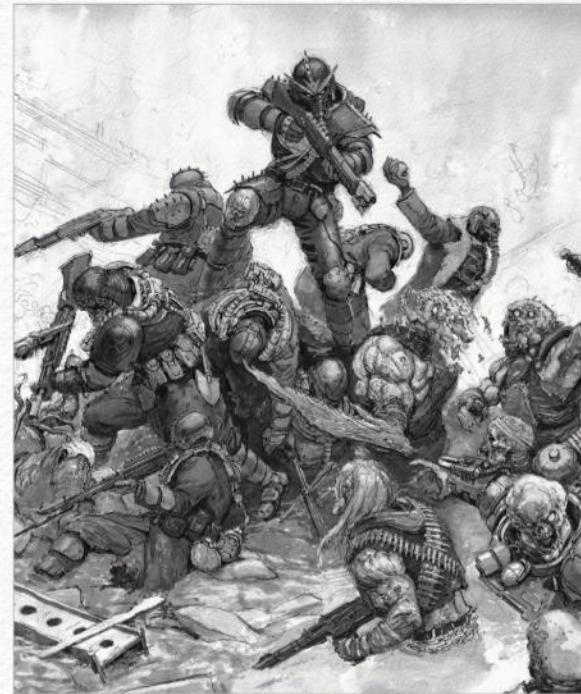
We have our sketch locked in and the tonal mock-up is showing us what we need to do, so now comes the scary moment of applying the first ink to our crisp, white paper. Splash on some heavily watered-down black to break up the white of the sky, then block in the figures and give a first suggestion of shadows. ►►

Traditional Artist Workshop



7 Create depth in your scene with a pen

Once the figures have been blocked in, go over the sketch using a fountain pen filled with the same black ink that you're using for the painting. This gives the image more depth and helps to lock in the details, as the pen will be visible through the layers of ink. This means that we can lavish the picture with plenty of details now, without having to go over them again later on.

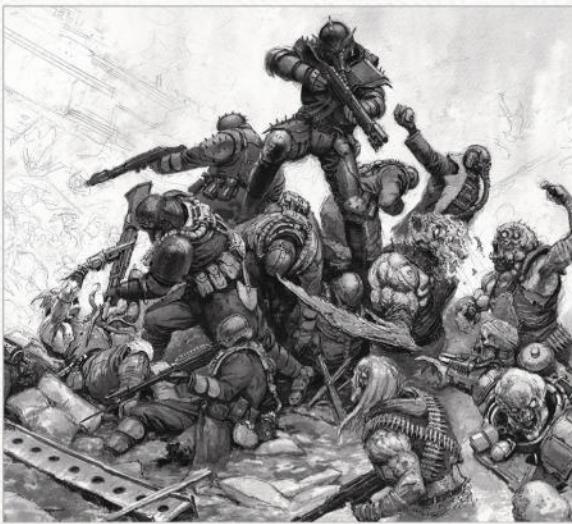


8 Use ink marks

One of the fantastic qualities of painting with the inks is the range of textures you can create with them. As you apply layer after layer of watered-down ink, the previous layers remain visible through them, which gives that wonderful traditional texture we all love. Another thing that can help add visual interest is to put your marks next to each other. Leaving space between the marks and not blending them into each other makes the individual marks more visible, and helps to create planes on the surface that you're describing.

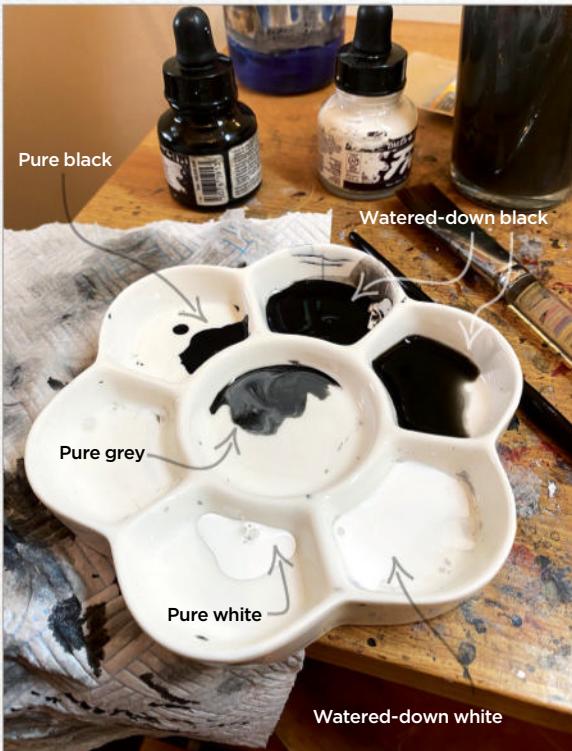
9 Adjust the tones

With all the details being locked in with the pen, we can put washes of watered-down ink over the top. This allows us to focus on refining the tonal aspects of the painting while keeping our details. The goal here is to suggest colour through black and white tones; elements that would be brown, red or black will appear darker and lighter-coloured elements will be paler. Looking at black and white photography here can be helpful.



10 Deepen the shadows

To get the maximum level of depth in a painting, you need to use the full spectrum of values available. Until now we've been watering down the black ink, but here we'll go in with pure black and place it in selective areas. It's easy to go overboard; less is more here. After this stage, you'll find the painting begins to pop.



11 Develop background elements

So far we've been focusing almost exclusively on the foreground figures, as they're the focal point and require the most work. We want to give the impression that this scene is part of a wider vista. With super watered down ink, paint the suggestion of figures fighting in the background as well as a huge industrial structure. Try boiling down your background figures into areas of light and areas of shadow, as this will make them easier to read and quicker to render.



12 Add the mid-tones

You might be forgiven for thinking the painting looks finished at this point, but there's one crucial stage still to be done. I mentioned earlier that these inks can be used like watercolours, but can also be used like typical acrylic paints. We'll be painting in the mid-tones with opaque grey ink mixed from the white and the black. To achieve this, make a mixture of a big splash of grey and then adjust the exact tone depending on the area that you're touching in on the image.

13 Complete the painting

Go over the foreground elements, picking out the mid-tones with the opaque grey ink. This gives the foreground figures a pleasing physicality, which contrasts nicely with the translucently painted background. The other advantage of this is that it's a last opportunity to adjust the highlights and tones, giving the suggestion of colour to this greyscale painting.

First Impressions

Marie-Alice Harel

We discover the early influences that inspired the artist



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art? I grew up in a village near Toulouse, in the south of France. I had absolutely no plans and no conscious wish to focus on a creative career pretty much until I turned 30 in 2016, so it's somehow hard for me to look at my childhood with that perspective.

My work is fuelled by stories, imagination and escapism, as well as, I hope, a sense of peace and compassion. Spending time alone as a child, outside in the garden or in the countryside at my grandparents' farm, as well as having the privilege to travel thanks to my parents, must have all seeped into my work.

It probably didn't hurt either that France has such a rich and thriving culture. The first book I remember buying with my pocket money was a small catalogue of the Orsay Museum in Paris. That's how I discovered the incredible paintings of the impressionists, and maybe my favourite museum collection in the world. I had a print of Van Gogh's Wheat Field with Cypresses on my wall as a teenager.



What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?

Nature and animals are a constant source of inspiration and grounding for me. Travelling never ceases to inspire: new sights, different ways to see the world, a diversity of human experiences, stories and histories, each with their own visual language regarding colours, art, clothes, architecture and landscapes. My personal projects, books and stories often start with a place or culture that I'm curious to explore.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BE WARM

My work for Neil Gaiman's poem for refugees, published in 2023 with contributions from 13 artists.

Is there a painting you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?

Not so much a painting but a painter: Edmund Dulac. There was a retrospective of his illustrations in the winter of 2008 at the public library in Toulouse. I was studying fluid mechanics at that time. It blew my mind, and opened the door to the Golden Age of illustration; an enchanted rabbit hole for me.

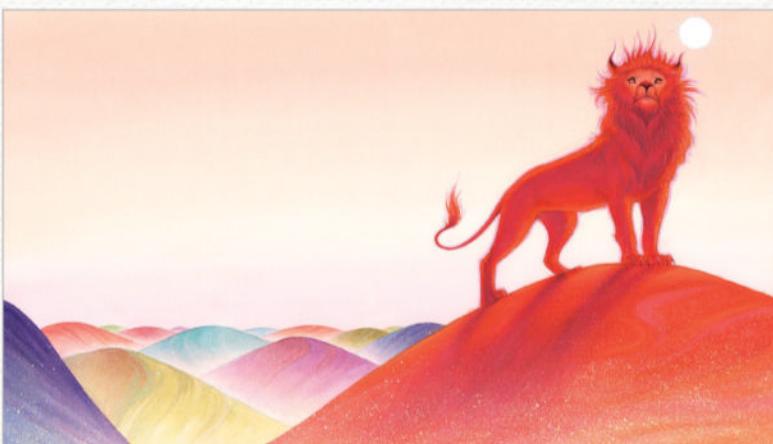
Maybe this gave me a direction too; not just art and illustrations, but art for books and stories. I've had other art crushes before and since, but this one feels particularly significant to the way I work. I feel a sympathy with Dulac's work and also his life: we were both born in Toulouse, and migrated to the UK. I find that his major influences – art from the Far East and the Middle East – are also mine.

GROGRAMAN, THE MANY COLORED DEATH

An illustrated double page from The Folio Society's edition of The Neverending Story. The lion takes the colour of the dune that he stands on.

Tell us about your first paid commission. Does it stand as a representation of your talent?

My first paid work was for a French literary magazine called *Tétralire*. I





HORTARI: BASCAHIL PELLIN

My illustrated collection of short stories about explorers and seekers. This is my second self-published book, which is now in its third printing.



BOY OF SPRING

A personal work from 2018, made in watercolour and coloured pencil. A little spirit who, deep in winter, brings the first signs of spring.

approached them at the Montreuil Children's Book Fair with my portfolio under my arm, and will always be grateful that they were my first client. I've continued to work with them throughout the years, trying to improve and expand my work with every new commission.

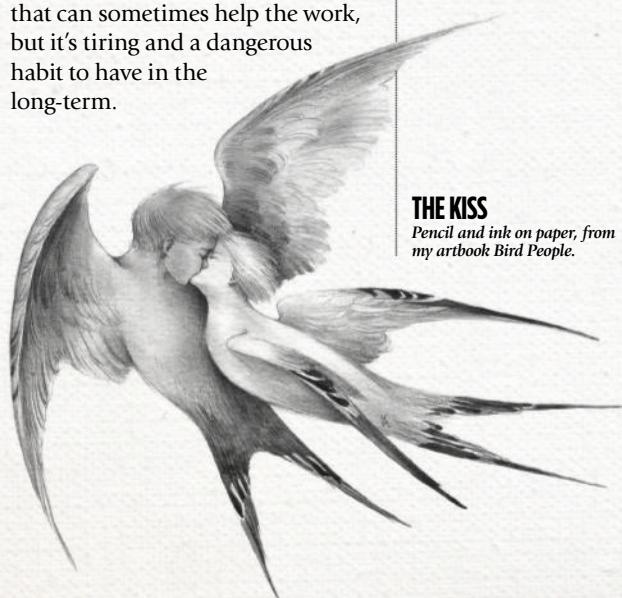
I had to do four illustrations for a Peruvian folk tale for that first job. I'm still very fond of the portrait I painted for the title page. As for the other three, looking at them now helps me see where I've improved, and where I still need to improve.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
One of the last jobs I completed was illustrations for a picture book called *Pandora and the Story Forge*. While my sense of design, values, colour and composition has improved a lot since my first commission, there are aspects of my old work that I struggle a bit to keep alive.

The energy and freedom of my first few years as an artist have suffered a bit from the

“My personal projects often start with a place or culture that I'm curious to explore”

constraints of freelance life. Juggling projects, clients, emails, money and other demands on a daily basis puts pressure on the creative side of the job, and it's something that I have to be more and more mindful of as I go forward. I often feel rushed when I work now, because I know I have a tight schedule to keep. This pressure that can sometimes help the work, but it's tiring and a dangerous habit to have in the long-term.



THE KISS

*Pencil and ink on paper, from my artbook *Bird People*.*

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

With the Black Lives Matter movement, I've seen more diverse representation both on and off the page. While there's still a long way to go, this fills me with hope. Being exposed to diversity, especially as a child but for adults too, is a first and crucial step towards a more compassionate world. When we learn to see ourselves in others, who may look, sound or behave differently, it becomes harder to justify conflicts, wars and injustice.

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

Absolutely not, it's both more rewarding and more challenging than I thought it would be. I had a very narrow and somewhat negative view of the artist's life growing up – some of which I still have to remind myself to shake off from time to time.

Every artist's life is different of course; each with their own challenges and rewards. But for ➡

Traditional Artist Interview

For me, the freedom it offers is marvellous. I love that I can choose and work on my own projects if I want to, and plan my time as I see fit, doing something that I'm truly passionate about.

That comes at a cost of course, and some aspects of the creative life are surprisingly difficult to manage. Beyond the precarious income and lifestyle, being a creative means spending a lot of time alone in your own head, which can be either lovely or tricky at times, and time management is often a nightmare.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
You've got this. What you are is all you need. You have more inside you than you think, and what you don't know yet, you can learn. Trust yourself and make your own way.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
I have a tendency to draw characters bonding with animals. I like people, most of the time, but I often prefer to socialise with animals. They've been a constant source of comfort and wonder throughout my life, as I hope I was – and am – in theirs.

In my latest picture book, *Pandora and the Story Forge*, the last page represents a little girl writing at a desk, sitting in a world all of her own, complete with a curious black cat and a protective dragon. This image feels close to my heart and echoes some of my



PERSONAL TAKE

Running on the Wind, another illustration from The Folio Society edition of *Howl's Moving Castle*. The challenge was to find my own interpretation of the world and characters, while staying true to the story.

PANDORA AND THE STORY FORGE: TALE WEAVER

From a new picture book published in September by Rocket Bird Books and written by Gaynor Andrews.



“You have more inside than you think, and what you don't know yet, you can learn”

own dreams as a little girl. That's the magic of storytelling.

What artist or franchise would be your dream collaboration?
At the moment I'm trying to prioritise my own projects and stories. I'm working on a novel, as well as other shorter illustrated stories and artbooks. These are the worlds I long to explore the most.

But collaborations are always fun and give me the opportunity to visit other people's imaginations. So far, I've had the chance to illustrate for exceptional storytellers: Diana Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*, Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*, Neil Gaiman's *What You Need to Be Warm* poem, and work by Katherine Rundell. I'd love to keep exploring stories with such fantastic storytellers.

The first illustration that I painted in colour for a story, which I did off my own back, was for *The Sword in the*

INSIDE THE ARTBOOK

Murmur, from the book *Bird People*, a collection of drawings that was successfully funded on Kickstarter in 2020.



HOWL AND SOPHIE

From the *Howl's Moving Castle* edition published by The Folio Society. My entry won the 2019 Book Illustration Competition, which allowed me to illustrate the book, plus two others in Diana Wynne Jones' wonderful trilogy. A dream job.



Stone by T.H. White. I suspect *The Once and Future King* would be a lovely book to illustrate too. And then there are all the classics that populate my childhood and imagination, such as *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

More recently, I discovered the *Chronicles of Prydain* by Lloyd Alexander, as well as the stories of Nicholas Stuart Gray. These two authors are at the top of my list of dream projects right now.

Marie-Alice Harel is an author and illustrator. She started freelancing in 2016 after working in research and completing a PhD in geosciences. Her illustrations can be found in illustrated books for readers of all ages, as well as galleries, while she also teaches book illustration through Schoolism. www.maharel.com

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Instructions to your Bank or Building Society: Please pay Centrepoint Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Centrepoint and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

Increase your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate with Gift Aid 

By ticking this box I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and want Centrepoint to Gift Aid all donations I've made in the last four years and any donations I make in the future until I notify you otherwise. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in any tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Your name and address are needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for donating to Centrepoint today.

We'd love to show the impact of your support and share how young people continue to need your help, through newsletters, fundraising appeals and information about events. Please let us know how best to stay in touch with you by adding your details above, and ticking the relevant boxes:

Please contact me by email Please contact me by phone

Last year our supporters helped us change the lives of over 15,000 homeless young people. By letting us know we can count on you, we can continue helping young people with a home and a future.

Your privacy is key.

We promise never to sell or swap your details, and will always keep them secure. You can view our Privacy Notice in full at www.centrepoint.org.uk/privacy. You can opt out of post and change how we communicate with you at any time. Please call 0800 232320 and speak to one of our friendly team or email supportercare@centrepoint.org to do this and ask us any questions.

Please return this form to: Freepost Plus RTXY-LBEA-UTJJ, Angel Fulfilment Services Ltd, Communication Centre, Par Moor Road, Par PL24 2SQ.

Registered office address: Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ. Company no. 1929421. Registered Charity no. 292411. Housing association no. H1869. VAT registration no. 649 345 018.

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9001
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