THE ART OF
TABLETOP GAMES

16 must-see tips to create incredible board game art with **Vincent Dutrait**

PLUS!
250 CUSTOM BRUSH BUNDLE

FUTURE

ISSUE **249**

ALSO...

DISNEY LORCANA CARD ART
Meet the artists bringing new twists to legendary characters

AWARD-WINNING RPGS
The story of developing art for 2024's best tabletop releases
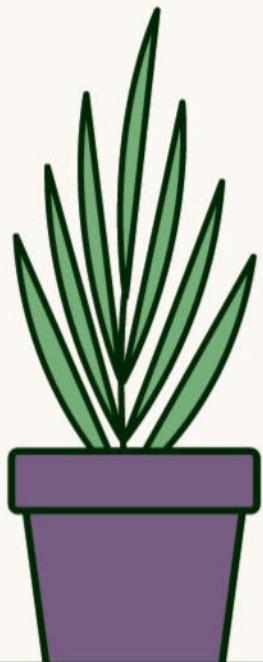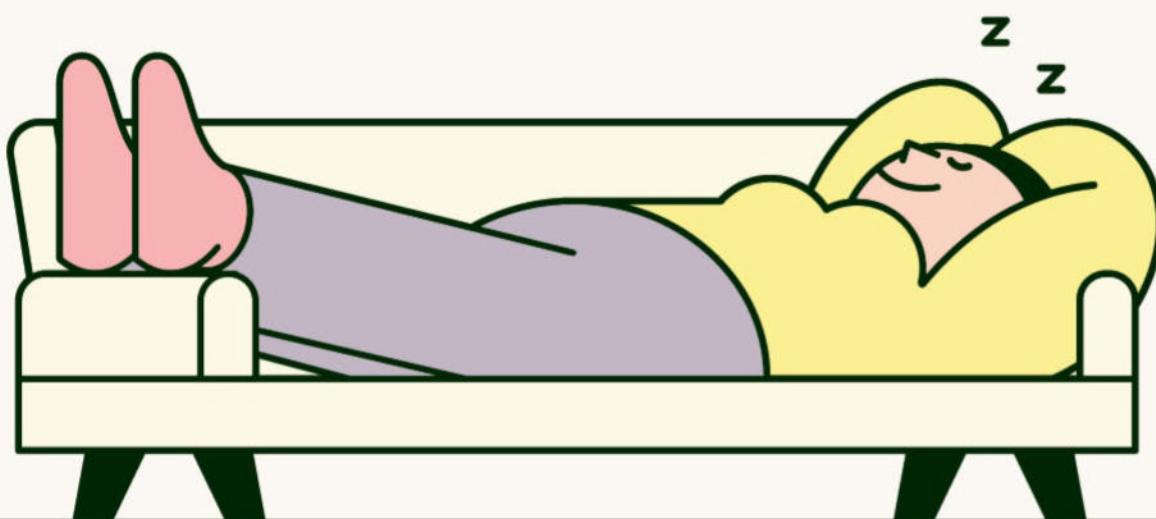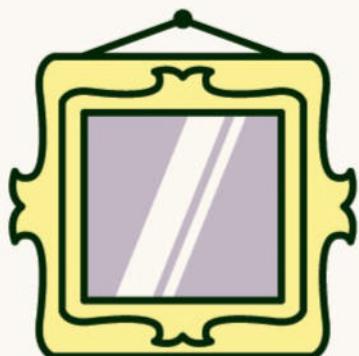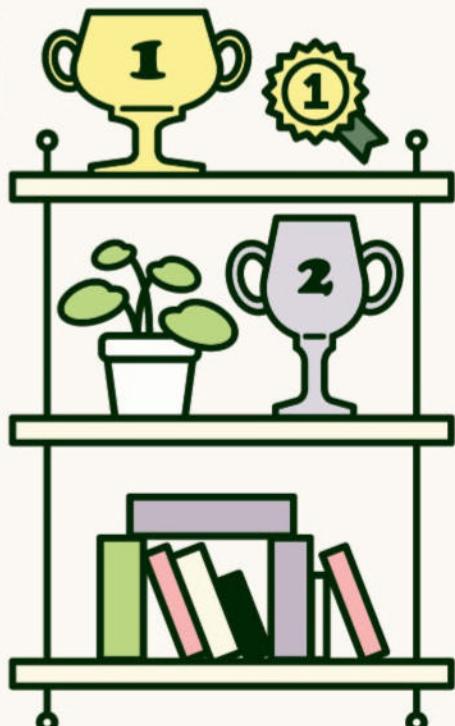
HANDY ADVICE
Discover simple ways to draw the notoriously tricky body part

MIGHTY MACHINES
Get expert insight for designing ferocious technological beasts

SAVVY SPENDING STARTS AT HOME.

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

This month we're looking at tabletop games, an area that has had a major role to play in the world of art and vice versa. Whether it's trading card games, tabletop wargames or board games, there's an intrinsic link between the gameplay and the evocative nature of the visuals, helping players to immerse themselves within the game and its world.

Vincent Dutrait, a true master of tabletop art, shares some of his top tips for crafting board game illustrations this issue alongside providing our beautiful cover image, which comes from the box of board game The A.R.T. Project. We also speak to three Disney Lorcana artists about their experience recreating iconic characters for the card game.

Anatomy is an area we cover fairly frequently as no matter what genre you're working in, getting the fundamentals right is key – even if only to break the rules when creating a macabre monstrosity! That's exactly why we have three mini workshops on top techniques for nailing your hand drawings.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Contents

FXPosé

Award-winning RPG art secrets

Inking a world for Illumineers

The Rookies

Artist in Residence:
Derek Laufman

Sketchbook: Rossy

62
Maintain focus in your details

64
Design a fierce robot concept

54
16 tips to master board game art

86
How to draw accurate hands

92
Paint a video game poster

96
First Impressions: Greg Ruth

GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

1 **Go to the website**
Type this into your browser's address bar.
https://ifxm.ag/tabletopgameart

2 **Click the download link**
Find your files ready for download.

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

Next month in... ImagineFX

WE CELEBRATE 250 ISSUES

Build enduring skills with a huge collection of **expert tips** from iconic ImagineFX artists

Absorbingly forboding art
Flick through the pages of Shaun Friend's beautifully dark sketchbook

Visit a studio full of folklore
Mythology-driven fantasy artist Julia Lundman opens up her workspace

The story of an illustrator
Traditional artist Greg Manchess on his life working for NASA and more

ISSUE 250 ON SALE 11TH FEBRUARY
IN PRINT & DIGITAL

ipso. Regulated

Widely Recycled

F U T U R E
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE!

£26.81

£24.98

PRINT PLUS FREE DIGITAL ACCESS

- Six months of the print edition
- No-hassle home delivery
- Pay less than you would in the shops
- Exclusive text-free covers
- **NEW!** Digital access to 140+ issues when you subscribe to print!**

DIGITAL ONLY SUBSCRIPTION

- Six months of the digital edition
- Instant access via your Android or iOS device
- Same content as the print edition
- Interactive text-free covers
- Never miss an issue

THIS SPECIAL OFFER IS ONLY AVAILABLE BY VISITING

WWW.MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM/IFX/DH43Y

OR TELEPHONE +44 (0) 330 333 1113 AND QUOTE DH43Y

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

1 GEI LERG, WRITING HISTORY BY WRITING STORIES

"In order to develop my fictional Merging Lands universe, I created this character who appears both imposing and graceful."
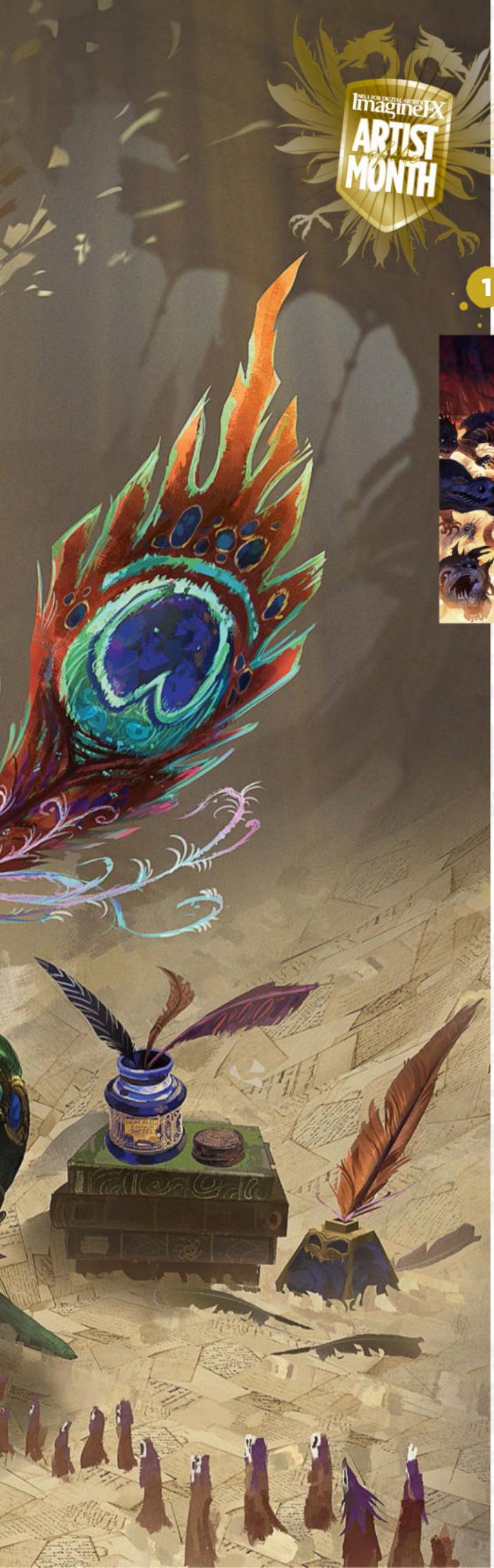
Captain Sass

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** https://bit.ly/49iBAdr

Orson, known online as Captain Sass, is an illustrator and concept artist influenced by Moebius, Druillet and Jodorowsky. His focus is on creating unique things.

FORT - PATRICK

2 THE SLASH
"This artwork was challenging in terms of the composition, but it was worth the effort and makes for an absolutely epic fight!"

3 FORT PATRICK
"This one is a tribute to Ireland, a country I've visited lots and love so much. It was also a chance to have fun with shades of green and blue."

FXPosé

![Thomas Fernandes photo]

Thomas Fernandes

LOCATION: India MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.artstation.com/tfe

The rich environment and architecture of Goa are a huge inspiration for Thomas, as well as its renowned illustrator Mario Miranda. In his work, he likes to use vibrant colours to make his audience happy.
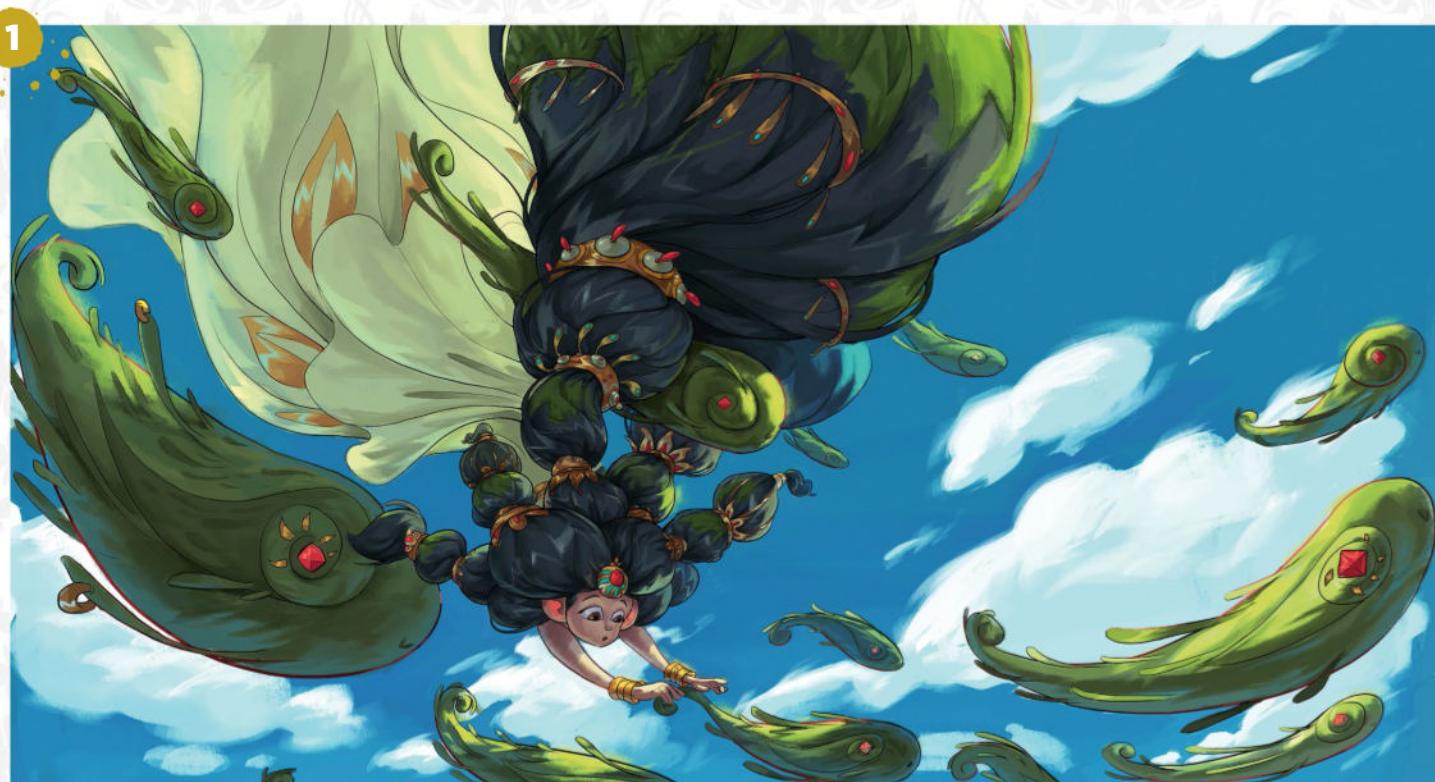
1 JEWELLERY GIRL

"I'm fascinated by the style and culture of Indian jewellery, along with the long, traditional hairstyle of Indian women. Here I combined them with some fantasy elements."

2 PRAYER TIME WITH GRANDMA

"This is a beautiful memory of when my grandma taught me and my brother to pray. She was always funny and filled with joy!"

3 AN OLD LADY STANDING NEAR THE WINDOW

"This is a tribute to my grandma. She used to love feeding crows, so I wanted to capture that memory."

4 MANGO SELLER

"I saw this mango seller in the local Panjim market. Her colourful outfit and traditional attire were so fun that I had to capture them."

FXPosé

Michael Darjania

LOCATION: Georgia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, ZBrush **WEB:** www.artstation.com/mishodarjania

Michael is a digital illustrator with roots in traditional mediums such as oil painting and sculpting. He is inspired by Starcraft and World of Warcraft, and likes to experiment with new approaches to keep his process exciting.

1 THE BAZAAR OF BOUNDLESS REALMS
"Created entirely digitally by hand, this artwork is designed for a board game, reflecting the diversity and richness of a multicultural, multiracial realm. Diversity was the main focus."

2 ZYRELITH THE DROW
"Inspired by Drizzt the Drow, my fictional character delves into the ancient tombs of her ancestors to uncover the mystery behind her long-lost family."
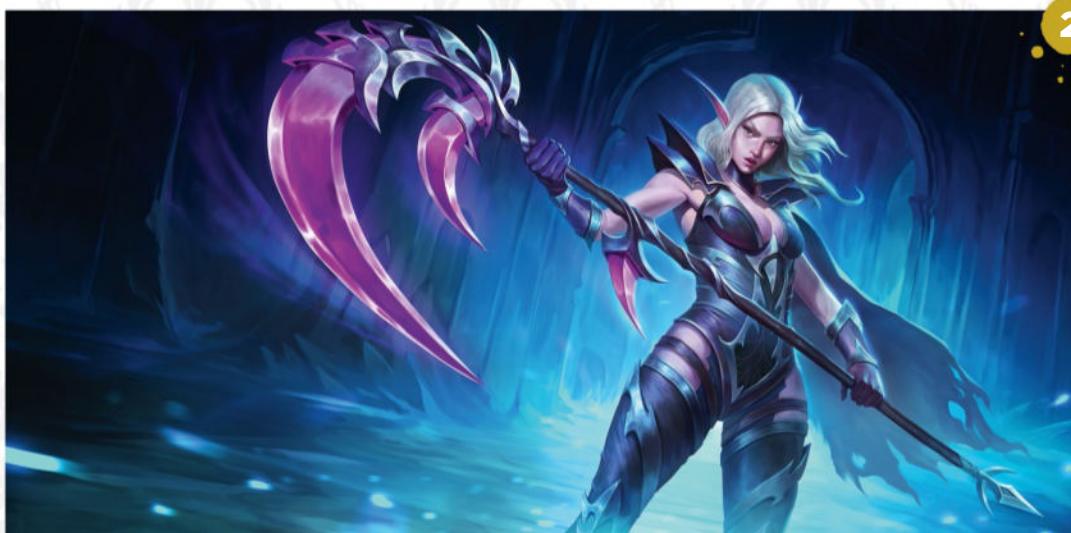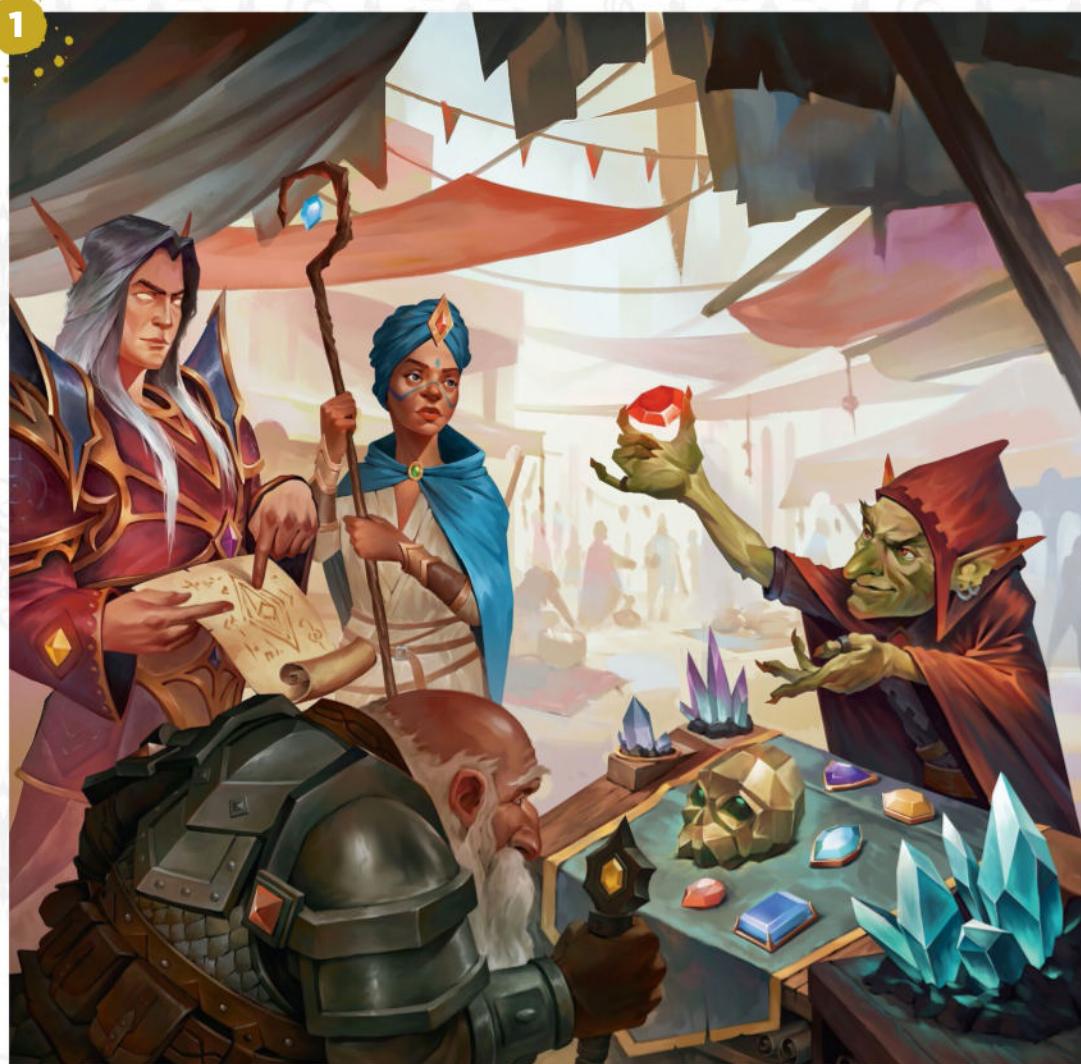
3 APPLE OF EDEN
"Fantasy art that was inspired by Final Fantasy. It captures a moment of offering with the allegory of the Apple of Eden. A steady composition invites deeper reflection on the subject."

4 DRAGONRAGE
"Here I focused more on emotion and atmosphere than perfection. I used a 3D sculpt made in ZBrush as a base, then painted over to create a raw, painterly feel."

FXPosé
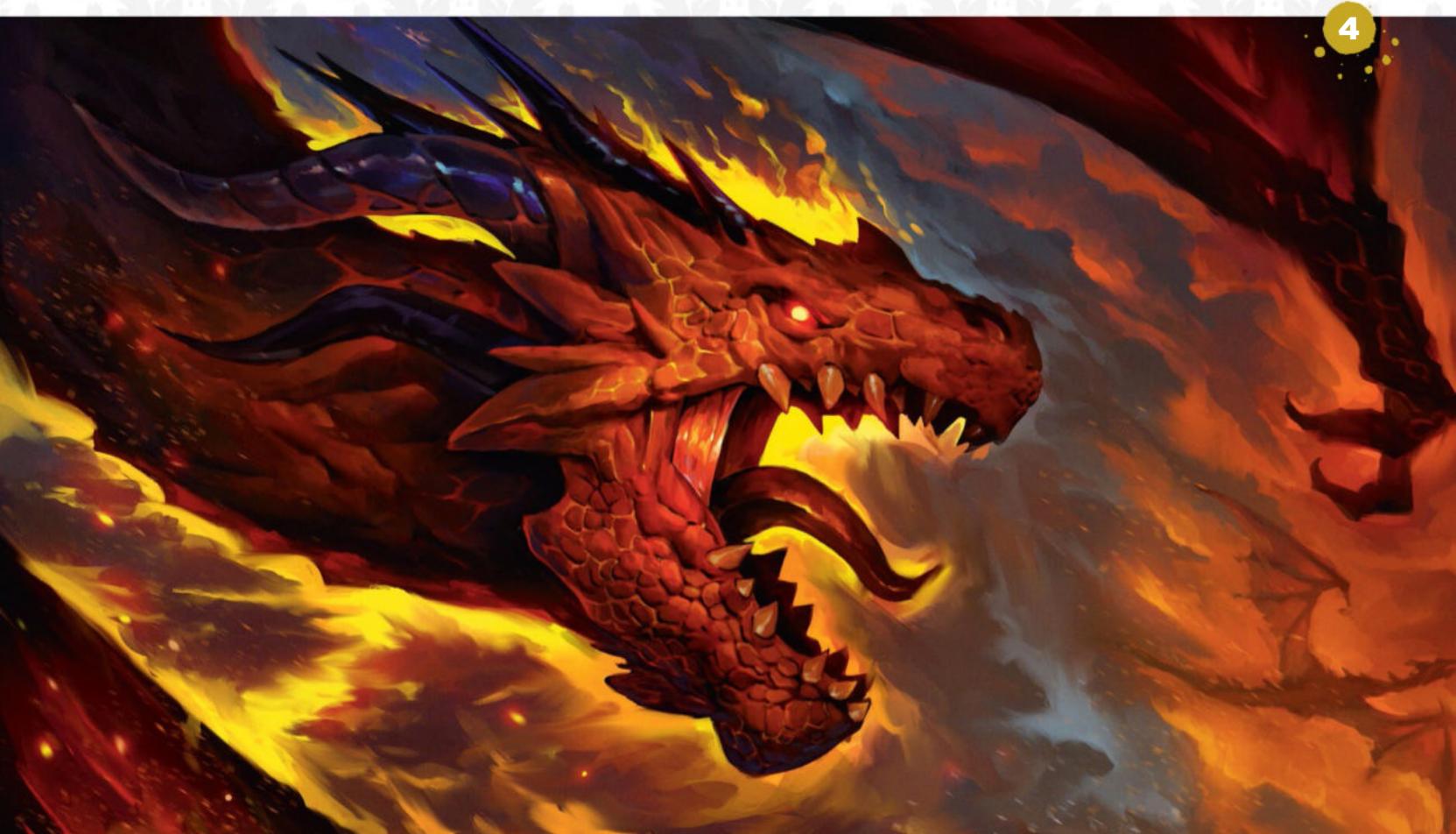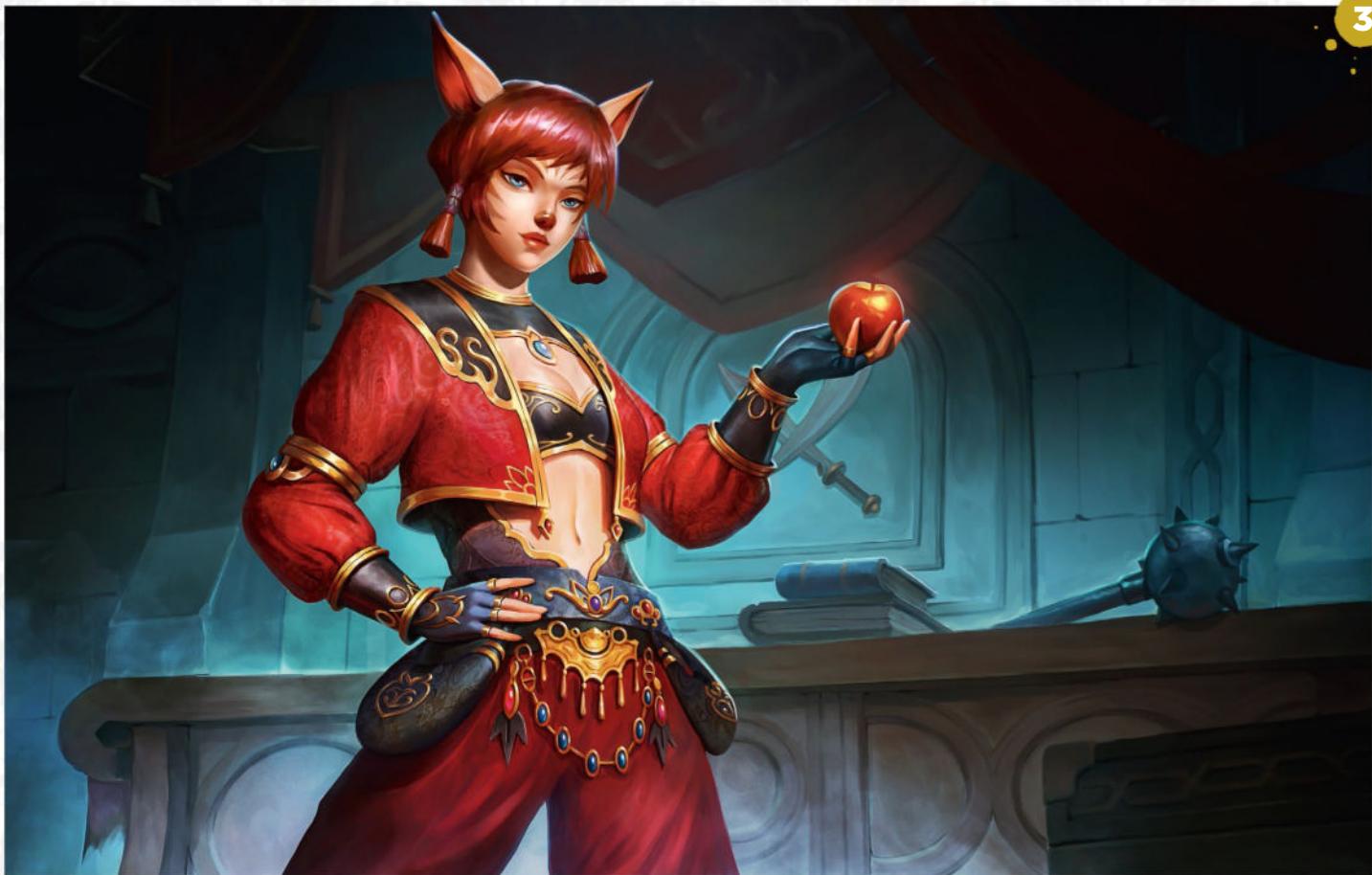
Sam Carr

LOCATION: Sweden **MEDIA:** Clip Studio Paint, Blender **WEB:** www.eternalruins.com

Sam is an illustrator and concept artist who is currently developing The Eternal Ruins, a personal project that explores an endless labyrinth of ancient mysteries. He crafts compelling settings steeped in secrets.

1 SLEEPING STATUES

"Wanderers of the Eternal Ruins awaken from stone statues. I stumbled upon this illustration by accident while playing around, and have been rolling with it ever since."

2 THRESHOLD

"One of my main inspirations is the PS2 game Ico, and I tried to capture that same feeling here with the blown out, bloom lighting."

3 SUPPERTIME

"A wanderer prepares supper in the mouth of a strange and ancient temple. I like to mix the cosy and cute with the dark and scary, and I think this illustration captures that best."

4 VEMESA'S BLESSING

"A wanderer makes an offering to a great spirit in the hope that they can heal their friend's curse. The spirits are inspired by the strangeness of Ghibli film Princess Mononoke."

David Orellana

LOCATION: Spain **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.davilorium.com

David, also known as Davilorium, is a comic artist with a background in anthropology. Previously a freelance animator, he now creates comics and stories inspired by manga, video games and ancient Mediterranean art.
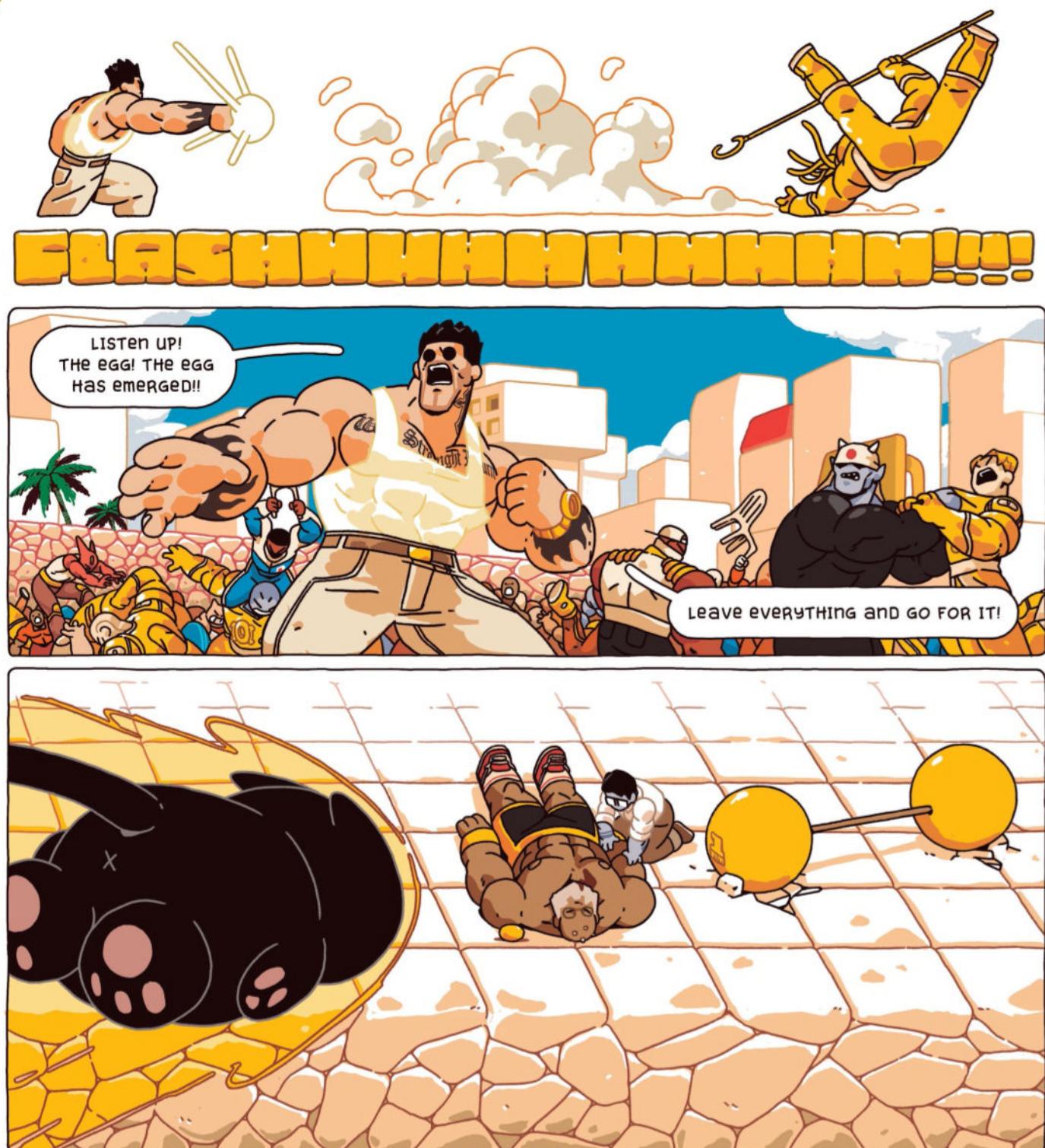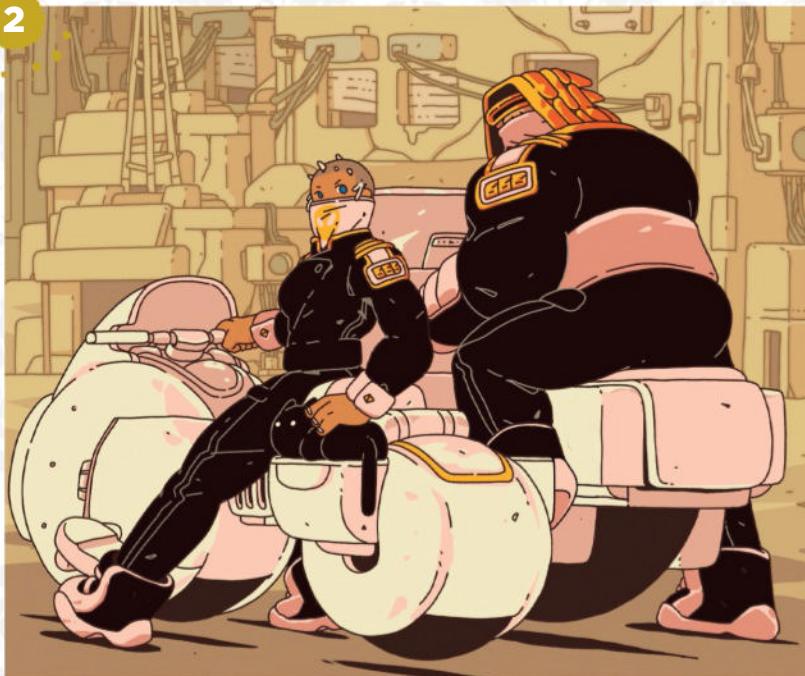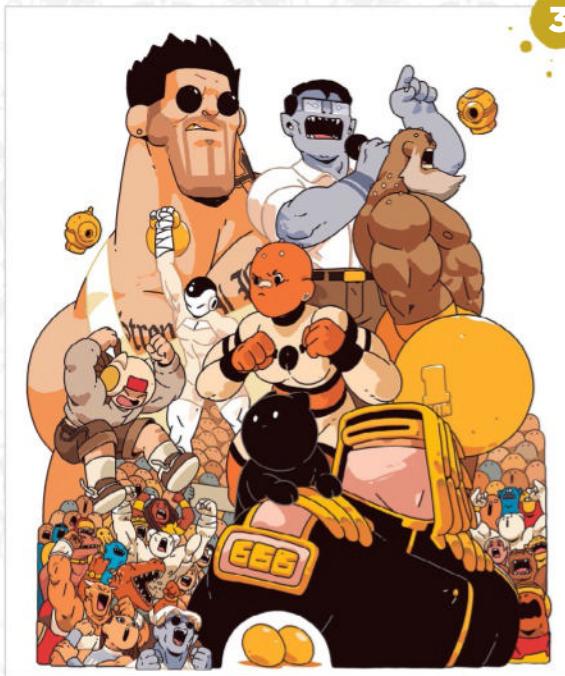
1 **STARKID666, PAGE 76**
"An inside page taken from my comic Starkid666. I wanted everything to have a toy-like feel, complete with absurd anatomies, cities made of LEGO bricks, and over the top characters."

2 **ATALA & STARKID666**
"Two of the main characters from Starkid666 in a single panel. I've always loved Akira Toriyama's vehicles and wanted to pay my own tribute to them somewhere in the comic."

3 **STARKID666 COVER**
"I decided to use a classic poster composition, given that the whole Starkid666 project is full of ironic references to my favourite films and video games from childhood."

4 **LAST DAYS OF MUSEION**
"A panel from an old self-edited comic called Last Days of Museion. It's set in a futuristic yet mystical environment, and has a monochromatic palette to underline the odd atmosphere."

Glutton's Feast

YEAR CREATED: 2023
MEDIA: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint, Blender

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + +

"For my graduation show from the ArtCenter College of Design's Entertainment Design track, I wanted to create a personal worldbuilding project, which became known as Glutton's Feast. The story follows Feesh, a human turned into a tiny sardine, who falls and gets trapped in Food Hell on his journey to solve the riddle of the golden dish before he gets eaten himself."

WINDING STAIRWAYS
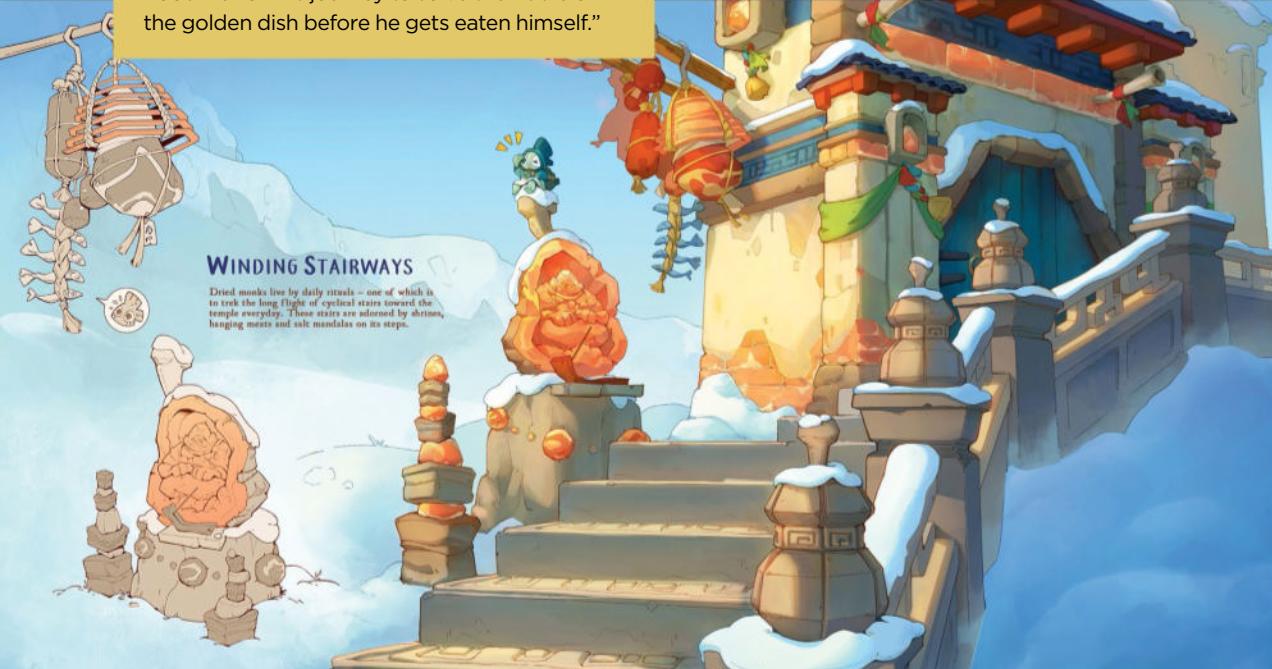
Dried monks live by daily rituals — one of which is to trek the long flight of cyclical stairs toward the temple everyday. These stairs are adorned by shrines, hanging meats and salt mandalas on its steps.

Artist **PROFILE**

Sabrina Sentoso
LOCATION: US

Sabrina is a concept and visual development artist based in Los Angeles. She specialises in creating fun, stylised characters and environments, and currently works on both card games and video games.
www.therookies.co/entries/29597

Tiny cat ranger

Naële is a young ranger patrolling the outskirts of the blue desert. Always accompanied by her **mischievious cat Cléo**, she roams the vasts empty plains of Ceros - the cerulean world. She might not look like it at first glance but she is fierce, daring and resolutely stubborn.

Naële
Blue desert ranger

Lifeline
This device, harnessed on the back of the cat rangers, secures them to their mount in case of fall. Their spring-like shape is designed to dissipate energy when falling.

Cerulite collector
Named after the planet itself, cerulites are **pervasive geo-formations**. Particularly prevalent in the blue desert, where they seem to form more than usual, these **quatz-like cristals** have countless application and are collected by cat rangers daily.

They are unfortunately **slightly radioactive** and need to be carried inside a specific metal container as to not harm the carrier.

Lunch box
A lunchbox full of comforting food for whenever hunger strikes

Tiny cat ranger

YEAR CREATED: 2023
MEDIA: Photoshop

+ + + + + + + +

"I wanted to do a project about a world with giant cats that are used as mounts, plus some sci-fi touches. I love sci-fi, cats and worldbuilding, so it was really fun to try and imagine how to mix all these themes together."

Artist PROFILE

Sara Hermellin

LOCATION: France

Sara is a French concept artist who specialises in creating character designs. She graduated from the New3dge Concept Art school and has been working as a concept artist ever since.

www.therookies.co/entries/34566

Cleo
Ranger cat / Good girl
240cm
158cm

Fauna and flora
Although bare at first glance, the blue desert hides a surprising amount of life.

"While every player's journey through Koriko will be their own, setting this expectation with the art helps them to understand what their story could look like," says creator Jack Harrison.

"I ask for any stories and lore details related to the subject of an illustration because I know the writers always have more they can tell me," says Against the Faerie Queene artist Rafa Guisso.

Award-winning RPG art secrets

High rollers **Tanya Combrinck** meets the artists and designers who created some of this year's best tabletop role-playing games

One of the highlights of Gen Con is the ENNIE Awards, which recognise and celebrate the best-loved tabletop role-playing games. Every year the winners and nominees are a treasure trove of the most interesting and creative examples of the genre, and the 2024 lineup was no different.

Solo adventure Koriko: A Magical Year was one of the standouts of the event, picking up prizes in the best production values and best cover art categories, and nominations for best writing and product of the year.

Inspired by Studio Ghibli film and Eiko Kadono novel Kiki's Delivery Service, Koriko was created by game designer **Jack Harrison**. The game is different to most RPGs in that it's designed as a

"Jack gave me a comprehensive mood board to work from; It was one of those giant collaborative websites where users can drop in a million images at once," says Deb J.J. Lee.

contemplative creative writing exercise for one person, as opposed to a competitive quest for a group. The player takes on the role of a teenage witch who journeys to Koriko, a city they must design themselves based on the game's writing prompts.

The game centres around drawing out the player's creativity, and the art serves as kindling for the imagination and a jumping-off point for story ideas. Jack tells us: "With all my projects I've enjoyed going outside the typical RPG art scene, which ➤➤

❝ I wanted it to say, 'Even if you've never played an RPG before, this is still for you' ❞
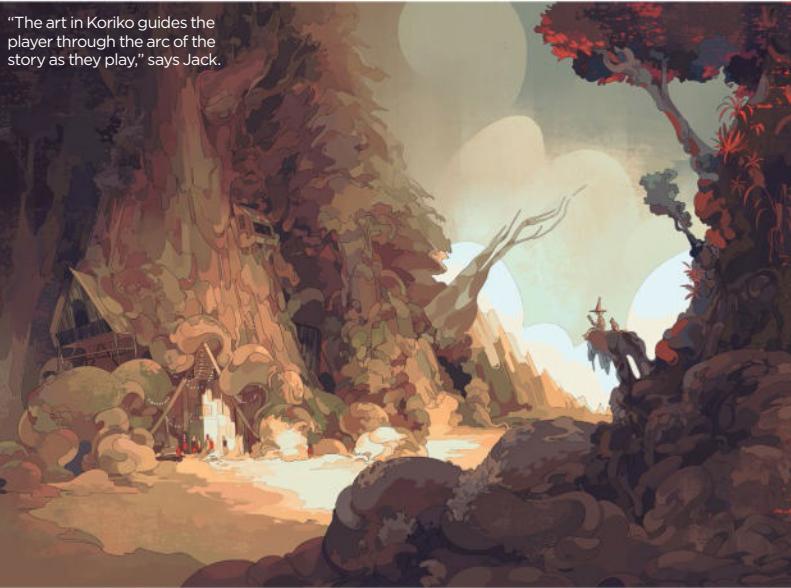
"The art in Koriko guides the player through the arc of the story as they play," says Jack.

➤ can sometimes feel overly nostalgic, grimdark, or just kind of, well, boring. Especially with this game, I wanted to say to people, 'Even if you've never played an RPG before, or you played D&D once and didn't like it, this is still for you'."

Jack found his collaborator, the artist **Deb J.J. Lee**, on Instagram, and thought their art style would work perfectly with his idea to set the game in an environment that resembled Italy's Amalfi Coast. Fortuitously, the project coincided with a point of evolution in Deb's art technique.

"In Koriko, the character sets out for a destination where anything is possible," Deb explains. "Luckily, my illustration process began to change around this time, where I began to use unexpected colours to denote highlights, lighting and so on. It gives a jewel-like rendering effect to the subject matter, and I think this worked in my favour!"

Jack adds: "Deb's style was a great thematic fit for the cosy, relaxed vibe of the game. I was thrilled when they accepted the commission."

CATCHING THE EYE

Strong artwork is the key factor in attracting attention when trying to fund and sell a game. "It's really all about the art!" Jack says. "You can write the best game in the world with astonishingly clever mechanics and decades of content, but if it looks dull you're going to have an uphill struggle getting anyone to actually play it. Of course, once you've sold people on the project you'll need to back it up with a good game or they'll end up being disappointed."

"Sure, what really matters in a game is the gameplay, but people need to want to get to the gameplay, and that is achieved via good artwork," says Alex T.

He recommends crowdfunding rather than self-funding as a way to get games made, not least because it gives you an indication of whether your project will succeed before you begin. "Crowdfunding provides you with a big marketing opportunity, and also lets you fund the production of the game without shouldering all that risk yourself," Jack says. "If your game doesn't fund on Kickstarter, you'll have spent a small amount of money to know that it's not a compelling product yet. Before crowdfunding was accessible to creators, we often used the term 'fantasy heartbreakers'; disappointing, self-funded projects that often resulted in a garage full of unsold books."

With a funding goal of just £5,000, Koriko attracted more than 7,000 backers who pledged over £235,000

"Each large spread had to be emblematic of its part of the adventure, but also not overlap in theme, scene, or action with any other illustrations," says Deren Ozturk.

❝ I let artists express their vision and do what they do best, without interference ❞

on Kickstarter, demonstrating the faith and enthusiasm in the gaming community for Jack's work.

His advice for aspiring game designers is to start out by creating their own take on an existing formula. He says: "The TTRPG community is encouraging and accepting of 'hacks' of game systems – taking ideas and mechanics from one game and combining them into something new.

"There are even system reference documents [SRDs], explicitly written to make it easier for people to create new games from existing systems. If you're new to designing, it's often much easier to start out with something proven and tweak it to fit your desired goals, rather than coming up with a whole game from scratch."

GALACTIC QUEST

Also successfully funded on Kickstarter, and another game that can be played alone if desired, Across a Thousand Dead Worlds is a space

The cover for Across a Thousand Dead Worlds by Vladimir Manyukhin, which was nominated for a best cover art prize at the ENNIE Awards.

exploration adventure that picked up an ENNIE nomination for best cover art. It's by Blackoath Entertainment, a small team that specialises in creating "soloable" experiences to meet the needs of gamers who don't have time to organise full-on gaming sessions with others. Players must journey across the galaxy exploring abandoned scientific research outposts in search of remnants of alien technology.

The first and most important step for game designer **Alex T.** is selecting artists whose style naturally fits the game rather than trying to "shoehorn a particular art style" into someone's work. "I tend to be very vague with my directions for artwork," he says. "This is why it's crucial for me to find the correct artist for each project; I prefer to let artists express their own vision and do what they do best, without me interfering."

He likes to give basic instructions such as "a warrior fighting a monster", using references from comics, ➤➤

"Humans are almost always shown covered head to toe in heavy space suits," says Vil.

➤➤ films or books to give the artist a general sense of the mood and direction he wants.

MAKE AN IMPRESSION

Brazilian illustrator **Vil** (@zordvil on Instagram), who uses a gloom art style, created the interior artwork for Across a Thousand Dead Worlds. He told us his constant focus was on the "vibe and tone", because his images would form the players' first impressions of the world and set their expectations. "I was very attracted by the idea of giving a different spin to the familiar space truckers trope, taking some bits from it and putting them in a different light. So I started there and let everything else fall into place," Vil says.

Alex agrees with Jack's advice for budding game designers to begin with a hack of an existing system. He adds: "Start small, so you can see that you're able to finish a project. I know many aspiring designers with good ideas who get overwhelmed when they realise how much work it all actually entails."

Nominated for best interior art at the ENNIE Awards, Against the Faerie Queene (AtFQ) by Adder Stone Games places the player in a historical setting based on ancient British folklore. The game's

Deren says: "If you're both a game designer and an artist you have an incredible advantage when creating TTRPGs. I'm thoroughly jealous."

"I don't like to micromanage illustrators. They know their craft better than me," says Alex.
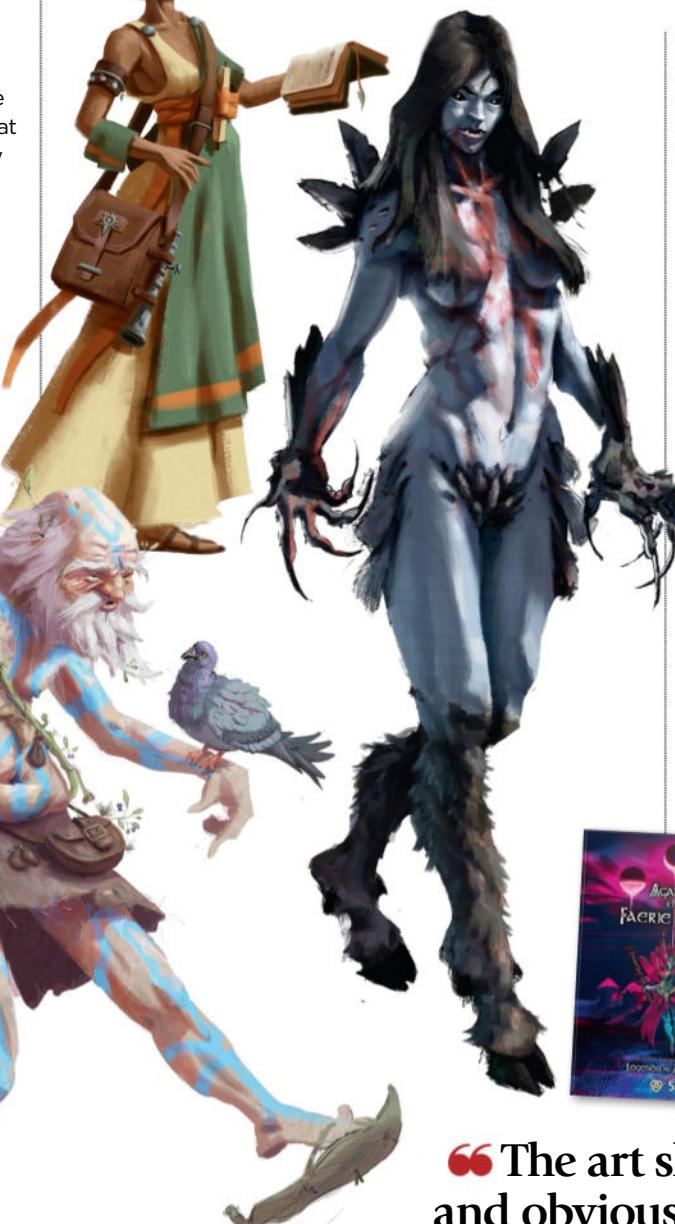
creator **Deren Ozturk** explains the concept: "AtFQ is an adventure campaign book for our already-established Celtic Iron Age fantasy world of Avallen, which we introduced with our core rulebook Legends of Avallen. The art aesthetic for AtFQ was a continuation. For this legendary world of ancient stories, I didn't want photorealism; I want the art to be raw, painterly, vivid, and obvious that you're looking at a piece of imagination crafted by another person."

CELTIC CONNECTION

A key focus in this second book was developing the look of the different locations and clans in the world, most notably by creating the 15 double-page-spread illustrations that open each campaign chapter, as lead artist **Rafa Guisso** can attest to. He explains: "As it's a game that represents a historical moment in a culture, we've always been concerned with maintaining the feeling that it's a believable universe. So before the first drafts, I always sought guidance from Deren, and researched direct Celtic culture references." Deren
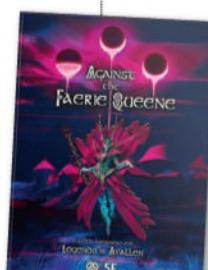
> ❝ The art should be raw, vivid, and obvious that you're looking at somebody's imagination ❞

adds: "Drawing on historical sources, local folklore, and also adding our own fantastical twists was a big part of art directing for this book."

Marketing the game was a case of creating artwork that would make the setting clear to the audience. "Avallen uniquely makes real the legends of pre-medieval folklore from Wales and Britannia at large," says Deren. "Having art that immediately conveys that is important for drawing in people interested in our particular niche."

His advice for those tempted to embark on creating their own TTRPG is this: "Firstly, playtest, and playtest early. Don't delve too deep on an idea until you know it works. Secondly, get a partner. You can't be good at everything and you'll want someone to read what you've written to ensure it makes sense outside your own mind. And finally, once you have a cohesive idea that's presentable, attend cons, in person or online, to show off your concept and grow a mailing list of people interested in your game."

Deb was grateful to be given a sensible timeframe. "You'd be shocked how common it is to receive assignments where they need it in a month."

The heart of my productivity. I've been using this Wacom Cintiq 27QHD for over nine years and it's still going strong.

This sticky note is probably the most special thing in my entire office. Years ago, I was having one of the worst days of my career and my oldest son came home from his preschool and wrote "I love you Daddy" on a Post-it. Anytime that I'm having a bad day, I look at that note and it genuinely makes me feel better.

I like to keep the books that inspire me most at arm's reach. This little shelf is a treasure trove of talent that I love to draw inspiration from.

Derek Laufman

Cats and comics The artist shows off the creative cave where he escapes the dreary winter blues

I've always wanted a studio with natural light, so when my wife Valerie and I went searching for a new house in 2012, I knew I'd found the place I'd call my creative home.

Located above our two-car garage, it was the ideal space to escape a noisy family with two active boys. I'll start my day at 9am going through emails and messages for about 30 minutes, then it's time to get down to the business of drawing.

I set up two workstations in my studio to help me tackle both digital and traditional work. I'm about 80 per cent digital these days and at the core of my setup is a Wacom Cintiq 27QHD tablet, which has been going strong for the past nine years, and I'm thankful for its reliability. I flank it on the left with a vertical 24-inch monitor for reference images, and just above sits a 32-inch 4K monitor mounted to an ergo arm, which allows me to swivel it round to my traditional drawing area as well. That's often playing YouTube videos as I work. ➤➤

A perfect source of natural light and fresh air during the warmer days.

This monster is based on a character design I drew in partnership with Crudo Miniatures to develop a fun prototype toy.

Made by my wife, this blanket is usually where you'll find one or both of my cats during the day, when they're sick of me.

I've been lucky enough to collect some amazing original artwork for my office, and I'm so happy to own such amazing pieces.

I'm getting old and I've never had great eyesight. So my magnifying light is a must for my eyes when drawing traditionally.

My table is the perfect solution for drawing traditionally. When raised, it has a separate shelf for holding all of my supplies.

An illustration of Sir Duncross, the main character in my comic series Crimson Fall.

A blanket handmade by my talented wife that acts as the ideal spot to catch a catnap during the day.

I was in search of the perfect drawing table and noticed that comic artist Daniel Warren Johnson had just what I was looking for, so I zoomed in on a photo of his workspace and was able to locate the brand of it. A little stalkerish, but it got me a table!

> ❝ I'm proud to have built such a perfect creative sanctuary for myself ❞

This space has the important giant calendar so my looming deadlines are not easily missed, as well as my large-format printer and scanner. Usually this area is a catch-all and I have to dig out a path to use the equipment.

I use this corner for gathering dust from my office, displaying my Sean Galloway Hellboy and Batman statues, plus a few other collectible prototypes I've developed over the years.

A page out of my wordless graphic novel BOT-9. Inspired by my love of Hayao Miyazaki movies and an urge to challenge my storytelling without words.

❝ Most of the time I find that my drawing table has been occupied by one of my cats ❞

➤ I have a Røde mic and another ergo arm for my webcam, making it the perfect place for video calls or streaming for my Patreon. My webcam is actually a Google Pixel 7a phone, which for the money is a really decent quality camera.

Just behind me is a reclining love seat that's perfect for a little reading corner, and a place for my cats to sleep during the day. On the left wall I have a large magnetic whiteboard that I use to pin concept art for my current comic project.

PURRFECT CATNAP SPOT

Next to my digital station is the drawing table. Most of the time it's occupied by one of my cats, so I keep a blanket on there to make it a little more comfortable for them while they keep an eye on the neighbours. The drawing table can be raised and lowered, but the majority of the time I just keep it flat.
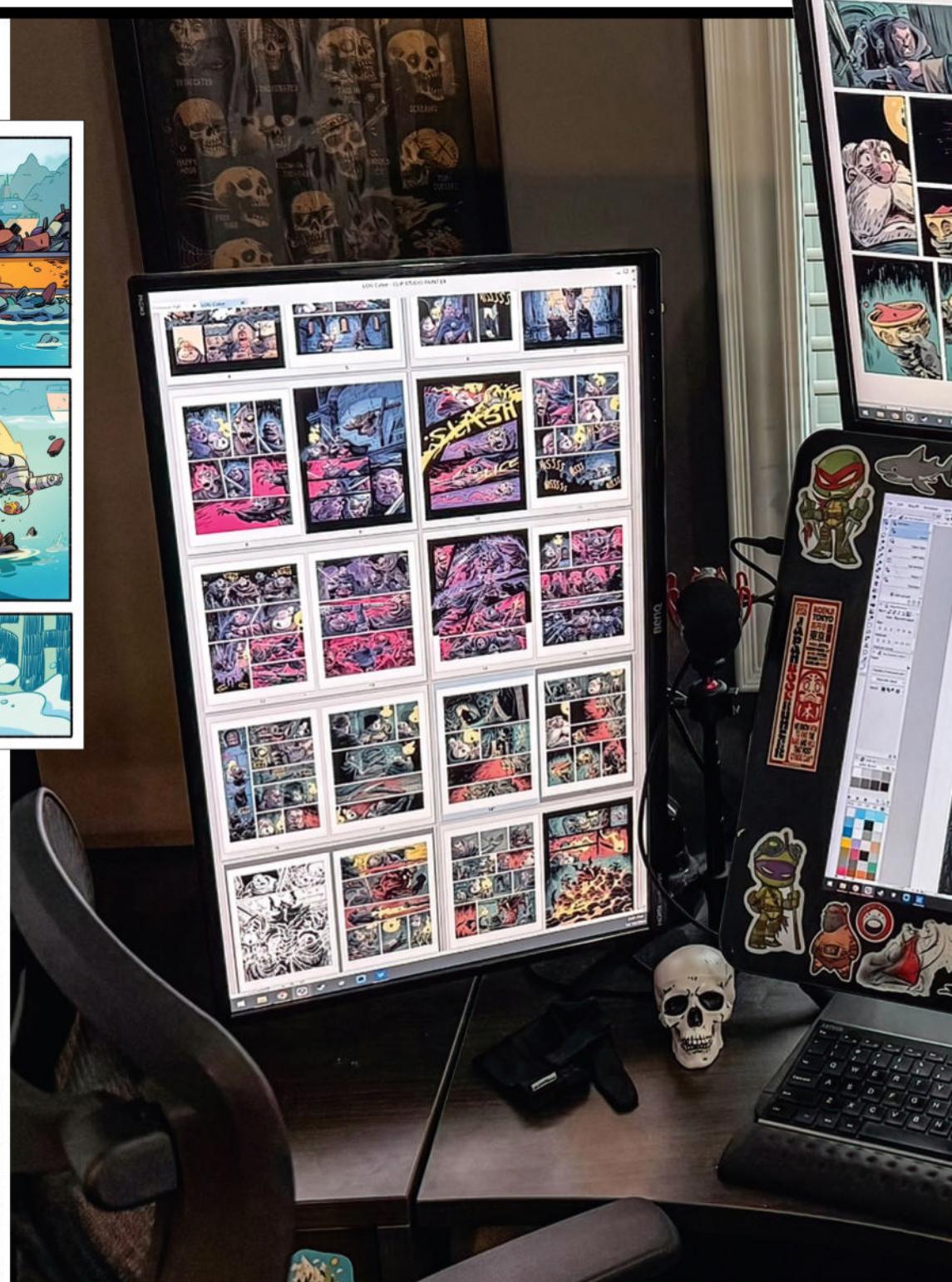
I have a good collection of pens, pencils, brushes and inks at my disposal right next to it and typically the area can get quite messy. Further on to the right of my drawing table is another table that houses my Bluetooth speakers, large-format scanner, and a large-format printer. Above is a massive wall calendar to keep me aware of looming deadlines, and next to that and just down the hall are two large bookshelves that I use to

The key to a perfect setup is having as many screens as is humanly possible so that my scattered brain can multitask with YouTube videos, reference images, and of course a space to draw.

store all my favourite graphic novels, comics and artbooks.

I've managed to cram something into every inch of this space and I'm proud to have built such a perfect creative sanctuary for myself, which I never take for granted.

Derek is a cartoonist from Canada. He has been a professional illustrator for over 25 years, self-publishing graphic novels while working for Marvel, Warner Bros., Disney, Hasbro and more. www.dereklaufman.com.
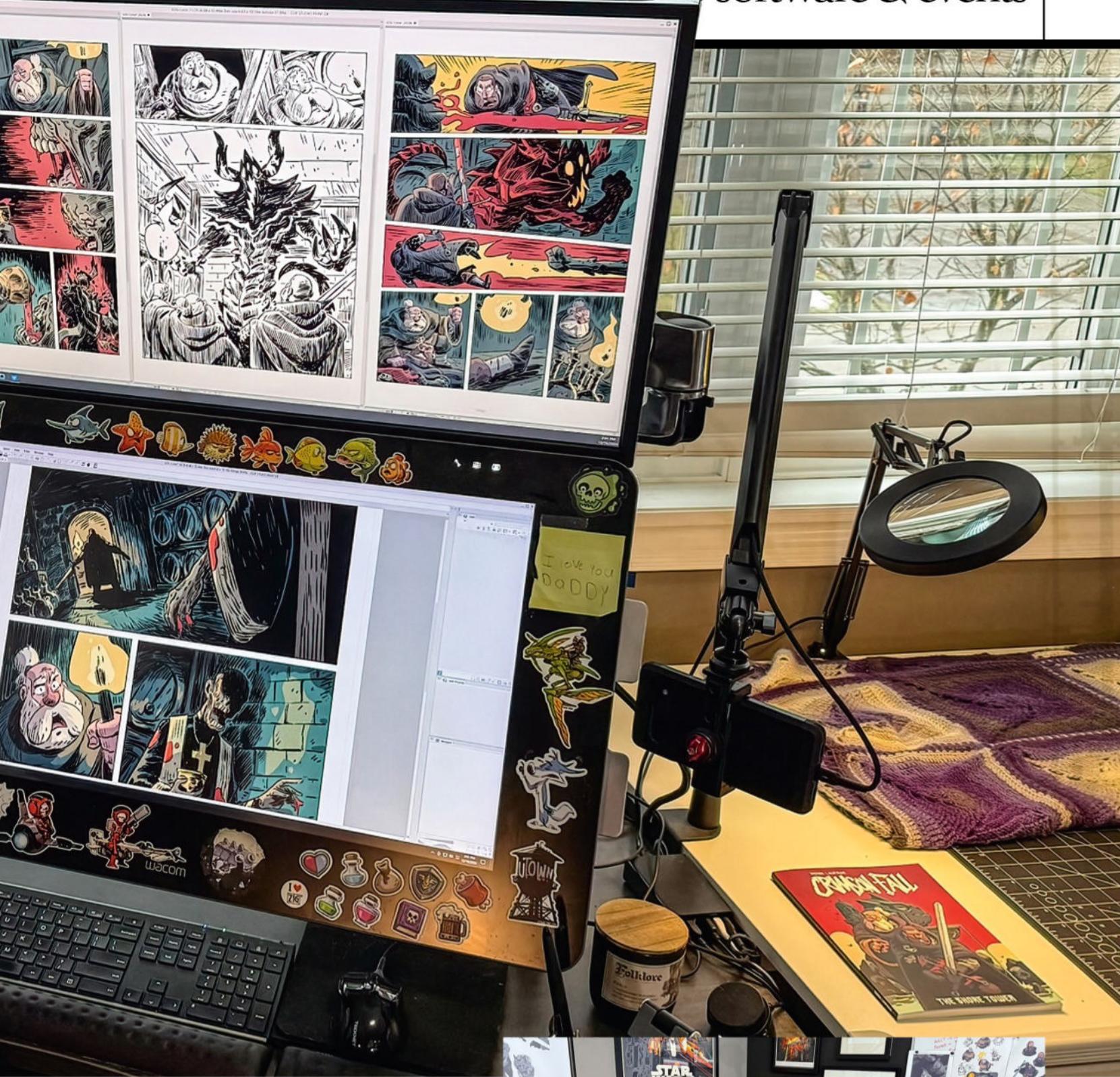
The Pumpkin Mage is an original character that I designed and later developed as an animation pitch that didn't go anywhere.

A comfortable, quiet little nook to put my feet up and catch up on a stack of graphic novels. My cats also like to sleep here sometimes.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Rob Redman, on **mail@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

X Follow us on X:
x.com/imaginefx

F Find us on Facebook:
facebook.com/imaginefx

Share your artwork via #imaginefx:
instagram.com/imaginefxmagazine

Baptiste Boutié's fan art workshop showed how to pay homage in style.

Blown away

I adore the Tekkonkinkreet fan art workshop from your last issue. The reasons behind doing fan art and the passion the writer has for it really struck me, and on top of that the art itself is amazing. It somehow feels optimistic amongst what can be a very dark and violent genre, even when it has a bright and pretty look to it. I'd love to see more of this style featured in the magazine.
Enrico, via email

Rob replies *Hi Enrico, and thanks so much for sharing your thoughts with us! I completely agree with you. Baptiste Boutié created a wonderful piece of fan art there and his love for the medium really shines through. I'm always impressed by artists who can capture the feel of a world and give it their own spin, especially when fan art could so easily be more akin to just painting by numbers.*

I'm definitely keen to have more of this in the magazine too, so keep your eyes peeled and hopefully you'll find more to love in coming issues. We have a manga

We looked back at the art of the Alien franchise in issue 248, as well as featuring some awesome Alien tutorials.

issue planned for the not-too-distant future, so make sure that you look out for that one on the horizon.

Giger-esque

Howdy ImagineFX. I was so excited to read your Aliens issue. I've loved the work of H.R. Giger since first seeing it in the 80s. Although you didn't show much of his work it was great to see and read how artists working on projects within the universe he established have tried to remain true to his concepts, even when they're updating and adding to it.
Trevor, via email

Rob replies *Hello Trevor. Absolutely! I think Alien is one of those IPs where it would be doing a disservice not to stay somewhat faithful to the original, as that look is so distinctive. You can move time and place, but the xenomorph aesthetic is so instantly recognisable that it's become part of popular culture and has a power over the viewer in the same way as Superman's costume or a lightsaber.*

3D inspiration

Hello Rob. I've never even dabbled with 3D tools before, but I definitely will be after reading Magdalina Dianova's tutorial in your last issue, where she blocked out a scene and then lit it in 3D to use as a guide for her painting. That's such a cool trick that I'd love to learn, so thank you very much for sharing!
Hannah, via email

Rob replies *I would highly recommend experimenting with other tools whenever you can, Hannah. You never know what doors will open when you start exploring different areas and, even if it turns out not to be for you, you'll still have discovered something new about the artist in you, which is always a good thing!*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 248 at **ifxm.ag/single-ifx**.

NEW CHAPTER
The Disney Lorcana illustrations reimagine classic characters.

5

RAPUNZEL
Appreciative Artist

Dreamborn • Hero • Princess

3 5

PERCEPTIVE PARTNER While you have a character named Pascal in play, this character gains **Ward.** (Opponents can't choose them except to challenge.)

"Pascal! A new flower for the wall!"

Aubrey Archer
153/204 • EN • 4

Disney Lorcana ©Disney

4

RAYA
Kumandran Rider

Storyborn • Hero • Princess

3 3

COME ON, LET'S DO THIS Once during your turn, whenever a card is put into your inkwell, you may ready another chosen character of yours. They can't quest for the rest of this turn.

Mariana Moreno / Peter Brockhammer
107/204 • EN • 6

©Disney
Disney Lorcana

INKING A WORLD FOR ILLUMINEERS

James Clarke speaks to a trio of artists about their work illustrating beautiful card art for hit TCG **Disney Lorcana**

When Walt Disney and his early collaborator Ub Iwerks brought animated character Oswald the Lucky Rabbit to the movie screen in 1927, nobody could have quite imagined where it would lead today. Over the near century that has followed, Disney has introduced audiences to what has become a globally popular heritage of animated characters.

A new chapter in that story was inked in the autumn of 2023, when the hotly anticipated trading card game Disney Lorcana was released to the world. The game reimagines your favourite characters in exciting new ways, all playing their part in a dynamic and easy-to-pick-up card game for players, known as Illumineers.

Its maiden set release, The First Chapter, flew off shelves and became instantly sought-after. Among its initial 204-card release were iconic Disney characters including Mickey Mouse, Simba from The Lion King, and Frozen's Elsa. Disney Lorcana's sixth set, Azurite Sea, was released last November with a nautical twist on many legendary names.

The game's unforgettable art required equally talented artists, so we caught up with Kenneth Anderson, Lisanne Koeteeuw and Aubrey Archer to explore their roles in crafting the Inklands. ➤➤

FULLY ACCESSORISED
Box art for the game captures the range of characters that players can encounter.

FRESH STORYTELLING
Disney Lorcana's illustrations combine classic animated characters with new situations.

CHIP
Ranger Leader

3 · 4

Storyborn · Hero

THE VALUE OF FRIENDSHIP While you have a character named Dale in play, this character gains Support. (Whenever they quest, you may add their ⬡ to another chosen character's ⬡ this turn.)

French Carlomagno
12/204 · EN · 6

YOU CAME BACK
Action

Ready chosen character.

"Nobody gets left behind."
—Stitch

Michaela Martin
97/204 · EN · 6

©Disney
Disney Lorcana.

A VERY MERRY UNBIRTHDAY
Action · Song

(A character with cost 1 or more can ⬡ to sing this song for free.)

Each opponent puts the top 2 cards of their deck into their discard.

Now blow the candle out, my dear
And make your wish come true

Geoffrey Boudout
60/204 · EN · 6

©Disney. "The Unbirthday Song" Huffman, Livingston, David © 1948 WDMC (ASCAP) © Renewed
Disney Lorcana

AUBREY ARCHER

Creative licence brings a new twist to classic characters

What brought you to Disney Lorcana?
My background is in concept art and character design for animation. Initially I was doing early concept designs when they were trying to decide what these new interpretations of Disney characters would look like, before we fully even knew what the six inks even were. I worked on some of those early concept visions, and Ravensburger were kind enough to give me the chance to illustrate the cards as well.

How does your style match with the Disney Lorcana aesthetic?
I think my personal style is whimsical, and it connects well with the game that way, but there's also a lot of incredible work the art directing team does to make sure there's a whimsical world for artists to play in.

What are the storytelling and character demands involved?
It's really fun in Disney Lorcana because we're not illustrating direct scenes from a movie. You're basically putting a character in a whole new story every time you draw a new card. They're never doing the exact same thing as in a movie. And if it's very similar, you can take a creative licence with the background, like making it more whimsical.

It's fun because it feels like you get to tell a new story with the character, which is just a really fun part of the process. We're telling new stories. Ideally, we're telling the story of what the game card does. So when you're playing the game, it feels like what you're looking at. I put a lot of heart into the illustrations.

Is there a favourite card that you've worked on so far?
I'm pretty fond of Rapunzel – Appreciative Artist in the Ursula's Return set. That one was a brand new take on Rapunzel that I got to do concept design for. I did some costume explorations for her, and

FOIL FIGHTER
Raya – Kumandran Rider was one of the rare Enchanted cards in Azurite Sea.

HANGING OUT
Design language emphasises appealing shape and use of colour for Rapunzel.

we tried out different directions for it while still wanting it to remain very true to the character.

Which artists influence your work?
There are a lot! I really love the work of J.C. Leyendecker. It's just so nice to look at, and he simplifies form in a way that relates to a cartoony style.

What's special about the game?
For me, it's that Lorcana gives gamers and Disney enthusiasts an exciting opportunity for socialising, friendship and connection.

GLISTENING IN EMERALD
Cards are split into different inks for deckbuilding purposes.

5

SNOW WHITE
Fair-Hearted

3 **5**

Dreamborn • Hero • Princess • Knight

NATURAL LEADER This character gains **Resist** +1 for each other Knight character you have in play. (Damage dealt to this character is reduced by 1 for each other Knight.)

Friendship is the best

5

BRUNO MADRIGAL
Out of the Shadows

4 **5**

Storyborn • Ally • Madrigal

IT WAS YOUR VISION When you play this character, chosen character gains "When this character is banished in a challenge, you may return this card to your hand" this turn.

Aubrey Archer
38/204 • EN • 4

Disney Lorcana ©Disney

3

PETER PAN
Never Land Hero

1 **3**

Storyborn • Hero

Rush (This character can challenge the turn they're played.)

OVER HI... have a character named
Tinker...
With
dang...

Aubrey...
119/204

1

CHIP THE TEACUP
Gentle Soul

2 **2**

Storyborn • Ally

"Wanna see me do a trick?"

Aubrey Archer
37/204 • EN • 2

Disney Lorcana ©Disney

" I think most artistic fields are connected in some way, especially when you get to visual art. There's some connection between **appealing shapes** and design. When you're creating concept art, you're usually drawing a character without a background, and not worrying about the context of it feeling like a finished story. You're just dealing with, '**What is this character doing** at this moment?' "
Aubrey Archer

READY FOR THE QUEST
Disney has no shortage of iconic characters to call upon for each and every new expansion of expertly crafted cards.

KENNETH ANDERSON

Why Disney Lorcana is a perfect fit for the character designer

When did you begin working on Disney Lorcana?
I've been on it since the start. When I found out what it was, I remembered thinking it was an interesting project. Ravensburger seemed to like my art and asked if I wanted to work on the game. I think that was in around 2020 or 2021. There was a lot of work to get the game ready for its eventual launch.

What was it about your illustration style that drew Ravensburger and Disney to you?
Over the years, a lot of people have said that my style is a little bit Disney-esque. I've also got an animation background. I don't know whether Ravensburger knew that, but I think that maybe it comes across in my work. I don't work with pencil and paper; I find digital faster.

What challenges have you faced illustrating the game?
It can be tricky to find the pose that sums up that moment or what's going on in the character's head. Getting the Glimmers [characters] to look right and trying to keep them on-model is a challenge, and you've got to take these characters and put them in completely different poses. Model sheets of the characters will give you the shapes, but not necessarily the full performance.

How does the collaborative process work on Disney Lorcana?
We work with some amazing art directors, and they're always keeping you on the right track. You send them some options, see what they like, and work from there. How quickly you nail the idea really depends on the complexity of the image.

Did you have an interest in Disney's animation heritage before working on the game?
I grew up watching Disney, and I'm still very fond of the characters from my childhood.

ANIMAL MAGIC
Madam Mim, the witch from 1960s classic The Sword in the Stone, takes on her elephant form in Kenneth's illustration.

KING OF THE JUNGLE
Character depictions are informed by the source-movie material, but with creative freedom for the artists too.

> 66 Every card is a different ink, so you have to reflect those in the background, in the character, and in the colours. Even so, you're trying to weave that in. **There are so many mechanics** going on in these games, and as an artist I just follow them. The illustration should reflect the mechanics of the card. **My job is to convey** that, and the more I play the game, the more that I understand. The mechanics drive the artwork. 99
>
> **Kenneth Anderson**

3

MICKEY MOUSE
Courageous Sailor

2 **4**

Dreamborn • Hero

SOLID GROUND While this character is at a location, he gets +2 ⬡.

"Golly, this looked a lot easier from the ship. But I know I can make it—the crew is counting on me!"

Kenneth Anderson
115/204 • EN • 6

©Disney
Disney Lorcana

LISANNE KOETEEUW

From Disney-obsessed youngster to Lorcana artist

How did you begin working on Disney Lorcana?
I started in January 2023. Because I knew about Disney Lorcana already, and some of my art heroes were already working on it, my first reaction was "this is not real".

What did Ravensburger and Disney respond to in your portfolio?
What I heard was that "we think your style would be a good fit with what we want for Disney Lorcana". So it wasn't a particular piece but an overall vibe that matched. It's been a great experience to be part of.

How does your work on the game connect to your interest in Disney's animated character heritage?
I grew up on Disney movies, so I've always been a fan. As a child, I would watch the VHS tapes at home and at my grandma's house. It had been a bucket-list thing to work on a Disney product and now it's here. It's awesome! If you'd told five-year-old me, watching The Little Mermaid, she wouldn't have believed it.

What cards and characters have you worked on so far for Disney Lorcana?
The first card that I got to illustrate was Ursula – Deceiver in the Into the Inklands set that came out in March 2024. From that point onwards, I've had cards in every set. I also illustrated Elsa – The Fifth Spirit and Wreck-It Ralph – Demolition Dude, both of which ended up being included in the Amethyst and Ruby starter deck for the Shimmering Skies expansion.

What are some of the creative challenges involved in developing art for the game?
Illustrating Ursula was a bit of a challenge, but you have a lot of freedom in how you want to approach it. You have to get into the mind of each character. Ursula's mindset, for example, is a different vibe than Peter Pan's, so you approach that differently in terms of shapes and gestures, and

what a particular character is supposed to convey.

I've illustrated a lot of villains for the game so far. I've done Ursula, Iago, Captain Hook and Ursula in her form as a bride. I've also illustrated many good characters including Prince Eric, Wreck-It Ralph and Elsa. As I said earlier, the Wreck-It Ralph and Elsa pieces were also included on the set's packaging. When creating packaging characters, they're lit from the front so that there are no shadows.

Which artists influence your work?
J.C. Leyendecker, Alphonse Mucha, Edward Gorey and Loish. I was surprised to be asked to illustrate for Disney Lorcana because I haven't worked with colour for that long; I'm mostly a black and white artist.

SEA WITCH
Ursula, from The Little Mermaid, is given a suitably menacing portrayal by Lisanne.

SETTING THE TONE
The game's design language informs the composition for this illustration of Prince Eric.

DREAMBORN ROYALTY
Elsa from Frozen is one of Disney's most resonant characters.

2

HEIHEI
Not-So-Tricky Chicken

2 **2**

Storyborn • Ally

EAT ANYTHING When you play this character, exert chosen opposing item. It can't ready at the start of its next turn.

OUT TO LUNCH During your turn, this character gains **Evasive**. (They can challenge characters with Evasive.)

©Disney
Disney Lorcana

Lisanne Koeteeuw
146/204 • EN • 6

3

DIVEBOMB
Action

3

WRECK-IT RALPH
Demolition Dude

1 **4**

Storyborn • Hero

REFRESHING BREAK Whenever you ready this character, gain 1 lore for each 1 damage on him.

Lisanne Koeteeuw
104/204 • EN • 5

Disney Lorcana ©Disney

DRAWING WITH HUMOUR
The comical, kinetic energy of Heihei, Wreck-It Ralph and Iago fill their frames.

> 66 My card for **Captain Hook** wasn't exactly what you see in the film, so for reference I had a different costume design that was done by a concept artist. Then you can give your interpretation of that costume, make it **look awesome** and then just focus on the body language, expression and gesture. In my card he was very angry. You get to do a lot of cool things like the **scrunching of the face**. If it's a good idea, there's always a way to make it work. I try to keep in mind that every character is somebody's favourite and so you want to do a good job for every character. 99

Lisanne Koeteeuw

4

ON YOUR FEET! NOW!
Action

Ready all your characters and deal 1 damage to each of them. They can't quest for the rest of this turn.

"Catch them! Before they get away!"

Lisanne Koeteeuw
130/204 • EN • 3

Disney Lorcana ©Disney

ImagineFX
Recent editions

Missed an issue? Here's how you can order previous print or digital editions of ImagineFX

Recent print editions
Visit: **bit.ly/ifxbackissues**

Apple Newsstand
Download us from the Newsstand app on your device or visit: **ifxm.ag/apple-ifx**

Android, PC or Mac
Pocketmags: **pocketmags.com/imaginefx**
Zinio: **zinio.com/gb/imaginefx-m2956**

Other devices
We're available via nook on Barnes & Noble and Amazon's range of Fire tablets.

Only the most recent editions are available in print WHILE STOCKS LAST!

PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 248
February 2025
Dive into the Alien universe with a hive full of xenomorph-shaped treats. Explore the series' impact on popular culture, read our chat with the concept artists of Alien: Romulus, and learn how to make epic fan art just like our cover.

Issue 247
January 2025
Dungeons & Dragons is 50 years old! To celebrate, we look back at the history of the RPG's iconic art, including an interview with the legendary Larry Elmore. There are also top character design tips and advice for magic illustrations.

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. Read 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.

BUY PRINT EDITIONS OF IMAGINEFX AT: bit.ly/ifxbackissues

magazinesdirect.com

RESOURCES ARE INCLUDED WITH PRINT AND DIGITAL EDITIONS*

Issue 244
November 2024

Issue 243
October 2024

Issue 242
September 2024

Issue 241
August 2024

Issue 240
July 2024

Issue 239
June 2024

Issue 238
May 2024

Issue 237
April 2024

Issue 236
March 2024

Issue 235
February 2024

Issue 234
January 2024

Issue 233
Christmas 2023
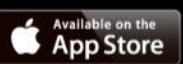
*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Sketchbook

Rossy

Get an eyeful of these goblins! They're a fantasy favourite for this fairy tale-obsessed artist

GOBLIN HOUSE
"This house is just a pile of moss with some carnivorous plants growing on it. It's the complete opposite of a Hobbit house, but probably even more cosy."

FOREST TROLL
"This troll is clothed in a leafy cloak so they can suddenly lay down in the forest leaves and become invisible to any onlookers."

NIGHT TROLLS
"I've been drawing these trolls mainly as designs for some miniatures I'm sculpting. The idea is that they are mysterious but friendly and quite small, rather than the great big trolls that are often seen in fantasy."

AN ELF
"A very small elf with a hat made from a rolled-up leaf and some moss, decorated with a button dropped by a human."

CAVE GOBLINS

"I draw so many goblins as they're my favourite things to draw. These goblins all live in a small cave and, as you can see, the cave is totally full of them with barely any room, but this is the way they like it."

GOBLIN GROUP

"I like to sketch groups of goblins all together – and it's definitely inspired by a particular shot from the film Labyrinth. It's fun to just draw them without planning what they should look like."

> 66 This cave is totally full of Goblins, with barely any room, but this is how they like it 99

PUMPKIN HERALDRY

"This year I sculpted a small range of miniatures that were pumpkin villagers. They were all ordinary villagers but had been transformed into humanoid pumpkins. This was the coat of arms for their town, Squashmarrow."

Sketchbook

FROG MAGIC
"As well as goblins, I like frogs. This is a drawing of a goblin summoning some from the frog dimension. The frogs are safe because they're in bubbles of water."

SNAIL KNIGHT
"This is a noble snail knight. He's especially slow now he's wearing such heavy armour, but is very well protected against birds."
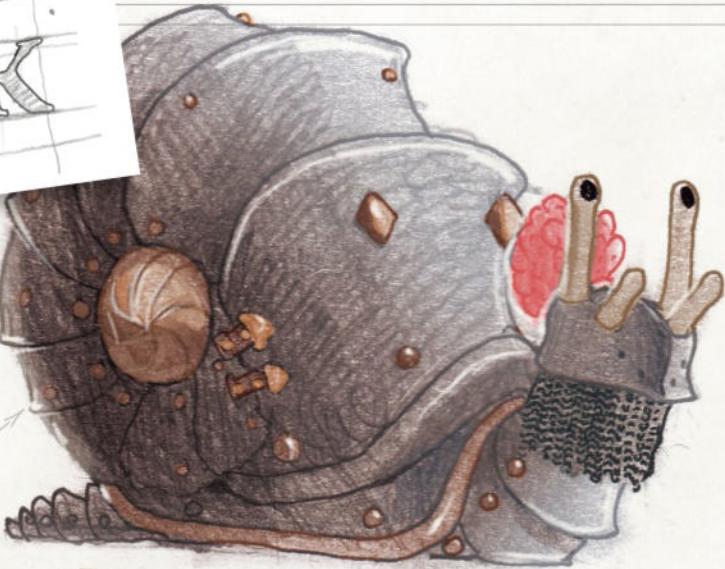
FLAGBEARER
"I coloured this with watercolours. It's probably a goblin, although it could also be a troll. I like the idea of a parade of goblins all led by this tiny, heavily armoured goblin who waves a flag."

FRIENDLY TREE
"I think it's difficult to make a tree-person look both friendly and not-human at the same time, but this one does look sort of friendly."

FRŎGG·MAGICK

SWAMP WITCH
"I've been drawing this character for a while. They're a witch, but don't really know any magic spells. Their hat is always floating because there's a bat stuck in it."

TREES
"I like looking at trees and seeing what faces they have, but sometimes they need some exaggeration to make them look like really spooky tree-people."

SNAIL WIZARD
"This is a wizard who can summon entire armies of snails to do their bidding. But in case that doesn't work they've brought their friend too."

> ❝ **It's difficult to make a tree-person look both friendly and not human at the same time** ❞

Featuring Team Asobi on the creation of *Astro Bot*,
Edge's game of the year. Plus a special report:
How can the game industry's problems be fixed?

Edge 406 is available now from
WHSmith and bit.ly/edge406

VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists
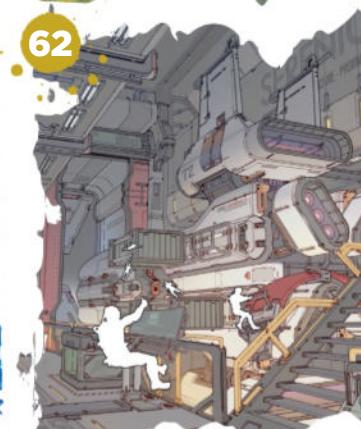
This issue:

16 TIPS TO MASTER BOARD GAME ART

Vincent Dutrait shares concepts and approaches for creating impactful game illustrations while having fun in the process

Artist PROFILE

Vincent Dutrait
LOCATION: South Korea

Having worked on children's books and RPGs, Vincent has found fulfilment and growth in board and card games.
www.vincentdutrait.com

I've been creating illustrations in the good old, traditional way for more than 25 years; hand-drawn and painted using pencils, brushes and acrylic paint on grainy paper. It's proudly upholding the history and heritage of documented, credible and lifelike conventional art, while at the same time developing modern sensitivities, contemporary perspectives and approaches to visual storytelling.

Over the years, I've expanded my skill set, enabling me to create digital graphic designs for numerous projects. My knowledge of the publishing world, coupled with technical and functional expertise, has allowed me to manage and master each step of the graphic production process. Additionally, I've collaborated on many projects from their early stages, offering artistic direction and advice, and contributing to the development of game worlds and themes. This significantly inspires, enriches and complements my work on the images through a variety of new encounters and discoveries.

It's often mistakenly believed that simplicity equates to weakness or shallowness. But an image that appears simple can be incredibly complex, offering multiple levels of interpretation, profound depth, meticulous structure, and execution that challenges an artist. I strive to imbue my illustrations with an apparent simplicity.

1 SPEAK TO THE AUDIENCE

I'm often asked why I still work traditionally. First, physical contact with materials and tools is essential to me. Also, the piece I paint closely resembles the printed product players hold in their hands. Even though the illustration is digitised for printing, we can both "touch" the art. This tangible link bridges the distance between me and the players. It's invaluable for helping fully stay connected to the final product. So always keep the final purpose in mind, not just what's in front of you.
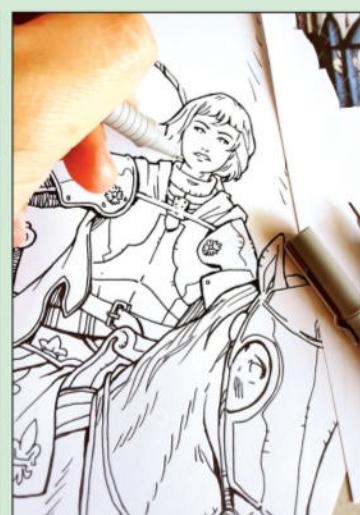
2 UNDERSTAND EVERY LINE

Documentation and references are crucial; I dedicate significant time to research and thoughtful preparation, and rarely produce multiple rough sketches or doodles. Instead, I focus on presenting one main idea for discussion. Preparing illustrations often makes up more than two-thirds of my entire process! Setting the right tone early on is vital to ensure cohesion. A clear and well-defined direction, agreed on by the editor and designer, is essential for achieving a successful final result.

4 BALANCE TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Adaptability is key, and finding tricks and techniques helps. I now create my sketches in separate elements rather than as a single piece. I draw each part individually – foregrounds, characters, the core scene, backgrounds, skies, and so on – and then scan them all. I assemble the image in Photoshop, carefully following layout and spacing needs such as titles, logos and credits. Essentially, I simulate the layered workflow of digital tools physically. This offers more flexibility in developing my sketches and leaves room for adjustments later if needed.

3 A PLATFORM FOR ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Illustrating a board game is fascinating. Depending on its scope, I may handle various image formats, convey multiple messages in one image, or integrate actions into universally understood icons. The game world is incredibly diverse: there are card games, board games, abstract games, varied materials, miniatures, and more. I've never encountered such richness and creativity anywhere else!

> **66** An image that appears simple can be incredibly complex, offering multiple levels of interpretation **99**
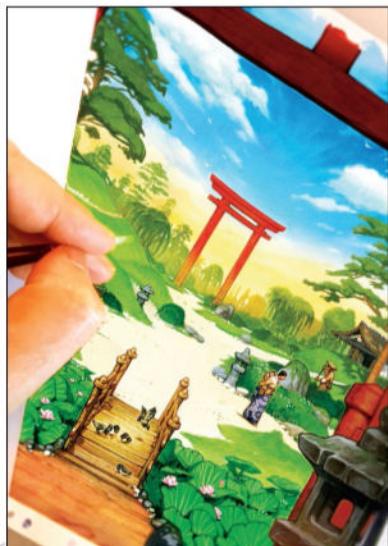
5 GETTING STARTED ON THE FINAL ART

Once the sketch is finalised and approved, I print it on heavy paper, sometimes with slight colour hints as guidance. Then the main part of the work begins: the painting, which I create as a single unified piece, unlike the sketch. After completing the illustration, I scan it and use Photoshop to adjust colours, contrasts, tones and lighting. Occasionally I'll make subtle edits to ensure the image matches my vision. This final step prepares the artwork for printing, delivering a polished, ready-to-use piece to the publisher. ➤➤

6 BIGGER THINKING, LESS TROUBLE

Many board game elements are small, like cards, tokens or specific features. I always create illustrations up to 300 per cent of the final size so I can work comfortably, matching the scale to my tools. It also offers flexibility; if the size or format changes, adjustments can be made more easily. And at its final size, the image gains definition and sharpness.

> **66** The tall, elegant box format lends itself perfectly to developing a sleek and elongated composition **99**

7 BUILDING A VAST PLAYGROUND

Illustrating a game board involves managing defined zones, often interwoven with various interactions. A score track frequently surrounds or is integrated into the board. First I establish a fixed structure, usually based on the prototype provided by the publisher after testing. I create a detailed sketch or mockup as some kind of an advanced prototype. At this stage, gameplay elements such as values, icons and quick colour indications can be added, making it almost playable. Before final colouring, the board layout must be fully approved as adjustments after painting are risky, so I always ensure publishers finalise the design beforehand.

8 CLEARLY DEFINE WHAT YOU CREATE

Illustrating cards or tiles is very different from working on a board. While card or tile illustrations can be functional, they're often more descriptive. Broadly speaking, for a board the challenge is to turn abstraction into illustration. The medium also dictates the approach. Boards are large surfaces, and all their information must be legible from a distance, laid on a table, and viewed at a certain angle. This requires a distinct way of thinking compared to cards, which are held in the hand and viewed up close.

9 RETRO FLOURISHES FOR THE A.R.T. PROJECT

Vincent walks through the thought process behind a board game cover
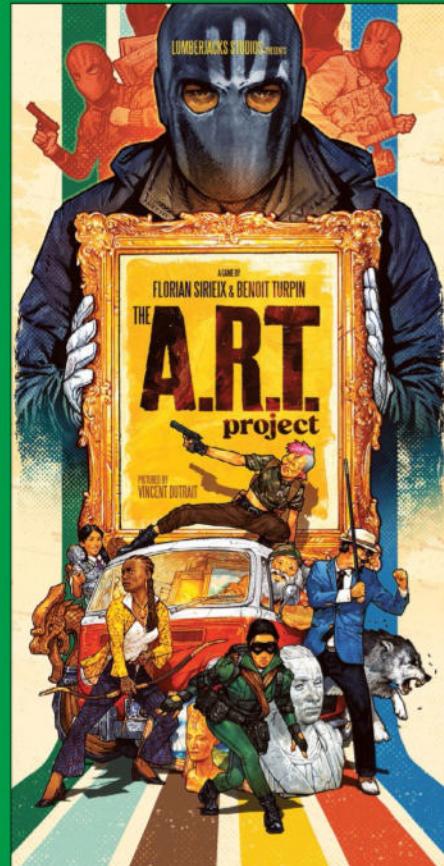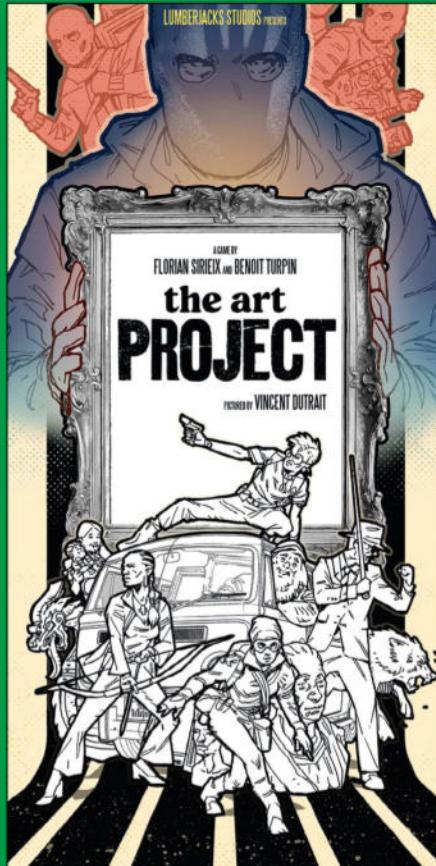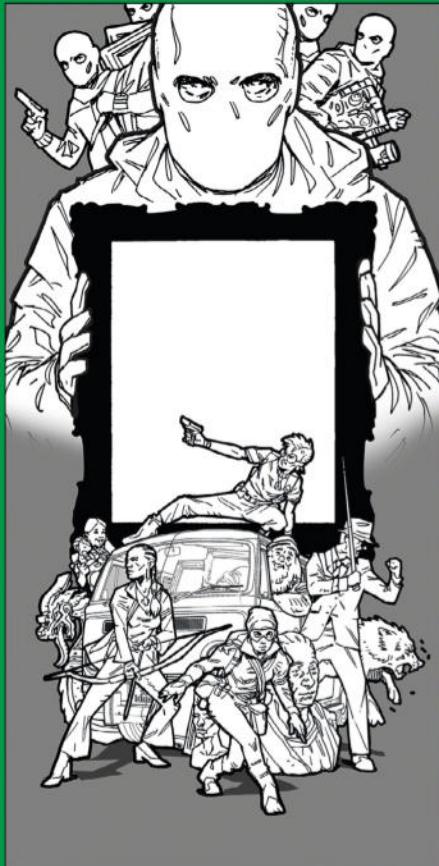
A Maximise your idea

I envisioned this illustration as a poster from the 1980s; a vertical structure supported by vertical bands, and featuring a mix of characters at various scales. Additionally, the tall, elegant box format lends itself perfectly to developing a sleek, elongated composition, which enhances the overall aesthetic and adds a playful visual impact as well.

B Guide the viewer's eye and tell the story

The game's players are the Art Rescue Team and oppose The White Hand, a group behind major art thefts. The image reads top-down, with the villains looming above as a menacing threat. A frame in the centre integrates the title and credits while, below, the full team is ready for action, facing in all directions.

C Old-school vibes and modern thrills

I drew inspiration from the vibrant retro-vintage colours of that era, with a special focus on using textures and visual effects to emphasise the vibe. Notably, the coloured stripes on the ground match with the colours of the characters – colours that will also appear on the players' tokens during the game itself.

10 THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION BUILDS THE MASTERPIECE

For art covers, I tend to structure my illustration using the same framework in three steps. First is the core of the scene: what should players notice straight away as the main focus? Next, elements that complement the core: what enriches the main subject and adds extra information? Finally, the background that sets the scene: what establishes the world, and conveys atmosphere, mood, lighting, or depth of field? This hierarchy ensures clarity and balance while immersing players in the intended narrative and environment. ➨
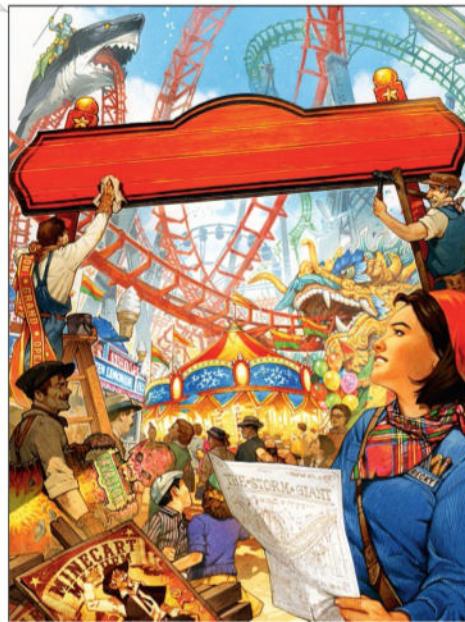
11 HOW TO GRAB THE ATTENTION

An illustration must always be well-anchored, with contrasts playing a crucial role. I often use ratios like 1/4 vs 3/4 or 2/3 vs 1/3 for everything. These create subtle imbalances that add dynamism. The goal is to slightly unsettle the player, making them question while still reassuring them with a solid foundation. In stores, if the illustration grabs their attention and they pick up the box, much of the work is done. If curiosity leads them to flip the box and read the details, that's another step!
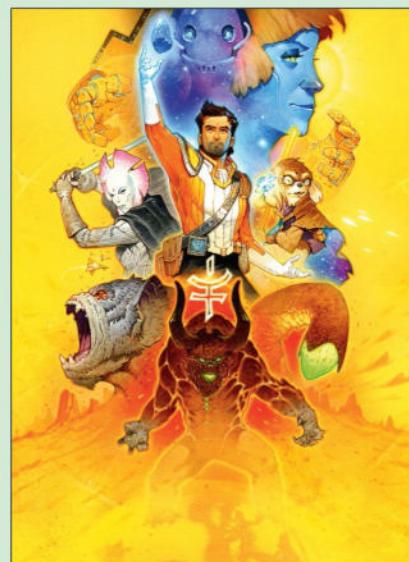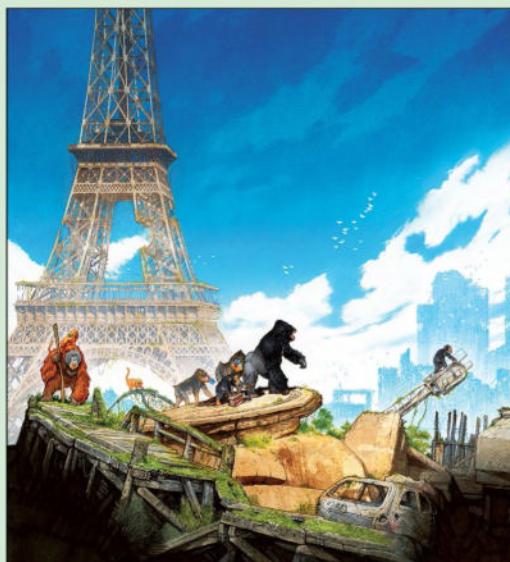
> **I strive to avoid settling for a lukewarm consensus or watered-down compromise**
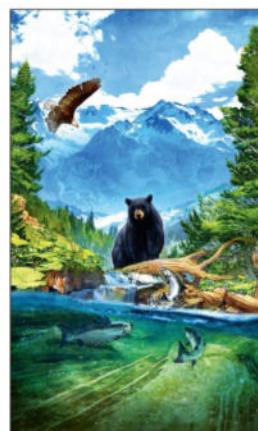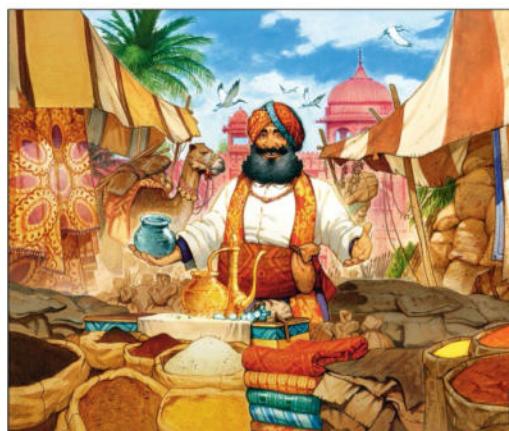
12 DON'T HOLD BACK – WOW THEM!

For colours, I often assemble two dominant colour blocks in opposition, with a third, subtler tone – sometimes just a small accent – to break the balance and counter the apparent harmony. Alternatively, I might use a wide range of colours but focus on contrasts, such as warm tones against cool ones, bright against dark, or vice versa. I also enjoy borrowing techniques from photography, like combining sharp, detailed areas with softer, blurred zones. All of this serves to enhance the illustration, infusing it with energy and vibrancy.

13 BE FIRM IN YOUR DECISION MAKING

It's important to be confident and decisive. I strive to avoid settling for a lukewarm consensus or watered-down compromises at all costs. If an illustration needs to be bright and vivid, I go all in on saturation, even to the point of burning colours. If a key element of the image needs to stand out, it will do so boldly, fully in sight. I firmly believe in an all-or-nothing approach. Either you show something, or you don't. Always keep in mind that the image will be seen by anyone, experienced or not, and must be understood by all.

14 BEYOND THE FRAME

I always make it a point to ensure that my illustrations are clear and convey emotions. I'm not creating documentary-style illustrations, so I don't hesitate to distort or cheat to amplify these effects. I think of illustrations as visions and, above all, as windows and gateways to other worlds and universes. This is why creating a sense of vast depth in my images is so important to me, with wide focal lengths and long perspectives. I want the eye to wander and lose itself within them.

15 WHERE ART FUELS PLAY

Illustrating a board game is a unique task! The visuals must stand alone, telling a story or depicting a scene, while also supporting and enhancing the gameplay, rules and flow. Striking the right balance between function and narrative, description and immersion is essential, but also tricky! I prefer to play the game prototype beforehand to understand the table's atmosphere, and players' interactions and discussions. I can't imagine simply illustrating a checklist or filling in blanks. While that might work, it misses a crucial development aspect that can boost the project significantly, adding both depth and remarkable fluidity to the experience.

16 BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND EXPLORE

I don't work solely for personal enjoyment or to pay bills, but primarily for the audience. It's essential to give meaning to my work beyond creating a pretty image. What matters is that the image remains coherent, believable and plausible. Nothing can be left to chance – every choice must be intentional, with clear reasoning that I can explain and justify. I don't fear self-reflection, even when it's challenging. Artistic growth isn't linear but happens in leaps, unlocked through encounters, readings and discoveries. These moments of progress often come unexpectedly, pushing both my craft and perspective forward.

Technique focus

USE LIGHT TO GUIDE THE EYE

Find out the techniques **Kyle Brown** employed to ramp up the signature look in his Alien fan art

"I wanted to reproduce Queen as closely as possible to the original Stan Winston Studio animatronic, and then place her in a scene. I began by gathering photo references, then sculpted the Queen in ZBrush. Next I used Array Mesh and custom IMM brushes to create details such as the fins and teeth.

The scene itself was made in KeyShot, which allowed me to quickly arrange objects without having to paint during compositing. Values are crucial for guiding the eye, so I created areas of contrast by lighting the Queen from behind. This also allowed me to explore her design in a new way. With the hard base sculpt done, I can easily drop her into other environments."

Artist
PROFILE

Kyle Brown
LOCATION: US

Lead concept artist Kyle works in games and live action. He adores all things Star Wars, Aliens and Jurassic Park. His list of projects include Star Trek: Discovery, Star Citizen and Blood Line: A Rebel Moon Game.
https://bit.ly/3ZsuMGX

AIRLOCK
DEPRESSURIZING IN PROGRESS
PLEASE MAKE SURE ALL MAG-ANCHOR EQUIPMENTS ARE ACTIVE

HANGER A1
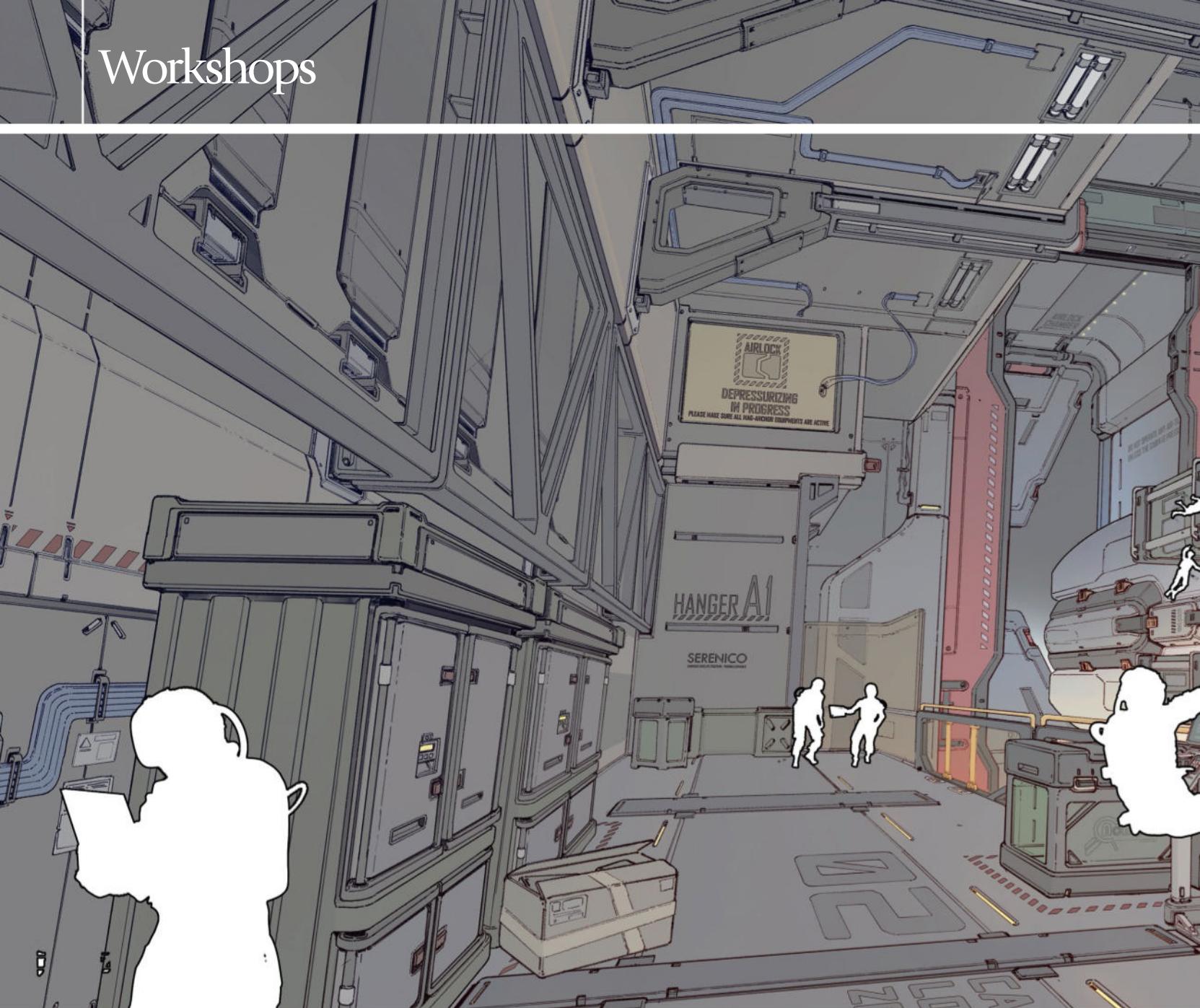
SERENICO

Technique focus

MAINTAIN FOCUS IN YOUR DETAILS

Gin Zhang explains why keeping an image balanced is vital for ensuring readability

"Step inside the USNS SERENICO Composite Colonial Satellite from my larger worldbuilding project. With this piece, I wanted to hint at a larger facility through the depiction of a smaller space.

I started with a rough 3D blockout and a quick sketch of the overall composition and props. Most of this process happens on one canvas, but more complex objects were sketched onto a blank page.

The key was to balance the details across the canvas at every stage of the process. If this wasn't maintained, information would have been lost and the focus would have been scattered. This is especially the case with fine line work, which brings out more details than painting."

Artist **PROFILE**

Gin Zhang
LOCATION: US

Gin is a freelance concept artist whose focus is on hard surfaces and industrial designs, all imbued with a fascination for worldbuilding.
https://bit.ly/3ZAjoYk
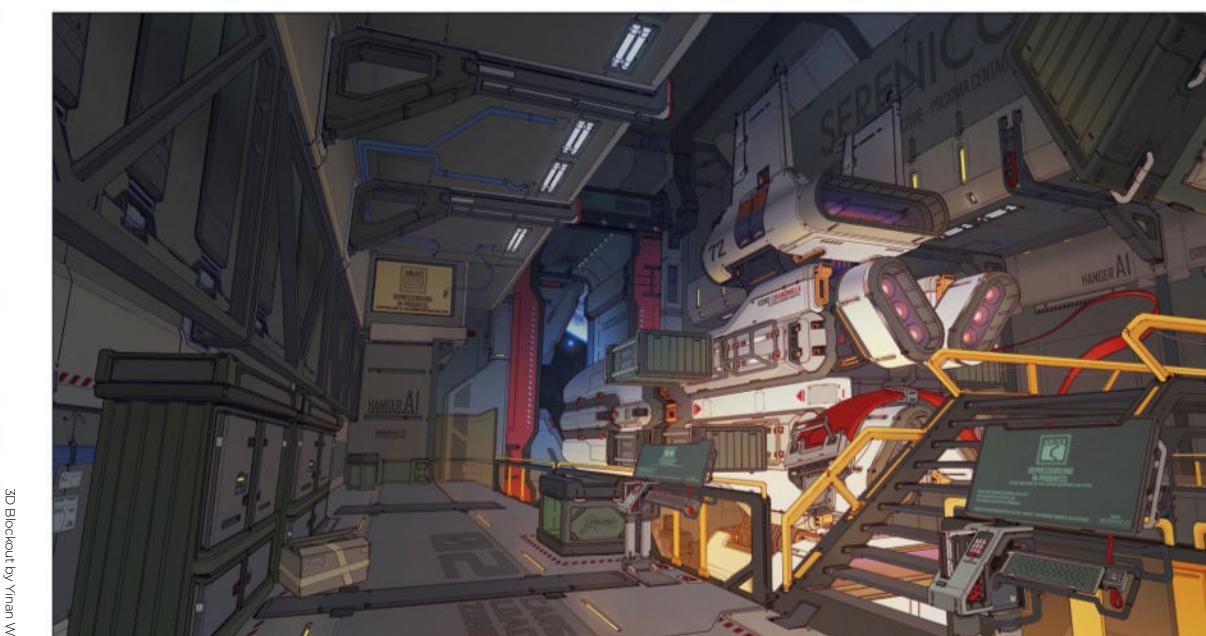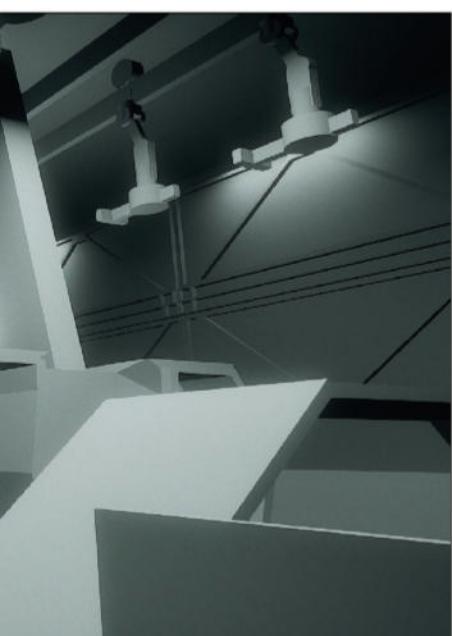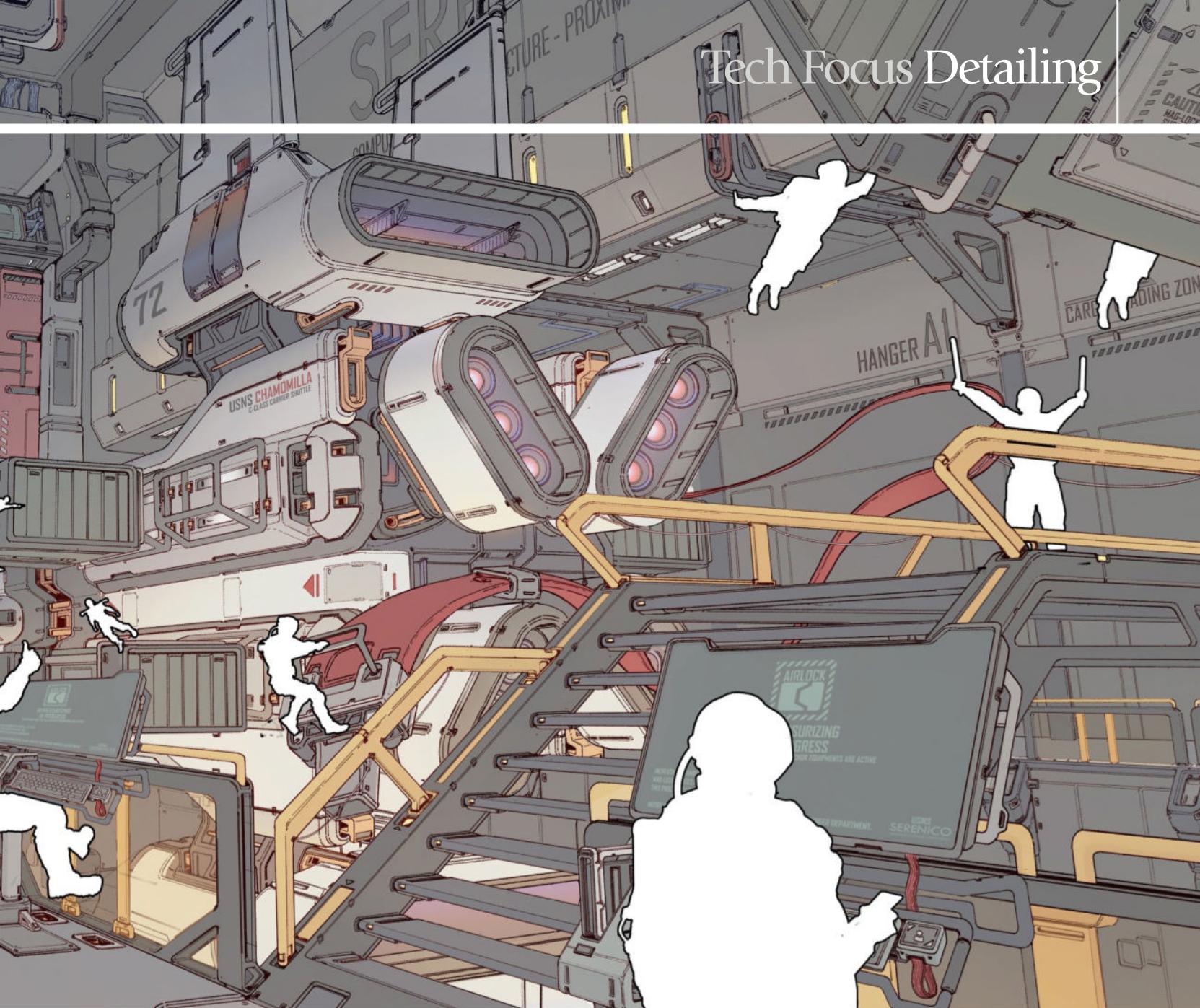
3D Blockout by Yinan Wei

Photoshop
DESIGN A FIERCE ROBOT CONCEPT

Michael Michera showcases his handy process for creating a memorable, animal-inspired machine

Artist
PROFILE

Michael Michera
LOCATION: Poland

Concept artist Michael specialises in designing creatures and robots. He has worked on projects including Transformers: Rise of the Beasts.
https://bit.ly/4f4VBoV

The goal for this workshop is to design a robot concept that's rich in detail while simplifying the entire process. I'm excited to share my approach to creating robots with 2D techniques, and will demonstrate this with an example made for my personal project MACHIMERA.

In this case, I needed a design for a quadruped robot inspired by a creature, but in a way that avoided fully resembling any real-life animal. To achieve this, I decided to combine photobashing with digital painting.

Before we get to work, it will be helpful to gather reference images showing various machines, vehicles and devices. Images of engines and cables, as well as textiles, fabrics, and anything else that fits with the concept and aesthetic we want to achieve will come in handy.

How I create...
STRIKING MECHANICAL BEASTS

1 Sketch a silhouette
When planning the concept, the first and most important step is defining the robot's silhouette. At this stage, it's worth considering dividing its structure into the armoured and exposed regions. In this case, the light grey areas are designated for armour, while the darker ones represent all the exposed parts of the robot – soft fabrics, cables and artificial muscles.

2 Incorporate fine details
To get a natural look and work faster, keep perspective simple. Remember, you're creating a concept, not an illustration. For the same reason, I recommend avoiding dynamic shadows. It's best to think of a main, diffused light source rather than creating something more dramatic. Paint details by hand for a more natural look, and use black and white to focus on the design.

3 Add colours and finalise
For cohesion, I focused on warm shades of purple, copper and cool blue tones, with colours on separate blending layers. Typically I use Soft Light or Overlay, but you can experiment with Color Dodge or Multiply. To save time, I copied already established design elements from the legs and adjusted for the pose. Finally, refine details and add effects like glowing eyes.

BUILDING A MACHINE

Plan with a grid
To simplify grasping perspective while working, you can sketch a rough grid to guide the overall design. However, when drawing a posed character, keep in mind that each body part will have its own alignment relative to the others. I recommend not sticking too rigidly to the lines or being overly precise, as this can slow you down and make the design appear stiff. Since it's a concept, there's no need to obsess over perfect perspective. Also, remember that the pose doesn't have to be overly dynamic; keeping it simple lets you focus more on the design itself.

RESOURCES
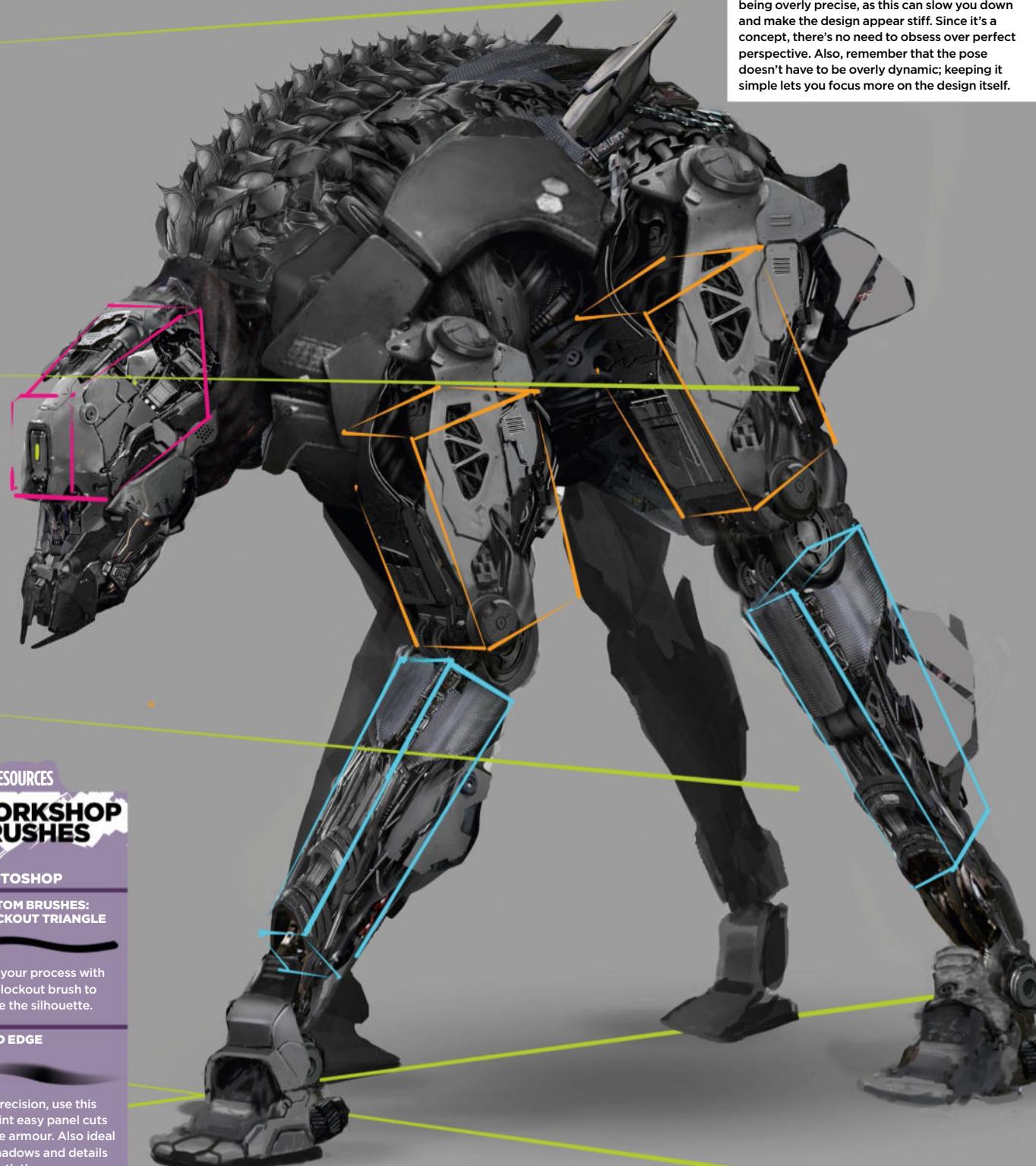
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: BLOCKOUT TRIANGLE

Start your process with this blockout brush to define the silhouette.

HARD EDGE

For precision, use this to paint easy panel cuts on the armour. Also ideal for shadows and details beneath the armour.

GET YOUR RESOURCES

Background trick

To elevate the presentation, consider adding a gradient background with a softly fading pattern. This will introduce depth to the image, bringing a focus to the forefront and making our robotic creature stand out. A well-placed shadow beneath the character will further ground the machine in 3D space, enhancing its realism in the process.

Use colour sparingly

Limiting yourself to a maximum of three values will help you distinguish different types of robot parts more easily and keep your design organised. At this stage, don't worry too much about shadows; we'll just use simple, soft lighting to avoid the complexity of dramatic shading. This allows us to focus on the functionality of our machine's shapes.

Palette focus

Restricting yourself to a simple colour scheme helps establish a clear and cohesive aesthetic for your design. Since our robot is already rich in detail, adding too many colours could result in visual chaos and overwhelm the composition. I chose three main colours and added them to different parts of the robot.

Maintain your vision

Keeping everything in greyscale eliminates distractions caused by colour, making it easier to focus on the design itself and control the values. To quickly convert a colour image to black and white in Photoshop, use the shortcut Alt+Shift+Ctrl+B.

Photobash new elements

Once you've established the silhouette of your robot, you can start cutting out elements from photos of machines and adapt them to fit the shapes you want to create. Don't hesitate to stretch, cut and modify them. At this point, we're not concerned with the details.

Technique focus

GET PERFECT PROPORTIONS

Nicolás Amarilla uses 3D models for a little assistance to achieve a flawless composition

"This piece combines BMX culture and bold character design, blending urban energy with a dynamic, tiger-inspired twist. The tentacles were particularly challenging – they needed to feel alive while seamlessly framing the composition and enhancing the sense of motion in the scene. A big focus for me was creating a pose that pops off the page and conveys the character's energy.

I started off sketching the bike by hand, but later incorporated a 3D model as a reference to nail the angle and proportions accurately. It's a great method for tackling tricky objects while keeping the artwork both sharp and dynamic."

Artist
PROFILE

Nicolás Amarilla
LOCATION: Argentina

Nicolás is a concept artist at Dardo Studios who specialises in creating bold character designs, dynamic poses, and stories that combine urban influences with energetic visuals.
https://bit.ly/4iD279w

Technique focus
COMMUNICATE WITH COLOUR

Liang Mark reveals how they bring emotion to narrative through the use of their palette

"This concept design was created for my personal project CROW, which tells a story of guardianship. The silver object at the centre of the piece is the core of the story. These are scattered divine relics that are protected by mage-like characters.

I usually expand on the contents of my painting through storytelling.

For example, this piece is connected to a storyboard from CROW that I drew a year ago. I started with black and white sketches in order to explore the narrative, and then experimented with colours that were needed to serve the story and emotions of the piece. I find this technique useful across a variety of mediums, including 3D modelling and photobashing."

Artist
PROFILE

Liang Mark
LOCATION: China

Riot Games art director Mark aims to improve their visual storytelling and artistic expression skills with every new piece that they create.
https://bit.ly/4gbYCVN
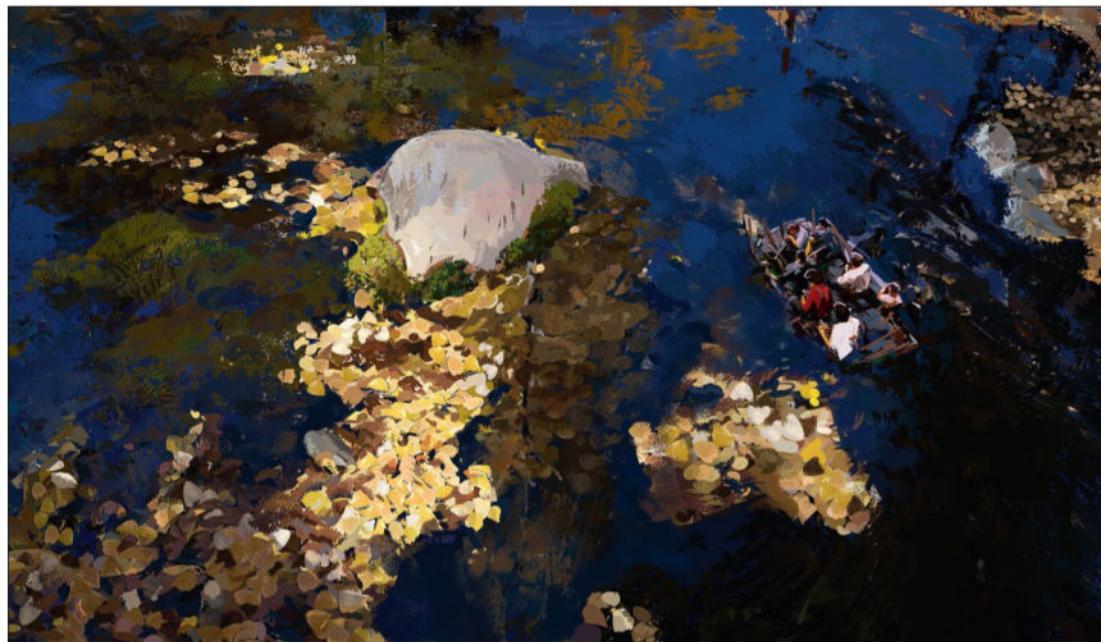
Reviews

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!

A sleek design makes for a low profile on your desk.

Huion Inspiroy Frego M

SMALL TABLET, BIG IDEAS A surprisingly brilliant wireless drawing tablet aimed at the needs of digital artists, with a delightful surface and wireless capabilities

Price £105/$100   **Company** Huion   **Web** http://store.huion.com

The Inspiroy Frego M is Huion's latest graphics tablet pitched at beginner artists and creatives, or anyone looking for a well-priced drawing tablet. Promising cutting-edge levels of accuracy, alongside wireless capabilities to aid a tidy desk or a more useful travel experience, this is a small drawing tablet with big ideas.

The yearly new release cycle for drawing tablets brings the latest levels of accuracy, sensitivity and maybe the odd new feature, but fundamentally they all do the same thing, so now the manufacturers are all vying for your consideration based on nuances in design, function or tech. We've had Xencelabs' Pen Tablet Medium bundle for value, XPPen's Magic Drawing Pad for innovation, and the Wacom One series for tech at a lower price.

FULL PACKAGE

The Frego M comes with everything you need to get started, including a stylus with 10 spare nibs and a USB-C to USB-A cable, and for the most part is well made. Given its price, we thought it might have skimped a little and, while that's true, it's not where it counts. The build is excellent; the tablet is light while still feeling high quality, especially impressive considering it has a decent battery crammed in.

The inclusion of a right-angled connector is great, helping to keep your desk neat and free of clutter.

The skinny Frego M measures in at a mere 8mm thick.

© Huion

The top edge houses a fabric loop for storing the stylus, a USB-C port and the power button, all of which feel good. The fabric band is probably only compatible for the slim pen packaged in, but that's to be expected.

There are four rubberised feet to prevent it from skittering all over your desk. These are low profile, keeping the working surface as low as possible.

Accurate, comfortable and easy to use – just what you need for prolonged drawing sessions.

The stylus feels good in the hand. It's slim but comfortable, with a choice of nibs. Just avoid the felt tips!

You won't see this tablet wandering thanks to the nifty little feet on its underbelly.

A handy fabric loop makes sure you never lose your stylus.
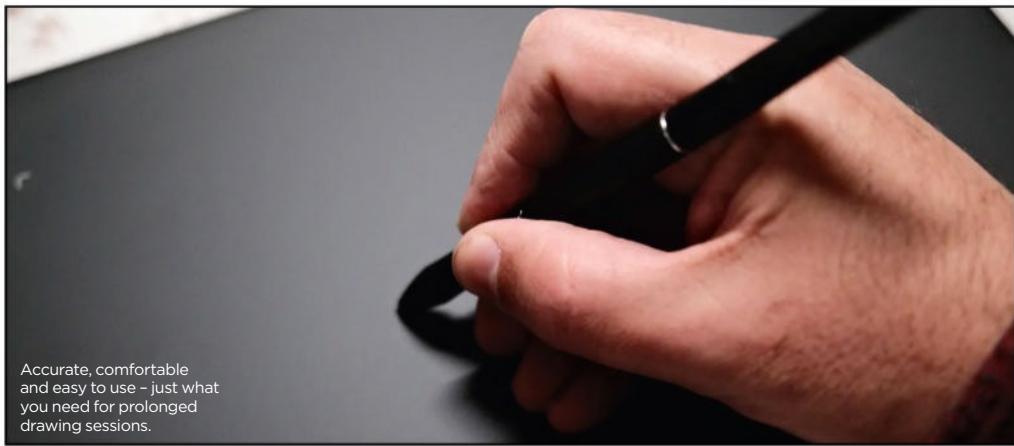
You'll find a wonderfully tactile surface on the Frego M, even without using the felt stylus tips.

Using Bluetooth means you can hook up the Frego M to Android or IOS devices. We see the appeal of this but, in reality, if you're serious enough about your art to buy one of these, you may already have an iPad or similar. Still, it's a nice option.

TACTILE SURFACE

The Frego M has nailed the texture and feel of the surface, for the most part. It has a lovely, fine texture when used with a standard nib, while the felt nib was too coarse and scratchy, and also quite loud.

The buttons on the stylus are well placed, the ratio of tablet size to active area feels just about right, and the addition of Bluetooth means you can sit back and use it on your lap without the need for a longer cable, or any cable at all. That's quite a freeing experience.

Anything a device can do to reduce strain is a big win. The Frego M has a sloped front edge, which, although a minor detail, makes a big difference over the course of a working day. We never felt the need for a drawing glove as, although textured, the surface is kind of satin finished, so neither too slippy or sticky.

Accuracy levels for this type of tablet are now so high that it's hard to discern the differences, and the Frego M is no different. It excels, with 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity, can detect 90 degrees of tilt, and with a resolution of 5,080 lines per inch you'd be hard pushed to notice any issues.

The only thing missing about using the Frego M was the lack of a pen stand. The fabric loop is great for travel or longer-term storage, preventing you from losing your pen, but we would like to have seen them include even a basic stand. Ideally one that could house the spare nibs, as the tiny plastic bag they come in doesn't really cut it.

There's no angled support here but that's okay, as they're most needed for pen displays. If you want something like that, grab a cheap laptop stand.

HANDLING THE PRESSURE

The stylus uses Huion's PenTech 3.0+, which has a tiny 0.4mm nib retraction, rather than the slightly squishy-feeling nibs you may have experienced. It has 8,192 levels of pen pressure to match Wacom and Xencelabs, but lags XPPen's 16,384 levels on its latest stylus.

The body of the pen is smooth and slim, with little to no bulge near the tip. In some cases, adding a little width nearer the nib can be helpful to hold your stylus steady, and would be handy here as the casing is smooth. That said, there were no problems to be found when drawing with it.

The stylus has two programmable buttons on the side. They feel nice and responsive but it's a shame there's no rear button for erasing or any other use. It comes with a felt nib installed and a little bag with spare standard nibs and the removal tool.

The Frego M can be connected to your host device in one of two ways. It comes with a right-angled USB-C cable, which is a nice touch as it keeps your desk neater than a standard cable. You can also connect via Bluetooth, which is a much more elegant solution, if it works. Bluetooth 5.0 is used here, meaning it can connect to more devices, though only one at a time.

> 66 It has a lovely, fine texture when used with a standard nib, although the felt nib was too coarse and scratchy 99

VERDICT

The Frego M is a fantastic tablet and comes in at a great price to boot. Wireless connection provides a wonderful experience, although it's best to check the Bluetooth compatibility, as we had mixed results on some machines. The overall drawing experience is great and it works well for general computing.

Pros
■ Excellent accuracy
■ Very tactile drawing experience
■ Wireless capabilities are very useful

Cons
■ Bluetooth connection issues
■ No pen stand

Rating
★★★★½

There's more than a hint of Apple's iPad design in the MatePad 12X.

The impressive M-Pencil stylus has over 10,000 levels of pressure sensitivity.

A limited app selection is likely to hinder the tablet, despite its features offering broad appeal.

Images © Future/Ian Evenden

Huawei MatePad 12X Papermatte Edition

SOFTWARE CONUNDRUM A decent tablet with an excellent screen, but it's held back by the limited availability of apps

Price £550 /$700 **Company** Huawei **Web** https://consumer.huawei.com

Huawei has had its ups and downs, but produces good-quality mobile devices with a quirky software infrastructure that's not nearly as limited as it used to be.

The MatePad 12X Papermatte edition comes in at about the same price as a low-end iPad. It offers a good experience as a tablet, but anyone wedded to specific iOS or Android apps may want to check if their preferred software is available.

It's a standard rectangular slate with a matte-finished LCD screen that's easy on the eye and perfect for reading. It's not rough like a Kindle Paperwhite, but doesn't reflect light like an OLED either. It feels good in the hand, not too thin that you can't use it without a case, and there's a big dose of Apple-like design in its look.

Huawei still has a software problem due to the fact it can't ship with the Google Play Store, despite running on Android. There are ways around this, and while Huawei's AppGallery has a selection of apps, big names like Chrome aren't there, requiring you to download an APK file or find a way to circumvent the restriction.

The app situation may not be optimal, but Huawei has equipped the tablet with a painting app, GoPaint, that superficially resembles Procreate and can export as PSD, JPEG or PNG files. Combine this with the third-gen M-Pencil stylus, which boasts over 10,000 levels of pressure, and you have a nice drawing tablet. The feel of the screen is natural and less slippery thanks to its matte coating.

Some of our testing was restricted by the lack of apps, but the battery life

> **❝ Huawei still has a software problem as it can't ship with the Google Play Store, despite running on Android ❞**

The keyboard is connected wirelessly and attached using magnets.

seems generally excellent, capable of going all day with a mix of reading, browsing, painting and a few games. We were able to get both Geekbench and PCMark running, but some of the tests wouldn't complete. The Geekbench CPU numbers are about half those of the Samsung Galaxy S10+, a much more expensive tablet, but were slightly ahead of the Kindle Fire Max 11, which is cheaper yet just as limited when it comes to software.

Grabbing the bundle with the magnetic keyboard and M-Pencil is a great way to pick up a complete system, and it doesn't feel overpriced for what you get, just as long as you can live with the limited software catalogue available.

VERDICT

Digital painters and magazine readers will enjoy the MatePad 12X Papermatte Edition. Its matte screen produces plenty of brightness and colour while fending off reflections, and the integration of both the keyboard case and stylus into HarmonyOS is top-notch. For everyone else, it's a good choice as a media consumption tablet, but you'll need to check favoured app availability first.

Pros
■ Excellent matte LCD screen
■ Bundled keyboard and stylus available
■ Decent battery life

Cons
■ No Google Play
■ Not the most powerful tablet
■ Requires yet user another account

Rating
★★★⯪☆

An over-engineered look won't be to everyone's taste, but you can't argue with the chair's price.

Boulies EP460

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE
A great office chair for bargain-seeking buyers

Price £280/$370
Company Boulies
Web https://boulies.co.uk

RATING ★★★★☆

The Boulies EP460 is a bit more of an interesting chair than the majority of budget chairs out there. It's certainly not perfect, but offers a lot more than others do within its budget price range.

For a start, the EP460 is very comfortable to sit in. We used the chair for just over a month, and racked up almost 1,000 hours. It's airy, with its mesh back and seat being great for airflow. You can slide the seat front and back to sit your legs comfortably, and the armrests, while not soft, are comfy enough to take your weight on an elbow without discomfort.

For its price, the EP460 offers great ergonomics. The most noticeable feature is the lumbar support, which is adjustable by lifting the lumbar and whole back panel up or down. As it's a wide support, you won't press your back against it at the wrong angle either.

The arms offer more than they have any right to. At this price you usually get armrests that go up and down. These guys also go forward and backwards, and rotate. There's also a leg rest under the seat that allows you to kick your feet up.

Logitech MX Creative Console

WORKFLOW WONDER Streamline your creativity and get jobs done in record time with this handy shortcut keypad and dial

Price £200/$200 **Company** Logitech **Web** www.logitech.com

Logitech has a long history of making some of the best-loved peripherals in the industry. Its latest release is a productivity tool called the MX Creative Console, which eliminates unnecessary mouse clicks.

The console consists of a keypad and a secondary contextual dial. This pairing lets users control creative applications such as Photoshop and Illustrator like never before. Every button and dial is fully customisable, so you can tailor it to your workflow. The inclusion of user presets also means you can connect directly with your most commonly used actions.

This little device is out to boost your productivity and enable you to focus on the creative process rather than repetitive tasks. Without overstating it, the console completely transforms how you create.

The USB-C keypad contains nine shortcut buttons and two scrubber buttons for moving through 15 available pages. The shortcut buttons are full-colour LCDs that can be customised to any application or shortcut you want. The Bluetooth dialpad is much freer to sit anywhere on your desk. Other than the dial, there are four buttons for directional control as well as a fluid roller.

The dialpad can operate any tool within apps. That includes adjusting

The keypad has a USB-C connection, while the dialpad is wireless and free to roam your desk.

The LCD shortcut buttons are bright enough to work in well-lit environments.

brush size or adding layers. In essence, if you already do it with your mouse and keyboard, you can do it with the MX Creative Console. It's possible to customise to your heart's content, but if you want an easy life, there are dozens of pre-made profiles for Adobe software and other apps.

From a functional point of view, every button, dial and scroller works reliably and efficiently. It's easy to make precise adjustments without losing control of what you're doing. The dial moves incredibly smoothly with a perfect level of friction. We could rotate it all day long!

The console is not only well-built but thoughtfully configured. The fact everything can be customised means all you have to worry about is getting used to where your new controls are. As with any new process, after a little while it becomes second nature and your muscle memory adapts.

The free Logi Options+ app also makes what might have been a cumbersome experience enjoyable.

VERDICT

The Logitech MX Creative Console is a must-have for anyone eager to streamline their workflow. The shortcut pad and dial are the perfect combo for getting the job done in a fraction of the time thanks to the shortcuts and preset actions. It's beautifully designed and well-engineered so it looks great and functions brilliantly. At this price, there's nothing better. It's a real must buy!

Pros
■ Adobe compatible
■ Infinite options for customisation
■ Beautifully designed

Cons
■ Dial is only battery operated
■ Installation process can take a while

Rating
★★★★½

The updated MacBook Pro's design remains as sleek as ever.

The machine's 1080p webcam features tech designed to work with the lighting around you.

If you want a sturdy, reliable productivity laptop the MacBook does the job, albeit at a price.

Apple MacBook Pro (M4, 2024)

PREMIUM PRICE, MIDDLING GRAPHICS There are few surprises found on board a well-built, reliable and fast machine, but the GPU performance could be better

Price From £1,600/$1,600 **Company** Apple **Web** www.apple.com

The Apple MacBook Pro is the world's most famous laptop for a reason. It's been one of the best laptops for creatives for 18 years.

And the new Apple MacBook Pro (M4, 2024) continues Apple's proud tradition of well-built, efficient and trustworthy laptops for creative pros. Except for one thing. If you deal with 3D modelling, heavy video rendering or animation, the base-spec M4 chip isn't going to cut it.

The MacBook Pro has always been a substantial laptop, and the feel of the latest one is satisfyingly solid. It has the same 79-key Magic Keyboard we've all grown to know, with ambient backlighting and light key response with that teeny click sensation.

The screen on our review model is the smaller 14-inch proposition, and as usual it's a brilliant and vibrant Liquid Retina XDR display, with 557 nits of max brightness as measured by a trusty Datacolor Spyder X2 Ultra. Whether you're working in Photoshop or watching films, it's a very pleasing experience with this display.

Inside you'll find the new M4 chip. We're reviewing the base M4 model, with 16GB RAM and the 10-core M4 chip, and what the newest Apple Silicon provides is incredible efficiency and battery life, which measured at a staggering 22 hours and 48 minutes in our streaming video test. There's 1TB of storage onboard here, but that can be customised from 512GB to 2TB, and the RAM can be upgraded all the way to 32GB.

The MacBook Pro, as the name suggests, is a premium laptop for people with premium needs.

Apple has upped the number of Thunderbolt 4 ports by one.

Benchmark testing reveals that, in most respects, the starting price is well earned. In Geekbench and Cinebench testing, the single-core efficiency numbers are unmatched, with impressive multi-core results for the price bracket.

But that's only half the story, as things stop looking so rosy for GPU-intensive tasks. The Geekbench GPU score trails some Intel Arc Graphics-powered setups, and the Cinebench GPU score trails an average Nvidia RTX 3050-equipped machine.

The MacBook Pro M4 is great for those who work with static images or light content creation, but then again, those people could also go for the more affordable MacBook Air.

> **The MacBook Pro M4 is great for those who work with static images or dabble in light content creation**

VERDICT

The latest MacBook Pro won't surprise anyone who's ever been near one of its predecessors. It's well built and the screen is great. But its 3D and video capability is poor for such a high-end laptop.

Pros
- Great design
- Easy set-up and use
- Fantastic for static visual creative pursuits

Cons
- Poor graphics performance
- Very expensive

Rating
★★★★☆

ASUS ProArt P16

GRAND SLAM ASUS has hit a home run with its expanded ProArt laptop lineup, and this is a proud creative flagbearer

Price £2,500/$2,700 **Company** ASUS **Web** www.asus.com

You'll find a plentiful selection of ports to hook up all your gear.

The ASUS ProArt P16 takes direct aim at the MacBook Pro and manages to rise to the challenge.

Externally it's near-identical to last year's Studiobook, with a 16-inch OLED screen, large touchpad and a well-spaced backlit keyboard. There's also the ASUS Dial tucked away in the corner of the touchpad, which offers quick satisfaction when changing brush sizes in Photoshop by simply twirling your finger, or any other programmable function you want.

The screen is ASUS' famous OLED offering, with touchscreen and 10-point touch recognition, with a glorious 4K resolution. On the inside, we have the AMD Ryzen AI 9 HX 370 CPU, supported by the new AMD XDNA NPU. The CPU has 12 cores and 24 threads, so is comparable to the M3 Pro chip from Apple, and to help it there's up to 64GB of RAM and an Nvidia GeForce RTX 4070 Laptop GPU for 8GB of visual punch. Being a ProArt model, it comes installed with Studio drivers rather than the game-ready ones.

We're pretty sure you won't find a more capable pro laptop for the price. With benchmark scores that in many cases rival (and sometimes outdo) the MacBook Pro M3 Max, it's ready for any studio setting. PCMark testing shows top-level scores in every category, excelling the most in Digital Content Creation thanks to its combo of a 4070 GPU and dedicated NPU.

Away from the benchmark tests, the ProArt P16 effortlessly loads and runs several demanding applications at the same time in time-sensitive, real-life situations at work. The OLED touchscreen was also impeccable, being responsive and providing 396 nits of whole-screen brightness (out of a stated 400), with partial-screen, localised numbers much higher. The colour gamut is brilliant too, with 100% Adobe RGB, 97% sRGB, and 100% P3 coverage. Battery life is also improved at 10 hours, 23 minutes in our video streaming test.

VERDICT

The ProArt P16 is the flagship of ASUS' new range for creative professionals and proudly succeeds last year's Studiobook as a powerful, feature-rich, studio-ready laptop. The gorgeous screen matches fearsome internals. Against even the mightiest rivals it packs a punch.

Pros
■ Very powerful
■ Beautiful screen
■ Perfect for creatives

Cons
■ Smudges easily
■ Not the prettiest laptop design

Rating
★★★★½

The ProArt P16's screen not only offers beautiful visuals, but responsive touch control as well.

Choose between black, grey or the snazzy blue and white version that we tested out.

ErgoChair Ultra

STYLE AND SUPPORT
We rate an office chair that covers all the bases

Price From £770/$600
Company Autonomous
Web www.autonomous.ai

RATING ★★★★☆

There are many ergonomic chairs out there that excel at support, or go all in on style, but few hit both nails on the head like ErgoChair Ultra. It's a fairly priced office chair with decent support and a nice selection of colours on what is a pretty unique-looking design.

It's comfortable to sit in and smooth to move around on; fairly light and ideal for sitters that like to move around – rolling out from the desk or sliding over to a colleague. That means the ErgoChair Ultra doesn't have the monumental comfort that comes with heavy chairs. But that's fine; this isn't a luxury chair, it's an all-rounder that does lots of things well.

Part of the comfort is due to the plastic skeletal back and seat. This resists to whatever part of your back and bum is pressing against the seat, absorbing backwards and downwards movement. This chair does hit the sweet spot with its comfortable-yet-firm feel. You can't sink into it like the best out there, but you feel cradled, held, without it being unyielding and hard. The arms were a little rattly, but don't move when resting on them.

ImagineFX
Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists
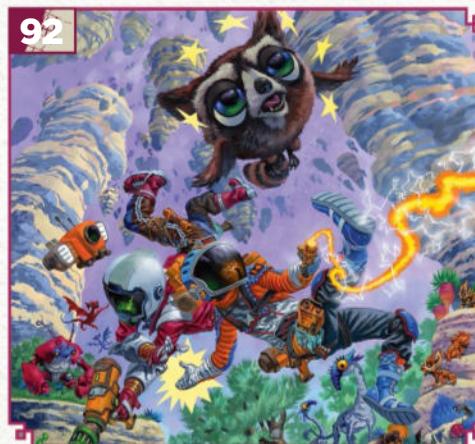
AdobeStock / Prostock-studio

© Warner Bros.

© Racoon Logic Studios

This issue:

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Jon Sommariva

LOCATION: Australia **MEDIA:** Pencil, ink, markers
WEB: www.instagram.com/sommariva

Jon is a lifelong comic book artist with a career that has spanned over two decades. His work has been published by all major comic book companies, and is known for its energetic style and chibi characters.

1 NINJA TURTLES 1980S ALLEY COVER

"I had tons of fun drawing this version of the Turtles. My goal was to capture the feeling I got playing the old arcade game."

2 POPEYE COVER: OLIVE IS FED UP

"I love the old rubber hose animation style of the 30s, and felt this would be a good chance to explore that in my own style."

3 CHIBI HARLEY QUINN

"I have drawn many versions of Harley, but the original suit is always my favourite. I was asked to draw her in my chibi style for this particular commission."

4 GRACIE AND THE FROG BALLOONS

"Gracie is from the graphic novel Neverlanders I co-created with Tom Taylor. This was a birthday present, hence the balloons!"

Cleonique Hilsaca

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Ink, watercolour **WEB:** www.cleonique.com

Cleonique is a Honduran illustrator whose art is featured in picture books, newspapers, magazines, board games and galleries. She imbues her work with whimsy and a hint of horror from her love of fantasy and mythology.

1 CATAPPLES
"Created for the Ethereal Orchard show at the WOW x WOW gallery. This painting was inspired by my precious cat, Fig."

2 SNACK
"Another WOW x WOW piece, this time for the Monochromagic 7 show. This was an exploration piece, created from loose sketches through to a finished painting."

3 LECHUZA
"This piece was made for Giant Robot Store's Creatures of Flight exhibition. Lechuzas are witches that transform into owls in Mexican mythology."

4 FAIRY TALE LAND
"Created for the show Tiny Doors & Friends at ABV Gallery, and inspired by my love for fairy tales."

Flintica

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Watercolour **WEB:** www.instagram.com/flintica

Flintica is a fantasy artist and creature designer on a mission to mystify nature, inspire dreaming, and raise awareness of ecological and social topics. "We are nature and art is what makes us so wonderfully human."

1 STORYTELLER
"Connected to the big mycelium, the Storyteller witnessed all of Earth's legends and projects them into your mind with his third eye, so you may be inspired by them."

2 WHAT MAKES US HUMAN
"Inspired by Stone Age cave paintings, this creature came to existence. Art like this empowers us to time travel and explore what our early ancestors have felt."
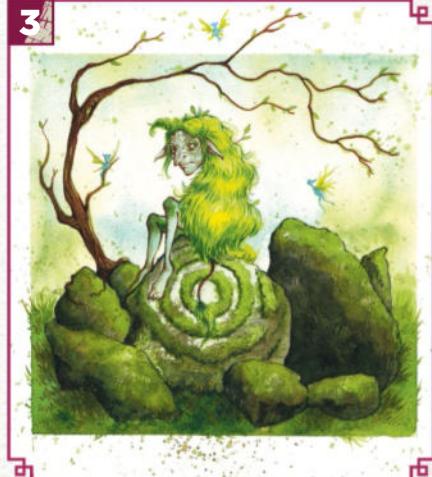
3 GUARDING STONES
"This Trow, inspired by folklore of the Orkney and Shetland islands, is guarding a collection of ancient stones."

4 SELKIE
"The symbolism of the Selkie played a huge part in my self-discovery journey. Here she's protecting a young pup, while being guided by an elder. Like her, we should protect nature."

Core skills

HOW TO DRAW ACCURATE HANDS

A trio of talented artists teach you their methods for crafting one of the trickiest, but most expressive parts of the human anatomy

To draw hands accurately, you need to look past the complexity of their anatomy and recognise simple rules that will help you draw from a model, or even your own imagination. Although they're notoriously tricky to get right, there are some sketching tips and tricks you can use to get them just right.

To help, we've got three tutorials from artists Kate Oleska, Brynn Metheney and Jake Spicer. First, Kate breaks down the process for creating a quick sketch into four simple steps. She starts by exploring the structure of the hand, and then looks at how to translate this into a drawing.

We also have a more in-depth guide on how to draw hands from Brynn, which breaks hand gestures into shapes for a more refined and realistic style. And finally, discover how you can use negative space to make your proportions as accurate as possible with Jake's walkthrough.

AdobeStock /Prostock-studio

Nail the basics with a quick hand sketch
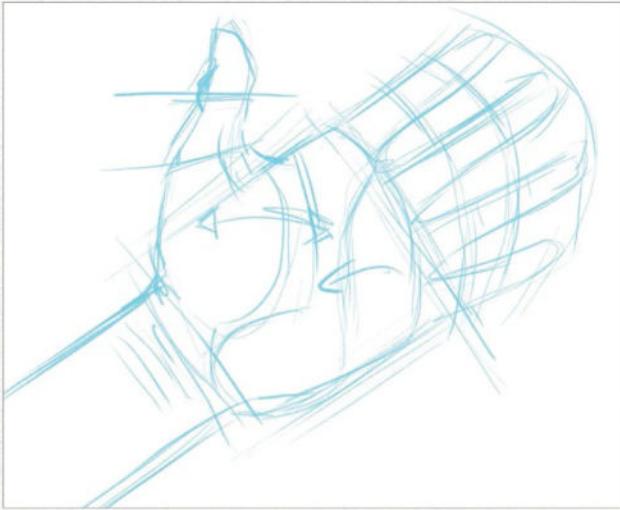
1 *Consider how hands work*
 The most important thing when drawing hands is to understand their anatomy. Look at your own hand – it (usually) comprises of a palm, thumb, index finger and the three remaining fingers that, even though they can be moved separately, work together when it comes to grabbing objects. Move your hand and notice how your fingers and thumb bend and move, and what happens to the palm in the process.

2 *Find the right gesture*
 Before you start drawing a hand, make sure you pick an interesting gesture. Try to experiment a lot at this point. A well-drawn gesture can communicate more than 100 words. Why not be your own model and actor? Perform a gesture and notice what happens to your hand, then try to emulate those gestures in some fast and loose sketches.

3 *Construct your sketch*
 Once you choose the gesture you want to draw, start sketching it in a more precise way. Ask someone to pose for you or observe your own non-drawing hand. Start off with bigger shapes, but don't focus on small wrinkles or fingernails yet. A sturdy, well-constructed sketch will go a long way. Observe how the elements of the hand work together and what happens to the skin and muscles.
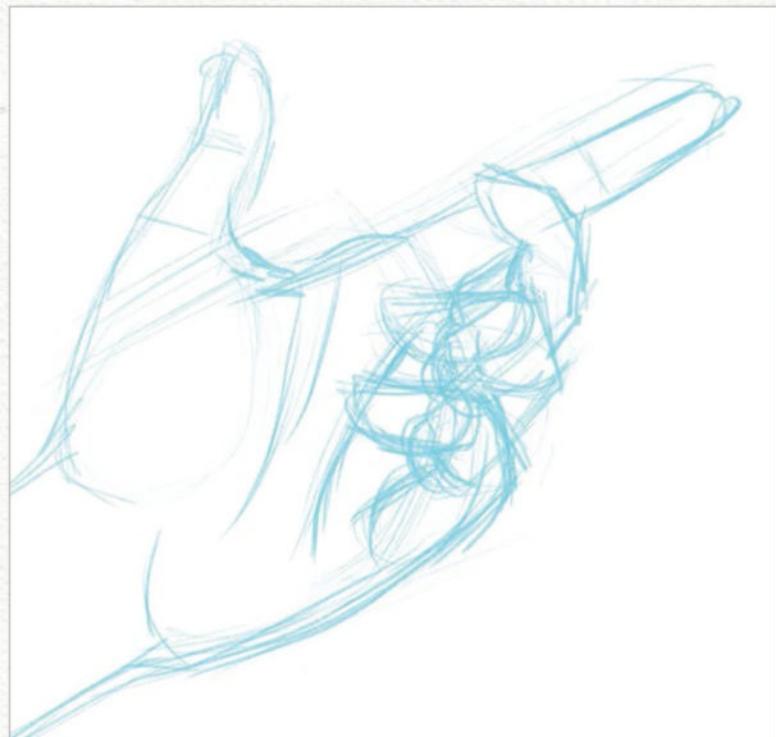
4 *Work in the details*
 When you're happy with the first sketch, begin refining it. Enhance the lines that are important and erase those that aren't. Add wrinkles, fingernails and veins if they're visible. When drawing fingernails, remember that they aren't pasted on top of the fingers, they are well embedded in the tips of the fingers. Drawing them correctly is important. ➤➤

Draw a detailed hand
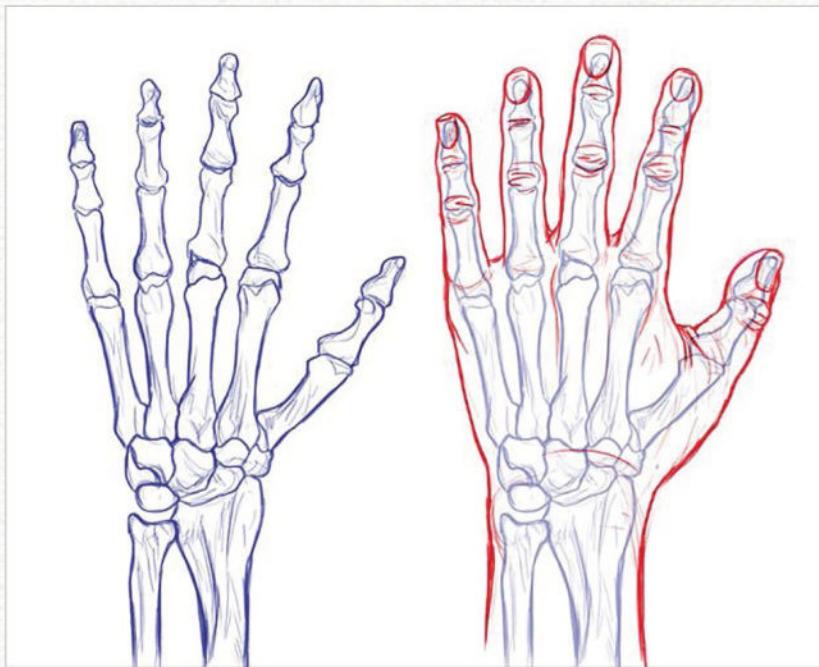
1 Look inside the hand

The human hand comprises bones, tendons, and lots of connective tissue, plus muscle and fat. It's a strong and flexible appendage. Getting to know how it's formed and how it works can really help you learn how to draw hands. It can be helpful to sketch out skeletal studies of human anatomy in general, but when learning how to draw hands, a lot of the form we know is lost at the skeletal level. However, if we overlay a surface view on top of the skeletal view, we can begin to appreciate where the skeleton sits within our hands.
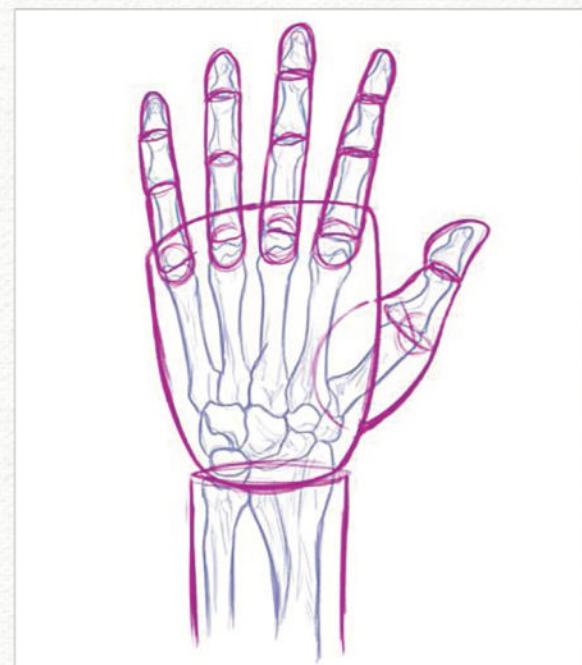
2 Break the hand into shapes

You can lay in broad shapes over the skeletal view in order to build the hand. Use a flattened wedge-like shape for the palm; rectangles for the digits and a teardrop shape for the thumb. You can use the skeletal image above as the basis for this step.

When learning how to draw hands, simplifying the forms like this will help to remove the pressure of rendering out a perfect hand from the start. From here, you can begin to fill out the shapes into 3D forms to help build the hand and pose it in perspective.

3 Build the hand in 3D

Now it's time to develop the forms to make the hand drawing feel more 3D. Here, our flattened-wedge palm gains another dimension, as the fingers become cylinders and the joints become spheres. We'll call this view of the hand the planar view.

By drawing through our forms, we can show volume, as you can see in the palm pads. This is also a good time to work on your proportions and placement. Notice how the palm is about as long as the middle finger, indicated by the green lines here. Remember that the fingers are never the same length or perfectly straight; what sells this is imperfection.

Note the blue lines indicating the angle at which the fingers end. We can also see that the middle finger stems straight from the middle of the hand. Paying attention to these proportions will help you ensure your hands look natural and accurate.
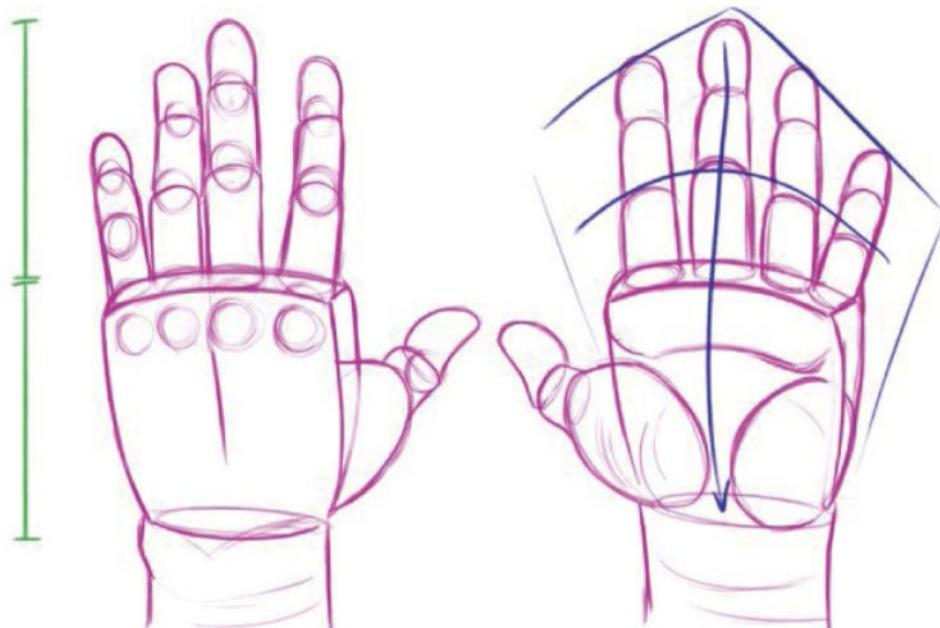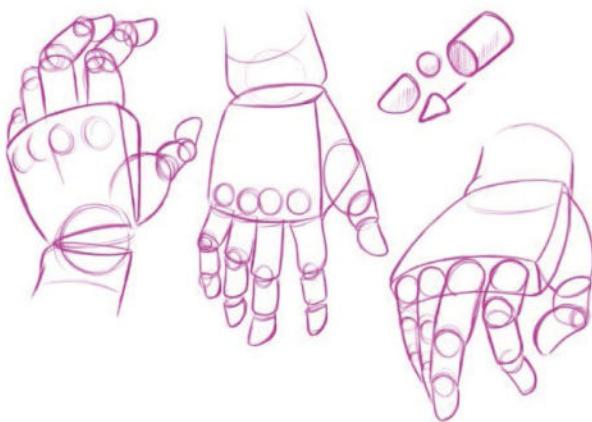
4 Pose the shapes

Once you've drawn a 3D version of your first hand, why not try out some different poses? By breaking up the hand into simpler forms and using contours to explore volumes, you can start to arrange the hand in different poses without worrying too much about the details.

You can use your own hands as a reference, but use the planar view to help keep it simple. This is another way to get quick poses that don't rely on detail. In creating this tutorial, I found myself looking at my two hands quite a bit. However, if you need to use your own hands for the sketching, you might need to ask a friend or family member to help you out.

Note the small diagram of the cylinder and sphere above. Fingers can be unruly at times, so it's often best to keep them simple and utilise 3D shapes to represent them at this stage.
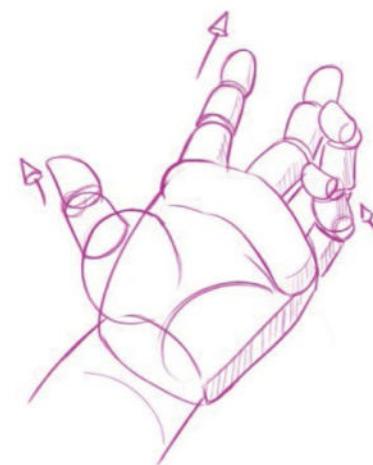
5 Get started with planes

Once you've had some fun with posing, pick out a pose that you like and, using your own hand as a reference, draw the hand in the planar view. In the sketch above, the little cones indicate which way the cylinders are travelling. This can help you to keep a grasp on where the curves of the cylinders need to bend.

Again, we want to keep it simple at this stage and not worry about the details. You want to capture proportion, perspective and volume. Keep in mind that it's important to work lightly at this stage if you're using pencil.

> 66 Once you've drawn a 3D version of your first hand, why not try some poses? 99

6 Find gesture and forms

If you're working traditionally on paper, be sure to start out light and gradually build up volume and forms with heavier lead only as you get to the end of your study. Meanwhile, if you're working digitally, you can simply knock back the opacity of the planar drawing here to begin to find the forms you see on your own hand.

From here, you can use the planar view as a guide to help lay in the forms of your hand as you look at it. Be careful to take note of how the forms curve around each other, and also bear in mind the silhouette of your hand. In the example above, you can see where I've deviated from the pink line and instead used it as a guide to find where the forms turn in space.

7 Begin to lay in the detail

Now you can either push back the first two layers, or switch to a heavier lead to begin to lay in those details. You can see how helpful the construction of both the planar view drawing and the gesture drawing really help us to place details like the wrinkles and creases in the hand. We can also begin to place the fingernails and render out the side of the palm. ➤➤

Use negative space for better hands

1 Negative spaces

When you're simplifying a three-dimensional subject into a two-dimensional drawing, you're essentially mapping its shape on the surface of the page. Sometimes you might find it helpful to stop focusing on the 'positive' shape of your subject and instead look at the shapes surrounding it; these are the negative spaces. Sometimes these shapes will have boundaries on all sides – this is what we mean by trapped shapes – and sometimes you'll need to create boundaries for them.
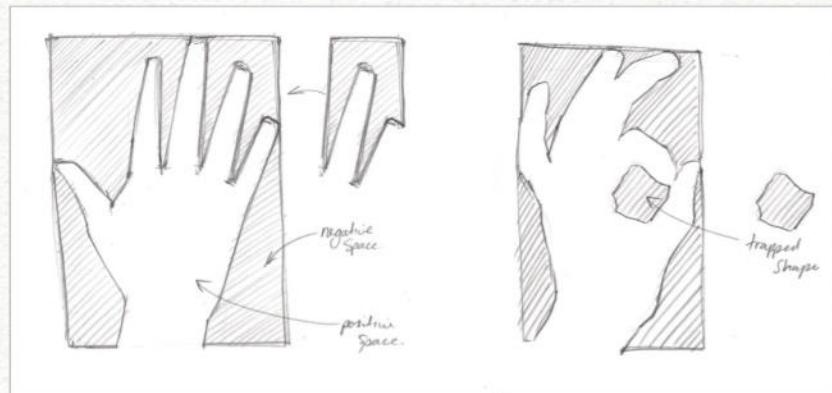
2 Make the underdrawing (right)

Pose your hand, or ask your model to hold a position, and start your drawing off with a loose, light, intuitive sketch in HB pencil. Simply look and draw what you see in less than a minute, keeping your marks energetic and allowing yourself time to look over your subject without agonising over the specific proportions.
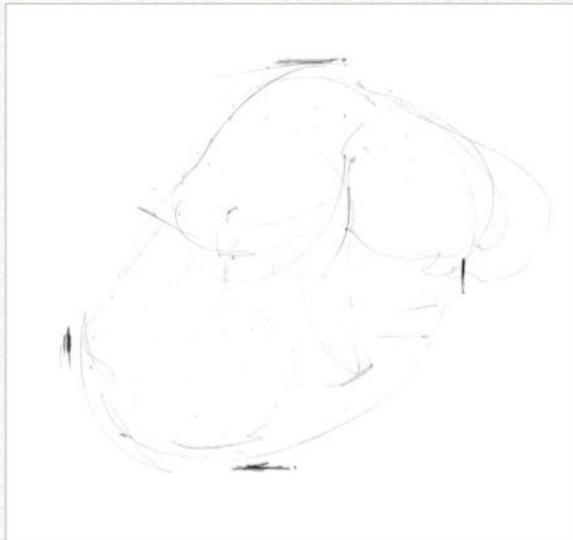
3 Set your limits

Using the initial sketch as a rough guide, mark out the top, bottom, left and right limits to your drawing. This will ensure that you don't lose your drawing off the edge of page and also help you to better establish a sense of scale within the image.
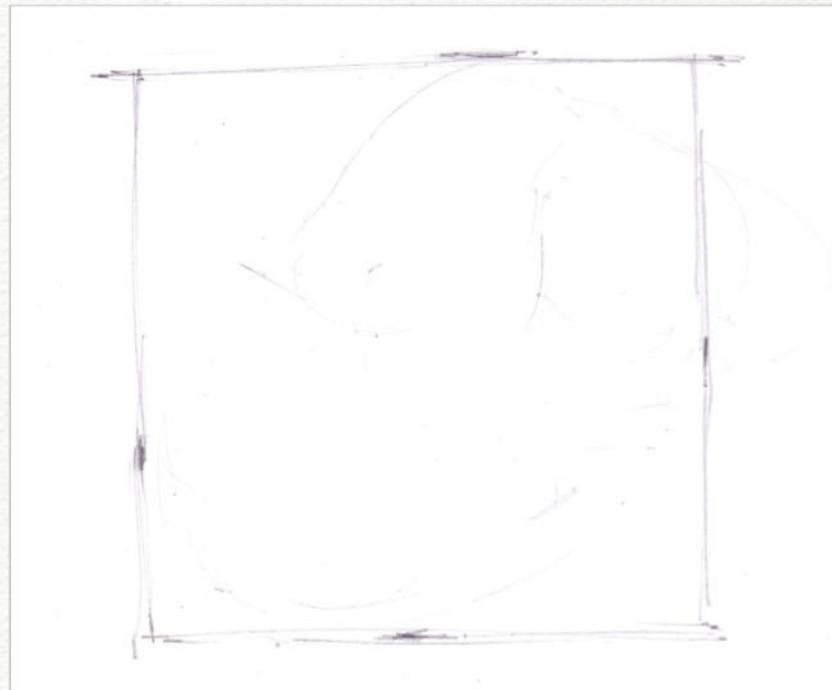
> ❝ Think of the negative spaces like jigsaw puzzle pieces – they should fit with the positive space ❞

4 Draw out a box

Use these new limits to construct a box around your subject. Imagine your subject within a box: what dimension would that box be? Short and squat or long and thin? Would it be in portrait or landscape format?
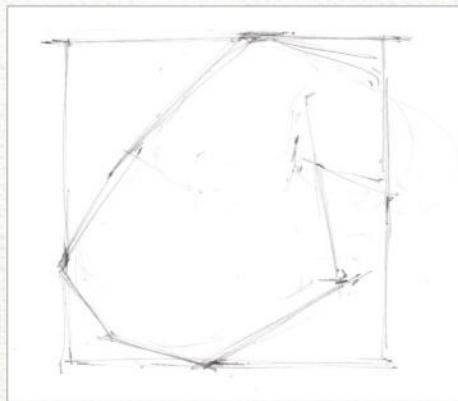
5 Carve big shapes

Now look for the big shapes that make up your hand, keeping your marks rough and angular. Work as if you were carving the hand out of wood, making straight cuts to rough out the form of your subject before carving in the detail.
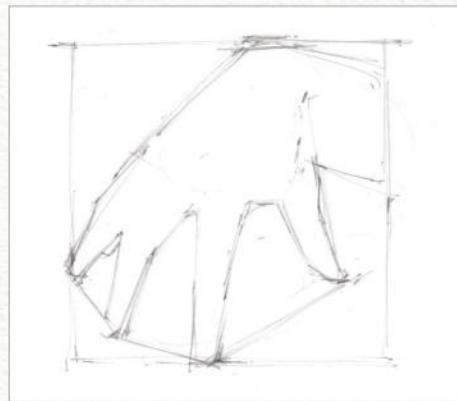
6 Insert negative spaces

Maintaining your simple marks, draw the triangular wedges of negative space between the fingers. Try not to draw the fingers at all, just concentrate on the shapes themselves and let the rough shapes of the digits appear as you draw.

7 Erase the outline

Once you have a rough, angular drawing established on the page in HB pencil, use your eraser to lightly rub out the lines of your drawing, leaving them only faintly visible to guide you as you draw.
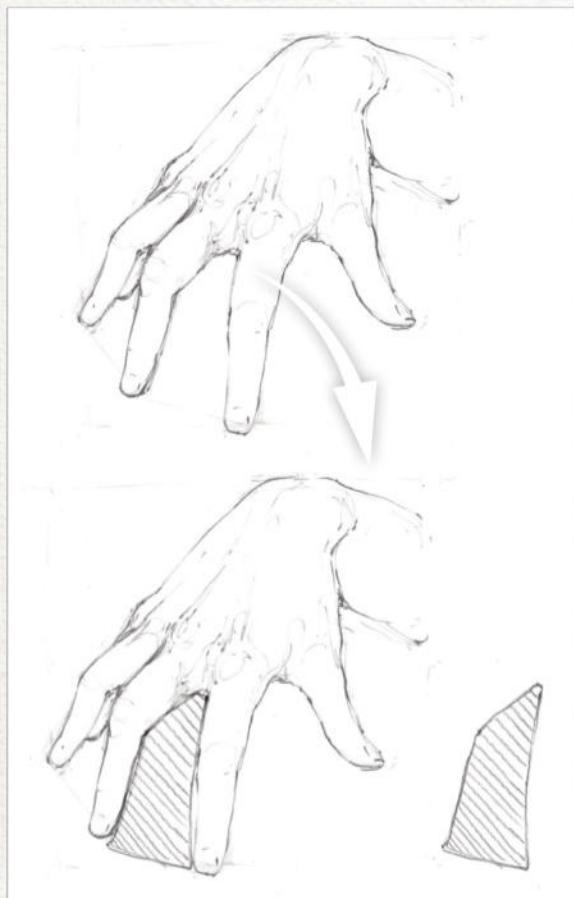
8 Redraw the hand

Using the faint underdrawing as a guide, redraw the hand from observation in 3B pencil. As you draw, use the negative spaces to check the proportion of your evolving image. Do the negative spaces in your drawing look the same shape as the spaces between the fingers of the hand you're drawing? Think of the spaces like jigsaw puzzle pieces: they should fit with the positive space to make the final, resolved image.

9 Elaborate the lines

Next we'll refine the drawing, using a lighter, more playful line to delineate the shapes within the hand and reaffirming the outline of the fingers. Think about how you might capture the tension within the hand, or suggest pressure where the fingertips are pressed up against surfaces.

PAINT A VIBRANT VIDEO GAME POSTER

Fancy creating lively game art? DUNCAN FEGREDO talks through his process designing a stunning poster for sci-fi adventure Revenge of the Savage Planet

Game art has a legacy of coercing comic and fantasy artists into its world to create box and key art. Some of the best video game box art ever has been created by comic artists and illustrators, including the very best of Atari's iconic advertising art.

I jumped at the opportunity to work on the poster art for upcoming video game Revenge of the Savage Planet as I love video games, and saw the poster project as hovering somewhere between a cover or box art that recalled the classic 16-bit era of Psygnosis covers by Roger Dean.

My art is bright and optimistic, and makes for a great fit with indie developer Raccoon Logic's colourful, weird and psychedelic exploration of

> ## MATERIALS
>
> **PENS AND PENCILS**
> ■ Sketching pencils
> ■ Marker pen
> **PAINT**
> ■ Acrylic gouache
> **MISCELLANEOUS**
> ■ Airbrush
> ■ Illustration board

alien worlds. I was already a fan of the previous game, Journey to the Savage Planet, but Raccoon Logic sent over design docs, costume designs, environment details and more for me to riff off.

Making the poster art became about scaling down and making sense of the chaos in a readable way. This meant replicating the third-person view, the game's intense colours, and more fundamentally telling a story in the poster.

Creating game art for a poster or box is about capturing the essence of what makes the game unique, in this case the colour, co-op gameplay and crazy escapades. And as an artist, I needed to do this while retaining my style, as that's what makes it unique.

I'm trying to find a way of imbuing what the game is without losing sight of who I am. You're sort of walking a tightrope, it's a way of encapsulating the game while still keeping the essence of my style, and I think there's a crossover point.
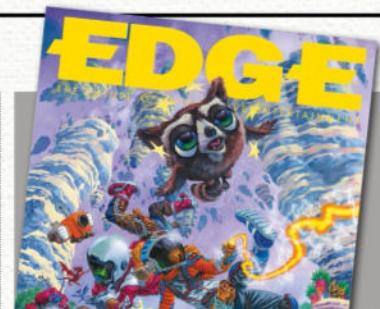
I could feel it when I was drawing the characters, because there's that fun stretch and squash animation to the figures, which I like to bring to my work anyway and that was really nice to play with, and I get you drawn into the characters and play up those theatrical elements. It hopefully gives over a good time.

I was also very chuffed to have made the subscriber edition cover of Edge magazine with the artwork. *Duncan Fegredo began his career in comics, working for DC Comics on Enigma and collaborating with Mike Mignola for Hellboy. He has also created storyboards for Rogue One: A Star Wars story. www.duncanfegredo.co.uk.*

❝ Poster or art box is about capturing the essence of what makes the game unique ❞

1 First sketches
Always begin with preliminary sketches after checking out your reference material, in my case the videos sent over by the devs. Amazingly the first sketch became the foundation for the final image. I have the player character and his co-op partner falling past floating islands and sharing a high five. I knew I wanted to emphasise both the co-op gameplay – hence the pair high fiving – and the verticality of the game.

2 Explore details and poses
After you've got some initial ideas down on paper, try a few follow-up sketches too. These are about getting used to drawing the costume details and exploring any possible poses you may want to use. I was looking for something kinetic, anything that can pull the viewer into the action. Another early sketch features our friend the puffer bird from the original game on the receiving end of a well-aimed kick. ➤➤

3 Set out the composition

Next up, we'll combine our elements into a potential composition. The game features multiple costume possibilities so that's incorporated as well. In my piece, the characters are set against floating rock formations and I start to suggest possible foliage and creatures too, all gleaned from the videos.

4 Initial digital painting

My next step followed feedback from the studio. A couple of changes were suggested: out goes the bird in favour of Raccoon Logic's unofficial mascot, the raccoon puffer, who will undergo a few changes along the way. I was also asked to downplay the weaponry in favour of the proton whip. With the changes made, more creatures are added with the colour. Everything is drawn and coloured digitally until this point, as it's much more flexible and better to nail details down at this stage before committing to real paint. Also of note, I made a feature of that hand slap in colour, as is often seen in comics to indicate impact or sound. It then occurred to me to surround the raccoon with stars to show it as dazed and confused, reflecting the game's humour.

5 Traditional switch

With a plan made, it's time to start the real thing. When there are lots of tiny details it can be handy to work a little larger than you normally would. To do this, you could project the sketch onto a piece of illustration board and trace it with a fine marker pen. Now start painting; I used acrylic gouache. Begin with the sky as it's the single largest element and links the composition together. Don't worry that it starts crude and always looks horrible for way too long as you try to balance all the elements. Note the gun on the left, I'd drawn it badly so it had to be painted out to be redrawn; much messier in real paint than digital!

6 Refine the image throughout the painting process

The painting work continues in earnest and mistakes are rectified. That describes the whole process really; fix up any errors until you're done. The details are adjusted all the way through, so constantly refer back to the digital colour sketch and references. I'm not trying to reproduce the game in paint but to capture its essence, and still retain my own identity. It's about this stage where I felt the raccoon puffer was a bit off-model, and frankly terrifying! Above is the same stage as before but with a digitally painted replacement. Much cuddlier!

7 Fix up a few areas

The repairs are well under way at this point, along with adding the remaining details. As I painted in the electric arcing around the proton whip, I realised that I'd have to see if I could revive my airbrush, which hadn't been used in over 20 years! Would it still work?

8 Finesse the atmosphere and finish up

Putting in some clouds provides atmosphere and volume for the sky. Thankfully for my image, after much cleaning and even more swearing, my airbrush sputtered into life long enough to add a glow to the proton whip. To finish up, the final artwork is scanned and the scan is cropped, with a little work done to sharpen up the stars and the high-five graphic, and it's finished! A cover fit for Edge magazine, fronting the subscribers' special cover for issue #403. ◉

First Impressions

✳ *Greg Ruth* ✳

The artist on his journey to finding a style and career

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in Houston, Texas, which does boast some deep-welled art resources: it's Contemporary Arts Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, the Rothko Chapel and the insane Menil Collection, which houses, I think, the largest collection of Rene Magritte's artwork this side of the Atlantic. But the culture is anything but art, or at least it was in the 70s and 80s that I was there for.

There was an underground group of people scattered around the city that weren't as obsessive about football and church, but it took me until high school to really find it, so I was largely left alone to sort out my art life. My mum helped a little in supporting it with art classes here and there, but it wasn't until she made me apply and then get into a high school for performing and visual arts that I felt like I found my people and a way out of Texas to the more artful New York City after graduation, and on from there.

What, outside of art, has most influenced you over the years?
I think movies, TV and books dominated my art seeking back then. There really wasn't much else to chase after given the culture in Houston, and the storytelling aspect of those mediums really shaped me hugely, and led me into comics and books, and now working in film and TV as an artist.

I think in some ways the lack of support and community for an art life down there was a bit of a boon for teaching me to stand on my own, and carve my own path as an artist; there simply was no other

© Warner Bros.

DUNE: PART ONE
Greg designed the stunning poster art for the first entry in the new Dune films.

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
To celebrate the 20th anniversary of critically acclaimed film In the Mood for Love, Greg was asked to create art for a poster and vinyl cover.

©Block 2 Pictures/Jet Tone Contents Inc.

choice. Sometimes the negative is what defines the positive.

Is there a painting that you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?
Well I don't know if it was just one painting. I recall having my hair blown back when the Menil hosted some Francis Bacon paintings. I pretty much lived at that place, just down the road from my high school, and would spend hours with the Magrittes.

Ad Reinhardt was another revelation I found there, plus Alice Neel, Sue Coe and Joseph Beuys when I worked at the Contemporary Arts Museum too. Man I loved those exhibits and remember how much I loved being there alone with that work. It was poorly attended, which

wasn't great for the museum but was a gift to me personally. I had a very private and intense creative education in that way, steered by what caught me above all, and anything remotely narrative was especially grabbing.

Tell us about your first paid commission. Does it stand as a representation of your talent?
I don't have a distinctive memory of my first paying gig to be honest. I'm lacking the framed dollar bill memoriam of that moment to seal it into history. Likely I was just happy to get paid for work at all, as any of us are when we're starting out.

I expect it was after college when I was working as a home repair monkey in Brooklyn and drawing comics at night. I did my first graphic novel Sudden Gravity that way, but it doesn't count as I wasn't paid a penny for that.

Maybe it was The Matrix Comics back in the late 90s? I got brought in as a Johnny-on-the-spot when one of their slotted artists vanished on them, and I had to write, paint and letter a full eight-page story in about four days. I think that's what really turned my corner in a lot of ways. It gave me a taste for the thrill of the deadline crunch and I ended up doing a lot of work for them after as a result, which I was paid for at last. It sort of began my career as the emergency deadline saviour, which I still employ as a method even after all these years.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
A lot of my work is under NDA right now so it's a tricky one to answer. Let's call it the trio of portraits HBO commissioned me to do for The Last of Us Season 2 campaign.

The work is profoundly different to the art I was doing early on. While I did work a lot in black and white, I was pushing hard on the full-colour front just to expand my scope of work wherever possible.

THE LAST OF US
Mysterious poster art for Season 2 of The Last of Us featuring primary characters Ellie, Joel and Abby.

THE PIANO
Historical drama The Piano was re-released in 4K back in 2022, with Greg's art front and centre.

When you're starting out you want to cast as wide a net as you can, and say yes to all the things that come in until you can grow a firmer grip on your steering wheel and direct your path more later.

But the black and white work has remained a constant and an approach that I've championed ever since those first published pieces, and being in a position to codify that in a major global campaign in this way was a real moment for me personally. To have art that is seen by most as unfinished until it's coloured become the feature was an important flag to plant so others coming up, fellow weirdos trapped in non-artful upbringings, might see hope in this kind of thing. It felt especially significant.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?
The landscape has changed dramatically since the 90s when I was coming up, for good and ill of course, but I think more for the better overall. The internet's opened up a lot of new avenues to make a living, and connect with peers, clients and collectors that just wasn't available without the gatekeepers' nods of approval before.

And while I did largely focus on comics for the first 20 or so years, almost exclusively, I wasn't really a superhero guy and neither was I really in line with the New York alternative comics scene that I was immersed in back then.

If it wasn't for the years of support of my manager Allen Spiegel, I don't know what or how I would have done anything. He really taught me how to navigate it all, wrestle with contracts, handle crappy clients and deadlines, and the conflicts that come up in any kind of work you do. My ability to work solely as a creative artist and writer all these years is a credit to his guidance and support, and getting to be part of this crew alongside the giants that inspired me in the first place – Dave McKean, Kent Williams, Jon J. Muth, George Pratt and so on – showed me a peek ahead of how to make it work.

> **❝ I recall having my hair blown back when the Menil hosted some Francis Bacon paintings ❞**

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
I think it would be the same ethic that Spiegel taught me as I was learning the ropes: always be willing to work harder and longer than the other person; never ever hack out a project – whatever job you agree to do, however small or low budget, always give it the same attention, passion and energy as you might bestow on some big opportunity or high profile job; and a job is about the work, a career is about people. Always follow people and not companies, and create ➤➤

➤➤ and nurture relationships that are lasting and positive.

Even if your gig is a crisis gig for reasons having nothing to do with you personally, to be able to hold fast and still stick the landing while remaining professional endears you to clients in ways you can never really quantify, but it makes or breaks careers alone.

No one in this work I know who has a career now, even after all these years, got here from anything less than a stubborn, obsessive drive to never stop working. Hard work and relentless persistence outpaces raw talent in every way, always.

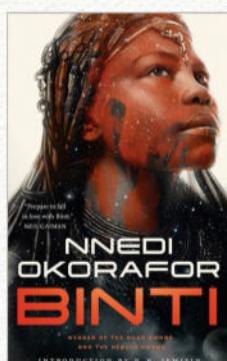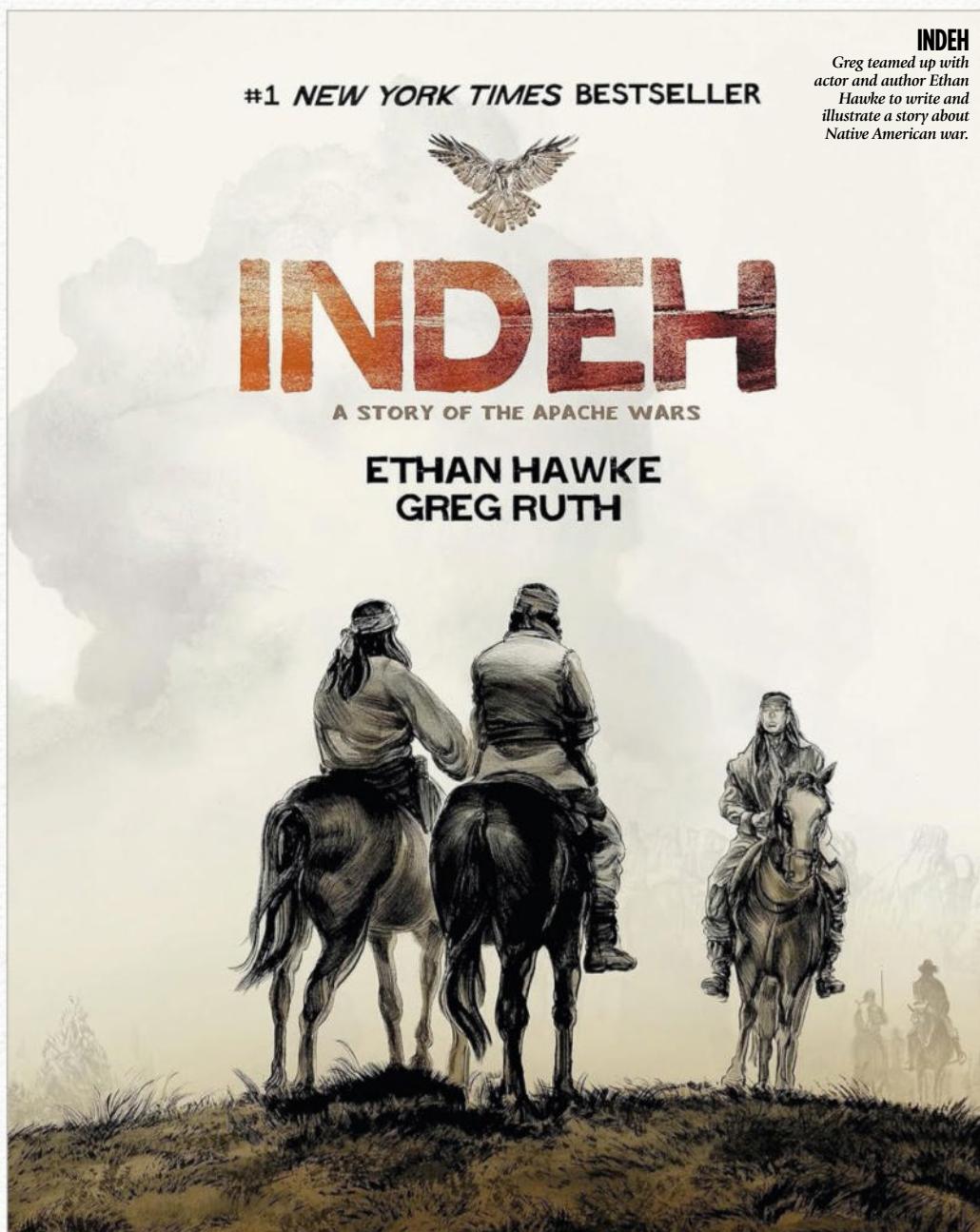**How has the art industry changed for the better since you began?**
I think there's a lot more agency in the artist's hands than there has ever been before. We don't have to court relationships that we don't have yet as the sole means of gaining access to a career like you once did. It's what made my Covid years twice as busy with work, what has allowed me to live, raise a

> ❝ **I make sure to identify with any character I've worked on** ❞

family and work consistently while living in a rural town 30 minutes deep into the forests outside Northampton, Massachusetts.

The advent of social media has been one of the most altering things to ever hit our field and I'm glad I was both young enough to grip it and old enough to temper it's use as an artist, because it's definitely a knife that can cut both ways. But knowing for a fact how hard it was to get in back when it was high walls and gatekeepers everywhere, I'm grateful for the opportunities and abilities it has provided.

A lot of us, especially the troglodyte profiles inherent to making comics, have a hard time with the schmoozing and courting elite power brokers that used to be required to get in. Being in New York City, near all the publishers and art scene there, was essential in a way it isn't any more. Now anyone

with a connection can get spotted by an editor or art director from anywhere in the country. Just ask Jeff Kinney and a dozen or more other authors and creatives able to carve a path in our field thanks to this new technology.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
That's weirdly tricky. I think as a rule I try to make sure to identify with any character I've worked on, whether it's a music video for Prince, characters from a film I adore like Kim from Bong Joon-ho's Parasite, Naiches and Goyakhla from Indeh with Ethan Hawke,

Conan the Barbarian for Dark Horse with Kurt Busiek, or getting to work on Denis Villeneuve's Dune.

My own characters tend to be the ones I connect with the most personally; Walt from The Lost Boy especially, Jack and Cooper from Meadowlark, and in a lot of ways all three of my main characters in the novel I'm working on now. If you're doing it right there's bits of your identity in each of the characters you work with, create or sculpt.

Greg Ruth's art has been featured in DC, Marvel and Dark Horse comics, and he has worked on music videos, film, TV, book illustration and more. Greg's work can be found at www.gregthings.com.

INDEH
Greg teamed up with actor and author Ethan Hawke to write and illustrate a story about Native American war.

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

INDEH
A STORY OF THE APACHE WARS
ETHAN HAWKE
GREG RUTH

BINTI
Cover art designed for Nnedi Okorafor's award-winning Africanfuturist novella.

IF I HAD SOMEWHERE TO LIVE...

I COULD GO ANYWHERE IN LIFE

When Abi's mum died, life got tough. She didn't get on with her dad and the arguments became violent. Abi felt her only choice was to leave home. With just the clothes on her back, and no idea where to go, she ended up sleeping on the streets in the freezing cold.

Right now, you could give a homeless young person like Abi somewhere to start their future

Abi's life changed when she was given a room at Centrepoint. A safe place to sleep and recover. A place to develop the skills and confidence she needed to rebuild her life – and leave homelessness behind for good. Now, Abi believes she can go anywhere.

Thousands of homeless young people like Abi are desperately trying to find their place in the world – but first they need a place to start again. **You could help right now by sponsoring a room at Centrepoint for just 40p a day.**

We know this support changes lives. 88% of the young people we help move on positively in life. So please, help someone like Abi today. Thank you.

Text **PLACE to 78866 to donate £3**
Call free on **0800 472 5798**
Visit **centrepoint.org.uk/place**
Or **complete and return the form below**

SPONSOR A ROOM. HELP A HOMELESS YOUNG PERSON FIND THEIR PLACE.

YES, I WANT TO SPONSOR A ROOM
FOR £12 A MONTH

Please collect my payment on the 1st/15th of every month (please circle preferred date).

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

To the Manager:
Name and full address of your Bank or Building Society:

Originators Identification No. [6][5][9][1][0][7]

_____ Postcode _____

Name(s) of Account Holder(s) _____

Bank Sort Code: [ ][ ]-[ ][ ]-[ ][ ] Account Number: [ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]

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 *giftaid it*

☐ 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.

Your donation will go towards funding Centrepoint's vital work with young people all year round providing accommodation and support. We sometimes use models and change the names of the young people we work with to protect their identity; however all stories are true and as told by the young person.

Registered Charity No 292411.

NAP2021CN

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.

Registered with **FUNDRAISING REGULATOR**

centrepoint **give homeless young people a future**

EVERY 46 MINUTES SOMEONE IS DIAGNOSED WITH A BRAIN TUMOUR.

THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

A CURE CAN'T WAIT

Work with us to accelerate a cure

Brain tumours affect more than 11,000 people every year and survival rates are among the lowest of all cancers. We need your support to help us get closer to defeating brain tumours.

Text DEFEAT5 to 70507 to donate £5, please help us to find a cure.

thebraintumourcharity.org

FR Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

9001

9000