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From capturing clouds to cleaning your brushes

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If you're reading this then you almost certainly have a deep passion for art and improving your techniques. But whether you are just making your first strokes in the industry or you're a seasoned pro with years of experience, this bookazine has something to offer every artist. Featuring expert advice from leading talents in the world of art, this latest compilation of some of the best content from ImagineFX magazine includes tips on improving your doodles, guidance on drawing both people and animals, inspirational sketchbooks from some of our favourite creators and a step-by-step guide to drawing a chaotic fight scene. There are also hints on how to improve your painting, clean your brushes and develop stunning ink art. On top of all this, you will find a link to some online tutorials on page 7. Get ready to create!

FUTURE

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

ART SCHOOL

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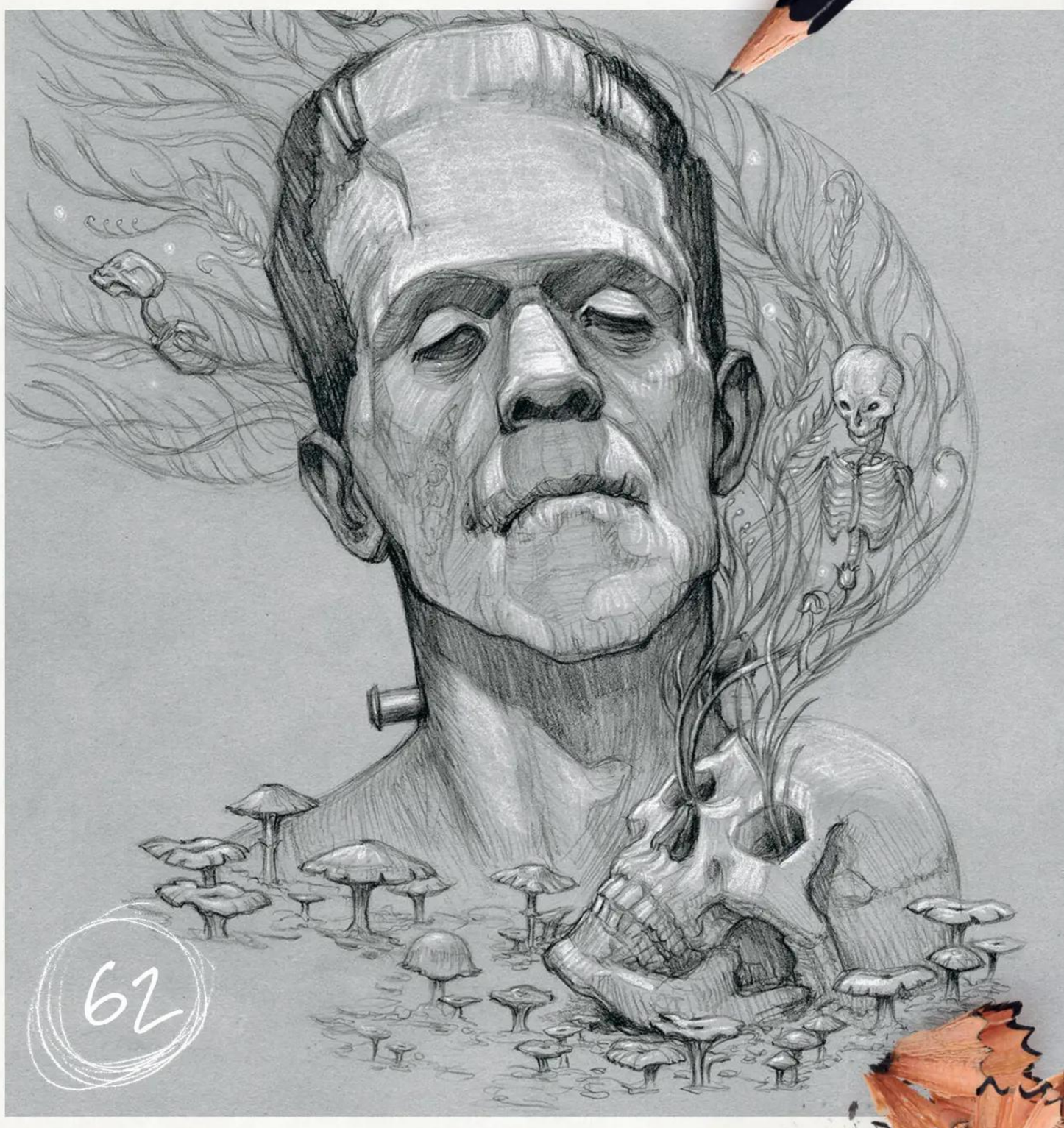
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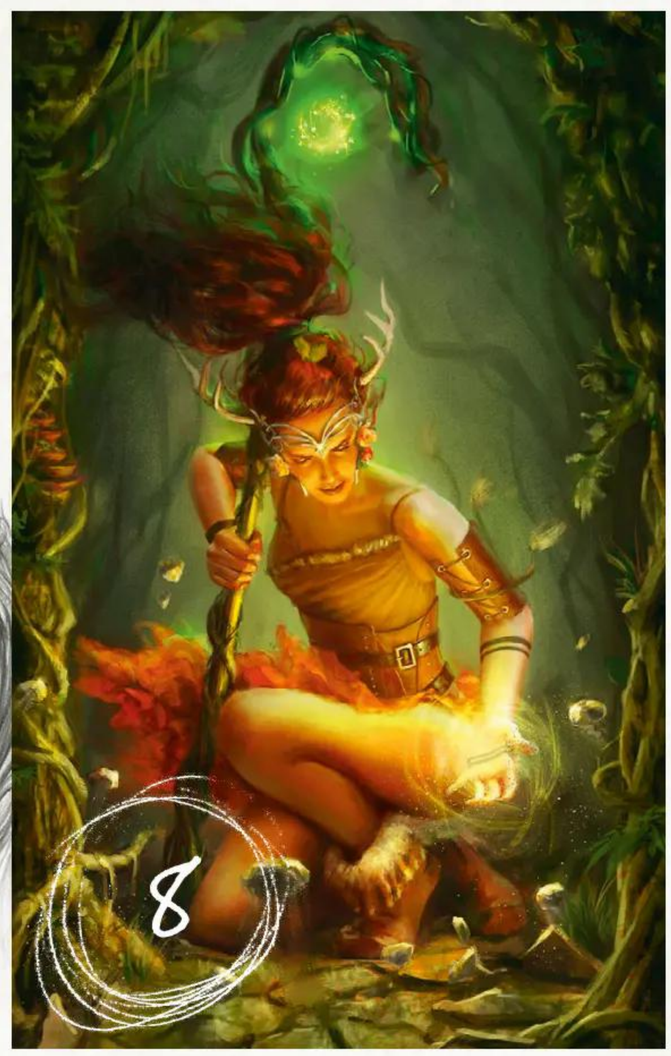
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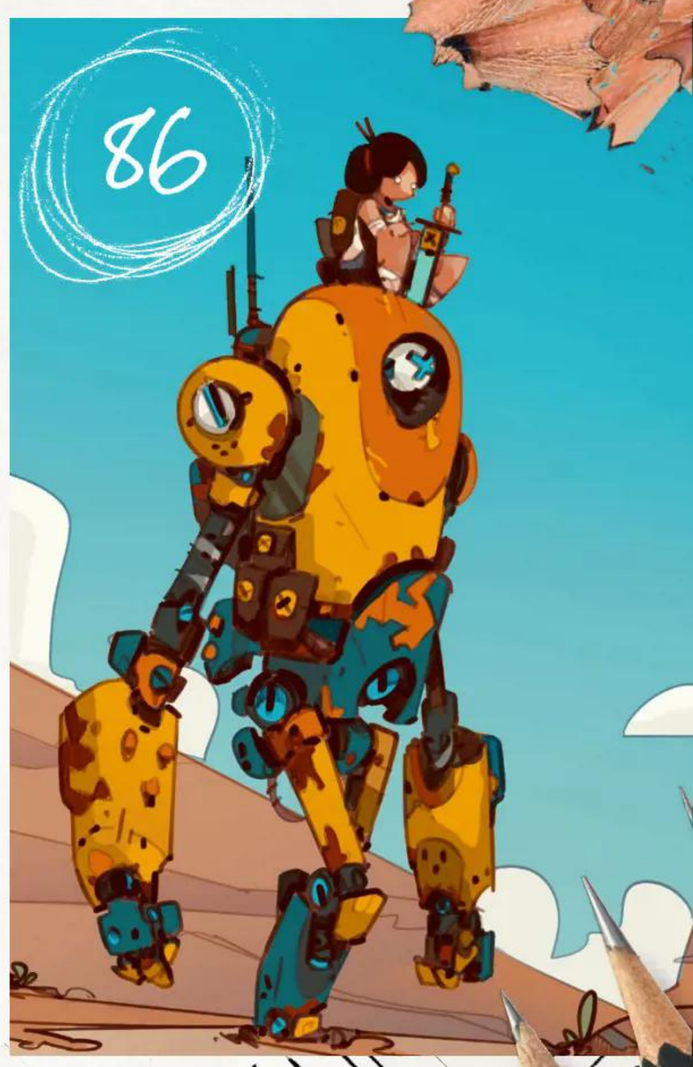
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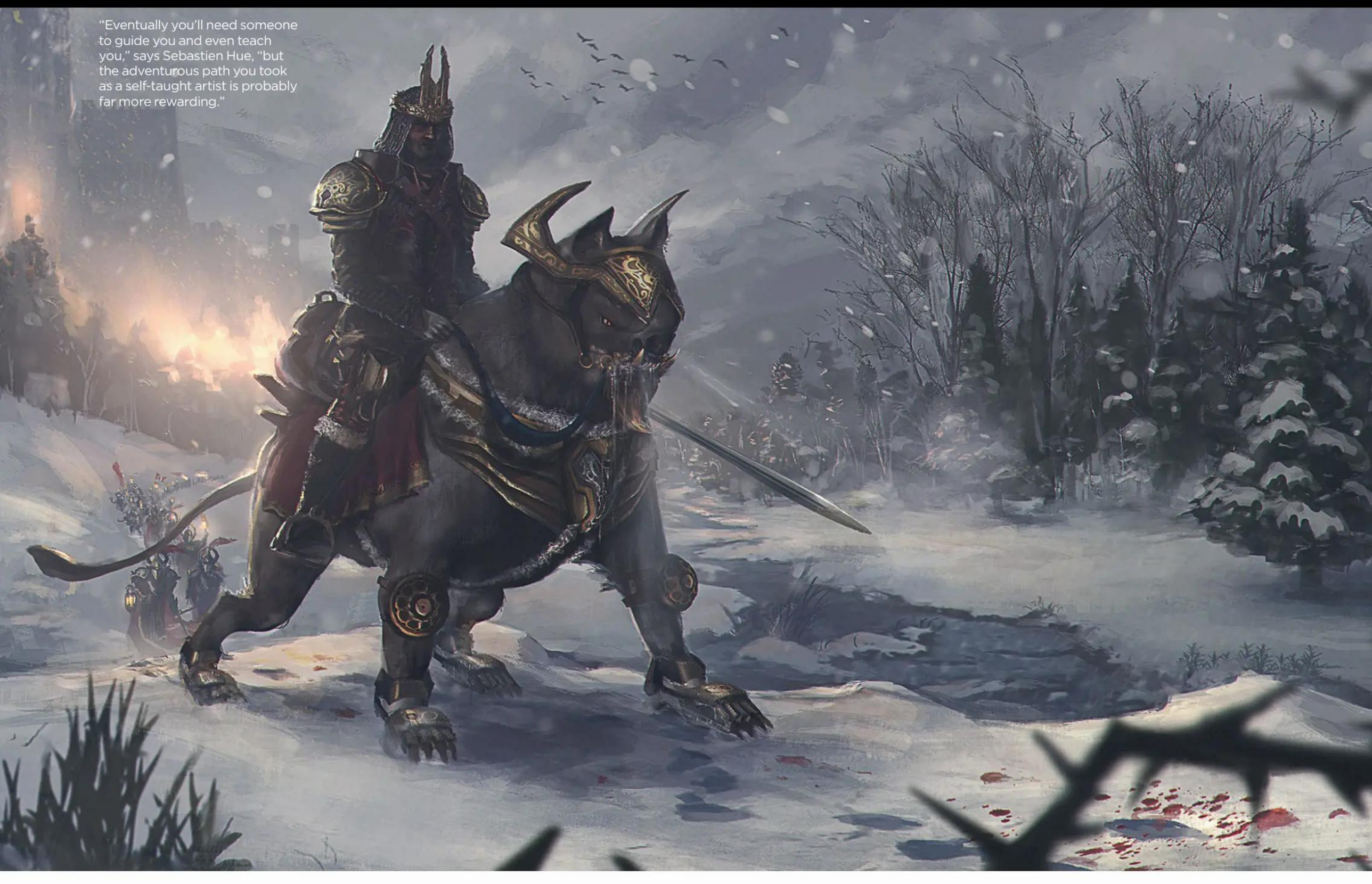
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GET YOUR RESOURCES

Visit **https://ifxm.ag/ifxartschool** to download this bookazine's workshop videos



"I didn't know how much time I would be able to dedicate to formal studies while looking after a baby," says Irina French. "So, self-teaching was a more flexible option."



Do you have what it takes to teach yourself art?

School's out Formal art education is not for everyone. Artists who've self-taught talk to **Dom Carter** about the advantages and challenges of learning independently

Art schools provide students with structure and professional feedback, but they're not the only way forward for artists looking to develop their skills. Teaching yourself is more viable than ever thanks to an explosion of easily accessible, affordable online learning materials, and it's an approach that gives artists greater freedom to explore and develop their own unique voice.

Of course, the two routes aren't mutually exclusive. But for artists short on time and money, or those looking to switch into an artistic career, the idea that you can teach yourself is especially appealing.

"It's not easy to do it on your own," stresses **Irina French**, who self-taught

out of a desire to save money and look after her baby. "It takes courage and a great deal of hope, a lot of determination, as well as self-discipline."

Craww agrees: "A desire to progress and willingness to fail are all essential!"

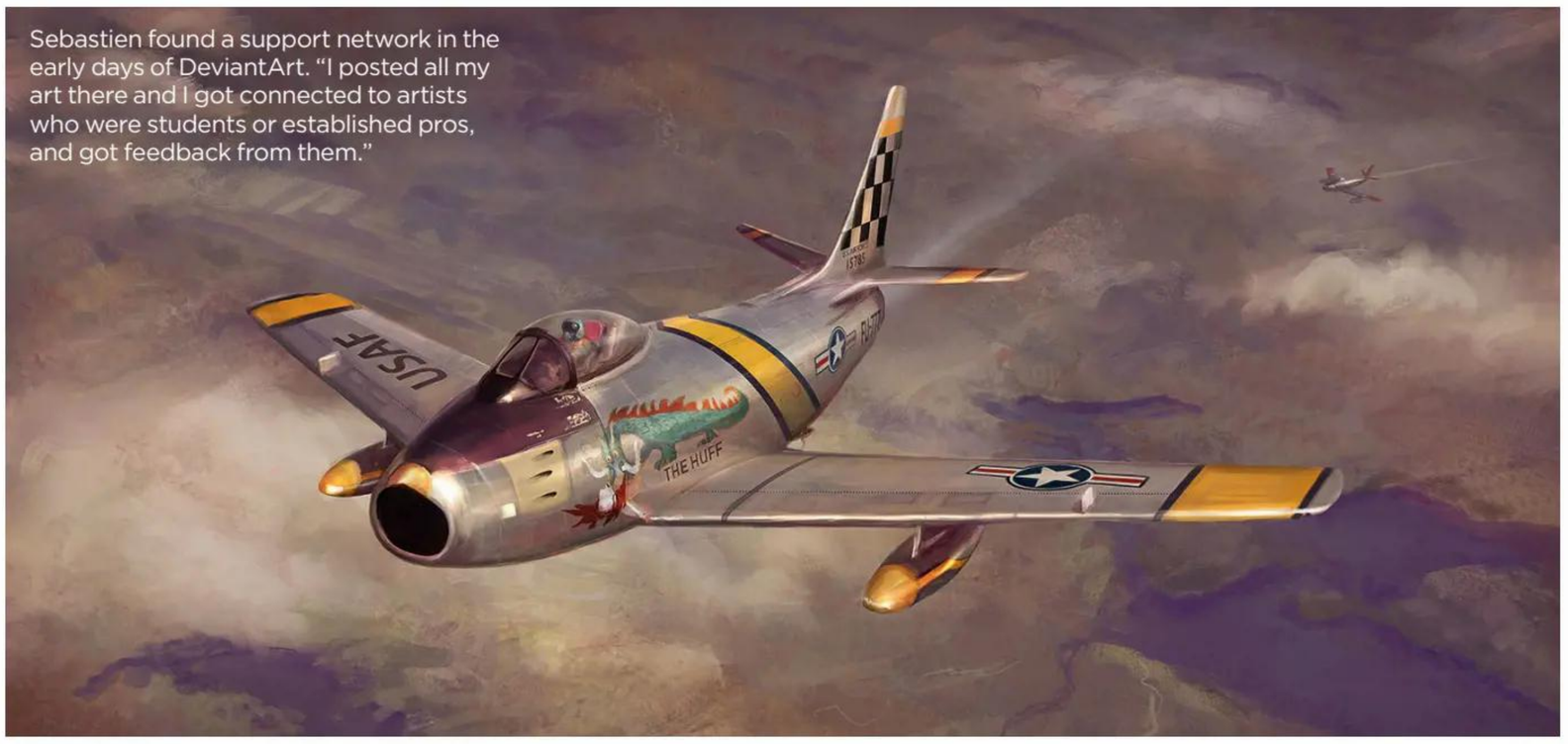


Having quit graphic design out of frustration to pursue art, he wanted to learn on his own terms. "There are times when I've wished I'd had more of a formal training, when I would have benefitted from a little


"I have to 'do' something, and get it wrong a few times before I learn," says Craww.



"Trying to conform to a strict process left me feeling uninspired," says Lisa Hansen.



Sebastien found a support network in the early days of DeviantArt. "I posted all my art there and I got connected to artists who were students or established pros, and got feedback from them."



more practical tuition, but overall I'm happy with where I'm at."

"I can see where higher education would have been beneficial in learning more quickly," adds **Lisa Hansen**, who always saw art school as an impossible aspiration. "But on the other hand, experimenting with different mediums guided by my own needs and whims is what led me to discover what works best in terms of achieving self-expression."



THE RIGHT MINDSET

So how do you know if the self-taught route is right for you? Concept artist and matte painter **Sebastien Hue**, who switched from a career in logistics when he was 31, thinks it requires a mindset geared towards growth. "It has to become addictive and something you need almost every day. A strong thirst to learn new things and be curious. When you're self-taught you have to be permanently on the look-out to chase new things you missed."



"I think it takes longer to learn established techniques and skills on your own," says Craww. "But the flip side is, you're more open to exploring new ways of doing things."

"It has to become addictive and something you need almost every day"

Feedback helps to pick up on these blind spots in art school, but this doesn't mean self-taught artists go without constructive criticism. "I'm rarely happy with my own work so it would be great to have informed, insightful feedback to hand," says Craww. "But social media has helped with the contacts I've made over the years. There are a few artists that I'm in regular contact with and they can be invaluable with feedback."

"It's best to find genuine support from people who will point you to what doesn't work, rather than just praise you," adds Irina, who often consults her husband's critical eye. "I've also joined a few groups on social media specifically designed for learning, rather than promoting. The members take art very seriously and are happy to give feedback."

As for the idea that art school puts you on the inside track in terms of



"The self-taught method rewards focus and determination, but it definitely penalises ambivalence," cautions Lisa. "You have to be willing to work. Really work."

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Self-learning is full of obstacles, as two pro artists reveal…

1 Finding resources
"We're lucky to have numerous tutorials online," says Irina French. "T he difficulty is in finding those that will teach you core principles, the fundamentals, so you can build from there. There are some real gems out there; a lot are for free, too."

2 Staying motivated
"Motivating yourself and not giving up is a major factor," says Irina. "You just have to believe that you'll get better with more learning and practice. It's not always easy, especially because it's hard to separate yourself from your creations. I'd say from a mental health point of view, there are a lot of ups and downs, but with time you find more confidence in your skill."

3 Mastering new techniques
"A few years ago I really wanted to paint with oils and it took me a long time to get to grips with them," says Craww. "I definitely would have benefited from a little instruction! A lot of simple mistakes like painting on unprimed paper and the paints leaching through could've been avoided if someone had taught me, but then maybe I could've researched things a little better too. Sometimes that trial-and-error process can lead to unexpected and exciting results."

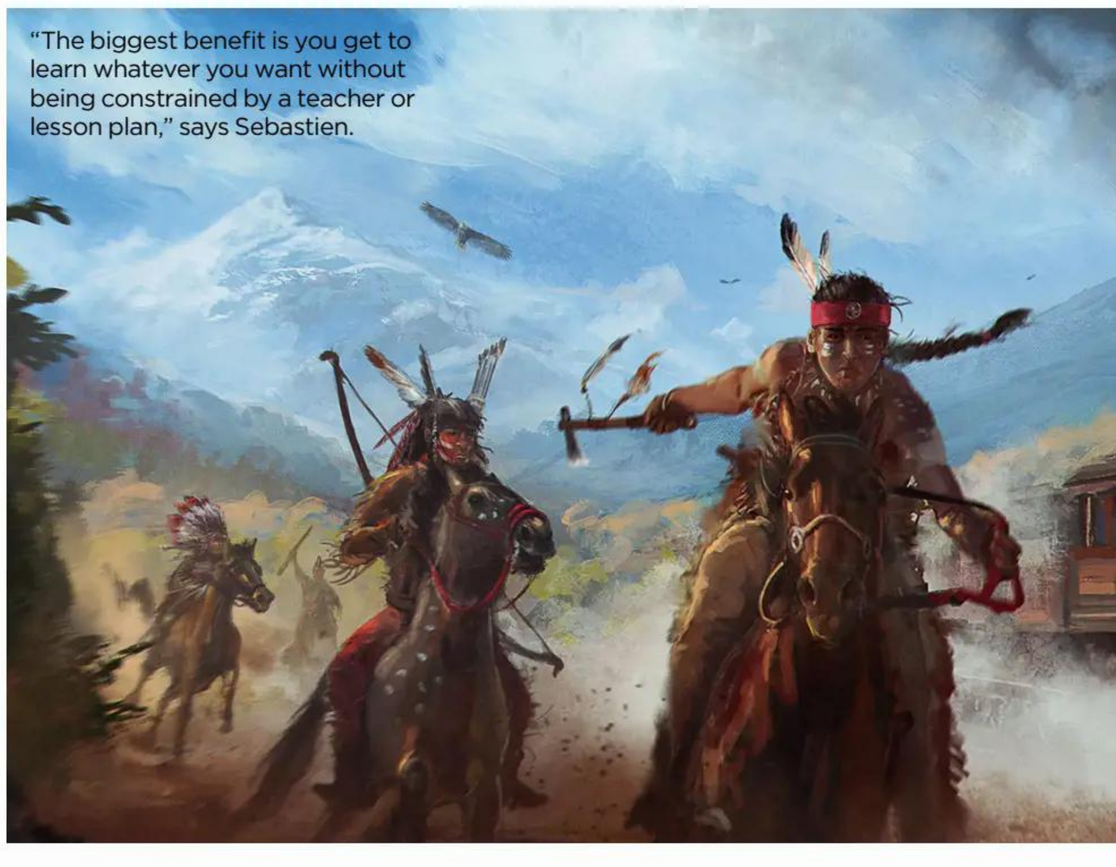
4 Getting into a routine
"Since you're not physically attending a class, you have to bring structure to your day: dedicate consistent hours to learning and practising, vary the topics that you cover and note from critiques what fundamentals you need to revisit in order to improve," Irina advises. "On the other hand, be careful not to burn out. Take regular breaks and remember to have fun when you're painting."

establishing a career, Craww isn't convinced that this is true. "The most important thing is for the work to find a connection with an audience, which I don't think can be taught. It's something that has to come from the heart – a natural, honest process rather than something that's contrived."

This rings true with Lisa, who was concerned that being self-taught would affect how her pieces were perceived when she started working professionally. "With so many years now under my belt, I have a better understanding of what I can control and what I can't," she says. "I know how my history has affected my work, but I don't necessarily need everyone else to know that. I'd prefer people to view my work on its own terms, and fortunately, most people have."

IDENTIFY YOUR WEAK SPOTS

The self-taught path isn't without its challenges though. As well as having to judge your own work, Sebastien



"The biggest benefit is you get to learn whatever you want without being constrained by a teacher or lesson plan," says Sebastien.

"The most important thing is for the work to find a connection with an audience, which can't be taught"



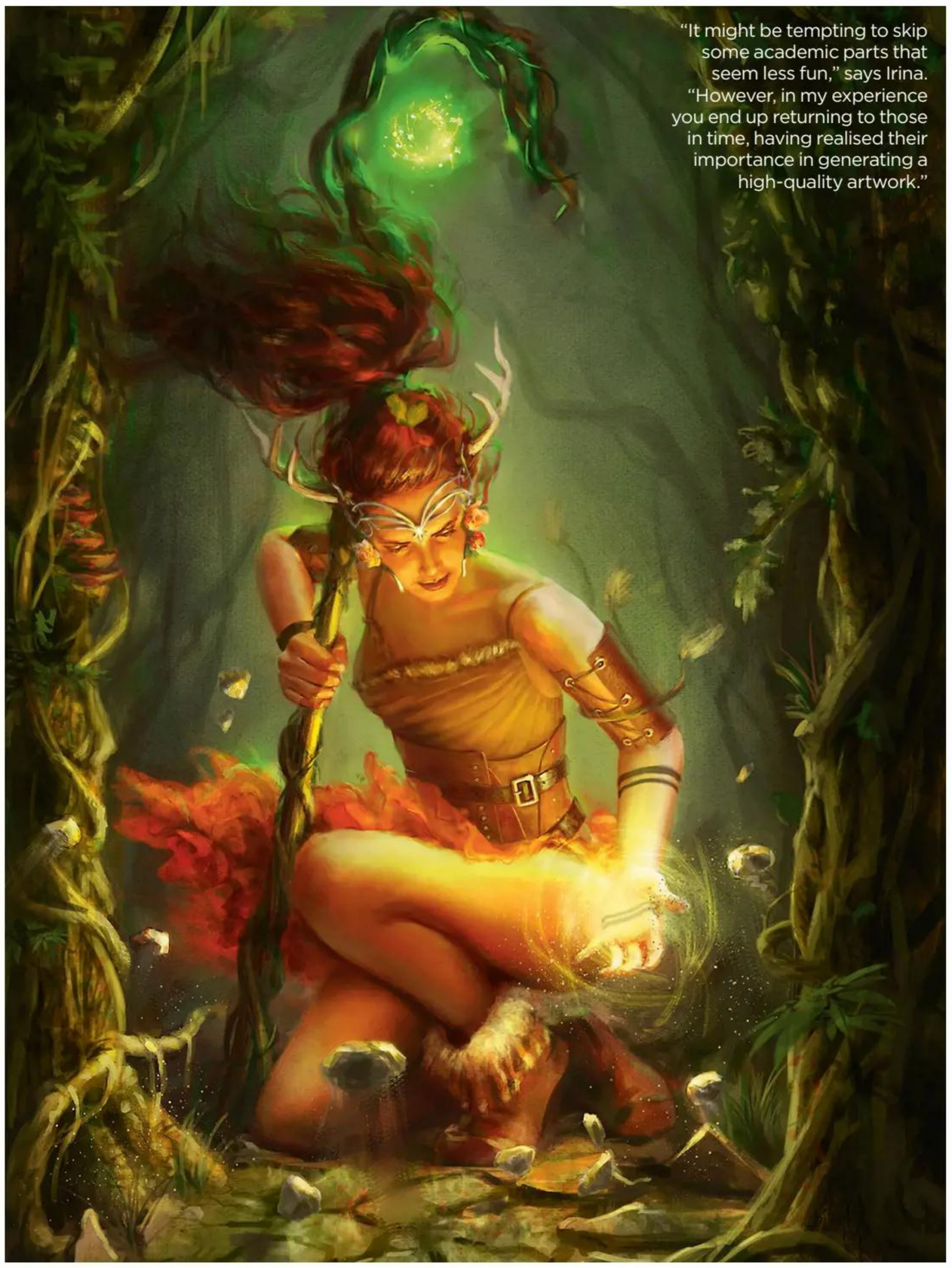
"I learn quickly, but you never finish learning in this industry," says Sebastien. "This is partly why I love it so much."

"It's paramount to find a community and meet other students of art," Irina advises. "They're on the same journey so they can empathise with your struggles."



"Be patient with yourself and with others," Lisa recommends. "Above all else, remember that this is a journey and never, ever a race."





"It might be tempting to skip some academic parts that seem less fun," says Irina. "However, in my experience you end up returning to those in time, having realised their importance in generating a high-quality artwork."

"It's all about organisation and going through the priorities you need to grow and blossom professionally"

points out that you need to be able to determine your weaknesses, single out where you need to improve, and find the discipline to train yourself.

"It's all about organisation and going through step-by-step the priorities you need to grow and blossom professionally," he says. "It shouldn't be work, but passion. It should not be painful, but totally fun. The internet is huge and people are getting lost in finding good ways to train themselves. So the first obstacle is probably to get rid of the things you dislike doing and focus on learning what's effortless to learn for you."

Irina doesn't worry that being self-taught will limit your prospects: "It's irrelevant how you acquired your knowledge, as long as you produce quality art to suit clients' requirements."

And while it sounds like this might require a certain baseline of talent, don't let that intimidate you if you're interested in becoming a self-taught artist. "I'd never want to label someone as 'more talented' just because of how they learned something," says Lisa.

"That's actually a stigma I'm fighting against," she continues. "If I wanted to prop up us self-taught artists, though, I'd say we can have an almost fanatical dedication to our craft. It's like we're on a mission. Maybe it's because we feel we have more to prove?"

Even if you're blessed with great talent, Irina doesn't think this head start will carry you all the way. "I fully believe that in order to achieve anything in this field, you need to put in a lot of hard work and time to be successful," she says.

"From my perspective, talent does not exist," adds Sebastien. "This is just something you reveal by the amount of work you do, and the amount of training and studies you put in to get to the next level. I think everybody is gifted for something in life – the difficulty is to find out what it is. The talent would be how fast you find your path, listen to yourself and your needs, and how quickly you develop your skills."



"If you have a talent, it'll come out whether you have academic knowledge or not," Craww says. "Everyone's journey is different."

Artist insight

15 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DOODLES

Creating doodles is the lifeblood of art, **Gareth Davies** reveals his top tips for getting the most from them

Artist PROFILE

Gareth Davies
LOCATION: England

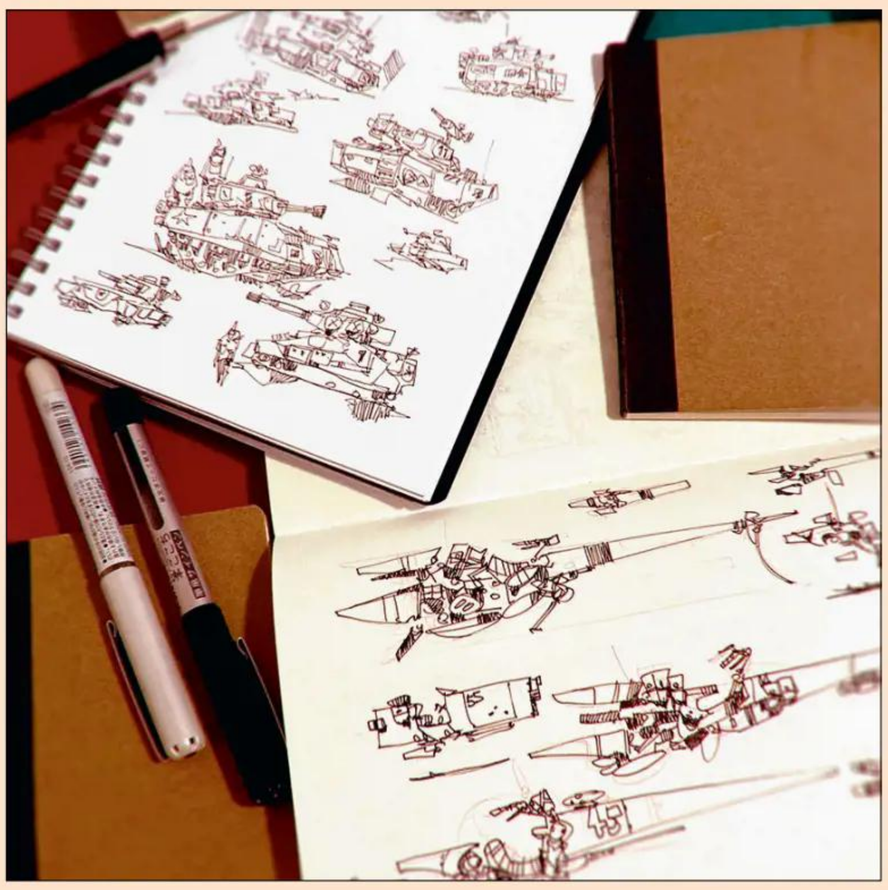
Gareth, also known as Spudonkey, is a senior concept artist working in-house for Coatsink. Other notable clients and projects include Into the Breach, Disney, Bad Robot, Bithell Games and Otherside Entertainment.



Growing up, I can't remember not having a pen or pencil in my hand and I was always encouraged to draw by my family. I would constantly doodle through school and moving into university, I learnt to solve problems through drawing, embracing the art principles that would help me to develop these ideas further so others could understand them.

Now I have turned these little thumbnail ideas into big ones and fulfilled my dream of working as a concept artist for the video game and entertainment industry. I started as a 3D artist and kept pushing myself and experimenting until I was most useful as a concept artist.

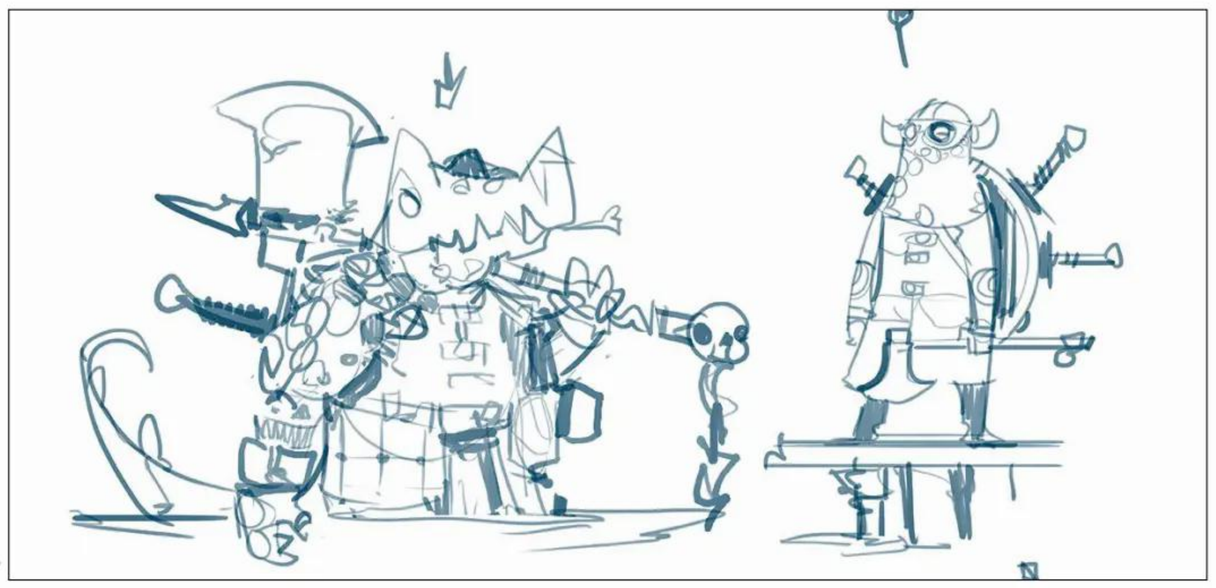
I believe there's a certain meditative quality to doodling and you can get lost within finding that new idea – I think we could all do with a way to unwind after this year. Hopefully these tips and tricks will help you make the most from your own doodling, avoid the dreaded burnout and maybe you can achieve your own dreams, too.



1 ALWAYS CARRY A SKETCHBOOK

I have a ridiculous amount of sketchbooks – a different size and shape for any occasion. You never know when inspiration or time to sketch may present itself, so always be prepared! They don't have to be expensive, they just need to do the job of being able to take notes or marks. Experimenting with different pens and materials can also generate ideas, from happy accidents caused by a rogue mark, to having to work in a new way to adapt to a material.





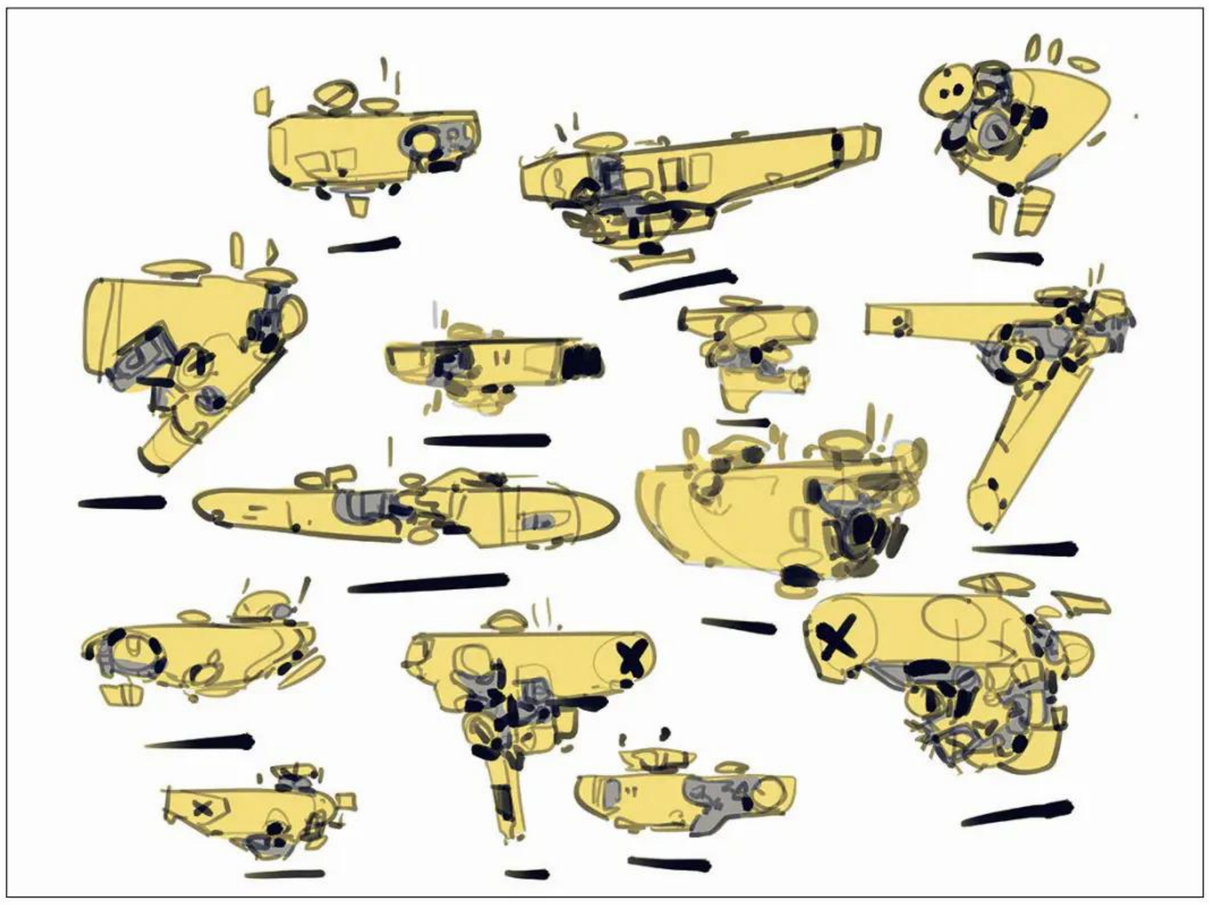
2 LOOSEN UP

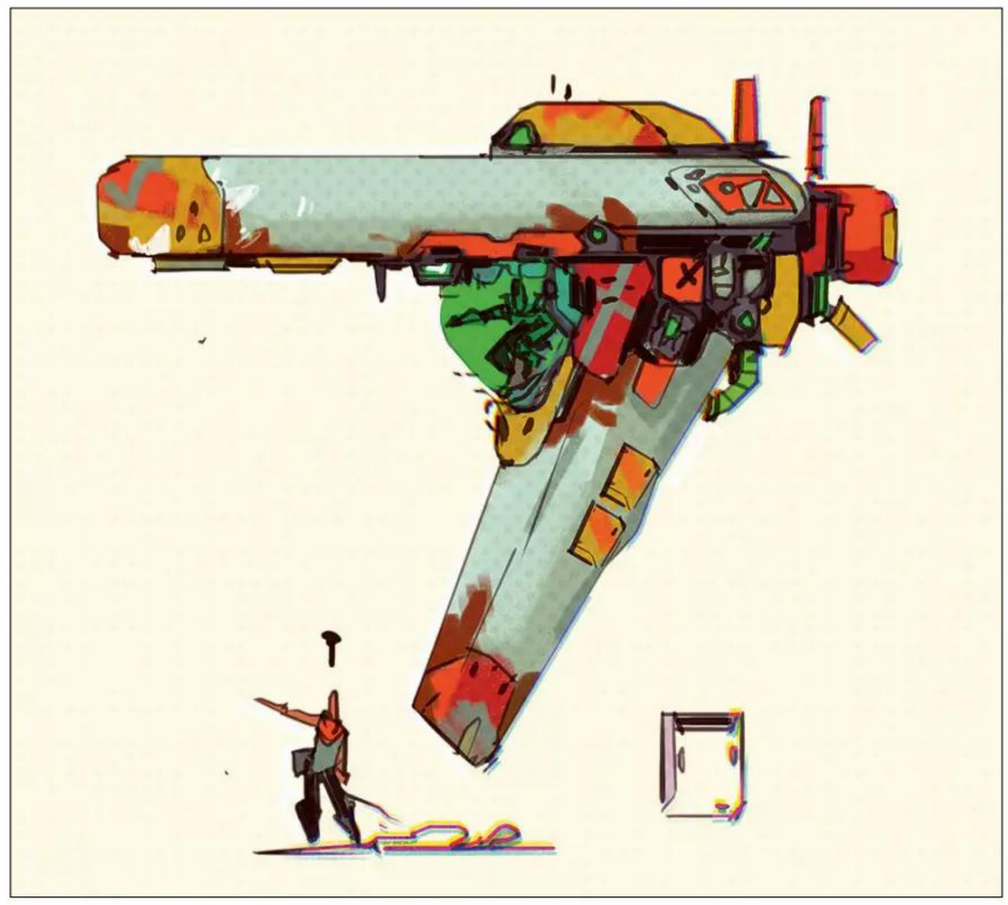
Sketches are meant for you and not necessarily for others to see, so don't worry about if they're 'presentable'. As long as they serve you, that's the main purpose. If I go into a drawing thinking about how they'll be received then I instantly tighten up. You're trying to capture the broader idea of something as a whole. Draw from your shoulder using big, confident movements, and think about the larger shapes and flow of the sketch and idea.

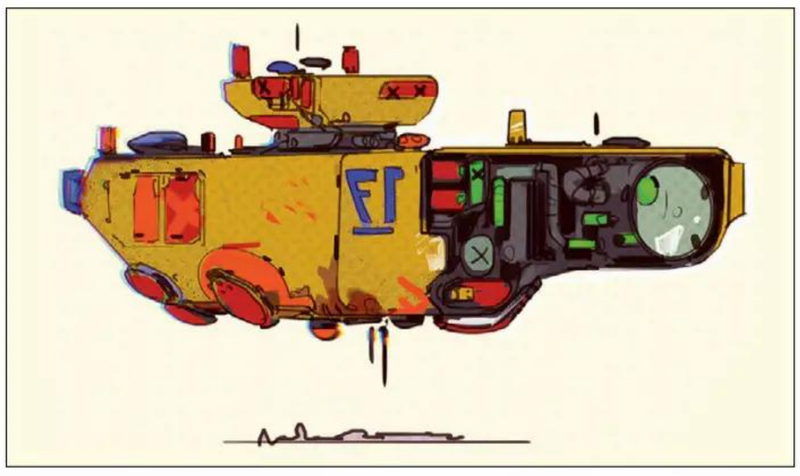


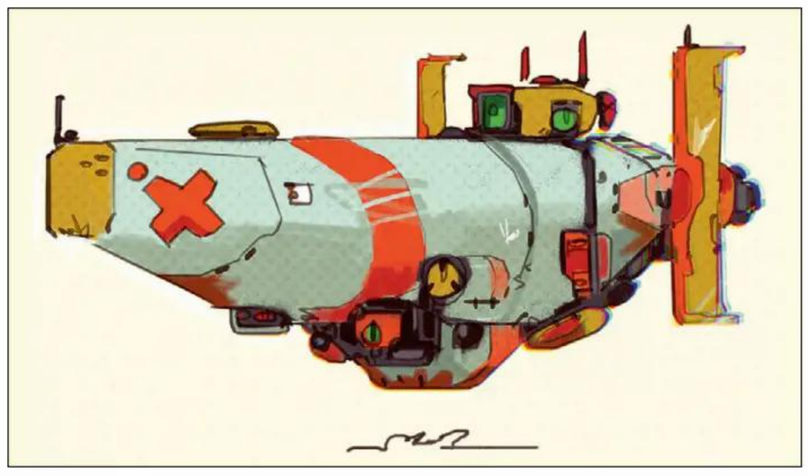
3 DRAW IT AGAIN

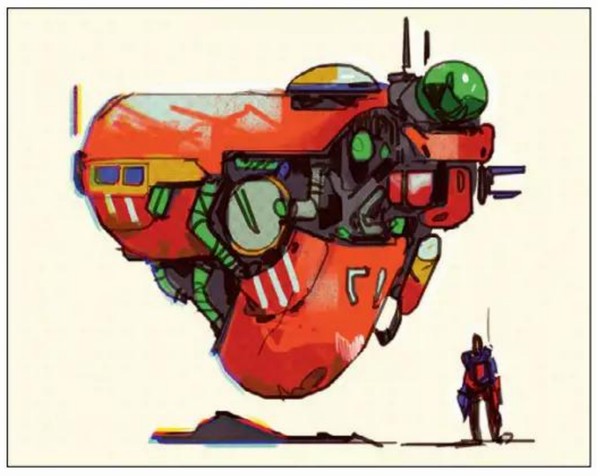
Sometimes you strike gold and hit the best idea first time, but usually this isn't the case. I often draw the same thing over and over, playing with proportions and shape language to test ideas. This process helps build the knowledge of what you're drawing into your visual library and also helps you understand the mechanics of your subject.











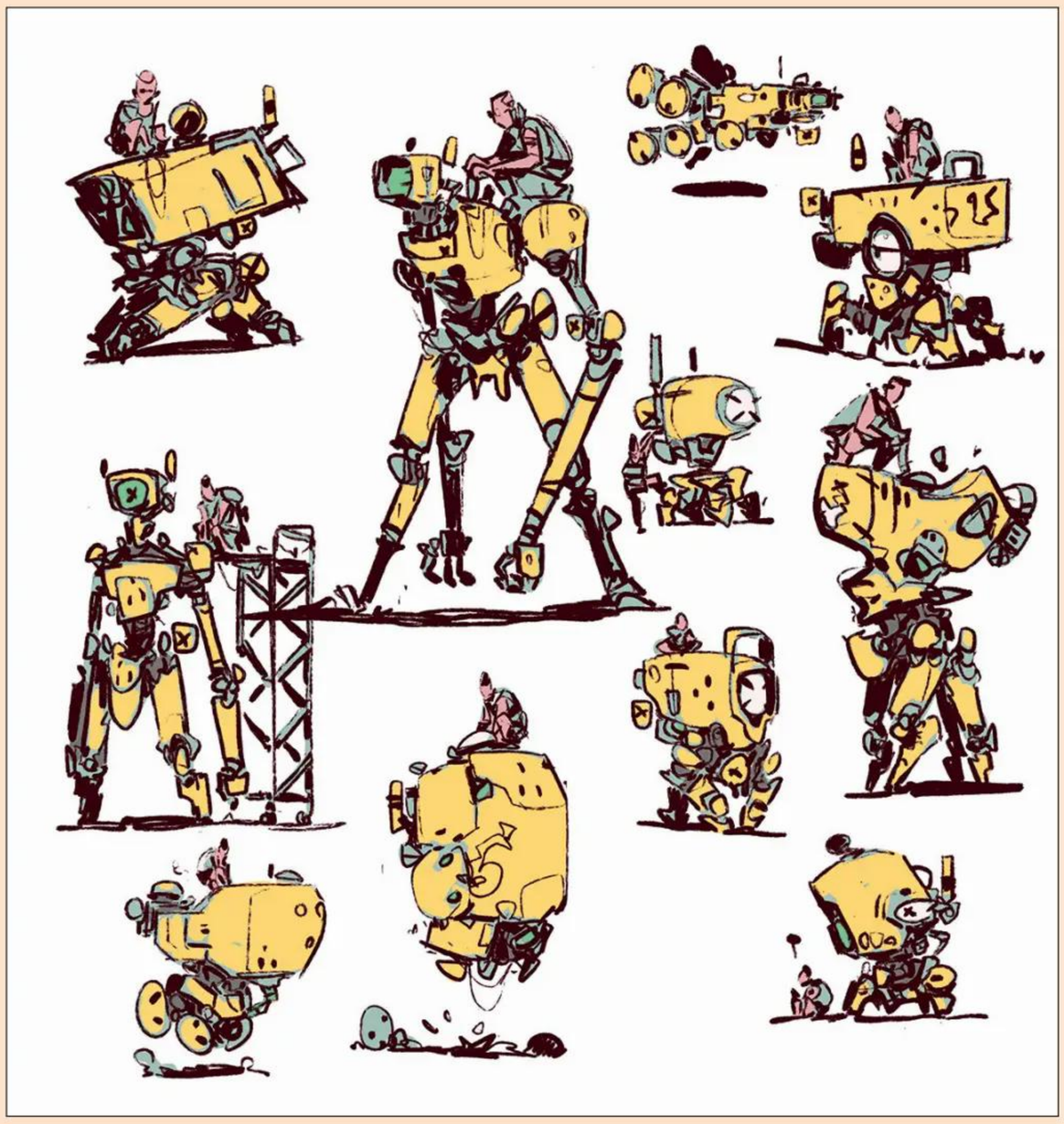
4 LOSE THE DETAIL AND STRENGTHEN SHAPE DESIGN

Always think about the bigger idea first. What's the principle behind what you're trying to achieve with your design? Detail can wait until the end. I love adding detail, especially graphic design to my spaceships and robots, but if the overall read is wrong then I'm wasting my time on fancy graphics. Make sure the silhouette and larger shape design is solid: you'll then have the foundation to build a final piece from.

5 START WITH A SIMPLE PALETTE

Shape, form and value should always come first. Colour is a deep pit to get lost in, so initially keep things simple. I generally work with three or four complementary colours to show the basic design. I also add pops of colour to highlight certain elements or create pattern. When working up a full piece, it's always a better plan to keep saturation low at the start, rather than having the whole piece shout at you.

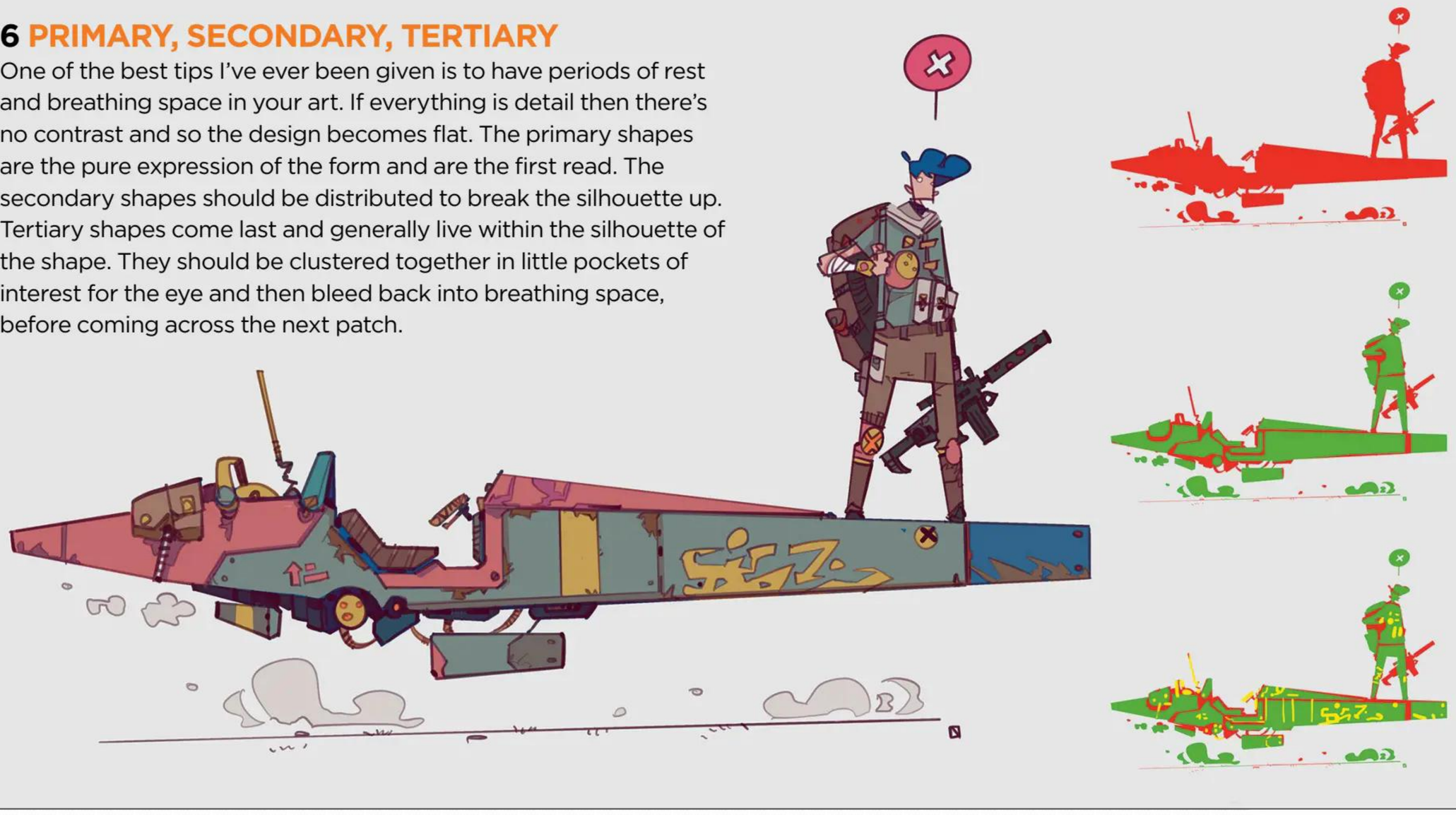




> "It's always a better plan to keep saturation low at the start, rather than having the whole piece shout at you"

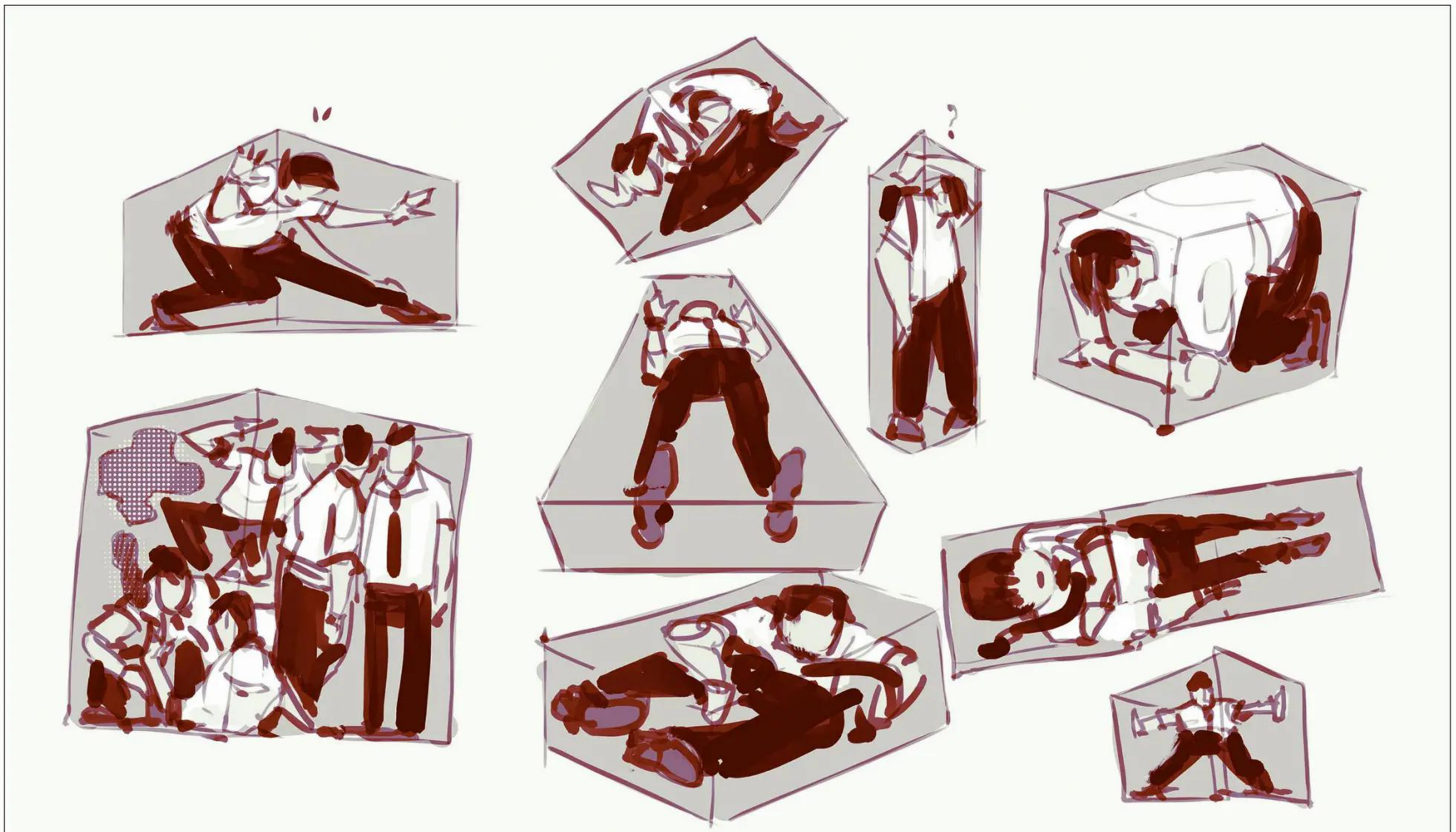
6 PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY

One of the best tips I've ever been given is to have periods of rest and breathing space in your art. If everything is detail then there's no contrast and so the design becomes flat. The primary shapes are the pure expression of the form and are the first read. The secondary shapes should be distributed to break the silhouette up. Tertiary shapes come last and generally live within the silhouette of the shape. They should be clustered together in little pockets of interest for the eye and then bleed back into breathing space, before coming across the next patch.



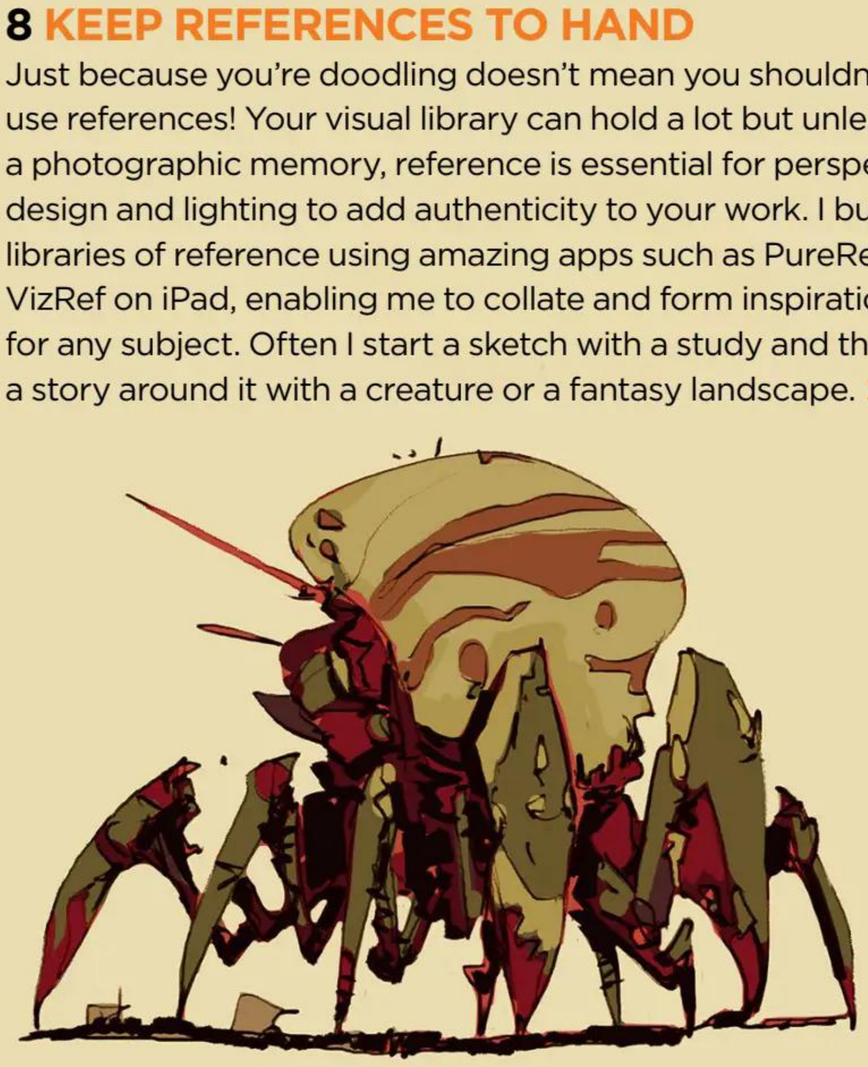
7 DON'T FORGET YOUR ART PRINCIPLES

Although sketches are meant to be rough and quick, please don't forget the foundations of art when designing. I always try to picture my drawing within boxes to help clarify the perspective for myself. I also imagine a single-point light and try to simplify the sketch by blocking in and designing the shadow shapes. If you're relatively new to drawing, take the time to draw a rough perspective grid. This is something I always used to do; however, over time I've had to use them less and less.



8 KEEP REFERENCES TO HAND

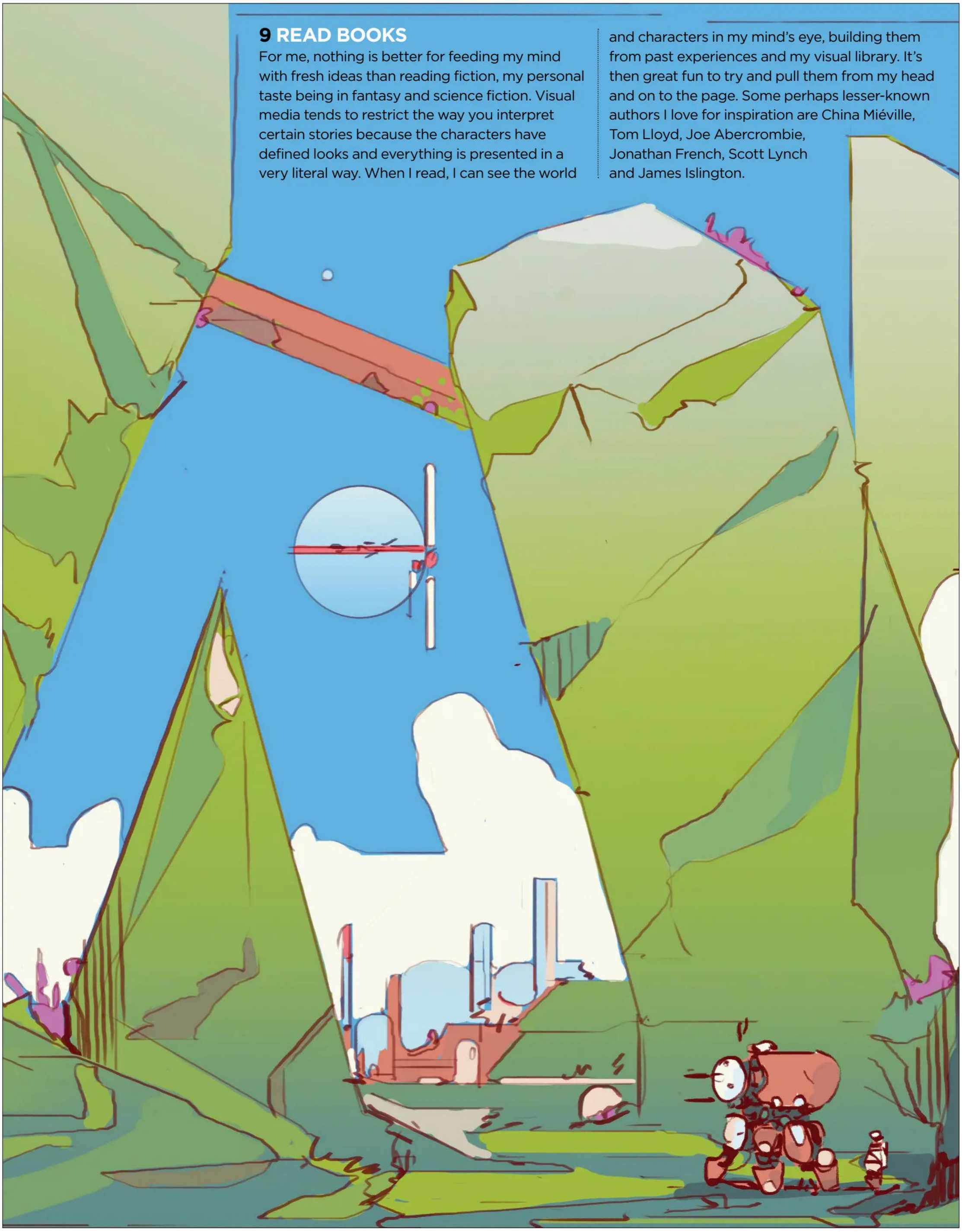
Just because you're doodling doesn't mean you shouldn't or can't use references! Your visual library can hold a lot but unless you have a photographic memory, reference is essential for perspective, design and lighting to add authenticity to your work. I build large libraries of reference using amazing apps such as PureRef on PC and VizRef on iPad, enabling me to collate and form inspiration boards for any subject. Often I start a sketch with a study and then build out a story around it with a creature or a fantasy landscape.





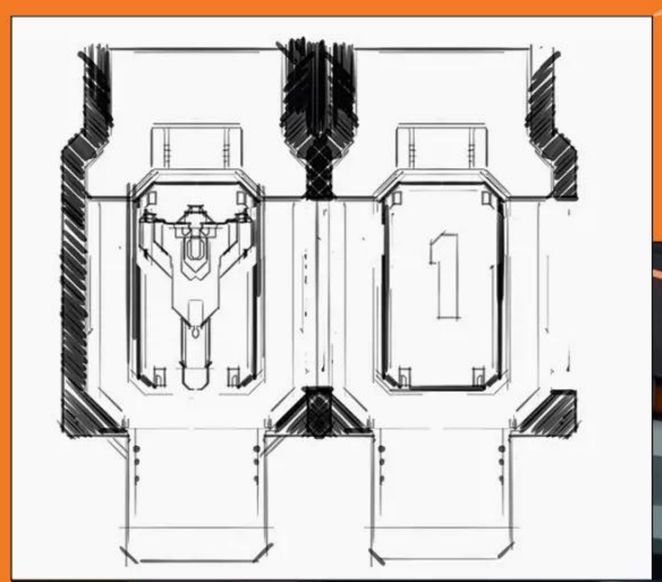
9 READ BOOKS

For me, nothing is better for feeding my mind with fresh ideas than reading fiction, my personal taste being in fantasy and science fiction. Visual media tends to restrict the way you interpret certain stories because the characters have defined looks and everything is presented in a very literal way. When I read, I can see the world and characters in my mind's eye, building them from past experiences and my visual library. It's then great fun to try and pull them from my head and on to the page. Some perhaps lesser-known authors I love for inspiration are China Miéville, Tom Lloyd, Joe Abercrombie, Jonathan French, Scott Lynch and James Islington.



10 USE 3D TO FLESH OUT A DESIGN

Take a sketch from a simple 2D idea to a fully realised 3D concept



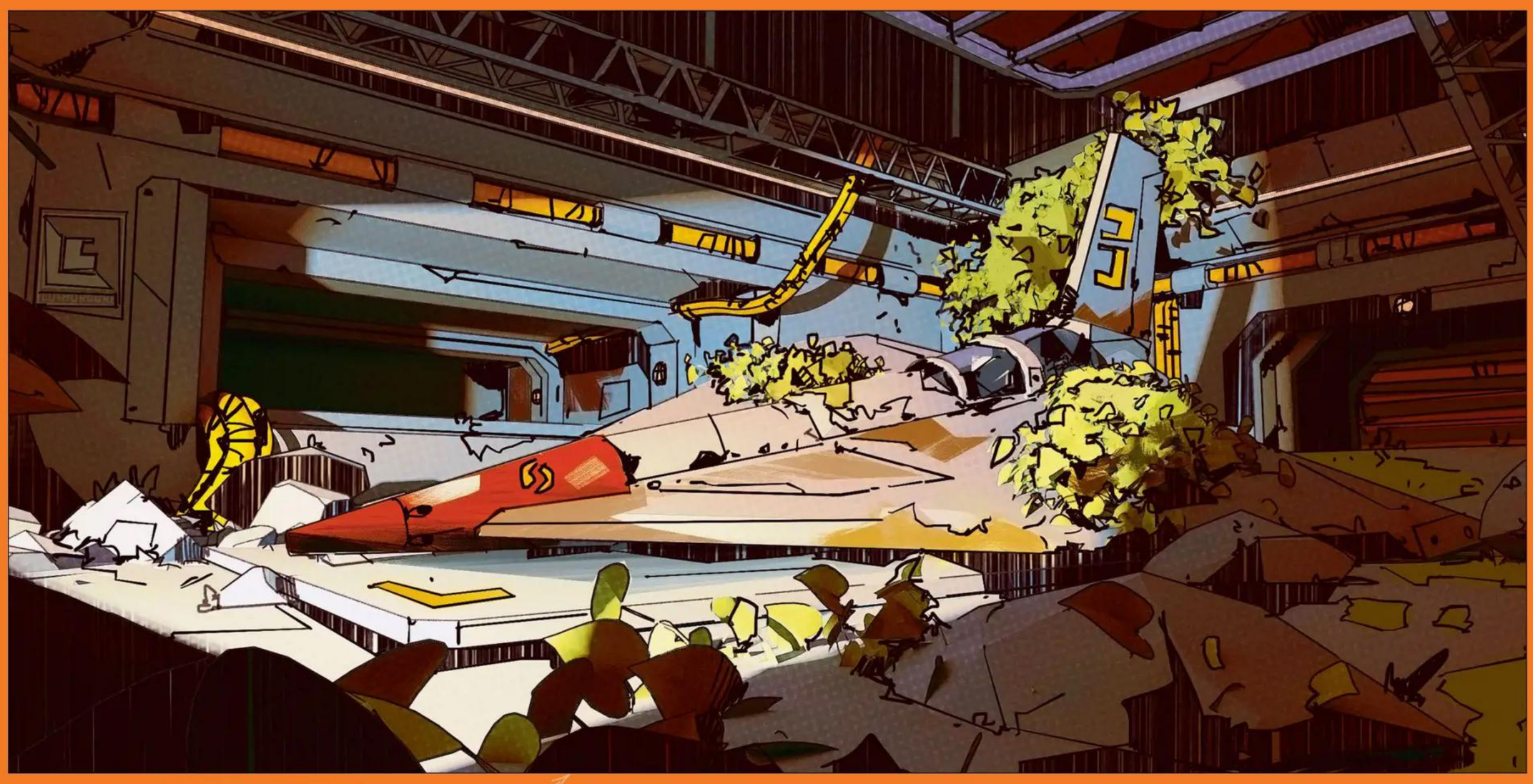
A Begin with a plan

I start by planning what I want to design. I draw out rough sketches of the 'final' scene and iterate upon it with different ideas. I then use my architectural background to create rough plans of the space and a blueprint to work from in 3D.



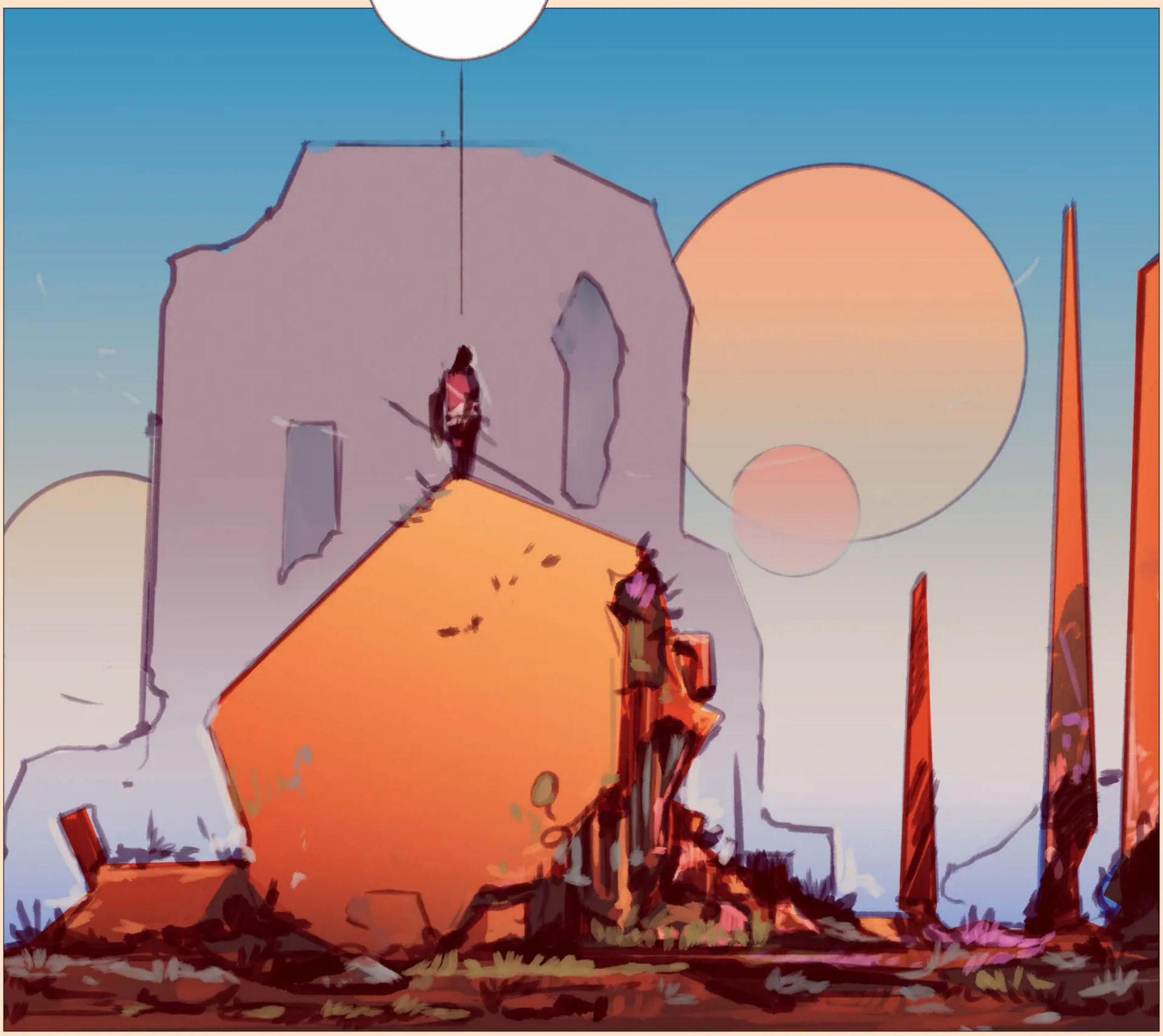
B Rough 3D

I move to Blender and build a basic blockout of the space, often recycling elements from different projects to save time. I then do a quick lighting pass to set up the tone that I was trying to achieve in my initial sketching phase.



C Apply the final touches

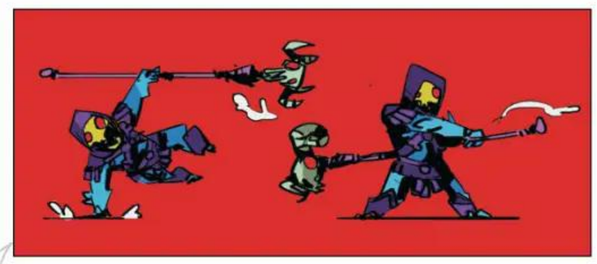
I now move to Photoshop and add hand-drawn line-work. I like to do this because it adds looseness and a more organic feel that sometimes becomes lost in 3D. Finally, I work into the basic colour pass, adding local colour and material detail to the scene, in addition to wear and tear and graphic detail until I feel the scene is where I want it to be. ➳



11 TURN OFF THE MUSIC

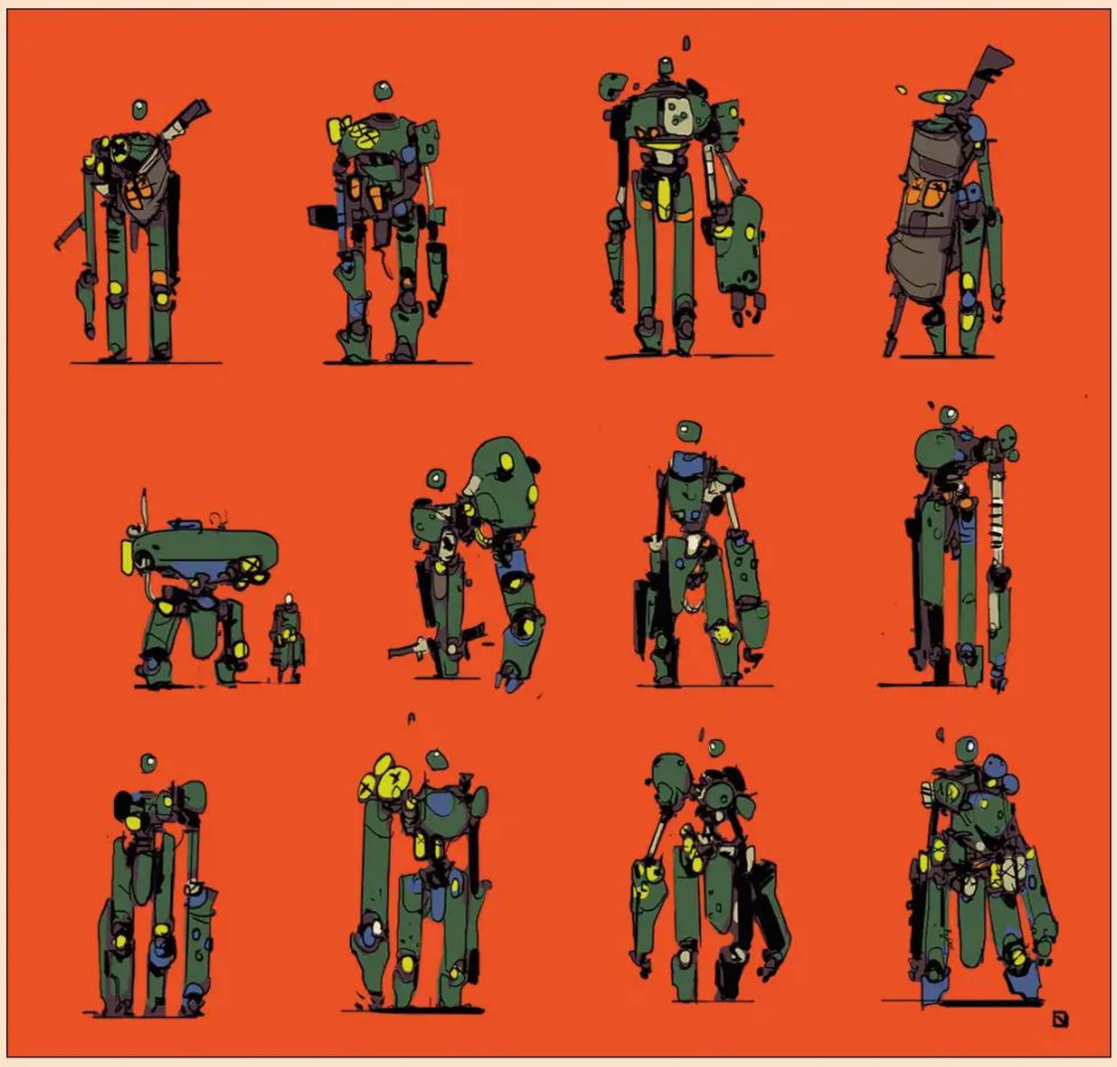
Sometimes I need to switch everything off and get lost in the drawing. I must admit, I'm often guilty of drawing with music on or in front of the TV, and not really engaging. I then find that most times I go back to topics I'm comfortable with and rarely come up with something new. When taking on a new subject, I make the effort to turn everything off and talk myself through what I'm doing. What am I drawing, how does it work, why does it look like this? It's all about making conscious decisions and convincing yourself that you 'invented' your solution. Thus your brain is more likely to hang on to the information and you get to add a new tool to your drawing arsenal.





12 FAN ART

If you're stuck in an art funk, fan art and playing with existing IPs is a great way to revitalise yourself. An exercise I love to do is take an existing character, reinterpret their design and then use gestural reference to put them into fun poses and explore how their design works. This takes the pressure off myself as the key design decisions have been made and I can just relax and have fun.



13 RECYCLE SHAPES

When creating thumbnails digitally, I save a lot of time by recycling shape language that I think works or sparks an interest in me. When I find a combination I like, I'll duplicate it and see how I can reinterpret and use this to spawn new shapes and designs. This often gives a consistency to the ideas, because they start from the same building blocks and so form and share a similar shape language.

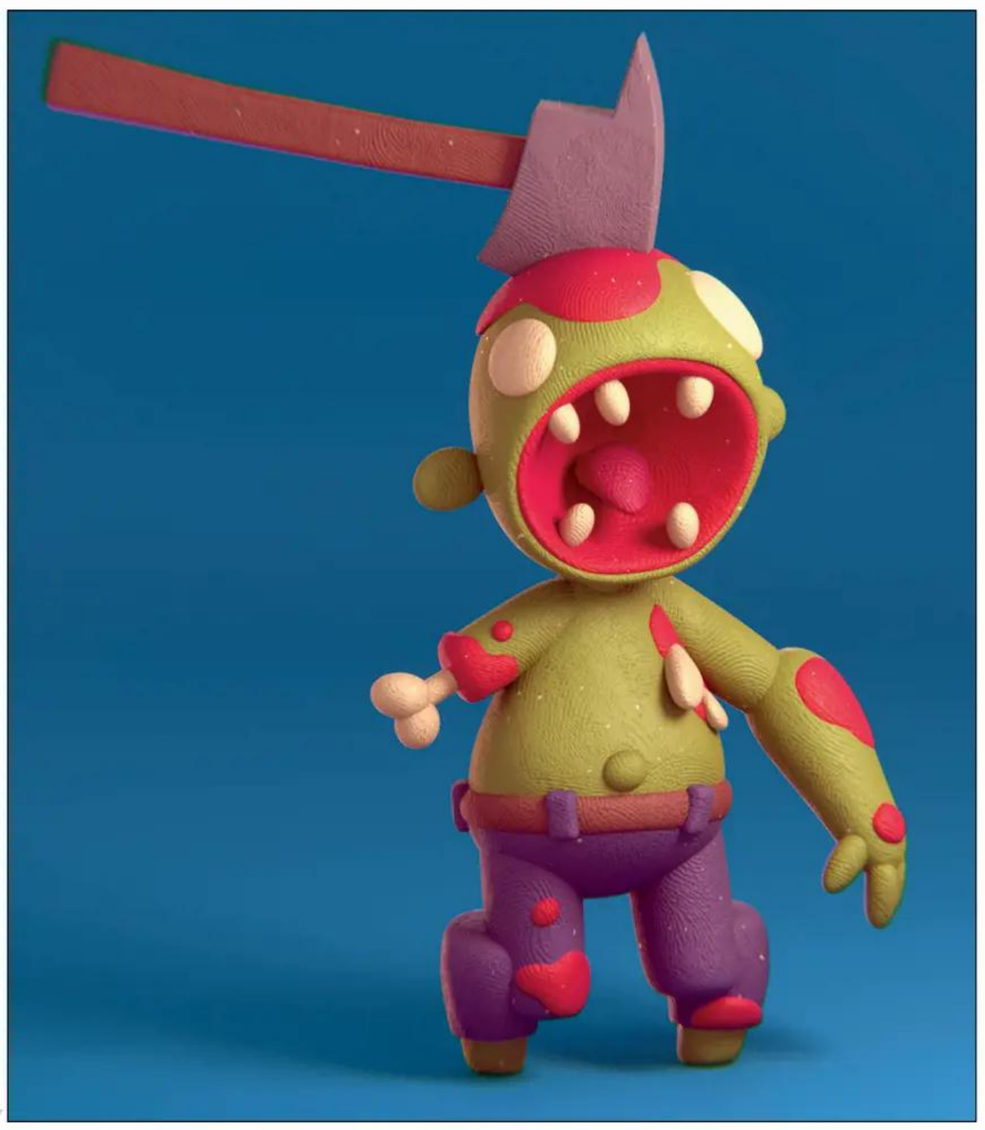


14 FIND THE STORY

When drawing for myself, I don't start with a story in mind, but one is often born within the process. I may start to design something that then sparks a daisy chain of ideas and thus a narrative is born. It might be as simple as a robot missing an arm and then trying to explain how that came to be, either with other battle wounds or rust if it has been neglected. It's a challenge to express something so complex in just one illustration, but a fun one.

> A great way to challenge yourself on the understanding of a design is by taking it into a new medium





15 CHALLENGE YOURSELF BY WORKING WITH NEW MEDIUMS

A great way to challenge yourself on the understanding of a design is by taking it into a new medium. I love to experiment with new tools and always love the challenge of 3D. With 2D, there's quite a bit of room to hide but in 3D, designs have to work in real space, even if you can cheat things a little for fixed camera angles. Blender has great free modelling and sculpting tools and I love challenging myself to try and reinterpret one of my designs in 3D. I certainly appreciate what I put the 3D artists through when I design a character!

Andrea Femerstrand

This Swedish children's book illustrator loves drawing animals that are playful, sleepy or just plain confused…

Artist PROFILE

Andrea Femerstrand

LOCATION: Sweden



Andrea has been freelancing since 2010, working with pretty much anything that includes character development or some sort of storytelling. Her clients include HarperCollins, Wacom, 3Dtotal and Goodbye Kansas Studios. Nowadays she's mainly occupied as a children's book illustrator working on several Swedish book series.

www.noukah.com

CUDDLY LYNXES

"I love exploring ways to draw expressive animals, and felt the urge to draw cuddly lynxes. Sometimes it can be hard to find reference of wild animals and their expressions, but since lynxes are large wild forest-kitties, I could easily study domesticated cats and then mimic their behaviour."

LUNA

"I made some rough sketches for a Swedish book series that I'm illustrating, and these were the first rough character sketches of Luna, the main protagonist."

IS THERE A SPY AMONG US?

"Here's one of my personal favourites, done back in 2013. Did somebody say imposter syndrome?"

Andrea Femerstrand

RANDOM FOX

"Just a random fox to play around with Kyle T Webster's Photoshop brushes. The brush is called Carbonara Raw 2, I think."

LIVING ON THE EDGE

"Another old personal favourite. This one started out as some random tiger reaching for something and I wanted to add some funny contrast to it, hence the worried balloon!"

PLEASE HELP, THIS IS AWKWARD

"Oh, I love to keep the sketch really rough in the beginning, sculpting appealing shapes and nailing the structure of everything. Also, cuddly bunnies and confused doggos are so entertaining to draw!"

> "Cuddly bunnies and confused doggos are so entertaining to draw!"

JAVA

"These sketches are a bit emotional for me. I drew my long-lost sphynx cat Java who passed away too early, only five years old. After I processed the loss for a few years, I managed to honour him with these sketches without tearing up."

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

ImagineFX

INK TREE

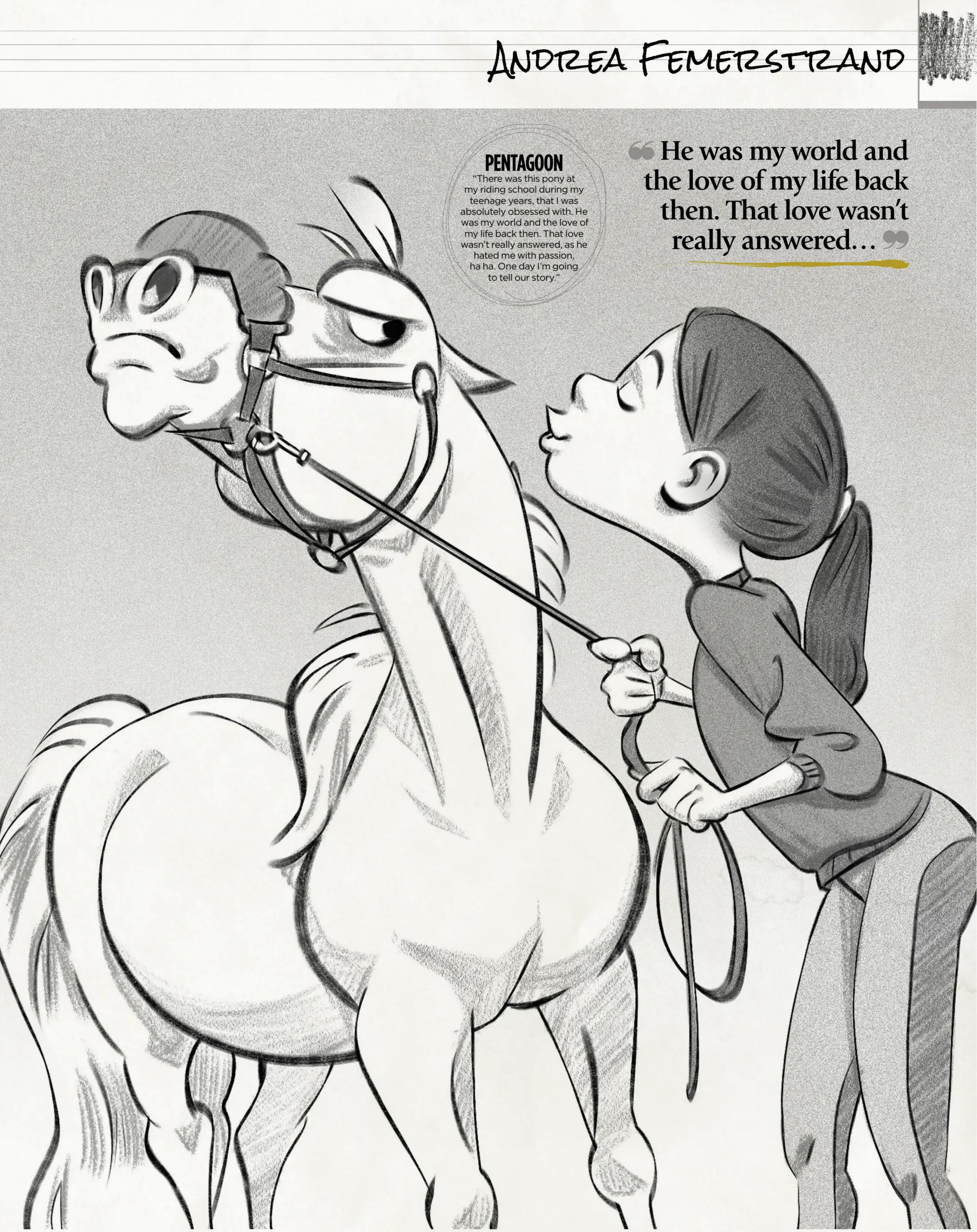
"I drew this for Inktober a few years back. I didn't really have any plan, other than just making some random doodles. Done mainly with a brush pen."

COFFEE FOXES

"I saw this awesome unknown quote outside a coffee shop: 'A yawn is a silent scream for coffee.' Being a coffee addict myself, I instantly felt that I had to draw something based on that quote."

I LOVE YOU BRO

"That feeling when you love someone so much that you almost want to squeeze the life out of them."



PENTAGOON

"There was this pony at my riding school during my teenage years, that I was absolutely obsessed with. He was my world and the love of my life back then. That love wasn't really answered, as he hated me with passion, ha ha. One day I'm going to tell our story."

> "He was my world and the love of my life back then. That love wasn't really answered…"

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

JULY

"I got to illustrate a monthly calendar for a Swedish kid's magazine, and this was the sketch for July. Swedish summers can be amazing, especially if you've got access to a lake, so I tried to portray the joy that every kid should feel during the summer breaks."

SPHYNX KITTEN

"I saw this adorable photo of a sphynx kitten, and just had to make a loose study of it. It became this little fella!"

PRINCESS YLVA AND ULVIS

"Just a random sketch that I've done during my breaks. I'd love to develop some story with these two someday!"

SNOW LEOPARD

"Did you know that snow leopards like to carry their own tails? It's the most adorable thing in the world, so I had to draw one doing just that."

Andrea Femerstrand

> “He looked so chill so I added a sleepy lynx on his back to make this sketch twice as chill!”



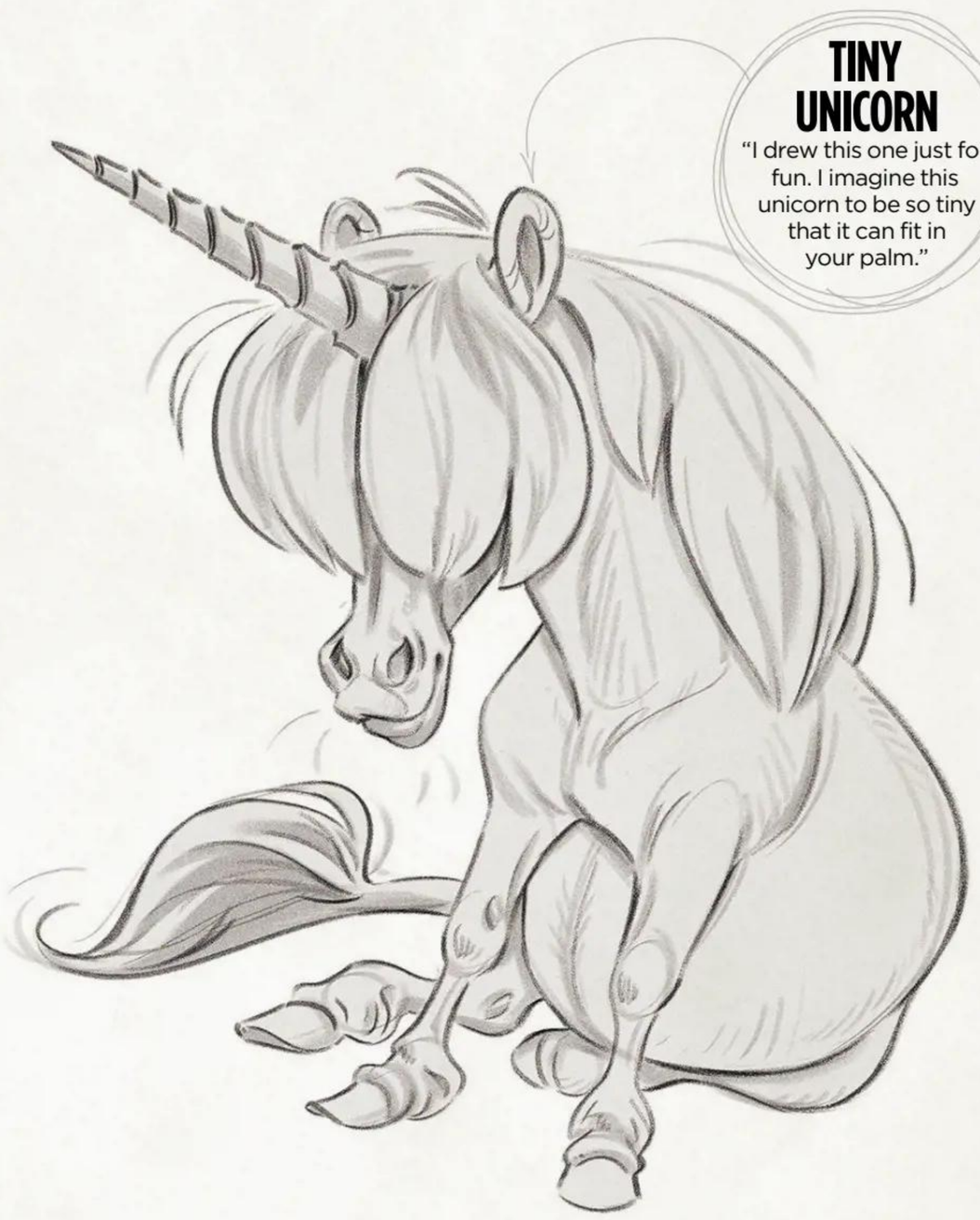
LYNX AND HORSE

“This one started out with some random horse sketch. He looked so chill so I added a sleepy lynx on his back to make this sketch twice as chill!”



COMFORT ZONE

“I’ve noticed that most of the time, when I draw just for fun, I gravitate towards red foxes against greenish backgrounds. I just love drawing them, and find that colour combo so appealing! So here’s one of those typical comfort zoners of mine.”



TINY UNICORN

“I drew this one just for fun. I imagine this unicorn to be so tiny that it can fit in your palm.”



SKVADER

“This one started out as a wolf doodle, just to practise shape language and find some interesting designs. He looked surprised, so I decided to add a skvader. It’s a Swedish mythological creature that looks like a winged hare.”

Pencil *Pens*

DRAW HEADS FROM OBSERVATION

Follow CHRIS LEGASPI'S simple, effective techniques for drawing realistic heads and faces either from life or observation

Before I draw the human head, I observe the shape, planes and rhythms. Then I start by capturing shape and gesture, by drawing the major shapes using big strokes and long marks. I can then position features using the vertical and horizontal centre of the face, making sure the angles are correct. Next, I build in the major planes: front, sides, and either top or bottom. The secondary planes are the brow, nose and beginning of the mouth. Then I start to refine the features.

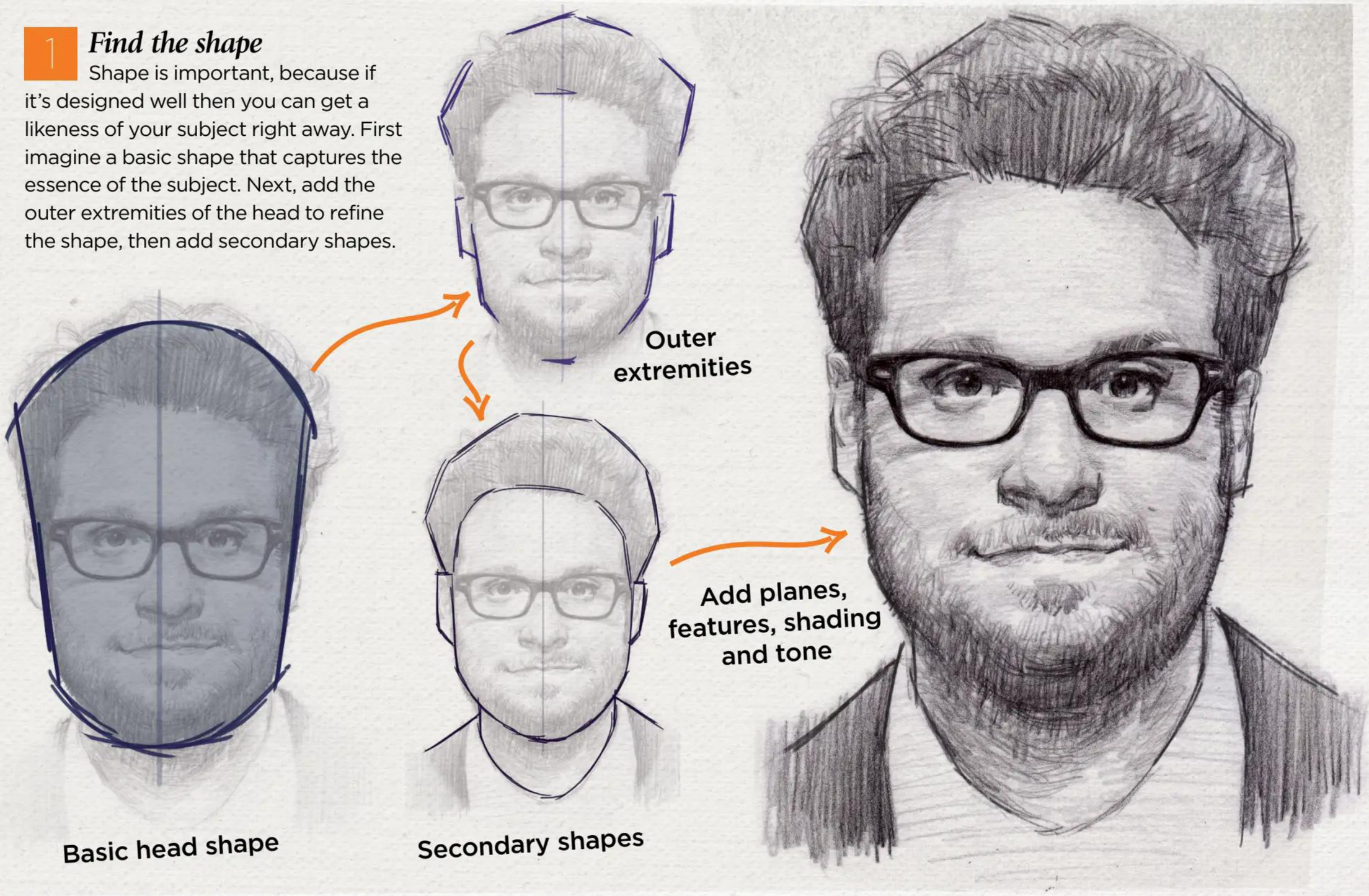
If I have time, I add tones and shading. I start by simplifying and massing in the shadow shape to give the illusion of a light source. Next, I add tones in the shadow to soften the edges and create a realistic form. Then I refine the tones and edges to increase realism. I start with half-tones, adding a light wash and gradually build up their value. Finally, I add highlights and dark accents for contrast.



Chris is a painter, illustrator, video game concept artist and health nut with more than 20 years of drawing, painting and teaching experience. See his work at www.drawwithchris.com.

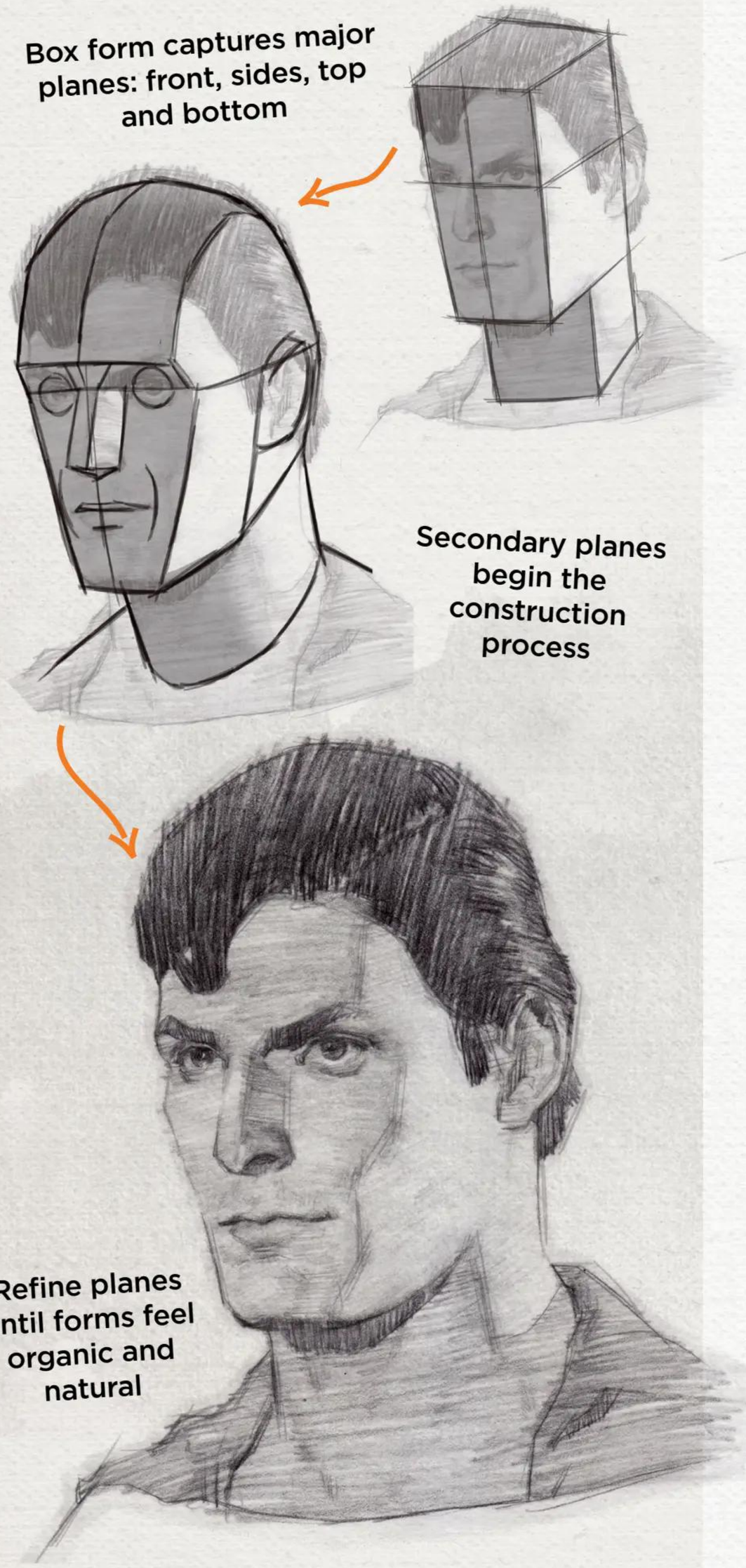
1 *Find the shape*

Shape is important, because if it's designed well then you can get a likeness of your subject right away. First imagine a basic shape that captures the essence of the subject. Next, add the outer extremities of the head to refine the shape, then add secondary shapes.

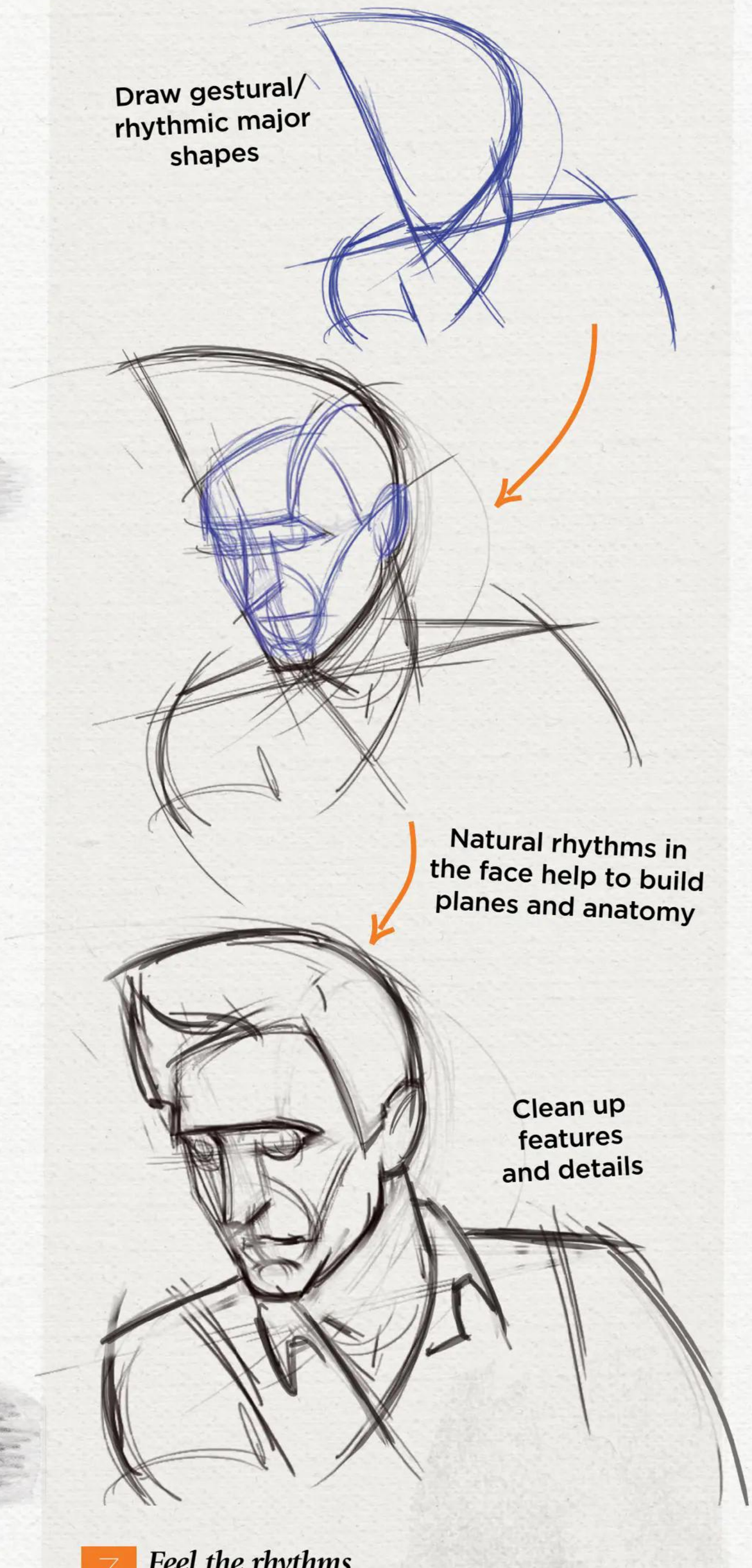


2 *Include the planes*

Planes make a drawing feel like a 3D form. When you study a subject, imagine a basic cube with a front, sides, top and bottom planes. Then look for the secondary, subdivided planes and smaller shapes, such as the brow and the nose.

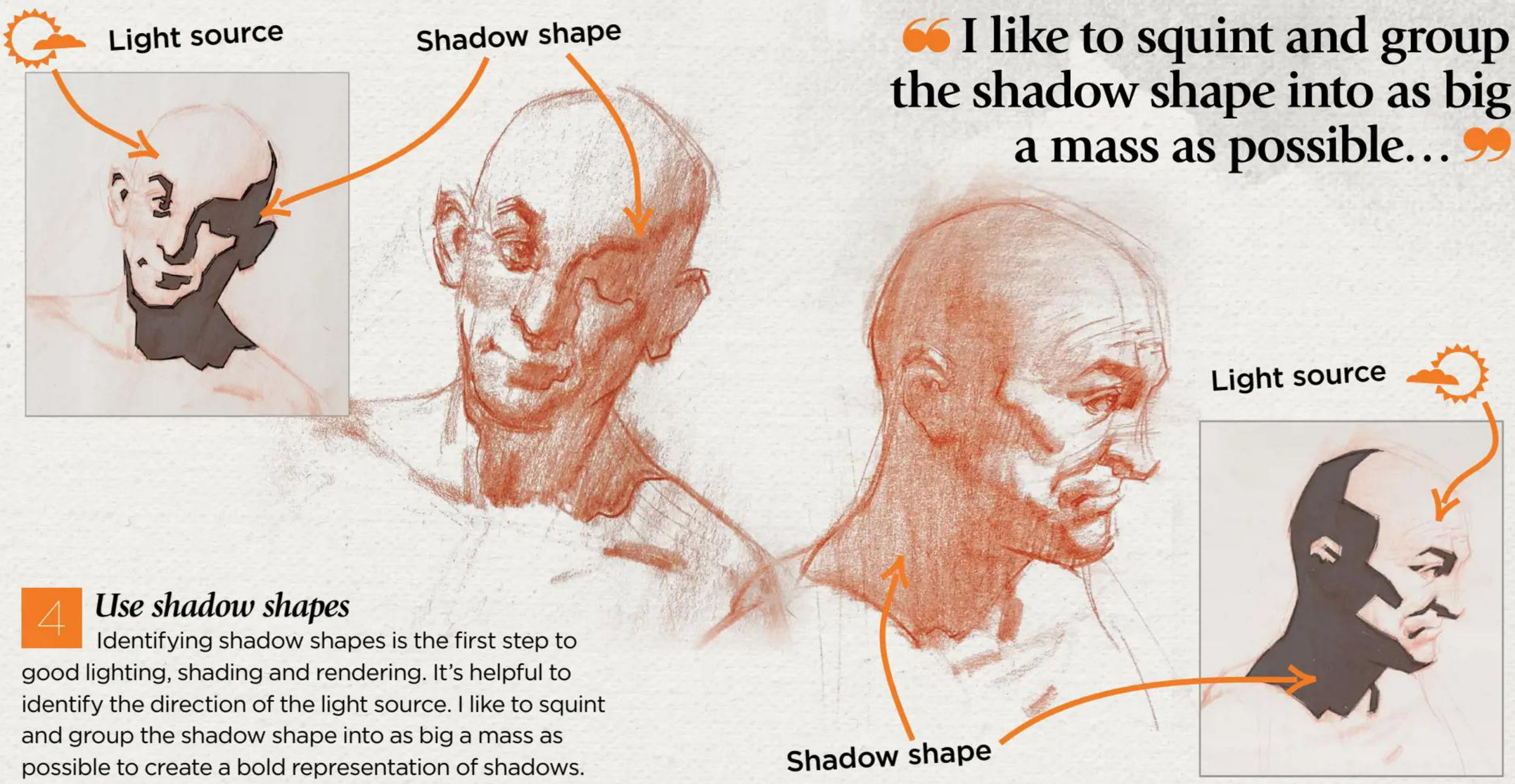


“When you study a subject, imagine a basic cube with a front, sides, top and bottom planes”



3 *Feel the rhythms*

Rhythms are naturally occurring lines that usually follow anatomy to create a sense of gesture and movement. First, look at the outer points and try to connect them using big, sweeping gestural marks. Then look for rhythms and lines within the face. These help you to construct and eventually align and place features later in the drawing.

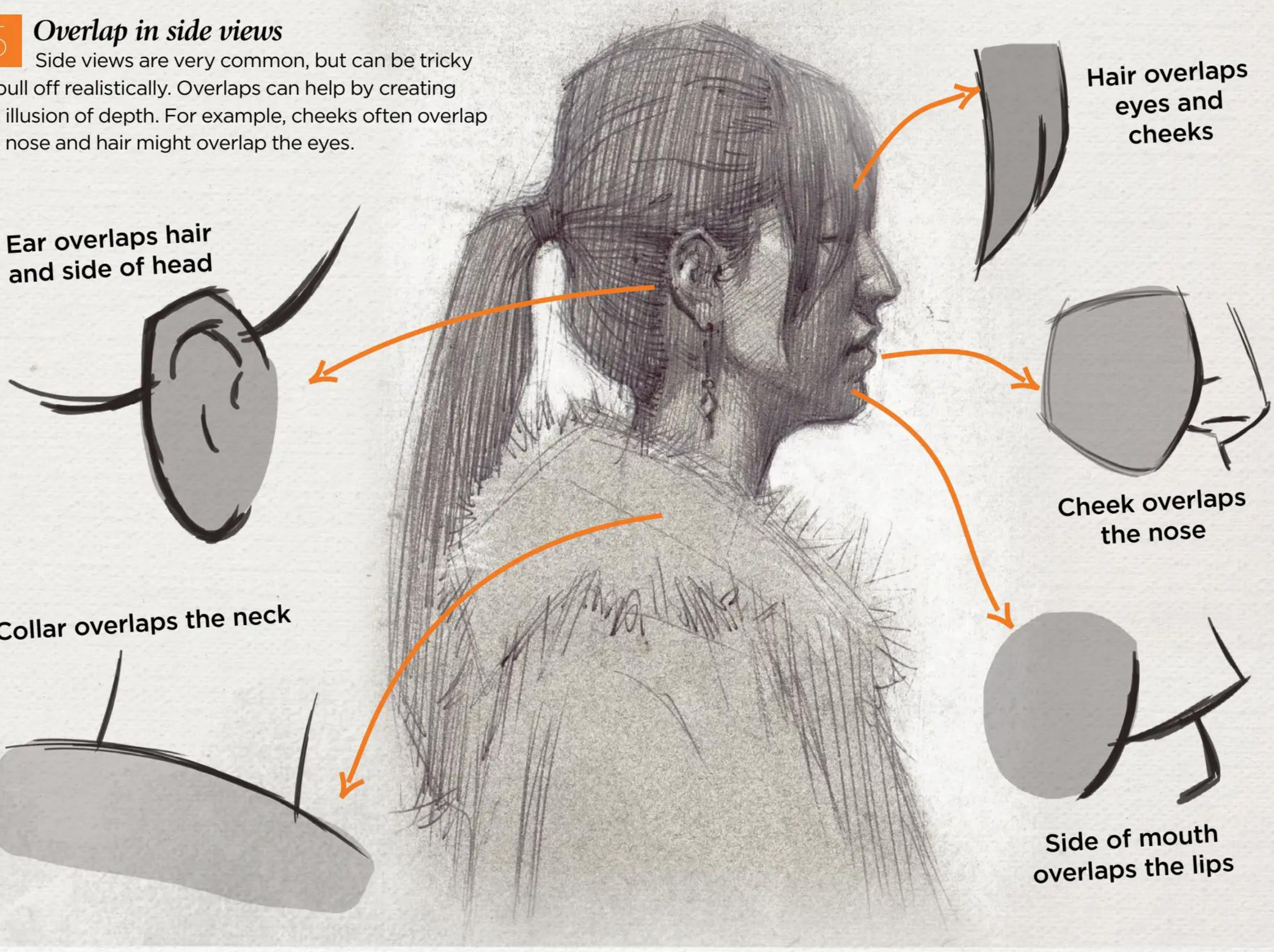


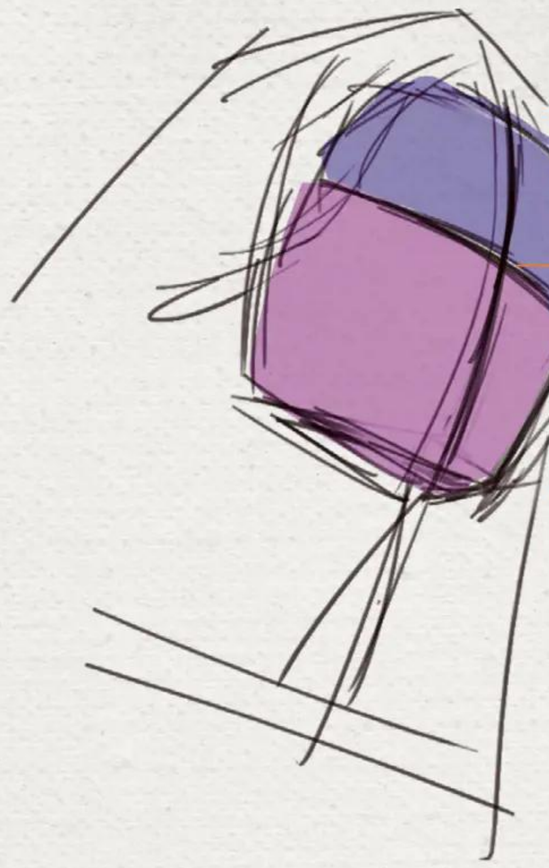
4 *Use shadow shapes*

Identifying shadow shapes is the first step to good lighting, shading and rendering. It's helpful to identify the direction of the light source. I like to squint and group the shadow shape into as big a mass as possible to create a bold representation of shadows.

5 *Overlap in side views*

Side views are very common, but can be tricky to pull off realistically. Overlaps can help by creating the illusion of depth. For example, cheeks often overlap the nose and hair might overlap the eyes.





B

A

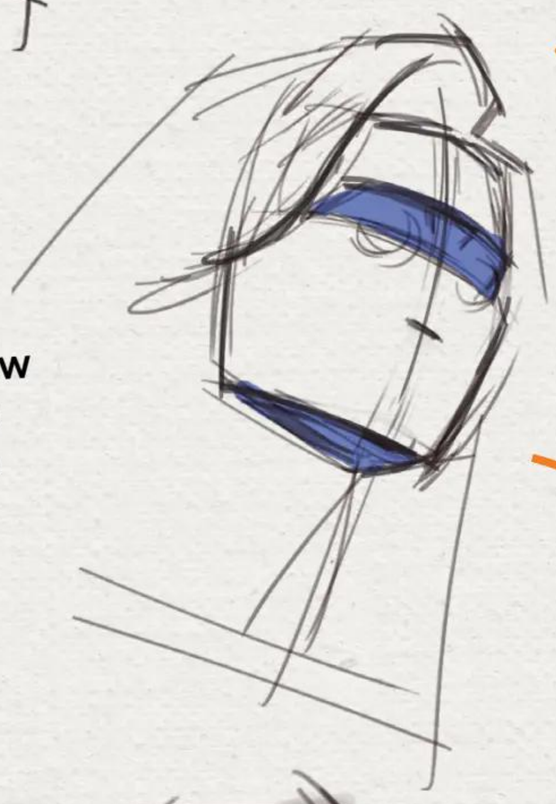
Make sure B is shorter than A

Ensure D is thinner than C



C

D



Construct the brow and exaggerate the underplane

Box-like nose and mouth exaggerate underplanes



Use highlights to emphasise up-facing planes



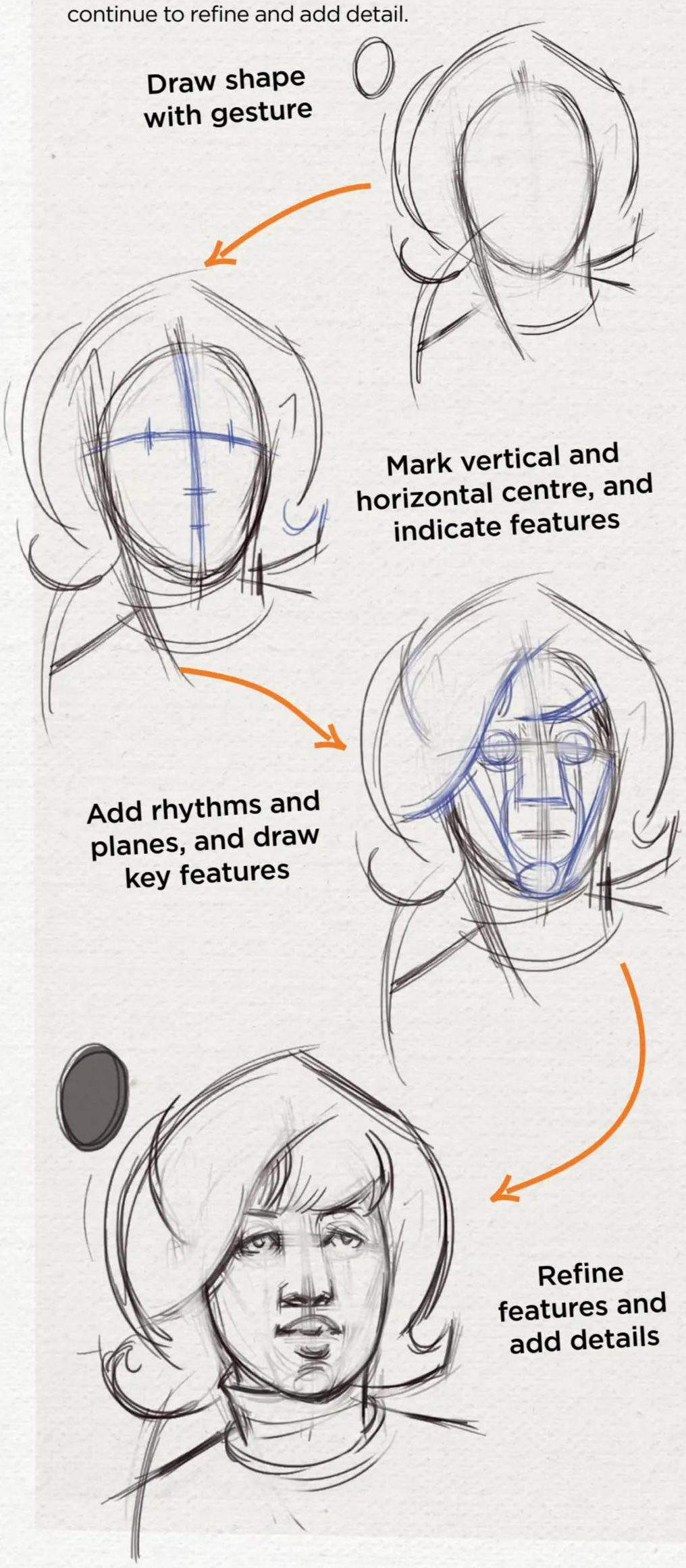
Tone emphasises underplanes

6 *Ensure your up-views are in proportion*

Up-views or low angle poses are really tough, so they need a lot of practice. Take your time to measure the proportions. Then as you construct the face, exaggerate the underplanes of forms. If you have time to shade, use tone and highlights to help create depth.

7 *Two- to three-minute process*

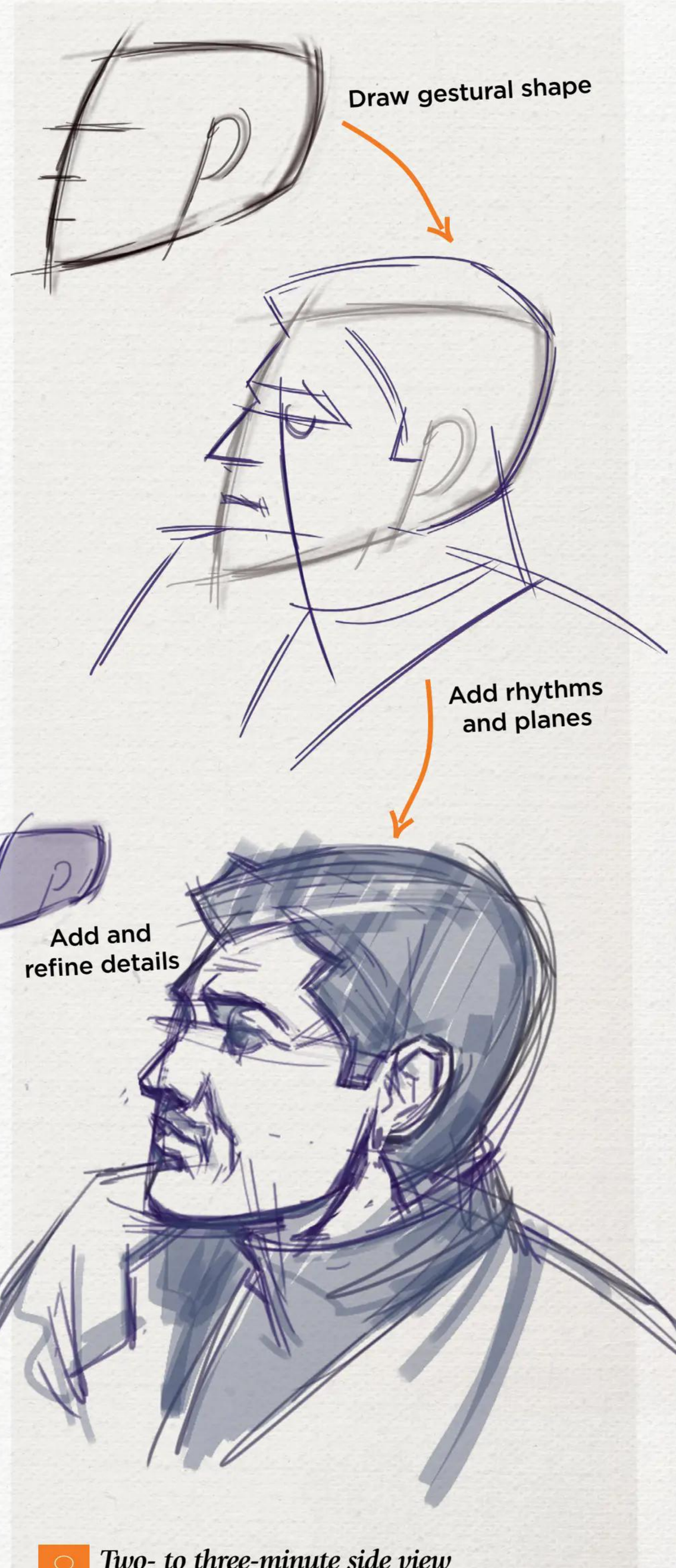
In a short, two- to three-minute pose, begin by drawing the major shapes in a gestural way. Then add the vertical and horizontal centres and indicate the features. Next come the planes, rhythms and placement of features. With the time left, continue to refine and add detail.

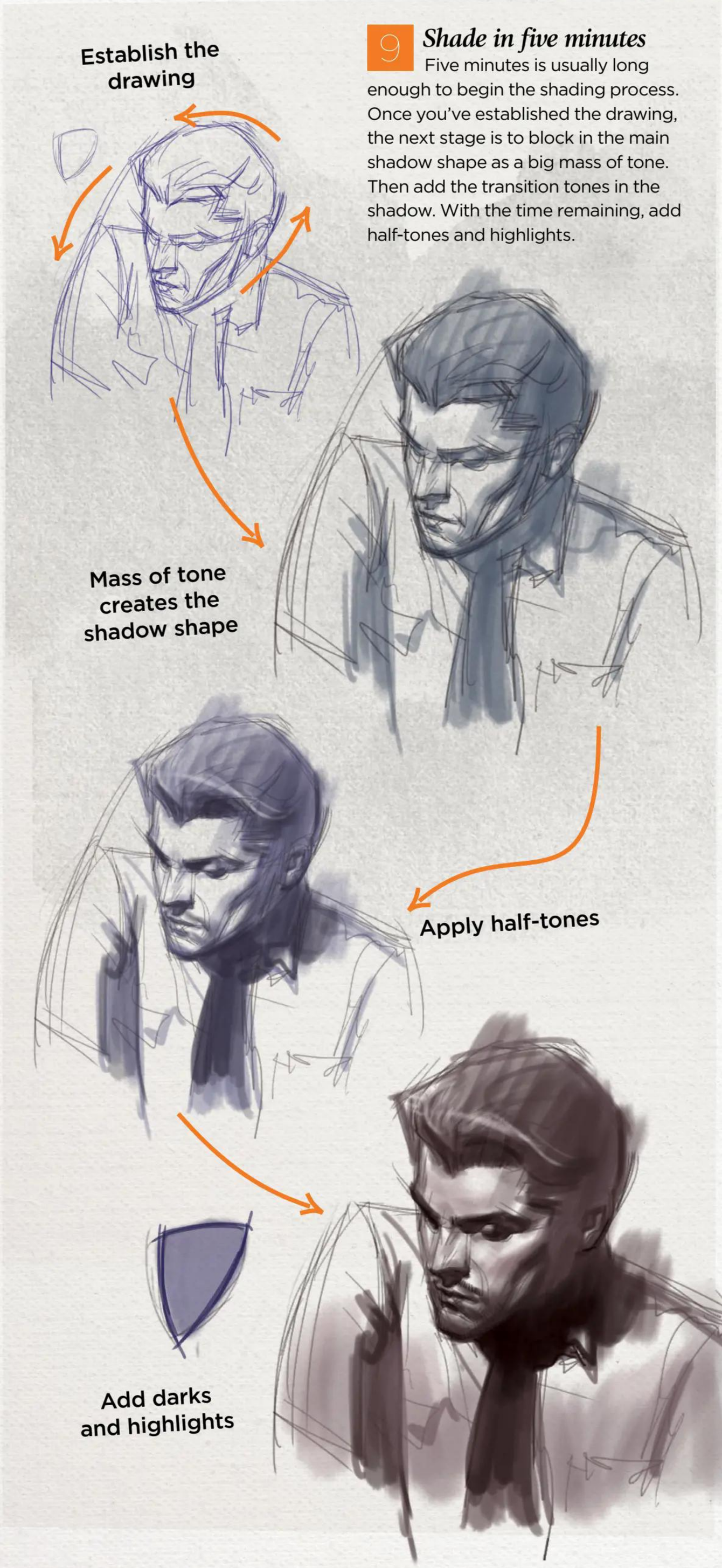


“In a short, two- to three-minute pose, begin by drawing the major shapes in a gestural way”

8 *Two- to three-minute side view*

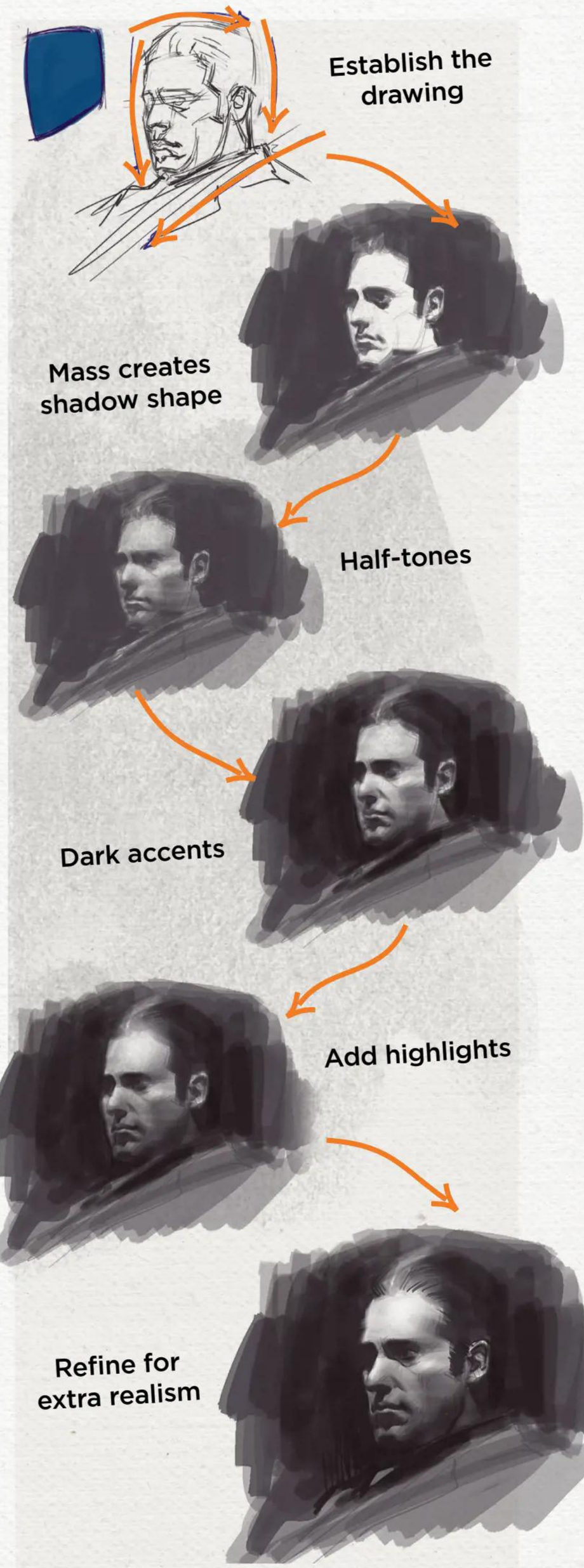
Side views usually take less time to develop because there’s less to draw. Start side views by drawing the major shapes in a gestural way. Next, draw the rhythms and place the features. Then continue to refine, add details and tone.





9 *Shade in five minutes*

Five minutes is usually long enough to begin the shading process. Once you've established the drawing, the next stage is to block in the main shadow shape as a big mass of tone. Then add the transition tones in the shadow. With the time remaining, add half-tones and highlights.



10 *Longer to refine*

My process for a 10-minute work is the same as for a 20-minute or more pose. Establish a good lay-in first, then block in the shadow. Next, add core shadow and half-tones. Finally, continually refine the half-tones, lights, highlights and darks

Photoshop

QUICKLY SKETCH A CHARACTER DESIGN

Netflix artist **Jackie Droujko** shares her process for designing a character in a scene, emphasising texture, mood and lighting

Artist **PROFILE**

Jackie Droujko

LOCATION: Canada

Jackie is a character designer working at Netflix. Her passion lies in creating simple and appealing designs that communicate compelling stories.

www.jackiedroujko.com



This piece was created for my monthly Patreon exclusive print – each month I create an illustration to print and send to my Patrons. For this illustration, I was inspired by German artist Thorsten Hasenkamm (@thasenkamm) and the way he draws characters on bicycles so effortlessly. Vehicles aren't my strong suit, so I wanted to challenge myself not only to create a character on a Vespa, but to do it within a short amount of time (basically while I was taking my lunch break).

I began by opening a few Vespa references from Pinterest and sketched out the idea using Photoshop. I was playing with the idea of not having any lines in the piece, but eventually decided against that for the sake of time. I ended up embracing the sketchiness that comes with rough line-work. My main focus was capturing rich colours, strong mood and the gentle gaze of the character. I focused less on the perspective of the bike, and more on the interaction of the character and the vehicle.

When I finished the local colours, which were these vibrant green and yellow hues, it made sense for the lighting to be sunset to add to the warm glow of the character. ➳

How I create...
AN ILLUSTRATION DURING A LUNCH BREAK



1 Sketch using a reference

I first rough out the character with no plan for the background. I know I don't want a solid colour, but have no other idea beyond that at this point. I use a reference image to guide me on the placement and perspective of the bike and how the character fits on it. I add a basic grid on the floor to anchor her to the ground.



2 Blocking in colours

With the sketch done, I line the character and Vespa. I add base colours to get the general mood I'm trying to convey. Once the base of the character/scooter is complete, I rough in the background, making sure to use colours that harmonise with the existing palette. I want her to fit in with her environment, not stand out.



3 Lighting and background

Now I can move to the texture, details and lighting of the character and scooter. I quickly create a messy background, then refine the character. The background has enough information to show where she is and what time of day it is – I don't need more information than that, especially when the character is the focal point.

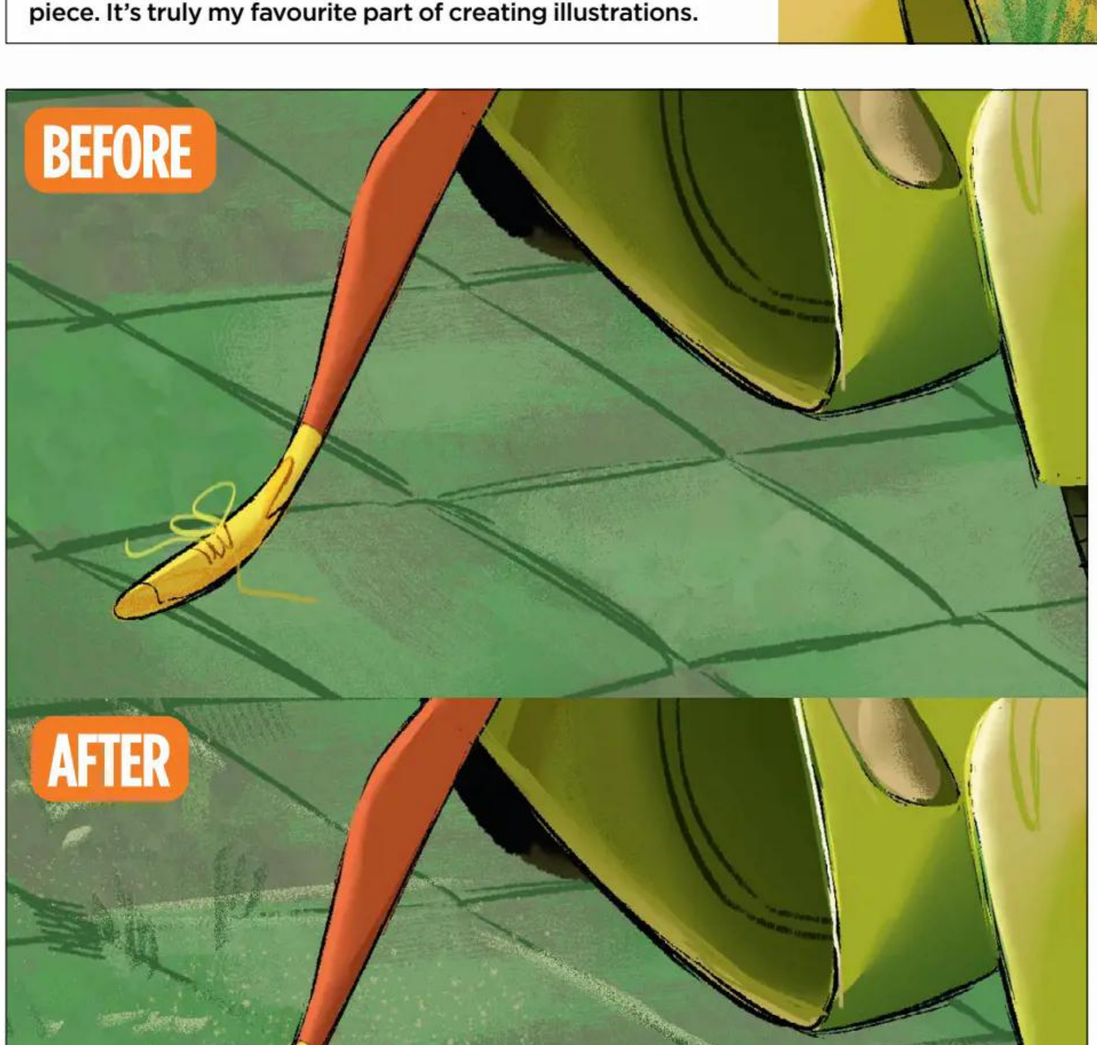

VALERIE
2021

QUICK TRICKS



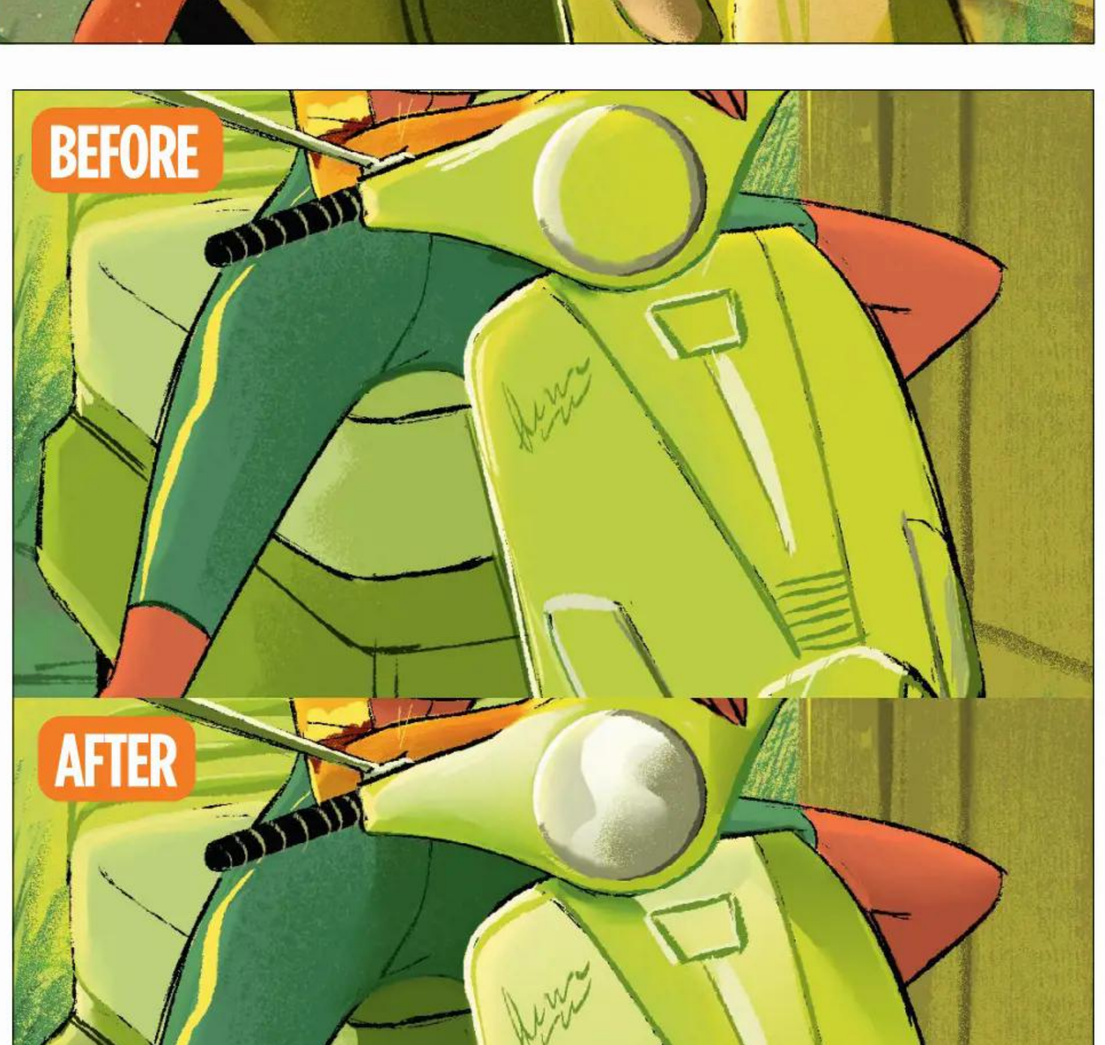
Draw over the image

A favourite method of mine to add appeal and life to a piece of art is to draw over the entire image on a single layer. This gives me free rein to fix whatever's bothering me by colour-picking and drawing over it. I blend lines together, add details, and give myself the freedom to have fun with the piece. It's truly my favourite part of creating illustrations.



Texture: the lazy person's detail

Adding a variety of textures in the background is a great way to quickly make a simple design more interesting. Here, I place textures and similar colours over the grid on the ground to give the impression of grit. Now it looks like dirty cobblestone with grass growing through the cracks.



Painting metal

In order to make the scooter look metallic, I add a Multiply blending layer for the shadows and a Lighten blending layer for the highlights over the local base colours. To make details convincingly shiny, I make sure to add mostly either hard shadows or highlights that eventually soften.

Patterns make it POP!

To add an interesting detail, I create a fun pattern in her shirt that embodies all the colours of the image. When the rest of the drawing's colours are used in big blocks, this shirt adds rhythm and variety to an otherwise simple use of colour.

Lens blur

Blurring edges of the character and background is a quick way to convey depth and push the idea that this image takes place in a real location, rather than a 2D drawing. With some of the background blurred, we can really focus on the character.



Light source

Here's an extreme example of the lighting I used to better understand how surfaces were lit in this scene. The light source is parallel to her and behind her, so I used a strong rim light along all the surfaces facing screen left. Where there's no rim light, there's a shadow to contrast.

Retro colour change

I love adding an RGB split effect along the edges of a piece to add a retro feeling. It gives a sense of wonder and draws your eye to the focal point of the image. It also subtly adds blue and red so that it's barely visible, but you can feel the change in the colour palette.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: SHIYOON KIM'S INK BRUSH

I like using this brush for line-art because it gives a rough and sketchy energy to my pieces.

Artist insight

10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DRAWINGS

Acclaimed artist **Karl Kopinski** shares his sketching and drawing advice, based on his personal experiences and career in the illustration industry

Artist **PROFILE**

Karl Kopinski
LOCATION: England

Karl has been producing fantastical art since 1997, and has worked for a range of companies including Wizards of the Coast, Games Workshop, Ubisoft, MPC and SIXMOREVODKA.
www.karlkopinski.com

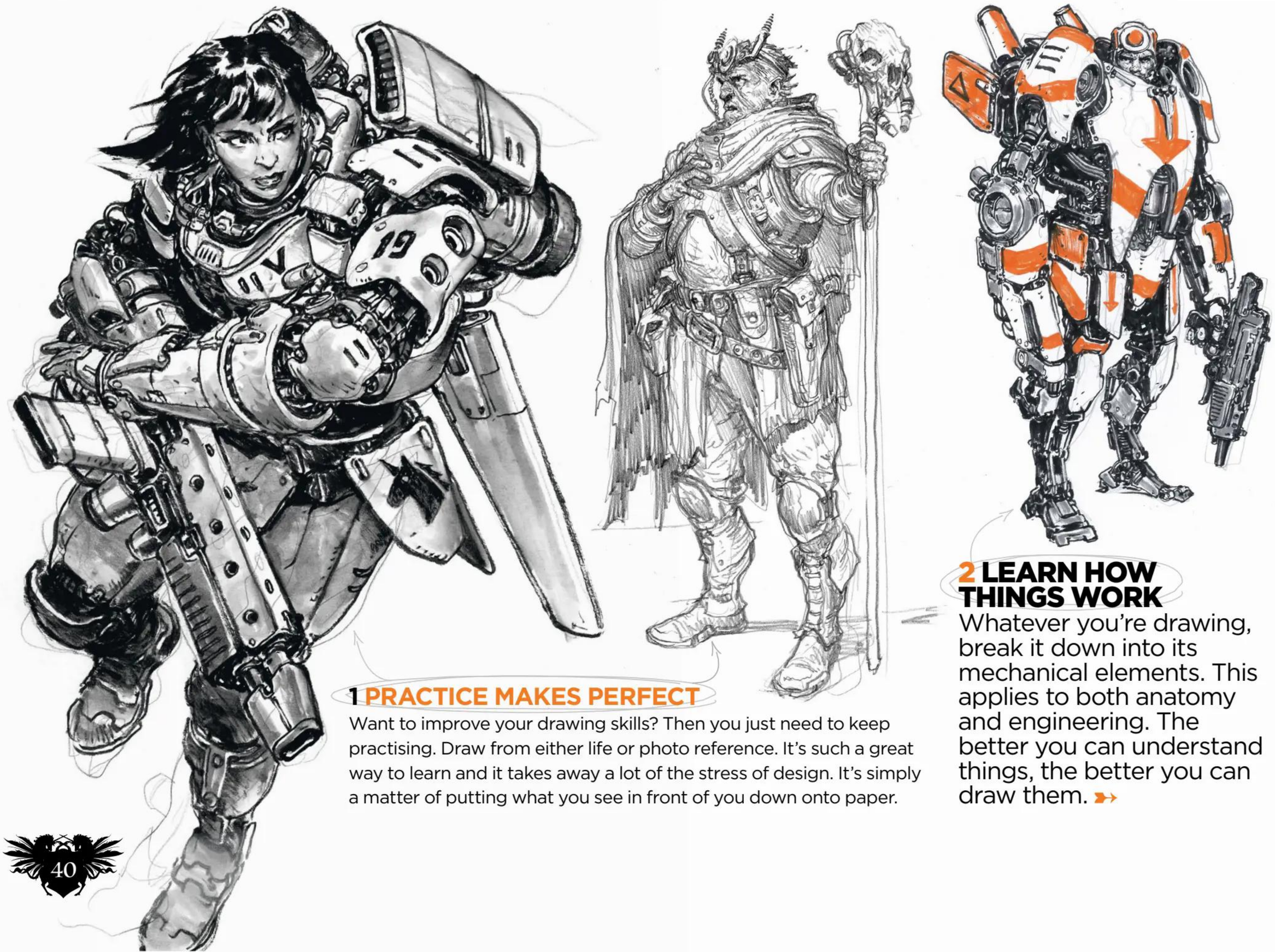


I grew up loving Asterix and comic books, and also the stories of Dickens and Sherlock Holmes. I always loved portraiture, and artists such as Diego Velázquez, John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Norman Rockwell, Frederic Remington and Phil Hale were huge influences on my oil painting style. I also love Katsuya Terada who I met in Los Angeles two years ago with Kim Jung Gi.

I think my style is a real mix of all these artists and life experiences. I always loved sketching and have been lucky enough to build an interest in this and actually publish my own books.

I don't know if I ever realised I wanted to be an artist. I think it was the only thing I was good at! I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else, to be honest. I was lucky enough to be supported by my family, and my wife Tara has been amazing at really pushing me. This is important because I think that by its nature this career will always have its ups and downs, and struggles. I'm not the most confident of people and so having some moral support and people to say, "Yes, you are good enough" can make all the difference!

I think that, like most artists, my personal style is a mix of all the amazing influences. There are so many artists whose work I love and have tried to emulate.



1 PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Want to improve your drawing skills? Then you just need to keep practising. Draw from either life or photo reference. It's such a great way to learn and it takes away a lot of the stress of design. It's simply a matter of putting what you see in front of you down onto paper.

2 LEARN HOW THINGS WORK

Whatever you're drawing, break it down into its mechanical elements. This applies to both anatomy and engineering. The better you can understand things, the better you can draw them.

10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DRAWINGS



“Want to improve your drawing skills? Then you just need to keep practising...”

“If you can enjoy the process of learning then you can become a good artist”



3 PUT IN THE TIME AND EFFORT

People have to recognise that there is only efficient learning – there are no shortcuts to becoming a good artist. If you can enjoy the process of learning then you can become a good artist. But if you're just pushing for success and money then you're putting a lot of pressure on yourself at a very early stage of your development as an artist.

4 EXPLORE THE UNKNOWN

Have confidence in your art and experiment – try something new! You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time, and you actually learn a lot from your mistakes. Don't beat yourself up if things go wrong. Just look at how to fix them next time!

5 BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR PRACTICE PIECES

It's far better to do one hour of practice exercises a day for seven days, than draw for seven hours in the space of one day. Drawing becomes far more instinctive and natural with regular practice. Try to focus on initial, simple principles such as breaking down your drawing into its most basic form, before applying perspective to those elements. These are the foundations of your drawing, and like everything a good foundation makes for a stronger drawing.

> "You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time, and you learn a lot from your mistakes"



6 USE A RANGE OF DRAWING TOOLS

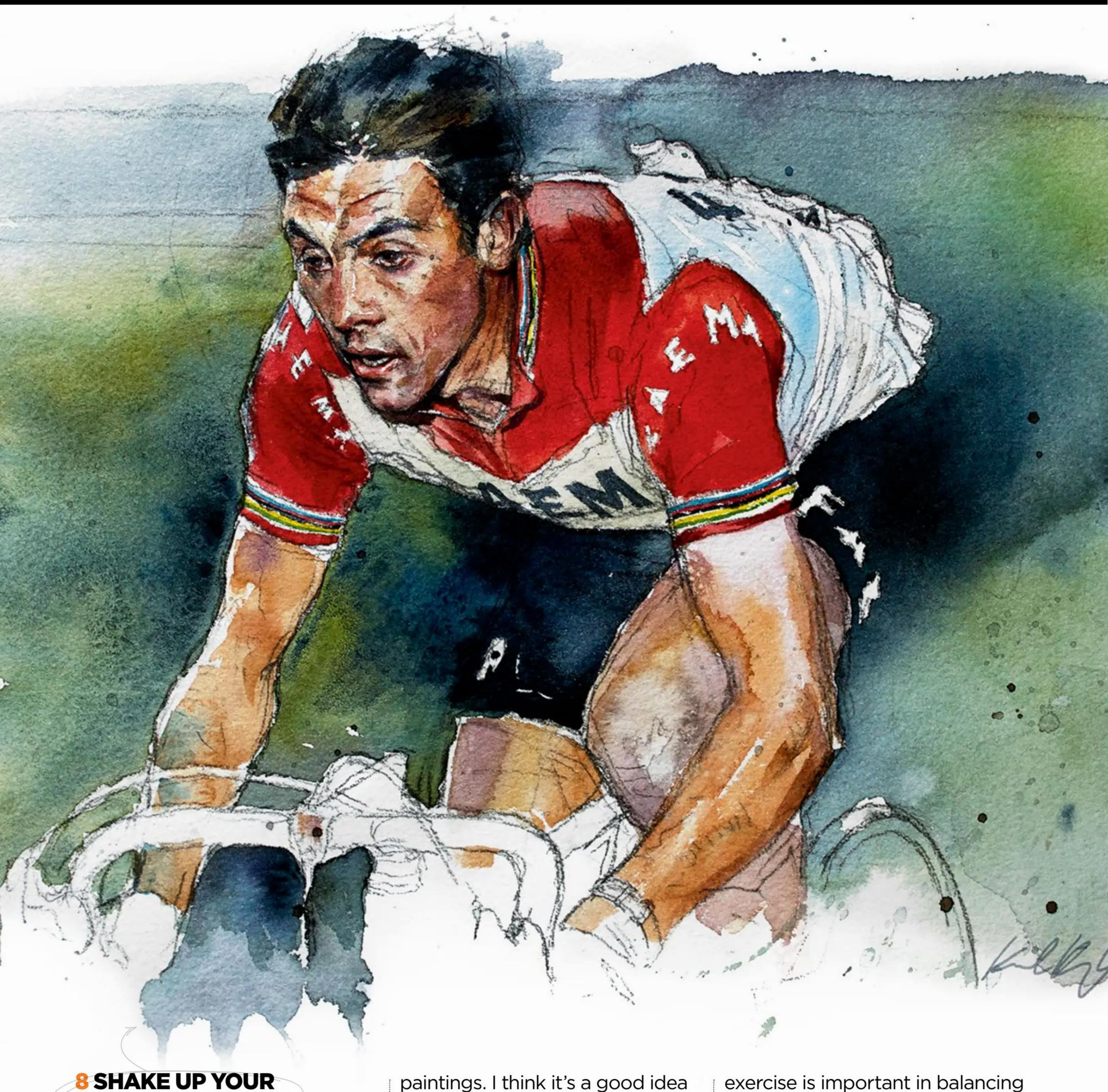
I'm not super-precious about what I use, but I do have a few tools that I use more regularly than others. These are a Faber-Castell Pitt graphite 3B pencil, a Pentel Colour brush pen (FL2F), a Pentel Brush Sign pen (SESF30C), a Faber-Castell Polychromos black pencil, and POSCA Black & White Fine pens.



© CMON Games

7 START YOUR DRAWING PROCESS LOOSELY

Usually I'll have a vague idea of the subject in my mind, but not very specific as far as details go. I then start with some very loose, scribbly lines, trying to find some interesting shapes and to start to get some idea of perspective and how the subject is placed within its space. I find this helps me often make some interesting design choices, too: instead of falling back on a library of costumes/details I can push larger shapes before refining and rendering them later. ➳



8 SHAKE UP YOUR CREATIVE ROUTINE

I do have a good mix of projects on the go at any one time. If I'm struggling with motivation or creativity then I'll often switch to something quite different – for example, going from a piece of concept art/drawing to one of my more expressive cyclist paintings. I think it's a good idea to experiment and work with different media to stop yourself from feeling stagnant.

I also ride my bike a lot, so every day I'll fit in a one- to two-hour trip. This gives me time to process and think about projects away from my easel, or just empty my head a bit. I think exercise is important in balancing things out.

I often spend mornings or evenings sketching and trying to come up with new ideas, whereas during the day I'll be doing more project-based stuff. I recommend having some kind of routine, but it's so personal that you have to find your own system.

9 AVOID COPYING ANOTHER ARTIST'S STYLE

I see a lot of artists making similar and very understandable mistakes. They're often trying hard to emulate artists who they admire, without looking at how that artist began their journey and what their fundamental skills are. As I said earlier, you need to work hard at understanding how things work. This applies to other artists, too. Most of the people you admire have a strong foundation in drawing/painting and observation. If you focus too much on trying to emulate the end result, you neglect learning those basics yourself.

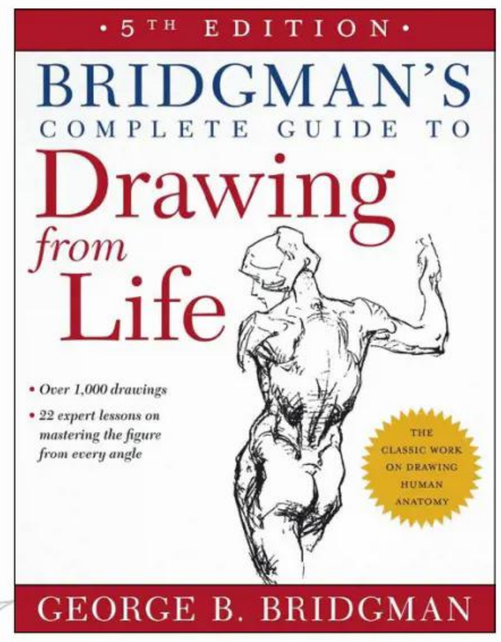


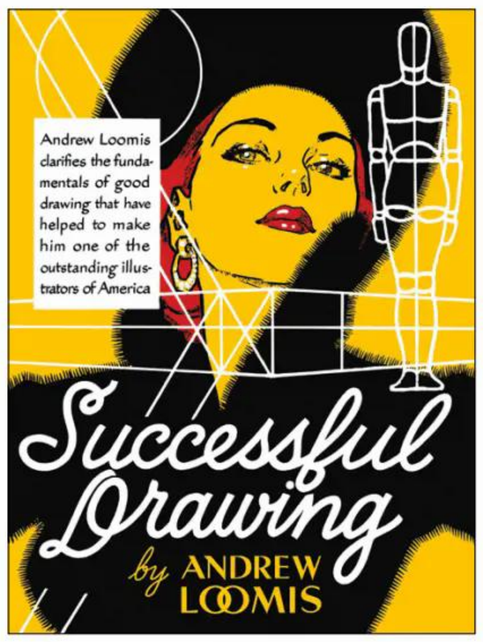




> I think the key for me is to draw information from a broad spectrum, not just one artist







10 VARY YOUR LEARNING SOURCES

I studied a lot of anatomy books – the Bridgman book [Bridgman's Complete Guide to Drawing from Life, by George B Bridgman] is great, as are the Andrew Loomis books. Eadweard Muybridge's Animals in Motion is also useful, but there's so much information for artists out there now. I've done tutorial videos with Kazone Art and I know they have some SuperAni artists on there. Schoolism is a fantastic resource and obviously the YouTube channel of Stan Prokopenko is amazing. I think the key for me is to draw information from a broad spectrum and not just one artist. By doing so, you'll hopefully develop a much more individual approach and outlook. That's the key – to stand out from the crowd.

The best online concept art schools



Class acts Lockdown needn't stop you learning concept art or extending your skill-set. **Tom May** presents eight great places to study online

Online courses in concept art have been growing in influence and importance for the past few years now. And in 2020, for obvious reasons, they've come into their own. But choosing between them can be tricky. Different concept art schools don't just specialise in different areas, but also offer very different approaches to learning in general.

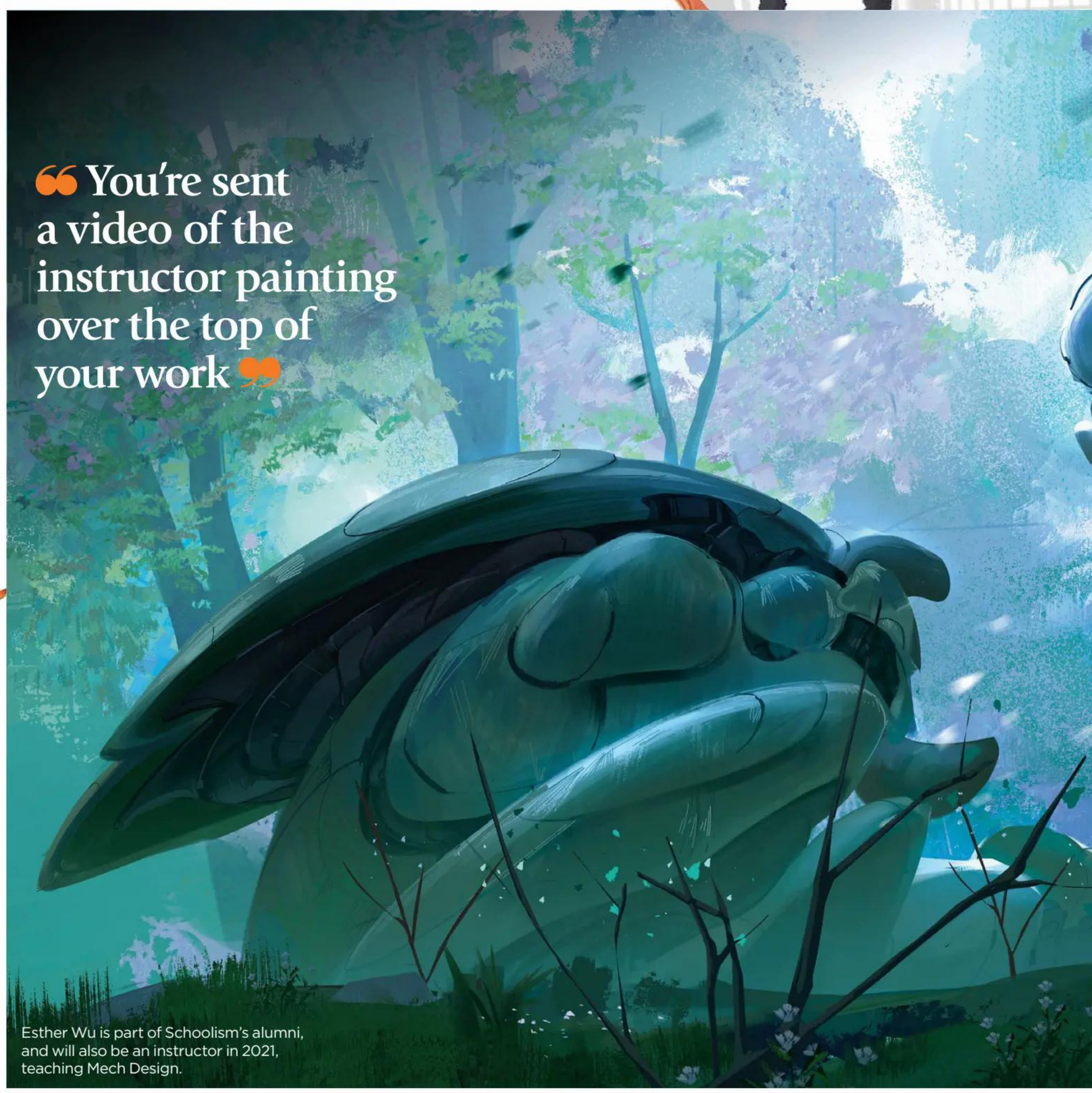
Some are similar to YouTube channels, offering prerecorded videos that contain exercises for you to complete after the lesson. This type of course tends to be cheaper and easier to fit into your schedule, but offers less in the way of feedback, and you'll need to be more disciplined to complete it. Other schools feature live classes that are more like traditional education, with greater interactivity and opportunities to ask questions. These, in turn, tend to be more expensive, and you'll need to keep to a rigid schedule.

In this article, we've selected our eight favourite online schools for concept artists. We'll explain what each one offers and how they differ, to help you choose the right one for your needs.



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET

INSTRUCTOR: BOBBY PONTILLAS



Esther Wu is part of Schoolism's alumni, and will also be an instructor in 2021, teaching Mech Design.



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET

INSTRUCTOR: BOBBY PONTILLAS



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET





INSTRUCTOR: ESTHER WU

Schoolism

www.schoolism.com

Schoolism was set up by concept artist Bobby Chiu, and tutors include well-known artists such as Craig Mullins, Iris Compiet, Ian McCaig and Nathan Fowkes. It offers two ways of taking its courses in drawing, illustration, sculpting and painting.

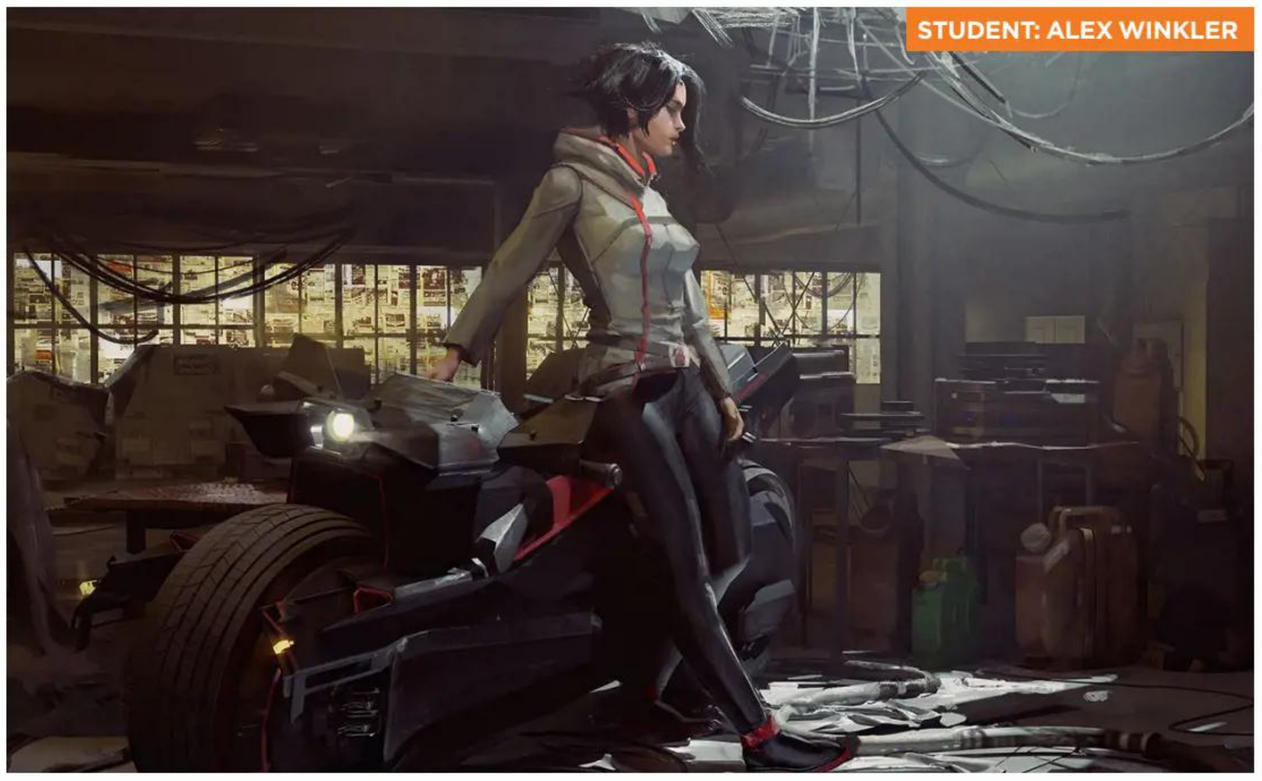
The cheaper option is to follow pre-recorded videos, which you can watch whenever you like. Alternatively, you can pay more for Critiqued Sessions. These have set start dates, and run from nine to 14 weeks.

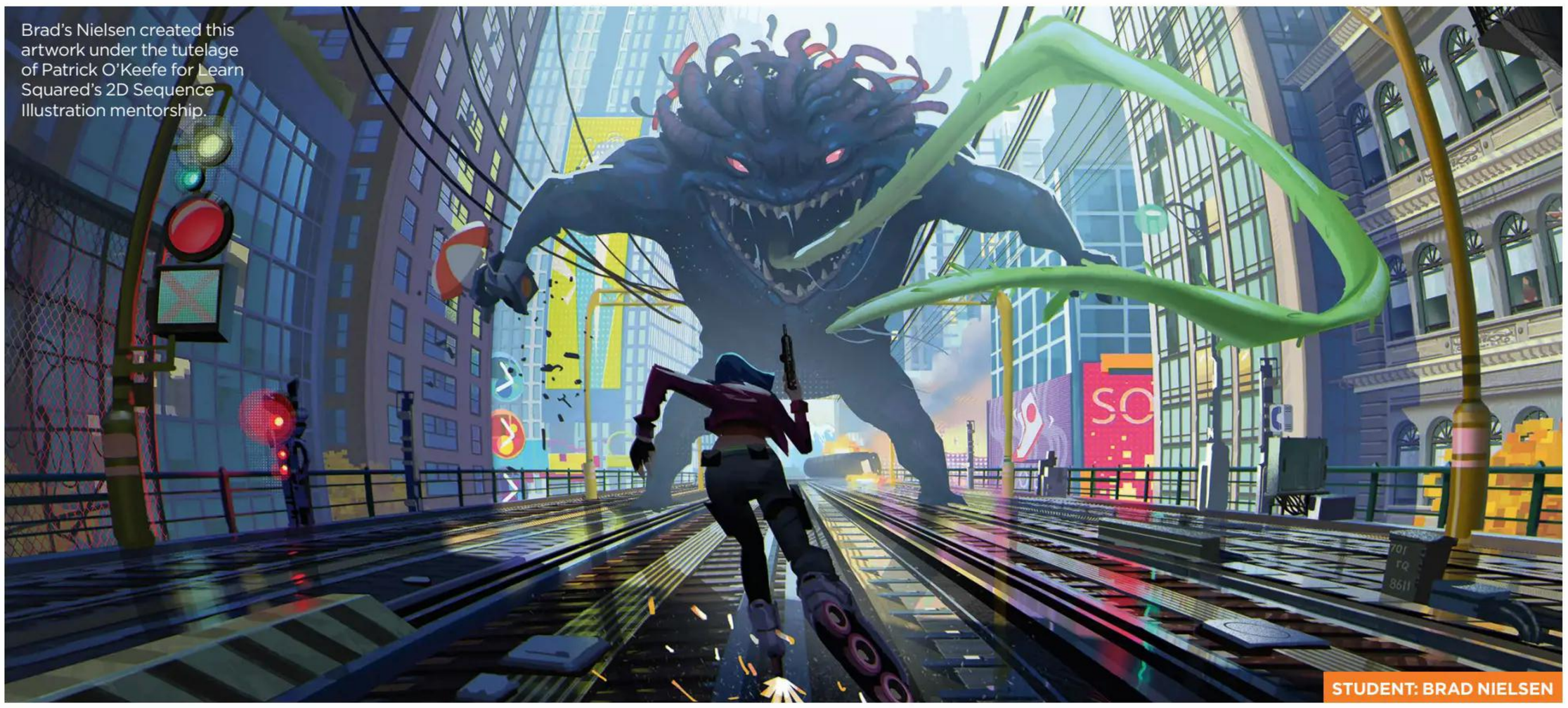
One lecture is activated every one to two weeks, and includes an assignment that you have to complete within a week. After you've submitted it, you're sent a video of the instructor painting and drawing over the top of your work, while discussing what you did well, what you can work on, and how they might have handled certain elements of the assignment differently. You can also view your fellow students' feedback videos.

A subscription to Schoolism will get you a year's access to all prerecorded videos for $299.40 (or $198 before 18 January 2021), while the Critiqued Sessions cost $998.


STUDENT: THEO NARDI


INSTRUCTOR: PABLO DOMINGUEZ


STUDENT: ALEX WINKLER


Brad's Nielsen created this artwork under the tutelage of Patrick O'Keefe for Learn Squared's 2D Sequence Illustration mentorship.

STUDENT: BRAD NIELSEN

Learn Squared

www.learnsquared.com

Founded by industry-leading artists in 2015, Learn Squared offers dozens of courses totalling more than 300 hours of training materials. These cover concept art, environments, character design, matte painting and animation. Tutors include well-known industry names such as Tran Nguyen, Jan Urschel, Ash Thorp, Maciej Kuciara and Patrick O'Keefe.

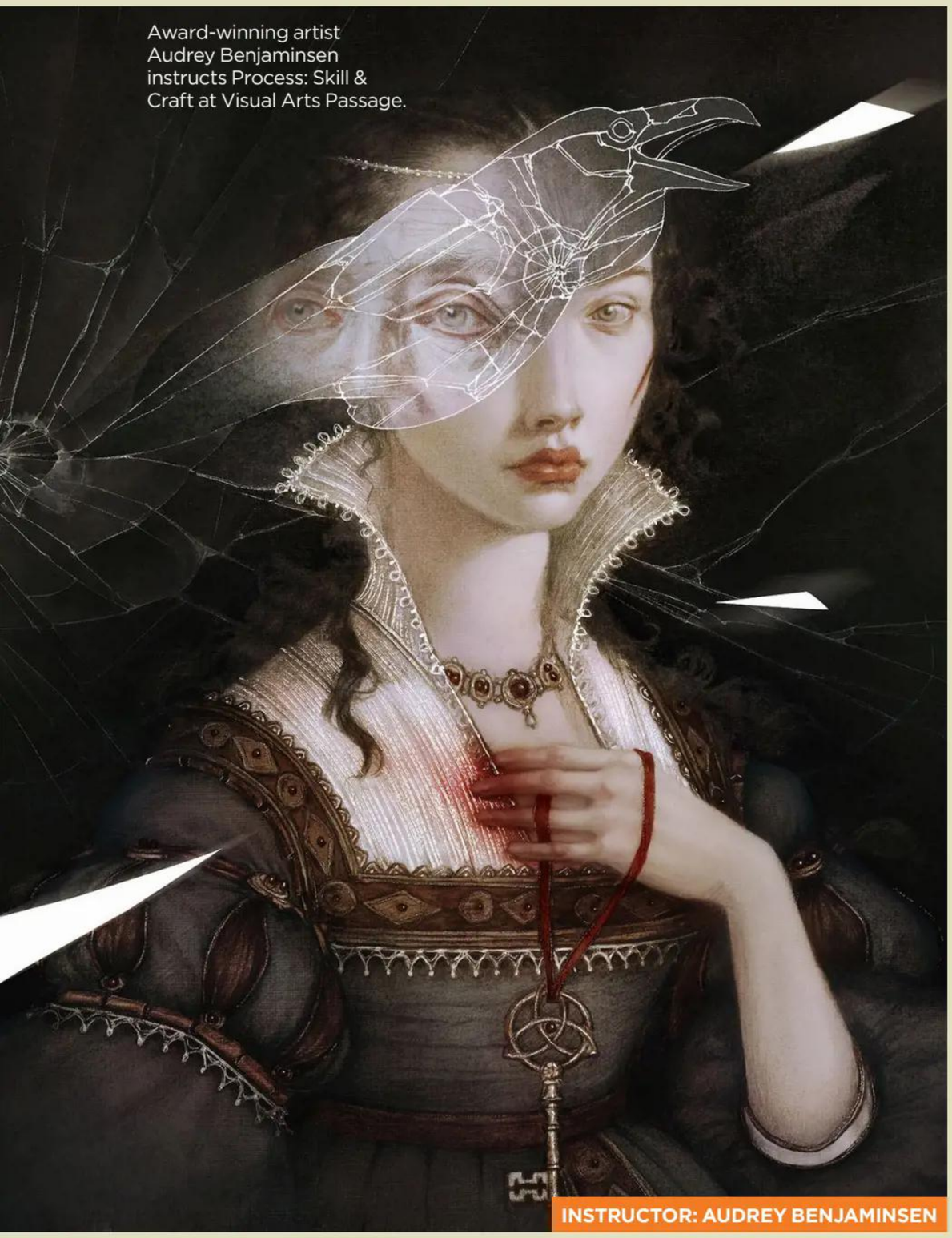
Learn Squared's courses are based on pre-recorded videos, which you can watch whenever's convenient. You also receive downloadable project files that enable you to work alongside the video lessons. Courses cost between $99 and $249, and consist of between four and 12 hours of training. If you open a free account, you can access the entire first lesson of each course, which is over 60 hours of content in total.

Learn Squared has recently launched an option where, like at Schoolism, you can pay more for professional feedback on demand. The difference here is that you pay only for the lessons you want feedback on. It's early days, though, with this option only available with Pablo Dominguez's course on Vehicle Concept Art.

More mentors are promised for the second quarter of 2021, as well as new courses from some notable industry names. Many existing courses also include bonus recordings of past mentorship meetings.

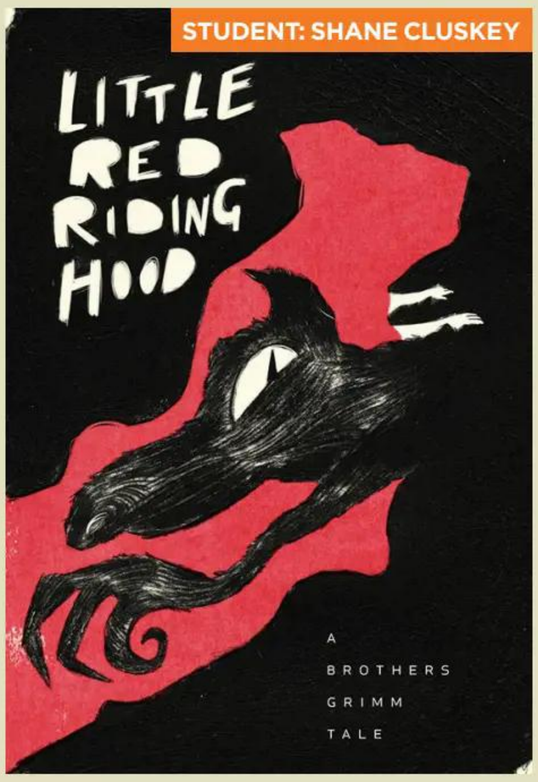

INSTRUCTOR: TRAN NGUYEN

THE BEST ONLINE CONCEPT ART SCHOOLS

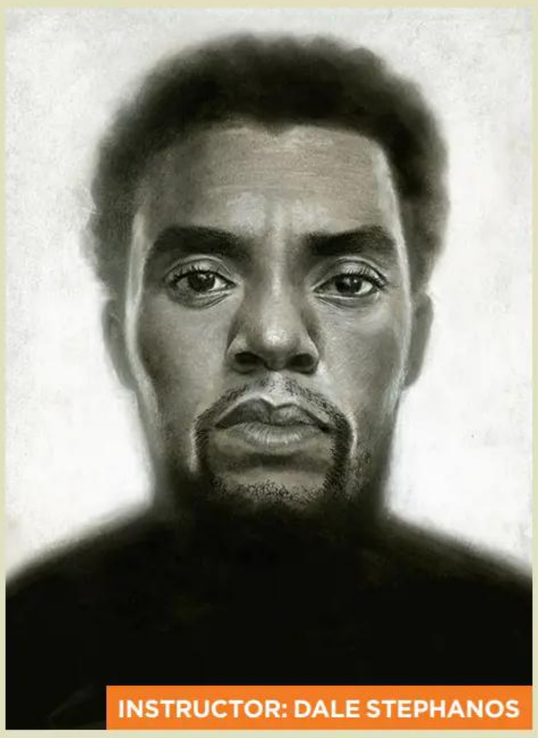


Award-winning artist Audrey Benjaminsen instructs Process: Skill & Craft at Visual Arts Passage.

INSTRUCTOR: AUDREY BENJAMINSEN



STUDENT: SHANE CLUSKEY



INSTRUCTOR: DALE STEPHANOS



INSTRUCTOR: LAKE HURWITZ

Visual Arts Passage

www.visualartspassage.com

Not keen on recorded lessons? At Visual Arts Passage, students are mentored by industry pros and have a live, fully interactive class every week that lasts three hours. There are also mid-week meet-ups online. They're a chance to share progress, receive extra guidance from other instructors in the programme, and stay on course. Students are also encouraged to connect with instructors and classmates via Slack between classes.

Each class is recorded and available on-demand, so even if you miss attending a live lesson you can catch up later, and your submitted work will still be critiqued. As well as illustration courses, there are four concept art courses on offer, each lasting 10 weeks and costing $999: Intro to Concept Design. Advanced Concept Design, World Building, and Career Development.

Visual Arts Passage is also launching a new subscription platform this January, for $29/month, called Studio Bridge. Running parallel to its mentorship programme, Studio Bridge involves virtual visits to the studios of new artists every week, along with weekly digital drawing meet-ups and challenges.



STUDENT: KATE MEYRICK

> "Students are mentored by pros and have a live, fully interactive class every week"

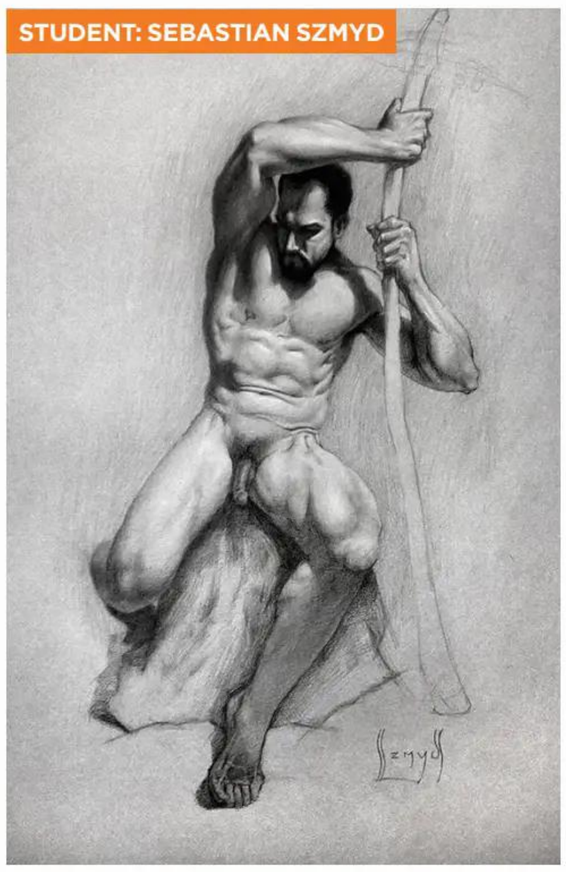


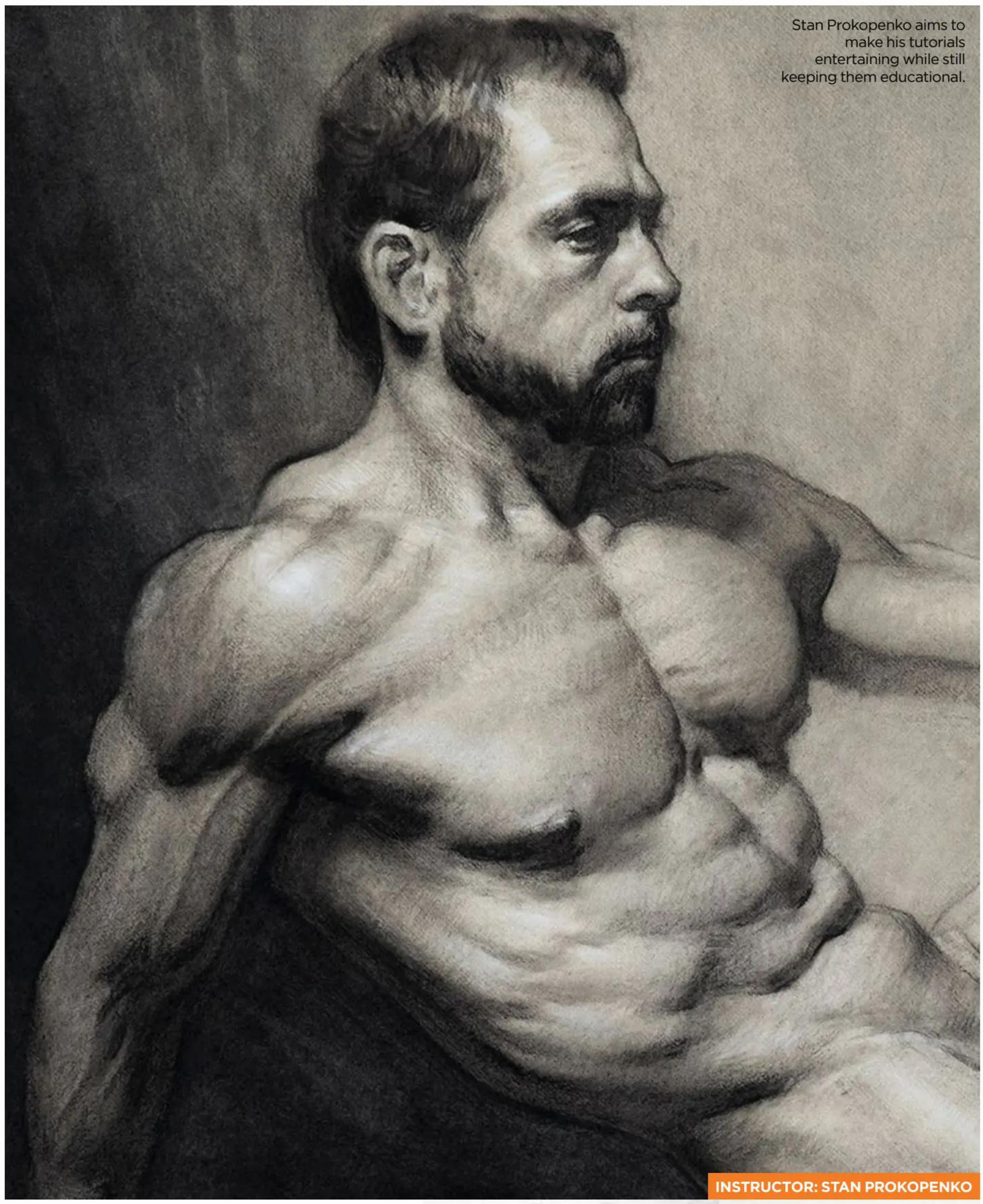
Raymond Bonilla is a nationally recognised illustrator and fine artist who instructs Painting the Head at Visual Arts Passage.

INSTRUCTOR: RAYMOND BONILLA



Students of all skill levels have been using Stan's courses to improve their figure drawings.





Stan Prokopenko aims to make his tutorials entertaining while still keeping them educational.

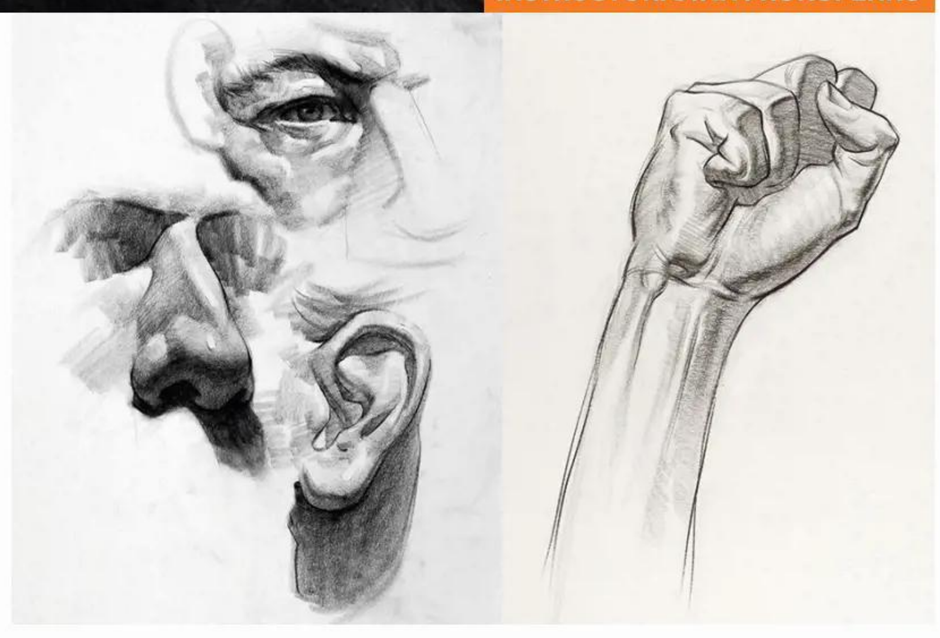
Proko

www.proko.com

All the schools we've featured so far have been focused on specific concept art skills. But maybe you're a concept artist who needs to refresh or build on your fundamentals, such as anatomy or figure drawing. In that case, you should check out Proko, the online school of Stan Prokopenko.

To get a taster, there are plenty of free videos on Stan's site. Then, if you want additional instruction, you can upgrade to his paid Premium videos. Premium content can include extended lessons, additional demonstrations, 3D models, eBooks, critique videos and premium-specific videos. Whenever diagrams or photos are provided, as a premium student you receive high-resolution versions that you can download and print for your reference. For those who like to work offline all the videos are downloadable, so you can watch them later at your leisure.

Along with the educational content that Stan's been adding to Proko.com, he's also been inviting other pro artists to create lessons and courses for the site. There's already a caricature course and high-quality demos from professional artists that you can learn from. Finally, there's now a monthly art challenge that anyone can participate in with prizes awarded to the winners.



"Stan's been inviting other pro artists to create lessons and courses for the site"

THE BEST ONLINE CONCEPT ART SCHOOLS





Gnomon

www.gnomon.edu

Looking for a course with real academic rigour? Then meet Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Games and Animation. A Hollywood institution established in 1997, its online courses closely parallel the learning environment of its on-campus, physical ones.

All of Gnomon's classes are delivered live, putting you in a virtual classroom with pros and your peers. They range from specific topics like compositing and digital matte painting to core art skills such as figure drawing and perspective. Every class has a message board that enables students and the instructor to communicate with one another, share ideas, and ask and answer questions. Courses are led by some of the best-known names in the industry, including Maddie Scott Spencer and Kevin Hudson.

Note that even though they're online, Gnomon's courses are only available to students physically located in California, or outside of the US. In other words, if you're a US resident who doesn't live in California, your luck's out. Courses last for 10 weeks and tuition costs range from $699 to $2,133.



Alice Yang's environment concept from the WB3 (advanced world-building) course.

STUDENT: ALICE YANG



STUDENT: AIRI PAN



STUDENT: CORNELIUS COCKROFT



STUDENT: KEVIN KRUSE

Brainstorm School

www.brainstormschool.com

Based in California, Brainstorm School specialises in foundation, digital painting and design courses, focused around character design, environment design and prop design, and led by working professionals in the entertainment industry.

Different courses are suitable for beginner-, intermediate- and advanced-level artists. All classes are delivered live, and to a schedule based on Pacific Standard Time (European artists, be warned!). These sessions variously include demos, guest lecturers, reviews, critiques, paint-overs, and solo and group activities.

There are four types of courses on offer, which take place during three terms per year. In the Mentorship programme, you'll be guided along a personalised intensive programme. You'll meet with your mentor weekly to have private learning time specific to you. Mentorships cost from $4,500 and are led by Jonathan Kuo, Joon Ahn, Saiful Haque and Brainstorm School co-founder John Park.

Meanwhile, Bootcamps usually run for five to eight weeks, and cost from $400 to $685. There are also Storm courses, which run for five weeks, and cost $259, and 10-week courses, costing from $700.



Character design development by Tuncer Eren for an IP project in the Entertainment Design course.

STUDENT: TUNCER EREN

CGSociety

www.cgsociety.org

CGSociety is a venerable global organisation for creative digital artists. Focusing on landing you a career in the art, games and VFX industries, its CGWorkshops arm offers expert training for industry professionals in subjects including character design, matte painting, drawing foundation and environmental design.

Courses last between six and 10 weeks, and range from $599 to $998, with discounts for those who buy two or more classes at one time. The lessons are based on pre-recorded videos, but you do need to keep to a schedule, with weekly homework deadlines. You also receive individually recorded feedback on your work, as well as regular live Q&As with your instructors.

Recently it was announced that CGWorkshops was merging with CG Master Academy. Eventually, students of both schools will be able to socially interact via CGMA's virtual classroom. However, the two websites remain separate for now and we've been assured that will continue to be the case until at least mid-2021.

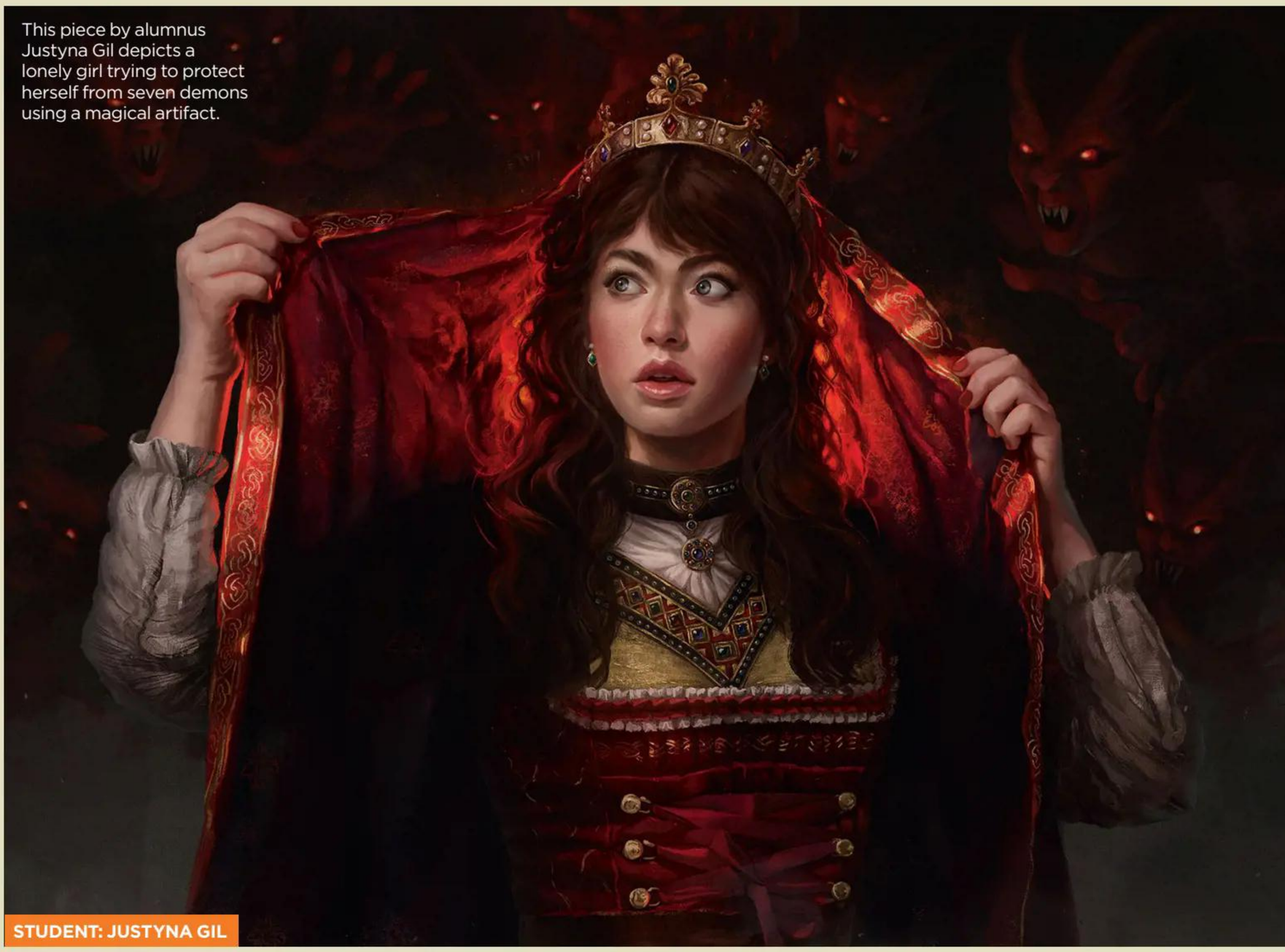
> "You'll receive individually recorded feedback on your work"



STUDENT: JD GARDNER



STUDENT: JESS O'NEILL



This piece by alumnus Justyna Gil depicts a lonely girl trying to protect herself from seven demons using a magical artifact.

STUDENT: JUSTYNA GIL



Neo Tokyo by CG Workshops student Edward Chan, created by painting over 3D kit-bashed elements.

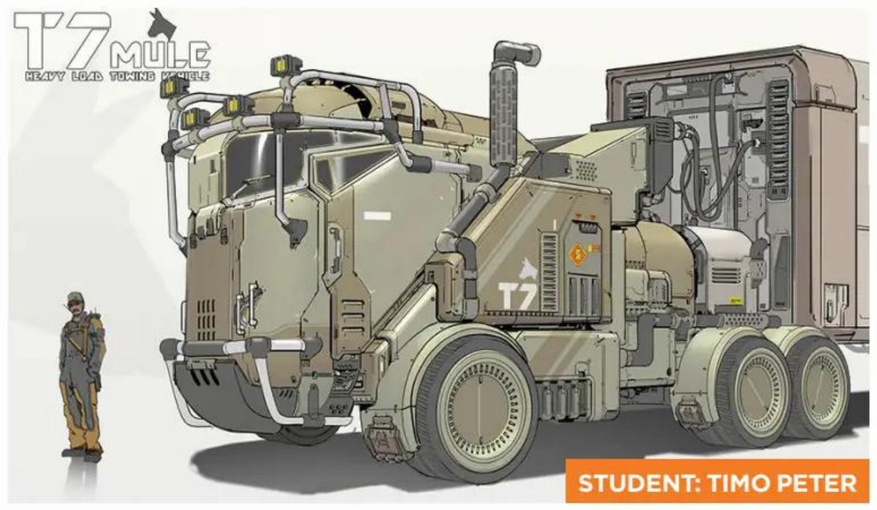
STUDENT: EDMUND CHAN



STUDENT: GUE YANG



STUDENT: BRANKO DANIC



STUDENT: TIMO PETER



An evocative piece by CGMA alumnus Martin Fargasso entitled Street Corner.

STUDENT: MARTIN FARGASSO

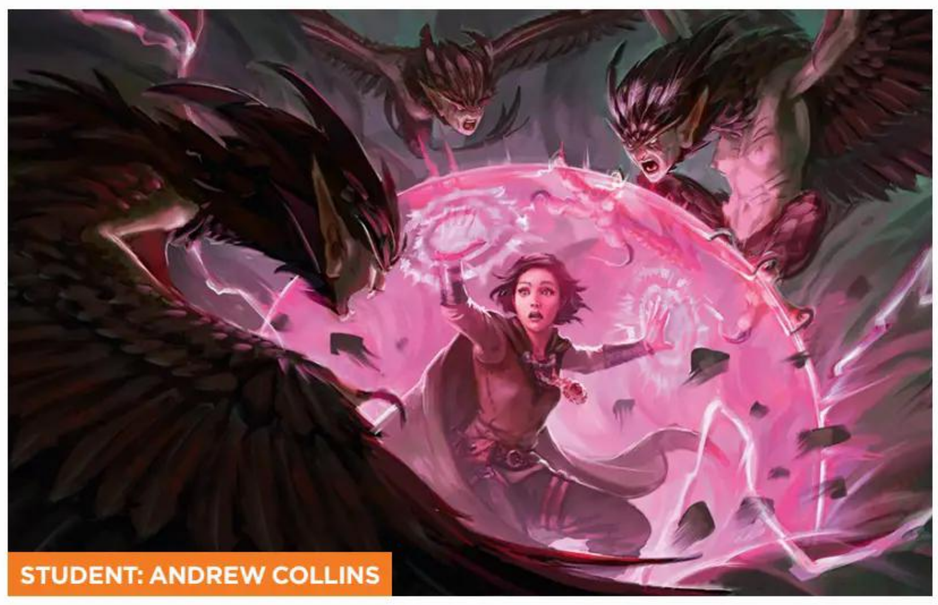
CG Master Academy (CGMA)

www.cgmasteracademy.com

Founded in 2010 and based in Los Angeles, CG Master Academy (CGMA) offers online courses in 2D, 3D, VFX, games, software and storytelling, to help you develop the skill-set you need to launch a career in the entertainment industry. It's continually adding new courses, the most recent of which include Acting for Visual Storytellers and 3D for 2D Artists, and their tutors have worked for most major studios, including Disney, Blizzard and Pixar.

Like CGWorkshops, with which CGMA is currently merging, courses run for six to 10 weeks, and cost from $599 to $998, with discounts on two classes or more. And like CGWorkshops, they're based on pre-recorded videos that include weekly assignments, individually recorded feedback on your work, and live Q&As with your tutors. You'll enjoy over 365 days of access to the full course, including feedback and live Q&A recordings, and a Certificate of Completion on finishing the course.

It's worth noting that CGMA offers complimentary portfolio reviews for prospective and current students. This provides guidance to help you enrol in courses that are appropriate for your skill level.



STUDENT: ANDREW COLLINS

Hero vs Harpies, a keyframe illustration by CGMA alumnus Andrew Collins.



STUDENT: JASON CHAN

Artist insight

15 TIPS FOR BETTER CHARACTER DESIGN

Illustrator and author **David Melling** reveals how he brings his book characters to life, using exaggeration, silent narrative, props and more

Artist PROFILE

David Melling
LOCATION: England

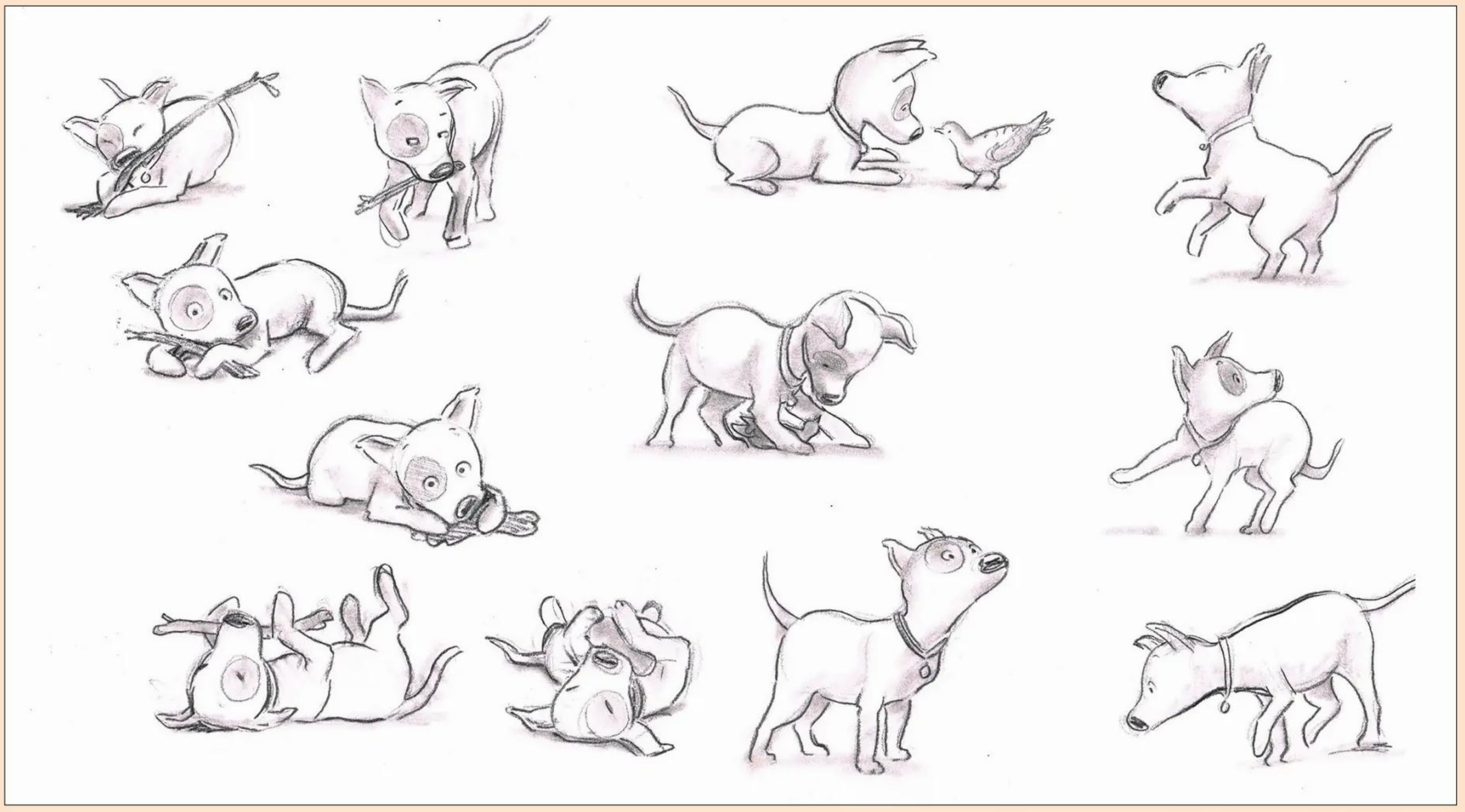
Author and illustrator David has published around 150 books in over 30 languages, including the Hugless Douglas series.
www.davidmelling.co.uk



I was once asked to name three important skills required to be a successful book illustrator. I said, in no particular order, draughtsmanship, character and pathos. No doubt others will have their own top three, but I stand by these for the kind of book illustration that appeals to me.

In my opinion, character is right up there. But what is character? And how do you go about finding it, creating it? And when you have it, how can you use it most effectively in your work?

When I started out, I acquired some by looking at the books and art that appealed to me and asking myself why I liked them. Character seemed to be the answer time and time again. We all hope our art will appeal to a wide audience, but character appeal is subjective. In that respect, there's no golden ticket to character design. Yet I've learned there are things you can do that can be effective in bringing your characters to life which, with a bit of luck, resonate with others.

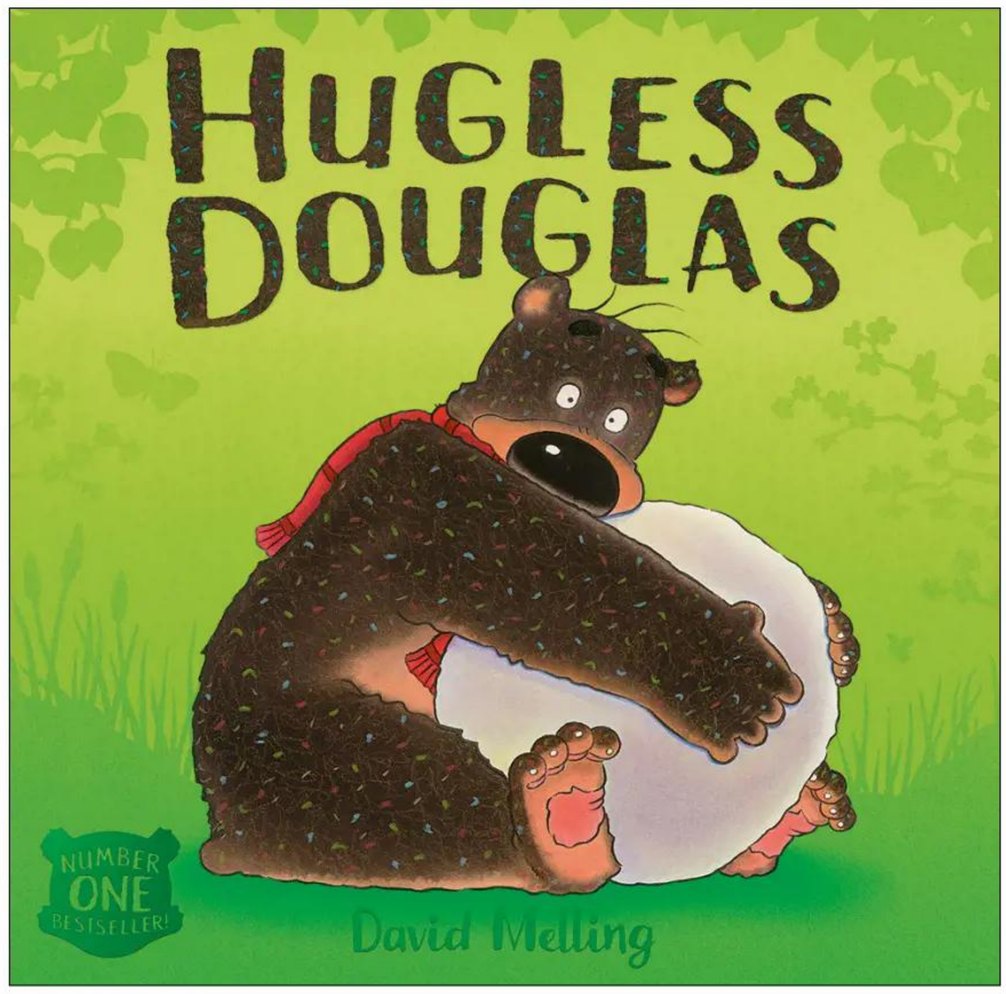


1 CHARACTER SHEETS

Once I'm happy with a particular design I create character sheets. Here, Ruffles is being very doggy as he runs around on the page – reacting, responding and so on. He's a puppy, but also a toddler and I'm trying to get that across here in his playfulness. At the same time I want to avoid him being too anthropomorphic (so, not sitting with hind legs forward, for example).

As I'm drawing, I'm asking myself questions. What's he like? Is he shy, bold, moody? How does he walk? Is it bouncy, elegant, bumbling? All the answers feed into the drawing and, hopefully, help evolve character.





2 IT TAKES TIME TO DESIGN A CHARACTER THAT FEELS RIGHT

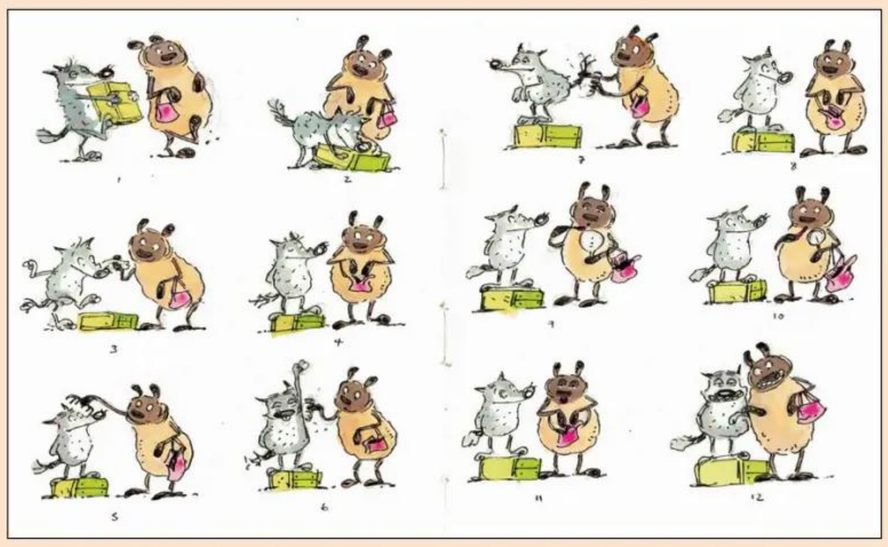
Designing a character is never simple and rarely happens quickly. The more I draw, the more the design (proportions, shape and so on) settles on the page. These two versions of Hugless Douglas show how much he changed from early concept to final design. In hindsight, I'm surprised I hadn't noticed the tiny head and long arms... and those hamster cheeks! Eventually, I settled on the right proportions. He's still quite jowly but, with the mouth hidden I needed to rely on other features; the way his cheek rests on the boulder helps with that 'I need a hug' expression.



3 DRAW LIVING, BREATHING ANIMALS

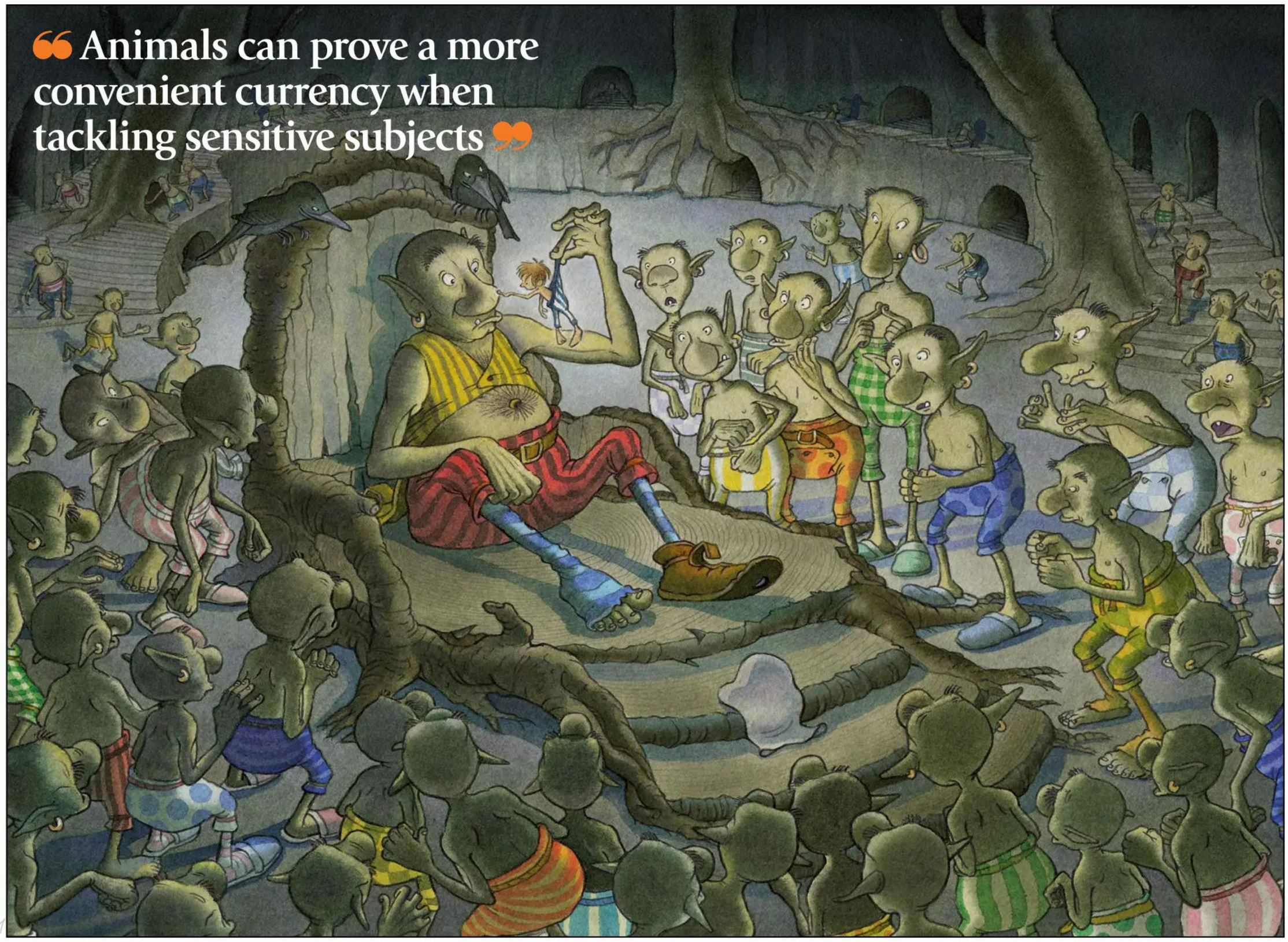
I was once asked to draw a hungry cat sitting on a mat in front of a bowl of delicious food. Part of the brief included words like ravenous, excited and anticipation. Well, I drew the cat almost symmetrical including its ears and paws. The result was stiff and uninteresting. In silhouette, it didn't read as a cat (more on this later). No matter how much expression I tried to put into the face it failed... and so did the job! Whenever I draw a character I think of them as living, breathing creatures. A tail is curling, thoughtful. This tiger is standing still, but he's definitely alive.

> "The more I draw, the more the design (proportions, shape and so on) settles on the page"



4 SEQUENTIAL DRAWING

As part of my character/story development process I've adopted an exercise created by author and illustrator Maurice Sendak. He called them Fantasy Sketches. On A4 paper, starting top left, finishing bottom right, I draw quickly to a fixed time of 10 minutes. Starting with a random character(s), I try following a sequence and see what happens. I try not to pause or think too much. More often than not, the result isn't a complete or logical narrative but I nearly always come away with something useful.



5 A BLEND OF ANIMAL AND FANTASY

I prefer to draw animals and fantasy figures. In children’s books, animals can often prove a more convenient currency when tackling sensitive subjects. On occasion, the risk of causing offence or dealing with challenging issues can be eased within the metaphoric realm of animals and fantasy. I’m generalising of course, but in my picture book The Tale of Jack Frost, I had the chance to explore fantasy a little deeper and although these goblins are essentially human in appearance, I treated them like wild animals. For me, there’s something about fantasy that makes it possible for you to push a character that little bit further.

6 EXAGGERATION (WHEN SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE)

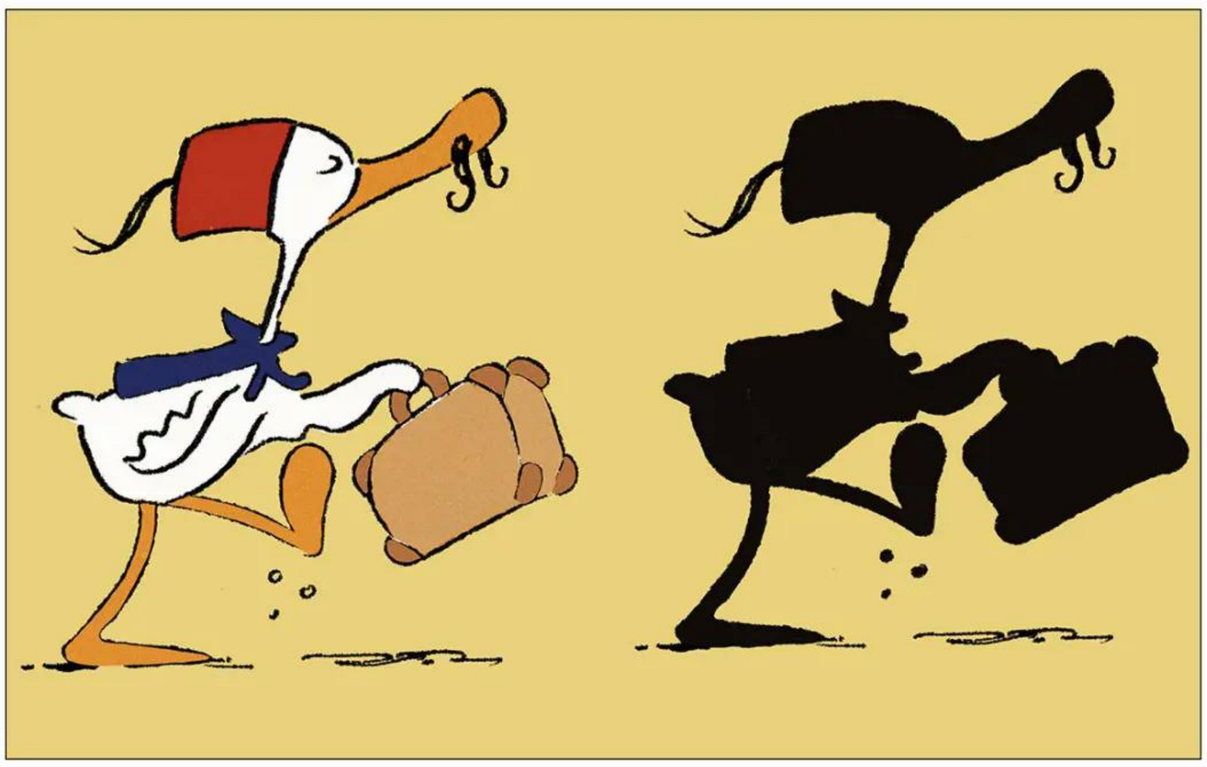
Exaggeration can be an effective tool from extreme, almost ‘cartoony,’ to a more subtle blend. Both are valid in the right context. Here, I deliberately set out to paint a realistic-looking rooster with the intention of seeing how little I could alter its features to achieve just a touch more character. The blue line shows the original proportions. You can see that I extended the beak, dropped the line at the corner of his mouth, narrowed the shape of his eye (which added an unexpected human tone), and exaggerated the wattles. It’s interesting the impact these small changes can have; now it’s a distinctly anthropomorphic rooster.





7 EMOTION THROUGH SYMMETRY

Now I know I've already suggested symmetry is best avoided, or risk a figure looking stiff and lifeless, but there are exceptions. Indeed, on occasion the opposite can be just as powerful. I had this in mind when I drew this whippet. By cropping in tight, I wanted to avoid any distractions: no asymmetrical ears or any animated eyebrow action (although I did soften the brow generally to fit the mood). I wanted the viewer to have nowhere else to go but into those big, soulful eyes. I think this is more effective because there's no movement.



8 EXPRESSIVE SILHOUETTES

I worked for a spell in several London-based animation studios as a background artist and cel-renderer (mid-1980s before digital animation). During that time, I read about character design and became aware of the power of silhouette and how expressive they can be (just take a look at shadow puppetry). Mickey Mouse's ears sit in 2D on his head so that they can be read clearly in silhouette. I had this on mind when I drew this duck. The expressive nature of this pose can be seen by dropping him into silhouette.

9 COLOURING HUGLESS DOUGLAS



A Capture the pose in pencil

I always like to work out the pose, expressions and so on at the pencil stage. For me, it's the most important stage, a time to experiment and really nail what I'm trying to say. I then carefully trace with Indian ink and fountain pen (as a dip pen to avoid clogging the works).



B Wet-in-wet watercolours

I use the wet-in-wet technique with Dr Ph Martin's concentrated watercolour inks. First, I paint a selected area with plain water. Then, while still wet, I add the light colour, then the darker brown. I have to work quickly – this whole process needs to be done in one go.



C Embrace happy accidents

I finish the details with coloured pencils. The fur flecks were a happy accident. I dropped a bright blue pencil on the surface of an early Douglas painting, leaving a 'chipped' blue mark which I quite liked. It gave me the idea of adding coloured flecks that helped him stand out from other bear books! ➳

10 BUILD UP ANTICIPATION

I often like to add a sequence of three or four images in a row... an influence no doubt, from my animation days. There's a reason for this. As well as slowing down a moment to (hopefully) be enjoyed in a little more detail by the reader, it also taps into something I do when I draw a character almost every time. That is, I anticipate how the character is moving, behaving, thinking as I sketch them. What I'm doing is looking to settle on a key moment in that imagined sequence: before, during... and after.



"I anticipate how the character is moving, behaving, thinking as I sketch them"



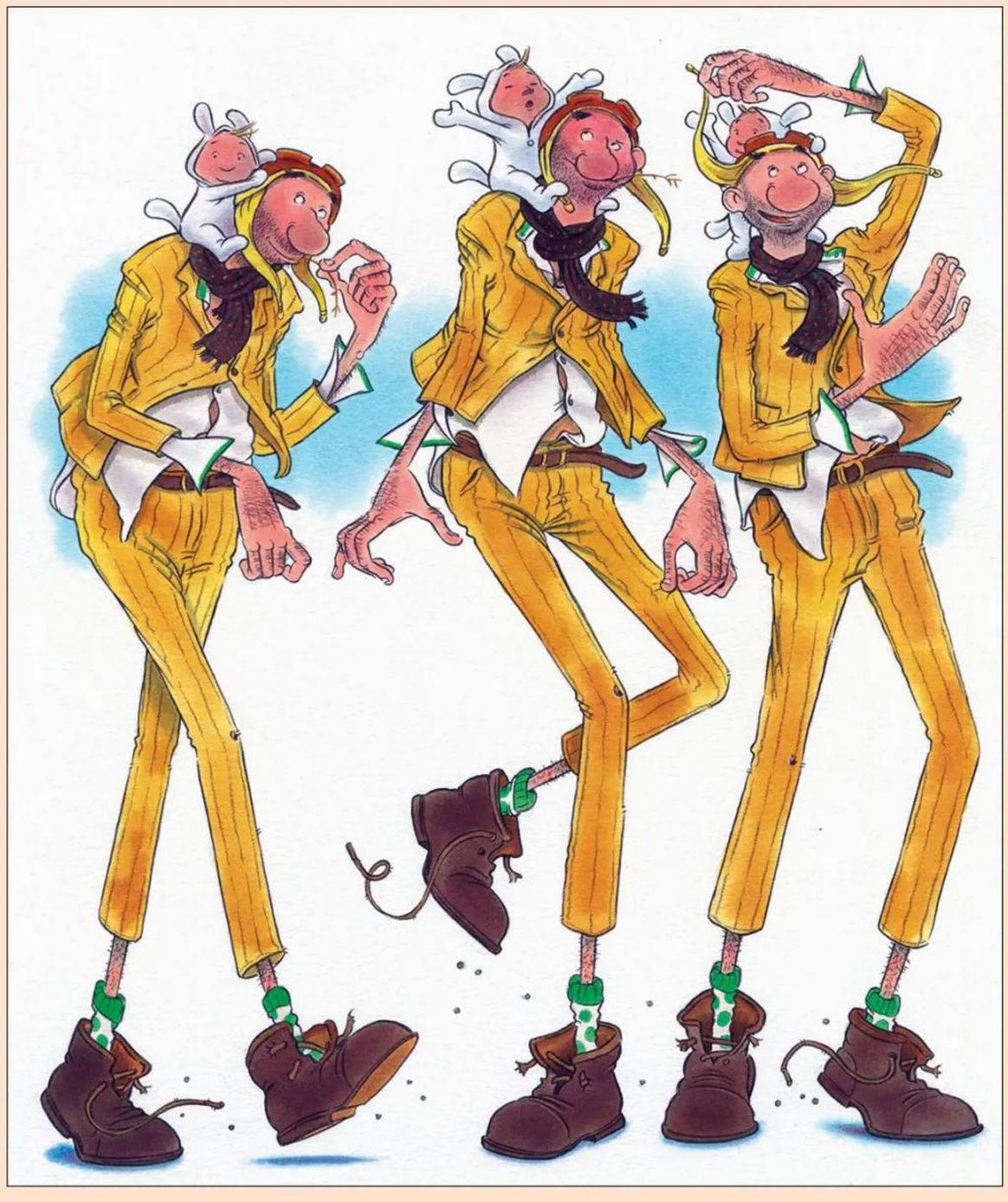
11 BODY LANGUAGE

Body language has so much potential in terms of adding to a character's silent narrative. Using gestures, weight distribution and posture, the results can be obvious and extreme, or quiet and subtle. These goblins are still, unmoving, yet there's movement. I tilted the line of the shoulders of the goblin with the green waistcoat; one dropped, the other hunched, touching the earlobe. I drew the other goblin's feet turned inward and joined together, more like hands than feet. Even the nature of the flower is telling its own narrative, reacting to the tightly clasped hand.



12 SILENT NARRATIVES

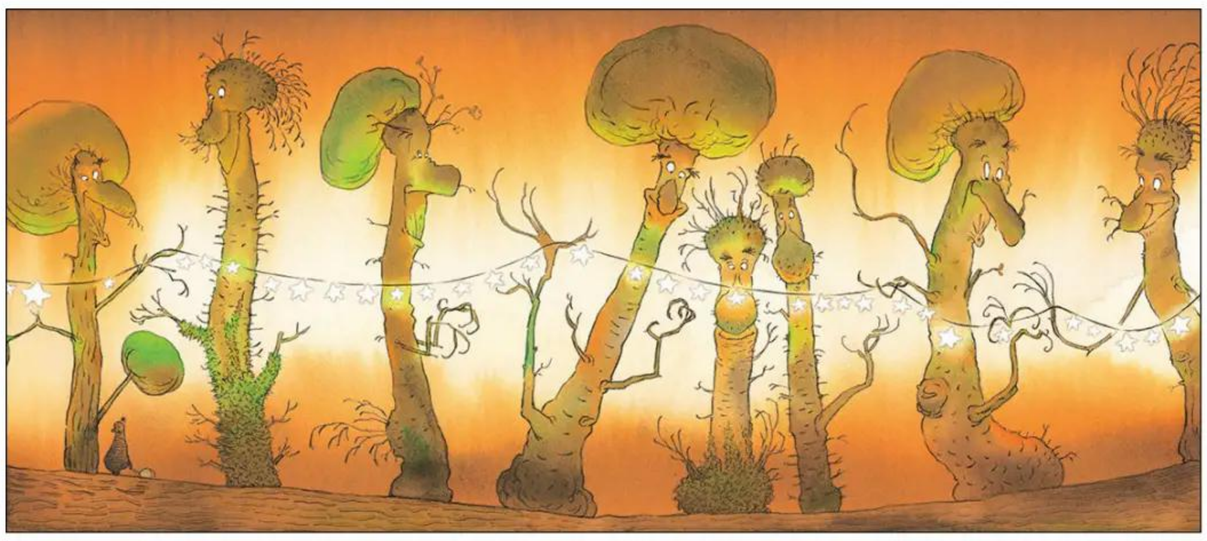
Clothes and props can also contribute and add value to personality and character. I enjoyed adding props around this dragon, so neatly wedged into his bath – an action in itself that tells you something more about him outside the text. These props – the use of a hair net, the placement of a potty close by and a crown stand (none of which are mentioned in the text, either) – give insights into this dragon's persona. And I wanted to emphasise this giant's stiff, stilt-like walk by giving him tight, short, ill-fitting trousers. I enjoy adding these quiet additions when I can.





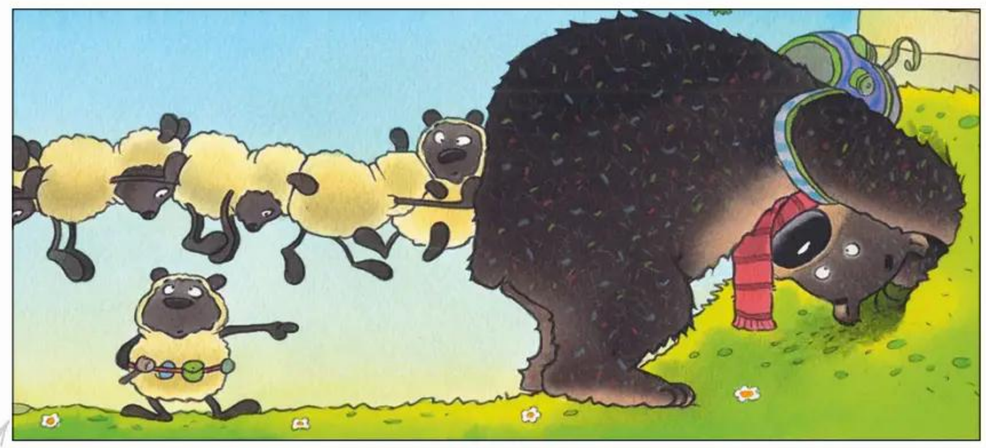
13 PLAYFUL SKETCHBOOK

Once I'm happy with a character, it's important not to stop exploring additional character traits as the drawing continues. My father was a sculptor and watching him draw, I remember him saying the pencil was his thinking stick. This happens in my sketchbook. I like to have characters interacting with each other. It's a playful part of character development and one of my favourite parts of the process.



14 BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

I understood early on that the job of a book illustrator is to add something new to the text. To enhance, and not just repeat. Which is why I like to add background characters when I can, who aren't mentioned in the text. As well as hopefully entertaining the reader, it's a chance to introduce unexpected characters who might wake up on a page or two and contribute to the characterisation of the main cast through interaction and even conversation. I love drawing trees for their anthropomorphic potential. This group found their way into the story. Everything you draw has character potential!



15 TEN FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!

When I created the flock of sheep in my Hugless Douglas book series, I realised I'd touched on something special. Very early on, I made the conscious decision not to create individual characters but to think of them and treat them as one. For smoothness of narrative, some titles do have individual sheep that appear as themselves, so to speak, but essentially the flock of sheep are one character. This enabled me to have more fun with silent narrative (that phrase again!), whereby they get up to all sorts 'off camera.' My hope is for readers to find new things during repeated readings.

ImagineFX ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

Mia Araujo

Striking character artwork fills the pages of the US illustrator's sketchbook, including a reimagining of Alice in Wonderland

Artist PROFILE

Mia Araujo
LOCATION: US

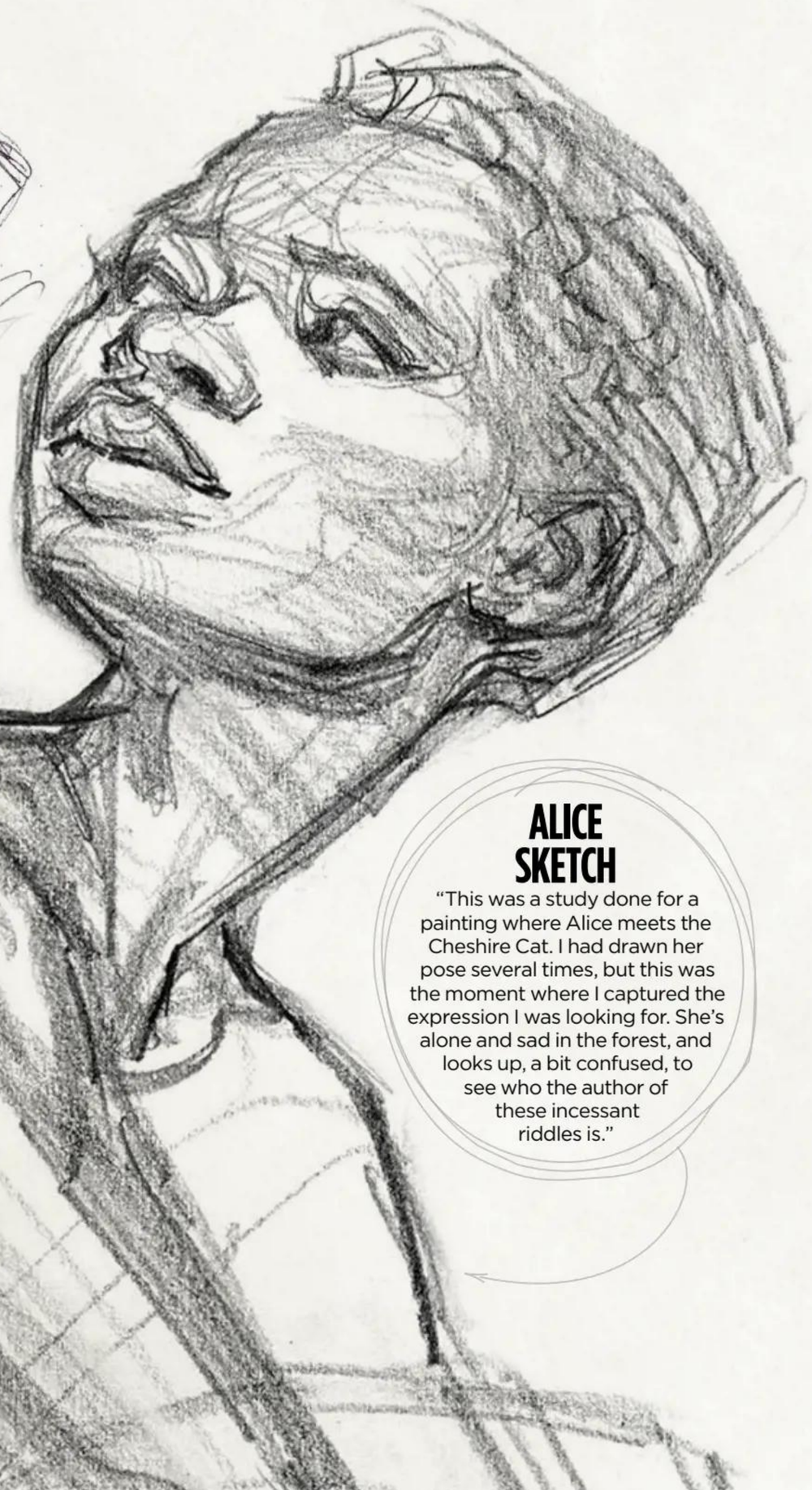
Mia is an award-winning Argentine-American artist, born and raised in Los Angeles. She works traditionally, and is currently writing and illustrating her passion project – an illustrated novel inspired by Alice in Wonderland. Since 2007 Mia's artwork has been shown in prominent galleries and conventions across the US and around the world.
www.art-by-mia.com



TRAVEL SKETCHES

"One of my favourite things to do when I visit other cities or countries is to sketch on trains and aeroplanes, or in restaurants and bars. I love capturing the beauty of people in a short amount of time. Looking through a travel sketchbook afterwards enhances my memories of each trip."



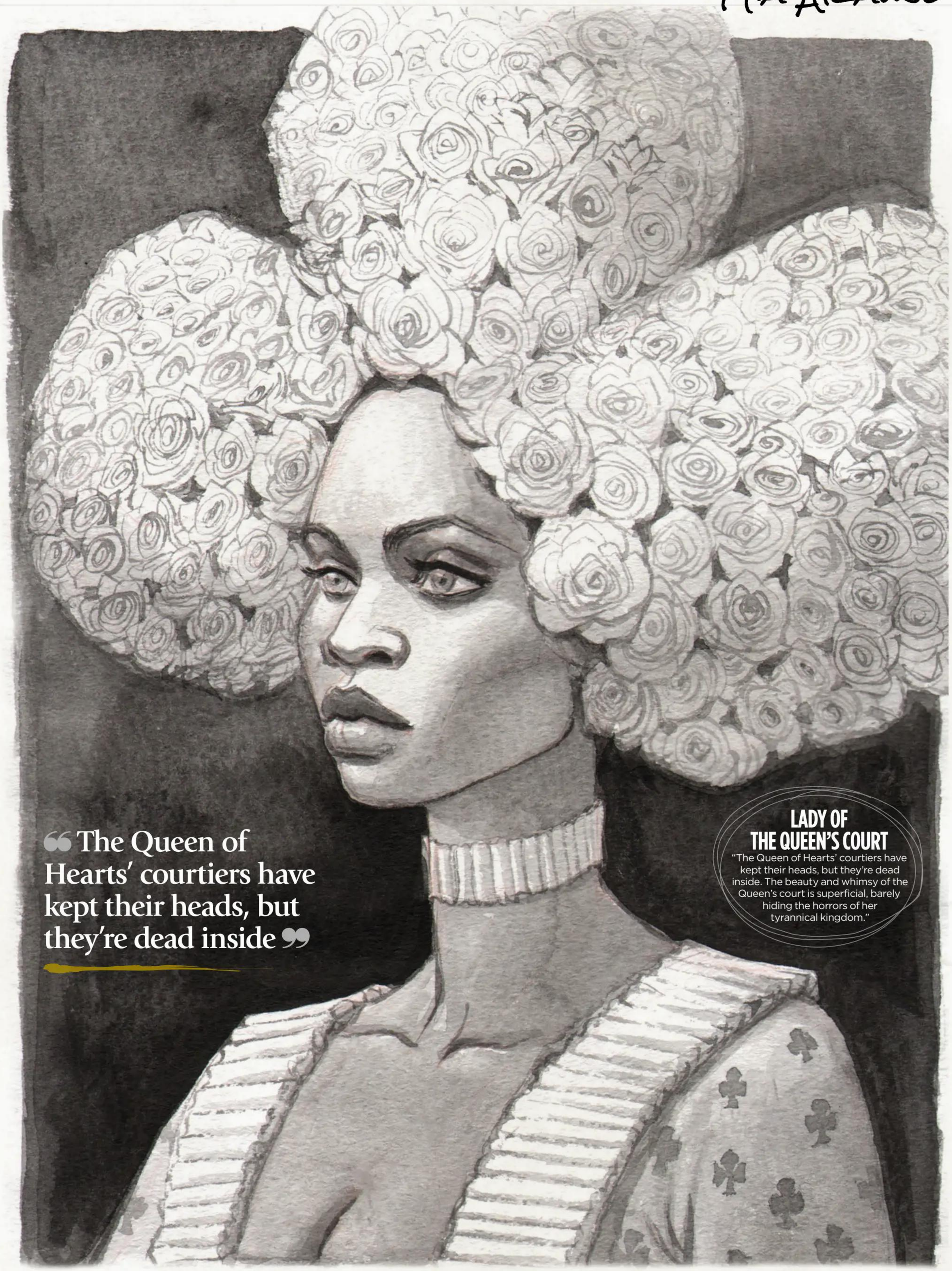


ALICE SKETCH

"This was a study done for a painting where Alice meets the Cheshire Cat. I had drawn her pose several times, but this was the moment where I captured the expression I was looking for. She's alone and sad in the forest, and looks up, a bit confused, to see who the author of these incessant riddles is."

CHILD SKETCHES

"I don't often take commissions, but this was for a good friend. I've drawn both of her daughters when they were this age. Children's faces are so much fun to draw, because the proportions are so different from that of adults!"



“The Queen of Hearts’ courtiers have kept their heads, but they’re dead inside”

LADY OF THE QUEEN’S COURT

“The Queen of Hearts’ courtiers have kept their heads, but they’re dead inside. The beauty and whimsy of the Queen’s court is superficial, barely hiding the horrors of her tyrannical kingdom.”

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

No.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

CORAL

"This was another portrait of a gorgeous follower of mine, trying to convey 'mermaid' in just a portrait. I usually reserve red pencil for underdrawings, but I liked the soft ethereal feel that this had without using any graphite."

MARCH HARE & DORMOUSE

"When I chose to interpret this story, I wanted to do it in a way that hasn't been done before. Setting it in West Africa was a way to pay tribute to beautiful people who don't receive enough representation in either fantasy or whimsical stories."

FIGURE DRAWING: FRONT

"Before the pandemic, I used to attend life-drawing sessions regularly. I've had a lifelong passion of figure drawing since I took my first class at 14, but had my first real breakthrough in 2017."

FIGURE DRAWING: BACK

"It's always tempting to get lost in all the details of the human form, but it's more fun for me to pull back and focus on the overall shape design of the pose."

"Setting it in West Africa was a way to pay tribute to beautiful people who don't receive enough representation…"

Mia Araujo

#MERMAY FOLLOWER PORTRAIT 1

"I thought it would be fun to turn some of my followers into merfolk for #Mermay, by putting out a call for selfies on Instagram. It was so hard to choose, because each one of the submissions was beautiful!"

ImagineFX

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

NATURE SPIRIT OF WONDERLAND

"The nature spirits of Wonderland are invisible to Alice, but represent the forces of nature that inhabit every aspect of the forest. This one is a butterfly spirit."



#MERMAY FOLLOWER PORTRAIT 2

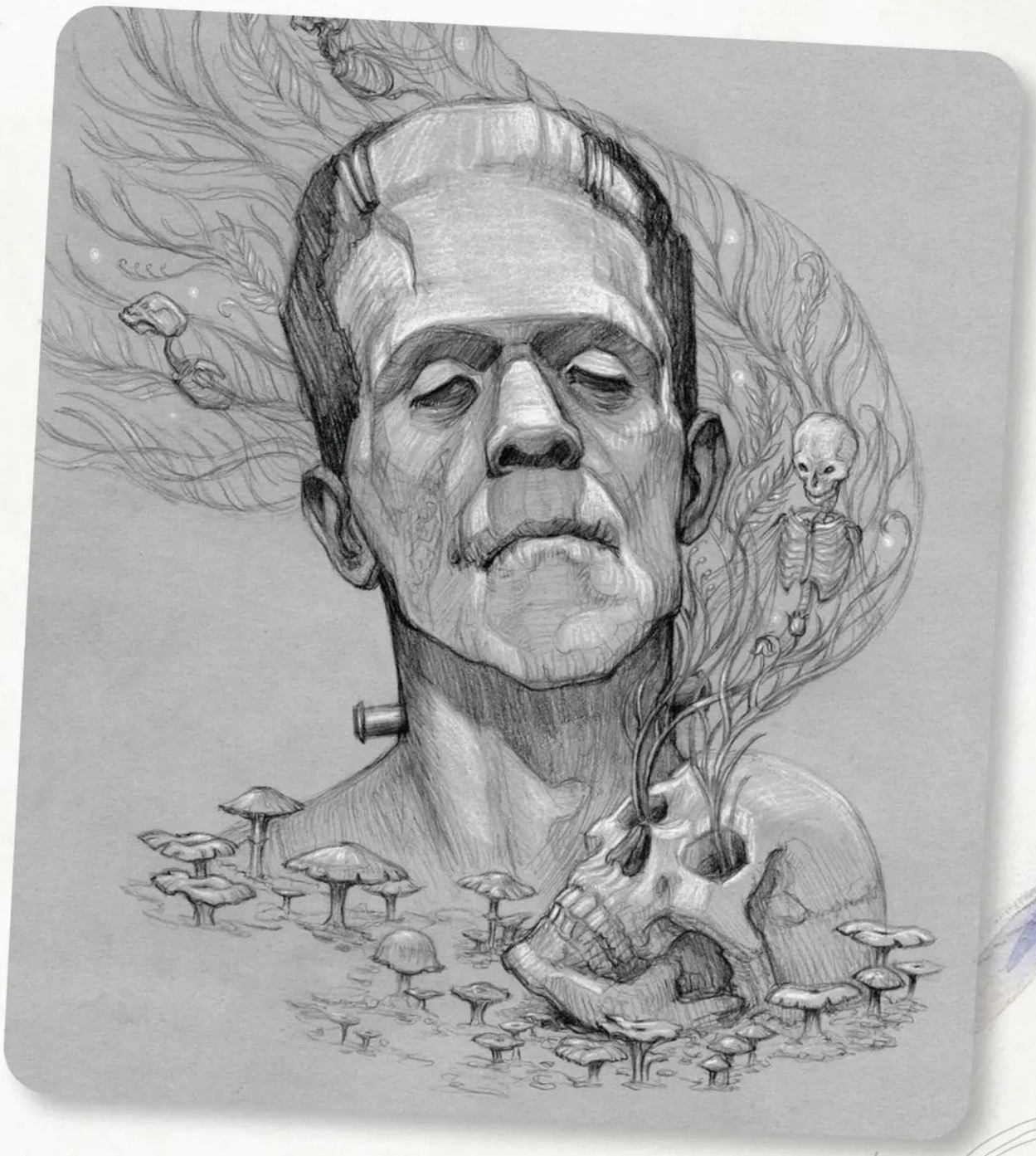
"It was also tough to convey a mermaid with just a portrait (no tail!), but it was a fun challenge, and an honour to capture some of the wonderful people who support my work. When I take portrait commissions, I prefer to transform the subject into a fantastical character like this, rather than recreating a photo or selfie exactly."

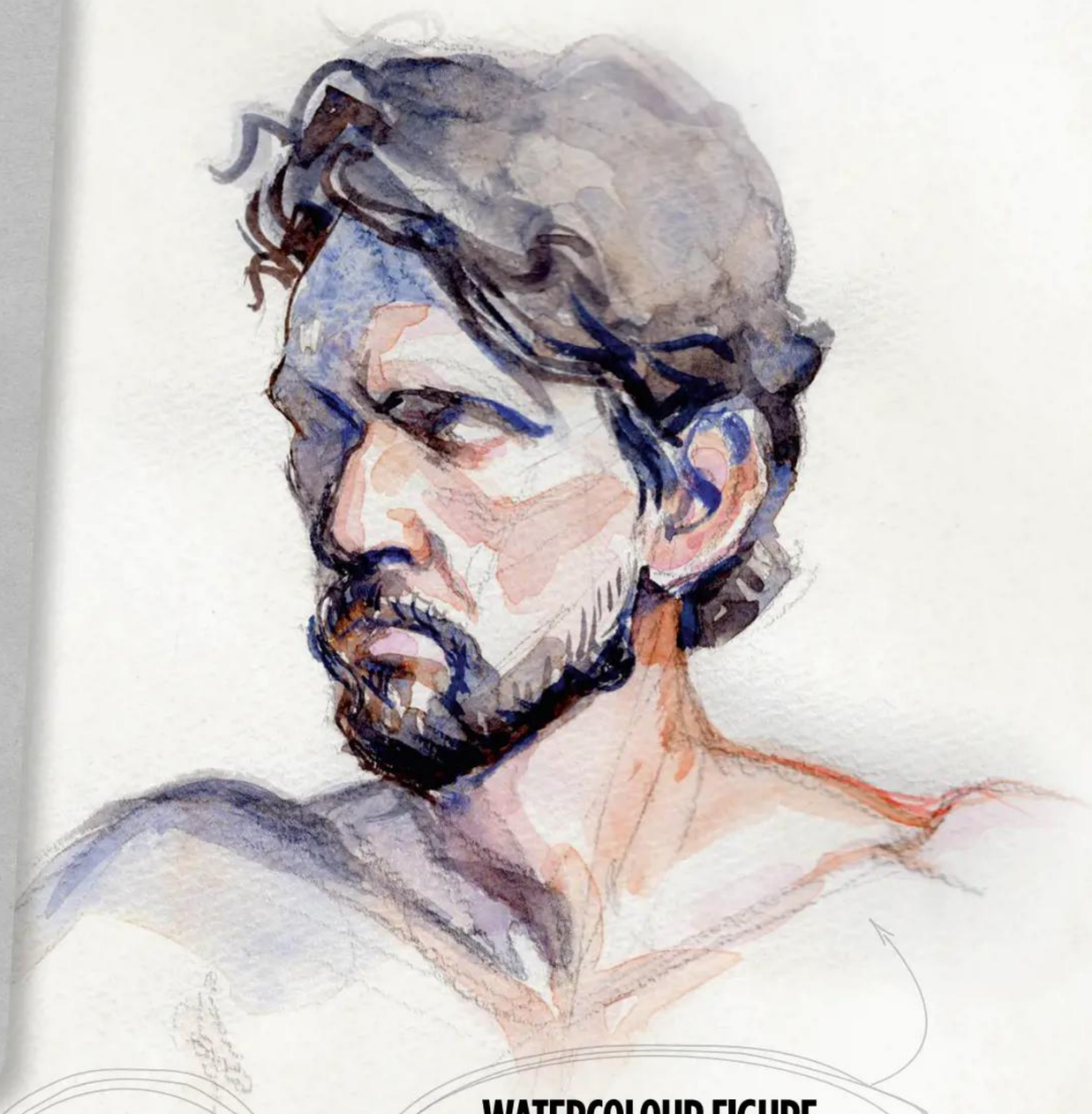


MASQUERADE

"This was a little watercolour experiment, and a first exploration for the Queen of Hearts' masquerade ball in my story. It was fun playing with flat vs detail, and using a monochromatic palette."

> "It was tough to convey a mermaid with just a portrait (no tail!)"





FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

"Capturing an iconic character in my own style was one of the most fun drawing commissions ever for me. The skeletons are the spirits of the bodies that were used in the monster's creation, as he rises from a mushroom-covered grave."

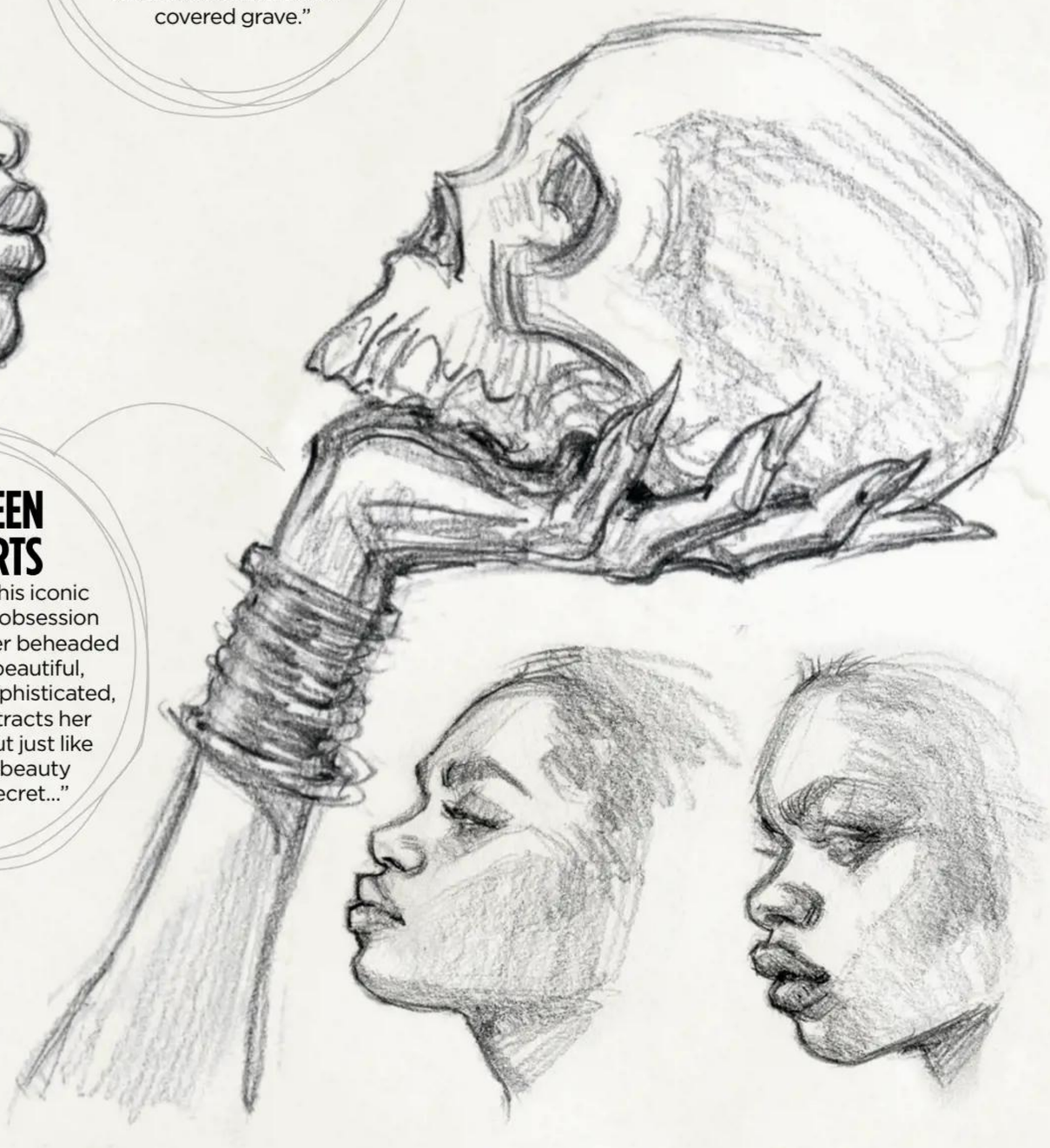
WATERCOLOUR FIGURE

"I reserve watercolours for 20-25 minute poses, which is just enough time to get something down on the page, and just short enough to avoid over-thinking things."



THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

"My version of this iconic character has an obsession with the skulls of her beheaded victims. She is beautiful, charismatic and sophisticated, which is what attracts her victims to her. But just like her court, her beauty hides a dark secret..."



Photoshop & Clip Studio Paint

DRAW ACTION-PACKED PANELS

Steve Ellis reveals his process for injecting action and movement into his sequential artwork, helping to immerse the reader in his world

Artist **PROFILE**

Steve Ellis
LOCATION: US

Steve is a comic artist by day and a fantasy artist by night. His most recent graphic novel, The Only Living Boy, earned him a Best Artist of 2019 Ringo nomination.
www.steveellisart.com



I love seeing action pages in comics. When I draw action scenes I want the reader to feel the sense of urgency. I want the page to feel visceral: if a character gets punched in the gut, I want the reader to hurt. If a character falls, I want the page to reflect the sensation of falling.

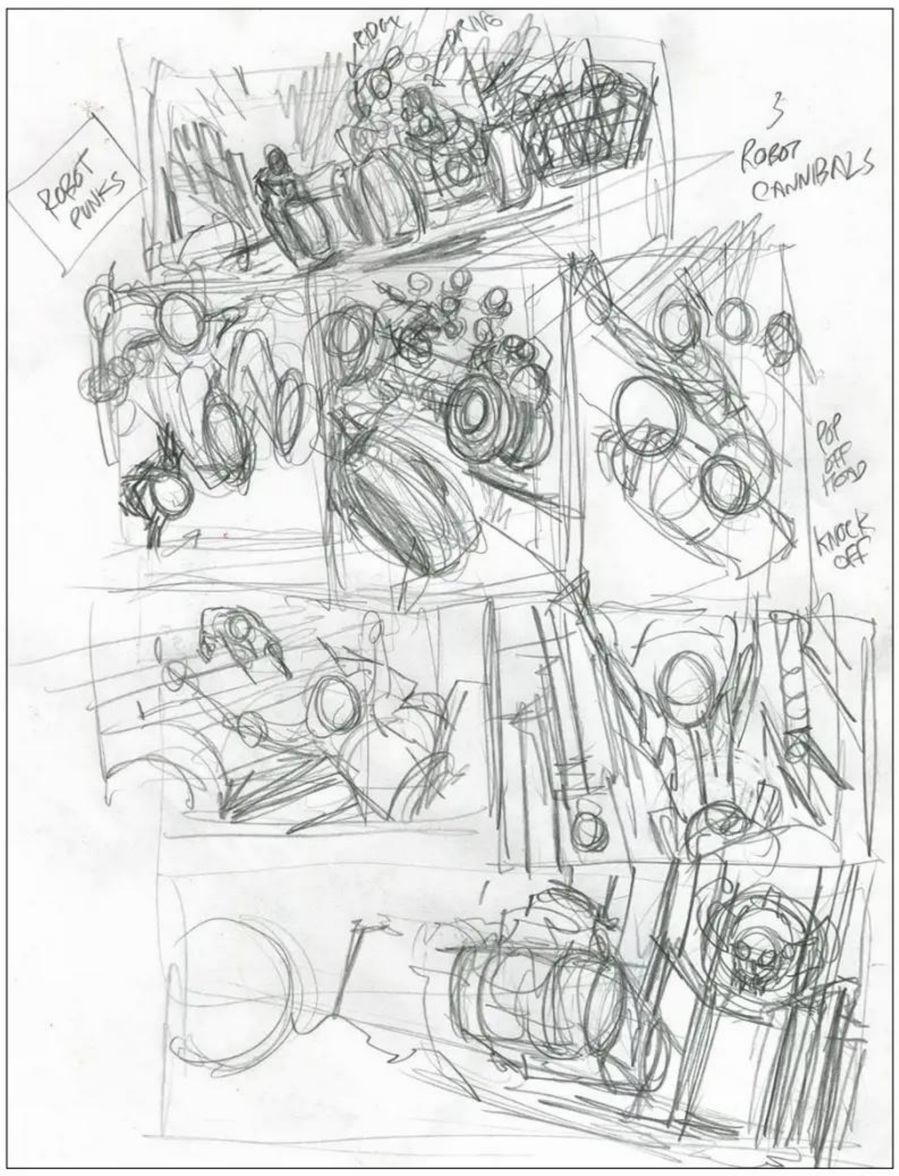
A well-done action scene can be an immersive event for the reader. I take inspiration from some of my favourite TV shows and films. There are lots of similarities between films and comics, so I tend to use a lot of movie 'tricks'.

Yet unlike film you get to see every moment on each panel, and you can go back and look at panels out of order to examine what you like about a particular 'shot'.
Since there's no actual movement, you need to create the illusion of movement with your drawings.

In this workshop, I'm going to show you how to think about setting up an action scene, how to choose the right moment to draw for the most impact, and how to take both the character and the reader through a complex sequence while establishing a sense of speed.

I'll lay out tips to maintain clarity and teach you about transitions between panels, and how to use movement to drive the viewer from panel to panel.





1 Pacing out the story

Sometimes the script gives me the plan, but usually it's up to me to provide the pacing. First I consider how the action begins and ends. Then I sketch random ideas of angles, shots, panel movements and actions. They're are usually out of order and messy because I just want to react emotionally to the script.

2 The rough layout

I think about moment-to-moment action by lining up the angles and shots from my sketches to assemble a rough layout that gets me from points A to B. Often each step becomes a panel. I'll draw a lot of extra steps, then edit them down to the most important ones. Each story might require a different number of panels.

RESOURCES

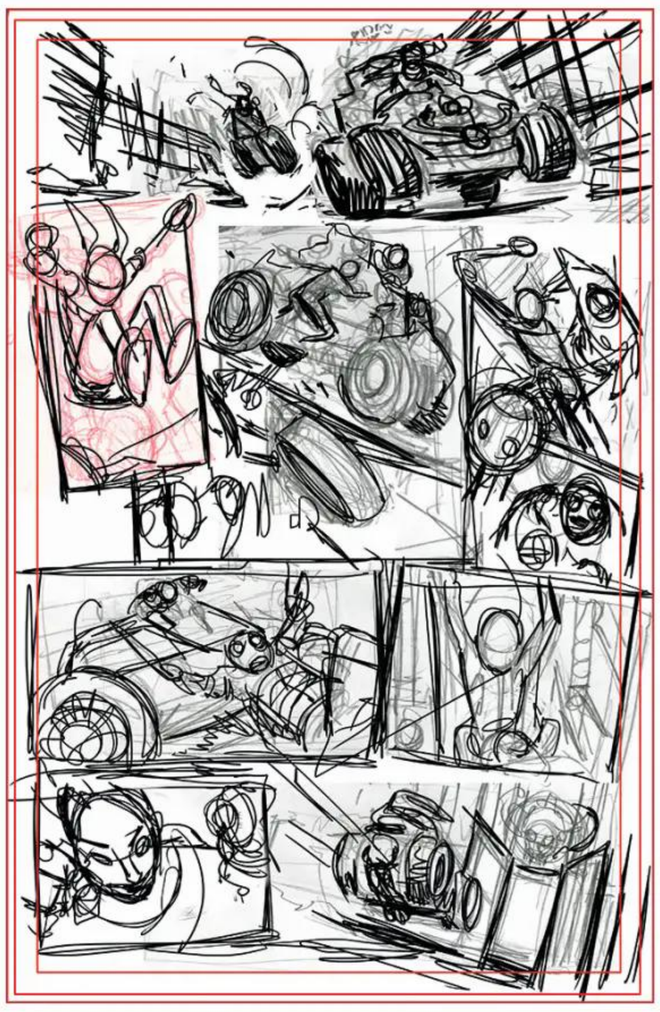
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

CUSTOM BRUSHES: G-PEN



A highly sensitive inking tool that flows nicely and gives a lot of line variation with pressure.



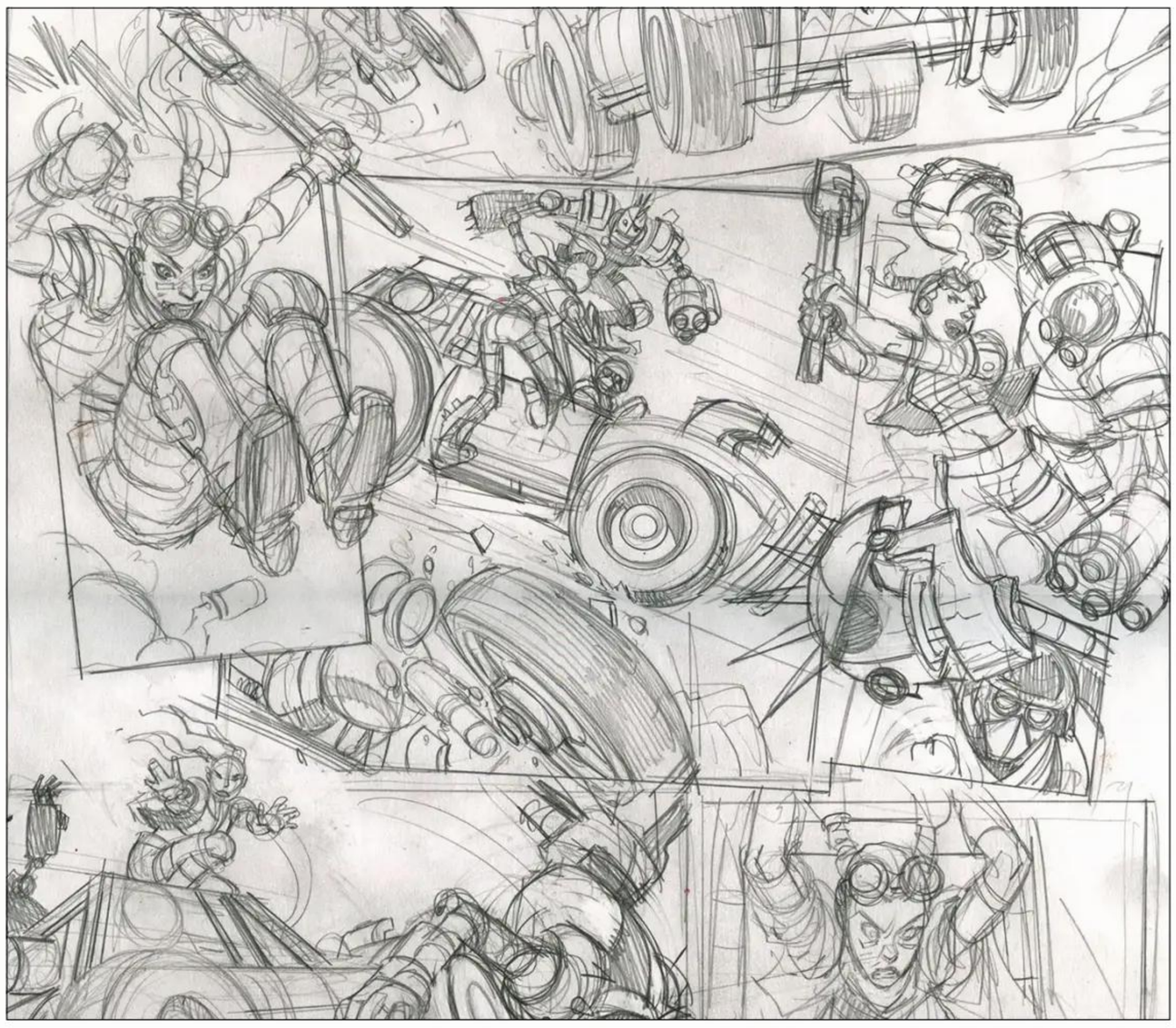
3 Sketching out the page

Now that I have the steps figured out as panels, I can think about how they work together as a page. Here, how the action of one panel flows into the next panel will ensure the proper left-to-right or up-to-down reading movement. At this stage I frequently drop a few panels to streamline the action as much as possible.



4 Establishing the setting

I choose a distant shot for the first panel to both establish the scene and the environment, and the relationship between the characters. This is vital so that when in the second panel the character jumps, we already know where she is in the space. We follow this up in the third panel with the character having landed on the jeep and her bike in the foreground crashing.



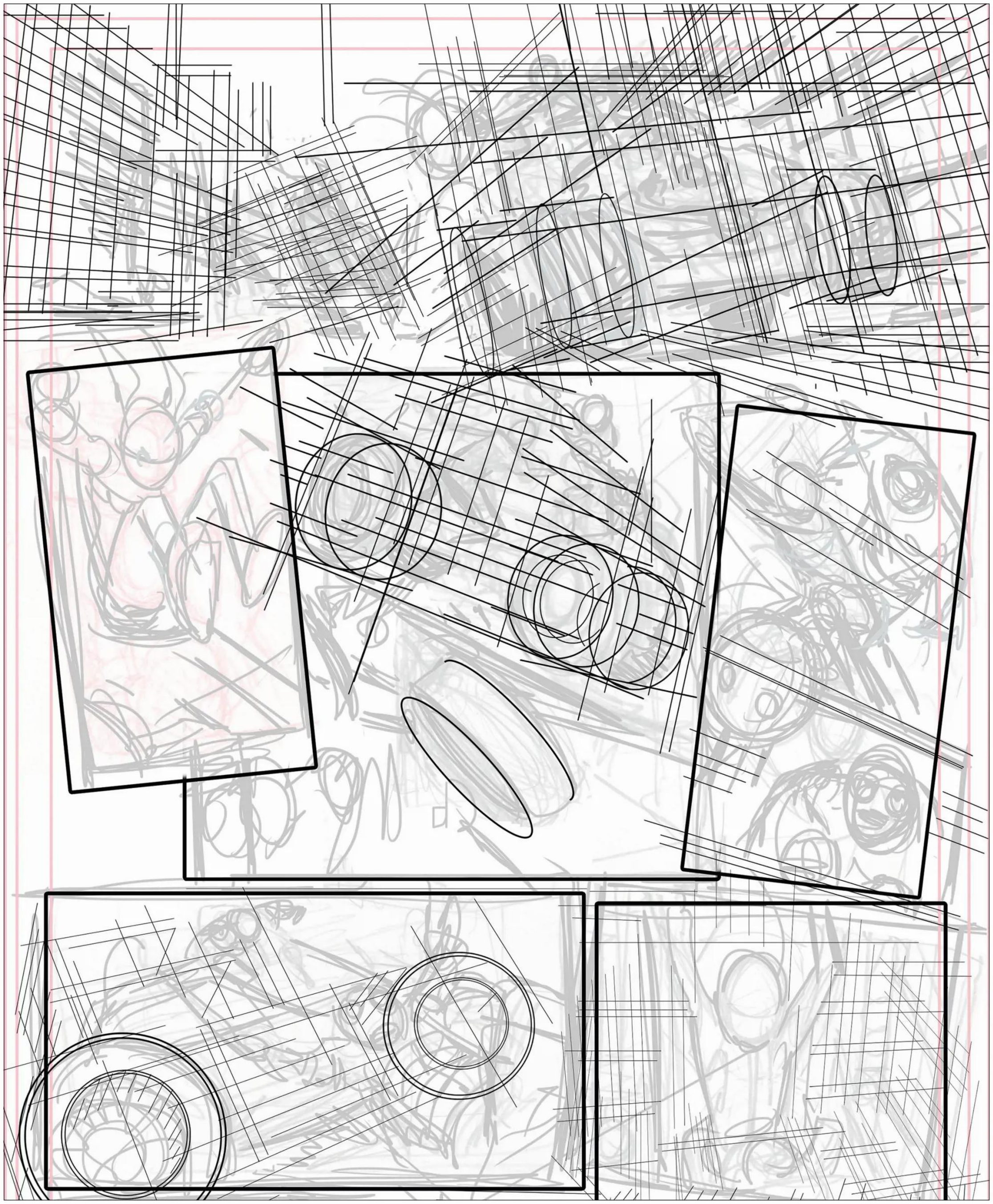
5 Following the action

In the fourth panel, I jump forward a few seconds. I'm relying on the reader to understand that in the time between panels (the gutter time) she's climbed up, gotten a purchase and is able to take a swing, knocking off the robot's head. The head is positioned down to direct the reader's eye toward the lower tier of panels.



6 Exiting the page

In the next panel, I draw the viewer's eye towards the left with the action of the car, and I set up the shot so the driver's body falls towards the right. Again, this should lead the eye to the next panel on the right. The next two panels are our character's moments as she takes control of the car and we drive off the page in the final panel.



7 Generating grids and borders in Photoshop

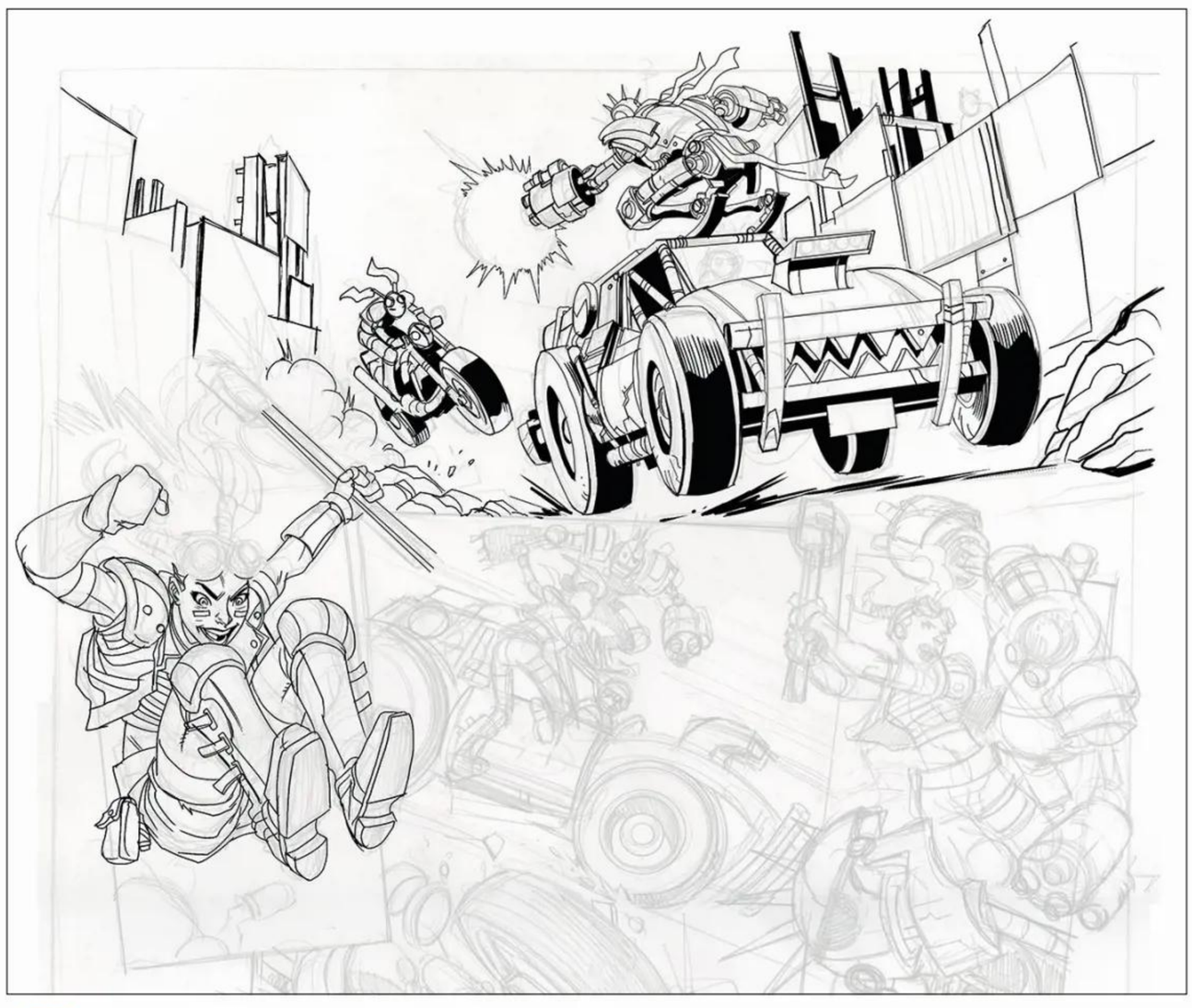
I like to create the illusion of a grid on a page and use angled panels for exciting contrast. In Photoshop I cut up the page and rearrange and resize, and zoom into panels for the most impact. This gives me a chance to rethink the borders and overlapping elements.





8 Developing a bit of perspective and ramping up the action

I want there to be a lot of movement, so I'm using extreme angles on everything. However, I also want the reader to understand the space. Using Clip Studio Paint, I overlay one perspective grid for the fixed items to create a believable world and give the vehicles their own perspective grids. I want to make the vehicles look like they're bouncing around without breaking the laws of physics too badly.



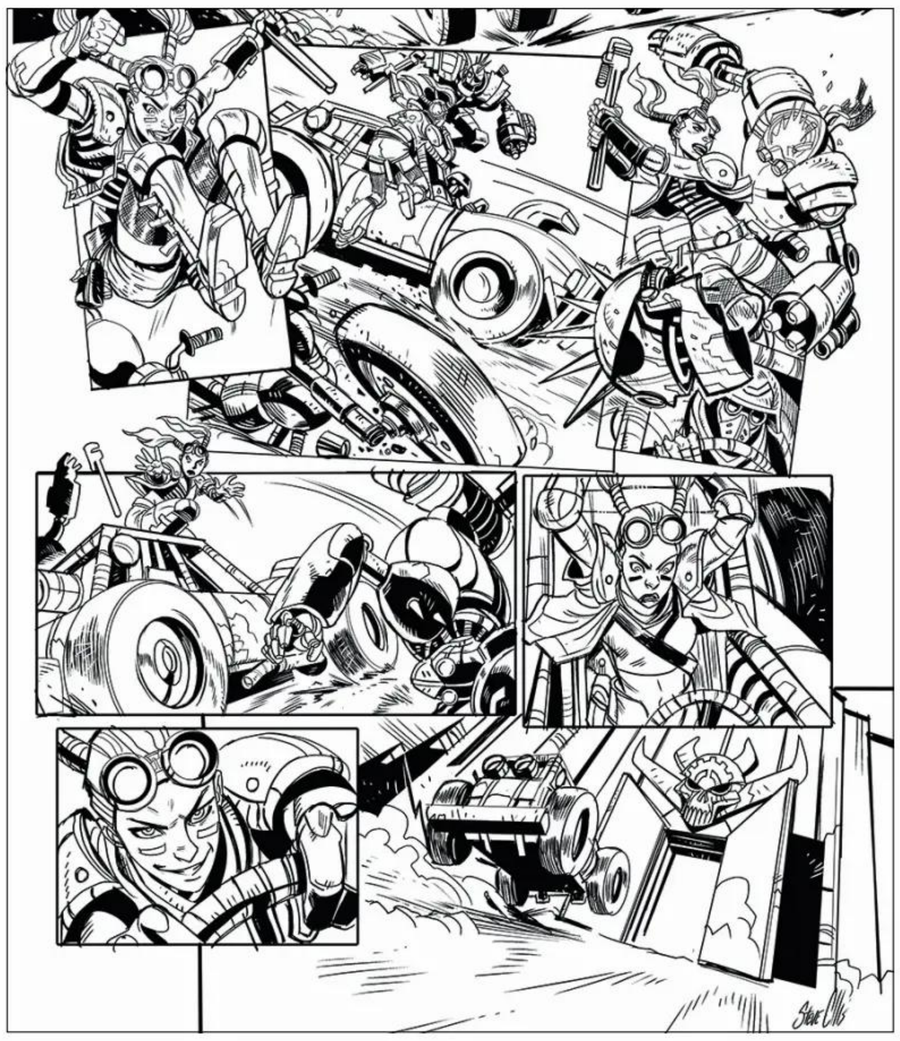
9 Pencilling and finalising ideas

I print the page out on to copy paper and lightbox the drawing on to Bristol paper, leaving out the messy or structural bits. I add details, finalise ideas and make sure everything's on point. I also analyse the acting/facial expressions of the characters and how that affects the story. While I thought about it before, it's only now that the exact expressions and feelings start to come through.



10 Varying the weight of my ink lines

After scanning into Clip Studio Paint, I use the standard line marker with a single line weight on an Inks layer, tracing the pencils. Next, I differentiate objects from the background by using heavier line weights, looking for opportunities to let the varying line-weights of Clip's G-pen Nib create some active exciting lines. Broken up lines and scratchy lines make things move.



11 Adding textures and blacks

I use different textured lines (jagged, smooth, cross-hatch, parallel line grids and hash marks) for hair, rocks, rust on a car, blasts from a gun, combat boots and so on. Black areas are great for separating elements and giving objects weight. The jeep looks like it's flying because of the scratchy lines behind and on it, and the black area under it showing it lifting into the air.



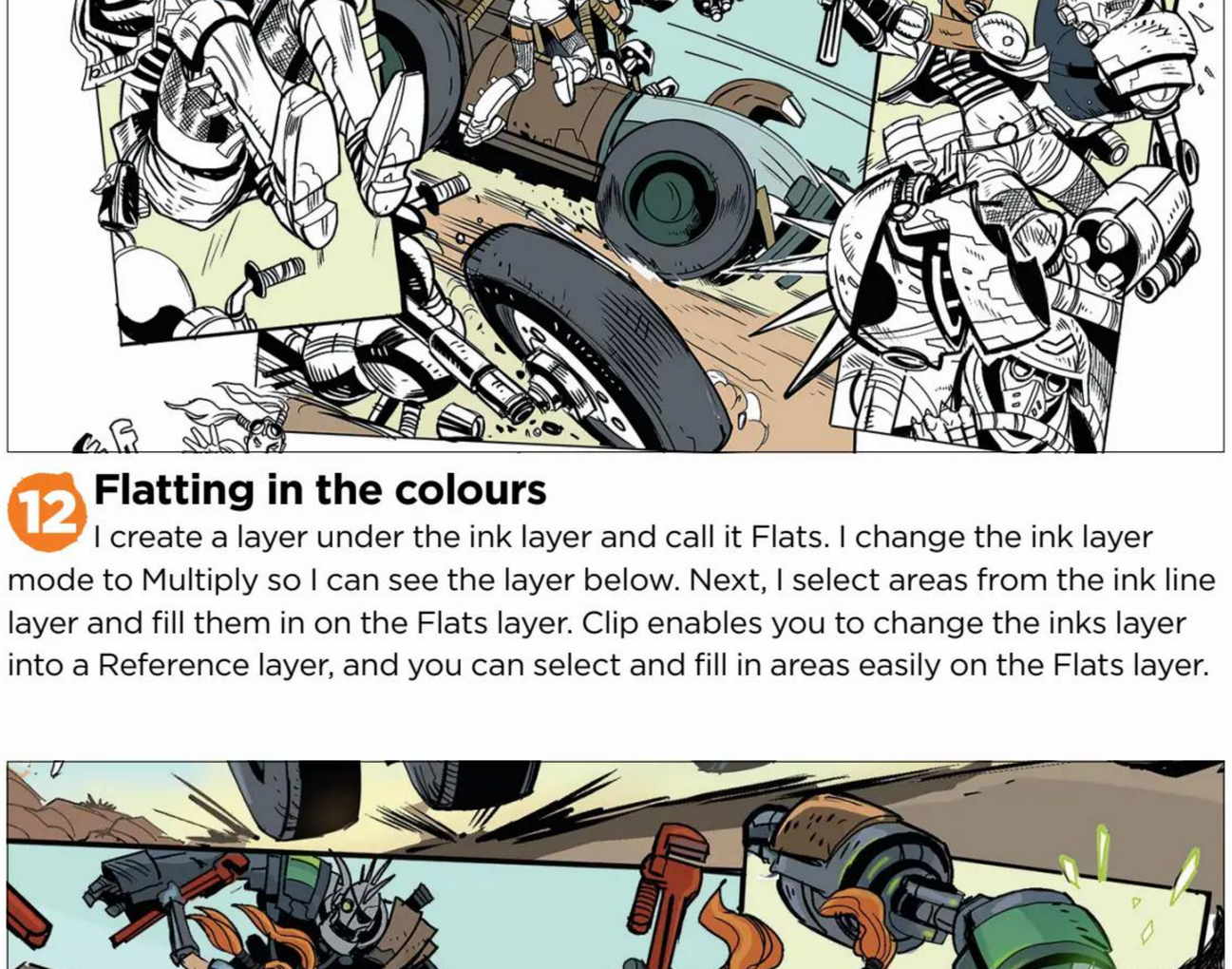
12 Flatting in the colours

I create a layer under the ink layer and call it Flats. I change the ink layer mode to Multiply so I can see the layer below. Next, I select areas from the ink line layer and fill them in on the Flats layer. Clip enables you to change the inks layer into a Reference layer, and you can select and fill in areas easily on the Flats layer.



13 Painting in the dark areas

I ensure the 'flatted' colours are correct before adding shadows. I use the Selection tool to grab areas, choose a colour that's darker than the current colour and paint them in using the Marker tool. Here, I'm only looking to create one value darker than the base colour. I don't need to get into deep rendering because I want the art to be dominated by the inks and to flow quickly.



14 Highlights and finishing

I soften harsher colour edges with the Airbrush tool, then start to desaturate selected areas that need to recede to make important elements pop out. I "colour hold" the lines using a Lighten layer above them. I use a low Opacity layer on top to make action swooshes behind actions that I want to emphasise. As a finisher, I create a highlights layer on top and airbrush areas with bright whites for highlights, reflections and gunfire to really pump up the action!

Photoshop

HOW TO ORGANISE A CHAOTIC SCENE

Discover how **Bayard Wu** controls movement, contrast, light and colour as he paints a fight scene from his personal art project

How to organise a chaotic scene



This work comes from my personal series: Ms Hammer and Orc Girl. It's a series of illustrations telling the story about two young women – one is a dwarf, the other an orc.

In contrast with other illustrations from this series that show armies clashing on vast battlefields, this work depicts a much smaller fight taking place in a harpy's nest. However, there are still 10 harpies attacking Orc Girl, and I know that I need to take a number of key steps to maintain clarity in the artwork.

First, I want to keep the focus on Orc Girl while composing the different and aggressive movements of each figure in the scene. Next, I need to convey the feeling of chaos while making all the harpies readable. Finally, I want to develop the depth of space within the nest.

These are the technical problems I want to solve in this work. However, I'd also like to convey more details about the story, such as revealing the environment of the harpies, and exploring the different characteristics of each creature through their movement and expressions. These factors will take time to address, but I know I'll enjoy the process!

Artist **PROFILE**

Bayard Wu
LOCATION: China

Bayard is an illustrator and concept artist with a passion for strong compositions and story telling. He's spent over a decade working on a range of game projects.
http://ifxm.ag/bayardwu

A FRENZIED ATTACK

Focal point

Orc Girl's red hair and shadow on her body make her the initial focus of the image. Using a strong colour is a simple way to create the focal point. It's more difficult to keep it in balance with the scene's overall hue, though.



Strong V-structure

The movement of this fleeing harpy, Orc Girl and the attacking harpy on the other side of our heroine create a strong visual element in the composition. It's the spine of the image. All the other characters work around this big 'V', and there are other hidden Vs in the scene, too.



Directing the viewer

This highlight on the harpy's light blue skin helps to take the viewer's eye from the face of Orc Girl, but then releases it because there's not much detail here.

Skull elements

The viewer's focus now falls on the pile of skulls. There are details, movement, shadows and light, and warm and cold colours here, but little contrast.

Generate depth

Composition layers create depth, but when these layers contain lots of densely placed elements, it can led to chaos and confuse the viewer. I'll generate contrast using different colours, shadows, light, and warm and cold colours to help me avoid this situation.

Hidden details

I like this foreground area. It takes up a large part of the image, but you hardly notice it. You'll find many small details when you study it. It's just another subtle way of introducing storytelling into the scene.

How I create...

RELATIONSHIPS, DEPTH & DETAIL



1 Deciding on the composition

I spend a long time designing the pose of each character and their relationship with one another. When you draw one figure, you need to jump into the scene to see what everyone else is doing. Then you can see which elements are superfluous.



2 Depth techniques

I choose a cold, dark hue for the environment around the nest. A warm spotlight creates contrast between the blue feathers and golden leaves. The depth is not only created by layers, but also by the contrast between cold and hot, and dark and light.



3 Details and focus

Adding details is a given, but bear in mind that it's more important to hide such details than show them. Controlling the details enables you to control the viewer's focus. They'll also be pleased to discover any hidden features in your artwork.

Artist insight

15 STEPS TO DRAWING ANIMALS

Acclaimed animator, director and wildlife artist **Aaron Blaise** share his observational and illustration advice to help improve your animal artwork

Artist **PROFILE**

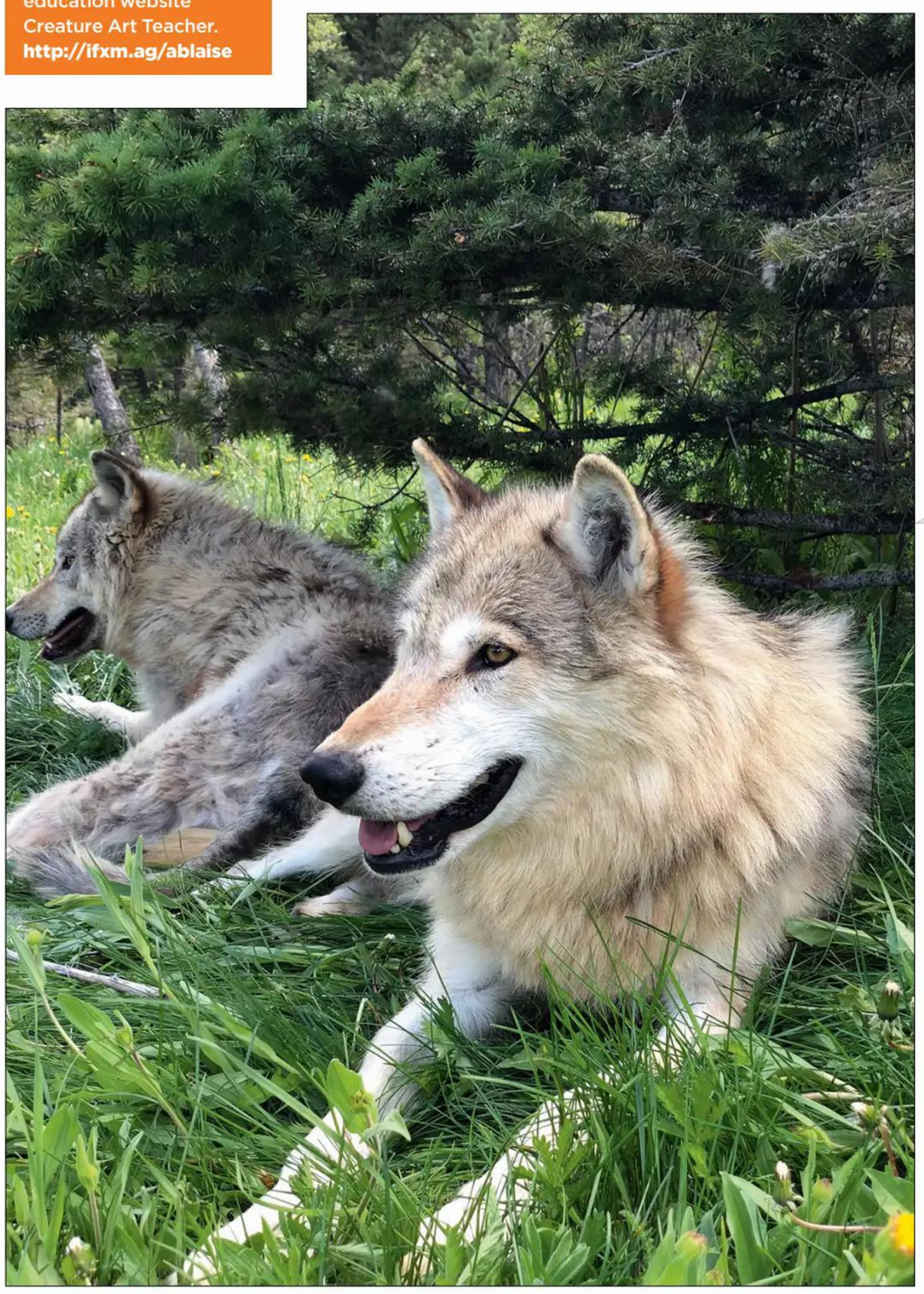
Aaron Blaise
LOCATION: US

Aaron is a world-renowned wildlife artist, animator and Oscar-nominated director. He also runs the online art education website Creature Art Teacher.
http://ifxm.ag/ablaise



Long before I was a director and animator with Walt Disney Feature Animation, I was a lover of wildlife. Growing up as a bit of a wild child in the swamps of south Florida, I would typically be found running through the woods, barefoot of course, tracking animals. I would draw them in my sketchbooks or even collect the bones of animal kills and save them for later study.

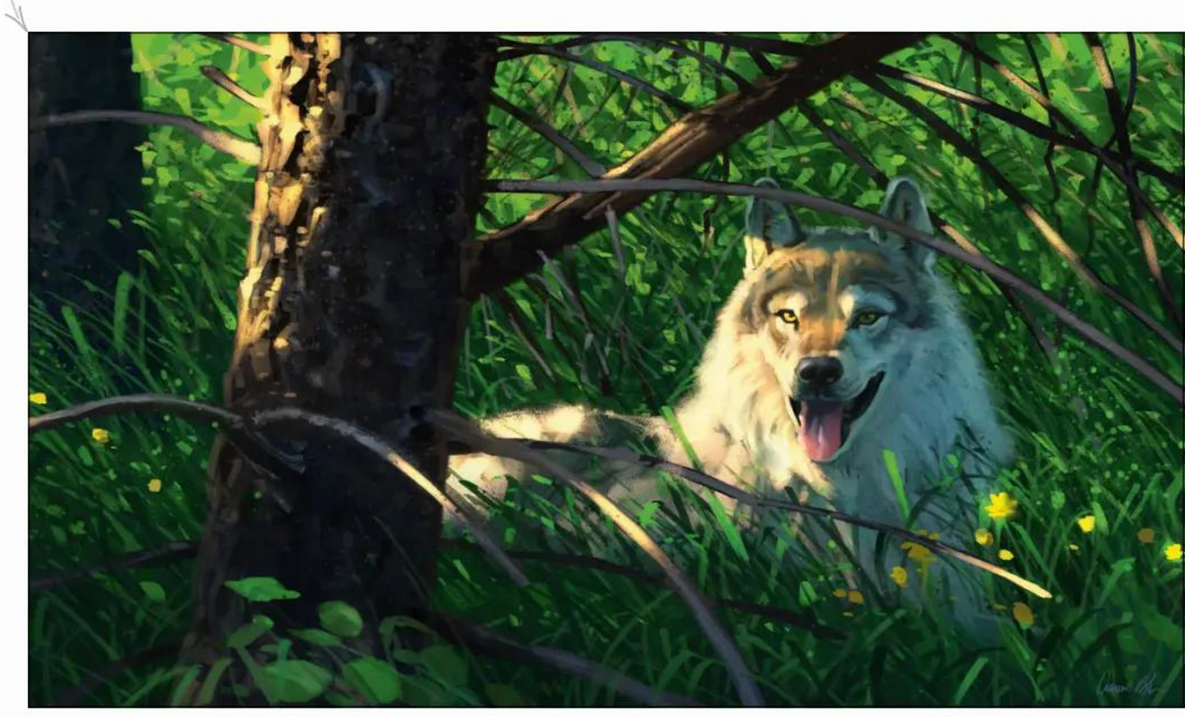
It was always my dream to be an illustrator for National Geographic and to see the world. Instead, I went on to Disney and a successful animation career, but I still found a way to pursue my love of drawing animals by working on classic films like The Lion King and Brother Bear. Now I want to share some of the knowledge from my years of studying animals with you!

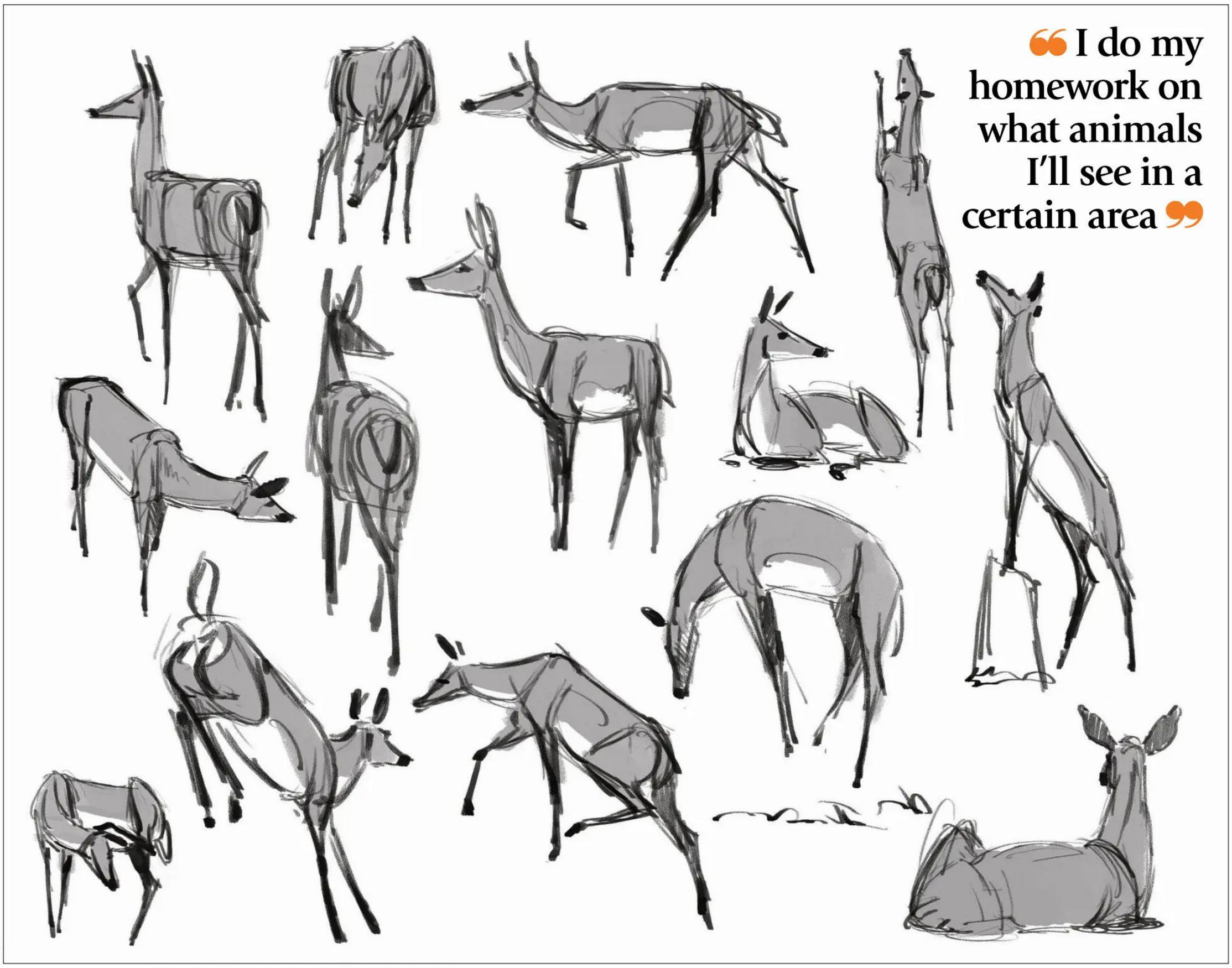




1 OBSERVE FIRST

Before you start to draw, stop and really look! Take a moment to observe and study the animal. How does it move? Often you'll notice patterns of movement. What's the animal doing? Can you anticipate where it will be next? If it's a hot day it might be heading for shade, for example. These sorts of details can be crucial in helping you capture details because animals often won't sit still and pose for you – especially in the wild!

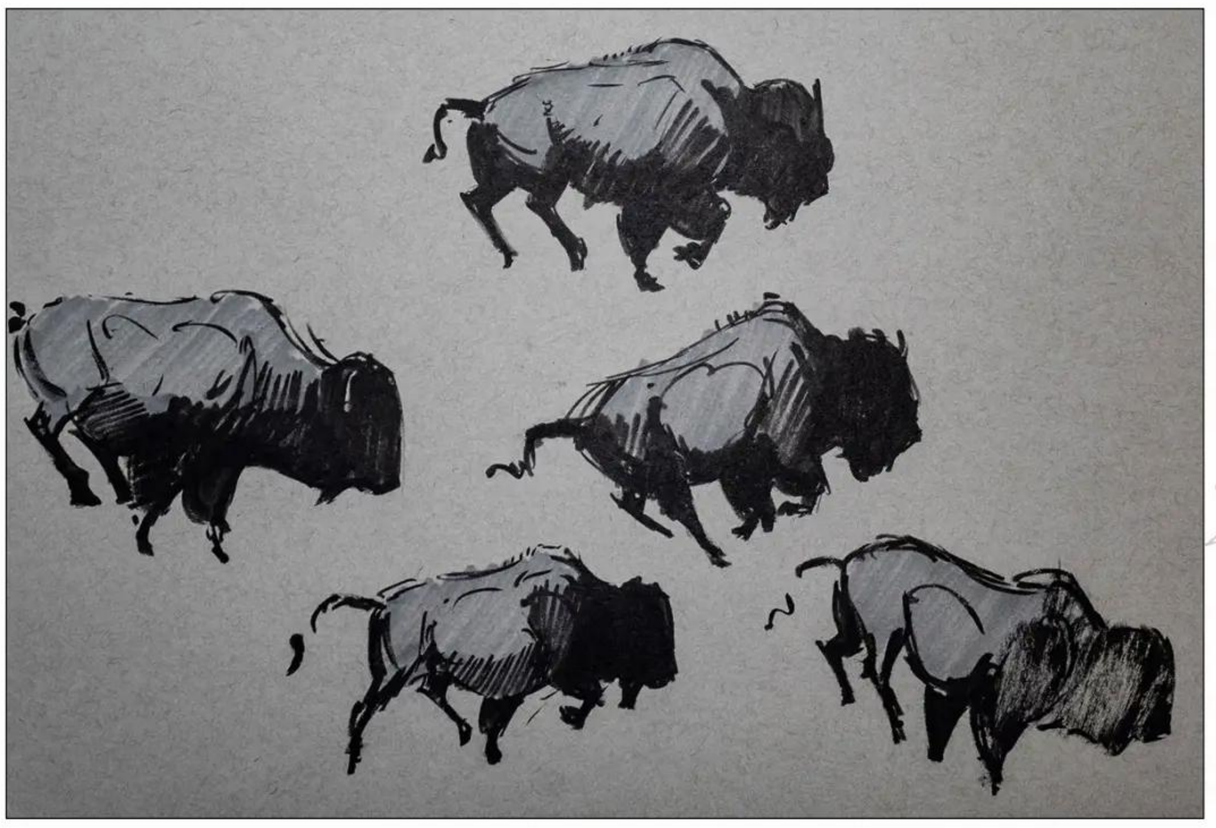




> I do my homework on what animals I'll see in a certain area

2 DO YOUR RESEARCH BEFORE YOU GET THERE

I do my homework on what animals I'll see in a particular area. For instance, on a trip to Alaska I may try to learn everything I can about grizzly bears, muskox and moose before I arrive. I'll study books and do research to learn about their muscles, skeletons and patterning. I'll even watch live webcams of an area to give me a sense of the environment. This information will aid me when I'm on location, and save a lot of time.



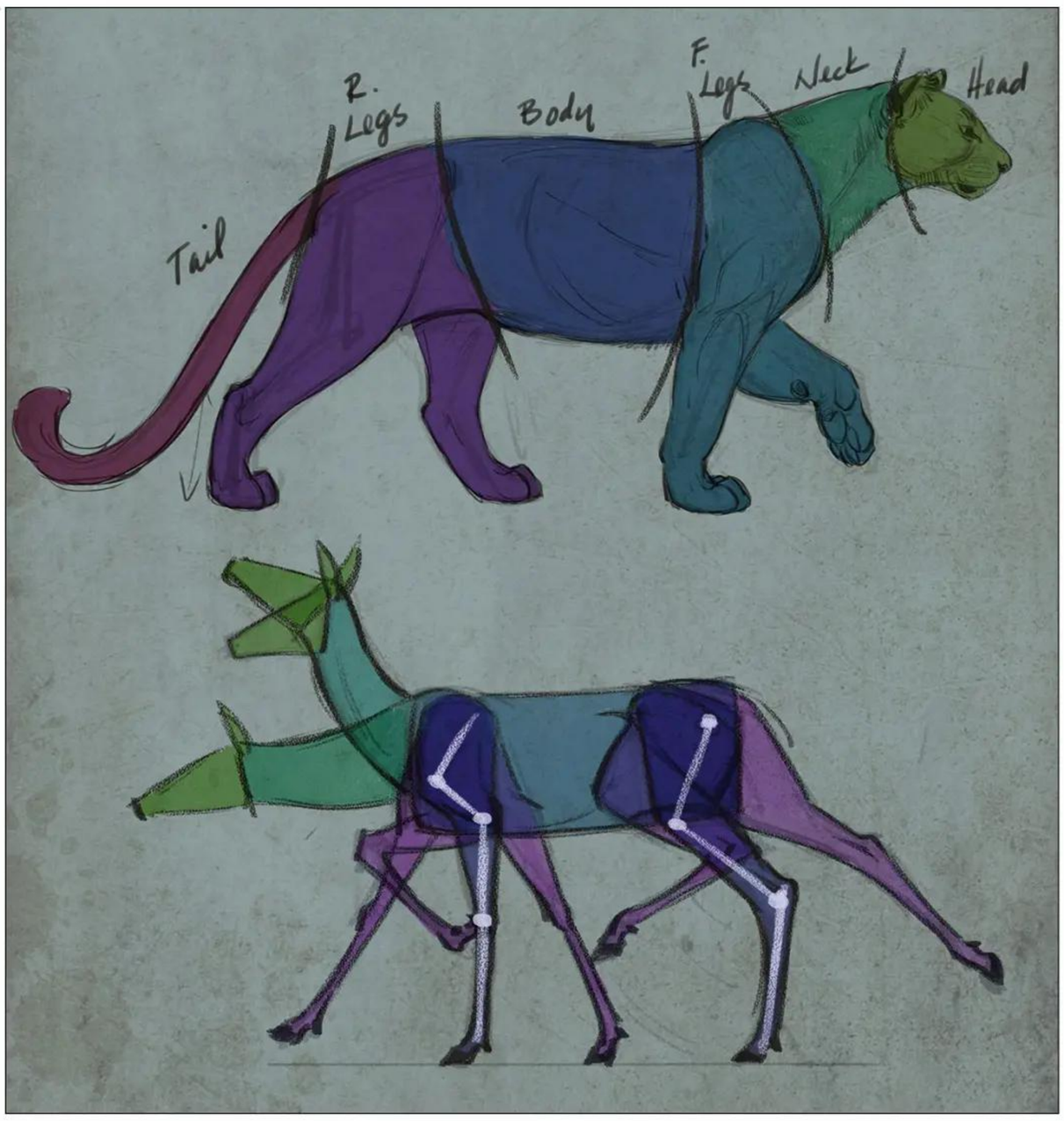


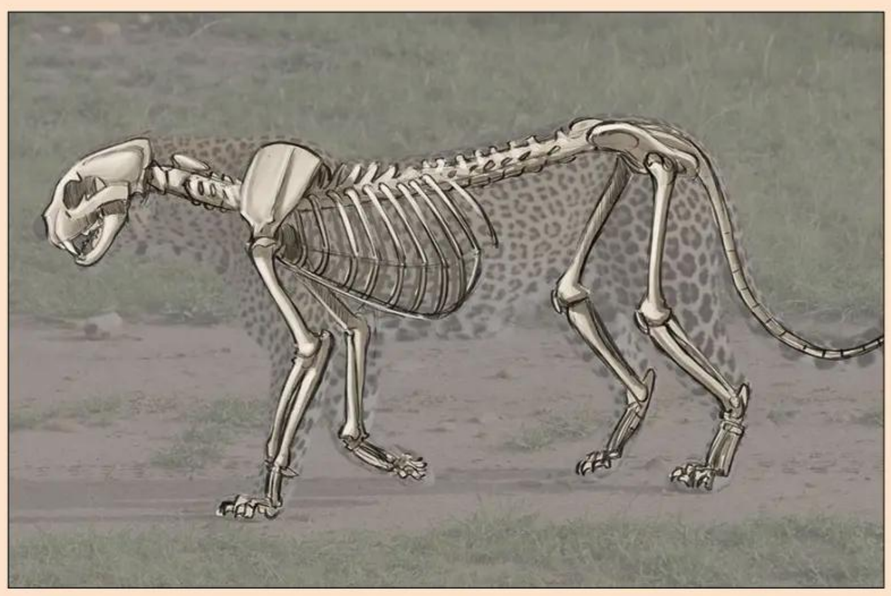
3 TAKE A MENTAL PICTURE

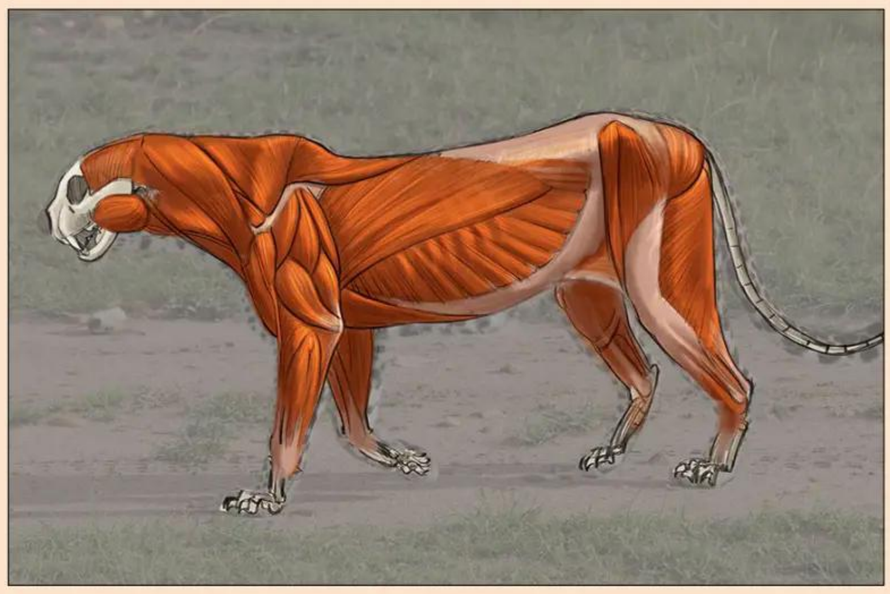
Animals often don't sit still. To combat this I've developed a technique of taking a mental snapshot. I don't stare at the animal the entire time I'm drawing. Instead, I'll glance at the animal and then quickly look away to my page. By doing this the last image of the animal that I saw is frozen in my mind. Combined with my research on anatomy, I'm able to get an accurate drawing down on the page.

4 BREAK THE BODY UP INTO SECTIONS

This is an observation I've made over the years. Most quadrupeds can be broken down into six main areas: the head, the neck, the front legs and shoulders, the body, the rear legs and hips, and finally the tail. This may seem like a simple observation, but once you break the animal up this way you can overlap those areas in any orientation in space.



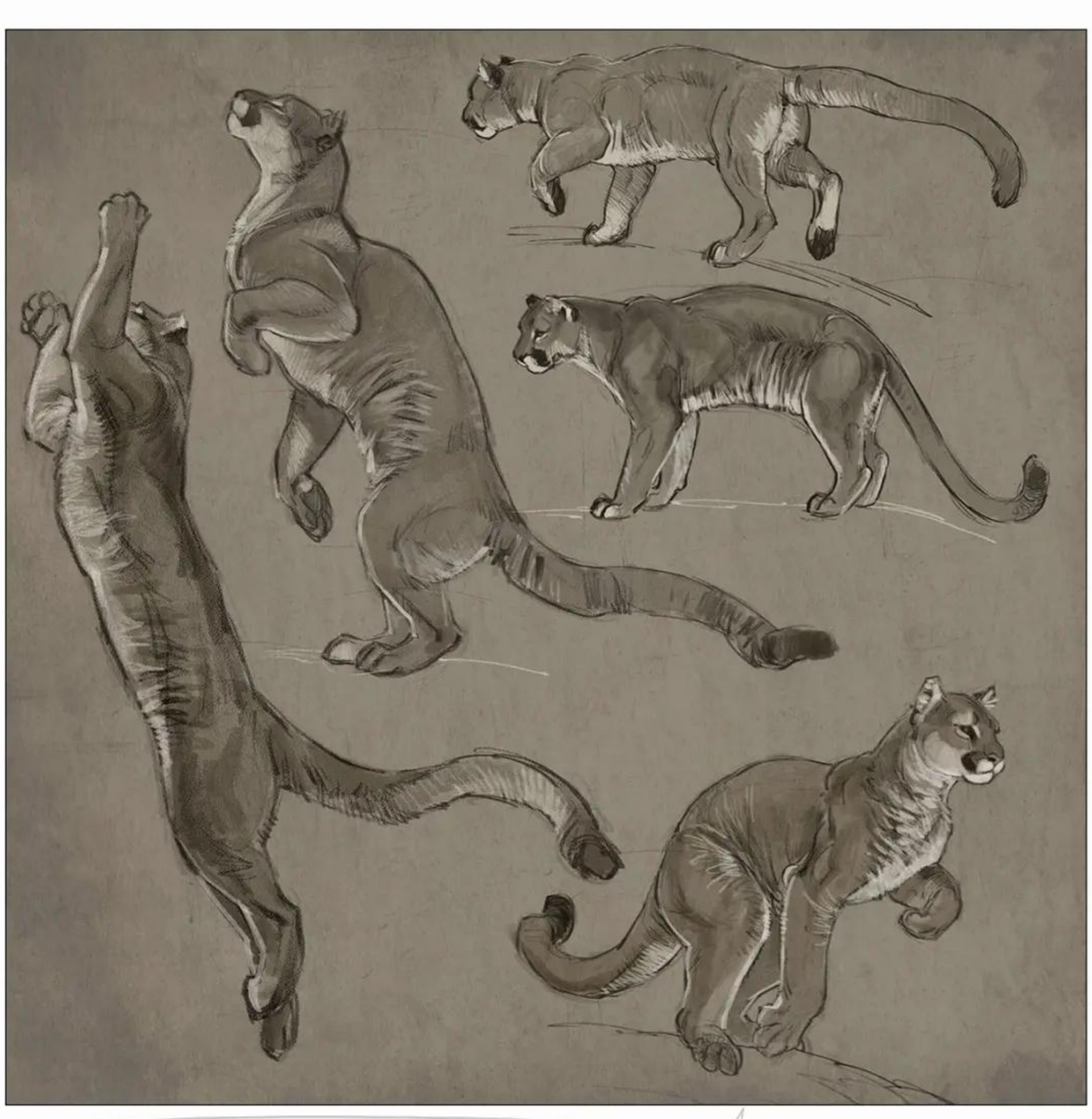






5 UNDERSTAND BASIC COMPARATIVE ANATOMY

People ask how do I know all these details about the animals I draw? The answer is: I don't! But I do know comparative anatomy. Most animals, especially mammals, have all the same "parts" – just spaced out differently. And this is true of humans as well. Once I understood that I have basically the same parts as a lion, just in different locations, it was a eureka moment in my ability to draw them.



6 WATCH YOUR PROPORTIONS

Now that you understand that most animals have the same bones and muscle groups as you do, it's just a matter of playing with the proportions and getting those correct. This is primarily a matter of practice and repetition. But once you start to get the spacing and proportions right, you'll be able to draw your subject in any pose or angle.

7 USE BLACK AND WHITE INK ON MIDTONE PAPER

How to enhance a pencil drawing of a lion's head with inks, bringing it to life

A Create a rough sketch

First lay in a rough drawing in pencil bearing in mind all the tips you have already learned so far. It's okay to be loose at this stage. This can give your work a dynamic edge! You'll refine the image in the later steps.



B Add darks to the drawing

Next, use a brush pen and/or ball point pen to lay down the darks. Use waterproof ink here in case you want to add watercolour or a wash later. Try to work in one consistent direction so you don't smear the ink.



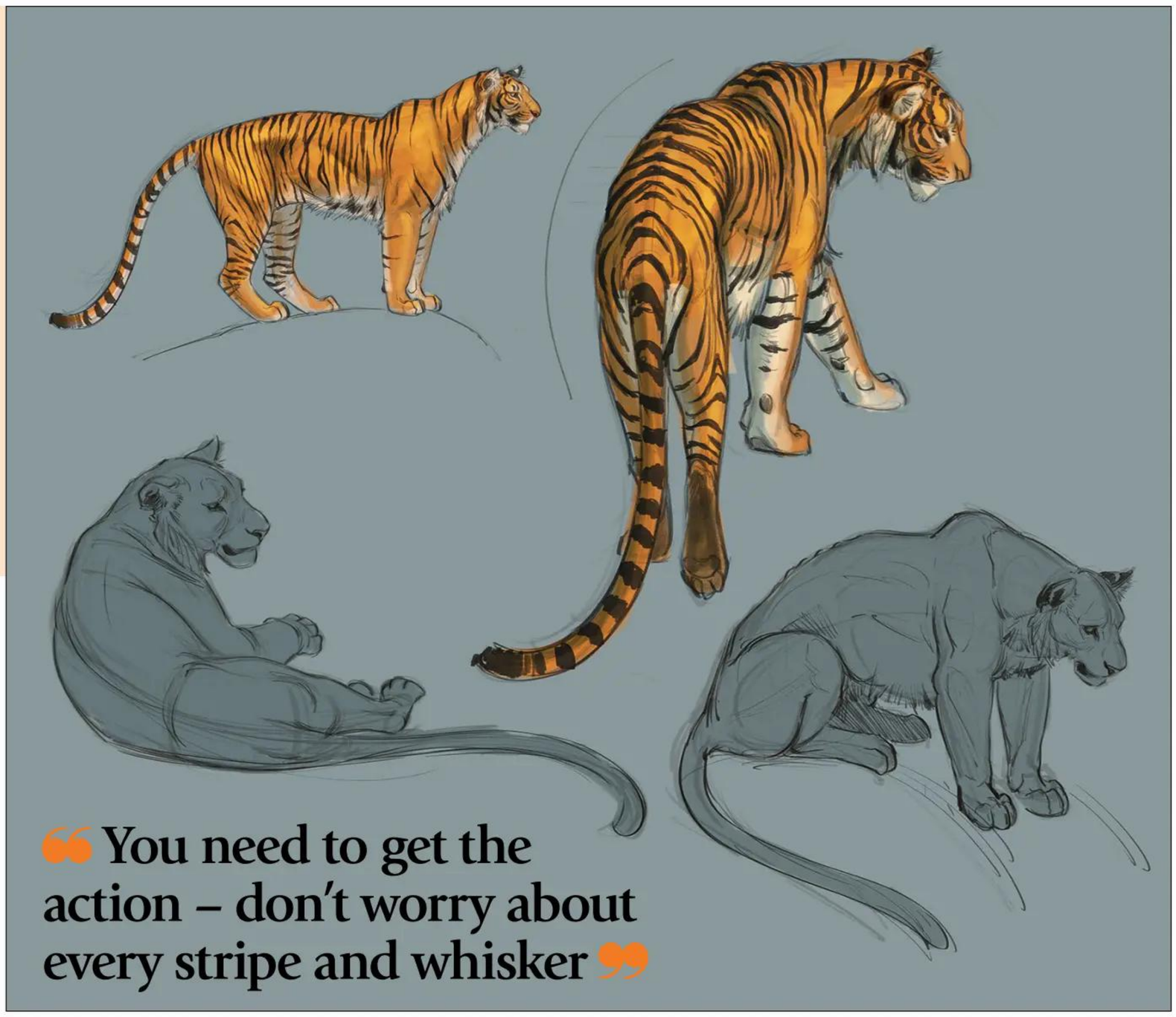


C Use white ink for highlights

Now use a white pen (I like Sakura Gelly Roll pens for this) and add final accents and highlights. Because you started with a mid-tone and not on white you can go lighter and make it pop! Use markers to add more shading.

8 STAY LOOSE AND FIND THE FLOW

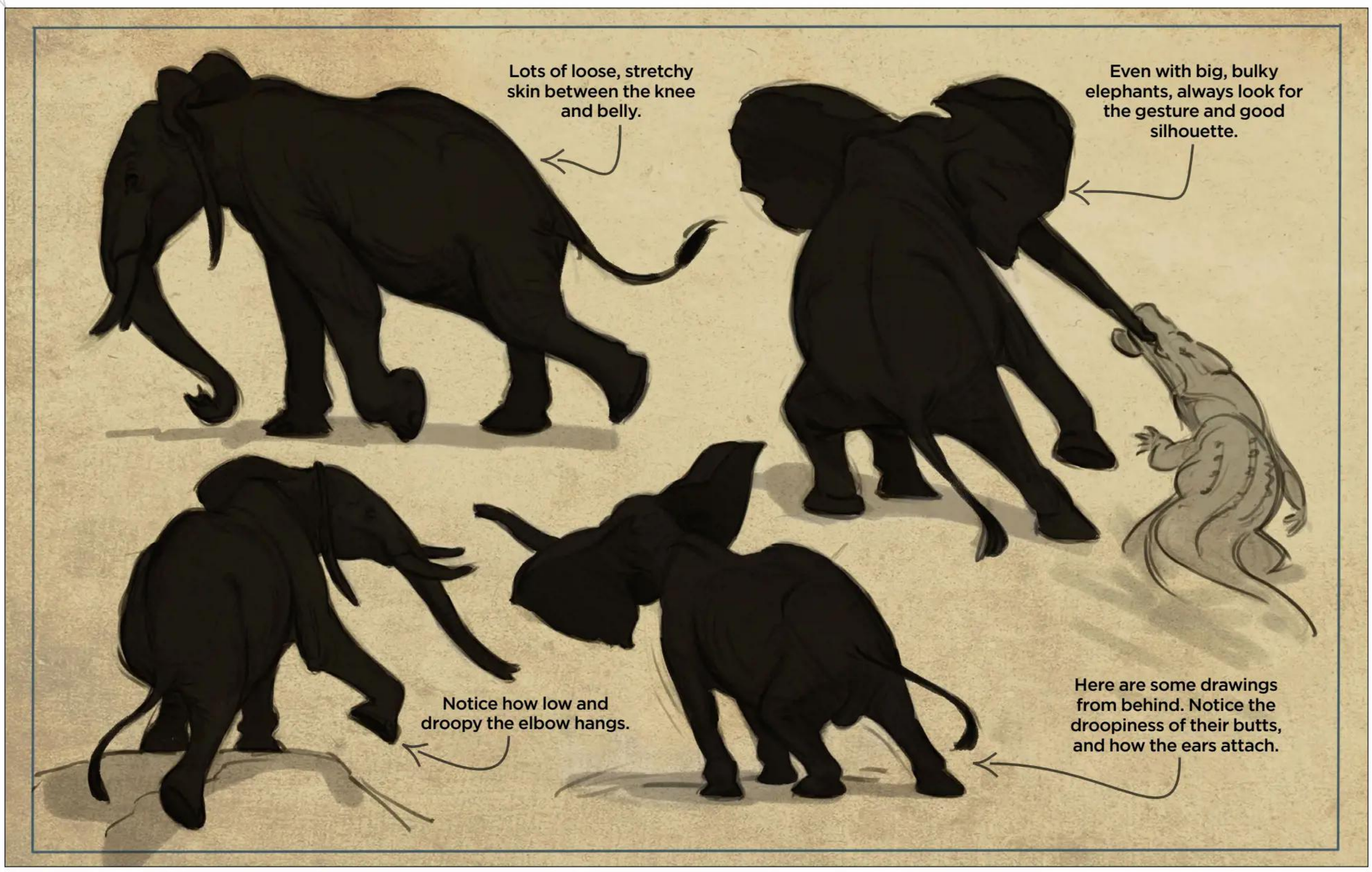
This is similar to step six if you want to get down a gesture of your pose right away. The animal is likely to move on you, so you need to get the essence of the pose fast. If you're drawing a tiger or lion you need to get the action and don't worry about every stripe and whisker. Instead, look for the line of action and rhythm to the pose.



> You need to get the action – don't worry about every stripe and whisker

9 CAPTURE GOOD SILHOUETTES

The basics of good animal drawing are not that different from drawing a good human character. You want their pose to read as clearly and concisely as possible. If your silhouette isn't clear then the drawing won't be understood by the viewer. It's the same whether you're drawing an elephant, a bear or any other animal.







10 USE OVERLAPPING SHAPES TO CREATE DEPTH

Once you're happy capturing the different shapes of your chosen animal, try overlapping them. This will give your image a sense of depth and space in the frame. Properly overlapping each shape will give your drawings a sense of believability and life.



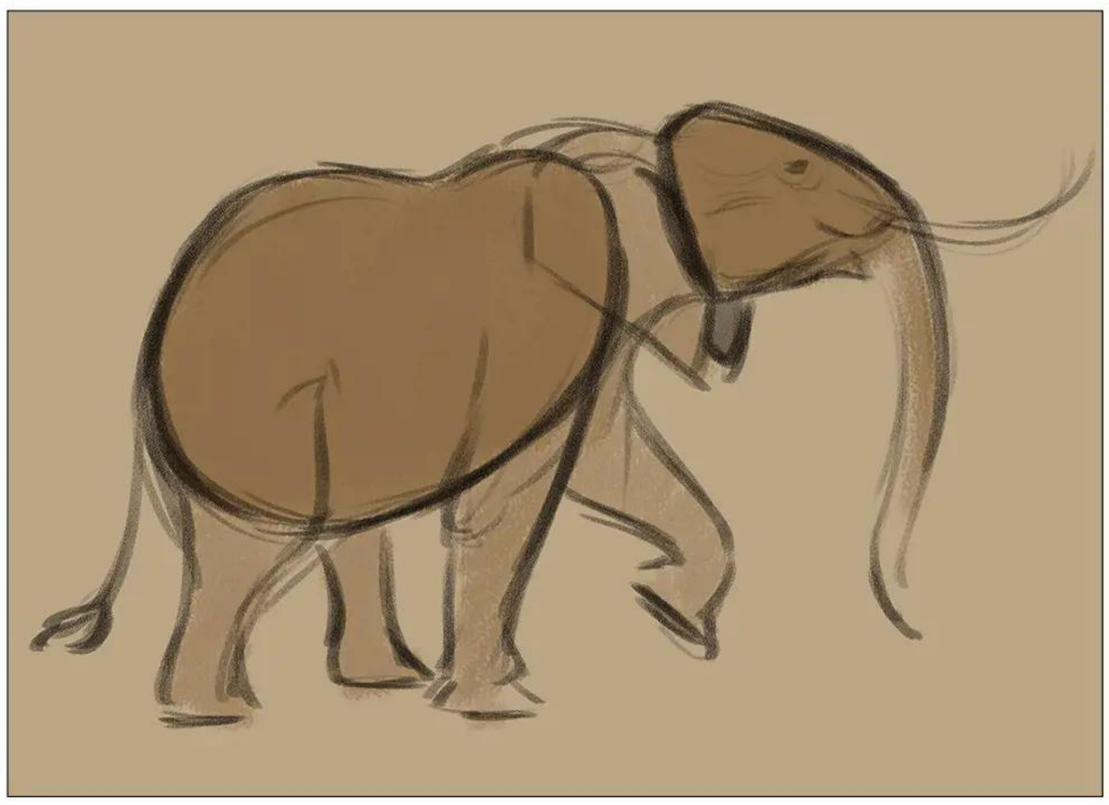
11 CREATE ACTION AND DRAMA

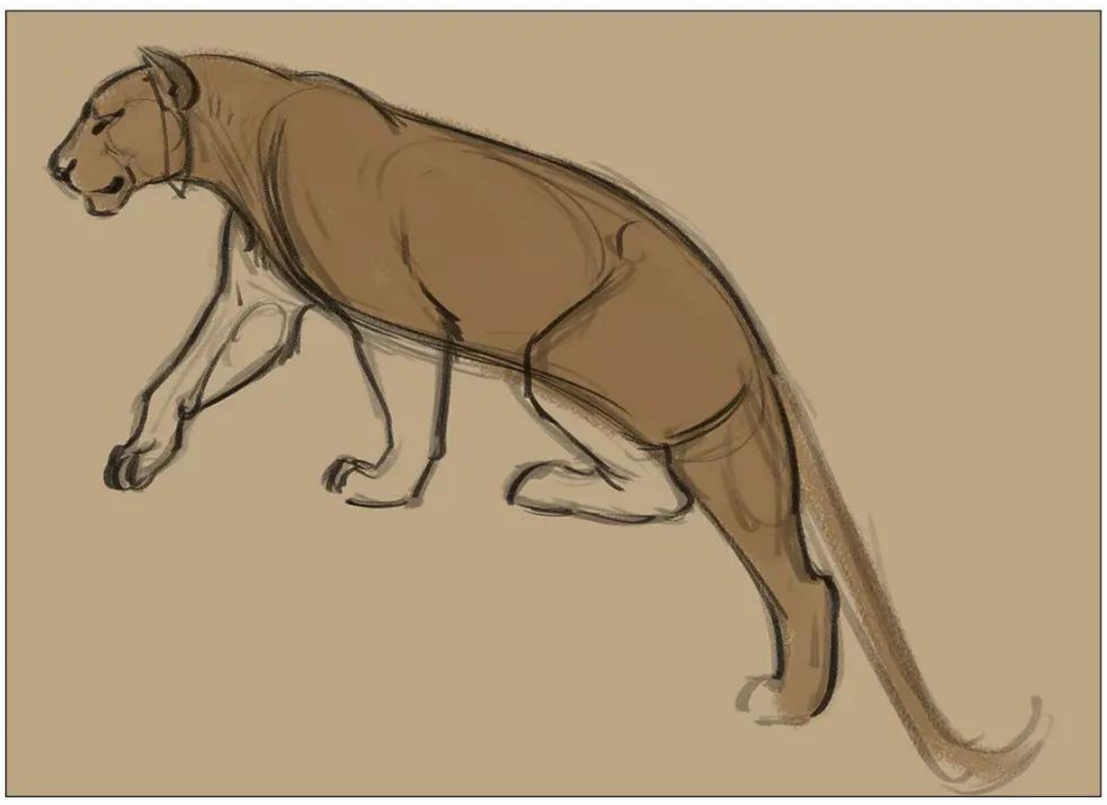
Animals are living creatures. If you've been out in the wild drawing you'll have noticed that they're always on the move. You should be capturing this in your drawings as well. While there's nothing wrong with a good animal portrait (so to speak), I've found that images of animals in action always get a bigger response and have more impact. Work hard to develop a sense of drama and life into your images. ➳



12 BE MINDFUL OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

Proper use of light and shadow in your image can help enhance the feeling of drama that we discussed in step 11. I'll often push or exaggerate the lighting of nature to heighten that feeling. Used properly, a dramatically cast shadow can deeply enhance the mood of your image as well as give it a sense of time and place.





13 LOOK FOR THE BIG SHAPES FIRST

A typical mistake that I see artists make is they get too caught up in the details right away. You don't need to do that. Instead, get down the big shapes first. For example, if you're drawing an elephant then find the big "bean shape" of the body and lay that in, followed by the triangle or wedge shape of the head. Get their placement right and the rest will come together quickly.



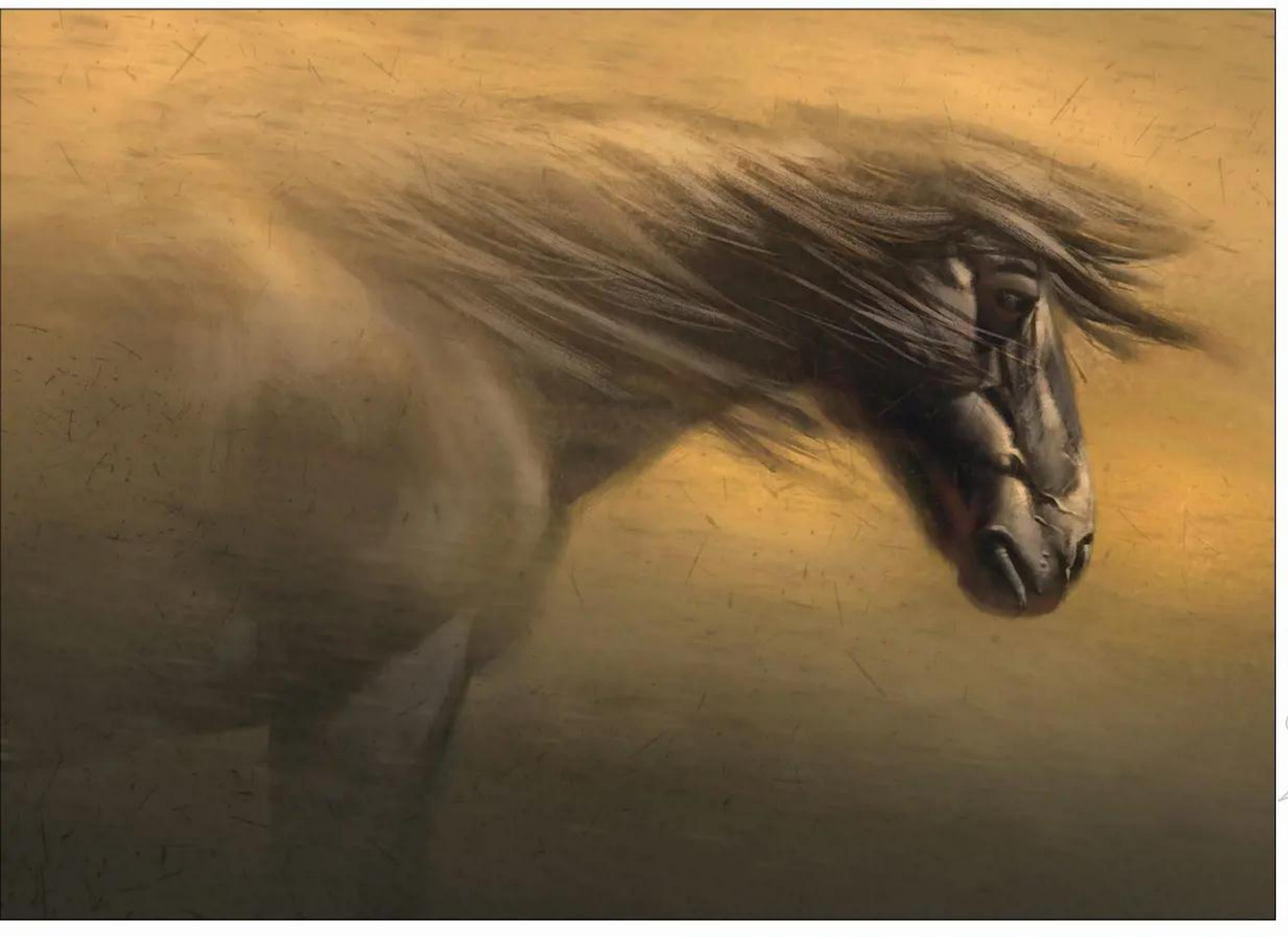
14 LOOK FOR EMOTION AND PERSONALITY

Whether drawing an animal that's realistic or cartoony, try to get as much personality as possible into the image. As humans we look for this naturally and gravitate towards it. Use that to your advantage whenever possible. A little exaggeration or emphasis can go a long way.



> "A dramatically cast shadow can deeply enhance the mood of your image"

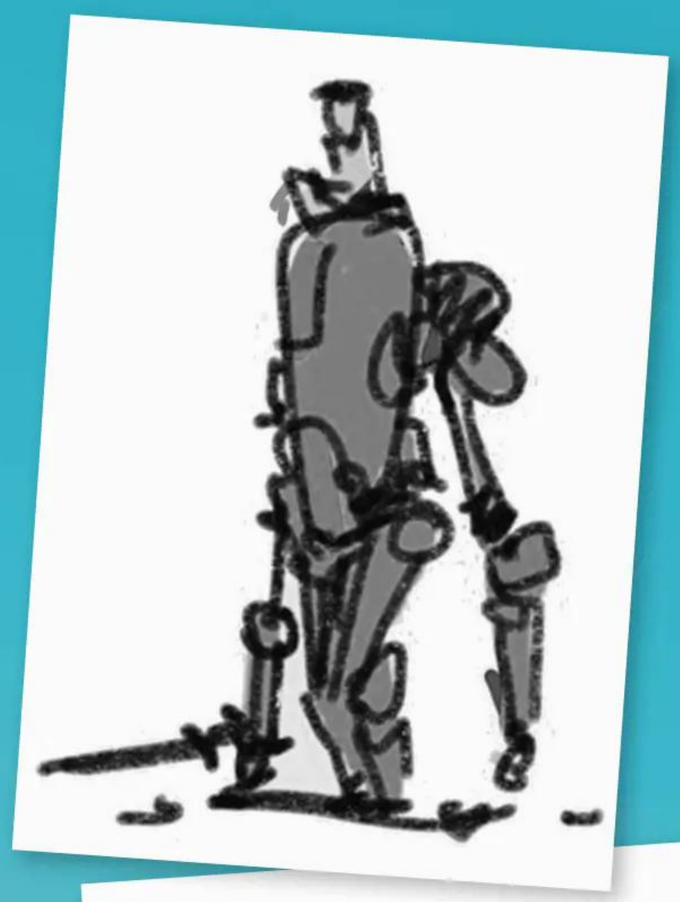




15 BE SELECTIVE WHEN DRAWING YOUR ANIMAL'S HAIR AND FUR

There's no need to be too detailed here. You don't need or want to draw each and every hair on an animal. Instead, make marks in key spots to suggest it. Places where the body bends are a great spot to indicate a hair break.

"I drew a bunch of robots until I saw shapes I liked, and started to work them up," says Gareth Davies.







"Facing art block, I started to do studies of athletes, which led to this personal project on volleyball players," says Kofi Ofosu.

How to generate new ideas

Smart thinking Pro artists talk to **Tom May** about their go-to tricks for staying innovative and creative

To be a successful artist, you have to work hard on developing your skills. But technique alone will only get you so far. You also need to generate creative and original ideas that will grab people's attention and truly engage them. So how do you go about it? We asked four talented artists to share their tips.

For **Kofi Ofosu**, a visual storyteller and character designer based in Ghana, idea generation is a continuous process of gathering inspiration. "I'm constantly bookmarking images, videos and links that spark my interest on the web and social media," he says. "I also get ideas for new concepts when I look back through my old sketches. Last but not least, I love to do studies. Studying enables me to practise my fundamentals, and it has lower stakes so I steadily build my confidence, too."



LOOK TO THE PAST

Newcastle-based concept artist **Gareth Davies**, aka Spudonkey, similarly finds fresh ideas for his personal art by thumbing through his old sketches. "My sketchbooks are full of little doodles, where I've just tried to make interesting shapes that I see potential in," he explains. "For client work, though, I find the process can be simpler. When you're given a set of requirements, there's often an 'obvious' path to take. So it's about using your expertise to fulfil the problem that needs solving, and offering suitable options to the client."



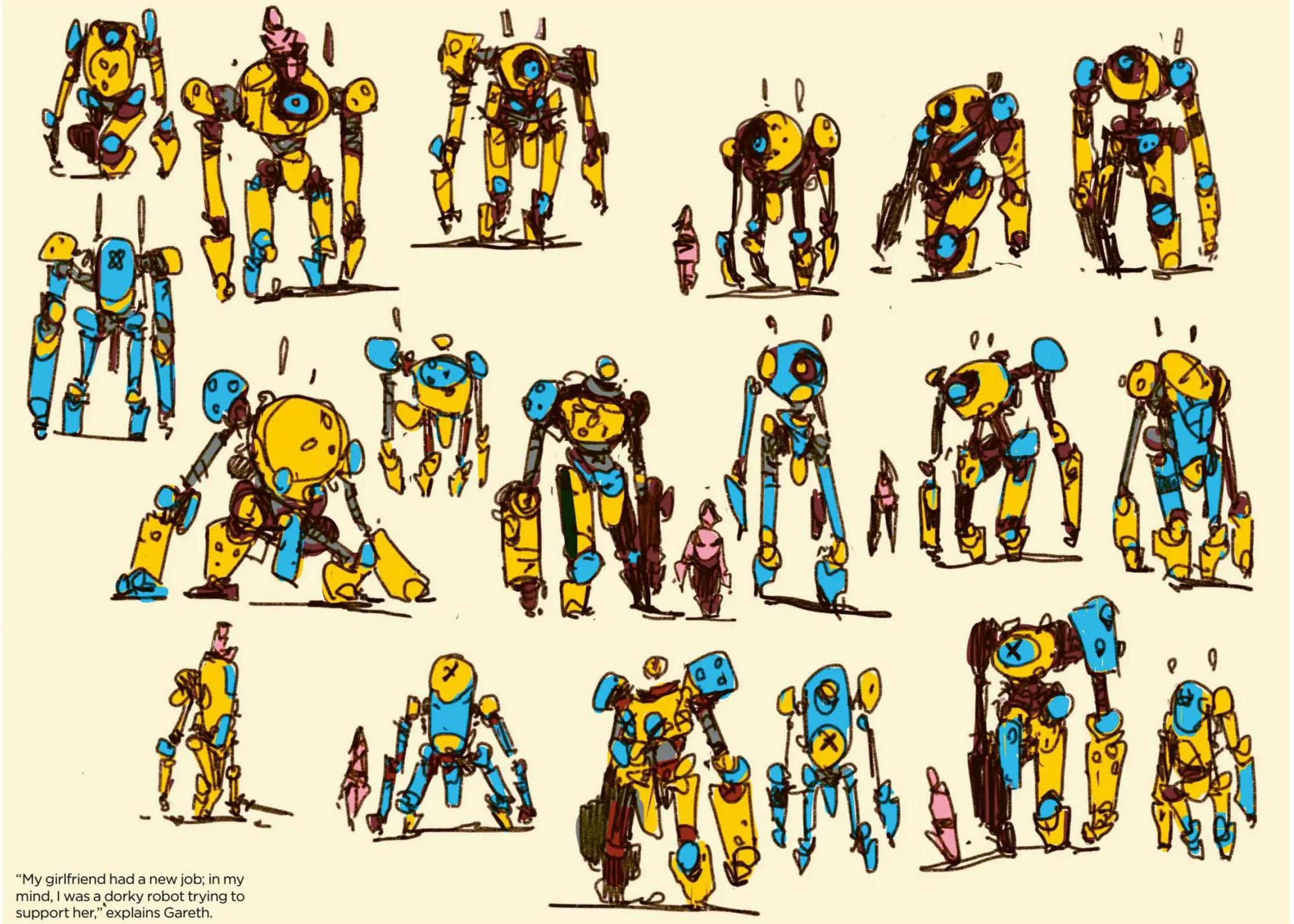
Berlin-based art director and illustrator **Eva Stöcker** also approaches idea generation for commercial and personal work differently. For the former, she'll begin by writing ➳





"I always have too many ideas, so I have to be super-critical," reveals Eva Stöcker.

> **"I'm constantly bookmarking images, videos and links that spark my interest on the web and social media"**



"My girlfriend had a new job; in my mind, I was a dorky robot trying to support her," explains Gareth.

down some initial thoughts and clustering them into a mind-map. "I'll follow this with some internet research: reading up information, and collecting references or visuals," she adds. "I'll check whether other artists have already worked on something similar, and ask myself: 'How can I make my work stand out?' Eventually, I'll translate my idea into a first sketch, and come up with a plan of how to develop it."

WHEN INSPIRATION STRIKES

When Eva's working on personal art, however, inspiration can come from anywhere at all. "My ideas are the result of everything in my messy-potato-head," she says. "They might strike, for example, during a long walk and appreciating nature, making myself a coffee, watching a new television series, taking a shower, cuddling with my cats, or just enjoying a great meal with friends." For this reason, she always carries a pencil and small notebook with her to write ideas down. "And even if I don't have them," she adds, "I'll record the idea in a note app – my phone is always in my reach."

Spanish author, illustrator and art director **Beatrice Blue** agrees that "anything can trigger a good idea". But for her, she adds, "it's my own experiences that help me visualise and attach a mood to them." What intrigues her the most, in other words, is less about

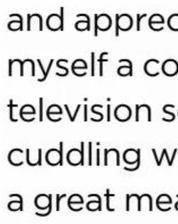


Photo by Florian Aupetit

"Anything can trigger a good idea. But it's my own experiences that help me visualise and attach a mood to them"



"Any idea can work out if you take the time and effort to do so," says Beatrice Blue.



the detail of stories than the mood that they evoke. "So for example, sometimes when I'm taking a walk and thinking about past experiences, I'll try to think about how I'd tackle those visually. Then certain ideas will pop into my head that match that mood, even if they're different ideas from the actual thing that happened. And while drawing or painting them, I'll try to convey that original mood."

But what if no ideas come to mind at all? First of all, don't panic: everyone suffers from creative block at some point. "Being blocked is the worst!" exclaims Eva. "I find that to overcome it, I first have to stop worrying about it, which isn't easy as a classic overthinker. Getting stressed out is like putting obstacles in my way, so I need to force myself to relax." Her go-tos for that include: "Listening to music I love, scrolling through my favourite artist's Instagram feed or my timeline, checking out Pinterest, watching a comfort movie, taking a very long ➳

Kofi tells us that, "I'm constantly gathering ideas for new projects on a daily basis."

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

FIVE WAYS TO STAY CREATIVE

Artists reveal their top tips on keeping your artistic flame alive

1 Make time to step away from your desk

All our artists agree that it's important to step away from your desk on a regular basis. "I often get hit with new ideas when I'm out jogging or showering," says Kofi Ofosu. "I usually run the idea a number of times in my mind until I get back to my sketchbook, so I can quickly scribble down notes for later."

2 It's okay to leave bad ideas by the wayside

If you're failing to move forward with an idea, don't beat yourself up. "Never be afraid to drop a particular piece if it isn't working out, and move on to something else," says Kofi. "You can always have a stab at it later."

3 Return to your old art favourites

Not everything you do has to be new and original. "Recently, I faced a bit of art block and frustration," says Gareth Davies. "I'd been snowed under with client work, and felt like I hadn't done anything for myself. So I decided to go back to my favourites, namely robots/mecha, and it really helped."

4 Pay attention to people

If you want to strike an emotional chord with your art, pay attention to the people around you. "The people I meet in my daily experiences always give me ideas for things to create," says Kofi. "I'll create a character based on someone I've met, or the stories I hear from others will inspire the stories that I tell with my characters."

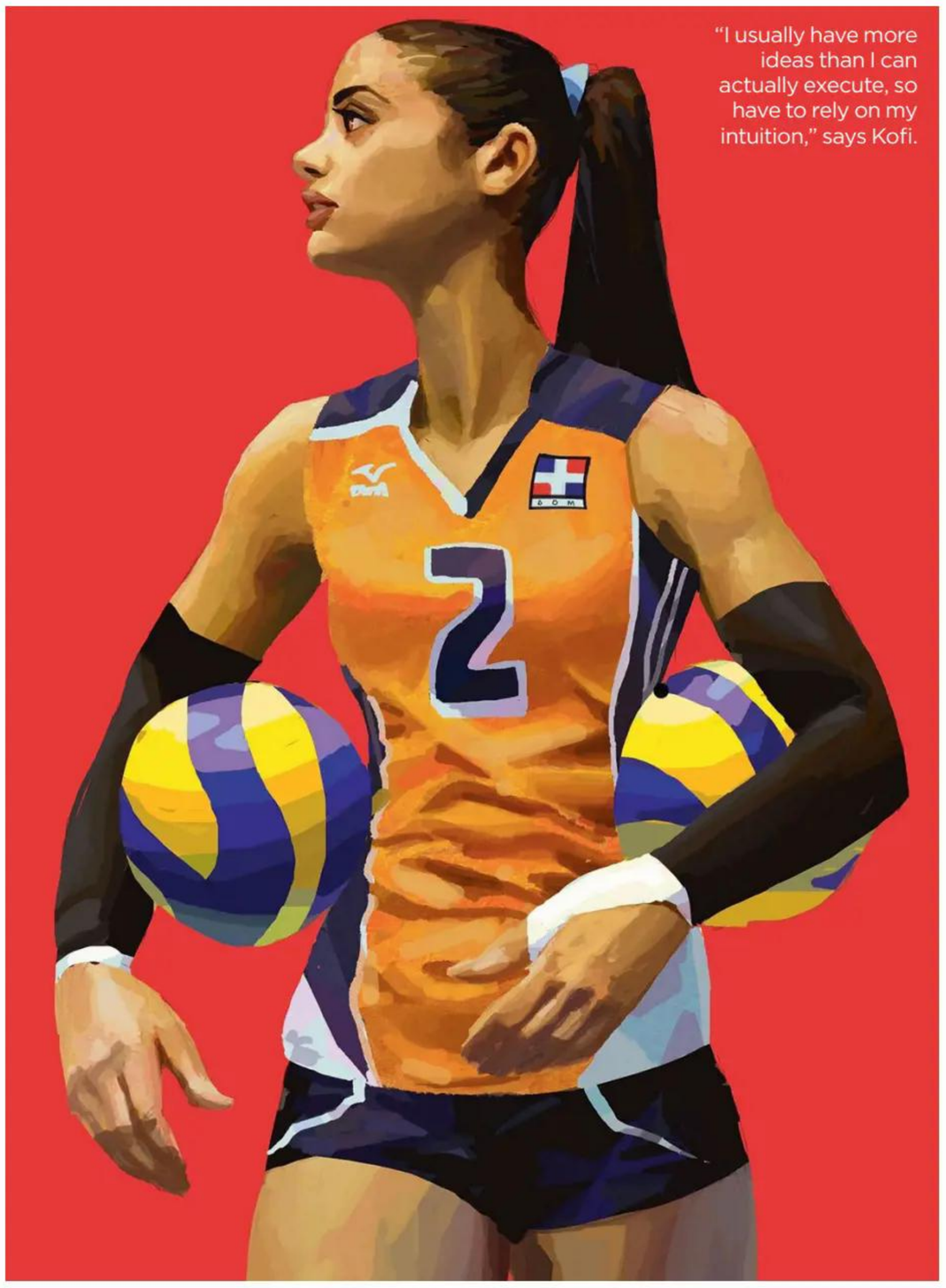
5 Just keep drawing

"If the ideas aren't coming, just draw it out," advises Gareth. "I very rarely get creative block, and feel this is partly because I'm always drawing."

"My go-to solution when I'm suffering creative block is to stop thinking about art," says Beatrice.



"I have to stop myself from overthinking and stick to one idea until the very end," says Eva.



"I usually have more ideas than I can actually execute, so have to rely on my intuition," says Kofi.

➳ walk, or looking at some art-of or how-to books by different artists. But ultimately I find the best way to fight creative block is to just draw without a plan, or following something like a #drawthisinyourstyle challenge."

WHAT'S CAUSING THE BLOCKAGE?

It's useful, too, to consider whether there's an underlying cause to your creative block. "Most of the blocks I've experienced have stemmed from personal issues," says Beatrice. "Either I've been burnt out, pushing myself too much, or forcing myself to higher expectations than I can manage at that time. Taking a moment to look at what's around me, and doing some other things I enjoy, helps big-time."

Kofi, meanwhile, says: "It's been a while since I went through a creative block, and I feel the reason for that is because I stopped comparing my work to the work of others."

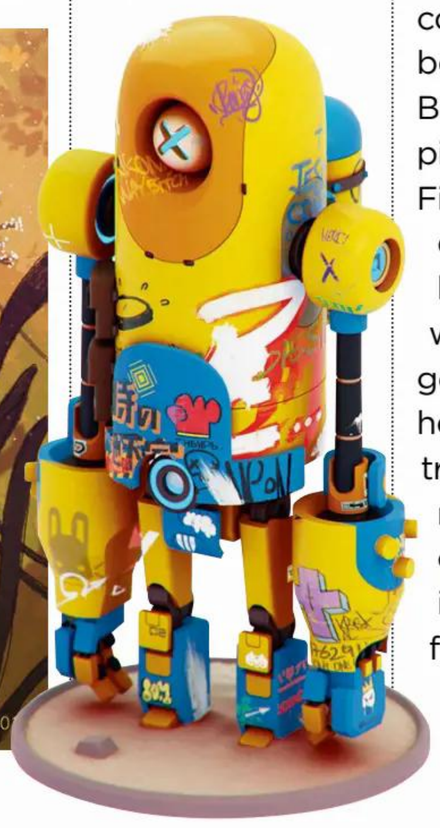
Always remember that you don't have to do everything alone: working with others can multiple your ideas and creative energy exponentially. "One thing I love to do is to work on both a collaborative project alongside a more personal one," says Beatrice. "It creates a good balance in general."

Also, keep an open mind and have confidence in your ideas, without becoming too obsessed with them. Beatrice spent a year developing her picture book, Once Upon A Dragon's Fire, and went through around 15 drafts. "It was hard at some points to believe in an idea and move forward with it, not knowing if it was really going to work," she recalls. "But it helped to step away at times, and to try to build my ideas up with an open mind. I also found it useful to stay open to feedback, which stopped my ideas becoming too narrow. If you focus too much on a specific idea and small, unnecessary details, you can lose sight of the overall vision."

"I find the best way to fight creative block is to just draw without a plan"

"If I suddenly get an idea that I might forget about, I write it down on whatever I have at hand," says Beatrice.

"I was learning Blender at the time, so I worked on converting my robot into a 3D model," says Gareth.





"I try to save some time every now and then to sketch some of my ideas out," says Beatrice.

"This was inspired by lockdown, when I surrounded myself with plants and colourful stuff to cheer me up," says Eva.

Artist insight

DRAW A FIGURE IN 20 MINUTES

Give **Chris Legaspi** just 20 minutes and he'll give you all the basic techniques you need to depict realistic figure art in pencil and charcoal

Artist **PROFILE**

Chris Legaspi
LOCATION: US

Chris is a dedicated, life-long artist with over 20 years' experience as a professional artist, writer and educator.
www.drawwithchris.com



Shading and rendering is my favourite part of a 10- or 20-minute pose. Here, I'll introduce some of the basic principles, tools and techniques that I use to shade or render in a short amount of time.

Before I begin, I first analyse and limit the values I use. For life drawing, I use a three-value palette of light, dark and mid-tone. This helps me to control values as I shade and render forms.

To define forms, I use a combination of soft or hard edges. Soft edges do the majority of the work and create the most natural look. Hard edges are great for accents or sculpting forms.

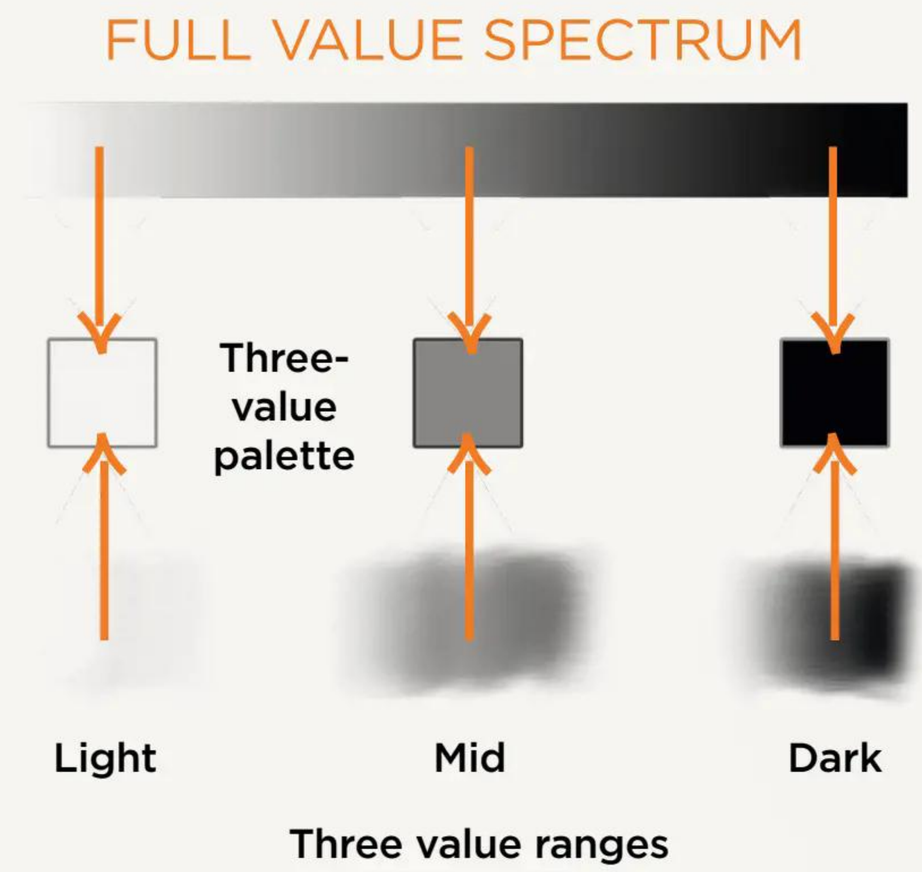
There are many shading and blending techniques that you can use in your figure-drawing art, but they can be simplified into either line or tonal drawing. Line is great for details and texture. Tones are good for coverage and creating soft edges. More techniques will be explored in upcoming issues.

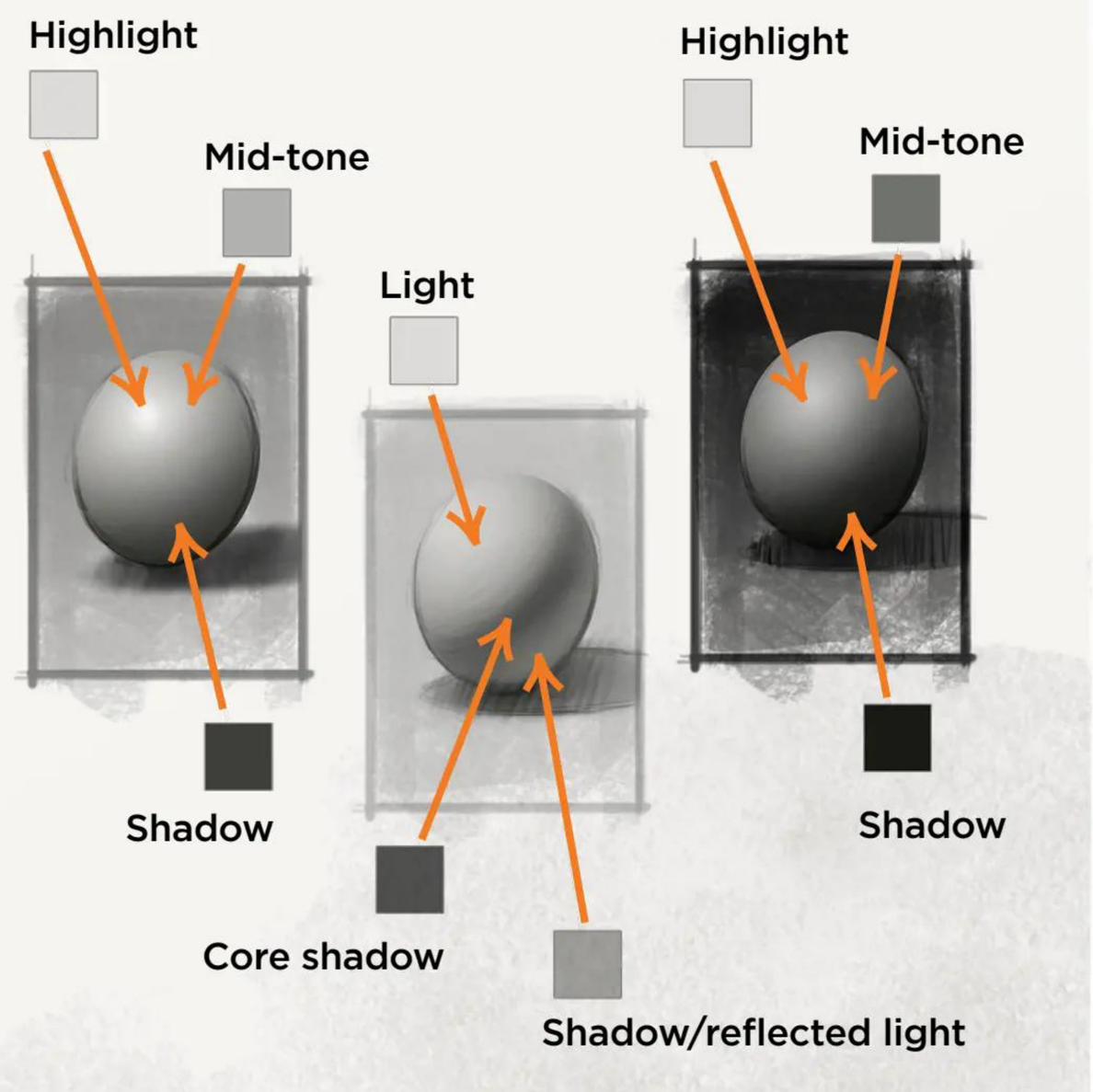
For blending, my favourite tools are kneaded erasers, blending stumps, tissue paper and my fingers. Stumps are good for detail, while tissue is great for making really soft and lost edges. Finger blending is useful, but do be aware that the skin's natural oils can make subsequent edits difficult. A kneaded eraser is a versatile tool that I use for correcting shapes, erasing out highlights and also for drawing and sculpting form.

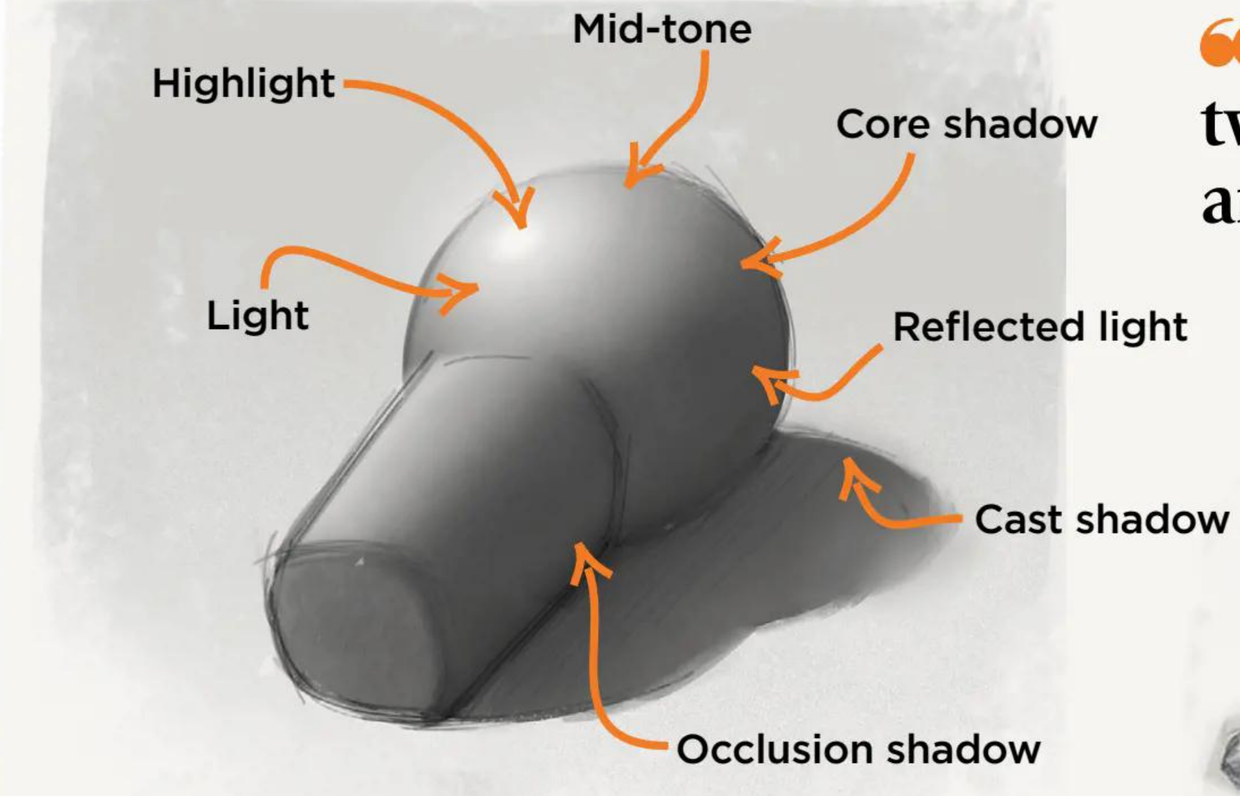
My drawing and shading process varies depending on the pose, but I generally start by shading and refining a focal point area, like the head or torso. Once that's working, I move on to other areas of the figure, as time permits.

1 HOW TO USE THREE VALUES

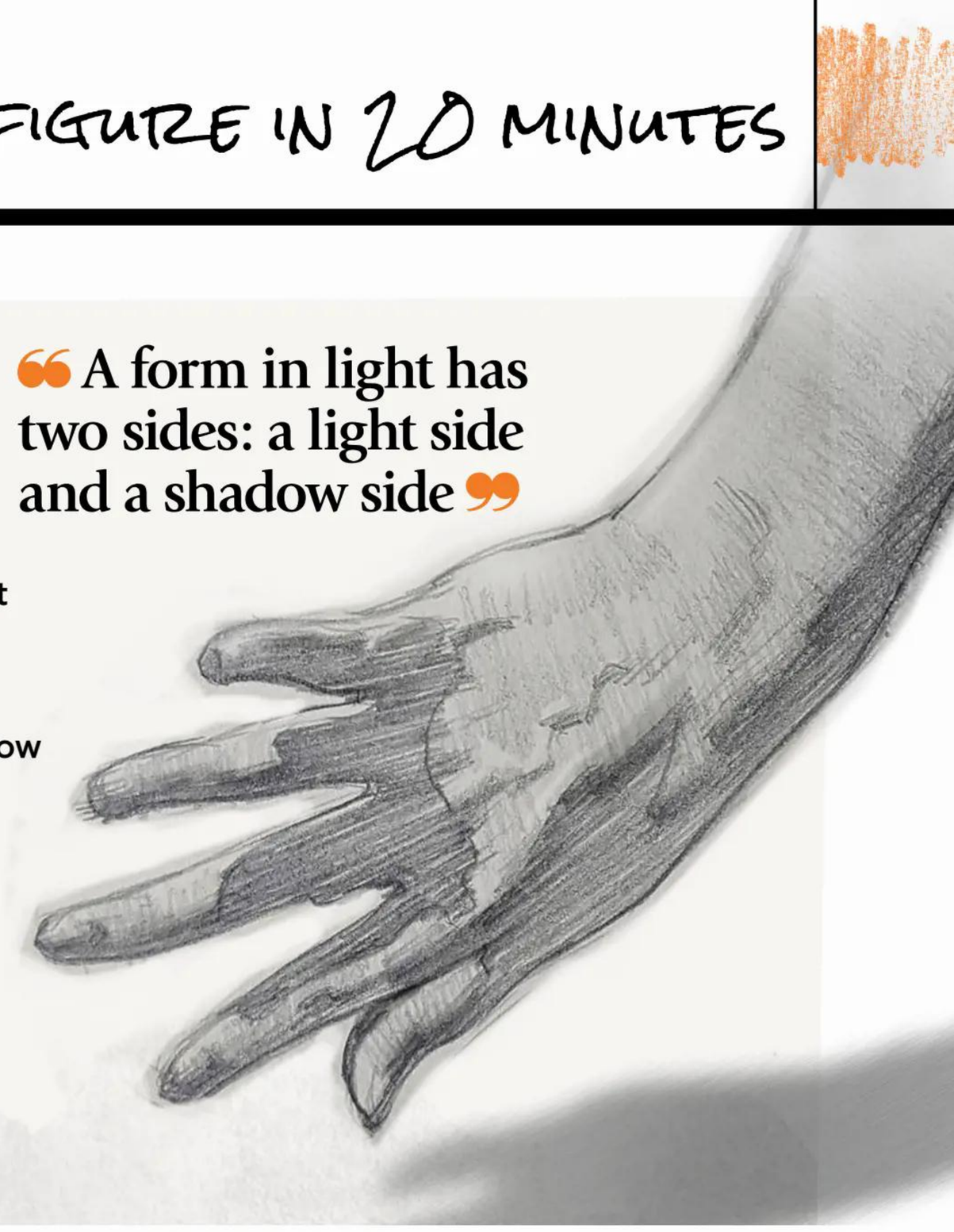
Controlling value is the first step to shading. For life drawing, I limit myself to three values: dark, mid-tone (also known as half-tone) and light. This helps to control values and with careful arrangement of lights, darks and mid-tones, I can render form and even create depth.





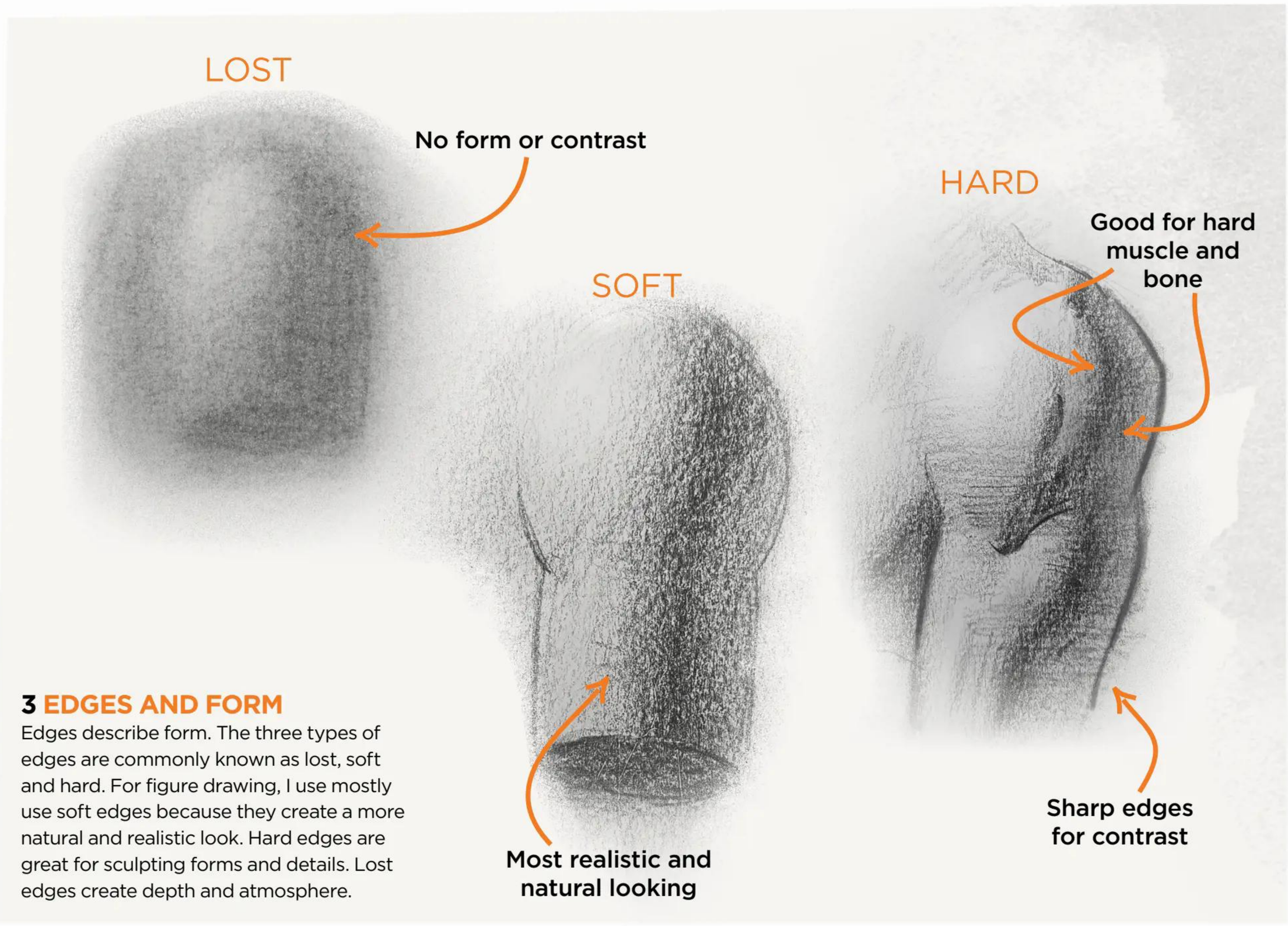


“A form in light has two sides: a light side and a shadow side”



2 ANATOMY OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

A form in light has two distinct sides: a light side and a shadow side. The shadow side consists of the core shadow, reflected light, occlusion shadow and cast shadow. The light side of the form is made up of mid-tones, light itself and the highlight.

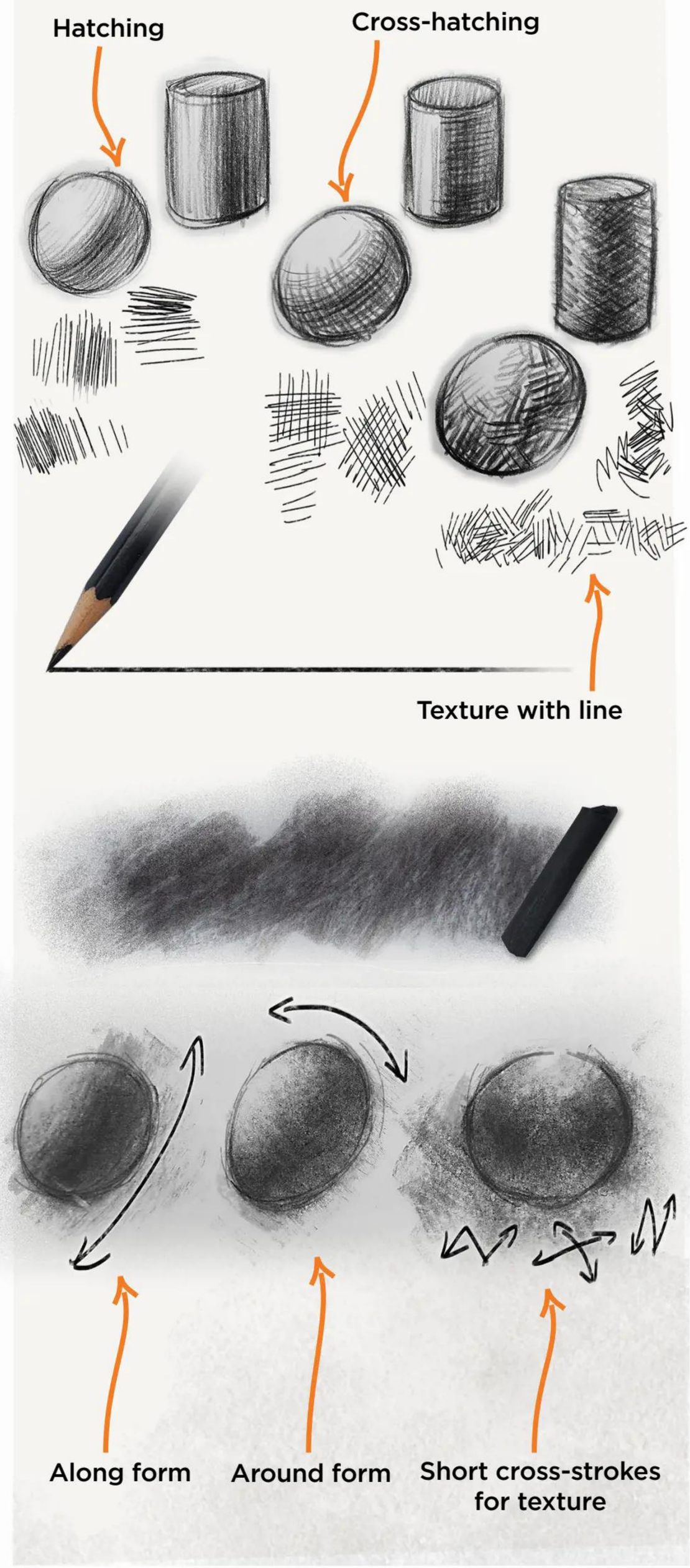


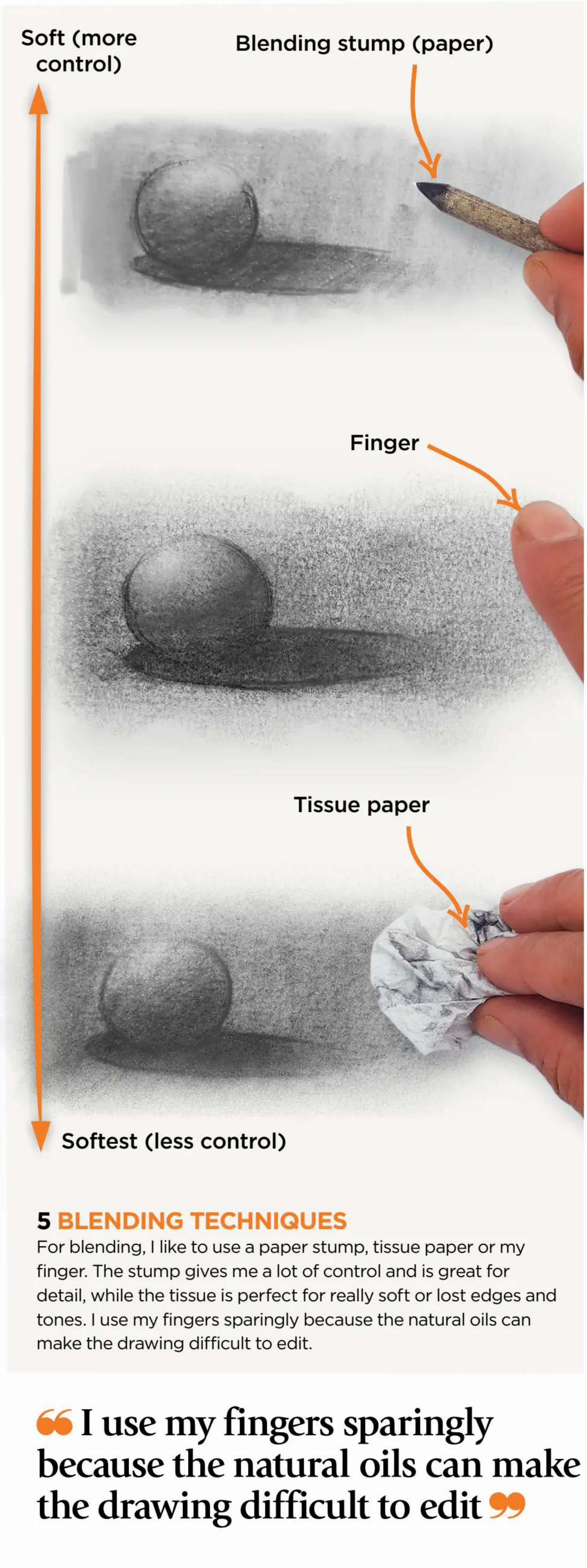
3 EDGES AND FORM

Edges describe form. The three types of edges are commonly known as lost, soft and hard. For figure drawing, I use mostly use soft edges because they create a more natural and realistic look. Hard edges are great for sculpting forms and details. Lost edges create depth and atmosphere.

4 SHADING TECHNIQUES

The two main ways I shade are with either line or tone. For line, I use the tip of my pencil to create hatching and cross-hatching marks. For tone, I use the side of the pencil or a stick to create a variety of broad strokes, tones and texture.





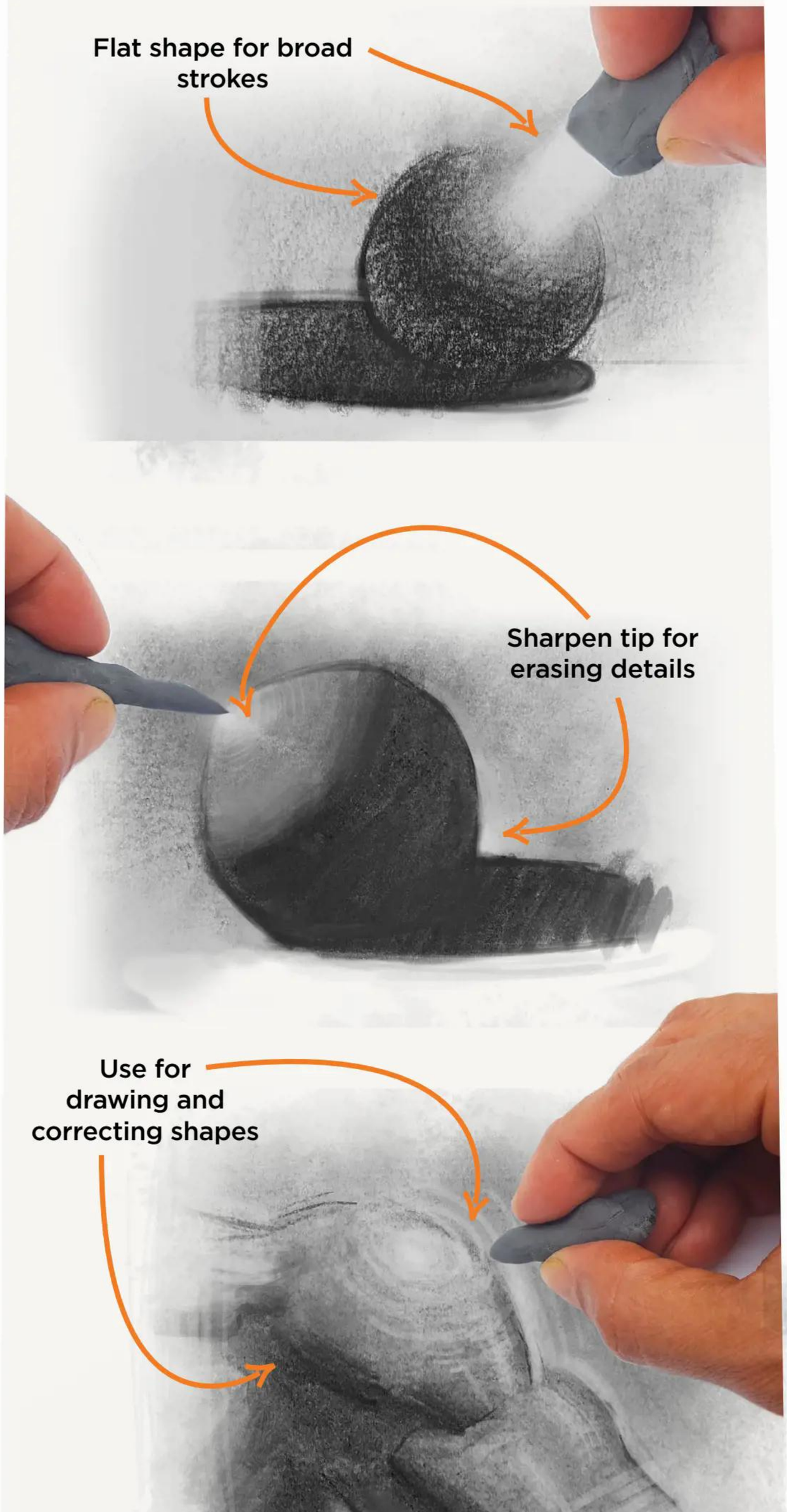
5 BLENDING TECHNIQUES

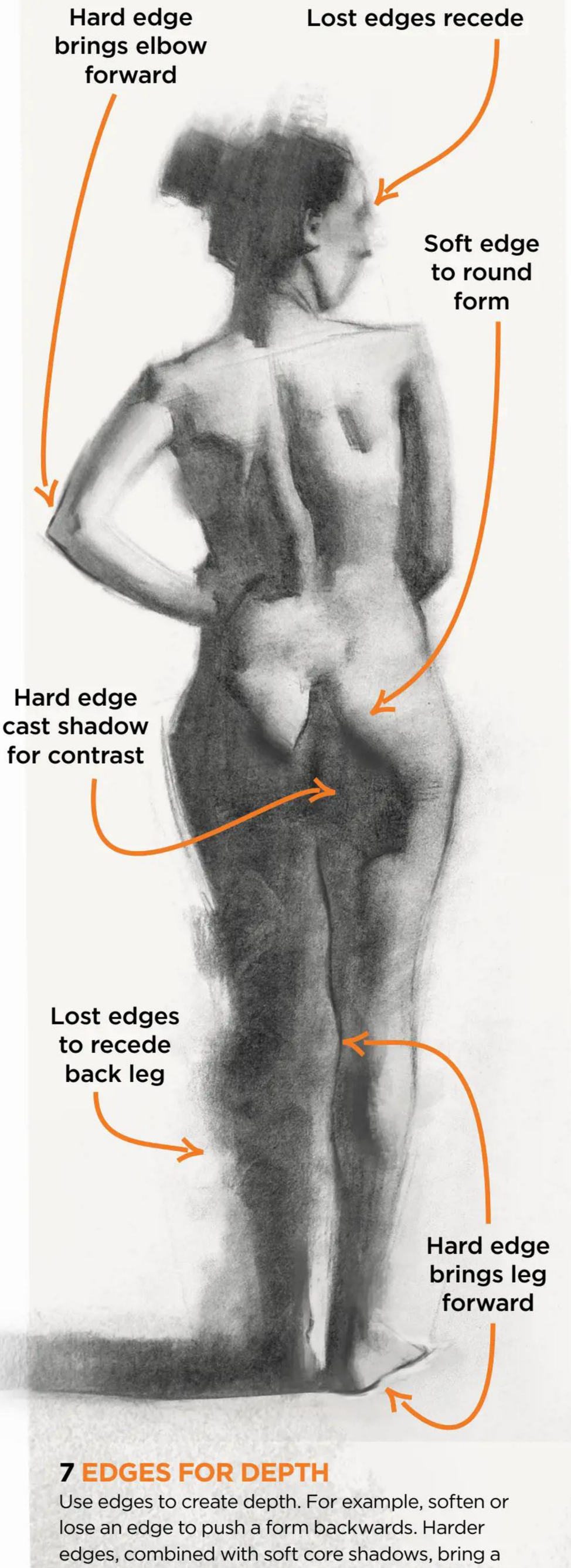
For blending, I like to use a paper stump, tissue paper or my finger. The stump gives me a lot of control and is great for detail, while the tissue is perfect for really soft or lost edges and tones. I use my fingers sparingly because the natural oils can make the drawing difficult to edit.

> **“I use my fingers sparingly because the natural oils can make the drawing difficult to edit”**

6 ERASER TECHNIQUES

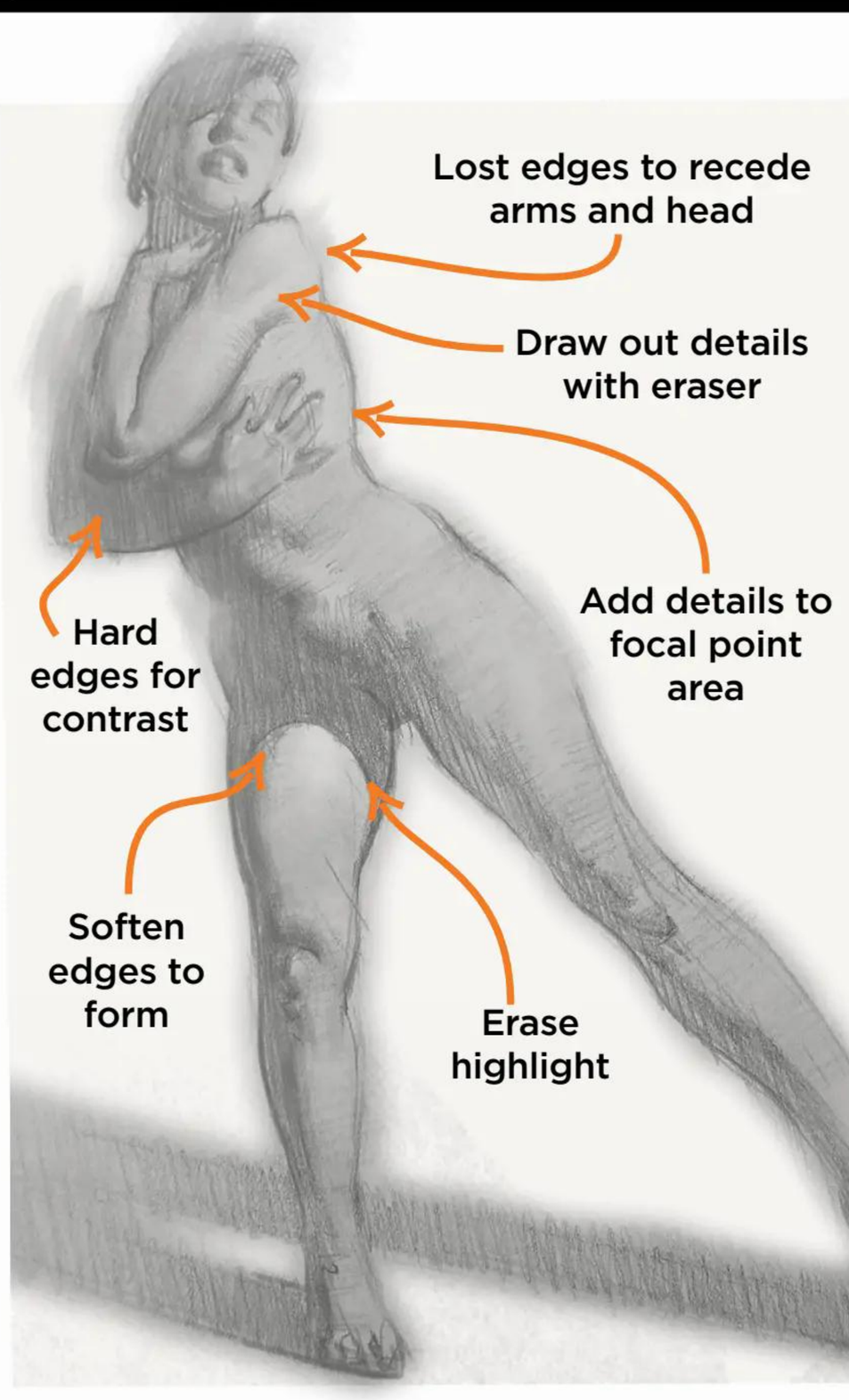
A kneaded eraser is an all-purpose tool I use for erasing, blending and even drawing. I simply sculpt it into different shapes to create a variety of marks. A flat shape is great for broad strokes. A small point or tip is great for erasing out highlights, details, and to draw and correct shapes.





7 EDGES FOR DEPTH

Use edges to create depth. For example, soften or lose an edge to push a form backwards. Harder edges, combined with soft core shadows, bring a form forward. Sharp edges also bring a form forward, by creating contrast.



3-MINUTE STAGE



5-MINUTE STAGE



8 AT THE 10 MINUTE STAGE

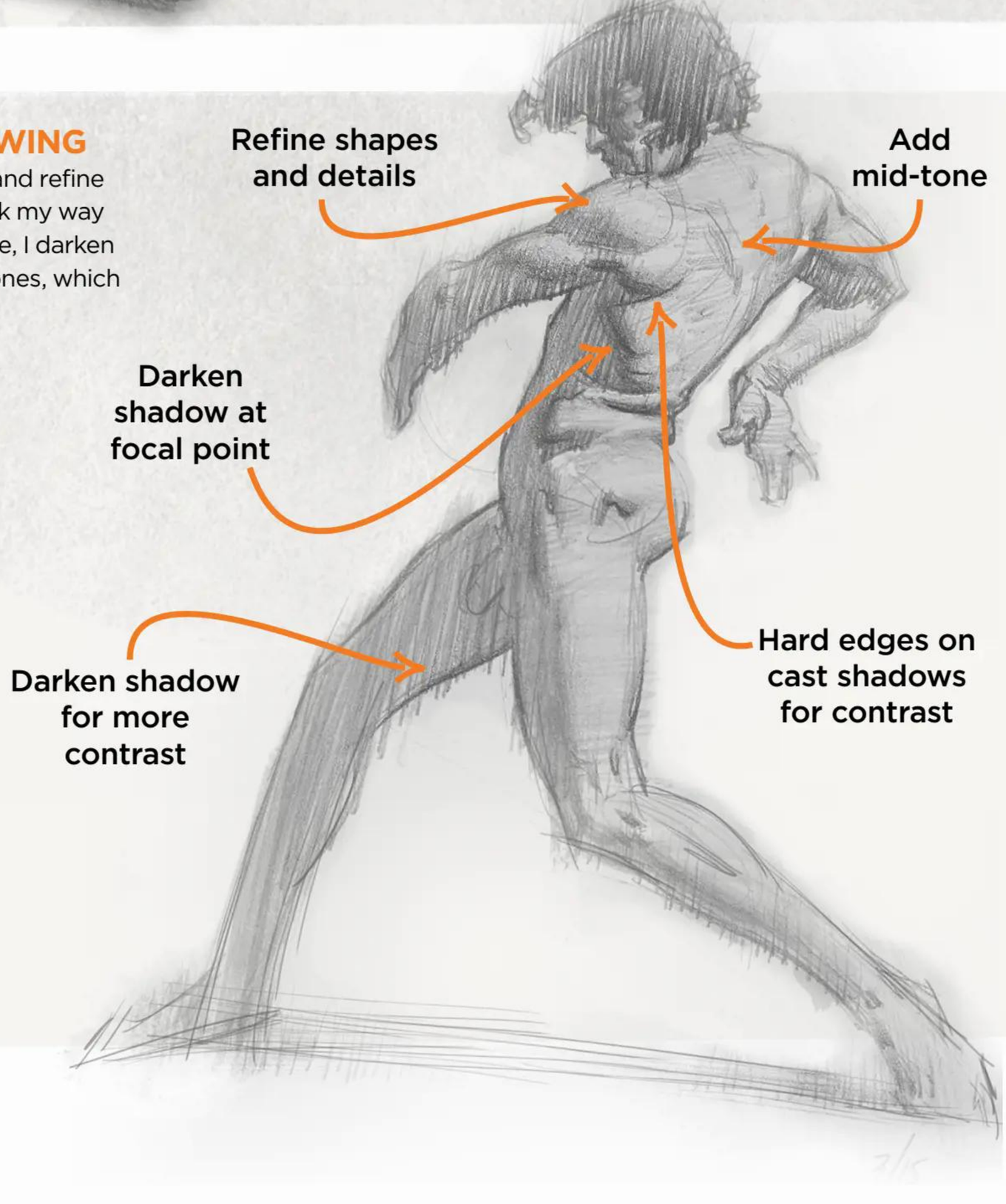
Once I have my figure drawn and have blocked in the shadow pattern, I continue to refine the light and shadow. I begin with a focal point area and refine the edges and values, which involves making soft edges softer, darkening the core shadow for contrast and depth, and sharpening hard edges to create contrast.

9 STARTING THE 20-MINUTE DRAWING

Twenty minutes is enough time to draw a figure and refine shading. I usually start with a focal point and work my way towards the other parts of the figure. For example, I darken and soften the core shadow and then add mid-tones, which help me to sculpt the form.

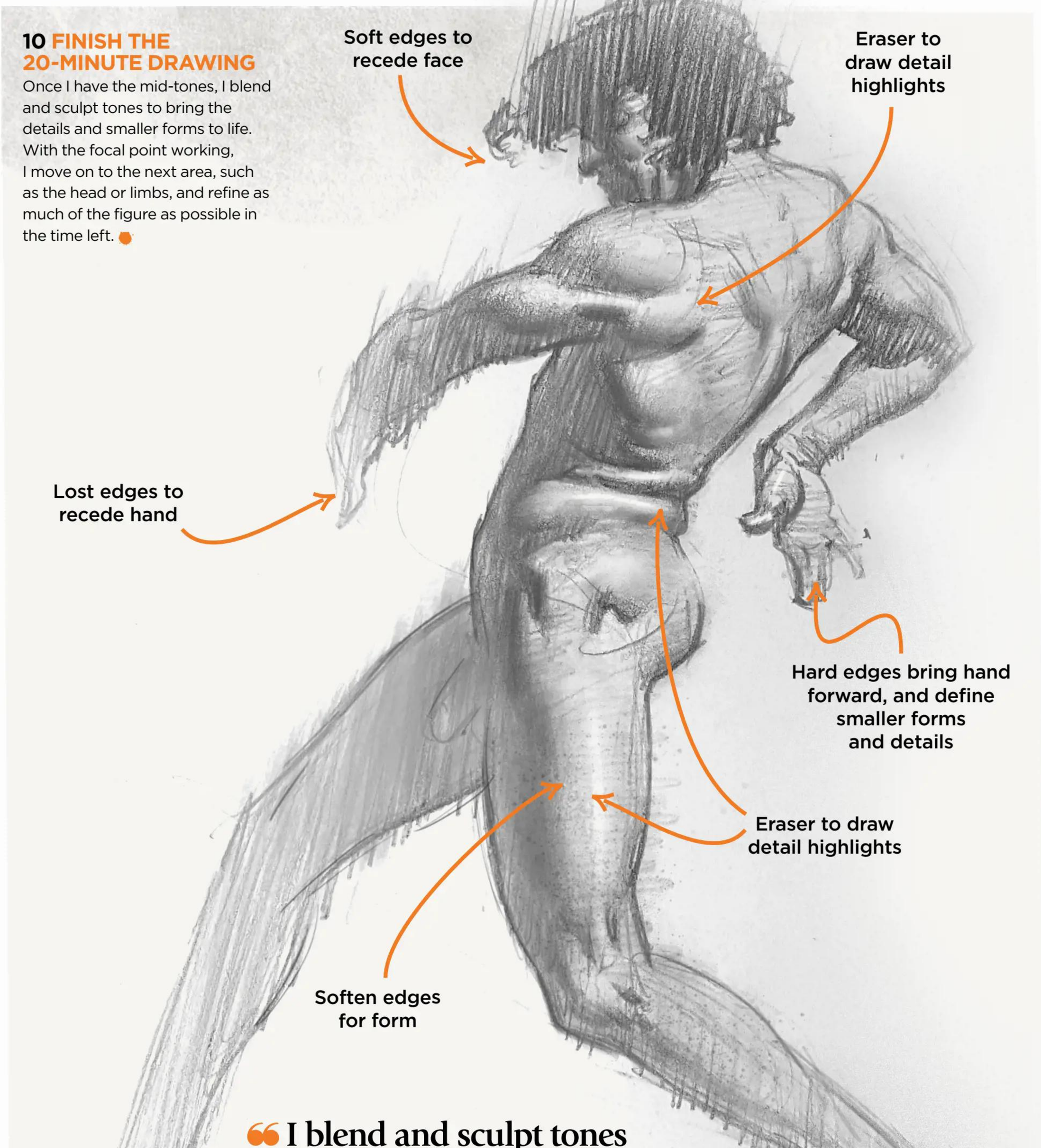
5-MINUTE STAGE





10 FINISH THE 20-MINUTE DRAWING

Once I have the mid-tones, I blend and sculpt tones to bring the details and smaller forms to life. With the focal point working, I move on to the next area, such as the head or limbs, and refine as much of the figure as possible in the time left.



“I blend and sculpt tones to bring the details and smaller forms to life”







ImagineFX VIDEO WORKSHOP

Gouache

PAINTING CLOUDS WITH GOUACHE

Discover how to paint clouds in gouache with JUSTIN DONALDSON, who uses a wet-in-wet technique to capture a variety of edge qualities

Working as a fine artist. I use gouache, poster colour, oil and open-acrylics in my everyday adventure with painting. The only thing that I love nearly as much as painting is sitting down and pondering how paintings work on a fundamental level, and then how I can communicate these ideas with my many students. I've created a number of online courses around painting with gouache, and painting landscapes, and I have something up my sleeve that I have created just for you.

In this workshop I'll show you some of the major ideas that I like to use when I'm creating landscape paintings in gouache, with a focus on cumulonimbus clouds. Clouds are a difficult subject to paint at the best of times. They're full of a massive variety of edge qualities, from lost edges to hard edges. For those of us who use gouache, being able to paint consistently with soft edges provides a particular challenge since it's the nature of gouache to dry very quickly. Don't fear though – there are a few tricks that I'm going to show you in order to be able to combat this particular difficulty. While what I'm about to show you might seem simple at first, I want you to sit down, have a cup of tea, and ponder how you can apply these ideas to an even wider array of subject matter.

These cloud paintings are always something that I find great joy in creating and now you can take something useful from this in order to create your own joyful artworks. We're going to dive into the relationship between gouache, paper, water and time, and come out the other end being able to paint more quickly, effectively and be able to maintain that soft-edge quality for extended periods of time! Gouache has the capacity to create immensely detailed and expressive work, and I implore you to spend the time to learn how to use the medium to its fullest extent!

I'm bringing these ideas to you from my little studio in Clemson, South Carolina, US. Go ahead and check out where I work. I find that a clean space, lots of plants and a touch of just the right music is required to really get into the zone. So grab a coffee and put on a tune, and let's get into painting!

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Arches Hot Press watercolour paper

BRUSHES

- Synthetic medium Round, synthetic medium Flats and medium Oval mop

PAINT

- Winsor and Newton Gouache: Cerulean blue, Titanium white, Jet black, Marine blue and Cadmium red

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 7 now!



Justin is an Australian artist who works and lives in the US. He creates lush landscapes in gouache, acrylic and oil and loves to teach art. See more at www.justindonaldsonart.com.



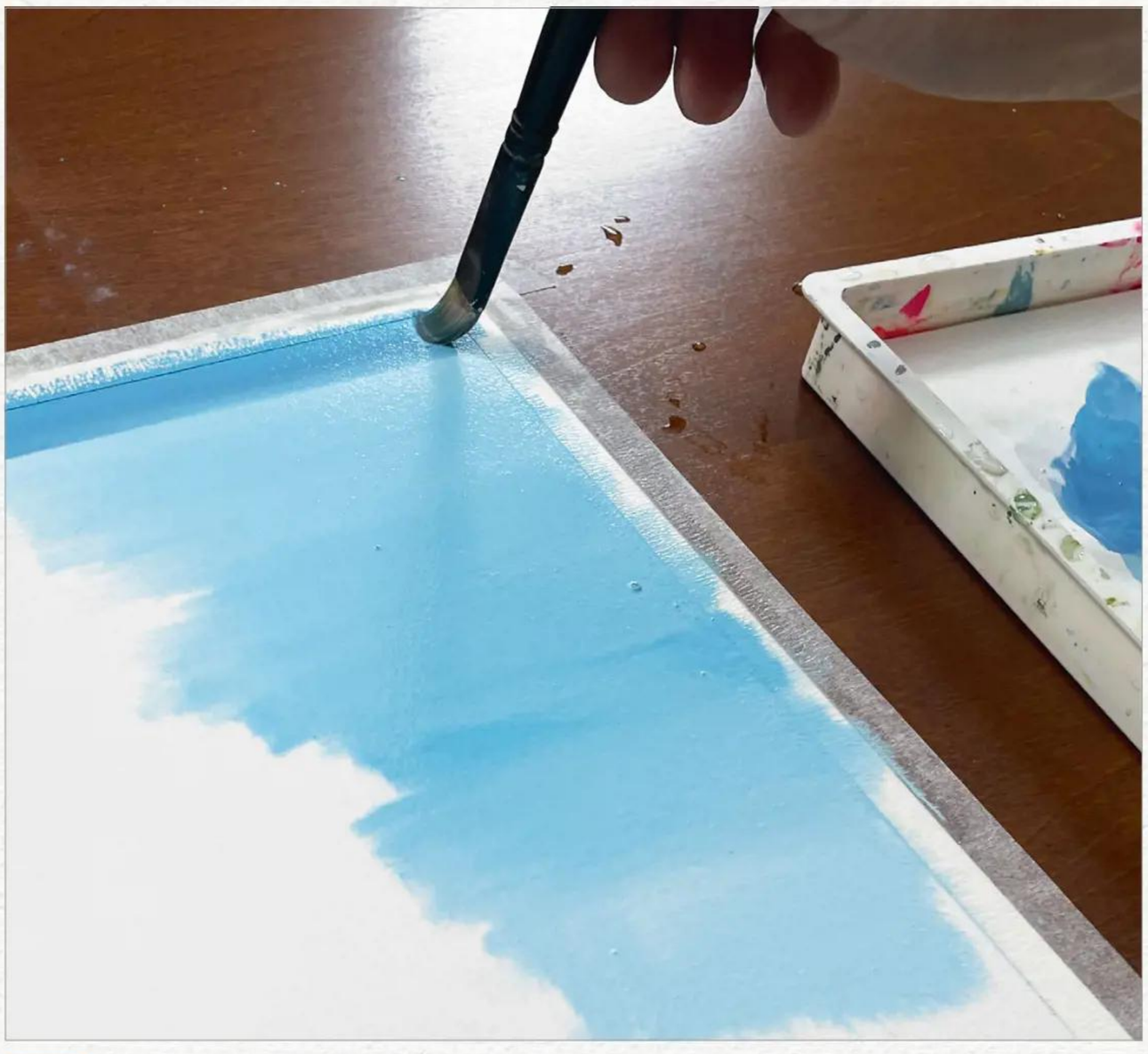
1 Soak the paper on both sides

Use your biggest brush to apply water on both sides of the paper. Warping occurs when water is unevenly distributed on the paper. By getting both sides of the paper wet we'll avoid most instances of warping as well as provide a longer time in which the paint remains wet, activated and therefore workable.



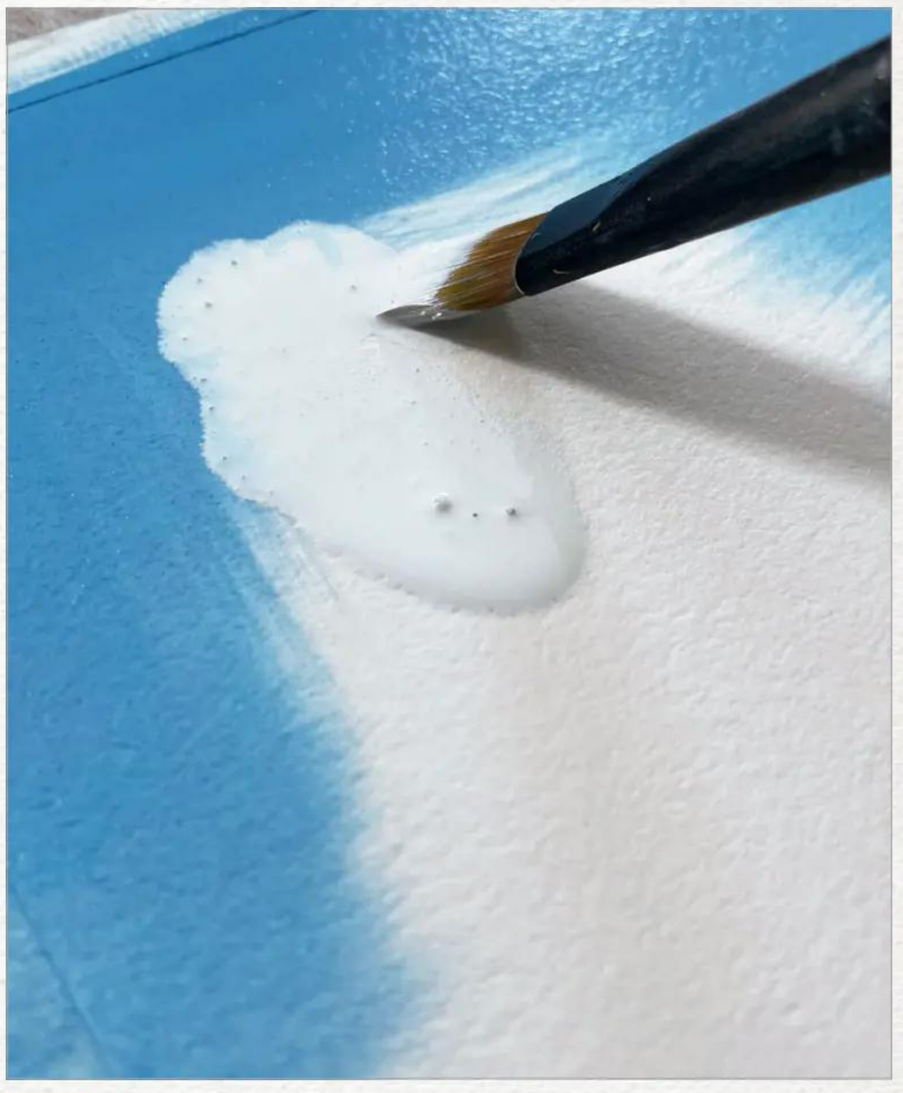
2 Sky gradient setup

Let's take Cerulean blue and Titanium white to create a layer of paint where the sky will be. Make sure that you're painting with some thick paint. It needs to be thick enough to interact with the white of the cloud when we paint it in.



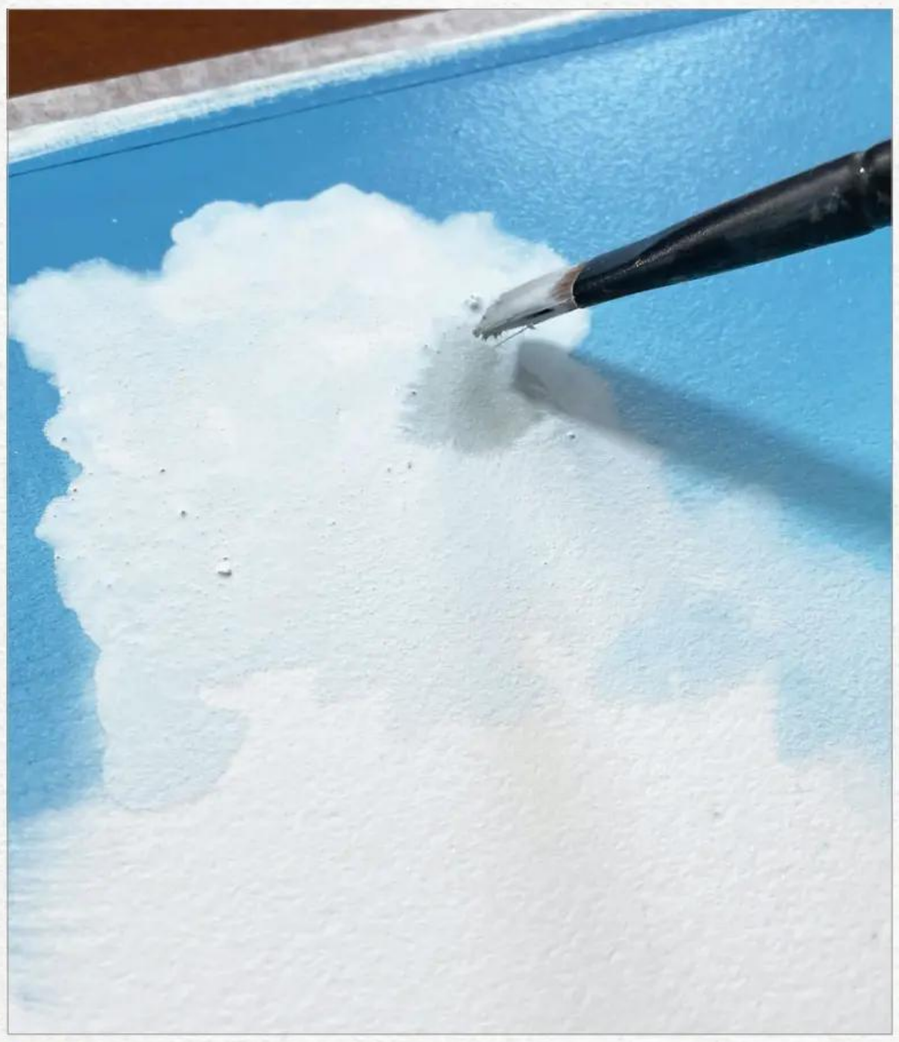
3 Painting the gradient

From the top down, horizontally apply a layer of pure Cerulean blue to the area that already contains the base sky layer. As you bring your brush down the paper avoid the temptation to reload your brush. The natural mix of paint that occurs as you bring the brush down the page will result in a gradient.



4 Start the cloud

While the paint that you've applied is still wet, charge a layer of white paint into the blue sky to create your clouds. Charging requires a lot of paint and water at the same time. This technique will enable all the paint we've used so far to mix very naturally, and will result in a very soft edge for the cloud.



5 Creating the shadows

Create a darker mix for the shadows of the cloud. I like to focus on the larger gradients within the shape at this point, rather than getting sucked into the smaller shapes within the clouds. This is a great time to think about the bounce light that might be occurring. Bounce light helps the clouds to feel light and fluffy.



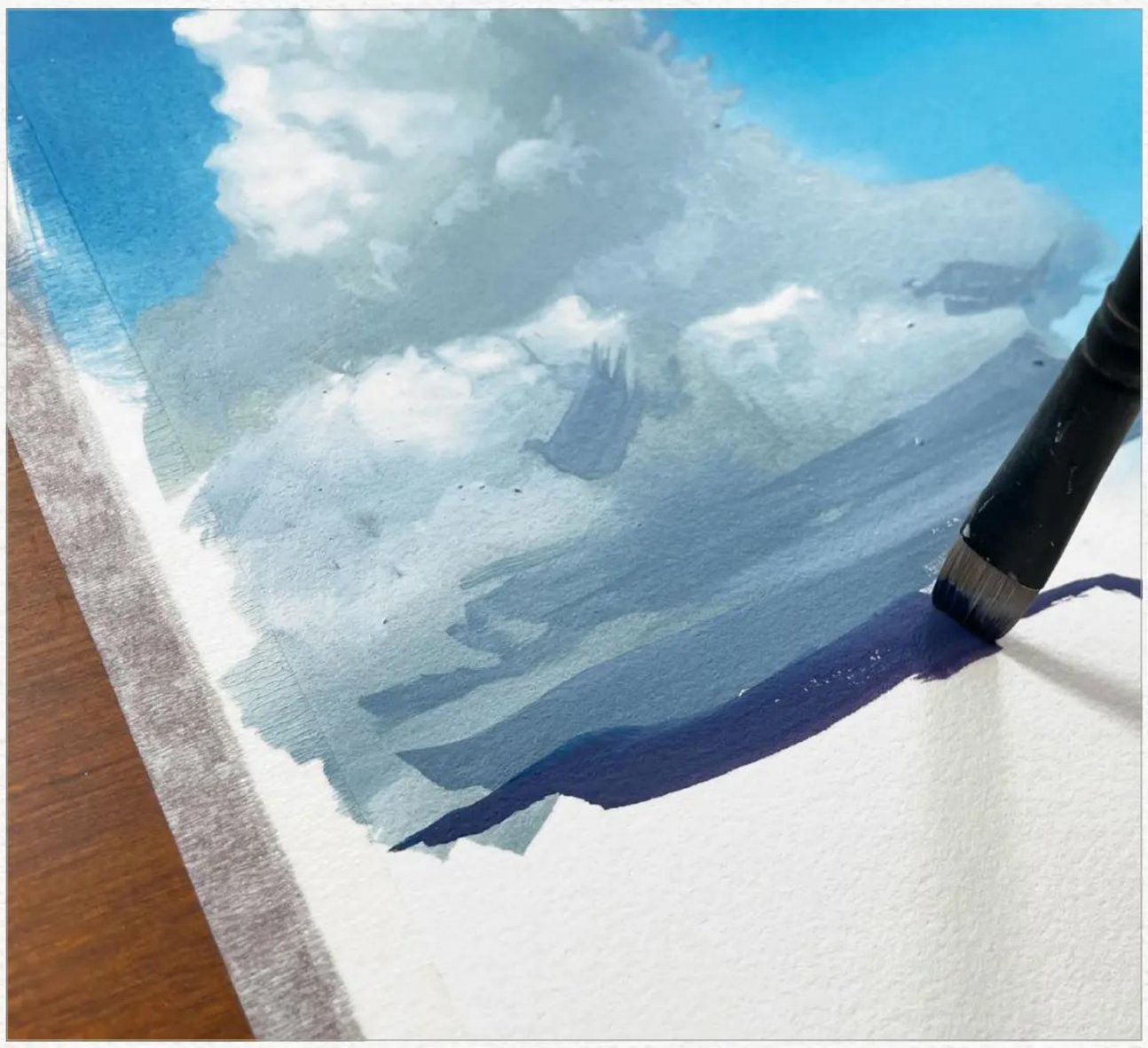
6 Smaller shapes within the cloud

Next, focus on smaller shapes within the painting. At this point some of the paint has evaporated from the painting and we'll be able to apply paint with an edge quality that's not yet hard, but not as soft as it was in the initial layout.



7 Soft brushing

A lot of clouds shapes have a variety of edge qualities within a single shape. We can take a dry soft brush with no paint on it and drag it over an edge to soften the edge up. This is often useful when trying to describe form shadows or lost edges.



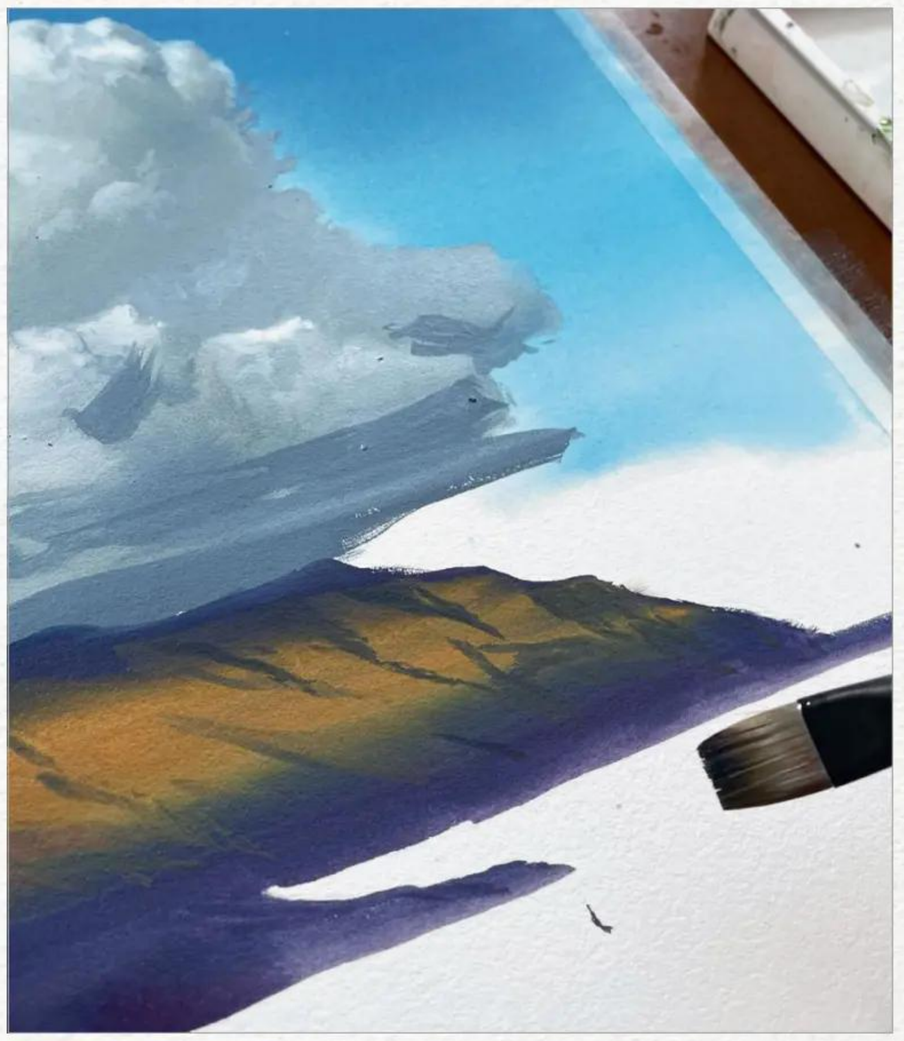
8 Create context for the composition

Now we get to provide context for the cloud. When we paint we're never dealing with an object in isolation, and the way our cloud interacts with what's around it says a great deal about the cloud itself. This cloud is casting a shadow onto a mountain, and this gives it a definite location in space. ➳



9 Soft shadows on the mountainside

Create a gradient on the mountain. The soft quality of this gradient tells us that the cloud which is casting the shadow is far away and has soft edges. Once again, we get to communicate about the cloud in the act of painting our mountain! Feel free to use a soft dry brush to extend the length of the gradient.



10 Detailing the mountain

In the mountain gradient we have communicated the larger quality of the mountains form. Now we get to go in and detail the smaller forms. Use the shadow colour and drag it from the shadow into the light. Because the paint is still wet we'll end up with edges that are moderately soft.



11 Paint the lake at the base of the mountain

Now we are going to create the body of water. The major movement of the water is to paint a gradient lighter nearer to the mountain and darker as it gets closer to the bottom of the page.



12 Additional elements

We want to create a little more dynamism to the painting, so let's add in a triangle mountain edge coming into view. So far we've been careful with our values, not allowing the shadows to become too dark. Now we can use the room that has afforded us to silhouette the new mountain edge in an even darker colour.



13 Re-wetting the paint

If you step away from your painting and need to come back to it with soft edges it's often helpful to reactivate the paint on the page, to achieve a wet-in-wet effect again. To do this I recommend quick, even, large and light sweeps of your brush loaded with only a small amount of water.



14 Additional details

You can then come in with a brush loaded with normal water and work back into the painting. Let's use this technique to bring in new details to our clouds, water and mountains. It can be difficult, but with practice you can apply extra wet-in-wet details and no one will be the wiser that you ever left your painting to dry.



15 Choose how to protect your artwork

Now we can step back and enjoy our piece! Gouache is traditionally framed behind glass so that it's not accidentally reactivated by moisture, but you can frame it open, use a wax sealant, or apply a matte sealant to keep it safe.

ImagineFX No.1 for digital artists

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

Gary Villarreal

This artist enjoys putting extraordinary characters and creatures into scenarios that are overflowing with storytelling craft

Artist PROFILE

Gary Villarreal

LOCATION: US



Gary graduated from Texas A&M University from the Department of Visualization. He's since worked in various industries ranging from videos games, AR and VR experiences, and films. Gary is known for his traditional render style and has grown a love for storytelling, which further immerses viewers into his character's worlds.

www.artstation.com/villarrte

ANACONDA BABY

"I wanted this piece to be different. Two contrasting characters that no one thinks of in one setting. I later imagined an innocent baby next to a python. Maybe this was part of a ritual that all babies needed to go through?"

GOAT FATHER

"Planting good seeds in the minds of the next generation and guiding them should be our main purpose in life. That's what inspired this drawing."

AZTEC PUPPET MASTER

"Aztec culture is intriguing, and I've always enjoyed drawing indigenous characters. So, why not make a puppet master in this theme?"



MUSHROOM COLLECTOR

"This character picks mushrooms for a living, a skill that was passed down to him over the generations. Those that once guided him, now accompany him as he works."

"Aztec culture is intriguing, and I've always enjoyed drawing indigenous characters"

ImagineFX
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

ANCIENT HUMPBACK

"Arklo the whale was blind and guided by those around him... I love marine life and felt I needed to explore this area more. I began with sketches of a humpback whale, but wanted to add a mystical element to it."

FORTUNE AND MISERY

"We can work ourselves endless hours, acquiring riches, climbing the highest peaks and still never see the sky. I drew this royal character being suffocated by her internal struggles. Paying the price for all those she once betrayed."

RANDOM SKETCHES

"Most sketches that live in my sketchbook are thoughts that randomly came to mind. Others originate from daydreams. These are ideas awaiting their turn to become something bigger."

GARY VILLARREAL

TWIN HEADS

"We all have a dark side that we need to embrace. This inspired this drawing of the twins. One is loving and forgiving, while the other is filled with hate and condemns all souls that pass for judgment."

SNAIL ARTIST

"We all have our insecurities as artists. We develop our shells, a thin build-up of calcium, to feel protected until we feel ready to help others. That, my friend, is the key to our existence."

ImagineFX
ART SCHOOL Sketchbook

“I’ve always been fascinated with cybernetic characters…”



ROMANTIC IDEATION

“This is a snapshot of the sketches I produce before working on the final piece. I try working on areas that’ll give me trouble down the line, such as hands or composition.”

ROMANTIC STORYTELLER

“Have you ever wondered what the likelihood of meeting our lovers was? What if there was a character who wrote our love stories long before we were even born? That’s the thought that sparked this drawing.”

ORANGUTAN FARMER

"I can't help but laugh when I walk by this piece at home. I imagined having this god judging the harvest of his fellow orangutans, each one nervously placing their dried-up herbs in his pipe as he smokes away."

BEE KEEPER

"The buzzing sounds from the bees were the only sounds that pushed his fears aside. If at any moment he felt threatened, a subtle twitch of his wrist would unleash a swarm of bees from his suit."

SKULL ALIEN

"I've always been fascinated with cybernetic characters. So I imagined this character, with techy elements protruding through his skin, screaming towards its next victim. Side note: I was very proud of his hands though, ha ha!"



Photo by Sonny Flanaghan

Oils *Acrylics* *Watercolour*

BEST WAYS TO CLEAN YOUR PAINTBRUSHES

Whether you're using oils, acrylics or watercolours, ROB LUNN reveals how to effectively maintain your paintbrushes and extend their life span

Learning how to clean paintbrushes properly is an important skill that all traditional artists need to learn sooner rather than later. As the saying goes, if you look after your tools, your tools will look after you. When you start painting, a good set of brushes is one of the most important investments you'll make – and they can set you back a fair amount of money too. So it makes sense to give them a bit of TLC.

The golden rule when it comes to paintbrushes is keep them wet while in use and give them a good clean when they're not. This approach will help keep your brushes in good nick for a long time. But cleaning paintbrushes is easier said than done, and there are some techniques that you need to know if you're going to get the paint out effectively.

How to clean your paintbrushes properly depends on the kind of paint that you're using. In this article, we'll run through the main cleaning process and then explain the different brush care variations for different painting mediums. Let's start with the medium with the most options: oil paint…



Based in Bath, England, self-taught Rob tackles portraits, still-life pieces and landscapes in his work. He also enjoys teaching art and runs a series of workshops. You can explore Rob's collection of paintings at www.roblunn.co.uk.



Photo by Sonny Flanaghan

CLEAN OIL PAINTBRUSHES

There may be more steps involved to cleaning oil from paintbrushes than there are with other types of paint, but it's still a fairly simple process

1 *Remove paint from the bristles*

First, remove as much paint from the bristles as possible by folding a clean cloth or paper towel around the ferrule of the brush (the bit just below the bristles) and wipe upwards. Always move the cloth from the ferrule to the end of the bristles. You don't want to get paint down the ferrule because this will ruin the brush. Continue until very little paint is left showing on your cloth.



2 *Ditch the white spirit*

For some artists the go-to cleaning solution for oil paint is white spirit, but there are much better and safer alternatives, both for the user and the environment.

The next best alternatives to white spirits are 'clean' spirits such as the water-based Bartoline Clean Spirit. Use this just as you would traditional white spirit, but don't pour it down the drain afterwards, despite it's 'greener than white spirit' credentials. Take it to your local recycling centre, or even better, recycle it yourself. Decant the dirty 'wash' spirit into an empty clean spirit container and over time the pigment sinks to the bottom, leaving reusable clean spirit above.

The best solution for cleaning oil paint off brushes is pure oil, but it does take a bit more work. Linseed oil dries quicker than other oils and so a better alternative is walnut oil or safflower oil.

3 *Place brush in pot*

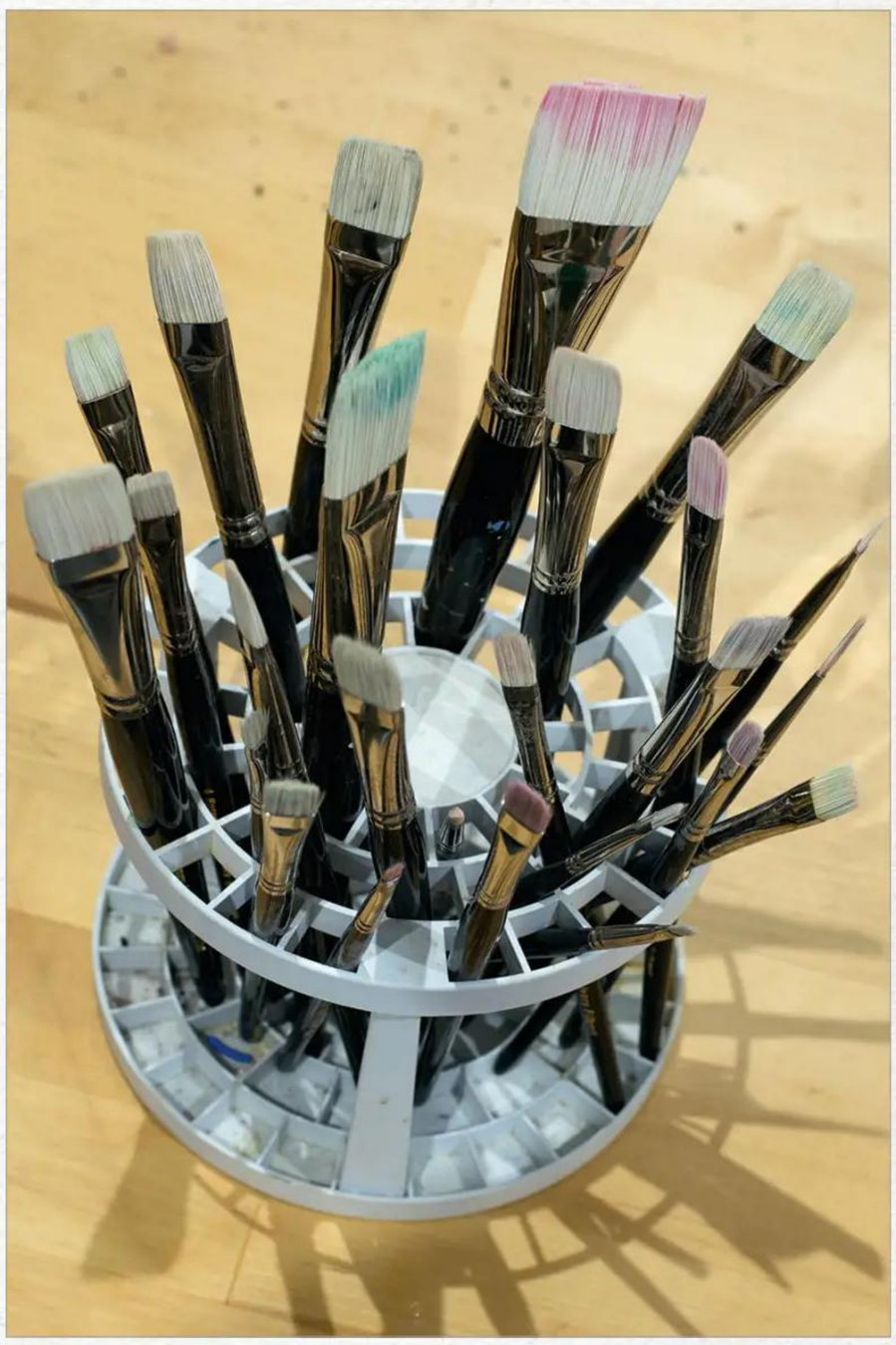
Next you'll need to use your spirit or oil. For this, you'll probably want to kit yourself out with a metal brush washer, which are available in a variety of sizes. These make light work of brush-cleaning and while the majority of models start at around £15, are a great investment. Fill the washer up with Bartoline Clean Spirit and then holding your brush almost vertically, gently run the bristles back and forth across the perforated metal insert submerged in your spirit or oil.

This knocks off pigment from the bristles without swilling up the sediment at the bottom of the pot. The sediment can be periodically dredged and disposed of responsibly. If you're using oil instead of clean spirit you may need to repeat this step, wiping as described in step one with a clean cloth each time.

"A metal brush washer makes light work of brush-cleaning"







4 *Use a brush preserver*

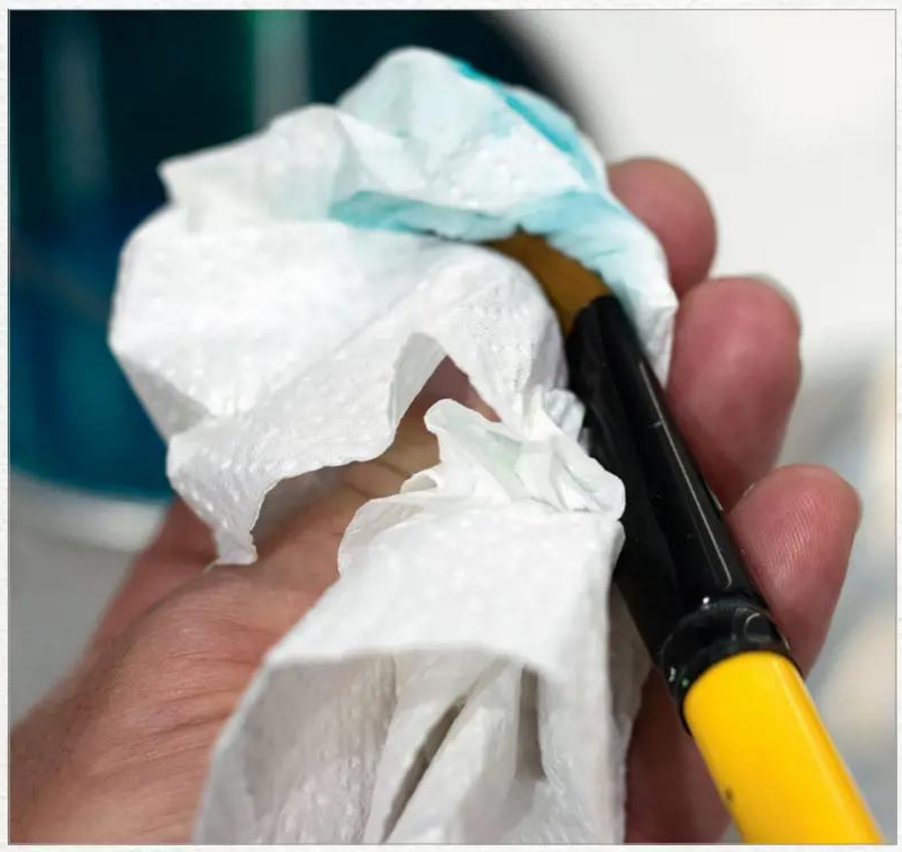
For a final clean, consider using a paintbrush cleaning soap. We recommend The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver. Using a little water, work up a lather with your brush in the centre of the soap. Work the lather through the bristles with your thumb and forefingers, always working from the ferrule out towards the ends of the bristles. Continue until no pigment can be seen in the lather. Note that some pigments will stain bristles permanently.

5 *Prepare to store*

Finally, you can rinse in clean water, reshape with your fingers and allow to dry in a holder or pot. If you're storing for a little while you can add a final dose of clean soap lather and reshape with your fingers. Leave your brush suspended to dry. Once dry, the soap will hold the shape of the bristles hard until the brush is needed again.

CLEAN ACRYLIC PAINTBRUSHES

Acrylic paint can be used thick like oils or diluted with water for watercolour-like effects. For the former, use the following process, for diluted acrylics, see the cleaning method for watercolours



1 *Use a cloth to wipe clean*

First clean off as much paint as you can using a clean cloth or paper towel. Wrap the cloth around the ferrule of the brush and, squeezing the cloth with your thumb and forefinger, work up towards the end of the bristles. Repeat as many times as necessary.



2 *Clean paintbrushes in water*

Using water in a jar or brush-washer, clean as much paint as you can from your bristles. Use a clean cloth to remove the dirty water. Repeat if necessary.



3 *Final clean and store*

For a thorough clean, use The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver as instructed in the Oil Paint section in step four. ➳

CLEAN WATERCOLOUR PAINTBRUSHES

Watercolour brushes are more delicate than paintbrushes that are designed for use with acrylics and oils, and should be treated accordingly

1 *Clean with water as you go*

Because a lot of watercolour paint is used in highly diluted 'washes', it should take less work to remove the pigment from the bristles. Instead of cleaning with a cloth, keep a vessel of water close to hand at all times, and swill the brushes between washes. One tip is to use a brush washer with a holder so you can suspend the bristles in water when not in use.



2 *Dry with a cloth and store*

Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel, as with acrylics, and then air-dry in a pot or holder.

3 *Reshape the bristles*

As with oils and acrylics, use The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver and reshape the bristles as described in the previous sections. Dirty 'wash' water should be collected and disposed off responsibly. It's also possible to allow dirty wash water from watercolour and acrylic paint to settle naturally in larger containers as you can with oil paint in clean spirit. The golden rule is: never chuck it down the sink!



HOW TO CLEAN OTHER PAINTBRUSHES

Larger-scale projects may involve different painting media than the ones we've talked about here. The golden rule is, whatever the medium, remember to clean your brushes before calling it a day!



When it comes to using other type of paints for large-scale murals or other creative projects, all paints will fall into two basic categories: water-based and oil-based. The only exceptions are some specialised paints that are thinned beforehand using methylated spirits, but these tend to be more for trade use. The best approach is always read the side of the tin and follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions.

It's best to clean brushes as soon as you've finished for the day. However, if you're short of time for whatever reason, a clean plastic bag can make a temporary brush-saver. Just put your brushes in the bag until you can clean them properly.

Finally, soak rollers used with water-based paints in a sink and wring with your hands to loosen off most of the paint, or you'll be there forever!

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PAINT AND REFINE A DEMONIC FIGURE

Jim Pavelec reveals the inspiration and painting techniques used to create the demon Haagenti for his ambitious Ars Goetia project

Artist **PROFILE**

Jim Pavelec
LOCATION: US

Jim dabbles in freelance fantasy and horror illustration, but spends most of his time working on illustrating his interpretation of the Ars Goetia grimoire.
www.arsgoetia.net



I'm currently illustrating the 72 demons described in an ancient grimoire (a book of magic spells and incantations) known as the Ars Goetia. In this workshop I'll show you how I developed the art for the demon known as Haagenti. It's very important to me that the pieces in this series be dark and menacing, but also beautiful. Some, such as Haagenti, fell towards the human end of the spectrum. For pieces such as this I like to emphasise the beauty of the human face or figure, and surround it with monstrous garb or bizarre growths.

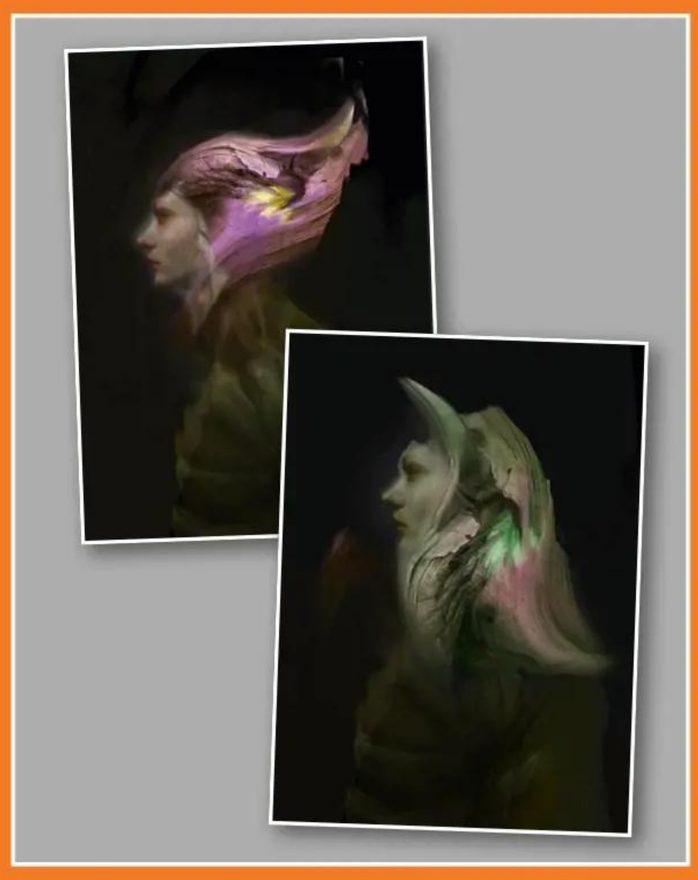
Haagenti, the 48th demon of the Ars Goetia, appears in the form of a mighty bull with gryphon's wings, and is traditionally represented quite literally following that description. For my work on this book, I'm breaking from this literal representation and putting my own spin on these demons.

I like to move freely between traditional and digital painting, and will show you how that's achieved in this workshop. For the digital aspect of these paintings I've been working almost exclusively in Procreate on a 12.9-inch iPad Pro. I find the flexibility and ease of use of that setup second to none.

How I combine...
TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL TECHNIQUES



1 Traditional start
Where I begin on a Goetia artwork and where I end are often vastly different. I had a specific model that I wanted to use for this piece, and started the painting traditionally. As I got into the oil painting I wasn't happy with where it was going so I photographed it and took it into Procreate.



2 Into the digital realm
I prefer to let a piece evolve in the digital realm since there are so many fun ways to play with shape and texture. As I was working on the head, I realised that it might be cool to drop in the face of the woman I had painted. I was happy with the result once I rotated its head 90 degrees.



3 Refine the silhouette
At this point I needed to refine the silhouette of the demon. I settled on a kind of robed priestess feel. I love classical paintings by Old Masters such as Rembrandt, Joshua Reynolds and Franz Hals. I decided to use elements of that style of painting to render this hellish priestess.

Paint and refine a demonic figure



ADD TEXTURE AND COLOUR



Taking advantage of layers

Because I work somewhat piecemeal on these paintings, the digital medium is ideal. I can try different things and move objects around in seconds. Once I figured out the overall silhouette for this piece, I needed to go back and work out the proportions of the anatomy so I could have the arm coming out of the drapery at the proper point. So I just created a new layer and quickly sketched the anatomy on top of the piece. Because I had the head size already established it was easy to figure out the rest.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

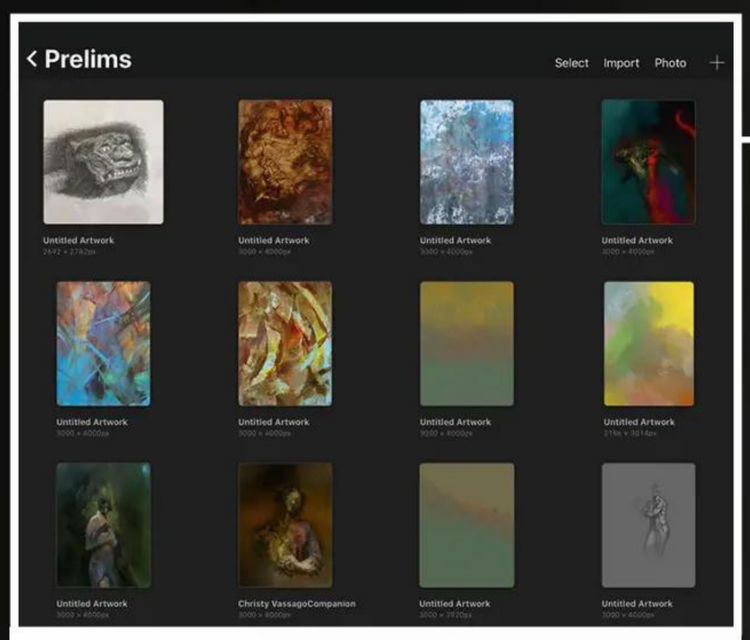
PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSH: VICTORIAN 2

I like Procreate's Texture brush called Victorian. I decided to make my own version using Victorian clip art. I use the brush to lay down a pattern, and then go over it with a smudge tool to create interesting textures.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 7 now!

Paint and refine a demonic figure



Using other painted pieces

I have a folder filled with dozens of random mark-making, colour and textural paintings. I'll often drop these into a digital piece I'm working on, lower the layer Opacity to 50 per cent and flip through the layer modes to see what kind of exciting effects result. Go through layer modes such as Lighten, Darken, Multiply and Overlay to see what cool and interesting things pop up.

Textures of the bone headdress

Take a few minutes to go online and find reference for any details you're painting. I wanted the headdress in this piece to read as a large bone/horn structure, so I searched online for a variety of animal horns, enabling me to render some interesting yet identifiable textures.





Figuring out value, then adding colour

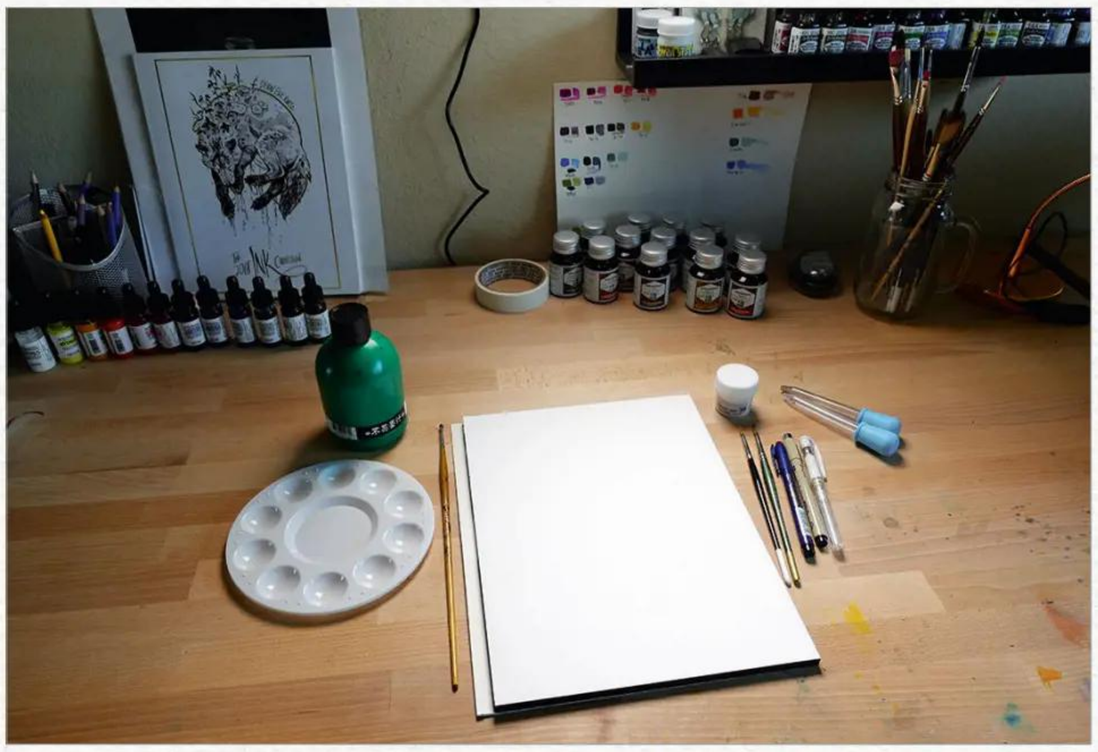
One issue I've had trouble with over the years is value. How light or dark a thing should be in relation to everything else in the image can be a difficult thing to wrap your head around. One great trick I learned is to work on areas giving you trouble in black and white to make sure you get the value right, and then add colour on a separate Color layer. By eliminating the element of colour, it can be easier to figure out the proper tones. Working digitally makes this very easy. Here you can see how I utilised this technique while working on Haagenti's cloak.

Female hands

Because there are very few visual elements in these pieces, it's important that they all look right. I found a great stock photo reference for this hand, which I purchased and used to make sure the anatomy was correct. Female hands are difficult to paint. Some people make the mistake of ignoring the bony structure of the hand in order to make it seem feminine, and wind up with a 'noodly' look. Like most things in art, you need to find the right balance. In this case, it's a balance of a delicate hand with the proper anatomical structure.







ImagineFX VIDEO WORKSHOP

Ink

CREATE REALISTIC TEXTURES USING INK

DEVIN ELLE KURTZ explains her ink illustration process from line art to ink wash to dry brushing to finishing highlights, as she creates a piece full of natural textures

Back in October 2018 I decided to pick up ink for the first time and try the yearly Inktober art challenge. I discovered that despite being such a simple medium, the variety of texture and the degree of realism I could achieve with brush and ink was astounding.

I've since experimented with how far I can push this medium to achieve the diverse textures of the natural world. My work is often inspired by themes of life and death, creatures, plants and magic. My desire to craft a visual experience of fur, feathers, skulls and grasses led me to explore a number of methods of applying ink.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 7 now!



USING A MIX OF BRUSH TYPES

Creating an ink illustration involves varying the amounts of ink and water, using a variety of brush textures, and adjusting the motion and pressure used to apply the ink. I use a mix of soft watercolour and stiffer acrylic brushes for my drawings.

The soft texture of a watercolour brush is perfect for ink washes, and thinning the ink with water enables you to create a palette of wash shades that can be used like greyscale watercolour paints. If you're familiar with watercolour, ink functions fairly similarly but tends to dry more quickly, doesn't reactivate with water, and has a grainier appearance than many of the watercolours I'm familiar with. Because ink doesn't reactivate with water you can layer ink washes a bit like Multiply layers in Photoshop.

The stiffer acrylic brushes are perfect for dry-brushing ink onto the paper to create realistic hair, grass, and fur textures. I employ both a well-kept acrylic brush for smooth dry brush textures (such as slick grasses) and a frayed acrylic brush for wilder, more uneven dry brush textures (such as fur and feathers.)

Ink is an incredibly versatile medium, and I love it because it's also quite approachable for anybody. It grows as you grow as an artist, offering more opportunities when you're ready for them. I hope that this workshop allows you a window into my experience with the world of ink.



Devin is an illustrator and visual development artist, and works as the lead background painter on the Netflix show Disenchantment. In her free time she likes painting a magical world of unearthly creatures and starry gods. See more at www.devinellekurtz.com.



1 Transferring the sketch

I sketch digitally because it enables me to experiment freely and restart without regret. Once I'm happy with my sketch I print it out and use my Huion light pad to create my line-art on a piece of Arches hot press watercolour paper. I tape the paper to the light pad so nothing moves around.





2 Line-art techniques

I use three main tools to create my line-art: Zebra super-fine brush tip pens for the thicker lines, and Micron .005 and .1 pens for the thinner lines. I use thicker lines to direct attention to the focal area of the piece, and thinner lines to create fine details and areas of rest.

MATERIALS

PENS

- Zebra brush pen (super fine tip)
- Micron pens (sizes .005, .01, .03 and .05)

LIGHT PAD

- Huion A4 LED light pad

BRUSHES

- Utrecht Sablette faux sable Round brushes sizes 0, 4, 6, and 12
- Isabey Isacryl size 4 Round brush
- Frayed Isabey Isacryl size 0 Round brush for scratchy textures

INK

- Yasutomo black Sumi ink
- Signo Uniball white ink pen

PAPER

- Arches hot press 9x12 watercolour paper (300gsm)



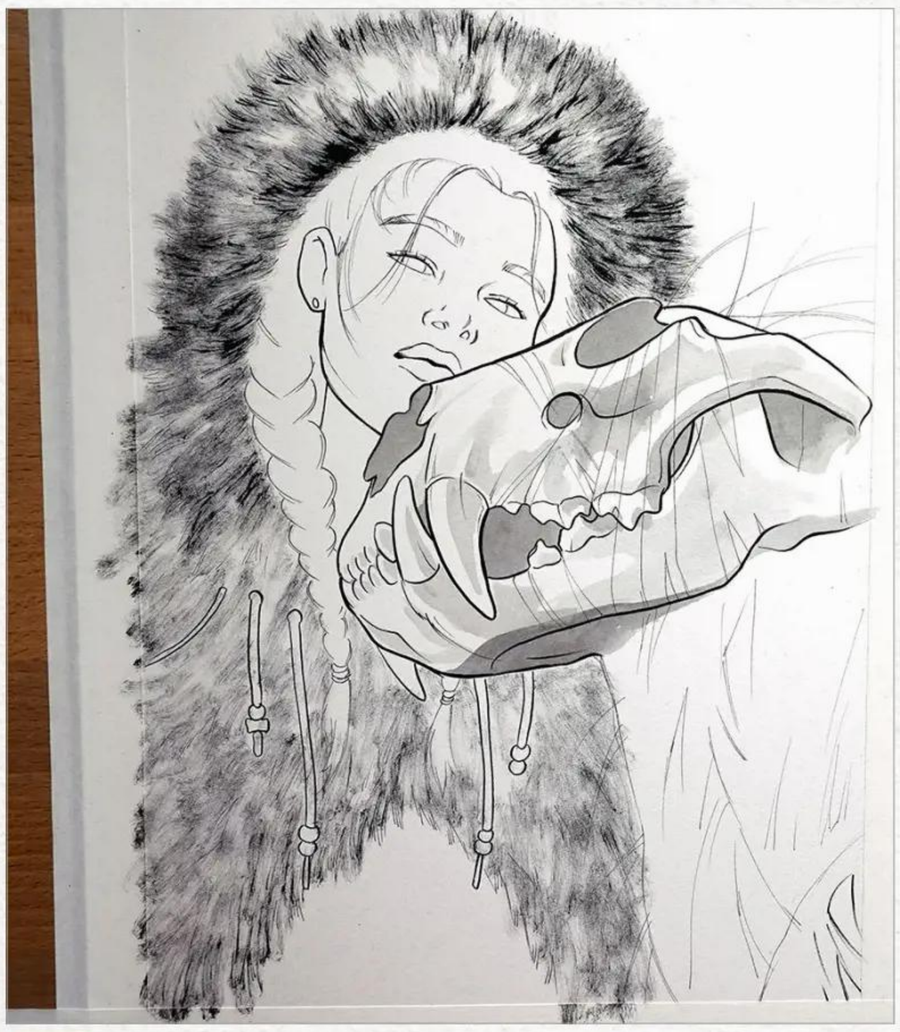
3 Mixing ink washes

I mix water with ink to create six shades of grey and swatch them out on a piece of test paper. I use eyedroppers to control the amount of ink and water in each shade. I use a brush to mix each wash thoroughly so that it'll apply evenly.



4 Rendering the skull

Using my leopard skull cast as reference I render the skull in the drawing. I add water to my brush whenever I need to create a fade effect. Sometimes I begin with a lighter shade and then add a darker wash to one side of the wet area, which creates a gradient.



5 *Dry-brushing the fur*

I paint the fur hood using my frayed faux sable brush. I add no water to the brush, only pure ink; this texture is created with a dry brush. Short, directional strokes accomplish the bushy effect.



6 *Fine-liner details*

I use my .01 and .03 Micron fine-liner pens to go in and control the look of the fur coat. I design little clumps of fur across the hood using quick, purposeful strokes. Fur generally clumps in a triangular or diamond pattern. Fur looks most realistic when it is varied; even-looking fur looks artificial.



7 *Dry-brushing the braid*

Using the frayed faux sable brush again I paint the girl's braid using a dry-brush technique. This time I add more ink to the brush to create an appearance of glossy dark hair, making sure to leave a lighter area where the highlight sits. I add a wash to darken the highlight.



8 *Details of the face*

I take my lightest shades on ink wash and add a bit of warm rosiness across her cheeks and nose. I fill in her irises with a medium-grey, and paint her eyebrows using micron pens and dry-brushing with short directional strokes.



9 *Developing the iris texture*

To create the grainy texture in her irises I take my dry frayed brush with the smallest bit of ink and paint tiny controlled circles with a very light amount of pressure. I test out various amounts of pressure on a test sheet before putting ink down on the final illustration.



10 *Creating the details in the clothing*

I use my medium grey shades of ink to fill in the details in her outfit. I want this area to have less contrast than around their faces so viewers don't focus on this part of the piece. I decide early on what the focal area of the piece will be, and design the rest to lead to it.



11 *Dry-brushing the enchanted grasses*

Taking an acrylics size 8 Round brush I use a softer dry-brush texture to paint in the magical grasses that hold the skeleton creature together. I use a controlled amount of pressure to get an even distribution of dry ink. I use the tip of the brush to create darker, narrower details.



12 *Finishing the dry-brushing*

The technique I use to paint this texture takes a bit of practice and experimentation. I always have a test sheet next to my drawing so I can try out the pressure and motions necessary to create each stroke before applying it to the final piece.



13 *Washing over dry brush*

Before allowing the dry brushed ink to dry completely, I use a medium-dark ink wash to unify the creature's body and soften the grainy texture of the dry brush. The combination of the grainy texture with some of the bleeding-wash edges creates a unique appearance and evens out the tone of the creature's body.



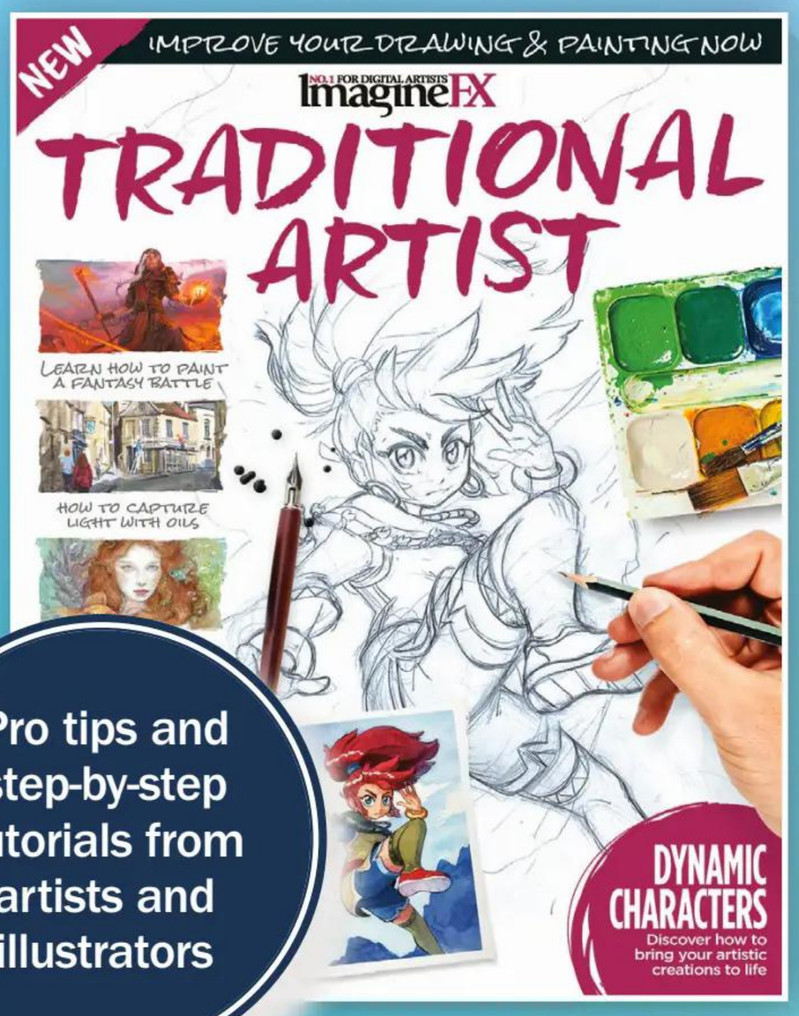
14 *Shading the shawl*

To darken and unify the girl's torso I add a soft cast shadow using a medium-light ink wash. I break up the edge of the shadow in a jagged motion to create the illusion of volume on her fur shawl. I try to create a variety of soft and hard edges to each shadow to mimic reality.



15 *Applying white highlights*

Finally, I use my Signo Uniball white ink pen to add the little dots of white magic that adorn all of my magical skeleton creatures. I also add little highlight lines to create dimension. I try to vary the size and placement of the highlights to create an even but randomised pattern.



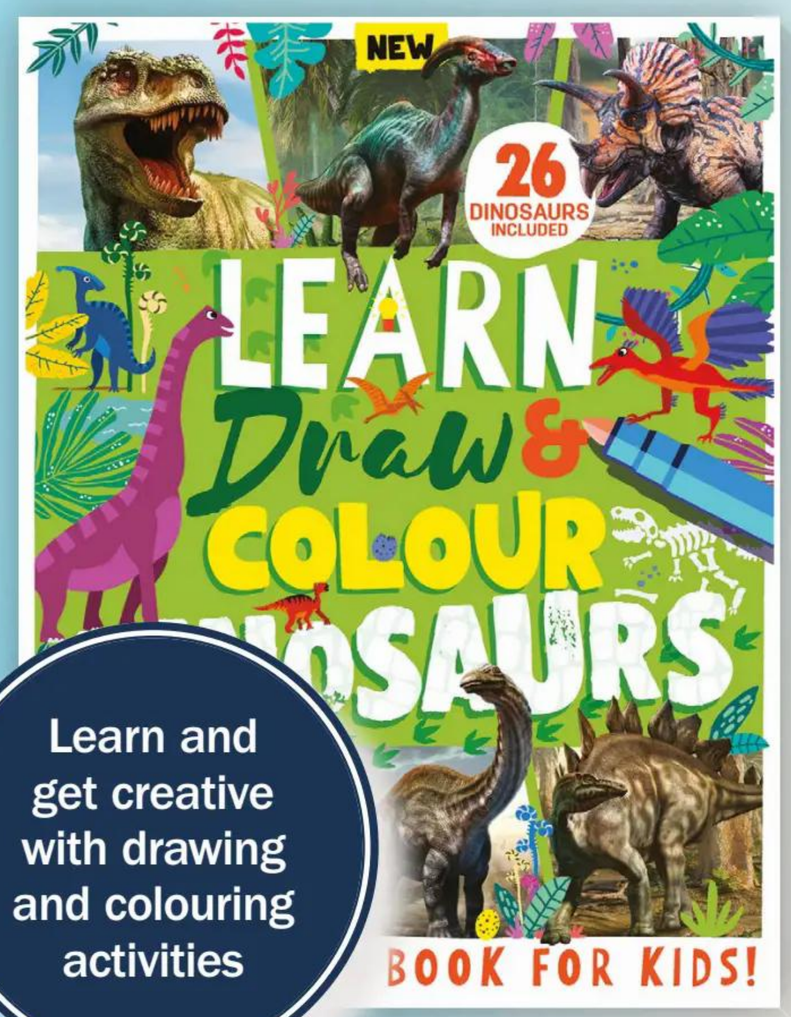
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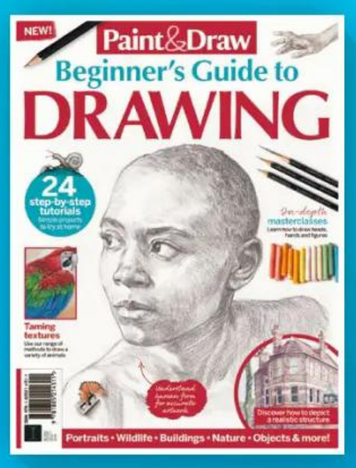












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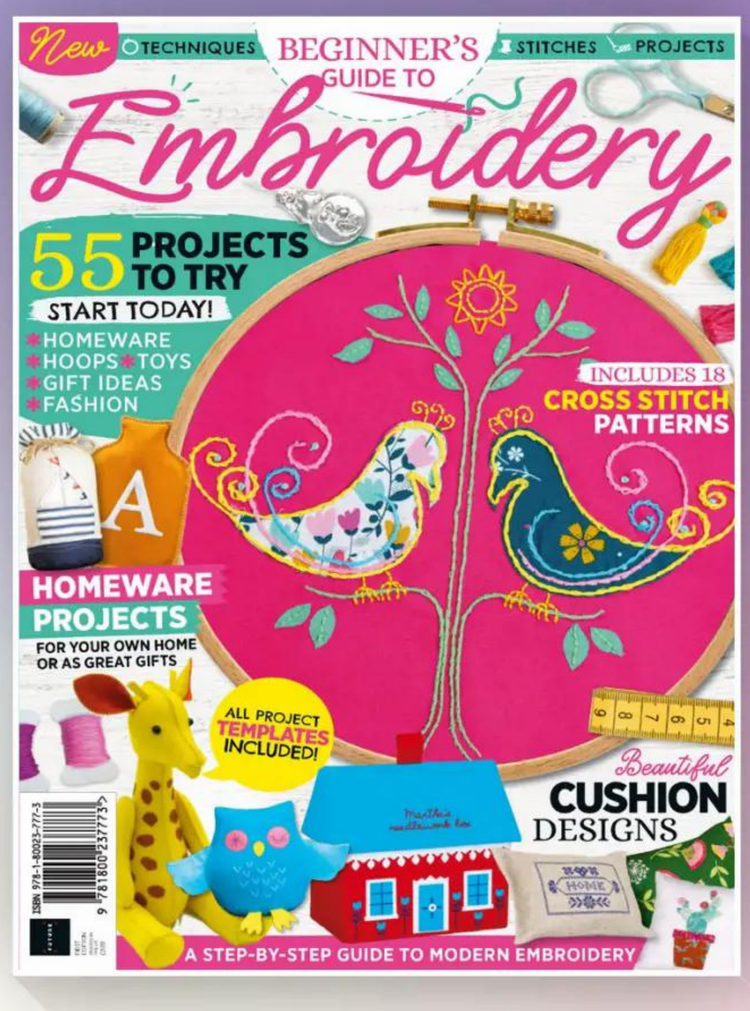


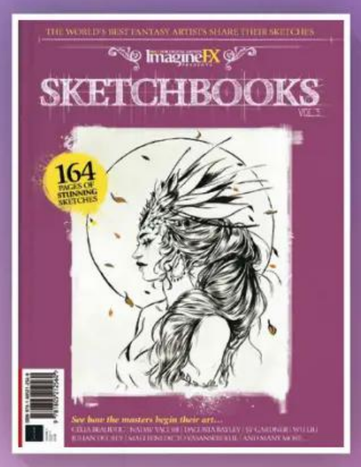
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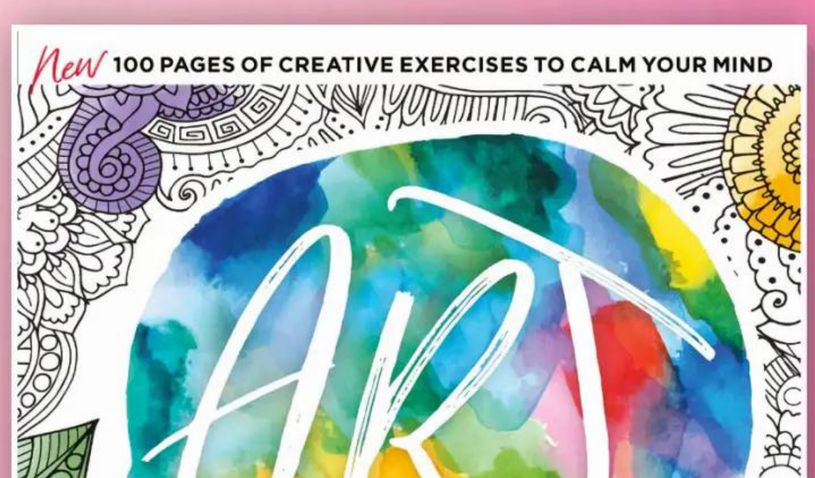
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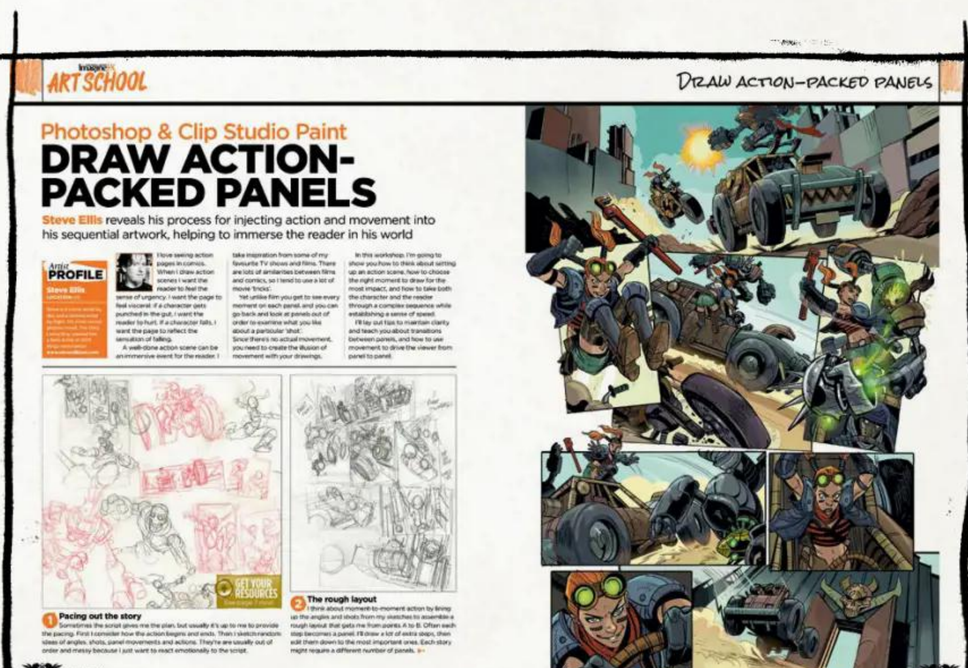
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