

AIRBRUSH

STEP BY STEP

75



SPECIAL

HOW TO & INTERVIEW

CARLOS CARTAGENA

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS

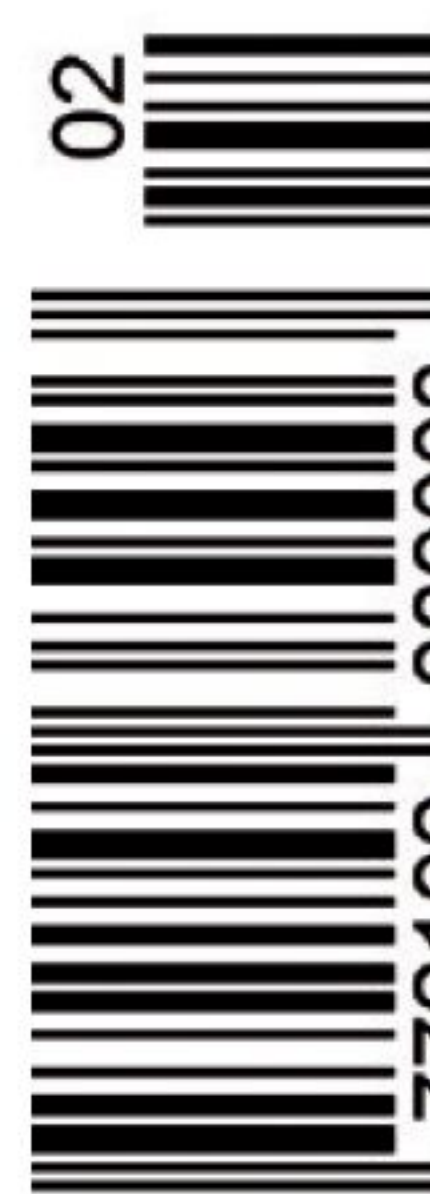
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Girls, Girls, Girls . . .

This issue is all about pretty girls – whether portrayed full-face or full-body, covered up to the nose or stark naked. Five artists show female beauty with different focuses, techniques and settings: **Carlos Cartagena** plays with light reflections in his cover artwork “AI Girl” to give his AI-generated portrait a special, artificial high-gloss look. In the interview, the illustrator also talks about how he not only made it into illustrated books and airbrush magazines with his pin-ups, but also into Playboy and the Hooters Casino Hotel in Las Vegas in the mid-1990s.

In **Mitya Ka's** nude, delicate skin tones and soft body shapes meet cold colors and hard geometric shapes in the background. **Geza Nagy's** Fire Girl fascinates with its very special mood and color scheme,



created by the candle as the only source of light in her hands. In the work of Canadian illustrator **Dennis Mott**, only the eyes of the Asian protagonist can be seen. However, these express an extreme will to win that captivates the viewer of the portrait. The Norwegian **Geir Nordaunet** mainly focuses on the accessories of his main character - on the medium of water, on the sky and flowing fabrics, whose gentle shades he highlights with transparent airbrush colors and contrasts sharply with colored pencils.

Finally, you will meet a real, strong girl: **Ellen Olson**, who was born in Ukraine, has now successfully established herself as a custom painter and airbrush teacher in Poland and allows some insights into her work.

In the news, find out about some highlight events and products coming up in these days. As always, we hope you'll enjoy this brand-new issue. Have a creative spring time!

The ASBS Team

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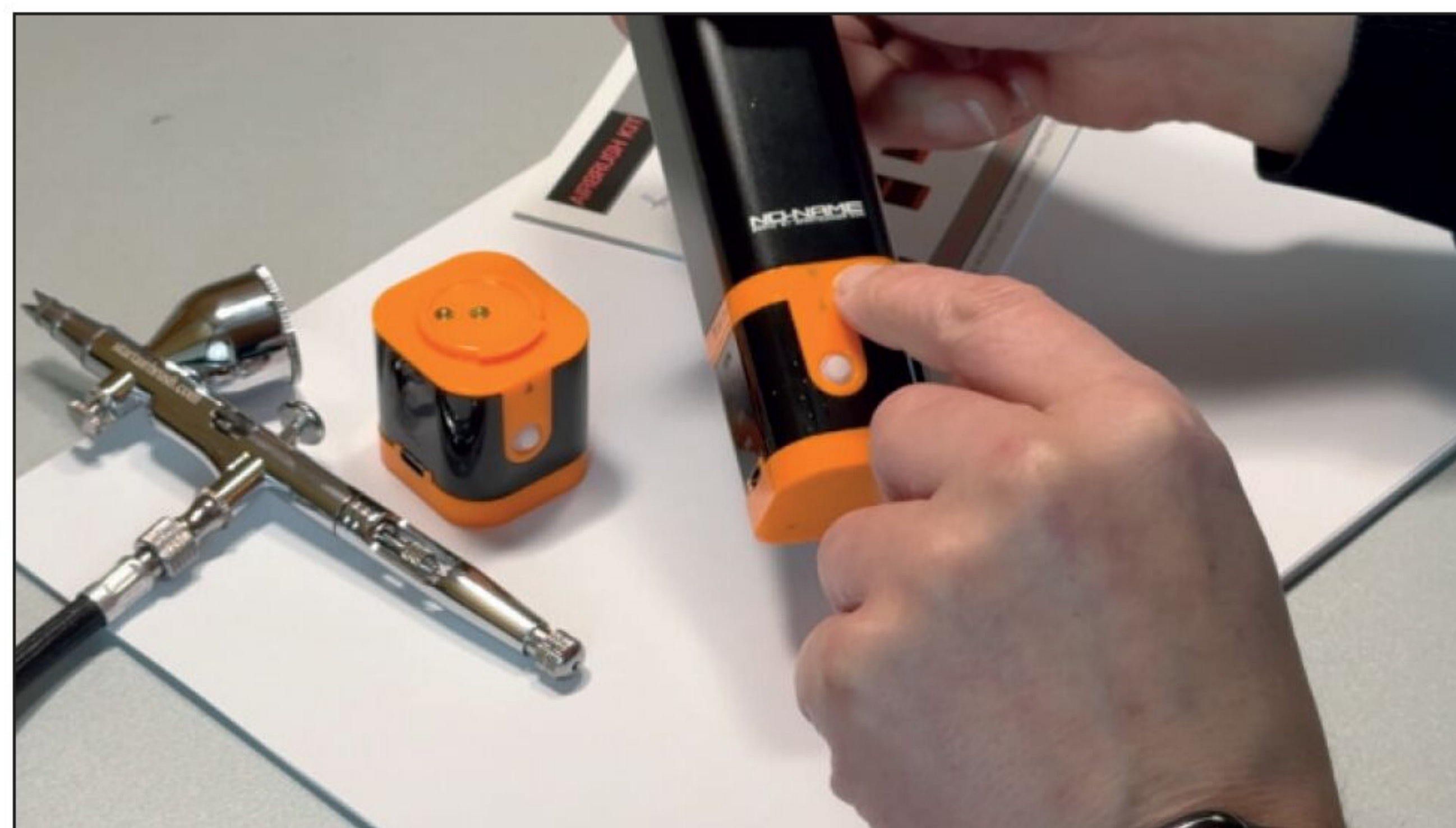
NO-NAME: Cordless airbrush compressor of the latest generation

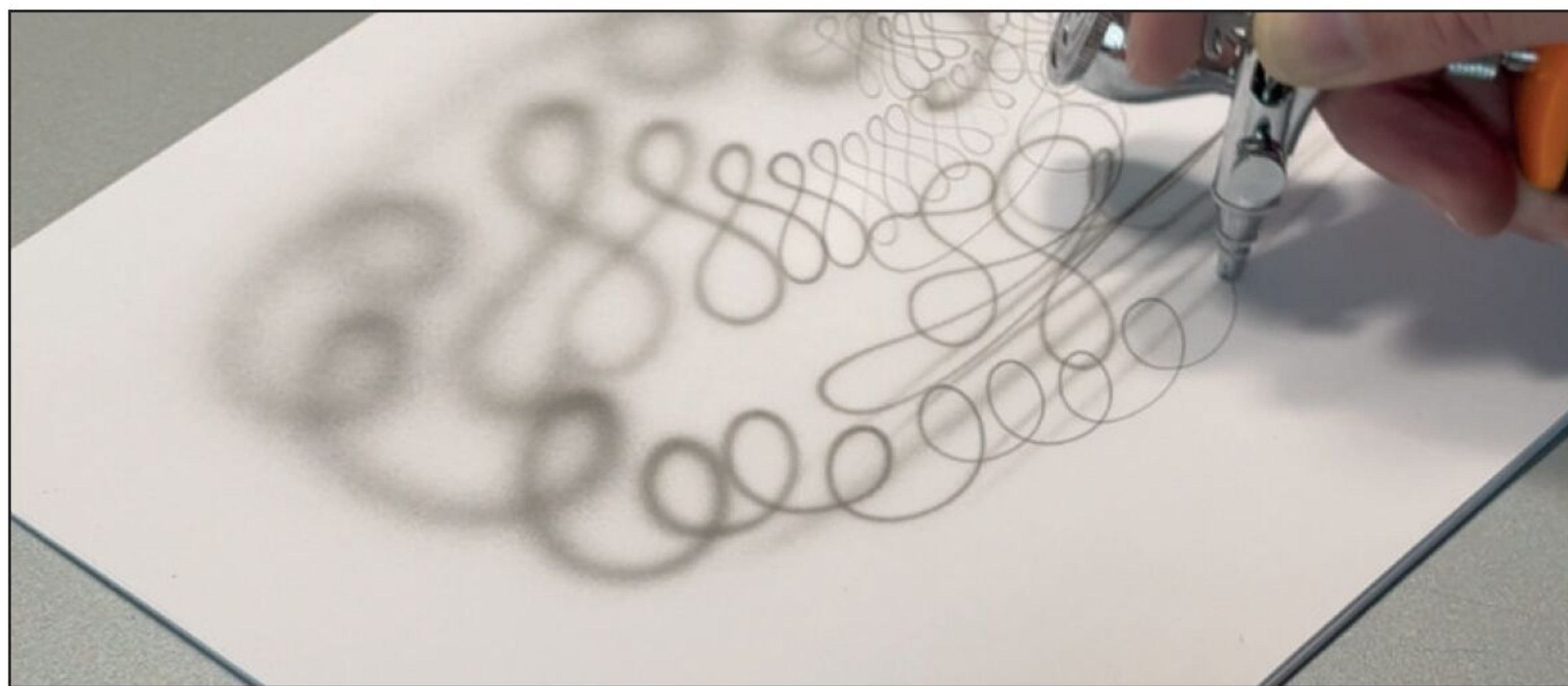
Cordless airbrush compressors are flooding the market for beginners in the "low-cost segment". Those who are tempted by the very affordable devices on the market will quickly be disappointed. Nevertheless, the devices continue to develop year after year and have their areas of application. The specialist dealer Spraygunner from the USA imports its devices offered under the brand NO-NAME from China and checks each one for quality and function. The cordless airbrush compressor set of the latest generation, recognizable by the orange design elements, comes with two batteries, the double-action airbrush BD-180, hose, charging cable and cleaning set.

The NO-NAME compressor has an automatic on/off function. When the airbrush lever is no longer pressed, the compressor also stops running and the battery is conserved. With the second battery supplied, you have the option of working non-stop by charging one while working with the other. At full capacity, the battery lasts a little over 30 minutes. However,

since you are constantly switching on and off, you can expect an operating time of 1.5 to 2 hours. The batteries have a charge level indicator so that you can see how much has already been charged and how long you can still spray. The included USB-C to USB charging cable is included, a charging adapter must be added from your own drawer. The batteries are screwed onto the compressor. Alternatively, the included hose can be built in between, for example, to put the compressor in your pocket when working. There are markings to show you exactly how to screw on the battery – this is extremely helpful, especially when using it for the first time. The white on-off switch is built into the battery. It is not possible to spray and charge the battery at the same time.

The cordless compressor still delivers less air than regular oil-free piston compressors. Ultimately, the small and fairly quiet compressor delivers 8-9 liters of air per minute at 1.3 to 1.7 bar. This is also reflected to some extent in the spray pattern.





We compared the atomization with the NO-NAME compressor and a 2-bar oil piston compressor. It is noticeable that the spray pattern appears somewhat coarser than with a high-performance compressor. However, you can significantly optimize the spray result by using airbrushes with smaller nozzle sizes and without the included hose, i.e. by screwing the airbrush directly onto the compressor.

In our editorial test, we sprayed a complete illustration with the cordless compressor and were able to complete the entire project thanks to the second battery. We sprayed the background with the included BD-180 airbrush and the details with an Iwata Takumi Micron. We found that detailed applications work particularly well and that the compressor delivers superbly. The weight of the compressor, at 210 grams, also posed no problems. With the NO-NAME compressor, it is therefore absolutely possible to spray complete works with the finest details and also to connect your favorite airbrush at any time, up to a maximum of 0.4 mm nozzle. The 1/8" connection allows to connect almost all airbrushes on the market. The included BD-180 airbrush delivers a respectable spray pattern, given the price range. It is easy to use and comes with air reduction and lever limitation. The included transport cap is used for 'bubbling', i.e. for mixing colors or foaming up cleaner.

Airbrushes with a cordless compressor are a good solution for anyone who wants to get into airbrushing without a large investment. They are also ideal for small projects and can be used anywhere. Cordless compressors are also a perfect second device for professionals in all industries – including those working on large-scale projects such as murals or exhibitions. They can be used to flexibly master hard-to-reach areas and to carry out minor touch-ups, e.g. transport damage, without much effort, anywhere.

The wireless NO-NAME compressor from Spraygunner is available as a set for 85 US-\$ at [Spraygunner.com](https://www.spraygunner.com).



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The new all-rounder: Iwata Vault Kustom CS

With the new Kustom CS airbrush, the Japanese airbrush manufacturer Iwata is launching a new all-rounder on the market. The device is a reimagining of the Iwata Eclipse and offers a generous 14 ml paint cup and a 0.35 mm nozzle. This makes it very suitable for larger-scale airbrush projects with increased paint requirements, such as custom painting and wall painting, bodypainting, cosplay and special effects applications. The paint cup can be closed with a matching lid, protecting the paint from spilling even during large spray movements. The double cut-out in the handle allows quick access to the needle clamping nut and the needle end. A special needle end piece makes it easy to loosen and pull out the needle to remove stuck paint without having to unscrew the handle.

In addition, the lever is slightly raised for better control of the paint flow. The included accessories include a tool for loosening the air cap, a tube of Iwata Lube lubricant, and a gun-side water separator. The device is compatible with all Eclipse replacement parts. The Iwata Vault Kustom CS IW-ECL4700 is available from airbrush retailers. The MSRP is 262 US-\$.

www.iwata-airbrush.com



For mixed media artists: Schmincke PRIMAcryl Professional with a new formula and selection

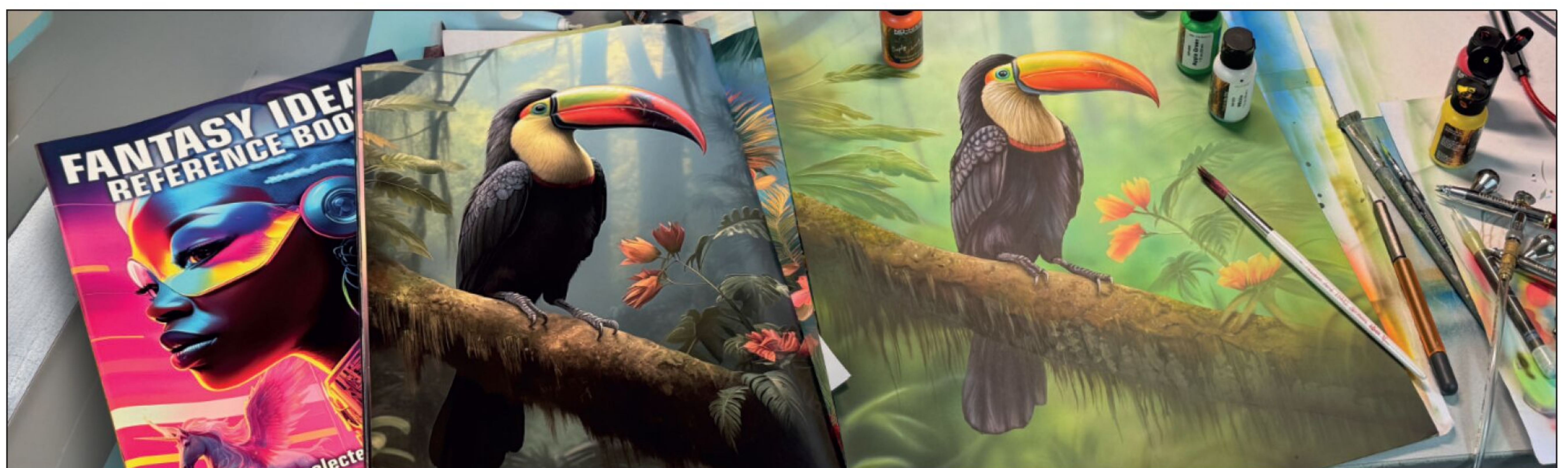


High pigmentation, luminosity and countless colors: These properties made Schmincke PRIMAcryl Professional colors the "Artist Product of the Year" at this year's Creative World 2025. And for artists, of course, these are also the compelling arguments when choosing colors. For airbrush users, the PRIMAcryl Professionals are particularly interesting because of their different consistencies: 90 colors are available as heavy-body tube and jar paints, and 48 of them also as a flow-friendly fluid in a bottle. The colors are therefore ideal for use in mixed media – from the structured application of the heavy body paint with a brush or spatula, to the fine painting of the fluid paint, to its spraying in a diluted state with an airbrush. To spray, the paint is simply mixed with a little water to bring it into a sprayable consistency. In the first editorial test, a very fine spray pattern could be achieved even with the smallest nozzle sizes.

The product has been a classic for years, but has recently been extensively revised, with a particular focus on sustainability. The acrylic paint is now based on an innovative, microplastic-free binder, and the bottles and jars are made from recycled plastic. 89 colors are vegan and free from animal ingredients, and environmentally friendly, color-identical alternatives have been developed for all cadmium shades. The range has been expanded by a total of 17 colors and the variety of containers between 35 and 500 ml has been increased. All colors have a 4-5 star lightfastness and the color shift between wet and dry paint is minimal. Prices of PRIMAcryl Professional Colors in art supply stores range from about €8 for a 35-ml tube to about €25 for a 250-ml bottle of fluid.

www.schmincke.de

Imaginatively creative: AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP Reference Book "Fantasy Ideas"



The journey of ideas in the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP Reference Books continues: In the fifth volume on the subject of "Fantasy Ideas", aliens, dragons, knights, fantastic landscapes, unusual animals and creatures, science fiction flying objects and other fantastic ideas await their creative realization in equally imaginative airbrush creations. 40 selected, AI-generated designs, mostly in A4 format, provide inspiration for your own ideas or specific templates for airbrush works on any surface. The stapling enables both easy scanning of the pages for

further processing and their direct use for tracing, copying or projecting in order to create preliminary drawings on the painting surface and, if necessary, masking.

Like the other four reference books, the "Fantasy Ideas" edition is available exclusively in the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP online shop for €9.50.

www.airbrush-books.com

Slice craft knives: safer and more durable with ceramic



Ceramic knives have been used in kitchens for a long time, but the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP editorial team was not aware of them as craft knives, at least not until now. And it's true: the Slice brand offers a wide range of craft and precision knives, cutters, scissors and other cutting tools with ceramic blades. The advantage: the blades are sharp when cutting, but the risk of injury to the skin is significantly lower. This makes them ideal for workshops or public events, for example. In addition, the blades are said to stay sharp up to 11 times longer than steel blades. This enables an uninterrupted workflow and also offsets the higher purchase price of the Slice knife. Of course, the editorial team was not yet able to

be convinced of this long-term advantage, but they were definitely convinced of the safety and, above all, the cutting quality.

The craft knife is available in two versions: one with a conventional loose protective cap (like a felt-tip pen) and one with a protective cap attached to the shaft, which can simply be pushed up or down as required. Both knives come standard with a straight blade that is rounded at the tip, which we personally found less than ideal for cutting and scraping. However, a total of eight different blade variants are optionally available, which can be flexibly interchanged. Of course, we tested the straight pointed blade and a curved, rounded blade, as they are predominantly used by airbrush artists. Both are excellent for cutting, scraping, and scratching. The craft knives feature a two-handed, non-slip design with a textured surface that fits well in the hand and allows for precise control. The blades are easy to replace like standard steel blades without tools. Due to the ceramic material, they do not rust, are heat-resistant and do not react to chemicals or other substances.

The Slice craft knife is available in stores from around 16.49 US-\$, and the replacement blades in a 4-pack are available from around 25.49 US-\$.

www.sliceproducts.com

Save the date: The Fantasy World of Airbrush in August 2025



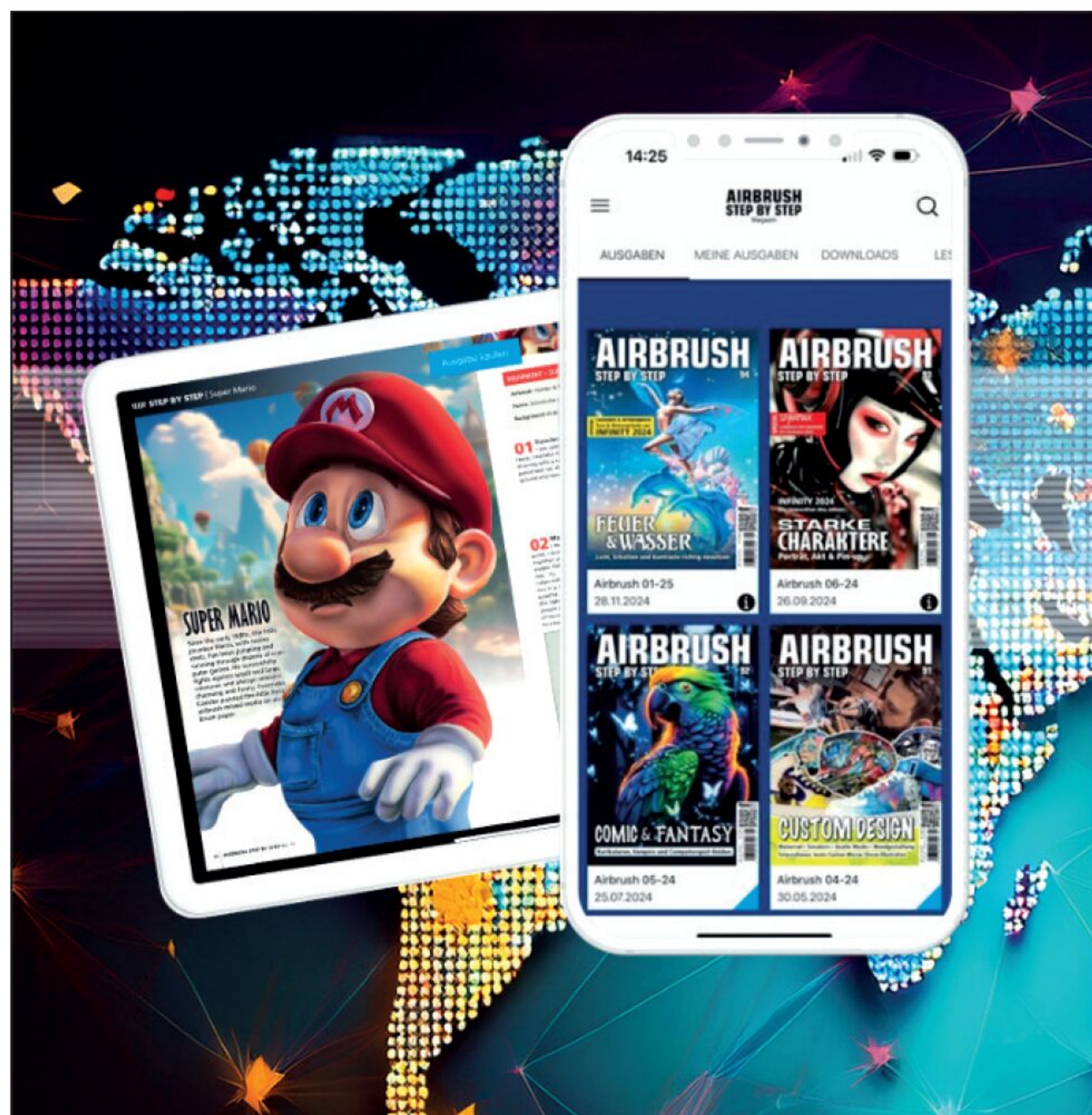
For half a year, the organizers of the popular airbrush show in Germany, Hugo Vervliet, Daisy van den Bergh and the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP team, trembled because the future of the Fantasy World of Airbrush was uncertain. The reason for this: there is a change of personnel at the US Car and Bike Show. Günther Zaluskowski, who, together with his team from Niederrhein Werbung GbR, has organized 17 successful shows in almost 20 years, is handing over the event to Joel Weyers from Original Drivestyle Department. After a few discussions, the good news came in January: everything will stay the same, the Fantasy World of Airbrush is allowed to remain as part of the US Car Show! The new operators are also kee-

ping the dates true to tradition: the last weekend in August is reserved for the US Car & Bike Show and the Fantasy World of Airbrush, which this year falls on August 23-24.

The airbrush show team will start organizing and promoting the new show in April. If you are interested, you can already send a non-binding e-mail to grefrath@airbrush-magazin.de and you will be kept up to date as soon as things get underway.

<https://us-car-show.de>

Now also complete and paperless: the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP “in-app” archive subscription



For many years now, it has been possible to subscribe to the AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP magazine in the app of the same name on a purely digital basis. As with the conventional print subscription, the digital subscription always offers access to

the latest issue during the term of the subscription. With the new archive subscription, all back issues can now also be unlocked and read – this is particularly ideal for newcomers who have not been following the magazine for very long. “Back issues” specifically means all 75 issues published since 2007, with more than 350 step-by-step instructions, interesting interviews, artist portraits, tips, tricks and product presentations from the last 18 years. Only issues from the last five years are still available in print, so the app archive offers the only complete library for airbrush artists.

The AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP app can be downloaded for free from the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. The archive (“All Issues”) subscription is then available in the app for 32.99 euros. Of course, the upcoming issues are also included in the 12-month subscription. Those who prefer to read on a desktop PC can also book the subscription in their browser at epaper.airbrush-magazin.de or access their purchased subscriptions and issues.

Of course, print magazine subscribers can also upgrade their existing subscription to an archive subscription. This gives you the four new printed issues published each year, plus access to the entire digital archive, starting at just €47.60 per year.

www.airbrush-magazine.com

2025/2026: AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP celebrates a triple anniversary

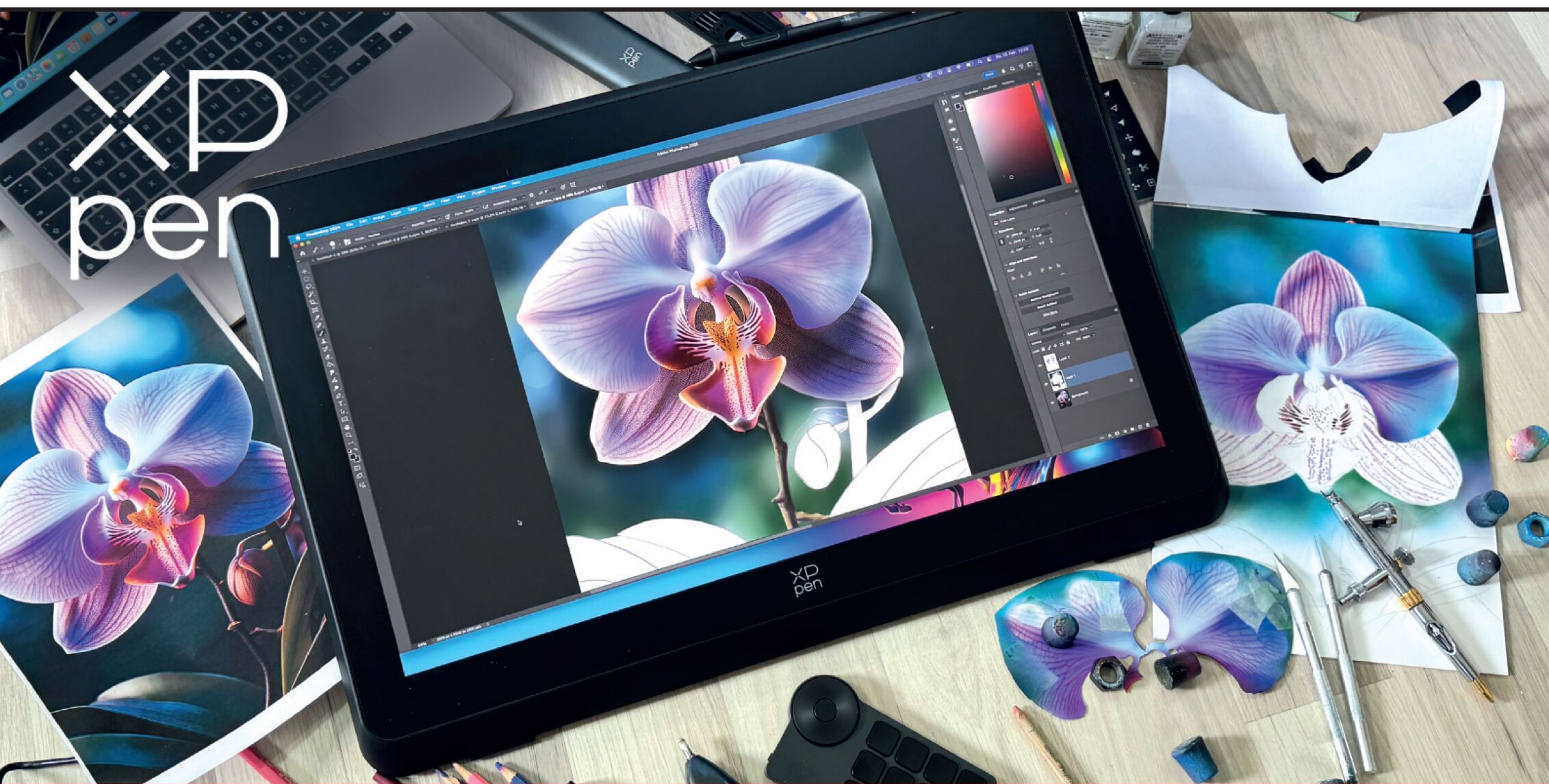


The cover of this issue shows the number 75, the German equivalent even counts number 96 due to the German roots of the magazine and the more frequent publication. So you can probably guess that the 100th issue of AIRBRUSH STEP BY STEP magazine is not far off. It will actually be published on November 28, 2025. This is the issue anniversary – the year anniversary will follow in 2026. The magazine and the publishing house will then be 20 years old. That alone is a reason to celebrate. But how?

The solution is provided by the third anniversary: almost exactly ten years ago, on May 1-3, 2015, the first International Airbrush Days took place. The workshop event, with over 40

different workshops and demos by 12 internationally renowned airbrush artists and around 70 participants from all over Europe, set new standards in the airbrush community and remains unrivalled to this day. That's why we're hosting the International Airbrush Days Anniversary Revival in May 2026! The planning and preparations for this are already in full swing. More specific information about the date, content, artists, prices, etc. is expected to be available at the end of April, and registration will then open in May at the latest.

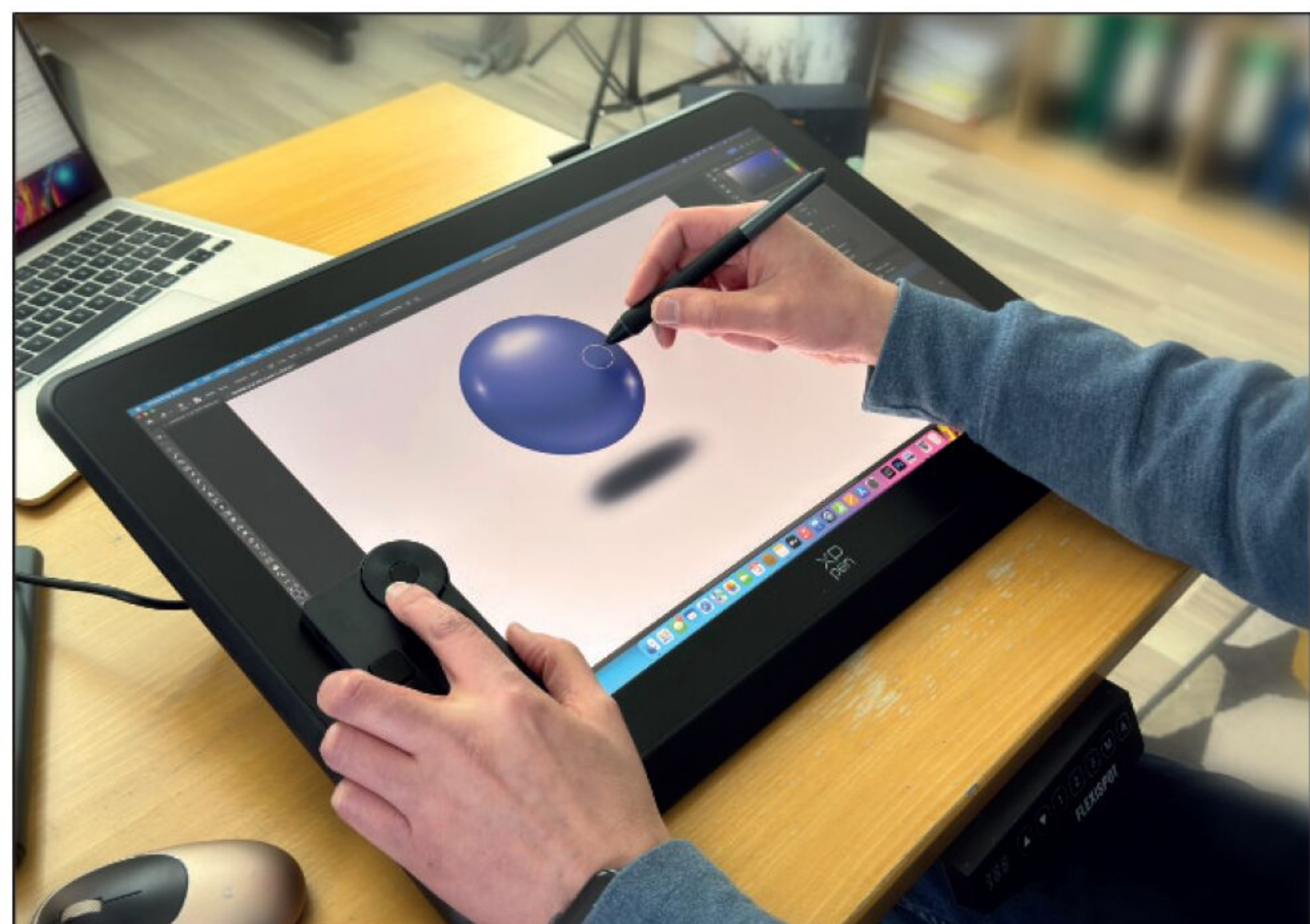
Follow our plans at www.airbrush-days.com



XP Pen Artist Pro 22 (Gen2): The ideal price, performance and size ratio

When it comes to image editing, digital painting and drawing, you can't get around a pen display these days. The technology offers decisive advantages: you can see where you are painting and the pressure sensitivity ensures natural design. The graphics tablet expert XPPen is launching a new 22" pen display that combines the latest technology with an attractive price and size. 22" is certainly one of the best-selling pen display formats in the last 10 years. It offers the perfect mix of size and price performance. It doesn't take up too much space on the work table, but has enough space for software display and provides an excellent overview of the art piece to be edited. In contrast to the previous model, a QHD display is now installed, which means 2560 x 1440 pixels on 21.5". This is optimal because it looks like it is printed (137 PPI) and pixels are only visible at close range with great difficulty. Of course, 4K and higher could also be used here, but it doesn't necessarily make sense, especially in terms of an attractive price.

The Artist Pro is color-calibrated and CalMAN-verified ex-works, which means that it displays exact colors and gray-scales. Simply turn it on and the colors will be accurate. Of course, you can change the color spaces in the software and also control them manually. In our editorial test, however, we left the basic settings as they were and were extremely satisfied with the color reproduction in 16.7 million colors and a contrast ratio of 1000:1. The viewing angle is 178 degrees and the surface consists of a fully laminated AG Nano-Etched Glass. The manufacturer speaks here of a paper-like surface. The small distance between the pen tip and the cursor definitely helps to enhance the visual drawing experience. At the very least, the surface is prepared in such a way that there is minimal glare, flickering and fingerprints. The display's color space can be adjusted in the driver – whether Adobe RGB, sRGB, Display P3 or your own customizations. The integrated stable stand allows the pen display to be set up at a wide range of angles - from a flat drawing position to an upright



one. The lower edge of the housing is ergonomically wedge-shaped and thus offers a pleasant transition to the work surface.

Of course, the latest X3Pro pen technology has also been incorporated into this model. With 16K pressure levels for input, the pen reacts very sensitively and responds to a light pressure of 3 grams. As usual, the pen has two buttons for individual assignment and an eraser function at the end of the pen. So simply turn the pen over and start erasing in the respective application. The pen comes well protected in a metal case that contains the Bluetooth dongle for the included wireless remote keyboard, as well as replacement pen tips and the replacement tool. To store the pen safely, there is the option of integrating the included quick-release holder on the upper side of the case. This way, the pen always has its place and cannot disappear.

The XPPen Artist Pro 22 (Gen2) connects to the computer via USB-C cable. In this case, the image signal and the pen information are transmitted by just one cable. This helps with the cable situation on the work table. If you don't have a free USB-C port, you can also use the included HDMI cable and a USB-C to USB-A cable for pen data transfer. Older ports can also be used with an adapter. In this respect, the device can be operated on almost all computers, because the variety of drivers – whether Windows, MacOS, ChromeOS, Android or Linux – is also provided.

As already mentioned, a shortcut remote control with buttons and a physical dial is included as an additional accessory. This can be integrated into the system via Bluetooth. The shortcut remote is not only practical for using the pen display, but can also be used to operate it in any application. This makes it possible to customize your own workflow and implement shortcuts more conveniently than with a large keyboard. The rotary wheel is ideal for zooming into designs, adjusting brush sizes or rotating your image in the design application.

Of course, the device is compatible with all popular design programs. Whether Photoshop, Affinity Photo, Gimp, Krita, Corel Painter, Illustrator or Blender. The range of applications is therefore very wide and ranges from image editing, digital painting, designing templates to layout and 3D modeling. The new XPPen Artist Pro 22 (Gen2) is therefore ideal for all ambitious hobby users up to professional designers. With an MSRP of 799 euros / 699 GBP / 699 USD, the device offers an attractive price-performance ratio.

www.xp-pen.com

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Kyomi Racer

The Asian racing driver looks determined to win as she peers out from under her helmet. Canadian illustrator Dennis Mott's detailed portrait uses

just a few colors to great effect, with masking tape and film as his main design tools.

EQUIPMENT – KYOMI RACER

Airbrush: Iwata Custom Micron Takumi Airbrush

Paints: Golden High-Flow transparent acrylics: Quinacridone Red, Naphthol Red light, Carbon Black

Surface: Bristol 300 illustration paper, 19" x 25" with 3 layers of gesso for a smooth, erasable surface.

Further materials: Masking tape, masking film, eraser, French Curve Stencils by Dru Blair, 600-grit sandpaper

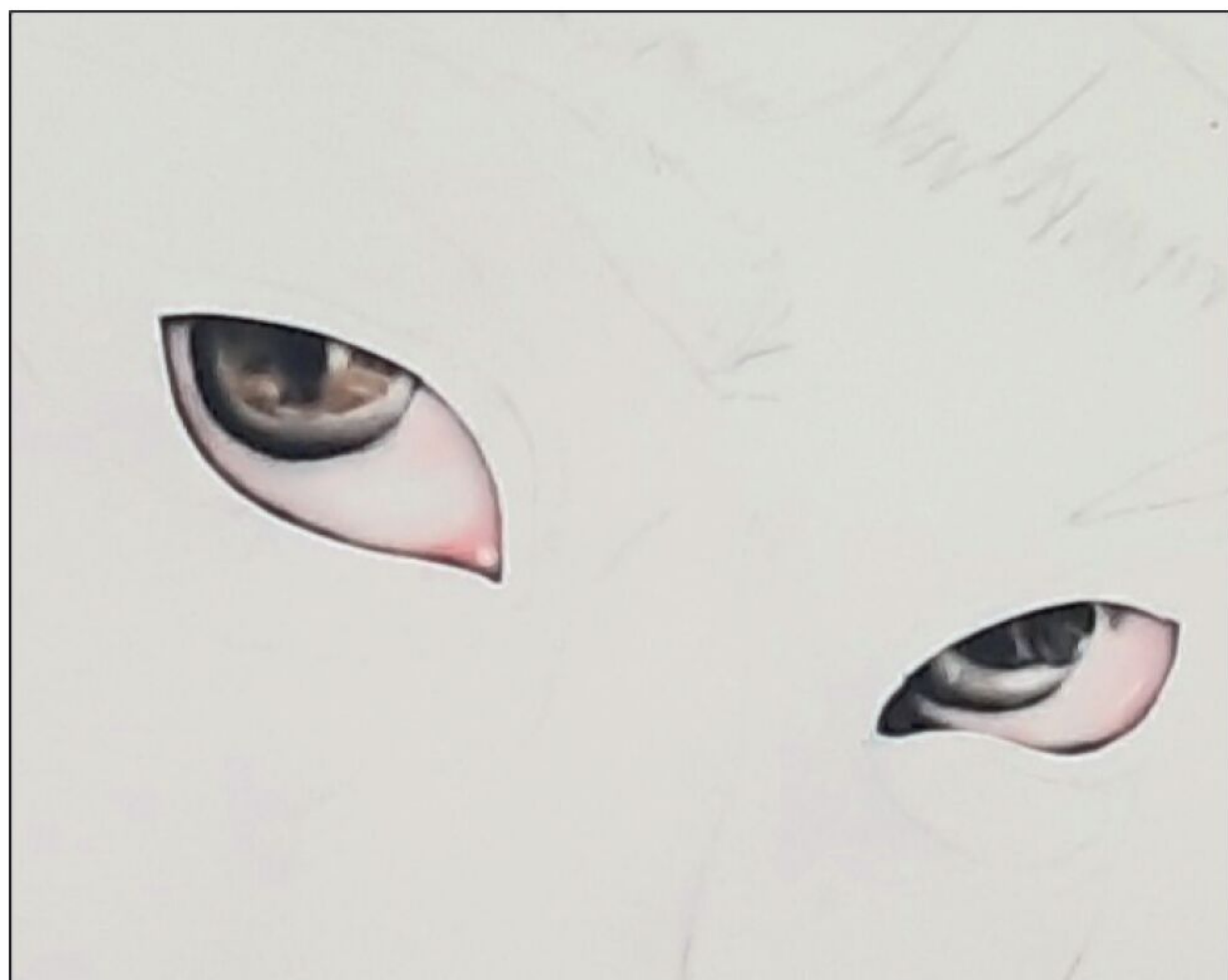
01 Drawing the image

I use a projector to size and layout the image on my illustration board. In Commercial art school we were told that you are being paid to paint, not to sketch. I use a soft 4b pencil, so that it will erase easily.

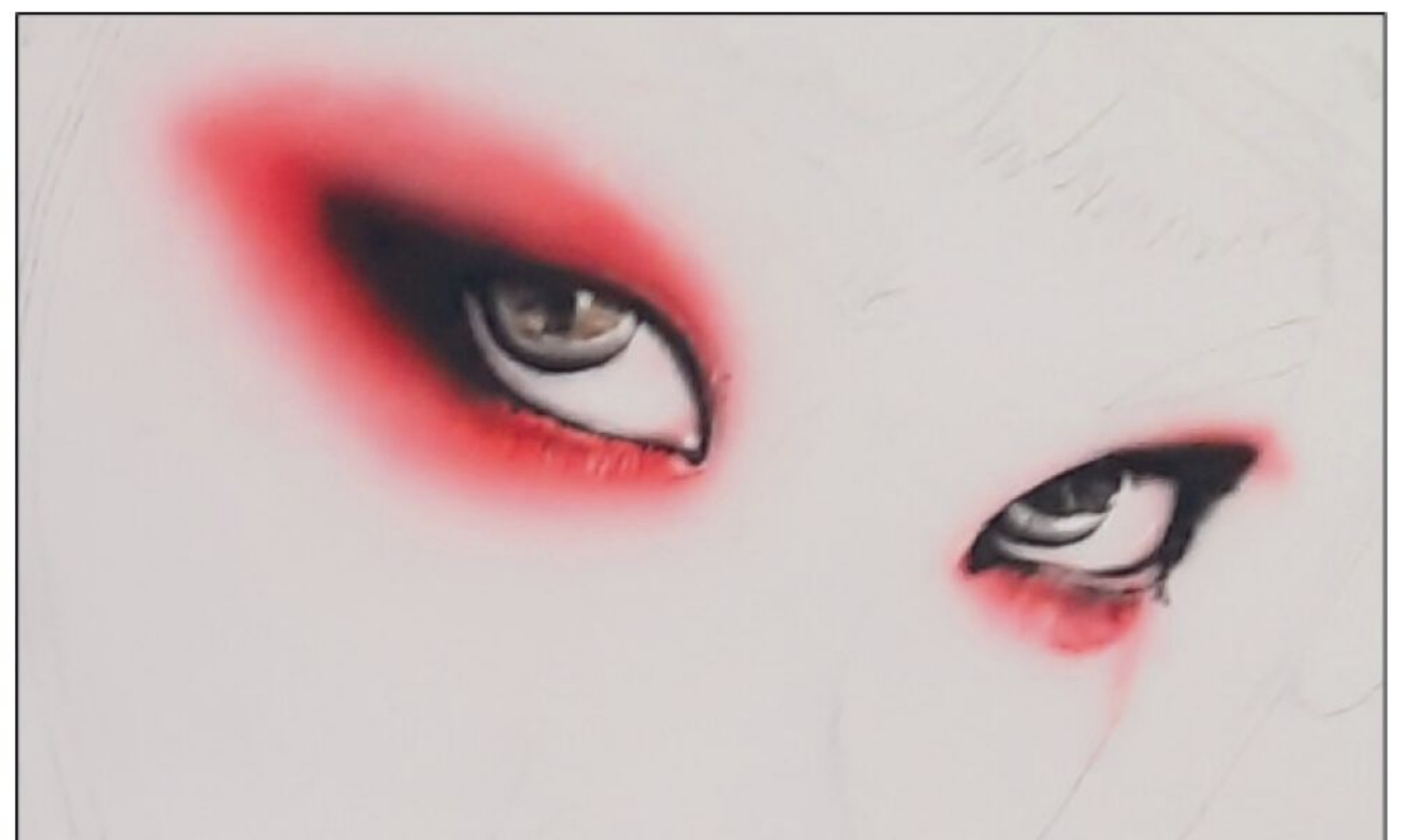
**02 The eyes**

For me, the eyes are always first area of paint. If they don't look as lifelike as possible, the rest of the painting will be mediocre. It is typically the only area that I use Frisket film

and circle templates for the shape of the Iris. I will lay down the iris colour and then spray the black pupil and the black outer edge of the pupil.

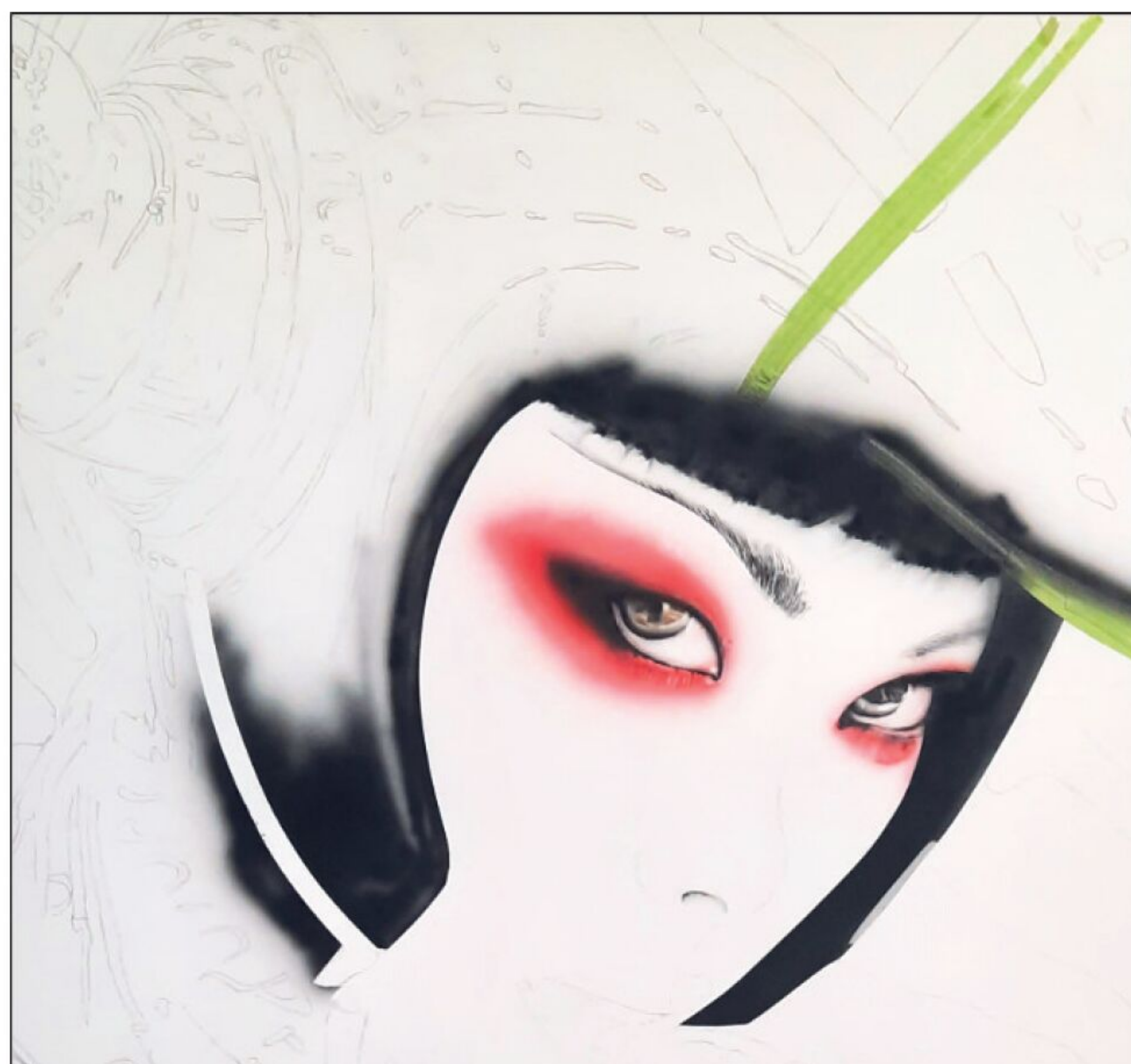
**03 Make-up**

The Sclera (eye whites) usually have grey shadows and surrounding colours reflecting in them so I will wait until I have more of the face painted before I finish them. After I finished the black eyeliner and red mascara I added some red to the sclera. The red is a 50/50 mixture of Quinacridone Red and Naphthol Red light diluted with 20% distilled water.



04 Black areas in the helmet

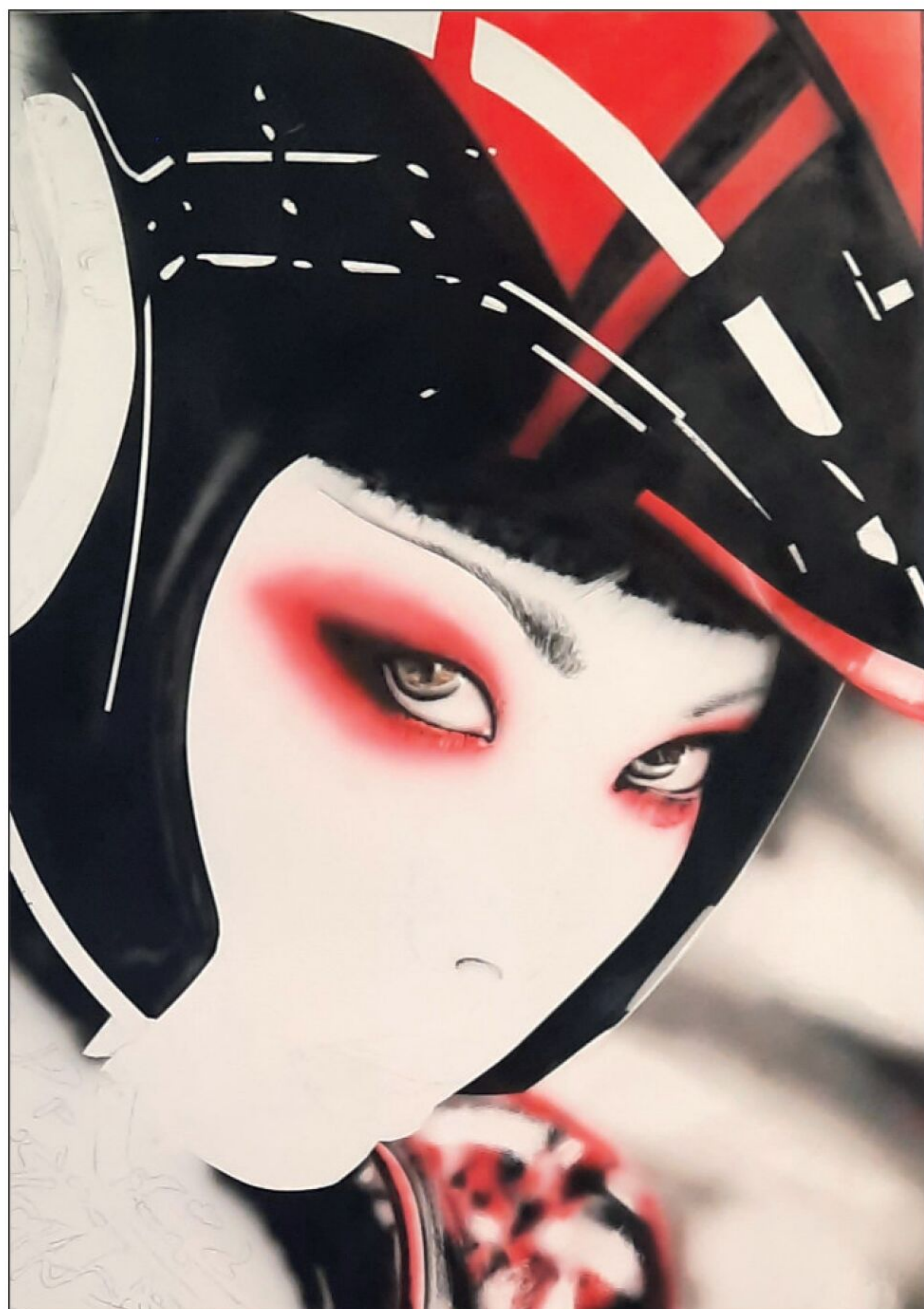
The black in the helmet was next. I masked the edges using ¼" paper masking tape for a sharp edge with no bleed or overspray.



05 Masking highlights

I also masked out the large specular highlights. To avoid overspray I will mask off the edge of the face and then tape sheets of paper to the masking tape. To achieve the perception of a shiny surface, you must create contrast, sharp edges and numerous specular highlights. I used ¼" wide paper masking tape found at any hardware store instead of Frisket film for the sharp edges. Frisket film is expensive and hard to

cut perfect curves freehand, where as the tape is flexible enough to make smooth curves. Frisket film was used for the eyes and lips but more importantly for the specular highlights. This painting used the least amount of colours and the most amount of masking tape I have ever used.



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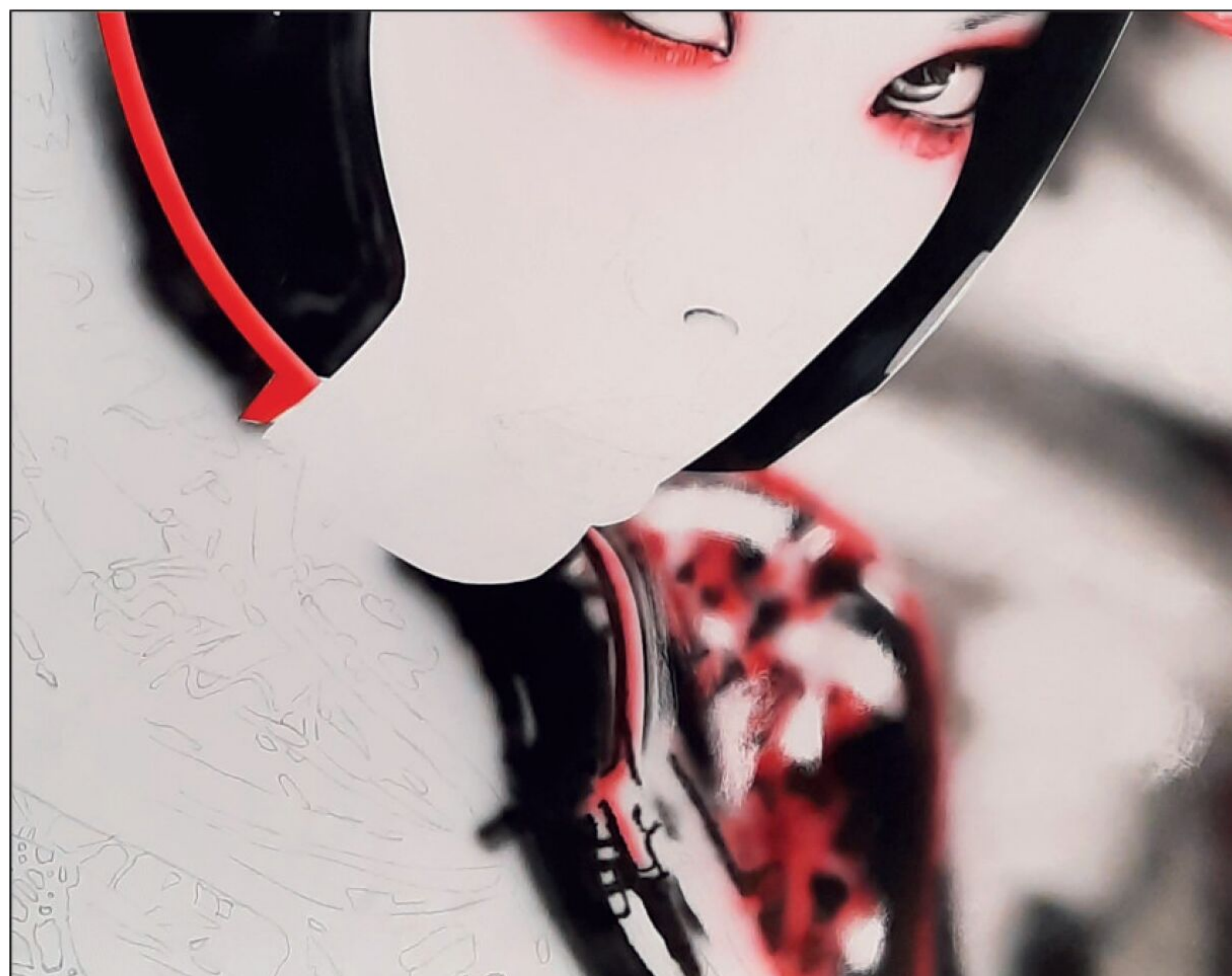
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06 Background

A major contributor to this painting is the exaggerated depth of field. The focal point is Kyomi's nose and the back ground is out of focus. After spraying the back ground freehand, I will use 600 grit sand paper to blur the reflective areas.



07 Lips

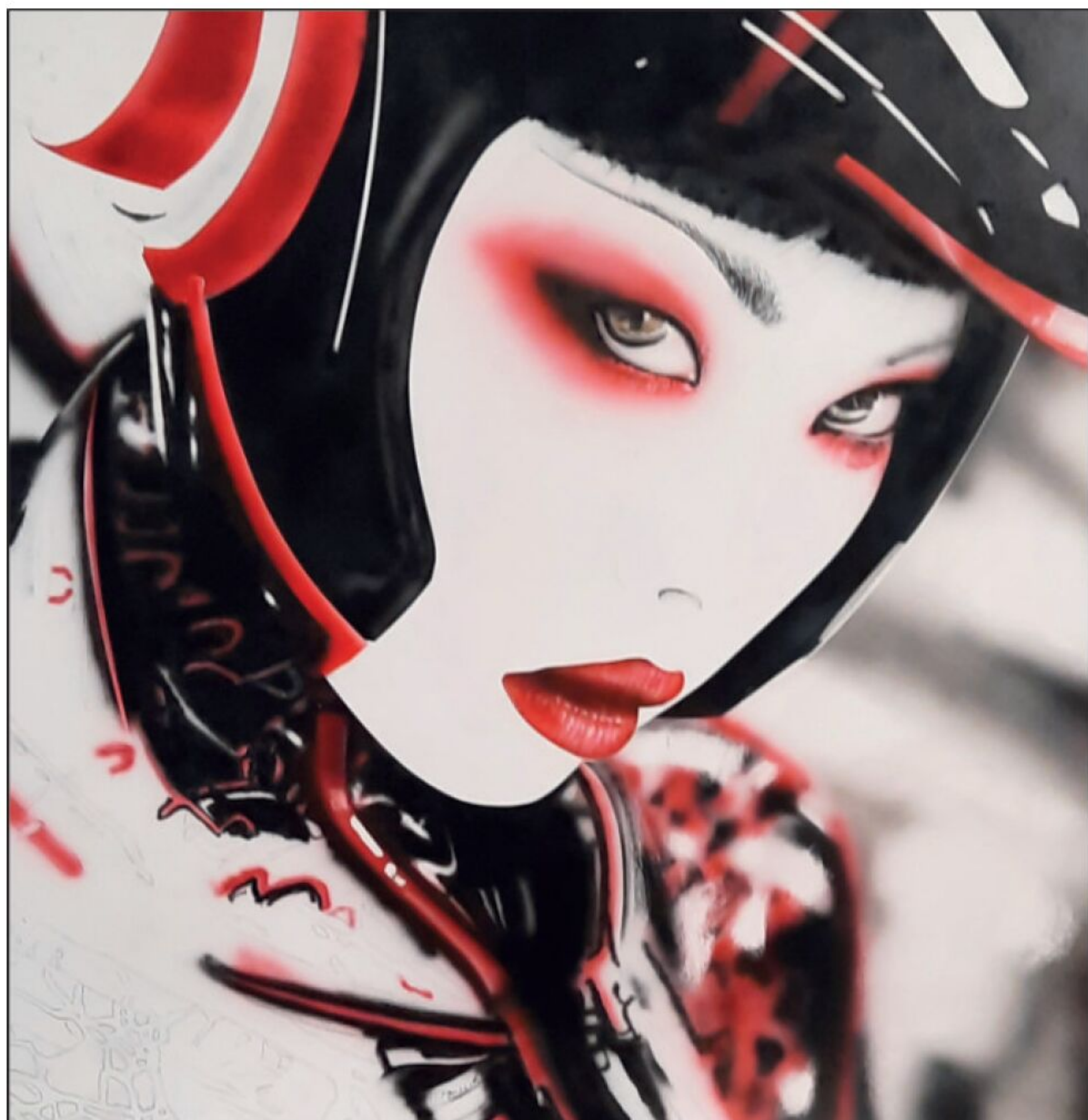
I use Frisket film to mask out the outer edge of the lips because there is no flesh tone against them. The lips have 3 tones of the red so I start with the lightest area first. When spraying transparent paints, more coverage will create the two darker tones. Using an aggressive eraser I subtract colour for the white highlighted creases on the lips.



08 Racing suit

To make the Black leather racing suit look shiny, I used Frisket film to cover the specular highlights and then I

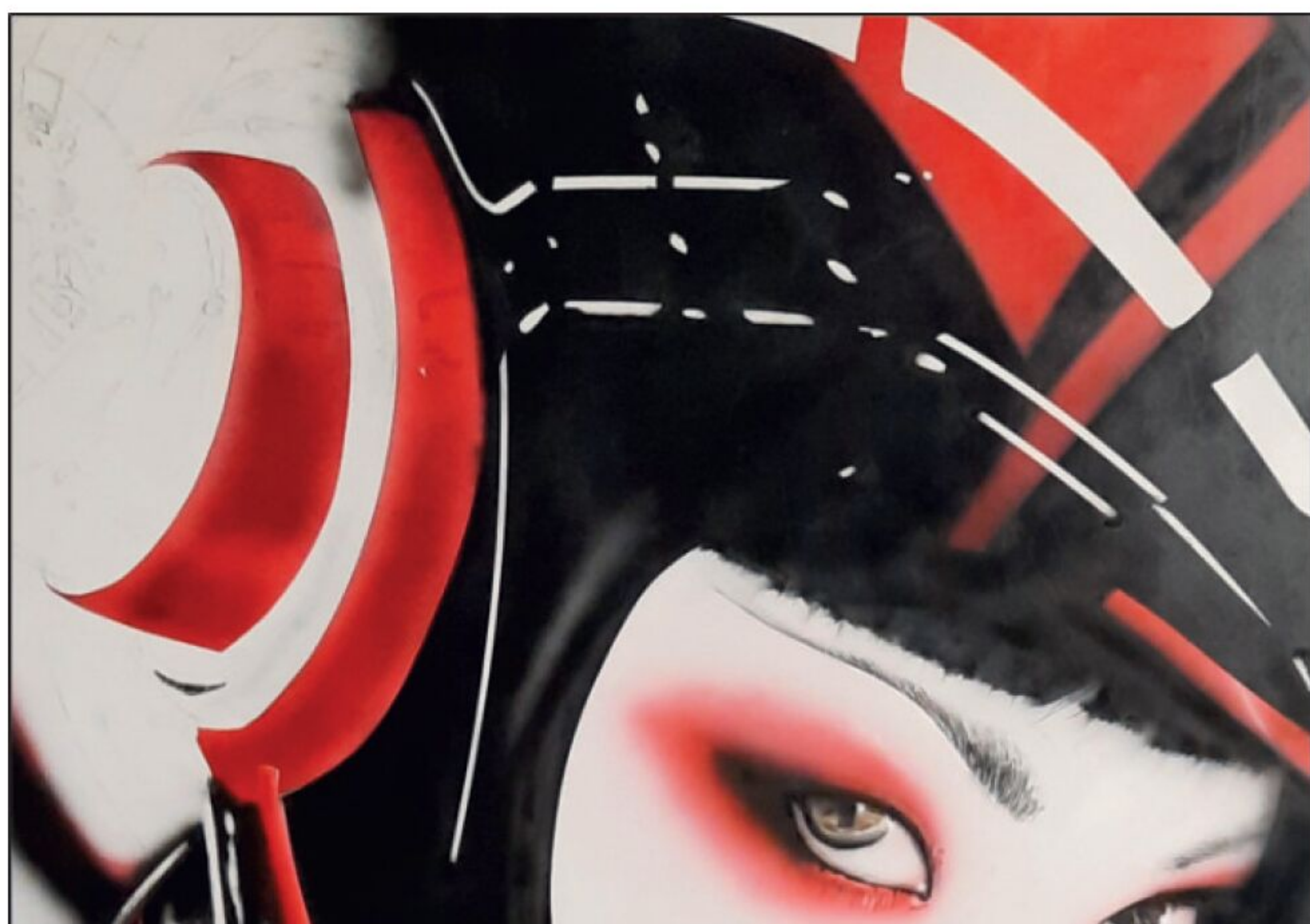
sprayed the red pattern. This part of the suit is slightly out of focus, so I am able to add the surround black freehand.



09 Headphone

The headphone portion of the helmet has the most curves and to make the surface look shiny you need contrast.

I will use a curved metal edge to erase against for a very sharp edge or reflection.



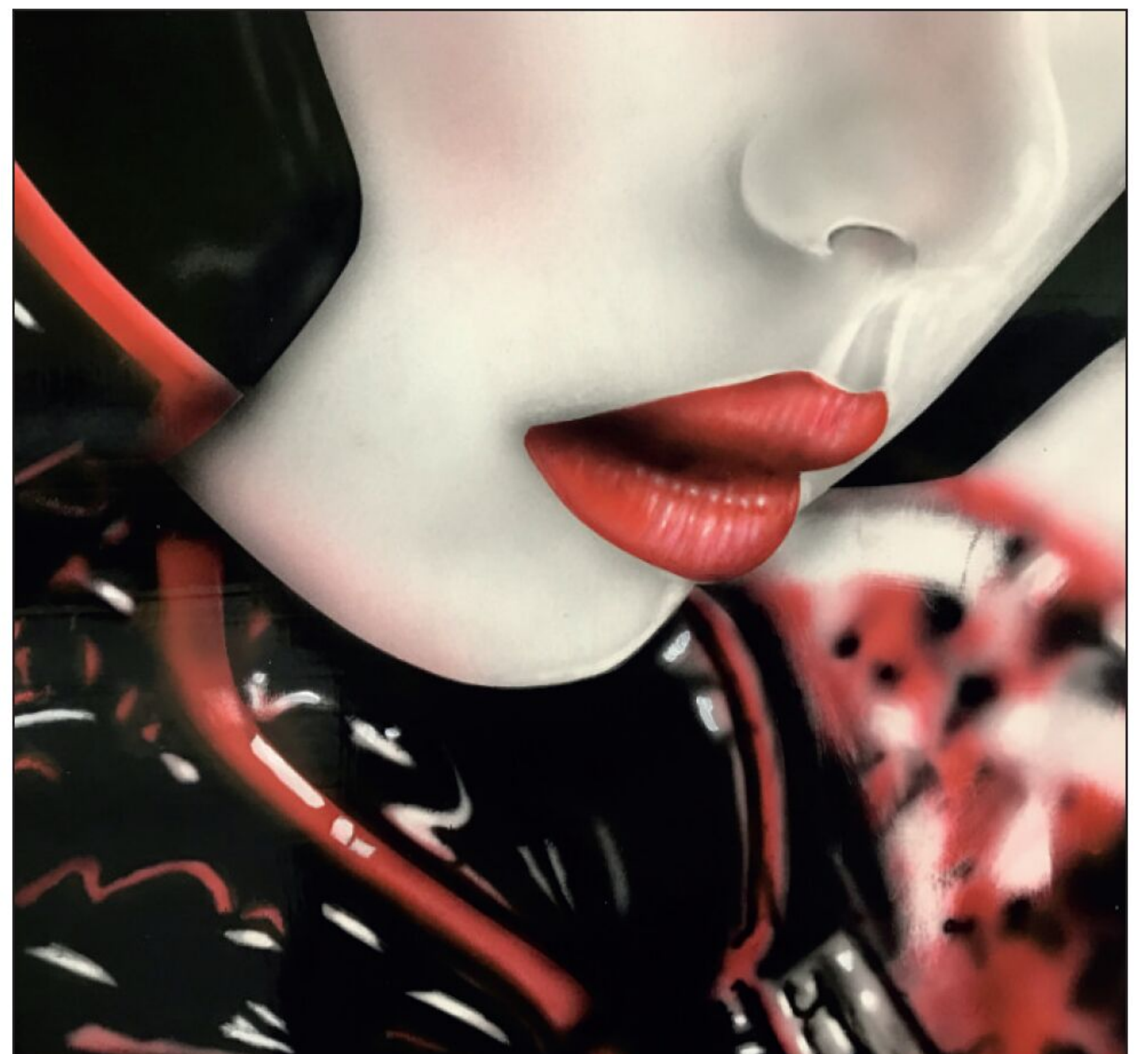
10 Face

The last step is to add dimension to the face. I masked off the black edge of the helmet and painted the cheek and chin shadow with a very faint covering of black. To spray the nose shadow I use transparent marker paper taped from

above and a new Exacto blade to cut the shape of the nose. I hold the marker paper back from the cut edge to allow a slight bleed when spraying. I also used Dru Blair's French curve shields for some of the areas on her face.

**11** Details and highlights

Using an aggressive eraser and subtracting back to the Gesso is never as bright in my opinion for the highlights.



12 Finished portrait

Lastly is a coat or two of Li-quitex high-gloss clear, this give the paint to look of a photograph and protects it from damaging UV light while still leaving the painting flexible enough to be rolled for shipping. This Painting took roughly 20 hours to complete. This is the link to the time-lapse video of me making this painting as well as a slideshow of the critical stages on YouTube:



DENNIS MOTT



Dennis Mott is 57 years old and lives in Toronto, Canada, where he works as a professor of applied mechanics at Centennial College. He loves painting futuristic pictures and portraits of famous people and tries to make time for it once a month. He finds painting very relaxing and challenging in a good way. He has been drawing in one way or another since he was a child. In the 80s, he completed a degree in Commercial Art at Saint Clair College and worked briefly as an illustrator in small advertising companies and print shops. After leaving the industry over 30 years ago, he decided in 2021 to revive his love of painting and airbrushing. He still had his original Badger 150 from the 80s and started to relearn how to mix and apply paints. After a year, he replaced the Badger with an Iwata HP-SB airbrush and last year he switched to an Iwata Custom Micron Takumi with a lighter feather and shorter lever from Dru Blair. His YouTube channel shows how he has developed over the last 3 years in time-lapse videos and slideshows. With practice and perseverance, his work has improved.

YouTube: @airbrushillustratordennism2141 - [instagram.com/airbrushillustrator](https://www.instagram.com/airbrushillustrator)

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Back to the 90s – that's how you could summarize the motto of Geir Nordaunet's work. A children's toy and the memory of a beach towel from his childhood inspired him to create his design. To do this, the Norwegian digitally assembled various photo templates and then developed them using his special airbrush crayon technique.

SKYDANCER

GEIR 2024

EQUIPMENT – SKYDANCER

Airbrush: not specified

Colors: Army Painter airbrush sets and Vallejo airbrush colors.

Surface: 250 g Canson Bristol paper, 420 x 297 mm

Other materials: Caran d'Ache luminance pencils and Prismacolor Premiere colors, HB graphite pencil, adhesive tape, white gel pen

01 Planning

I start my process with a Google search to find references that could fit my idea. These images give the idea a better starting point and help to better plan the composition.

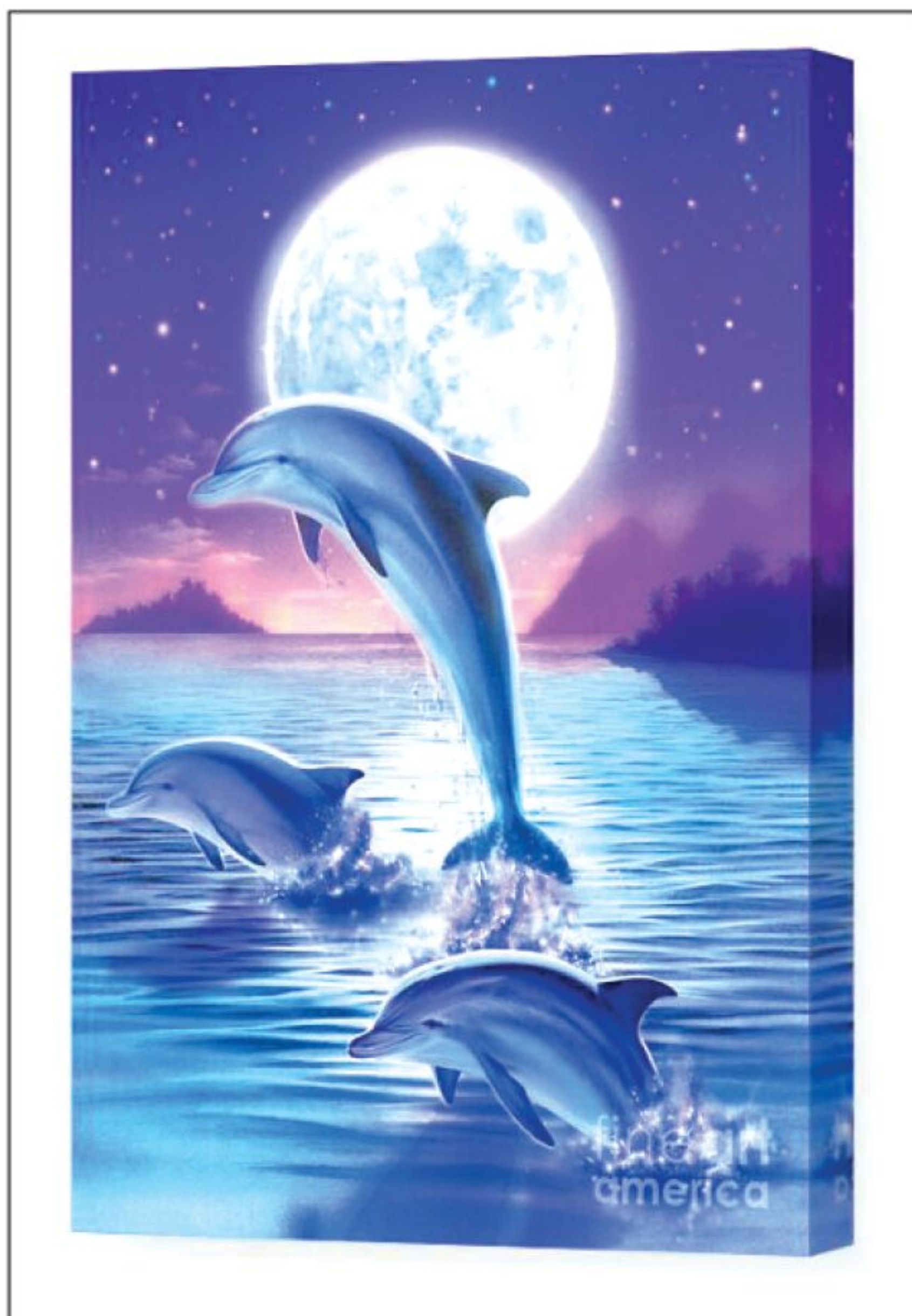
In this case, I wanted to design a typical tourist vacation beach towel from the 90s that reminds me of my childhood. It was also to be a realistic design of a 90s Skydancer toy.



02 Composition

I use Photoshop to put together my composition. For the color style of the dolphins, I was inspired by ballet dancers and the work of Robin Koni. I planned my image in A3 format (420 x 297mm). This format is easy to work on in a small

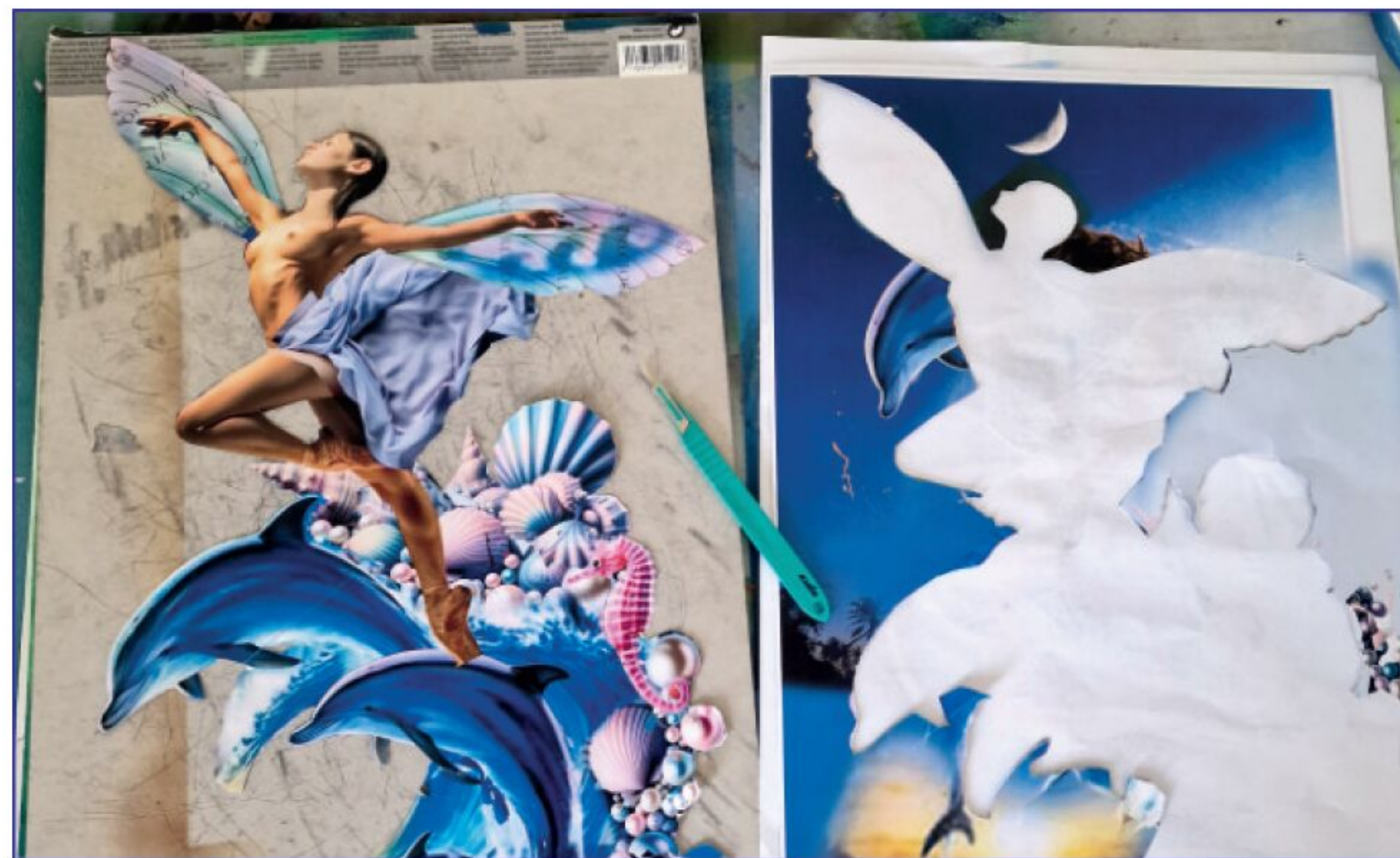
workspace and can be printed at home on a normal printer by splitting the image in half and printing both parts at 100% size in the printer settings.



03 Prepare templates

I print the drawing out at the actual size I want to make it. Then I fill the back of the paper with an HB graphite pencil so that I can transfer the design to a stencil using a pen. If you are working on a large format, use masking tape from

the hardware store to join the print papers together and fill the tape with graphite. This way you won't have any gaps in the stencils when you transfer them.



04 Make stencils

Make two sets of stencils. One with the graphite on the back, one without. Use the blank stencil to protect your shapes while you are working on the substrate and to avoid

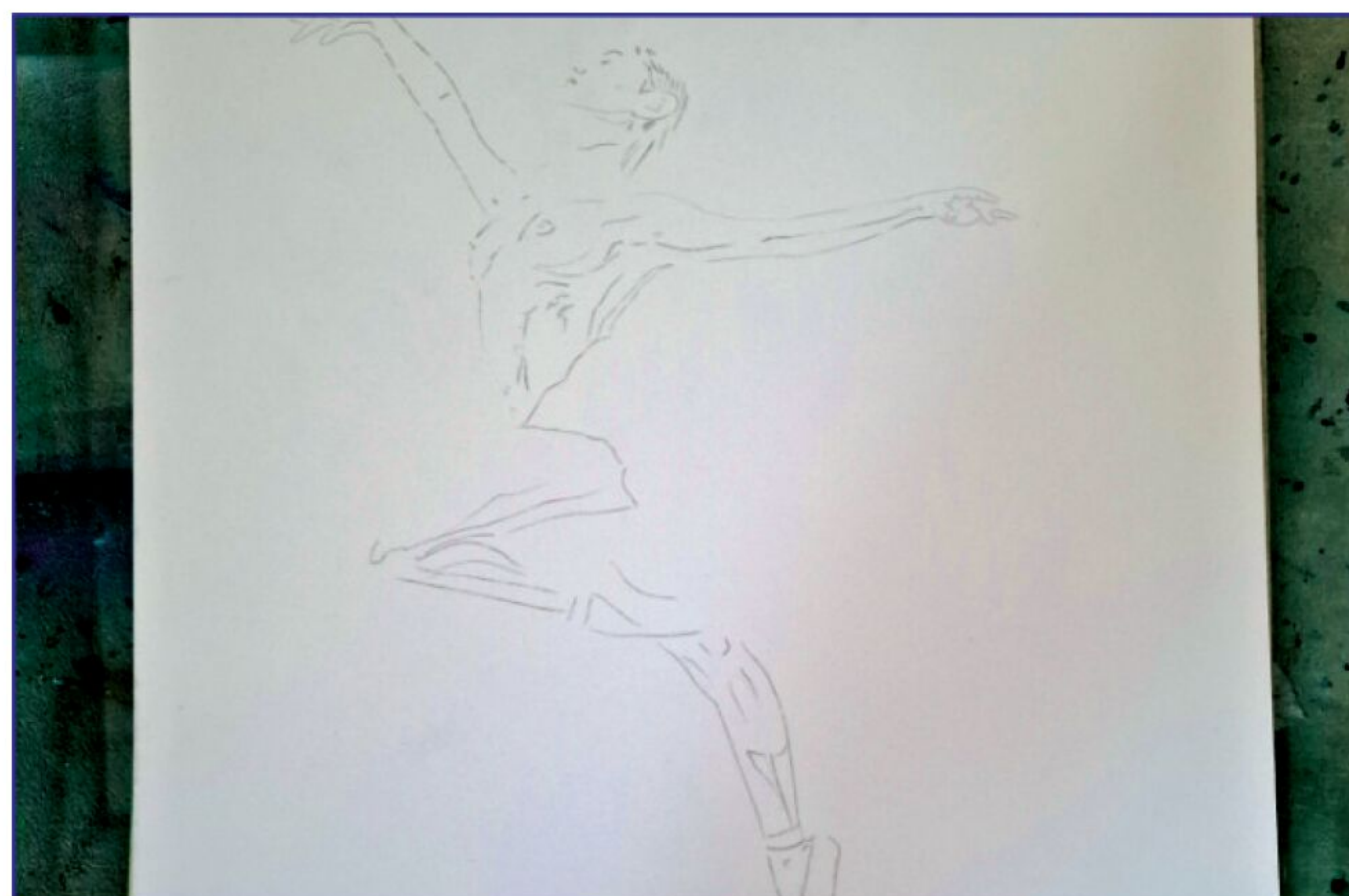
covering your graphite stencil with airbrush paint. I use Canson Bristol paper, 420 x 297 mm, because it can absorb the water and has a surface on which the pencils will adhere.



05 Trace the outlines

First, I attach the graphite template to the background and trace around the figure. Use simple lines to help you place the shapes. The details are filled in with pencils. The more detail you include in your outlines, the messier both the

airbrush color and the pens will get, as the allspice easily transfers to your artwork. A tip is to use a little eraser when working with pencils.



06 Background

Then cut out the blank stencils from the same transfer paper to create the areas to be protected. Attach them precisely to the drawing. Then start filling in the background and build the work based on your gut feeling. Make nice transitions that give your piece good contrast. The back-

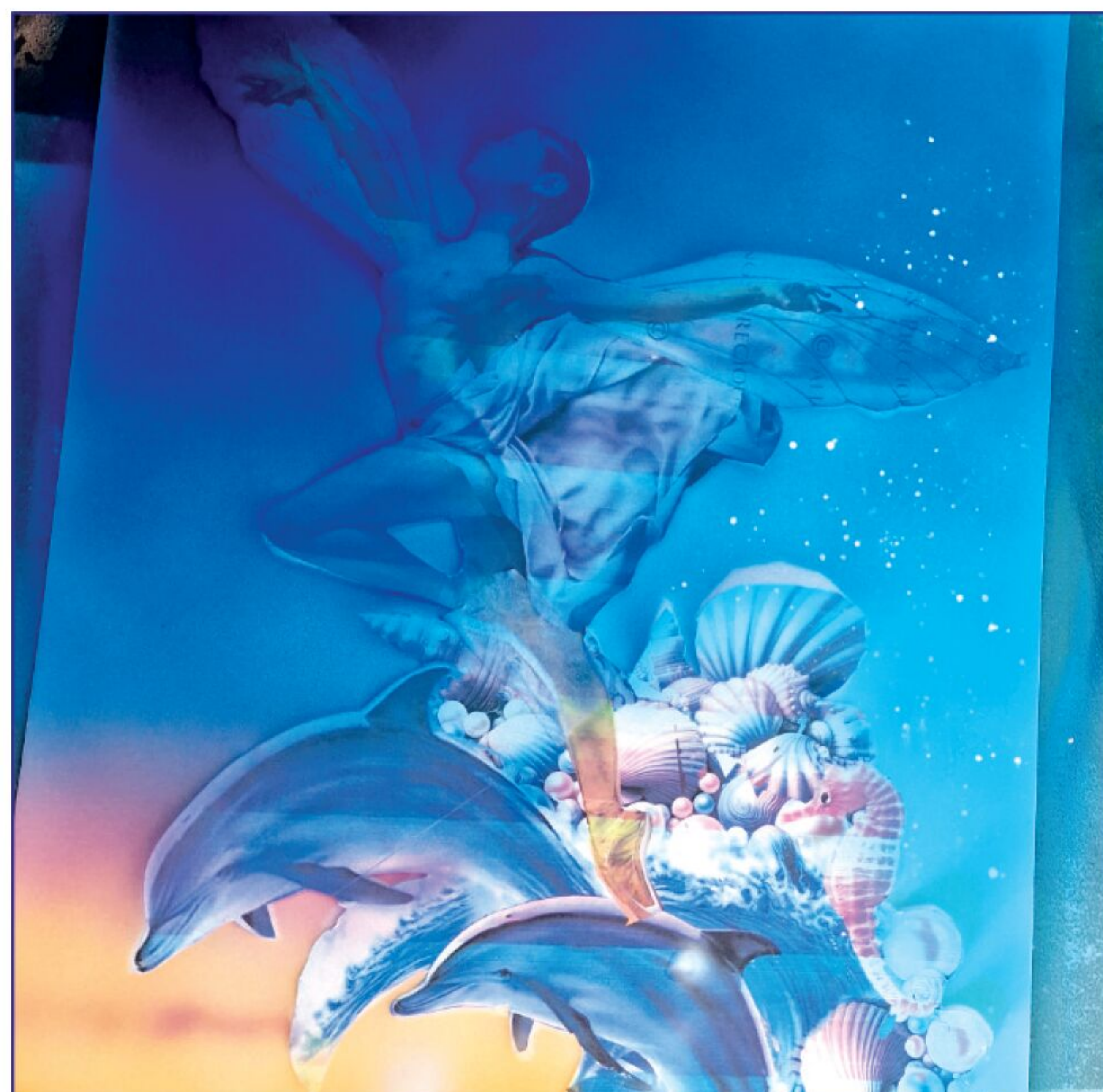
ground gives your drawing a good starting point for building shadows and volume. Make the smooth transitions with the airbrush to make your pencil work stand out, and have fun mixing the colors.



07 Sunset

Fill in the details by enhancing the background and foreground. Here I used some leftover cardboard to create a horizon line in the sunset. I also added a sunset as a base to be colored in later with colored pencils. Please allow the paint to dry for 24 hours before working with pens over the

paint layer. The paint won't blend nicely on the surface and will have less hold if you draw on it too soon. If you're as impatient as I am, use a hair dryer, put the drawing in the oven on low heat, or leave it in the car on sunny days to speed up the drying process.



08 Color base for shells

I'm covering the background and revealing the area of shells and pearls. Don't throw away any cut-outs until you've finished this process. Now I'm filling in the color base in this area to use as a foundation for my pencil work later on. Make sure you create good gradients and textures if necessary. I started with pastel pinks, using a hint of flesh tone and pale rose as the base shade for the shells in my design. I wanted these to end up in an opaque, iridescent color when I finished them with pencils.



09 Big Wave

Next, I started filling in the large wave for the dolphins. I used the same shades as on the horizon to ensure that the effect of the sunset is repeated in the large wave. It is important to use the same shades in the foreground and back-

ground if you want to achieve a coherent result. Next, the dolphins were covered again and the blues for the ocean wave were filled in. I only indicated the direction of the wave freehand.



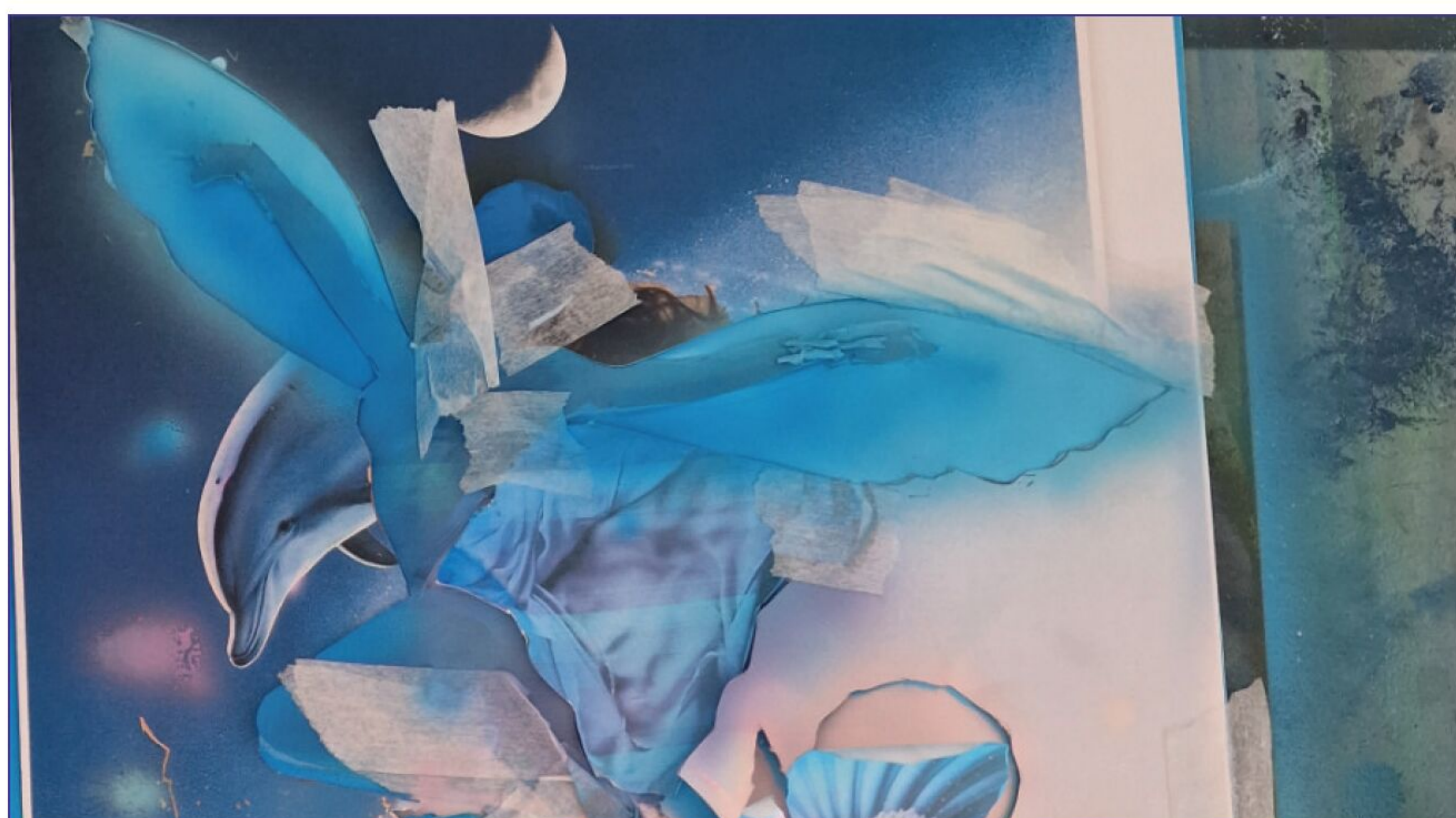
10 Dolphins

After that, I filled in both dolphins one after the other to make sure they were sharp and clean.



11 Skirt and Wings

The last additions were the skirt and the skydancer wings.



12 Interim result

Here you can see the interim result after I had applied the color base in all areas. I have roughly taken into account the different shades, textures and gradients. However, everything is still very blurry and serves only as a basis for the subsequent detailed work with pens.



13 Tracing more outlines

The next step was to use the graphite-colored background template and draw the placement of the details over

the main subject's basics. I only drew the details I needed and left out details I could draw freehand.





14 Creating the figure

Now, using your reference as a guide, try drawing your picture upside down. This will help you to focus on each element (face, body, background elements, etc.) rather than on the whole. Don't rush this process, and draw with the reference close to your work to get a good result.

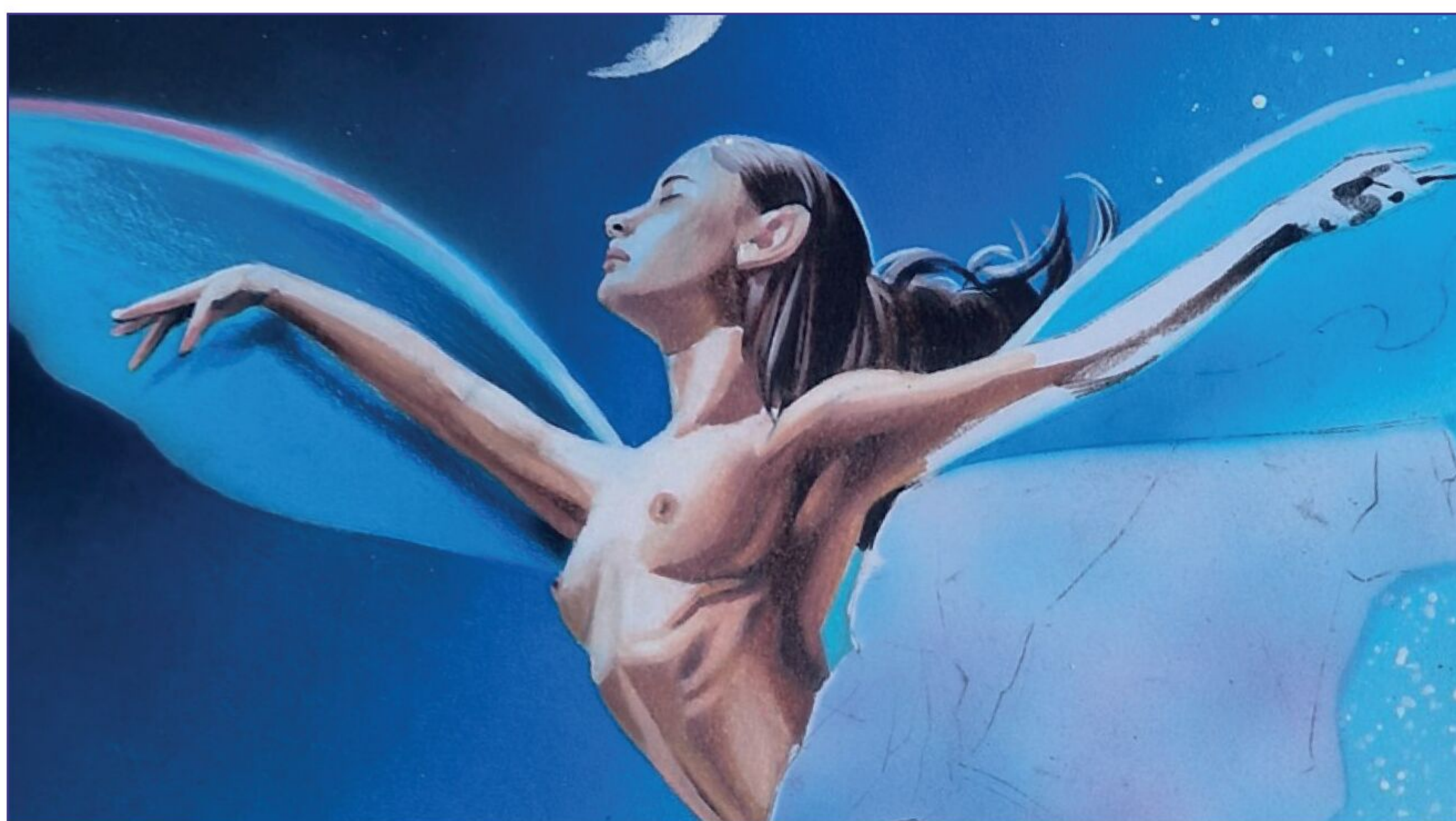
I started with the face and built up the frame of the face by coloring the hair and adding the moon with a white Caran

d'Ache pencil. This moon is given more life with white overspray using white and neon blue airbrush paint. Drawing in the hair first helps to frame the face and give it more contrast (remember we are drawing from dark to light). If you color the face first, without hair or background, it's easy to make the mistake of coloring the face too dark, or other parts you draw. That's why filling the background with the airbrush is so important: it helps your main subject have a solid base to stand out against.



15 From dark to light

Start by working from dark to light, as shown in the illustration. Fill in the dark flesh tones first, then move on to the lighter tones. This is the best way to ensure that the colors blend seamlessly. I recommend the Caran d'Ache luminosity pencils, which are the best for blending skin tones when drawing. They are creamy and easy to blend due to their ability to draw over each other.



16 Filling in skin tones

Here you can see an example of my approach to filling in the skin tones on her arm. I first use black, then the color "Dark Flesh Tone" from Caran d'Ache Luminance and gently shape the shadows. Try to create soft edges so that you don't have any problems with overlapping lighter tones. As you can see, the chest is now more complete with soft, beautiful gradations.



17 Wings

The wings were created by adding a white edge on top as a reflection of the moonlight. This line helps to give the wings more volume. I added volume to the wings with a defined gradation from dark to light. The pink design was filled in with Prismacolor Pink to imitate the original Skydancer toy. You can see that the strokes of the pencil are slightly visible in the wings. This was smoothed out later in the process.



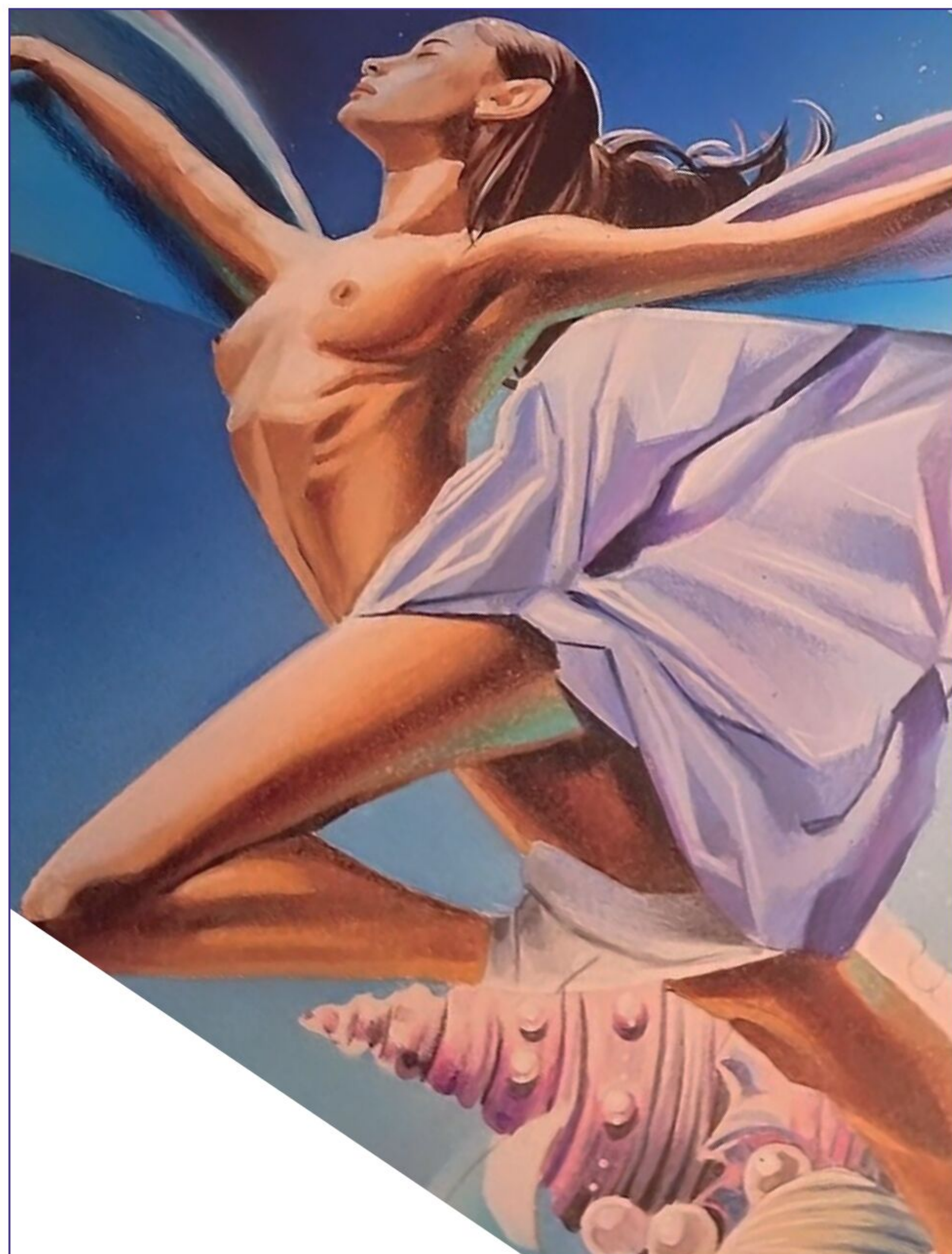
18 Skirt

The folds of the skirt were drawn with pencils to create a nice movement. This fabric was later softened by adding soft, pale lavender and purple colors.



19 Body

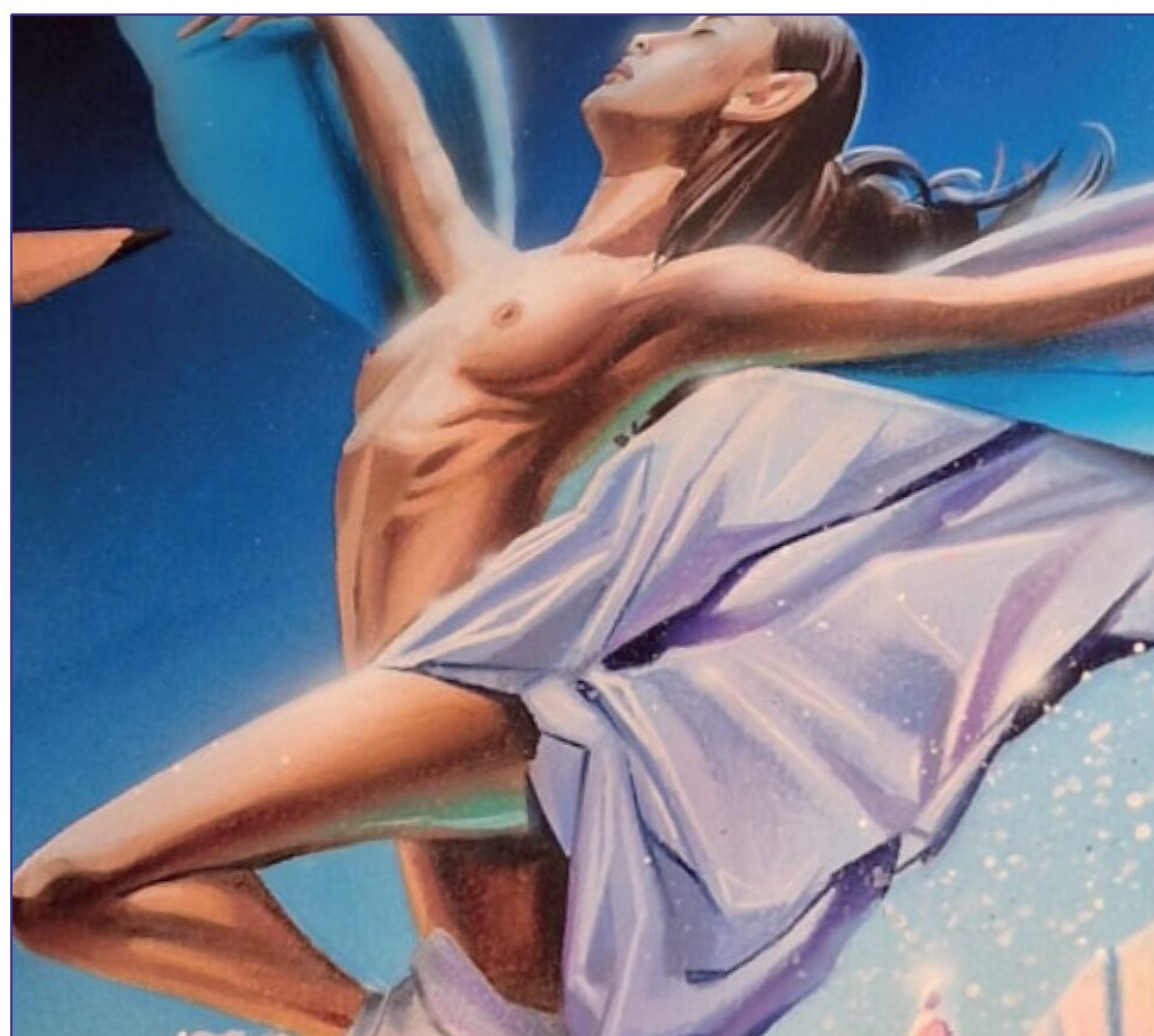
Here you can see most of the body filled in with pencils. I also added a green tint to the thigh to play with the colors of the wave below.



20 Overspray

Here is an example of how the skin tones are brought to life with airbrushed overspray. The dark overspray, made from thinned paint poured directly into the airbrush cup, gives her deeper shades. The white highlight on the body brings the figure to life, as if the moon were shining on her like a goddess. Purchase an advanced airbrush paint set, such as the Army Painter Air Set, so you don't have to mix too many colors yourself. This saves time and ensures more consistent colors if you need to reapply paint later.

This technique also helps to enhance the intensity of the pencil drawings and give all surfaces a soft finish. A nice bonus is that it also removes the shine that pencil drawings can get due to wax deposits. With an airbrush paint thinner added to all colors to be over-sprayed, this waxy layer easily disappears from the paper. Be careful not to overspray color over your pencil drawing or you will lose your lines and the shape will become blurred. Always remember to thin the paint with airbrush thinner.



21 Dolphins

The same process is used for the dolphins, adding details with Caran d'Ache and Prismacolor pencils from dark to light. It is very motivating to see the overspray from the pencil work bring the dolphins to life, as seen in these two images. The dolphins are now getting that over-the-top '90s aesthetic, with their soft gradients and saturated colors. I've also added neon yellow to the sunset. This color will be reflected in the dolphins, wave, skydancer, and beads.

Tiny white dots were added to give the drawing more texture. This was done by squeezing the airbrush hose, building up the pressure in the air stream and then releasing it with white paint in the cup for the water droplet effect.



22 Pearls and shells

The pearls were given their glossy effect by drawing with soft, light colors and a white gel pen highlight. Here I recommend the selection of Prisma Color Premiere pens. I also sprayed the pearls with heavily thinned neon pink, green and yellow Vallejo airbrush colors. This gave them a more playful, interesting surface that sparkled like diamonds.

23 Contours and pastels

I filled in the beads and shells, working from dark to light. I gently outlined their shapes with a confident contour that allowed for good placement of the shadows. The colors were slightly soft and pastel due to the underlying base color. I added some pale greens and blues in the shells and pearls to break up the pink base color. Keeping with the color base of the Skydancer toy, I wanted to keep it childlike, fun and happy.



24 Patience

In this step, it is important to be patient and draw one detail at a time. Don't rush this process, but enjoy the journey.



25 Lights and Effects

The details of the lights were enlarged and the hints of neon colors in the shells were thinned out. The white spray effect with dots was also repeated.



26 Finished Skydancer

Congratulations, you have created a new work of art!



GEIR NORDAUNET



35-year-old Geir Nordaunet from Norway has been drawing for as long as he can remember. He never went to art school, he is self-taught. His most commonly used tools are pencils and airbrushing. He started airbrushing after a good friend showed him how to fill in backgrounds and he had taken courses with Dru Blair. He wanted to use airbrushing to save money on supplies for pencils because you can fill so much space without pencils. Meanwhile, it has become a tool that he integrates into his pencil work to create fun colors, blends, and effects. In addition, the pencils can be easily layered over the airbrush color layer, giving the artist much more room for interesting layers in his artwork. He has been a professional tattoo artist at Black Cat Ink in Norway for 13 years, and the drawings and airbrushing are what he does in his free time between customers.

www.facebook.com/geir.nordaunet

FIRE GIRL

The young girl's face is illuminated only by the light of the candle. Her red hair accentuates the yellow-reddish lighting. The Hungarian artist

Geza Nagy created this portrait on canvas using only airbrushing techniques.

EQUIPMENT – FIRE GIRL

Airbrush: Infinity CR plus

Flow Improver, Vallejo Airbrush Thinner, airbrush cleaner.

Paints: Vallejo Game Air and Model Air in the colors white, black, medium gray, yellow, red, and blue, Vallejo Airbrush

Further materials: adhesive tape, paper for masking

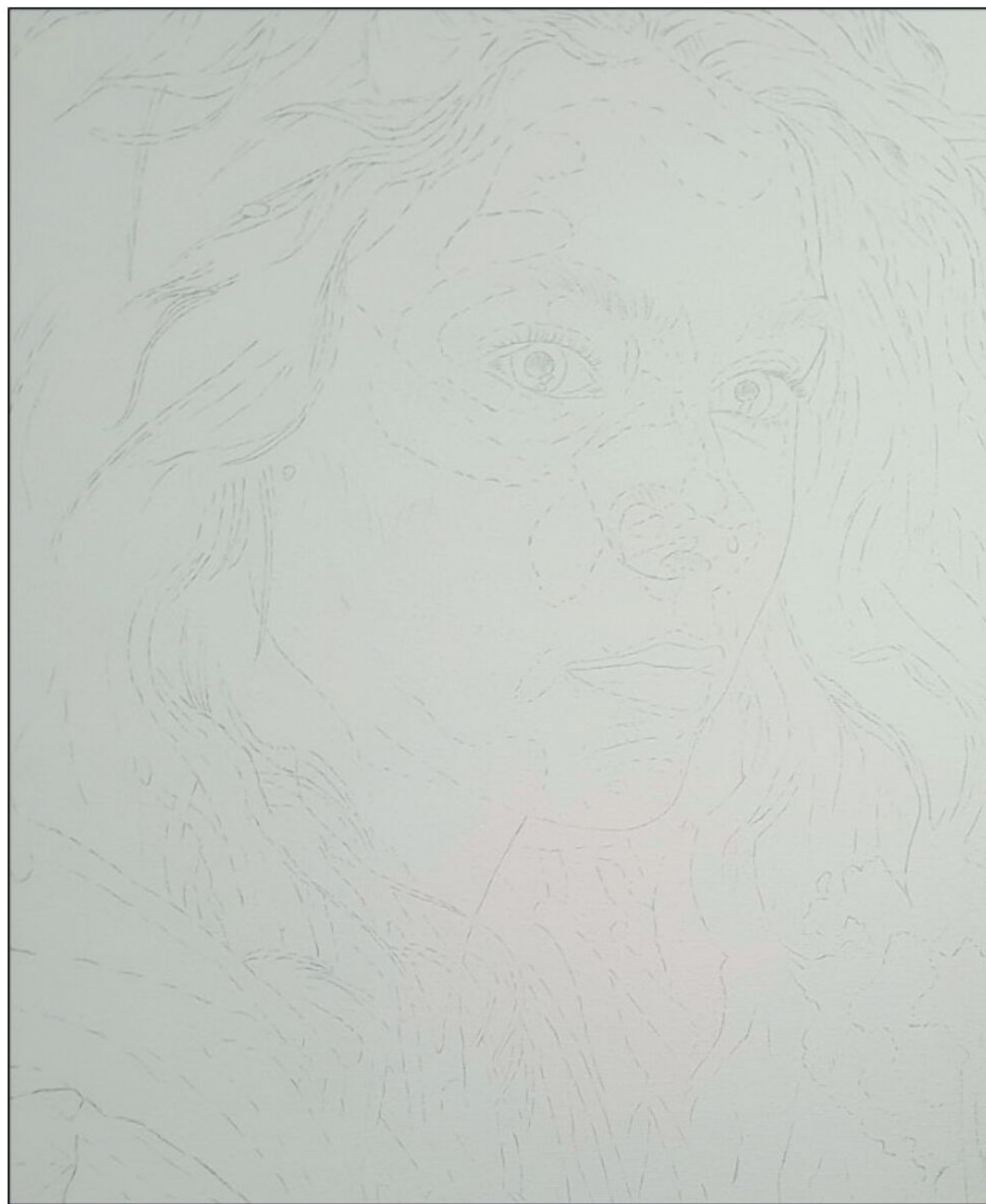
01 The canvas

I usually paint on a 50 x 70 cm canvas, as this size is neither too large nor too small. However, it is good to know that the larger the surface area we paint on, the more beautiful the end result will be, as it is easier to paint the details. I mean here, for example, for a portrait and wrinkles in it. Also, it is important to note here at the very beginning that I have never studied any form of art. Therefore, I'm sorry if you should officially do something differently. :) :) I did not perform the steps deliberately and consciously, because this picture was the very first portrait of my life that I painted with acrylic paint.



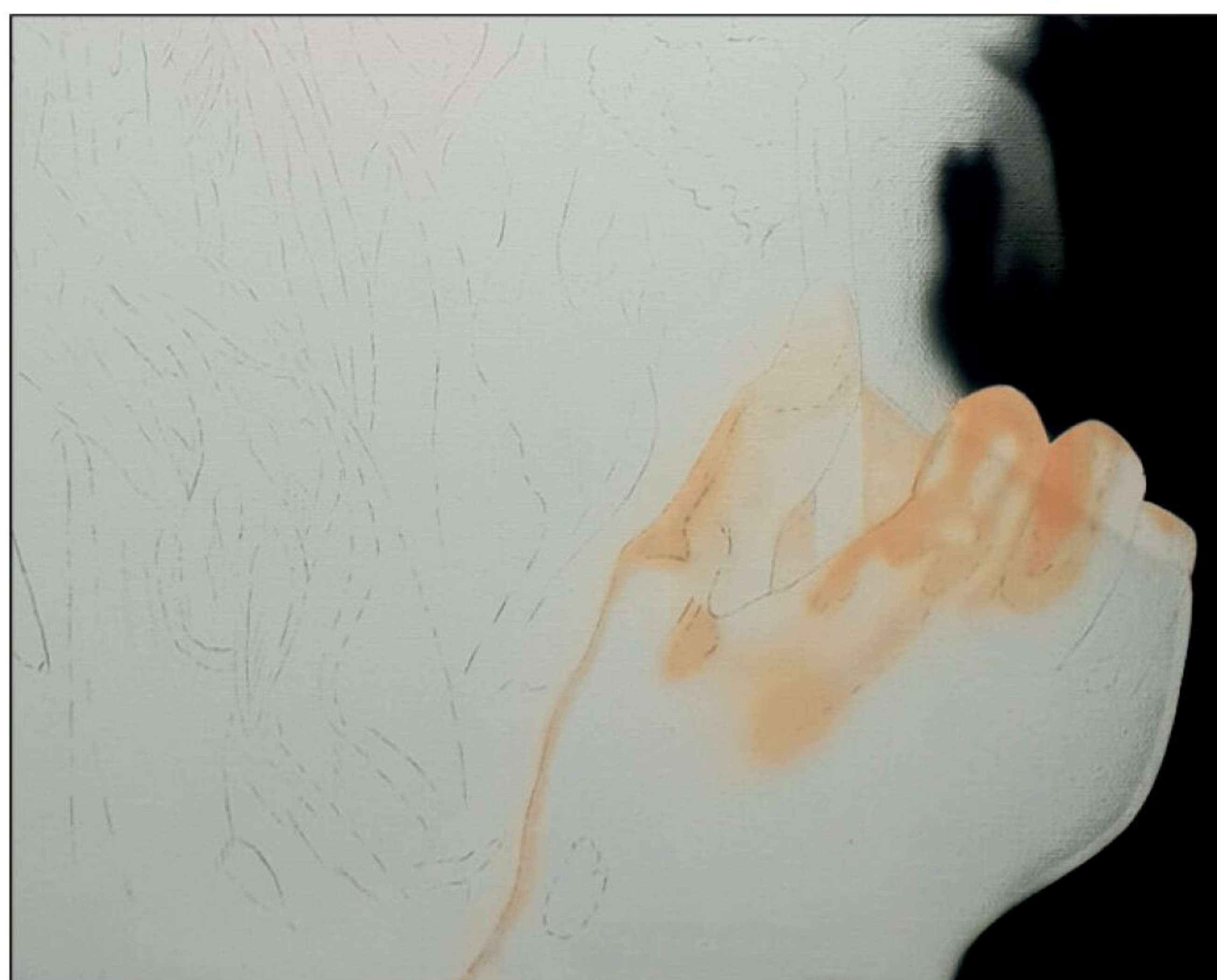
02 The preliminary drawing

With a HB pencil, I drew the desired design, the highlights and the shadows. Pay attention to the proportions and be careful not to smudge the parts that have already been drawn. If you are not sure, draw the motif very lightly at first. It is then easier to erase the unwanted parts. If necessary, you can draw the lines a little more boldly afterwards.



03 Mixing colors

I started by adding a bit of black around the girl's hand in the lower right corner to make the hand more contrasting at the beginning. So I left out the candlelight. Then I mixed a little skin color, consisting of red, yellow and a little blue. Unfortunately, I can't tell you the exact proportions and how much I mixed because I simply mixed the colors by feel. But with a little practice, anyone should be able to do it. I usually add 3 drops of flow improver and 3 drops of thinner to about 8-10 drops of color. I have lightly colored the fingers with this light color. When airbrushing, we always go from light to dark, because that's how you build a beautiful picture. Of course, this is not set in stone, but it usually makes it easier to build a painting.



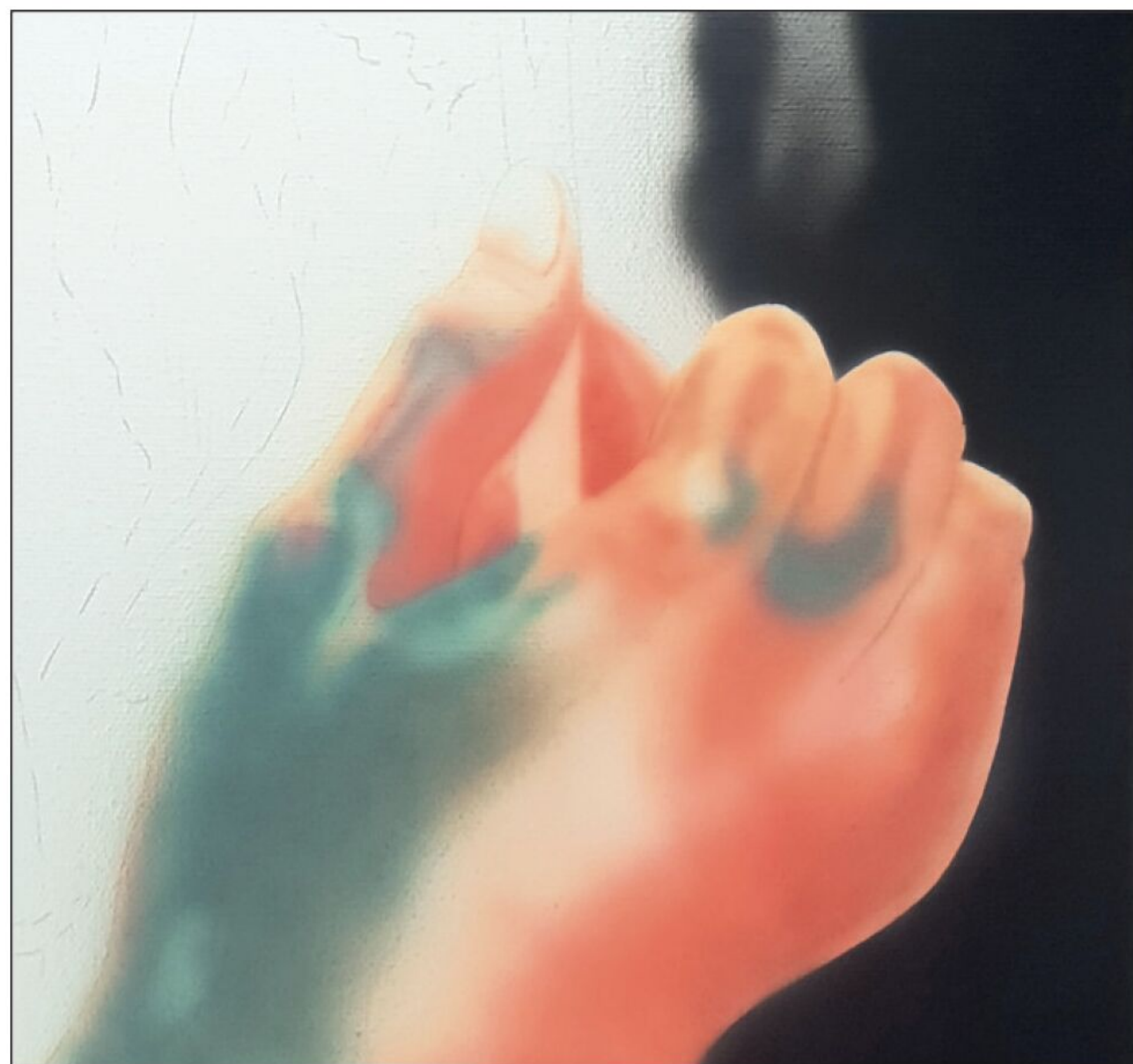
04 Darken skin tone

I added a little dark brown to the mixed light skin tone to give it a darker shade. I then airbrushed the rest of the hand with it, omitting the areas where the turquoise will go in the next step. I always try out the mixed colors on a blank piece of white paper and only then go directly to the canvas when the shade is right.



05 Reflected light

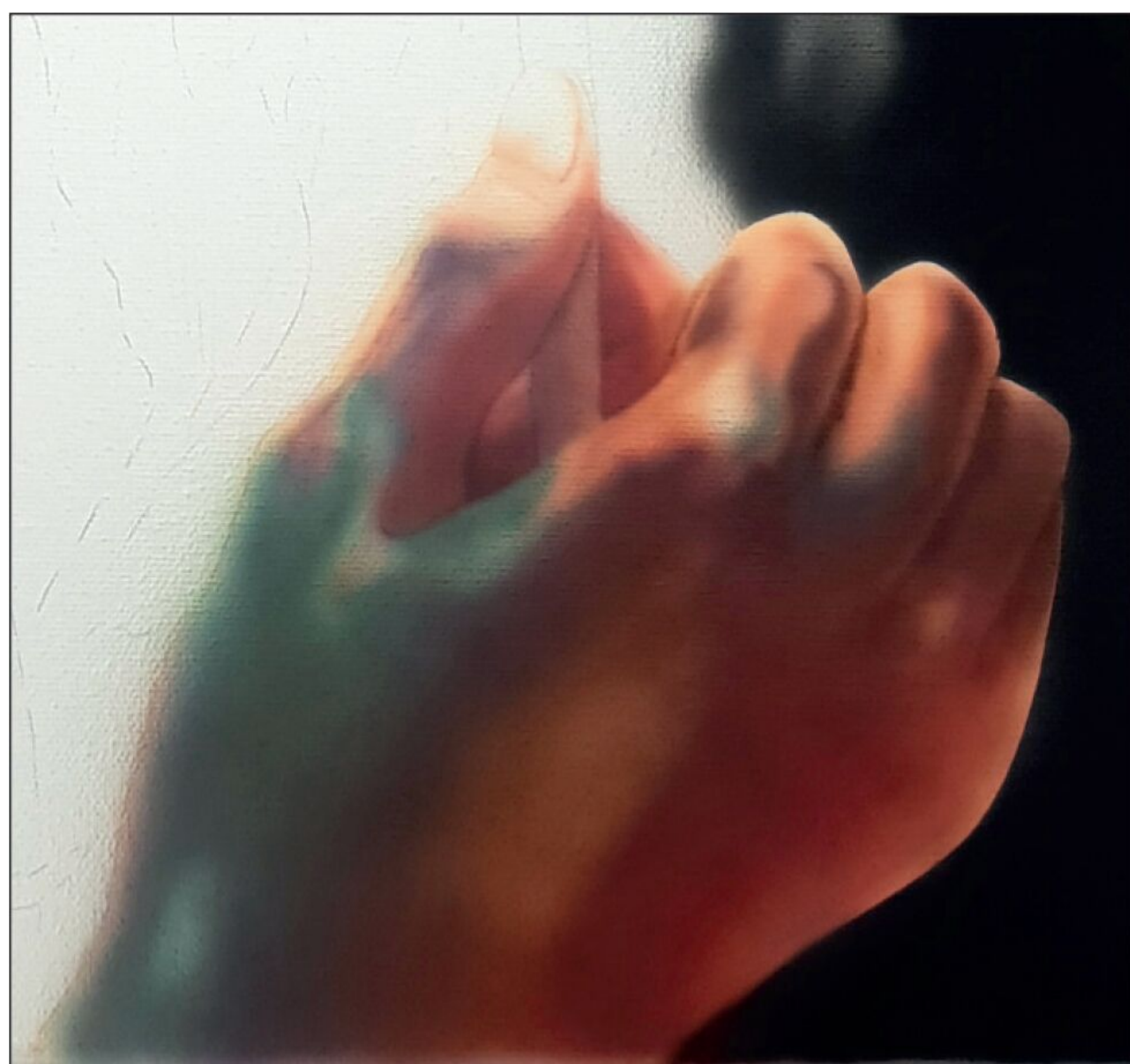
For the turquoise, I mixed blue and green and then lightly applied it with an airbrush to the areas where the light reflects from her coat. This is called reflected light. For these parts, I am not yet using the masking technique. I simply spray the color on close up and then the lines become sharper. If you want to mask it, you can do that, but I didn't want to spend any time on it here because it's not that important yet.



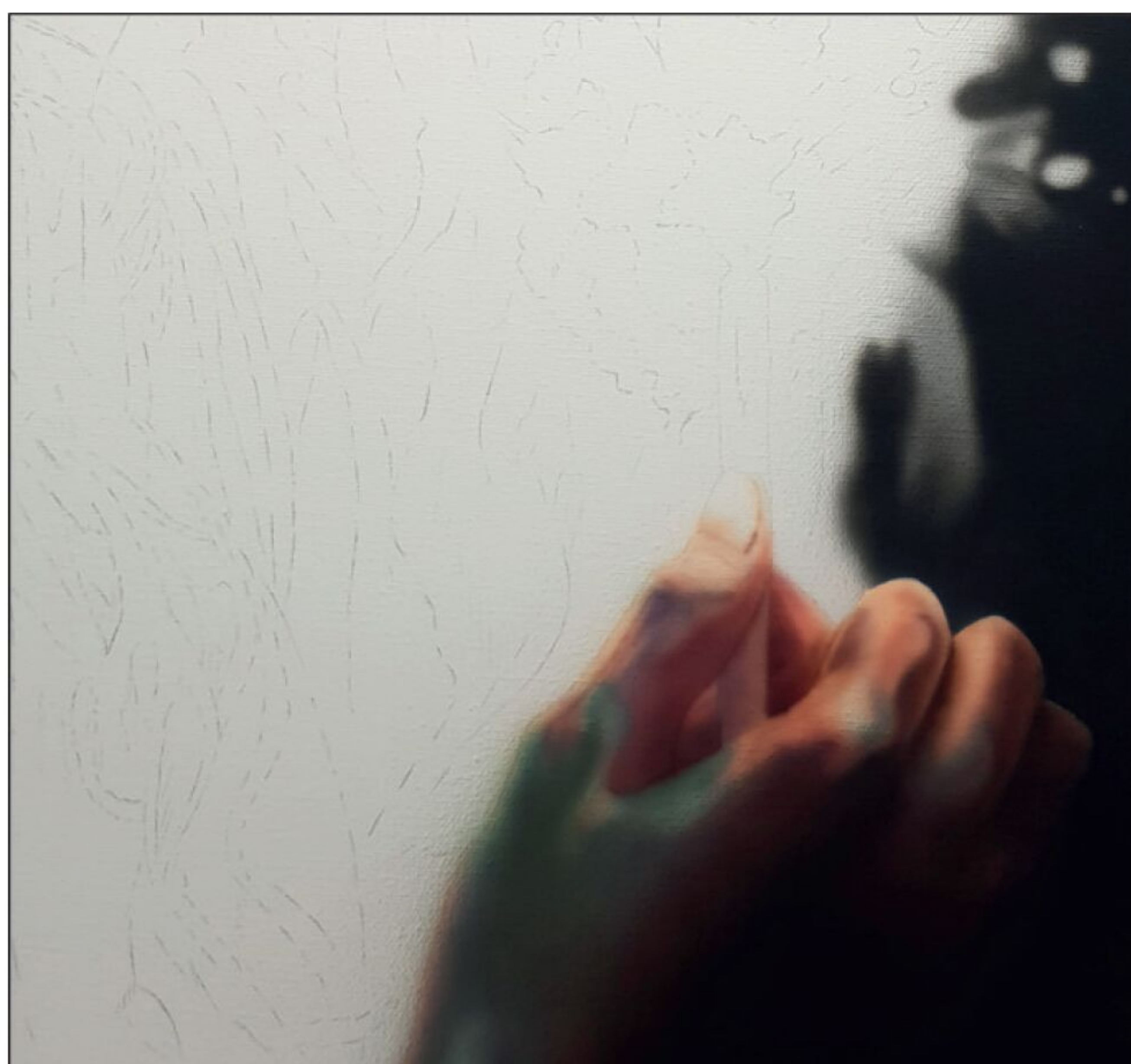
06 Shadows

I mixed dark brown color and sprayed almost the entire part of the hand with it, leaving out the light parts that I started with. The lower part of the hand will be very dark, but I am still used to spraying the lighter parts first because it makes the end result even more lifelike.

I sprayed the lower part of the hand with black paint, because this gives the impression that the girl is standing in the dark.



Some people work by first painting the light parts all over the picture and then moving towards the dark parts. But for me it was easier to paint this picture piece by piece. I finished almost every part 100%, and then I moved on. In other words, I almost completely finished the hands here and only wanted to continue after that.



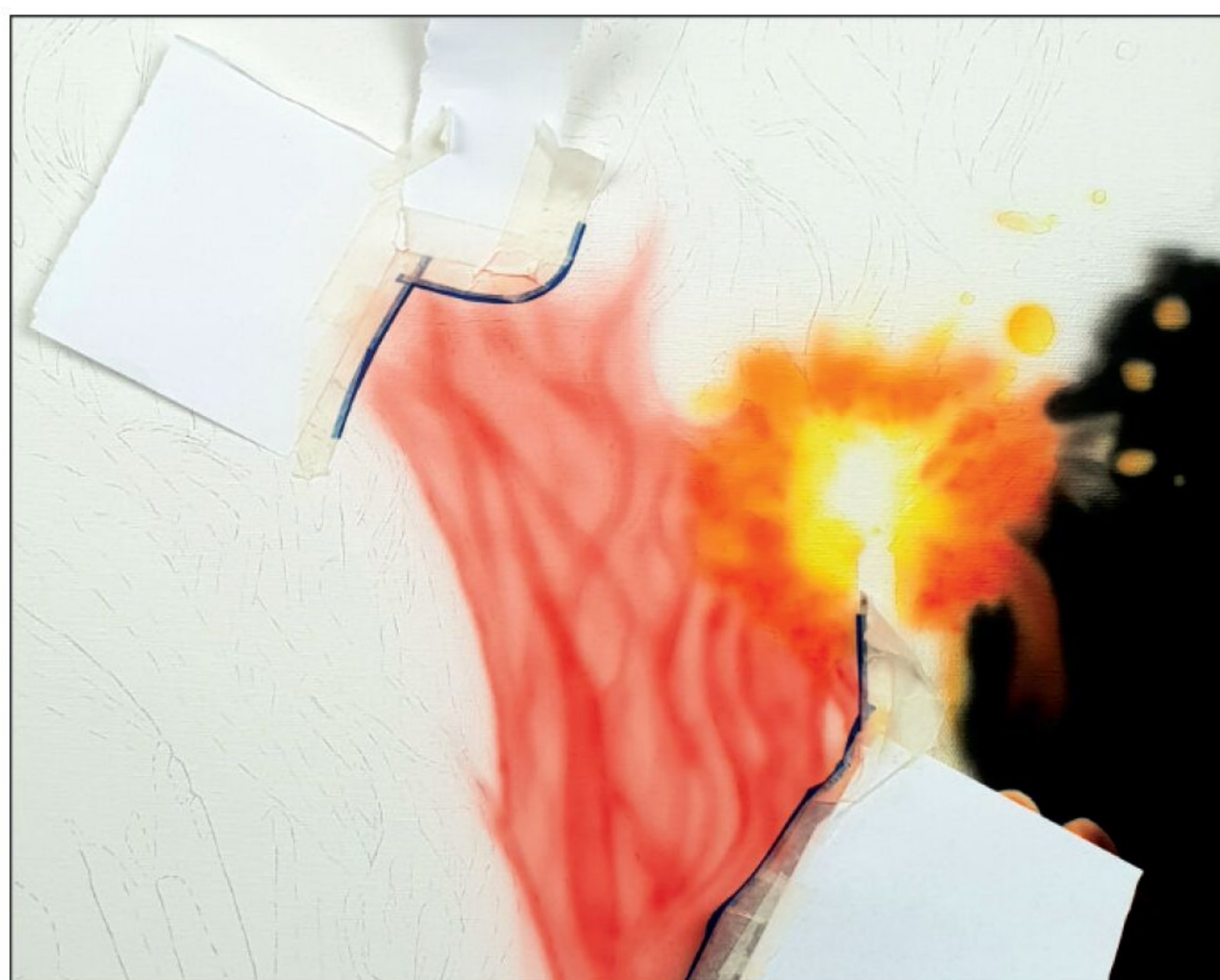
07 Candlelight

I sprayed the areas around the candle with lemon yellow, taking care not to get the center of the flame, as this part is the brightest and gives the impression of having just been lit. I usually don't spray white for this, but I just leave out the brightest areas, because here the base color of the canvas itself shows through. In the upper parts of the fingers, I even went a little deeper with the yellow, because here the fingers are lit by the candle flame.



08 Fire toning

For this part, I have already masked the hand. The most important thing is not to get color on the areas that should remain white, because if that happens, it cannot be removed afterwards. So we make our own work much easier by using this technique. Then I sprayed orange onto the edges of the lemon-yellow part in the candle flame, so that the lemon yellow remains visible inside. In other words, the flame should darken from the inside out. When I had that, I sprayed wavy lines into her hair with red paint and then lightly fogged the whole thing over. To be honest, I was really nervous about the hair parts. I knew how to do it, but I had never done anything like this before.



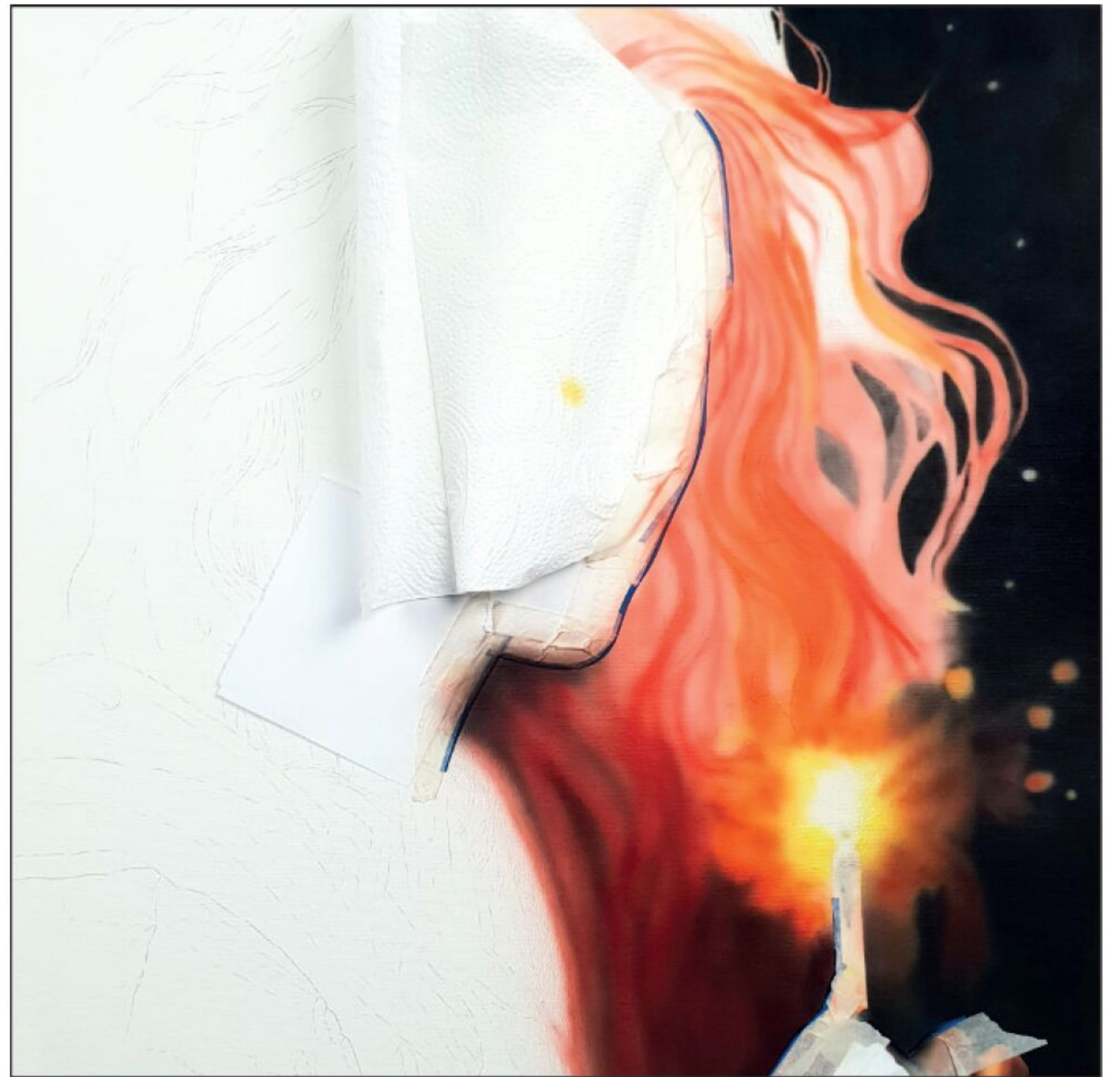
09 Lower hair area

Here I have already masked the entire face so that I do not accidentally spray inside. Then I took out the black color and sprayed the areas between the hair strands with it. After that, I sprayed the lower part of the hair and the part under the chin a little more, since this part will be darker at the end. After that, I designed half of the background with black, carefully leaving out the hair and the small circles representing the dust. For the hair sections on the right side, I did not use any masking techniques, but simply drew the lines freehand. This did not matter, because in the end it will be dark anyway.



10 Right Hair Area

In the next section, I lightly sprayed the hair with red, then mixed an orange color and drew a few hairs with it so that the sections of hair are not just one color when the candle illuminates them. I didn't use a brush anywhere in this image, just the airbrush gun for everything. Of course, anyone who wants to use a brush is welcome to do so, but I think the end result will be more beautiful this way. This is because when you draw a line with a brush, it will be very intense on the airbrushed areas and will really stand out at the end.



11 Darken the hair

I mixed a dark brown color again and sprayed it on the hair sections, except for the part above the candle. It is important to note that when we mix a color and use it in the given image, we should note how much of each color we used to get the same shade.

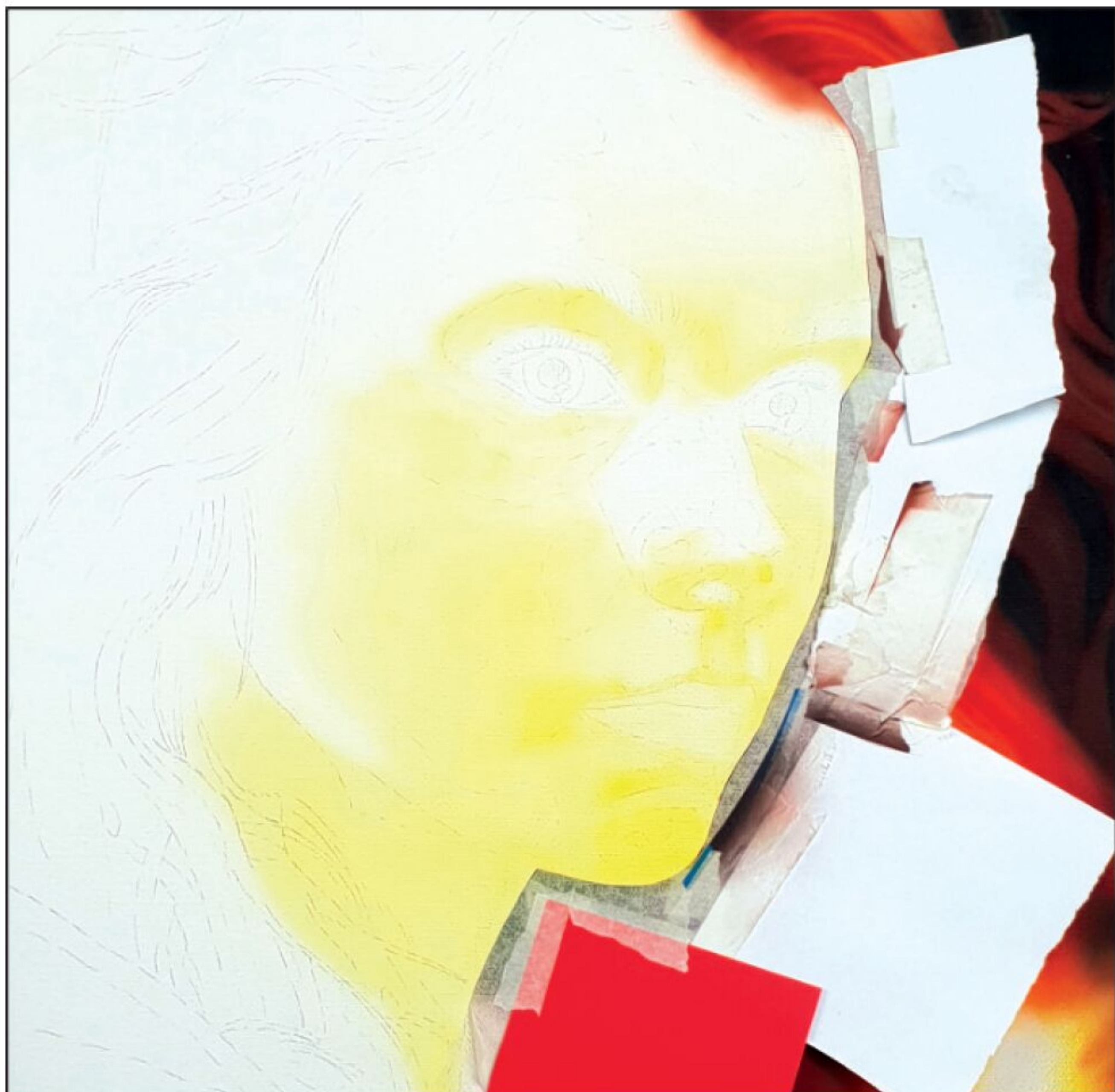
I continued working with the dark brown in the upper part, leaving out the light parts. I also added some color to the dust

particles in the upper right corner. After that, I removed the masking from the taped area, since the next step would be the face. At least I was looking forward to finishing that part, because creating a beautiful face is the most important thing in a portrait. If the face is beautiful, we have already won the case. Then it does not matter how the other parts turn out.



12 Face

It is very important to cover the hair sections when we start spraying the face now. If overspray gets on the finished areas, we will completely undo what we have done so far. And so we are completely safe. Then I lightly sprayed the main parts of the neck and face with lemon yellow, leaving out the



areas that should have completely different colors or shades. Then I lightly worked the entire face and neck with orange paint. Where it should be darker, I applied it a little more heavily, so that these shadow areas became visibly darker. Again, I left out the parts that will be a different color or shade, such as the eyes, nose and mouth.



13 Facial features

With a very light brown color, I reworked the areas where the face will be dark at the end. I also sprayed the eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth. I also designed the eyebrows and eyelashes only with the help of the airbrush gun; I did not use a brush. When designing the facial features and shading, I always use my photo template as a guide.



14 Turquoise Light

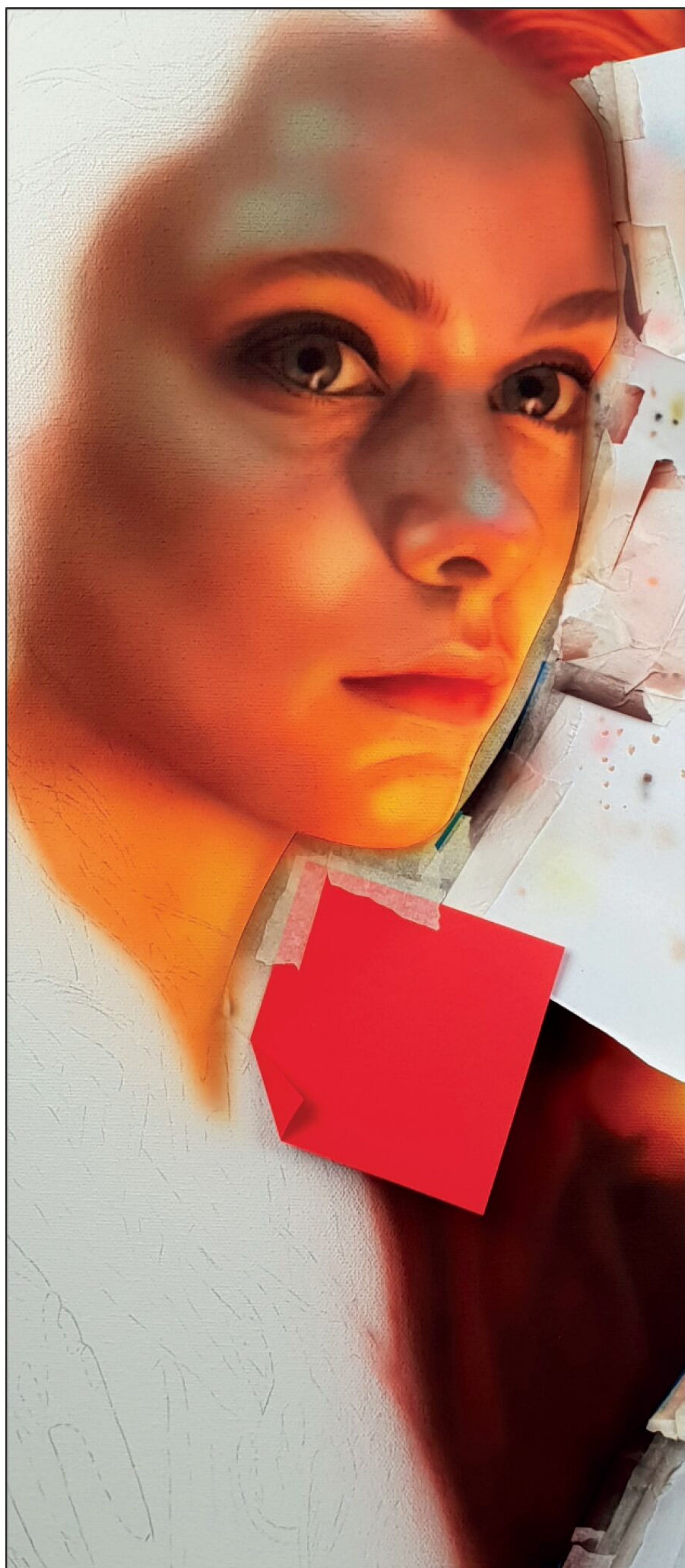
In this step, I used two colors, a pale red and turquoise. I used the pale red for the mouth, so that the lower lip is darker than the upper lip, and the turquoise for the nose and forehead. I also used the turquoise a little in her eyes and the upper parts of her hair. Although it won't be that visible in the end, the more colors there are in a colored picture, the more beautiful the end result is! :)



15 Eye area

Here I used black again, although I could have waited until the very end to use it. I just had to do the eyes, because up to now the girl looked like a zombie! :D So it brought a little life into it... it feels a bit better when you look at it that way.

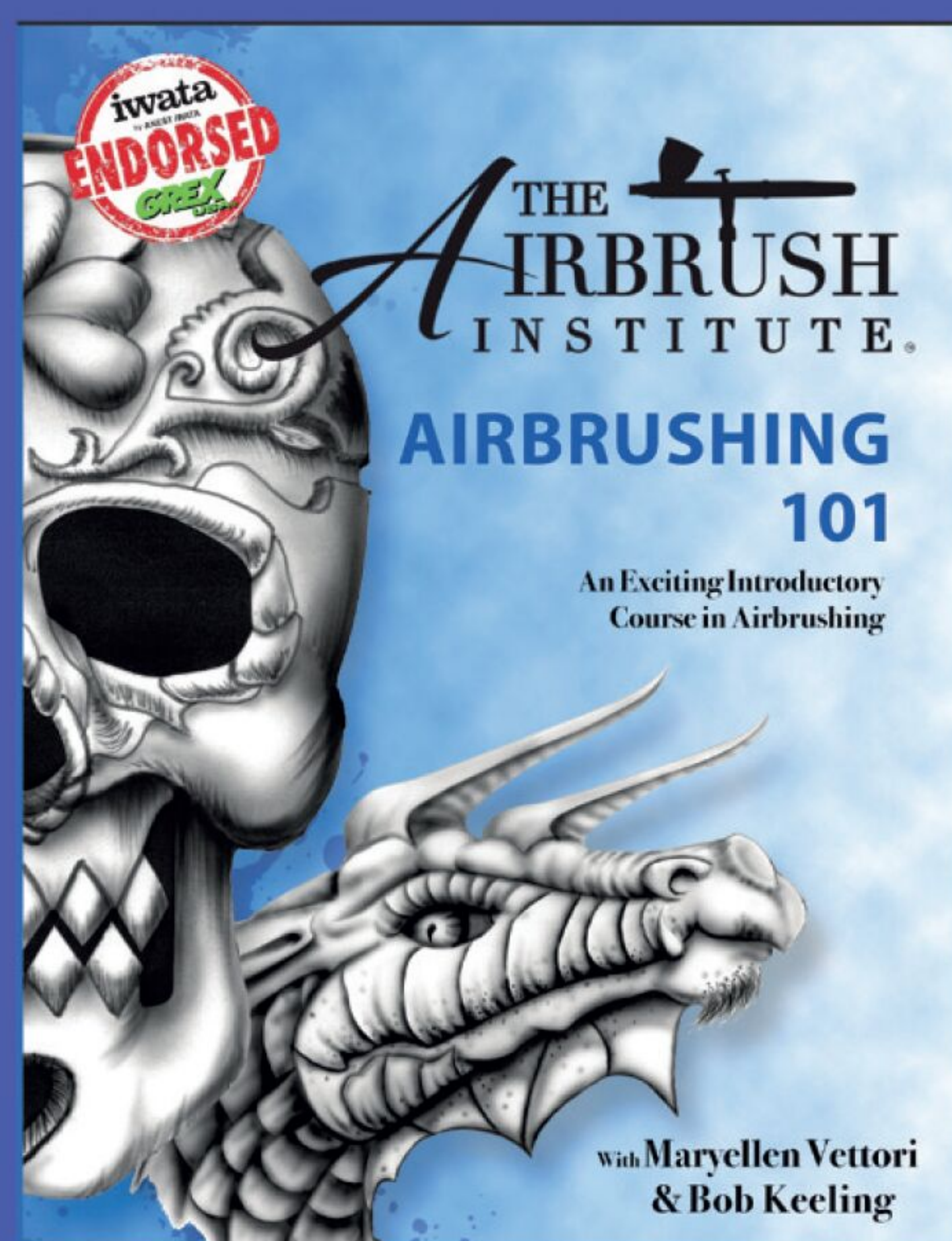
I also airbrushed the eyebrows a little to make them darker and I applied a little black to the corners of the mouth to make them more lifelike. I also lightly fogged the parts of the face, the nose and forehead – but only carefully, because if I hold the airbrush a little longer in one place, it would be too dark. I just sprayed it on quickly in broad strokes.



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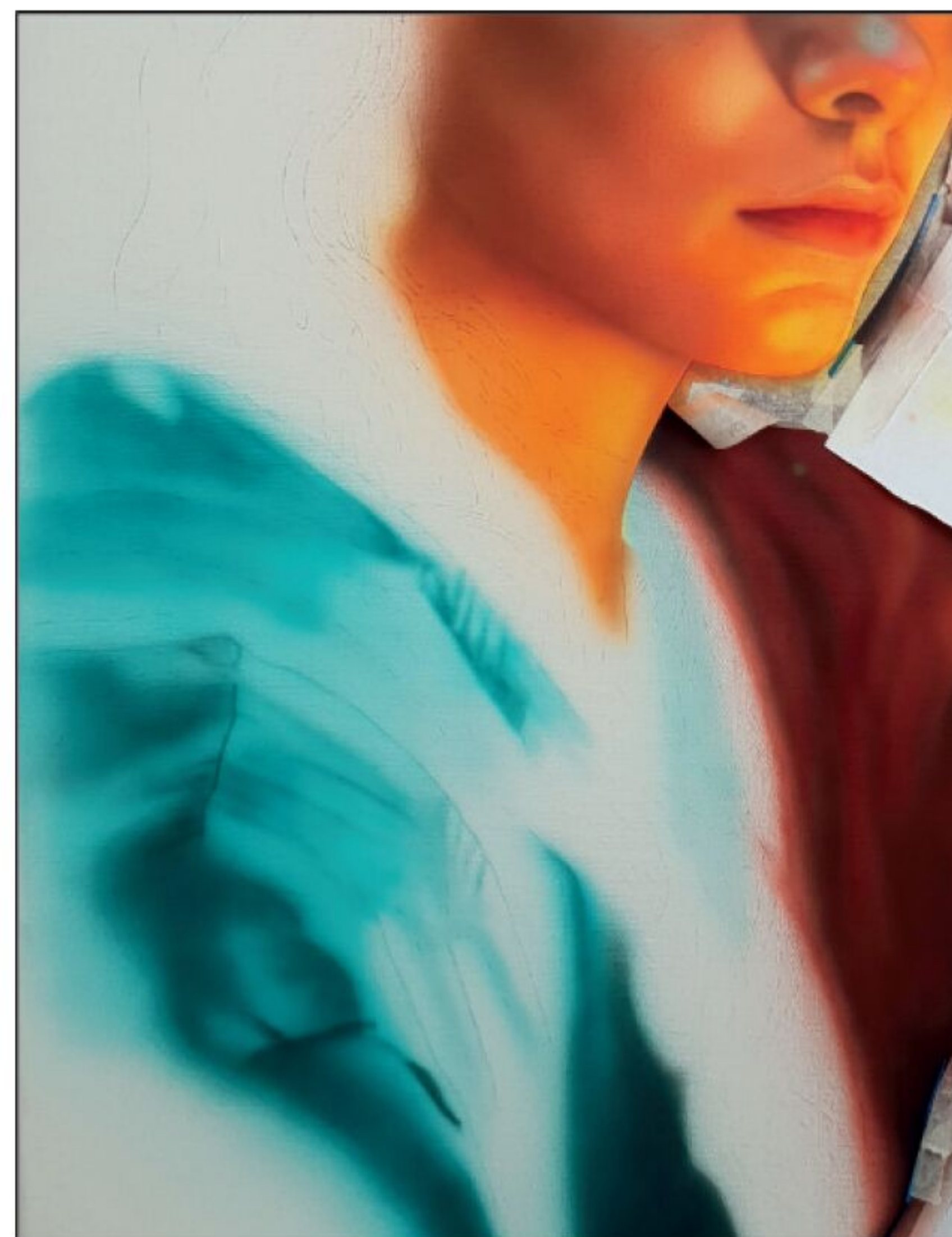
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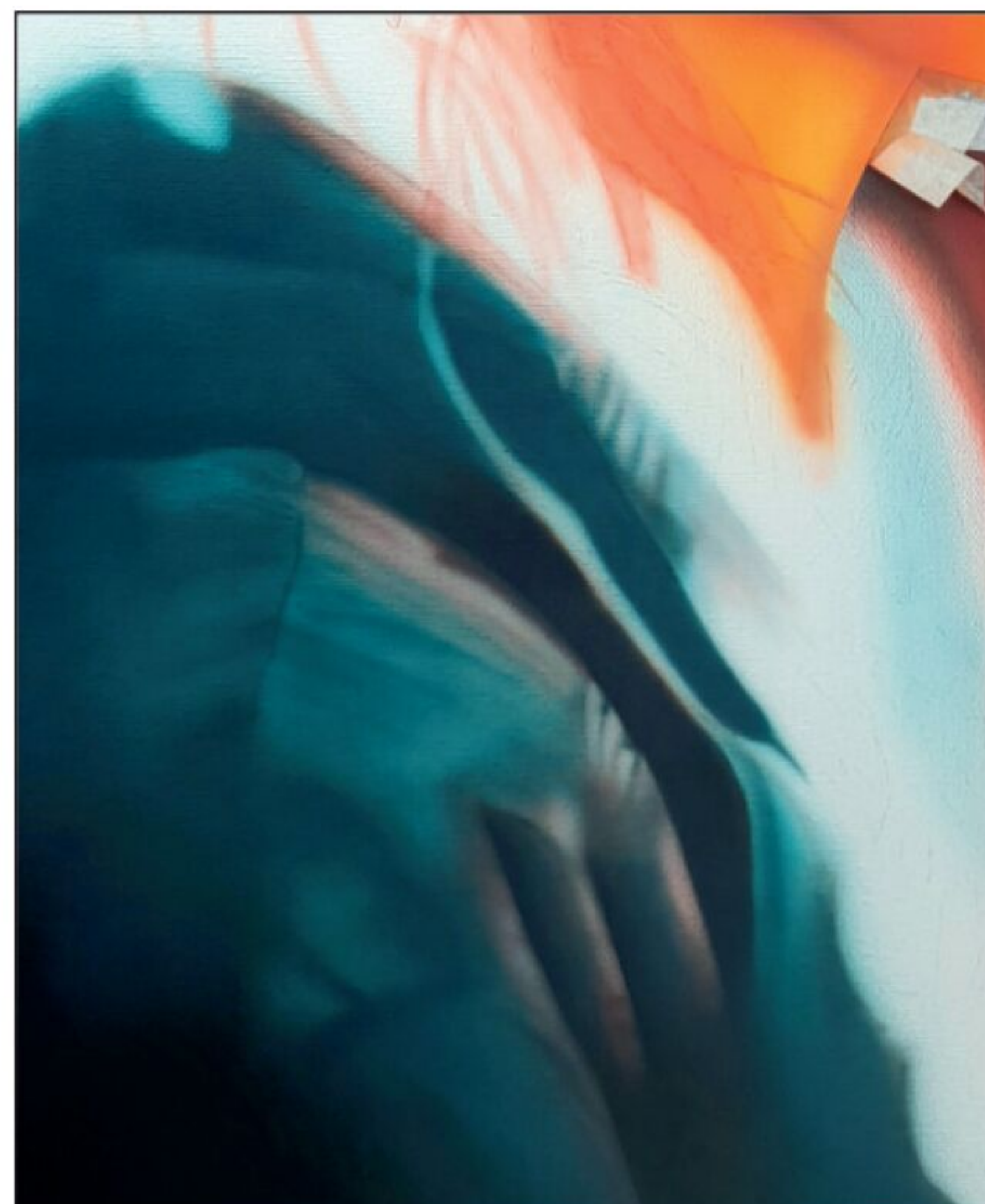
16 Clothing

The face is finished, now I can easily move on to another part. Now I started to make clothes for the lady with turquoise. Where it is darker, I applied the color more intensely, and where her hair will be, I will do without this shade. Then I mixed the turquoise with just one drop of black, creating a fairly dark shade, which I then applied to the darker areas.



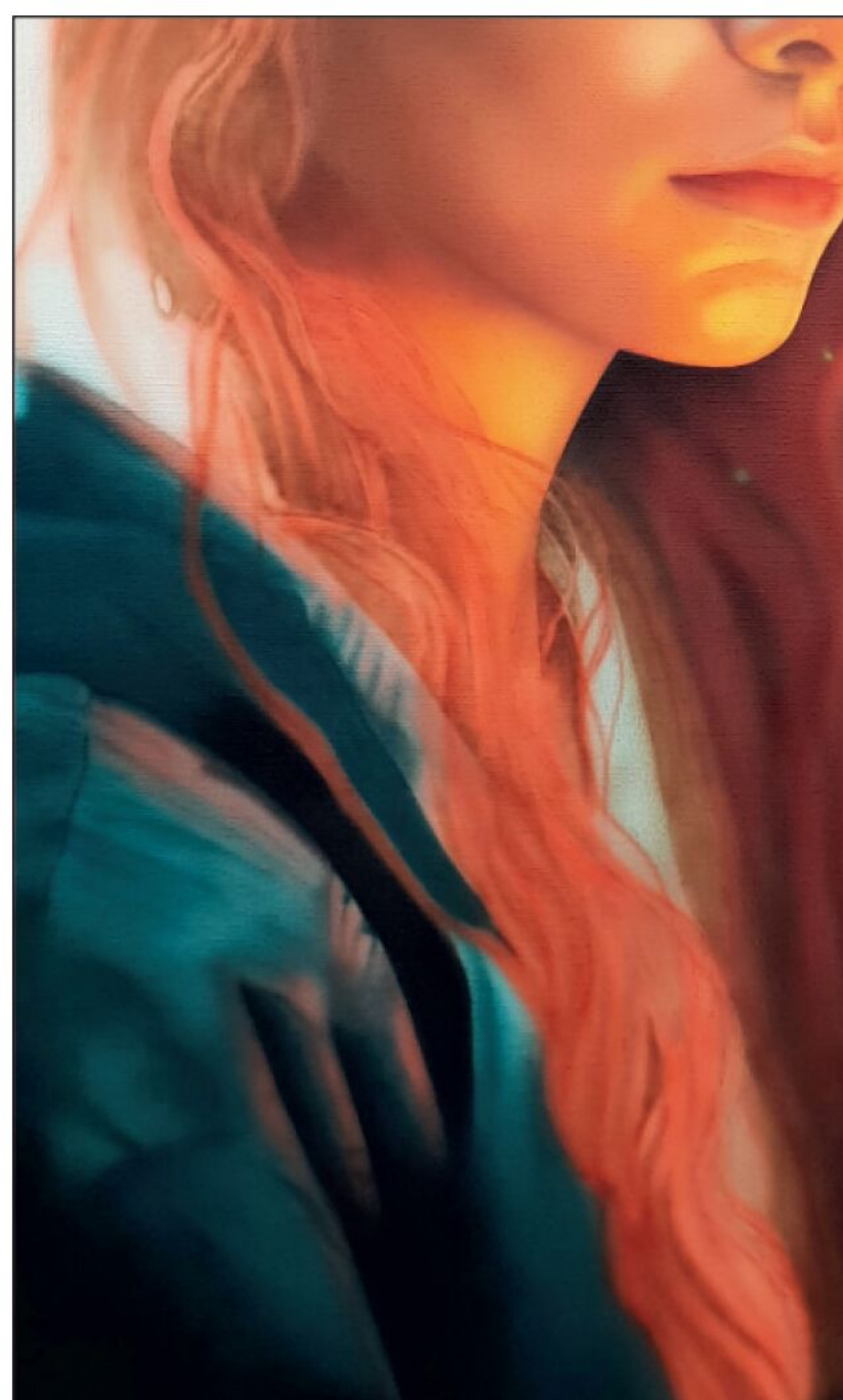
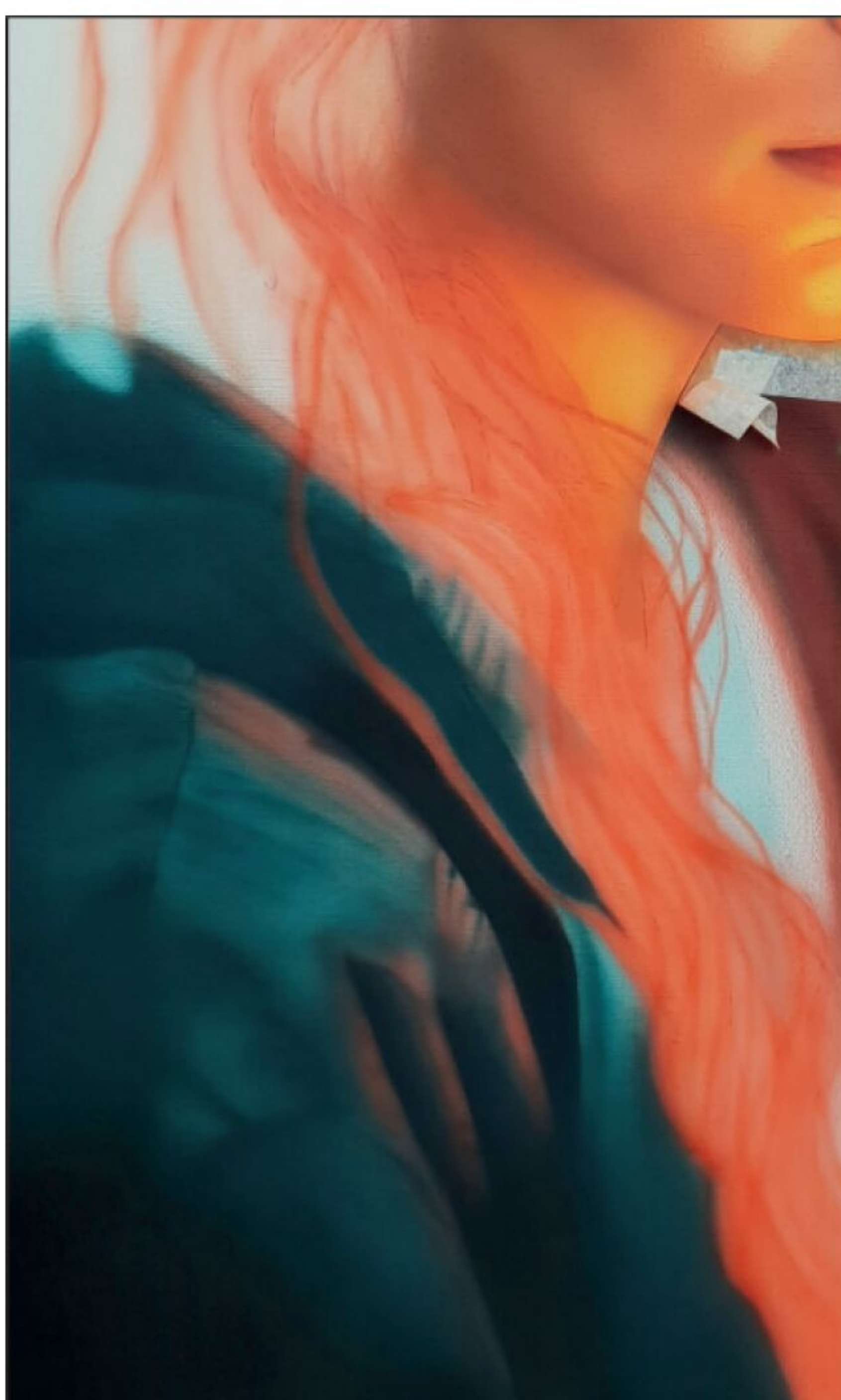
17 Darken clothing

I have edited some parts of the coat with brown color and then went to the lower part with black, because the image will be dark at the edges, to give the viewer a better impression that the young woman is in the dark. After that, I continued with the same system, i.e. I dyed almost the entire jacket turquoise and used black where it should be darker. Then I drew the hair lines, as I had already done in the previous areas.



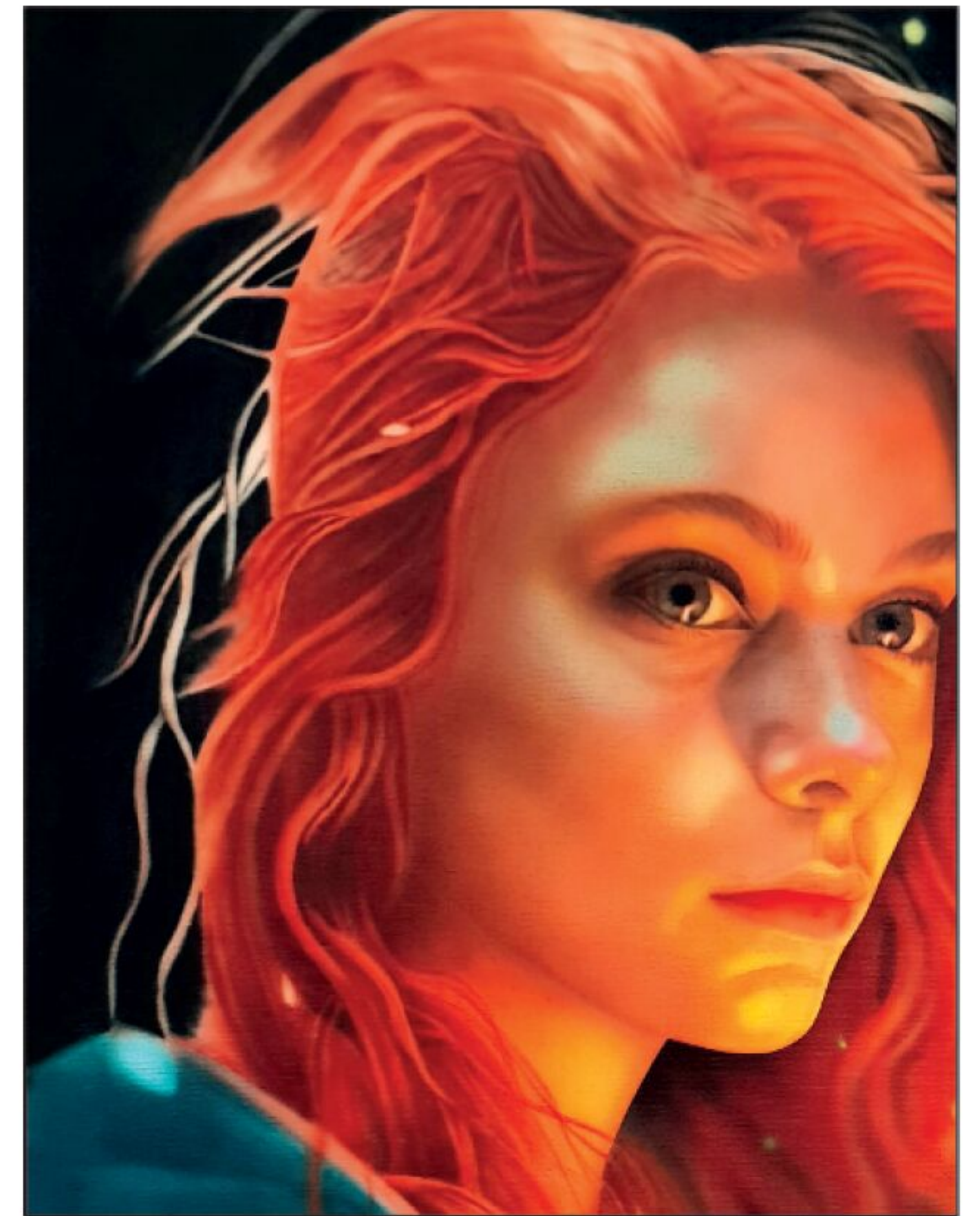
18 Lower hair area

I continued to spray the hair with red and finally sprayed the whole area lightly with it to make it look fuller. Then I removed the masking from the hair, as I was very curious to see what the work would look like! :) :) Then I sprayed the area between the hair strands with dark brown color. The left part does not need to be done in such detail, so I left it out because it will be black because of the shadows.



19 Complete the background and hair

I continued to fill in the background with black. I left out a few hairs so that the overall picture would look more lifelike in the end. Draw the lines free-hand with the airbrush gun, as you did when preparing the entire hair. This will ensure that the end result is consistent and blends in with the other parts. I continued to fill in the spaces between the strands of hair with the brown color. At the hair roots, I work darker and lighter towards the outside, because only in this way it becomes somewhat realistic.



20 Finish the work

The last step is to finish the black background on the left side! Again, I have over-airbrushed her hair a bit to create a transition between the background and hair. Once you have this, there are only two things left to do: sign with your name and enjoy the final result! :)

Thank you for looking at my work!



GEZA NAGY



Hungarian artist Géza Nagy has been drawing since childhood. Years later, he tried out an airbrush that he really liked. When he ordered his first set, he didn't even know how the paint came out. He learned the technique self-taught and all by himself with the help of the internet. After a year, however, he learned a new technique: tattooing. Since nobody in Hungary, where Geza lives, even knows the word "airbrush", he stuck to tattooing and makes a living from it. Back then, he sold his airbrush set and used it to buy his first tattoo equipment. It wasn't until about 12 years later that he felt the urge to paint with an airbrush again. So he bought an Infinity CR Plus and has now been painting again for months – and can no longer live without it.

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BETWEEN LIGHT & SHADOW

The Ukrainian-born artist Mitya Ka specializes in extraordinary, colorful portraits and female figures. With his artistic roots in oil and acrylic painting, Mitya also uses conventional acrylic paints for airbrushing and mixes them with a special for-

mula that is ready for airbrushing. In his work, he combines fine skin tones and gentle body shapes with cold colors and hard geometric shapes in the background.

EQUIPMENT – BETWEEN LIGHT & SHADOW

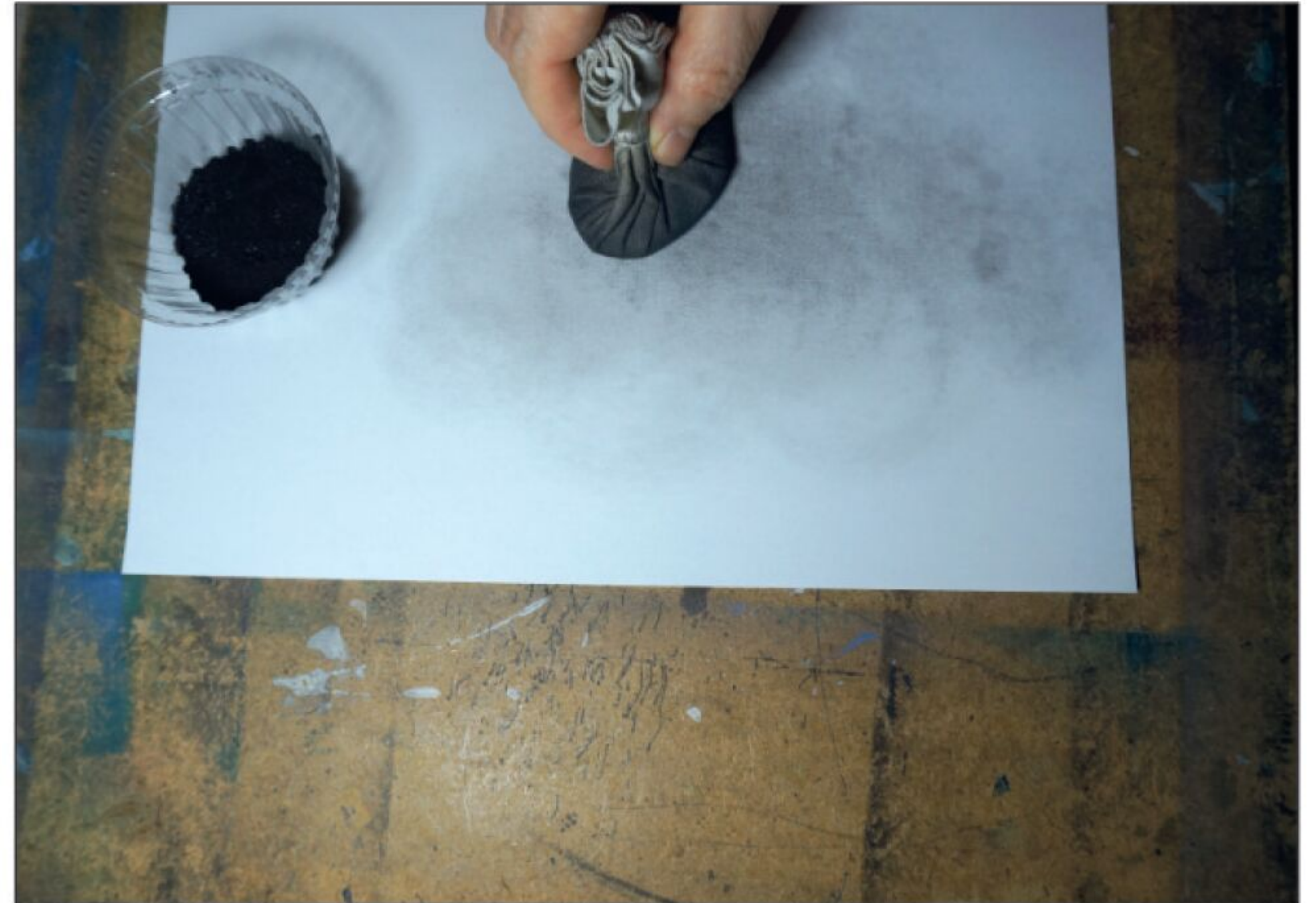
Airbrushes: Iwata CM-SB 0,18, Olympos SP-B 0,18, Creos PS-771 0,18

Surface: Kraft board, 30 x 40 cm

Paints: Amsterdam Acrylics by Talents and Golden

01 Preparing the design

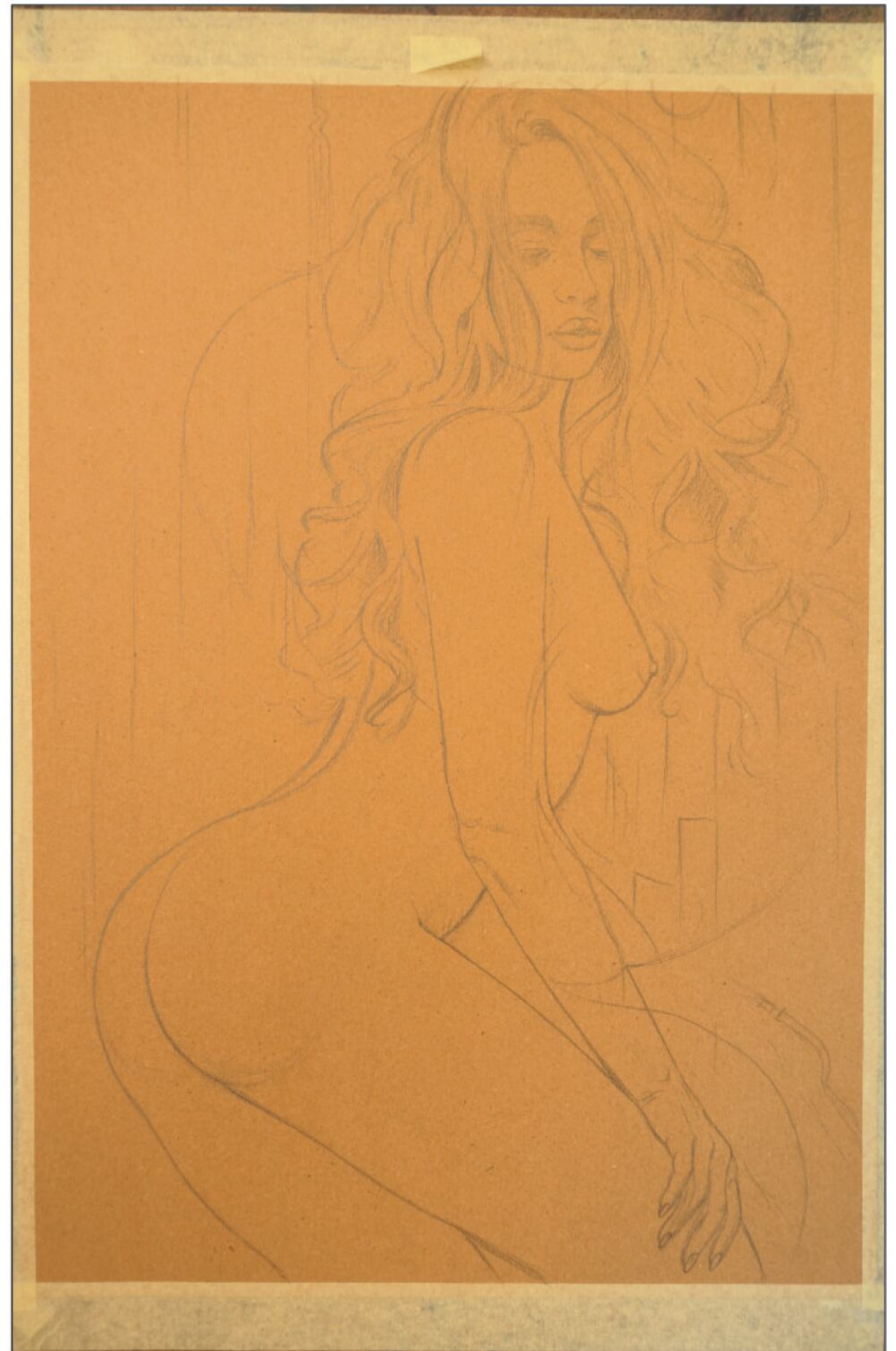
To create this painting I use a pre-prepared photo of a naked girl, which is processed in a photo editor. The background I create mainly intuitively relying on the theory of colour and warm-coldness of the future picture, and I also like to experiment with different combinations of colours. I print out the prepared sketch-photograph on an ordinary black-and-white printer and from the back side of the paper I smear soft graphite powder 8-9B and rub it into the sheet with a special sponge (cotton wool wrapped with cotton cloth).



02 Drawing

I glue a sheet of kraft cardboard with a density of 300-400 g/m² on a wooden tablet with the help of paper tape keeping the margins of 5-7 mm and copy the main points of the line on which further I will draw a detailed picture. So the image is already transferred to the cardboard and it means that 50% of the work is already done.

For my paintings I use FaberCastel 9000 pencils mainly for sketching, usually HB-3B. Now you need to create a good quality drawing which will be the basis for the future work. At this stage it is necessary to pay maximum attention to the proportions and details of the figure, this is the key to a good result of the final work. Based on my aesthetic taste, I change some proportions of the body as the camera can distort some parts of the body when shooting. For example, fingers and hands can be made thinner and more feminine. The girl's figure can be given a more graceful posture, remove the stomach, draw a more rounded breast or reduce it, who likes it better. When the drawing is ready and it matches your taste and you realise that there is nothing more to add or remove, you can proceed to the next stage. Prepare colours for application through airbrush.



03 The paints

To create this painting I used acrylic paints Amsterdam Standard and Expert Series from Talens. These paints are not intended for direct application through the airbrush, but I like to experiment and find non-standard solutions when creating my paintings. You can read how I make airbrush paints for my paintings in the box. When I create my paintings, it is important to me that the pigment is lightfast and easy to atomise through the airbrush and that it has good adhesion to the paper or canvas. I am comfortable with my recipe and how the paint adheres to the paper or canvas. It is recommended to filter any paint through a filter before pouring it into the airbrush, but I don't always do this.



04 The airbrush

I apply the paint with a SP-B/ 771 hybrid airbrush. I like to modify my airbrushes and improve their performance. The hybrid SP-B/ 771 is basically a Creos 771 in a small Olympus SP-B body. For me, it is convenient because it is small and light and the cup does not interfere with the angle of view, but it is a matter of habit and personal preference.



05 The background

First of all in this picture I paint the background and use stencils of circles and strips from cardboard. I start with cool blue colours Pthalo Blue 570, Primary Cyan 572 and then go to warmer violet Ultramarine Violet 519 and different warm and cool green shades Olive Green Deep 622, Greenish Yellow 243. Also I paint so that colours on some fragments of

a picture differ in tone, for example (Prussian Blue Phthalo 566 and Sky Blue Light 551). Then I move on to the application of paint on the figure of the girl using shades of brown Van Dyck Brown 403 and orange shades Burnt Sienna 411 and a little red-violet Permanent Red Violet 567. I love the ease with which the sheer colours spray out.



06 Building up the body

The main task at this stage of painting is to apply the first layer of paint over the entire surface of the painting and we do it leisurely and lovingly enjoying every moment of this process. After applying the dark parts of the body (shadows, penumbra) we move on to the light parts. For this purpose I take a light flesh-coloured shade Naples Yellow Red 292 and apply it to lighten the necessary parts of the body. I like to paint on kraft cardboard because it has its own medium tone and it is convenient to work on it both with light and dark colours, unlike white paper. I also like how kraft cardboard absorbs the paint.



07 Shadows and penumbra

After we have applied light colours we can work on shadows and penumbra.



08 Effects

Also the background of the painting has scuffs and scratches in some places, I create these effects with sandpaper with gradation from 60-180 grit and also use a scalpel and other sharp objects to give the painting a vintage and aged look these spots blend well with the background of the painting. Also the girl's skin looks very smooth combined with the ripped background.



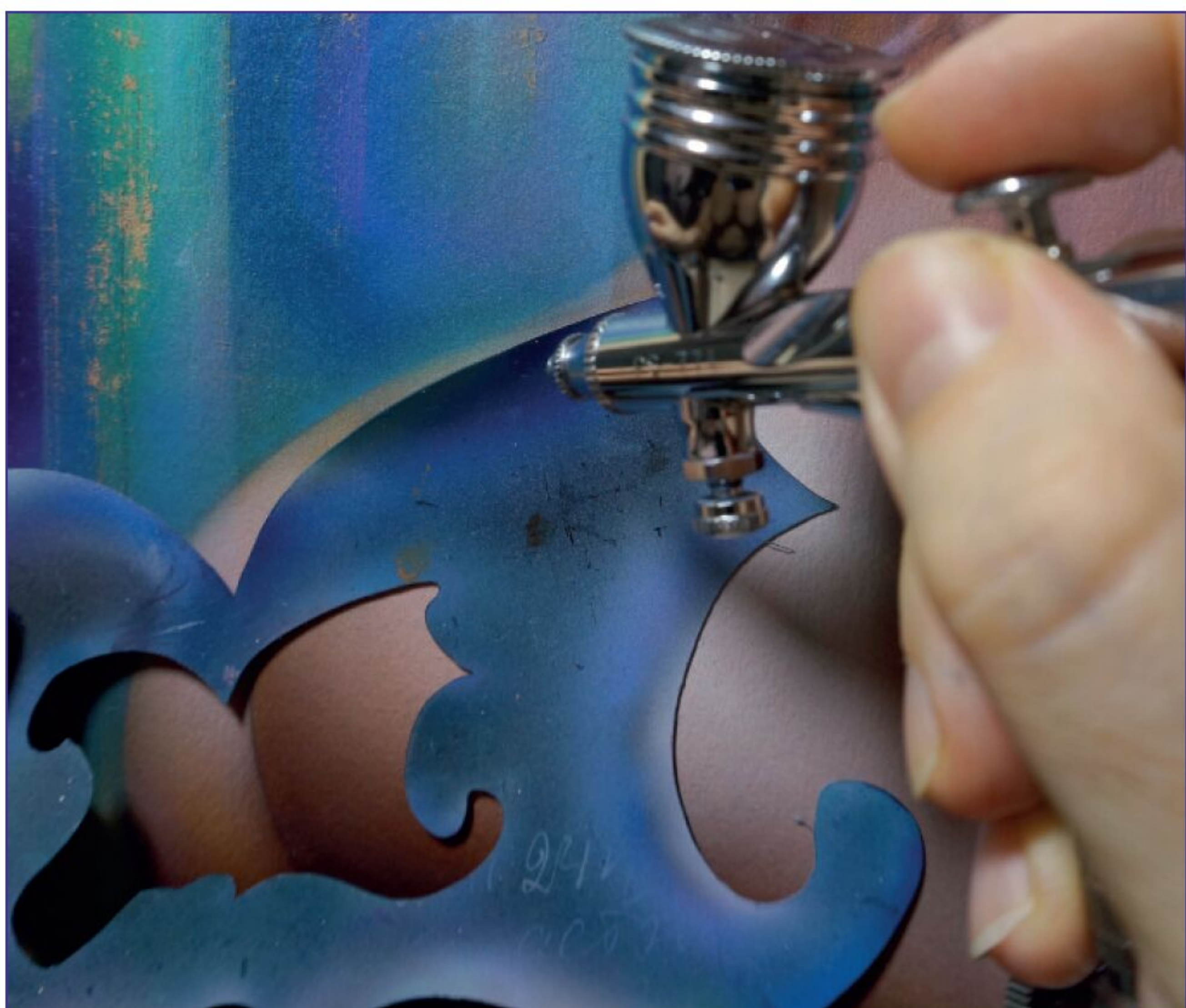
09 Hair and Highlights

We pay attention to the details of the girl's hairstyle, creating the overall volume of the hair and also in some places draw individual hairs. Here I'm using a PS 771 with a modified head, it works at the lowest pressure I've ever worked with, creating very fine lines and making it easy to do so with the slightest pressure on the trigger. The PS771 has been modified with parts from RichPen. This company makes excellent airbrushes and parts on a par with other Japanese airbrush companies. I draw the smallest details of the painting with a fine manicure brush and accentuate them where necessary. With a thin brush I paint highlights on lips, nose, eyelids, hair. These brushes are a godsend for artists who like detail in their paintings. These brushes are actually very big helpers, I call them 'micron brushes'.



10 Refining shapes

For creation of body shapes I use ready-made or homemade anatomical stencils, it is very convenient to work with them not cutting out a mask beforehand, but just moving and choosing necessary angles and shapes doing it with ease in the process of work.



11 Color pencils

Also in some places you can work with coloured pencils they give sharpness to the future picture. I use Faber Castel Polychromos and Derwent Coloursoft coloured pencils.



12 Enhance the coolness

The next stage I spray through the airbrush translucent strips of blue and violet shades directly on the body of the girl this technique enhances the overall warm-coolness of the painting.



13 Improvement and finish

After you think that the painting is ready it should be photographed and seen on the computer screen if everything is in order. Most often it will need to be refined and we continue to improve it. And after you have decided that it is ready, you will need to put it away for 1-2 weeks and not look at it at all. At the end of this period you look at it and if everything is fine and you definitely like it, you will varnish it. Remove the paper tape and the picture is ready, don't forget to put your work in a suitable frame. Success in your creativity.



Mixing Acrylic Paints for Airbrushing

Since the time when I completely switched from oil painting to acrylic painting, I had the task of smooth color transition, gradient of tone and with these were problems until I had an airbrush in my hands. Acrylic paint which at that moment I used had to be adapted for spraying. At first I tried to dilute it with water and even alcohol in different

Ingredients and Materials

For my acrylic painting I use acrylic Amsterdam Acrylic Standard and Expert series, from Royal Talens.

The first thing we will need to do is paint thinner, its composition is simple:

For one liter of thinner

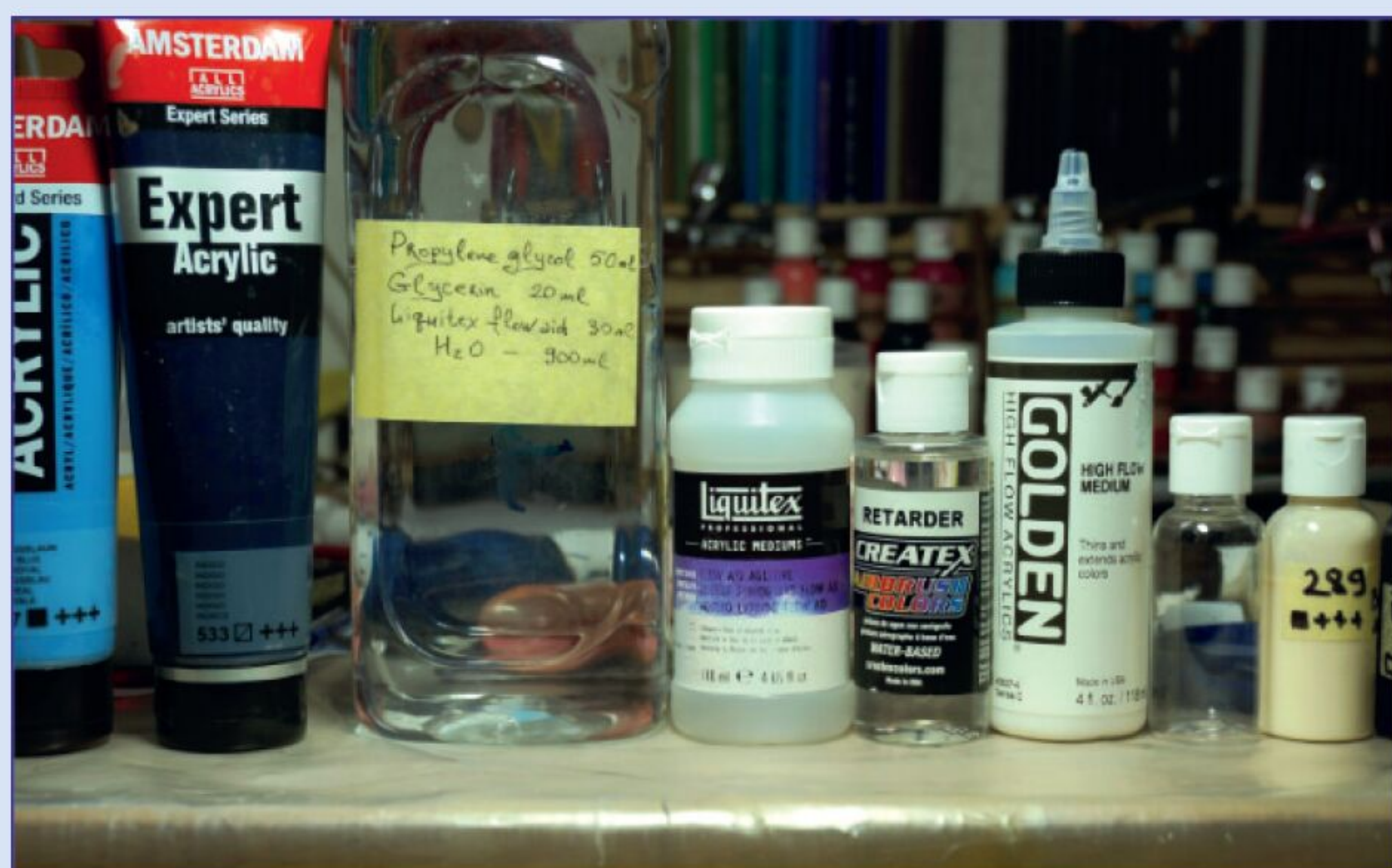
900 ml Destille water

50 ml Propylene glycol

20 ml Glycerin

30 ml Liquitex flow aid

This is the base with which we are going to work.



Applying paint

There are so many different airbrush paints on the market right now, but I find this recipe very convenient for several reasons. I often apply the first layers of paint on the canvas with a brush or in some places painting knife and then that I get into the color, tone, I already have a ready paint with this color tone. This paint atomizes well with the right dilution and pressure, even with a 0.18 mm nozzle through an Iwata micron or PS-771. Also, this recipe can help you save 5-10 times on buying acrylic airbrush paint!

For more information on how I make airbrush paints for my paintings, please visit the airbrush forum at www.airbrush-forum.org, 'DIY Airbrush Paint'.

proportions, it was atomized, but I was not happy with the result. By the method of trial and error, communication with artists and chemists, searching for information on YouTube and forums came to the following recipe for airbrush paint, which I now use.

Mixing process

The second thing we will need is paint bottles. I find 1oz bottles work best for me. Into it we pour 1/2oz thinner and



1/2oz acrylic paint, mix well. It is better to add a little less paint or thinner so that the bottle has room for mixing.

Before applying the paint we add our ready paint from the bottle to the airbrush and about the same amount of Golden High Flow Medium, depending on the task, and mix the paint in the airbrush. If the tip of the needle will be very dry you can add CreateX Airbrush Retarder or other retarder. Golden High Flow Medium is a great product that improves the flow of the paint by reducing surface tension and also improves adhesion.



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MITYA KA



Mitya Ka (alias Mitya Karastoika) was born in 1983 in Ukraine to the artist's family. Since childhood, he has wanted to create unusual, realistic paintings. Through the paintings the creator conveys the beauty and harmony of this world its divine majesty, multidimensionality and love. The paintings inspire people to open their hearts to light. To love the nature of this world, to love the planet Earth. The paintings are painted in acrylic, airbrushing, watercolor, oil and pencil techniques. The author's paintings are in private collections around the world. He is a participant in international art exhibitions.



AI GIRL

With artificial intelligence, almost any artwork can now be generated at the push of a button. Often the images appear too perfect – depending on your taste, super- or unnatural. Carlos Cartagena,

an artist based in the United States, has taken advantage of this glossy perfectionism to create an extraordinary portrait, showing the path from the AI-generated template to the airbrushed original.

EQUIPMENT – AI GIRL

Airbrush: not specified

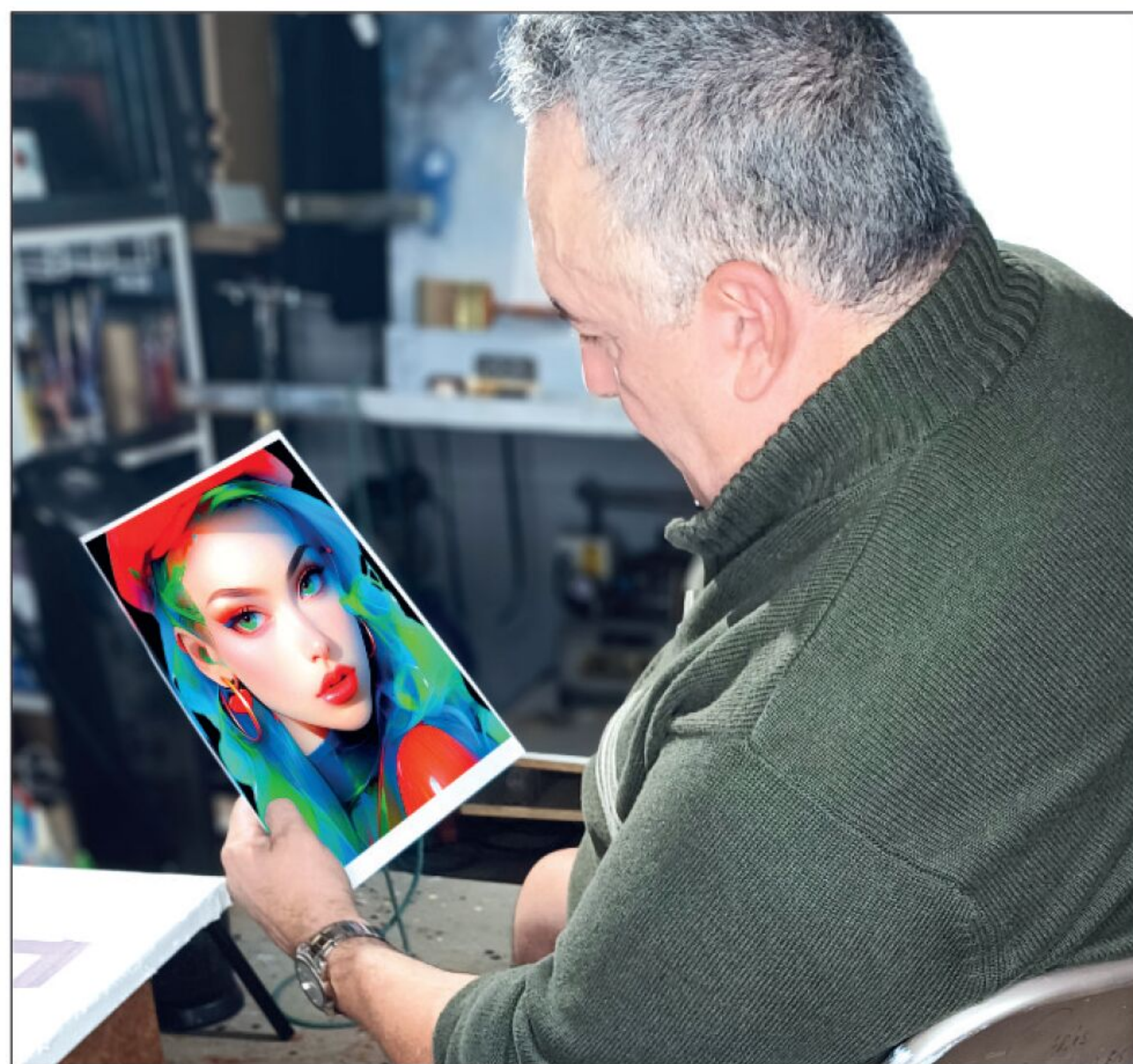
Paints: Indian red, black, white, ochre, red, green, blue, brown, sienna, violet, turquoise

Surface: Canvas

Additional materials: pencil, fixing spray

01 Reference

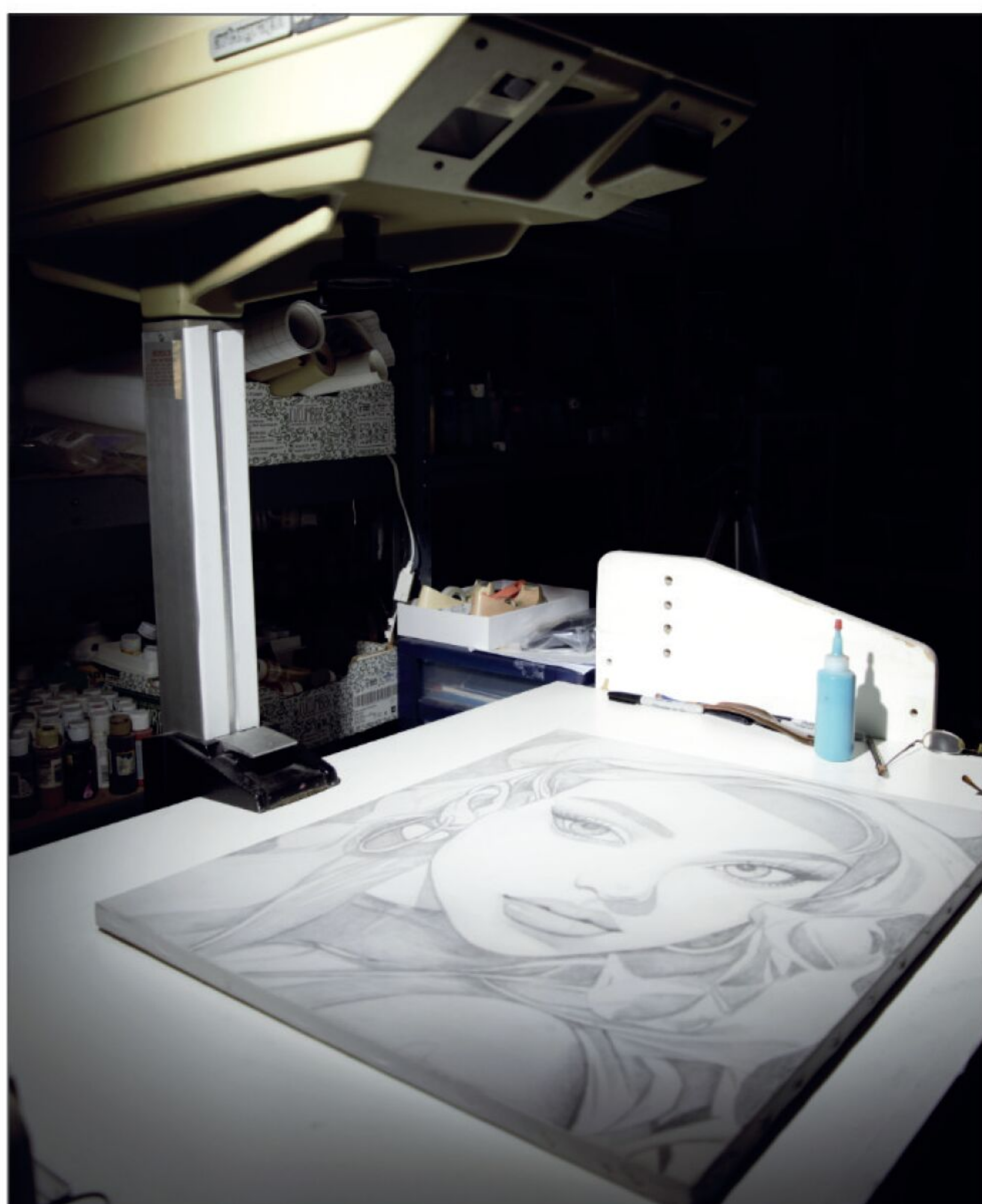
As a template, I downloaded a digital portrait created using artificial intelligence from the internet. I spend some time planning and organizing the colors and effects before I start the illustration.



02 Pencil underpainting

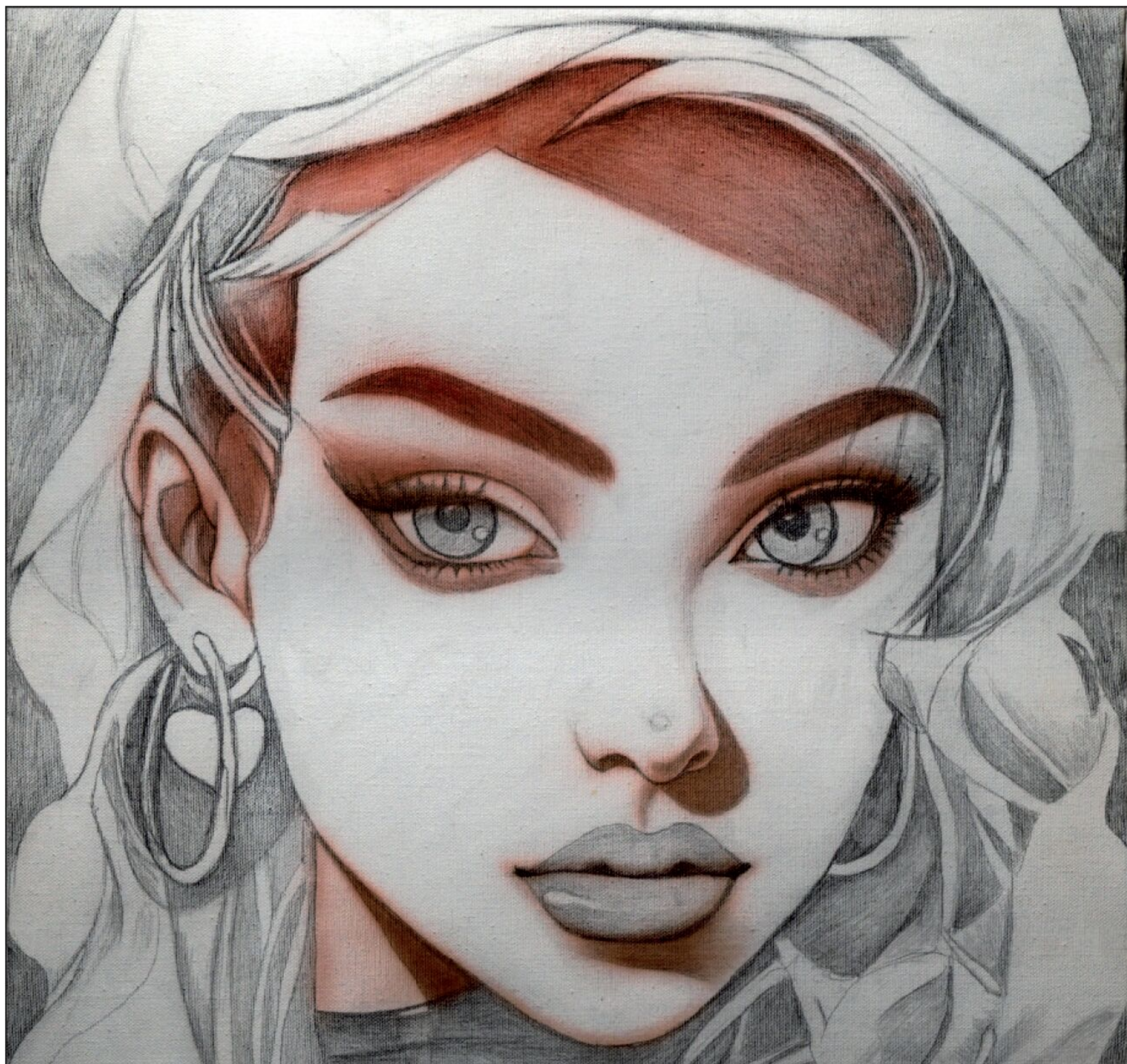
I project the image on a canvas or illustration board. With a pencil I establish all the dark and light values of the

illustration. I spray some fixative to keep the drawing from smearing it with my hands.



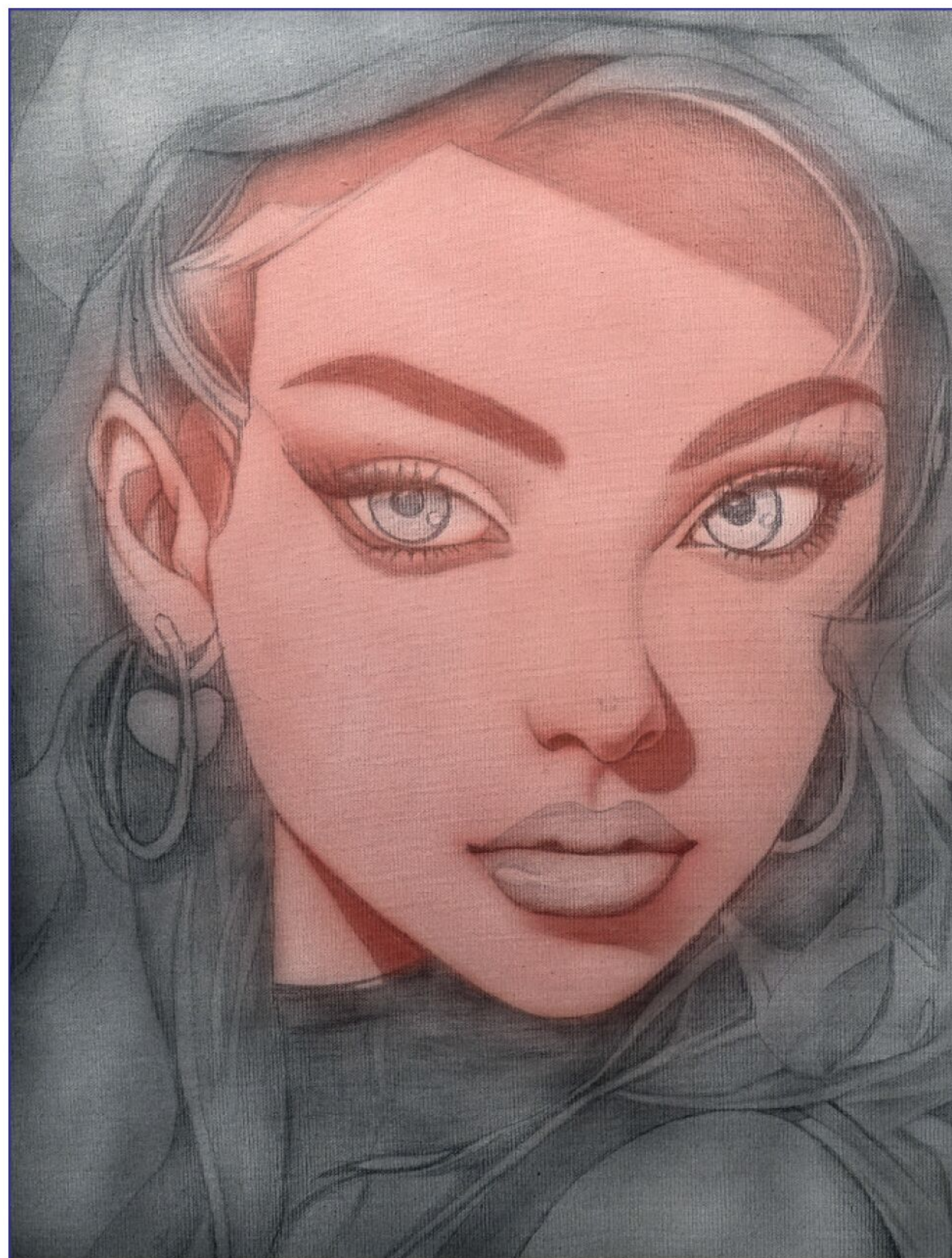
03 Dark shadows

First I airbrush the darker areas with an Indian red color. This is mainly the dark shadow of the cap on the forehead, the shadow under the mouth, the chin and the nose, the eye-brows and shading around the eyes and ear.



04 Basic flesh tone

I spray the first thin layer of the same Indian red color on all the flesh. I spray a thin coat of black outside her flesh area.

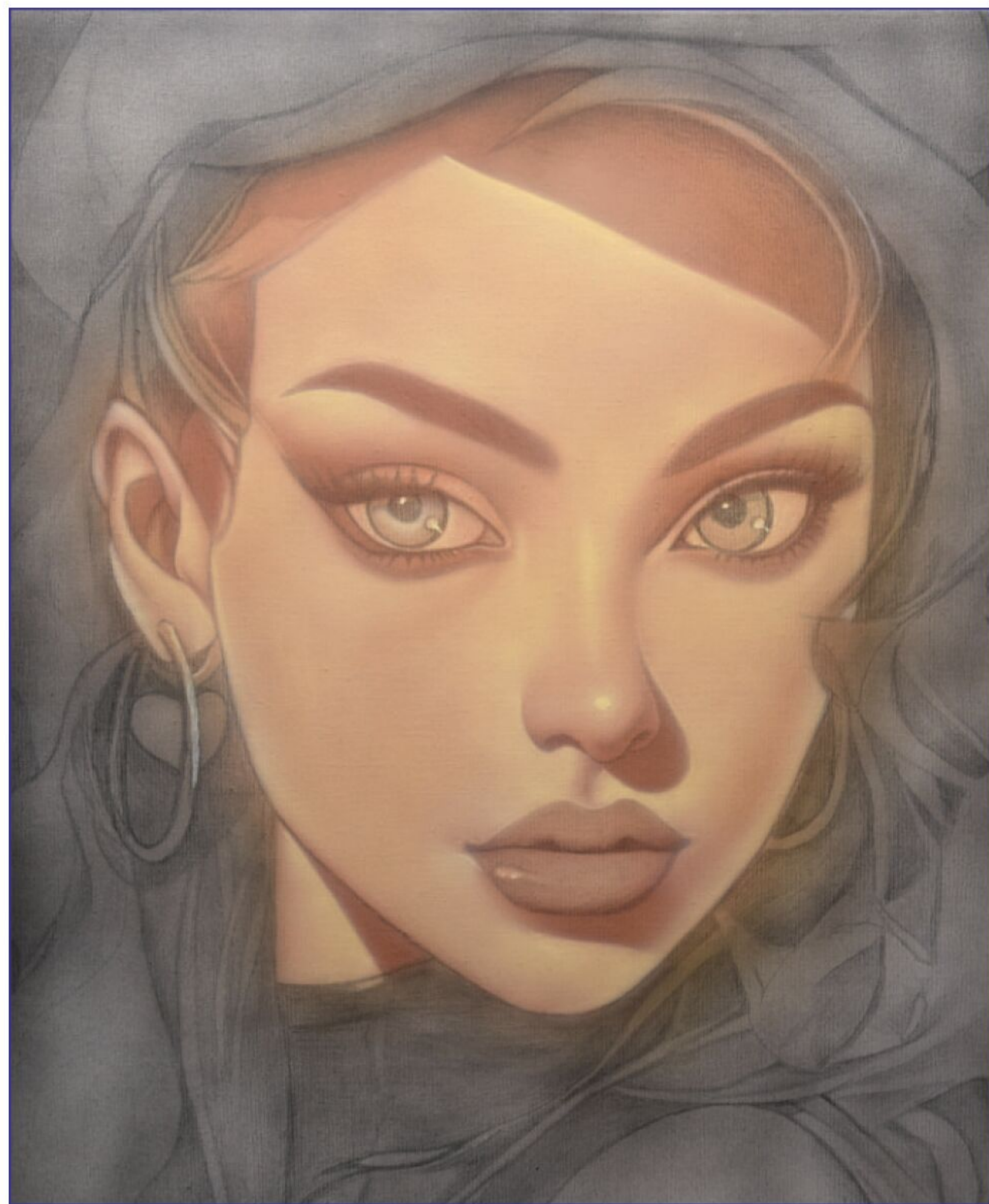


05 Highlights and shape of face

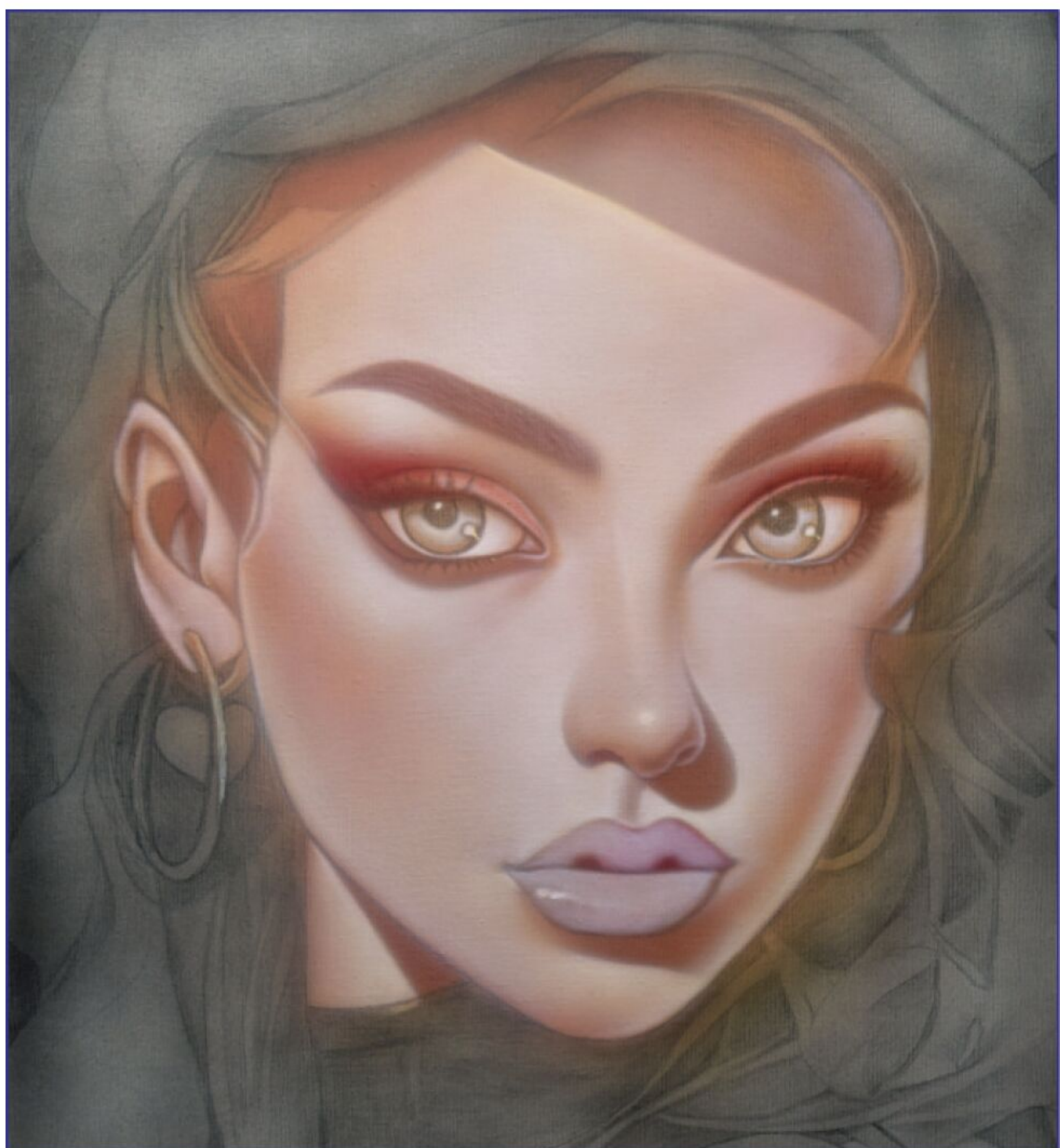
I begin to airbrush all the highlights with white color. It is the same principal like erasing the highlights, but I do it with white color paint. I use color to shape the face, giving it an initial 3D effect.

**06 Warm up skin tone**

I spray a second thin layer of transparent yellow ochre to warm up the first layer of Indian red color on her flesh.

**07 Highlighting the skin**

I repeat the same process of highlighting the skin and facial shape again with white color. After that, I added a mist of very transparent red color for the blush on her cheekbones.

**08 White base for hair, hat and clothing**

Now I started painting with white acrylic all the brighter areas outside her face, thereby giving shape to the hair, hat and clothing.



09 Coloring red and green

Once I determined all the bright areas with the white color, I start spraying all the bright red color areas. I repeat the same process but now I select green and start spraying all

the bright green color areas. When coloring, I take care not to cover the previously created tonal values and to spray on the color in gradients if necessary.



10 Blue coloring and enhancing brightness

I repeat the same process but now I select and start spraying all the bright blue color areas. I used a very thin transparent blue for the blue light reflecting on her left side face. Also I added a more bright florescent green on all those

green color areas to make the eyes and the green strands of hair glow. With a darker blue, I darken the shadow areas of the light blue color areas. With dark brown, I draw on the eyebrows and eyelashes.



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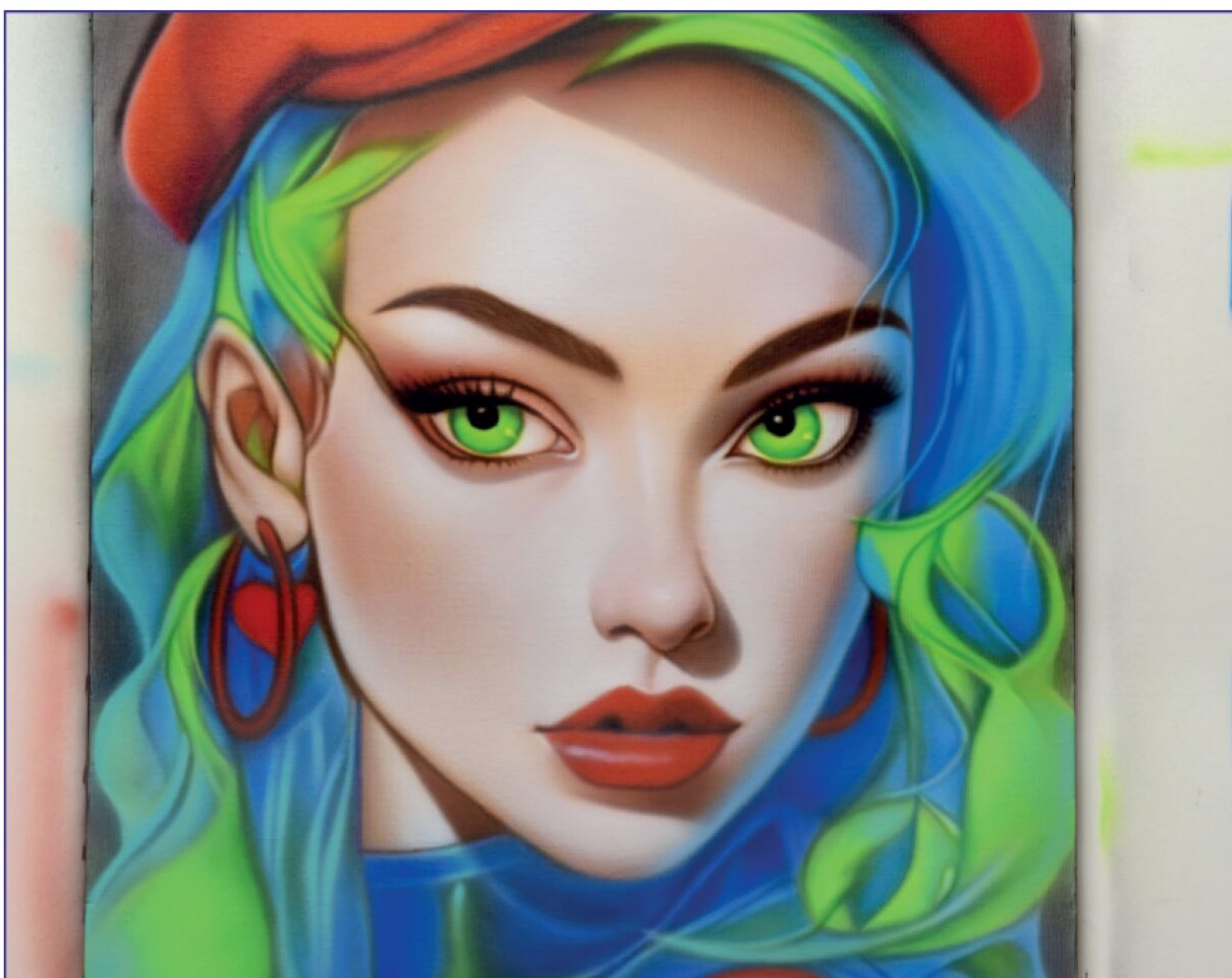
11 Dark contrasts

I sprayed a very thin transparent layer of sienna or light brown on all her face to make her flesh look a bit warmer and continued applying more dark brown for her shadows and other darker areas on her face. Eyebrows, eyelashes and irises are darkened. The cap, the earring, the chin, the lips and some strands of hair are contoured.



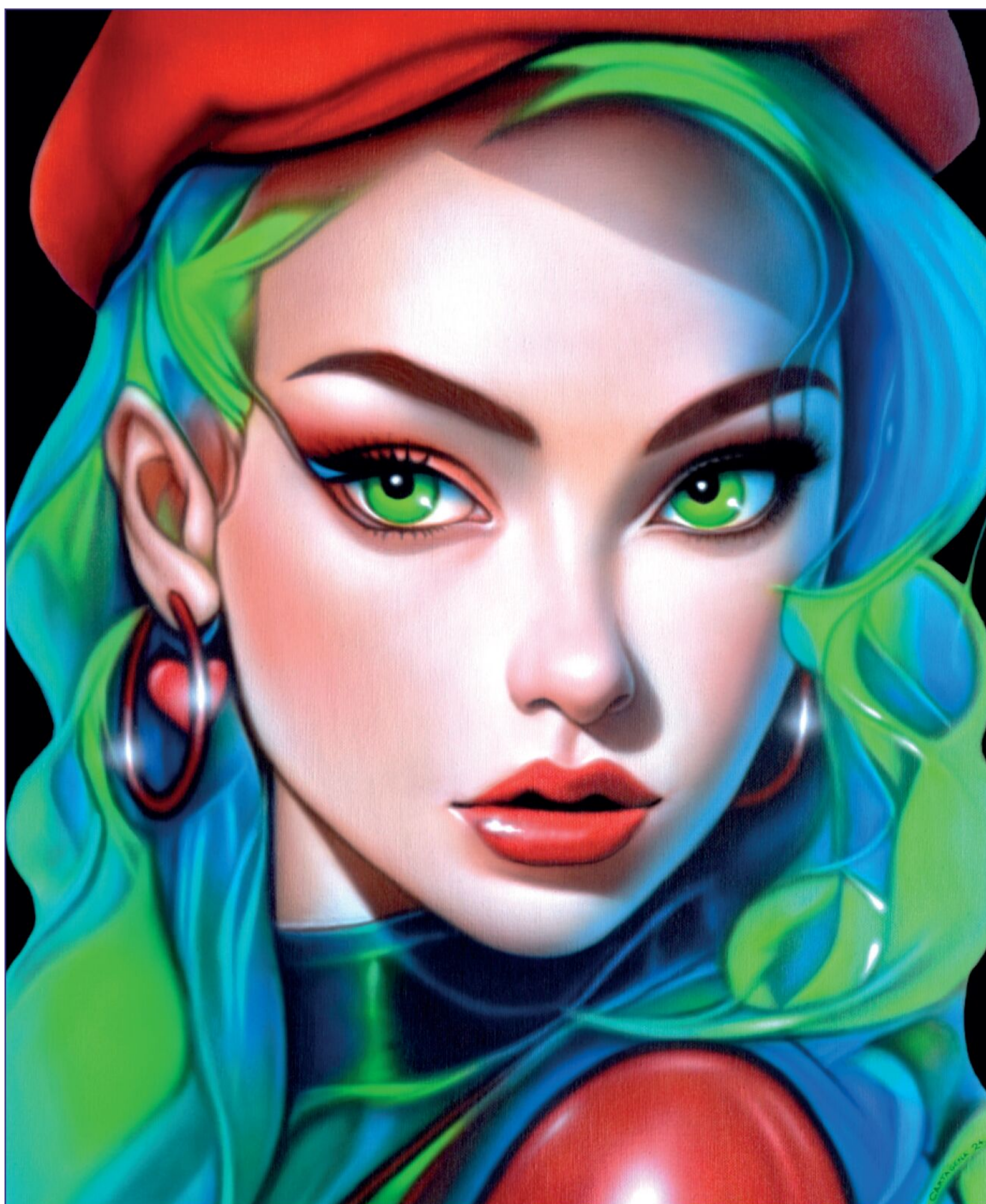
12 Touching up

I began the final process of touching up the illustration adding more colors to it like dark green, dark blue, purple, and turquoise to create a more colorful illustration.



13 Finished artwork

And final one, I established all the black color areas like her eyelashes, the left edge of her face, around her earrings, etc. And I also added all her final facial highlights with white. Finished!



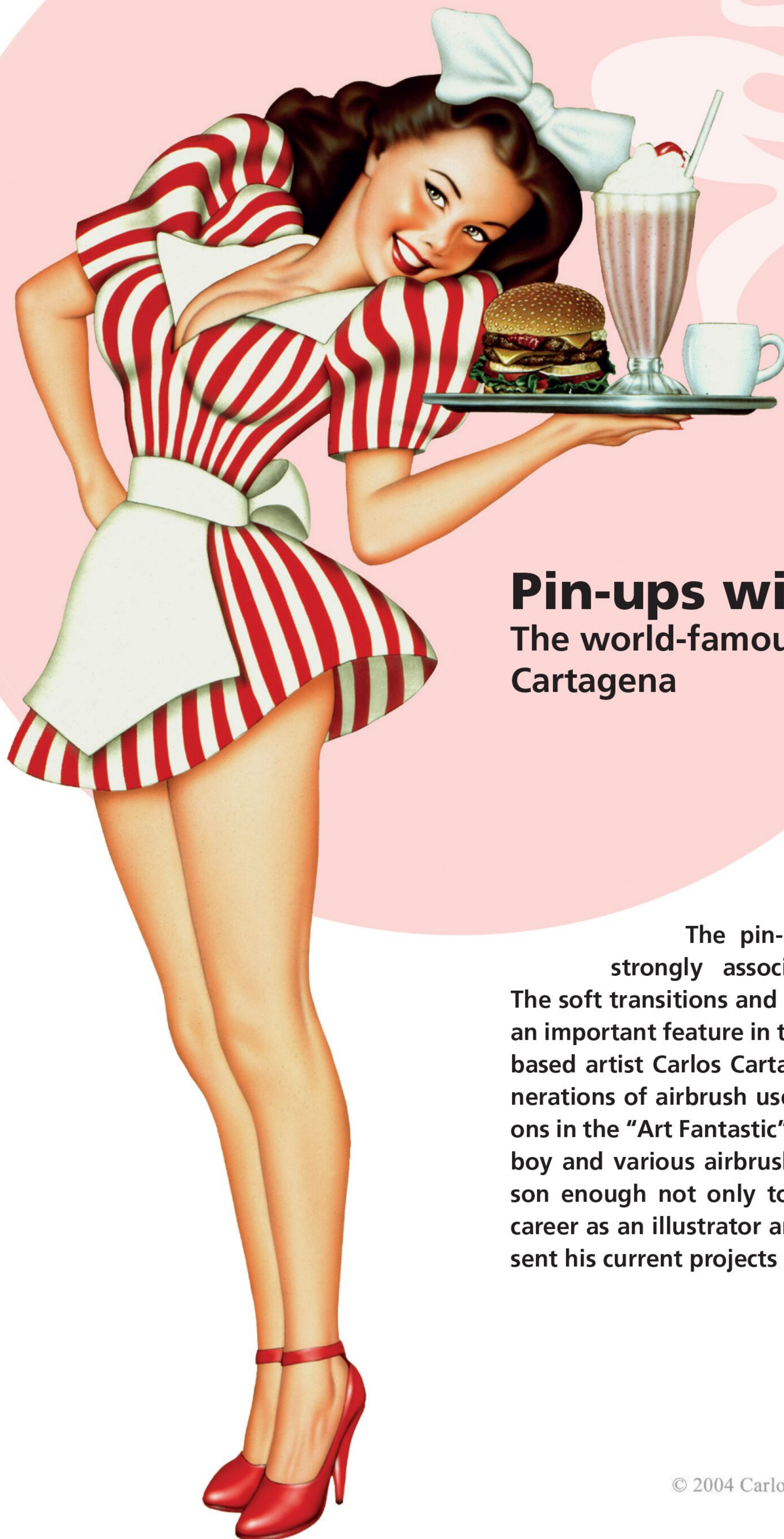
CARLOS CARTAGENA



Carlos Cartagena was born in Guatemala on April 29, 1960. He moved to the United States in 1981. For the first nine years in the US, he worked a variety of jobs. In 1990, he got his first job as an illustrator for a sign company. The following year, he began honing his artistic skills by painting leather jackets and customized Harley-Davidson motorcycles. During this development, his sexy pin-up style began to emerge.

In 1995 and 1996, he won first prize for his airbrush work on a Harley-Davidson in Sturgis and Laughlin, making it onto the covers of Easyriders and Hot Bike magazines. In 1997, he started working for Slap-On Decals, a company that produced high-quality, sexy pin-up decals in oversize. In 2001, Carlos's international breakthrough came thanks to the advertising campaign for Slap-On Decals. Today, the pin-ups from Cartagena are in demand and licensed worldwide. Carlos's clients also include magazines such as Playboy, Hooters Magazine and Penthouse.

www.carloscartagena.com



Pin-ups with style

The world-famous art of Carlos Cartagena

The pin-up theme is historically strongly associated with airbrushing. The soft transitions and the work with masks are an important feature in the design of pin-ups. US-based artist Carlos Cartagena has influenced generations of airbrush users through his publications in the "Art Fantastic" series, as well as in Playboy and various airbrush magazines. This is reason enough not only to get an insight into his career as an illustrator and artist, but also to present his current projects and ideas.

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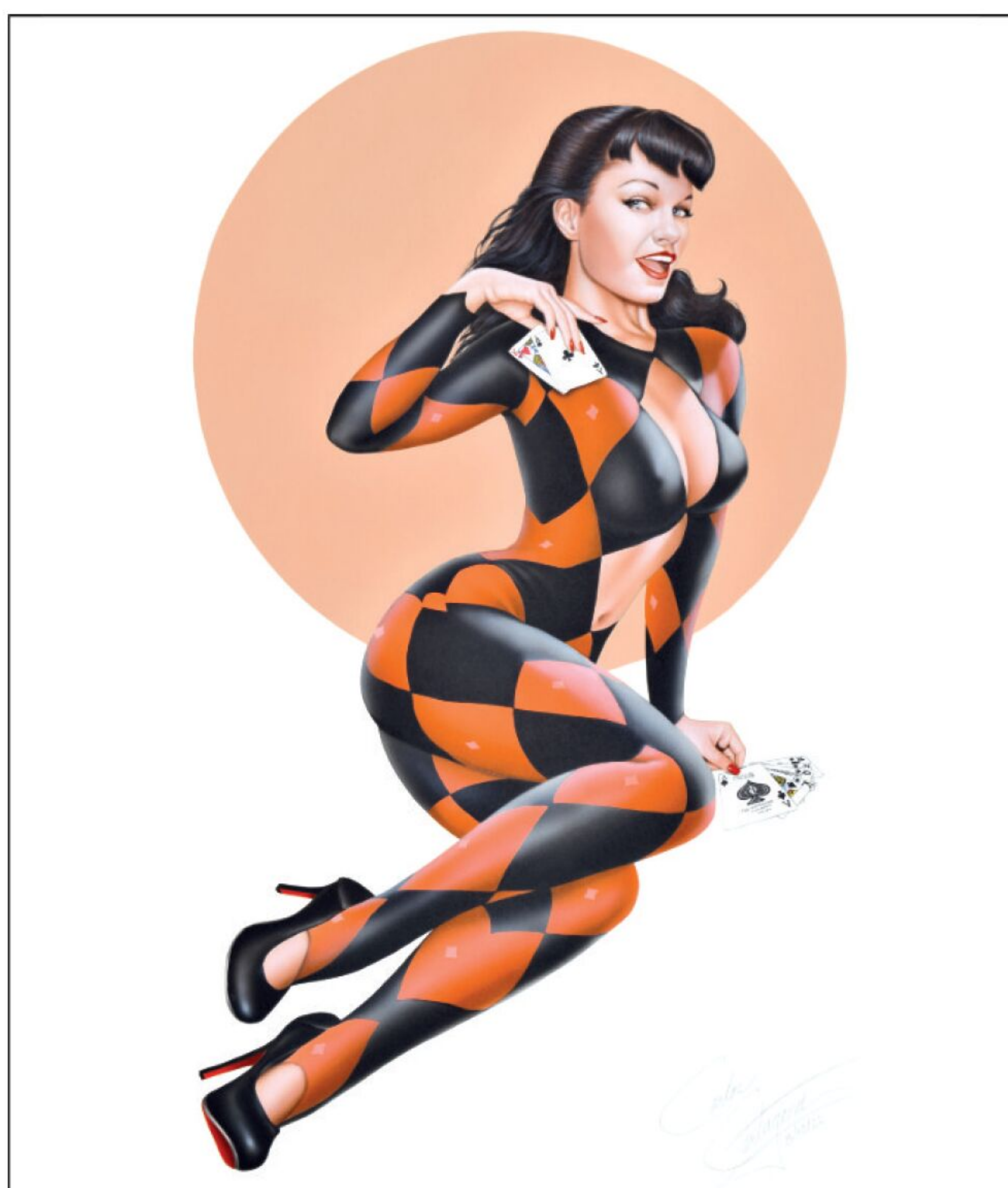
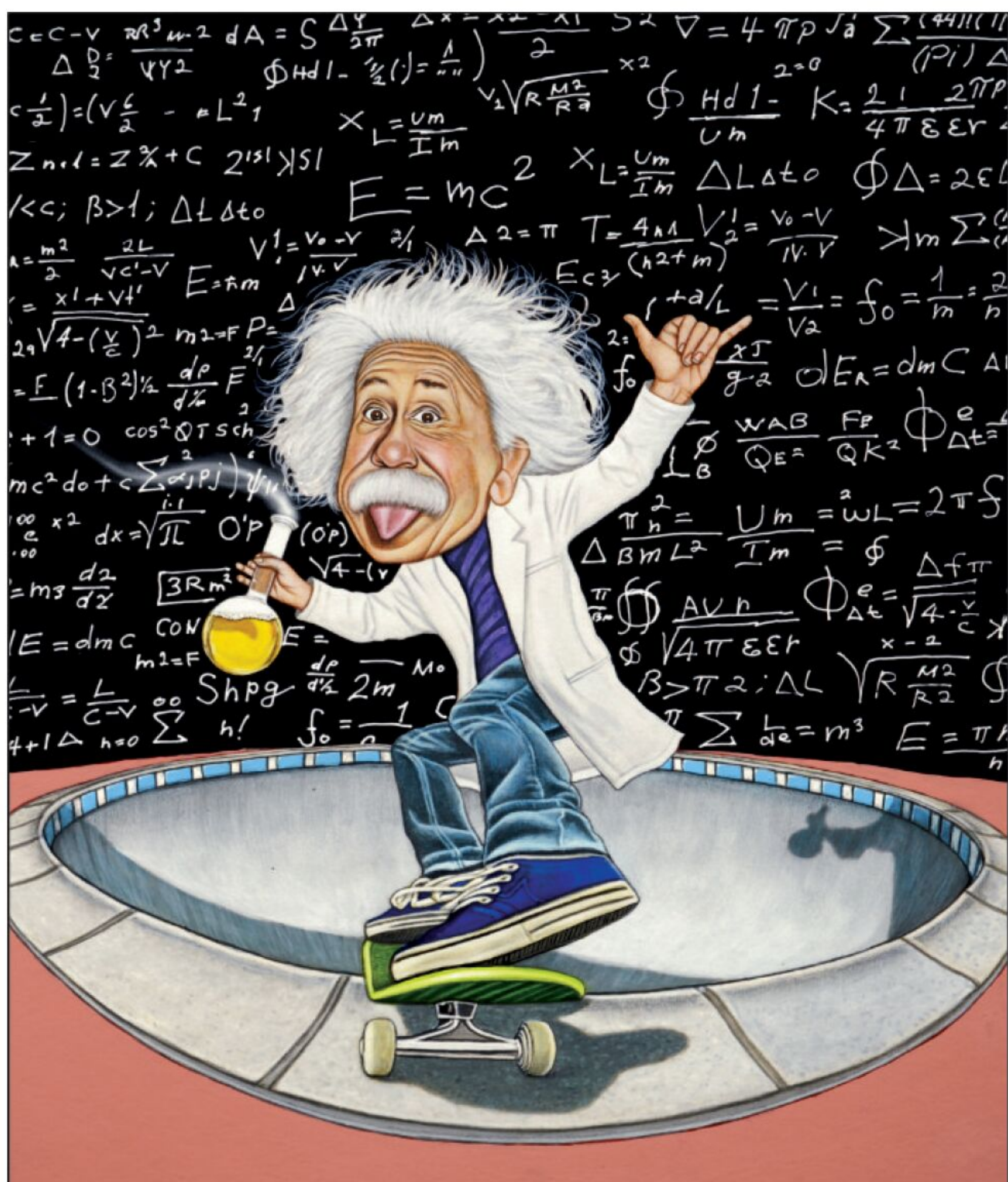
You were born in Guatemala in the early 60s and emigrated to the USA in 1981. Did you design and paint a lot in your youth? Was this one of the reasons for moving to the USA – the land of opportunity?

Carlos Cartagena: I began showing some natural drawing abilities in my early years, which is pretty much all I did in my native country in my first twenty years. In those early years, the art of airbrushing was something I knew nothing about. Our father used to work for PAN AM Airlines, so we used to visit some family members in the US in our childhood and teen years. It was at the age of twenty-one when I finally de-

cided to move permanently to the US. It was then that I spent the first ten years adapting to my new life and learning to communicate in my new English language.

How did you get into airbrushing? Have you tried other painting techniques before?

Carlos Cartagena: In the last four years of the '80s I had a job driving a truck delivering products to restaurants. It was then that I got my first introduction to the airbrush world. I loved it so much that I decided to invest in my first airbrush equipment without knowing anything about it, determined to de-





velop some skills to fulfill a new dream.

Did you teach yourself? Did you have support from other (pin-up) artists?

Carlos Cartagena: Yes, I did, but it was also thanks to a combination of good airbrush books, a couple of airbrush seminars, and a burning desire to become good at it that I started developing some skills.

How did you manage to break into the industry in the 90s?



Carlos Cartagena: Having then my first airbrush studio in the late 80s, I started developing some skills good enough to launch my first job as a luminous commercial signs artist in the first year of the nineties.

You have also been to Germany with your designs. How did that come about?

Carlos Cartagena: I had the privilege of meeting my dear friend Reinhard Geckler, a German businessman in the airbrush business who was visiting California and came to attend a local art show exhibiting my illustrations. He liked it enough to



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invite me to Germany to conduct an airbrush workshop seminar. I once airbrushed a plane in Germany in collaboration with Reinhard Geckler. And some of my originals are still on permanent display at Airbrush Geckler in Eislingen. Prints of my early pin-ups are also available to buy there.

Do you still use airbrush for your artworks? Which materials do you prefer to work with?

Carlos Cartagena: Not 100% anymore. Now I mix regular brush techniques with my airbrushing and I use acrylic paint on either canvas, clay, or illustration board.

You always manage to make the pin-ups look sexy and classy, but never cheap and vulgar. What is your secret behind this?

Carlos Cartagena: Thank you for the kind words, but now I enjoy more the difficult challenge of creating a very appealing sexy image without full nudity or with pornographic orientation.

How do you approach a pin-up project? Do you take photo references of the models yourself?

Carlos Cartagena: It all depends on whether it is a specific person's commission, I still take my photos of that model. Otherwise, today we can almost get any image reference that we need on the Internet.

Do you work with sketches?

Carlos Cartagena: Yes, but first I create a digital preliminary on my computer with Photoshop. Then I use an overhead projector to sketch the digital preliminary onto an illustration board. Then I enhance the sketch with some personal drawing touch-ups.

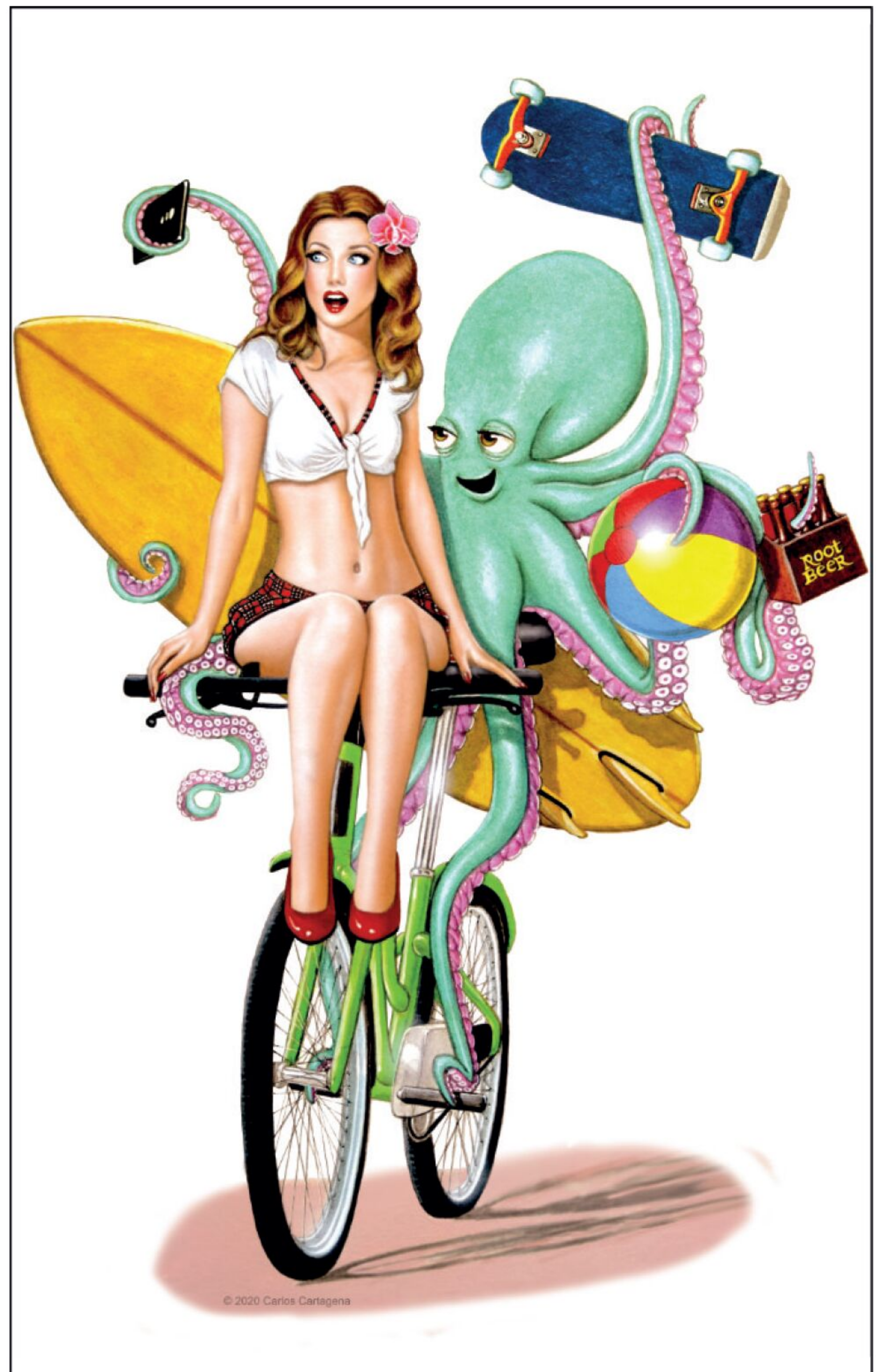
Do you tend to work with transparent or opaque colors?

Carlos Cartagena: I prefer transparent colors, but both ways are needed.

What kind of masking do you use?

Carlos Cartagena: Original Frisket masking.

You have certainly met many stars and starlets from the business. Tell us something about the wild 90s ;) What was particularly exciting or memorable for you?



Carlos Cartagena: The unveiling of Lynne Austin's original illustration at the HOOTERS casino hotel event in Las Vegas, a couple of invitations to the Playboy Mansion, and meeting Hugh Hefner.

According to your biography, you started licensing your designs at the end of the 90s. How did you get into that? Is this still a line of business for you?

Carlos Cartagena: Around the late 90s, I signed my first licensing contract with my friend Mark Buck, the founder of "Slap-On Decals". This high-quality decal company became global in 2000 and that wide exposure of my pin-up designs enticed other companies with other products into other licensing contracts.

Do you have any current projects? New illustrated books? Lectures?

Carlos Cartagena: Yes, I have some new projects and I am now in the process of refreshing my career.

Are pin-ups still an issue today? Or are the stylish illustrations being replaced by photos, 3D renderings and AI?

Carlos Cartagena: Yes, today there is a new group of incredibly talented digital computer artists who are learning how the AI technology works. These are already replacing all the art illustrators like me, but for as long as we still have art buyers appreciating the detail of art made by a human hand, we'll still hopefully have some art to sell.

Thank you, Carlos, for this retrospective and outlook on your creative work.



The crazy wolf

Ellen Olson's airbrush art

Ellen Olson had just started to build up her airbrushing business and offer courses in her native Ukraine when the war began. Now she is continuing her dream in Poland and wants to stay the-

re. She now works with Anest Iwata Poland, teaches in Polish and is particularly successful as a motorcycle painter.

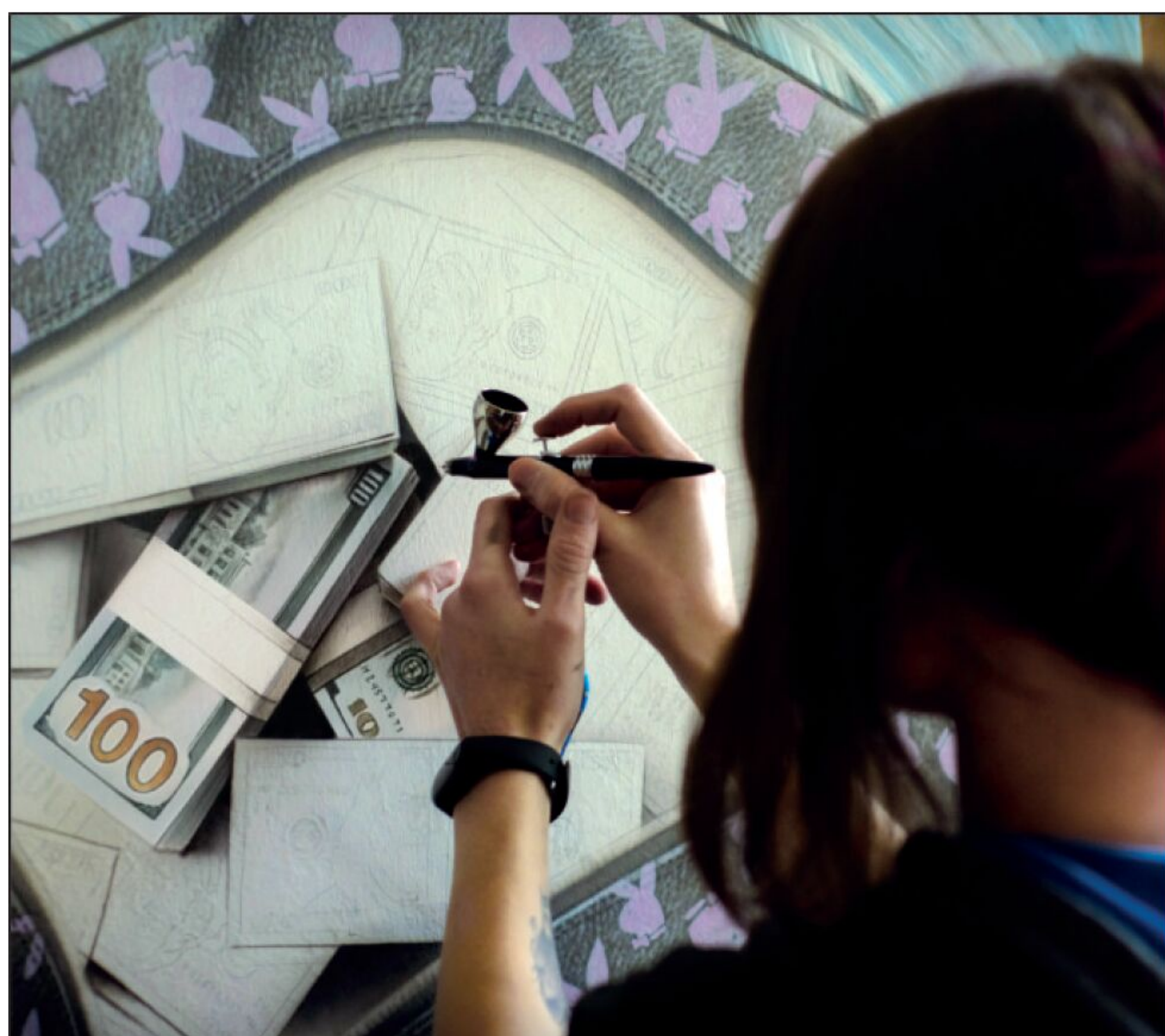


How did you get into airbrushing?

Ellen Olson: Although I have been drawing quite well since childhood, as I was passionate about it and dedicated a lot of time to it, I was not accepted into art school at the age of 15. I wasn't disappointed at all. It was then that I realized I did not want to devote myself to academic drawing. I have always loved realism, and since childhood, I have loved cars. I had many colorful books with cars, and I believe my love for cars led me to airbrushing. It seemed like a great idea to combine drawing and cars, so I learned about airbrushing. At that time, the internet was not as accessible, but I remember how my eyes lit up when I came across a video of American airbrushing on lowriders. I wanted to do that too.

Are you completely self-taught?

Ellen Olson: I would love to say that I am self-taught, but



that's not entirely true. My parents always saw my interest in drawing and helped nurture it. When I was about 8 or 10 years old, they sent me to art school, but I was given little attention there, probably because I was capricious and did not need much help. At the age of 13, I drew pencil portraits and earned money for my desires this way. Now I realize that this was not right, and in doing so, I skipped one of the stages of childhood by growing up early.

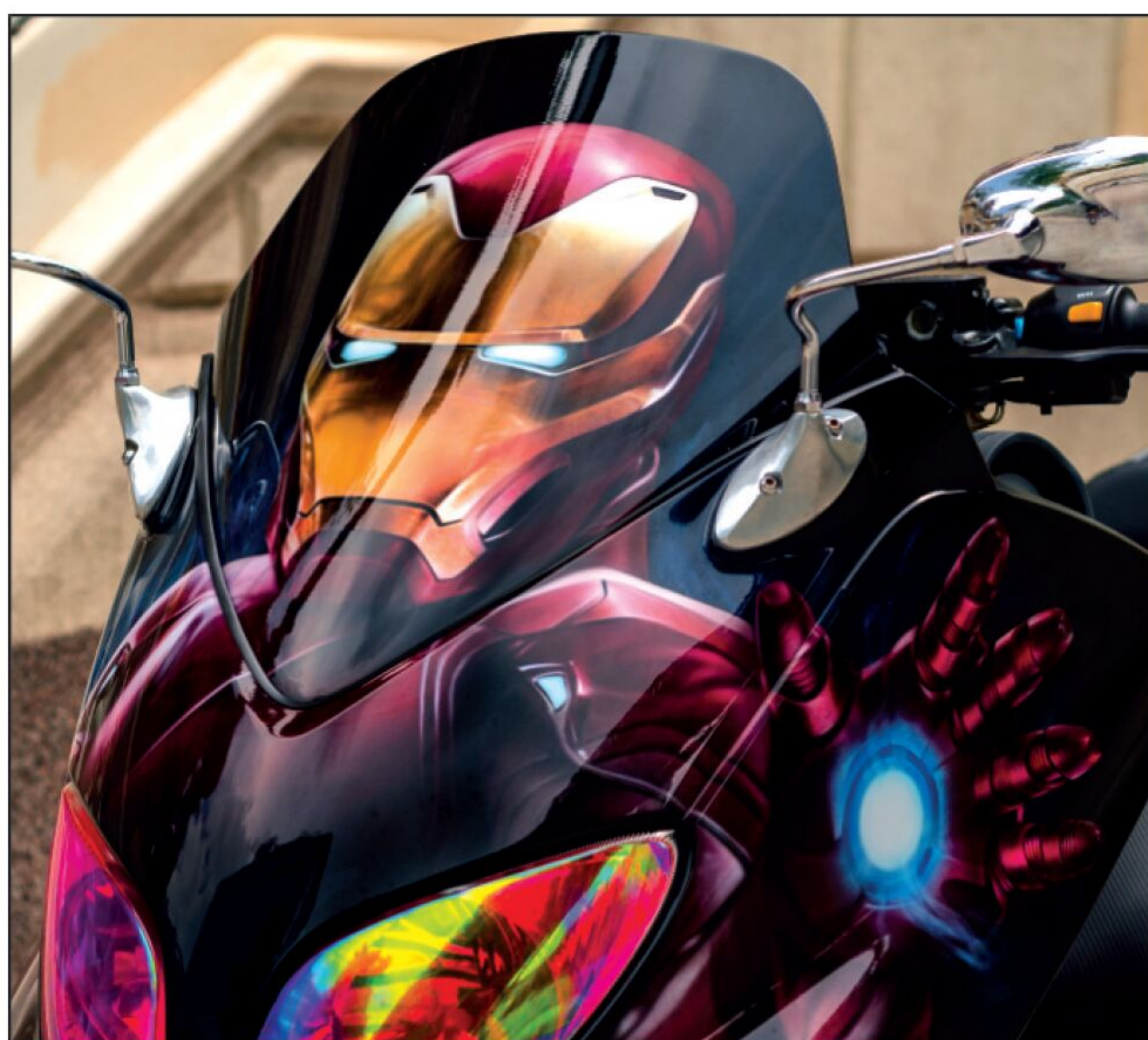
At 16, when I picked up an airbrush, I thought I would start creating masterpieces, but it turned out that airbrushing is a complex drawing technique that requires knowledge of paints, surfaces, and a bit about compressors. I was nervous and wanted to give up within the first week. Then, my mother and I traveled 300 km for a three-day airbrushing course, where I got answers to my questions and learned the basics of airbrushing.

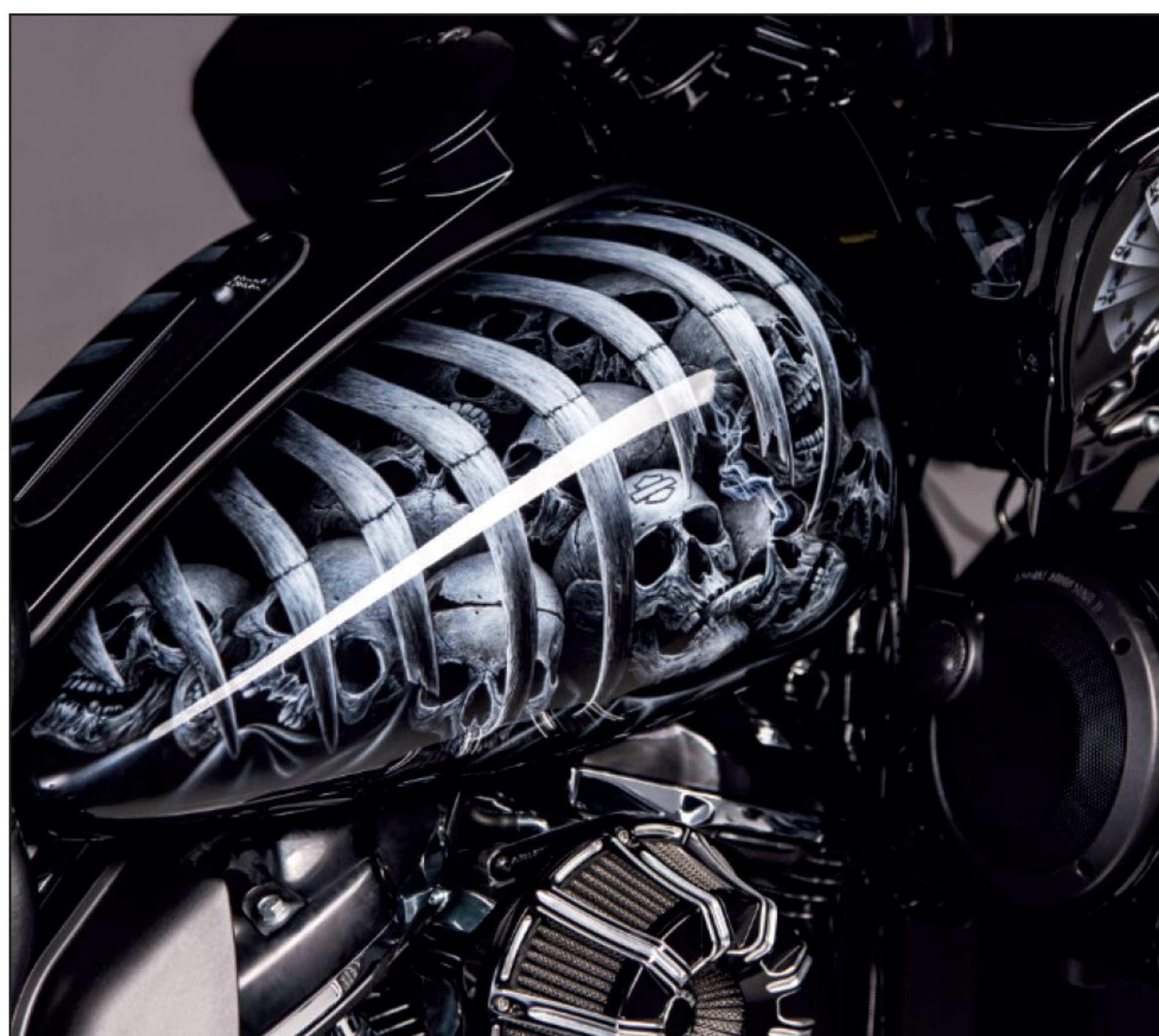
How did you come to make art your profession?

Ellen Olson: I didn't always work on commission. To fully support myself, I tried working as a shop assistant, a waitress in a café, and sought part-time jobs. However, I couldn't stick to a strict schedule for long because I already knew what it was like to work from home at my own pace. And when I had the opportunity to draw on commission, I did.

Over seven years, with breaks, I independently studied this drawing technique. It was a long journey of trial and error, searching for lacquerers, finding orders, and sourcing paints. I saw my growth but wanted more. So, at 23, I saved a good amount of money and traveled 1,500 km to St. Petersburg to attend Aline Tarasenko's airbrushing school. That month was unforgettable. There, I had the opportunity to meet other artists, share my experiences and failures. That's when my art made a significant leap forward.

So would you recommend this experience to other airbrush learners?





Ellen Olson: If you have never attended a master class, I highly recommend participating in at least one. This energy cannot compare to any YouTube video. Even in my individual classes, I see how students' eyes light up. They get answers to unique questions, share and gain experience. You'll be surprised how much teachers and students have in common. We all go through a thorny path, face difficulties, and learn from our mistakes, which we are ashamed to talk about because we think only we are capable of such failures. This is not true. Currently, my experience in airbrushing spans about 13 years, and I am still learning this drawing technique.

What do you like about the airbrush technique?

Ellen Olson: I love airbrushing for its ability to paint on virtually any surface. I have tried painting on fabric, human bodies, walls, cars, bicycles, and canvases. But I have a special love for motorcycles.

What materials do you prefer to work with?

Ellen Olson: My first airbrush was a Harder & Steenbeck Evolution. I was lucky with my father, who always meticulously chose purchases online. He spent a lot of time comparing different airbrushes. And not in vain. This airbrush served me for eight years and now hangs in a frame on the wall. Now I mainly work with two airbrushes: H&S Evolution and Iwata Takumi. I like both brands, and although professional airbrushes can aid in drawing, I believe my experience would allow me to draw a detailed picture even with a Chinese airbrush. However, my recommendation for beginners is to choose quality equipment; it's worth it.

You mainly use Schmincke paints for client orders. What advantages do they offer you?

Ellen Olson: I use two types of paints: solvent-based automo-





tive base coats and Schmincke water-based paints. I often use Schmincke paints to add color to my work. Many might notice that I first paint the airbrush work in black and white tones. At this stage, I detail the work with automotive paints. Then, I tint everything with Schmincke paints. I like Schmincke for its fine dispersion, allowing the paint to easily pass through a 0.2 nozzle, vibrant colors, and low consumption. One bottle of my most used color lasted me five years.

In one of your videos, you said you're "crazy." What defines you and your lifestyle? What drives you crazy, and aren't we artists always a bit crazy?

Ellen Olson: It's true, everyone is a bit crazy in their own way, everyone has their views on life and their individuality. And now I understand how important it is to preserve this in oneself. I have always been a bit wild, a bit special. In school, I was teased and called a she-wolf. And now I understand that the-

se children probably knew more about me than I did. I have always loved nature and animals, but over time my love began to grow stronger and reveal new aspects of me. I truly feel like a she-wolf. This is my totem animal, and I plan to create a series of paintings on this theme, as I believe many people feel the breath of their wild animal behind them. We are taught to be modest, quiet, like everyone else; this can lead to internal conflict and a feeling that we are hiding something, living a double life. Now I understand how important it is not to ignore it and to give it freedom, to live in harmony with it.

What are your favorite surfaces and designs?

Ellen Olson: Currently, the most popular and my favorite surface in my portfolio is motorcycles. Besides that, I paint on helmets and acrylic panels. Helmets are the hardest for me to paint due to their curves and shapes. This is probably the last





thing I would want to deal with. But I will never refuse an interesting airbrush job on a helmet. For example, I painted a helmet with Sigmund and Mickey Mouses with great pleasure.

How do you come up with a commissioned project like this?

Ellen Olson: Before painting, I always make a sketch in Photoshop, listening to the client, their wishes, and color preferences. Of course, sometimes the client doesn't know what they want. In such cases, I ask about their favorite movies, music, animals, important events in their life, and then they start to have ideas. Sometimes we change the airbrush concept during the painting process. There was a case when I wiped off a painted fragment with solvent and painted a new design on that part.

Do you varnish clients' orders yourself?

Ellen Olson: I know a lot of theory about surface preparation and varnishing, as well as many nuances that can arise during the process. If necessary, I could varnish a surface myself, but

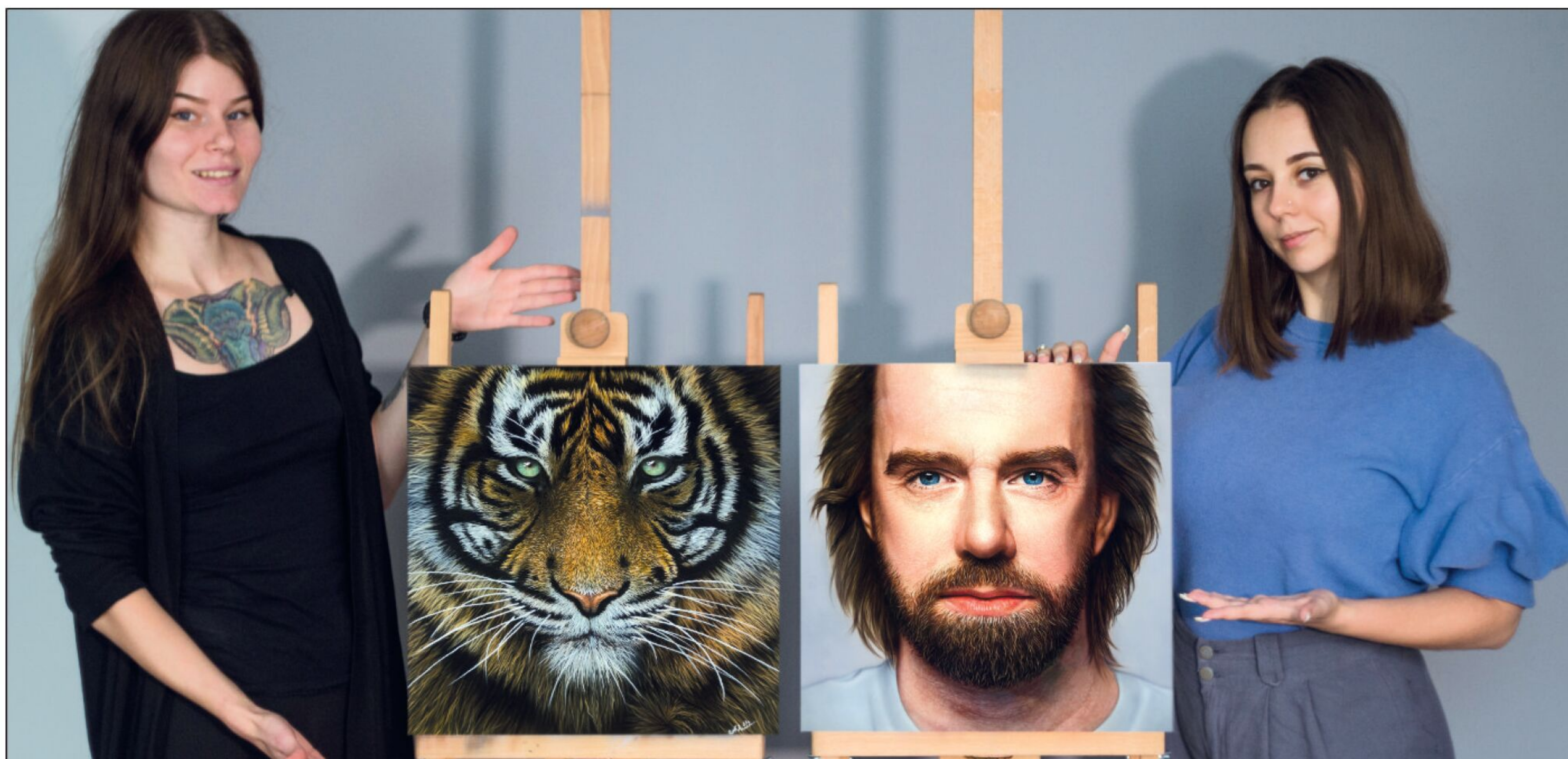
I prefer to leave this work to specialists. First and foremost, I am an artist and want to devote more time to art and drawing.

What projects would you like to realize in the future?

Ellen Olson: I have spent a lot of time realizing my clients' ideas on motorcycles, leaving me with little time for my personal ideas and projects. Only recently did I realize how important it is for an artist to express their thoughts through art. Through creativity, people communicate with the world, reveal their personality, and I have been silent for a long time. As I mentioned earlier, I want to develop the theme "people and totem animals." This is what always inspires me. There is a thin line between us, and we are very similar.

Tell us something about your master classes. Have you been conducting seminars for a long time?

Ellen Olson: I was invited to be a teacher in St. Petersburg. This happened a month after I attended an intensive airbrushing course there. The girls said I had great results, which was





very pleasant to hear. At that time, it was more profitable for me to stay in Ukraine and continue building my client base. Then I thought, why not try teaching airbrushing myself in Ukraine? It was a new perspective on airbrushing since I had to explain to my students how to draw this or that without having experience. Many things I did intuitively, and I didn't even have to think about how I did it. But with students, I had to be able to clearly explain this drawing technique. However, I managed quite well. My students quickly learned under my guidance.

Six months later, the war began, and I moved to Poland. I don't know if it was luck or merit, but I was quickly noticed here and recommended directly to the director of Anest Iwata Poland, Wojtek. He provided me with the conditions, tools, and workshop for conducting master classes. Thanks to Wojtek, I also started learning Polish, and I conducted my second

master class independently without a translator.

My master classes are more like intensive individual lessons, lasting from 2 to 5 days. During this time, we create a complete painting on an acrylic panel. The theme is chosen together with the student. In my intensive course, we learn to draw in the technique of realism without using stencils. Drawing free-hand allows for the natural flow of lines.

Currently, I have started taking English courses and plan to record online airbrushing courses from scratch to make my training accessible to more people, as not everyone has the opportunity to come to Poland.

Ellen, thank you for the interesting talk.

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Preview

Airbrush Step by Step 76 will be available from June 27, 2025.



Lucy's Dream

Every one of American illustrator Michael Calandra's images tells a story that the viewer can discover individually in the detailed pictures. It's no wonder that Michael's works have made it onto the cover of the famous magazine "Heavy Metal" several times.



Steampunk Skull

A skull made of bone and metal mechanics decorates the electric guitar of Polish artist Agnieszka Maluchnik. She sketched out a detailed head with masking and white paint and then colored it.



Quando c'era lei

"When She Was There": This is the title Italian artist Guido Coltri chose for his homage to the Italian acting legends of the 1960s and to the FIAT 500, which is the figurehead of the Italian economic boom of that time and serves as a backdrop for his work.



True Colors

Since the 1980s, the singer Cindy Lauper has been known for being shrill, loud and colorful. And that's how the Columbian artist Edith Davila has painted her: with bright colors, many highlights and strong expression.



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