

Genius Guide 

A comprehensive masterclass  
to becoming an instant expert

# Fantasy ART

For  
Photoshop,  
PaintTool SAI,  
ArtRage &  
Painter

The essential guide to designing & creating stunning fantasy art



## Welcome to **Fantasy ART** Genius Guide™



**There's no better way to express your creativity than through fantasy art.** If you're tired of airbrushing, retouching, or being bound

by reality, it can be great to let your imagination run wild, and in this book we will show you some of the best tips and techniques to help you take your art to the next level. Whether you use Photoshop, Painter, PaintTool SAI, ArtRage or any other number of creative programs, we have something for you within these 260 pages. From adding dramatic lighting and using layer masks to painting sprawling sci-fi cityscapes and mythical beasts, you'll discover plenty of inspiration to help you with your projects. There's expert advice from industry professionals on how to design manga and steampunk, and even guides on how to produce amazing artwork on your iPad. So put your creative hat on and delve into the magical world of fantasy art.





# Fantasy ART

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# The rules of Fantasy Art

We explore the rules of digital painting, from concept and composition through to tools and technique



**Fantasy and sci-fi concept painting is one of the biggest sub-genres of digital art, and in order to be successful in this area, it pays to learn the rules of planning, composition and application.** Artists who master this type of artwork will find their skills essential in the movie, videogame and entertainment industries, where the need to convey places and objects that don't yet exist is common.

Over these pages, we will be looking at the work of four amazing artists who have created awe-inspiring artworks on the digital canvas, from the likes of Martin

Bland's tech-macabre cyber cityscapes to Andreas Rocha's sci-fi utopias. Dedication and practice count for much when achieving these styles, as well as natural artistic ability, but there are plenty of rules and methods that you can learn and apply to your artwork to improve your creations. We talk with some of the fantasy art industry's top contributors and get them to reveal their top tips and tricks. Even if you're not into fantasy landscapes, the advice here is relevant across all genres of digital art. So read on to start on your path toward better digital paintings.

## Concept and planning

**There is nothing more daunting than staring at a blank canvas with no idea of where to start.**

When constructing any conceptual landscape work, thorough planning is essential to the visual development of the piece. But are there any proven methods for getting going on a project, a perfect method of planning that will guarantee the success of a piece? Portuguese artist Andreas Rocha, an up-and-coming favourite in the gaming and editorial arenas, cites motivation and research as key elements in his workflow, but he also suggests getting the basics down first: "Without research, the initial concept can lead to failure. I would think it is best to first think briefly about what you want to portray, just the general guidelines." This helps you to find that balance between what your imagination would like to achieve and keeping a sense of realism in the piece.

Rocha admits to a preference of using specialist books over the internet when in these early research stages. "For instance, you want to use some Art Nouveau motifs in a fantastic castle," he explains. "You can find examples on the internet, but specialised books will give you much better quality images taken by professional photographers, all condensed into one handy resource. If you opt for the internet, you will almost certainly not get the best photos and you will lose time filtering the results."

Despite this, the world wide web does hold some benefits according to Rocha: "On the other hand, the internet displays its content in digital format, which is great for organisational purposes. Keeping

things organised will transform your initial painting process into a combination of fluid, dynamic actions where there is no time for interruption."

Rocha endorses the advantages of stock photography to help speed up the workflow in digital applications such as Photoshop and other painter programs. "Photographs can really be helpful in the conceptualising process," he explains. "Photos not only contain information about an object, but they also show us how the object interacts with its surroundings and this can be important in portraying the object realistically." He does warn artists not to become too reliant on photos, though, if you want to maintain some individuality in your work: "Photos should be used as a complement. They should not dictate what



Mostly monochromatic;  
some hint of red (maybe  
flags) later turned into  
single light source



Observation of the behaviour of  
nature (images stored in memory,  
others from photography) clouds,  
reflections, atmosphere

Central element (tower) placed at  
third of layout (rule of thirds)

Background only hinted –  
overcast sky blurs detail

Contrast around main elements;  
surrounding low contrast/dark

Low eye-level horizon; vanishing points off  
canvas – low dynamism leads to a calm setting

**Home:** "Homage to one of Lisbon's most charismatic  
monuments: The Tower of Belém"  
© **Andreas Rocha**

# The rules of fantasy art

you are portraying. Conceptualisation has to involve the creative side of the brain.”

The value of good motivation and stock resources is in providing the ability to put down strong ideas in a simple basic language. Sketches and line work are fundamental in developing the conceptual composition, as Rocha explains: “Since they set the limits, you can quickly evaluate the content as things get defined very early on. Another advantage is that once the sketch is done, you can quickly add value underneath the line work by putting this layer in Multiply mode in Photoshop, above the value layer. Like this, the filling out of forms becomes a very quick process.”

Different artists have different processes when it comes to starting their images. New Zealand-based concept artist Stefan Morrell voices his own opinion on the early stages of image creation. “For the initial development stages, I try to avoid colour. I’m always very concerned with values, and as such, black and white or muted colours are used more often. In later concept stages, it certainly becomes more important.” The artist, who is also a content creator for DAZ 3D, sanctions the use of digital media and its assistance in the pre-production stages. “In Photoshop, I mostly use the Chalk brush for roughing images out. It’s the ideal brush for quickly building up values and, when used with a graphics tablet, you can work very freely. The initial thumbnail process is more about values and shapes than anything else. I try to work with three values in sketches, dark for the foreground, mid-grey for the middle and a light grey for the background. These would also be the same values I work with when using COPIC graphic pens on paper.”

Morrell also finds that digital software allows him to construct innovative compositions in a novel fashion, as he explains: “I have explored different techniques of overlaying many images to ‘find’ an image, but that tends to be quite a random affair. It’s great if you have no idea to begin with and just want to explore shapes; you simply overlay several images in the one Photoshop file and use the blending modes of each layer to randomly change the look of each layer. Finally, all the layers combined can come up with some fun ideas.”

“Photos not only contain information about an object, but they also show us how the object interacts with its surroundings”





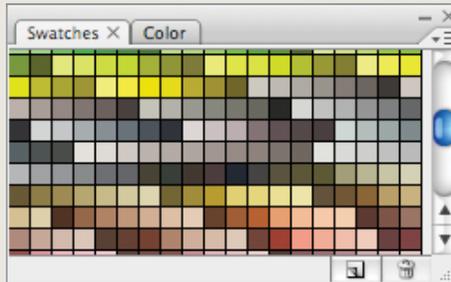
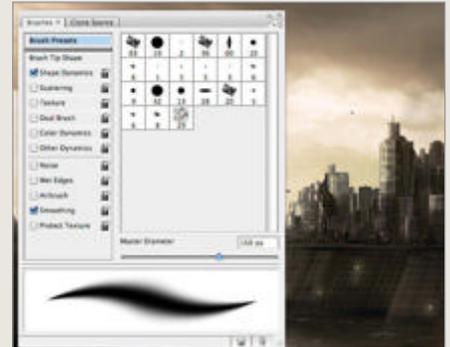
**District75:** "With this image, I added dozens of photos of billboards and neon signs to add some life to the city"  
© Stefan Morrell

## Essential tools

A guide to some of the features of Photoshop you need to master

### Simulated strokes

Photoshop's improved brush capacity has excelled the limits of concept painters, as Martin Bland reveals. "The brush engine is now massively powerful, and any number of effects can be applied with a few custom brushes. Take painting chain links, for example. It would have taken an age to do a few versions of the software back, but now, one custom brush and one sweep of said brush and you have a chain!"

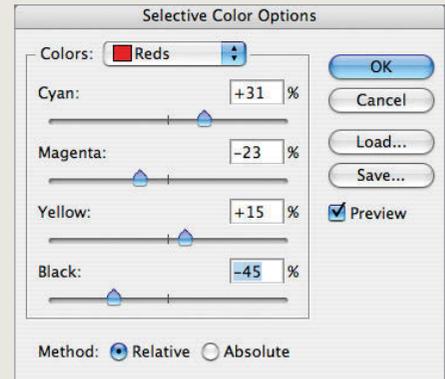


### Setting the mood

Photoshop supplies a range of adjustment options to later enhance your colours. Variations, Hue/Saturations and adjustment options such as Channel Mixer and Color Balance can enhance effects, as Sarel Theron explains. "Just as music helps build mood, colour can also help create a certain mood within a painting. A contrast between cooler and warmer hues can create impact as well as help to define focal points. I tend to pick the kind of palette that best suits the subject, eg, warm brown tones for deserts and cool crisp blues for icy environments."

### Layered effects

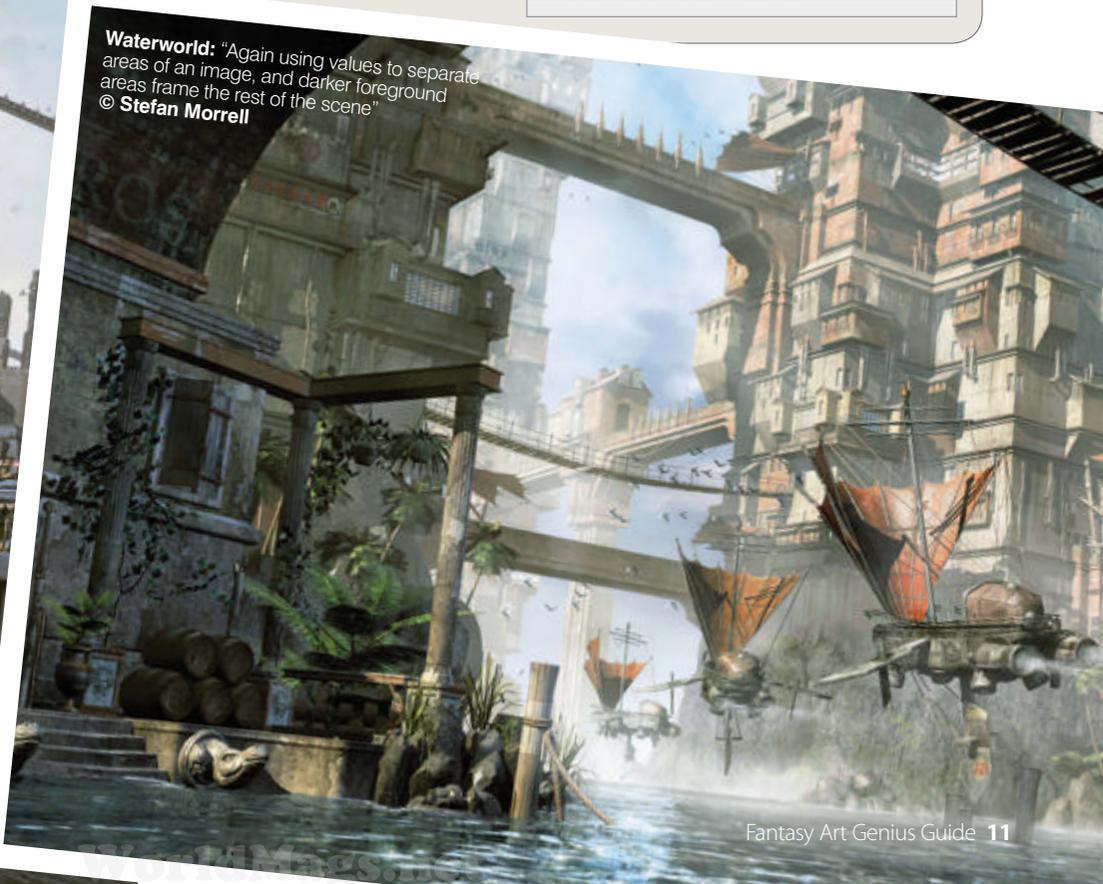
Photoshop's introduction of editable layer effects have been a real plus for producing multifaceted compositions, as Morrell explains. "In a production environment, photographed elements are essential. Something as simple as a photo of a stone wall can be overlaid onto a basic Photoshop drawing to give the appearance of a castle wall. Rapidly building up textures is where Photoshop comes in handy; it's all about speed and ease of use."



**The Majestic:** "Here I wanted to show off the height of the building, adding atmospheric perspective to the very top of the building so it almost blends into the sky"  
© Stefan Morrell

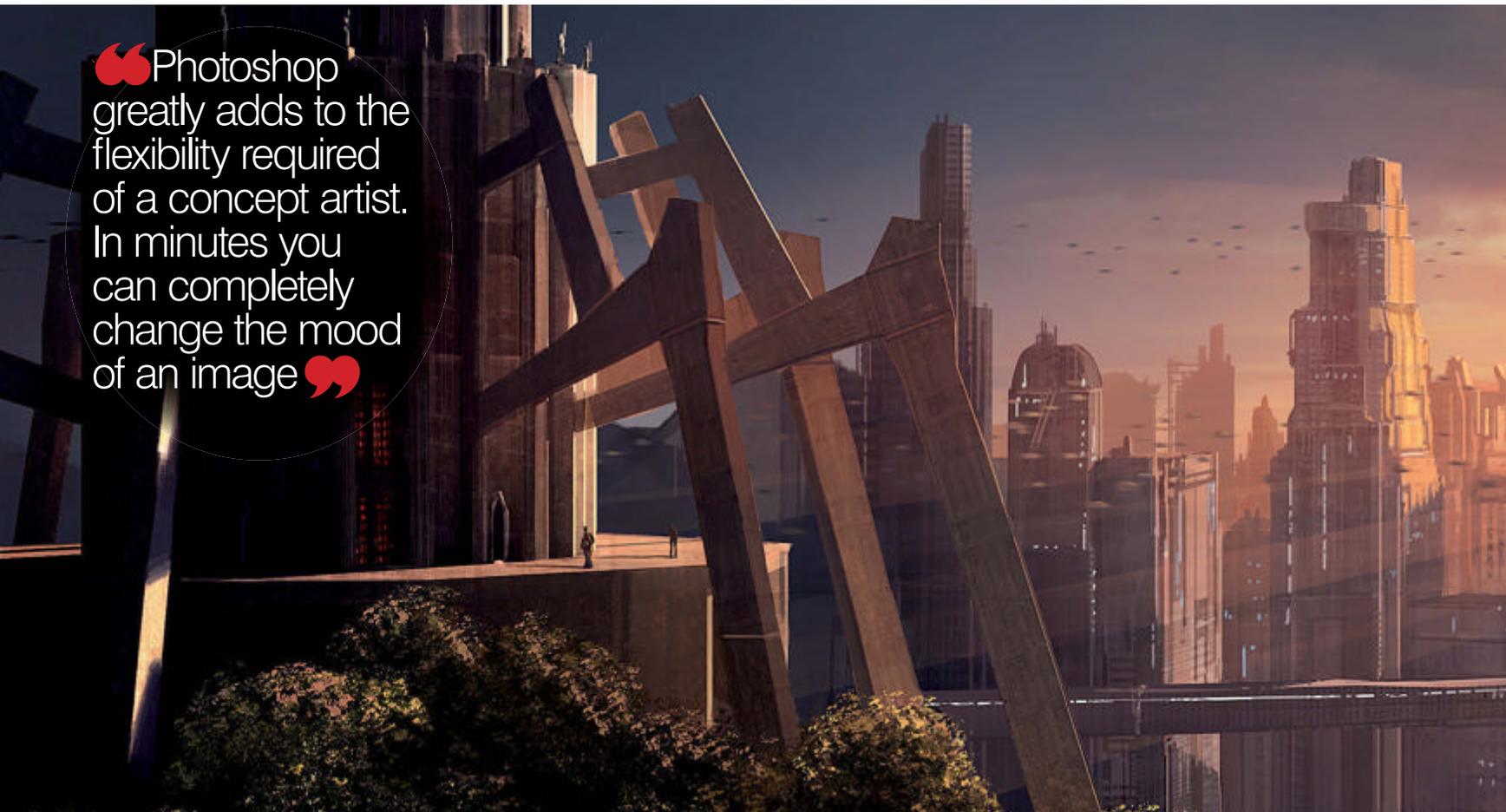


**Waterworld:** "Again using values to separate areas of an image, and darker foreground areas frame the rest of the scene"  
© Stefan Morrell



# The rules of fantasy art

“Photoshop greatly adds to the flexibility required of a concept artist. In minutes you can completely change the mood of an image”



## Industrial City WIP:

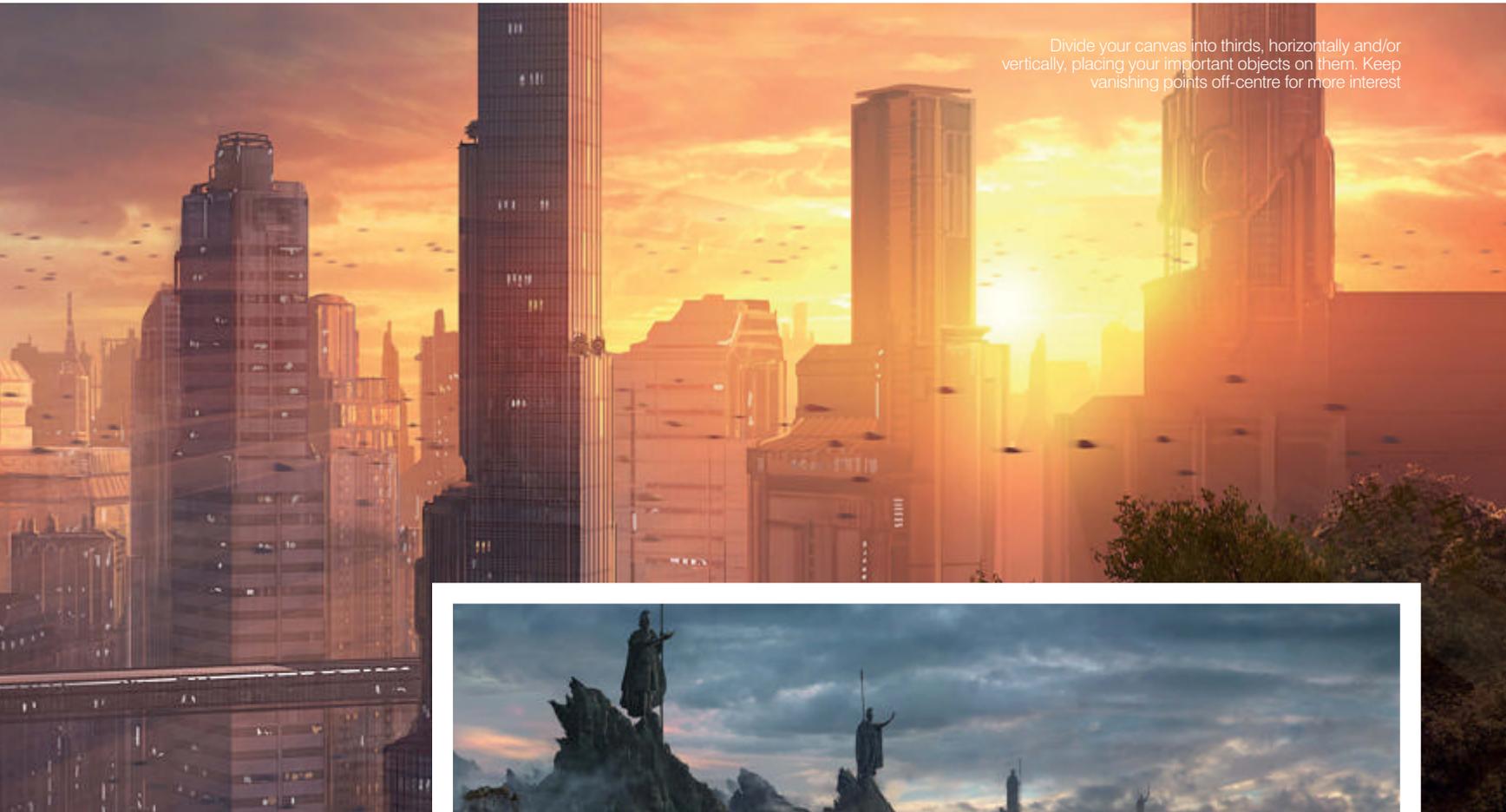
“An industrial cityscape in a ‘steampunk’ setting. While it’s still a work in progress, it serves as a good example of how colour can create mood”

© Sarel Theron

The vanishing point is placed appropriately in the central section grid to draw the line of sight and accentuate perspective

The focal point of the painting is the steam train and has been placed accordingly in one third across of the composition

The horizon is set on the horizontal line dividing the lower third of the photo from the upper two thirds. This allows the linear features in the photograph to flow between sections



Divide your canvas into thirds, horizontally and/or vertically, placing your important objects on them. Keep vanishing points off-centre for more interest

**Sentinel bay (right):**  
"Another fantasy-themed painting that demonstrates both the use of scale and atmospheric perspective"  
© Sarel Theron



## Perfect composition

**Once you have the basic ideas down on paper, then it's time to start thinking about building up the composition of your painting.** Stefan Morrell uses 3D software to its full advantage, saying: "In the initial conceptual phase, I always work with some basic perspective lines and a horizon drawn out. When working with buildings or cityscapes in particular, this is very important. Getting your vanishing lines and correct perspective laid out in the initial stages will save a lot of pain down the road. This is not so important if your scene is pure 3D, but when working with something like a 2.5D matte painting, it's an essential step to get right."

Once the composition has been realised and 'fleshed' out, be it line drawing or colour washing, the next logical creative step for a concept artist is to visually substantiate the scene and here modern digital software really

excels – something that Morrell agrees with: "Using a program like Photoshop greatly adds to the flexibility required of a concept artist. In a matter of minutes you can completely change the mood of an image. Embracing technology has helped my art grow in ways I could never have imagined, and it's through tools like Photoshop that these ideas can be imagined."

Digital matte painter Sarel Theron also agrees with this attitude: "I would say that Photoshop has definitely advanced the possibilities of colour application. Adjustment layers and colour overlays enable the artist to make chromatic changes without permanently affecting the layers beneath." This encourages experimentation, which in Theron's opinion can only lead to better, vibrant artwork. Providing much of this himself, including high-end commercials, television productions and various pitches, Theron continues: "Clever use of scale can help to provide depth. Naturally, the further away the object is the smaller it appears. Often the challenge with fantasy landscapes is portraying the scale of objects that don't exist in real life. This can best be achieved with the use of atmospheric perspective as well as juxtaposing real-life objects with the imaginary ones."

To Theron these are mere suggestions, believing art should be without any hard rules. However, there is one valuable exception that he sanctions: the rule of thirds. He explains: "Simply put, a canvas is divided up into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. The focal point of the painting is then placed either one third across or one third up or down the picture or where the lines intersect. Framing helps to prevent the viewer's eye from leaving the canvas while also guiding it back in towards the focal point, and you can see that in any good photo."

# The rules of fantasy art



Don't be afraid to use colour, keeping it the same level of saturation and brightness throughout as the others in its plane

A balance between sharp edges and soft areas adds a lot of visual diversity as well as the impact of perspective

Utilise custom brushes to take some of the effort out of highly detailed areas

Sharpening edges in the final stages will make detailed areas 'pop'

**Terra Ariose:** "This futuristic cityscape was aided by laying down custom brushes as a base to work from"  
© Martin Bland

## Create atmosphere

**Once the basic ideas have been put down and the composition is decided, it is time to start thinking about the lighting and colours that you are going to use in your images to help create atmosphere.**

Sarel Theron talks about 'atmospheric perspective' in his images: "This defines our perception of objects as they recede into the distance. The further away the object gets, the lighter the tone becomes, while colours tend to cool and contrasts lessen. Air is not invisible as most people seem to think, and it's important to take it into consideration when painting distant objects." Here he observes another key factor in concept art production. The use of colour and lighting in an image is essential. This can be crucial in correctly portraying theme and obtaining an emotive response.

Theron agrees, saying: "Just as music builds mood, colour can also help create such within a painting. Contrast between cooler and warmer hues can create impact as well as help to define focal points. I'm also aware that certain colours can produce certain feelings or emotions, although generally I tend to pick the kind of palette that best suits the subject, for example warm brown tones for deserts and cool crisp blues for ice environments." He continues: "However, lighting is probably the most important aspect. It helps to describe the form, colour and texture of the landscape. A landscape artist does not outline shapes; he paints them as light defines them. Colour helps a lot with setting the overall mood and atmosphere and, as with light, can be used to define focal points."

The correct application in the creation of light gives a composition a pragmatic essence, as UK-based conceptual artist and tutorial provider Martin Bland explains: "Successful lighting and colour choices make the difference between something looking real and tangible to something that looks like a flat 2D illustration. Conceptually, more often than not, you are asked to take an idea, and bring it to life.

Bland continues: "Without proper lighting there is no life, no spark to an image, no realism. In order to make people believe what they are seeing, you need to trick the eye into believability, which is all done by lighting and the creation of depth." Addressing the application of paint to create light and colour, Bland exposes further practices to creating realism. "Even if you paint 99 per cent of your scene from scratch, an added texture or effect can make a huge difference to the end product. A well-placed texture overlay to age an area of metalwork, ground planes muddled up with a texture, overlaid and skewed into perspective to add to the believability and an Unsharp Mask on your final-sized flattened

image to make detailed areas pop. Used subtly, these can add a lot to a final image."

Yet when practising concept art, the 'end product' goes beyond mere invention. Presentation is just as essential in delivering powerful visuals. Bland provided some authoritative final thoughts when he commented, "It depends a lot on the image; if it is a very low contrast, darker image or a very light image, then you need to be careful and consider the

“Lighting makes the difference between something looking real and something that looks flat”

background of where your image will be. If you put a dark image on a very light background it can lose detail, so a dark border or matting may be necessary to alleviate the effect."

While the tips revealed over these pages are based on the creation of fantasy landscapes, they are just as relevant across any genre of art where composition and atmosphere are essential.

## Learn more

Throughout this feature we have gleaned some amazing advice from our four top artists. However, there are plenty of resources out there that can aid your learning further. Our artists reveal the places they turn to in order to continue their learning or gain inspiration. Martin Bland says: "A tricky question to answer as it is better to learn from a thousand sources than to stick to one. What I can add is, for concept art, seeing people's raw unfinished brushstrokes on quick sketches and paintings can teach you much more than any tutorial can. Picking apart strokes and seeing what made an image come together is the closest you can get to seeing into an artist's soul, so speed-paint threads are a massively important resource. There are a few very busy and useful threads at <http://sijun.com/forums>, CGTalk and ConceptArt.org forums."

Andreas Rocha also has a list of resources that he recommends for further learning: "I would say 3D Total's excellent Digital Art Masters books and CGSociety's brilliant D'Artiste series of books. I also strongly advise artists to build a library of inspirational works by other artists appearing on CGTalk.com and digitalartistdaily.com."

Finally, Sarel Theron suggests: "Online community forums such as ConceptArt.org, MattePainting.org and CGSociety are great places to meet other artists, talk shop and have your work reviewed by peers. Even better is if you can get an internship at a post-production facility, such as ILM (Industrial Light and Magic). Finally, there is a lot to learn technique-wise from trade magazines such as Advanced Photoshop and Fantasy Artist."



**The Austringer:**  
 "722-705 BC – an Assyrian bas-relief found in the ruins at Khorsabad during the excavation of the palace of Sargon II (or Saragon II) has been claimed to depict falconry. It's only fitting that the tradition would go on way past our understanding"  
 © Martin Bland

**Lustral:** "I wanted to bring a little beauty to a classic sci-fi scene, so at first glance, you see a sunset, although looking deeper you see a story unfold"  
 © Martin Bland

# Portrait

## Add effects to your portraits

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“You need to think about the basics when painting portraits, such as lighting and skin tone”



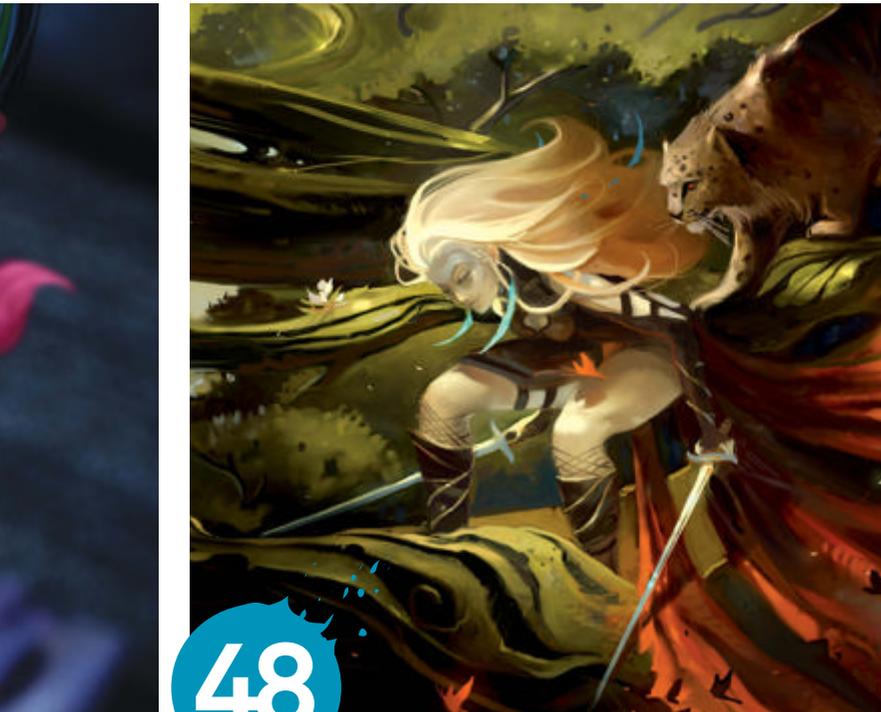
38  
Use layers to add subtle effects to portraits



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## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Bao Pham

Personal portfolio site  
[www.baophamart.com](http://www.baophamart.com)  
Country USA

Software used **Photoshop**  
Bao is a painter working with traditional and digital media. His digital work stays in the fantasy genre, dealing with fairytale imagery and occasionally gore. When working with traditional media he likes to draw from life and record as accurately as he can what he sees.

# Add 3D elements to paintings

Tempered 2010 Photoshop

“The brushes used for this are quite simple, but with subtle texture effects the fantasy aspect really shines through”

Bao Pham Painter



**The purpose of this workshop is to show how, with a few simple processes, you can convincingly create the illusion of a tattoo coming alive.**

The goal is a simple one, but before reaching that point you should consider the context you want to create for the tattoo. What is the setting? Who is it on? And why is it coming alive?

Some pictures are story driven from the very beginning, but with others the story doesn't really come to light until the very end. Have a bit of fun with the painting and go with the ideas that come to you to see where they lead. The subject matter is nothing serious and the desired effect is of course

not a natural one. Basically, you are given free reign to play with it. This is my interpretation, one possible way that such an effect can be done. My advice would be to play around with the ideas presented here. See what works for you – and what doesn't – and take it from there.

The brushes used for this are quite simple, a round Brush, a Chalk Brush, and a Splatter Brush. With fantasy painting and glowing effects, it's easy to go all out and use any and all texture effects you can get your hands on, so remember to edit down. Make a painting and the effects can come afterwards. With a strong basic foundation, the fantasy aspects can really shine through.

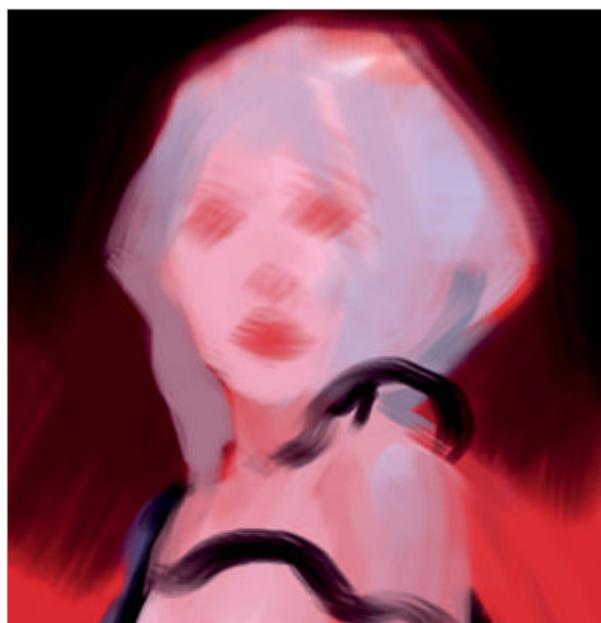


## Start simple

Construct and prepare the shape of your figure



**01 Shapes** Start with a large brush and block in the shapes of the figure. The brush in this case is the Chalk brush with 5% Spacing, 26% Flow, and Flow Jitter set to Pen Pressure. These settings give the brush a soft quality and a buttery effect, mimicking traditional brushes.



**02 Pose** Work on the pose of the character. She needs to look a bit haughty and in control, with the dragon winding up her arm and into her hair. The dragon is the focus, so make sure the arm you're going to tattoo is in the foreground of your design.



**03 Choose a theme** The overall theme is influenced by Chinese and Japanese culture. The dragon has the features of a snake but with a full mane, horns and whiskers. The figure is brightly lit against a dark background with a warm glow from the horizon.

## Working Progress

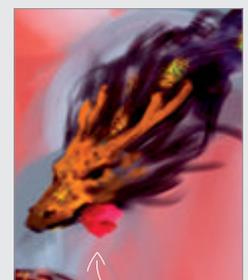
Create a fantasy portrait with 3D images



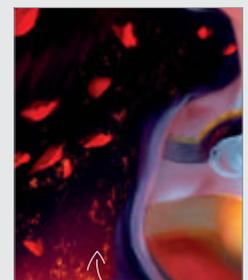
Step 01, Pose



Step 02, Gold cloth



Step 03, Structure first



Step 04, Sparks



## Enhance your design

Work with light and shadow to add detail

### 04 Light the figure

Until this point the light source has been kept intentionally vague. This allows changes to be made more easily. Establish a source now, with the light coming from the top right. The light is used to cast the dragon's shadows onto the figure, enhancing the illusion that it is three-dimensional.



**05 Cool the light** By cooling the light on the figure, the contrast it creates with the warm colours behind help pull it into the foreground. One way to do this is to create a new Soft Light layer and brush a bright turquoise on areas lit by the light. Another is to create a new colour layer and change the colours directly, such as the areas around the hair where the red background still shows through.

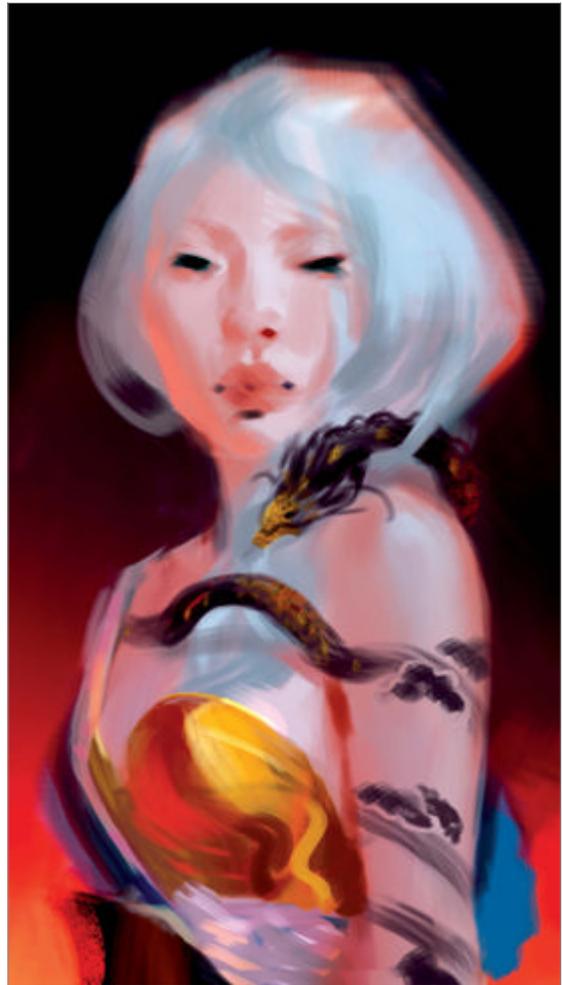
### 07 Tweaks

Make further changes to the light with a new Soft Light layer and move the figure slightly off-centre. By adding the detail of a right sleeve, you can create a triangular composition that is solid and grounded.



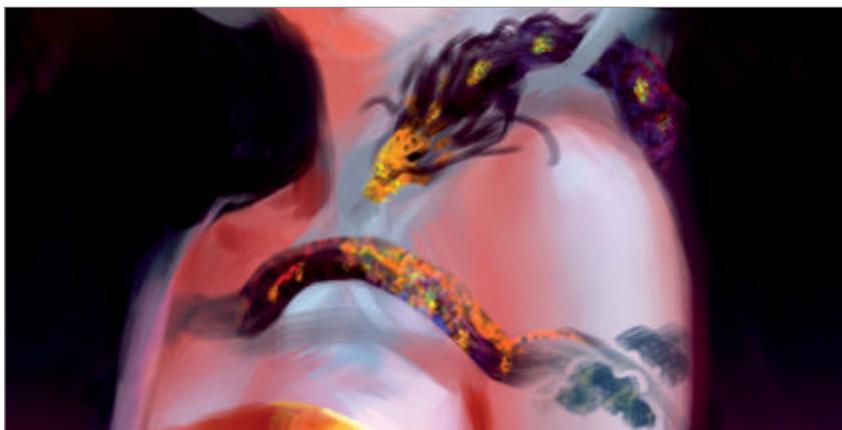
**08 Secondary focus** With the main ideas laid out, it's time to shift the focus to the figure. The surface needs to be clearly defined before the tattoo can be convincingly applied.

**06 Modify the costume** Because the dragon is the main focus, the first thought was to keep the areas around it bare and free of clutter. With further reflections, it seems best to cover her up. Take this opportunity to add a little twist to the traditional garment with a gold breastplate.



### Be aware

When it is clear what the focus of the painting is, it is easy to forget the rest of the image. As you work, keep moving around the picture and add ideas when they come to you. Interesting or unusual details, however small, add an extra dimension to your images in terms of composition.



**09 Backstory** As the painting progresses, the story of the character solidifies. In my image, the woman is a sorceress who is very confident in her powers and the dragon is her pet. It lives on her skin and comes to life whenever called upon. You don't need your image to communicate all of these details, but knowing it will help you to make design decisions confidently.

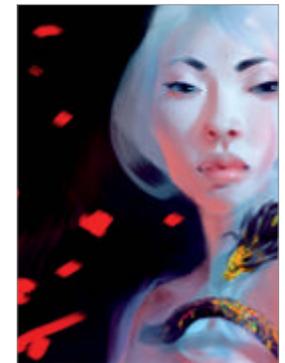
**10 Expression** The woman's expression is high and mighty, full of self importance. Make use of her features, narrow eyes, full lips, and raised eyebrows. Imagine how a model might express the emotions you want for your character.



**11 Gold cloth** For the gold breastplate, I opted for a piece of gold cloth instead because it works better with the costume. With the metallic surface, it's important to remember the warm reflected light and the core shadow where two light sources meet. There is also a third plane above the chest where not much of the cool light would have reached.

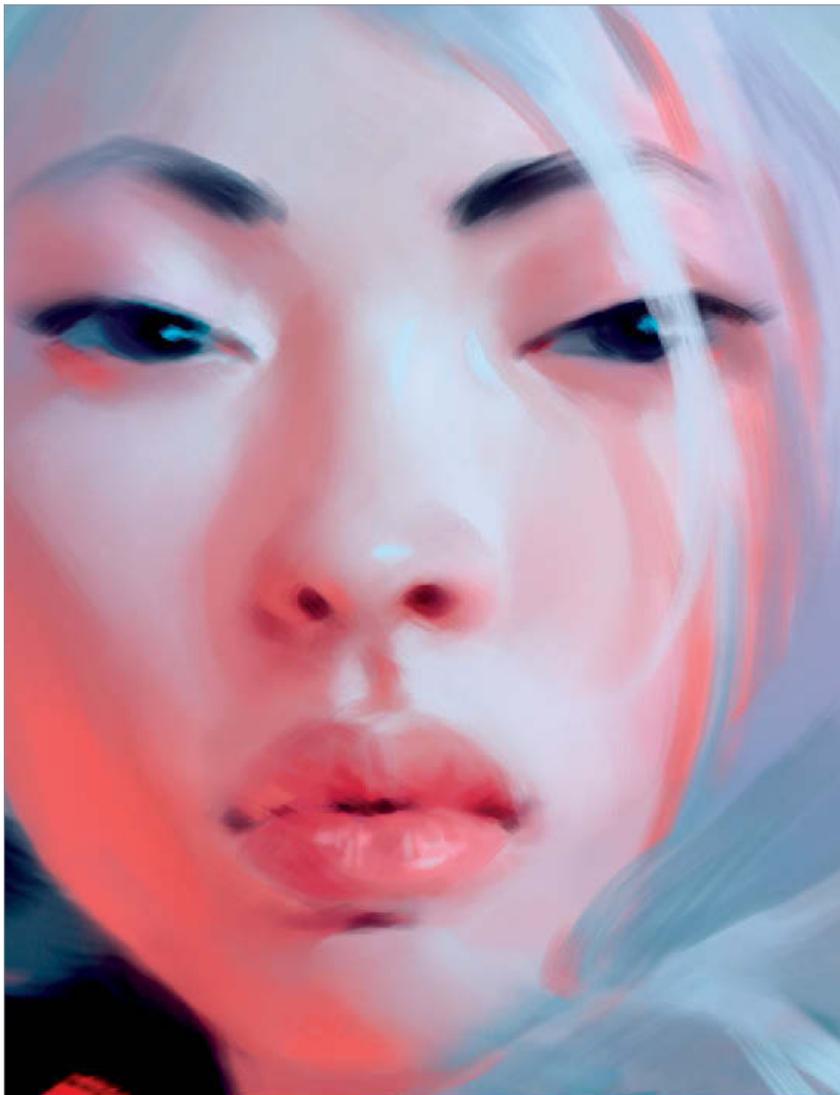


**12 Cooling layer** The image still looks too warm, so go to Layers>New Fill Layer>Solid Color. Choose a turquoise blue and set the new layer to Soft Light. This cools down the whole image, so use the Layer mask created to bring back the warmth of the background. Having the effect on another layer allows you to refine the Opacity as well.

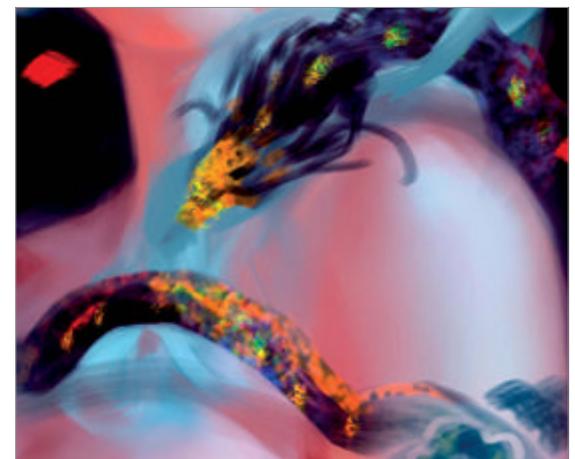


**13 Add interest** Add more interest in the background to keep the eyes moving. Use abstract shapes for now and focus on the flow of the whole group. Later on, they will be shapes of butterflies and petals.

**14 Refine** Refine the face and hair and pay attention to the shadows as the hair falls across your figure. When the structure has been refined, use a soft brush with 26% Flow to smooth out any undesired strokes. Alternate between the Eye Dropper and the brush and make use of the different sizes until reaching the desired smoothness.



**15 Hair** Think of clumps of hair as ribbons and keep their shapes simple. Pay attention to how they interact with one another and use the surrounding skin colours to break up large shapes. Take advantage of the streaky brushstrokes to suggest strands of hair. The area with the dragon is kept vague for now and will be explored some more later on.



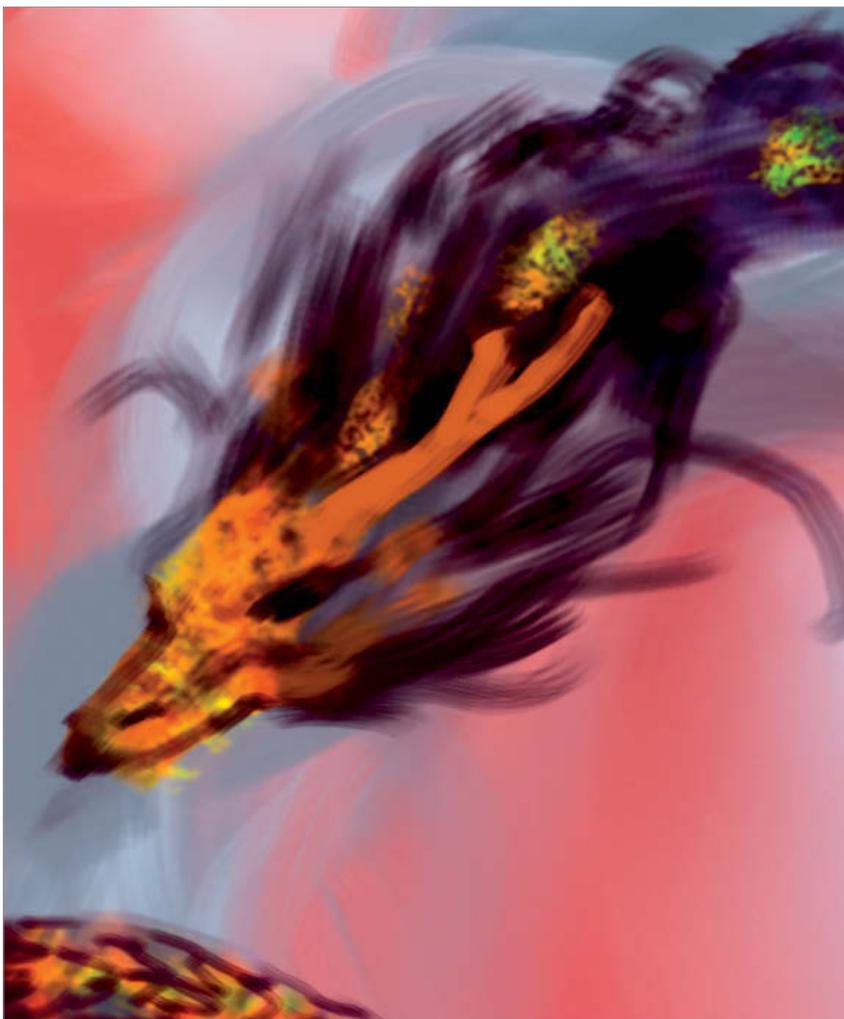
**16 Dragon** The dragon is kept on its own layer for easy access. As the painting progresses, small ideas have been added to it. Flakes of colour and gold have been added, just roughly at this stage. As it is quite dark, the colours will add more interest and really draw the eye.



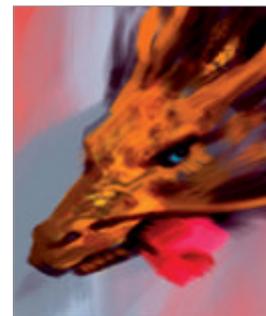
## Enter the dragon

Add texture and personality to the tattoo design

**17 Dragon features** The features of this dragon come from traditional Chinese and Japanese art. The major difference between this and Western depictions is the lack of wings. It is snake-like with a big mane that runs along its body, two horns and whiskers. These are only my ideas however, and the interpretation is up to you.

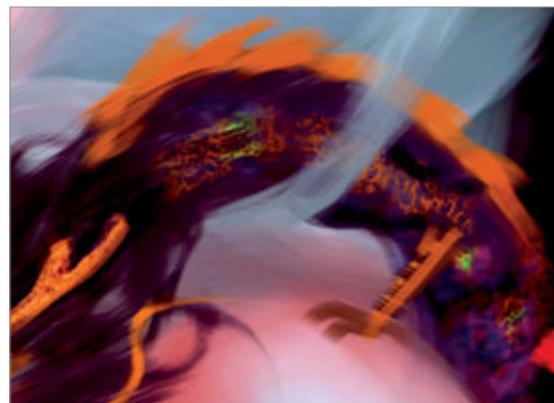


**18 Structure first** Just as with the figure, start with the structure of the dragon. Its head is similar to various lizards, though more narrow. Have numerous references images on hand but don't stick to a particular one. It needs to look like a different creature, not a mixture of others.



**19 Personality** Add character to the dragon with human-like eyes and an on-edge expression. It has just come alive and is ready for action. A small detail, such as the butterfly in its mouth, adds narrative.

**20 Textures** Textures can be complex and as we are working on a small scale, it's not particularly economical to spend too much time on it. Keep it simple, use a textured brush set to Color Dodge and brush a greenish yellow on the head of the dragon to add a gold feel.



**21 The body** Add legs to the dragon and have it crawl over her shoulder. Its feet are bird-like, suggesting the lightness and swiftness of the animal. The mane is kept dark to frame its face, but the mane on its back is a deeper gold to define its body against the dark background.



**23 Tattoo** To keep the flat look of the tattoo, switch to the hard, Round Brush. This will help create clean graphic lines. Draw each scale and keep in mind that it is on a curved surface. Keep the colour lighter in value than the three-dimensional part of the dragon. The cloud motif adds graphic interest.

**22 Shadows** Pay special attention to the shadow cast by the dragon. As it moves over a surface, make sure it flows along the curves of the body. As it passes over the hair, brush the shadow along with the flow of the shape. It's a small, but convincing detail and will make all the difference.



**24 Transition values** With the three-dimensional dragon and its tattoo established, it's time to merge the two. Think of it as a long balloon slowly inflating as it lifts from the surface of the arm. The first focus is on the two different values of the tattoo and its 3D counterpart. Establish a gradient from the tattoo to the inflated part of the body.

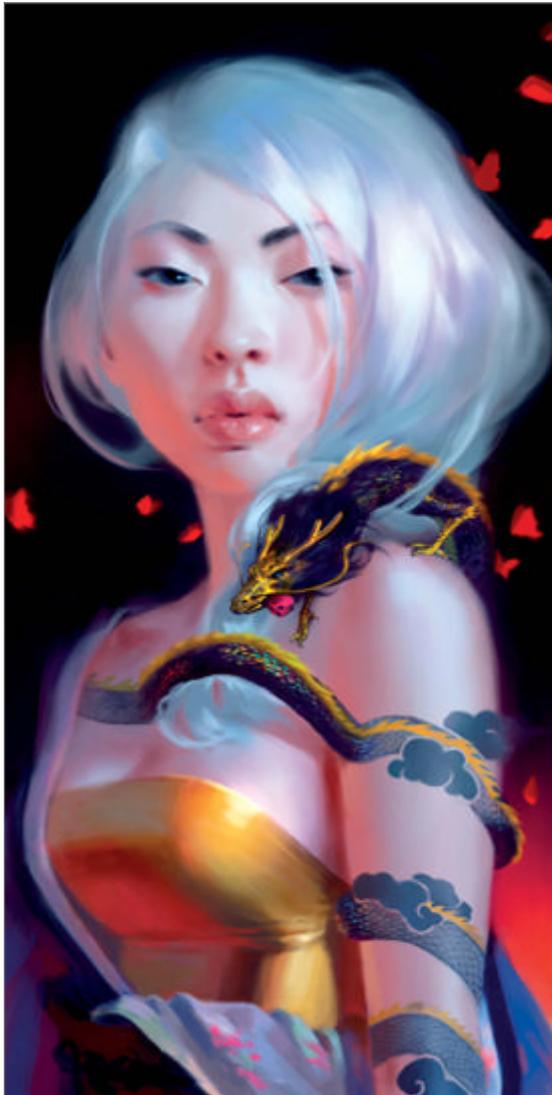


**25 Transition scales** Use the Round brush to draw the scales on the tattoo, but create a carved effect by adding dark shadow shapes rather than defining each individual scale. Brush on flakes of bright colours to add highlights that enhance the separation of the tattoo and the real dragon.



**26 Iridescence** Add some interest to the body of the dragon by creating some iridescent scales. Indicate the dark of the shadows on the scales and, with the brush set to Color Dodge, brush on various neon colours to create the highlights. Use the flakes of colours laid down much earlier to create layers of and unify the design.

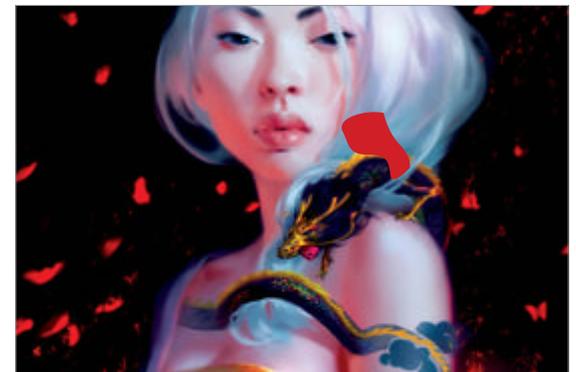
**27 Background shapes** It's time to define the background shapes created earlier. Keep them simple and make them resemble flower petals and butterflies. Keep in mind the warm light from the horizon.



**28 Sparks** Use an irregular Splatter brush to create the sparks rising into the air. Duplicate this layer adding a slight Motion Blur and set it to Color Dodge. Duplicate it again, add a Gaussian Blur and set it to Color Dodge to create the glow of the embers.



**29 Fire** The warm light from the horizon has turned into a hot flame. Create a new Color Dodge layer and lightly brush on bright yellow wisps of flames. The fire will add some rim lighting to the figure and the dragon as well.



**30 Finish** Flatten the image, duplicate the layer, set it to Color Dodge with 5% Opacity and apply a Gaussian Blur of 20. Duplicate this layer and set it to Overlay with 10% Opacity. This adds a subtle glow to the image. Flatten the image and duplicate the layer again, but this time set the Gaussian Blur at 3. Erase away the area of the figure, but keep the background. This will add a sense of depth to the image and help bring the figure out so that your three-dimensional effect will really shine.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Drazenka Kimpel**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.creativedust.com](http://www.creativedust.com)  
Country USA

Software used **Photoshop**  
I am a self-taught, freelance  
illustrator and graphic  
designer. I create  
illustrations influenced by  
18th and 19th Century art.

 **Source files available**

Custom brushes

# Classic portrait lighting techniques

## Working Progress

Learn to use portrait lighting successfully



Step 05, Shading



Step 09, Bounced hues



Step 22 Design



Step 26, Extras

## Athena 2010 Photoshop

“Here I’m using ambient lighting to accentuate the delicacy of skin and bringing out its natural glow”

**Drazenka Kimpel** Freelance Illustrator and graphic designer



### Imagination isn't the only key ingredient to successful illustration.

There's no room for ignorance when it comes to theories behind technique. Here we'll discuss the importance of lighting in a portrait, how skin reacts to it, and illustrate relevant aspects.

As we travel through time and revisit paintings created many years ago, bear in mind that artists in the past did not have the luxury of today's modern innovations to aid them. Most of the paintings were done using natural lighting such as sun during the day and moonlight at night, with the exception of candle light to add a secondary light source. Even using natural light, we can achieve a myriad of effects, depending on the position of the light source.

Consider how Caravaggio used his light to create drama through the strong depth of shadows and bold directional light source. This technique was successfully used by

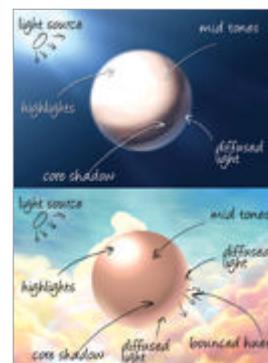
many artists wanting to depict dramatic mythical and historical scenes, among other subjects. On the other hand, William Bouguereau used diffused ambient light in which his subjects were enveloped by light and bouncing hues from their surroundings, creating an ethereal, cheerful feel as oppose to a dramatic outcome.

With the progression of technology things changed, and we can now add as many light sources as we want, and mimic natural light where there is none. but although the techniques changed, the principles have stayed the same.

Today's artists such as Marta Dahlig and Mélanie Delon have adapted some of those techniques and use them in digital media with great success. Mastering skin tones through lighting isn't easy. It takes time and determination to understand the complexity of skin, so we can achieve the level of mastery of some of the great artists of our time.

## First steps to lighting a portrait

A suitable background is important



**01 Lighting** Before we start, let's see what happens to the subject under one directional light. Remember, a stronger light source will cast deeper shadow. Also, warmer light will create cooler shadow and vice versa.



**02 Choosing the scene – background** I've decided to place my character high in the sky among the clouds. Considering she is a goddess, clouds seem the right place to start. The clouds will be used as a stepping stone for light to bounce off of, as well as to give me the richness of hues down the road.



**03 Skin tones** Choose the palette carefully, considering the environment. Skin is a very complex organic substance. A little knowledge about what's going on under the skin will help you determine how to tone it properly in any circumstances.



## Make the skin glow

The lighting and environment relationship, and their effect on the skin



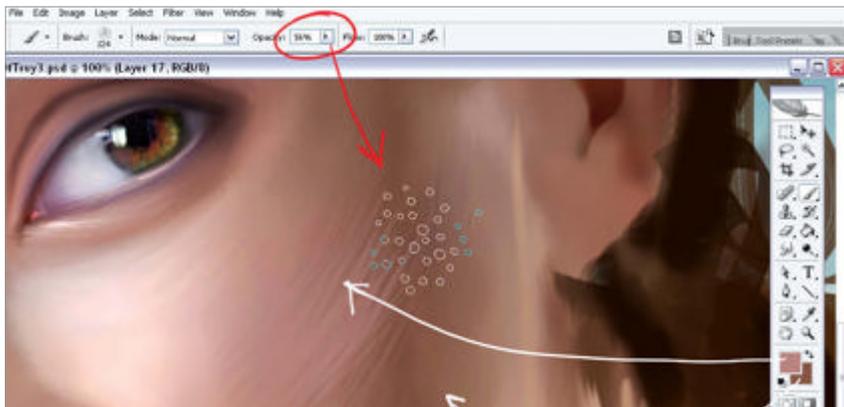
**04 Facial anatomy** Bear in mind the way the human skull is formed – this will determine where to shade and how to contour the shapes the right way. Eye sockets will have deeper shadows as they are set more deeply, and nose, cheeks and chin will be exposed more, so hues will be lighter.



**05 Shading** Shading is important to achieve the feel of dimension as well as determine the light source. Skin will be lighter closer to the light source and darker in places further away. In this case, values aren't as deep as they'd be in dark surroundings.



**06 Eyes** Eyes aren't flat surfaces. Think of them as a round ball, and paint them with darker edges and lighter around the centre. I used two-tone darker shades for the edges. I also used a very light violet hue over the eyeballs to make them glow.

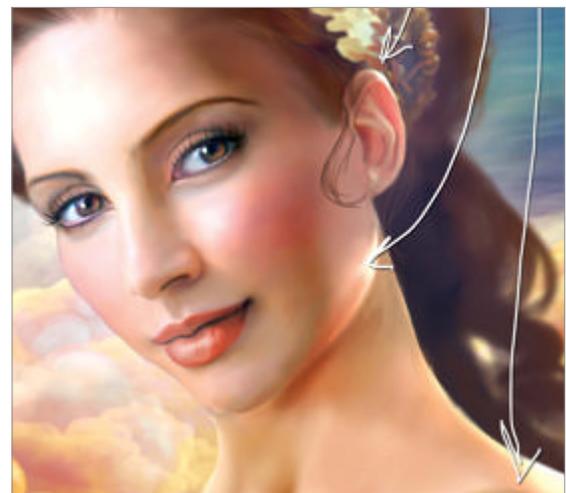


**07 Blending** There are a few different ways to blend the colour, but I always use the same method – Spatter brush, with Opacity set to around 50%. Use the Color Picker to select adjoining colours and change them simultaneously while in the process of blending.

**08 Developing the skin hues** The character in this example has a light, porcelain-like complexion. To visualise this further, I added faint bluish-purple hues over her forehead, nose and a portion of her cheeks. In those areas skin is very thin, which will expose some of the blood vessels right beneath the surface.



**09 Bounced hues** The most prominent appearance of the bounced hues will be on the opposite side of the light source. So I paint some nice shades of pink, purple and orange hues on the side of her face shaded from the direct light. In addition, I add a layer of haze (layer mode set to Hard Light) to further the effect of daylight.



**10 Skin highlights** I decided that some of the residual lighting would be instrumental to highlight the right side of the character, considering the ambient lighting I chose for this exercise. So I panted some faint highlights along her chin, ear and a portion of her neck.



### Use of reference material

Before you attempt to paint a portrait, or any other subject for that matter, it is advisable to build a library of reference materials. This is imperative if you want to stay true to a certain period, style or the likeness of a person.

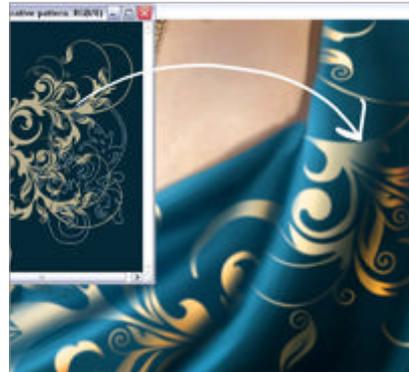
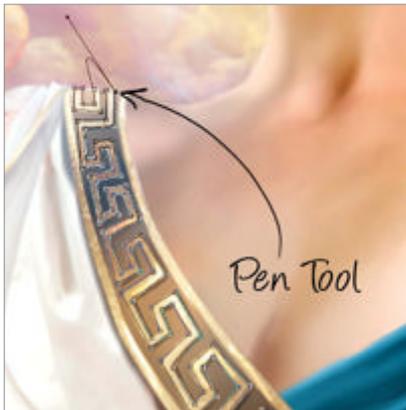
**11 Clothing** Clothing items tell us about the person who is wearing them. My character is a Greek goddess, so I chose to paint a white stola draped over one of her shoulders, and a deep sky blue wrapped over her other shoulder. To paint the folds, I used the Soft Round brush with Opacity set to 100%.



**12 Styling** I wanted to stay away from well-known designs of stolas, so added a sheer piece of fabric suspended from her shoulder. I used the Pen to select the area where I wanted the fabric, and the Soft Round Airbrush, Opacity 50%. I painted the edges first, leaving the centre untouched to create a feel of transparency.



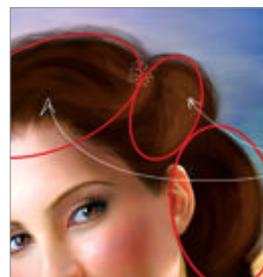
**13 Details** To tighten things up with the chest area, I've added a golden trim with the Greek key pattern to the white stola. Again, I've used the Pen tool to select the area with the pattern.



**14 Pattern** As a finishing touch I decided to place a golden swirl pattern on the blue wrap, to balance things up a bit. I carefully laid down the swirls to sit next to each other (not overlapping). Then I used Burn and Dodge to paint along the contour of the folds in the fabric.



**15 Hair** Painting hair can be frustrating, especially when there is a certain style involved. The best way to tackle painting hair is in sections. As a first step, I use big brushes (such as the Soft Round or Airbrush Hard Round brush) to block in the basic form of the hair. This may take many tries, but be persistent.



**16 Hair texture** Ancient Greek hairstyle has many folds, twists and curls. I pick one section at a time to paint in the fine hair strands, using a few shades lighter colour than the base, and a custom Bristle brush – but any dotted Spatter brush will do. Make sure you follow the form of each section to make it look believable.

## Style School

Art genres in a nutshell

# The great illumination

Indulge your senses in the poetry of light through the Old Masters

It's hard to select just a few artists with the ability to transform the subjects of their paintings into three-dimensional, lifelike forms that breathe life and almost look touchable. To be able to use light to capture the essence and tell a story is truly a masterful skill. There's something so lyrical about the way light travels through the strokes and reveals important details the artist wants to portray. Even after many years, these paintings are as fresh and alive as when they were painted.

### The masters

Using portrait lighting – the master way



**Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson**  
**Ossian Receiving the Ghosts of the French Heroes**  
Year: 1802

Location: National Museum Château de Malmaison  
● This painting tells a great story. Even though there is so much going on, we can still keep the attention on the main subject through the path of light. The technique of circling the bodies with the bright washes of paint is something I love to use in my work as well.



**Pierre-Paul Prud'hon**  
**The Empress Josephine**  
Year: 1805

Location: Louvre Museum

● Here we see Napoleon's consort, the Empress Josephine, reclining in the garden at Malmaison. The bounced red hues contrast with her pale skin, giving a dark warmth to the image which is quite unlike the other examples shown. Iconographically, the use of crimson signifies her role as empress.



**Simon Vouet**  
**The Allegory of Wealth**  
Year: 2nd quarter of 17th C  
Location: Louvre Museum

● What has attracted me to this painting is not only the story through the movement of colour and light, but the way the light illuminates the girl's skin and transforms it into an almost translucent glowing mass. I wanted to use a similar colour palette in my painting, to accentuate the paleness and delicacy of the skin.

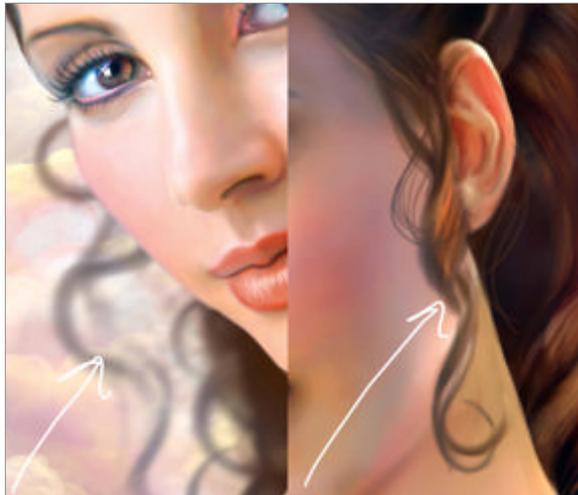


## A real Greek goddess

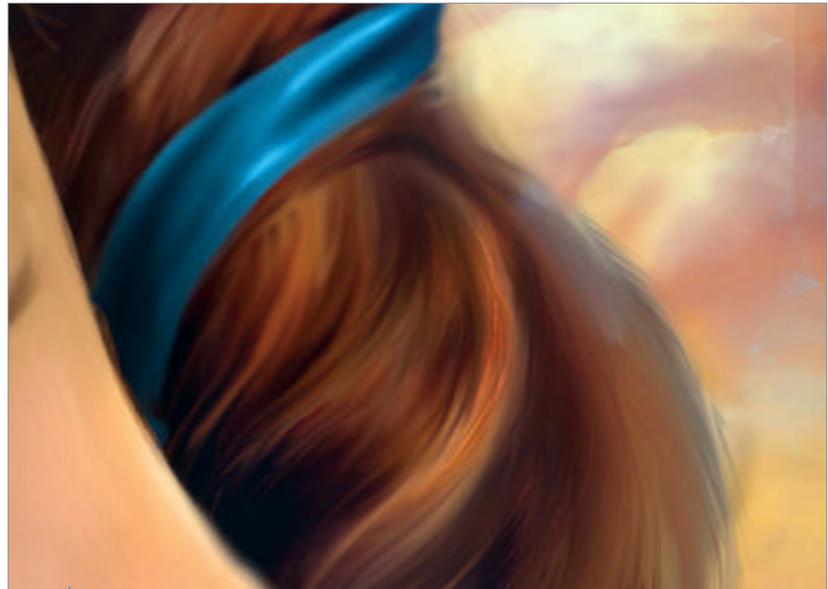
Create the style of the period

### 17 Hair highlights

Hair, just like skin, has many different hues. I gave my character an auburn hair colour – therefore the highlights will be light, reddish brown. On a separate layer, using the Bristle brush, paint in the highlights most exposed to the light. Blur the ends of the highlights and use the Dodge tool to brighten the highlights if needed.



**18 Fine strands** There are always some places where hair will get loose and strands will hang around the face. This is good to include as it creates a more realistic look to the portrait and adds liveliness to the whole picture. Use the Hard Round brush and randomly paint in the strands one by one. Do this with a very soft, fluid motion.

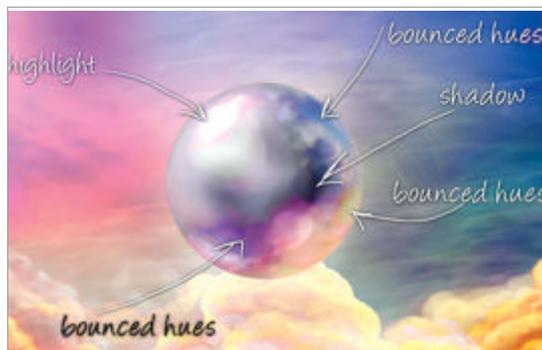


**19 Styling details** Staying true to the period, as a final step I add a hair ribbon to tie the hair in a fashionable style. This also adds to the overall richness and makes the whole image look more finished.



### What are bounced hues?

Bounced hues are literally that: colours which have been bounced from one thing to another. In this case, a great example is the blue colour cast from Athena's earring, which illuminates her neck and jawline. Coloured objects, particularly shiny or reflective ones, cast their colours onto the surfaces around them, particularly under strong lighting. Making use of this is a great way to add both realism and tonal variation to a portrait piece.

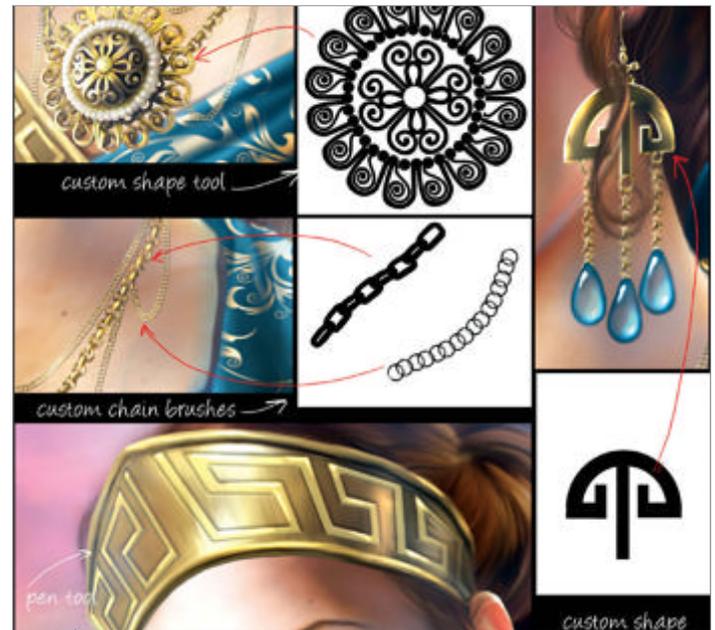


**20 Reflective metals – basics** Any highly polished metal surface will not only reflect strong light but will pick up all the colours of the surrounding objects, and therefore we must be careful to include many bounced hues. The areas exposed to light will be very bright, almost glowing, but the ones in the shade will be very dark as a deep contrast.



**21 Palette of gold** Our eye may perceive gold as yellow, but in truth it's a mix of warm greens, yellows, orange and beige. The highlights are very bright yellow and white, and the shadows are mustard, green and brown. Midtones are the colours reflected from other surfaces.

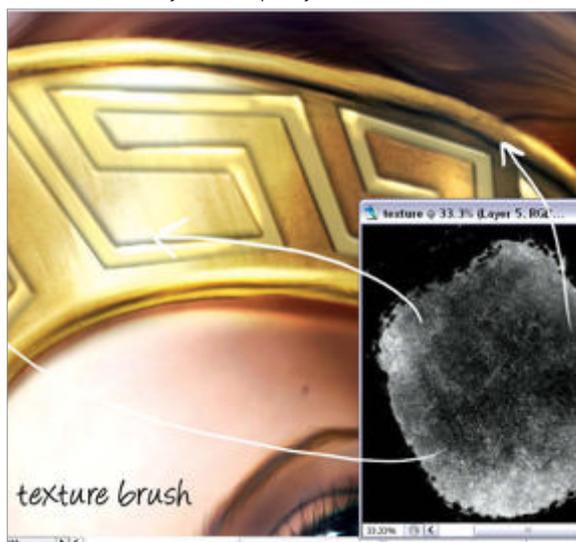
**22 Design** With the Hard Round brush, using some of the base colours from the palette, paint in the general shapes of the golden jewellery parts you want to include. It helps to generate some custom brushes for certain parts of the jewellery, such as the chain, to speed up the process. Be aware of the dimensions while you paint. Paint lights and darks accordingly.



**23 Pattern** Use references to help you pick the right kind of pattern, significant to the period and character. I used the Greek Key pattern for the crown, the pattern of the shoulder fabric, and other ancient patterns to construct the pendant. I used the Pen tool to outline the patterns for a cleaner, sharper look.

“Using certain cultural motifs emphasises the details about the place character, and era the painting’s representing”

**24 Texture** I am a very keen user of textures, as I think they add more realism to a painting. Metals all have texture generated from wear and age, so a nice scratched metal texture would work well. I used photographic texture, which I converted into a custom texture brush (Opacity set to 50%) with the layer mode set to Overlay at 75% Opacity.

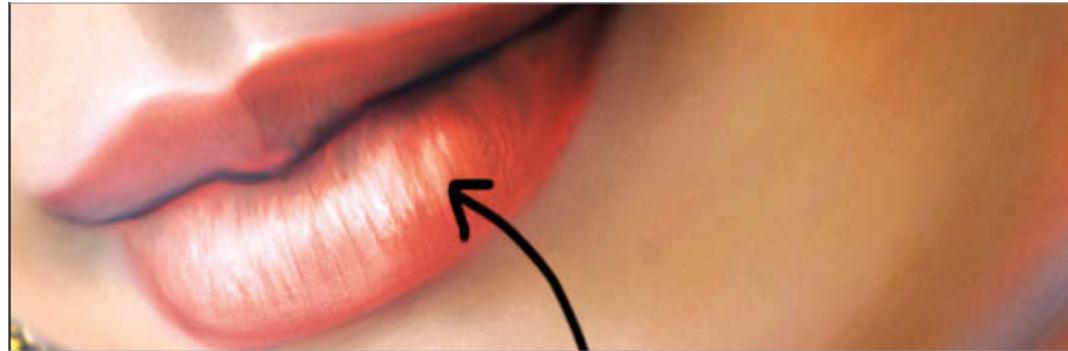


**25 Iconography** Using certain cultural or historic motifs emphasises the details about the character, place and era that the painting is representing. Athena was a goddess of wisdom, strength and craft among other things, and for this reason I've painted a flying owl in the background to symbolise wisdom, which she was known to represent.

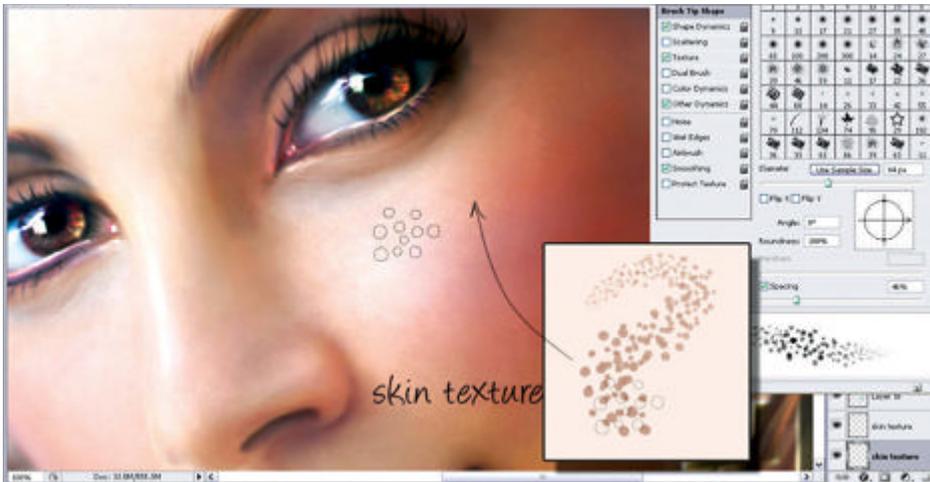


## Importance of custom brushes

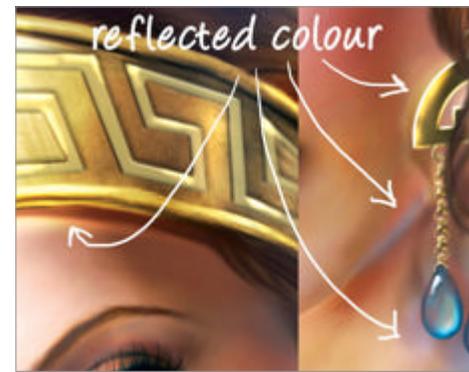
As a painter, you would always want to add something personal to your paintings. It's a good idea to invest some time in developing a selection of your own custom brushes to help you do this. It's a very rewarding process, and one which will help you grow as an artist as well.



**26 Extras** Adding more texture here and there is always a bonus when striving for realism in a painting. Here I've used some real photo texture for the lips to give them more life. Also, I've gone an extra step to paint in veins that may be visible in parts of the body where skin is very thin and pale.



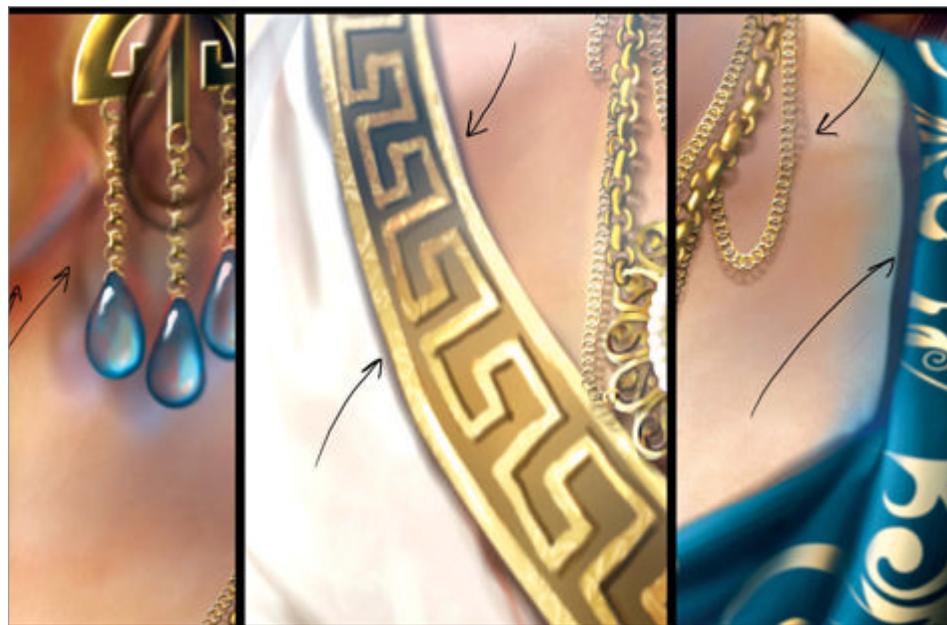
**27 Custom skin texturing** Even though fair, porcelain skin does not need too much texturing, for the sake of realism it's good to add those natural bumps and blemishes. Use the Dotted brush with Spacing set to about 50% (or whatever suits your image). Adjust the layer blending modes and opacity settings for best results.



**28 Reflected lighting** Reflective materials such as gold, silver, bronze, etc will always bounce hues to the nearest surface. In this case, gold from the crown will cast some reflective light on the forehead, and the shine of the earring will bounce off the chin bone. It is important to mention that colour will always be reflected from the gems and stones.



**29 Bounced hues** Sometimes the colour of clothing can cast interesting hues on the skin depending on the type of fabric. The stronger the light, the stronger the bounced hues will be, and fabric with more sheen to it, eg silk and brocade, will bounce more colour. As our lighting is diffused, hues are very mild.



**30 Casting shadows** Every object will cast shadow opposite its light source. This is a simple rule never to be ignored. The strength of the shadow will be determined by the strength of the light. Here I used very faint, blurred shadows.



## A classic portrait

### Behind the images

**1 Background** Lighting will greatly depend upon the background setting of the painting and vice versa. Open areas such as sky will have an abundance of bounced hues and a myriad of colours reflected around the subject.

**2 Lighting** An instrumental component to tackle right at the beginning and follow its direction all the way to the end. Make sure to always keep in mind the strength and differences between directional and bounced light sources.

**3 Iconography** Including historic or cultural motifs in the painting will symbolically and visually add meaning that directly relates to the image. In the portrait, it will identify the character and place it in the designated period of time.

**4 Expression** Portraits should always tell us about the mood and the story in some way. Facial expressions are one of the ways of telling the viewer about the state of mind our character is in, which adds to the resonance of an image.

**5 Details** Details play a big part in visually narrating the story. Even the smallest detail can say something about the conditions and the time of the painting through texture or items hidden within the canvas.



You can use the Smudge tool to blend the skin. Be careful not to over-blend it and make it appear artificial.

Take advantage of digital tools. Use the Pen wherever you need perfectly clear design.

# Creative photomanipulation

## Working Progress

Create your own geisha girl artwork



Step 04, Eyes



Step 13, Hard rusty texture



Step 19 Adding flowers



Step 27, Flowers in her hair

## Rusty Robotic Geisha 2010 Photoshop

☞ In this tutorial I will try to show you simple techniques to use in painting and photomanipulation ☜

**Aslı Yeniy Kizilay** Graphic designer and digital artist



**A photomontage is created by taking two or more pictures and combining them into one.**

The term 'photomanipulation' covers a range of tricks carried out on the picture itself.

In this tutorial we'll be manipulating photos and looking at light, perspective and colour harmony. To create a successful manipulation, it's important that your photos are in harmony with each other.

The history of doctoring photos dates back to the 1860s. Only a few decades after Niepce created the first photograph in 1814, photos were already being manipulated. The first 'fake' photo was created in 1840 using a photographic process by Frenchman Hippolyte Bayard.

The iconic portrait of US President Abraham Lincoln is a composite of Lincoln's head and the Southern politician John Calhoun's body.

Around 1910, photographic composites of different images were created by commercial photographic studios to bring family members together in one picture when they were not together in reality for the portrait session.

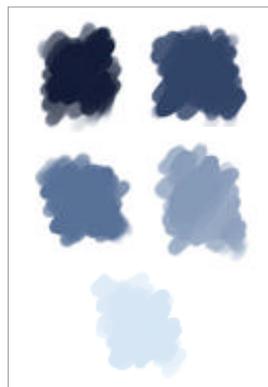
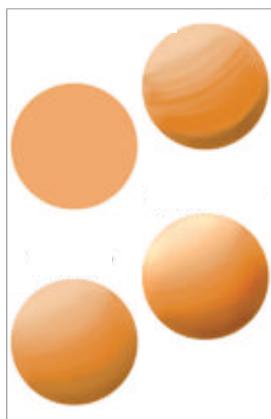
In 1982 *National Geographic* featured a digitally manipulated photograph on the cover of the magazine. The portrait image was originally a landscape photo of the Egyptian pyramids. *National Geographic* validated the manipulation by calling it the 'retroactive repositioning of the photographer'. In other words, if the photographer had had a different angle when he shot the photo, the manipulated image is what it would have looked like.

The technique I use doesn't end with combining images – I also add the painting process. Sometimes the image in your mind doesn't transfer to the photos you're working with, so you may need to add extra features to 'close the gap'!



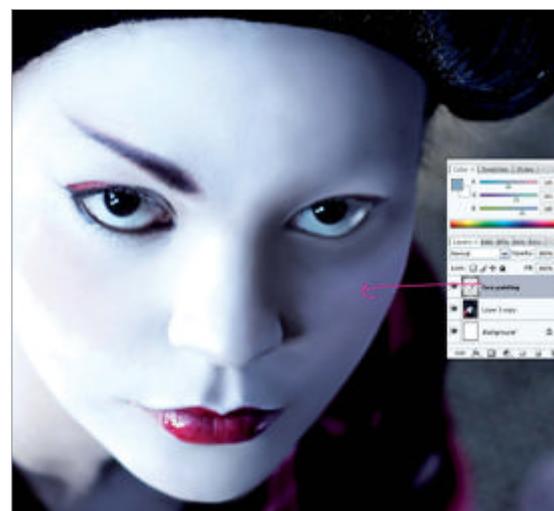
## Bring out the face paint

Choose your colours



**01 Painting** Painting is very important in photomanipulation in order to create specific effects or features in an image. Here I am going to give you some easy techniques for painting.

**02 Face painting colours** The colours we choose for the face are also very important. They must be compatible with both the subject and the background. My advice is to start painting with light tones.



**03 Face painting** First open the 'geisha' photo. In this step our mission is to paint a smooth geisha face and create a robotic look. For this process you can use the colours in step 2 or take a reference from the face.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Aslı Yeniay Kizilay

Personal portfolio site  
[wiksa.deviantart.com](http://wiksa.deviantart.com)

Country **Turkey**

Software used **Photoshop, Illustrator**

I have been a graphic designer since 2003. I like to use dark, Gothic and fantasy styles.



 **Source files available**

Start photo



## Easy face painting techniques

Start with the eyes

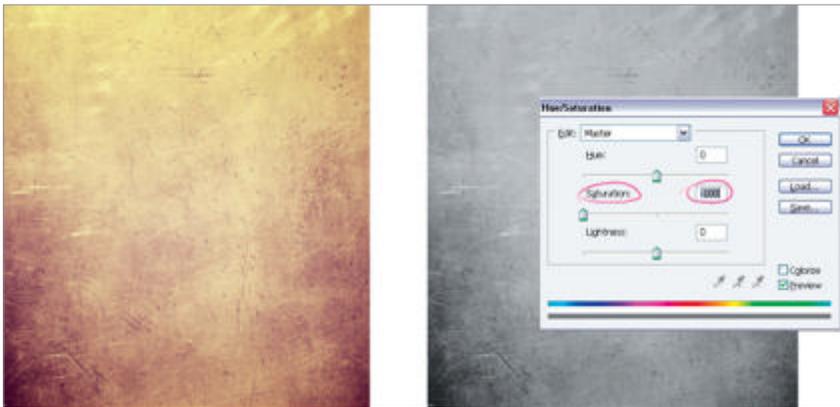
**04 Eyes** Don't forget that we're painting a robotic geisha – so her eyes must be frozen and without any emotion. I chose blue, but you can use any colour you wish.



**05 Eye make-up** For eye make-up I researched geisha make-up style. My favourite colours are black and red for make-up – but you can use different colour combinations. I used a very high Brush Hardness for this part of the process.



**06 Eyebrow light and shade** In this step we're painting eyebrow shadows and light, so our geisha's eyes will be even more frozen and hard-looking! If you like, you can use the Dodge and Burn tools for the shadow and light effect.



**07 Colour settings** Sometimes the colour settings of the images should change. The purpose is to combine photo colour with background colour. There are many ways to do this, but my choice is the Hue/Saturation settings.



**08 Rusty look** Now we want to try a rusty look for the skin. For this we can use a rusty stock image. Follow step 7 to change the colour settings. Our rusty image will then be greyscale, and the rusty texture will be available for the skin of the geisha's face.

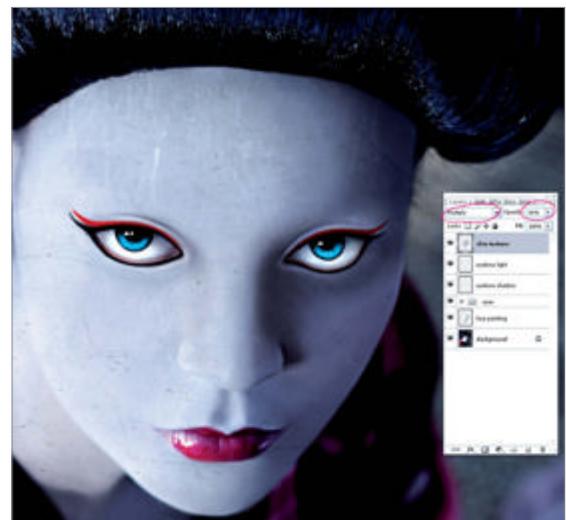


### Developing a style of your own

As you gain more and more experience, you will probably find that you gradually begin to develop your own style. Take the time to search other artists' work to give you some inspiration – but don't forget to believe in yourself and your own unique ability! Share your experience with like-minded people, and you will find it very rewarding.



**09 Combining images** One of the most important things for good photomanipulation is naturalness. Images that are on top of each other should have colour harmony, so play around with the layer blending mode settings.



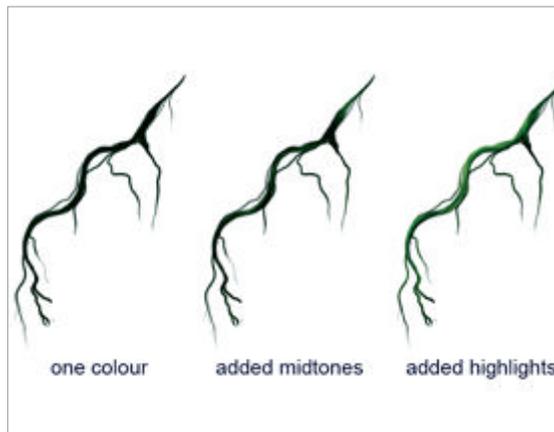
**10 Finishing off the rusty look** Finally, we need to choose the most appropriate layer blending mode for our rusty look – my choice was Multiply, with Layer Opacity at 60% for a natural look.

**11 Face shadow** We use the Eyedropper tool for the face shadow, choosing the darkest area of skin on her face. We then use a smooth brush for painting shadows. If you wish, you can use the Burn tool for shadows in the main geisha image. For the darkest areas use the hardest brush.



**12 Face light** We need to create a clear light on the face for a robotic look. First we need a hard contour on the face, so we change our brush to the hardest setting. Now paint the shiniest area with the hardest brush. After painting, use the Erase tool with 30% Opacity for erasing the polished contour.

**13 Hard rusty texture** For the hardest rusty effect, we can use a grungy texture. Change the Saturation setting (hit Ctrl+U, then set Saturation to -100). Set the layer blending mode to Overlay. You can erase unneeded areas from your grungy stock image.



**14 Adding features** In Japanese culture we frequently see flowers and trees, so I'm using flowers and branches as added features in my work here. First I will show you how to paint branches.



**15 The location of objects** The location of objects is very important in photomanipulation. We need to be careful to choose the most appropriate position for the branches so they look natural and meaningful.



**16 Painting branches** After determining the location of branches, I start to add their shadows. I use two brushes for this. You can clear unnecessary areas from shadows with eraser Opacity set to around 30%.

## Style School **Alternate realities**

Art genres in a nutshell

Discover how artists approached manipulation without the camera

In the history of art, the camera is a relatively recent invention. At less than 200 years old, it's a baby when it comes to some of the techniques shown here. It's theorised that artists from as far back as the 15th Century were using a camera obscura or camera lucida to draw physically accurate representations. And where there is accuracy, there is also the inevitable urge to play with it, and create something accurate-looking but utterly impossible...

### The masters

Experimenting with visuals like a pro



**Bernardo Bellotto 'Canaletto'**  
**Capriccio, Palazzo Strozzi**  
Year: 1762

Location: Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

● This painting is by the nephew of the artist we famously know as Canaletto, who carried on using the name after his uncle's death. Taught by the original Canaletto, it's likely that Bellotto had access to the camera obscura technique Canaletto used to create such accurate scenes.



**Giuseppe Arcimboldo**  
**Summer**  
Year: 1573

Location: Louvre, Paris, France

● Arcimboldo took a different and unique look at playing with visual reality. His allegorical portraits of the seasons were made up of incredibly detailed and well-observed fruit, flowers and vegetables. Much of his work has been forgotten apart from these famous still-life based images.



**Jan van Eyck**  
**The Arnolfini Wedding**  
Year: 1434

Location: National Gallery, London, UK

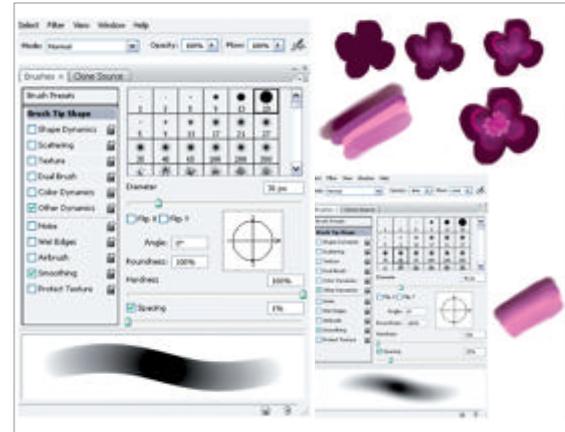
● There are theories that van Eyck used primitive photographic technologies to capture the perspective and detail of this scene so flawlessly. Many art historians suggest the use of a camera obscura and point to the mysterious object reflected in the mirror behind the couple.



## Hair and face accessories

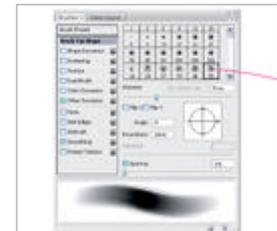
Add a bit of flower power

**17 Branch details** Now we need to add details of the branches for a natural look. Here the colours are very important. Use dark green for shadow areas and light green for light areas.



**18 Painting flowers** Draw and paint basic flowers with a brush, making soft swirled shapes. I chose pink and purple, but of course you can use different flower colours.

**19 Adding flowers** Here we're adding flowers on the face. I created a single flower then replicated it as both large and small. Also, you can rotate the flowers in any direction.

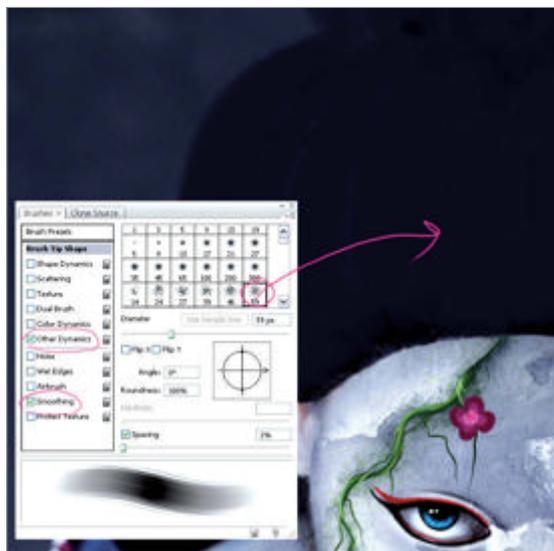


**20 Erase hair** I will erase unnecessary areas of hair, because I do not need the flowers in the original stock image. For erasing, I use the Clone Stamp tool. I'm taking texture from the background for erasing the flowers from the photo.

**21 Easy hair painting** Many digital artists don't like painting hair. The process may appear to be difficult and boring, but in fact it's very easy. There are many ways of painting hair, so choose the easiest for you. This is my way.

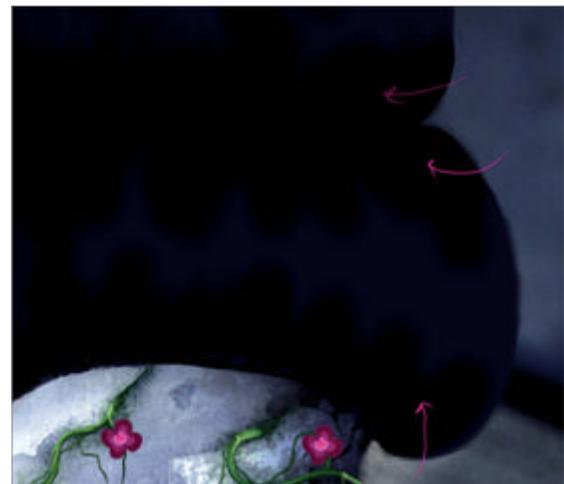
### Match your colours

Before you start compositing content from different photos, make sure you've matched up their hue, saturation and value as far as possible. If you're painting over the photomanipulation base, then consider building the initial stages entirely in black and white. This allows you to build up the tonal values properly and then apply 'glazes' of colour using layers set to the Color blending mode. This also makes colouring quicker too!

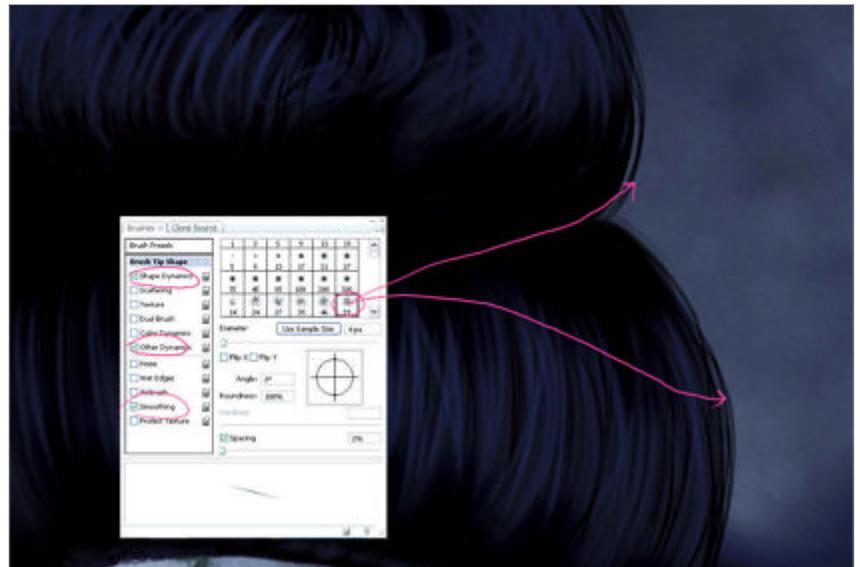


**22 Hair** First create the shape and base colour of the hair. For the base shape I use a hard Splatter brush. Change the size of the Splatter brush for the edges of the hair.

**23 Hair shadow** In this step we will add shadow to the hair. We first need to identify the section of hair shadow. For this I use the Burn tool. If you wish, you can use a soft round brush, but shadow colour must be darker than the base colour of the hair to look effective.



**24 Adding some light** Now we must add some details to the hair. These should also show the hair's light areas. I add midtones of blue using a soft round brush, and remove the ends of the hair.



**25 Hair sides** In this step we'll add details to the sides of the hair, again using the Splatter brush. Set Brush Size to 3-4 points and start to add detail with the base colour of the hair.



**26 Final hair details** Now we'll do the detail of hair with highlights. For this I use a hard round brush set to Pen Pressure, with Brush Size at 1-2 points for adding details. The colour will change according to the light.

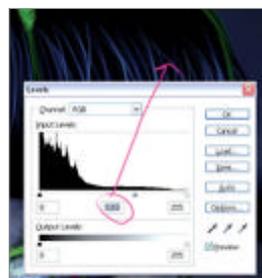


**27 Flowers in her hair** We'll now add branches and flowers to the hair. We'll use the same principles as for the branches and flower paintings in the previous steps.



**28 Adding petals** To add falling petals, select a light pink. I used the same soft round brush used in the previous steps. When you're finished painting the petals, add some blur by going to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and changing the setting to 10 pixels.

**29 Intensifying the background** Atmosphere is very important for photomanipulation and painting. In this image the background must be fairly dark, so to intensify it I first flatten all layers and then copy the layer. Now I change the Level settings on the top layer to increase the black.



**30 Final step** We've now added all the missing details. Sometimes you can skip some of the details—it depends on the image. I always look to the light and shadow, and for this I use the Dodge and Burn tools.

## Burn and Dodge

Most Photoshoppers eschew the Dodge and Burn tools as unprofessional but there are uses for them, as long as you've got a light hand and a gentle touch. They're particularly useful in photomanipulations for adding final details to the hair, eyebrows and eyelashes, but should be avoided on skin.

# Portrait



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



### Francisco Perez

Personal portfolio site  
[www.pac23.com](http://www.pac23.com)

Country **United States**

Software used **Photoshop**

Pac23 makes use of his graffiti, video game and music influences in most of his art. From robots to flying pandas, to drumming vultures, to girls with tattoos, he adds his own colourful flair to each of his pieces.

# Use filters creatively

**Deadly** 2010 **Photoshop CS4**

“ Learn how to take advantage of several filters for some nice subtle effects ”

**Francisco Perez** Illustrator



**Using filters in Photoshop may be a little tricky, because you don't want the image to reek of Photoshop.** That will make your

illustration look as though it has been created by an amateur Photoshop user. When I first started using Photoshop in my early teens, I remember using every filter available to me because I thought they were 'cool'. I then realised that my images looked like something anybody could have created through a simple click of a button. As I became more familiar with the program, I started using the filters in a different way – not using them as the main focus of my image, but rather as a tool to enhance the illustrations. I found that the best approach is to mix certain filters along with layer styles in order to get the most out of the effect I am trying to create.

Vintage martial arts movie posters inspired this illustration. We have a lovely but deadly katana-wielding female character. The actual character is detailed, while the simple background maintains certain 2D Asian style minimal shapes. Adding a few filters to the background really made a difference, and actually made the foreground character pop out even more.

Reds and oranges are the predominant colours used, while a light yellow along with a dark brown was used to create some contrast between elements and to bring them together as well. A sunset setting with a simple background along with warm colours is what I had in mind the whole time that I was working on this. I wanted the viewer to feel the heat coming from this illustration! And a white border can always add that poster/postcard feel, if that's what you're trying to achieve.

I start by sketching out the character very loosely. I use a 9x12 Wacom Intuos3 tablet (in case you were wondering). Once I'm happy with the pose

 **Source files available**

Unfiltered artwork

## Artist showcase

A look at other work by Francisco Perez



**1-2-3**  
2004, **Photoshop**

● Pic of my girlfriend based on a photo I took. I thought the angle of the sun and her stance would make a nice drawing.



**Dead Astronaut**  
2010, **Photoshop**

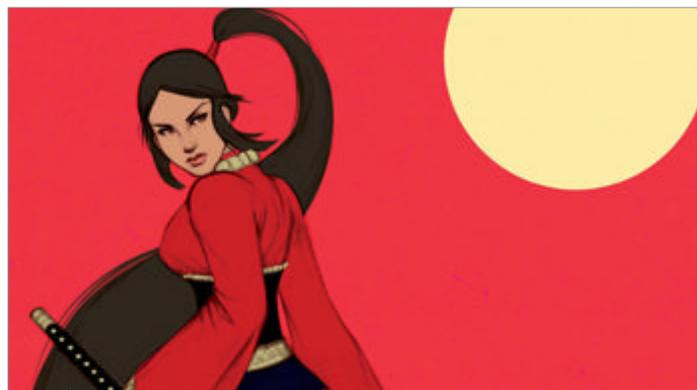
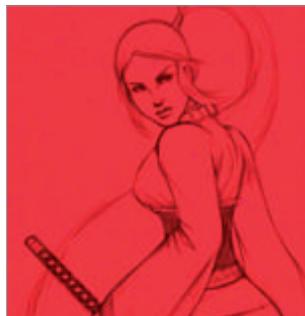
● Based on an idea I'd had for a while but didn't know how to approach. I was happy once I came up with this layout.



**Vulture**  
2010, **Photoshop**

● I'm a big Dave Grohl fan and this is a homage to Them Crooked Vultures. I've always been fascinated by drums!

**Initial sketch** This was done on a separate layer with an Airbrush Pen Opacity Flow brush. I used a dark red for the sketch and set the layer to Multiply.



**Colours** Flat colours in the layer underneath the line art. Since the line art is set to Multiply, the colours blend nicely with the art on top.

and layout, I start erasing some lines while going over other ones.

One of my favourite effects that's really easy to achieve is the subtle 'glow' you can get from your line art. Sometimes line art just looks too boring, and this definitely gives it some life. Make a copy of the line art and set it to Multiply at around 50% Opacity. Now apply a Gaussian Blur at around 4 pixels or less, and you'll see the smudged-out look the line art gets. This doesn't always work obviously, as it depends on what type of illustration you're working on. If you're going for a squeaky clean look, stay away from this effect and try using the Sharpen effect instead.

Another filter I used was the Sketch>Halftone Pattern filter. It gives you the option of applying lines, dots or circle patterns. I believe this works best on gradients, and keep in mind that it will utilise the foreground and background colours that are currently picked. That's the filter I used for the mountains to create some sort of 'fog' and introduce depth to the image. Fading horizontal lines remind me of old Art Deco style illustrations.

The clouds looked very cartoon-like, and this created a nice contrast against the detailed

foreground character. The effect even made it appear as though she were standing in front of some sort of wallpaper. The clouds felt a little too flat once I drew them, so that's when I decided to add the Graphic Pen filter. The layer was set to Screen, and this definitely gave a sort of 'fluffy' look and it separated the clouds from the solid coloured shapes that were in the background.

I even played around with the mountains in the background, by making the ones in front a solid colour and the ones behind set to a Pin Light layer style. I made a copy and dropped the opacity, then moved them to the side slightly, which gave a nice offset print effect.

I then felt that the sky was too plain, so I added another Halftone Pattern filter set to Dots – and that effect always works if you're trying to pull off a vintage-looking poster.

The sun's reflection on the water was intentionally made to look detailed but very crude at the same time. Gaussian Blur and Motion Blur were the only two filters that I used to obtain that effect.

I also used a Gaussian Blur effect on the highlights that are on the foreground character – but very slightly. When I first drew the highlights they looked too sharp compared to the rest of the character's style. That's the one element that connects the background with the foreground, because you can see yellow in the sky, the water and the character. The designs on the character's sleeves are just doodles set to Screen at a very low opacity.

I always think that very subtle, intricate details add a lot to an image. It's something that many viewers may not catch the first time they look at the illustration, but once they do, it's also something that makes them say, "Wow, the artist went to the trouble



**Reflection**  
Sun reflection in the water was made with the Wave filter to give a ripple effect. Added mountains in the background to give some depth.



**Glow** Copied the line art layer and applied a Gaussian Blur to give a subtle glow; same for the sun, and added water and white border around the image.

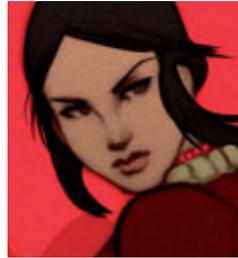
Before

## Give the character a new look

A couple of filters will do the trick



The character looks very clean and light, so it's not really 'popping' and it blends with the background. Make a copy of the line art and apply a Gaussian Blur to give it more of a 'messy' smudged look. Now darken the flat colours and apply the Add Noise filter. This gives it a grainy, vintage look. It definitely helps to separate the character from the background.



After



**01 Screen** Added clouds to the background set to Screen using the same brush as before. Also highlights on the character, again set to Screen.



**02 Nice vintage** I added a paper texture with folds as the top layer and set it to Overlay. This makes the entire image look older – like a vintage movie poster.



**03 Bring it together** I added a Graphic Pen filter to the clouds and applied an orange layer set to Color on top of everything. This brings all the elements together.

### Preview settings

Don't just use filters on their default settings, that's a surefire way of looking like a smudge artist. Use Photoshop's Preview function to see what happens when you adjust levels of colour, saturation, special effects etc. And remember that filters don't have to be applied to the whole image area too!



**04 Retro** I added a Halftone Pattern filter set to lines on the mountains to give a retro look. Also added some designs on the sleeves of the kimono.

of adding something so minimal that some people won't even notice!"

Some of the filters that I find myself using over and over again are the Blur filters. They can be your best friends if you use them correctly. I always recommend using them in a very subtle way, and even combining them. There are many times when people ask me how I created a certain look or style in my illustrations, and when I explain to them that I used 'x' filter with 'y' filter, they always say, "Ahhh, so that's how you do it!"

Everything is fairly simple, and if you are familiar with the program then you know that there are many different ways to attain the same effect. I also added the Noise filter to the main elements in the illustration to give it that printed, aged look. From the start I knew that I was going to add an orange layer on top set to Color, and that I was going to use a folded paper with a creases layer set to Overlay. These two things were always going to be the icing on the cake that would bring the whole image together in creating the look I was going for.

Remember too that filters don't have to be applied to the whole image in a blanket effect. They make the most visual impact when they are used to pick out some key areas and fade others into the background. Use the Freehand Selection tool and make sure you have set Select>Feather to at least five pixels' worth of bleed, depending on the area you're filtering and the effect you're using. This will then ensure that the area or object you are applying the effect to will still fade realistically around the edges. And also try to avoid the run-of-the-mill oil-painting style filter at all costs. Nothing else makes a digital image look less professional!

## Build up filter effects

Build up filter effects to achieve the look you want



**01 Define shape** This will be the sun's reflection. I use a flat coloured oval under the sun as the defined shape; I'll distort to make it look like it's reflecting in the water.



**02 Wave filter** Play with the Number of Generators, Wavelength, Amplitude, Scale. Copy the layer, set to Screen, apply a subtle Gaussian Blur and stretch to the sides.



**03 Distortion** I used the Rectangular Marquee to select areas of the reflection and move them to the sides. Added some lines (Line tool) to break up the waves.



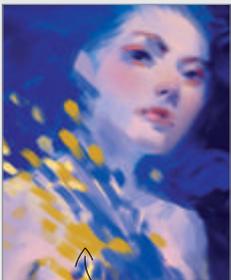
**04 Motion Blur** Apply Motion Blur at 0 degrees to the reflection to make it look like calm water with little movement. This blurs the side edges, giving the right look.

## Working Progress

Rough block outline to finished masterpiece



Step 02, Two to three colours



Step 11, Double checking



Step 19, Finalise anatomy



Step 29, Dust

# Add neon colours to portraits

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Bao Pham**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.baophamart.com](http://www.baophamart.com)

Country **USA**

Software used **Photoshop**  
Bao is a painter working with traditional and digital media. His digital work stays in the fantasy genre and the occasional gore. When working with traditional media, he likes to work from life and record as accurately as he can what he sees.

## Blush Dust 2010 Photoshop

“ Learn how to use and maintain vibrant and luminous colours in your digitally painted portraits ”

**Bao Pham** Painter



### Working with colours can be a difficult process.

The task of knowing where to start can sometimes be a little bit overwhelming, but having a basic understanding of the primary colours and their complements will help ease you into the process, and make the correct decisions.

Just like learning to walk before you can run, it is imperative to have a core understanding of value, hue and chroma. In short, hue refers to the colour itself, chroma is the measure of its saturation or vividness, and value is the measure of its lightness and darkness as it moves from white to black. Familiarise yourself with this concept by experimenting with the colour wheel. Choose blue as the dominant colour, add its complementary colour yellow/orange, then add its adjacent colour blue-purple and shift the value towards white to get a pinkish colour. This is the basic palette and the start of this painting.

Start with a simple, almost monochromatic palette to make the task less daunting. This also puts the focus on the anatomy and composition of the painting and prevents you from being overwhelmed by the colour spectrum. Once the structure has been established, then it is a matter of shifting each colour to its adjacent to add interest to the starting palette. From this point on, it is important to remember not to stray too far from the spectrum chosen or create confusion visually.

It is too easy to go from clear to cloudy, to muddy colours. To keep their clarity and vibrancy you must look past the colours themselves and think of their complement and adjacent colours, and how they play against each other. This tutorial will help, breaking down the process and peeling off the layers that make up a vibrant and luminous painting. So let's get started and look at building up a painting with neon colours



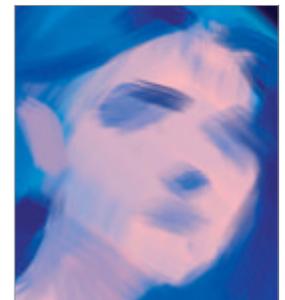
## Keep it simple

Start with a simple but strong foundation

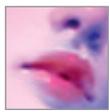


**01 The idea** The painting starts with an idea of a girl with blue hair and bright eyes. The dominant colour is sky blue and the secondary colour is a dusty pinkish flesh with a variation of a darker value of each colour. With a big chalk brush, lay down the general shape of the figure with her pink flesh and blue hair against a dark background.

**02 Two to three colours** Start with a couple to three colours as a base to build on. It minimises the thinking process and shifts the focus to the anatomy and shape of the figure as it relates to the background.



**03 Colour outside the line** Loosely indicate the eye sockets, the shadow under the nose, and the lips. Think of them not as features, but shapes on a curved plane. Let the brushstrokes move into each other to create mid-range colours to pick from.

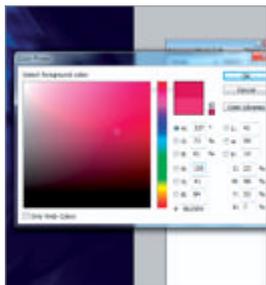


## Colour and form solidify

Form and colour come together to realise the idea



**04 Shape breakdown** Break down the larger shapes to form the structure of her face. Pick colours that have been laid down and use them to add shadows. Brushstrokes are put in wildly, but intentionally vary from distinct shapes to very soft gradation.

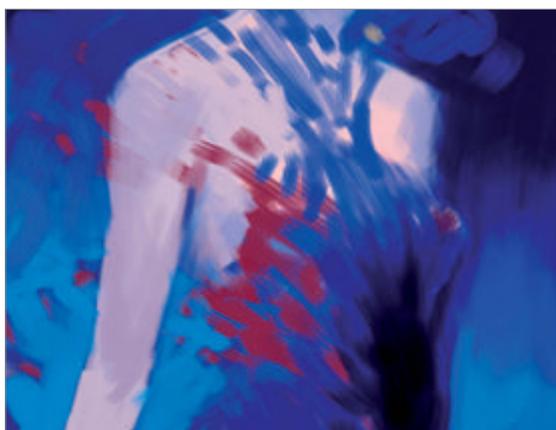
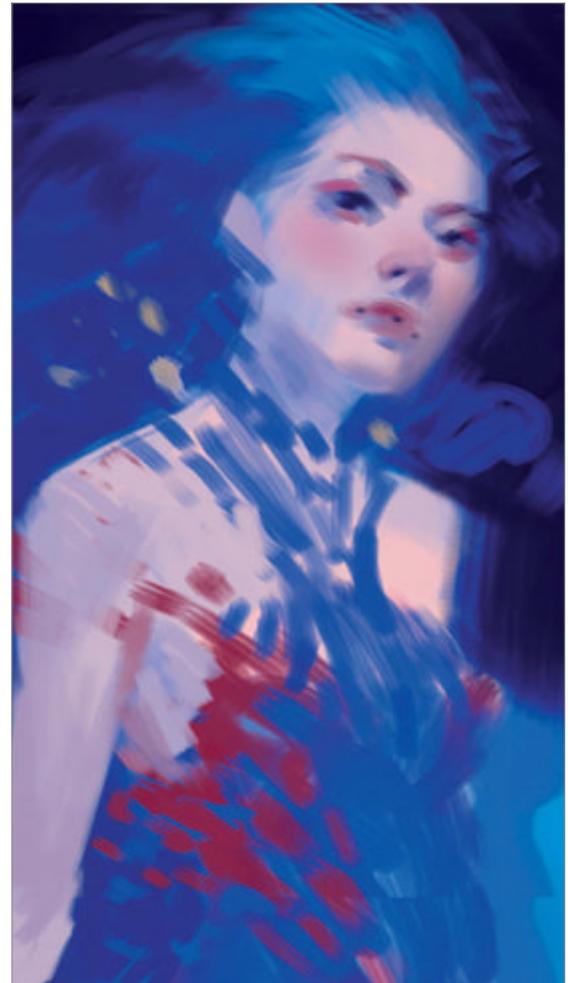


**06 Add warmth** The figure has so far been painted with the three colours that were put down at the beginning. To add more warmth to the face, use a medium saturated pink and faintly add touches to the cheeks, nose and lips.



**07 Juxtapose light and dark** Play with the juxtaposition of light against dark. Contrast her pale skin against the dark upper background and her dark dress against the brightly lit lower background. This brings the figure out from the background and adds depth to the image.

**05 Composition strength** Use the hair to frame the figure and to add movement to the image. The face is tilted up to indicate it's on a higher plane to add to the perspective of the image. A soft round brush is used to quickly and broadly indicate soft shadows on the face.



**08 Be a designer** Have a little fun with the costume by using odd shapes and breaking it up into flying pieces. Use it to add visual interest and create a lifting motion in the figure and the image.

**09 Introduce the complement** Experiment by adding a complement. Red is replaced by yellow using Image>Adjustments>Selective Color. The dress and the design is further explored using the complementary colour.

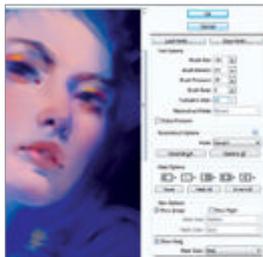


**10 Refine anatomy** Make simple changes to the anatomy of the figure by first making a selection of the area that needs to be moved, then use Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+C to copy all parts of every layer. Paste the compiled image using Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+V and move it where it needs to go.

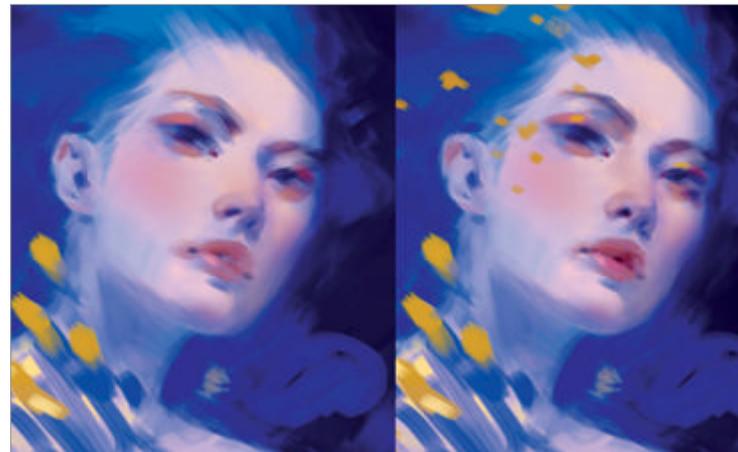
**11 Double checking** Continue work on the anatomy and design, while keeping the image zoomed out to prevent the addition of unnecessary details. Make sure all the features are aligned on the same perspective. Move the body back to extend the neck and add tension to the figure.



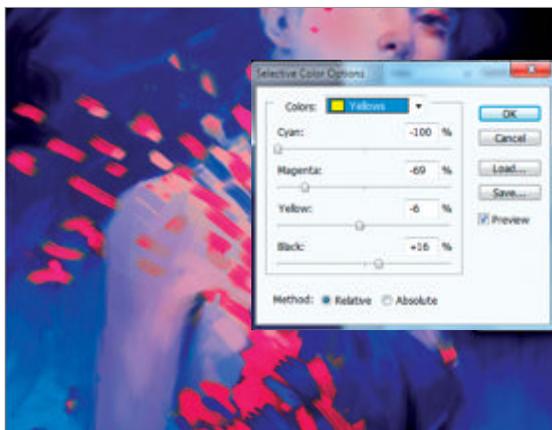
**12 Use shadows** Darken the edges of the image by creating a new Overlay layer and adding a soft gradient of dark blue. This sets the lower part of the body back and moves the focus to the face. It is the same as setting the figure in shadow and it should take on some of the blue of the background.



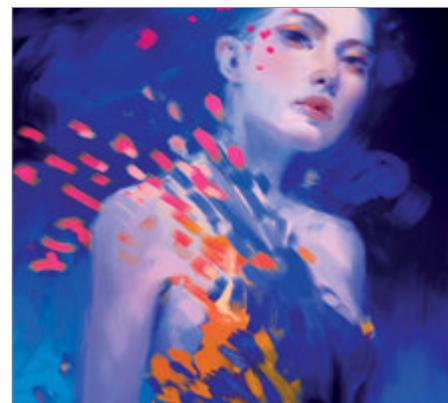
**14 Soften the features** Zoom into the face and use a medium sized chalk brush to refine and soften the features. Lift the brow and part the lips slightly to add some sensuality to the face. The lower lip is brightened with a slightly more saturated colour, while staying close to its value.



**13 Liquify** To move the features around on a small scale, use Filter>Liquify. Use the Move tool to move the eyes into alignment. Before doing this, make sure all the layers are combined and duplicated using Ctrl+Shift+C (PC) or Cmd+Shift+C (Mac) and Ctrl+Shift+V or Cmd+Shift+V.



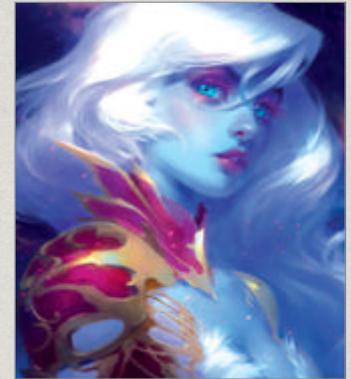
**15 Going back** The yellow wasn't adding much warmth to the painting, so it is shifted back to the pink in the original sketch by using Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Selective Color. This keeps the adjustment on a different layer and the original can be brought back again using the mask created with it.



**16 Everything in its place** Up until this point, the image has been painted as if it was one layer. With everything coming together to form this more extensive sketch, it's time to prepare it for the next step. I've cut out the pieces of feather and butterfly and pasted them into a new layer. This will make changing them easier later on.

## Artist showcase

Bao Pham's other amazing paintings



**Enoki**  
2010, Photoshop

● This was done as a commission portrait of a client's character. The colours were all there in the reference image, so it was only a matter of how to use them in a realistic way.



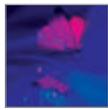
**Nature Boy**  
2009, Photoshop

● This image was a product of several previous images I've created. They were cut up, stretched, and overlaid on top of each other until an image appeared and I took it and ran with it.



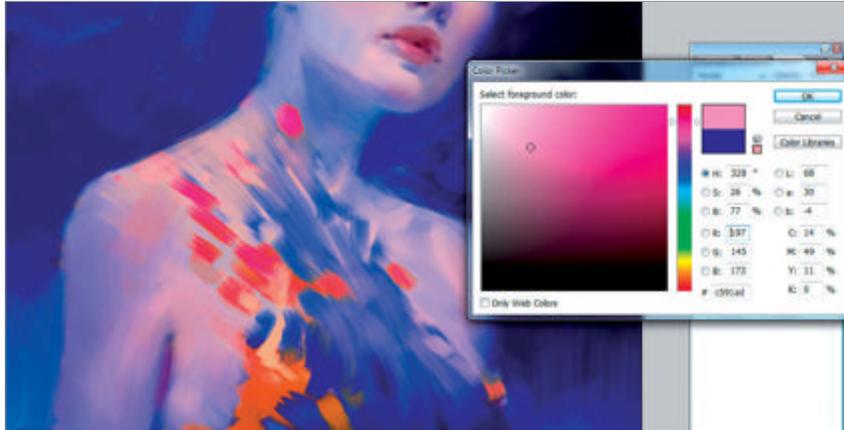
**Pearl**  
2009-2010, Photoshop

● This was a limited palette painting in blue. Keeping the colours subtle was a challenge, but the limited palette really shines when a complement is added in the right places.



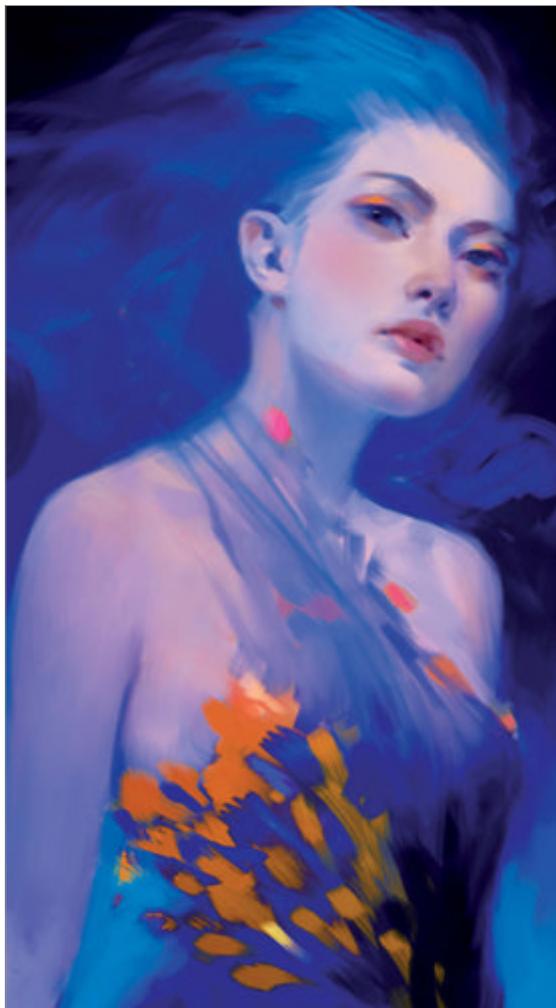
## Time for fun

The foundations have been set, and now it's time to build and decorate

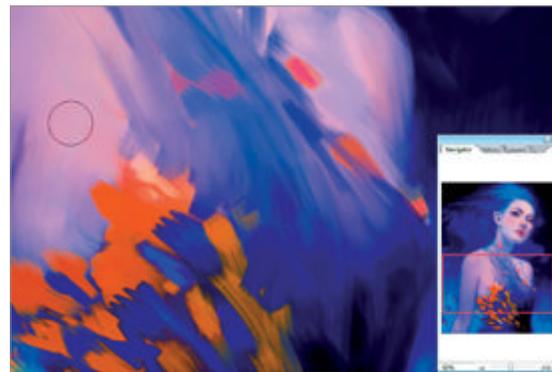


**17 Cloudy** First, turn the butterfly layer off and out of the way. I've decided that the dress will be sheer as it wraps around her shoulder. To suggest the texture of the fabric pick a darker value and slightly saturated variation of the skin tone and gently brush it on with a soft broad stroke. The warmer colour will contrast nicely with the cool skin tone.

**19 Finalise anatomy** The right arm needs some special attention, so with some references on hand, I make the correction. At the same time, I work on refining the facial features by picking colours from the surrounding area.



**18 Sheer** Add in strips of saturated blues to indicate where the fabric is folded. It looks too pink now, and the blue of the fabric needs to come back. Once again, use a large soft brush to gently brush on a very saturated blue, pressing harder where the fabric concentrates on the chest. Add more strips of blue to bring back the folds.



**20 Smooth** The focus now is on the anatomy of the figure and it should be finalised. When smoothing skin tones, use a large soft round brush and pick from the surrounding colours. Gently airbrush the surface while maintaining some of the brushwork underneath. For smaller areas, use smaller brushes to maintain the edges between the forms.

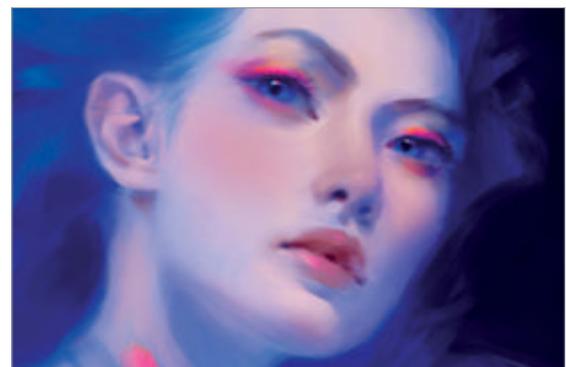


**21 Hair** Move onto the hair and start breaking down the large shape. Think of it as ribbons moving against and into one another, twisting and curling as they pass through each other. Use dark shapes to accentuate the shadows and to suggest the separation of the layers.



**22 More hair** Work with a large brush to 'comb' out the ribbons of hair, and then decrease the brush size to breakdown the larger shapes. Create a new Overlay layer and brush on a mass of dark blue to set some of the hair back. Also, use a bright blue-green colour to pull some of the front hair forward.

**23 Bright eyes** On the same Overlay layer, brighten the eyes using bright blues and turquoises. To contrast with the blue of the eyes, brush on some violets, pinks, and yellow. Vary the colours to get the effect you desire. The brightness and saturation of the colours brings the focus to the eyes and draws the audience in.

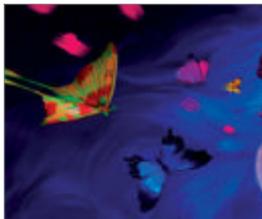


**24 Tweaking the figure** With the figure almost finished, go back and examine the alignment and anatomy of the figure. Use the Liquify tool again to realign the eyes and the lips, and finish off the figure.



**25 Tweaking the design** Add interest to the design of the dress by creating a pattern with the blue and orange. Reference the design after birds and butterfly patterns to tie it in with the flying butterfly imagery.

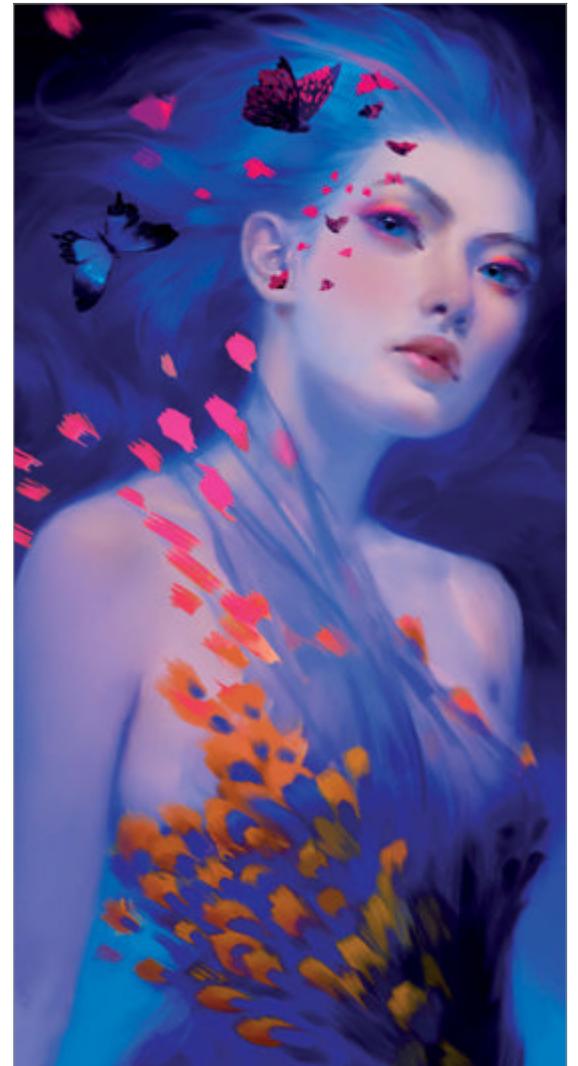
**27 Flapping leaves** Think of the butterfly as two triangular leaves attached to each other, flapping in the wind. Start with the general shape, varying the moment that each one is in motion. Once that has been established, create the pattern using references, remembering to stray a little to keep the design unique.



**28 Rearrange** As you work on individual butterflies, it is easy to lose track of them as a group and that can create clutter. Take a step back and edit. Change a colour if it contrasts too much and remove it entirely if it's too busy.



**26 The secondary character** With the figure finished, it's time to flesh out the butterflies. Keep in mind the general movement of the group and how it can add to the composition of the painting. Keep them on a separate layer so that they can be moved to work with the composition if needed.



**29 Dust** Add some magic to the painting by sprinkling dust around the butterfly and on the figure. Once again, it adds visual interest, movement, and an otherworldly quality. Add in moderation and appropriately or it can cause confusion.



**30 Glow** Once the painting is finished, flatten it and make a duplicate layer. Set it to Screen and apply a Gaussian Blur set around 20 to create a glow. Lower the Opacity to keep it subtle. Duplicate the Screen layer and set it to Overlay to deepen the colours. This also helps tie everything together.

## Shadows

The colour and light of the background always find their way onto an object. Using the colour of the background for the shadow is a good way to set the figure within the painting. Don't be afraid to use pure colours for the shadows. As long as it is the right value, you can use any colour for the shadow.



# Fantasy lighting

**On The Scent** 2010 Corel Painter X, Adobe Photoshop CS4

“ I will show you how to paint and illuminate an environment and character using expressive lighting techniques ”

**Kelley Harris** Fantasy Illustrator

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Kelley Harris**

Personal portfolio site  
[krhart.com](http://krhart.com)

Country **United States**

Software used **Painter X**

The art I create usually tries to display a certain mood or emotion, often using light as the main method to convey these ideas. My interests focus around dark fantasy characters and creatures, sometimes moving into more surreal imagery.



## Artist showcase

We take a quick look at Kelley's other work



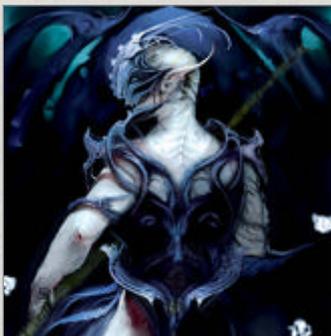
**Remnants**  
2010, Corel Painter X

● I was having a lot of trouble getting ideas onto paper – the dreaded artists' block. After a brief hiatus and mounting frustration, an image of forcing ideas into the open inspired this concept.



**Vase And Necklace**  
2009, Corel Painter X

● I've done studies before and digital still-life, but nothing seriously detailed. I took advantage of track lighting at a friend's house, and over a two-day period painted this in their kitchen.



**Sleep Sentry**  
2010, Painter X, Photoshop CS4

● A long stint of bad dreams inspired this quick concept image. I joked to a friend about setting up a 'dream security guard' in my head and what he'd look like using twilight colours.

Before

## Quick lighting technique

Integrate additional elements into the environment



We need to add more elements of interest to the painting, but we aren't sure where to place them and how they'll be illuminated. One quick way is to create a new composite layer and paint the elements where you desire. Lock the Transparency of the layer, and

airbrush shadows and lighting where desired on those elements only. You can use harder-edged brushes to add more highlights.

Lilies are growing haphazardly on some of the branches. The lily furthest away from the light is toned down with cooler colours.



After



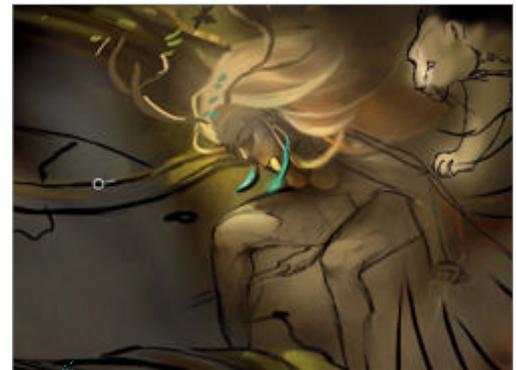
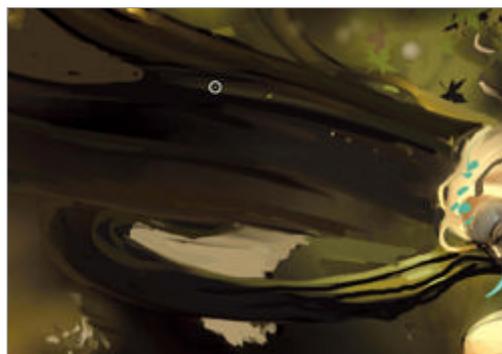
To illustrate a mood or a strong sense of dramatics in a concept or illustration, lighting is one of the more important

features you can utilise to help achieve a captivating painting. You may follow traditional rules closely for accuracy, or you may bend and exaggerate these rules and allow yourself freedom to explore to your heart's content. This is exactly what I'll be showing you in this tutorial, using a painting of a ranger and her scouting familiar.

While wanting to exaggerate and go above and beyond traditional lighting in a painting, there are standard and set rules to follow for achieving a realistic lighting effect. Rim lighting, suffuse glows, light particles, reflected light and shadow rules were adhered to, and in the most dramatic areas we bent them a little. However, there is a foundation of lighting fundamentals that were always kept in mind during the entire painting process.

Before we start, it's good practice to set up lighting examples in your workspace. Prior to the painting being established, objects were observed under different lighting directions. Take into account how the light bounces off different surfaces and textures. What colour is the light? What colour is the surface? How do these objects and light interact with things underneath them? Behind them?

Along the right side of the figure's face, a warm, yellow-hued rim light is used to show the side of her face that would be directly in the line of light if we were to see her from the opposite direction. The same is applied to the sides of branches and twigs in the background. It's important not to use rim light as an outline along elements, since planes and forms are not flat – they bend and recede into the background. It shouldn't be used as a sort of line art around a figure, as it can make three-dimensional shapes appear flat and too stylised. We want the figure to remain the central focus of the painting.



**Direction and placement** Lighting direction and shadow placement is established at the start of the painting, along with the sketch. The figure, the cat and rough placement of major shapes can be seen.

However, the background and left sides of the painting will need a little bit more attention as well to make the environment completely believable. There is water, a cooling element to such warm tones in the foreground. This causes cooler reflections along the base of the limbs and on some of the leaves. Warm colours are also reflected along the character – the brilliant red from her clothing and silver from the twin blades she carries. In order for all elements to mesh with one another and become believable, they need to interact with each other. They have to exist and reflect, blend, and bounce colour in perfect harmony.

We'll also discuss how to keep in mind your shadow placement, because it's just as important as lighting placement. We need the character and object to have weight and substance, as they are illuminated in various intensities. The hair casts shadows, even though it is free-flowing and weightless. The swords, feet and leaves shatter light, and add breaks and cool areas into the environment. Keep all the shadows cast in a similar direction, as well as your light, for continuity.

To get a very strong sense of atmosphere, we couple dramatic lighting with a charismatic character



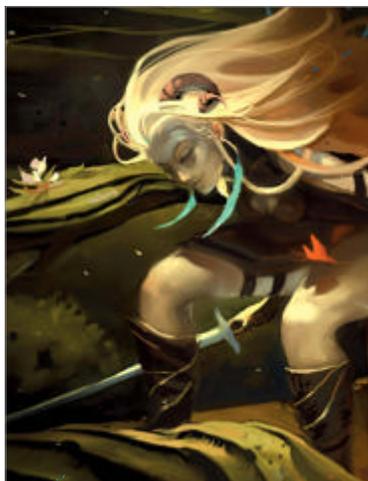
**The dark side** Here we make the shadows as dark as possible without losing the shapes of the branches and figure. More intense highlights are added throughout, for lighting balance and concept continuity.



**Extras** Areas of entry for the strongest points of light are added to the upper canopy of the forest and extend into the far background. Soft speckles are placed through the leaves.

## Layer options

When you're uncertain about a major element to be included in a painting, it's best not to limit yourself when it comes to experimenting with options. Create multiple composite layers, and switch them on and off until you find the direction you would like to take.



**Final steps** Colours and highlights are strengthened around the figure and her companion, and reflected light added under the branches. Water, moths and lilies add interest.

to create what turned out to be a painting with movement and colourful scenery. The character is slightly flamboyant in her dress and personality, so the choice in lighting should follow suit to help accentuate the figure and overall mood of the painting. During a ranger's adventures, many types of terrains are traversed, and many types of trails are followed and uncovered. In game settings and fantasy stories, rangers are described as finding their home in natural environments, and having respect for animals and nature because they live and move alongside them.

To help push the illustration into a more believable natural environment, we have to add certain things that you normally wouldn't think of if you were standing there yourself. Usually our attention isn't focused on dust particles or how our eye perceives light as glowing or reflected, so explaining this for the viewer is key. Additional small details such as illustrating humidity, debris and shedding fur seem commonplace, as the lighting placed upon them reflects the rest of the environment.

Some paintings can speak for themselves, but here we wanted a few obvious clues combined with a little mystery of the concept. During the creation of the figure and additional elements of the forest, more surreal objects were placed along the figure and her companion to give her more than the feel of an ordinary ranger or scout. The idea of her having a familiar gave her a bit of mystery and fun. Imagine a ranger of some renown, someone who is so good at finding trails and following marks that she allows the people she is after to know she is around and on their tail. Maybe red moths start to show up on trees or in the air? It seems she would play a game with the mark, much like a cat would with its food. Maybe her companion is having as much fun as she is as he stalks alongside her.

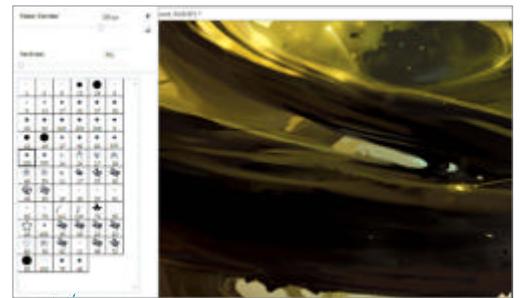
All these ideas were spawned during the painting stage. They're fun to think of and can help inspire an artist to complete the painting and add a back-story for viewers.

## Dappled lighting

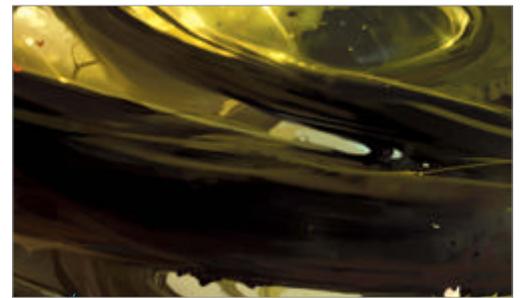
### Techniques for creating wonderful patterns of light



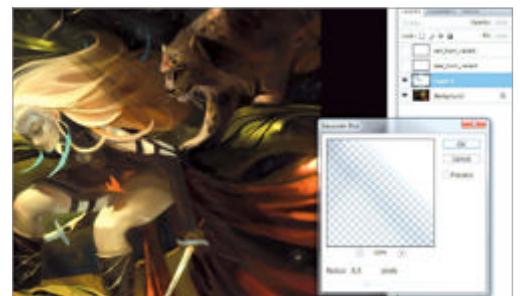
**01 Dodge** When used sparingly, PS's Dodge tool can create fantastic dappled light. On upper branches, add small areas of light using soft-edged brushes.



**02 Soften edges** The light edges were too harsh. Use the Airbrush tool at a low opacity to push the diffuse glow of the dappled light on the trees and figure.



**03 Nucleus** Using Dodge, add spots of light to the centre of each area of light, creating a 'nucleus' of the most intense light path as it hits branches and leaves.



**04 Shadows** Add an Overlay adjustment layer to place shadows alongside the most intense beams to magnify areas of light using contrast. Adjust opacity to suit.

# Paint perfect skin in Painter & Photoshop

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Marta Dahlig**

Personal portfolio site  
[blackeri.deviantart.com](http://blackeri.deviantart.com)  
Country **Poland**

Software used **Painter, Photoshop**

Marta is one of the world's most well-known exponents of digital painting. She specialises in character images of fantasy female characters which are popular with digital art fans all over the world.

## Revelation 2010 Painter, Photoshop

“ In this tutorial I would like to explain the process of painting skin, as well as share some key tricks and tips ”

**Marta Dahlig** Character painter



**To start, prepare a sketch of a character you want to depict.** Before you put in the

colour, however, there are a few basic things that you should consider and decide on. Those elements are light source, colour palette and brushes. First, you should plan your light source, which will in turn dictate your palette. Stronger light sources will put the most emphasis on highlight and shadow hues, while softer lighting will accentuate midtones.

Aside from the actual strength, time of day will also influence your choices – hues will be much colder for scenes placed in a dawn setting, remaining warmer and darker in dusk compositions. If you are unsure about your skin painting, I would highly recommend going with a standard frontal daylight light source.

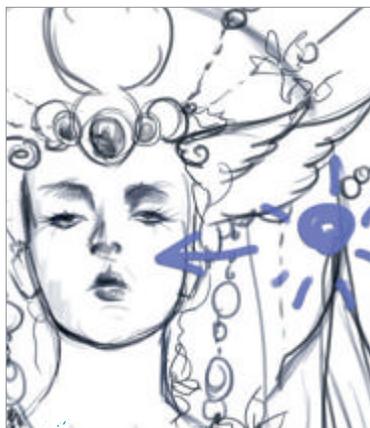
After you decide on the light source, it is time to move onto composing your palette. There are several issues I would like to bring to your attention. First, remember that the hues of midtones, highlights and shadows that you choose should all differ from each other. It is also often a good idea to make highlights and shadows different in terms of colour polarity – if the highlight is a warm tone, like yellow or orange, you

can try to make one of the shadow hues colder, for example green or blue. Another well known rule, that you should always keep in mind, is that you should never choose pure white and pure black for shading.

Last, when you choose colours, remember to always pick shades that are slightly more saturated than desired, as applying them on low opacity will drop their perceived saturation anyhow.

After you compose your palette, recreate a small version on a separate layer in the file with your sketch, so you can eye-drop it whenever you need a specific colour. Now, pick a brush you feel most comfortable with and put in the midtones and shadows according to the light source you defined in step 1, with the colours you chose in step 2. Since it's the very beginning, it doesn't really matter what brush you do it with, as long as the opacity is high and the edges remain solid. At this stage, the image won't probably look too interesting, but this step is all about creating a basis which we will later detail and texture.

The last important issue you should decide on is which brushes to use throughout your painting process. While most effects can be recreated with



**Sketchy start** A pencil sketch is a good way to start your image if you do not feel comfortable with blocking colours straight onto the canvas without any guideline.



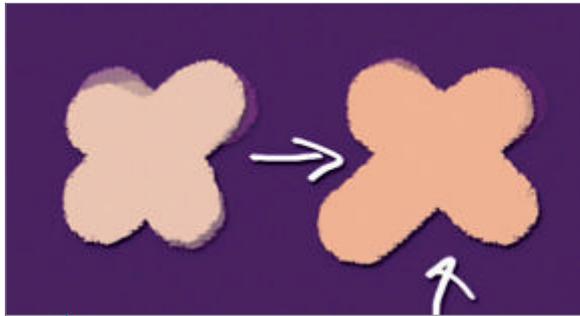
**Block in colour** Colour blocking first shades onto the canvas can be done with practically any tool, as long as your strokes remain opaque.





## Compose a skin colour palette

Learn how to choose colours for character painting



**01 Choose a midtone** Choosing a midtone will depend on the light source you plan. For standard scenes, it's safest to go with a typical beige.



**02 Highlights and shadows** When picking highlights and shadows, remember that their hue should differ from the hue of your midtone.



**03 Enrich your palette** After you have chosen the highlight and shadow colours, eye drop them. With those colours selected, apply some strokes on top.



**04 Finalise colour choices** Review all the colours you created and choose the boldest combinations that strongly differ from each other.



**Choose your brushes** Deciding on the brushes is a crucial step for skin painting, as each of the brushes performs best at various tasks.

any tool, there are certain brushes that will help you create desired effects faster and easier. For the colour blocking stages and early blending, I would therefore recommend brushes with solid edges. Those can be custom Photoshop brushes or even personalised Painter Acrylics or Oils. Brushes with solid edges will create more texture, which is quite priceless for creating basic layers of skin, as they help to underline the structure of a painted object.

Spattered brushes are great for latter stages of blending as, when used on a low opacity, they create a texture resembling the skin's pores. Softer one-point brushes, such as the classic airbrush, are best for latter stages of colour enrichment, when you wish to slightly smooth up transitions or seamlessly introduce a new shade to an existing composition, like adding a blush to the cheeks.

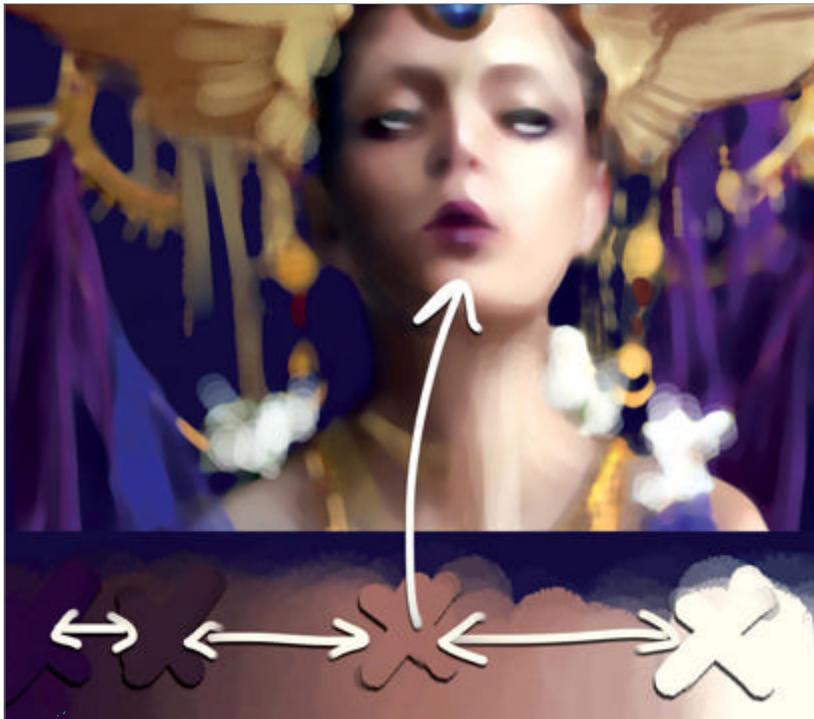
Once you know which tools to use on particular areas at particular times, pick a solid brush and use it on a low opacity (my settings vary between 15 and 30% in Photoshop) on the areas that still need their shadows defined. Keeping in mind the structure, such as concavities and convexities of the depicted object, apply subtle shades that would underline their interaction with the light source. The most convex areas (marked with white arrows on the screenshot) should of course be most highlighted, whilst the most concave ought to be left darkest. Apply the colours gradually, eye-dropping the shades from your colour palette. If the colours start to look muddy, it means that the saturation of shades you picked in the colour composition stage was too low. If that happens, simply alter the palette by increasing colour saturation and continue shading.

Once the main shades are blocked in, you should start thinking about smoothing all the blocked areas.

Using lower opacity brushes should have made the basis somewhat smooth already, however special blending techniques will help you control the texture you created and use it as a means of adding extra realism to your painted skin. The first stage of

### Ready for your close-up?

The most efficient way to learn how to realistically paint any object is by simply looking at it and analysing its form and interaction with light. For learning texturing it also is a good idea to analyse macro photographs. Viewing such a picture up close lets you clearly see and eventually mimic the surface.



**Blending** Blending is a vital part of the painting process, if you care for more realistic results. Unfortunately, it is rarely a good idea to rely on a program's automatic blending tools (like Smudge).

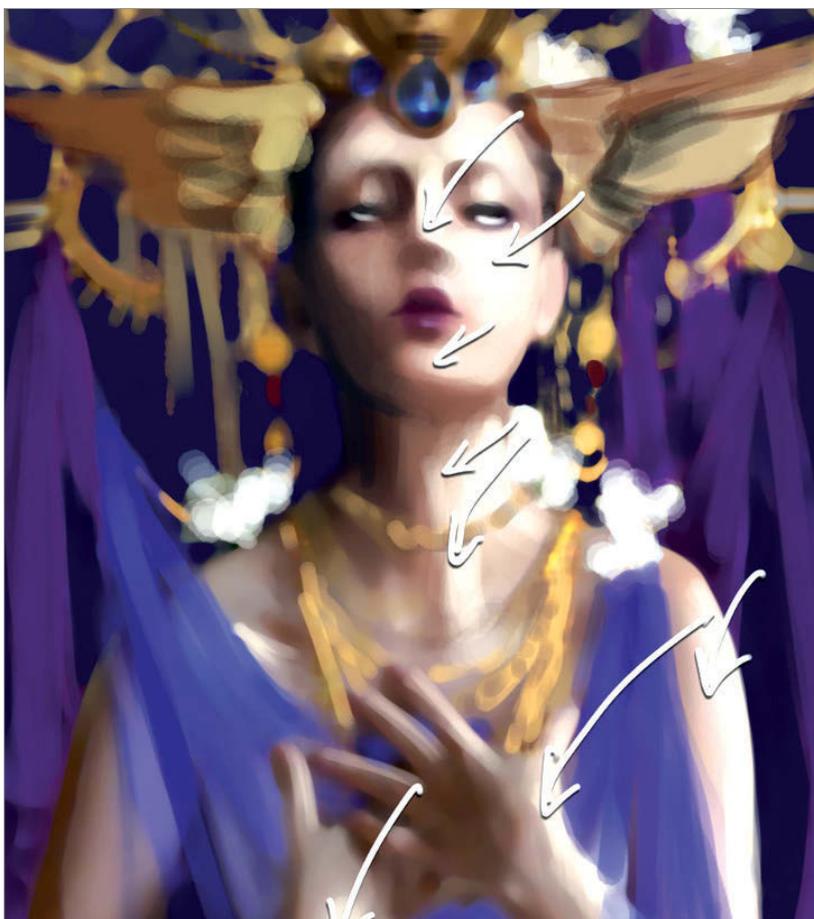


**Review your palette** Truly realistic skin comes from combinations of many colours, so it's absolutely crucial to keep reviewing your palette as you progress, applying additional colours if needed.

blending is using very low opacity solid brushes (5-15%) and running them over the areas that need smoothing, while eye dropping colours. When the transitions look slightly smoother, you can change the brush to a softer airbrush or, preferably, a spattered brush and run with it over the same areas, still on a low opacity. The slight dots that the spattered brush creates are great for simulating skin pores, helping add to the realism.

Even though this process is often subconscious, the way you place your brushstrokes greatly affects the way your painted skin looks. Knowing which brushstroke motion to use at a specific moment can prove crucial for conveying realism. In character painting for example, round motions are most effective for depicting roundish surfaces, such as cheeks, chin or tips of the nose, while vertical or horizontal parallel strokes underline height or width respectively. For situations where you want to add depth to areas that might otherwise seem flat (such as arms or stomach), you might want to blend with both vertical and horizontal strokes, while underlining the most convex areas with round motions.

When all the main tones are applied and smoothed together, is often the moment when the image is considered done. Having a decent-looking skin surface is great, but instead of finishing your work, you can begin a new stage of your workflow – the hardcore polishing phase. What you can take care of at this stage are the small hue variations found within the skin. Portraying them can boost the realism of your painting to a whole new level. That is great news



**Shadows** Application of shadows and highlights should be done with great attention to detail. For best results apply colours on a low opacity, so you can control and alter the outcome as you progress throughout the image.

## Artist showCase

A selection of Marta Dahlig's artwork



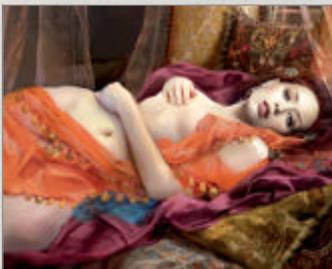
**The Fifth**  
2009, **Photoshop and Painter**

● A surreal personal image, in which I tried to plan the composition and stylisation to resemble Salvador Dali's style. The image was created in Painter and Photoshop with a Wacom tablet in around 45-50 hours.



**Captive**  
2008, **Painter**

● Image originally prepared for The Official Corel Painter Magazine. The challenge for this project was to design a painting resembling a typical fashion shoot, yet with a considerable amount of emotion and tension.



**Judith**  
2009, **Painter and Photoshop**

● This image was an extreme challenge in realism and a take on a theme that I have found fascinating for many years. I faced a lot of technical difficulties since the whole painting process was video-recorded.

considering that they are not hard to apply at all – what's difficult is simply remembering to put them in place! Those tricks include the slight red tint on the earlobe, nose tip, chin, elbows, tips of the fingers, greenish tints on the insides of forearms, and slightly violet shades under the eyes.

Once all shades are in place, all that's left is to accentuate small physical nuances. Doing so will help you achieve a very believable skin surface.

The most important, easy to be forgotten details within the face are the small highlights simulating folds outside the inner eye corner and above the upper eye lid as well as a tiny highlight on top of the nose and chin.

The last, often omitted element is veins, which will be covered in the following steps of this workshop. Veins are an excellent touch not only as enrichment of your skin's surface, but also as means of conveying emotion and adding drama. Painting them can be a challenging task, but once you know the tricks it is just another means of achieving realism. To start, pick an airbrush and a turquoise colour to create lines simulating main veins. The strokes should not be too opaque – in fact, they should be barely visible. When the line is ready, dim its beginning and end strongly by using the airbrush with your midtone



“ Veins are an excellent touch not only as enrichment of your skin's surface, but also as means of conveying emotion and adding drama ”

⤵ **Different strokes** The direction of your strokes is nearly as important as the brush you choose to paint them with. Knowing how to place and angle your strokes is yet another means of conveying realism when painting skin.



⤴ **Details** Even the smallest of touches can have a tremendous effect on the final image. It's therefore important to know which of the details are most worth investing time in.

 **Software flexibility**

While I am often asked to state which is better, both Photoshop and Painter have their unquestionable advantages. In modern times flexibility is the best trait an artist can possess, and therefore having both of these programs in your arsenal is nearly mandatory for a career in the digital art industry.



 **Veins** Painting in the veins is great as an extra touch for character paintings. You should start with some airbrush strokes simulating vein shapes.

colour on top of it. This way the vein will slowly appear from under the skin, just to fade gently back into it. The last step to paint in the veins is to add a more opaque, slightly thinner line on top of the one you created in the previous step.

In places where the vein is most convex, the colour should gradually become more opaque. In those convex parts, add a slight highlight on top of the vein and a small shadow according to the light source you chose for your painting. The bolder the shadow, the more



convex the vein will seem, so be sure not to go overboard! Good places to paint veins are the forehead (to underline stress or thinness of skin), forearms and outer sides of hands.

After applying all of the polishing touches, you are basically done with your skin surface. It doesn't mean, however, you cannot still experiment with it! If you still feel that you might have done something better, or that you are still lacking something, there is an easy way to spice up your skin surface. The Color Balance tool, both in Photoshop and Painter, offers possibilities for quickly manipulating the hues of your skin. It's hard to believe how big a difference can it make if used correctly. This tool is most attractive to those who still feel slightly unsure about their colour choices, but can also be a great help for professionals for fine-tuning images.

Personally, I most often end up reducing Red from Highlights and increasing Blue from Shadows. The best results, however, come from simply playing with the tool, so just go ahead and give it a try!

 **Naturalism** The more convex the vein, the more dramatic your character will look. The most natural parts to add them are tops of hands, but veins also look effective when painted on foreheads, arms and legs.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Paul Cartwright**

Personal portfolio site

[www.zero9studio.co.uk](http://www.zero9studio.co.uk)

Country **UK**

Software used **Photoshop, Painter**

I work primarily as a concept artist in the video games industry. I also work as a freelance illustrator whenever an interesting project comes up. I create images in many different styles, with characters and creatures being among my favourite things to paint.



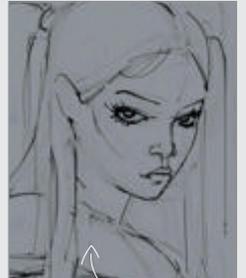
**Source files available**

Underpainting sketch



## Working Progress

Use coloured layers to build up vibrant art



Step 04, Sketch refinement



Step 12, Low opacity paint



Step 21, Dark edges



Step 27, Glazing stage two

# Complete guide to underpainting

“ Discover how layers of tone build up to create values, definition and colour ”

## Girl with a Sapphire Earring... and a Rat 2011 Photoshop, Painter

“I will show you how to make use of the basic principles of traditional underpainting to create a digital image using Photoshop and Painter”

**Paul Cartwright** Concept artist and illustrator

 **The importance of tonal values cannot be understated.** The application of light and shadow to a painting is just about the most important thing to get right when it comes to creating an appealing image. Even the most beautifully composed paintings can fall flat if their values are incorrect, so before thinking about adding colour it's a good idea to get your greyscale base image looking tip-top first.

Many of the world's greatest digital artists begin their creative process by painting in black and white, leaving it until later to apply colour washes by way of different layer modes. But this technique is by no means exclusive to the digital realm, or even present-day artists for that matter.

Painting in monotone and applying colour later on is an approach that dates way back to the 13th Century. The verdaccio and grisaille techniques were used to lay down a monotone underpainting to which colour would be applied. While grisaille uses grey tones made from mixing black and white, whereas verdaccio appears cooler due to the additional green pigment. The tint achieved when using verdaccio is widely believed to produce more accurate skin tones when the subsequent glazes are applied.

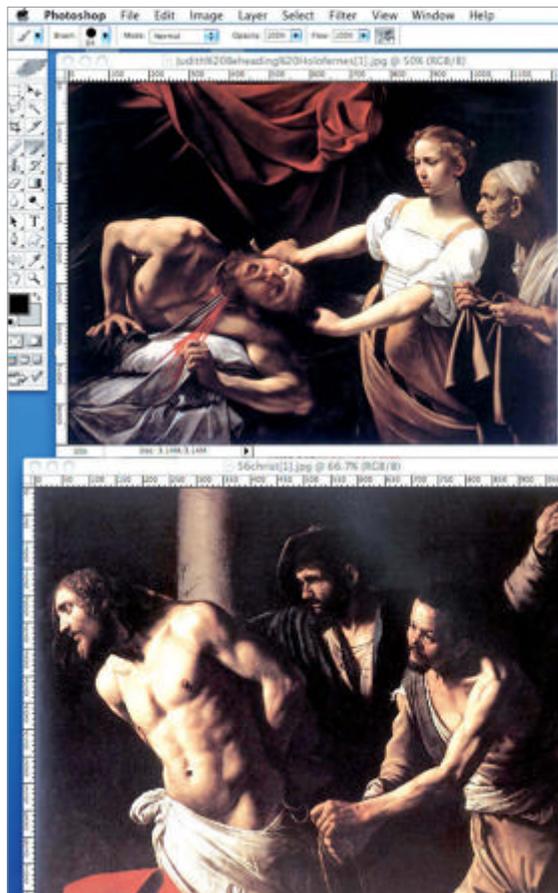
For this tutorial I will loosely follow the same process used for a traditional oil painting to create a digital underpainting before adding colour, using verdaccio under my skin tones and grisaille under the rest of the image.

### **Top Smudge tool tips**

Photoshop's Smudge tool is often overlooked or dismissed, but it is definitely worth experimenting with as it makes a useful blender. Make sure Spacing is switched off in the Brushes palette to blend rather than push pixels around, and try using different brush tips for a more textured finish.

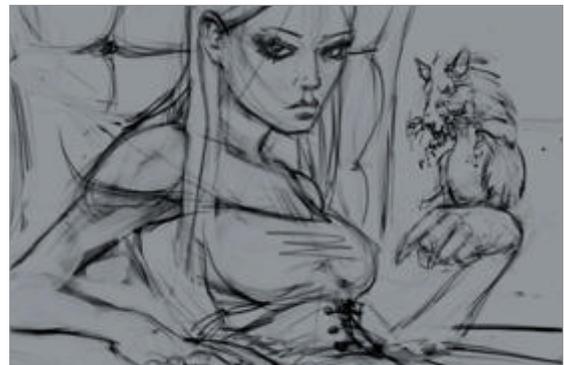
## **First stages** Decide on a basic composition

**01 The subject** For the subject of this painting I have decided to portray a seated woman with a pet of some sort, and the image should be slightly stylised with an edgy feel to it. To keep with the aesthetic of a classical painting, I decide to take the approach of a traditional portrait. I gather reference images of relevant examples by Old Masters.

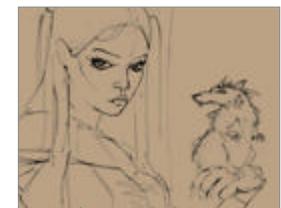


**02 Loose sketches** Working at a low-resolution, I begin to rough out some basic compositions. The dark surroundings and pale skin tones of my reference images have steered me towards using a gothic-style woman for my subject. For some reason my scribbles take on the shape of a little rat, which I like.

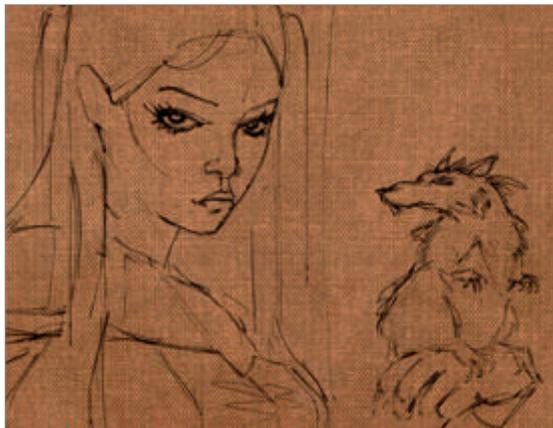
**03 Compose the sketch** With my subject decided upon I pick a basic round brush and begin to sketch out my figure in more detail. I'm still keeping it pretty loose. As I draw, I occasionally use the Lasso tool to chop and shift areas of my sketch that need nudging slightly for a better composition.



**04 Sketch refinement** I lower the opacity of my current layer and create a new one above it. I then trace over my loose sketch making slight adjustments here and there until I am happy with how things look. I keep the background very minimal as the figures are the focus and the background will be very dark when it comes to rendering it properly later on.



**05 Imprimatura** As I am trying to work in the traditional way, I need to begin my painting process with an imprimatura layer. This is a layer of paint that stains the canvas with a middle value as a starting point, usually in a burnt umber colour. On a new Multiply layer, I fill the canvas with a mid-brown tone.

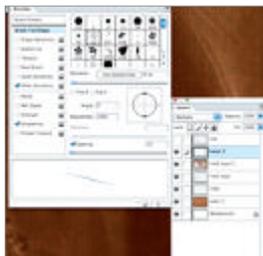


**07 Cast shadows**  
On a new Multiply layer above my line sketch I start blocking in cast shadows on my two figures. I make sure I don't go too dark and try to keep my shadows consistent with a single light source coming from the top left.

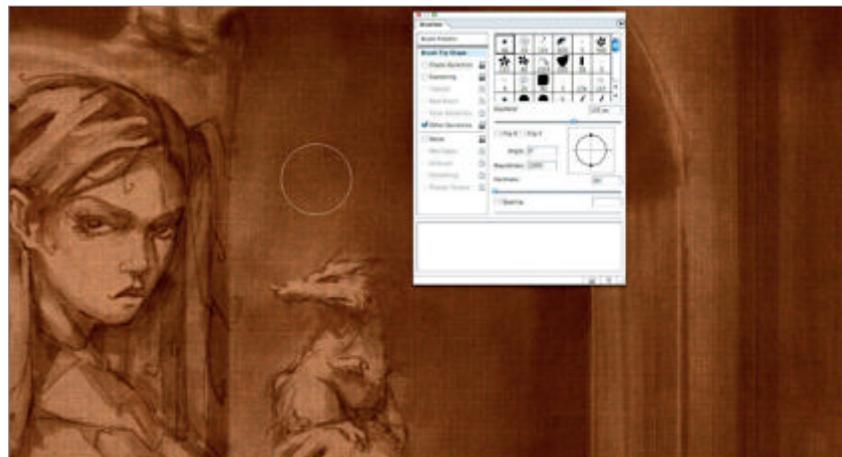


**08 Surroundings** Using a default charcoal brush I work over the image adding shadows and darkening down the surrounding area. My background will be vague and dim so as not to distract the viewer from the figures on the left.

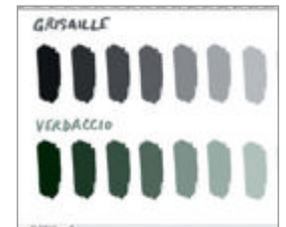
**06 Canvas texture** I now want to add some slight variations in tone and texture. As Painter can be a bit slow when blocking in large areas, I opt for a colour wash in Photoshop. I then overlay a photo of a canvas texture.



**09 Stylised touches**  
Although my figures are drawn with some exaggerated proportions, I want to add a more stylised look to them. Still with the charcoal brush, I exaggerate the hair on both the girl and the rat. I want to create a link between the two characters by way of a similar hairstyle.



**10 Blend and tighten it up** With the Eraser tool I go over the image and remove any rough edges and areas in direct light that have become obscured during the process so far. I then use the Smudge tool to blend some of the larger areas of shadow. For a nicer blend with the Smudge tool I use a soft round brush with Spacing unchecked.



**11 Grisaille palette**  
The grisaille palette is made up of various shades of grey ranging from dark to light. To stick with tradition I make up a palette of nine shades, leaving out pure black and pure white. I then make up the same range with a tint of green. This will act as my verdaccio palette to use for underlying skin tones.

**Style School**  
Artgenres in a nutshell

## What lies beneath

Introducing three masters of underpainting



**Artist:** Adam Elsheimer  
**Image:** Venus and Cupid Circa 1600  
**Owner:** Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, Germany  
● This bruneille value study is done in pen and ink and makes use of hatching and other visible linework to express tonal values. Venetian painters such as Tintoretto and Veronese who created elaborate underpaintings influenced this German artist's warm colour palette and use of midtones.  
[tinyurl.com/DA-Elsheimer](http://tinyurl.com/DA-Elsheimer)



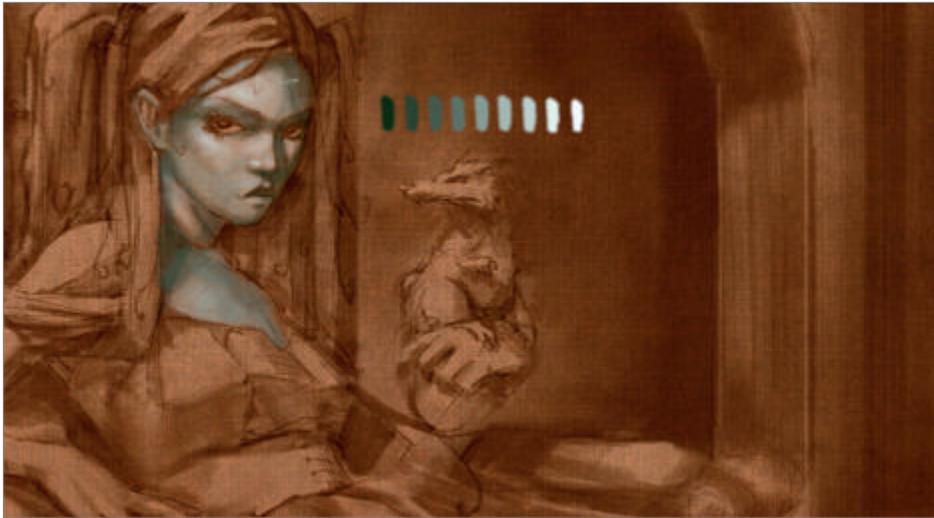
**Artist:** Adriaen van de Venne  
**Image:** Altogether Too Stupid! Mid-17th Century  
**Owner:** Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, France  
● This genre painter of the Dutch Golden Age was famous for his engravings and grisailles of proverbs and popular expressions. This one is a satirical piece showing a peasant woman having her wits sharpened on a pedlar's grindstone. The artist's background in engraving is clearly visible in his use of chiaroscuro.  
[tinyurl.com/DA-Van-De-Venne](http://tinyurl.com/DA-Van-De-Venne)



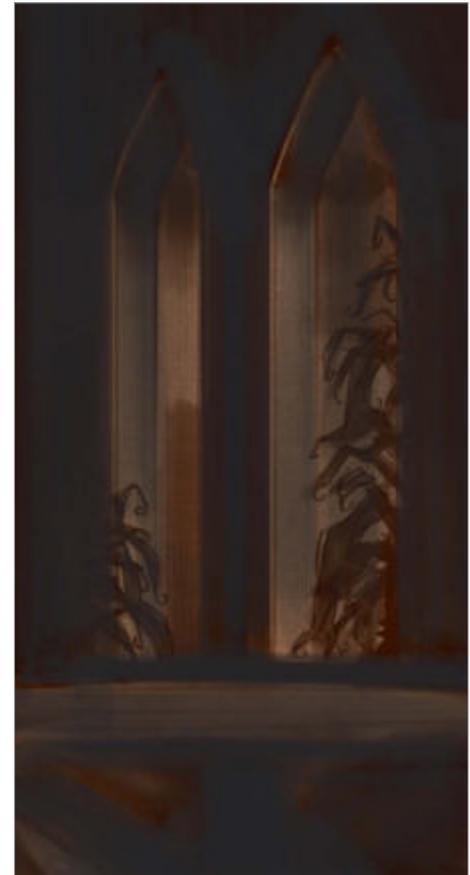
**Artist:** Abraham Pether and Philip Reinagle  
**Image:** Night-Blowing Cereus 1804  
**Owner:** From the book *The Temple of Flora*  
● Abraham Pether created engravings and backgrounds for botanical illustrations like this one of a Cereus flower. Famous as a painter of moonlights, he used a mysterious technique similar to the Dutch Dead Layer style, and probably learned from his patron Wright of Derby, layering up silver gilt and white gypsum to give subsequent glazes a supernatural glow.  
[tinyurl.com/Reinagle-Pether](http://tinyurl.com/Reinagle-Pether)

# Portrait

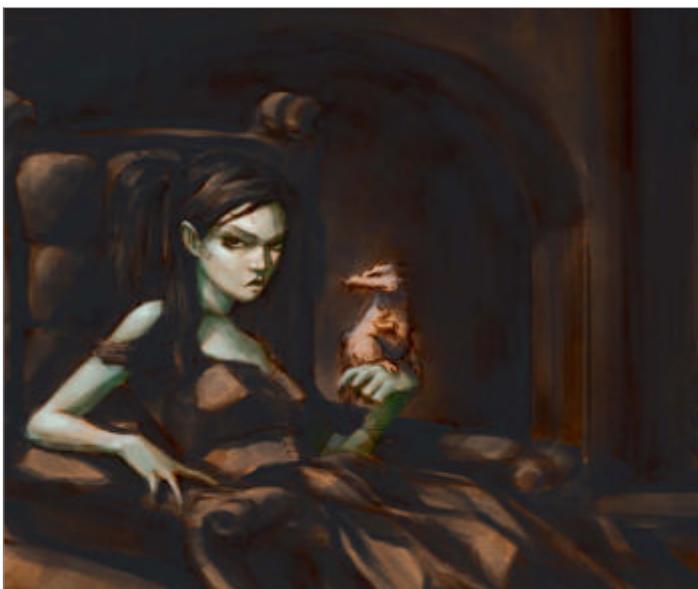
**12 Low opacity paint** I copy my verdaccio tones onto a new layer so I can quickly select them by holding Alt. Using the same default charcoal as before, I lower my brush Opacity to 40% and start to paint lightly over the skin areas.



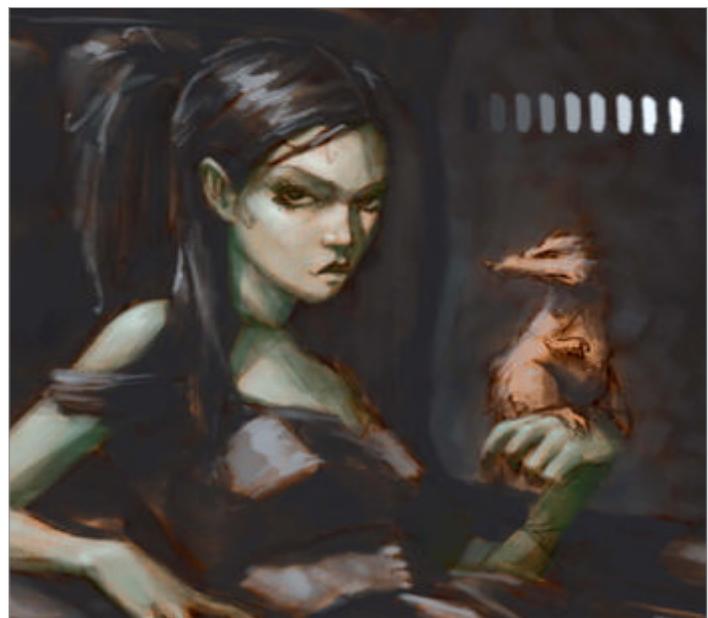
**13 Background wash** I copy my grisaille palette to a new layer and select the darkest tone. With my brush at a fairly large size, I wash over the background to knock it back into shadow. Using vertical strokes on the walls while holding Shift gives a perfectly straight paint stroke that is handy for the background.



**14 Bulk out the shadows** One of the benefits of working digitally is that it's a huge time saver. I've added a layer of paint to most of the image now, but rather than go over it again to bulk out the dark areas, I simply make a duplicate of my underlying brown wash layer. This is done via the drop-down menu on the Layers palette.



**15 Solid shadows** I now zoom out so I can see the entire canvas and use the darkest grey in my palette to block in the areas that are obscured by shadows. I set the brush to 100% Opacity, but outter the pressure of the strokes on my graphics tablet so my shadows retain a slight variation in tone, preventing these areas from looking too flat.



**16 Dark greys** I pick the second darkest grey and paint into the background. Even though this shade of grey is only one along in the palette, when applied next to the darkest areas it defines the forms in the background clearly.

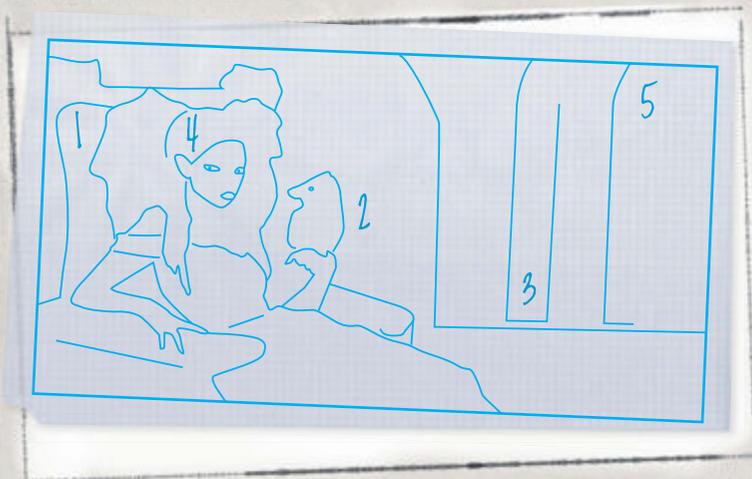


A consistent style element such as hair colour creates a visual link between characters.

Traditional features like the corset and leather chair echo the time period the image is inspired by.

## Grey matter

### Underpainting explained



“The application of light and shadow... is just about the most important thing to get right”

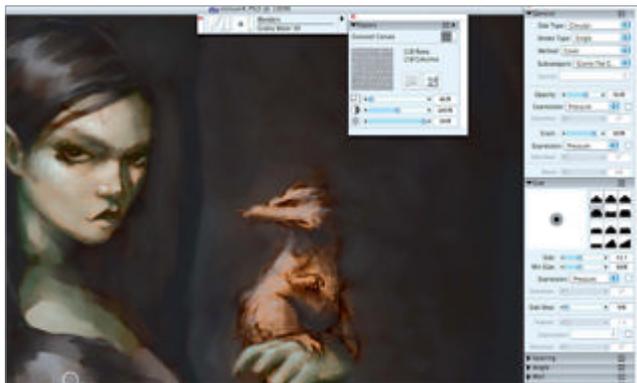
**1 Light source** Using a single light source is a good way to exaggerate facial features. This is also a convenient way to paint as it eliminates many of the complexities that arise when having to paint a subject affected by multiple sources.

**2 Rim light** A subtler secondary light source can help define the edges of figures and objects. The soft light coming from the windows on the right provide an opportunity to add some rim lighting and define the rat's silhouette more clearly.

**3 Vague background elements** For a scene with a figure as the main focus, it is not always necessary to work lots of detail into the surroundings. Working in silhouette with a slight colour wash gives the vague impression of plants in front of the window.

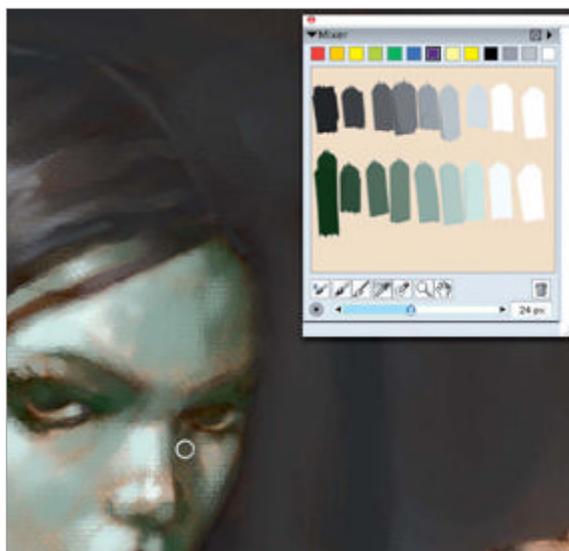
**4 Eyes** Traditional portraits usually show the subject looking directly at the viewer, with the eyes and eyebrows being the facial features most responsible for conveying the subject's emotion. It is therefore worth taking the time to make the eyes bold.

**5 Boost values** When nearing the completion of an image, a good final step is to give the values a boost. Adding a little more strength to the light and shadow can bring a painting to life in the later stages. This is easily done with an Overlay layer.



## 18 Oil brush

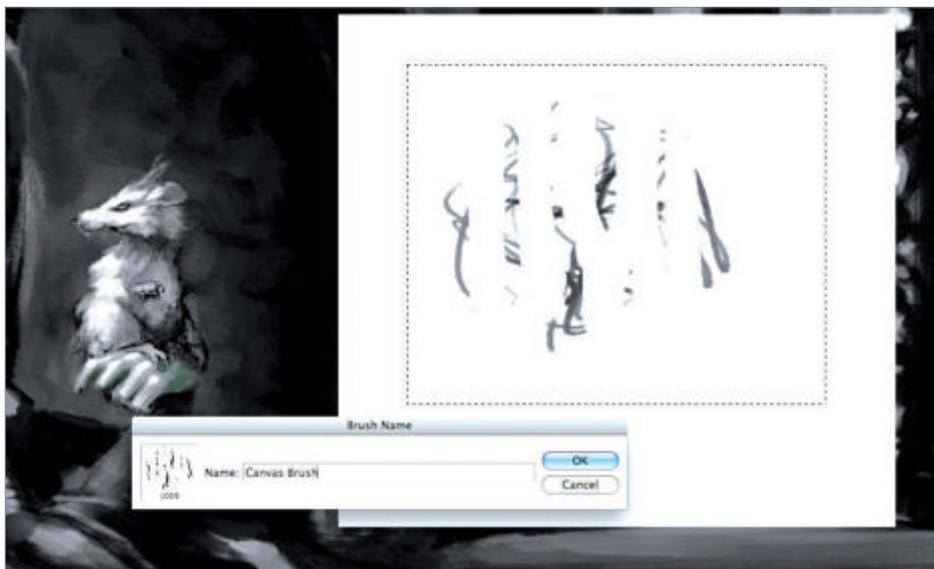
I dab my grisaille and verdaccio tones into the Mixer palette and select the Fine Feathering Oils brush. I make the paper texture the same as for my blender brush, create a custom palette so I can quickly switch between brushes and work on the face.



**17 Into Painter** I flatten all of my layers now to continue in Painter. I pick the Just Add Water blender and, in the Papers palette, choose the Gessoed Canvas paper texture. I adjust the Size slider for this paper so the grain closely matches that of the previous imprimatura layer I created in Photoshop. I then start blending the tones of my image.



**19 Adjustments** After desaturating the background, I zoom out and notice that the image looks a bit wonky in certain areas. Back in Photoshop I use the Lasso tool to select parts to adjust using the Transform function (Ctrl/Cmd+T).



**20 Tidying up** I make a custom brush that will simulate the effect of a coarse paintbrush by sketching dashed lines on a white background and using Edit>Define Brush Preset. In the Brushes palette I go to the Texture options and give my new brush a canvas texture. I then use this to paint over the sharp edges left from the adjustments and blend them in.



**21 Dark edges** Using a very dark grey – almost black – I paint stronger shadows around the edges of the figure to define the form more clearly and create a strong contrast between the dark surroundings and the paleness of the skin.



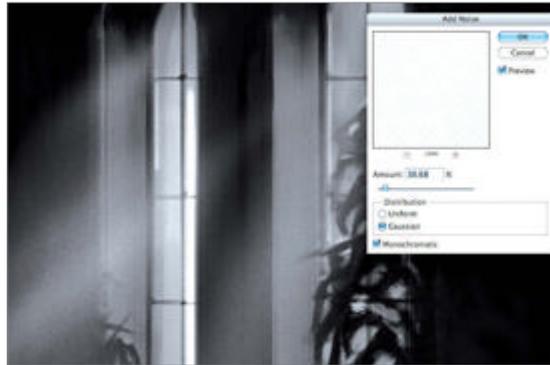
**22 Paint the rat** I turn my attention towards detailing the rat. Using the custom brush I created, I paint in the direction of the fur. This brush is ideal as the individual strands produce a hair-like effect. I switch to the Smudge tool from time to time to soften the focus of certain areas.

## Add the colour Finish your portrait with the digital glaze

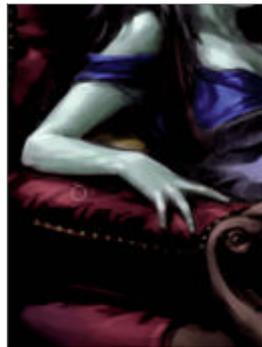
**23 Soften the skin** To soften the skin I use the Smudge tool very lightly, with a spackled brush tip and Spacing disabled. These settings prevent the blending process from being too smooth, but retain the texture. Photoshop has many default brush tips that are also perfect for this.



**24 Hazy light** On a new layer I paint in some shafts of light coming through the windows and then use a Gaussian blur to soften the effect (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur). To add a suggestion of dust particles and a hazy effect, I add some slight monochromatic noise (Filter>Noise>Add noise).



**25 Blending pass** I zoom out so I can see the image as a whole. Using the spackled Smudge tool, I work into areas of the background to soften out the parts that look particularly rough. This stage helps to create the overall look of blended oil paint.



**26 Add colour** For the first colour glaze I create a Multiply layer and block in the base colours to all the elements in the scene. Using darker tones I paint in areas of the background to increase the shadows.

**27 Glazing stage two** When the main blocks of colour are in, I go into more detail with the application. Where areas are darker I use more saturated, warmer tones, and for the lighter areas I use a less saturated colour with a cooler feel. I also introduce additional tonal elements to the figure's hair.

**28 Skin colour** I pick a light pink colour and glaze over the green tinted skin of my figure. Once I have the skin blocked in, I pick a slightly darker and more saturated red and glaze the cheeks, tip of the nose, elbow and knuckles, as these areas of skin naturally tend to be redder in colour.

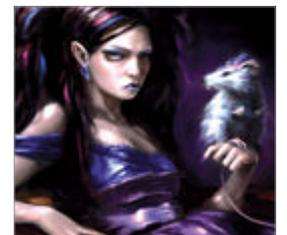


### Painter 12

Using the Artist Surfaces textures from Photoshop's Texture option in the Brushes palette is a quick way to give any brush a more traditional, organic-looking stroke effect. Painter 12 however sports the new Wet Oils brushes. These blend beautifully (they even have a Turps brush!) for realistic oil painting effects.



**29 Opaque details** I flatten my layers once more and grab the canvas textured brush I made earlier on. I tidy up the image where required and also add highlights to the reflective surfaces and elements such as the eyes. Somehow I realise I have overlooked the rat's tail, so I paint one in, then add some rim lighting to edges, coming from the right.



**30 Overlay** To give the light in my image a bit of a boost I create an Overlay layer and use a soft round brush to lightly spray the windows and lightest parts of the scene. I then add some extra highlights where required and, as a final touch, I overlay a slight cracked effect for an oil-painted look.

# Character

From manga to steampunk



- 68 Mythological character art
- 72 Create classic anime characters
- 78 How to paint a steampunk fantasy
- 82 Paint manga
- 86 Metallic paint in ArtRage
- 90 Fantasy character

“You don't need to be a master painter to create beautiful fantasy characters, as these guides will show you”



82



86



**90**  
Paint your  
own fantasy  
warrior from  
scratch



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Carlyn Beccia

Personal portfolio site  
[www.carlynbeccia.com](http://www.carlynbeccia.com)  
Country **US**

Software used **Painter**  
Carlyn Beccia is an award-winning children's-book author and illustrator. A self-professed history geek, her illustrations reflect her love for travel and cultural history. Her latest book, *Digital Painting for the Complete Beginner*, was released in April 2012.



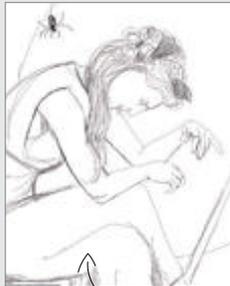
**Source files available**

Sketch

# Mythological character art

## Working Progress

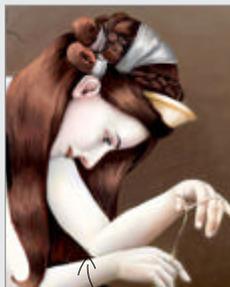
Re-create a scene from ancient myths



Step 01, One sketch down



Step 04, Paint the midtones



Step 09, Paint hair



Step 12, Decorative details

## Madame Scandal 2012 Painter

Get to grips with Painter's tools to build a mythological portrait in Sargent's artistic style  
**Carlyn Beccia** Children's author, illustrator



**When we paint a mythological subject, it's always worth looking back at the work of other artists who have approached it.** John Singer

Sargent was an Edwardian painter who adored mythological subjects. Sargent's unique painting style inspired the creation of Painter's Sargent brush, so in this tutorial I will aim to evoke the painting techniques he used, working with this brush and a muted palette to depict a character and story.

As an ode to Sargent, I have chosen a subject he loved: Greek myth. My painting is of Arachne, who bragged of her weaving talents to the gods before Athene turned her into a spider in punishment for her hubris. As well as being guided by subject, I am going to take Sargent's influence further, drawing from his most famous piece, Madame X, for aesthetic inspiration. This became Sargent's most controversial painting and depicts a beautiful young

woman with luminous pale skin starkly contrasted against a dark backdrop. The story goes that in May of 1884 Mme Avegno burst unannounced into Sargent's cluttered studio apartment. Catching the twenty-eight-year old artist off guard, she let loose a tirade: "All Paris is making fun of my daughter. She is ruined", and demanded that he remove the young woman's portrait from the Paris Salon art show.

Always uncomfortable around women, the young artist suddenly found the courage to defend his painting. "Nothing said about Madame Gautreau at the Salon was any worse than what the fashionable world had said of her already." And he had a point. A long-time target of scandal sheets, Virginie Amelie Avegno Gautreau was no wallflower. As a celebrated socialite, Sargent pursued her for over a year trying to get his "unpaintable beauty" to sit for him. The resulting portrait with its anonymous title now resides in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



## Initial sketches

Get your linework and tones down



**02 Value study** Before painting Madame X, Sargent studied Japanese prints and was most likely influenced by them. To create the flat planes of colour found in these, I reduce my sketch to simple black and white shapes in the program. This step forces me to see which areas should recede and which should come forward.



## 03 Mixing a Sargent palette

Sargent started his painting with a palette of lead white, rose madder, vermilion and bone black. To create a similar palette, open up Painter's Mixer Palette, select the Apply Color tool (A) and create a string of warm tones. Mix with the Mixer Brush (B) and pick up colour with the Sample Color tool (C).

**01 One sketch down** Sargent is said to have done 100 sketches before he began a piece, but I just do a few quick ones and decide which captures my story's essence. I then scan my sketch into Painter.



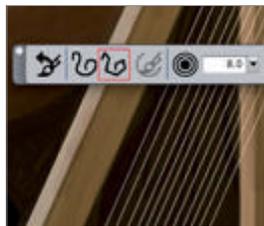
## Build the tones

Adapt brush settings and refine your colours



**04 Paint the midtones** Sargent believed that artists should get their midtones correct and then build up the shadows and highlights, and always began his midtones in a greyish colour study. In Painter I selected the Sargent brush from the Artists category and laid down thick strokes of paint.

**05 Keep it straight** Sargent advised to get "your lines precisely at their relative angles." The straight diagonal lines of the loom are an important part of the narrative as well as a compositional device to frame the portrait. To paint with straight lines, I selected the Straight Lines Stroke tool.



**06 Background boost** Sargent always knew which parts of his painting to bring into sharper focus. For the moon, I needed a softer gradual blending and not the sharp strokes of the Sargent brush. I selected the Real Flat Oils brush found under the Oils category and increased the bleed to 50%.



**07 Alabaster skin** One of Madame X's most striking features is her smooth, pale, statue-like skin. To apply paint in thinner glazes, I customise the Sargent brush to apply paint at a lower opacity and build it up.



**08 Add colour** With my midtones in place, it is time to build colour into my value study. I add another layer to Painter and set its mode to Color. I then select shades of rose, bluish purple and yellow ochre, and painted into the skin. I keep each wash of colour on its own layer so I can lower its opacity. I remember to keep the thinnest area of the skin such as the eyes and around the mouth the bluest in tone.



**09 Paint hair** Sargent was a master at painting hair, so let the broad shapes of colour suggest the hair instead of painting each strand. At this point, I realised it was falling wrong and wasn't communicating her sadness. I painted in more and draped it dramatically around her face, paying careful attention to where the light would hit.

**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell!

## Sargent's Madame X

The work, the woman and the artist that inspired him

**Artist:** John Singer Sargent

**Image:** Madame X 1883-4

**Owner:** Metropolitan Museum of Art

● Sargent's powdered, defiant beauty in cameo-like profile was painted with one strap falling from her shoulder. He later repainted Gautreau's fallen strap and kept the portrait until 1917 when he sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for £1,000. He requested the sitter remain anonymous and that the painting be known as Madame X. Mme Gautreau died that same year.

[tinyurl.com/da-madamex](http://tinyurl.com/da-madamex)



**Artist:** Antonio de La Gandara

**Image:** Portrait of Mme Pierre Gautreau 1898

**Owner:** Unknown

● Mme Avegno's predictions of her daughter's ruin proved false. On the contrary, Mme Gautreau went on to become a highly sought-after subject for artists such as Gustave Courtois, Mademoiselle Lucie Chatillon, and Antonio de La Gandara. We still do not know what she looked like in frontal view; every subsequent artist chose to paint her in profile.

[tinyurl.com/da-gandara](http://tinyurl.com/da-gandara)



**Artist:** Diego Velázquez

**Image:** Portrait of Juan Pareja 1650

**Owner:** Metropolitan Museum of Art

● We are taught at a young age not to copy other artist's art, but even Sargent learned by copying Velázquez's paintings. Copying a famous painting can increase your own awareness of colour, lighting techniques and composition.

[tinyurl.com/da-velazquez](http://tinyurl.com/da-velazquez)

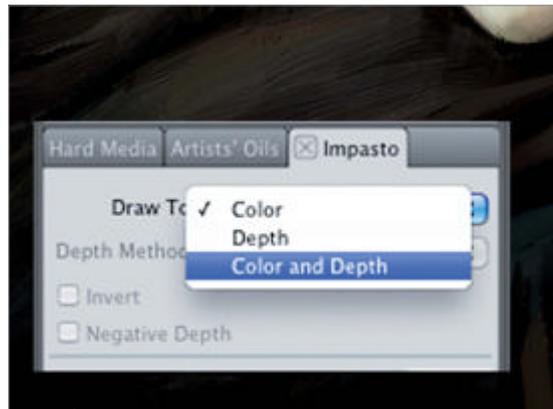
**10 Zoom out** Sargent would move back and forth from canvas to sitter to reassess his painting (so many times that he wore a path along his carpet). In digital painting, I often forget to zoom out. When I zoomed out, I realised that the hair needed to be brighter and the background needed to be darker to make a sharper contrast with her pale skin.



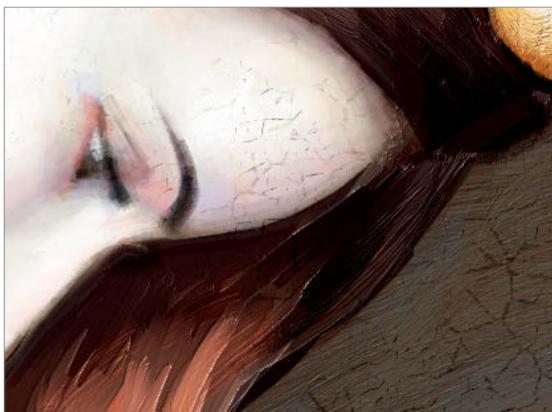
**11 Clothes that move** Sargent used very long, quick brushstrokes that gave a spontaneous feel to his sitter's clothing and a sense of movement. To create the same variance in brushstroke, I selected the Sargent brush and increased the Jitter settings.



**12 Decorative details** Now I needed to make the decorative pattern on her chair look less more embedded. I selected the Detail Oil brush found in the Oils Brush category and painted over the pattern to make it look more like a wood-relief carving.



**13 Add weight to paint** In the later stages of his painting, Sargent built up thick paint with very little medium. To create impasto effects, I selected the Real Flat Oils brush found under the Oils category and, in the Impasto settings (Window>Brush Control Panel>Impasto), changed its Draw To method to Color and Depth.



**14 Canvas texture** The impasto effects can sometimes remove too much of the canvas texture. To bring some back, I selected the Square Hard Pastel brush from the Pastel Brush category and set the grain to less than 10%. I then selected different relief papers from Painter's Paper Library (Window>Paper Panels>Paper) and painted on a separate layer to add texture back in.

**15 Ode to Sargent** Finally, I selected Sargent's painting, Orestes Pursued by the Furies, and dragged it on top of Arachne's unfinished tapestry. I then selected the Transform tool (hidden underneath the Layer Adjuster tool) and, in the Property bar, selected the Distort option. I dragged the corner handles until it matched the angle of her tapestry and hit Enter.

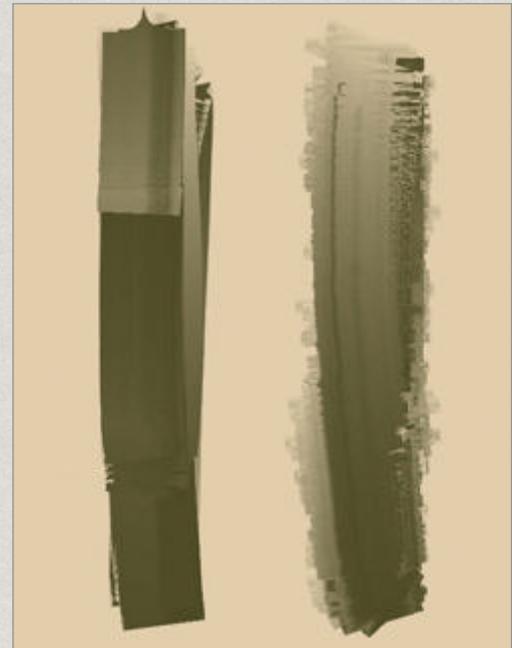


## Brush options

Get to grips with the settings and variants of this piece's essential tool

### Understand the Sargent Brush

Sargent painted very quickly using thick brushes loaded with paint. The Sargent brush applies paint in a similar way by putting down heavy layers of colour with a little trail at the end to give it the look of paint applied quickly. You can change the shape of this trail by changing the Dab Profile (Window>Brush Control Panel>Dab Profile). To add more variance in this trail and the appearance of scraped paint, increase the Jitter. I prefer to keep the Grain at 100% to keep the paint thick.



### Customise the Sargent brush

To paint in glazes, I created a thinner version of the Sargent brush. I changed the Stroke Method to Cover and the Subcategory to Softcover. In the Property bar, I set the Resaturation and Bleed to 100%, and kept the Jitter at 0. I then saved this variant by selecting Save Variant from the Painter Brushes drop-down menu.



### Underlying colour

The Sargent brush uses the underlying paint and mixes it with your chosen colour. Because of this feature, you must paint on either the canvas layer or a layer containing paint. If there is nothing on the layer (or if it is transparent) then you will not see any colour being applied.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



### Schin Loong

Personal portfolio site  
[schin-art.com](http://schin-art.com)

Country **Malaysia**  
Software used **Painter,**  
**Photoshop**

I secretly want to dress up as a magical girl and go beat up bad guys every night, but I just end up painting stuff. One day my time will come.

# Create classic anime characters

 **Source files available**  
Line art

## Working Progress

Build a narrative with colour and expression



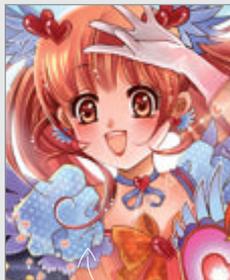
Step 01, Put on your best face



Step 03, Clean and prep



Step 05, Colour the clothes



Step 08, Sparkles

## Magical Heart 2011 Painter, Photoshop

Inject some real personality into your art and harness the fun, magical elements of the anime style

Schin Loong Fantasy illustrator, graphic artist



**Anyone who knows anime knows something about the three stock characters.** First off,

there's the cute, magical girl, the secret alter ego to an ordinary schoolgirl who stumbled into her vigilante life by a chance encounter. Second is her fluffy sidekick, a cute creature who has come to protect, help and guide the magical girl to deliver justice and find her one true love. And that just happens to be our third character, the hero, who finds himself intrigued by this cute newcomer despite his cool persona.

Magical girls are very popular with teenagers who dream of love, loyalty and friends, and it's easy to project themselves into a fantasy land where all this comes true. Colours should be brighter and more saturated to signify cheerfulness, sparkles should be everywhere, the hero should be handsome and suave, and, of course, hairstyles and costumes should be amazingly elaborate.

It's the perfect time to exercise your imagination and practise character design. The classic magical girl has a costume that is extra special for when she transforms from her real-life persona, and this costume can be anything you want, but typical designs have elaborate styles with a fantasy edge such as wings, boots and, of course, ribbons. Not forgetting the all-important wand or sceptre!

Her theme should extend to her newfound sidekick who is presumably from the same fantasy land she is, so keep their styles matching. Her sidekick should be cute and energetic and could be modelled after a real animal such as a rabbit or cat, or you can go wild and create something entirely new. Finally, the hero should be a little different from the magical girl. His personality should be more mature, perhaps more clever and commanding, and he would definitely prefer darker clothes that fit his well-built abs instead of elaborate costumes. Let's start the adventure...

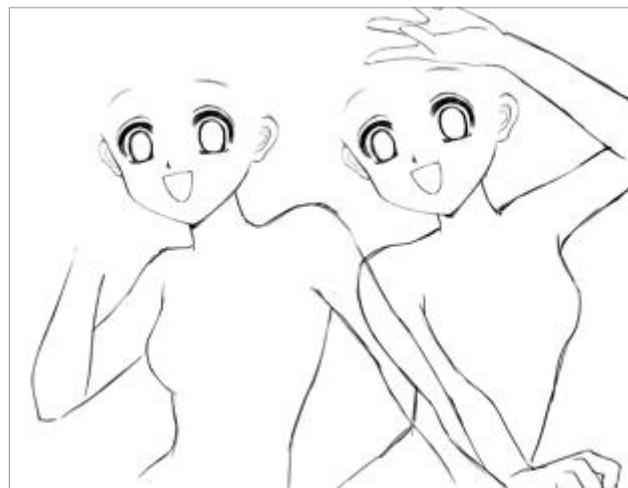


## Begin in simple style

Sketch the basics for three distinct personalities



**02 Put on your best face** Manga faces are simple but very expressive, so start by sketching out the girl. The secret is to keep everything symmetrical and cute-looking. Try different poses for her based on the thumbnails in the previous step. Just experiment!



**03 Begin the handsome hero** With her basic pose down, sketch out the hero and try to get his pose to complement hers. His expression should be more mature to reinforce his role as the clever and commanding one.

**01 Thumbnail poses**

First off, sketch out a few composition ideas. Keep it simple and brainstorm. Try to get the composition flowing with energy and movement, as magical girls are very active!



## Perfect the line art

Get your sketch ready for digital painting

**04 Magical costume** Here's the fun part, her magical girl costume! Think super fantasy cute. My heroine's magic symbol is a winged heart and the theme is carried on with ribbons, hearts and wings. I also gave her cute cat ears and ponytails to reinforce her fun nature.

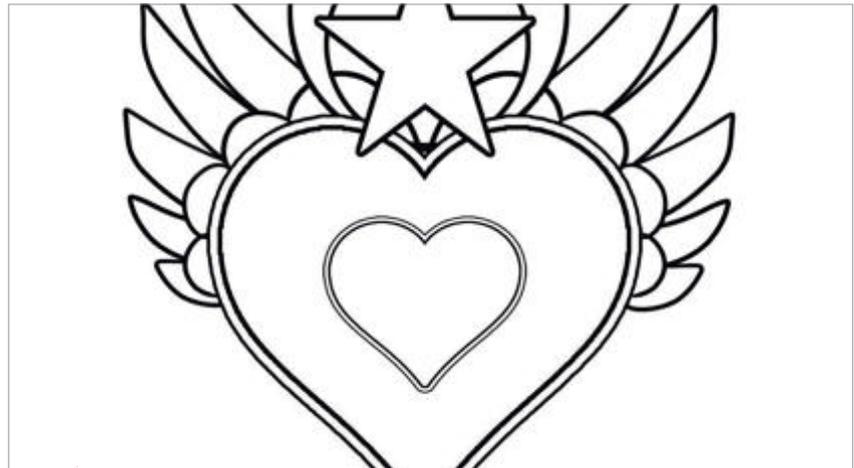


**05 Refine and tweak the figure**

Add more detail to her clothes and refine the lines. I didn't like how her legs looked so I edited them using the Transform tools in Photoshop and gave her some cute boots as well. We're still at the experimental line art stage, so fix whatever doesn't look right.



**06 New species** Every magical girl should have a cute, cuddly and loyal sidekick. I made mine a bunny-dog hybrid. Don't forget to sketch in the wand at this point. Look up royal sceptres for ideas and then incorporate her heart symbol.



**07 Design a powerful symbol** In a separate file, design the wand on a flat perspective so that it will be easier to manipulate. Without making it too elaborate, I added wings, a star and some fittings to keep it important and appropriately magical.

### Know your PS tools

Use Photoshop to really maximise your painting's potential. The filters, layer styles and blending modes are there to help you achieve the final look you want, so learn the ins and outs of your tools. For this painting I used different blending modes and layer effects such as Color Dodge, Overlay and Outer Glow to really bring out the glimmer in this painting. Start with a basic colour and then go wild and see what final outcomes can be achieved with experimentation.



**08 Clean and prep** Now the boring part, cleaning up. On a separate layer, very slowly clean up all the debris and create the line art to work on. Last-minute changes are made here and every line should be neat and free-flowing.

**09 Complete and colour the line art** Add a few more last-minute additions to the line art like hair strands and ribbons. Now, using the Hue/Saturation command in Photoshop, make the colour of the actual lines a little lighter so it is less harsh. I decided to go for a neutral light brown.

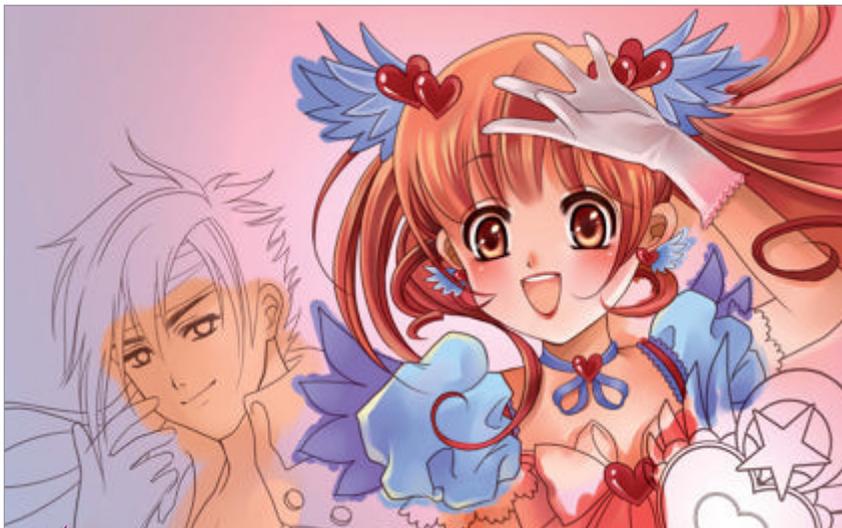


**10 Set the mood with gradients**

Change the line art layer to Multiply, then start with a colour gradient on a separate one underneath. This should reflect the overall mood you want to set for the painting. True to the magical girl heart theme, I chose a mix of sweet pastel pinks and blue.



**11 Blend skin tones** I like to start with the skin tone and face, and I also fill out her hair at this stage so it sets the theme colour. It is pink, of course. I gave her sparkly eyes and the all-important pink blush. The colouring should be clean and well-blended to contribute to her soft, young appearance.



**12 Develop the hair** Keep developing the hair with thin streaks and gradients so it looks fresh and clean. Keeping within the same colour theme, start on the other parts of her dress.



**13 Colour the clothes** Be careful with the colours here, making sure they are clean and not muddy. I gave her a red skirt with cute orange trim to make her really pop out of the picture. Oh, and did you notice the cute hearts in her eyes?

**14 Happy tones** Now for her cuddly pal. I picked green tones to pick out the colours in the other two characters. Blend it very well so it looks clean and cute, and add small, simple details.



## Evolution of a manga face

From the sketching stage to the final kawaii colours



**01 Line art** Sketch a basic face. The eyes should be large and symmetrical and the nose very small. Don't be afraid to use Photoshop to adjust if needed.



**02 Cleanup** On a separate layer, trace over the sketch to create cleaner lines. Take your time with every line, and if it's not perfect just go back and redo it.



**03 First colours** Use a gradient to colour the face. A little blush adds to the cuteness and lip colour defines the mouth. A few highlights give the eyes sparkle.



**04 Enhance the cute** Stars on her cheeks and hearts in her eyes add a super cute element. White lines define her hair and a glow gives an ethereal look.



## Colour, blend and highlight

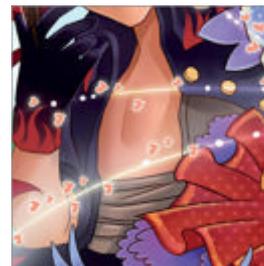
Finalise the tones and paint a background

**15 Heroic colour scheme** The hero should be simpler than the magical girl. His colours are darker but still fantasy-looking. To contrast him from the others, I gave him a dark purple tonal theme with flashy red flames for a bit of danger.



**16 Finish up the basic colours** Make the wand bright and cheerful and make sure the colours pop out against the background. Clean up any other debris at this stage too.

**17 Set the scene** Using the background gradient layer, create an environment for them to be in. A forest is ideal, as it will look like they're out on an adventure. The clouds add to the scene, depicting a sunny day. The perfect setting for some magical shenanigans!



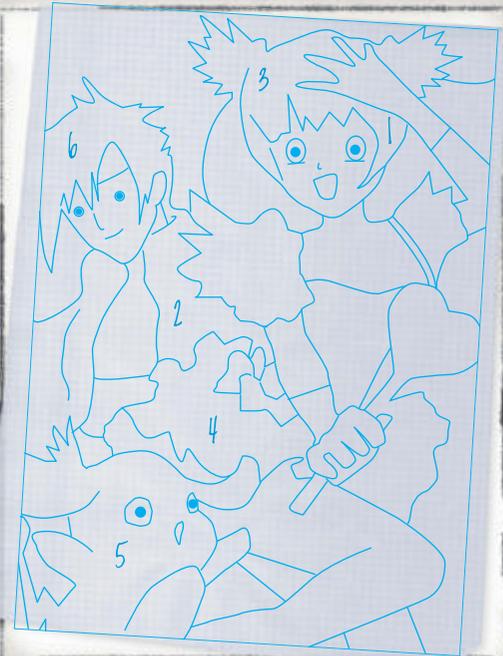
**18 Sparkles** Now for some magic. Create some sparkles and graphical special effects to generate movement. I added white dots for freshness as well as texture on her clothes. Use layer effects such as Color Dodge and Overlay to create the magical look.

**19 Little details**

I added more little details in her hair and adjusted the colours, giving some glow to her and the sidekick. Every little detail counts at this point so keep refining as needed. I also tweaked the composition slightly to make it look a touch more dynamic.



**20 The magical finish** I made some final colour tweaks to really brighten the piece up. Once everything looks right, flatten the layers, sign it and spread the love.



## Anime made easy

### Key tips for an energetic scene

**1 A happy face** The face is the first thing the viewer will see, so it is important to get the expression right. Anime faces should be simple with huge eyes, tiny noses and an expressive mouth. Keep the colours simple and clean, and add highlights.

**2 Experiment with your tools** Photoshop is your friend, so utilise all its tools including layer styles and blending modes. I drew simple lines and hearts, but added Outer Glow to get a magical effect through the composition.

**3 Less is more** Hair can be tough to paint, but the trick is to paint it in clumps to begin with. Start with a flat colour then gently add areas of different tones with highlights and detail. Remember to keep everything neat, flowing and natural.

**4 Magical costumes** Little details in a character's costume make a big difference. Trimmings and patterns can add to their personality and tell you more about them. Polka dots add a cute feel and lace edges suggest innocence.

**5 Expressive eyes** The eyes are so important in anime (that's why they're so big!), so the colours should be saturated. You can even add cute little graphics like hearts and stars in the iris for highlights, just don't over clutter it.

**6 Male features** Subtle changes in angles and shapes can suggest a more masculine face. The hero has considerably smaller eyes to signify maturity, a longer nose, sharper jawline and thicker eyebrows as well.

# How to paint a steampunk fantasy

## Working Progress

Create a Victorian scene with a twist



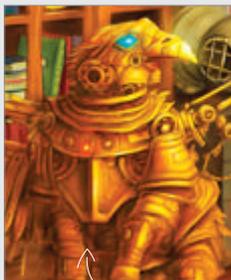
Step 03, Incorporate objects



Step 05, The robots



Step 10, Time for a step back



Step 13, Define with colour

## No Goggles 2012 Painter

“The aim of this tutorial is to create a fantasy steampunk piece complete with quirky robots”

**John Malcolm** Freelance digital illustrator

 **Source files available**

Creative Pack

 **There are probably as many kinds of steampunk as there are people who like this genre of science-fiction fantasy.** To some people it means books, to others it may mean costumes (complete with obligatory brass goggles).

I associate it with books and comics I read when I was young, as well as more recent books and even films. I think my favourite book in this genre is *The Warlord Of The Air* by Michael Moorcock. I first heard the name in connection with the novel *The Difference Engine* by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, another classic, but the grandfathers of steampunk are undoubtedly HG Wells and Jules Verne, and there were even a great number of books written in that genre before the phrase was coined.

It can be, and is, all of the things above, but at its heart it's a genre that portrays Victorian-era technology as capable of doing things that in history took a lot longer

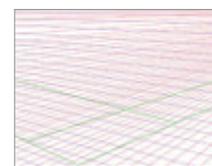
such as huge airships, flying machines, computing devices or even things that still don't exist like HG Wells's famous time travelling machine.

It's a lovely genre to create art for. You are limited only by what your imagination can come up with, yet you can still retain all the benefits of it being based in a historical or alternative history setting, such as researching costumes, hairstyles, architecture or the various clever things that were discovered or invented by the Victorians.

Corel Painter 12 is my program of choice when it comes to digital painting and almost all of its brush categories could be used in a steampunk painting. You might want the end result to look like a period oil or watercolour painting, for example. I'm going to be a wee bit unadventurous, though, and stick to my favourite brushes: the Real 2B Pencil, the Just Add Water Blender and Rob's Basic (downloadable at [tiny.cc/robsbrushes](http://tiny.cc/robsbrushes)).

## Sketch out the scene

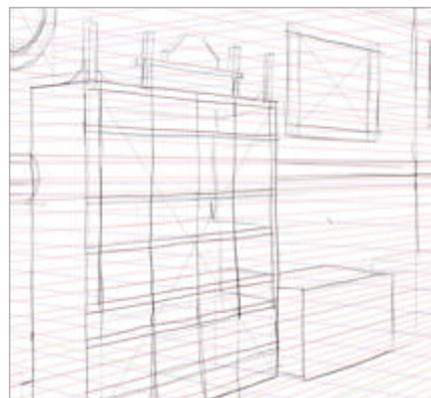
### Begin your image in Painter



### 01 Start with things in perspective

I created a canvas wider than needed and marked vanishing points for two-point perspective. To draw the grid I picked the Scratchboard tool. I hit V to draw straight lines. After completing each line I tapped V again to begin a new one then cropped my image.

**02 Time to draw** Switching to Pencils>Real 2B Pencil, I started drawing simple shapes on a new layer. When I had the basics there, I reduced the opacity of this layer and began work on a new one. This was my process throughout the drawing stage. Each new layer refines the shapes and more detail is added.



**03 Incorporate objects** I began to add more objects to my scene, books on the bookshelves, shipping trunks and an old-fashioned diver's helmet. I had made a group for my perspective layers (Ctrl/Cmd+G) to enable me to turn them all on or off at once, which helped at this stage as I was relying on them less.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### John Malcolm

Personal portfolio site  
[johnmalcolm1970.co.uk](http://johnmalcolm1970.co.uk)  
Country UK

Software used **Painter, Photoshop, ArtRage**

Although working full-time for a local newspaper group, John has found his free time increasingly being taken up with digital art.



## Block in colour and refine tones

Use pencils and blenders to build up detail

**04 The heroine** I'm better at drawing grotesque monsters than attractive women, so I used a photo reference image to begin work on my heroine. I researched Victorian hairstyles and hats, and decided that I'd have to adapt the model's hair from the original photo slightly. As I'm not giving her the traditional goggles, I had to at least give her a hat.



**05 The robots** I complete the drawing stage by doing the robots. One of the heroine's companion robots is a griffin, so I give her a falconry-style glove for holding him. With robots it's easy to add lots of suggested detail – rivets, panels, screws, lights or whatever else you can think of.

**06 Time for some colour** I created two new layers beneath the line art. The bottom one was filled with a neutral grey and, on the layer just beneath the pencil, I added colour with the pencil. I wasn't interested in shadows or highlights – just the flat tones.

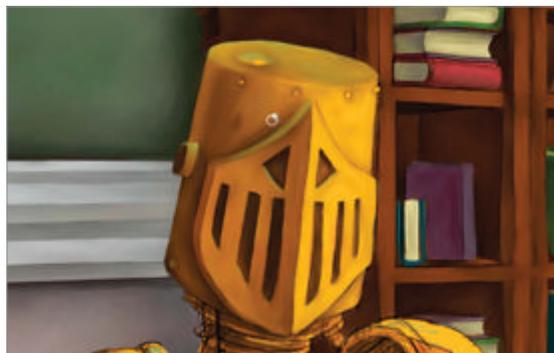


**07 More pencils** I started a new layer, still working beneath the line drawing. I go over the whole image adding darker, shadowed areas. For this I use the Real 2B Pencil again. It's a strange tool to be painting with, but I like how intuitive it is. I make fine lines with it but can also slowly build up areas using a style of mark making akin to crosshatching.



### Dip into older files

It can be a very good idea to hang on to layered versions of older paintings. You can then reuse elements instead of having to reproduce them from scratch. I was stumped for ideas about what the wallpaper in this image could be like. I had a rummage through some older stuff and turned up a paisley pattern skull I'd created before that was perfect for the job.



**08 Blending** With the whole canvas given the same treatment, it was time to start blending. I used two of Painter's blenders: Just Add Water and Real Pointy Blender. I always blend on fresh layers with Pick Up Underlying Color checked. For general blending I use light, circular movements but to keep edges sharp where I need them I use heavy strokes parallel to the edge.

**09 The belt** In this step you can see a close-up of an area I was working on before, and during, blending. On the left are the kind of marks I make with my pencil. Much of the work thereafter is done with the blender – I use it in a fairly heavy manner sometimes to push pixels around.



**10 Time for a step back** I repeated steps 8 and 9 many times until I felt my image was almost done – there were a few small tweaks and edits I wanted to make. It's very easy to get tunnel vision when working so it's always a good idea to seek someone else's opinion.

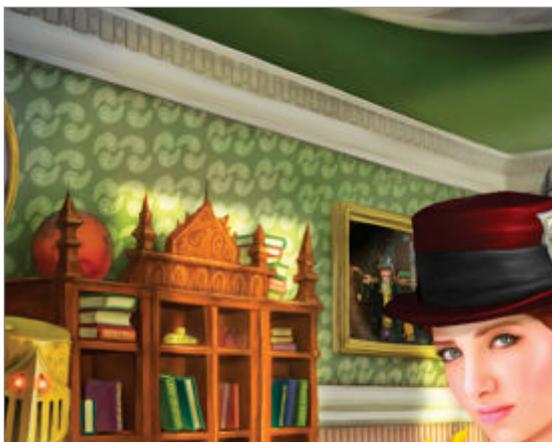
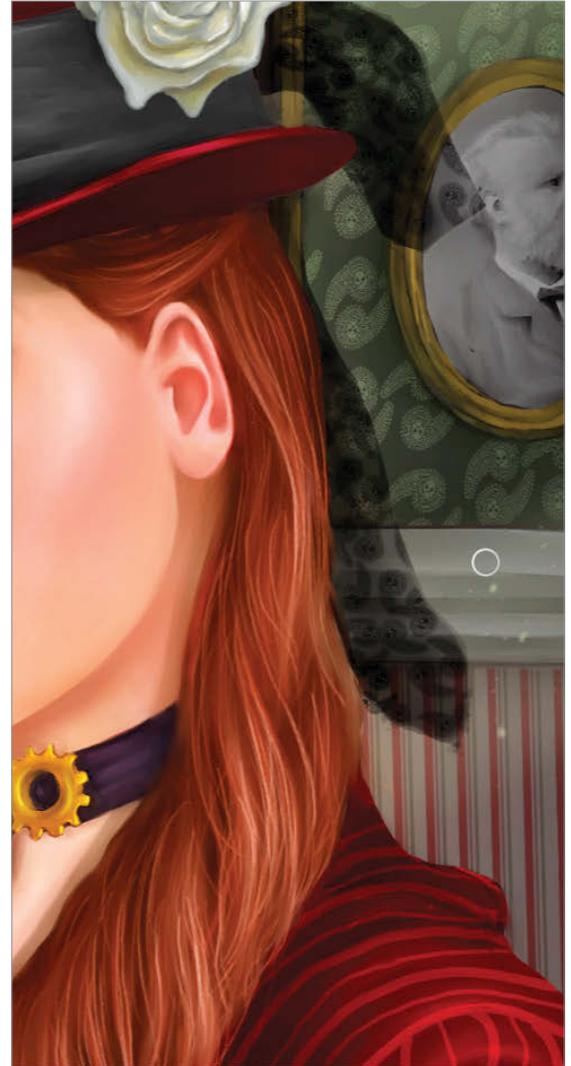


**12 The dress** Instead of the rather dull purple colour I'd gone with originally, I used a deep, red-wine hue. This was also set as an Overlay Layer. I then added some extra detail to it in stripes of a lighter colour.

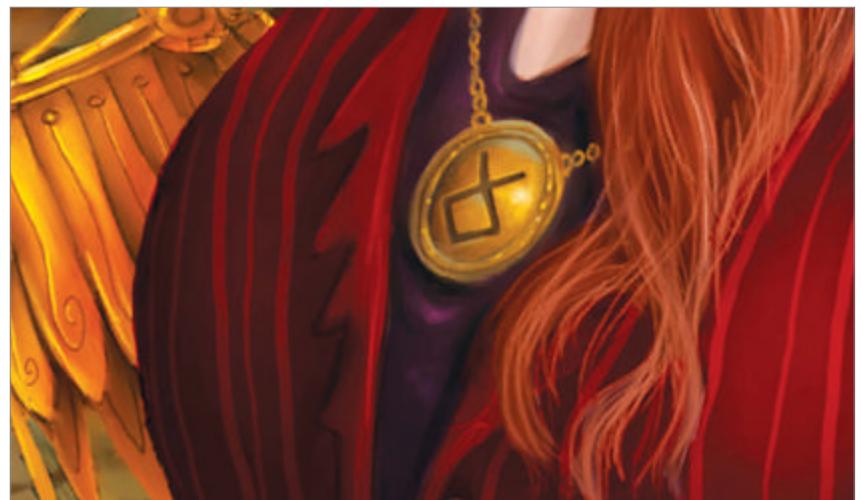


**13 Define with colour** The two robots were overlapping and had some very similar tones and colours, so I aimed to suggest a separation between them, pushing the larger robot back by reducing his saturation and shifting the colours in a cooler direction. The griffin robot could then be brightened up a bit – especially his wing tips.

**11 Complexion** Even after researching Victorian clothing and hats, I'd forgotten that Victorian women didn't tend to have suntans. I had also drifted fairly far off my reference. I cut and pasted the original face into my image, painted on top of that and blended with Just Add Water.



**14 Lighting and light beams** The whole background was still rather flat. I added more shadows to it, helping to knock it back a bit. To add more interest I included some beams of light and brightened up areas where they hit the background. I made selections, used the Digital Airbrush, reduced the opacity and played with layer blending modes.



**15 Pendant detail** This was the stage for roaming about the image looking for things I'd missed. The pendant around the heroine's neck had been neglected, so I added some detail to that. The changes in the last five steps took a while to make, but this just shows the importance of taking the time to make small adjustments for the overall effect.

# Paint manga

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Choo Kah Chun**

Personal portfolio site  
[kaizeru.deviantart.com](http://kaizeru.deviantart.com)

Country **Malaysia**

Software used **Photoshop CS2 and PaintTool SAI**

I'm a strong believer in diligence. I prefer to work with a varied portfolio and so I try not to limit myself to manga, choosing to explore different styles, drawing inspiration from many movements and artists.

## P-Pa-Panda 2010 Photoshop CS2 and PaintTool SAI

“Details are not everything. A simple-looking painting can also look great with the proper methods”

**Choo Kah Chun** Illustrator



**The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about the word 'manga' is the generic perception of characters drawn with the weird facial proportions of big eyes, small noses and small mouths.**

Even so, it seems to have a law of attraction attached to it that overloads you with its cuteness and appeal so you just find it hard to resist. The style itself is still constantly evolving and becoming more refined over the passage of time and more artists are discovering that the generic look is not the only way to do it.

Originally, the term manga was coined in Japan and is widely used to refer to Japanese comics. Over the years it has gained substantial popularity and has greatly influenced styles like Korea's manhwa, Taiwan's manhua and to some extent how many current day comics are drawn. Today, the term is more popularly used to identify a style that artists

draw in. Let us begin the tutorial on how I created this original piece of illustration, drawn in a fun manga style.

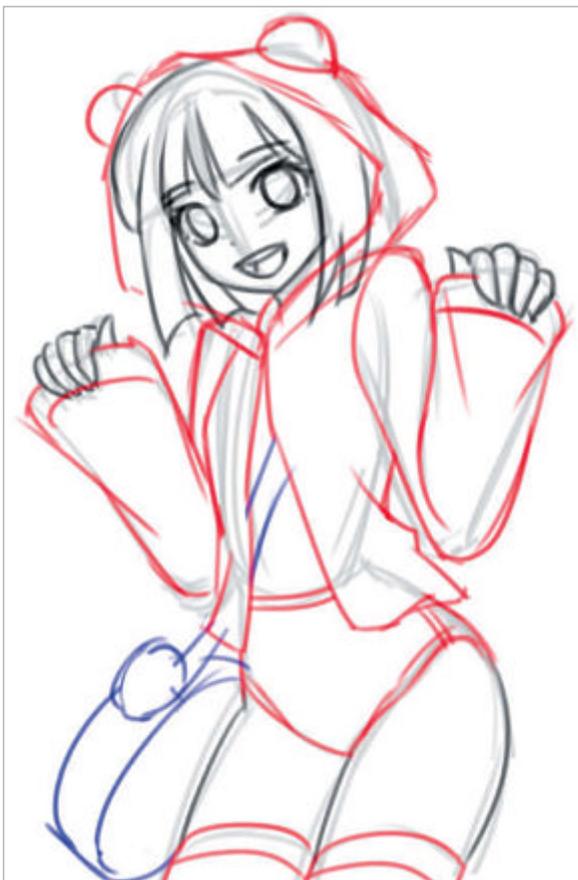
Before starting on any new artwork, I usually do a few thumbnail sketches to help me decide what I really want. Sometimes, when I'm already pretty sure of what I want, I just jump straight in and start roughing out the illustration. This was the case for the image P-Pa-Panda, but stick to however you work best. I carry out the initial stages on a small canvas fitting the screen at its full size, enlarging it gradually to add in more details depending on the need of the piece.



**Guidelines** I begin by drawing a set of sketched guidelines. Keeping to simple shapes, I want to get the character elements and pose down.

Putting down guidelines before drawing might seem tedious but it is a very important step that should not be overlooked. It doesn't have to be complicated, just make use of very basic shapes like ovals, squares, triangles and maybe some lines to show the perspective. Getting it right at the earlier stages would really help save a lot of time and hassle trying to fix it later. When I'm satisfied with the foundation, I move on to sketching out the details. Whilst working on the draft, I will often flip the canvas horizontally to do a check on the proportions which might look correct on one side, but not on the other, so this is a good trick to make sure.

Once I'm done with the draft, I enlarge the image to about 4000 pixels for the wider side while retaining 300dpi resolution from the previous steps and save it as a new PSD file. Don't hesitate to save multiple files for back-up purposes in case any files accidentally get corrupted along the way and you risk losing those



**Draft outline** I lower the opacity of the guidelines and make new layers above them to rough out the draft using different colours on different layers to avoid clashing.



## Artist showcase

More manga artwork from Choo Kah Chun



**Art Nouveau Princess**  
2009, Photoshop CS2/PaintTool SAI  
● I'm an avid fan of Vocaloid Hatsune Miku and Alphonse Mucha's Art Nouveau style. I decided to draw something combining what I love and came up with my own take on it.



**Look in the Mirror**  
2009, Photoshop CS2/PaintTool SAI  
● This was an entry for one of Wacom's contests and the concept was about looking into the mirror to find evil lurking within. I usually enjoy painting my works in this dark, unsettling style.



**Shaman of Peace**  
2010, PaintTool SAI  
● This illustration was an experimental painting using a line-less style that was featured in the book *Otacool 4*. I was trying to portray a moment of peace during the shaman's journey.

precious hours of hard work. That heart-wrenching feeling could affect your drive to continue.

When I'm outlining, I usually work with a brush size of four or five. There is no fixed rule here as to what size to use, it really depends on how thick or thin you want the lines to be. Regarding the issue of how to get crisp, smooth lines, I usually make quick, long strokes across my tablet and combine one end of a stroke with another. Of course I need a few attempts to get it the way I want it and so Ctrl/Cmd+Z is my best friend. I then erase off any excess lines from the image and repeat the process until I'm done. Spending more time to work on the lines really pays off as manga style relies heavily on a good outline.

Next, I proceed to fill in the base colours. Before that, I turn my background colour light grey so as to be able to distinguish the areas that I have filled from those I haven't. I make sure that there is only a single colour on each layer so it is easier for me to change the colour scheme if the need arises. The layers are labelled according to their functions to easily access the layer I want quickly and efficiently. If you get stuck on where to start for the colour scheme, I suggest looking up some references and using the Eyedropper tool to pick colours from it.

After filling in the base colours, I would almost always focus on the skin, hair and eyes in no fixed order. I switch between soft and hard brushes constantly to paint in the cast and form shadow areas. Most of the time how well the painting turns out depends on how these three areas are done. However I personally like to concentrate more on the eyes because in manga drawings the eyes are key to evoking characterisation and the stylised manga



**Block the base** I fill in the base colours in a medium tone, with each colour separated onto different, pixel-locked layers to avoid confusion.



**Lighting details** For the next stage I add in the highlights to the skin to make it stand out, and work on the shadows for the hair and eyes.

look. In successful images, the eyes alone are enough to convey a myriad of information like the emotion or situation that the character is in.

Of course it doesn't always work that way and sometimes I need to work on an overall basis to get a feel for the whole illustration. This is usually when I'm not feeling very confident with the colour scheme or how the picture will turn out. Working this way gradually puts my mind at ease as I get to picture how the final piece will roughly look. Throughout this stage I would often do minor tweaks to the colours to find the best possible match. At the end of the day it is always good to work in the way you are most comfortable with so that you can enjoy the process of painting your own illustrations and seeing the artwork from your imagination in front of you on the page. Once I'm done with the character, I move on to the



**Gradients and glow** I fill in a gradient tone for the background using two analogous colours of blue and purple. I also gave the character an outer glow.

background. I would usually have a vague idea of what background I want to do but it still takes some experimenting to match the picture well. In this

Before

## Breathe life into your work

It's not magic, but it certainly feels like it



Highlights are important especially when painting in a manga style. They give life to your images, as you can see in the example here. Before adding in the highlights the eye is devoid of life, but once it is done, we get a bubbly and cheery eye, full of personality. Be careful when applying highlights though! When used sparingly, they can do wonders for your pictures, while overuse can leave your images gaudy with too much glitter (unless of course that is what you were aiming for).



After



**01 Background** If the gradient tone seems too saturated it can draw attention away from the character or focus of your image. I decide to lighten it and tile in some patterns for the background.



**02 Sign off** Lastly, I take an overall look at the image and add in some finishing touches to the character and background. I did a little signature in between the bag and her legs too.

example, I used a graphical background. It is always a good idea to plan the background together with the draft and not leave it until the very end. In my case, I'm not really practising what I'm preaching so please do not follow in my footsteps.

Anyway, I settled for using a harmonious colour scheme of blue and purple for the background that matched the purplish hue of the character's clothes and hair. The background needs some patterns, so for the time being I leave the illustration alone and create a new canvas about 500 pixels wide. On the new canvas itself I start working on the design of the pattern that would be used behind the subject in my illustration.

When I'm done working on the design, I define it as a pattern in Photoshop and tile it onto the background. The background is still rather empty so I grab some free-for-use patterns that you can find on the internet and put those in together with what I just did. I tweak the opacity for the background and patterns until I'm completely satisfied that it won't steal the limelight from my character.

I revisit the background again and find that it still feels a bit boring with the uniformed repetition of the patterns. Using the Rectangular Marquee tool, I make some barcode-like, inconsistent vertical blocks on the background to break the repetition. I also add in smaller strands of hair to the character to give it slightly more volume. Last but not least, I like to put in a barely noticeable signature on the illustration and try to make it part of the design.

That wraps up the whole process of working on a manga illustration. Do keep in mind that manga style is basically a form of simplification in which the aim is to bring out the best points of a picture. It is fine to forget about cluttering details sometimes and keep it clean, simple and easy on the eyes. More importantly it must be able to captivate your audience almost immediately. I hope that this article has given you a better insight into how manga artwork is produced, that you can start applying what you have picked up from here and have fun while you're at it!

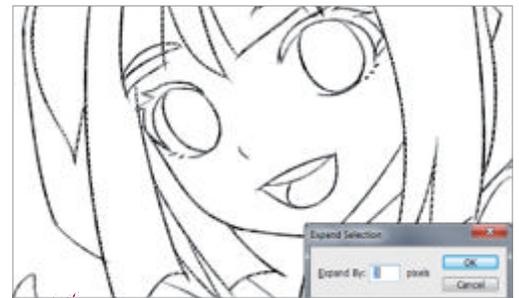


## Quick and easy colour

Fill base colours in a jiffy with Photoshop's Magic Wand tool



**01 Selection** I select the hair with the Magic Wand tool. Filling in the colour at this stage would leave a fair amount of unfilled areas next to the outline.



**02 Expand the area** I click on Select>Modify>Expand and expand the selection by three pixels, making sure that it doesn't exceed the outline.



**03 Fill in the base** Selecting the colour of my choice, I fill in the selected area. Inevitably, some areas will remain unfilled even after expansion.



**04 Final touches** I deselect the selection and manually paint the small corners that were missed with a hard round brush. Now, wasn't that easy?

# Character



# Metallic paint in ArtRage

**Metal Paints Metal Paints Metal**  
2010 **ArtRage Studio Pro**

“ Use the Metallic paint feature in ArtRage Studio Pro to create areas with a dramatically different feel ”

**Jon Hodgson** Illustrator and art director



**Despite its modest price and apparent accessibility, ArtRage has a lot of hidden features and aspects that are not often used by serious digital artists.** One of the most overlooked of these features is the function of the Metallic slider.

Found on the Color Picker, the Metallic slider changes the appearance of all tools in ArtRage. Due to its name it's easy to think of it as something for the Sunday digital painter who wants to make day-glo metallic portraits of their pets, and of course there's nothing wrong with doing precisely that. However, like so many of the features and tools in ArtRage, with a little lateral thought it can prove itself to be a useful tool for any serious artist's tool box.

What the Metallic slider does in simple terms is increase how reflective the colour that's put down by the tool in use is. This is an artefact of the way ArtRage makes many of its marks; building a three dimensional model of a mark as you go along. By adjusting the slider you change how much light it is that the model reflects. What this does to your image in practical terms is offer very rich colours, deeper shadows and glistening brush marks. If you can move away from visions of glitter glue and badly made collages then it has some powerful uses.

This metallic effect can be used all over an image. It makes for very strong colours and increases the feeling of an oily impasto. It also increases the take-up of the canvas texture, as is to be expected with a more reflective medium. Using it sparingly can add an extra dimension to a piece of work.

Most pieces of art rely on contrasts to create their form. In terms of composition, light and shade, contrasts in colour and contrasts in shapes and sizes

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Jon Hodgson**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.jonhodgson.com](http://www.jonhodgson.com)  
Country UK

Software used **ArtRage, Painter, Photoshop**

Jon Hodgson is a full time illustrator and part time art director living in Scotland. He works digitally, mostly in ArtRage Studio Pro.



**Source files available**

Sketch

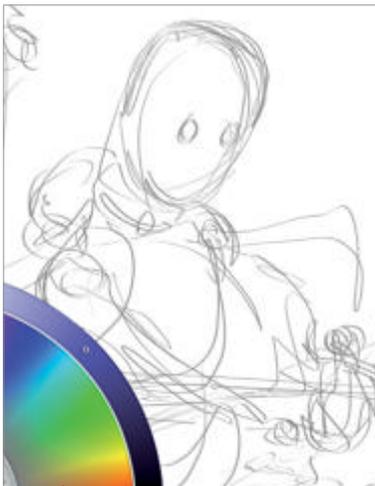
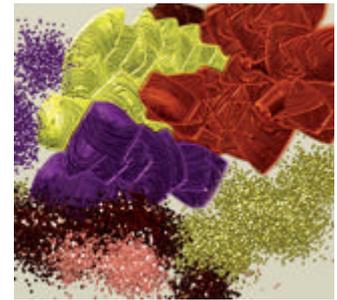
## A perfect foil for painterly images

### What is it that makes metallic paint metallic?



Metallic colours blend slightly differently to non-metallics. Due to the stronger saturation, brighter highlights and deeper shadows created, colour mixing on the canvas can be challenging. It can feel like the first time you use oils in ArtRage, slightly out of control and slightly difficult, especially if you're coming from a package like

Photoshop which offers very high control. It is times like these when seeing this as a feature rather than a bug pays dividends for you. Strange colours are thrown up as light colours struggle to lie on top of dark when using a high percentage Metallic setting. This can provoke changes in the way you paint, and that is no bad thing.

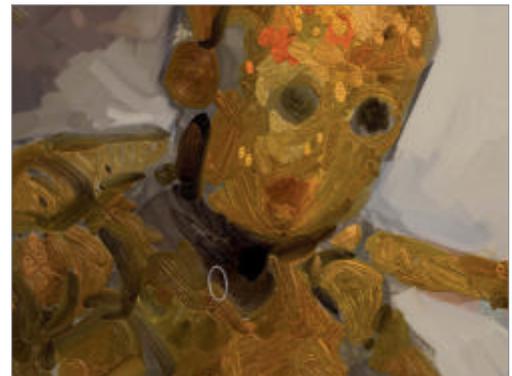
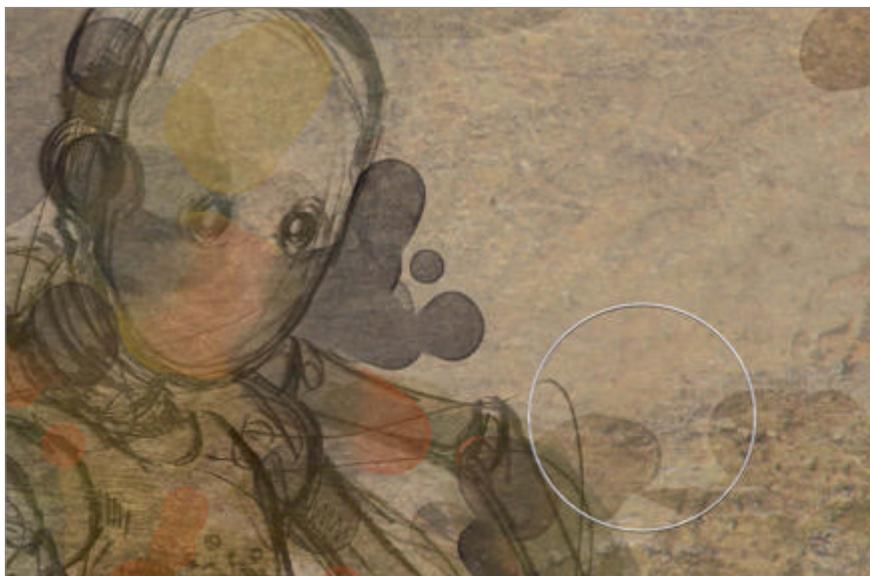


**Loose sketch** The pencil in ArtRage is a marvellous digital drawing tool. Due to the flexibility and forgiving nature of digital media, you can start planning your image very loosely.

break up the picture plane and create the image. This is also true in terms of material handling. Large brush marks contrast with small as rough, scratchy marks contrast with smooth, considered ones. And so it is we can use the Metallic slider to create a contrast in the look of the materials we're using. This can be used as subtly or as outrageously as you desire. In this image the robot character is painted with 100% Metallic, in contrast to the background and surrounding details which are painted with non-metallic paint. This extreme variance in a small area is just one way to make use of the feature, and experimentation will quickly throw up even more ways too. Certain elements painted in Metallic paint, scattered around the canvas, can be picked up by the eye and create rhythm and pattern.

This painting begins with a drawing in ArtRage using the Pencil tool. Any tool that makes a line is fine for this purpose. You can draw with an Oil brush high in Thinners or the Ink Pen tool just as readily.

Anything done at this point will not be visible in the final image. When working digitally it is well worth taking advantage of the totally malleable qualities of the medium and working up a very rough thumbnail sketch on the canvas, then refining it step by step. It can be helpful to bring in some tone to show areas of light and shade. Generally speaking a midtone brown is the most versatile colour to use for this purpose. Working quite quickly, we build up an underpainting using washes of Watercolor on a tint layer. Generally the Watercolor preset Unclean Brush works well for



**Underpainting** Underpaint in metallic opaque oil paint. Using marks that follow the form helps the shape to appear more three-dimensional.

this. Once the layer is full we flatten it and make a new layer. Building up too many layers isn't good for ArtRage's performance, so in general keep flattening as you go. Building in a variety of colour is helpful at this stage, with some cool and warm colours dotted around. Given that ArtRage really likes to pull colour up from the canvas, planning ahead and plotting in colour early is a good move.

Once the whole canvas is toned, with the darks and lights in the right places and plenty of interesting marks to work on top of, it's time to switch to some opaque media and get working with the Metallic slider. In this image, the oils are used with the Metallic slider at 100%. We use the Metallic Oil only on the robot itself – this will be the only area to use these rich strong colours. Everything else will be muted and non-metallic to emphasise the effect. Using dark, rich golden colours along with some reds, a further pass of underpainting goes in. The Metallic Oil is quite hard to control, so we have to take our time and make plenty of adjustments to the colours we pick.

Making the colours lighter than we would normally choose can help us get the effect we want. Once the burnished deep undertones are in place it is a good

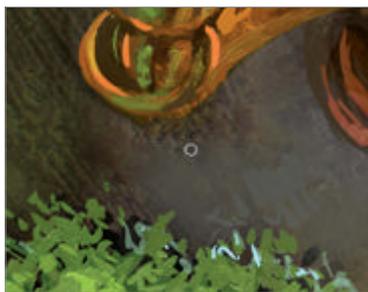
**Textures** Importing a real texture into your design whether scanned or photographed is an ideal way to add interest, keep one foot in real media and cover canvas real estate fast. You can even make specific paint textures for a given project if you want.



**7 Rim light** On this close-up of the head of our robot, the main focus, the variety of golden colours can be seen in the second pass of metallic colour with the opaque highlights sitting on top. Getting that rim lighting right is crucial as it makes for a believable image.

## What it doesn't say on the tin

What adding more Metallic effects won't do is paint metal for you. You can't push the slider up and suddenly paint perfect chrome. You have to do all the work in picking the right colours and applying the right tone to your image. The metallic effect is designed to make the digital paint look metallic – not what is painted with it.



**7 Reflections** Attention to details like the reflected green foliage is another important point to observe. Metallic surfaces appear shiny because they reflect light and colour and that includes the scene around them.

idea to switch to non-metallic oils and work up the surrounding areas so that everything progresses simultaneously and we keep our tones at the right relative levels. If you work one area too far it can make for a bitty image. A big part of making the golden tones of our robot really pop will be the contrast with the cyan coloured window, and it is worth getting that colour in there about now so we can see how it looks while we work.

Next, a texture is imported as a new layer just to break everything up and add further visual interest. In this case it's a photograph of a bronze statue in close up, which seems appropriate!

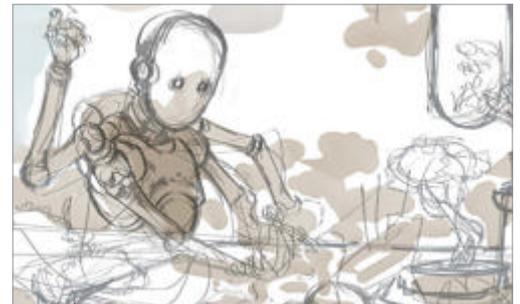
The next step is to return to the Metallic Oil paint and really work on the details and the midtones of the metal areas, pushing more towards yellows, golds and mid-oranges and leaving the darker areas showing through in the shadows. This takes the longest single period of time, and it needs a lot of care to work with those slightly difficult metallic oils. You can hopefully see the build-up of deep metallic colour and texture that begins to appear. Because the marks are so shiny and really show off that impasto feel, you need to take care to have the marks follow the form of what they are supposed to be describing or they will look unrealistic.

A couple of passes of lighter colours in Metallic Oils are followed by a switch in tool. The Ink Pen tool at a high Opacity with zero Smoothing is used to add in some very sharp highlights of reflected colour and shining gold. Because these need to appear as if they are lying on top of the metal body, non-metallic colour is used as it blends less and doesn't have that push towards deep colours.

This is the main basis of creating the metallic appearance you see in the image. Additional passes of Metallic Oil are used to tighten up the smaller details as well as introducing a few more areas of reflected warm orange and grey as a complement to it. From this point on, it is a case of adding as much detail as you like to flesh out the scene. Or to put it another way, it's all about polishing.

## Painting with Metallics

Learn how Jon's process makes the most of reflective effects



**01 Sketch** A simple line drawing midtoned with Watercolor. All the major details are here, but how detailed it needs to be depends on your painting style.



**02 Set some colour** Watercolor is used along with an imported texture to break up all the white space and provide some underlying neutral tones.



**03 Opaque paint** Highly metallic oranges and golds go in on the robot while flatter, non-metallic, muted colours make the surrounding area. Vary the hues.



**04 Polish** Lighter, brighter tones go in with strongly metallic paint. A further pass of non-metallic highlights are added on top for maximum brightness.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Jeffery M. De Guzman**

Personal portfolio site  
<http://theartofjeffmd.com>

Country **Philippines**

Software used **Photoshop, Maya, 3ds Max**

Jeffery works for Lucasart in Singapore, and has worked on films such as *Iron Man 2* and *The Avengers*.

 **Source files available**

Custom skin pores brush  
Custom scratch brush  
Colour palette  
Scanned decorated paper

# Fantasy character

Zhetri 2008 Photoshop

“Take inspiration from Asian warriors and European knights”

Jeffrey M. De Guzman aka 'Jeff MD' Digital painter and concept artist



**You don't need to be a master painter to create beautiful fantasy characters.**

A good knowledge of lighting is the most important thing when creating an image. Observe everything that surrounds you. See how a light reacts with a certain object, how shadows fall on an environment and how dark an object will be in a given light. This knowledge will put the idea that you have when painting into shape and turn it into reality. Also, you just need to push the imagination to create something new out of what has already been made, making it original and eye-catching. Feed your mind with stunning artwork and creations. Continue to be inspired, as it's easy to create beautiful concepts when you're in this state of mind.

In this tutorial you will learn how to design armour, taking inspiration from Asian warriors and European knights, combining them to create a fantastic new look. You will also be given a different perspective to using references, learning how to make good use of something without completely copying it. You will also learn how to create your own custom brushes for use as textures. The vast amount of Photoshop tricks and techniques that we will be sharing with you will be a big help in creating this kind of artwork with ease. We won't need fancy brushes as everything will be done using Photoshop's default collection, but do bear in mind that you will need extra patience in creating a crisp and detailed artwork as it takes quite a long time to complete.

## To pose or not to pose?

The female figure's outline needs to be made as close to precision as possible because this will dictate the overall armour design, and most importantly, avoid a bad fit with the final image. This is an entirely new pose that we created. It is helpful to have a decent grasp of anatomy when drawing the female figure. If you're after another way, you may take a photo of yourself or a friend re-creating the new pose that we made, using the same lighting if possible. Use whichever method that would work both better and faster for you.

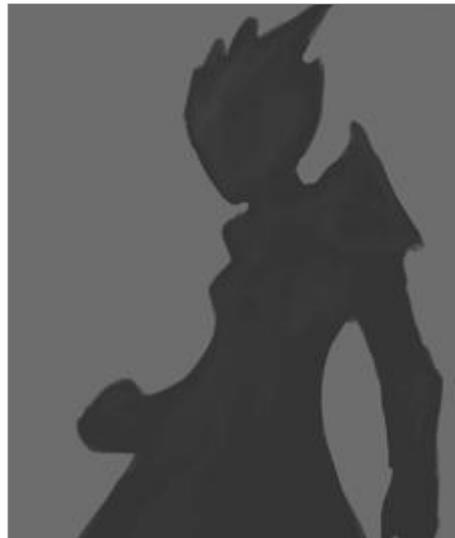


## Build your character

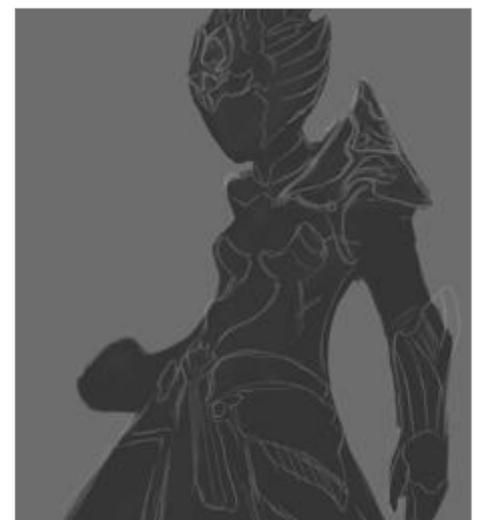
Get some inspiration



**01 Using references** At the start we don't need solid references. Even if they are just parts of an image and may be small, like helmets, armours, costumes, etc, we will not be completely using them in any way. They will just be used as a reference to give us an idea for the new character design that we have in mind.

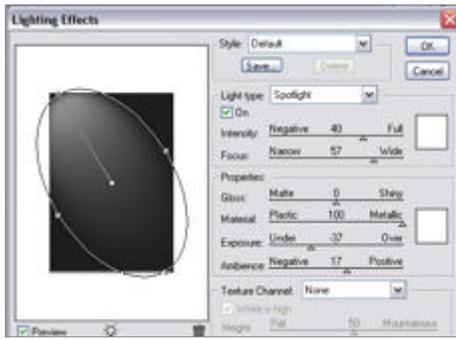


**02 Painting silhouette** Start off with 4 x 5-inch canvas at 72dpi. From the images we gathered, loosely paint your character's silhouette from combinations you find interesting. Making something new should always be at the front of your mind. It is important that we paint the figure and a costume of shapes that are recognisable even at this early stage. Choose a grey at 50% to paint it with.



**03 Sketch over** Increase the document size to 8 x 11 inches, still at 72dpi. On another layer, outline the female figure first, then loosely sketch over a costume design based on the silhouette and references. Don't think of details yet, as we should first draw the general shape of armour parts and how they would fit the figure well.

# Character



**04 Let there be light!** Go to Filter>Render>Lighting Effects and set the Style to Default and the 'Light type' to Spotlight. Rotate by grabbing the tip of the lever arm to put the light source at the upper-left corner of the image from a 45-degree angle, so it appears as though it's coming from behind her. This gives a good light direction reference that will aid us better when blocking out shapes.



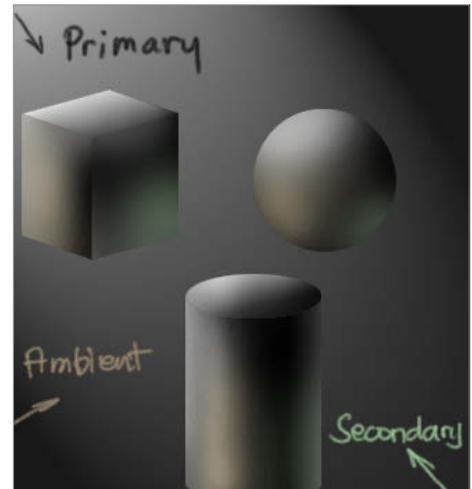
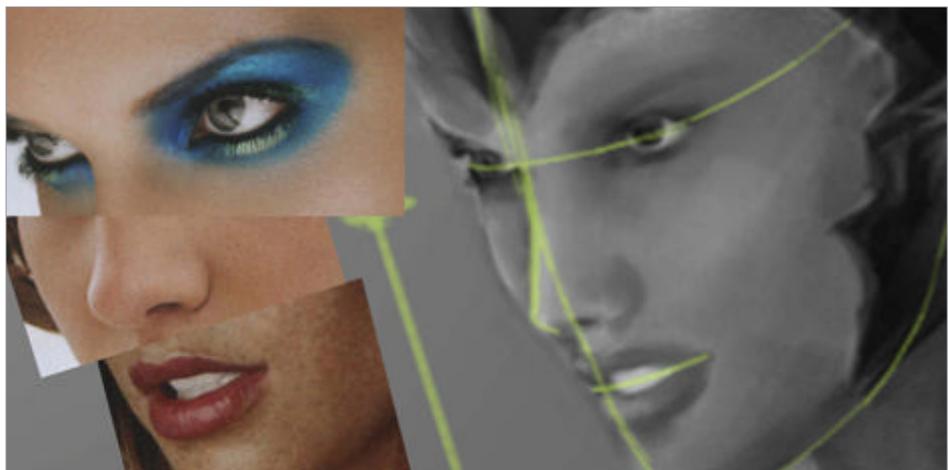
**07 Painting grey** We now have a general idea what our image would look like. Merge your sketch layers and the character layer. Use the Brush tool set to Pen Pressure, with Opacity and Flow at 100%. We will now enhance the shapes and paint it further. It is better to work in greyscale as we don't have to worry about colour values. This will help us concentrate more in defining and painting the entire character.

**08 Cut and face** The face should be the most interesting part of the image. We couldn't find the right expression as a reference, so instead we mixed and matched parts of the face from different images that we found. With this approach, we didn't have to worry that the face we painted would look like someone else's. Take note that the light source from each image are different. We must consider this when we transfer it to our character.

**05 Dodge and Burn** Set your Dodge and Burn tools to Highlights and Exposure to 12%, using the default Photoshop Chalk brush with the Other Dynamics box checked and set to Pen Pressure. Also take note that we will be using the Chalk brush for the majority of the painting; use it as well for your brush. Use the Dodge tool to give highlights and the Burn tool for the shadows.



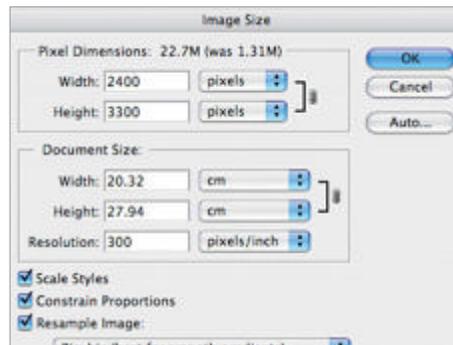
**09 Adding colours** After creating our desired colour palette, add a new layer on top of our greyscale image, with the layer set to Color. We can pick colours from our palette by pressing Alt then releasing it to go back to the Brush tool. Paint the colours you want for the image, then merge both layers. Repeat this procedure if you want to add more colours to it, or alternatively you could also set the layer to Soft Light or Overlay.



**06 Shape references** Are you having a hard time knowing how to light a certain part? We shall break it into different pieces and apply the Gradient Fill tool as a different style to quickly do it for us. It shall be created in the same light source with a secondary light that we will add later on.

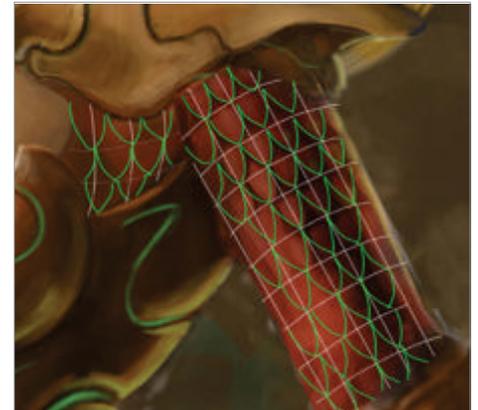


**10 Textured background** Adding texture will make the background interesting. Use the default Maple Leaf brush, check the Other Dynamics box on the Brush tab and on its settings, set Opacity Jitter to Pen Pressure with the Brush Spacing at 10. Now paint like crazy! Switch between different colours from your palette to create harmony with your foreground image.



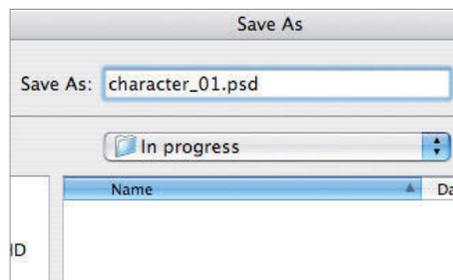
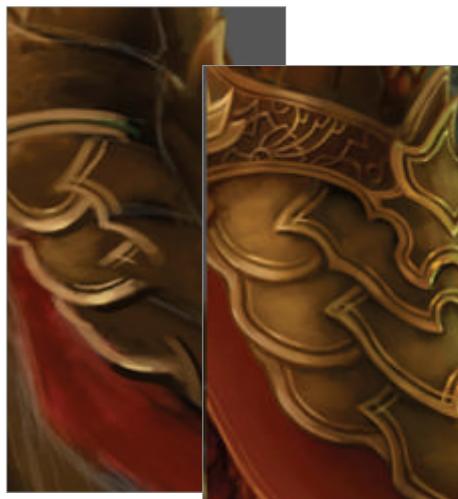
**11 Layer management and image resize** It would be better to work with as few layers as we can. A maximum of four layers is advisable: the background, character image, hair and weapon. Then resize the image to 300dpi resolution with the Scale Styles, Constrain Proportions and Resample Image boxes checked. This will increase your resolution size to 2,000 x 3,000px, which is enough to add details.

**12 Making scales** Create a new layer and draw guidelines as shown in the screenshot. Your vertical and horizontal lines must conform to the overall shape of the image. Set your guidelines layer's Opacity to 30%. Go back to the main image layer and start painting dark colour just outside the scales' guidelines to create shadows.



“We mixed and matched parts of the face from different images that we found”

**13 Sculpt-painting details** Notice that simply emphasising the shadowed parts and the highlights lends volume to the image, giving you that 3D look. Highlights give images the bump and shadows lend thickness to them. There's no need to sketch into a new layer to create the design, just let your imagination sculpt away to get new ideas.



**14 Saving as a different version** As you progress with your image, it is best to save a new version by changing the filename. For example, 'character\_01', 'character\_02' and so on. This is helpful for us to go back to the previous version in case we end up messing up our work.

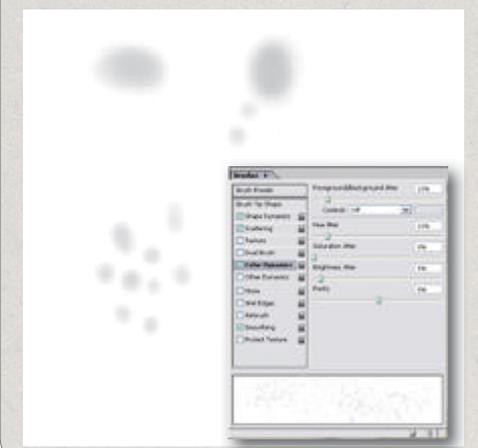


**15 Cloth** Use a soft round-edged brush when painting cloth as it gives a soft feel to it. Shift between the Dodge and Burn tool to emphasise highlights and shadows. Make sure to use the same brush and setting you used with the main painting brush for this.

## Custom brush for skin pores

Create a new 200 x 200px file. Paint speckles with a 20% grey, soft, round-edged brush, then go to Edit>Define Brush Preset and name it 'Base\_skin\_brush'. Go to the Brush tab and apply these settings: Scatter = 450%, Control Pen Pressure = check both axes, Brush Count = 3, Count Jitter = 98%, Control = Off. Under Shape Dynamics, set Angle Jitter = 100%, Roundness Jitter = 72% and Minimum Roundness = 25%. Set Color Dynamics to Foreground = 11%, Hue Jitter = 11%, Brightness = 11%, Purity = 0%.

Ctrl/right-click and select Create New Preset From This Brush. You will then need to name it 'Skin\_pores\_brush'. There will be two skin pores brushes in your selection – delete the first as it's no longer needed.



# Character

**16 Painting hair** Using the default Spatter 59 brush set to Pen Pressure, first paint the entire volume of how you want the hair to be with a big brush size. Gradually reduce your brush size and change colours to paint the hair into smaller groups. Once you're happy with the arrangement, reduce the brush to 2 pixels and paint some individual strands to make it look more natural.



**17 A quick flip** We must not forget to regularly flip our canvas horizontally. This gives us a fresh eye with our image and could easily determine errors we have made. What looks good on the other side might not work as well when flipped.



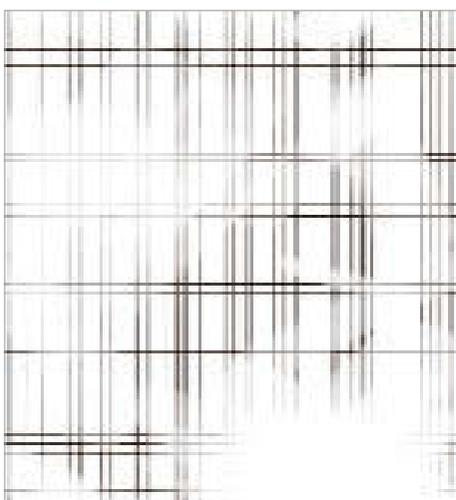
**18 Skin pores brush test** Create a new file and fill it with your base skin colour. We must experiment with our new brush before applying it to our character. This is the outcome of the brush choosing different colours for it. Use a Background Color of either blue or green to have a better output in the Color Dynamics settings to better blend with the skin colours.



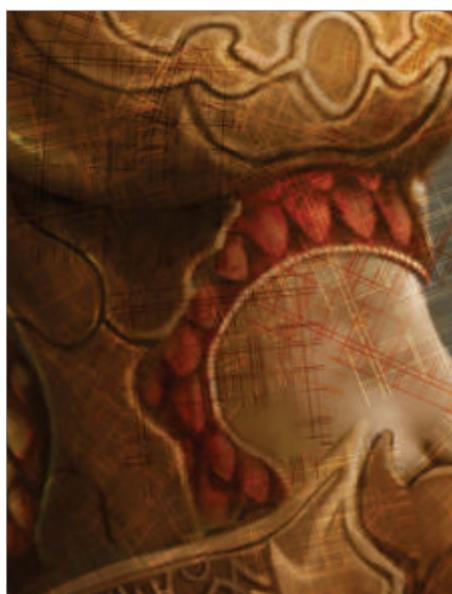
**19 Detailing the skin** Skin, like cloth, needs to have soft feel to it. Use a soft round-edged brush, also set to Pen Pressure. Pick a colour from the skin palette and paint directly to your character layer. Texture the skin using our custom skin pores brush. Add a new layer above it and set to Overlay. Add pores to the parts where it bulges more.



**20 Getting lippy** First paint the base lips as seen in the illustration. Get a close-up picture of a lip and turn it to greyscale. Cut and fit to the base lips. Set the layer to Soft Light then merge the layers.



**21 Creating custom brush scratches** Open a file sized 200 x 200px. With a hard round-edged brush, make random lines. Hold Shift to make perfect vertical and horizontal lines. Erase portions of these lines and create as a brush. In the Brush tab, set to Shape Dynamics with Angle Jitter at 48% and Brush Spacing at 68%. Ctrl/right-click and select New Icon to create a new preset.



**22 Adding textures to the armour** For a realistic look to the armour, add scratches to it. Add a new layer and set it to Overlay. Using our custom brush scratches, add bright colours to parts that the light reflects more, and dark colours to shadowed areas. Erase unwanted areas. Reduce the layer Opacity to 50%, then merge the layers.

“Flipping the canvas horizontally gives us a fresh eye”

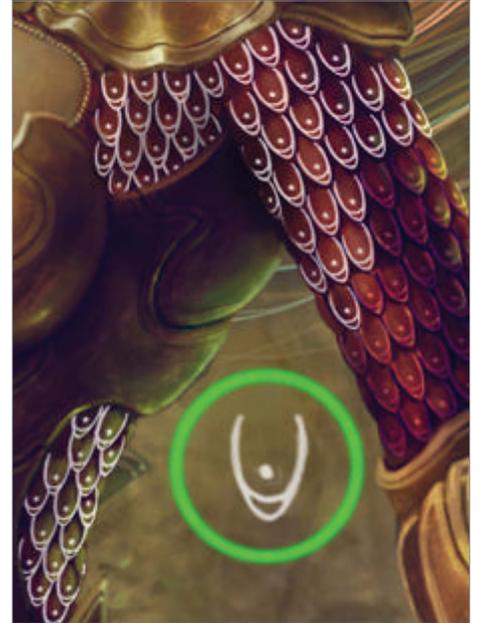
**23 Cloth details and textures** Again add a new layer. Draw simple flower patterns then set the layer to Soft Light with Opacity at 35% and Fill 100%. Add another layer and add textures using the default Scattered Maple Leaves brush set to Soft Light. Merge all three layers.



**24 Creating a reflective sword** On a separate layer, first paint the shape of the sword, then sculpt-paint to give volume and details to it. When done, duplicate the sword layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J). Go to Filter>Sketch>Chrome, setting Detail to ten and Smoothness to zero, then press OK. Set the layer to Multiply at 30% Opacity then merge with the base sword layer.



**25 Adding more details to the scales** The scales look flat, so add a few more details to them. Create a New Layer Set and add a new layer. Draw one simple detail for the scales and fit it into one. Duplicate the layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and using the Free Transform, fit it to another and repeat the same procedure with the rest. Merge the layer set folder. Set it to Overlay and merge with the image.



**28 Semidesaturated look** Rather than going to the Saturation slider and reducing the saturation, it would be better to add a new layer filled with a soft, desaturated gold colour (R = 152, G = 118, B = 68), then set the layer to Color at a layer Opacity of 30%. Merge the layers to finish.

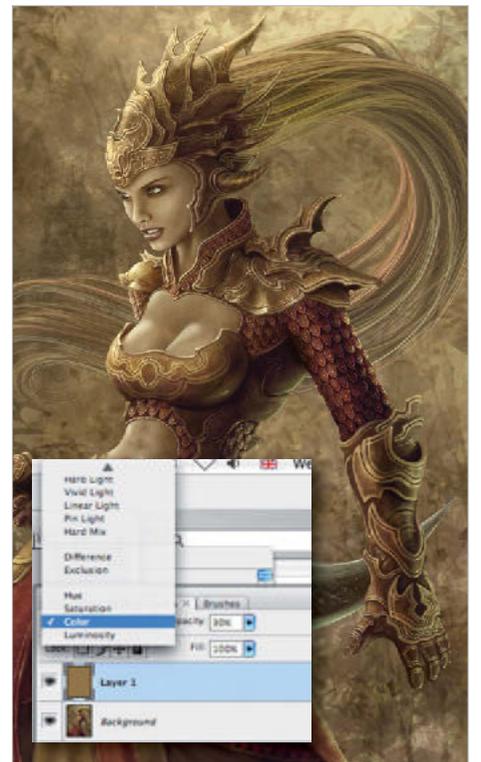
**26 Background overlays** To make the background look more interesting, we scanned in some paper decorated with bamboo trees. Add it on top of your background layer, set it to Multiply and reduce the Opacity to 50%.

### Quick tip

It is best to assign shortcut keys for functions that we regularly use. For example, we have set Cmd/Ctrl+, for Flip Canvas Horizontally and Cmd/Ctrl+/ for the Brightness/Contrast sliders. Shortcuts help us work more efficiently.



**27 Finishing touches** Now we are happy with our image so it's time to flatten all the layers. Start filling in and making touch-ups to any of the areas that need refining. Add little details to the hair and highlights to the armour.



# Concept

## Compose magical scenes

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“Try to come up with a few compositions that are strong enough to take further”



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Construct detailed manga scenes on your iPad



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# Secrets of good concept art

 **Source files available**

Line art image

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



### Kim Herbst

Personal portfolio site  
[www.kimherbst.com](http://www.kimherbst.com)  
Country **USA**

Software used **Photoshop**

Kim is a freelance illustrator based in San Francisco, CA, originally hailing from the East Coast. Her illustrations have been described as an organic graphic novel style. Her work has been featured in a variety of art blogs and magazines. She has experience in game art, children's books and editorial publishing.

## The Kite Flyer 2010 Photoshop

“ Create a character whose personality is revealed by their pose and their interaction with the environment ”

**Kim Herbst** Illustrator



**When creating a character, perhaps for a game or for a 3D model in general, it's vital to make the illustration interesting**

**for the viewer.** Having a character in mid-action instead of simply standing motionless in the middle of the canvas can make them much more dynamic and appealing.

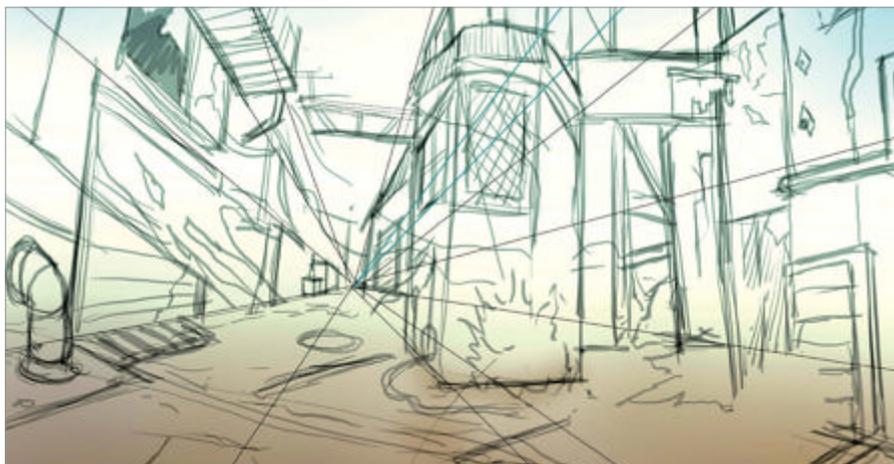
Diagonals can work extremely well to bring an image that seems static and flat to life. Seeing something with a bit more perspective in a horizon line that goes beyond the horizontal is generally a great experiment for any artist. Far too often, a designer will get caught up in creating an image that's too simple in its composition. While characters do not need to constantly be in motion, their stance and position need some nuances to encourage the viewer to keep looking, or indeed to grab them in the first place. I believe concept art can be created with the 'draw it until you find it' rule. I keep sketching until I come up with a few compositions that are strong enough to try and take into further development. When you have a few roughed out, you might even go back to your original sketch, but at least you'll know you've tried a few options and different elements of those could potentially work together.



**Placement** Make sure the characters are placed effectively on the background. You can already get a grasp of the world that this boy and robot live in.

For concept art, I like to make a short story in my head. Writing down a paragraph can sometimes help to motivate how the image will turn out. The stories rarely have a beginning or an end. It is a quick snapshot into a character's realm, and I'm not given any answers to what else might be going on in the background. I do not know why this kid is by himself, why he owns a kite or how he befriended a robot.

I am eager to show a small moment in the boy's life and that it is possible to find happiness in a not-so-great home. The world, for this illustration, is not a stable one: dilapidated buildings, broken windows, no wildlife or any living foliage. It's not a happy place, but to have something that stands out among all of this can evoke a very poignant feeling. It gives an



**Build the environment** With characters out of the way, the environment can be laid out much more easily. Remember that a convincing environment can have unrealistic colours, as long as you keep them consistent with one another. The buildings should all follow from the same perspective point.



## Artist showcase

We look at some of Kim Herbst's other artwork



**Duck 'n' Cover**  
2009, Photoshop

● Featured in *EXPOSÉ 8*, this illustration shows a deep-seated personal fear of mine – imagining exactly how small I'd feel if I had to deal with a monster the size of Godzilla.



**We're Gonna Need a Bigger Rucksack**

2009, Photoshop

● Featured in the Autumn Society's 8-Bit & Beyond Video Games Art show, this Zelda illustration asks the question many videogamers might ponder: how did Link really lug all his items around?

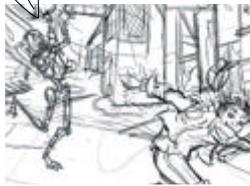


**Buried**

2009, Photoshop

● Used as a self-promotional image, this illustration seems to be a favourite because every person can relate to feeling overwhelmed, whether by emotion or... origami birds.

Before



## The Kite Flyer

It's much easier to create a setting with a solid sketch

When you fill in more of the image, you may consider changing your illustration's concept. Taking elements off the canvas while creating the image can help you focus on the story you're trying to express. The boy's facial expression suggests that he's mischievous, but it doesn't seem to have the same impact without a secondary character.



After

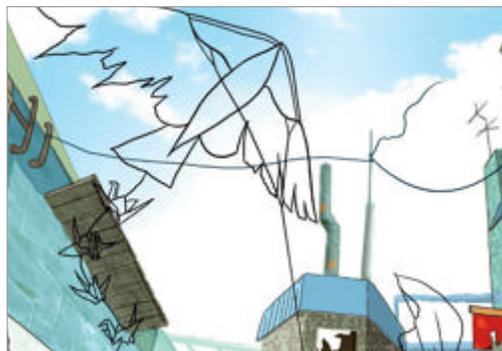
underlying concept to drive the viewer to figure out what is happening in the image.

Lighting is extremely important when creating a conceptual piece. With proper lighting, the viewer can gain the correct mood for a scene in a film, or a video game. This starts with a colour scheme. You want to convey that this is a precise moment in time so choosing day or night is always a good start.

For this piece, it is a dismal day. The light source comes from the sky, and is mottled with clouds. Your imagination can take the concept even further: perhaps the natural sun has burned out in this world and has been replaced by artificial light. Either way, the light should have a natural feel and hit objects accordingly. Bear in mind that the lighting and colours of the background can actually add to the personality of the character(s).

When sketching out characters, really consider how you want them to look by the end. The condition of their clothes, the material they are made of, the world they live in, what they have been through, how they react to their world, and so on. I usually create multiple thumbnails of clothing designs to see what would fit best. Research is key when creating conceptual images. For the background, I have referred to images of WWII, with bombed buildings and abandoned towns for my environment. It might seem reminiscent to a viewer if they can recollect something they have seen elsewhere, in photos, or even a memory. It becomes much more believable when an artist bases their idea on something that exists/existed and builds from that initial concept.

Always look at references for positioning objects in your image, whether they are quick snapshots of yourself, a friend or buildings, etc. Even the best artists can't conjure up what a really specific object looks like from their minds. You can choose to emulate different types of domestic archways for doors or look at some 18th-Century churches



**Rain or shine** Reflect on other scene elements such as the weather. It could be raining, about to rain or just finished raining. The air changes in each of these states and will also affect your character's mood.

instead, so long as you feel it all comes together to make a great final product. Keep the fundamentals in mind as you apply colours. Placing objects far off in the background will obviously require less detail and less saturation in colour. Objects in the foreground receive greater attention to detail, more contrast in lighting and more colour saturation.

When my character is fleshed out in my mind, I generally think of the atmosphere of my character's surroundings. If it is cold, the character should be dressed appropriately and the colours of the background should follow suit with a cooler palette.

For this illustration, I wanted to convey a world that seems to have some saving graces, even while looking so desolate. For me, this is done best with the interaction between two characters instead of just one: a boy, who may or may not need the aid of a mechanical automaton, is attempting to fly a kite. It's a small, entertaining recreation and he seems oblivious to his current surroundings, a theme seen with many children, but countered slightly as he has no fellow human companionship.

A lot of other choices were considered with just these two characters. Because of their interaction, the



**Erase lines** Clean up any remaining sketch lines on your characters. The weight you give them should be reflected in their clothing (or the material they're made of, in the case of the robot). Their anatomy, even if cartoony, should be immediately readable to the viewer.



**7 Colour time** Experiment with colour variations if you think you're pushing a particular shade too far. For instance, if the environment's too blue, your warm-toned character might clash.

## Master your craft

If you're stumped for composition when creating concept art, I highly recommend browsing paintings by the Old Masters for the general placement of objects. Or try taking photos of your everyday life and creating numerous thumbnail sketches, overlaying various shapes or characters on top.



**7 Light right** Proper lighting from a certain direction and foreground elements can tie a concept together. The buildings are faint in the background, while the boy and the robot are more saturated.

design should reflect their relationship. If the robot is to be seen as a companion, I felt it needed similar features to the boy. The robot's build is bipedal and has a face versus having, say, wheels as a base and long, robotic tentacles for arms; this would make the scene feel much more menacing!

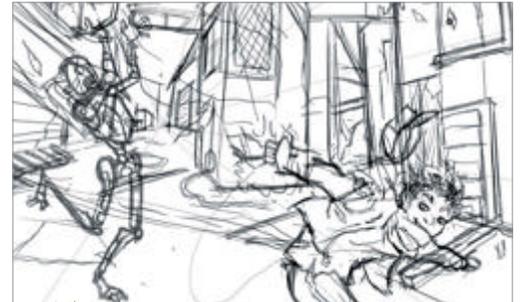
This robot appears to be friendly, even if a bit bumbling and over-enthusiastic. He shows a bit of rust and wear on his metal frame to fit in with the rest of the environment, maybe from hanging out in the moisture of the mist too long. The boy has some old-fashioned clothing that was a throwback to the early 1900s since I referenced the buildings from that era, like his hat, for example. I changed a few elements of his shoes, however, to signify that this realm is obviously not our own.

The kite is made up almost entirely of paper, having considered what materials this boy would have readily available to him. If it were steam-powered and mechanical, the concept would lay more heavily in technology, and not the lack of it as so clearly depicted in this image. Consider your options for props and then narrow them down to fit your theme. Laying down some rules for your make-believe world enables you to answer any questions in the back of your mind more quickly. I can say, there's gravity, so the characters won't be floating around idly in the space I have created. There are buildings so it is safe to say there was a civilisation at some point. If I had chosen to place more people in the background, the mystery of whether this boy is one of the only survivors of some calamity is easily answered. The possibilities are endless unless you give yourself the necessary limitations.

A lot of concept art stems from the question, "Wouldn't it be cool if..." and continues on to whatever your mind can conjure. Having an idea is great, but expanding on to develop a whole new world is even better. Lastly, always be flexible with your artwork; if your theme doesn't seem to be fitting the character or environment you set out to create, experiment with other props and styles for your piece.

## Develop the scene

Set the rules for your world before you begin to draw it



**01 Point A to B** With a sketch, the artist should keep dynamic composition in mind. The eye should flow from one point of the scene to another.



**02 Plan ahead** In the early stages consider other objects you may want to include. Random pieces of rubble, vehicles and wildlife are a few possibilities.



**03 Keep it real** Textures should be used believably. For background elements, consider the distance and atmosphere to make sure nothing jars.



**04 Blend in** Characters should belong to their environment, with correct shadows etc. Stylistically, the kite, robot and clothes should look contemporaneous.

# Design decorative backgrounds

## Working Progress

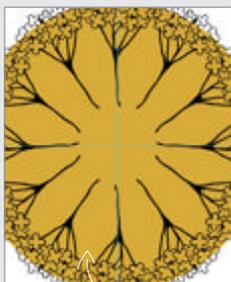
Evoked Mucha with pattern and texture



Step 02, Design in rough



Step 05, Scan your image



Step 12, Repeat the shape



Step 14, Inky hair

**Femme Fatale** 2011 Photoshop

Build exciting compositions for your portraits using complex decorative backgrounds

**Natsuki Otani** Illustrator

Source files available

Line Art

**Backgrounds are an important and interesting way of adding life and depth to your portraiture.**

By creating something that your subject can contrast with you can add beautiful decorative elements or simply frame your portraits to lead the eye better. Backgrounds can be stylish in their own right and convey a meaning and context that simply cannot be portrayed by the subject alone.

Using a strong background can be especially effective when you weave it into the subject so that there is no clear separation between the two. A background that interacts with its foreground elements can give the whole image more of a feeling of movement and life. This kind of detail can reflect the personality of the character that you are drawing or their lifestyle and way of being. In this tutorial, I will reference the great artist Alphonse Mucha to give my portrait a classic and unique feeling.

Mucha is one of the definitive graphic designers of Art Nouveau in the late 19th Century, and he used female figures to express a wide range of concepts. His work was, and still is, both desirable and commercial with his trademark clean lines and repeated patterns, the key elements that give his work such a distinct atmosphere.

We will learn how to take these techniques into the digital age and combine elements in a fast and effective way to give you complete control over your final image. We will use digitally created elements such as patterns and original textures that will give the hand-drawn feel that is needed to create the painterly style associated with this period and Mucha in particular. Referencing classic styles and artists is good practice; examining what they created and how they did it enables us to understand that even nowadays illustrators and artists can learn from the past and gain insights that will help their work remain fresh.

## Create a decorative background

Give your subject an Art Nouveau twist



**01 Research your image** Try to find images that inspire you. You can choose elements of a drawing like patterns, things you intend to draw in the image like flowers or even just references for the colour scheme. I like to choose a variety of references to give my drawing a good start point.

**02 Design in rough** When sketching, try to make the big decisions about layout and composition. It is easy to change, alter, add or remove elements at this stage so make sure you are happy with your layout and have a good idea of your final image.





## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Natsuki Otani**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.natsukiotani.co.uk](http://www.natsukiotani.co.uk)  
Country **Japan**

Software used **Photoshop**  
I'm a Tokyo-born illustrator and love to use colour in my work, especially inks. I create dreamlike visuals that are both life affirming and tragic. If I can make people smile with my work then I have succeeded.



## Scan, texture and shape

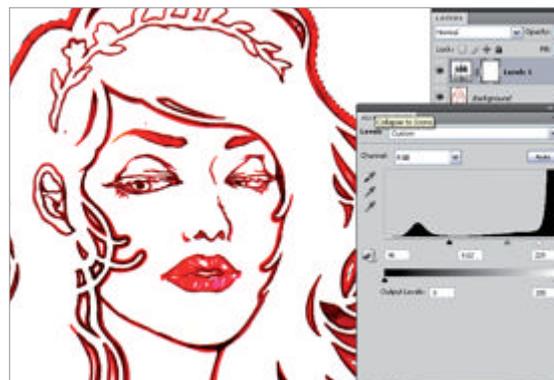
Import your drawing and develop the background

**03 Line drawing** Bring together the things you have designed in rough to create your line drawing. You can do this digitally if you prefer, but I created mine by hand. The girl will be part of a highly decorative final image so I kept the lines as clean as possible.



**04 Prepare your textures** You can make your image unique by creating your own textures to use. This will give a personal touch, and the textures you make can be useful for creating your own brushes too. You can make textures digitally as well using the Smudge tool and custom brushes to layer colour.

**05 Scan your image** When scanning your image make sure to use a high resolution (300dpi minimum). I find it best to turn off any colour correction and anti-scratch settings, as they tend to interfere with the tone.



**06 Sharpen and cut out** Open the scan and create a new Levels adjustment layer. Change the values until you have created the sharpest image possible with the most contrast. Use the Magic Wand tool to select the blank area, then Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+I to invert your selection. Copy and paste into a new layer on your main canvas.

### Make digital stamps

After creating an element that you want to keep, like our flower bunch for example, you can turn them into a stamp by simply selecting the shape layer and choosing Define Custom Shape from the Edit menu. After you have named your shape it will be available from the Custom Shape menu.



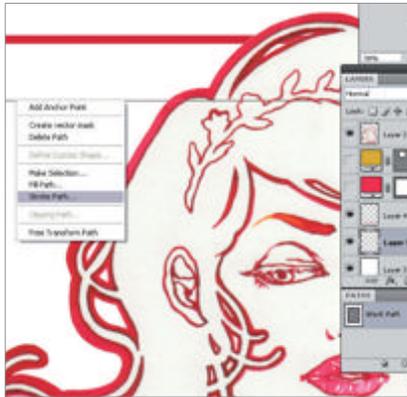
**07 Clean your image** As my image is hand drawn, I need to clean it up. Create a black background to help you see the marks, delete any you come across and use the Clone Stamp tool to repair any damage to your original image.

### 08 Think about the composition

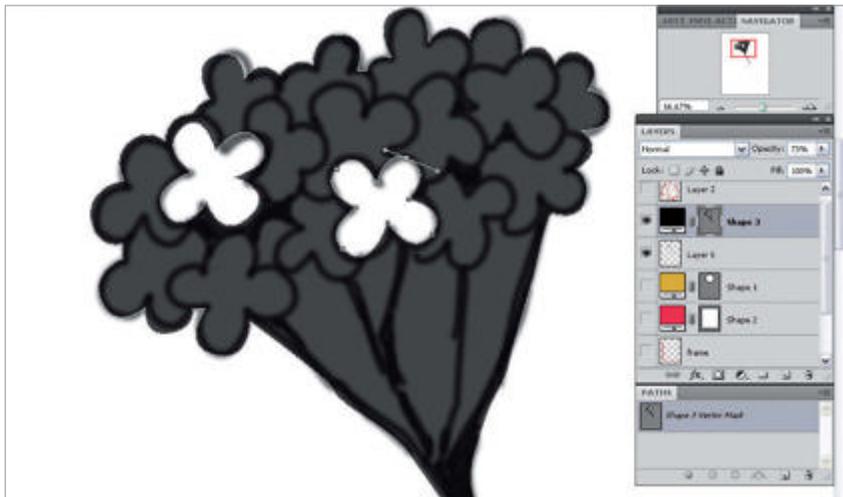
Now decide where to put the background that you made using the Shape tools. Guides are helpful when you are trying to make something with a sharp, precise feel.



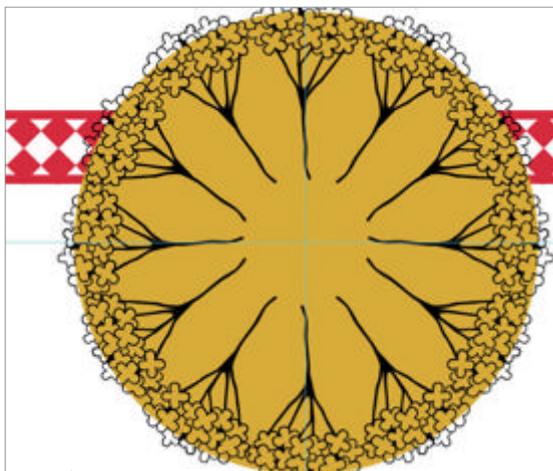
**09 Make the frames** To make a frame, select the Pen tool set to Paths. The frame should be drawn using Shift to make the lines straight. Once you join up the path, right-click, select Stroke Path and use the Pencil option. This will select your current Brush settings and paint it along your path.



**10 Add a pattern** Make a simple pattern on a different layer; I chose a checkerboard-style texture. Use the Magic Wand to create a selection of your frame and, with the selection still active, go to the pattern layer and cut it out with the selection shape.



**11 Flower halo** Draw a rough design to flesh out the halo with decoration (I decided on a flower pattern). First use the Pen tool to trace over the design and then remove the internal shapes of the flowers by using the Subtract From Shape Area option.



**12 Repeat the shape** Use guides to divide up your halo to make placing your flowers easier, then copy and paste your design. To make it less repetitive, you can use the Flip layer option from the Edit menu. When you are happy with their placement you can combine them into one layer.

**13 Textured background** Now add the textured background of the image by setting the layer option to Multiply, creating a vector mask on the Background layer and using the Brush tool with pure black to hide all the areas where you do not want the background to show through.



**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

# Mucha's unique style

Alphonse Mucha has real depth in his work so let's take a closer look

There is something immediately eye-catching about Mucha's work. The vast majority of people are familiar with it but not necessarily the artist, and his work remains distinctive and timeless. He was a pioneer of a glamorous, commercial style and his work remains intensely relevant today. Mucha brings the viewer into his image with an ever-increasing level of detail that appears hypnotic and gives his subjects depth and context.

## The masters

Out with the old, in with the Nouveau



**Artist:** Alphonse Mucha

**Title:** Job

**Year:** 1896

**Location/Owner:** Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art

● In this picture the hair is almost working as the decoration and background. It is not a pattern but falls somewhere in between, following the curves and becoming a part of the theme. I wanted to take inspiration from this technique for the hair in my own image.  
[tinyurl.com/mucha-job](http://tinyurl.com/mucha-job)



**Artist:** Alphonse Mucha

**Title:** Salome

**Year:** 1897

**Location/Owner:** Private collection

● The irregular repeated patterns of this image gave me inspiration for my composition. I like that while the shapes in the background are simple, they give a sense of movement and the idea that they could represent music.  
[tinyurl.com/mucha-salome](http://tinyurl.com/mucha-salome)



**Artist:** Alphonse Mucha

**Title:** Monaco Monte Carlo

**Year:** 1897

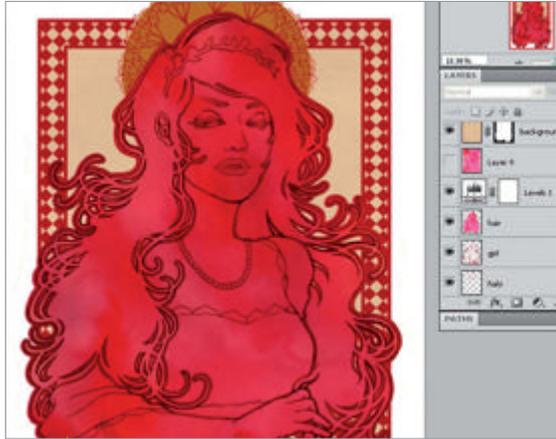
**Location/Owner:** Private collection

● This image contains a strong halo motif. On first viewing it appears to be a repeated pattern but on closer inspection it has slightly different constructions and tonal values. The image is very strong and helps to give the subject not only prominence but also a mystical and mysterious air.  
[tinyurl.com/mucha-monaco](http://tinyurl.com/mucha-monaco)



## Finalise the tones

Colour the hair and complete the setting

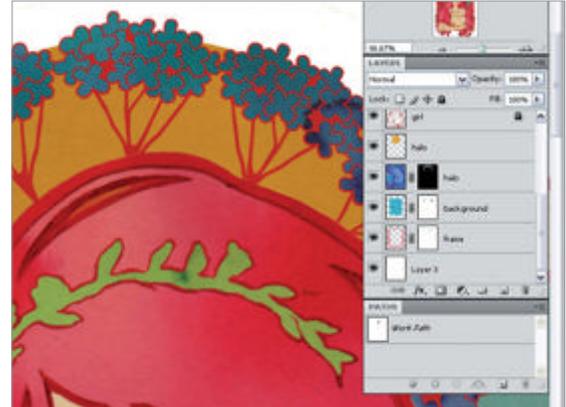
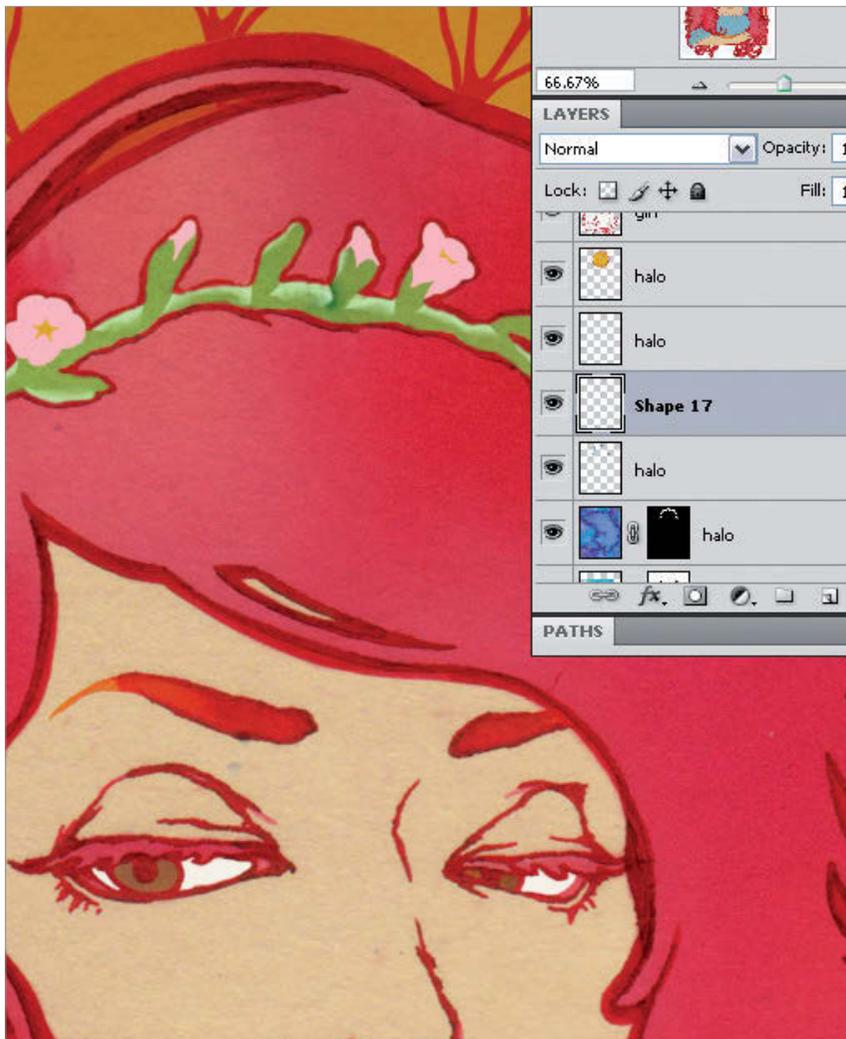


**14 Inky hair** Import an ink texture for the hair into a new layer then use the Magic Wand to select the rough area you want to apply it to. With the selection active, switch to the texture layer and copy and paste. Set the layer to Multiply.

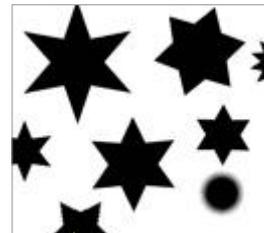
**15 Isolate the hair** Using the same technique as with step 13, create a vector mask of the layer and use a black brush to clean the mask revealing the image wherever you do not want the hair colour to show through. Remember to leave her eyelashes and eyebrows for consistency.



**17 Matte and shade** This is the stage where you bring all the elements of the image together using matte colours to emphasise the various parts. Make sure you add the colour carefully, taking time to get the best result, but feel free to alter the hue and saturation of the image.

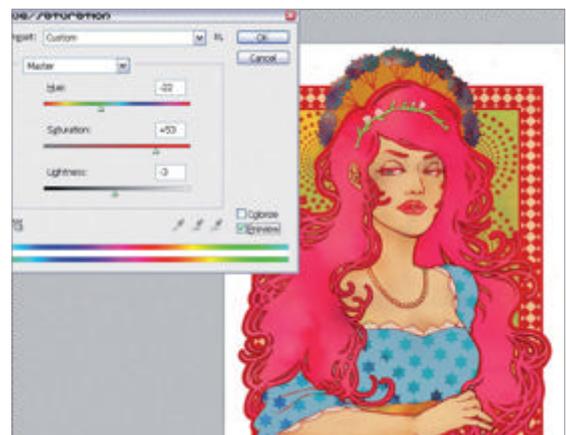
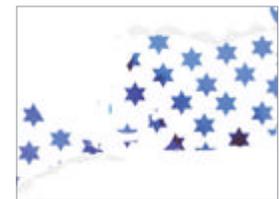


**16 Mask other elements** Use vector masks as with the earlier steps to create the other elements, painting pure black where you want to hide the image. This is where you can be really creative, making sure all the elements interact the way you want, to give a sense of movement and integration.



**18 Star symbols** Make a new layer and choose the Shape tool. You can find the Polygon tool in the Geometry options. Uncheck Indent Sides and enter a percentage. Choose the number of sides you want and you can create a variety of star symbols, so find your favourite one.

**19 Place shapes and texture** Place the stars until you are happy with the composition. Open the ink texture, place it below the symbol layer and then set the blending mode to Screen. You can now see the ink texture on the symbols. Create a blank layer below the layers and merge them together, setting this to Multiply.



**20 Last adjustments** This is the point where you should give the image its final adjustments. You can perfect it by changing the hue or level and opacity of the layers. Use adjustment layers to do this and keep your original settings.



## Nouveau riche

### The glamour of Mucha

- 

**1 Facial expression** While this is a tutorial about using the background to reinforce the strength of your work, the face will always be the focal point of any portrait so take care to make sure that you have a strong and engaging expression.
- 

**2 Decorative hair** While you may worry about each strand, it is important to consider how the hair falls as a whole as to work in a stylised concept it has to have a harmony of form and direction that gives the image distinctiveness and balance.
- 

**3 Halo effect** With the halo it is important to get a balance between a repetitive element that gives consistency and creating a unique feel. I used the same element but placed it differently and used varying colours to offset the repetition.
- 

**4 Create a frame** Making complex shapes is usually the preserve of Illustrator, but there are ways to stay in Photoshop. The Stroke Fill feature on paths, for example, enables a range of shape manipulating techniques.
- 

**5 Simple patterns** These can be made in a number of ways, but make sure they do not detract from your image. They should act as a complement to the theme and mood. Simple patterns can be made with the Clone Stamp or custom brushes.
- 

**6 Background colour** The pattern and shapes are really important, so the colour should not come to the fore. I'm using subtle hues that will give depth. The colour needs to be faded, otherwise the amount of elements would not work.

# Concept



# Fantasy art on the iPad

## Working Progress

Build a magical scene within a mobile app



Step 02, Line art



Step 05, Refine with blend modes



Step 10, Rock photo texture



Step 14, Final fixes and pattern

## Daybreak 2011 ArtStudio

“This tutorial will focus on how you can create a detailed fantasy painting on the iPad with the ArtStudio app”

**Kari Christensen** Illustrator, concept artist and traditional painter



**For many years I've been waiting for the day I would be able to carry around my oil paints like a sketchbook.** With my first laptop I thought I would be painting during long flights. But I soon discovered balancing a laptop and a graphics tablet in a confined space is not fun. I then switched to a Modbook. That worked great on a plane but it was still too heavy to carry around on a daily basis.

Don't worry, though, there is a happy ending to this story. My dream of a magic oil painting studio is here. Though the iPad lacks pressure sensitivity and is limited to the file size it can create, it is powerful, completely portable and actually faster than my first Windows 98 laptop. I get around the lack of a provided stylus by using any of the

numerous rubber-tipped styli that are available. I don't care for the sponge-tipped options as I find they don't have the right amount of friction. I attach the stylus to a pencil extender from an art store to make it longer like a paintbrush and use a fingerless glove to avoid any accidental marks.

To make up for the lack of pressure sensitivity on the iPad, the ArtStudio app enables you to adjust how thin a line begins and ends. Surprisingly, this feature works rather well for my style. If an iPad painting app does not have this feature, it is almost impossible for me to use productively.

So there you go. A painting studio as light as a sketchbook, great for working in the cafe, a figure painting session or just waiting in line.

## Paint on the iPad

Set down tonal values and line art

**01 Reference and colour study** After sketching from my head, I create a reference. I am always trying to improve my lighting and figure painting, and any resource that does that is invaluable. I also make colour studies. Without these I would start painting in circles trying out different combinations, which can be bad if I have a deadline.



**02 Line art** To do the sketch I use the largest resolution I can get on the iPad in ArtStudio which is 2,048 x 2,048px. I find anything smaller starts showing pixels in my lines. I am going for a basic outline drawing that I will soon cover up with brushstrokes.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



### Kari Christensen

Personal portfolio site  
[karichristensen.com](http://karichristensen.com)

Country US

Software used **Everything from Photoshop and ZBrush to ArtStudio and real media**

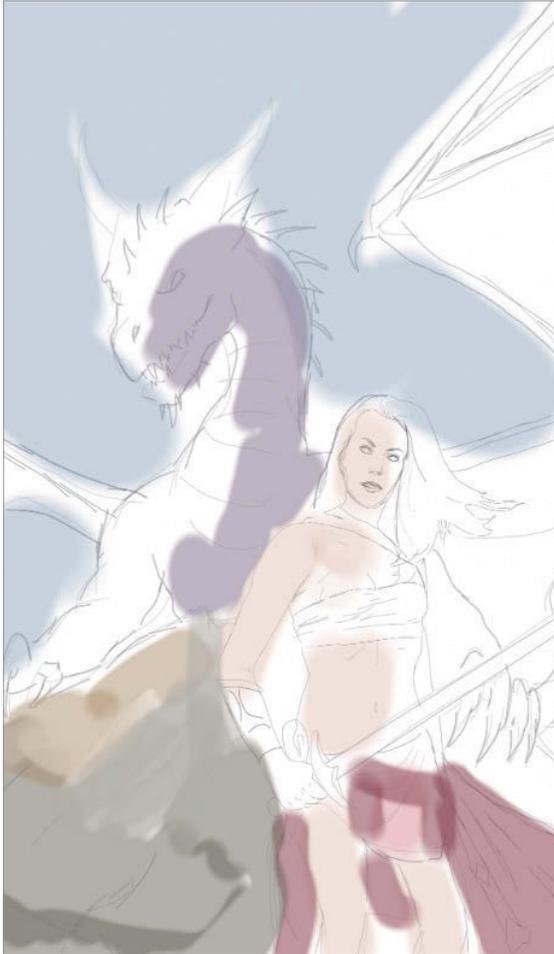
I have been a full time freelance artist for almost ten years. I have done illustration and concept art for games, publishing and film. I currently live in New York City with my wife Cambria Evans who is also an artist.



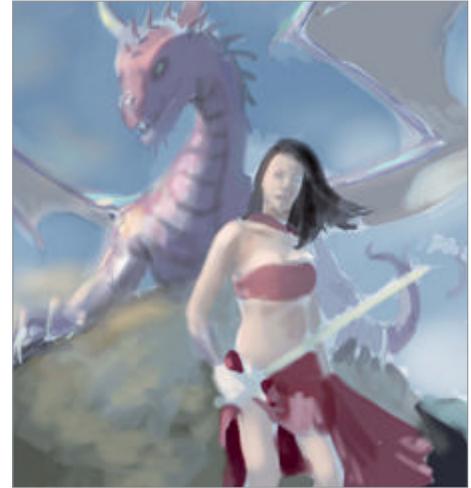
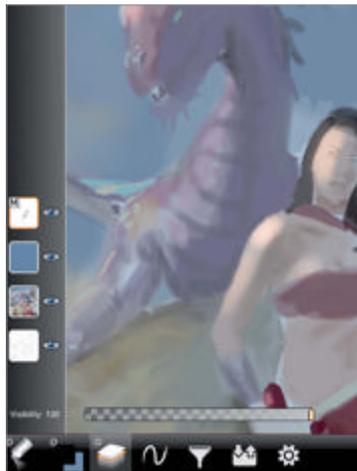
## Create custom brushes

Add detail and texture with ArtStudio's tools

**03 Block in colour** I make the image smaller at 1,024 x 768px. I don't need that much detail at this stage as I will be covering my line art and the iPad brushes cover more of the image at that size. Referencing my initial colour comp, I block in the basic shapes. I'm painting into a new layer with the Airbrush tool and Incremental Mark Application turned off.

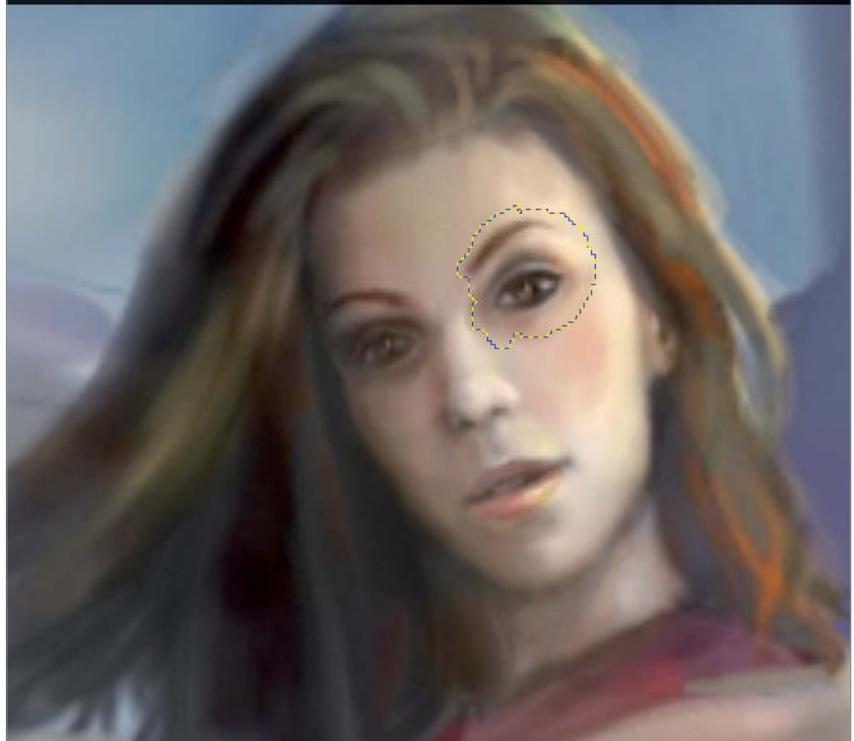


**04 Lighting effects** First I fill a blank layer with a colour that reflects the ambient light of the piece. I choose blue then multiply the layer and create a mask. I paint with black into the mask and the lighter values of the lower layer come through to create hits of light.



**05 Refine with blend modes** I use Overlay mode to bring out light areas and Multiply to darken values. Once I am happy I will switch to the Paintbrush and the Mixer Brush tool, similar to the Mixer Brush in Photoshop. I often repeat these steps going from transparent colour to opaque and then back.

**06 Fix errors with selection** Zooming in and out on the small screen of the iPad, I'll sometimes render something up close and it will be out of proportion when I zoom out. Here I noticed the eye was off so I selected and nudged it. I also mirror the image occasionally to look for errors.



## Get equipped for painting on your iPad

Wearing fingerless gloves when working on your iPad is a great tip. It means that when you lean the heel of your hand on the screen (which will inevitably happen from time to time) you won't accidentally make any marks on your canvas.





07

**Opaque painting** At this point, Overlay and Multiply layers are too transparent, so I start laying down some opaque paint. I use the Airbrush for subtle gradations and the Paintbrush for more solid marks. Make sure the biggest range of contrast is in the foreground.

08

**Custom brushes** If I continue completely with the Airbrush and Paintbrush I will get very boring marks. Luckily ArtStudio has custom brushes. I use a photo texture for a brush and add an organic feeling to the rock.



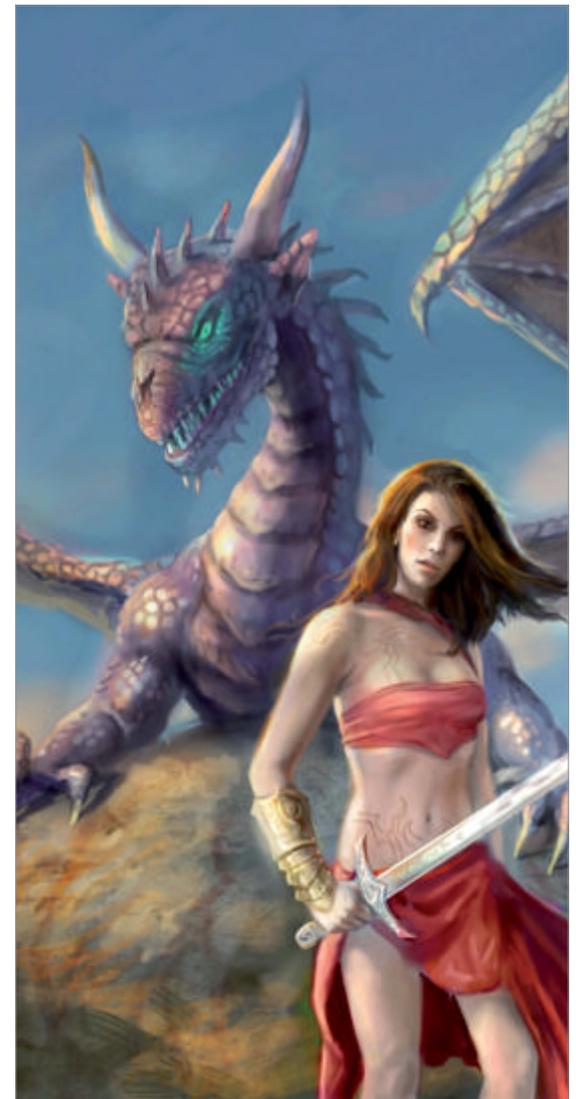
09

**Sky, wings and rock** The custom brush is adding some life to the rock so I zoom into the faces and add detail. I also use a custom brush and a very soft airbrush on the sky. I add a photo texture overlay on the wings and here I realise the rock still needs more texture to match them.



10

**Rock photo texture** I mask out a photo of a rock on a new layer then make the photo layer's Opacity about 30% so it blends with the painting marks. The hyper control of digital is also its weakness. I like to add photo textures or scanned brushstrokes to bring in organic marks. Masks make this process very fast and intuitive.



11

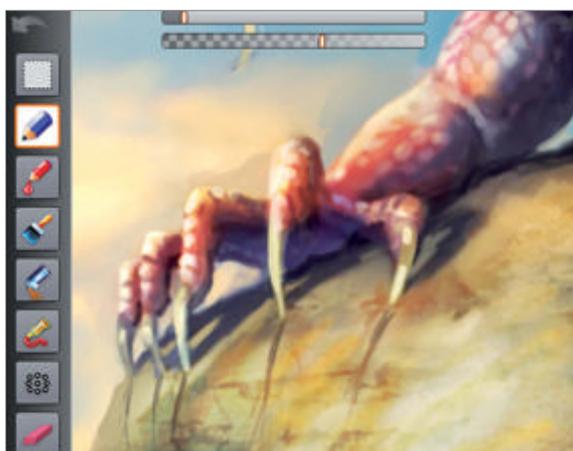
**Tighten smaller details** At this point I'm feeling confident about the overall colour and values so I start really zooming in and rendering smaller details like the dragon scales. This part can take a lot of patience.

**12 Add contrast and saturation** The colour looks a little disjointed and dull. A good colour scheme leads the eye through the painting but I've got a big blob of red that is the girl and my eye stops there. I add more red to the dragon in an overlay layer to give a sense of unity.



**13 Emphasise bright lighting** Thinking about the direction my light is coming from, I zoom in and start tightening the edges of the dragon. In sunlight detail gets washed out where the light hits, especially if you focus on the shadows. I want more of that effect, so I paint with white into an overlay layer.

**14 Final fixes and pattern** The hair and rock are too bright so I use a Saturation layer to grey them down. I overlay some blue on the sword to create a reflection and mask out a pattern of stars I imported to add interest to the fabric. I paint on the girl's face until I'm happy with my main focal area.



**15 Scratch details** I'm resolving the final details and getting some feedback. One idea is to add scratch marks. The claw is an important area because it is alone on a large shape. I also needed to paint over a piece of skin that was on the left wing but not the right. These are little things but in a detailed fantasy painting they are important.



## Mobile art **Key tips and techniques**



**1 Hierarchy of detail** A detailed fantasy piece can require a massive amount of work. If you have a clear idea of your focal points and where you want to lead the eye, you can begin with your focus and work from there. Spend the most time on these areas and the other pieces will fall into place.



**2 Tap into your soul** When you are working on a character, think about which of the elements that you are rendering are unique to you. It does not matter if it is part of the dragon, a person or a tree. A fantasy world comes to life when it is a mirror for the artist and what they want to express.



**3 Realism** Work from your imagination but look outward. Fantasy art is a fun balance between the unreal and real. You can tap into more convincing work when you increase your understanding of light, perspective and anatomy. Every day brings a new opportunity to observe and gain insight.



**4 Little details** I like to improvise as I go, letting the individual piece take me where it will. If there are little details that I feel like adding as I am painting I go with it and see how they work. It is these finer touches that can add layers of meaning and interest to the painting.



**5 iPad limitations** The most difficult limitation for me on the iPad is the resolution; staying within 2,048 x 2,048px requires planning. I measure what is possible by how big I have to paint for a head to be in focus. If the head is too small it becomes pixelated and can be difficult to work with.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Abigail Daker

Personal portfolio site  
[www.abigaildaker.com](http://www.abigaildaker.com)

Country **Cyprus**

Software used **Photoshop, InDesign**

I use art as a way of depicting the aspects of the world I find most fascinating. My work reflects my interest in the landscape and the way in which human geography interacts with physical geography.



**Source files available**

Line Art



# Antique effects

The Lands Beyond Mount Arghuangelisk 2012 Photoshop

“ This tutorial will show you how to design a map of a fantasy land with aged, antique effects ”

Abigail Daker Illustrator



**A good way to start drawing a fantasy map is to use a real map as a reference point.** Maps of imagined places work

best when the environment is believable-looking, so the more realistic the layout of the different topographical elements, the more engaging the final image will be.

I looked at Google Earth to try and find a good bit of landscape to use as a guide. I eventually decided to use a remote location near the White Sea in Russia. This area is not somewhere that is instantly recognisable to most people and the landscape contains all of the elements that I wish to add to my drawing; rivers, mountains and several inlets in the coastline. In addition, the place names in this region will give me plenty of inspiration for the more imaginative aspects of the map.

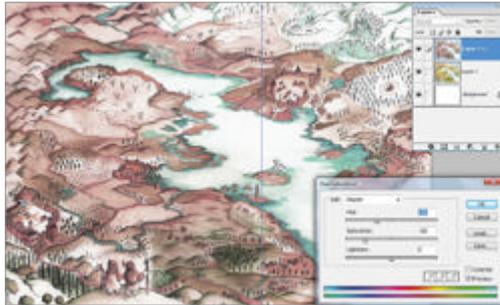
The first step is to sketch out a rough bit of terrain and decide where to place the land and sea. I want this map to be detailed but still easy to read, so it's important to have a few calmer, less-detailed areas. Large spans of water are a great way to break up a design and stop it from becoming too busy. I also wanted to add a compass of some sort so I pencilled in a couple of ideas for where this could go.

Once the rough layout is decided it's time to sketch the land edges in more detail and define where the land meets the water and the exact shape of the coastline. The next step is to decide how the map should read. Fantasy topography should absorb the viewer, tell its own story and really bring them into the fantasy world, so I added two small figures in the foreground of this map, looking across the land, and decided on two or three possible routes they could take to different parts. As I had used a section of landscape in northern Europe as my guide, I decided to base these two figures around Norse dwarves. By basing the figures on a mythology associated with this part of the world, the overall effect of the map should be more convincing.



## Use effective adjustments

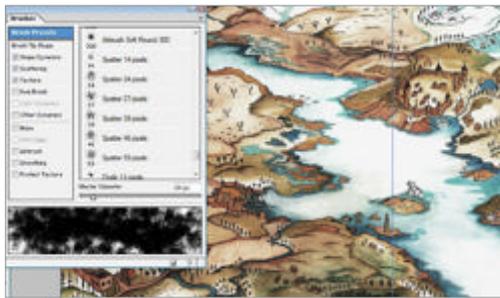
Tweak your colours with the Hue/Saturation command



**01 Change the hue** Flatten your illustration and go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Uncheck Colorize, set Hue to -32 and Saturation to -58.



**02 Adjust the layer mode** Set the adjusted layer to Multiply. Duplicate this layer and change it to Normal mode, then Image>Adjustments>Desaturate.



**03 Reveal colour** Set the Opacity of the desaturated layer to 35%. Select the Eraser and choose the Spatter brush. Now erase sections of this layer.



**04 Erase more** Duplicate the desaturated layer and repeat step 3 so that the overall image starts to look faded, then adjust the Opacity to about 50%.



**First sketch** Start with a detailed pencil sketch of the map that defines the main features of the landscape and includes notes of potential place names and village locations.

Now it is time to add more details to the landscape. This part of the map design is probably the most fun as with a fantasy map, you have a lot of freedom to use your imagination and add mysterious and intriguing topographical features.

I started by drawing in the terrain in more detail. At this point you can refer back to the landscape you were using as a guide. I added hills and mountains first, drawing fairly simple shapes to indicate these. Fantasy maps suit a hand-drawn style, so while it's not essential to draw every single mountain, tree or building individually, I would suggest you create several different versions of any symbols you plan to repeat and stagger these around the map rather than repeating the same symbol each time. Towards the edges, I used perspective on the foreground elements to make the image more pictorial than referential. Fantasy maps work best when they contain strong illustrative elements.

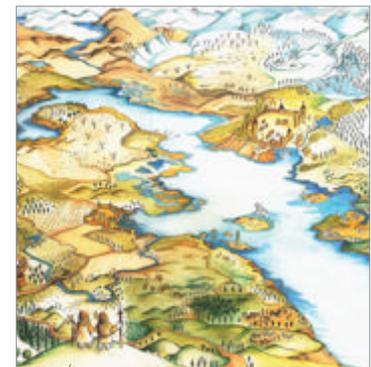
After I'd drawn in the hills and mountains, I started to sketch areas of woodland and farmland and to build towns. As I was working on the sketch I pencilled in place names and descriptions of what creatures I imagined would inhabit the various places. I lifted obscure and interesting place names from the area of the White Sea I was using as my guide.

Once the pencil sketch is completed, it should be scanned. If you are planning to draw it using Photoshop, paste the scan into your document page and start a new layer to draw onto. If you are planning to use pen and ink and draw by hand, then it will be useful to have the scanned copy of your initial drawing to refer to later.



## Grid guide

If you find a blank page intimidating, start by drawing a grid on your page. I always divide each side into thirds and make a grid of nine rectangles on my page. This acts as a guide to balance the composition of the piece.



**Colour** When colouring your map you should use a limited colour palette and soft, watercolour techniques with the stronger colours around the important features of the map.

**Landscape details** Build up your sketch to include simple shapes for the different features of the landscape and show perspective in the foreground.

# Add aged effects to your map

Layer torn paper textures over your drawing to create a vintage look



A beautiful way to finish off an antique-style map is by adding torn edges. There are plenty of free paper textures available online or you could scan some torn paper. Open the paper texture file, Select All>Copy and paste it onto your document. Set the blend mode to Multiply and line up the edges so they fit with the edges of your document. Choose the Eraser tool with a Heavy Scatter Flow tip and set the Opacity to about 60%. Erase sections of the paper texture and repeat each step until you have a faded, torn effect across the image.

Use a narrow pen size to draw out your map. Because it needs plenty of detail it will look best when drawn using a fine nib or pen. I use a Rotring .25 Rapidograph pen for hand-drawn maps and a 3px or 4px line for drawing in Photoshop. I would also recommend working on a page size proportionally larger than your final image needs to be as this makes adding tiny details much easier.

When the line drawing is complete, it is time to colour it. As our page needs to look aged and antique, I kept to a limited colour palette; blue for the sea and distant mountains and yellow ochre and olive green for the land. Watercolours are a good way to colour a map that needs to look old and worn.

To paint in Photoshop, scan the line drawing and place it on your document page. Set the layer style to Multiply and start a new layer. Drag this layer below your pen and ink version and paint in the image below the line drawing. Start with light, translucent washes and build up the colour around the more important details in the image. Once the map is painted, try out a few layer effects to alter the colours a little (the effects I used are outlined in the step by step on the facing page).

This is a good stage to start adding in the place names. Caslon Antique Italic is a great font to use for fantasy-style maps and there are plenty of terrific antique fonts available for download online. Once the map is labelled, start a new layer and add a compass. If you prefer, you could design a title shield or add latitude lines if you feel they would work better. I'd always recommend creating your own set of stock compass and border designs for use within illustrated projects like this one as it can help to finish off a piece. A simple compass can be made quite easily in Photoshop with the Ellipse and Line tools. Make the compass quite large so you have plenty of space to arrange and resize it on your page once it's finished.

Paste the compass into your document and arrange it to fit in with your map design. Set the layer mode to Soft Light and try duplicating the compass layer and then fading each one a little so that you have a subtle effect which doesn't interrupt your main image too much. Check that the place names don't



**Duplicate for effect** Copy and adjust the coloured map several times in order to fade and enhance sections of colour. This helps create a more aged effect.



**Texture overlay**

Torn paper textures were layered over the finished image and partially erased to create a worn, used effect with folds and tears in it.

bisect the compass lines and rearrange any elements that cross over too much.

Finally, add some texture to your map. Flatten all the layers and start a new one. Select the Paint Bucket tool and set the Fill to Pattern. Choose one of the Artist Surfaces – Parchment is a good one – and fill the new layer with this pattern. Set the layer mode to Overlay and the Opacity to 50%. Then choose the Eraser tool again and, still using a scattered brush, erase sections of the texture. Flatten the layers and finish off by adding some torn paper textures to make your map look tattered and aged.



**Work on a large scale**

Work on a document proportionally larger than your final page size, this way you can add details far more easily than if you worked at actual size. Drawings which have been scaled down look elegant too, as the lines of the drawing will become finer and more delicate.

# Pro matte painting

Steampunk Factory 2011 Photoshop

“In this tutorial we'll show you how to combine photos and 3D renders for the best results”

Jeffrey M. De Guzman aka 'Jeff MD' Digital painter and concept artist



**Creating photoreal fantasy environments can be fun, but the process involves many a technique that you'll need to master.**

Some digital artists use only photos and then paint over to create their mattes, whereas others use solely 3D software. Both methods have their pros and cons. With a purely 2D approach, using just photos can be tricky; factors to consider when pulling imagery together are perspective, lighting and image resolution. On the other hand, simply using 3D renders makes it more difficult to get photoreal results straight out of the box when rendered. This route entails knowing how to tweak rendering values and how to set up lifelike materials.

In this tutorial we'll show you how to combine photos and 3D renders for the best results. We'll also be making use of Photoshop's key filters and default brushes, as well as offering some insight into how to enhance a dull 3D render to give it more life. A basic knowledge of any 3D software will help you to pick up this process quicker, though we have three render passes included on the disc for the 3D uninitiated to play with.

We encourage you to develop your own concept and apply the techniques in this masterclass so you end up with an image you can truly call your own. This guide isn't about magical tricks and one-click solutions. Rather, we're giving you the foundations so you can make render passes work for you, use photos effectively and push your compositing skills to the next level.



**Source files available**

Landscape reference images  
3D render passes



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Jeffery M. De Guzman**

Personal portfolio site  
<http://theartofjeffmd.com>  
Country **Philippines**  
Software used **Photoshop, Maya, 3ds Max**

Jeffery works for Lucasart in Singapore, and has worked on films such as *Iron Man 2* and *The Avengers*.





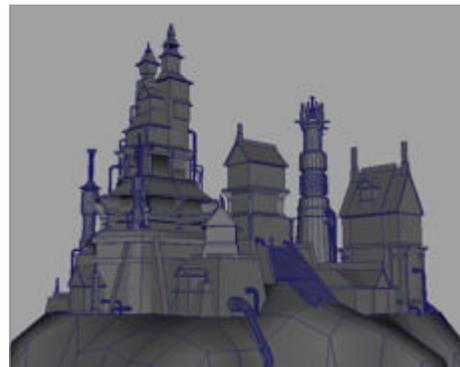
## Create your scene

Kick off the design work

**01 Concept** It's always best to kick off any project with a rough concept. This will serve as your guide and help you to make artistic decisions faster later on. There's no need to create an exceptionally well-drawn or painted concept – all you need are good suggestions of shapes, lighting and atmosphere. You can also use photo references, mixing and matching them until you have a solid base to work from.



**02 Block out in 3D** Just like painting or sketching, first block out the general shapes and sizes, and map the layout. This will help to re-create your 2D concept faster. The advantage of blocking things out in 3D is that you can quickly amend your concept to help refine the final composition. For instance, you can experiment with aspects like image views, angles and lighting.



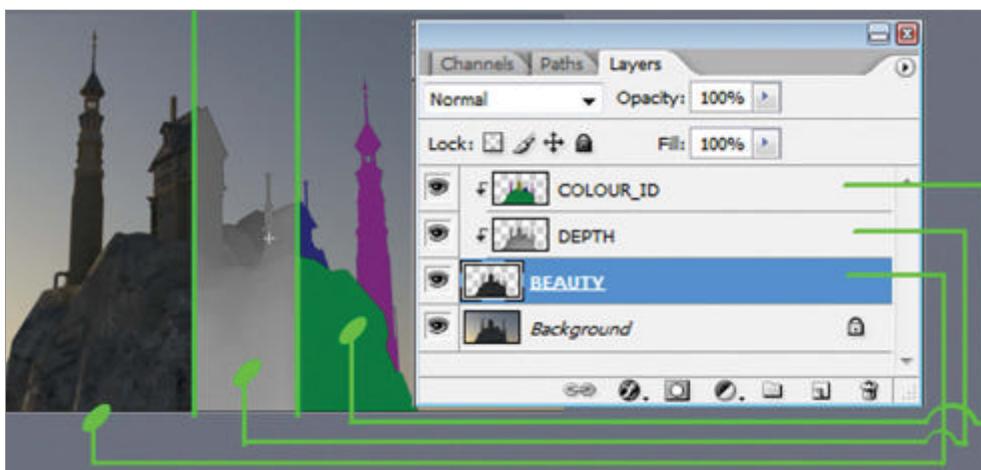
“Just like painting or sketching, first block out the general shapes and sizes, and map the layout”



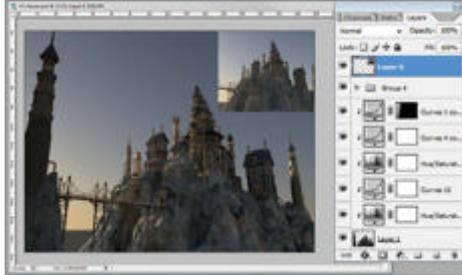
**03 Make textures** We only need low-detail textures for now, like those shown in the screenshot – just the basics to help us determine the shape, the feel and the perspective. Later, we will enhance textures with photo stock in our Photoshop composite so don't dwell too long on this step. Throw in your textures and create your own texture map in Photoshop.

**05 Set up render passes** In Photoshop, open all three render passes. Drag the depth pass over the beauty pass, while holding Cmd/Ctrl+Shift so they will perfectly line up on top of your main image. Repeat with the colour ID pass and drag it over to the beauty pass window. Rename this window to your project file name PSD. Now turn off visibility layers of the depth and colour ID passes for the moment.

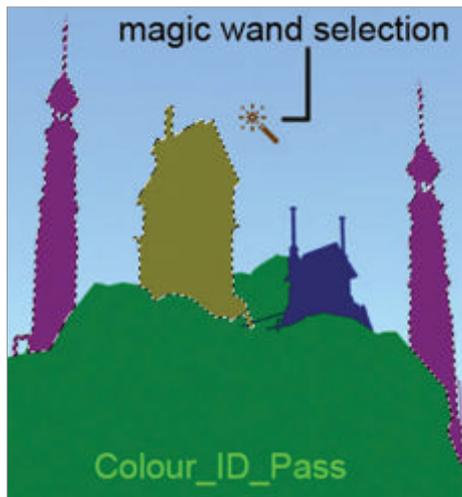
**04 Render passes** A beauty pass, colour ID pass (optional) and depth pass are all we need, as we'll be making the majority of elements within Photoshop. Although having more passes gives us greater control over renders, we'll keep things simple and use photos to enhance what the renders lack. Make sure all your renders are the same size with alphas.



**06 Beauty pass** In the Channels tab, locate the alpha layer and Cmd/Ctrl-click the layer to create an instant selection. Go back to the Layers palette, hold Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection and press Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate or extract the selected area to another layer. Apply a Color Balance adjustment layer on top with a clipping mask, subtly pushing Highlights toward yellow and Shadows toward blue; this will add more colour contrast to the flat renders. Experiment with other adjustment layers and tweak colours as you see fit.



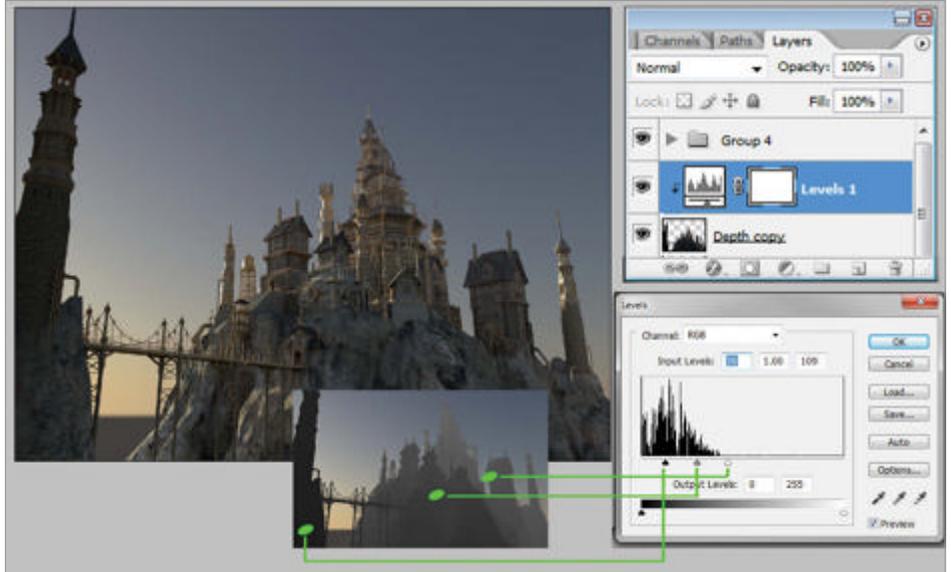
**08 Colour ID** We said this pass was optional, but it removes the burden of making the same selections. Since the renders assigned each piece in different colours as desired, it is easy for us to select a part of the image without tediously following the shape. All we need to do is use the Magic Wand tool to get the area we want.



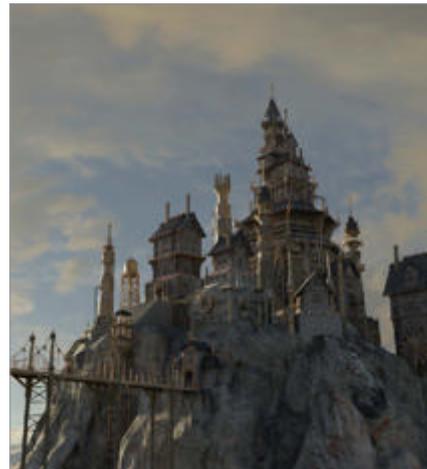
## Image Library

Building your own image library is a must for every matte painter. Whether it's a shot of a simple lamppost, foliage, water, or more extreme landscapes, they will all come in handy for some project sooner or later. Try to carry a camera with you at all times so that you can easily take a snapshot of things for current projects as well as future reference. It's often stressed how important it is to see things from a camera's perspective. By doing these simple steps, you will learn a lot of things through frequent practice and be able to translate them into your matte paintings.

**07 Depth map** Turn the visibility of the depth layer back on. In the extracted beauty pass layer, press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift, click the layer, Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert selection then delete to remove the background image. Change the blend mode from Normal to Lighten and drop Opacity to 20%. Add a Levels adjustment layer above the depth map. As you play around with the sliders, you will see how the depth and haze of each element is affected.



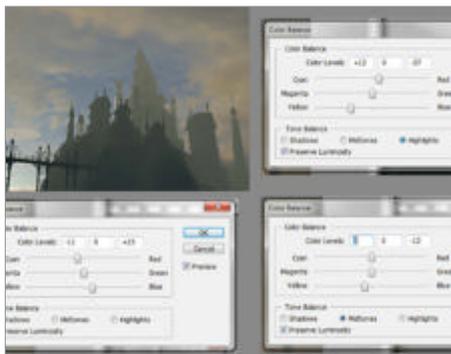
**09 Add a sky** The sky is one of the most important parts of this image, as it will determine the overall colour value, brightness and general mood. Make sure that you choose a sky that will work with the image's composition rather than overpower it. Also ensure that you get the correct lighting direction and time of day to match your beauty pass render. Insert the sky below the beauty pass layer.



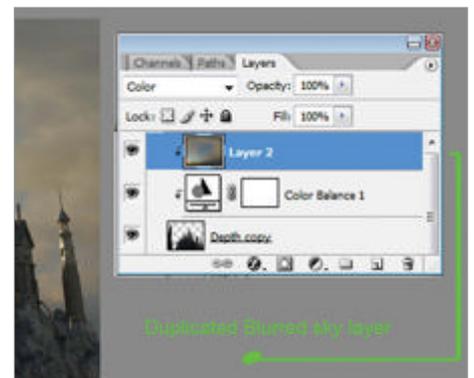
## Quick Tip

It's a good habit to use adjustment layers to make changes to your images. These give you more control when tweaking the colour values, brightness and levels without actually making changes to the original image. With this approach, you can always go back to any adjustment layer and fine-tune things too.

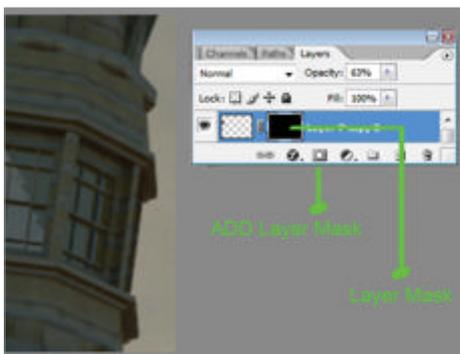
**10 Grade the depth pass** Now add a Color Balance adjustment layer with a clipping mask to the depth pass layer. Adjust the Shadows values for Blue and Cyan to the colour of the blue sky, but more intense. Change the Highlights values for Yellow and Red to the same values as the bright points of the clouds, but slightly more subtle in intensity. For the Midtones, just add hints of yellow.



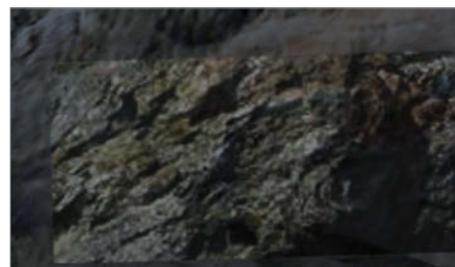
**11 Colour grade the sky** Duplicate the sky layer and drag it on top of the depth pass layer. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+G to create a clipping mask. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and apply an 80px value. Change the blending mode to Soft Light, Overlay or Color so that the colouring of the sky will also influence your depth pass.



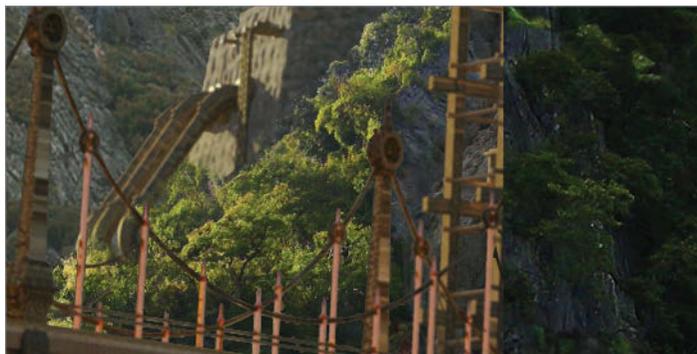
**12 Time to reflect** For the window reflection, using any part of the sky image, select a portion with the Marquee tool and duplicate. Reduce the layer Opacity to 60-65%. Add a layer mask and fill with black then paint inside the layer mask with a white brush to reveal the image. You may also need to fine-tune the reflection by adjusting its contrast and saturation to get that reflected quality using Hue/Saturation and Curves layers.



**13 Rock textures** Source some rock textures and place over the mountain render pass (you can use the beauty and colour ID passes to help isolate the selection of the mountain with the Magic Wand tool, then use the selection as a mask). Scale down the texture, twist, skew or rotate to match the perspective of the mountain. Lower its black values using Curves or Levels to match the depth/haze already in place.



**14 Going green** Using photos, populate your environment with trees and plants, colour correcting them to match the overall scene. It would be best to have the same lighting in the original photos as much as possible, but if not we can simply relight them.



**15 Relight the scenery** Relighting works well for an image that is flatly lit or has no direct key light. Duplicate the image, press Cmd/Ctrl+B to alter the Color Balance and use Curves (Cmd/Ctrl+M) to adjust the brightness of the tree and rock imagery based on the colour of the sky's key light. Add a layer mask and fill it with black. Now, with a white standard brush, reveal the lit area gradually.

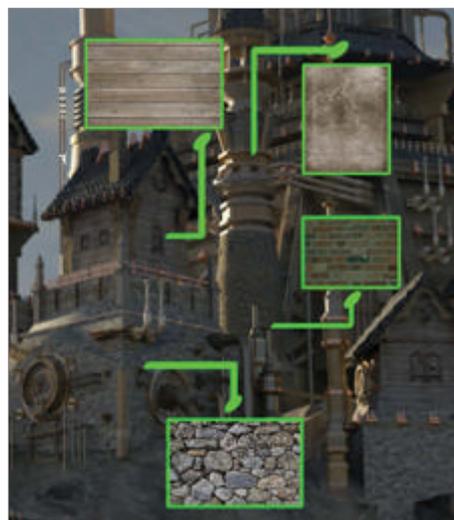
“Since the renders weren't edited much, we need to support them with proper texture overlays for a more realistic feel”

## Photography 101

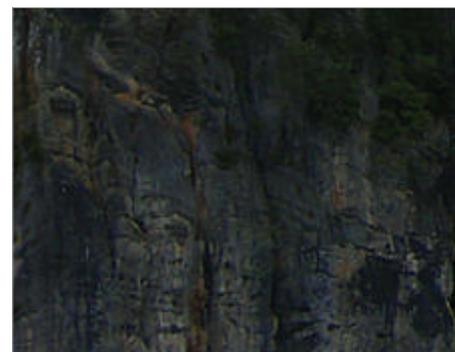
It's recommended that you understand the basics of photography when creating this kind of artwork. It can easily be spotted if a matte painting looks more like a photomontage. We must always try to 'see' the composition from the camera's point of view, not just with our eyes. There are a lot of things that photograph differently under different conditions and focal settings. Try to experiment, take a lot of photos and understand the characteristics of an image when shot at various times of day. This may be a bit technical, but it is a key factor in making our final matte painting look like the real deal.

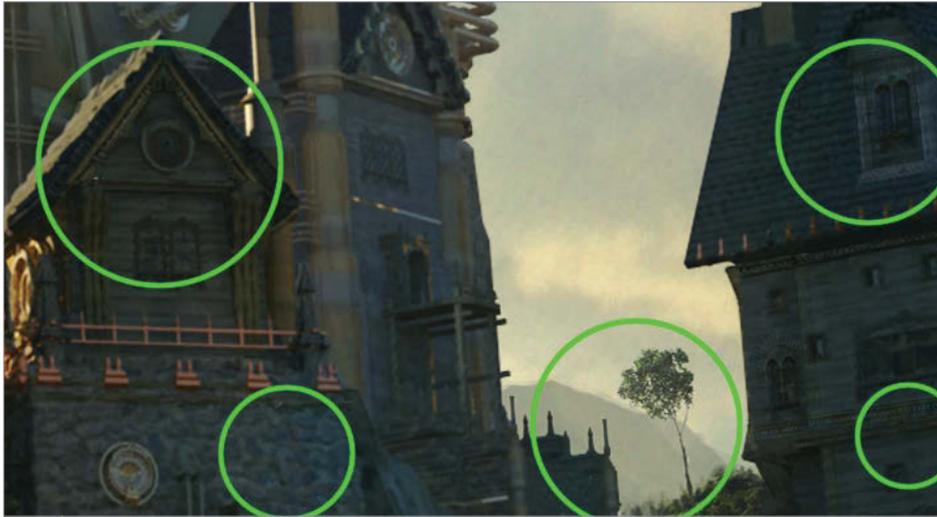


**16 More textures** To quickly give renders a photoreal look, you need to comp photos into your image. Since the renders weren't edited much, we need to support them with proper texture overlays to give a more realistic feel to every material. Cut and paste photos of closely matched images and then scale to fit the original rendered image, setting the blend mode to Soft Light. Lower Opacity to 20% or until you feel blending is seamless.



**17 Mountain makeover** This is where we give the mountain some character. Since ours has no real shape, we need to add some cliff edges, cracks and strata effects. Don't add loads of images to every part; you just need them here and there to add interesting focal points.



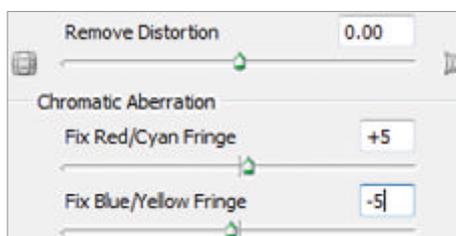


**18 Enhance details** The tiny details count, even though sometimes we might think they are not necessary. In fact, these are the parts that send a signal to the viewer's brain and subtle hints to their eyes that they are looking at a real-life image as opposed to a painting. Roof gutters, door jambs, window frames, smoke and reflections are just some of the things you should be paying attention to here. Simply add photos of these elements and blend as in previous steps.

**20 Blur edges** Once you're happy with the image, save, flatten it then save as a new copy (just in case you want to go back to previous work and make adjustments). Next select the Blur tool and lower the Flow to 10%. Lightly blur the edges of elements – all those sharp edges of cutout trees, roofs, cliffs, etc. Overly sharp edges are one of the biggest giveaways that images have been comped together when it comes to matte-painted artwork.



**23 Chromatic aberration** This is a prominent quality you'll see in most photos. Study a photograph and you will see that the edges have blue and red light fringing. We can emulate this flaw in Photoshop; just go to Filter>Distort>Lens Correction. Set Chromatic Aberration values to Fix Red/Cyan Fringe +5 and Fix Blue/Yellow Fringe -5.



**21 Well and truly framed** Adding framing elements, such as branches or hints of architecture, can really help pull the viewer into the scene. They can also add to the composition, making viewers focus more on the factory in this case. Since these are often foreground elements, it's best to use a photo at a higher resolution, with accurate lighting and a similar viewing angle. Grab your cameras, go out and start stocking up framing elements for your image library.

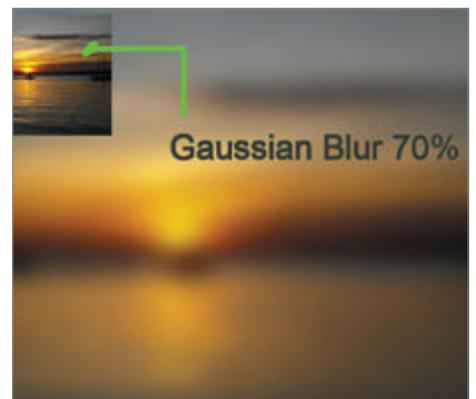


**24 Film grain** To add the final touch, we need a subtle hint of film grain. Add a new layer, use the Marquee tool and roughly make a region an eighth the size of the entire image and fill it with white. Go to Filter> Noise>Add Noise and set Amount to 18%; also check Uniform and Monochromatic. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T to scale up the layer to the entire width of the image. Set the layer to Multiply blending mode then reduce Opacity to 10%.

**19 Light blooms** Once a shiny object is hit by light, a subtle glow is captured in a photograph. These bright spots need to be painted in and/or enhanced on existing stock. Add a new layer on top of all the layers we have set to Screen. Get a standard soft-edged brush and set Flow to 20%. Colour pick the brightest highlight colour in the image then lightly begin to work in these blooms.



**22 Colour overlay** Get a photo of an environment or landscape that closely matches your image, ie the lighting, colour and time of day. We need to extract the qualities and mood present in the photo and bring them in to our creation. Next place a new layer at the top of the stack and apply a 70px Gaussian Blur. Set to Soft Light then lower Opacity to 10-15%. You'll see a big difference when you toggle this blurred image layer on/off.



**Quick Tip**

Practise memorising keyboard shortcuts, as knowing the basic quick commands gives you flexibility and speed when working. Let one hand do the drawing and the other work on the keyboard.

# Draw a fantasy fairy-tale scene

Epiphany & Petrichor 2012 Photoshop

“ In this tutorial I will show you how to create a beautiful and evocative fairy-tale illustration in Photoshop ”

Sandra Dieckmann Freelance illustrator

 **Source files available**  
Line art, palette

 This tutorial will guide you through the process of creating a magical, evocative and beautiful fairy-tale illustration, loosely inspired by the soft and harmonious colour shades and natural lines popularised through Art Nouveau design.

Art Nouveau as a decorative style was inspired by natural forms and structures and botanical influences are present as well as curved lines and femininity.

The focus of this image will be a princess-like girl with a young fawn beside her; the two friends looking out at us the viewer within a delicate border.

To get inspired I can only suggest you take some time to really look at images and posters of this art style. Take in the shapes and colourways, and start thinking about building your palette before you start.

There are some really good resources on the internet, for example the website [www.colourlovers.com](http://www.colourlovers.com) that has palettes and patterns available ready for use. If you want to do it yourself, start saving some images and pick out the colours to build your own array of swatches that you can then save in Photoshop for this project. Don't worry too much about this being final, it will probably change again as you continue working, but at least you have a guide to start off with. Since this image is inspired by Art Nouveau, the colours I picked were in harmony with each other as the point really isn't to create a stark contrast, but to stay quite muted and natural. For this



 **Colour** Colour by selecting with the Polygonal Lasso tool and filling it on a new layer. This is then multiplied.

tutorial I will be applying soft greens, greys and golds, with some touches of pink and brown as well as darker teal colours in selected areas.

Search for image references before you start sketching your characters and make sure you have the right to use them. It is not always okay to just pull something off a Google Images search. Be clever about it and collage different photographs together to create the image you have in mind. If you want to use a complete photograph as a reference, you can find heaps of free stock-image sites online.

Start by drawing the outlines of your main characters. Keep these separate to anything else you want to put into the background as it will make it much easier for you when colouring your image later.

In fact, separate everything, as working with a digital collage keeps your composition as well as your colour choices flexible. The first thing I tackle when illustrating is the faces. When the person or animal has eyes they can seem to come alive and look at you, which creates a connection and drives

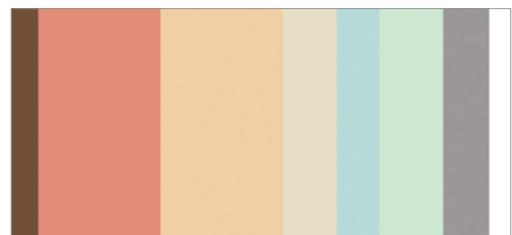
## Blending layers

A wonderful way to work with tones and textures are the extremely underrated and simple technique of blending layers. I mostly use Multiply and Screen to reach the desired effect. Often the edges of the layers overlap in their opacity, creating great shadows and more depth.



 **Sketch** Keep all the elements separate from each other. After scanning in your line drawing, adjust the levels to get a stronger contrast.

 **Palette** Decide on a colour palette before starting your illustration, even if you decide to change it later. Look at images in books and online.





## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info

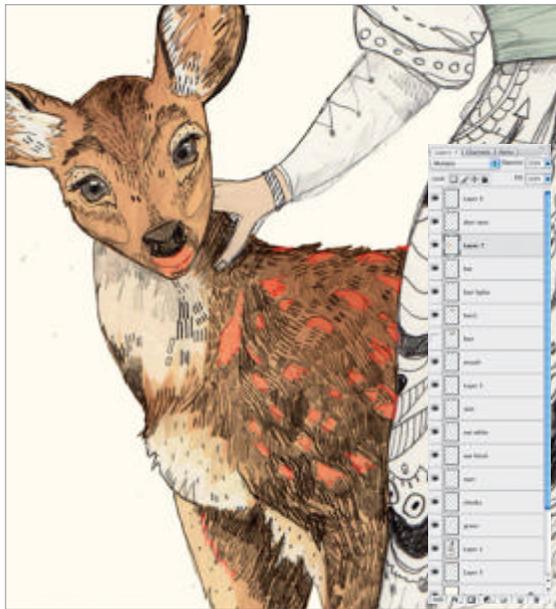


#### Sandra Dieckmann

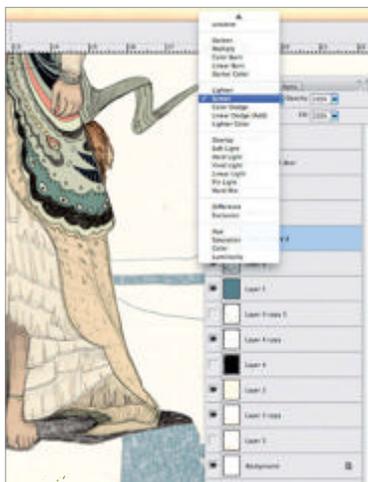
Personal portfolio site  
[sandradieckmann.com](http://sandradieckmann.com)  
Country **Germany**

Software used **Photoshop**

I'm a freelance illustrator living and working in East London. My work mainly revolves around nature and wildlife, and is inspired by all that touches me personally.



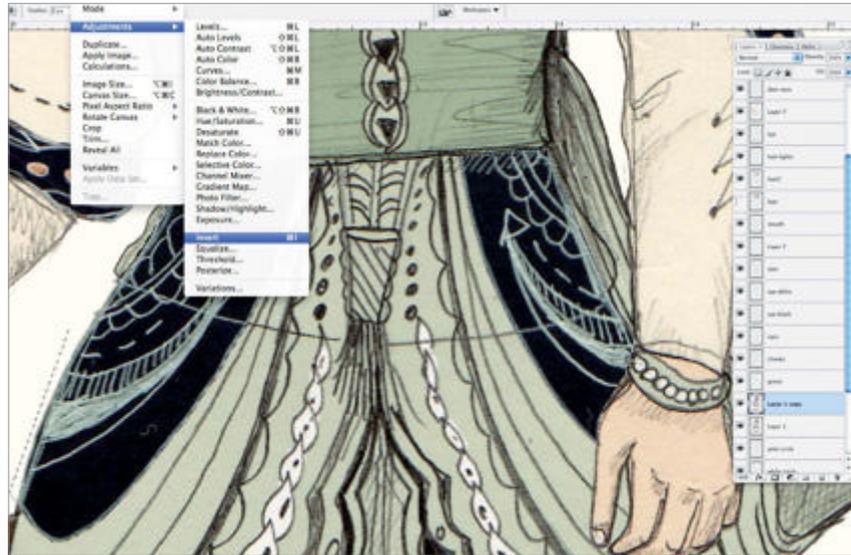
**Quick Mask mode** To create highlights and shadows, enter the Quick Mask mode and select areas with a soft brush or the Polygonal Lasso tool. Once you exit that mode you can shift the hue and contrast.



**Add texture** Fill your background, adding textures and colours that you can either set to the Multiply blend mode, or use Screen to create extra interest.



**Multiply for depth** To give your illustration more depth and interest, copy your original line drawing and invert selected sections to colour by Multiplying a layer on top.



you to complete them to the best of your ability. Make friends with your illustration for the best results!

After scanning in the image it's really important to keep the original drawing safe. Duplicate the layer and maybe even duplicate it again before you start adjusting levels, brightness and contrast. Adjusting these will enable you to use the Magic Wand to cut out any excess white around the drawing. If it is in pencil and the lines aren't strong enough, you can go to Image>Adjustments>Threshold and turn this up to about 200. Now select the white space around it and move back to the layer below (where your original line drawing sits) and cut out the excess white on there.

Before I coloured my princess for this tutorial I made sure she looked strong and beautiful at the sketching stage and added soft pink tones to her cheeks, nose and mouth with a dry brush. You can Multiply that layer and adjust it as desired.

Begin to colour your image by adding another layer and selecting all the areas of skin. Fill these on a new layer again and proceed as before by Multiplying and adjusting as you see fit. The entire piece is coloured this way and you will end up with a lot of layers, so it really pays off to name them all to avoid searching for the right one. When I got to the stage of colouring her hair, I thought about a gust of wind making the hair fly up. This image was supposed to stay light and feminine, so after colouring the hair I erased the tips by selecting a soft brush for the Eraser tool and adding a lighter and brighter brown with the Gradient tool. This makes the colour fade out towards the ends

in a nice gradual way, and the same principal was later applied to the young deer's fur. While working away you can make the process a little easier by adding a dark background layer that really shows off the edges of the items you are colouring.

Both the deer and the girl's dress were initially coloured in one hue and, step by step, little details were cut out or selected with the Polygonal Lasso tool and the brightness, contrast and hue shifted. You can get to these options via Image>Adjustments and then select what you want to change.

To add depth and interest to the deer's fur, I added a texture of crumpled brown paper, set the layer to Multiply and merged it with the other brown layers I applied to the drawing. You can create textures easily yourself by collecting papers, magazines or any other visual reference you come across, and building up an archive that will come in handy for future projects.

Once that was done I concentrated on the light parts and spots on the fur by entering Quick Mask mode and inverting the selection. There I used a soft dry brush to mask the areas I wanted to highlight and returned to Standard Mode where I used a Brightness/Contrast layer and altered the sliders to achieve the desired hues.

Coming back to the girl, it is really important in the line drawing right at the beginning of this tutorial to add details like the little cap she is wearing with the headband and to draw as much detailed pattern on the dress as possible. These patterns and details will create a wonderful contrast to the much less busy

Before

## Apply a pattern Make your princess's dress stand out from the rest

After



The pattern on this dress is based on the natural flowing lines found in much of Art Nouveau design. First of all, I decided on the shape of the garment making sure it was curvy, feminine and had enough layers to really show it off after the pattern was applied. The idea for the pattern stems from extensive image research looking at posters and women's clothing from this period. After drawing in the lines, the illustration was coloured step by step on different layers, multiplying these after selecting and filling in the areas with the Polygonal Lasso tool.





**7 Detail** Once you are happy with the composition and colour of your illustration, you can now start playing with little details to make your piece special.

**Flexibility**  
Keep all the elements of your illustration separate and you will save yourself a lot of time making mistakes and having to redo anything afterwards. Every single tree, plant, animal and person in my illustrations is separately scanned, coloured and saved, and then later digitally collaged together. This gives you flexibility with your composition.



**7 Harmony** Think about colour harmony and how, by introducing a subtle complementary hue in other objects, you can add depth to your image and really make it pop.

backdrop, which was drawn and scanned in separate parts after completing the main characters.

Considering we want this image to be harmonic and in keeping with an Art Nouveau style, we don't want to create contrast by using colour, but can achieve that through the use of textures and pattern.

One fun step in making your drawing appear less flat and more dynamic is to pick out certain areas as I have in the dress, for example, on a copy of the original line drawing and to follow Image> Adjustments>Invert to turn the line drawing inside out. Screening and Multiplying colour on top of this can bring surprising effects that you might want to keep. Experiment and see what happens.

Once you are happy with your main characters, merge their layers together and move them into a new file on a fresh canvas to assemble, compose and colour your background elements.

For this image I have chosen to go with a soft and natural framed outline and flowing, contour-esque lines throughout the stylised ground they are standing on, which was inspired by my research. As I coloured both deer and girl, I played with applying, Multiplying and Screening different textures, keeping in mind the muted palette I was working with and picking my colours out of the swatches saved.

I imported a few small details like the birds flying away into the sky, the trees in the foreground and the woodland in the background, as well as little dots in the sky to add even more depth to the image.

Above the layer with the line drawing of the trees, I added an overlay of peach-textured paper and set the blend mode to Screen. Some of these trees are as they were sketched, and others are inverted to create the opposite effect with the only colour being on the line details against the textured fill.

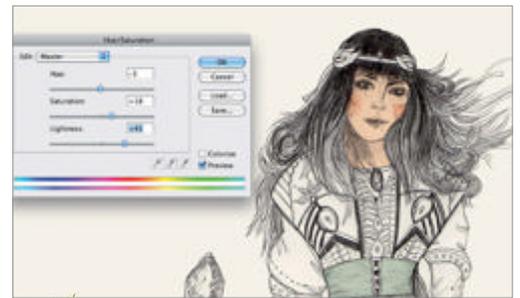
Have another look at your piece as a whole, zooming out to 100%. Clean up any dirty bits, adjust hues and contrast, and then don't forget to save your PSD. Flatten the image when you have no more changes to make and your perfect magical princess and deer illustration has come to life.

## Focus on the face

Essential steps in bringing your character illustration to life



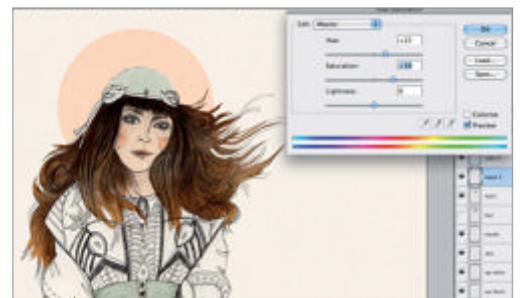
**01 Cheeky** When colouring your line drawing, colour the cheeks, nose and mouth first of all. Use a dry media brush on a new layer set to Multiply.



**02 Face** Add a skin tone by selecting the face and filling on a new layer. Multiply it and adjust the hue and saturation. Select the eyes and cut them away.



**03 Hair** Colour the eyes and then the hair in the same fashion. Depending on your line drawing, this can be a bit tricky as there are lots of fine elements.



**04 Highlights** Use the Eraser to get rid of the hair tips that you coloured. Copy the old layer, select it and fill with a lighter shade using a radial gradient.

# Use PaintTool SAI

Afternoon Escapades 2012 PaintTool SAI

“Breathing life into a two-dimensional image takes time and skill but what if that life is more than even we imagine...?”

Anneliese Mak Illustrator

Source files available

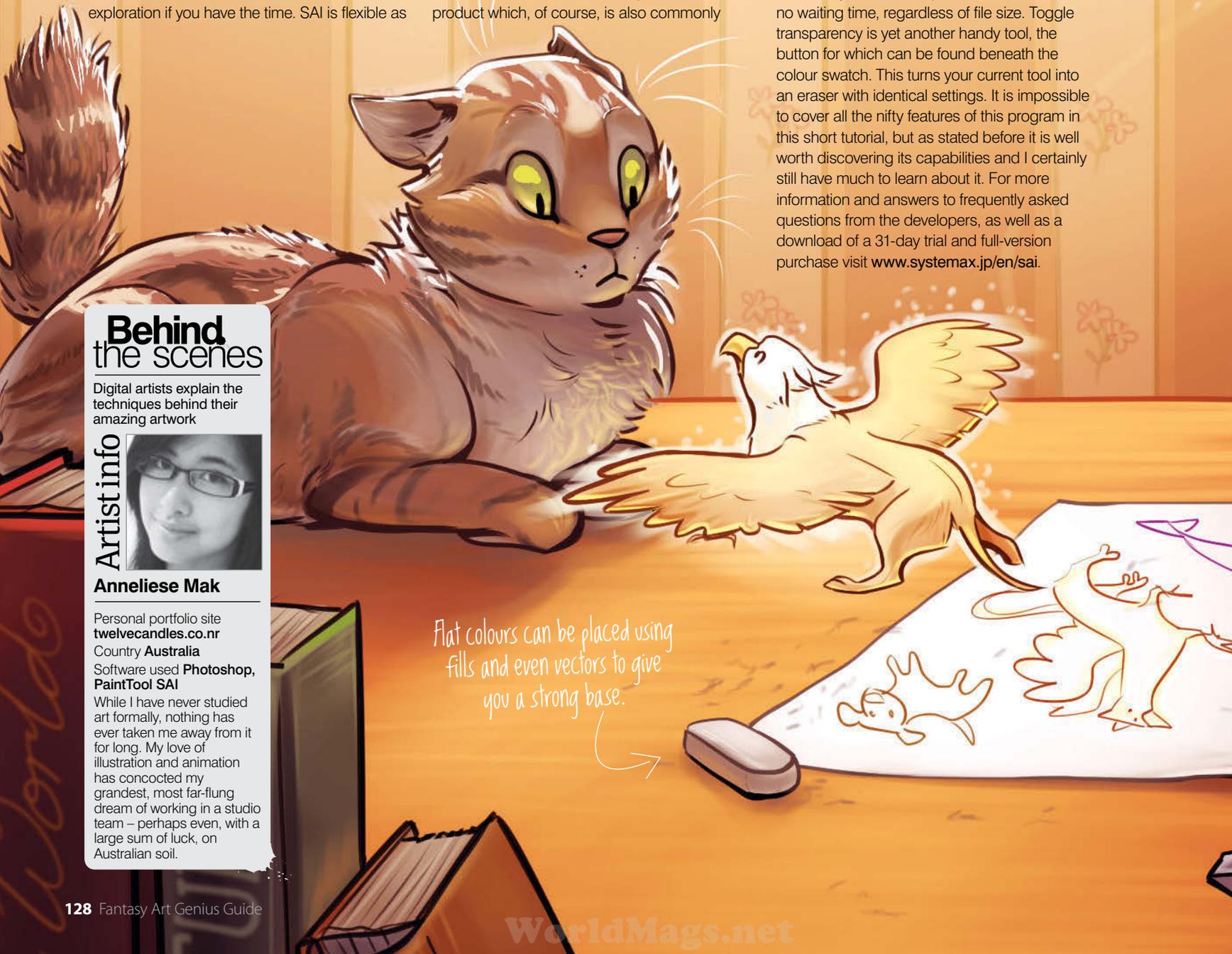
Sketch

**PaintTool SAI (or SAI) is a simple yet incredibly diverse and powerful drawing program with both painting and vector capabilities, created by Japanese developers SYSTEMAX.** While this guide will focus only on the most basic, key features of the painting component, there are countless more treasures in this program that are not covered here and well worth further exploration if you have the time. SAI is flexible as

– though it has a native file type – it is capable of working with and saving into all the common formats used in digital illustration, and that even includes PSDs.

For those accustomed to working in Photoshop, the learning curve won't be too steep, but upon opening the program it is immediately clear that it's engineered more for the creation of illustrations compared to Adobe's product which, of course, is also commonly

used for photo-editing purposes. Preset drawing tools customised to emulate real media such as acrylics, crayons and markers as well as various canvas textures and vector lines can be effortlessly manipulated in terms of weight, colour and position. Also among some of SAI's most useful tools in its impressive arsenal are its canvas functionalities that enable the user to effortlessly rotate and flip the current view with no waiting time, regardless of file size. Toggle transparency is yet another handy tool, the button for which can be found beneath the colour swatch. This turns your current tool into an eraser with identical settings. It is impossible to cover all the nifty features of this program in this short tutorial, but as stated before it is well worth discovering its capabilities and I certainly still have much to learn about it. For more information and answers to frequently asked questions from the developers, as well as a download of a 31-day trial and full-version purchase visit [www.systemax.jp/en/sai](http://www.systemax.jp/en/sai).



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork



**Anneliese Mak**

Personal portfolio site [twelvecandles.co.nr](http://twelvecandles.co.nr)  
Country **Australia**  
Software used **Photoshop, PaintTool SAI**

While I have never studied art formally, nothing has ever taken me away from it for long. My love of illustration and animation has concocted my grandest, most far-flung dream of working in a studio team – perhaps even, with a large sum of luck, on Australian soil.

Flat colours can be placed using fills and even vectors to give you a strong base.



Hues, shades and tones  
can be controlled in RGB  
and HSV values.

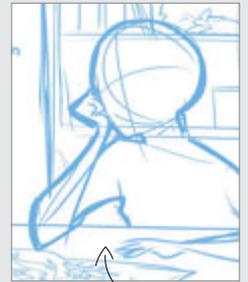


Illustration tools emulate a  
range of real media.

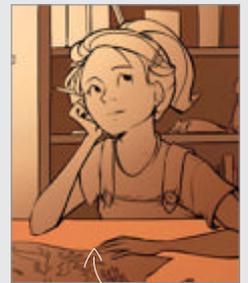


## Working Progress

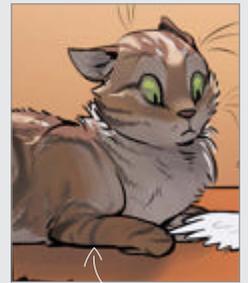
Master this program  
for perfect digital art



Step 01, Sketching



Step 05, Establish the mood



Step 09, Lighting



Step 13, Add effects

# Concept



# The SAI interface

## An introduction to the key functions

If you're used to Photoshop, finding your way around PaintTool SAI shouldn't present any problems. The majority of tools are stacked on the left, with further controls available at the top. A sidebar contains your Layers palette, Preview and Navigation areas. Next to your image, you'll find your main illustration tools. Colour is selected via a hue ring. Below that you'll find a Mixer palette, then brushes. For more info, visit [tinyurl.com/DA-sai-wiki](http://tinyurl.com/DA-sai-wiki).

**1. Layer menu** Basic layer controls, blend modes, opacity, transparency lock, layer clipping and texture options can all be selected here. Ctrl/right-clicking selects the layer's contents. Layer masks can also be used and the Eraser and Pen can paint on the mask.

**2. Canvas tools** Flipping the canvas (H) gives a fresh view of your work, and rotating the canvas can assist when drawing certain angles or drawing upside-down objects. The Stop (square) button returns the view to the default.

**3. Colour tools** The familiar colour wheel – the buttons above house different ways of picking (RGB and HSV), a colour mixer, a swatch panel and a scratchpad. This can be used mixing colours, and can be useful if you're used to traditional media.

**4. Drawing tools** As with most drawing programs, extra tools can be downloaded. There is a huge amount of settings, my favourite of which is the Texture menu. Hotkeys can be configured by double-clicking the tool icon, or via Help>Config>Key Config.

**5. Selection tools** Rectangular Marquee (with layer transformation tools, also accessible via Ctrl/Cmd+T), Lasso and Magic Wand. Irregular selections can also be made, and that Shift does not need to be held while selecting areas with the Magic Wand.

**6. Preview and navigation** The Preview window is helpful for navigation or just for a very rough overview. Canvas zoom and rotation can be controlled and memory and keyboard usage are viewable in the bottom-right corner of the interface.

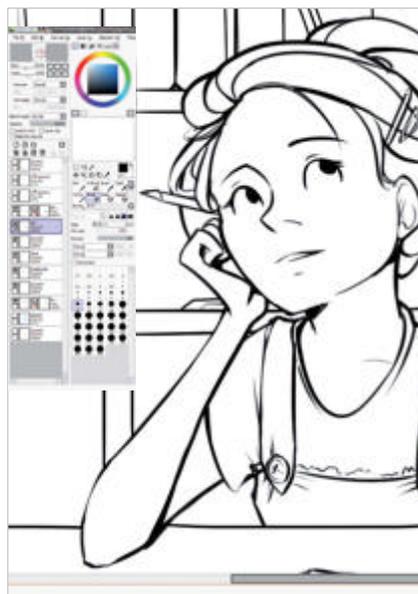


# PaintTool process

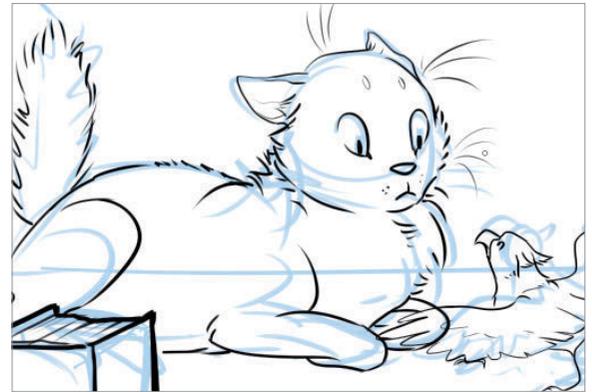
Begin your SAI masterpiece with line and ink sketches



**01 Sketching** I start off with a rough sketch using the Pen tool and use a few layers to rearrange elements. Before working on the line art, I will flatten these into a single layer for the sake of organisation. I may scribble notes to myself and mark out areas to focus on later. Unlike Photoshop, the Background layer in SAI is transparent.



**04 Finish the lines** This is the final stage of my inking process for now. I go back over the lines, taking into account light source, depth and any textures that I will need to evoke. I thicken lines around objects and areas that will be in shadow, those that are closer to the viewer and the key focal points of the image.



**02 Begin the line art** On a new layer, I use the Brush tool on Fine Flat and begin the line art after slightly lowering the opacity of the sketch. I alternate between the Brush and Pen for this stage. Try varying brush size according to distance from the camera, with thicker lines for objects that are closer.



**03 Continue to ink** More inking! I opt to hand-draw straight lines for a more organic feel. I create two copies of the vector layer and, flipping the canvas 90° for ease of use, start laying out the shapes with the Line tool as a guide.



**05 Establish the mood** Regardless of what program I'm working in, I like to rough in the background to indicate lighting and mood before I lay the colours. Some prefer to block in the flat tones or even render the subjects completely first, then use filters to marry it with the background, but I rather enjoy the process of colour picking.



## 06 Lay flat colours

Now for the flats. It's a simple joy for me to find what emphasises certain areas while cohering with the background. I use the Magic Wand and Selection>Expand, trying to use as few layers as possible for the sake of saving space and memory.

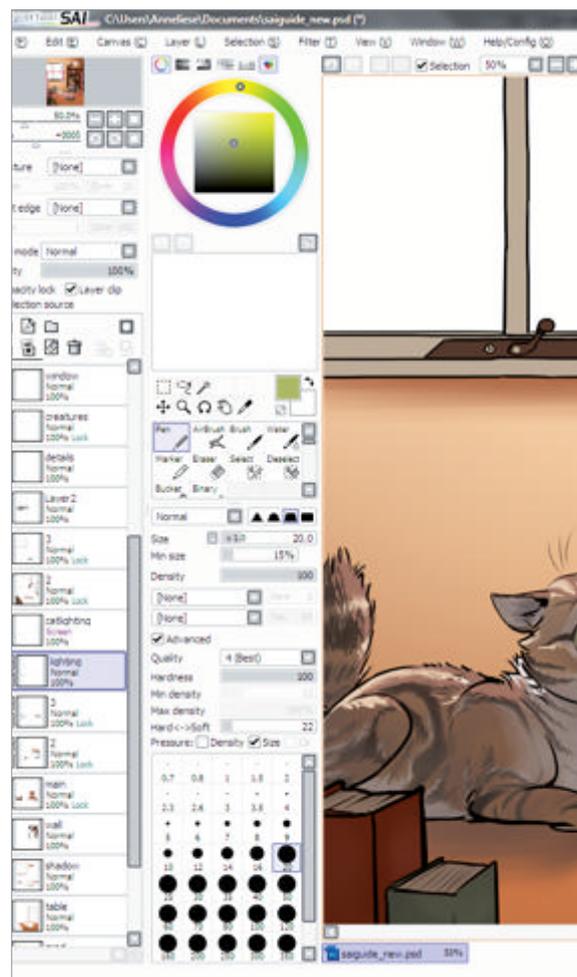
**07 Shading** With a large Airbrush, I lightly brush over each layer of the flats to establish a very rough, basic sense of lighting. This is where it comes in handy to have layers so that objects are not adjacent. This way I can use the Lasso to easily section off each element and leave others untouched, even when working with a cumbersome tool.



**09 Lighting** As the main light source here is behind the subject, I've chosen flat colours that correspond to the shadowed areas, over which I can place highlights. On a new layer, I paint the subject highlights in lighter, more-saturated colours with the Pen. For large areas, I draw the outline and fill with the Paint Bucket tool set to Color Difference.



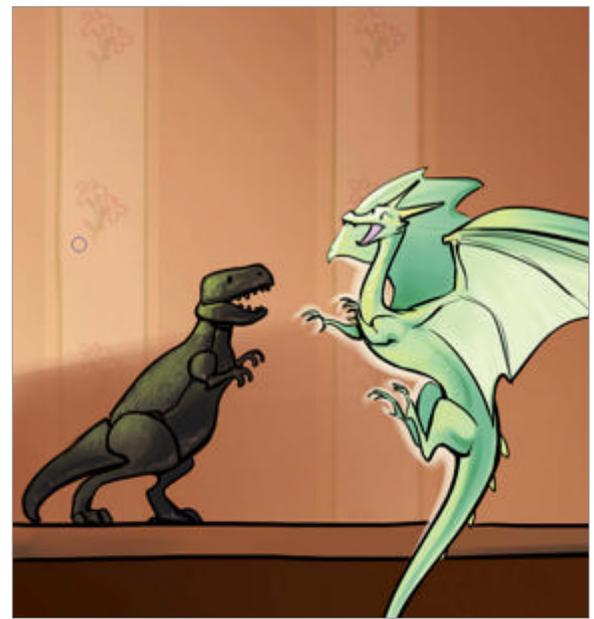
**10 Extra details** On a few layers between the initial highlights and the flat colours, I go back over with the Airbrush and Water, and add extra lighting and details as I see fit. I also add another layer at the top for some rim lighting effects.



**08 Background shadows** This isn't an absolute necessity in the process (I tend to work depending on how I feel and what will keep the piece cohesive), but I went with the Airbrush and Water tools to rough in some background shadows at this point.



**11 Refine the background** For the background elements, I paint shadow and highlight details directly onto their respective layers, still with the Airbrush and Water tools. Try to keep focused on the larger picture rather than get carried away with the minute details of every single element, as they may end up distracting from the focal points.



**12 Wallpaper** The wallpaper was mostly trial and error since it turns out interior design isn't exactly my strong point! I used my previous vector layers to draw some straight lines and then the Marquee tool to fill areas before duplicating a small flower pattern.



**13 Add effects** What better way to make things look magical than glows and sparkles? Not entirely original, but it does work. On a new layer below the creatures' line art I paint in some simple effects with the Water tool.



**14 Colour the lines** I'm mostly satisfied with the contrast the black lines provide for the girl and the cat, but for background objects such as the window frame and the items on the bookshelf I pick a dark colour in the same hue as the object and paint over the lines with Opacity Lock on. I also do this for the creatures, to make them stand out a bit more.

## Common mistakes

To make sure you don't forget about focus and tonal contrast, try desaturating your image completely. Flip the canvas and take regular breaks so that you see the image with fresh eyes and avoid going off on a tangent. And use references! I had images of cats, cherry blossoms and metal pencil tins, and without them those elements would likely have turned out terribly.



**15 Touch up** At the very end, I may take the file back into Photoshop and make some minor adjustments. Here I've used adjustment layers, a layer on Soft Light and a very low opacity to add extra warmth around the window and a Multiply layer to add a slight vignette. Finally I save it out and the piece is ready for printing or display.

# The golden rules of comic art

 **Source files available**

Line art

## Working Progress

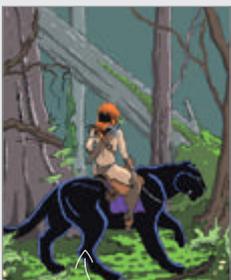
Enhance your stories with these simple tips



Step 01, Complete drawings



Step 04, Ink panels



Step 07, Begin colour



Step 10, The final panel

## Haunted Forest 2012 Painter, Photoshop

“ This tutorial demonstrates various uses of text boxes, balloons and SFX to add authenticity to sequential art ”

**Kathy Ferrell** Illustrator



**Since childhood I have loved comics, especially the ones that featured swords and sorcery fantasy.**

Discovering the work of greats such as Frank Brunner, Richard Corbin, John and Marie Severin, Boris Vallejo and Frank Frazetta inspired me to choose art as my own career. No matter what style or medium an artist works in, a basic understanding of sequential art and text use can only broaden their outlook and is therefore worthy of study. Two excellent, authoritative sources on this subject are *Comics and Sequential Art* by Will Eisner and *Classic Comics Illustrators: The Comics Journal Library*.

To prepare for a project like this, look at many Silver Age comics, particularly from the late Sixties and Seventies. Note that during this period text had moved far beyond the often-repetitive style of the Golden Age. Artists were gaining more creative freedom and the large-format

Warren publications were taking the medium into new realms. It became standard practice that the shape and size of speech balloons themselves be as varied as the words contained within, often visually reflecting the emotions being expressed by the text.

Note also that the most interesting comic pages vary the size of the panels according to the needs of the script. Text size and styles change to illustrate the tone of voice or subtlety of thought. Keep in mind as you plan your palette that comics created in the pre-computer age did not have the advantages of today's digital toolbox. Colours were often subdued and quite flat, without the gradient shading seen so frequently in modern graphic novels.

I created traditional pencil drawings on paper and scanned them into Photoshop to start this piece. I then manipulated their size and began working them into a panel layout I had prepared in Corel Painter.



## Cement your concept

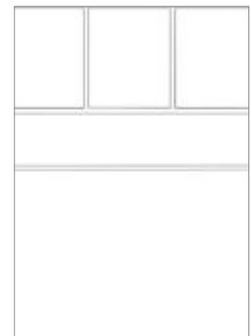
**Finalise the script and character placement**



**01 Complete drawings** I used traditional pencil and paper for this step, creating five individual drawings. The more complete the detail at this stage, the faster and easier the inking will be later. When finished, scan the drawings into Photoshop.

## 02 Create a page layout

Using Painter, create a new file choosing a smooth, hard paper. Create the file at 50% of the final image. Hot Press gives a look nearly identical to the illustration board used in comics.



Meanwhile, in the  
**HAUNTED FOREST...**



well, Shah, I suppose we might  
as well camp here for the night...



Although I don't trust  
those trees...  
there are eyes in them...



**Krik - krik - krik**

**Snnnarllll!**

**YUM...**

**SKRE**

show yourselves,  
**DEMONS!**

**RRRAAAARRR!**



### Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the  
techniques behind their  
amazing artwork

Artist info



**Kathy Ferrell**

Personal portfolio site  
[cuposwank.carbonmade.com](http://cuposwank.carbonmade.com)

Country US  
Software used **Painter,**  
**Photoshop**

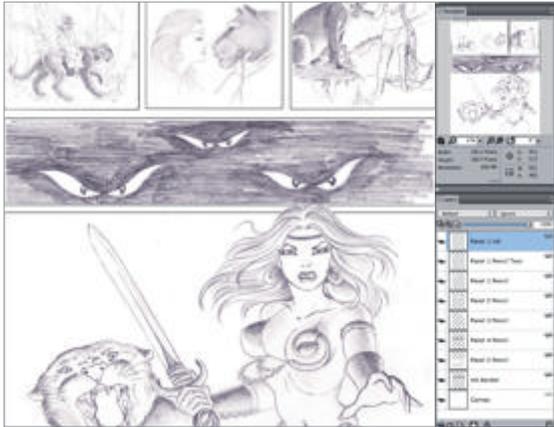
My most consistent  
influences are Warren  
comics, Art Nouveau, pulp  
paperbacks and gothic  
horror fiction.



## Bring in text and colour

Convey your characters' emotions

**03 Arrange sketches** Copy and paste the pencil sketches in, adjusting size as needed and arranging each drawing into its corresponding panel.



**04 Ink panels** Set the sketch layer to 30% Opacity. Create a new layer for each inked panel, as well as a separate one for each text box or speech balloon. Using the Fine Point pen from the Brushes palette, ink the pencil sketches. Discard pencil layers as you go.

**05 Add text** Begin adding text to the various speech balloons, text boxes and thought bubbles. The Komika font was selected for this piece and the weight varied, especially in the third panel. The type in the thought bubbles becomes smaller to build apprehension.



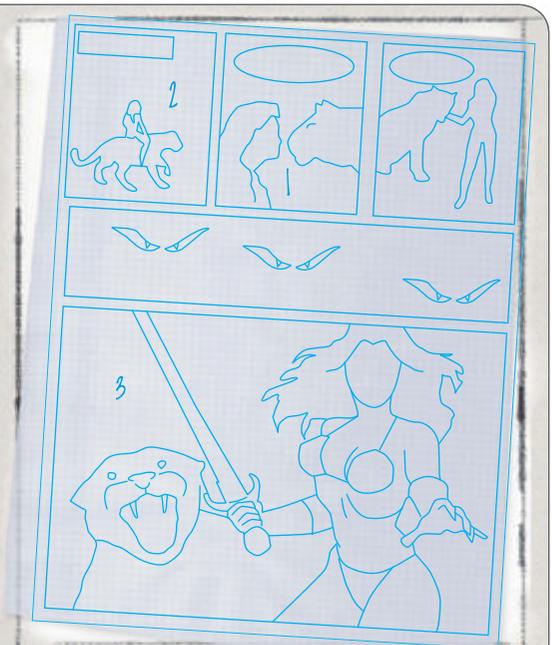
**06 Complete text** Since panel five depicts the climax of the action, several parts break the frame. The boldest and largest type is used and the character's speech balloon is jagged to indicate a shout. The cat's roar, while very bold, is crossed by the sword to give this panel a sense of depth.



**07 Begin colour** Create new layers for each panel as you add colour. Position these fills under the ink layers. Select pens from the Brushes palette, including Smooth Thick Round and Fine Point. Work from the back to the foreground, keeping in mind a cool forest at sundown.



**08 Create firelight** Panel three is a good example of how effective the simple use of yellow and black can be in a colour scheme. Remember, it is now dark in the forest and the fire is the only light source so features are simple and indistinct.



## Key techniques

The secrets of great comics

- 1 Draw daily** Keep a sketchbook handy and experiment with different pencils and inks. Comics demand the particular skill of drawing the character in different scenarios. The more you practise, the more recognisable your style will be.
- 2 Think in sequence** Aim for logical order in the arrangement of your layers. Think in terms of background, mid-ground and foreground with ink outlines and text boxes positioned on the surface nearest the viewer.
- 3 Colour speaks** Colour has a language in its own right. Cool shades of blue and green tell a reader that things are calm. As the action heats up, so should your colour choices. Shades of red create a visceral sensation for the reader.

**09 Add SFX** Panel four provides an opportunity to add freehand lettering for creepy sound effects. Choose red and use the Fine Point pen to hand-write the words on a separate layer. Now fill in the centres with yellow.



**10 The final panel** Panel five is the largest and most dramatic, so use several layers and take care with details. A simple background that suggests a large boulder adds tension. Our character's back is to the wall. She must fight. Remember, the fire will add a strong light from below. Notice the yellow added to her eyes. Check your work carefully, merge all layers and save.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Simeon Elson**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.simeonelson.co.uk](http://www.simeonelson.co.uk)

Country **Turkey**

Software used **Photoshop, Illustrator**

Simeon is a freelance illustrator and graphic artist. He creates his work by fusing vectors with pixels, working mainly in Photoshop and Illustrator. He has worked on flyers, posters, logos, websites and more.



# Design a movie poster

**Zombie Takeover** 2011 **Photoshop**

“You will learn how to master Illustrator’s Pen tool in a simple but highly effective way”

**Simeon Elson** Illustrator



**Zombies are big business at the moment.** There are horde upon horde of them in contemporary literature, cinema and videogames – including recent comic phenomena such as *Marvel Zombies*, *DC’s Blackest Night* and TV series *The Walking Dead*. Coinciding with these are the launches of the *Red Dead Redemption*, *Dead Rising 2* and *Left 4 Dead 2* videogames, among many others. So, what better subject to focus on when looking at how to grasp editorial styles?

In this tutorial, we set up a mock brief for international illustrator Simeon Elson, who shows you how to re-create an iconic and cinematic illustrative style, which engages viewers – one which is as gruesome as it is cool. We’ll reveal

how to use Adobe Illustrator to create realistic graphical characters and, subsequently, Photoshop to add texture and work up the final composition.

During this workshop you will learn how to master Illustrator’s Pen tool in a simple but highly effective way, as well as how to create dynamic visuals with powerful and intuitive Photoshop colour and layer effects.

We have used a wide variety of stock images from two texture sites, Fotolia and iStockphoto, so you will need to download these beforehand if you want to follow the tutorial exactly; however, for the most gratifying results, we recommend gathering your own zombie stock as originality is imperative to editorial design.



**Source files available**

Stock images

## Using Illustrator

To create this particular style of editorial design, we must make use of both Photoshop and Illustrator. If you don’t currently have the latter app, then you can download a free 30-day trial directly from the Adobe website ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)) so that you can follow along with all of this workshop’s steps.

In particular, Illustrator’s Pen tool is an essential part of this tutorial, so take time to familiarise yourself with it. Draw some random abstract shapes to get used to the click-and-drag motion needed to create accurate curves, and also make some shapes with sharp edges and corners, as this will help you learn how to produce more rigid elements.

Take time to learn the different elements of Illustrator’s Pen tool too: the Add Anchor Point tool, the Delete Anchor Point tool and the Convert Anchor Point tool, etc. The most important thing is to express yourself from the get-go by creating interesting shapes that are quite edgy and abstract to give you a striking and graphical end product.

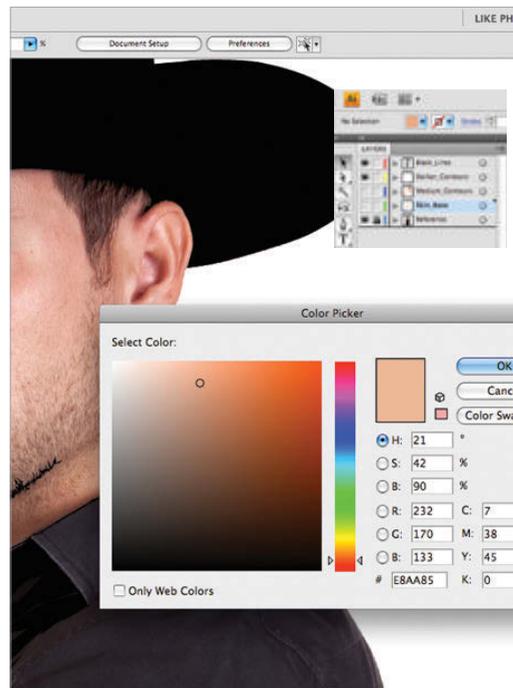


## Prepare yourself

Do the groundwork



**01 File preparation** Open up the first character in Illustrator (“serious man rifle” from Fotolia), then change the mode to CMYK via File>Document Color Mode>CMYK. Double-click on the photo in the Layers palette and name it ‘Reference’. Be sure to click the Lock tab, as we don’t want the image to move. Create a new layer and call it ‘Black Lines’.



**02 Skin tone** Use the colour Eyedropper tool to select a flesh colour – sometimes the colour may be too dull, so you might need to brighten it by tweaking values. Create a new layer and call it ‘Skin Base’, positioning just above the Reference layer, then draw out the flesh areas.

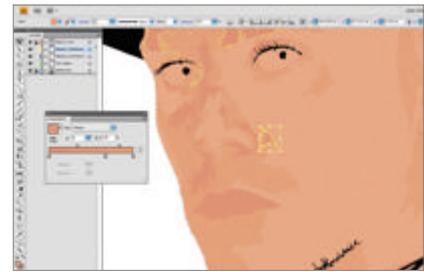
**03 Outlines** Next select the Pen tool to draw the character's deepest shadows. Before drawing each shape, set the Pen tool Opacity to 0% – this way you can see the shape you're drawing and the photo below simultaneously. Try to create interesting abstract shapes.



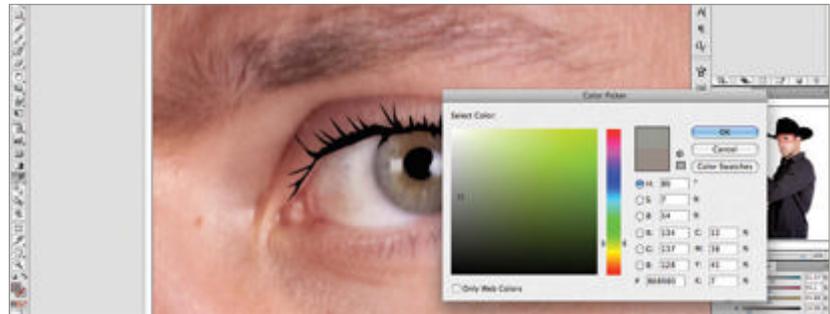
**04 Add detail** Open a new layer and name it 'Medium Contours' for the midtone shadows of the character's skin. Repeat this process to create the 'Darker Contours' layer. You should now start to see your character emerging. For a more realistic look we are now going to blend some areas of the face using gradients.



**05 Blending colours** Still with the Darker Contours layer active, open the Gradient palette, setting Type to Radial. Place the Darker Contours swatch at 0% and the Medium Contours swatch at 100%. Add another gradient slider at around 65%. Remove the Medium Contours swatch from the gradient and drag the swatch located at 65% to 100%.



**06 Blending continued** Keep making the 100% location colour darker until you get an effective blend. Apply this technique to any other shape that you feel requires a more realistic contrast. You may find in some cases the darker 0% location colour needs to be made lighter.



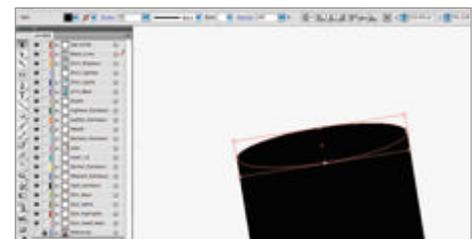
**07 Accurate colour selection** Next, let's draw his eyes. Use the Eyedropper tool to pick the lightest part of the iris, then place it right next to the pupil. Adjust the colour until your selection matches your character's natural eye colour. The iris consists of four or five different shades so use this colour selection process to re-create them all.

## Quick Tip

Experiment when using textures. Use different colours, Opacity settings and blending modes and go for it! Also, try mixing various blending modes together, for example Screen with Hard Light can give a great contrast in colours, although you will need to fiddle about with the values to get the best results.



**08 Extend the rifle** Continue to add detail to the portrait, applying highlights, facial features and mixed skin tones – but keep each colour on separate layers. The gun has been cropped, so we need to top off the rifle. Use the barrel as your reference guide to draw a small slanted rectangle.

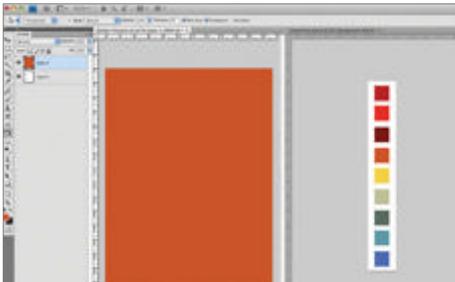


**09 Extend the rifle 2** Choose the Direct Selection tool, pulling the top-right corner anchor point up slightly to create a diagonal angle. Finally, with the Ellipse tool, draw a thin oval shape, then angle it and position it at the top of the rifle. Then add any final detail to make the join seamless.

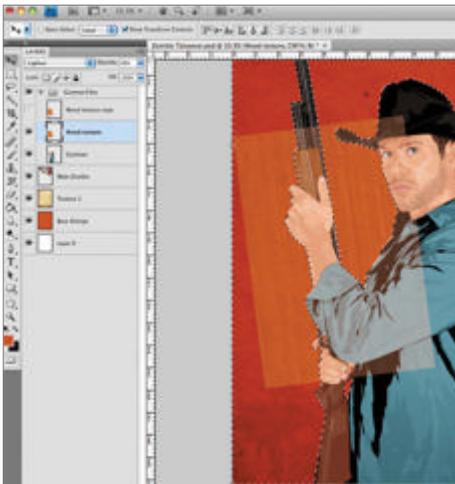
**10 Create the main zombie** When illustrating the main zombie in the background (our reference is the 'Zombie' image from Fotolia), features such as the eyes (enlarge the pupils) and teeth need to be changed. As seen in this reference photo, features are more vampiric. For this illustration we're going to use a more simplistic style with only a few colours, leaving the rest transparent. Repeat these Illustrator steps with as many characters as you want in your final piece (see the links on the disc for the ones that we used).



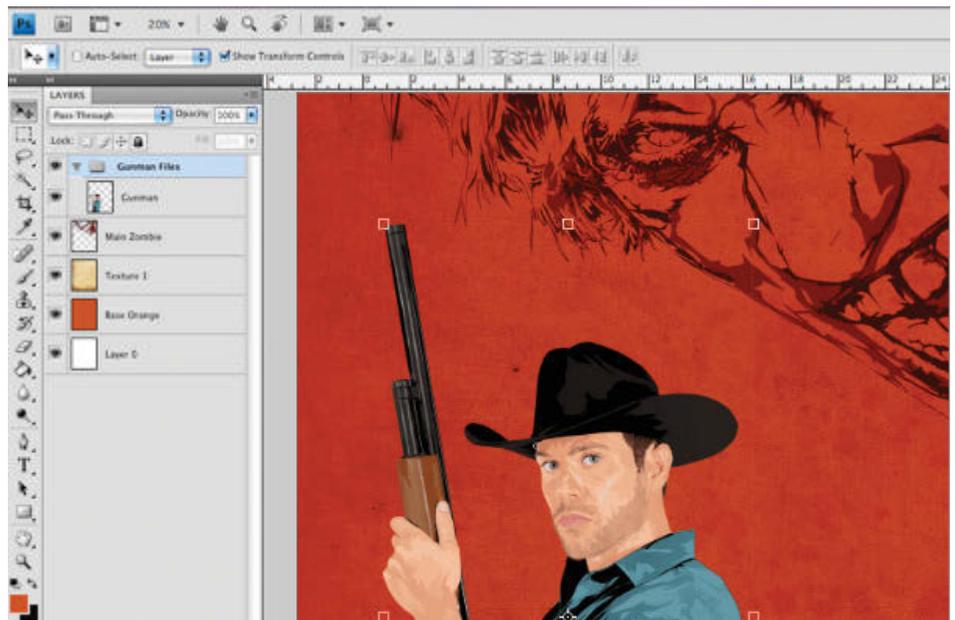
**11 Switch to Photoshop** Now all of our characters have been created, it's time to jump over to Photoshop. Create a new CMYK file and set your workspace to a multiple palette layout – meaning you can see your Color palette as well. Open a new layer and then use the Paint Bucket tool to fill it with a deep orange tone.



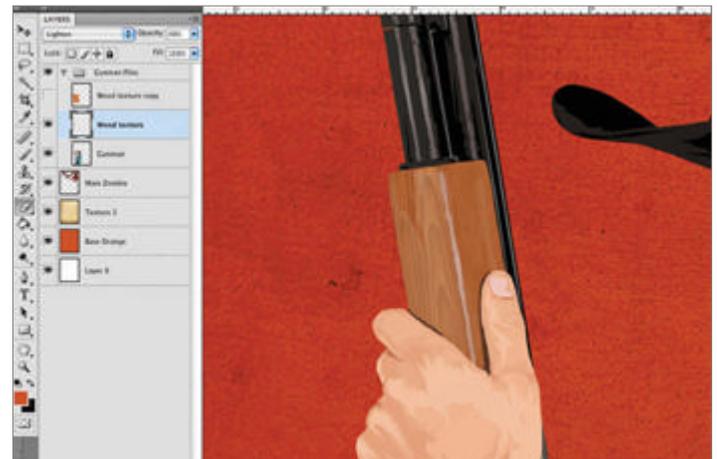
**13 Wood texture** Now we source a wood texture from CGTextures ('WoodFine001'), rotate the image so it's at a similar angle as the gun, then set the blending mode to Lighten and the Opacity to 48%. Select the gunman by pressing Cmd/Ctrl and clicking the layer's thumbnail, then invert the selection (Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I).



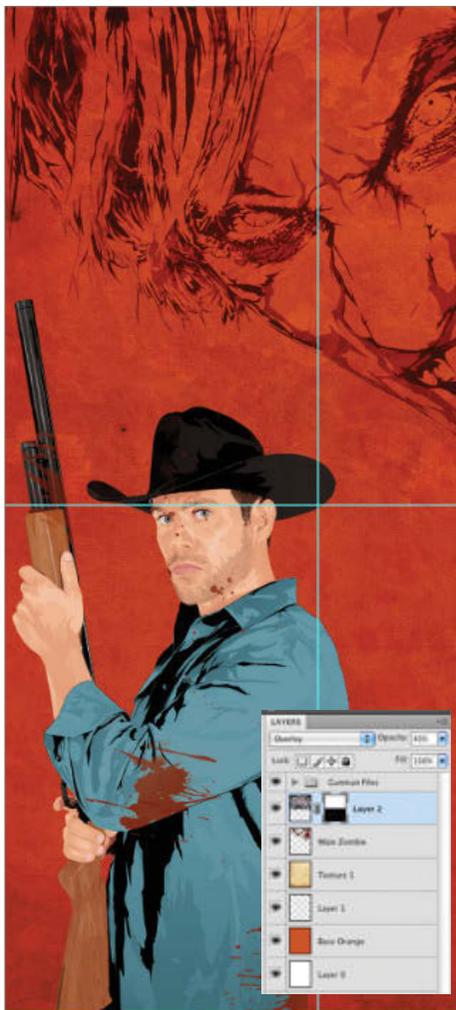
**12 Texture the canvas** We add in 'old paper texture' from iStockphoto (link on the disc). Stretch the texture so that it fills the page, then Edit>Transform> Rotate by 90 degrees clockwise. Set the blending mode to Linear Burn and Opacity to 67%. Open the main zombie image and the gunman. Create a new group and call it 'Gunman Files', placing the man inside it.



**14 More texture** Hit Delete to clear the selected area. Select the Eraser tool set to a 27px Brush (at 90% Opacity). Erase remaining texture around the wood. Select the man and wood texture layers, then click the Link Layers icon so they move as one. We're now going to use splatters to add a bit more edge to the gunman.

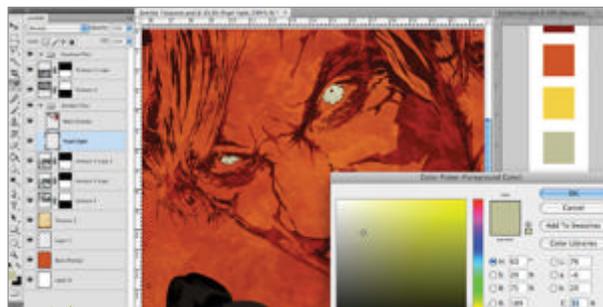
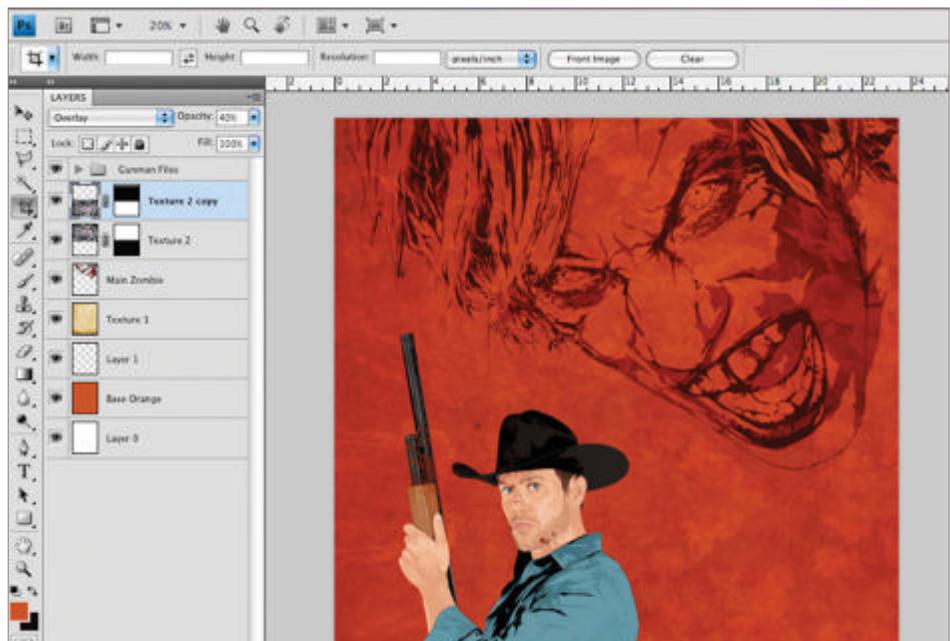


**15 Add splatters** Position the splatter so that it looks like zombie blood has splashed onto him. Then set the colour to red by double-clicking the layer and applying a Color Overlay. Use an inverted selection on the gunman to clear the excess splatter, then erase any unwanted areas. Repeat this process on other areas of the gunman. Use the Eraser set to 400px, 0% Hardness and 18% Opacity to reduce the prominence of the splatters.



**16 Work up the background** Enhance the background by adding in a new texture (we use the 'stone pebble' texture from Urban Dirty). Place it just above the main zombie layer and stretch it so it fits across the top half of the page, setting Opacity to 40% and an Overlay blending mode. Add a layer mask and select the Gradient tool set to black-white, and draw a small gradient starting just before the halfway vertical mark.

**17 Texture continued** Duplicate this layer and then flip it vertically (Edit>Transform> Flip Vertical). Drag the duplicated layer to the bottom half of the page so that it fits seamlessly with no visible joining point. Follow the same process with another texture (we used Urban Dirty's 'glass frosted crack' image), setting the blending mode to Soft Light at 51% Opacity and place this just below the main zombie.

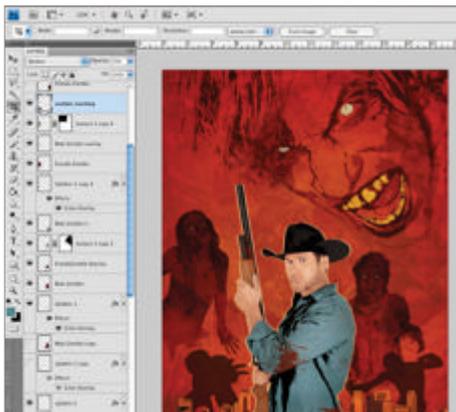
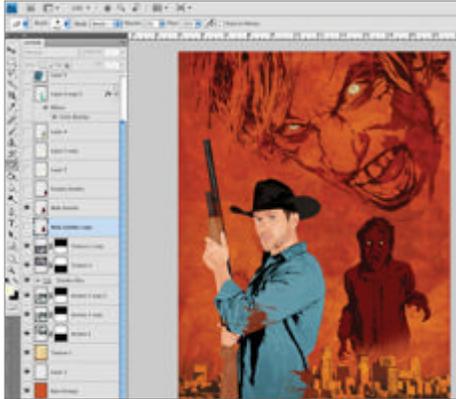


**18 Jeepers creepers** Create a new layer placed below the main zombie layer. Select a light green colour and, with the Brush tool set to 34px, Hardness at 53%, 100% Opacity, colour in the zombie's eyes. Add the 'Urban Highway' image (from iStockphoto), duplicate twice, setting the bottom duplicate to 100% Opacity and applying a Overlay blending mode.

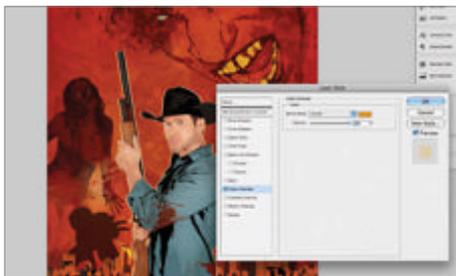
## Quick Tip

Drawing stubble can be very tricky. Pick a tone or gradient similar to the gunman's eyebrows. Use this colour to draw around the beard area, set Opacity to 70%, then add one or two hairs with a small brush to boost realism.

**19 Energy through colour** Add another zombie and use an Eraser at 35% Opacity to fade out the bottom of the zombie. Duplicate your 'glass frosted crack' texture again, placing it above the second zombie and changing the blending mode to Multiply. Place in a position where you get an interesting contrast, then clear the area around the second zombie. Set the Opacity of the texture to 74%.



**21 Enhance the colours** Add a Radial gradient to the orange base layer and set the outer colour to a deep red and the inner colour to transparent. Change the blending mode to Linear Burn at 20% Opacity. Next, we add more two-tone zombies, and apply the 'glass frosted crack' texture for more grunge.



**22 More elements** Continue to build up more detail by duplicating the silhouettes and overlapping them. Use blending modes like Screen and Lighten, and reduce the opacity if needed. Also tweaking the positions of the characters can make all the difference. Create another splatter layer with a yellow Color Overlay set to Screen.

**20 The end is nigh** Apply the same technique using the 'zombie girl' image from Folia to add more variation. Add splatters to increase contrast in the image. Colour the main zombie's teeth and add a Stroke to the gunman to help him stand out. Colour the Stroke light yellow, set its blending mode to Screen, then choose an opacity that suits.



## Add emotion

Our gunman has a mean look as he's on a mission to blast every zombie in his hometown to pieces. We can enhance this emotion by adding textures and blood splatters. Use the 'glass frosted crack' texture, duplicating and placing it above the gunman's face and shirt. Experiment with blending modes such as Multiply, Linear Burn and Darken for a grubby look.

Use the Eraser tool set to Brush mode, 30% Opacity, with a soft edge and sized between 300-500px to carefully remove unwanted areas. Try not to overdo it to the point where the gunman is lost, but at the same time we want to inject a sense of chaos and commotion.

Also the gunman's shirt starts as a blue/green colour, but this is too bright. We could simply edit it in Photoshop using Hue/Saturation or a Color Balance adjustment, but with a vector illustration like this you would be hard pressed to do so without losing detail and sharpness. We can amend this in Illustrator by simply reducing every shape of the gunman's shirt's Cyan value by 5% and then saving it as a new file. Then position it in place of our previous gunman in our final PSD file.

**23 Finishing touches** Lastly, we need a bit more dynamism. Use your splatter texture to add lighter areas around the zombies. Reduce opacity in places; also use a large, low-opacity Eraser to fade edges. After any final compositional tweaks, we're done.



# Manga illustration on the iPad

Backstreet's Den 2012 **SketchBook Pro, procreate, Photogene**

“ This tutorial demonstrates a method for creating a beautiful manga illustration entirely on the iPad ”

**Patipat Asavasena** Freelance illustrator

**The advantage of the iPad is mobility.** I like to work outside my studio and often carry a sketchbook with me, so now I also include the iPad in my bag. I can create designs with colour, tonal pieces or even rough paintings with it. When I get back to my studio I can then transfer those designs to my workstation and continue with them. That's how the iPad has changed my workflow. Furthermore, I can work directly on the screen and that's very intuitive.

There is a downside, however, and for me it's the accuracy of input. This is a particular problem when I try inking. I use a stylus, but even that's not much help. The iPad's screen also lacks the pressure sensitivity that you would get with a graphics tablet, and that is crucial for some artists. Hopefully these downsides will be improved in the next generations, the iPad 3 or maybe later, but for me it's still an invaluable tool.

So, is it possible to create an artwork entirely on the iPad? It doesn't have the flexibility of a desktop application, and it might consume more time during some tasks, but yes, we can do it. I will show you in this tutorial how I created a manga piece entirely on my tablet.

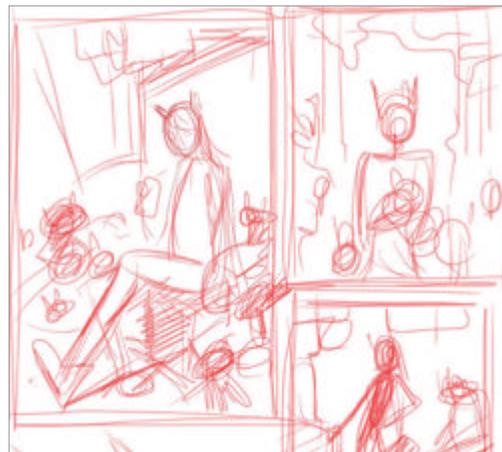
I used the SketchBook Pro, procreate and Photogene apps with an AluPen stylus on the iPad 2. SketchBook Pro is one of the best art apps out there, with high-quality tools and brushes built in. I mainly use this app for sketching and inking. As for procreate, it provides customisable, high-precision brushes and an advanced layer system. The user interface is also streamlined and amazingly fast so I usually use this app for painting. Finally, Photogene is for tweaking colour, brightness and contrast.

Note that you can't work on a high-res canvas if you are working on a first generation iPad, but the process is still the same so you can follow the steps as normal.

## Thumbnail designs

Sketch a range of ideas to refine your concept

**01 Brainstorm ideas** I usually start with a lot of thumbnail sketches to explore the given concept. I create a blank canvas in SketchBook Pro and use the Pencil tool. I choose one thumbnail as a guideline and draw a more detailed version.



**02 Concept sketch** I create a new blank canvas and use Pencil brush no.4 to quickly sketch the image. Don't pay too much attention to the details here, just focus on the overall composition and draw loosely. I then export the image to procreate.

Source files available

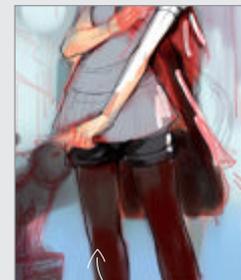
Sketch

## Working Progress

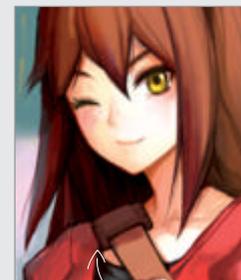
Go from concept to artwork in mobile apps



Step 02, Concept sketch



Step 05, Create a colour script



Step 09, Paint the hair



Step 13, Minor details

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



### Patipat Asavasena

Personal portfolio site  
[www.asuka111.net](http://www.asuka111.net)

Country **Thailand**

Software used **Photoshop, SketchBook Pro**

I moved away from a career in engineering because I love art and have been working as a professional artist for five years. My works have been strongly influenced by Japanese manga. Now I'm a freelance illustrator living in Thailand.





## Colour and compose

Block in your tones and work on the details

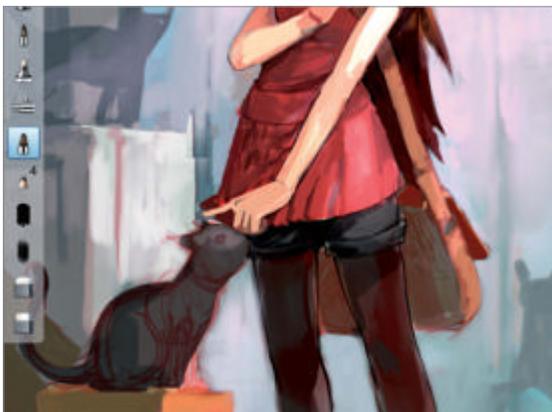
**03 Clean up the character** I run procreate then create a new layer on top of the sketch. With a Normal brush at 1% Size and 60% Opacity I clean up the character. I flip the image horizontally to check for flaws, for example in the alignment of the facial features, and fix any I come across.



**05 Create a colour script** iPad painting apps don't have the flexibility of Photoshop, so a colour script reduces guesswork. I use a large brush and try various combinations, then pick the version I like most.



**06 Into SketchBook Pro** Export the image to Camera Roll then run the SketchBook Pro app and create a new high-res canvas (turning on high-res canvas in the Preference menu). Import the image via Layer > Import Photo. Finally, tap the Free Transform tool to resize the image to fit the entire canvas.



**07 Block simple colour** I use the Paintbrush tool at 20% Opacity to block in some simple colour for the character, background details and cats. I slowly refine the overall elements but I don't focus on any minor details yet. Remember to work from large to small-scale detail.

**04 Draw the background** I create another new layer for the background and loosely draw in the setting and the cats. How loose is loose? Just enough for me to know where they are and what they do. I will clean them up at a later stage.

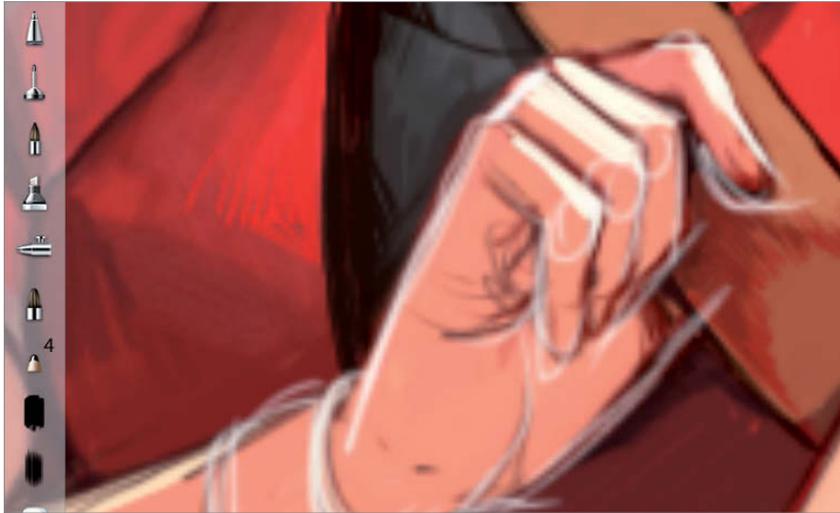


**08 Fix character proportion** My character's proportion was slightly off, with her body too short. I revised this by duplicating the layer and using the Erase tool to remove all areas except the character. I then used the Transform tool to make the adjustment.



**09 Paint the hair** I begin to refine the small details of the character's hair. First, I use the Airbrush to blend the colours as it gives a soft feel. I then use the Paintbrush to paint the hairline. Finally I use the Pencil tool at 1.0 for the small details.

**10 Details** I use the Paintbrush tool at 10% Opacity for blending skin tone around the facial area and the costume. For the small details like hands, the bag and her eyes, I use the Pencil tool to sketch additional details and the Ballpoint Pen tool at Size 1.0 to refine the hard edge.

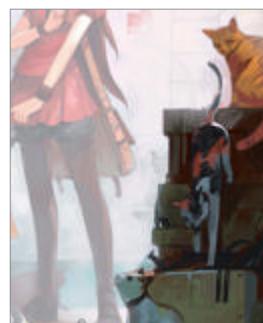


**11 Revise the background** When I looked at the overall image again I felt there was a problem in the composition. The details around the corners of the image look almost the same size; it's dull and static. To fix this I increase the size of the dark yellow sign and decrease the visibility of the top-left one. I'm now satisfied with the overall composition.

**12 Paint the cats** I use a small brush to clean up the shape of these cats and the Pencil tool to paint the fur. I add different patterns to make them look more interesting.



**13 Minor details** This is the best step; I love to add a lot of small details into an image to make it look interesting. It can be hard with the iPad because of the restriction of resolution and the accuracy of input, but the end result is worth it.



**14 Look for any improvement** I check the overall image once again to see if there is anything that can be improved. This image looks flat, so I repeat the method from step 8. I enlarge the bottom-right area a little bit to increase the depth of the image.



**15 Adjust the colour and contrast** I export the picture to Camera Roll and then open it with Photogene. I increase Contrast to 0.05 and the Sharpen amount to 0.15 before exporting again into Camera Roll and it's done.

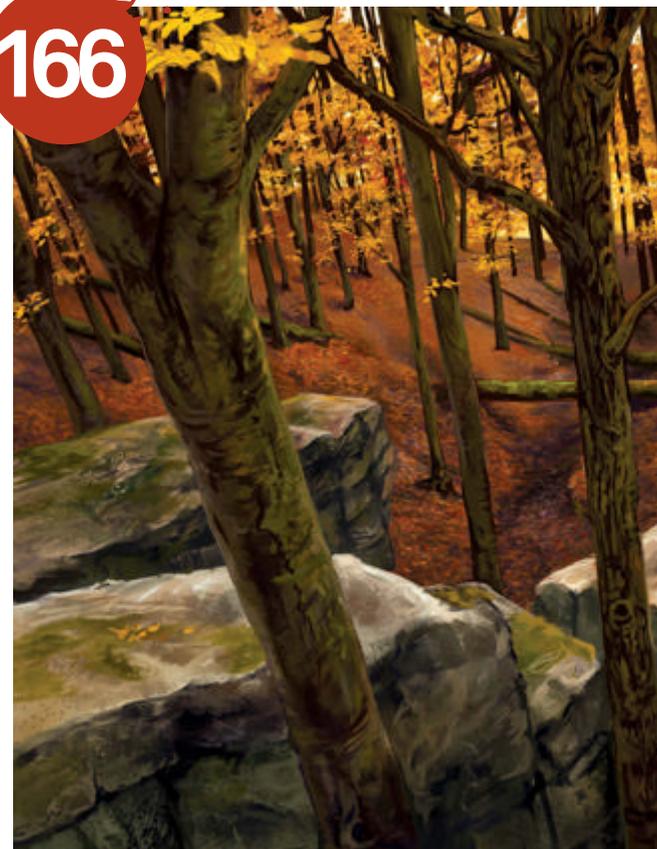
## Lock screen rotation

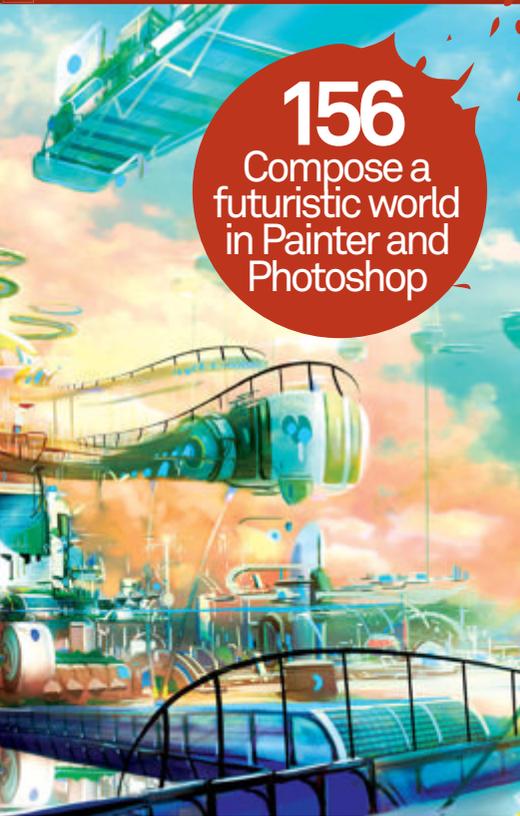
Sometimes the iPad accidentally rotates its screen while you're painting. This can cause a lot of frustration and mistakes, which could harm your work. To lock the screen, double-tap the Home button and swipe your finger to the right on the Multitask bar. Tap the screen lock icon.

# Landscapes

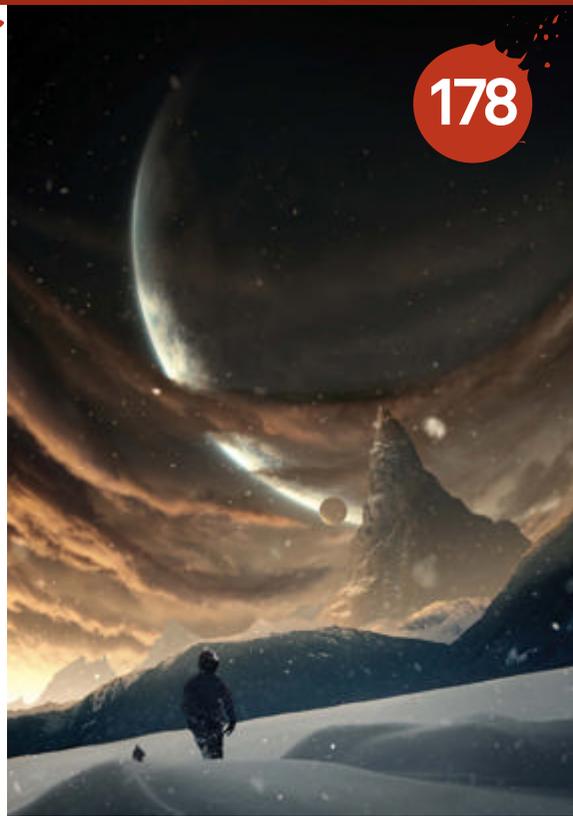
Create huge fantasy worlds

- 150 Painting captivating backgrounds
- 156 Construct a cityscape
- 162 Paint with sponge brushes
- 166 Combine fantasy and realism
- 174 Lighting with layer masks
- 178 Compose a spacecape
- 184 Manga street scene
- 188 Create fantasy worlds
- 194 Paint sci-fi settings
- 198 Paint moonlight into scenes
- 206 Design destructive cityscapes
- 212 Paint fantasy scenes





**156**  
Compose a futuristic world in Painter and Photoshop



**178**



**206**



“Fantasy landscapes allow you to push light, colour, concept and perspective to extremes”



**184**

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Amber Hill**

Personal portfolio site  
[vantid.deviantart.com](http://vantid.deviantart.com)

Country **USA**

Software used **Painter X**

Amber's art education consists mostly of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art – flights of imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of newness and wonder.



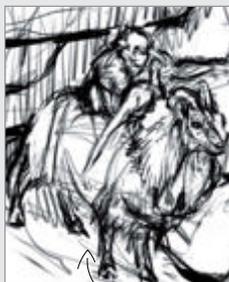
**Source files available**

Original sketch

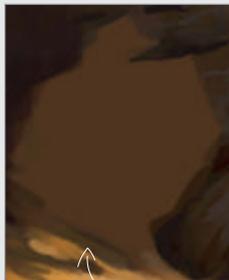
# Paint captivating backgrounds

## Working Progress

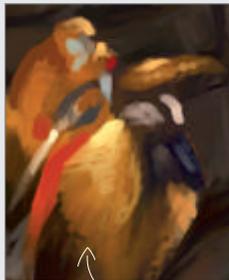
Create your own symbolic background



Step 02, Take the best



Step 06, Create the underpainting



Step 14, Bring out the animals



Step 25, Add the final touches

**Zodiac Race** 2010 **Painter X**

“ Learn to balance your subject and background while enriching your vision with symbols ”

**Amber Hill** Fantasy wildlife illustrator



**When you look down into silence, you see no friend.**

When you lift your gaze to space, you hear no echo. It is like striking a single chord. It rings out, but there is no music' – Lui Ji, *Literature, a Rhapsody*.

A well-painted background pulls the viewer deep into a scene. It fills the eyes and fires up the imagination. Unfortunately, painting backgrounds daunts many artists. Where to start? How to pull it all together? Will it work?

Usually backgrounds end up unpainted, which is a shame because they can provide story, mood and support for the subject. The key is to plan ahead and break the composition down. Simplify the elements so subject and background can be treated as a single unit that work together to unify the piece as a solid composition with the added bonus of avoiding feeling overwhelmed halfway through the painting.

The three critters depicted here are endangered analogues of the goat, monkey and rooster in the race to find a place in the Chinese zodiac myth. According to legend these three worked together to cross a river and won a place in the zodiac forever. Their endangered counterparts are: the Himalayan tahr, the golden snub-nosed monkey and Elliot's pheasant, respectively, and they symbolise the global cooperative efforts of conservationists. Several other visual symbols are scattered throughout the illustration to support the recurring themes of friendship and cooperation. Chinese culture is rife with symbolism and signs for good fortune in art, architecture and even everyday routines. Objects, colours, numbers and more all fall into the complicated system of traditional Chinese beliefs.

These symbols have no meaning to those who are unaware of their auspicious nature. Indeed, all symbols are meaningless without the knowledge to identify and interpret them. However, many seem to be universal for mankind as a whole, such as the obvious symbols of friendship and uniting to overcome difficult obstacles together. We all also have our own personal symbols that can be incorporated into our work for unique touches. It requires some forethought, but it certainly adds some fun and a personal touch to any scene!



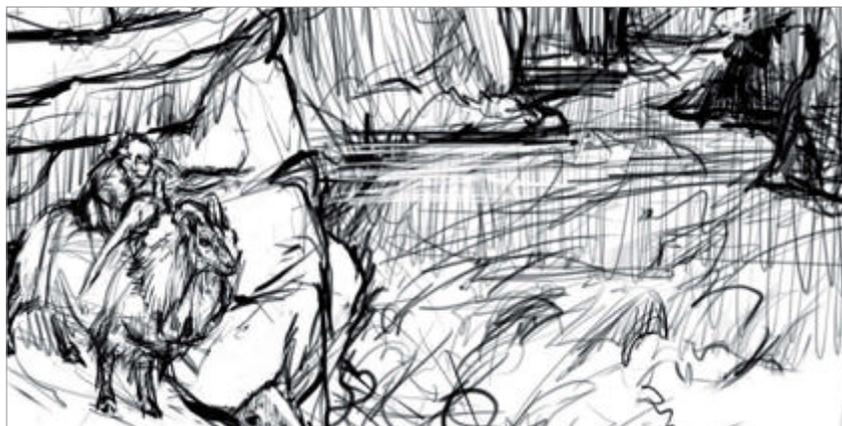
## Plan it, build it

Start with a plan and a solid foundation

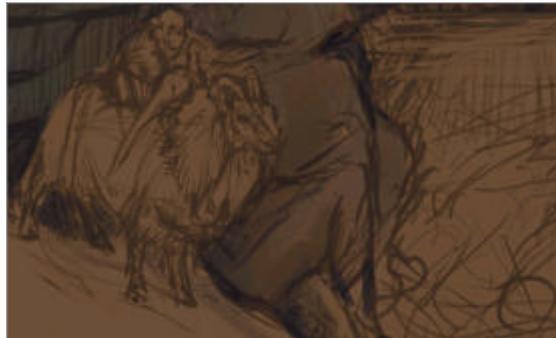
**01 Nail it down** Brainstorm and sketch little thumbnails. Use different media and tools, whether in a digital program or on paper. The variety keeps you fresh. Don't get too involved and spend only a couple of minutes on each drawing. Divide the compositions into abstract designs of interlocking shapes and simplified values of black and white.



**02 Take the best** Take your favourite thumbnail and develop it into a full sketch. Create a new document, create a new layer, grab your favourite sketching tool, and draw! Here we have our three heroes surveying the rapids before them. The animals are scaled to be visible in the image, but still small enough to convey the depth of the gorge around them.

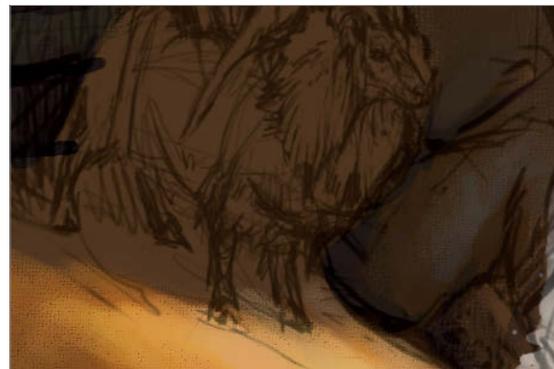


**03 Colour** In the spirit of planning ahead, hash out colour studies on separate layers to see what works. The idea here is to have contrasting values that lead the eye through the piece. The animals have similar golden colour schemes. Gold/yellow is considered lucky in China.



**04 Block in the darks** Set the sketch layer to Multiply. Go to the canvas and Flood Fill (G) with a rich midtone brown. Push and pull values from the canvas. Select the Round Oil Pastel tool, make it big and smooch in large swathes of dark browns and desaturated greeny browns on the rock walls. The negative space that remains shows a clear path for the eye to follow directly to our subject.

**05 Layer the lights** Paint a patch of golden sunlight under the animals. This spotlighting effect helps draw the eye to the trio, and the blush of colour on the rise in the distance adds interest. Paint the sky with pale green-blue, and the distant mountain with desaturated purple. The rapids are painted with the blue of the sky and the browns pulled from the rocks.



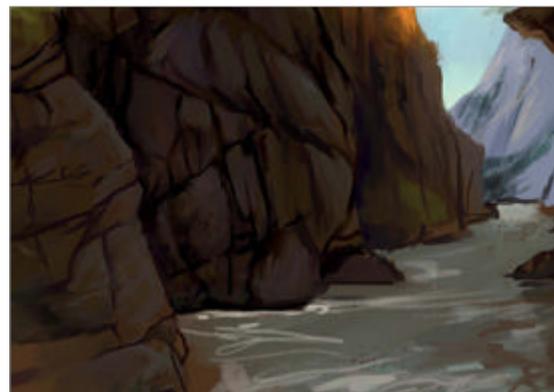
## Hiding symbols

The old study and practice of iconography used to involve inserting symbols into artwork. Famous examples include portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, who was painted with objects that symbolised military victories or personal qualities the court propaganda machine wanted to project. In this image, symbols from the *I, Ching* that represent the values of the subjects are hidden. Think about the subject you're painting and what you want to say. What could you include?

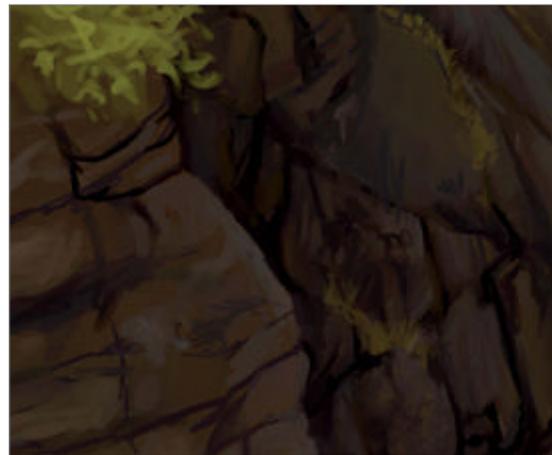


**06 Create the underpainting** Hide the sketch layer and continue blocking in the elements of the background. Look at references to see how the stone is layered. Draw in the large rock fissures with a purple-black tone. Add vegetation, some of which will be turned into mulberry trees later. Mulberry trees symbolise the divine tree that supports the sky, so add them around the top of the painting.

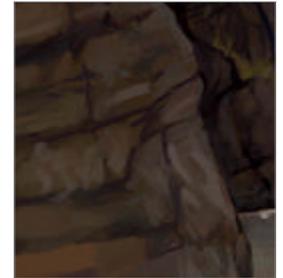
**07 Work on rocks** Use the strong lines in the rock to support your composition. While we don't want the rocks to look unnatural, we can guide the eye with bold lines and angles. Rock faces are some of the best natural abstract designs an artist could hope for!



**08 Play with rock and paper** From right to left shows the beginnings of some rock textures on to more developed stonework. Move the Grain slider to change how much paper texture shows in each stroke. Open the Papers Palette with Ctrl/Cmd+9 and play with the sliders and invert until you're satisfied. Use these techniques to get that rough texture on the rocks.



**10 More on rock texture** Create more random textures to work with using the Tiny Spattery Airbrush in conjunction with the low-grain Round Oil Pastel tool. Your eye will start to notice the textures and you can easily follow the random patterns to create beautiful and believable rocks.

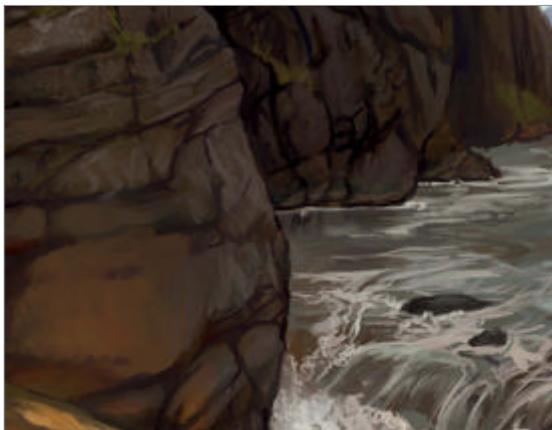


**09 Paint green** Creeping lines of vegetation add interest and life to the barren rock, as well as lines to guide the eye. Hardy plants grow in the cracks, symbolising determination. Many symbols, such as this, are anthropomorphisms of plants and animals just doing what they do.



**11 Hide the meaning** Some of the more subtle symbols in this piece are the hexagrams – symbols used for divination. Hexagram Nine, which corresponds with the monkey's number in the zodiac, can be interpreted to mean 'taming the power of the small'. The rocks provide a subtle pattern to hide this divination code.

**12 Shadows and light** Begin refining sunlit ground beneath the tahr's hooves. Alternating scallops of light and dark simulate the surface. Look at photos of rocks to get an idea of how to paint shadow and highlight shapes. Note the shadow on the right cast by the opposite wall of the canyon.



**14 Bring out the animals** Create a new layer. These animals are emerging from darkness into the light, so bathe them in bright, rich colours with shadows at the back end. Use a large brush and pull their forms with thick, gestural strokes. It is important that these guys have character and life. Follow the flow of the tahr's long, luxurious fur with every stroke.



**13 Bounce and punch** Continue detailing the rock surface. Paint saturated red-gold on the jutting rocks near the sunlit stone. This bounced light adds colourful realism to the rocks. Add more contrast to the roiling waters with smaller brush sizes. Use the square bracket keys to resize brushes on the fly. Keep the perspective of the water in mind while working.



**15 Paint details** Once the forms are roughed in, use smaller brushes to refine the details and anatomy of the tahr. Etch light around his face to make him pop against the dark rock. The blue of the sky is reflected in his dark fur.

**16 Build up the creatures** Work in the markings and forms of the monkey and pheasant. Concentrate on nailing down the right expression and body language in each of the animals. Monkey is obviously talking to his friends while Pheasant leans his head back to listen. Monkey is also scary beyond all reason. Use the Detail Airbrush for some of the finer features.



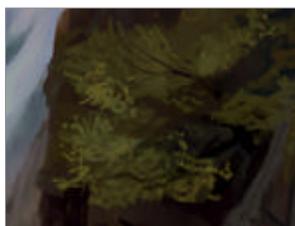
**17 Think of the light** Keep in mind all light sources such as the sun and the sky bounce light from fur, feathers, horns or stone. Monkey has orange light on his face, and blue on his fur from his own reflections. Pheasant has iridescent feathers that glitter under the sheen of his plumage. Create fur texture with small dabs of light colour over dark.

**18 Lost and found** Not every edge of the subject needs to be clearly defined. Allow some of the edges to fade or blur into the background. This way, we can keep the viewer's attention where we want it. Monkey is holding a peony, which symbolises riches and honour, and is an omen of good fortune.



**19 Paint rapidly** The frothy texture of the rapids is achieved by painting large blobs of yellow-white in random, loose squiggles with the Soft Oil Pastel tool. Then, use the Nervous Pen with Feature set to 20 and paint a cloud of jaggies over the blobs. Next, with a Tiny Spatterly Airbrush, you can create spray-like foam.

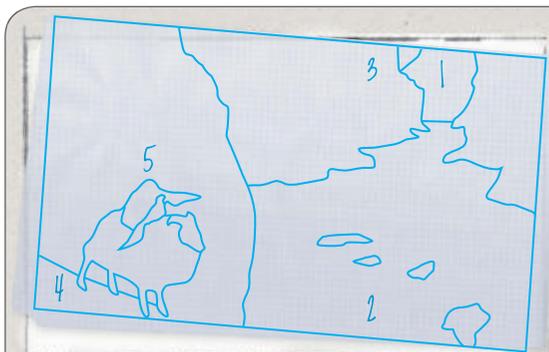
**20 Water works** Create a new layer. Set the Feature of the Spatterly Airbrush to 8 or 10. Make the brush large and paint a few gentle strokes. Erase the excess and any over-spatter. Now we have a rich source of natural textures to paint over. Drop the layer and emphasise or paint over the foam with the Soft Oil Pastel tool.



**21 Refine the mulberries** Select the Wet Oily Brush under Artist Oils and dab in suggestions of foliage over the underpainting. Work loosely to give the impression of leaves. Don't get too detailed! We want most of the focus on our subject and the green leaves can attract too much attention.



**22 Hide another symbol** Do the same with the other bushes until they look filled out. Paint the sky showing through the top bush by pulling colour with the Eyedropper and applying single, firm dots in the mass of foliage. Select a desaturated red and paint a few mulberries. Hexagram Ten, for the pheasant, stands for 'continuity' and is worked into the scene as grass.



## Dissect an image

Art structure explored

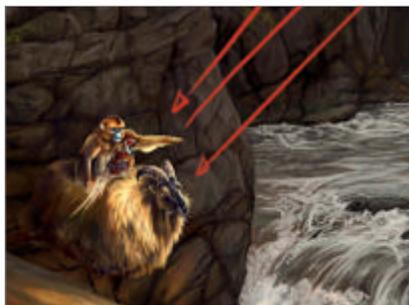
**1 Atmospheric perspective** Use a palette of cool colours and soft, undefined edges to create the illusion of depth in the scene. Remember objects in the distance do not have much detail. Moisture in the air blurs it out.

**2 Water distortion** Note how the rocks below the flow of the water are visible, but only as out-of-focus blobs. The dark dollops of colour create the illusion of fast-running water over stone, which is perfect for this wild environment.

**3 Similar colours** Tie your piece together with similar colours scattered around. For example, the animals share golds, the monkey has blue like the sky, and bounced light shows tones in unexpected places.

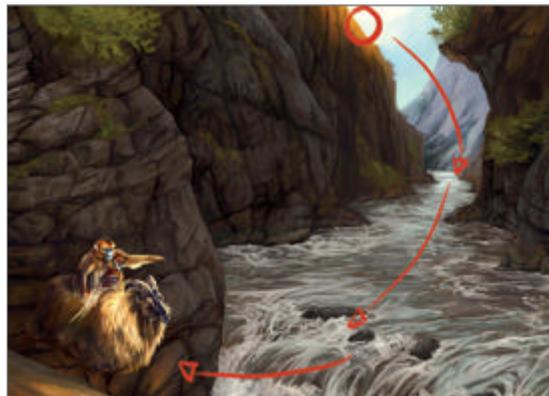
**4 Hexagrams** Hexagrams are explained in the *I Ching*, or *The Book of Changes*. Each is made of two of the eight trigrams. The broken line is yin, and the solid line is yang. These forces play a significant role in Chinese spiritual culture.

**5 Character interaction** Tahr cranes forward to see, Pheasant leans closer to hear what Monkey has to say as he points. Even without obvious human expressions, we can connect with the subject and what they are doing.



**23 Take a step back** Never be afraid to change elements during the painting process. Even when an image is planned ahead, sometimes things don't work. The sunlit cliff is causing a ping-pong effect. There is nowhere for the eye to rest and the painting is uncomfortable to look at.

**24 And breathe** A quick swipe of the brush lowered the cliff. Now the eye can enter the painting from above, follow the river down, and surprise – there are the animals! Now the painting works as a unit again.



**25 Add the final touches** Spend time texturing the rest of the water, rocks, sky and distant mountain. The final Hexagram Eight is for Goat, or tahr, and means 'holding together', so it is perhaps the most meaningful and relevant symbol for this whole piece.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Yap Kun Rong**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.yapkunrong.net](http://www.yapkunrong.net)  
Country **Singapore**  
(currently in Tokyo)  
Software used **Photoshop, Painter**

I have been interested in visual arts since I was little and have been drawing and painting ever since. For work, I do concept art, usually designing environmental backgrounds, challenging forms and scales. Personally, I enjoy drawing and painting anything that delights me using both traditional and digital mediums.

# Construct a cityscape

**Harbour Front Lights** 2010 Photoshop, Painter

“ I wanted to create a place with futuristic architecture and form, something that seems possible in the near future ”

**Yap Kun Rong** Concept artist, illustrator

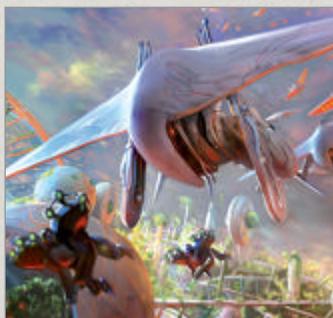
## Artist showcase

More fantastic artwork from Yap Kun Rong



**Floating World**  
2010, Photoshop

● In this piece I experimented with Japanese art, breaking down boundaries, perspectives and forms. It's a mix of modern culture and traditional ideas that creates something different. I wanted it to look flat and yet distinguishable at the same time.



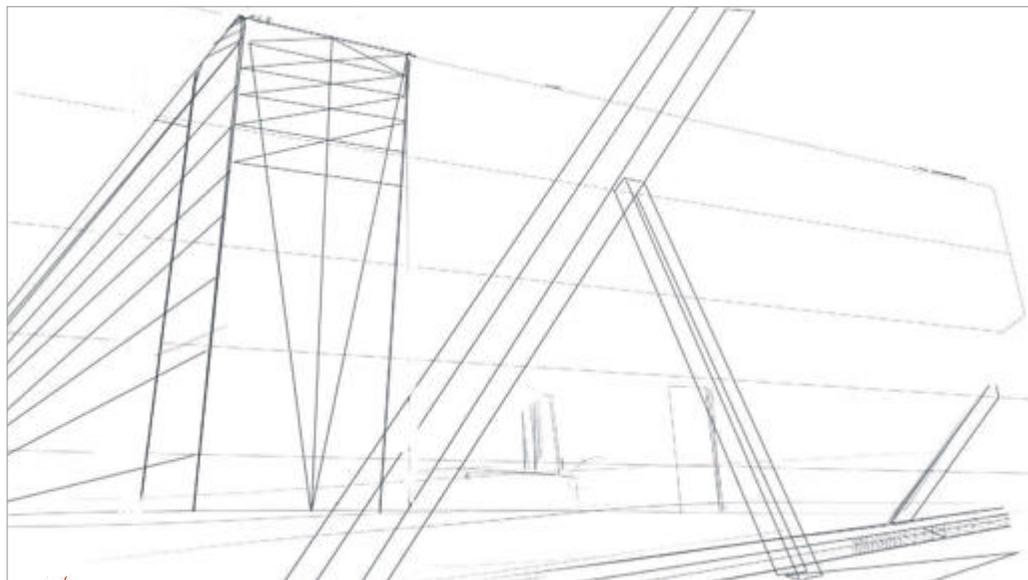
**Project Hephaestus**  
2010, Painter, Photoshop

● This was meant to be a poster for a personal project I was working on. I was trying to create different looking organic robots in an alternate world.



**Bring Him Down**  
2010, Photoshop, Painter

● A scene depicting a conflict with a robot gone out of control. I played with dynamic perspective to create tension and interest in the work.



**Line sketch** Sketch the basic lines from perspectives to start building the image. I used the Line tool for sketching in this case. Lock this layer so you can refer back to it as you add more detail.



**This piece of work started as an experiment, playing with diverse environmental styles for my personal portfolio.**

When working for specific clients, I often have a brief for the visuals and design to meet their needs, so I always try to make time to work on personal concept projects. I find working like that is a great way to discover and learn more about the existence of forms and the way they impact us.

My interest in architecture definitely played a part in the development of this piece. I'm amazed by impressive architecture and style as I feel a really successful design has the ability to surpass everything and create a mathematical kind of beauty. I wanted to create something in a fantasy vein that was engaging and believable, building simply on whatever visuals I pulled from my imagination.

I started this piece in Photoshop on a white canvas. Sometimes I start with pencil sketches and scan them in. I find them much easier to control especially when drawing a combination of straight lines and curves. It really depends on what image I want to create whether I choose to start from scratch on the computer or on paper. I started it digitally as I wanted to keep to basic shapes and therefore the method of colour blocking would work well. In

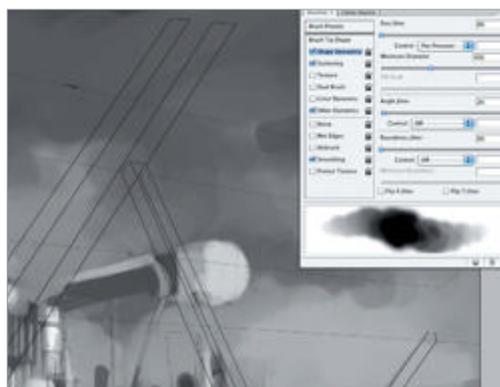


**Colour layer** Colour is applied on its own layer over the greyscale image. Taking reference from a photograph and a bit of trial and error, a fairly realistic colour scheme can be reached.

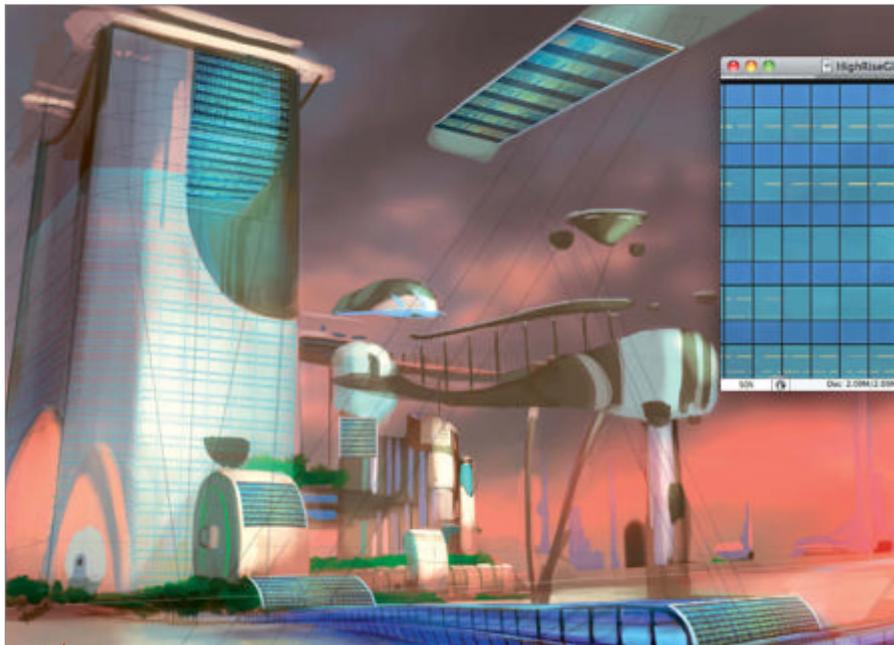
Photoshop, I opened a new file and started using the Line tool to build my basic shapes, keeping to a simple, three-point perspective.

Once the two vanishing points were fixed, I went about creating blocks, erasing and adding when necessary. Digitally, erasing is the best advantage that I can imagine – it's much harder to correct mistakes when you're using traditional tools! The advantage of working digitally is that it really allows for many surprises, sometimes even resulting in giving your work that extra edge.

Once I finished the quick perspective lines, I saved it under a new layer and locked it. I usually keep this layer until the end, making it semi-opaque so that I



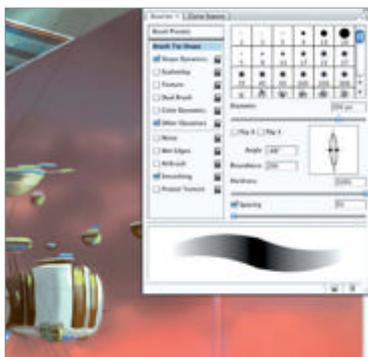
**Greyscale tones** Block in black and white tones to give the initial line sketch form and depth. Blocking should be done quickly with a huge brush, focusing only on the overall blocks.



**Use textures** Effective use of textures expresses intended ideas and design in a much more efficient way. Here I used a window texture on my buildings.

## Perspective and depth

The illusion of perspective can be created by understanding the rules and applying it to art. For example, the distance between each vertical bar on a railing should be the same, so if you have a railing stretching from the background to the foreground, the calculated placement of the vertical bars in that perspective will have a very huge impact in creating the illusion of depth. Using simple but golden rules like this, convincing depth and realism can be easily brought into your work.



**Flat brushes** I usually use a default brush squeezed flat. This is a personal preference as I like how you can get good control and end up with something much cleaner than using a round brush with the same settings.

can always fall back on it and not get carried away while working on the details. I created a new layer below it and started blocking in the tones in greyscale. Huge brushes are used for blocking in, and also some scattered soft brushes to simulate clouds. A pretty quick process for me, but nonetheless an important stage. Keeping things simple creates a good foundation for your image.

After blocking the tones in greyscale, I added a Color layer on top of it and slowly worked in the different hues. For colours, I took reference from photographs and mimicked the lighting conditions I wanted the painting to have. I had a clear picture in my mind how the scene would look in terms of light by using my photograph reference. The realistic orange sky contrasting against the building's cool cyan tint gives a slick, modern look.

With the Color layer, I could apply colour onto the scene without changing its basic form. With experience and some trial and error, I came to a colour scheme that I was satisfied with.

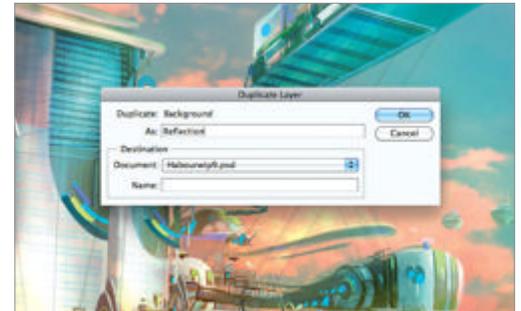
After I had more or less fixed the colour palette for my scene, I went on to add some details. I decided to start off with the windows as they would be a good indicator of the scale and let all the other less familiar objects be built proportional to their size.

Using textures from a photograph of office windows, I manipulated them to fit the perspective in my image. A lot of free textures and photos can be found on texture resource sites and it is always a good thing to have resources on hand.

Using textures efficiently, you can save a lot of time and express your design more purposefully. Here, I laid in the window textures using Hard Light, but it really depends on your particular scene which mode you want to use. I picked Hard Light mainly because I wanted a blue glow for the windows. Texture is especially useful in fantasy work as it evokes familiar images and makes the scene more believable.

## Creating reflections

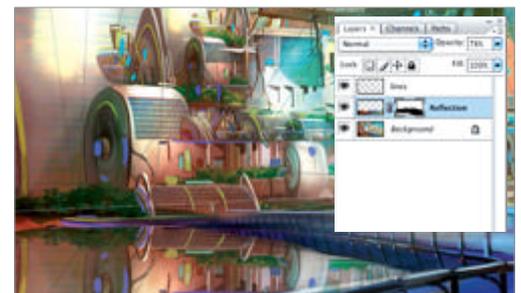
Evoked still water using layers to create a reflection effect



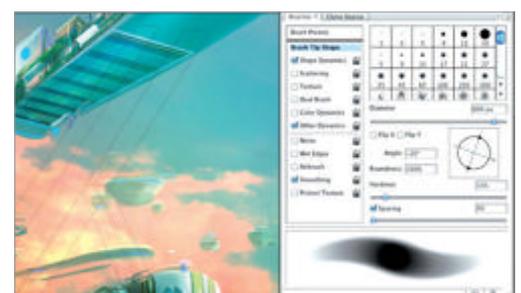
**01 Duplicate the layer** Here I wanted to create the reflections of buildings on the water so I created a new layer and duplicated the image.



**02 Position the reflection** I went on to flip the layer vertically and then dragged it to the water level where it would meet the building.



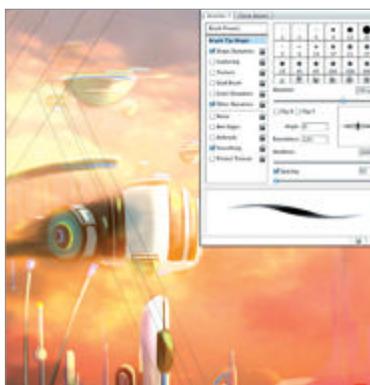
**03 "Fit" the reflection** Then I added a mask to the reflected layer and carefully painted off the unwanted regions; a simple but effective tip.



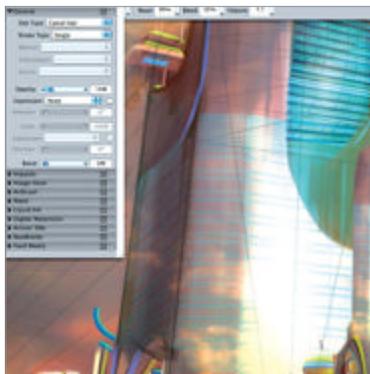
**04 Touch-up tones** I did a little touch-up on the water. I added an Overlay layer and with a soft brush I painted in shadows and white highlights.



**Photo enhancement** I used a photograph of a dramatic sky to digitally enhance the colours and contrast of the work. At this stage it's useful to experiment with different hues and styles.



**Create detail in Photoshop** I slowly added more details in Photoshop using the pre-existing tones and colours, building forms and layers upon themselves. I still avoided very tiny details in this stage, taking it one step at a time and building the image.



**Render in Painter** I switched to Corel Painter here to take advantage of the Oil brush, a great tool for creating the clean, controlled strokes for this piece. Painter works really well when you're using tiny brushes, and having crisp strokes of colours really adds to the definition of the artwork as a whole.

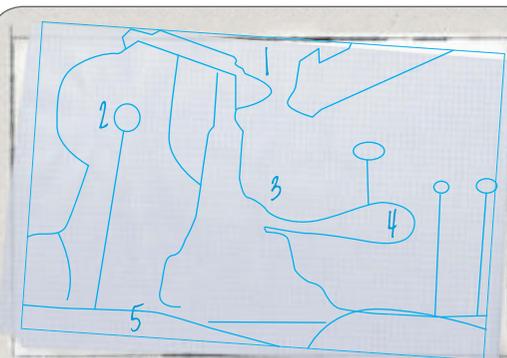
When I was more or less happy with the window texture, I started to work in detail on the buildings. With a default Hard Round brush, I flattened it and changed the direction according to what I wanted to paint. This is a very personal preference. I have always liked flat brushes as they can help you a lot in creating forms, and making the brushstrokes work in your favour saves time and effort.

After working on the details for some time, I like to zoom out to take a look. Everything seemed to be going well, but I decided that I wanted to create an even more intense colour palette before moving on to the finer details. I browsed through my folder of personal photographs and managed to come across a photo of a sunset sky with dramatic clouds that I thought would work well. With Hard Light mode, I pasted the whole photograph onto the painting. This created the effect of intensified depth while keeping to my original colour theme. I played around with the Opacity as well as the Mask until I reached a stage where my original painting had obtained the extra glow or glint that I was aiming for.

With the added Hard Light clouds layer, I used the image as a base and started to render more details in Photoshop. Again, I used my favourite flattened brushes to give a clean, flat look. Slowly but surely it is possible to create convincing depth working within your fixed colours and tones, colour-picking for highlights and shadows where necessary.

After some rendering work in Photoshop, I moved over to Corel Painter as I really wanted to make use of some of its brushes for the final rendering. Using the Oils and Fine Camel brushes, it is possible to add fine strokes and lines which was very important for creating the clean, slick look I wanted for this piece.

Using a very tiny brush, I spent most of my time here rendering forms and playing with shapes and colours. I love the look of tiny details against huge negative space (like the clouds in this case) and I usually find myself dedicating the most time to this stage, painting and erasing when necessary. Exploring visual placement of objects and concentrating on detail enhances an image by creating something fun and interesting for viewers.



## Dissect an image

### Creating a fantastical city

**1 Lined roof** I was wondering what kind of roof design might be appealing (and possible) in the near future and I decided to go for a simple porch-looking structure, striped with the blue and green tones I have used throughout the image.

**2 Clock** I wanted the harbour to have a clock like large towns and cities often do. The image itself is quite ominous, but I used bright colours and tones to suggest simplicity and youth, showing that the harbour itself is young.

**3 Wisps and domes** Using circular disc-like forms I tried to create some open-air parks where people can come out and take brief walks. I enjoy curves and I think the future might see a rise in an aesthetic of more rounded, curved structures.

**4 Ballroom** I chose this curved shape mainly because it is pleasing to the eye. It could be anything, perhaps a theatre or gallery space, or something not for recreational usage. The viewer can use their imagination on this one.

**5 Reflections** I wanted it to be a harbour so there has to be water. I wanted something calm and tranquil to go with the curved building shapes. By using reflections I managed to suggest very still and calm water with no disturbance.

With the bulk of the details down, I then used a Round Blender brush to smooth out any rougher areas. Using a Blender as a finishing touch works well in painting clean objects, giving them a glowing quality. A lot of details at this stage are based on intuition as I didn't really 'design' the work and was open to altering my techniques depending on what was required at a given moment. If I did have a design that included certain buildings or shops, initially I would have done the planning on paper before bringing in the colours. This design began with simple building blocks and thus I can work on the design and rendering freely even at the final stage.

Once I was really happy with all of the tiny details, I switched it back to Photoshop for some finishing touches. The reason for this is that Photoshop is very good at supporting large file sizes, so all of the possible manipulations towards the final stages of a



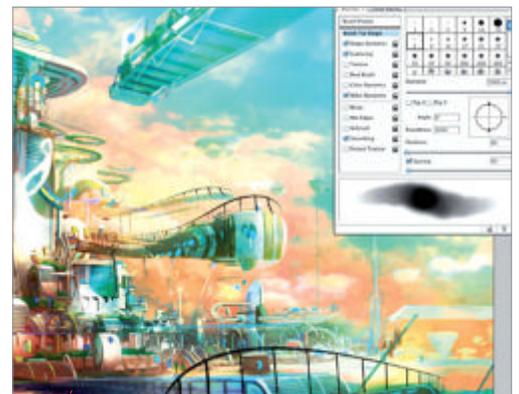
“The bridge is there to give the harbour a significance and a form of connection to the foreground, and to continue the theme of water and tranquility”

piece are easier. I think taking advantage of each program's strengths is a good way to work around issues and the more efficiently you can work, the more effectively you can create. So back in Photoshop, I adjusted the Brightness and Contrast slightly and added an Overlay layer with which to do some specific colour finishing.

I added cool blue cyan to the top right hand corner of the sky to bring in focus as well as tighten up the whole painting. Last, I duplicated and flipped the image vertically to be used as we did before to show a reflection in the calm water of the harbour.

This piece of work took me three days, on and off. When you understand the rules of perspective, tone, colour and form, the canvas is really a place for the imagination to run wild. With a solid, basic idea, it all boils down to the creation and the free will to design, unrestricted by technical issues.

 **Blending and touching-up**  
 Using Blender brushes in Painter, I blended off some of the rougher strokes and gave the buildings a very clean look. With time and patience, cleaning up a work can be simple and rewarding.



 **Final colour correction** Finally, I bounced it back to Photoshop for a last adjustment and touch-up. I added cyan to part of the sky to tighten the image on the whole. Also I adjusted the Brightness and Contrast accordingly to give it a polished look.

# Landscapes



# Paint with Sponge brushes

**Medusa Dance** 2011 **Painter**

“ Add texture and interest to an underwater scene ”

**Nick Harris** Children's book illustrator



**Painter delivers a huge raft of tool options with almost endless possibilities.**

Coming from a traditional background you might think that Painter's digital watercolour alternatives would be the obvious choice for me, but that is not the case. Although I still think in terms of overlaid washes, I have warmed to a selection of the other brushes more than the named Watercolor variants. This is particularly true for introducing textural elements. You have more options and control than available with real media. Using chalks at variable grain settings, combined with paper textures and their controls is one method I like and have used in the past. In this short walk-through, I'm substituting the chalk for sponges to push it even further. We will be illustrating a brightly coloured jellyfish interacting with a playful mermaid.

Medusa is another word that can be used for jellyfish and got me thinking about the Greek mythological Gorgon, of the snakey hairdo fame – hence my composition Medusa Dance visually plays with that idea with the tentacles on her head.

The goal is to create a scene that incorporates dappled light, playing on and through glowing, gelatinous creatures drifting across a brightly coloured reef. The addition of the mermaid will add a magical element and some character interest, hopefully adding to the appeal for children.

My preference is to use numerous layers, building up subtlety and depth as I would with real watercolour washes. This happens to be how I work and is one possible approach, making full use of digital editing.

The first stop is to trawl (sorry about the fishing pun) the internet for jellyfish and reef inspiration. This is a fantasy scene and the sketch, drawn straight in on the graphics tablet (in my case a Wacom Intuos3 with a Round Tip pen at 35% Opacity), will reflect source image influence rather than strict biological accuracy. Working at an initial 72dpi, I flood fill a blue

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Nick Harris**

Personal portfolio site  
[nickillus.com](http://nickillus.com)

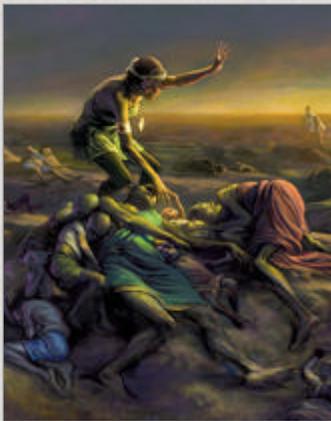
Country **UK**

Software used **ArtRage, SketchBook Pro, Painter, PhotoPlus X4, DrawPlus X4, PagePlus X5, WebPlus X4**

20 years spent working in traditional watercolour illustration before going digital has meant that I still think in that way. The way I use various software tends to reflect this background.

## Artist showcase

Nick shares some more of his fantastic pieces



**A New Hope**  
2009, ArtRage

● This was created in response to the **conceptart.org** challenge with the theme 'new born'. I got all pretentious and went for an image of famine.



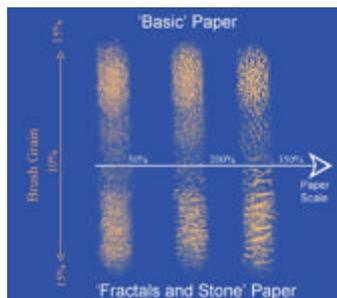
**Cheshire Cheesey Grin**  
2010, ArtRage

● Part of the frenzy of activities that sprung up about *Alice in Wonderland* last year. Couldn't not stick my oar in.



**Dragon Web**  
2009, SketchBook Pro

● One of the 20 or so artworks, I did for Templar Publishing's *Drake's Comprehensive Compendium of Dragonology*. Quite a mouthful.



## Paper and grain settings

There's gold dust in these features

Each paper has a range of looks to offer, particularly if you adjust the scale and fine-tune the Grain setting on your dry media brush to use with it. The look will also be affected by the dpi of your image – you are likely to need a larger brush and paper scale at a higher dpi. These example stripes

of orange on blue use just two papers (Basic Paper at the top, Fractals and Stone below). They represent 50%, 200% and 350% paper scales and a mere 5% alteration in brush Grain from 10-15% with the Sponge. The range of effects you can get with such small changes is impressive.

base layer and sketch some forms on a few layers above. I block in different tonal areas on the base layer around the sketch to get an idea of highlights and shadows, then rough in solid white shapes to act as templates for my mermaid and jellyfish characters.

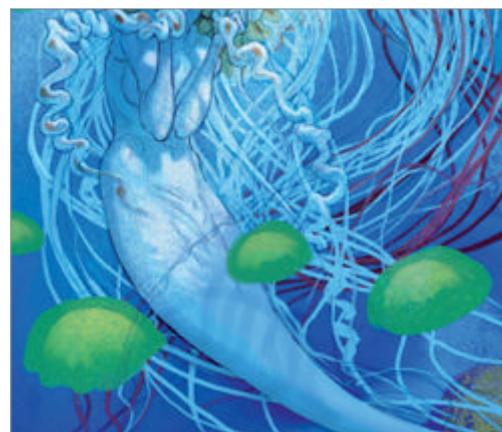
Adding several layers of varied blues (using the Multiply blend mode) enables me to bring lighting and form to the layers below. I refine the drawing and shapes continually as I go, adding and grouping a set of layers for pattern and tentacles on the mermaid figure. Use the Preserve Transparency option on the Layers palette to enable free brushstrokes on the opaque template layers. This gives you a controlled addition of textural interest. Now it's time to bring on the sponges. Their organic look will be perfect for coral. There are 13 variants loaded within Painter, and I select three to add to my custom palette.

During the image creation process, I use the plain Sponge at a large size on the base layer (with the basic paper at a reduced scale) to add blocky reef texture before scaling the image up to 300dpi. I work some interest into the blue layers using the Fine Sponge 60 variation with white, then add Overlay layers using various colours to accentuate lighting



### Base sketch

Working over a blue base, I sketch the main shapes and block in colours on layers above. It's good to get some sort of framework down quickly.



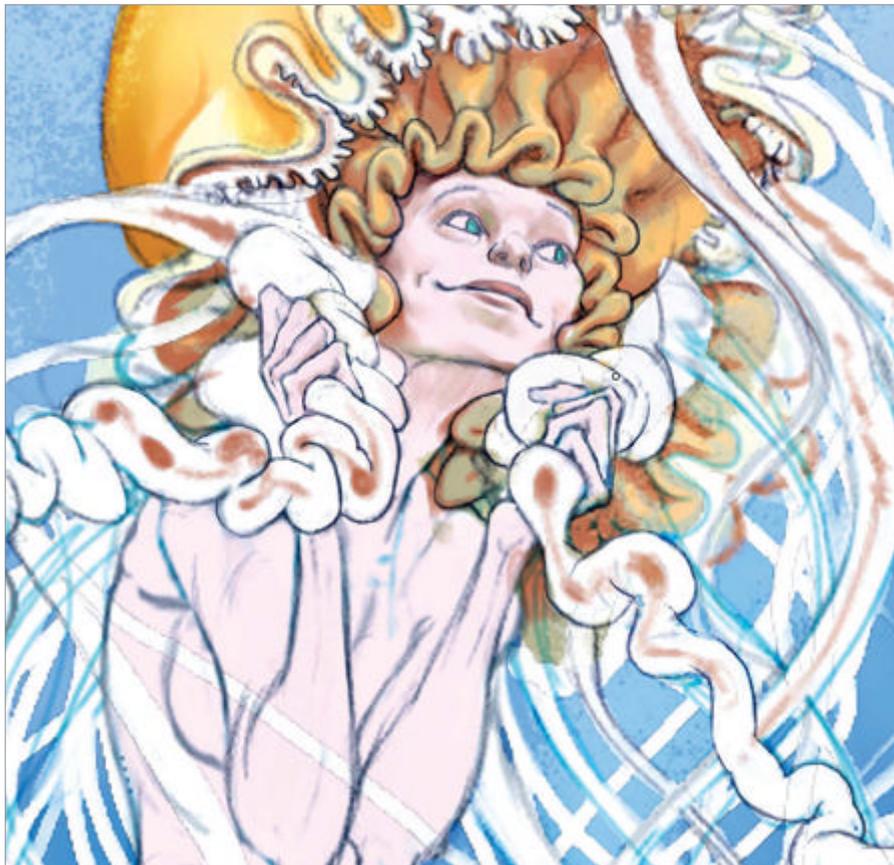
🔍 **Jellyfish crowd** I created the ring of little jellyfish to balance the composition more. This also enabled me to add more interesting lighting effects.

effects using the same brush, and then a Glazing Sponge for colour-zinging wash layers. Make sure to name and group the layers – or at least some of them – if you use a lot, otherwise you'll spend half your time trying to remember which is which, make silly mistakes and ultimately waste precious time.

Switch the blue layers on and off to regularly check how the forms and textures are coming. Remember that they're only there for lighting effects and it's important to try and make the actual composition and drawing as good as you can. It's easy to let them take over the colouring completely and lose out on the little details that can make all the difference. They should ultimately provide the underwater magic that we want for the finished image, just use with caution.

I build the image with a combination of translucent layers set to the Multiply or Overlay blend modes over other layers of solid colour, painted with either the Soft Oil Pastel (at 10% Opacity and 20% Grain) or the sponges (at different settings). By spacing the blue layers at various places in the stack, I can more easily control the overall lighting pattern in the scene,

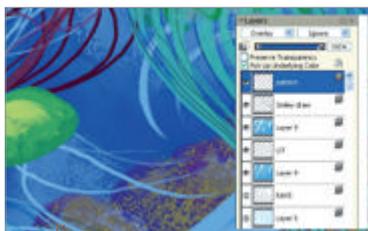
🔍 **Dry sponges** When working back into layers set to Multiply, the sponges are really great for introducing interest. This works best with the dry versions.



**7 Work the layers** Turning off layers that make the image darker enables you to see the linework more clearly and therefore spot any areas particularly in need of tidying up.

## Textural contrasts

When using textural effects, you can often emphasise those areas by having smooth contrasts nearby, in the same way that light and dark contrasts close to one another make more of an impact. Do be aware of this, however, within the context of the whole scene – you don't want it to seem out of place.



**7 Texture** Though I like the way the lighting is going, the image at this stage still needs a lot more textural interest if I'm to make full use of the sponges.

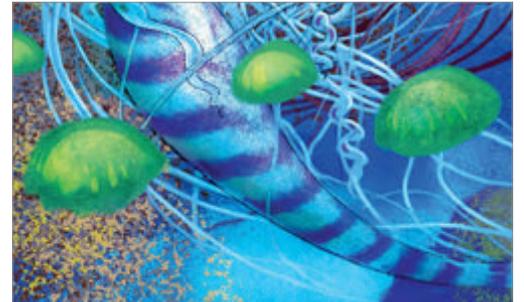
painting lighter areas into them with the pastel or sponges. The higher up the stack the layer is, the less saturated with blue it is likely to be, bringing it forward. Working this way is flexible and forgiving.

I try to respond to what I think the image needs as I go, which sounds very vague of course, but does describe the process. For instance, in my case the composition is compromised by having to straddle the page-join of the magazine. I quickly decided about the mermaid and right-page jellyfish placement and blocked colour and tone accordingly. The other jellyfish were added later to help lead the eye round the picture, as was the brighter colouring at the top right. Blue and green were always going to be the dominant colours, so complementary oranges and yellows will provide the richest contrasts. Using a few papers and their settings in combination with the sponges enriches the surface more. If you haven't explored these options already, I heartily encourage you to do so. Open up the Paper palette and see what difference changing the scale, contrast and brightness makes. Invert it and use a different colour.

Play with the Grain setting of your chosen tool and explore to find out how this works best with your particular style. I find the Large Chalk and various Dry Sponges good. You may prefer something different. There are a lot of Painter compatible papers freely available, as well as ones to purchase. The extra ones I have stored came with *The Painter 8 Wow! Book* some years ago and have kept me going ever since. You can indeed make your own paper textures, as described in the manual. I have to admit to never having felt the need yet myself, though.

## How to light your jellies

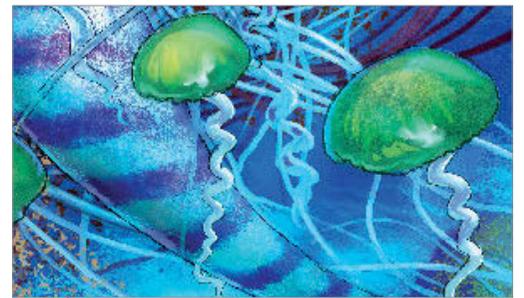
Go for a translucent gel effect with highlights and inner glow



**01 Base layer** Block in the shape of your jellyfish solidly to act as base tone. I chose a mid-range value because it's easier to go lighter or darker on it.



**02 Light** Set your main light source and add appropriate shadows to describe some form. If you don't do this, the final effect may look rather flat.



**03 Add highlights** Add crisp-edged highlights to the side facing the main light source that reflect its colour. Bear in mind a softer light gives softer highlights.



**04 Jellify** Add a less pronounced but still positive glow inside the opposite edge of the object in a brighter version of the colour of the object itself.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Amber Hill**

Personal portfolio site  
[vantid.deviantart.com](http://vantid.deviantart.com)

Country **US**

Software used **Painter**

Amber's art education consists mostly of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art – flights of the imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of wonder.

# Combine fantasy and realism

“ Create a realistic fantasy wildlife piece with textures and a natural setting ”



## Working Progress

Place your mythical beast in a lifelike scene



Step 01, Create a sketch



Step 06, Build up ground



Step 15, More leaf litter



Step 26, Begin creature textures

 **Source files available**  
Sketch, references

## Lords of Autumn 2011 Painter

“Combine traditional wildlife painting techniques with elements drawn from mythology for a stunning image”

**Amber Hill** Fantasy wildlife artist



### Fantasy wildlife art is a fantastic new genre that combines traditional wildlife painting with ye olde beasts of lore.

There have always been stories of creatures hiding from us just out of sight, and as we walk through the woods of today sometimes something will catch our eye and we wonder, was that the flick of a dragon's wing? Did that fox I saw have an extra tail? We can take these moments and paint them as if they actually happened, with realistic lighting, close observation of anatomy and texture rendering, or we can hide the mysterious creatures in our art. Not every fantasy piece has to have the dragon bursting flames all over the place. Sometimes we can put them into a piece, almost camouflaged, so that the viewer can have that same moment of “wait, is that a gryphon I see there?”

This piece was inspired by my own wanderings in the woods, where I often ‘see’ dragons and gryphons. When you have experienced a place for real you can put more of yourself – and more feeling – into the finished art. It's this extra element that really ties the whole thing together and makes the fantastical into a plausible reality.

02

### Show a new perspective

The higher angle creates a feeling as though we are hiking along, perhaps clambering over some rocks in the woods, when we see a bird of prey. Only it's not, there is something wrong here. The back view of the gryphon makes the effect subtle.



01

### Create a sketch

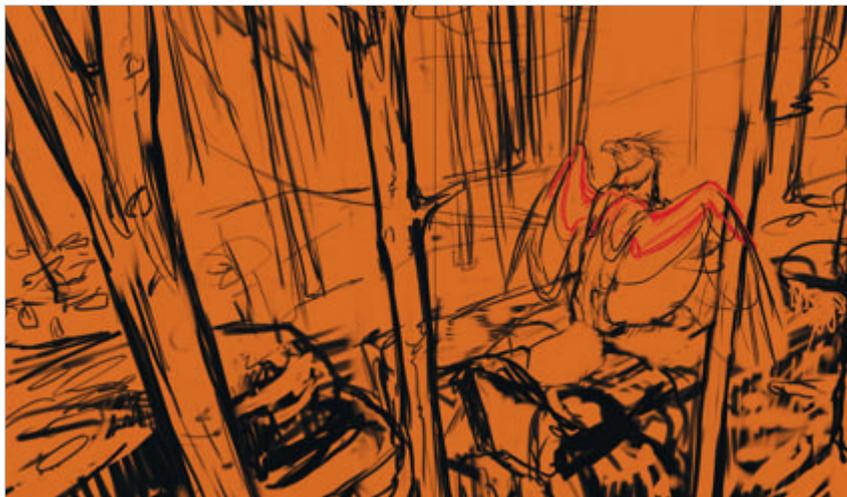
Take a while to brainstorm. What is it you'd like to accomplish? The initial sketch of a gryphon leaping over a log is dynamic but not very subtle. To make a static pose more interesting, move the virtual camera (the viewpoint) around a bit. The camera pointed down creates a fun perspective.



03

### Focus on anatomy

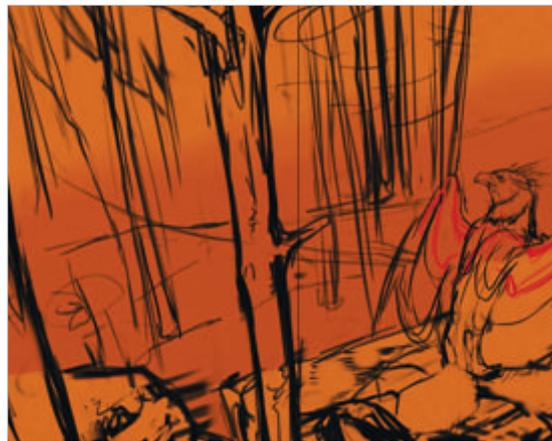
Fantasy wildlife is nothing without real-life anatomy. Wings are an especially difficult aspect of a gryphon to get right, so to help you understand what's going on underneath, check out the outline of a chicken wing. The shape is very similar, with joints in all the same spots. Also, look at feather groupings and cat hipbones for reference.



04

### Seasonal colour

Set the sketch layer to Multiply. If you accidentally sketched on the canvas first, just hit Ctrl/Cmd+A, look for Select in the menu and then Float. Since this is to be an autumn scene, flood fill the canvas with a rich orange to serve as your base.

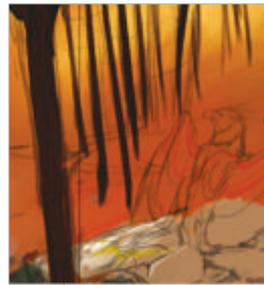


05

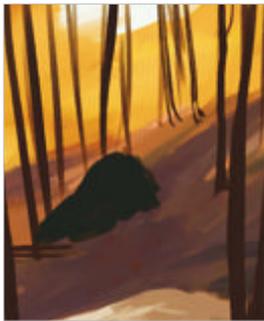
### Separate the ground

Grab a big opaque tool – Scratchboard Rake will do – and, with a lighter orange, chunk some rocks in. Use a Soft Airbrush to paint in the distant ambient light. Now we instantly have some sort of depth between fore, mid and background.

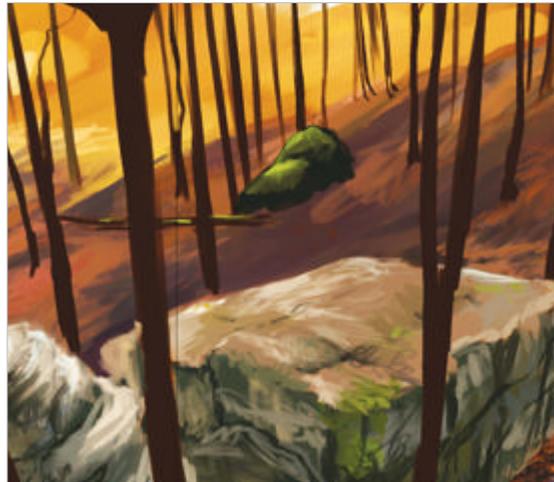
**06 Build up ground** Use the Soft Airbrush to work more gold-yellow light into the background, lowering the opacity of the sketch layer if you need to. Use a Round Oil Pastel with 50% Grain to smoothen in the rocks. Use a desaturated yellow in the shadows and a pinkish yellow in the light.



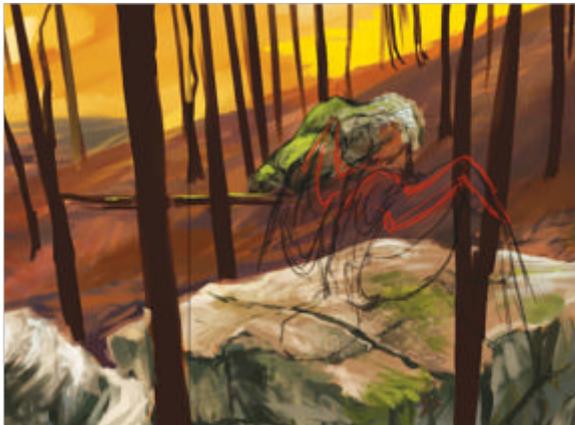
**07 Place the trees** Create a new layer. The trees are fantastic for showing a dynamic three-point perspective angle without being too difficult to make look good, and naturally trees don't look perfect anyway. Be sure you keep the angles in mind when you block them in with a rich, dark brown.



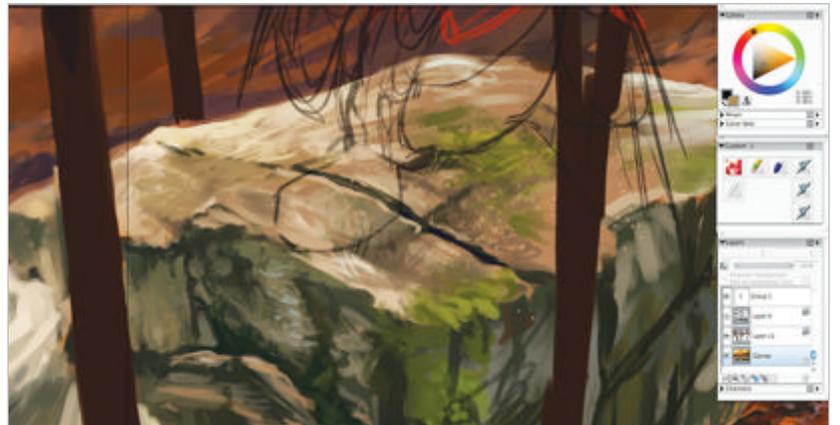
**10 Follow directions** Further refine the contours of the land with more and more colour and experiment to find which tones work best. Use the strokes of the brush to follow the angles or planes of the hills, as this will help build volume.



**09 Lay of the land** Suggest the shape of the hills beyond with more purple. Paint the sky patches at the top with a slightly dull but high value blue and begin texturing the rocks, making sure to follow the invisible lines of perspective with the cracks and striations you draw.

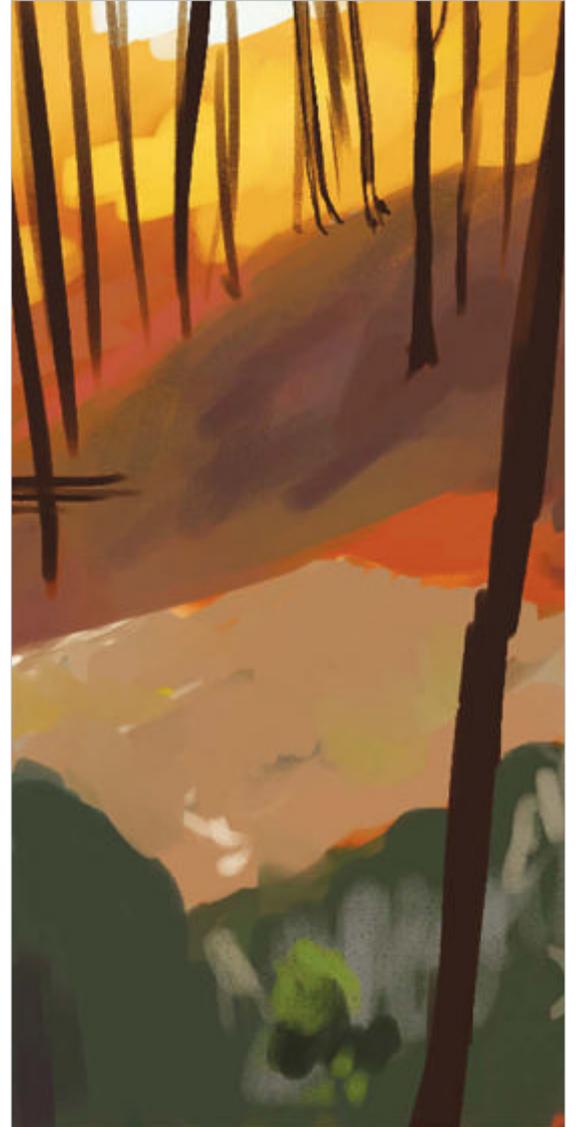


**11 Paint the leaves** Once the underpainting is all blocked in, start to paint leaves into the scene. Use a small brush and stipple various colours such as orange, yellow, brown, dark purple and light purple.



**12 Rock out** Create rock textures using a Chunky Oil Pastel with a low Grain setting. This enables Painter's paper texture to show through and makes for fantastic rough textures. Paint blobs of moss and skate the stylus over the surfaces to generate random cracks and buckles. It's controlled scribbling! Paint a hint of bounced light on the bottom.

**08 Block it in** Now start blocking everything else in. Be sure to work on the canvas under the tree layer, as the Round Oil Pastel will smear the digital paint. Use a lot of purples and dull pinks to blend into the orange.



# Landscapes



## Lighting

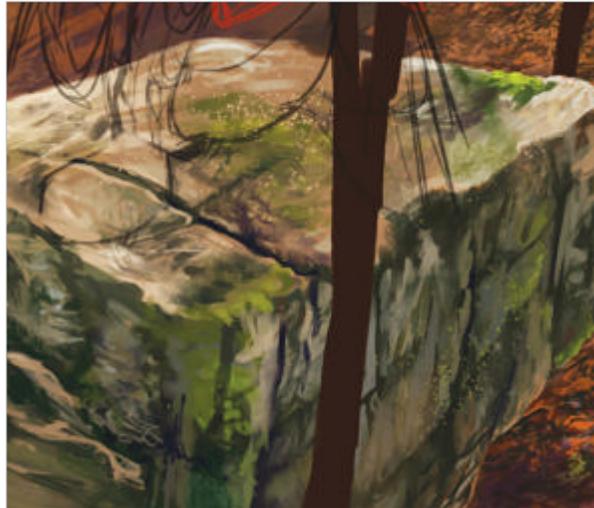
A scene like this is filled with a golden-orange glow that permeates the image. This is called ambient lighting. Bounced light is evident in places like the trunks of the tree and especially on the surfaces of the rocks that face the leaves.



**13 Spatter textures** The Variable Spatter airbrush generates random dots as if the paint were flicked. Experiment with the various Spread, Flow and Features to find which work best for you. This is a quick way to get an organic look. Lightly paint over, shade and highlight the spots that look best.



**14 Finish the rock** Work over the entire rock, making sure that the horizontal and vertical lines look like they could converge to a vanishing point. Paint the beginnings of a dry creek under a fallen log with some of that dark purple, and use choppy strokes to suggest leaves further in the distance.



**15 More leaf litter** Continue painting leaf litter and various sticks etched with pale purple on the forest floor. Use photos to see how leaves and fallen branches lie naturally. From this angle we are seeing the tops of the leaves as we paint them going up that hill. Add a fallen tree with moss, too.



## Dissect an image

### Key design elements

**1 Variable Spatter** The thing about the Variable Spatter is that it is variable. If ever you are worried about overspray, create a temporary new layer. Erase the stray spots and then merge with your working layer to solve the problem straight away.

**2 Animal attitude** Your critters should tell a story. This guy's fluffed up head is saying something in gryphon body language, which just might be the same as bird language. People who know animals will identify with familiar behaviours.

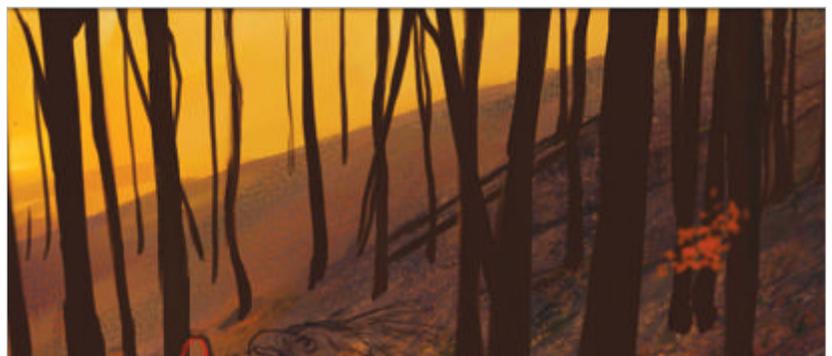
**3 Character** Trees are each unique characters in the setting, and this should be brought out. They are beautiful and worth studying to get their forms down. Once you become familiar with the nature of trees, drawing and painting them is a joy.

**4 Colour scheme** A fall scene has a marvellous colour scheme. Look for purples to complement the yellows and tie the piece together using the same colour palette throughout. This is not only rewarding, but helps with tricky choices.

**5 Feathers** These feathers are rendered loosely, with broad strokes over the form; tight detail would ruin the effect. While tiny painted elements may not be desirable, things such as pockets of fallen leaves on the rocks are great to bring realism.



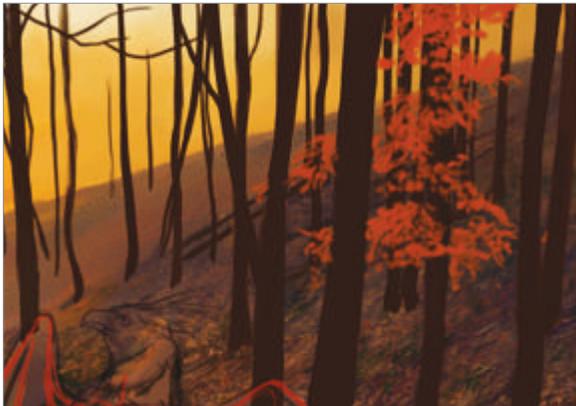
**16 The details** This is a close-up to show how loose the strokes are for all the textures. Keep your brushes as large as possible for as long as possible and work from big to small. The leaves look like ground-up plastic, but from a distance they read as leaf litter. Work big, work loose, work happy!



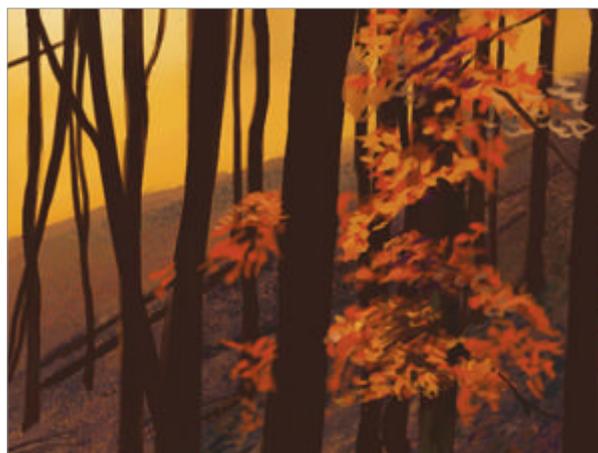
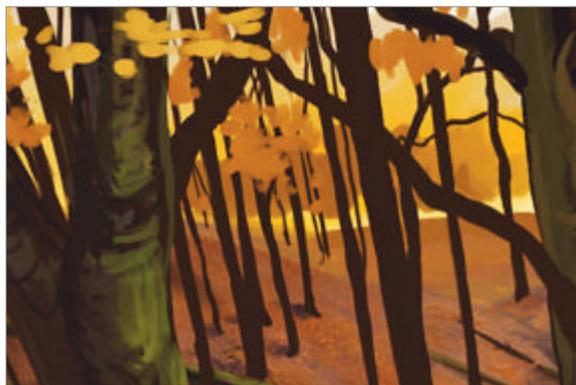
**17 Begin the foliage** On a new layer above the trees, paint vermilion dots with a Soft Detail airbrush set to a low opacity. Use reference photos of trees to get the grouping to look right. Trees have anatomy just like animals and people, after all.

# Landscapes

**18 Climb the tree** Paint more sprays with the same red, leaving those natural gaps from branches. Paint on the other side of the trees in the foreground to further enhance the feeling of depth, but keep it in perspective.

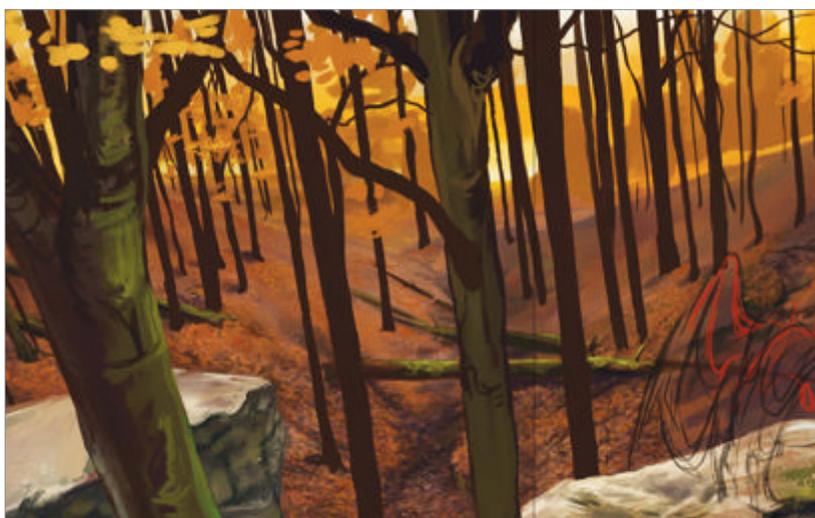


**20 Create more depth** On the other side of the painting, smooch in some blobs with dull gold, adding a few in front of the foreground trees. Even as mere leaf blobs, the painting acquires more depth. Paint a very dull green for the moss on top of the tree trunks.



**19 Add more colour**

Now add a variety of colours. Layer dull gold, deep brown-red and some purple shadows with the Round Oil Pastel. There is no trick to this other than paying attention to actual trees and giving a rough impression of the leaves and patterns.



**21 Treetops** Smooch more blobs of encircling gold and paint even smaller dots of brighter gold on top of the duller, darker colours. In the distance, add some of that sky colour from earlier. Erase around some of the leaf masses that are too big and blocky.

**22 Use negative space** Use temporary layers and Variable Spatter to make leaf sprays, then build on top of the random sprays. Erase what doesn't look good. Start adding more colours with small dots and draw some twigs. Cut in bright sky windows that make the scene scintillate.



**23 Find satisfaction** Now it's getting hairy, but it's really just layers of leaf dots layered on top of one another. Push and pull the colours and values. Did you paint over a tree trunk? Well just draw another one in! It looks complicated but it's just fussing with the texture until it looks right.



# Complete the creature

Paint and texture your gryphon using real-world references

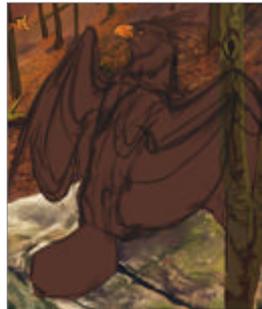


**24 Tree trunks** There are two different kinds of trees, so there are two styles of bark; one smooth and one rough. The forms overlap so we can see the top of each branch.

**27 Highlights** Once the dark shadows of the feathers are roughed in, a silvery yellow is used to make the feathers emerge. Use light pressure in the shadows with firmer pressure to carve out those highlights. Cut shadows back in as needed.



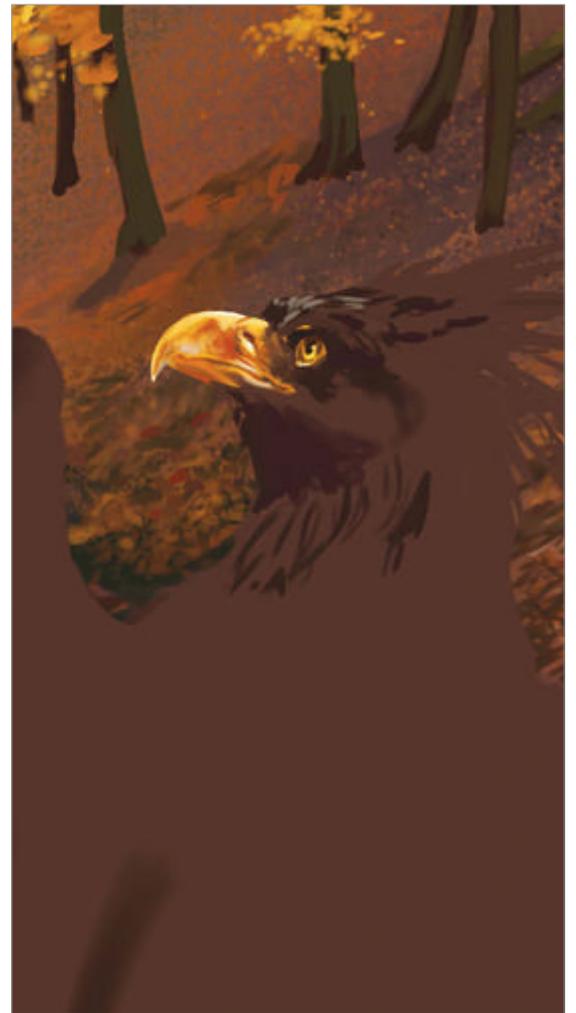
**25 Start the beast** Oh right, there's a gryphon in this! Create a new layer and lay in a dark brown under the sketch. Using the Eyedropper tool, grab the gold hue from the leaves and paint the beak and eye.



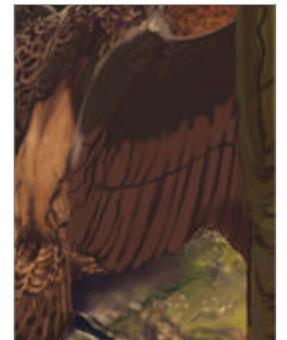
**28 Wing forms** While still referring to the sketch made earlier, block in the rest of the body and the wings, paying close attention to your references. Edge the feathers with a pale grey and make sure you don't make them too uniform.



**26 Begin creature textures** Complete the beak with a rich, deep orange. Include colours from the sky on the highlights of the beak and, with an even darker brown-purple, block in the shadows of the head and the beginnings of feathers.



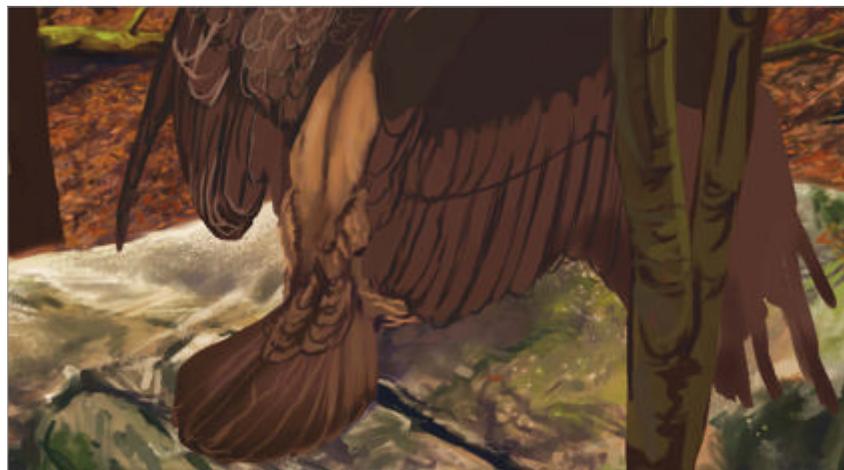
**30 Tighten up the details** Keep working the feathers and fur. Add patterns found on birds of prey and iridescence wherever you want. I prefer iridescence everywhere.



## Stippling

Stippling is a technique where hundreds or thousands of dots create a complete image or texture. The advantage of stippling the leaves is that you are in control of the directional flow, which is hard to duplicate with a pre-made brush. It is worth the time it takes.

**29 A hint of cat** The feline back is one of the aspects of this critter that tells us that something isn't quite right. Keep in mind where the hipbones are and try to render them so you can still see the anatomy beneath, giving an edge of realism to the fantasy.



# Landscapes



 **Source files available**  
Sketch

# Lighting with layer masks

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Joe Cummings**

Personal portfolio site  
[cumingsillustration.com](http://cumingsillustration.com)

Country UK

Software used **Painter**,  
**Photoshop**, **Illustrator**,  
**SketchBook Pro**

I have been a long-time traditional illustrator, producing a range of artwork for magazines and newspapers. I like to explore many different styles and media. For me, the abundance of digital drawing programs and 3D apps offers many more avenues for exploration.



## The Storm Below 2012 Painter, Photoshop, GroBoto

“ This tutorial shows how lighting a sci-fi scene can be enhanced by the use of layer masks ”

**Joe Cummings** Illustrator



**It is said that in London you're never more than five metres away from a rat.**

Similarly, in the world wide web-gallery of digital painting, you're probably never more than two clicks away from a fantasy or sci-fi-themed image.

Unlike our mangy rodent neighbours, however, a well-executed fantasy painting can be an intriguing and beautiful thing, and they very often are.

It's easy to see why an artist might be drawn to the world of fantasy illustration as the themes and alien landscapes enable us to push light, colour and perspective to extremes and, done properly, the results can be exciting and dramatic. These are the elements I'm interested in exploring in this tutorial.

A painting set in the future or on another world gives us the opportunity to invent strange forms and landscapes, or even new laws of physics. We can relax a little and not worry so much about reproducing nature in detail. A new white canvas becomes less of a threat and more of a platform for your imagination. However, we still need to pay close attention to how light affects the objects and colours in our scene, and getting this right is no mean feat. Hours of good work can be destroyed by adding last-minute details or editing. Who has never experienced the dread of trying to rectify a mistake that has completely changed the look of your piece only to discover that you have no more undoes?

One solution is layer masks. These can be added at the end of the painting process so you can adjust the tones and values without fear of permanently damaging your artwork. These are a must-have addition to any digital artist's toolset.



**Initial sketch** Tone thumbnails are excellent for working out composition and colour schemes, but you need to include some detail too. I usually produce about five or six of these rough drawings.



**Go 3D** If you have tools to make life easier, why not use them? I am far from expert with 3D apps but a little knowledge offers great rewards.

The idea of this painting was to imagine a city of the future that sits on a cloud – who needs gravity? It is silhouetted against a tropical sun, but an approaching storm creates an appearance of extreme and contrasting lighting effects. For this work I will be spending most of my time in Painter 12 and, while this program can produce adequate layer masks and adjustments, I will be taking it into Photoshop towards the end to use its more comprehensive tools for the final tweaks.

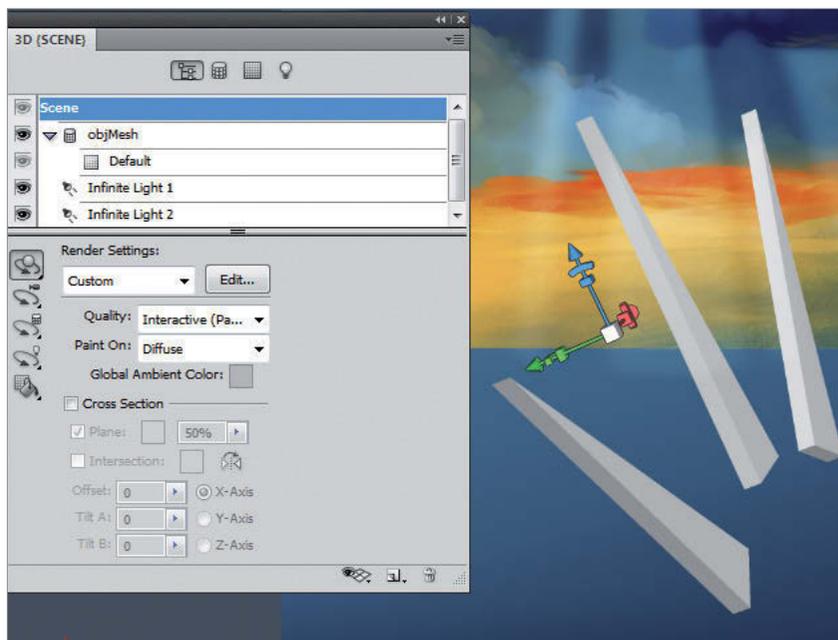
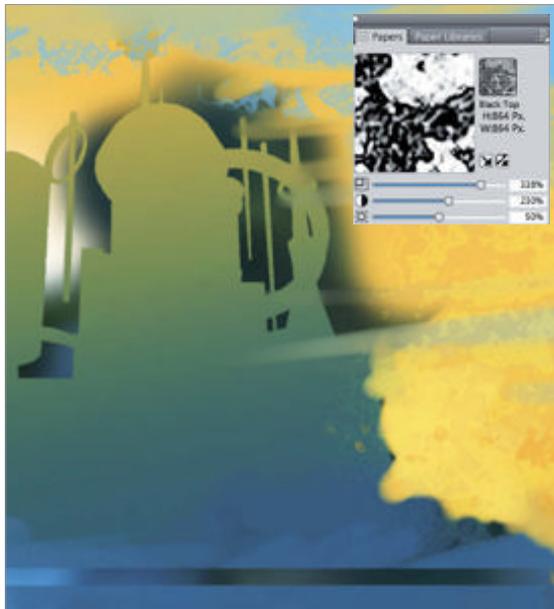
I began, as always, by quickly blocking out some colour ideas using simple, rough shapes. I wanted to use honey yellows for the sky to contrast with the deep blues and greens that I intended for the sea and storm. This made life a little easier regarding colour schemes, as I knew I could concentrate on a smaller section of the spectrum, leaving myself open to drop in some small, complementary-coloured elements later. It is often safer to limit the number of colour choices to avoid losing focus.

After producing a more detailed line drawing on a new layer I began designing my city, experimenting with domes, spires and glass towers. I also knew I wanted something protruding out of the sea, perhaps the remains of an earlier civilisation.

At this point I had intended to simply paint in geometric shapes and use custom brushes to add basic, undefined architectural features – the city was to be mostly in shadow after all. As I continued I realised that I could quickly produce a simple city of

# Landscapes

**Brush tips** Use Painter's hard media (Chalks, Conte, Pastels) with different papers to produce strong textures. Push the Grain to 10 and scale the paper up and down.



**Extended features** Photoshop CS5 Extended's 3D features are a little clumsy, but the ability to manoeuvre 3D objects within a 2D file saves enormous amounts of time.



**New dimensions** Once the object is placed correctly, it can be rasterised and taken back into Painter. Painting the sea lapping around the spikes merges them nicely into the scene.

rounded shapes in GroBoto, a peculiar 3D-modelling program that has been lying idle on my hard drive for a couple of years. The inexpensive software works by dropping custom shapes onto a 3D canvas, which can then be manipulated into quite extraordinary, complicated and beautiful structures, and there is the added bonus of being able to manoeuvre a light source. It only took about 40 minutes to build a convincing city. This was excellent reference for working out structure and perspective.

I dropped a rendered image of the city into a new layer and began painting the background, clouds and seascape, working with each on their own layers.

Keeping the elements isolated this way is insurance for future alteration or deletion. I used a Captured Bristle Acrylic brush for roughing out, but for the majority of the painting I adapted a Soft Flat Oils brush to make it blend more with the surrounding colours. I changed the Dab Type to Circular, Method to Cover and the Subcategory to Soft Cover in the General tab of the Brushes panel. This gives a smooth, buttery oil that is excellent for blending. Keep the Bleed high and the Resaturation low, that way you will blend with light pressure and lay down more colour when it is increased. Using the city render as a guide, I added shadows and highlight detail. I placed a new layer above the city and started on the cloud. Clouds are tricky because they come in so many

flavours. For the foreground cloud effect I settled for a classic fluffy cauliflower, as it had to appear almost solid to support the city, but I left the background clouds more indistinct. The choppy sea was also challenging, but working methodically in layers can take away some of the strain.

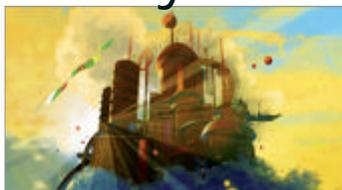
Lightning is always fun to paint and incredibly simple. Brush a bright yellow spidery trail with a small medium-hard brush, add some branching and then incorporate a stronger yellow over these with an airbrush to create a fluorescence. Use the Glow brush from the FX category to paint over. It has an amazing ability to create the whitest of whites.

Shamelessly lifting from *The Planet of the Apes* (and a dozen other sci-fi movies), I decide to add protruding spikes from the crown of the Statue of Liberty. The fallen monument is submerged under a dramatically raised sea level. Having the Extended version of Photoshop CS5 meant that I could open the painting there and import a simple 3D file of some spikes, placing it directly into the painting where I rotated and used them as a guide.

There are many ways to produce sun rays, but I find it quick and easy to first draw a rectangle, add a Gaussian blur and transform the rectangle using Perspective Distort to make the ray. This produces a beam that is sharp at the focus with an increasing blur towards the end. Copying and rotating several of

Before

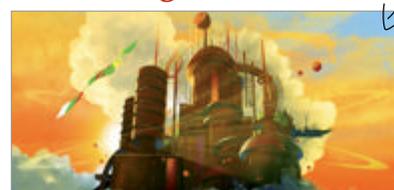
## Use layer masks **Mask your elements for non-destructive editing**



Layer masks can be used to make dramatic changes to your artwork or tweaks so subtle that only you would notice. The beauty is that you can always go back and edit them, a bit like having a reverse eraser.

These before and after images show how I had complete control

over the sunbeams I added. Even if I decide to incorporate something else in the scene, I need only take a brush to my mask to account for the changes. Adding layers of colours and then masking parts enabled me to increase the dramatic appearance of the tropical lighting.



After



**Paint clouds** Clouds are always tricky to get right. It is worthwhile studying lots of images and practising painting them. I try as much as possible to avoid soft edges.

these gave me a template for god rays emanating from the sun. After spending a few hours refining and adding detail to the city, I reached the point where I could start to work with layer masks to develop the image further in separate sections.

Layer masks enable you to adjust the opacity of the pixels on a layer while leaving it intact. Painting black on the mask hides the pixels, white reveals and shades of grey change the opacity, depending on the value of the grey. This is an especially useful feature when you are dealing with soft blurry elements like the sun rays; it is difficult to work on these directly without destroying the effect around them.

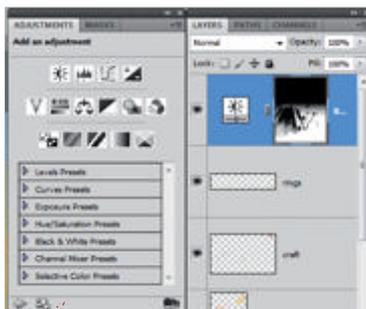
I opened the image in Photoshop and added a layer mask to the sunray. I then selected the mask and, in the document window, painted black where I wanted to hide the parts that would be obscured by the city and clouds. With a soft brush, I painted in grey (actually, I just reduced the opacity of the brush) to reduce the opacity in other areas and changed the layer mode to Overlay. This gave me convincing sun rays while retaining the ability to go back and alter them later should the need arise.

After selecting the pixels of the cloud layer and overlaying a gradient on a new layer, I added another layer mask and once again painted blacks and greys to reveal the shadows on the cloud. To finish off, I used adjustment layers to edit the contents of the painting. These are similar to layer masks but enable you to alter the colour balance, levels, contrast and so on without actually changing the pixels permanently. If you open the Masks panel you will find extra controls in the Adjustments tab. Be aware, however, that adjustment layers will not transfer back to Painter, the layer will simply be flattened.

Layer masks are ideal for making final adjustments to your artwork and, being non-destructive, are reassuringly safe to use in artwork in which you have invested hours or even days of hard labour.

## Unmask your mask

When using masks it is always useful to see a before and after for comparison. Shift-clicking the mask thumbnail toggles it on and off and Alt/Opt-clicking the thumbnail shows the mask in the document window where you can see exactly what you are painting.



**Mask options** Open the Masks panel to find extra layer-mask controls. In the Adjustments tab you will also find an extensive number of parameters to control adjustment layers.

## Sea painting for beginners

Rendering rough seas is not as daunting as you might think



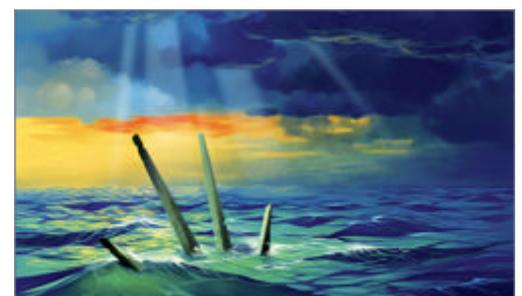
**01 Simple beginnings** Create a dark-to-light-blue gradient and, on a new layer, paint sharp-edged diamonds. Only one or two should dominate.



**02 Blue or green** Between the background and the waves, airbrush a brighter green-blue towards the foreground then paint a lattice of smaller wave outlines.



**03 Light tweaks** Adjust the hue and contrast according to the light then look at reference images to see how foam on the top of water disperses.



**04 Reflections** Go back to the airbrushed layer and paint in some of the sky colour at the horizon. Add in bright sunlight reflections across the water.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Tobias Roetsch**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.gtgraphics.de](http://www.gtgraphics.de)

Country **Germany**

Software used **Photoshop**

Roetsch has been focusing on space and science fiction based images as long as he's been doing art. Self-taught, he improves his skills step-by-step, with a lot of patience and effort.



 **Source files available**

Stock images

# Compose a spacescape

## Working Progress

Turn your fantasy world into a reality



Step 04: Piece the scene together



Step 09: Bring in the sky



Step 19: Adding flowers

## Wayfarer 2011 Photoshop

By the end of this tutorial you'll discover the means to create realistic and futuristic looking scenes

**Tobias Roetsch** Digital artist



**In this tutorial we will learn how to create a moody extraterrestrial landscape.** All you'll need is Photoshop and a good source of photography.

The best way to ensure you get the perfect shot is to take it yourself, therefore it's very helpful to have a DSLR, ensuring high-resolution quality in your resources. To get the necessary inspiration for your project, just take a walk outside. Another option is to use the Google image search; by searching for 'mountains', for example, you'll get a variety of shapes and ideas that will stimulate your imagination. If

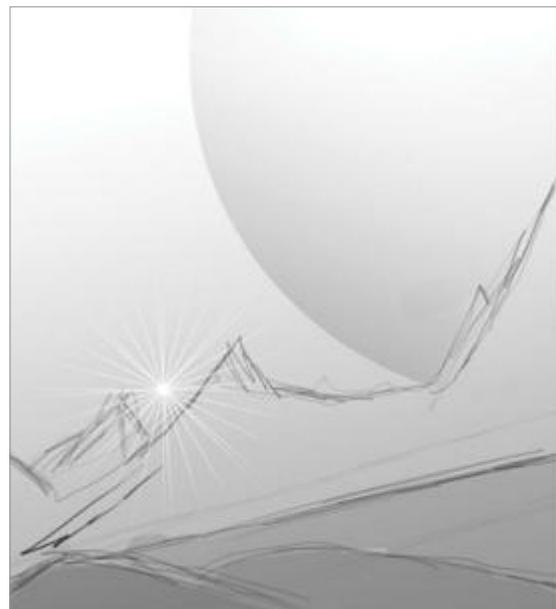
you don't have a DSLR, you'll need to use stock sites such as iStockphoto.com. In preparation for this tutorial you should collect or take photos of things that might be useful for detail.

The software basis for this tutorial is Photoshop CS5, but we have stuck to the core functions of the program available in older versions as well. A graphic tablet was also used for the painting parts but this is not necessarily needed. By the end of this tutorial you'll discover the means to create realistic and futuristic looking scenes.

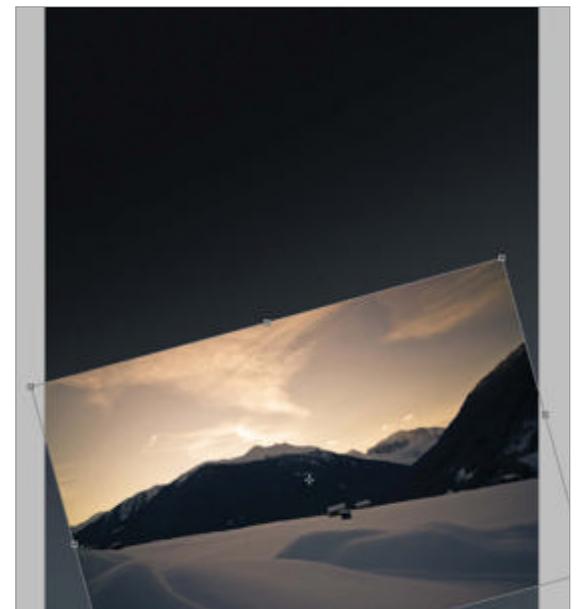


## One step beyond

Start to build your extraterrestrial landscape



**01 The idea** It helps to sketch out your idea before, so use a small hard circular brush for the outlines and a large soft brush to visualise the light setting. Find the right place for your light source at the start, then create a new 4,800 x 6,000 pixels document.



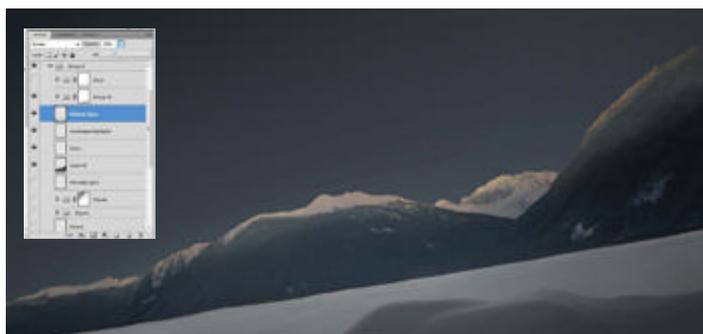
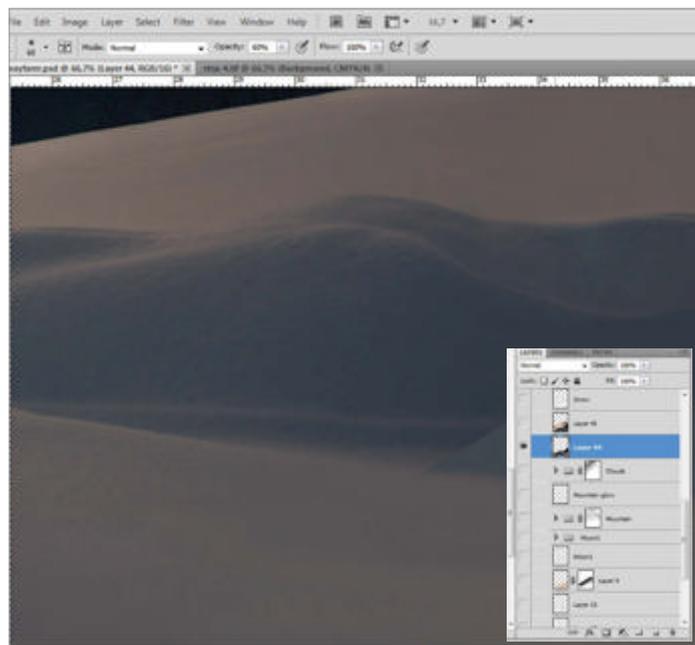
**02 Getting started** Use a Linear Gradient ('#000000' to '#3e464d') from bottom-right to top-left corners. For the foreground, we're going to use the image 'IMG\_5642.jpg'. Add it to a new layer, flip the photo horizontally and rotate it by 10-15 degrees.

# Landscapes

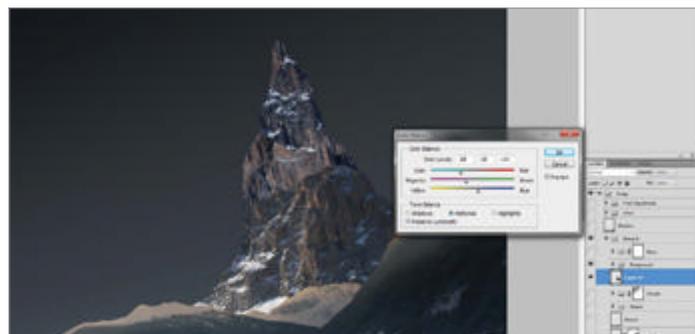


**03 Undesired elements** We only need the landscape section of the photo, as we're creating our own heaven later. For this kind of task, the Pen tool (P) set to Paths is a good choice. Just follow the mountain outline, make a soft selection (Select>Modify>Feather Radius of 1 or 2 pixels) and cut off the sky portion of the image. Now we're going to remove the buildings, so zoom in to 200% and use the Clone Stamp tool (S). Sample the verge between the snow and the mountains to use with the tool.

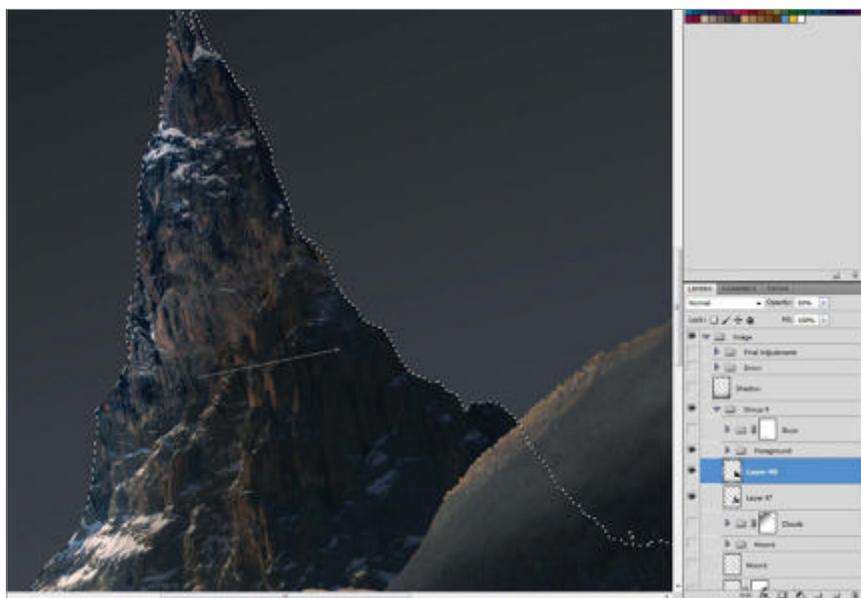
**04 Make it fit** The landscape is still not right because some snow and mountains are absent from the photo due to its angle. Mountains can again be remedied with the Clone Stamp tool. Simply paint in the snow in the left and right bottom corners using a medium-sized soft round brush at 60% Opacity. To get the right colour, Opt/Alt-click and chose the one you need from another part of the photo. A texture brush or the Clone Stamp tool helps you to make the snow look more realistic.



**05 Dust and haze** The landscape is still looking very clean; a dirty look will help improve its realism. First we have to add haze on a new layer. It's up to you to paint it or to use cloud stocks. If you paint it, use a white soft round brush at a low opacity, creating distant haze. Adjust the layer opacity and use some circular light blue gradients for the foreground, then play with opacity again. Add another layer and paint over the snow parts with a white brush. Set the layer to Color blending mode.



**06 Background mountains** To add draw more attention to the background, we're going to add some extra mountains. Build them using the 'IMG\_6402.jpg' and 'IMG\_6417.jpg' images on the disc, cutting away unnecessary areas. Layer these by using single parts of the given photos. Once you're pleased with your arrangement, work on the transitions. Adjust the colours by using Color Balance (Cmd/Ctrl+B). For the transitions of your crops, take the Healing Brush tool (J) and fix the edges.



**07 Light the mountain** To change the lighting, Cmd/Ctrl-click the mountain layer thumbnail to make a selection. On a new layer, add a black-to-transparent Linear Gradient from right to left. For highlights, copy the mountain layer and apply a Brightness/Contrast adjustment with Brightness at 45 and Contrast to 10 (tick Legacy). Delete everything but the left edge of this layer. Add haze, as in Step 5, using colours from the highlights of the foreground mountains.



## Quick tip

Landscapes are naturally formed. That means they're not perfect and always include some dust, dirt or smoke. This factor is quite important, as applying realistic effects will make the difference between a standard and a good image. Work with blurred extra layers at a low opacity. The subtler they are, the better.



# Planet effects

Use Distort filters and textures to create new worlds

**08 Vibrant heaven** Start by using a Linear Gradient (colour '#b19a82' to transparent) from the snow horizon to the top of your highest peak on a new layer below your mountain layers. Open 'IMG\_1755.jpg', which will serve as our cloud layer. Copy it in to a new layer and select Edit>Transform>Warp. Change the look to a more dynamic orientation (as in the screenshot). Now remove all the undesired image elements, as we only need the clouds themselves. Adjust the clouds' colour saturation and darken some of the brighter clouds with the Burn tool (O). Repeat this with 'IMG\_1765.jpg', although you have to flip this image vertically beforehand.

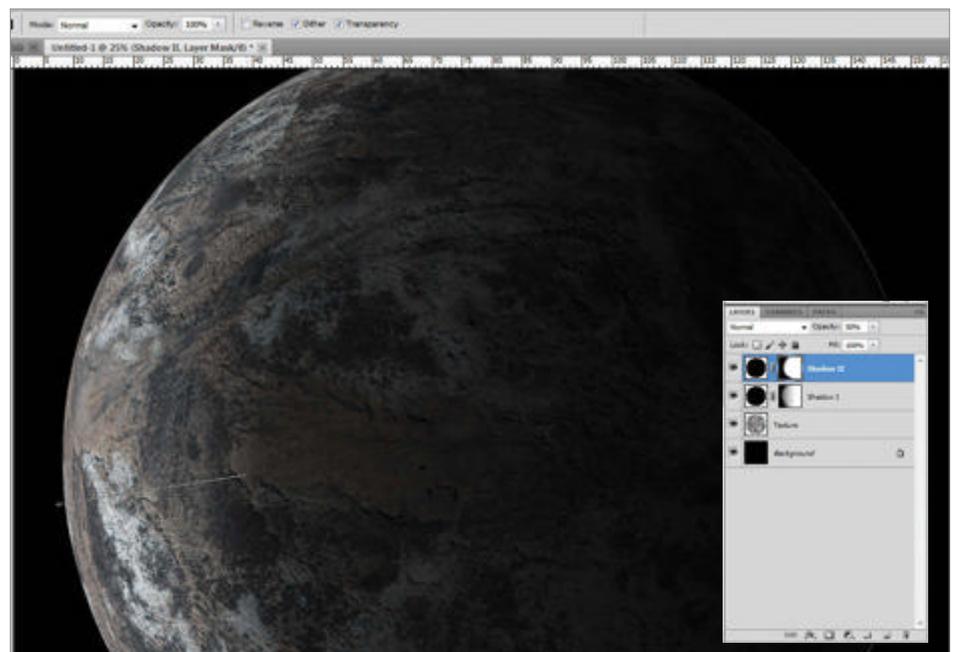


**09 Heaven postwork** Duplicate your cloud layers and merge them – select the layers you want to merge and press Cmd/Ctrl+E. Apply a Gaussian Blur with a 30px Radius. Some details should be visible, but subtle. Transform (Cmd/Ctrl+T) this layer up to 125-150% of its original size and move it behind the other cloud layers. Duplicate the cloud layers individually and use Gaussian Blur. Set their Opacity to 25% in to soften the whole scene.



“When you have finished your first planet, adding a second one is always a good idea to help improve the feeling of scale and to give more depth to the sci-fi landscape. Just repeat the steps and size down the new planet to 10% of your original one”

**10 Planet textures** Now we're going to create a planet in a separate document. In this case we're going to go with a 4,500 x 4,500px new document size. The first thing that you need is a good texture. [Cgtextures.com](http://Cgtextures.com) has good images for this kind of task – we've applied the 'SoilSand0165' image. Add it to your planet document on a new layer. Duplicate and rotate it by 180°. Rearrange it so it's nearly a square. Merge both texture layers and erase the hard edges with the Clone tool (S) where both parts meet each other.



**11 Add the shape** Activate the Elliptical Marquee tool (M) and make a circular selection from top-left to bottom-right. Crop parts you don't need. Make a selection of the layer and apply Filter>Distort>Spherize at 100%, Normal mode, twice. Create a new black circle shape layer of the same size. Add a vector mask to this layer and apply a black-to-transparent Gradient tool (G) to delete shadow on the planet's dayside, creating shadow to the right.

# Landscapes



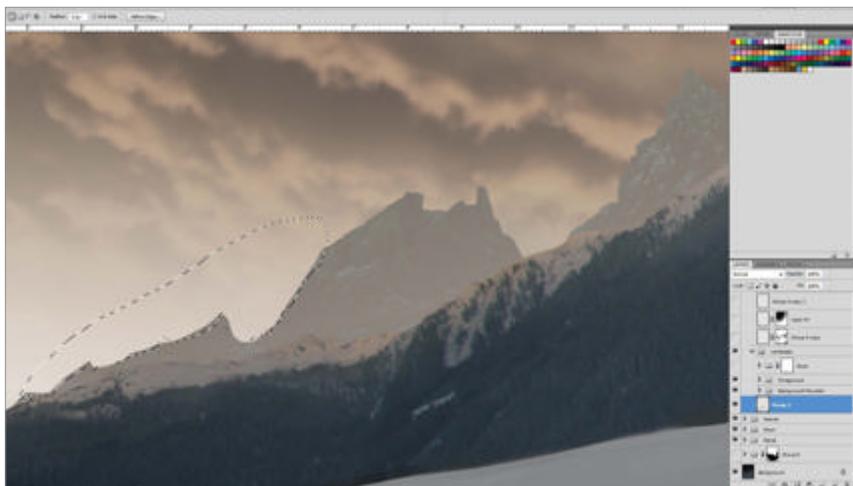
**12 Final planetary action** Create a new black circle above the shadow. Apply a light blue Inner Glow layer style, set to Screen, 250px and Source set to Edge. Also apply a same colour Outer Glow with the Size at 55px and Range of 50%. Add a white Stroke of 6px Size. Set the entire layer to Screen blending mode. Create a new group (Cmd/Ctrl+G); this is needed to delete unnecessary parts. Add another mask to the group and use the Gradient tool (G) as before.



**13 Integration into the scene** You can now change the colours, etc, but basically you are finished with your planet, so now add the planet group to your scene right above your background layer. Adjust its colour setting and improve the shadows in order to make it perfectly fit into your scene. A second planet is always a good idea to improve the feeling of scale and to give more depth. Just repeat the steps and size down the new planet to 10% of your original one.

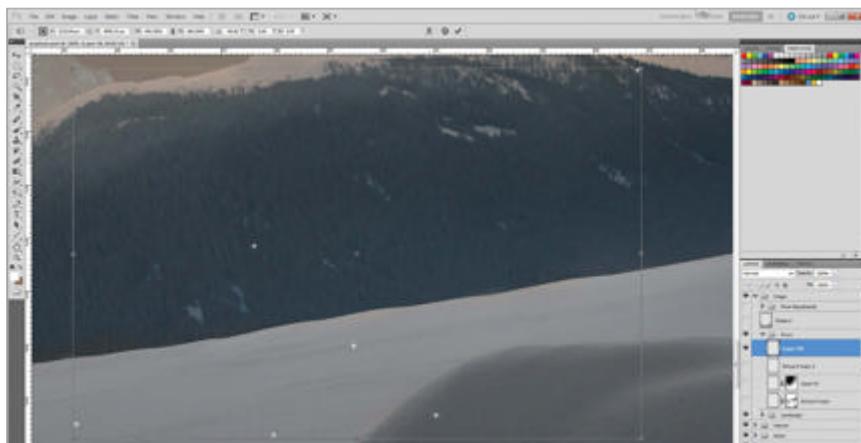
## Additional Elements

Use colour effects and additional stock to complete your scene



**14 More mountains** Now add more mountains. Open one of the mountain stocks from the disc and add it to the scene on a new layer below the other mountains. To make it fit into your scene, adjust the lighting – press Cmd/Ctrl+U and set Lightness to +40. Change Hue to a more yellow/red tonality and use the Lasso tool (L) and cut off parts. Now add a Gaussian Blur of a 1-2px Radius.

**15 Snowflakes** Now to add snowflakes in the foreground. Create a new layer above everything else, take a 2px hard round brush and make some random dots. Press Cmd/Ctrl+T and transform it up to 400-500%. Duplicate the snowflake layer, transform its size by 125-150% and set the Opacity between 50-75%, then rotate it. Now merge both layers (Cmd/Ctrl+E) and repeat.

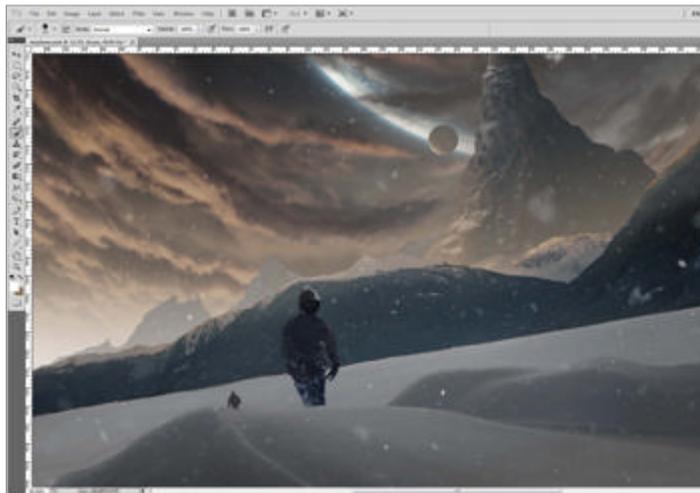


## Finding textures

A planet is a good addition to your pictures and makes a normal landscape scene look epic immediately.

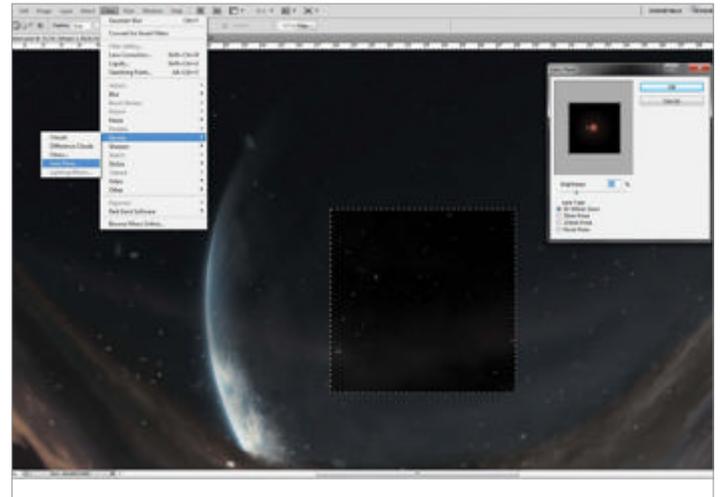
Unfortunately, the Spherize Filter in Photoshop causes quality loss, especially on the planet's edges. To avoid this, it's useful to work with a 3D program. You only need basic knowledge for that because all you have to do is to create a sphere and add the prepared texture. A good place besides [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com) is actually the NASA homepage. There are thousands of high-quality photos that can be used. However, follow this copyright link closely for information: [www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/features/MP\\_Photo\\_Guidelines.html](http://www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/features/MP_Photo_Guidelines.html).





**16 Have some fun!** It's up to you to add further elements to the image. For example, you can add a single house, some people, an old, dead and frozen tree or some kind of vehicle. Keep in mind not to overdo it. In this case it's better to go with one additional element at the most. There are already a lot of details provided in the scene and the eye of the watcher only needs some focal points to follow. This is your scene, so have fun and add in your own elements as you wish.

**17 Stars** As we have darker parts above the clouds, stars would be a good addition to the scene. Add a new layer just above your background layer and create a black square shape. Rasterize it, select the shape and add a Lens Flare as shown in the example. Select the layer again and apply a Radial Blur, setting both Spin and Zoom to 100%. Size it down to 15% for larger stars. Set the blending mode to Color Dodge. Duplicate this layer over and over again, changing the size and colour as you wish.



**18 Final adjustments**

Before you start the final tweaks, add another layer above everything else and add more shadows to the foreground by using the Linear Gradient tool (G). Set this layer to Soft Light and change Opacity to 50%. For this image, the adjustment layers we used are Color Balance, Hue/Saturation and contrast layers (Levels or Curves). Place them at the top of your layer structure and play with the settings to get your desired finish.

# Manga street scene

Wandering in the Market Street 2012 Photoshop

“This painting tutorial aims to achieve the lively richness of a market street scene”  
Patipat Asavasena Illustrator



**A good street scene is about choosing an interesting viewpoint and capturing life.**

It's about the stories embedded in the image.

You should try to observe everything around you carefully and you will see there is a lot happening. For example, if you are in the downtown area, you will see people who are rushing to their businesses, hear the noise from cars on the street, see the sunlight that reflects onto the skyscraper buildings, smell lovely scents from the bakery shop nearby and so on. Every detail creates a lively scene. Another important thing is perspective, which sounds so scary, especially for amateur artists. However, it's necessary knowledge for drawing any scenery and I highly recommend that you practise it.

The best way to capture the crowd of people, noise, colour or any other detail is visiting the actual location. You have to use all of your senses; sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste to collect the raw data around you. Unseen things, like a scent or noise, are exclusive to the actual location. These greatly help you to thoroughly portray your impression in your image. You'll never realise those feelings if you only do research with a book or web search, so let's get outside and seek some inspiration!

You can sharpen your observation skills by drawing and you'll find your visual awareness increases every time you do it. After you do this for a while, you will be surprised how many details you overlooked before as you start getting better at noticing the finer details of everyday life. Finally you will be able to see things differently from the average viewer and create an interesting viewpoint for your image. I often carry my little sketchbook with me and use it whenever possible. I draw everything that catches my attention in order to practise my observational skills.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Patipat Asavasena**

Personal portfolio site

[www.asuka111.net](http://www.asuka111.net)

Country **Thailand**

Software used **Photoshop**

I shifted away from a career in engineering to be an artist and have been working as a professional artist now for five happy years. My art is strongly influenced by Japanese manga. I'm a full time freelance illustrator living in Thailand.





 **Source files available**  
Sketch



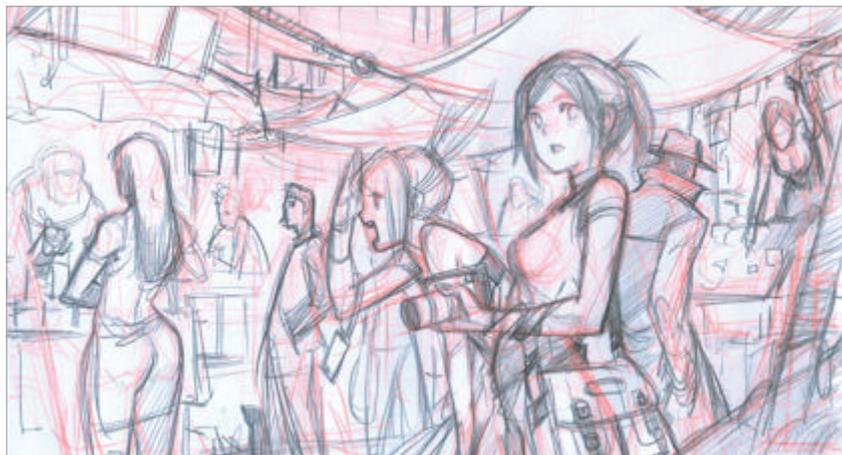
## Location, location, location

Hit the street you want to illustrate to collect ideas

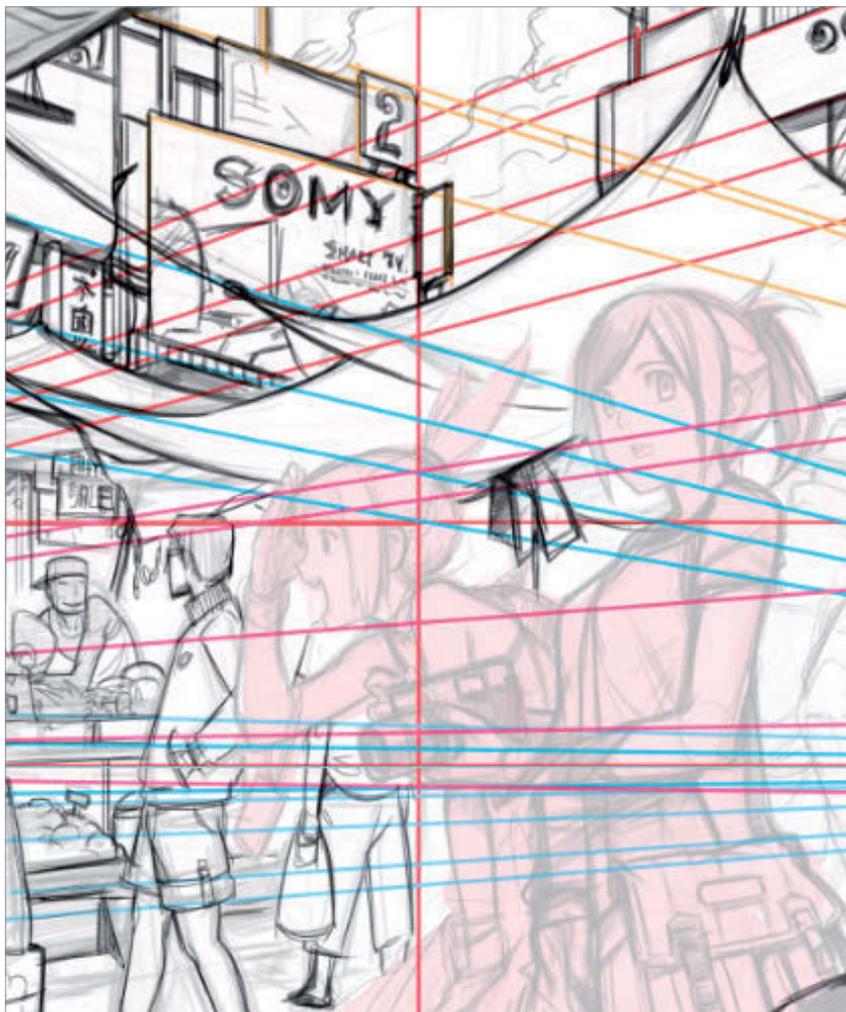
**01 Gather the data** I begin with a trip to visit a crowded street market in the downtown area in Bangkok. I keep wandering around there as much as possible and looking for any inspiration. I also capture interesting subjects with my camera and write ideas in my sketchbook.



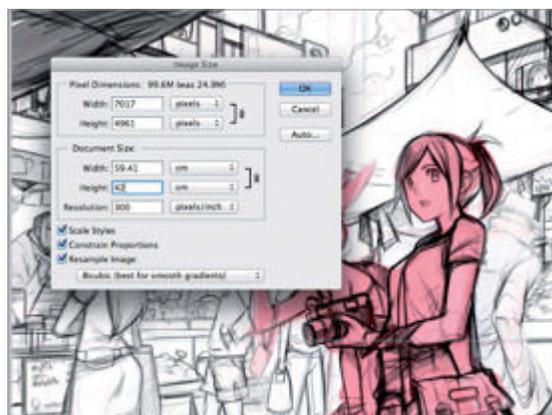
**02 Thumbnail sketch** I lay out all my images from the previous step as a reference then start to sketch a rough thumbnail on A5 size paper (148 x 210mm) with a 2B pencil. Using small paper forces me to think in terms of the big picture and not the details.



**03 Fix perspective** I scan my thumbnail and import it into Photoshop. I expand the canvas both to the left and right side, establishing the horizontal line for the perspective grid. To do this, I create a new layer called Grid and use the Line tool to draw my lines of perspective. Now I create another layer called Rough Sketch and redraw the building to match the perspective.



**04 Refine sketch** After I crop out the expanded canvas area, I decrease the Opacity of the Rough Sketch layer to 20%. I create a new layer called Refine Sketch and use a 4px Hard Round brush for adding more details to the image, especially the main characters.



**05 Ink time** I merge all of the layers together then resize the image to A3 at 300dpi (7,017 x 4,961px). I decrease the Opacity value of the Refine Sketch layer until it fades into light grey and then create a new layer for inking called Line Art. I use a Hard Round brush for this stage of the linework.

**06 Experiment with colour** Since I work with quite high-resolution images, it would be more efficient if I think about the colour palette that I'm going to use early on. I duplicate the current image via Image>Duplicate and resize it to a lower resolution. I then experiment with various colour schemes before settling on one. I'll now build this up in detail on the high-res file.

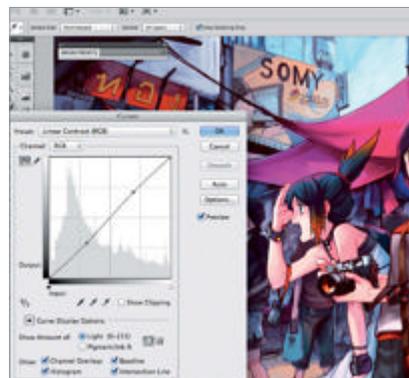


**07 Main character layer** I create a new layer at the top called Main Character and use the Lasso tool to select the area. You can add to the selection by holding down Shift and dragging, but if you want to subtract it, hold down Alt/Opt instead. I then select Edit>Fill and flood with a solid colour.



**08 Paint the character** I lock the layer's transparency before painting to prevent the colour bleeding outside the area. You can do this by clicking the icon in the layer window. I now use a Hard Round brush to paint the characters. I also import the colour reference sheet into the new layer so I can quickly sample the hues from it.

**09 Paint the background** I use a Flat Curve Thin Stiff Bristles brush to paint the background. Begin with a large tip to paint the basic shapes but decrease the size when working on smaller detail. Now select the Mixer Brush tool with the Moist, Heavy Mix preset and start blending the colour. Be careful not to overblend anything, because the image will lose brushstroke detail.



**10 Final touch** I create a new layer at the top called Overpainting and then brush over everything. I enjoy adding more details and cleaning up the image until I think I'm done, then I flatten all the layers. Finally, I add some brightness and contrast adjustments with the Curves command from Image>Adjustments>Curves.

**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

## The best in scenic art

We take a look at three inspiring examples from the canon

Painting scenery is all about how we feel towards the things around us, and it's unique to each individual person because we all have different cultures, impressions, experiences and thoughts. If we want to accurately capture any city or town, we might use a camera to do it in a split second. However, it doesn't have an opinion or a response to the view. We do. These are some examples from the history of art that capture the spirit of their scenes.

### The masters

Three classic crowded images



**Artist:** Adolf Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel

**Title:** Laying out the March Dead

**Date:** 1848

**Location/Owner:** Hamburger Kunsthalle

● Although this is an incomplete painting, Adolf Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel did a good job at portraying lives and telling a story. As you can see, there is a lot of variation and detail in the crowd. It tells the unfortunate story of the March Revolution in 1848.

[tinyurl.com/DA-Menzel](http://tinyurl.com/DA-Menzel)



**Artist:** Claude Monet

**Title:** Boulevard des Capucines

**Date:** 1873

**Location/Owner:** Nelson-Atkins

**Museum of Art**

● In this painting, Claude Monet hasn't refined the small details, but he was able to capture the environment of the city scene really well. The soft and fuzzy brushstrokes give a hazy feeling and movement to the crowds of people.

[tinyurl.com/DA-Monet](http://tinyurl.com/DA-Monet)



**Artist:** Georges Seurat

**Title:** Bathers at Asnières

**Date:** 1884

**Location/Owner:** National Gallery, London

● The impression of light is well illustrated in this painting, especially the reflection in the water. This adds to the more relaxed feel of this image. Although the foreground is crowded, these sleepy people are lazing in the sun and the painting gives an impression of quiet, peace and tranquility thanks to the colours used.

[tinyurl.com/DA-bathers](http://tinyurl.com/DA-bathers)

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Jennifer Cirpici**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.breakingcanvas.com](http://www.breakingcanvas.com)

Country **Netherlands**

Software used **Photoshop**

Jennifer is a self-taught graphic designer and illustrator from the Netherlands. She studied graphic design last year, has worked for several big agencies like Saatchi & Saatchi and Leo Burnett, and is currently a freelance artist.

 **Source files  
available**

Photo pack

# Create fantasy worlds

**Fantasy World** 2011 Photoshop

“ This workshop is fundamentally inspired by the lush mountainous scenery in the movie *Avatar* ”

**Jennifer Cirpici** Illustrator and graphic designer



**What you will learn in this tutorial are several basic but essential techniques like blending, colouring and painting over a scene comprising**

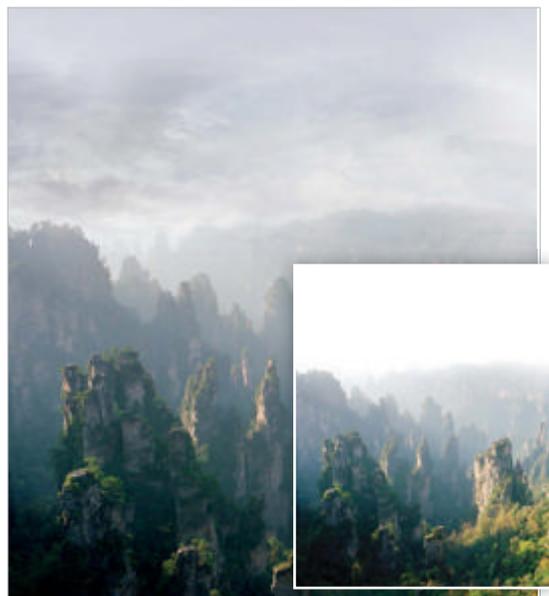
**multiple photos.** This workshop is fundamentally inspired by the lush mountainous scenery in the movie *Avatar*. The Zhangjiajie Mountains, located in China, inspired the makers of *Avatar* to create the floating Hallelujah Mountains; they also inspired us and we used stock imagery of this range to create this artwork. We'll go into how you can combine real and painted elements (the essence of matte painting) in

depth, while keeping things easy to follow along. We'll also look at how you can blend stock easily and how essential colouring is when it comes to setting an atmosphere. This guide will not only help you to create these *Avatar*-esque floating mountains, but also to improve your future photomanipulations. Unlike the scenes created for the film, we will only be using Photoshop to achieve these effects. We recommend, however, that you look up inspiring *Avatar* scenes first, or better still, (re)watch the movie to get a few ideas for the composition.

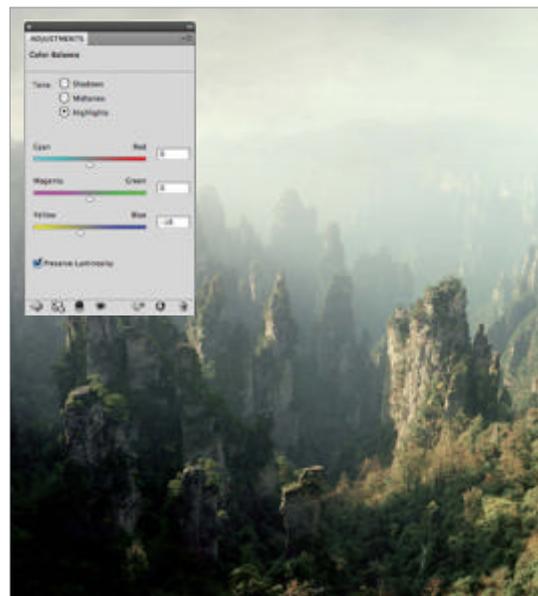


## Create a lush environment

Manage your stock, colours and blending



**01 Get your head in the clouds** First find some mountain stock. The sky is white in our image and we want to add some clouds. We search for good sky photos, paste them over the landscape, then blend using layer masks as well as Overlay, Multiply and Normal modes.



**02 Bring in some colour** For a green tint, create a new layer filled with '#f6f6e5' and set to Multiply. Next, create a new layer set to Multiply, but fill this with a bluish gradient at 36% Opacity. Use Curves to up the contrast and tweak the greens in Color Balance.

## Working Progress

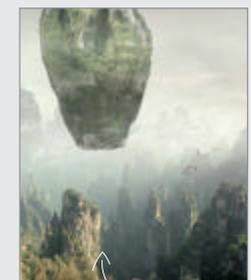
Turn your fantasy world into a reality



Step 01: Develop a mountainscape



Step 08: Apply shadows and accents



Step 17: Use mist to blend

# Landscapes



**03 Mountains and birds** We now add in some mountains from another stock photo. Set the layer's blending mode to Multiply with an Opacity of 68%, then make the mountains a little greyer so that they all blend well together. Blur the mountains with a 5% Gaussian Blur filter because they are further away and this will create a greater sense of depth. Finally, find some nice bird images and paste them into the composition, using the Edit->Transform options to match the scene's perspective and scale.



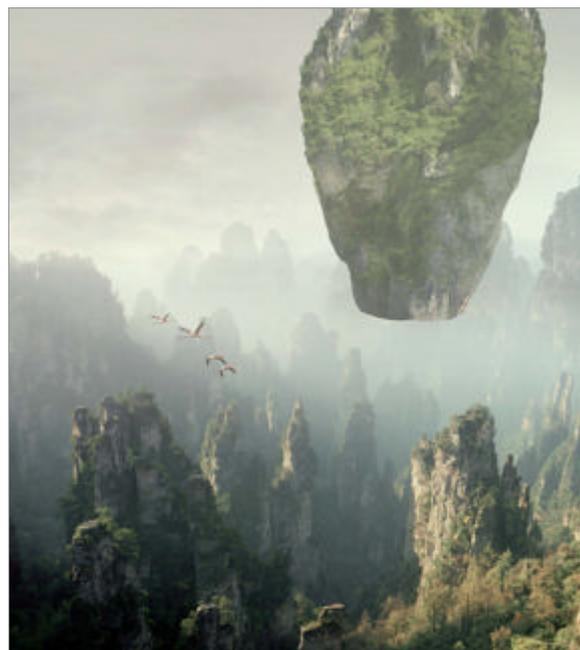
**05 Gradient shading** Select the floating mountain and, with a black-to-transparent gradient, create a shadow at the bottom of the scene, fading out towards the top of the image. Lower the Opacity to 28% and repeat this step. Select parts of the mountains from the background and paste into the bottom to give it more texture. We'll go into more depth with this in a moment. At this stage, we feel we're not quite there yet with the composition, so to give it a fresh look, we go to Edit->Transform>Flip Horizontal.

## Quick Tip

You may find that you get stuck sometimes, and lose inspiration or motivation to continue with your artwork. Some of the best solutions are to either sleep on it, take a couple of steps back from your screen or, as we did in this tutorial, just change the perspective by flipping it horizontally.

**06 More depth and highlights** To create depth and highlights we use a small hard brush, painting with black where we want to generate a bit more shadow. We set this layer to Soft Light blending and lower the Opacity to around 70% with the brush Flow at 70% too. We follow the same process with a white hard brush, this time creating highlights with the layer set to Overlay. We use this technique with all our photomanipulation projects to great effect.

**04 Floating mountains** With the help of CGTextures ([www.cgtextures.com](http://www.cgtextures.com)), we source some free landscape stock images and blend them together to produce a mountain, reminiscent of those in *Avatar*. This is very much a matter of artistic licence so you will have to decide on the scale, shape and which materials constitute your mountain when you come to constructing it. As previously demonstrated, use layer masks to bring elements together, as this will help to blend effectively using black and white brushes. Further, make sure that when you are using these brushes you are working with a low Flow value as this will also help with blending.





**07 Add some clouds** To add realism to the floating mountain and to establish its significant scale and airborne position, we add in some clouds, placing them around the bottom of the mountain. Render the clouds with channels, put them on a new layer, invert (Cmd/Ctrl+I), select the black parts (the clouds) with the Magic Wand tool and erase the rest. Blur the clouds with Filter>Motion Blur to lend them a greater sense of movement.



**08 Shadows, accents and eerie mist** As this project goes on, and the more that you work on the mountain, the more likely you are to notice that it requires a bit more of this and a bit more of that as you work. At this stage, we decide that it needs more shadows and highlights. Repeat Step 6 and go into more detail using a smaller brush; it's time-consuming work, but this effort will pay dividends when it comes to the final result. To generate a mist effect, take a soft brush, sample the colour from the background with the Eyedropper tool, and brush over the mountain and background, before switching to Soft Light blending.



## Make the fantastical real

The secret is in the details

**09 Add some plants** In *Avatar*, the floating islands have long vine-like plants to help people move from one 'island' to another; we're also creating these in our scene. Take a hard brush and draw some simple lines to get the basic plant forms from one mountain to another. Then, with a green colour, add more lines over the first set and then a final group of lines in a lighter tone for shading. You can also set some of the lines to Overlay.



**10 Mountain vegetation** We are now going to add some shady plants at the bottom of the scene and around the base of the floating mountain. You can do this very simply by taking the hard brush again and, with a grey colour, drawing in plants that are hanging down. The trick is that they don't have to look exactly like plants when zoomed in, but when you zoom out they should look like the silhouettes of trees/shrubs etc. You only have to make these plants as complicated as you want to.

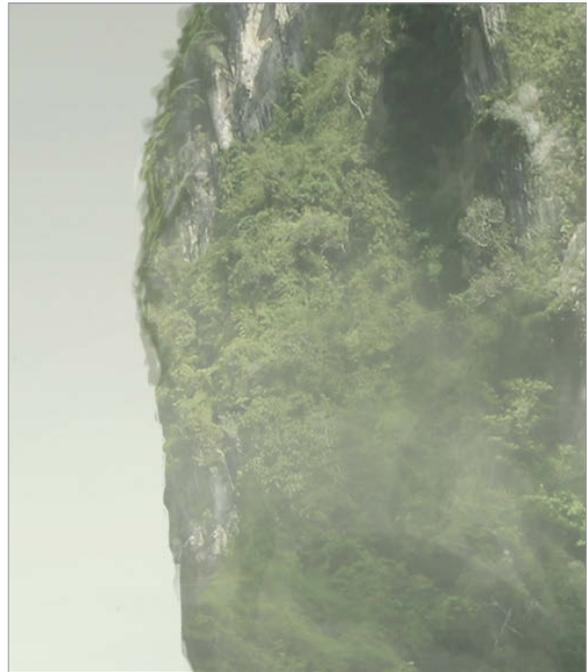
# Landscapes



**11 Additional highlights** We come again to a point when we're adding more highlights – you can never get enough of them! The more you have, the more detail you'll have in your scene and the better it will look. We're also adding a bit of green here and there with a hard brush. By doing this we are giving it a more digitally painted feeling, but don't forget to make sure that everything blends well together, with no one area stealing the show.

“We need to add our own flora to the mountain. This will better blend the mountain into the sky and reduce that copy/paste feel. You don't have to paint the plants realistically as they're in the distance and shrouded by mist”

**12 Work on mountain edges** Because we could never have rendered the rock in a way that made plants at the edges look good too, we need to add our own flora to the mountain edges. This will better blend the mountain into the sky and reduce that copy/paste feel. Again, you don't have to paint the plants/leaves very realistically as they're in the distance and shrouded by mist. Make sure not to use one colour – always add highlight/shadow tones too.



**13 Splash out!** Before making a waterfall, look up some reference to get an idea of the basic structure. As you will see, there isn't too much detail in a waterfall – it's basically a white sort of cloud. Take a soft brush at around 150px and brush in a thick line in white, then apply Soft Light blending at 25% Opacity. This is the start of the waterfall and shows how it's floating. We now add a couple of finer lines either side of the waterfall to serve as edges.



## The final touches

Wrap up your fantasy world



**14 Waterfall details** With the soft brush sized around 500px, we brush once more into the waterfall, but we lower Opacity to 28% and set blending to Soft Light. For details, zoom in and use a hard brush to make a couple of small strokes, then on a new layer, add a series of lines. If they look too hard, you can blur them a bit. Add vertical lines until satisfied then apply some smoky mist underneath the cascade.



**15 Rainbow effect** Waterfalls often have a rainbow due to light refracting through the moving water. Create a rainbow with your hard brush, as per the screenshot, lowering the Opacity to 80%. Change the layer to Soft Light and apply a slight Gaussian Blur, so that the rainbow doesn't draw too much attention. With the soft brush set to Soft Light, add a little more mist coming off the waterfall.

**16 Mountain shadow** Because it's a floating mountain, we need to add its shadow to the area it's floating over. We decided to put some shadow on the rocky column closest to it and on the ground, with the soft brush set to black at a lowered opacity. Make sure you never do just one shadow; for realism, apply several layers of shadow that becomes darker the closer it gets to the object. Don't mess too much with the blending options when it comes to shadows, as they need to be almost fully black.

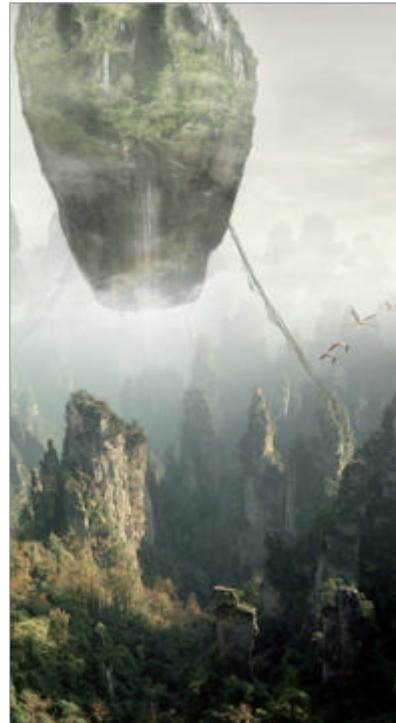


“We add more mist so that the mountain merges more seamlessly with everything else in the scene”

 **Quick Tip**

When you digitally paint, you can use the Rotate View tool to navigate your whole screen. This way you can paint more detailed elements without having to turn your head. It makes everything much more comfortable.

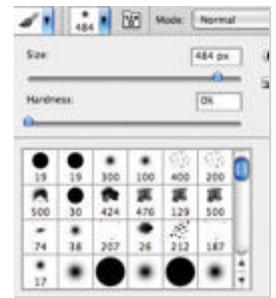
**18 Final touches** Now you can play with Brightness/Contrast, Levels and Curves adjustment layers. What we also do to get focus in this artwork is to create a black-to-white Radial gradient set to Soft Light and 30% Opacity. The white circle goes wherever you want to draw focus. Create a new layer, fill it with black and go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise (12.5% and Monochromatic). Set this layer to Soft Light and just 5% Opacity. Last but not least, wrap up the image with a Smart Sharpen filter.



**17 Anything you mist?** As one of the final steps, we are going to add yet more mist around the floating mountain and make the vegetation around the edges a little greener. We add more mist so that the mountain merges more seamlessly with everything else in the scene, plus it also gives a surreal and mysterious mood. Never make your mist too white though – instead use a colour in the same shade as the background, so give it a green tint here. Switch mist to Soft Light blending and set the Opacity to 30%.

 **Custom brushes**

For this tutorial we didn't just use Photoshop's standard hard and soft brushes, but we also used a brush set from one of our favourite artists, Dan LuVisi, who is also known as 'adonihs'. You can download the set for free from his deviantART gallery: <http://tinyurl.com/adonihs>. Do read the usage instructions before you use them though. LuVisi is a great artist and this is a fantastic resource, so it's definitely a must to download when working on a matte-painting project like this.



# Landscapes

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Alexander  
'miNze' Thümler**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.minzketchbook.com](http://www.minzketchbook.com)

Country **Germany**

Software used **Painter,  
Photoshop, Google  
SketchUp**

I'm currently a design student in Nuremberg, Germany and a freelance concept artist. I also do live paintings via online streaming. After graduating I will look for a job in the entertainment industry.



# Paint sci-fi settings

**Ancient Home** 2012 **Painter, Photoshop**

“My goal was to paint a very atmospheric alien world and use Painter’s Kaleidoscope tool to create a unique pattern for a sci-fi vehicle”  
**Alexander ‘miNze’ Thümler** Digital painter

## Working Progress

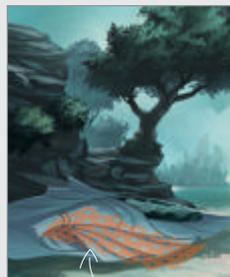
Use the Kaleidoscope tool for futuristic art



Step 01, Sketch your imagination



Step 04, Spaceship design



Step 08, Paint with scales



Step 10, Last details

 **Source files available**

Sketch



**Corel Painter 12 includes a new tool as part of the set called Kaleidoscope painting.**

In my humble opinion, the Kaleidoscope tool is Corel’s most recent masterpiece. It’s not only able to provide up to 12 axes of reflection but also offers the function to choose the axes’ angle, colour and the position of the source point. In general I am no friend of mirroring paintings because perfect symmetry is not something that really happens in nature, for example, perfectly mirrored faces do not look very natural and appear lifeless. The Kaleidoscope tool, however, avoids this problem. It doesn’t mirror the pixels you’re creating but the brush tracking itself, so if you’re using an asymmetric brush the kaleidoscopic painting won’t be symmetrical either, truly simulating what you are doing. There are millions of ways to use the tool from creating patterns, drawing portraits, designing vehicles, robots, monsters and weapons to just doing experimental live painting performances. I heartily recommend you get a copy and play around with it.

In this walkthrough I will show off the way I used the Kaleidoscope tool in my futuristic image to create the pattern that’s applied to the fish-like aircraft’s surface. In my image the kaleidoscope effect lends the vehicle a metallic, almost armoured look, contrasting beautifully with the natural elements such as the rocks and trees. Other artists have used this tool in different ways – the Painter 12 box, for example, features artwork by Andrew Jones which uses the Kaleidoscope painting tool to create dense and textured patterns. It can be used to create abstracts, or with Painter’s Pattern Pen tools to create and place motifs for fabric, décor and other image elements. Let’s take a look at how it works and how you can use it like I have to get you started.



## Design the basic elements

Begin your scene and colour composition

**01 Sketch your imagination** There are two different ways I start off with a painting. The first is having an idea and developing an image in my mind. I make sketches and thumbnails of my painting concept and try to stick to it when I'm working. The second is just having an idea, starting off and seeing what comes out. For this image I created a sketch first.



**02 Ground the canvas** Grounding is a very important step in my process because I'm afraid of blank, white pages, just as almost every artist is! The best way to start the painting is to erase that endless white space of nothing just by filling the canvas with basic tones.

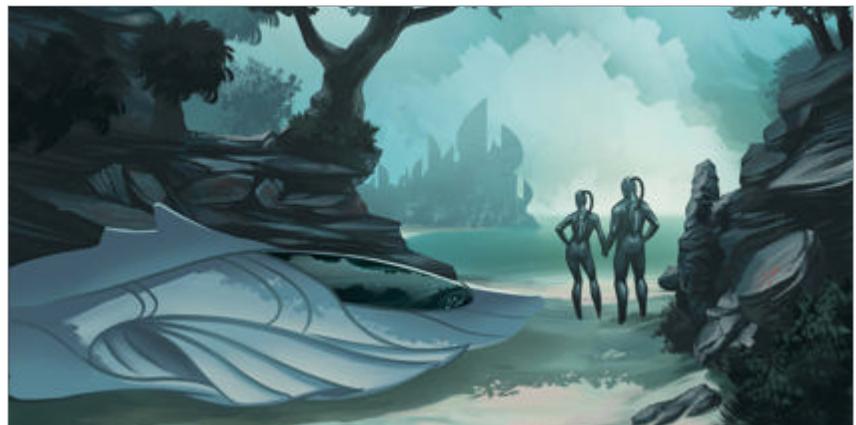


**03 Environmental shapes** I used the Selection tool to bring in some basic shapes like the rocks in the foreground and the clouds in the sky. I also played around with blend modes like Multiply and Overlay to create contrast.

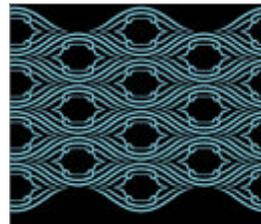
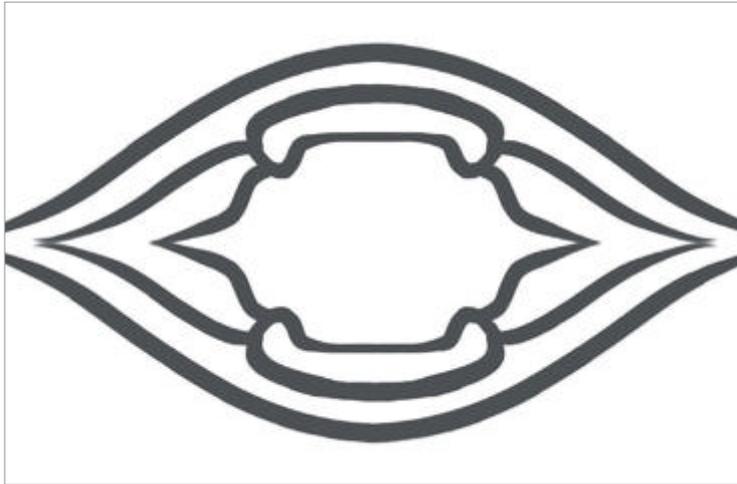


**04 Spaceship design** My task was to create a vehicle that's covered with kaleidoscope patterns and I thought a lot about how this vehicle should look and how I would apply symmetrical patterns to it. I came up with the idea of designing a fish-like aircraft that's covered with modern, stylised scales.

**05 Include a story** Besides bringing in details like rocks and leaves, and working out the atmosphere and lighting of the scene, it's very important to create some kind of story to make it easy for the beholder to get into the painting. This image shows the story of a couple discovering the town they used to live in before the apocalypse.



**06 Keep it simple** There are many different ways to use Painter's Kaleidoscope tool. You're free to use a total of 12 axes of reflection to create your painting. For my fish-scale pattern I decided to use a horizontal and a vertical axis only. I kept the basic structure simple to avoid overfilling the aircraft's body.



**07 Create structures** I didn't want to apply every single scale to the vehicle's surface, so I decided to create a seamless pattern texture and started to copy and position them. While creating the pattern, it is very important to make sure that all of the scales are arranged exactly, otherwise the texture will contain fractures.

**08 Paint with scales** When the pattern was complete I was able to use Painter's Pattern Chalk to apply it onto the surface of the aircraft just by painting dynamic strokes on a separate layer. As the pattern didn't really fit the form of the vehicle straightaway, I warped it using Painter and Photoshop's Transform tools.



**09 Texture effects** I covered the fish vehicle's body with the pattern texture completely then I simply painted on the orange structures while preserving their transparency. This made the pattern look like a shiny net on a high-tech nano suit.



**10 Last details** In the final step I increased the size of the vehicle and boosted some contrast to offset it a little more from the rocks in the background. I also added a few details and dropped the tree on the left to improve the composition.

## Artist showcase

More inspiring artwork from miNze's portfolio



### Sci-Fi Atelier

2011, Painter, Google SketchUp

● One day I asked my best friend during a workshop in Berlin to give me a spontaneous task I could deal with. His task was 'Sci-Fi atelier'. I started doing a simple SketchUp model and worked over it in Painter.



### Bird Collage

2010, Painter

● This is a painting I did for my girlfriend for her birthday. I used photo references and painted each bird on its own layer with the Pattern Chalk brush.



### Resting Birds

2012, Painter

● This is a painting I did via live stream. It's one of the pieces where I started off with absolutely no idea what I was going to paint. I just listened to the music and watched the painting evolving itself.

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



### Amber Hill

Personal portfolio site  
[vantid.deviantart.com](http://vantid.deviantart.com)

Country **US**

Software used **Painter**

Amber's art education consists mostly of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art – flights of imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of newness and wonder.

## Coyote Beach 2011 Painter

“ Learn to create textures filled with the magical light of a full moon riding high in a glowing star field ”

**Amber Hill** Fantasy wildlife illustrator

# Paint moonlight into fantasy scenes



**There are few things in life that can evoke more of a sense of loneliness and contemplation than the soft susurrant of wavelets lapping a sandy shore under the stark glow of the moon.** Moonlight calls to the artist, arousing a desire to capture that ethereal glow in pigment or pixels, and many classical pieces of work are an answer to that call. It's almost instinctual.

The human eye cannot see much colour in moonlight, mostly shape and movement, so the moonlit landscape is drained of tones. Blues and silvers dominate with a few warmer colours here and there. Moonlight seems to fill every nook and cranny of the scene except for areas of stark, black shadow where no detail can be seen. Even when the moon is not full, she shows beauty in the form of earthshine, a unique lighting phenomena where the moon is lit from reflected sunlight from the earth's surface.

A panoramic view is a fantastic way to illustrate a sweeping landscape empty of all but the viewer and one moon-struck individual, which, in this case, is a coyote. Even this old trickster can't resist the enigmatic beauty of the full moon.

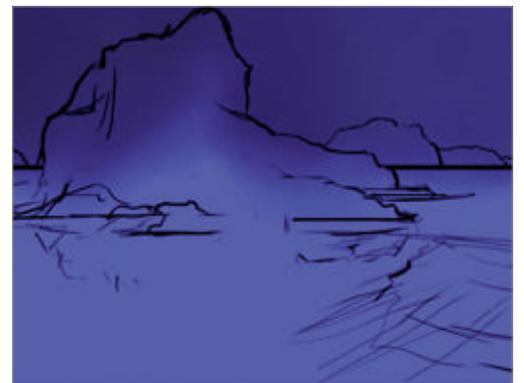
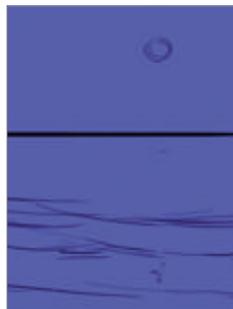


 **Source files available**  
 Value study



**01 Valuable values** Before you start the painting proper, take the time to work out some composition thumbnails. Once you have a sketch you like, rough in your values. A good greyscale is vital for a moonlit piece because the value changes are so sudden.

**02 Set the tone** Create a new layer and sketch using your thumbnail as a guide and set this layer to Multiply. Flood fill the canvas layer with purple-blue to create the mood of the piece.



**03 Wash the sky** Paint the sky a deep, violet blue with the Soft Airbrush tool. Toggle the value map, making sure it's set to Multiply, and use the Eyedropper tool (Alt/Opt) to grab some even darker purples to paint into the sky. Use the different tones to create a gentle gradient that lightens near the moon.

## Start the basic shapes

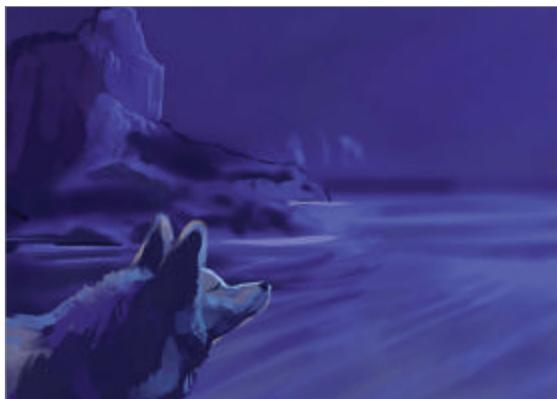
Block in your seascape, shadows and highlights

**04 Rough in the tide** Using the same colours as the sky, block in the shore and rocks. Notice how the reflection appears slightly shorter than the actual rock. This is because the perspective is not level. Paint lighter values along the bottom where the water froths against distant edges.

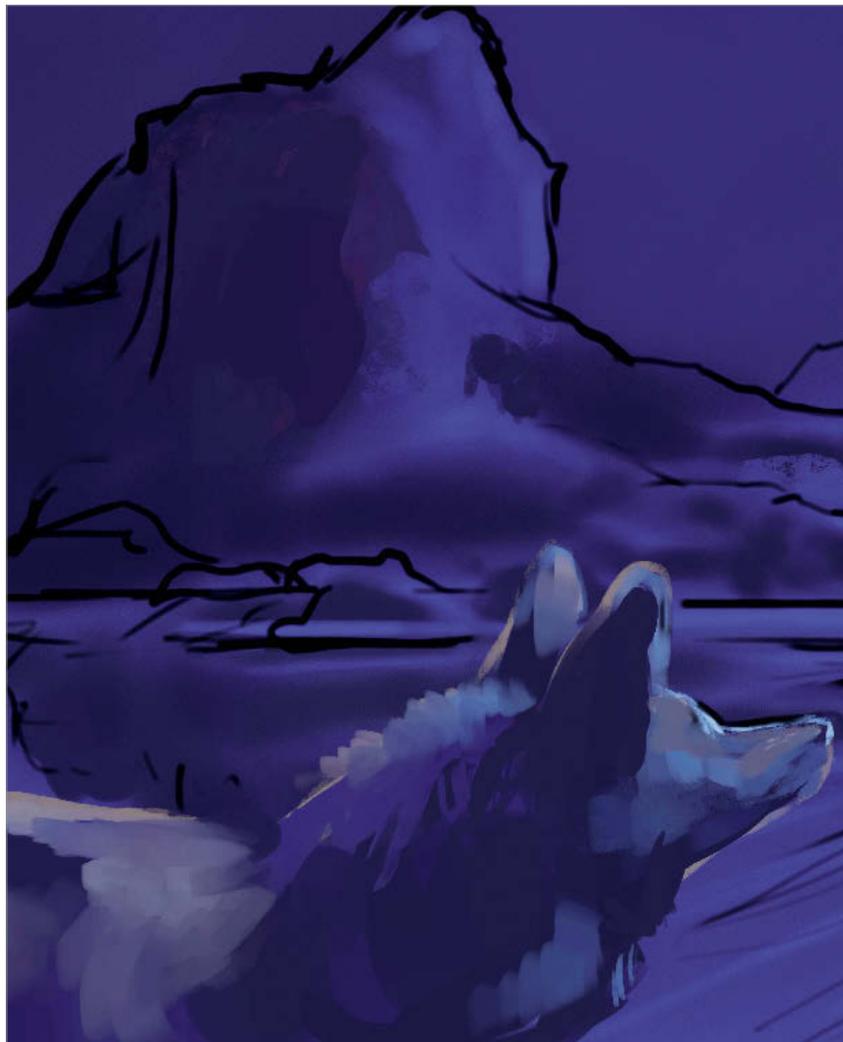


**05 Create space** Striations in the sand give the landscape a sense of movement and openness. Cut the lighter value sand streaks above the reflected rock and see how realism is instantly achieved, even at this rough stage. Now begin to develop rock textures.

**07 Create harmony** The coyote's face is pointed toward the moon so his eye is barely visible and won't have much detail at this angle. Select the canvas layer again and paint more beach streaks with the Soft Airbrush, varying the opacity as needed. Use some of the desaturated purples from the coyote in the sand for harmonious colour.

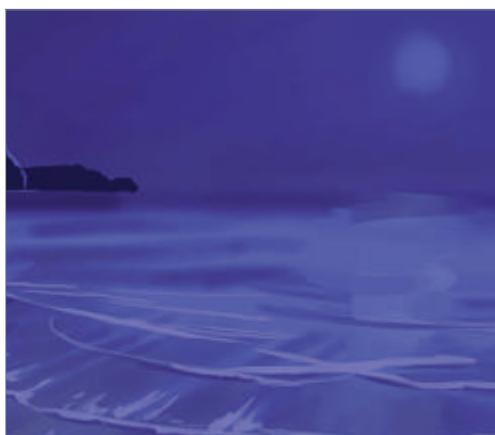


**06 Coyote character** Block in the coyote with the Round Oil Pastel. He's in the way of the nice reflection! Coyotes are jerks that way. His colours are rather muted in this light. The brown is actually a desaturated purple that appears more neutral due to the surrounding colours.



### Compose with values

Large shapes of light or dark fit together like pieces of a puzzle in composition, so direct the viewer's eye with a path of light. Here, reflected moonlight stabs through the piece to meet with sea foam that carries on to the coyote, around through the rocks and back to the moon.



**08 Make waves** Paint the first signs of sea foam with the Round Oil Pastel using wide, gentle arcs and a pale grey-purple. Follow some of the sand streaks toward the horizon.



**09 Begin the surface** The texture of the tide is a series of scalloped light values. As the leading edge rushes onto the beach, it has a modified cylinder form and casts a definite shadow. Study reference photos to understand the tide. Paint the moon a light blue.

**10 Rock it** The rocks have a stark contrast of light and dark with very little detail in the shadow. Moonlit texture is jagged, with crooked shadows. Allow your hand to be random and you will start to see patterns in your strokes that you can refine into rock. The coyote seems to have picked up more fur texture, too. Sneaky.



# The key elements

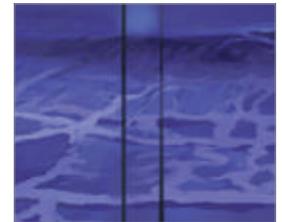
## Add water features and the moon's reflection

**11 Think about form** Refine the little wavelets in the background with dark purple. There is a concave area that is a trough between two very low, gentle waves. The ripples in the water define the shape. In a moonlit piece, simple contrasts of dark against light are vital for creating shape.

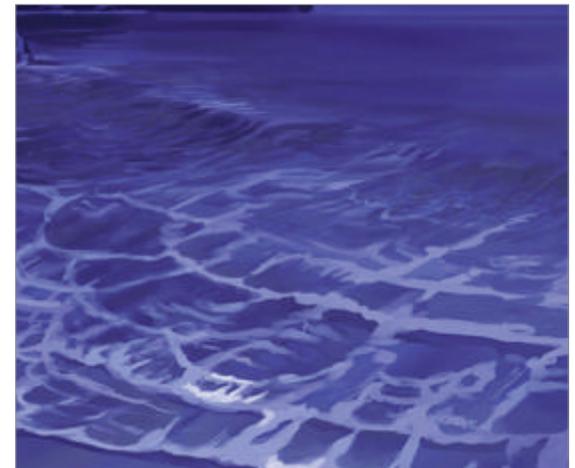


**12 Water work** Not only are there lines of foam going in the direction of the waves, but foam crisscrosses and catches the light horizontally. These lines all aid in giving the water perspective and motion. Paint the large shadow of a swell that is close to the viewer.

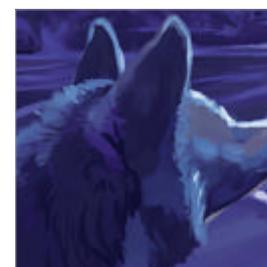
**13 Make a swell** Begin to texture some of the points of the wavelets. Keep in mind that the swell is just a tube and that they should curve over that. Create a new layer and drop in some guidelines for the reflection of the moon. Hold the Shift key for swift, clean lines.



**14 Begin the reflection** Drop in the beginnings of the moon's reflection on the water within these lines and then delete the layer you drew the guides on. Make sure that there is a break in the line of the reflections where the swell is blocking the light.



**15 Not too much detail** Continue to refine the water. Develop shadows and highlights, but keep it simple, as the human eye cannot pick out very many value changes in moonlight. It should look like beaten metal in the background.



**16 Create fur** Etch dark – almost black – textured Vs in the coyote's neck to depict the shaggy fur and paint moonlight on the face where the ruff is turned away from us. Be sure your strokes follow the direction of the fur, even if it seems to be coming right at us.

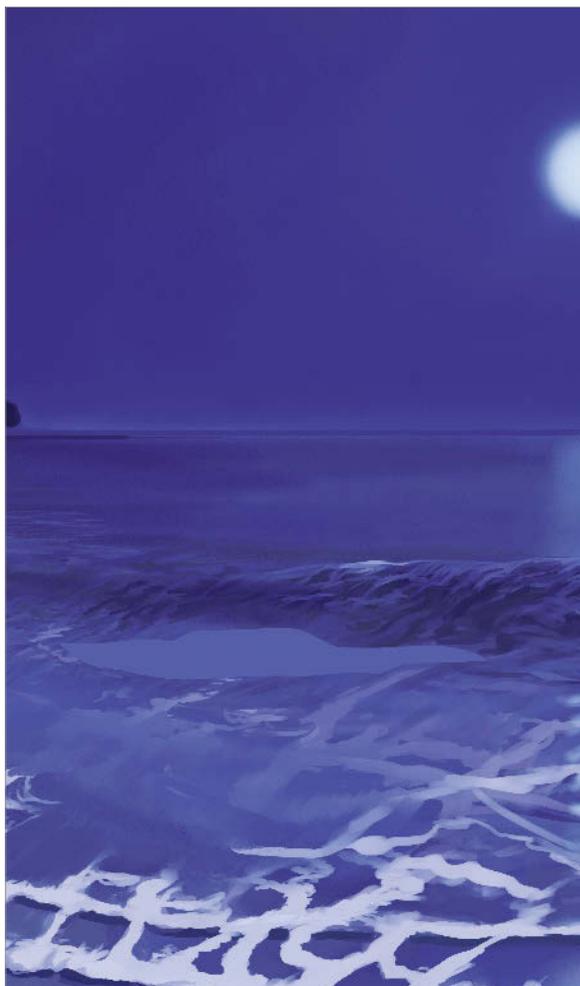
## A night out

Take the time to go outside and observe the effects of moonlight first hand. Study the shadows and the lack of detail within those areas. Reflect on how the moonlight makes you feel and bring that back with you to your workspace.

## Refine the scene

Use selection tools and paint more detail

**17 Swell surgery** The original position of the swell seems wrong, so I use the Lasso tool (L) to select a section of it. Ctrl/Cmd serves to lift a chunk of the canvas and I drag it to where it looks better. Never be afraid to make a drastic change for the good of your painting.



**19 Create bubbles** Foam needs bubbles, so paint dark dabs in the white water and draw bubbles with the light purple. Some are tucked inside the froth and are more round, while others sit like domes on the surface. The little bubbles have highlights from the moon and will make the painting seem alive.

**18 Paint distant water** The missing texture is quickly patched up with the Round Oil Pastel tool. Paint the water in the distant background using smaller brushes. Hold Shift for choppy horizontal strokes and alternate between dark and light values.



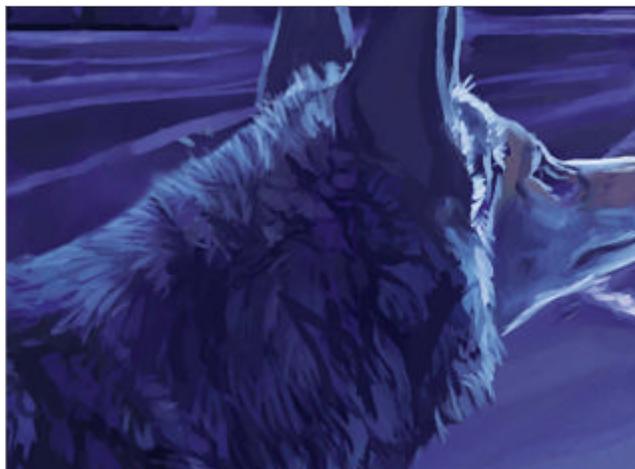
**20 Remember the fundamentals** Complete the wave foam keeping perspective in mind. Although the lines are not perfectly parallel, they will begin to converge somewhat the further they are from shore.

**21 The coyote's anatomy** Time to get our coyote into shape. His anatomy is worked out and the planes of his face are properly arranged. It's always helpful to have a sketch to refer to at this stage.



**22 Render more fur** Most of the coyote is in shadow so not much detail can be seen. Add more of that blue-black to develop the fur texture. Dabs of a slightly lighter blue create the illusion of fur clumps without having to worry too much about detail.

**23 Bounce light** Work around the body, adding scruff and fluff. Only his topline is very well lit, which causes an effect known as rim lighting. Paint very faint bounce light on his sides where the moonlight is reflected from the sand onto his lighter fur.



**Style School**  
Art genres in a nutshell

## By the light of the moon

Observe how other artists have handled the subject of moonlit landscapes over water

There are many ways to represent moonlight in art, however, all moonlit paintings share similarities. All have large areas of darkness, the disc of the moon prominent in the composition and tonal harmony. Greys and blues dominate. Many artists strive to capture the eerie luminosity of moonlight to evoke feelings of unreality.

### The masters

Three classic lunar portrayals



**Artist:** Ando Hiroshige  
**Title:** Full Moon Over a Mountain Landscape  
**Year:** 1834  
**Location/Owner:** From *Eight Views of Omi* print series  
● Master ukiyo-e artist Ando Hiroshige, who is known for his beautiful landscapes, created many pieces that feature moonlight. The colour scheme is simple, but nonetheless it is powerful enough to throw us into the atmosphere of an Eastern nighttime, long ago.  
[tinyurl.com/DA-ando-hiroshige](http://tinyurl.com/DA-ando-hiroshige)



**Artist:** James Abbott McNeill Whistler  
**Title:** Nocturne in Blue and Silver – Chelsea  
**Year:** 1871  
**Location/Owner:** Tate Gallery  
● James Whistler was inspired by Hiroshige's artwork and created delicately layered paintings of the Thames at night that also incorporate flat areas of colour. This series of paintings is known as his Nocturnes. [tinyurl.com/DA-whistler](http://tinyurl.com/DA-whistler)



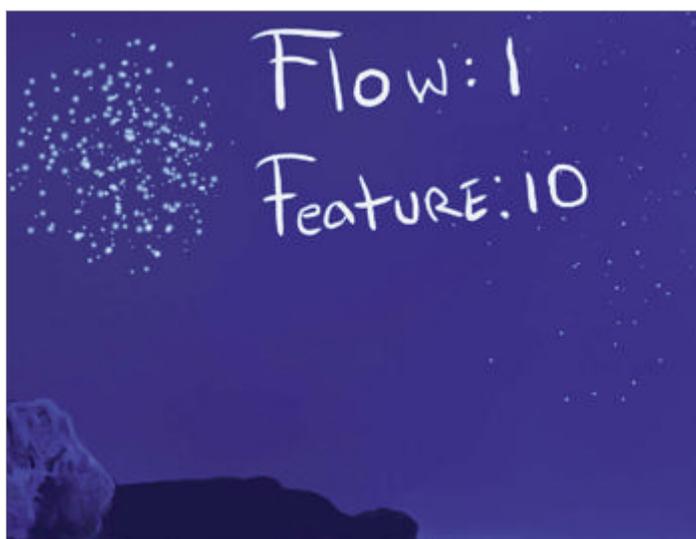
**Artist:** Joseph Wright of Derby  
**Title:** Bridge Through a Cavern, Moonlight  
**Year:** 1791  
**Location/Owner:** Derby Museum and Art Gallery  
● This painting takes on a warmer colour scheme than most moonlit scenes. However, the large areas of darkness and light source (that seems to come from everywhere not in shadow) tell us it's the moon and not the sun in the sky. [tinyurl.com/DA-wright](http://tinyurl.com/DA-wright)

# Landscapes



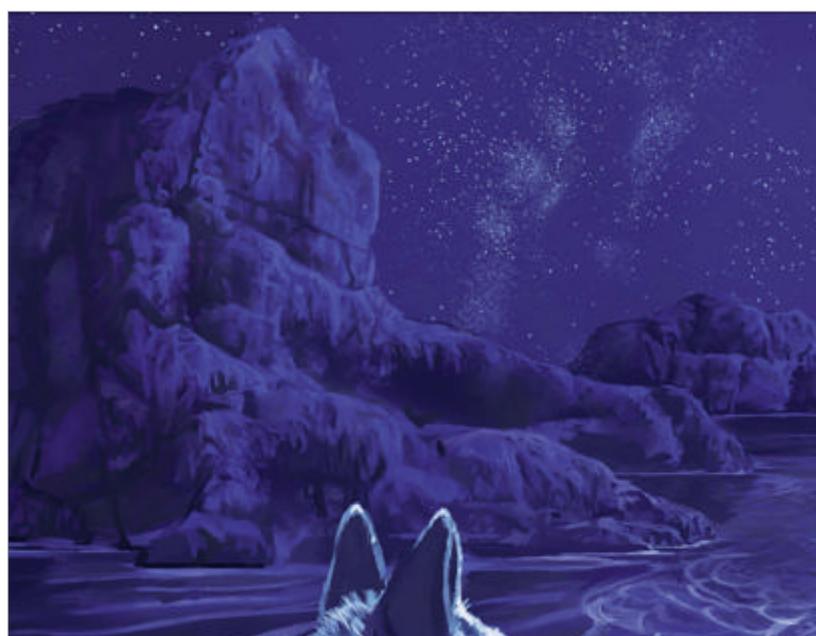
**24 Rim light** Pick out the edges of fur with a small brush and a pale, silvery blue. Do so sparingly, though, as it's easy to go overboard with this type of lighting, resulting in a flat-looking, cardboard cutout of a subject.

**25 The Variable Splatter tool** Select the Variable Spatter airbrush tool to paint some stars. Create a new layer and test the look of the brush. Below are a couple of examples. The feature changes the size of the dots, so adjust as needed to best fit your star size.



**26 Paint the stars** Make the brush big and floofy, and spatter dots all over the sky with a light blue colour – so pale, in fact, that it is almost white. Change the opacity of the brush for varying effects and don't worry about overspray right now.

**27 Change it up** Vary the Feature slider just a bit for a more natural-looking sky. Create a dense line of stars where the Milky Way would be. Once you are happy, erase all the overspray and have a cleanup.



**28 Paint the Milky Way** On a new layer, lower the Opacity of the brush to 10% and paint the clusters of the Milky Way. Use the Eraser tool to cut out sections of cosmic dust to give it the look of a galaxy, then merge this with the star layer.



# Highlight and tone

Perfect your moonlight shade with overlay layers

**29 Star fire** Create a new layer. Set the mode to Overlay and load a small, 10% Opacity Soft Airbrush with ice blue and gently glaze a few stars with a celestial glow.



**30 Underpainting** Focus on finishing the moon's reflection – this is the underpainting for the special lighting effects to come. Blend the colours with a regular Oil Pastel.



**31 Specular highlights** Add all the specular highlights to the bubbles and then paint light spots on the foam where it catches the moon's reflection. Add more bubbles where needed, then dab on some shadows cast by the foam.

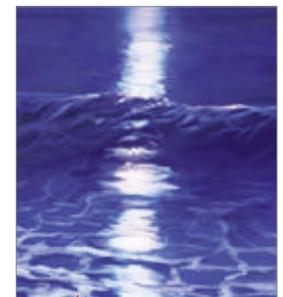


**32 Build sand texture** Create a new layer, flick sand granules over the streaks and then lightly erase to push back the texture. Be careful not to overpower the soft forms of wet sand with too much crunchy, dry looking sand. Erase any overspray and drop the layer to the canvas.



**33 Create overlay layers** On the star glow layer, airbrush the moon with a light, peachy orange. Paint the moon's reflection, sea foam, rim light on the coyote and anywhere else you want to glow too. This warm colour will show through and lend an ethereal quality to the scene.

**34 Complete the moon** Create one last layer and, with an ice blue airbrush, paint the cool blue moonlight we are all so familiar with on top of the peach overlay.



**35 Touch it up** Create a new layer above this overlay. Eyedrop colours and paint in touch-ups where the colour seems too strong, break up the contour of the light to make the water dance then do the same on the coyote for extra fur texture.

# Design destructive cityscapes



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Vitaly S Alexius**

Personal portfolio site  
<http://vs.darkfolio.com>

Country **Toronto**

Software used **Photoshop, Illustrator**

Using a graphics tablet and Photoshop, Vitaly creates digital paintings, graphic novels, CD covers and more.

## Awakening 2011 Photoshop

“A great pile of rubble is pretty much essential for a post-apocalyptic artwork! Rubble can be found and photographed on construction sites in any large city, though take care and ask permission beforehand if it’s on private land”

**Vitaly S Alexius** Illustrator



**This guide is all about manipulating subjects and scenery into an evocative digital matte painting.** More specifically, you’ll discover how to create a post-apocalyptic world using a combination of photography, stock, Photoshop, a graphics tablet and your drawing skills.

The theme for this piece of work comes from Vitaly Alexius’s numerous urban-exploration trips, adventures with his wife, Meeshka, stock imagery from iStockphoto, as well as original photography shot by Alexius himself. His primary inspiration comes from his journeys across the abandoned cities of Siberia, where he was born and lived for much of his life. To shoot your own stock you will need either a basic point-and-shoot camera or a DSLR. When starting to create both original photomanipulations and digital paintings it is imperative to assemble a massive database of stock. This can be done by going out every day and taking photos of everything interesting you come across: buildings, clouds, rocks, trees, cars, etc. You can also use stock imagery from the internet for those more specific images that are tricky, or even impossible, to get.

Photoshop is the best software for digital photomanipulation since it handles brushes, layers and effects extremely smoothly – far better than any other program. The newer versions are the fastest when it comes to loading many layers, but you don’t need CS5 to complete this tutorial. You can emulate the scene that we have created here, but why not use your own stock and come up with your own truly unique apocalypse?

 **Source files available**

Stock images



 Courtesy of **iStockphoto**

## Working Progress

Bringing about the end of the world



Step 05: Pull together the stock



Step 11: Match the contrast



Step 18: Lighting with blend modes



## Apocalypse now

Transform stock into a stunning scene of destruction

### 01 Find the right background

We begin by finding the perfect city backdrop for a post-apocalyptic, skyscraper-filled, decaying world (the iStockphoto '5489812' image on the disc). Stock of cityscapes can be shot locally or, for something more specific, can be bought online. It's important to purchase licensed stock, because copyright laws always apply.



### 02 Source the middleground

Next, we use an already broken-down building from our own image library (on the disc). Perspective matching is important, though if you are creating a ruined landscape, the buildings will be tipping sideways and collapsing/twisting anyway, so a linear perspective needn't apply. However, a sense of organised chaos is a must.



“Having a library of images will come in handy for future projects too, so make sure you always have a camera on you, just in case you see anything while out and about”

### 03 The survivors

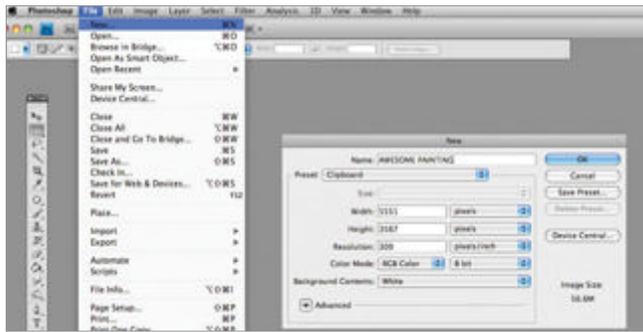
For the characters in the painting it is best to photograph friends or collaborate with professional models/photographers who can be found on sites like <http://modelmayhem.com>. These photos can be used as reference or put directly into the painting, depending on how fast the image has to be done and on how realistic or stylised the final look needs to be.



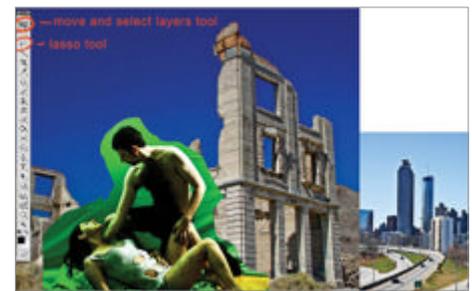
### 04 Foreground

A great pile of rubble is pretty much essential for a post-apocalyptic artwork! Rubble can be found and photographed on construction sites in any large city, though take care and ask permission beforehand if it's on private land. Having a library of these sorts of images will come in handy for future projects too, so make sure you always have a camera on you, just in case you see anything while out and about.

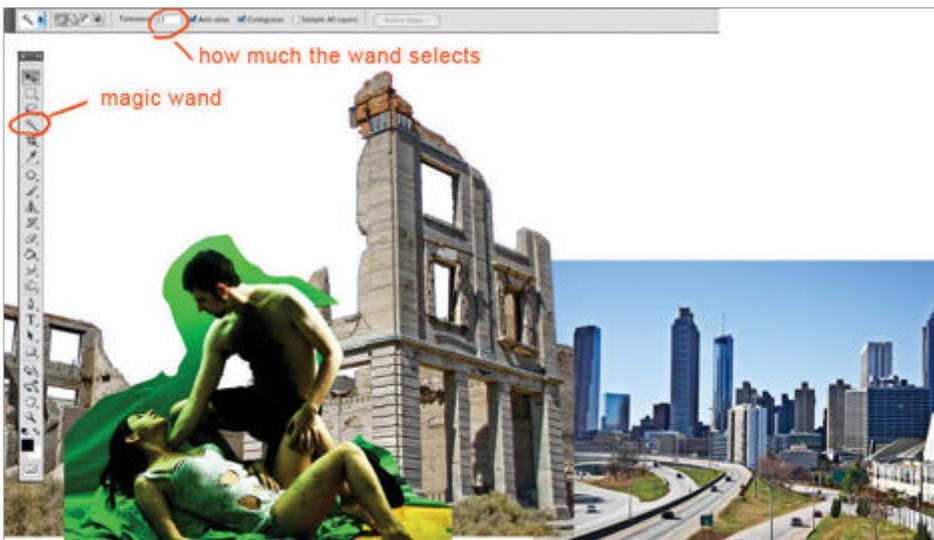




**05 Put it together** Open all of the photographs in Photoshop. Create a new file, setting image Width and Height to something over 3,000px (in fact, you can pick any desired size; as long as it's more than this resolution, you can later print and exhibit it anywhere). Also set the Resolution to 300dpi.



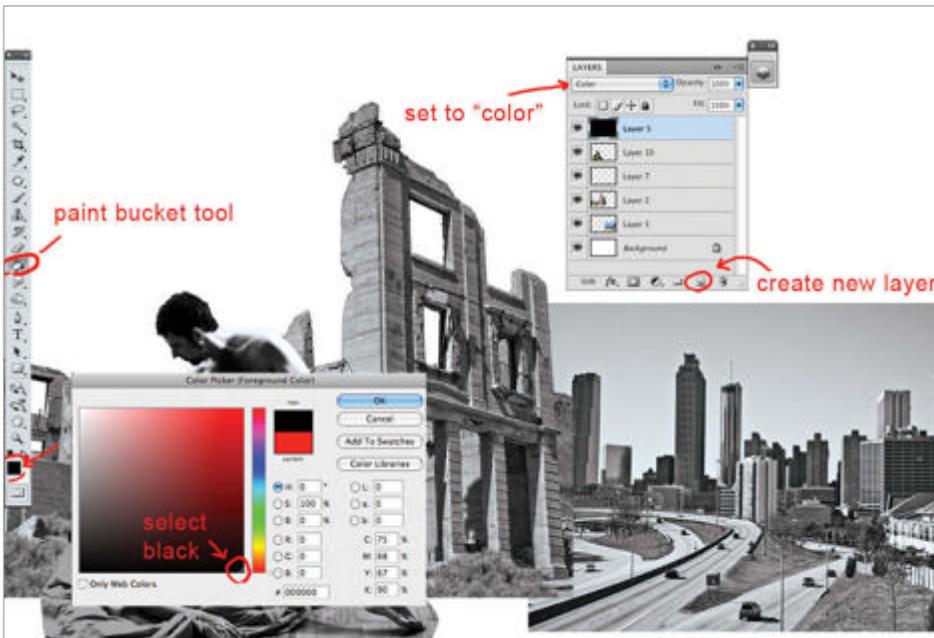
**06 Tool basics** Using the Lasso tool, you can now crop, cut and paste the found background, middleground, foreground and character images all into a single file. The selections do not have to be overly neat at this stage, as edges will be refined in upcoming steps. To select additional items with the Lasso tool, simply hold down the Shift key while using it. On the other hand, if you want to take things away from the selection, hold the Opt/Alt key.



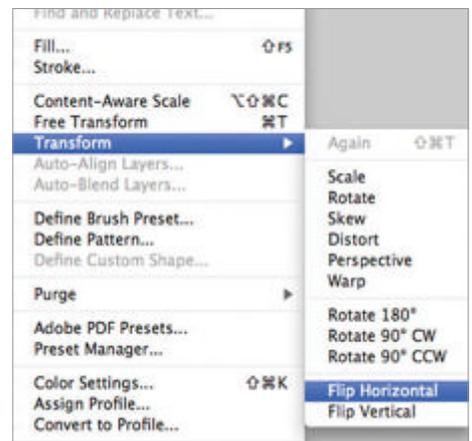
**07 A little magic** To copy the image to a new layer in its new file, simply hit Cmd/Ctrl+C to copy and then Cmd/Ctrl+V to paste. You can select and move layers around using the Move tool – found at the top of the main Tools bar. Unnecessary elements (such as the greenscreen behind the two models, for instance) can be selected using the Magic Wand tool and removed with a tap of the Delete key. Tidy up edges, if needed, with a small Eraser tool.



**08 Layers** The Layers dialog is a godsend for photomanipulation projects and, as you'd expect, extremely useful for managing layers. (To see the Layers palette if you can't already, go to Window>Layers.) By clicking on a specific layer in the Layers palette, give each one a recognisable name like 'Background city', 'Robot' or 'Happy cloud', etc. It makes layer organisation a whole lot easier when the painting reaches upwards of 100 layers.



**09 Colouring with layers** Create a new layer using the New Layer button located at the bottom of the Layers palette. Next, set this to Color in the blending mode drop down. Fill the layer with a black colour using the Color Selection tool, which can be found at the base of the Tools bar, followed by the Paint Bucket tool.



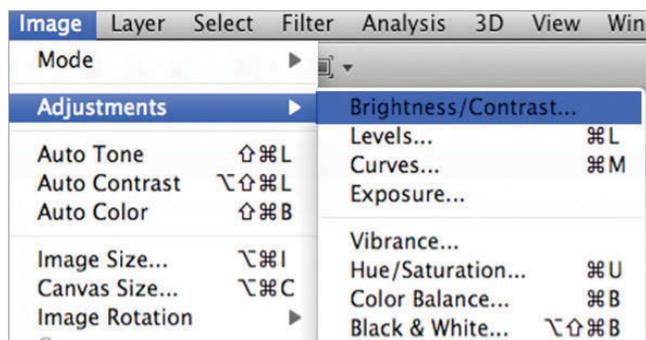
**10 Transform layers** If it is needed, individual layers can be flipped upside down/sideways, scaled, rotated, warped, distorted, etc, using the comprehensive Edit>Transform menu. These options are fun to play with, but at the same time extremely useful for resizing layers and correcting perspective.

# Landscapes

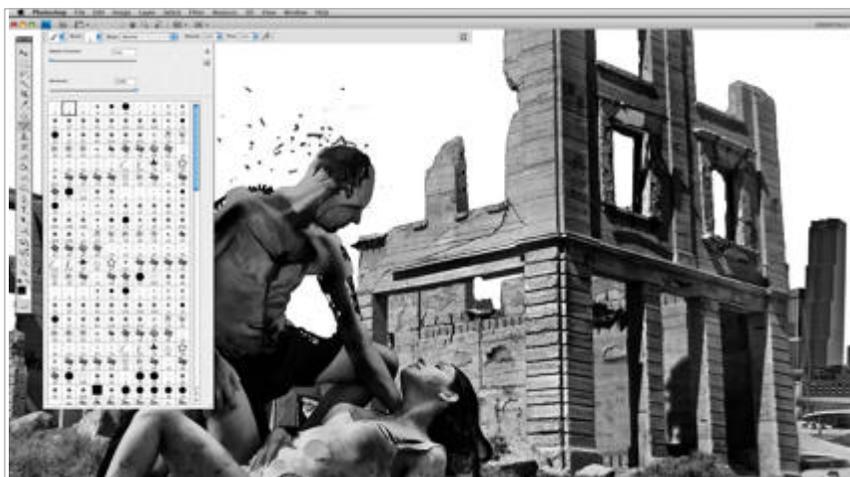
## Quick Tip

Making the painting black and white from the beginning helps manage contrasts. Even before Photoshop existed, painting masters would kick off with a black-and-white sketch to help establish values, contrasts and shadows, before advancing to painting the scene in colour.

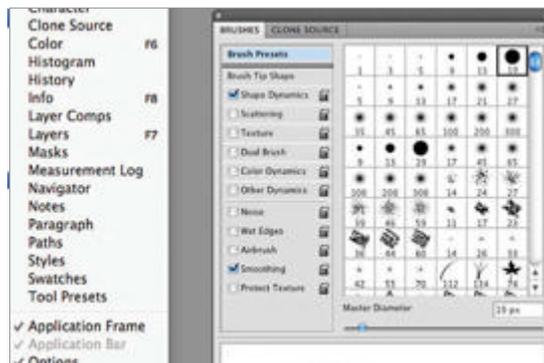
**11 Adjust contrast** Select an individual layer and then head to Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast to play with the tonal settings of each layer. Repeat with all until the contrast of each looks more striking. Try to keep the saturation/contrast fairly consistent across the various elements so it feels as if they belong together in the same scene. There are many useful and powerful adjustment options to play with in Photoshop that are often overlooked, so feel free to explore them throughout this tutorial.



**12 Brushing up** Using the Brush tool efficiently requires a great deal of practice. Don't be discouraged if the brushstrokes don't come out perfect the first time round. Mastery of the Brush tool comes only with years of experience. Use the Opacity parameter to vary your strokes for more diverse effects.



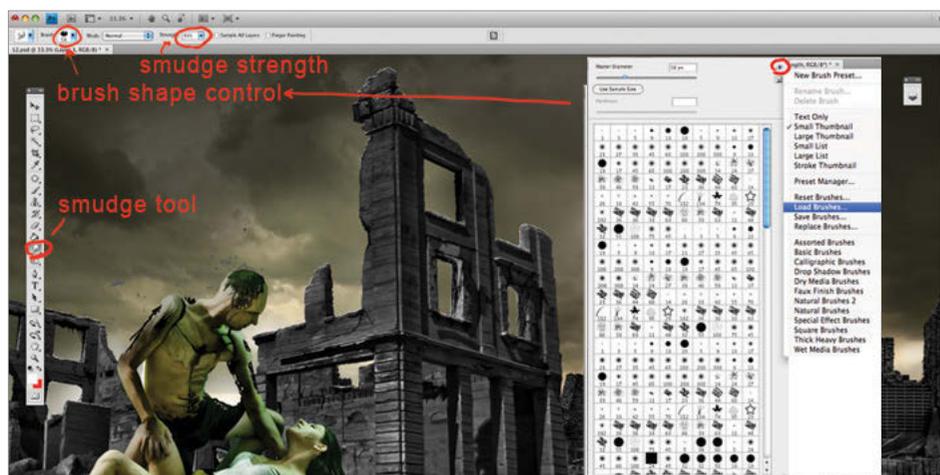
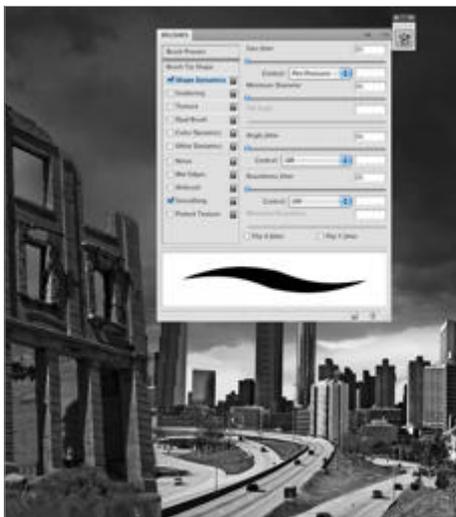
**13 Brush tool in depth** Go to Window>Brushes to call up the Brushes dialog. This panel calls up many more possibilities and is great for tablet users, as it enables you to manipulate brush dynamics, pressure, angle, etc. to the nth degree. This menu takes a bit of experimentation to get used to, as instead of a real-world, solid paintbrush we are using a digital representation of a brush limited to specific options depending on the selection.



**14 Shape Dynamics** Clicking on Shape Dynamics in the Brushes menu gives you the option of controlling the brush via the Pen Pressure parameter; make sure that this option is selected. Enabling this integrates the tablet pressure (ie how hard the pen is pressed against the tablet surface) with brush thickness. Select the Smoothing parameter if you want smoother brushwork. Other options here make the brush more or less 'jittery'. Experiment!

“Using the Brush tool efficiently requires a great deal of practice. Don't be discouraged if the brushstrokes don't come out perfect the first time round”

**15 Smudge tool** When an artist works with oil paints, the brush naturally smudges the paint across the surface of the canvas and each brushstroke blends into those beside it. To replicate this effect best in Photoshop, various custom brush shapes are used with the Smudge tool. Many varied custom brushes can be found via a quick Google search for free or can be purchased in packs online at a range of art sites, such as deviantART and CGTextures.



# The end is nigh

Apply final touches to 'ruin' your image

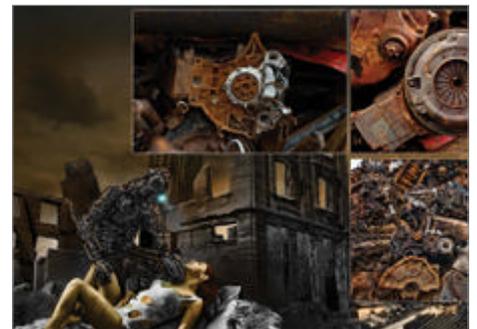
**16 Head in the clouds** For more detail images of clouds and buildings are taken from the AP archives and iStockphoto. Using the Brush and Smudge tools, as before, they are re-painted to look more post-apocalyptic. Using the selection and Move tools, skyscrapers are slanted and placed behind other skyscrapers to develop depth.



**18 Lighting effects** New layers are painted with the Brush tool and set to the Screen blending mode to make dust clouds of light between buildings in the distance. The opacity of each layer is tweaked to perfection; take your time with this. Next, several more buildings are added to the painting to bulk out the city, and new layers are painted with a large brush set to Multiply blending to make specific parts of the picture even more dark and gloomy.

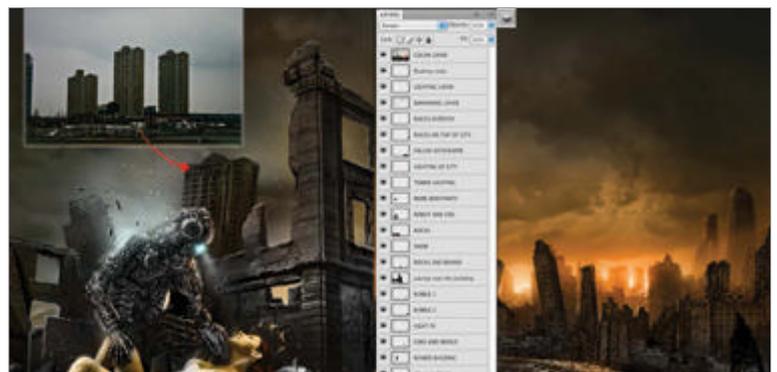


**17 Extra textures** Rubble stock is inserted into the front of the painting, beneath the main characters to boost tactility. Various junk and debris is scattered on the road, which is a shot of a busy LA highway, while a collapsing bridge adds more drama. All of the textures are inserted and re-painted to make them look ruined. The Color layer at the top of the layer stack is used to give the scene consistent colours and a variety of large round colour brushes are applied for finer details.



**19 Mechanical suit** Next, a number of textures which were shot in a metal scrap pile in Nova Scotia, Canada, are used to create the mechanical outfit of the 'robot'. Once these are imported, a great deal of work is done, carefully cropping them into the suit and painting many extra parts by hand to emphasise wear and tear. Use your own creative eye here to piece together the textures, always bearing the harsh environment in mind.

**20 Final touches** To wrap up this post-apocalyptic piece, an extra building is inserted into the background to fill a space above the kneeling robot figure. Last-minute details are painted in with the Brush tool here and there, such as extra shading on the foreground rubble and some fiery glows cast by the flames in the distance. The painting now has many layers, each one named appropriately for greater ease if any post edits are required.



## Quick Tip

Use the Load Brushes option to install new brushes. Use the brush and Smudge method to smooth out all brushwork, zoom in and out lots by hitting the Cmd/Ctrl and '+/-' keys. Cmd/Ctrl+Z is a lifesaver if you make a mistake and want to undo.

# Paint fantasy scenes

Seeing Magenta 2012 Photoshop

“ This tutorial will guide you through painting realistic water and how to achieve the look of reflections ”

Lili Ibrahim Concept artist and illustrator



**Not many realise that artists need to have a solid grasp of physics when creating a painting.** After all, everything we see is a

product of light bouncing off objects – a highly scientific concept – and when we paint we are merely trying to create the illusion of this effect in a 2D format. A better understanding of how light reacts in different situations and how light affects what we see will directly improve your work.

Every surface interacts differently with light. Water is one of the trickier substances to portray, and yet many artists still decide to take on the challenge. It is soothing and calming, but mysterious at the same time, and this contrasting, evocative nature is probably what attracts them. Not only does water behave in many different ways, but the fact that it is highly reflective adds to what makes it so beautiful as well as so difficult to render realistically.

Before starting on an illustration, you should definitely research the topic and collect references. One thing that is always useful to bear in mind when you create any painting is that if it doesn't look right, find out why and change it, don't just carry on hoping it will improve. With something as complex as water, following this rule of thumb will save you a lot of heartache. If it looks like water, you've succeeded – even if it doesn't match your references exactly.

For this tutorial I will be painting a mermaid standing in a shallow rice paddy. She will be spinning and wielding a sword in front of some shocked kids who were quietly fishing. The water effects that will be used in the artwork are splashing, caustic light reflections, water reflections and water ripples.

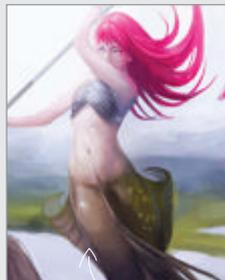
Whether the water plays a big part in the illustration or just works as a backdrop, the following tutorial will hopefully give you a good idea of how to approach painting water digitally and what to keep in mind.

## Working Progress

Realistically render a watery scene in PS



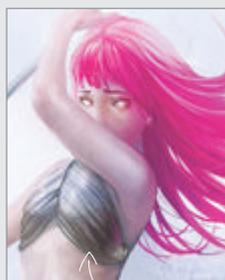
Step 02, Sketch it out



Step 06, Prepare for effects



Step 10, Break the surface



Step 15, Final touches



Source files available

Sketch



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Lili Ibrahim

Personal portfolio site

[www.liliibrahim.com](http://www.liliibrahim.com)

Country **UK**

Software used **Photoshop**

I think I always knew I wanted to do art for a career. I moved to England from Sweden three years ago to study illustration and animation at university, and I haven't looked back.

Graduating in June, I'm currently looking for full time or freelance work.

# Landscapes

**01 Brainstorm** Do not underestimate the power of a good brainstorm. Before you start on your illustration, always grab your sketchbook and throw down some thumbnails to give you a quick idea of what you are dealing with. At this stage, anything goes!

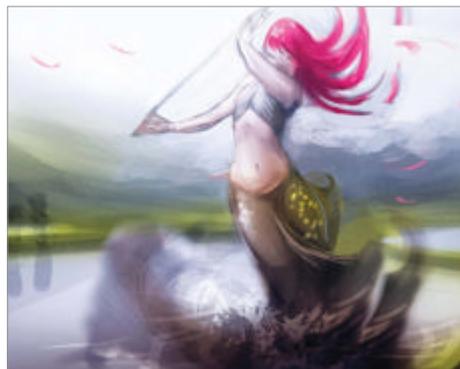


**02 Sketch it out** After settling on an idea and a composition, open a new document in Photoshop and start sketching it out. There is still room for adjustments, so don't be too precious with your lines.

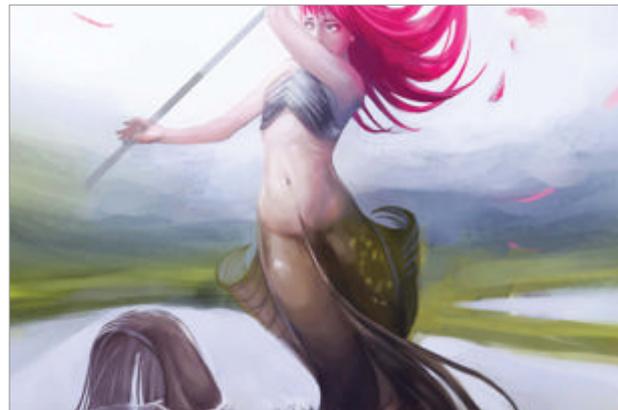
**03 Values** By putting down the basic values in greyscale I can colour it later without worrying about light and shadow. At this stage I have been thinking about some of the water's attributes. Because water is highly reflective, I have made it reflect the bright sky.



**04 Colours** On a separate layer I add colours, setting the blend mode to Color or Overlay. If you don't have a clear idea of what to do with your colours, this stage can take a long time. Put each on a new layer so you can adjust them separately.



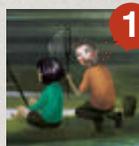
**05 Block out hues** When values and colours are ready you can start blocking out the shapes a bit more. This is a very messy process and I recommend you keep it that way. The key is to not zoom in, but work on the whole image to make sure there aren't any parts that get finished before the others.



**06 Prepare for effects** A lot of water effects are added very late in the painting process. This grab shows the stage in the painting that I got to before I started working on the water. As you can tell, the figure is easy to read and there isn't much noise in the water.

## Key techniques

### Understand the image



**1 Early ideas** The reflections of the mountains and the two sitting characters are added to the piece in the early sketching stages because they have an impact on the overall composition and the values relating to the main figure.



**2 Colours** You don't want the colours to compete or overwhelm. Try to keep to one or two main hues. In this piece I've chosen pink as the eye catcher – the other colours are muted down and I have made sure they all look good next to it.



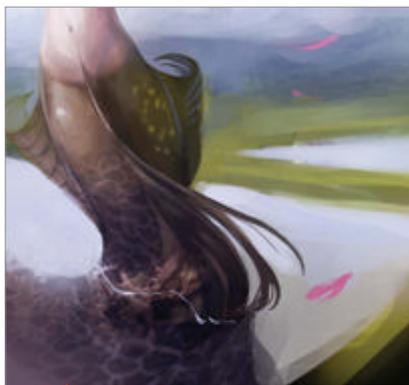
**3 Movement** Water is useful for conveying movement in a picture. Adding water spraying off of objects in motion lets the viewer know what direction they've come from and that they are moving fast! Great for our dynamic mermaid.



**4 Detail** Little water speckles on the surface, along with lines of water running down, show that the tail has just been emerged from the water and is still wet. The slightly offset and faded part below the surface adds depth and perspective.

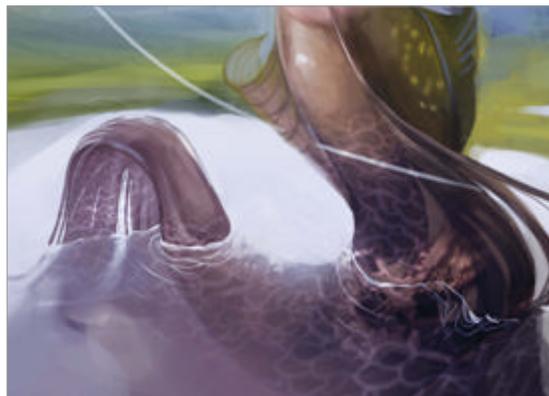


**5 Location** Even though the background is simple to not distract from the character, detail can tell more about the location. I've included irrigation ridges seen in Eastern paddy fields, mountains and, of course, my startled characters.



**07 Caustic light** Caustic light is created by light hitting the uneven surface of water and bouncing onto nearby objects. You can achieve this by painting the pattern on a layer set to Soft Light mode.

**08 Refine the light** Paint the squiggles on the parts of the mermaid that are close to the water surface. These will be the most obvious areas of caustic light as they are reflected up from the water onto her tail.



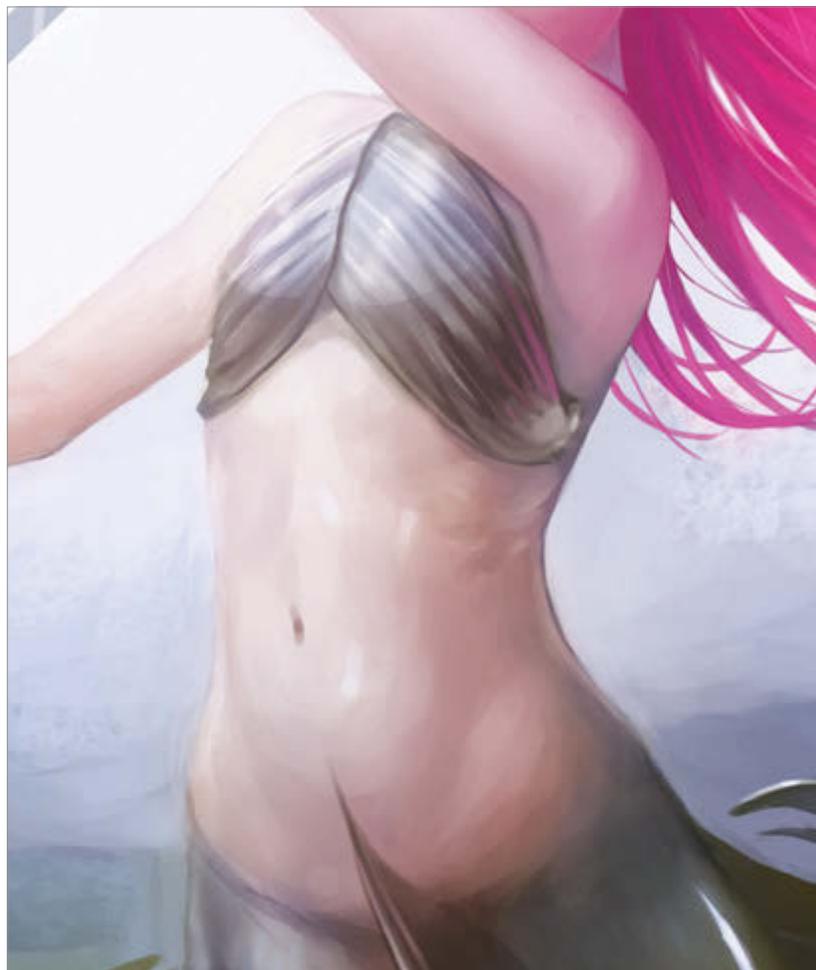
**09 Ripples** Objects in water create ripples on the surface. By drawing a thicker line exactly where the object breaks the surface you show how the surface of the water grips tightly around the object.



## Work the details

Add splashes, ripples and reflections

**10 Break the surface** To give the illusion of the mermaid spinning in the water, I've added some splashes where her fin breaks the surface. These linger a bit to the right of the image, increasing the feeling of the mermaid spinning clockwise. The splashes are painted with a textured brush and the layer is set to Normal.



**11 Keep rendering** As soon as a part of the image looks neglected, I start working on it. At this stage the mermaid has had a lot of work done to her. To make her look convincing in the environment, I added some texture to her hips, which looks like reflections of the water. The little fins covering her chest have had similar adjustments, but reflect more of a green tone from the grass.



## Don't be precious

If something looks wrong, change it as soon as you see it. The more you wait the more difficult it will be to make tweaks. Don't hesitate to copy and paste chunks of the image that you want to move in the early stages.



## 12 Background

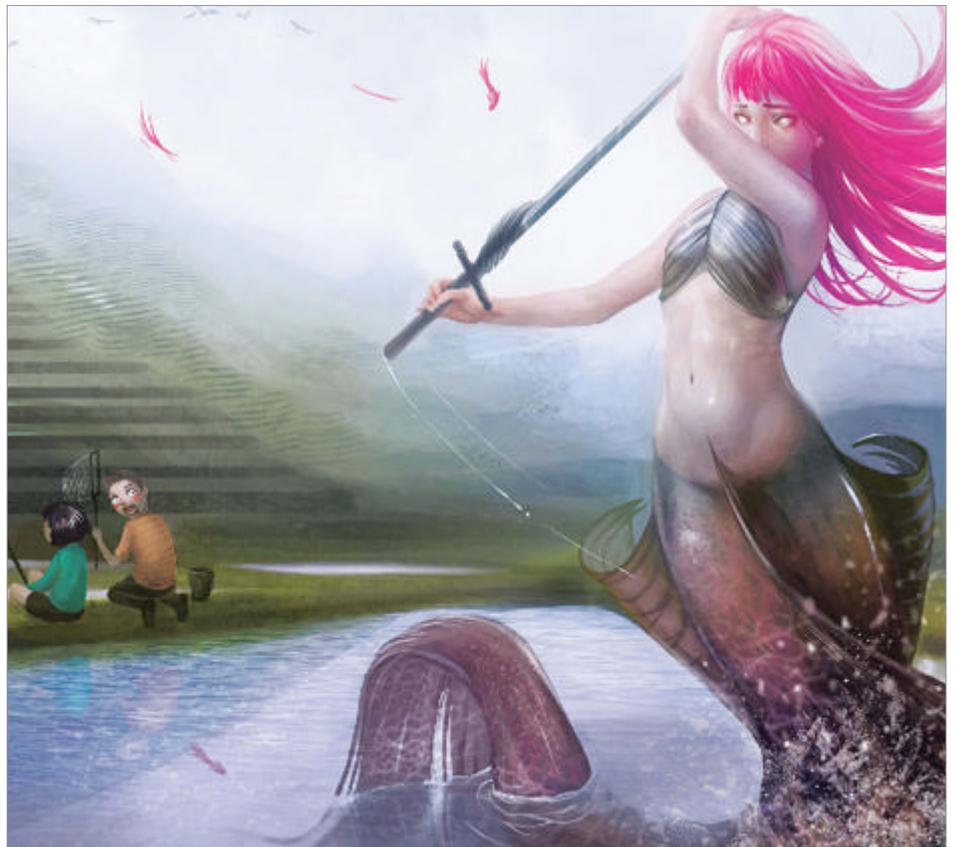
I decide to pay the background a bit more attention. Apart from the little kids fishing, I also added a few more rice paddies in the distance. They all reflect the sky and give a nice break in the dark background.



**13** Background ripples

Ripples on the water surface behind the mermaid aren't complicated but make a big difference. Short, horizontal lines on a new layer will add depth to your water. Make a layer with light lines (set to Soft Light) and one with darker lines (set to Overlay). More ripples are added where the splashing water hits the surface to the right.

**14** Reflections A rougher water surface will not reflect as accurately as a still one so bear this in mind. As the surface is relatively still in our painting, copying the reflected objects is easy. Set the layer with the copied section to a mode that looks good (I used Overlay for the kids and Soft Light for the mermaid). Erase any parts that are unnecessary.



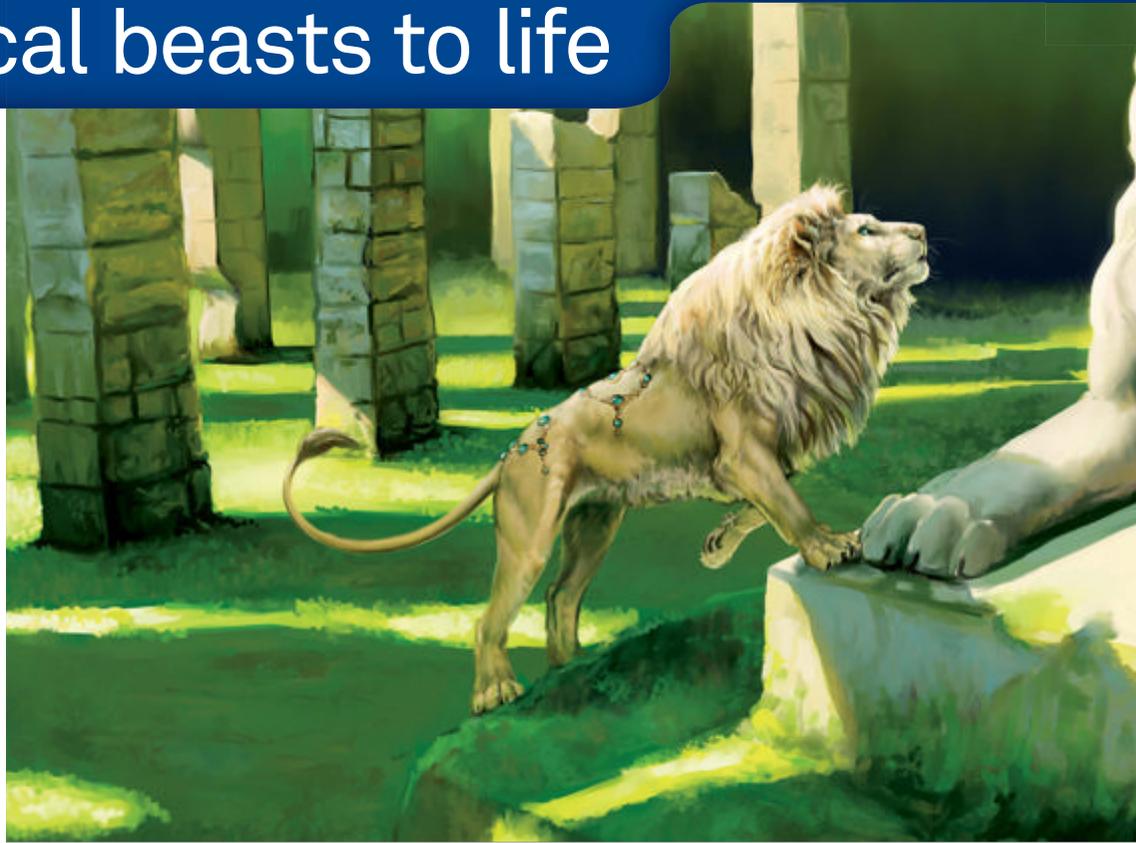
**15** Final touches When all the details are in place, I save the file as a flat copy (JPEG for instance) and make the final adjustments on this version. Colours and values are tweaked to my preference and I also sharpen it a little to make it look super crisp. As a final touch I added a grainy texture set to Overlay and a low opacity for a very subtle effect.

# Creatures

Bring mythical beasts to life

- 220 Figurative fractals & Photoshop
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- 236 Scale in sci-fi art
- 240 Master Photoshop brushes
- 246 Paint fur effects
- 250 Magical night painting

“Let feelings and improvisation appear on the screen and drive results”



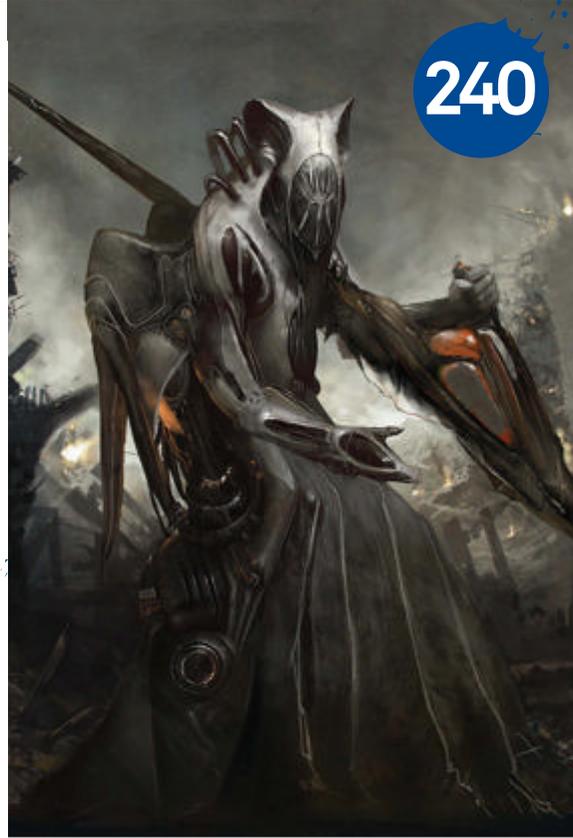
224



230



246



240



220



**250**  
Add magical effects to your fantasy creatures

# Figurative fractals and Photoshop

## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info

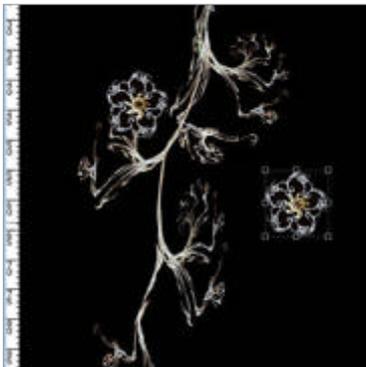


**Gemma Hart**

Personal portfolio site [rockgem.deviantart.com](http://rockgem.deviantart.com)  
Country **United Kingdom**  
Software used **Photoshop, Apophysis**

I'm a Wolverhampton University graduate. I've been attempting to create since I can remember. Due to confines on time and space, my work developed more digitally. A friend introduced me to fractals, which I combine with PS.

**Shapes** A completed branch and flower shape; shows first steps of copy/pasting to put the pieces together.



## Finch 2010 Photoshop Elements, Apophysis 2.02

“Tricks using ‘random batch’ fractals in combination with Photoshop to create images of figurative form”

**Gemma Hart** Freelance artist

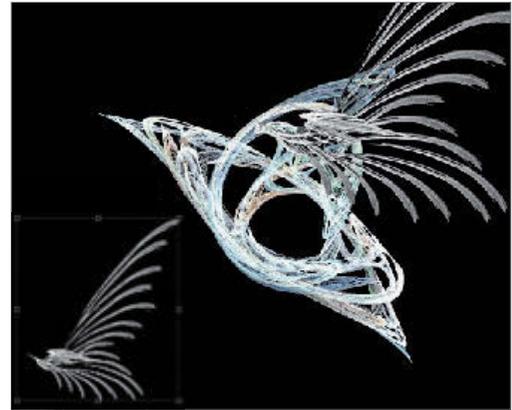
**Fractal art is created using a program where mathematical formulae are entered and images are produced representing the calculation results as still images or animations.** The images created are referred to as ‘flames’.

I find fractals interesting as they echo certain patterns found in the natural world. However, when first coming across the program Apophysis, I found myself flummoxed. I could see the shapes but couldn't decipher what to do with them, or at first how to progress further.

To begin I chose a few of the more interesting looking images gained from the ‘random batch’ settings and rendered/saved them as PNG files before taking them into Photoshop to see what might be done with them.

Secondly, I threw out any real input on the ‘mathematical’ parts and relied at first more on luck than intent. To an extent, I still do so.

Photoshop gave more range than Apophysis alone could provide for a complete novice such



**Assemble** Starting to assemble the bird shape, the body from one fractal, and wing construction from another pair of fractal parts, copy/pasting to assemble.

as myself, and this began to steer me towards a different way of using fractal flames in a collage-like format. I could see figurative shapes partially formed – the hint of a flower or a wing – but not the complete shape.

Photoshop allowed me to combine fractals, giving me an advantage of being able to piece together simple forms to create complex shapes, and from that point develop pieces that are more figurative by editing out stray lines or repeating and rotating a single shape. It becomes possible to build up petals and leaf patterns, even animal and humanoid shapes, in a few layers or many, depending on how many pieces of fractal you choose to combine.

**Specks details** Some of the specks details added, using a 21-pixel round soft brush, which is something that can be done last if preferred. This adds a note of realism as well as a sparkly look which suits the glowy style of these fractal-based organic designs.





 **Source files available**  
Assorted fractals

## Artist showcase

We look at some of Gemma's other work



**Hoot-hoot**  
2010, *Photoshop Elements and Apophysis 2.02*

● This little critter came about by accident – a piece that sort of made itself once it got started. Four separate fractal components were used.



**Got This For You**  
2010, *Photoshop Elements and Apophysis 2.02*

● Created using parts of three fractals as a gift for a friend. Sometimes I like to clash textures with the fractals. Others, like this, make use of similar fractals.



**Angelic**  
2010, *Photoshop Elements and Apophysis 2.02*

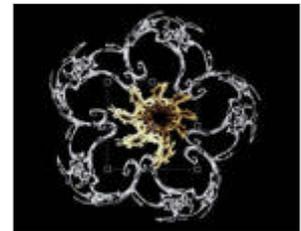
● I've often admired cemetery statues of angels – the carving and shapes are astounding. I decided to try creating one using fractals and Photoshop.

## Photoshopping fractals

The two fractals need to be combined



In the image on the left it's easy to see initial shape. On its own it might not look like anything, but in the same image it is shown how one piece is copied, repeated and rotated to build up a basic flower shape. The image on the right shows further development using a second fractal as the flower centre, making the shape more figuratively identifiable.



A lot I discovered can be gained with using what can be created from the random batch results. These in turn lead to the 'Finch' image being created.

The piece began life as seven individually rendered fractal flames that became a whole mainly through one of the simplest of Photoshop processes, the humble Copy and Paste.

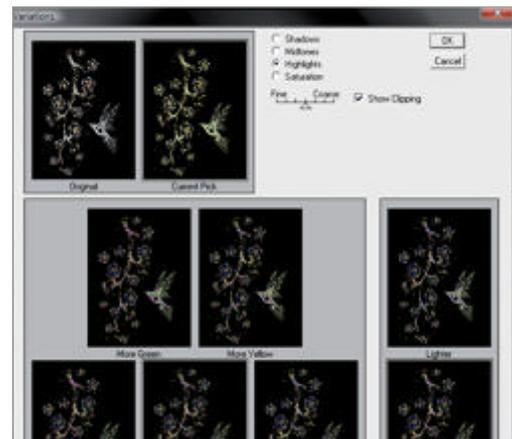
The initial idea for the piece stemmed from a random batch fractal that to me looked bird-like, so the intent became to make a complete bird and then a branch from fractal components. The bird already partially in hand, I turned my attention to creating the branch shape.

Twig-like renders are quite easy to come by in random batches. You can either change the gradient to an appropriate colour at this stage or do this later in Photoshop with the Hue and Saturation tools. I found something approximately branch-like and rendered it before opening a new blank document with a black background in Photoshop and pasting the render into it.

The simple process of constructing a branch shape came from copying and pasting with the occasional resize or the erasing of a stray line. Real branches are not the same width all along, so I



**No colour**  
Remove the background layer from the pieces of the bird, then copy the merged layers ready to paste into the document containing the branch – no real colouring yet.



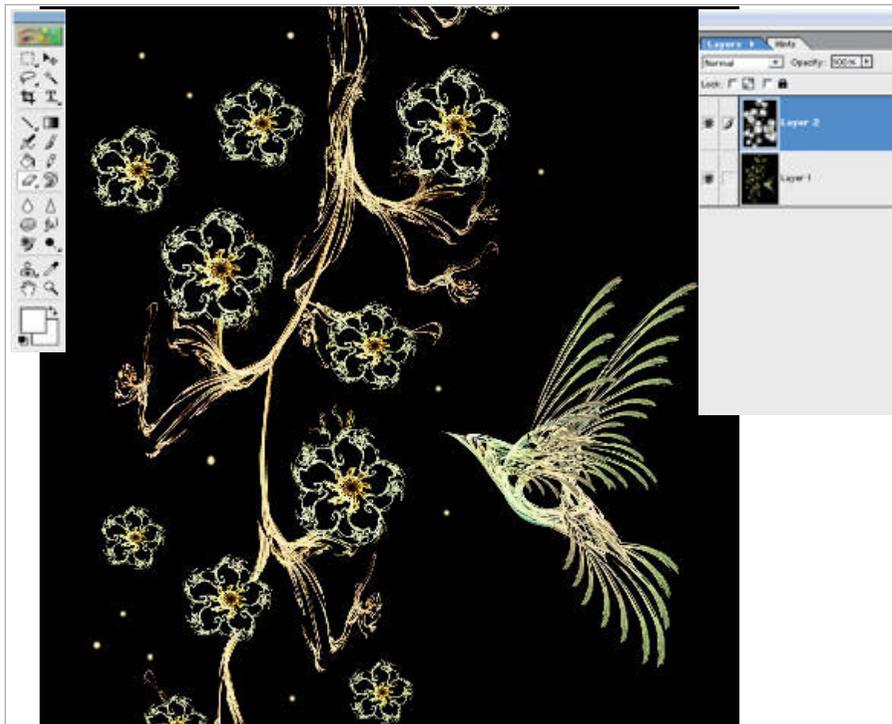
**Variations tool** Using the Photoshop Variations tool to add colour to the highlights of the image. In this case I opted for more of a green shade to suit both bird and branch, which harmonises colour in the image.

wanted to show some degree of tapering out. The initial shape repeated seven times gave me a good approximation of a branch. If too many layers become a problem, you can always copy the merged layers into a new document.

I find it easier to work horizontally when making branches, even if the final image will run vertically. There is really no right or wrong way to work when putting a fractal collage together.

To make the branch more 'branch-like', details such as leaves and flowers can play a big part – although I opted for just flowers. Open a new blank document and choose a fractal shape that has a rough resemblance to a petal, then the steps are the same as for the branch-making process, repeating and rotating one shape. For flowers with odd numbers of petals, for example, five, use a pentagon shape drawn as a guide layer that can later be deleted. This helps keep the shapes evenly spaced. If you wish, more detail can be added, a second layer of petals or centre to the flower, with another fractal.

**It's already there** The overall image is all there – all component shapes forming a figurative image together. Copy all the merged layers and paste into a new document before adding some colours.



**7 Add a different colour** Copy the image and paste before using the Variation tools to add a different colour to the new layer, before erasing certain areas to show the first layer's colour.

## Chance

I often find it fun to leave part of the creativity to chance, letting that inspirational moment come to me. I find myself in the habit of looking through random batch renders to see if any shape catches my eye – in this case the bird shape.



**7 Add a border** Just to finish, pick one of the colours from the main body of the image and then add a thin border around the edges of the overall image.

This can be coloured as you like with the Gradient tool in Apophysis or with the Hue and Saturation tools in Photoshop.

It would be time-consuming to create each flower this way, so again the Copy/Paste functions come into play in positioning the flowers where desired along the branch. The only rule here is not to overcrowd.

When the pieces of branch and flowers are placed together in a way that you're happy with, copy the merged layers into a fresh document and close the old ones. This is not essential, but with more complicated pieces it helps eliminate some of the confusion that comes with many layers.

Now back to the bird in this piece. This was created with three random batch fractals – two of these making the wings and tail, and one for the body. With wing shapes, you can usually make the whole shape as a render in Apophysis quite easily, but I found it more fun to have all the shapes I worked with generated by chance.

With the bird, I found it easier to put the shapes together before deciding on an overall colour. Copy the merged layers and paste twice into a new document, then use the Variation options to change the colour of the lighter areas on both upper and lower layers before using an Eraser tool to remove areas of the upper layer to show the lower layer through.

Copy and paste the merged layers into the document with your previously constructed branch image. Resize if needed and reposition. Any dark areas on layers that might overlap can be erased.

Lastly, finish off with extra details added with a Brush tool. A soft, round, 21-pixel brush was used to add the specks here and there, and a slightly sharper one was used to add the bird's eye.

A border surrounding the overall image is the last thing added. I chose one of the colours from the main image to contrast with the dark background.

## Creating fractals

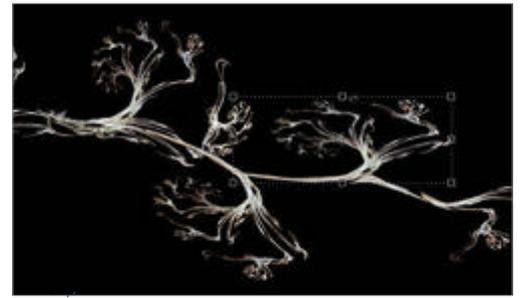
Most of the hard work is done by the software program!



**01 Play around** First, just play with the settings in Apophysis, seeing what you can create. Anything interesting, render – it might be useful for another creation.



**02 Random batch fractal** The second step is a random batch fractal image of roughly the shape you want, before rendering and taking it into Photoshop.



**03 In PS** To begin constructing the branch shape for the finished image, the shape is formed by copying and pasting the original, with some resizing and erasing.



**04 Copy/paste** Copy/paste all layers into a new document to reduce the number, then rotate the canvas so the branch shape is vertical. Tweak colours to suit.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



### Alyssia Indermuehle

Personal portfolio site  
[www.3dcelebrity.com](http://www.3dcelebrity.com)  
Country **Australia**

Software used **Photoshop, Painter, Maya**

US-born Alyssia creates 2D and 3D digital art in a variety of programs. An animation specialist, she has worked for clients as diverse as the US Air Force and MTV. She relocated to Australia in 2005 and took up freelancing.

# Creating a hybrid portrait

## George – An Animal Portrait 2010 Painter & Photoshop

“ Learn how to create a portrait which is neither wholly human nor animal, but a powerful combination of the two ”

**Alyssia G Indermuehle** Digital artist



### Build the foundations

The beginning stages are very important in a hybrid portrait project. Planning is essential, which is why I began with a very detailed sketch of the feline character I wanted to create.



**I have always thought there was something magical about the ability to capture true character in a portrait.**

In my experiments with portraiture, I began to imagine a combination of human and animal forms. All of us, at one point or another, have personified the look or actions of an animal. I certainly know that I am guilty of attaching human emotions and personality traits to my own pets. It is not hard to imagine that a quick glance of disgust from your cat was for the latest food offering in his bowl, or that the big brown eyes of your dog were expressing true remorse for the 'surprise' she left you. It is these personifications of animals that make the blending of man and beast on canvas such a brilliant combination. In my hybrid creations, I have been able to express the inner personality and character of a subject that a traditional portrait sometimes fails to capture.

The idea for the *George* portrait came from my desire to pay homage to a person who was very close to me and recently passed away. Similar to his human counterpart, I wanted George to be a classic, handsome cat in a military =uniform and the feature through which I wanted to channel his inner human was his steely blue eyes. With the idea set, I moved on to the next stage of development: planning.



**Soft shading** Colours built up as I added subtle highlights and shadows. I tried to keep the image soft at this point as I would add detailed shading later.

Planning is absolutely essential to the success of any artwork and, when creating a hybrid portrait, there are a few special items that need to be taken into consideration in addition to traditional portraiture concerns. For example, the flow of the cat's head and neck into the proportions of the human body, the lighting on fur instead of skin and the posing of the 'model'. I have found that the best way to tackle these questions is to sketch, and sketch again, until I get the desired composition, lighting and proportions.

I always consider the direction of the light source from early on in the planning. One main light source – as used in many classical portraiture examples – allows for the dramatic depth and unity in my image that I desire. For the portrait of *George*, the light source is located above and to the viewer's right.



**Flesh out the sketch** I blocked in the colours underneath the Sketch layer. I then used the Artists>Sargent Brush and applied colour, keeping the paint loose and letting the strokes flow freely.

**Blending on a knife edge** Using the Artists' Oils>Dry Palette Knife, I blended the colours of the image together. With this tool I began to hone basic dynamics in the fur and cloth.



## Can't draw? Combine digitally

If you're new to freehand sketching, you can always utilise royalty-free or personal photographic examples of animals and humans, and digitally combine the images in Photoshop as a base reference. From this foundation you can draw over your combination until you're more comfortable with sketching.



Colours allude to the mood of the portrait. The colour palette that I had in mind for this painting consisted of muted browns, greys and creams with one main colour as the focus. I chose a piercing sky blue/violet for his eyes and the sash across his chest to draw the viewer in and unify the image.

The portrait began with a simple sketch in Corel Painter on a layer above the Canvas base with a Pencil>2B Pencil, set to Black at 20% Opacity. The early sketch was very light and meant only to indicate the basic shapes. I named the layer 'Sketch'.

Once I was satisfied with the composition of the character, I then moved on to using the Pen>Scratchboard tool. I often utilise the Scratchboard tool at varying sizes and opacities when laying down the foundations of a painting as it's so flexible.

I continued to build up detail until I had the exact character, layout and lighting I wanted for the final painting all mapped out. In my workflow, the sketch acts as a comprehensive guide so I'm always very detailed with my early pen and pencil work.

Next I started blocking in the colour. On the base Canvas underneath the Sketch layer, I blocked in the colours of the portrait with the Artists>Sargent Brush. I often adjusted the Sketch layer's Opacity to around 50% while I added additional colour for better visibility of the Canvas layer.

**Smooth it out** With the Blenders>Real Stubby Blender, Water Rake and Coarse Oily Blender 30, I began to work on blending the colours of the image and smoothing the basic shapes.



**Build up paint** I added highlights and additional paint to certain areas with the Artists>Sargent Brush and continued to blend using the Dry Palette Knife.

In the early stages of laying down colour, I attempted to keep tones fairly loose and built up the lighting in the base colours by using varying opacities. While I did hint at the lighting early on, I didn't commit all the way to working in shadows, as these are best added as a finishing touch.

Once happy with the blocking in of the colours, I chose a variety of blenders to start mixing them together. My favourite blenders to work with are the Real Stubby Blender, Water Rake, Coarse Oily Blender 30 and Artists' Oils>Dry Palette Knife. All of these were fantastic for moving the colours into the appropriate areas, while the Real Stubby Blender added a nice, smooth transition between neighbouring colours. I found as I went along that certain areas needed additional colour, so I applied more of the paint that was required with the Artists>Sargent Brush.

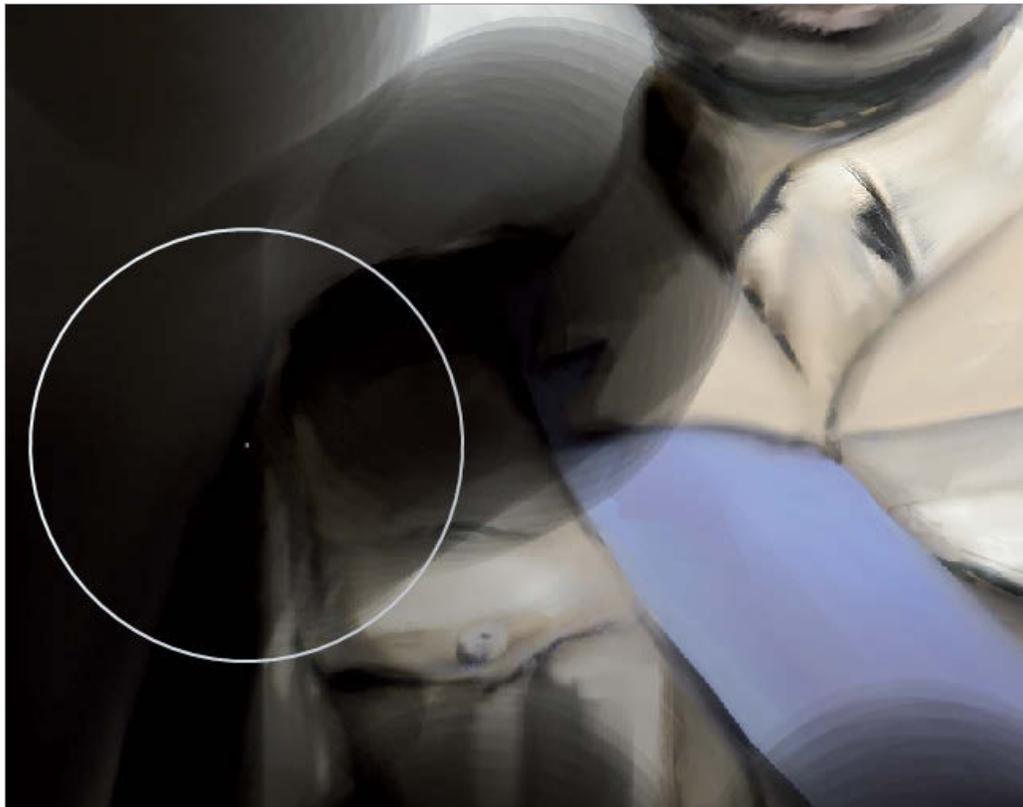




**Refine the form** I worked with the Artists' Oils>Dry Palette Knife again to pull out and shape specific selections of the fur. I worked along the jawline paying close attention to the bone structure.

Once I had the base colours of *George* working together, I wanted to add more detail to the brushstrokes and movement in the image. For this stage, I began to work solely with the Artists' Oils>Dry Palette Knife. I was careful to work with the shapes of the bone structure and follow the flow of the clothing etc. I spent the majority of my time on this painting using the Dry Palette Knife, so this is a good opportunity to master the tool. After completing the base colours and brushwork, I opened a new separate layer above the Canvas layer for a watercolour wash. Using a Digital Watercolor>Wash Brush, I lightly placed where I wanted the shadows to

**Subtle shadows** On a new layer, I added a Digital Watercolor wash of dark brown. Then I removed colour from the highlighted areas with a Wet Eraser to leave only hints of transparent shadows.



## Artist showcase

Some other hybrid portraits by Alyssia



### Leopold – An Animal Portrait 2010, Painter and Photoshop

● Leopold is a romantic character from a dreamy era of days gone by. His gaze is gentle, magical and alluring, as if he were waiting for someone to bewitch his mind and steal his heart.



### Etienne – An Animal Portrait 2010, Painter and Photoshop

● Etienne the man-goat. Stubborn and rigid, he's also intelligent and crafty. Unfortunately, we have all worked with this character. He is the 'animalisation' of that annoying colleague.



### Rudolph – An Animal Portrait 2010, Painter and Photoshop

● Rudolph is getting a little bit slow these days and his whiskers are turning grey. He is not that young spry pup he once was, but those gorgeous, big brown eyes will never change.

fall over my portrait, building up the depth as I went along. At this point, I turned the Sketch layer on and off to make sure I had the placement of my shadows correct; this brings realism to the image. I then used the Digital Watercolor>Wet Eraser to remove the wet paint from areas where it was not needed, at varying opacities for a painterly look. Next, I dried the watercolours by selecting Layers>Dry Digital Watercolor and dropped the layer onto the Canvas.

By this stage I had an image I was pleased with, but which still needed all-important details such as fur and highlights. For the shadows, I utilised the Pen> Scratchboard tool at a very small size and, at a similar size for the highlights, I used Chalk>Sharp Chalk. For the fur generally, I loosely sketched in where I wanted it to show but not in any great detail; the important thing was to hint at the fur, rather than draw it all. For example, along George's jawline to the left, I sketched in dark, soft individual hairs and then smudged them outwards with the Blenders>Water Rake. To the right, on the lighter side of the portrait, I sketched in creamy light hairs, but only strategically blended certain hairs, leaving others to accentuate the shape in full strength. I wanted to keep the fur loose and soft, as opposed to busy and overworked.

Once I'd reached a point where I was happy with George and his background, I was ready to take the image into Photoshop and pull the portrait together as a whole. I removed the Sketch layer and dropped the remaining layers onto the Canvas, saving the portrait out as a PSD file.

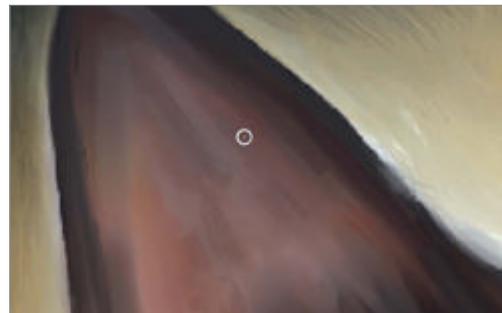
In Photoshop I opened the image and created a duplicate layer of the Canvas layer and applied an Alpha mask to it. With the mask selected under Channels>Mask, I used a basic round brush and painted in the mask to include only the

 **Precise highlights** With the Chalk>Sharp Chalk, I sketched strategic hair strands on the lit side and darker, bolder strands on the shadowed side, making sure to vary the hair size for believability.



## Easy digital fur effect

A brief introduction to creating realistic fur and hair



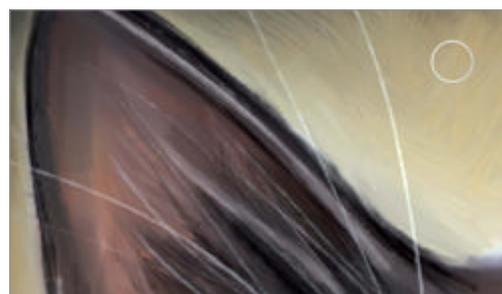
**01 Finish the foundation** First, I made sure my image was ready to receive detailed fur. This image of an ear has the basics laid out and has clean lines.



**02 Add depth** I utilised a variety of blenders and brushes to push, pull and manipulate the paint so the fur appeared to have depth and wasn't flat.



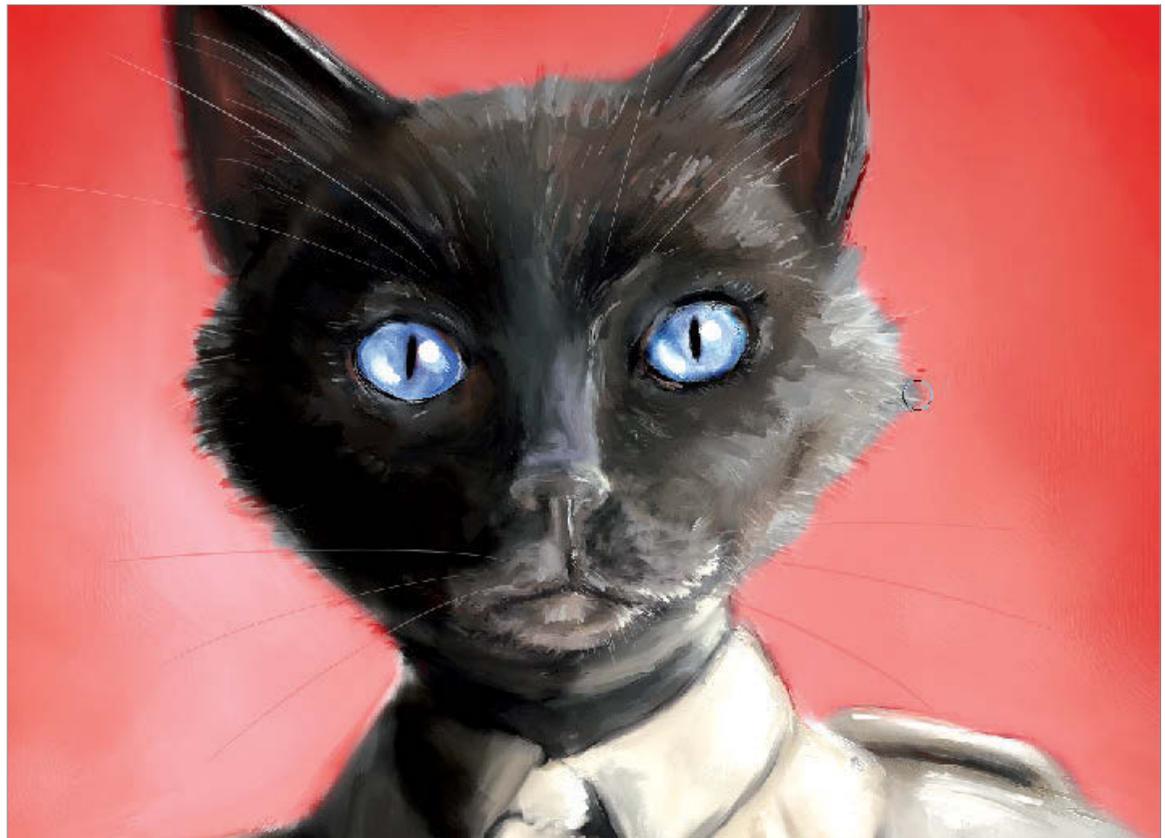
**03 Fine details** Once the basic shape was laid out, I added fine hairs, in both dark and light colours. I blurred and smudged them to appear softer.



**04 Final touches** I drew in full-strength hairs with bold strokes. I didn't blend these hairs as they were intended to be in focus and to catch the viewer's eye.

**Time to Photoshop**

Once the main subject was painted, I opened the saved painting in Photoshop and created a mask of the cat on a new layer so I could work on the background.



**Keep it simple**

If you overwork the brushstrokes in your painting, you can easily make it look muddy, dull or messy. Have the brushwork hint at the overall shapes to accentuate the portrait.



shape of the cat and his human body. The purpose of adding a mask was I needed to apply images behind George and the separated layer contained only the cat, which would lend me greater flexibility with placement of the background elements, as well as ensuring any adjustments were non-destructive.

To add some dynamism to the scene and generally a bit more life to the background, I used some custom brushes in either black or white to stamp out images on ten separate layers behind the masked layer. These custom brushes consisted of flowers, antique letters and flourishes, but you can use whatever appeals to you. I either used Multiply or Soft Light for the blending mode at varying degrees of opacity to establish some depth and complexity within these background layers.

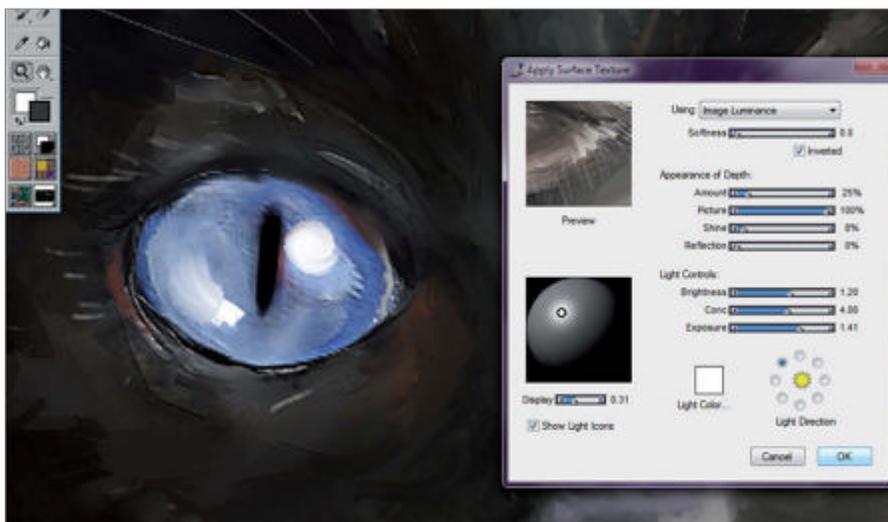
The last layer I created was positioned above all the others in the layer stack. With a very large airbrush, I painted around the

edge of the illustration in order to produce a soft vignette effect; this really pulls the image's focus to George at the centre. This layer's blending mode was set to Multiply and the Opacity was adjusted to a very light 25%.

Once complete, I merged the layers in Photoshop and again opened the image in Painter. At this stage, I added those fundamental final touches that really pull the painting together.

I applied Effects>Surface Control>Apply Surface Texture>Image Luminance. I set the Amount very low at 25% and the Shine to 8%; this added a powerful emphasis to the brushstrokes on the surface and really made the painting pop! It is possible to achieve a similar effect when you are working in Photoshop by adding a Smart Sharpen filter, but I prefer to use Painter's feature for the slightly more painterly finish it offers.

George was a beautiful adventure into the creation of a hybrid portrait. I am pretty sure his human inspiration would have enjoyed seeing himself transformed into such a cool cat!



**Boost brushstrokes** In Painter, I applied Effects>Surface Control>Apply Surface Texture>Image Luminance with the Amount at 25% and Shine at 8%. This added life by enhancing brushstrokes.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Amber Hill**

Personal portfolio site  
[vantid.deviantart.com](http://vantid.deviantart.com)  
Country **USA**

Software used **Painter**  
Amber's art education consists mostly of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art, flights of the imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of newness and wonder.



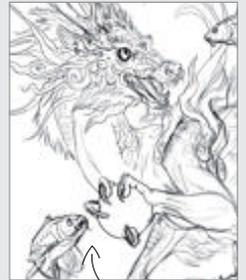
**Source files available**

Line art



## Working Progress

Illustrate a vivid scene with a limited palette



Step 01, Sketch it



Step 08, Begin the details



Step 18, Koi time



Step 23, Tilt

# Illustrate in monochrome

“Delve into the surprising world of monochromatic colour schemes”

## Celestial Party 2011 Corel Painter X

“ The colour palette of this piece was inspired by the cobalt blue of traditional porcelain glazes. It lends an ethereal quality, as if bathed in filtered starlight ”

**Amber Hill** Fantasy wildlife illustrator



**Monochrome: having one colour.** It doesn't sound very exciting, yet this sometimes neglected colour scheme is steeped in history and provides the artist with an easy way to express bold contrasts and lighting without becoming bogged down in fiddly bits of colour theory.

Monochromatic paintings are not only black and white; any colour and its mixtures with black and white will do. A colour mixed with black is used as a shade and a colour mixed with white is a tint. It should also be noted that every colour, or hue, has its own value called a chromatic value. Yellow, for example, has a much higher chromatic value than blue, and they are comparable across the spectrum.

In both traditional and digital painting, monochromatic underpaintings are employed to set the stage for lighting and contrast and to define tonal values and spot problem areas early on. A few common examples of monochromatic underpainting are grisaille, which is shades of grey, brunaille (brown), verdaille (green), and verdaccio (a green-grey also used for skin tones).

This piece is done in the digital analogue of cobalt blue, a rich natural pigment that has been used for centuries. Traditionally it was used in glassmaking, pigment for paints and a glaze for blue and white porcelain. It is by such pottery that this piece is inspired. The cobalt blue lends an ethereal quality, as if it's bathed in filtered starlight.



### Mixer palette

Play with the colour mixer to see which hues work for monochromatic painting. Some shades are too dull or won't fit the mood of your piece. Be aware of Dirty Brush mode when mixing on the palette. Toggle it off or use the Clean Brush button after every stroke.



## Blue beginnings

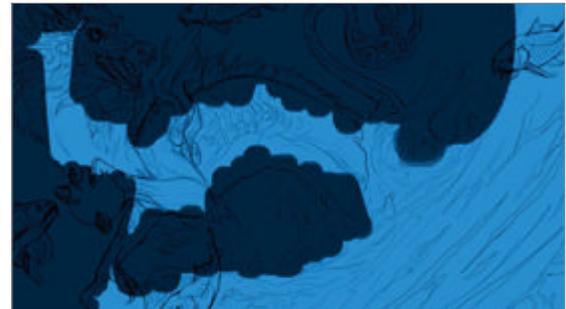
Enjoy the freedom of a lack of colour

**01 Sketch it** In a new document, create a basic sketch. This twisty guy and his koi buddies were drawn with the Detail Airbrush tool. Set the layer mode to Multiply.



**02 Find the colour** Painter has a large collection of colours selected to match real media paints. Hit the shortcut Ctrl/Cmd+3 to show the Color Sets palette. Admire all those cool colours. Look for cobalt blue, grab it, and then flood fill the canvas with digital pigment.

**03 Get to mixing** The previous shortcut will toggle the Color Set on and off, and a similar shortcut, Ctrl/Cmd+2 will bring up Painter's lovely Mixer palette. Slather a swathe of cobalt blue in the Mixer window. Then, with both black and white, smooch together the various tints and shadows that will be used in this piece. You may be surprised at the variety of different tones you can derive from just one hue.



**04 Mash it** A large round Oil Pastel with a high grain is good for blocking in the background. Use a large brush to lay in the darkness of the sky and select a paler blue and work part of the Milky Way. Use varying pen pressure to develop the rudimentary beginnings of stellar cloud formations.



**05 Start watering** Select a bright tint and paint the waves. Use the sketch as a guide for the perspective and note the reflection of the splash of water beneath the dragon.



**06 Search the sky** Select the Soft Airbrush tool. Look up some references of the Milky Way to understand how the masses or dark and light clouds pass in front of each other. Bump small nodes of light against the misty darks for maximum universal coolness.



**07 Place the critter** Create a new layer, this time for the dragon. Select the round Oil Pastel brush again and smash in his form with pure cobalt blue to make him pop against the darkness behind. Use a smaller brush and a lighter tone to begin pulling some of the highlights from the form.



**10 Tighten it up** Not only are textures easier, but lighting is easier as well. Think about where the light is coming from and where the form will cast shadows, such as mounds of fur overlapping themselves. Add generous black or white to push or pull. At this point, the sketch layer isn't needed as much.



**11 Stay rooted in reality** Always remember that even though this fellow is fantasy, he should have believable anatomy. His body is based on an elongated dog with stocky muscles. All that chunk is painted with the usual pastel and then blended with our old friend Just Add Water.

**12 Paint scales** Scales are tricky, even in monochrome. This dragon's scale pattern is loosely based on a koi with a bit of alligator and chicken feet for good measure. Start by painting under the sketch with blue, shade the lower plane and then highlight the top plane as shown.

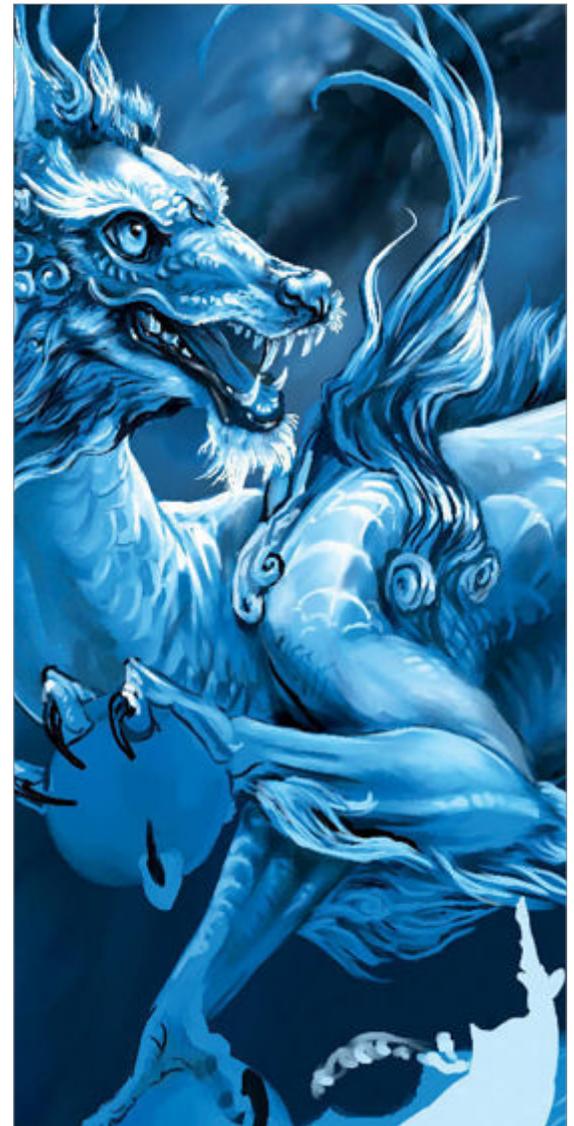


**08 Begin the details**

Toggle the sketch layer on and off by clicking the eyeball to the left of the layer name. Render the finer details of the face with small brushes using black, white and some generous Eyedropper love for efficient blending.



**09 Texture eyes** Let's give the back of his head some structure. Underpaint with cobalt blue, then etch the shadows with a dark blue and pop highlights. Instant textures! The monochromatic scheme makes texturing like this easy.



**13 Give them sheen**

Paint the finer details of the scales with a smaller brush and firmer pressure. The contrast of dark and light gives the illusion of a hard, smooth surface that flows with the dragon's body. Paint smaller scales at the joints.

**14 Keep going!** This fellow is really beginning to look alive. Work on his wavy fur tendrils and the fluff along his back. Give him scales on his legs and claws. Bird feet are a wonderful reference for dragon feet. Don't get caught up in one area for too long though, keep the flow going.

# Creatures

**15 Reach for the stars** Back to the sky for a bit. Make sure the canvas is selected! Grab the Just Add Water blender and smooth some of the cosmic vapours. Create a new layer and with the Tiny Spattery Airbrush tool, paint white stars. Play with the feature and brush size until they are just right.



**16 Clean it up** Selectively erase the spatters that are too prominent or are not where you want them. Be gentle with your stylus and press and push some of the new star clusters back. Select the canvas and pick out a few stars to highlight with puffs with the Soft Airbrush tool to make the stellar bodies glow.

**17 Sparkle** Continue working over the sky, adding streaks of airbrush where needed. Avoid using gray in the sky to keep as much sparkle as possible in this monochromatic painting. Use an airbrush with a small feature value to scatter tiny stars and then merge the layer with the canvas.



**18 Koi time** Paint the koi in flat blue then trace the line art from the sketch layer onto the flats. Draw the larger scales and the facial features, concentrating on the expression of the fish. Koi have cute faces. Since this is fantasy, push it further!





**19 More scales** In a manner very similar to the dragon scales, paint white over the flat colour to begin building up scales. Give the edges hard lines of white for glitter and take your time.

**20 Fan fins** Paint the fan of the fin with fluid strokes of white. Allow some of the blue to show through to give translucency. Dot the edge of the fin with scintillating droplets of light. Build up the form of the face and shade the scales.



**22 Crest of a wave** Create a new layer for the crest of the wave. Paint foam with the tiny Spattery Airbrush tool, similar to the stars. Move the Feature slider even higher for larger clots of paint. Erase the excess and paint over the spatters with the round Oil Pastel.

**21 Keep it floaty** It only takes a few lines of white to create the fins, so keep in mind less is more. Too much colour and the fins will lose their delicate look. Create belly scale texture by painting dots along the bottom of the koi and then gently paint over them just enough to blur.



## Making waves

### Key art features explained

**1 Celestial nonsense** Have fun creating random lighting effects and extra sparkles. These guys are frolicking on the celestial plane so who knows what could happen! The stars scattered across the orb help bring it to the foreground of the image.

**2 Curved shadows** The deep shadows on the dragon give his body a believable curve of flesh and bone. Look at references of koi, other large scaled fish and reptiles to see how they move and how the scales shift and catch the light.

**3 Blacks** The black background makes the foreground pop as well as giving the whole scene a mysterious feel. Black is used to emphasise the pupils of the animals and sharpen details as well as being a key part of your colour palette for shades.

**4 Critter stories** The koi interacting with the dragon create a story. A dragon bursting forth from water is interesting enough, but toss in a few other critters and it makes the scene that much more interesting and engaging.

**5 Interesting lines** This piece is based on a continuous curving line throughout the composition that is supported by the alternating dark and light values. Use the strong contrasts to your advantage, guiding the eye and showing details.



**23 Tilt** If you have a tablet that supports Tilt, use the angled spatters to create the illusion of motion in the wave. If you don't have Tilt, that's okay! Just paint by dragging the stylus over the crest for motion lines. Erase over spatter. When the foam is complete, merge it with the canvas.

**24 Sharpen the splashes** Sharpen the splashing water with smaller brush strokes. Keep the contrast of light against dark high for the look of translucent water. Use the Detail Airbrush tool to outline small circles of water and drips to simulate reflections.



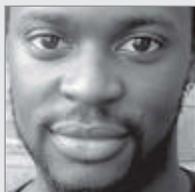
**25 Finish with fish** The fourth koi felt odd and hidden in the composition, so it was deleted. You can paint as many fish as you want though! Sharpen the details of the water with a small round Oil Pastel by flicking the stylus back and forth in rapid, light motions. This blends all the underpainting and creates the undulating textures of a swelling wave.



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Rinehart Appiah**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.r-appiah.com](http://www.r-appiah.com)

Country **UK**

Software used **Photoshop**  
UK-based concept artist Rinehart works in Photoshop to produce dramatic and painterly sci-fi and fantasy scenes, sharing his skill through tutorials.

R Appiah

# Scale in sci-fi art

Wake Up Call 2012 Photoshop

“In this tutorial I will be designing a sci-fi scene with an ancient robot looming over a small town, using scale to evoke mood”

Rinehart Appiah Concept artist

 **Sci-fi artwork often uses scale to convey a sense of fear.** It constantly challenges our feelings and forces us to imagine ourselves in situations that would never happen in reality, whether that's a 100-foot giant ape scaling a tower, an alien mother ship that casts its shadow over a major city or fighting against a tidal wave looming over a famous landmark.

On the flip side, scale can be used to put an audience in awe. For example, a super-tall beanstalk that winds its way through the clouds and beyond can make you feel breathless as it leaves you wondering how high it reaches. An incredibly small alien biped that lives its life inside a robotic human suit with tiny gears and motors can leave us feeling intrigued and captivated as we imagine what it would be like to be that small. Scale matters in imagery and it's a useful tool that is perfect when trying to instill an emotional response with your audience.

Before I begin to paint my image, I always create a research folder filled with references helpful to the subject. With this done I begin to create my image by using thumbnails I have drawn. I still use traditional media at this stage simply because I like the organic feel of drawing with a pencil. The first step in my process is to quickly establish perspective and composition. Once I select the one I feel best fits the brief, I scan it in at 300dpi. Using a Hard Round brush set to 63% Hardness, I quickly continue to rough out a dynamic pose. I want the robot to appear active



 **Body work** With the head starting to take shape, I begin to work on the body using a basic cube consistent with that of ancient biped statues.

and loom over the city. Once that's decided I create an Overlay layer and, using the Airbrush tool, shade in grey values on the robot, keeping the primary light source on the left-hand side of the image.

Establishing a light source early in the process is important as it helps to stop confusing shades of light when the colouring process starts later on.

I use the Airbrush tool with Hardness set to 100% and start to block in form and structure, pulling out interesting shapes that add to the overall form of the robot. I want the character to look strong and durable, as if it was built to last. For this I turn to my research

## Work with Perspective

When creating an image with scale at its heart, the Perspective option can be helpful. Simply click Edit->Transform->Perspective. This will enable you to move and adjust your image in multiple perspectives by clicking on the corners or sides and dragging in or out.



 **Mayan-inspired** Using a Hard Round brush, I begin to paint fine grooves and intricate patterns. The design is similar to Mayan carvings.

## Artist showcase

Discover the sci-fi worlds of Rinehart's art



**Earth Colossus**  
2011, Photoshop

● When creating this guy I constructed him from rock, interwoven with wood and vines. I wanted to give it the look of a Minotaur (from Jason And The Argonauts) but with a slight twist.



**Beast Hunter**  
2011, Photoshop

● This image depicts courage and facing your fears. I was inspired to create a tense scene of a battle between a beast and a skilled archer who has entered dangerous territory.



**Enslaved**  
2011, Photoshop

● In my vision of the future, I wanted this piece to capture the power and destructive force of nature, but also incorporate the vibrant colour and beauty of a strange new world.

Before



## Trees Enhance the sense of size and ancient age

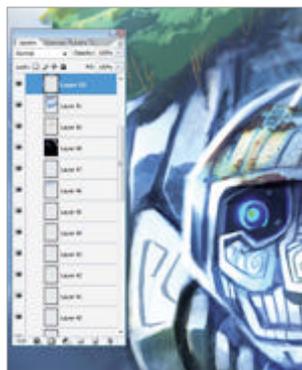
After

A tree often represents old age and longevity, the two elements that I'm incorporating in this image. I add interwoven roots that spread across the robot from the ground and then paint the tree growing on his shoulder. Before adding too much detail I step back, take a look at the silhouette and make the necessary changes to the composition. Next I create the plants and leaves using the Airbrush tool at 50% Hardness. I then paint in the green foliage with different shades of green to achieve the look.

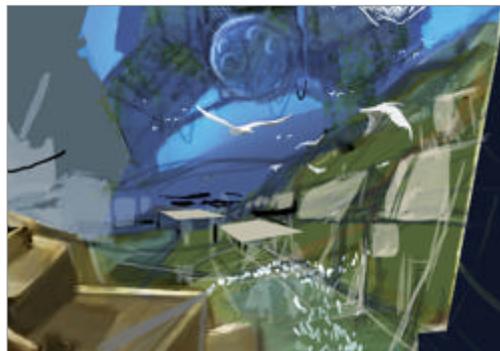


and notice that the most durable structures are ones that are thick, heavy and chunky as opposed to thin and light, so apply this to my design. Adding in details is now the next step and, starting with the background, I shade in the town at the bottom of the image and continue on to detail the hillside behind the houses. I create a new layer set to Color Dodge and fill it with black. Using an Airbrush set to white, I paint in lighting on the hard edges of the robot and the side of its head. I continue to improve upon the basic light values I had originally laid down.

Now I begin to explore and develop the piece with colour. I create a new layer and set its blend mode to Overlay. This is a simple way to paint over my greyscale image without having to change the colour values of the underlying layer. Using cool hues like blue and purple, I start to paint over the robot keeping the darker colours at the bottom and the lighter on the top. Although the robot is huge, I want him to have a gentle look on his face, as this will force the audience to question the good or bad intentions of the character. To achieve this look, the face is kept simple and I draw a mouth with high peaks in the corner, mimicking a smile that employs a sense of innocence to contrast his intimidating size.



**Texture**  
With the core design in place I start to airbrush in a reflective metallic texture and paint in rust on the shoulder and head, giving the look of erosion.



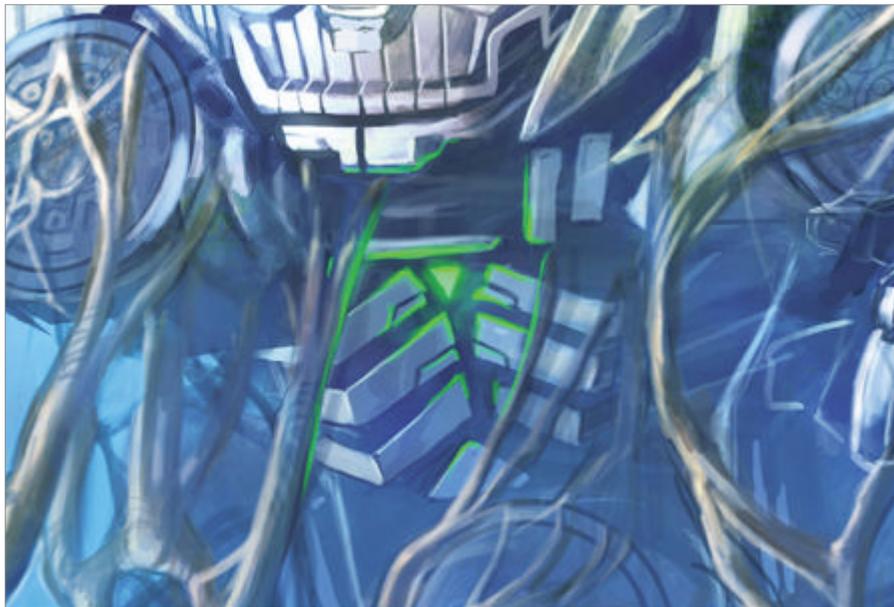
**Saturate for scale** Large objects appear more saturated at the top depending on the angle. Using the Airbrush tool at 10% Opacity at the top of the image achieves the sense of scale.

At this point I begin to introduce new colours, adding shades of green and yellow on the hillside and the tree growing from the robot's shoulder. The focal point of this piece is the robot so I use a bright green and a Hard Round brush to highlight his eyes and chest. When rendering these values on his chest I paint elements of light reflecting off the inner body and under the head. This creates small, eye-catching flashes of colour which will lead the viewer to the focus of the image; the robot's face.

Next I finish off with the fine details on the town and body. I start by concentrating on the top half of the robot, detailing the face using a fine, hard brush, sharpening the edges and adding rust to the mouth and top of the head. On a new layer I select Multiply at 30% Opacity and paint in a shadow on the body.

Elements of the image now start to interact with the feeling of depth the shadows have created. The robot is the largest thing in this image, so to fully understand its size I paint in townspeople below running for their lives and add birds flying above to

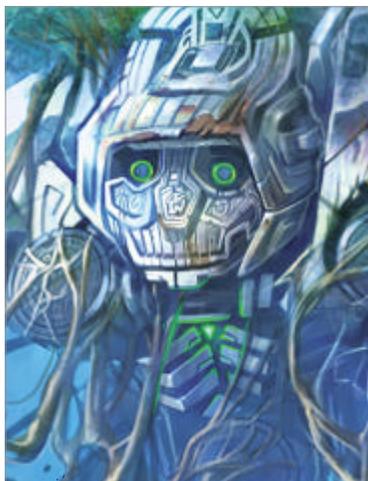
**Build the basic town** Blocking in a series of simple geometric shapes, I create a small town. I then throw in shades of green and purple to establish distance from the background.



**7 Battery power** Painting the chest area green with a 40% Opacity Airbrush indicates the robot's internal battery is working while drawing the eye closer to his face and body.

## Colour balance

A good way to create or change the mood of your work is by using the Color Balance adjustment. Simply click Image>Adjustments>Color Balance to access the Control sliders. This enables you to quickly go from warm to cool hues and you can also adjust shadows, midtones and highlights.



**7 Eye for detail** With the image near completion, I add the finishing touches using texture on the roots and detail on the head. I choose a green hue for the eyes, in keeping with the chest.

enhance this sense of scale. Since this robot has been lying dormant nature has begun to take its course. To reflect this I start to cover the robot with large vines and tree roots, intertwining and keeping them in flow with the robot's body. Real roots get thinner the further down into the ground they go as they seek out water. I've drawn mine getting thinner as they go up, which works because they are being pulled up by something that was once under them.

To further tie the robot to its ancient origins, I paint Mayan symbols on parts of the body, erosion and dents using the Burn tool set to 20% Opacity. I paint on small dark marks followed by a crescent moon shape with the Dodge tool on the right-hand side of the mark. This creates a dent in the metal, keeping with the ancient look. The colour of metal tends to be dictated by the hue of its environment as it is so reflective, so in this case it's the bright blue sky. The robot is partly covered in rust and some parts are dull, which means that only the preserved areas of the robot are going to show such reflection. Next the running crowd are given very saturated colour and the red sail of a windmill is added to gently break up the browns and greens, but not too bright that it might take the eye from the focal point.

I create a new Soft Light layer and fill with green. The Opacity is then turned down to 6% balancing the image. The head needs to pop a little more, so I revisit it adding blue highlights on the left-hand side of the face and on top of the head. Finally I select the Eraser at 50% Opacity and I start to clean up all the unwanted patches that interfere with the image. After taking a step back I realise the image is slightly too dark, so I use the brightness and contrast controls via Image>Adjustments>Brightness/Contrast. I push up the Contrast slider to +14, creating that extra little bit of colour it needed. I use the Lasso tool to create two silhouettes of houses in the foreground.

When painting the foreground, the shades become darker while the background becomes lighter and more saturated. The selection is filled with black to finalise the impression of depth.

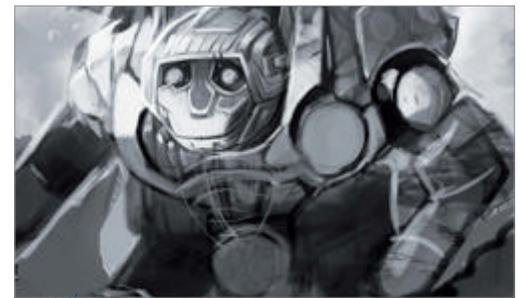


## Develop the character

How to render your central figure with intimidating scale



**01 Traditional thumbnails** A range of thumbnails are drawn with different poses and angles. It's important to have a choice and pick the best.



**02 Greyscale blocking** I create a greyscale image and keep the strong silhouette of the robot in the centre. I hold back on the detail and keep it loose.



**03 Add colour** Colour is layered on top of the greyscale. Establishing the sky tones early is a quick way to set the mood and lighting of the image.



**04 Fine details** I keep in mind that the focal point of this piece is the robot, so use small, eye-catching flashes of colour to draw the viewer to it.

# Master Photoshop brushes

## Working Progress

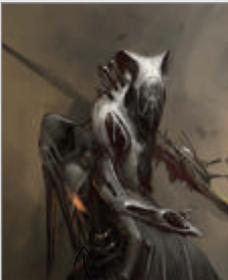
Create dynamic and vivid concept art



Step 01: The general look



Step 11: Colour wash



Step 16: Polish the details

## Blind Invader 2011 Photoshop

“The techniques explored in this guide will show you how to develop quick concepts and evolve them”

**David Munoz Velazquez** Graphic designer and digital artist



**Character concepts are big business, and fantasy types are extremely prominent.**

Within every commercial industry time equals money, and in this tutorial our CG artist shows you how to create quickly and successfully, using little more than the most basic of Photoshop tools. The techniques explored in this guide will show you how to develop quick concepts and evolve them.

With most creature designs and illustrations it can become important to try to forget what we are designing,

letting the improvisation and feeling of the shapes appearing on the screen drive us to results – unexpected or not. Try to empty your mind, don't attempt to render something nice, instead just live the experience of doing something unknown. All you're going to need is a tablet and Photoshop, perhaps two screens if possible, but that's not completely necessary. Some options are explored in our boxouts that make this possible on one screen, for example, having separate views of your image at different zoom sizes.

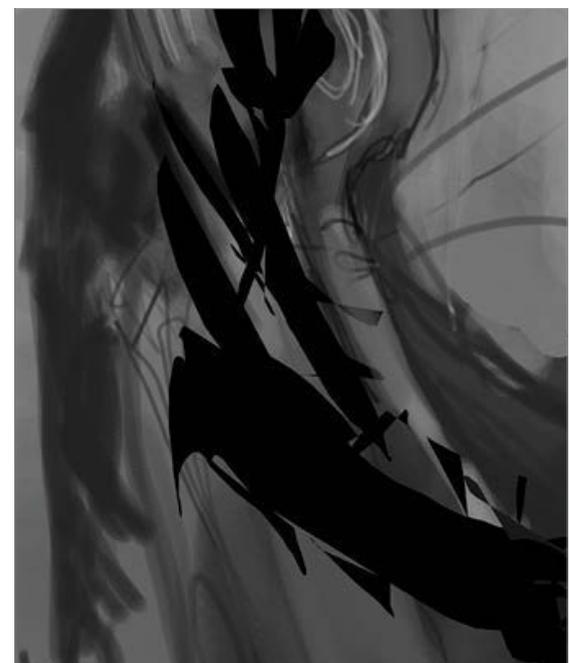


## Build the base

Approach your concepts with simple Photoshop tools

**01 The general look** With the basic idea of a character in mind, don't be afraid to keep conceptualising and evolving it. Do this with a simple round hard-edged brush, using greyscale to focus on shapes and design. It may seem vague but some interesting decisions have already taken place.

**02 Start in Photoshop** From here we will be using the Lasso tool in freehand mode – very useful when creating general shapes and filling with brushes. It can produce unexpected forms quickly and its simplicity and speed give you freedom. The arm of the creature has been rendered this way.





## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**David Munoz  
Velazquez**

Personal portfolio site  
[www.munozvelazquez.com](http://www.munozvelazquez.com)

Country **Spain**

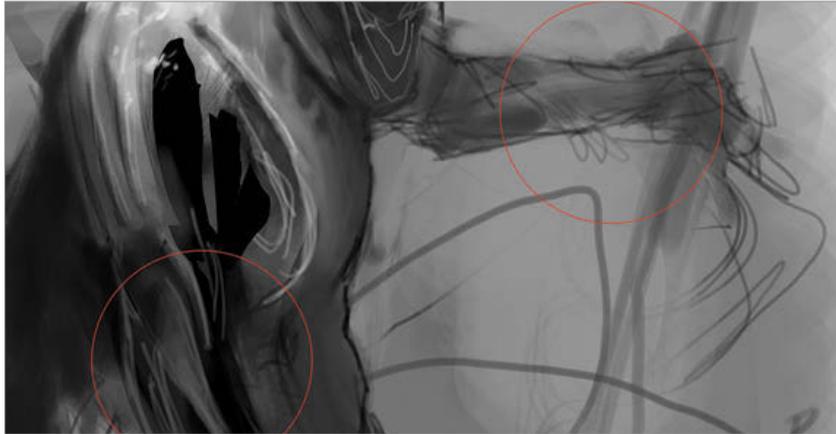
Software used **Photoshop**

David Munoz Velazquez is a Spanish artist who studied graphic design, specialising in lighting and character pieces. He works at Kandor Graphics as an art director and digital sculptor.

# Creatures

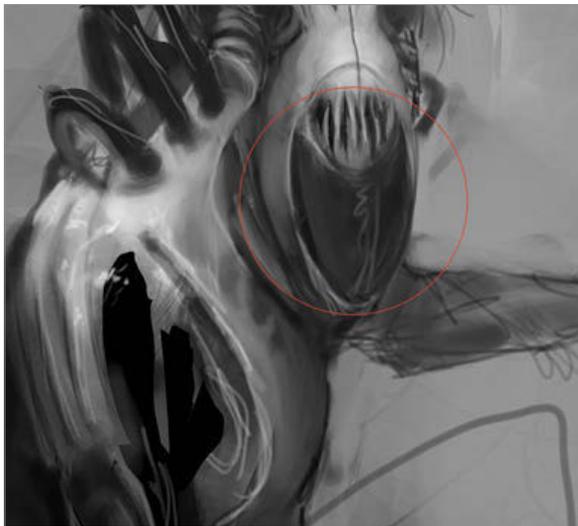
## 03 Add elements and balance

This image is starting to show how we can use the Lasso tool to great effect, shaping the figure and anatomy of our character. Still using this tool and a standard round brush, evolve some design elements and a rough idea for the left arm, creating a sense of depth and balancing the composition of the piece.



## Quick Tip

Flipping your image horizontally is a useful design tip. It gives a fresh eye to the overall image, making anything not wanted or weird obvious. For example, artists might try and fill the canvas but end up giving the character an odd posture. Hot key this function for maximum productivity.

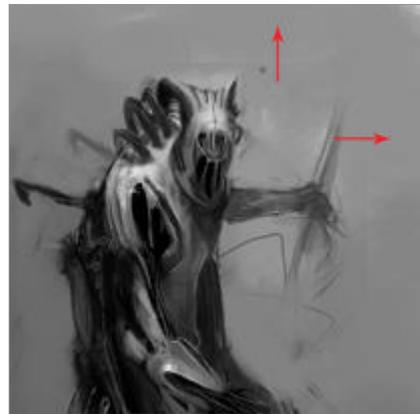


## 05 Finishing facial touches

When defining the head concept, it's easy to make a design difficult to understand through poor facial structure. Applying an abstract look in your concept is interesting – as long as a mouth or eyes are recognisable the head and its features will become more understandable. Make sure you leave enough interpretive room for the viewer to decide, though. Not everyone will see the head in the same way as intentionally created, which creates interest.

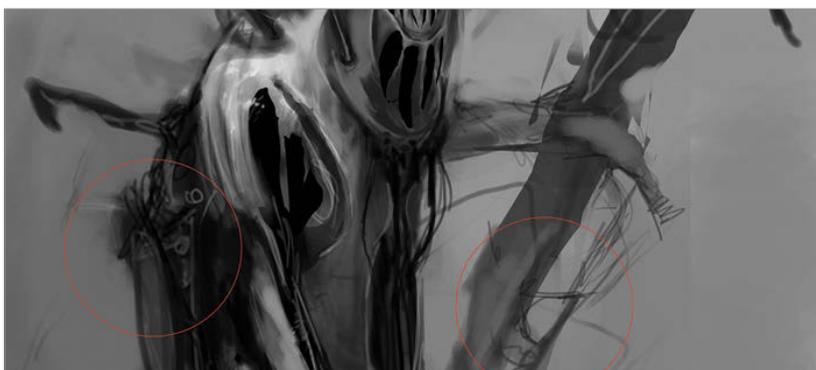


**04 Head design decision** For any character design, the head is an important element. The idea for this character is a bat-like creature that is blind and uses sound to see. It's important to keep such concepts in mind, yet move in a creative direction where features aren't all that obvious. This makes your concept more interesting and unique. This is accomplished by getting rid of evidence of animal skull elements from the face and blending the character's costume with natural body shapes, achieving both peculiarity and elegance.



## 06 Body design

Because the face is practically finished, it's time to work on the rest of the character. Enlarge your canvas so it's big enough to give you the freedom to experiment with anatomical shapes, building out your base character. Now you can explore radical shapes, such as drawing out longer elements and extending the original form. With Photoshop it takes no more than a second to add or remove space on the picture. Using the standard hard edged round brush, we are building a back structure and low cape to look like retracted wings.



**07 Mechanical body parts** Define more form and posture by adding some cables and hinting at mechanical devices. You can always remove shapes that you've applied as well. This means using a lot of layers, but don't worry as it will help you to recover anything made before on the image, using it as a new starting point. Cropping and duplicating shapes to build and blend then painting over them can help develop complex designs.



## 08 Flip image Horizontal

Select Flip Canvas Horizontal (Image>Image Rotation) and keep adding elements, trying to add something for a weapon, avoiding the more obvious shapes that we are used to seeing. Think of it perhaps as a sonic weapon. Again, the Lasso tool is used everywhere and painted over with the round brush. As the general body takes shape, it is a good moment to resize parts to balance proportions. The head has been made bigger to recover the presence we felt it was at risk of losing.



# Work with Tones

Apply saturated colour washes and in-image palettes

**09 General shape design** At this stage, understanding the general shape of your character is paramount – particularly the outline shape. Once you have taken care of the form and the composition, look at the character's outline or perhaps block over in it black to view it as one entity. Is the shape dynamic enough? Of course the detail will enhance it but a strong form creates distinction.



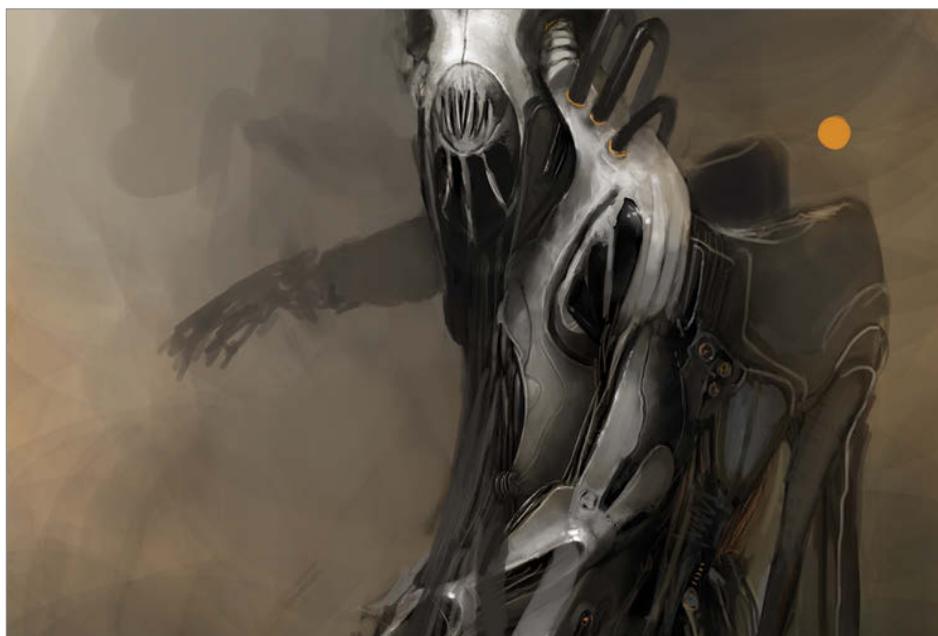
**10 Building parts** Work in elements to make your figure even more interesting and keep one eye on building the concept into a flying winged creature (or hinting at it through visual elements). It doesn't have to be literal, but rather suggestive through shape. We've fleshed out defining elements on the closer hand and arm, justifying the perspective as well as throwing some shapes in to define the lower part of a cape. This all alludes to the figure's character and balances the proportions.

“By using a new layer set to Saturation, start playing with applied colours. These are subtle but can give an idea of which work and where the image is going tonally”



**11 Colour wash** By using a new layer set to Saturation, start playing with applied colours. These are subtle but can give an idea of which work and where the image is going tonally. The canvas has a scale correction found under Image > Canvas Size. It is not definitive but it is the first general approach to a colour scheme and contrast balance. From here on we will be using colour palettes and playing with light and shade.

**12 Define the Details** As the image is created, everything evolves and changes. There is no previous line drawing to follow so we are flexible. There is further work on light and shade applied and we work on details to make them clearer, defining shaders. The brush settings for almost the whole process is a round hard edged tip, set with Pen Pressure for both Opacity and Flow Jitter, 10% Spacing, and 100% Opacity and Flow.



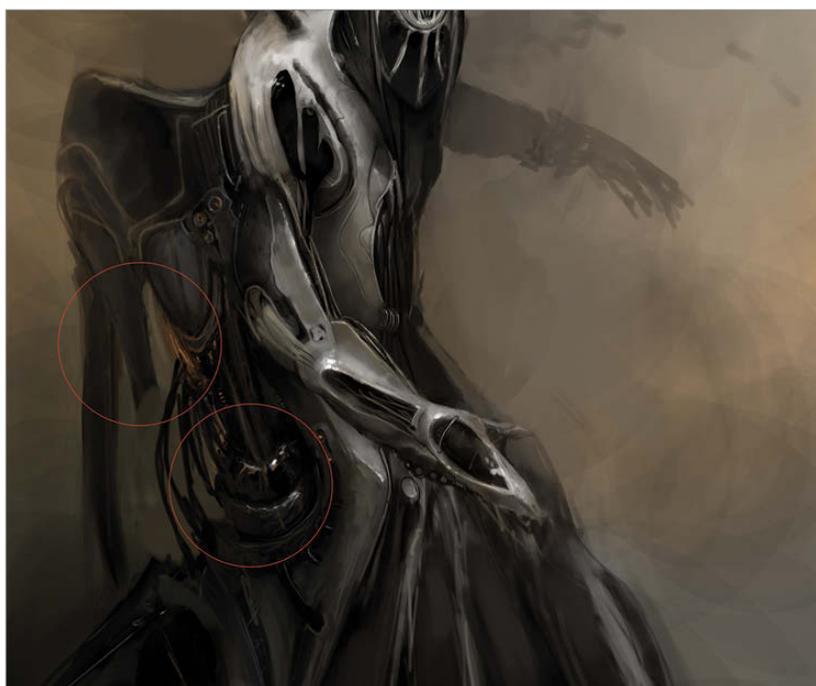
**13 Color Palette** Flip the image horizontally again to get a new view of the design and make any changes. Create small dots on a separate layer to use as instant pickers of your key tones. They can also be very useful to paint out elements you now want to obscure, such as the background arm in our example image, which is now slightly less obvious. Do this on a new layer and simply stack it above the old one in the Layers palette.



## Devil's in the details

Apply mechanical elements and realise the final form

**14 Mechanical structures** Add details to the back of the character, such as a mechanical device. Again flip the image constantly, using painted white highlights on top of shaded areas to suggest complex elements and metallic effects. We've also removed the back spikes that were placed to the front of the character to make it less confusing.



**15 Work into elements** Make the mechanical parts clearer and more prominent, and work on the outline of the figure by adding highlights. Some retouching of the head is applied to make it look more animalistic, suggesting teeth. Try to add elements such as particles floating or even ships in the distance to strengthen perspective.

**16 Polish the details** Polish some details in the realised mechanical forms and other key elements, making the highlights more visible. As most of the other parts are set in shade, this will work to create a more believable metallic look. Again, the mouth and teeth styles are changed so as not to be too symmetrical or regular, avoiding obvious reference to teeth shapes and taking away some of the impact of the image. Select coloured dots, using the Eyedropper tool to pick a colour scheme from your image and create a makeshift tonal palette on a new layer.



 **Use the Freehand Lasso tool to create a successful character design**

To show how powerful this tool can be, a quick character design has been made showing steps. If the Lasso tool has a hot key assigned and the Brush has one as well, it's just a matter of how quickly you can draw and fill the shapes you have in mind. Using the Brush to enforce forms or visual guidelines that appear, keep drawing shapes with the Lasso and fill them quickly, leaving some transparency or gradients. Because of how improvisational and inspirational this technique can be, it's not as important as the result. The concept can change until something we like appears and it might be a surprise even for us with shapes we may never have thought of. If you like it so far, create a new layer so you can get back and recover steps. By adding details and colour corrections it is possible to have an interesting design in no time.



**17 Add to the background** Copy your character and put it over the top of the layers so we can paint without affecting the design. Now start creating a background. Be it abstract, subtle or very detailed, this will help contextualise the character and make it easier to understand. Also, create a vignette to direct the viewer's attention to the character, arranging some elements on the sides of the image to reinforce this. Try to find a sense of depth through the background, but keep the foreground fairly simple, enabling the character grab more attention.

**18 Adjust and filter** Display everything together and make colour corrections on the background using Image>Adjustments>Selective Color, and Image>Adjustments>Photo Filter. Finish the details on the ground using textures and dirt brushes, and add a noisy, textured layer (such as a flat metal image) set to the Overlay blending mode to create colour variation on certain parts such as the sky and low wings. The weapon is finished and there is no need for it to be pushed into the background, so now we want it to gain more presence and complement the character design. It's always possible to keep detailing, but in our case the details were enough and showed everything we wanted to be visible.



 **Quick Tip**

A very interesting option in Photoshop is the double window view. Go to Window>Arrange>New Window for. This will duplicate the window, and everything you do on one will be instantly updated on the other.

# Paint fur effects

Arcane 2012 Painter

“ Learn how to break down complicated fur textures into large, easy-to-deal-with forms ”

Amber Hill Fantasy wildlife illustrator



**Painter X's Round Oil Pastel brush is great for simulating oil painting techniques for fur.**

In fact, I went the opposite way to many artists, moving from digital painting to oil painting and applying what I learned from Painter with actual paint. This tool is a bit smeary and translucent when light pressure is applied, and more opaque with more pressure. This makes for fine fur flow, as you can start with a firm hand and then trail off into wisps, or you can stab your tablet for chunky fur and later outline or deepen shadows around the fur clumps. This variety means you can contrast different effects within the same image without having to swap between tools.

Here we can compare the orderly volumes of the stone lion with the more natural fur forms of his inquisitive real-life counterpart. Both have organic shapes. Both look furry, even though one is a stylised, artificial version in the stone statue and one is the real natural deal. Different artists will interpret it in different ways, so take a look at other artist's rendering of fur to see the wide variety of methods. The lion statue is based on Edwin Henry Landseer's lion sculptures that sit in Trafalgar Square, London. The contrast between the two is a study in how simplified, sculpted fur has similar problems and solutions as fuzzed, rendered fur for the digital artist. By juxtaposing them we create an interesting comment on how individuals approach the challenge.

Fur grows in definite patterns on an animal and the direction combined with the length of fur is critical to consider when painting the texture. Fur itself actually has many textures within it rather than just one. Short fur can be soft or coarse. Long fur can be silky or frizzy. And long fur doesn't completely obscure the anatomy underneath. This lion's luxurious mane breaks where the neck is stretched, and you can still see the shoulder beneath the piles of fluff. Unless an animal is all brushed out, fur naturally clumps together. Thinking of these clumps in larger and larger masses helps break down the otherwise difficult task of painting fur.

## Working Progress

Contrast textures in your painterly images



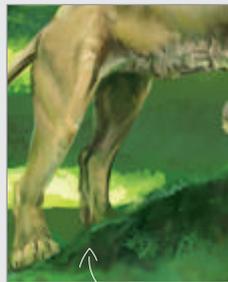
Step 01, Sketch forms



Step 03, Place the forms



Step 07, Luxurious locks



Step 10, Final details



Source files available

Sketch



## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

### Artist info



#### Amber Hill

Personal portfolio site  
[vantid.deviantart.com](http://vantid.deviantart.com)  
Country **US**  
Software used **Painter**  
Amber's art education consists mostly of dissecting dead things and watching live ones. She specialises in fantasy wildlife art – flights of imagination inspired by the living and breathing world. Amber lives on the road, moving from place to place in pursuit of newness and wonder.

# Creatures

**01 Sketch forms** Plan out the painting with a sketch on a new layer using your favourite drawing tool. It helps to have the basic shapes of the fur mapped out before colouring. Set the sketch layer to Multiply and sculpt with lines that follow the contours of body and mane. Lay in the background on the canvas before starting the lions.



**02 Drop in a background** The colours and light of the scenery affect the palette of the lions. It's easier to put the pieces together once the setting is in place by pulling sky, sun and bounce light from the surroundings. Rough in the statue with colours using the Eyedropper (Alt/Opt) from the ruins, applying the Round Oil Pastel tool on a new layer.

**03 Place the forms** Sculpt the planes of the statue in chunky swathes. Keep value changes sudden and crisp before gradually blending round forms in the mane into smoother shapes. Fur should always be painted from large to small. If you jump in to detail too soon, you may lose sight of the whole.



**04 Break it down** Begin to break up the mane into smaller masses that still curve around the form. Strokes should follow the planes. Think of how and where each is facing. The top of the mane will reflect the sky, the bottom will pick up some reflected green or saturated gold light. Moss grows where the stone is deeply carved.

**05 Note similarities** The real lion has a similar underpainting. This fellow reflects a lot of the surrounding green. His masses are blocked in similarly to the stone lion. Once the general masses are laid in with the Round Oil Pastel, select the Detail Airbrush and make it into a fine point.



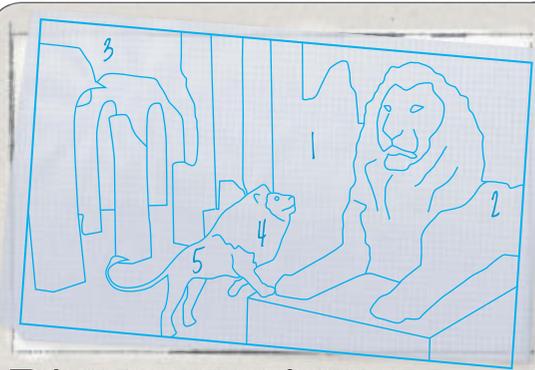
**06 Place a clean sketch** Toggle the sketch layer, change the opacity settings to where you can see dark brown on the lion layer beneath and follow your initial sketch. This way you have a clean base to work with, the way an acrylic painter would transfer line art on top of blocked-in forms.



**07 Luxurious locks** Render the mane with long, flowing strokes. Use a photo reference to see how the fur lays. There are deep crevasses that cast shadows in the shape of wavy Vs. Use the power of digital paint to brush over dark values with light and vice versa.

## Dissect an image

Art structure explored



**1 The story** Try to tell a story in your art. Here we have an enigmatic encounter between a lion and a magnificent statue that is surrounded by ruins yet mysteriously untouched. Both are similar and striking, and their duality plays against one another.

**2 Bounce light** When strong sunlight hits the pale stone or grass, it bounces the colour back onto its surroundings. In shadow, this bounce light is saturated, which helps bring some planes forward and rounds out the forms.

**3 Atmospheric perspective** Elements in the background are pushed back with a nearly transparent layer of pale blue. It cools down the greens, blurs the furthest columns and makes the foreground elements seem closer and crisp.

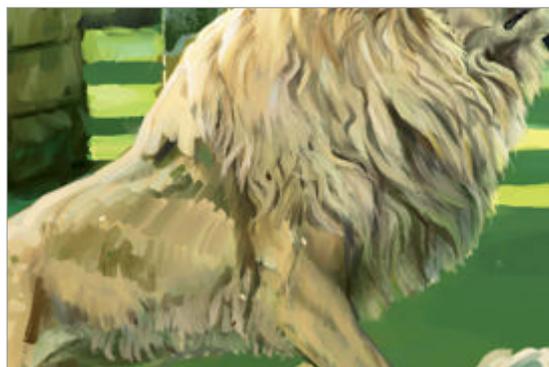
**4 Contrast** More detail does not necessarily mean better fur. Focus on large forms and tonal gradations broken by textural contrasts. This contrast creates texture faster than hair rendering. However, small details should not be overlooked.

**5 Saturation** A line of saturated colour under and next to the brightest values creates a beautiful glow. Take a look at colour from photos to get an idea of what to place where. Here, deep yellow and peach are painted over with white or gold.



**08 Colour temperatures** Use short, choppy strokes for the fur on the face. The Round Oil Pastel will blend the colours depending on how firmly you press with the stylus. Place cool gold-green in the shadows, cooler purples in deep shadow and warm, saturated gold at the edge of shadow. Think of the overall rounded form like the lion statue.

**09 Keep rendering** Continue etching finer details into the mane. Define the larger clumps of fur with sharper lines without overdoing the detail. Select the Blender Bristle from the Artist's Oils menu and paint thick swathes for the short fur that goes around the musculature of the lion.



**10 Final details** Grab the Round Oil Pastel. Check your references again for musculature and fur length. The paws are fuzzy, especially on the bottom and the belly fur is a mix of short fur textures and long. Suggest the soft fur of the inner thigh in shadow with light pressure on the stylus.

## Working Progress

Enhance your subjects with fantasy lighting



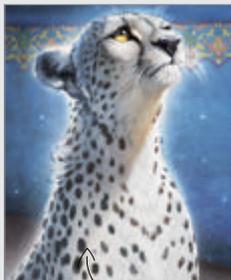
Step 01, Refine your idea



Step 05, Break it down



Step 12, Now for the magic



Step 15, Unify and add details





## Behind the scenes

Digital artists explain the techniques behind their amazing artwork

Artist info



**Anastasia Korochanskaya**

Personal portfolio site  
[bala.deviantart.com](http://bala.deviantart.com)

Country **US**

Software used **Photoshop**

The aim of Anastasia's art has always been to capture the ubiquitous beauty of nature while infusing it with the personal experience of divinity felt when looking into nature's heart.

# Magical night lighting

Persistence of Memory 2012 **Photoshop**

“ Learn to tell a story in your imagery using surreal light to guide the viewer's eye ”

**Anastasia Korochanskaya** Freelance illustrator and designer



**Source files available**

Sketch, brushes



## The story of light

Paint a realistic image using fantasy lighting



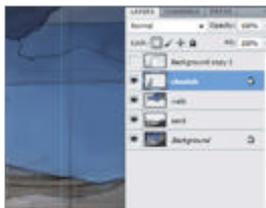
**Several months ago while researching another painting, I came across some startling imagery of what is now thought to be a distinct**

**subspecies of big cat, the Saharan cheetah.** I was instantly transfixed by the blurry black and white photographs of the esoteric cat. There was something haunting about the imagery, as if the animals themselves were apparitions of the desert, perhaps even memory itself. Imagery of diffusely glowing cheetahs traversing the serpentine spines of sand dunes under a canopy of slumbering stars haunted me with gnawing persistence. By chance I also later came across photos of Kolmanskop, a small town in the Namib Desert that is slowly being devoured by the sands. The two ideas swirled nebulously in my mind's eye until the chance came to unite them and bring the imagery to life.

In this painting, the cheetah serves as the primary source of light, deliberately guiding the viewer through the composition. The interior rooms are lit as well to suggest the cheetah has marked them in memory before she continues on, her tracks being erased behind her.

This tutorial aims to teach you to approach using light in non-traditional ways, such as treating light as an entity not always bound to a light-emitting source. For example, in this painting I have chosen to use my main subject, the cheetah, as the source of light. As we are trained to link light to very specific sources (the sun, a candle and so on), the artist can exploit this human perception to evoke an air of mystery and drama in their work. To accomplish this, we will use Photoshop's powerful blend modes and a carefully mapped composition.

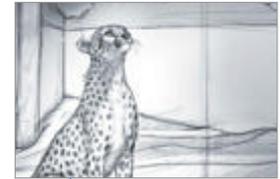
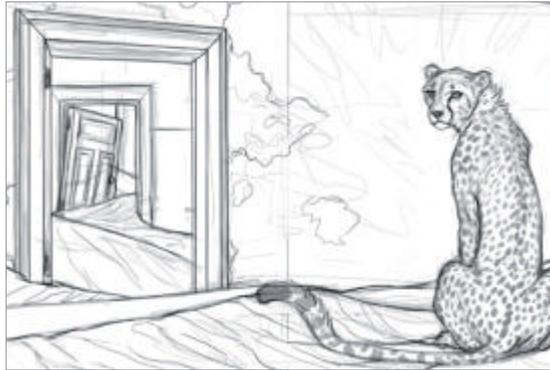
“Exploit human perception to evoke mystery”



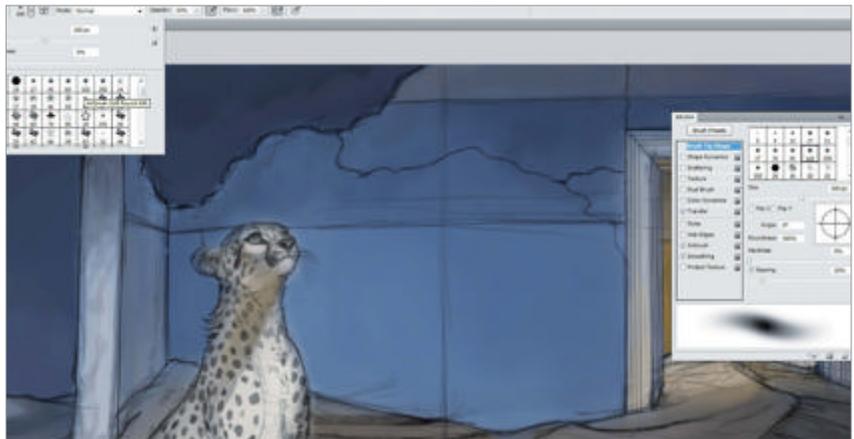
### 04 Separate your elements

With your basic colours roughed in, merge the visible layers to make a flat image. Use the Polygonal Lasso tool to carefully separate the major elements of the image into their own layers; one for the sky, the sand, the wall and the cheetah. Lock transparency and resize to 300dpi.

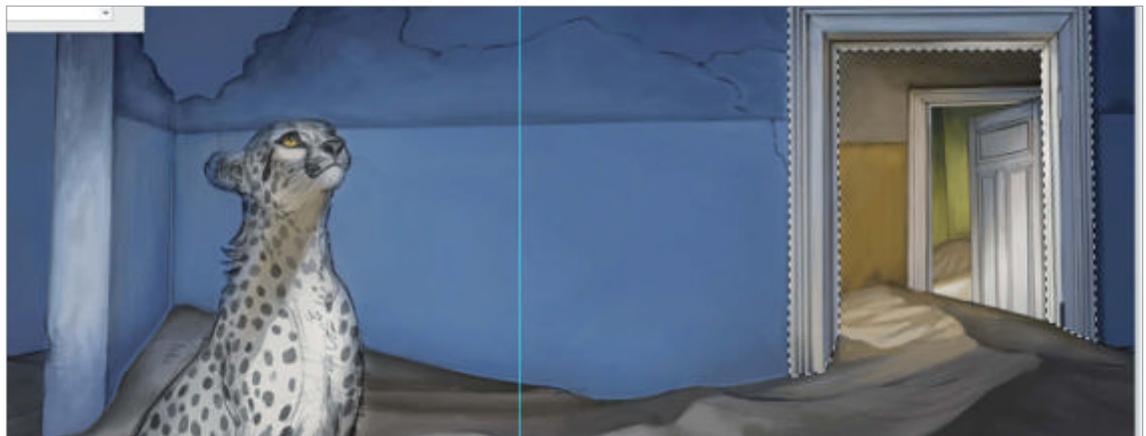
**01 Refine your idea** This is the most crucial stage of a painting. Even if you started with a strong idea, the first step is always research. I will spend a day collecting references and inspirational images that help build upon the original idea. With my inspiration in hand, I work out a few sketches with markedly different approaches to the same idea.



**02 Value study** Light will tell the story of this image, so the composition should work around it. To test it out, I choose one image and do a quick value study of the sketch in Photoshop using a Soft Round airbrush on a layer set to Multiply. Using the ridge of the sand dune, I separate the light from shadow and lead the viewer's eye from the cheetah to the doorway.



**03 Paint in the base colours** Leaving your image at a low resolution (72 dpi), duplicate the sketch layer and set it to Multiply. For the background, add a flat blue colour base. Using the Soft Round brush, roughly paint in your forms, drawing from images to help with colour choices. I chose to use a pinkish silver light with more gold in the interior to create contrast.



**05 Break it down** Working from background to foreground, begin refining each layer first by blocking in chunks with a large, soft transparent brush and working towards smaller, more opaque chalk brushes. I start with the wall, painting over sketch lines. Separate elements further as needed, giving elements such as the doorways their own layers. Do the same for the sand dunes and sky layers, using the sketch and value study as guides.

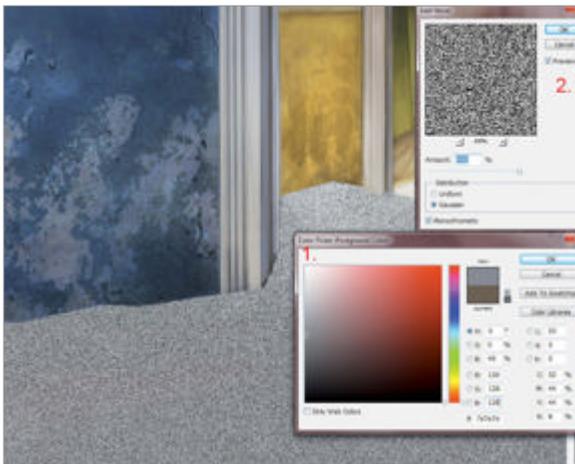
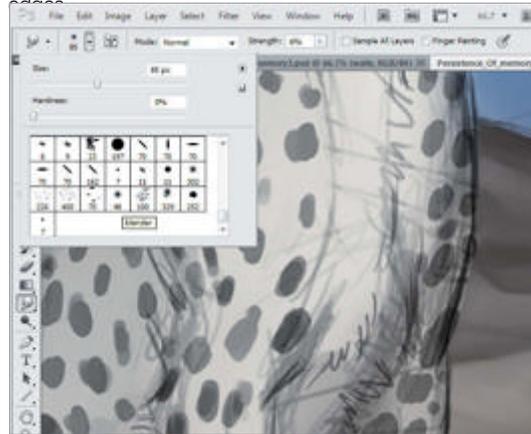
## Smudge Blender technique

Use the Blender brush in the included brush pack with the Smudge tool to gently merge areas of your painting (blending hard-edged lines into more diffuse, softer ones). Keep the Opacity low, under 10%, and apply varying pressures to increase or decrease the effect. Experiment to learn this brush's capabilities.



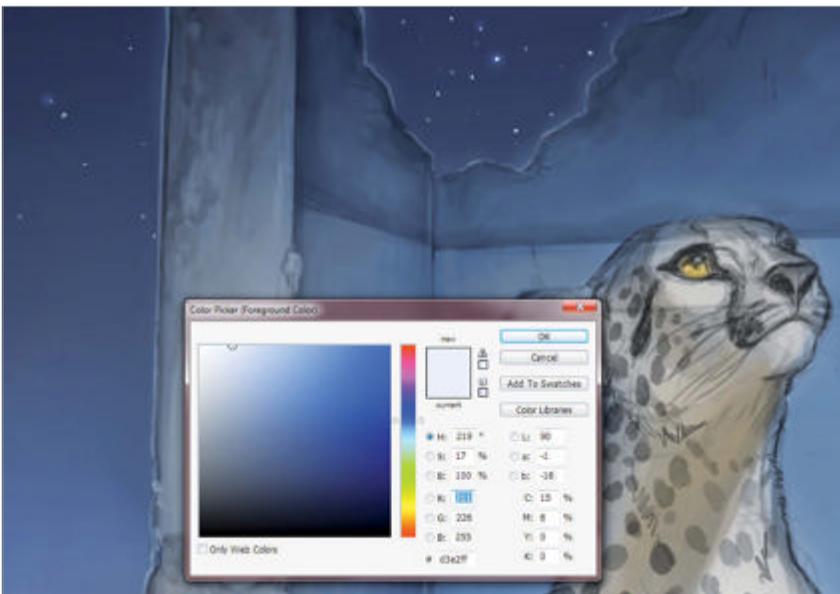
## 06 The sand dunes Sand dunes react uniquely to light. There is a line separating the light and shadow.

The shadows taper and soften away from the peak. Use the chalk brush for the hard edges, the soft airbrush for the shadows and the Smudge Blender brush to soften the edges.



## 07 Desert texture

To give the sand texture, add a layer over the sand and fill with the colour R126, G126, B126. Apply the Noise filter set to 400% then blur the layer several times and set it to Overlay. Lower the Opacity to around 9% and hey presto – sand! Add individual flecks of sand that catch the light on another Overlay layer with a custom sand brush.



**08 The sky** Since the walls are also blue, I decide to make the sky darker to push the walls forward. The stars are painted on their own layer with a custom brush. An Overlay layer is added over the stars and a few of them are accentuated with glows using the soft airbrush and a light blue colour.

## Style School **Classical nighttime art** Art genres in a nutshell

Night paintings use the interplay of light and shadow to evoke mystery

Artists have long exploited our fears of the dark to lead our emotions into the mysterious coil of shadow. Bright, warm colours juxtaposed against cool blues leave us with a more hopeful outlook on the night while paintings bathed in shadow with silver light may leave us unresolved and uncertain. Careful interplay of light and shadow weaves both nightmares and dreamscapes. Whatever the case, we are left at the artist's mercy, alone in the dark.

### The masters Go over to the dark side

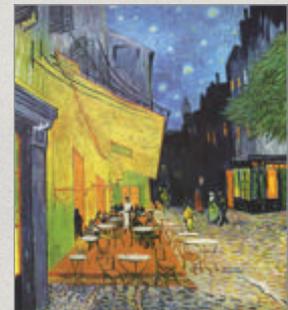


**Artist:** Paul Delaroche  
**Title:** A Christian Martyr Drowned in the Tiber During the Reign of Diocletian  
**Year:** 1855  
**Location/Owner:** Louvre Museum  
● This image uses stark darkness to lead the viewer's eye from the pitch black on the top left to the drowned maiden. The translucent gold light seems to emanate from the floating halo suggesting a bittersweet resolution. You are left uncertain as to the intent of the onlooker.  
[tinyurl.com/da-martyr](http://tinyurl.com/da-martyr)



**Artist:** Antonio de Correggio  
**Title:** The Nativity  
**Year:** 1528-1530  
**Location/Owner:** Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

● A warm glow emanates from the sleeping newborn Christ, bathing both cherubs and shepherds in his effulgent light. The night is filled with promise and light, and the painting effectively conveys hope and adoration through the movement of light.  
[tinyurl.com/da-nativity](http://tinyurl.com/da-nativity)



**Artist:** Vincent van Gogh  
**Title:** Cafe Terrace at Night  
**Year:** 1888  
**Location/Owner:** Kröller-Müller Museum  
● Van Gogh's use of rich, vibrant colours and expressive strokes seems to imply a sense of motion and bustling life in the image. The warm colours of the cafe against the deep azure blues invite the viewer to enter the scene without inhibition.  
[tinyurl.com/da-cafe-terrace](http://tinyurl.com/da-cafe-terrace)

## Artist showcase

More fantastic scenes from Anastasia's art



### Dive

2012, Photoshop

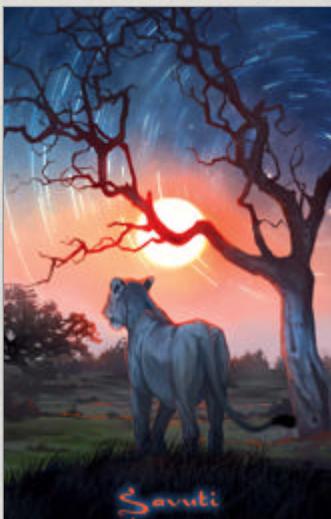
● This piece was created without any foundation sketch and was simply a free exploration of a nebulous idea that thankfully took shape. Created using mainly a pressure-sensitive Hard Round brush.



### Sands of Creation

2012, Photoshop

● This is a piece that breathed its own unequivocal meaning as it came to be; it became a demanding mistress, unrelenting and even cruel. But such is the way with some paintings.



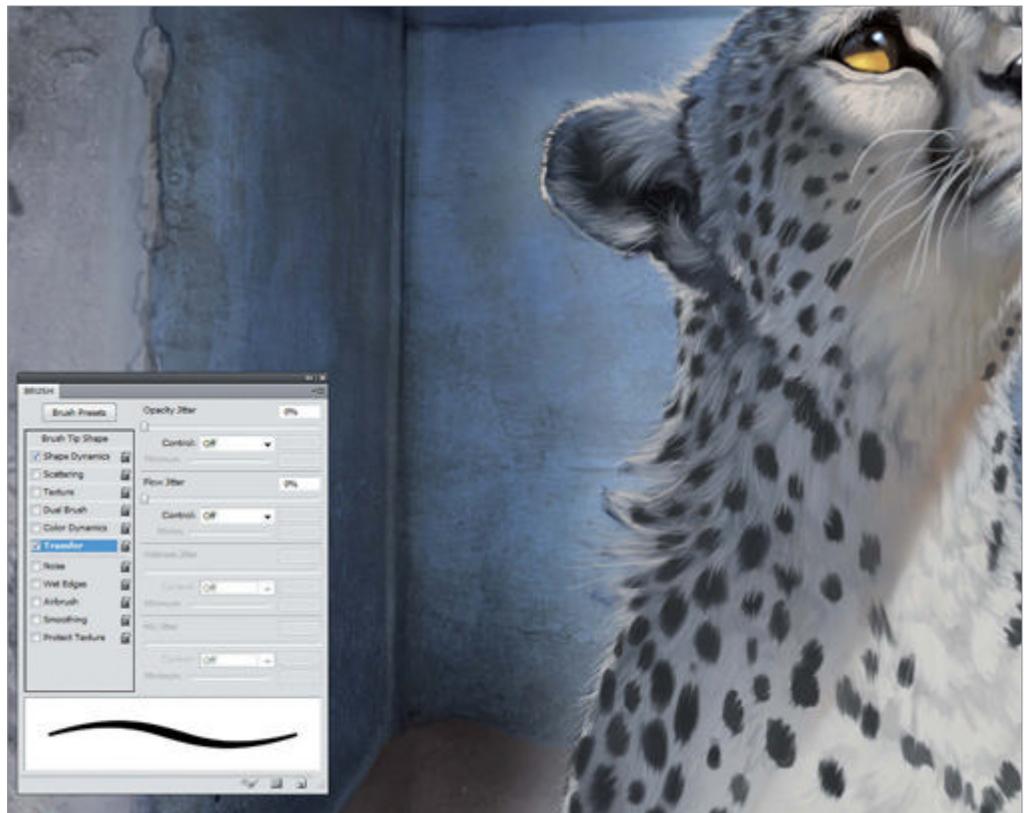
### Savuti

2012, Photoshop

● An exploratory painting for a graphic novel I hope to release in the future. The idea started with the desire to integrate star trails into the composition.

### 09 The cheetah

Establish the form of the cheetah using references to help with anatomy and lighting. As in the previous steps, start with a large soft brush and move to the chalk brush to break up the soft lines of the airbrush. Use the Smudge Blender to softly blend any unwanted hard edges. Outline her form with light to suggest she is the source of it.



**10 Paint fur** Suggest fur clumps with the chalk brush, using the Eyedropper to pick colours. On a new layer, paint the spots, following the contours of the body. To suggest detail, add another layer over the top for individual fur strands and whiskers, but be careful not to overdetail the fur!



# Texture touches and glow

Use standard brushes and blend modes

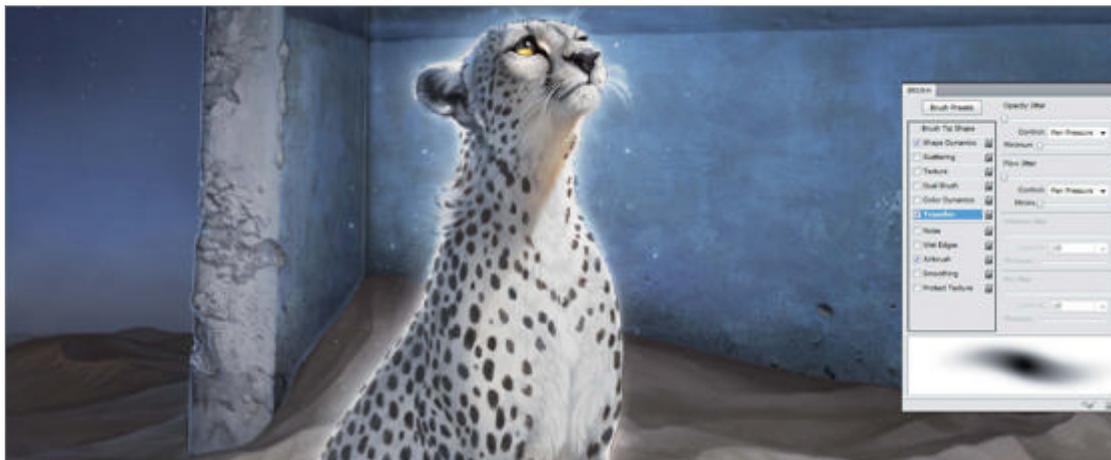
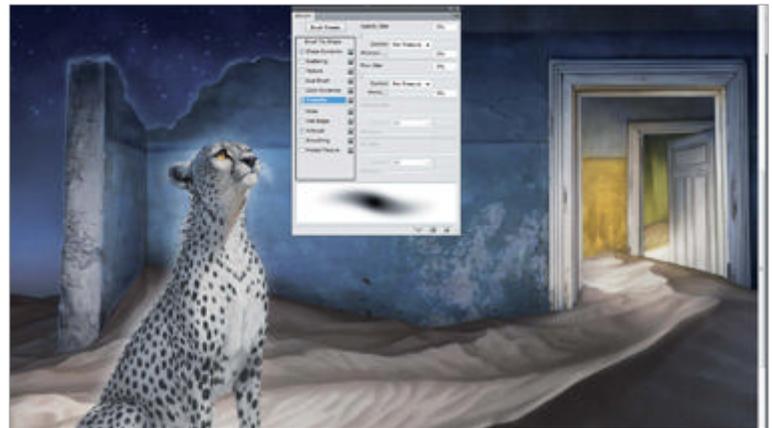


## 11 Texture the wall

Instead of painting in the texture of the wall by hand, I use examples sourced from [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com). Finding several good plaster textures, I desaturate them by 50% and paste above my wall with the layer set to Overlay. Lower the opacity until it blends naturally and use layer masks to remove any overflow. Repeat the process for other areas.

## 12 Now for the magic

This is where the power of Photoshop's blend modes comes into play. To paint the ethereal light I wanted, I use a multitude of Overlay layers. Using a Soft Round brush, I lightly paint in washes of light over anything I want to glow, starting with the sand and eyedropping existing colours from the painting.



**13 Light the cheetah** As I want the cheetah to act as a source of light, she needs to glow. Using an Overlay layer and a light colour, I paint a corona around her body with the soft airbrush. I add several more Overlays to punch up her colour, introducing a touch of gold under her neck to lend warmth to the figure.

## Use the standard brush set

I work primarily with Photoshop's standard brushes, limiting myself to six brushes if I can. While you can make or find many custom brushes designed to paint pretty much anything, limit how many you use in a single painting. Using too many will give a muddy, unclear look to your piece.



**14 Emphasise shadows** In the same way that I used Overlay layers to add glow and introduce extra light, Overlay layers can be used to deepen shadows and add vibrancy to existing colours. To lend more punch to the wall, I add an azure blue wash and push the outer edges into more shadow with a darker blue.



**15 Unify and add details** Continue to refine your main elements and add finishing touches. There are many free stock resources you can find online to help. I use an adjustment layer and tweak the Curves to enhance the contrast of the image.

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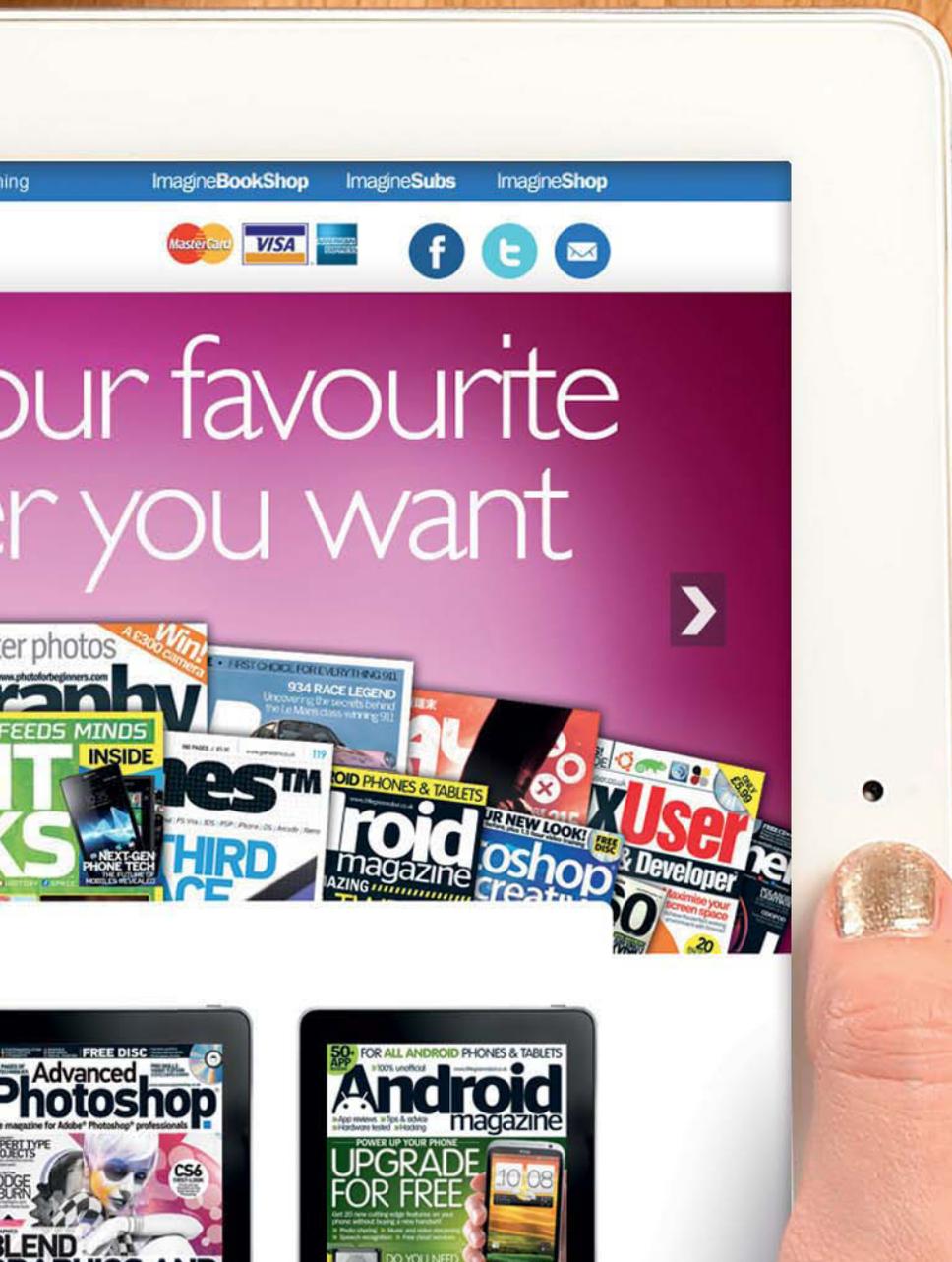
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