

# GRAPHITE

CONCEPT DRAWING | ILLUSTRATION | URBAN SKETCHING



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## EDITOR'S LETTER

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It seems like hardly any time ago that we released the first issue of GRAPHITE, yet here we are with the third! Each new issue always feels like our favorite, and this one is no different; we can't wait for you to dig into it, and hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

These first three issues have helped us become more confident and refined in the process of creating GRAPHITE – branding, designing, editing, publishing – and we feel like they've laid a strong foundation for the magazine going forward, allowing us to focus with clear minds on the content we want to deliver next.

Whether you're an existing subscriber or a new reader picking up GRAPHITE for the first time, we hope this issue delights you with more exciting tutorials and interviews by artists with a wide array of specialisms, interests, and approaches. And, as always, we welcome your feedback. What do you think of GRAPHITE so far?

How did you hear about us? Send us an email – we'd love to hear from you.

Until next time!

Marisa Lewis  
Editor

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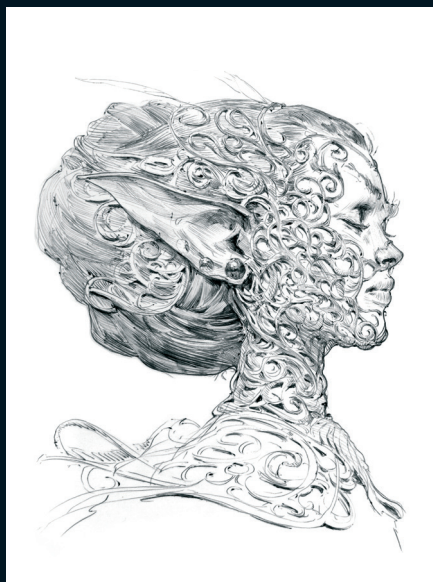
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COVER ARTIST:  
EVEN AMUNDSEN



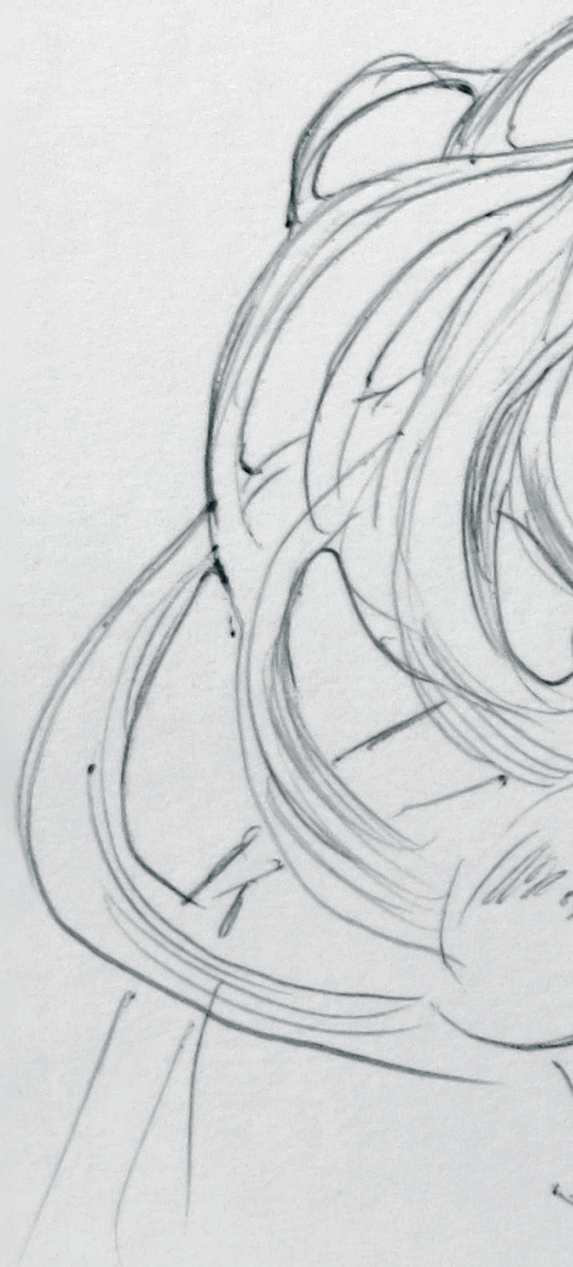
"She grew her vines slowly, tenderly, and with care, her pride evident in every gorgeous curve, every interweaving spiral. It was no easy task, as the covenant was for protection, and the growers were more likely to sprout where they could best defend their host. To change this took more than a little will.

Vain as it was, she allowed herself this indulgence. She had been a War Dancer for so long that she saw it as her right. The protection was still there, and what vulnerabilities she opened up, she was sure she could cover with her skill.

The oldest of the War Dancers were often spotted by how they directed their growers to suit their dance, and she hardly saw the difference in what she did. She was after all the best of her generation."

# GETTING EVEN

An interview with Even Amundsen





Day 180: "Her eyes were  
silver and midnight, and  
they had no give in them."

Concept artist Even Mehl Amundsen creates dynamic character sketches with lifelike nuance and narrative flair. We learn about the development and inspiration behind his images, writing, and worldbuilding.



Q: Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your creative background?

A: I'm a Norwegian artist working in Copenhagen, though I have studied in England. I studied illustration at Falmouth University, which lasted for about a year; Falmouth was structured more around traditional illustration, but what I wanted to do was more concept illustration, which wasn't in the curriculum. So while studying, I did more freelance work, and after about a year I left. I've been working professionally since 2011.

Q: Did you always want to be a concept artist, or was that something you decided later?

A: In Norway we're allowed to start trying things out until around fifteen or sixteen, before choosing a specialization. It's one of the better things about the Scandinavian system – from a very early age you get to try different options. No one knew what concept art was at the time. Thanks to my friend Mads, I snuck into a videogame company and was given a tour of the concept art studio. Then I realized, "This is pretty cool – people get to draw monsters and people in armor!"

Top left  
Day 247 of my ongoing  
daily sketches

Above  
Day 244 of my daily  
sketch project

Right  
Day 178: "Did they honor him  
with a name such as Dwarf  
Killer, like Golborg of old? No."





Q: What were your biggest inspirations?

A: Games Workshops' *Warhammer* franchise was one of the first things I fell in love with. Also an English artist called Paul Bonner – I found his work when I was quite young. I didn't want to *be* him until later on, but his work was always on the periphery of my understanding of the world. He influenced the way I thought about the things I wanted to do in life. So I have to blame it on him! He's wonderful and actually lives in Copenhagen – he has a studio in his basement where he makes his paintings.

When I began art school, I discovered the [conceptart.org](http://conceptart.org) forums – a fantastic place online for people who want to be better at drawing. There were some great artists there, like Bruno Gore (a.k.a. NoXizMaD), those kinds of people.

Q: It's great to follow your daily drawings and short stories on Instagram. How did that project begin?

A: It started from a point of high frustration with where I was professionally. It was a way of not going absolutely insane while living in Irvine, California. After I'd done it for about a month, I had the feeling that I might keep it going for a year, writing stories about it, creating narratives and excuses for expanding on some of the characters.

Above

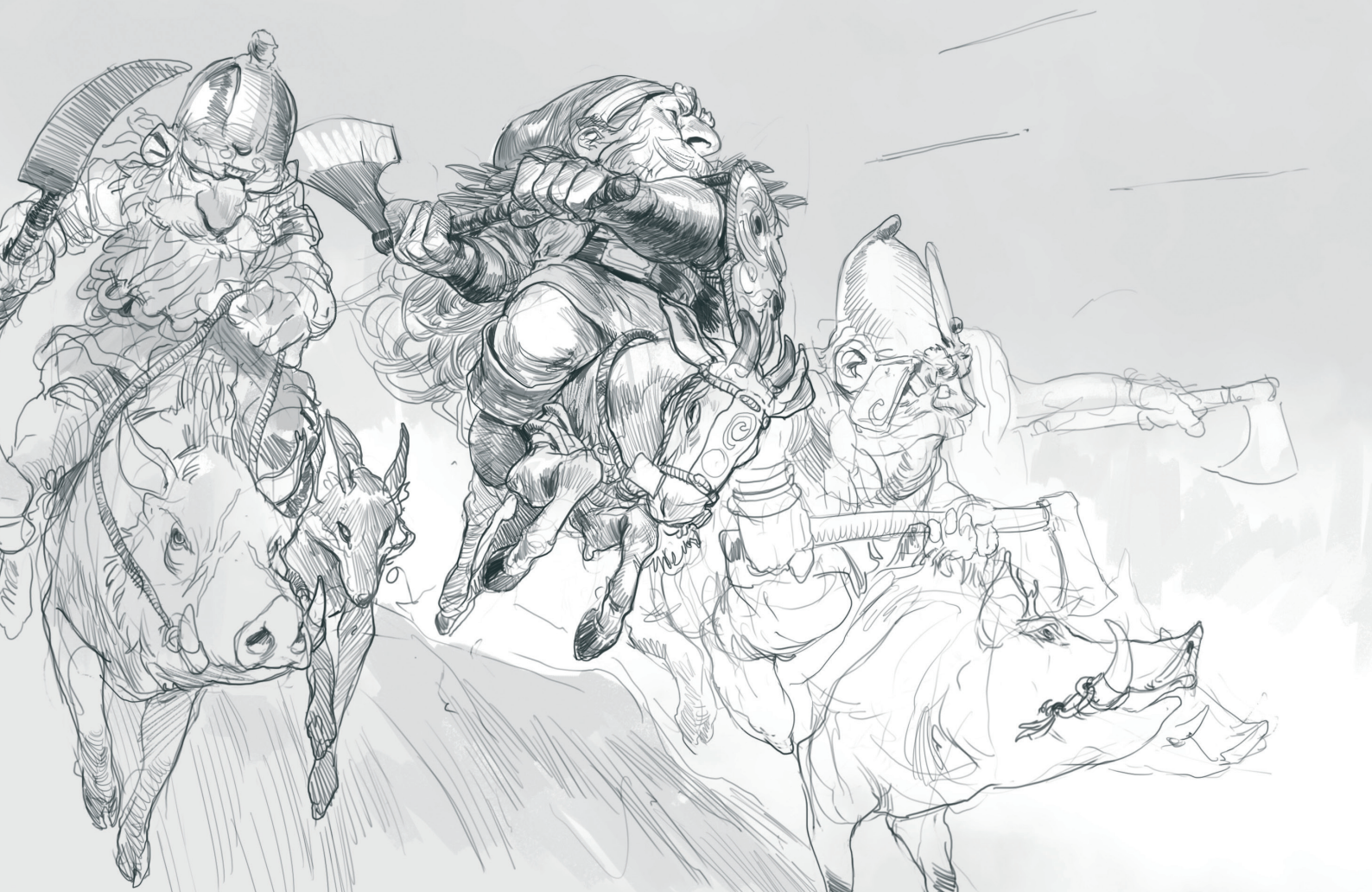
Day 251: "The White Ram, riding with no eyes and no ears. You got old!"

Right

Day 131: "...tendrils reach under the skin to form patterns..."









Q: Do all of your characters share the same world or setting?

A: Most of them share a world – the dwarf Birker, for example, lives in the same world as Ayaan and the Vikings. They just live in different parts of that world. You try out things and feel whether they fit into that setting or not, and look for different manifestations of a subject – what would a dwarf look like in a Middle Eastern-inspired setting, and so on.

Q: Do you try to keep a balance of traditional and digital media?

A: Digital and traditional media serve different purposes. Sketching on paper is a good way to try different options and see what works, though one of the great benefits of working digitally is that it's very easy to fix. Digital is a good way to get results, but traditional sketching is a good way to figure out *what* you want to do. I like to try to balance that out. If you're traveling, it's

easier to carry a sketchbook, but when you're at home it might be easier to sketch digitally.

Top left

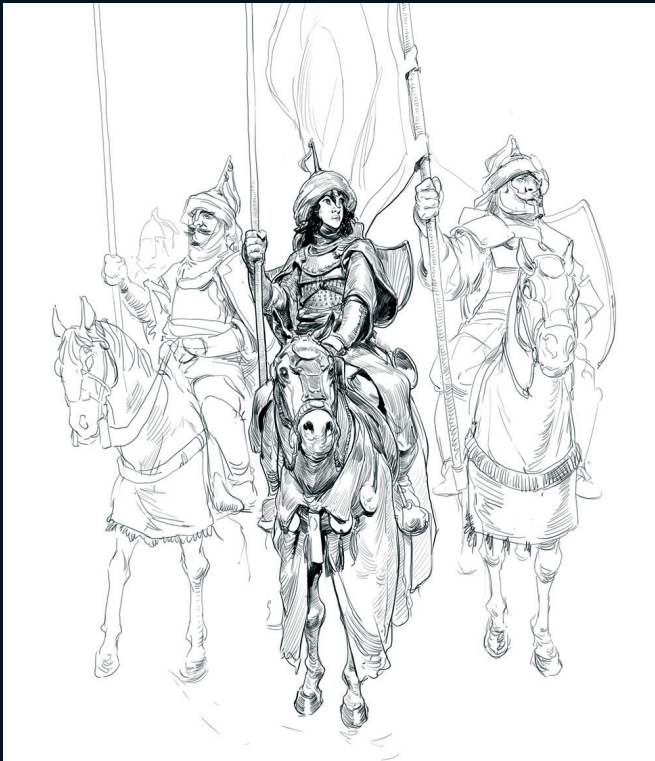
Day 81: "You come to the Court of the King Grekki..."

Bottom left

"Let the axes sing, let the dance begin."

Above

"Mother of Sandworms, that hurts!"



Q: If you could share one valuable piece of advice with an aspiring concept artist, what would it be?

A: To pursue curiosity as a discipline. As long as you stay curious, you won't mind if things don't work out. Concept art is a language of explanation, like illustration, a way of trying to visually explain to someone. There are right ways and wrong ways to do it, and trying to figure out and manipulate what you're trying to say is important. Rendering and lovely visuals are secondary to getting the point across.

Q: What hobbies or pursuits do you have outside of art?

A: I go jogging, which is great for clearing the mind. At some point you have to make choices when it comes to time management – hence I don't do medieval reenactments any more! I do play videogames a bit, and also read – I was never good at reading for pleasure before, but lately I appreciate the way it turns on some critical parts of the brain.

I just finished Terry Pratchett's *Soul Music*, and before that I read his book *The Fifth Elephant*; I've read quite a few of them. I love Pratchett's world and he's sort of what inspired me to start writing – "word sketching" to add more depth to my drawings. Writers like J. R. R. Tolkien and George R. R. Martin also have amazing worldbuilding.

Q: Have you always enjoyed writing or was it something you discovered recently?

A: I enjoyed doing a little writing in school but I never took it up much. However, I've really enjoyed getting into short-form writing recently. (That's another goal for the future – to finish writing something!)

It's been great to get an online following and an audience of people who enjoy my sketches and reading about them, but it's hard to be aware of that and take account of it when you're trying to write something. I try to write without too much thought, but it's really lovely to have other people who also like it.

Q: What future goals do you have for yourself or your career?

A: I'd love to become a good painter. I'm a draftsman, so I come from drawing rather than painting. A lot of my paintings are elaborate drawings instead of paintings. So that's a project for next year! I'm also working on a book of my daily sketches for release in 2017. As for my career, ten years ago I'd probably have said something that amounts to where I am now. I'd like to find ways to get paid to work on my own projects – I think that's the next step.

Top left  
Day 103: "It was time."

Above  
Day 216: "...stepping out from their midst came the one who must be their leader."

Right  
Day 205: "...the waters of her pond closed above them..."



# THE PIKE

Illustrating in watercolors  
with Asya Lisina





We join illustrator Asya Lisina in creating a project based on a Russian fairy tale, using pencil, watercolors, and preparation techniques that help to get the best out of watercolor paper.



## Thumbnails

This illustration will be based on a Russian fairy tale about a pike and freshwater fish. There isn't an English version, but the plot is very simple: when the angry pike starts to attack its fellow fish, they all swim to other rivers and survive. This tale is visually interesting to me because of all the possibilities for showing various fish and their underwater world.

I start with a few small compositional pencil sketches. I do keep in mind some possible colors, but I don't add any yet; if I make my sketches too elaborate at this level, I often become bored of repeating them in a larger

format, so I keep my preparatory stage to a minimum. This keeps me curious about what to expect later on in the process.

Out of the three thumbnails above, I choose the first. Although it might seem less dynamic at a glance, I think that the larger picture will look different. The composition where all the fish are huddled together might be too static, and the option with the pike's head appearing in the corner, despite the dynamism, could look too bulky on a larger scale.

## Drawing tools

I have recently fallen in love with the mechanical pencil, even though teachers did

not recommend it to us at school because the graphite creates a very limited thickness of line, and is not very flexible. It's exactly what I need right now though, because I do not have to constantly sharpen it, and this drawing isn't intended to be a piece of art – it's only an auxiliary guide to help me place all of the image's elements.

At this stage I also need an eraser and a paintbrush to shake off the eraser rubbings – it's a personal idiosyncrasy, but I hate to do it by hand, as it's dirty and always misses some bits! To avoid creating rubbings, you could use a putty eraser, but for this I use a simple plastic eraser.

## “I have recently fallen in love with the mechanical pencil”



### Preparing the paper

After selecting the thumbnail, I pick up a suitable piece of wood and attach sheets of cheap paper to it, so I can draw on my easel. The paper is smaller than I need, so I use two sheets, but the magic of sticky tape saves the situation! It doesn't matter how messy it might look, because this stage is only the draft. This is where I'll make the preliminary drawing in pencil, in order to solve all the compositional problems before progressing to the next stage.

### Sketching the pike

I start the draft by drawing the biggest character around which the minor ones will

be located, marking out its general features.

As you can see, it's the pike! I always try to draw from the *general* to the *particular*, by working my way from large and generalized forms to smaller forms.

I know people who draw all the details in right away, but their work is not created gradually in layers; instead it's woven like a carpet. I can't do this, and in any educational institution they will tell you that using such a method is taking a big risk. What can you do if you find that a key element isn't composed correctly, only to find you can't fix it because the whole picture is already painted and worked through?

Left  
I go with the  
first thumbnail

Above top left  
The drawing tools  
used for this stage

Above top right  
Preparing the paper  
on an easel

Above bottom  
Sketching out the pike first

## Developing the draft

The images to the right show how the sketch has developed. As you can see, the silhouette of the pike has changed a lot; the initial version was more expressive, but here the focus is more on anatomy. Unlike the thumbnail, in this draft I compose the surrounding fish so that some of them appear to swim off the paper. This adds to the sense that they are scattering away from the pike in different directions.

Now the draft is ready. It's still not too detailed, but it's enough for my requirements here. For other projects there might be cases where a more detailed drawing is needed.

## Wetting the paper

Now I am going to prepare the watercolor paper I will use for the final version of the image. Watercolor paper lighter than 300 gsm often benefits from stretching before use, to prevent it from buckling (or “cockling”) later. Paper-stretching techniques may look mysterious, but in general the process is very simple. To start, you have to wet the piece of paper abundantly on both sides; I do this under the shower. The wet paper must be handled very carefully, as it's fragile and will tear or crush easily. The paper I'm using here is nothing special, just an old roll of warm-pigmented paper that's around 300 gsm.

## Wooden board

I place the wet sheet face down, then place a wooden artist's board on top of it. I make sure that the sheet is 10 cm larger than the board on each side, allowing the spare paper to reach around it. I also cut out the corners to fit around the board, which will make it easier to gently pull the paper.

## Stretching the paper

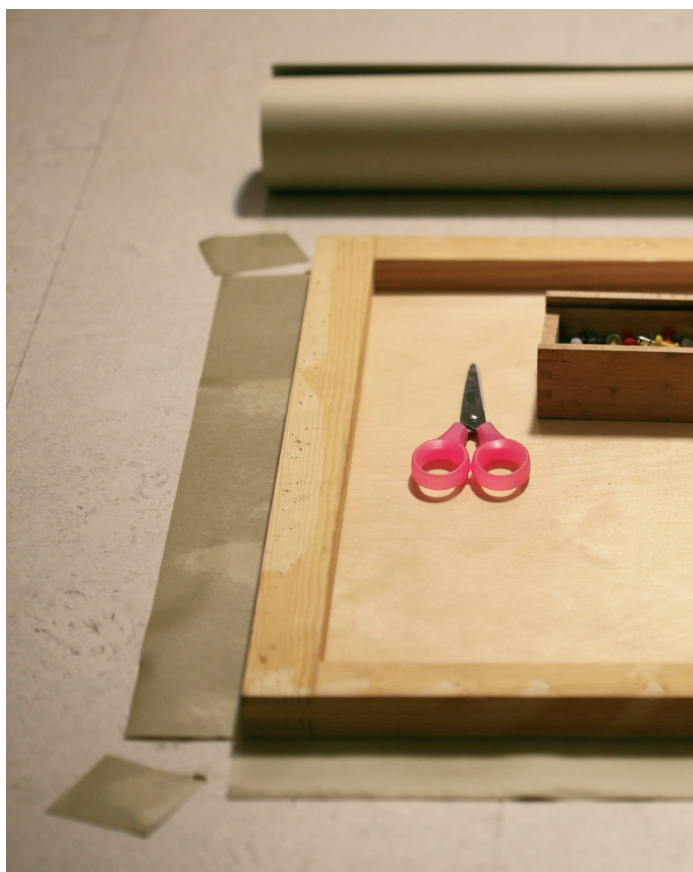
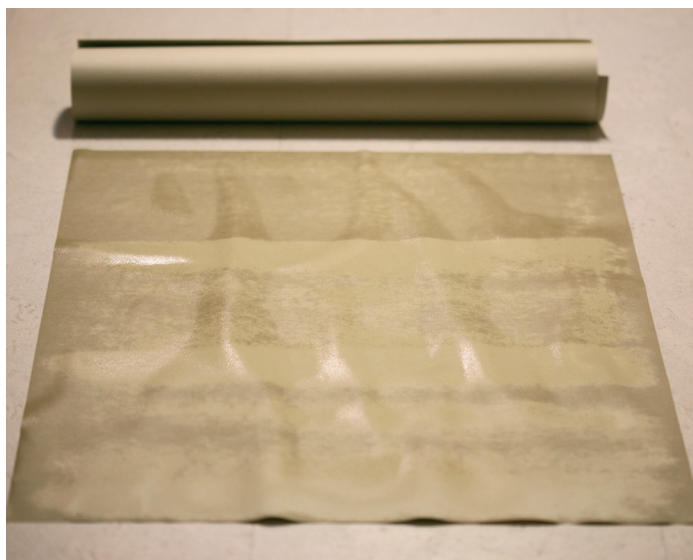
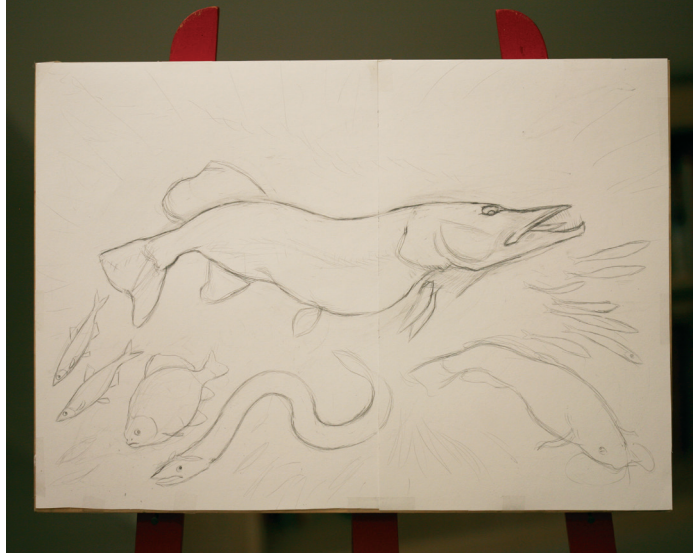
Now to stretch the paper. I do not stretch it hard, but rather just fold it. The better the paper quality, the more dense it is, but the more loose at the same time; if you pull it too hard, it will break when dry. I secure the folded corners with push pins, but you could also use a staple gun for this. I fasten the middle segments first, then move outwards to secure the edges. Then I leave the paper to dry. It is better to let it dry naturally, because using a hair dryer or radiator can make the paper dry too quickly and end up damaging it.

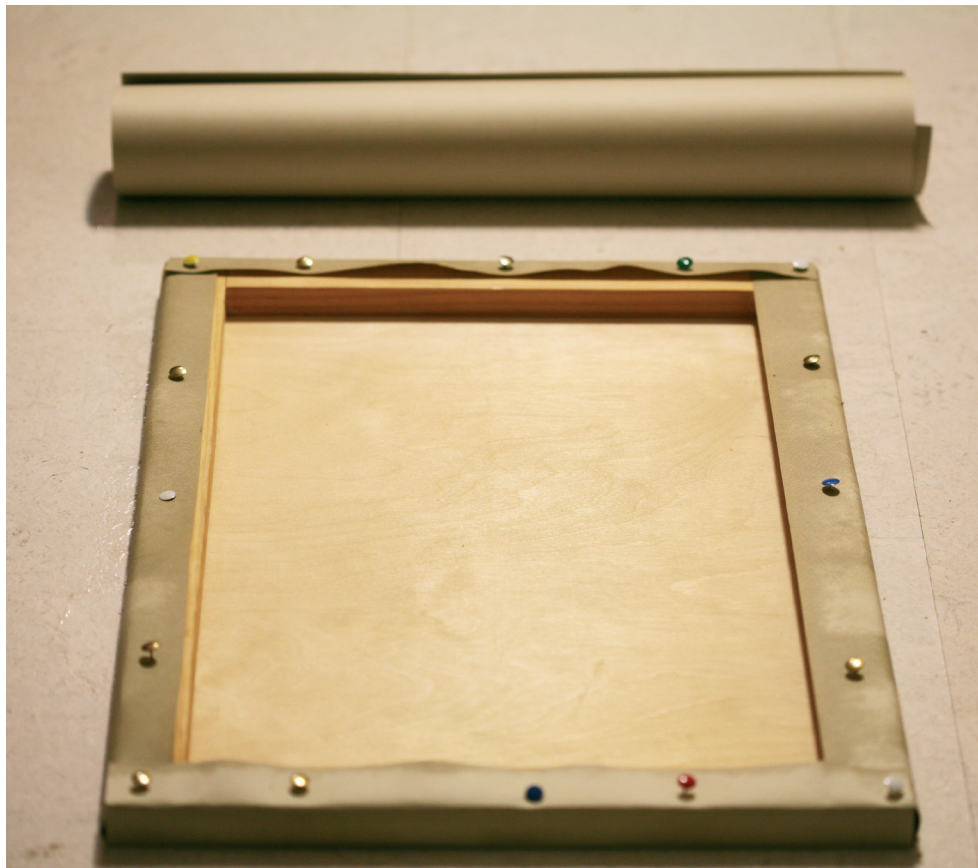
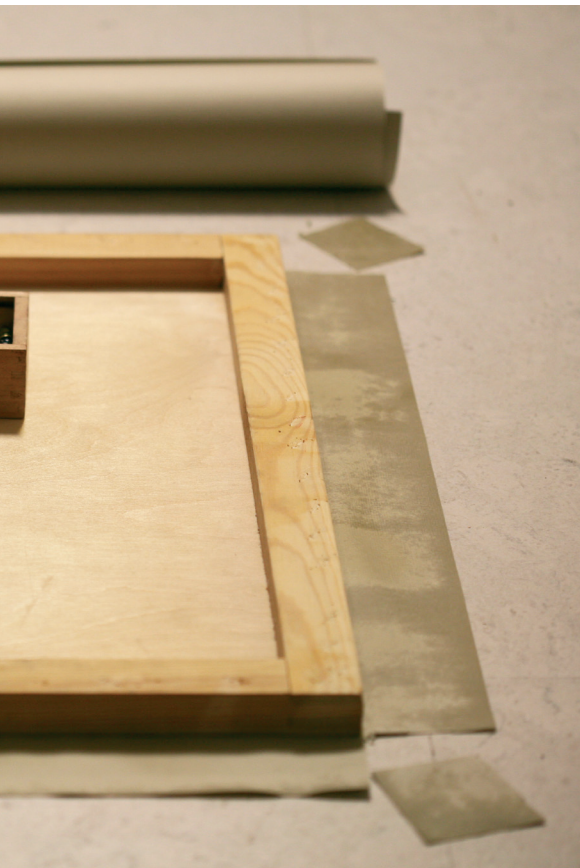
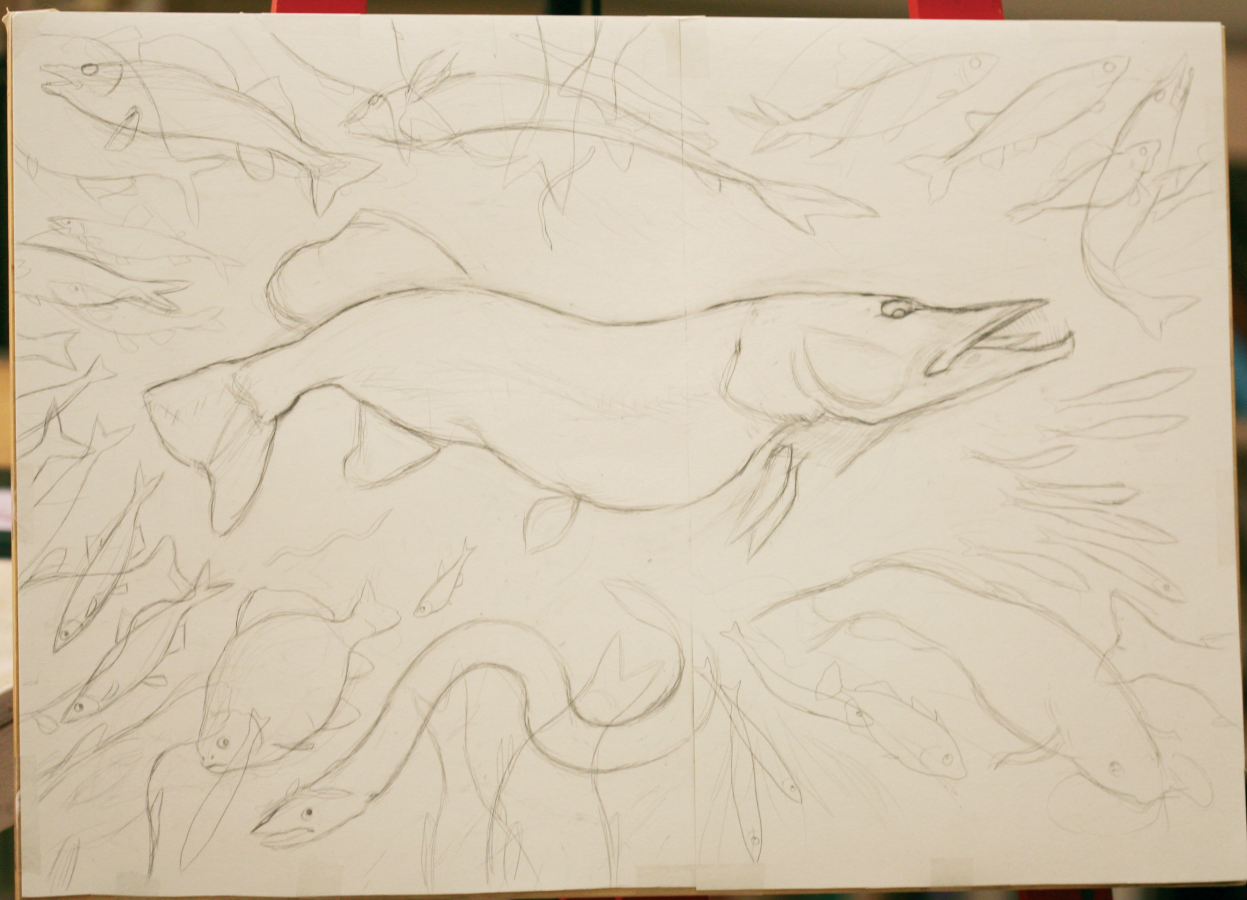
Top near and far right: Developing the draft further

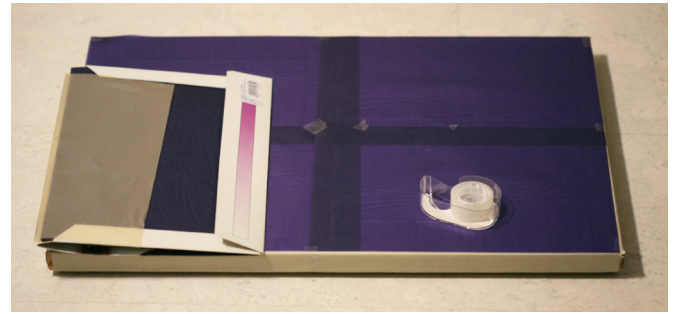
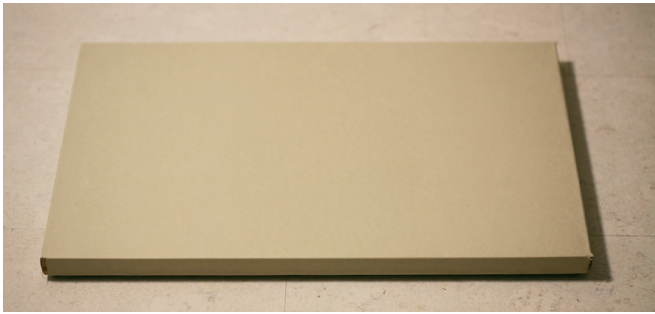
Middle right: The wet sheet of paper

Bottom near right: Placing the wooden board and cutting the excess corners

Bottom far right: Stretching the paper over the board







### A while later...

After a few hours, the paper is dry, and I'm left with a perfectly smooth sheet. Why am I doing all this? The answer, "I live in the countryside and I'm bored" is wrong, in fact! This sheet of stretched paper will now remain perfectly smooth, even if I pour a glass of water on it – and as I'm going to use watercolors, this is ideal for me.

### Carbon copy

To copy the draft sketch to the clean board, I use carbon paper. I attach A4 sheets of carbon paper to the entire surface with the help of small pieces of adhesive tape. Then I lay the sketch over it and draw over the lines again using a ballpoint pen with firm pressure. A ballpoint pen is necessary to distinguish the elements I have already copied from those I haven't copied yet.

### The transferred sketch

Now the transfer is complete. Sometimes I have bad luck and apply too much pressure, and the line comes out rough and hard to erase, but it's even worse when the line is too light to see – then you have to perform all these steps again! The pike is hard to see in the photograph, but it's noticeable in person, so everything turned out right this time (as you can see in the close-up, top right).

### Starting small

Contrary to common sense, I start by working on the minor characters first. This happens when I'm a little afraid to get straight to the main subject because it's such a big responsibility! When filling the shapes with watercolors, I try to use plenty of water to make the shapes look transparent and gentle. On one hand, this emphasizes the weakness,

fragility, and ephemerality of the small fish compared to the pike, while on the other hand, the layers and colors add chaos and panic to their movements.

Above top left  
The paper is now perfectly smooth and dry

Above top right and above  
Transferring the draft using carbon paper

Top right images  
The successfully transferred outlines

Bottom right  
Filling in the small fish with watercolors





**“The color dries almost instantly on the paper, so I try to hurry as much as possible”**



### Painting the pike

Finally I decide to fill in the main character with watercolor. I make the pike red for a high-contrast, aggressive look that stands out from the other fish. To make its silhouette bold and interesting, I add a cold and dark gradient color to its tail.

The color dries almost instantly on the paper, so I try to hurry as much as possible. Some areas of the blue gradient do not look even, but in this work those flaws are favorable for me: the image becomes more alive, the spots and stains making up the texture of the fish.

### Painting more details

I gradually fill the pike with details, as well as some of the smaller fish. I don't focus on the smaller fish too much yet, because the most elaborate object must be the pike. The other fish will be secondary to it, so I need to establish the pike's level of detail first.

I use darker colors to add more volume to the head, but the body is more difficult. Real fish are almost metallic in the intensity of their highlights and grades of contrast, but this painting has a smooth tone without many highlights or very bright places. The

impression of volume and texture must be achieved in other ways, which we will look at in the next step.

Left  
Painting the  
pike's silhouette

Above  
Adding detail to  
the pike





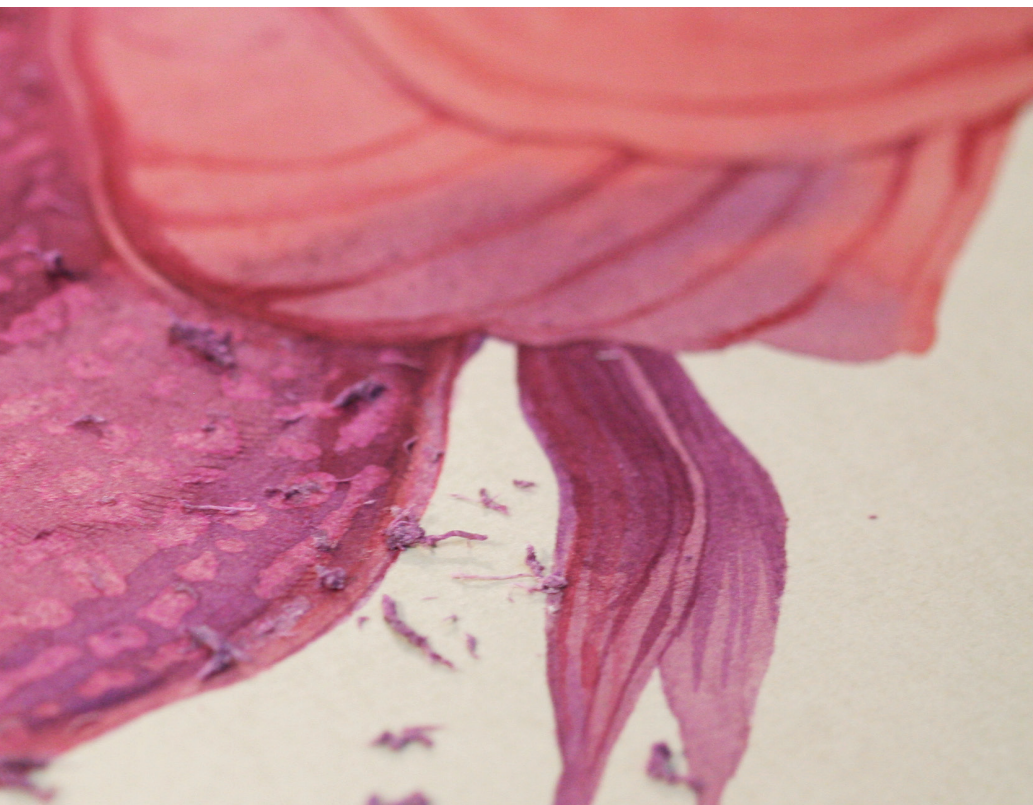
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**“The dried fluid is removed with the help of an eraser, leaving a subtle mottled pattern”**

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### **Masking fluid**

Now I use masking fluid to create a decorative effect on the body of the pike. When the fluid dries, I paint with watercolors directly over it, making the exposed areas of the pike a few shades darker, while leaving lighter areas protected by the fluid. It's possible to achieve this effect without masking fluid, but I wanted to try it on this paper! The dried fluid is removed with the help of an eraser, leaving a subtle mottled pattern, but I would like to make it bolder.



**Top left**  
Applying masking  
fluid to protect areas  
of the painting

**Bottom left**  
Removing the dried  
masking fluid

### The final painting

I decide to make the shaded places of the pike denser, as well as add some tiny reflections to its scales using white paint. Now I work more bravely, mixing the paint more thickly, which results in the desired degree of contrast. I add texture to the fins using a fine brush, trying to emphasize the whole shape rather than break it. The pike's teeth are not painted in a naturalistic way, but so they stick out in all directions like sharp sticks, as I want to make it look more sinister.

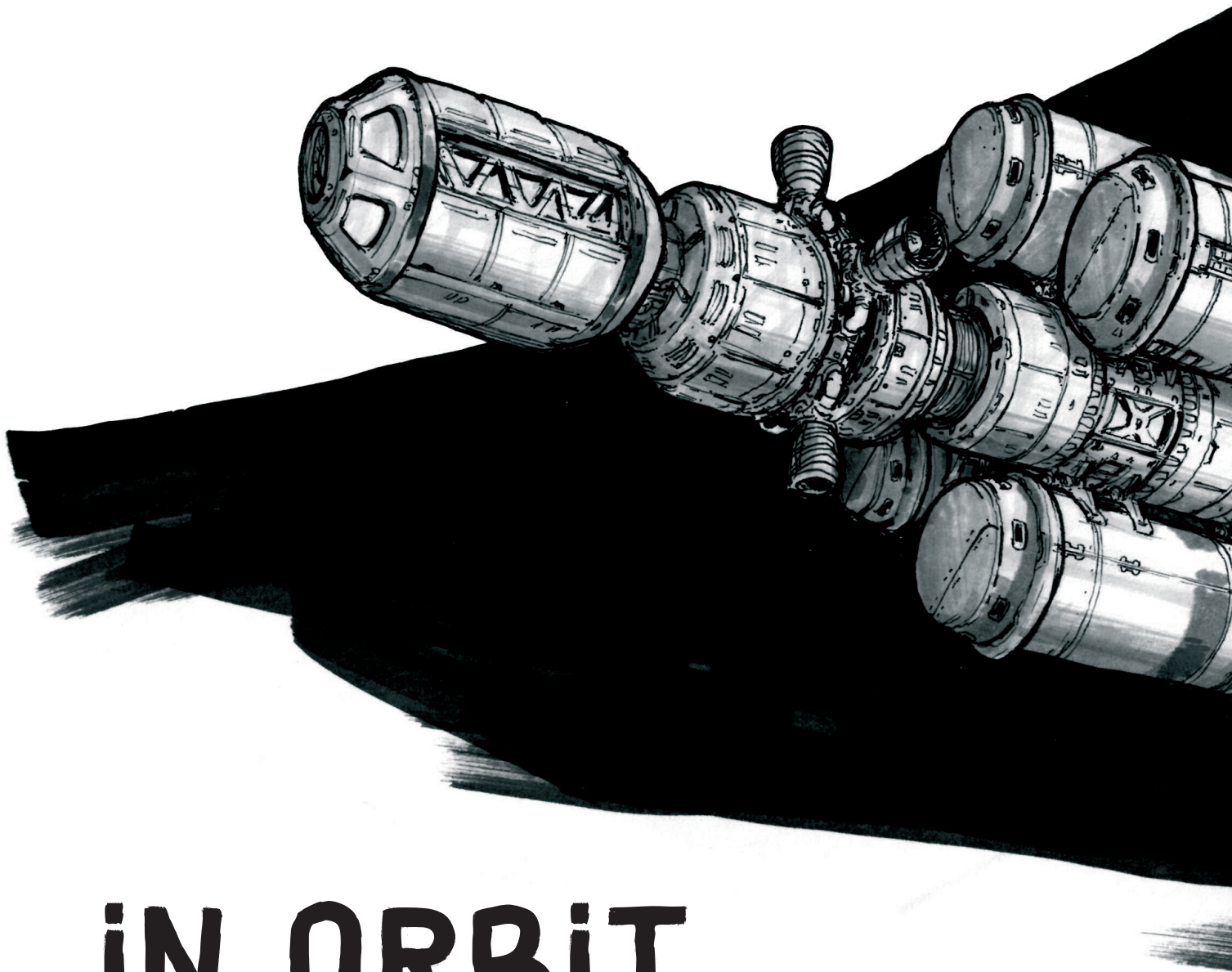
When the pike is finished, I return to the smaller fish to add details to each of their fins, scales, and faces with a fine brush. If you look closely, you will see that all the fish are looking back at the pike, underlining that the pike is the center of the composition. As a spectator looking at a living being, you first pay attention to their eyes and facial expressions; thus the surrounding creatures help to direct the onlooker's gaze, emphasizing the painting's focal point. And with that, the illustration is complete.

Right

The final painting,  
refined with more  
colors and details  
© Asya Lisina

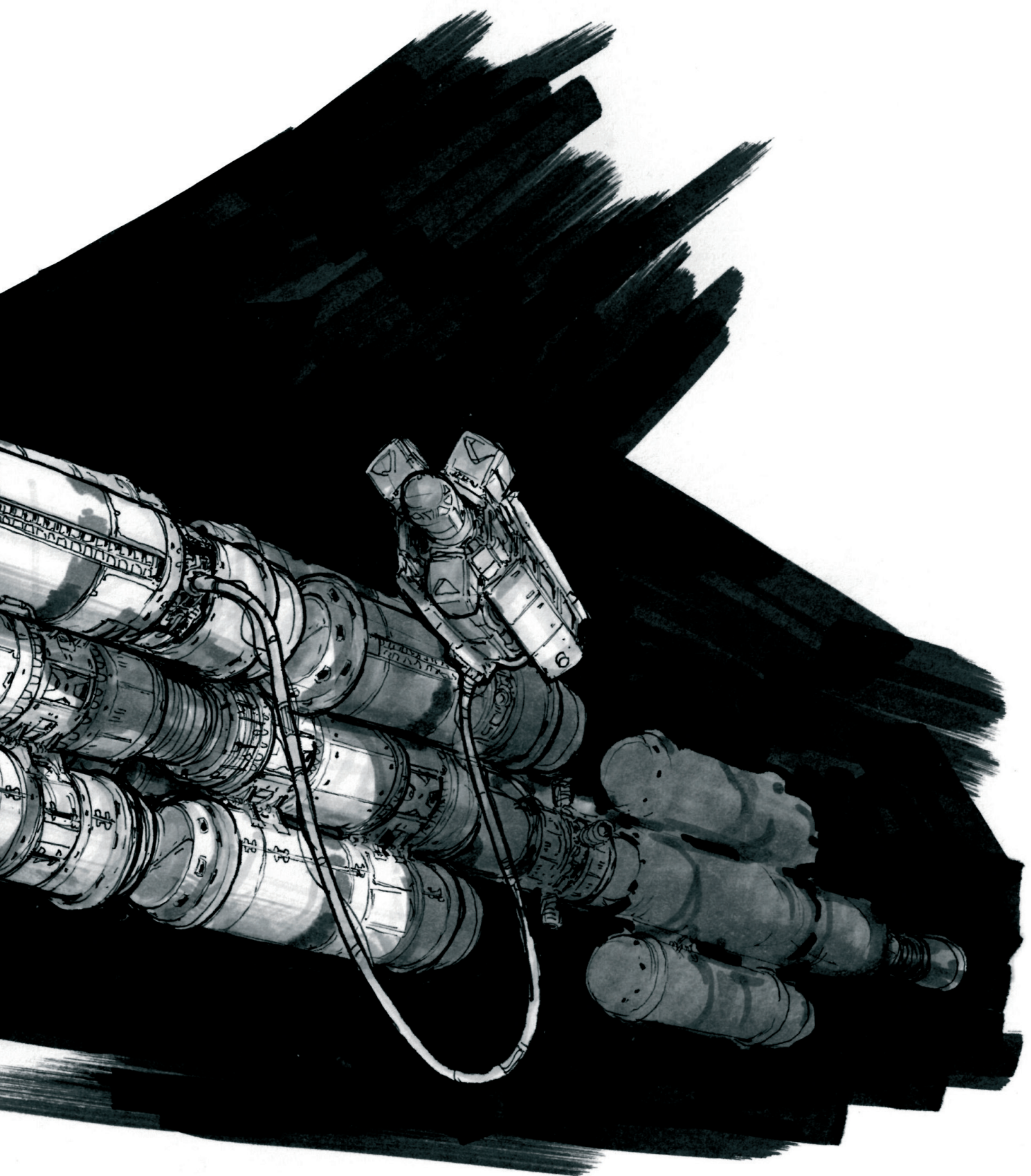




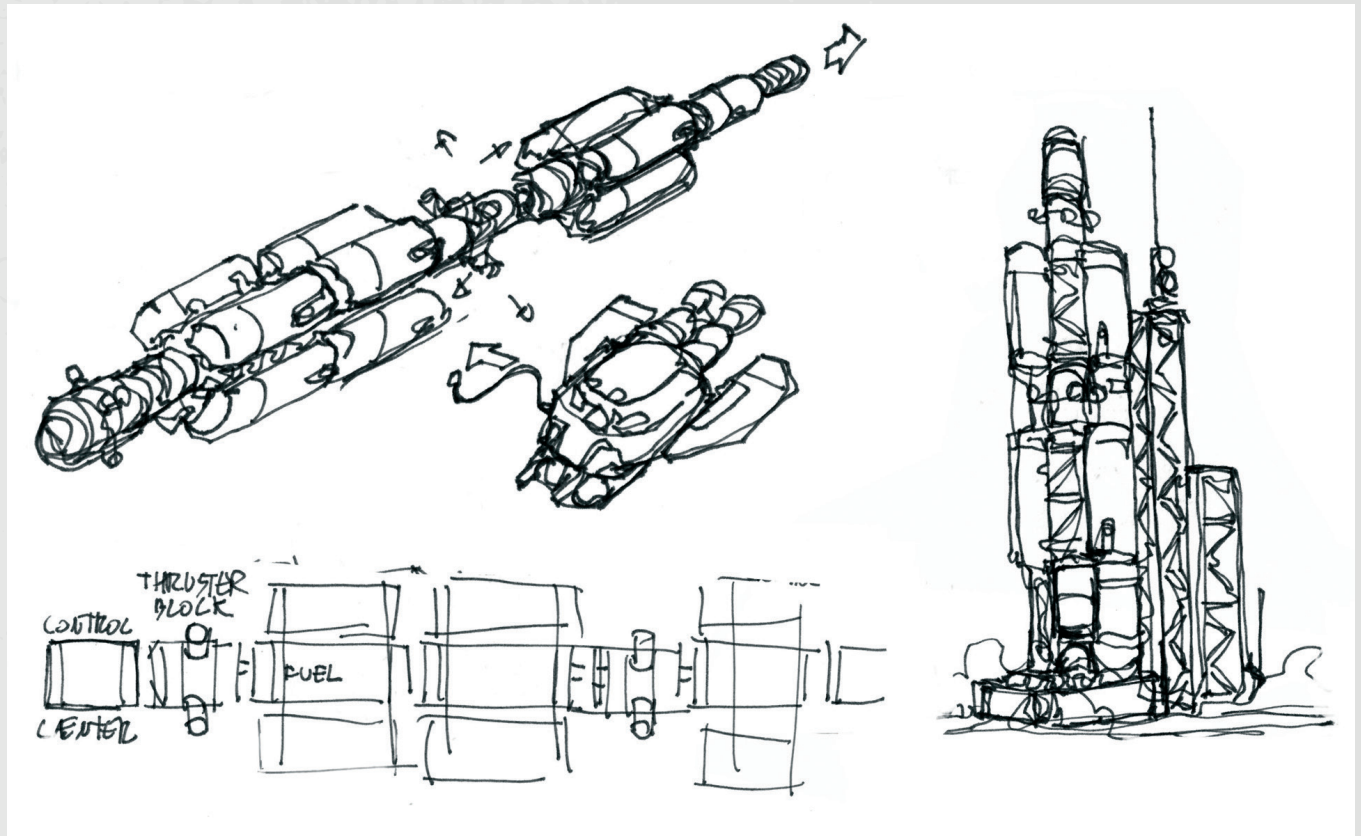


# IN ORBIT

Sketching and concept design with Jonas Minnebo



In this article, concept artist Jonas Minnebo guides us through designing a modular sci-fi craft inspired by real space stations, and realizing the final concept with pen and marker.



### Initial doodles

In this project, I will be designing a believable sci-fi spacecraft and presenting it using marker and pen. I will be focusing on clear presentation of the design and using strong value contrast to visually push the drawing. I'll be using various black drawing pens and some Copic markers in the Neutral Gray color range (N1—N7).

The first thing I do when starting a design is quickly doodle some ideas. I want to have an interesting concept behind the design, so I just focus on what it is and how it functions, not on visual styling. The idea I've chosen for this project is a refueling station for long-distance space travel. It has a series of fuel containers attached on the outside of a simple frame, allowing easy access for passing ships.

### One-line exploration

After settling on this idea, I make a larger – but still very loose – drawing of the ship. In these early stages, I like to do one-line drawings: drawing the whole picture without lifting up the pen. I feel they allow for a lot of exploration and have room for interesting “happy accidents” to occur.

At this point I start defining how things might look, and refining the functional elements of the design. When I feel that I know what I'm going to do, I move on to creating some supplementary drawings.

### Module sketches

I've been heavily exploring modularity in all my previous designs, so I decide to focus on it with a few sketches. I draw a lot of the

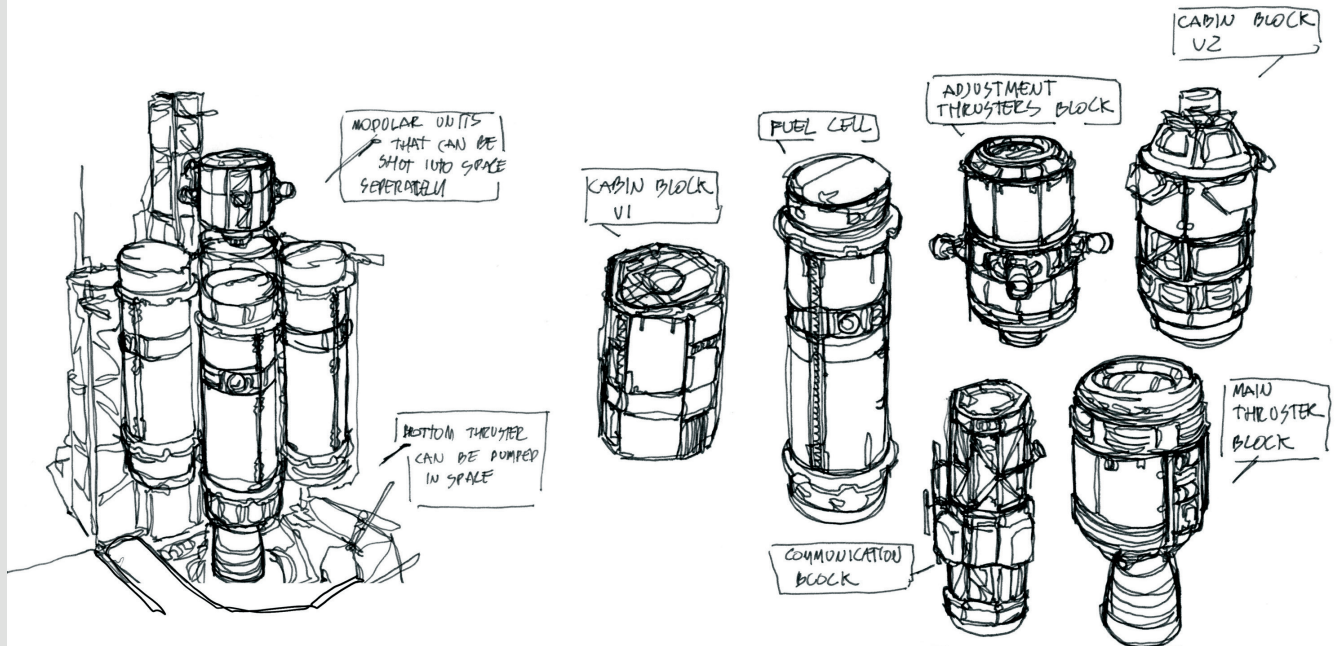
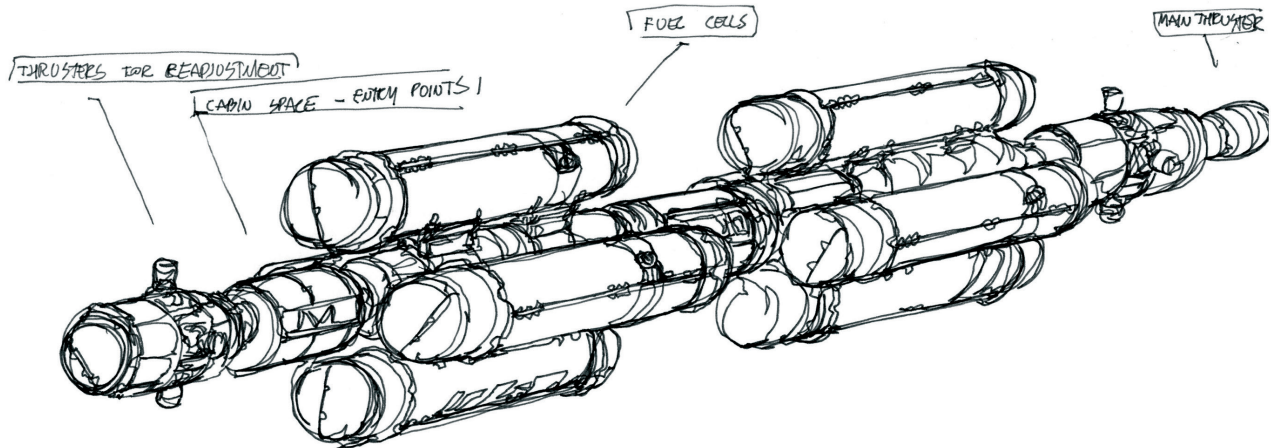
independent modules separately and think about some other variants or options for modules, such as cabin blocks and fuel cells. I also think about the possibility of separate segments being launched to expand the existing station.

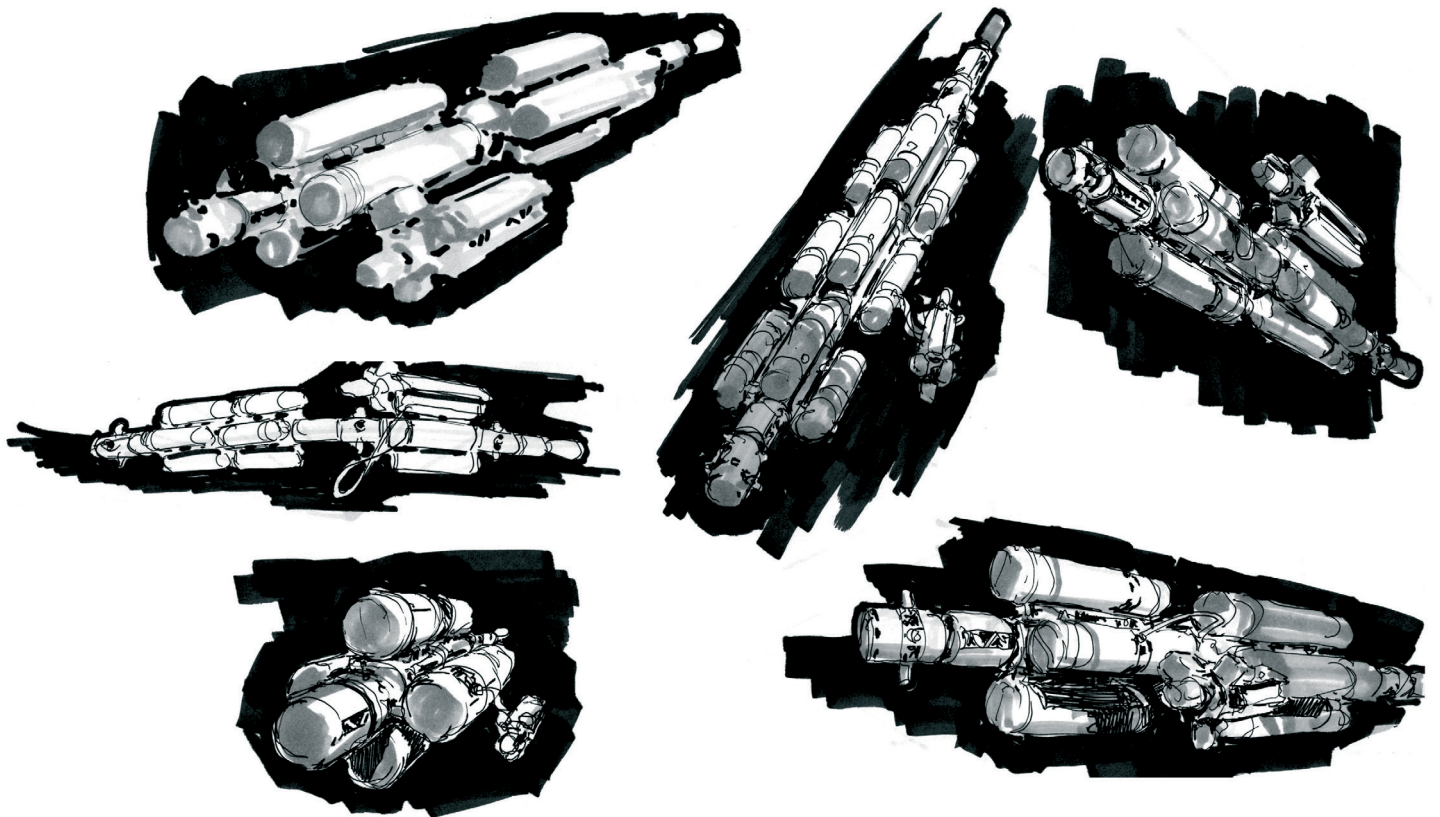
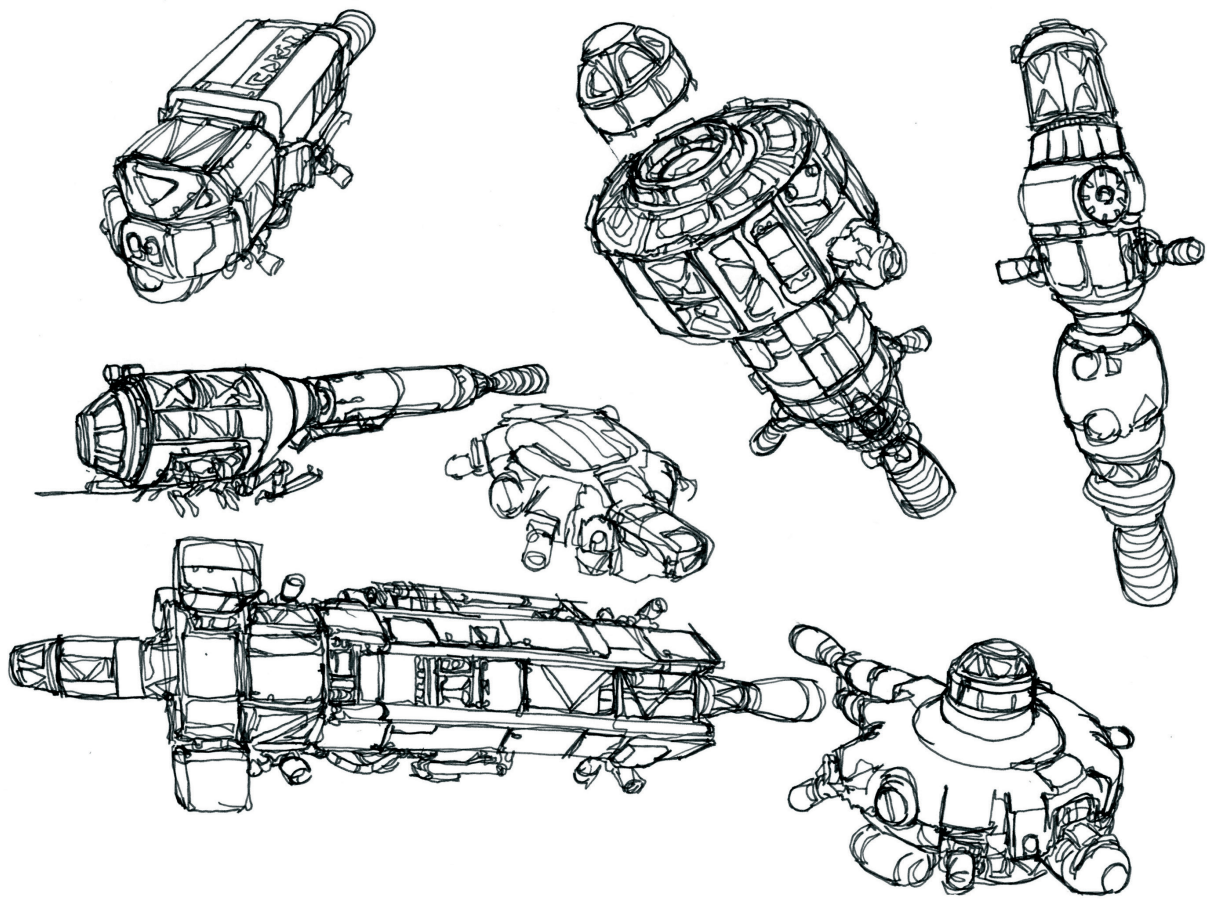
Above  
Doodling some initial ideas

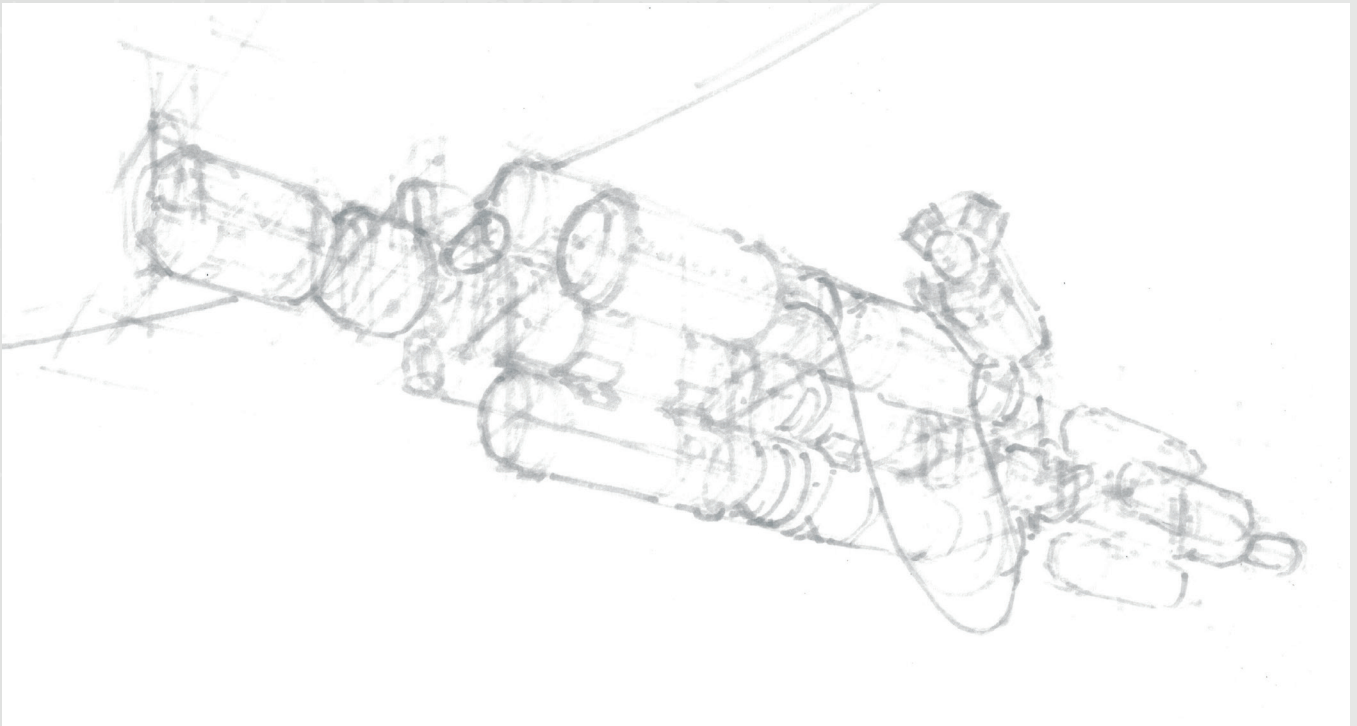
Top right  
Try sketching a concept  
with a single line!

Bottom right  
Exploring the ship's  
modular design

## "Focus on what it is and how it functions, not on visual styling"







### Docking vessel sketches

In my original doodle I drew a ship docking with the station. Since it's a great device to explain the craft's function and add some story to the image, I want to incorporate it into my final concept. For these sketches I use a slightly different approach. I start by drawing from an interesting reference photo of a real space station, but I distort different parts and add my own shapes as I go along. If you use your reference materials this way, you benefit from the details in the reference, while still generating your own ideas as well.

### Composition

With all the necessary elements designed, it's time to find a compelling composition for the final line art. I want to have eye-catching value distribution and strong contrast in my final piece, so I move on from one-line sketches and start using Copic markers over quick line sketches. This way I'll have a better idea of how the final result will look.

The compositions looking up at the station work the best for me, as they don't obscure the station as much as the other compositions.

### Marker base

With all the planning out of the way, the next step is to start the final line art. I use my N1 and N2 Copic markers to establish the shapes and perspective, trying to make it clear what I have to do in the line art stages. Don't rush this stage; it's important to have a good base construction to start with, so you don't have too much to figure out in the detailing phase.

## ARTIST'S TIP

### Reference

Before I start putting down any definitive lines, I make sure I have references at hand. I want to clearly know what I want to draw, and where, and how it will look before I commit to any lines.

For this project, I refer to photographs of satellites, rocket parts, and the International Space Station. Having good references on hand helps with making your concept believable, as well as giving you a lot of information for adding details.

#### Top left

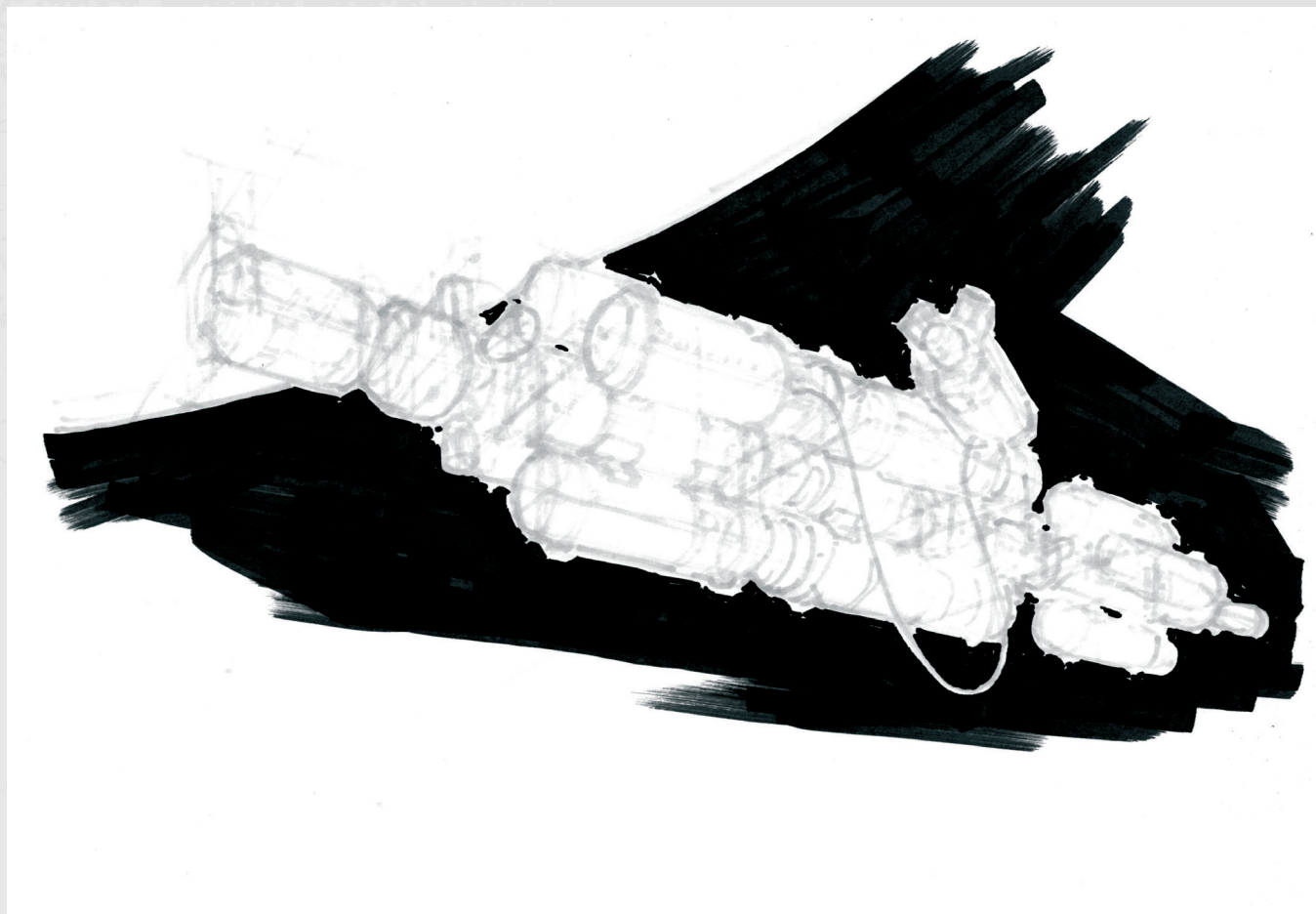
A docking vessel gives context to the design

#### Bottom left

Quick sketches testing values and compositions

#### Above

Sketching a base for the final concept with markers



## Silhouette

I've chosen to draw the graphical black background first with this sketch, making defining the silhouette one of the first things I do. I'm essentially clarifying the regions I'll have to draw the line art in, so it's easier not to get lost. It is a very risky procedure, though; it's easy to accidentally black out important parts of your drawing. If something like that happens, you can always use some white paint to fill it back in.

## Shading

I block in some basic shadow shapes with the N3 Copic marker, further defining the base before I start drawing. I want the drawing to already read clearly without the lines, so it becomes easy to fill in the shapes from here. I'm not adding complicated cast shadows or rendering at this point – I'm just defining the base planes of the form.

## Starting the line art

This is basically how I approach the drawing: with all the blocks of the vehicle already defined in the build-up, I just add panels, tubes, and structures until I've defined the object clearly. I use a 0.05 mm Copic Multiliner, first drawing the elements that stand out the most, then figuring out design choices and clearly rendering them, before copying those shapes onto the other similar elements that are less in focus, since definition on those doesn't have to be as clear.

## First line art pass

I continue using the 0.05 mm pen to draw all the different elements, keeping the lines very loose at the end where the ship falls outside the focus of the image. I know I'm going to push the end of the ship back into shadow later, so I don't want a lot of detail there fighting the detail at the front of the ship.

Above  
Blocking in the  
background silhouette

Near top right  
Starting to shade  
with markers

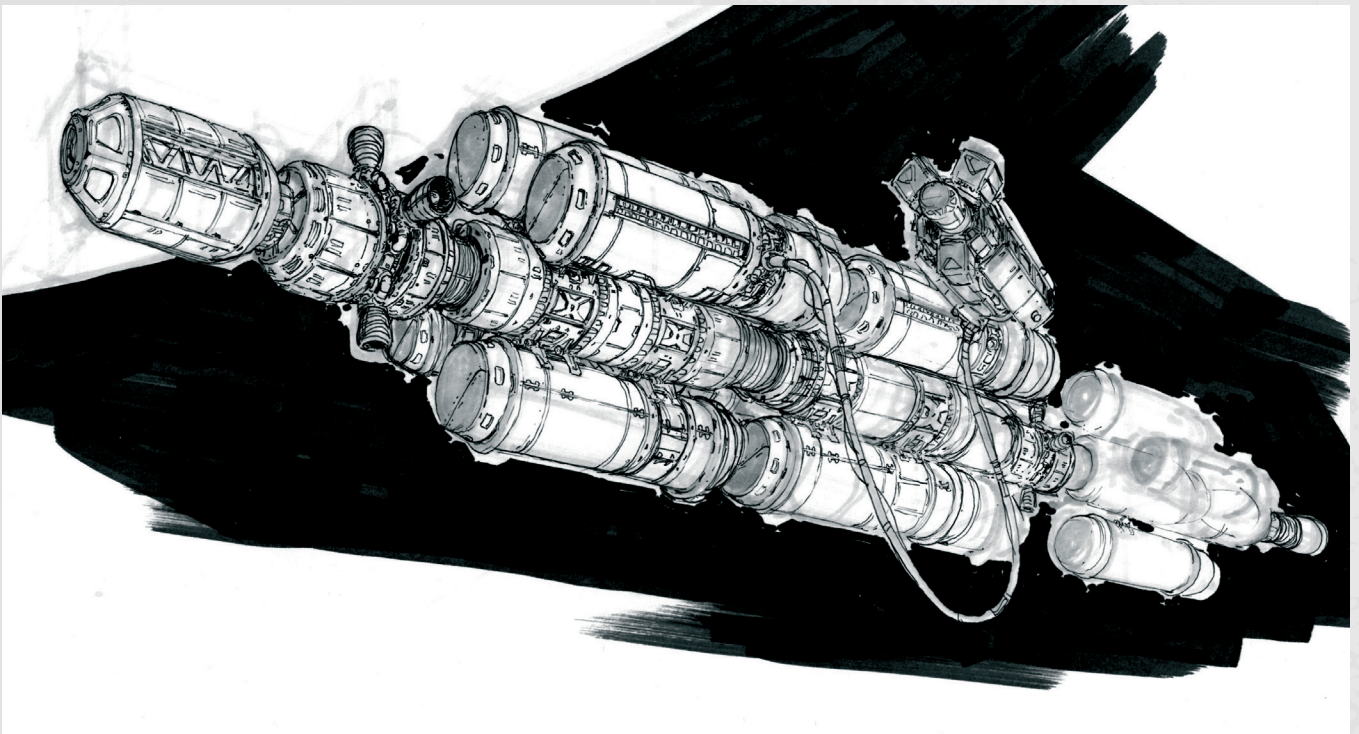
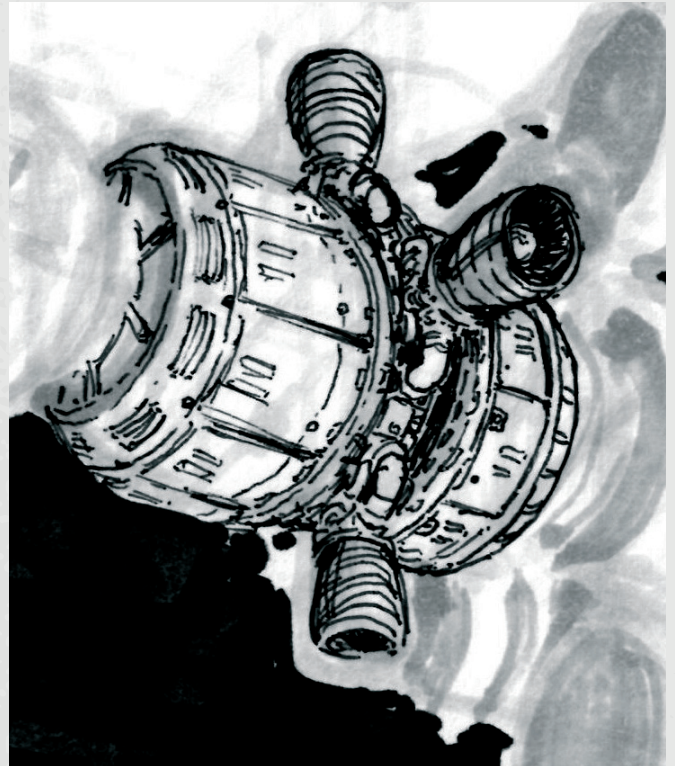
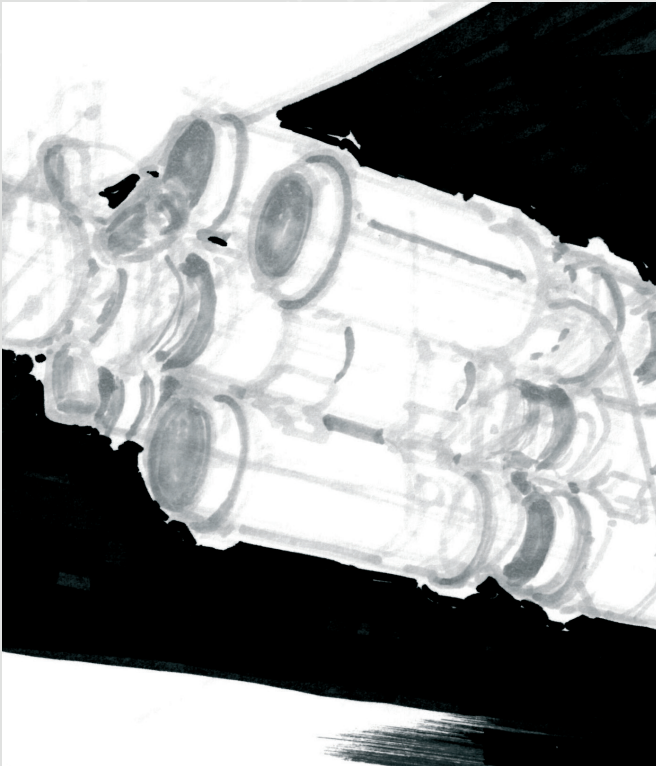
Far top right  
Drawing the line art with  
a black Copic Multiliner

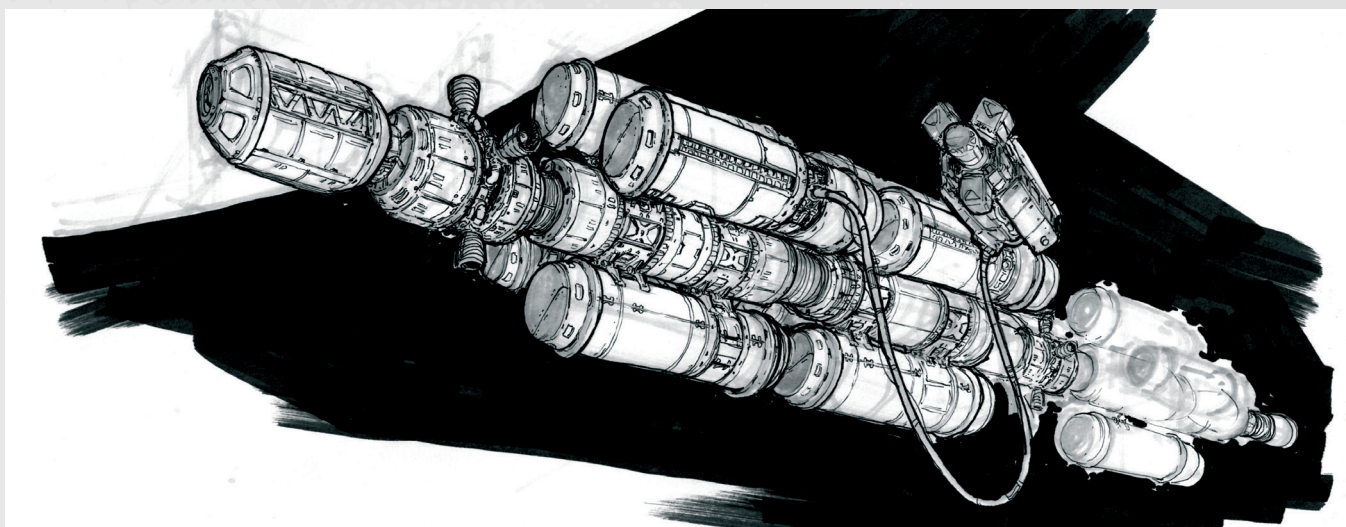
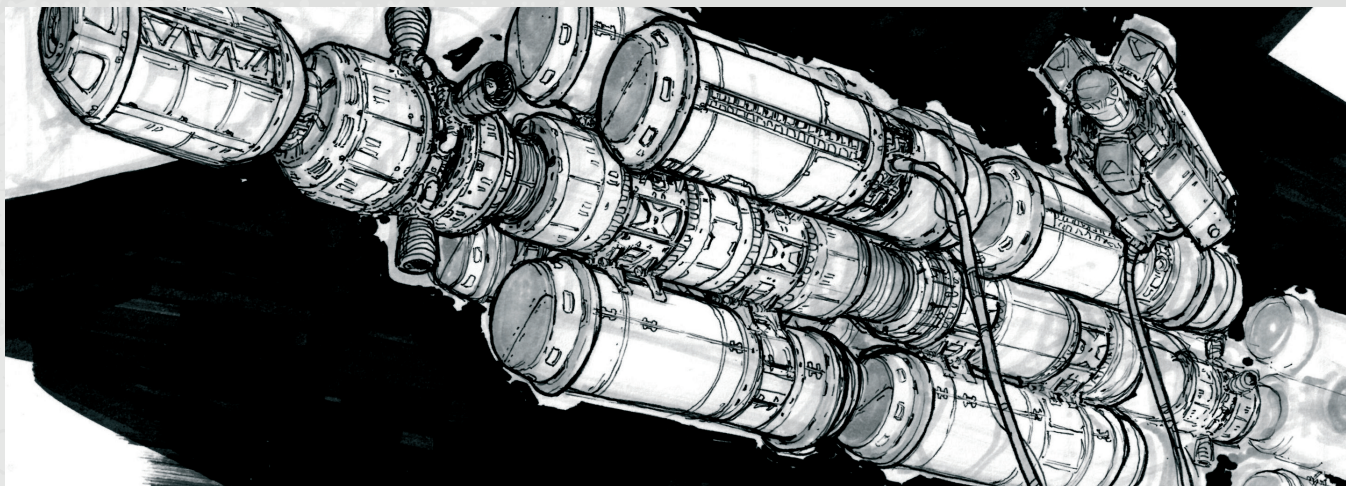
Bottom right  
The completed first  
line art pass

---

**“I just add panels, tubes, and structures until I’ve defined the object clearly”**

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### Second line art pass

I use a thicker pen to separate different objects, making the drawing more “readable.” With a lot of different shapes and details drawn in fine lines, it’s easy to get lost, so an extra pass with a thicker line weight solves this problem. I mainly go over lines that show an overlap between objects, defining them as different forms and clarifying where they are in space.

### Refining the background

With all the changes I’ve made to the overall form, I have to update the silhouette to fit the new forms and clean up the drawing. I’m just about done with all of the line art at this point, and improving the overall read is my new priority.

### Finishing the shading

Using N3, N4, N5, and N7 Copic markers, I add more shading and values to define the forms. I also add a big cast shadow at the back of the station, as if a large object is passing by, to focus the composition and add more interesting value breakup throughout the image. The big cast shadow also works well with the docking ship, which breaks the shadow shape with far lighter value.

### Final concept

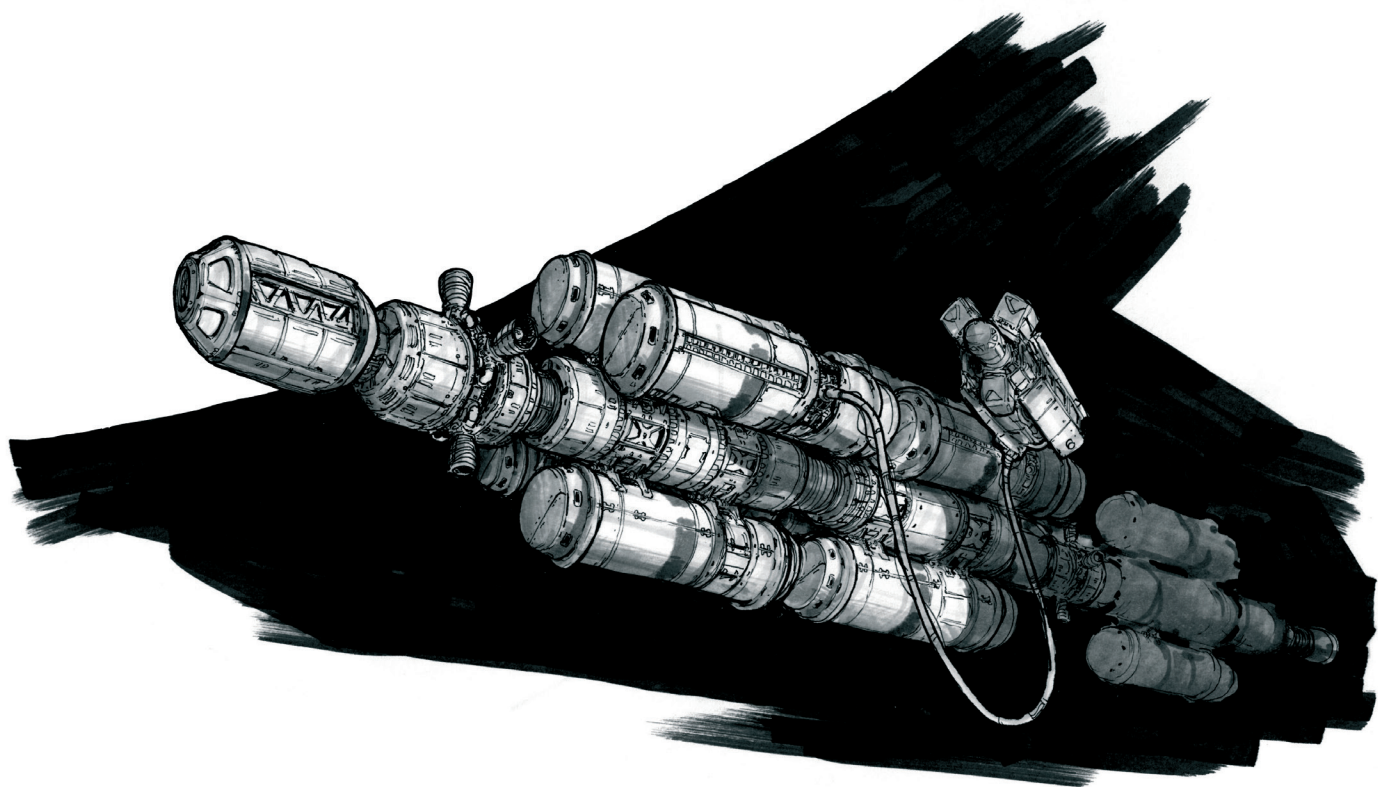
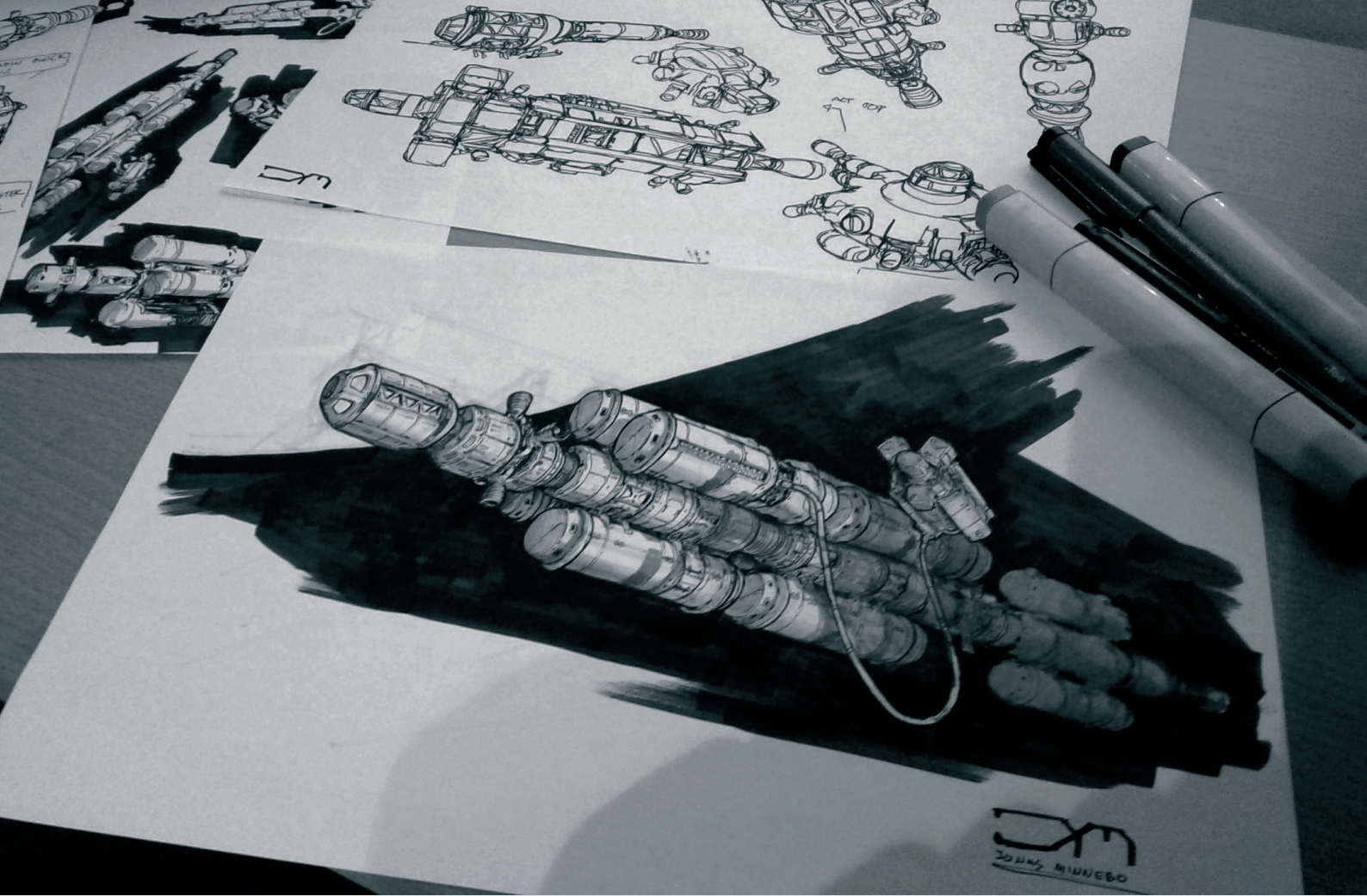
I add some different material definitions, such as the darker stripes and rims; I want everything to feel cohesive and clearly defined, so I go over any regions that I feel can be clearer. After refining everything that needs refining, I can call the image complete.

Above top  
The second line art pass adds some thicker outlines

Above bottom  
Refining and filling in the background gaps

Top right  
Finishing the shading with a wider range of markers

Bottom right  
Final image  
© Jonas Minnebo



# Frankfurt

Sketching and painting on location with Jenny Adam





Join Jenny Adam on an urban sketching visit to Frankfurt am Main, Germany, equipped with pencils, ink, and watercolor.



## ARTIST'S TIP

### Urban sketching gear

I love trying out new things, so you'll find loads of different tools in my bag (shown left). Most important are my watercolor supplies: a small box that I've customized with a 3D-printed insert so it can hold more pans. The pans are a mix of many brands, but mostly Schmincke. I try to paint with limited palettes, such as triad color schemes, but I usually end up adding other pigments as well. I use a few sketchbooks, such as the handmade Portuguese sketchbooks by Laloran (with the bright spines), and my small Hahnemühle. I like all sorts of pens and pencils, but my favorites are Polychromos colored pencils, which I prefer to sharpen with a pocket knife. A mini folding stool is also a must!

I'm Jenny, an industrial designer and illustrator, but most of all I'm a sketcher. I've always drawn, but since discovering Urban Sketchers in 2009 my sketchbooks have become my everyday companion. I'm based in Frankfurt am Main, one of the largest cities in Germany; not having lived here for long, I've been discovering the city through my sketches. Sometimes I'm still like a tourist, drawn to the obvious, like the skyline because it's an unusual sight in Germany. But I'm also interested in the everyday and mundane, like the city's tradition of "Wasserhäuschen" that can be found everywhere.

Sketching allows me to get acquainted with my surroundings in a unique way, letting

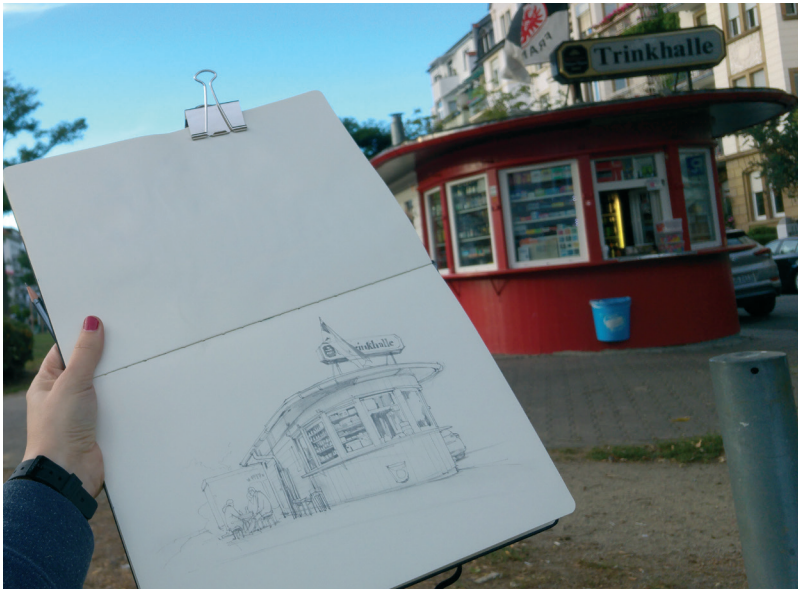
me see beyond the surface. As a sketcher, I've started seeing the world with different eyes, and I am constantly scouting for interesting sketching locations. The process of drawing from observation is really mind-opening to me; as I sketch, my understanding of the subject deepens. I start to understand why buildings were built in a particular way, or that shadows are never just black.

So drawing is not just about putting down nicely drawn pictures; it's about the process itself, which is rewarding enough. And even if I've made a bad sketch – which happens a lot – I find it very comforting to just let it go, flip the sketchbook page, and continue on a fresh new spread.

### Wasserhäuschen, Holbeinstraße

Wasserhäuschen ("water houses") are one of Frankfurt's lesser-known and more obscure attractions. Basically, it would be a refreshment kiosk these days to quench your thirst. The tradition of the Wasserhäuschen in Frankfurt dates back to the nineteenth century, when the city's water was of a very poor quality. It could only be drunk after boiling, so the workers preferred to quench their thirst with beer and liquor.

Wasserhäuschen were supposed to counteract alcohol consumption by offering cheap, alcohol-free refreshments, selling mineral water in glasses. Nowadays it's mostly back to beer, though!



---

**“Sketching allows me to get acquainted with my surroundings in a unique way”**

---

Many Wasserhäuschen are simply tiny stores built between houses, but I like the ones that are detached, simple constructions, on traffic islands or by the park, with a couple of beer benches to the side and regular customers dropping by. Often, their architecture is quite peculiar, with odd DIY details and interesting shapes and materials.

The Wasserhäuschen to the left sits on the median strip of Holbeinstraße, in the affluent area of Sachsenhausen. Its sign is slightly hidden by the flag for Eintracht Frankfurt (the local soccer team).

I used a medium pencil and drew in an A4 Moleskine sketchbook, making quite a detailed drawing. I considered leaving it like this, but the afternoon sun came out and cast an interesting shadow on the front of the building, so I finished the drawing by painting the kiosk red, detailing the building more than the people on the benches and the other elements in the picture.



**Top left**

Pencil drawing in front of the Trinkhalle (“drinking hall”, another name for “kiosk”)

**Middle left**

The finished pencil sketch, which I considered leaving as it was

**Bottom left**

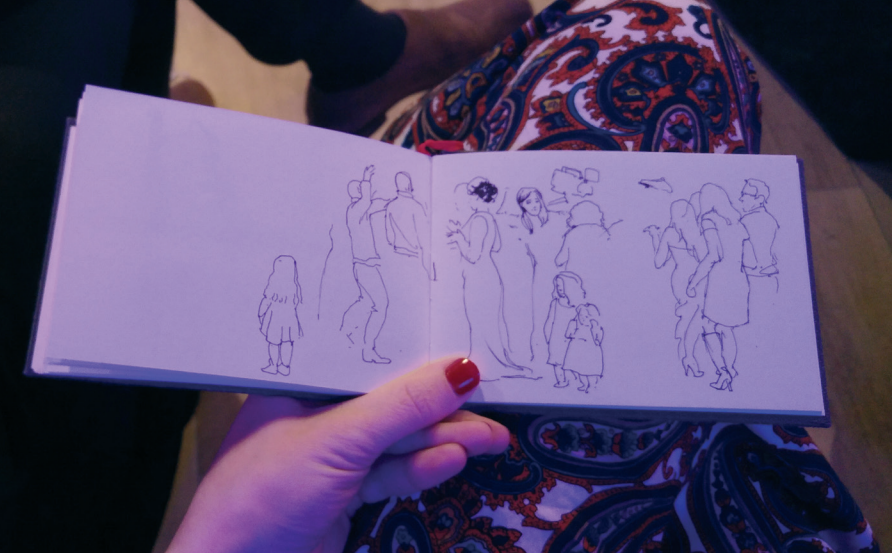
The pencil sketch, now with watercolor applied





The finished picture.  
Image © Jenny Adam







## Turkish wedding, Mainz Bodenheim

A friend, Yasar, got married. The wedding took place in a suburb of Mainz, where the wedding venue was wedged between two supermarkets. Unexpectedly big inside, it was a hall that comfortably fit three hundred and fifty guests. Mixing up German and Alevis Turkish traditions, the wedding was a take on the traditional henna night, where the bride says goodbye to her friends and family. There were some presents and ceremonies I didn't quite understand, and then the dancing started and never stopped!

I wanted to capture that feeling of the crowd, the people in their colorful, festive clothing, and the positive, excited atmosphere. Drawing people in motion is hard – of course, no one stands still for a long enough time to capture their pose. So I began, in this case, with the woman in the pink dress, working from foreground to background when possible. When someone I was drawing moved, I just left that part for later; maybe the person would return and I could continue. The other option was to look for someone similar in build, pose, or dress, completing the drawing from mixing two or more people.

A fine black pen, watercolors, and a waterbrush filled with diluted ochre ink were my tools for this sketch, completed in about an hour, with some breaks so I could get a bit of dancing in myself.

### Top left

I started drawing from the middle of my sketchbook spread, letting the drawing “grow” to both sides

### Bottom left

The finished sketch, with a yellow wash adding warm tone and depth to tie the picture together  
© Jenny Adam

## Skyline, Frankfurt

This painting was done while I was perched on the balustrade of the Ignatz-Bubis-Brücke, one of the bridges going over the Main River. (It sounds more dangerous than it was!) You can ride a tram over that bridge, and the view from there is always something special and unexpected. It got too dark to finish that evening, so I had to continue the next day.

For this sketch I prepared the page with a color wash consisting of a yellow ink splatter. I like to do this sometimes because it forces me to improvise and experiment on location, and it also gives me a starting point. I have to look at the things I want to draw and fit them together with the existing, abstract shape, often resulting in a loose, dynamic drawing.

In this case, one of the round shapes on the left looked exactly like the island by the old bridge, so I started by drawing the bridge with a Polychromos pencil, adding touches here and there until I had the outline of the skyscrapers as well. Knowing that the watercolor added later had to be harmonious with the yellow underneath, I chose complementary blues and purples that wouldn't look too green. In my first wash the skyline got too dark, so I lifted some of the pigment with a wet brush and tissue.

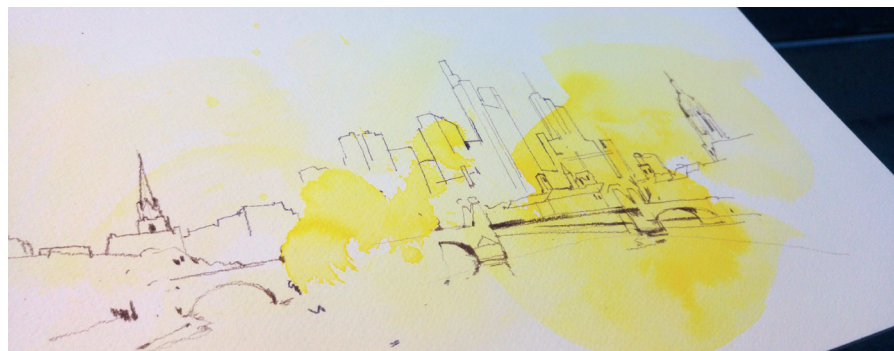
To bring the foreground forward, I used warm mixes of raw umber and carmine red to define the bridge and add some reflections. The finished picture is quite dramatic, and maybe a bit kitschy, but I like the overall color mood and contrast that was achieved through the yellow underpainting.

### Near right

My yellow ink underpainting and simple line drawing, to which I added watercolor

### Bottom far right

The finished painting  
© Jenny Adam





# RISOKTH THE WANDERER

Sketching and designing a character with Jose Gómez



In this article, character designer and visual development artist Jose Gómez guides us through his process for creating an unusual fantasy character.



## Character profile

### Name

Risokth

### Age

17

### Info

A traveler and explorer.  
Homeless. He loves to discover new lands and meet new people.

### Enemies

Anyone might be an enemy, so he must carry a weapon in case of trouble.

## Starting a new adventure

In this article, I'm going to draw a fantasy animal character. The theme is a wanderer or adventurer, so this will provide some basis to help focus the project and keep me from working too randomly. I will use a 0.7 mm 2B mechanical pencil, a 6B pencil, and an 8B pencil, but you can use the tools that you prefer. I will create a lot of sketches to develop the character; I'm going to show you my own personal drawing process, but it is a process that may help you in your future character design projects as well.

A character must have a story behind it. Maybe they're a warrior from a world far away. Maybe he's an undead king who wants to recover his throne. You may have a lot of ideas, but you need to do the necessary preparations before starting to draw anything. If you write a short story for each character that you make, it makes your designs better, as your drawing will have focus from the very beginning.

## A head start

I find that it's easier to start a drawing by creating some heads, then choosing one of them before continuing to the next step. This way I have more ideas to explore, and avoid making only one design.

I like to draw random lines, then see how I can make new ideas based on those lines. It's simple – just let your hand work its magic!

## Creating a body

Now that I've chosen some heads from my first exploration, I'm going to create a series of different shapes for the character's body. Feel free to draw as many new ideas as you want – you need to be happy with this stage.

It's important to start thinking of the final vision of your character and how you want to draw it. I like three of my head ideas, so I draw some different body shapes for each. To the right, you can see my ideas for various body shapes, paired with two head ideas.

Above

Starting the project with a story

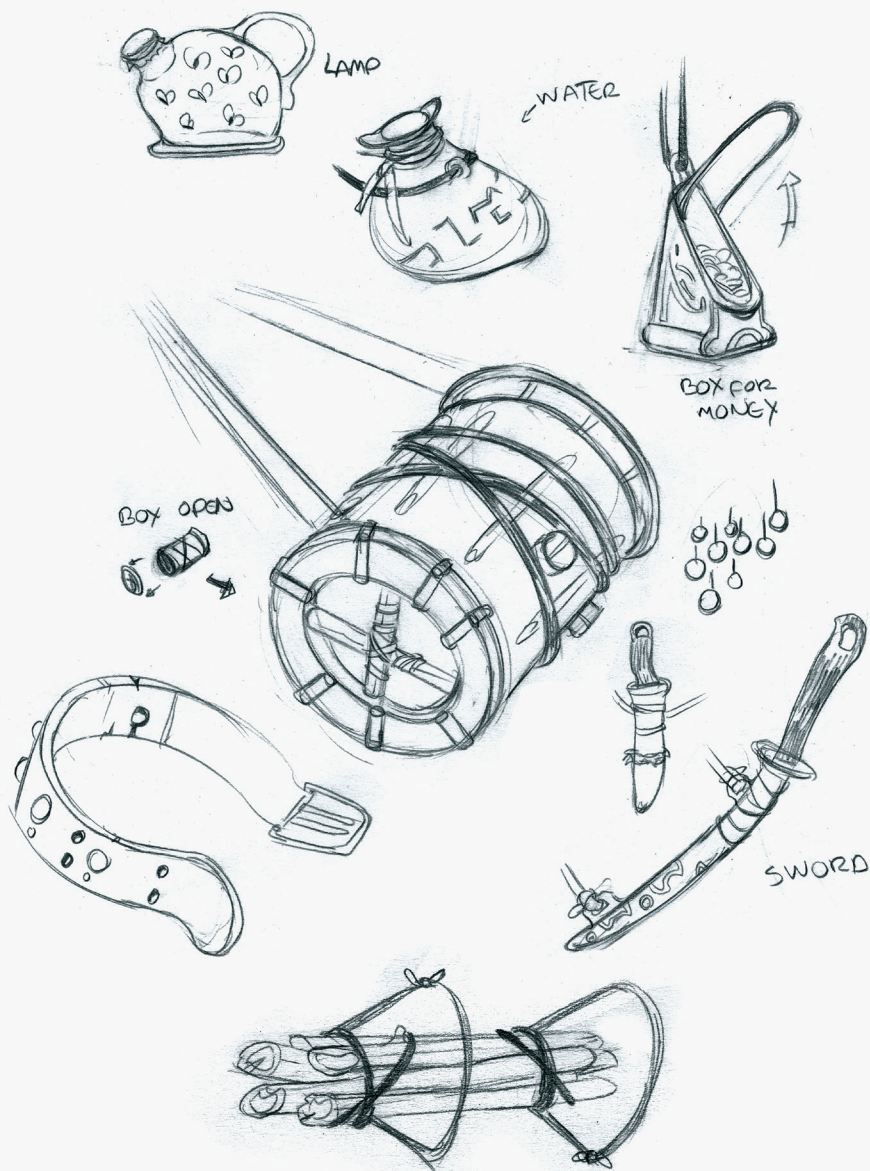
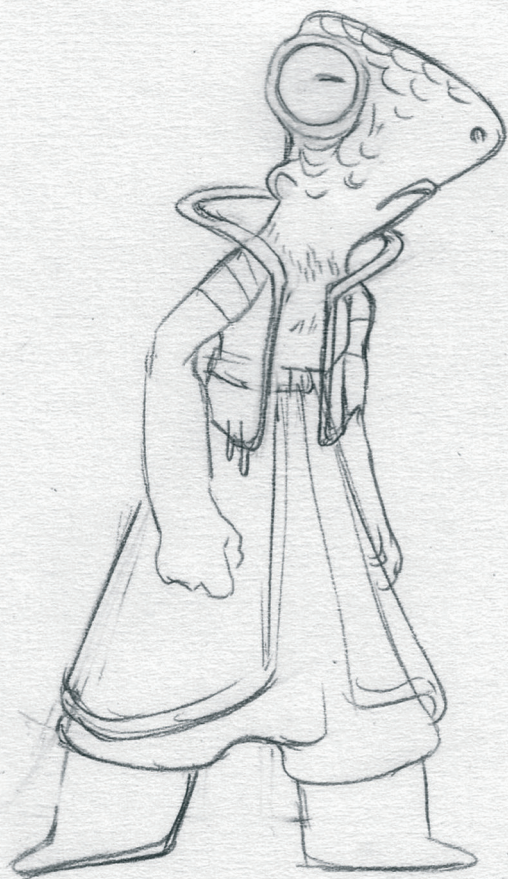
Top right

Sketching head ideas

Far and bottom right

Testing out heads with bodies. It's ideal to have a few bodies to choose from







### Trying out different ideas

Sometimes we get new ideas as we go along, so why not draw them? Don't feel pressured to apply them to the final character; just draw those ideas on other pieces of paper. If you see that they might work, you can choose to apply them when you feel it's the right moment – just don't discard them! In the top left image, I've drawn a new face. Maybe I will add it to the final character, or maybe not – we'll see!

### Adding clothing

Now I'll apply the first lines of his clothing: just simple lines to describe the idea, how the clothes will look, and where they'll be placed on the character. So, for now, I sketch some basic outlines to guide me in the future.

I don't want to commit to a final design when it might still be changed. Remember that when you're designing a character, it often goes through several changes throughout the process, so don't force anything. Just draw and feel free to do what you think is better for you or your design.

### What's in my bag?

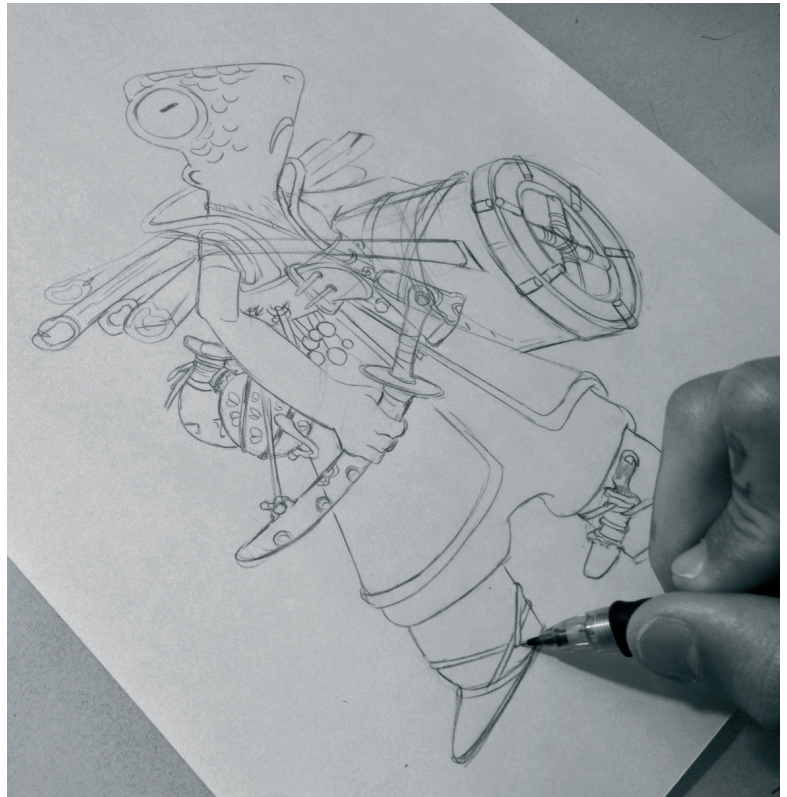
Another way for me to know this character better is to make his props. My character is an adventurer, explorer, or something similar, so I need to draw things that suggest his everyday life. For example, what does he eat? Where does he keep water in case he's thirsty? These questions are important for your character, and if you have clear answers, you can create props that make sense. Sometimes you'll see a character that's very well rendered, but you have no idea if he's an explorer, a warrior, or a king. Each prop that you draw tells a story, so think hard about what you're doing.

### Adding the props

Now that I have all the props ready, I'm going to draw them on the character. It's important that you don't draw heavily on the paper, or in the next step you'll be complaining about it! As you sketch in the props, remember that they have to make sense with everything else on the character. For example, if my character is carrying a sword, it needs to

be placed somewhere where he can draw it without problems.

If you have many props to include on one character, you need to be smart, ensuring that the items are easy to "read" when the character is seen at first glance. If one object intersects with another, I try to separate them so they don't look like an error.



Top left

Trying out more head ideas

Bottom far left

Sketching in some rough clothing

Bottom near left

Designing props and accessories

Above

Adding the props. Now, this looks better!

## “Consider the direction and surface of the object that you are drawing”

### Character poses

Draw your character in different poses to explore more about them. For example, if they like to jump while traveling, draw it out! As you can see, my character is tired but on alert because he heard something weird behind him. If you want, you can use a pose from the previous sketches that you’ve made, if you think that those are better to show the personality of your character.

### Cleaning up!

Now I clean up the lines with an eraser, and redraw them again to define the accessories and outfit on the whole character.

### Adding values

Add values to the sketch by using simple lines. Consider the direction and surface of the object that you are drawing, and apply your lines based on that. For example, look at my character’s boots and pants: you can see some lines going in different directions, which help to show what shape and surface the garments have, and if they’re flat or not.

Near right

Trying out some poses

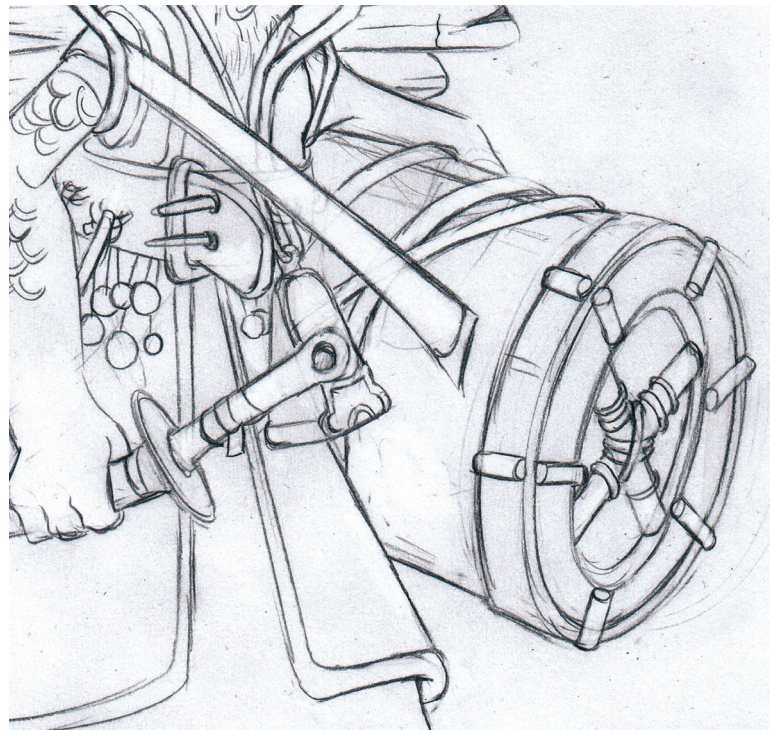
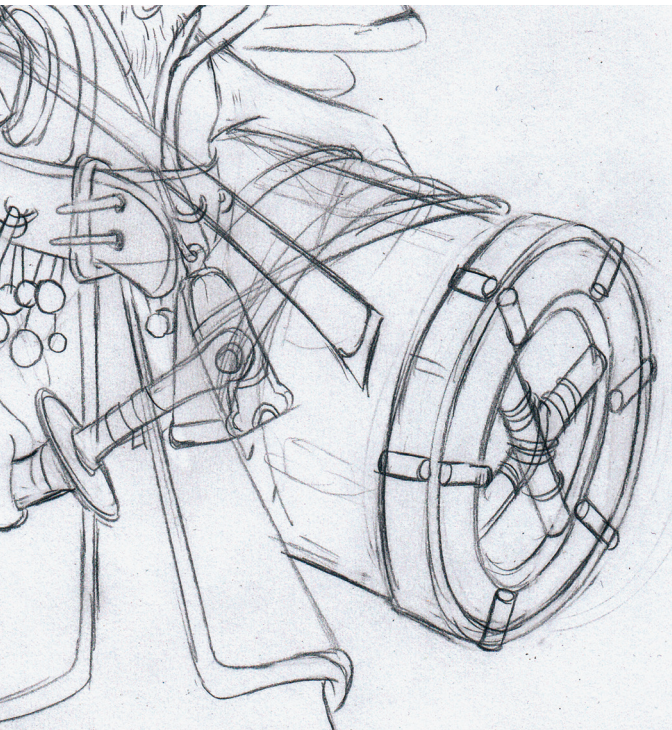
Middle right and far top right

Please clean up that mess!

Far bottom right

Adding values to the sketch with lines and more lines!







### Textures and materials

Now I am going to define the materials for each part of this character, and create texture using different directional strokes like I did in the previous step. The textures might be wood, leather, or skin; I think about what kind of skin he'll have – at this stage, he's quite reptilian.

### Lighting and shadows

Choose the location for your light source and apply the necessary shadows on the opposite side of the character. Do not apply too much force to the drawing, as you can damage the paper, and then it would be difficult to erase something that you don't like.

I use a 6B or 8B pencil for this, but you can use whatever pencils you prefer. Try to avoid too much darkness if it's not necessary; you just need to apply the principal shadows to suggest your light source. For my character, I choose a light source from above, like the sun.

### Defining the lines

I use pencils ranging from 4B to 8B to start defining the character's lines, giving a good reading to the whole character. I use an 8B pencil for the principal outline, and a 4B and 6B to line the interior parts. This separates the outline of the character from the interior details, which makes the drawing much easier to read, and ensures that you can clearly see all the parts of his design. You might also notice that his face has changed. He's now more friendly and mammalian. Remember, anything can change if you feel like it isn't working.

### Finishing touches

Now you can add some finishing details if you want. In this case, I define the character's face more, until I'm happy with it and the design feels complete. I hope that you have enjoyed following this process, and take away some ideas that may form the basis for your own character projects!



Above left  
Creating materials  
and textures

Above right  
Adding a light source  
and shadows

Top right  
Defining the line work  
with a range of pencils

Bottom right  
Finishing the design  
© Jose Gómez



## ARTIST'S TIPS

### Develop your own ideas

Try to avoid only creating characters for your clients or professional work. Develop your own stories too! Create new concepts and push yourself to be better all the time. It is not easy to progress if you think only in terms of making money. Character design is hard, but keep practicing every day if you can, and soon it'll be possible for you to draw whatever you want. If you can spend one or two hours per day to create things for yourself, that would be perfect.

### Reference versus inspiration

It's very important to know the difference between *reference* and *inspiration*. If you see a good artist and want to draw like them, but you just produce the work as them, you're making nothing. Instead, you should be using that artist as *inspiration*, not as a reference.

Photos, videos, and classical master paintings can be used as reference, which is when you use parts of reality and history and make your own versions of them. It is best to get your references from reality, and your inspiration from other artists, music, books, and so on.



# the gallery

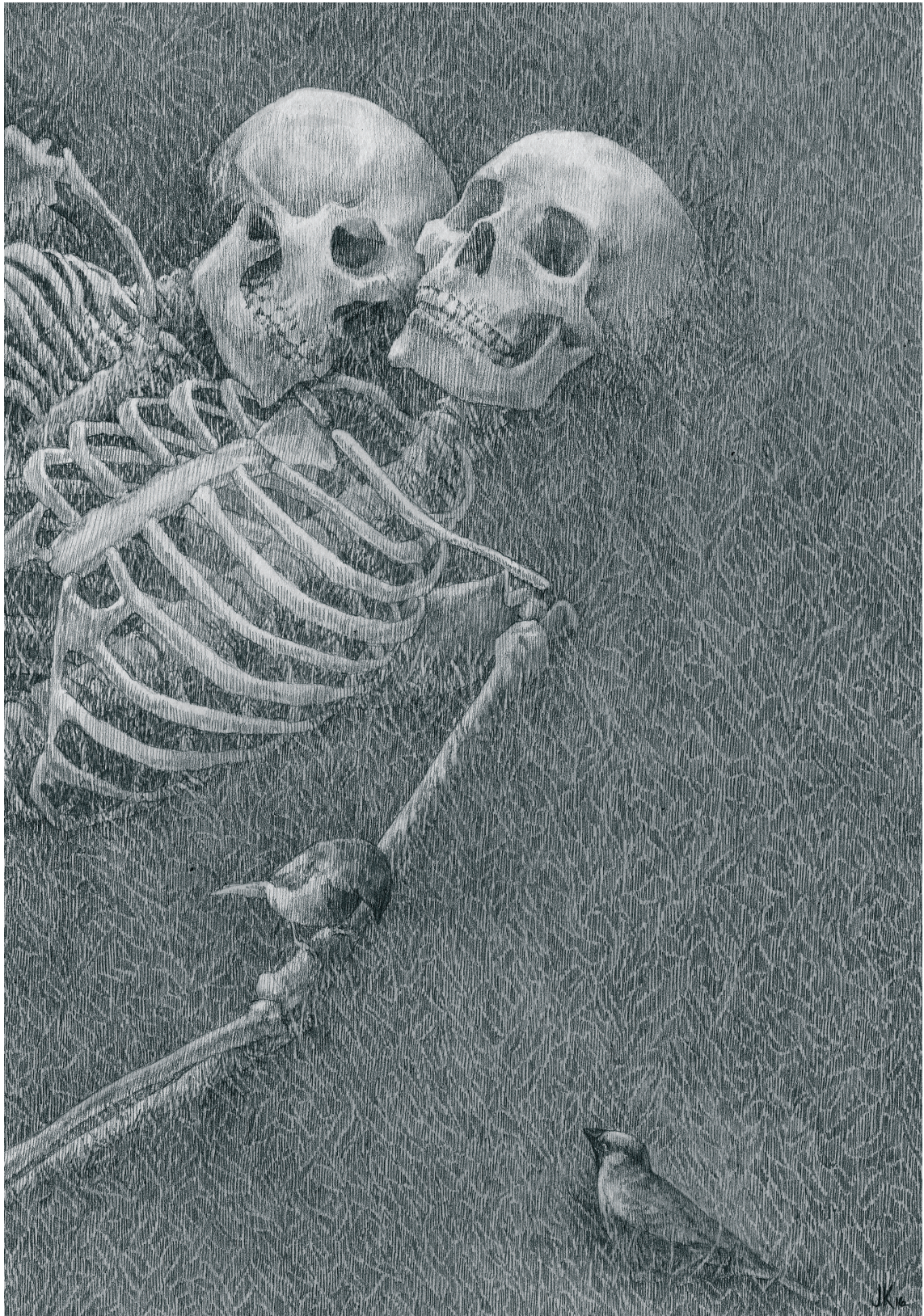
**Featured artists:**

Paulette Jo  
Jenna Kass  
Olivier "Moon" Menanteau  
Hai An  
Steven Russell Black  
Yusa Cui  
Vivian Mineker





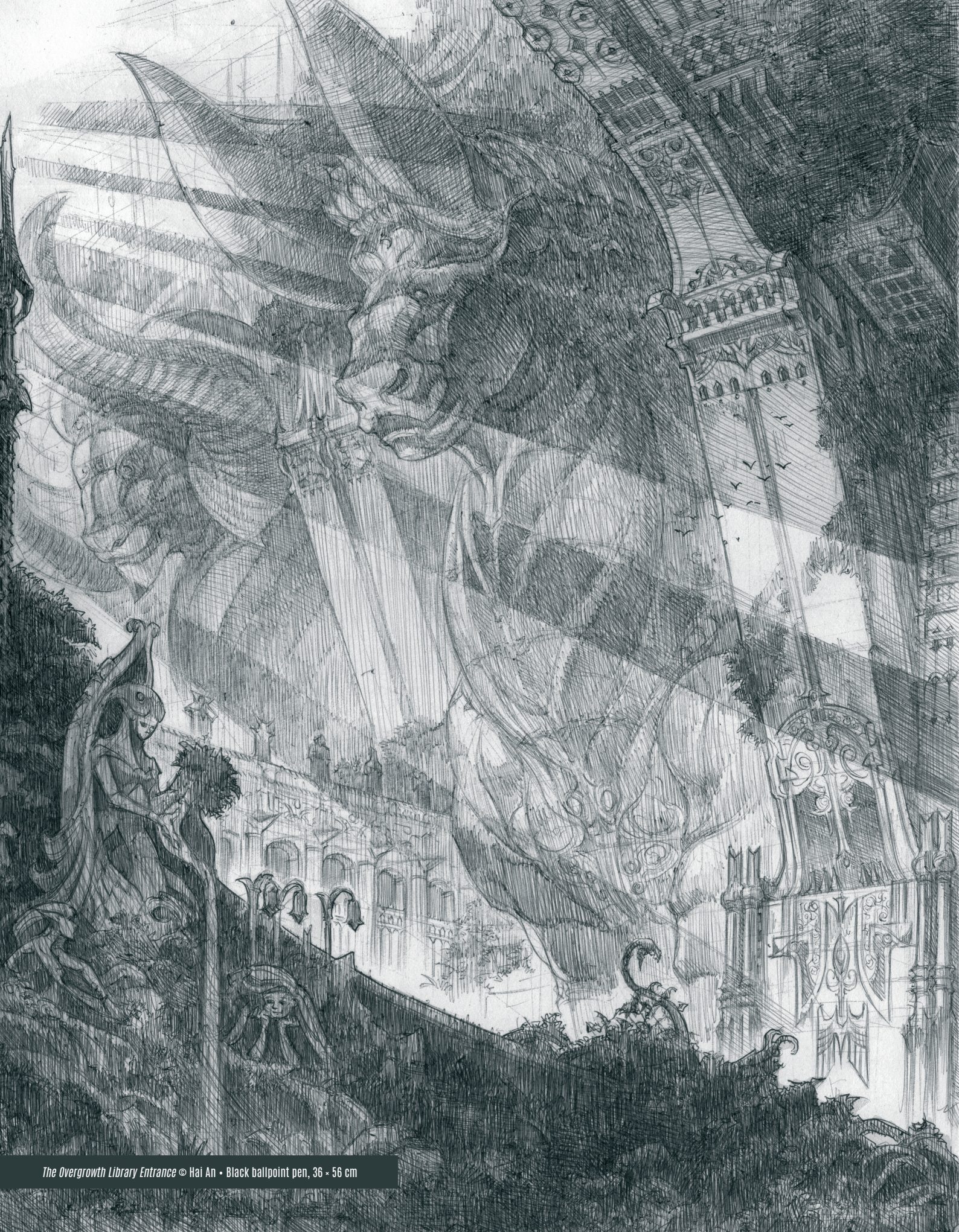
*De clamavis*  
© Paulette Jo  
Graphite and golden leaf  
on illustration board



*Together Forever* © Jenna Kass • Pencil on Bristol, 18 x 28 cm, 2016



*Vespidae* © Olivier "Moon" Menanteau • Graphite on canvas coated with gesso, 100 x 120 cm







*Clouded Mind* © Steven Russell Black • Prismacolor pencil on toned paper, 22 x 28 cm



*Dream Maker* © Yusa Cui • Pencils, colored pencils, digital media

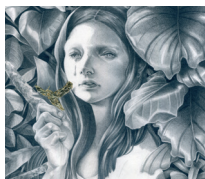
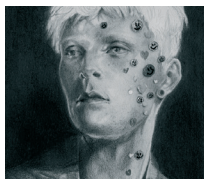


*Fruit of Labor*

© Vivian Mineker

Pen and pencil on  
paper with digital

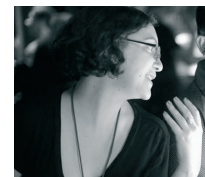
## THE GALLERY CONTRIBUTORS



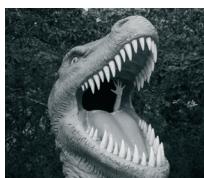
**Paulette Jo** is a Mexico-based artist working primarily with graphite and ink. *De clamavis* was created for the group show *Herbolario Colectivo*, in which plants were the main characters that healed a certain problem, issue, or concern of the artists' and writers' choice.

[paulettejosatelier.tumblr.com](https://paulettejosatelier.tumblr.com)

**Jenna Kass** is a New York City native drawn to the beauty in silence. Influenced strongly by the Pre-Raphaelites, she explores internal drama and subtle emotions in her work.



[jennakass.com](https://jennakass.com)



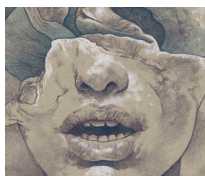
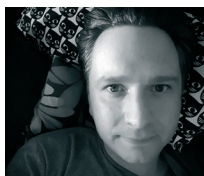
**Olivier Menanteau**, a.k.a. **Moon**, started out as a graffiti artist twenty years ago, before graduating from art school and working as a graphic artist and art director. *Vespidae* depicts a suspended moment, and takes its name from wasps.

[moon.fr](https://moon.fr)

**Hai An** is an illustrator and concept artist based in Vietnam. He studied Game Art at Laguna College of Art and Design, California, in 2014 before returning to Vietnam to work full-time at local game studios, and start his own freelance and teaching business.



[vncchildren.artstation.com](https://vncchildren.artstation.com)



**Steven Russell Black** is a San Francisco Bay area-based illustrator and painter with an obsessive compulsion to champion the odd, fringe, or otherwise unappreciated. He splits his time between comics, illustration, and fine art.

[facebook.com/stevenrussellblack](https://facebook.com/stevenrussellblack)

**Yusa Cui** (Qingyu Cui) is a Chinese design student currently studying for a Bachelor of Design at RMIT University in Melbourne. She loves exploring the world of art by using pencils, watercolors, and gouache.



[behance.net/yusayosa](https://behance.net/yusayosa)



**Vivian Mineker** is a Taiwanese American from Taipei and Portland, Oregon, currently residing in Slovenia. Vivian focuses on conveying emotions and underlying narrative, working primarily in traditional mediums for the physical connection with the work she creates.

[vivianmineker.com](https://vivianmineker.com)

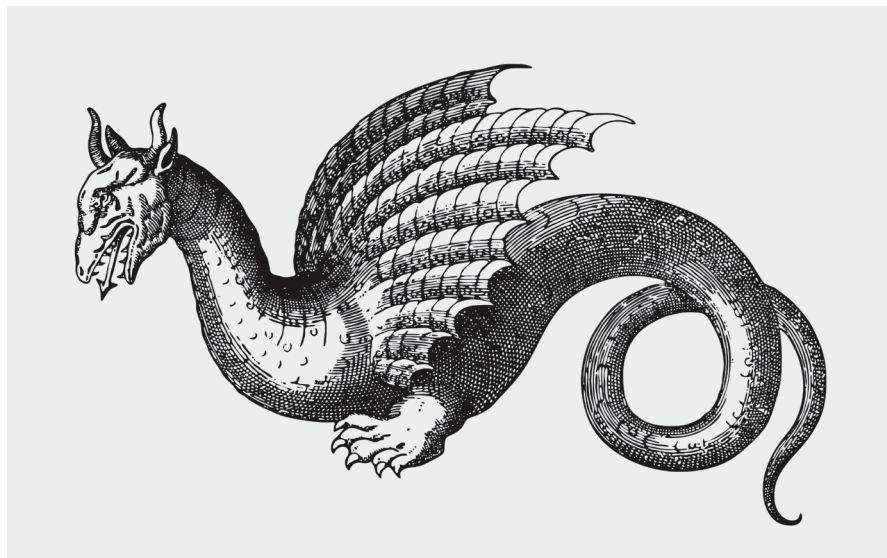




# HERE BE DRAGONS

Concept development, sketching, and painting with Iris Compier

In this article, illustrator and fantasy artist Iris Compét uses graphite and watercolor to create an aquatic dragon design.



## Getting started

This project will be inspired by the origin of dragons: how dragons might have “evolved.” We will be designing a dragon that lives in the water and decided to venture on land, using real-world reference, pencil, and watercolor.

We all have an image of how a creature should look when we hear the word “dragon.” It should have wings, dangerous talons, scales, strong legs, a tail, it should breath fire,

and so on. Dragons are part of our history, myths, and fairytales.

They can be found everywhere around us; in architecture, for instance. They are symbols still used today. They are part of our world and anything is possible in creating such a creature, so I’m going to let my imagination take over when I ask myself, “What would a dragon look like?” Before I start, I take notes and do some research on dragons in lore

and history. Not too much, because I already know I won’t be illustrating a story about a dragon; I just want some basic information.

I write down what I “know” and “think” when I hear the word “dragon.” This gives me a general direction and narrows things down a little.

For this project, I will be using my sketchbook, a 2B mechanical pencil, some Strathmore



Visual Journal watercolor paper, and Daniel Smith watercolors.

### Sketchbook inspiration

Since I've been sketching mythical creatures for quite some time (in August 2016 I drew one every day for the *smaugust* hashtag on Instagram) I have tons of designs waiting in my books that have never been used. I flick through these older sketchbooks and use them as reference.

They might have something I could use for a new design. Before I pinpoint one particular idea however, I give myself complete freedom to sketch whatever I want.

To help, I give myself little prompts to see what I can come up with. For instance, what would a primate dragon look like? How would a hornbill dragon act? This gives me just enough information to begin the early concept sketches.

Top left

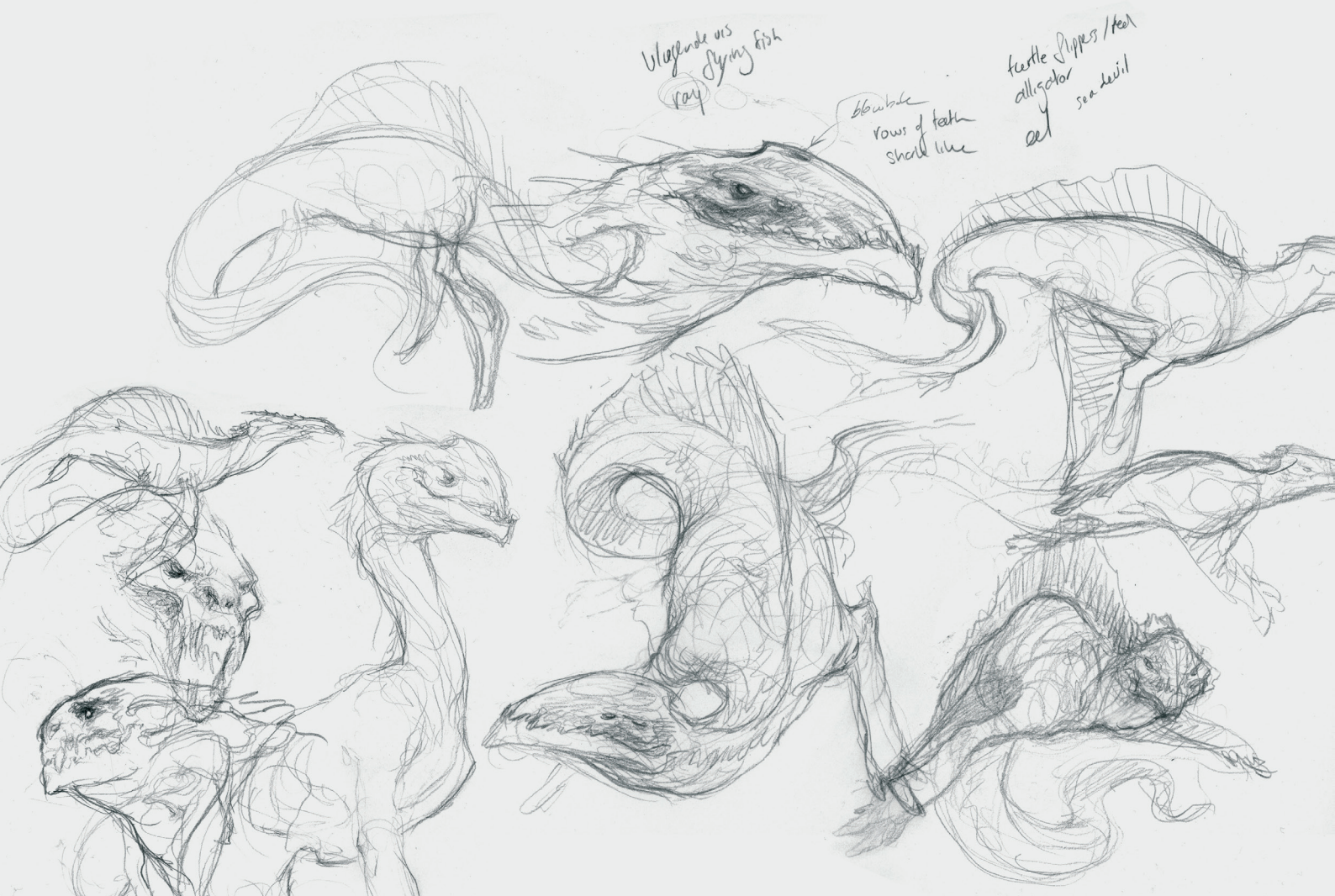
A medieval illustration  
© Betacam-SP / Adobe Stock

Middle left

Taking notes and getting  
acquainted with the subject

Above

Out with the sketchbooks,  
digging through ideas



## “Without a story, a beautifully designed creature is just a pretty picture”



### Adding backstory

Sketching a lot of different dragon heads is good, but it can be very distracting. Anything is possible when creating a creature – it’s easy to get lost in the diversity of it all. You can end up falling down the rabbit hole, and so you need to find focus. Having a story behind your sketch makes it more believable; without a story, a beautifully designed creature is just a pretty picture. So I take a couple of my favorite sketches and think of a possible background story.

I settle upon the idea of the evolution of dragons. I ask myself, “What if dragons evolved from the sea, just like the rest of life on Earth? What if there was some kind of primordial dragon that swam in the ocean,

hunted there, killed there, flew through the water, and decided to come ashore one day to evolve into the flying dragons we know now? What would that dragon look like?”

This is my story: the “missing link,” perhaps, in the evolution of the dragon. At first these sketches are very rough, but it’s the idea progression that’s important.

### Real-world reference

Having narrowed down my idea, I search for reference in books and on the internet. Pinterest is great for this. I take different animals and using their anatomy to literally build a new creature: combining a snapping turtle with a whale, a lion fish with a horse, and so on.

Anything is possible, all of which can be used to reference your new creature. Having good reference is key; it will help you understand basic anatomy, which you’ll need when creating the creature. Reference helps you to create designs that look and feel like they “belong” in our world, like they might have been real in a long forgotten age.

Top left  
Materials

Bottom left  
Narrowing down and  
creating a story

Above  
Reference is key



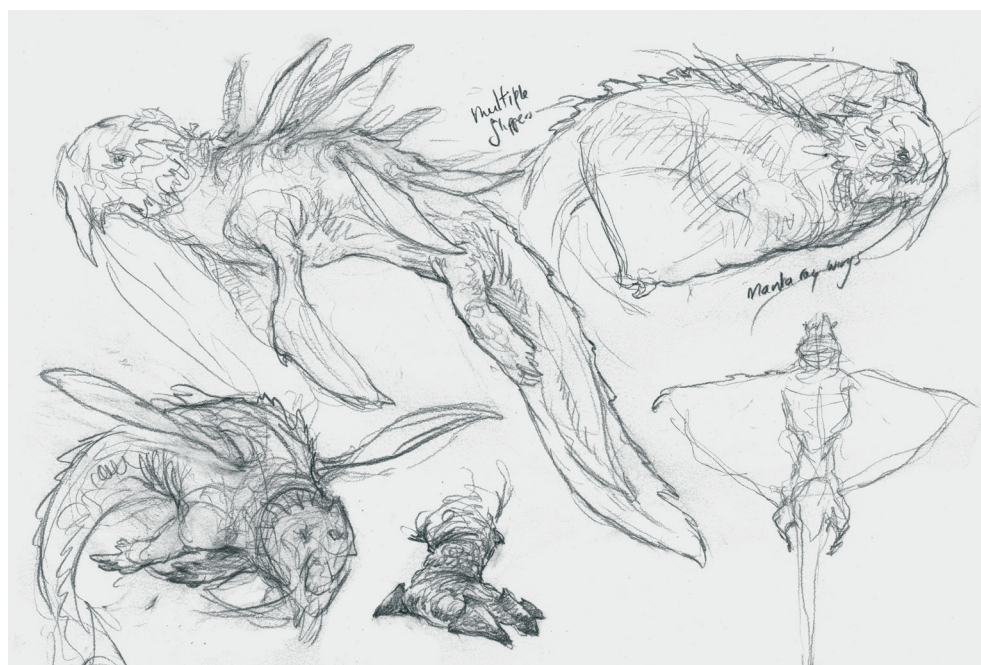
## ARTIST'S TIPS

### Blending imagination and reference

While I find using reference really important in designing a creature, I do think it's best to hold off on using it until you have an idea and basic sketch finished. The danger with diving into the reference too early is that you'll rely on it too much, and your design will end up stiff, a jigsaw of different animals jumbled up into a new creature. Besides, it's way too much fun to use your imagination! It'll give you that initial spark and then you'll use reference to fine-tune things.

### Model-making

As you can see on page 76, by making simple sculptures of the ideas you have, you can easily see if something works or not. It can also be used to test lighting and odd angles, and gives you a better idea of your subject. I make models of parts of the creatures as well as full bodies. None of these are fancy or elaborate, but they are helpful ways of creating additional reference for your creature.





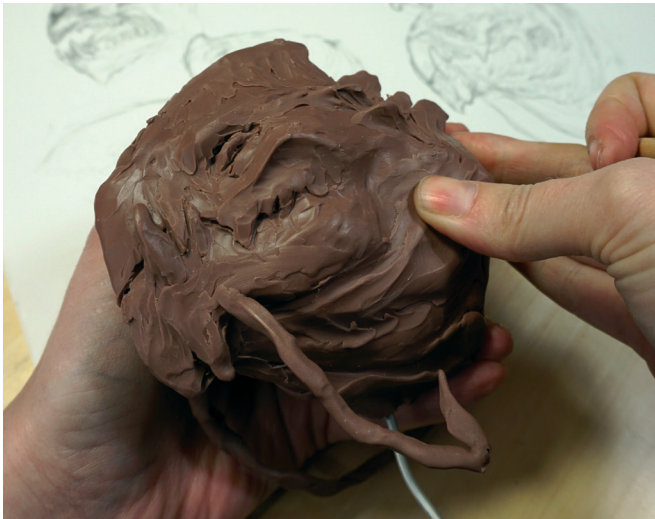
## Sketching the design

With my reference ready, I begin sketching the final design, adding tusks and finding the shape of its head. Where should its eye sockets be placed? How does it breathe? I like the idea of it having to go to the surface to catch some air, having a blowhole much like a

whale or dolphin would have. I keep in mind that this creature will have to evolve into the dragons we know, so it has to “sprout” wings from somewhere. It might have double front flippers, or flippers suggesting membranes just like the wings of a bat. All of this will help build the story and the character.

These pages

Exploring the creature, and finding its basic shape and look using various animals for reference



## Sculpting

To be able to better sketch a creature from all angles, and understand how it would work in three dimensions, I sometimes make models. These roughly sculpted clay models can be used to see how an idea would or wouldn't work. I can easily add horns and see how that translates. It's a basic shape, nothing too fancy. It's like a three-dimensional sketch to make visualization of the concept easier. It gives me the opportunity to get my head around the creature, literally! I make these in Monster Clay – clay that doesn't harden and can be re-used when I'm finished with it.

## Combining ideas

At this stage I have to make some decisions. I take some of my favorite sketches and end up mixing several of them together, taking parts that I like from each sketch and combining them. I'm trying to find interesting shapes that would be believable. I decide I want more scales, a rough textured body much like turtles have, with spikes even. A smooth body like a whale doesn't feel right for this creature. I also want to see how the dragon would look in a more active pose, so I open its mouth up. This makes the image more interesting; if it's just going to be a bust, I need something to heighten the sense of danger and action. It's always good to try out different poses for a creature's head to see which angle would work best.



## Transferring the sketch

I use a piece of baking paper to transfer my sketch onto watercolor paper. Baking paper is cheaper than tracing paper, and easy to use when your light box isn't powerful enough. I don't bother with details – I just need the rough shape. I like to keep things open for interpretation, but I do want my basic shape to be right, so that it can serve as a kind of pencil skeleton for me to build on when I start working in graphite on the finished piece.

## The underdrawing

With my rough shapes laid down, I use my transferred sketch as a guide to find the shapes I would like to make. I lightly work with a simple 2B mechanical pencil – nothing too soft, so it won't muddy my colors later on, and nothing too sharp that I can't erase using a kneaded eraser if I decide it doesn't work.

Darken certain areas to build volume and mass in your creatures; try using different strokes of your pencil, different angles, and rotating your paper. This will create diversity in your lines which feels more natural. If certain areas are too dark, just lighten them by gently pressing your kneaded eraser on that area to pick up the excess graphite. Rubbing it would leave some residue which could mess with the watercolors later on. This drawing will almost be a graphite "underpainting," so to speak, so I don't want it to be fully

rendered. I retain some of the white of the paper to make sure that those areas will pop once they have color. I use the surface of the paper, which is slightly textured, to create the skin textures. I don't smudge, as smudging tends to make things a bit flat.

Most of what I'm doing here is purely instinctive; I have a general idea with the sketches in front of me and my reference books around me, and I just add scales and spikes where I want them to be.

Above

Making a simple clay bust, based on a sketch

Near top right

Combining several different ideas into one, creating some kind of Frankenstein's monster!

Far top right

Transferring the image

Right

Graphite pencil "underpainting"



## Watercolor wash

To make sure I don't end up lifting the graphite off the paper, I spray the paper and drawing lightly with workable fixative. Just a light coat will do; too much fixative and the color won't seep into the paper. When that's dried, I take a big brush and dampen the whole drawing. I then put different colors into the still-wet areas, letting the paint mix on the paper to create natural blending. Try to keep your palette limited at this stage. I want the dragon's tongue, beak, and eye areas to stand out by making them blood red later, so I decide to go with complementary greens and yellows for its main skin tone. When one wash dries, I wet certain areas again using an atomizer rather than a brush, as a brush would lift some of my paint again. In these wet areas, I work directly with some paint, letting it find its way to creating textures I like.

## Painting the details

Now that the whole piece has its base coat of color, I start to dive in and pick out the details: adding highlights and creating a sense of depth and mass using color to enhance what's already there in the underdrawing. I follow the lines laid down in graphite and the textures that were created by me and the paper. Making things irregular adds a realistic feel to it. Be mindful of edges: smooth some down and make sure some are harder, which will make the image read better.

Turn your image upside down from time to time – this helps you to see where you need to add more color, or what is missing. I sometimes work with graphite pencil on top of the colors, when I feel I've lost some of the graphite by adding the watercolor. My focus is on the face and not so much the neck, but I don't want it to be just a floating head, so I do pay attention to that area. I use a bit of yellow in the neck and back area just to tie everything together, suggesting that this animal's skin looks the same as its head all over.

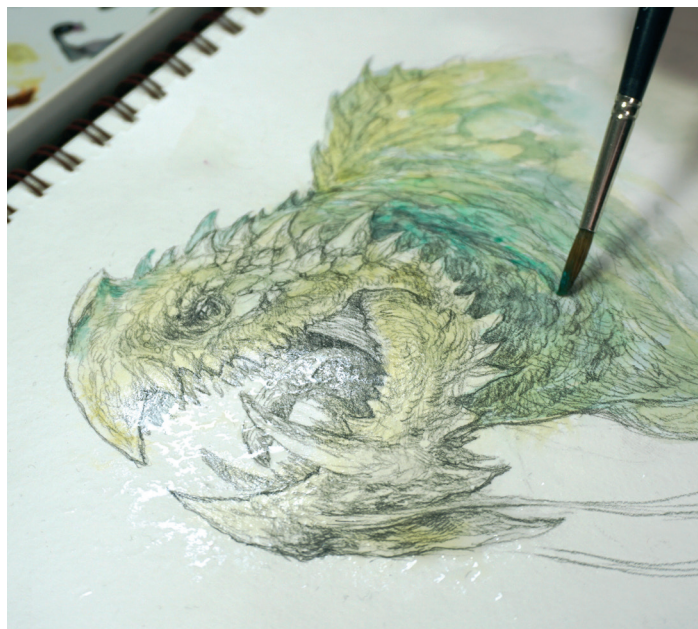
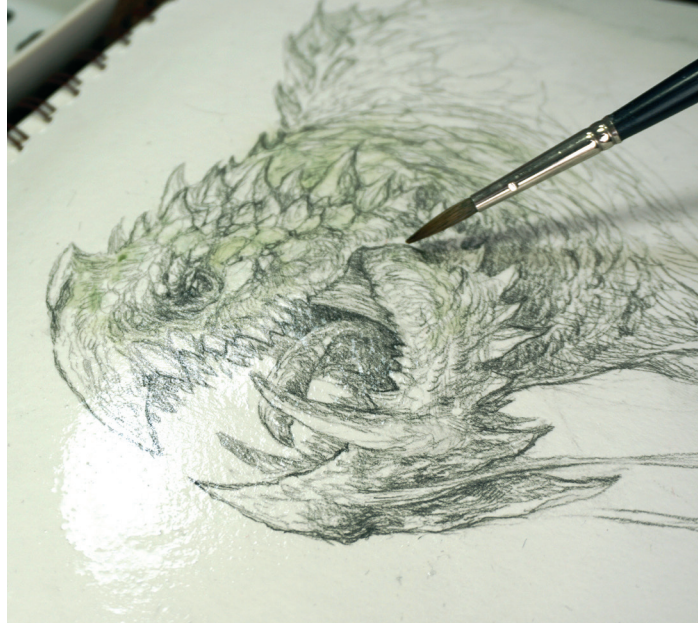
## The final image

Giving a face to something mythical is never a dull thing to do. The possibilities are endless and nothing you do is ever "wrong." Just be mindful of basics such as anatomy, and also story: you should be able to envision your creature's life. How would it hunt? Why would it decide to go ashore and leave the waters? It's a lot of fun to create these stories and it's something I personally enjoy very much. This is just a "sketch" for a creature that will probably swim in my mind for quite a bit longer. I'm still discovering new things and it may still evolve from what you see here into something completely different.

Near right: The scary part: adding colors without muddling them

Far top right: The dragon is in the details!

Far bottom right: Final image © Iris Compiet



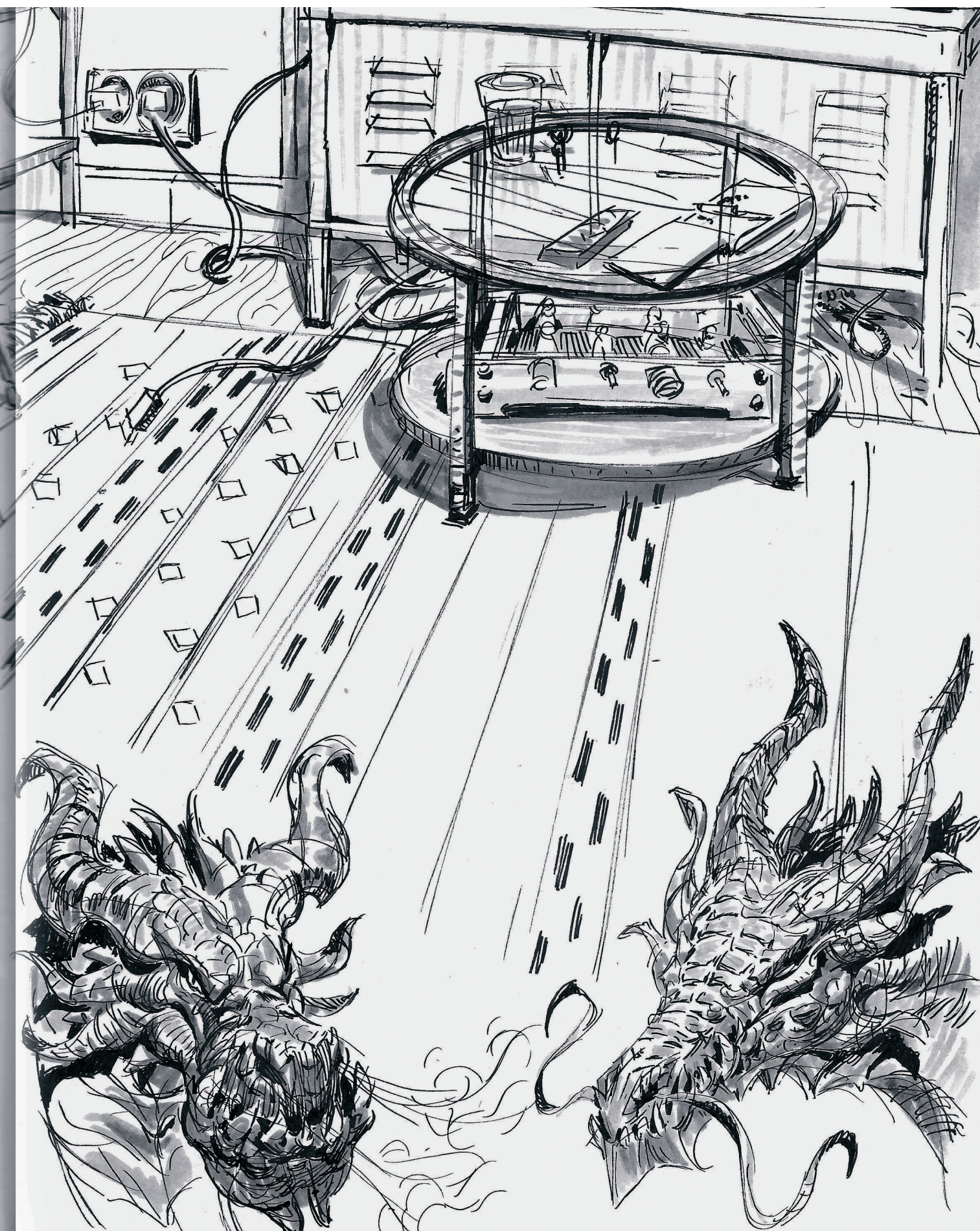


# MONSTER MAKER

An interview with Mike Azevedo

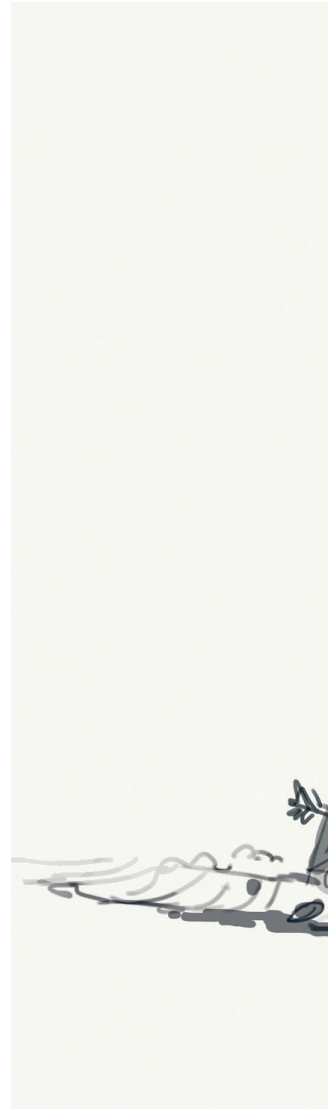
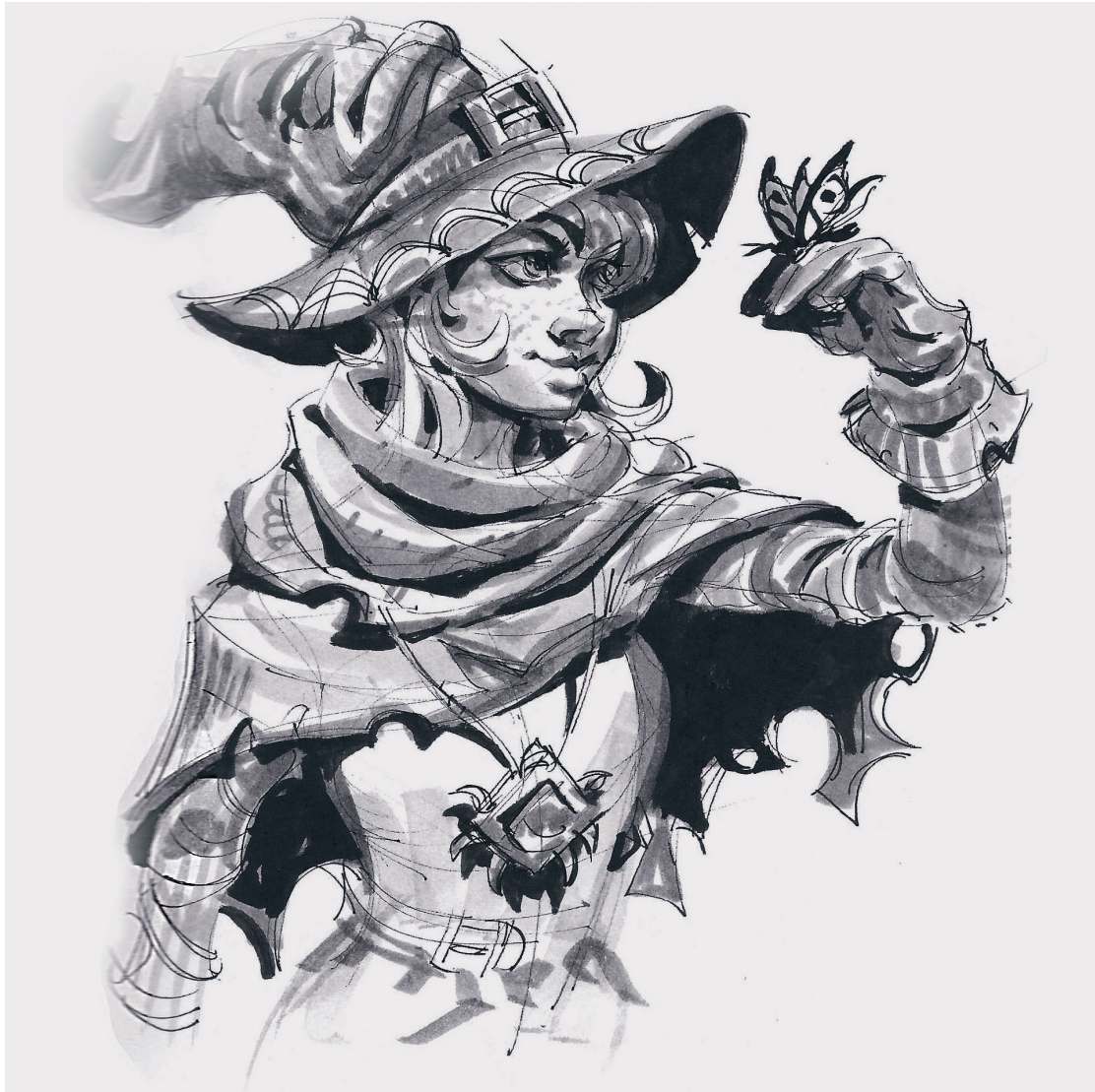


Sketchbook page  
from a trip to Croatia



We speak to Mike Azevedo, a concept artist and illustrator whose bold, energetic style has led him to work with clients including Riot Games, Blizzard Entertainment, Guerilla Games, and Games Workshop.

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Q: Thanks for talking to GRAPHITE, Mike! First of all: who are you, where are you from, and what do you do?

A: I am Michel Azevedo, known to most as Mike Azevedo. I'm an illustrator from Osasco, Brazil, and I draw and paint monsters all day (and sometimes all night, too). I like to tell stories to people, and I do that mostly by communicating through my drawings. I also teach digital painting courses and workshops

in Brazil, and I try to help the Brazilian game industry grow.

Q: What inspired you to take up art? What inspires you today?

A: My biggest inspirations of all time are my grandparents – they inspire me a lot to this day, to have a clear career goal and work every day towards it. Regarding art specifically, I remember when I was a kid, about eight,

watching *The Lord of the Rings* movies. I decided that I wanted to do that. I didn't know what "that" was, but I knew I wanted to do it.

I also used to play a lot of videogames, especially *Dota 2*, and again I had the feeling that I wanted to be the person making the games, not only playing them. Today I am very inspired by painters I enjoy, like John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Moby Francke, Sergey Kolesov, and Craig Mullins. I'm



inspired by life in general, and I often think about new ideas for paintings when looking at nature and people around me. You just have to pay attention.

Q: Did you have any formal art education?

A: I graduated from university in 2013, having studied game design, but it was a very general course. I learned a bit of everything: 3D, level design, programming, 2D animation,

3D animation. Most of my painting studies happened after class, at home.

Q: How did you go about teaching yourself?

A: Since it was very hard to find any material in Portuguese, or any courses that were specific enough, I was forced to learn by myself. I made a daily schedule, with structure studies in the morning (anatomy, gesture, perspective), light and color studies in

the afternoons (still lifes, Adobe Photoshop), and sketches and portfolio pieces at night. I would take some days off to rest, but overall the most important things were to persevere and have clear priorities. Knowing what your most important daily goals are is very helpful.

Left: A little witch from my sketchbook

Above: "Me likey shiny things"



**"The pen never forgives you,  
and that makes you think a bit  
more before making a mark"**



Q: Was it difficult to stay disciplined and keep to your plans? Any tips for staying focused?

A: I know that sometimes it's hard to stay disciplined, but that mostly happens when you don't have a clear goal and deadline, so you are more likely to feel that you have "free time." Whenever I feel like I need motivation, I look for it somewhere else. I look at other artists' stories and get inspired by their path. Remembering that you don't need to do this alone can help a lot, so find a friend to sketch with every day. Make up small challenges for yourself, and always remember the reasons

why you draw and paint. For me, it's mostly about having fun and improving.

Q: What tools and materials do you enjoy using, and how do they change your process?

A: I really enjoy using pen and markers. I think pen helps me a lot because it's the complete opposite of digital – Adobe Photoshop always forgives you, but the pen never forgives you, and that makes you think a bit more before making a mark. That ability to think before making marks can help a lot with your digital work. Learning to have commitment can

improve your speed, because you make fewer decisions but they are all correct; a lot of the time you take to do digital work comes from trying to make decisions too quickly, and drawing in pen helps you not to rush things.

These pages  
Playing around with  
some different types  
of werewolves in  
my sketchbook



Q: Do you have any warm-ups or little rituals that help your work process?

A: One thing I do is try to keep going once I've started. It's very easy to get distracted in the first twenty minutes of a piece, so I try to focus and get my creative juices flowing, which, for me, is about keeping my mind balanced between anxiety and comfort. I don't want to get too worried or anxious about how much

work I have to do, but I also don't want to get so comfortable that I don't pay attention to my decisions. I think this state of flow is something you can learn.

Q: What do you think makes a successful character concept?

A: I think the best character concepts have clear visual communication and a very strong

sense of the world that they belong to. Just by looking at the character, you know what part he probably plays in the world.

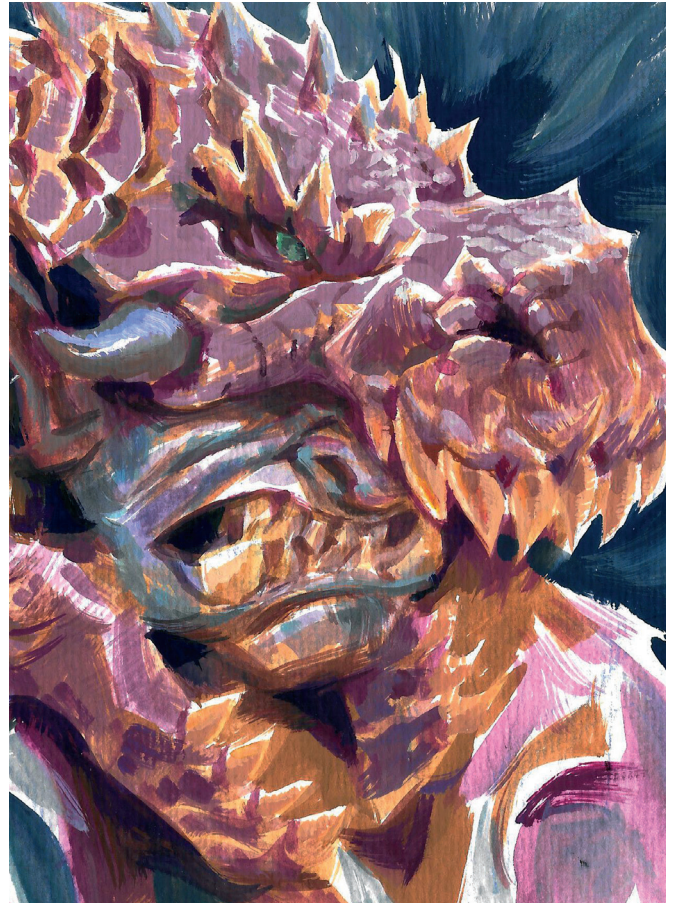
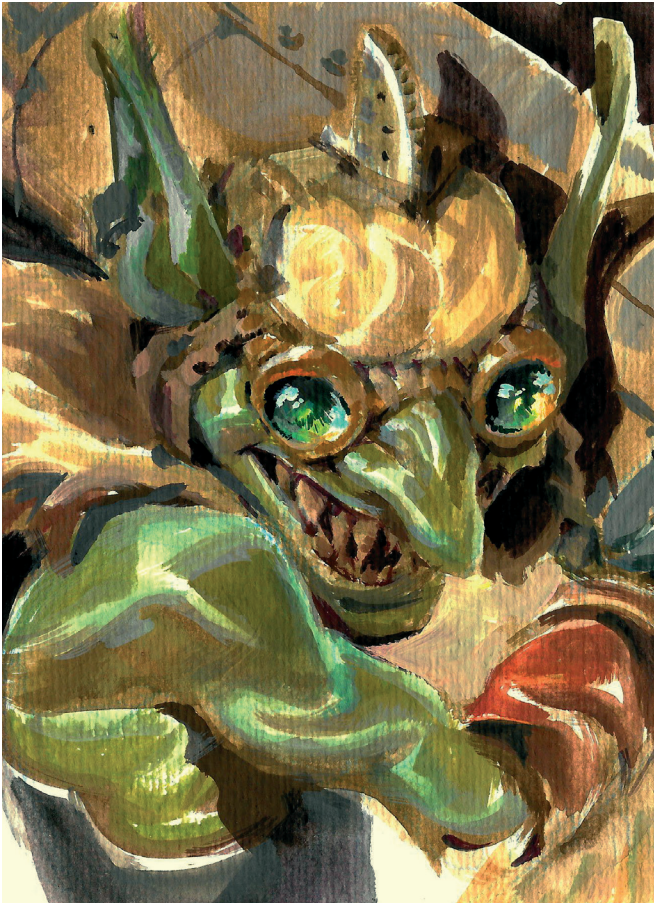
Q: How is freelance life treating you? Do you have any advice for artists considering a freelance career?

A: I really like the freelance life, especially because I am able to do work for game

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## “I would like to keep helping other artists to follow their passion too”

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companies outside Brazil that I really enjoy, and I'm able to live close to my family and Brazilian friends. For people thinking about a freelance career, I would advise you to make a portfolio and improve it as often as possible (keeping in mind quality over quantity). Develop the ability to follow daily schedules, ask artists you like for an opinion on your work, be friendly, and be original – in other words, be true to yourself.

Q: What do you do when you're not busy making art?

A: I watch many movies and television series, read books, exercise (Pilates is great for your back). I hang out with my friends, family,

and my girlfriend. There are a lot of nice restaurants in São Paulo. I also play games – nowadays mostly a few matches of *League of Legends* every month.

Q: Finally, what would you like to achieve with your artwork?

A: I would like to help to create a game with my own designs, using my style. I would like to keep helping other artists to follow their passion too, just like I am able to – especially Brazilian artists, since I can communicate better in Portuguese and I see the struggle of many people around me. I will try to keep having fun with my paintings. At the end of the day, that's why I do it.

These pages  
I recently began making  
gouache sketches to relax  
after a day of digital work

# BATTLEBORN

A narrative illustration project with Daniel Landerman | Story by Adam J. Smith

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“Sylas the Battleborn planted his boots on the precipice at the water’s edge. Waves crashed around him, the sea-foam misting the air. It was here he would make his stand. Sword drawn, with the tail of his bandana whipping fiercely in the wind, he roared to be heard over the breaking waves as the pack stalked nearer, creating a semi-circle of fate. Battleaxes, swords, pickaxes, scythes, and clubs glimmered in moon- and torchlight; the Viking shape-shifters brandishing them snarled and growled and tentatively advanced, with more emerging from the shadow of the forest.”



Professional sketch artist Daniel Landerman shares his process for crafting a dramatic scene using imaginative graphite techniques.

## Thumbnails

In this project, I'll be tackling a scene of a warrior pitted against some Nordic-inspired were-people. To start, I look around at which animals we might find in the European Northeast: wild boar, wolves, lynx cats, brown bears. I will also throw in some ibex for good measure!

I'll be using a favorite combination of tools that I often employ in my work: Prismacolor pencils, solvent, and erasers on Dura-lene by Seth Cole. Dura-lene is an acetate and basically a high-end tracing paper, but regular tracing paper or vellum can work as well. I find this method particularly useful when dealing with lighting, as it is forgiving and lends itself very well to a painterly and moody approach which would suit this scene.

I sometimes find it easier to jot down thumbnail sketches in pen, because I can't take them back, and this forces me to make decisions as I go. I have a strong initial idea that I poke at a few different ways with a gel pen, a brush pen, and a water brush pen. Some flowing ink is always a great way to start blocking in designs.

## Character thoughts

I should give our warrior's design some thought before jumping into the final drawing, as his silhouette will play a big part in the overall composition. Illustration is not necessarily character design, but this does help to get my mind moving in the right direction. I also take the opportunity to explore some other poses. This exploration allows me to poke at the story and figure out what speaks to me.

## Planning values

I want to start working out some of the possible pitfalls in the final image, so I start sketching on a slightly larger scale with orange pencil, gel pen, brush pen, and water brush pen. I also start getting into the larger shapes of the composition, and the image's overall value grouping. I'm not sure if I'm sold on this take on the story yet. Something's falling flat for me – one of the many reasons doing thumbnails and roughs is so important!

Near right

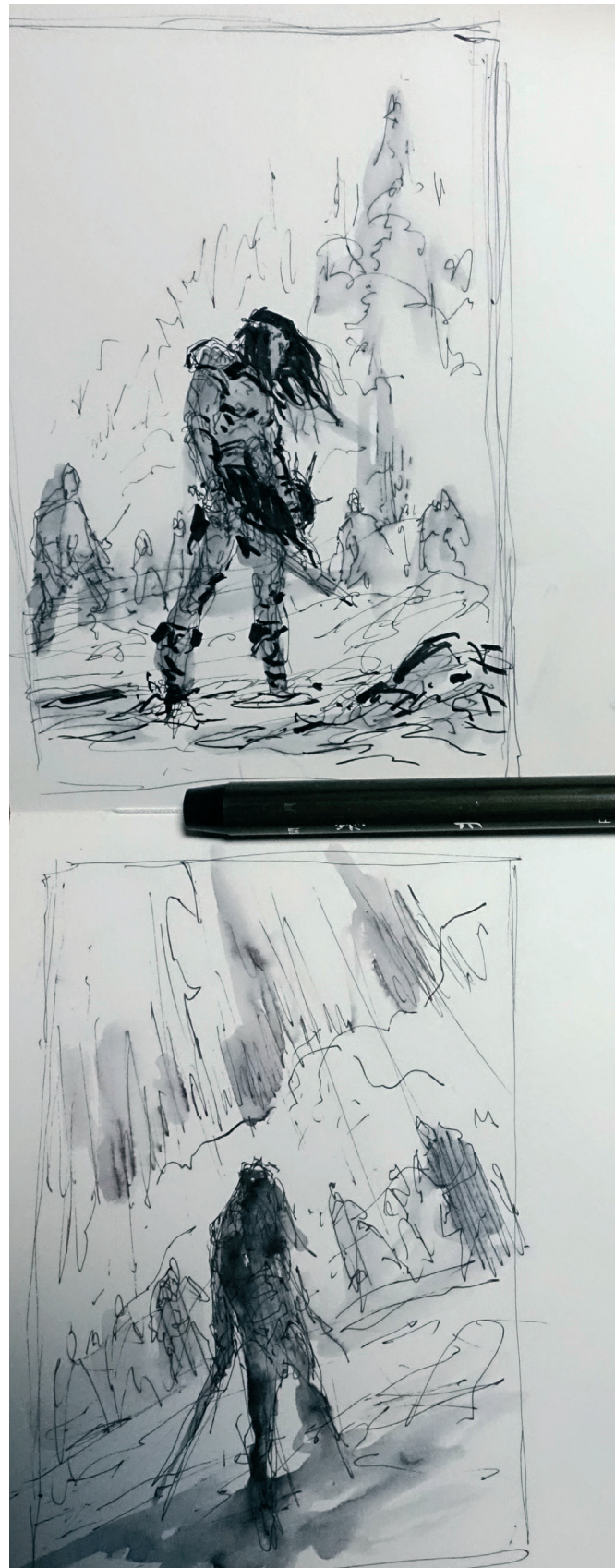
Pen scribbles to begin with

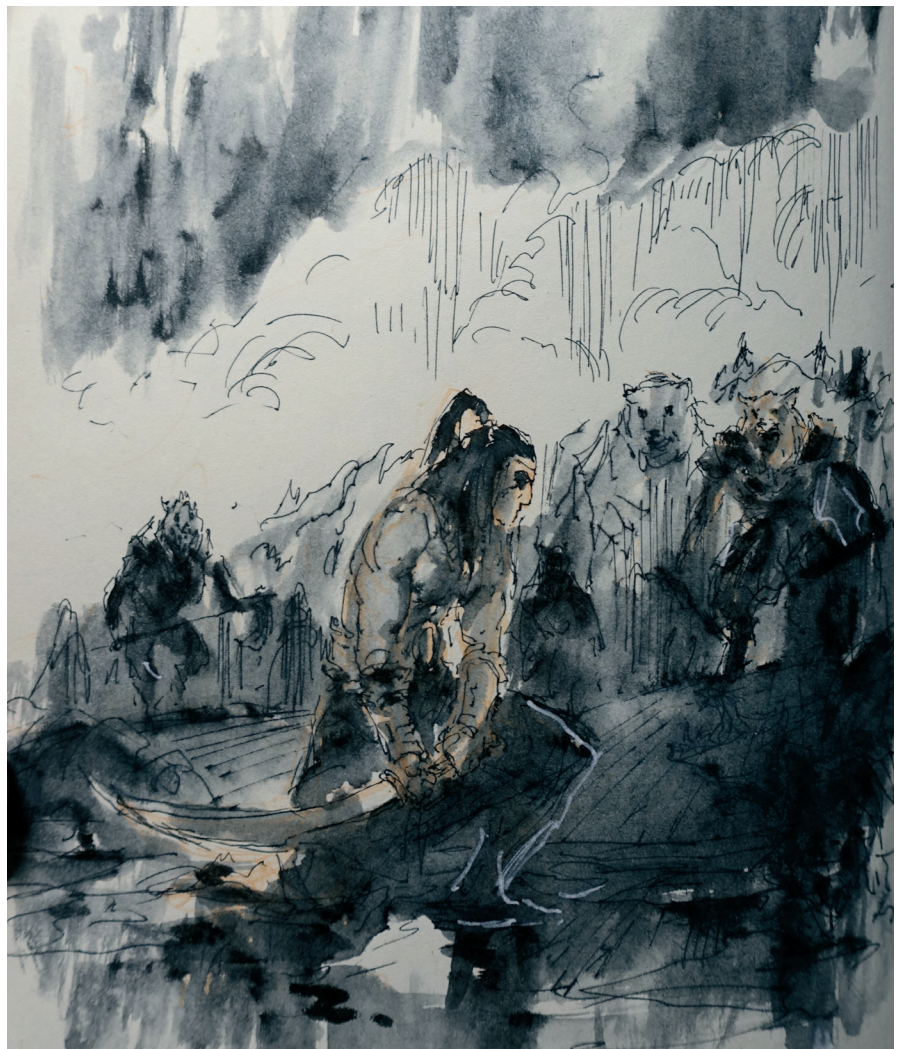
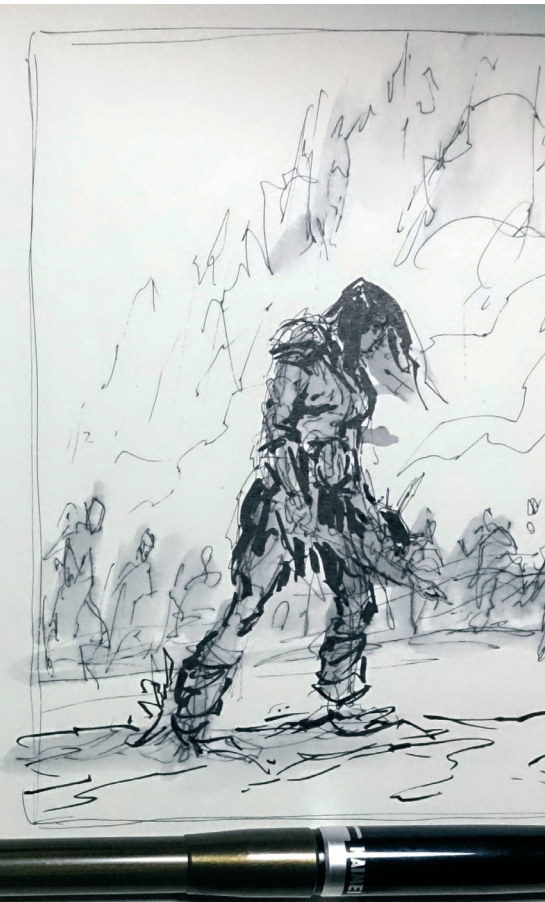
Far top right

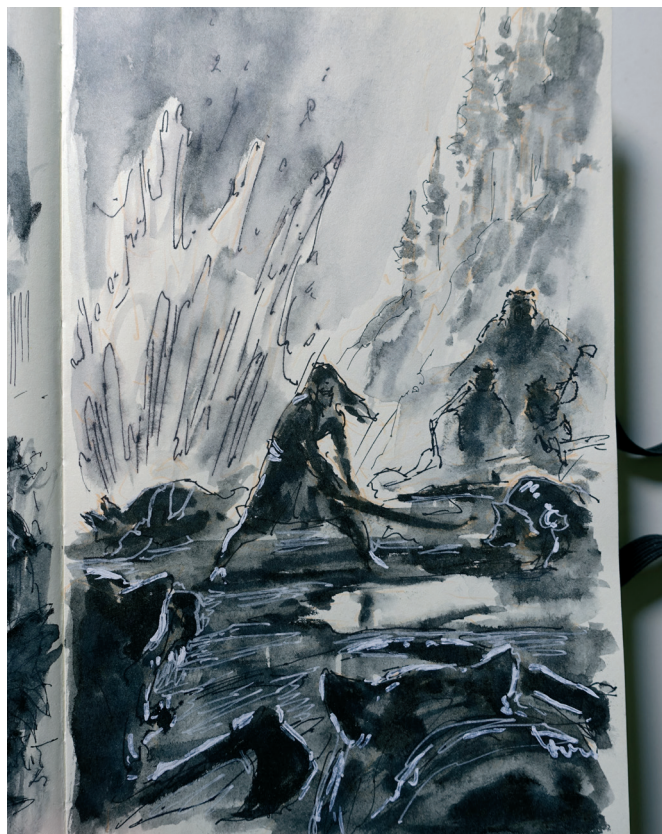
Initial character thoughts

Far bottom right

Working a little larger to figure out some details







### Adding some twists

I decide that I don't just want to go with a typical barbarian-looking warrior. Changing his sword is the first part of that equation. I like the idea of a large scimitar rather than the broadsword I'd drawn first. I also don't want to go for a typical sandy beach. Where I grew up there were a lot of rock formations and I wanted to get some of that into this image; Northern California's beaches aren't the friendliest of places and I want a harsher environment for this battle. I look at reference images of Norway's coastline and feel that I'm on the right track.

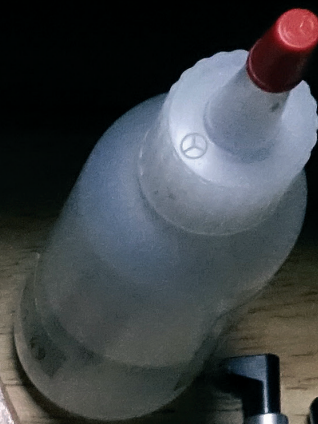
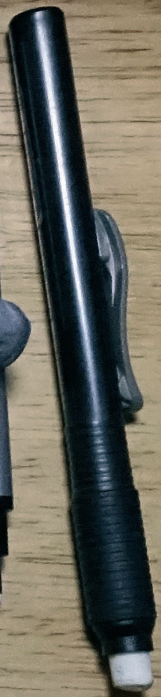
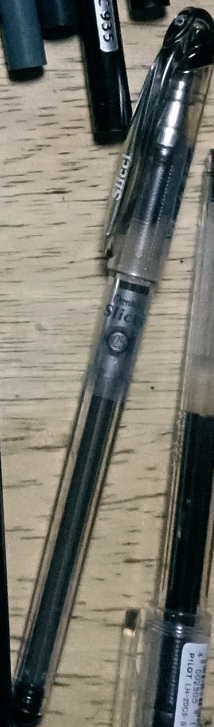
### Tools of the trade

By the end of this project I'll have used a variety of tools. You can see the pens, pencils, and the solvent (in this case, Gamsol solvent) in the image to the right. At this point I'm ready to start tackling the final piece. I know I'll be making some of it up as I go, including the details of the character design. I'm okay with that. I enjoy drawing into the unknown and keeping myself on my toes. It keeps things interesting and fresh.

Above: Inspired to move away from the norm

Right: The tools used for this project







### Rough sketch

Now working on the Dura-lene, I block the rough sketch in with a 50% Cool Grey Prismacolor pencil. I keep a light hand so that I'm not putting down too much waxy pigment, which would be difficult to draw over for the final. In the end, the 50% Cool Grey doesn't show up, so I'm not worried about how messy it might get. I also don't put down too much detail, just enough to serve as reminders for the next stage.

### The complete sketch

Above right, you can see the full rough in 50% Cool Grey. It gives me all the information I need to move into the final lines. Some details will change along the way, but that's the fun part of this journey – as new ideas pop into my head, I can add them into the final drawing.

### Creating focus

I often start with the focal point of the image when I begin the final drawing. I can draw as tightly as I want to here, knowing that I will work more and more loosely as I move toward the edges of the frame. In this case I know I want the warrior's profile to catch our eye right away, so I want it to cut the page like an axe! I draw with sharp lines that should read clearly regardless of how small one might see the image.

### Developing Sylls

I continue to flesh out the foreground and middle-ground with a black pencil, chiseling out details and working in little design elements that will start to fill out the story should someone choose to look closely enough. I'm inspired to go a little more

Middle Eastern with our warrior's design, as I like the potential "fish out of water" narrative it creates in contrast with the Nordic take on the were-creatures, which is most evident in the choices of animals.

Above top left  
Roughing out the image

Above right  
The full rough sketch

Above bottom left  
The focal point is key.  
Contrast is your friend!

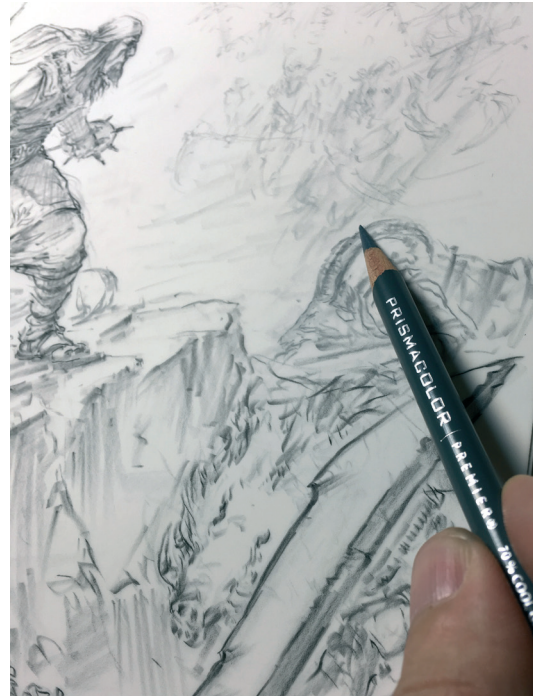
Right  
Developing the scene  
with black pencil



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**“You just have to trust in past experiences to know that it will all work out”**

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### Building up tones

I move to a 70% Cool Grey Prismacolor pencil as I start sketching in the background. This ensures that my shading never gets too dark, so I don't have to worry about how hard I might be pushing. Once I start adding tones, the 70% Cool Grey areas can still be made darker, whereas a black pencil would make the distant background elements far darker than I want for the final product. Using gray makes it all so much easier.

### The final underdrawing

Above right is the final drawing for the line art phase. After this I will apply a tone to it and get into the lighting and a bit of form-modeling and rendering. At this point the differences between the black background, the middle-ground, and the gray background are subtle, but their presence will become clearer later. Sometimes you just have to trust in past experiences to know that it will all work out in the end!

### Flip the page

To work in the tone or value, I flip the page over. I'm working on Dura-lene, but tracing paper or vellum are similar and would work for this technique as well. I prefer acetate because I can't ruin it and I don't like sketching on paper with much "tooth." From the reverse side, the lines fade a little and the image's atmosphere becomes more evident.

### Get scribbling!

I scribble in the general values that I want on the back of the paper, knowing that my drawing is still safe on the other side. I use black in the foreground and 90% Cool Grey in the middle-ground and the darker areas of the background.

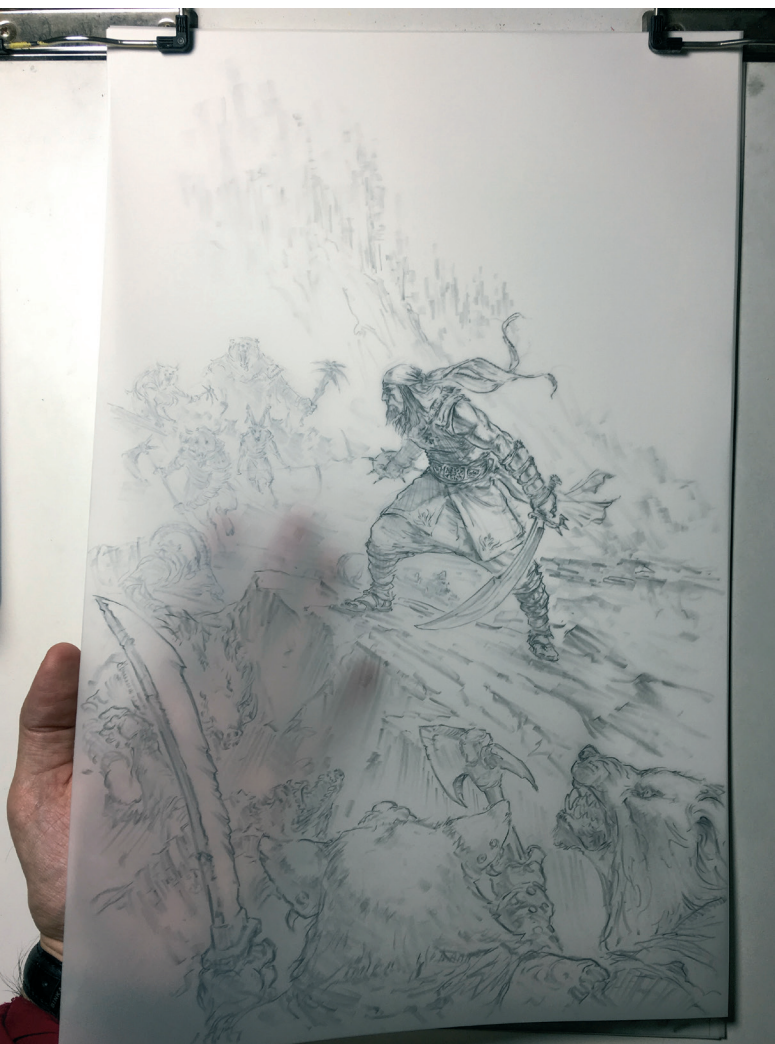
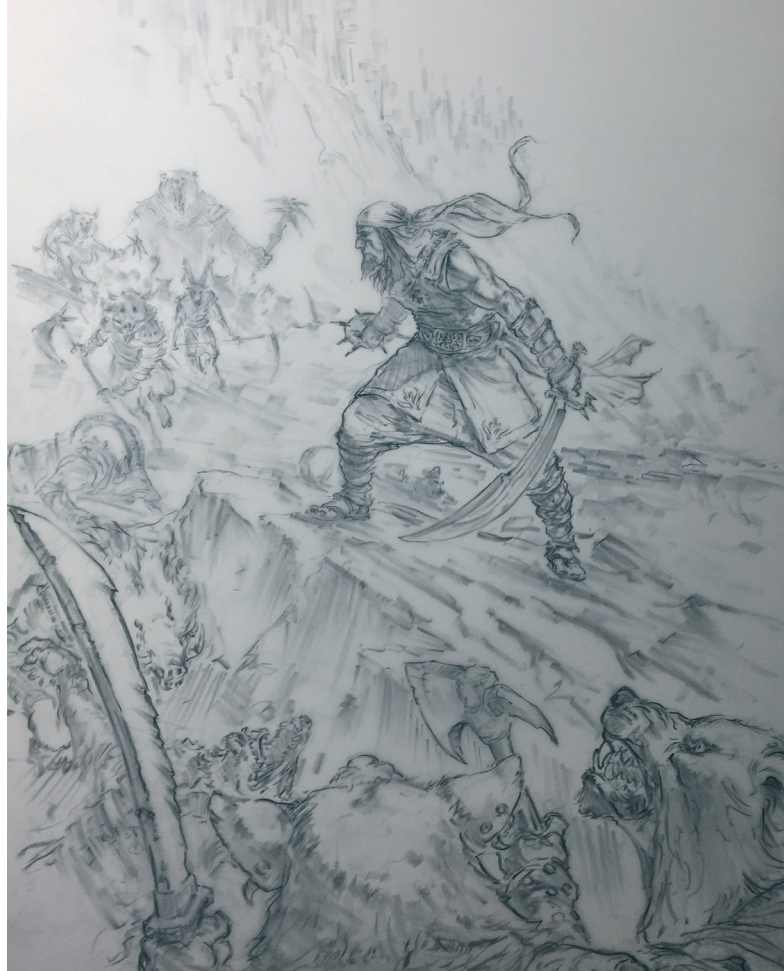
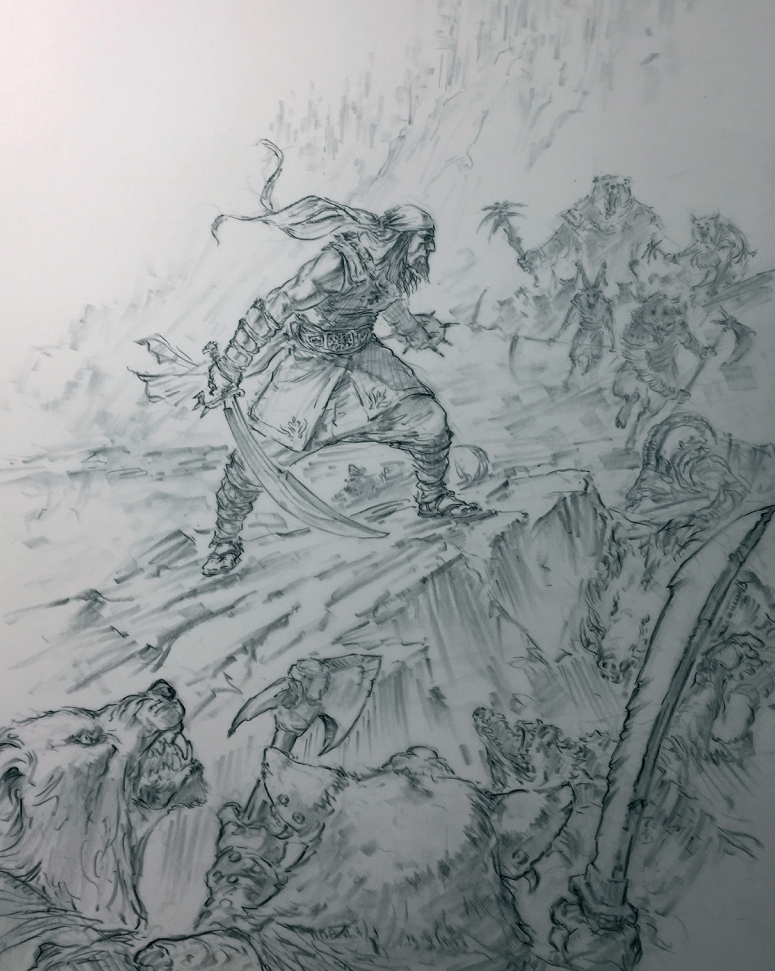
I leave some space in lighter areas, knowing that everything will blend smoothly and create some gradients. You can be messy here. The drawing on the front will help to tighten things up.

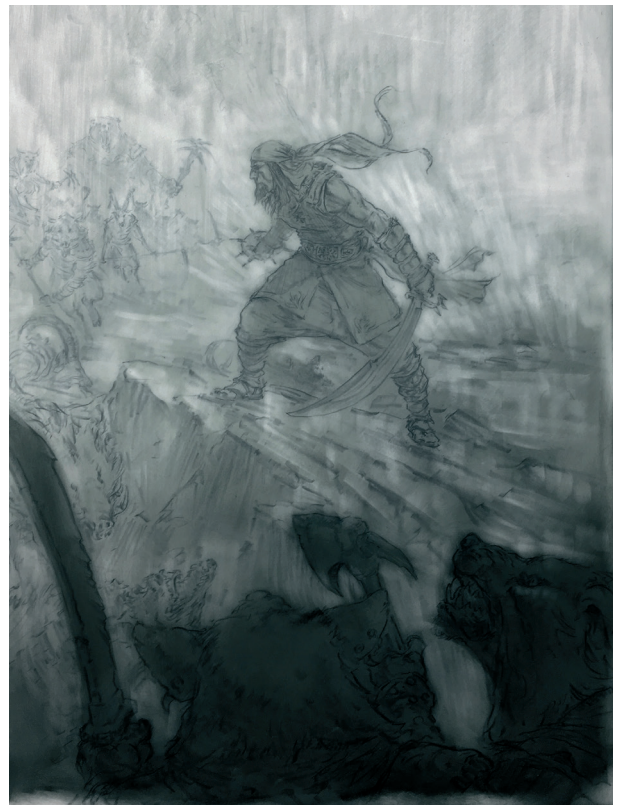
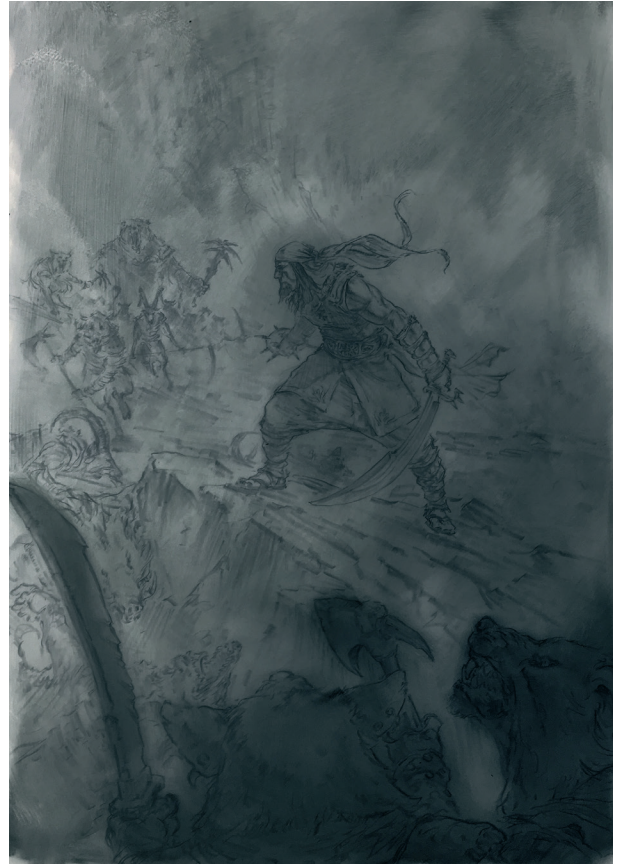
Above  
Adding values  
for atmosphere

Top near right  
The final lines before  
the tone comes in

Top far right and  
bottom near right  
Flip the page over and  
check for mistakes

Bottom far right  
Scribbling in the tones.  
Don't worry! The drawing  
is on the other side







### Blending with Gamsol

I will be using Gamsol solvent and a shop towel to blend it all together. Paper towels will work as well, but they're not as sturdy, so I like the blue shop towels more. They can easily be found in any hardware store.

Gamsol is an odorless mineral spirit that dries quite quickly, and using a few drops on a shop towel, I can just smear away and melt the colored pencils. This is what will give me the base tone. It's much like working on a midtone paper, but here I can dictate how dark that tone is and where it might get darker or lighter. That's very useful.

### The final base tone

Establishing a base tone gives me a lot of room to play in terms of value. I can erase a lot before it returns to white, as well as having room to go darker if I want. There may be some back and forth along the way with erasing and adding back pencil as needed.

### Erasing lights

I begin to erase out the main light areas with a kneaded eraser. It's still not detailed work, but simply creating light masses in a general way, paying attention to the overall value structure, and always knowing that I can add values back in if I decide to.

### General values

I've established the general value structure now: a dark foreground with the values getting lighter as they recede into the distance. Some areas have become a little too light, but this is a necessary sacrifice to get where I need to be. I'll address those issues later along the way. This technique is a lot like painting, where you can push and pull until you find what you are looking for.

### Reworking tones

I bring back my 70% Cool Grey pencil to add some tone back into the background figures. I want them to pop forward more and create

a sense that there's some mist or spray off the ocean ("the sea-foam misting the air") giving the scene some thicker atmosphere.

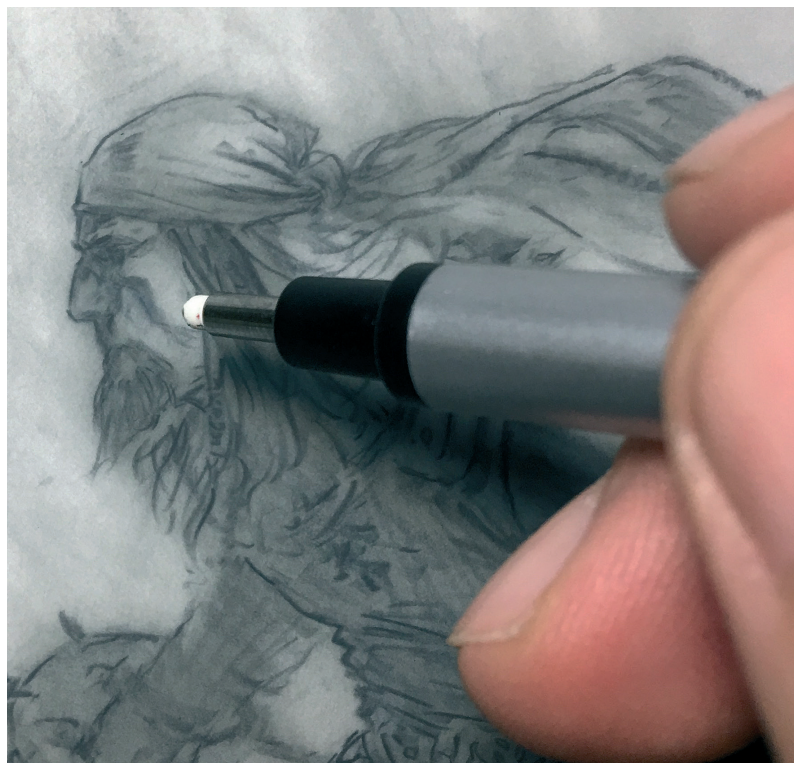
Top and middle far left  
Melting the waxy  
pencils with Gamsol

Top near left  
The full base tone is there.  
Now for some erasure!

Bottom far left  
Working with a kneaded  
eraser for soft control

Bottom near left  
General value  
structure: achieved!

Above  
Before and after tone  
is worked back in



### Erasing details

I switch to my Tombow Mono Zero eraser for details now. With this I can erase back to white if needed, or just keep the tones subtle. It's a very responsive tool that allows for a huge range of detailing. If you mess up you can always grab your shop towel and rub it out, and since the drawing is on the front you never have to worry about ruining it. In that regard it's an incredibly forgiving technique.

### Refining details and tones

I start to see where the image is headed. I'm bringing in more detail, making the highlights pop, and making sure the silhouettes read clearly. I can bring in some more pencil to darken things as needed, and chisel out shapes with my eraser as well. Depending on the final look I want, I could add in some lines on this side and render it out, but I want something a little more line-focused, so I'll stick to the front side being the finish.

### Adding more atmosphere

As I look at the front of the image, I decide I want some heavier dark tones at the top,

thanks to some advice from a friend, to help the warrior pop out more. This will also help to sell the stormier atmosphere suggested in the text. I decide to add a bit of dark onto the front of the image here, because I don't mind if those background lines get blurred out. I bring in some white pencil to pop out some shapes as well. I'm aiming for a drawing, not a painting, so I'm happy with calling some attention to the lines.

### Finishing up

I use the white pencil again to bring out more details in the foreground and background. I also unify some of the background values to the composition, blending them so they aren't so spotty. This creates a much simpler, stronger final structure.

Since I'm not above using the computer when needed, I use an Overlay layer in Adobe Photoshop to adjust the contrast on my final image. I don't want to do any actual painting on the computer in this piece, as I want it to be as traditional as possible, so I just adjust the dark and light values with a large soft



brush on the computer. This takes about three minutes once the drawing is completed on paper.

Now I have a final image that pops in a satisfying way. The composition reads the way I want and gives plenty for us to look at, enjoy, and imagine.

Above left

My devilish detailing eraser!

Above right

Establishing highlights and atmosphere, it begins to come together

Top right

Checking the front to see how it all reads

Bottom right

Final image

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## ARTIST'S TIPS

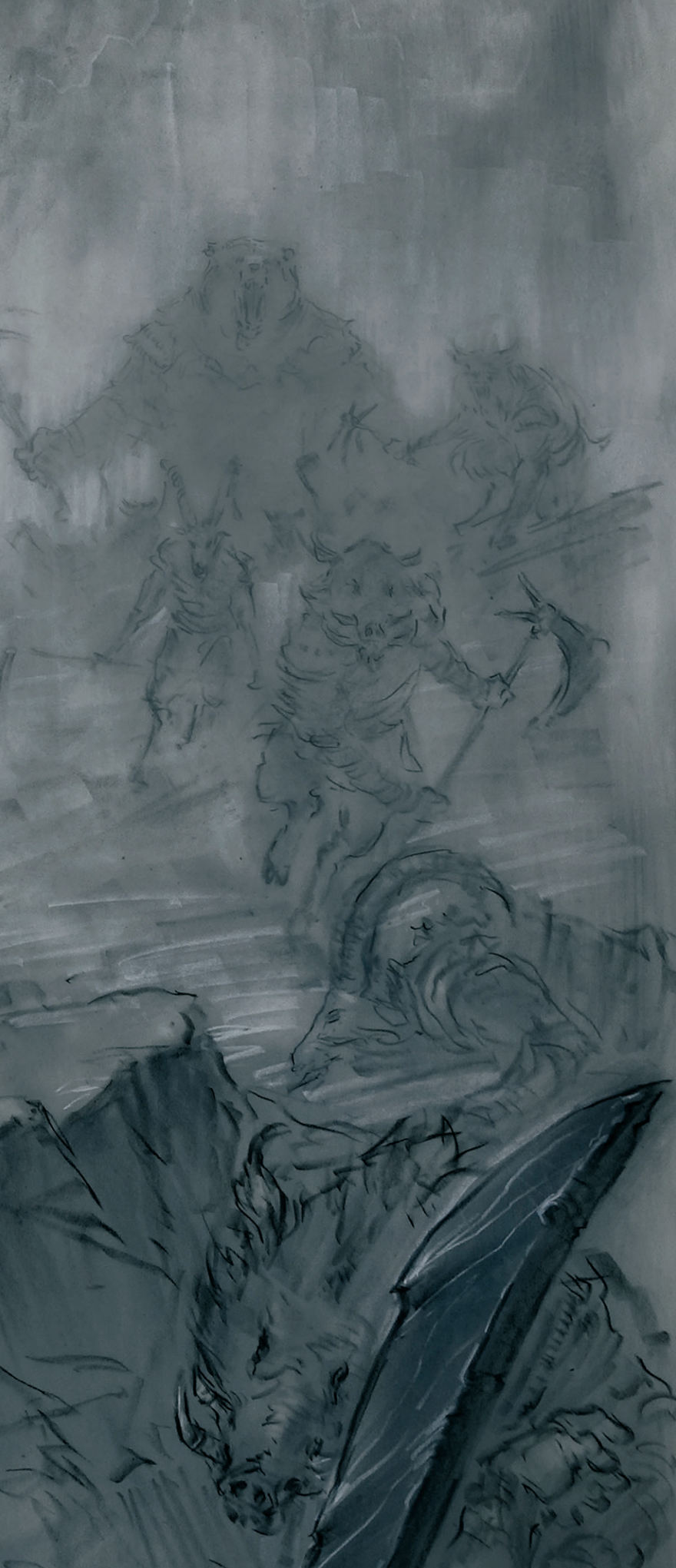
### Mileage is the key!

I am frequently asked how I learned to draw the way I do, whether it's about a pen sketch or a pencil sketch. The answer is simple: I draw a lot. Here's the secret: if you want to draw well, draw a *lot*! If you want to get better faster, draw *more*! At the same time, we must always draw with purpose. Never go on auto-pilot. Always have a goal: make interesting marks, draw good hands, draw a great gesture. Anything! Just have a clear goal.

### Exploration fosters growth

We always need to explore as artists. Drawing and sketching and painting in different mediums helps to keep our minds supple, which aids in problem-solving. And that's what art is: solving a visual problem. The more I draw in pen, the better my pencil lines become. The more I paint in watercolor or oils, the better my digital painting becomes. That diversity helps us think in ways that might otherwise be lost on us. The same goes for interests. Diversify your subject matter and reading material. Study things you know nothing about. It helps us grow as artists and human beings.





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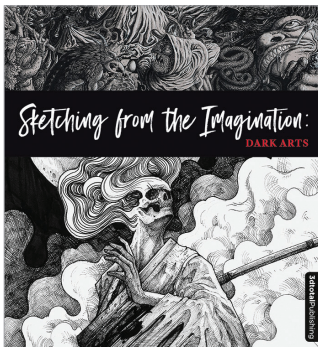
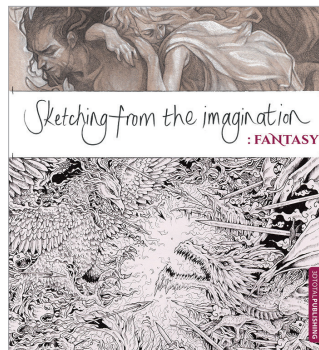
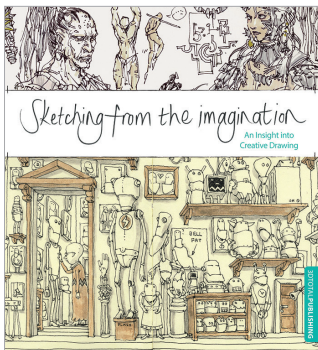
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