

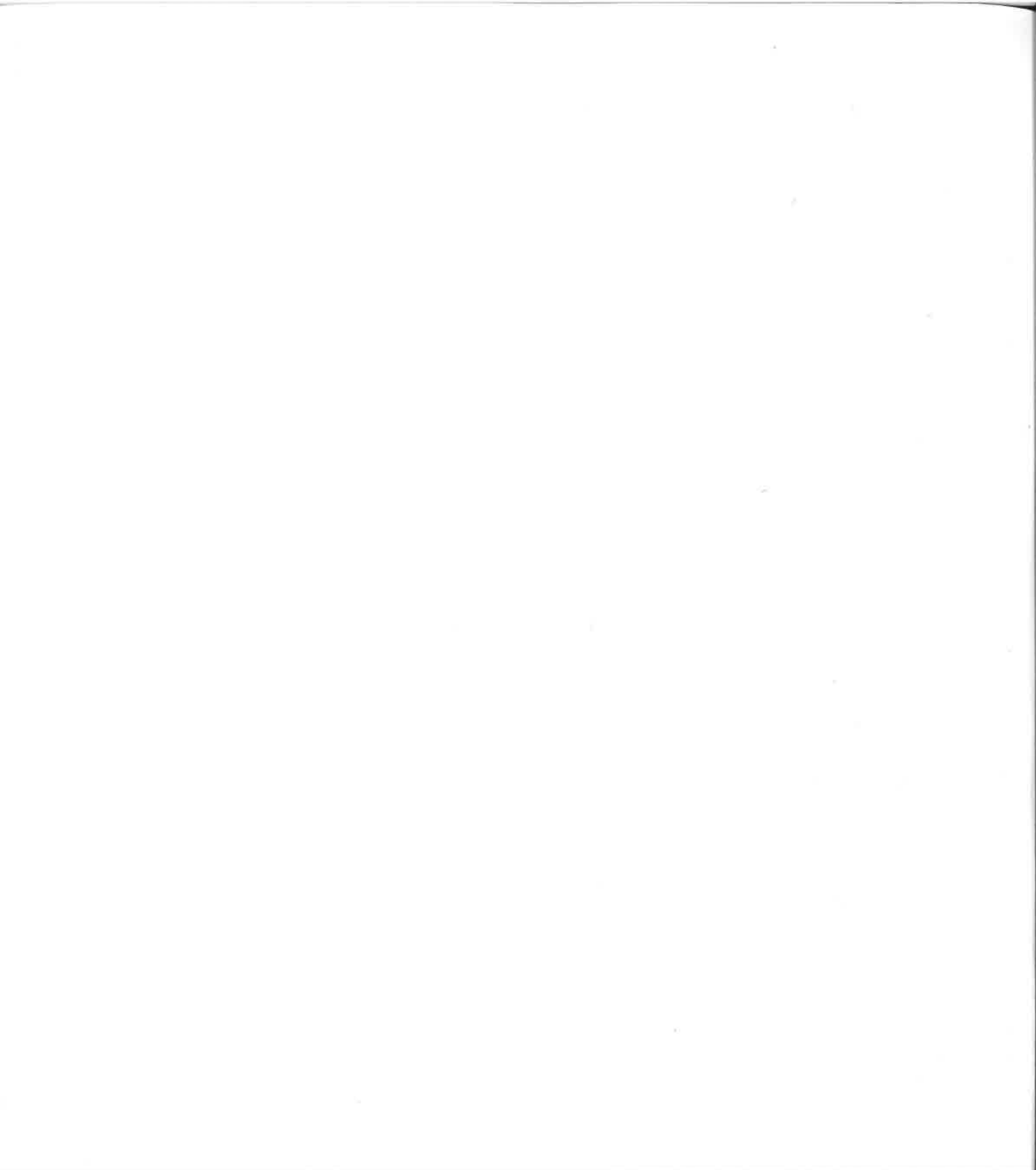


Sketching from the Imagination:

CHARACTERS



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Sketching from the Imagination: Characters.

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INTRODUCTION

The humble sketch is where every visual artist's best ideas start. Whether you sketch in pencil or ink or straight onto a graphics tablet, whether you sketch to remember a good idea or to find one, most artists can agree that this exploratory stage is key to their creativity and development. It's a time to experiment, make mistakes, make discoveries, and nurture your ideas from tiny kernels to fully grown concepts.

We've already covered the genres of *Fantasy* and *Sci-fi* in this series, but we realized there are so many exciting subjects and talented artists whose work isn't strictly either. What about ordinary people? Cartoon animals? Portraits? *Sketching from the Imagination: Characters* is our way to bring some of those eclectic subjects together in one book. In this volume you'll find a myriad of wonderful characters that are

magical, monstrous, fantastical, funny, human, animal, and even donut-based, but they're all united by a focus on great character design. All these artists love to capture personalities, gestures, and snippets of bigger stories through their characters.

We're delighted to bring you such a varied and diverse book, featuring fifty brilliant concept artists, comic artists, illustrators, and animators, and the hundreds of characters that inhabit their minds and sketchbooks. We hope that you enjoy this selection and all the exciting ideas it has to offer, and that it might inspire you in creating characters of your own, whoever they might be.

MARISA LEWIS

Editor, 3dtotal Publishing



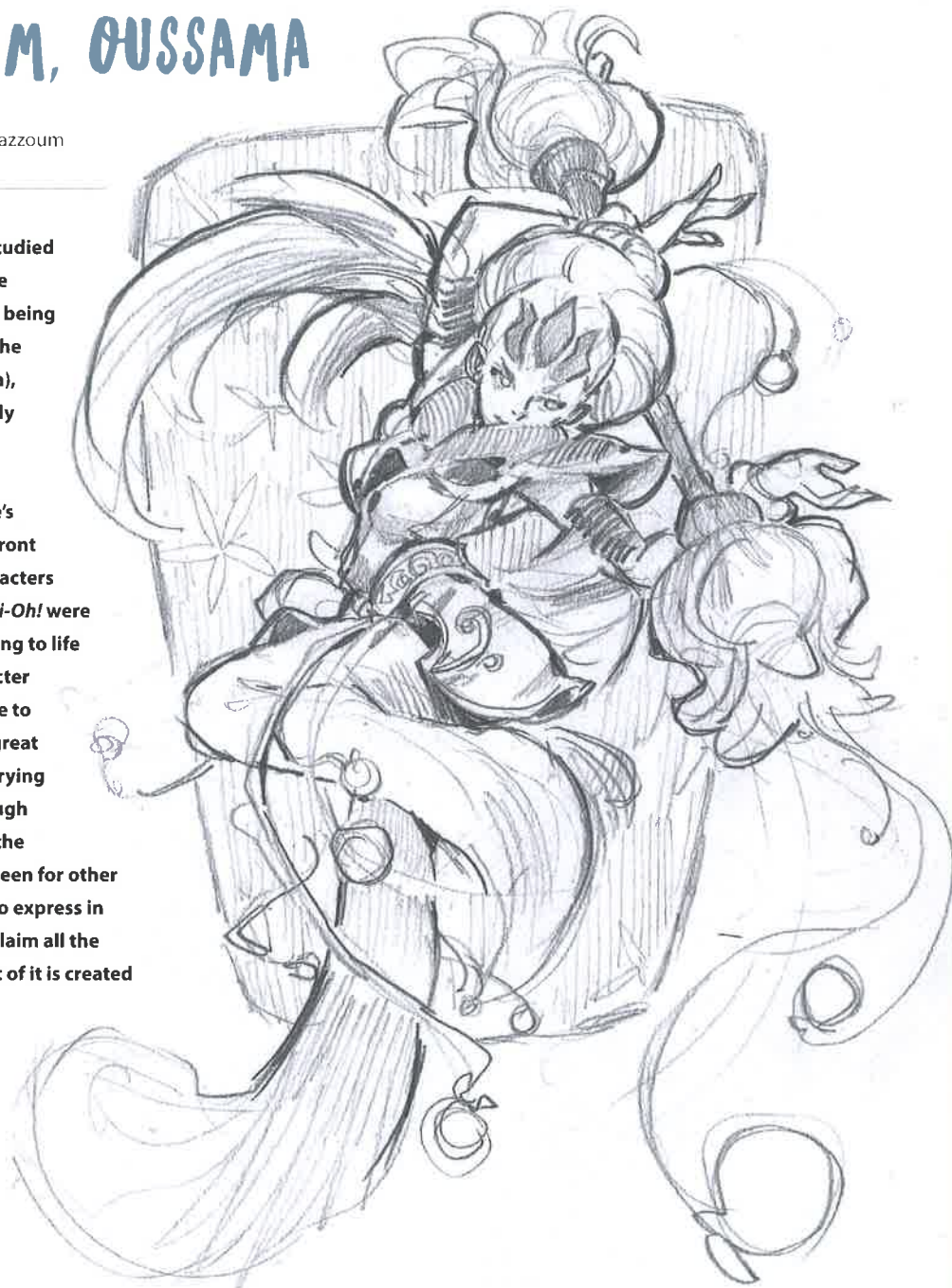
AGAZZOUN, OUSSAMA

white-leyth.com

All images © Oussama Agazzoum

I grew up in a small town in Morocco and studied electrical engineering in high school before deciding to pursue my childhood dream of being an artist. The childhood of every kid from the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), especially those born in late 1980s and early 1990s, was marked by certain anime titles. I was one of those kids; I watched a lot of anime growing up, and after every episode's end, I would grab any school notebook in front of me and simply start drawing all the characters I'd seen. *Pokémon*, *Digimon*, and even *Yu-Gi-Oh!* were all important parts of my childhood, bringing to life the part of me that wanted to create character and creature designs with enough presence to make a name for themselves, just like the great titles I grew up adoring. I remember even trying to design content that would be good enough to live in the worlds of these anime series; the thought of seeing my own work on a TV screen for other kids to enjoy was something I found hard to express in words alone. It would not be just of me to claim all the credit for the work I produce, because most of it is created by the child inside me who still feels a rush of joy at every piece of art I complete.

I'm a little spontaneous when it comes to sketching. I tend to see interesting shapes and designs in my mind, but without much of an idea as to what those shapes are at first. I brainstorm ideas until a story develops in my head, and the shapes and designs come to life.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My main fountain of inspiration is the world of fantasy in almost all its forms. I can't express enough just how much fantasy affects me as an artist: elves, for example, with their tall, flawless figures, beautiful clothing and embroidery, flawless skills with the blade, and deep connections with nature. What if I were to create something as beautiful? Hence I love studying traditions, cultures, looking at fashion, watching movies, and playing games – so I can create worlds based on ours for everyone and anyone to relate to.

MATERIALS

I mainly use mechanical pencils, usually 0.5 mm, because they offer the most amount of detail on A4 and smaller sizes of paper that I usually work on. I use a 2H pencil for a light base sketch, then a 2B or 4B for darker lines and refining. For me, this is the most quick and efficient way I can sketch and lay down ideas. I also use brush pens sometimes, and fineliner pens of different sizes to achieve different line weights, either for rendering my sketches or when drawing directly from observation to gain more confidence in my lines.

I also use Adobe Photoshop to refine my sketches and play with the Liquify tool to see how I can make my shapes more interesting. Sometimes I add digital colors, or I skip the traditional part for a change and sketch directly with shapes, color, and light without lines.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

One of my favorite fun exercises to do is to switch off my brain and just think of interesting shapes. I start drawing small

random thumbnails without a specific idea, which prevents me from over-thinking the functionality, believability, or story behind a design, which might hold me back sometimes and keep me in the “ordinary” zone. Instead I get a library of random characters to refer to from this exercise and can pick one to develop at any time.

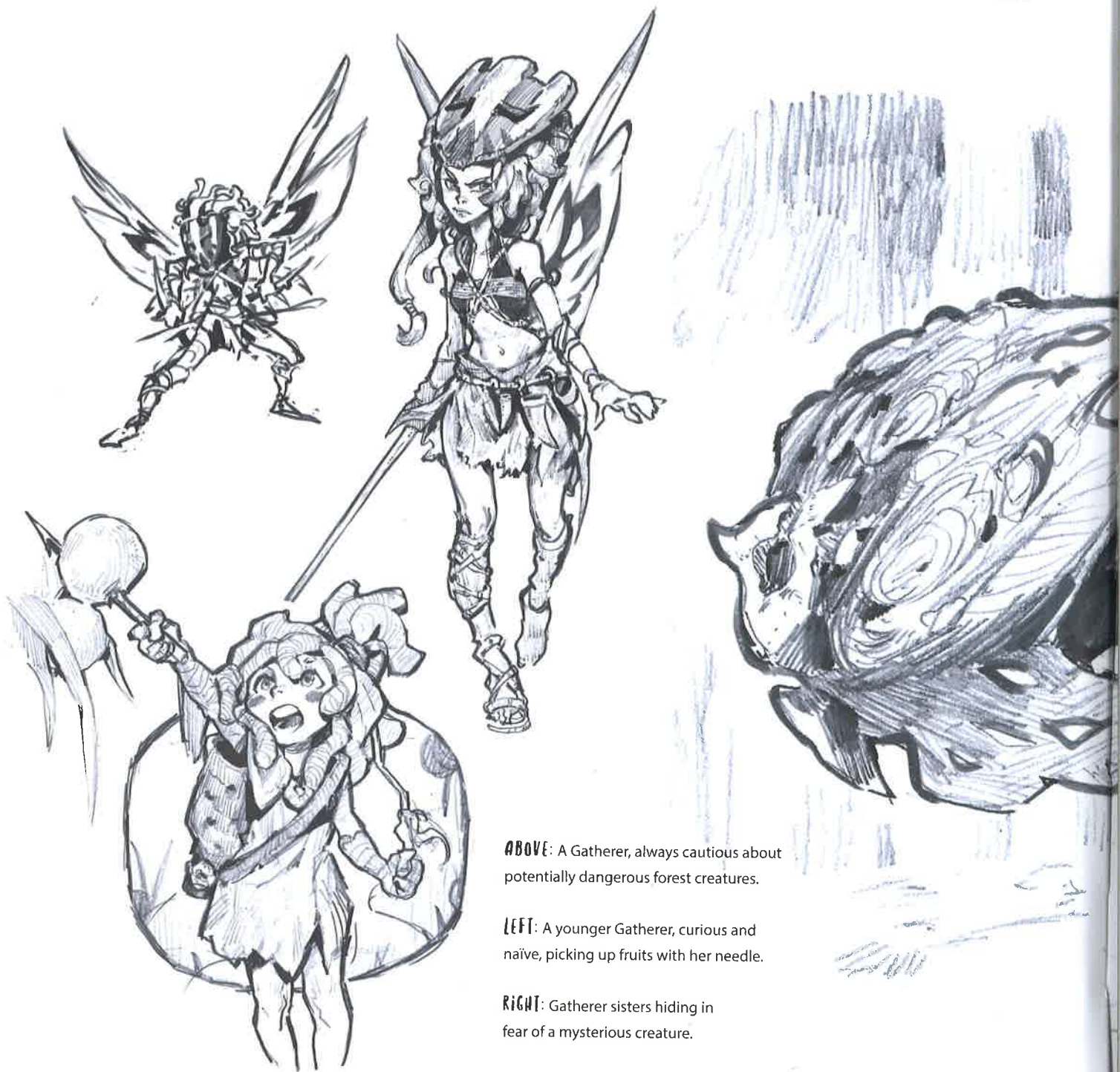
If I have a specific idea I want to work on however, personal or job-related, then I enjoy doing research first to solidify the design with functionality, story, and real-world visual references so that it stays relatable. If I feel it's dragged too much to the ordinary, I try to go back to my random thumbnails and either exaggerate some shapes or add a twist.

LEFT: Each of this mage's spells is a dancing performance.

RIGHT: The Four-Eyed Greatsword has found a new bearer!

“MY MAIN FOUNTAIN OF INSPIRATION IS THE WORLD OF FANTASY IN ALMOST ALL ITS FORMS. I CAN'T EXPRESS ENOUGH JUST HOW MUCH FANTASY AFFECTS ME AS AN ARTIST”

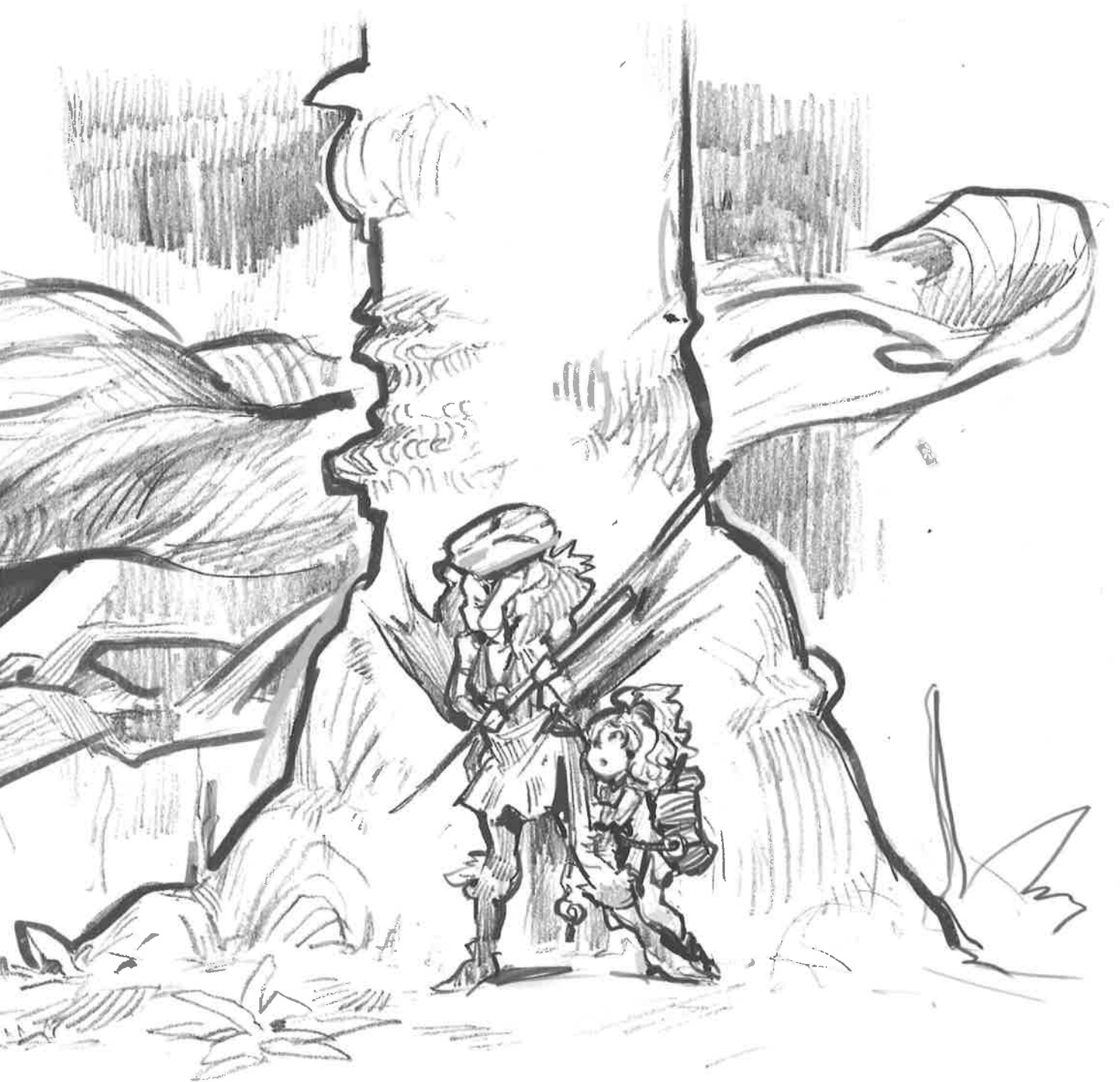


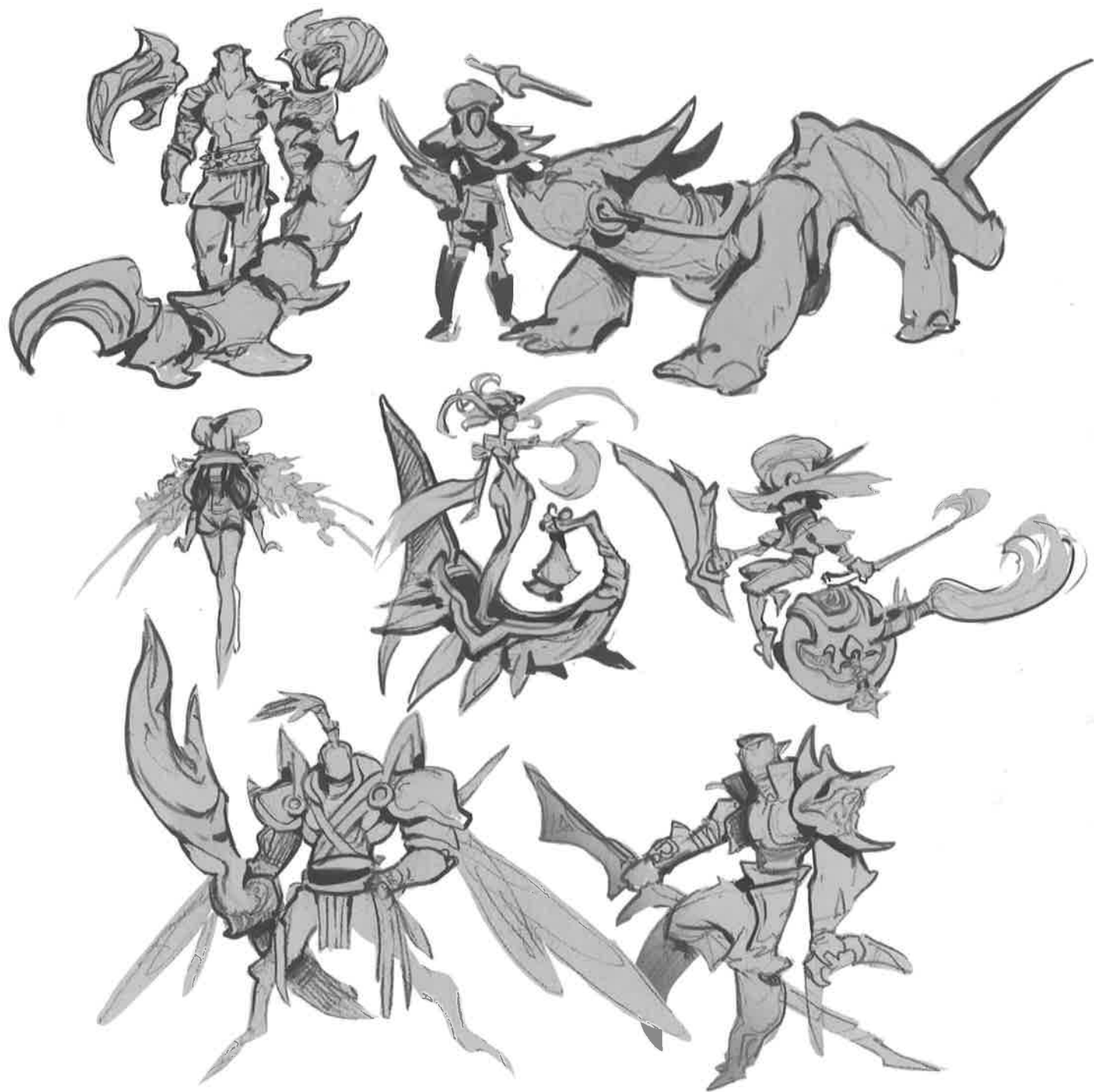


ABOVE: A Gatherer, always cautious about potentially dangerous forest creatures.

LEFT: A younger Gatherer, curious and naïve, picking up fruits with her needle.

RIGHT: Gatherer sisters hiding in fear of a mysterious creature.





LEFT: Random "brain off" thumbnails to use when needed.

RIGHT: Design exploration for a musician character. This musician left her fame and glory to play for animals – a more welcoming audience for her new natural tones.





AGIRRE, AMAGOIa

amagoiaagirre.com

All images © Amagoia Agirre

Sketching is the stage of drawing I most enjoy; there are no limitations at this point. Most of the time I don't even plan to finish the drawings, I just take pleasure in the process, building the characters and their stories as I go, not knowing who they are until the last strokes. Sketches also serve me as a visual library where I can go back anytime to fetch and reuse ideas or concepts in order to create more finished artworks. Browsing through old sketchbooks and rediscovering old ideas I had long forgotten about is very rewarding for me.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I get inspired by almost everything and everyone surrounding me. However, fiction is my number one place to look for inspiration. I think it's safe to say I've been influenced by every novel, movie, and comic book I have had in my hands.

Fantasy has always been my favorite genre. The romanticism of the classic chivalry romances and folktales has accompanied me since I was a child and has become one of my greatest inspirations when drawing.

Traveling is also a great source of inspiration. Whether I visit long-abandoned ruins or bustling streets, I always have glimpses of ideas or stories revolving in my head. I later translate these ideas into drawings.

MATERIALS

Depending on where I am, I just use what I can find around me. When inking, I use a Pilot 0.4 mm pen (a favorite of mine), Pentel brushes, and Indian ink. For pencil drawings, I use an HB pencil, a mechanical pencil, and a 3H pencil for the base drawing. I also use Tombow markers for the finishing touches. However, when I'm not at home and don't have my materials around, I use ballpoint pens (very underrated but fantastic for pressure control) and regular office paper.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

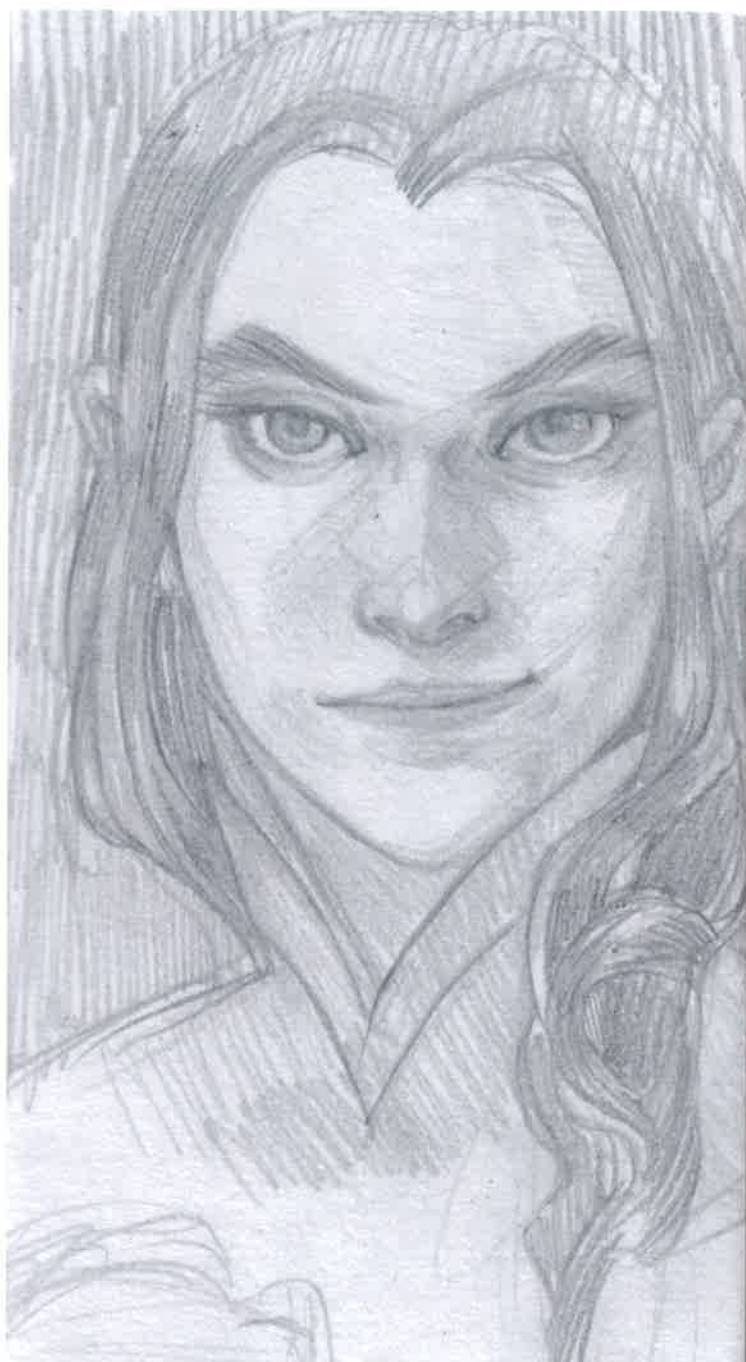
I use different processes according to the drawing I'm doing and the materials I'm using. I don't like using a base drawing when using inks – first because I usually feel like I'm ruining the original drawing, and second because it is a good way to improve my control of the lines. Once the drawing is done I sometimes add some tones using markers.

When using pencils I usually scribble a loose drawing with an H pencil and then add detail to it with an HB or mechanical pencil.

RIGHT: Character exploration. I started these with a Pilot 0.4 mm pen but figured I needed more control and switched to a ballpoint pen.









FAR TOP LEFT: Office paper and ballpoint pens are your best friends. This started as a portrait and ended up as a three-character composition.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: I used a very loose base drawing for this one as I wasn't so sure about what pose to draw.

MIDDLE LEFT: A recurring character of mine. Using pencils allows me to put much more detail into the drawing compared to using inks.

NEAR LEFT: Another ballpoint drawing. I enjoy drawing drapery very much.

ABOVE: A more cartoony sketch. Feathers are a recurring ornamental device in my drawings.



LEFT: Drawn in a café with 3H and HB pencils. I usually try to fill the page as much as possible.

ABOVE: I try to use the eraser as little as possible, hence some construction lines are still visible in the end.

RIGHT: I had a clear idea with this one, so I made a base drawing with a 3H pencil. I also added some detail with markers and gold ink.





ALFIREVIC, GAUTIER

gautier-alfi.tumblr.com

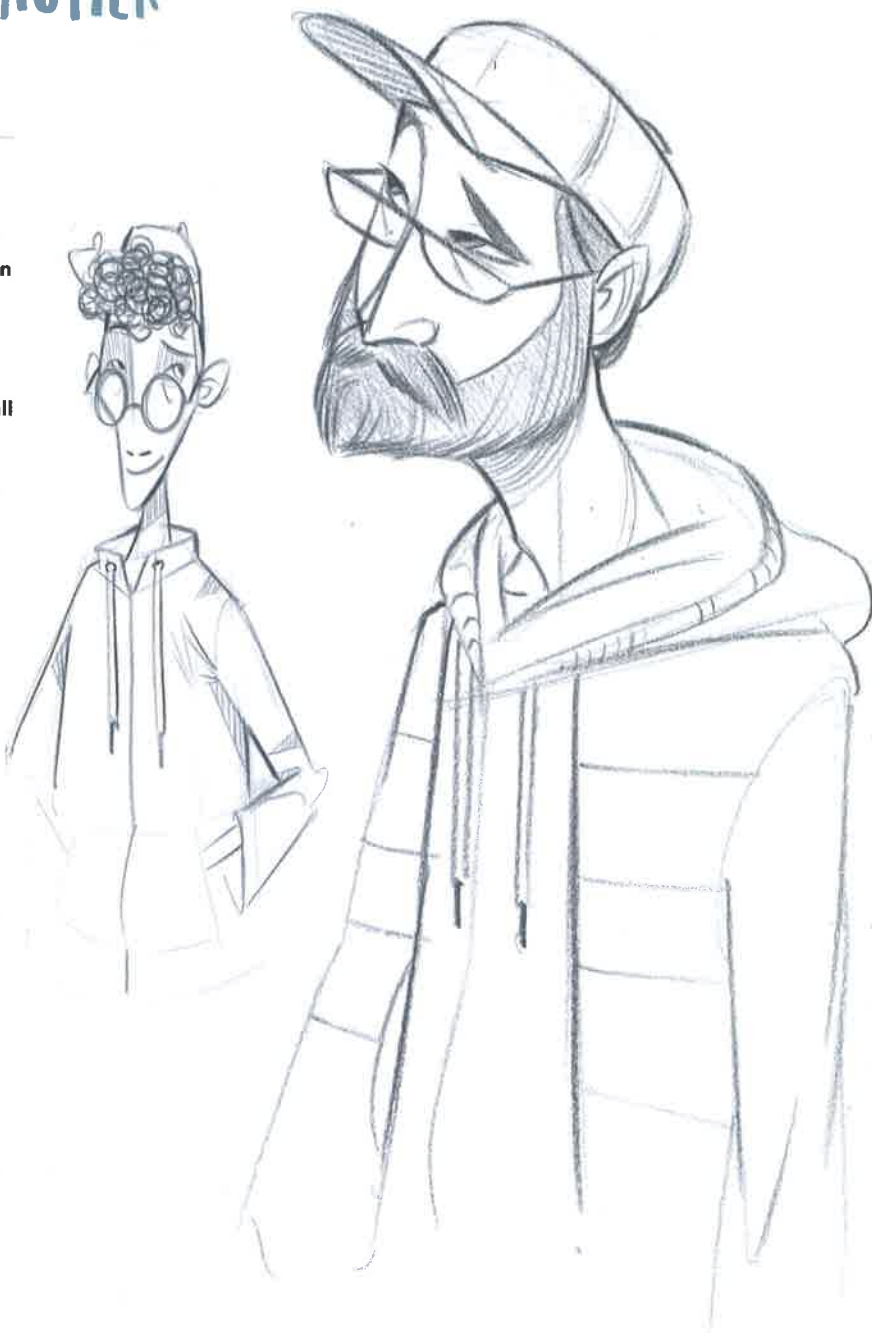
All images © Gautier Alfievic

To me, sketching is one of the most interesting parts of the character design process. It's where you get to have a lot of fun exploring as many options as you can for a character. It's where you go crazy. When I finish a character, I like to go back to my research to see how I got there – it's always fun to do this! Having a sketchbook is a good way to keep track of your overall progress. I like to take a look at my older drawings when I don't feel confident about what I'm doing.

I recently rediscovered the importance of traditional sketching. I used to start my images by sketching digitally, which isn't a bad idea because in the end you'll still have tried a lot of different options for your final design. However, you can become too used to it, until it becomes something that you do systematically, and you're just disappointed when you return to drawing on paper. There is no Ctrl+Z on paper, so what you do is what you get. In my opinion, what makes a good design is the idea behind it and how you managed to achieve it. Because paper is uncompromising, you have to think beforehand; it forces you to form a good idea and not expect one to just come down from the sky. If you've put enough thought into your drawing, there is no reason for it to be bad.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s, watching a lot of movies such as *The Goonies*, *Jurassic Park*, *Jumanji*, and *Hook*. What I like about these movies is that you often see things from a child's perspective. Most of the time, the child is out there in the world by themselves; I've



been drawing a lot of characters like that lately. I like the fact that they are somehow forced to face things that are way too big for them.

MATERIALS

I like to draw with either colored pencils (Faber-Castell's Polychromos are incredibly good), or with what I consider the king of pencils: Prismacolor's Premier Black (PC 935). I like to use soft pencils because they produce more dynamic lines, especially if you try to draw using your shoulder. I like to draw on soft paper so that the pencil can really glide on it.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I try to avoid sketching with my forearm and sketch more with my shoulder, in order to make real decisions with my lines. Most of the time, if you're not sure about what you're doing, your drawing won't be convincing, so don't put too much pressure on yourself. The drawing you're about to do is probably not the best you'll do in your life. You should always keep in mind that in the end it's all about having fun.

FAR LEFT: I drew an animator and friend from Triggerfish Animation Studios in South Africa, where I did an internship.

NEAR LEFT: Another friend from Triggerfish Animation Studios. I like to keep this kind of memory in my sketchbook, as it also shows my state of mind at that time.

RIGHT: One of the earliest sketches for an aviator design I did for the Character Design Challenge on Facebook, drawn really quickly to warm up.





"YOU SHOULD
ALWAYS KEEP
IN MIND THAT
IN THE END
IT'S ALL ABOUT
HAVING FUN"

LEFT: Some research I did for the aviator-themed design mentioned previously. A medley of digital and traditional sketches. The one in the bottom left is the final design. I try to have this level of finish before coloring a design.

RIGHT: A quick sketch of a character for the character design Facebook group 4forFAN. They had a really cool and inspiring theme: "tree princess."



Don't rush!

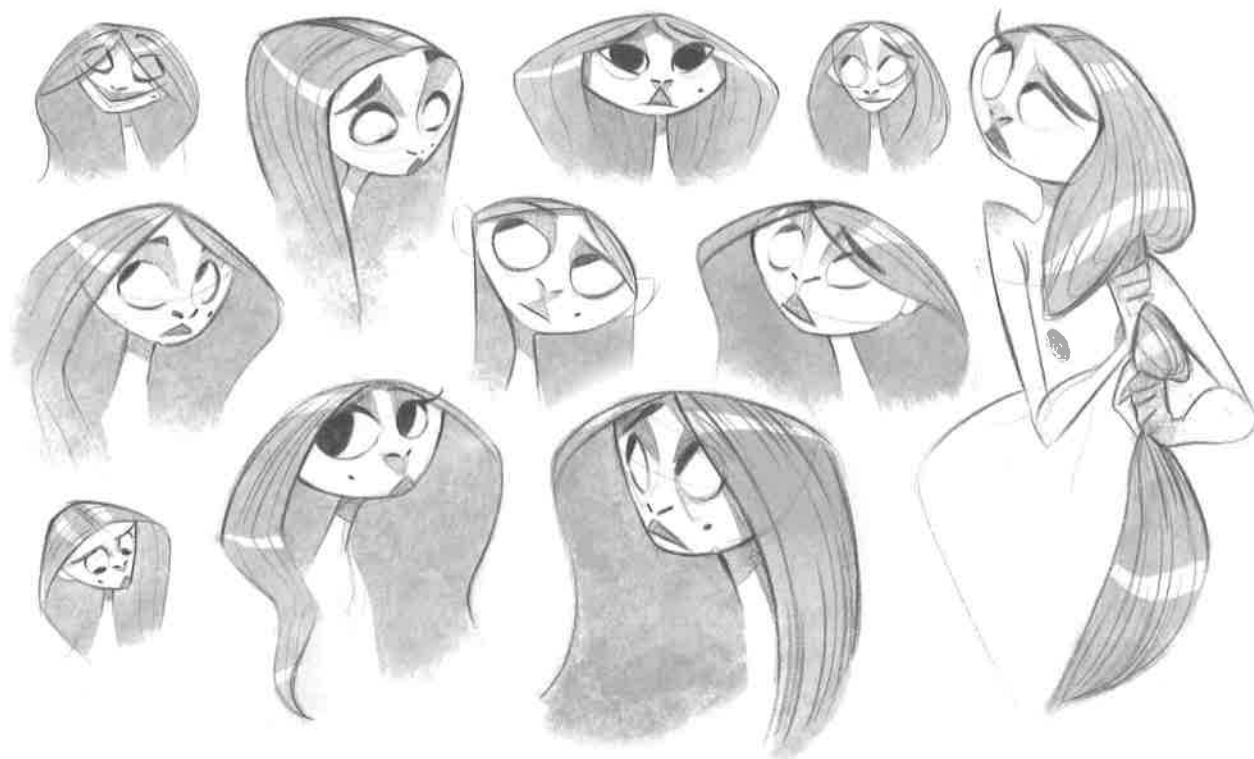
Unless you don't have a lot of time for a project, take your time. A lot of people want to reach the coloring phase very quickly, which is often a mistake. Even if you have god-like coloring skills, they will never save a bad drawing, so be sure to take your time during the sketching and drawing phase. In my opinion, the drawing has to work by itself, and coloring is a bonus.

Learn from others

Drawing is just like music: the most common way to learn how to play guitar is by trying to play existing songs. As long as you don't claim it as your own and you consider it as an exercise, it's fine. Draw still frames from animated movies; draw comic book pages; draw sketches from artists who are better than you. I like to call that "artistic reverse engineering." In my opinion, there is no such thing as talent; only hard work provides results.

Don't be narrow-minded!

A lot of people I come across are reluctant to try 3D or other digital techniques. I've learned so much by modeling characters in 3D, as it forces me to be able to picture a character in volume. I now do my best to keep that vision when I draw on paper. People used to model with clay in order to get that kind of extra perception. If you have 3D skills, or any other useful knowledge, don't be afraid to use them. Using different tools to get the result that you want is not cheating. Don't rely too much on this, though; it's all about finding a good balance.

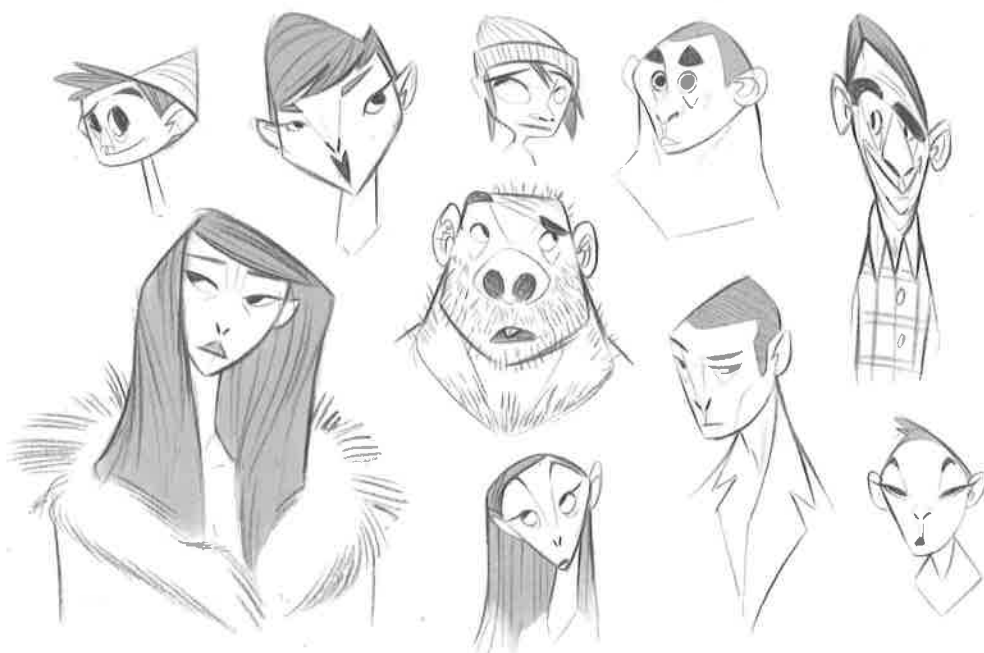


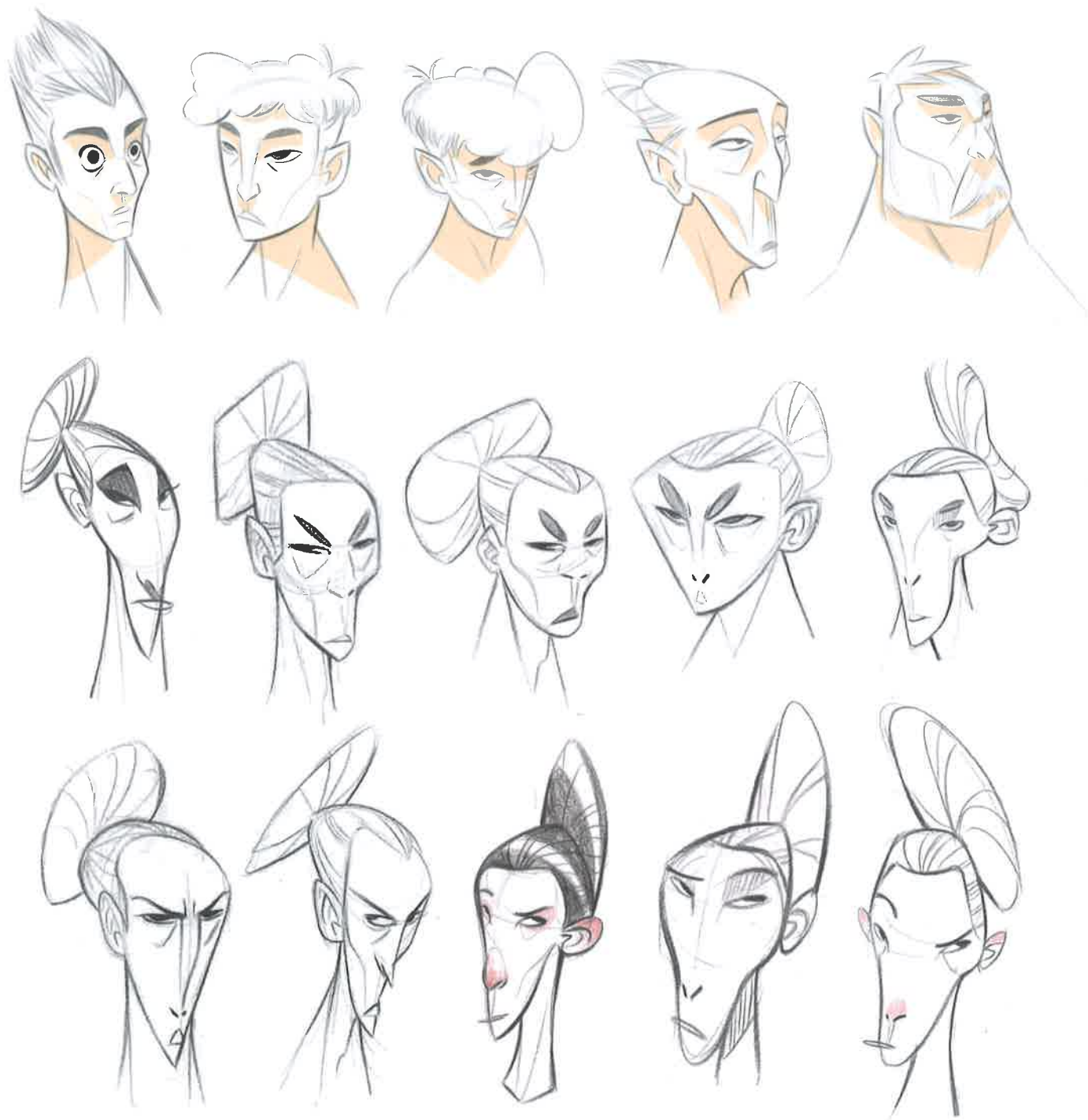
ABOVE: Some research for a previous graduation project based on *The Little Mermaid*. All done with Prismacolor's Premier Black.

LEFT: This is a typical page of my sketchbook: lots of faces and crazy shape exploration just to have fun and experiment!

TOP RIGHT: We had to create a sci-fi short story for school, so here I was thinking about what the character line-up could have been for it.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Early face research for a samurai-themed Character Design Challenge.







ANDERSON, RICHARD

flaptrapsart.com

All images © Richard Anderson

I can't remember a time when I didn't love drawing, but I do remember when I started to take drawing more seriously as a craft. When I moved from Montana to Seattle to study animation, my eyes were opened to how hard I needed to work to get to where I wanted to be – a point to which I think many artists will strive and strive, and never reach.

I had a teacher tell me, "There will be thousands of artists who are better and have more experience than you applying for the same jobs as you. You have two years to go from making 'high school art' to 'pro art,' so you'd better take a sketchbook everywhere with you and draw, draw, draw!" I thought it would be weird carrying a sketchbook and drawing people on buses, in cafés, libraries, and parks, but now I feel weird *not* having a sketchbook with me all the time. That's when I started to take drawing much more seriously. It was still really, really fun, but I was just putting more and more "passion" into it and it became a lifestyle – just drawing all the time.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My inspiration usually comes from other artists and what they create, whether it's photos, comics, movies, or sketchbooks. Some of my favorite sketch artists are Bill Watterson, Sean Gordon Murphy, Ashley Wood, Mathieu Lauffray, Mike Mignola, Craig Mullins, Bob Peak, Kim Jung Gi, Sergio Toppi, and tons more – I can't list all of them. All of this really amps me up to draw. I also listen to a lot of audio books, which help me form mental pictures of characters and inspire me to explore those ideas.

MATERIALS

My preferred tools are Pentel brush pens, my Wacom tablet or Cintiq, a fine ballpoint pen, black ink, and my Pentel flat-edged pen. My favorite tool for life drawing, or just being about town,





"I THOUGHT IT WOULD
BE WEIRD CARRYING
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DRAWING PEOPLE ON
BUSES, IN CAFES,
LIBRARIES, AND PARKS,
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A SKETCHBOOK WITH
ME ALL THE TIME"

is probably a rubber-tipped Pentel brush pen. It gives me a lot of advantages, such as being able to achieve thick and thin lines to describe shapes quickly. It takes a little time to learn and control, but I just love the style and feel of it. It's great for sketching characters as well, and gives you a different look from other pens.

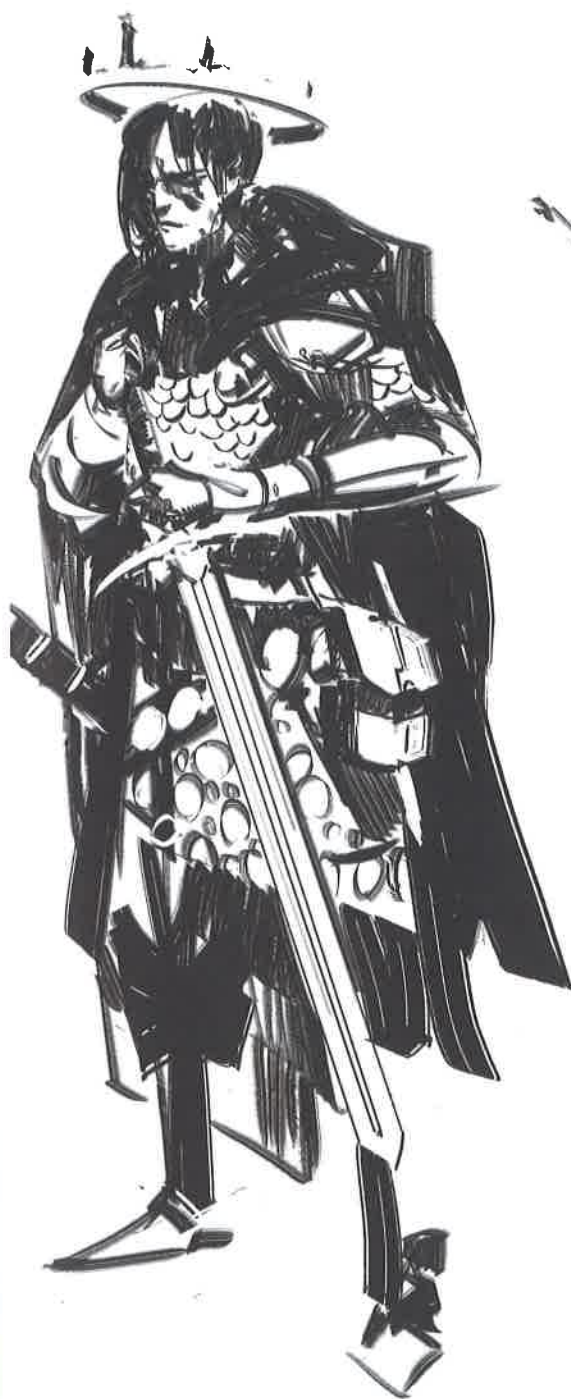
In Photoshop there are so many brushes, but I like to use Pen Tilt with an angled brush set to Initial Direction. It works almost exactly like my brush pen, which feels very natural to me and gives my digital work that traditional feeling.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

To start, I usually use a brush pen or ballpoint pen and sketch little thumbnails, looking for a strong balance between negative and positive shapes. I am asked how I developed my "style" a lot. What helped me the most was life drawing eight to twenty hours a week: short poses for one to five minutes, and longer poses for ten to twenty minutes. While watching TV, I just sketch little things from my head, and study some of my favorite artists. Try to mimic what other artists do – but not directly copy – and experiment with different mediums; don't be scared to try different things and fail.

BOTH PAGES: Painted sketches created in Photoshop, working on a new character design process. Experimenting and trying new things is a good way to learn, so that's what I'm doing here.





LEFT PAGE: Small thumbnail sketches to try to find the best or most interesting shapes to take to a next-level sketch. I always love doing these!

MIDDLE LEFT: This is just a fun sketch, going into a story I'm listening to where there is an invisible crown above a warrior's head that only a few can see. I love working in black and white!

NEAR LEFT: Here I used a Photoshop custom brush that I've made that looks like my traditional brush pen.

"MY INSPIRATION USUALLY COMES FROM OTHER ARTISTS AND WHAT THEY CREATE, WHETHER IT'S PHOTOS, COMICS, MOVIES, OR SKETCHBOOKS"

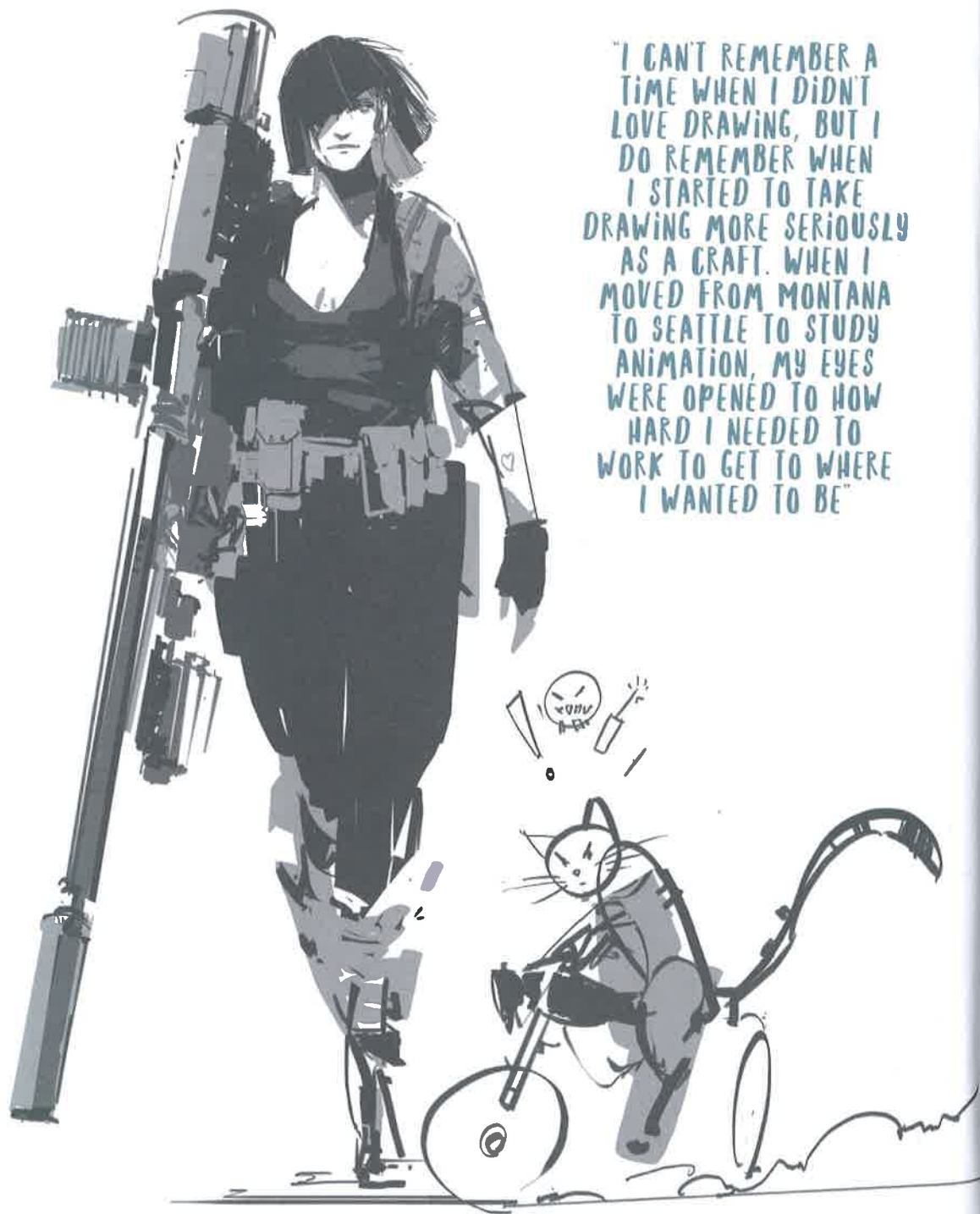
NEAR RIGHT: A sketch in Photoshop using an opaque tilted brush, set to Initial Direction. This is just for fun, using three words to get creative and come up with interesting ideas: "cat," "chick," and "gun." I don't like to take myself too seriously, which is why I like the goofy cat!

MIDDLE TOP RIGHT: I turned the "cats, chicks, guns" theme into an exercise, Monday through Friday, sketching something different for each day.

MIDDLE BOTTOM RIGHT: This one I love – not really because of the girl, but because of the little cat dude whom I wanted to be dressed just like Rambo.

FAR TOP RIGHT: For this one, I went with a massive shoulder gun, and also thought it would be funny to have the cat on an old tricycle (which I don't think kids use any more)!

FAR BOTTOM RIGHT: To change things up I wanted to draw something with a prop, so I found a photo reference for a motorbike. I stuck the angry cat in the side car – the expression I drew on his face makes me laugh!



"I CAN'T REMEMBER A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T LOVE DRAWING, BUT I DO REMEMBER WHEN I STARTED TO TAKE DRAWING MORE SERIOUSLY AS A CRAFT. WHEN I MOVED FROM MONTANA TO SEATTLE TO STUDY ANIMATION, MY EYES WERE OPENED TO HOW HARD I NEEDED TO WORK TO GET TO WHERE I WANTED TO BE"





BEKKALIYEV, NURZHAN

artstation.com/artist/nbekkaliyev

All images © Nurzhan Bekkaliyev

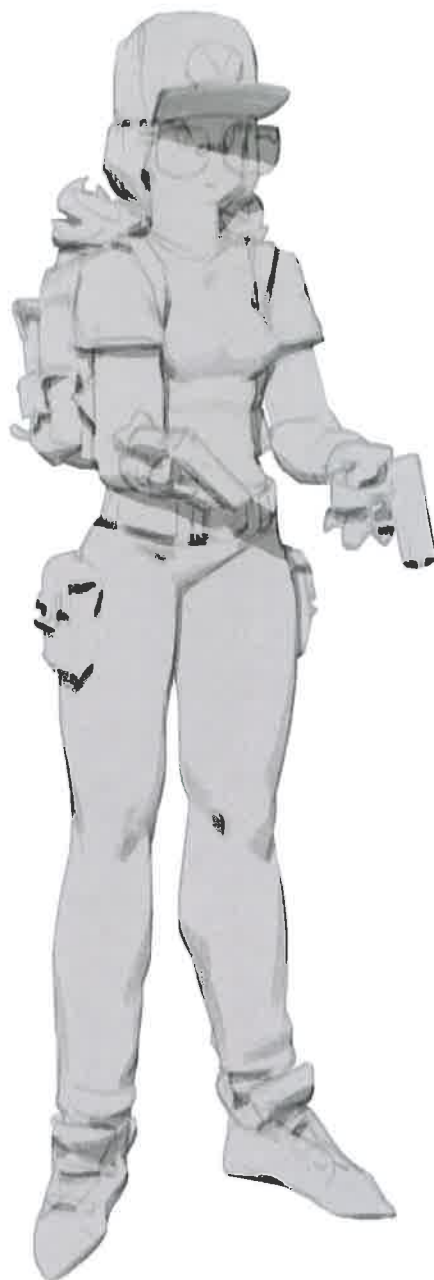
I've always liked to draw. I decided to move in this career direction after I graduated from university (not specializing in art). I had a lot of free time and began to draw for myself in earnest, starting my self-education. Ever since then, I've done what I've wanted to do since childhood.

I am mostly interested in the primary stage of the drawing; sketches constitute a large part of my works. I prefer to draw unusual forms and poses, as they play an important role in creating mood and feeling. I try to give each character individual, interesting shapes so that they have a unique look; stylization helps me to achieve this. In my opinion, my style changes a little bit with time. I consciously try to make some details more stylized, do experiments, and create something new in each character. At the moment my work process is divided into stages, and at every stage I try to draw better and keep useful experiments on the side; completing a sketch in stages helps you to finish work quickly and with quality, and avoids wasting time in vain.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My main criteria for a source of inspiration is an interesting or appealing attribute. For me, one very good way to be inspired is to look at other artists' work that shows a sense of style.

Sometimes I produce studies from photos, which helps me to learn anatomy – but when I study, I never just copy a photo. Changing the forms





and shapes is more interesting, and gives me space for stylization. Generally, I choose to study from a photo that isn't very good visually so I that can improve on the original! Beautiful photos, however, serve to inspire.

MATERIALS

I draw digitally using Photoshop and a Wacom Intuos Pro graphics tablet. I prefer to draw on the computer because it's easier to edit, and when my eyes become tired of looking at one view, I can just flip the image.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I draw sketches with lines, as line drawings allow you capture quick ideas that are sufficiently detailed and well developed. When I sketch, I draw a few variations at once so that I don't become tired by the picture. This also enables me to think more about my designs and see which options would be advantageous; when you work on a second drawing, you're taking a break from the first, which can help you to identify any banal errors.



LEFT AND ABOVE: New versions of different characters from some of my old drawings.

RIGHT: I drew a few characters with a "bunny ears" theme.





BOTH PAGES: A diverse collection of sketches on different themes.



BIAZOTTO, BRUNO

artstation.com/artist/brunobiazotto3363

All images © Bruno Biazotto

I'm from Mogi Mirim, São Paulo. I graduated in Graphic Design at UNESP in Bauru, São Paulo, and went on to work as a concept artist and illustrator for CD PROJEKT RED in Warsaw. When I began to glimpse the possibility of working in this industry, I was still studying engineering. At that time, I recalled my childhood every day. My uncle had a collection of comic books, and when I was ten years old he gifted me an issue with stories of several Marvel heroes. John Buscema's elegant lines gave life to Thor; on the back cover of that issue, Frank Frazetta showed me all the power of his imagination with his powerful Conan. I remember making sketches of those pages and that back cover daily, trying to decipher the secrets of those two geniuses.

Over the next fifteen years, my life took me through different roads, and I stopped drawing. Finally, at twenty-six years of age, I left engineering and went into design. Like all artists at the beginning of their path, I saw myself faced with a problem: I did not know how and where to start studying. Finally, I discovered *The Collective Podcast* by Ash Thorp. No matter which episode, the message was always: do what you love. Do it with honesty and dedication, and respect yourself. I held on to those words. At thirty years old, I returned to drawing Frank Frazetta and John Buscema. I do it today. I make sketches of pictures, I study other artists, I explore my imagination. I look at them as my push-ups, my mental stretching, my morning sit-ups. Without it, I would never dare to draw complex characters, and for sure I wouldn't be working at CD PROJEKT RED today.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

When I make an imaginative sketch, I try to be as honest as possible about myself. Starting from a central theme (such as ethnicity, personality, culture, or feeling) as a foundation, I let my mind work as freely as possible. When I draw, I respect the speed of my thoughts. With every brushstroke action, a cognitive reaction occurs: one thought





leads me to have another idea, and then on to another stroke. Happy little accidents occur, and at a certain point I lose a bit of control over what is being created. This is the most fun part of the process!

MATERIALS

For my sketches, I like to use the most basic brushes (in my opinion), either digital or traditional, at least until my idea is well founded. In the early stages, I do not want distractions. Complexity added by a brushstroke or texture could make me lose the concentration that I need at the beginning of my process. I like to use a mechanical 0.5 mm pencil and sulfite paper, or a ballpoint brush in Photoshop at full hardness, without the artifice of transparency. When my ideas are well established, I allow myself to use some different textures (if digital) or charcoal (if traditional).

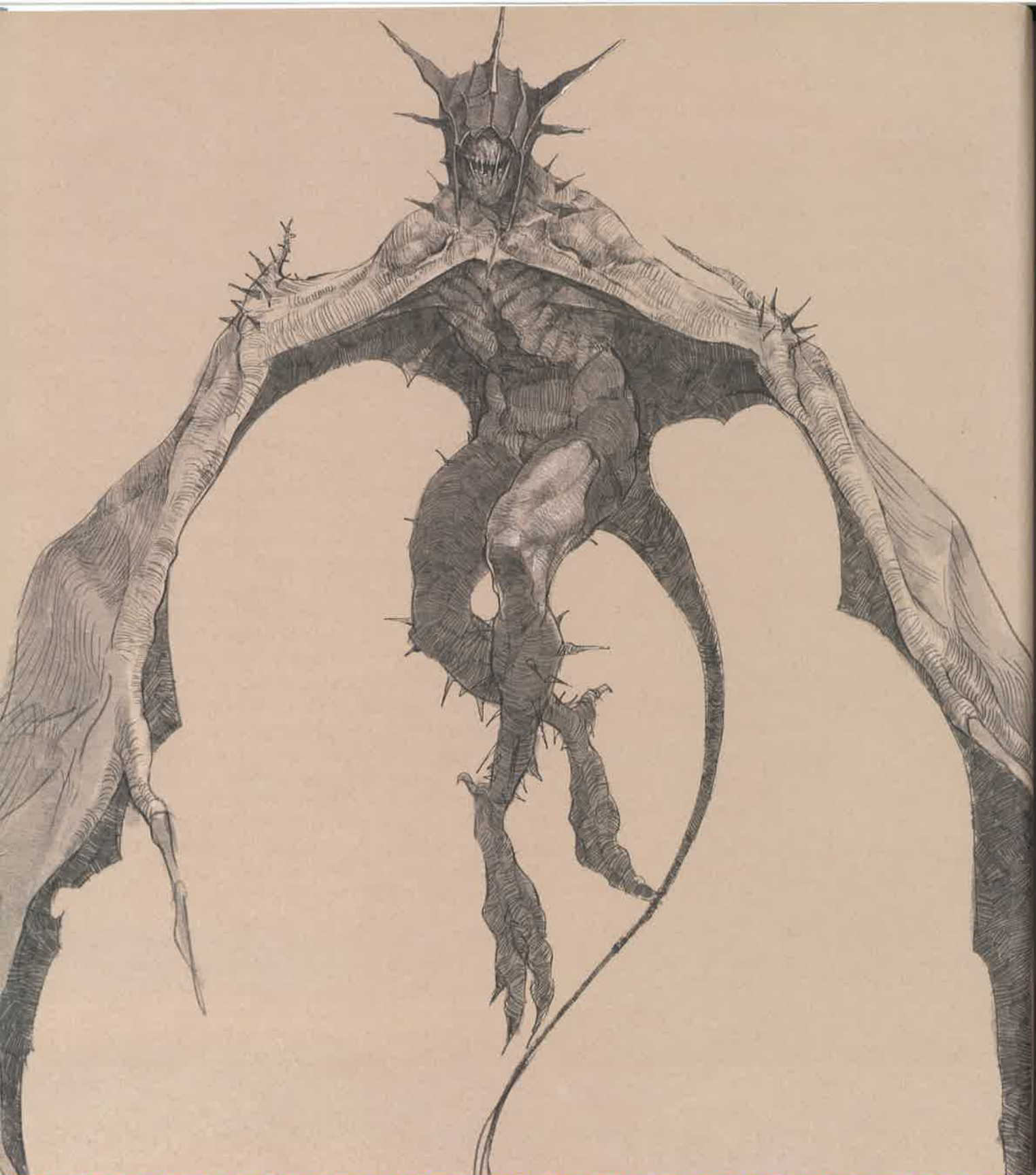
SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

For a more elaborate sketch, I like to select different references. I like to build a collection of several images on the topic that I want to represent. For something realistic, I like to use photos from real life, where culture, society, and everyday reality can tell us much about the world we want to create. For something more fantastic, I add other artists' work to my references because their worlds can help me build my own.

I start with general guidelines for the pose, adding in the main shapes. Then I reduce the sketch's opacity (if digital) and start drawing over it, using my initial ideas to build the final image. This allows me to keep the feeling of my first design while developing the details that will help tell the story of the character that I want to represent.

FAR LEFT: What started out as a practice exercise became a solid personal project.

NEAR LEFT: The Iron Queen. My personal project is about this character and what she did in the past.





"HAPPY LITTLE ACCIDENTS OCCUR,
AND AT A CERTAIN POINT I LOSE
A BIT OF CONTROL OVER WHAT IS
BEING CREATED. THIS IS THE MOST
FUN PART OF THE PROCESS!"



FAR LEFT: They can't see you, but they can hear you!
The Ironbeasts are creatures of insatiable hunger,
awakening dread in those who feel their presence.

NEAR LEFT: *Ironjoker*, from my personal project. Sketching
is an endless learning process, and it's important to
be patient while you continue to improve.

ABOVE: This was the second image that I made in my Iron
series of sketches. It's always nice to see where we start from.

Follow your instincts

Look inside you for what you love. Find what you want to represent. Work slowly and let your brain tell you what you want to do. Let each stroke bring you to another. Always try to tell the viewer a story about who your character is, what they do, their background, and how they think. Practice every day to discover yourself and show people what's inside your brain.

Fundamentals

Sketches are your push-ups, your stretching, so do them every day. Whether you're a black belt in jiu-jitsu or a white belt in kung fu, you will always need your warm-up exercises. If you don't have good preparation, and a fit and strong body, you won't be able to carry out complex moves. It's the same with art. You need to have strong fundamentals to allow your perception to work at its strongest.





FAR LEFT: Trying to create a strong Highlander woman for my personal project. I have so much to do!

NEAR LEFT: One of the types of people from my personal project, which has been helping me to grow a lot! Old tales say that the Highlanders went running to the mountains to escape from the Iron Queen and her creatures,

ABOVE: Having some fun creating my Highlander border patrols. They're skilled and fast, and live perched on the upper branches of tall trees.



BONFANTI, TANO

tanobonfanti.myportfolio.com

All images © Tano Bonfanti

I was born in 1987 into a family that enjoys visual arts in all its forms. In school I was always the kid who drew in class! After high school I studied architecture for a few years, but I wasn't totally comfortable doing that – there wasn't much drawing going on – so I decided to drop out and pursue my illustration and concept art career. Leaving college was a huge decision because the entertainment industry was (and still is) not developed enough in Argentina to make a living. Thankfully, being a freelancer is easier now, and looking back I can say it was a good decision.

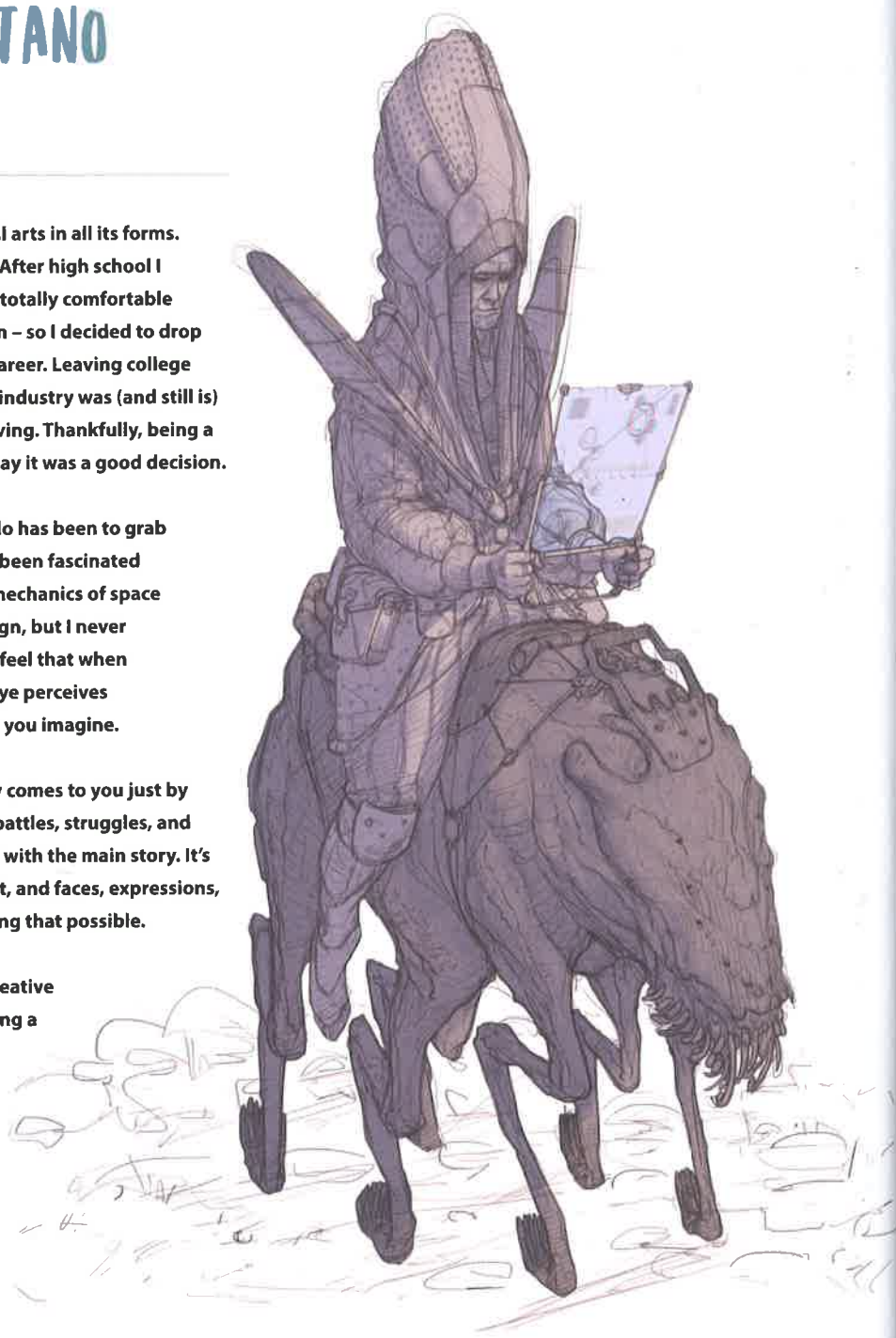
Since I can first remember, my favorite thing to do has been to grab a sheet of paper and doodle around. I've always been fascinated with cars, planes, machines in general, and the mechanics of space exploration. Now I am focused on character design, but I never stop drawing vehicles and architecture as well. I feel that when you learn the fundamentals of how the human eye perceives physical space, you can reproduce anything that you imagine.

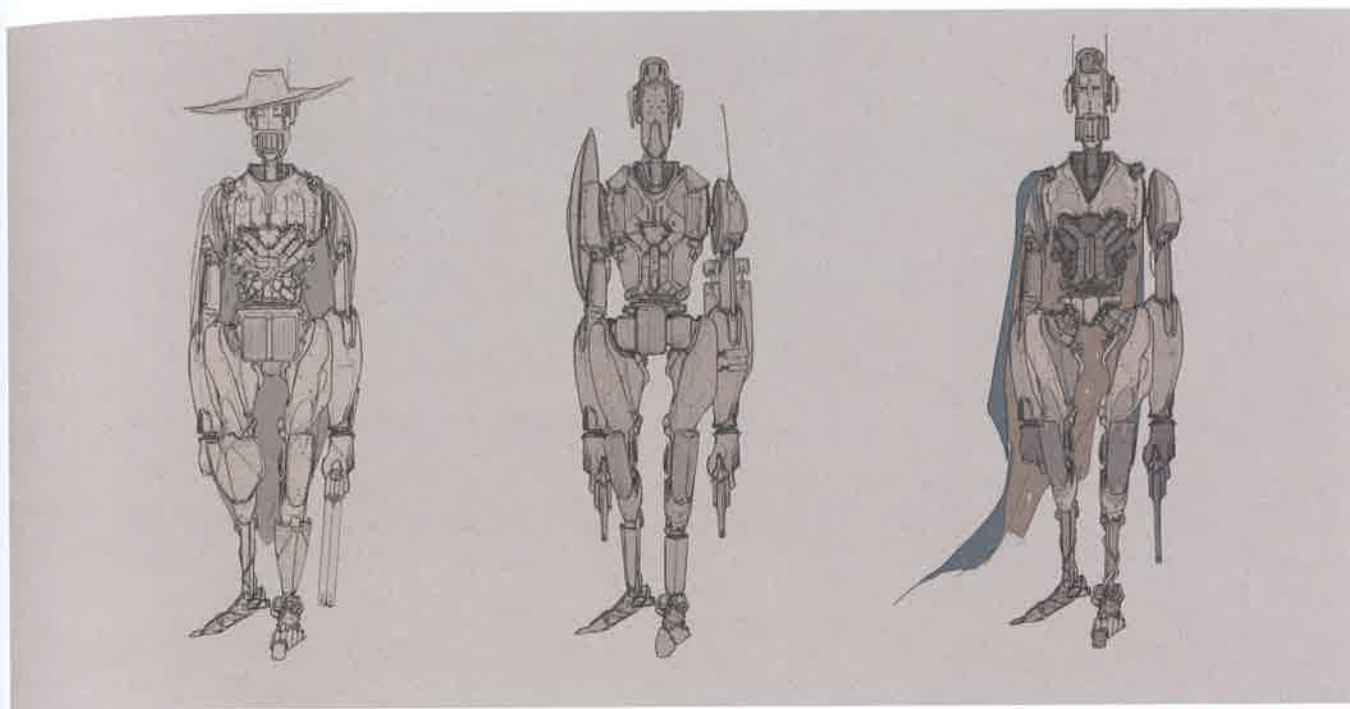
For me, good characters are those whose history comes to you just by looking at them. There's evidence of their lives, battles, struggles, and past experiences. It is crucial to identify yourself with the main story. It's all about empathy; by nature we want to connect, and faces, expressions, and body language are really important in making that possible.

Sketching is the most fundamental part of my creative process. I sketch regardless of whether I'm starting a new personal work or a job for a client. There's an energizing feeling when I'm doing it which takes the fear of the blank page away and allows my creativity to start flowing.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My inspiration comes from a lot of places. I usually take my bike, put some music on, and take a





ride though the city and think about what I'm going to do next. I find that movement is a really good way to prevent burning out, which is very common in our industry. Having said that, I find that the most important sources of inspiration are movies and books. I still keep my childhood fantasy books and anatomy encyclopedias lying around my house; they had an enormous impact on me and I still go to them for reference now.

MATERIALS

I use a Wacom Intuos 5 tablet and tons of sketchbooks – small ones with nice thick paper, at least 180 gsm. I sketch with Copic markers (a really good way to block out basic shapes), sometimes watercolor, colored pencils, and all sorts of pens.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Sketching is something I do every day. It feels like a good way to warm up the muscles and tendons of my hand and arms. As mentioned, for me, sketching is the most important part of the creative process, and I get excited when I'm starting a new project because every possibility is there to grasp. I can spit out all the raw information almost without a filter, then I can pick and choose the more valuable ideas and work from those.

LEFT: A character sketch with digital color.

ABOVE: Concepts for a cowboy robot.

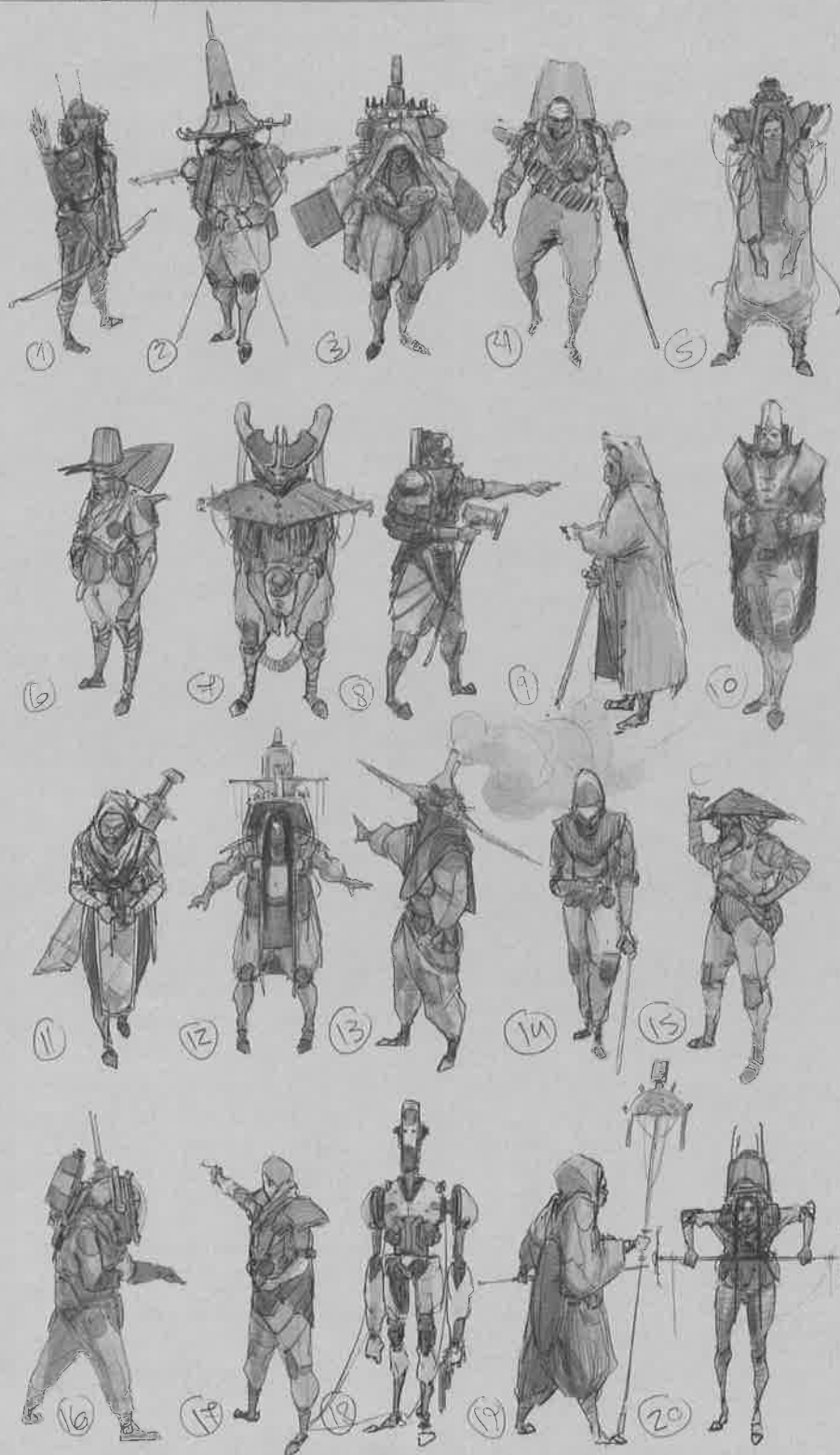
Find your drawing zone

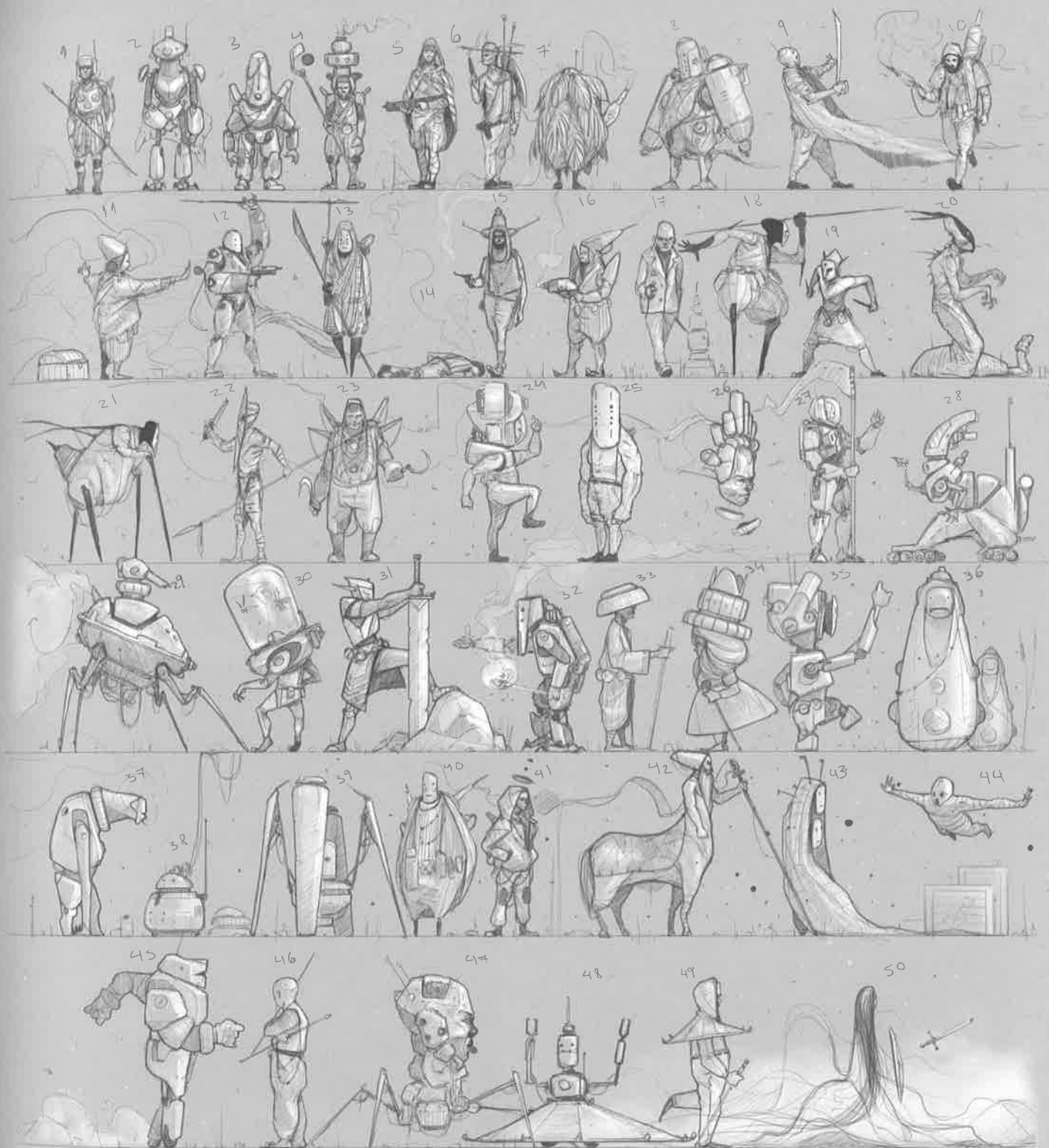
Find the time to put yourself in the right mood for sketching. This is hard, and some days it can take a long time of sitting in front of the computer for your mind to start flowing – but try closing the internet, putting away your phone, and just drawing for hours instead.

Take criticism constructively

Don't be afraid to ask for critiques, and try to grow a "thick skin." Not everybody is going to like what you do, but be gentle and respectful of people's opinions, as we are all learning.

BOTH PAGES: I use
thumbnailing as a way to
select the more attractive
forms to develop later.









FAR TOP LEFT: A witch doctor who can be a good fella when he wants to be.

NEAR TOP LEFT: An archer character.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: Three good friends that I made when thinking about some new shapes. They're very different from one another but share the same overall design language. When adding color, it's a good idea to present multiple choices, so you can decide wisely on the best palette.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT: Development stages of one of the three friends.

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Sketches exploring sci-fi characters and their settings.

NEAR LEFT: Designs for an archer character.





FAR TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT: Process sketches for a pig character.

MIDDLE LEFT: *Playing Time.* A personal sketch.

NEAR LEFT: *Someone Needs a Hug?* Another personal sketch.

ABOVE: Digital sketch of two characters in an action scene.



BROCK, NEAL

nealbrock.tumblr.com

All images © Neal Brock

I've drawn for as long as I can remember. I was raised amid comics, many old French magazines such as *Métal hurlant*, *À Suivre*, *Charlie Mensuel*, and *Pilote*. I discovered a lot of geniuses, such as Tanino Liberatore, André Franquin, Jacques Tardi, and also American authors such as Robert Crumb and Bernie Wrightson. But above all, I discovered Moëbius, the greatest artist of all time in my opinion. I started drawing because of Moëbius, and decided I wanted to make comics in high school when I realized that there was nothing else I liked as much as drawing. Later I changed my influences, without forgetting the old ones, and became interested in more modern artists in the animation and gaming industry – people like Alexandre "Zedig" Diboine, Anthony Holden, and Fabien Mense. This changed my drawing style.

I draw primarily because it is vital for me, and also to convey ideas. For several years my work has been full of feminism and inclusiveness; I want, with my very small impact, to help improve the world of comics and drawing in general, which is often a sexist environment where the image of women is generally that of a pin-up or decorative character.

More generally (and probably also depressingly), drawing is the best way for me to escape the world around me that I don't like. I like to escape into the fictional worlds created by other people, but to create my own world, with all its own rules, is the best. If I want I can create a fully egalitarian world, where nobody suffers and where we live on Aldebaran, and that's great.

BELOW: Sendioj, the heroine of a personal project. She eventually becomes a killer of gods when she considers that they are a plague on humanity.

RIGHT: Here's a bunch of character designs I made for fun, drawn directly using line with no rough sketches. It's a good way to improve.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

As mentioned, many things inspire me, such as other designers, but I also find inspiration in my own ideas. My sketching improved when I began to include diversity in my work: differences in morphology, skin colors, genders, culture, and so on. I recommend it to everyone. It is a reflex to stay insular in your work, and not to question in the name of art, but once you start to step back and put diversity into your designs, it becomes a vast wealth of inspiration. I'm also inspired by many people that I meet – a new person can give me new ideas for morphology and characters.

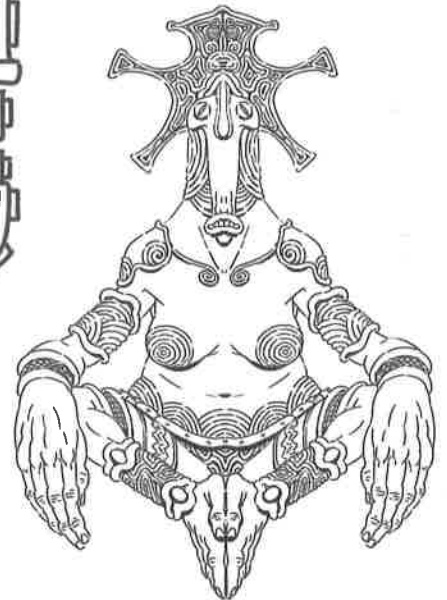
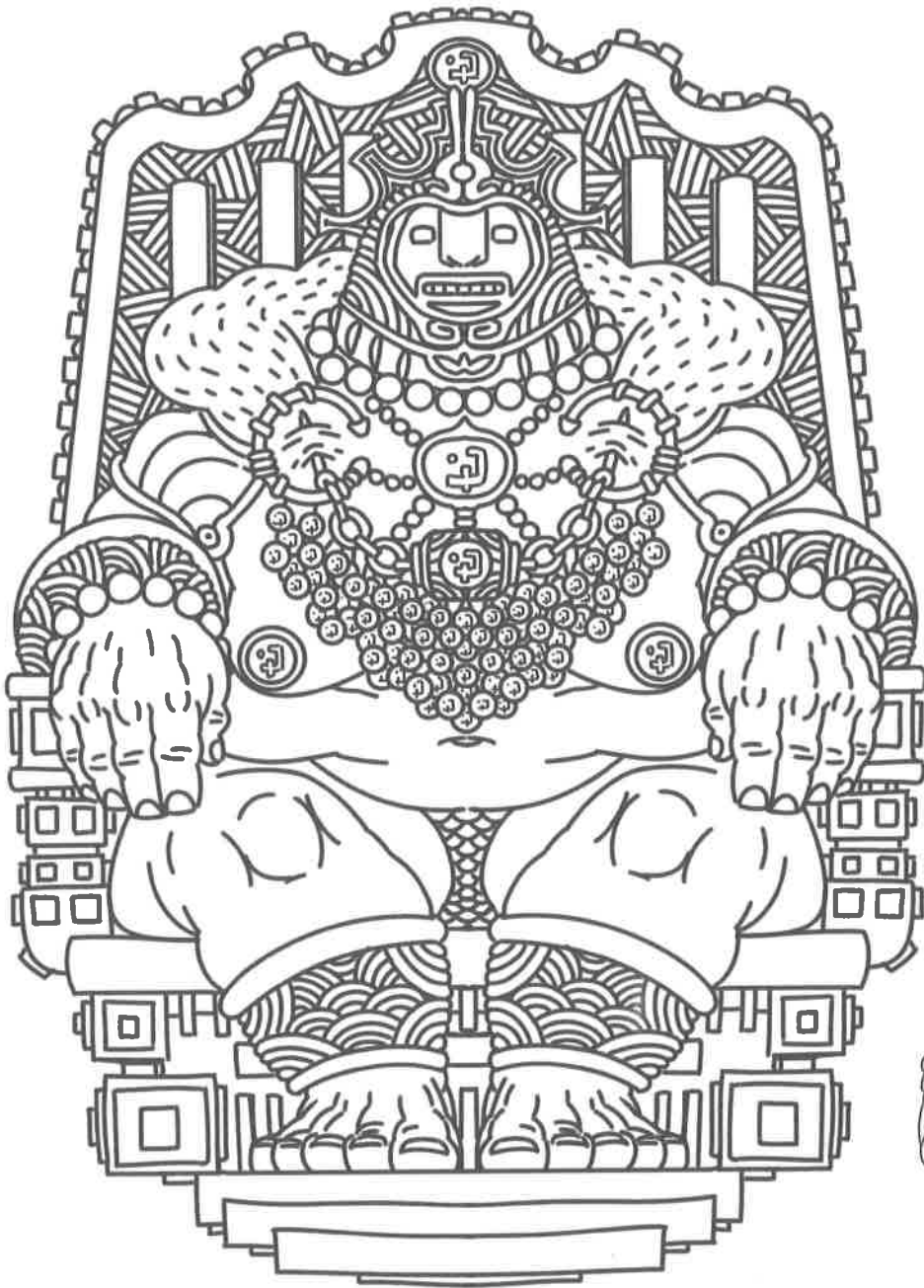
MATERIALS

In the beginning I was all about traditional drawing: ink, pen, and brush. But then I discovered digital media and bought a graphics tablet. This has completely changed the way I draw, and I can hardly work without it now. I almost only draw on my computer. I started with Photoshop, but for a while now I've worked with the free software Krita, which is perfect for drawing.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

It's difficult to discuss specific techniques because I don't really have a method – I am a very chaotic artist in my way of working. Sometimes I make a preliminary sketch, sometimes not. Sometimes I start with the head, sometimes with the foot. The only thing I always do in the same way is that when I create a design, I invent the character's story. I cannot work in the void. My characters must have an identity, and if they don't, they're not good in my opinion.







FAR LEFT: This is Riceco, the God of Trade. He is not really a kind god, and is the father of Sakristo, god of slavers and traffickers.

NEAR TOP LEFT: This is Kosmaro, the Goddess of Nightmares, and daughter of Songi, the God of Dreams. She is the future girlfriend of the heroine of the project's story.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT: A character for a side project with my life partner. It's the gender-neutral God-dess of the Present, one of the trio of Time gods.

ABOVE: This is Terni, a trader who works for Riceco – she is a nice person who doesn't know everything about her god.

RIGHT: Here's the God of Earth – a pacific and nice god. He is quite small and likes to dig tunnels in the mountain.







"I DRAW PRIMARILY
BECAUSE IT IS VITAL
FOR ME, AND ALSO
TO CONVEY IDEAS"

LEFT: This is an all-girl band of fighters in a futuristic gladiator-like blood sport. They are all prisoners who fight to survive.

ABOVE: This is Rose Graham, the character I play in the paper role-playing game *Z-Corps*. She is a former pro boxer converted to a gardener after accidentally killing one of her sparring partners.

RIGHT: This is a vampire I made for the monthly Character Design Challenge. She loves to tenderize meat before consuming it.





CASTLE, TRUDI

trudiart.com

All images © Trudi Castle

I am a concept artist and illustrator for games, which is something I have always wanted to be since I played *Space Invaders* at the age of five. My other passions are coffee and sweet food. Whether it's warming up or warming down from work, I like to draw subjects that are fun and silly – and so I created a side project called the Coffee Crew, from which I'm sharing some sketches here.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Games, food, and drink inspire me! I love to visit new cafés and restaurants, so they most certainly inspire me. I watch various TV shows, play a lot of games, and follow many great and inspiring artists online.

MATERIALS

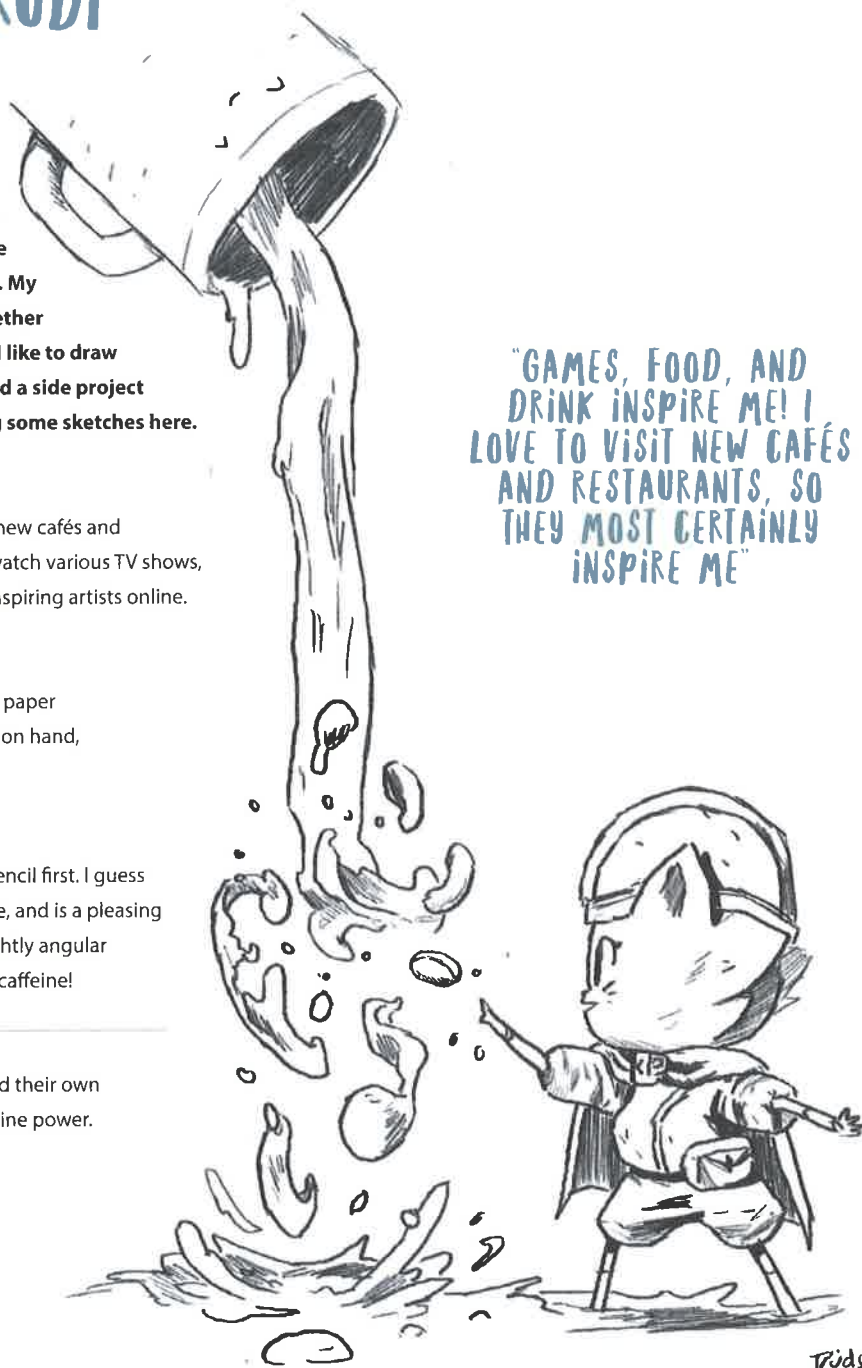
I always use Moleskine sketchbooks as I like their paper quality. As for pens and pencils, I use whatever is on hand, whether it's a ballpoint pen or a Copic marker.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I tend to draw sketchy rough shapes in orange pencil first. I guess the color has always been a little like coffee to me, and is a pleasing tone. I don't draw smooth lines. Everything is slightly angular as I don't have steady hands – it might be all the caffeine!

NEAR RIGHT: Each Coffee Crew member must find their own individual bean, which will help grant them caffeine power.

FAR RIGHT: Let the Bean Fu championship begin! Marble has to sneak in undercover due to eating the prize cup the previous year.



"GAMES, FOOD, AND
DRINK INSPIRE ME! I
LOVE TO VISIT NEW CAFÉS
AND RESTAURANTS, SO
THEY MOST CERTAINLY
INSPIRE ME"

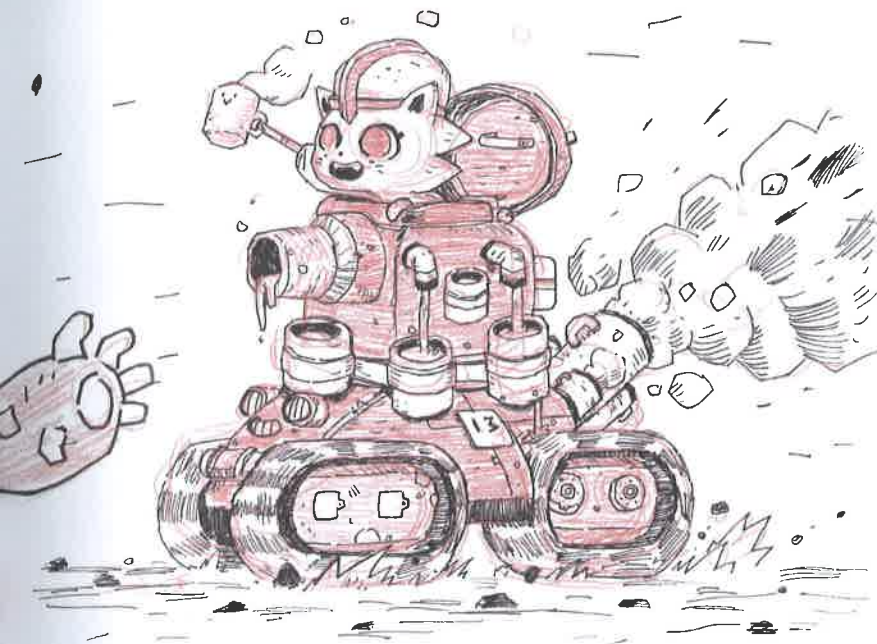




THIS PAGE: Marble discovers an undercover robot in a donut and has no option but to expose it!

TOP RIGHT: Marble driving a hot coffee-powered tank, which produces a lot of steam! The hotter the coffee, the faster the tank.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Marble saved up a lot of cookie vouchers for this new ride, and now flies around pouring out coffee across the bean fields!



Variety is key

Try to have a few art styles in your portfolio if possible. This will help you to find work on a variety of projects, from realistic to kid-friendly. It keeps your job as an artist refreshing!

Experience everything

Don't just follow the trends in your chosen industry – watch movies, play games, read books, and go outside! This will help you bring something new to the table.

Take a break

This might sound obvious, but take a break. Go cycling, have a walk, and more often than not, an interesting idea will pop into your mind while you're out!







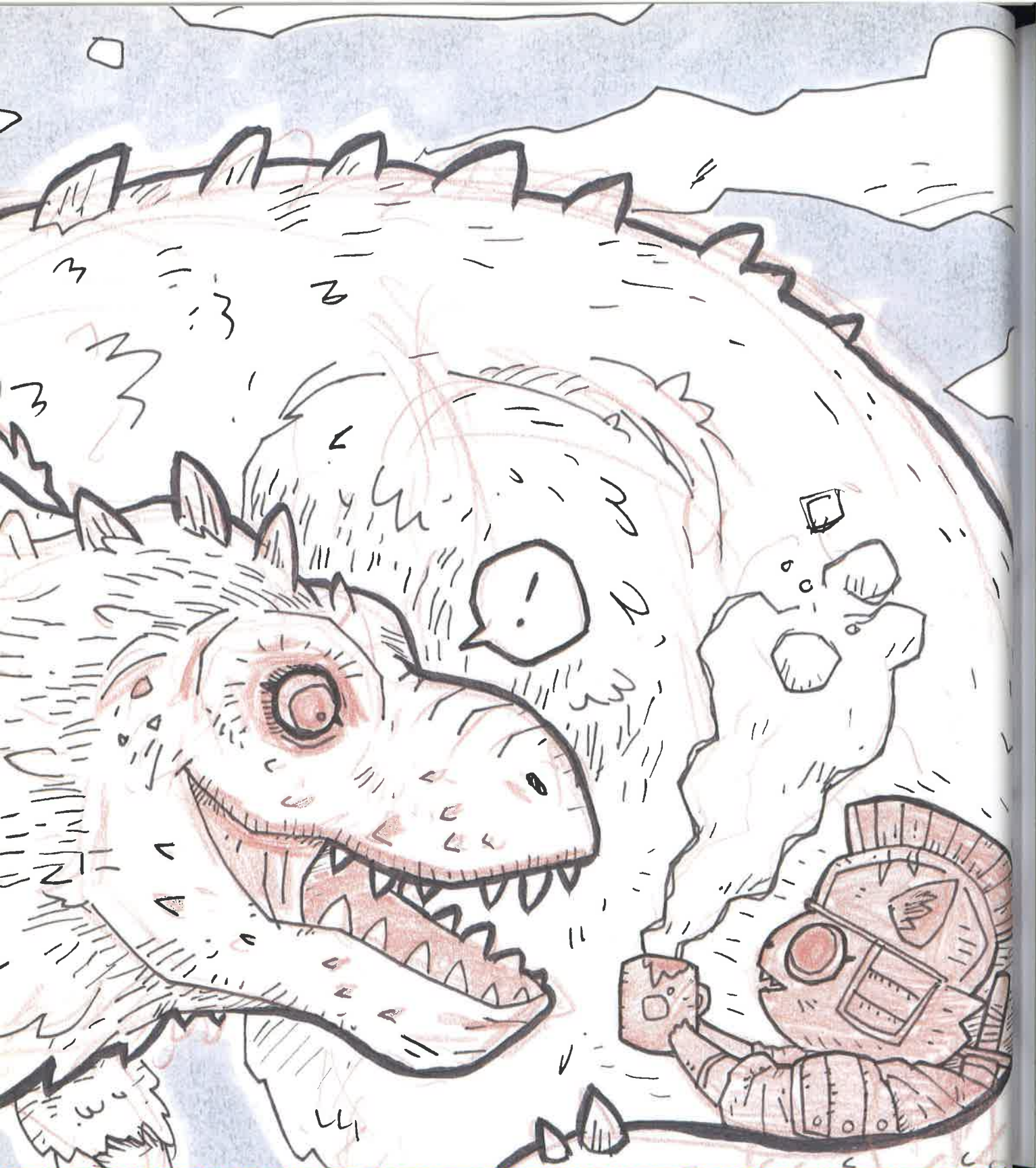
FAR LEFT: Here Marble is using a Soouper Scope, useful for attracting coffee beans, cupcakes, and pumpkins.

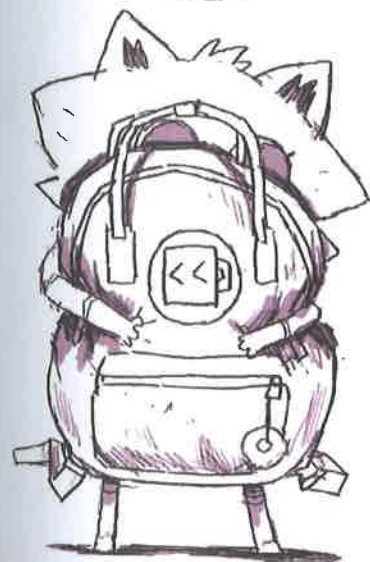
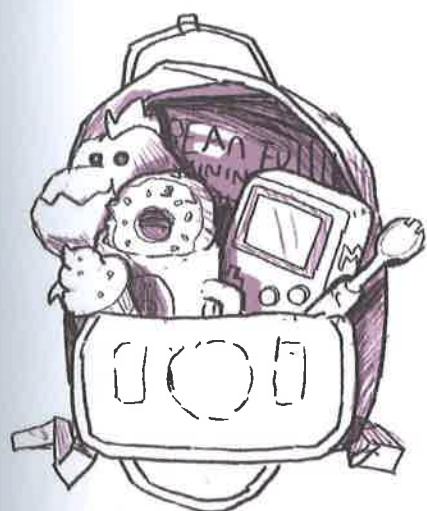
TOP LEFT: The sugar twins guard the last pumpkin spice latte of Vancouver!

BOTTOM LEFT: P Spice will only offer up words of wisdom when presented with a scone and donut (so he may bend them to his will/flavor).

BELOW: Cuppabot meets Puff!



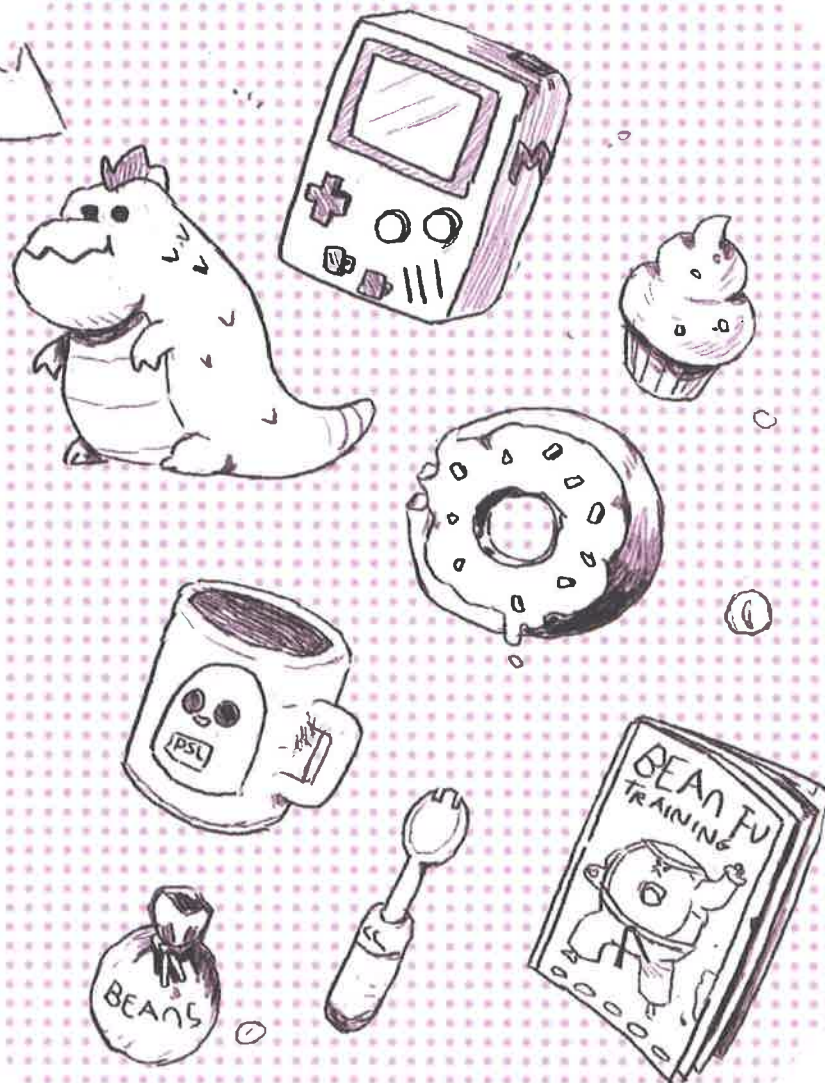




LEFT: The coffee offering is a success, and so the fluffy dinosaur and Coffee Captain are now close friends.

THIS PAGE: Inside Marble's backpack you will find some Coffee Crew essentials! All these elements are key to Marble's character and story.

INSIDE



Trudy '16



CHAN, AFU

afuchan.com

All images © Afu Chan

I graduated from California College of the Arts in 2013 with a degree in Illustration and have worked for BOOM! Studios, Marvel, Nickelodeon, Edge of Reality, and Run DMC. I was also nominated for a Society of Illustrators award in 2012.

I sketch every day while brainstorming new ideas, whether for work or myself. When designing characters for professional work, clients require me to show sketches in order to make adjustments based on their input before moving on to the final product. My sketches are usually loose and thumbnail-sized due to clients requiring them urgently, as well as desiring sketches of ten to twenty unique designs per character, but they also need to be visually clear, with each design needing its own distinguishable and recognizable silhouette. Sketching is very important to me as it's the foundation and "skeleton" holding any work of art together. Without a "skeleton" the figures would look like rag dolls, resulting in a loss of believability, personality, unique characteristics, and other elements that make a great character design.

When sketching for clients, I am restricted by their rules and guidelines. When sketching for myself, I am flexible and have total control of my ideas. The positive side to sketching for myself is that there is no limit on my own



BOTH PAGES: Just is a cowboy boxer with a gun arm.



creations, allowing me to explore new boundaries and ideas that I might not be able to when working with companies.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

When creating a character, I like to start by writing down ideas that I believe would be interesting and unique. So far I have created characters based on unconventional objects such as umbrellas, cigarette lighters, wall scrolls, paintbrushes, books, zippers, belts and shoes, as well as more conventional objects such as grenades, swords, and guns.

More recently I've been challenging myself by designing characters limited to two ideas or themes. For example, among the characters shown here, Just is a combination of a cowboy and a boxer, while Peg Leg Bessie's (page 68) outfit borrows elements and designs of both a tap-dancing shoe and a double-barreled shotgun. I also try to be as clever as possible;

in this instance, by using the double-barreled shotgun break-action as a knee joint.

MATERIALS

I'm very flexible with tools, transitioning from traditional to digital depending on my mood or what I find most convenient. When sketching, I work with pencil on paper; when inking, I like working with my favorite Lamy fountain pen; and when coloring, I work with Photoshop.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I enjoy watching movies and documentaries while working and it can definitely help in character creation workflow. I remember watching a documentary about the one-legged tap dancer Peg Leg Bates, and he immediately became my main inspiration in the creation of Peg Leg Bessie.



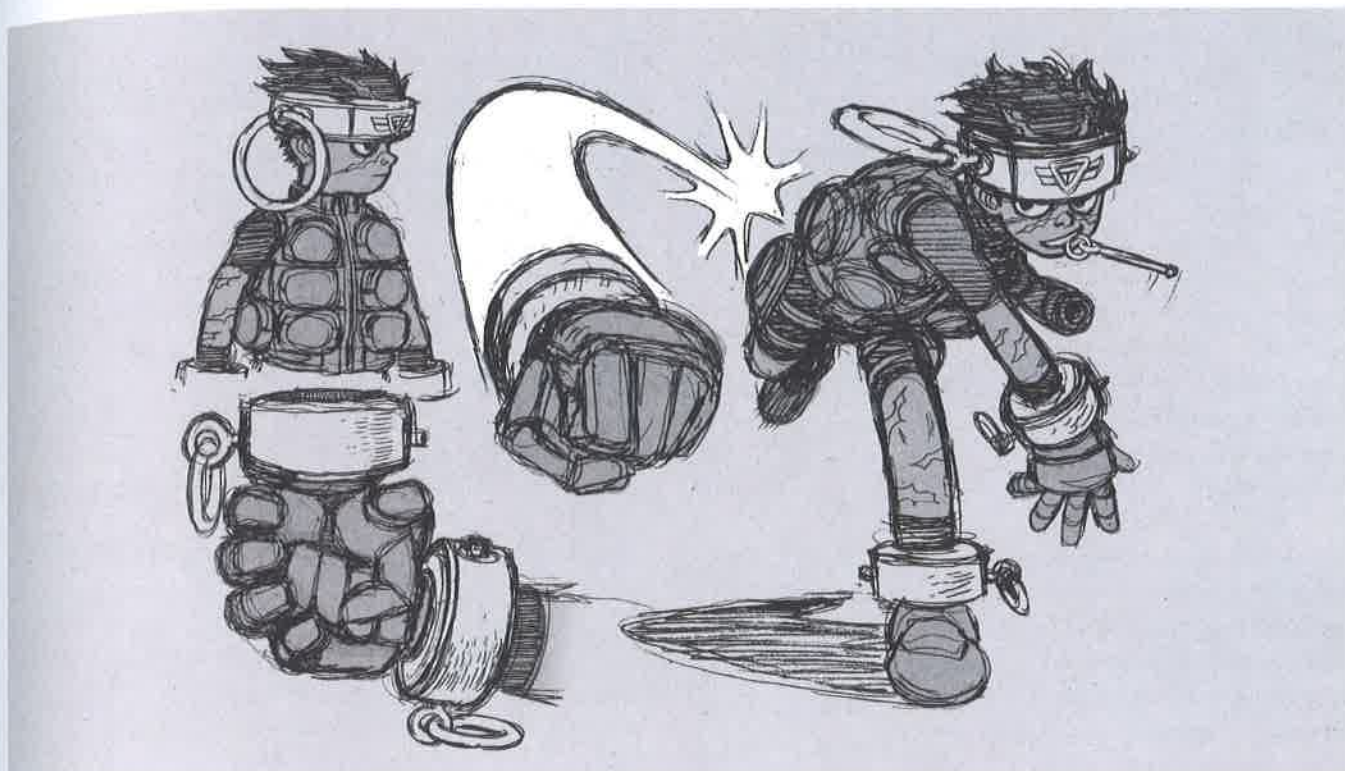


LEFT: Ash is a vampire pirate who wields "cannon-chucks!"

RIGHT: Blaze is inspired by Nezha, a Chinese deity who rides on flaming wheels. She wears a pair of lighter skates.

BELOW: Faolan is a knight rocker who wields an axe guitar.





LEFT: Peg Leg Bessie is a tap dancer with a shotgun leg.

THIS PAGE: N8t is a grenade boy.





CORTESE, MARIANO

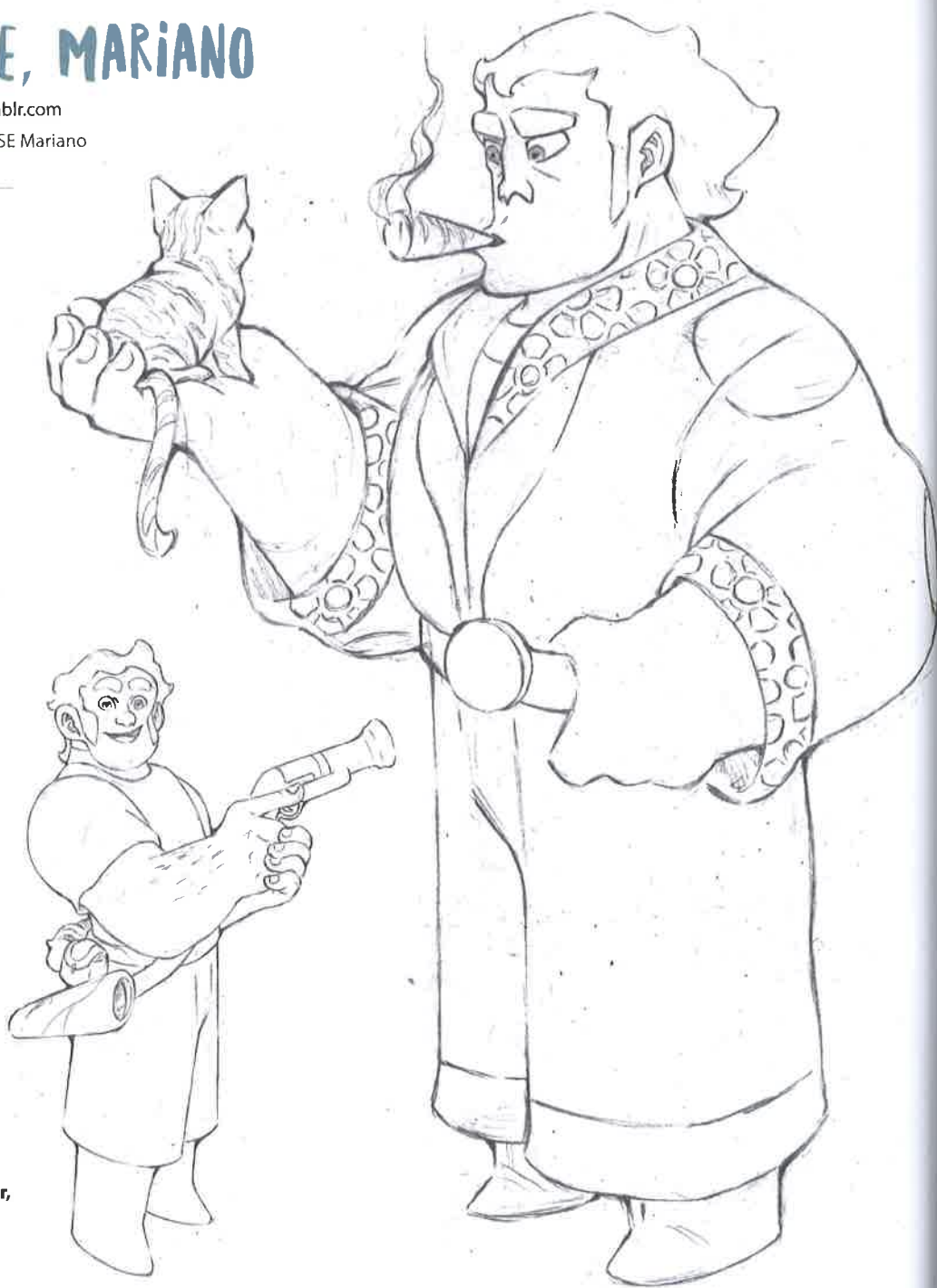
marianocortese.tumblr.com

All images © CORTESE Mariano

I started observational drawing five years ago. I think learning to draw from life is great, as it reinforces your skills and helps you to have better control of your lines. I usually take my time when I sketch, as I remember things better that way.

Then, two years ago, I got my first sketchbook and started to draw from my imagination. I didn't have enough skills to draw various subject matter, so I got into the habit of using references to help me draw from my imagination, enabling me to create a wider variety of things.

I advise you to sketch a lot because all of your drawings can be useful: first, by sketching regularly you will improve, and second, everything you have in your sketchbook can be used for a future project, whether it's character design, environments, vehicles, or creatures. When you don't have a lot of time, even a loose drawing is important. Don't forget to sketch from life, of course! A sketchbook is good for trying new techniques and media. I'm in love with artists who work with watercolor, because I find it so hard to use.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

All artists, video games, movies, anime, and photos help me to create my characters. In my childhood, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* was the most inspirational video game for me. I love the design of the game, the colors, music, characters, and world. I'm very influenced by adventure games like that: I always draw characters with small bags, lot of items, and a sword or lance, but I don't like it when it's too much. My other big inspiration is Hayao Miyazaki – it's not really original, but I can't not mention him!

MATERIALS

For all my sketches I use a colored pencil or 2B pencil, then I scan the drawings and color them with Photoshop. I like using custom brushes by Alexandre Diboine, Loish, and Shiyoon Kim, and Kyle T. Webster's brushes for creating watercolor effects.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

All my characters begin with the head, and from that I create little stories with their expression. I add the rest of the body loosely, then begin to draw the clothes, and finish with drawing props. I don't think it's a good technique, but at the moment it's the only thing I do when I create my characters. I don't have enough skills to draw a character in movement, but I'm working on it!

FAR LEFT: Just a man with a gun. I don't know what I was doing with him, but he is certainly a good guy.

NEAR LEFT: I have an Italian name, so I had to draw a mafioso (even though I'm also Asian – my mom is Laotian)!

TOP RIGHT: A character I will use for a story I have in mind.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *Frog Keeper*. I love magician characters – here I thought about a keeper who chases things in the night with his lantern.





FAR TOP LEFT: I'm not a sci-fi guy, but I like robots when we don't use them as fighting machines.

MIDDLE TOP LEFT:
Unknown Traveler.
She leaves no trace wherever she goes.

NEAR TOP LEFT: I love witches. I was inspired by Tibetan clothes for her – the clothing looks like concepts for a video game!

FAR BOTTOM LEFT:
Do you know the marmoset monkey species? They are so cute and tiny, I love them! I tried to create the same kind of face here.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT:
Thief. If you like my work, you will see a lot of characters like this. Destitute children are the saddest things in the world, but we can create a lot of hopeful stories with them.

RIGHT PAGE: Two pages from my sketchbook.





CORZO, ALBERTO

artstation.com/artist/duranial

All images © Alberto Corzo

I've loved drawing since I was a kid – I saw some concept art for a Capcom video game and decided right then that I wanted to make characters for video games. I studied Illustration, Comic, and Design at Escuela Superior de Dibujo Profesional (ESDIP) in Madrid for three years. I discovered so many things during those three years and learned a great deal about many interesting artists, and this has contributed to what my art has evolved into today. After some collaborative work on preproduction for animated series and video games, I've been polishing my character design portfolio to start working in the video game industry – my dream job.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My inspirations come mainly from seeing other artists' work, playing video games, reading books, watching movies or TV series, and then trying to do things in my own way. So many concepts start out as fan art and end up being totally different ideas that I can use in my own personal projects.

My love for classical art defines my way of drawing; I'm attracted by artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Adolf Hirémy-Hirschl, Diego Velázquez, Anders Zorn, and John Singer Sargent with some current influences such as Joe Madureira, Petar Meseldžija, Even Amundsen, and Frank Frazetta. My favorite themes are sci-fi and fantasy because I can create worlds inspired by those books, comics, games, and movies that I grew up with – *Star Wars*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Witcher*, and many more. I fell in love with the idea of giving life to the characters living in those universes through drawing and painting and showing my images to the world.



MATERIALS

My main tools are digital: Adobe Photoshop CS6 and Clip Studio Paint. For traditional work, I love to draw with paper and pen, and sometimes watercolors.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

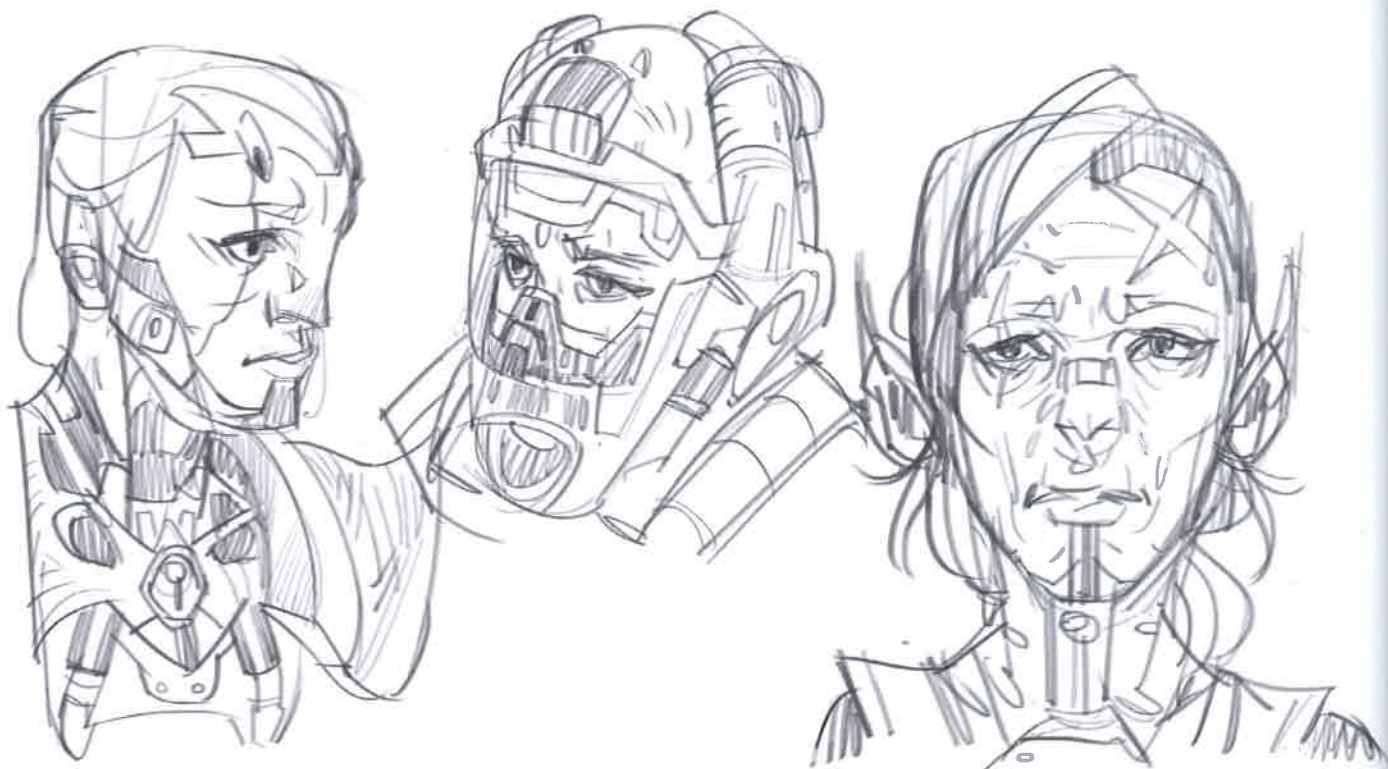
For starters, I try to get some movement into my characters. I love characters that are dynamic and energetic, so I spend a fair amount of time searching for the perfect pose. Then I think about the background story of the character so that every detail I can glean from the world they live in becomes useful. When the pose is finalized and I need to give it some personality, I try to imagine what my characters would do in their situations and worlds and design them accordingly.



LEFT: Drawing cyborgs is really fun for me. You need to think about how they would work.

TOP RIGHT: Lich myths are something I like to draw from time to time.

ABOVE: High-tech elves can be a cool challenge to draw!



Loosen your lines

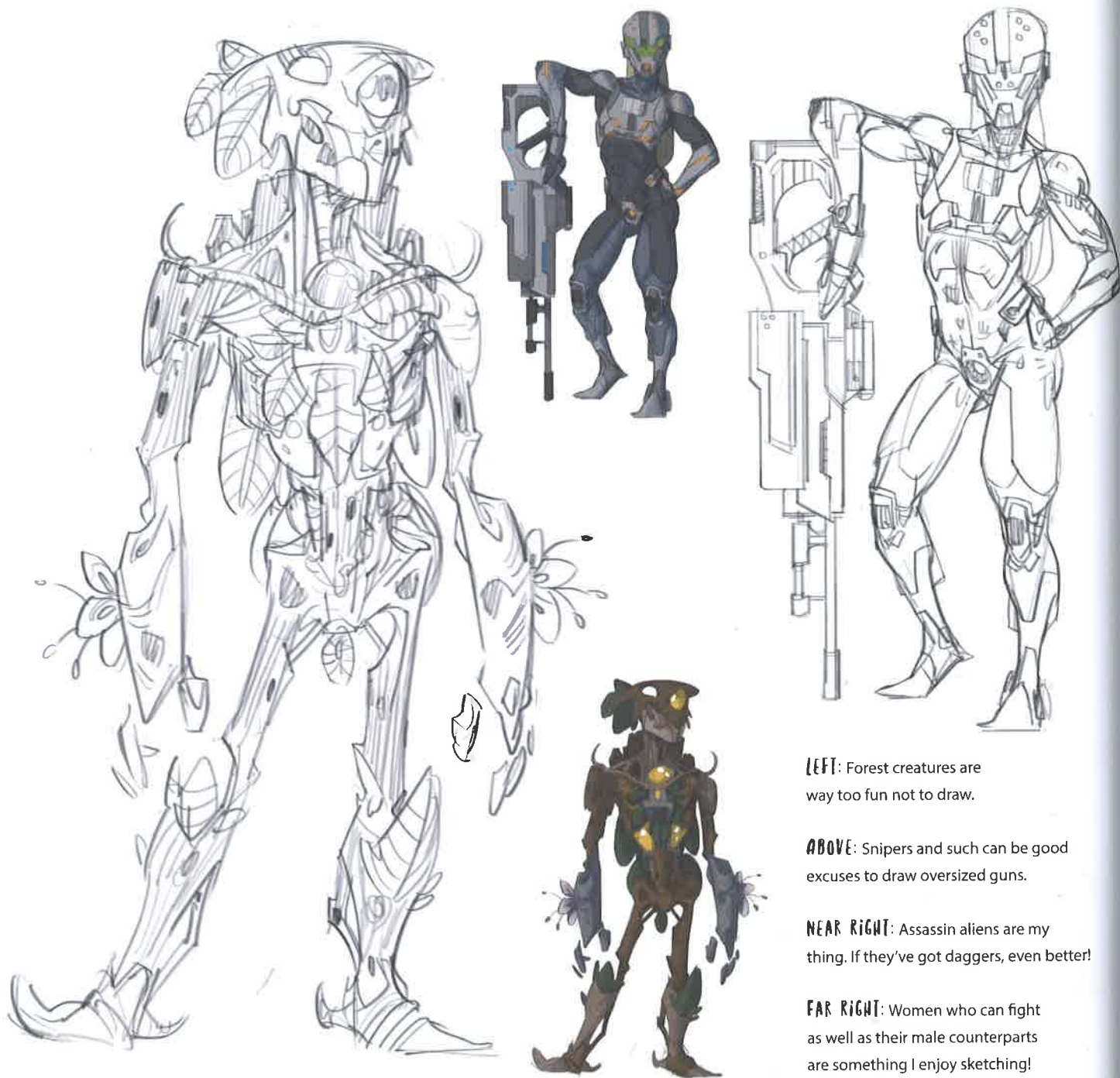
Every time I see someone starting a drawing, I can't help but find myself studying their lines to find their problems. My anatomy teacher used to tell me that "hairy lines" are what destroys the beauty of a good drawing. Try to be careful with your lines and you'll be rewarded. Experiment and let your hand be loose – you'll be surprised by how good a loose, confident line can be.

Think about your character

People tend to draw characters without anything in mind. Before starting to design a character, I try to gather references for what I think the character could be related to (armors, weapons, cultures) and have a story about the character in my mind. This helps me not to lose my initial direction and to maintain an interesting character.



BOTH PAGES: I like sketching portraits of different characters and try to make a few on a daily basis.



LEFT: Forest creatures are way too fun not to draw.

ABOVE: Snipers and such can be good excuses to draw oversized guns.

NEAR RIGHT: Assassin aliens are my thing. If they've got daggers, even better!

FAR RIGHT: Women who can fight as well as their male counterparts are something I enjoy sketching!





DÍEZ, DANI

www.danidiez.com

All images © Dani Díez

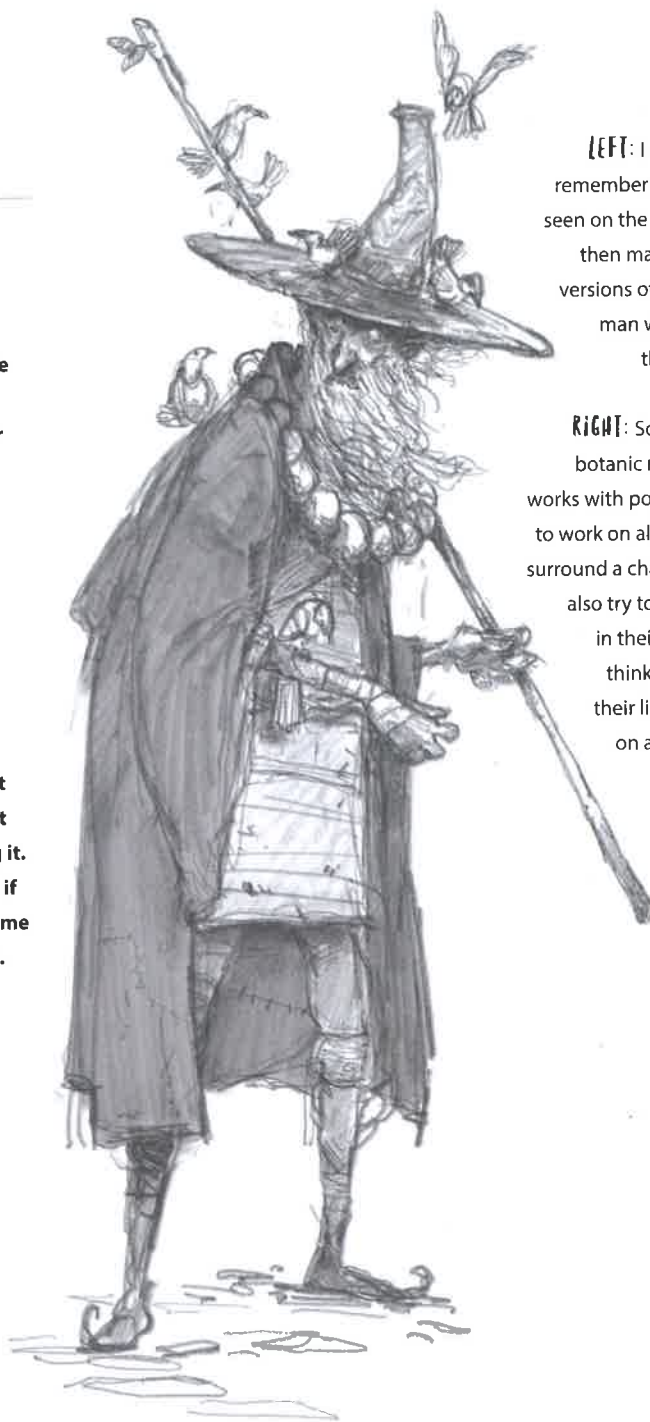
I've always thought that what is most important as an artist is learning how to communicate. I personally use drawing as a transmitting tool, and so sketches from my notebooks are the most pure of all expressions. A sketchbook happens to be where everything takes place; the place where you are brave enough to explore and experiment. It is where you can afford to let your hand loose without knowing where something is heading.

Sketchbooks are like a big testing field to which you can return later on, once everything is over, just to try to find new clues for your next drawing. Quite often you will find that new ideas can come to you by looking back at your own doodles or by trying out new ideas over old drawings.

To carry a sketchbook with you (and, of course, to use it) is an essential part of almost every artist's life. To be honest, at first it made me feel somewhat stressed. It was just calling my name at all times, screaming "Fill me up!" – I really couldn't stop hearing it. But with time I've learned that carrying it around with you is as if you're playing at all times, like having an extra item that can come out of your backpack at any time to catch ideas and inspiration.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

You can find inspiration in almost everything. Whatever surrounds you has something that might be useful for your own drawing. I honestly enjoy fantasy more than reality most of the time, so a little inspiration exercise I usually do, often unconsciously, is transform the world around me, bringing it into my genre so that I'm able to see a little further and put something of mine into that object or person that has caught my attention. If I happen to be listening to the right song, as well, I could just draw forever.



LEFT: I often try to remember people I've seen on the streets and then make my own versions of them. This man was feeding the pigeons.

RIGHT: Some kind of botanic master who works with potions. I love to work on all props that surround a character, and also try to put myself in their shoes and think about how their life would be on a daily basis.

MATERIALS

I try to vary my way of working so that I'm not always inside my comfort zone, although I often tend to use small sketchbooks (A5 size). Lately there has always been a Hahnemühle A5 traveling with me. In terms of pencil and inks, I've worked with 0.5 mechanical pencils and blue leads quite a lot, but I'm currently trying to switch to regular 2B pencils (softer and harder to master, but a lot more expressive). I also find the Pilot G-Tec-C4 an incredible tool, along with the Pentel Pocket brush pen.

I happen to have been sketching with the iPad lately, too – I used to refuse to believe that it was actually possible, but thanks to the iPad Pro and Procreate, I've gained an amazing new sketching tool!

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

When I'm doodling I basically require two things. One is warming up my hand, usually for fifteen minutes before drawing, so that the muscles stay relaxed and I am therefore able to achieve a loose finish. The other thing I need is mental preparation. A white sheet of paper can be very frustrating, making you want to fill up the page with all sorts of beautiful, perfectly created stuff. In order to start drawing, it is very important to ignore all of that pressure and remember that you're only trying things out! I try to sketch fast. I would rather have ten one-minute drawings than one ten-minute drawing.

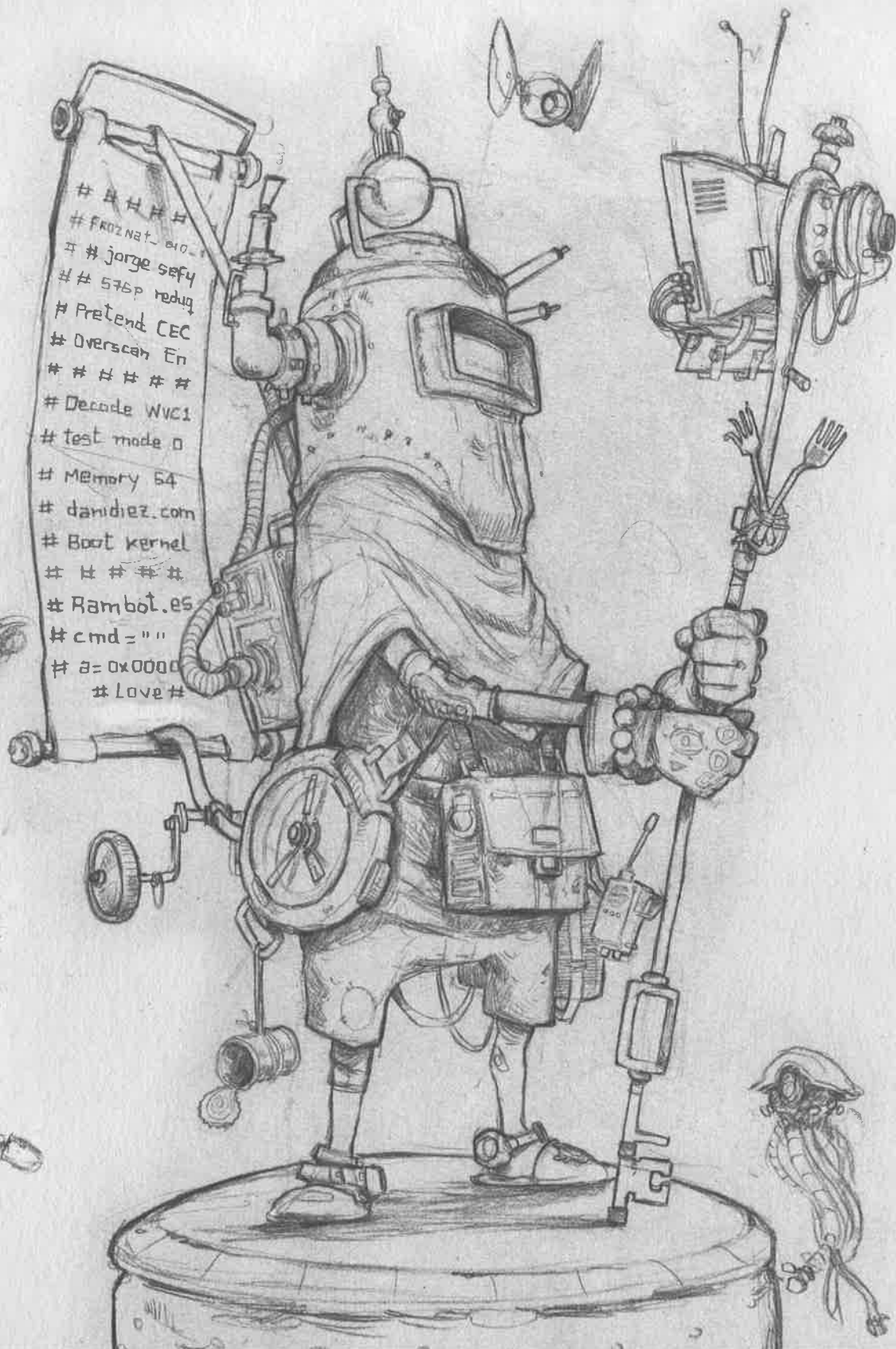
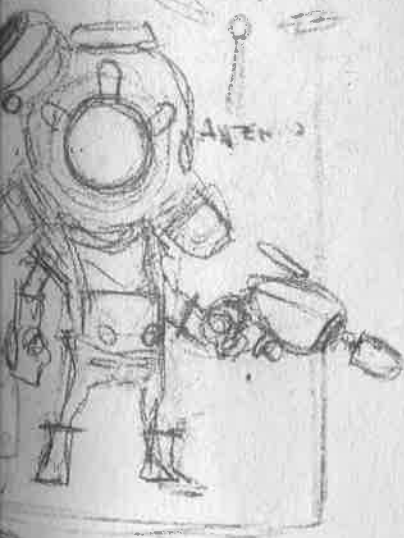




ABOVE: A magician facing evil nature. I spent more time than I would have wanted on this sketch, but I was simply enjoying it so much!

RIGHT: Development for another character, full of props all over their body.





```
## ## ## ##
# FROZNA1_010
# # jorge sefy
# # 576p reduq
# Pretend CEC
# Overscan En
# # # # #
# Decode WVC1
# test mode 0
# Memory 64
# danidiez.com
# Boot kernel
# # # # #
# Rambot.es
# cmd = ""
# a = 0x0000
# Love #
```




Always search for balance

There are a few things your hand always draws by default. In my case this is elderly characters! If this appears to happen to you, enhance your understanding of this subject as much as you can, but be careful not to lose sight of the fact that you might be drawing this because it gratifies you and you're just good at it. Facing more uncomfortable subject matter can sometimes be very frustrating, but in the end this will make you a much more capable person, and you might also end up enjoying it a lot more, broadening out your comfort zone.



TOP LEFT: When I'm not sure what to draw, my hand automatically drives me to this type of character – preferably bearded and with a prominent nose!

ABOVE: iPad Pro doodles. Quick character studies.

RIGHT: I often use sketchbooks to practice all the things I'm not that good at. Here I was practicing drawing girls.





ESTRADA, ANDY

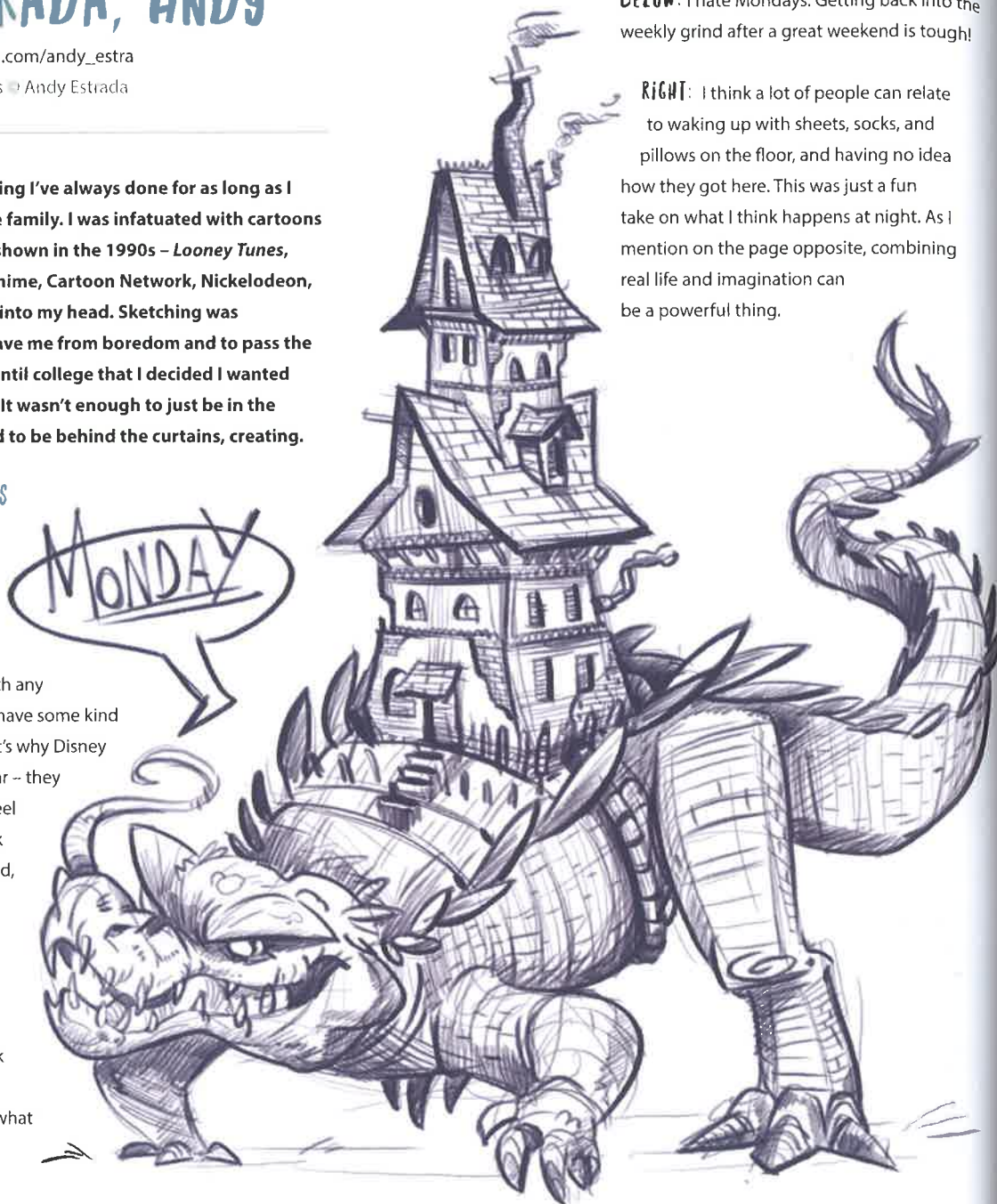
instagram.com/andy_estra

All images © Andy Estrada

Sketching has been something I've always done for as long as I can remember. It runs in the family. I was infatuated with cartoons growing up. Every cartoon shown in the 1990s – *Looney Tunes*, Saturday morning shows, anime, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and Disney – was absorbed into my head. Sketching was something I did for fun to save me from boredom and to pass the time in class, and it wasn't until college that I decided I wanted to be a part of the industry. It wasn't enough to just be in the audience anymore; I wanted to be behind the curtains, creating.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I believe that art is catching a moment in life: capturing a feeling or a thought in one drawing. Before the details and the color, the audience sees the life first. With any art form, the viewer wants to have some kind of emotional connection. That's why Disney are the masters and so popular – they are the kings of making you feel for their characters. Yes, I think their art is the best in the world, but more importantly it's one big emotional rollercoaster that hooks me! That hook is what inspires me to sketch; it's my main goal when picking up a pencil. If you look at a Glen Keane drawing, you automatically start believing what the character is feeling or thinking... it's unbelievable.



BELOW: I hate Mondays. Getting back into the weekly grind after a great weekend is tough!

RIGHT: I think a lot of people can relate to waking up with sheets, socks, and pillows on the floor, and having no idea how they got here. This was just a fun take on what I think happens at night. As I mention on the page opposite, combining real life and imagination can be a powerful thing.

I asked him for **advice** once, and he told me, "Draw what the character is **thinking**, not doing." That stuck with me and has been the **idea** behind my drawings ever since.

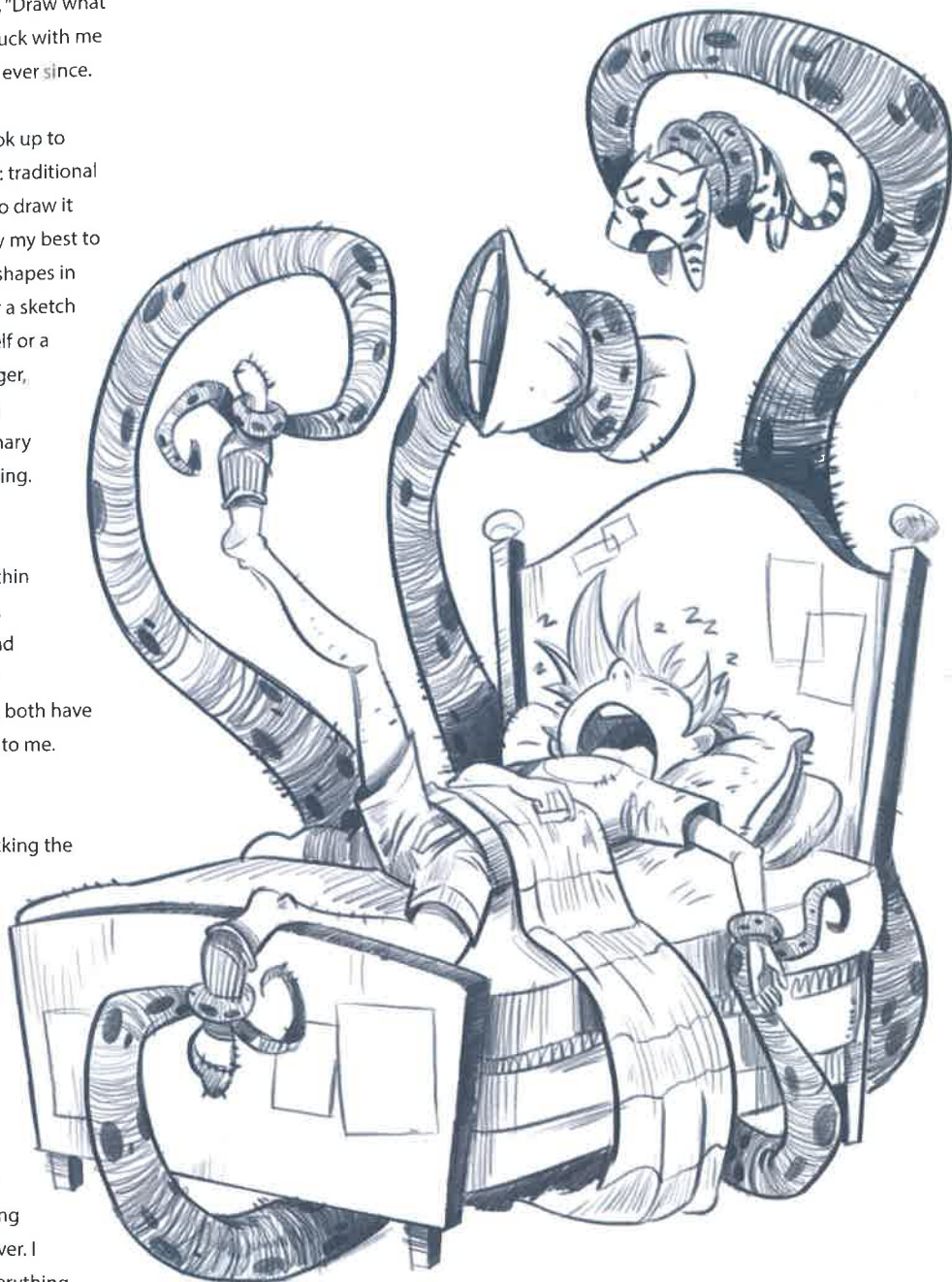
There are so many artists out there that I look up to and admire. I'm drawn to so many art styles: traditional cartoons, Pixar, anime, you name it. I want to draw it all! I pick and choose certain aspects and try my best to combine them, exaggerating and pushing shapes in characters and objects. I try to pull ideas for a sketch from everyday life. Instead of drawing myself or a human character, I use mascots such as a tiger, mouse, alligator, or a boy, just to keep it fun and more interesting. Combining an imaginary character with real life can be a powerful thing.

MATERIALS

In terms of materials, I use Prismacolor Verithin indigo blue pencils, paper, or a sketchbook. For digital sketches I use a Wacom Cintiq and Photoshop. I jump back and forth between computer and paper as much as I can. They both have their pros and cons and are very important to me.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I start every sketch very loosely, lightly blocking the character out in one shape, trying to find the action line or where the focus will be. I rough out the drawing as lightly as I can, to the point where I'm comfortable with starting to clean it up. If I draw on paper, I clean up over the rough on the same paper. It's the same on the computer, or I lower the sketch's opacity and draw on a new layer. I still keep it "sketchy" when cleaning up, as it maintains the life in the drawing. Any details or shading are done with line only – no color whatsoever. I love details, and make sure I over-detail everything.





BELOW: I love making characters out of animals. Most of my ideas come from other interests that I have – in this case, the guitar. My characters are a reflection of what I'm feeling or thinking at the time. Other times they reflect who I want to be or what I want to do. In this case, a rock god without a care in the world.

"I PICK AND CHOOSE CERTAIN ASPECTS AND TRY MY BEST TO COMBINE THEM, EXAGGERATING AND PUSHING SHAPES IN CHARACTERS AND OBJECTS"



Reference, reference, reference

No matter how many times you have drawn something, it's always good to have a reference around. When drawing characters from a reference, you don't have to match their anatomy exactly, but your drawing needs to make sense. Know the rules before you break them.

Staging

I try to have props for what's going on in the story, to put my characters in a simple environment. For example, in the sketch of a boy and his rocking horse on page 91, the arrows tell you what's happening and frame the scene. In the drawing on the page opposite, the alligator is sitting next to an amp, whiskey bottle, and cup. Adding these elements tells you a lot about the character and pushes the story.

LEFT: I have to put in the work to get better. There's no way around it.



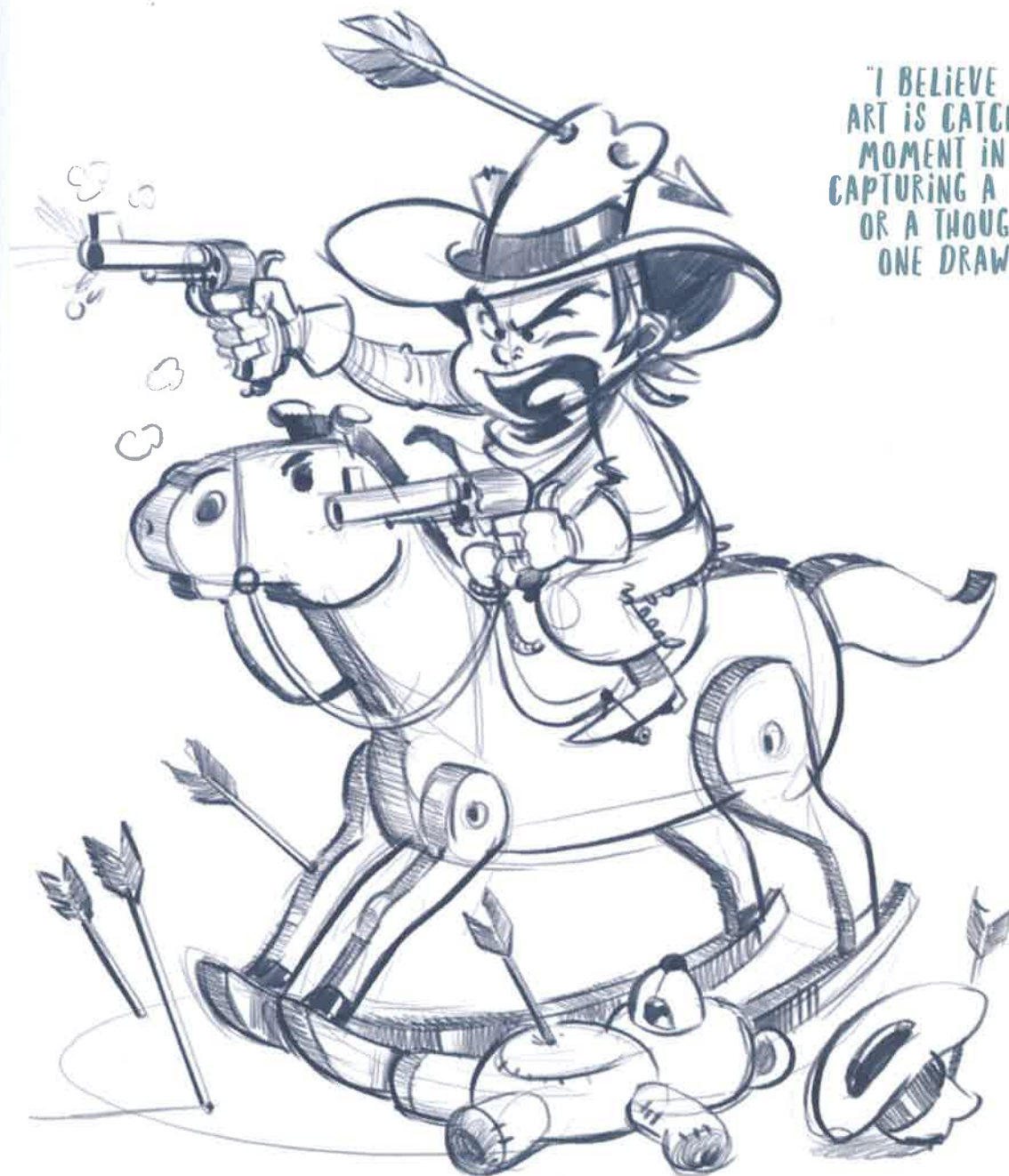
TOP LEFT: Not having Ctrl+Z and needing to sharpen your pencil is a drag, but nothing compares to traditional drawing.

BOTTOM LEFT: The best part of the day is leaving work and going home.

BELOW: One of the hardest things to do is wake up in the morning and have to drive to work. I know people can relate to this, and I use this theme repeatedly on my Instagram.

RIGHT: A lot of the ideas for my sketches are children playing pretend. I try to capture the moment through their eyes as we once experienced. Story is a big deal to me. I try to fit as much story as I can into one drawing: for example, the horse is a toy, but to the boy it is just as alive as he is, and I made the horse's eyes reflect the same personality as the boy. The defeated teddy bear adds some comedy.





"I BELIEVE THAT
ART IS CATCHING A
MOMENT IN LIFE:
CAPTURING A FEELING
OR A THOUGHT IN
ONE DRAWING"



GELEV, PENKO

behance.net/PenkoGelev

All images © Penko Gelev

Most of my sketches don't have any specific purpose. I just let my imagination create different drawings while I take a rest from what I do. Thus I collect a kind of unlimited image library, drawn only from the freedom of my imagination.

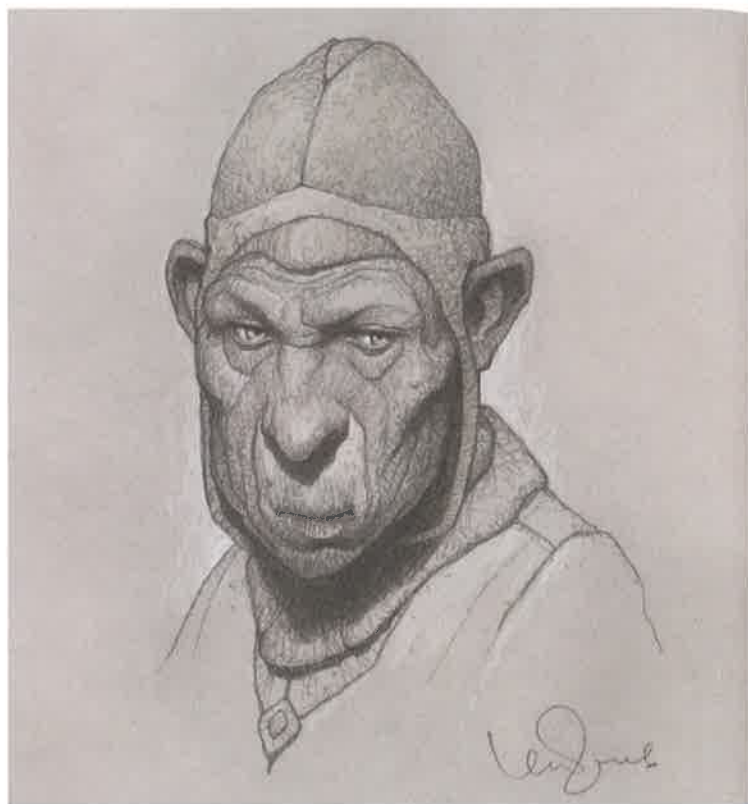
When I was young, my academic education was close to the traditions of the nineteenth century; I made thousands of sketches and drawings from nature, so today I almost never need to do any more. Drawing from nature develops an artist's habit of observing their surrounding reality, which becomes "second nature" for them. I use what I've learned, especially when I try to add substantiality to the fantastic elements of my characters and drawings.

I try to imprint characters' biographies on their faces, bodies, and clothing. I myself, of course, don't know their biographies in detail. Quite often, the drawings comprise a certain story – but that's just the beginning of the story developed by the viewers themselves.

Drawing every day enables me to experiment with style and methods for building each image. I make sequences of drawings in different styles, build the shapes in different ways, and develop the separate elements with different treatment of the details.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Sometimes my sketches are a result of a certain impression from the day. Sometimes they are drawn by the vague inspiration of the subconscious – ideas that occurred after seeing or reading something, but had been forgotten for a long time. In my work on movies and comics, I hardly ever use an accidental drawing. My drawings are a kind of training for when I have to work



on a specific project, to create a character that has been described in the script. Then I use the elements and emotions that I've collected in my memory, like an identikit robot which reconstitutes the suspect's face according to the eyewitnesses' description.

MATERIALS

I learned to draw in the 1980s, when Bulgaria was a part of the Communist Bloc and therefore it was quite difficult to find materials for drawing. My colleagues and I developed a niggardly attitude, building up reserves of quality papers, pencils, and paints, which we used only on important occasions. I still keep pencils and steel nibs which (nobody knows why) we used to call "ladies."

Now I love to draw with pencil on paper. My favorite pencils are Derwent Graphic 2Bs, but I use a mechanical pencil with 2B leads as well. Recently I've been drawing digitally with Corel Painter, where I prefer the Sumi-e brush for sketching.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

My favorite technique is to draw the sketch with pencil, and then scan it and finish it with Photoshop and Painter, thus adding more personality and depth. This is my way of keeping the freshness of drawing by hand on paper while combining it with the wealth of opportunities for additional processing – which itself, actually, is quite economical.



TOP LEFT: Sundara just knew that with such a muzzle he'd never marry a maid with decent dowry.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: Uncle Benjamin was a proud man. He didn't hesitate to kill his wife. We, his nephews, were the first people who greeted him.

MIDDLE BOTTOM LEFT: An old maid who lives in the home of her relatives. She doesn't believe in ghosts and vampires.

LEFT: The old man sat in front of the temple every day, never looking at anyone, staring at the pavement as if trying to count the stones.

ABOVE: When I first met this guy I was impressed by his broad smile and beautiful teeth.

Draw from life

Studying nature in detail is never harmful to the artist's creative heart, and it's the only way to perfect one's skills. At the same time, contemporary tools that have become quite accessible recently (photography, 3D models, movies) should not be underestimated, as long as we don't restrict ourselves by blindly copying.

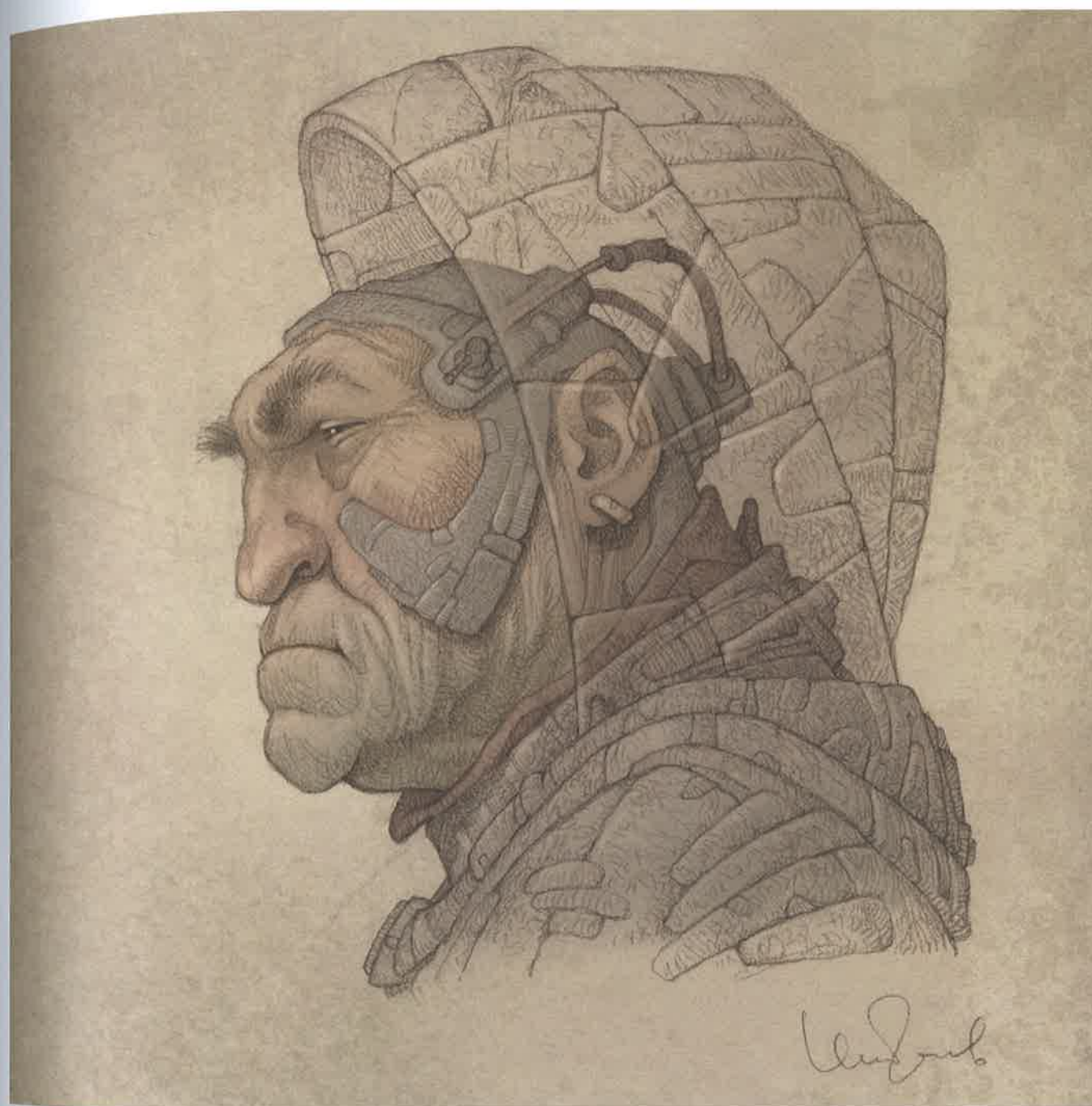
Remember, however, that it is still important to study from real life as well. I recommend that beginner artists should draw more from life and nature, instead of using photographs. The observation of a live model involves more profound analysis of the shapes, bones, and muscles. You can also gain an understanding of how one's emotional state influences one's appearance.

TOP RIGHT: Tsubang is a smuggler and gambler. He was the best at 21 in the neighborhood. He didn't do it for money, he just loved the game.

BOTTOM RIGHT: This guy is a banker. He's convinced of the power of money, and has a hardly noticeable sense of humor.

FAR RIGHT: This guy is a sergeant in the infantry. When you train neophytes for a galaxy mission, a little bit of austerity is necessary.









TOP LEFT: While he was walking his home-bred vord, Mpanamori thought that it was high time he left this city.

BOTTOM LEFT: Until the end of her short life, Natasha never knew why she wore this uncomfortable hat that brewed her head.

LEFT: What makes this girl stare at the sky all the time?

ABOVE: I called him Corporal Mencil. He's full of optimism, even though he's seen many things during his service.

TOP RIGHT: This young warrior found the best animal for the money he had.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Gathering jumping pumpkins is a difficult and dangerous job, but Dara is a professional and she doesn't complain about it.





GIGLIO, CÉLINE

celinelys.tumblr.com

All images © Céline Giglio

I have two passions in life: art and movies. It seemed logical to embrace both and to work for the animated movie industry. I come from a long bloodline of artists, so doing anything other than drawing in my life never occurred to me. I'm passionate about drawing people and making up stories to extend the world they're evolving in. Drawing is my way of adding beauty to the world.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

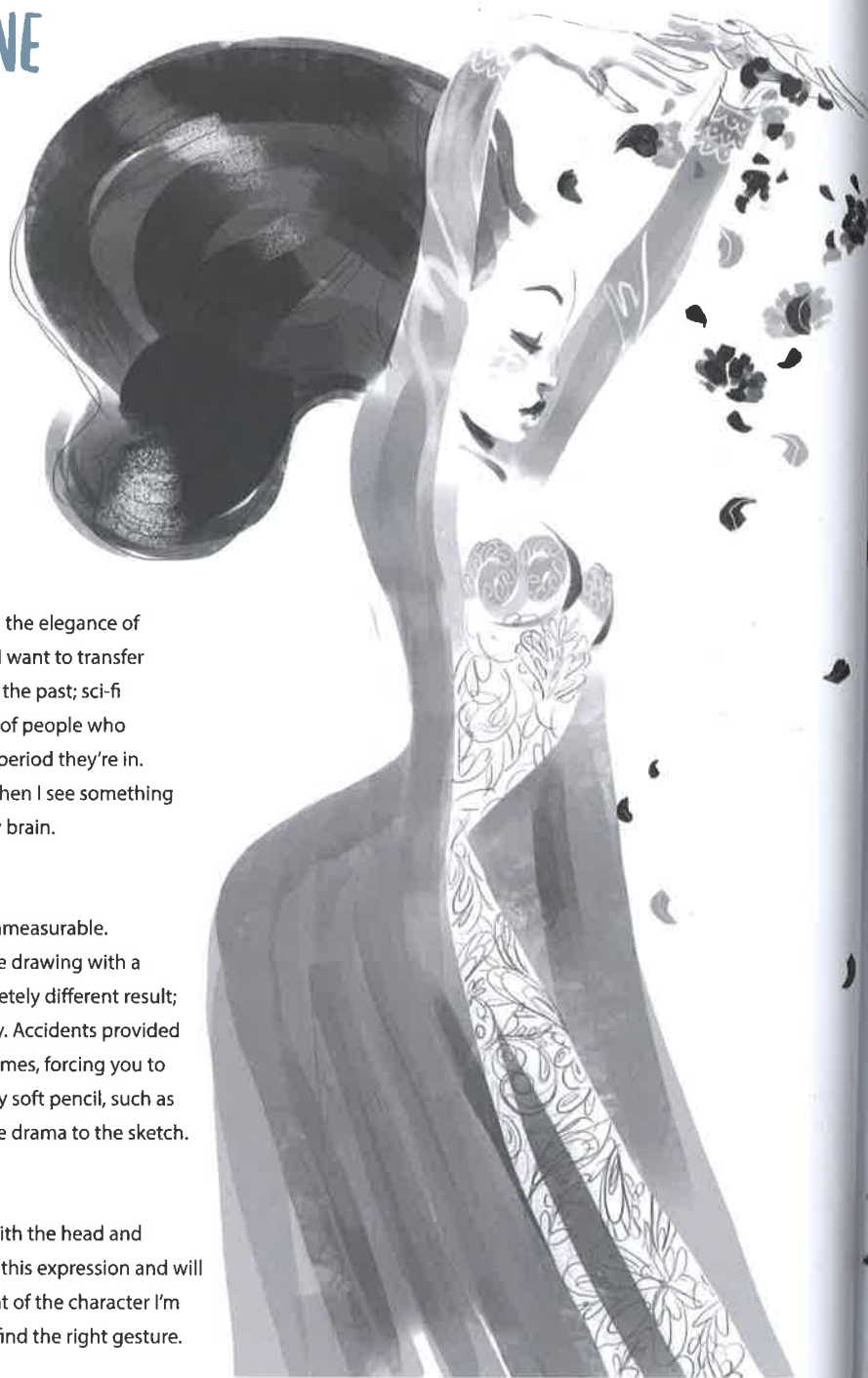
All my inspiration comes from the 18th and 19th centuries. I love the tragic passion, the romanticism, and the elegance of artistic movements of these eras. Those are the feelings I want to transfer through my drawings. Of course, I'm not only looking to the past; sci-fi is also something I'm deeply fond of. I like telling stories of people who go beyond their familiar conditions, no matter the time period they're in. Inspiration can come from anywhere, mostly a feeling when I see something or when I'm in a particular place that lights a spark in my brain.

MATERIALS

I mostly use digital media now, as the advantages are immeasurable. However, traditional tools are great. You can do the same drawing with a very thin pencil or a large brush and you'll have a completely different result; that's something I like, and is a great exercise, by the way. Accidents provided by traditional tools turn out to be good surprises sometimes, forcing you to react smartly and adapt. For sketching, I like to use a very soft pencil, such as 4B, to create a strong line and deep black that adds more drama to the sketch.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

When I do automatic sketches, most of the time I start with the head and expression of the character. Everything else results from this expression and will guide me towards the attitude, clothes, and environment of the character I'm creating. Otherwise I scribble the same character until I find the right gesture.



LEFT: Sketching to get the right gesture.

BELOW: Black and sepia ink with brush.

RIGHT: Ink designs developed from a quick pencil sketch.



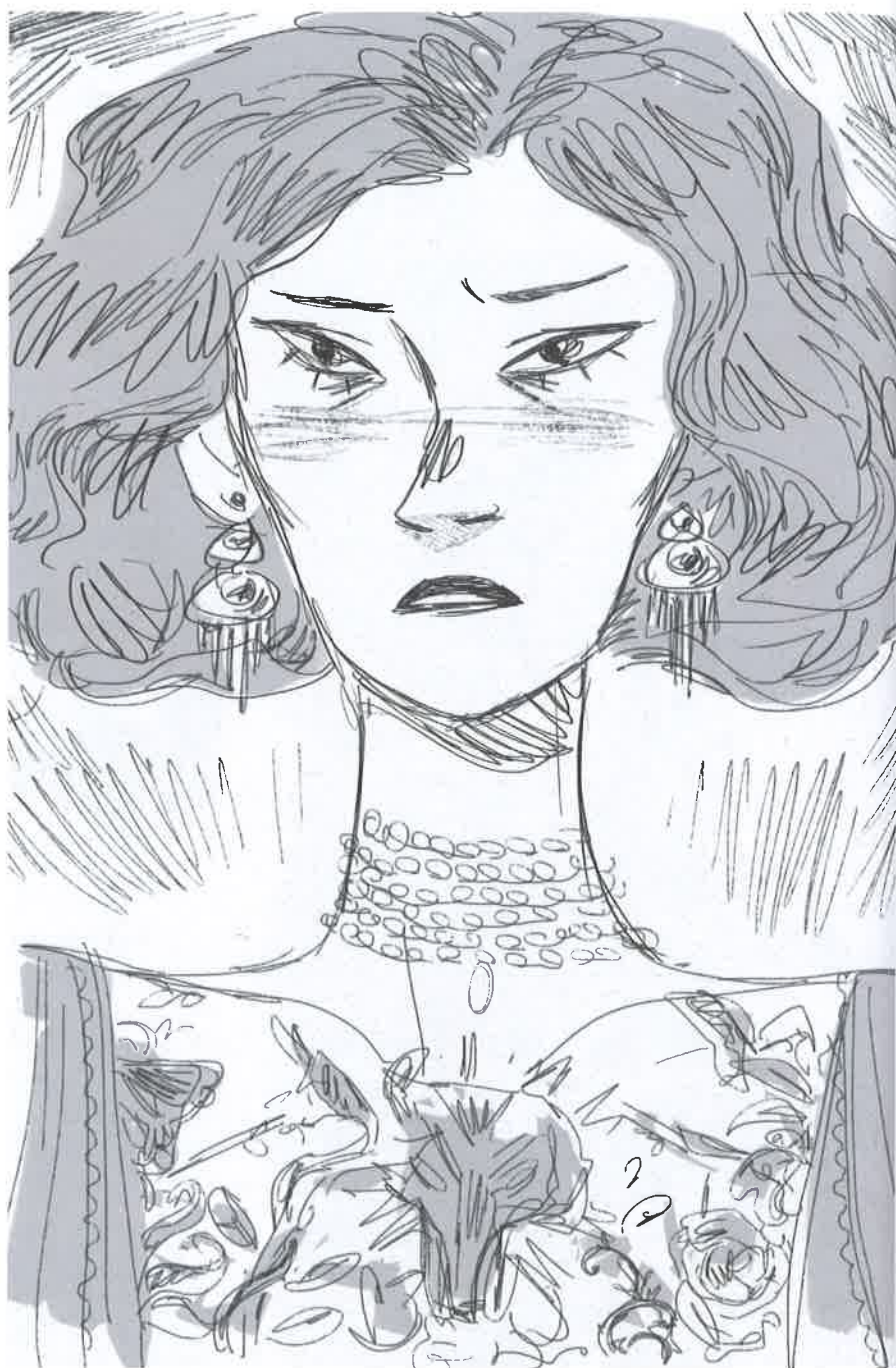
"I COME FROM A LONG BLOODLINE
OF ARTISTS, SO DOING ANYTHING
OTHER THAN DRAWING IN MY LIFE
NEVER OCCURRED TO ME"



ABOVE: Black pencil and alcohol-based Letraset ProMarker.

NEAR RIGHT: Digital portrait sketch.

FAR RIGHT: Another digital portrait sketch.





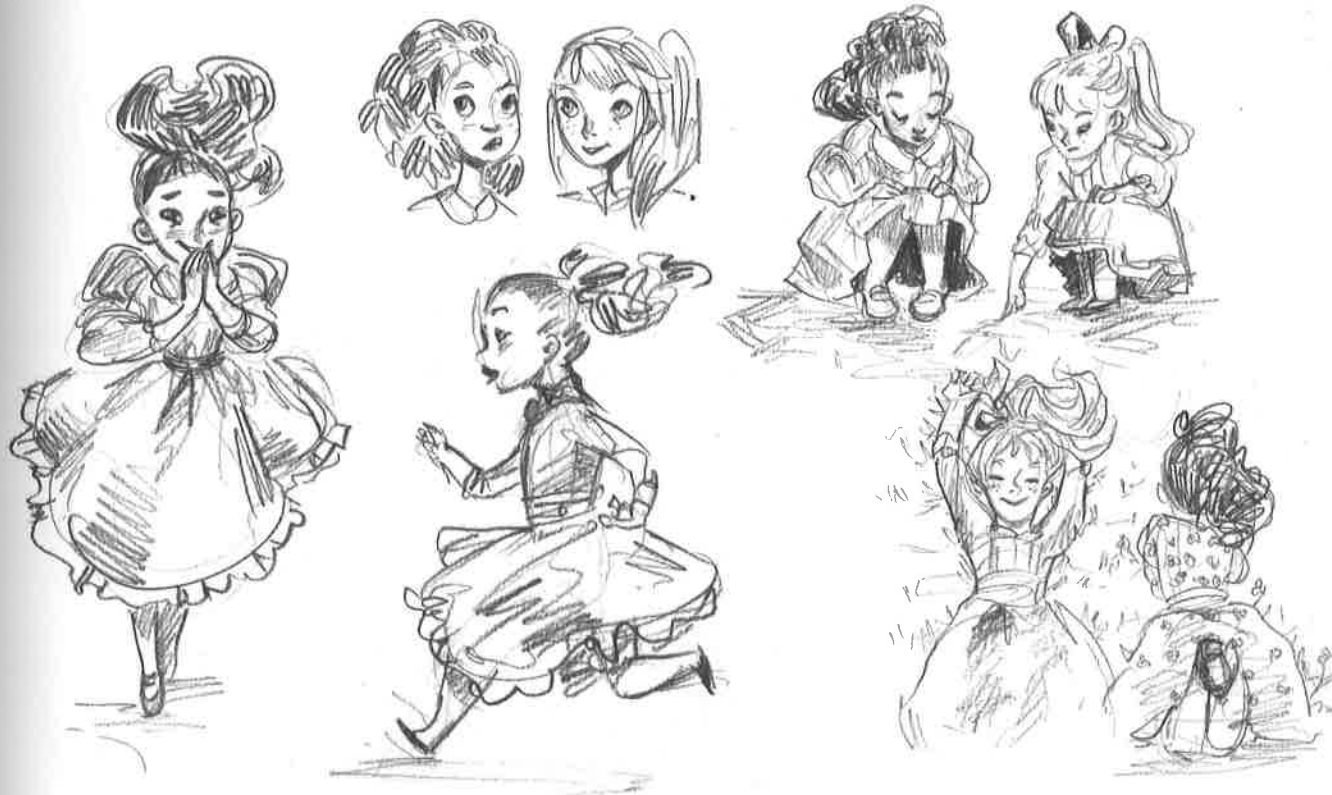
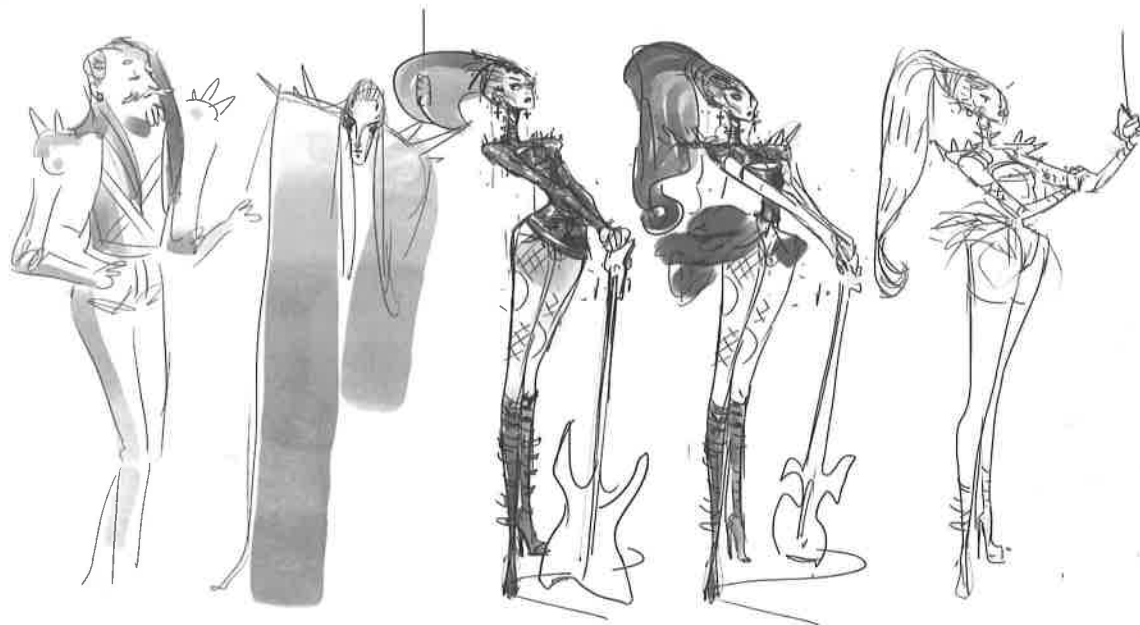


"SCI-FI IS ALSO SOMETHING I'M DEEPLY FOND
OF. I LIKE TELLING STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO
GO BEYOND THEIR FAMILIAR CONDITIONS,
NO MATTER THE TIME PERIOD THEY'RE IN"

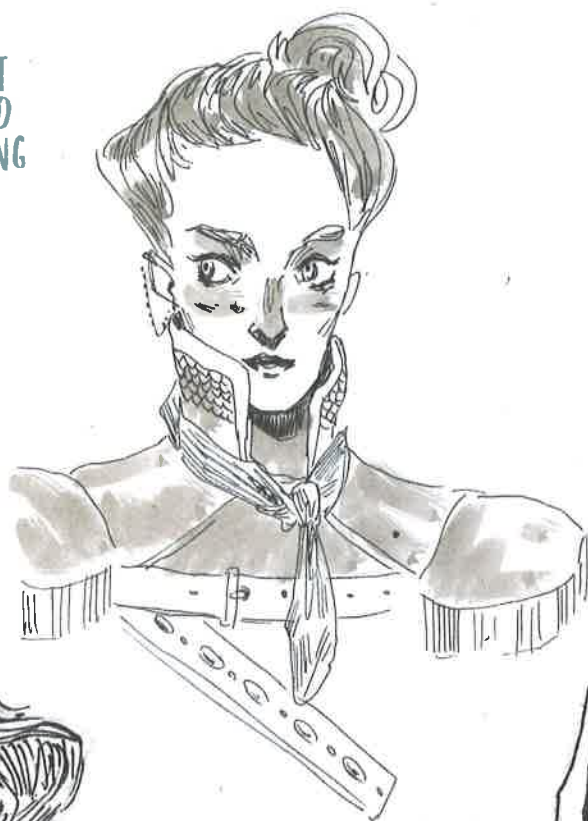
LEFT: Various pieces of research for a sci-fi project.

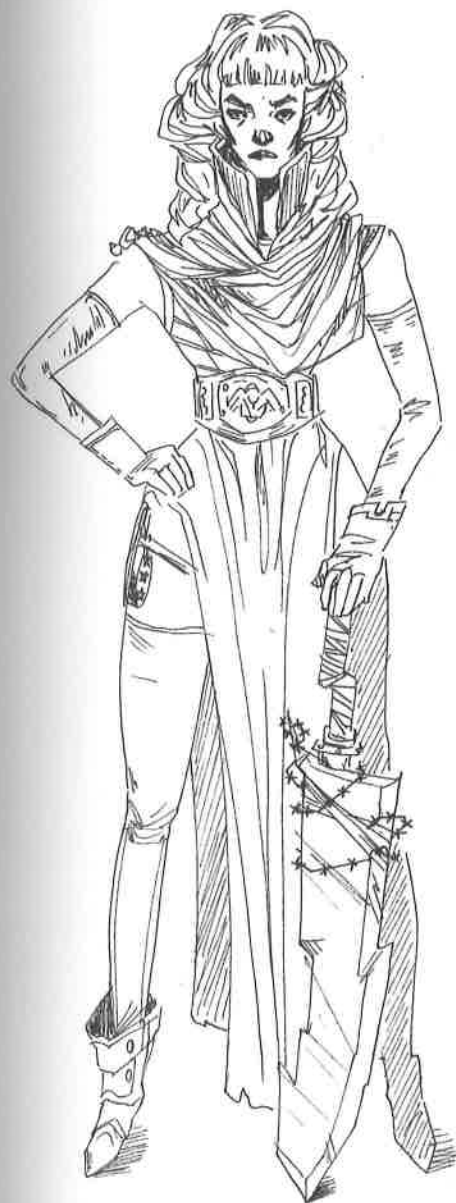
RIGHT: Different variations of the same concept made for the Character Design Challenge. The theme was "metal." I was inspired by H. R. Giger's sculptures, especially the microphone he designed for the band Korn.

BELOW: Research for a project taking place in the 19th century. Drawn in black pencil.



"WHEN I DO AUTOMATIC SKETCHES, MOST OF THE TIME I START WITH THE HEAD AND EXPRESSION OF THE CHARACTER. EVERYTHING ELSE RESULTS FROM THIS EXPRESSION"





BOTH PAGES: Various sketches and portraits drawn with black ink, pencil, or in Photoshop.



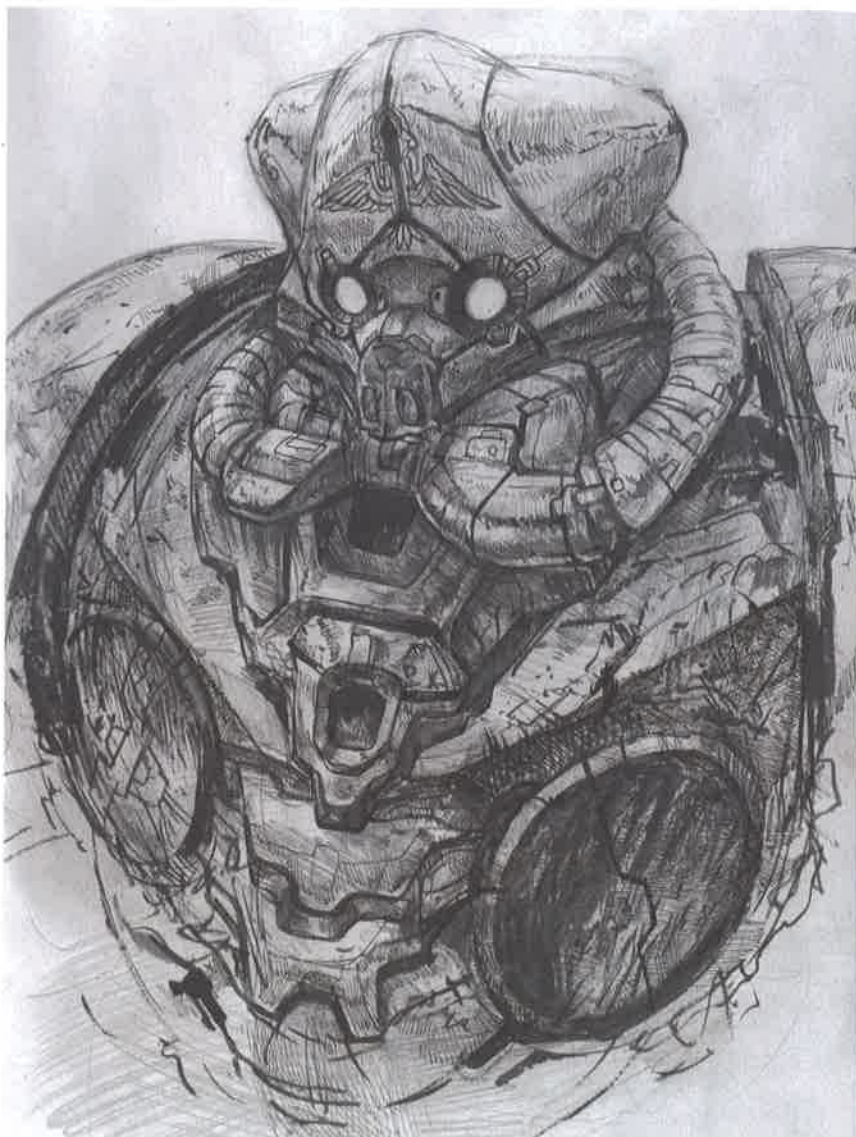
GOLOVATYUK, ALEKSANDER

artstation.com/artist/arekkusanda

All images © A. B. Golovatyuk

I began drawing in my early childhood – I loved book illustrations, fantastic cartoons, and movies. Since I was more or less of a conscious age, I wanted to become an artist. My experience at art school was quite important because it created an artistic base in terms of technical skills such as anatomy, upon which I could develop my own visual library.

My approach to sketching is, above all, having an absence of specific frameworks and targets – just visual improvisation on the themes of sci-fi or fantasy. Images are born from the moments in which I find certain patterns, which then go on to become specific, complete images.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Life itself inspires me! I'm sure that we are here on Earth to create. I am fond of reading books: classic works of humanistic and science fiction, and some journalism. I love philosophy. I am inspired by quite a vast range of artists, writers, and directors, such as Moebius, H. R. Giger, Wayne Barlowe, J. R. R. Tolkien, Roger Zelazny, Bruce Sterling, Ridley Scott, and Steven Spielberg.

MATERIALS

I use writing paper as well as sketchbooks. I give much attention to the tools themselves: pencils (4B to 8B), mechanical pencils, a brush handle with ink, and sometimes a small brush. This set of tools allows me to use a fairly wide range of different strokes.

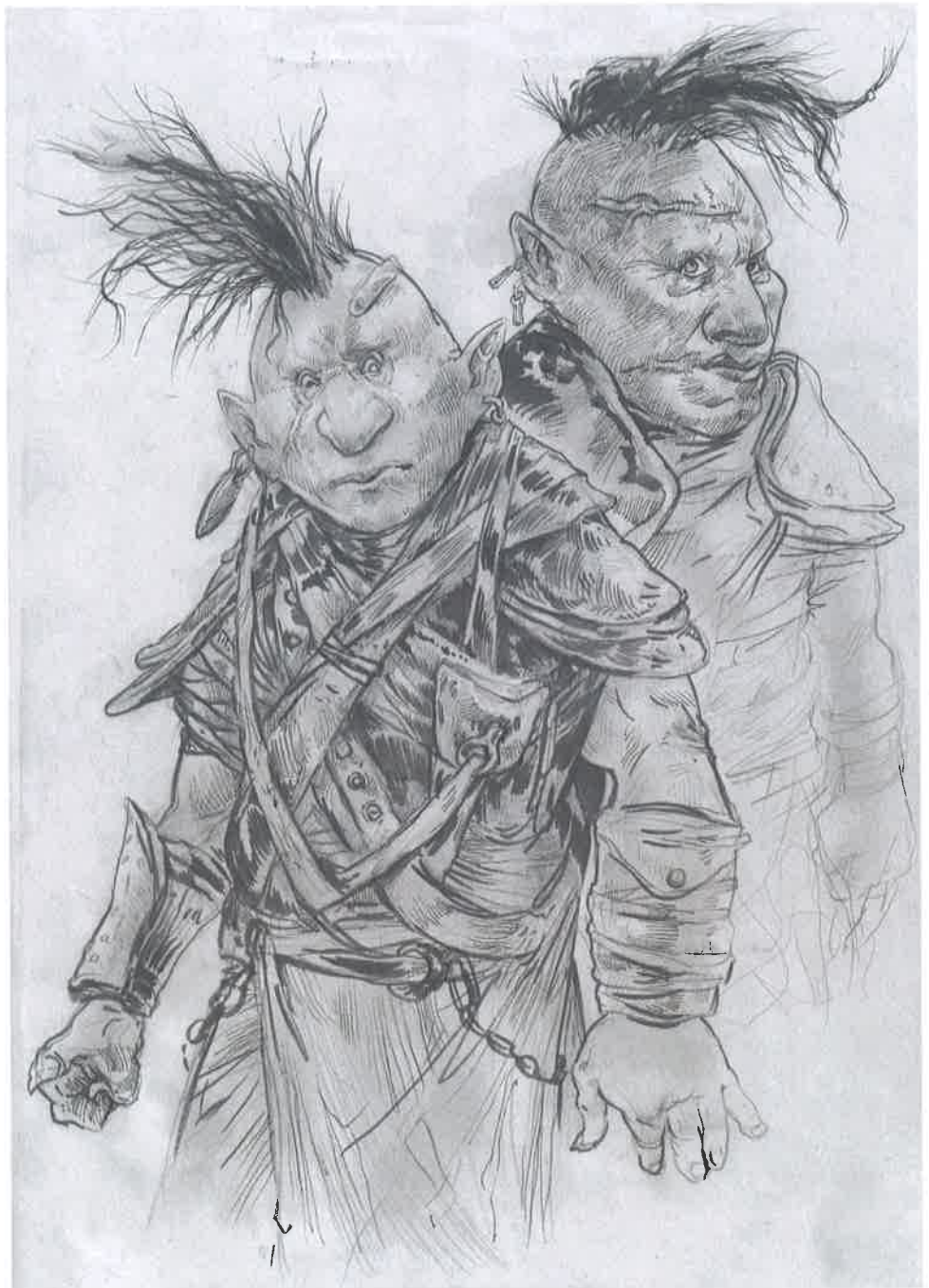
SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

For me, time is an important aspect of the image and design. My drawings usually take between one and a half to three and a half hours, a time frame I use so that there's no doubt in terms of my results.

FAR LEFT: Housebreaker, a good but fierce warrior.

NEAR LEFT: A powerful combat tank unit that takes the main enemy fire by itself.

RIGHT: Dork and Bork – two brother trolls, trackers.







"MY DRAWINGS USUALLY TAKE BETWEEN ONE AND A HALF TO THREE AND A HALF HOURS, A TIME FRAME I USE SO THAT THERE'S NO DOUBT IN TERMS OF MY RESULTS"

FAR TOP LEFT: The ancient undying King of Ghouls.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: Pointing the way.

MIDDLE LEFT: A dead king.

NEAR LEFT: Militant princess of the White Kingdom.

ABOVE: The brave, experienced warrior dwarf.



GÓMEZ, JOSE

thechulo.tumblr.com

All images © The Chulo

I am Jose Leonardo, a self-taught artist from Colombia. I grew up thinking about being an archaeologist because I wanted to find dinosaur bones, but ended up not studying that because it wasn't going to be any help in my country. But thinking about finding dinosaurs gave me a great interest in history. When I finished school, I didn't study art, I didn't go to college, but I kept drawing every day and trying to improve every time. I had no art books, I didn't have a computer, but I really wanted to draw and create my stories.

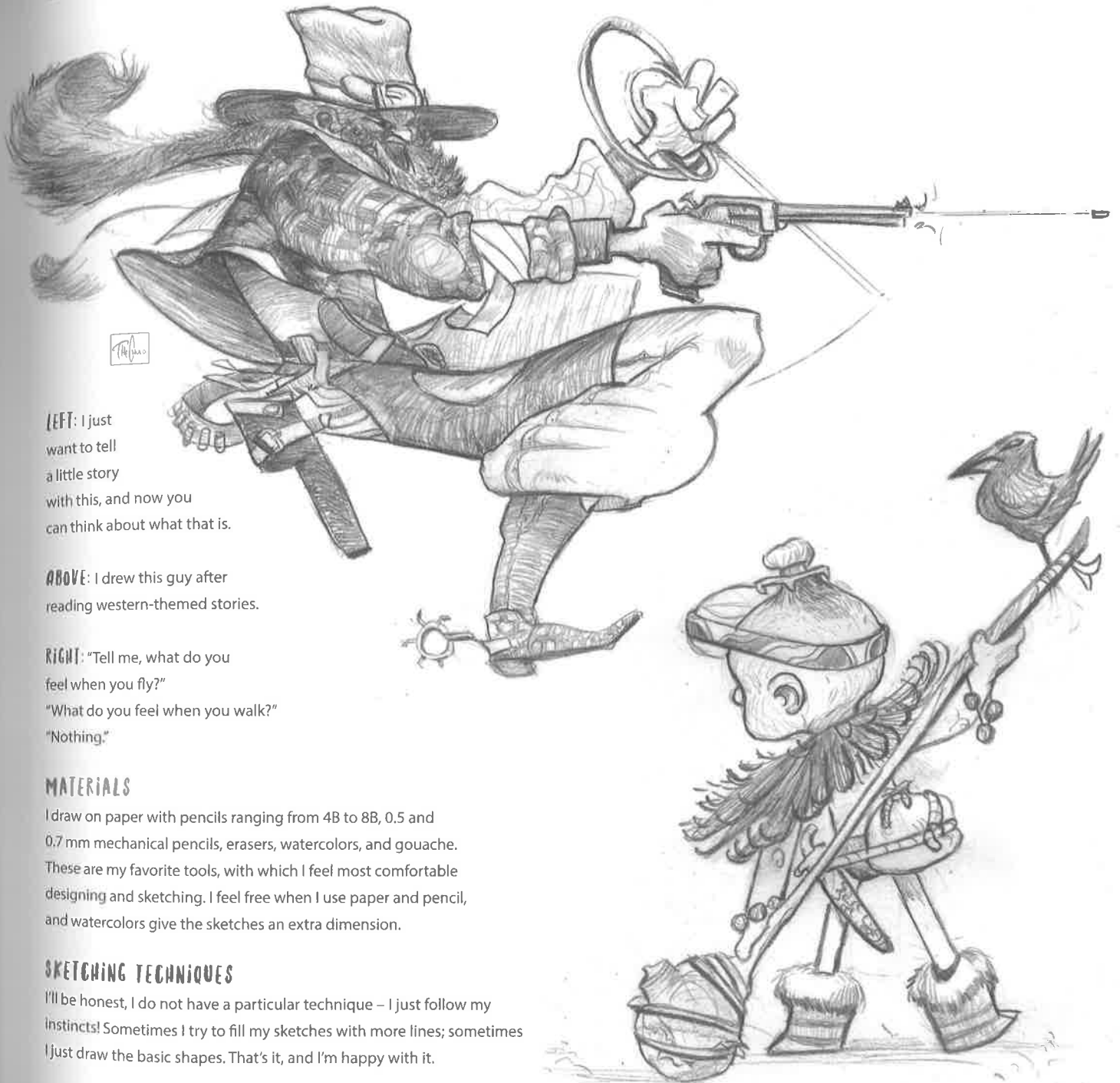
I've been interested in drawing since my childhood. I loved watching Japanese animated series and tried to imitate what I saw; those are my memories of starting to sketch whenever I had the chance. When I was in high school I made my first comic, which was created totally in pencil – it was a clean sketch, but it was still a sketch, with no color or ink.

Creating sketches is something I love doing, letting the ideas come out by themselves, without restrictions or deadlines. It's a very sincere and very personal process. If I don't like the look of one sketch, I make another. Sketching on paper also helps me to relax from the stresses of drawing on a computer, where you're clicking or pressing keys every few seconds. My sketches on paper are fluid, pure ideas.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Normally I look for any image that will help me develop what I have in my head more easily. I look on Pinterest or websites with good photographic references. I don't refer to other artists' work in order to avoid drawing unconsciously on their ideas. When I have the references I need, I begin to quickly draw a sketch – very loose, nothing detailed, just modeling the pose of the character or composition of the scene. I also find it helpful to close my eyes and find images that I have there – it's like the closest thing to magic.





LEFT: I just want to tell a little story with this, and now you can think about what that is.

ABOVE: I drew this guy after reading western-themed stories.

RIGHT: "Tell me, what do you feel when you fly?"
"What do you feel when you walk?"
"Nothing."

MATERIALS

I draw on paper with pencils ranging from 4B to 8B, 0.5 and 0.7 mm mechanical pencils, erasers, watercolors, and gouache. These are my favorite tools, with which I feel most comfortable designing and sketching. I feel free when I use paper and pencil, and watercolors give the sketches an extra dimension.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I'll be honest, I do not have a particular technique – I just follow my instincts! Sometimes I try to fill my sketches with more lines; sometimes I just draw the basic shapes. That's it, and I'm happy with it.

Move your lines

When you want to give your characters volume using single lines, just look at where they lead. For example, the belly of this character is very large, so I drew lines with a curved shape to achieve a big and swollen look. It's the same with the legs, beard, and so on. Think of the volume of the subject before drawing your lines.



LEFT: My father and his family have been farmers, so I have always had many references to them in my drawings.

NEAR TOP RIGHT:
Irthukppukp Ishzz
Vurakupp (reptilian
language).

NEAR BOTTOM RIGHT:
Ruru, a bird character
with Japanese
inspirations.

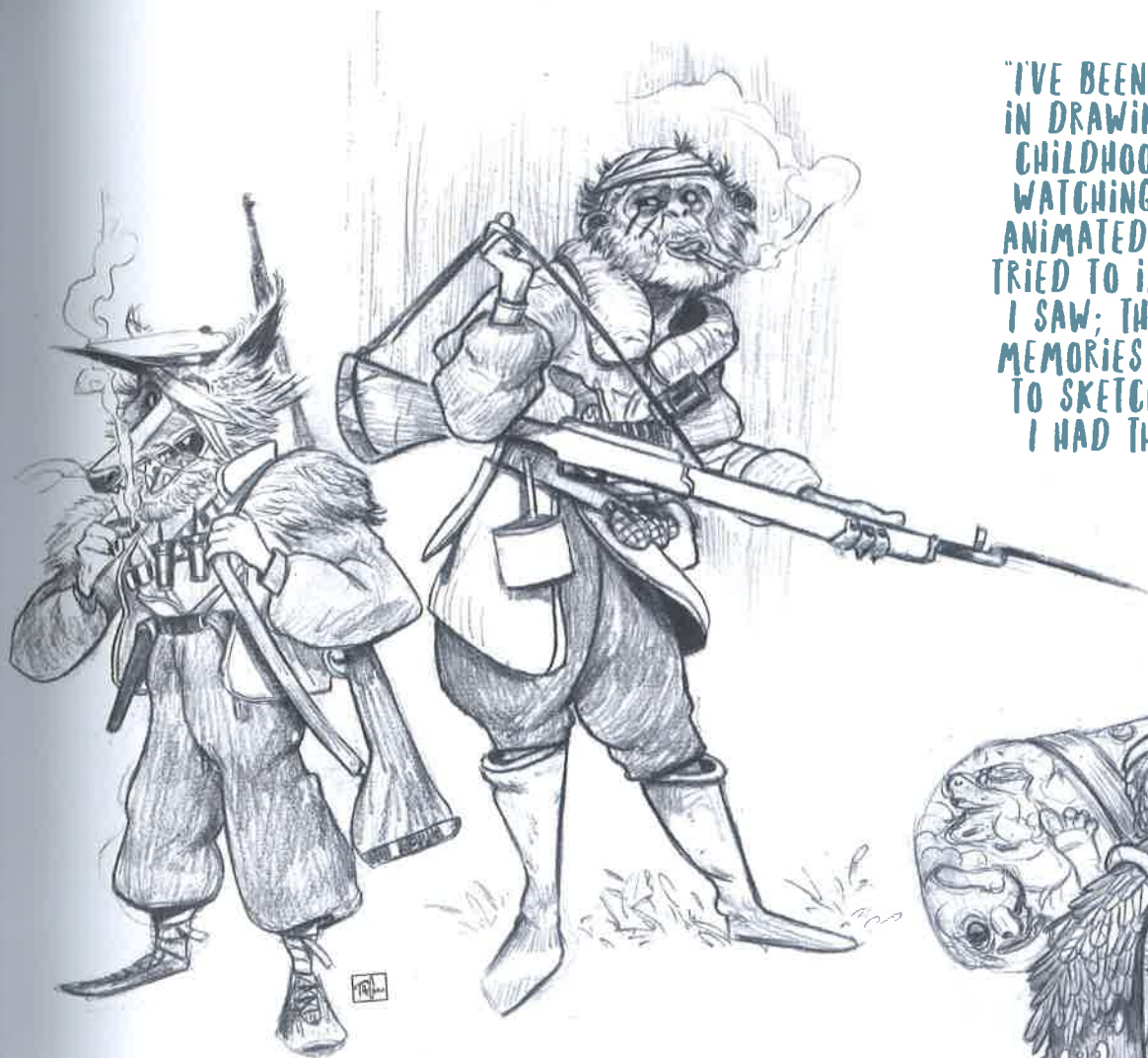
FAR RIGHT: "My wife's
going to kill me! I left my
keys... inside the house!"



Tell a story

Explore more options and variations of your characters. Create a mix between ancient cultures and animals, humans and fruits, warriors and young children. Make a story when you draw. This is very important. Don't just draw a cute character – the most important thing is to create a story with characters, and the design should speak for itself.





"I'VE BEEN INTERESTED
IN DRAWING SINCE MY
CHILDHOOD. I LOVED
WATCHING JAPANESE
ANIMATED SERIES AND
TRIED TO IMITATE WHAT
I SAW; THOSE ARE MY
MEMORIES OF STARTING
TO SKETCH WHENEVER
I HAD THE CHANCE"

LEFT: What can I say? Vikings are the most black metal things from ancient times.

ABOVE: "We're going to fight, but first of all we need to eat, and drink, of course." When you draw animals, try to put a little magic or fantasy in them. Maybe they can think like humans, and be like humans. Maybe they can smoke and drink a good wine!

RIGHT: If one day you're lost and you find a witch, please don't ask her for help.





BELOW: "My loyalty for the emperor is my best gift. I will die for him. I'm a Samurai."

NEAR RIGHT: He is the king of all you know, he fought for a reason, and died for many others. He's a character from my graphic novel I'm working on.

FAR TOP RIGHT: "My name is Toruru. I'm here to defend my home."

FAR BOTTOM RIGHT: "Excuse me sir, is this the way to my home?"



MARUT
#1



GOUDREAU, ANDREW

andrewgoudreau.com

All images © Andrew Goudreau

For as long as I remember there have been three constants in my life: drawing, video games, and food. Obviously you objectively need at least one of these to live, but I've stubbornly decided that all three possess that quality. It was important to have those hobbies in my life as I was "caught in the middle" with a lot of different things: being half white and half Asian, being the middle kid, and growing up as an Anglophone in a French province. Drawing and video games grounded me to something reliable that I could control and shape to my will. I suppose it's always been about having control or agency over something that doesn't exist.

My ongoing issue is wanting to try new things all the time to see how I can apply them to the rest of my work, but I often get caught up and lose sight of what "the rest of my work" even means. Now that I work in the industry, things are a bit different, but the main reason I sketch has never changed. It's always been about self-improvement. The path forward to what I want isn't always clear, but I believe that hard work, dedication, and consistency clear the way and present new goals for you.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I'm sure a lot of people do this, but I like to create the structure of a world that I can add images and sketches to, in order to round out

the vision of that universe.

Recently I've been working on a series of dog knight drawings, which is what people usually know me for. A lot of my influences come from Japanese interpretations of western knights, like in *Berserk* or *Dark Souls*. Otherwise, for my monster stuff, I love Japanese horror manga such as the works of Junji Ito. Facebook, Tumblr, and Instagram also have a ton of amazing artists, and they're great content aggregators through which to randomly find new artists I've never seen before.

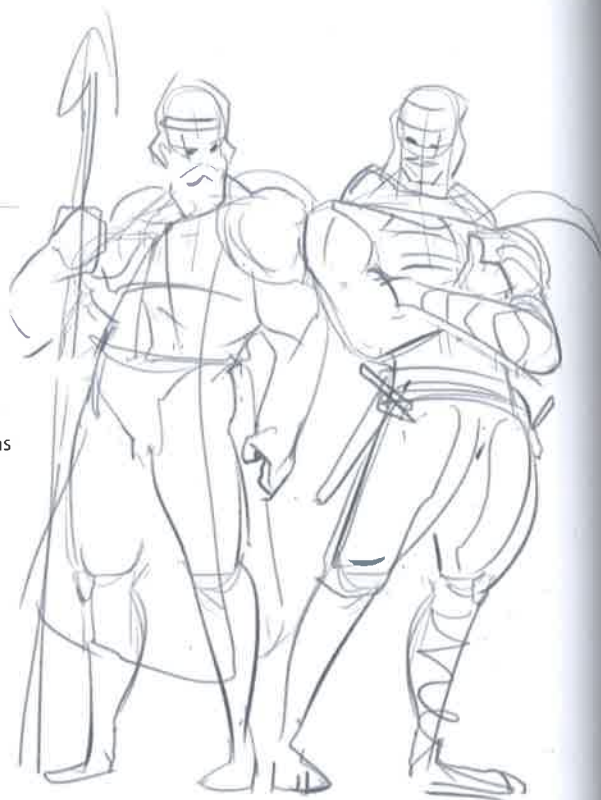
MATERIALS

For my digital art I just use Photoshop and a Wacom Cintiq or a regular tablet. Nothing special there. For my traditional materials, it's been a constant trial of experimentation with pens, but I find I have the most fun with Staedtler Triplus fineliners because the line weight is so consistent and they offer a variety of colors; also the felt tip doesn't get clogged up with graphite if you make an underdrawing beforehand. The Pilot G-Tec is amazing but you might become frustrated at times for the reasons I just mentioned, since it is a ballpoint pen rather than a felt tip. For sketchbooks, anything works really, as long as it

doesn't fall apart when I hold it up, or bleed through like tissue paper if I'm using pens!

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I've tried so many different approaches to character creation and it changes for me depending on whether or not there's an underdrawing. I like to start with rough lines and shapes to guide the flow of the character and give some insight as to where I should take the design next, before I move on to "inking" them in. Recently I've taken to projecting some perspective lines with a pencil crayon so that I can reliably ground the character before going crazy with the design.





BOTH PAGES: An example of my character creation process, which is quite rough, but straightforward.

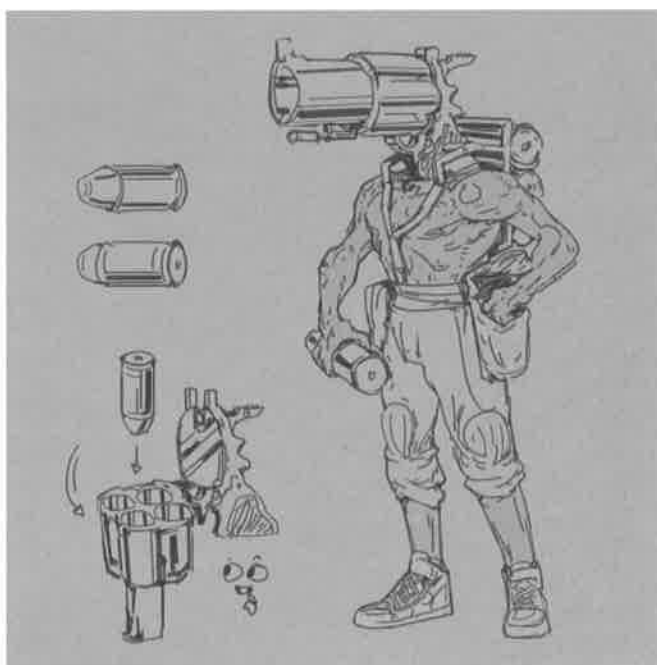




LEFT: I love to combine animal themes with knights. Here's a crow bro!

ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT: This knight was inspired by a lot of *Dark Souls* and looking at mushroom references.

RIGHT: A small design for a little game, making fun of first-person shooter games.





FAR TOP LEFT:

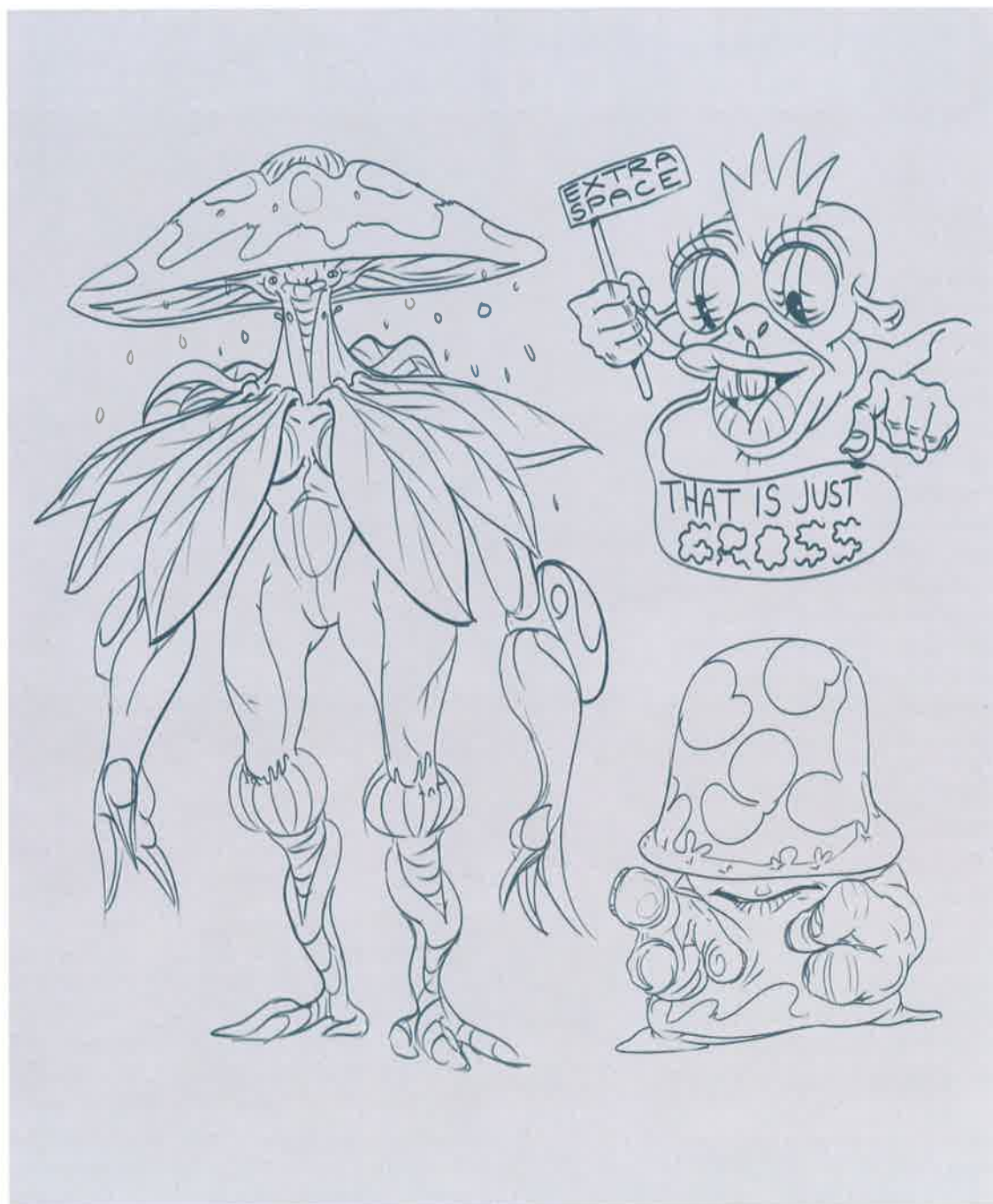
A dog knight posing majestically, as one would.

NEAR TOP LEFT:

A dog knight after slaying a giant cat enemy with a halberd.

BOTTOM LEFT: Here's a three-step process from starting sketch to color. This one was rare because I knocked out the pose and design in the first couple of doodles.

RIGHT: Here I was trying to be really careful with line quality and designing as I went along.





GUNST, TORSTEN

meteorfactory.com

All images © Torsten Gunst

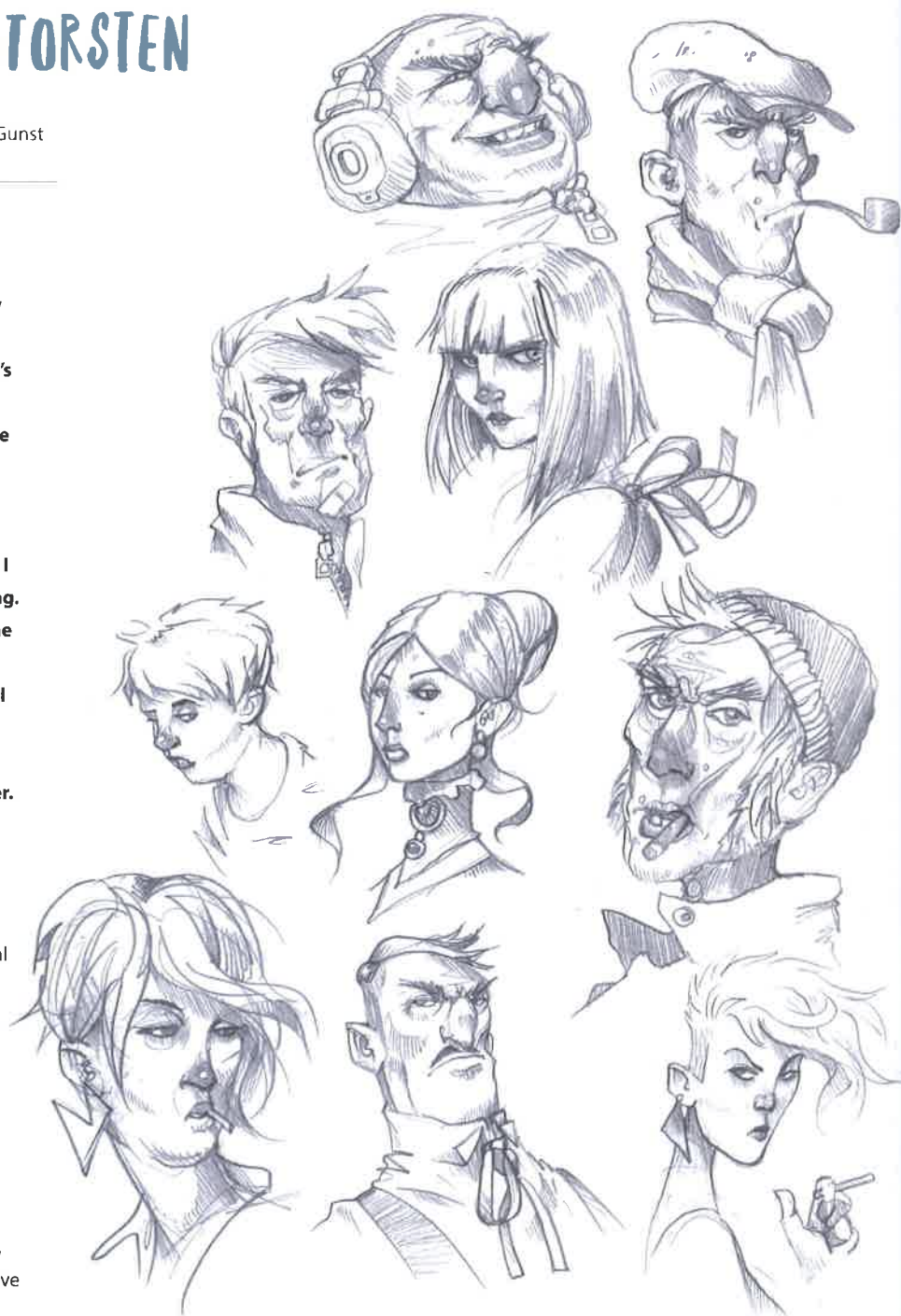
For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by drawing. Starting rather early with a ballpoint pen on my parents' bedroom wall, I moved on to doodling in school. Constantly. Since it's nearly impossible for me to focus on a single thing, I let part of my hyperactive mind wander off through drawing.

Pencils, ballpoint pens, and black ink were my primary tools for years before I expanded my interest to digital painting. As a long-time enthusiast of video game art, I love technologically enforced minimalism and the limits of old-school game hardware to focus designs. But nothing compares to analog doodling using pencils and ink on good old paper.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Often I just start doodling and see where it leads me, based on inspiration drawn from pictures, movies, music, and personal visual impressions from long walks through foreign places. For a focused character concept, I usually start with a basic story idea, and by thinking of the character's strengths, weaknesses, and attitude towards the world they live in.

In a lot of instances, a good song inspires me. Be it folk, classical, 1970s synthesizers, or snotty punk rock, music gives my creative



process a solid foundation and a direction to go in. It sets the mood for the situation that the character is in. It helps immensely to construct a world for your designs through music, sounds, logos, environments, and ideas for scenes.

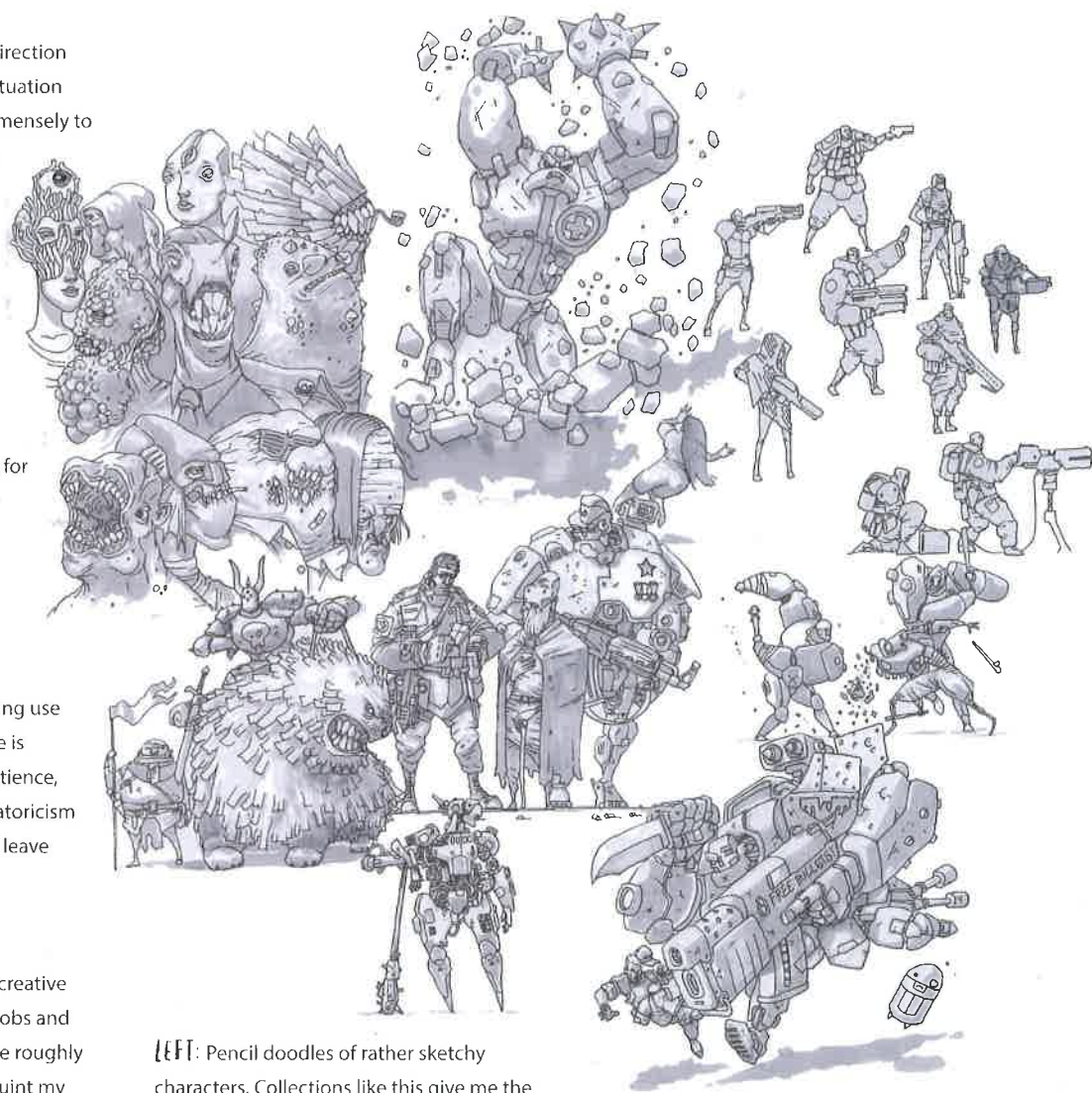
MATERIALS

pencils, black ink, preferably brush tip pens, and a few gray markers are all I use for analog sketching, which I prefer as a basis for a colored piece of art that I usually finish digitally by adding color.

I love the irreversible nature of using black ink. No pencil lines, no thorough planning. Trying to tame the brush and making use of all the happy mistakes and noise is good fun and good practice for patience, concentration, and embracing aleatoricism (leaving art to chance) to help you leave your comfort zone.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

One of my favorite techniques for creative results is doodling a page full of blobs and shapes with a gray marker to create roughly humanoid silhouettes. Usually I squint my eyes or avoid even looking at the paper altogether to give it a good, spicy dose of aleatoricism. Using a thin pen or an ink brush, I add shadows to the most interesting blobs to create details in their silhouette. Black shadows are all that is needed to create details while leaving enough room for interpretation during any later rendering steps.



LEFT: Pencil doodles of rather sketchy characters. Collections like this give me the luxury of throwing away all the second-best approaches in order to focus on the strongest.

ABOVE: A lot of random doodles from one of my sketchbooks where I started drawing with no idea where it would lead me. I skipped pencils and went directly to a fine pen with additional marker shading.

"IT HELPS IMMENSELY TO
CONSTRUCT A WORLD FOR
YOUR DESIGNS THROUGH
MUSIC, SOUNDS, LOGOS,
ENVIRONMENTS, AND
IDEAS FOR SCENES"

Explore everything

Get inspiration from everything. Watch old movies, listen to obscure records, take lone walks through foreign cities and museums, start a band. Craftsmanship means work and practice; creativity, to me, means finding inspiration through living.

Find your way

Find an art style that suits your personality. For example, I'm ridiculously impatient and need quick results. After years of struggling to master overly detailed styles that don't fit me, I began to embrace flat shading, reduction in detail, and an overall focus on minimalism to achieve my goal. Find your strengths and turn some of your "weaknesses" into assets and embrace them.



ABOVE: I started off with the vague idea of a Napoleonic character, beginning with sketching his face and hat. Using the Old Guard of Napoleon's army in 1815 as a reference, it made perfect sense to give him a defiant pose and add wounded comrades struggling to continue standing. "The Guard dies and does not surrender!"

LEFT: Adding just a bit of scenery can turn a random character into a touching story. In this case, two wounded cavalymen after a crushing defeat.

RIGHT: Marker blobs where I used a brush pen to interpret the silhouettes, all with a rather dark theme. It quickly derailed into a dystopian post-apocalyptic world where robots enslave humans – not my most innovative moment!



"USUALLY I SQUINT MY EYES
OR AVOID EVEN LOOKING
AT THE PAPER ALTOGETHER
TO GIVE IT A GOOD, SPICY
DOSE OF ALEATORICISM"





"FOR A FOCUSED CHARACTER CONCEPT, I USUALLY START WITH A BASIC STORY IDEA, AND BY THINKING OF THE CHARACTER'S STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN"

FAR TOP LEFT: Using little more than hard shadows to tell a story is excellent for practice, and great fun once you get used to it. Here I wanted some contrast between the calm, almost human nature of the monster while at the same time bringing the rusty knife that it is clutching into focus.

NEAR TOP LEFT: Further exploration of a supernatural western setting in one of my sketchbooks. Adding the supernatural to the idea of people fending for themselves on the western frontiers always appeals to me.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: For old-school exorcisms, it is always good to have a .44 caliber "plan B." A digital piece I made using a diamond-shaped brush in Photoshop; most of the time, I prefer to use a simple brush like that, so that it's similar to working without my computer.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT: An ink-only sketch of a zombie-killing bounty hunter with the same vibe as my other Weird West sketches.

RIGHT: Black ink as a medium adds to the eerie feel a character sketch can communicate.





DE HAAN, LUC

artstation.com/artist/lucdehaan

All images © Luc de Haan

I'm a regular guy without any epic life-altering stories or struggles. I always knew what I was going to do in a broad sense, so I had a clear goal to work towards, and I consider myself very lucky having had such a smooth ride so far. I guess I worked hard enough to create a nice road for me to ride on.

The first and foremost reason I do personal sketches is because it's fun. In my sketchbook, I rule supreme. It's my private space for enjoyment, where nobody can tell me what to do or how to do it. This, to me, is heaven.

Personal sketches carry no heavy burden, have no expectations, and don't need to be pretty or well drawn – most of them will not even see the light of day anyway. A sketch is just an expression, an idea. Some turn out great, some don't. It's all part of the process. I find it very relaxing because it's such a care-free activity. These sketches usually have no other goal than to be fun.

Sketches I do for projects are very different from personal sketches as they are much more guided by goals; I give myself restrictions and rules to help me stay on the right track.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Coming up with new ideas is the fun part and the most challenging. I mix anything and everything; I like to place elements in a different context. Everybody has seen a knight with a sword or axe, but give the knight a gun and things become a whole lot more interesting. The viewer will start to ask questions because this is something out of the ordinary. Weird and fantastical are the things I gravitate towards; things that make me ask questions and inspire me the most.



BELOW: A sketch I made on the train.

RIGHT: Another train sketch. I saw a bear on a billboard, so this knight became a bear.



I draw inspiration from everything. All the objects around me can be the perfect shape to add to my sketch; maybe the bottle cap of my drink will inspire the design for a helmet for a character. I see my imagination as an engine or muscle that needs fuel before it can create interesting new concepts, and that fuel is literally everything around me. Feeding my imagination new things means it will grow bigger and more powerful. Everything I feed it can become useful in my next sketch or painting.

MATERIALS

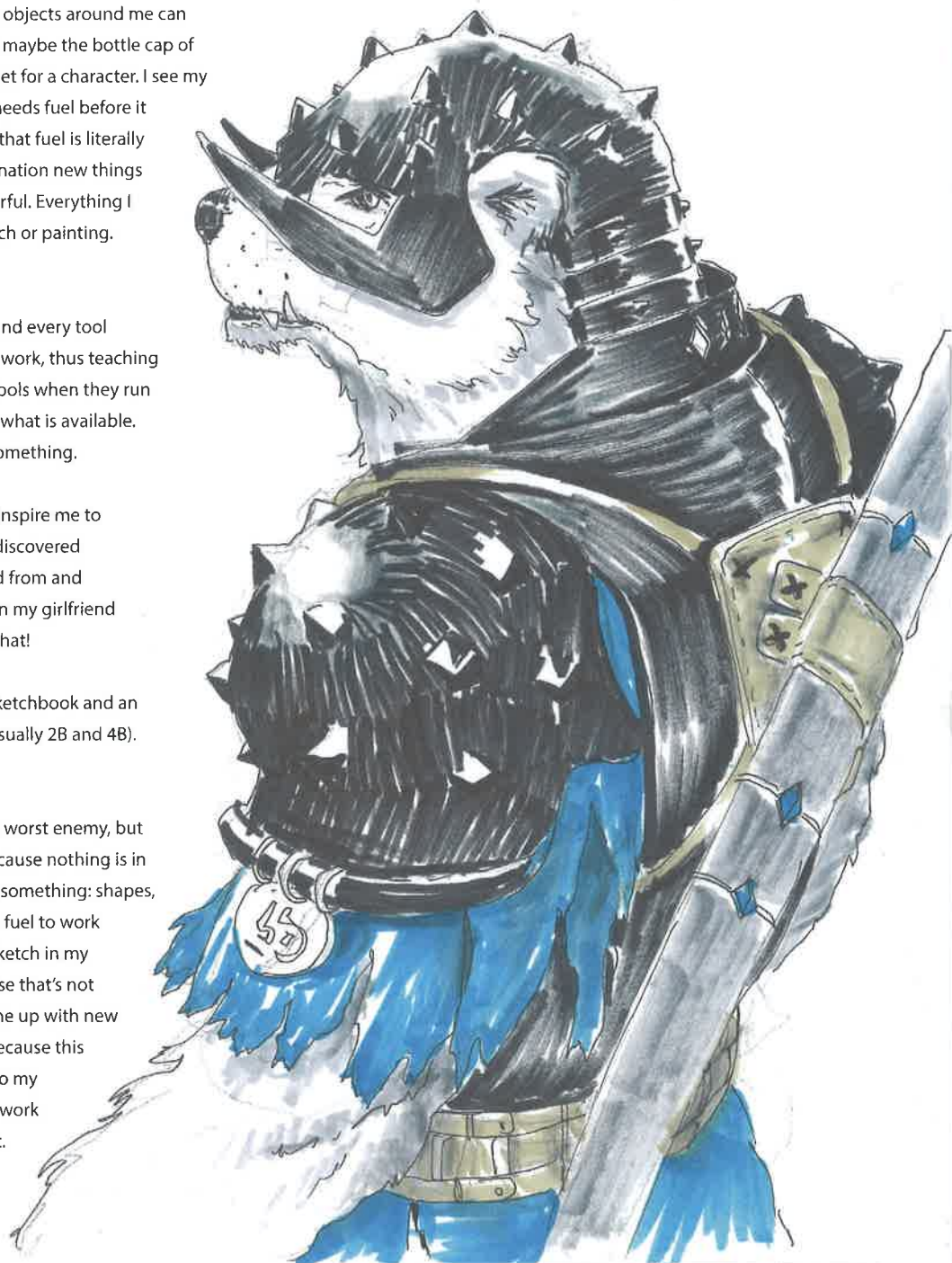
I change my sketching tools all the time, and every tool encourages a different approach to how I work, thus teaching me different things. I usually change my tools when they run out. At that point I look around me to see what is available. I rarely go to the art supply store to buy something.

Sometimes finding a tool or material can inspire me to start sketching. For example, I recently rediscovered my Copic markers, which I'd mostly retired from and replaced with a different kind of brush pen my girlfriend brought back from Japan – I'm fickle like that!

In my backpack I always carry a Croquis sketchbook and an array of markers, fineliners, and pencils (usually 2B and 4B).

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Blank paper is often considered an artist's worst enemy, but when I'm sketching, I'm not afraid of it because nothing is in jeopardy. The trick is to just start drawing something: shapes, lines, anything. This gives my imagination fuel to work with. I don't need to plan out the whole sketch in my head before my pen hits the paper because that's not the point of sketching. The point is to come up with new ideas. I always sketch without an eraser because this teaches me to be confident and commit to my mark-making. This helps me in my digital work where the option of Ctrl+Z is ever present.





BOTH PAGES: I like to start with shapes to see where they go. For example, one of these characters started with a pharaoh headpiece and then I began adding in other elements, such as the Spanish matador shoulder pieces.





BOTH PAGES: I like to have fun, letting my imagination run wild with no restrictions: revolvers, plate armor, Hannya masks. I like mixing all kinds of cultures and centuries together.





HOBBS, BETH

artstation.com/artist/bethh

All images © Beth Hobbs

After spending one year at university studying game art, I left to self-study and venture into freelance to focus on the 2D side of things. A year on, I had the opportunity to intern at a video game development studio. It's early days in my career and I'm excited to see how my art will change and what the future has in store.

Sketching is my favorite way to quickly sift through ideas and explore designs, all the while chasing that eureka moment when I feel the character really begins to come alive on the canvas. Sketching frequently can also help me lose any fear of imperfection when it comes to putting pencil to paper.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I tend to draw a lot of inspiration from fashions throughout the ages, occasionally adding a fantasy twist here and there to keep the creation process unpredictable. Video games and movies provide a lot of visual inspiration, but I think looking for influence in other interests (books, history, people you've met, places you've traveled, and so on) is the best place to draw from when you'd like to bring fresher ideas to the table.

MATERIALS

I mostly use Photoshop because of how easy it is to fix things, but when sketching on paper I use nothing out of the ordinary: plain sheets of copier paper and a 6B pencil. This way I'm not afraid to make mistakes and discard drawings if they're not working.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I tend to start off with gestures to get down pose ideas that match the energy of the character I'm going for. After that I'll draw the character's body before designing outfits or accessories. Knowing what forms are underneath helps me to visualize things more thoroughly.



BELOW: This guy was the result of being inspired by the styles of ancient Persian armor.

RIGHT: Cats and Egyptian fashion combo. I always have to fight the urge to design minute details indefinitely, but it's too fun!





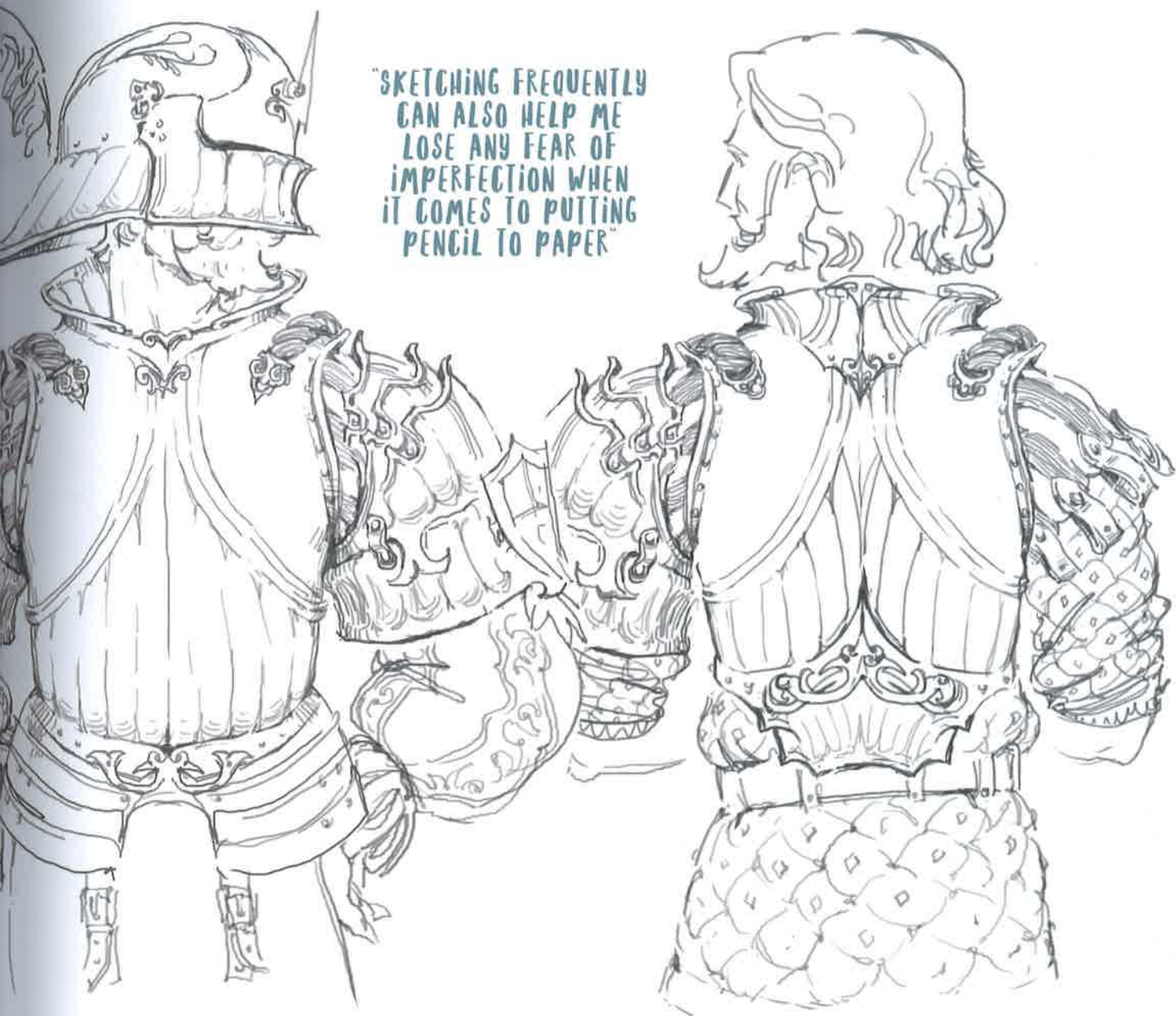
LEFT: Sketched after seeing various folk costumes of different cultures.

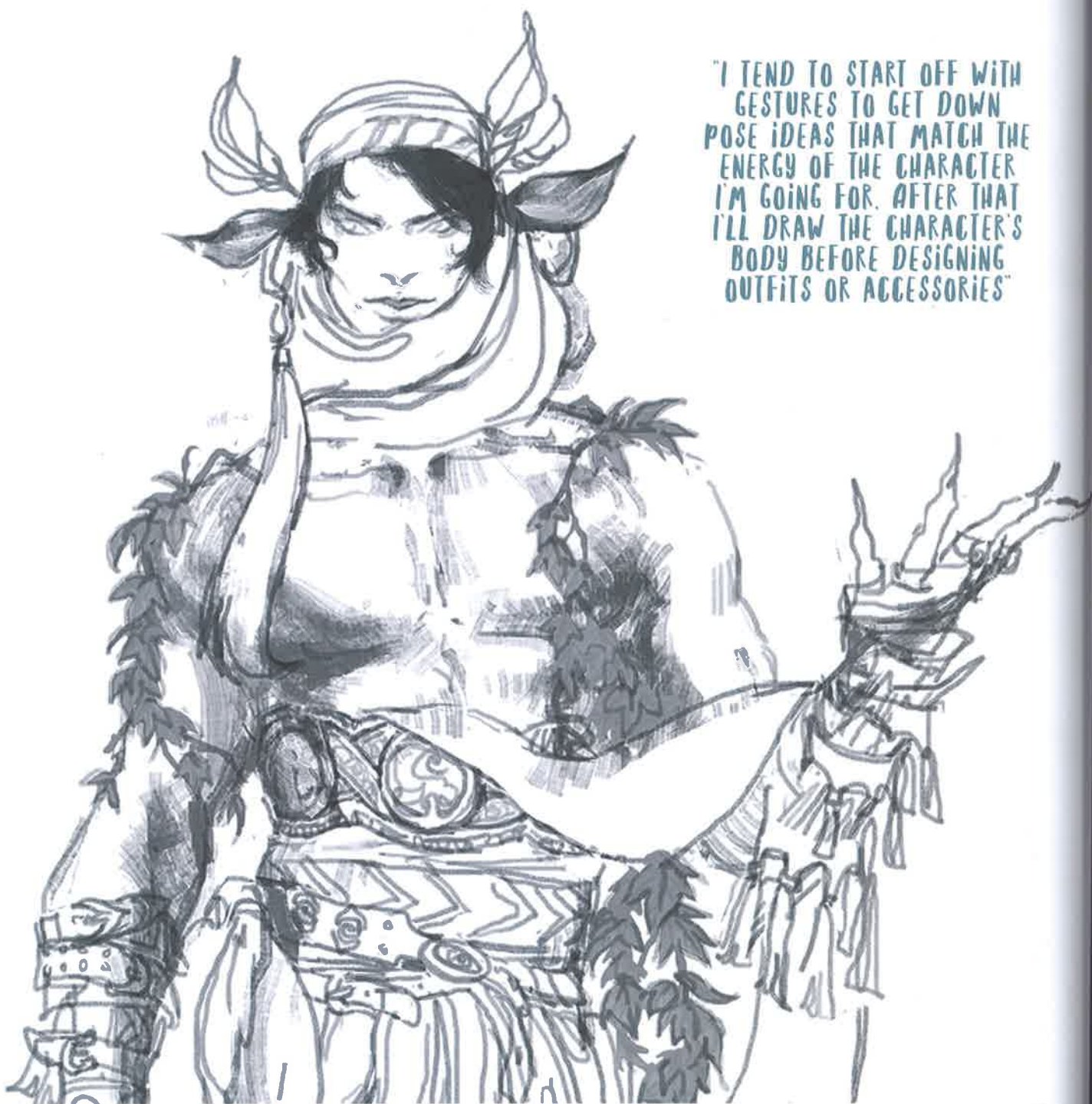
ABOVE LEFT: Drawing back views of characters is refreshing as it makes you think about shapes and design from a different perspective.

ABOVE RIGHT: Beard Knight is the result of one of my museum visits, after seeing armor up close.

RIGHT: Here I indulged in my love for medieval armor, while always thinking about the flow of lines and shapes on the character.

"SKETCHING FREQUENTLY
CAN ALSO HELP ME
LOSE ANY FEAR OF
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PENCIL TO PAPER"





"I TEND TO START OFF WITH GESTURES TO GET DOWN POSE IDEAS THAT MATCH THE ENERGY OF THE CHARACTER I'M GOING FOR. AFTER THAT I'LL DRAW THE CHARACTER'S BODY BEFORE DESIGNING OUTFITS OR ACCESSORIES"

LEFT: A sassy faun accompanied by trails of ivy to add a mythical element to the character.

NEAR RIGHT: I like to include patterns to hint at the culture of a character, as well as to break up big spaces in a drawing.

FAR RIGHT: More Persian influence here, with a face on the back of the helmet to spice things up.

BELOW: A mix of renaissance couture and fantasy. I find a lot of inspiration in history and the beautiful costumes of the time.





HOROWITZ, ASSAF

assafhorowitz.com

All images © Assaf Horowitz

I've had a passion for sketching ever since I was a toddler. Back at my parents' home in Israel there are still piles upon piles of drawings; I drew strange characters I would think up so I could share them with others; I would return home excited after every movie I watched, sketching the characters I saw on the screen and imagining new adventures with them; I would spend hours looking through encyclopedias, soaking up illustrations of nature, space, and far-away civilizations.

Over the years I always insisted that drawing was just a hobby for me, but eventually I came to admit that it is much, much more than that. I pursued a career in making art and am very fortunate to be able to say that I draw for a living.

Sketching for me is a need. It might be a bit of a cliché but I really couldn't see myself doing anything else. It's a tool for me to mark down my thoughts and ideas, to help me make sense of them, and to share them with others. It's also something I use to better understand the world around me, whether it's through figure drawings, animal anatomy studies, or exploring and understanding the way things are built, how they function, and why.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

A lot comes to mind, but to sum it up, these are the main things I feed on for ideas and inspiration:

- **People** – friends, people I know, but also strangers I see on the street, read about in newspapers, or watch



on TV. I like sketching things that tell a story about a person, that make you think about who they are and what they might be like.

- **Nature** – all aspects of the world around me, whether it be animals, plants, or different places I've been to or want to go to; I try to understand the "how" and "why" of whatever I can.
- **Experience** – things I go through, memories I have, both good and bad.
- **Art** – both old and contemporary. I like to expose myself to others' ideas, to see how other people see the world and how they choose to illustrate it.

MATERIALS

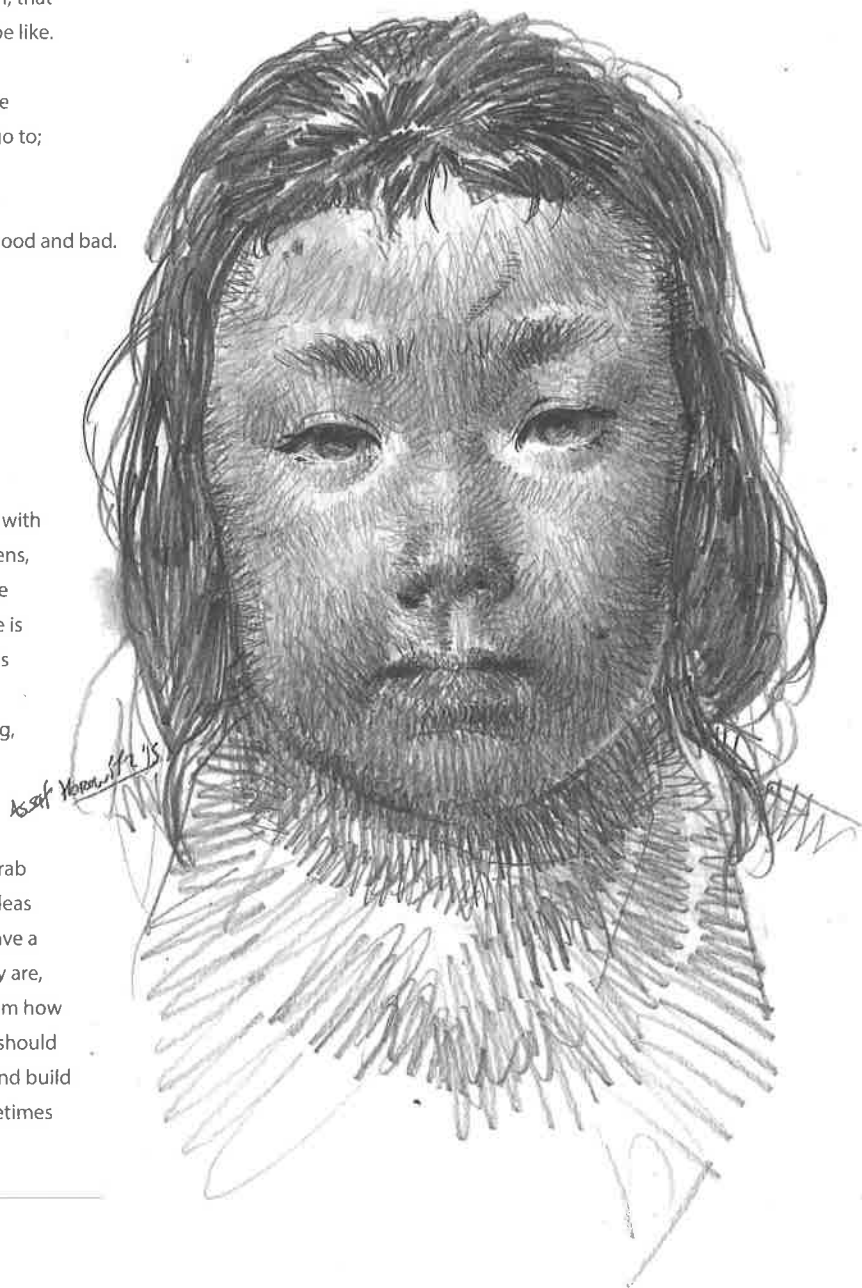
I used to work mostly with pencil because of how delicate and forgiving it can be. Nowadays, though, I sketch mostly with pens of different kinds: Pigma Microns, ballpoints, brush pens, fountain pens. I still use pencil of course, but I find that I like pens better because of their permanence; sketching for me is mainly a form of thinking on paper, and part of that process is dealing with mistakes and learning to build upon them, letting them take you to unexpected places. It's very freeing, not having to worry about getting things "right."

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Sometimes I treat sketching as a form of brainstorming. I grab a pen and just go, seeing where it takes me and building ideas upon ideas until I get something I'm happy with. When I have a specific idea for a character, though, I think about who they are, how they would behave, and let that inform everything from how they look and how to pose them to what kind of lighting I should use. For those I usually start with pencil or a light marker, and build on that, usually with black pens and ink. To finish off I sometimes add subtle transitions and texture with markers or pencils.

LEFT: Head sketch. Ballpoint on paper.

RIGHT: *Mongolian Girl*. Graphite on paper.





"SKETCHING FOR ME
IS A NEED. IT MIGHT
BE A BIT OF A CLICHÉ
BUT I REALLY COULDN'T
SEE MYSELF DOING
ANYTHING ELSE"



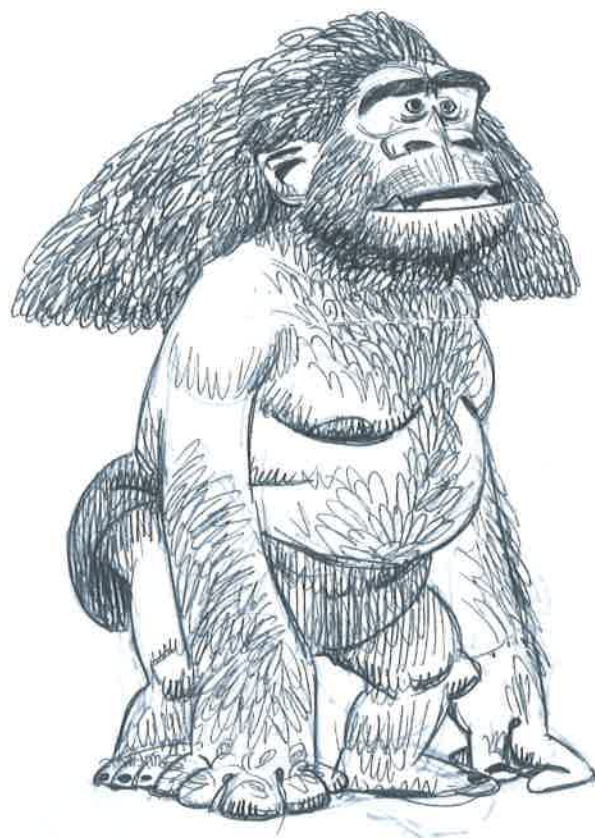
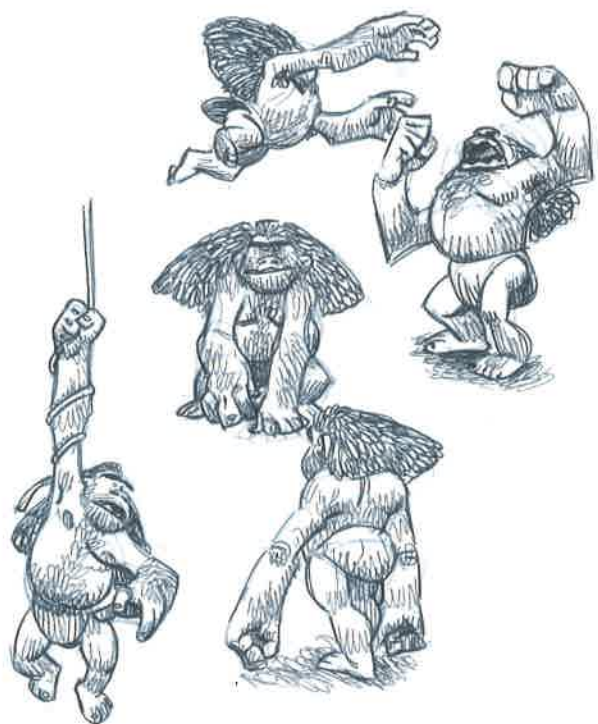
FAR LEFT: *Centaur*. Ballpoint, various brush pens, and black Prismacolor pencil on paper.

NEAR LEFT: *Forest Fairy*. Ballpoint, various brush pens, and black Prismacolor pencil on paper.

ABOVE: *Hawaiian Woman*. Brush pens and black Prismacolor pencil on paper.

RIGHT: *The Old Man and the Bucket*. Gray Tombow pen, brush pen, and black Prismacolor pencil on paper.

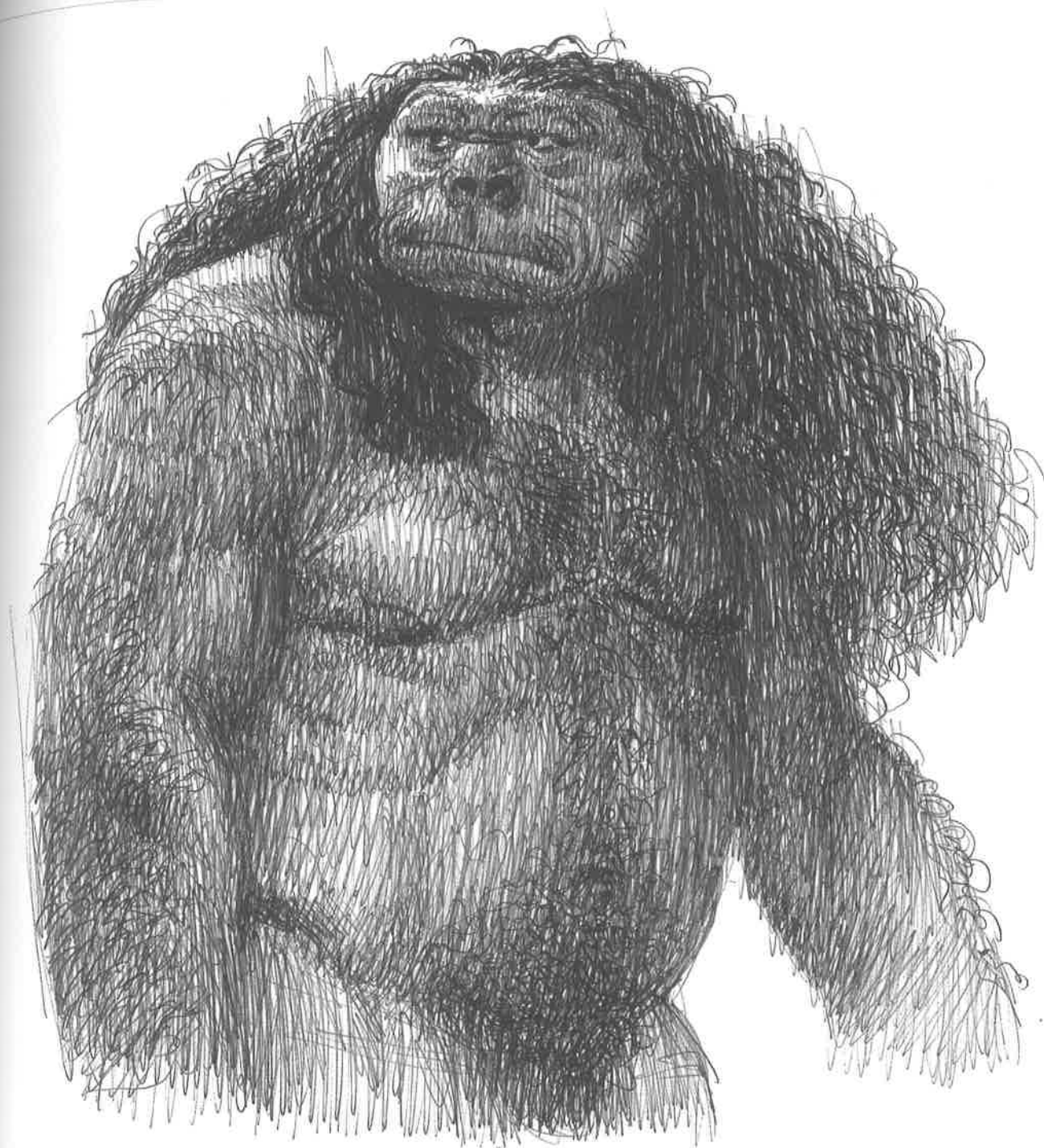




ABOVE: Caveman character studies. Ballpoint and gray Tombow pen on paper.

LEFT: *Prank*. A digital sketch.

RIGHT: Caveman character exploration. Ballpoint on paper.





"I LIKE SKETCHING THINGS THAT TELL
A STORY ABOUT A PERSON, THAT
MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT WHO THEY
ARE AND WHAT THEY MIGHT BE LIKE"

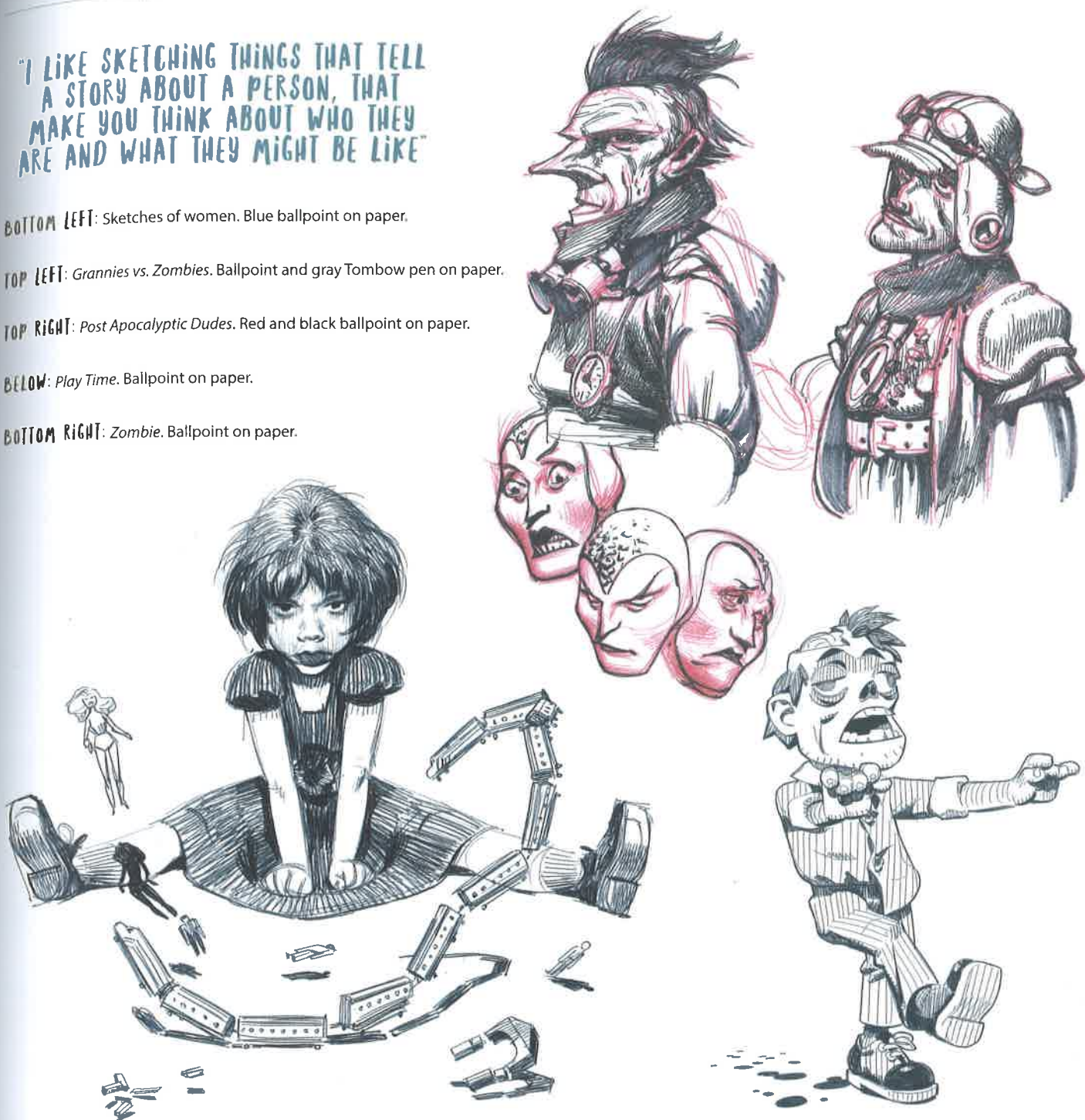
BOTTOM LEFT: Sketches of women. Blue ballpoint on paper.

TOP LEFT: *Grannies vs. Zombies*. Ballpoint and gray Tombow pen on paper.

TOP RIGHT: *Post Apocalyptic Dudes*. Red and black ballpoint on paper.

BELOW: *Play Time*. Ballpoint on paper.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *Zombie*. Ballpoint on paper.





JACOB, Vipin

facebook.com/VipinAlexJacob

All images © Vipin Alex Jacob

From the earliest time I can remember, I had a pencil in my hand, drawing on everything I could find. My math and science books were all cluttered with character doodles from my imagination. Art was my favorite class and our teacher, Mr. Mirza, really helped me to open my mind to dream big and draw freely without limitations. Being a shy and quiet person, drawing was something I used to express myself and share how I saw the world. A sheet of paper was best for me to communicate an idea and I would so often be sucked into it without realizing how long it had been. Sketching is more than just a passion; it is a way of expression.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Often my characters are inspired by observing people or animals while traveling. This is why my sketchbook is a



handy companion. I look out for anything from interesting hairstyles, clothing, and accessories to physical features or even something about their personality. Animals and children are some of my favorite subjects because you're always trying to understand and fill in what they are trying to communicate. Mostly when I design a character, I think of an interesting backstory to define who they are. This helps me to give that character a unique identity.

MATERIALS

My drawing materials have changed over time. Most recently, I have enjoyed using Prismacolor and Koh-I-Noor Polycolor art pencils to draw. I love these particular pencils not only because of how smooth they are when I want to lay the foundations, but for how dark they can be when I want to do the finishing touch-ups.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Being primarily a 3D artist, I've learned to think of my characters in 3D; as I lay down the pose, I think of the volume beneath. Once I'm satisfied with the base design, I go over it again, this time adding in the details of the character's face, body contours, mass, and weight.

FAR LEFT: *Cookie Raiders*. A humorous moment of tag-teaming to get something that was put off-limits.

NEAR LEFT: *Sneaky Mr. Fox*. This pose just happened by accident after a lot of explorations to display his thoughts and character.

TOP RIGHT: "I'll fix you." A storytelling moment of picking up someone from their brokenness and mending them.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *Windy Day*. What it feels like to be walking outside on a cold windy day in autumn.



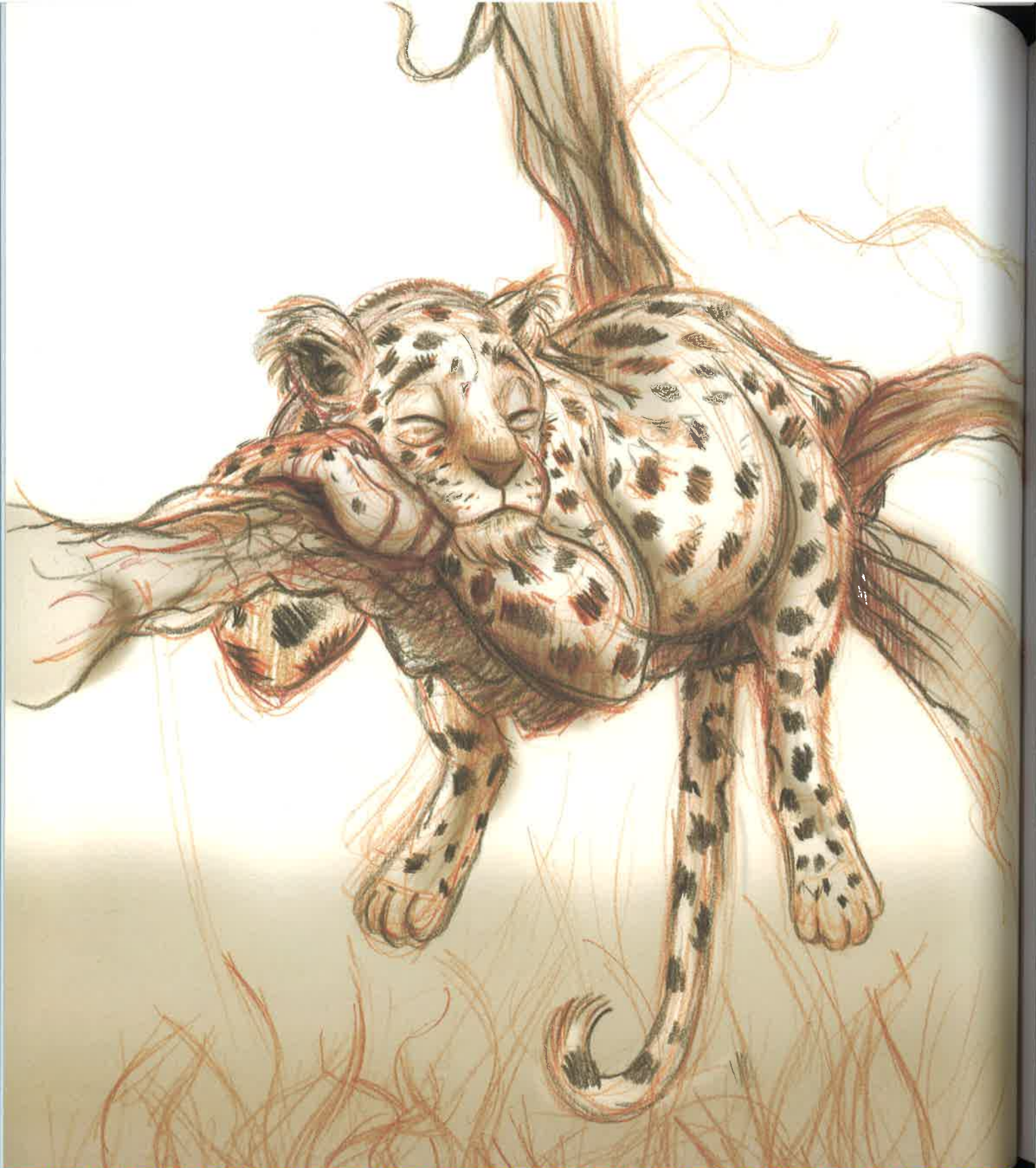


ABOVE: *Man and Dog.* Stepping into the elevator one morning, I happened to meet this pair: a big angry man and his cheerful little dog.

RIGHT: *Pug Explorations.* Pugs, being naturally caricatured, were a natural interest for me and I played around with this guy to create some expressions and variations.









LEFT: *I'm Stuffed.* This drawing was inspired by a photograph of a leopard sleeping peacefully after a full meal.

ABOVE LEFT: A sketch sheet exploring the personality of a chubby rabbit.

ABOVE RIGHT: *Cuddly Elephant.* Exploration studies of a playful baby elephant.

RIGHT: *Wolf in Sheep's Clothing.* These were couple of gag-based explorations on this particular theme, playing with variations of the idea.





JAROCKI, MAREK

twitter.com/MJarocki_Art

All images © Marek Jarocki

BOTH PAGES: Lately I've been obsessed with bodily organs and it shows in my work.

Drawing is great. I like it so much that I've been doing it for well over two decades. I've been drawing professionally for a few years, mostly picking up freelance work and selling my own stuff online. I work almost exclusively with traditional media, preferably pen or pencil. For me, the thrill of drawing is in the feeling of a pen on paper, or in the weight of a nice pencil.

I work primarily in my sketchbook. I love to come up with a ton of ideas and never actually finish everything. I have a huge collection of characters and stories that exist in my sketchbooks and nowhere else. Every time I come up with a new character I imagine what their lives are like and what interactions they have with whatever world they live in. They have friends, jobs, and individual wardrobes.

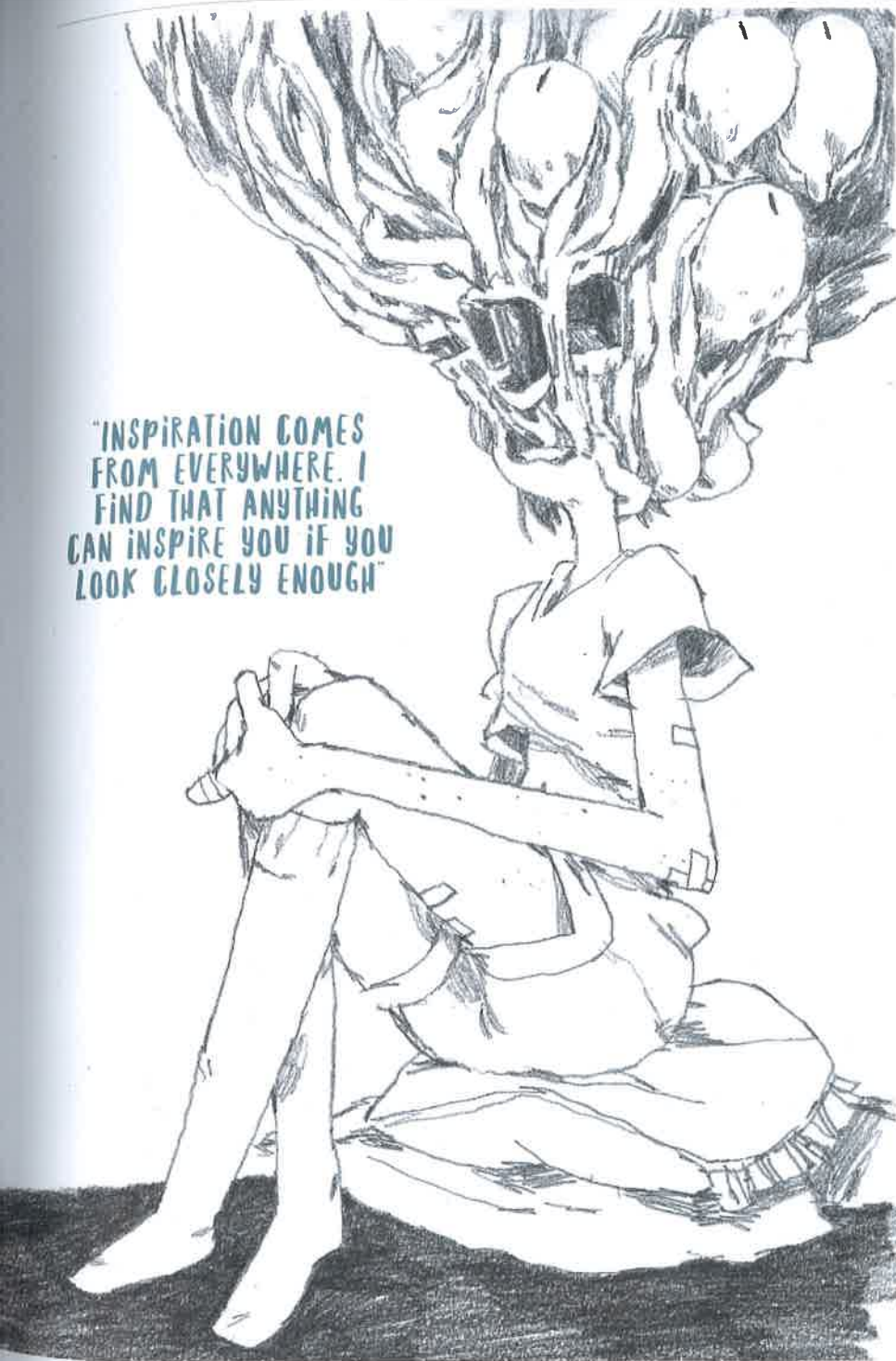
As for me, I'm fairly quiet and tend to be carrying around my sketchbook if I don't have my nose buried in it. I was born and raised in Boise, Idaho. I love nature (bugs) and I'm fascinated with the inner workings of the human body. I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. It's just something that I've always done.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Inspiration comes from everywhere. I find that anything can inspire you if you look closely enough. I try to be observant and build up ideas as I go through my day so that I have a handful of ideas when I sit down to draw. I gain motivation to draw from other artists. Seeing someone else's work makes me feel like I can do it too.



"INSPIRATION COMES FROM EVERYWHERE. I FIND THAT ANYTHING CAN INSPIRE YOU IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY ENOUGH"



MATERIALS

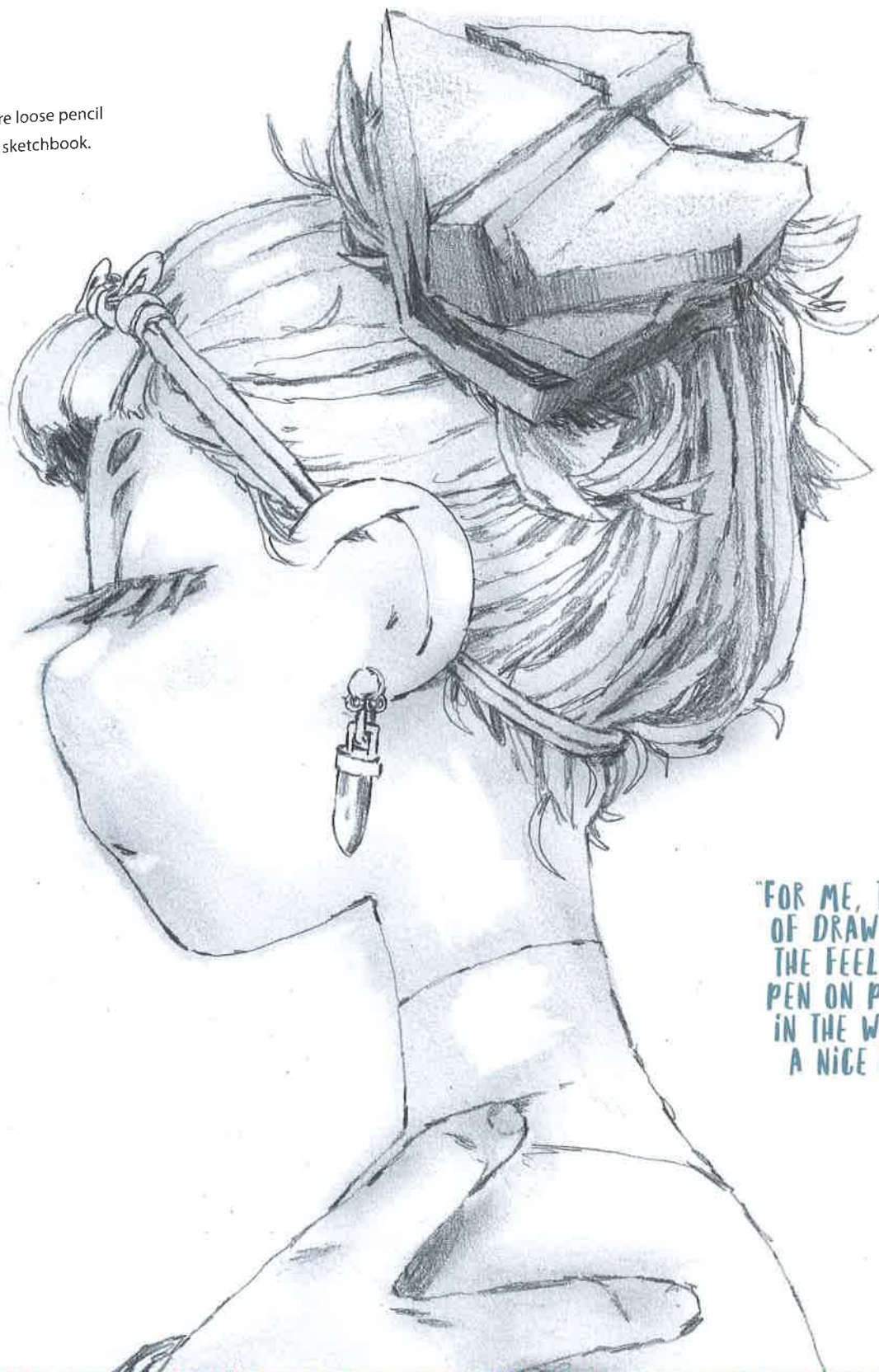
I use a ton of different drawing tools, and I like to interchange what I use to keep things fresh. It's important to try different tools to find what you like best. I use a lot of Pilot and Pentel tools – whether it's a pen or a pencil, those brands make good stuff that's affordable and fun to use. For colors, I like Crayola watercolors and colored pencils. I also take the crayons that come with the children's menus at most restaurants.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I like to sit down and just jump into a drawing. I usually already have an idea that's been knocking around my head so I just make a start. I don't like to rough things out before I draw. Part of my process is letting the line work flow naturally rather than following a rough sketch. It took me a long time to develop that confidence. I draw every day; I think it's important to do that if you want to improve.



BOTH PAGES: More loose pencil sketches from my sketchbook.



"FOR ME, THE THRILL
OF DRAWING IS IN
THE FEELING OF A
PEN ON PAPER, OR
IN THE WEIGHT OF
A NICE PENCIL"



KIHLSTRÖM, AMANDA

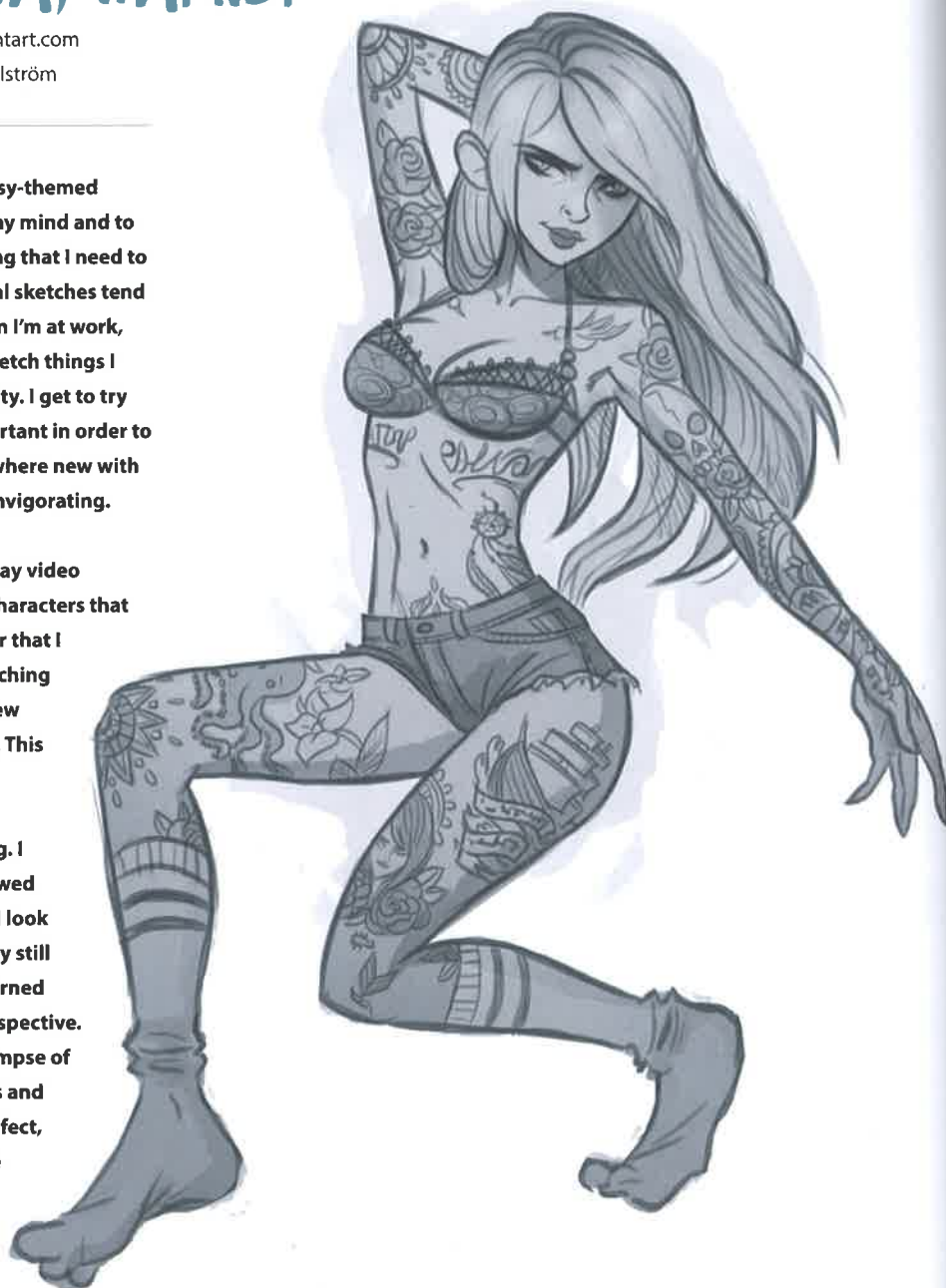
amanda-kihlstrom.deviantart.com

All images © Amanda Kihlström

My sketchbook primarily consists of fantasy-themed images and pin-up girls. I sketch to clear my mind and to relax without having the pressure of feeling that I need to complete anything, so most of my personal sketches tend to be things within my comfort zone. When I'm at work, that's where I can really be creative and sketch things I usually wouldn't, and work on my versatility. I get to try different styles and themes, which is important in order to stay creative, at least for me. Going somewhere new with your art can end up being surprisingly reinvigorating.

Besides painting and sketching, I like to play video games. As a result I really enjoy drawing characters that I think would fit into a game, or a character that I would want to play as. My respect for sketching comes from all the times I've seen how a few well-placed lines can make a drawing pop. This is a constant source of inspiration for me.

The freedom of sketching is very liberating. I think messing up a drawing should be viewed as a step towards becoming better. When I look at my sketches from several years ago, they still function as a reminder about what I've learned through struggling with anatomy and perspective. A good sketch, to me, is like catching a glimpse of the artist's creative process, showing flaws and imperfections in all their glory. It's not perfect, and it doesn't need to be; it might become the skeleton for a complex painting, or it might not. My focus while sketching is upon the creative surge of the moment.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I get most of my inspiration from music; if I hear a song I really like, I am instantly super inspired and start sketching whatever comes to mind. Games give me a huge amount of inspiration too, because they often contain impressive scenery, creatures, and amazing character designs. And of course, the very talented artists I find on the internet also inspire me.

MATERIALS

I use my Wacom Intuos Pro and Photoshop. When I want to sketch traditionally, I use whatever pen and paper is available at the time and place.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I start by drawing really basic shapes and messy lines. Then, if I'm working digitally, I put that layer on a lower opacity, make a new layer over it, and start drawing more defined lines and details. It depends on what kind of sketch I want to make; sometimes I think a really messy sketch looks good, or sometimes I want it to have a more finished appearance, in which case I might do a third layer to add even more defined lines and details.



LEFT: Experimenting with pose.

RIGHT: In this sketch I wanted to focus heavily on the face.



LEFT: Experimenting with pose again.

ABOVE: Another pin-up girl I drew for fun.

RIGHT: A sketch for composition practice.



Tell a story

Tell a story with your designs. Where do the characters live? What would they wear? Do they need weapons or not? Ripped and torn clothing and scratched metal are really good ways to tell the viewer that something has happened to this character before – that they've been through something. A backstory makes a character more believable.

Have confidence

Don't miss an opportunity simply because of self-doubt! I've seen this happen so many times. It might be a cliché but a lot of artists seem to be their own worst enemies. Keep your portfolio up to date but don't be afraid to show older work as well. Most employers have a keen eye for potential; you could just as easily be hired or get an internship based on what someone sees in your artistic progression because it shows the potential for you to evolve. Show your old work, contrast it with your new, and put dates on it. It will give the employer a sense of your progression as an artist.



LEFT: A mage character I drew in my spare time.

ABOVE: A quick sketch before I went to bed!

TOP RIGHT: Designs for an original character I am developing.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Fantasy characters I drew in my spare time.





KOVECK

koveckart.com

All images © Koveck

All my life I've been around art in one manner or another. When I was young my ultimate goal was to become a comic book artist, but when at last I published my first professional comic, I realized that I didn't enjoy the experience of working in comics. I didn't like repeating the same characters a million times, one page after another. I therefore made the jump to illustration, which better suited me. Up until then I had worked with traditional media, but in 2006 I moved into digital art. Yes, I like it a lot, and yes, I can't imagine returning to acrylics, airbrushes, and oil painting. However, traditional media is so special, so romantic... so real. That's the reason I make these ink sketches, to escape the box of work and the cage of digital.

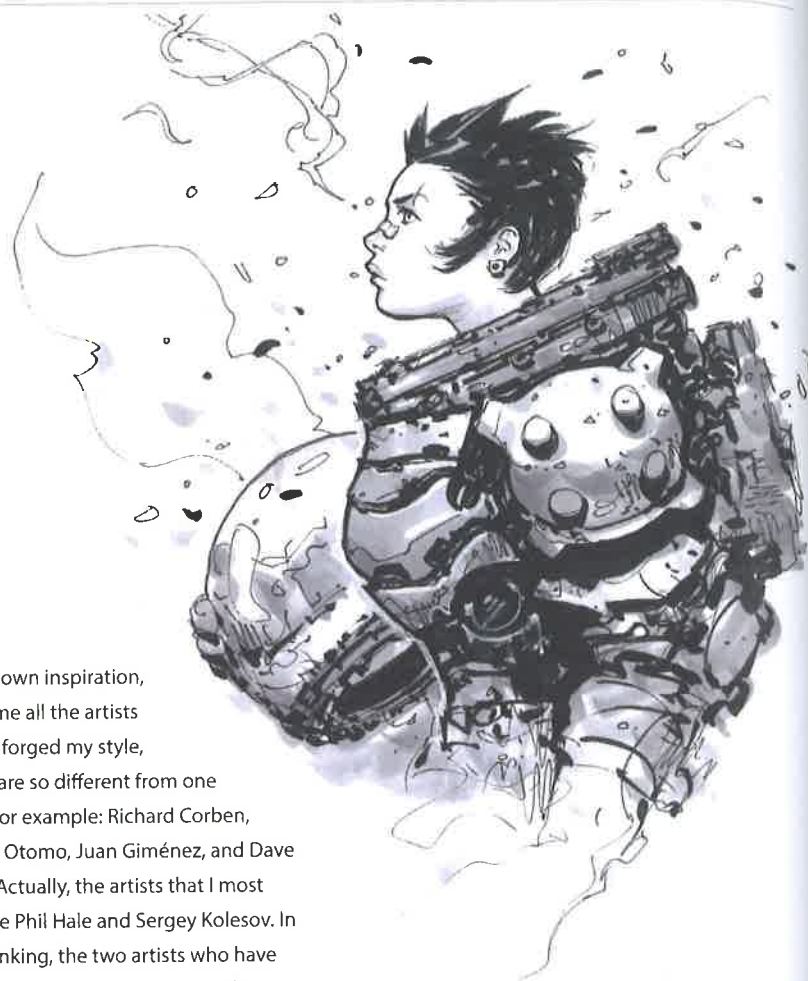
INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

You can find inspiration in any place. Sometimes it's a movie, a photo, a phrase, a stain on the wall. For me, something that always sparks my creativity is horror movies. I like the feelings they evoke in me, and also how they encourage me to try to provoke feelings of any kind in the viewer. When you grow as an artist, it is a pleasure to pass from copying the dreams and nightmares of other artists, the ones who inspire you, to being able to make real your own dreams and nightmares. The best feeling I've experienced as an artist is to become the inspiration for somebody else who wants to join the cycle of becoming an artist.

As for my own inspiration, I can't name all the artists that have forged my style, and they are so different from one another, for example: Richard Corben, Katsuhiro Otomo, Juan Giménez, and Dave McKean. Actually, the artists that I most admire are Phil Hale and Sergey Kolesov. In terms of inking, the two artists who have had the largest impact on me over the years are Brian Bolland and Satoshi Kon.

MATERIALS

I have tried a lot of materials throughout my career. In fact, in the beginning, I was obsessed with trying everything. One of my comic books was a nightmare to produce because each panel was made using a different technique. Now, it is very different. A couple of years ago I discovered a combination of tools that suits my inking work perfectly and I don't have plans to change them for a long time.



At this point, I need to say that I don't like penciling. In fact, I hate it. My pencil work is a mess of rough lines only understandable to me. Because of this, I draw the draft with two pencils: red to make the initial mess of lines, and blue to try to find order in the red chaos. The next step is just inking the silhouettes of shapes with a Mitsubishi Uni Pin 0.1 mm pen. For me, this stage is not officially the inking; it's only a step that allows me to erase the red and blue pencil. Then, when I have that sterile and boring initial line, the real fun starts: inking

with a Pentel brush pen, the tool I like the most. After that, I usually make two passes of shading with a couple of Copic markers: cool gray C3 and C5. Finally, if needed, I add fine detail with a 0.05 mm fineliner.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

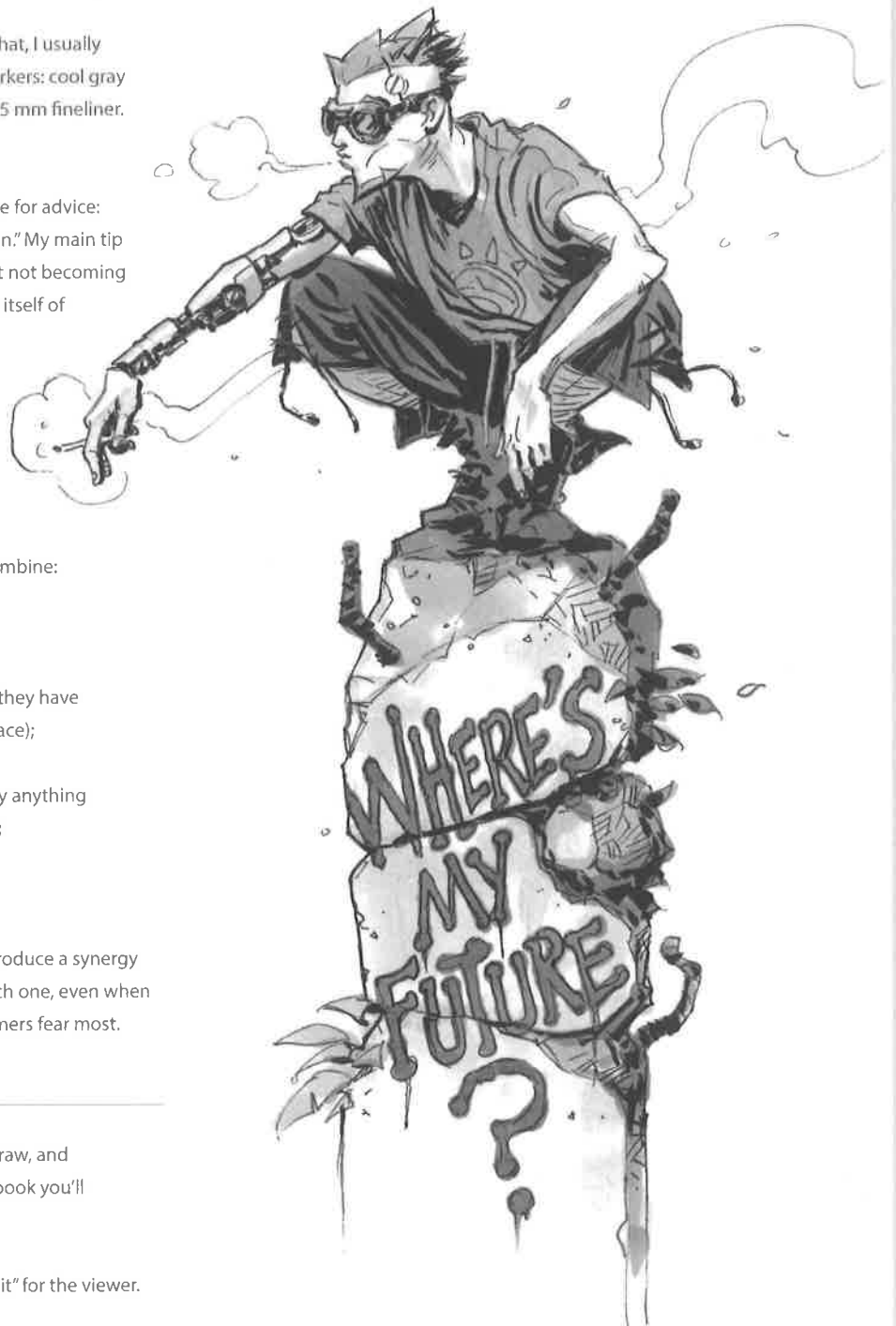
I have a sentence that I repeat to everyone who asks me for advice: "Becoming an artist is about progression, not perfection." My main tip to newcomers is not about technique, but rather about not becoming obsessed with the end goal. Instead, enjoy the process itself of becoming an artist. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Sketches are a perfect way to practice this. Don't draw for other people, draw for yourself. Are you not doing it well? Don't worry, draw more tomorrow. And the day after tomorrow. Every day if possible. Not big drawings, not challenges, only draw simple things to help you lose the fear of the blank page. To progress quickly I suggest you combine:

- copying from reality;
- copying from other artists (this is important because they have found their solutions to the same problems you will face);
- studying anatomy and lighting (it's a lot easier to copy anything if you understand how it's made and works, trust me);
- drawing from your imagination.

If you combine these four ways of learning, they will produce a synergy between them. You will notice how you improve in each one, even when drawing from your imagination, the thing that newcomers fear most.

LEFT: Astronauts are possibly the thing I most like to draw, and a side view is quick and easy to produce. In my sketchbook you'll find a lot of astronaut side views. Too many, I think!

RIGHT: Any image can tell a story if you place some "bait" for the viewer.



Study the basics

If you want to become a concept artist you must be open to other art styles, techniques, and workflows. The key is to have clear knowledge of the basics: composition, anatomy, color, and lighting. It doesn't matter if it's cartoon or hyperrealism, if it's a robot or a dragon egg; the light has physics, the color has rules, and the body has structure. If you know them, you can play with them and break the walls of your comfort zone. Learn the basics, open your mind, draw everything.

For several years I drew without a real knowledge of the basics. I managed to be a professional and work as an illustrator for many years, but without enjoying it at all because I always drew with doubts and fear of the blank page. Suddenly I decided to take a break from my career and dedicate a whole year of my life to learning the basics. I made hundreds of studies. I filled a tiny notebook with a myriad of composition, lighting, and art tips: my own Holy Grail diary like Indiana Jones'. It was the best decision I've ever made in my professional life. When you understand what you are doing you can enjoy it, make it better, faster, and adapt to other styles.





LEFT: *Princess is Dead.* In sketches like this I try to tell a story that the viewer can complete. Usually I add a title that evokes context for the story.

ABOVE: A pure exercise of composition and black and white lighting.

RIGHT: This is from an Inktober challenge. I told myself that my fifteenth day would be the last – I was tired and not in the mood to draw more. Then, on the sixteenth day, I drew this, and continued until I finished the challenge!



Make your ideas real!

If you have an idea – an image in your head, a composition, whatever – don't think about the whole process and all the time and difficulty you will need to face until it will be finished. Just spend two minutes translating it to paper. A tiny, rough, and imperfect sample. Make it real in the simplest way. And maybe not tomorrow, not next week – maybe it will take several months or even years – but one day you will be in the mood and have the ability to draw it in all its glory. Your ideas will be there, waiting to come alive in your hands.

NEAR RIGHT: An ink sketch made with fineliner, Pentel brush pen, and Copic markers.

TOP MIDDLE RIGHT:

Out of My Way. Giant characters are one of the topics I'd like to draw more!

BOTTOM MIDDLE RIGHT:

As seen in many of my sketches, a frame with smoke is almost always present. For me, it's a way to define a space, adding some atmosphere and enhancing the composition.

FAR RIGHT: *Theseus Is Coming, My Lord.* Mythology and my passion for giants in one image.







KURILICH, CAITLYN

caitlynkurilich.com

All images © Caitlyn Kurilich

Often I use sketching as a way of searching. I'm constantly looking for the best interaction of lines and gestures. I almost never hit it, but when I do, it feels amazing. Balancing is key. I enjoy fitting lines together in a pleasing way – making sure curves play off each other in just the right way. I'll often redraw the same sketch multiple times, changing the subtle bend of lines just so, to explore exactly what makes them fit. In this way, sketching is a little bit like a puzzle, one that I could keep trying to solve forever.

And then there's gesture! There's so much to explore with the gesture of the form and the way it contributes to balance. It's fascinating how pitching the torso of a character ever so slightly backward or forward can change the form's expression, or how the particular position of a single finger can make a character's grip on an object more believable. Often it's all these small adjustments of form and body language that make the figure seem more seamless, and it's an inexhaustible process of discovery.

When I'm not using sketching as a means of exploring balance, I'm usually using it to memorize and recall things that I want to be able to draw without reference. I do a lot of figure drawing, both from life and imagination. I aim to one day earn the ability to draw a convincingly balanced figure from imagination at anytime.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Much of the work I do involves historical themes and costuming. It's those centuries-old, forgotten details that really help to give extra life to a character or illustration. I'm constantly searching for antique pictures and prints to inspire my drawings, and books, especially. I keep a collection of reference books of all kinds, from ethnographic aquatints from the 1800s, to old opera stage design catalogs, to giant coffee table tomes about Albanian folk dress.



MATERIALS

I use a blend of graphite and digital media for most of my finished work. There's something about the versatility and tactile feel of graphite that really gets to me. The grittiness, texture, and inevitable variation of drawing something by hand still remains unparalleled by digital media. It's a great way to really give an illustration a raw edge.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

As you may have guessed, gesture is important, especially if I'm planning to bog down a character with a lot of costuming and props. If I can maximize the gesture, balance, and overall flow of the preliminary drawing, it will serve me well once I start adding all the clothing. Don't be afraid to make several gesture drawings to explore the balance of the figure – every little shift of the body counts. I also try to convey that the character is operating within a physical space, even if the setting isn't rendered out in the final drawing. It goes far to sell the character's impact.

LEFT: For this sketch, I looked at a lot of late 19th-century Russian folk costuming as inspiration.

RIGHT: Some say the court sorceress's owl is actually a trapped fairy, bound to her bidding.



"MUCH OF THE WORK I DO INVOLVES HISTORICAL THEMES AND COSTUMING. IT'S THOSE CENTURIES—OLD, FORGOTTEN DETAILS THAT REALLY HELP TO GIVE EXTRA LIFE TO A CHARACTER OR ILLUSTRATION"



It's the little things

Remember that your character exists somewhere, even if you're not overtly drawing it. Try to imply where your character is going, or where they have been. What is your character feeling? What are they thinking? People often think two steps ahead of their current action; where they're looking often tells us the direction they're heading next. Capturing a sense of time or moment in an illustration can give the viewer a feeling of a much richer, more sprawling world.

FAR LEFT: In highly detailed images, leaving room for visual rest (the face, hair, and throne) helps to make sense of heavy patterning.

NEAR LEFT: I tried to mix narrative moments with this drawing: the girl ties her sash while the cat plays with it.

RIGHT: Some say the wyverns are good for nothing. It's only the Ophidiaie that have the patience to charm them into song.



"GESTURE IS IMPORTANT. ESPECIALLY
IF I'M PLANNING TO BOG DOWN
A CHARACTER WITH A LOT OF
COSTUMING AND PROPS"



LEFT: I love playing with different kinds of fur texture. Fur gives you a lot of room for stylization.

ABOVE: Patterns can be used to show form. Things like seam lines and fabric borders are good for this!

NEAR RIGHT: You can guess where she's been and where she's going. This technique is great for extending the narrative moment of your illustration.

FAR TOP RIGHT: If no major narrative is present in your sketch, expression and expressive posing go a long way to create interest.

FAR BOTTOM RIGHT: During the Orientalist movement, it was quite popular to paint portraits of palace guards, dressed similarly to this one.





LANDERMAN, DANIEL

daniel_landerman.artstation.com

All images © Daniel Landerman

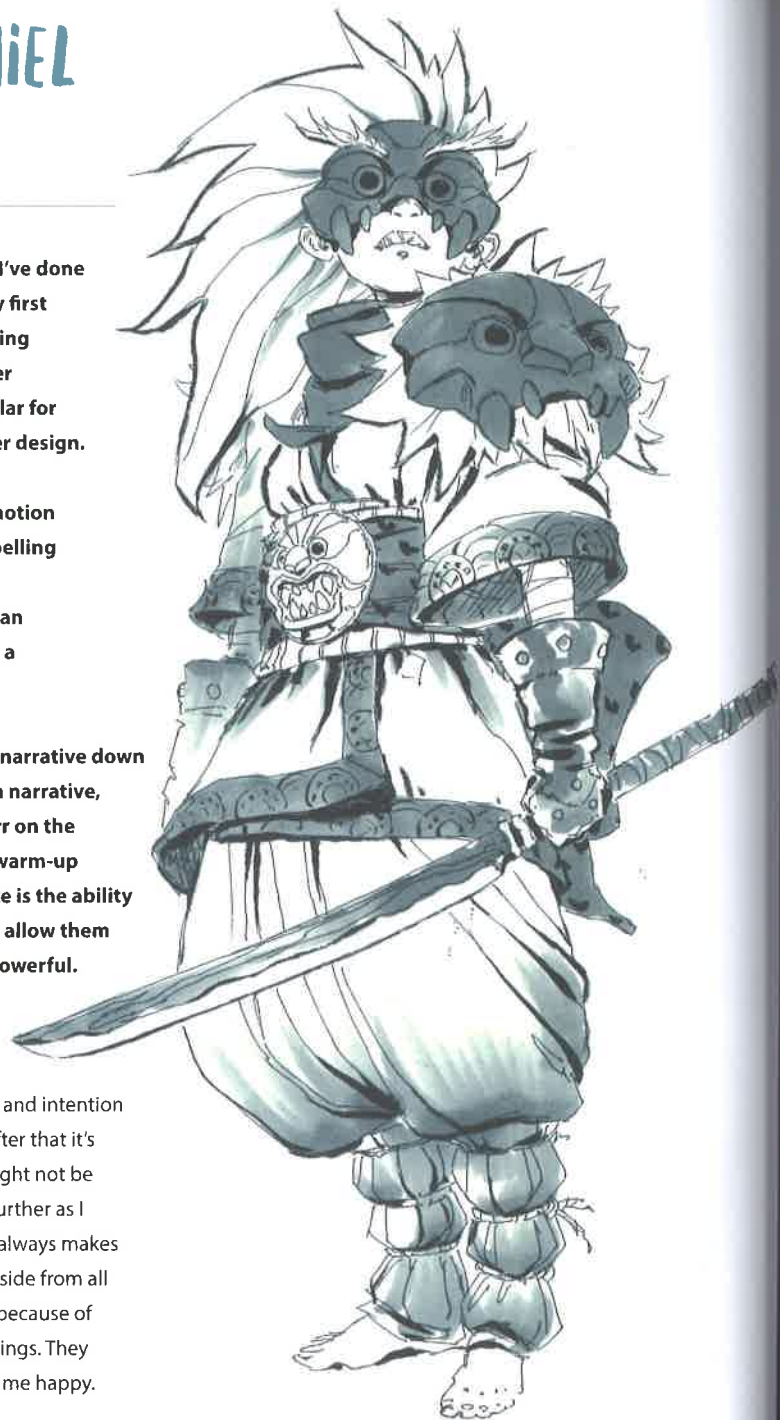
I've been working as a sketch artist since January 2008. Though I've done a bit of concept design and illustration throughout the years, my first love has always been sketching on paper. I really just fell into being a sketch artist and the shoe happened to fit better than any other job type. There aren't a lot of industries that will still pay top dollar for sketches on paper, so I've happily embraced movie and TV poster design.

Sketches manage to capture an intriguing amount of life and emotion without having to spell it all out, and that has always been compelling to me. The efficiency of mark-making and use of form language play such huge roles in our ability to say a lot with very little. It can be addictive in a way: seeing how many ways I can use a mark or a tool and how many different ways I can depict the same forms.

On top of it all is a love of storytelling. My job entails distilling a narrative down to a single image which will often end up being more iconic than narrative, but when I sketch on my own, or take a freelance job, I usually err on the narrative side. I always want a story to sketch, even if it's only a warm-up piece. What a sketch often has that can get lost in a finished piece is the ability to show just enough to ignite the viewer's imagination and then allow them to fill in the spaces. I've always loved this. I think it's incredibly powerful.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

First and foremost my inspiration comes from narrative. Always the first thing that pops into my mind is a story. This gives me the action and intention of the character, as well as a context which will dictate the design. After that it's research as I familiarize myself with the details and nuances that I might not be aware of otherwise. I love the research phase. It always inspires me further as I learn and become more informed. Creating from an informed place always makes for better art, as it allows me to execute concepts with confidence. Aside from all of this, there are a few genres that always inspire me as well, mostly because of the style of marks they lend themselves to: cowboys, pirates, and Vikings. They generally come in waves, but drawing any of those will always make me happy.



MATERIALS

My materials really depend on my mood, but overall I have a few go-to tools that make up ninety percent of my sketches. As a combination I'll use Prismacolor pencils with Gamsol solvent on Dura-lene acetate. This stems from the traditional technique of sketch art in advertising, which involves using charcoal or colored pencil on tracing paper or vellum (although I use Dura-lene instead, a personal preference). It's still in use today by many top-tier sketch artists. Working on a translucent surface allows you to draw on the front and put the values and lighting on the back. I learned it on the job from an industry veteran, but have since tailored it more to my artistic hand. It's a very forgiving medium that lends itself exceptionally to painterly tone and speed. My other go-to is a natural hair brush pen. The versatility in mark-making is fantastic and the propensity for calligraphy is something I always seek out in any tool I tackle.

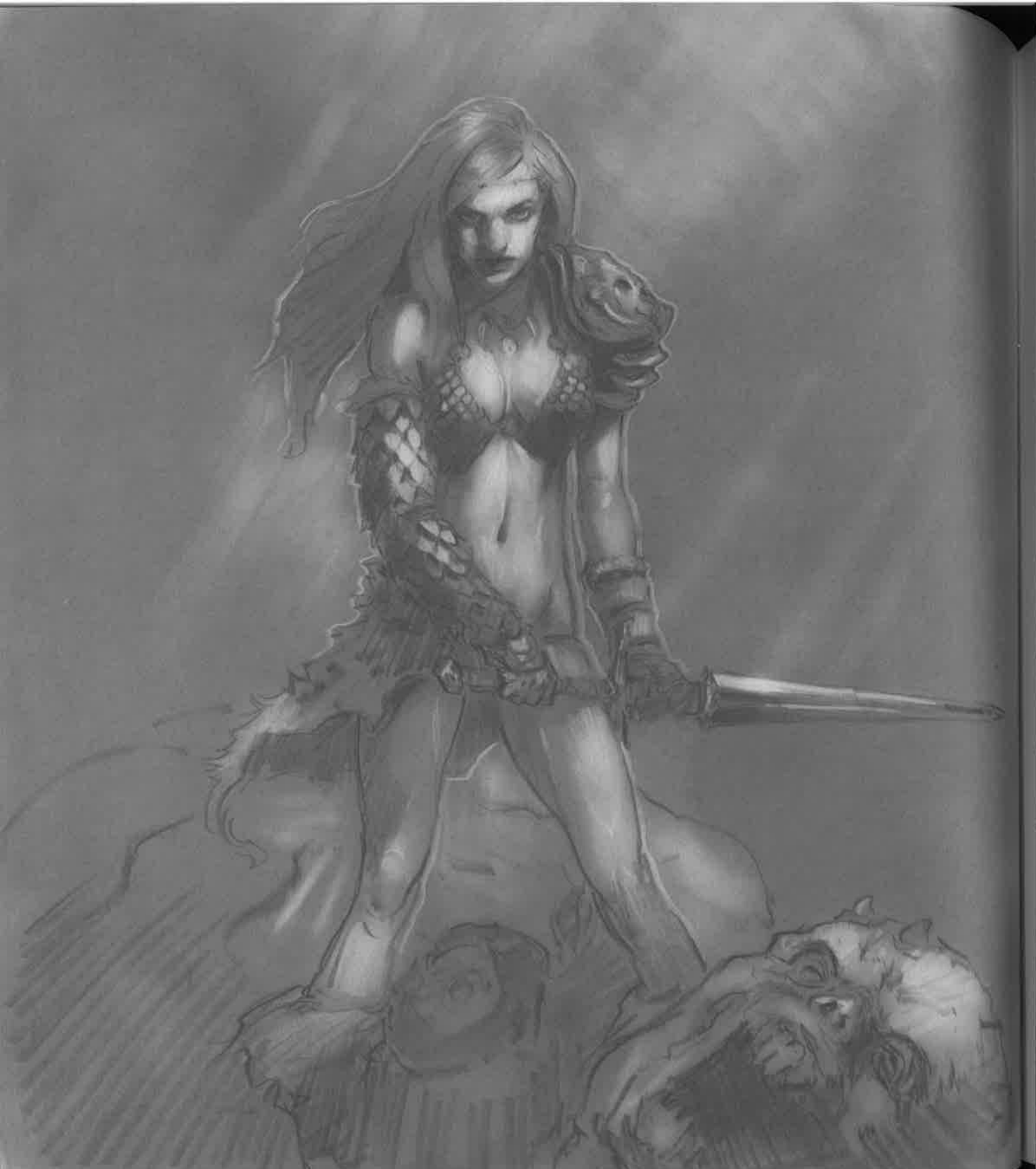
SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I don't tend to have a set technique. It changes depending on the mood and story I'm trying to depict, though I do tend to leave my rough block-in as loose as possible. I don't want the drawing to feel stale and if I spell it all out before I do a final pass then I'm essentially just tracing from what I drew already. I'll become bored and that will always show in the final piece. The idea is to leave as much life in a sketch as possible, and the closer I can get to a mark that's executed right the first time, with vigor and feeling, the better off I'll be. As long as I'm well-informed on the subject I'm sketching, I can confidently design in the final sketch on top of a loose block-in. This is my happy place.

LEFT: Designing straight in pen is great practice. I love pushing myself to make more deliberate marks and commit to what I put down. Working directly in pen also trains me to always think five steps ahead. Gel pen, brush pen, and Copic marker on Moleskine.

RIGHT: Pirates! A simple concept is a great chance to experiment with new techniques. In this case I chose to add a little color to my usual grayscale sketch. Prismacolor pencil on Dura-lene acetate.





"FIRST AND FOREMOST
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AND INTENTION OF
THE CHARACTER, AS
WELL AS A CONTEXT
WHICH WILL DICTATE
THE DESIGN"

LEFT: Barbarians, being rather close to Vikings, are always enjoyable to draw. There's really no wrong way to draw them, which means I can just have fun. Prismacolor pencil on Dura-lene acetate.

RIGHT: I rarely sketch without a story in mind, even if it's only as simple as receiving a sword from the powers that be. (And no, it doesn't always come down to practical armor, but as artists we need to be aware of the whens and wheres: there are times for practical design and times for entertaining design, and it's important to be able to tell the difference.)







FAR LEFT: Sometimes I become so serious about art that I have to lighten the mood a bit, but I try as much as I can to still tell a compelling story. Put details where you need them and give enough to entice the viewer several levels deep, but, as much as you can, let the natural textures of the medium do some of the work. I let the details fade away in the shadows and instead put directional lines mostly pointing back toward the center of the image. It's a cheap trick, but highly effective. Prismacolor pencil on Dura-lene acetate.



NEAR TOP LEFT: Storytelling, storytelling. Capturing innocent moments is one of my favorite things to do in sketches. They give me more insight into characters than an action scene does and I enjoy the nuances it takes to sketch subtle gestures. If a simple contour will get the job done, stick with that! Leave something to the imagination. Make the viewer work a little bit and they'll fill in the gaps and thank you for it.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT: Lighting is what I love best. That, and line work. I never pass up the chance to design dramatic lighting, and the opportunity to design a face out of my head is always a blast. In this case, pushing and pulling with pencil and eraser gets me to where I'm going. Prismacolor pencil on Dura-lene acetate.



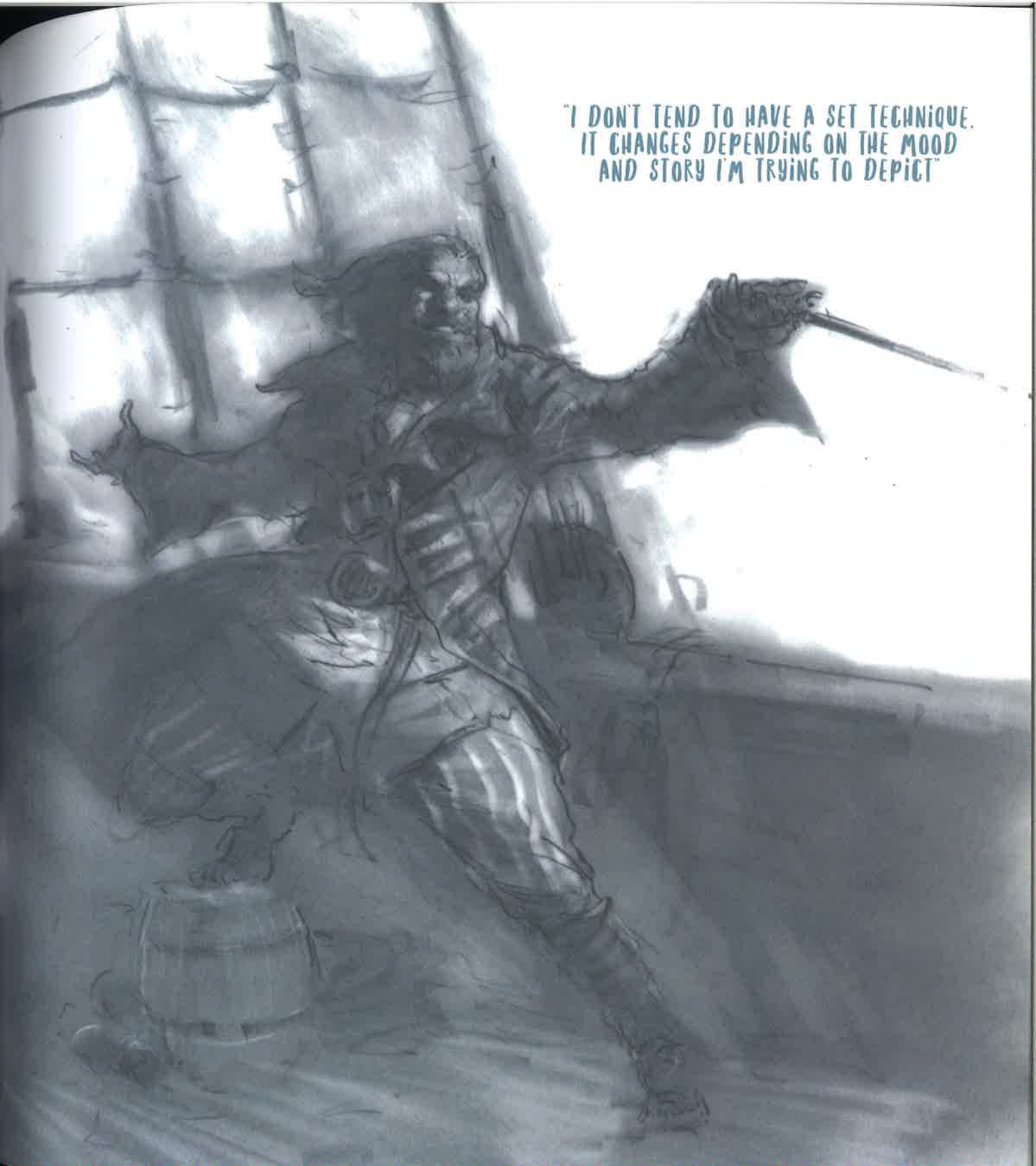
TOP LEFT: A pirate captain counting the day's loot! There are a lot of half-drawn and partially indicated elements in this sketch. I'd argue that very few things, if any, are actually realized. If I understand the form language of an object or character, I can usually get away with drawing very little of it as long as the few marks I lay down capture the essence of whatever I'm drawing. This way of sketching requires a firm grasp on what you're drawing and a detail-oriented mental library.



BOTTOM LEFT: Yes, I love me some pirates! In this case I wanted to show a pirate couple having a blast at the expense of the poor soldiers. Notice how I rely on forms and tones to do a lot of the work; if I don't have to spell something out, I won't. The opaque shadows add a sense of mystery while allowing me to draw less, and also create a solid lighting design which adds to the mood and helps the image read quickly and clearly.

RIGHT: Texture is my friend. It will often help me add a sense of movement without having to draw anything actually moving. Prismacolor pencil on Dura-lene acetate.

"I DON'T TEND TO HAVE A SET TECHNIQUE.
IT CHANGES DEPENDING ON THE MOOD
AND STORY I'M TRYING TO DEPICT"





LECLERCQ, THIBAUT

thibaultleclercq.tumblr.com

All images © LECLERCQ Thibault

I grew up in the countryside, in a small village in the north of France. For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to be an artist. I was drawing before I could even walk.

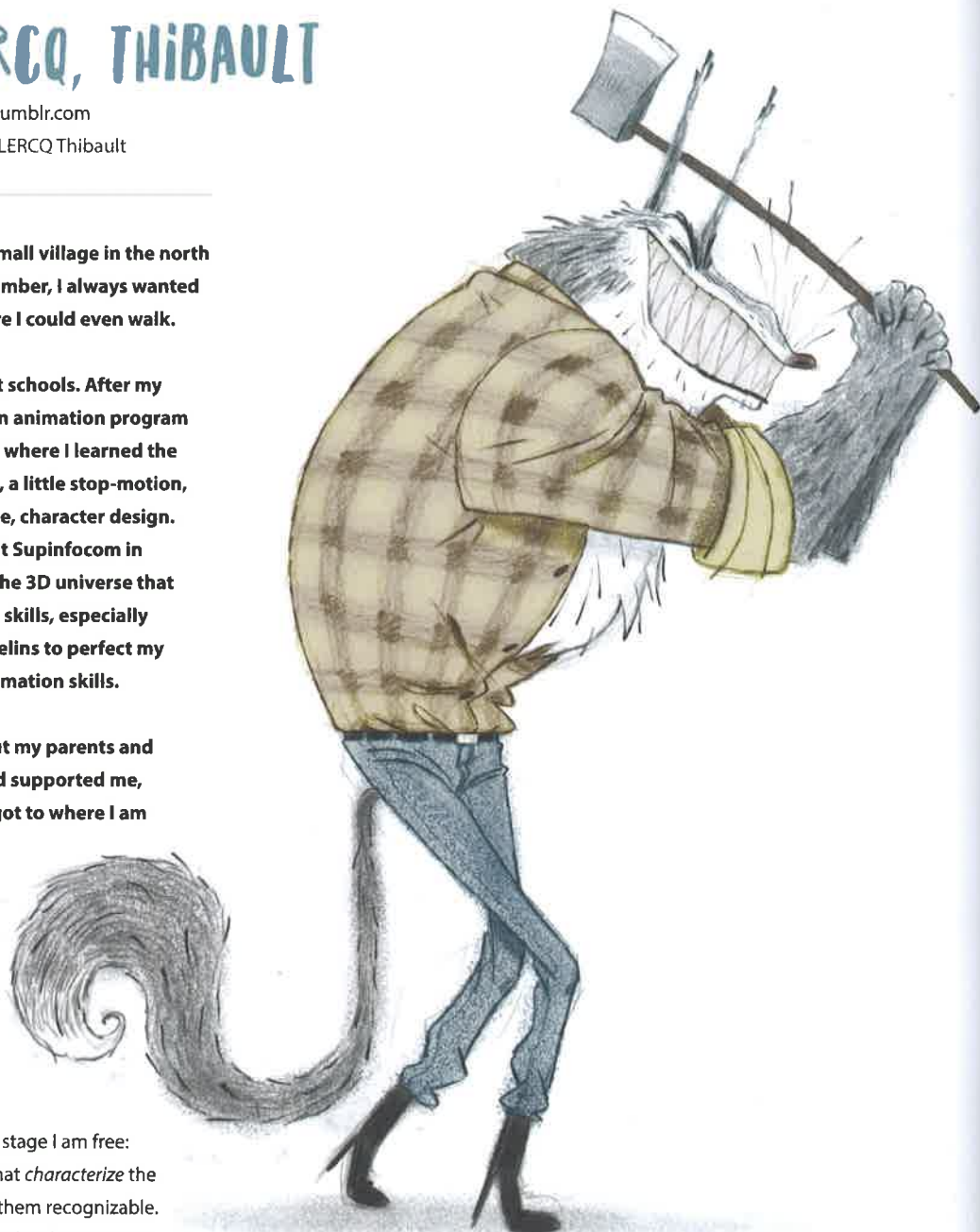
I learned to draw through different schools. After my high school graduation I studied an animation program for two years in Clermont-Ferrand, where I learned the principles of traditional animation, a little stop-motion, 2D digital animation, and, of course, character design. After that I studied the third year at Supinfocom in Valenciennes, where I discovered the 3D universe that enriched and enhanced my artistic skills, especially my drawing. Finally, I got into Gobelins to perfect my drawing, character design, and animation skills.

I am the only artist in the family but my parents and my brother always encouraged and supported me, and without them I couldn't have got to where I am now. I am very grateful to them.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I love the research phase of character design, where I have fun with the shapes and lines of the character. It's the stage where I wonder what part of the character's personality can be seen physically.

What will make them unique? At this stage I am free: I search, I explore, finding the traits that *characterize* the character, and the shapes that make them recognizable. Finally, when I feel that the drawing is the character I'm searching for, I'm satisfied. Just a few lines give it life.



MATERIALS

The sketches shown here are created with paper and pencil, or on a tablet with Photoshop, or a combination of both.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

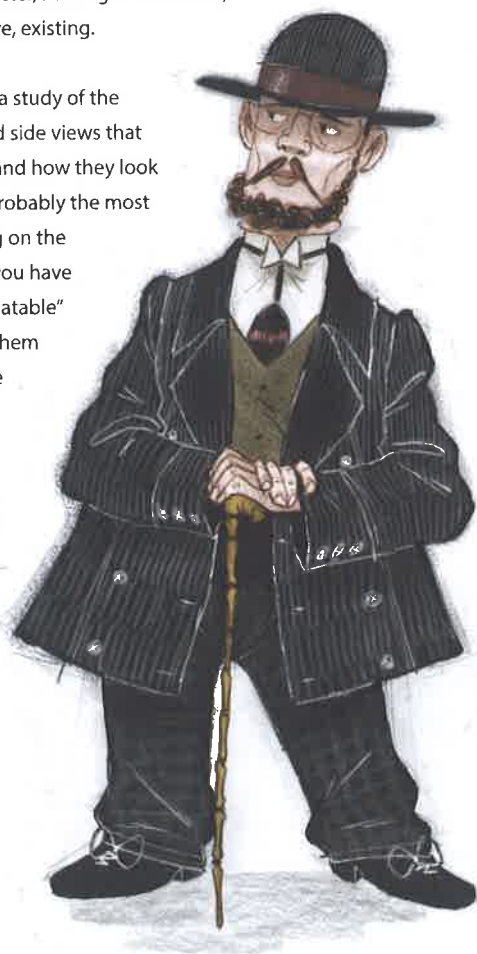
As well as the research and inspiration stage, I also love creating model sheets (a sheet of character drawings that decide the character's look, poses, facial expressions, style of movement, and so on). This is the stage where I clearly define the character and their emotions. What expressions would they have when they're sad? How do they laugh? How do they move? I try to make everything coherent between the shapes and the background story of the character, making it believable, feeling that they are there, alive, existing.

I also produce a turnaround – a study of the character from front, back, and side views that establishes their proportions and how they look from different angles. This is probably the most complicated stage, depending on the character, because it's where you have to make your characters "animatable" (for 2D or 3D), while keeping them recognizable from every angle and maintaining the essence of the designs. But in the end, that's what makes the turnaround job so interesting.

LEFT: A sketch of a werewolf character.

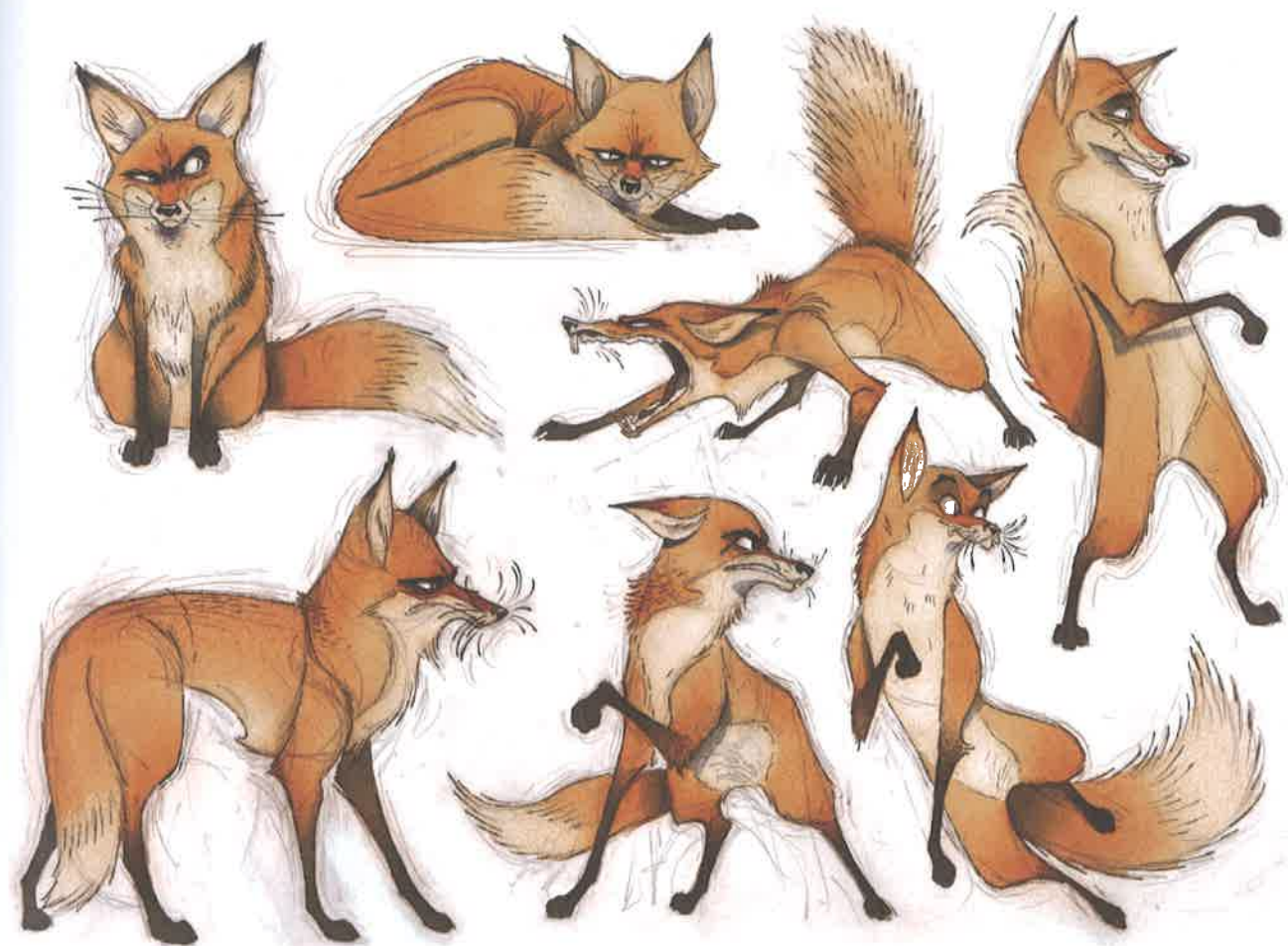
NEAR RIGHT: A sketch of Toulouse-Lautrec.

FAR RIGHT: A sketch of an opera singer character.





BOTH PAGES: Sketches of different animal characters and their expressions.



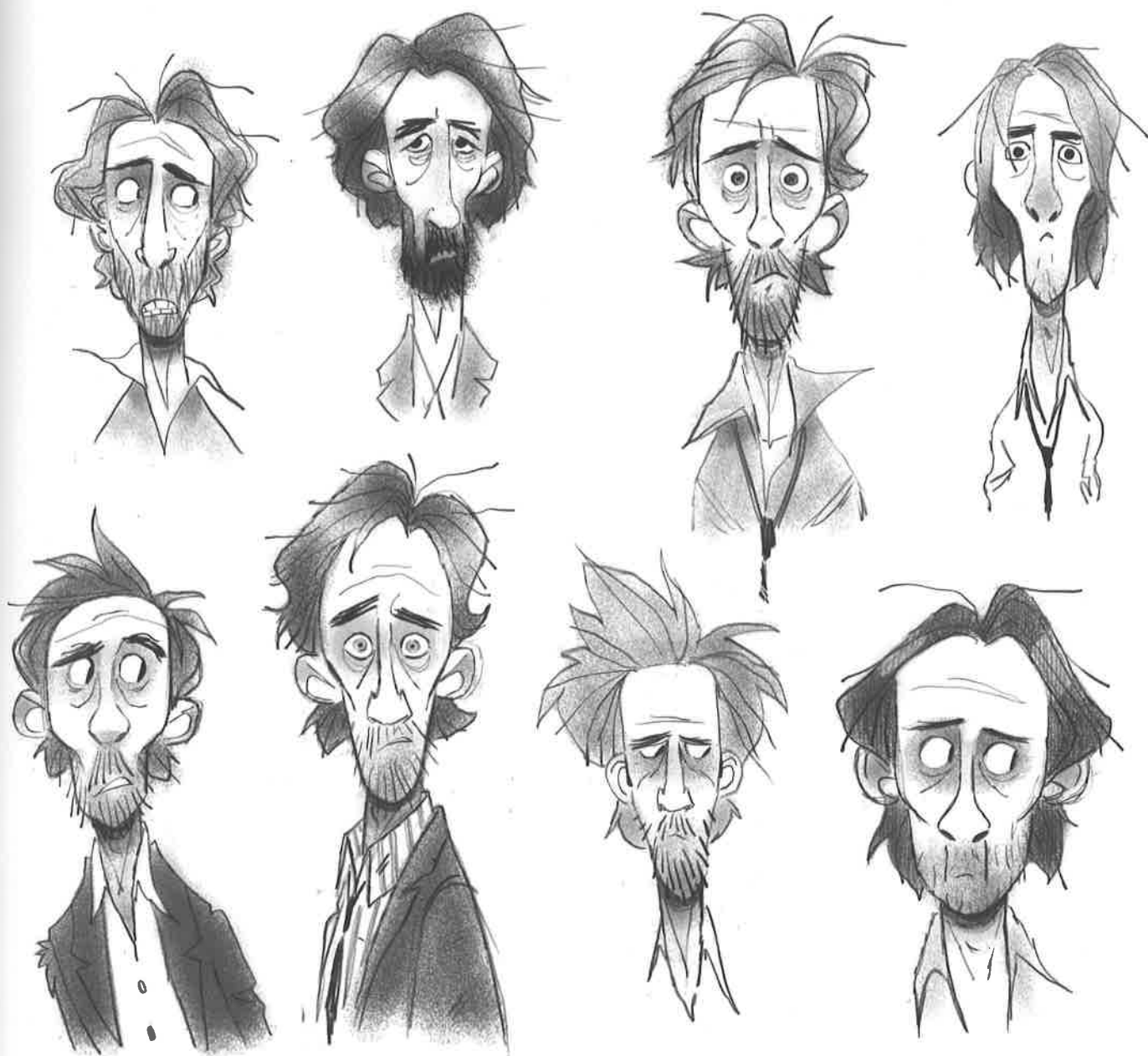
"I ALWAYS
WANTED TO BE
AN ARTIST. I
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BEFORE I COULD
EVEN WALK"



LEFT: Another animal character from my portfolio.

BELOW AND RIGHT: Research sketches of a hunter and her "prey."

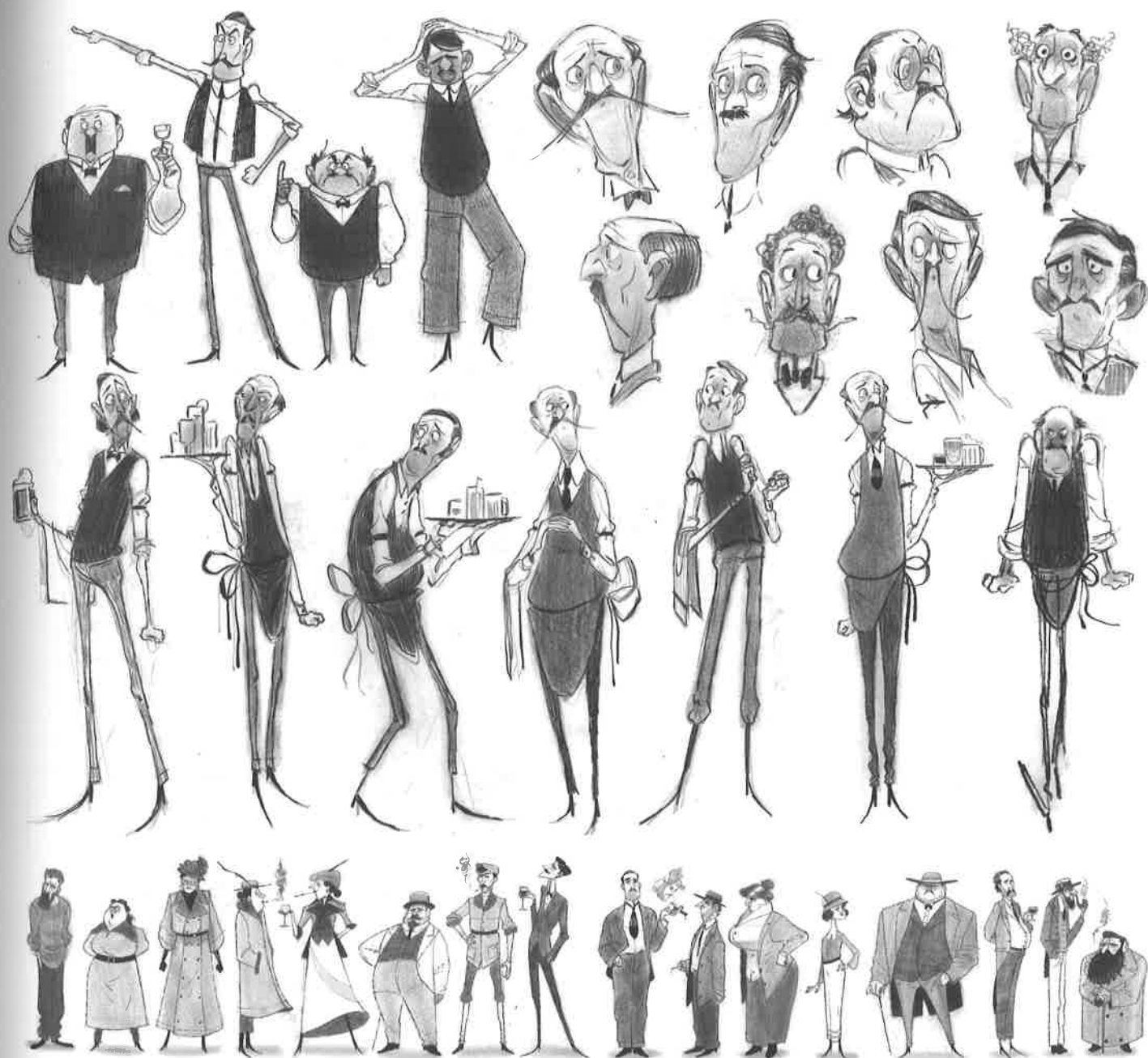






"I LOVE THE RESEARCH PHASE OF CHARACTER DESIGN, WHERE I HAVE FUN WITH THE SHAPES AND LINES OF THE CHARACTER. IT'S THE STAGE WHERE I WONDER WHAT PART OF THE CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY CAN BE SEEN PHYSICALLY"





BOTH PAGES: Character design sketches for a short animated film.



LYRA, RAEL

raelyra.tumblr.com

All images © Rael Lyra

I started making my own scribbles at a very young age, influenced by my mother, who used to draw with me and my brothers. Paper never lacked in our house. Sketching seems to be a language, a frequency that I wouldn't be able to reach by other means, and is very hard to explain since it's not verbal. For me, it doesn't have much to do with the reproduction of what is seen around us, although I understand how this can be true for some people. Sketches have the power to reveal, through the paper, patterns of interest and expression. Drawing, it seems to me, is a mechanism for comprehending reality: an abstract answer, in a sense, to the concrete world. A kind of gossip where the end result does not have so much to do with what is seen, but what you feel about it.

The brain is a very weird thing and drawing has a structuring effect on me. Very plainly, I draw because it helps me to live. Sketches appear to be a way to catalog ideas that begin to pile up in my mind, so a couple of pens, traditional or digital, are the tools I need to organize these ideas. However, this is only one part of the process. Narrative has become another part that makes some sketches more relevant for me, creating a second layer of depth. To think about the background stories of my drawings has added a powerful restraining factor: it helps me to refrain from lazy solutions and consider how, even in the early stages, sketching may be a playful communication mechanism.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I have a tendency to drink from the ordinary experiences of everyday life – family living and memories from my childhood. I'm Brazilian and for decades lived in a very quaint neighborhood near the beach, but nearer to a slum called Ilha do Rato ("Rat Island"). Robberies and shootings, stray horses eating the trash, and bizarre arcades were part of the scenery. In a single day you could find crazy vagrants, cowherds, and even fishermen with a shark carcass. It was a very strange micro-universe, but it made me very healthy from a creative point of view.

MATERIALS

I don't like to always work in the same sketchbook, so I keep five or six sketchbooks of different formats around my place. Some are Moleskines and some are handmade,



friends' gifts. For traditional sketches, I have a small but good variety of pens and markers with different characteristics, but my favorite tools are a Staedtler 6B pencil, a regular Paper Mate ballpoint pen, a Pentel brush pen, a couple of gray Copic markers, and finally a Wacom Cintiq 22HD for digital sketches.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I like to draw with pens, skipping the pencil phase; it can be very helpful to develop a mental library and line confidence for this. But I do recognize how a good pencil base can take the inking to a whole different place.

When I go digital, which is a lot, I sketch more with values. To simplify the process as much as possible is the goal; simple processes for a simple guy. Two layers are usually enough.

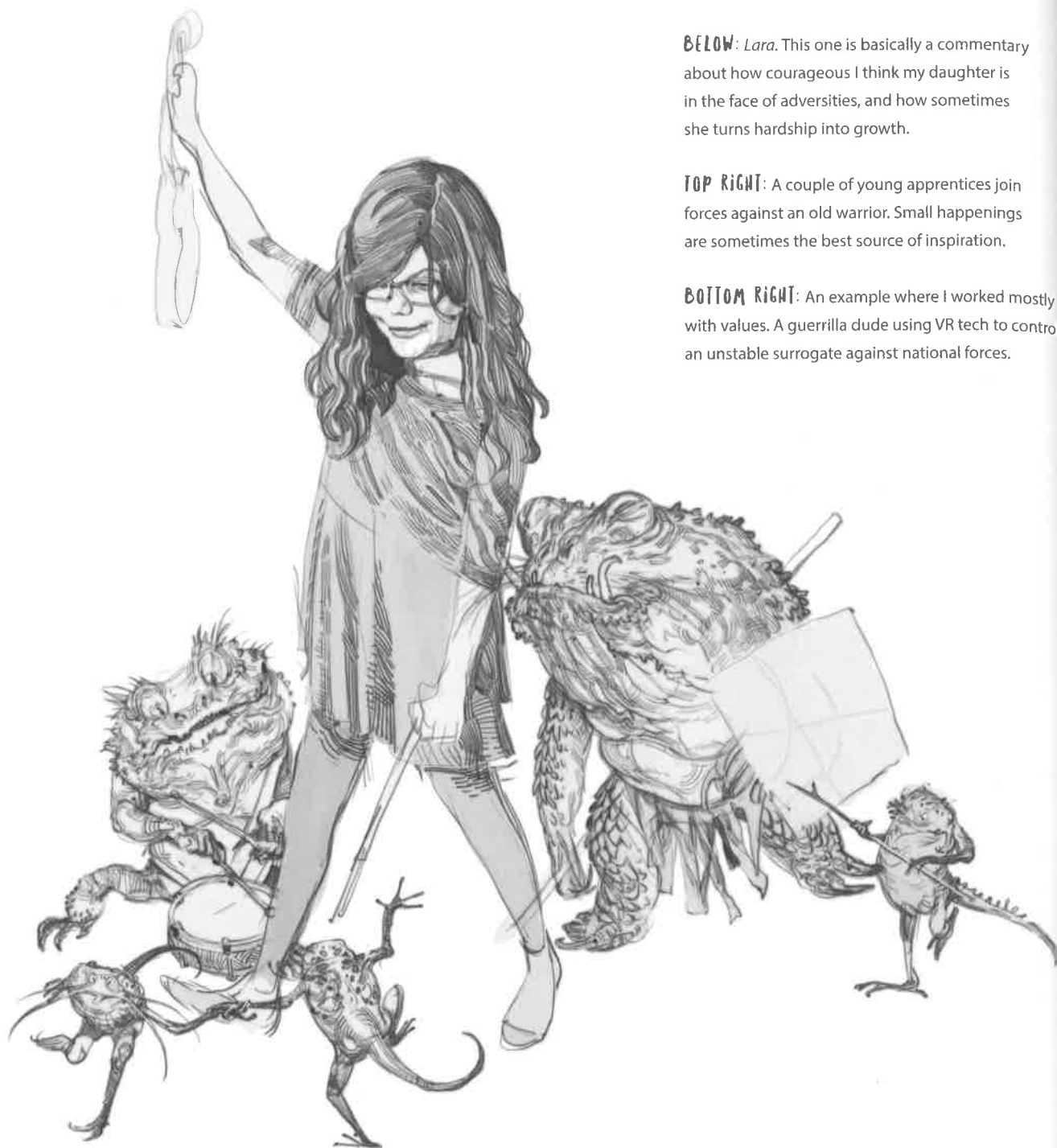
As for the character design itself, it's the same approach for traditional or digital media. I frequently start with a premise: restrictions such as the sort of environment in which the character lives, what the context is, what they do for a living, or a conflict. Restrictions help me to think and find less obvious solutions, and the character tends to become a visual response to the questions I ask.

LEFT: A maintenance robot, exploited until the last drop in a big old pirate submarine, decides to organize a robot riot.

TOP RIGHT: *War Photographer*. Just exploring a different type of character, instead of going with the Rambo archetype.

MIDDLE AND BOTTOM RIGHT: This contractor's biosuit is not working properly. It's time for a recall.

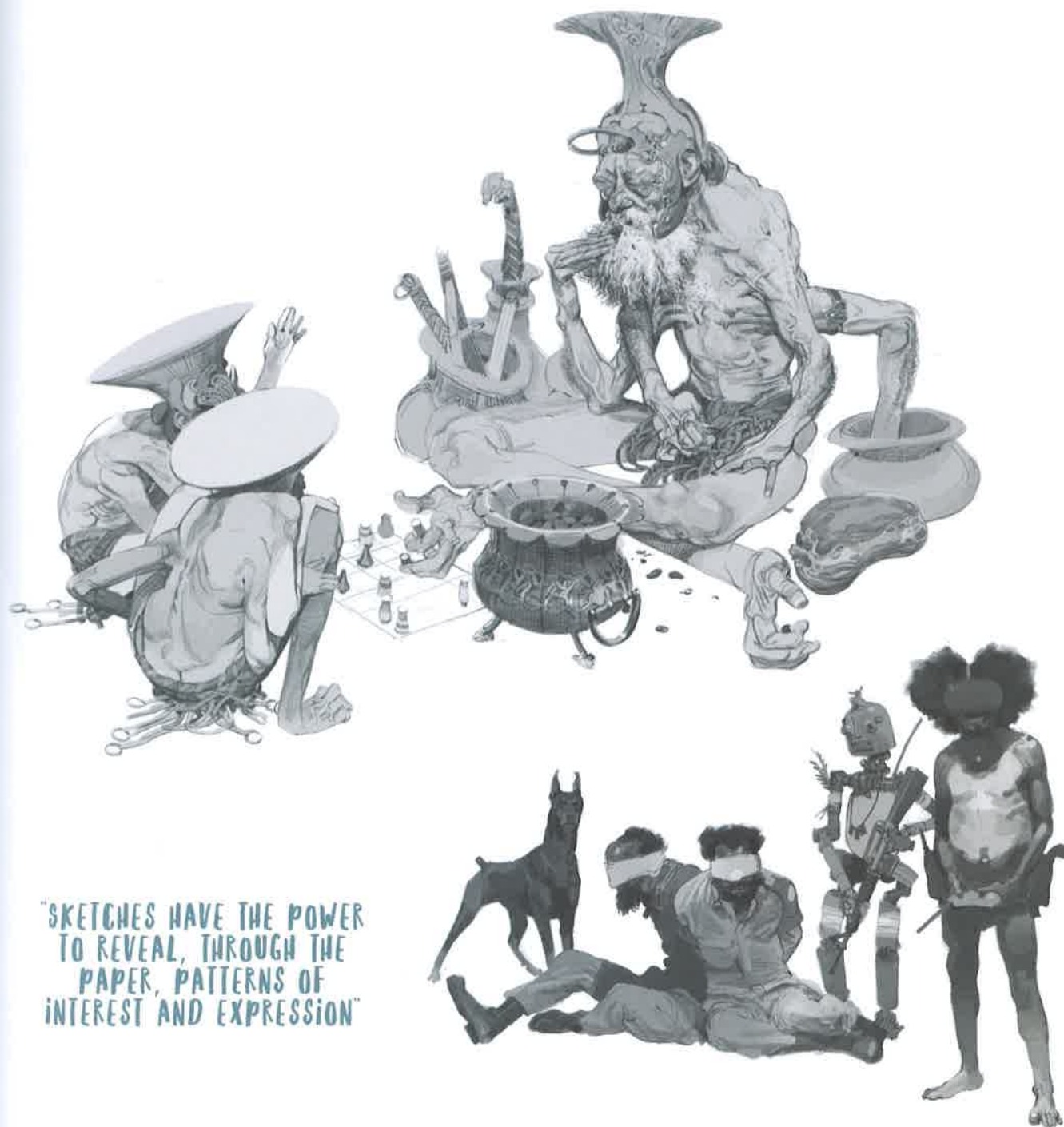




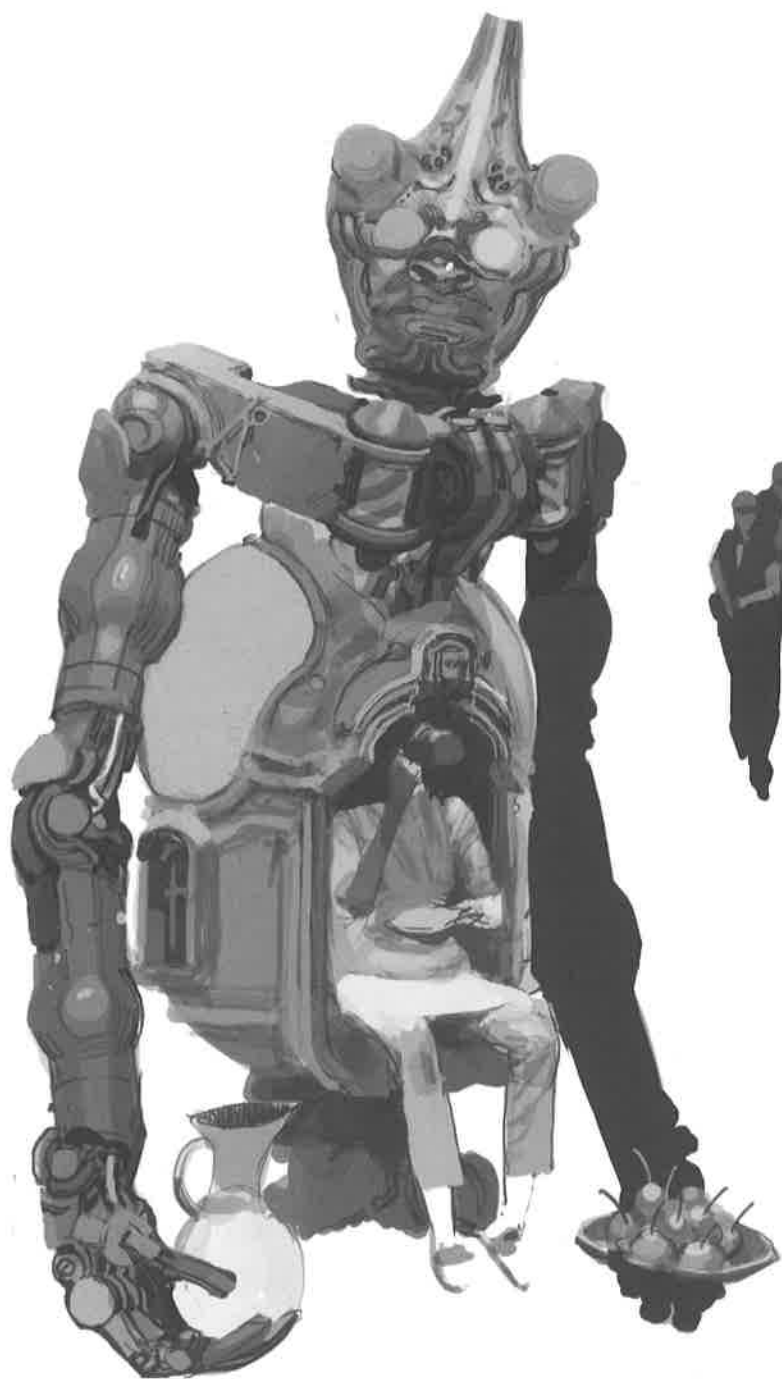
BELOW: *Lara.* This one is basically a commentary about how courageous I think my daughter is in the face of adversities, and how sometimes she turns hardship into growth.

TOP RIGHT: A couple of young apprentices join forces against an old warrior. Small happenings are sometimes the best source of inspiration.

BOTTOM RIGHT: An example where I worked mostly with values. A guerrilla dude using VR tech to control an unstable surrogate against national forces.



"SKETCHES HAVE THE POWER
TO REVEAL, THROUGH THE
PAPER, PATTERNS OF
INTEREST AND EXPRESSION"



LEFT: *Guardian*. A young slave master and his peculiar henchman, having breakfast.

BELOW: I like the duality here and how people come with different interpretations. Sometimes it's good to leave it that way.

RIGHT: This diver is probably the counterpart for the submarine robot riot mentioned on page 195, *Die Hard* style.



"SKETCHES APPEAR TO
BE A WAY TO CATALOG
IDEAS THAT BEGIN TO
PILE UP IN MY MIND"





MACIOCI, VITTORIA

vic-mac.com

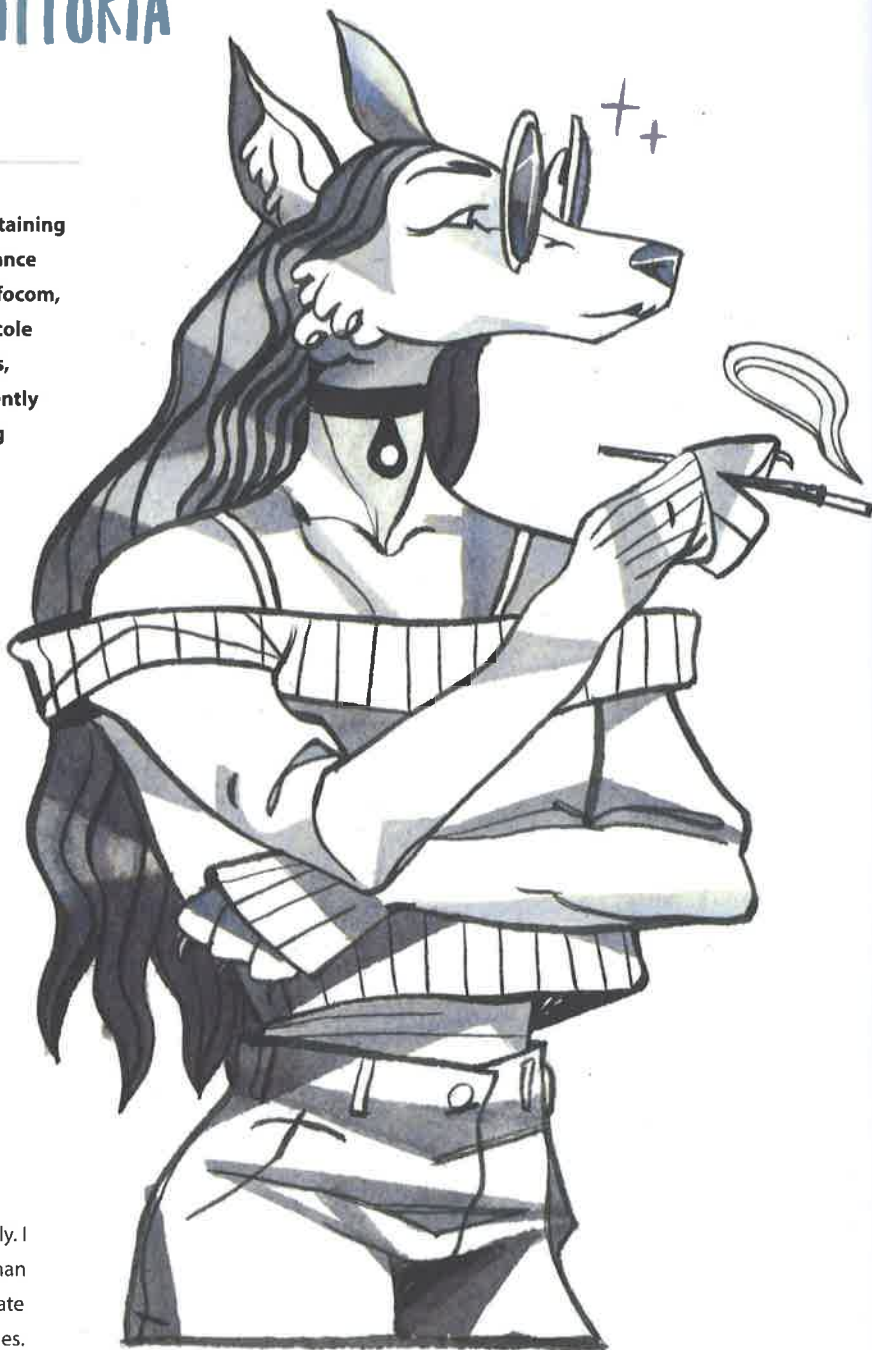
All images © Vittoria Macioci

I was born in 1991 and grew up in Rome. After obtaining a high school diploma in literature, I moved to France to attend a two-year preparatory course at Supinfocom, a 2D/3D animation school. After that I went to l'École Émile-Cohl where I was taught illustration, comics, and animation, and graduated in July 2016. Currently working on comic book projects, I've been writing and illustrating stories since I was little – it has always been a passion of mine. I like to think that every sketch has its own story. I tend to focus a lot on facial features and how one line can change a character's expression. I find it fascinating. A single line can impact the entire story behind a sketch. For me, doodling is therefore the same as writing a story. I've always had a bad memory, so sketching is a way of putting my influences and any memories stuck in my brain down on paper, kind of like a memo. Drawing has become more of a liberating routine than anything for me.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Reality is the best source of inspiration, as always. I believe that it is important for an artist to question themselves and see the world that surrounds them. Learning how to properly see alternative "realities" and appreciate them is key, even if they are completely different from what you're used to.

In second place, there's music. Any kind of music, really. I can be inspired by the atmosphere of a song rather than its lyrics. Music is an incredible way to change your state of mind, emotions, and memories, thus inspiring stories.



MATERIALS

My favorite tools are brushes, colored inks, and gouache. I much prefer the feeling of a real brush than one on a drawing tablet. Basically, I am happy with any water-based materials. Water can give unexpected beautiful results to colors and layers, which is a great way to balance my work, since I am a perfectionist when it comes line art.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

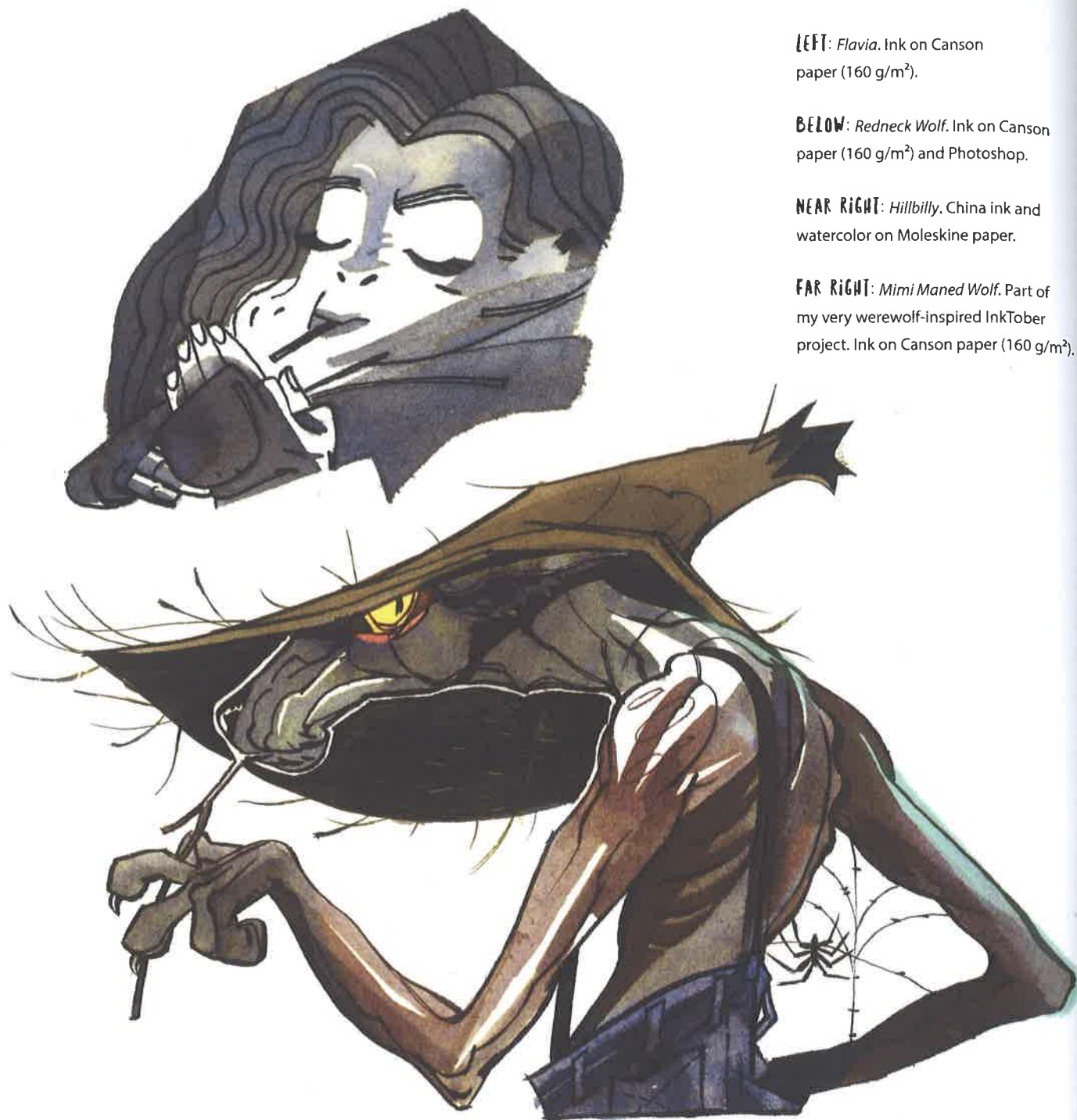
I don't have any particular technique. When I'm not sure about what I'm going to draw, I sketch the masses with a colored pencil, then define some details using a regular pencil, then refine them more precisely with brushes and inks. When I already have the doodle in my head, a regular pencil or even ink will do.

LEFT: *Foxy Lady*. Ink on Canson paper (160 g/m²).

BELOW: *Stressed Bored Witch*. Pencil and ink on Arches paper (185 g/m²).

RIGHT: *Monkey Mama*. Always think about the exaggeration of shapes and staging to better differentiate characters and to make their personality recognizable. Ink on Canson paper (160 g/m²).





LEFT: *Flavia*. Ink on Canson paper (160 g/m²).

BELOW: *Redneck Wolf*. Ink on Canson paper (160 g/m²) and Photoshop.

NEAR RIGHT: *Hillbilly*. China ink and watercolor on Moleskine paper.

FAR RIGHT: *Mimi Maned Wolf*. Part of my very werewolf-inspired Inktober project. Ink on Canson paper (160 g/m²).

"A SINGLE LINE CAN
IMPACT THE ENTIRE
STORY BEHIND
A SKETCH. FOR
ME, DOODLING IS
THEREFORE THE SAME
AS WRITING A STORY"





MARSHALL, MAXX

maxxmarshall.tumblr.com

All images © Maxx Marshall

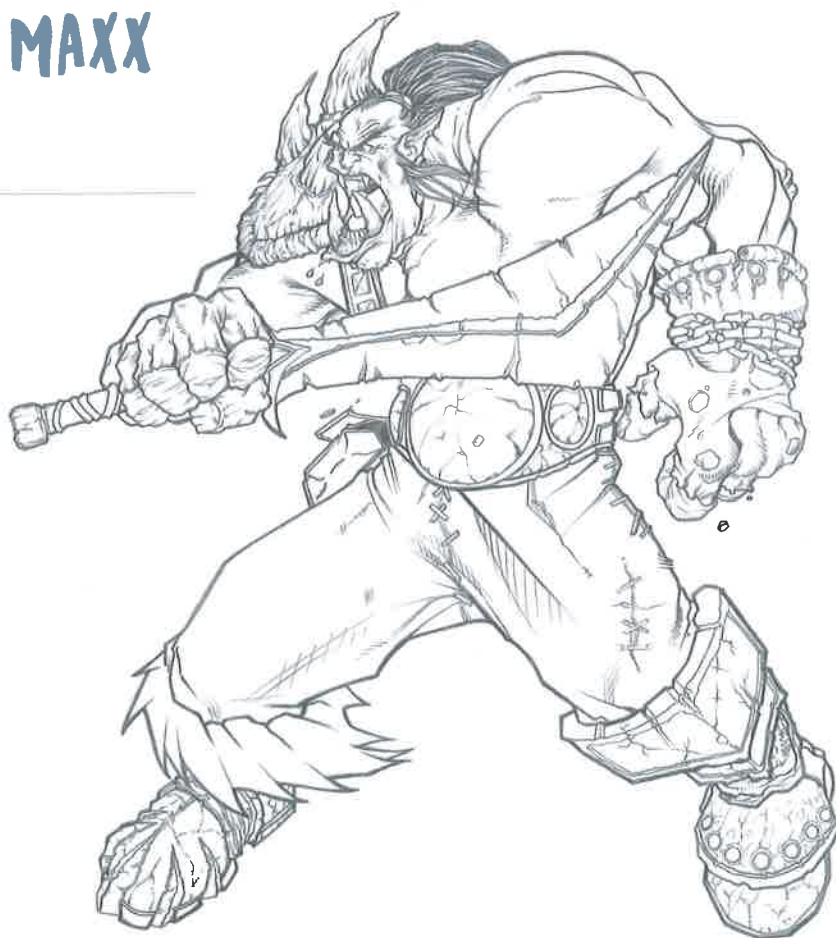
I am a 2D/3D artist and animator originally from Detroit, but my art has lovingly taken me to many of the places I've dreamed of going. I've worked in Japan, England, California, and Seattle. I've created art and concept work for games and series including *LittleBigPlanet 3*, *God of War* for the PlayStation Portable, *Daxter*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Ōkami*, to name a few. I draw constantly. I draw on the bus, at the bus stop, at family functions, at bars, pubs, and coffeehouses. My sketchbook is filled with things that I've liked over the years. The thoughts and ideas are inspired by random people, places, and things I've seen in my travels.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I am inspired by the people and places I see. Be it a concepting job in Akihabara, or a calming vacation in Edinburgh with my family, I am always on the lookout for new and interesting ideas. I'm a self-taught artist who grew up on comics, role-playing games (RPG), and video games, and these helped me to focus on the type of artwork I wanted to make. I like to sit back with markers, pen, and pencil and just sketch out random ideas.

MATERIALS

I usually sketch on thick, almost Bristol paper. I prefer very bright paper. I have fifteen or so clear plastic clipboards that I place my paper on, in



addition to a Bristol card to stop markers from bleeding through. As well as holding my paper straight and tidy, the clipboard almost doubles as a lightbox when I want to iterate on an idea. I have lead holders with 3H and HB leads for pencil work. I use a mixture of Prismacolor and Copic markers to add color to my ideas. When inking, I always use Sakura Pigma Micron pens because I like how they feel on the page. I like markers because they are fast and an amazing production artist's tool, but I've also been getting into watercolor more and more.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

When starting an idea, I usually see an iconic shape in my head, whether it's a character or based on a person on the bus. That shape is quickly and lightly drawn with the 4H pencil. If I'm going to use markers, I'll color at this stage with only the lightest pencils so that there is no smearing or smudging. If I'm not going to use colors, I erase any and all construction lines and start refining with the HB pencil, finding the lines I want and lines I don't. I then go in with the pen and ink the whole thing.

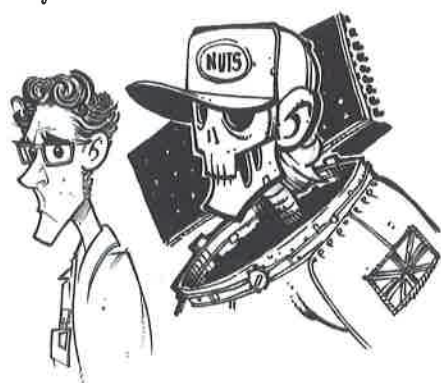


FAR LEFT: I like the thought of orcs wearing mismatched armor pieces as it adds to their chaotic nature.

NEAR LEFT: When penciling something like this, I put on my favorite music and get lost in the details. Every line, circle, and crease sketched translates into something when I color these guys later.

BELOW: This guy was based on a biker in Irvine, California. He was sitting by us and his outfit was so retro that I just kept adding and adding until he became what he is here. As a game character, I assume he's a sniper.

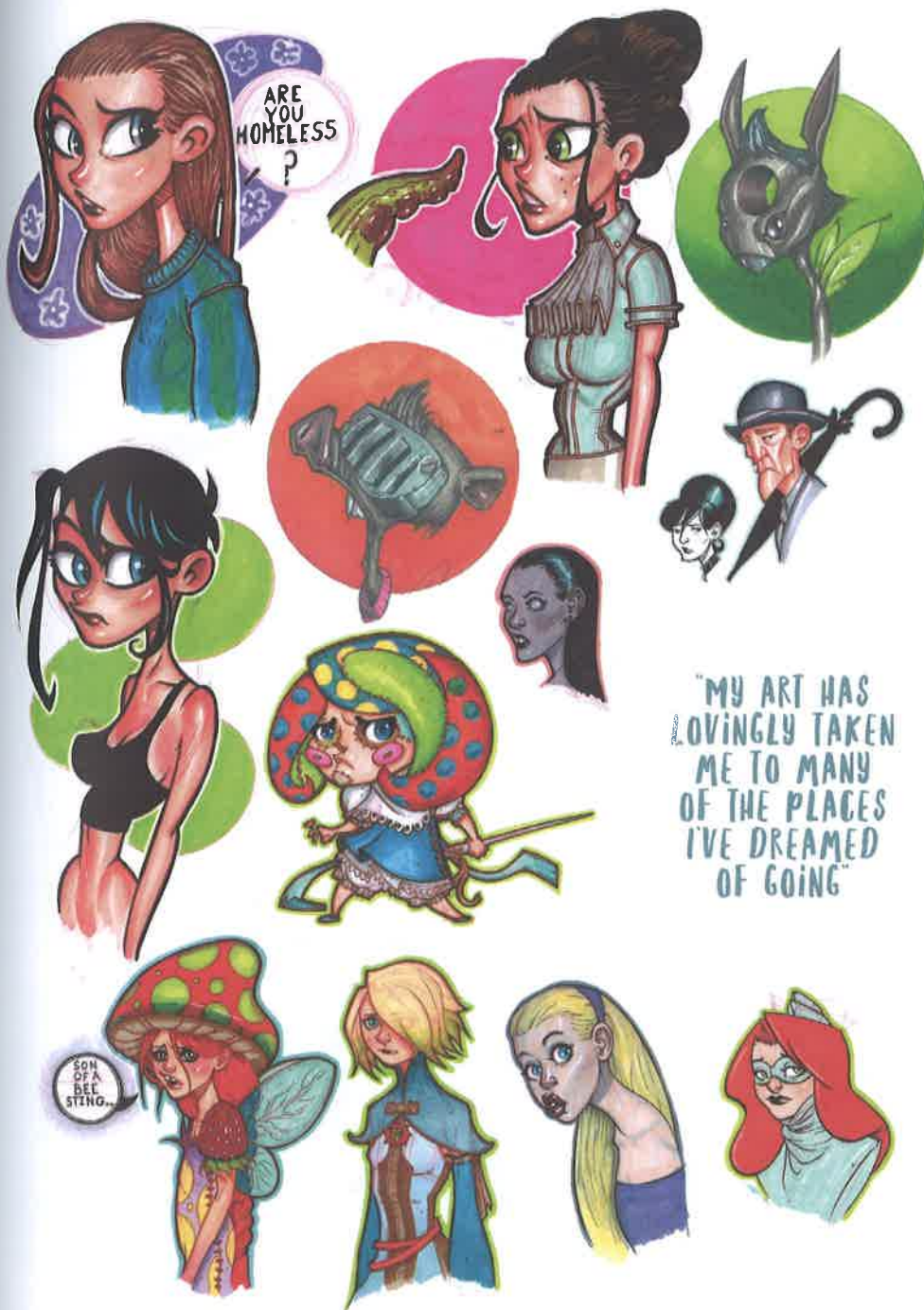




LEFT: Inks. I personally “pull” lines. Meaning, when inking, I start with my hand or lines farther away from me, and pull the pen towards me. I find that “pushing” tends to create wobbly lines. In the end, it’s your choice and you should go with what feels best for you and gets you the results you want.

ABOVE: There is something about black ink against white paper that I am madly in love with: the contrast, the edge, the battle of light and dark. This is a silhouette that has more form because of the internal markers. Markers first, inks second; that way the ink isn’t dulled or smeared by the markers.

RIGHT: Markers, markers, markers. Markers with pencils, markers with black pens, markers with charcoal, markers with brown pens. I like to test what things will look like. I bought some pencil leads from the Czech Republic because I couldn’t find them anywhere else. Testing, learning, and subsequently showing my work = bliss.

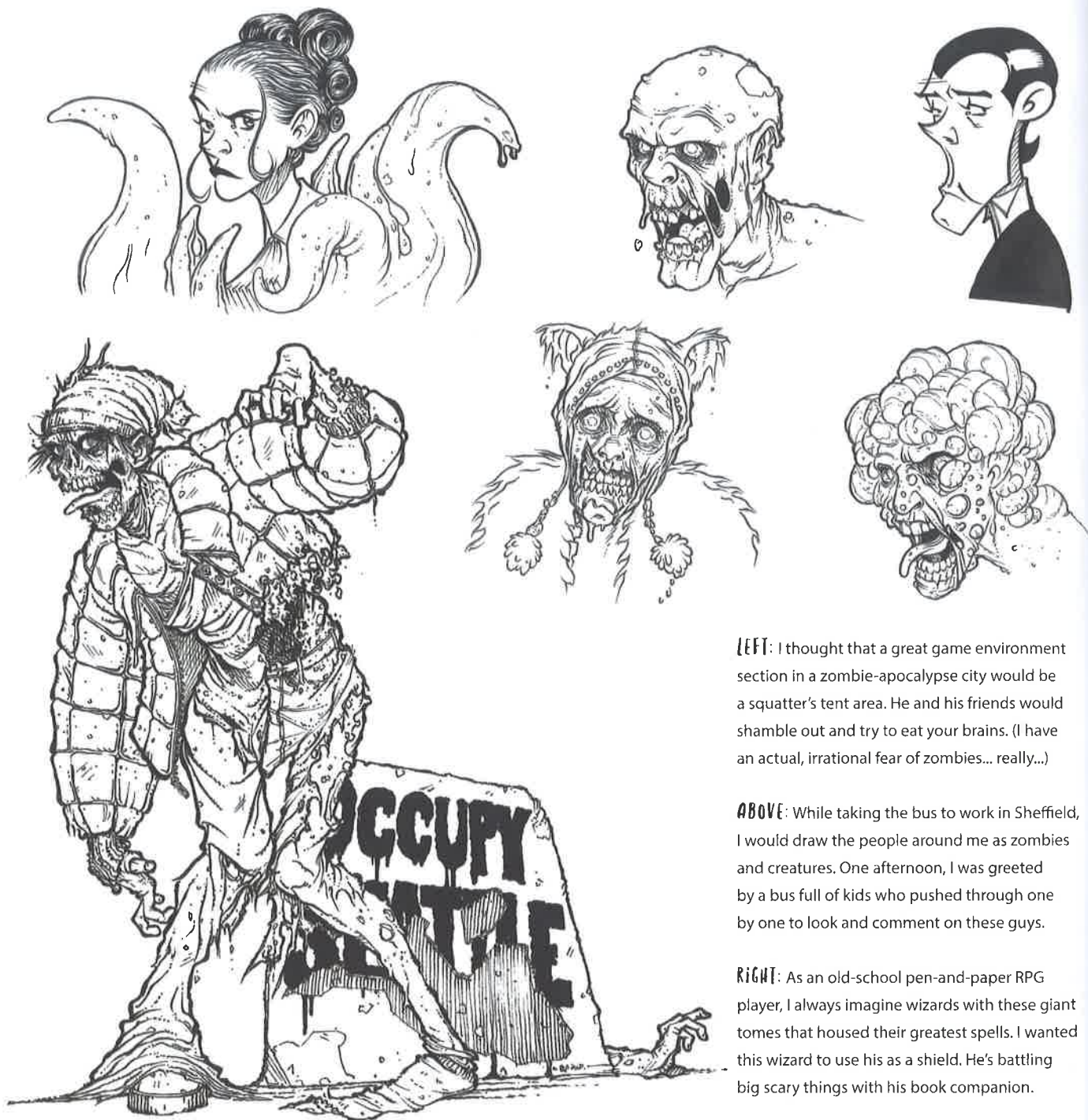


Ink with conviction

With a good pen or brush, understand that the ink will get to the page on its own. Your focus during the inking stage should be making sure your pressure and control are "on point." I let my daughter use one of my pens a while back and she bent the tip from using so much pressure. A good friend of mine later used one of my pens during a drawing session and bent the tip as well. A light touch will still get the ink to the page. Pressure aids in line weights, but excessive force can make your pen bleed, or worse!

Teach and learn

While playing a game of *Street Fighter* an amazingly talented fighter told me that he feels part of his job is to bring more people into the fighting game community. I tend to see the artistic community the same way. I also feel that teaching and learning from each other is extremely beneficial to the community as a whole. I was recently discussing nail polish with a make-up artist who gave me a few great ideas based on how she applies the coats of polish and creates the overall effect.



LEFT: I thought that a great game environment section in a zombie-apocalypse city would be a squatter's tent area. He and his friends would shamle out and try to eat your brains. (I have an actual, irrational fear of zombies... really...)

ABOVE: While taking the bus to work in Sheffield, I would draw the people around me as zombies and creatures. One afternoon, I was greeted by a bus full of kids who pushed through one by one to look and comment on these guys.

RIGHT: As an old-school pen-and-paper RPG player, I always imagine wizards with these giant tomes that housed their greatest spells. I wanted this wizard to use his as a shield. He's battling big scary things with his book companion.



All art is valid

I've worked with many amazing artists in the past – people who have made me want to pack up my pens and shuffle off to flip burgers. As time has passed, I've come to understand that my personal loves and happy-button-pushing imagery isn't for everyone. I can talk for days with zombie enthusiasts, but when I'm at home with my daughters I respect the artists of their favorite cartoons. Our community is a creative one, and we won't all like the same things. When it comes to art and design, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" still rings true. As creators, we need to remember that intolerance towards certain genres of artistic expression doesn't help our community. Embrace your fellow artists!



MASCARÓS, RAMÓN

ramonmascaros.com

All images © Ramón Mascarós

Whenever I talk about myself as an artist, I explain that when I was younger I couldn't draw anything. I was not the typical child who was constantly drawing – I didn't even like it! I couldn't stand the frustration of not being able to understand what I was seeing, or to see what was really happening in front of me. Eventually I understood that the frustration was my desire to comprehend drawing, people, and the world.

I knew quite early on about my interest in the human condition and relationships. I'm always trying to understand people's behavior through their gestures and their non-verbal communication – the way information flows from one person to another. In drawing, I found a wonderful way to explore and research the feelings and emotions of humans and how they work in a social sense.

I draw for a simple reason: to say something, to tell a story, to express feelings. I believe that every picture comprises several concepts by itself, elements that configure it and give it meaning. In every drawing I seek what works as a whole, the sum of its elements, from the general shape to the position and proportions of each part. All of that must support and enhance the final idea. In the end, everything is based on an idea and how you use a language or something else to tell it. Drawing is a language too, so I'm trying to learn every word and how each one works, separately and with others. I want to create a message that grows an idea in the viewers or spectators, that evokes a feeling from inside, that touches them – and for that, I use drawing.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

"Inspiration" is something that, I believe, has martyred artists for generations. I usually talk about it as "motivation" and "energy." It's easier for me to charge energy than search for "inspiration," which is more spiritual. I motivate myself by thinking of what I want to say.





My ideas come from everywhere. Anything can be a reference, and in the end I often don't know how the ideas come. I just try to draw and they end up coming. When I'm feeling blocked, I look for images on the internet (both photos and works of other artists), things on the street, books, and so on. The world is full of characters, too many. Actually, I do not invent anything – all of this is about the desperate research of a small "artist" to reach the greatness of the eternal beauty of nature.

MATERIALS

I've tried many things, but I always return to the simple and honest graphite pencil. Sometimes I also add a mechanical pencil or an ink brush to the formula. On the digital side, I have recently acquired the wonderful Wacom Cintiq, so I'm finally playing with colors and strokes on the computer.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I have different techniques for using pencil. For the first strokes, when I'm searching for shapes and structure, I use the pencil transversely. For the details, I turn it so it is more perpendicular. I don't like to blur the shadows; instead of that, I create a sort of veiling of parallel stripes that overlap each other to create the chiaroscuro that simulates light and volume. I love the mix. By seeking dialog between elements, some of them finished and others insinuated, I create a dance, a balanced composition that leads the viewer between different hidden messages in each drawing. Overall there is always more than meets the eye.

FAR LEFT: When I see my own sketches I realize that I love the things that are inside the character, out of the spectator's view.

NEAR LEFT: Spain had a glorious era in history that was great for paintings, creating a canon for portraiture which remains to this day.

NEAR RIGHT: This guy is based on a light bulb and a children's school bus driver.

MIDDLE TOP RIGHT:

This character lives on a world with weird machines and magic.

FAR TOP RIGHT:

I drew this for Halloween. Occasionally I come back to the same subjects, and witches are a recurrent theme for me!

FIRST BOTTOM RIGHT:

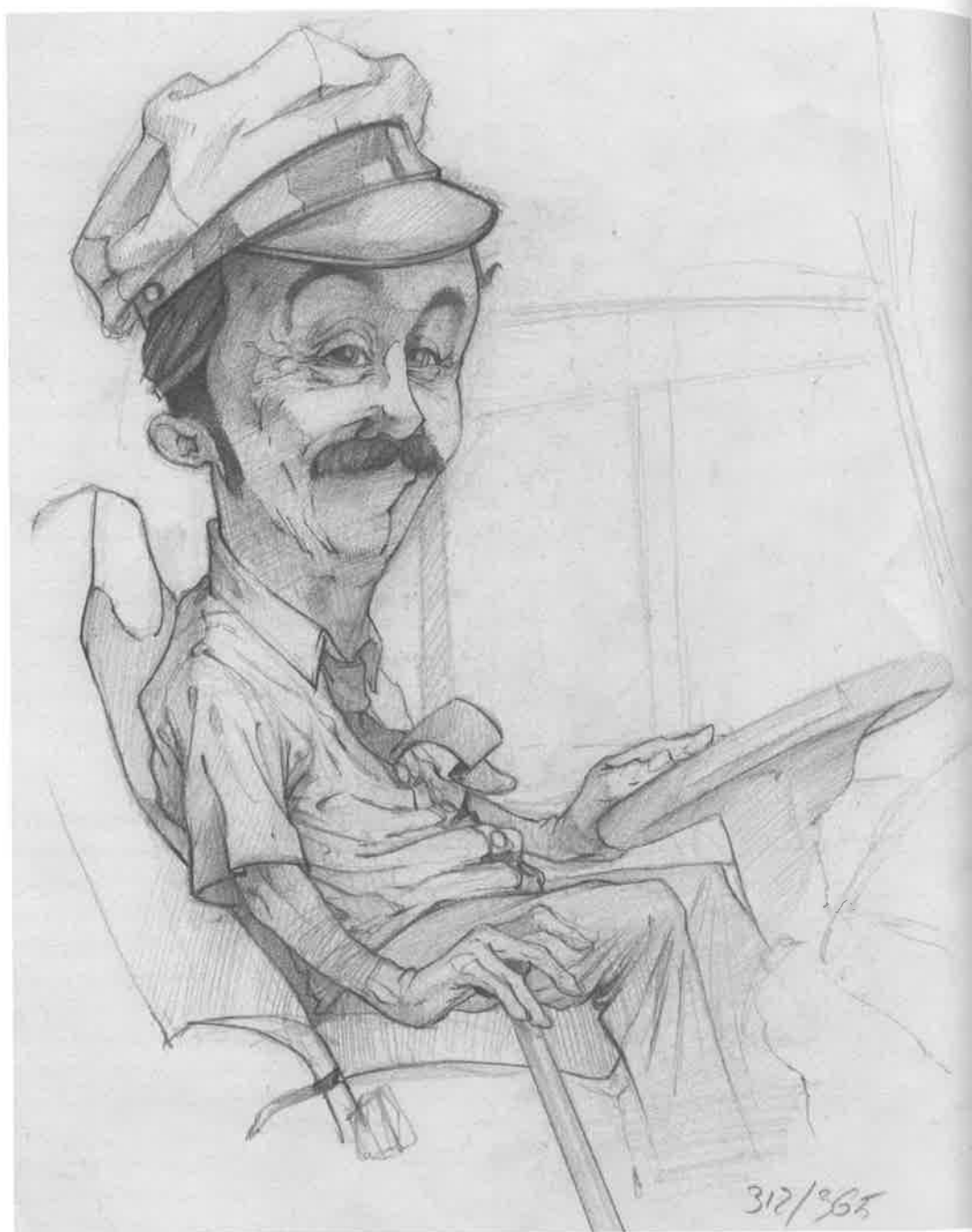
I usually base my sketches on a simple concept or relationship. This character was derived from a little bird. I can see it move as such.

MIDDLE BOTTOM RIGHT:

I love opening gifts. I think there is something special in that exact moment.

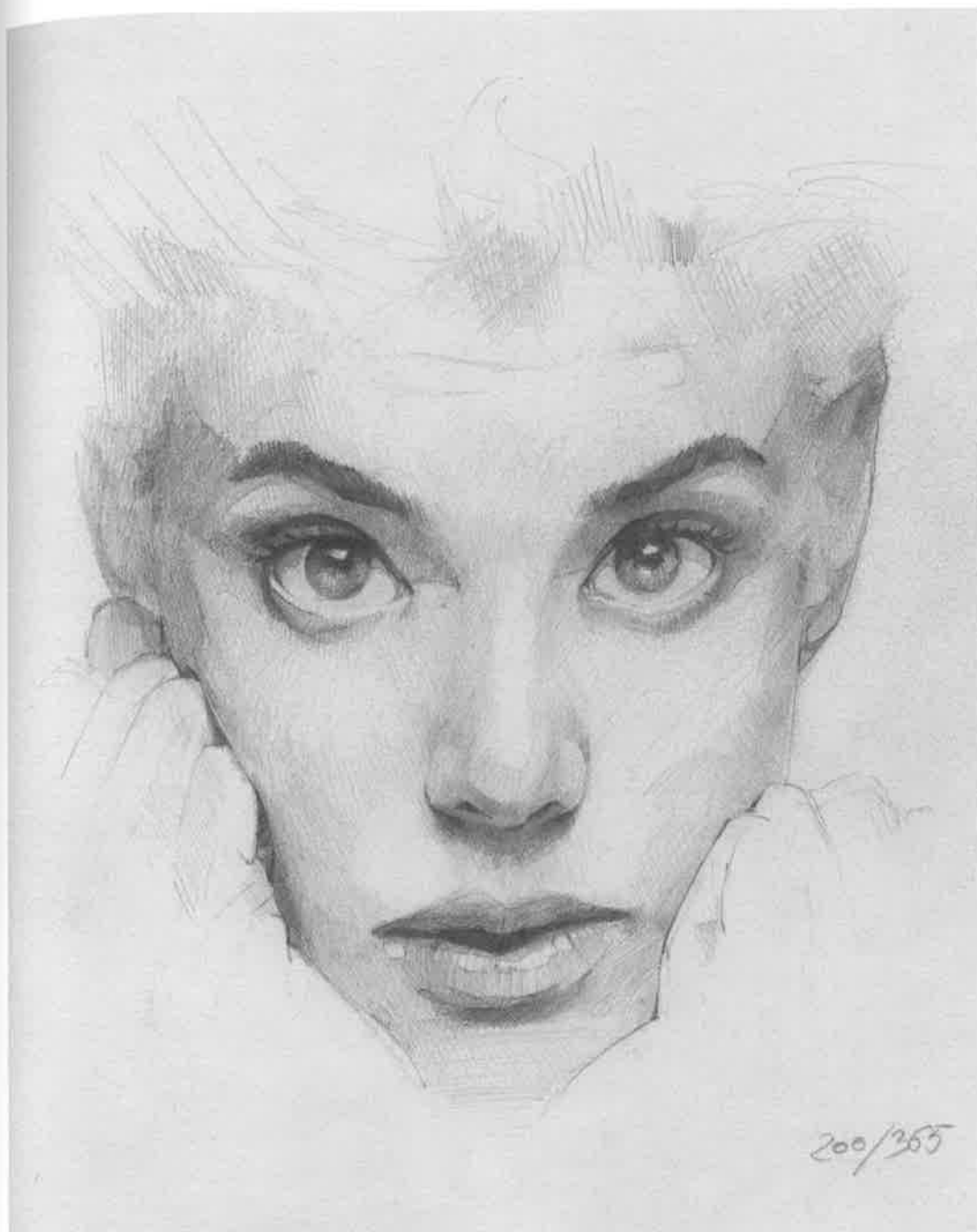
FAR BOTTOM RIGHT:

In this sketch I wanted to show just one of two characters. It's a romantic scene where you can clearly see the interaction. I always fancied this scene as one of those timeless moments in life.









FAR TOP LEFT: I had to sketch a selfie-style picture. I think this is an icon of contemporary society. This character is my hipster par excellence!

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: I'm not a special lover of tattoos, but they can have a powerful visual meaning.

MIDDLE BOTTOM LEFT: For me drawing women has a special appeal. I seek a sensual approach when outlining their curves in pencil, like an erotic dance.

MIDDLE LEFT: The fashion in autumn is the best, okay? I just said it! I like how some girls move their visual weight to the top, creating a tangle of shapes with the hair and scarf. The rest is simple.

NEAR LEFT: Sometimes I just have to draw something with no reason. It says something to me, even if I don't know how to tell it with words.



NIENABER, MICHAELA

artstation.com/artist/mnienaber

All images © Michaela Nienaber

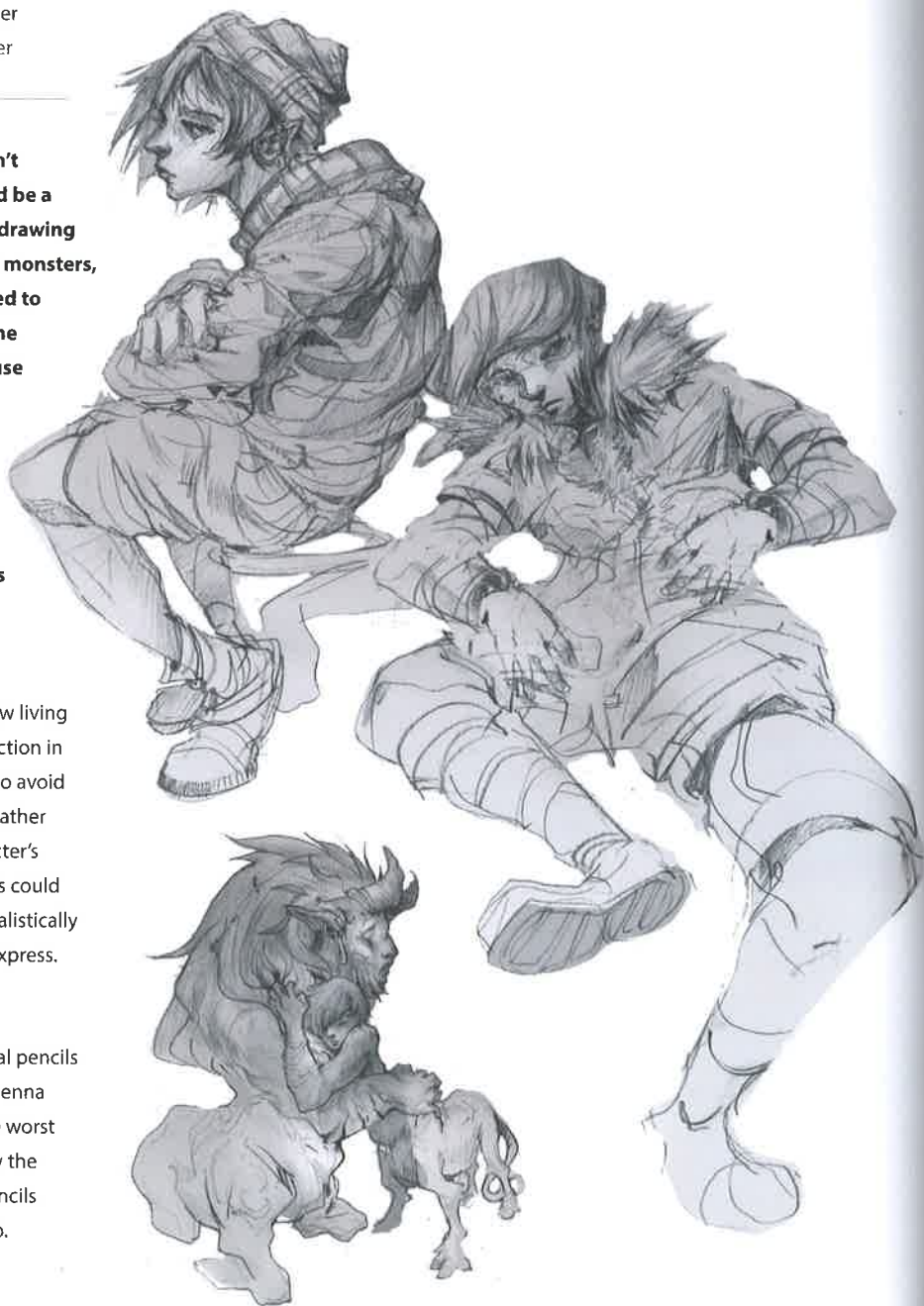
I've always drawn since I was young, but it wasn't until the age of twenty that I believed this could be a viable career path. Growing up, I was all about drawing what I couldn't see in real life: dinosaurs, forest monsters, world peace... (kidding). In grade school I tended to sketch more animals than humans, and someone once asked why. I remember answering, "Because I see people every day." However, as an adult, I became drawn to sketching more simple, endearing moments. Everyone has to eat, sleep, and find ways to fill their time. It is fun to ask yourself how certain characters would do more mundane tasks and what makes them have a personality beyond the obvious.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I have recently found inspiration in considering how living things choose to connect with one another. Interaction in particular is my target, since I used to be the type to avoid hands and feet where possible. At the same time, rather than relying on drawing a smile to convey a character's happiness, I try to consider how the curl of the toes could do the same. I don't fuss over being technical or realistically accurate, I just try to convey the feeling I want to express.

MATERIALS

My materials alternate between 0.3 mm mechanical pencils and pens. The best tool I've painted with is burnt sienna ink paired with a brown Pilot Hi-Tec-C pen, and the worst is probably guacamole. My go-to pens are typically the Zebra Sarasa and SKB brands. I also use colored pencils and sometimes edit a sketch digitally in Photoshop.



SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

One thing I have tried is to just commit straight away in ink; if I mess up, I use correction fluid and keep working it out rather than ideate roughs. This goes entirely against what I was taught but it is simply for the experience itself. The focus isn't on good design *per se*, but to explore how it feels to commit with no safety net and no guide. Every stroke becomes more deliberate.

LEFT: Toned pencil doodles.

RIGHT: Pencil drawing to explore characters and patterns together, toned in Photoshop.





ABOVE: Colored pencil doodles of hyenas and a young dragon.

LEFT: Sketched in red pencil, inked traditionally with pen; a family eating together, though unrelated by blood.

RIGHT: Pencil sketches of humans and creatures interacting.



THIS PAGE: Inked traditionally, this features a girl and her minotaur friend in an eating contest.

RIGHT: These began as contour ink drawings and were taken into Photoshop; I was exploring different poses and movements in characters.





"THE BEST TOOL I'VE
PAINTED WITH IS BURN
SIENNA INK PAIRED WITH A
BROWN PILOT HI-TEC-
PEN, AND THE WORST IS
PROBABLY GUACAMOLE"



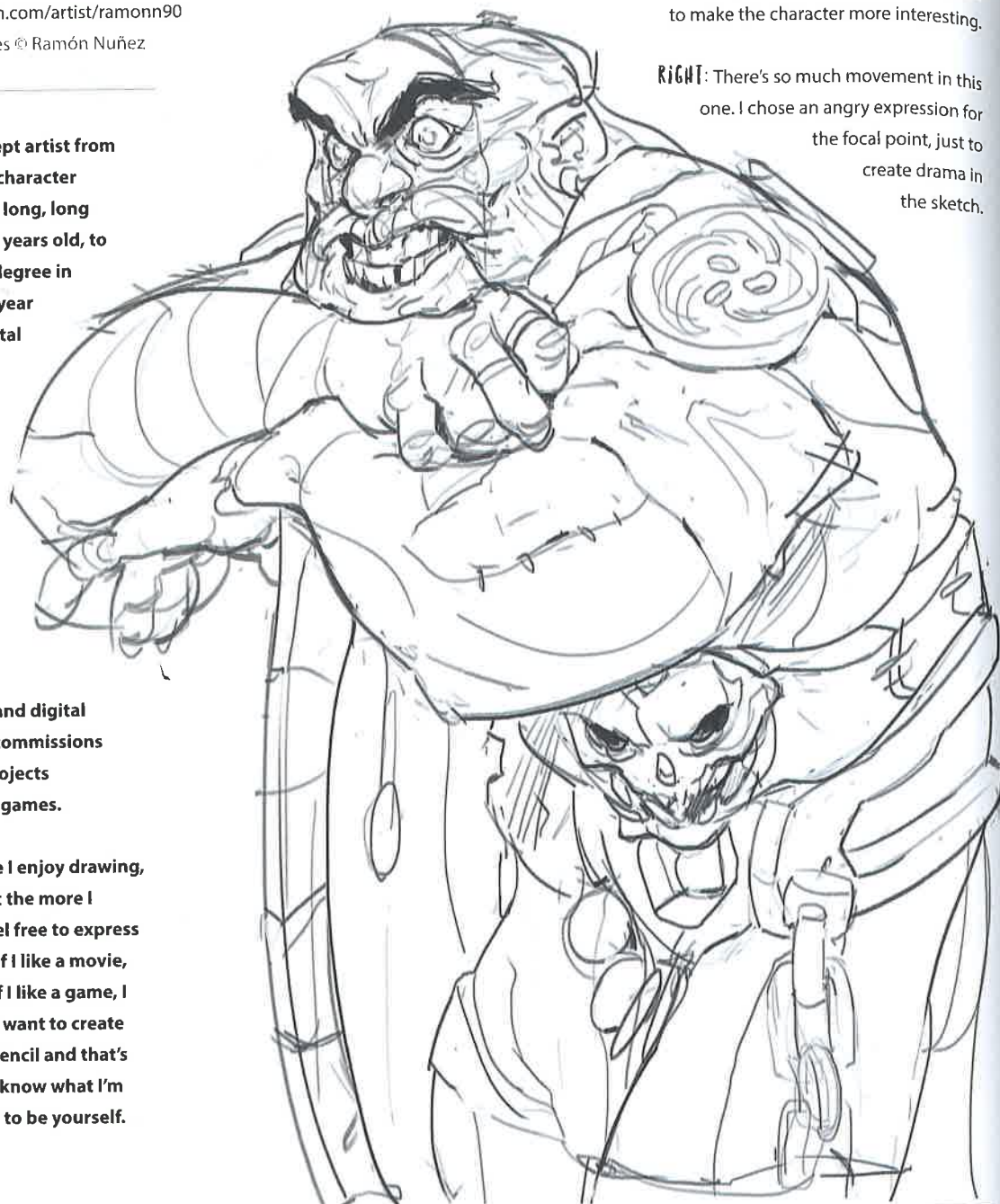
NUÑEZ, RAMÓN

artstation.com/artist/ramonn90

All images © Ramón Nuñez

I'm an illustrator and concept artist from Venezuela, specializing in character design. I started drawing a long, long time ago – when I was four years old, to be precise – and gained a degree in Graphic Design in 2012. A year later I started to study digital painting and illustration; I wanted to improve my rendering and anatomy skills so I created a routine, two or three hours per day, looking for references and studying while I worked as a developer of brands for clothing companies. In 2014 I introduced my portfolio as an illustrator and digital painter and began doing commissions as a freelance artist, for projects including cards and video games.

I sketch every day because I enjoy drawing, it's relaxing, and I feel that the more I draw the more I learn. I feel free to express whatever I find inspiring: if I like a movie, I draw about that movie; if I like a game, I draw some fan art; if I just want to create something, I pick up the pencil and that's it! The people who sketch know what I'm talking about. To sketch is to be yourself.



BELOW: I loved drawing this Viking. I was thinking of a happy or creepy face, just to make the character more interesting.

RIGHT: There's so much movement in this one. I chose an angry expression for the focal point, just to create drama in the sketch.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

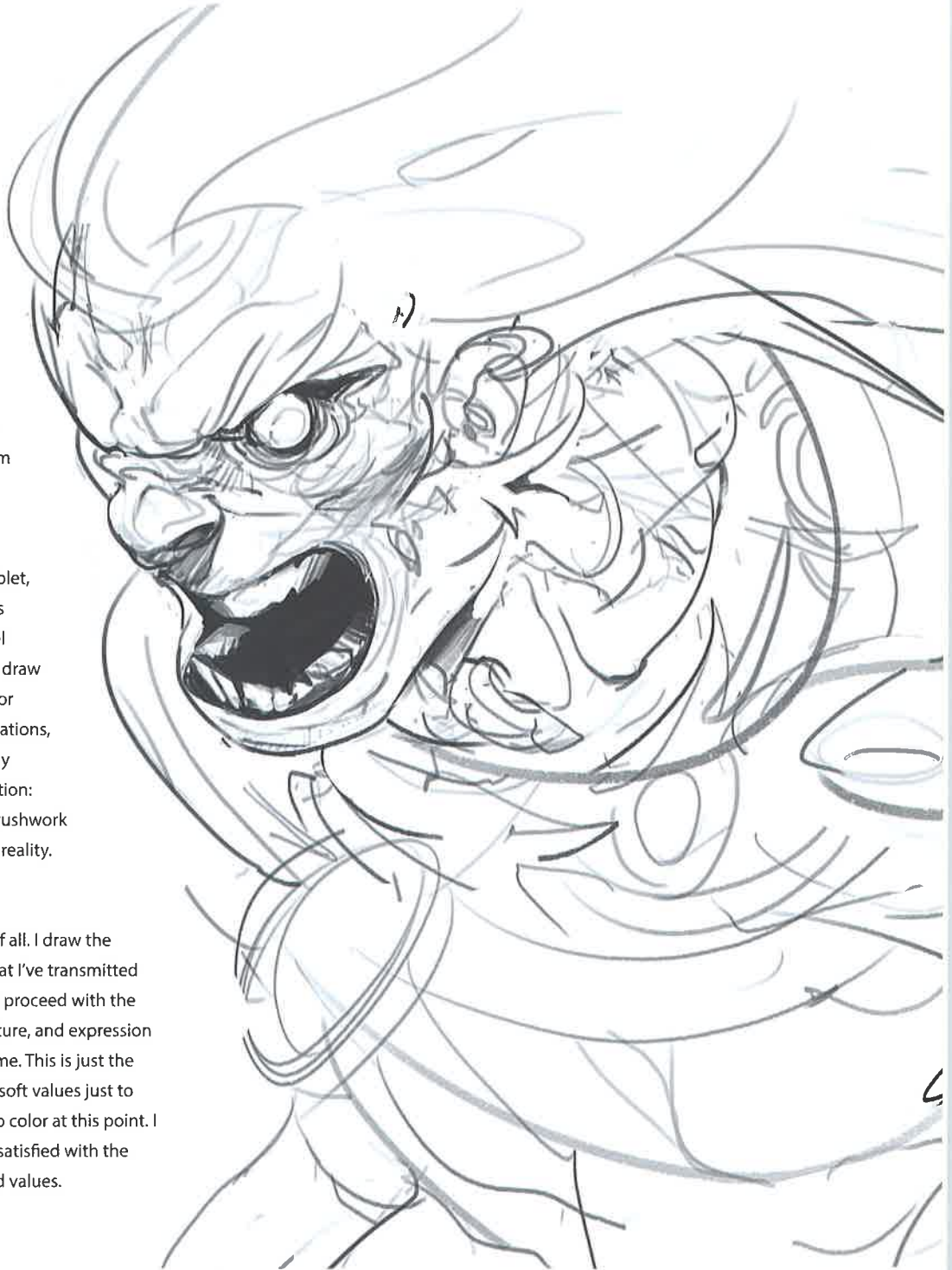
I find inspiration in movies, photography, games, and music. I can also find inspiration looking at other artists' portfolios – when I see something that I like, I try to learn how to do that, which is a good way to stay fresh and escape from your routine. As an artist, I'm always trying to transmit something in my characters, with an expression, color, mood, gesture, light. That's what I'm looking for. Art is about feelings and I try to express them in a simple way – to me, less is more.

MATERIALS

My principal tools are Photoshop, a tablet, and the internet, of course! Sometimes I search for references when I don't feel satisfied with my designs, but mostly I draw from my imagination. Use references for study and produce your own interpretations, don't just copy what you see – anybody can copy. That's the point of simplification: making intelligent decisions in your brushwork or lines which help you to understand reality.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I start with several lines, curves most of all. I draw the head and face first, then when I feel that I've transmitted the right expression for my character, I proceed with the body. I aim to capture movement, gesture, and expression in the figure, and then I add the costume. This is just the drawing stage! If I like the result, I add soft values just to bump up shapes and forms, but still no color at this point. I only add colors at the end when I feel satisfied with the anatomy, pose, expression, design, and values.





LEFT: For this doodle, I used a Fibonacci guideline as a base for the character's pose.

BELOW: I was very bad at drawing female bodies, so I decided to step out of my comfort zone and only draw female characters for a few months.

NEAR RIGHT: A dragon from the depths.

FAR RIGHT: A kind of jungle princess – I had fun drawing the curves of the female character and snake's bodies.



"TO SKETCH IS TO
BE YOURSELF"





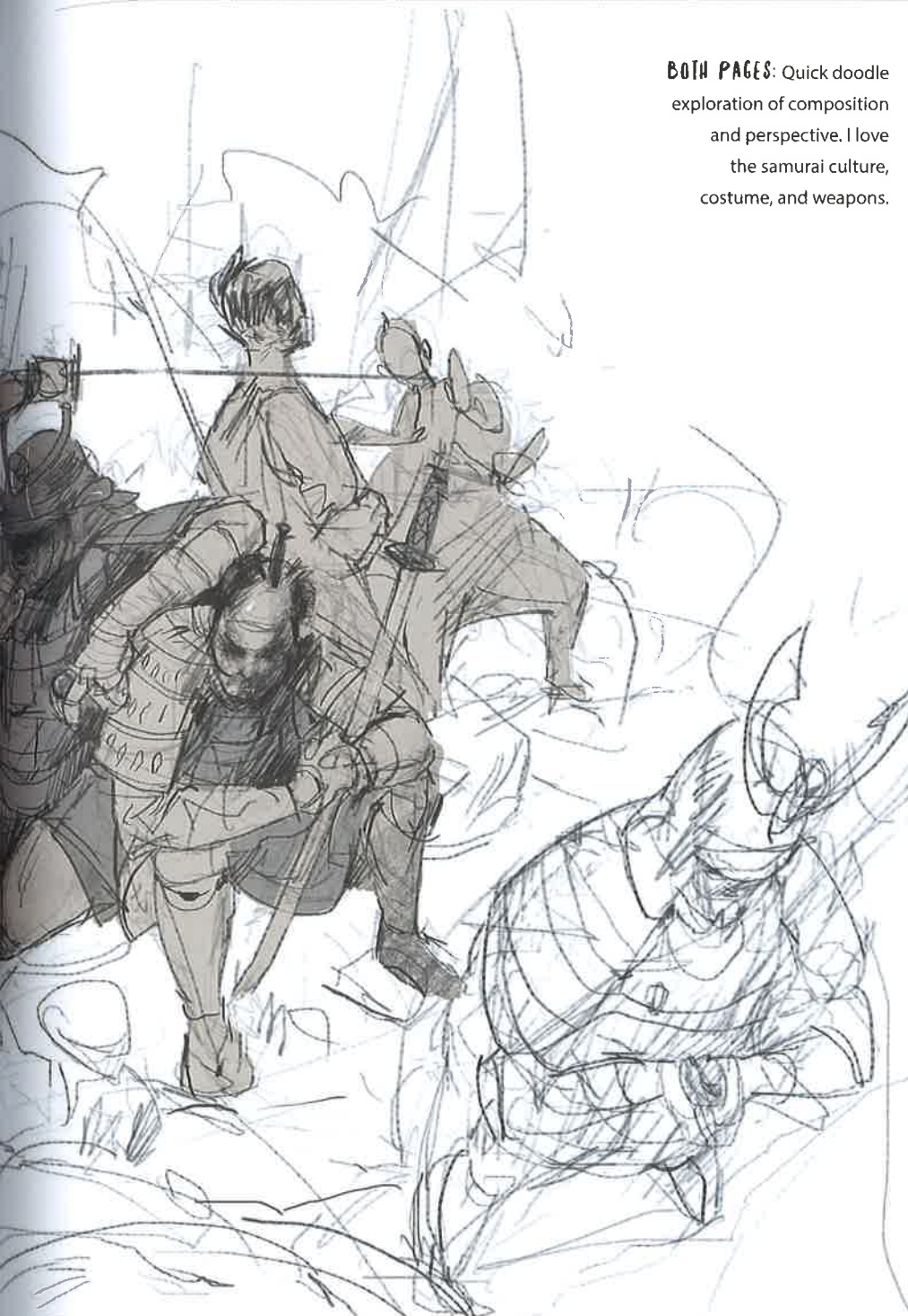
FAR LEFT: This time I was looking for a relaxed expression, and also added some extra fantasy details to the character.

NEAR LEFT: I don't usually draw full-body doodles because I like portraits more, but I wanted to take a different approach with this character.

BELOW: Studying storytelling and body expression, and making volume with just two simple values. Less is more! If you can send the message with a few lines or shapes, that will be enough.







BOTH PAGES: Quick doodle exploration of composition and perspective. I love the samurai culture, costume, and weapons.

Planning and discipline

You can draw whatever you want, but be organized! Make a list of what you need to improve on. As soon as you start to treat art as a serious lifestyle you will reach your goals. Practicing every day is the secret. If you want to be a professional, you must administer your time well, and in two or three years you'll be getting to a good level – but only if you believe in what you're doing and work hard. Studying master artists is a good way to understand the fundamentals; they knew what they were doing, so that's a great way to begin. Good things take time, and it's awesome when you "get it," so never give up.

Explore animation

Animation is hard, but it's a fantastic way to learn about a character's nature. It's not just about costumes; it's more about dynamism, gesture, and expression. You can find a lot of this in animation.

Ask for critique

Sometimes, as an artist, you're closed off to opinions or feedback, and you don't want to see your mistakes. It's good to check your work from another perspective, and ask for critique. You will probably find some new things to improve!



ÖDMARK, OLIVER

oliverodmark.com

All images © Oliver Ödmark

We all have creative blocks sometimes, right? As someone who identifies as an artist and draws a lot I'm gifted at least one fancy hardback sketchbook a year from thoughtful family members. It's obviously a very nice and fitting gift for someone like me, but I struggle with these sketchbooks. There's nothing more intimidating than getting to work on the first page of a sketchbook like this (...well, there is, but we won't go into that here)!

Even subtle and humble all-black sketchbooks scare me. I love the touch and smell of them and I just don't want to get in there and ruin the whole thing with a wonky face or a weird pose! I've finished a couple of sketchbooks back to back but most of them have been left untouched and unspoiled or stuffed down the bottom of the sock drawer after shaming myself and my family name with a bad drawing on the first page.

I may be exaggerating but this kind of thinking has hindered me a lot sometimes, and can mean I just don't seem to get any sketching done at all. A tip I got from a good friend is to get the worst, cheapest sketchbooks you can find, or better yet, just snag some A4 printer paper from the copier and use that as your sketchbook. This is a great way to overcome that nasty hump we might face every now and then. Mama Ödmark now has a steady supply of drawings on A4 paper to put on the fridge door.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Living in London has been great in terms of inspiration and ideas for characters. Every day I see so many funky and original people that just go straight into the reference folder in my head. I was designing some space pirates for fun once and I literally just had to take a walk to my local supermarket and back home to get a bunch of new ideas.

MATERIALS

As suggested in my introduction, my favorite way of working is on simple and cheap sketchbooks, or just copier paper, merely because that's how I get the most work done! Most of my pen and paper drawings are done with any old mechanical pencil or brush-tip pen. I'm not too fussed. Anything will do. I also work digitally sometimes.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

The more confidently and relaxed I draw, the better the results will be. Obviously I'm not always in that state, so when I'm feeling like a stiff coward, I've usually just got to warm up properly and pump out some bad sketches before I start having fun with it!

LEFT: Drawing characters in motion is great for practice, and a good sense of weight is one of the most important things in any drawing.

RIGHT: Just putting down your pen and letting it wander can be a great way to start off a sketching session. Sooner or later you'll find some interesting shapes that you can pounce on.





LEFT: These are some line drawings of a line-up of characters. They are all portraits of friends of mine in a dystopian future setting.

BELOW: A digital character sketch.

RIGHT: Another kind of drawing I like to do when I'm getting comfortable, where I don't have to focus on anatomy and proportions too much.

FAR RIGHT: A design can have a lot of character even with a subtle and more down-to-earth approach.

"JUST PUTTING DOWN YOUR PEN AND LETTING IT WANDER CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO START OFF A SKETCHING SESSION"



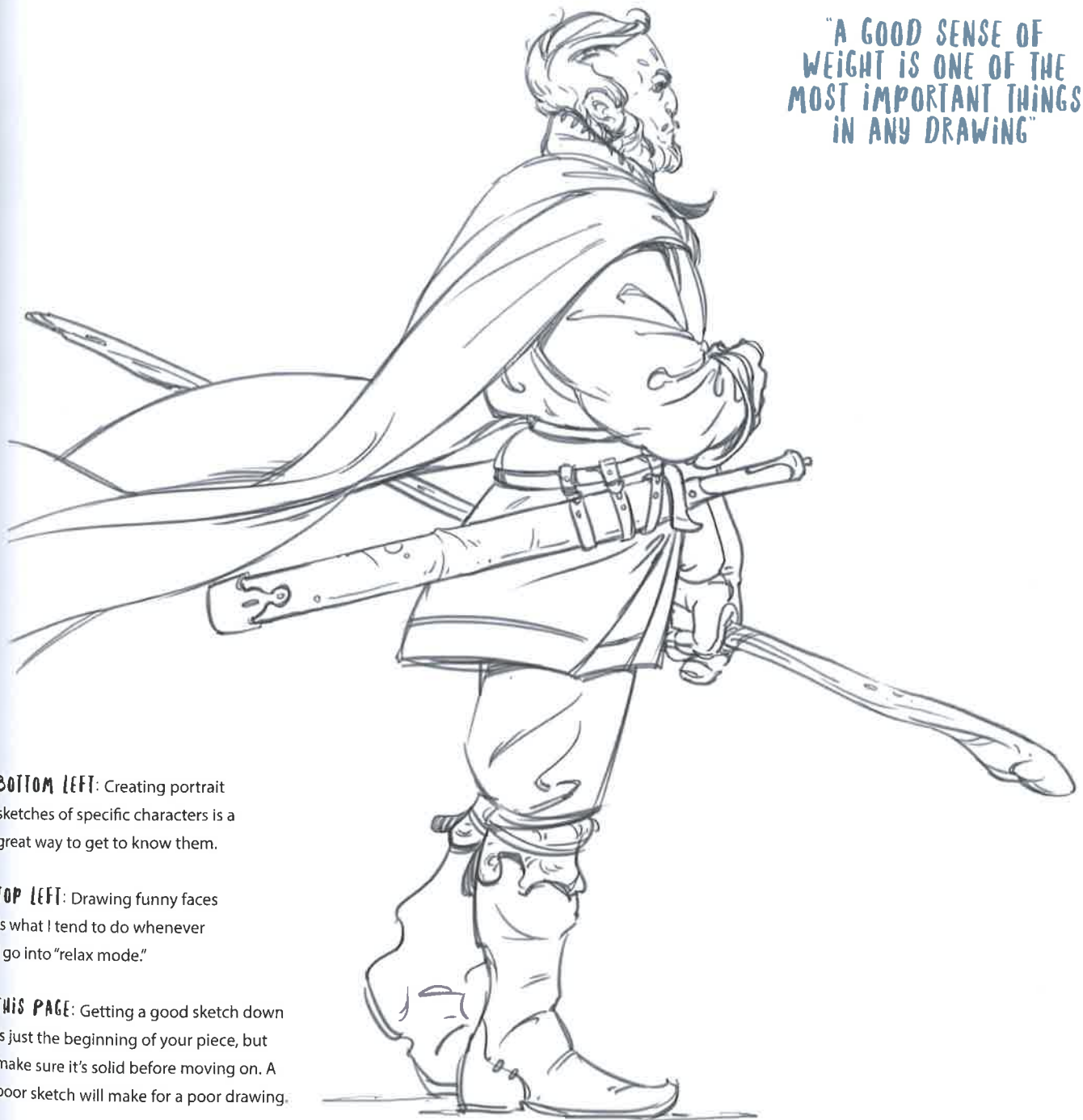
A sketch is just a sketch

Always remember, a sketch is just a sketch. If you become too precious with it, then what good is it? You need to let loose all those weaker ideas before you find your really good ones by drawing them out. Try all kinds of things. Be brave when sketching and never mind if the result is not great – you are just experimenting and trying different things out! One of your lesser drawings and designs might have some elements that you can pick up and develop further, so try to be as varied as you can in the beginning.



**"GETTING A GOOD SKETCH DOWN
IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF
YOUR PIECE, BUT MAKE SURE
IT'S SOLID BEFORE MOVING ON.
A POOR SKETCH WILL MAKE
FOR A POOR DRAWING"**

"A GOOD SENSE OF
WEIGHT IS ONE OF THE
MOST IMPORTANT THINGS
IN ANY DRAWING"



BOTTOM LEFT: Creating portrait sketches of specific characters is a great way to get to know them.

TOP LEFT: Drawing funny faces is what I tend to do whenever I go into "relax mode."

THIS PAGE: Getting a good sketch down is just the beginning of your piece, but make sure it's solid before moving on. A poor sketch will make for a poor drawing.



PARK, YEWON

yewon-park.info

All images © Yewon Park

I am a professional artist who specializes in concept and visual development, with diverse job experience in games, TV, and animation. I love to create and design something new and see how my new creations react with each other.

I grew up in South Korea. Even if I never thought of being an artist, I always liked to draw and read manga as a kid. Years later, animations and Japanese cartoons still fascinated me, and I finally decided to become an artist in the animation field. I applied to an animation school in Korea, but I didn't feel quite right about their curricula. After one semester, I dropped out of that school and applied to the ArtCenter College of Design in the US. I knew it would take a lot of money and time, but I wanted to challenge myself and prove that I wasn't wrong.

I graduated from the ArtCenter College of Design with an emphasis on entertainment arts. While studying there, I experienced lots of things: I have worked on many group projects that taught me how to cooperate and communicate with a team; I also learned how to develop a fast sketching technique, and how to multi-task and organize my assignments. It really improved my skills in creating backgrounds and characters as a visual development artist.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I get a lot of inspiration from Japanese comic book artists, and artists from Disney and Pixar. I grew up with movies such as *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, and *Aladdin*. All of these things influenced me a lot. In addition, I'm always inspired by current artists, such as Mingjue Helen Chen, Dice Tsutsumi, Ryan Lang, Mathias Verhasselt, and Jeff Turley. There are tons of things in the world that you can try to see to inspire you – you never know how something will influence you and change your mind about something. Experiencing new things like traveling will bring great influences to your artwork.

MATERIALS

I used to use mostly traditional materials such as pen and colored pencils. Currently,



I mostly use Photoshop for sketching because it speeds up my work process and makes it easier to make adjustments.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

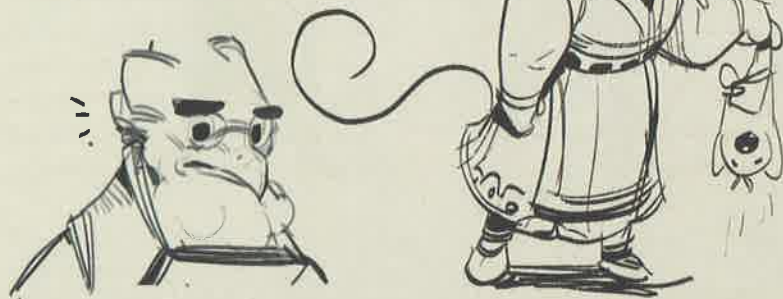
I break objects down into their most simplistic forms, always considering the proportion of characters. I try to push the acting and storytelling in my images, and utilize my content, posing, staging, and color in harmony to fully achieve and portray what I want the audience to feel.

BOTH PAGES: Digital sketches of Athena for a project based on *The Odyssey*.





"YOU NEVER KNOW HOW
SOMETHING WILL INFLUENCE
YOU AND CHANGE YOUR
MIND ABOUT SOMETHING.
EXPERIENCING NEW THINGS LIKE
TRAVELING WILL BRING GREAT
INFLUENCES TO YOUR ARTWORK"





TOP LEFT: Exploratory sketches for Momo, a character born from a peach.

BOTTOM LEFT: Sketching ideas for other characters in the story of Momo.

ABOVE: Apina, a monkey character who becomes Momo's companion.

RIGHT: Various drawings of Koira, a dog character in a project named *Poika*.





ABOVE: Different sketch ideas for a character, the Marsh King.

BELOW: I needed to design an Asian dragon with diverse shapes and personality.

RIGHT: Digital sketches of Odysseus for a project based on *The Odyssey*.







POLIAKOVA, MARIA

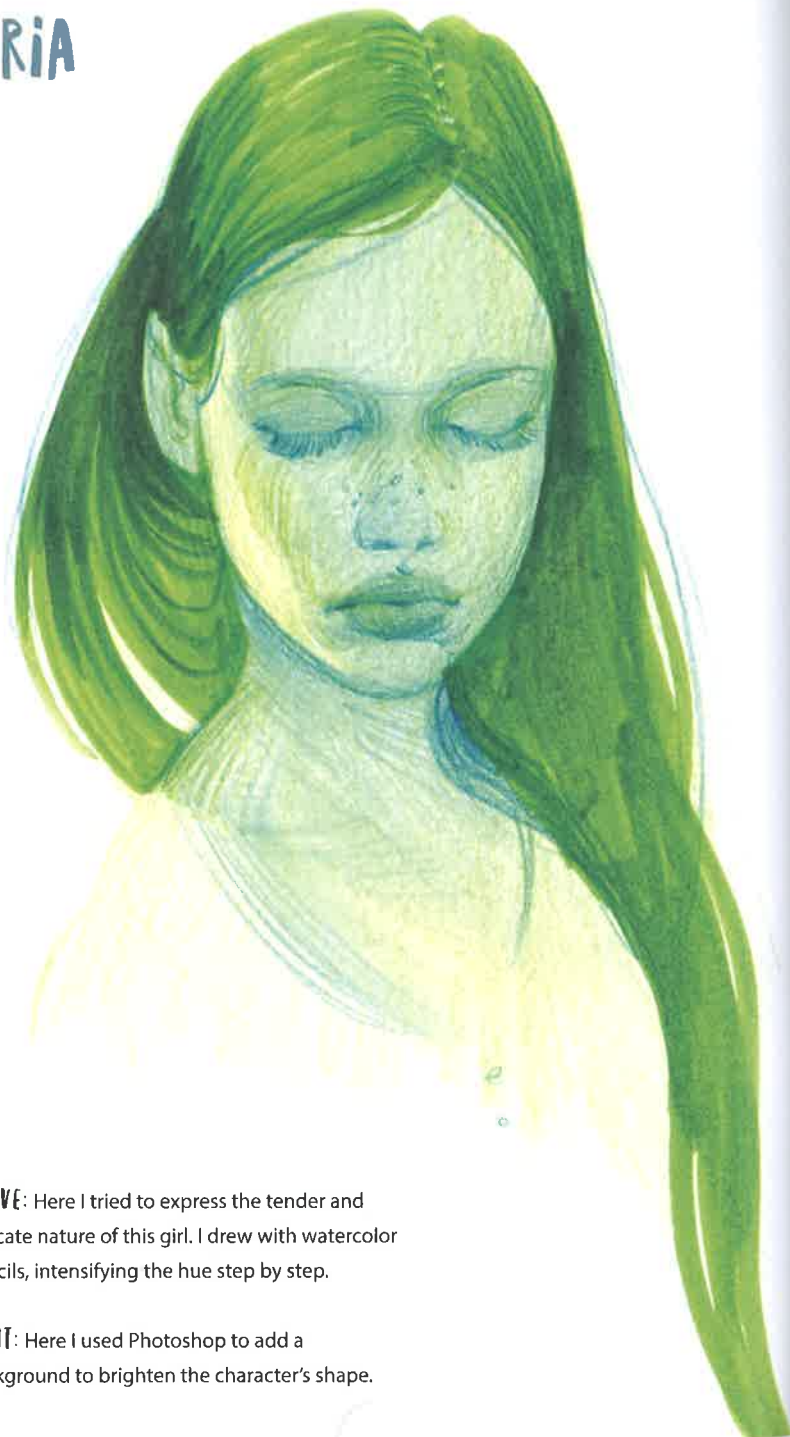
artstation.com/artist/tubikraski

All images © Maria Poliakova

I'm a CG artist – my work is my hobby, and vice versa. I've been addicted to drawing since my childhood. That is why I enrolled on a graphic arts course at the National Technical University of Ukraine, where I discovered and learned about academic drawing. Outside my classes, I kept a sketchbook for myself and drew literally everywhere: at home, in cafés, and during my commute on the subway. Looking at my old sketchbook, I am pleased to see how my drawing has improved, and glad to remember the places I have visited.

I adore studying human faces, bodies, and poses, and trying to capture them with fast sketches. During my trip abroad, I filled my sketchbook with impressions and things I wanted to remember. After some time I discovered the CG world, became passionate about studying digital art, and actually stopped using my sketchbook.

I then decided to take part in the online community event InkTober. I never thought that it would be so exciting! It feels so cool to use mediums like liquid ink, markers, and pencils on paper. After several years of studying digital art, I draw more confidently and can now express my ideas freely. I experimented a lot during InkTober, not only with ink, but gouache, watercolor, markers, colored inks, charcoal, and even the dry-wipe markers from my school days. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to paint every day, but the main thing is that InkTober reminded me of my sketchbook, and I continued to paint in it regularly afterwards.



ABOVE: Here I tried to express the tender and delicate nature of this girl. I drew with watercolor pencils, intensifying the hue step by step.

RIGHT: Here I used Photoshop to add a background to brighten the character's shape.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Anything can become an inspiration for me. I have noticed that ideas come much more easily if I draw constantly, so now I always take my small sketchbook wherever I go to capture my concepts on paper at any time and in any place. However, if I am not inspired at all, I receive creative energy from sources such as nature, the human body, photos, and the works of other artists. I just take time to look through artists' works and photos; sometimes I take photos during strolls to capture beautiful moments. Usually, these sources give me interesting ideas.

MATERIALS

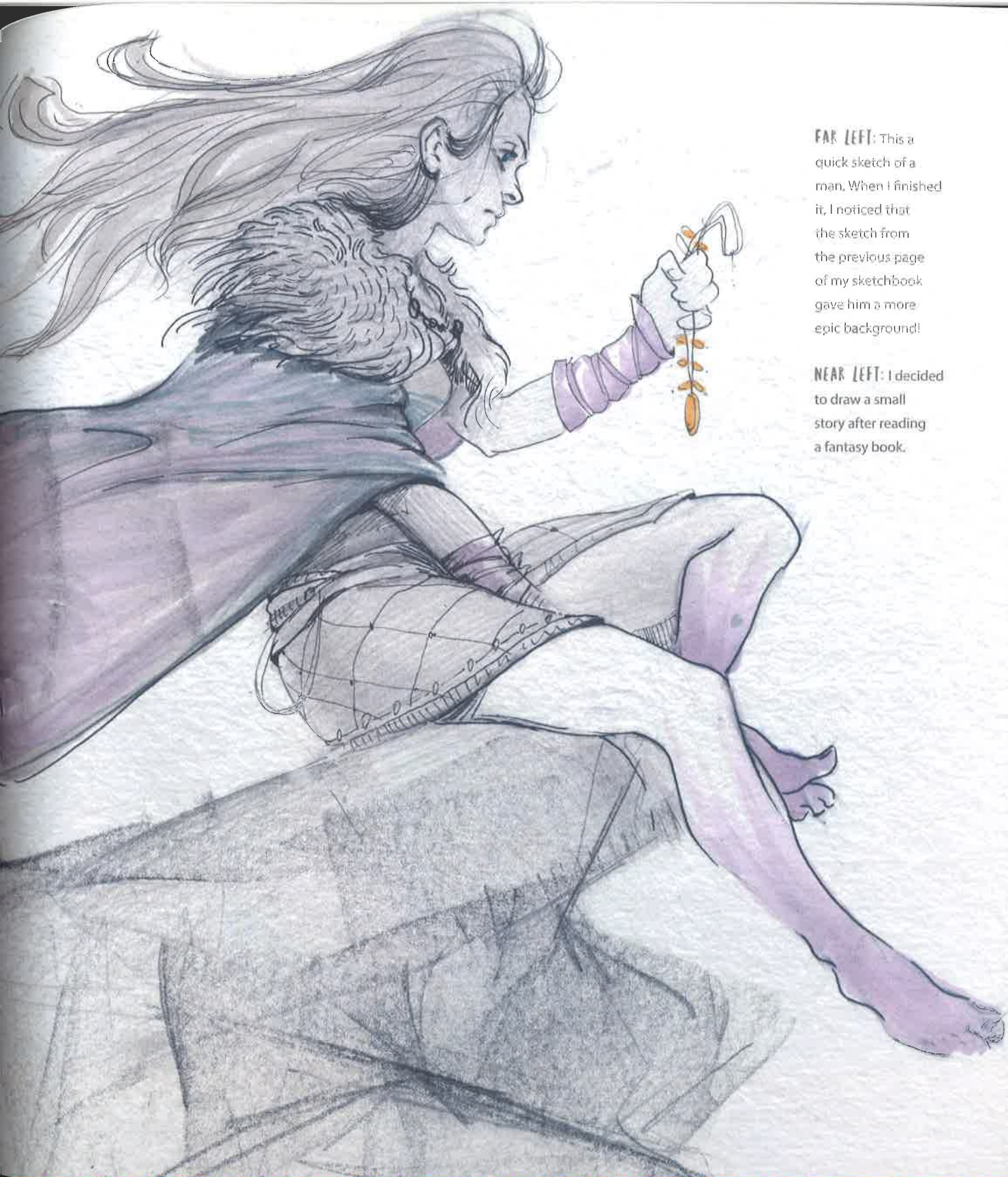
I like to experiment with different drawing materials, even turning their disadvantages to my advantage. For example, if my marker is dry and draws poorly, I don't throw it away – it might be useful for drawing dry grass or a midtone. My favorite materials are watercolor pencils, watercolors, and markers. With their help, I can make juicy, colorful sketches. Recently I've enjoyed using gouache as well; its thick texture helps to mimic volume in drawings.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I have a small plain notepad where I make rough sketches and finalize my thumbnail concepts. After my ideas are captured, I take a big sketchbook and outline them with a pencil (so I can easily erase the bad strokes). My next step is to select an appropriate material; when that choice is made, I start to work with bigger planes, systematically moving to details.







FAR LEFT: This a quick sketch of a man. When I finished it, I noticed that the sketch from the previous page of my sketchbook gave him a more epic background!

NEAR LEFT: I decided to draw a small story after reading a fantasy book.



Always experiment

For me it is always interesting to take different materials and ask myself whether they are suitable for drawing. Once, I was relaxing outdoors and realized that I had forgotten my pencil. So I took some coal from a place where there had been a campfire, and started to draw on the concrete path. I made an interesting texture that day!

Such approaches can be used in your sketchbook. What would happen if you applied water to the paper and drew on it with a dry marker? What if you drew with watercolor pencils first, then continued with gouache and added details with a liner? How about coloring the whole sheet with diluted ink and drawing on top of that with a Copic marker? Such experiments help you to grow professionally, and are always interesting and fun.

LEFT: An awkward forest creature. I used a black frame to organize the composition.

RIGHT: I wanted to draw something bright, so I used watercolor and water-soluble pencils.



NEAR RIGHT: I like to draw women's hair with ink, achieving big, graceful shapes as a result.

FAR RIGHT:
Gray marker, ink, and the white sketchbook page helped me to focus on massive shapes and to depict the "air."







RICHARD, HUGO

artstation.com/artist/hugo-richard

All images © Hugo Richard

I usually use my sketchbook with no expectation at all. I think it definitely helps to not think about making a “good” and “pretty” drawing, but to focus on testing new ideas. For me, my sketchbook is a place where I can commit mistakes without judgement and have the freedom to try as hard as I can.

I think I’m really good at not giving up on things – and that includes everything in my life, whether it’s a simple sketch or a really elaborate piece that I’ve been working on for over a week. This way of thinking has brought me to where I am today; I’ve been working in the video game industry for over three years now, and on that path I’ve had the chance to meet lots of great and creative artists with unique and genuine styles. If there’s something that I’ve been trying to achieve during these past few years, it’s been to push my style to another level.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

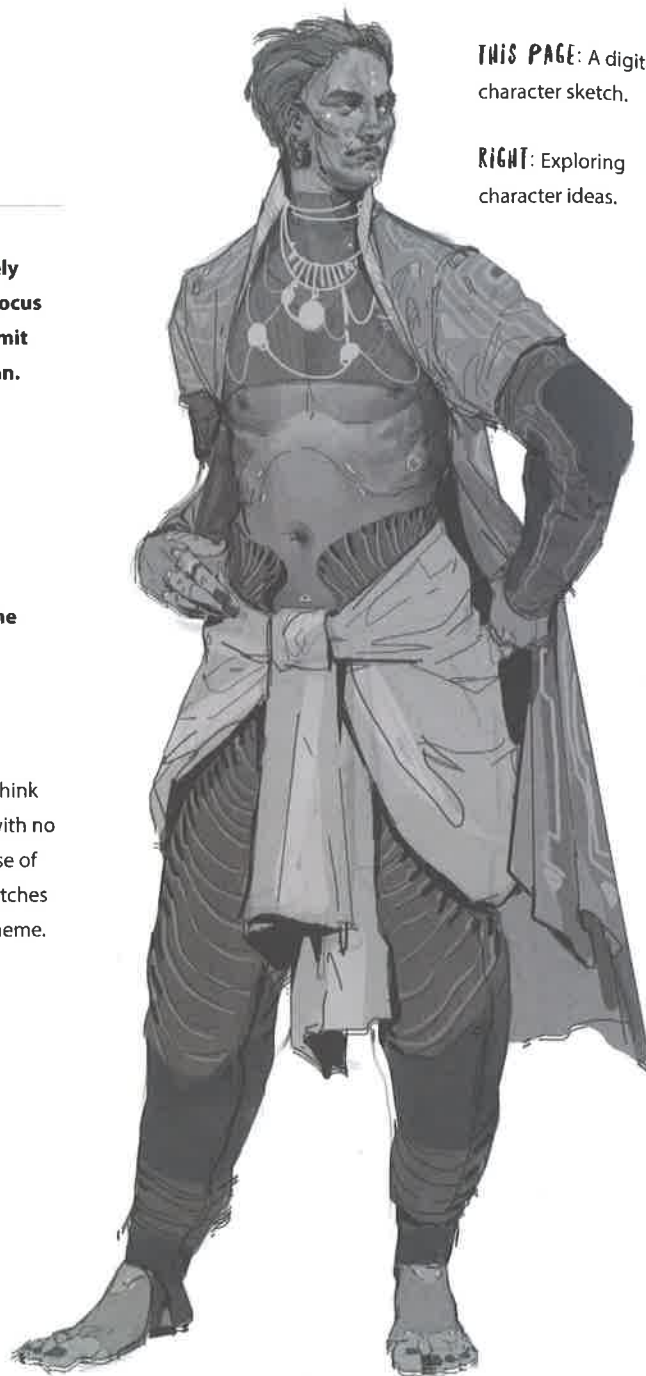
Most of my inspiration comes from African, Chinese, and ancient cultures. I think it’s fascinating how people developed their own visual language and style with no references at the time. I try to capture and explore that idea, giving that sense of culture, expression, and emotion to my creations. The mix of new and old catches my attention a lot, so I probably tend to work on more drawings with that theme.

MATERIALS

I used to use pencils and ink pens for my sketches, but then I decided to use only ink pens. Why? Because it makes me think more before drawing. Now I spend as much time as possible thinking about shapes, lines, and how to represent them in a clear way.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I don’t think I have a specific technique for my sketches that I can share with you, but there’s one book that I really appreciate and that has helped me a lot: *Charles Bargue Drawing Course*. I think the way he teaches you to observe the human body as a shape, including light and shadow, is really effective, and he’s had a really big influence on my sketching technique.



THIS PAGE: A digital character sketch.

RIGHT: Exploring character ideas.





THIS PAGE: Ideas for some soldiers with sci-fi elements.

NEAR RIGHT: Exploring ideas for costume design.

FAR RIGHT: A sci-fi exploration character based on Greek mythology.

"I TRY TO CAPTURE AND EXPLORE
THAT IDEA, GIVING THAT SENSE
OF CULTURE, EXPRESSION, AND
EMOTION TO MY CREATIONS"





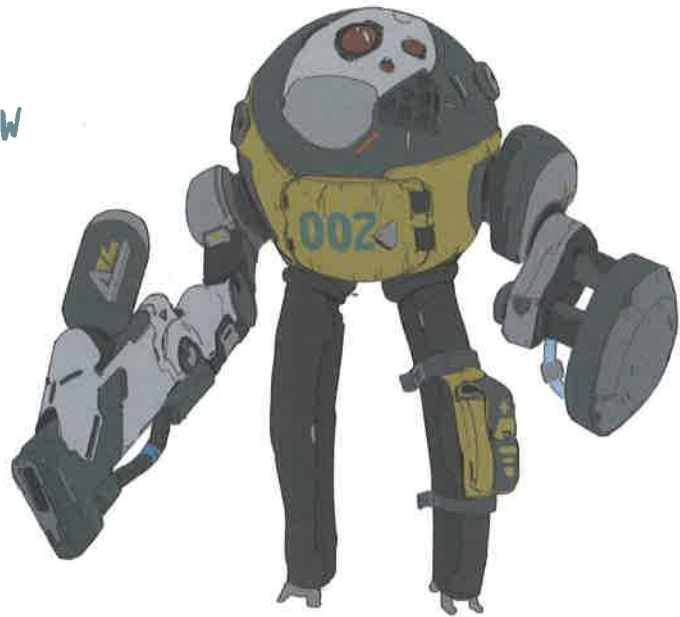
"I SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE
THINKING ABOUT SHAPES, LINES, AND HOW
TO REPRESENT THEM IN A CLEAR WAY"

LEFT PAGE: Characters for my *Ghoul* project.

RIGHT: I had fun sketching ideas for this
character – another sci-fi soldier.

BELOW: A digital robot character design.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Exploring some ideas for a
guardian based in a steampunk world.





STUPECKA, KASIA

artstation.com/artist/kasiaslupecka

All images © Kasia Stupecka

decided that I wanted to be an artist quite late, when I was around twenty years old. I come from Bydgoszcz in Poland, and I've always loved drawing but no one in my life was supportive of it. I studied industrial design but knew it wasn't my field, so during my last year I decided I wanted to work as an artist for the entertainment industry. I've always enjoyed comics, video games, and animation; my interest was especially sparked after I watched *Dragon Ball* as a kid.

Sketch because I like to be creative; I like to be original and let my imagination flow. When I go out I always take my sketchbook with me so that I am prepared to sketch something interesting. When I'm not drawing I'm trying to keep up with the newest anime or play my Nintendo games.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

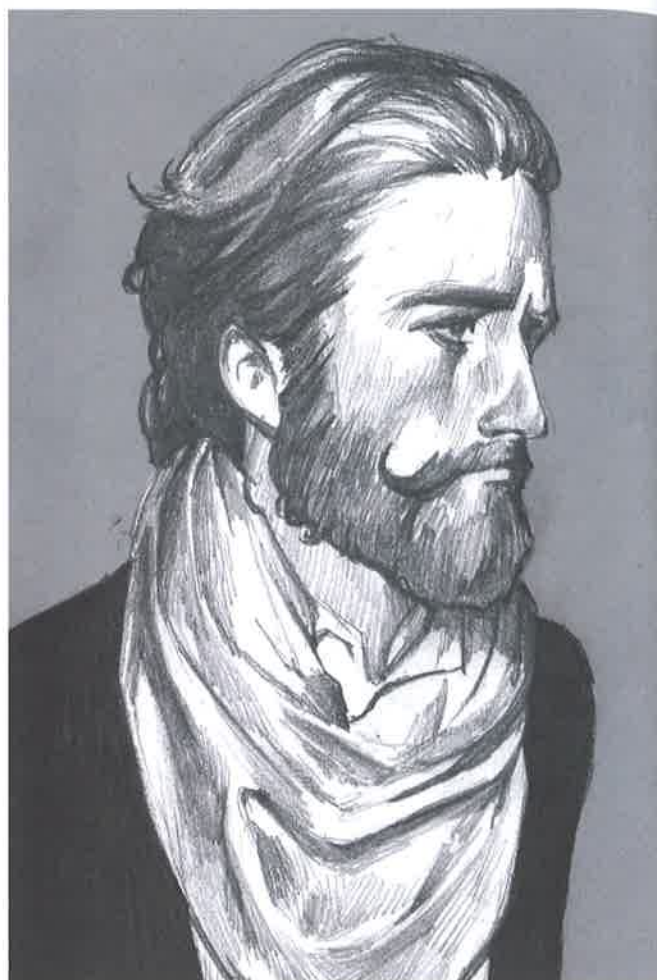
I try to get inspiration from a wide variety of sources. My favorite animation is *Princess Mononoke*, my favorite video game is *Dragon Age: Origins*, and my favorite comic is *Sin City*. I am inspired by stories I listen to, by fairy tales, by TV shows I watch. But I mostly use history as my inspiration. Historical design and inventions can be really surprising, and there's a lot to learn from them. My favorite historical period is the medieval period – exploring and learning about armor is especially fun for me. I recommend that everyone goes to museums to find great references.

MATERIALS

I use graphite pencils, a Moleskine sketchbook, and blending stumps. I like the quality and soft tint of Moleskine paper, and I like how graphite smudges on the pages and gives a more realistic look.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

My sketching techniques are fairly simple. In the beginning I use a 2H pencil, starting with light lines to get a good base. On top of that, I use

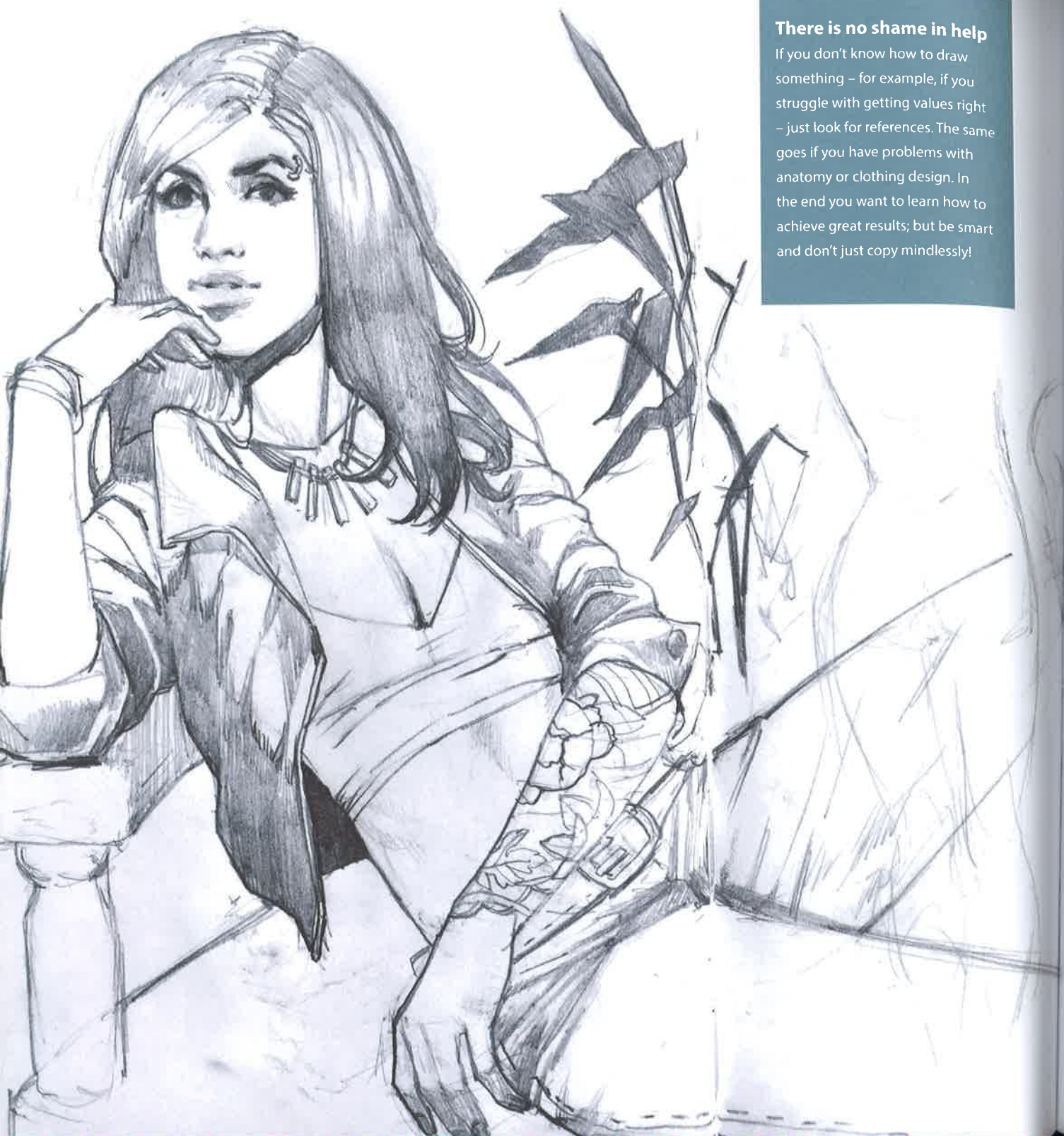


pencils that are softer and leave darker marks on the paper. Finally, I use a blending stump to achieve pleasing values for my character, defining the line between light and shadow and then smudging it with the stump.

ABOVE: A pencil sketch with some digital touches.

RIGHT: I think these characters were created after I watched the TV series *Vikings*. I usually feel the urge to draw something after I watch a TV show or play a video game.





There is no shame in help

If you don't know how to draw something – for example, if you struggle with getting values right – just look for references. The same goes if you have problems with anatomy or clothing design. In the end you want to learn how to achieve great results; but be smart and don't just copy mindlessly!



Copy the masters

If you want to learn how to draw something, look at artists you like. Be inspired by how they draw fabric, faces, bodies, creatures, and so on. In the beginning you can copy them, then later you will find what you like the most. Let it stick with you. Pick and choose what you like from other people and create your own style to stand out from the crowd.

LEFT: My favorite subjects are probably women – I like to draw badass, beautiful women. This is the type of spontaneous sketch that I like to do between work.

ABOVE: I draw a lot of random heads and people. After I gather multiple sketches like this, I like to put them in one file.



SUAREZ, FERNANDA

fernandasuarez.carbonmade.com

All images © Fernanda Suarez 2016

I have been in love with drawing my whole life. It was a clear decision for me to choose art as my career. While I was studying arts, I discovered the world of digital art. Since that moment I have been developing professionally in that field, but have never stopped drawing and sketching on paper on the side.

I dare to say that sketching with pencil is my favorite thing to do. I love the rawness of it. There is something really honest and open about it; the weight of a line can tell so much.

I love trying to capture a fraction of a moment in an expression: every small detail in a face that shows what's happening inside, telling a story just with a look in the character's eyes. I am quite fascinated by people and portraits. Nobody is the same; there are endless universes inside each individual, and drawing that makes me very happy.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My main inspiration has always been music. I just love to sit, put on some music, and imagine stories with it. I create characters around what the music makes me feel. I can close my eyes and images pop into my head, like a movie. From there I try to somehow put that onto paper. It doesn't have to be perfect or super polished. For me, sketching is all about freedom; I do it for myself because it gives me such joy.

MATERIALS

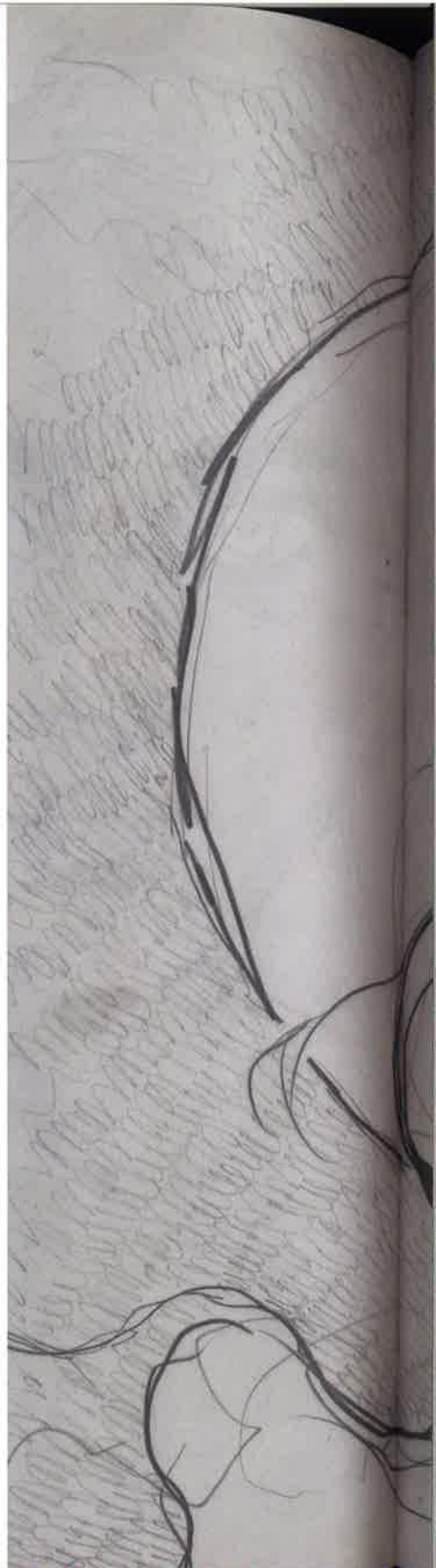
I have a Moleskine sketchbook because I like my paper to be thin and not have too much texture. I also use regular graphite pencils (usually 2B, 3B, 4B, and 6B), a 0.5 mm mechanical pencil for details, and an eraser. I incorporate charcoal pencil sometimes, too – I like to smudge it in certain areas to give a greater sense of dimension.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I start with loose lines, nothing too structured, just to map the basic forms and composition. I really love seeing the layers of lines upon lines in a drawing, so I don't erase very much. I usually smudge those first lines a bit, so they look softer. Then I go in with a stronger pressure and start to draw more defined lines, and also begin adding the details. If I want to adjust or change something I usually draw on top of the lines, without erasing. This way you can see all those steps, and you can read how the drawing was constructed.

After the main figure is there and I am happy with it, I accentuate the parts I want to highlight – the parts where I want to focus the attention. I do this by adding more pressure and thickness to the lines, and I also might diffuse other areas.

RIGHT: I love the moon. I feel it connects with the crow and lily motifs I sometimes use to create a mysterious and feminine atmosphere.





**Take care of
your hands!**

I have a lot of arm and wrist issues and pain. I would advise everyone to always take care of their hands. Don't overdo it, do exercises and stretches, and take breaks. Your hands need to last for an entire life, and nothing would be worse than damaging them and not being able to create art.

NEAR RIGHT: I love Voodoo cultures and aesthetics.

FAR RIGHT: Inspired by that song by Coldplay, *Violet Hill*.









LEFT: More of a fantasy scenario.

ABOVE TOP: I love drawing flowers, especially the lily.
I feel it conveys purity and is quite feminine.

ABOVE BOTTOM: I really like playing with hair movement in my drawings.



"I START WITH LOOSE LINES, NOTHING TOO STRUCTURED, JUST TO MAP THE BASIC FORMS AND COMPOSITION. I REALLY LOVE SEEING THE LAYERS OF LINES UPON LINES IN A DRAWING, SO I DON'T ERASE VERY MUCH"

LEFT: A fun character design. I love Chihuahuas!

ABOVE: A character sketch featuring an owl design.

RIGHT: Portraits are what I love the most.





SUMEIRE, GASPARD

gaspard-sumeire.tumblr.com

All images © Gaspard Sumeire

As far as I remember, I have always been a big fan of comics (mostly in the Franco-Belgian style). This is the reason why I started drawing and why I still sketch a lot: I like finding short stories to tell. Characters are usually defined by all the other characters that they interact with, so it's really important for me to make scenes with interactions, even without dialog; it's a fun way to create situations and produce more lively characters.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

When I start sketching, I always try to imagine a short story or a situation. Even if I only want to draw one character, it is important for me to know what kind of person they are and what they've been through. This is even more important if I want to draw a scene with several characters. Relationships are also crucial in this case. Having an understanding of all these elements will always help you to create the most intense expressions because you know exactly what the character's mood is and why.

MATERIALS

I draw with a vermillion Prismacolor Col-Erase pencil that I use lightly because I don't want to be too insistent with it. I then use a Uni Pin 0.1 mm fineliner pen to make the black line, which is much more significant in my sketches. Most of the time I sketch on a Moleskine with yellow pages because I like the mix of yellow and red.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

To me, spontaneity is key. This is why my vermillion sketch pencil isn't used for very long in the drawing process; it just helps me to define the characters' places in the image and a bit of background. I then spend much longer drawing with the black fineliner, because this is what I use to really define the expressions and all the details.

Keeping spontaneity in mind, I don't tend to push a drawing too far: "finished" doesn't mean "perfect." For this reason the black line really has to convey what I want to say, even if it is still a little messy. Adding digital colors or gray filling doesn't have to change what you wanted to express with the initial drawing.

RIGHT: Bath time! Vermillion pencil and black ink.









FAR TOP LEFT: A knight and one of the castle's ladies.

FAR BOTTOM LEFT: A Viking granny.

MIDDLE LEFT: A knight with a sword.

NEAR LEFT: A pirate with rum!

ABOVE: A pirate and a lady.



ABOVE: An old laser cowboy running away.

RIGHT: The cabin of the old weird lady in the woods by the village.

Adding environments

Sometimes adding a background can create a nice ambience and give more credibility to a character. For example, even if this grandma on the right here looks like an average smiley old lady, you can assume she is a crazy witch carrying out experiments in her lab with her rat, parrot, and owl.







SYKOSAN

sykosan.artstation.com

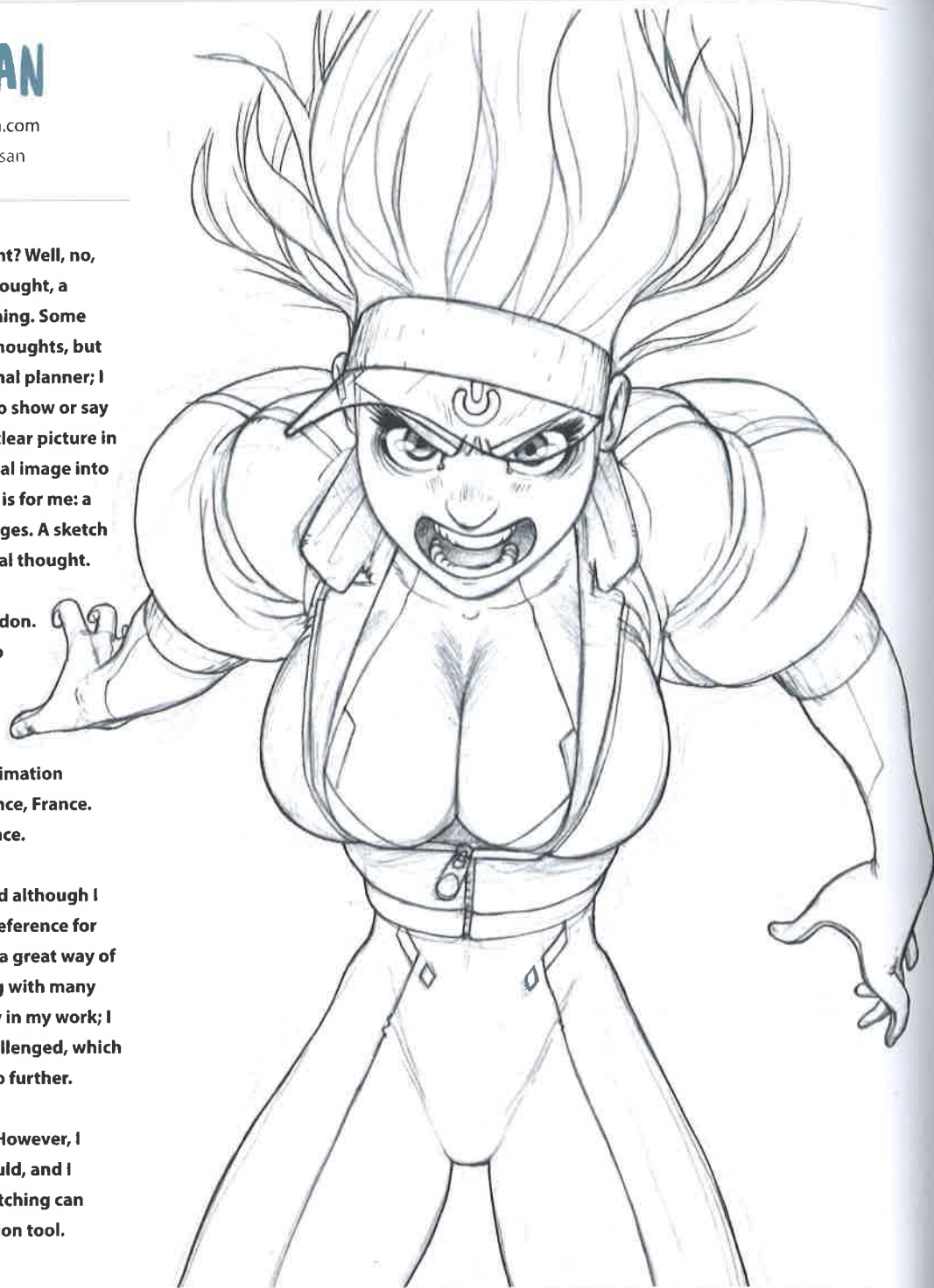
All images © Sykosan

Everything starts with a sketch, right? Well, no, not really. It usually starts with a thought, a concept, a need to visualize something. Some artists let their pencils drive their thoughts, but I don't do that. I am more of a rational planner; I start with a goal, an idea, a desire to show or say something. I usually have a rather clear picture in mind, and I want to bring this mental image into the real world. That's what a sketch is for me: a means to communicate mental images. A sketch is the very first expression of a visual thought.

I am French, currently based in London. I studied science first, then chose to become an architect; I graduated but never worked a minute in architecture. I discovered animation and decided to study animation filmmaking at La Poudrière in Valence, France. I've not changed my mind again since.

I am very independent-minded, and although I can work well in a team, I have a preference for solitary work. Being a freelancer is a great way of being your own boss while working with many different artists. I like that diversity in my work; I am never bored and am always challenged, which feeds my creativity and desire to go further.

I have a real affinity for sketching. However, I don't sketch nearly as much as I could, and I beat myself up for it. I find that sketching can be the most powerful communication tool.



INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My desire to draw essentially comes from childhood comics and animation. I have always dreamed of creating my own universe and characters. What draws me in first is the design and the movement, so those are the first things I want to convey. As I grow older I also wish to communicate more meaning. I develop personal projects that bring together all these things. I don't actively try to fit in a particular style or genre, but I can say that I am heavily influenced by Japanese animation and European comics. However, nowadays I find most inspiration on social media: DeviantART, Instagram, YouTube, and ArtStation are some of my favorite places. The internet is an endless library of ideas.

MATERIALS

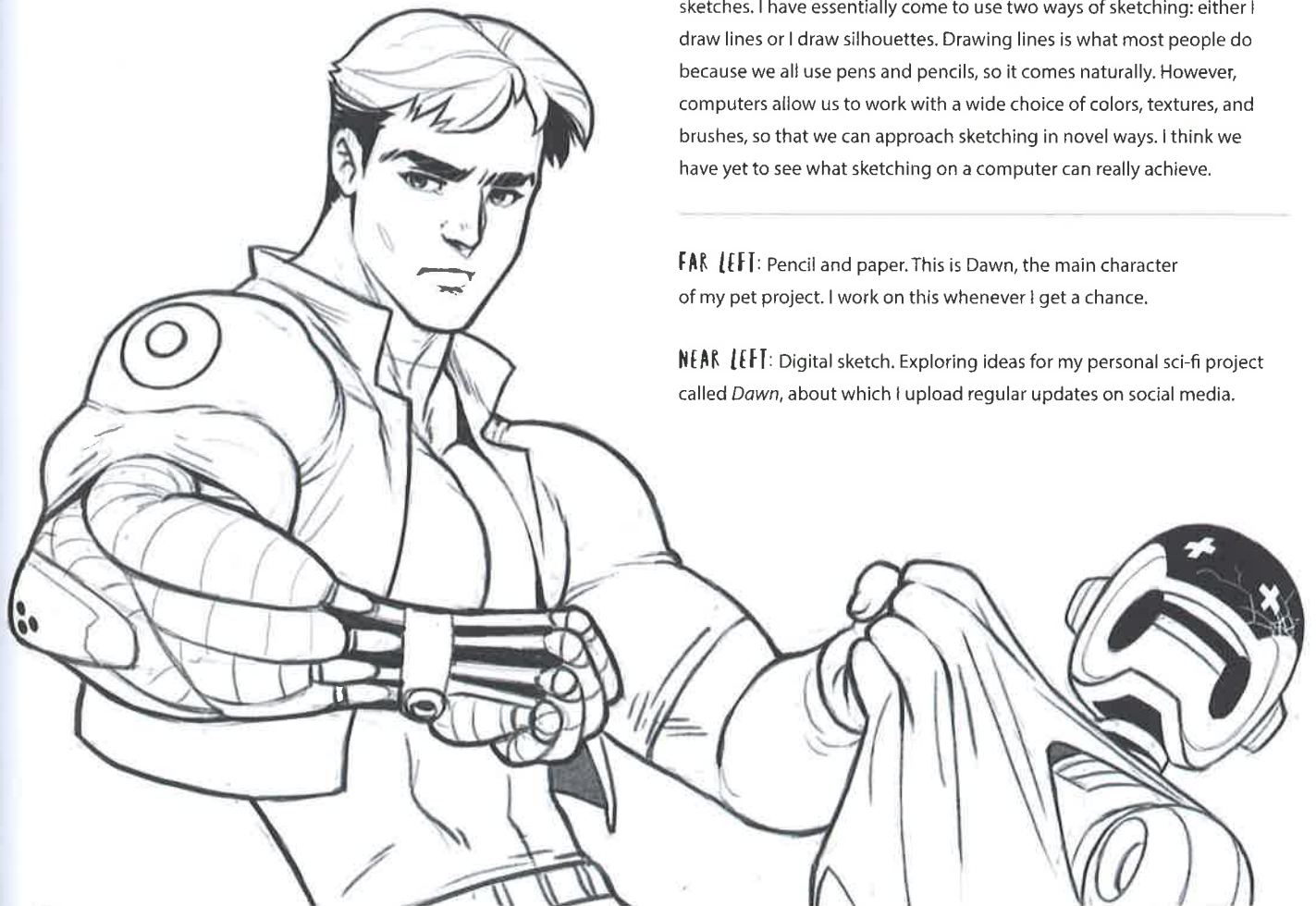
These days, ninety-five percent of the time I sketch and draw on my old Wacom 12WX Cintiq tablet. It's still awesome. However, I can't sketch on the go with it. It's not very portable, and I am waiting for a good laptop-tablet hybrid that can give me precision and power as well as portability. Technology is essential to me, particularly for animation. But when it comes to sketching while traveling, a good old pencil and paper is still the best way to go.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I am not the kind of artist who will draw pages and pages of characters. I usually think a lot before I draw and put all my effort into just a few sketches. I have essentially come to use two ways of sketching: either I draw lines or I draw silhouettes. Drawing lines is what most people do because we all use pens and pencils, so it comes naturally. However, computers allow us to work with a wide choice of colors, textures, and brushes, so that we can approach sketching in novel ways. I think we have yet to see what sketching on a computer can really achieve.

FAR LEFT: Pencil and paper. This is Dawn, the main character of my pet project. I work on this whenever I get a chance.

NEAR LEFT: Digital sketch. Exploring ideas for my personal sci-fi project called *Dawn*, about which I upload regular updates on social media.





"TECHNOLOGY IS ESSENTIAL TO ME, PARTICULARLY FOR ANIMATION. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO SKETCHING WHILE TRAVELING, A GOOD OLD PENCIL AND PAPER IS STILL THE BEST WAY TO GO"

FAR LEFT: Pencil and paper. I always have a preference for sci-fi, but this is me trying to bring a bit of sci-fi and a bit of fantasy together.

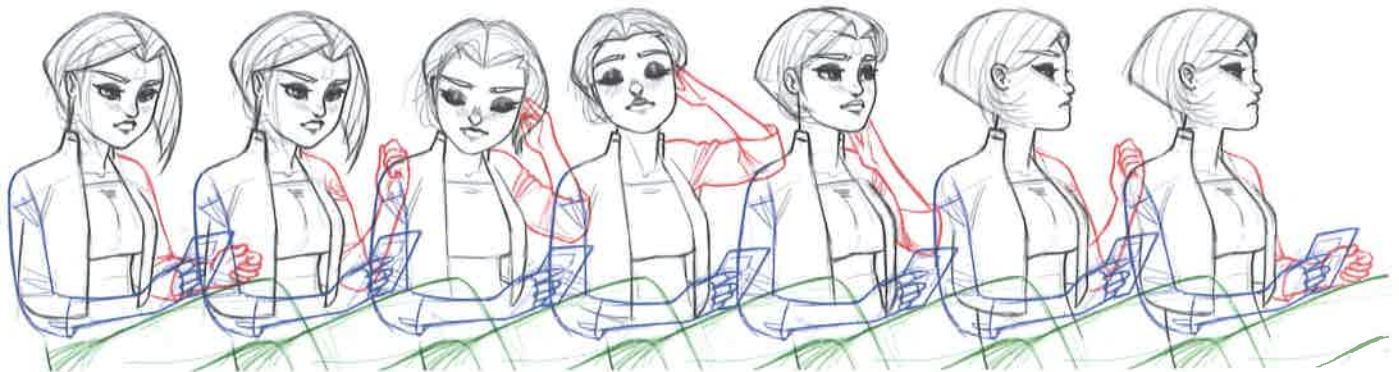
NEAR TOP LEFT: Pencil, ink, and paper. Typically the kind of small sketch I like to do. Here I used a brush pen to clean it up.

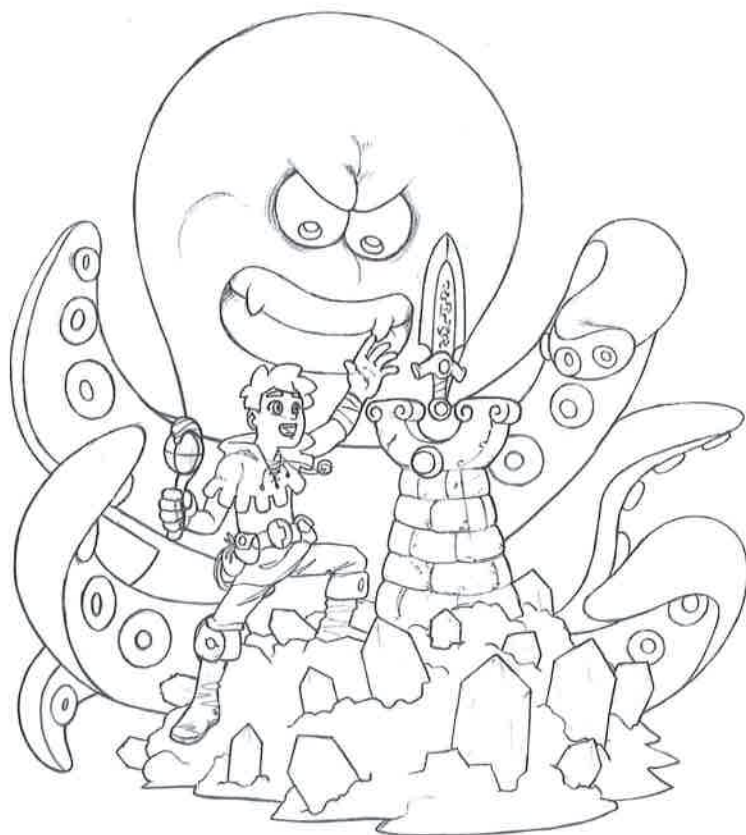
NEAR MIDDLE LEFT: Digital drawing. Some people love to draw landscapes, machines, monsters, or buildings. I am one of many who love to draw pin-ups.

NEAR BOTTOM LEFT: Digital sketch. This may look like pencil on paper but it isn't. To me, using a stylus now feels just as natural as using a pencil, yet still different.

RIGHT: Pencil and paper. Sometimes I like to try a different style. I often start with red or blue pencil and then finish with black pencil.

BELOW: Digital sketch. Sketching for animation involves a lot of very similar drawings. Patience and consistency are key. The reward is seeing your drawing come to life.





"I AM NOT THE KIND OF
ARTIST WHO WILL DRAW
PAGES AND PAGES OF
CHARACTERS. I USUALLY
THINK A LOT BEFORE
I DRAW AND PUT ALL
MY EFFORT INTO JUST
A FEW SKETCHES"

LEFT: Pencil and paper. Telling a story is central to a good sketch. It gives meaning to your lines, and that's magic.

BELOW: Digital drawing. I did this one for a design contest on social media. These sorts of events are an opportunity to try new things.

RIGHT: Mixed media sketches. I find drawing with silhouettes challenging but satisfying. With computers it is easy to quickly lay down shapes and colors.







TAN, ZHI HUI

artstation.com/artist/kudaman

All images © Tan Zhi Hui

I am a passionate concept artist and illustrator who inspires others towards creativity. I graduated as a digital animator from The One Academy, Malaysia, and am currently a freelance concept artist and illustrator providing services such as character design, game splash art, background design, print design, and various illustrations to industry clients including Sony Interactive Entertainment and Microsoft Studios.

I think sketching is a very important part of the whole painting process, mainly because it offers a space in which we are not afraid to explore; our imagination and creativity are therefore less limited.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

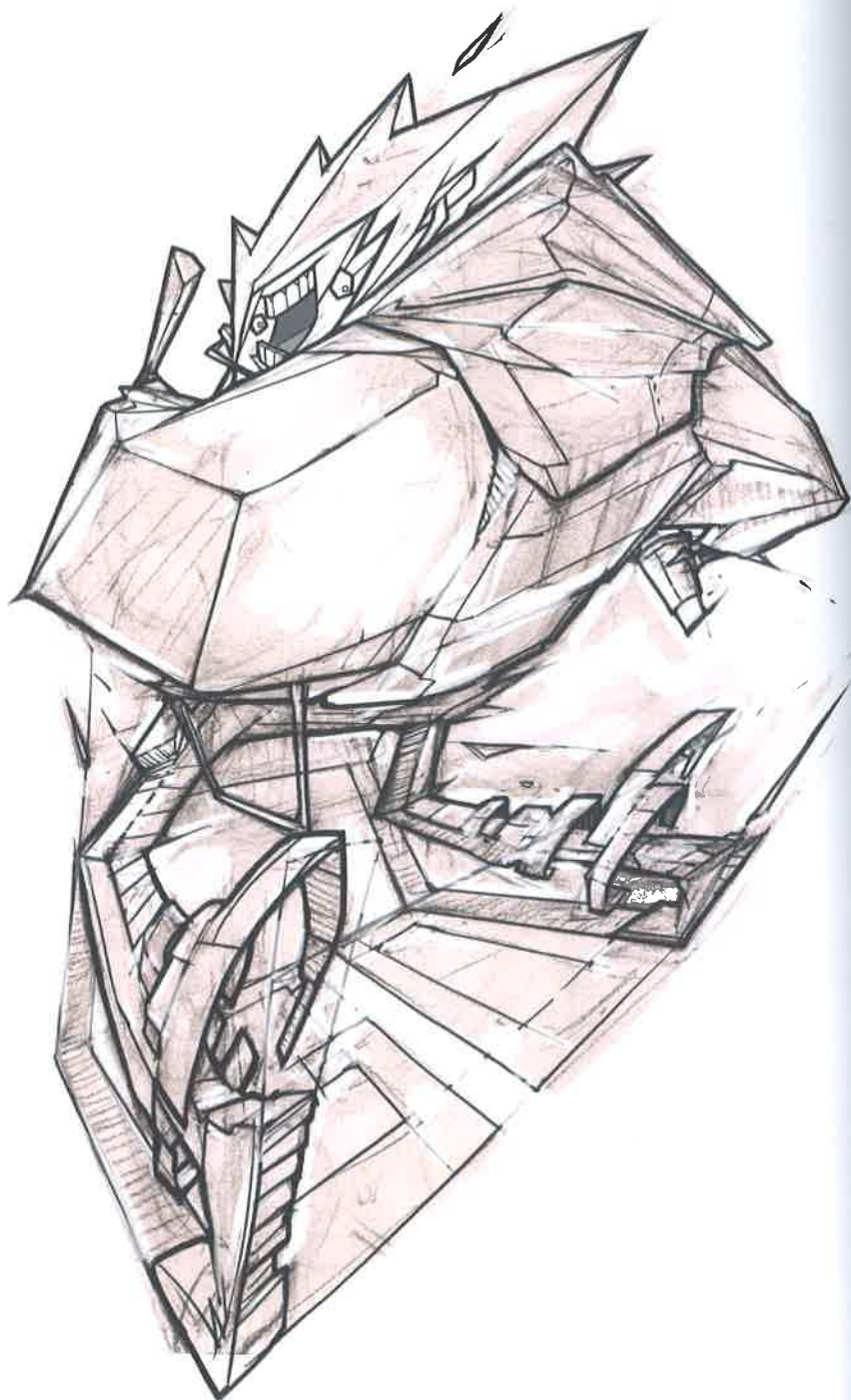
My inspiration and ideas come from many sources, mainly from animated movies, other artists' works, and computer games. I also get a lot of inspiration by observing things in my daily life.

MATERIALS

I always used to sketch in my sketchbooks using traditional media, but then I realized that creating sketches directly on the computer saved me a lot of time and was much more efficient for me. Now I can make good use of all the tools in Photoshop, such as the Warp, Distort, and Liquify tools.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

I always keep my sketches loose and rough, making sure they don't include too many details. This allows me to change elements and explore later on without having to worry too much.

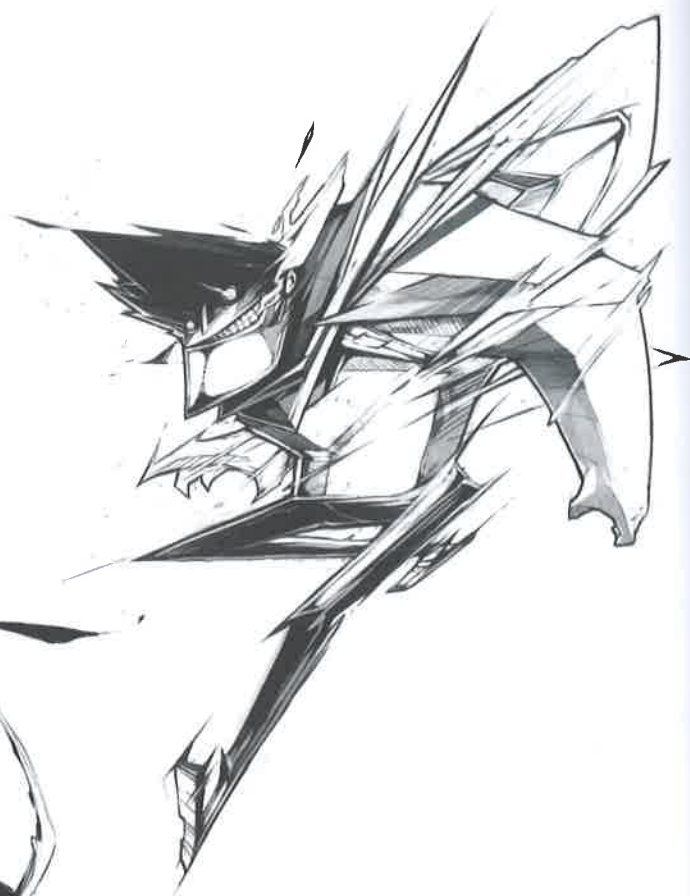




LEFT: A quick sketch between boring projects. This was created traditionally in my sketchbook, then refined in Photoshop.

ABOVE: *Monkey King.* Personal work. A digital sketch of my favorite character from Chinese mythology.

"I ALWAYS KEEP MY SKETCHES LOOSE
AND ROUGH, MAKING SURE THEY
DON'T INCLUDE TOO MANY DETAILS"



LEFT: *Pirate Queen.* A personal digital sketch. She has tentacles growing out of her back, for some reason.

ABOVE: Portrait sketch for a friend of mine, refined from a traditional drawing.

NEAR RIGHT: *Judgement.* A Sunday practice sketch. I had a lot of fun exploring this design.

FAR RIGHT: Personal work. A digital sketch, trying out a character with really long legs!



W I L D C O W B O Y



UKARDI, GISELLE

artstation.com/artist/giselleukardi

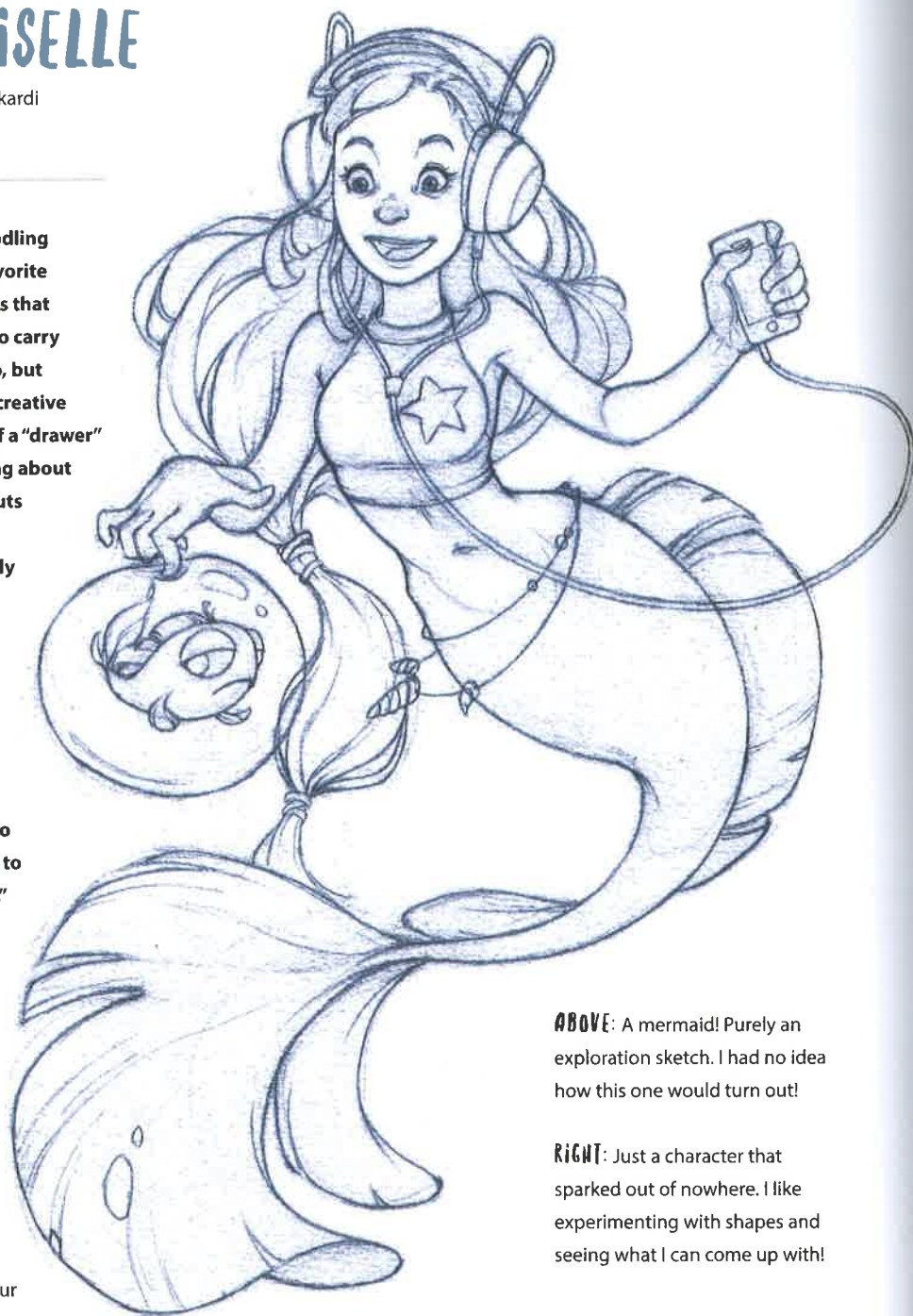
All images © Giselle Ukardi

I started drawing when I was a kid, mostly doodling whatever came to mind, or drawing out my favorite cartoon characters, animals, or the stuffed toys that I owned. I have to admit, I've never been one to carry around a sketchbook with me everywhere I go, but sketching is definitely my favorite part of the creative process. I've always considered myself more of a "drawer" than a painter, really. For me, there's something about the ideation and exploration stage that just puts me in a completely different frame of mind – a place where nothing is set in stone, and literally anything goes! Sketching is very therapeutic for me, and as intimidating as a blank page can be sometimes, it can also be very liberating. There's nothing like laying down shapes and seeing what becomes of them.

Sketching, for me, is primarily about learning and experimentation. When I sketch I try not to think too much about how the sketch is going to turn out, or if something doesn't "make sense." I feel it's really important to learn to trust your gut when it comes to sketching (and all throughout the image-making process, actually). Sometimes it can be very difficult for me not to worry about the outcome in the sketching stage, but I often find that my best work stems from moments where I think about nothing and just draw.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

For me, inspiration comes from anything and anywhere. I think it's really just about keeping your



ABOVE: A mermaid! Purely an exploration sketch. I had no idea how this one would turn out!

RIGHT: Just a character that sparked out of nowhere. I like experimenting with shapes and seeing what I can come up with!

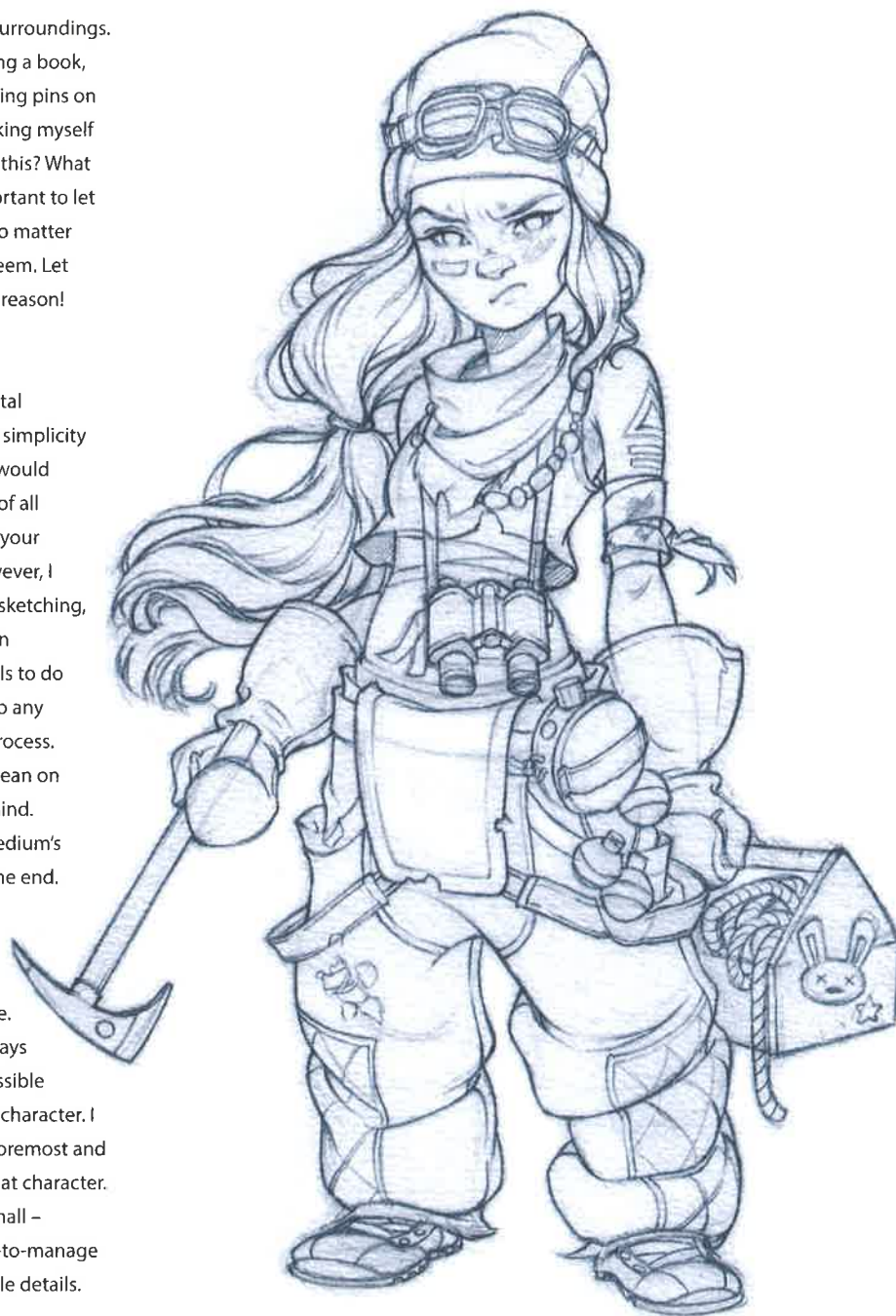
eyes and ears open and being attentive to your surroundings. Whether I'm watching a movie or TV show, reading a book, looking at photos, admiring architecture, or pinning pins on Pinterest, I'm constantly looking for ideas and asking myself questions like, "How can I create an image out of this? What would this look like in my world?" I think it's important to let your curiosity run wild, and trust your intuition no matter how odd (or even how clichéd) your ideas may seem. Let your ideas live and exist – they came to you for a reason!

MATERIALS

I really enjoy working in both traditional and digital mediums but, when sketching, I much prefer the simplicity of pencil (or pen) on paper. When I started out, I would sketch almost exclusively in Photoshop because of all the nifty little tools you could use to alter and fix your drawings – and, of course, the Undo button. However, I really enjoy working traditionally these days (for sketching, anyway). I find that when I'm sketching digitally in Photoshop, I end up relying too much on the tools to do the job for me, and don't pay enough attention to any mistakes I may end up making throughout the process. When I sketch traditionally, there are no tools to lean on aside from a simple pencil, eraser, and my own mind. There's less room for error, and because of the medium's limitations I find that I make better decisions in the end.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

As far as technique goes, I try to just focus on the shapes I'm putting down before anything else. When I have an idea for a character in mind, I always start with lightly throwing down the simplest possible shapes that I feel would capture the spirit of that character. I think about the character's personality first and foremost and try to come up with a pose that really feels like that character. I think it's super important to work from big to small – capturing the character's essence in simple, easy-to-manage shapes before getting caught up in all the fun little details.





Use references

It's easy to get caught up in thinking that you should be able to draw something out of thin air without using any sort of visual aid, but part of learning and growing is using references. Don't feel bad about using them if you really need them – I know I did for a while! Using references with the intention of learning from them (rather than passively copying what you see) can really help to expand your visual library so that you have more to pull from when you're drawing purely from imagination.

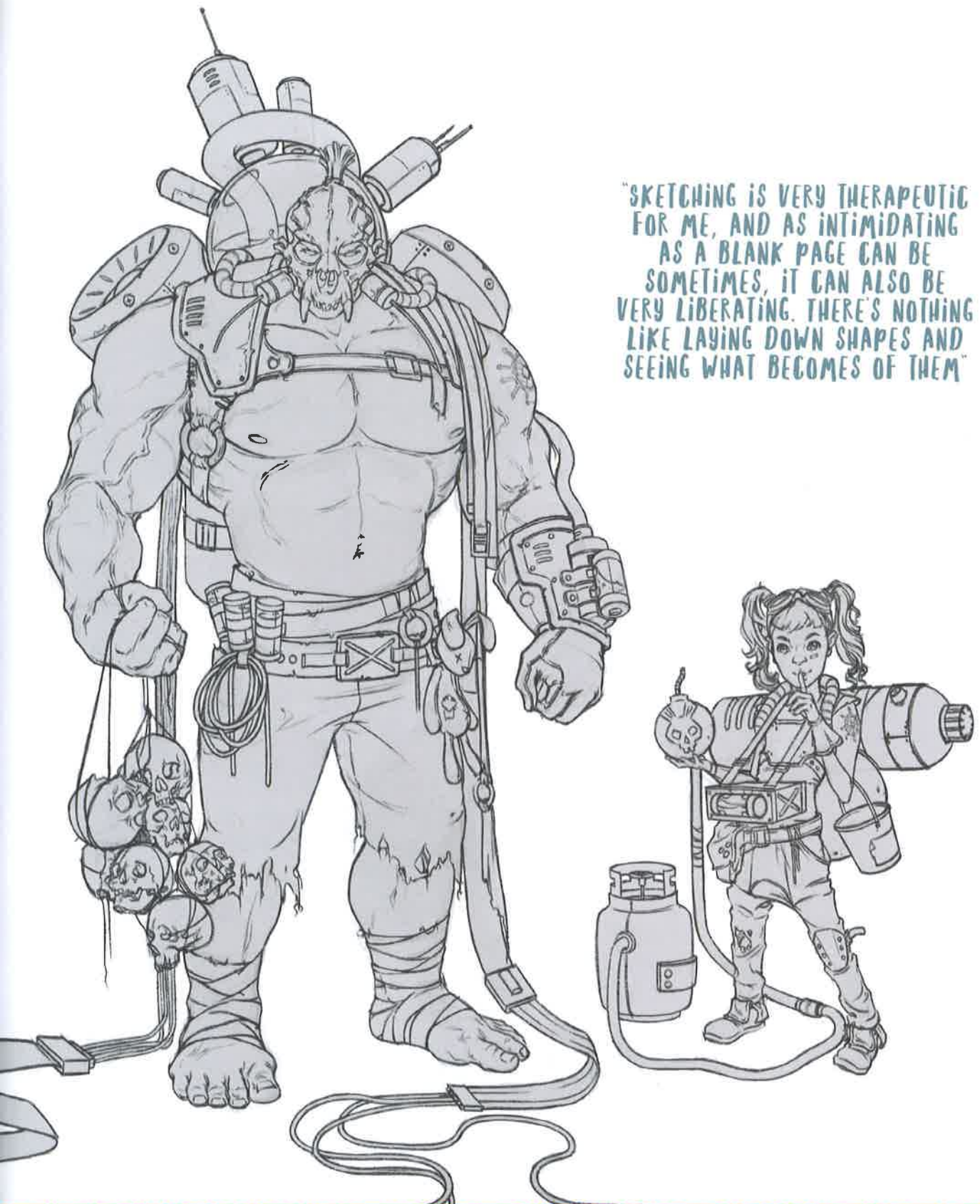
Observation, observation, observation!

Observation is key to being able to sketch anything from your head. Observing the way people and animals move, and just getting to know the limitations of the muscles and joints of the body, is essential to creating believable character poses and expressions. You must know the boundaries before being able to push them!

ABOVE: An image that came to mind while listening to one of my all time favorite Muse songs, *Uprising*.

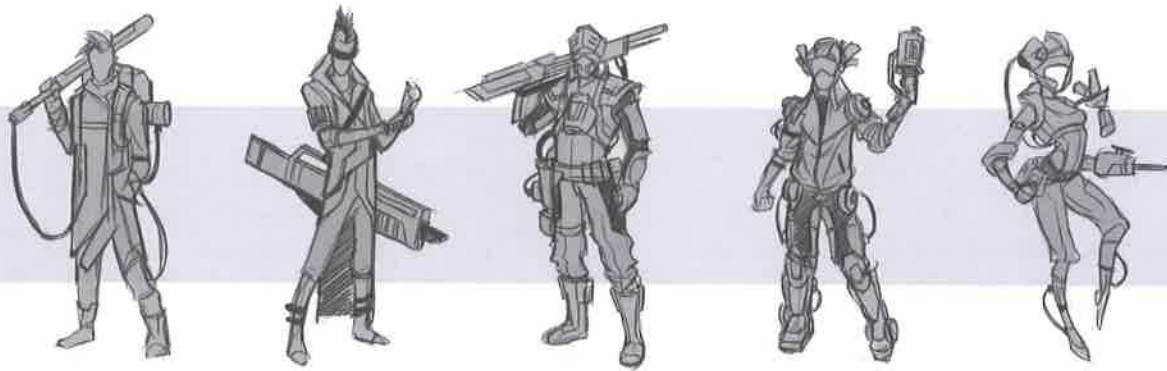
RIGHT: A post-apocalyptic duo I had floating around in my head.

"SKETCHING IS VERY THERAPEUTIC
FOR ME, AND AS INTIMIDATING
AS A BLANK PAGE CAN BE
SOMETIMES, IT CAN ALSO BE
VERY LIBERATING. THERE'S NOTHING
LIKE LAYING DOWN SHAPES AND
SEEING WHAT BECOMES OF THEM"





"LET YOUR IDEAS LIVE AND EXIST —
THEY CAME TO YOU FOR A REASON!"



ABOVE (BOTH PAGES): A few rough thumbnail sketches of some sci-fi character ideas.

FAR LEFT: A badass jungle lady riding a tiger – because, why not?

NEAR LEFT: Another exploration sketch. I really seem to enjoy drawing ladies.

BELOW: A sketch I did purely for fun.

RIGHT: Digital character sketch of an idea I had for a hip-hop-style sci-fi lady.





WEIßBECHER, JAN

artjaw.de

All images © Jan Weißbecher

If I think back, drawing has always been the start of pretty much everything I do. It's not just a way to plan out an illustration for me; it's a way to manifest my own thought process and keep it around for later (or keep notes, in less pretentious words). For example, I have a sketchbook which is a dream diary from a few years back, and when I look at the drawings I can still remember some of the dreams I had, which is fantastic inspiration material. That's why it's always a special treat to get to see another artist's sketchbook – it's kind of like getting a peek into their head!

Sketching also puts me in a whole different mindset compared to when I paint; if you are like me, then maybe this sounds familiar. When I paint an illustration it feels like frantically trying to achieve something very specific. This can be quite stressful and makes it hard to experiment. Drawing, in contrast, is like playing. Ideas can be toyed with freely and my brain can just relax, flowing with the story that plays in my head while my hand just works on its own for a while. Or, if I want, I can noodle around on specific areas and get them exactly the way I want them, without too much investment. That's why drawing is the most relaxing for me, but I need to be relaxed as well first for it to work best.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

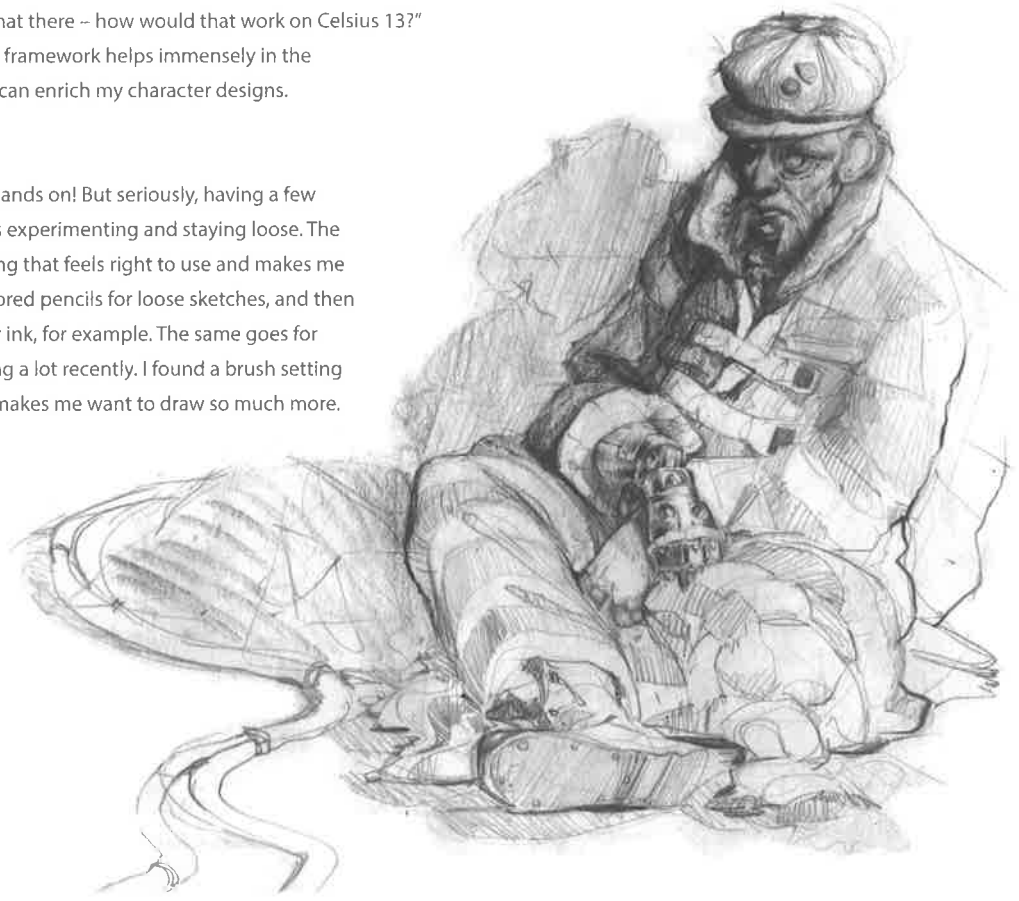
I love manga like *Akira* and *Blame!*, as well as movies like *Ghost in the Shell* and *Blade Runner*. I have been working on creating my own world, called Celsius 13, with those inspirations in mind. This world is like a playground, but also a framework, giving me endless questions to ask and explore while keeping the overall design thematically connected. This



means I can always ask myself, "Look at that there -- how would that work on Celsius 13?" I find that giving myself this kind of story framework helps immensely in the creative process. Even the smallest story can enrich my character designs.

MATERIALS

My materials are whatever I can get my hands on! But seriously, having a few different drawing tools really encourages experimenting and staying loose. The most important thing is finding something that feels right to use and makes me want to draw more! I really like using colored pencils for loose sketches, and then drawing cleanly over them with pencil or ink, for example. The same goes for drawing digitally, which I have been doing a lot recently. I found a brush setting that feels really good for drawing and it makes me want to draw so much more.



SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Drawing is essentially storytelling to me. I love stories and I want my own drawings to always have one that can be explored. When I create characters, I therefore think about who they are and what they do. This helps me give them depth and offer other people an opportunity to build that story from the clues I give them. I think that the most important step of all is trying to get to know the character I'm designing, because this helps me to make appropriate design decisions that support the character.



FAR LEFT: A portrait of two CEOs on Celsius 13. They lead the Janus Syndicate Corporation.

NEAR LEFT: A pencil sketch of a man on his way to work.

ABOVE: A homeless person on Celsius 13.



**Sometimes,
you might have
to try again**

Don't be afraid to start from scratch. Making multiple variations of a concept is easy when sketching, but hard when lots of work is already invested. Find what fits for you early so that you save yourself lots of grief later.





TOP LEFT: Like all my sketches here, this one is for my personal project, *Celsius 13*. It depicts a medicinal cult.

BOTTOM LEFT: A drawing depicting a cult ritual.

ABOVE: She just stole some important documents. She can also jump pretty far, so she's probably going get away clean.

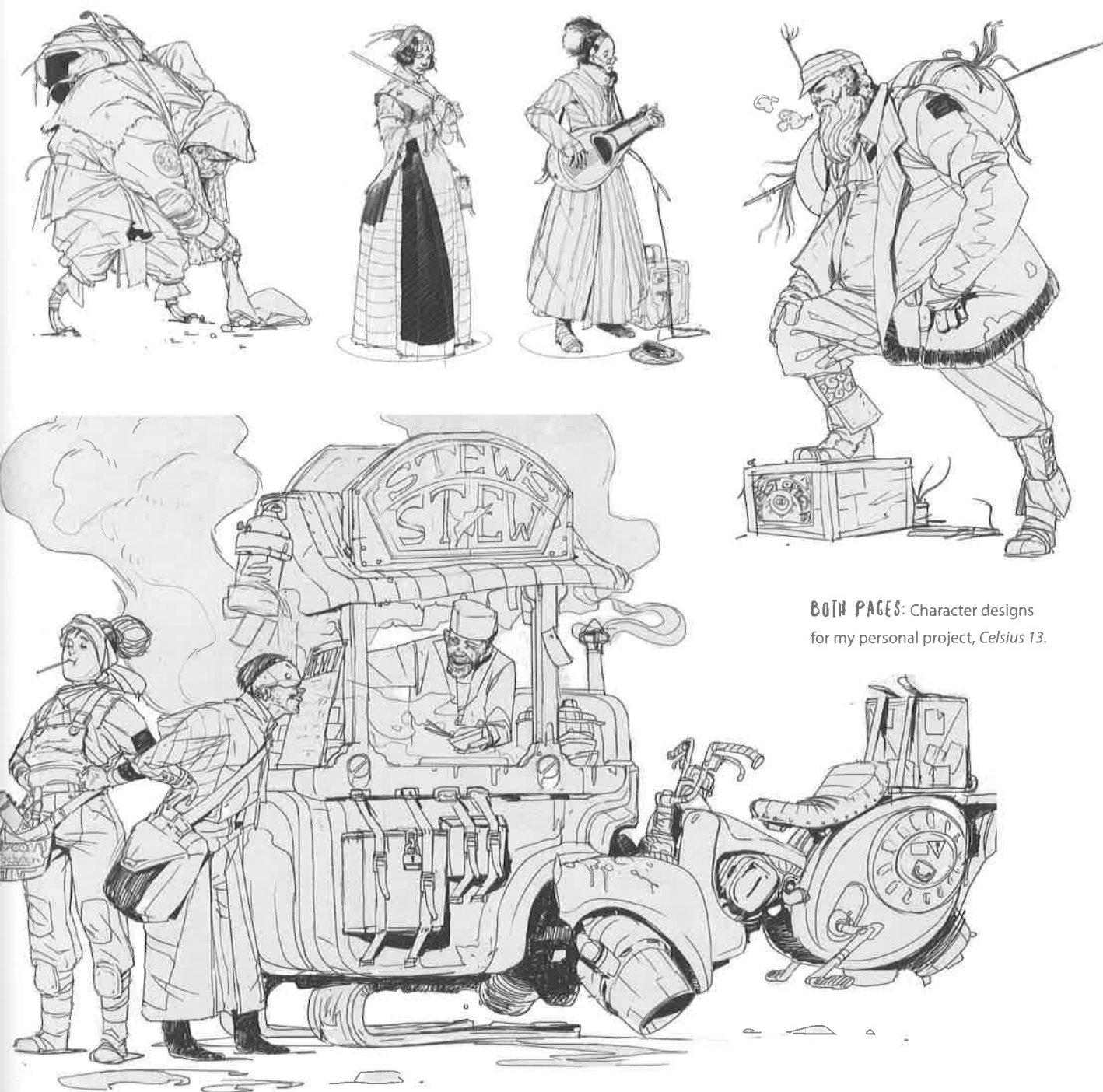
RIGHT: I'm not actually sure what he is repairing here...



The mundane life

Showing a character doing something very mundane or regular in their lives gives the viewer an opportunity to connect to them. A samurai slicing people in half is awesome, but showing him cleaning his armor afterwards can also have a great impact. Knowing your character and what you want to emphasize about them is key here. You might not want to humanize them if it doesn't fit the story!





BOTH PAGES: Character designs
for my personal project, *Celsius 13*.



XIA, RUBY

roo-draws.tumblr.com

All images © Ruby Xia

I've drawn in a sketchbook since I was little; there is something truly magical about bringing a character to life with just a few strokes of pencil on paper. There are many reasons to sketch, such as observation, improving your skills, or recording a specific moment. When I sketch characters, I aim to create a feeling of familiarity, almost as if the viewer has met the character before. I try to make the characters relatable and not just cool-looking, because it's empathy with a character that makes them memorable.

There are so many tiny, unique interactions that happen between people every day. Keeping a sketchbook allows you to record these nuances real-time, in a way that can never be captured by a photo or conceived on the spot in front of a computer. The specific way someone holds a cup, or leans while speaking to another, can say so much about a character. Carry a sketchbook and record the life around you; it's amazing how much richness there is in quiet moments.

Keeping a sketchbook helps to define what makes your characters unique. Every sketch states an opinion, and the more sketches, the greater your opinion and the stronger personalities your characters take on. A sketchbook is also a catalog of ideas and a documentation of progress through the years. For me, a sketchbook is a place to put ideas down, not to make "beautiful drawings," and I often leave the sketches just clear enough to convey the idea.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

Inspiration comes from anywhere, and often when you least expect it. My biggest inspiration for characters are the people I've observed and met in real life. I love backpacking and traveling, and with every new place comes a different perspective on life and a wider



LEFT: Character sketch for a short animated film.

RIGHT: The types of props and clothing that a character chooses say something about the kind of person they are.



range of character possibilities. I find putting first-hand experience into the characters gives them a sense of believability and makes them feel genuine. When exploring ideas, I push everything, the posture, body type, even things like self-maintenance, towards the character's personality.

MATERIALS

I like to draw with a standard HB pencil. I find the simplest tools work best and don't distract from capturing the subject's

personality. At times I draw gestures with an HB mechanical pencil to force myself to think only about gesture and not line quality.

I like paper with grit that is thick enough to take a wash or two if needed. Currently I'm using sketchbooks bought from Asia that don't have a brand – drawing on cheap paper keeps the mind focused on the idea and not on creating a "masterpiece." In Photoshop I tend to experiment with different brushes just to switch things up.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

During early character development I like to use direct drawing; basically, setting pencil to paper and seeing where it takes you, not limited by anatomy. I draw fast, to capture that initial feeling and gesture before it fades away. Who is this character and what do they want? What are their strengths, fears, and obstacles? After many sketches, I pick the one I'm happy with and scan it into Photoshop. Then I refine or take away details, and clarify and push the pose even further.



THIS PAGE: A collection of people sketches. Sketching the people around you in a variety of styles is a great way to build a visual library to design from later.

RIGHT: Quick one-minute gestures of a speaker and audience member at a conference. He was moving his hands so expressively, I had to draw him!

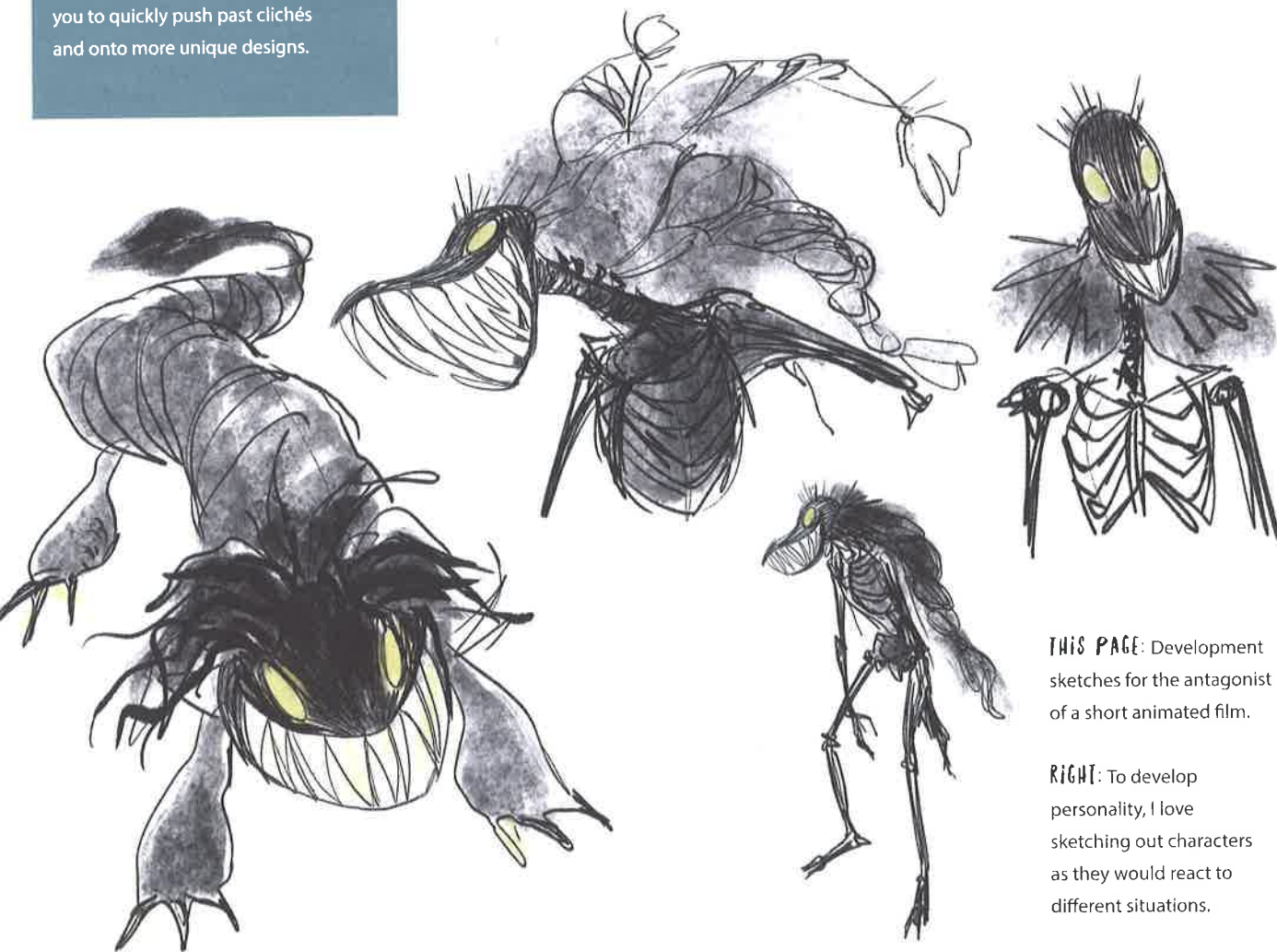
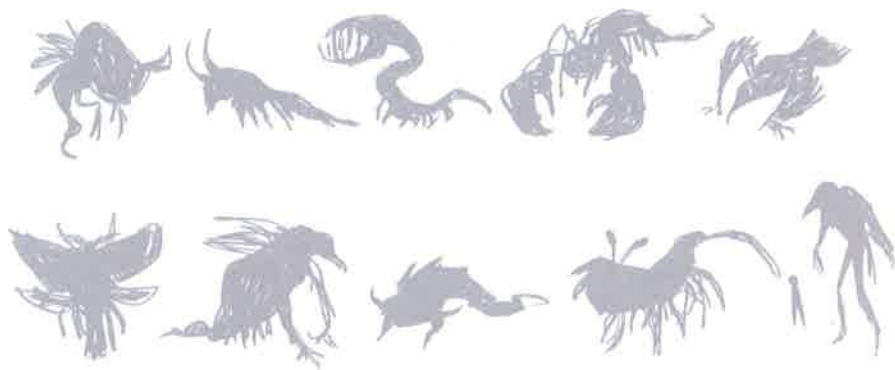
Sketch all the time

Sketching people in action, as opposed to simply standing or sitting, widens your pose library and allows you to draw characters that look natural and feel real. Observe and draw how a wide range of people react to things and conduct themselves. This refines character acting in your own designs, and adds depth that isn't present in a generic design. Sketching people on location builds a sense of empathy with fellow humans, which in turn aids the audience's empathy with your characters. Go draw!



Silhouettes

Silhouettes are one of the most important things in character design, and working in quick thumbnail silhouettes allows you to quickly assess whether a design is working or not. The character's attitude should be visible from a tiny silhouette. Working in thumbnail silhouettes enables you to quickly push past clichés and onto more unique designs.



THIS PAGE: Development sketches for the antagonist of a short animated film.

RIGHT: To develop personality, I love sketching out characters as they would react to different situations.



"THERE IS SOMETHING TRULY
MAGICAL ABOUT BRINGING
A CHARACTER TO LIFE WITH
JUST A FEW STROKES OF
PENCIL ON PAPER"

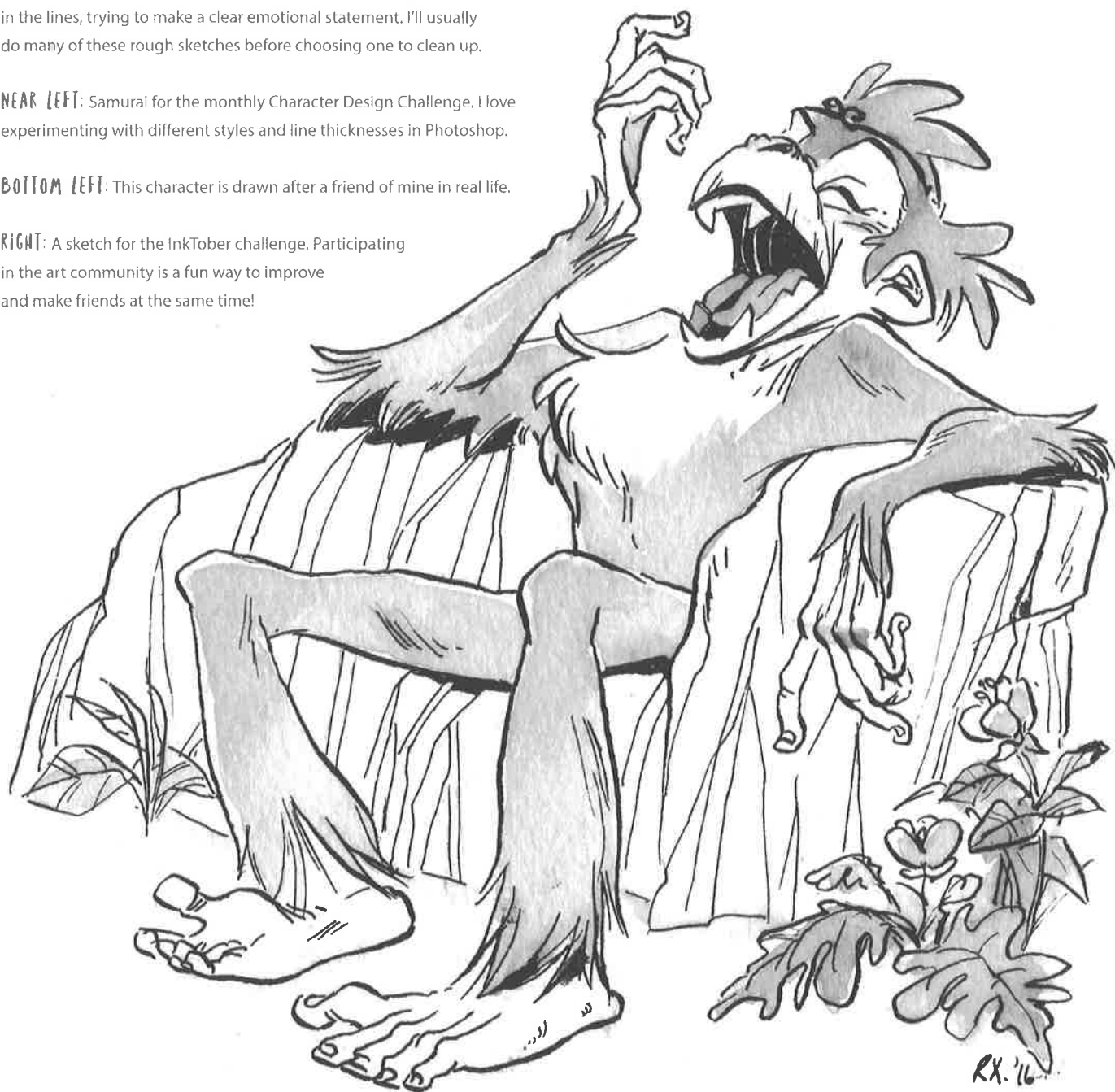


FAR LEFT: In this sketch I'm really trying to capture energy and tension in the lines, trying to make a clear emotional statement. I'll usually do many of these rough sketches before choosing one to clean up.

NEAR LEFT: Samurai for the monthly Character Design Challenge. I love experimenting with different styles and line thicknesses in Photoshop.

BOTTOM LEFT: This character is drawn after a friend of mine in real life.

RIGHT: A sketch for the Inktober challenge. Participating in the art community is a fun way to improve and make friends at the same time!





YE, MABEL

mabelye.com

All images © Mabel Ye

I'm an enthusiastic artist, willing to learn anything from 3D animation to clay sculpting. Though I am primarily self-taught, with barely any industry experience, my focus on exploring fun and experimental ways of sketching has contributed heavily to my artistic growth. The two sole reasons I create are simple: to be happy, and to share my art with others! The internet is an incredible place for new ideas and fellow artists. With the right community, whether it be online or more in the traditional sense, support will be consistent, and often kick-starts a surge of improvement and growth.

Art resources are readily available online, ranging from digital artwork collections to e-books to instructional videos. Inspirations researched online such as Mœbius, Georges Beuville, Ashley Wood, Tadahiro Uesugi, and Rebecca Sugar have helped progress my style. Additionally, chatting online with industry professionals working in animation has provided invaluable guidance. While I still have a long way to go to achieve any kind of success, what I have accomplished so far is credited to the terrific community of artists I have met online throughout the years. With their help, I found space to develop as both an artist and an individual.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

I love exploring different cultures, worlds, objects, and various topics. Doing so builds up a mental library that can be mined for character design ideas. Combining distinct genres together will spawn interesting and



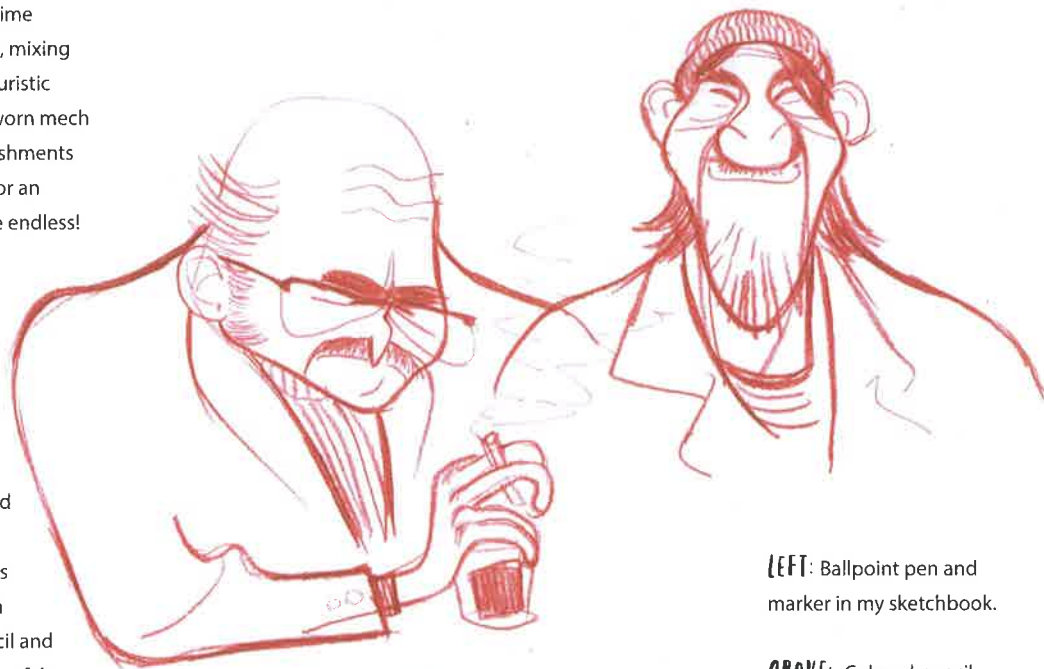
original ideas; these genres can vary in time period, location, and so on. For example, mixing and matching a desert biome with a futuristic time period may result in a sandstorm-worn mech explorer. From that idea various embellishments can be added, such as a billowing scarf or an animal skull charm – the possibilities are endless!

MATERIALS

For digital sketching, Photoshop has always been a favorite program of mine. I've created some digital brushes that emulate traditional inks; combined with the convenience of a digital program, sketching becomes fluid and quick. There are lots of free digital brushes to be found online, and tutorials on developing your own are plentiful. In traditional sketching, a mechanical pencil and ink pens are key. Ink pens may range from felt-tips to a classic dip pen. Brush pens are a crucial staple in any artist's collection, as they can create distinctive lines and fill in large spaces with color.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

In order to churn out designs, your lines have to be fluid; one way to prepare beforehand is to sketch figures of eight and curvy lines. This will loosen up your strokes so your sketch session will be smoother. Simplifying lines is a great way to enhance your sketching technique; there are the old "chicken-scratch" or "hairy" terms for lines that have been overworked. With a strong, fluid stroke, almost akin to gesture drawing, your character can come to life.



LEFT: Ballpoint pen and marker in my sketchbook.

ABOVE: Colored pencil on computer paper.

BELOW: Ballpoint pen and ink on computer paper.



Experiment and grow

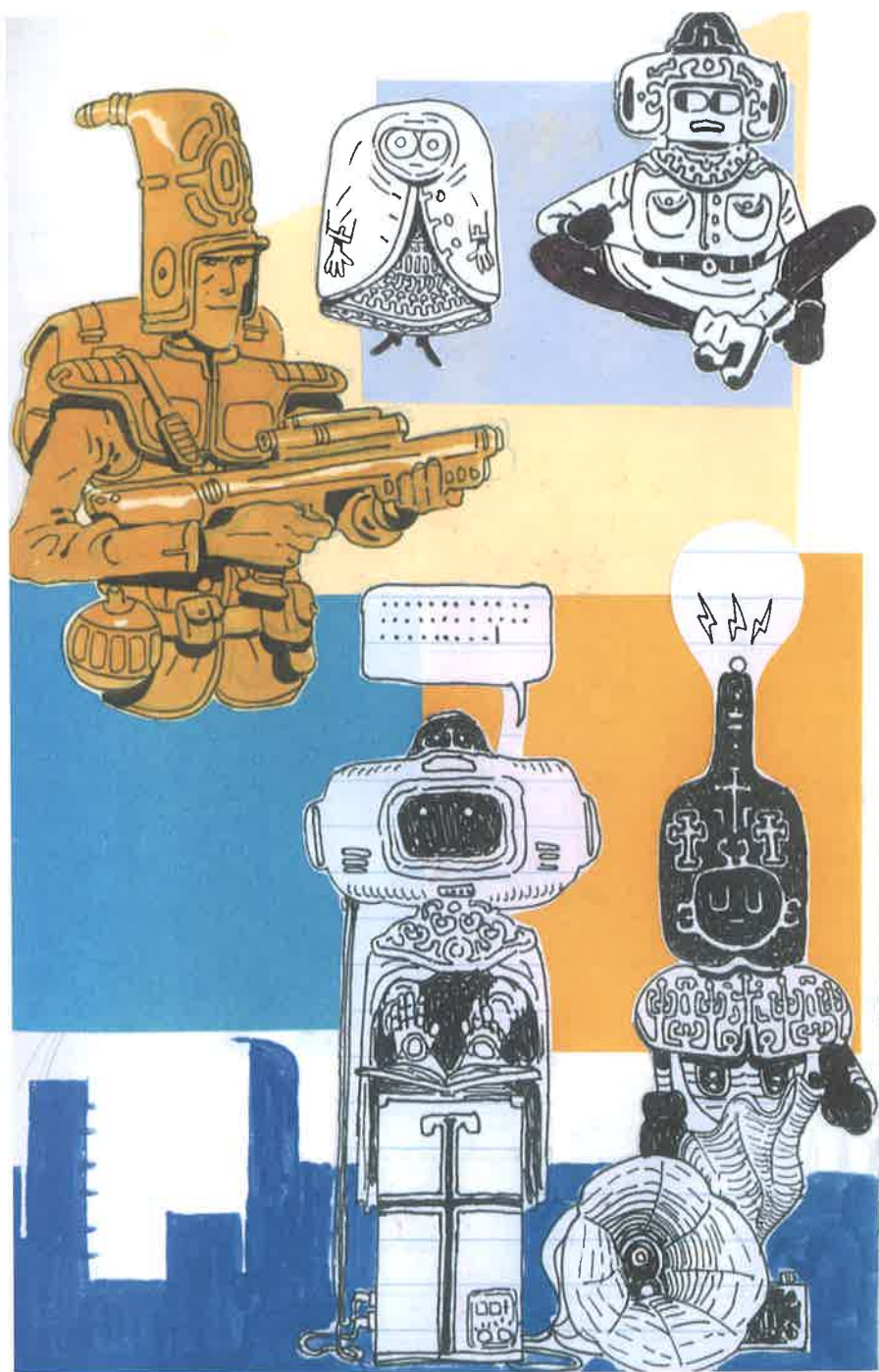
Try your hand at many styles, mediums, and new parts of art you haven't explored yet. Fill as many sketchbooks, digital canvases, and notepads as possible without sticking to just one way of doing so. By broadening your artistic horizons, you can bolster stylistic development.

Strike up conversation

Don't be afraid to contact artists and industry professionals you admire! Most may have social network profiles that make it easier to get in touch – and most are enthusiastic in offering advice, technique explanations, or plain old friendly conversation.

Draw from life

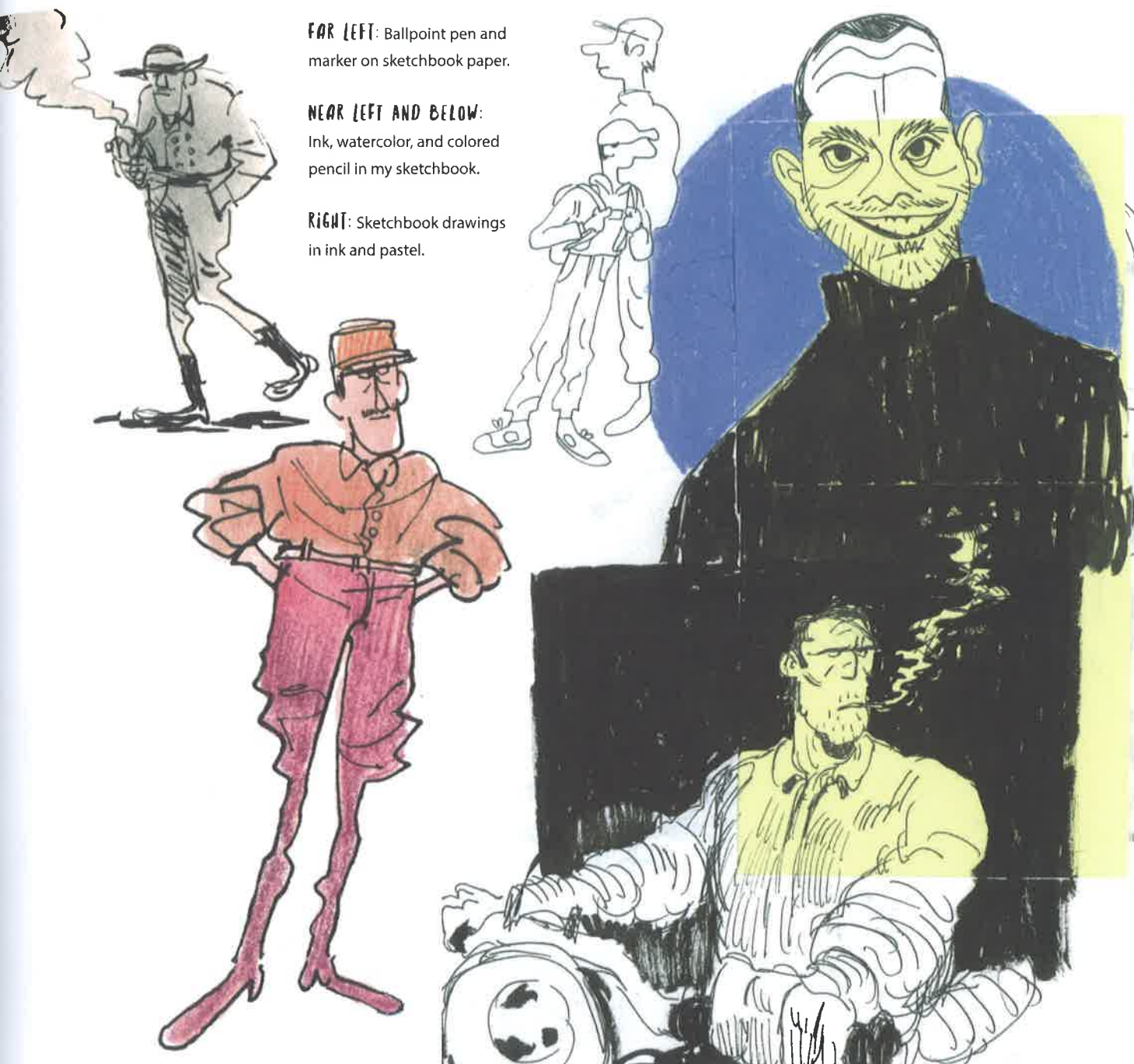
To be able to draw from one's imagination, life drawing is a must. Studying objects, landscapes, and people around you lends a better understanding of the subjects being drawn. Whether it be on a subway ride, at the back of a lecture hall, or in a busy cafe, whip out a sketchbook. The more diverse your subjects are, the more creative freedom you have in sketching from your imagination.



FAR LEFT: Ballpoint pen and marker on sketchbook paper.

NEAR LEFT AND BELOW:
Ink, watercolor, and colored pencil in my sketchbook.

RIGHT: Sketchbook drawings in ink and pastel.

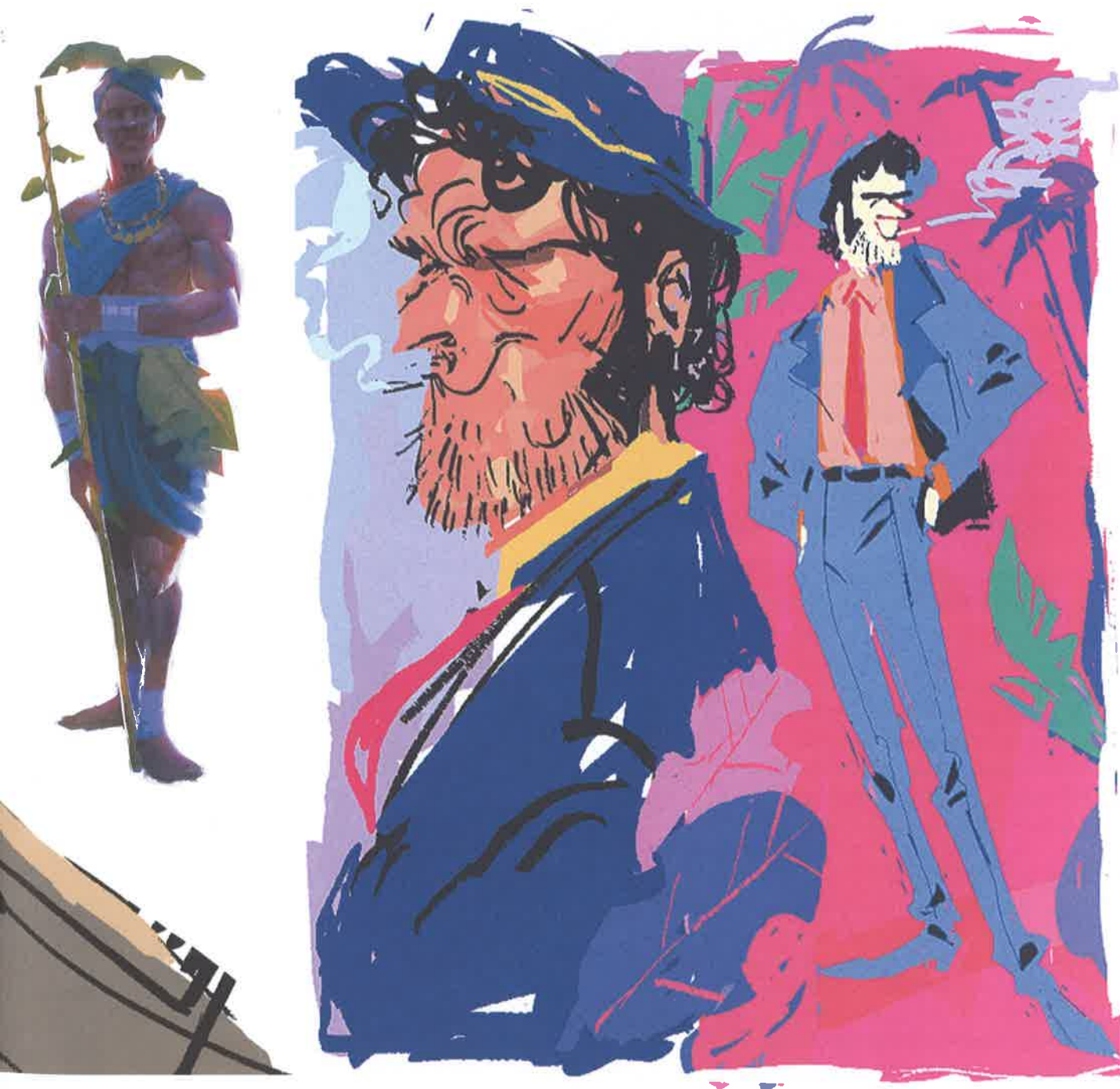




"I LOVE EXPLORING
DIFFERENT CULTURES,
WORLDS, OBJECTS, AND
VARIOUS TOPICS. DOING
SO BUILDS UP A MENTAL
LIBRARY THAT CAN BE
MINED FOR CHARACTER
DESIGN IDEAS"

BOTH PAGES: Various
digital sketches.







ZAKO, SUHEB

zakosuheb.tumblr.com

All images © Suheb Zako

I studied the art of stained glass for four years before coming back to my first passion: comics and animation. After a year in a comics workshop, I completed a two-year program in a 2D animation school in Luxembourg in 2013. "I soon had the opportunity to work with Spanish illustrator Juanjo Guarnido to help him as an animator and in-between artist on his video *Freak of the Week* by the band Freak Kitchen. Since then, I've had the opportunity to work on a few feature films in-house in Paris and as a freelance story or concept artist for clients such as Headless, Reel FX, and Illumination Mac Guff.

I approach my work by trying to express an emotion in my scenes, by playing with rhythms and shapes in the composition, with light and values. Storytelling takes an important place in my work. Like every artist, I think it is essential to deliver a message through what I do. This is why I try to tell anecdotes from my own life. Sometimes I caricature these anecdotes, or I produce a metaphor with them. In doing so, the results appear even more truthful.

INSPIRATION AND IDEAS

My narrative works and style are inspired by many great artists, such as Hayao Miyazaki, Akira Toriyama, Carlos Nine, and Edgar Degas, to name a few. I truly believe in the power of a simple message – by using proper composition, it is definitely possible to have an impact on the audience. The themes I use are quite classic but nonetheless





universal, such as love, friendship, nature, and sometimes even death.

MATERIALS

I mainly use Photoshop, but I also use traditional tools in my sketching process, such as 2B pencils or the famous black Pentel brush pen and 110 gsm paper. I also like to add mood by using my trusty watercolors – I recommend the great brands Sennelier or Winsor & Newton for this. My favorite technique remains drawing on paper, where I've always liked the ability to speedily put down a character.

SKETCHING TECHNIQUES

Before starting to work the actual drawing, I will focus more on the silhouette; I always start by sketching some thumbnails. From there, I begin playing with shapes and rhythms. At this point, using gray tones really helps me. Afterwards, I can finally focus on my obsession: the details of the drawing itself. But the first steps are where the ideas come to life. The drawing and colors are only there to add polish. I do not hesitate to redraw again and again before going for the final version.

BOTH PAGES: These are the kind of exercises I like to do in a café with my friends who draw: just doodling some faces and attitudes.

"I APPROACH MY WORK BY TRYING TO EXPRESS AN EMOTION
IN MY SCENES, BY PLAYING WITH RHYTHMS AND SHAPES
IN THE COMPOSITION, WITH LIGHT AND VALUES"





TOP AND NEAR LEFT: I sketched these warriors during my first trip to Japan. It was a blast and I felt so inspired there.

BOTTOM LEFT: A mystical creature – this is a good example of how I roughly capture an idea with pencils and watercolors.

ABOVE: Using a black brush pen might look tough, but this ink has a strong force that I don't

have with pencils or pen. It makes me feel as if I have to put the idea down before it gets away!

TOP RIGHT: When I create a character, I always think about a little story around them. His mood, her attitude, even their job.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A wild little girl. I love to play with other little animals as accessories, or to mix many characters as one.



CONTRIBUTORS



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Oussama Agazzoum attended art training at Campus Ubisoft Casablanca and now works as a character designer for Ubisoft Abu Dhabi.



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Amagoia Agirre is a concept artist, illustrator, and fantasy lover based in Spain, currently working in the video game industry as a 2D and 3D artist.



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Gautier Alfirevic is a French student at l'École Émile-Cohl, hoping to work in visual development and character design after graduation.



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Richard Anderson is a concept artist with over a decade's industry experience, with credits including *Guild Wars*, *Prometheus*, and *Batman: Arkham Knight*.



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Bruno Biazotto is a full-time illustrator at CD PROJEKT RED, as well as a freelance concept artist and illustrator.



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Tano Bonfanti is a self-taught concept artist and illustrator from Santa Fe, Argentina, doing mostly freelance work.



BROCK, NEAL

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Neal Brock is a French comic book author just starting his professional career, currently published by Delcourt for a feminist heroic fantasy comic.



CASTLE, TRUDI

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Trudi Castle has been an artist all her life, with a huge passion for games, drinking coffee, and dinosaurs.



CHAN, AFU

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Afu Chan is a San Francisco-based freelancer, comic artist, illustrator, character designer, and concept artist, currently working for Marvel as a comic artist.



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Dani Díez is a visual developer who loves fantasy and sci-fi art, and is presently working freelance in the film animation industry.



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Andy Estrada was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, before moving to Dallas to pursue a career in the art industry.



GELEV, PENKO

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Penko Gelev is a producer and art director for animations, designing characters and 3D models. He also illustrates books, writes, and draws comics.



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Céline Giglio is a concept artist and illustrator who graduated from an animation school in France, where she studied both 2D and 3D animation.



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Aleksander Bogdanovitch Golovatyuk is a 2D artist, GUI artist, and sculptor based in Saint Petersburg, Russia.



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Andrew Goudreau is an illustrator, designer, and 2D artist currently working in the animation industry in Vancouver, Canada, as a background layout artist.



GUNST, TORSTEN

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Torsten Gunst is a senior 2D artist at InnoGames, Hamburg, where he establishes styles, develops game concepts, and makes a wide array of 2D art.



DE HAAN, LUC

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Luc de Haan is a concept artist at Guerrilla Games, where he mostly creates character concept art for *Horizon Zero Dawn*.



HOBBS, BETH

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Beth Hobbs is a concept artist currently working at Creative Assembly in the UK. Line work and characters are two of her favorite things.



HOROWITZ, ASSAF

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Assaf Horowitz was born and raised in Israel, and currently resides in Los Angeles, working as a visual development artist in the entertainment industry.



JACOB, VIPIN

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Vipin Alex Jacob currently works for Toronto-based animation studio Mark Media as a visual development and 3D modeling/texturing artist.



JAROCKI, MAREK

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Marek Jarocki works as a freelance illustrator. He likes his family, coffee, and most foods.



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Amanda Kihlström is a digital artist who has worked as a graphic artist, game artist, and art director. She's currently a lead artist based in Sweden.



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Antonio "Koveck" García has worked as a comic book artist and freelance illustrator, and now works in video games as a senior concept artist at Ubisoft.



KURILICH, CAITLYN

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Caitlyn Kurilich likes to blend history and fantasy into detailed illustrations and characters, creating small worlds that seem to exist just beyond reality.



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Daniel Landerman is a lead sketch artist at BOND, sketching and illustrating movie and TV poster concepts. He works freelance when time allows.



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Thibault Leclercq is a character designer and an animation and storyboard artist.



LYRA, RAE

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Rael Lyra has spent several years as a concept artist for the video game industry, and also creating smaller works for movies, comics, and illustration.



MACIOCI, VITTORIA

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Vittoria Macioci graduated from a French art school, has illustrated CD covers and a comic for the Opéra de Lyon, and is now working on some comic books.



MARSHALL, MAXX

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Maxx Marshall is a 2D/3D artist working primarily in video games, as well as freelancing for comics, trading cards, marketing adverts, and illustration.



MASCARÓS, RAMÓN

ramonmascaros.com

Ramón Mascarós aims to make art that tells stories and evokes feelings. He's an art director and is always looking for something special in his work.



NIENABER, MICHAELA

artstation.com/artist/mnienaber

Michaela Nienaber works as a prop/environmental concept artist at Blizzard Entertainment.



NUÑEZ, RAMÓN

artstation.com/artist/ramonn90

Ramón Nuñez was an illustrator for clothing before becoming a digital painter for clients such as Paizo Publishing and Cryptozoic Entertainment.



ÖDMARK, OLIVER

oliverodmark.com

Oliver Ödmark was born and raised in a small town in northern Sweden. He's currently working at Rocksteady Studios in London as a concept artist.



PARK, YEWON

yewon-park.info

Yewon Park grew up in South Korea and is currently working for Blizzard Entertainment as a concept artist.



POLIAKOVA, MARIA

artstation.com/artist/tubikraski

Maria Poliakova is a freelance CG artist from Kiev, Ukraine, who really loves to draw different things and explore color.



RICHARD, HUGO

artstation.com/artist/hugo-richard

Hugo Richard is an illustrator and concept artist currently working in the video game industry.



SŁUPECKA, KASIA

artstation.com/artist/kasiaslupecka

Katarzyna "Kasia" Słupecka is an illustrator and concept artist for video games, currently working at Bigpoint Games.



SUAREZ, FERNANDA

fernandasuarez.carbonmade.com

Fernanda Suarez studied fine arts at university and now works as an illustrator and concept artist for Plaid Hat Games.



SUMEIRE, GASPARD

gaspard-sumeire.tumblr.com

Gaspard Sumeire is a storyboarder and animator living in Paris.



SYKOSAN

sykosan.artstation.com

Sykosan is a London-based animator and illustrator, working both remotely and in various studios, for TV, games, film, advertising, and the web.



TAN, ZHI HUI

artstation.com/artist/kudaman

Tan Zhi Hui is a freelance concept artist and illustrator from Malaysia, specializing in character design, concept design, and marketing illustration.



UKARDI, GISELLE

artstation.com/artist/giselleukardi

Giselle Ukardi is a freelance illustrator and concept artist working out of Vancouver, Canada.



WEBBECHER, JAN

artjaw.de

Jan WebBecher is a concept artist and illustrator from Germany, currently working mostly in the gaming industry as a freelancer.



XIA, RUBY

roo-draws.tumblr.com

Ruby Xia is a third-year animation student at Sheridan College, Canada.



YE, MABEL

mabelye.com

Mabel Ye is a seventeen-year-old student from suburban New York, interested in animation and storyboarding.



ZAKO, SUHEB

zakosuheb.tumblr.com

Suheb Zako is a Paris-based freelance artist working in various roles in the animation industry, as well as on his own comic book, *The Dreams Factory*.

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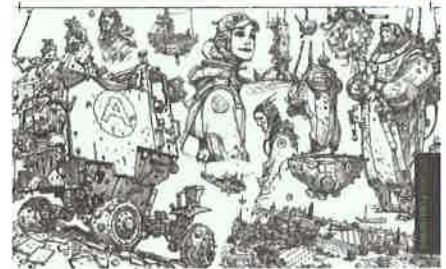
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Even Mehl Amundsen

Freelance concept artist
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