

peer pressure

Our pick of the best reader submissions sent to us this month

Peer Pressure has once again been inundated with a volume of great artworks. The chosen entries this month offer an array of insights into the creative mind, sharing and revealing individual approaches and skills. We always include your email and web address, so interested parties can get in touch.

All you have to do is send us high-quality TIFFs or JPEGs (RGB or CMYK) at 300dpi, which can be printed at a minimum size of 15 x 15cm. Send us low-res versions to advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk – we'll get back to you for higher-resolution work if needed. Alternatively, log on to our forum at www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum.

We cannot provide individual image assessment.

Each issue we select one image to be 'Best in Show', and that lucky person will win a fantastic prize courtesy of The Illustration Source (www.illustration-source.com), which is a great way to get your work seen. So, what are you waiting for?



CHASING RAINBOWS

(ABOVE): "I came across this photo and was struck by the strength and colour of the image, and set about extending these themes to create something fun, lively and magical to play on the trance-like state and passion of the model"

NESTING (RIGHT): "This actually started out as quite a minimal black-and-white piece, focusing more on composition than impact. After returning to it I decided to have a play around with colour and started using various layer techniques. I then started mixing in some vector elements"



Light and colour

NAME: James Fox

EMAIL: james@jamesfox.org

WEB: www.jamesfox.org

James Fox is a 24-year-old designer and illustrator from just outside of Birmingham in the UK. He graduated from the University of Glamorgan three years ago with a degree in Design for Media, and since then he has been working in agencies, putting his skills to use across a wide range of media including print, web, multimedia and flash design.

However, it is illustration where his real passion lies: "I have recently been signed by Advocate and am starting to gain a good client base of my own, and hope to further enhance my commissioned and freelance endeavours until I can, hopefully, realise the dream of turning this into a full-time thing."

His work generally consists of a mix of Photoshop and vector work: "I love the contrast of mixing the two to create something that is quite graphic, yet still retains an air of realism. I am influenced by a wide range of people, both in art and design, and across other media such as music and film, and think this is reflected in my work."

All of his images follow the basic workflow, "from a rough sketch to the creation of the main Photoshop element of the piece – layout, composition, clipping, retouching, colour work, etc. I then save out a flattened version to place into Illustrator to play with some vector elements and lay out some ideas, then copy the vector items back into the PSD to mix in and add any finishing touches."

WE COME ONE: "This illustration was created for use on a variety of promotional items for an exhibition of young artists, to create something that mixed a traditional sense of art with contemporary imagery"



WHERE YOU WERE STANDING (LEFT): "Prior to being introduced to the computer I had been working mostly in table design, lighting and small found object sculptures. My mother had been suggesting for some time that I should try painting, which didn't really interest me, but there was this moment when I was looking for a good desktop picture that I realised I could be making my own backgrounds"

CARBON: "The elements in a piece are usually personal to me in some way, photos of places I have visited or things I have collected," says Saak

Abstract designs

NAME: Eric Saak

EMAIL: ozais@aol.com / AEprints@aol.com

Eric Saak got into using Photoshop when he was promoted to a graphic design position at his father's successful retail signage and display company in 1998. "My parents have always encouraged my creativity, so I looked forward to this new opportunity. I had to learn Photoshop and several other programs used in the printing industry, but having no real computer or design experience, it was challenging at times," he explains.

It was Saak's mother that encouraged him to try painting, something that he eventually got into: "As I was learning more and more at work, I became interested in the idea of creating digital paintings and collages that would become actual works of art on paper. At the time the idea was considered by most artists to be more of a novelty than a 'true' art form. My mother and I started working on a series of digital postcards that eventually turned into a series of prints, which we showed at some local venues."

This was to be his big break: "In January 2001, the prints helped me earn an internship at one of the most respected print makers in the country, Universal Limited Art Editions in New York. I learned a lot about texture and layers, which helped my work to evolve into what it is today."

So what does the future hold? "Currently, I am working on a series of digital prints of mixed media drawings that are a collaborative between me and my partner, Alexis. For more information, please email us at AEprints@aol.com."

WAVES IN RED (ABOVE): "When I think back on it now, it's funny how I was trying to fit into a traditional art culture with a 'new' medium. Some people didn't want to accept the idea that the creative process was the same except that Photoshop had become a new form of canvas and palette"



TAISHU: "I created a selection for the underwater part of the image and used the Add Noise filter to create the look of particles and some additional colour. For some of the wrinkles, I duplicated the layer, set it to Layer Style>Bevel and Emboss, and erased lines to create wrinkles"

**BEST
IN SHOW**
Advanced
Photoshop

Sci-fi selection

NAME: Joe Slucher

EMAIL: slucherj@yahoo.com

WEB: www.joeslucher.com

Joe Slucher learnt the craft through his time at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. In the summer of 2004, he attended the **ConceptArt.Org** workshop in Texas, "where I found enough inspiration to last me a decade". Slucher also used related forums and magazines to help refine his techniques, and during his senior year of college. "Since then my client list has expanded to include T-shirt companies, miniatures manufacturers, computer games and collectable card games," he says. "I'm currently a freelance illustrator, as well as art director for Dark Skull Studios."

My process always begins with thumbnails, unless a client has given me carte blanche. I'll then create a sketch which will be scanned in. The sketch is duplicated on another layer and set to Multiply. The lower layer is roughly painted with base colours and textures before being flattened. There are never more than two layers at a time so that it's more like natural media and the image is more cohesive. I find myself accidentally drawing on the wrong layers if there are more. I know a piece is near completion when I'm zooming in and trying to paint out the lines from the initial sketch."



COAL GOLEM (ABOVE): "The runes were painted on a separate layer with layer style set to Outer Glow. This image was painted with the basic Photoshop brushes"

ENTER THE PUMPKIN (LEFT): "This was a self-promotional piece so it began much differently than normal. I had downloaded and created a vast amount of brushes that I'd never used and they were in complete disarray. Out of this completely abstract process, an image began to evolve. I ended up loving the image, but I noticed that I otherwise would have considered most of the brushes useless for rendering"

ZELEPHANT: "This image was created with photos of zebra skin. I used a baby elephant image as a base, then used the zebra texture to overlay and paint the new skin. This is probably my favorite image... not sure why"



Two becomes one

NAME: Nick Lay

EMAIL: nick.dww@gmail.com

WEB: www.nicklay.info

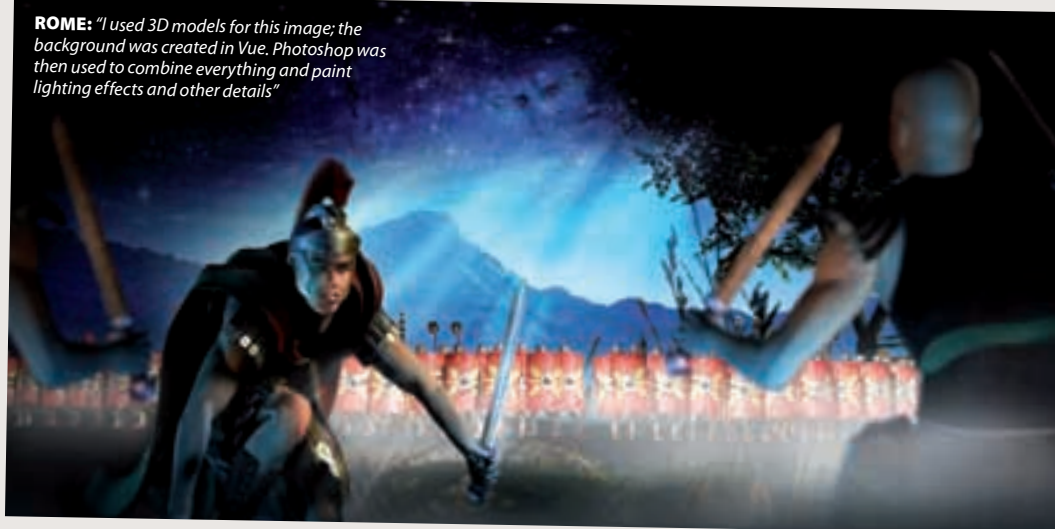
Nick Lay's images came to our attention when he submitted an illustration of a Roman battle scene to our forum (www.advancedphotoshop.co.uk/forum). The comments from other users were so positive that we had to get him in the magazine and see his other creations.

Lay is a Canadian freelance designer, living in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. He has been working in the industry for five years, four years of which were spent at a design firm, and has worked freelance for the last year.



DROG: "This is a combination of a dog and frog. I used a bulldog's face for reference and then painted those features on the frog head. The Liquify tool was also used to create depth and contours"

ROME: "I used 3D models for this image; the background was created in Vue. Photoshop was then used to combine everything and paint lighting effects and other details"



Sponsored by...

Not only is Joe Slucher this month's Best in Show, he has also won a year's full Option 3 membership to the Illustration Source, worth £150, and the Featured Artist slot for February. The Illustration Source Ltd is the newest source of original art, freelance illustrators, photographers, artists and designers on the net. Visit www.illustration-source.com for more information. If you'd like to stand a chance of winning an Illustration Source portfolio, send your images to advancedpshop@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

Image requirements

You'll stand a better chance of seeing your work in print if you adhere to the following criteria: make sure that your images are high-quality TIFFs or JPEGs (RGB or CMYK), 300dpi minimum, and can be printed at 15 x 15cm minimum. Don't forget to also include a small text file detailing how you created your work.

Terms and conditions

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THE PRIZE: Check out The Illustration Source's website to see the portfolios of previous winners of Best in Show

Portraits of the future

NAME: Kirsten Lane

EMAIL: callafae1@yahoo.co.nz

WEB: <http://wynterskye.deviantart.com>

Kirsten Lane started her career by training as a fashion designer, and didn't discover 'serious' digital art until June 2007. However, she did begin using Photoshop at the end of 2005, practising on and off with fanart.

"I live in New Zealand, where digital art is still a relatively 'new' trend," she says. "I've always loved art and it's something my family has always encouraged me to do."

She is self-taught in the program: "I taught myself how to use Photoshop and other programs, but PS is my favourite by far (and there's still so much to learn). I never intended to become a digital artist. I was adamant for a long time to stay traditional, but let's just say the digital medium is somewhat addictive!"

Lane's work appears expert, but she still considers herself to be learning the skill: "Still feeling very new at digital art, I see each of my pieces as an experiment in style and technique, although I do work with a couple of standard techniques, including photomanipulation and digital painting. I've also introduced fractal painting and the beginnings of 3D elements into my recent works; doing only digital painting and creating my own 3D pieces is my long-term goal."

So where does she get her inspiration from? "I get my ideas from almost anywhere; it can be a picture that inspires, or something or someone I see in everyday life to novels I read or TV programmes or movies I see – even to something that wakes me up in the middle of the night thinking 'great idea!'"



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AS THE WORLD FALLS DOWN (ABOVE): "Well, I was hoping this piece would speak for itself – I grieve for the world, is it too late for our home? Or will we save enough of it just in time?"

INNOCENT (FAR LEFT): "This piece is symbolic of how terrible I am with first impressions and what an awful judge of character I can often be, done in my surreal fantasy/sci-fi-type way. My dreams, or rather nightmares, are often plagued by the disastrous relationships I've gotten myself into, which is interesting considering I don't give them much thought when I'm awake"

THE FALCON'AIRE (LEFT): "Wearing so little and being blinded she is so vulnerable, and she relies on her falcon's eyes to see through. We see her as she really is and can't deny her, while she thinks of a better world, a world where people will understand and they'll be no more lies"

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