



Moin!



(disclaimer: this
photo of me is
really really old)

About me

- he/him
- Art director and game director
- 9 years game art teacher
- Freelance character designer
- Doesn't use adobe products
- Sucks at drawing environments
- Has absolutely zero tolerance for AI nonsense
- Brought a pumpkin

1. I talk fast and show a lot of stuff. But don't worry, you can get the presentation on my homepage in the Bonus section.
2. Happy to answer question afterwards.
3. Yes, I'm going to give you some insights on how I work as an artist later.

But first let me talk to you as an art director.

Part 1



Yeah, sure, honey.

... or why you are like super stupid
for drawing stylized art.



Excellence in the craft?

(Craft: skill + technology)



Nintendo®

**GRAPHICS SO REAL
YOU'LL FORGET IT'S
EVEN A GAME**

*Hours of entertainment await you
In this diverse adventure!*

**The craft
was
always
about the
pursuit of
realism.**

Film makers having to justify making animated movies (kids stuff, low art)



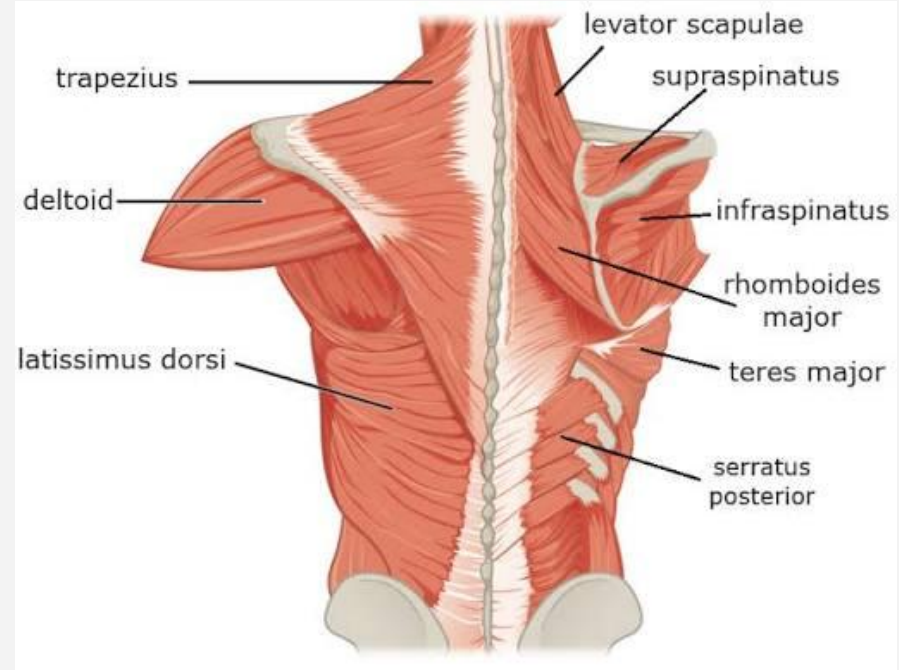
Moving from 2D to 3D is technological progress, simulation as benchmark



Name that muscle, you impostor!



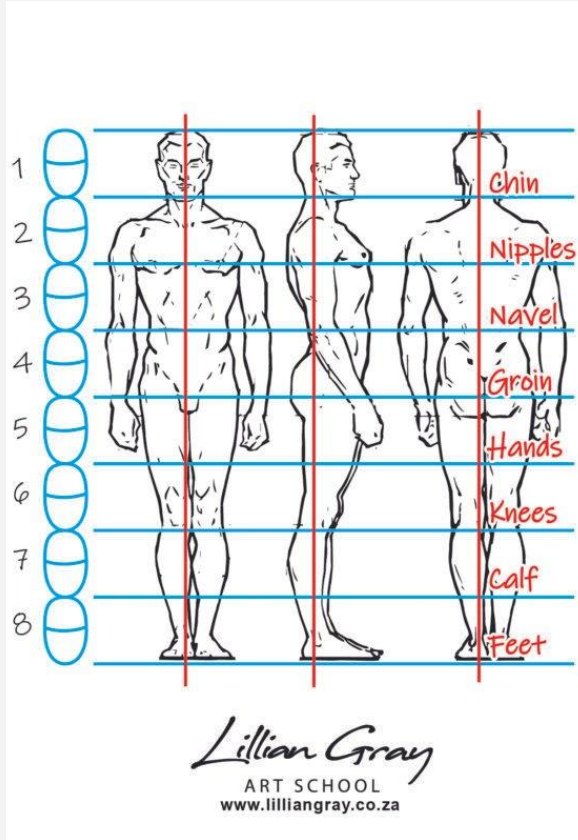
Art teachers coaching you on drawing "from life", Picasso was drawing perspective wrong



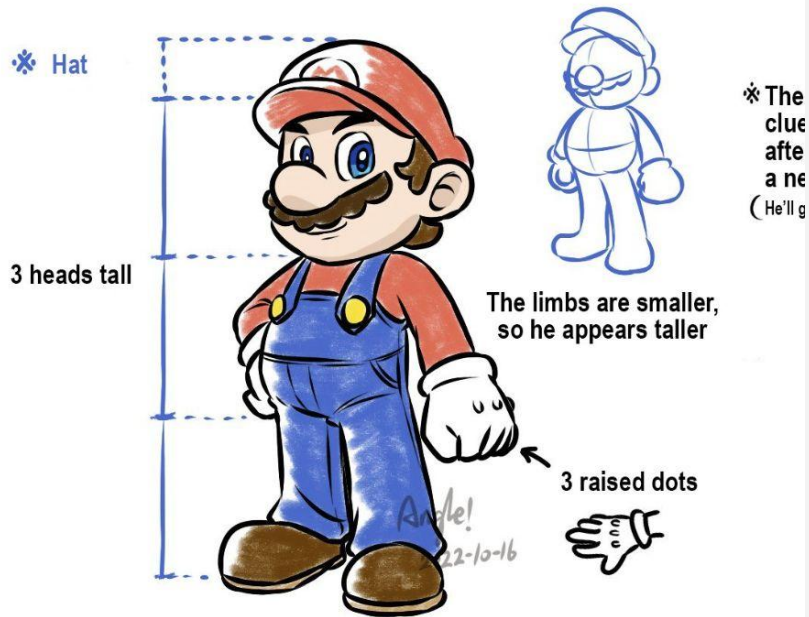


Even your disapproving parents finally see you have talent when your drawings are more realistic...

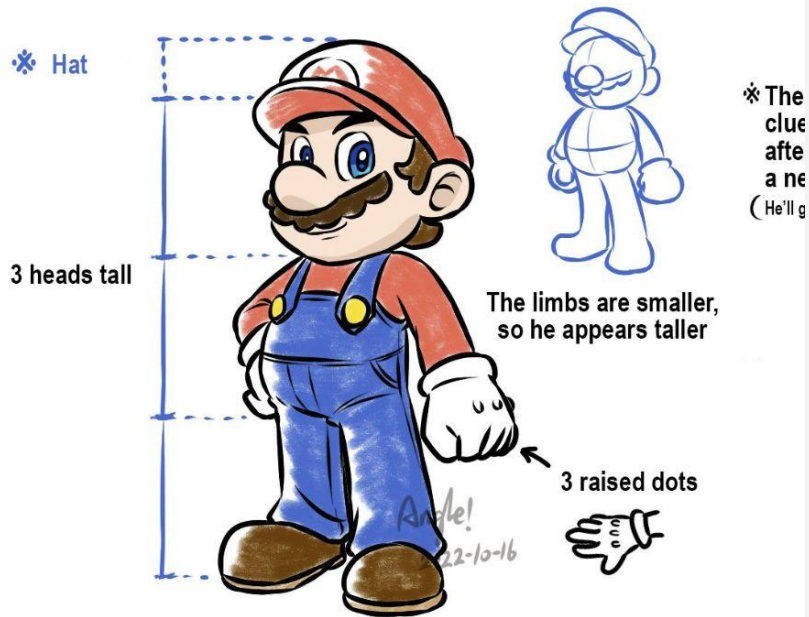
Every how-to-draw book ever has this:



**The
CORRECT(!)
way to draw a
figure is to
make it 7-9
heads high**



Confused expr
..and you draw a guy only 3
heads tall???



Confused expression
 ..and you draw a guy only 3
 heads tall???

Ewww! What is your deal???



(you know that isn't true)





**You know
what you like
and what
drives you**

You know that there is nothing inherent about realistic characters that makes them more appealing to audiences

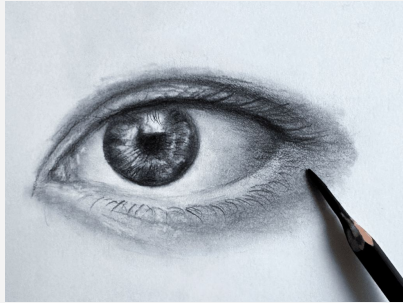
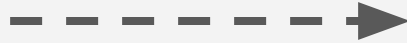


You know that there are whole nations
that do not have that hangup.



Rule for excellence in the craft:

long gap = bad
short gap = good



Even your disapproving parents
know that much

Honey, your drawings have
improved so much.

Really impressed with how
realistic your art looks, boy.



I was so worried you would never become a
viable artist, but your art almost looks like
photographs, so lets have children.

**But what
when you
don't want to
pursue
realism?**

**But what
when you
don't want to
pursue
realism?**

**...when you
don't want to
capture
existing
reality but
design a
new one?**



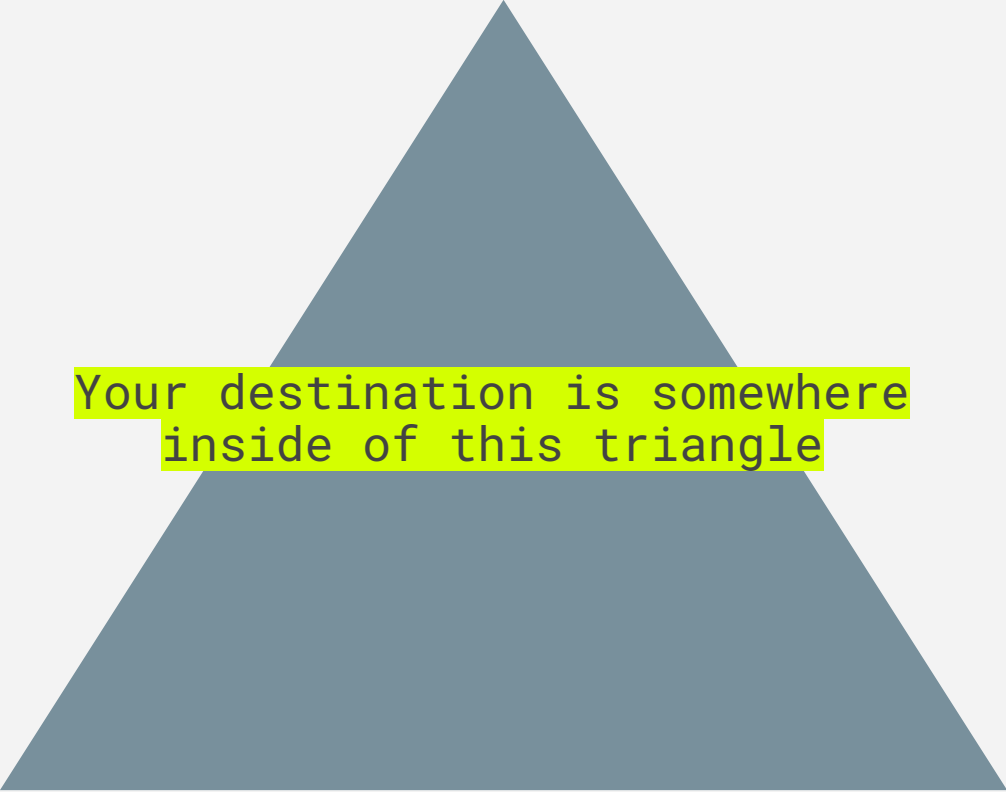
What then????

Part 2



Visual Language

... or how to define targets for
excellence in stylized design.



Your destination is somewhere
inside of this triangle

Step 1

**Redefine
realism not as
a goal, but as
an ingredient.**

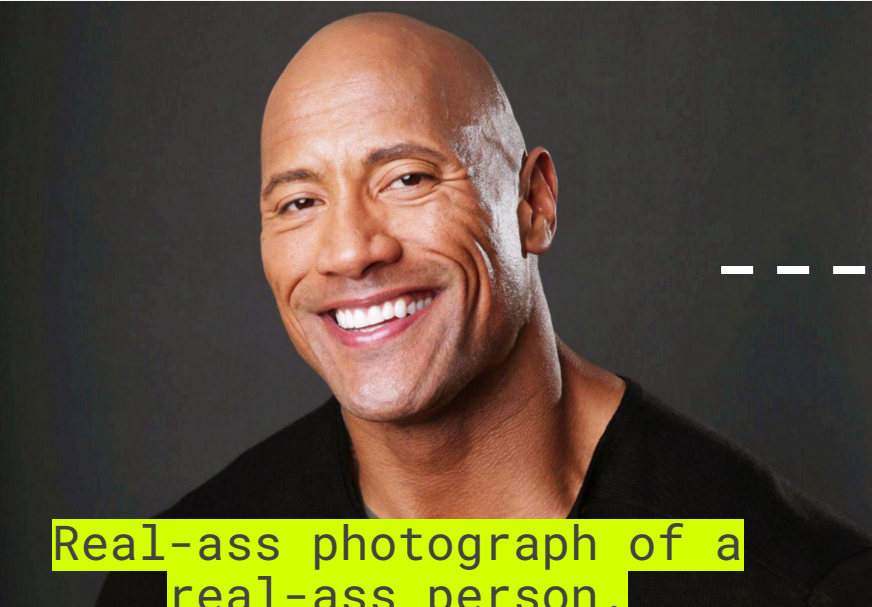
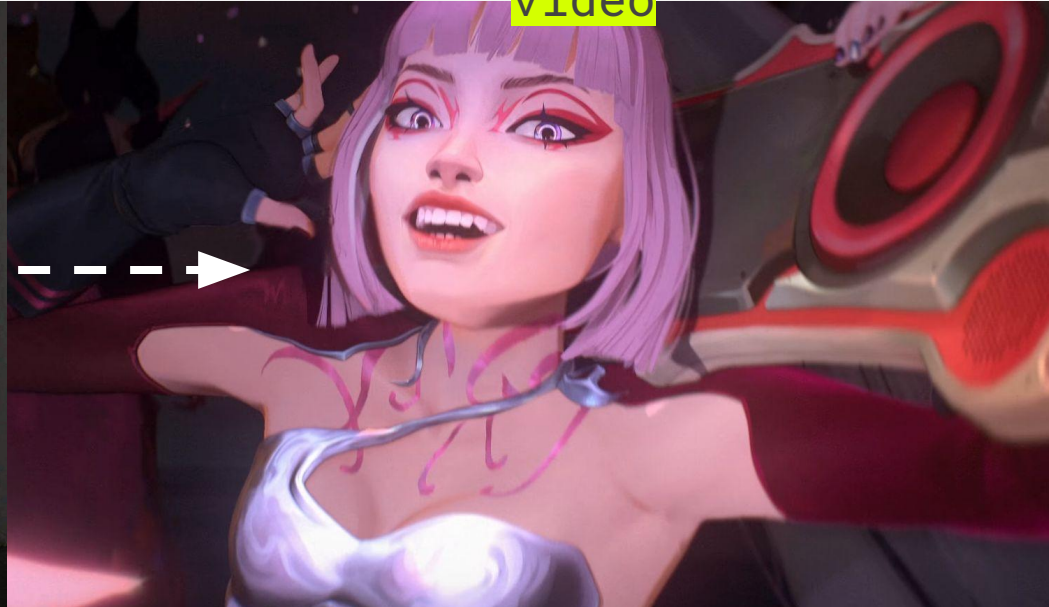
Kids, stop fighting!



Achieving realism is impressive

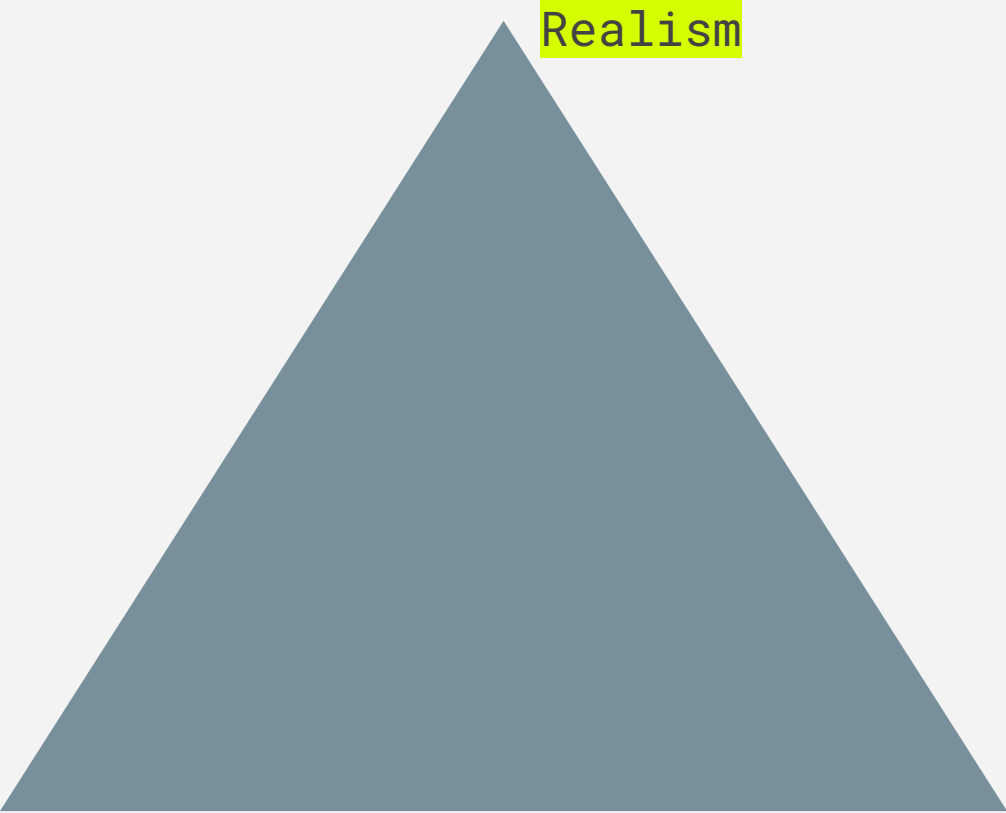
The sensation of the real can be quite powerful

Frame from recent Fortiche music
video

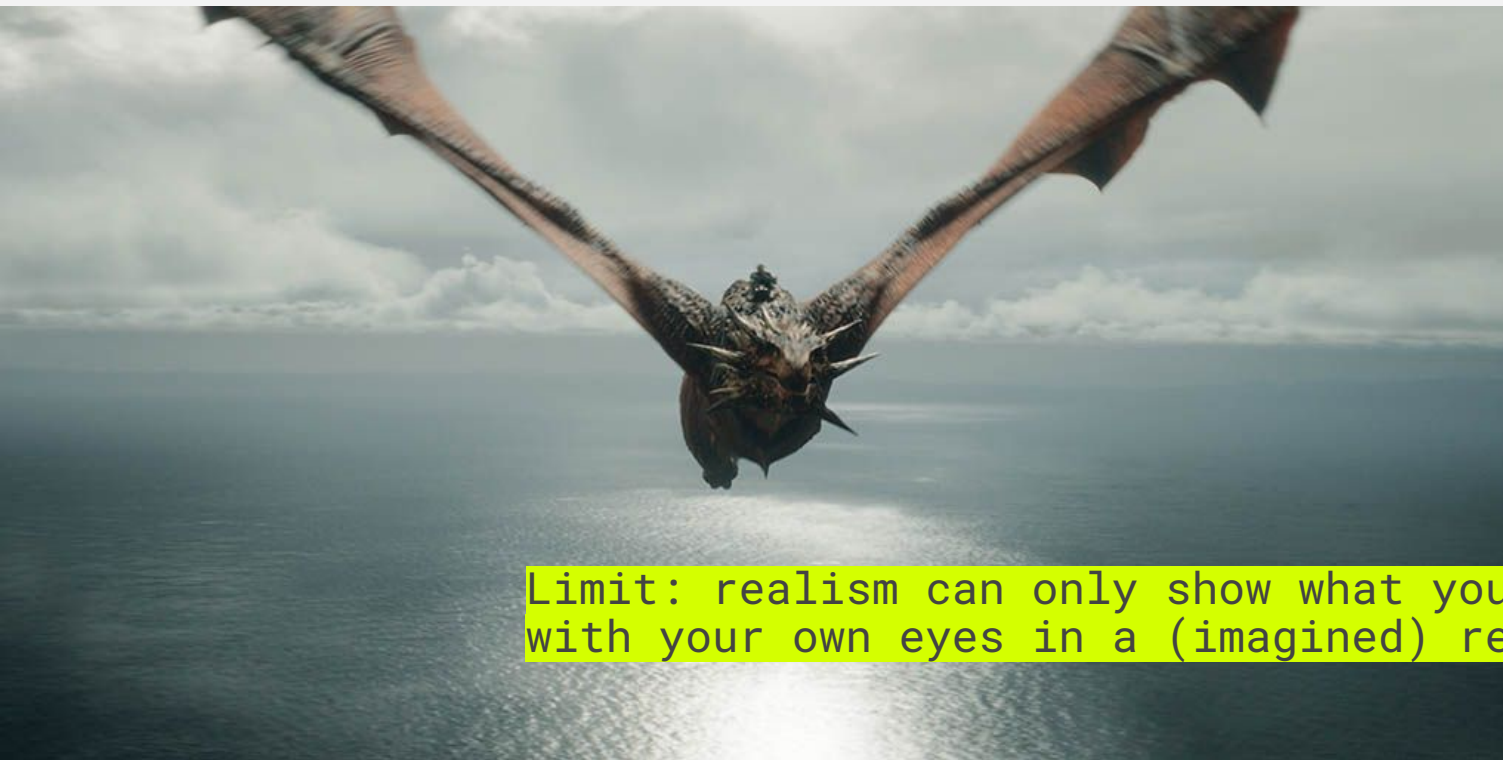


Real-ass photograph of a
real-ass person.

You tell me who has more realistic teeth!



Realism



Limit: realism can only show what you would see with your own eyes in a (imagined) reality.

...but there is so much more:
concepts, feelings, non-visual sensations,
visual information beyond the target medium

Realism can show you a person in pain, artefacts of pain, but not pain itself



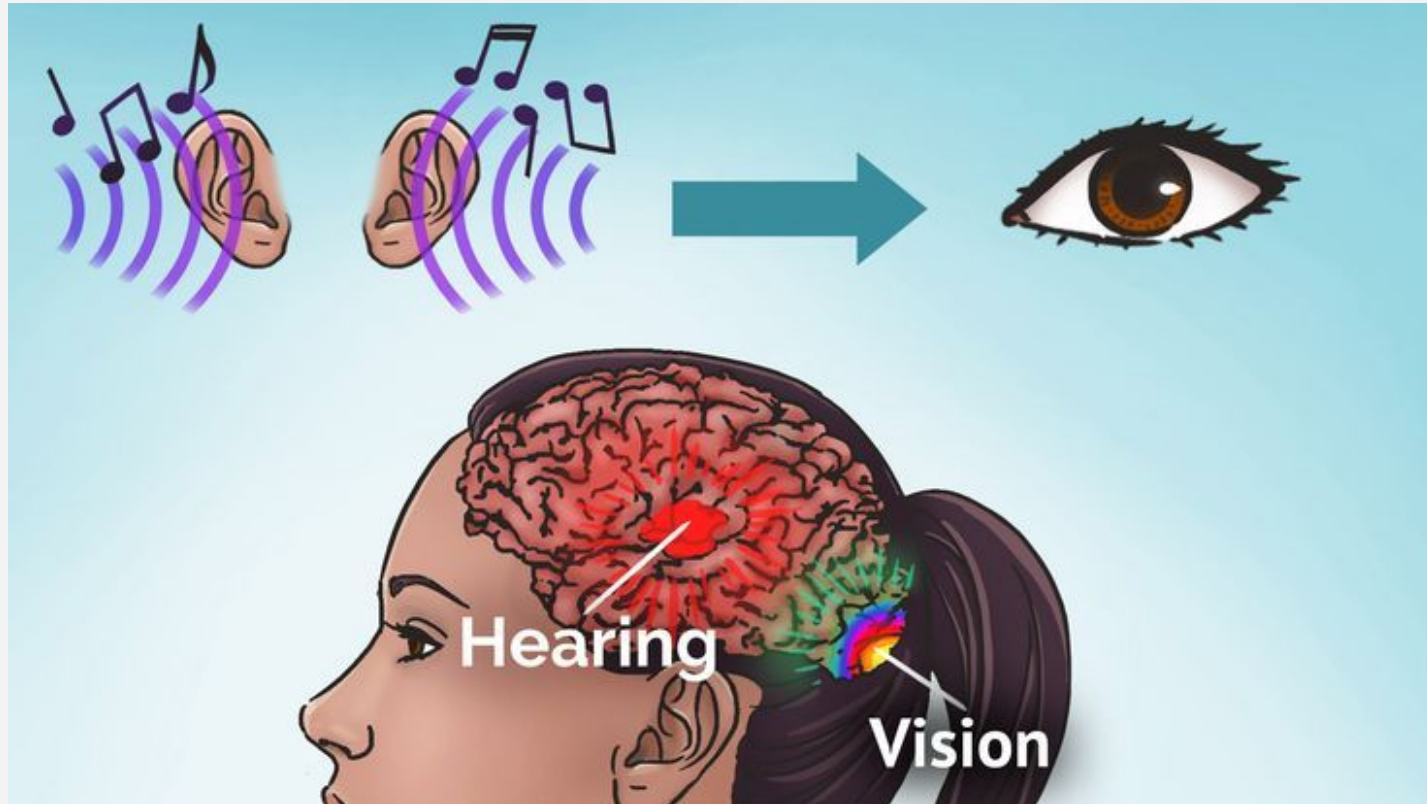
Ability to stylize can, tho.



Ingredient 2

Voluntary synesthesia

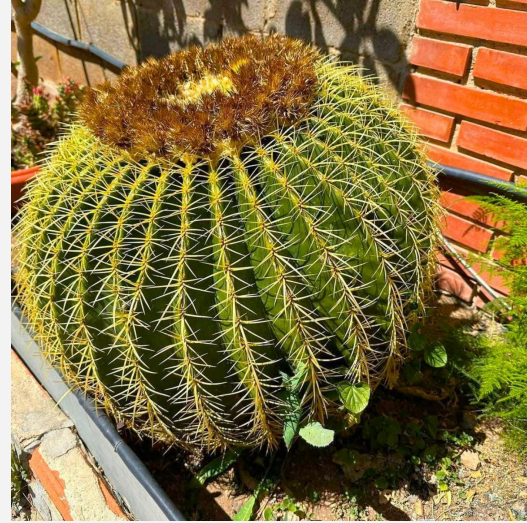
Synesthesia is involuntary cross stimulation of the senses. Hearing colors, smelling sounds and such.



Which of these objects is hostile?



Round and smooth



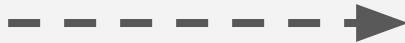
spiky

Oh, good, he brought the pumpkins back into play.

Which of these Mega-Man characters is hostile?



Round and smooth hair



Spiky hair

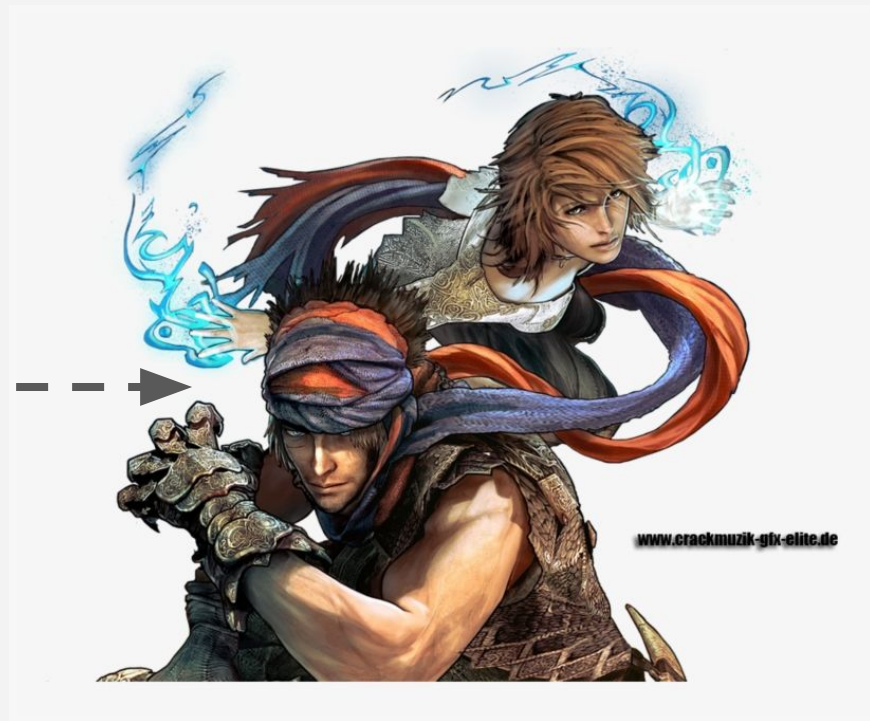
Cold bastard



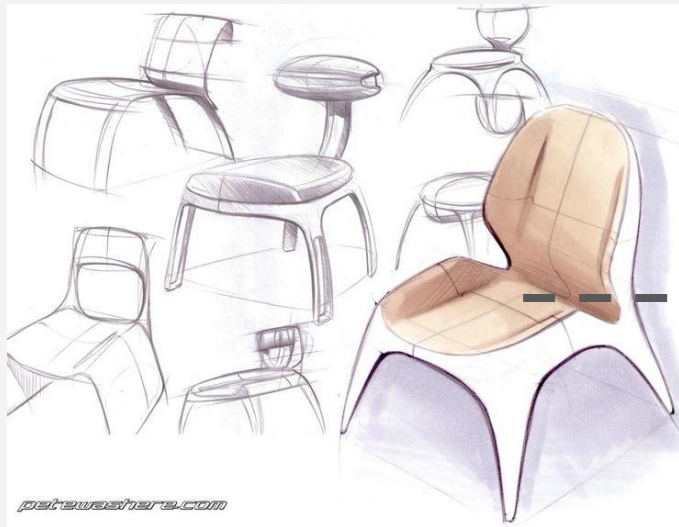
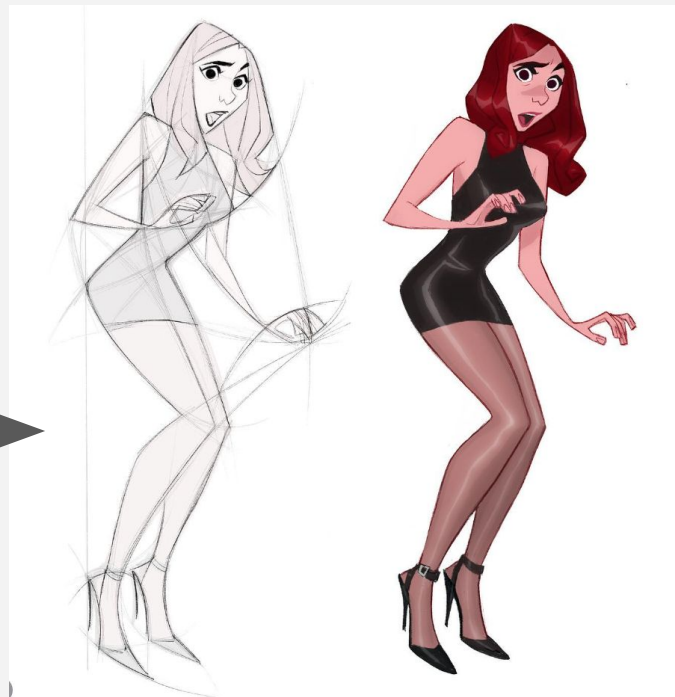
Hot head



kinetic brush stroke



...transferred to character
movement

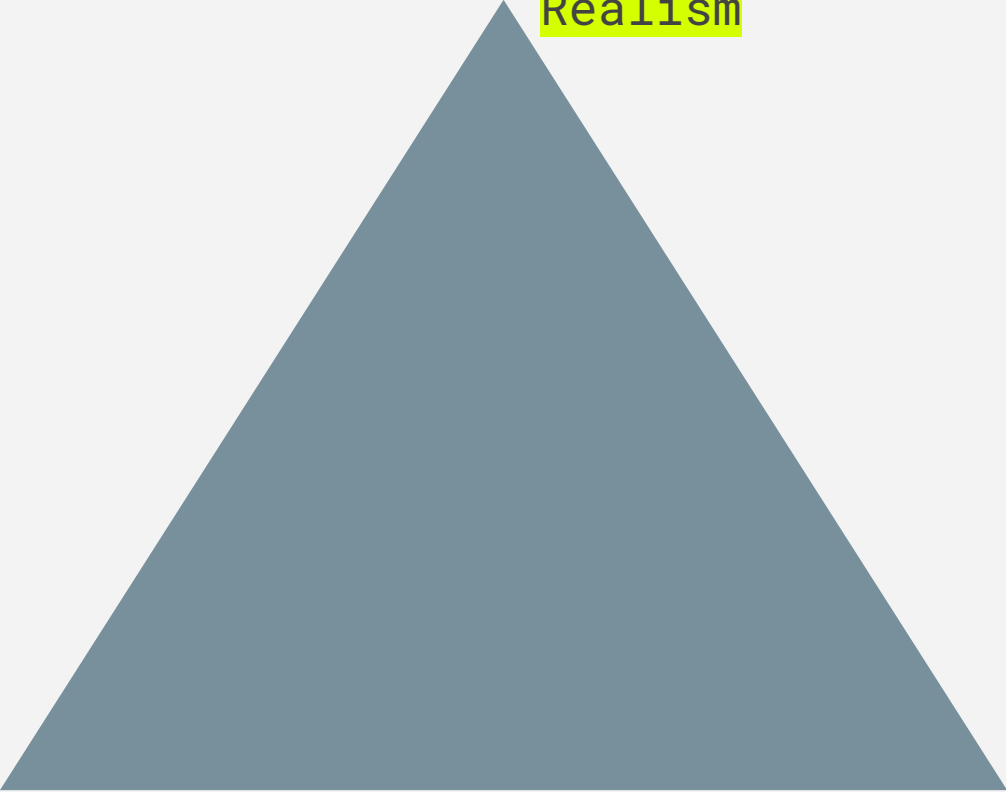


Attractive connected lines
and shapes

...transferred to character design

Look for references beyond other character designers:

- your own experience
- nature
- Fashion design (check out moodboards)
- Architecture
- Interior design
- Object design



Realism

Sensory transfer

Ingredient 3



Coded language /
symbolism





You have to know them, even if sometimes, you can see where they are coming from.



Sometimes the origin has
been lost in translation

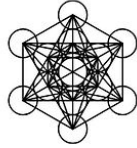


Some symbols are
completely arbitrary

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Magritte
Lunpi

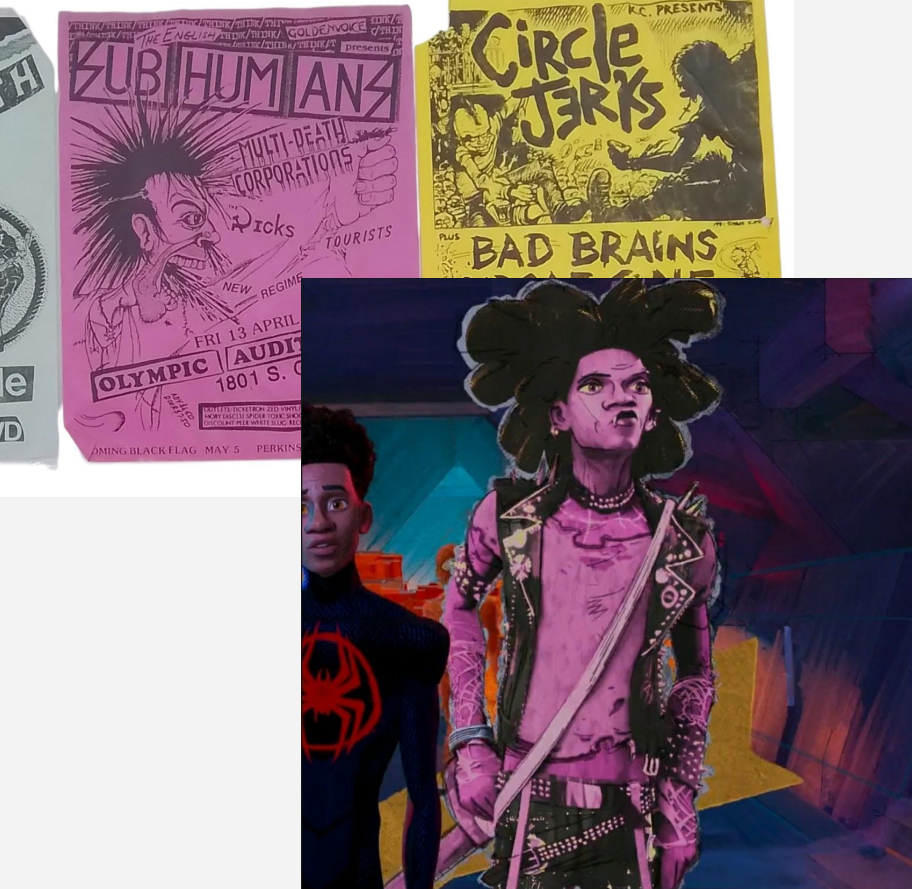
STREAM AND ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE."

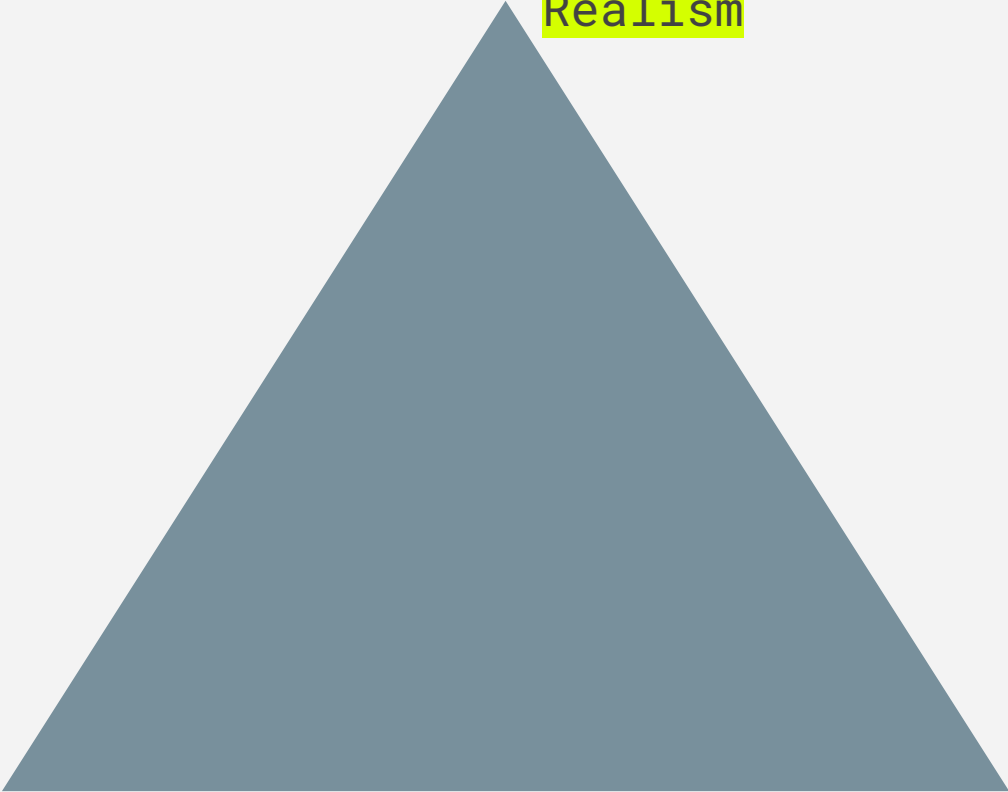


Symbols can not
just be seen, they
have to be known.

Do your research,
grow a library.

...symbolism includes references to other media and art styles





Realism

Coding/Symbolism

Sensory transfer



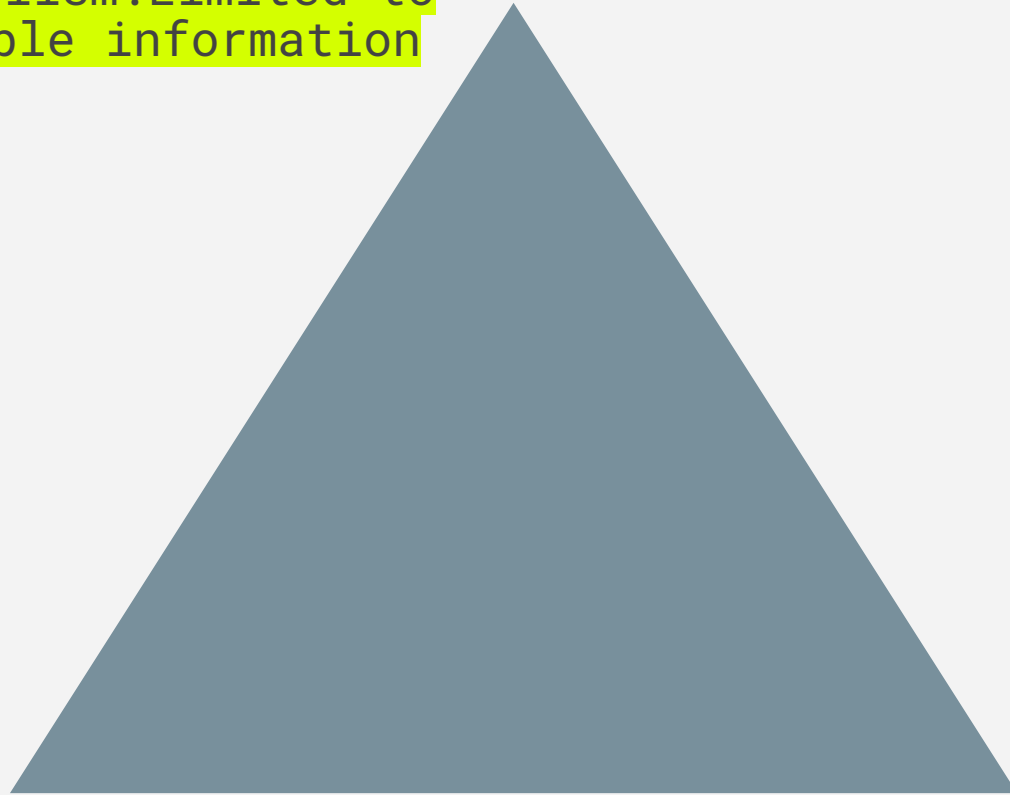
Realism

Coding/Symbolism

Sensory transfer



100% realism: Limited to
observable information



100% symbolism:
Not visual at all
(just text)



100% sensory transfer:
Too abstract

Realism



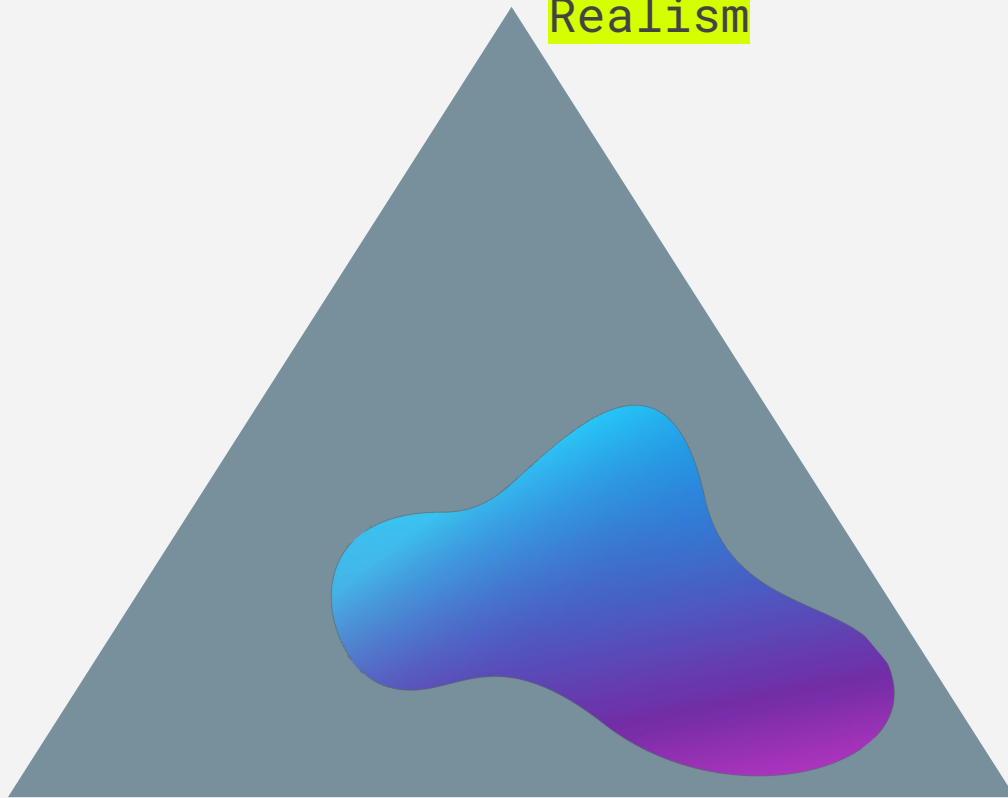
Coding/Symbolism

Sensory transfer

Realism

Coding/Symbolism

Sensory transfer





Problem solving for production limitations
(constraints for moving inside triangle)

Signature style
(is a byproduct/outcome of navigating the
triangle)

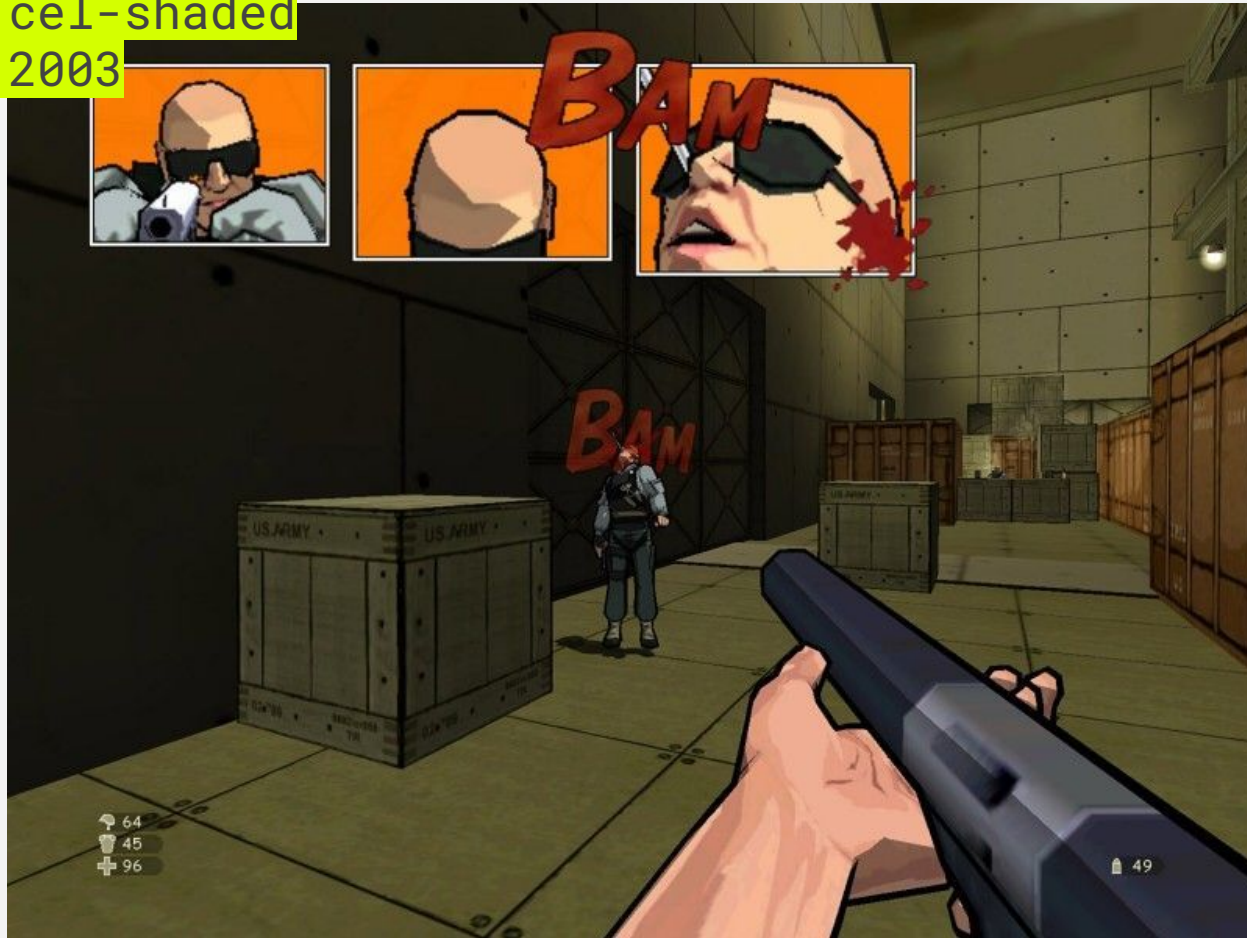
Part 4

The craft

... or how modern technology gives
you access to the whole-ass
triangle.



Realtime cel-shaded
graphics 2003



Realtime cel-shaded
graphics 2025



2D+3D hybrid solutions are much more seamless now.



Mixed media can now happen inside the digital space.



Stylized design can be produced and
RE-produced in astonishing detail

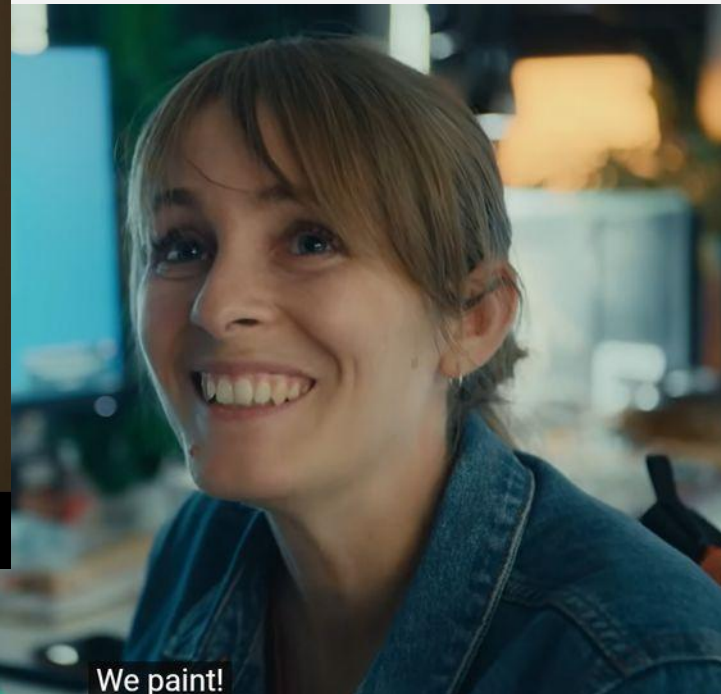


High fidelity did not become less work, tho...

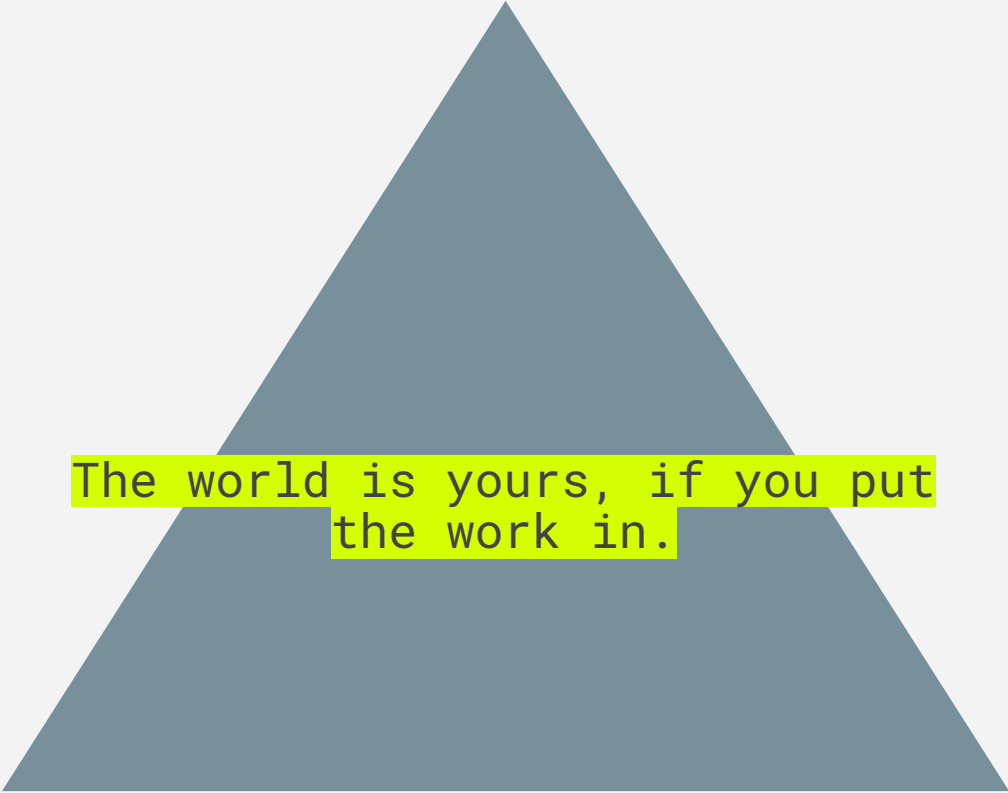


ARCANE

All rights reserved Copyright Riot Games.
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We paint!



The world is yours, if you put
the work in.

Part 4

How I do...

... or how i do. What?
I don't have clever lines for
everything. It's late, I wanna go
to bed. Leave me alone.



Prelim line drawings, doing them less and less

BLUE ONI STEP BY STEP



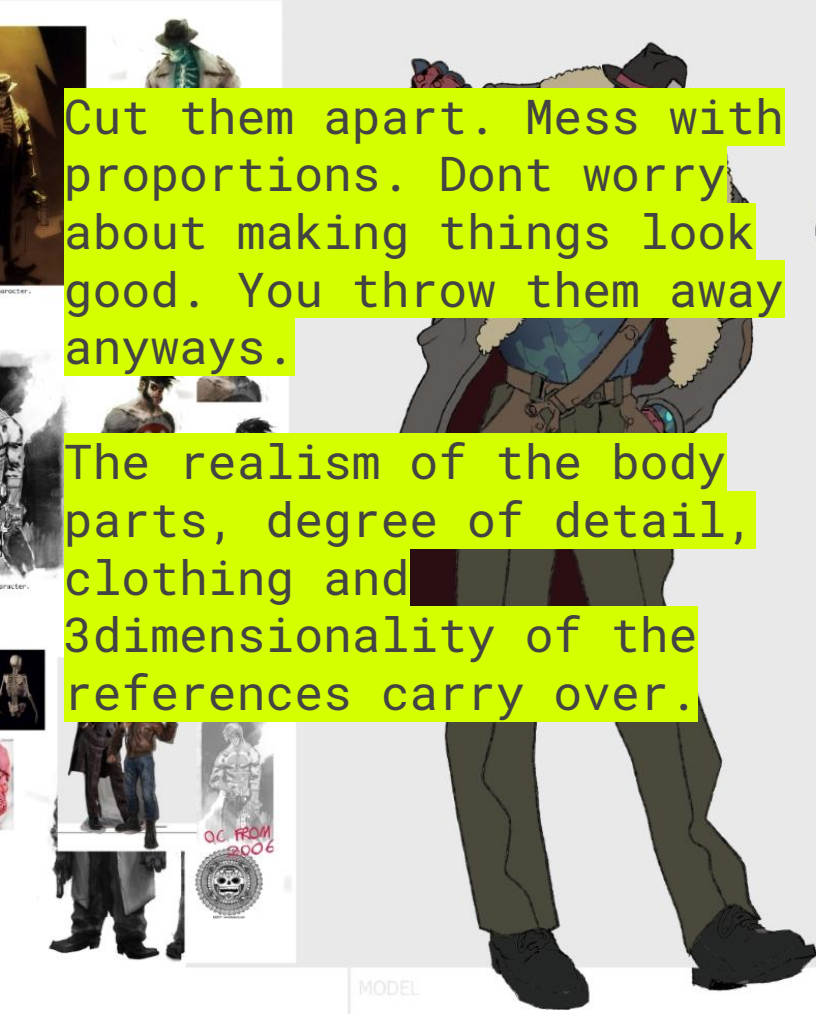
Separating rough line objects via color helps with early readability

Taking photo references and bashing them into stylized designs is the very often the first step.



Cut them apart. Mess with proportions. Dont worry about making things look good. You throw them away anyways.

The realism of the body parts, degree of detail, clothing and 3dimensionality of the references carry over.



MODEL

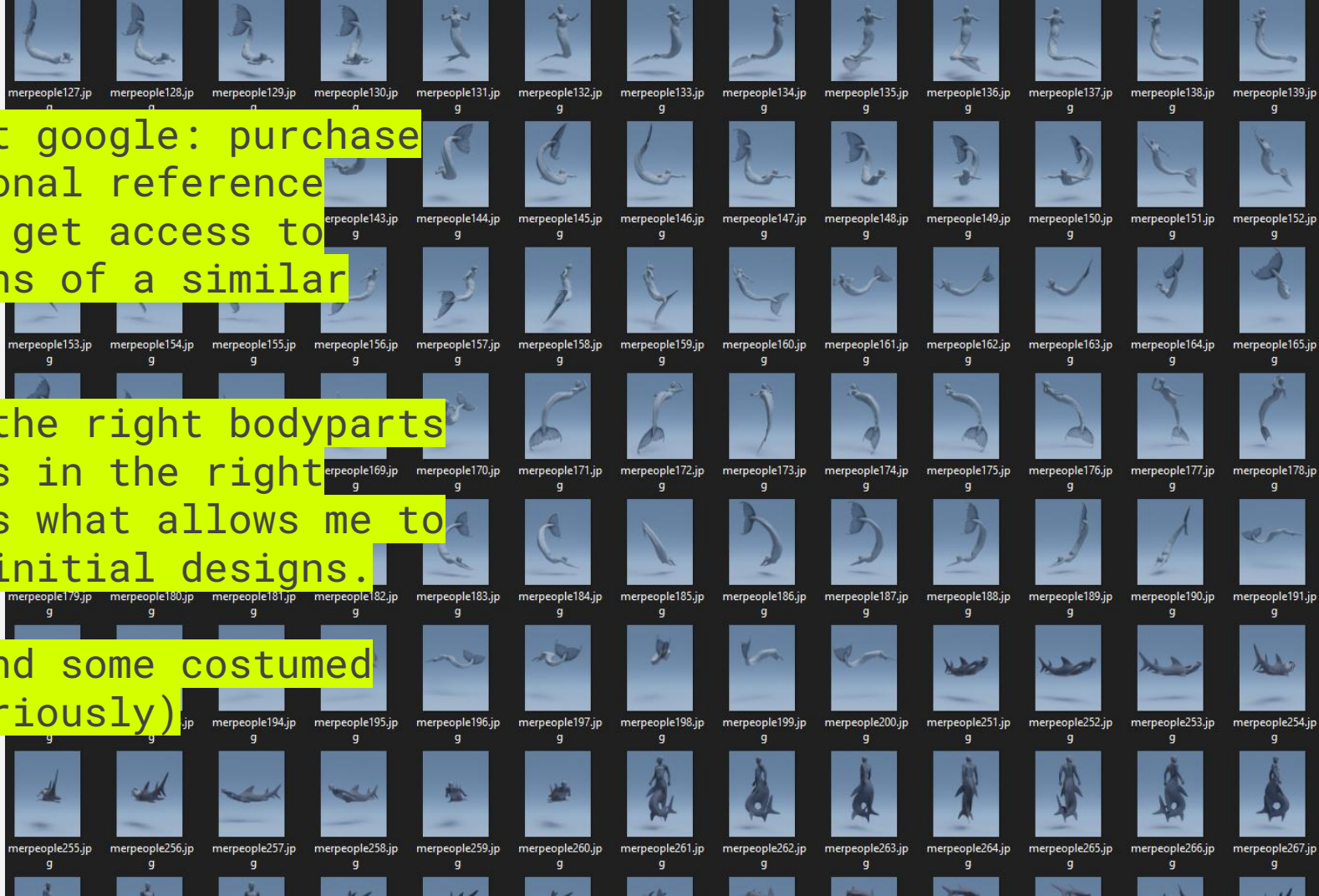
VARIANT

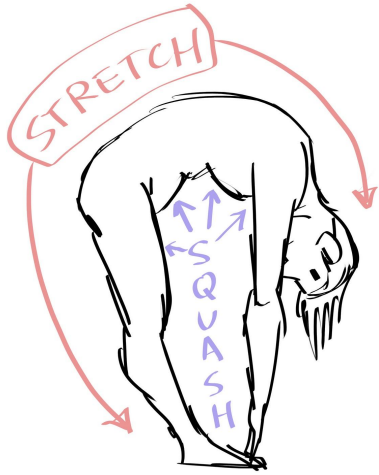
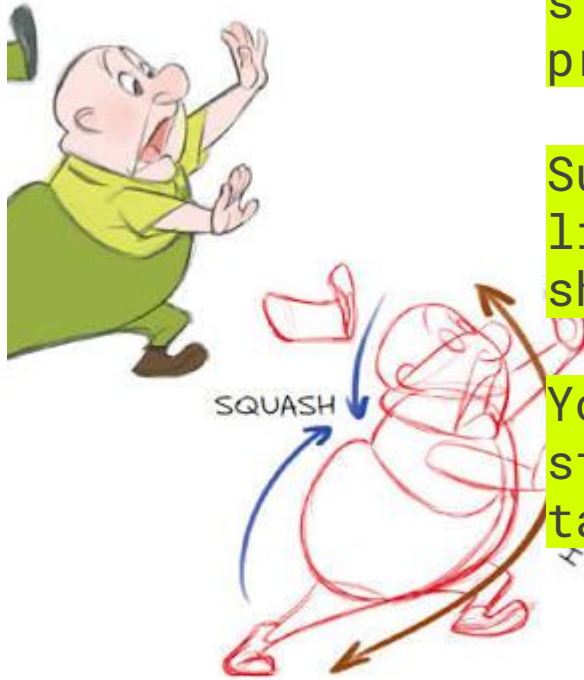
AN
AL

Dont just google: purchase professional reference packs to get access to variations of a similar model.

Finding the right bodyparts and poses in the right angles is what allows me to bash my initial designs.

(also find some costumed ones, seriously)





In your draw-over apply stylized linework practices.

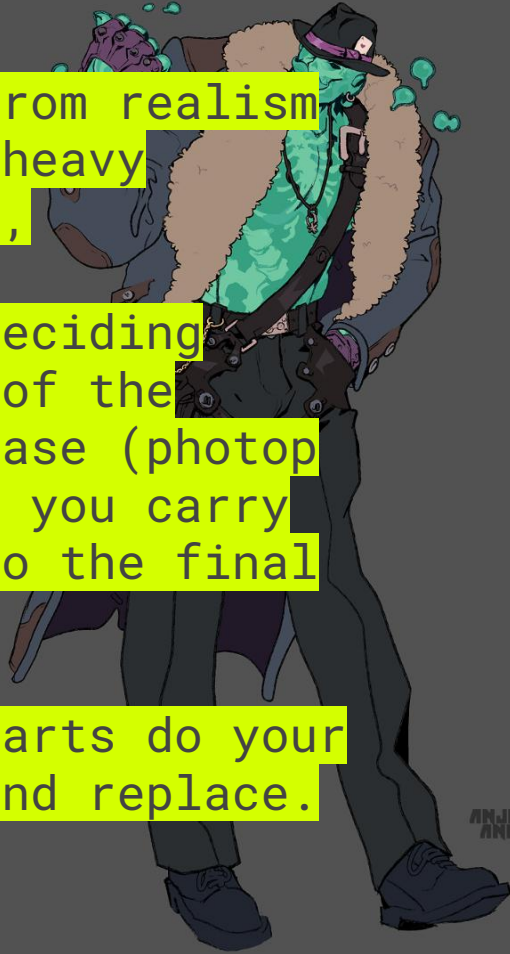
Such as Stretch&Squash, lineweight, follow through, shape language.

You also choose a rendering style, that is not targeting realism.

You start from realism
and end in heavy
stylization,

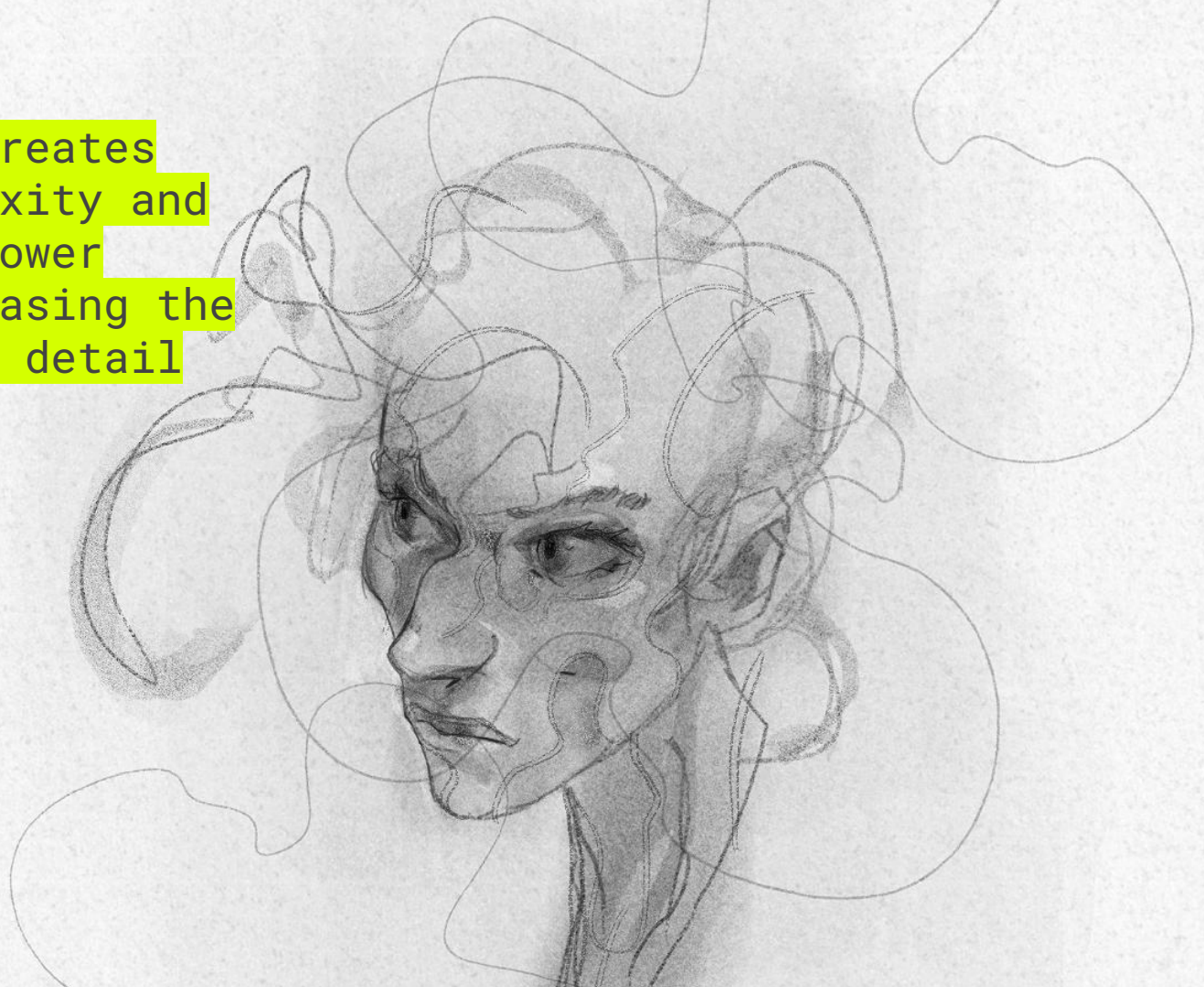
carefully deciding
which part of the
realistic base (photop
references) you carry
forward into the final
designs,

and which parts do your
transform and replace.



ANJIN
ANNOT

Artefacting creates
visual complexity and
stylization power
without increasing the
actual design detail



Your design needs to be promising in every step. You will never “fix” a design that doesn't click now in a later step.

Only move to lines when your sketch is clicking.

Only move to colors when your lines are clicking.

Make sure you care before going in further.



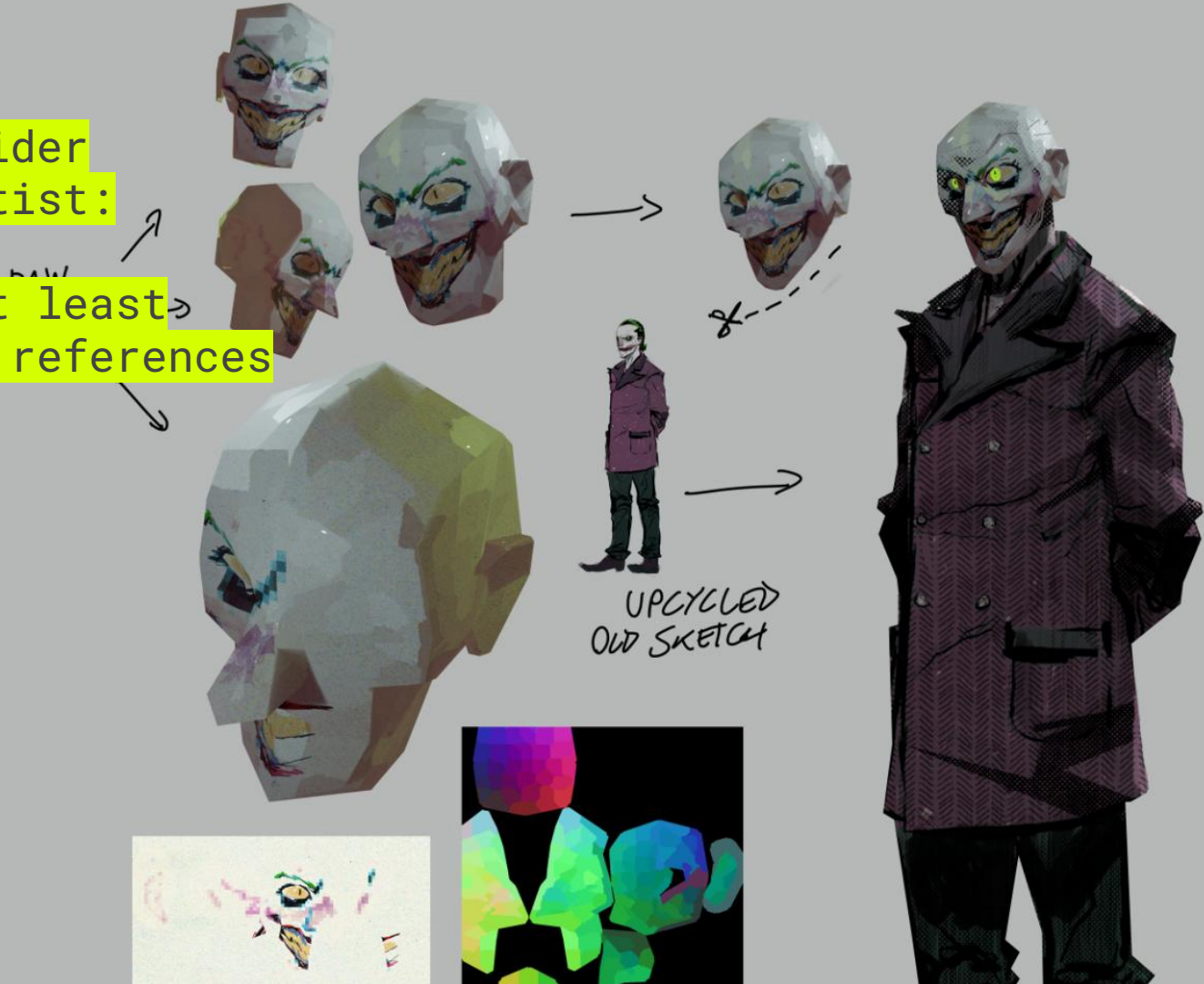


You dont have to go through all the steps in teh same order tho. How about being happy with the cel shading first, then moving to detailing?

Just build your confidence each step.

Even if you consider yourself a 2D artist:

Learn Blender. At least enough to create references for yourself.



Divest from Adobe.
Cancel today. GTF0.

Use Clip Studio Paint... it
is by far the superior
software for drawing and
painting. (not so much
photo editing and
3Dtexturing tho)

Or use Procreate for a more
streamlined program (tablet
only tho)



If I want to keep photo elements from your bash in the final illustration, I make sure they are licensed...

And style them into a specific media style, such as print, pixel, tones or similar.

(Don't listen to me. If you can make clean photos work in your bash, go for it.)

Clef

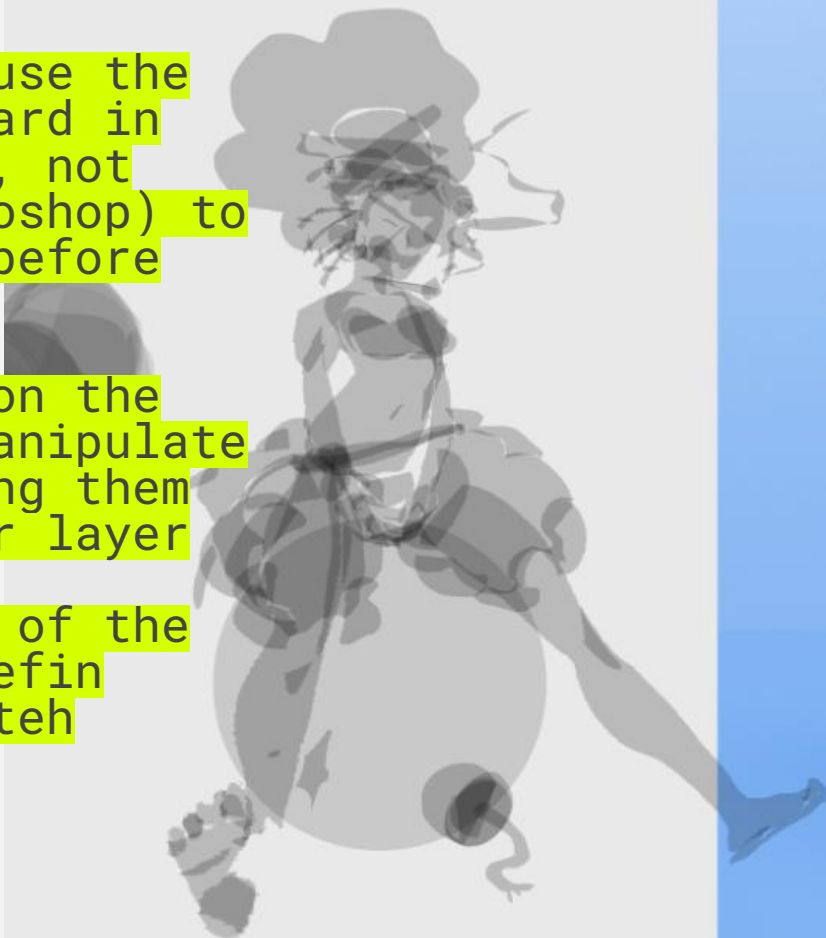
PUNK-VIBE
CHARACTER
EXPLORATION



Alternatively, I use the fill lasso (standard in Clip Studio Paint, not available in Photoshop) to block out shapes before drawing.

I add new shapes on the layer above and manipulate them before mashing them down to the master layer

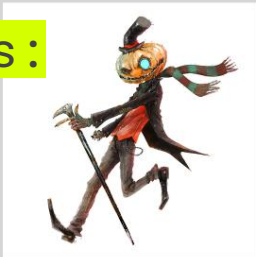
The lower opacity of the shapes helps me define things inside of the silhouette.



Like this:



Or like this:



Oh, god, not the pumpkin AGAIN!!! What is his problem?

Part, done already



TYSM

Find me and say hi!