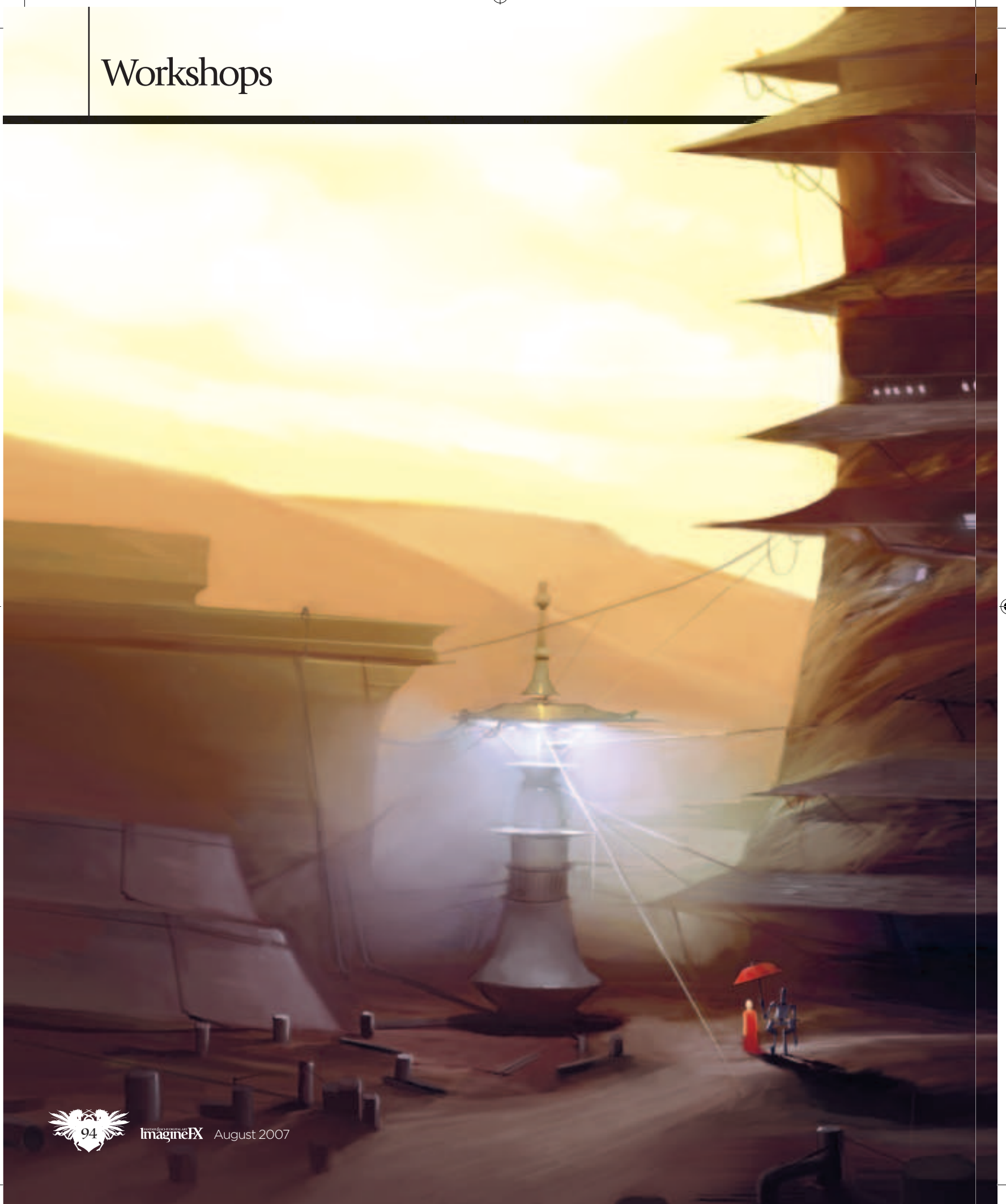


# Workshops



Artist  
**PROFILE**

**Thomas Scholes**  
COUNTRY: US



Thomas first got into art three years ago, when he started

experimenting digitally, and quickly fell in love with it. He's largely self-taught but is currently prospecting for mentors. He describes his favourite artists as "anyone who does their own thing and can express it well to others." [www.crayonboxofdoom.blogspot.com](http://www.crayonboxofdoom.blogspot.com)

**DVD Assets**

The files you need for this workshop are on the DVD in the Thomas Scholes folder in the Workshop section.

**SOFTWARE:** Photoshop CS3 (demo)

# Photoshop ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPT ART

**Thomas Scholes** explores visualisation methods, tricks of the trade and editing processes to create a fantasy landscape

**C**onstantly expanding and experimenting with your methods, subject matter and discipline is important. All arts are connected; you'll even find that elements within music have parallels with the visual arts. If you aren't motivated or are in a slump, change the variables and experiment. Not only is the variety refreshing, you'll also be able to apply what you learn to your core interests. Here, I'll show you a few methods I use

for keeping visualisation fresh as well as some other tricks of the trade.

I believe no matter what field of art you are in, good design is important. Regardless of final intent, a good-looking product will get not only the product recognised but you as well. Shapes play a major role in design and are the bread and butter of my visualisation methods and experiments. I often find the initial creation with these basic shapes to be more enjoyable than any other part of the

process; this is where life is born and worlds are created, and this is what interests me and drives me. In comparison, the rest is hard work. I recommend you find what drives you and your progress will never stop. I want to stress that each painting is a learning experience. If you're worried about making portfolio pieces, try to stop stressing, and relax. Be passionate and enjoy your art and you'll have a much better portfolio, not to mention life. ➤➤

## 1 Shape play in silhouette

I start my initial sketch with a Squished Round brush, akin to a Palette Knife. I find the edges that a normal round brush creates aren't satisfactory for laying in shapes, especially man-made subjects. I only have an inkling of what I'm about to create; it's about searching for interesting shapes and a suitable composition.

Within these basic shapes I start to visualise a structure and surrounding walls. This method of working is similar to seeing objects in clouds or in Rorschach inkblots, only taken a step further. I find this method incredibly enjoyable and it enables me to see things I couldn't deliberately plan. Some control and variety within the method is necessary to prevent your visualisation from becoming stagnant and too similar.



*Shortcuts*  
**Hardness settings**  
Shift + [ and Shift + ]  
I use this constantly to control the hardness of round brushes and round variants.

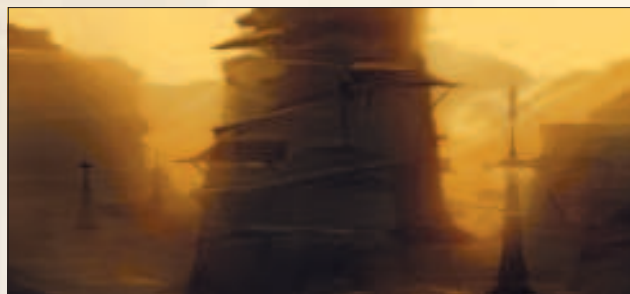
## 2 Canvas as brush itself

With my basic shapes I sometimes like to employ another method for visualisation. This involves duplicating certain shapes – or even the entire canvas – flipping and/or transforming these shapes, playing with non-destructive layer modes, such as Lighten or Darken, and repositioning them within the frame to create yet more interesting shapes, all while keeping the composition in mind.

It's best to use this method when your picture is still achromatic or monochrome, or with similar coloured shapes, because often diverse hues don't mix suitably. The lantern shapes in my initial sketch were created by merging a duplicate of the larger structure together on a Lighten layer.

## 3 Atmosphere and colour

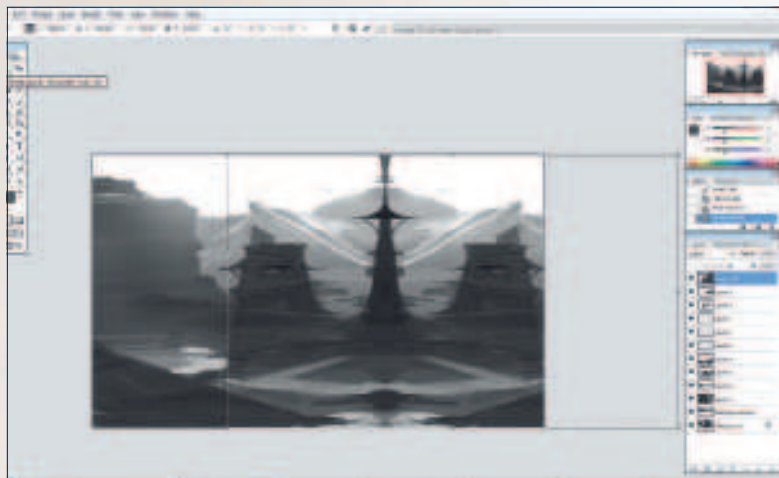
Before adding colour I switch to an Airbrush, 0 per cent Hardness and 10 per cent Manual Flow. Using this brush I gently reduce contrast in the background, softening tones and edges – adding to the illusion of atmosphere. I apply colour first with a Multiply layer and a flat orange colour. Then with a soft light layer of similar colours I play with tones and lighting, wrapping the light around rounded shapes to help me render later on. This is topped off with an Overlay



layer just to get the intensity where I want it. I'm keeping things monochromatic at this stage. I know I want to add a dominant orange to the painting, but I'm planning on contrasting this with smaller areas of competing hues, including the artificial light source of the lamp and perhaps some windows on the structure.

## 4 Initial rendering

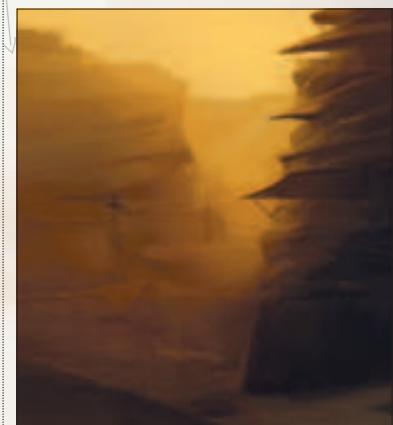
I start rendering with only colours found within the canvas, switching to a round brush for a smoother and more accurate feel. At this point, everything is composed of the same general red rock material and is lit by a single yet diffuse light source – the sky. Using the same method as described in step 2, you can save yourself a lot of time if you utilise the painting you've already done and merge it with areas you have yet to render.



## PRO SECRETS

### Flow and Manual Opacity

Unless you have a specific application that requires low Opacity, avoid it – it takes too much time and leaves telltale digital brushstrokes. Instead in your Brush Preset window under Other Settings, set brush Opacity to respond to your stylus's pressure. This gives you more control over how much paint you apply.

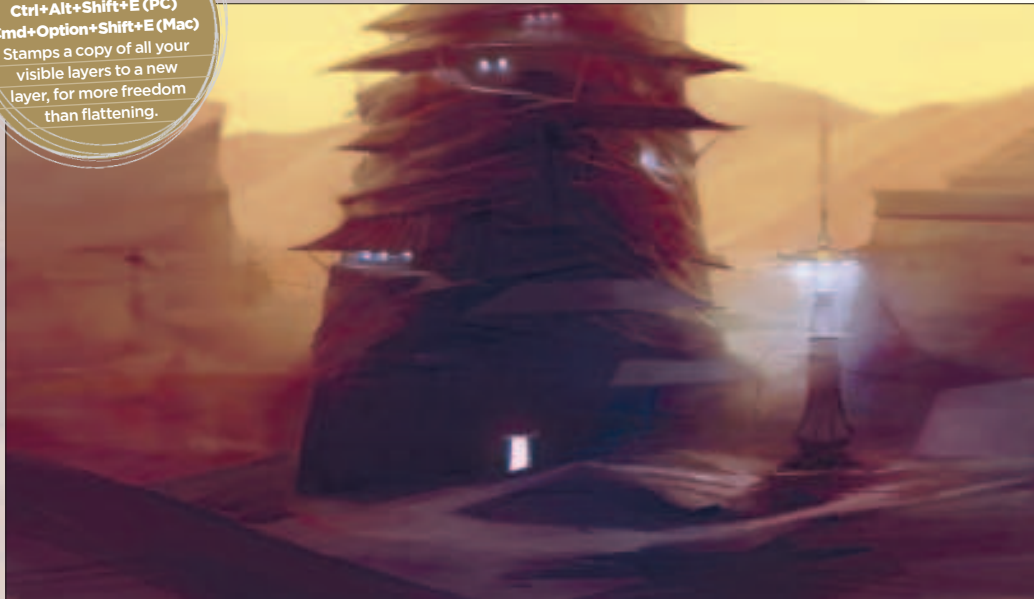


# In depth Environmental concept

## Shortcuts

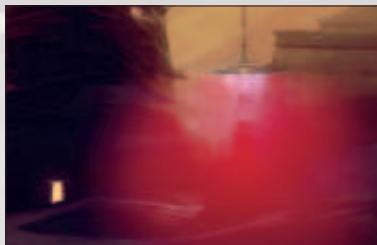
### Copy layers

Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E (PC)  
Cmd+Option+Shift+E (Mac)  
Stamps a copy of all your visible layers to a new layer, for more freedom than flattening.



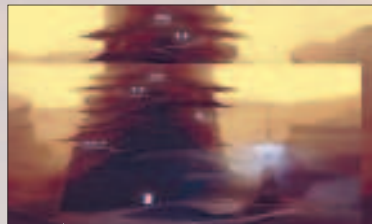
## 5 Fleshing out with colour edits

As I render, several times during the painting process I feel the need to flesh out my current palette and turn to Photoshop. I use Colour Balance to shift my hues and temperature, Curves to adjust my value range and Selective Colour to tweak individual hues and large areas of colour. I do all this visually and intuitively; there are no set rules. As I add the secondary light sources, I can even use these tools – Colour Balance especially – in conjunction with masking to alter the light in concentrated areas. I usually use a quick-mask, because this utilises your own brushes and gives you more control over edges and shapes.



## 6 Take a break

I find it helpful to take breaks from painting; you return motivated, with a fresh perspective. When I came back to this painting, I wasn't happy with the composition. Sometimes it's necessary to forge ahead, but once you've met your deadline come back to study your work.



## 7 Drastic measures

I transform a duplicate of the entire canvas over the top of the original, lining up the main structure in both copies. I paint out the seams and extend some of the shapes that didn't line up. Looking back, I almost prefer the original but I learnt a great deal from this experiment. I continue to render.

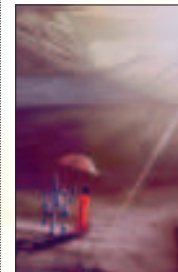
## PRO SECRETS

### Rules and mistakes

Break rules! Explore their boundaries – it will give you a much better understanding and expanded freedom. You will make mistakes, but these are every bit as – and perhaps even more – valuable as success, because it's through your mistakes that you discover solutions.

## 8 Figures

Compositionally, figures add an immediate and decided sense of scale; for the viewer they can add a feeling of being there and a slight sense of realism. They are often powerful focal points that can also be unintentionally overbearing. With this environment, I knew where I wanted to place the figures. However, I waited to insert them into the painting in order to refine the environment without their



distraction. It's probably easier to balance things by placing your figures first, but if you always did things the same way, you wouldn't learn nearly as much. Experiment!

## 9 Borrowing extra eyes

At this point I rest for the day and decide to get some outside input. A fresh set of eyes may see things you would never have noticed, or flaws that you have become blind to. People with no art training can provide great feedback, too.

## 10 Further change and polish

I play with the shapes further, add more land and change the angles to the right. To guide the eye, I also create a path that leads right to the figures. I've also tilted a few angles on the surrounding structures to do the same. From here, it's polishing, cleaning up shapes, edges and strokes before I wrap things up.

