

Photoshop

SYMMETRICAL DESIGNING

Through the process of abstract asymmetrical duplication, **Mike Corriero** explains how to produce dozens of unique symmetrical thumbnail designs

Thumbnail designing is always a useful tool for any artist. It triples the amount of designs you can produce with much less effort and often yields a lot more effective results than a fully rendered, detailed sketch. This is a process undertaken by most artists, especially in the

professional field when presenting the preliminary phase of a job to a client or company. Here, I'll show you a few different variations of asymmetrical and symmetrical thumbnail sketching.

When sketching, you'll need to keep in mind what shapes might end up as a head or arms. However, it's

not necessary to be too precise. Keeping things abstract leaves your work open to interpretation, giving it greater flexibility. So when you're setting up these asymmetrical designs to be copied and flipped, going crazy is encouraged. The more wild and irregular the sketch, the more possibilities it opens up.

It doesn't matter if you use a pen, pencil or digital program to sketch these out because, in the end, it's the shape and silhouette that matter. You should feel free to let the shapes become exaggerated, and even separate portions, because you never know how they'll be interpreted when you work them out in 3D form.

Artist PROFILE

Mike Corriero
COUNTRY: US



Mike is a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the video

game and film industries. His work has also featured in Ballistic Publishing's Exposé 4 and 5. His clients have included Radical Ent and Fantasy Flight Games.

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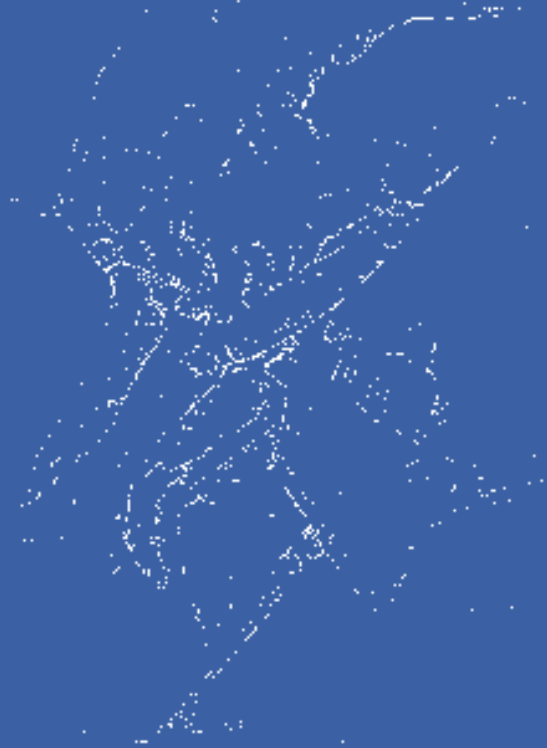
DVD Assets

The files you need are in the Mike Corriero folder in the Workshops section.

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS3 (demo)



In depth Symmetrical designing

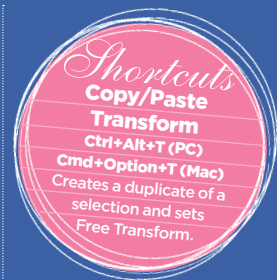


3 Asymmetry

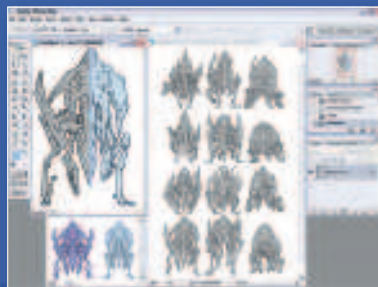
In our world there are examples of asymmetrical life forms – usually crustaceans and sometimes fish – but it's rare as most life consists of symmetrical biological constructions. In order to more easily read my designs and distinguish the differences, I've selected all the negative space, inverted the selection and, on a Multiply layer, filled the designs with a solid colour. It's very easy to manipulate a design via Free Transform if I decide to make it more streamlined or stretch it out. I can even mix and match various portions of one design with another by overlapping a selection and fitting it to the width or height of the other thumbnail.

4 Digital thumbnails in silhouette

One other method I use on occasion is the silhouette technique, which is very quick and easy to produce digitally. Using the lost line technique and erasing out the details or separation of shapes is highly useful and makes it easy to produce many designs from just one shape. I've included three videos documenting each of these thumbnail techniques

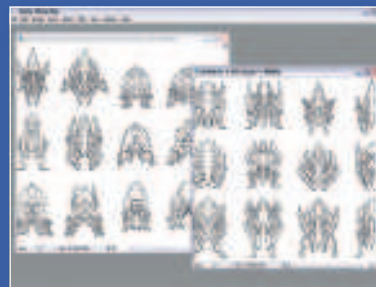


on the DVD. When working with the digital thumbnail in a silhouette manner you can manipulate the shape in hundreds of ways, erasing and working with a strong use of positive and negative values. Overlaying and warp transforming (while providing texture) and a rapid transform repeat technique makes it all so easy to go from one sketch to one hundred sketches in a matter of minutes! ➔



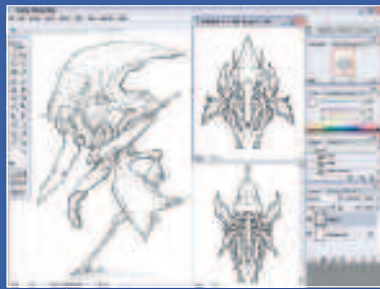
1 Asymmetrical to symmetrical

I've started these designs with a Staedtler 0.05 pigment liner pen on plain paper. Each thumbnail is approximately 1x2 inches. Start by drawing a couple of vertical lines in pencil; these will serve as your design separation points, to create symmetrical designs later on. In the thumbnail that's blown up you can see the design split down the middle. Below it are the two symmetrical designs created from the purposely asymmetrical design in order to produce two similar but unique shapes. To the right is a set of asymmetrical concepts, which you can see were each designed to be unique, with different elements, varying amounts of limbs and a mix of height and width.



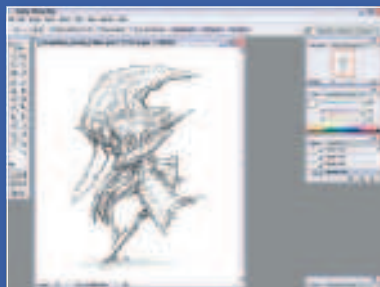
2 Copy flip method

To produce double the amount of concepts in terms of symmetrical designs, I took the asymmetrical versions, selecting one half with the Rectangular Marquee tool. Then, by using the copy and paste method, I flipped the second paste of the same half horizontally. With my settings applied to View Snap, it's quick and simple to drag and align the duplicated selection to meet and snap together. Just repeating this process with the opposite side of the thumbnail will provide a second symmetrical design. This brings the original 12 thumbnails to a total of 36 designs – of which 24 will be symmetrical only – having taken one third of the amount of time it would have taken to produce 36 individual sketches.



5 Evolution of a thumbnail

Now that the thumbnail process has been completed and I've produced around 80 designs, I've chosen two that are close to what I want and have started to sketch my design using the pigment liner pens. It's easiest to start this process by reproducing the large, dominant shapes from thumbnail to final design. I'm taking an easy way out here with a semi-profile view of this life form.



6 Detail and mirroring

How much work you do here is up to whether you want to keep the sketch rough and loose or detailed and refined. Mirror your drawing by first producing the line work and shapes that dominate it then just duplicate the necessary limbs and biological elements to the other side. If you're happy with your sketch, shading in at this point can sometimes help cut down on painting later on.

7 Sketch complete

Complete the final sketch with sensory fibres, shading and minor details. It actually takes much less time if done using a pigment liner rather than a pencil; it helps to steady your hand and produces more confident lines if you can't erase. Using small 0.05 Staedtler pens also enables you to shade and control line weight effectively. I line up some of the thumbnails that I liked the most next to the final image, to see if anything else inspires me.



8 Base texture

Courtesy of www.mayang.com/ textures, I've used a texture photo of an old worn-out wall to give my sketch some colour and a base to begin my painting. I just pasted the photo, rotated it and enlarged it to my liking.

9 Establishing a setting

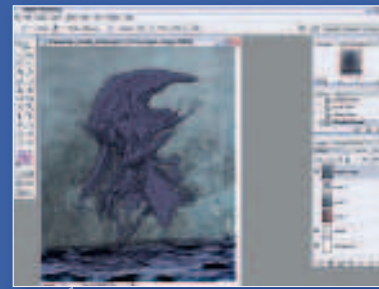
With the use of additional photos from Mayang's free texture library, I've laid down a ground, which was actually a photo of a termite mound, and overlaid another texture on top of the wall photo. At this point I'm just playing with colours through the Hue and Saturation options to find anything that works, keeping in mind what I'm aiming for, which is an unearthly setting and a blue/pink colour scheme. In addition, at this point, I've gone back to the original sketch layer and selected and inverted it, filling it with a pinky base colour.



PRO SECRETS

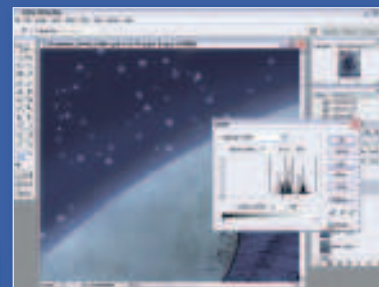
Transforming a shape

Create a shape on a new layer then select it. Now hold down Alt/Option+Ctrl/Cmd+T and that should copy/transform the shape. Then use the Transform tool to move it in any direction, shrink or enlarge it a little and rotate it a bit. Next hit Shift+Alt/Option+Ctrl/Cmd+T and it will repeat the action, and if you hold down Shift+Alt/Option+Ctrl/Cmd and just keep hitting T it will continue to duplicate the action as many times as you want.



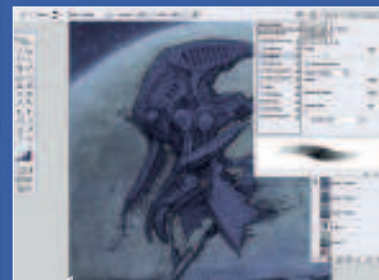
10 Colour flow

Keeping elements on separate layers makes it much easier for me to play around with the values, the hues and colour shifts. In order to build up colour gradually, I want to use cool, muted and darker tones all from within the same colour spectrum.



11 Defining the location

To complement the curved dorsal shape of the creature's cranium I've used the Circular Marquee tool to create an arch and set the beginning for my planet in the backdrop. In order to create a striking planetary lighting effect, it always helps to paint a glow produced by the atmosphere, and to continue the light around the source as it hits the sphere.

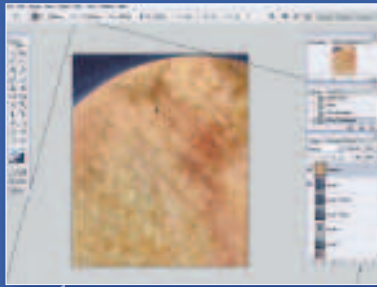


12 Planet surface

A quick light and dark value texture is applied with a stippled concrete pattern, inverting the texture to make the pattern more prominent. Reducing the scale of the pattern as it nears the lit edge helps create an appearance of the texture wrapping around the surface.



In depth Symmetrical designing



13 Gouged soil
With the use of another photo texture cropped to a circular shape and framing the planet, I can provide a contrast in colour between the foreground and the background. It's also being used to supply additional texture and quick colour variations.



14 Overlay
By setting the gouged soil photo texture to an Overlay layer on low Opacity, it will give the appearance that it's sitting on top of the planet. It will sink into the existing colour and textures while still affecting the values and the shifts in hue, appearing as different colourations in soil or varied locations and elevations. Erasing with a soft airbrush and breaking up the strength of the photo texture also helps to achieve a more natural appearance. Duplicating the layer will increase the strength of the Saturation and Opacity, which is useful if you want to light a section on one side and leave the other in shadow.



15 Atmosphere and particles
What I've found to be an effective way to knock down the strong, clear pixels of a photo in order to give it a more painted feel is to copy and paste a selection directly on top of the image. I then apply a Motion Blur on an angle in whichever direction is appropriate and set the duplicated layer on a low Opacity. This is a great and easy way to supply a misty, soft atmosphere and to help cut down on the harsh pixels that photos sometimes produce in contrast to a painting.

16 Gravity Glider edging
On a new layer above the background and above the sketch, I've started painting dark and light values – working out the forms and shapes of the streamline Gravity Glider. This character has a complex design so I'm trying to keep a good deal of it in shadow, especially since bioluminescent light will play an important part in the creature's biology. Edge control quality consists of defining the silhouette by applying reflective and local colour both from the dominant light source and colour from the background.

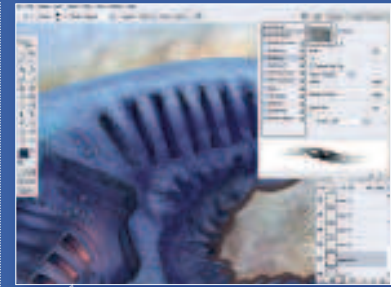


17 Contrasting bioluminescent
Important parts of this life form are also important parts to the focal points and interest of the painting. The sensory fibres help this creature in many ways, from its sense of touch and vision to its mating habits and digestion. They're also a great element for the environment in which it lives, as living in space is similar to living in the deep oceans of earth.

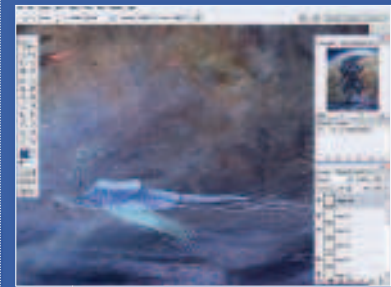
PRO SECRETS

Ask why

Designs are limitless so long as you take into account all aspects of why something looks the way it looks. It's the question "Why?" that comes into play, and if you can find answers to the question for the idea behind a concept, you'll find a much stronger design. Why does it have three legs, how does it eat, where does it live, is it dangerous, does it lay eggs or carry a baby in a womb? Make sure there is a reason why in answer to all questions.



18 Glider's skin
Using a scratched glass bump pattern created from Mayang's texture library, I'm using the same light and dark value invert technique as in step 12 for the planet's surface. In order to get the most out of my texture, I desaturated the colour, pump up the values and make sure there are no seams so it repeats continuously. Set the Depth to its full extent, the mode to Multiply and check the box that says Texture Each Tip.



19 Not alone
I sketched out these little guys during my thumbnail creations. I felt they would do the job of providing some sense of scale. I only painted one but by adjusting the scale, the angle and the position of the wings, among other things, the effect of many can be made with ease. Keeping with the deep sea and space theme I kept the smaller life forms completely bioluminescent to provide enough additional eye candy without being a distraction.



20 Light, value and that's a wrap
The last thing I do before finishing a painting is to take a day or a few hours away from it. When I come back I may find that it's too muted, there might be something missing or the lighting isn't right. So here I have used the Brush tool on Overlay to create a stronger sense of light on the planet and adjust the overall light value. ●