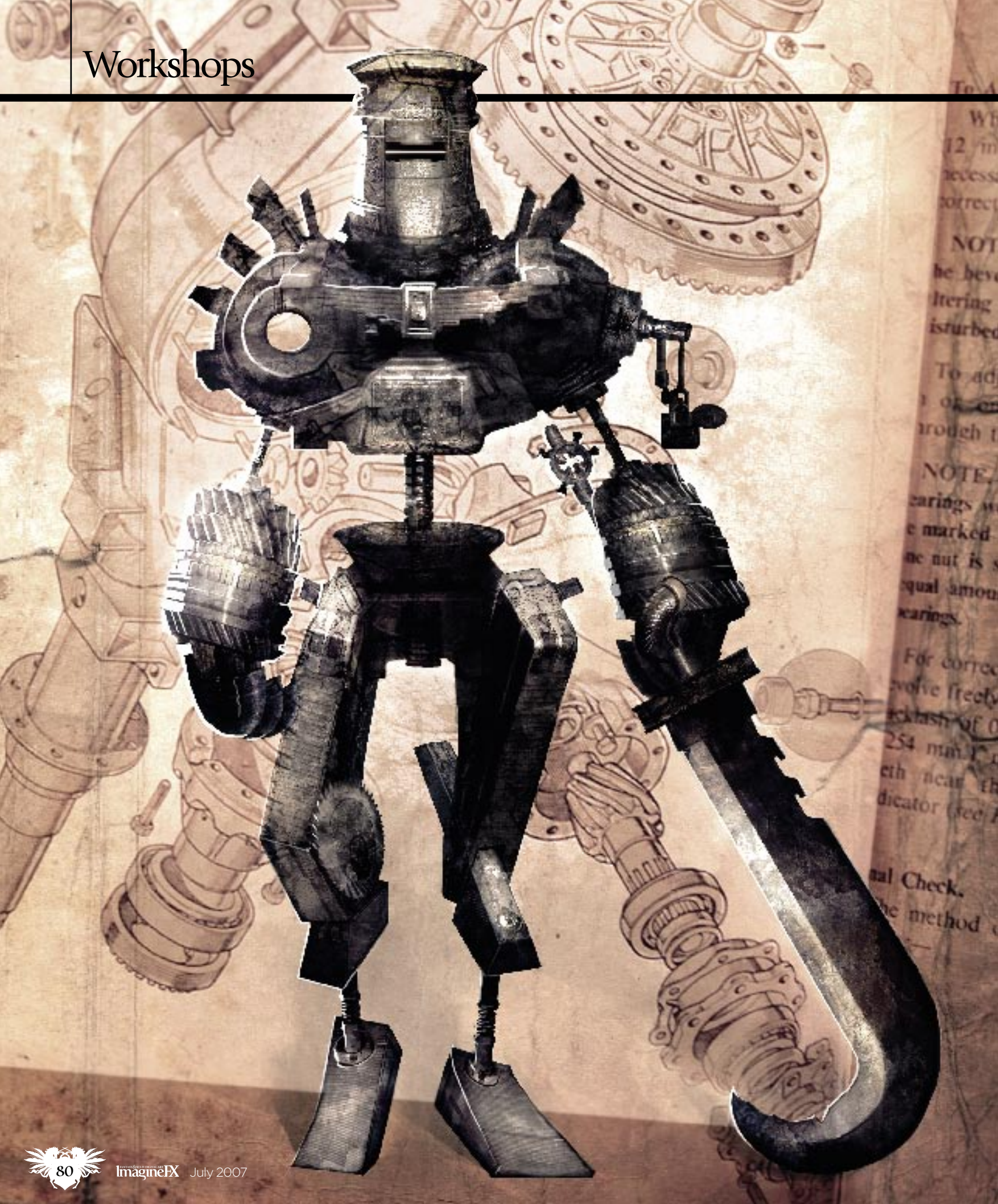


Workshops



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All these photos are on your DVD

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 the genre. 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

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the folder Character Workshop.

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

Photoshop

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Learn construction techniques, photographic montage methods and other Photoshop tricks with **Thomas Scholes**

During this workshop, I'm going to share with you the process and methodology that I used in the construction of a photo and paint montage. I'll talk about some of the pitfalls and benefits of using photography and also cover the tools that I used for shape extraction, including Quick Mask and Tonal Range Blending. In addition, I'll discuss in detail several tools that I employed for shape and image manipulation, including Transform tools and layer modes such as Soft Light.

I began using this method to provide a refresher from my usual techniques and subjects. If you ever find yourself in a slump, nothing will help you recharge better than changing your subject matter and your approach to it. Afterwards you will find you're able to return to what you've done in the past with a fresh outlook and new methodology. This is the key to motivation and progress.

I really enjoy the creative element of the method I'll discuss here and it's opened my eyes to possibilities I might

not have discovered. I would encourage everyone to employ diverse methods and techniques in their own visualisation and painting process. Many artists seem to think that practising diverse methods does them no good if it does not apply to their style. Through experimentation and exploration, however, we maximise learning, and through diversity your style will mature and progress.

Please look me up on the ImagineFX.com forums or my website if you'd like to know more. I'm always happy to help!

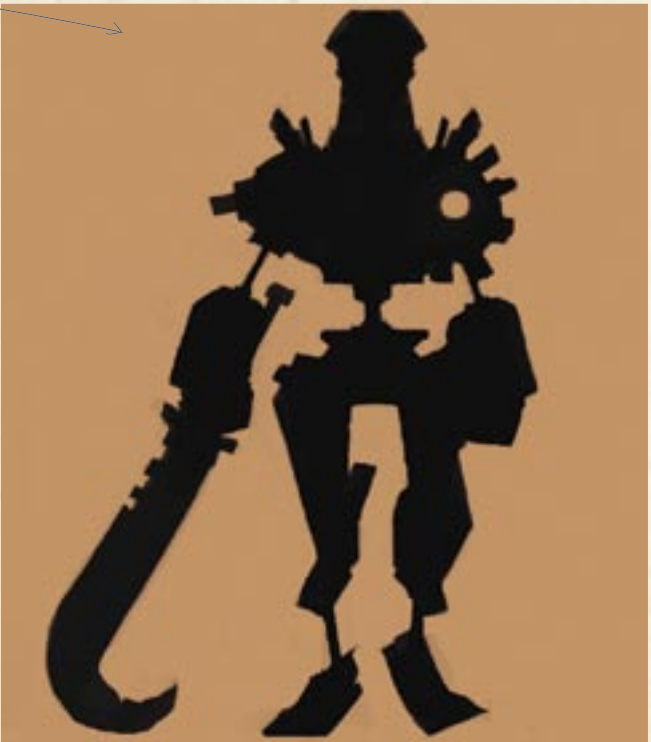
1 Sketch and preparation

Before I can start assembling the individual parts, a base and concept are necessary to build upon. Using a simple palette knife does well with man-made shapes and angles. I do a few preliminary sketches focusing on interesting shapes within a loose humanoid form. I like the advancing pose and jagged shapes of my second sketch and decide upon a more adversarial concept.

From here I clean up a few edges and shapes as well as think further about how to modify these interesting abstracts into purposeful forms and parts. Once I have a good base to build upon I then lighten the canvas to enable a greater value range. This is then covered up with a rusty orange colour on a multiply layer to set my palette.

2 Adaptation and refinement

I tend to keep the silhouette as blocky and primitive as possible because the intricacy of shape will come from the



application of photographs during the next stage. The shapes that result are more often than not things I would not normally have considered with paint alone, which helps me explore different shapes and expand my visual repertoire. Often while working on other projects, I will recall the shapes that I have discovered in this fashion and the end result is better for it.

3 Bypassing common problems

When using photographs, mismatched lighting coming from all directions can cause significant problems. The method that I generally utilise masks the direction of troublesome lighting and reduces most information into mid-tones. The Soft Light layer mode is the perfect option for this as it enables the values to show through with little artifacting and the colours contained within are influenced by what is underneath, which creates a harmony that would otherwise be difficult to obtain from such diverse sources.



4 Basic transformations

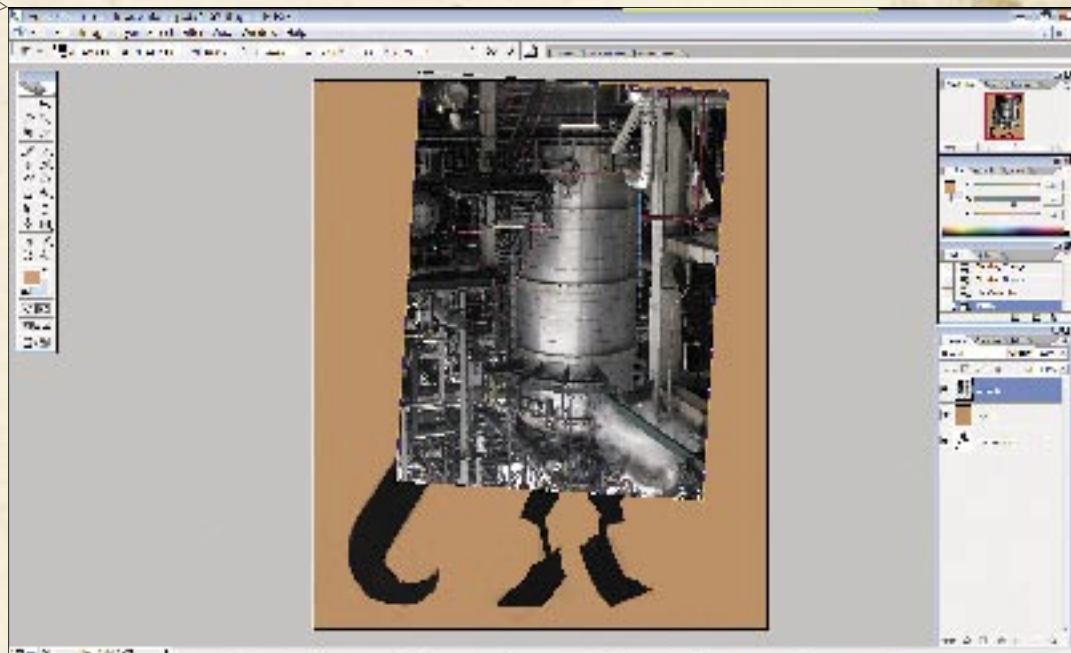
A picture of a large-plated cylinder in my photography collection has the right shapes to add to the head. After copying the photograph onto my canvas I hit Ctrl+T/Cmd+T to enable the Transform tools. Once I've done an initial resize to get the photograph to manageable proportions, I rotate the cylinder to match the angle of my silhouette by moving the cursor outside of the Transform box and dragging either to the left or right.

I find the Distort Transform option works best for correcting perspective and basic shape manipulation for anything further, Warp Transform is best. I'll talk about this in more detail and how I've trimmed the overlap later on.

5 Embrace your happy accidents

One of the things I enjoy most about this type of process is serendipity, or 'happy accidents.' Usually I work roughly with the photographs, trying not to cut anything out until I've seen if random bits affect the overall painting positively. Shapes will often line up and I discover things I wouldn't have consciously considered. Additionally, this is a great way to build up random grit and grime, overlapping with time to create interest by way of texture.

As a result I will often have to cover up or modify underlying layers to give more clarity. I prefer to do this not by erasing the information underneath, but instead by creating a normal layer and painting a new base coat the same colour as my initial silhouette underneath. This enables me to backtrack if necessary.



6 Advanced blending

I've discovered a set of gears that I think will work well for the shoulders and was pleased to find that without an awful lot of adjustment they gave me some good shapes for the hips and textures elsewhere.

To trim overlapping parts that do not fit into my silhouette I use Tonal Range Blending that can be found under Blending Options in Layer Styles (double-click your layer or from the Layer Menu>Layer Style>Blending Options). The bottom box with two greyscale bars is what you're looking for; in this workshop I'm using the second bar, Underlying Layer. This blends the current layer based on the values of what is

PRO SECRETS

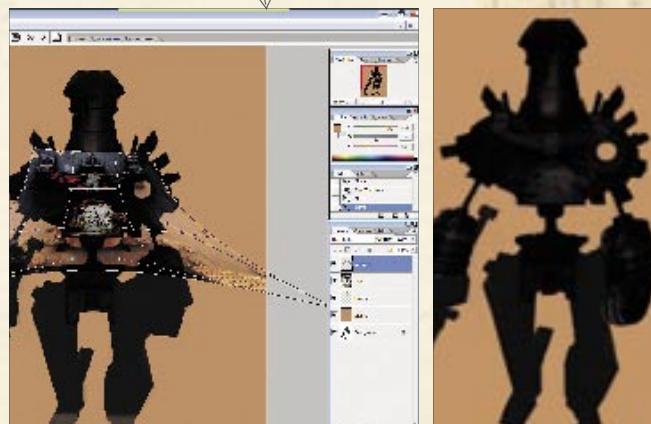
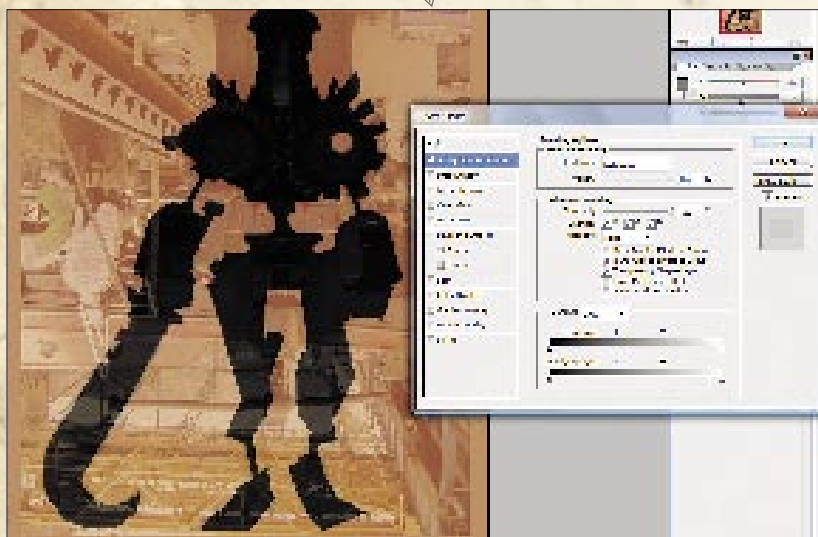
Focus

To ensure growth as an artist, analyse your flaws. Focus on your problem areas; divide and conquer. It is foolish to exhaust your energy doing too many things at once. Don't draw the entire figure if you want to work on hands and feet - just draw hands and feet! Work in greyscale unless you want to study colour. Study from life and reference in order to focus on drawing and rendering. But most importantly, enjoy it!

underneath. My silhouette is dark and the background is much lighter, so I click on the white triangle to blend over the background. By pressing Alt/Option and clicking you can split the triangle into two parts, which will specify a range of values that will only be partially blended, enabling a smoother transition.

7 Warp transform

I've found a great photo that works well as a sternum and collarbone. The rest doesn't match up perfectly with my silhouette, but I can see it has the potential to do so. I turn to Warp Transform, an excellent tool for more precise image manipulation. Using the bottom corner anchors I align the shapes to my silhouette and give the collars a little bend in the middle using the top centre mesh. It's an intuitive tool that I often use throughout this painting.





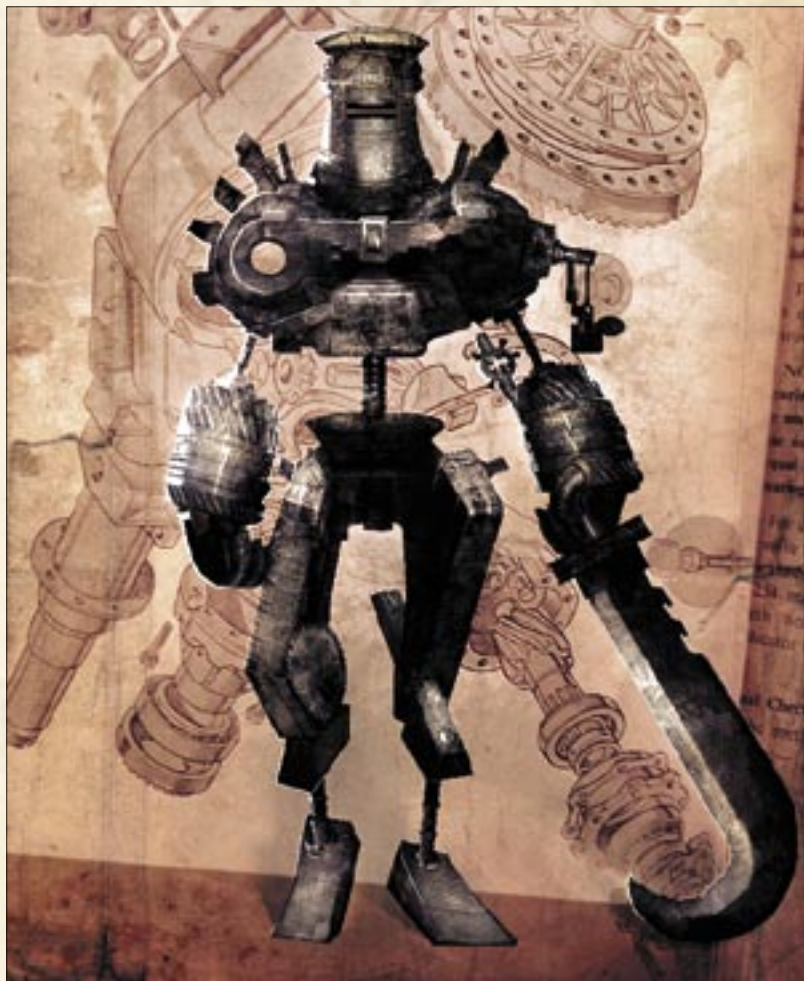
10 Background and composition thoughts

I've set a blueprint photo that accents the theme on an Overlay layer for the background. It has a crease down the middle that I use to draw the eye in and connect with the sword. Where the texture interferes with the subject I simply erase. I also either paint out or clone over any tangents or areas that distract. At this point I'm exploring how the painting reads while mirrored and discover I like it better flipped.



11 Lighting and final edits

I've darkened areas that should be in shadow with a combination of soft light layers and multiply layers. The lighter parts were created using the Dodge tool set to highlights as well as mid-tones. I've decided to paint in some rim lighting to further describe the form. Finishing touches include a bit of bloom lighting added with a low flow airbrush, and depth created by darkening just the machinery of the background.



PRO SECRETS

Photo file
I have a large collection of reference and texture photography, mostly acquired from imageafter.com. It has a huge collection of photography available free for personal and commercial use. A quick texture overlay can be a great visualisation tool, giving you ideas of where to go and how to texture certain objects and materials. Never shy away from any tool that can help you learn, but always be wary of letting it become a crutch - a common error.

8 Trimming the fat

The shapes on the legs are defined planes and require more precision to match perspective. Sacrificing the extra detail and texture, I trim the excess around my basic rectangle before using the Transform tools to gain better control. Once I have a trimmed shape I can duplicate this layer in its raw format to use for the opposite leg later.

9 Complex cutting and Quick Mask

The most efficient method I've found for separating elements is with a general purpose round brush and a Quick Mask (hit Q to activate/deactivate). Using a brush will give you better control over edges and over opacity. This results in a more natural selection that doesn't look like it's been pasted on.

