

shops



Artist PROFILE

Jehan Choo

COUNTRY: US

CLIENTS: ImagineFX
is Jehan's first client



Jehan loves the dark, fairytale kind of fantasy that

mysteriously eludes the question of whether it was created for children or adults. He loves it even more when that art, be it in illustration or film, walks this line to appeal to both audiences. His dream is to someday help create such films with his art. www.jehanchoo.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD

FOLDERS: Screenshots

FILES: Ratsprocess_

Jehanchoo.psd, rats_

jehanchoo.tif

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

Photoshop

MIND'S EYE TO DIGITAL CANVAS

Learn to transfer illustrations from imagination to Photoshop as accurately as possible as **Jehan Choo** shares his secrets

Transferring a stunning, fantastical image from our mind through our hands and on to our canvas can be frustratingly hard to do. It's always fun to let a piece evolve into something completely different than what was planned, but what if we want to get that image from our head down as faithfully as possible? With this particular piece, I knew what I wanted pretty much from the start. Sometimes an image so vivid will pop into our

heads, one so amazing that we want to put it down exactly as we imagine it.

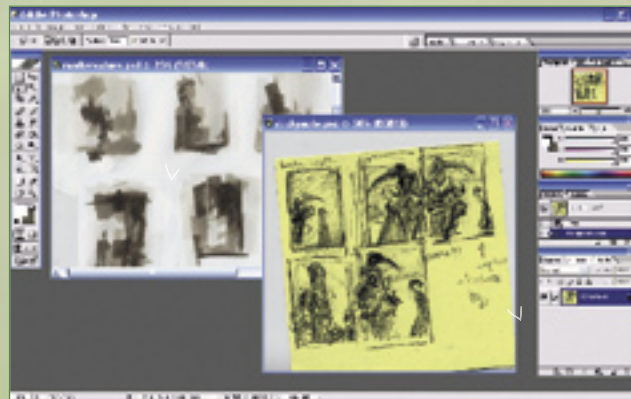
This workshop will demonstrate what I do to try to keep my painting looking as cool as it does in my head. I will discuss some ways to manipulate layers, how I create visual hints about what to do next, and how to salvage a disastrous-looking face. I will also introduce an unconventional way to quickly begin a painting that may help in blocking out your imaginary scene before it fades from memory.

I hope this workshop inspires you to try something new, or something you thought too obvious to attempt before. I will be creating an image based on a story I've tossed around in my head recently. It's a dark children's fantasy about a rat infestation in a Victorian asylum. It stars four characters, which I will paint throughout this workshop as I touch upon some of the techniques I use when trying to keep my image faithful to the one I see in my head. Without further ado, let's get started!

1 Beginning

I begin by sketching out a couple of thumbnails. Keeping rough, my intention is to find one similar in mood and composition to the image in my head. It took me years to learn that you can perform this step as quickly or as slowly as you like. Try not to force yourself to draw or think faster than you are capable of, or to draw very neatly if quick scribbles seem to work better for you. This step can take anywhere from three thumbnails to 13 pages, so don't be afraid to keep sketching until you find one that seems to encapsulate best what you see in your head.

For this piece, I've imagined something slightly dark and whimsically strange. I find a thumbnail that seems to fit this. Remember that thumbnails can be used to quickly try out wildly different compositions and ideas. Sketching out a couple of different views or takes on your subject can light a new, unexpected path. If you still end up loving your initial composition, you haven't wasted any time: you know you've made the right choice.



2 Creating notes to self

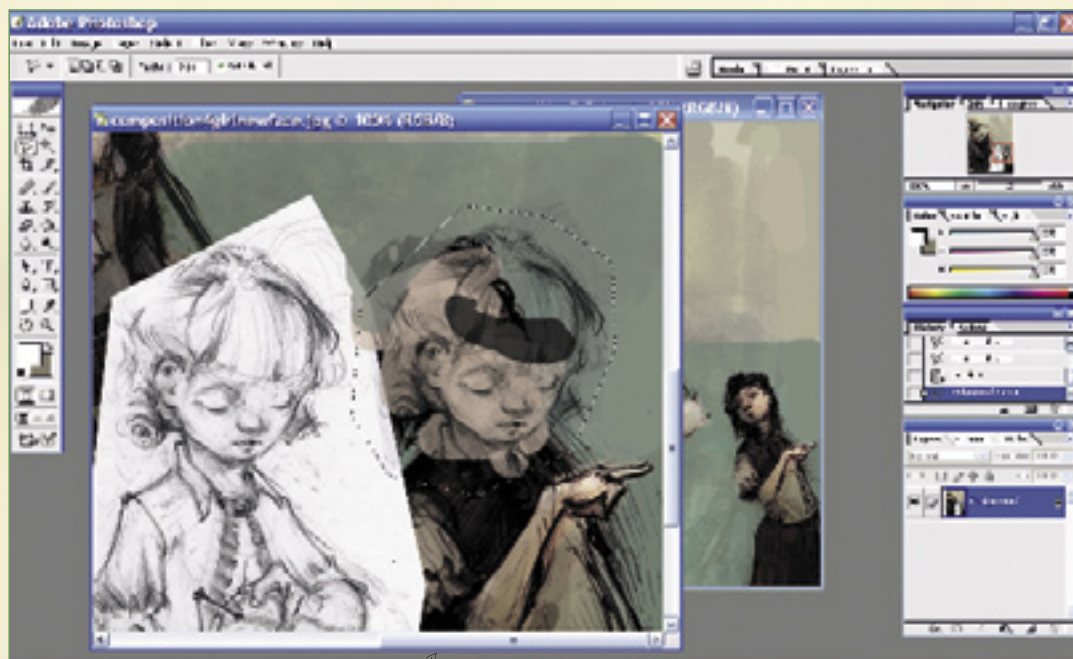
I chose a pencil thumbnail to bring into Photoshop, along with a handful of value thumbnails done with marker. I then place the pencil and markers on individual layers. Next I add a gradient that seems to fit very abstractly with the colour scheme I see in my head.

Arranging these pieces like a puzzle, I adjust the contrast, colour, saturation (found under Image>Adjustments) and positions of my Pencil and Marker layers until the results reflect closely the

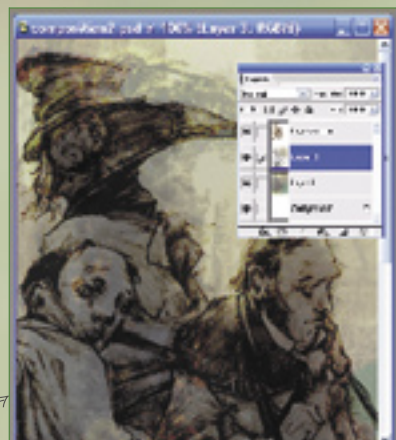
composition I'm after. I am also changing the Blend Modes of each layer, picking from the defaults based on whatever seems to feel best, although I mostly use Multiply Layers.

This process results in a sort of digital collage, a quick snapshot of the painting that I see in my head. The collage serves as a pictorial note to self, a map of what I plan to do. This technique also helps to eliminate any scary blank canvas. Try to keep loose with this step, as the goal here is not to lock into a perfect





➤ composition right away, but rather to create an abstract image that reminds and hints to you what to do next. Right now, my image is telling me things like: "Character group on the left," "greenish area on the bottom right," and "empty space above that."



3 Creepy gentlemen

Using the mess of pencil scribble on my screen as a guide, I sketch out three characters that could fit into its silhouette. I end up with a masked horror made of rats, a reporter to document this strange occurrence, and someone who is just freaked out by all of this. With this particular piece, I felt it necessary to balance out my messy, abstract collage with solid character sketches. If you feel bold, you can go straight to painting into your collage without need of any tighter drawings.

4 Off with her head

I decide I need a fourth character, a little girl to help tie the story of this piece together and to contrast with my crew of strange men. Little did I know that she would become such a bother! As with most of my paintings, there comes a point where I find myself doodling away, trying to fix a certain something, such as a hand or a face. One simple way of dealing with this problem is to completely erase what isn't working.

After much frustration, I know for sure that she isn't working, so I pull out my sketchbook and draw a new girl. Soon after, I realise that I only really dislike her old head, and that I actually like the action of her old body better. By taking what is working from each drawing and losing what isn't, I end up with a girl I'm much happier to work with.

5 Lasso surgery

Troubles arise again when I decide to open her eyes. It becomes horrifyingly obvious that, due to working zoomed in on her eye (never get too close to your piece for too long!) I have lost sight of her skull's structure. To try and remedy this, I throw the Polygonal Lasso around her eye and copy it into a new layer. Next, I right-



PRO SECRETS

Find out for yourself

Find what process works for you. Learning the solid, traditional ways of image creation is very important, but it is also essential to eventually venture out beyond what your art school is teaching you. You will discover ways of working that are unique, fun and possibly faster for you. However, it is also important not to get caught using these new techniques over and over. To do so will only stunt the growth of your visual vocabulary.

click the new eye and select Free Transform. From here I can play with the Skew and Distort functions of Free Transform, pushing and moulding her eyes to better fit her skull.

If your character's eyes don't seem to be fitting on their face correctly, the problem most likely resides in placement, size, shape, or angle (or, as in this case, almost all of these elements). This trick, like the collage technique from step two, should be used mostly to hint at where to go next, and what to fix. After you discover what was wrong with your piece, you can go back and fix it with paint.



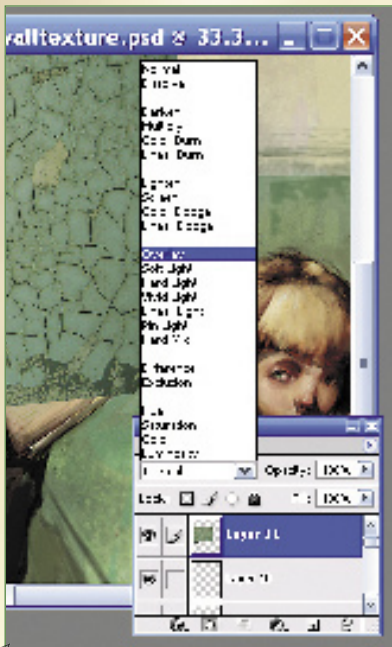
6 Washing down the tonal values

I realise that the character of the worried man begins to feel a little too similar in tonal value to the typist. To rectify this, I decide to try a wash of colour over him. To do so, all you need to do is simply create a new layer and paint a colour, either dark or light, over the subject in need of a wash. Set the layer's Blend Mode to Multiply, and adjust the opacity to fit with how opaque you want your wash to be.

7 Mirror image

To see my painting with fresh eyes, I flip it horizontally. This is a widely popular trick used to quickly spot areas in need of fixing, and though it's a bit of an artistic cliché, I'd thoroughly recommend it. Try it if you haven't before – the results may surprise you! This technique works especially well with portraits and gestures.

In depth Mind's eye to digital canvas



8 Photo textures

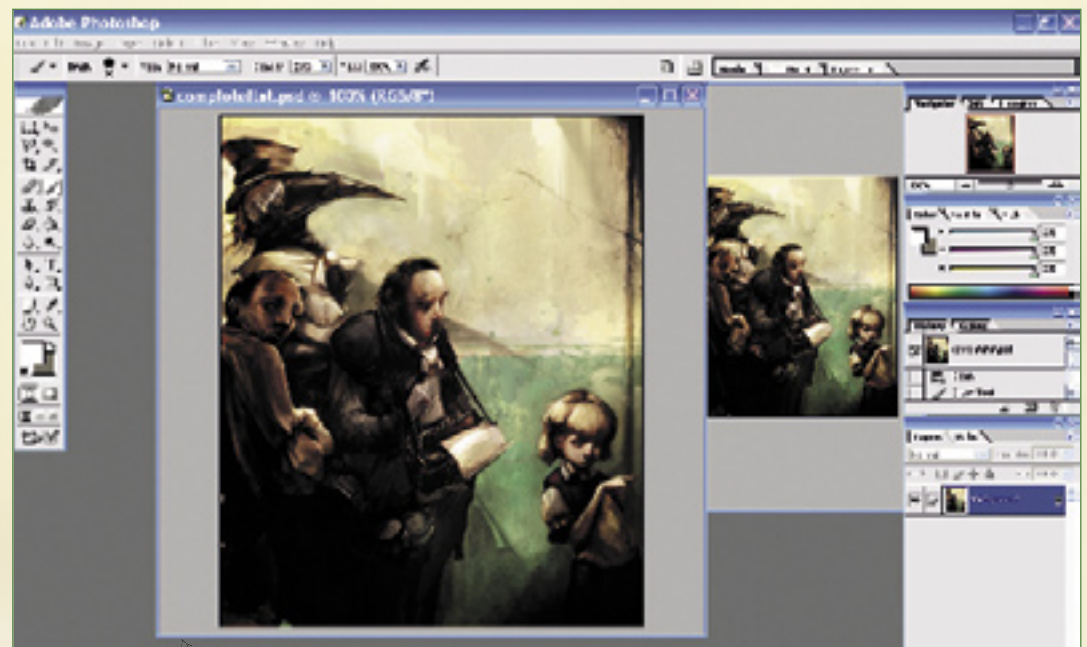
Back in Photoshop, I will sometimes take a clipping of a photographed texture (usually taken by myself), and by using the Overlay tool, blend it into an object or wall. For this painting, I've used a photo of peeling paint. Although I eventually mute it back enough so as to not be distracting, you can sense its lingering griminess in the final piece. If you want to place a texture on a plane in perspective, simply use the Transform tool from step five.

9 Pencils are okay!

Some people believe that leaving pencil lines visible in a final painting is wrong. This decision depends on what looks great to you. If you feel the pencil drawing holds power and emotion, feel free to leave some of it shining through! An example of where I believe this works well is in the head of my masked horror. I've left quite a bit of the pencil visible, while using very simple blobs of paint to define the rats.

10 Dreams/nightmares

I have been slowly increasing the value contrast of the composition. I want the effect of high contrast values because I'm going after a foreboding, on-edge feel. Something to keep in mind is that if your piece is very limited in value, it can tend to feel a little safe and dreamlike. Though I may start with limited values, I will always try to adjust them to fit the atmosphere I'm after.



11 Getting crits and finishing touches

Throughout the process of creating any piece, I try to seek out advice and get critiques from fellow art students and teachers. This helps me figure out what's working and what to improve, as a second opinion is always very helpful.

This is especially critical to do once you believe you're almost finished with the piece but can't figure out what to do next. A fresh pair of eyes will often be able to see what you're missing.

Sometimes all you need are a few small tweaks to make a piece feel complete. With this painting, I knew it lacked a few small things that, if discovered and added, could help it pop. After discussing it with teachers and friends, I figure out that my shadows need a little more work. I end up casting a greater shadow across the girl, strengthening cast shadows in various other areas, and finally ramp up my highlights to contrast with my shadows and complete the piece. ●

PRO SECRETS
Keeping it real
To paint well digitally doesn't just involve knowing Photoshop or Painter inside and out - you have to learn the fundamentals by painting in real life with real paint. Doing so will boost your digital skills faster than any shortcut.

