

Photoshop

MANGA CHARACTER ILLUSTRATION

Michael Chomicki shows you how to create a Japanese manga-style character in Photoshop

Artist PROFILE

Michael Chomicki

COUNTRY: Canada
CLIENTS: Exotique, 3D World



Michael got serious about drawing at the end of his high school

career, where he became very inspired by Japanese animation and European graphic design. He graduated in illustration and computer animation, before beginning work in the video game industry. Currently he's working as an artist at a video game production house, and always on the lookout for freelance opportunities.
www.studioqube.com

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD.

FOLDERS: Full screenshots, Progress Files, Brushes

SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2 (demo)

In this workshop, I'm going to show you how to create a manga-esque character illustration. I'll mainly focus on specific rendering techniques that, while painterly, enable me to preserve a clean, line art feel.

Throughout the workshop, I'll also study the differentiation between material types, as well as the relationships between warm and cool colour tones. I'll look at how to successfully make use of shadows, lighting and reflected light, in order to

achieve a three-dimensional form from a flat line drawing. You should keep in mind throughout the workshop the decisive use of dark versus light, in order to achieve a shapely, yet comfortable look to the artwork. Although I'll be working on a flat, white background, I'll keep a virtual atmosphere in mind, and really push bounced lighting. I am going to achieve this mainly by sharing colours between materials and objects.

Of no lesser importance will be my focus on maintaining a very Japanese art-inspired look and feel to the character

art. As a result, I'm going to be very deliberate in how I shape such areas as the eyes and hair – always distinct points in manga illustration. At all times, I'm going to keep Japanese animation in mind, specifically the way that shadows (or 'cuts') are shaped.

Cuts are used in animation all over the world, but the Japanese have a very specific way of shaping them. Since I'm taking a painterly approach in this workshop, my cuts will be a lot more painterly than those found in most classical-style animation.



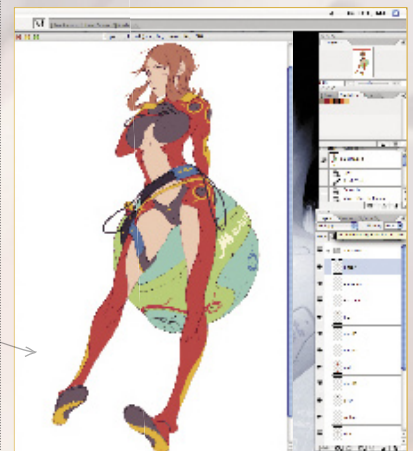
1 Scanning the line art

I start by scanning my line art in at a high resolution, in this case 600dpi. When it's scanned, I reduce the image to somewhere between 300 and 400dpi, depending on the size and purpose of the artwork. I clean up the line, and remove the white, background space using Colour Range, found under Select>Colour Range. This will later help me in painting over my line art. I colourise the line to a desired tone, using the Hue/Saturation adjustment tool, found under Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. I continue by importing some solid graphics and logos from Illustrator, and place them on to the artwork (beneath the line art layers), mainly using the Free Transform and Warp tools, found under Edit>Free Transform. Finally, I set the line art layer's Blending Mode to Multiply (this will enable me to maintain the line, while I place all the colour beneath it). I conclude by organising and naming all my layers as something sensible, whatever I see fit.

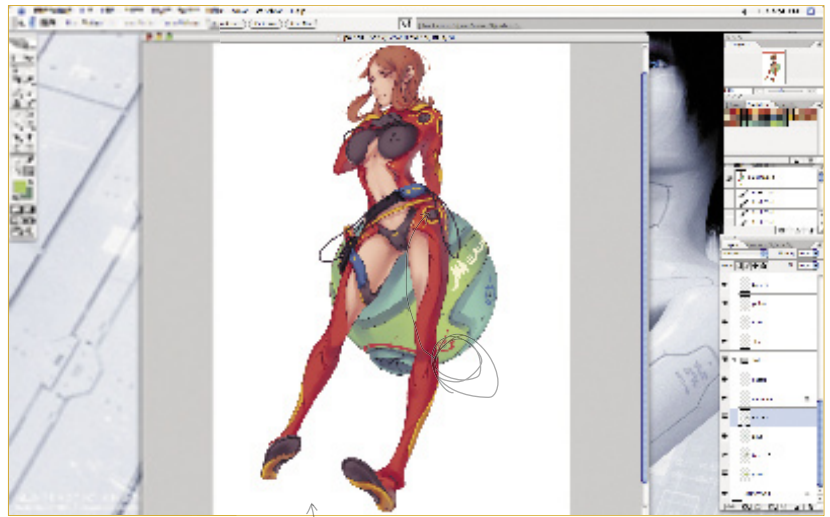
2 Organise your layers

Once I have all the basics set, I begin creating colour separations for the various sections of the artwork. For

example, I place the skin tones in their own layer, the red of the bodysuit in its own layer and so on. I'm not too concerned about achieving colours that are absolutely spot-on at this stage, as I find that I'll often go back and readjust tonalities later. Most of my colour separations are within the mid-tone range. I also make sure that I name the colour layers accordingly, for easy organisation. Working with multiple layers enables me to alter specific sections of the artwork at a later stage without disturbing the rest of the piece.



In depth Manga character illustration



3 Add some volume

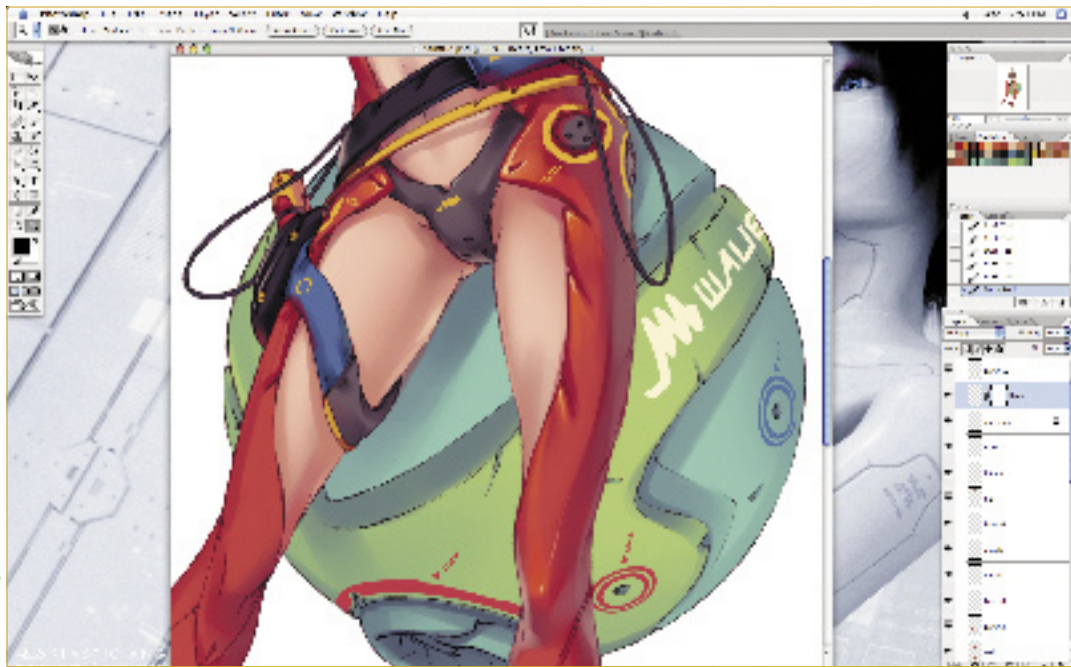
I start giving the image some volume, mainly through the use of shadow and reflected lighting. Having assigned all my colour separations to separate layers, I've made my workflow for the rest of the painting process much simpler and cleaner. I select a colour layer, and while holding Cmd on a Mac, or Ctrl on a PC, I click on the thumbnail within that layer. The Selection Marquee is in my way, so I hit Cmd/Ctrl+H to hide it. As I begin to paint, I use a softer brush for roughing sections in, and a harder brush for tightening things up.

4 Complementary colours

While picking and choosing my colour tones, I'm always mindful to push my lighter tones in a relatively warm direction, and my darker tones and reflected lighting in a cooler direction. This stems directly from some basic art principles: warm lights should be complemented by cool shadows, while cool shadows should be complemented by warm lights. The idea is to push for opposites in tonalities, in order to achieve a significant level of contrast, and therefore volume.

5 Defining shadow areas

I want to give certain shadowy areas a defined look. I try to stay away from working a single area too much. Although it's often very tempting to just go in and finish off a section, it's always best to work the entire painting at once. For reflected lighting, I usually tend to choose tonalities of greys. ➔



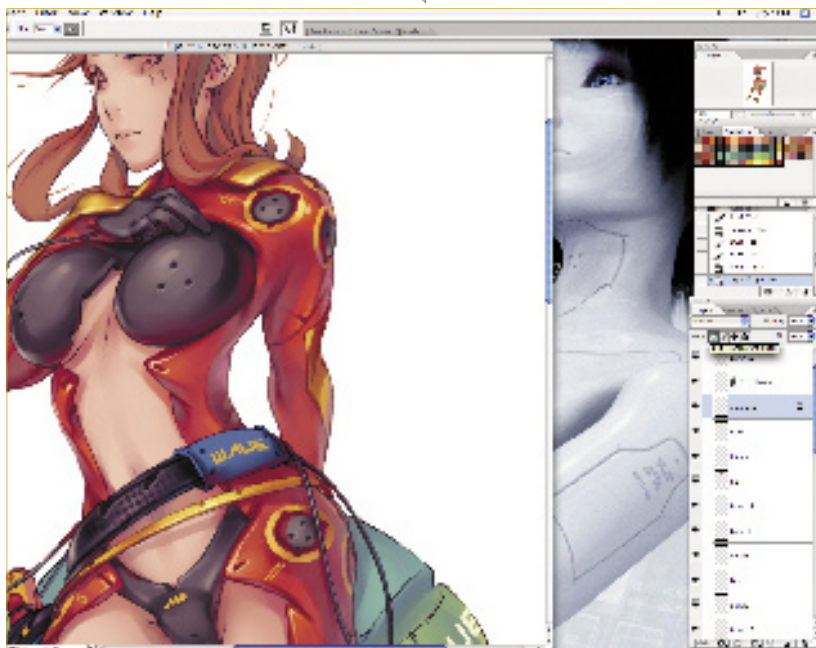
6 Material girl

Once I feel that I've completed blocking in the shadow areas, I start adding the lights, as well as some detailing. At this level I also want to concern myself with the material types that I'm working with, and their reflective properties. Areas such as the character's skin will never match the high, specular values of the motorcycle-red plastic bodysuit. Since I'm aiming to give the red a significant amount of gloss, I have to focus on high contrast between its values.

I achieve this by placing the lights right along side the darks. To top off that plasticky look, I use a sharp brush with a pressure sensitive tip to add some very precise areas of bright specularity.

7 Lovely rubbery

For the rubbery areas of the suit, I do quite the opposite. The specular value of a wetsuit-like rubber is much lower than that of shiny plastic, which means the hotspots tend to be gradual. I no longer require that high gloss.



8 Colourising

As I continue detailing the artwork, I make another layer over the top of the line art layer. It's going to be in this layer that I'll paint over and colourise my line. Depending on what I feel is appropriate, I'll either freehand some colour over the line art, or alternatively, I may select all the line the same way that I do with the colour separations, and then paint into the selection.

This selection procedure will only work if the white in the background was removed from the line art layer in the first step. For sections where I want to be rid of line art completely, I use a Layer Mask on that layer, which can be activated by clicking the third icon from the left in the Layers palette.

Following this up by painting white into the Layer Mask, I'm then able to easily hide sections of the line at my convenience, without actually ending up removing it permanently.



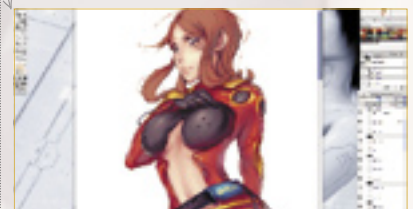
PRO SECRETS

Layers are your friend

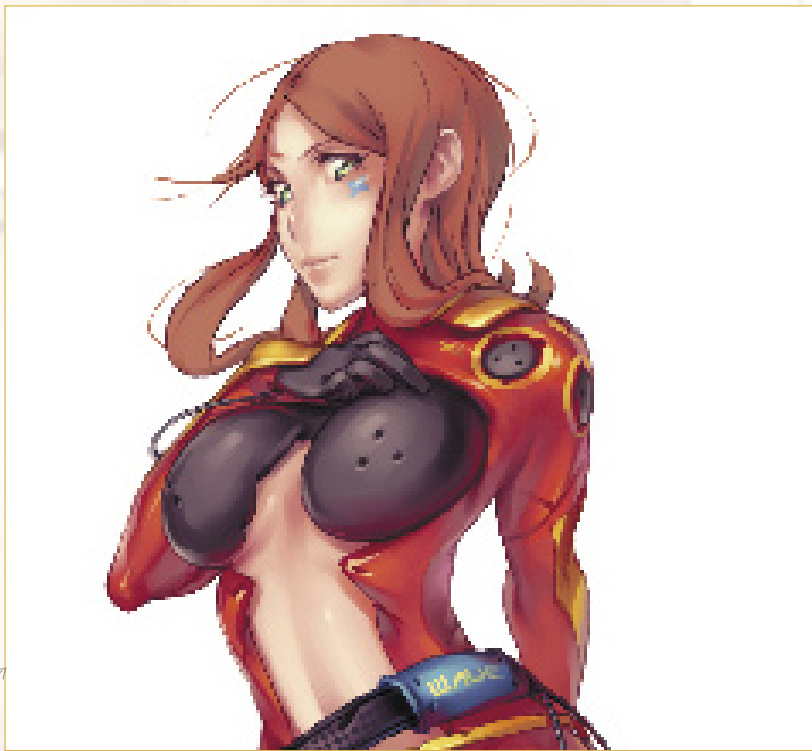
Make sure you remember that layers are your friend, and have countless uses. One of the many ways that I apply the layer system is in combination with the eraser tool. I create a clean layer and, with my brush, roughly block in an area of colour. I then take the eraser, with the same settings as my brush, and erase into the roughed in colour, without having to worry about altering the information below it. This is just another way of shaping your painting.

9 Manga features

When adding colour to the face, I have to keep in mind its manga/anime origin. Everything here comes down to a soft look, and selective simplification. At this stage, I'm mainly concerned with solidifying a comfortable sense of volume. I want to avoid a flat look, although you'll find that, as a result of its simplified nature, a manga/anime face style will tend to look flatter when compared to other contemporary styles.



In depth Manga character illustration

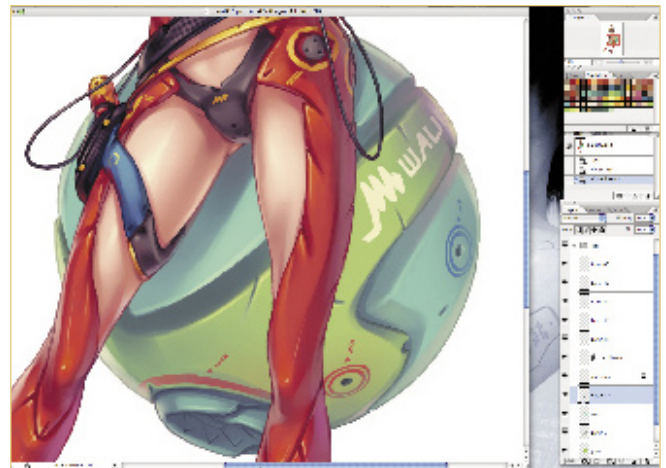
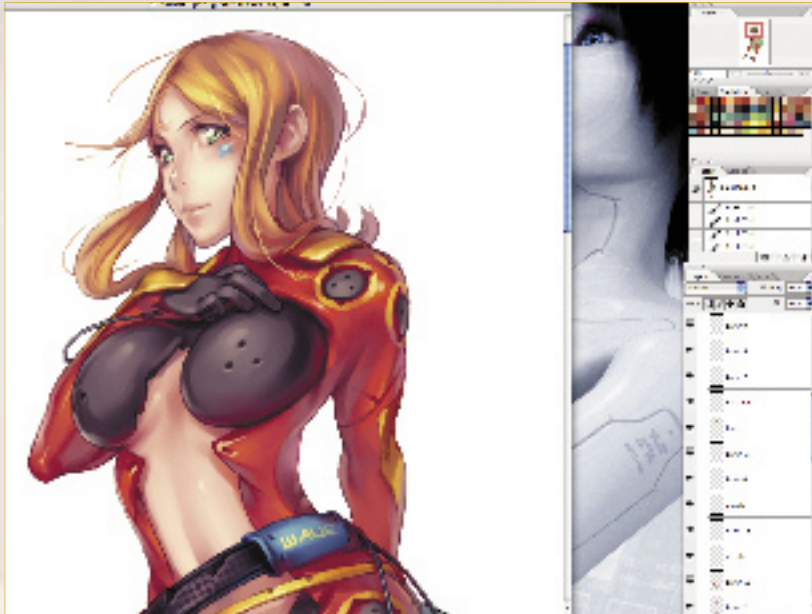


10 Look into my eyes

Since the viewer's eye will always be attracted to the character's face first, I have to make sure to refine it appropriately. This is especially important to me since I'm trying to achieve that Japanese look. I paint over the line art, throw in some gloss on the nose, lips and cheeks, and pay a lot of attention to the eyes, which, along with the hair, are of utmost importance.

11 Hair care

When approaching the hair, I want to make sure that I'm not overwhelmed by a strand-to-strand approach. With a sharp, pressure sensitive brush, I randomly add some hair strands, but for the most part, I'm able to fake the majority of the hair with some solid areas of colour, always making sure to maintain the Japanese-style feel. I finish up the hair by adding some anime gloss to it.



PRO SECRETS

Convincing logos

One thing to keep in mind when importing graphics, such as logos, emblems and designs, into your art, is that they have to look convincing. One way of achieving this is through the Free Transform and Warp tools, in order to distort the desired graphic over the topology in question. Use the Free Transform tool to rough in the placement and perspective, and then the Warp tool's mesh transformer to get into those finer, detail areas. Both tools can be found under Edit>Transform.

12 Finishing touches

I finish up the artwork by adding some final colours to the hover ball. Although I want the tones to remain colourful, I also want to make sure that they don't compete with the colours on the character, but rather that they recede into the background. In order to wrap it all up, I make any final adjustments to the areas of the artwork that I'm not quite satisfied with. ●

