SCIENCE FICTION ARTIST IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

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FAIRYTALE

SIR TANCREDE

STRANGEFATE

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ISSUE 58 | MAY 2021

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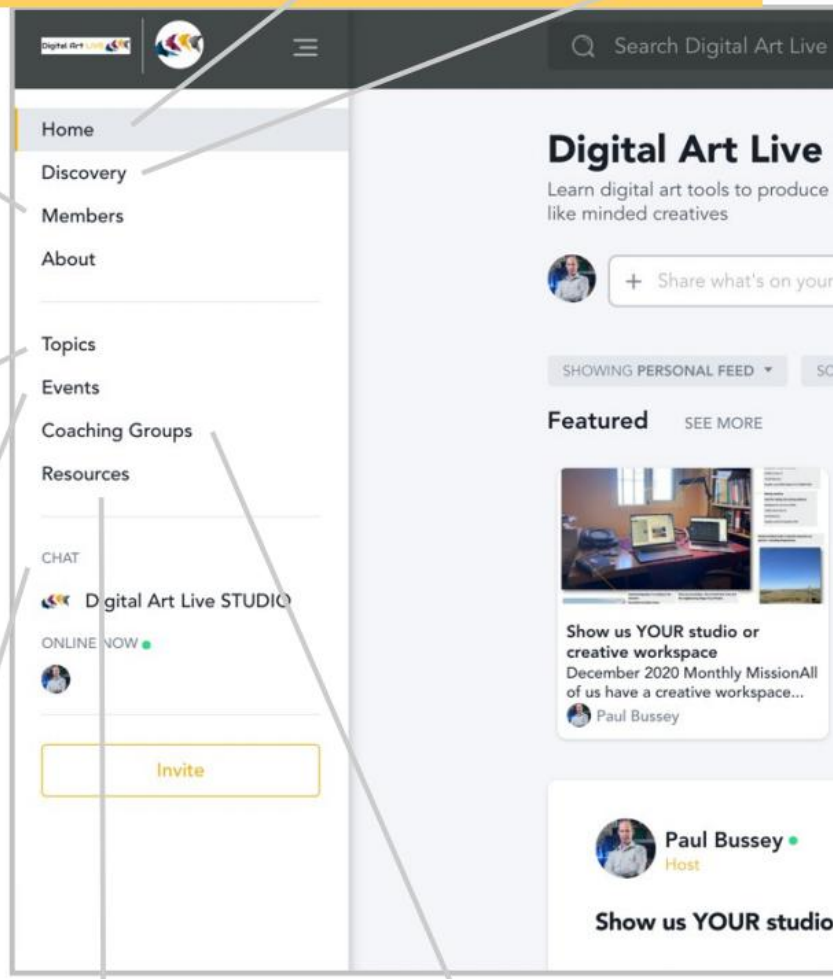

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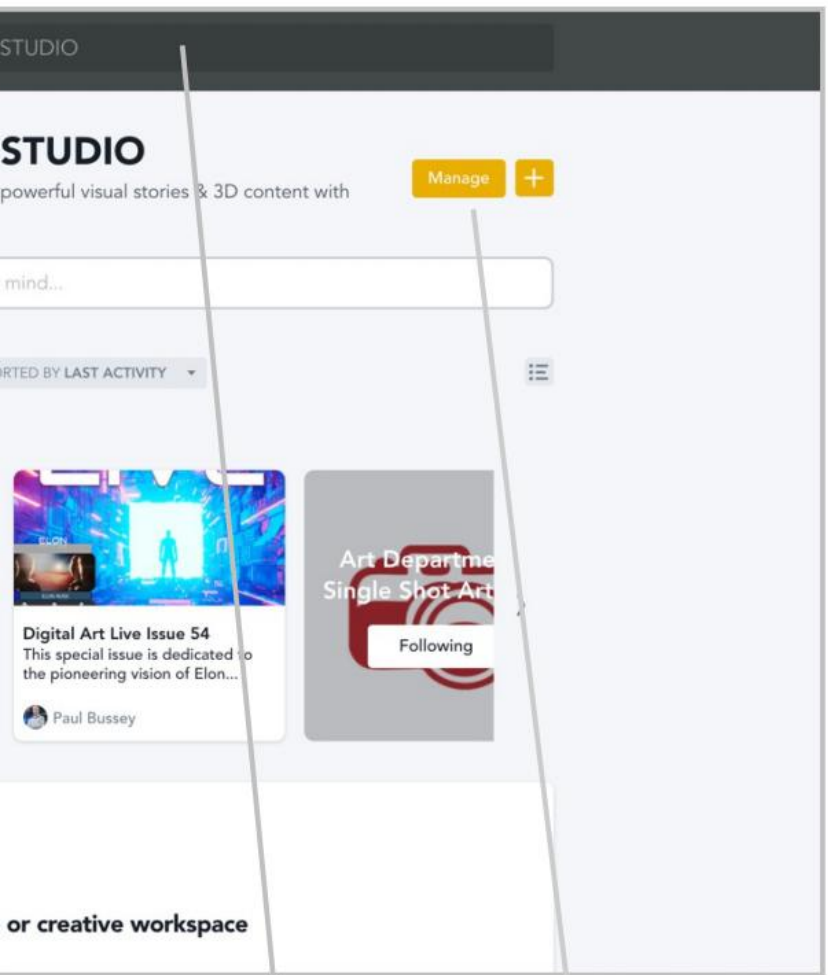

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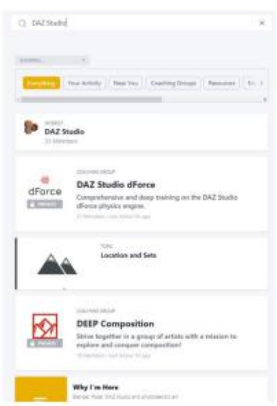

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Front Cover:

Detail from the "Fairy Tales: Snow White" by Sir Tancrede, interviewed in this issue.

The shoe, foot and toe feature in many potent fairytales, from *Cinderella* to the fragmentary '*earendel* source' Norse tale of Aurvandill's toe. There is also much evidence for ritual 'shoes in wells', suggesting lost Northern folk-beliefs.

THE 'FAIRYTALE' ISSUE

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SIR TANCREDE

Sir Tancrede is a leading 3D artist who makes impressive large-scale fairytale scenes and series with DAZ Studio.

DAZ | VUE | PS

"The tone of the picture is what takes me the most time: adjusting the tint of the textures. It is a mistake to simply use a filter or a tinted light. I adjust each texture so that they are matched with each other and fit the desired atmosphere. It's a real challenge."

— 26

STRANGEFATE

We interview a leading maker of quality fantasy/ fairytale 3D environments, made for the DAZ Studio software and iRay.

DAZ | MODO | SUBSTANCE

"Everything is modelled in Modo and painted in Substance Painter. I love 'fleshing out' a space. It's a lot of fun to let your imagination loose, and since it's all rough box shapes it's usually quick and satisfying progress. It may be boxes, but in your head it looks epic!"

— 46

DAVID REVOY

David Revoy is a major concept artist, champion of free software, and the maker of the *Pepper & Carrot* webcomic.

KRITA | COMICS | 3D

"I design a low-quality model of [large scenes] in Blender, speed-modelling done in less than a day. 3D models help solve shot framing, and keep lighting consistent. A lot of 'paint over' will be necessary, but I can't imagine painting these types of shot from scratch."

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Credits for pictures, from top left: Detail from "Cute fairytales: The Curious Mansion" by Sir Tancrede; "Fare well" by Yinetyang; detail from Stonehenge recreation, made and rendered in Blender by Ludovic Celle.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

WELCOME...

Welcome to our new 'Fairytales' issue, something a little different than usual. Here in the British Isles we have many ancient stone-circles, and it is often thought to be perilous for mortals to attempt to count the number of stones in such a circle. The fairies, you see, do not like such hard human logic. At best, the fool will never count the same number twice. At worst the counter will slightly misstep and slip behind a standing-stone and into the fairy realm... in which logic has a very different cast. One risks slipping "away with the fairies", as the saying goes. Likewise it is probably equally perilous for me to attempt to completely enumerate the number and types of the fairy-folk. To try to list here all the Elves, Fairies, Fays, Brownies, Spriggans, Knockers, Piskies, Pixies, Imps, Sprites, Sylphs, Little People, Boggarts, Hobs, Lobs, Padfoots, Pookas, Pucks, Woodwoses, Nicks, Nixies, Will o' the Wisps, Jinnies, Dobbies and Wussets... would be a very long task indeed. And my foolish head would be spinning and I would be "away with the fairies" long before completion.

Artists are often said in everyday conversation to be "away with the fairies", when we see things other than they are: "seeing things that ain't there". This can be true of pictures, in which we see things that normal people miss. Eye-tracking technology reveals part of the reason for this — we simply look at a picture differently, and process colour and shape differently. But the same can also be true of the real-world when we see things that "have been" and "might be", while the unimaginative person just sees "what is, now". To normal people, a good artist really "is away with the fairies".

What then of fairytales? It would also be perilous to try to list these or compare them, though there are large sets of books in dusty academic libraries that have done exactly that. They will tell you such things as that tale 'ATU 328' is the very ancient 'The Boy Steals the Ogre's Treasure' and why it is the basis of what is now 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Useful to know that one can 'spot' these tales like a bird-spotter spots birds. But one would like a general catch-all. What can be generally said is that few fairytales actually have fairies in them. So, for our purposes, it suffices to define a fairytale as a tale in which a fairy *could* appear at any moment. That, anyway, is my excuse for the relative lack of actual fairies in this 'Fairytale' themed issue of your magazine.

Nor should the digital crowd think we have escaped the nets of fairy. For instance, the very word pixel evokes 'pixie', those being somewhat mischievous variety of small fairies. Too much looking at the screen and we say our eyes have become 'pixelated'. Likewise PC is near to 'piskie' in pronunciation. We 'tinker' with our PCs. A software installer is a 'wizard' and requires a 'mouse' to work. We battle 'trolls' on the 'web' or 'net'. Animators and game-makers work with 'sprites'. To set up a network rendering system we may first have to install a 'daemon'. And so on. Go carefully with that 'Magic Wand tool' in your graphics software, now. You never know what it might conjour up.

DAVID HADEN
Editor of *Digital Art Live* magazine
david@digitalartlive.com

SIR TANCREDE

We're pleased to interview a leading maker of fairytale scenes with DAZ Studio, **'Sir Tancrede'.**

DAL: Sir Tancrede, welcome. We thought you would be a fine choice for the Fairytales issue.

ST: Thank you, it gives me great pleasure that you have thought of me for this theme. Fairy tales are my whole life!

DAL: Perfect. Now, we appreciate that you are currently very busy with paid work, so we will keep the questions fairly simple.

ST: Yes, I am very busy with my job at the moment, and when you have a passion you feel

SIR TANCREDE

FRANCE

DAZ | VUE | PHOTOSHOP |

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Picture: from the "Beauty and the Beast" series.

the lack of time for it even more. Currently all my free time is spent doing 3D or watching fantasy movies! But I appreciate your interest, and I will take the time to share with you about my hobby.

DAL: What made you interested in digital art?

ST: It's always fun when I think about this aspect of my interest, because it all actually started in 2009. Back when I bought *The Sims.*

I purchased *The Sims 2* game, for the PC. Then I discovered a huge community of modders on the Internet, whose hobby was to modify the game and add a wide variety of new online content for free. This discovery opened up so many possibilities, suddenly I could make scenes about... whatever themes I liked. I have a lot of nostalgia for this period. The *Sims 2* modders were very ingenious in getting around the limits of the game as it then stood. So that was how I started to get interested in 3D art. Then I discovered the Vue software, which is the special 3D landscape imagery software.

DAL: Yes, still going today, and still interfacing nicely with Poser 11 for scene import.

ST: I imported into Vue all the content I used in *The Sims* 2 and this time there were no limits at all. You can preview some of my old work on my DeviantArt Gallery. You can see that my interests have never changed.

I then bought Vue-compatible items from the DAZ 3D store regularly, but didn't at that time actually use DAZ Studio. That all changed when I experimented with DAZ's then-new fantastic iRay renderer. It has since become so easy to achieve a result close to the professional level. I had been waiting for that for a long time. I started to want to post my creations on the Daz3D gallery and on Deviant Art. At first it was for fun. Then, the good feedback I had encouraged me to really take care of my creations more and more.

DAL: Great. Yes, iRay has since come a long way, and due to the internal upgrades has become a lot faster even on CPU-only iRay rendering. Which is perfectly possible, though most people wrongly think it only renders with an NVIDIA graphics card. What learning resources were useful to you, in the beginning?

ST: My knowledge of 3D is far from that of a professional but I have a good foundation. From *The Sims* 2 modders, I learned from the community all the fundamentals about textures and modeling. It was therefore easy to get started on Vue and DAZ Studio afterwards. In addition DAZ is a relatively intuitive product and I learn mainly by analyzing how the purchased products are made.

DAL: Interesting. So you actually try to work out how things were made. But to stay with the early days for a moment… was there someone special who encouraged your art, in the beginning?

ST: My model is Walt Disney. This man has spent his life dreaming and making others dream. I grew up in the 'Second Golden Age' of Disney movies, from *The Little Mermaid* to *Tarzan*. Each year I was amazed by all these stories that appeared. When I was a child and then a teenager my dream used to be working for Disney. I was drawing a lot at that time. Then I gave up my dream and the drawing… but not my love for Disney. Then discovering 3D art allowed me to make part of this childhood dream come true.

DAL: I see. Did you also study the sceneography of the Disney movies? Because you have a fine sense of lighting in your pictures.

ST: Actually the lighting of my scenes is very simple. Most of the time I just choose a neutral light with very few shadows. I have no learning in that regard, but I find a lot of inspiration in classical painting and cinema. This gives me two advantages to work on my light.

First of all, I am inspired about the shaders, which means 'the way that surfaces react to light'. A realistic and pretty base texture is good, but it is ten times better when it reacts to light according to the corresponding material. It also takes a lot of personal experience. For example I am much more familiar with the effects of light on a tea service, than on a spaceship...

Then there is the tone of the picture. This is what takes me the most time: adjusting the tint of the textures. It is a mistake to simply use a filter or a tinted light. I adjust each of my textures so that they are matched with each other and fit the desired atmosphere. It's a real challenge when there are dozens of objects in the same image making sure you have a harmonious whole. In the end my images vary between hot or cold ambience… although my basic light is exactly the same.

Picture: "An Elizabethan beauty".

"[As a teenager] I gave up my dream and the drawing… but not my love for Disney. Then, discovering 3D art allowed me to make part of this childhood dream come true."

DAL: Yes, quite a challenge. How long does a large and detailed picture take? And what is the workflow used? Is there a lot of postwork?

ST: About one week, if one worked without stopping at all. But for this week to be possible I first have to spend a lot of time organizing the purchased content. I have invested in a huge amount of objects and textures, that I have to sort through as quickly as possible, to then make the best choices when rendering.

I can't render such detailed renders all at once. My renders are the result of a combination of a lot of renderings. Over a hundred for my most detailed images. I build my images piece by piece. I then combine it all together with Photoshop. This gives real control and above all prevents my PC from crashing at any time.

DAL: I see. So that leads me into the next question. What is your current studio and hardware like?

Picture: from the "Fairytales Series: Snow White".

ST: I just bought a new PC with an RTX 3080 to replace my GTX 1980Ti card and I also updated my version of DAZ Studio. I was still working with version 4.9. The difference is blistering! I can't wait to try out all the new technology in DAZ Studio that I have long overlooked.

DAL: Wow, yes. 4.9, that's way back in 2016 I think? So… an upgrade from that would give you, let's see now: dForce; better FBX import; and a substantial iRay speed boost just from the higher version of iRay that DAZ now ships with. Add a NVIDIA 30-series card on top, and it would be tremendous improvement. But are you happy with the software as it is? Is there anything you would like to see added to it, to improve it?

ST: DAZ studio is really good software, very intuitive and powerful. With its iRay, dForce cloth, Ultrascatter. All of these technologies were still only dreams of a few years ago. But what I would like to see improved are the lighting effects. iRay manages light very well on surfaces, but not in space. Volumetric lighting, light rays, light that flickers or that is reflected, there are ways to obtain these effects in DAZ Studio… but it is quite tedious.

DAL: Yes, the fine per-light control is more limited, which would be noticed if someone was coming from something like Poser. Also it's not Vue with its one-click Atmospheres, in that respect. But on the point of the content that's now available… who are your favourite content-makers for DAZ Studio, and why?

ST: Ah, now the first creator I think of is… of course Faveral on the DAZ Store. When I started with DAZ he was the go-to reference guy for interior scenes or architecture, and his products were exactly what I was looking for. Lately, I was dazzled by some of his companions on the DAZ Store, such as the collaboration between Roguey and Strangefate whose environments reach a level of quality never seen. In the fantasy genre anyway.

DAL: Great, well we happen to have an interview with follows yours, and that I think will interest you. Anyone else you'd like to mention?

ST: I also have great admiration for the products of Andrey Pestryakov and Peanterra. And of course I am a fan of their colorful natural environment in the style of Disney.

DAL: Yes, I think the non-photoreal style will come more and more to DAZ and Poser. Of course, the mass market wants photoreal skin and lots of it. But there are more and more people interested in NPR and toon now, that it will build to a critical mass and come through commercially. Someone who can make NPR and toon as easy in DAZ as it is in Poser, is going to earn a handsome sum. Anyway, back to the past! You are also very interested in medieval themes, as well as in fairy tales. Now of course the French have a very rich tradition, in such tales, not least in all the Arthurian tales, the Normandy folk-tales, Perrault and the like. Have you thought of illustrating and thus reviving some little-known and specifically French tales?

ST: My mother is passionate about the history of France, and she transmitted her interest to me. In my childhood, during my holidays, we went for walks in the forests and villages of the countryside or the mountains of my country and especially we visited all the castles we could. It strongly influenced my tastes. How can you not be marked when you visited castles like Versailles or Chambord in your childhood? But… while I have a very good knowledge of the history of my country, on the other hand I know very few fairy tales specific to France. Anyway, of course, in my personal library I still have an illustrated version of Perrault's tales.

DAL: I see. What appeals to you the most, in fairy tales?

ST: Actually I have very little interest in stories as such. My real passion is historical atmospheres. I love the clothes, the architecture and the landscapes of different eras, and different countries. I have a real preference for the medieval and the Victorian.

DAL: Interesting. You might listen to the Wayne June or Roddy McDowall audio reading of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Outsider", if you haven't already. He's very big on 'atmosphere'.

Pictures: two from "The Beauty and the Beast" series, in French "La belle et la bete".
All Sir Tancrede's pictures are made with DAZ Studio and Photoshop.

ST: Thanks. "What makes a fairy tale?" This question fascinates me. Of course there's magic, but not only that. You can notice that there are not much magic it in my pictures. It's mostly my work on the atmosphere of the scenes that makes them magical, and makes them seem to come out from a fairy tale.

DAL: What is the strangest fairy-tale?

ST: Hmm… are Tim Burton's movies fairy tales?

I think so. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Sleepy Hollow* marked my childhood. My first experience of the 'creepy' fairytale. It sounds commonplace today, but back then it was a real revolution, compared to the Disney classics.

More recently I fell in love with Lewis Carroll and his *Alice*. I had never read the book before and hadn't understood that the English had their own fairy world. It's so British! I had never read such a crazy tale before.

Pictures: Number three from "A Gothic Tale" series. Previous pages, from the "A Victorian dark fairytale" series, referencing *Alice*.

Pictures: "Sir Tancrede" and "A classical magic beauty".

DAL: Ah yes, it's commonly thought that we have very little native folk tradition, that it was nearly all lost. Which in a way is true. But we've since patched together a pretty good range, from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to the new nonsense tradition around Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, and the children's 'earth mysteries' tradition is very strong — Alan Garner and the like, and leads many into *The Lord of the Rings*. The invention of tradition has become the new British tradition, and it gives us a certain creative freedom from the crushing weight of the 'dead hand' of the past. Also, we feel free to mix together high and low culture 'at the drop of a hat', which I'm told that other nations don't. That helps power the culture.

But back to you... I see that some of your pictures are in a series. 'The Beauty and the Beast' for instance. Have you thought of making published storybooks, where the pictures are accompanied by your telling of the story?

ST: I would like to, but I don't have enough time and patience. It's not the illustrating of stories that interests me the most. This is why I choose famous tales, because there is no need to tell the story. Everyone knows them and immediately it gives a lot of meaning to my images. What I love is building a world. Like a level designer in the video game. The story scenario for me is secondary.

DAL: Interesting. But... you might then collaborate with a storyteller who could add the words, if you ever consider a book?

What are you working on at the moment?

ST: I have some big projects in progress and well advanced, but I'm waiting until I have the motivation to finalize them. I am also more and more interested in Japanese fantasy such as *Final Fantasy* games or movies from Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli. They have a much less traditional and less conventional conception of fantasy than in continental Europe. So far I've always disliked mixing genres or overly imaginary worlds, but that could change. I think that it will be reflected in my future work.

DAL: Sounds good. OK, thanks very much for this interview. We wish you well in the future.

ST: Thanks to you. I hope those who know my work will understand it better now, and that it will make those who do not know it want to take a look at my gallery.

'Sir Tancrede' is online at:

https://www.deviantart.com/sirtancrede/ and https://www.artstation.com/sirtancrede

Picture: "Dark Tales series: van Helsing" (*Dracula*).

STRANGEFATE

Fain Beaubien talks with DAZ Store content maker **'Strangefate'** who with partner **'Roguey'** has recently released the Red Crow Inn and Fantasy Home for DAZ.

Fain: 'Strangefate', welcome. To begin, what started your journey to become a 3D content creator?

Strangefate: I used to work as a Senior Lead Artist at a great videogames studio and... as it sometimes happens, things just fell into place that allowed me to go and try something different. I had always fancied doing something like this if possible, and had experimented with online 3D content and 3D

STRANGEFATE

SPAIN

DAZ | SUBSTANCE PAINTER | MODO

WEB

Picture: "Fantasy Home", available for DAZ Studio at the DAZ Store.

printing stores over the last 15 years. Just on the side, though I never had the time and opportunity to focus on it more than that. When I was trying to figure out the best way to 'go at it', I found DAZ by chance and coming from the videogames industry, creating content for a specific engine or system was something I was familiar with. And, at the same time, it was a break from working with actual game engines. So I gave it a try.

Fain: Great. What inspired you to create the ROG Red Crow Inn?

Strangefate: 'Roguey' and I keep a pretty large list on Trello of possible projects, from Dark Sacrificial Towers of Horrible Death to harmless sci-fi robots, all sorted by our current interest in doing them. We don't necessarily follow the existing order and it changes as our current interests change. But, by looking at the top entries in the list, we get an idea of where our interests lie at any moment. Then we usually sit down and discuss the upper three or so entries, until we can decide on one. The Red Crow Fantasy Inn floated pretty quickly to the top of most useful places we could do, within a fantasy setting. It's always a great place to create stories and where no character, regardless of whether they have boots or hooves, is out of place as long as they can hold a tankard.

Fain: Did you use any reference material to help you with the creation process?

Strangefate: The initial idea was to do something small, along the lines of the 'Crossroads Inn' from *Games of Thrones* as I had always loved the mood in there. But it quickly became clear that it was a bit simplistic to be fun to create in 3D. So we kept looking for ways to make it more interesting. We ended up with a lot of reference, and more ideas than we could fit in a small place — from Irish pubs that inspired some of the windows, corners and the tones of some of the wood in the architecture, to medieval kitchens that inspired the fireplace, all pushed a bit 'over the top' and sprinkled with some typical fantasy elements.

Fain: It certainly worked. How did you then plan out the project? Do you have a specific system in place that you use to go from concept to finished product?

Strangefate: We have a system for the ROG projects and then 'less of a system' for the STF projects but they all go through Trello. We usually start figuring out what to do next towards the end of the current project. That gives us a few days or weeks where we can think about the new project and discover reference materials without too much pressure. The gap also provides a bit of a mental break of the current project as we wrap it up.

Every project gets a Trello board and every task, prop and idea for the project goes on there, sorted by priority. We each keep our respective lists on the Trello board, and in that way we can always see what the other is working on and can move tasks that are ready for the other person to work on. Maintaining a list also helps you see a light at the end of the tunnel on bigger projects, or at least help answer the question of how they got so big and out of hand in the first place.

We also do simple post-mortems to see if we want to change some part of our current process, or workloads, and we talk about what we enjoyed the most and not at all so we can plan or change our next project accordingly. 'Roguey' is relatively new to all of this so we also use the post-mortems to discuss how she feels about her progress, and what new things and disciplines she feels ready to tackle.

Fain: Thanks. Can you walk us through a little bit of the detail, on the process you used to create the ROG Red Crow Inn?

Strangefate: Once we knew that we wanted to do an Inn and had gathered some reference, we sat together and went through it, discussing what we liked about it. Be it the mood, architecture or decoration of a place. At this point there still wasn't an idea of how the layout or main tones would be, only a collection of elements we liked from going through the reference together. Such as old windows, fireplaces, pub decorations, colours, wear and aging. What was clear enough were the basic needs in terms of props — bar, tables, chairs, lamps, barrels — and the preferred shapes of some of those items for our project, like rectangular tables and long benches for example. Roguey made proxy versions of all the large props we could possibly need and simple representations for the fireplace and such, which I then used to do a simple version of the Inn layout and architecture, using her props to make sure the spaces felt right in size and trying to include the elements we both liked from all our reference material.

Pictures: Night and day at the main window in the ‘Fantasy Home’ for DAZ Studio.

Picture: An interior corridor view of the ‘Fantasy Home’ for DAZ Studio.

Picture: Interior view of the ROG 'Fantasy Inn' for DAZ Studio, showing the upper balcony area.

At this stage I usually figure out the layout of the space and the main architectural elements, like all the wooden beams. I also try to make sure all spaces and corners look interesting from different angles, this includes adding architectural elements if needed, at typical eye or render height if walls look too bland. There are also quick lighting tests using emissive polygons and spheres to simulate the placement of windows and candles. I also like to do quick ambient occlusion renders as I go, as it helps you see areas that are too empty or noisy. For the Inn, this took about three hours, so in fact it all goes rather quick.

From there, 'Roguey' focused on modelling all the props and furniture while I refined the architecture and broke it down into modular elements, going back and forth between that and reviewing and texturing props. Since there's usually no single cohesive concept to follow, I just try to picture the final look and mood in my mind and build and texture things accordingly. Once it's all in DAZ Studio, I can go back and adjust materials as needed to make everything fit better together.

Fain: You worked with a partner on the ROG Red Crow Inn, how did you both split apart the workload?

Strangefate: Roguey's gotten very comfortable and fast at modeling furniture and props in general, so she usually handles most of that by default. Toward the end of production, once everything was in place it felt like a bit of a waste to have done all that work to end up with a single layout, so we decided to add round tables and regular chairs and open up the floor space a bit… to create a second variant of the Inn with a different feel from the default one.

That led to the second variant of the Inn that's included with the product. 'Roguey' handled all the re-decorating for this variant. Which I think looks better than my initial one with the rectangular tables! That was while I was already working on final lighting and promos. She also did some of the photogrammetrics for a few of the props, that was for the alt version with the round tables and all the product icons.

Fain: Roughly how long in total did a build like this take the two of you? This is quite a major product and very detailed.

Strangefate: It sure turned out bigger than we had initially planned, not even counting the finished props and furniture that we had to remove because of memory concerns with iRay rendering. And the several versions of every prop that 'Roguey' likes to model because, as she likes to point out, "they all look good".

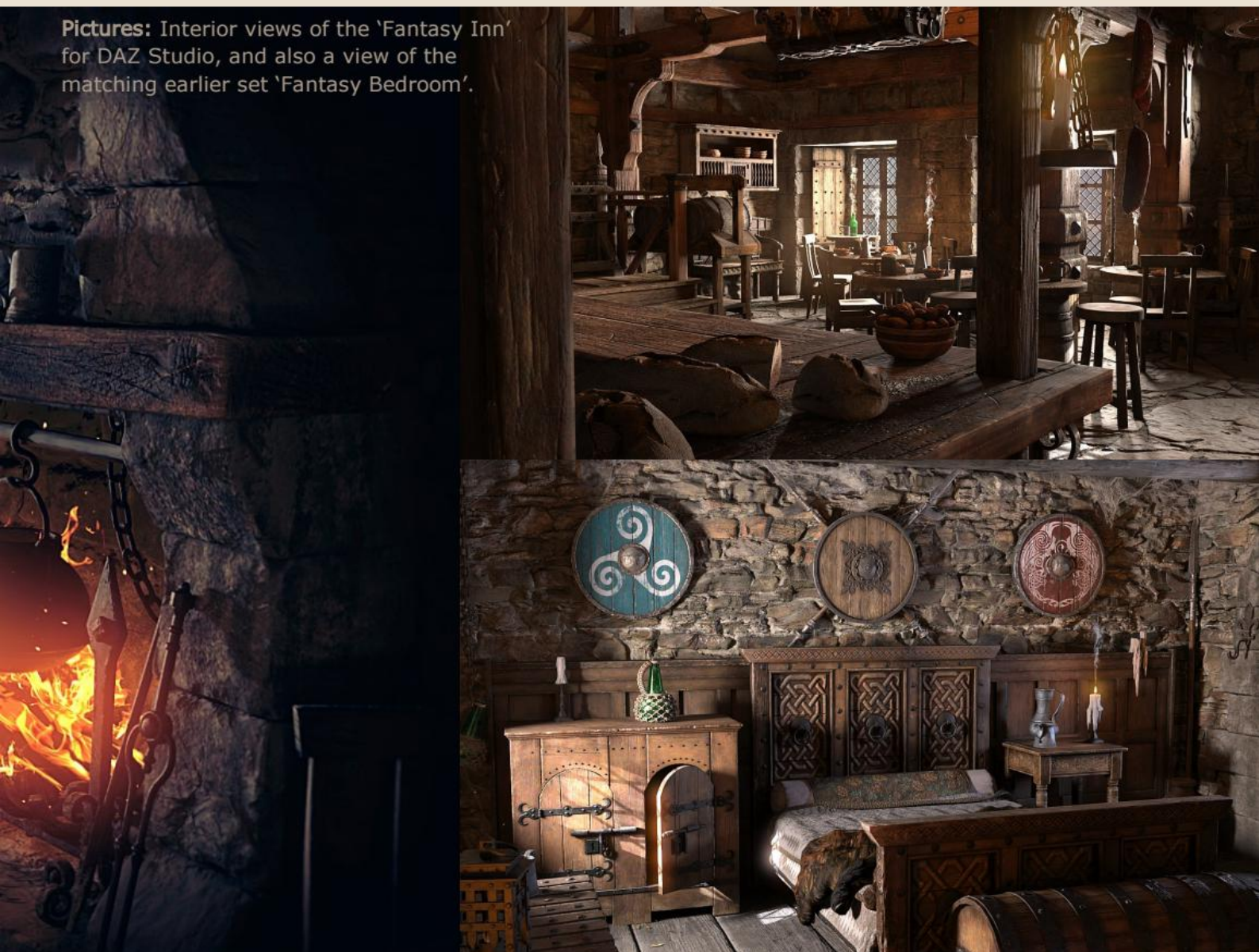
The Inn might have shipped with only two different tables, but she probably made a half dozen of them and several versions of any other prop included.

So to answer the question… I think it took around four months from start to finish. But the actual time spent on a project is always a bit blurry. We tend to have three or four projects going on at the same time, projects that we fall back to when we have to wait for the other to finish something. Or when we simply want a break and do something different for a few days.

Fain: Sounds good. What are some of the programs that you use?

Strangefate: Everything is modelled in the Modo software and painted in Substance Painter. I think those two, and Trello for project management, are the ones we use the most.

Pictures: Interior views of the 'Fantasy Inn' for DAZ Studio, and also a view of the matching earlier set 'Fantasy Bedroom'.



Fain: What's your favourite part of building something like the ROG Red Crow Inn?

Strangefate: I love 'fleshing out' a space. It's a lot of fun to let your imagination run loose a bit and since you're doing it all in rough shapes it's usually a pretty quick and satisfying progress. It may be boxes, but in your head it looks epic!

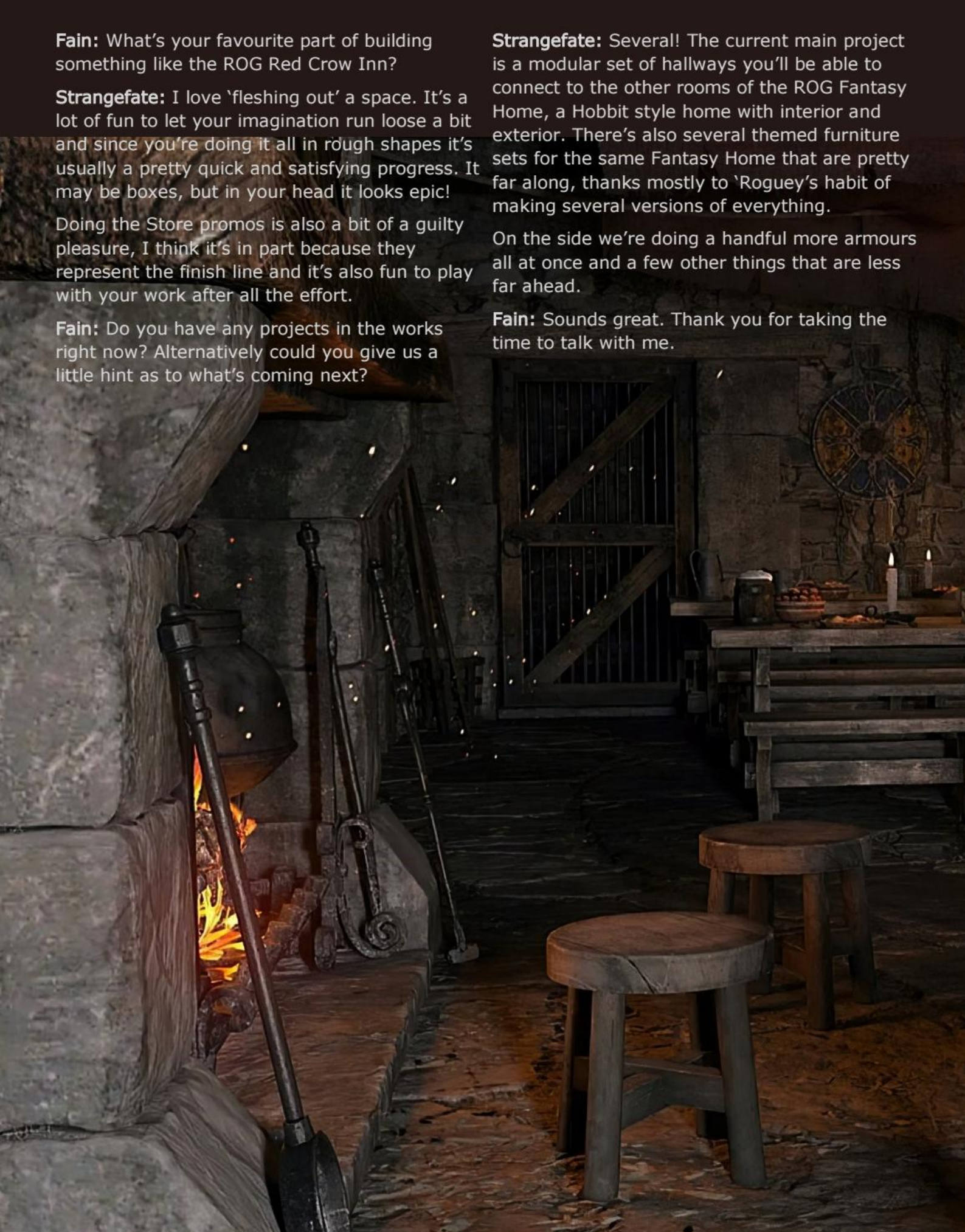
Doing the Store promos is also a bit of a guilty pleasure, I think it's in part because they represent the finish line and it's also fun to play with your work after all the effort.

Fain: Do you have any projects in the works right now? Alternatively could you give us a little hint as to what's coming next?

Strangefate: Several! The current main project is a modular set of hallways you'll be able to connect to the other rooms of the ROG Fantasy Home, a Hobbit style home with interior and exterior. There's also several themed furniture sets for the same Fantasy Home that are pretty far along, thanks mostly to 'Roguey's habit of making several versions of everything.

On the side we're doing a handful more armours all at once and a few other things that are less far ahead.

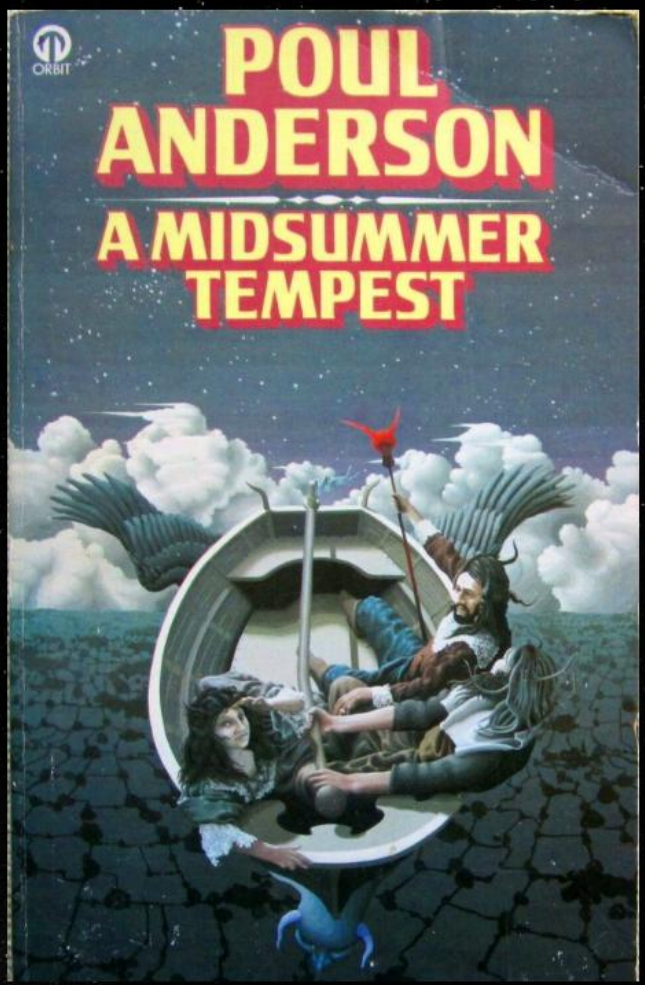
Fain: Sounds great. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.



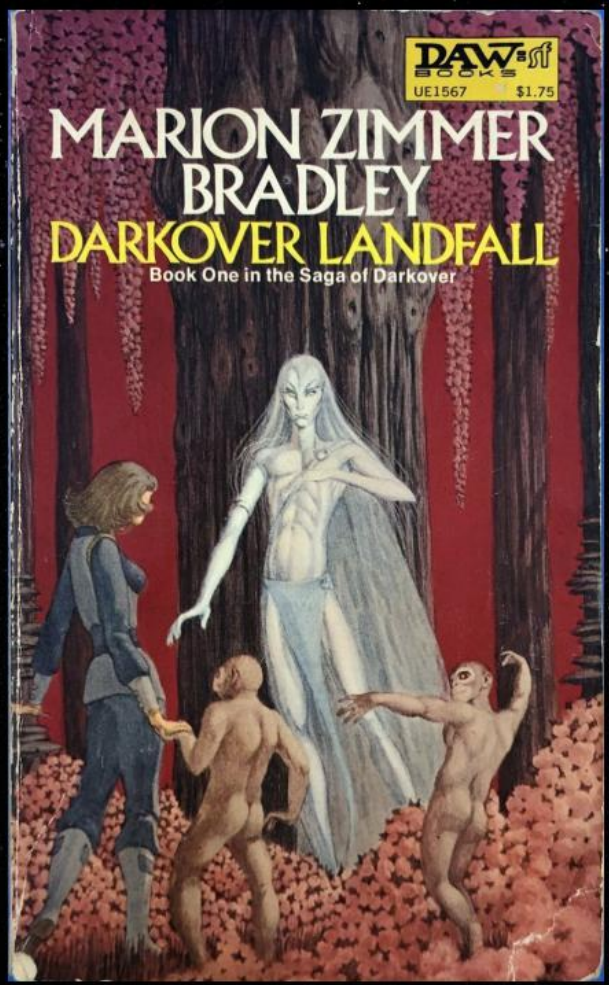
The 3D fantasy creations of **Strangefate** and **Roguey** can be found online at the DAZ Store, optimised for DAZ Studio and iRay renders. Many of the settings are perfect for fairytale renders and stories.

Picture: Interior view of the 'Fantasy Inn'.

CREATIVE IDEA: cloud-boat floating in a big night.



CREATIVE IDEA: blend *Star Trek*-like sci-fi with fantasy.



FAIRYTALE ON CLASSIC COVERS

A Midsummer Tempest

1974. UK paperback Futura/Orbit edition.

Poul Anderson's short novel *A Midsummer Tempest* (1974) is an alternative history fantasy set in an England in which Shakespeare's fairy-folk are real and the English Civil Wars are partly an early-steampunk affair with airships. The beautiful and finely-written novel was nominated for the World Fantasy Award and Nebula Award, and it won the Mythopoeic Award. That was back when awards meant something, too. The artist for both key UK editions — an Orbit paperback and a Severn hardback to cater for library demand — is uncredited and **unknown** but may have been one of the 1970s Ruralists. The artist has successfully created a difficult night / moonlight scene, evoking the novel well.

Darkover Landfall

1972. 1976 US DAW reprint with new cover.

At just 160 pages *Landfall* tale might seem somewhat lost among Bradley's immense *Darkover* series. But this short novel from 1972 actually opens the *Darkover* internal chronology and — as you can see — blends fantasy and science-fiction. Such blending is still horrific to many sci-fi critics, and was much more so in the 1970s. But the potential reader is warned of this by the new 1976 cover with its *Star Trek* –like colonist uniform paired with a pale fairy-elf. The novel is actually set in a harsh winter and features a crash-landed crew — half wish to colonise, half just want to repair and get home. As such the original painting was in cold blues, but DAW switched it to warmer colours. The cover artist was **George O. Barr**, who was influenced by Hannes Bok and who has been likened to Kelly Freas.

CREATIVE IDEA: centred and off-centre elements.

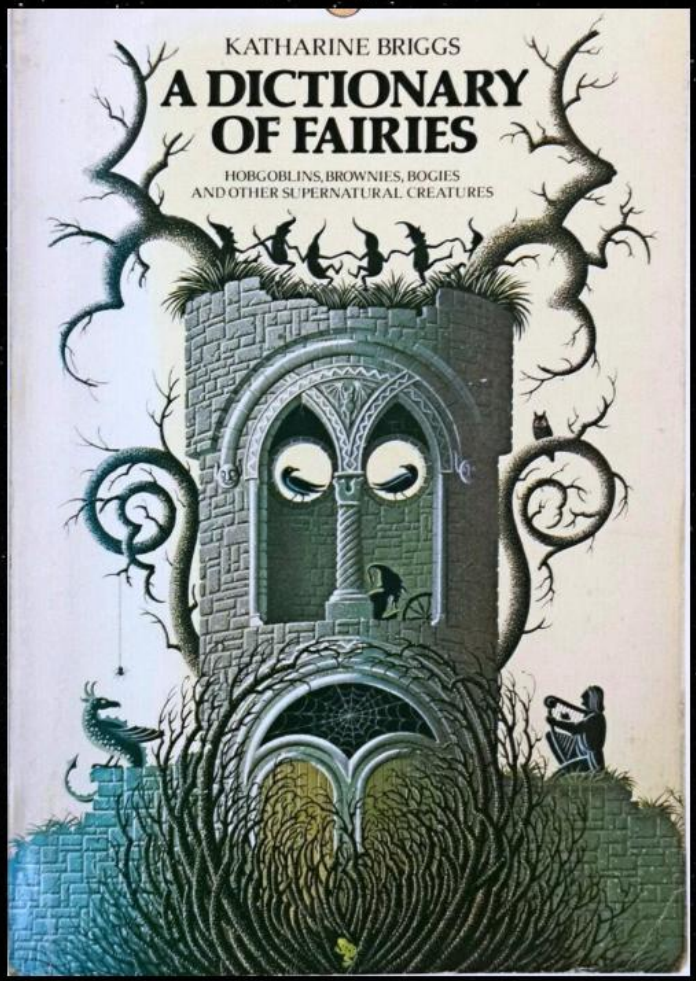
The Giant Under the Snow

1968. 1971 UK Puffin paperback edition.

John Gordon's *The Giant Under the Snow* is one of the great modern British fantasy classics for children in middle-childhood. Strictly one might call it a 'weird fantasy' in the manner of the early Alan Garner novels, but the cover art ably evokes the spirit of dark northern fairytale.

For its popular 1971 paperback printing it was paired by Puffin with superb art by **Antony Maitland**, who was asked to re-work his cover art from the 1968 first edition hardback. Maitland had served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the British Intelligence Corps duing the Cold War, then travelled around Europe before becoming an illustrator on returning to London. *Giant* was his first cover commission, and he went on to an illustration career and created over thirty children's book covers for Puffin.

CREATIVE IDEA: old tower appearing to be an old man.



A Dictionary of Fairies

1976. 1979 Penguin UK paperback reprint.

This delightful book cover immediately keys the potential reader into the gothic side of British fairy traditions, and thus steers them away from thinking of the 'Tinkerbell' type of fairy. In 1979 this cover would have appealed to many target audiences at once, including academics interested in the then-hot topics of 'the gothic' and British folkways. Sadly the book is long out-of-print, and commands stupendous prices even in faded paperback form. It is, however, now free at Archive.org — though with a hideous American cover.

The UK cover is by **Tony Meeuwissen** who also did many covers for Penguin Books. He was once very well known in many British homes for his similar-looking *Radio Times* magazine work, and stamp designs for the Royal Mail. His finely detailed designs beautifully fused graphic design and illustration.

INDEX

HAVE you missed out on an issue of our free magazine? Please enjoy this new handy double-page index of our past issues, and check if any are missing from your collection. Our 15,000 readers are also able to access back-issues of our previous title *3D Art Direct.*

Every new issue can be sent to your email address, simply by subscribing to our mailing-list...

https://digitalartlive.com/

Inset: Issue 28 ('Future Oceans' issue) cover art by Artur Rosa.

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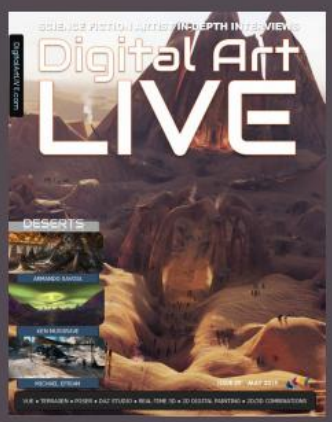

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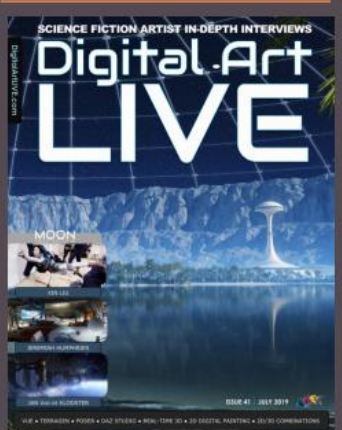

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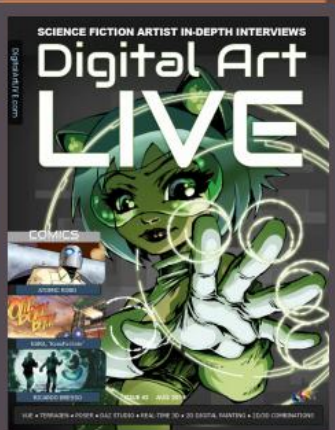

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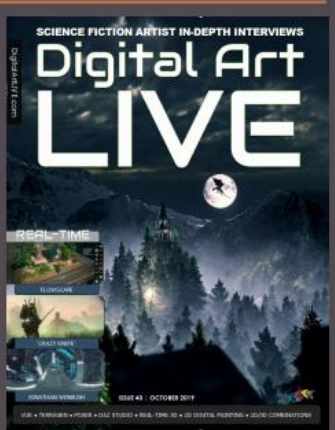

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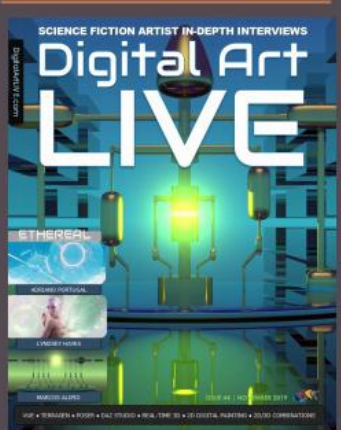

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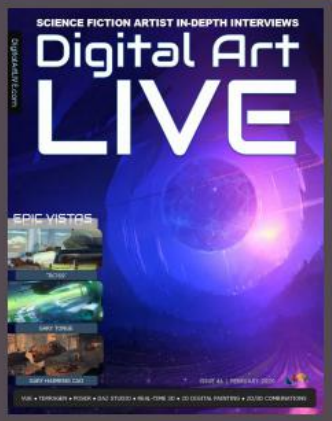

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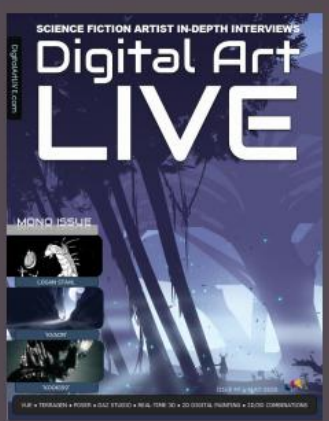

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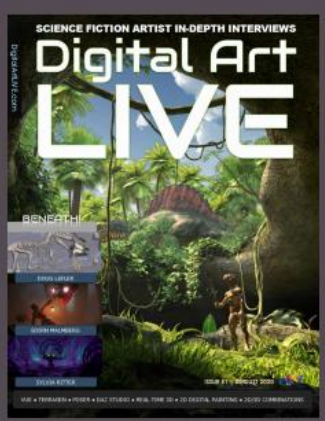

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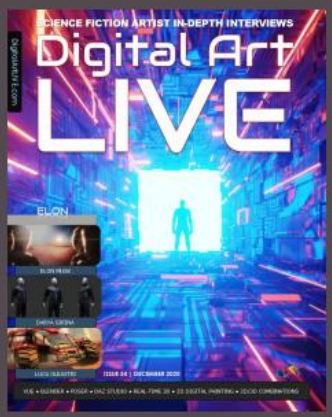

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YOUR ART HERE?

Issue 59 June 2021
Maps

YOUR ART HERE?

Issue 59 July 2021
Minimal

Are you interested in being interviewed in a future issue? Or presenting a new webinar? Please send the address of your gallery or store, and we'll visit!

paul@digitalartlive.com

Crossdresser
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HP Z600 Workstation
#47 | March 2020

Realistic Paint Studio 1.2
#56 | March 2021

CONTESTS

Here we offer our readers a small selection of current contests, for your consideration.

ARCTIC HOTEL

Arctic Hotel is an unusual new competition that challenges young 3D designers and architects to imagine and then plan ... "a place where people can experience the most authentic North, respecting its isolation and magic." Specifically, the planned site of the new hotel is on Ounasvaara Hill on the outskirts of Rovaniemi, the main settlement of Finnish Lapland. Can your team imagine a new structure that blends with the sky, ice and with this specific landscape? Something fresh and fitting? Not a chintzy chalet, not a corrugated-iron work-shed or bunker, not the usual modernist 'box on stilts'? If so, 15,000 Euro in prizes are available!

Early-bird team registration is 17th May 2021 and costs 65 Euro. Shared among a five people, this seems quite reasonable.

Require from your team for a successful entry are, as uploaded .PDF files: 1 x A1 board, showing the design concept, facades and cross-sections; a pack of 3D renderings; an A3 album shoing the ground plans (a site plan is supplied); and your project's 'avatar icon' heading your descriptive texts in English.

Deadline: 14th July 2021.

www.youngarchitectscompetitions.com/

24-HOUR SUNDIAL CONTEST

Elsewhere there is a free contest to design a "24-hour Sundial", sponsored by ten major Polish instituiions and open internationally. You will "design a small or medium-sized mobile" solar-powered sundial that will be functional and will operate at night as well as in sunlight. Details of technical aspects, re: the mechanism, are not required — just a B1-sized project board and 3D renders showing the scultural form and build, plus descriptive text. Individuals are welcome to enter. Entry is free. Deadline: 1st June 2021.

https://ideanova.org.pl/en/sundial/

MANGA AWARD

Japan's official 5th International Manga Award seeks comics of 16 pages or more of finished work, with a story. There appears to be no entry fee and international entries are welcome in either PDF or print. Winners fly to Japan and tour the studios and publishing houses! Deadline: 8th July 2021.

https://www.manga-award.mofa.go.jp/

MEADOW ARTS UK

The Floodplain Meadow Arts Competition 2021 invites artists to celebrate the beauty and lushness of the traditional English watermeadows — places awash with wildflowers, grasses, insects and birds. The contest is open to all types of art, including digital and film. Deadline: 28th August 2021.

http://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/

AMD 3D/2D CG CONTEST

AMD has a big contest for digital artists, open until 15th July 2021. 2D and 3D are welcomed. The prizes are fast AMD processors, not graphics-cards.

https://amdaward.com/

DAVID REVOY

We're pleased to present an interview with open software advocate and comics-maker **David Revoy**, concept artist on *Sintel* and creator of his own *Pepper & Carrot* webcomic.

DAL: David, welcome. You're currently most well-known for your comic strip *Pepper & Carrot*. For those who are not yet aware of *Pepper & Carrot* yet, can you give an outline?

DR: So… *Pepper & Carrot* is a webcomic, in other words it is a comic strip that can be read online. It's a webcomic about a little witch, named Pepper, and her cat, Carrot. It's humour. These are short episodes that would come out about every month in the ideal world but, in reality… every two months. And then I use Creative Commons for all episodes, and that gives a lot more freedom to people who enjoy *Pepper & Carrot*, who can re-use it.

Picture: Concept art for the opening of the latest edition of the *Pepper & Carrot* webcomic.

DAVID REVOY

FRANCE

KRITA | COMICS | CONCEPT ART | BLENDER

WEB

And also, I only do all the episodes with free and open source tools. These are the small peculiarities, and the main lines of the project. Also, I'm doing my best to keep *Pepper & Carrot* 'kid-compatible' — but I don't have a target audience as modern marketing does: slicing ages and targeting 'products' to them.

DAL: Super. How did you begin with comics, right back at the start when you were young?

DR: I think I wanted to stick seriously with the idea of becoming an artist when I was 12 years old or so. It sounds early for a life-choice, but I was seriously concerned by the question of adults: "What do you want to do in the future?"

I had to find a quick and definitive solution to answer this! As I was a young creative boy, I decided to be a comics author. Comics seemed to me the most 'full art', and I started to work hard at my drawing skill. But my own comics, while I was teenager, were mostly only 'concept-art dossier', not so much real story-pages. Designing all characters, scenes, clothes… a universe… that was a real passion for me. That's how I discovered I would love the work of concept artist and illustrator.

DAL: How did you then learn your craft?

DR: So… I have a path that was really very chaotic. For those who like the key theme of my *Pepper* comic strip, which is set in 'a school of chaos', there they will totally recognize the idea. Since, at the beginning, I did a rather artistic course, guided by tutors, in the applied arts. And then I stopped at the beginning of the first year of art-school… I went off to do street portraits. Then I illustrated board-games, book covers, and have never really stopped since. I then went on to do concept art for videogames and animated films. All this has let me try different industries, and I have to say that I've never been very satisfied with any industry I've yet met. So I went on to create my own project: *Pepper & Carrot*, the comic strip.

DAL: Which videogames inspired you, early on?

DR: RPG, role-playing games from the 1990s. *Zelda, Secret of Mana*, for example. On Super Nintendo. It inspired me a lot, about everything I do. And so… it's funny, because I do comics but it's videogames that are really the driving force behind it.

DAL: And the comics have been a great success. And were there favourite comics?

DR: All of Akira Toriyama's work, and the work of Tsukasa Hojo too — *City Hunter, Cat's Eyes* — I'm really a fan of what he does.

DAL: Great, I'm sure many readers will want to look those up. Turning now to the production methods and licencing. Firstly, what are your favourite tools to work with?

DR: So… my favourite tools will be quite simple, first of all it would be paper and pencil to prepare the scenarios, the storyboards. Which I like to share a lot. And otherwise I'm going to work a lot on the computer, and for that I'm going to use Krita as software, it's an open source software and I use it on a Linux system with a Wacom tablet — my favourite tool.

DAL: And have you been pleased with the success of the Creative Commons model for your art and comics?

DR: Well, eight years ago, I started *Pepper & Carrot* and I said to myself: in the very first year, *everyone* will jump on my concept, they will tell me "Woah!" and there will be a lot of illustrators who will take it, who will imitate [the model]. And I'm still almost alone on this. Of course, the Morevna studio, for example, in Russia, does things, there are things being done here and there. In Amsterdam, the Blender Foundation who do things for free art, and then, in music, there are plethora of them, but I'm talking about free art in the world.

DAL: Yes, there have been big batch releases of archives. The *Ryzom* concept art, the big *Odd Job Jack* archive, a few others. All useful, high quality. But ongoing storytelling work, not so much. Especially not in comics.

DR: So there is really everything still to do, which means that for the moment *Pepper & Carrot* is quite isolated. There is no science fiction universe in free art or re-use. A good science fiction universe.

DAL: Yes, there was *Symbiosis*, very high quality and it left a legacy of a sort but that never got off the ground. What else is missing, would you say?

DR: There's so much missing, because even in fantasy, we could do serious fantasy, it would be nice.

DAL: Indeed. Do you have any advice for young creators who are not familiar with free licenses for art, or who are wary of them? There seems to be some confusion. For instance one quite often sees on DeviantArt the icon-button "Stop! You are not authorised to use this artwork", and yet the picture is under Creative Commons. It's also often the case that people choose the wrong CC licence.

David’s digital art workstation at spring 2020, running Kubuntu Linux 19.10, and with Krita as the main graphics software. On the desk is a Wacom Intuos4 XL oversize drawing tablet. Faithful assistant-cat calmly awaits instructions and nibbles. Below we see David drawing *Pepper* in Krita on a smaller pen-monitor.

DR: So, yes… go to the Creative Commons site [and spend time there] getting interested in Creative Commons licenses. These are not just free licenses, there are licenses that allow you to make rules, these rules actually allow you to clearly express to your audience what you want to do with the re-use. Not only for free licenses but for licenses in general, studying Creative Commons is extremely beneficial for all your creations. And that makes exchanges on the Internet easier. There are some people who don't actually dare to contact artists and ask for permission. And some artists are in too much of a hurry, in the evening they only have an hour to draw a picture. The enquirer doesn't want to write an email to ask permission [and bother the busy artist]. By putting rules on the Internet it allows everyone to know what to do with the pictures [without needing to ask].

DAL: Thanks, good advice. Now an easy question, who is your favourite character in *Pepper & Carrot*?

DR: So actually that's a bit of a trick question… because all the characters in *Pepper & Carrot* are one of my own [personality] facets, one of the facets I like, anyway. But I'm always going to draw Saffron with a twinge. Because Saffron, she has a character that few people understand; they think she's the bad girl, they think she's nasty. While I find her quite brave, quite enterprising, quite strong and proud. She's a little venal, that's for sure, with the money and everything. But I like her very much because every time I draw her I can always give her a very determined, very confident expression, and compared to Pepper who is always 'lost' and who I always draw, it always refreshes me to draw Saffron.

DAL: So, Saffron… the *Pepper & Carrot* characters all have rather botanical names?

DR: /*Laughter*/ So… the names of the *Pepper & Carrot* characters all actually follow the names of plants, herbs, and for the animals that accompany them, also names of vegetables. So for all spice names. What inspired me there was simply going shopping at the traditional market, there are still such grocery stores [in my part of France, where I live and work]. Then I saw 'coriander', I saw 'saffron', I saw 'pepper', and that's it. There was '*poivre* '— that's pepper in French — but in French it was too similar to '*poivrot*' — which is drunkard in French. So I thought, 'We're going to avoid *Drunkards and Carrots*!' It would not sound good, that's why I kept the English 'Pepper'.

DAL: Yes, which is good as a name. So the origin of the name Pepper is drawing a little on the public domain — the long heritage of folk-names for plants. That's nice. Now, due to its very free nature, *Pepper & Carrot* sees many derivative works. The art and pages are re-used in games, alternative comics, fanart, animations. Does it hearten you to see your work live in this way?

DR: So yes, it really means a lot to me to see so many derivatives around *Pepper & Carrot*, whether they are commercial, non-commercial, fan products. Simply because I see reinterpretations, I also see people putting their style into it, who put cravings, who try to satisfy things they would have *liked* to see with *Pepper & Carrot*, and I'm glad that *Pepper & Carrot* is being used a little like 'a common'. A kind of sandbox that we can all share, more or less. It's always tricky with attributions, with who takes over which drawing, but so far it's working pretty well.

DAL: Good. What has been the most unexpected derivation you have encountered so far?

DR: I think it was the cosplay of a Russian group, who sent me pictures of Pepper with her cat, making potions, all disguised [in costumes], really very faithful [to the comic], and very well photographed! It was, but... wonderful to receive this! It made me feel I was completely hallucinating, to see it!

DAL: Great. So that brings me to the next question. The sharing culture is also about making contribution, as well as taking. It should not just be a few people who make, and millions who take. Everyone should contribute a little something. But specifically, for those who want to contribute to *Pepper & Carrot*, how can they do so?

Pictures: Various versions of the key Pepper character. In the black and white sketch we see her in one of her earliest versions. Above, she is seen with cat Carrot in an early fairytale adventure.

Opposite we see the current flagship character-logo for the comics series, as it grows into a large ongoing series, with printed books and other spin-offs.

DR: So… to contribute to *Pepper & Carrot* you just have to go to the site, we have a 'Contribute' page. That sums it up, a little bit. So, first of all, you can, of course, come to the different chat rooms to propose things. So of you have translations [to other languages], you can also make derivative products with it. And you can also give feedback when [I am] creating the scenario: Does the speech bubble look good? Is this or that nice? Does the scenario appeal to you?

DAL: Right, and you post that making of on your blog, documenting the process, so people can see how it is developing.

DR: Or you can also propose a new scenario. In fact there are many ways to contribute to *Pepper & Carrot*. And I think I leave the media quite free, to have people join the project if they want. Everyone is welcome!

DAL: Yes indeed, all the material is on your web archive in HD and various file formats. And you've also recently made three books collections. Printed books. And sold over 1,000 already at early 2021.

DR: Yes, the *Pepper & Carrot* comic mainly uses Krita for artworks, Krita .KRA files that are exported to flat .JPG at 95% quality, and Inkscape using .SVGs for speech bubbles and text, exported as PNG. But for the book project, I used Scribus. But I found Scribus has a lot of traps. One must make the mistakes, do trials-and-errors, export after export, to learn how to prepare in the best way the media before being able to export a good and solid CMYK hi-resolution PDF output ready for the printer.

DAL: Yes, I'd heard that Scribus was not really 'production ready', as Krita 4.x now is.

DP: It was a long and difficult task to find the best recipe and adapt all the other parts of *Pepper & Carrot* to be dynamically linked to the book project. What a story… and a difficult time with wrangling all the cascading issues. I hate it when that happens. But let's look on the bright side: the book project was an opportunity to review the state of all the .SVG database, find many bugs in software and the .SVG format. It will probably make the future brighter for other artists taking the open-source way.

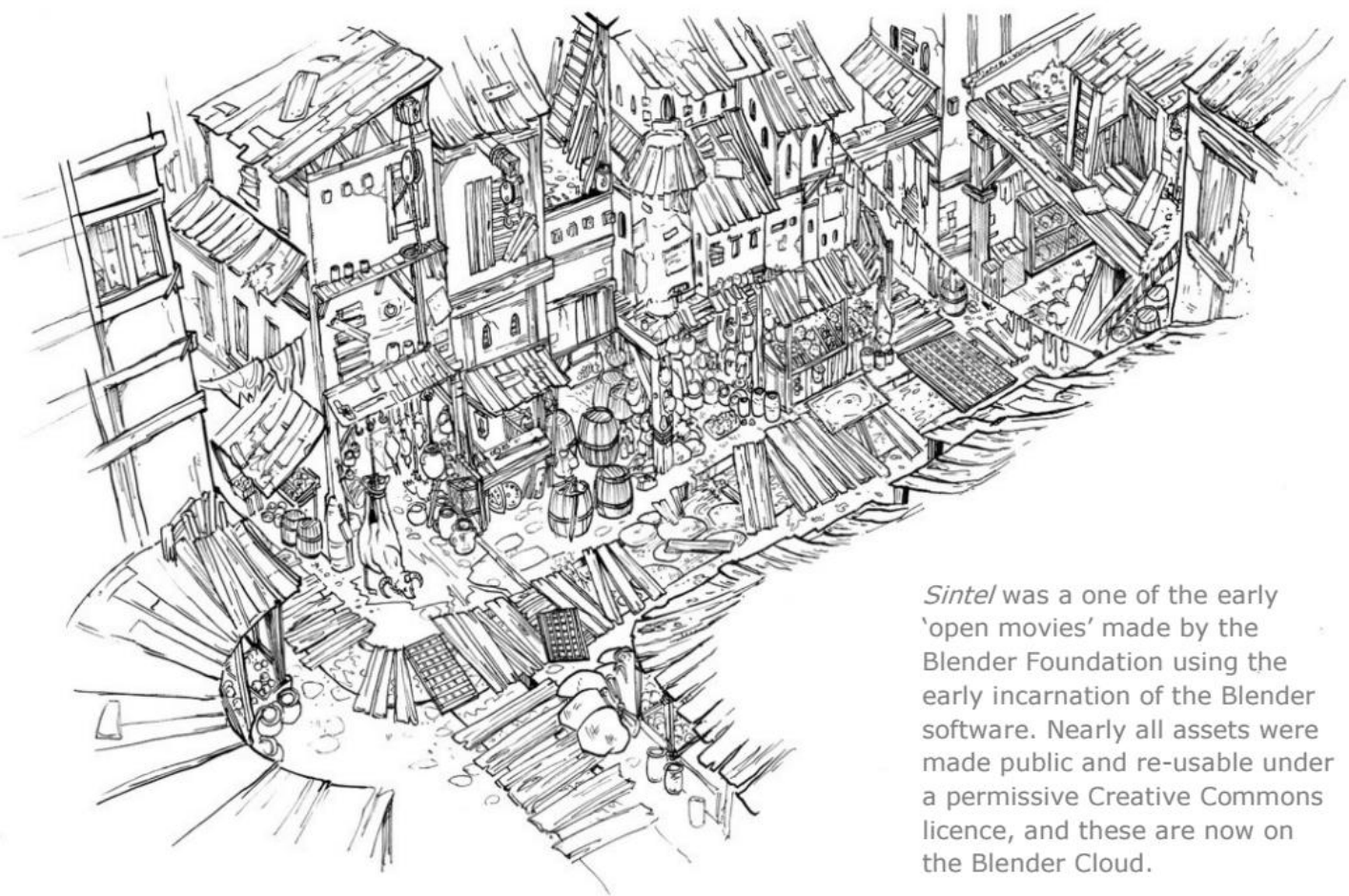
DAL: And you've very usefully documented the entire difficult process of making the book in a how-to, so others can follow you. Also, now we're seeing .SVG adopted by many software developers. It's in Clip Studio now, and Blender I think. So maybe your work played a part in tightening it up so it could be integrated. OK, now, moving on. And also back in time. You've also worked on several of the Blender open movies. The dragon-fantasy *Sintel*, the wild sci-fi *Tears of Steel*, the ambitious but troubled *Laundromatte/ Gooseberry*, and others.

DR: So… *Sintel* was my first project as an Art Director and, believe me, working on a big open project was a dream for a 'libre artist' like me. I sent in my portfolio when the Blender Foundation was looking for an artist for *Big Buck Bunny* [the second 'open movie', after *Elephant's Dream*]. I was selected as a 'spare artist' by Colin Levy, later to be the *Sintel* director. Some years after that, in 2009, while I was teaching digital painting in a French High School, I received an email inviting me for the position of Art Director for the project *Sintel*. A dream came true! The '*Sintel* style' I developed then is a style at the crossroads of the anime, U.S. comics, the European comics, and the cartoon. It helped me to develop faster a lot of ideas, and develop a solid speed painting style in a friendly collaborative environment.

Doing pre-productions artwork with open-source wasn't enforced by the Blender Foundation, just warmly encouraged. I made the personal choice to persevere with what existed [in open source] for 2D. I started to test everything to find a workflow using MyPaint and Gimp. So, I switched my machine to a full open-source system around 2009, and decided to keep it at the end of the project when came back home with this thinking, "open source could work on the long term". But I was learning the hard way: compiling a Wacom driver, modifying Xorg, doing a Xsetwacom script.

And, let's be honest… I kept Photoshop CS2 (799 Euros!) running on Wine for a long period, just to deal with CMYK and files from publishers. Krita does that and more, now.

Pictures: Early *Sintel* concept art, showing Sintel arriving at a mountain city by snail-cart; initial design of the markplace street in Ishtar. Right: *Sintel* DVD promo card.



Sintel was a one of the early 'open movies' made by the Blender Foundation using the early incarnation of the Blender software. Nearly all assets were made public and re-usable under a permissive Creative Commons licence, and these are now on the Blender Cloud.

Pictures: "Griselle value-study", 2019; "Witch and cat drawing" from 2013 — before *Pepper and Carrot*.

DAL: Wonderful, and the *Sintel* work certainly made you a well-known name. And of course, led to more such work with Krita. I know that you no longer recommend or use GIMP or MyPaint. But I wanted to ask more about some of your minor interests, which seem to point in interesting directions. You're interested in new forms of digital art and automation. You've been a fan of digital tools that try to do things digitally, rather than emulating traditional media? For instance things like Al.chemy (Alchemy) and symmetry ('mirroring') tools in painting software?

DR: I have generally thought that digital tools are better for digital art than tools that want to mimic too much the traditional effects — watercolor diffusion of pigment, or oils such as the greasy impasto 'bump'. But the digital and experimental feeling in Al.chemy was a bit extreme too. But other software dedicated to digital painting absorbed its interesting concept/features dynamic symmetric — it soon appeared in Autodesk SketchBook. Al.chemy was in fact a really cool laboratory of ideas for other applications.

DAL: Yes, and there is now something very similar in Krita, so effectively Krita has now taken over from Alchemy. And there's also the auto-colour features in Krita which you have also championed and documented, and autocolour from greyscale in G'MIC which is a very intriguing idea/process that may yet be harnessed to AI. Of course, you have not only champion free software, but also whole production-ready operating systems. You're now on Kubuntu Linux 19.10, and also write how-to install guides for artists for each of your major installations. Why Linux?

DR: I exclusively use a GNU/Linux operating system for my workstation. I produce everything I do with it — webcomic, website, book, freelance, videos, etc... for more than ten years now. Along the way, I tried so many solutions for my workstation! I use it for independence, no one has control over what I watch, what I use and how I use it. I have control of my data and privacy too. It has transparency because it is open-source. Meaning you can investigate any part of it. And the technology, the performance, scripting, the use of standards. It also has a fully featured first-class tablet / pen-display configuration panel, out of the box. That's something that no other desktop environment has to the date. You can also get very large thumbnails for Krita .KRA and .ORA files and these display instantly.

DAL: Sounds great. And it's free, albiet a lot of learning when coming from Windows. And talkingof hard work, I see you've also created your own open font for Pepper & Carrot?

DR: Yes, I used to use Google Web Fonts because my website needed to support a big amount of languages: like Bahasa Indonesia, Brezhoneg, Catalan, and so on... and fonts with all the required characters are rare. I loaded a single Google Web Font per language to get specific accent support. For the open alternative, I wanted to unify all my site's CSS sheets into one and use a single font, and a single style sheet. But few fonts with support for all languages are available... and fewer still with a comic style. And close to none if searching for free and open ones. But I found two fonts that were a good start: 'Comic Relief' by Jeff Davis, and 'Patrick Hands' by Patrick Wagesreiter. The first one had support for Latin and Cyrillic and a good font structure, the second one had Latin and Latin and many variants including the complex Vietnamese alphabet. I started my own fork of Comic Relief named ComicSpice. A free open-source 'libre' webcomic font.

DAL: Wonderful. But surely *a lot* of work?

DR: Thanks to the Font Forge software and a big amount of time and sleepless nights, I managed to build ComicSpice like I wanted. It now supports many glyphs, and it's lightweight enough to use as a webfont.

Actually… I later decided to fork my own font! With the software FontForge and redesigned the letters to give them a *Pepper & Carrot* vibe. The resulting font is named 'Pepper&Carrot' and has all Latin-extended and Vietnamese accents.

Picture: "It's boiling-hot...
Blllblllblllblllblllbllll...", 2019.

Pictures: from top, “Final elfe”; “Teeming”; “Untitled”; “Kynitia” and fairy.

DAL: Thanks. And both open fonts can had free on your Web repository and at Fragamit.

DR: Yes, the ComicSpice font was part of a big push to remove all Content Delivery Network services [coming in from outside my website]. It was like 'cleaning the Augean Stables' and of course it was longer and harder than I expected because I'm no Hercules... This work was full of challenges and constraints… but also creativity and happy accidents.

DAL: Congratulations. Yes, having put many years into developing jurn.org I know how much work such development for open access and open content can take.

And I should add that you also made the superb range of Krita 4 brushes, another great contribution to free creative software. So people can also install Krita 4.x to get those.

Now, turning lastly to 3D and Blender, which I know many readers will be interested in. You use 3D and the open-source Blender for your comics? I mean, helping with complex scenes?

DR: So… imagine a scene with a giant arena; many witches in a crowd, Komona city in background too. So… for that I design a low-quality model of the arena in Blender 3D, a speed-modelling done in less than a day of production. 3D models help to solve spatial issues with shot framing, and also help to keep lighting consistent. Or the bedroom of Pepper, when a complex [overhead ceiling] shot is required. [*Seen below, and right, reader.*]

I use the plugin BLAM to setup the camera angle to be as close as possible to my sketches in the storyboard. A lot of 'paint over' will be necessary, but I can't imagine painting these types of shot from scratch on all the backgrounds.

DAL: Super. Thanks for the tip on BLAM. OK, we know you're very busy these days so we'll leave it there. Many thanks.

DR: Yes, [behind the creative work] there is a mountain of 'todo' on my back: emails, maintenance, tax administration, translation system, render farm, accessibility, tutorials, documentation, conferences and many other technical issues: I have to make priorities.

DAL: Indeed. David Revoy, thanks very much.

David Revoy is online at:

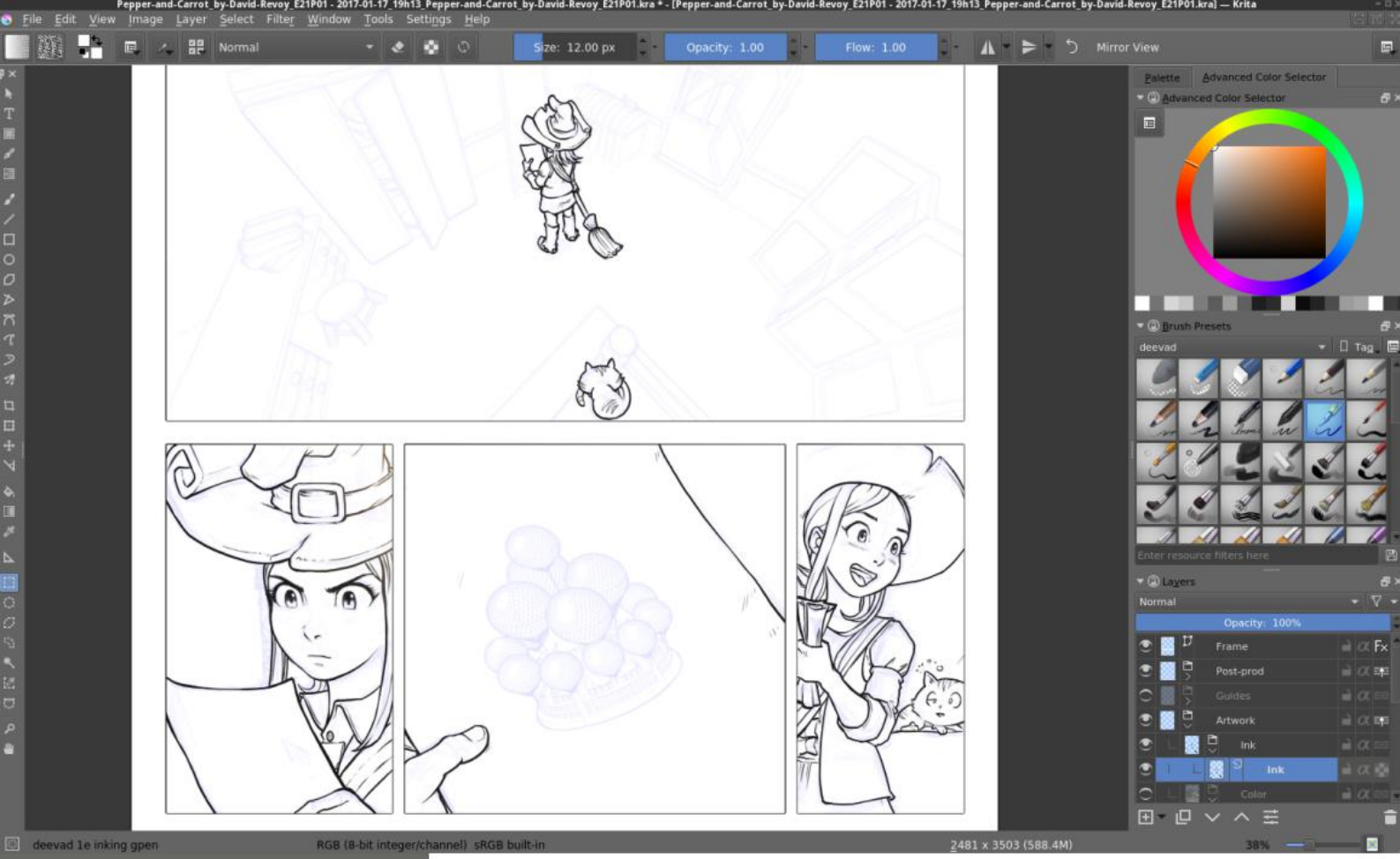
https://www.davidrevoy.com/

The Shop for *Pepper & Carrot* books

Pateon and similar services

https://www.deviantart.com/deevad

Our thanks to Alexandre Prokoudine and Touhoppai for helping facilitate the interview. All pictures in the interview are under Creative Commons Attribution.



Pictures: Initial 3D room and shot visualisation in Blender; a test paintover of the Blender render. Above we seen the character linart layer in Krita, over a rough sketch layer indicating the room. On the right we see room as a comics frame, in the context of the near-final *Pepper* comic page layout.

GALLERY

Here we offer small selection of the vast range of artwork that in some way evokes the more traditional end of fantasy — 'fairytale' or 'folktale'.

Many fairytales can be found in variants across whole continents, suggesting very deep roots. For instance "The Smith and the Devil" has a plot that is stable throughout the Indo-European region that stretches from Scandinavia to northern India.

A blacksmith strikes a deal for the power to weld any materials together. The canny smith then sticks the supernatural giver of the power to a rock, tree or suchlike. It probably originates in the region around the Black Sea, at the dawn of metalworking.

Pictures: "Winter" (January 2020) by David Revoy. Made in Krita. Revoy is a leading expondent of Creative Commons and wholly free software such as Krita. His permissive Creative Commons licence has here enabled us to carefully blend one of his 'floating castle' pictures with another of his pictures showing a dragon-riding young witch. We were also able to slightly enhance colour — giving the dragon's head more character-focus by adding a red eye, for instance.

"The Boy Steals the Ogre's Treasure" (the basis of our "Jack and the Beanstalk") is a story nearly as ancient. There are probably a few even older. The famous "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" is likely even more archaic, and due to its shepherding subject matter it quite possibly pre-dates the emergence of blended metallurgy and sophisticated agriculture.

A series of pictures of the earliest known folk-tales might make an interesting project for an artist.

It seems likely that fairies originate far back in the times even before primitive 'nature worship' animist beliefs. For instance, the beauty and patterning of butterflies and moths cannot have been overlooked by earliest man. There are still hints to be found in Northern folkore that this early regard may have later interwined with a belief that the spirit of a loved one would linger near its home for a while, either as a bird or a moth. The ancient Cornish language applies the term "pisky" both to the fairies and to moths, believed in Cornwall to be departed souls. There are also records of the belief in Ireland, and in England in Yorkshire people gave the name of "souls" to certain large night-flying white moths.

Recent linguistic scholarship has added to the connection., finding that… "certain other small, often winged, creatures are marked as special by the fact that their death, unlike that of 'normal' animals, can be described with forms based on the Proto-Indo-European root **mer–* (as in the Latin *morior*), otherwise reserved for humans."

All this then suggests an obvious rustic origin for the notion of small and diminuitive supernatural beings, somewhat butterfly-like and associated with dewy pastoral nature such old well-heads or 'fairy rings' (1590) in the grass. Also with twilight and liminal times of year, such as a calm moonlit midsummer's eve when large moths are flying abroad in the moonlight and around lamps.

Pictures: "The butterfly" by Prospero0404 of France, a test base-painting for the Procreate iPad software; "Travel" by Dathanhphong of Vietnam; "King of the elves" by Chameleonscales of France.

Pictures: "Mandrake" and "Jack and the Beanstalk", both by Irenhorrors of Russia.

The somewhat human-shaped mandrake root is a relative of the Deadly Nightshade. Mandrake was used by herbalists and was reputed to produce a deadly scream when plucked from the earth, unless plucked at special times. 19th century English herbalists would display them in herbshop windows, fully fashioned into the form of a tiny man. The root has accumulated many strange superstitions over the centuries.

LirenHorrors

Pictures: "1" by LeksaArt of Russia; "Watcher of the night" by Istrandar of France.

Fairy tales are not to be confused with the old ‘beast-fables’ which often had a moralistic element and in which the animals are mere ‘stands-in’ for humans. More interesting in this regard are the tales of transformation, where humans are transformed into animals or visa versa — such as the very ancient fairytale “The Swan Maiden”.

Pictures: "Swamp thing" by Irenhorrors of Russia, drawing here on Russian lore; and "Fare well" by Yinetyang of France. Iren writes of her picture: "In the Russian North is the [folk belief in the female] *bolotnitsa* (*bolotnica*) of the swamp and tundra."

In the Midlands and North of England, 'Jenny Greenteeth' was the rustic folk-name for a "female goblin who inhabits wells or ponds ... believed to bite and then drag children under the water". She is not to be confused by moderns with 'a witch' or a 'mermaid', and was never associated with rivers. The belief lingered among children even into the 1950s, and seems to have run from Birmingham to Manchester and the Peak. In the lore he was related to the faintly glowing *will-o-the-wisps*, which on Northamptonshire were called 'Jinny' or 'Jill' Buntail or Burn-tail. These being the tricksy-lights seen near marshy moorland pools, and which led the lost and unwary into ponds and bogs. Grendel's mother in *Beowulf* (Mercia/Staffordshire, circa A.D. 700) attests to the antiquity of the idea of a pool-hag, and she was likely related to the Germanic *nixies, nicor* and *moorjungfern,* and the Icelandic *nykr*. Her *modus operandi* was also broadly the same as strong and male water-horse connected with rivers. This supernatural shape-changing river-spirit would emerge from a river to stand stock still — and thus tempt people to mount and try to ride him. Immediately he would race away back to the river with wind-like speed and plunge in, drowning the rider.

Over time the Northern folktale and practices became entwined with knightly and courtly tales, of which the Arthurian cycle and its 'fays' is now the most well-known. Influences on such stories were not only local, but came via what knights and their retainers picked up on the long crusades to the Holy Land and also to still-pagan Lithuania. The weirder Bible stories and tales from Ancient Greece and Rome became accessible to readers and listeners, giving direct contact with ancient folk tales that stretched back even to the dawn of Babylonia. Early commerce by long-distance shipping sometimes brought garbed 'marvel tales' and seamen's yarns from even more distant lands. Elizabethan culture later brought us *The Faerie Queene* and the airy spirits of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest,* further re-shaping popular ideas what a fairytale might have in it.

In Europe, the great age of oral tale-collecting began, and grew into various comparative artistic attempts to reconstruct lost or half-forgotten national folk mythologies. Some more successful than others, such as in Finland. In other places, such as England, there was almost nothing left to reconstruct — but, thankfully, we now have Tolkien instead.

The early 20th century (i.e. the two decades before radio, TV and long-form cinema) offered a very wide readership for the work of the great popularisers — such as Andrew Lang, Hans Christian Andersen, and the translators of the Brothers Grimm and the *Arabian Nights*.

After about 1965 critics tried to read dark, political and psycho-sexual matters into fairytales, while at same time commercial culture pillaged them mercilessly for cutesy Disney-style exploitation. But the old tales resisted both attacks and continued to fascinate, providing many fine storytellers and artists with good starting points for new works.

Pictures:

"Sinking in nostalgia" by Lizarkeo of Brazil, DAZ Studio; "Before the Storm - Princess and the Falcon" by Kibosh-1 of New Zealand, DAZ Studio. See our long interview with Kibosh is issue 56 (March 2001) of your free *Digital Art Live* magazine; and "Up and down" by Mohammad1214 of Jordan, just one example of a very large online community which Photoshops stock pictures into new fairytale pictures.

Fairytales came from a way of life and a sensibility now distant from us, and to which we are unlikely to return. Given the choice between i) a rustic life with fairytale and ii) modern dentistry, even the most hardy modern would choose to keep the dentistry.

And yet, what modern young child dare go to sleep, after losing a milk-tooth, unless they have first left the tooth under their pillow — as an offering to 'the tooth fairy'? Such are the small ways in which old fairy beliefs still linger into our modern world.

Picture: ""Locked up" by Fantasyart0102 of South Korea.

And when the child all too soon grows 'too old' for fairy-stuff, there is a fair chance that science-fiction will come to serve them well. For what is good space science-fiction, of the circa 1925-1985 period, but fairy-tale? What are most extra-terrestrials except, as H.P. Lovecraft put in his 1932 study of fairies, science-ified versions of … "the three main fairy origins — nature-spirit, night-daemon, and earthly dwarf". And what are most civilised alien planets except a version of the old magical fairyland?

The Garden of Sanctuary

Picture: "The Garden of Sanctuary" by Enuryn of Singapore.

uscor floodplains Upper Delta

Digital Art LIVE

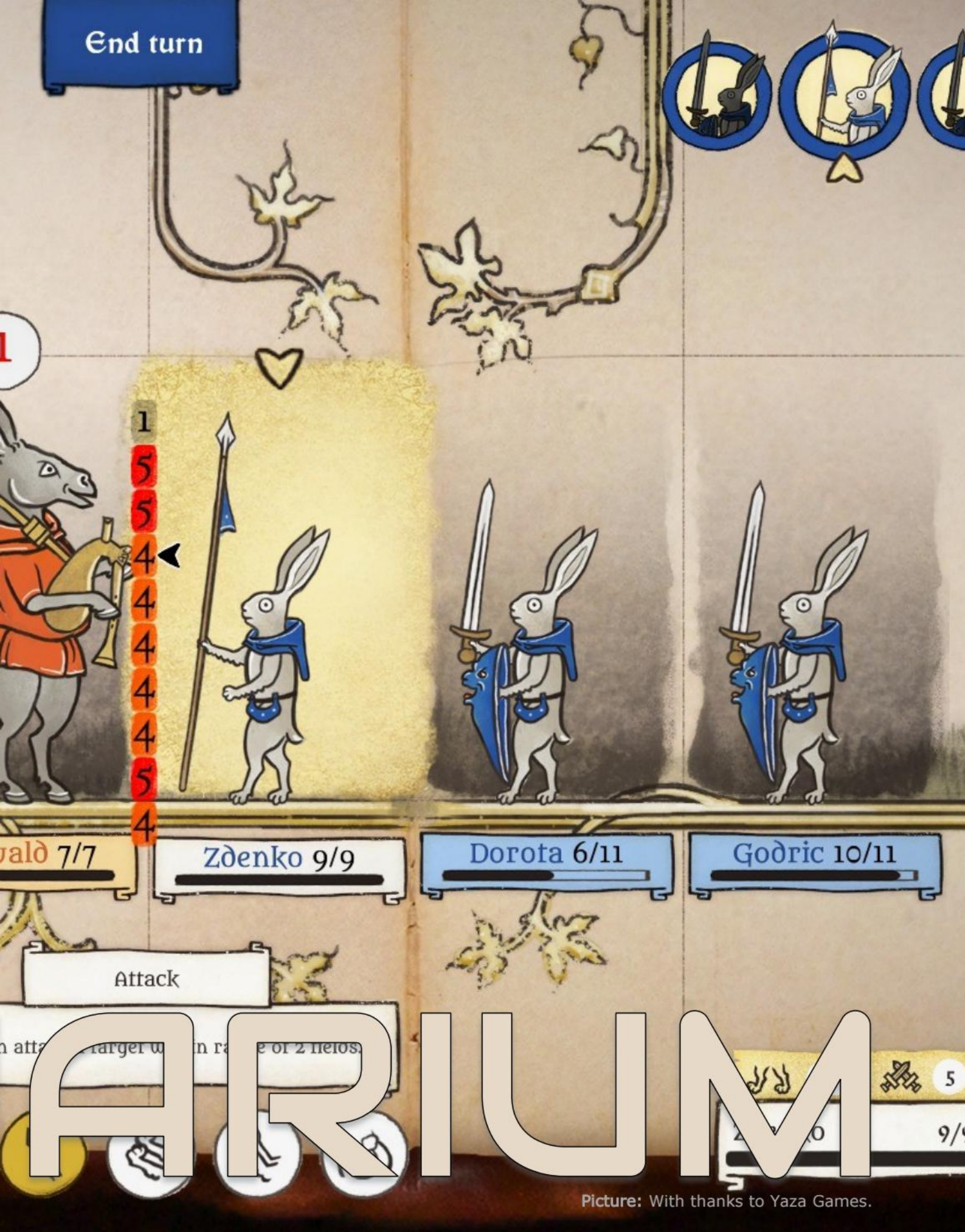
VIDEOGAME: Inkulinati

Medieval monks of northern Europe often painted whimsical 'fairytale' animals into the margins of the books they were painstakingly creating by hand. Little did they know that, 700 years later, *Inkulinati* would make these the basis of a fun and beautifully illustrated turn-based strategy videogame. The player must become a "master of the Living Ink and lead your illustrated animal army through the pages of medieval books" as you battle other book-makers with ideas of their own. The player also has a chance to "create your own bestiary" and you can meet many famous medieval personages real and fictitious.

While this is a new single-player / LAN PvP game due in Q2 2021, the setting is so fresh and unique that we're willing to recommend you support this immediately — rather than wait a year for the patches. For Windows, Nintendo Switch and Mac.

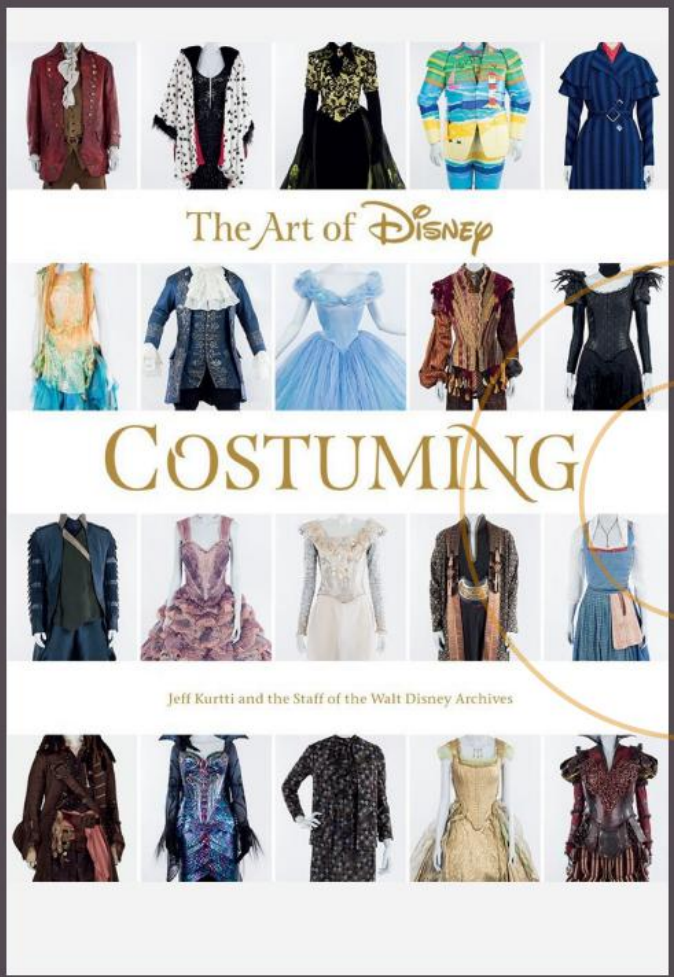
Our pick of the most inspirational art and products. Make your imagination LIVE!

IMAGIN



ARIUM

Picture: With thanks to Yaza Games.



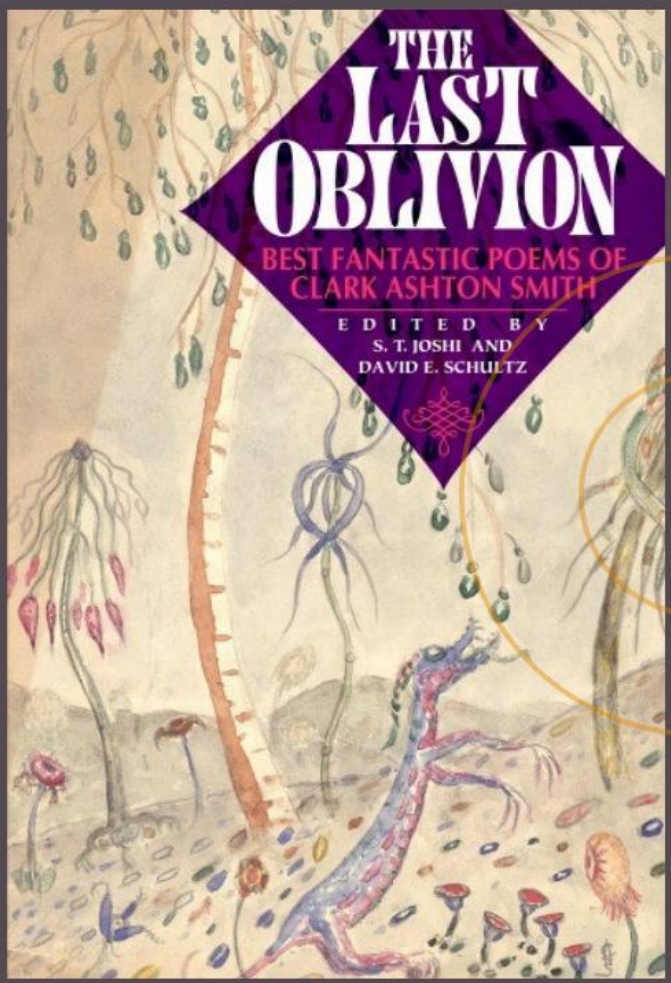
Artbook: Disney Costuming

Whatever you may think of how Disney has astro-turfed the landscape of fairy-tales, their vast army of costume designers are undeniably some of the best in the world. While thousands of Disney costumiers work across the world at theme parks, this new book is all about the Disney screen costumes and their makers. The author of *The Art of Disney Costuming* (2019) is Jeff Kurti, a leading authority on the history and creative works of Disney, and he provides able commentary and picks out revealing quotes. The pictures are as pin sharp and colour-faithful as you would expect from an official Disney Archives publication and this coffee-table book will thus provide much inspiration for digital artists and content creators. What the reader won't get is things like garment patterns and peel-aparts, mood-boards, fabric names, fine sewing details. As such this is very much a glimpse at the glittering surface of Disney rather than a deep-dive.

Series: Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell

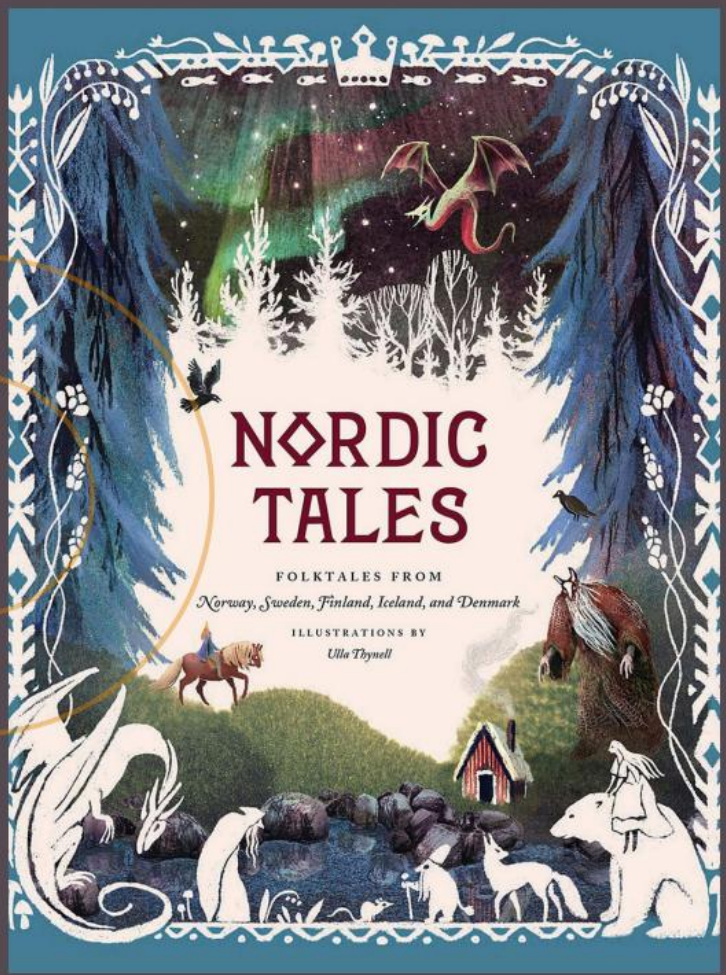
One of the best takes on fairies in recent years is Susanna Clarke's best-selling novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. This was adapted by Peter Harness and superbly filmed as a seven-part costume-drama for British broadcast in 2015. Set in an alternative Regency England (think 'Jane Austen') a fading magic still lingers in the weird and whimsical old landscape. Two very different magicians seek to return real magic to the land, but risk awaking the ancient power of *faerie*. Best viewed without picking up plot-spoilers from the Web. In the UK it can be had for £6 on DVD, though be warned that the BBC has saddled it with a very dour and offputting cover that totally lacks fairies, pompadour hair or swivel-eyed madmen wearing pointy hats. The U.S. DVD cover (above) is more enticing.

In the same vein, also highly recommended is The Royal Shakespeare Company's 1996 film version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Adrian Noble. Again, this can currently be had for £6 or less on DVD.



Book: The Last Oblivion

To say that Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961) is one of the great American poets of the 20th century is to invite a puzzled look from academics. But here the reader can make up their own mind, and we're willing to bet that — after finishing this 200-page 'best of' paperback — it is the reader who will be giving the academics a puzzled look. Published in book form at age 19, Smith seemed a blazing poetic prodigy in the line of Keats and Shelley. He went on to a long and sustained poetic career as an outsider artist. The book opens with his two long 'cosmic' works and follows with themed sections: fantastical creatures and monsters; strange landscapes and exotic islands; amourous and erotic poems; dream-poems; his poems on others including his great elegy on the death of Lovecraft. A glossary to the rich vocabulary is provided. A fine shelf-companion to the DVD documentary on Smith, *The Emperor of Dreams* (2018).



Book/artbook: Nordic Tales

Ulla Thynell is a leading DeviantArt artist, who ably mixes traditional and digital methods. We've followed her for many years on DeviantArt, Sadly she does not do interviews, or we would have featured her in this issue, but at least we can mention her most recent book here. *Nordic Tales* collects less well-known original folk tales from her home region, presented unabridged and as collected by folklorists and early chroniclers in the wilds of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark. The tales are sometimes chilling but mostly provide an enchanting and cozy companion to Ulla's fabulous and charming art. Here the intrepid reader will discover princesses and dragons, 'northern lights' flickering above snowy troll-haunted forests and isolated cottages, wizards and strange creatures, lads who marry mice, and the boy who had no fear. The tales are given in English, and the book is a handsome but affordable 200-page hardback — an ideal stocking-filler for Christmas 2021.

Fantastic Beasts

Opens 17th May 2021 / UK

London's Natural History Museum hopes to re-open its ill-fated 'Fantastic Beasts: the Wonders of Nature' exhibition to the public in mid May 2021. This major museum show has also been available online in hi-res, while closed, via the Google Arts & Culture website. The popular show is partly based around *Harry Potter* and related franchises, but roams far more widely.

https://www.gerryanderson.co.uk/

Pictures, from left, across double-page:

The Buxton 'mermaid', from Buxton in the Derbyshire Peak District. A famous fake of taxidermy, but linked to authentic local folk tales of the local moorland pools.

Detail from "Saint George slaying the dragon" (1863) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The work is included in the exhibition.

Ancient Greek helmet, breastplate and shield, and a hail of incoming Persian arrows.

View over the planned H.C. Andersen Garden, with thanks to Kengo Kuma Associates.

Pre-Raphaelites

Opens 17th May 2021 / UK

The Ashmolean in Oxford, England, will reopen to the public on 17th May 2021 with the new exhibition "Pre-Raphaelites: Drawings and Watercolours". The Ashmolean is home to one of the greatest collections of Pre-Raphaelite paper works. But these are fragile works and until now the Ashmolean has not been able to mount a large-scale exhibition of them. The fragility of the pictures also means that the show will run for quite a short time, closing on 20th June. Given this short run, restrictions on numbers, and the likely high demand for tickets from members, early booking is strongly advised. Those able to see this major show will have a rare chance to examine how the Pre-Raphaelites realised pictures of beauty by moving from spontaneous sketching and watercolours in the open air to intense detailing and vivid large-scale colour. Centerpeices will be Burne-Jones's "The Knight's Farewell" (1858), and works by Ruskin, Rossetti (above), Holman Hunt and Simeon Solomon.

https://www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions

Glorious Victories

Until Oct 2021 / Athens, Greece

The Greek National Archaeological Museum has a large exhibition which celebrates the 2,500-year anniversary of the Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis, which marked the turning point in ancient Greek history. Victory of the Greeks against the Persians meant that the first time the Greeks had successfully defended their freedom while united under their new national and intellectual identity. The exhibition has been able to draw the best items from collections across Greece and the region, and in total is showing 105 key ancient works — plus superb technical recreations such as the military gear and helmets and an Athenian trireme (battleship) of the 5th century B.C. The curators have also tried to remain close to the descriptions, tales and poetry of the ancient writers of these battles. Archeological items such as actual battlefield arrowheads and hasty inscriptions to the gods are also featured, plus digital evocations of the ancient gods. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue of 512 pages.

https://www.namuseum.gr/en/

Hans Christian Andersen museum

Opens Summer 2021 / Denmark

In the summer of 2021 a major new Hans Christian Andersen museum will open in Denmark. This will become one of Denmark's largest and most ambitious new museums, and will serve as a fitting celebration of the national hero whose many fantastical fairytales are now world famous.

While there are a number of Andersen visitor attractions in Denmark — some exceedingly cheesy — this new museum in Odense will seek to be both high-class and different. It will offer a "complete artistic experience" melding architecture, sound, light and stage FX, with the aim of "using Andersen's own artistic strategies as the starting point" for visitors to experience the maze-like landscaped garden, special children's house and large underground exhibition which will interwine with the gardens. The overall 1.4 acre site design is being themed around the well-known Andersen story "The Tinder-box" (1835) in which a hollow tree is found to be home to three huge supernatural dogs with enormous eyes.

https://www.visitdenmark.com/

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MAPS

Picture: Detail from "Sailing" by ChrisisIt of the Netherlands.

Are you interested in being interviewed in a future issue of the magazine? Or presenting a webinar for our series? Please send the Web address of your gallery or store, and we'll visit!

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