SAI WORKSHOP: Painting a character portrait

INTRO

**When it comes to starting up something on a new canvas, something original, you don’t come up with it out of nowhere and you don’t just take other artists ideas.**

**It’s really about the things you’ve experienced in your life that will influence exactly what you’ll put in a piece. If you think about it, and you learn about the artists you follow you’ll realise that it’s exactly what they have done in many of their own pieces. It’s not magic, as said before, your imagination is only shortened by what you think you don’t know.**

Think of iconic characters in games, they all have unique features and personalities that stand out.

When you design your character, think of an example of a character in a similar genre, and what that character didn’t have but would look cool if ever put to it. A fresh idea for an old concept is all about choosing ideas that was left out for characters that already exist.

Sketching and playing around with what you feel like will get you far with making great, unique characters that also has your own personal feel to it.

Basic SAI tools used: Brush, Crayon, Water & Pen.



THE BASIC

When starting a rough sketch, know what the basic idea is. It doesn’t have to look very obvious at first, as long as you can read your own strokes and you know where you’re going with it. Some people draw very messy sketches, others are more careful. You can do rough

in different ways.

Started off with a rough concept for a female knight, thinking about the characteristics, knights are powerful and wear heavy armour, which I built up in a later stage. It doesn’t matter too much how basic it looks since it’s all about getting your head started.

When coming up with an idea for the armour I study other people’s works and what their character was wearing, Chainmail, cloth and a lot of fixed metal parts. Kept making small changes to certain parts like adding slightly oversized pants and giving a fitting shape to every part that makes it look like a true armour you would wear to represent a kingdom.

DESIGN TIPS: a fun thing to do is combine clothes from brands you find in real life and interpret/ make it fit your character.

PORTRAIT TIPS:

Portraits are fairly easy to draw, the character either sits or stand and looks at the viewer in a fixed position with the lighting showing off the character in its best.



ADDING FOUNDATIONS:

It’s important to know what the basic level of light each part has. When the majority of the armour has about the same shade of grey you could pay attention to smaller things like the chainmail and make it dark, evening out every part of the character so that it doesn’t get a lack of value and texture. Since she is going to be in only grayscale I put in a marine blue background, making the character stand out more. Some parts of her armour are still unclear and under the process of overlaying the foundations it gets easier to maybe add something afterwards.



FINISHING OFF:

You can see that this is a big jump between the foundation stage and the finished piece. I basically painted over the foundations that made it much easier to figure out how everything should be shaded, It’s effective that way.

Parts like the loincloth, chainmail and bottom outer armour were done in separate layers on top of each other, so you don’t have to be as careful with accidentally making mistakes, It also gives you the ability to separate them more so that you can feel a more dimensional pattern instead of being right out flat 2D-looking. You can tell that there is not much small detail put into the armour; it’s all about personal preference and what style you plan on using. For a simpler anime characters I wouldn’t need heavy realism, for example.

The background got some highlighting focusing on the character once more; a portrait shall focus on the character at all times, as said.

My character is done and it is looking pretty sweet, most of my inspiration was taken from a very influenced and powerful female knight character; Saber from the Fate anime series.

ARTIST SELF PROFILE:

Delta

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Marisa, (aka Delta) is a major hobbyist and a self-taught artist focusing on anime inspired themes and original ideas.

She is also the author of this Work Shop article.