

AIRBRUSH

STEP BY STEP

62

STEVE GIBSON

Bike Illustration in Grisaille Technique

T-SHIRT SPECIAL

How-to by Cesar Deferrari

Business Tips by Pat Gaines

BRAND NEW
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What is your lifestyle?

Are you an enthusiastic biker and motorcycle freak? Or are you more the beach and surfing guy? Maybe your heart beats for fashion and fancy clothes, are you a music or cinema fan or rather a nature and animal lover? One thing is for sure: you are an artist and airbrushing enthusiast, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this magazine. But

with your airbrush you are also at the forefront of many other lifestyle and hobby areas: painting motorcycles, of course, or, as in the case of our cover motif by American artist Steve Gibson, creating illustrations on the subject of bikes and vehicles.

As a surfer, you should think about embellishing your board. Spanish artist Arturo Verano shows how it's done, using a skimboard as an example. On the way at the coasts of Florida, airbrush T-shirts as a souvenir from the beach vacation may not be missing: Airbrush artist and business

man Pat Gaines reports on his career in the airbrush T-shirt business, which also began on the beaches of Florida, but is now at its peak around the Disney parks in Orlando. How to actual airbrush a T-shirt is demonstrated by Argentinian Cesar Deferrari: The effective tiger on a black shirt is the next step for airbrush beginners, so to speak, and gets its "icing on the cake" still by a sophisticated background effect.

If it's too hot for you in Florida, then perhaps the art of Norwegian Aiste Nau is something for you: Her favorite topic are auroras, which she paints in a wide variety of combinations and on many different backgrounds. When it comes to backgrounds, the Italian Claudio Mazzi has found his very own passion for 30 years, which he talks about in the interview: painting Zippo lighters as unique, serial and collector's items. Modern collectibles, after all, are now often products and characters related to movies, television and computer games. The second edition of the airbrush and 3D printing contest of the online supplier Gambody has once again produced many unique figures here, which we also do not want to deprive you of.

So lifestyle has many faces - just like airbrush art, which can make a significant contribution to any lifestyle and make your lifestyle even more individual and unusual.

In this sense: Find your style!

The ASBS Team



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www.airbrush-magazine.net
 Passwort: Solitude



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STEP BY STEPS

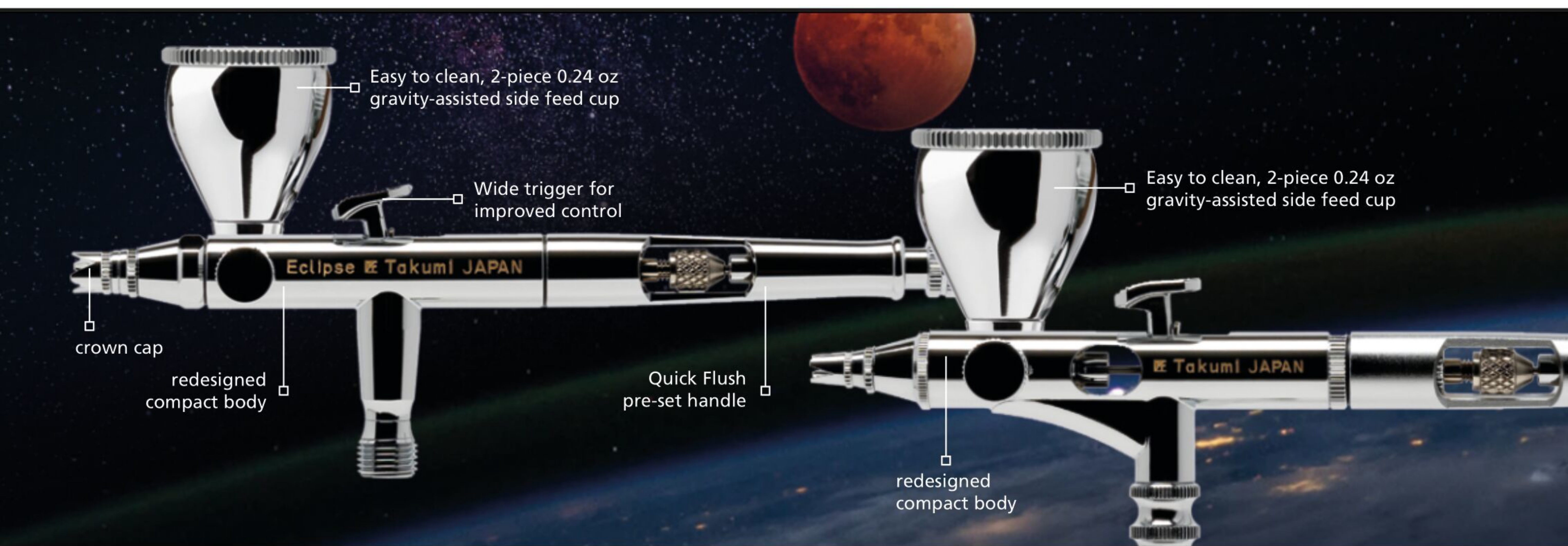
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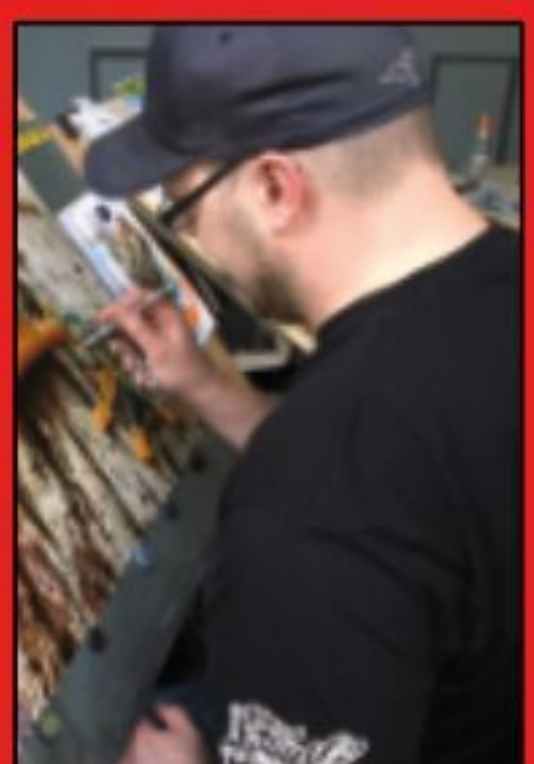


The new Iwata Takumi Airbrushes: workhorses with a lot of sensitivity

We have been eagerly awaiting the new Iwata Takumi airbrushes. Now we finally got to try them out and also asked a few prominent fellow artists for their impressions and experiences.

The two Iwata Eclipse and Custom Micron Takumi models will replace the Eclipse HP-SBS and Micron CM-SB in the Iwata range being double-action devices with side cups. Both airbrushes come in their usual packaging: the Iwata Eclipse Takumi in a cardboard box with quick start guide, spray sample, Iwata sticker, nozzle tool, Iwata Lube and transport protection and bubble cap, and the Iwata Custom Micron Takumi in a silver metal box with the same contents plus an additional water separator.

Marcus Eisenhuth



In my opinion, there is nothing better than the Takumis. Spray pattern, atomization and especially control are simply unbeatable!

very good and balanced in the hand. The new siphonless cup is also worth highlighting here. This is because the previous siphon cup system is now replaced by the flow cup system. In this respect, the flow cup, in combination with the short head

Both Takumi models have a redesigned, compact body. The levers sit closer to the tip of the needle on the units, and in combination with the new cups, both devices feel

and correspondingly shorter distance for the paint to cover, results in a much more direct response in the spraying process. In addition, the cup no longer hangs down, which prevents collision with the painting surface. The two-part cup system can be easily disassembled for

excellent cleaning. The cups hold 7 ml and can optionally be replaced with a smaller 3 ml cup.

Gerald Mendez

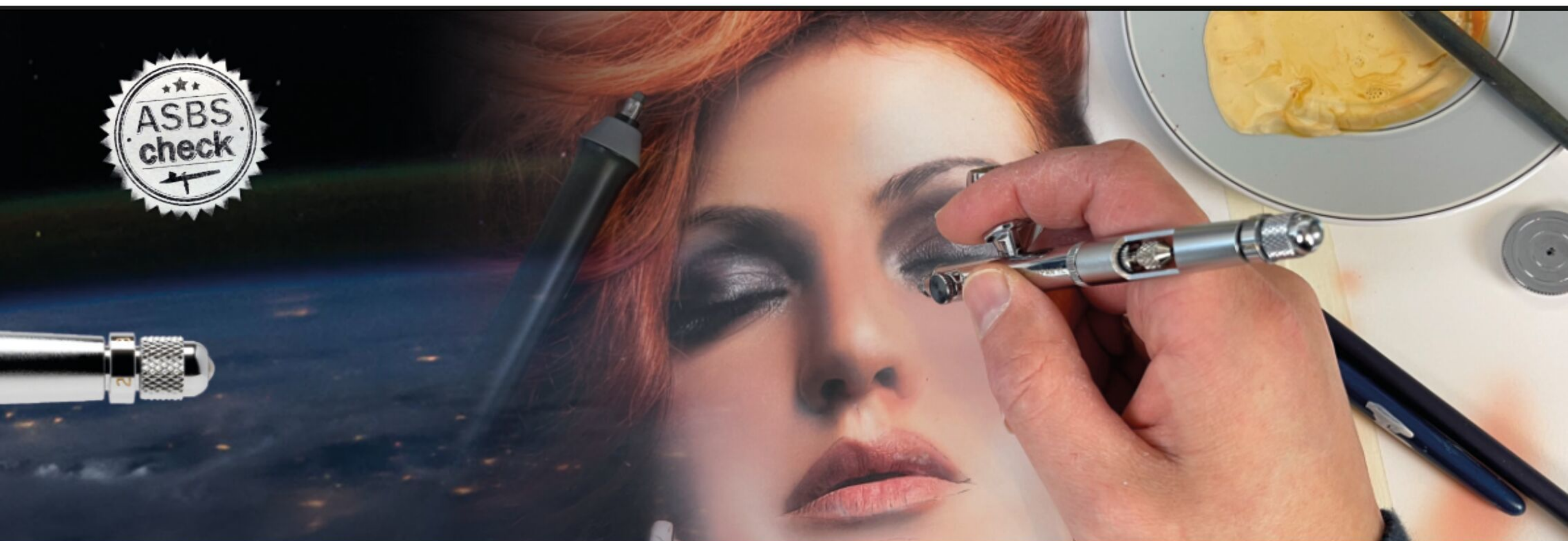


The short passage between the nozzle head and the new gravity feed paint cup in the new Iwata Custom Micron Takumi is a great improvement to the Iwata SB Micron series, making it even more responsive than ever, with great paint flow and accuracy on every stroke.



As before, the new Takumi Custom Micron is aimed at airbrush artists looking for unparalleled responsiveness and balance, as well as professional airbrusher artists and skilled hobbyists who want to spray very fine and extremely precise details. The spray pattern has not changed from the previous model – a 0.18 mm screw nozzle is still integrated. But due to





the optimizations, the Takumi Micron is very sensitive, and especially the finest details can actually be created effortlessly here. And that, of course, makes designing a lot of fun. In addition, the Iwata Takumi Custom Micron can be used for both right-handed and left-handed users. The cup can be easily repositioned from right to left while the opposite connection hole can be closed. For optimal use with the best flow, thin-bodied or diluted paints should be sprayed with the Takumi Custom Micron. The grip piece has now also been given a cut-out at the needle adjustment screw and the pre-set handle is of course also back.

The new Takumi Eclipse has changed quite a bit from its predecessor. In addition to the new cup system and the shortening of the body, there is also a new needle protection cap, and the lever from the Micron and the handle from the High Performance series with pre-setting option have been installed. Equipped with the 0.35 mm Eclipse plug-in nozzle, the unit is highly recommended to professional airbrusher artists and hobbyists, especially if they want to spray fine to larger levels of detail. All of the optimizations were clearly noti-



Kevin Wood



With the arrival of the new Iwata Custom Micron Takumi I've been truly blown away by its unparalleled performance. I find the responsive paint flow to be visually impressive while enjoying extreme comfort through its beautifully absorbent trigger providing much less finger fatigue along with an improved feeling of balance provided by a visually impressive compact body style upon working endless amount of hours on a project. What thrills me the most is its superior atomizing capability. I can't imagine any airbrush artist not being overwhelmed by the overall spectacular artistic performance this art tool provides.

ceable in the editorial test. The Takumi Eclipse is very sensitive, fits excellently in the hand and even the finest details can be applied very comfortably despite the 0.35 mm nozzle. This makes it a real all-round workhorse, which makes spraying incredibly fun. Spare parts, except side cup and needle, are compatible with the current models Custom Micron CM-SB2 or Eclipse-HP-SBS.

The suggested retail price for the Iwata Takumi Custom Micron is 577.15 euros / 585 USD and for the Takumi Eclipse 215.39 euros / 199.29 USD. Both are available immediately.

www.iwata-airbrush.com
www.createx.de

Steve Gibson



The Iwata Custom Micron just "feels" more like an Eclipse CS than a Micron – and not so delicate. I feel like the color cup redesign really makes a difference. I'm spraying higher PSI/ thicker viscosity than recommended and it handles just like my CS except with that micron precision. Like a really fine-tuned Micron without being finicky – a more reliable workhorse.

RIBO®

PRO AIRBRUSH



Ribo Airbrush Kit TM-80S:

The pocket compressor now available for all airbrush-models

A little bit more than a year ago, Chinese company Ribo Airbrush was responsible for what was seen a little wonder in the airbrush world by bringing out a battery-operated mini compressor that could be screwed directly onto the lower side of an airbrush and thus, allowed airbrushers to conduct cable-less airbrushing work wherever they wanted. The one problem: You could only use the compressor with the airbrush that came with it as well as a few other select models. That has changed with the new Ribo Airbrush Kit TM-80S. This model can be connected to all sorts of airbrushes via a 1/8" connector. In addition, the manufacturer points out that, with 30 psi (app. 2 bar), it's the most performance-capable device on the market for this product class. When using it, it is clear to see that the amount of air is less than that of a regular, stationary airbrush compressor. Yet, when spraying with a fine spray jet, it really does look quite good.

The TM-80S set is available in the colors red and black. In addition to the compressor, it contains a simple 0.4 mm double action airbrush as well as a fitting hose to make the device more flexible to use. While i.e. spraying, the compressor can just hang out in your pocket or placed somewhere else. There are two connection options. Either you screw your airbrush

right onto the compressor or you make use of the adapter that is part of the package in order to connect the included hose. The compressor disposes of a typical "On/Off" button as well as an automatic turn-off switch, which sets in when no air is required. This helps prolong battery duration for what is normally a 40-50 minute continuous operation. It takes app. 90 minutes to charge the battery, and this is done with the included USB cable adapter. A USB electric adapter is not part of the package, but something you'll likely have in your household anyway. Alternatively, you can charge the device right on your computer or with a power bank. A simultaneous operation is also possible during the loading process. The installed lamp is red when the compressor is charging and then green when the compressor is fully charged.

Even if you might not need it, the airbrush that comes with the compressor is fully capable of the job and creates a solid, typical spray performance for a device of its type. It is well-designed and both the nozzle and needle came in very good condition. If you should need more details and a higher level of control, you can naturally – as mentioned – simply attach your favorite airbrush and get to work. Especially fine spraying with a diluted airbrush acrylic paint is a lot of fun with this portable mini compressor. The application areas are multiple and multifaceted. Whether it be about improving a canvas in an exhibition, designing a cake or pie, or applying make-up, the focus remains on the wireless, flexible device design. The compressor weighs 210 grams on its own; and 300 grams together with the airbrush it comes with.

The Ribo Airbrush Kit TM-80S is available for ca. 70 USD from various importers or directly from the manufacturer. You can get a good overview at the manufacturer's website.

www.sino-airbrush.com



Arkitekt: From Airbrush to Spaceship Model Construction Set



In 2020, US artist Gerald Mendez enthralled airbrush fans worldwide with his piece "Out of this World", in which he portrayed an Iwata airbrush as a fantasy spaceship. His step by step guideline for the creation of this picture was featured



in Airbrush Step by Step, issue Nr. 57, 04/20. The inspiration projected by this motif was also noticed by a few Chinese model constructors and they decided to create their own "airbrush spaceship", the Arkitekt Advanced Research

Colonizer, making a 3D plastic modelling kit in the process. After gaining Iwata Medea's consent to make use of their airbrush as the significant template (and currently the owner of Gerald Mendez' illustration "Out of this World"), the model construction manufacturer Perfection Industry Company Limited has brought out this exciting model construction set in the fall of 2021 – and did so in proper style with packaging in Iwata design.

The Set contains 177 plastic parts, 22 LEDs, 6 circuit boards, and a metal rod. The finished model measures in at app. 272 x 70 x 41 mm. It can be connected to an electricity source per USB connection, which will light up the LEDs. The model parts can be easily stuck together. An English-language instruction manual with pictures comes with the model. The product also comes with an original story about the "initial spaceship" written by the manufacturer. A total of 5000 people can be transported through the ion cycle conversion-powered spaceship, which can accelerate up to 800 G with an 800 km/h max speed. The original is supposedly sized 800 x 120 x 210 meters and thus, the manufacturer has 1:3000 standard for the model.

In the meantime, the airbrush spaceship model is now available worldwide at a number of other specialty airbrush and model construction retailers. The Arkitekt model construction set is a must for all Iwata fans.

<https://youtu.be/v-OUJ0MMNjE>



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VsionAir: The ultimate airbrush workstation

Where do you actually airbrush? At the easel, on a desk or workbench, or on the living room table? The Rolls Royce among airbrush workstations is currently the VsionAir Airbrush Station. The modular system is, so to speak, an easel 2.0: The basis is a magnetic board to which templates or paper can be easily attached by magnet. The board stands on two rails on which it can be flexibly tilted and moved forwards and backwards. It can be placed directly on the table or, with additional accessories, mounted on a tripod stand or fixed to the table.

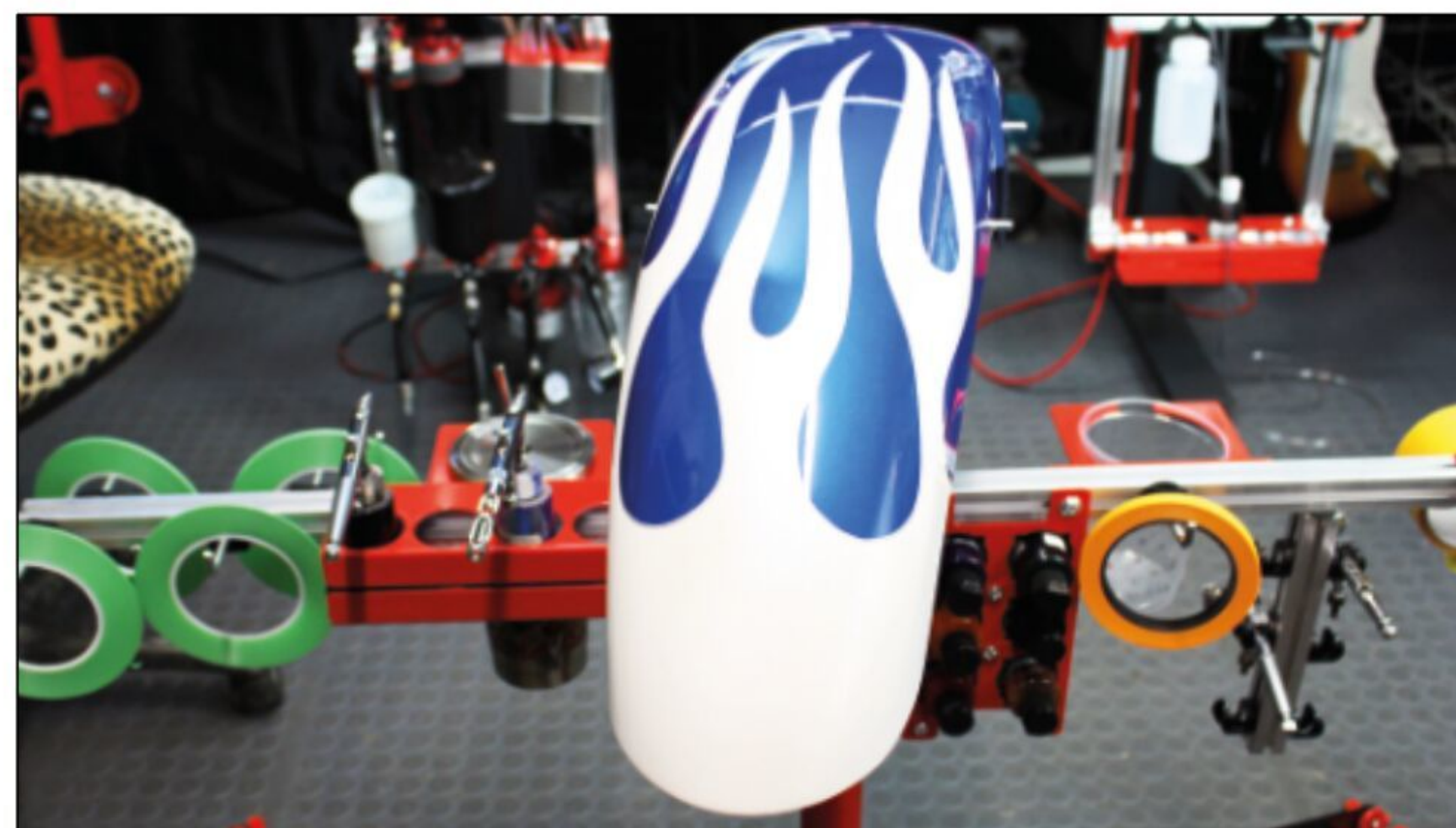
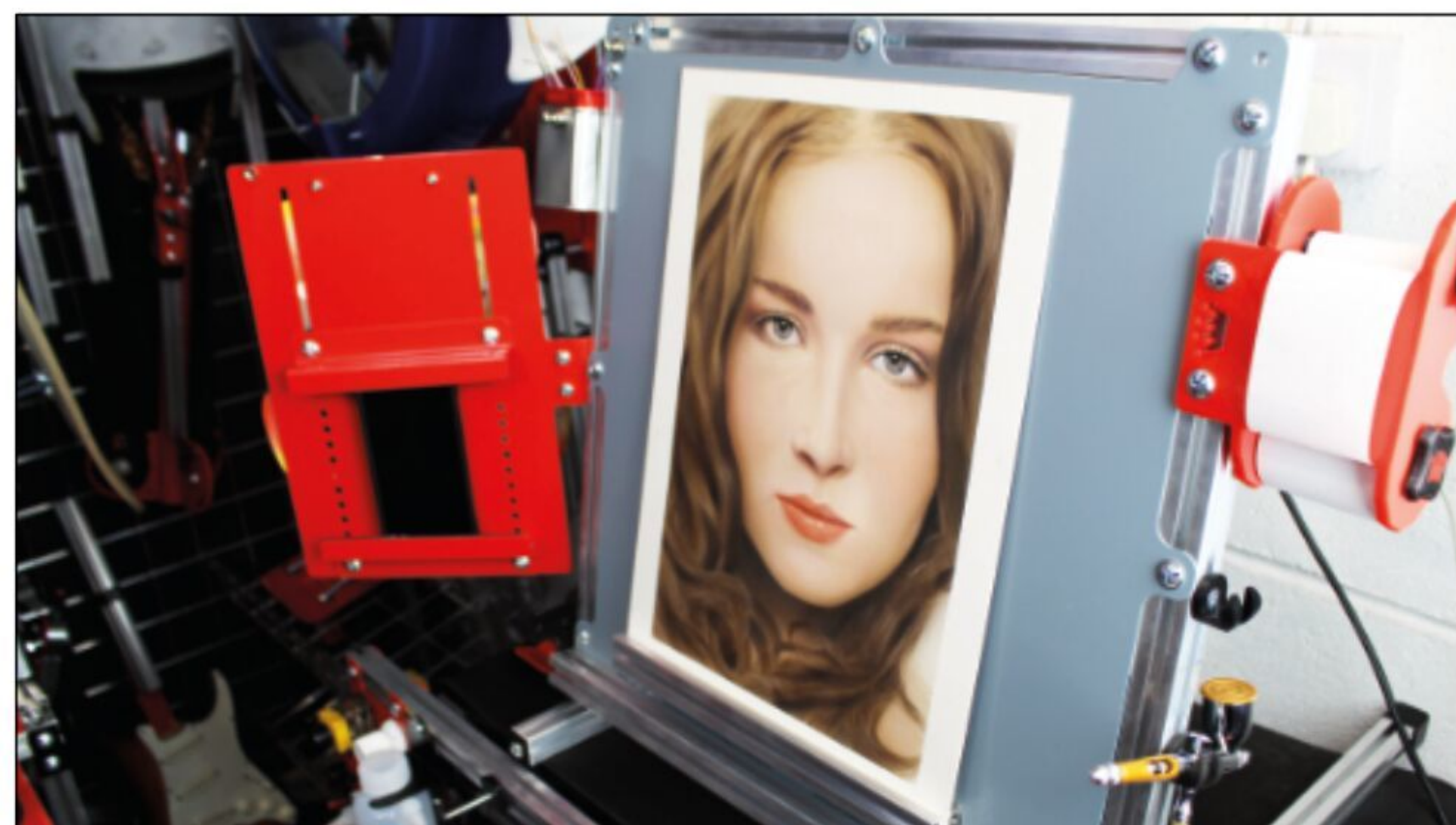
Accessories is the keyword at Vsionair: The basic board is enclosed in a metal rail on which all kinds of practical things can be mounted: Airbrush holders, cup holders, bottle and brush holders, a clipboard for templates, notes or a tablet. There is also an additional rig for installing lighting and a camera. The board can also be interchanged with other jigs for motorcycle parts, helmets, skateboards or guitars, for example, which are otherwise impractical to store and hold when painting. The Vsionair system is designed to accompany the complete work process from start to finish - from preparation work to painting process, clear coat and even polishing, in the paint booth, in the studio or at home. Everything should be within

reach for fast and convenient work. The base module is available in A3 or A4 sizes starting at £95.99. The extensions range in price from £7 for hooks and holders to around £230 for the motorcycle tank jig, for example.

The Vsionair system, which is always expandable and rich in variations, was invented by the British custom painter and former specialist dealer Derek Stainton, who has also already brought the "Flake King" spray attachment onto the market. The Airbrush Step by Step editorial team was of course immediately interested in how an artist comes to the development and production of such an extensive and large-format product. We simply asked him:

Derek, how did you come up with the idea for VsionAir?

If you knew me as people close to me do, you would know I'm weird, passionate, challenging, tenacious and an all-round pain in the butt. Added to that I'm a terrible multitasker, disorganised and clumsy. Now that's a good to start to an interview if you read one! Because I'm all of these things I had to be force myself to be organised, to mount my work where I wouldn't knock it the desk or the stand. It got to the point





where I just said to myself, I have to design something to help. So I set about designing an airbrush workstation. It had to be able to hold all the things that I had painted in the past. Motorcycle helmets, gas tanks, guitars, skateboards. I quickly realised that the items were not the only thing that needed to be held securely. When you spend \$400 dollars on an airbrush why couldn't you have the perfect area to work.

What kind of technical and professional background do you have that you could develop these products?

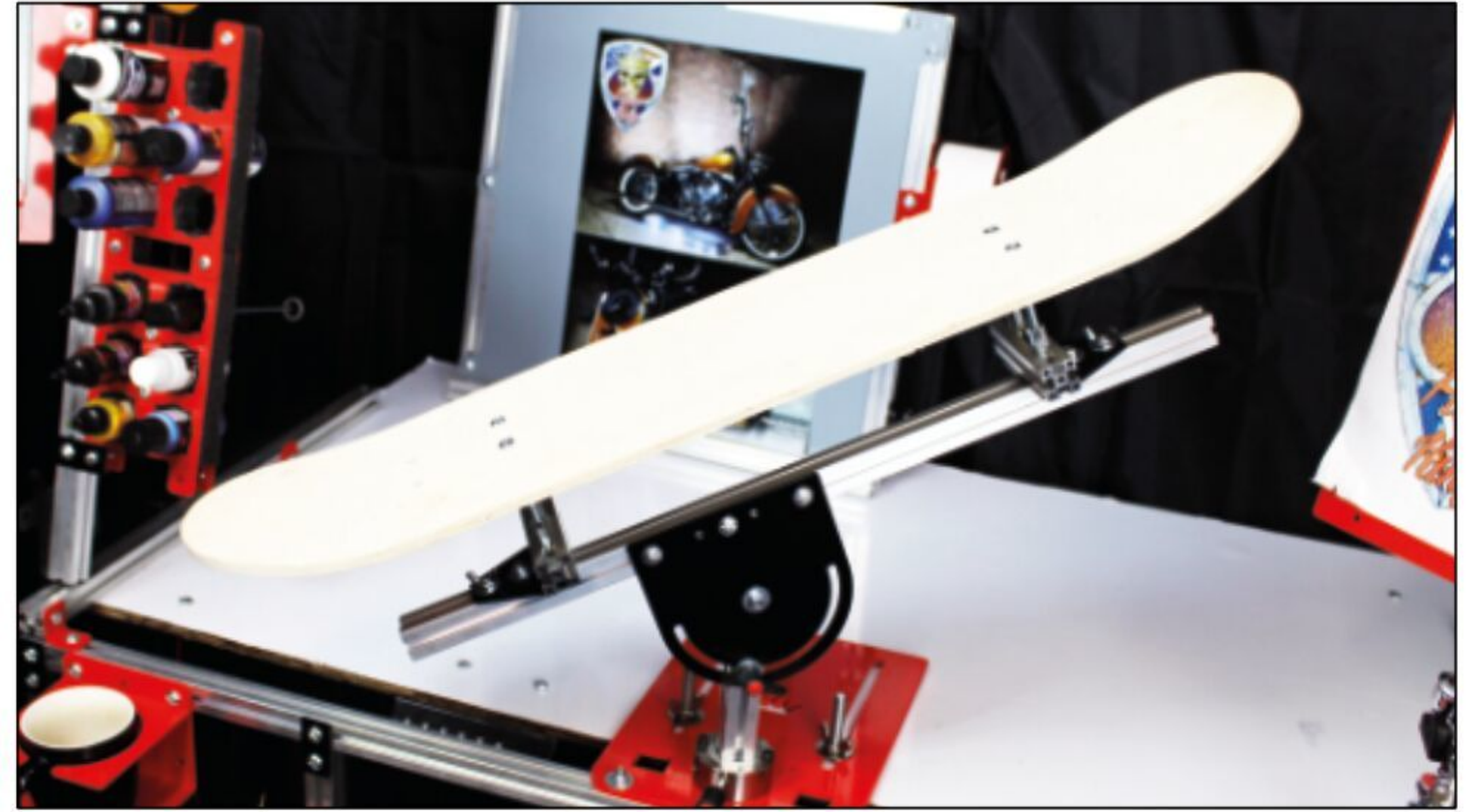
On the design side literally none. I had no CAD experience just a practical mind and an eagerness to learn, so I went to the goto training centre "YouTube", watched, tried, failed, tried again. Eventually it sank in. I have been commercial custom painting and airbrushing for the last 17 years, before that I owned an IT company.

Do you come up with all these creative ideas on your own or do employees help you with the implementation?

The initial products that were launched were pretty much all my own. Moving forward, our awesome customers are coming with suggestions to improve current designs and suggest new jigs that we develop together. I've learnt that customers are king. If you don't listen you don't survive.

Do you produce on site or do you have it produced?

Both, we have CNC, laser cutting and 3D printing on site. Initially new products are developed in house, but when they have a reasonable volume potential we work with our partners gear up to provide a faster turnaround and better pricing. For example, bulk buying on steel and aluminium helps our customers pay less.



What were the hurdles to bring such a product to the market? Were there technical difficulties?

Self belief and money. Being a family owned business in a very niche market the investment required and having the belief that people would like and adopt the system. This was realised when Marissa & Carlo at Foxy Studio saw the Airbrush Station and its potential.

My biggest technical difficulty was deciding on a final design for our VFrame. It is so important and significant to the entire system, I had to get it right. Purchasing our own custom aluminium tool die is no mean feat in cost and risk.

When starting with VsionAir, what does a beginner need?

To recommend what do you start with is a challenging question. Firstly you have to determine: What are you painting on? How are you going to be using it? These questions then determine which mount you use - TriStand or Desk Mount. A beginner would typically just paint on canvas, clayboard or Dibond. So we would recommend the Desk version of the Independent Airbrush Station (IABS) with a single airbrush holder and perhaps the new Airbrush Widget. Everything we design is upgradeable so the IABS can be converted to drop into both TriStand and Desk Mount. The possibilities are endless.

Are there also basic sets where certain accessories or jigs are already included?

Oh my. Our distributors and dealers are the ones that are going to be putting specific sets together. I get a hard enough time giving them weekly price list updates with all the new accessories on, to then force them into taking sets of products. I can feel the grief I would get just thinking about that. We do have the ability for customers to create a wishlist on our VsionAir website.

➔ www.visionair.com.

➔ www.flakeking.com

➔ Facebook: Del Stainton oder Flake King User Group

➔ Also available at: www.foxystudio.com

Photos: Foxystudio.com, Derek Stainton



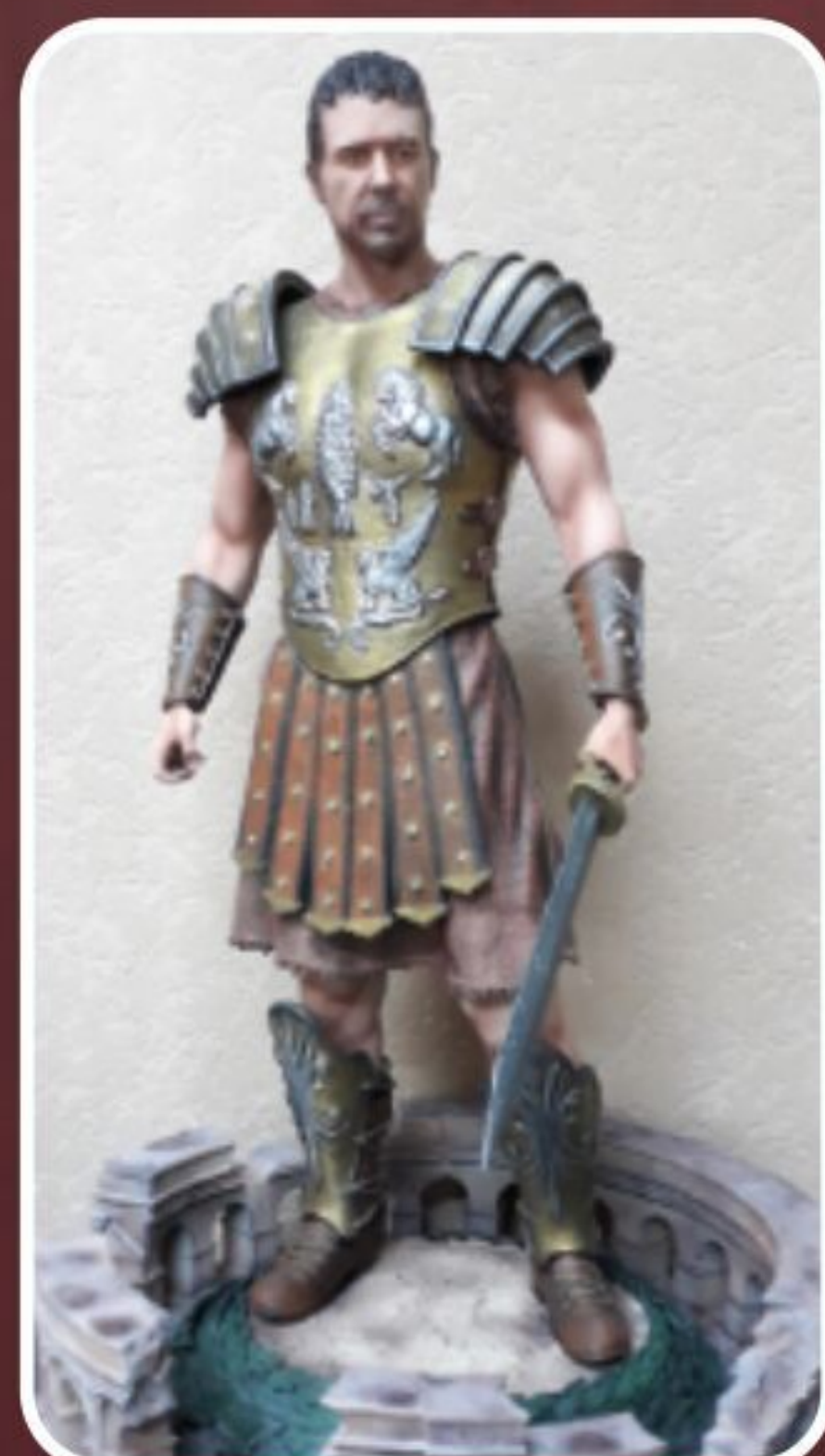
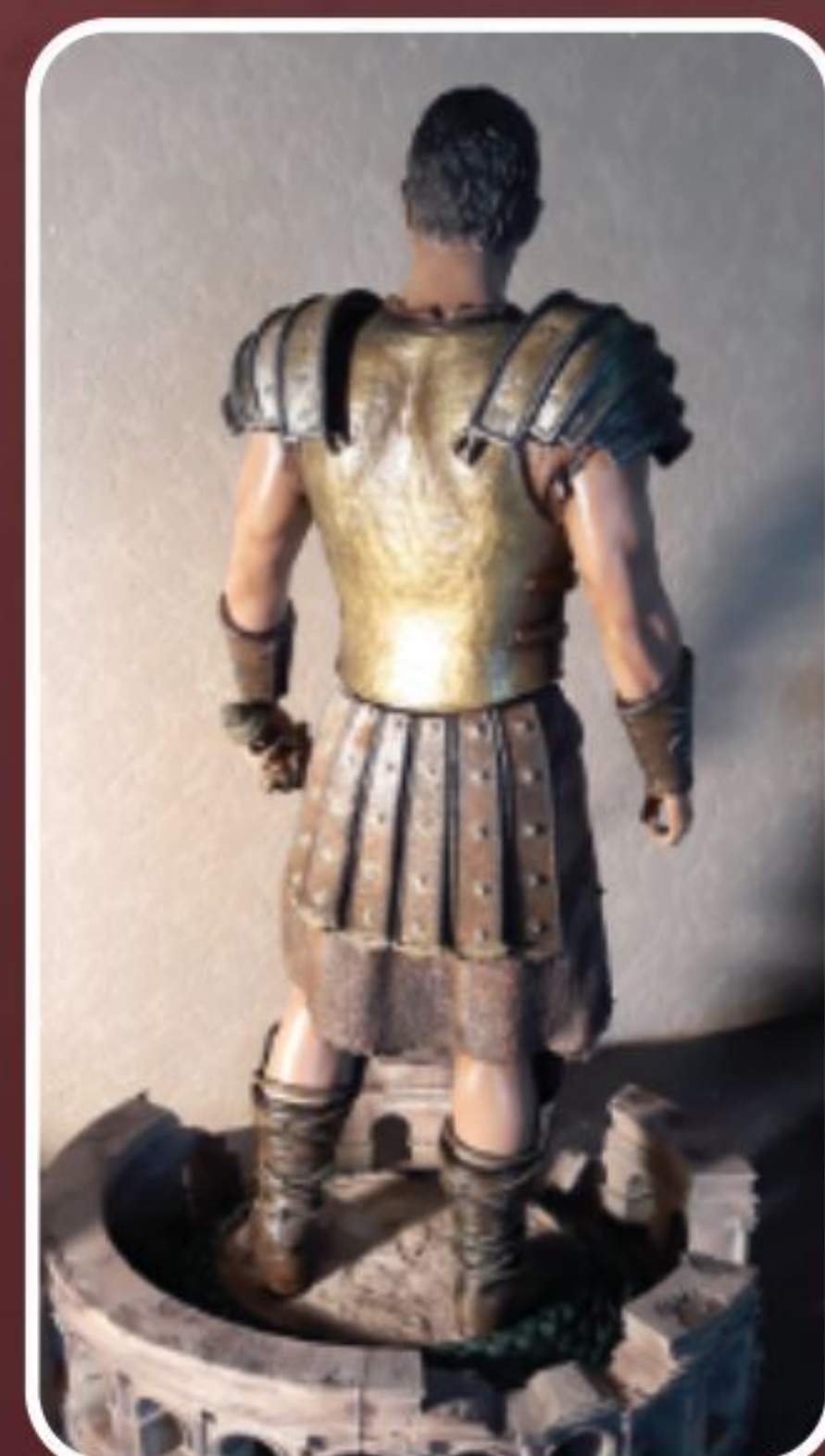
Gambody's Airbrushed 3D Prints Contest 2021

In issue no. 59 you could already admire the winning models of the "Airbrushed 3D Prints Contest" from December 2020, organized by the online platform for 3D printing models, Gambody.com. In March and June of this year, Gambody, in

collaboration with Airbrush Step by Step, once again chose 10 artists and their airbrushed 3D printed models. Of course, we don't want to deprive you of these fascinating 3D artworks.

Arnd Dorn: The Gladiator Fan

The 52-year-old from Germany has been airbrushing since 2003. He has attended courses with various airbrush artists such as Dieter Staatz, Marissa Osterlee and Eddy Wouters. He has been involved with 3D printing since 2020, and it sparked his interest because he made models and dioramas (mainly tanks and soldiers) as a child. It fascinates him that while anyone can print the models with a 3D printer, by painting them, you can make the model something unique.



In the arena (Gladiator)

Arnd chose the "Gladiator" model because he is an absolute fan of the movie and the actor. The printing took about 120-150 hours and the airbrush painting a few days.

Facebook: Claudia Dorn



Kenny Shelton: Flexibility and Freedom

Kenny Shelton is 34 years young and comes from Nebraska/USA. He has been airbrushing for about 3 months and is still learning – mostly from random Youtube videos. He started 3D printing about 4 months ago and then purchased airbrush equipment not too long after. He enjoys the flexibility and freedom to make and paint whatever and however he wants.

Leon S. Kennedy (Resident Evil)

He made the model as a gift for his oldest child, who picked it out. He probably put 700 hours into the printing and the painting time because the model was scaled up to 300% from the original model size.

Facebook: Kenny Shelton



Guido Kehder: Materializing computer drawings

The 58-year-old German has been working with the airbrush for over 30 years. It is one of his model making tools – a hobby which he has been pursuing for just as long. He taught himself how to use it, as well as by using large spray guns to paint furniture parts in his job as a carpenter. He has always given his favorite commercial, construction and recovery vehicle models a personal touch by making and adding parts or entire sections himself. In the beginning, he did this with a CNC milling machine. When 3D printers came on the market at affordable prices, he bought one and now has five in his studio. 3D printing simplifies the production of complex components for him. He likes the accuracy and simplicity of producing complex objects or model-making parts with consistent quality. He is particularly fascinated by the ability to materialize parts drawn on a computer with a 3D printer from a plastic filament of about 2 mm or a UV-sensitive liquid. The time it takes to get to a result is also much shorter, he said.



WARTHOG M12B

Guido likes vehicles that show power, strength and off-road capability, as well as vehicles with edges. He also really likes the shape, which can be turned into a lot of things in terms of model building. He designed the rims here himself, drew them and then produced them with the 3D printer. The windshield was created using vacuum forming. 3D printing using the

DLP process took about 80-90 hours. He did not stop the time of cleaning the supports, assembling and painting – for him it is a free time compensation, where he relaxes.

www.die-leitplanke.de



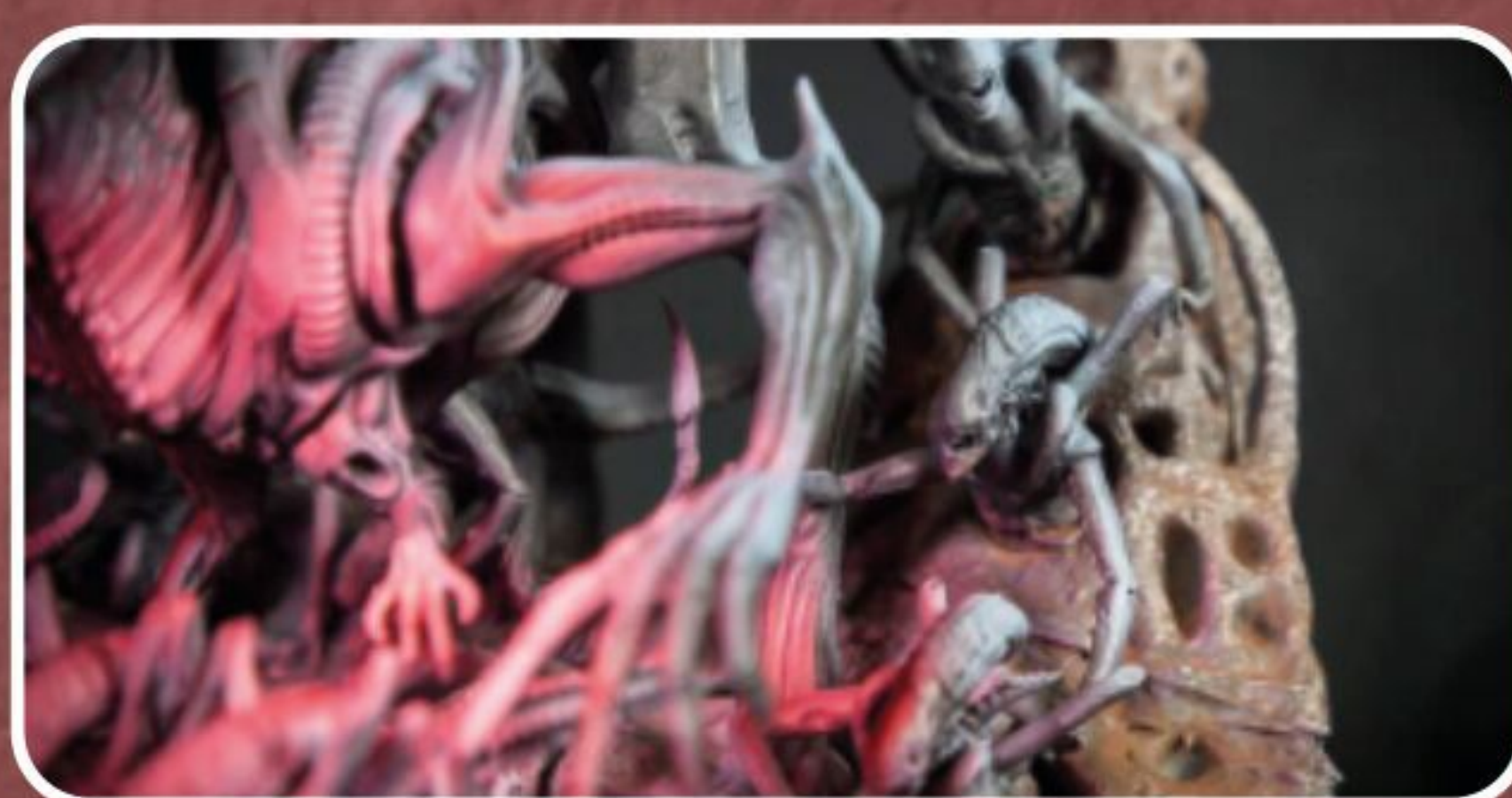
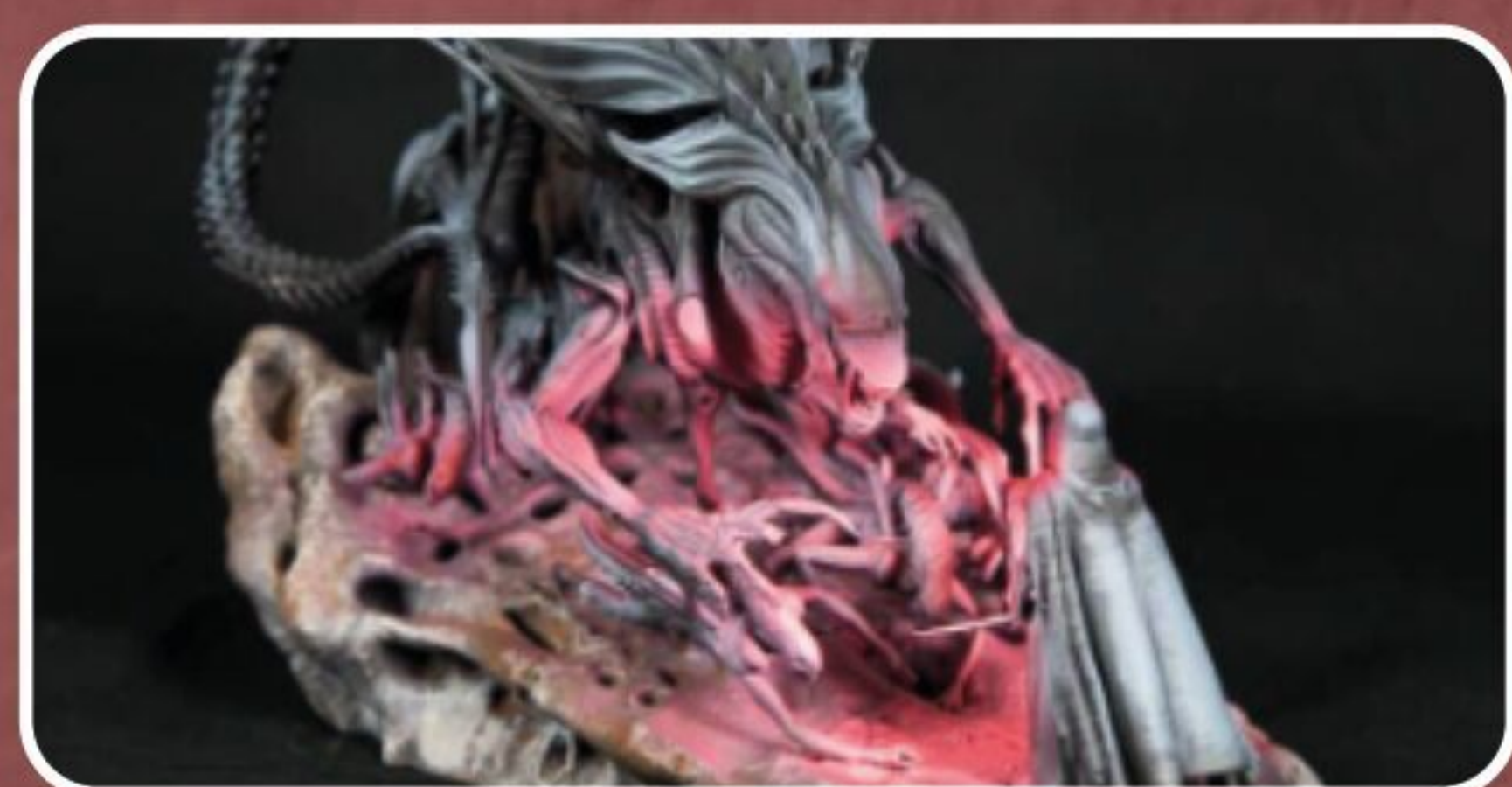
Raphaël Biello: Inspired by the model

Raphaël Biello lives in a suburb of Paris and started airbrushing about 6 years ago by watching the tutorials of "Awaken Realms" on Youtube and teaching himself the technique. In the beginning, he said, he made many mistakes, such as using too much or too little paint. Little by little, however, he learned from his mistakes. He started 3D printing only 2 years ago, but airbrushing models has been his profession for about 4 years – more specifically in the field of wargame miniatures. Painting 3D prints is more of a hobby. It is the model itself that inspires him and makes him want to paint it.

Alien Queen Diorama

Raphaël chose this model because he was inspired by an illustration and because it had an amazing light effect. Since he loves working with the OSL technique, he really wanted to reproduce it on a model. The 3D printing took quite a bit of time. He made a few mistakes in the process, he said, so it took about a month. The painting took 3 days.

Facebook / Instagram: Don Pincelito



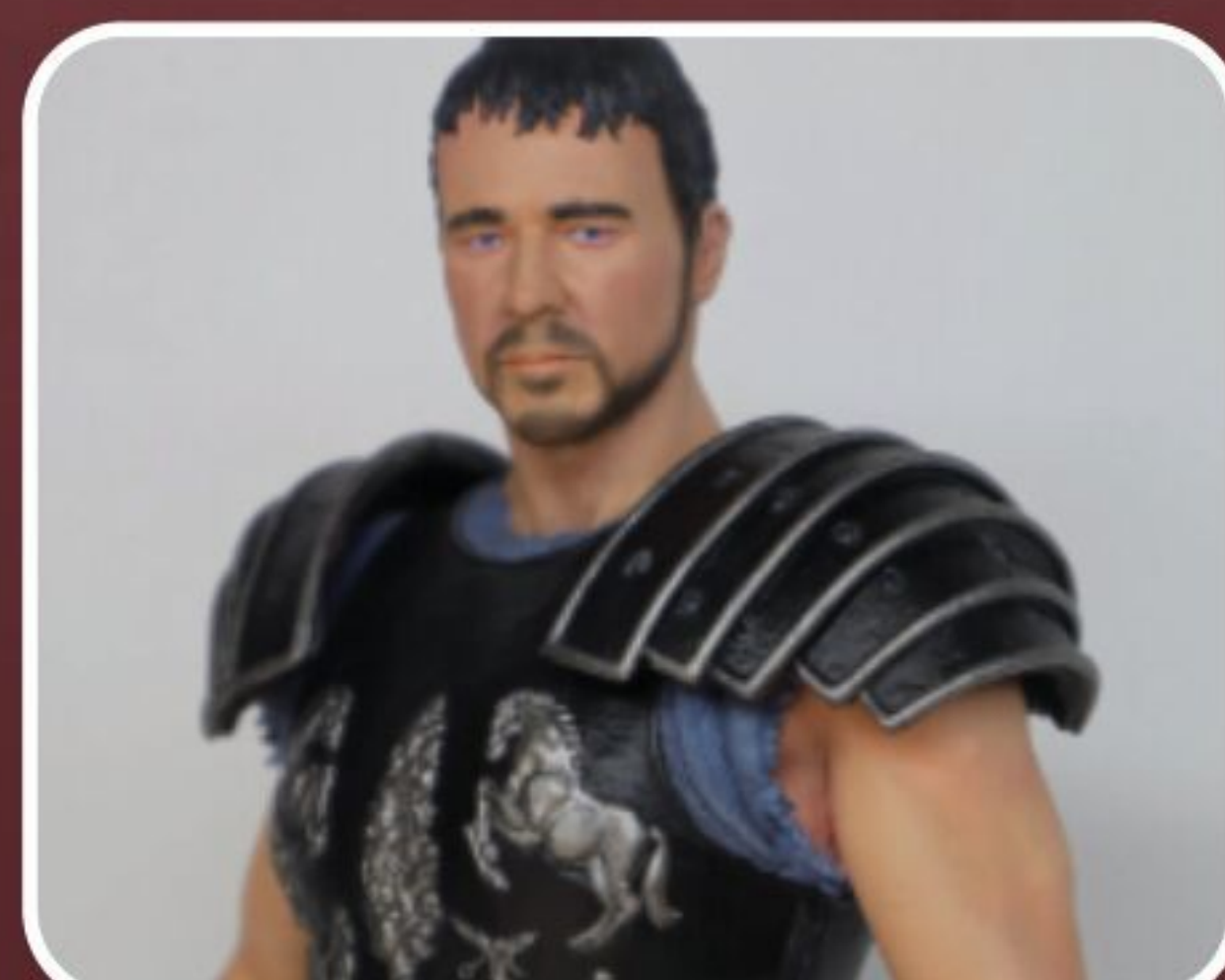
Martin Cagala: Making favorite movie characters

35-year-old Martin Cagala lives in Bratislava, Slovakia, and has been building plastic models, mainly airplanes, for 8 years. Soon he realized that without airbrushing, he wouldn't get anywhere with his paint jobs. About 4 years ago, when 3D printers became available and affordable, he also started 3D printing. He wanted to be able to create his favorite movie characters and props, as he has always enjoyed being creative and making things in general.

Gladiator

"Gladiator" is one of the best movies Martin has ever seen and one of his favorites, he said. When he saw this 3D model, he didn't hesitate. Printing and painting took about 30 hours in total.

www.youtube.com/channel/UCPRqqayoZR9l0a8jzbTseUA



Harrison Labadi: The Punisher Fan

Harrison Labadi lives in Northern Germany and is 54 years old. He has been airbrushing for 36 years and is self-taught. He started 3D printing and airbrushing models 5 years ago because he loves models. He used to paint resin garage kits, but with 3D printing technology, he says it's easier and cheaper to make models.



Punisher

He loves this model and the "Punisher" television series. It took 60 hours to print and about 5 hours to paint.

www.airbrush-pro.de
YouTube: airbrush-pro



Dominique Demers: The desire for something real

Dominique Demers is 49 years old and lives in Ste-Julie, Quebec, Canada. He started airbrushing 30 years ago. Back then, he painted murals and did monsters makeup prosthetics. Being Director of Photography in the video game industry, his day to day is happening in a virtual world. When he gets home, he needs to be in contact with real things. 3D printing fills that hole and allows him to do the opposite of his day job. Pulling out virtual objects to bring them to life in the real world, is amazing for him.



Groot (Avengers)

He chose the Groot model because of its great details that suit well his painting process. Generally, he starts with airbrushing for the primer and base colors, and then puts the finishing touches on the model with washes and dry brush techniques. The surface detail on the Groot model was just perfect for this. Printing took about 2 days on his Any-cubic Photon Mono X. Painting was done in 2 weeks of spare time and took about 10 to 15 hours.

www.domsworkshop.com

Luis M. Rosales: Pure relaxation

When Luis M. Rosales, now 45, from Vilagarcía de Arousa, Spain, was sixteen years old, he started painting miniatures. But when he started his first job after school, he stopped again. Then, a year and a half ago, he returned to his former hobby because he needed to find a way to relax. Painting is a way for him to relax. He has only been working with the airbrush for a year. He learns every day, watching videos and practicing. Luis likes to try different techniques and learn new ones. He tries to mimic corrosion and different materials through paint and it's very satisfying and relaxing for him. If he puts his mind to it, he can spend hours on it that appear as if it's just minutes.



Serenity (Firefly)

Serenity was his first 3D printed model. He loved the series "Firefly" and always wanted to have this spaceship. He has loved spaceships and monsters since he was a kid. A friend of his saw the Serenity on Gambody and gave it to him for his birthday. It took him about a week to print it, since he was in no hurry and could do it in his spare time. Painting it took him a couple of weeks, after work.

Facebook: Luis M. Rosales

Sunggon Park: The dream of being an artist

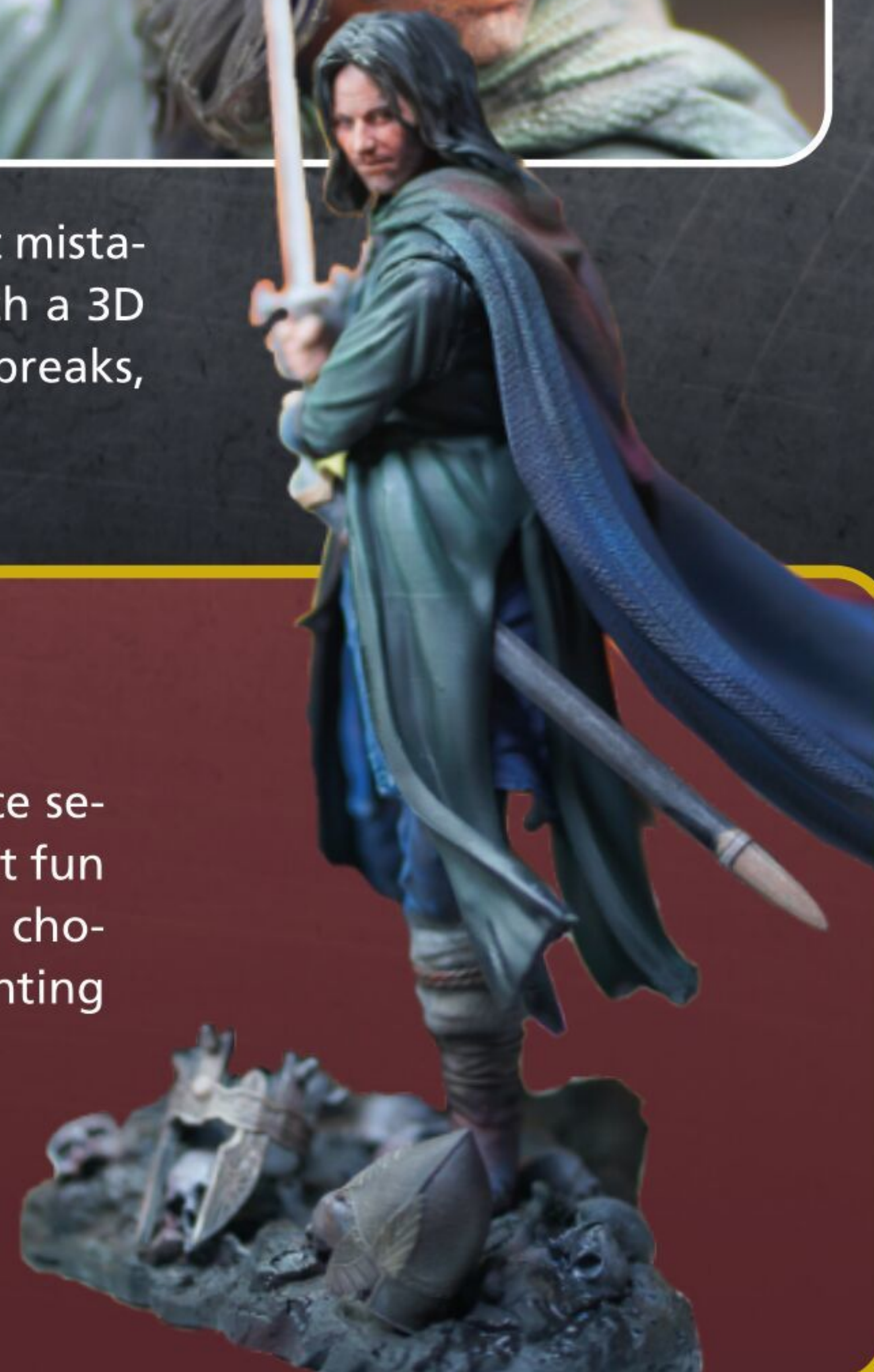
Sunggon-Park is from South Korea and is 46 years old. Her dream has always been to be an artist. She first got her hands on the airbrush in junior high school to paint a plastic model like Gunpla (Gundam Plastic Model). Late last year (around October), she bought an FDM-type 3D printer to print an articulated toy for her second child. At the same time, she found that there were several types of 3D models available online and that, while she was using an FDM printer, resin printers were available at very low prices. Soon there would also be a line of 4K printers. So she started 3D printing and painting at the right time. When she was painting resin figures from the store, she found it very difficult to correct mistakes when painting, or if something was accidentally damaged while painting. But with a 3D printer, mistakes are not a problem. If something gets painted wrong or accidentally breaks, it's easy to print it out again and make it again at any time!



Aragorn (Lord of the Rings)

Sunggon really liked this model. She compared the 3D mesh face to Aragorn's real face several times and thought, "Will it look similar when I paint it? Can I paint it similarly? Is it fun to paint the face and body of Aragorn?" With those conditions in mind, Aragorn was chosen. To print it, she used her Mono X and Mini 4K printer. In 2 days it was printed. Painting took 3-4 days, 2 of which were just for the face.

www.instagram.com/elfswood



Christoph Bönning: A Childhood Dream



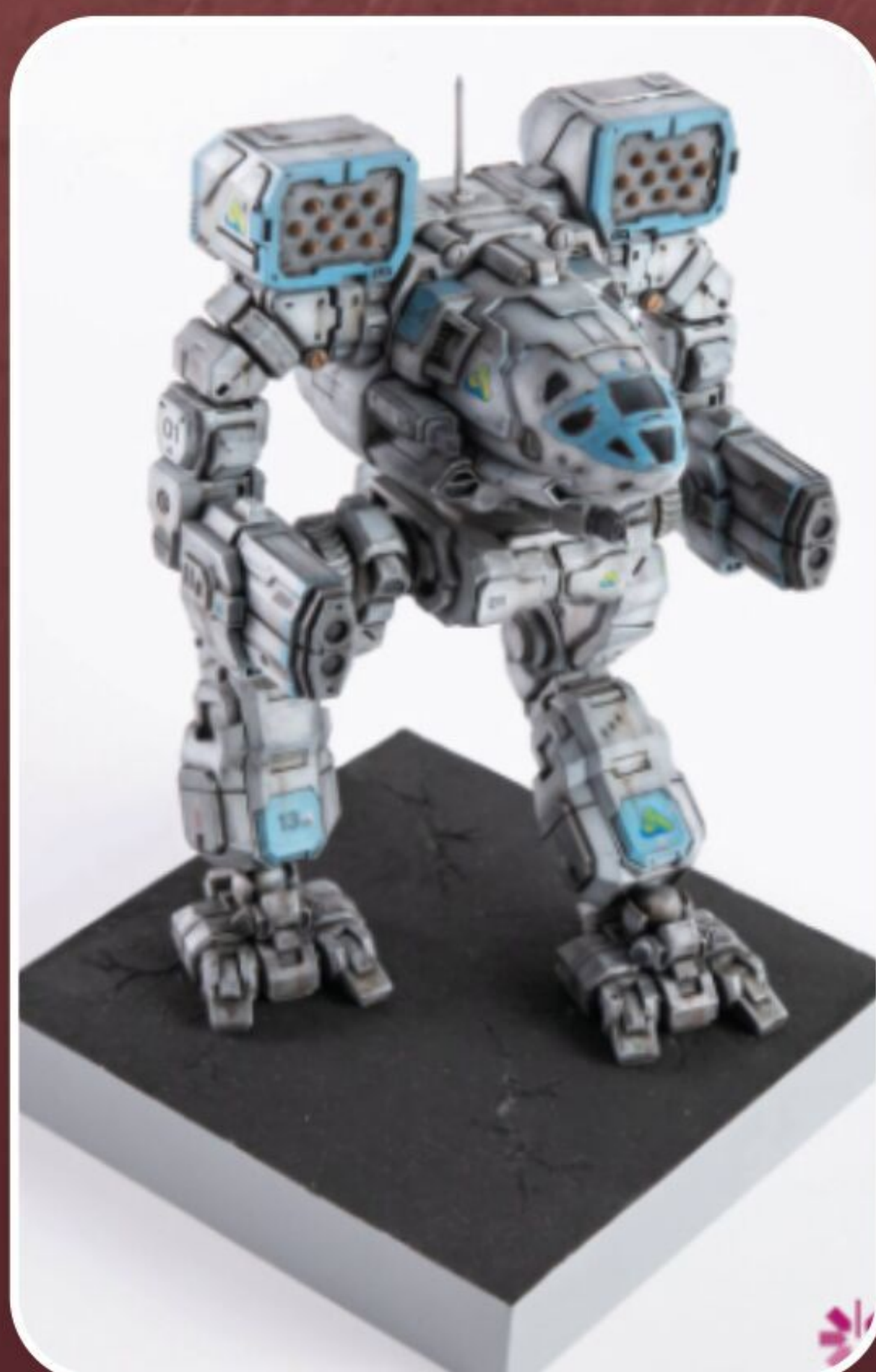
Christoph Bönning is Creative Director in his own creative agency near Frankfurt, Germany. Through his communication design studies, he first learned airbrushing physically, among many other creative techniques, and later adapted it to digital techniques using a Wacom tablet in Photoshop. Having been addicted to model making as a child, it made sense to combine his hobby with his profession, so he soon began painting models. After a long break, he started building models again about 10 years ago using classic plastic model kits. First and foremost, he always devoted himself to sci-fi themes, which he loved as a child and most of which is quite uncommercial. So he

found it very difficult to get commercial kits for the things he likes to build, so he decided to design and print them himself. For him, there is no alternative to 3D printing when looking for special and individual kits. Printing each one of them is a childhood dream come true for him. Plus, as a designer, he had the fortunate opportunity to learn 3D modeling as part of his job. One of the great things about 3D printing for him is that he can create 3D models digitally first and then see them come to life.

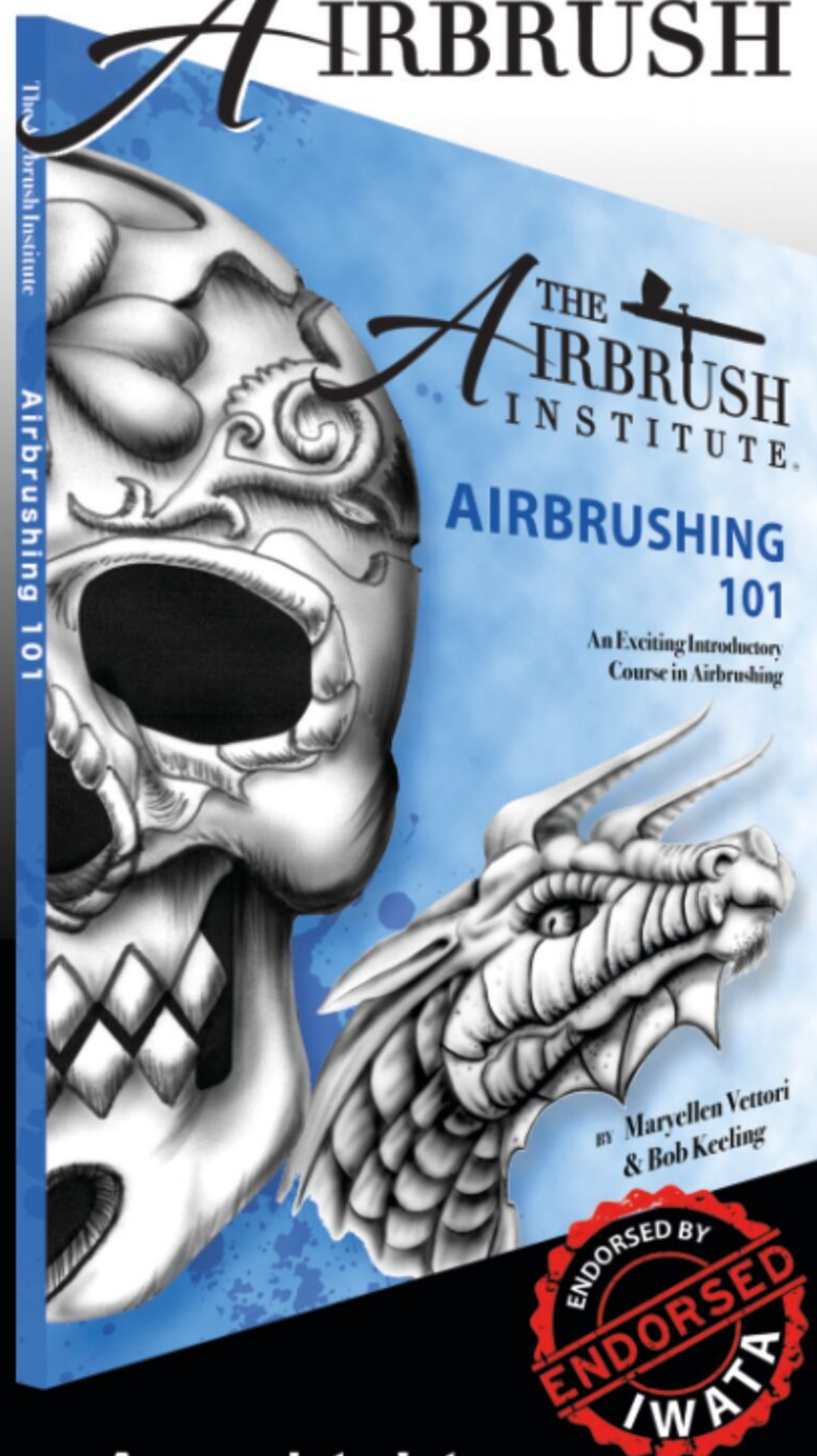
Battletech Timberwolf

Christoph has loved the Battletech universe since childhood. For almost 10 years he was looking for a good commercial kit of a Mad Cat, and it has always been a dream of his to build one. But there is only one really messy, hard to get, old resin kit of it. The Timberwolf is the modern descendant of the iconic Mad Cat, and when he found this great kit, he decided to build it first. It took him about 13 hours to print and about 4 weeks to paint, about 10-12 hours, not including research.

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About one and a half year ago US artist Steve Gibson was contacted for a private commission. The subject was to be focused around a custom Shovelhead built during 2012 and aptly named "Question Everything", a tribute to the legacy of the late "Indian Larry", a well-known bike builder

from Brooklyn, New York, USA. Here is the story and some of the philosophy behind the making of the painting "Solitude" painted during the Spring 2020 just as the Coronavirus Pandemic set in worldwide and solitude started to become a normal and forced existence – not a chosen one.

EQUIPMENT – SOLITUDE

Airbrush: Iwata HP-CS and HP-C Plus

House of Kolor Shimrin 2 Jet Black

Paints: Createx Grisaille Grey-Master Set, House of Kolor Shimrin 2 Basecoat, House of Kolor Shimrin 2 Bright White,

Surface: aluminum panel, 152 x 122 cm (60 x 48 inches)

01 Choice of Paints and Grisaille technique

Back in early 2017 I teamed up with Createx Colors to develop a grey line of paint which would later become the paint kit Air Oil and Lead “Grisaille Grey-Master Set”. This paint kit is based off of my color recipes that I had become familiar with working in urethanes using House of Kolor paint. It has been my general approach to airbrushing since the late 1990s. My familiarity with urethanes and my 20 years using this as my primary paint still makes this my go to paint system for major projects. I was fortunate enough to work with Createx Colors in developing a very accurate grayscale paint based off of the Munsell Color System, a system of color that has been around since the first decade of the 20th century. This water-based paint line has accurately influenced my gray mixes using House of Kolor, and has greatly expanded the audience with which I can teach this airbrushing method too. I am fortunate enough to be dealing with two paint systems of which I can bounce back-and-forth between comparing the various chemistries and mixing ratios to make my color application both more efficient and accurate.

INFO


HOUSE OF KOLOR

SHIMRIN 2 S2-26.Q01/BRIGHT WHITE

SHIMRIN 2 S2-25/JET BLACK

"BY WEIGHT UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED"

ALL (DROPS) ARE DONE WITH A PIPETTE

	WHITE	BLACK
N9	9 GRAMS + 1 DROP	
N8	9 GRAMS + 2 DROPS	
N7	8.5 GRAMS + 4 DROPS	
N6	9 GRAMS + 1 GRAM	
N5	4 GRAMS + 1 GRAM	
N4	2 GRAMS + 1 GRAM	
N3	3 GRAMS + 2 GRAMS	
N2	1 GRAM + 1 GRAM	
N1	2 GRAMS + 5 GRAMS	



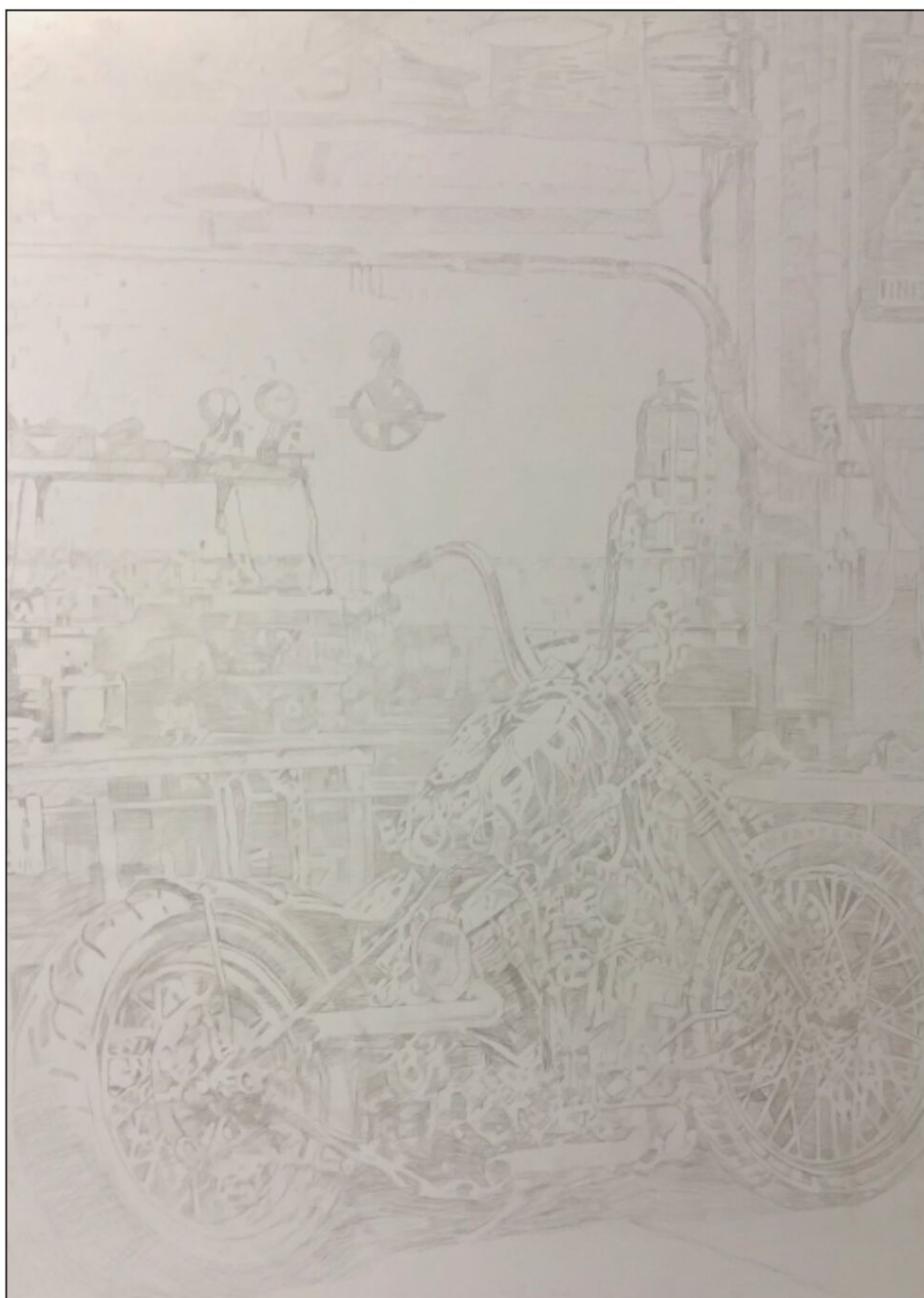
02 The surface

After compositing several photos and a little splicing and dicing in Adobe Photoshop, the image was established that would serve as the basis for my painting “Solitude”. At 152 x 122 cm (60 x 48 inches) the spirit of the piece would serve as a reminder that often, greatness and artistic beauty are born during the silent and long hours of working alone. Every project starts with a blank canvas. Sometimes mine are large and flat surfaces but most of the time they’re curvy and fast. Regardless of what paint I use, my process almost always starts the same way when it’s convenient and efficient: On a neutral gray surface (Munsell Grey #5) with a pencil transfer.



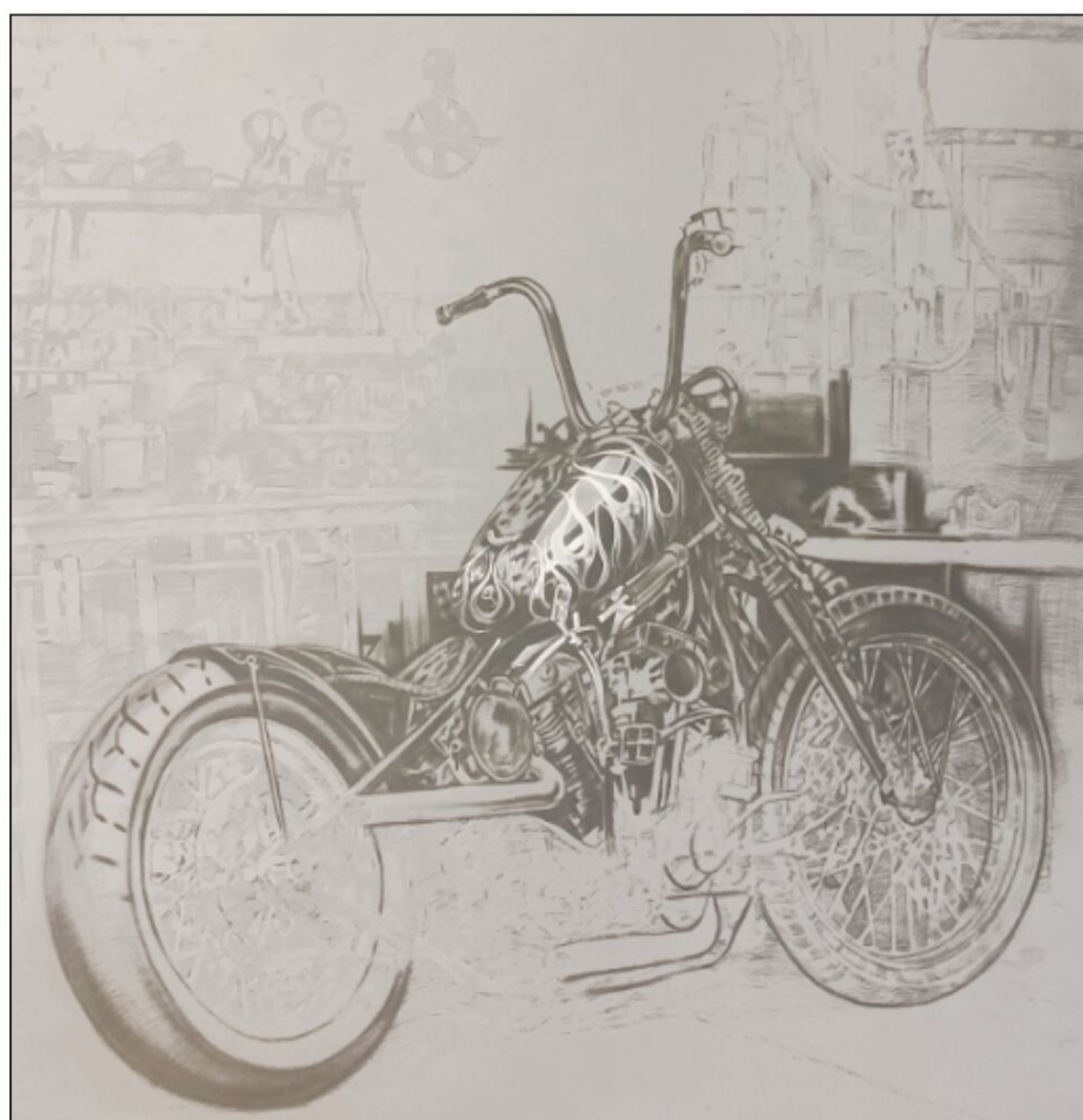
03 Abstract spaces

When I transfer my imagery, light and dark abstract spaces are more important to me than a detailed line drawing. This helps me very quickly establish an interesting image that consists of dark, medium and light contrast of which I can better build my imagery. My drawings are not normally accurate as far as detail, but I try to make them as accurate as I can as far as proportion. I tend to fine-tune the details of my image during the painting process.



04 Limited tonal range

Personally, when I start a painting I start with the most interesting part of the image. I find that I become engaged with the image quickly and that gets me motivated and emotionally involved right from the beginning. It also allows me if I so choose, to quickly show progress to my client and that helps with the morale for everybody involved with the project, both painter and patron! Here I am immediately concerning myself with the dark, medium and light values. I am laying the foundation of which to compare my other values as the painting progresses. It also takes a lot of the guesswork out of value placement as I only allow myself to paint within a limited tonal range in the beginning of my artworks. This keeps me from getting too dark or too light, and allows me to systematically step my values outward toward extreme dark and light without making too large of steps. It's about control, not guess work.



05 Consistent approach

When you are working big, sometimes it can seem a bit ominous to be consistent with your practices. It's best to pick an approach that you can carry through to the very end. This defines your work as a cohesive whole. Often I'll observe other artists who start strong and exhaust their best efforts in the beginning and fade in their effort and motivation as the project wears on. It is important to have a good plan in the beginning that you can carry through to the very end.



06 Details

In this picture I am starting to realize the details in and around the gas (petrol) tank. What I am trying to figure out is one of two things at this point. How long is it taking me to get to a certain level of detail that will make both myself and my client happy. And secondly, just how much detail will it take for me to realize an image (in this case a motorcycle) that will be mind blowing at first glance but not overindulgent and over-painted. By "over-painted" I am saying that not all details are necessary to convey a visual truth. We are visual communicators trying to tell a story. Like a writer who chooses his/her words wisely when telling a story, I find the same holds true with my approach to painting: which paints strokes or airbrush marks are best to tell my story?



07 Additive process

My original reference for this bike was not of the highest quality relative to the size I was commissioned to paint the piece. I had to figure out a lot of the details right on my panel. Being that my process is a completely additive one (no erasing, scratching) I have the freedom to overlap my elements and change direction at will. Because I freehand

mostly everything, it makes moving through complex imagery a more fluid process and not so painful because I am not married to taping/masking out specific areas and not changing direction. If something does not look right or presents itself as incorrect, I just paint over that element much in a similar fashion that a traditional artist would on canvas.



08 The engine area

This is a more detailed photo taken at an angle that demonstrates the development of the core of the motorcycle from initial pencil sketch to a more detailed and realized engine area. You can see a lot of my developmental lines at work as well as a lot of pushing and pulling of dark and light values. I will repeat the same process with my strokes making them smaller and more accurate as the painting progresses. It's this approach that allows me to paint imagery, even from a poor reference. It is also important to realize that knowing "how" something is constructed and made can very much aid in the painting process when that information is not present. This can be done by drawing and observation of similar objects – the ability to draw, I believe, is the foundation for a good artwork and without question the foundation of what it is to be a good artist. Don't just be a good airbrusher... be a good airbrush artist. Practice these skills often and with purpose.



09 Using the mahl stick

In this painting I am employing a sign painters tool as well as a traditional oil painters tool. The mahl stick. I've been using a mahl stick for about a decade now with airbrush. I can paint razor sharp lines for large and small distances alike without the use of tape. Nor do I have to employ a traditional paintbrush to accomplish such tasks. When time is money, efficiency and speed are very important. Without sacrificing the quality of my work it can be hard to make money as a professional artist and achieve the look I'm going for. I have found this approach to be the best approach for me without repeatedly taping out and masking away various elements frequently.



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10 "Educated" art mark

Here is another close-up of the main area of my image. It is much further along in this photo. Here you can really see that I am starting to develop a lot more of the detail. But upon closer observation you can actually see how much detail is not in there also. By slowing down and studying your subject, like previously stated, you can decide what are the most important elements that communicate your idea of what you are trying to present to your viewer. It is important to take into account what to include and what not to include. This thinking makes for a more "educated" art mark and does not put the artist into a mentality to just paint everything he or she sees without thinking. It's what separates the artist from merely copying a photograph, to becoming a real conveyor of the visual truth that he or she would like to share with the world. Your vision and the way you see the world is unique to you, share it! Don't merely copy something!



11 The brain is taking a break

Here I am working my way out from the center, laying some more detail into the bottom part of the frame of the motorcycle. I try to do the most important part of the painting during the best hours of my day which are usually early. As my eyes and brain fatigue I will switch to painting less important parts of the painting such as the background and surrounding area. While these areas are certainly important for the composition and overall look of the piece, they don't require the same amount of intensity. I am still accomplishing something while painting even though my brain is taking a break.



12 The background

In this photo I have stepped away to look at the image as a whole. With the majority of the bike realized I have a pretty good idea of what that will look like when completed, so I begin to turn my attention to the background and surrounding area. It is important when working on a larger piece to walk away and stand back from it. You get to see it as a cohesive whole rather than the sum of its parts.



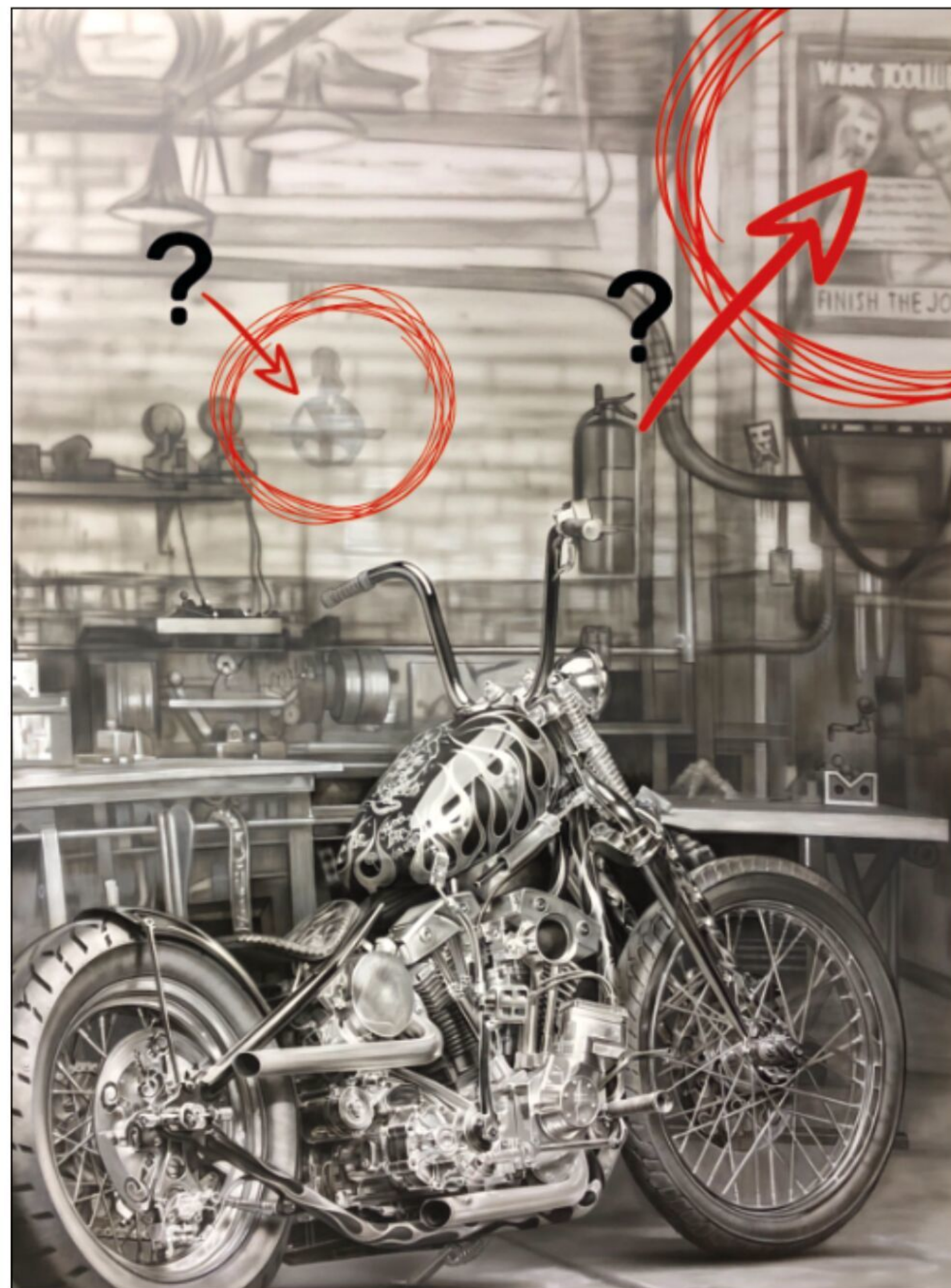
13 Avoid detracting

This is a similar view with a more developed background surrounding the bike. Here I am focused on just how much detail I want to put into the background as I do not want to detract from my main subject, the motorcycle itself. Most of my decisions at this point are aesthetic, or based on the guiding principles of beauty. I want to create a sense of atmosphere and environment, however, I do not want to give the same attention to the elements in the background that I did to my main focus in the foreground.



14 Removing detraction

While I am painting or “blocking” in the background, I’m continuously asking myself what is necessary and what is not. Does one thing detract from the foreground or does it help the entire composition? In this photo I have brought attention to two elements that I thought should be removed from the image because I thought they took away from my primary focus of the painting. Again, because my process is all additive it is easy for me to merely paint these elements out and replace them with something less intrusive. I’m never on autopilot and always think, “Will this help or harm?” I read something recently by the late drumming virtuoso Neil Peart (Rush) about his writing (A prolific writer also!) He said that he took such care at the way he presented his stories to his viewers because he understood that he was essentially asking them for their time to spend with his writing, and that time is our greatest gift. He didn’t want to insult his audience by not properly “caring” for the time he was putting into his work, as that’s what he was asking from his audience too. We are gifting each other an experience with painting, whether through observation or practice, it should be something held sacred by both artist and viewer.



15 Highlights and contrasts

As the background nears completion and becomes more polished, I start to turn my attention toward the motorcycle again. Here I am starting to think of the piece again as a cohesive whole and I am starting to apply my darkest values as well as my lighter values and highlights. Less application usually serves you more at this point as not everything will get a highlight nor will everything become the darkest of contrasting marks. This is what makes such believable depth as compared to a painting that just has good contrast. Depth and contrast are two different descriptive elements that can make for convincing realism, it’s best to know how and when to use them because they are different.



16 Completion

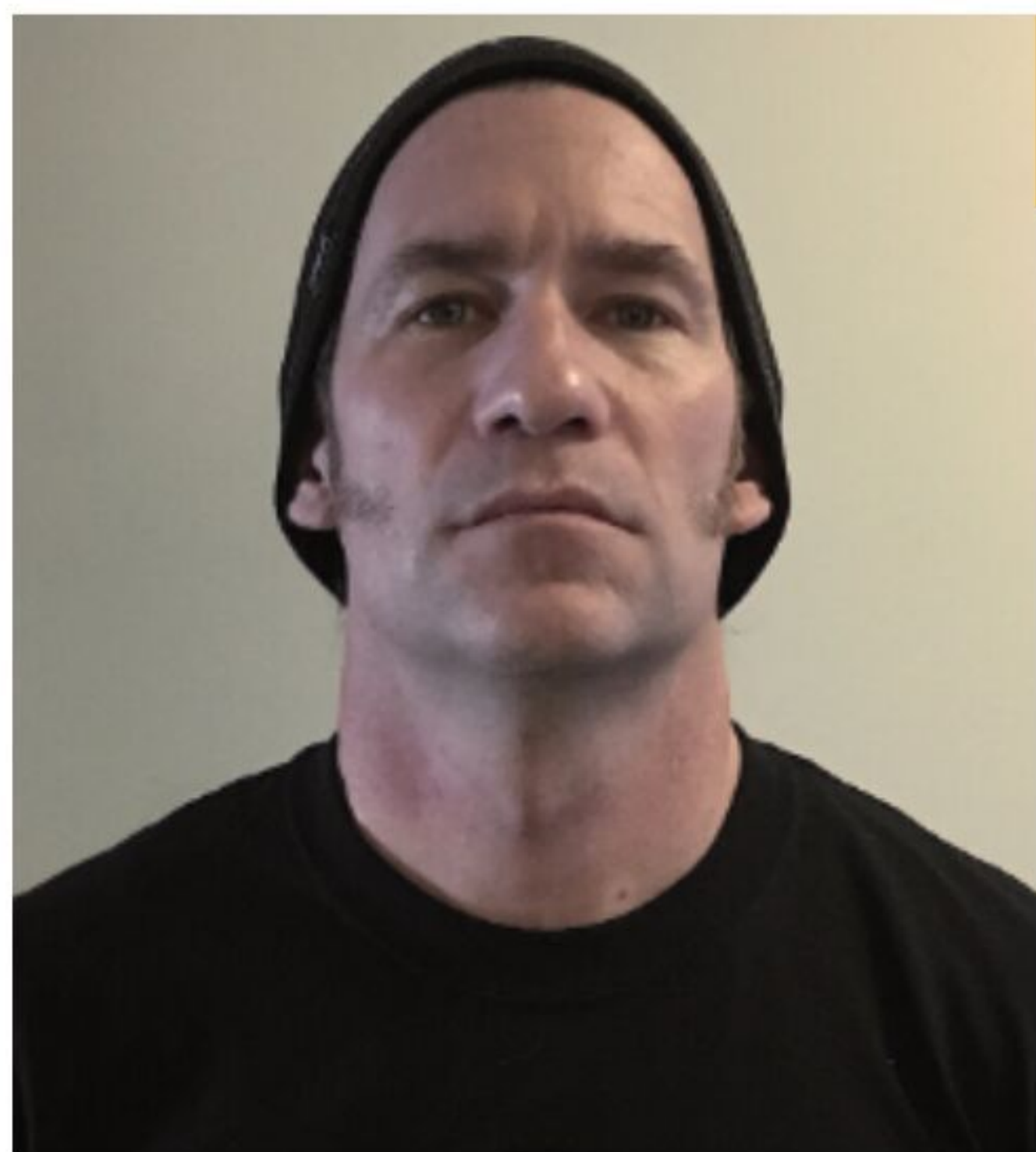
Here we see the completed piece. I have snuck in smaller elements of my own, my own touches so to speak. The painting is a combination of what I call educated art marks, the most important ones and not all of the ones. What I am after is convincing realism and not photorealism. My goal ultimately is to have my artwork viewed as a painting that embodies a soul and when applicable conveys a message. I've never been after a photorealistic finish. To merely copy and replicate takes away the most important aspect of art, the way you see the world. That is something that is unique to you and that is something that should evolve and change throughout your lifetime as you become more familiar with your environment and the nature that surrounds and interacts with you.



17 Safe shipping

Create it, crate it and ship it! The painting panel and crate were built by a company in the Midwest USA and fabricated to the specs of my client. The panel was shipped to me in the raw and I had to repack the crate with the completed artwork. Aside from the packing foam from the shipping company, I decided to wrap the painting in cotton sheets so as to not disturb the final matte finish on the artwork. To skip safety at this point would be self-defeating after the amount of effort that can go into a large artwork. The artwork resides in a space made specific for it and my clients needs, and the transportation went smoothly.

Thanks for spending this time with me and following along with my process and thoughts about this piece. I hope it was enjoyable and thoughtful. Be well everyone...



STEVE GIBSON

Steve Gibson is an airbrush artist whose technical skills are inspired by traditional oil painting. He specializes in automotive illustration and portraiture as well as fine art. He holds a BA degree in Fine Arts from Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida in 1999 and his artwork has been recognized by curators at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of Art and exhibited in group shows in Long Beach Island, NJ and New York City.

His experimental nature, combined with a colorful and eclectic work history, makes his works both highly original at their core and masterful in their execution. Renowned motorcycle builders and riders such as Jesse James (Monster Garage), Paul Teutel Jr. (American Chopper) and Carey Hart (Freestyle Motocross) have called upon his artistic skills. He was recently named Cyclesource Magazine's 2020 Artist of the Year. For his approach to his craft and the knowledge

embodied therein, he is in demand both nationally and internationally as a workshop lecturer (when there isn't a pandemic going on!).

www.airoilandlead.com



AURORA BOREALIS

Vast coastlines, majestic mountains, famous fjords, spectacular islands, and the expanses of frozen tundra: this is Norway – and the home of Aiste Nau. The beauties of her country play a recurring role in Aiste's works, especially the

breathhtaking wonder of the aurora borealis. Whether on vehicles, everyday objects or on canvas – she uses simple effects to give her pictures an unmistakable "Nordic" character.

EQUIPMENT – AURORA BOREALIS

Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse

Additional materials: Masking tape, sheet of paper, scalpel

Paints: Createx Wicked Black, white, Createx Airbrush Colors Pearl Green, Lime Green, Pearl Red, Iridescent Scarlet

Surface: Canvas

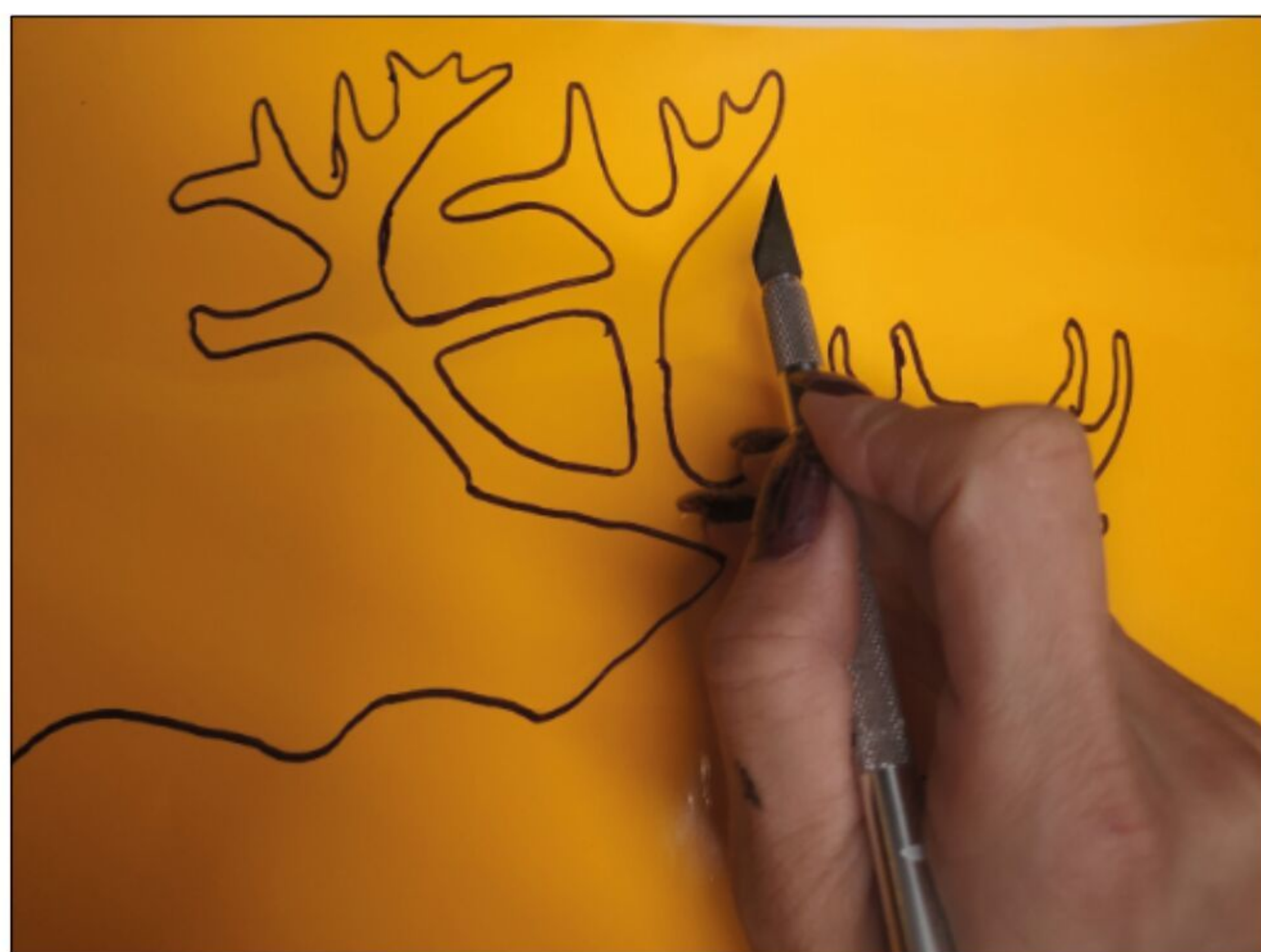
01 Prepare the canvas

First, I prepare the canvas and prime it with black. You can do this with a paintbrush, roller or airbrush. It should be nice and opaque.



02 Preparing the motif

Now you can prepare your stencils with a motif of your choice. I've decided on a reindeer. This can be done with either a loose stencil or one that can be attached. I sketch the entire thing with a pencil and cut it out with a scalpel.



03 Masking

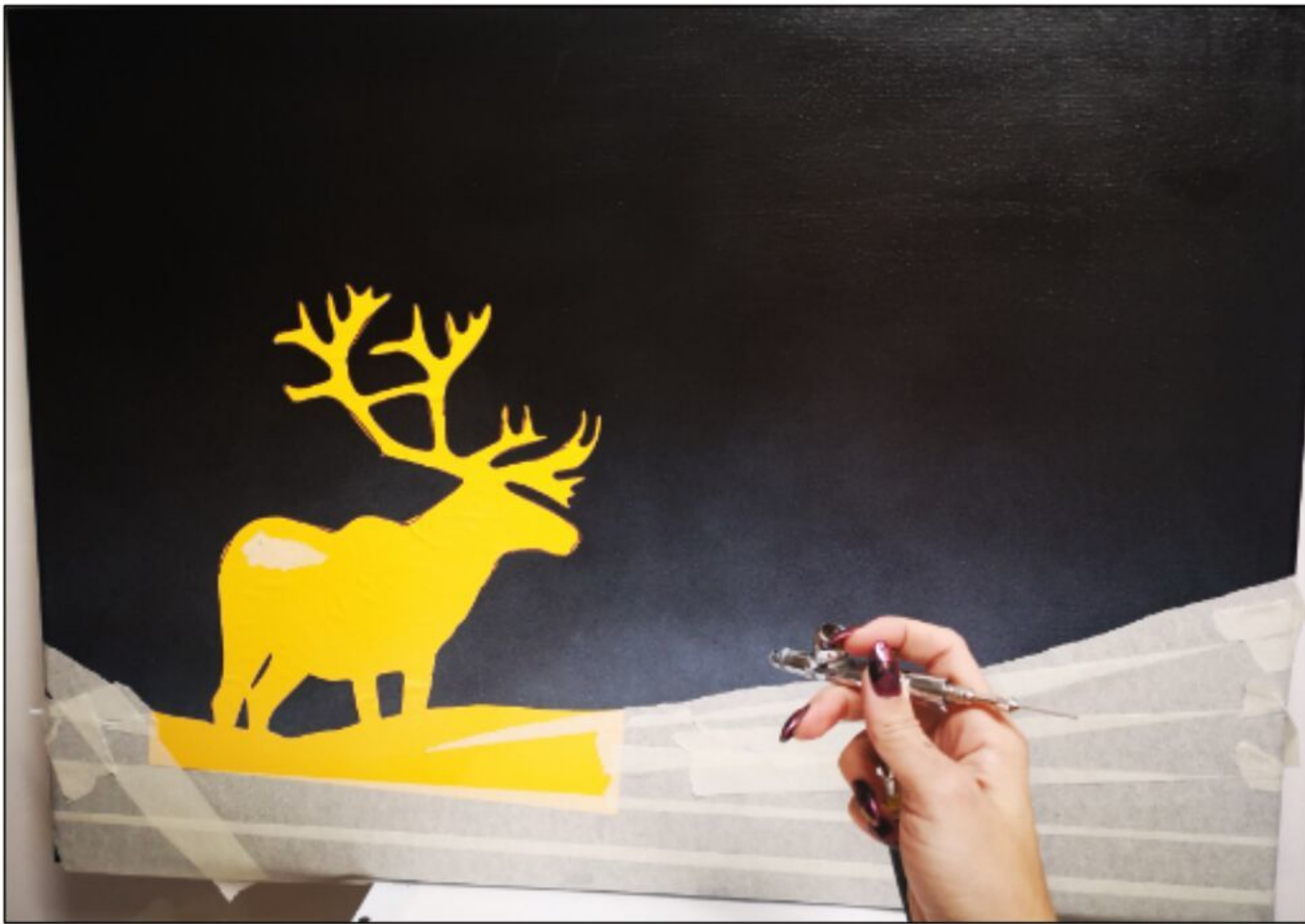
I establish the silhouette of the landscape by attaching the masking tape. With that, I can also fasten my free-hand reindeer stencil. You can naturally also make use of other stencils. I feel that this is a quick option in this case.



04 Adding gradients

Using white paint, I spray a light radial progression upwards from the mountain slope to indicate a sunset. In so doing, I work relatively closely to the painting surface. After

that, I enhance the color gradient a bit more all around the reindeer.

**05 Aurora Texture**

I continue here with the aurora. I use the sharp edges of a piece of sheeted paper for this. I carefully spray on the edge and then place the sheet of paper at another angle, thus creating a corresponding dynamic line construction to serve as a preparatory coat for the aurora.

**06 Optimizing the aurora**

Using some more white, I connect the streaks with the movement of the polar light in order to optimize it.



07 Orange light

I now spray Pearl Orange along the horizon to create an orange sunset. Due to the white spray mist applied, the orange really comes into its own and does not disappear in the black background.



08 Green light

That step is followed by a Pearl Green on the lower end of the aurora. Dark green is the main color here in the polar lights. Just like the orange, I carefully mist it in thin layers over the fading white area.



09 Red light

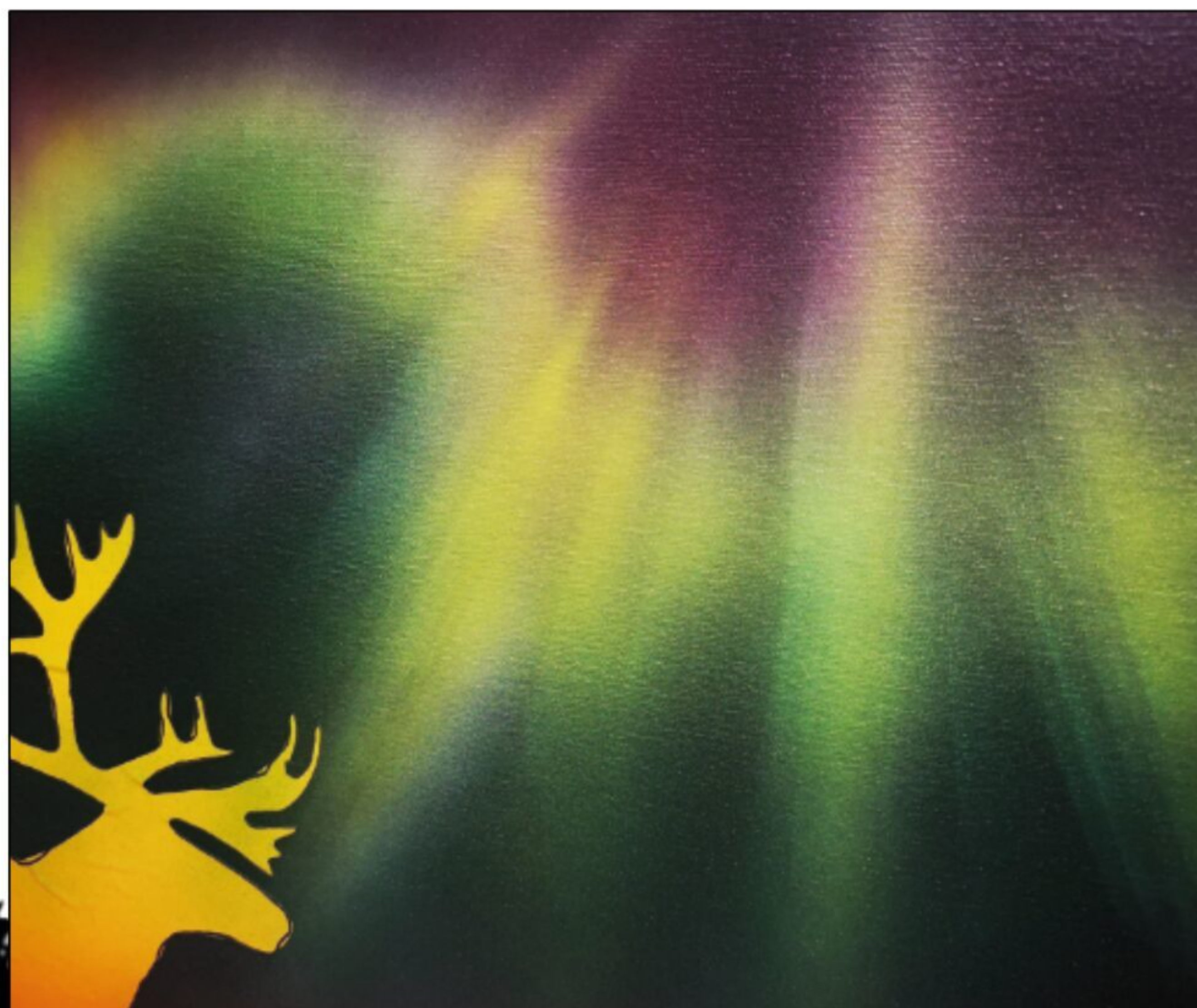
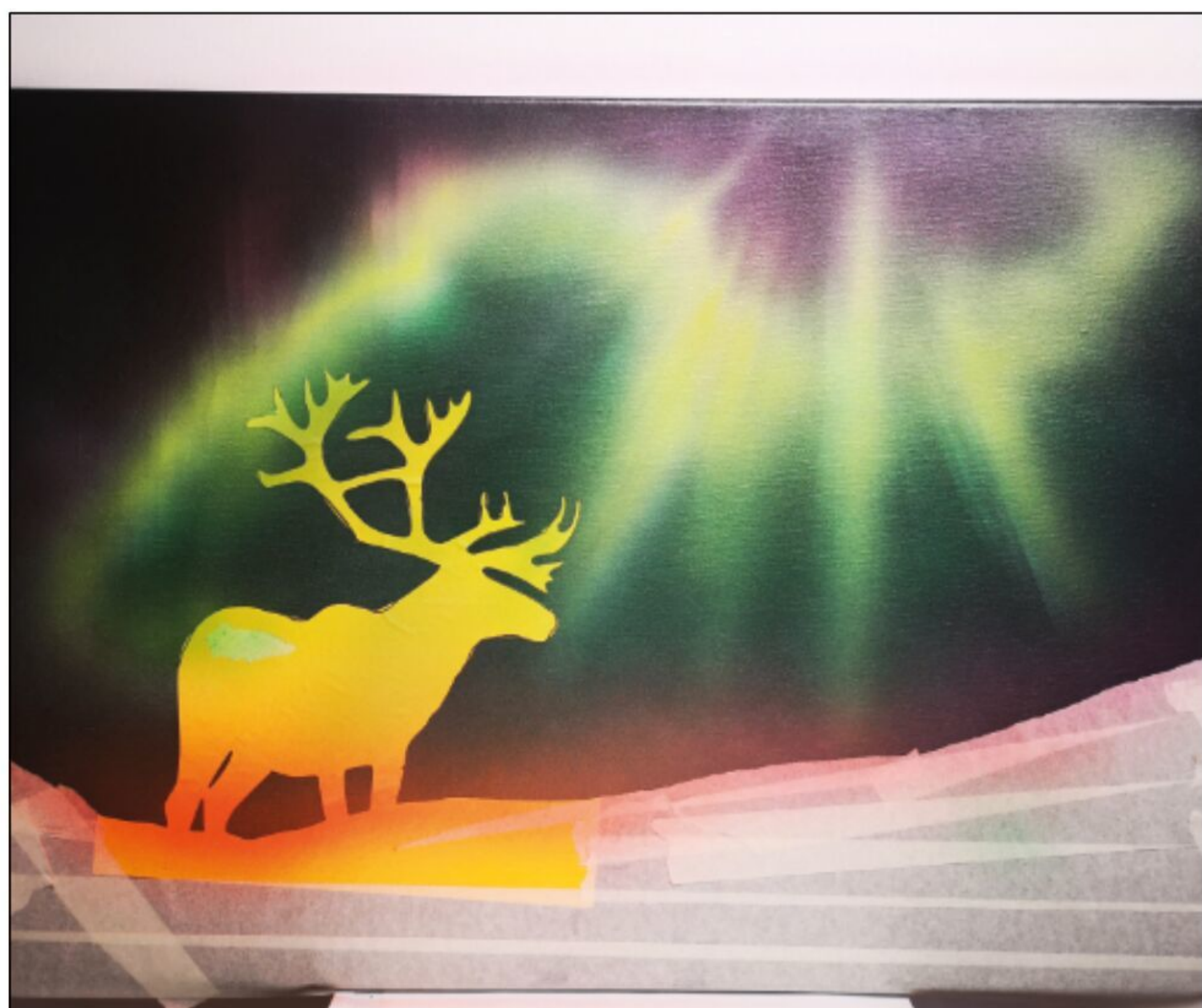
Now I spray Pearl Red onto the upper region of the aurora. You should only use red in spots where the aurora is rather intensive. This is very, very seldom the case.



10 Yellow light

Lime green goes finally in the middle. That'll make it sparkling. Remember to go over your color transitions very

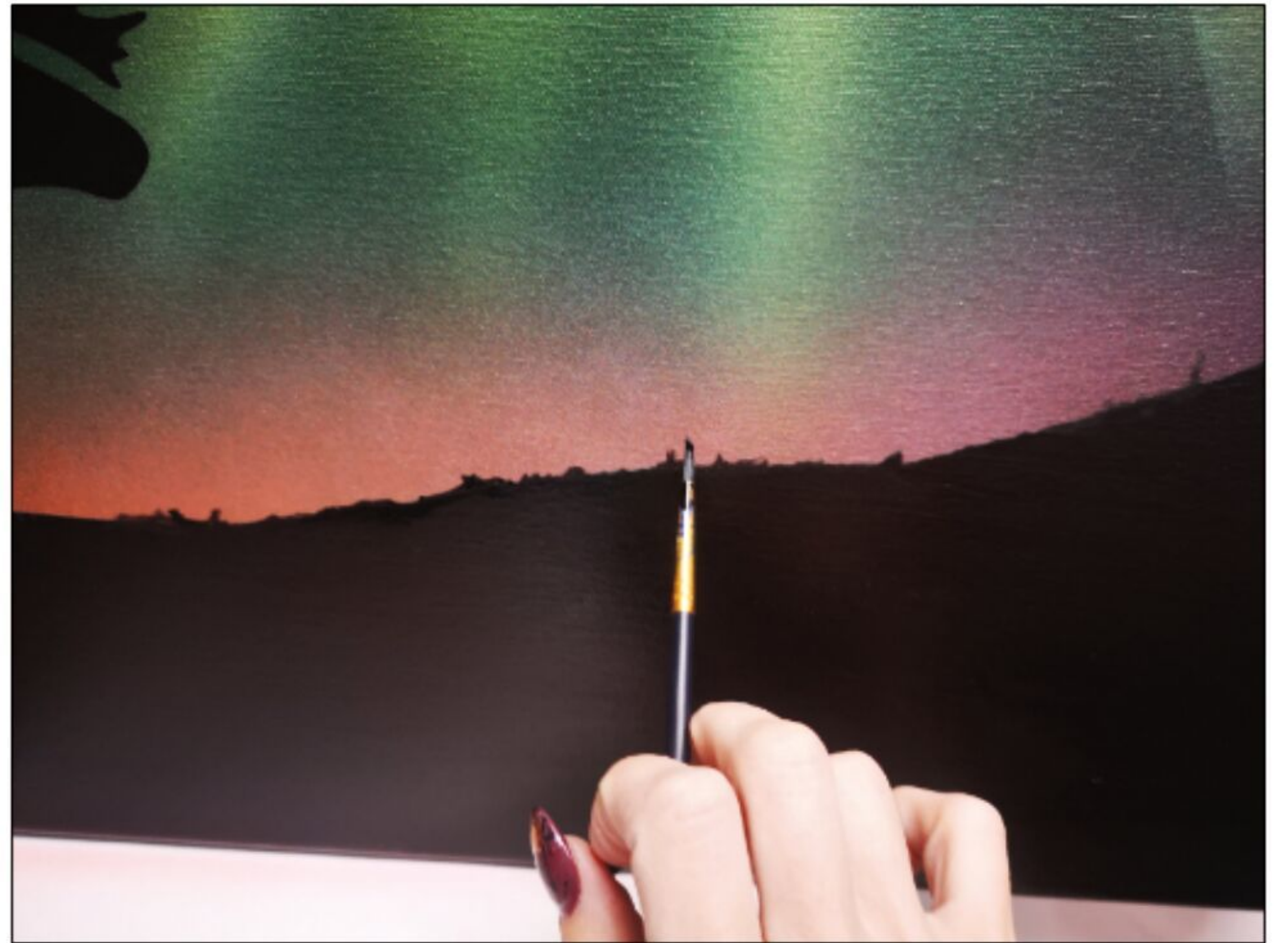
carefully so that the color effect and dynamic are brought out well.



11 Vegetation

You can now remove the stencil. To make the mountain slope appear a bit more realistic, I take a small paintbrush

and add a bit of vegetation or make the edges a bit more uneven.



12 Finish

We've got our final picture. You now have your fundamental techniques to go about working on your own auro-

ra artwork. Here's hoping you have a lot of fun with it!

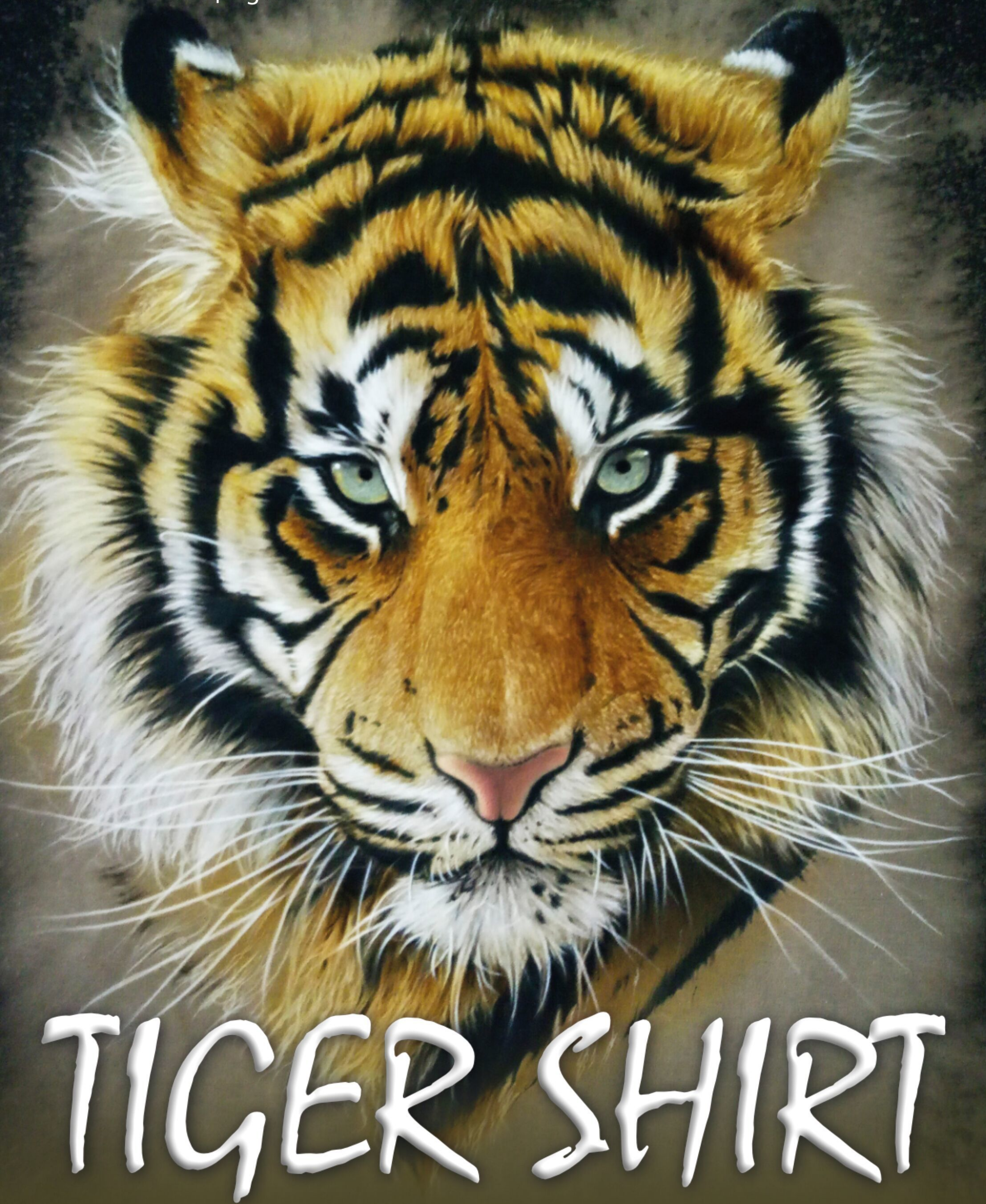


AISTE NAU



The 37-year-old Norwegian started airbrushing only 3 years ago. During the day she is a store manager at a fashion store in Harstad, and at night she pursues her passions: Cars, motorcycles and airbrushing. She mainly paints motorcycle parts and canvases. Before she started airbrushing, she had no experience with art. In the first few months, she watched a lot of YouTube videos and attended a few classes for a while. Through regular painting and experimenting, she began to find herself as an artist.

[Facebook: Aist:Art](#)



TIGER SHIRT

Argentinian airbrush and T-shirt artist Cesar De-ferrari knows all the tricks. Instead of painting a background for his tiger portrait on a black T-

shirt, he establishes a wonderful and simple lightening up effect for his T-shirt color making use of a mixture of chlorines.

EQUIPMENT – TIGER SHIRT**Airbrush:** Badger Renegade Krome, Badger Sotar 20/20**Paints:** Eterna Custom Soft Textile (water-based)**Additional materials:** Artograph Prisma projector, chlorine, pasteboard, projector, white carbon paper, atomizer**01 Discoloration of the black T-shirt**

When I paint a realistic tiger on a black T-shirt, I like to use a texture for the background that is created by discoloring the T-shirt. This gives the design an artistic effect and saves me from needing to do a white subsurface in the first few steps due to how the area I'm going to paint in is lightened up.

This is what the technique is about: I place 70% chlorine and 30% water into a atomizer. These proportions can vary depending on the quality of the chlorine. That's why you'll need to do a few tests in advance. I place the T-shirt onto a wooden surface in order to spray it with the chlorine-water mixture. I then begin to spray the middle portion of the T-shirt while the T-shirt is stretched out. The atomizer has two positions, one for atomizing and one with the spray jet. We first use the atomizing function for the midsection and then the spray position for the surrounding parts, above and below, right and left. I let this mixture sink in for 10 minutes and then wash it out with water and soap to stop the bleaching process and to prevent the material from ripping. You have to wash it really well to ensure that no chlorine remains on the piece of clothing.

I then trace the picture onto the T-shirt. In my special case, I like to project the design onto the white pasteboard and draw it with white carbon paper onto the T-shirt. In this way, I'll be able to put more clarity into the details. The more detailed the drawing is, the more precise the final result will be.

**02 The basic color of the eyes**

I begin by mixing the paints I'll be using to paint the eye and prepare two greenish gray hues. The first color consists of 20 drops of white, three drops of green, and one drop of black. With this mixture, I create the foundation of the iris in both eyes.



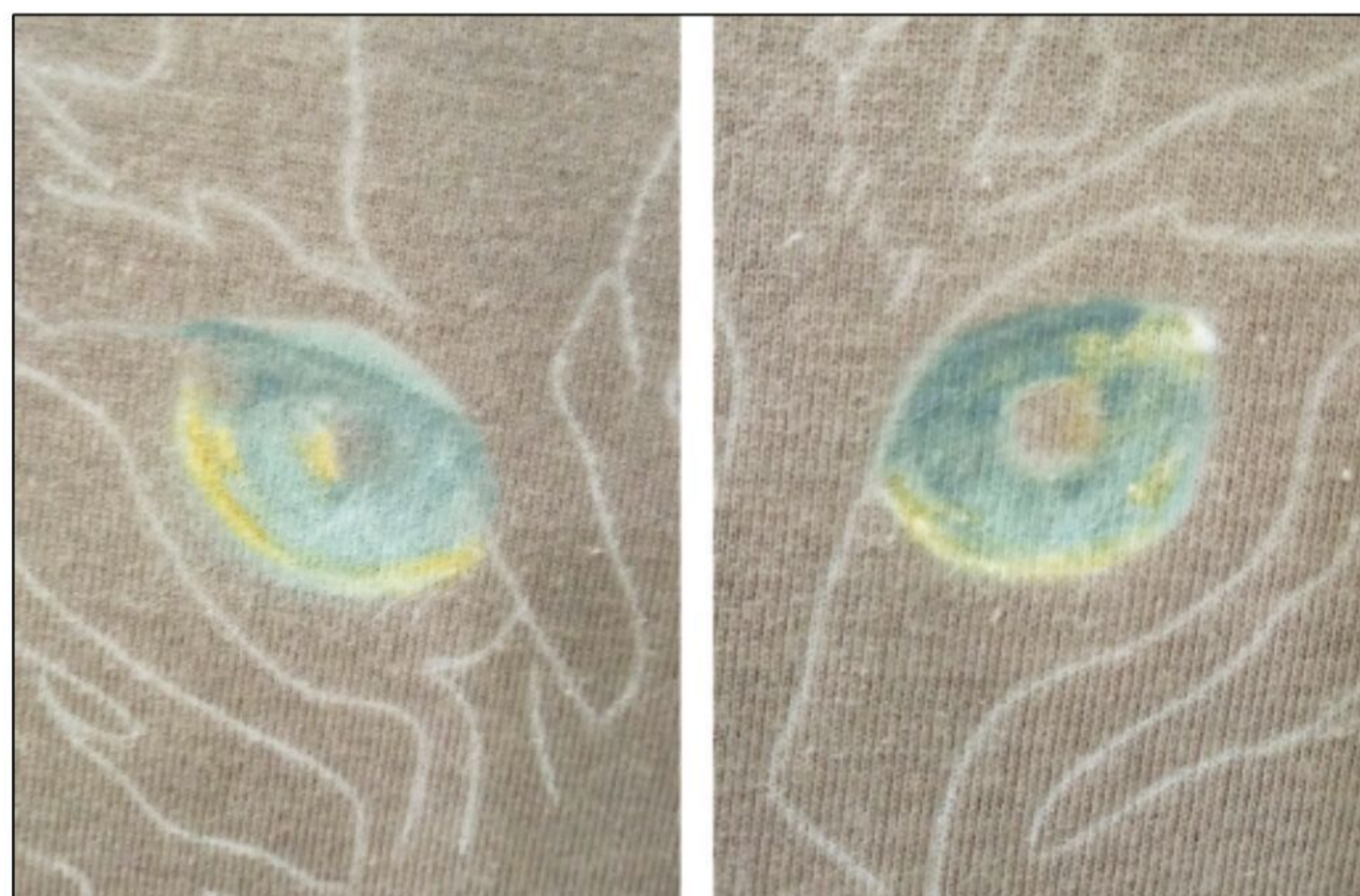
03 Dark yellow

I then prepare a new mixture in another airbrush because I'm going to want to use the previous mixture again at a later juncture of the work. Dark yellow is the color that I want to use now for the lower portion of the iris in both eyes.



04 Darkening up the eyes

I once again take the previously color, the gray green mixture, and add two drops of green to what's left over. I then paint the upper portion of the eye with a color gradient heading downwards.



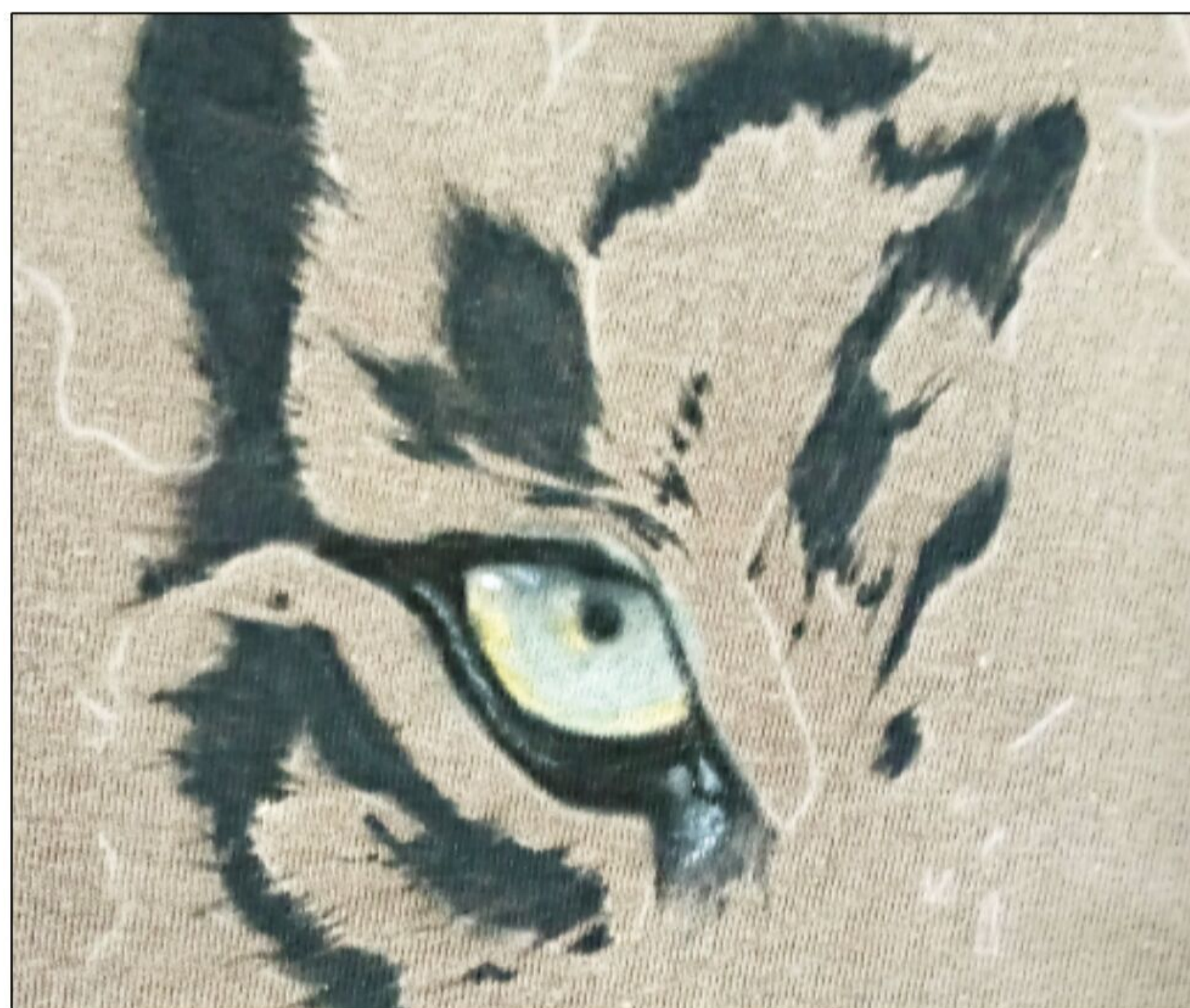
05 Pupils and shadows

In this step, I prepare a dark gray that I'm going to apply all around the eye. My mixture is 20 drops of black to two drops of white. I also paint the pupils and add a light shadow above the iris, which is a bit more intense on the right side, since the light is coming from the left. I also add a few small highlights with a light gray color so that this portion of the picture is just about finished. I then paint over this entire dark gray area with a layer of transparent black.



06 Dark fur pattern

Using the same gray, I paint the tiger's spots that are located around the eye. At this juncture, I use gray as opposed to black to achieve a better level of nuance in the final details. If I would use black here, it would turn out too flat.



07 Light fur pattern

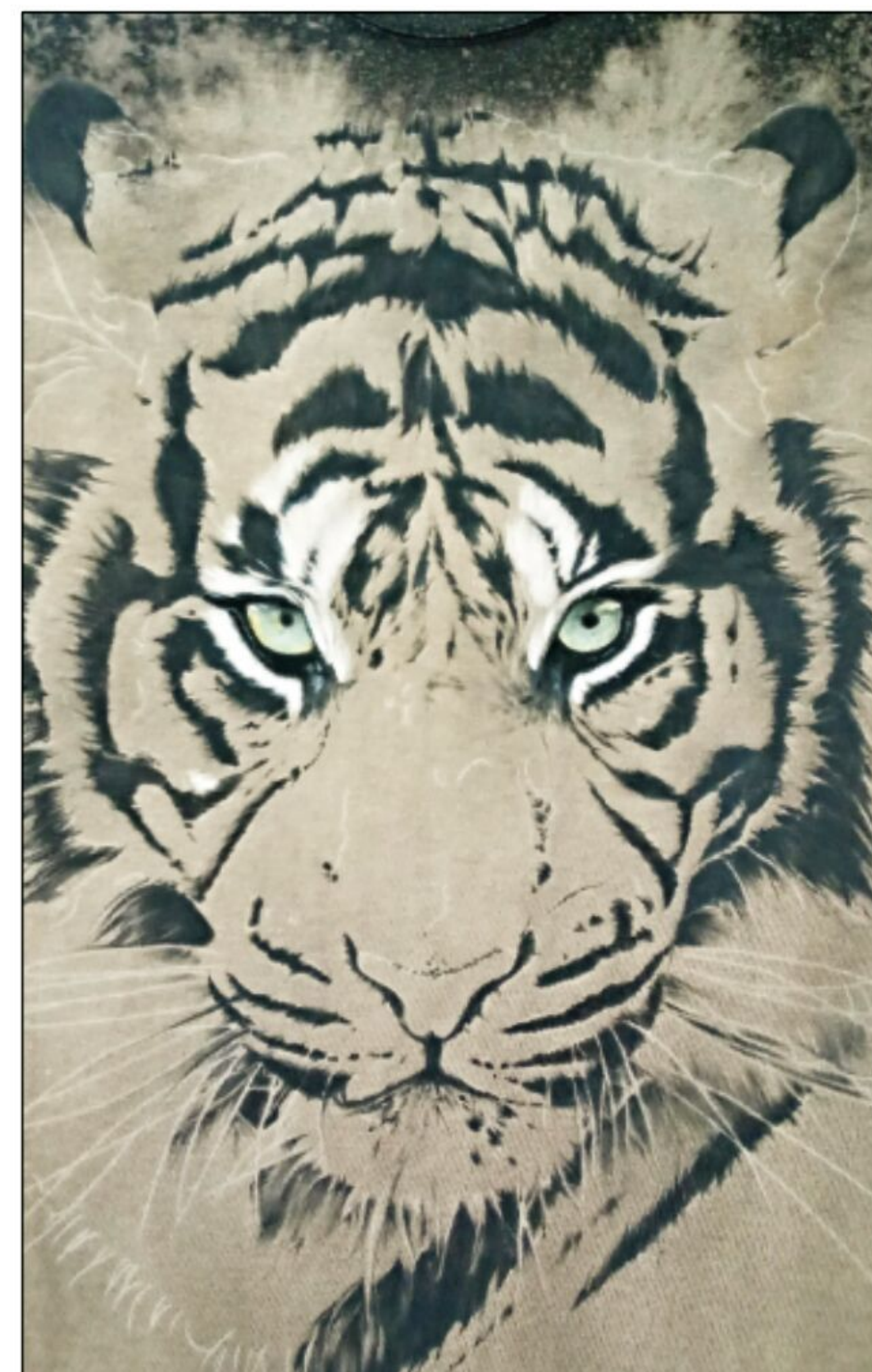
Now I begin to put in the white all around the eye. It is particularly important here that you constantly keep an eye on the fur's direction of growth. Thus, I add in thin lines in the correct direction of growth. All lines end in a point.



08 Continuing the dark fur pattern

I continue using this gray on the rest of the head. Make sure you keep observing the direction of the lines, which are decisive for the final result. Like a gray map, I have

taken the fur pattern from the throat to the ears as a basis, thus the tiger is well charted, so to speak.

**09** Paint primer

Now it's time to give the tiger its color. For this, I use Raw Siena and give it a flat priming without all that many details. In this picture, you can see the entire tiger with the Raw Siena priming. Please denote that the paint is a little more replete in some areas i.e. under the eyes, at the top, and on the sides of the snout.

10 Darker shadows

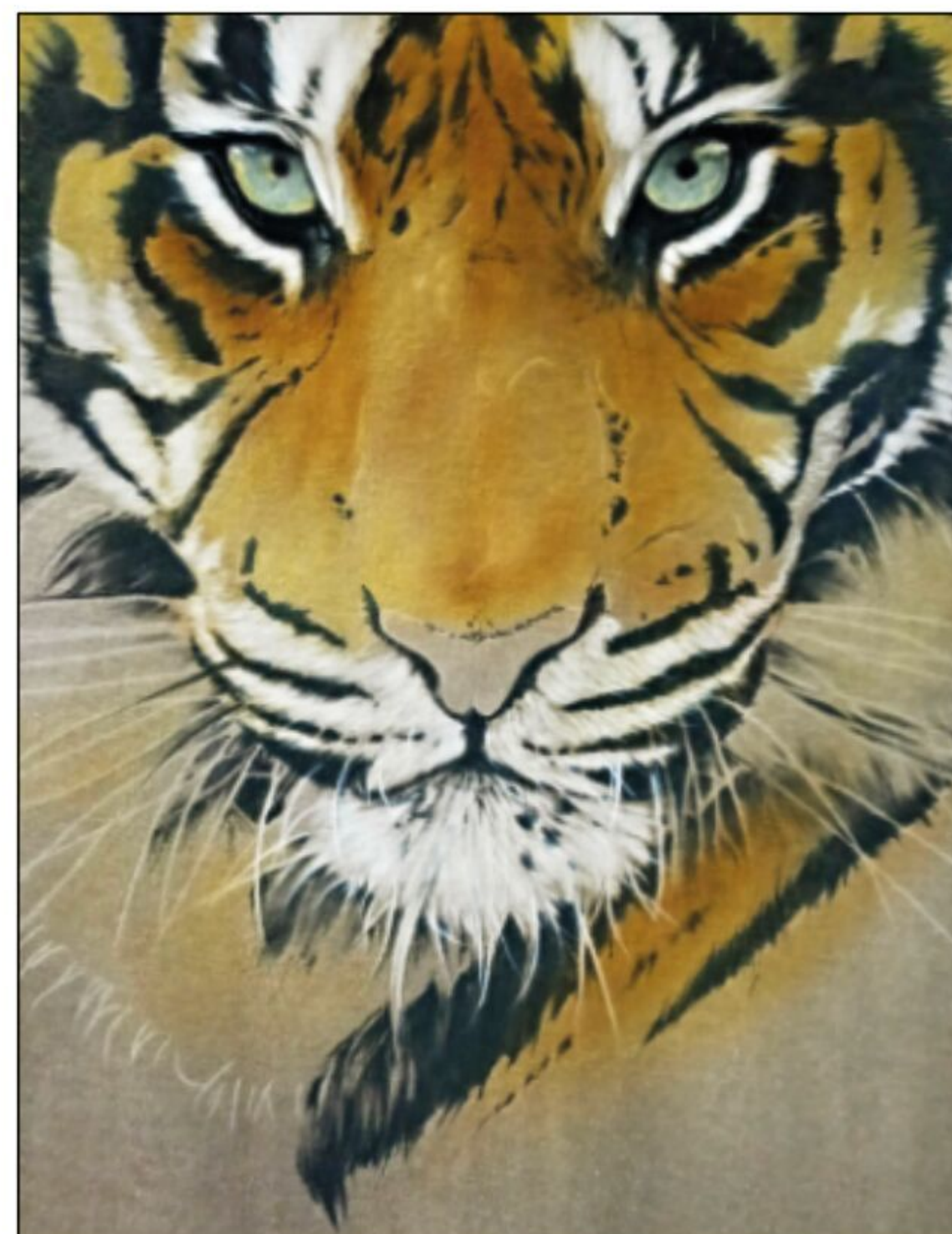
I now exchange the paint in the airbrush with a darker color hue. I use Burnt Siena and deepen the darkest shadows, always within the painted area and always without adding anymore details.



11 Continuing with the light fur pattern

In this step, I begin making the sides of the face white. Here too, I work in the same direction that I've started going in with the gray of the spots. Continuing on with the

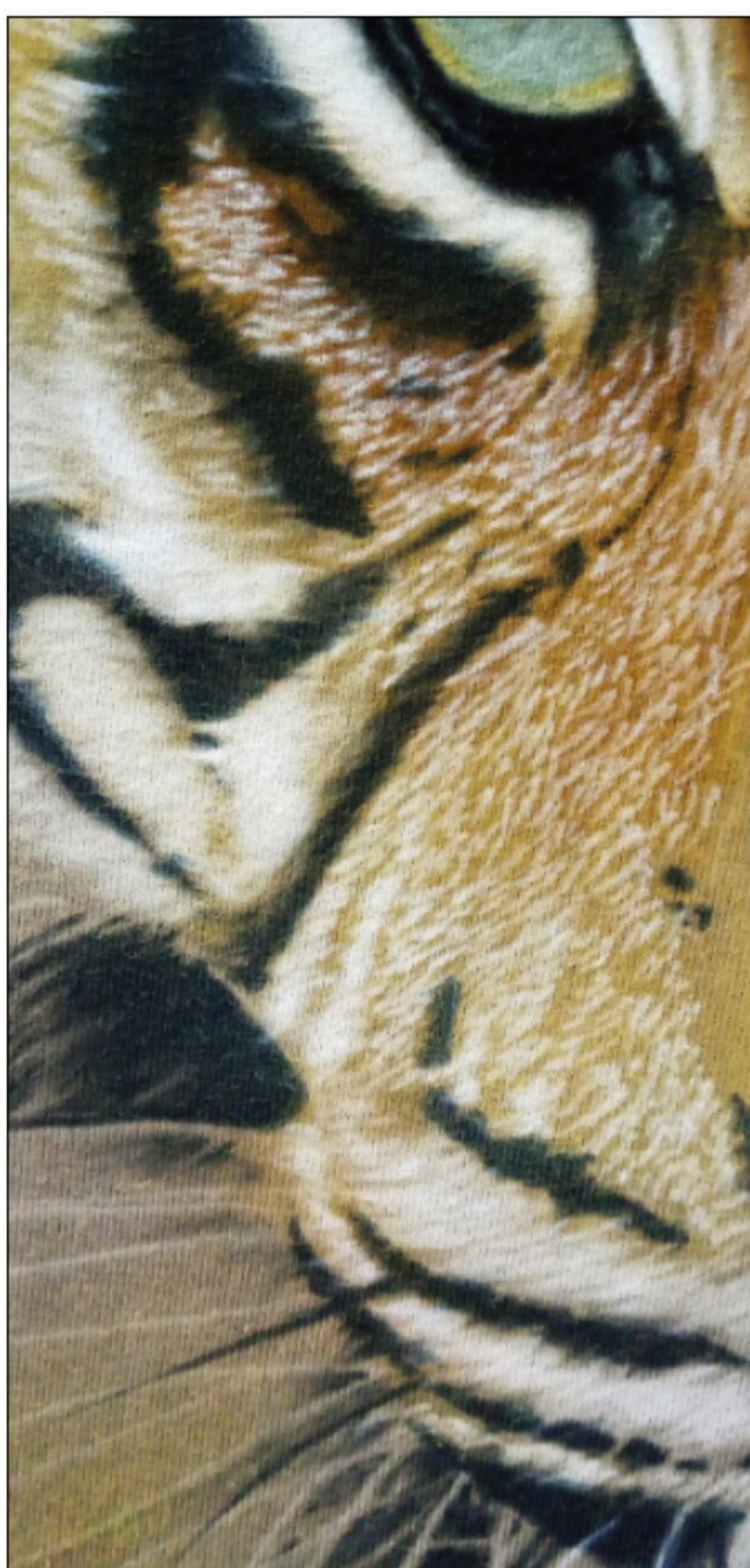
white, you can see how the whole head is being completed. On the tiger's snout as well as on the chin, we can see the growth of longer hair and small whiskers.



12 Short hair

Next, I begin with the details, hair strand for hair strand. Using white, I begin painting over the brown base, spraying on very thin and short lines. I do it like this, because the hair in this portion of the face is noticeably short. For this part, I make use of the Badger Sotar 20/20 airbrush. The hair

is longer on the upper portion of the head. It's important to watch out for these differences if you really want to end up with a very convincing result. I decorate almost the entire face with this hair-for-hair technique.



13 Longer hair

The hair on the sides of the face is much longer. But when working in this area, you've got to make sure that the hair isn't too long – an error that is often made. That's why I make zig zag lines to somewhat interrupt the same direction just a little bit. The ends are sharp with some pointing upwards so that not all of them will be pointed in the same direction.



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14 Details are complete

Now all of the white details of the hair-by-hair structure are complete. From the short fine lines for the snout to the somewhat longer lines on the upper side of the head and

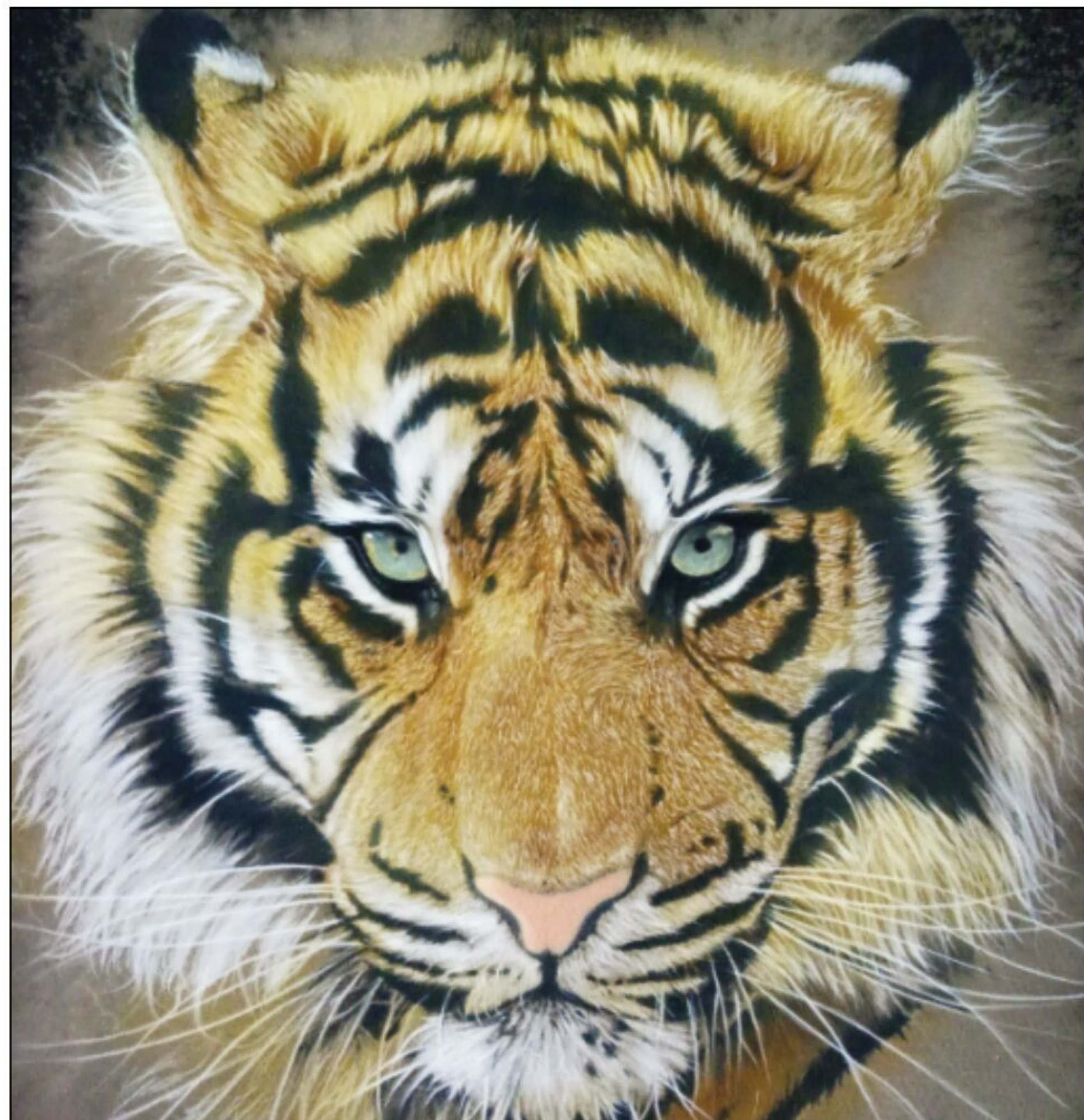
right on up to the even longer hair on the sides of the face and those growing out of the ears.



15 Transparent paint

I've once again placed Raw Sienna into my Badger Renegade Krome airbrush and diluted it about 50% with transparent base to achieve a good level of transparency and not to repeat the texture of the hair in a strictly uniform man-

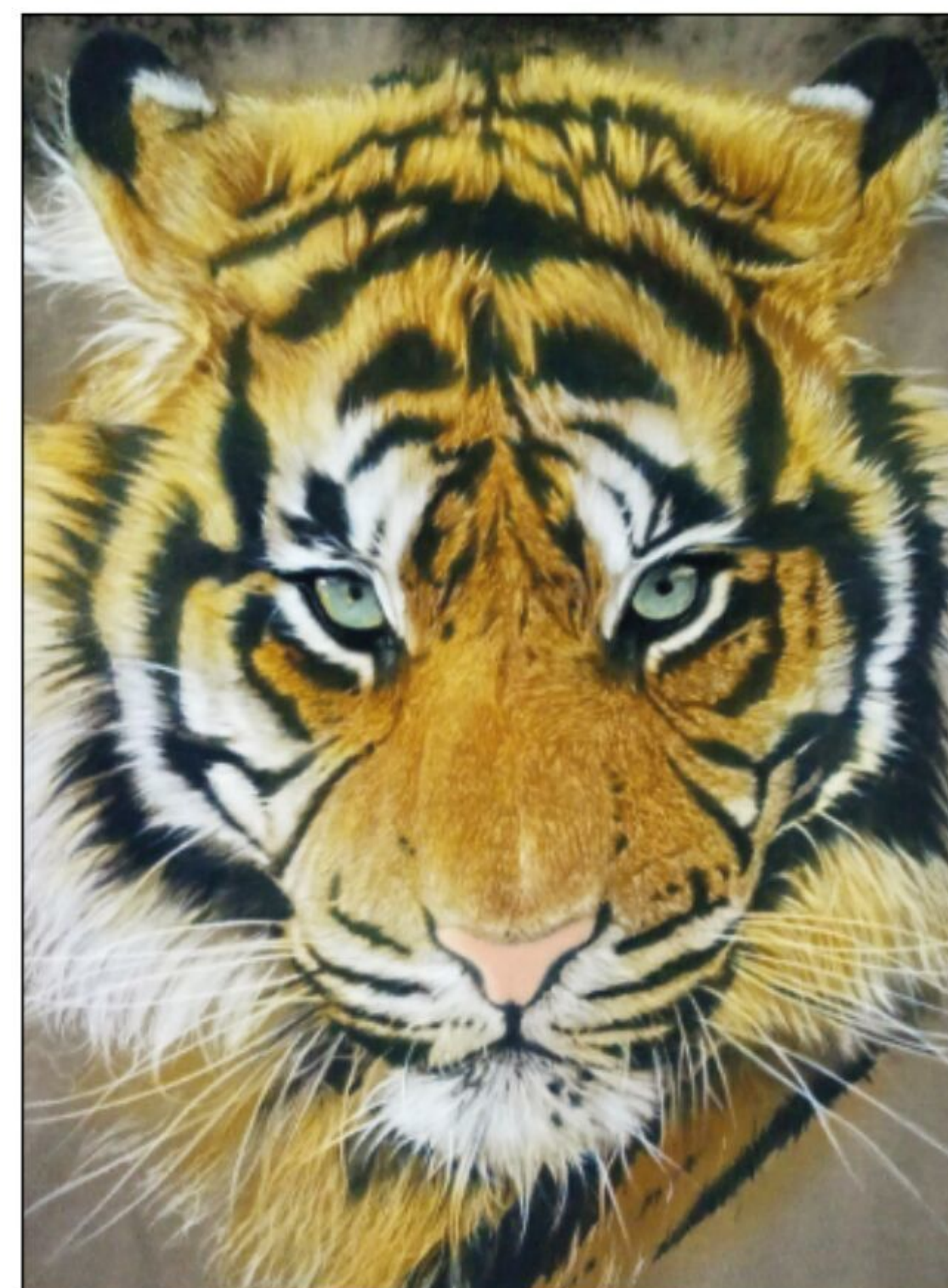
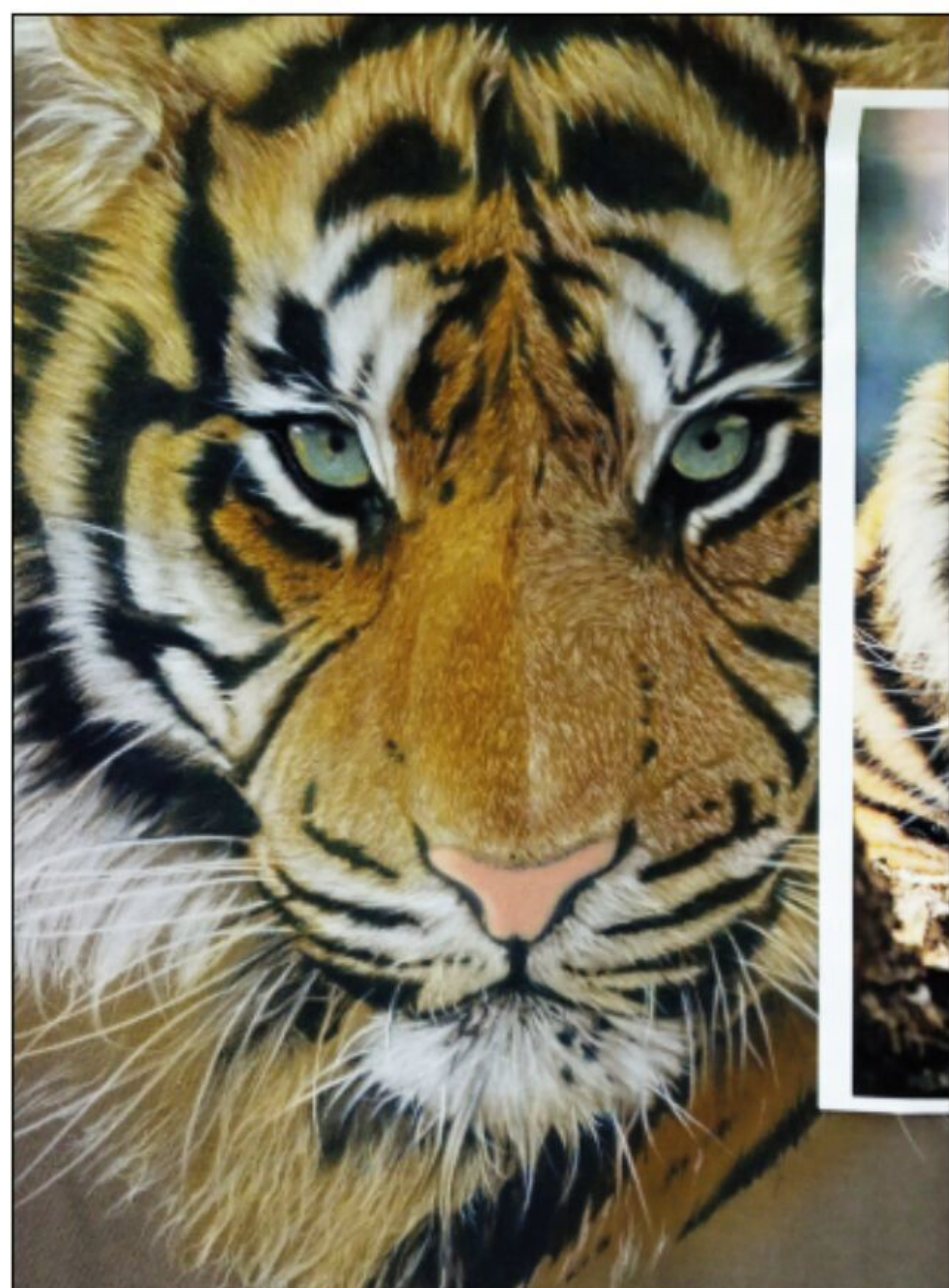
ner. For the nose, I also use a mixture of 20 drops of white, five drops of red, five drops Raw Siena, and two drops of yellow, which I apply evenly and lavishly to cover the entire tip of the nose.



16 Volume

In this step, I start to increase the volume with Burnt Siena by adding in texture one hair strand at a time. Here I've painted in half of the snout and the area below the eye to accentuate the difference. I initially work moving upwards on the left side of the head and under the eye on the right side, always with the same paint. I've then completed the first layer with Burnt Siena. Since I've been using a transparent

paint, the color gets darker over the course of several layers. I deepen shadows on the right side and follow the direction of the hair's growth. It's important to draw as many details as possible because we're not in the final phase of the work. Now all of the areas are touched up and completed with Burnt Siena and softly placed on the upper side of the head as well as under the snout.



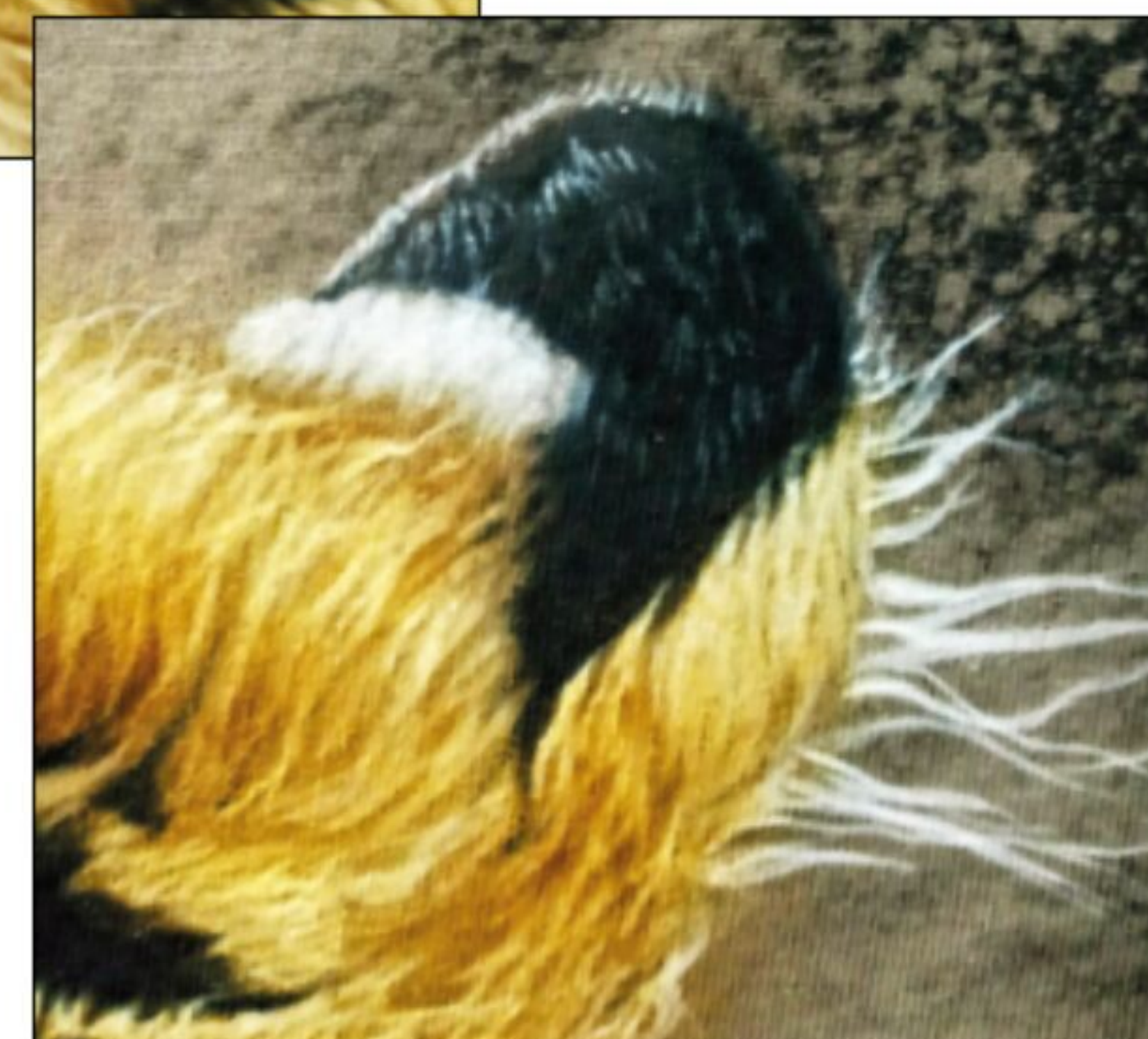
17 Increasing the sharpness and contrast

It's time to increase the poignancy of the picture. Using transparent black, I start going over all of the tiger's spots. Keep an eye on the difference in the left portion of the picture. The contrast is more present, and we achieve a better level of definition. As a sign of the sharpness and intensity seen in our tiger, I've added shadows to the segments of hair on the sides of the face. I achieve a gray hue for the whole of this by using the same transparent black.



18 The ears

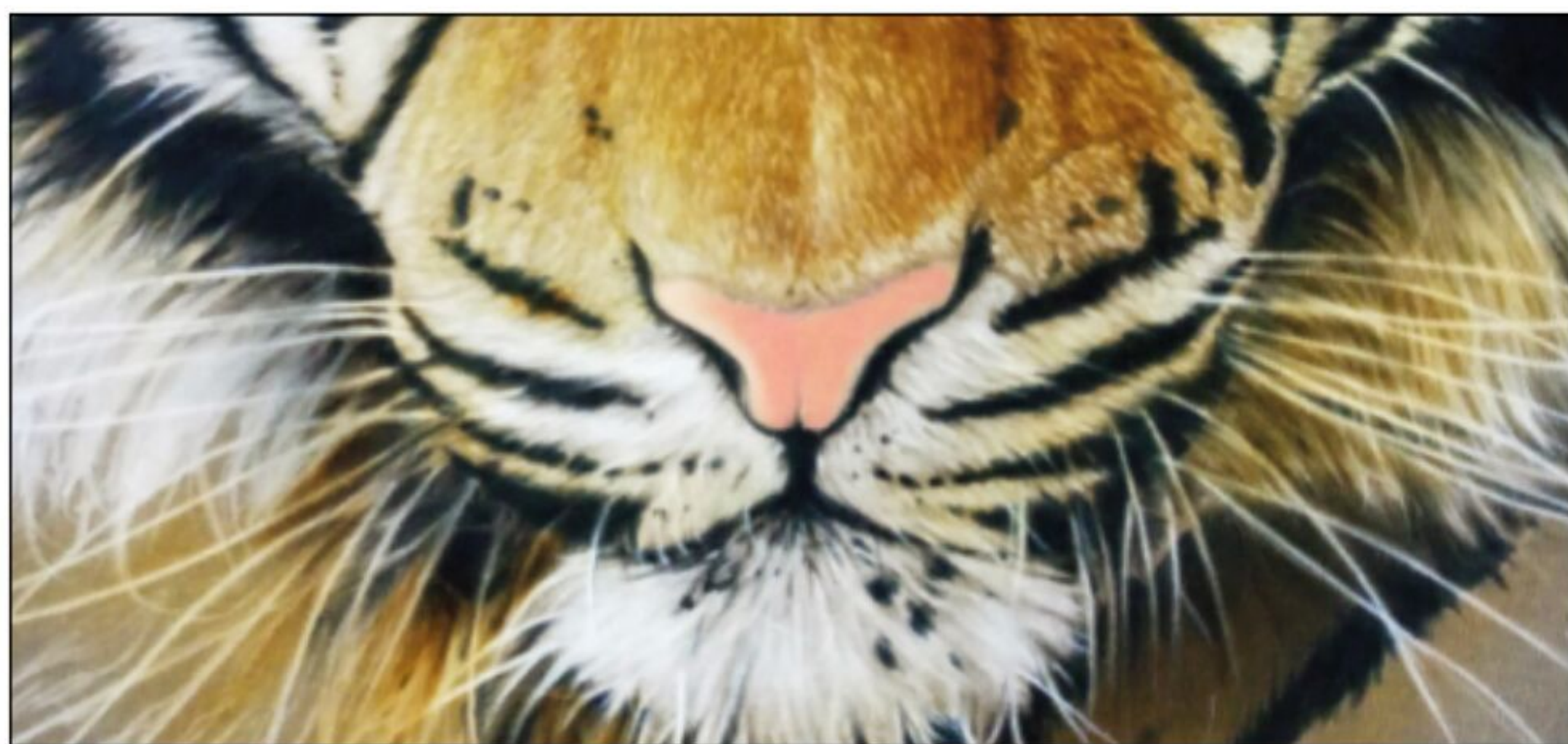
I now use white to add details to the ears with a few very minute hair details onto the upper side of each ear and then sprinkle it with a very little amount of transparent black to make it more realistic.



19 The nose

I add a bit of shade to the nose. I begin by putting some light on the left side using white. For the shadows on the nose, I make use of two drops of Burnt Siena, one drop of

violet, two drops of black and two drops of a transparent base, making use of more shade in a soft and subtle manner in the middle of the nose.



20 Finished

To conclude, I add in some final details such as highlights in the eyes and as part of the whiskers to enhance the realistic appearance of the tiger on the T-shirt.

CESAR DEFERRARI



Cesar Deferrari was born in Argentina in 1970. In 1994, he began his art studies at the Instituto Mitre in Buenos Aires, majoring in drawing. He eventually dedicated himself to airbrushing. In various courses, he learned how to work per freehand and with the masking tape technique. During this time, he also improved his illustrating and cartoon skills at X-Arte, where he would later discover the airbrush. He specializes in T-shirts and cartoon figures. Cesar Deferrari is now also a teacher throughout South America as well as online and has also been to Spain as a visiting lecturer.

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Billie Eilish

Billie Eilish is indeed very lively and colorful, and so too is her portrait design that Spanish artist Arturo Verano has brought to life on the skim board. He combined the realistic portrait of the singer with comic elements and gaudy colors.

EQUIPMENT – Billie Eilish

Airbrush: Iwata

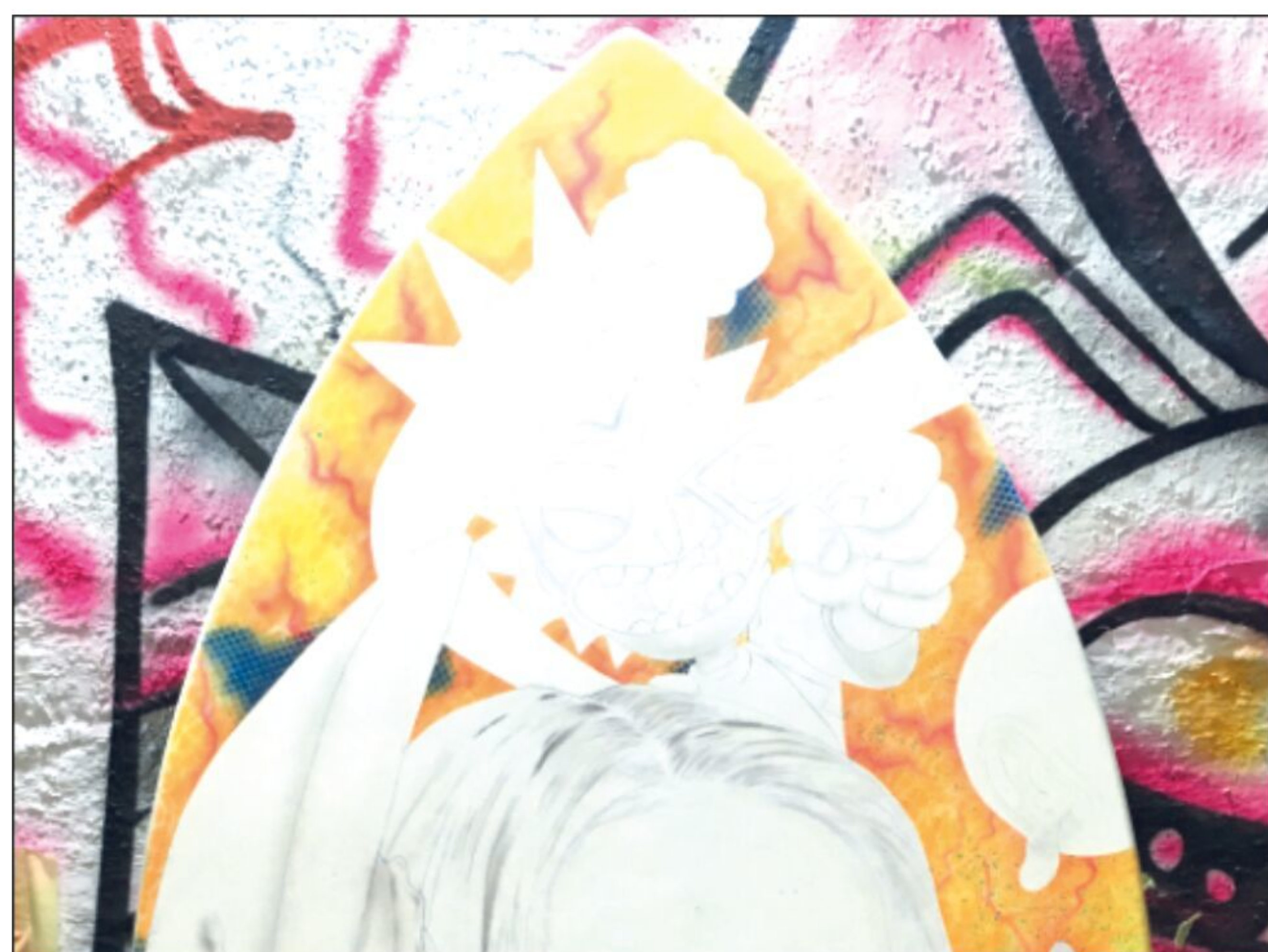
Paints: Custom Creative Colors

Additional materials: Eraser pencil, marker, colored pencils, tape, knife

Surface: Skim board

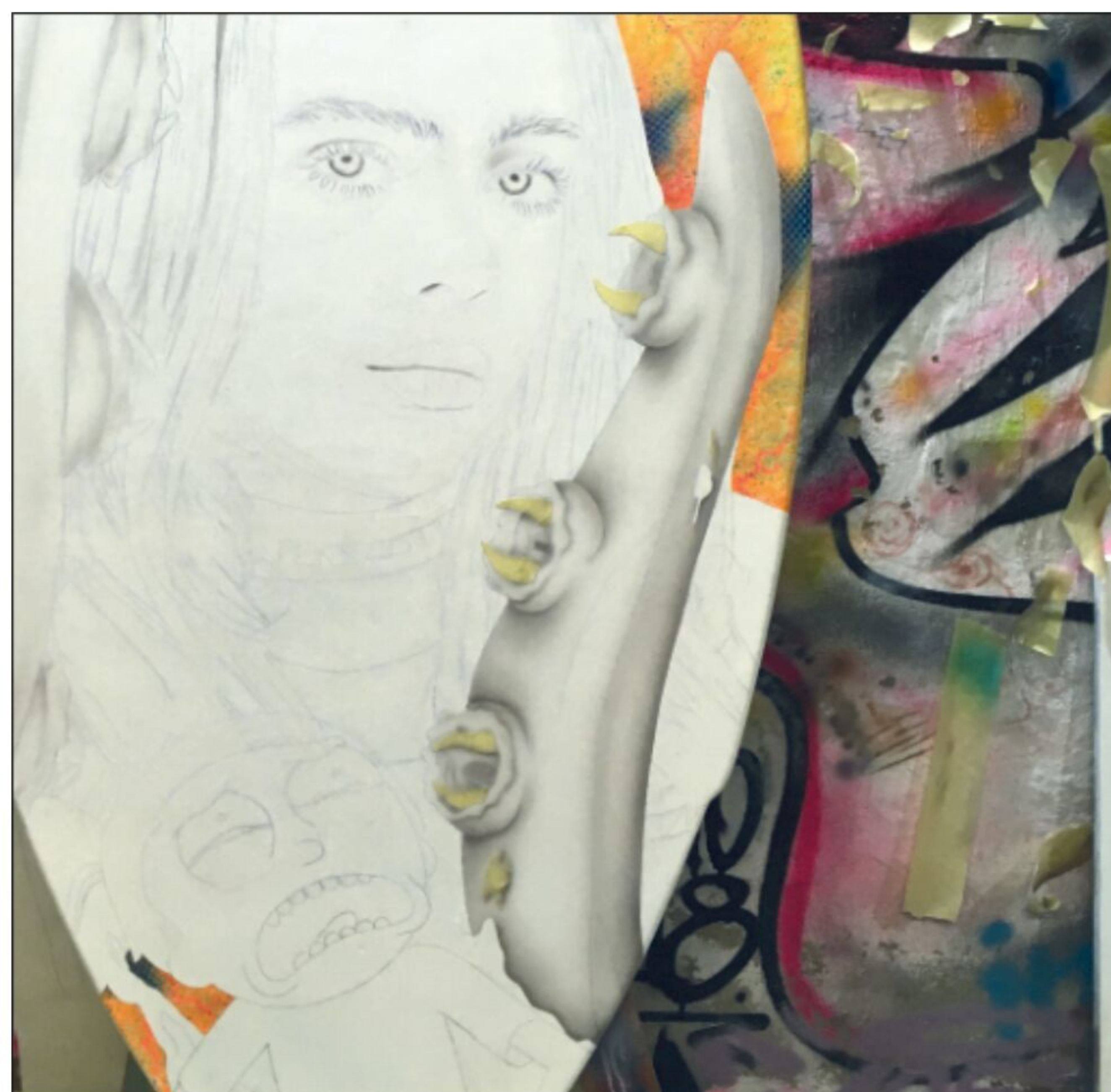
01 Background

After tracing my design onto the skim board, I fill up the background with orange-colored textures. I add in some pink, lightning-like lines as well as small shapes in a dark bluish-purple hue. I spray this on through a stencil full of dots. To round up the texture, I add some fine sprinkles. I add the texture onto the entire surface, where there are no characters or objects. Here you can see a small piece of the background in i.e. the lower region.



02 The tentacle's shadows

I now add some initial gray shadowing to the perpendicular tentacle and with that, define its shape and volume. I'm now establishing the suckers a bit more. I've masked up the small, barbed hooks at this point.



03 One crazy character

At this point, I start working on the first character, who shows up at the top behind Billie Eilish. Before starting to paint, I've taped up the area bordering the Billie Eilish portrait to ensure sharp edges and to avoid overspray. I first draw and add shadow to the character using gray to define shapes and structures. I then color in the individual areas in their respective colors. Since we're dealing with a comic character, I don't need to concern myself too much with skin and fabric textures. Just, when it comes to the hair, I have to keep an eye on the direction of growth to help me create the crazy hairstyle. Here I add various light and dark blue hues to establish contrasts and structure. I created the lettering on the sleeves partially with the airbrush, partially with markers. To conclude, I use white to add in some highlights to the elevated areas such as the nose, on the chin, and under the eyes.



04 Purple monster

In this step, I create the small purple monster that is located on the right edge of the board and thus, only partially recognizable. For this, I once again create a round shape via gray shading and define a kind of open mouth with a tongue sticking out. Using white, I spray in the highlights and a sug-

gested pattern on the round shape. The “lips” and tongue are given a lightly splotchy texture. I design the “mouth cavity” with green shading, as the creature will later be hit by the green beam of light from the character’s lamp.



05 Further establishing the right tentacle

I now continue with working on the tentacle located on the side. I tape up the contour such that the surface that will need to be filled up is well marked and no overspray can make itself outside of the selected area. I begin filling in the surface with thin layers of a pink color hue. Bit by bit, I intensify the color and constantly keep an eye on the shaping

and styling, that is, I color the margins in a darker manner while leaving a lighter area of light in the middle. Using black, I better establish and enhance the shadows once again and touch up the drawing and structure of the suckers. In the periphery area, you can see that I’ve taped up various areas and cut them out to create the realistic shapes.



06 Left tentacle

I go about designing the left tentacle in exactly the same manner. I also give it some green slimy spots on its surface. I've also demasked the barbed hooks in this step and added in some details.



07 Louis Vuitton character

My next step leads me to the lower section of the board to create the lower character with the Louis Vuitton shirt. I proceed here in the same manner as I did with the figure above, first working on the base gray shading, then ap-

plying the colors, and ultimately adding in shadowy details and highlights. I attach tape to sharp edges and cut out the respective shapes. For the T-shirt pattern, I've prepared the stencil that I can just place on the surface and then mist it up with the various paints.



08 Masking up Billie Eilish

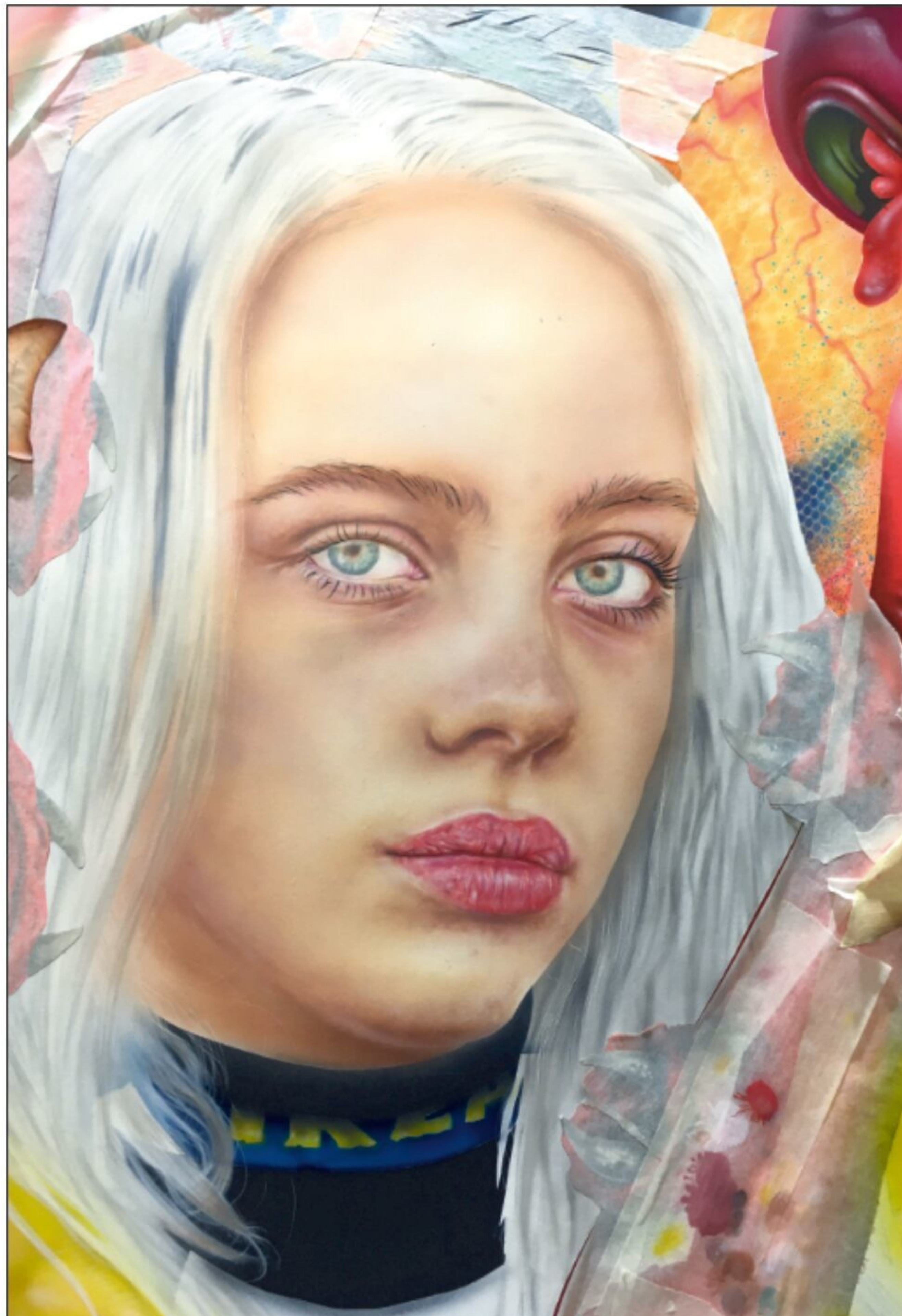
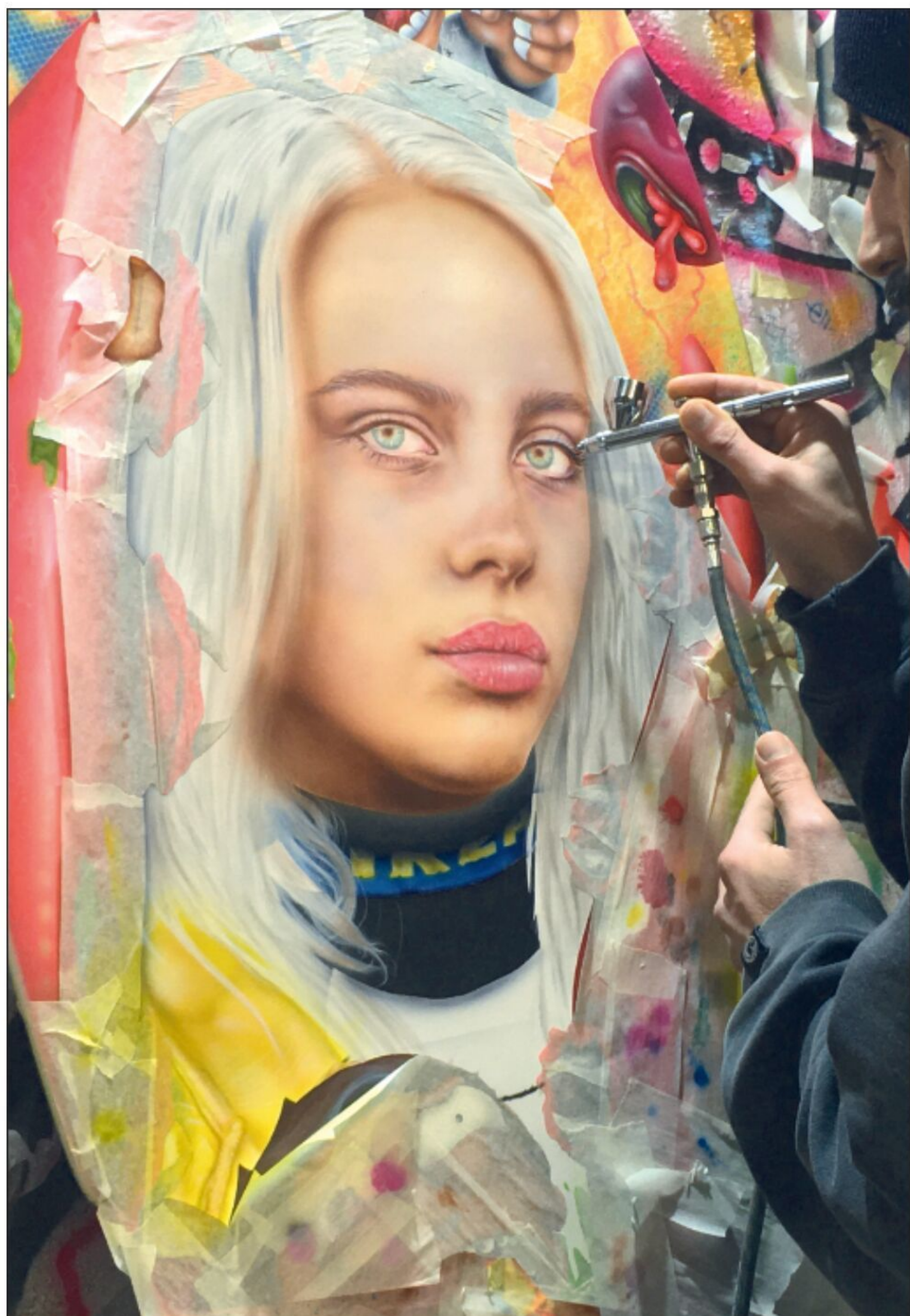
Once I've completed all of the auxiliary elements, I move on to the last and most important element, namely the realistic portrait at the center of the board. For this, I mask up all of the areas that I've already painted in order to avoid overspray and define the edges. I then do a bit of sketching using a dab of yellow and gray to establish some of the initial areas of Billie Eilish's clothing.



09 Face

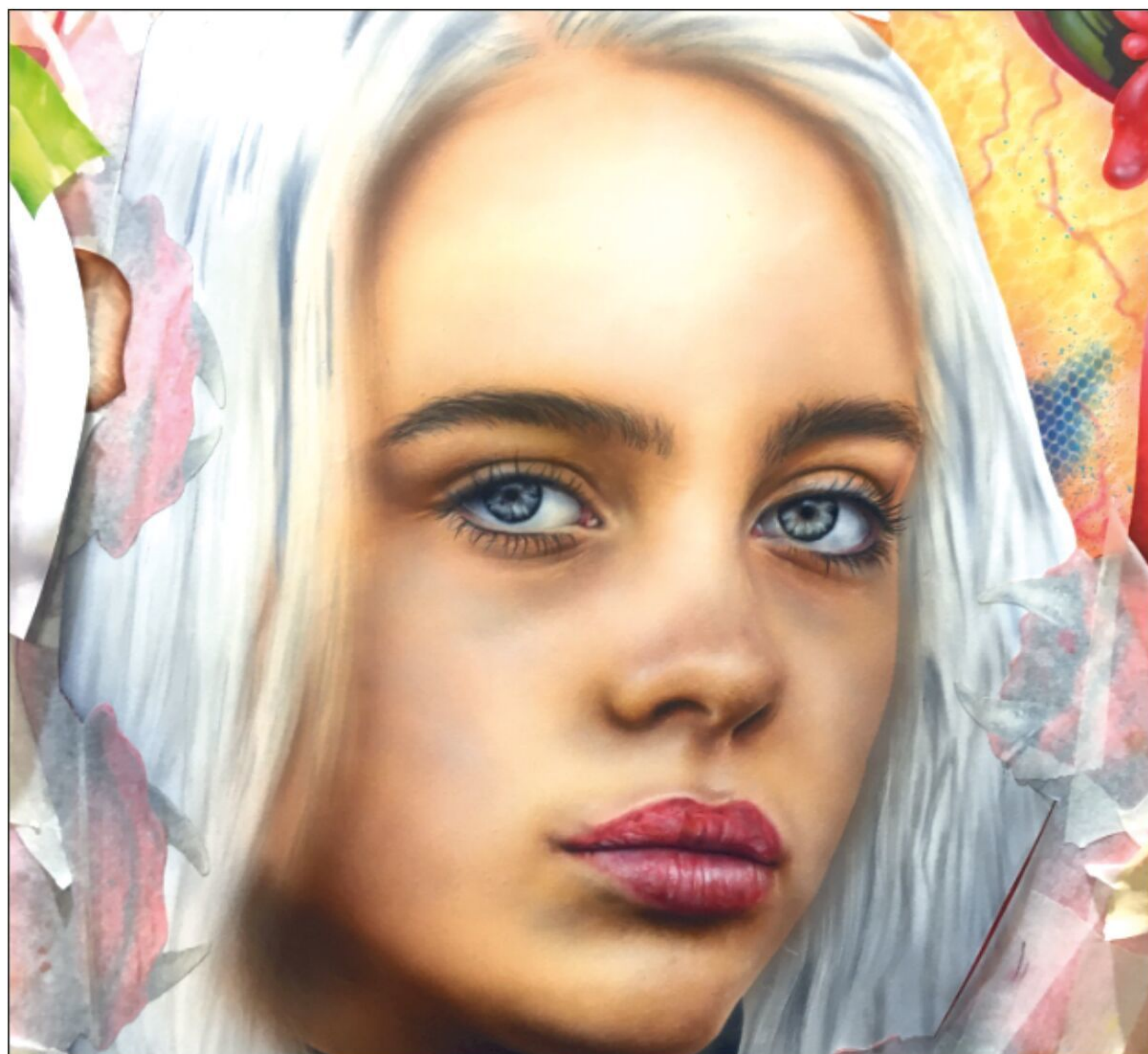
I begin by using a very soft skin color from Custom Creative to mark all of the face's regions, characteristics, and shadows. I then deepen the darker shadows around the hairline, on the throat, on the chin, under the lips, and around

the eyes. Bit by bit, this is how I establish contrasts and shapes. I color the lips in a pinkish red, which I also mildly add to the region of the eyes. Using an eraser pencil and lead pencils, I draw structure into the lips, around the eyes, the eyebrows, on the chin, and on the nose.



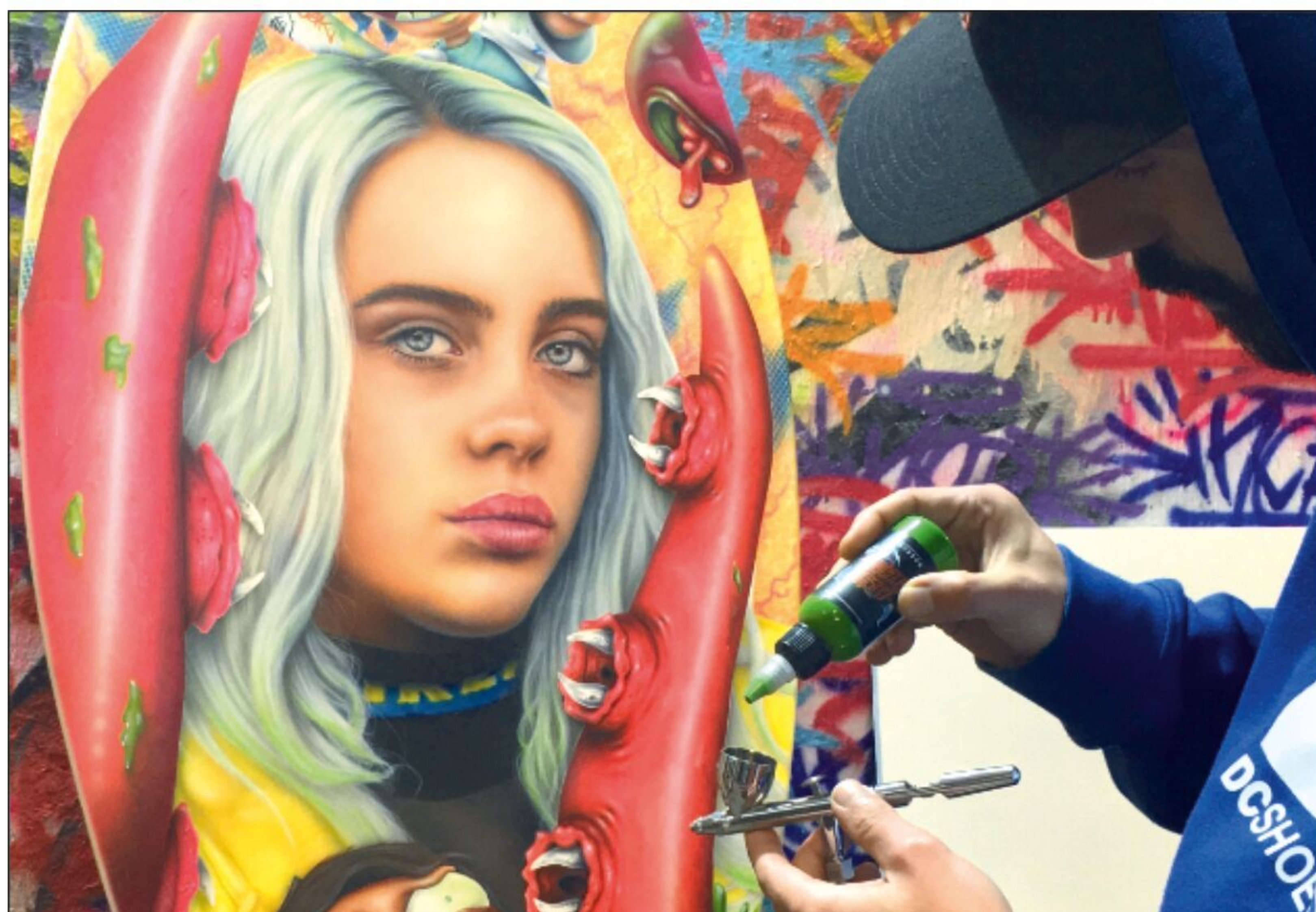
10 Creating contrasts and details

Using black, I deepen the contrasts, especially along the eyebrows and eyelashes, but also on the darkest shadowy areas such as the throat, under the lower lip, and the nostrils. Using a weak gray, I've also used this step to add in initial strands of hair.



11 Green light reflexes

It's now time to use stronger contrasts and structures to establish the hair and, overall, to add in portrait highlights. The only thing I'm missing now is the overarching green shine of light that connects the entire picture. The source of light, namely the lamp in the hand of the crazy character, is something I don't paint until the very end, but I do use this opportunity to add in green highlights all over the picture, namely into Billie Eilish's hair, onto the two smaller characters, on the small purple monster and the tentacles. This all combines to establish a unified and powerful impression.



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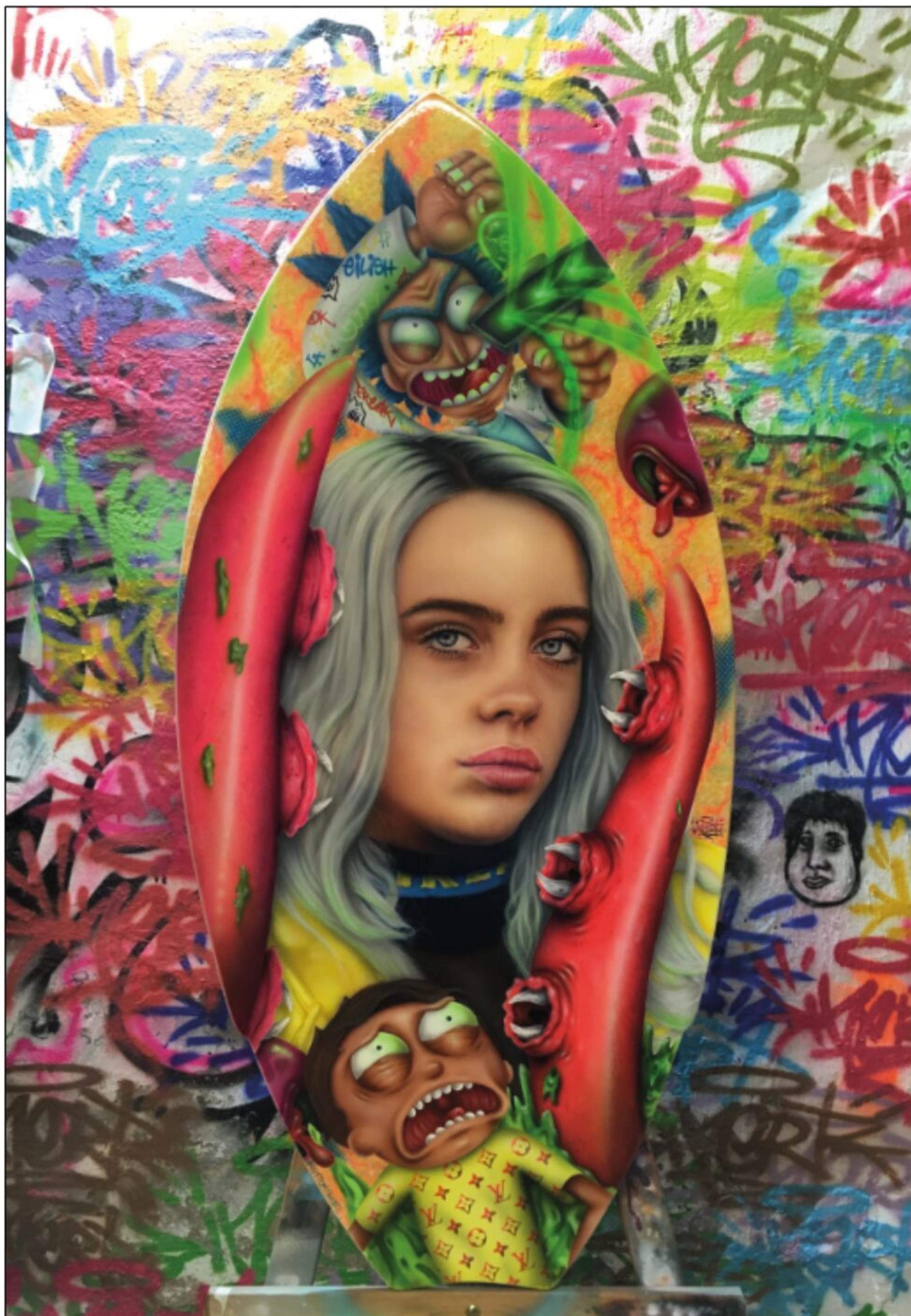
12 Green beams of light

I now establish the green beams of light coming out of the pistol, which is responsible for the holistic glimmer of light. I paint it in comic style, sharply defined.



13 Finished board

Ah, the Billie Eilish skim board is now finished. I hope you've enjoyed my work and I hope you'll take some time to visit my Instagram account @custominert, where you can see more of the work I've done.



ARTURO VERANO



Spanish artist Arturo Verano comes from Lueca, Asturias, Spain, and works professionally as an airbrush artist. His works can be found on a number of various surfaces. One of his true specialties is creating airbrush art on surfboards and skateboards. The motifs he's most commonly contracted to create usually consist of portraits of celebrities and TV characters. His work has already been on display in i.e. Hard Rock Cafe Madrid, and he's done live work together with other artist for companies like Harley Davidson and Indian. In addition, he's cooperating closely with the Spanish Ministry of Education in creating an airbrush teaching manual.

- ➔ Instagram: @custominert
- ➔ Facebook: Custom Inert All (Arturo Verano)



Orlando Airbrush Business

Pat Gaines' T-Shirt empire between Disney, beach and supermarket

Airbrush T-shirts are probably the most successful business model for airbrush art - especially in the USA. For over 40 years, American airbrush artist and businessman Pat Gaines has been running the most successful airbrush stores in the world and has been a teacher, role model and career starter for many other airbrush artists. With his My Air-

brush Shops, he sits in the center of American tourism: in the Walmart supermarkets in the heart of the Disney and theme parks of Orlando, Florida. In this conversation with Mexican T-shirt artist Hugo Maciel, Pat talks about his career and shares many useful tips and tricks for aspiring T-shirt artists.

Hugo Maciel: In the airbrush t-shirt business, you are a great role model for many airbrush artists today. How did you get started? Have you also been influenced by legends of the airbrush world in your career?

Pat Gaines: As a child I was brought up around Automobile racing, to be exact, United States style Drag Racing. Hot Rods and Fast Cars were an everyday thing for me growing up. In America in the mid 1950's to Mid 1960's sprang a new art form, the Airbrush T-shirt. In America at that time as a kid,



Tom Davison and Ed „Big Daddy“ Roth, in 1961



Tom Davison airbrushing Weirdo/Monster Shirts with Ed Roths Outlaw Show Car (to the right) in his booth, ca. 1964

you weren't really cool if you didn't have your very own "Monster/Weirdo Shirt" hand airbrushed by one of the early Masters of the airbrush T-shirt like Stanley "Mouse" Miller, the King of Cool Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, Ed "Newt" Newton, Dean "the Modern Painter" Jeffries, or The Great Tom Davison.

One weekend in the mid 1960's I was at Indianapolis Race Way Park for the National Hot Rod Association's Summer Nationals Drag Race. My family was competing at this event. After seeing the airbrush stand I just had to get my own Hot Rod Monster/Weirdo Shirt. I went to the stand and showed the young slender airbrush artist a photo of my brothers drag car I wanted to be painted on the shirt. I remember watching the airbrush artist in awe as the airbrush air whispered back and forth and magically rendered a high flying, tire smoking, flame breathing, revved up Drag Car, complete with a hairy green Monster hanging out of the roof, shifting the gears in a mad rush to the finish line. Well, as the very impressionable 10 year old that I was, from that point on I was hooked on wanting to learn how to airbrush T-shirts. Little did I know but the young slender airbrush artist who airbrushed my first T-shirt that fateful day was no other than the Great Airbrush Artist Tom Davison. 30 years in the future Tom would become my Partner at West Coast Airbrush Company. Isn't it interesting how things come full Circle like this?

Needless to say these icons of airbrushing and the Custom Culture art form they created grew to influence me greatly as I learned over the years to airbrush. I must also give kudos to both my mother and father who were retail store owners throughout my early life. They taught me by example the ins and outs of operating retail shops and the fundamentals of business that I still draw from to this day. My older Brother of 12 years, Mike, was a sign painter and pin stripe artist who I couldn't help but want to grew up to be like, and lucky for me, I kinda did.

Hugo Maciel: What did your training look like? Did your role models help you along the way? And when did you decide that painting T-shirts would be your path in life?

Pat Gaines: Throughout my primary and secondary education I was totally involved with art. I took every class available and participated in all the art clubs and art competition I could be

a part of. After High School I moved on to college at Ringling College of Art and Design. While at College I was surrounded by many students who had already monetized their artistic ability. One of those fellow students just happened to live next door to me. One day at the urging of his employer who owned Surf / T-shirt shops in several American Tourist cities to ask his classmates and find an Artist to come to Panama City Beach Florida that upcoming summer and take a job airbrushing shirts at one of his shops, my class Mate asked me, at which time I gladly accepted the invitation really having little idea of what I was getting myself into. I arrived in Panama City Beach Florida at the beginning of the summer tourist season where masses of Americans were on holiday. By this time American's loved airbrush T-shirts. As a beginner I had to learn production airbrushing quickly. In those times we did not work from displays as we would in later years. Customers would simply tell us their name and what they liked to do or a fun hobby, we would paint a cartoon of them playing a piano or riding a dirt bike, etc., with their name emblazoned across the shirt, whatever the customers passion was. It was a very personalized shirt for everyone back in those days. A shirt created solely for the Customer, no two alike, totally custom. I loved that I could make people smile and be happy with the art I created for them as they watched. I realized quickly that I could make a living airbrushing T-shirts and made the decision with my parents' approval not to return to college that fall, but start an airbrushing T-Shirt business full time. I was 20 years old. I never looked back. I've been a self employed artist for 45 years. Over all these years I've been able to make many thousands of Customers happy, I'm glad with the decision I made all those many years ago.

Hugo Maciel: Where and how many airbrush stores have you had or do you currently have over the years?

Pat Gaines: My first shop was in Panama City Beach, Florida, in 1975. It was a small booth inside a larger Surf/Gift shop. Over the next decade of summers, that small booth with 10 designs grew into a 2000 square foot space with 1000 designs for customers to choose from and that took 1/3 of the nearly 5000 sq ft store. When I started airbrushing in Panama City Beach, there were 3 shops where someone could buy an airbrush T-Shirt. Within 10 years airbrushing popularity had grown to the degree that it had attracted 150 artists working in 75 shops along the shore. Airbrushing on T-shirts was truly



First Mega Airbrush booth, Panama City Beach Florida ca. 1985

an art and business phenomenon. During the winter months I followed the tourists to ski resorts of Aspen, Vail and Breckenridge located in the state of Colorado in the western mountains of the United States, where I had several shops offering ski related airbrushed designs to that crowd. In 1987 I decided to leave this vagabond lifestyle of following the tourists to a more stationary existence. This is when I started West Coast Airbrush Company. Along with my partner Tom Davison and many associated artists at the helm, these shops were located inside shopping Malls in six U.S. States. Over the next 20 years 30 West Coast Airbrush Stores were opened which became the largest chain of airbrush T-shirt shops in the USA. The success of all of these shops was made largely possible by the great work and dedication of the many, many extremely talented T-shirt airbrush artists that worked, managed and in some cases owned some of these shops. Among these artists were Brian Dillion, Ed Hix, Mark Daehlin, TJ Ahoe, Earl Poole, Micky Harris, Tim Mitchell, Scott Fitzgerald, Terry Hill, Jeff Copland, Marty Figlinski, Ken Johnson and of course Tom Davison. The personalized artwork these amazing artists provided to the customers of West Coast Airbrush made the business what it was. It would not have succeeded, had it not been for their dedication and hard work of which I am eternally grateful.

A past colleague of mine, Mark Rush, had been doing business inside a Walmart store on Panama City Beach since 1990. Mark reached out to me and asked if I'd be interested in opening more airbrush shops in other resort Walmart locations. I clearly saw the potential and jumped at the opportunity. This call from Mark began our focus over the next few years. In 2015 my partner Karen Bellman and myself opened the first of our Walmart stores in Orlando, Florida. Being successful with the first shop within a few months, Walmart invited us



Staff of first Mega Airbrush Shop 1986 (in black shirts): Pat Reynold, Pat Gaines, Mark Rush, Scott Fitzgerald, (left to right)

to open 2 more shops in quick succession, giving us a total of three My Airbrush Shops located inside the Walmart Super Centers that surround Walt Disney World and Universal Studios. Orlando and Walmart are tailor made for an Airbrush T-shirt business. With 77 million visitors annually to Orlando of which most are families with children, there is never a shortage of interest in the colorful fun, personalized airbrush T-shirts and caps we are selling.

Hugo Maciel: How does the work in the Walmart Centers work? What does such a business relationship look like?

Pat Gaines: Keep in mind that my colleague Mark Rush had had an airbrush shop inside the Walmart store in Panama City Beach since 1990. There were also several airbrush shops in Walmart in resort locations in other parts of the USA for some time. But no one had cracked the BIG Nut that was Orlando and the Walmart Super centers that surrounded Walt Disney World. These Walmart stores being the busiest Walmart stores on earth of which catered to the Millions and Millions of visiting tourists from around the Globe. After a great deal of research we decided to focus our pitch to Walmart on the vast amount of Disney and Universal Studios souvenirs that were being sold to the Tourists out of these Walmart stores. Literately Millions of souvenir T-shirts were sold at each and every Walmart around the parks. The key to our success was realizing that the backs of all these souvenir Micky Mouse and Harry Potter, etc. T-shirts were blank. This blank side of what has to be the most popular tourist souvenir T-shirt on earth would become our canvas to airbrush a Child's name in bright colors or Smith Family Disney Vacation emblazon across the shoulders of an entire family group. With the added airbrushing cost of \$10-\$15 to the already \$15 Shirt we were able to double the final retail cost of the shirt by simply adding one Penny's worth of airbrush paint and free air! Now, who (I asked Walmart) can do that except an airbrush shop? The presentation of this realization was an obvious winner, a fact that once you saw the potential you could not unsee it, Walmart responded by asking "how fast can you get here and open a shop?" I said, "pretty damn fast!" Haha, wee have now been in Orlando Walmart stores for six years.

Hugo Maciel: Let's talk about the designs you offer: How have they evolved over the years?

Pat Gaines: There has most certainly been an evolution of designs since I started airbrushing, considering that when I started we did not even have designs to choose from. Like I mentioned above, we would just ask each and every customer what they liked to do and came up with a personalized de-



Current Big Airbrush Mega Shop at Walmart in Panama City Beach, Florida



Airbrush Mega Shop at Walmart Orlando, Florida

sign on the spot. What changed that was my first airbrush business was located in the tourist resort of Panama City Beach Florida. At some point I figured out that many of the same customers were asking for similar designs of popular sports like Baseball, soccer etc. They would also ask for designs with butterflies and teddy bears etc. Of course, since we were in a beach resort they would also ask for beach scenes. So I decided to speed up the customers decision making process by simply showing them photos of designs I had airbrushed for previous customers. Most would then choose from the photo examples I had. That then went from showing customers photos to airbrushing display panels that I would display on the walls around my booth. This was all pretty common sense evolution of showing customers designs which other airbrush artists also fingered out. At that point other airbrush artists started showing up in Panama City Beach Florida and started opening their own airbrush shops. This intern started competition for the biggest and best airbrush design display at each shop. Over several years my display went from 10 designs placed haphazardly around My airbrush booth in approximately 15 feet of wall space to a very organized display of over 1000 airbrush T-shirt and automobile license plate designs displayed in over 2000 square feet of wall space. My airbrush operation at that point became the first MEGA Airbrush shop display in the world. Today many large airbrush shops have MEGA display offerings like this, including the airbrush shops inside WalMart Super Centers in Panama City Beach and Orlando.

From that time the actual designs have evolved somewhat but there are still classic designs such as sunset beach scenes, unicorns, and heart designs. These designs will always be popular. New designs that have evolved over the years came into being as our customer base grew. Today urban style airbrush designs are very popular. These designs feature commonalities such as graffiti lettering, crowns and bright colors. Memorial Shirts for passed loved ones are also very popular with the urban customer. Other designs that are popular with customers are anything to do with video gaming like airbrushing controllers etc. Airbrushing on shoes is also a very big thing for some airbrush artists.

Hugo Maciel: What is the concept for a design to be successful?

Pat Gaines: The first and foremost consideration for the concept of a successful airbrush design is the shop's location. Our shops are located in Florida, USA. Florida is a peninsula surrounded on three sides by some of the world's most beautiful beaches, thus the most popular designs in Florida are beach sceneries. These popular designs could contain an assortment of Palm trees, sea grass, sand, blue green ocean water and of course the quint essential colorful sunset.

To be a successful airbrush T-shirt design in a resort location, the design needs to capture the sights your customers experienced while on holiday. They will want to take these memories home with them on their souvenir T-shirts. It's really pretty simple- We just need to sell them memories. Since that's what they are on, holiday, to do a lovely airbrush beach scene will do just.

All this being said, it's very important to have a proper display of popular designs to sell your customers. The selection of designs will vary from city to city, region to region and country to country. A display needs to be balanced as to what sells well to most of your customers, but you also have to have designs for customers who may not be in the main stream, so you just have less of those designs. How much display you have depends of course on how much wall space you have. If not a lot, you may choose to use your wall space to display only your very best eye catching popular designs and have the remainder in photo catalogs where you could have hundreds of selections for customers to choose from. My suggestion is to simply snap photos of everything you airbrush for customers. Process these photos and put them into your design photo album that is available for customers to look though or load the photos on a tablet that customers can browse through to find a design that fits them. Whatever you do always remember that designs are what you sell. It's very important to have a good selection of designs that are popular to your customers and that you can airbrush quickly as time is money in the T-shirt airbrushing business. Since everything is made to order, you can only make so much money in a day. To maximize your income you must be quick. Don 't display designs that you cannot complete in 30 minutes. Preferably all your standard designs should be able to be completed in 20 minutes or less and sell for between \$10-\$50 US not including the shirt.



West Coast airbrush shops located in shopping malls, ca. 1993



West Coast Airbrush artist Earl Poole, Ca. 1996

Hugo Maciel: Do you develop all the designs for your stores yourself? What about the rights of use and copyrights?

Pat Gaines: Over the 35 years that I have owned and operated airbrush T-shirts shops I've had the pleasure of working with some of the most incredibly talented airbrush artists in the world. Airbrush designs that we offer our customers are created by these artists and myself. Generally each artist is challenged to create 10 designs each year to add to our overall display. Currently at our 3 shops located inside WalMart stores in Orlando, we have 10 artists on our staff, each creating 10 designs each year which adds 100 new designs to our overall display. The new designs are added to the display. Over the following year of tracking the sales of these new 100 designs, possibly 25 will prove to be worthy of adding to our "proven seller" group that we will continue to offer on an ongoing basis. At that point we discard the other 75 designs and replace 25 of our "old" proven sellers with the 25 "new" proven sellers. In this manner, our overall proven seller list remains fresh for repeat customers. With all this being said, there are approximately 100 designs out of our 400 that are considered "classics" and they will stay on our proven seller list for years and years as they are such good sellers.

As for "usage" of these designs, with the advent of the internet photos and ideas are shared with people from all over the world, it's more or less impossible to think, we are going to control someone else copying our designs. But they don't have the original stencils in most cases or know necessarily which design sells the best etc. So they are at a disadvantage from the start in several categories to make a success of it. It's always been my feeling that I really don't care if someone copies our designs - as long as when copying the design they airbrush the recreation of the design themselves and do not

use a photo of design I airbrushed to sell from as if they painted it. That's not appropriate. Other than that, I'm fine with it. But this being said, I'm very easy to get along with. Some artists however are not so one might ask before using another artist's design. As for copyrights, yes, the designs are copyrighted. All original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression for all intents and purposes are copyrighted.

Hugo Maciel: How do you select the artists for your My Airbrush Shop to ensure high artistic quality?

Pat Gaines: Our shops have been around for so many years, our reputation for quality and steadfastness precedes us. This in itself is a big plus for attracting the best talent to our staff. Career airbrush artists are looking to work with a business who hold their same mature ideas and values. After a point in time this is all anyone wants. We feel we meet the standards these exceptional artists are looking for. Within our business structure, the artists and business owners have a very symbiotic relationship. As a working group, we all see the amazing potential of our Walmart location next to the busiest tourist resort on earth and we all totally understand our roles in making the business successful and appreciate the fact that we need each other's expertise to meet our shared goals. We operate our business as an artist co-op, with everyone working towards these common goals that benefit everyone within the co-op. The artists who work with us are not our employees, they are sub-contractors with their own businesses, and through the commission they pay to the owners from the sale of their artwork, they are provided an operating space setup with all of the major components to provide their services. The artists provide the talent and everything that goes along with that. The owners provide the ve-



Pat Gaines' partner at West Coast Airbrush, Tom Davison



Airbrush artist and West Coast Shop owner Brian Dillion, ca. 1995



Pat Gaines standing outside Pitkin County Airbrush-T-Shirt shop in Aspen, Colorado, ca. 1977



Layout for Walmart Airbrush Kiosk, Orlando, Florida



...and its completion



Other Walmart Airbrush Shop, Orlando, Florida

nue and everything that goes along with that. In our case all you have to add is customers, and Walmart near Walt Disney World provides that. With this recipe in place, it all works for everyone involved.

Hugo Maciel: Airbrush materials have also evolved over the past decades. What has changed in this area over the course of your career?

Pat Gaines: Yes, most diffidently materials and paint have evolved a great deal over the last 40 plus years. I started airbrushing with a single action Binks Wren airbrush in 1970. It was amazingly difficult to get any freehand detail. The single action Binks was only good for using with stencils and masks to get the results you wanted. I moved on very quickly to a Paasche double action VL. This airbrush made a huge difference allowing me to paint freehand which is the foundation of T-shirt airbrushing. However back in the early days, there was no paint made exclusively for airbrushing on fabric. The first paint I used was Nazdar Industrial Screen Printing inks. This was a solvent based enamel ink I used for colors. For black I used One Shot sign painters enamel. It was a real hassle, but at the time everyone just accepted that this was the way it was; so that's what we used. Later, to my great joy, water based textile paint specifically formulated for use on textiles started to appear. This new paint truly made a night and day difference in everything.

The biggest thing was the selection of colors that we never had the opportunity to use before. We had opaque and transparent colors to work with. It was a whole new world of choices that expanded everything we did. The advent of waterbased textile colors also greatly improved the sales of airbrush T-shirts. The dark colors were so deep and rich and

bright color were very vibrant and many were florescent which all combined to make some lovely designs customers loved and purchased.

Along about the same time true airbrush textile paint started appearing, we also saw other airbrush models designed with textile airbrushing in mind. Mark Rush, the college of mine, was getting tired of taking the back protective handle off the airbrush to access the needle chucking nut - something airbrush T-shirt artists do very often. Mark had a wonderful idea to simply file/cut two access ports/holes on either side of the back handle so as to access and loosen the needle chucking nut which then allowed him to pull the needle back and blow out clogs of dried paint and helped in cleaning the airbrush between uses. Little did Mark know he had come up with a new airbrush design that not only would aid in textile airbrushing, but in almost every type of airbrushing application. So if you ever wondered, where those holes came from on both sides of the back handle of your airbrush, that makes it easy for you to get to your needle, you have T-shirt airbrush artist Mark Rush to thank for that! Today, we are very lucky to have so many different paints and airbrushes to choose from all manufactured by great companies who totally support our art form.

Hugo Maciel: You also taught your business strategies and airbrushing on T-shirts in video training programs and on an Internet forum, didn't you? Tell us a little bit about that.

Pat Gaines: In the early 1990's Airbrush Action Magazine and I partnered to do the West Coast Airbrush/Airbrush Action Training Center. The on-site training program offered at our company headquarters trained attendees on all the ins and outs of planning, construction and then operating a success-



Staff Artists:
Ivan Luna...

Chris Johnson...

Steve Martin...

Jose Valez...

Rodney Brodrick



Popular „couples" design by Pat Gaines



Popular designs for family vacation in Florida

ful airbrush T-shirt business. The program offered 6 students a week long program with much one-on-one training with me covering designs, store layout, promotion programs offered at all the West Coast Airbrush stores etc. My bookkeeper would have a day with the students teaching them the basics of bookkeeping, money management and setting up business accounts at suppliers they would need when they started their businesses. The students would also visit several of our working stores in shopping malls to get first hand experience in working with customers, taking orders and learning first hand what working in a high-volume airbrush T-shirt shop was all about. During days at our training center several of the artists that worked for West Coast Airbrush would visit to conduct a day's training of human portrait airbrushing or how to airbrush car portraits and pet portraits - all great sellers for an airbrush T-shirt shop.

By 1995, this on-site training program was retired and replaced with a complete series of over 20 different video training programs offering videos on how- to do popular lettering styles, automobile portraits, airbrushing on black shirts etc. The video training series also included many design portfolios of the most popular, best selling airbrush T-shirt designs from West Coast Airbrush, and design collections of other successful artists like Tom Davison and Patrick Reynolds. The flagship product was our West Coast Airbrush 169 Design and Training Portfolio. This video training package offered 169 WCA designs, each design was airbrushed, start to finish on 17 hours of video how-to lessons. The portfolio also came with all the stencil patterns for the designs, reference photos for the 169 designs and the 100 page WCA training manual with all the information a person would need to walk them through opening their own airbrush T-shirt shop. The West Coast 169 Design and Training Portfolio was referred to by many as a "T-

Shirt Shop In A Box".

Also during most of the 1990's and in to the early 2000's, West Coast Airbrush operated our web site that included the WCA Forums. The WCA Forums was hosted by the great Tom Davison who was there almost every day giving his learned advice on the airbrush T-shirt business and art. Over the years nearly 50 thousand airbrush art enthusiasts called the WCA Forums their on line home for all talk about the business of airbrush T-shirts and the art form itself. As Facebook became more popular, the WCA forum was retired as airbrush artists made their way to the hundreds of Facebook airbrush groups we now know today.

www.myairbrushshops.com



Pat Gaines airbrushing a beach scenery in Florida, ca. 1988





Zippo by Mazzi

Zippo brand lighters have been popular and, to a degree, very expensive collector pieces for decades now, especially if they are decorated with the unique artwork of Claudio Mazzi. The Italian has

been famous for more than 25 years for his miniature airbrush works. In our interview with him, he told us about his worldwide success and the peculiarities of his miniature surfaces.

Claudio, how did you discover the airbrushing technique?

Claudio Mazzi: I became an airbrush artist in a pretty mundane way, to be honest. In the 80s, I studied advertising graphic design, but after 5 years of education, I had never seen an airbrush and heck, had never even heard of it. The very first day I entered an advertising studio as a novice, I saw an artist who was using this "tool" for an advertising illustration, and it was love at first sight. After 6 months, I was no longer an advertising graphic designer, but rather an airbrush artist, or better yet, one of Italy's first commissioned painters.

How long have you been airbrushing? Did you study art somewhere?

Claudio Mazzi: I've been painting with an airbrush since 1984.

Before that I had studied at an institute for art in my hometown for five years. Up to that point, I had never had any real artistic education. I come from a family of farmers that has had little to do with any form of art over the years. I really discovered the intensity of my passion when I visited an exhibition of drawings from Leonardo da Vinci in Florence. This experience showed me just how much grace and harmony a drawing can give to the world when it's done in the right context and viewed with the right spirit. My beginnings weren't easy, but this passion helped me to learn quickly. There were other times when airbrushing was a world I hadn't yet discovered and well, needed to be explored.

The whole world knows you as the Zippo artist. What made you possibly want to do your work on this product surface? Did it just happen by chance or are you a smoker?



Claudio Mazzi: I've never smoked! I got things started as a classic custom airbrushing artist who painted motorcycles, helmets, vans, etc. Then I just began doing all sorts of things in all sorts of fields. I've painted huge wall murals and roughly 5,000 scooters for companies like Malaguti. I've worked for Maserati and Ducati motors. I had already completed thousands of works of art on all sorts of surfaces before I began to enjoy the challenge of doing airbrush miniatures.

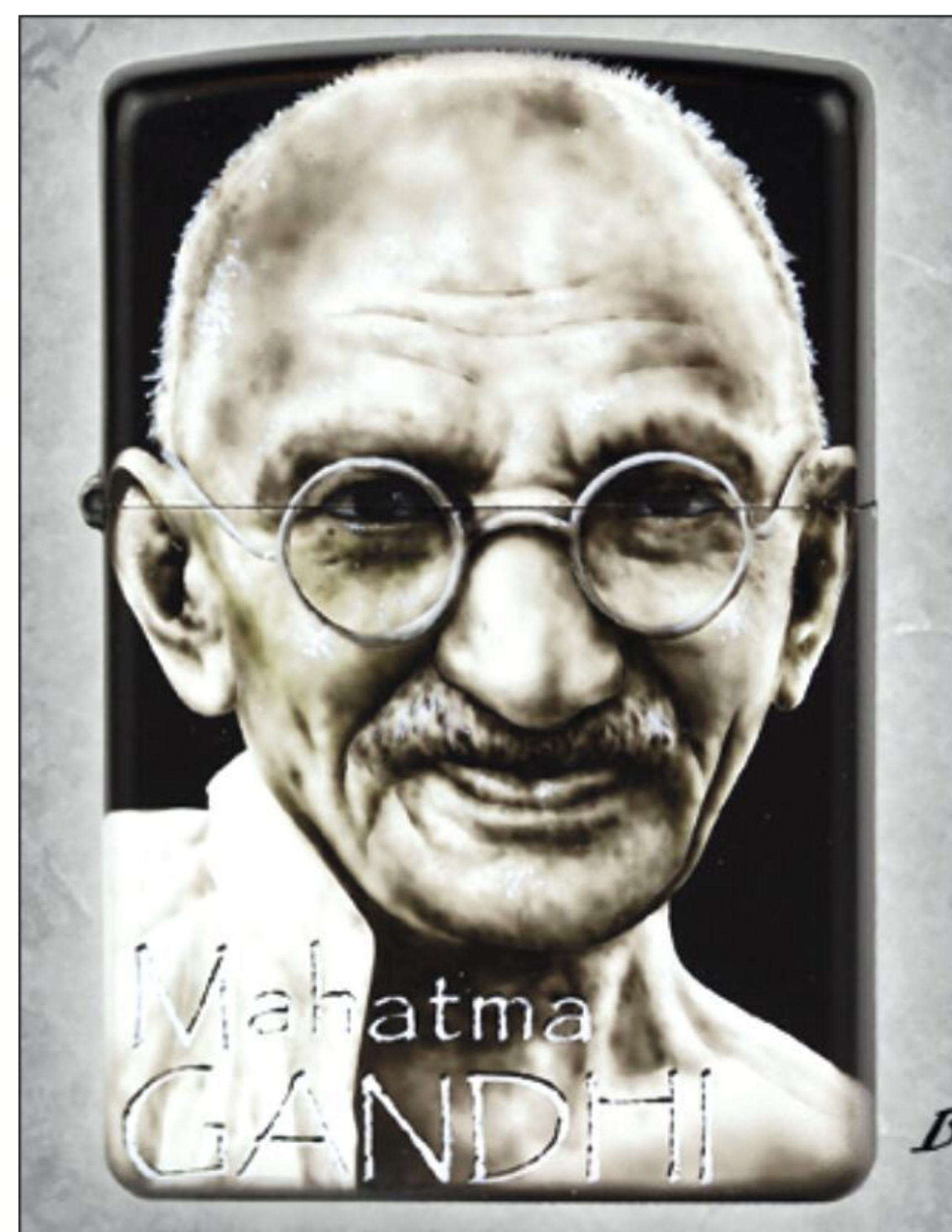
My first micro illustrations weren't on the lighters I'm now known for, but rather on Colnago/Ferrari bicycles from the same company as well as on Beretta and Perazzi collector weapons. In 1996, I painted small padlocks for motor scooters. I was then exhibiting my work at a motor show in Bologna, which is an important national event for vehicles. Zippo was there and had an exhibition room. I felt there were a whole lot of similarities between the padlocks that I was painting and the shape of a Zippo lighter, so I showed the manager my work. The president of Zippo Italia decided to give it a go with me, and after we did some tests on an initial prototype, the first few designs for the Italian Zippo catalog were born. Four years later, the Zippo manufacturer in Bradford, Pennsylvania, invited me to an international event for collec-

tors and my exhibition there played a considerable role in making work for Zippo internationally known. First it hit Germany, then Japan, and now, 25 years after the first Zippo by Mazzi, it's made its way through the world. I worked for Zippo until 2007, which was responsible for distribution in various countries. Once the phenomenon of "Zippo by Mazzi" collector pieces started to reach dimensions that were hard to manage, I personally assumed the distribution and manage it by bringing collectors together in clubs.

What does your work cooperation with Zippo look like? Are there individual productions and small series that are painted directly in that size or even those that'll be printed with your motifs?

Claudio Mazzi: There are different categories for my lighter creations. The most prestigious and desired ones are the individual pieces that are currently obtained primarily via auctions. Then there's the limited series – obviously, the rarer the series is, the more coveted it is. Nowadays, I try not to exceed 50 samples per series, but I sometimes have to exceed this amount to satisfy a larger spectrum of collectors. The open series are also numbered, but do not have a predetermined





amount. They're reserved primarily for fan club members and the production of these lighters discontinues on the last day of the current year. There are of course still the printed "Zippo by Mazzi".

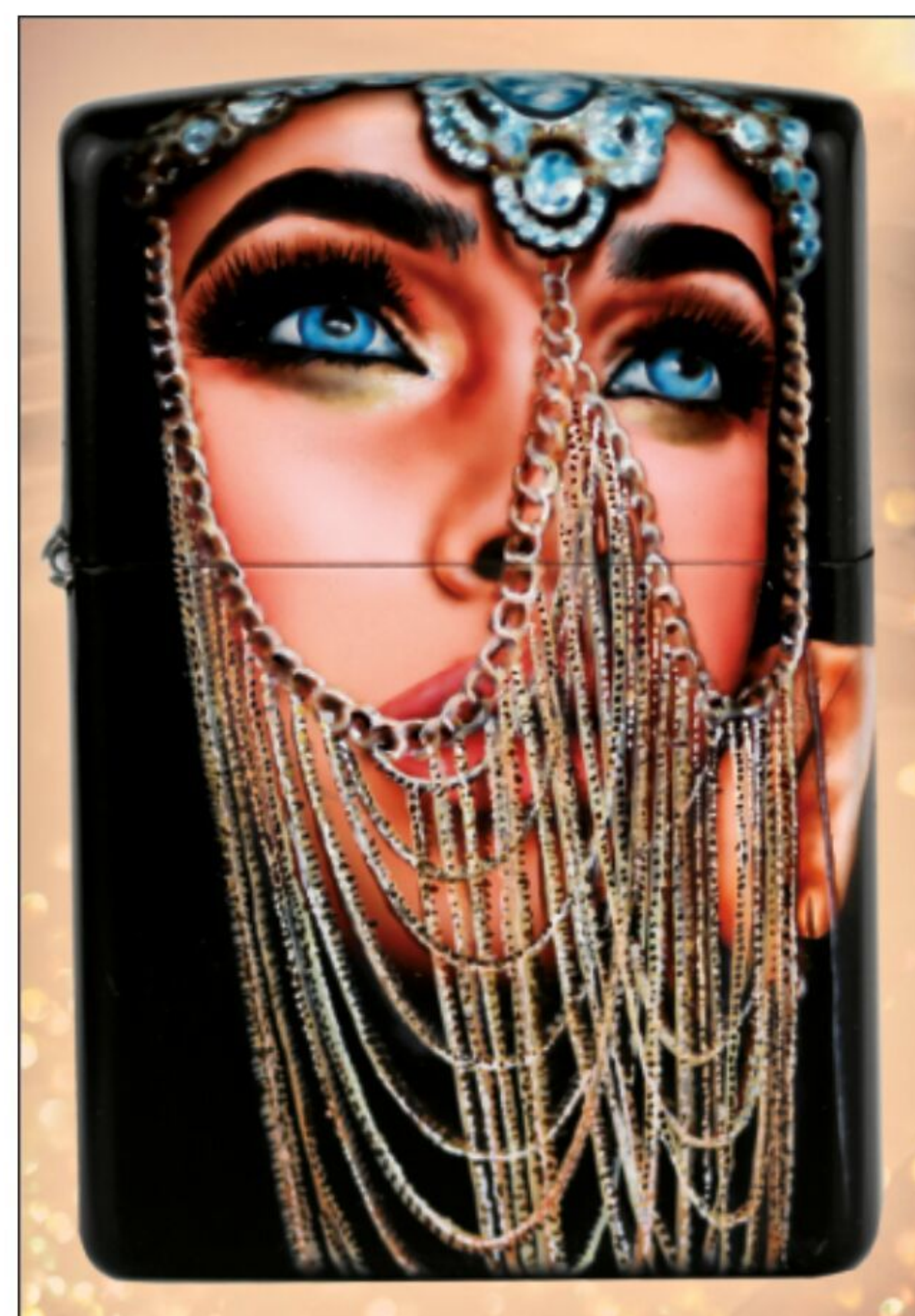
On what surface and in which size do you paint the motifs that are printed?

For these works, the original draft is established on Forex panels sized app. 10 cm x 16 cm. This size allows me to work on the details easily when compared to the less-detailed pictures that are created sized 3.5 x 5.5 cm. These painted panels are also very sought after in the world of collectors, as they are originals, so to speak, and only a few are created each year. The picture I paint is then sent per email to the Zippo production company in Bradford, which then prints them onto the lighters and distributes them. There are 2 different product lines. The large production line is distributed by Zippo by the tens of thousands in kiosks across the planet. These articles can be collection items, but naturally can also be used as nor-

mal lighters. Some limited series are, on the other hand, distributed by me directly to the "Zippo by Mazzi" collectors clubs. This last category by Zippo obviously has the higher level of collector value than the larger line of products.

Where do the motifs come from? Are they provided by the manufacturer and customers? Or do you develop your ideas yourself and then offer them accordingly?

Claudio Mazzi: The topics I paint are very different. I love the nature. I've moved my atelier from the city to a very remote area between forests and mountains to experience it in all its glory. For this reason, my favorite topics focus on natural surroundings and especially animals. I've painted practically all of them and in various versions. I'm also fascinated by portraits and particularly the female body, often using my wife as a model and muse. I also like to travel through time and history. I've painted scenes out of the wild west, the Celtic world, the age of pirates, etc. I also often work with topics that deal with the countries I'm holding an exhibition in, but





I tend to select a main topic and then develop a variety of collections on this topic throughout the course of the year. I personally select the topics and subjects of my collection, but I do like to include the collectors in helping me select my prototypes, which I suggest to them when looking to create the various series. I sometimes take on private orders and, in such cases, the customer of course picks the motif, but taking on such orders has become increasingly seldom due to my very full calendar.

What do you have to keep an eye on when you paint a Zip-po? How do you manage to paint so realistically in such a small format and admittedly at such a generally quick pace?

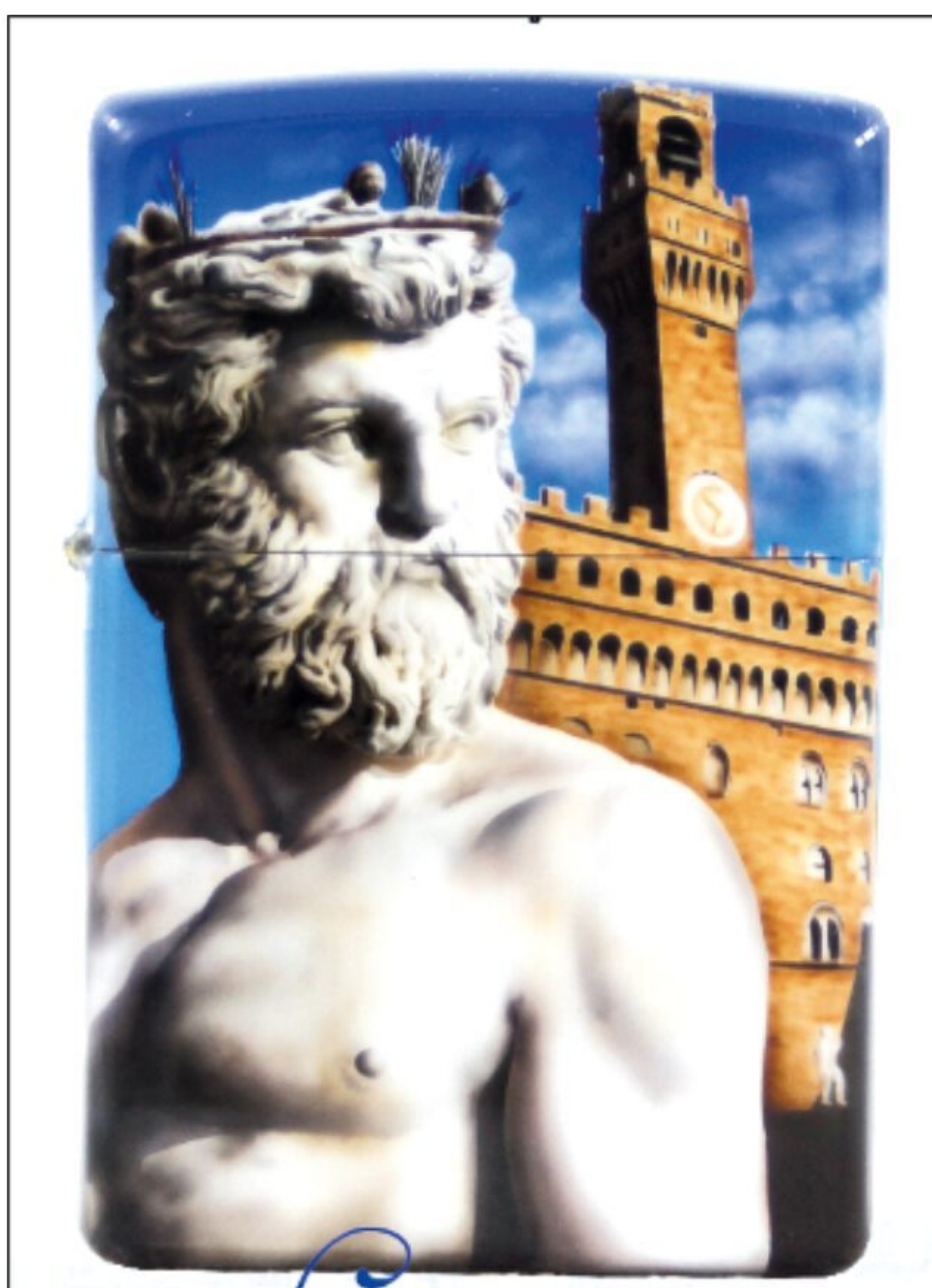
Claudio Mazzi: There are a few small rules to painting miniatures. They need to be pleasant and understandable from a distance. That's why it's good to emphasize contrasts, accentuate lights, and select "clean" pictures that are easily seen and read. But when a person closes in on it, he/she should immediately tune in to the details and enjoy them. I tend to pre-

fer motifs with intensive lights on the side and contrasts between warm and cold colors. In a nutshell, pictures with an effect that attracts the eye. I try my best when working to bring out the smallest details, but if I can't see the motif from 3 meters away... well, I haven't reached my goal.

It's my opinion that making a miniature realistic is a question of the right balance between masking and freehand work. If there's too much freehand work in such a small, limited size, we'll get unpleasant effects such as blurriness and a lack of focus while too much masking leaves the picture looking unnatural. In addition, you've got to know how you should interpret textures. For example, it's impossible to paint the fur of an animal by creating every individual strand of hair with an airbrush. You have to interpret the general lighting in question and the corresponding shade involved, meaning you've got to be able to trick the eye so that it sees fur resulting from little more than light and shadow effects.

When it comes to all of this, time is of the essence and of con-



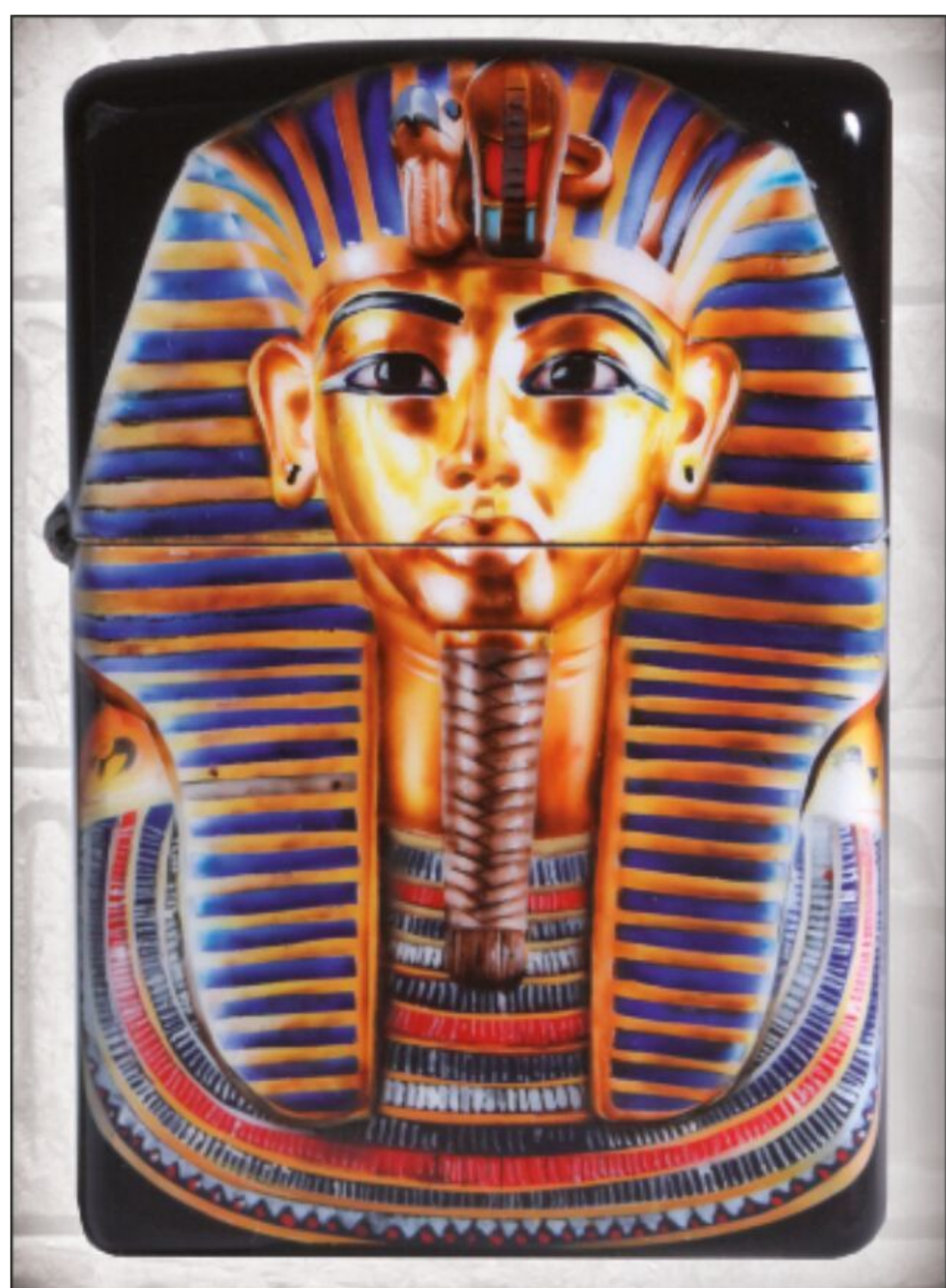


siderable importance, because I've got to satisfy the requests of hundreds of collectors every year. For this, I've developed an extremely effective technique. My wife – who also serves as my favorite model – takes care of preparing the basecoat, the concluding polishing, and the vectorization of the stencils as well as administrating the clubs and taking care of shipping concerns. I only really have to take care of the design and the creation of pictures. Whatever extra time I have, I dedicate to advertising my products. The choice of the correct masking is of fundamental importance in accelerating the work phases. When I observe a motif, my mind immediately breaks it down into the stencils I'm going to require. In the meantime, this has become an imperative reflex that is very useful for my work. I simultaneously use roughly 20 paint cups for my airbrush with ready-made paint, but only one airbrush. It takes time for a person to get used to the sensitivity of the respective trigger. It's much quicker to switch out the paint cup and to switch the paints on the same airbrush. Savings time and enhancing my level of control – doing so allows me to paint an average of 800 lighters per year!

Are there Zippo collectors all across the planet? How does distribution work?

Claudio Mazzi: Yes, Zippo by Mazzi is all across the planet. The printed lighters distributed by Zippo are found in just about every country on the planet (with the exception of where there are embargos). My airbrushed lighters are a good portion of those distributed products. There are collectors throughout Europe, primarily in Italy, Germany, and Spain, but the highest concentration of my collectors is located in China, where there's a very well-organized group known as "Zippo by Mazzi in China". My East Asian adventures began not too long ago, in 2018, but the phenomenon has spread pretty quickly and there's been great feedback. Still, China is also where counterfeit copies of my printed Zippos has taken flight. In Thailand, I found myself in the very surreal situation of having to try to get rid of some aggressive street merchants who wanted to sell me counterfeit copies of my very own printed Zippos! The wonderful adventure of Zippos by Mazzi has given me the opportunity to travel quite a bit and build relationships to collectors/friends from all over the globe, for example, India, Australia, and of course the





USA, where the Zippo is produced. These are experiences that have enriched my mind and soul in ways I cannot even begin to describe.

Do you know how many Zippos you've approximately painted?

Claudio Mazzi: It's very difficult to determine the exact number, but I've tried to make a very accurate rough estimate. The result is, well, a very large number, namely 22,000 over 25 years. The number of items painted in the first few years was particularly large because I airbrushed rather simple motifs such as backlit figures. There are two special individual samples that served as the milestones for the 10,000th and 20,000th Zippos by Mazzi. This year, I'll be celebrating the 25-year anniversary of "Zippo by Mazzi" and also the 20-year anniversary of the international fan club. Those are some big goals for my occupational adventure.

What airbrushes and paints do you like to work with?

Claudio Mazzi: If I had to define myself with one phrase, that phrase would be "creature of habit"! I've been using the same model of airbrush for over 35 years, namely the Paasche V1. I have 27 of them in my drawers, because I never wanted to take the risk of suddenly being without one. I've been using a solvent RM matt basecoat for just as long and yes; I have every bit as impressive a supply as with the airbrushes. The same applies for clear varnish, diluters, cutters, and masking tape – I always use the same thing. Always. When I've conducted my live demonstrations in the US, China, and Arabia, I've harassed the parent companies of these products to make sure they'd be there on site. Always these things. Precise. Efficient. Dependable! I can't work without them!

In addition to the lighters, do you also paint other items for customers?

Claudio Mazzi: There are fewer and fewer exceptions. My Zippo work really takes up the largest amount of my time, but

I've had unforgettable experiences working in Saudi Arabia. I've got customers there who wanted a variety of articles to be painted. I've painted fountain pen, collectors' knives, Cartier lighters, small plastic items, and other furnishings for them and I continue to take on orders. In these cases, I've often asked to complete pictures featuring "Arabic" topics like the falconry practiced in the desert, famous Arabian horses, Mecca, and Medina, all framed in complicated graphic motifs that are characteristic of this culture. Especially pens are among the items that I've most commonly painted in miniature. I did 18 years of airbrushing work for Visconti, a company that manufactures wonderful collector pens. I've done some of this work for kings and high ranked politicians from Prince Charles of England to Philipp of Belgium, from the king of Saudi Arabia to the royal family of the Netherlands – and a whole lot of other presidents and princes.

What are your plans for the future? Are there any special projects you'd like to do?

Claudio Mazzi: My most immediate project is about celebrating the 25-year anniversary of Zippo by Mazzi with special collections. But a much larger and more demanding project is bringing out my new, painted fountain pen called the "Mazzi Pen". Dante del Vecchio, one of the most experienced pen designers in the world, has created a pen especially for me that is made for painting thanks to the clear lines of the shaft and the cap, which is connected via a magnetic system that guarantees the continuity of the painting. The clip, which is shaped like a paintbrush, features my signature and the wooden box can also be styled individually. My collectors have already shown interest in the initial individual items that'll be issued in sets with their lighters. And there are a whole bunch of other projects. It is such a shame that we have two hands and only one life. There are so many wonderful airbrushes out there... Best of luck to everyone!

www.zippobymazzi.it

Facebook: [claudio.mazzi](https://www.facebook.com/claudio.mazzi)

Instagram: [@claudiomazzi65](https://www.instagram.com/claudiomazzi65)

Our Readers' Artworks

Martin „IZM“ Igaz: Dark Raven
Airbrush: Iwata Custom Micron CM-C+
Paints: Createx Illustration Colors
Surface: Honda Valkyrie F6 Tank



André Grafia: Stormtrooper
Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse 0,35 mm
Paints: Amsterdam Ink
Surface: Bristol XL Canson Paper



Frank Ledderhos: Sporty
Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse (0,3 mm)
Paints: Hansa, Schmincke, Createx
Surface: Harley Sportster Tank



Melanie Langen: Koala Ramboora (Zoo Duisburg)

Airbrush: Iwata Custom Micron SB

Paints: Schmincke Aero Color

Surface: Schoellershammer Illustration board,
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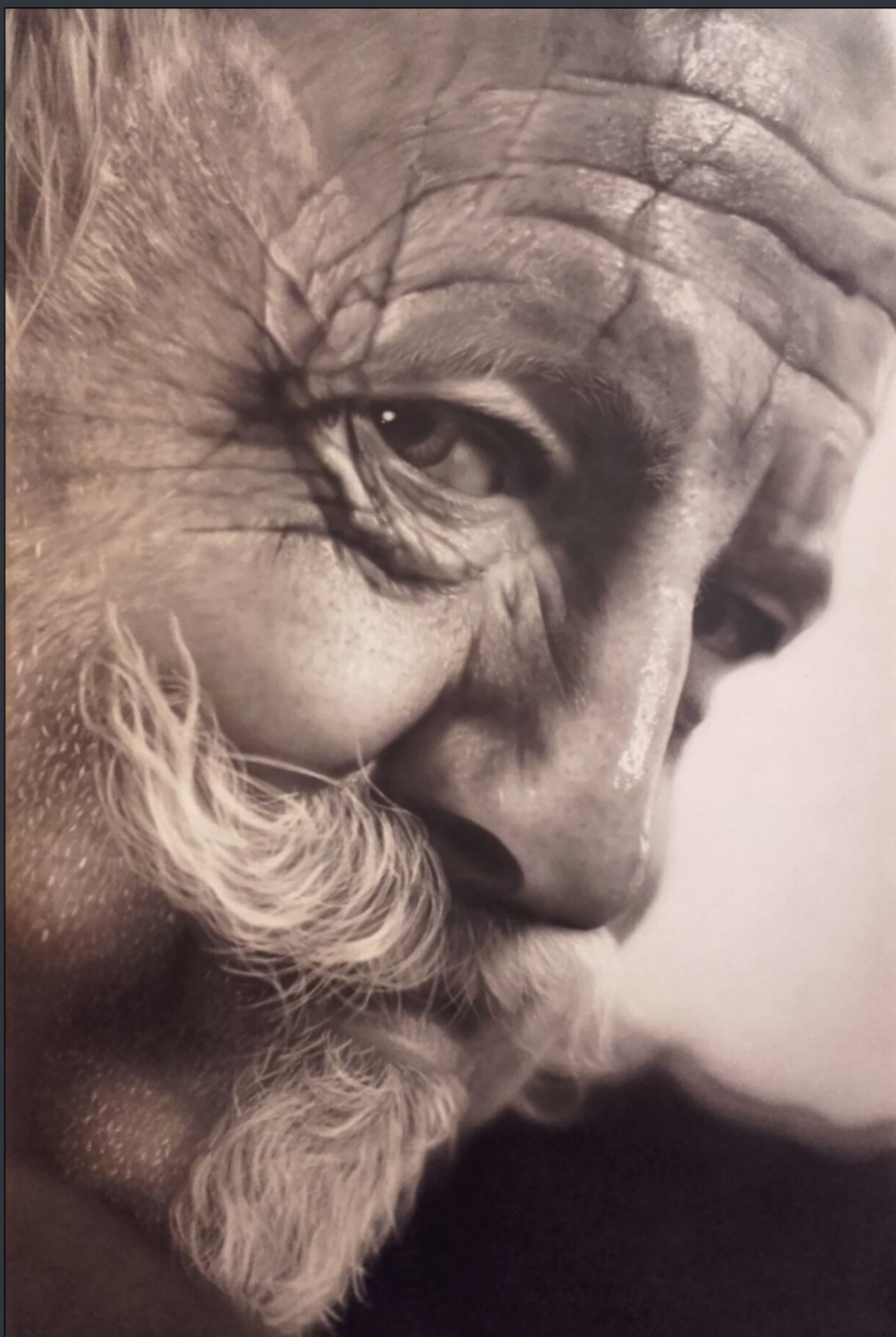
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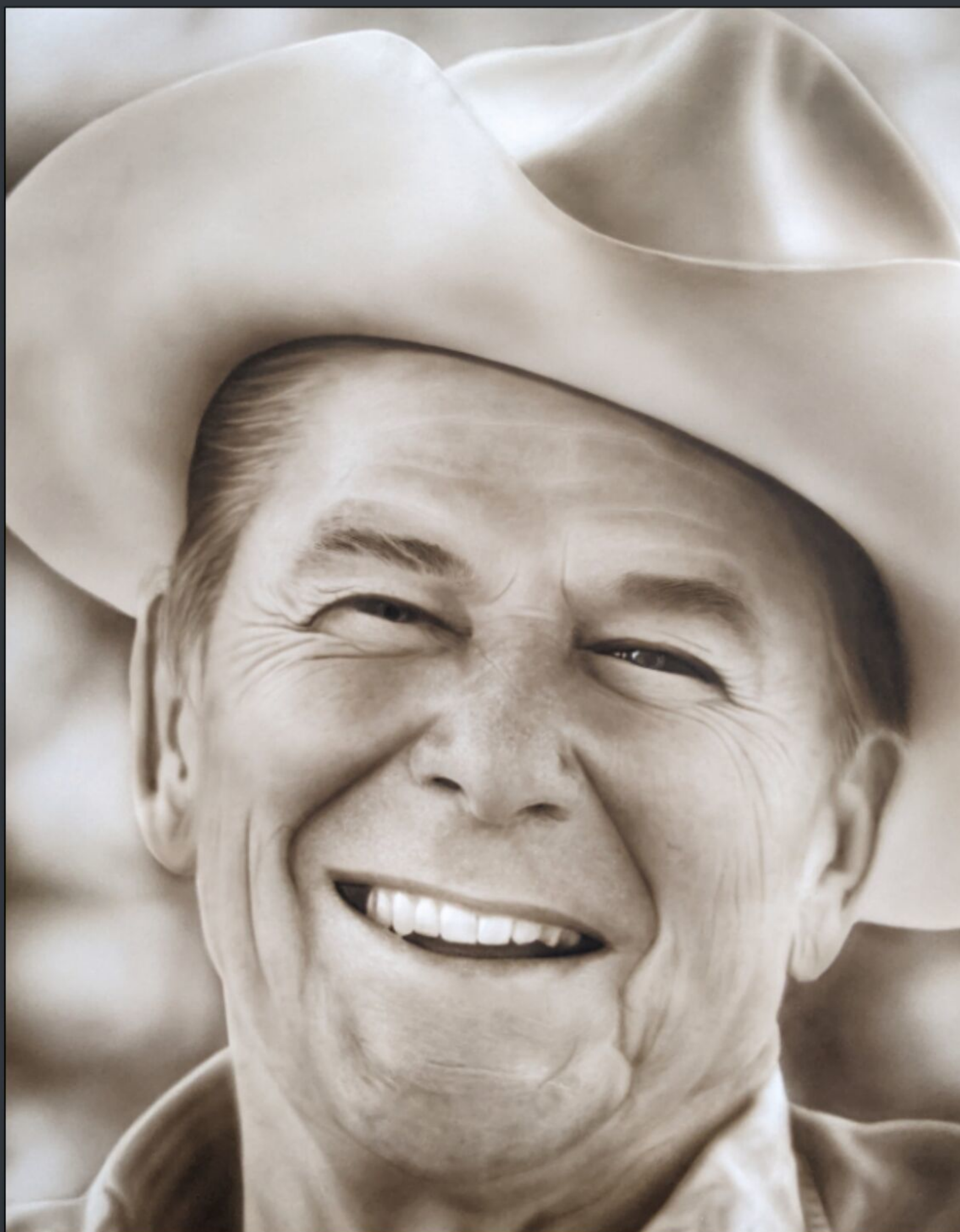
Michael Wolf: Paplo Pallazzo



Denis Kruse: Predator
Airbrush: Iwata Infinity
Paints: Createx and Schmincke
Aero Color Professional
Surface: RC boat



David Evans: Froggy
Airbrush: Paasche Raptor 0.25 mm
Farbe: Hansa Pro-Color Paint
Surface:
Canson Mixed Media Paper



Christoph Westrupp: Portrait
Airbrush: Iwata CM-B und Rich AB-200
Surface: Schoellershammer

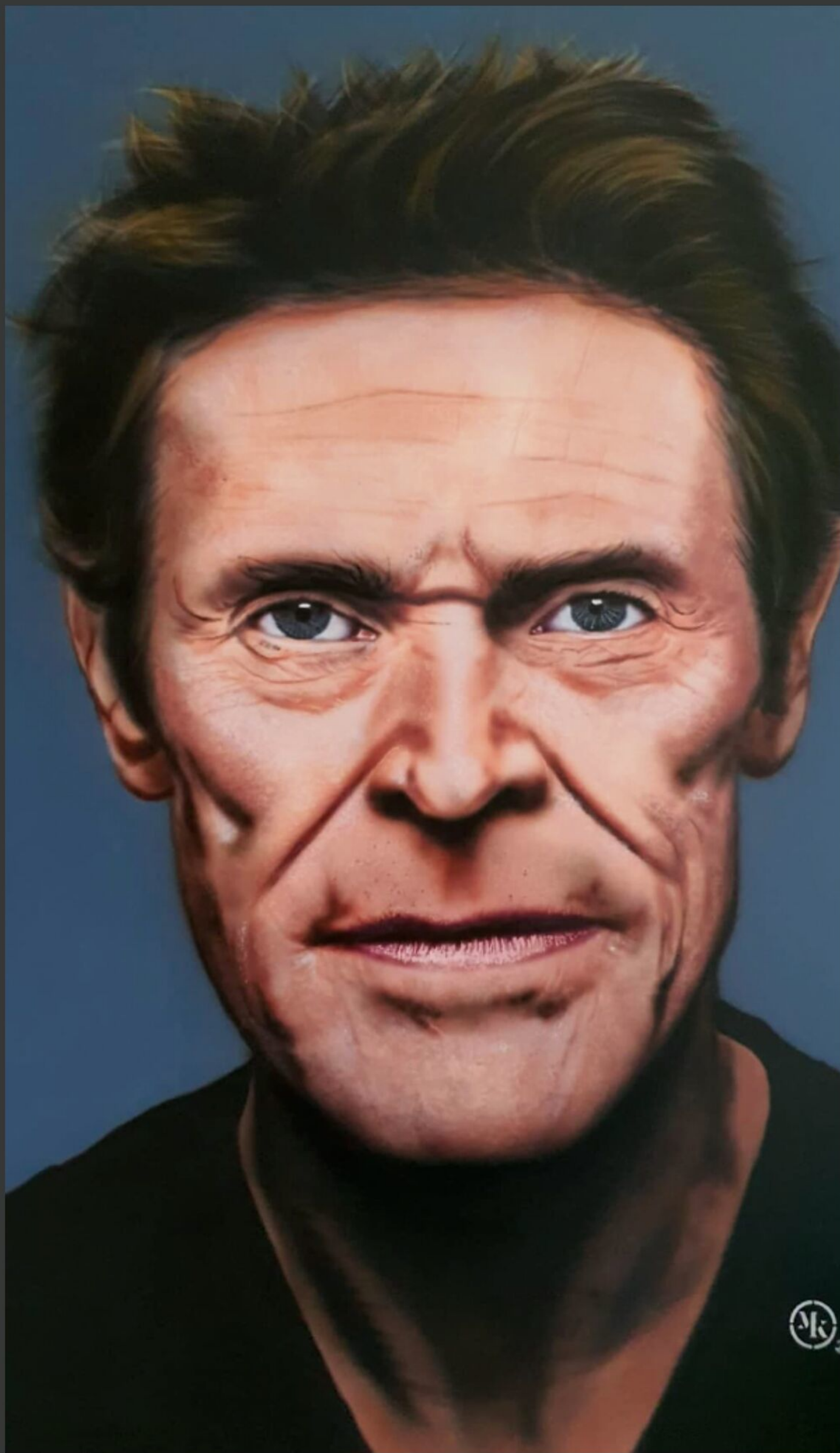
Arnd Dorn: Arnold Schwarzenegger
Surface: 3D-Print (PLA)



Matthias Miethke: Cornibus the house demon
Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse 0.35
Paints: Createx Wicked und Schmincke Candy's
Surface: Schist 8 x 6 cm

Alicia Rios: Bodypainting





Marcos Casás Varela
Airbrush: Iwata Eclipse
Paints: Custom Creative
Surface: Schoellershammer

How do I enter?



Simply send photos of your artworks – digital and at least 9 x 13 cm, with 300 dpi resolution – to: info@airbrush-magazin.de or mail (also min. 9 x 13 cm prints) to: newart media & design, Hamburger Str. 26, 21493 Schwarzenbek, Germany. Photos sent by mail cannot be returned.

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Preview

Airbrush Step by Step 63 will be available from March 31, 2022



Red wine

Sebastian Arenas from Chile invites you for a glass of red wine from his home country. In just a few steps and with many mirror and texture effects, he creates a full-bodied illustration on a black background.



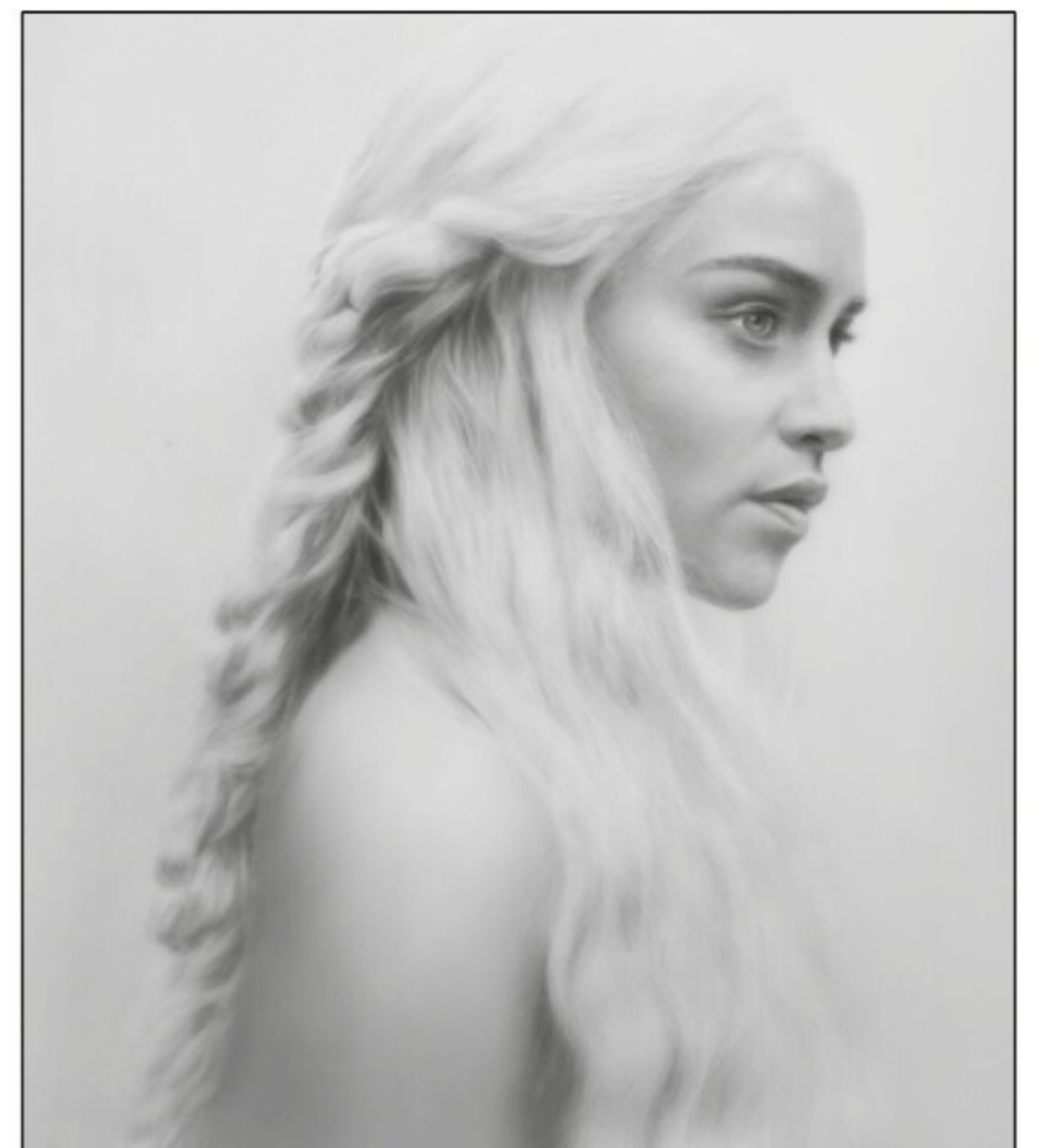
Water

With its multitude of reflections, water creates a new individual work of art in nature every time. Ralph-Torsten Kolmer from Germany has analyzed every single wave and reflection and captured them on drawing cardboard.



Freedom

Dreamy, but still attentive, the cat looks out of the window into the garden. Benjamin Zikoll from Germany created his cat portrait based on a snapshot. Ambient reflections come into their own here.



Black and white photorealism

That Ivan Loperena from Mexico is an artist, graphic designer and photographer at the same time is apparent in his artworks. Extraordinary moments, perspectives and compositions characterize his mainly black and white illustrations.



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