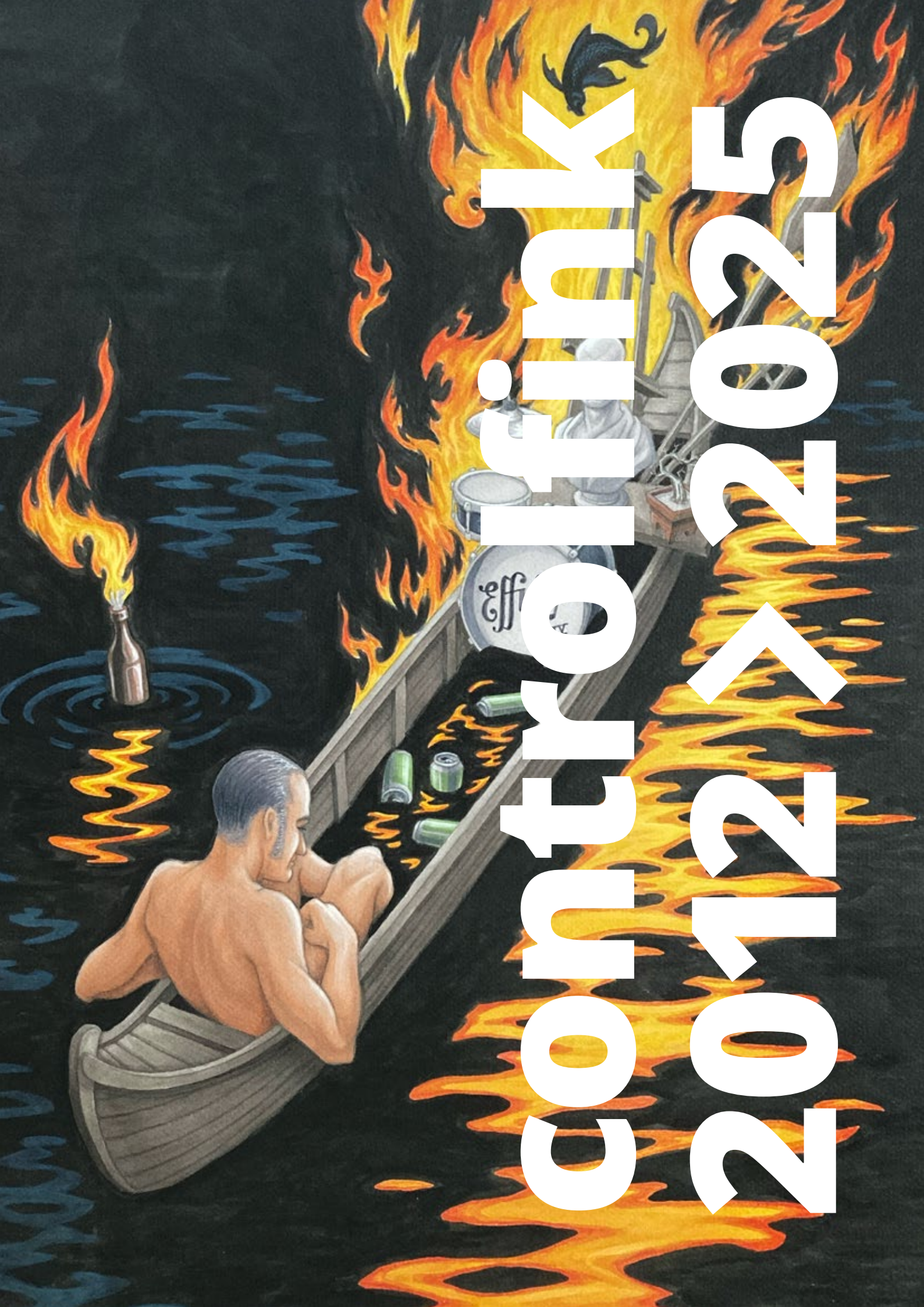




Confront 2015

A blog about illustration, cancer, etc.

I'm a graphic designer in Australia. This is for all the personal work that would scare my clients. I'm in remission for bladder cancer, so some of it ain't cheery, and there's a fair amount of nudity along the way. So maybe don't read it on the train.*

* That was the original tagline and blurb from way back in 2012. I took it down a few years ago when it didn't seem to fit anymore. Cancer has cast a long shadow but it's pretty faint these days, just tests every now and then. And as of the start of this year I'm no longer a designer with clients, now a brewer with co-workers to scare. The warning still fits though: still in remission, still not cheery, still nudity along the way. So maybe don't read it on the bus.

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 13 years, 159 posts

2025

"aversion"

April 12, 2012 | Tags: cock, tinned meat

tinned meat #1

"Hi all,

As well as to draw more, my other resolution is to actually show the drawings to people. Hence some home made junk mail about taking risks.

Let me know what you think, or not. Some may not be safe for work. Reply with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line!"

I sent this out by email to a few friends in early January to start the ball rolling. This is to push it a bit further, and have somewhere to put the more interesting illustrations...



2012 resolutions

April 16, 2012 | Tags: resolutions, typography



After having our annus horribilis in 2011, this was my line in the sand. I got a job, the tattoo is coming and I passed my first test on (the lucky for me) Friday the 13th. The addendum was to remind me to only spend time on my own original work, my two girls leaving me very little time for it! In this forum, the addendum should have an addendum about not linking to other sites...

Comments

daniel kuss | May 16, 2012

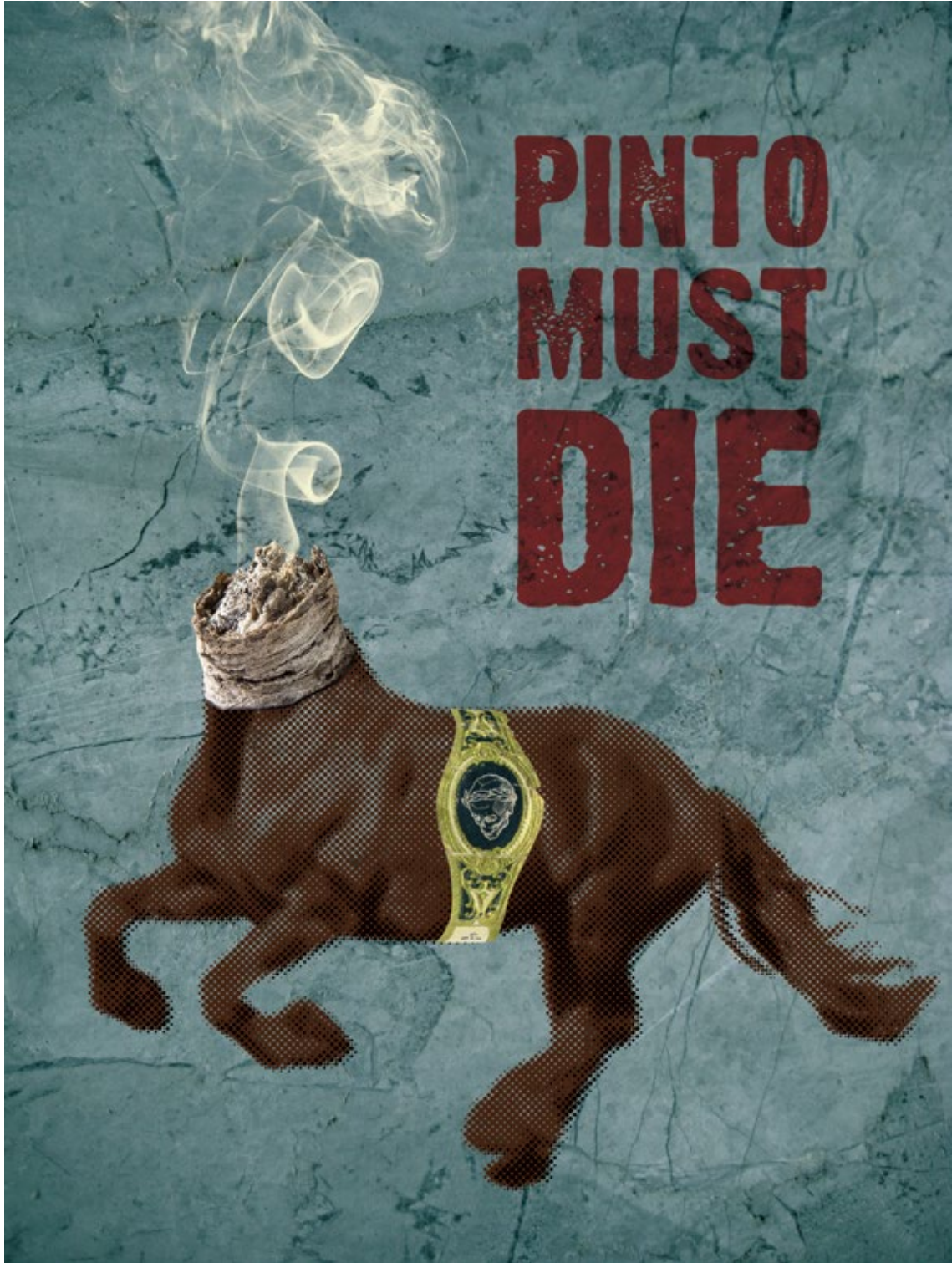
love the typography. when is the poster coming out??

tinnedmeat | May 17, 2012

You're officially the first person to comment! (Actually you're the first to visit...)

“pinto must die”

April 23, 2012 | Tags: cancer, smoking



It was always a bit of a conversation stopper – I got cancer. I was also lucky, my bladder cancer was low grade and they found it early, but it was caused by smoking. I was never a heavy smoker, and had given up 5 years earlier to have kids... apart from the occasional drunken lapse. That was still enough.

At that stage my wife was 8 months pregnant.

I always wondered how smoking caused bladder cancer. The toxic chemicals from the cigarettes bubble away in the piss in your bladder and start the cells of the lining mutating. Nice. No matter how enjoyable that cigarette is, I guarantee it doesn't balance out sitting in a doctor's waiting room wondering if you're going to die. And how to tell your children.

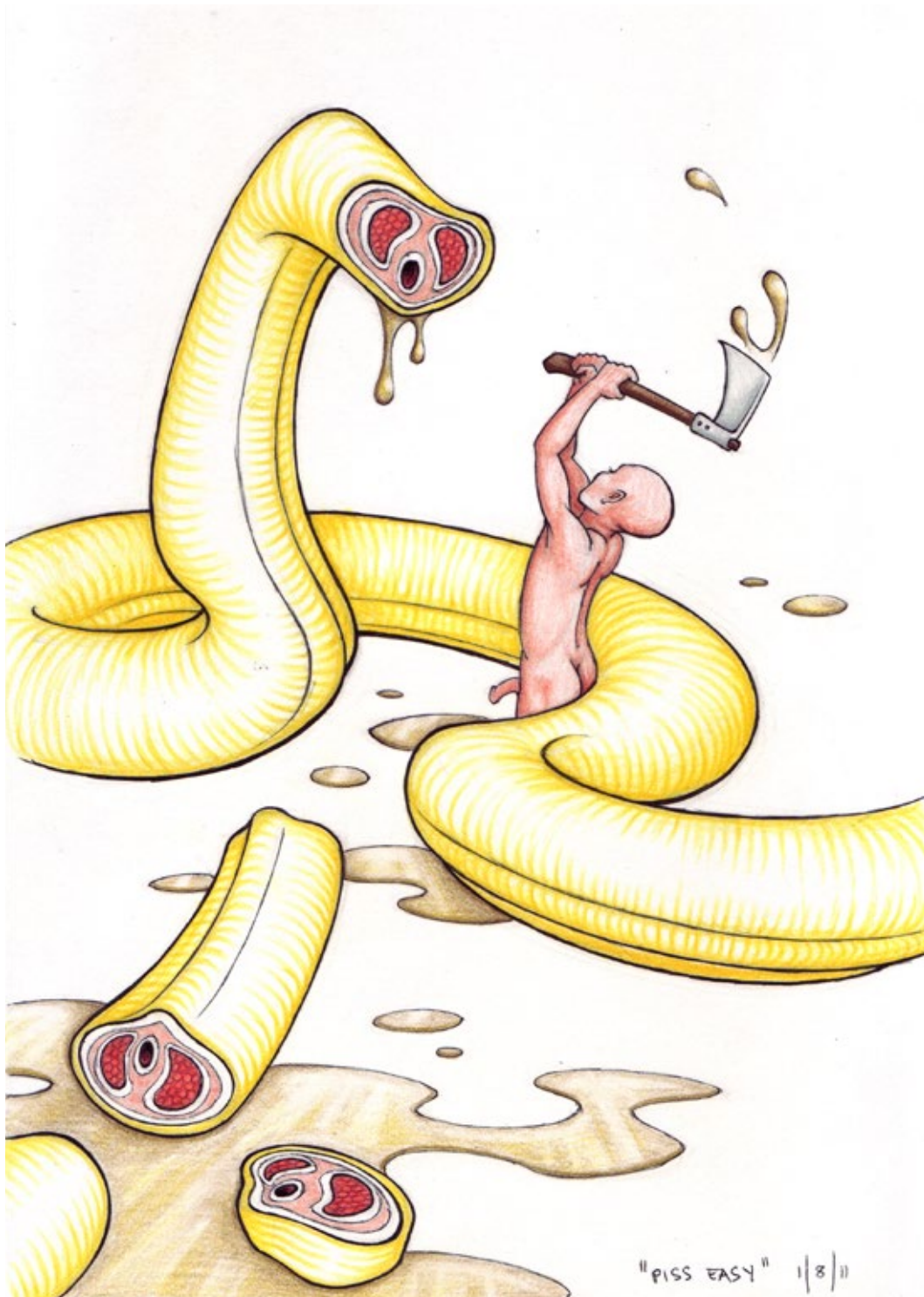
One of my first reactions was this personal anti-smoking poster for my cuz, and good mate, who had also given up but whose taste in relapses was pinto cigars, evil and unfiltered.

"piss easy"

April 27, 2012 | Tags: cancer, cock, cystoscopy

I drew this Freudian case study while recovering from my "cystoscopy," a fancy word for having a camera with a robot scraper arm threaded through the eye of your needle.

I'm sure I'm supposed to flag this as mature or something.



"two card drawing"

April 28, 2012 | Tags: cancer, dice, luck



Was a hell of a week.

On the Monday I got my pathology results back, as good as cancer can be, low grade and not growing into the surrounding tissue. I was at work before my appointment and it was like sitting in a bubble of reality, like looking through a membrane at everything completely meaningless and insubstantial.

Tuesday morning I had a car accident, turning in my seat at the last moment to see a car slam

into my 3 year old daughter's door. It was my fault. We were all right, but the car was fucked.

Wednesday morning my wife went into labour 3 weeks early. We had a second beautiful baby daughter with no complications.

So this drawing was about 3 things that could have gone really badly, all going as well as possible. Not that successful a drawing in the end, with my first attempt at applying texture to the flat colour.

"balance #13"

April 29, 2012 | Tags: balance, death



"BALANCE #13" 11/11/11

This is when the wheels really fell off...

Halfway through my six weeks of chemotherapy, my wife's grandfather died. Two days later I got sacked from my job. They gave me four weeks notice out of a feeling of guilt. No shit.

We later laughed that if it was the plot of a movie or novel, this was the point you'd say it became unrealistic – "all that wouldn't happen to one person!"

Yes, I did accidentally draw two right hands on the rug puller...

"ad infinitum / ad nauseum"

May 19, 2012 | Tags: Copic markers, tinned meat

tinned meat #2

"Hi again,

A drawing that started mulling around when job applications were feeling futile, but got finished when things were looking good (actually after I got a job in the end.) Hence you can turn the sad picture upside down to make it all uplifting and stuff – aww.

For all of you missing the frontal nature of some of my past efforts, I've packed in as much Freudian symbolism as I can. Done using my new favourite tool, ludicrously expensive Japanese markers. But like the chicken and the egg, the conundrum is which end of a double ended marker do you put in your pocket?

I've added a few more people to my spam list since last time. If you're not into it, email me and I'll cross you off the list. If you are into it, let me know, or better yet forward it on to someone else who will too!"

Sent via email 05/03/12. I was trying out a reduced palette, but the leaves just remind me of banana peel! Freudian bonus point.



"balance#14"

May 27, 2012 | Tags: balance, tinned meat, work



tinned meat #3

"Hi again,

a picture about working bloody hard to stay in one spot and not go backwards...

Not long after starting my new job the other designer left, and the next week my boss' wife had a baby. So 5 weeks in, I was sitting in the office by myself with the keys to the kingdom. Nice to know I could swim and not sink. It seems to be the year of "career" movement for everyone: getting hired, sacked, rehired, promoted, quitting, investigating people to get them sacked, or just going on a national tour.

This edition is a little spammier than normal. The next picture was meant to be a change of topic, a well endowed tiger-warrior-pimp-chick, but I realised the person who'd like it most (hey Carmine!) I couldn't send it to because of his work email. Then I also figured people might be checking their personal email at work... so I started a blog to post everything on, and just harass you all with a link instead of evidence for termination of employment!

Click on the link for bonus content!"

Sent via email 27/05/12

Bonus working files – woo! Now with added inflatable modesty, and 50% less angst. Inked using my birthday present, a literally cool **LED light table**. Now I just have to get that A3 scanner and I'm set.

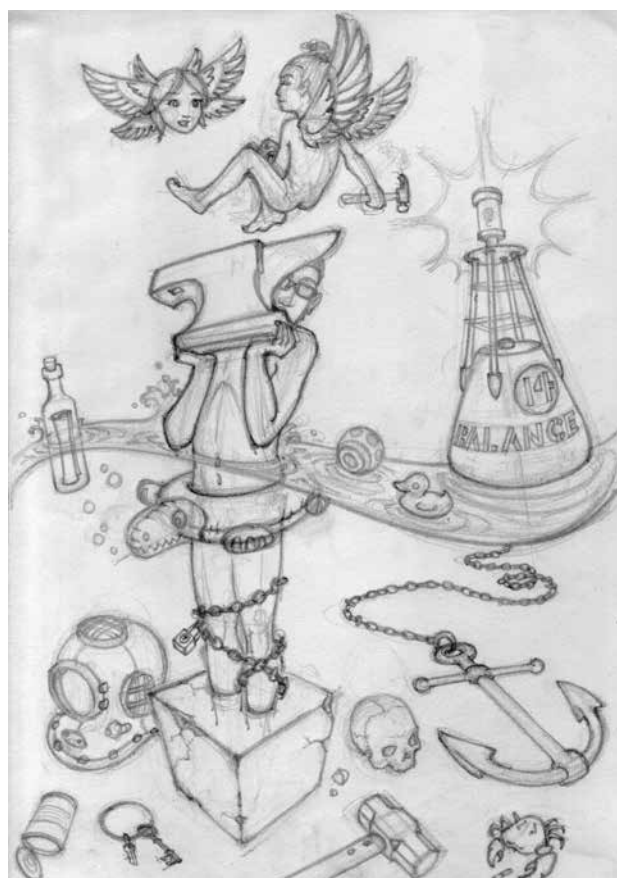
Comments

Michael | February 11, 2013

Once again, nice work. I like the use of pen and pencil roughs too. Very organised. Getting sacked CAN have its blessings (although it doesn't seem like it at the time...)



pen rough



pencils

style guide

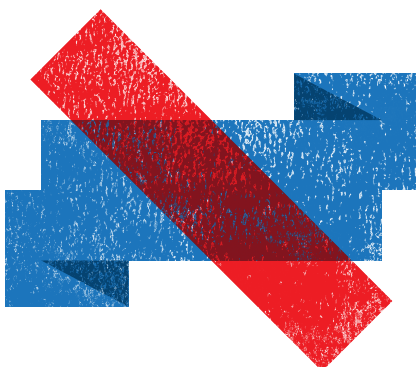
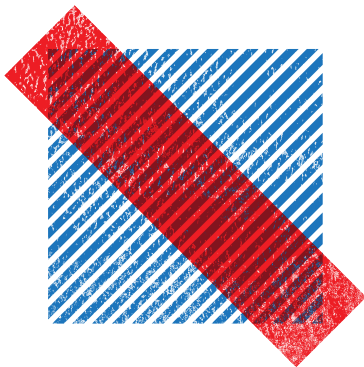
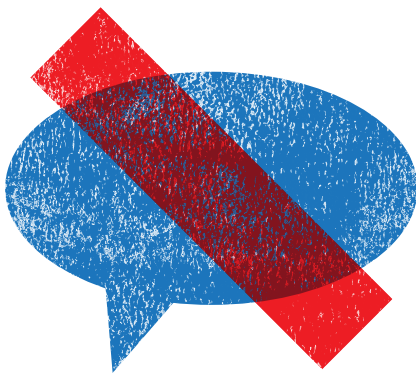
June 19, 2012 | Tags: work

Design memes to avoid, or at least try!
Unfortunately we have clients using all of them...

Comments

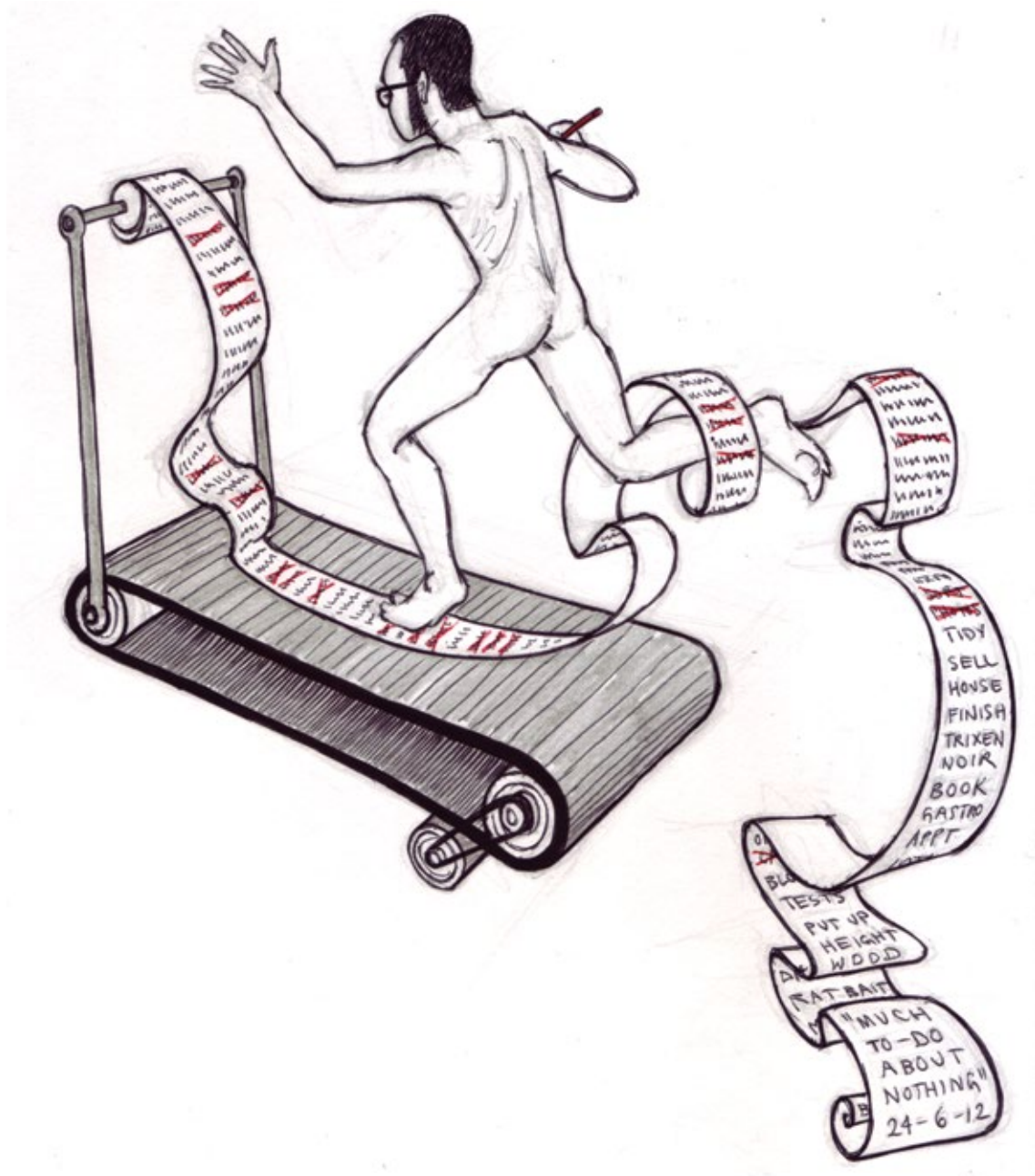
Michael | February 11, 2013

Clients never know what's best for them...



"much to-do about nothing"

June 27, 2012 | Tags: cock, futility



As a drawing about not being able to get things done, it was an exercise in persevering through tiredness and a cramped hand.

I keep promising more feminine nudity but end up like a flasher opening my raincoat...

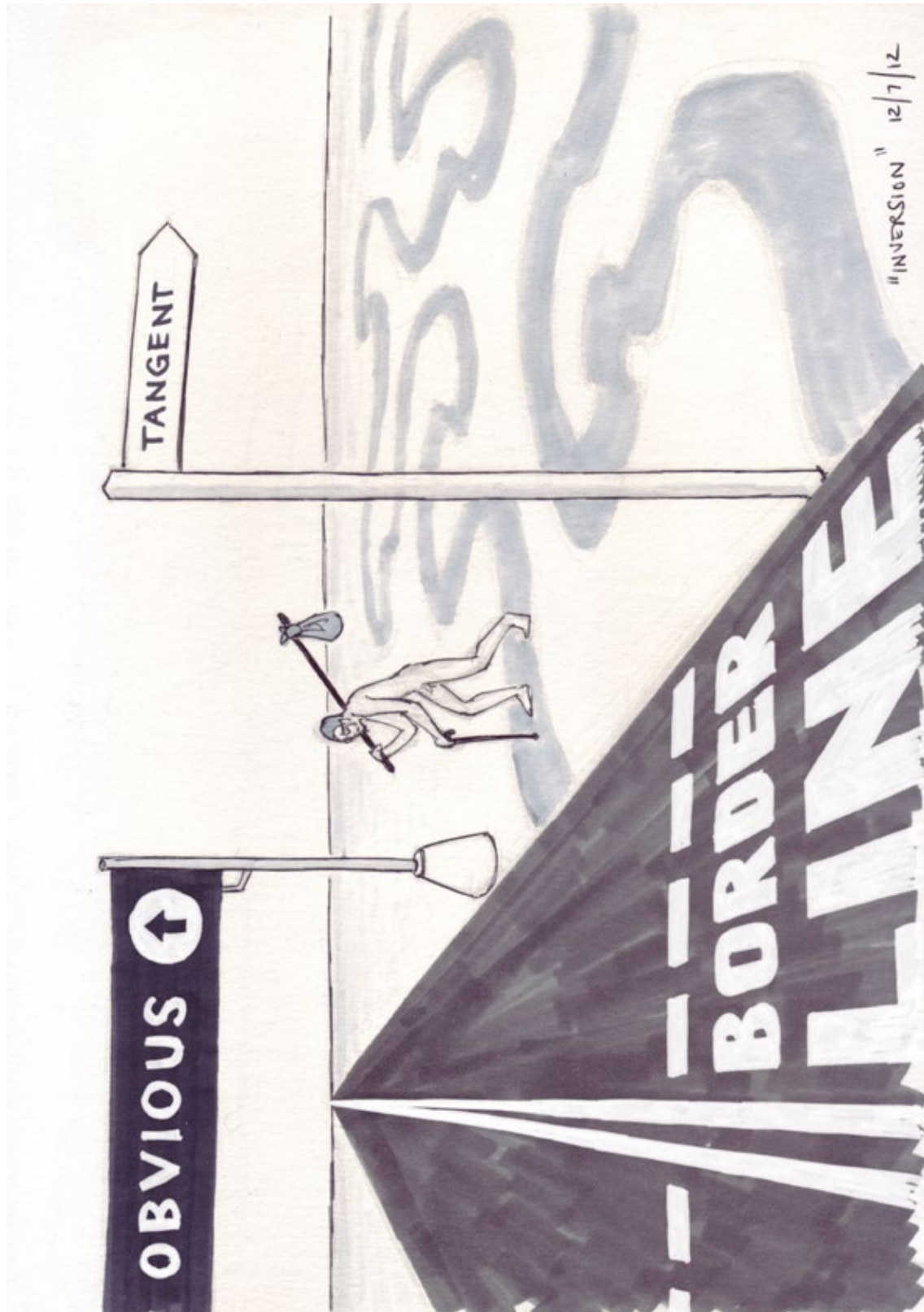
Comments

Michael | February 11, 2013

From a different viewpoint, the beauty of endless list/s is that they AREN'T completed... (ie. there's always something yet to do!)

"inversion"

July 13, 2012 | Tags: futility



Funnily enough, after the last two posts, one refuting them. Sort of.

It started back in my angsty early twenties with some drawings to show the “drudgery” of life, a slump backed figure trudging on a treadmill, or along a featureless maze of flat paths. Pointless. Repetitive. Like life was so hard as a twenty-something artist on the dole smoking weed.

It crystalised with some other ideas about the mainstream, into an image of leaving a massive, relentless highway going to an empty “normal,” to follow a meandering path to a distant mountain of obscure and difficult nirvana.

cutting off your nose...

I know there are plenty of gen x people who've gone on to great achievements, but there were more of us slackers. Lots of creative people on the dole, living in share houses, not many fulfilling jobs around. I'm super jealous of the boom time optimism and drive of gen y graduates – no design jobs, start your own agency! Being the

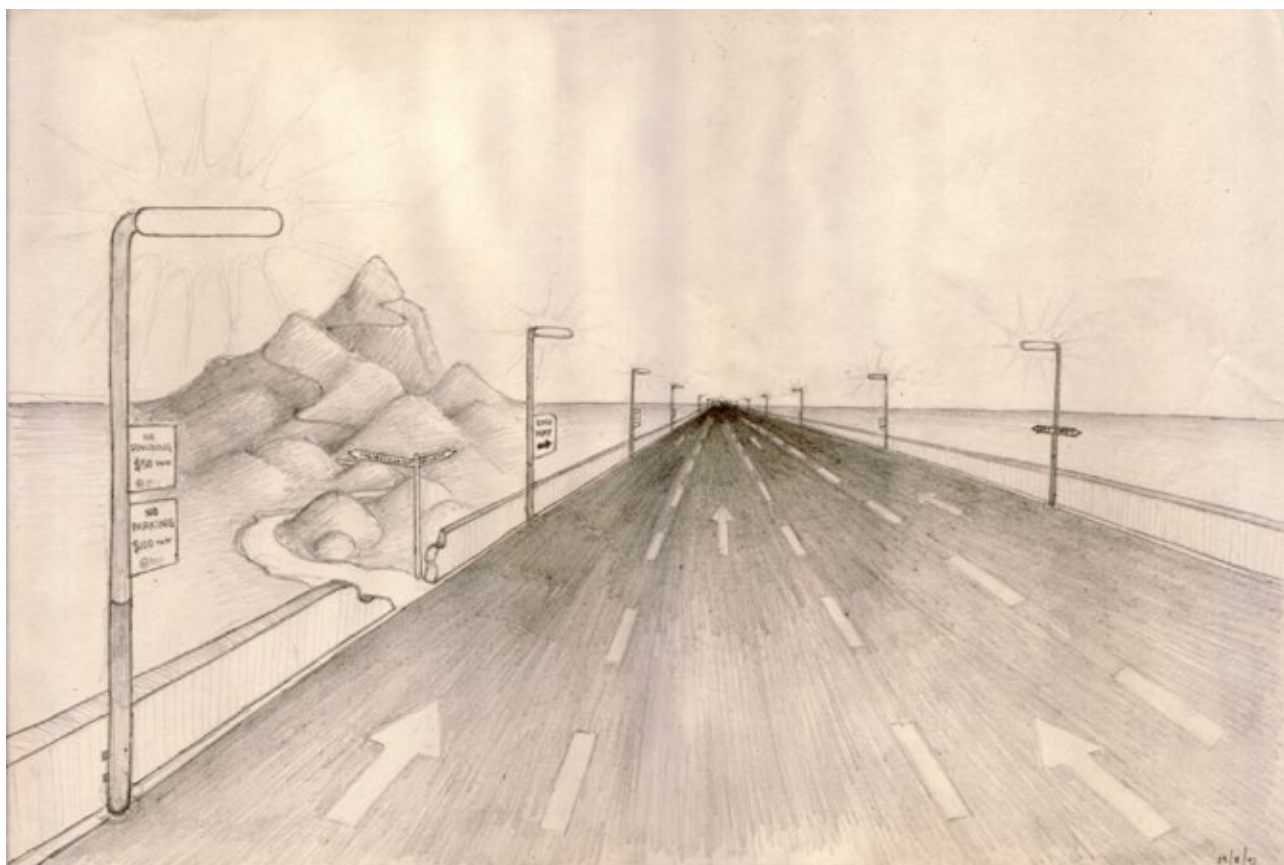
masters of their own destiny instead of bemoaning the could've been scenarios.

In those low tech days, we also had a monolithic mainstream “youth” culture and the “independent” scene. The received wisdom was that it was more credible to be an obscure indie artist/band/musician than to be successful. The kiss of death would have been your music being in a movie, or horror of horrors, an ad! Success = sellout. More like a cop out justifying self indulgence. Or just not trying.

In my brief time at uni (back to that later), I was just starting to find myself in that indie scene, long haired and ragged. Then grunge took off, jumped the shark to be popular. I could have stayed exactly as I was, been cool doing and wearing what I actually liked, but I changed and cut my hair, to not be “mainstream.”

That style guide was just for fun (mostly), but the truth is that the opposite of a negative is still a negative. Having a set of things to avoid, is just as limiting as trying to be just like something.

I had an idea for a drawing a week or so back, of me at my desk drawing, with the grim reaper



“untitled #38” 21/8/92

floating above holding his scythe under my chin, entitled “carpe diem.” Not quite as depressing as it sounds, but about the impossibility of sustaining that kind of “live every day to its fullest” drive that you get from a brush with terminal illness. I got a big burst of it when my mum had her first battle with cancer.

But in the end, it’s still a negative motivation, a whip with no carrot. You need a positive goal, a positive inspiration, a positive idea for a logo, to get anywhere.

...to spite your face

Starting to sound too whingey? To come back around to this idea, that I could have got, if not to my current destination, at least to my current direction, if I had pulled my head in and listened to some good advice. I can try to justify it that I was never given that good advice. Rather than being told after six months of visual arts that I had an attitude problem and a borderline assessment, I needed to be told to transfer to graphic design and focus on illustration.

But I was the one who proved them right by quitting! It only took me ten years to realise it... I don’t regret my journey (or all those illicit weekdays sitting in the sun, drinking coffee and reading a book while everyone else worked,) but I regret spending so much time reinventing the wheel. And damn sure I’d swap a few of those carefree days for some financial security for my two little girls.

skip to the punchline

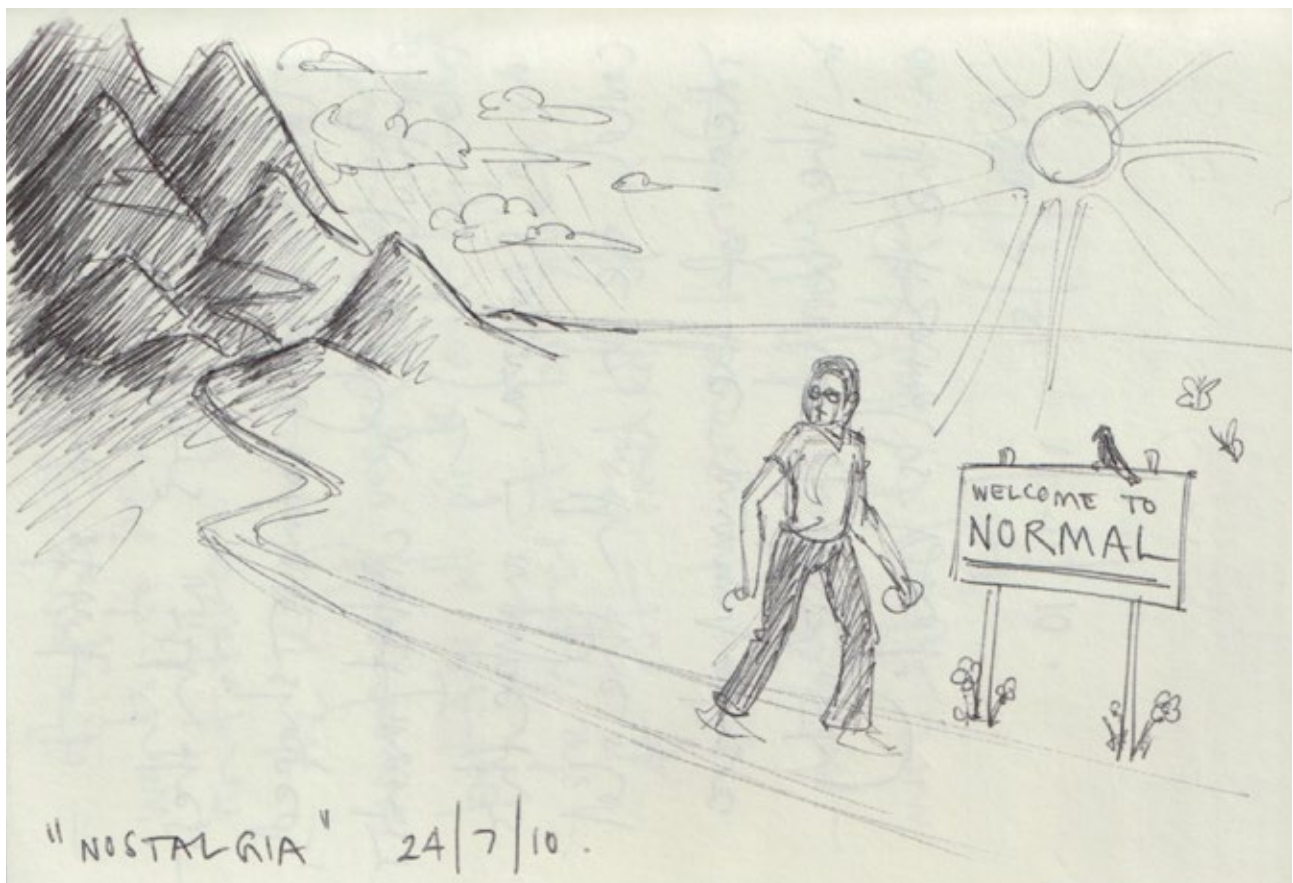
No this still isn’t a semi-naked warrior woman! Just to reaffirm to myself the positive things I need to do now: draw stuff; show it to people; connect with my creative peers; and make something of my talents.

There endeth the sermon.

Comments

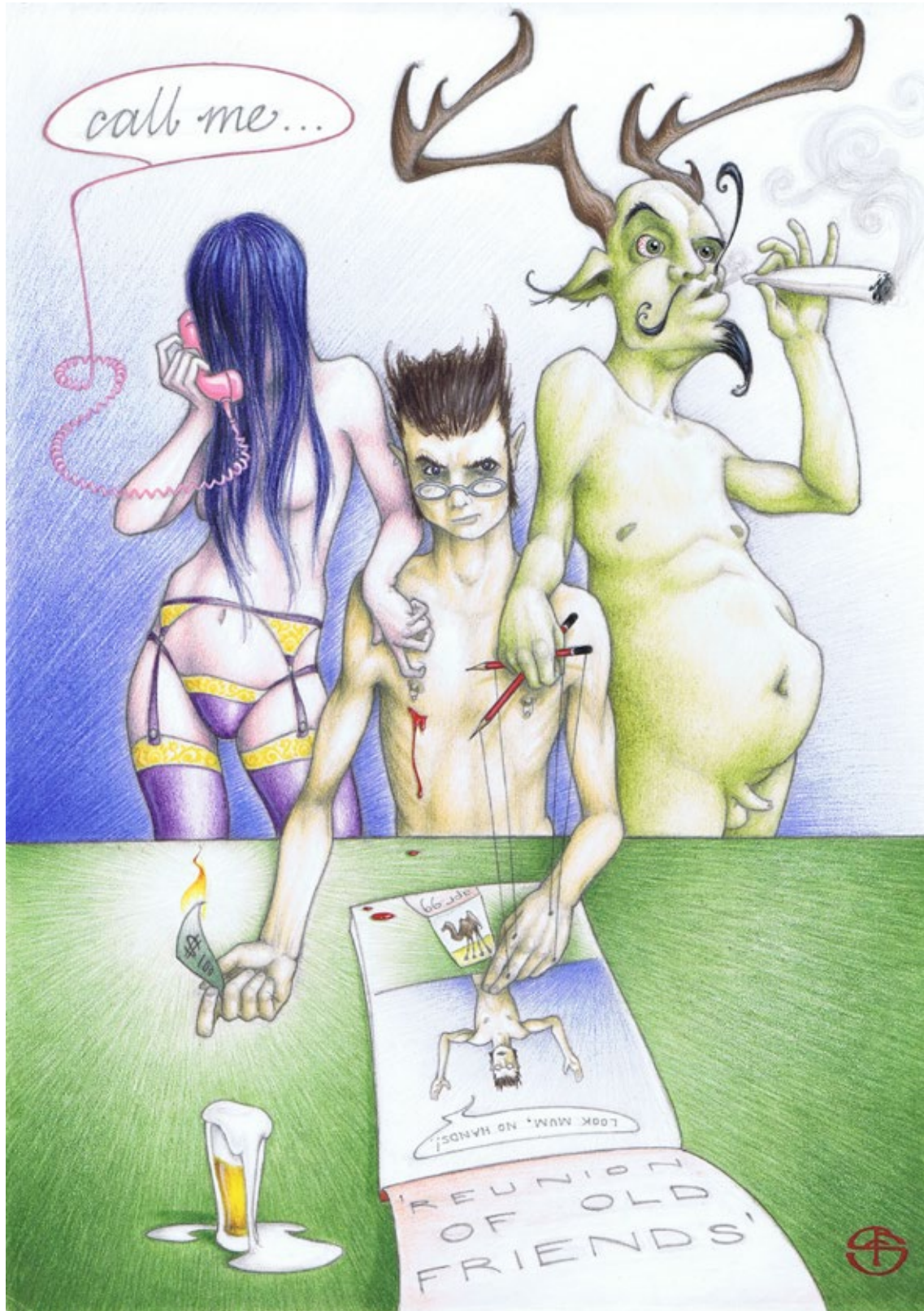
Michael | February 11, 2013

Amen.



stop, scanner time!

July 22, 2012 | Tags: booty, cock, smoking



Just to celebrate my new toy – a honkin’ big Brother A3 multifunction centre! After lusting after expensive A3 scanners (with doubtful Mac support) for a while, I discovered that there are way cheaper options. It can also fax, copy, blah blah blah and is the size of a small satellite, but dirt cheap second hand.

This golden oldie from 1999 is one of my favourite pieces, probably at the height of my pencil skills (in the last of the sequential sketchbooks I’d been filling since my mid teens) before I detoured into bigger, mostly painted pieces for a few years.

Only a “small” amount of male nudity, and some bonus cheesecake. It could have been worse, there was a lot of grim cock in sketchbook #26!

Comments

tinnedmeat | July 22, 2012

hey lucky post number 13! and a 13 year old picture...

Michael | February 11, 2013

Nicely drawn and heavily symbolic. Freud and Jung would be happy!

thundersbeard | May 4, 2013

My penis is bigger than that.

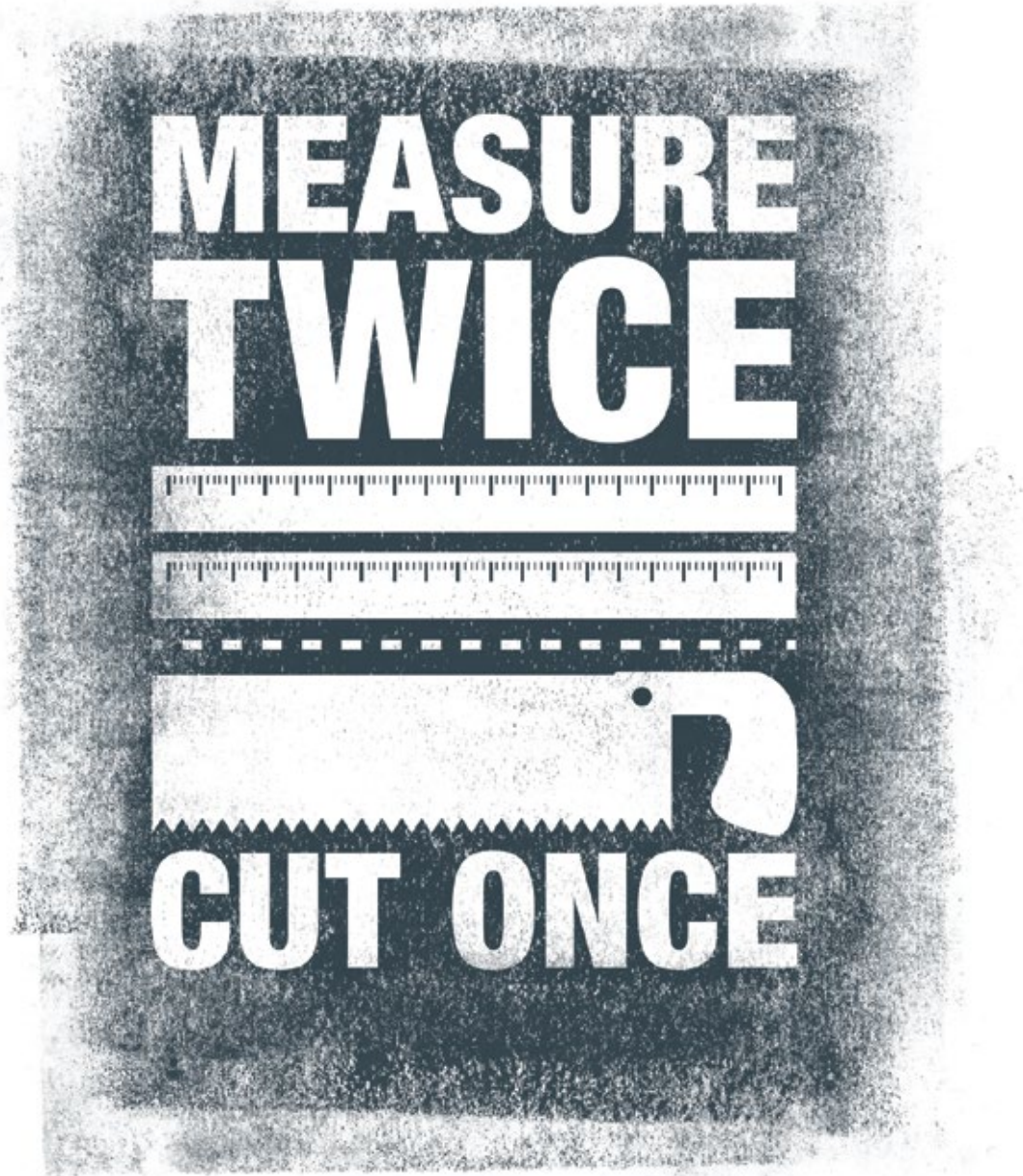
Control Fink | May 5, 2013

Weirdly enough, it was always meant to be me! After I’d drawn it I realised it looked too much like you and Yen... oops. If it was you, he would have had a beer not a joint!!



hindsight

July 25, 2012 | Tags: typography



Planning isn't sexy. As a control freak lover-of-lists, sometimes you take your own powers of organisation for granted. Wing it.

A list in your head is just another thing you've forgotten.

Comments

Michael | February 11, 2013

Sure planning isn't sexy but it's damn helpful...

"Trixen Noir 2"

November 30, 2012 | Tags: booty, smoking, tinned meat, trixen



tinned meat #4

Finally!

There was a gap of a month or two in the middle, and some of the planned embellishments got abandoned along the way... it was a first project using my light table/box, but the Copic marker rendering and then the Photoshop rendering went by the wayside.

But then again, the original more tribal-colonial version of this started back in 2008! And my first doodle for this blaxploitation revision was in 2010...

Trixen started as a parody of all those late 90's bad girl comics, and ended up more of a homage – oops. Finding a pair of magical breast implants (I was quite young at the time!) granted our mild-mannered heroine some demonic horns, tail, an extra pair of arms, and a little armour.

Then some variations on a theme over the years. Like junk food, or z-grade movies, not much redeeming value but a fun diversion. After most of this blog, probably sorely needed!

(click on the thumbnails for a larger view)

Comments

Dan | December 3, 2012

amazing work, man. You gotta find a market for this, or better still-create one.

Michael | February 11, 2013

A friend of mine asked why Trixen is always armed (literally!) with weapons...my retort was "That it looks COOL!" Long live Trixen!



Trixen original vanilla (2004)



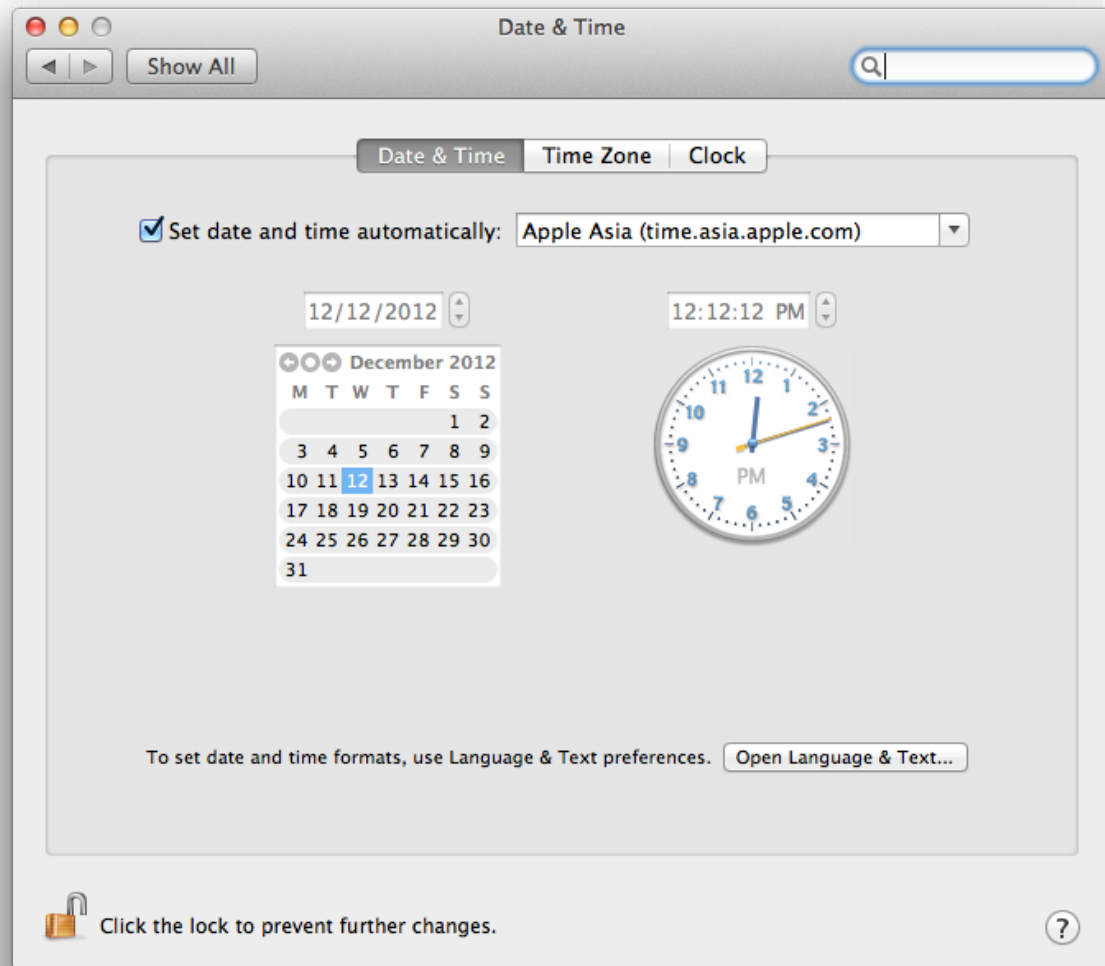
Trixen Indigo (2006)



Trixen Noir first version (2008)

synchronicity

December 12, 2012 | Tags: apocalypse



I've always loved when the numbers align, like looking at the clock in the middle of the night...

Only nine more days till the Mayan long count calendar ticks over a bak'tun. Luckily my work is knocking off for the apocalypse the night before. (Sorry boss, proof of literal clock watching on the job!)

The first post on the "beta" blog after shifting address.

Comments

Control Fink | January 2, 2013

Testing the whiz bang Jetpack plugin...

Michael | February 11, 2013

I too noticed the date alignment unlike others however I wasn't obsessed enough to check the clock as well! Fittingly enough, I was on my motorbike riding home when the apocalypse was due...

2013

2013 resolution

January 7, 2013 | Tags: resolutions, typography

I(a)uncheon meat



★ DISCLAIMER: NOT ENDORSED BY TONY ROBBINS

Comments

Michael. | February 11, 2013

Good to see you made a visual list of this year's resolutions. I've got mine in my head which is perhaps not the best idea...

"pestilence"

January 20, 2013 | Tags: cancer, cock, death, shit, tshirts



Just in case anyone thought the blog was getting soft.

In honour of tomorrow's colonoscopy, a flashback from nearly four years ago, and my first one. To paraphrase the old Bali tshirt – my brother went to Mexico and all he brought me back was this lousy gastro-intestinal parasite. *Blastocystis hominis* has similar symptoms to bowel cancer, so off I went.

The scans don't bother me until a couple of days before. At the most blasé end of the spectrum, they're a formality. At the most melodramatic, you find out if you're going to die.

At least a cystoscopy doesn't require three shots of industrial strength laxative!

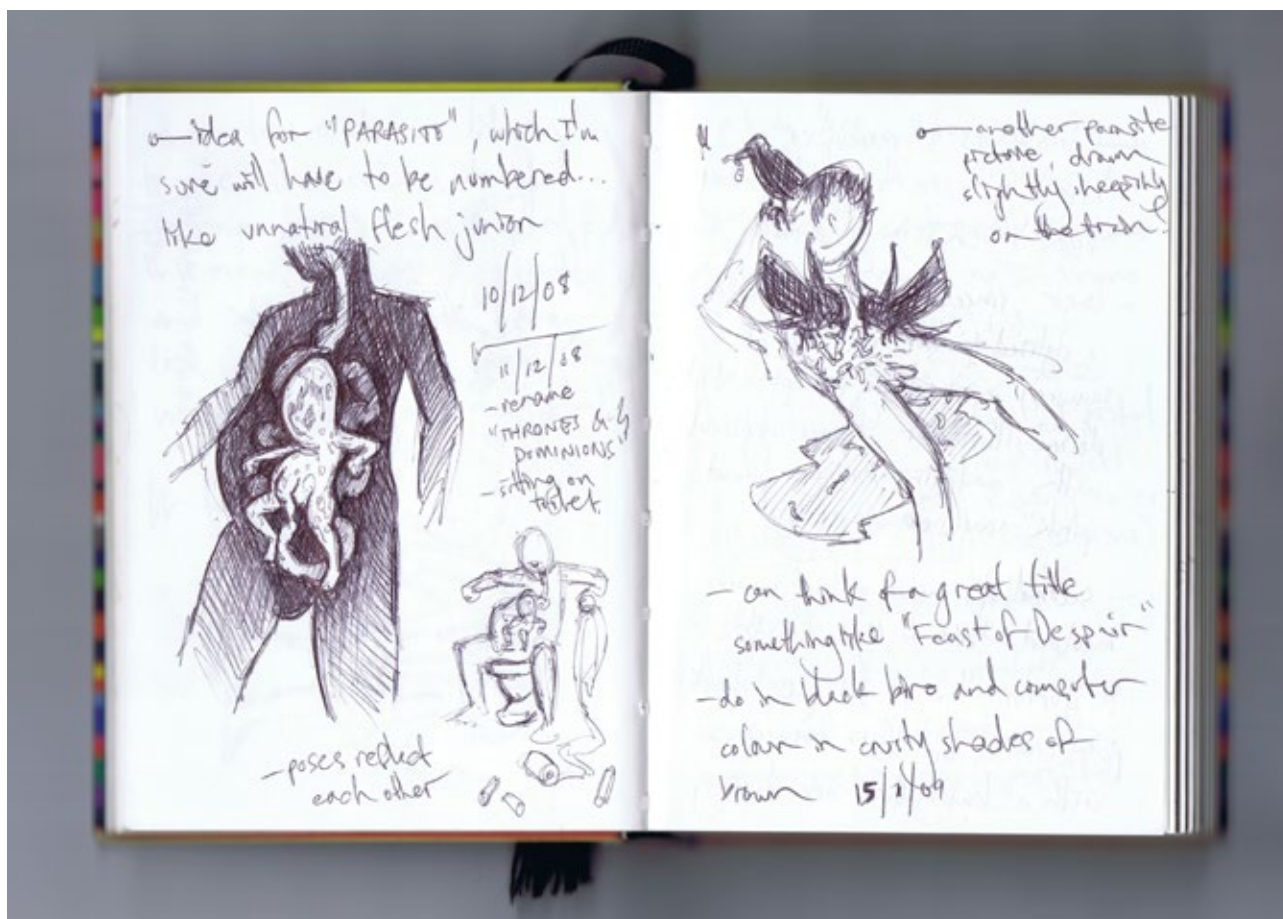
Comments

Michael | February 11, 2013

My Brother sometimes gives me the shits but never literally...

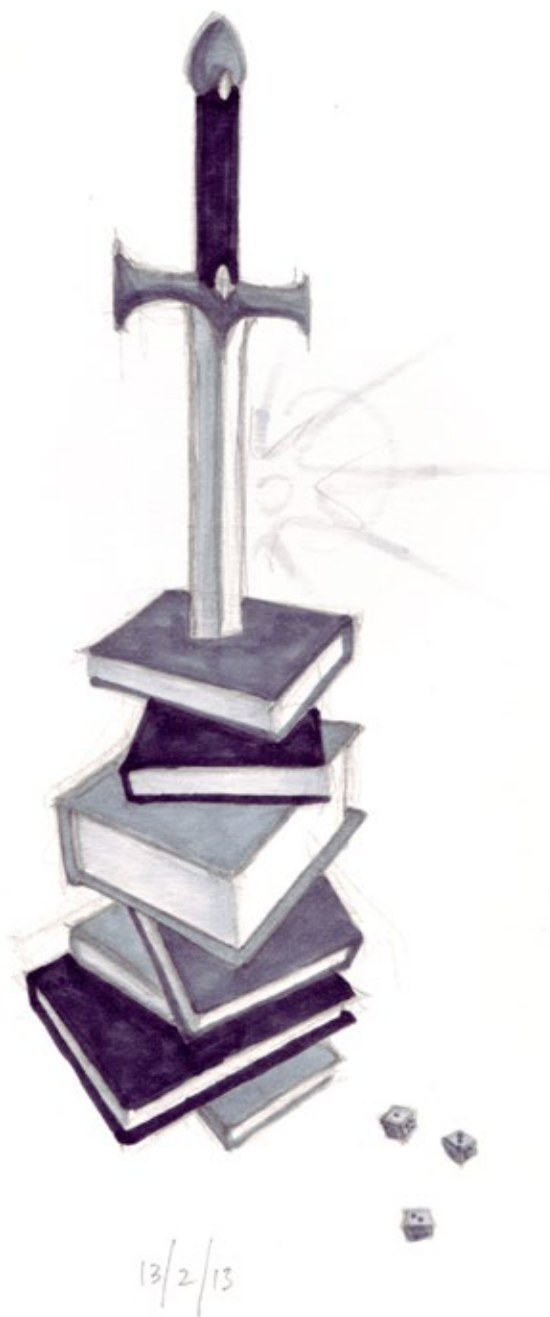
Control Fink | February 11, 2013

Boom tish! You've been commenting up a storm, nice to know someone's out there reading through...



rolling the dice

February 14, 2013 | Tags: D&D, dice, fantasy



I'm a latecomer to the works of Ursula K Le Guin, finally getting around to the Earthsea books.

It's been interesting to read "classic high fantasy," written before the Dungeons & Dragons tipping point into genre: where the antecedents are folk tales not Tolkien; where the magic is ambiguous not formularised and disposable; and most of all where the prose is formal, poetic and epic.

Don't get me wrong, I love Tolkien, and realistically it is the benchmark, but it cast a long elf/dwarf/dragon shadow over fantasy writing. Some of those cliches are easing off, but the return-of-the-ancient-bad-guy-in-the-east remains!

Funny how at a time when reading and publishing are meant to be waning, that there seem to be more books and authors. I have no theory for why franchise style series have taken off, whether the change is driven by risk averse publishing or readers seeking familiarity. It has certainly been entertaining to see the proliferation of vampire romance novels in the wake of the Twilight series, and now the sub-genre of bondage books inspired by the Fifty Shades series! Black covers and shiny details replacing the bodice ripping hunks of last century...

Even stranger how is how much "Robert Ludlum" titled work is being published despite him being dead. Surely you read a work because you like the author's style, not because it's a brand on the cover, but that probably seems a little quaint as a concept!

(One for the subscribers!)

Comments

thundersbeard | April 27, 2013

How far into the series are you? I read Wizard of Earthsea the same year I read Lord of the Rings, Grade 6. Probably the first fantasy books I consciously read. I remember finding the second book pretty scary, and the third book pretty bleak and kind of depressing, in that I'm just gonna sit here and ruminate about this book I just read kind of fashion.

Control Fink | April 28, 2013

I've read the first two, and avoided binging to save the last. Writing your main character back in halfway through, awesome. (I always avoided it because the cover art made me think it was a children's novel! "The Left Hand of Darkness" is one of the best scifi novels I've read...)

thundersbeard | May 4, 2013

Couple of days after you replied, I was moving some bookcases around downstairs and actually came across the Earthsea Quartet, an omnibus I bought Kylie a few years ago. I'll have to finally read the last one. I actually don't think I've read any Ursula science fiction beyond a short story that was more anthropology than science fiction, but I'll have to give "Left Hand of Darkness" a try on your recommendation.

Control Fink | May 5, 2013

I never knew there was a fourth!

real and fake

February 27, 2013 | Tags: whatever



This was going to be an article about my secret love of Windows 8.

Playing around with a touch screen PC in a shop, tooling back and forth through the Metro interface, I fell in love. I loved that it had no bevels, drop shadows, textures or other skeuomorphism. I loved that it had been burnt to the ground then rebuilt for touch and screen (yes I know the old poxy interface is underneath and undermines my whole premise!)

I was struck by the tale of two tech companies with visionary founders underpinning them.

Apple gets all the cred for simplicity and design, and had a founder who held the company that he personified till the utter last minute possible, and left a gaping hole when he let go. Yet somehow, the further the company and its products went, the more ornament was laid over the top of the function, till some of the Apple-isms became standard – product reflection anyone? I've disliked each version of OS X more than the last.

Windows was the evil empire, with a string of awful unusable versions, but with a founder who left and allowed his company to be renewed. The new Microsoft logo epitomises their new thinking: clean, uncluttered and looking forward. There are no bouncing, glassy, beveled and reflecting icons in Windows 8. No leather and torn paper. Apple's old turf.

But then it tied into a lot of other things in my head.

A while back I had been holding on to a Ruskin inspired philosophy of truth to your materials: a website is digital, there should be no drop shadows. (Rumour has it that his marriage was unconsummated because after viewing so many classical statues of women, he freaked out to see a real woman's pubic hair, so perhaps his idea of real is a little wonky.)

I realised that looking at a white screen is like staring at snow in the sun, blank and harsh, and that some subtle depth trickery actually aids readability. It started with a little texture here and there, until I was planning my "serious" folio site with faux painted backgrounds and push pins. Then Windows 8 showed me those simple blue boxes with an X in the corner.

Do "real" and "fake" have any more value as labels than "authentic" or "hand-made?" Things sometimes become default because they're the most workable solution. When I design a brochure, I don't agonise over making it DL. Everyone instantly recognises a web button by its emboss/gradient/drop shadow.

Get over it.

Comments

Michael | February 28, 2013

I must admit this post has a touch of William Gibson in it's style and content... Have you read that book yet?!

Control Fink | March 8, 2013

I did just start it yesterday, and weirdly enough despite being a collection of non-fiction essays, it reads like one of his novels. "The Man in the High Castle" was pretty phenomenal too.

memento mori

March 19, 2013 | Tags: cancer, death

Today we were taking my eldest daughter out for a treat, her very first movie at the cinema, Cinderella.

Not far from it, I pointed out a landmark from my childhood, a kindergarten with crazy sculptures of a copyright infringing Yogi Bear and Huckleberry Hound. I told her we used to look out for it when we were visiting my grandma, her grandma's mummy, it meant we were nearly there. Just around the corner is a hospital, and my daughter asked me if I had any memories of that.

I didn't know it as a boy, but a couple of years later my grandma would die of bowel cancer at that hospital. I also didn't know that 35 or so years later, I would have chemotherapy there.

The other night I was looking around to find other blogs about illustration and cancer. Reading one about a woman fighting aggressive breast cancer, I felt guilty and a growing sense of unreality. I never felt sick, never really had any symptoms, and had a very low level cancer. I feel like a bit of a fake when I tell people.

I do have memories of that hospital. I remember listening to the same depressing album as I drove to treatment each week, and hitting a certain song at the same point of each journey. I remember driving through lunchtime city traffic, yelling the lyrics as I cried. All the fear I was hiding from my wife, and from myself, came out that once a week.

There was another landmark on the drive back from my grandma's house. At night, craning round to look out the back window of our car, at the top of a certain hill the streetlights made the shape of a kangaroo. There used to be a huge neon bottle cap on the roof of the Gepps Cross Hotel, and that was its eye.

sketchbook #23

April 3, 2013 | Tags: classic stuff, smoking



To celebrate a small chunk of the goal
of scanning my old sketchbooks.

One chosen at random, full of the pleasure
and pain of my first real relationship, and
stumbling out of a long dole-bludging,
dope-smoking rut. (Some nice thematic
symmetry... check out that hand lettering!)



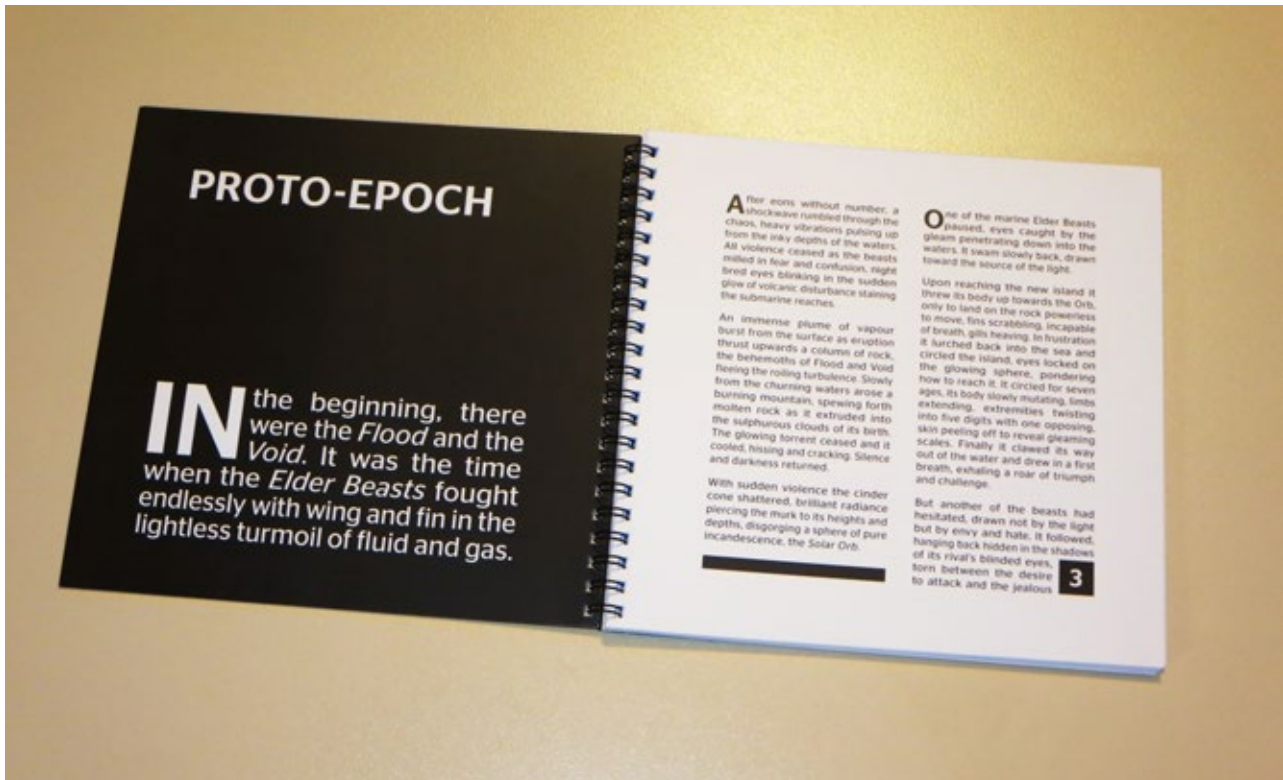
"soul purge"



cover with title list

desktop publishing

April 10, 2013 | Tags: apocalypse, fantasy, typography



After a couple of months of html and css I was desperate for some typesetting.

In my late teens I began work on an autobiographical fantasy comic, as you do, and part of that involved writing a full mythic history of the world it was set in.

When studying design much later, I had been inspired to set it up as a small booklet, and laboriously created a stylistically confused layout, complete with distressed

textures, hand-drawn rune titles and the body text set in an "antique" serif.

The self-imposed challenge was to create a new version using all the layout concepts of an old manuscript (drop caps, etc) but without any of the faux styling, purely typographic.

With the borrowing of toner and wire-binding from my boss, it was reborn in the flesh!

[Click to download pdf version \(1.1mb\)](#)

"caffeinated planet"

April 15, 2013 | Tags: booty, coffee



tinned meat #6

An ode to caffeine... and Robby the Robot.

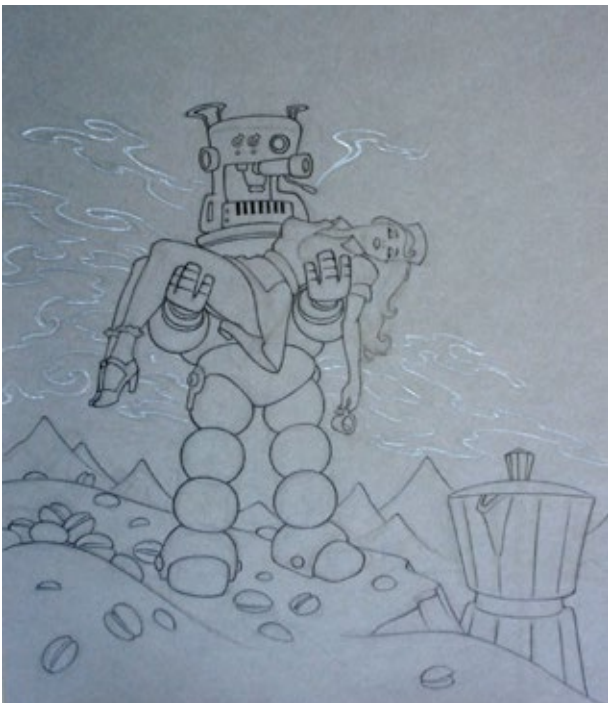
This was always a project I looked back on as one that got away. About six years ago, after laboriously painting to a point I didn't like, I gave up on it and paint as a medium. I recently found a photo of just the pencil work, and it was back on the hook!

(Couldn't find a credit anywhere for who painted the original **"Forbidden Planet"** movie poster.)

Comments

thundersbeard | May 4, 2013

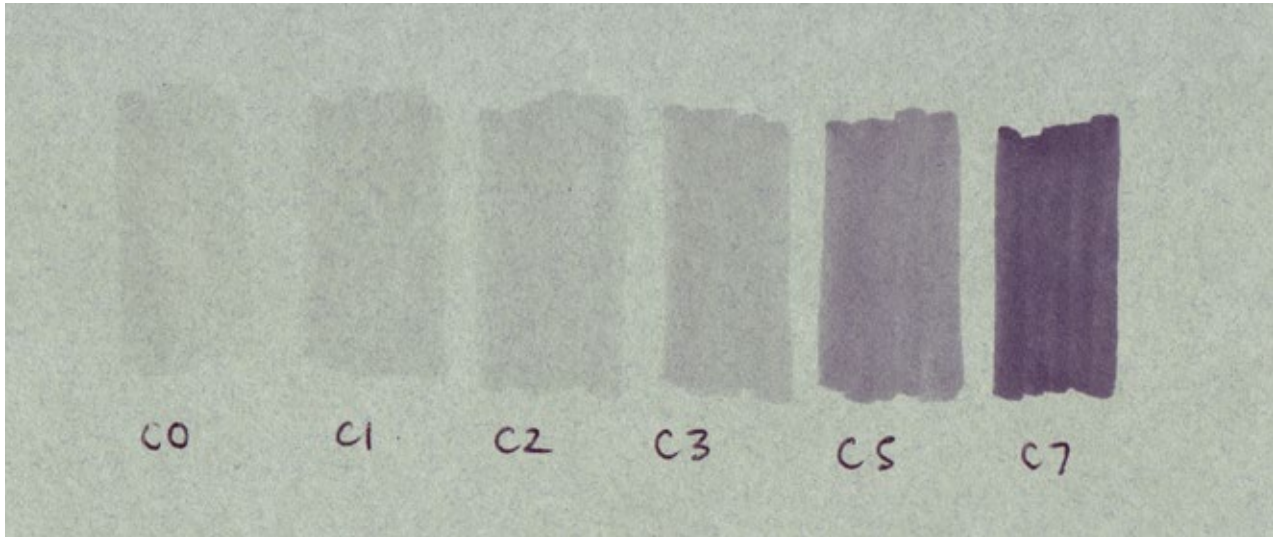
After years (years ago) of hearing about the detailed backstory and bible you had created for Raven, it was amazing to actually read this. Great format turning a detailed story bible into an exquisitely detailed story bible. I would love a physical copy of this (hint hint). Now, I can't wait to see how you write and illustrate Trixxen's story bible, haha.



caffeinated pencils

monochrome vs monotone

April 21, 2013 |



My wife laughed when I said I'd bought some grey paper and grey pencils to go with my grey markers...

The glass half empty / half full question can depend on your cultural tradition. I can appreciate the beauty of a Zen garden, but not the meditative value of repetitively raking gravel. In Greek mythology, a punishment in hell is pushing a boulder up a hill every day, only to see it roll down again.

I'm more with Sisyphus than the monks.

Comments

thundersbeard | May 4, 2013

Very vivid. Surely you have enough of these cool illustrations, and anecdotes to go with them, that you could post one a week? Set a goal! I would love to see some of your RPG characters on here. And, maybe, some of the Sputnik days stuff? Embrace your blog, Control Fink, embrace it!

Control Fink | May 5, 2013

Been a bit slack the last couple of weeks, but I'm trying not to post too much old stuff to make myself draw new stuff!

Was looking around to see if I could find the old Super Squadron rulebooks. I keep thinking about the Juggler, and how his frog knocked out one of your henchmen with a good roll! (As un-monotone as it gets!)

"sequence"

May 14, 2013 | Tags: cancer, Copic markers, death, fantasy, fear

This was going to be about death.

A few weeks back, I was listening to a [Pink Floyd album](#), one of the seminal bands of my late teens and early twenties. I looked at the date of the album, and realised that they'd essentially broken up 25 odd years ago, and two of them were dead.

It rolled into a few other things, like needing to piss more often (a symptom of my original diagnosis,) and lying awake through a patch of hard insomnia, reading a couple of grim books.

I'm not scared of being dead, nothingness. I'm scared of not having enough time to finish all the projects in my head. I'm scared of not seeing my beautiful daughters grow into women. And I'm most scared of finding out a short prognosis. I don't want to see it coming.

The last book was the [third of the Earthsea series](#). No overblown demonic villain with thuggish henchmen, but an elusive enemy luring people with their fear of death. A quiet book about decline, but also about the need to embrace death to embrace life, with a colourless stasis as the alternative.

I'd hoped this would have a more inspirational ending. Oops.

(Drawing this did help burst the boil!)

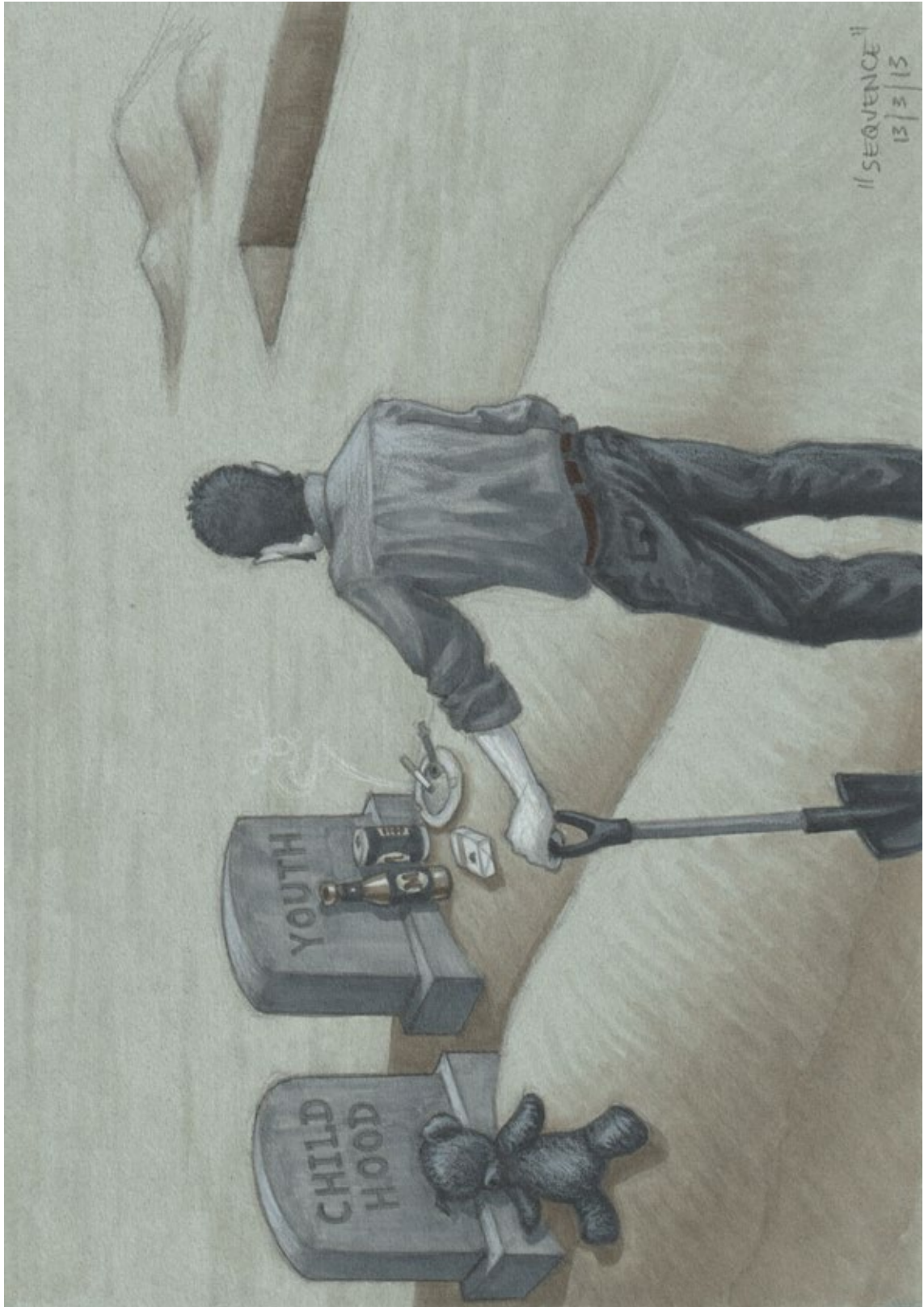
Comments

thundersbeard | June 3, 2013

Simply fantastic illustration. I hope you are okay?

Control Fink | June 4, 2013

Hasn't been much light reading here of late... Got another scan coming up soon, so it should all be good. It's hard not to get paranoid sometimes. On a lighter note, you should appreciate the brand of the bottle and can!



greener grass

May 20, 2013 | Tags: luck



My neighbour has too much spare time.

She's spent the last two days in her garden. All day. She sits out on her front porch reading. For hours at a time.

We have two girls under five years old. We're lucky to get an hour of spare time after they've gone to bed. I treasure my bus ride to work as time to read.

I feel like a starving man watching a glutton leave dishes half eaten...

She works from home, with no partner or children. She can hear our children's tantrums while she's working in her garden.

I'm certain she's not jealous of our life. But somehow I don't envy her either...

(Something a bit brighter to break the monotony! Funny how children's drawings are always way more interesting than adult's fake ones.)

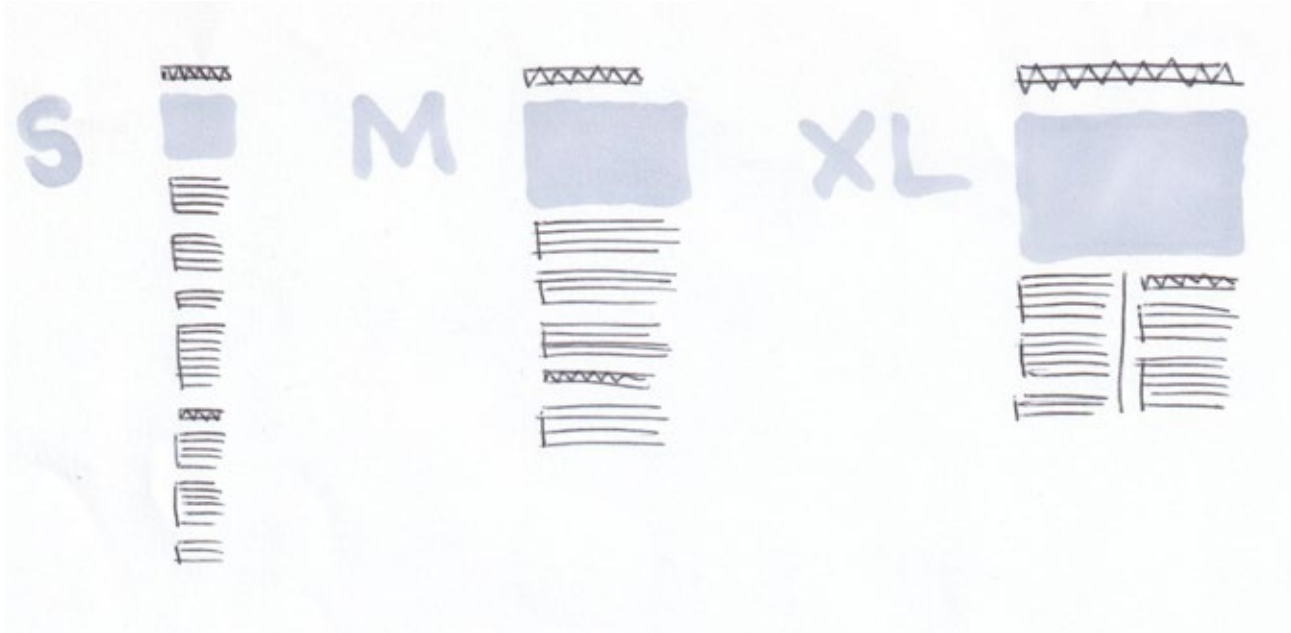
Comments

Dan | May 21, 2013

Curious what she does for a living?

now with 67.5% more responsiveness

June 9, 2013 |



This 960 grid seems like the new 800 x 600. I'm getting sick of looking at a strip down the middle of my widescreen monitor. (Or horizontal strips of colour to disguise the fact.) I also wanted to give the landscape images equal weight and space. Of all the projects bubbling away in my head, this kept floating to the top. Styling your own blog is not much more productive than outright procrastination, but ever since I read about the CSS multi-column property it's been keeping me awake at night! As well as some honking big borders and solid panels, you won't see much until your browser is wider than 1460... (Sorry Internet Explorer people, you get either nothing or no columns unless you're v10!)

<boring stuff>

I was going to strip out all the pseudo-responsive breakpoints for different devices, make it "pure" grid and percentage responsive. But I did some testing on an iPad, and using purpose coded layouts worked better than

some scaling within the viewport. That and WordPress seems to build so many nested divs that I could only get fixed widths to work. Got no idea who gets the 870 wide version though...

</boring stuff>

edit: now mostly redundant.. .
[see here for details.](#)

Comments

thundersbeard | June 25, 2013

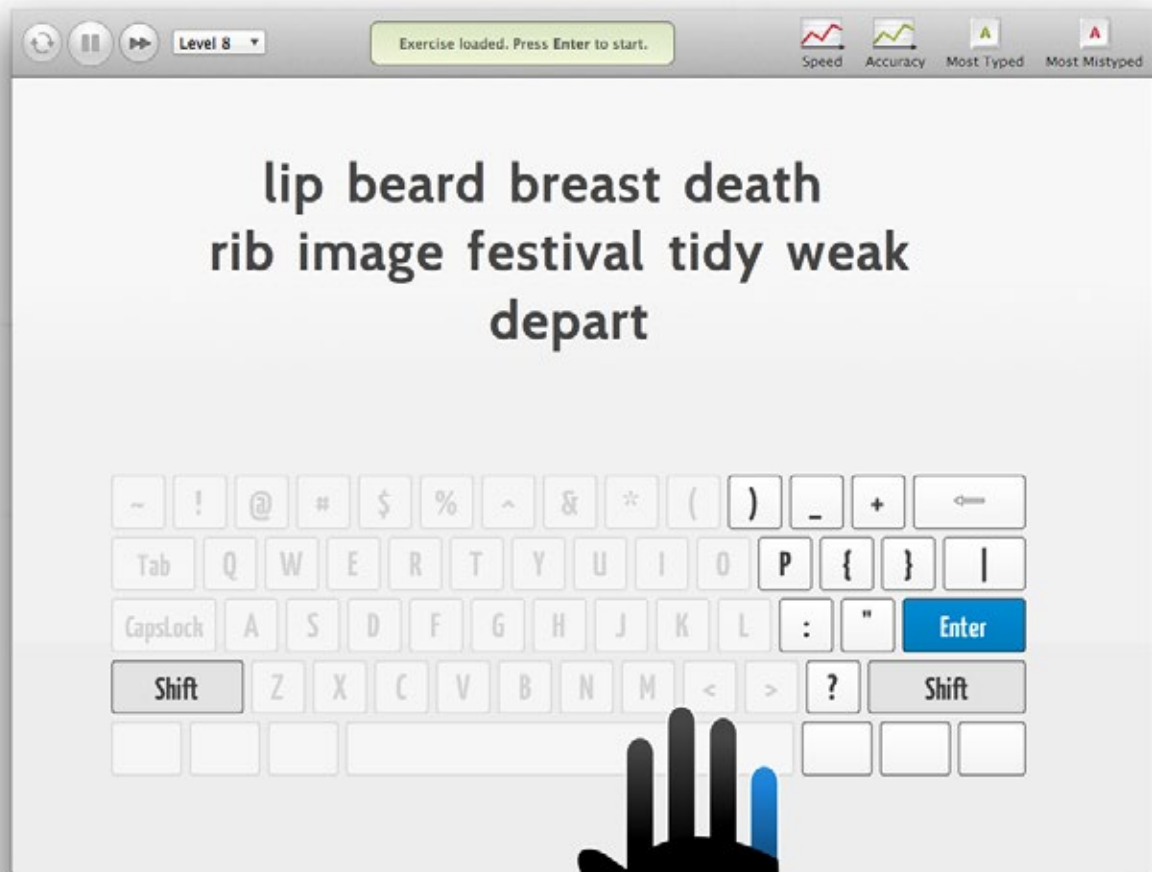
But is code still chocolate? Or have you discovered code is vanilla?

Control Fink | July 1, 2013

In the end I think code is like beer: disgusting when you first try it, but you keep doing it because everyone else is... then one day it is delicious!

typing tutor haiku

June 11, 2013 |



camera shy

July 19, 2013 |



**YOUR
DATA
IS HERE**

There was a newly discovered tribe who thought photographs would steal their souls. Am I being any more logical in my distrust of Google?

I'm not paranoid enough to think they're going to spy on me, I just resent my browsing habits being tracked and sold on as data. And find it a bit spooky to see my recent visits coming back as ads. Rational.

But now Firefox is a bloated old dog, and Chrome is so shiny and fast. And I want to use Edge Code (or Brackets. Ha, an unintended typographic pun.) Plus my soul is already floating in the iClouds.

I might not sign in though...

"frazzle"

August 28, 2013 |



One of life's eternal conundrums:
when do you have the energy to draw
about being excessively tired?

The bones underneath should have been
vertebrae to symbolise a bloody sore neck,
but they wouldn't have made such a neat
campfire, and I get some artistic license.
Finally got to use my other new toy, a **Posca**
white "paint" marker, to draw them too...

#5

September 11, 2013 | Tags: cystoscopy



Strictly speaking, this is wristband #6 in
my collection, but the fifth check up.

All clear.

I got some value for money, had a vasectomy
thrown in – now with 50% less calories!
Hence the "cryptic" previous post.

genre cheesecake

September 14, 2013 | Tags: booty, fantasy





Gladiator scarred-beefcake, something for the ladies

To “celebrate” the snip I went out at lunch to get myself a treat. I was aiming for a \$4 marker and ended up detouring through a new bookshop with an impulse buy on the way. A big hardcover collection of work from the king of the 50s pinup artists, [Gil Elvgren](#).

To celebrate the book, something from the archives, character designs from my dormant magnum opus fantasy comic.

Back in the day, they used to say that too much action (especially self inflicted) would make you weak through dissipating the vitamins in your sperm. Much better to join the scouts and save it up to be a healthy young man. Expect me to be much more energetic.

I did get the marker too.

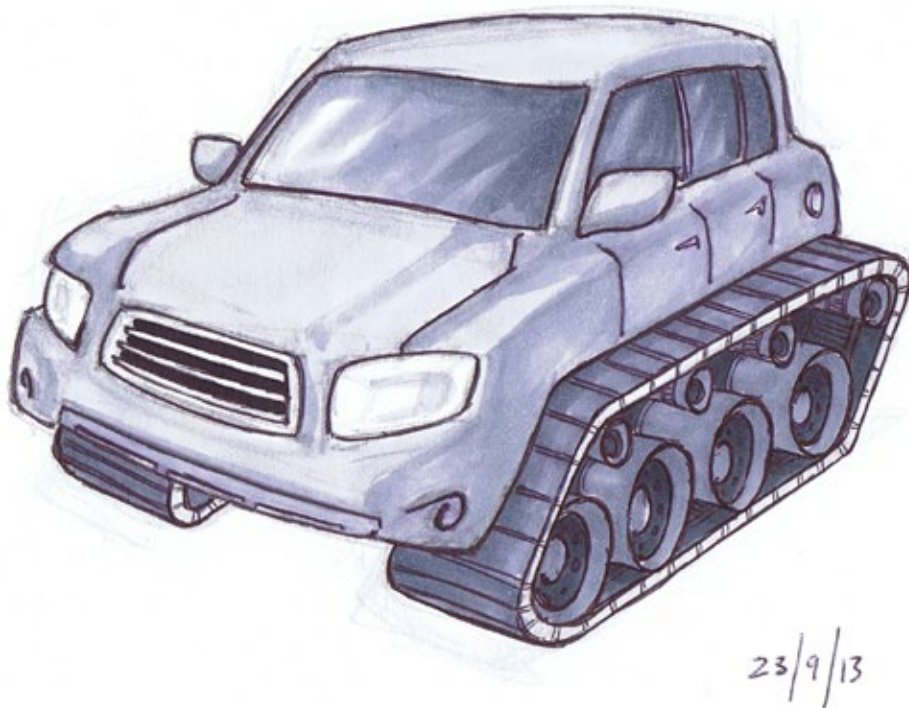
Comments

Dan | September 15, 2013

cheesecake?? if you like Gil Elvgren, you might like the painting we have at home by Dennis Ropar – 50’s popish.

maneuvers

September 23, 2013 |



If having children is like joining a masonic style club, buying an SUV is like gaining access to the VIP area.

Ours drives like a tank, and the blind spot is so far away you need a camera to see it, but it's so roomy I can only just rest my elbow on the door! So don't curse that bus blocking your view or taking three tries to park, it may well be me...

Comments

Mike | September 27, 2013

But what is it? We are on our 2nd SUV (a captiva) . I drove our first into a tree. (a territory)

Control Fink | September 27, 2013

A Kluger... with a third row of seats!

Mike | September 28, 2013

It does sound like a tank! Have you read/ heard of leviathan by Scott westersomething. Epic diesel punk alternate world series; sounds like something from that!

"muse#4"

October 27, 2013 | Tags: booty, classic stuff, inspiration, work



This picture started out a little whiny...

"it's so hard to get motivated"

"I love being an artist!"

Then I tracked down the first in the sequence that I'd forgotten about, all youthful exuberance...

"you can't hide your influences"

The second was a rebellion against all the "serious" art I was doing to get into visual arts at VCA...

...I didn't get in.



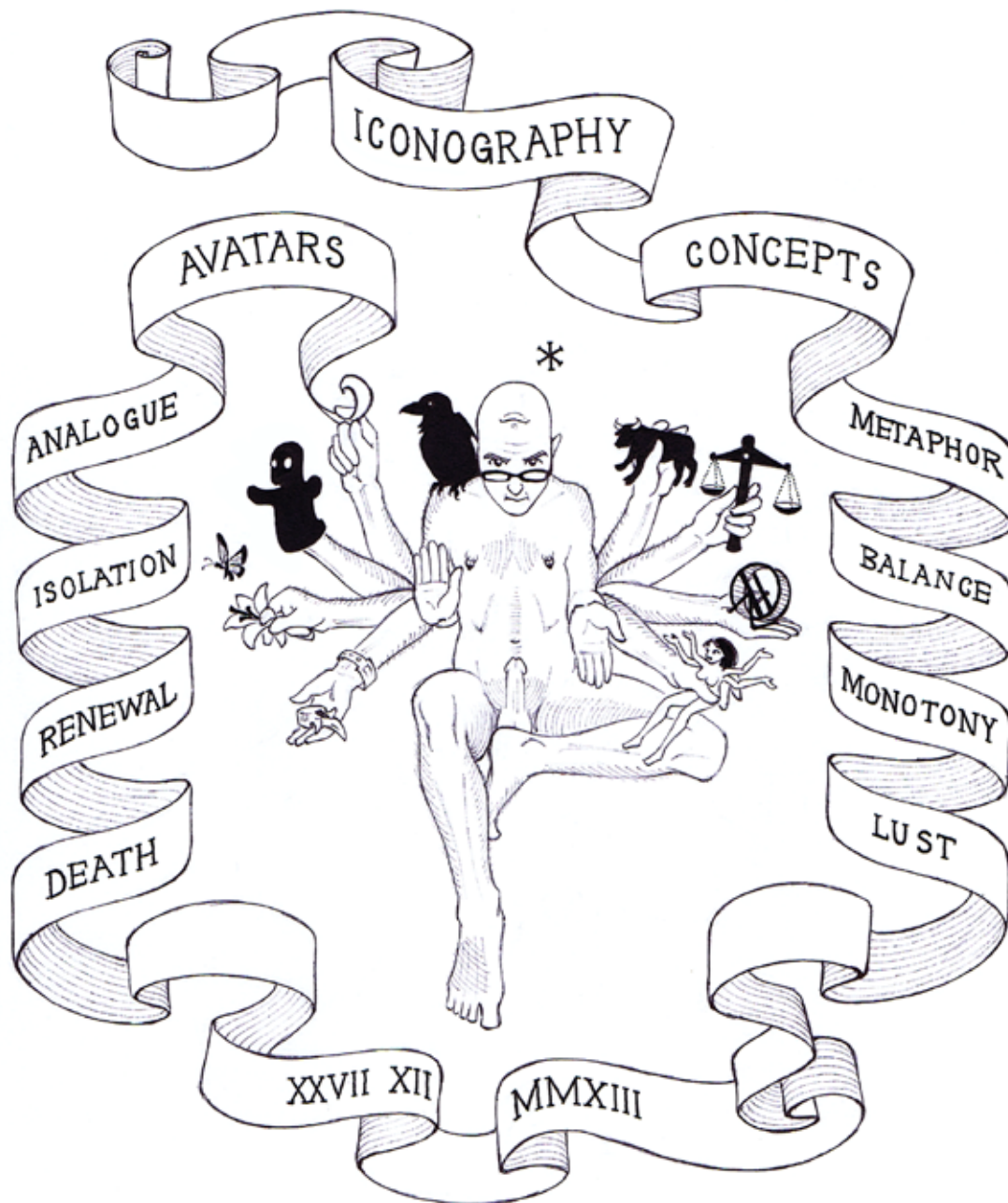
"get on with it!"

The third was once I was settled into my first design job, and found those illustration juices leaking out the edges. Inspiration has never been my problem. Yes, I know there's no muse of painting, there's a couple for prose and one for astronomy even, so I made it up.



"iconography"

December 30, 2013 | Tags: booty, classic stuff, cock, D&D, death, futility



Most of my work is about myself.

I've been using some of these symbols for so long they've been progressively boiled down to a few details, whilst becoming increasingly complex in meaning. For the two or three people who've come along for the ride, they

might make (some!) sense, but for everyone else they can be a little confusing...

Hence a primer of sorts, a beginner's guide to some of the main themes.

concepts



metaphor

I'd always enjoyed the stubbornness of my Zodiac, Taurus. So it was a foregone conclusion when I first saw the winged bull symbol of Saint Luke (patron saint of artists), and crest of the medieval guild of artists (with a bonus parallax infinity of shields on shields.) I adopted it as my own heraldry and eventual tattoo.

So whenever you see a bull, it's me, or often more specifically, my creativity (or lack thereof!)



balance

This is probably the most persistent of all of the symbols, about keeping everything in my life under control. Generally it only comes out when things are only just under control, or just hitting the fan.

I've juggled love interests, drug choices, work/life balance and even just the ideas of self control.





monotony

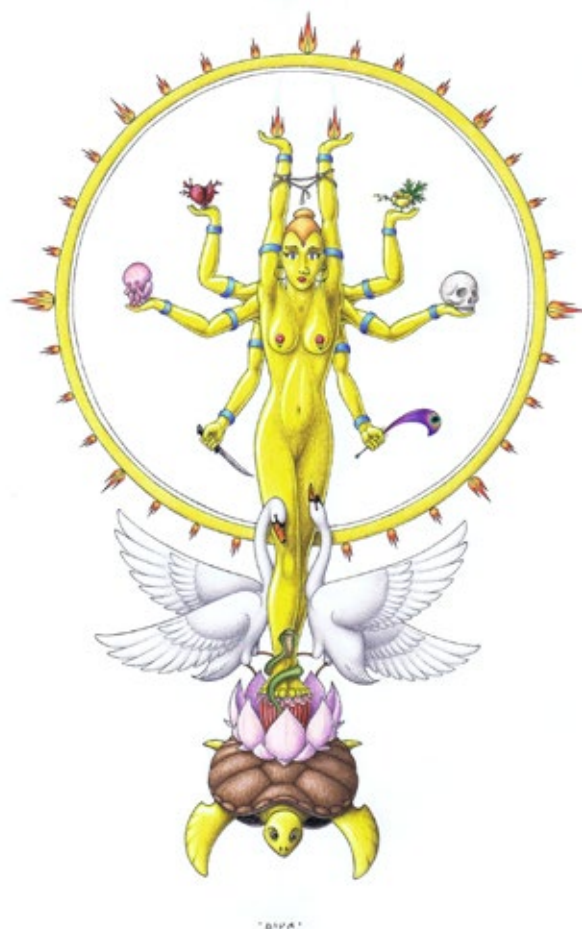
I wrote about this one a little while back, a kind of trudging, slumped-back defeatism. The same pose with different props: walking through a maze of paths on an endless flat plain; running on a treadmill or in a wheel; dragging a ball and chain.

All have that idea of drudgery and futility, but with different flavours... the maze referring to life direction, the treadmill more to work, and the ball and chain about relationships. They do have the occasional redemption, with a bit of stoicism thrown in!



lust

Oddly enough I'd never made the connection between some of the early multi-armed goddess style allegories I drew early on, and Trixen, until I started work on this. I certainly have a long history of sublimating my frustrations into detailed and objectified illustrations!



avatars



death

I had a bunch of earlier pedantic avatars, self-conscious and artificial. This one just kept coming back to haunt me after the original drawing, until anything with sickly green skin, or protruding vertebra was nailing this concept: the decay and temptation of addiction.

It was a fear of death, but strangely enough, not really about the fear of getting old.



renewal

A combo avatar and concept, the latter being the shedding of dead layers to reveal the new life. This idea became quite important for me learning to let go of the past and accept change, inspiring my unofficial motto "The flower must die, for the seed to fall."

The avatar mutated, the butterfly/flower man eventually symbolising shallow and narcissistic pleasure, the initial reborn confidence turning sour.





isolation

The most intense, and probably the most short lived of all the avatars, literally born in its first appearance from a sense of profound isolation at the time. A defence mechanism that embraced the sense of alienness.



analogue

He started off as an AD&D character when I was 14 and grew from there. A cross-breed elf not accepted by either of his parent races, chasing an unrequited love and chased by one in return... tragic teen angst but still meaningful to me nearly 30 years later.

It never crosses into my "mainstream" work, crows and ravens are just standard symbols of doom, but exists in its own self contained universe of symbolism.



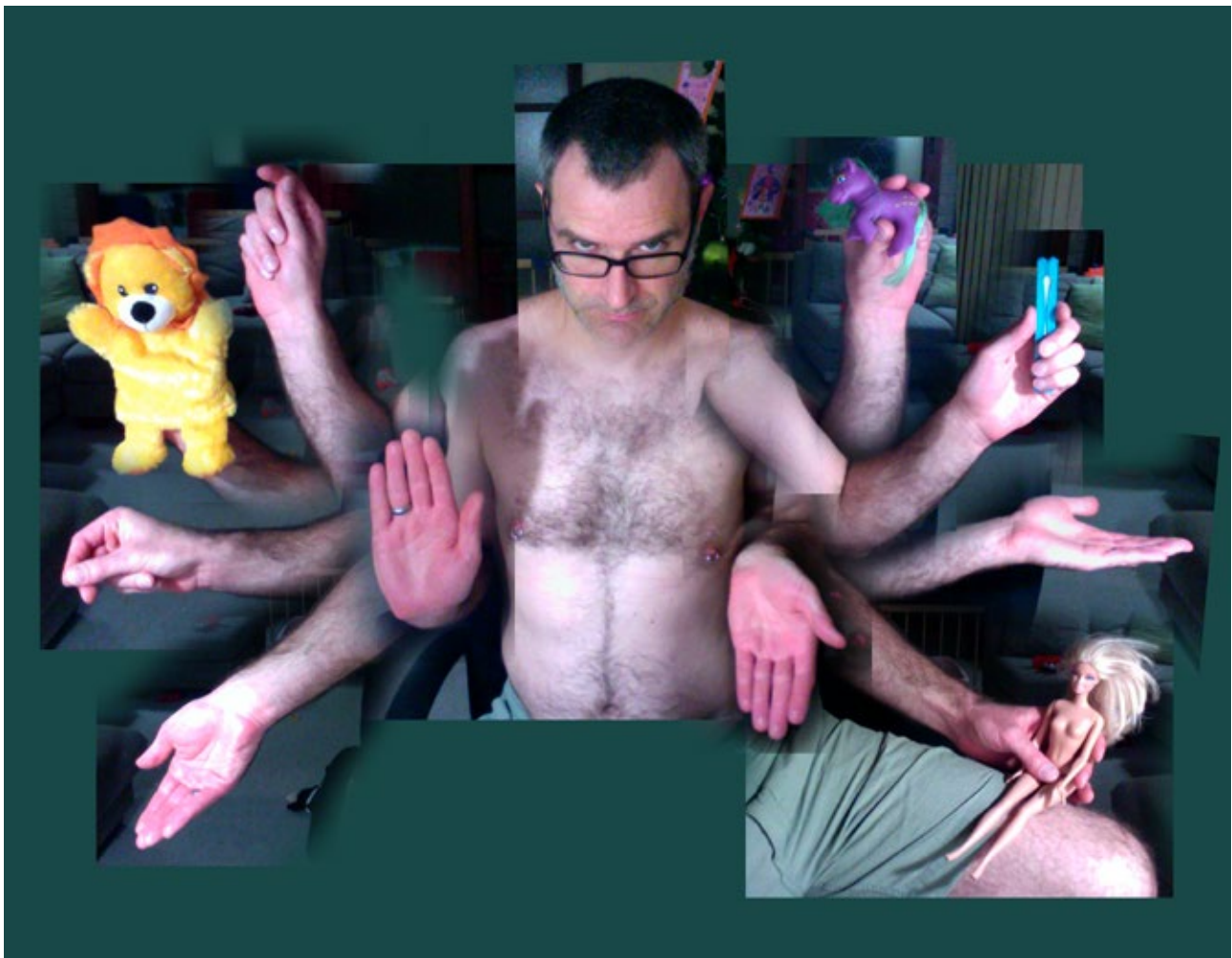
*head cut

A small bonus symbol, the scar on the top of my head (the result of a run in with a door frame) did a lot of double duty as a second mouth, in a **Janus** double-mask fashion.

This drawing was initially inspired by the fantastic "Realms of Wonder" at the Art

Gallery, in particular the wall of Hindu temple carvings. It started as a marker rendered "statue," but pondering what it would be holding in the many hands, turned it progressively into an instructional diagram.

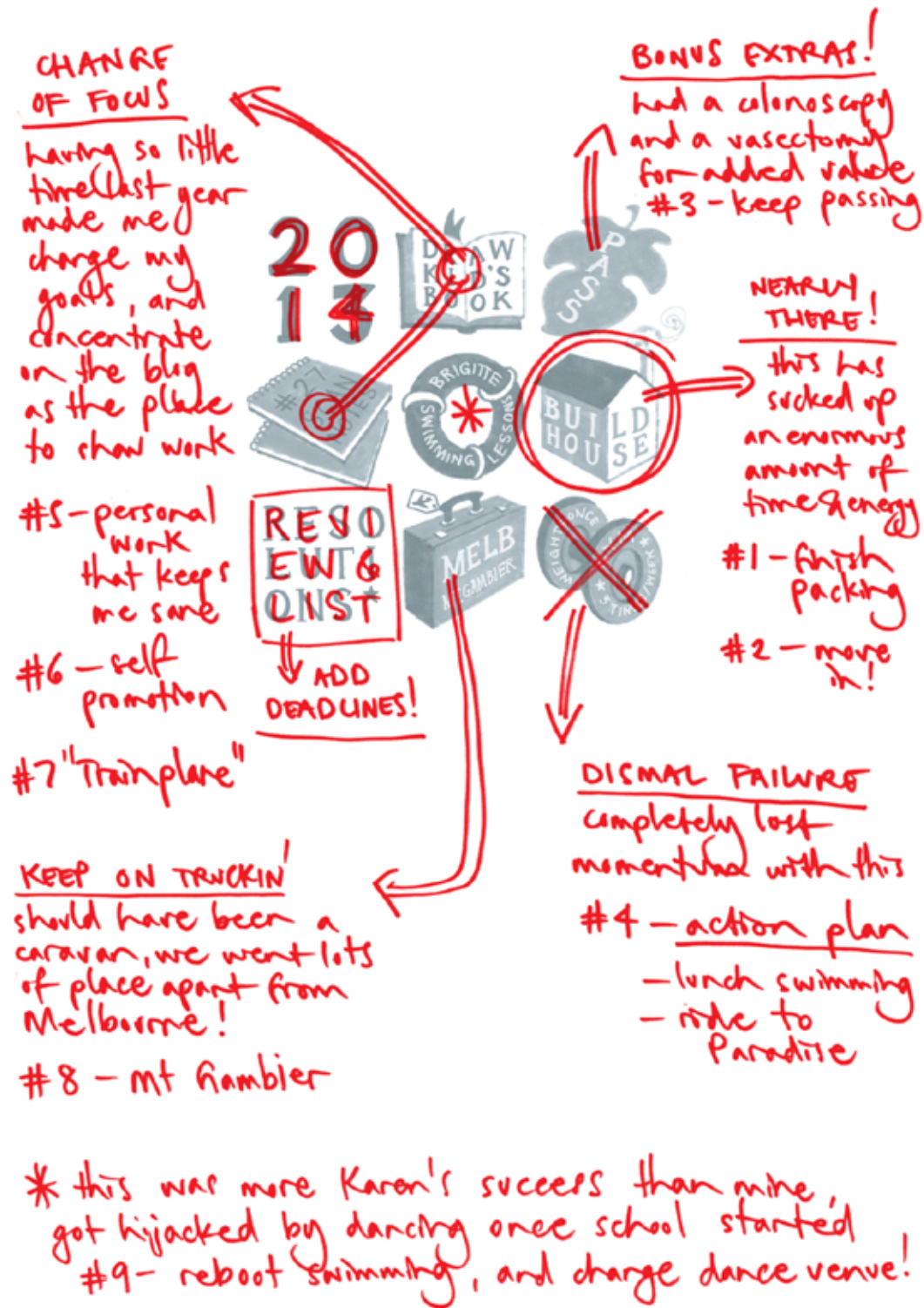
As a final scary extra, the Photoshop mockup I made for reference using the iMac's built in camera – dodgy self chat!

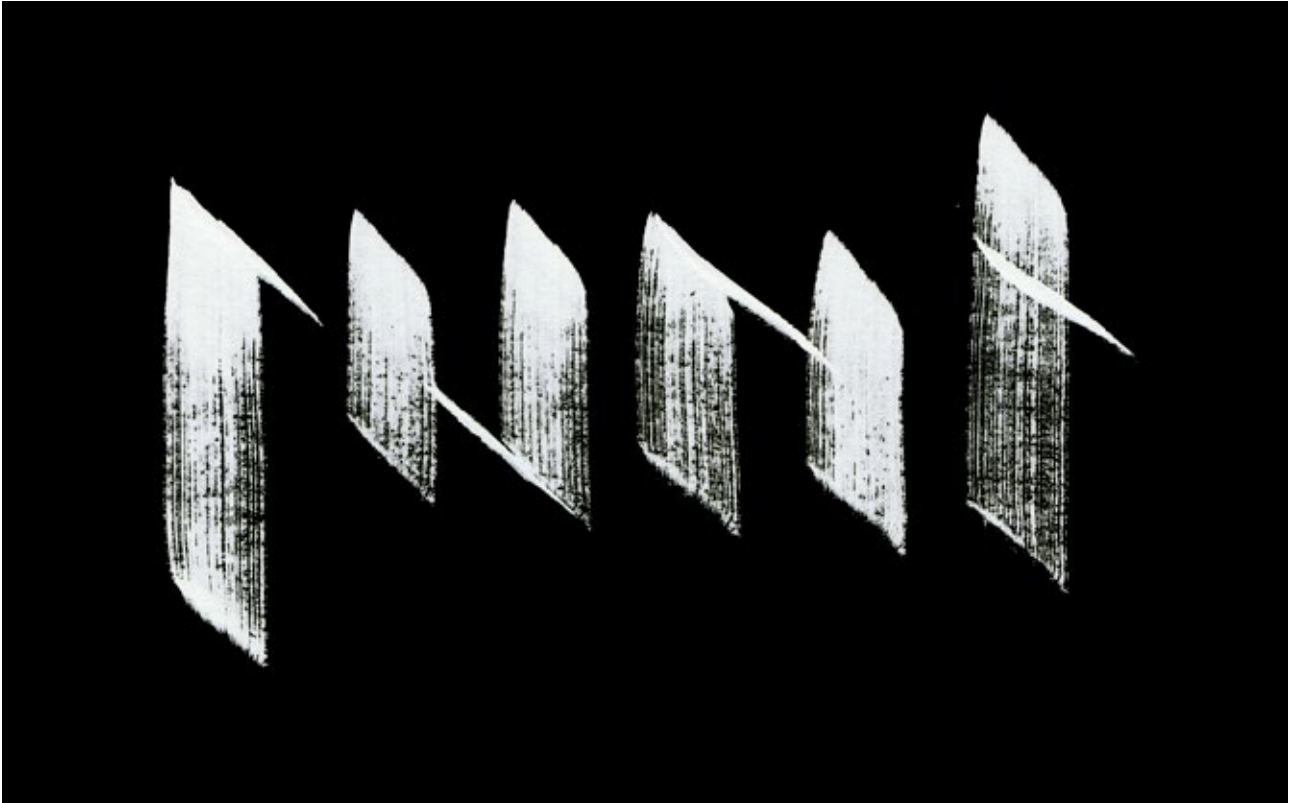


2014

2014

January 1, 2014 | Tags: resolutions





I don't know why it always surprises me when the best results arrive after you throw out your plans.

Just like the logo (and the character himself,) the name of my fantasy comic has changed over time. From the wordy "The Chronicles of Raven" to the uncopyrightable "Raven," from the short-lived and insipid "Incendiary" (it has the word diary in it, clever) to the final pithy and punchy "Runt."

Once the name stuck the logo had a bit of a split personality: one version runic and ye olde worldey; and the other old school metal band. A recent makeover of the latter into a more standard blackletter style ended up a bit sterile. Inspired by the

amazing graffiti brushwork of [Niels "Shoe" Meulman](#), I bought some ink to dirty it up.

It's way harder than it looks.

The early wonky stuff was cool, but when I tried to neaten up, it was back in sterile town. Then at the bottom of a dud page, trying to figure out how many strokes the ink would last, it was like a fantasy novel cliché. The two became one!

rwnt rwnt
rwnt rwnt

rwnt

RWNT



RWNT

"reversion"

February 6, 2014 |



Looking back at the very first picture I posted – “**aversion**” – made me realise that even though it was about not being afraid to take risks, I was still going **DOWN!**

Things have been going so bloody well lately (and at breakneck speed,) that the correct metaphor would be letting go of the things holding you back, to go **UP...**

Comments

Michael | February 7, 2014

Yes, your logic sounds right...
(and not a penis in sight!)

dan | February 11, 2014

love it! nothing like a leap of faith to get momentum going. Who's got time to look back when things are going at breakneck speed, anyway.

"increments"

March 26, 2014 |



Wandering through the [Dark Heart biennial](#) at the gallery a few days back I spied a face from my brief uni days, then corrected myself – “it can’t be her she’s too old.”

That was 24 years ago. I guess I’ve been insulated from that by not running into anybody from my past since moving back to Adelaide. I’ve mostly overwritten my old memories with new ones, moving forward too fast to look back.

Watching a bad movie set in Melbourne a couple of nights later, the random establishing shots of familiar locations gave me a sharp pang of nostalgia. I don’t want to move back, and some of what I miss was already gone when I left, but that phantom city seems more real than the remembered home town of my youth.

This is the age where you have a mid life crisis and these are the usual triggers.

Luckily my life has changed so wildly in the last few years that I don’t need a sports car or an affair... a bit of quiet space will do!

(First post from the new house.)

Comments

Dan | March 26, 2014

Sports car gets you thru the MLC faster!

Michael | April 4, 2014

Hopefully, you’ll find a quiet space in your new backyard...

"restless quest"

April 5, 2014 |



Not too much explanation needed for this one. All about being woken up in turn by my three ladies (sorry Karen!)

I love these Copic markers more than any other medium I've tried. Like drawing with biro, there's something instant and irreversible that makes me relax and keep going through the imperfections. Back in the (long ago) day I used to love painting with oil paint washes, they took ages to dry so you could pfaff around as long as you wanted. A bit like my other habit of zooming in to 2000% in Photoshop – invisible to the naked eye!

Done on white and inverted after scanning, it was a great brain exercise to visualise.

Comments

Michael | April 10, 2014

I hope they're hens/chicks and not three cocks...

Control Fink | April 11, 2014

Hens don't wake you up... or have wattles!
Technically I was wrong when I said there hadn't been any posts for a while with cock in them...

on your bike

April 10, 2014 |



An oldie from my fit and healthy youth
as a cigarette smoking cleaner, to
celebrate my return to two wheels.

An amazing way to start a morning, riding
through a green valley with a flock of cockatoos
overhead. Like riding through memories too,
of my childhood playing along Dry Creek,
but also the long bike explorations of Merri
Creek from my early days in Melbourne.

Not more nostalgia, like listening to an
old favourite album and still loving it.

Comments

Michael | April 10, 2014

Good to see the "return of Dan's cock"!...

"Trixen Vitruviana"

May 4, 2014 | Tags: trixen



"TRIXEN VITRUVIANA" 1/5/14

For the "iconography" post a while back, I was going to draw a diagram for each item. The only one that didn't seem like too much hard work was this one.

To show what all the Trixen riffs are based on, it's not quite as diagrammatical as I imagined, but you get the layout of the biomechanical armour/growth. The weapons are always a blade in one hand and something that shoots in the other.

The Leonardo reference is probably a little subtle...

Comments

Michael | May 4, 2014

Hooray! The return of Trixen...

dan | May 5, 2014

she'd look great on the entry foyer wall in the studio, with different design and marketing weapons at her disposal – client, choose your weapon and let's begin.

playing with old toys

May 25, 2014 | Tags: trixen

I wasn't supposed to do this. It was supposed to be grey and I was moving on to a "serious" picture. Then just before going to bed I just did a rough colour, just to see, just for five minutes.

I had decided not to do any more full Photoshop colouring, loving my grey markers and the pleasure of doing things by hand. But it's so easy, and a little bit cheap and nasty!

And puffed around for two weeks doing it...

Comments

Michael | May 27, 2014

Great Work! Sometimes it's more fun going "Old School"...



Double bonus – 100% biro

"apéritif"

June 1, 2014 | Tags: stress



A picture about heartburn, but
a story about stress.

I started this back in the last weeks of our
new house being built. By the end I was
chewing reflux tablets before and after
dinner, starting to think about going to
see a doctor and avoiding certain food.

Then the half-done drawing got packed away
in a box. We moved and a few other drawings
got squeezed in before I found it again.

Last night I made a curry using a paste that
was basically spice and oil, mixed with tomato
puree. Reflux with a spoon. No tablets required.

I'm not stressed anymore.

*(After the last post, this is 100% hand done.
I bled a couple of my textas dry but also
pinched some of my daughters' for the colour.
Oddly enough, the \$4 eight pack of Crayola
textas played very nicely with the \$10 each
Copics. Have to get a pack for myself!)*

Comments

Michael | June 2, 2014

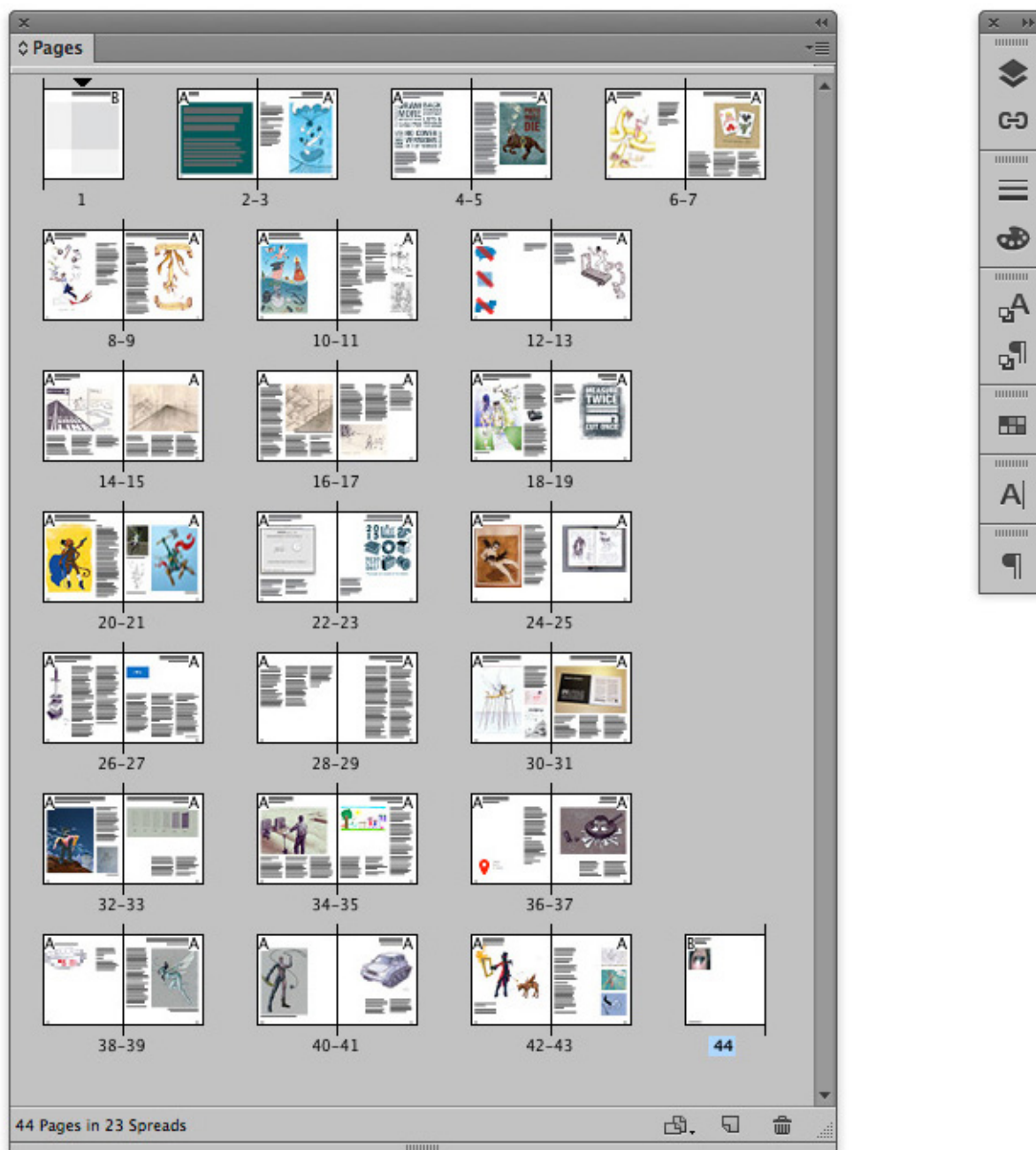
Good Stuff. Your new dishwasher
is certainly freeing up your time...
you're pumping out the pieces!

Control Fink | June 2, 2014

The hard stuff was done earlier,
I just had to colour it in!

volume 1

June 8, 2014 |



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Beyond a certain point, no one ever goes back to the start of a blog, and reading backwards chronologically gets old pretty quick. (Pun unintended!)

And I still like print design, so doing what I do for my day job at night, here is the first year and half or so of the blog in book form.

PDF download 14Mb

The plan is to actually print some of these and give a copy to my three regular commenters: *Dan*, *cuz Mike* and *Melbourne Mike*. My thanks to you all for letting me know there's someone out there reading.

I may be too broke to print them now, but that won't last forever.

Comments

Dan | June 9, 2014

Sold! There is something special about print. The smell, the tangibility. You can start at the back, too, easily.

Michael | June 9, 2014

Count me in! Just as Dan mentioned, in the digital age, there's something special about a book. The tactility, etc...that and studying printmaking, I'm biased and love the printed form. Keep up the great work!

Control Fink | June 9, 2014

Luckily I'm a designer not a copy writer! You guys still get the first three copies hot off the press... the extra two are to try and tempt new commenters!



souvenirs of a misspent youth

June 17, 2014 |



Since becoming a real adult (marriage + children + mortgage) I've regularly lamented not getting my act together earlier. Wishing I could swap a few of those carefree income-free years for some greater financial security now.

Working through the analogue to digital backup of my old sketchbooks, I've been reliving the height of my "wasted" youth. Living in a share house on the dole, smoking lots of weed, and drawing almost every day.

Then I realised something I'd never really paid attention to, looking at the skills of my younger self instead of remembering the events. Over the course of a couple of months I could see a massive improvement in my technique.

Practice makes perfect, so maybe not so misspent after all...

"egg and spoon"

June 29, 2014 |



This was to celebrate getting a big chunk of a project done (in two days instead of the two weeks I expected,) and the best ride home ever.

In the rain, riding one-handed holding my umbrella, dodging a hundred or so frogs who'd decided to hang out on the bike track, and managing for the first time to make it up a steep hill near home.

I had envisioned this being more somber in colour and mood, but the gamut of colours in kids textas is a little brighter!

"probation"

July 31, 2014 | Tags: cancer, cock, cystoscopy, death, inspiration



This is a story of two halves. Bad part first.

The idea for this came into my head a couple of years back when I got the letter about my first check up scan.

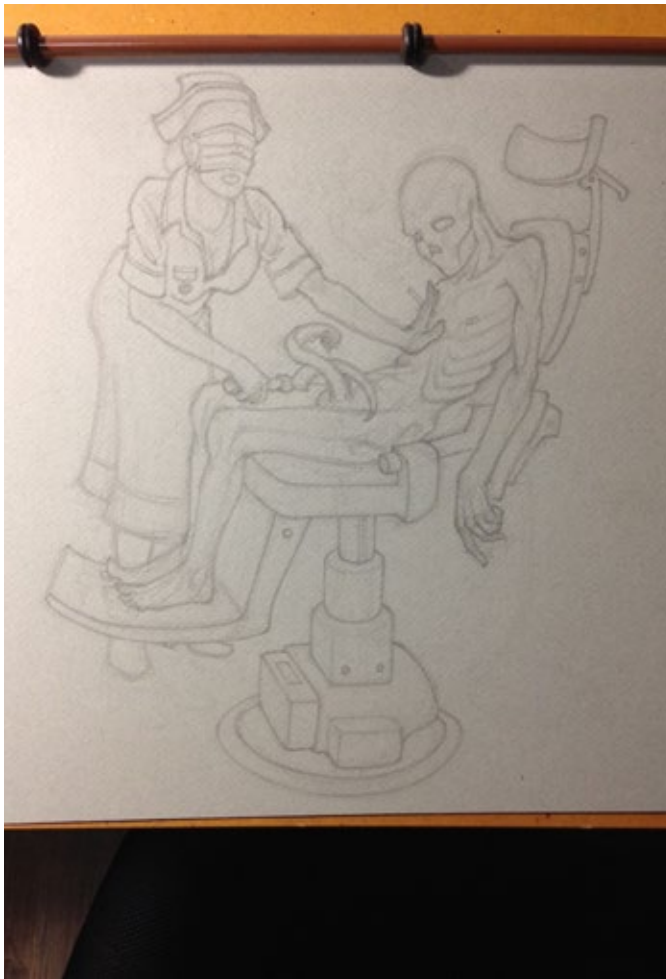
I still feel like a bit of a faker telling people I had cancer, because I never felt sick, but chemo was pretty horrible. Having something pumped through a tube into your body, something so toxic the nurse has to wear a protective face mask. When I got to the end I was elated – "I survived!"

Then that letter came. Then I realised I wasn't cured, I was only in remission. I would have to keep getting check ups for the rest of my life.

After that first one, the next couple became routine. My doctor's receptionist told me I was getting the regular's price. I even fell asleep lying in the hospital bed before one, and they had to wake me up to wheel me in. I keep passing, and the gaps between get longer.

But now I keep getting more nervous each time. I feel like it's going to catch up one day, and the further I get from that chemo, the closer it gets to me. This image came to mind each time, but afterwards I'd try to forget it, draw something else.

This time I didn't put it aside, and this is the good part.



There's a crazy amount of experimentation in this picture, and new mediums have got me really excited again about drawing. I love drawing on Canson paper, working on a mid-tone background, but it always warped with too much "love". In the past I even tried painting the back with canvas primer to stiffen it, then I recently discovered they now make a perfect board version.

Some of my new favourite markers had run out, and with no money to buy refills, I busted out a bottle of black ink and painted in the

background. Because I didn't like the scratchy texture of the pencil on recent drawings, I also layered on some white watercolour paint!

Now I'm champing at the bit for the next drawing. Bring it on.

Comments

Michael | September 15, 2014

Another great piece. Viva La Old School!

"dregs"

August 23, 2014 |



The other weekend I flew over to Melbourne for a whirlwind visit, a night of drinking with old mates. Lots of beers with a few shots to chase them, spit roast, fire drum and a bunch of great friends I hadn't seen for 3 years. Awesome, but I ended up with an emotional hangover that lasted a lot longer than the physical one.

It started when I got off the plane. We used to fly regularly when we lived there, and picked up a lot of visitors too. I had known the airport backwards, where to park for the overpass, shortcuts... but I didn't know where I was. The freeway I had driven a hundred times had been redeveloped, and I was like a small town hick staring at the 10 lanes with flyovers.

I knew I was back in the big smoke, and I suddenly missed it like hell, that energy and the feeling of being somewhere close to the heart of it all.

The second hit was after I got back. A random LinkedIn request from someone I'd studied with 8 years ago. She was working in an ad agency, not one of the big names but still pretty interesting looking. There were 34 staff.

The smaller pond started to feel pretty shallow, and without realising it, my mood got pretty toxic. I caught myself out in a couple of really negative and cynical reactions.

I'd flirted with an old flame while drunk, and forgotten how happy I'd been to break up. I'd forgotten the precious things I had bought with that sacrifice: our second daughter, having family around, and finally buying a house. My agency might have 4 people, but we punch above our weight.

F**k the glass being half empty or half full, an empty glass is an opportunity for a new drink.

Bottoms up.

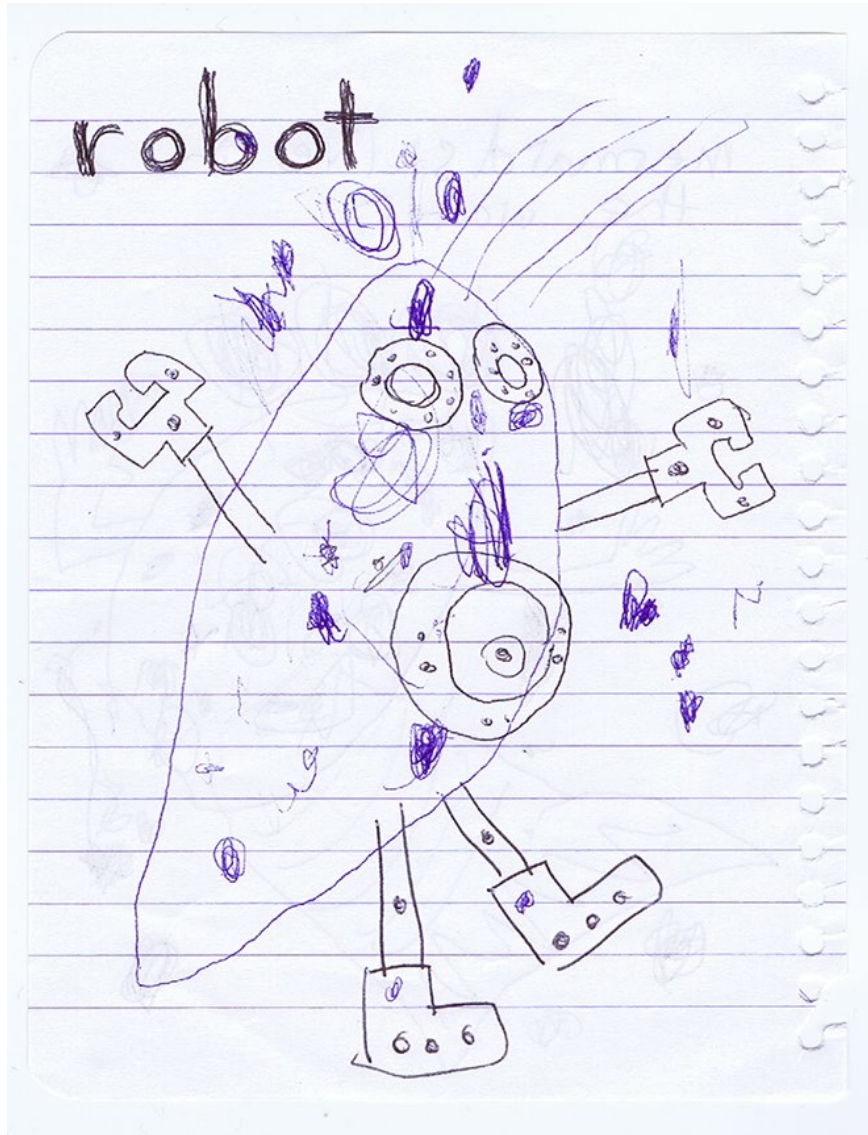
Comments

Michael | September 15, 2014

The Glass is just half...

robot

September 4, 2014 |



First guest post, a collaboration with my 3 year old daughter! She drew the shape and kept asking me to add things. Didn't want a belt, but a "robot tummy."

You never think twice about kids talking about fairies or pirates, but it still amazes me to hear them talk about dinosaurs and robots!

Comments

Dan | September 4, 2014

Upside down, Miss Jane.

Michael | September 6, 2014

Is it just me, or is the robot shaped like a poo?!

Control Fink | September 7, 2014

I thought potato! She endlessly draws this amoeba shape, round at one end and pointy at the other...

"Trixen Inversion"

September 21, 2014 | Tags: trixen



"TRIXEN INVERSION" 12/9/14

Something a little more lighthearted!

Funnily enough, one of my main motivations for [the last Trixen picture](#) was to show the "standard" version so this inversion would make sense: the green armour and leather flipping top to tail, and the bullet / blade weapons swapping for a very blunt cudgel* and a fiery missile.

The blue Smurf skin was an accident after blocking in the skin shape in a temporary colour, it looked cool, and is more technically an inversion of the usual white skin. Using my own hands as models also made the gender a more little ambiguous, maybe the most inverted part of all!

Comments

Dan | September 21, 2014

Nice. What's the significance of the birdie?

Control Fink | September 21, 2014

Welcome back! Just some Matt inspired punk attitude...



Pencil base



Marker grey

a different type of project

September 28, 2014 |



What do you do on a sunny Saturday afternoon: your wife and kids are out, the grand final is on the TV, and there's a single beer in the fridge?

Why make a desk caddy for your markers of course! It'd been in planning for a little while, but I'd expected to do it in dribs and drabs over weeks. I went for broke, using my toolbox as a workbench and my foot as the vice, and getting a couple of coats of paint dry in the sun. \$4 for a couple of melamine cups and some electrical conduit, combined with some house build offcuts and 4 hours of labour... not sure if it's a bargain!

Very satisfying to finish, and now I have a caddy that does exactly what I want it to. Better do some drawing to use it.

Comments

dan kuss | September 28, 2014
quick patent it, before Ikea sees this post.

another different type

October 6, 2014 |

The white caddy looked a little out of place on the old faux wood furniture. So I upgraded. (The clutter is just off camera.)

Thanks boss!

Comments

Michael | November 17, 2014

Colour coordination...
now your furniture
matches your caddy!



"intercontinental belt"

October 11, 2014 | Tags: stress



So I went to a pelvic floor physio, as you do, and discovered part of my problem. Always awesome to have a health professional find something simple and easy to fix.

I've always carried my stress in my stomach, there's pictures going way back with metaphors taking over my abdomen. Turns out your stomach is attached to your pelvic floor, so if you clench your gut you're clenching your crotch. Hard to piss through a fist.

So if you see one of my red dot stickers, unclench!

Bonus extra, a picture about my journey to Melbourne to interview for uni, bussing over with a very heavy folio tied up with green nylon rope. I got pretty stressed out, and this picture is pretty literal.



Super old school, oil paint even

what makes something valuable?

October 19, 2014 | Tags: art, Copic markers



I'm reading a sci fi novel where there are matter compilers than can 3D print things at the atomic level, essentially eliminating "poverty" as everyone can eat the printed food and be clothed in printed clothing. The people who invented the machines are very wealthy, but do not eat or use anything created by the matter compilers. They want the real, the grown, the hand-made.

What makes something valuable?

We bought our crockery from a chain store. It was cheap and we bought two sets to replace the ones I break. Not valuable I guess. If we had gone to a fancy homewares store and bought an expensive set, that would definitely be more valuable. Depending on the brand name, you could probably even resell them.

What if my two daughters made some out of clay. Amazingly precious, but essentially worthless. What about that same cheap crockery set, in 40 years time when my wife and I are dead,

and my daughters open a box and it reminds them of their childhood. Irreplaceable.

The last one I promise. How about a set of crockery from the early industrial revolution, mass produced and at the time considered to be the death of craftsmanship. Now extremely valuable, a sought after item for collectors, but completely unusable for its original purpose.

What does this have to do with me?

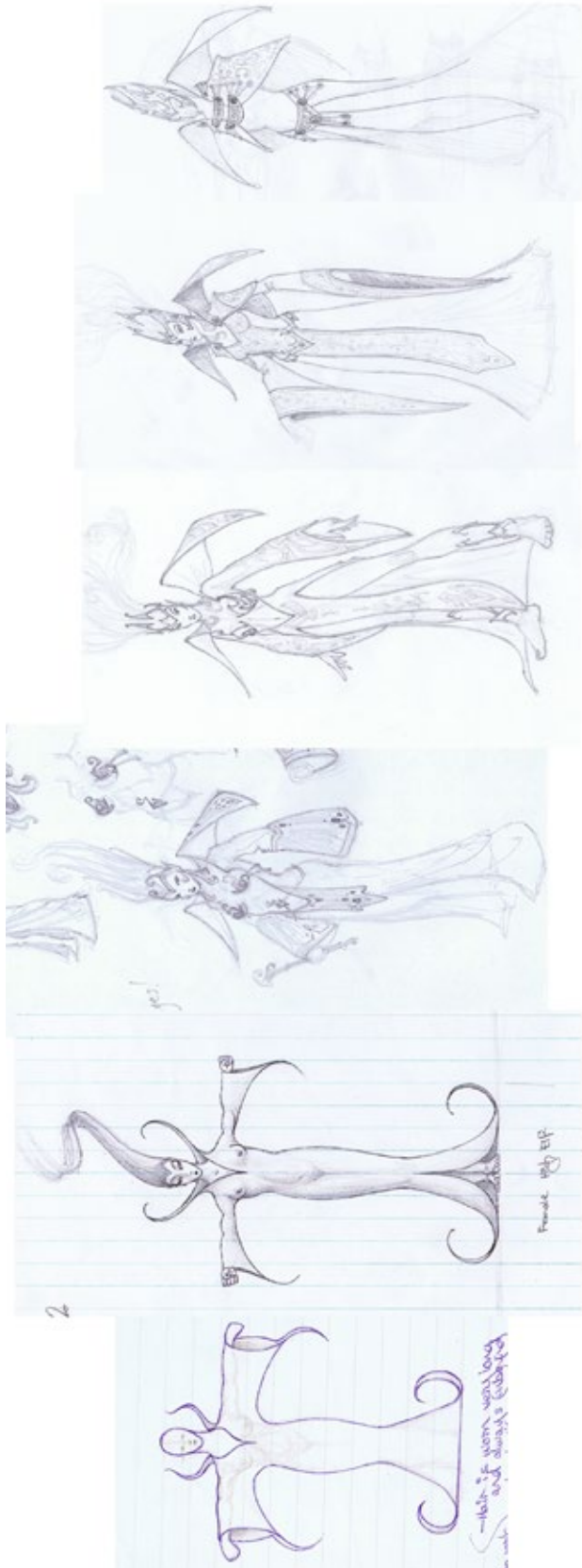
A lot of my ideas about art/illustration were formed in the pre-Photoshop era, when there were a small number of people using difficult and time consuming mediums like oil paint to create. After some struggle with the concept of using fake textures to make digital artwork look more "real", I've recently been getting a lot of satisfaction from using markers where the rendering is all done by hand, is actually "real". Does it make it more valuable?

There are some concept artists who are incredibly talented. Does the fact that Photoshop is "easier" to use than oil paint make it less valuable? Or does it free them from the tyranny of drying time and risk aversion and make them way more productive? There are as many bad charcoal drawings of life models as there are bad Photoshop montages. Once I scan my drawings, they're the same rectangle of pixels as any other.

Is the only measure that matters, that which makes something valuable to me?

elf evolution

October 26, 2014 | Tags: classic stuff, fantasy, inspiration



A little while back I read a [cool blog post](#) about an antidote to negatively comparing yourself to your heroes. The suggestion was to compare your work to your own 5 years back.

Looking through some boxes to unpack, I found some folders of the multitude of drawings I did to document the fantasy world I was creating. I got a little obsessive with the details, and got bogged down trying to figure out things like food staples ("root vegetables"!)) With no fashion sense I got into costume design with a passion, and multiple revisions.

On a Sunday night after going to the beach, it was a nice little time waster! Here's the progress of the "high" elves.

(Animated gif may not translate through email.)

Comments

Michael | November 17, 2014

All Hail the High Elf Priestess-es!

“anecdotal memorial”

November 25, 2014 |



My nana died last Sunday.

I always loved a story she told about her childhood in Broken Hill, back when the Afghani camel trains were still trekking through. A story about a little girl sneaking over her back fence to their camp, and trading a watermelon from her parent's garden for a ride on a camel.

When I first moved out of home to a crusty share house in North Adelaide, Nana told me how she'd done the same, moving interstate with her sister, living just down the street from where I was, walking to the city every day to work. I always wondered what shenanigans they got up to, two young unchaperoned girls down in the big smoke, with wages to burn.

By chance I was there at the end. Even as an avowed atheist you still imagine some last dramatic moment. Instead of the soul leaving the body, I pictured the last electrical impulses in the brain being that final moment, the switch flicking, a definite end.

But it wasn't like that, it was more like a rope unraveling, a gradual winding down that was somehow more mundane and at the same time reassuring.

For now at least, I'm not frightened of dying anymore.

I don't know why the scientific view of the universe is seen as more limited, less magical. A world of happy endings, of mortal puppets acting out the fates allotted by a secretive god, seems stifling next to the wonder of a universe where a million random dice rolls can make a dinosaur or a wildflower, or a civilisation of evolved apes.

Give me the cold infinity of space rather than the golden ceiling of heaven.

(13/11/14)

Comments

Michael | December 7, 2014

Great anecdote. My belated condolences to all. I'm still basically agnostic although seem to be becoming more atheistic as I get older...

"redacted"

December 26, 2014 |



2015

2015 (high) resolution

January 1, 2015 | Tags: resolutions



Just for the fun of it, new year's resolutions as app icons. **In case you want to check progress!**

(And no, I'm not sitting up posting this... delayed release.)

Comments

Dan | January 1, 2015

So, can we guess what they represent?

Control Fink | January 2, 2015

Have a crack! Mostly mundane...

"core functionality"

February 27, 2015 |



I'm sure there's a great metaphor that would suit here, but I'm too tired to remember.

Sometimes you try new things and they enrich what you already have. Sometimes they lead you in entirely new directions. Sometimes they remind you why you were doing the old things to start with.

I've really enjoyed my journey with html. Writing semantic content without any design taught me a lot about communication. But then I reached a point of complexity where I'd need to learn lots of non-design related programming, just to build a framework. Terminal commands, and compiling builds. Lots and lots of acronyms.

The metaphor I've used in the past about learning digital design was of climbing mountains, only to reach the peak and discover a new and higher mountain behind it. I hiked so far that I didn't realise I'd crossed the border into a whole different country, not graphic and certainly not visual. No layouts to sketch, only a pad full of coding notes.

Sometimes you have to pick a direction. It's been a while between posts because I've been working on a very labour intensive drawing about, ironically enough, working hard. Then there was a "quicker" drawing I was squeezing in about an extra project that had taken up a lot of time.

This was a single session, no rethinking. And no ctrl-z.

"degree of difficulty"

March 9, 2015 | Tags: Copic markers, luck, work



Starting a new job tomorrow. They say a change is as good as a holiday. Must be one of those holidays where you have to work. This is to commemorate the elaborate and time consuming test I did over 3 weeks to get it...

I started doing some work in Photoshop to colour it, but the further I went, the less I liked it. Partly because it looked crap, but largely because reworking with a tablet seems so sterile and redundant.

I'm not quite sure what I'm trying to do at the moment. Loving the flat and sketchy stylised parts, but jamming them up against "realistic" rendered stuff. Definitely loving the markers and ink experimenting, but am I creating full tonal images, or just creating texture to layer in Photoshop?

Funnily enough, I'm halfway through a big picture working coloured markers and pencils into the grey. I'd just said to myself – "this is too much hard work, have to start doing all the colour digitally." Maybe I'm just feeling lazy!

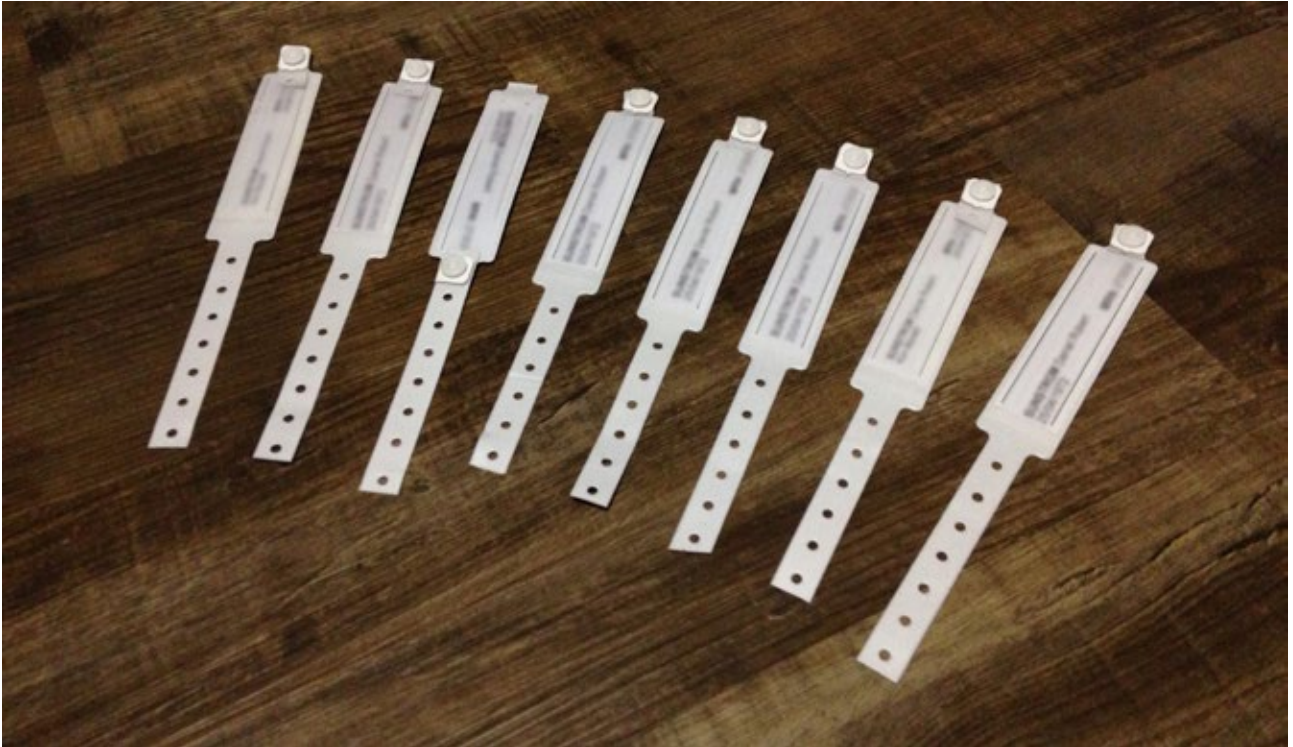
Comments

thundersbeard | July 20, 2015

Where are you working now, Dirty? Same kind of stuff? Are you an Art Director yet?

collection

April 8, 2015 | Tags: cancer, cystoscopy



Comments

Daniel Kuss | April 9, 2015

Another successful trip?? Hey
I cant read your MRN

Control Fink | April 9, 2015

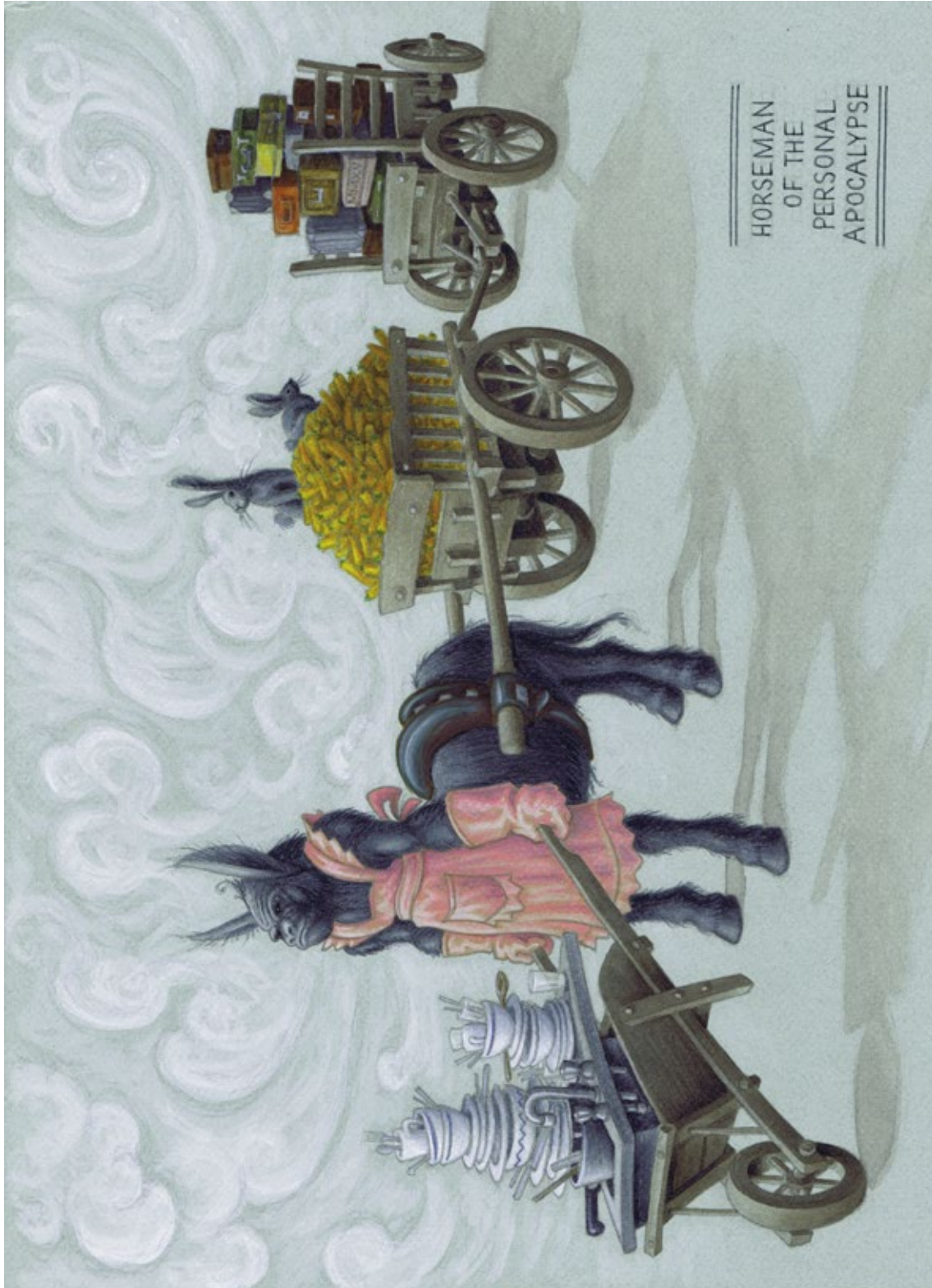
Damn! I also forgot this is supposed to be
anonymous!! Should have blurred my name too...

Michael | April 13, 2015

Hey, just when I thought I was the only one
to collect useless medical paraphernalia...

"horseman of the personal apocalypse"

April 9, 2015 | Tags: apocalypse, work



Another one with a long gestation, from a slightly whiny original idea five years ago.

Most of my drawings are inspired by events or emotions in my life. They're burning to be done while that emotion is equally burning... but if they take too long to get done, I want to move on.

Double whammy if the execution gets frustrating. I wanted to try doing this one all on paper, but I didn't have enough tonal range in the coloured textas. So I cheated and did another couple of drawings in the middle, then felt guilty and came back!

Suck it up – part one.

There's a few youthful things I look back on and laugh at.

Karen and I remember all the times we were "too tired" to go out. Too tired to go out and sit and drink and talk with friends. Pfft. Try six years of child induced sleep deprivation.

I laugh even harder at some of my uni project timelines. We were so stressed out by having to design a four page newsletter... in two semesters!! I've had to turn around the first draft of a hundred page report in a week.

So, a very worthy drawing about working hard. It might be all about just getting on with it, but having too many positive motivations can be just as heavy as negative ones. Even heavier is feeling like a martyr about it.

Sometimes the message needs to be just get it done.

Comments

dan kuss | April 9, 2015

Dude! Another insanely awesome drawing. Baggage and kitchen sinks. Sounds like a holiday with two young children.

Michael | April 13, 2015

Fantastic picture! Well worth the wait.

"intro version"

April 26, 2015 | Tags: futility, inspiration

Suck it up – part two.

I often also look back with amazement on the careless extravagance and freedom of youth.

Sometimes it's my own youth that sparks it, other times it's seeing someone else's. Like teenagers out getting snacks for a movie night, while someone else is home cooking dinner.

Plugging away on those recent drawings about work, I realised the extravagance of youth extended to emotions as well. The drama and certainty of black and white.

Spend two years pining for a girl who wasn't interested, while turning down several other offers? Sure! Feeling lonely and moody while living in an awesome party / share house? Why not!

That passion cut both ways, for every feeling of intense isolation was the conviction of changing the universe. Quit uni and spend a few years living without a tv or telephone, drawing every day? You bet I did.

I might regret a couple of notches that aren't on my bed post, but youth looks like too much hard work. The greys of compromise might be more complicated, but there's freedom there too.



untitled #42

May 24, 2015 | Tags: biro, futility, work



Been banging my head against tiredness and lack of motivation. The antidote to this being too serious and whiny was to draw it while watching Eurovision!

Comments

Michael | June 26, 2015

Another great graphic sketch.
Got an axe to grind?

"Trixen Aviatrix"

June 10, 2015 | Tags: biro, booty, drawing, trixen



Not much explanation needed! More exciting is the process to get to the final...

To stop myself from going back I did lots of little quick biro thumbnails. Picked the best one, scanned it then printed it out knocked back to grey and scaled up to A4. Then I kept working on the printout in biro to refine it further. Scan and repeat up to A3. Refined the small details with only a little bit of rethinking in pencil, then transferred it to a clean sheet using my light table.

As a process it was really painless, no trying to redraw a thumbnail pose much larger, and even better, no tracing a reverse and transferring then retracing again. It lost a little looseness of the line, but as a first attempt it worked well.

If only the biro ink was marker and ink wash proof... and Canson paper was thin enough to let light through. Then I could combine all these new techniques into a something I use more than once!

Edit 17-10-15: I was never really sold on the Photoshop coloured version of this. You can still see it here but I've replaced it with the much nicer final biro. Clean and real.

Edit 09-06-16: No one will read or care this far back! Was counting up the iterations for the next Trixen, and wanted to have another crack at the colouring... much better!

Comments

Dan Kuss | June 10, 2015

Wow! Not much more needed to be said than that!

Michael | June 26, 2015

Love the "Rocket Boots"!



journals

June 23, 2015 | Tags: classic stuff, typography, work



Just to celebrate the latest addition / edition. They started off largely as a dream diary with a bit of angsty whining in between. Then had a lot finished drawings for a while.

The rainbow striped one became the first real travelling notebook until it had so much stuff in it I was scared to lose it... and it never left the house again. The last is quite thin to solve that issue, a [Moleskin 3-pack](#), and has a very hipster cardboard cover. Growing my beard next week.

Comments

Michael | June 24, 2015

My god, did you really smoke Camels? I thought pintos were bad enough!

Control Fink | August 22, 2015

That and rollies without filters... probably why I got cancer so early!

"autonomic"

August 22, 2015 | Tags: drawing, work



Another piece about being ground under by work. Hmmm.

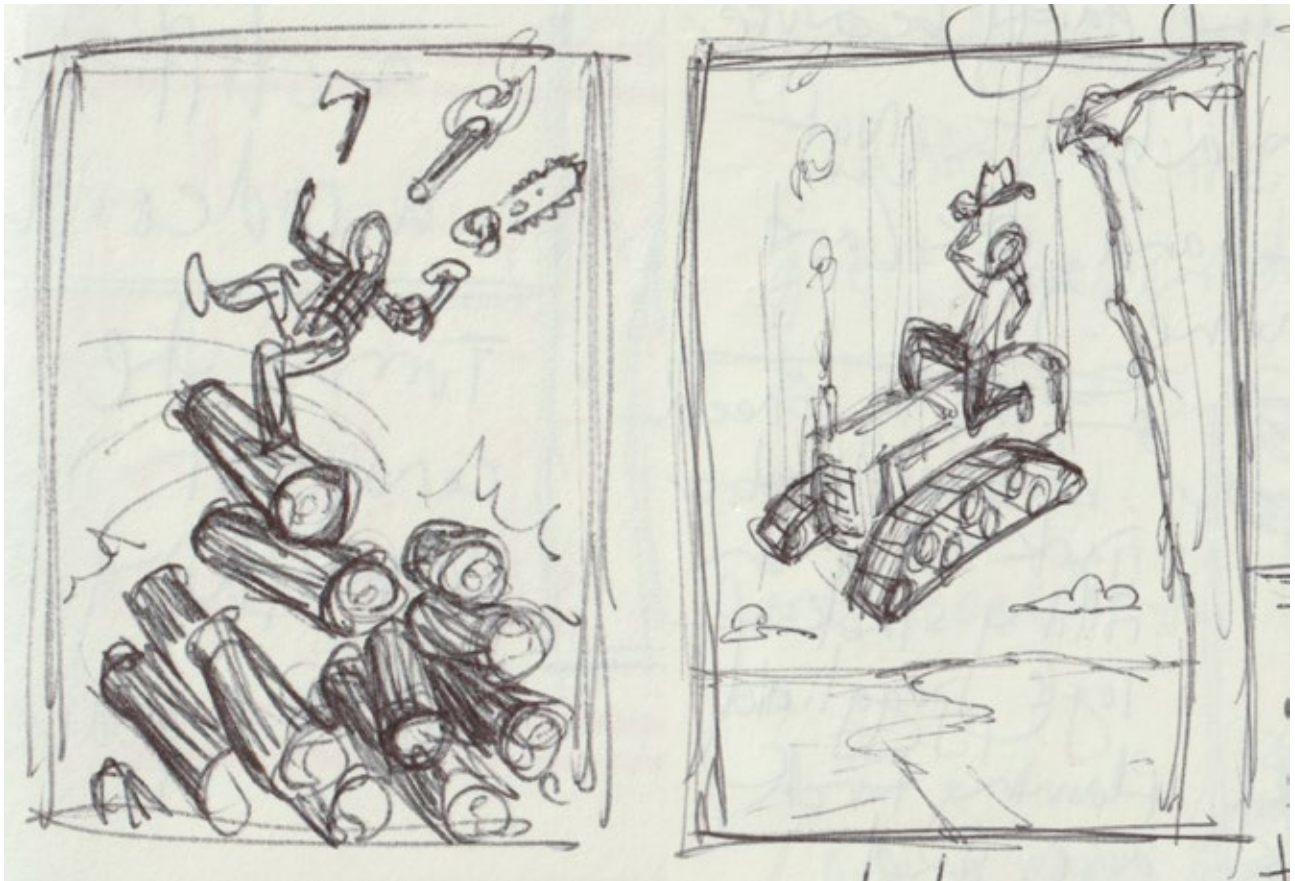
Rather than dwell on that, the other week over a few beers with cuz Mike, we were talking about journals that you have to do while studying anything artsy. Talking about how artificial they were, and how often you had to fake it by working backwards from the finished piece.

Flicking through one of his art books, looking at some insanely good prints by the Japanese

master [Hiroshige](#), I was inspired. Here then, is the faked journal of how it went.

The [treadmill as a symbol of pointless drudgery](#) turns up fairly regularly in my drawings. They always seem very flimsy though, with me the one out of control, not the treadmill.

My professional workload keeps veering to the ridiculous. I wanted to get the crushing weight and unstoppable juggernaut feeling of my days. Oddly enough the first couple of ideas were agricultural!



Then the austere greys of that snowy print joined it all together. Weight. Repetition. Toil.

On the technical side, I wanted to work big, bought some full sheets of Canson and a mount board to tape them too. I wanted the tractor to be big enough to be more than a suggestive blob, and get some zen value from raking my pencils across a larger expanse. The mountains were another example of something looking easy because of its simplicity. Those effortless brushstrokes of sumi-e take a lot of effort!

Anyway, here is my homework handed in, a little late.

Comments

Dan Kuss | August 23, 2015

I should feel relieved that it wasn't just at CG that you 'toiled'. Obviously its similar in your new gig. This large format sure is great for detail. Awesome work! BTW: you missed a pebble.

Michael | August 23, 2015

Once again, a great image in symbolism with fine text. But where is your journal?!



"soporific"

September 19, 2015 | Tags: booty, sleep



A change of pace, both in lighter subject matter and speed of execution.

I've had insomnia at different stages of my life, and figured out various more or less successful strategies to work around it! For a while when I was younger, I would visualise scenes in my mind, not think in words. Eventually I was keeping myself awake working on the details! A while back, what worked was imagining the thoughts in my head as posters pasted on the inside of my skull, which I then would paint over in black paint with a roller. If any new thoughts popped up, I would keep rolling over them. Quite meditational in its own way.

Anyway, the picture is an ode to that method. These days my strategy is to be so tired that I can't stay awake even if I want to!

The other goal is get some quick drawings done, save some of the many ideas that get left behind. This is using my other new technique, working only in biro with no reworking or looking back. Sketch small thumbnails, scan it in, blow it up, and print knocked back on a new sheet as pencils for the next round of biro.

So this was a single session piece, no hanging around getting stale.

Comments

Michael | September 19, 2015

Another good anecdote and picture...skate and paint on!

"reboot"

October 5, 2015 | Tags: art, drawing



"REBOOT" 4/10/15

Not much in this one. Been thinking about restarting some dormant projects, rebooting as it were. Liked the word. Drew a picture. That's about it!

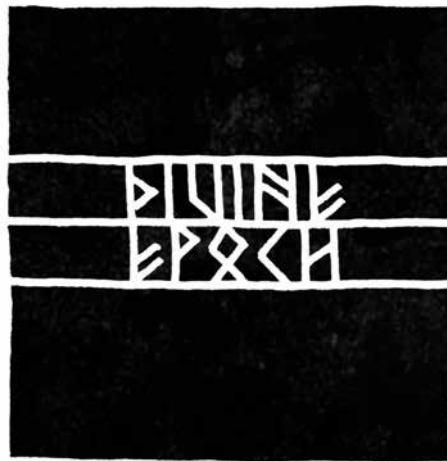
Comments

Michael | October 6, 2015

Hah! Reminds me of when I pulled apart an old Doc Marten boot earlier this year for photography...then dropped that subject soon after!

pastiche vs homage

October 9, 2015 | Tags: D&D, fantasy



What's the difference?

Thinking of what to reboot, I've been rereading a lot of my notes for the fantasy comic I'd worked on for a long time. The main protagonist started off as a Dungeons & Dragons character, and the world was a campaign setting. I was surprised by just how much content there was, some of it originally written in the defunct Lotus Notes!

A while back I typeset some of it as a [minimalist layout](#), as a reaction against any sort of fake parchment, ye olde document pastiche. Looked cool, but somehow missed the point.

I hate all the pointless remixes of pop culture, characters from *<insert new popular TV show>* redrawn in Simpsons style / as corporate logos / as 8-bit pixel sprites, but I love a lot of retro

illustrations and designs being done with fake texture. One is pastiche, one is homage.

Riding home tonight I was pondering what style I could use to bring it all together, when it struck me. It was like one of the 2nd Edition rulebooks from the 80s that I loved and were a big influence on me... a great excuse to do some fantasy pictures too!

Comments

Michael | October 10, 2015

Does it say "Divine Epoch" in "Runic"? Not quite sure if I'm reading it correctly!

Control Fink | October 17, 2015

It does... in my bastardisation of runic!

"buoyancy"

October 17, 2015 | Tags: biro, inspiration



Well, it was supposed to be about putting a bomb under my motivation, but this seemed like more fun!

The Copic didn't play too badly with the biro, just a bit of bleeding. I wonder how they'd go with printer ink if I scanned and printed the drawing...

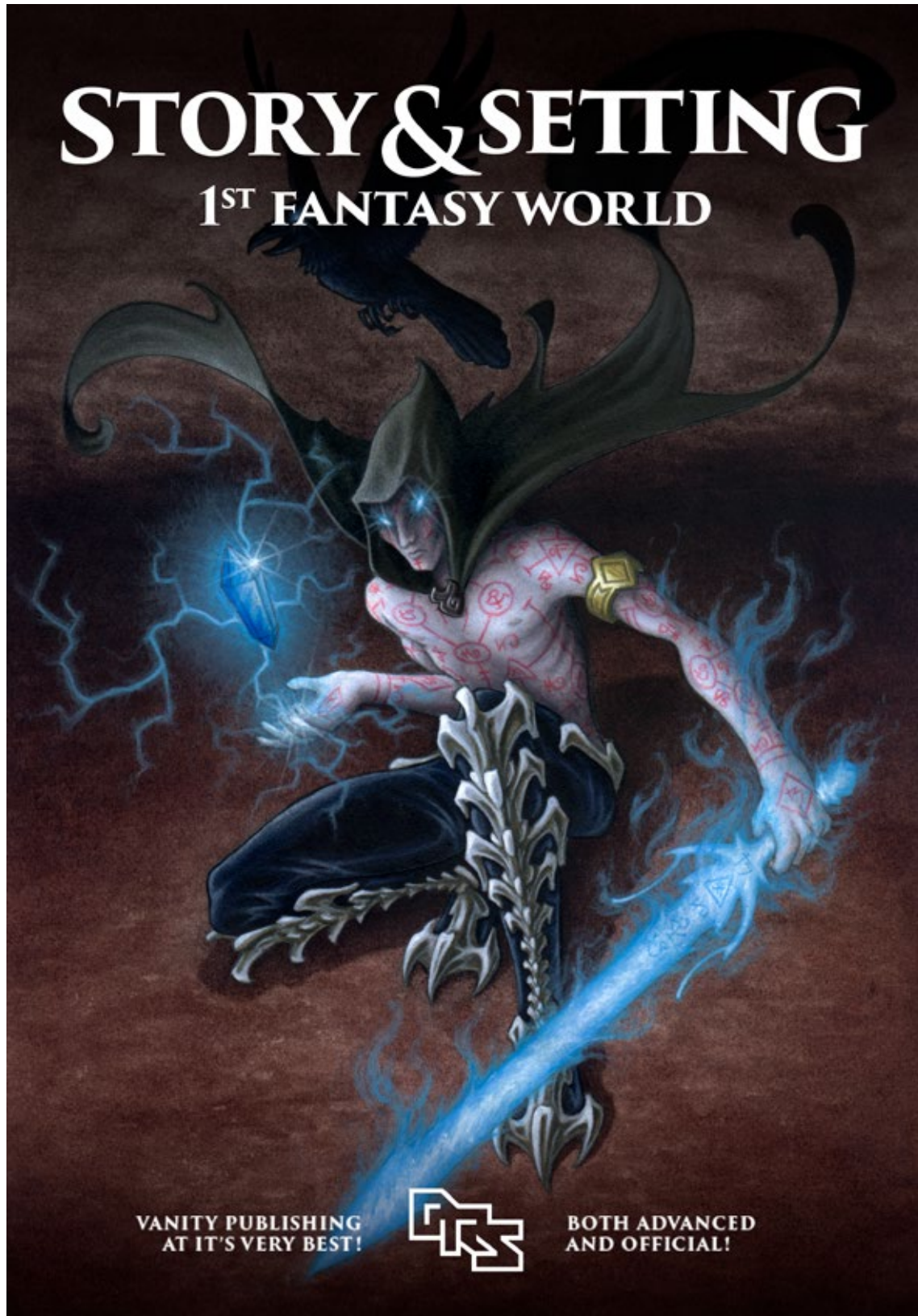
Comments

Michael | October 19, 2015

Gee, Dan, this piece is a "major letdown"! Boom Tish. Just wondering, do they still make Pantone markers?

faux cover

October 18, 2015 | Tags: D&D, fantasy, futility, inspiration



Just because I had so much fun making my fake logo and masthead, I wanted to mock up a cover! Probably needs the title to be chiselled into a block of cracked stone...

The plan is to draw all new artwork, a gloriously pointless and self absorbed project.

Comments

Michael | October 19, 2015

Nice chunky initials logo and a good way to display an old picture. Reminds me of all those D and D book covers you had!

"paradigm shift"

October 25, 2015 | Tags: stress

OK, so it's another picture about stress in my gut, but we all know misery makes better art than comfort does!

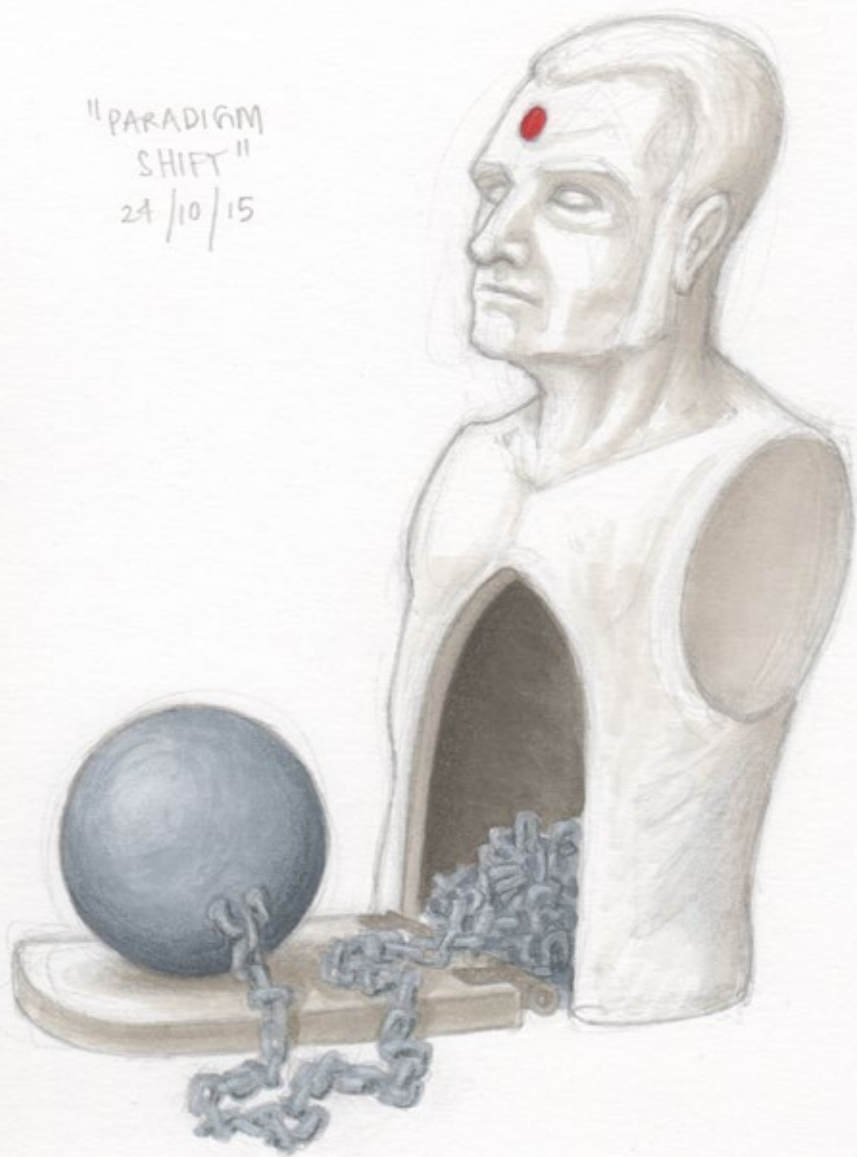
It would have stayed as a rough doodle in my journal, until I thought of a neat way to resolve how it all fit together...

Comments

Michael | October 28, 2015

From a headache to a gut ache?
Better take a Bex and lay down...

"PARADIGM
SHIFT"
24/10/15



"excision"

November 11, 2015 | Tags: biro, Copic markers, stress

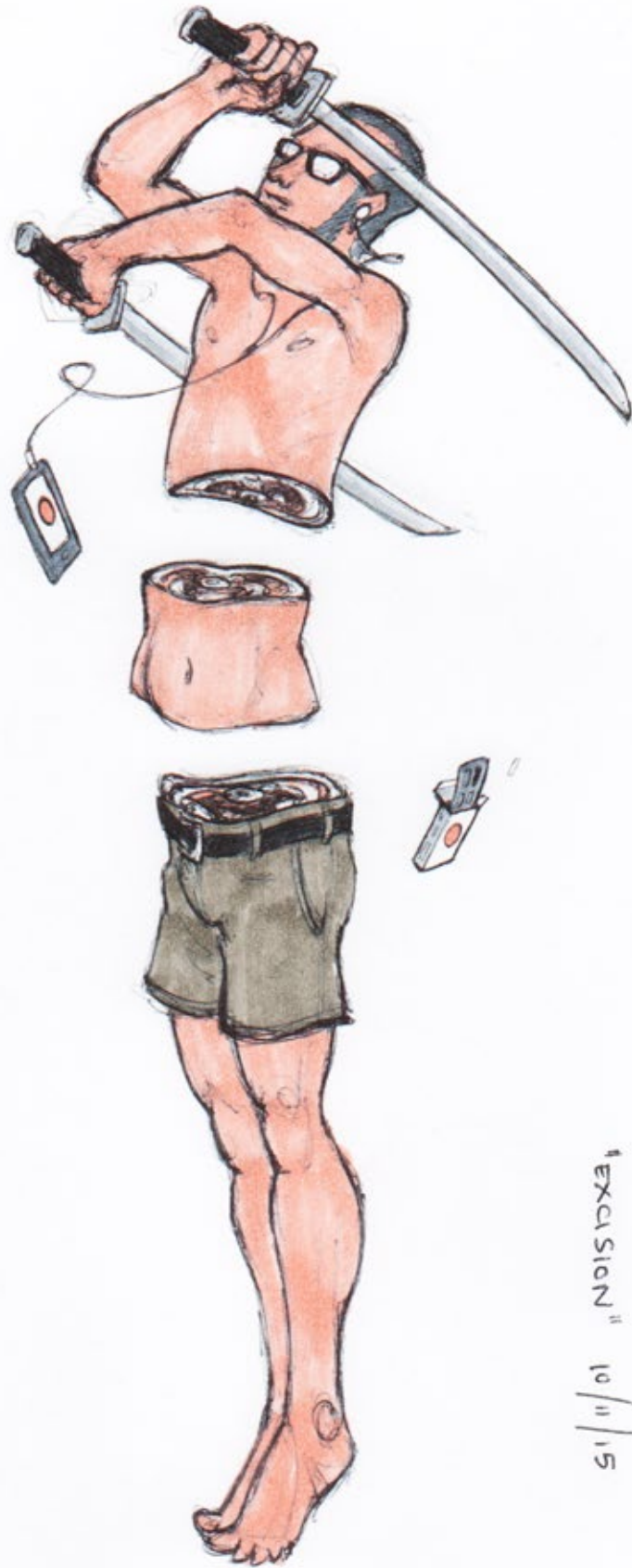
Making a conscious effort to deal with my stress. No, not happy pills but antibiotics!

Tested out the Copic on a printout too. Inkjet ink good, Bic biro bad. Makes the linework a little soft, but could be a great process for working stuff up relatively quickly.

Comments

Michael | November 13, 2015

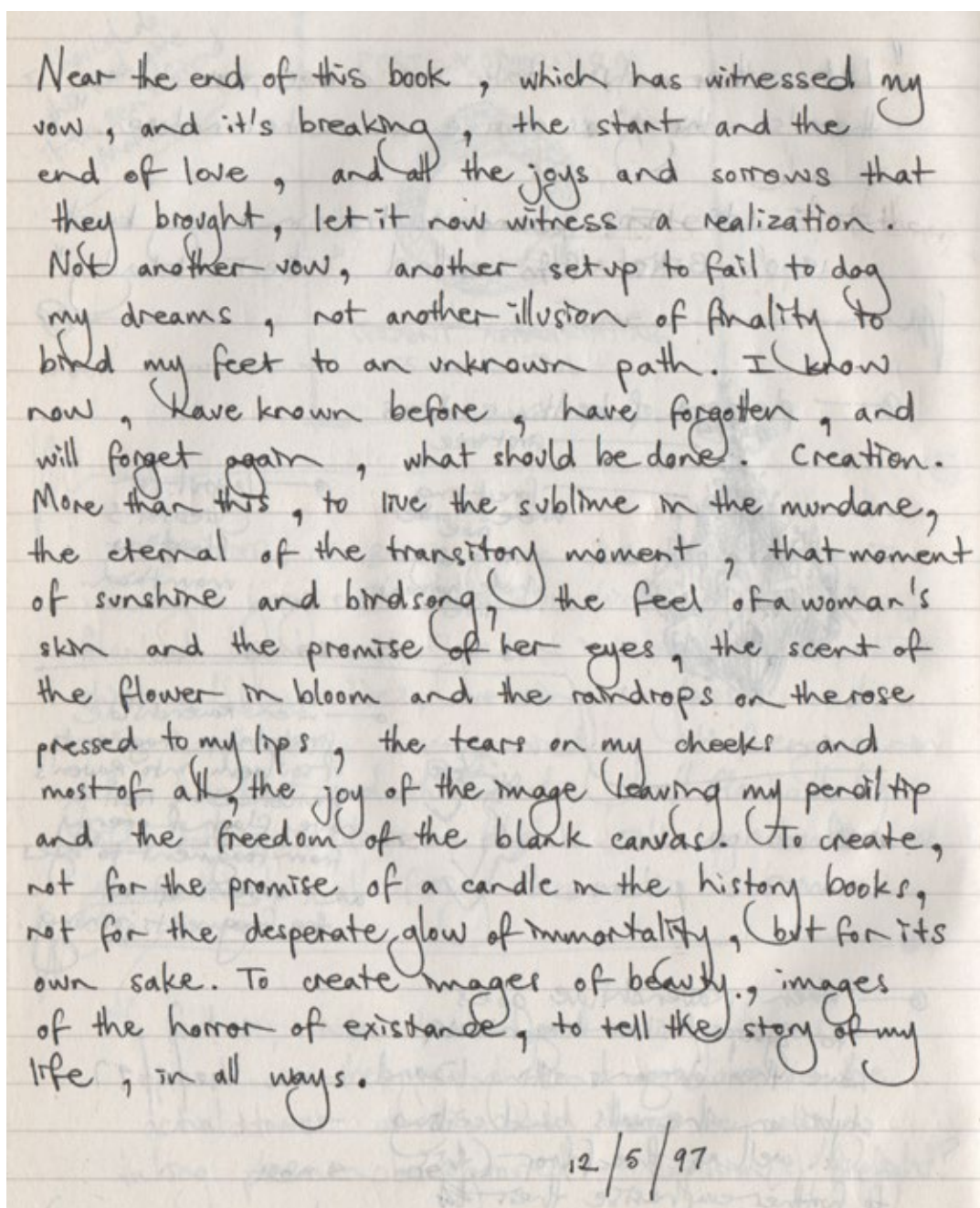
Cousin Chop Suey! Are the Mp3 player and medication packet designs based on the Japanese flag? Or your "red spot iconography"? Kind of reminds me of Lucky Strike cigarette packing too. A little stress can be a good thing but too much is definitely not so good...



"EXCLUSION" 10/11/15

advice from my younger self

November 24, 2015 | Tags: classic stuff, inspiration, resolutions



Comments

Michael | November 25, 2015

I'm trying hard to think of something "profound" to say but can't. You summed it up.

"nostalgia #2"

December 19, 2015 | Tags: smoking



I've been looking through an old sketchbook lately, preparing to scan the pages. Looking back. Not getting wistful, wanting to go back and relive it, but wondering who the f**k was that unhappy young man.

I wouldn't change his decisions, well many of them. If I went back it would be a parallel universe of winning lottery numbers. Traveling everywhere back when you didn't have to worry about getting shot. Going to concerts of bands long defunct now.

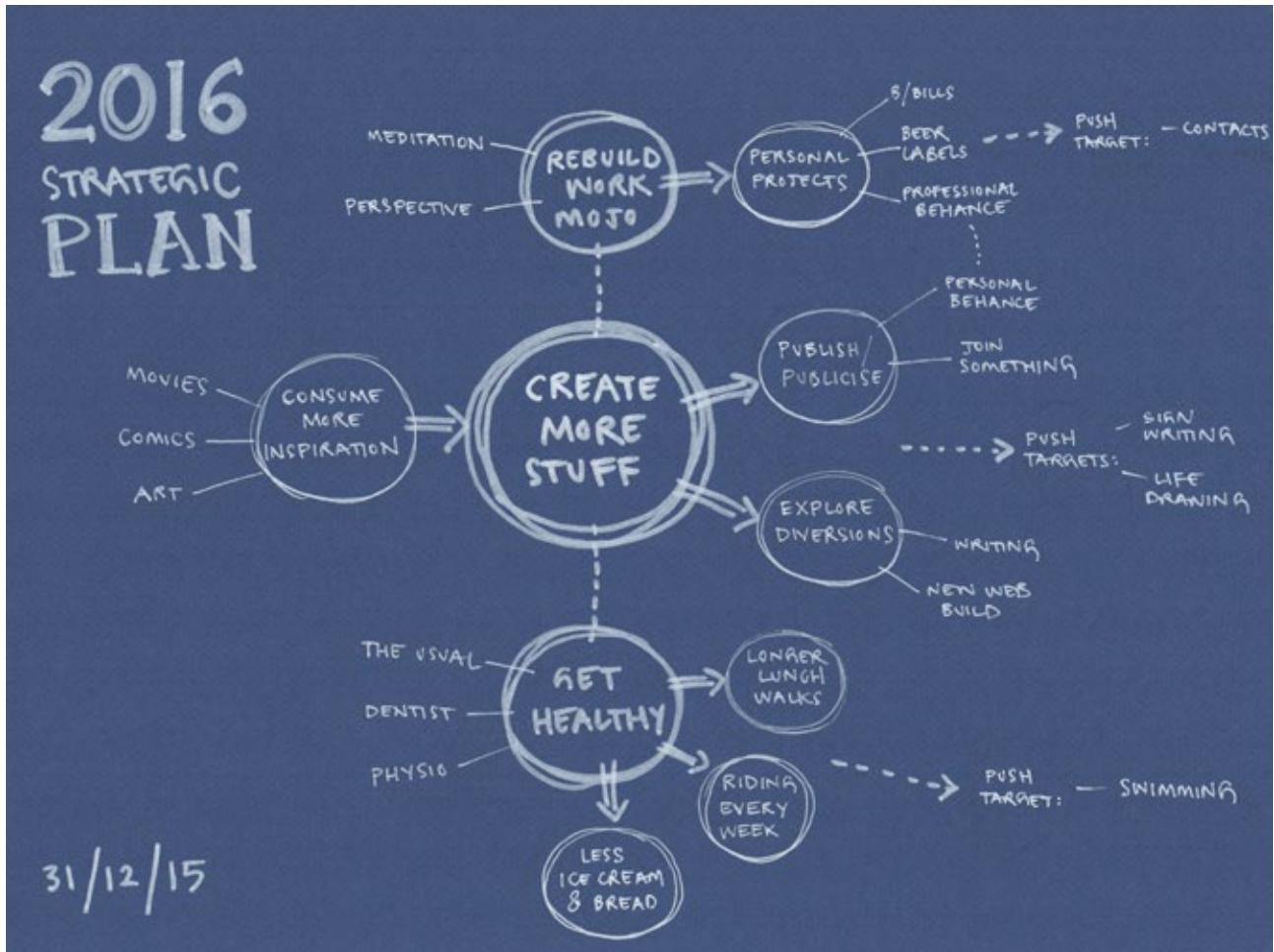
Back when I started sneaking out at night to smoke, I often found myself gazing up at the moon. Pondering. The locations changed over the years but the moments feel linked, a chain of moments of reflection. I guess the link is me, uninterrupted, finding the still eye in a universe of change. Seeing the sharp edges I tried hard to find by smoking weed.

I know how the story ends for that young man. He meets a girl in the next sketchbook, and is happy. For a little while at least.

2016

2016 strategic plan

January 1, 2016 | Tags: resolutions



Not quite an *annus horribilis*, but I'll be glad to see the back of it.

Comments

Dan | January 1, 2016

Congrats for putting it down on paper, or card or canson or whatever it is

What works for me is sticking it on the fridge and declaring to people around you so they support you.

Michael | January 20, 2016

I agree with the above! I've only put my down in a vague text message to you. I should make a "hardcopy" with goals/steps I can tick or cross off as I move forward. I've already lost some weight so am at least on a good start...

stand by for a break in transmission

January 14, 2016 |



There may be a few wobbles on the way as the site moves hosts.

A couple of years back my current host wouldn't give me a discount for a second plan to host a second site. Now they've nearly tripled the price and cut my storage by 90%. I wanted to shop local, but the other plan I bought with a multinational will let me host a second site for the price of the domain. See you later.

There'll be all sorts of database and DNS shenanigans, so please bear with me!

'dumb' quotes

January 19, 2016 |

The move went amazingly smoothly. I did all the complicated things right, did all the preparation, but messed up something really simple. Because I wanted to save a couple of minutes of application loading time, I used the wrong editor to change a password. An hour of rechecking DNS settings and file permissions because the editor used typographer's 'quotes' instead of dumb 'quotes' and gave the php indigestion.

Big shout out to Crazy Domains. They get a bad name, but their customer service answered my questions really quickly

and even rang me up to follow up my survey answers about their support!

Also managed to delete all of my old emails too. And learnt how to access hidden folders in Time Machine to retrieve them...

Comments

Michael | January 20, 2016

Back to blogging. Now I'll have to leave some more comments on your latest posts. I wonder if this time I'll finally get email updates?

"renewal"

March 2, 2016 | Tags: futility



Yes, it's a little ambiguous. On the job front the renewal is working out, positive if a little tedious at times, but the meat platform supporting my life isn't performing as well as hoped.

The antihistamines have cut the hayfever lethargy, and peace has been declared now a four year old has laid her constipated egg, so now I just have to hold my nerve till the next cystoscopy in four weeks.

I've drawn a lot of **botanical metaphors of renewal**, peeling back layers to reveal new growth or the seeds to spawn it. There were also a lot of green skinned metaphors of death, with a short goat-legged-and-horned sidekick sneaking in to offer a toke.

This then is the husk.

Comments

Michael | March 6, 2016

Spoiler Alert: "Got wood?" It'll be interesting to if you do follow up inner layers of kernal and seed...

Control Fink | March 9, 2016

Funnily enough, if you look closely he doesn't!

"threading the needle"

April 10, 2016 | Tags: cock, cystoscopy, work



Passed checkup number seven last week, no April Fool's gag, it was more boring than stressful. This picture probably looks less light hearted than it is, a good companion piece to [the first test's snake.](#)

Been quiet on the blog front, working on some "professional" personal work, a fake beer label. Quite satisfying to do some graphic design work to my own taste, and something to kick off a non-anonymous Behance profile. Some of the blog pics will do some double duty over there, maybe not the more penile like this one!

Comments

Michael | April 11, 2016

"Threading the needle"? More like "Slug in the shell"! Some nice subtle textures on the skin and like the crusty, "aggressive" shell. Keep it up! Boom Tish.

"balance #15"

April 14, 2016 | Tags: balance, biro, drawing



Just to do a quickie without rethinking / reworking too much. An hour working over a scanned doodle thumbnail.

Done!

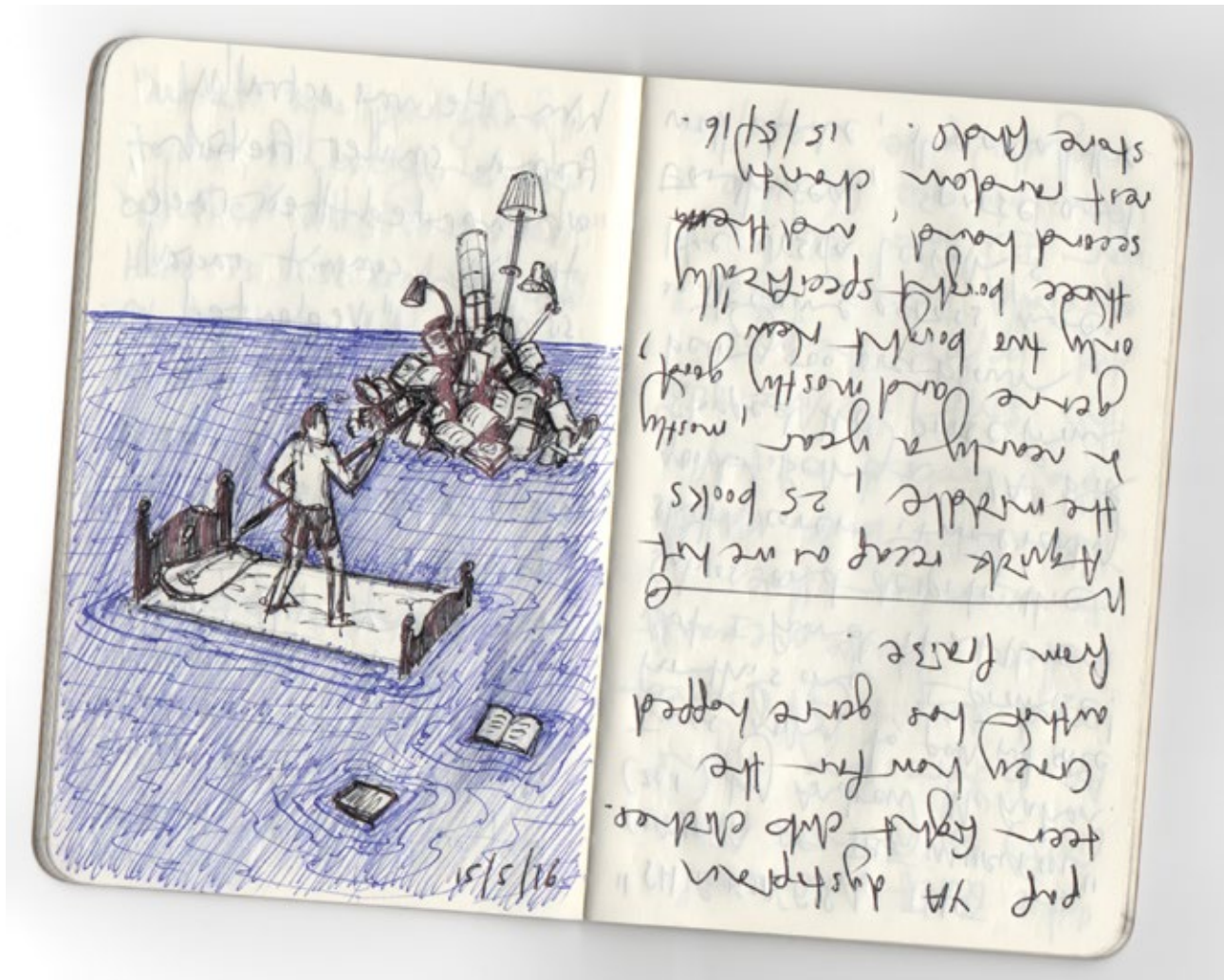
Comments

Michael | May 5, 2016

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Hey you don't have that many children...what's going on? Or are they representations of growth phases? Neat little picture. I like the fact that you can still see some loose drawing marks too. Symbolic and graphic.

changeover

May 15, 2016 | Tags: drawing



End of the first Moleskin, paper's a little thin but the binding is good. Ideas from the front, books reviews from the back, the latter crossed the midpoint first.

Bit like a mullet...

chart topper

June 13, 2016 | Tags: cancer

FRONT: ~~||||~~ |||

BACK: |||

Had my third colonoscopy last Friday. All clear. No polyps.

The hospital admission forms always seem like a tedious exercise – tick “no” 20 times and sign your name twice – but the nurse running through it this time gave me a different perspective.

“Any allergies?” No.

“Any current illnesses?” No.

“Any medications?” No.

“Any major surgeries?” No.

She was really impressed, said some people need to attach an extra sheet to fit it all in, made her job much easier.

“You must be really healthy.” Yeah, I guess I am.

"hammer 'n' tongs"

July 12, 2016 | Tags: monochrome, work



Been a while between posts, for all the right reasons. Well, we did all have a virus that made us vomit, but mostly it was because I've been spending my nights working on a freelance project.

Which links into the idea of the picture, along with getting some big jobs over the line for my day job, of the feeling of smashing it! Of just sucking it up and getting through.

I don't draw much in the way of beefcake, and my aim was to draw a massive dude.

Unfortunately the only wrestling jump pictures I could find for reference were more modestly muscled! Would have been great to do it as some sort of animated loop: smashing down through layers of masonry, through tag teams of dismayed wrestlers...

On the technical side, I coloured the marker base in Photoshop and was pretty happy with the result for a moderate extra layer of work. Have to try a whole scene with background, which I don't generally do in colour or mono!



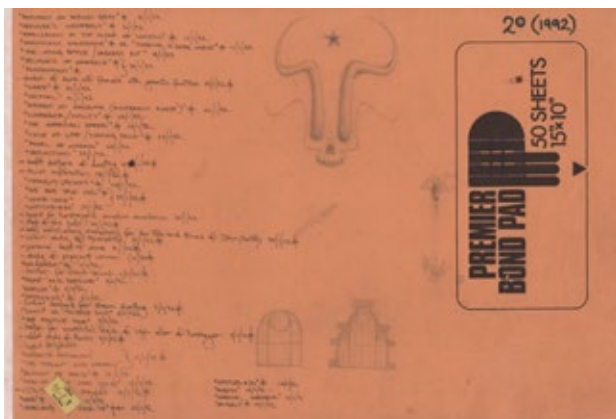
sketchbook #20

July 18, 2016 | Tags: classic stuff, monochrome



1992 was an interesting year, burning through sketchbooks (this one in a month) and too much weed, manic highs and lows. This picture sums it up in one.

Went and saw the awesome **Robert Hannaford** exhibition today. Lots of great work, but some absolutely mind blowing figure studies on grey paper – if you like that sort of thing! Really inspired me to work bigger again, and definitely get to some life drawing. Most of all, it reaffirmed monochrome as something worth following.



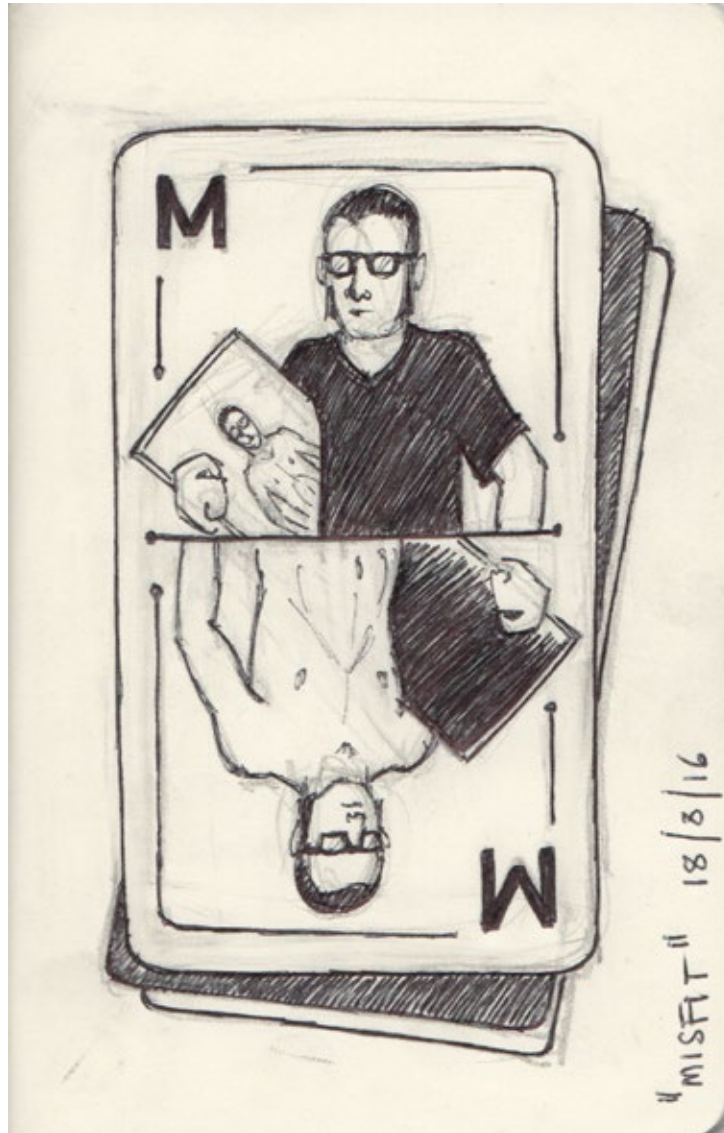
Churning it out



This one's for you cuz!

"misfit"

August 21, 2016 | Tags: art, drawing, monochrome



The idea of exhibiting my work has come up again.

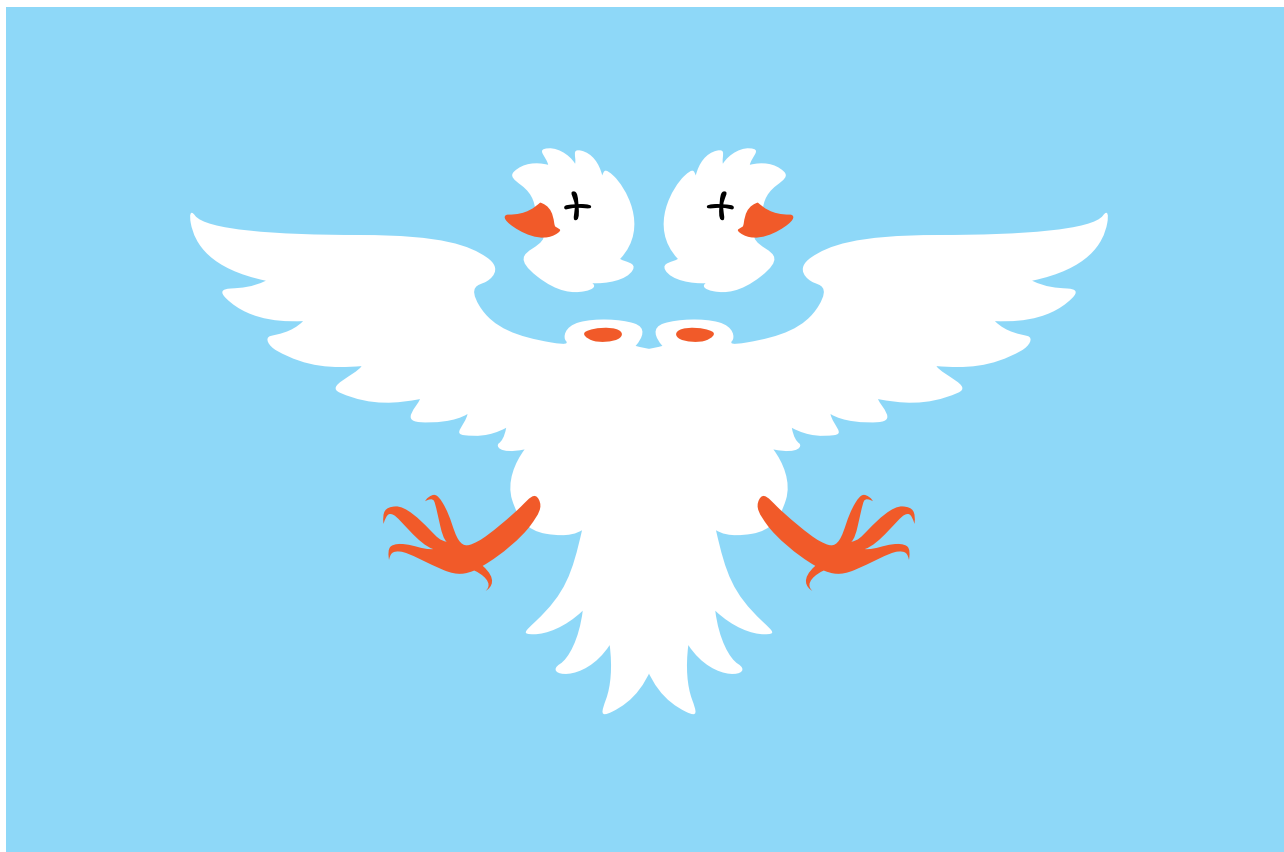
Back in the day, when I was either dropping out of art school (or trying to get back in), I drew a couple of versions of the idea of being a throwback. Against the high water mark of installations and the like, super old school personal metaphors got tagged negatively as illustration.

The irony is, that after a 15 or so year journey into illustration and graphic design, my work (which is still personal metaphors) is more likely to be tagged as art, now that illustration has broken the barrier into credibility!

Anyway, this abbreviated version is less whiney.

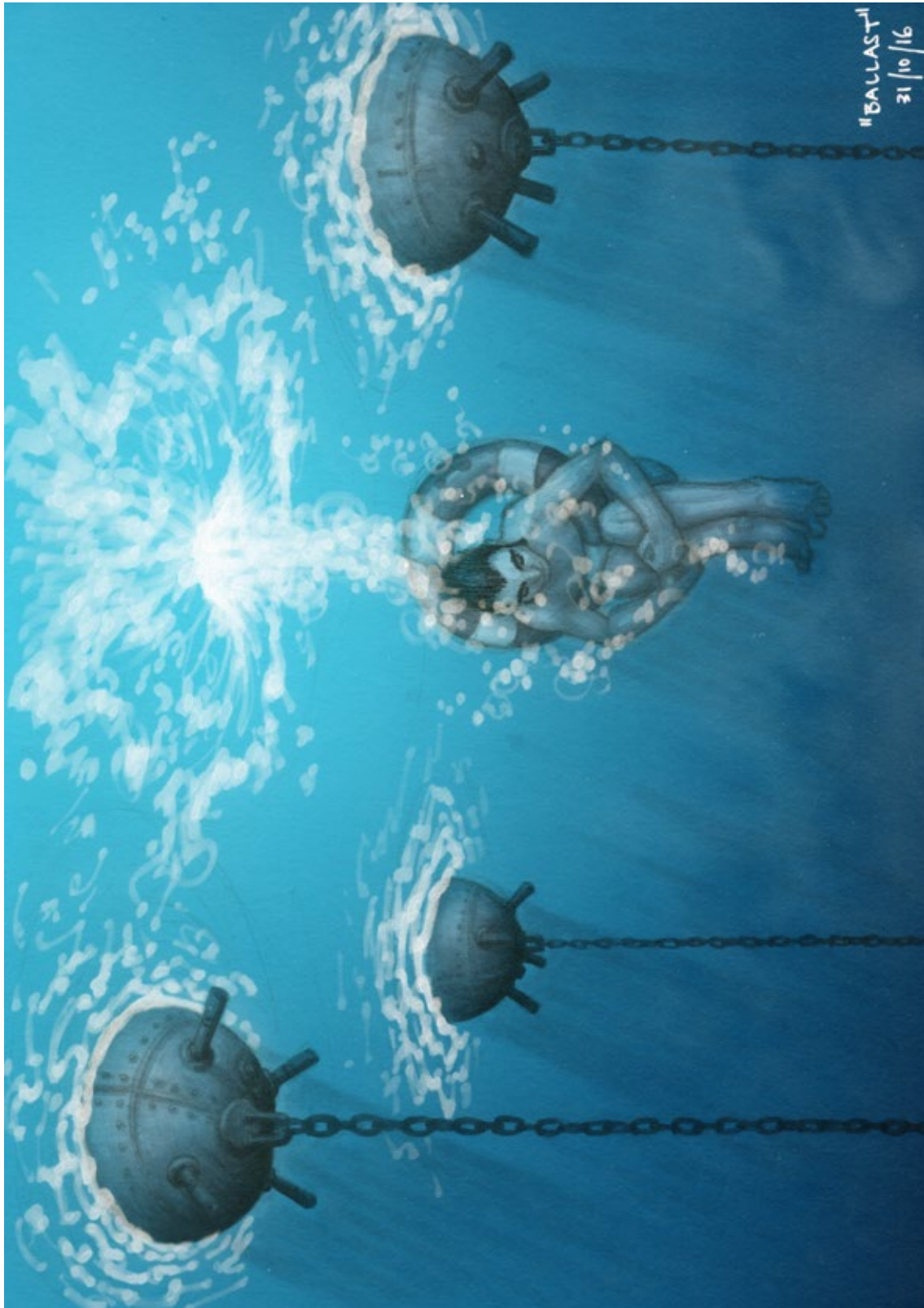
effugium cogitatio

October 16, 2016 | Tags: luck, work



"ballast"

October 31, 2016 | Tags: Copic markers, fear, work



What I write sometimes seems a little circular... "been a while / been busy / self referential". This one could be more so.

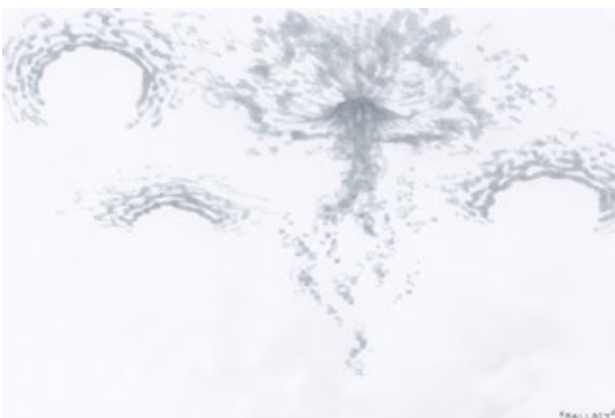
Been an insane 6 weeks or so, working on my agency's two biggest projects for the year, at the same time. Then doubling down by burning some extra curricular midnight oil. Before it sounds too whingey, that oil bought us an awesome family holiday, and printed the ticket for the next stage of my journey. To mangle two metaphors in one paragraph.

Wasn't until I started thinking about the blue, that I realised it was an accidental follow on to "hammer'n'tongs", the landing of the fall. The ball and chain has been mangled as a metaphor too, not a dead weight but a weapon, not an inescapable negative but a calculated risk.

And that central plunge was the most fun I've had with the markers so far!



Blue layer



White layer

2017

"second generation avatar"

January 1, 2017 | Tags: classic stuff, resolutions, stress



No resolutions this year, just this as a statement of intent, an underline to the end of last year.

Started during the week off between jobs, and a conclusion to the accidental blue series. It began with the resistance of **"hammer'n'tongs"**, continued with the risk of **"ballast"**, and ends with this, the reemergence from the belly of the beast.

More consciously it was a follow on to a drawing from twenty years ago, which started a new metaphor for isolation, an avatar born from a brain too prone to over-analysis and self-protection.

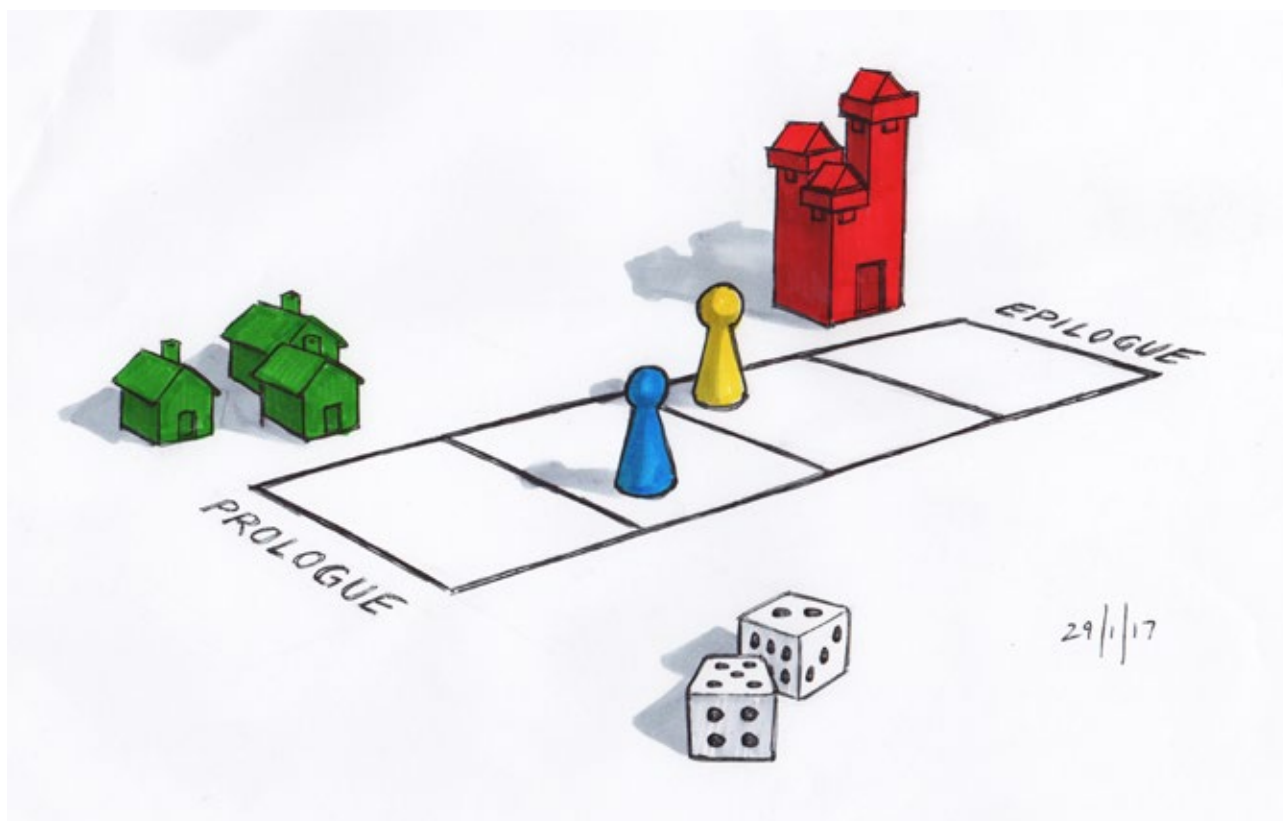
This reversal and rebirth, from the gut after a year and a half of clenching against ego bruising and stress, is resolute enough.

Coincidentally, the first drawing was just before I finished a stint in the public service, this is just as I begin a new one!



heroism as opiate for the teenage masses

January 29, 2017 | Tags: D&D, fantasy



Just finished reading "The Eye of the World" by Robert Jordan, published in 1990 as the first of a 14-novel 23-year epic – ["The Wheel of Time."](#) Oddly enough, it tied in with some recent thoughts about undead stories, how they pander to self-importance.

A lot of the early sci-fi movies are supposedly about the fear of communism – "they've secretly taken over!" – or nuclear bombs – "they're unstoppable!" Likewise there are lots of theories about the "meaning" of zombies and vampires. A good one I read was that the burst of vampire movies in the 90s was in response to AIDS, where the ultimate risky transgression would be to drink blood. The accepted wisdom about zombies movies is that they're some sort of response to the collapse of society or

community, seemingly always in connection with consumerism and rampant capitalism, whether in the 60s or now. Whatever the reason, there's a drought of vampires but a horde of zombies in the new millenium. Pun vaguely intended.

More than any metaphor, I find it interesting how undead stories tend towards exaggerated individualism, a teenage need to be unique and powerful. I am a vampire, I function outside the rules of society and know things normal humans can't even guess at. I am a normal human, the rules of society have broken down and I function above the sub-human majority who are clueless zombies. The difference seems to be that vampires tend to be the bad guy (or at least anti-heroes) because they have to kill "normal" people to live. The zombie apocalypse seems

to give you free rein to attack any individual or social group, to destroy any institution.

So what does this have to do with a high fantasy novel?!

“The Eye of the World” seems to me like the quintessential post-Tolkien Dungeons & Dragons plot, enjoyable but pre-digested. A boy living in a village who is secretly the heir to a long lost something and is the key to everything, living in a lesser modern era after a nostalgic long lost age where everything was better. A girl who he fights with initially, but secretly loves, who turns out to be a princess or a sorceress or something other than a damsel in distress. A dark and evil god who is awakening / escaping his prison / returning, generally from the frozen north or the volcanic south. With or without a white bearded mentor, elves and dragons.

The thing that annoys me now, but I used to buy into wholeheartedly in my youthful readings, is the idea of the preordained hero. A young man who doesn't really have to do anything but accept who is he to excel and save the day, like all of the TV talent shows where the intrinsic skills of the contestant allow them to skip all those boring years of practice and hard work.

Now I like the hard-bitten warders and rangers in the stories, who have survived the pain of losing their kingdoms and families, who have worked selflessly and anonymously for the greater good, and then end up wiping the arse of the self-indulgent teen hero.

Give me self-determination over fate any day.

Comments

Daniel tester | March 11, 2017

test comment!

Michael | March 19, 2017

Hey Cuz, I'll try posting again. Your comments are food for thought (or rather blood and brains)! I've often thought that zombies are also a metaphor for pandemic disease (like the black plague) turned up to the extreme...what could be more fearful to humans than to be eaten by the dead?!

"apogee"

April 7, 2017 | Tags: stress, work



After a break in transmission, a (mostly) lighthearted look at my recent work / life balance. Think Icarus flying by the seat of his pants.

In the downtime, I spent most of my spare time rebuilding the blog. No one really cares about the details, but I coded it up as a custom theme with a super tidy grid. And finally fixed the comment function that I didn't realise was so broken... come on over and test it out!

Comments

Dan Kuss | April 8, 2017

I think you would like the movie Birdman with Michael Keaton

Control Fink | April 8, 2017

It's on my list to watch!

Michael | April 9, 2017

Hey Cuz, another great image with more symbolism/metaphor to poke a stick at (pun intended)! Another bonus of your coding is now I can finally leave comments again. Better start back-dating my comments of your previous work!

"heralds"

June 11, 2017 | Tags: balance, cancer, death, sleep, stress



This was going to start off like so many recent posts – been tired, took a long time to work on this, bla bla. But it was worse, a new insomnia and a new level of stress. Waking up at 5am and not being able to get back to sleep. Waking up at 4am, waking up at 3. Going to bed early and falling asleep in a blink, but dreaming about work, waking up in a panic about deadlines with a pounding heart.

Looking for an analogy that's not trite. Like a card game, with a sequence of trumps. Throw in a yearly cystoscopy. Top that with abnormal tissue to be burnt out and sent for biopsy. Call the universe's bluff with a negative result, no cancer just "inflamed" tissue. An even hand, block your urinary tract infection with a course of antibiotics and referrals for tests.

The analogy runs out when you try to describe the feeling of shock at the urinal at work, peeing out blood and clots, bright red against the white porcelain, fear of embarrassment overpowering it, waiting impatiently for the automatic flush to wash away the stain.

There's some mostly irrelevant and gruesome details that lead to walking into the emergency section of the hospital at 8.30 the next morning. Ironically, I'd slept quite well.

I'm ok with most medical procedures, but I don't like catheters. The only thing worse than a catheter, is having them tell you a little later that the treatment isn't working and they have to upgrade to a bigger model.

Their best guess is that it was the scar in my bladder starting to bleed, and 16 hours of flushing it out with saline did the trick.

I half-heartedly toyed with some ideas for a picture, a skeletal chicken, some cock substitute with impalement, but they were even weaker metaphors than a card game. Better to look away, back to this drawing in progress. Insomnia? Work stress? Pfft. I can trump that.

Comments

Dan | June 12, 2017

oh boy, did I wince and cringe! a bigger model!?!?! Your sleeplessness reminds me of busy Creative Grease days. Waters are calmer at the moment. Time for a beer catch up. I hear beer is good for flushing stuff out. D

Michael | June 30, 2017

Oh dear. An over-bore of an already overstressed body part/s. You're one up on me for medical "horror stories"!

"reversal"

July 2, 2017 | Tags: whatever



A quick and colourful drawing to christen the next notebook. Nothing too dire, powerwalking through town on my lunchbreak with a headache... feeling light on my feet but brain encased.

The flower/faery man often has a chrysalis layered renewal thing going on, emerging from dirt and negativity. This can close the loop and return the favour.

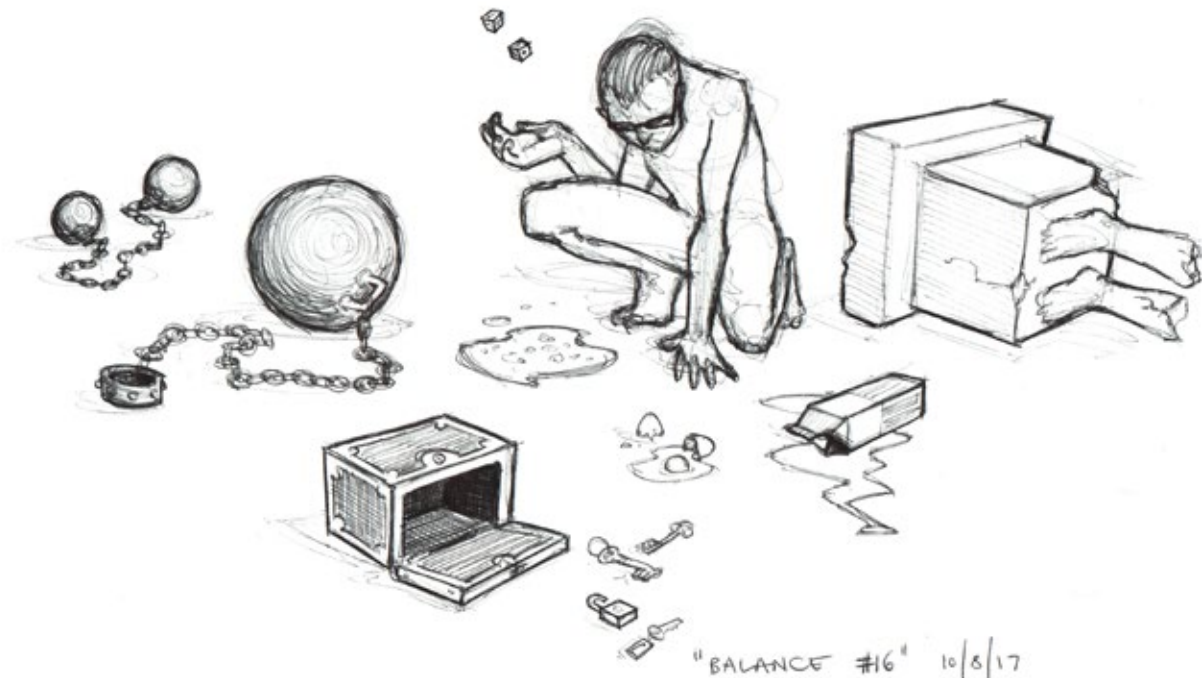
Comments

Michael | July 4, 2017

Snap. Ouch! Nice quick sketch.

"balance #16"

August 10, 2017 | Tags: balance, stress, work



This is probably a little aspirational. After a bruising few weeks I came home from work last night, before a day off, feeling like I'd done everything I could. And that I could leave it behind.

All of the balance pictures have been about keeping the difficult things in my life up in the air, with varying degrees of success. I was the boss for a couple of weeks, and could easily have drawn some convoluted sprint through hoops and over obstacles, carrying the weight of confidences, the grind of insomnia and long hours, the pressure of my own expectations.

This isn't meant to represent failure, but the idea of stopping to give myself a break, of the fallacy of crashing though by effort and momentum alone.

I wish this had been more eloquent, and the drawing more polished, but for tonight it will do.

Comments

Dan | August 15, 2017

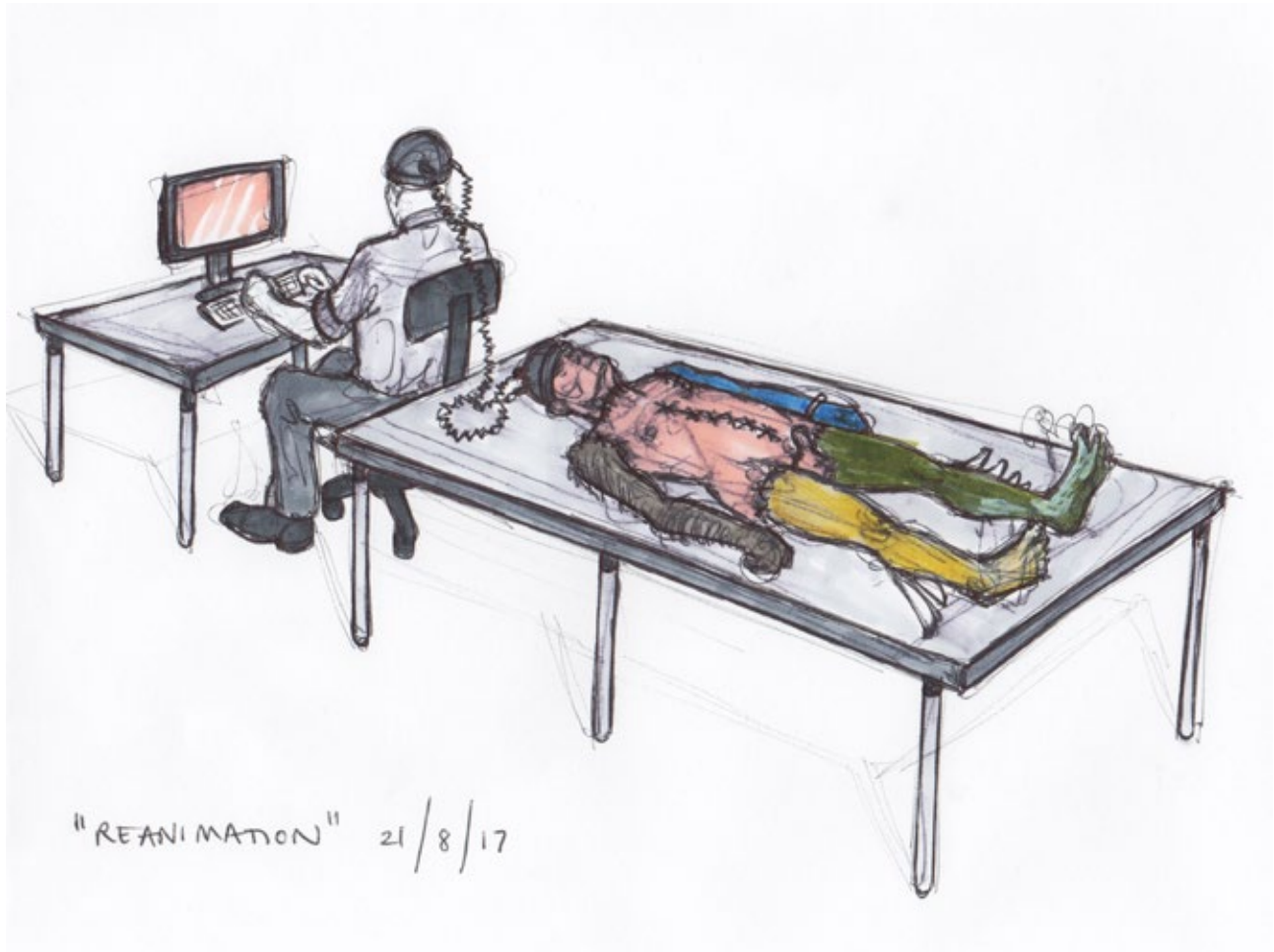
So, you're managing ok then? Still gotta do lunch. No spilt milk tho

Michael | August 16, 2017

Another great drawing...why bother with "polish"? It'd make a good etching. Must do runch soon too!

"reanimation"

August 21, 2017 | Tags: inspiration, sleep, work



I'm flicking the switch. Turning over a new leaf. Beginning as I mean to continue.

Moved to a new floor at work today, got some staff changes coming, caring less to sleep more, getting back on the exercise bike, and pumping some juice back into my creativity. Frankensteining some of the old avatars, good and bad, to add some colour back to the greyness of my managerial life.

They might be a bit rough but more drawings are coming.

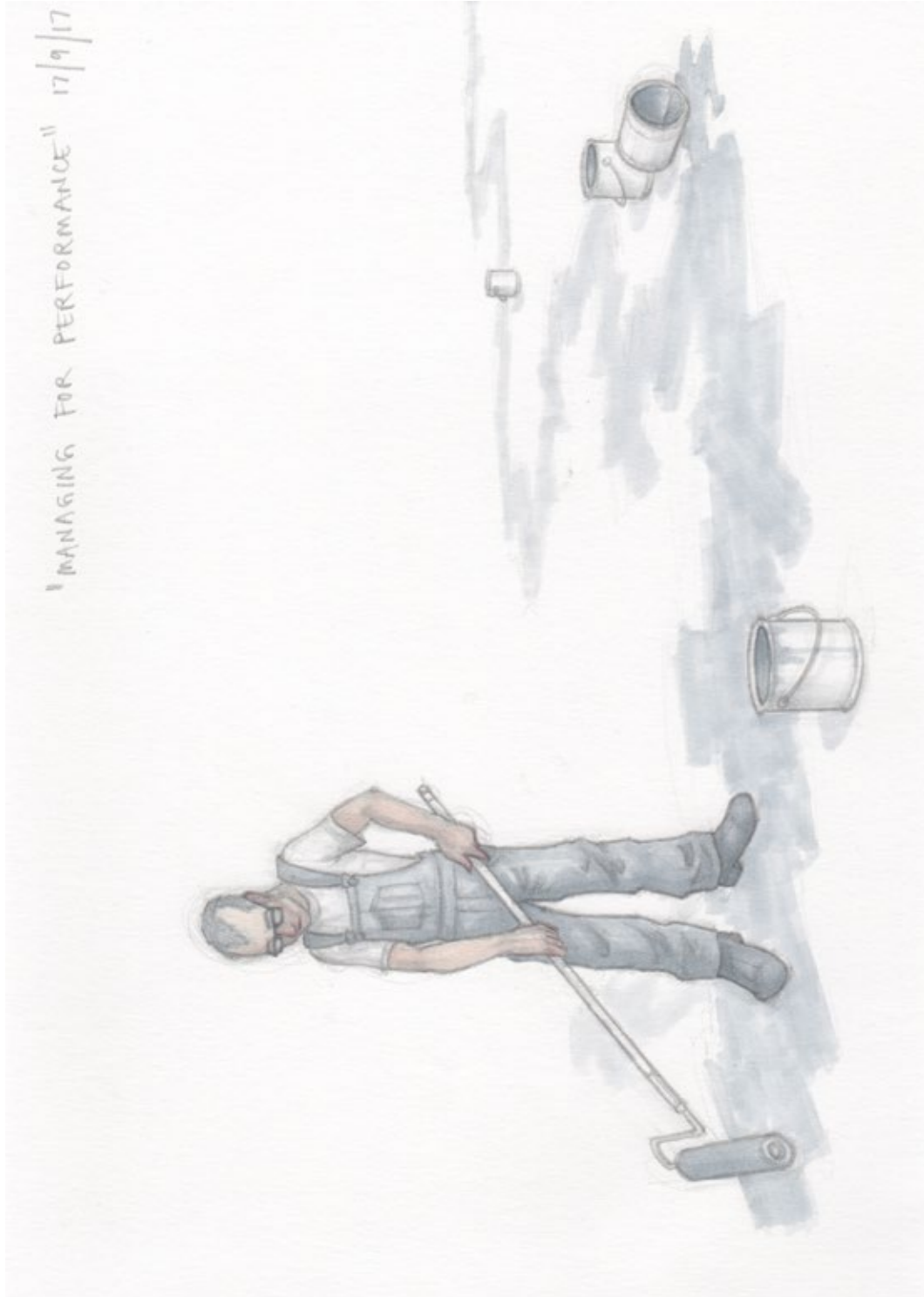
Comments

Michael | August 23, 2017

Brain synch with creative office manager and hybrid avatar Frankenbot complete...

"managing for performance"

September 18, 2017 | Tags: drawing, monochrome, work



I tried working on something frivolous... I really did. Somehow it seemed a little pointless.

It's mostly the negative stuff that gets its claws into me, that feels meaningful enough to work on till it's done. The paradox is that the drawing of it often makes me happy. As a blog it may seem a bit of a downer, but as therapy it's working so far!

We've been getting freelancers in to cover some gaps at work, and the two great designers I kept chasing both ended up getting senior roles at the biggest agency in town. The agency I had been eyeing off a couple of years back as a creative career path. As opposed to the managerial path I'm on now. So I had a few moments of angst.

But the therapy worked. Management isn't quite the dark side, and embracing it sounds melodramatic, but I can be a good boss.

And that will be good enough.

Comments

Dan | September 19, 2017

Mate you showed great leadership and management of clients, and staff, and me! at CG. That said, great people don't need to be managed — they need to be just lead well and constantly recognized for their efforts.

Mycarl | November 30, 2017

Hey Danny, Do you have a gallery site (or function of this site) for ogling? Regards Big Micky

Control Fink | December 2, 2017

Hey Mike, you must have been prompted by the dream I had about you the other night! We were at a party drinking and smoking cigarettes, and the floor was flooded with an inch or so of water...It's not a bad idea to just have a page that shows them all. You could just keep scrolling down?!

Big M | December 15, 2017

I like to show your art off to people, especially other artists and gaming nerds.

Big M | December 15, 2017

It's often mid game, so not always a chance for much else.

"ouroboros"

December 2, 2017 | Tags: stress, work



An overdue reminder to myself that there is no tail to catch.

Back in the day, in work and sometimes in life, there were times when I would catch up. Finish all my jobs and reflect. Maybe even prepare and look ahead. I need to stop looking for that end, that pause. Need to work the process not the task, like that old cliché, the journey not the destination.

Just have to make sure there are rest breaks along the way, if not toilet breaks overnight.

Comments

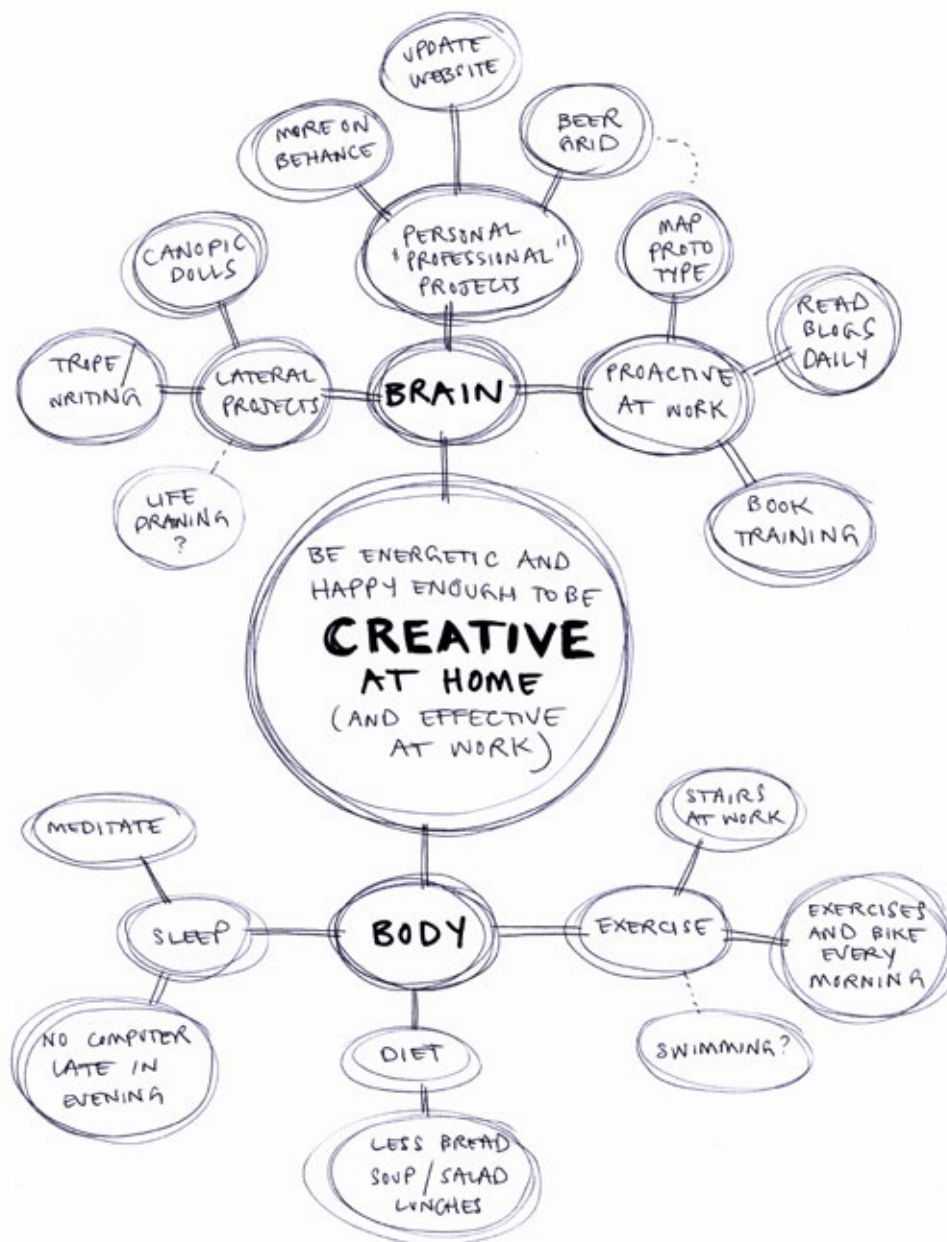
Michael | May 7, 2018

Drop-tail drawing...

2018

2018 goals

January 1, 2018 | Tags: resolutions



2018 GOALS

1/1/18

The last one was a great visualisation, so this is a bit of a reboot with a reason, with a central goal to tie it together.

Leaving off the obvious, like being a good husband and father(!), and passing all my tests...

Comments

Michael | January 16, 2018

Made a list of resolutions, should make a "flow chart" (?) like you...

balance #17

March 10, 2018 | Tags: balance, sleep, stress



So I broke my sleep.

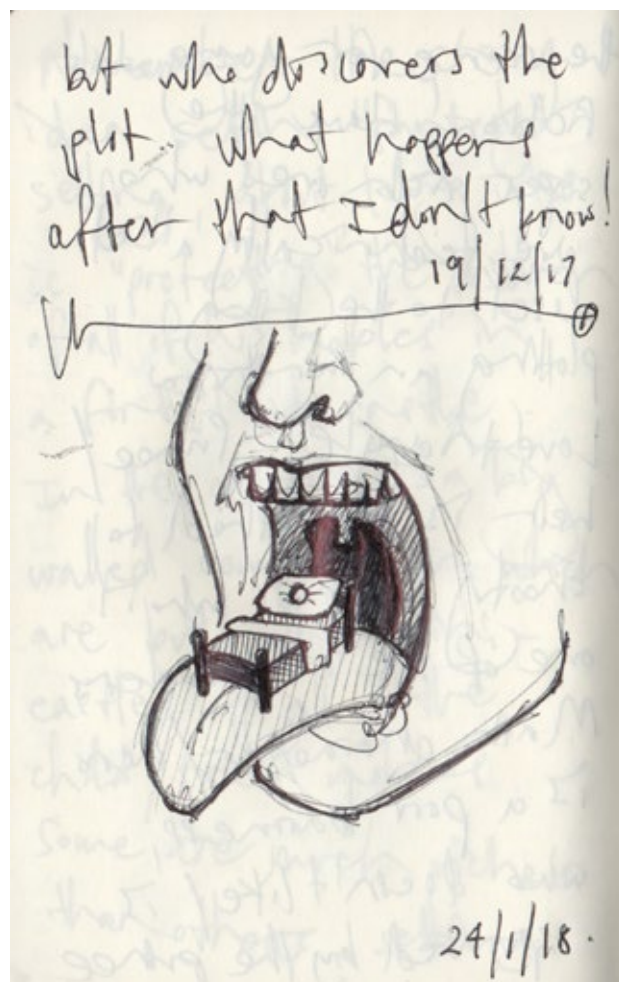
In the last couple of years I'd been putting some serious cracks in it, stress waking me up in the middle of the night. Over time it turned into reverse insomnia, falling asleep within minutes at the start of the night, but waking up and not being able to get back to sleep. 5am was workable, grinds you down but you can function. As it crept earlier, to 4am, to 3am, it got harder.

In contrast, my work life just got better and better. I built good relationships, particularly with my boss, was working on some interesting projects. Over the Christmas break I caught up on sleep, really unwound, was looking forward to going back to the quietest time of the working year.

Second night after going back I woke up at 1am after an hour or so of sleep. And went to work. And knew I had to do something about it.

Temazepan. In the end I think it was a great placebo, was a security blanket to help me get over the anxiety about sleep itself. The directions said to make sure to be in bed within ten minutes after taking it... I was often awake reading for an hour or so afterwards.

The good news is I'm mostly over it. Exhaustion was one of the reasons for the lack of drawings. The other is teaching myself javascript to build a [website mapping beer flavours](#). It's still a bit buggy in parts, but aren't we all.



Tucked in

Comments

Michael | April 3, 2018

Melatonin. Sparingly to avoid sleep drunkenness next day.

Control Fink | April 8, 2018

Sounds like Jackie Chan film with a sleepwalking martial artist!

Michael | April 30, 2018

Try Olanzapine! 2.5mg. Works a treat.

unfinished business

April 26, 2018 | Tags: classic stuff, drawing, inspiration



Was putting a birthday present to use, a big folder to store old drawings more delicately than in the shed, and was looking at some of those drawings. Some good and bad, some pretty wacky, and a few unfinished.

This one was a cracker, all about the rawness and uncertainty of trying to find love on the Melbourne nightclub scene in the late 90s. It got derailed by the hand. I couldn't get it right, drew and redrew it till the paper got rough. Even took some reference shots back in the day when you had to get them developed and printed. Eventually I found love and moved on.

It was in a brief phase of large works on paper, and I love the fluidity of the big pencil strokes, but most of them didn't get finished. Elaborate and labour intensive, and eventually too separated by time from their inspiration.

I also forgot to give a woo hoo when I posted that last picture, it was post number 100. Woo hoo!

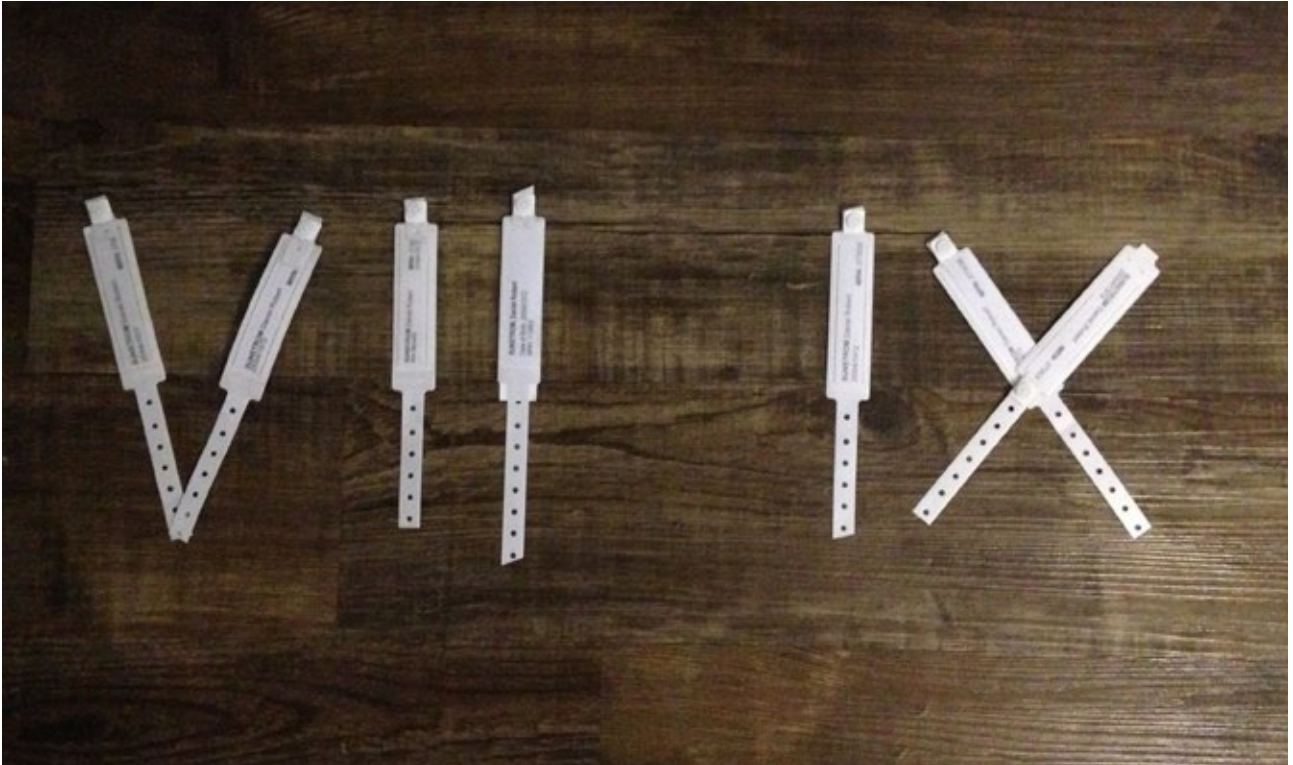
Comments

Michael | April 30, 2018

100. That's a Milestone. As for the drawing...I can't work out what is going on?! Reminds me of Giger-ish horror and touches of Steadman and Bacon. Fun stuff!

volume 2

June 5, 2018 | Tags: cystoscopy



Passed cystoscopy no 9 today. After last year's shenanigans I was a little nervous.

My file is now so fat it has run to a second volume...

Comments

Michael | June 7, 2018

Yay! My file gets fat too but usually only in the morning...

"canopic dolls"

June 14, 2018 | Tags: cancer, inspiration



Was a fun family project! I bought both the girls a set, and taught them how to use a spray can in the backyard. They finished theirs pretty quickly, but I got nervous about "wrecking" mine and kept procrastinating. The long weekend just been I finally had a crack. The paint marker was a little crude, and it probably would have been less human-centric to have the urns in size order... guts, brains, heart then bladder... but it was satisfying to complete.

Do I need to explain it? Egyptian canopic jars
× Russian matryoshka dolls + cytotoxicity.

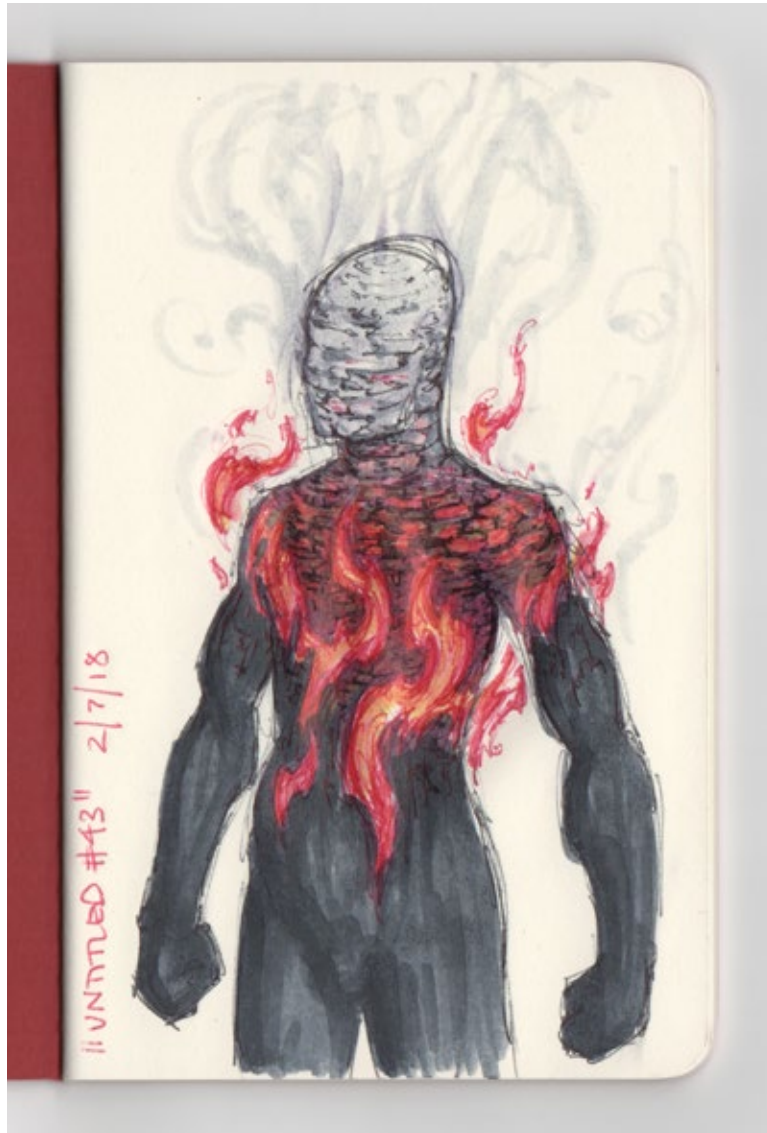
Comments

Michael | June 17, 2018

Cool!

"untitled #43"

July 3, 2018 | Tags: sleep, stress



For what was supposed to be a quick sketch before bed to remember an idea, it turned out surprisingly well! An accidental cover page for the next journal, but couldn't think of a title that wasn't trite.

Musing on the feeling that stress / reflux / sleep deprivation was degrading my mental competence. A slightly less super-heroic pose would have been good...

Comments

Michael | July 6, 2018

The title could be "Flamin' Ashes" but that too is corny and trite!

"new juggler"

September 30, 2018 | Tags: D&D, dice



I was looking to draw something a bit lighter in tone, and had been wanting to do an update of a very old drawing for a while...

One of the role playing games I played back in the day was an Australian superheroic setting – **Super Squadron!** In a great campaign run by Mike (hi!) I played an acrobatic character “The Juggler” who had a frog sidekick. There was a luck rule that if you rolled triple 6 you would hit no matter what. During a fight we were losing, the frog attacked, rolled the triple and knocked out the bad guy!

I’m a bit unconvinced by this drawing. Been sinking my creative juices and spare time into a coding project, and getting a bit existential about drawing... “why am I doing it?” The deep / unhappy pictures answer their own question, but the fun ones feel a bit pointless. Doing some life drawing again and getting the anatomy less wonky might help too!



The raw drawing



The original, from back in 2001!

Comments

Michael | October 7, 2018

Good to see you posting again. Triple 6... what an "evil" frog! Still got to draw my character, Captain Rehab from Super Squadron days so you're well up on me...

The Other Mike | September 22, 2019

I game sometimes with a guy who was a playtester for super squadron. He is still friends with Joseph Italiano's sister.

Apparently Joseph lost the rights to the game in a messy divorce. I was thinking the other day, that with a game like that, were leveling up doesn't mean that much and there is no real loot or equipment gains, that the experience level progression should be much shorter. Maybe even once per session or two.

Also apparently, ego and public standing were about to be unbroken in the next update.

Control Fink | September 23, 2019

Hey! That would be sad if he lost the rights to his creative baby. I've had a secret fantasy of contacting him to see if he wanted to do a 2.0 version of the manual...Game Therapy looks like a very cool thing. I can imagine a lot of isolated people being able to connect through games.

Be great to catch up with you when we're in town very soon.

The Other Mike | September 26, 2019

Game Therapy is going pretty well. Of all my wild ideas it's had the most traction (and biggest paydays) . Its pretty much full time across a couple of organisation's now. Ive just scored a consultancy with Aspergers Victoria to develop multiple Game Therapy programs and workshops for them in the north. Being paid to play and teach Dungeons and Dragons isn't even the best bit!

The Other Mike | September 26, 2019

Also first time I haven't had time to be anal about the project web site cos the project itself is actually working out and I'm too busy! (translation: I know the site looks shite, haha)

The Other Mike | September 26, 2019

But I actually came here to talk Super Squadron (Ive actually reached out to buy the rights, so maybe your and my dreams can meld actually) – quicker progression in lieu of loot so that you can do cool stuff quicker. Experience levels add range, duration etc (soup that up) but also if you have luck giving a luck percentile chance to add a x2 to a power. Better luck Stat you have, more powers you can have a chance at souping. What do you think?

The Other Mike | September 26, 2019

I think also giving a chance to redeem yourself in regard to ego points would be nice. I do like the original idea of getting cocky and paying for that over confidence with lower accuracy, but I also like the idea of redemptive acts as well.

The Other Mike | September 26, 2019

Firearms should also be looked at. Unless you have a related "power" or a high accuracy, there should actually be a higher chance of killing or maiming someone... And then facing the consequences of the law. I'm sure I told you about how, as kids, my cousin and I just armed all our super heroes with pistols and Kevlar vests.

Control Fink | October 13, 2019

Didn't see your replies before Melbourne... if you can find a way to get SS 2.0 up and running I'm in! I need a real achievable goal to help motivate my drawing. Or lack thereof.

The Other Mike | October 25, 2019

What's your number these days? Do you use whatsapp? Send me a message on 0435331515. And, if you're interested in a play by post game of super Squadron or DND 5e on my private website forum with Jake and Ant and another guy let me know.

2019

"muse x"

January 4, 2019 | Tags: code, drawing, work



There's no irony in a picture about neglecting my drawing to work on some coding projects, being delayed by working on some coding projects...

But that is **launched** and this picture finished. I did debate a little about it being super self-referential, and even more about whether I could still use a nude woman to symbolise creativity, but if you can't gratify yourself on an anonymous blog there's no hope!

The colours are from the web project, and the central idea is a reversal of **this one** about giving up on code. The candle comes from a long time concept of altars to things I thought I wanted, and the one below in particular after coming back from my first big overseas jaunt, lighting candles to make choices about the future. From way back in 1996, maybe not safe for work!

I hated it as a drawing at different points, the anatomy of the figure itself, some terrible shading before it got slathered with blue ink, and in the end the thing I like most is the bottle... but it was good to try some new things out, mainly bright colour!

Drawing had better watch out, I love code.



Original rough with extra wheat!

Comments

Michael | January 5, 2019

Great image. I think the blue lady looks fine. Is the bottle your favourite aspect because it's a BEER bottle?

Dan Kuss | January 7, 2019

No hope! Ha ha made me laugh. Hope you're well Dan



darker grass

February 20, 2019 | Tags: alienation



I was ten when *ET* came out. Unequivocally I thought Elliott should have gone with the aliens, had no hesitation about the idea of leaving family and world behind. Two years later, I was appalled Tom Hanks didn't swim away with Darryl Hannah at the end of *Splash*. Into the unknown with a girl!

Maybe all of my generation's teenagers felt alone and different, but I remember watching the couples easily making and breaking and remaking like interchangeable pieces of a simple jigsaw. And feeling like a piece from a different type of puzzle altogether.

I spent too much time with my own thoughts, and smoking weed probably didn't help that, but eventually found my own way. There was a long planned but never started picture idea in my early twenties. A wild lone wolf me

following a harsh and isolated path through the night, pausing to look in the window of a bright and warm house, pausing to look at a mirror self inside. A self connected to a family, peering out at the darker path.

Looking back at some of the things that darker self did, taking social risks I couldn't imagine now. Loving going to parties where I didn't know anyone so I could be free of worrying what people thought. Moving to another city not knowing a single person. That me was fearless, but often very lonely.

Two decades later I'm inside that warm house, a piece in my own puzzle connected with family and purpose, wondering where the hell that guy outside would have finished up. Watching movies with themes of alienation, and hoping they'll have a happy ending.

"germination"

April 10, 2019 | Tags: inspiration



Just for a change, I was delayed
completing a positive picture by going
on an awesome overseas holiday!

The year kicked off with a bang, splitting my
job to spend two days a week at the Botanic
Gardens, and on the countdown to that
holiday to Japan. Walking through the gates
into lush green those first few mornings I
knew I needed a botanical metaphor, that
there was growth and optimism in flower.

The return of the budding avatar was a
given, but it was the rebirth from the ashes
that made it real. There's been some fire
on paper in the metaphors, and in life
over the last year or so, bottoming out my
stress levels and sleep deprivation.

Been too long since the cycle kicked
over, let the new baktun begin!

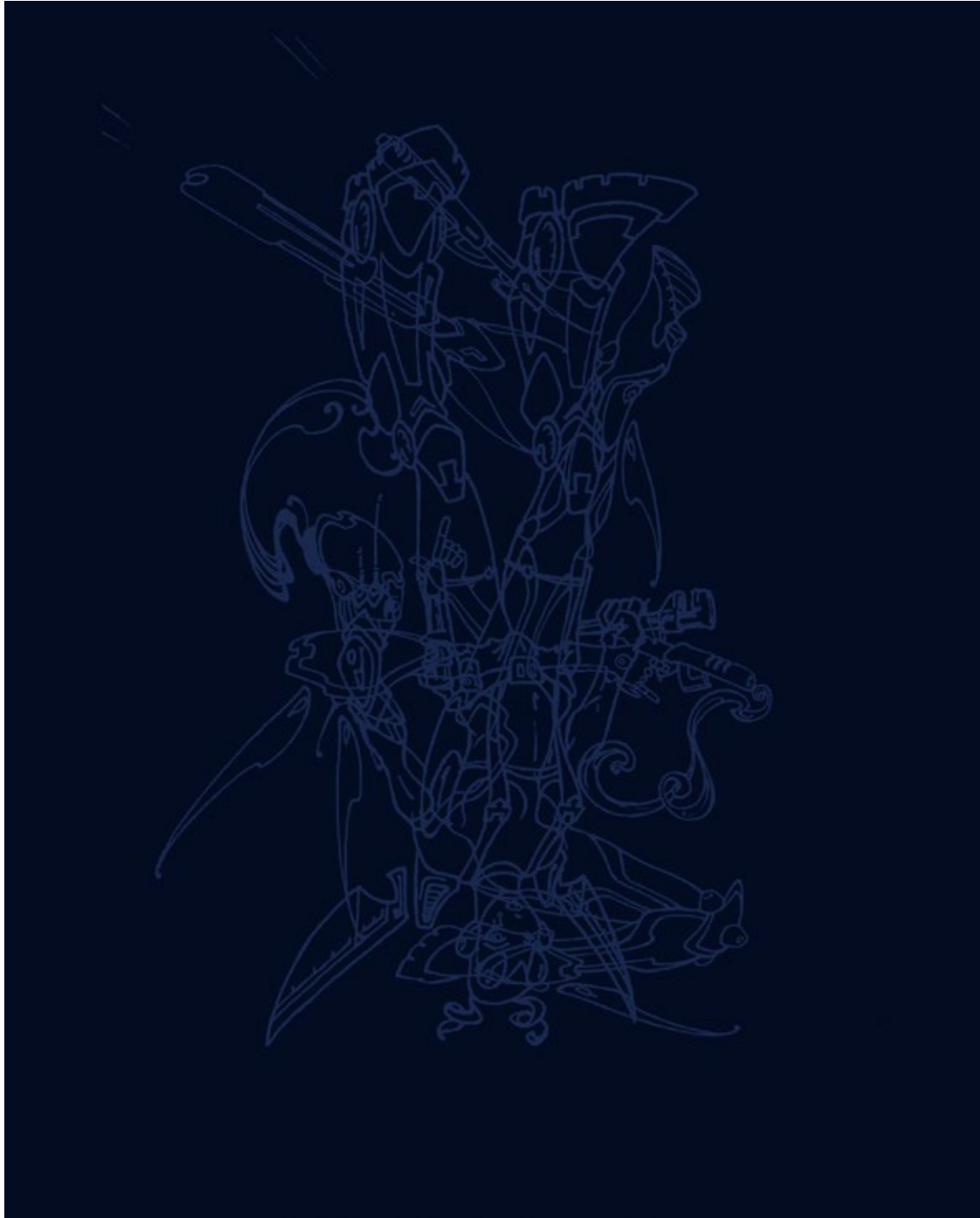
Comments

Michael Taplin | April 19, 2019

Excellent symbolic image. "Quiver wild ferns"...

chauvinist apocalypse

April 18, 2019 | Tags: apocalypse, nostalgia



I watched one of my all time favourite movies over the weekend, Blade Runner, set in an apocalyptic 2019 as imagined in 1982. I had dreamed of chartering a helicopter to fly over Los Angeles just to fully live the alternative real version.

There are no offworld colonies, no flying cars, but we do have sex robots. You don't need a feminist reading to be disturbed by the movie, a reconstructed male view will do just as well.

I always loved Rachael. She was beautiful and doomed, and I wanted to be gritty and tough and rescue her. Now she just seems like a blank for the male characters, or a teenage boy, to project their fantasies on.

Tyrell makes her as an experiment, loading her up with girl memories to make her chaste and uptight, obediently tottering on heels where she's told to go. Deckard isn't interested until that identity and her elaborate hair unravel, then he overwrites with his own operating instructions: *"say you want me" – "I want you."* Afterwards he leaves her passive in his bed while he works through the rest of the plot, returning at the end of the movie to issue a second set: *"do you trust me?" – "I trust you."*

That's not even getting into details of the love scene where Deckard kicks the door shut so she can't leave and throws her against the wall. Or that Sean Young's tears in the scene were real because Harrison Ford actually threw her against the wall. Or the reports of repeated bullying she was subjected to by Ridley Scott.

I often remark on the great and tough female characters of sci fi, Ellen Ripley and Sarah Connor especially. Rachael, sadly, is not one of them.

Comments

Michael | April 19, 2019

Yeah I also had problems with her character and especially that scene. Replicants were made to be used, "if they're useful that's for our benefit..." sadly that's her lot in life...a useful experiment. Blade Runner 2049 expands on this concept...

"despite"

May 8, 2019 | Tags: drawing, futility, resolutions



A reminder to myself from today, vowing to let other people do crap work and not stick my nose in. A play on cutting it off instead, I originally imagined it as a leaping action pose wildly slashing with a sword to narrowly slice, leaving a skull-like nose stump. As you do. Maybe Japanese flavoured

with a samurai sword and [Tengu](#) mask. Or Venetian flavoured with [Scaramouche](#) mask and ruffled collar both being chopped. Both with a conveniently big nose.

But I've already got one half-started drawing, so maybe I can let myself do something quick and dirty too!

"resilience"

June 2, 2019 | Tags: inspiration, resilience



As a family we weren't really that resilient. We all need extra time and space to ourselves to keep our equilibrium. If we do more than one thing in a day we feel frazzled. Travelling to Japan was the crucible for that.

We really surprised ourselves with some crazy adventures of endurance. The epic train, bus and icy mountain climb to spend a half hour at the snow monkeys was the high point. We all had our moments of losing it, but we pushed through and got some great rewards for it. Crepes after 9pm in Harajuku anyone?

This idea came together on that journey, rollercoasters and bullet trains and giving yourself up to the ride. It doesn't look much like what I initially imagined, with arrows peppered everywhere and blood. It also doesn't have much of the zen asymmetry of Japanese prints I was aiming for, but it does have a ludicrously accidental mirroring of the banner and the serpent!

Despite being a bit of a train wreck of mediums it needed no resilience to draw, coming together in a two week purple patch of late night sessions. The unexpected revelation was after a week or so of repeated scribbling, trying to get the feel of the coiling serpent in tiny thumbnails, I threw caution to the wind and just started on the big A2 board. The freedom of big drawing gestures was amazing, so I'll have to start going big and to hell with the practicality.

I just have to learn how to take good photos instead of scanning!

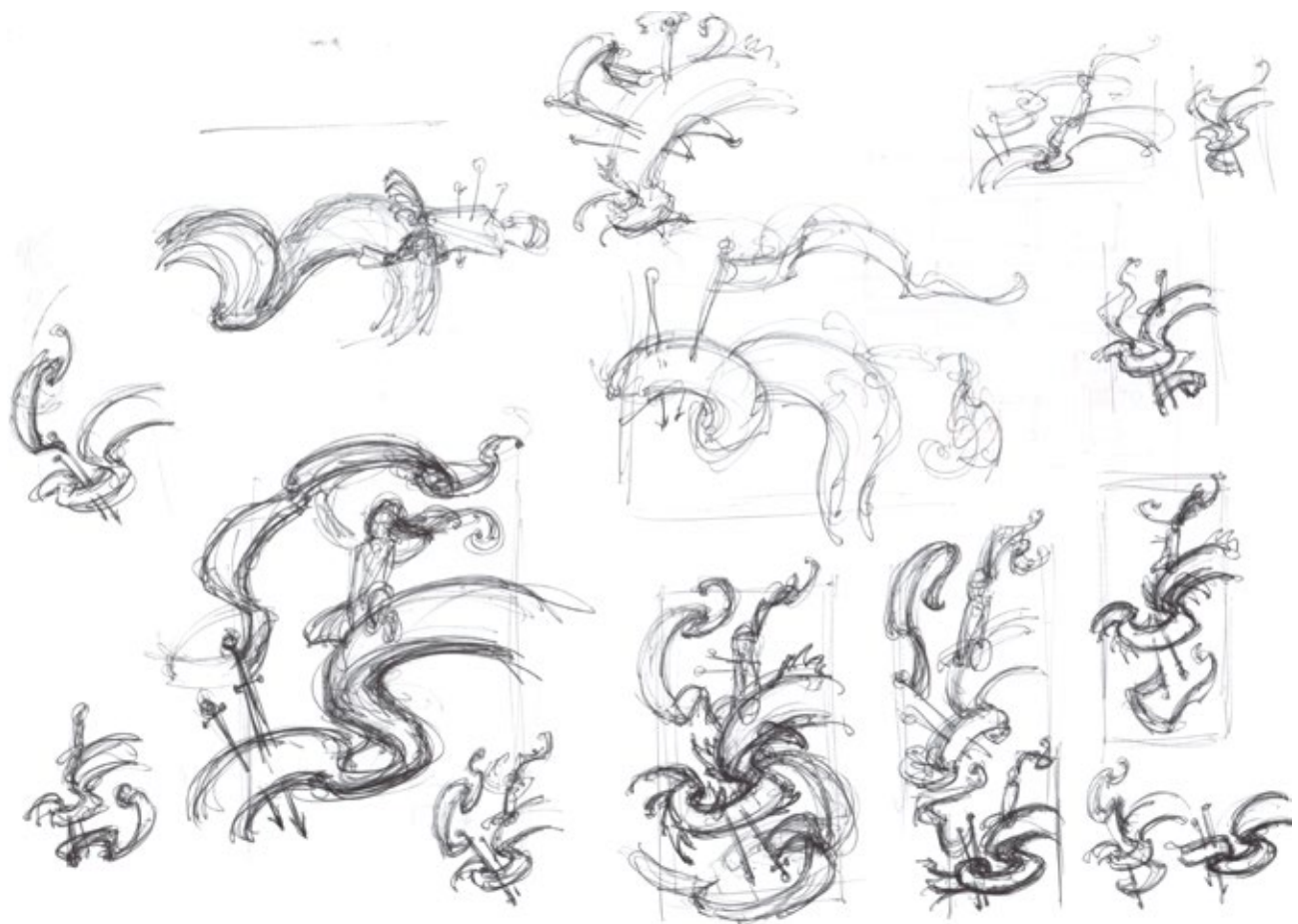
Comments

Michael | June 18, 2019

Such excellent drawing and imagery but was wondering, "Is the white serpent (dragon) a subconscious Blade Runner reference?"

Control Fink | July 10, 2019

No, just another big phallic reference!



8 and 10

July 10, 2019 | Tags: cancer, death, futility, inspiration, resolutions

Passed cystoscopy number 10 yesterday. Maybe it was because I'm on a week's holidays, but I was pretty blasé about this one. No drawing even!

On the bus to the hospital there were a group of Down Syndrome teens on an outing. It was a sunny day and they were having an infectiously fun time. But it also made me intensely grateful for the health of my two daughters. Why do we need reminders to feel it?

It was my wife who remembered it would be 8 years nearly on the dot since my first surgery. Cancer and family deaths in the past have given me bursts of motivation, seize the day, etc... but it never lasts. My life is going well and I wallow in happy complacency, feeling a moment of guilty regret after a night of bad television. Should have done some drawing. Looking at my gut in the mirror. Better do some exercise.

There's a blank board on my desk waiting to be drawn on, a bookmarked headless CMS waiting to be downloaded, a novel synopsis waiting for the difficult second half, and a blog post waiting for a pithy ending. How lucky is that!

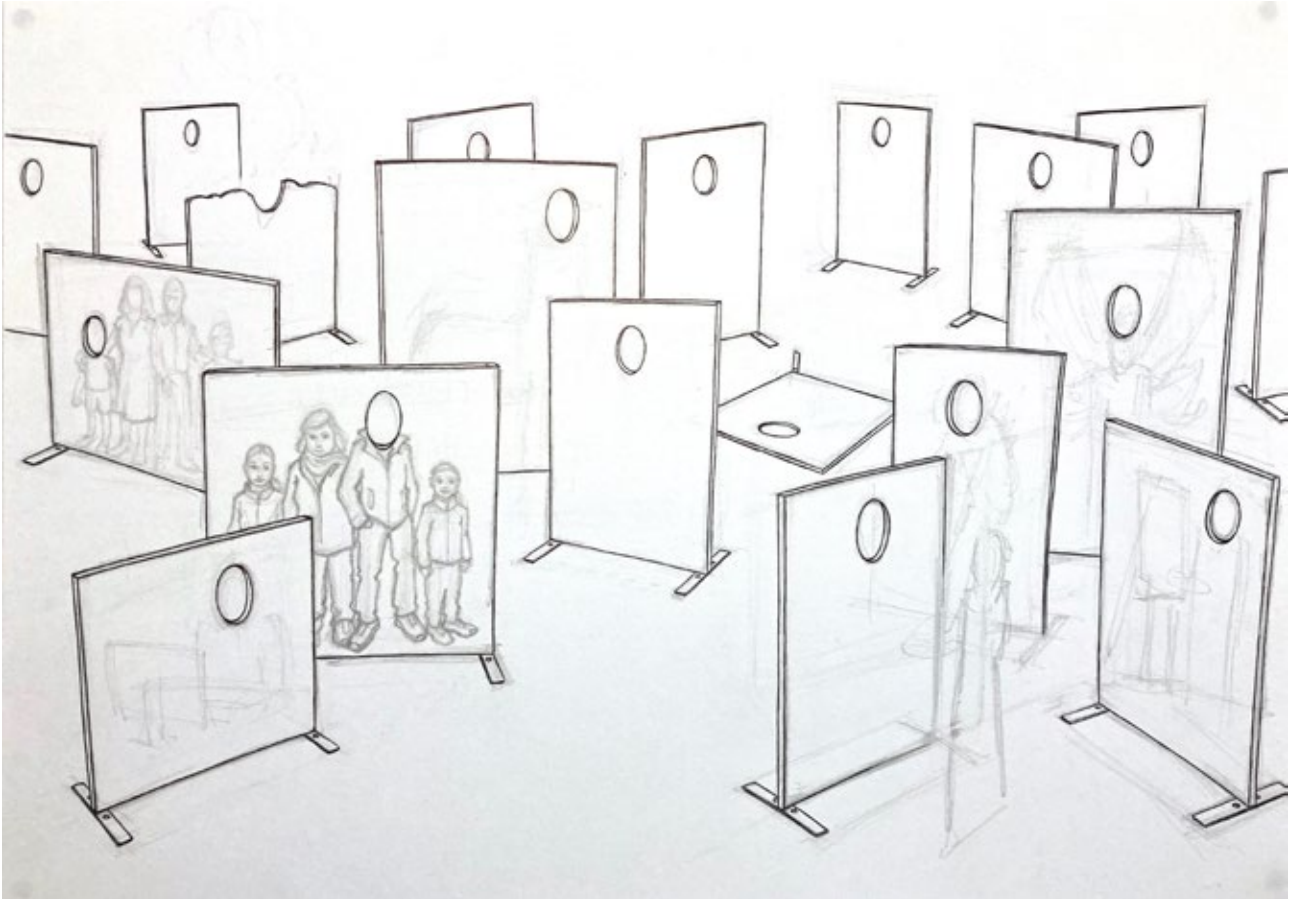
Comments

Michael | August 29, 2019

Ah, First World "problems"...

too hard, didn't finish

October 13, 2019 | Tags: drawing, futility, inspiration



Drawings have been few and far between this year. Not that it's been a bad year, the time at the Botanic Gardens getting my hands dirty with design again, an awesome family holiday to Japan, but wondering what it was all about. Being more of a manager than a designer. Being more inspired to code than draw. There are no comics where the hero settles down to being a dad and public servant in middle age!

Hence a drawing about my self-image and its changes over time. Which then seemed pointless and self-indulgent – 'who will ever see it?' – or more strongly – 'who would care if they did?'

Ringling ears and dark ales

But then I went out for a boys night and saw some amazing heavy bands at the Crown and Anchor.* They were old dudes, my age, living the dream and smashing it. We ended up talking to some of them outside afterwards, I was confessing my lack of motivation and they were inspiring. Do it for the love of it, do it for yourself.

And I did. Got all motivated and made good progress to a point... then just stepped back to my coding project. Got really obsessed with it, staying up late and on weekends trying to get new things to work. And they did work, and the satisfaction was massive. But no drawing was done.

Intrinsic demotivation

I've been doing more management training at work, as well as a great questionnaire about personal strengths. Lots about how to motivate people, and much pondering on how to get it to work with my staff, or my two headstrong daughters! Turns out there's a whole lot about challenges and learning something new.

So I started comparing coding and drawing. The first seems like a hard sell. After a day of being on a computer at work, sit at another screen at night, mostly in a bare bones code editor typing Javascript that I mostly didn't understand. Spend weeks trying multiple things, searching forums, just to get a single thing to work. Being elated when it finally worked. Then seeing the next thing I could do to build on it. Loops.

Drawing should be a no-brainer. Something I've always loved and is quite meditational. Something that's always been a strong part of my self identification. Now a thing where my skills are getting rusty, having to spend longer to produce drawings that aren't as good as they were before. Oops.

This drawing really was the straw that broke the camels back, but also that finally made it clear. The thing I find hardest at the moment is drawing people. With a good reference pictures, and at a big enough scale I can still get it together. I was really enjoying this when it was all about the perspective and the pen outlines of the canvases. Then it was going to be lots of detailed small drawings of people, often specific people like the family shot set in Japan... the only one that I actually finished.

Too long, didn't read

At this point you'd be expecting some resolution, some truths, but they're never that easy. I'm not ready to give up on drawing yet, but there may be a few more posts about writing a novel along the way!

**Thanks again for the birthday tickets cuz!*

"reductionism"

December 30, 2019 | Tags: drawing, futility



One last for the year. Really the absolute reduction of this concept, the ball and chain dragging, treadmill spinning, Sisyphian task.

There's some positive spin you could put on this, maybe it's all downhill, and it's been a pretty amazing year... but a pretty tough one in patches. I still haven't quite gotten hold of the idea of never catching up, of

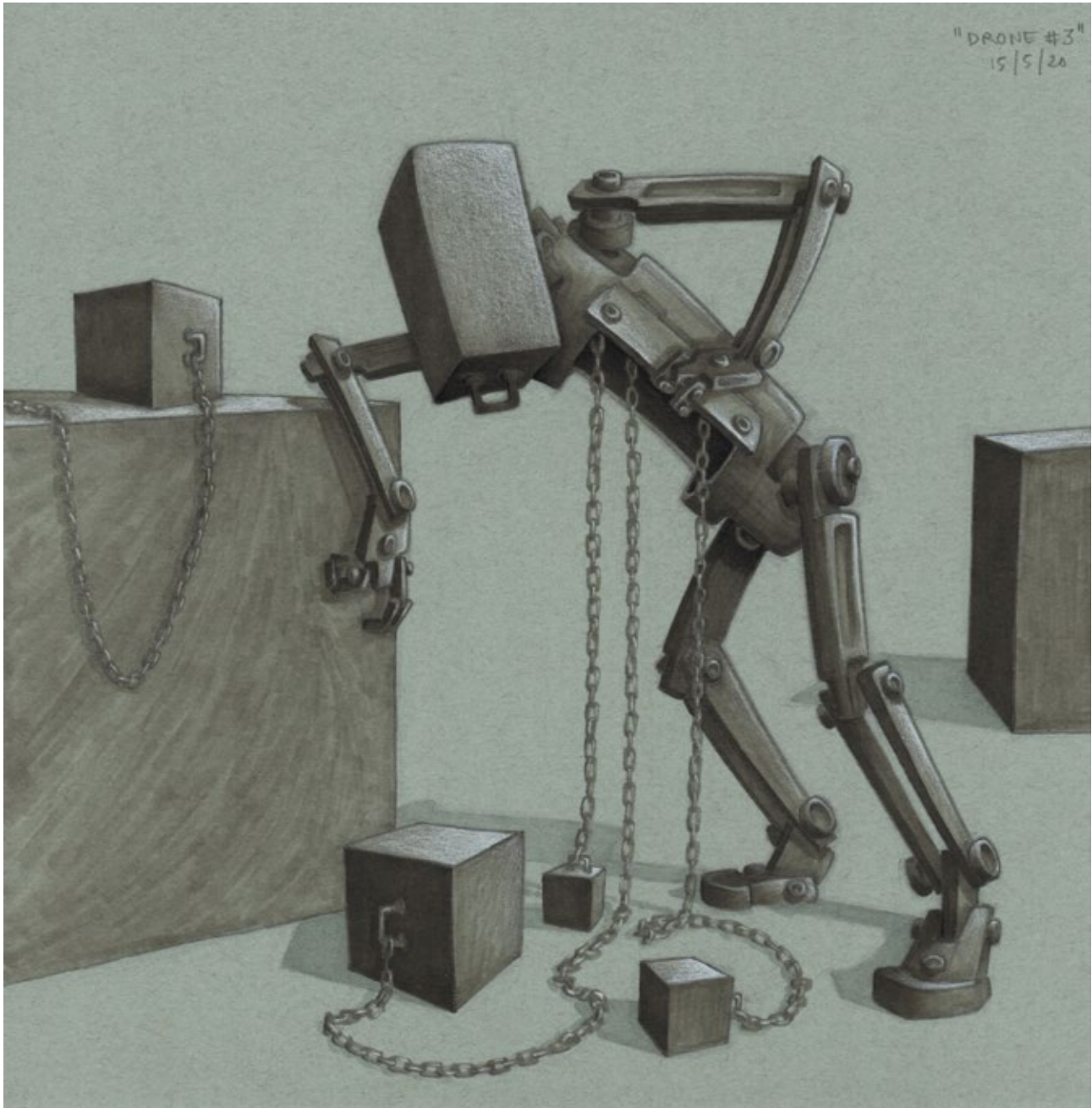
never having an empty inbox, of letting unimportant tasks be done badly or never.

After a lot of drawing procrastination, this one came together quite quickly. Set myself a deadline to do it before the new year. Got four weeks off, going to catch up on all the things I'm behind on...

2020

"drone #3"

May 17, 2020 | Tags: drawing, stress

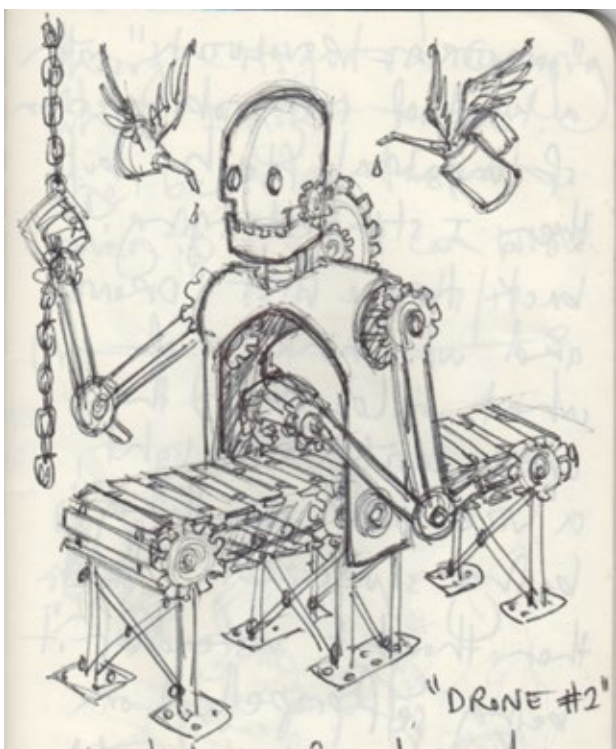


I just ignored the obvious, and kept plugging away at this drawing. A moment of stress and tiredness amongst a pretty happy year (obvious elephant notwithstanding), that got chosen as a good exercise... mechanical is easier than biological! Turned out better than expected, didn't quite nail the textures.

The first one was youthful feelings of vulnerability and loneliness, and a homage to the mannequins of [de Chirico](#), with a "secret" message in the blocks.



Have to look up the date – 1996?



*Only a couple of years back, 2017.
Love those oil can birds!*

"purse of wisdom"

July 9, 2020 | Tags: fear, futility, inspiration



"PURSE OF WISDOM"
7/7/20

A mangled metaphor about the abundance of clear lessons to be had in this craziest of years. It initially came from pondering the universal ones.

How can anyone deny the reality of climate change while the country literally burns around them?

Why does it take a senseless racist murder in another country for 432 deaths in custody in Australia to even make the news?

How is the science of vaccinations under attack during a global pandemic?

Then I had some personal lessons to learn. Working from home made me feel disconnected and unmotivated, doubting my abilities while lashing myself with guilt for not being more grateful.

I applied for a new job and lay awake the night after the interview worried I'd get it. But I would have taken it just for a permanent position, out of fear of the future and to run away from my doubts.

Not long afterwards I applied to go back to study, not to learn something new and move forward, but to get a qualification for what I already do. To prepare for a fallback career in teaching, out of fear of being an old has-been designer.

Maybe these lessons are just as obvious from the outside. That rather than give up, I should believe in myself and keep trying. That instead of aiming low I should be learning skills to build the projects I'm passionate about.

Maybe I need to be more forgiving, and not just more grateful.

Comments

Dan Kuss | July 13, 2020

Great post, Dan. I agree that it's crazy that it takes such uproar to bring about change. A death on a main road before they introduce a pedestrian crossing is a local example that always concerned me.

Recently I was part of a men's group to discuss racism, and a police officer elaborated on the 'deaths in custody' statistics. Many of them are before the police actually have detained the person, but still considered 'in custody'. Being okay with just being okay has been a struggle for many people lately. Me, too. Be kind to yourself, man. Let's set up a time for catch up soon.

D

Control Fink | August 5, 2020

Thanks Dan, self forgiveness is the hardest! We are definitely overdue to catch up.

"new pantheon"

October 15, 2020 | Tags: beer, drawing, vice



This was meant to be pretty lighthearted, myself as a beer spirit, but he didn't turn out as fat and foolish as I intended! It was riffing on an old theme, when feeling self-satisfied after giving up weed, the unnatural flesh turned into a cannabinoid satyr. My vice of choice these days is definitely drinking beer.

The most successful part of this picture was the discipline to get it done. I've dropped a day of work and set myself the goal of just starting drawing first up like it was my job. Rain, hail or headache. Back in the day I used to wait until I was inspired... life is too short!

On the technique side, I've hit a bit of a dead end with the coloured inks. Layering the translucent inks over my Copic shading, or over the grey card, gets muddy and throws out the tones. Using up some genuine blue ink on the background, its shiny shellac surface is almost impossible to scan! The greyscale drawings are going ok, but not sure where to next with colour.

Comments

Michael. | October 16, 2020

Hopefully the Satyr is up for a drink tonight?!

Control Fink | October 27, 2020

He was!



A little smug, muddling up the classical references



Years later, finding the break not as clean

"husk"

November 21, 2020 | Tags: futility, inspiration



Funny that I put a lot of time and effort into the last "happy" picture but this three hour quickie was more satisfying! My motivation and self-worth are still a work in progress but there is progress. Shame the flowering didn't last long enough.

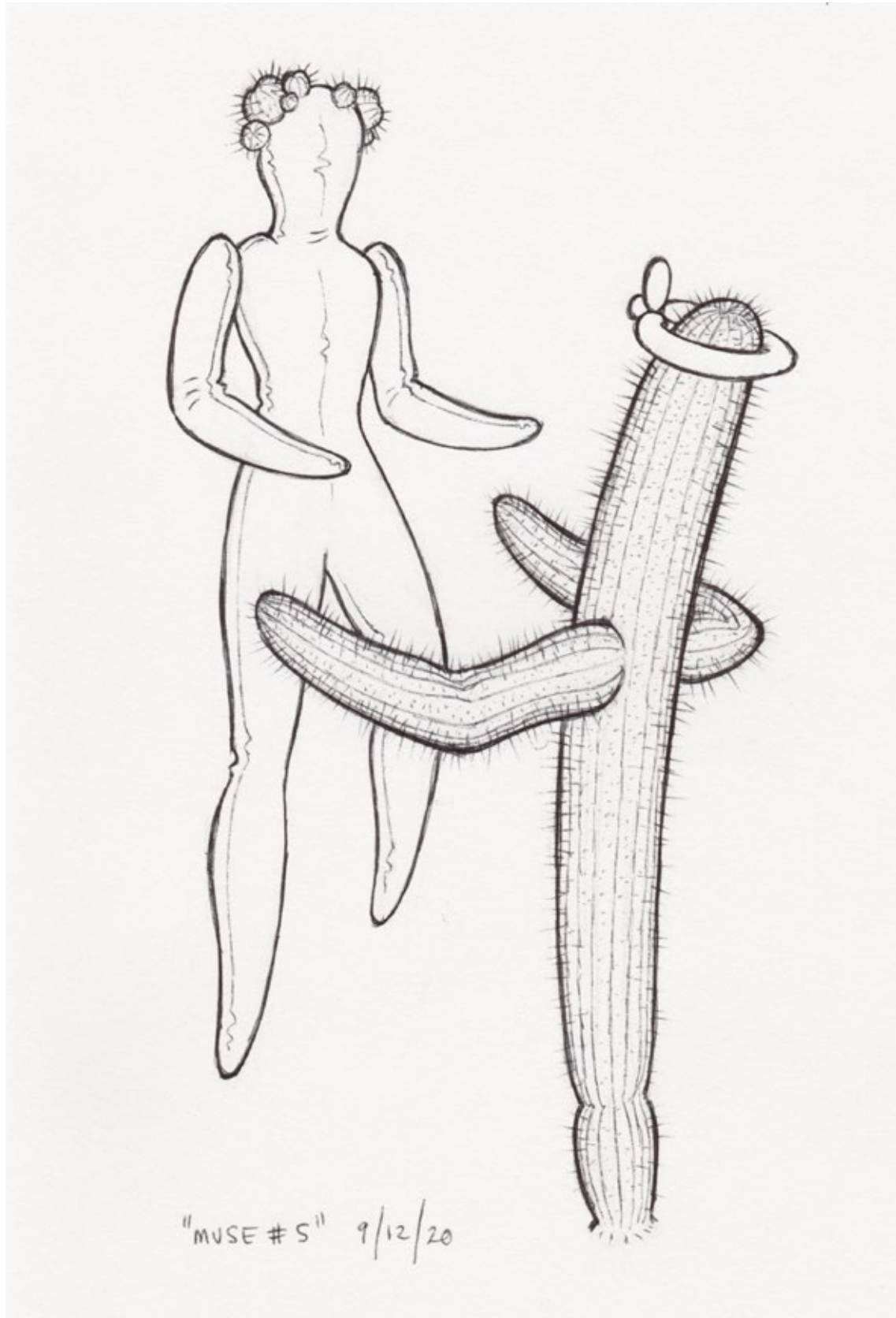
Comments

Michael | April 11, 2021

Inside the husk, there's usually a seed...

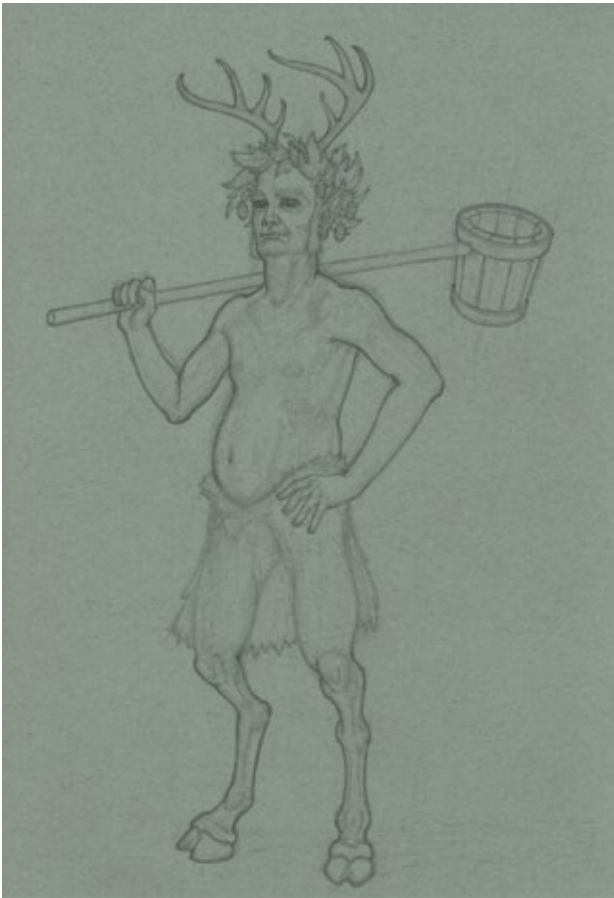
"muse #5"

December 9, 2020 | Tags: art, drawing, inspiration



I had a small epiphany recently. I'd borrowed a book on the relationship between the painter [Klimt](#) and the architect [Hoffman](#).

Always one of my favourite eras, fin de siècle Vienna, I finally realised that the work's graphic and stylised line work was what I was digging! Whether it's Art Nouveau or comics it's the lines and how loose they are that gets me excited. Makes sense of why I was happy with the pencils for "new pantheon" but was really uninterested in the final painted result: the line work was covered up and the shapes became quite lifeless.



Hence this one, whose motivations should be pretty obvious. Black biro in an hour and a half to keep it fresh. [muse #1-4](#) | [muse x](#)

Comments

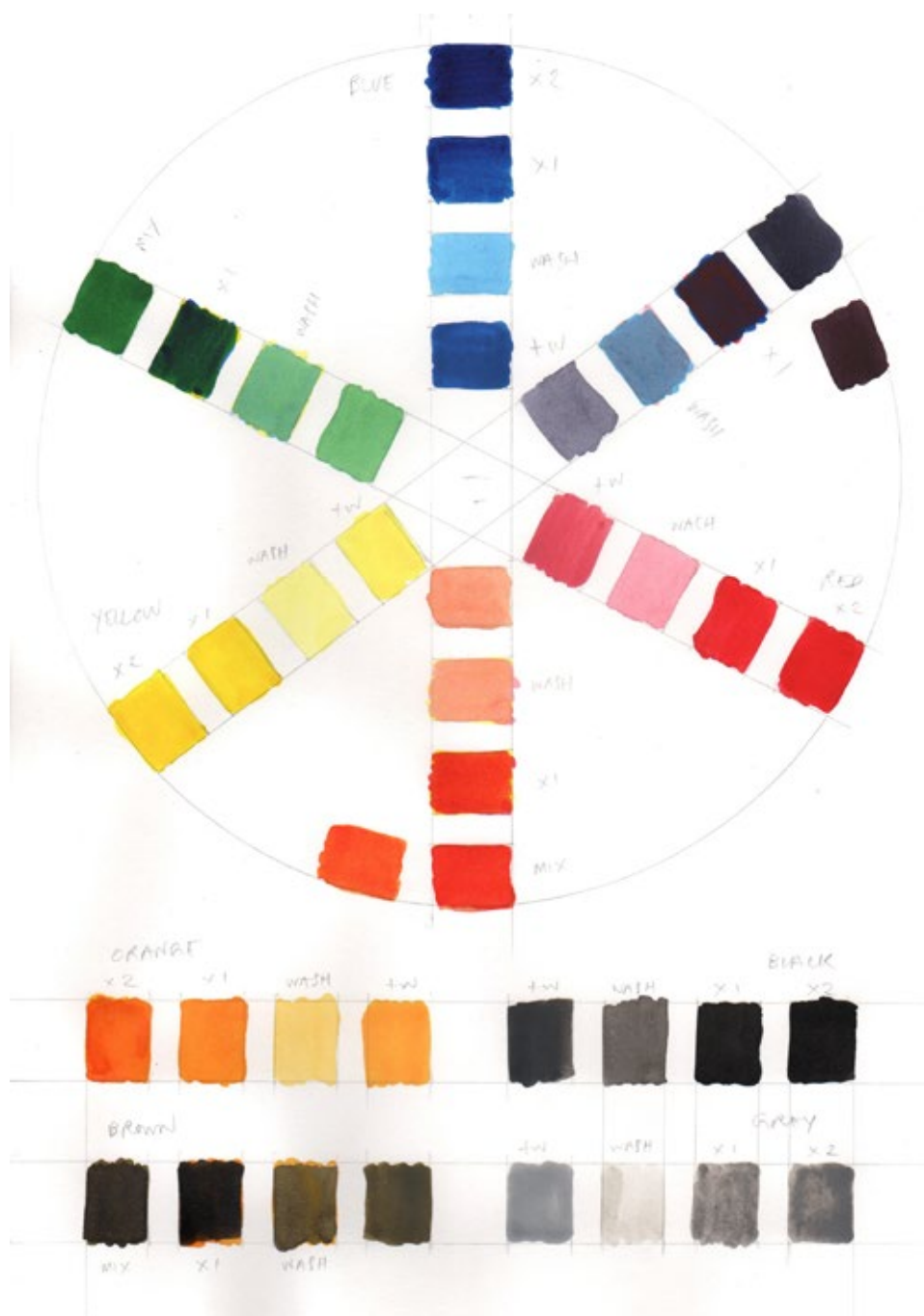
Michael | February 17, 2021

Cati-Boy meets Inflatable Girl? I've decided to retroactively add some comments...

2021

ink wheel

February 9, 2021 | Tags: drawing, inspiration



It was a practical sort of procrastination on my day off last week, testing out the new inks. I haven't given up on colour, only the methodology. Washes play nicely with the pencil work, mixes and opaque layers get muddy.

Another day off tomorrow, no excuses!

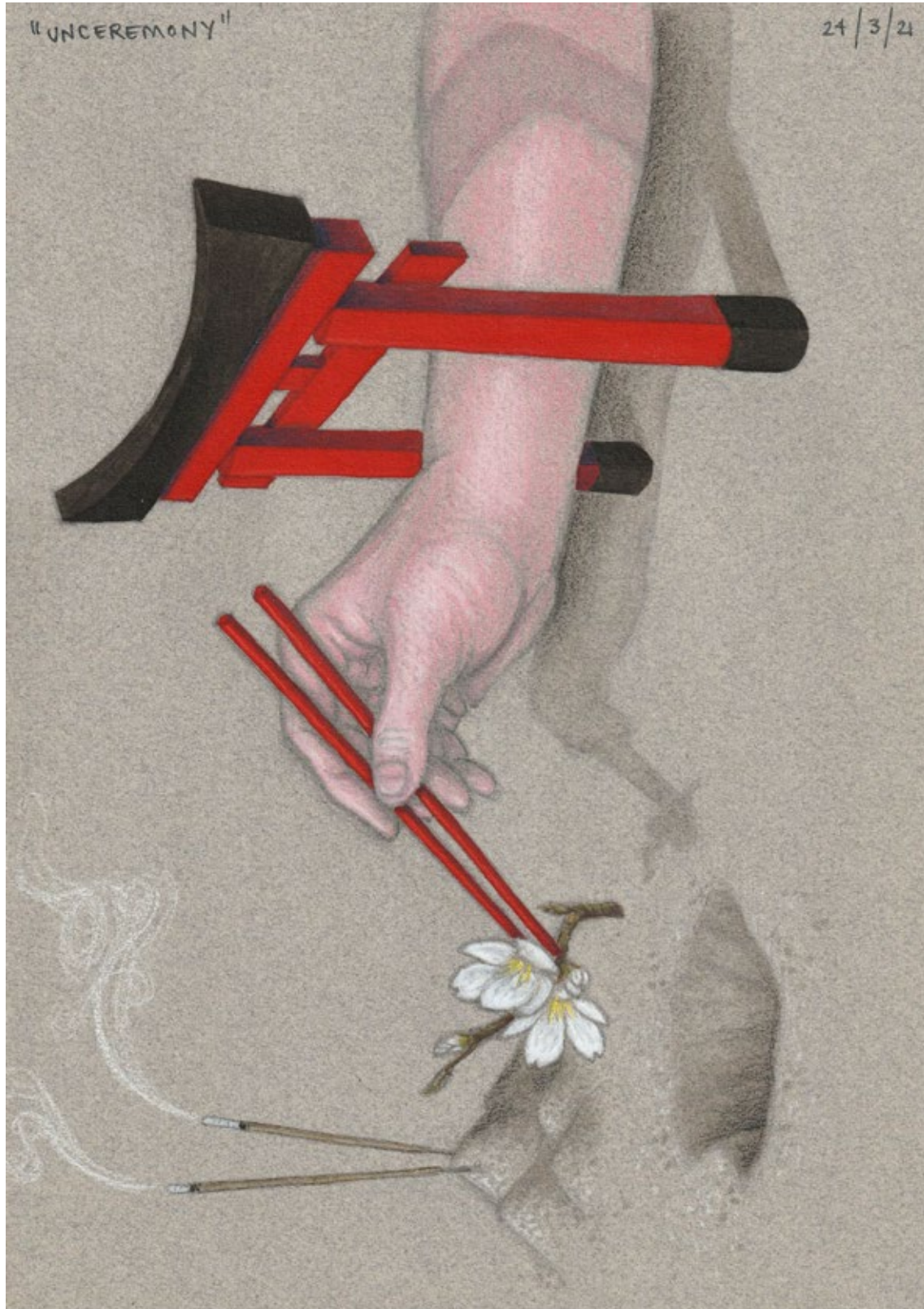
Comments

Michael | February 9, 2021

Nice and logically methodical. Best wishes for your next piece. "Wash on, wash off Daniel-san"!

"unceremony"

March 24, 2021 | Tags: nostalgia



Our big holiday to Japan was two years ago, and I need to let go.

It was a fantastic trip, to somewhere I'd been dreaming of going since my early teens. We were looking ahead, thinking of other big holidays we'd want to take. New York for my 50th. Venice for Karen, her dream destination. And back to Japan.

Then Covid-19 hit and travel was gone.

We had the photos from the trip as a screensaver, always scrolling past with memories. Two years later I'm still looking, fixating on that trip as a symbol of the world that was. Mourning for that world.

The girls are more focused on our trip to Mildura that's coming up. The near future not the past. I need to do the same.

Comments

Michael | March 24, 2021

Yes, I still have delusions of big travel plans but I'd be more than happy to do a bit more travelling in Australia... And finally going to concerts again...

brute force

March 31, 2021 | Tags: futility, inspiration, work



I tried something different on my day off today. Lacking inspiration I went for productivity over creativity. Busted out the big scanner and set up a production line to scan the last few old sketchbooks.

Back in the day I drew mostly in those books, tight and controlled pencil work. Then I moved on, set myself free to go big on coloured paper, go crazy with different mediums.

There's a good analogy in there somewhere. Letting go. Colouring outside the square. I also tried brute force to help my mental health, with a big night out on the beers... worked for a few hours!

Comments

Michael | April 1, 2021

Yes, it did work for a few hours but really paid for it the next day!

"augury"

June 19, 2021 | Tags: futility, inspiration



Back in the day I was a fairly depressed young man. Full of woe for my life at the time, but somehow never really doubting my reason to draw or its "success" in the future.

I wonder what that young man would think if he could look forward to now. To my life of security and stability with non-negotiable motivations. To a future of doubt and shades of grey.

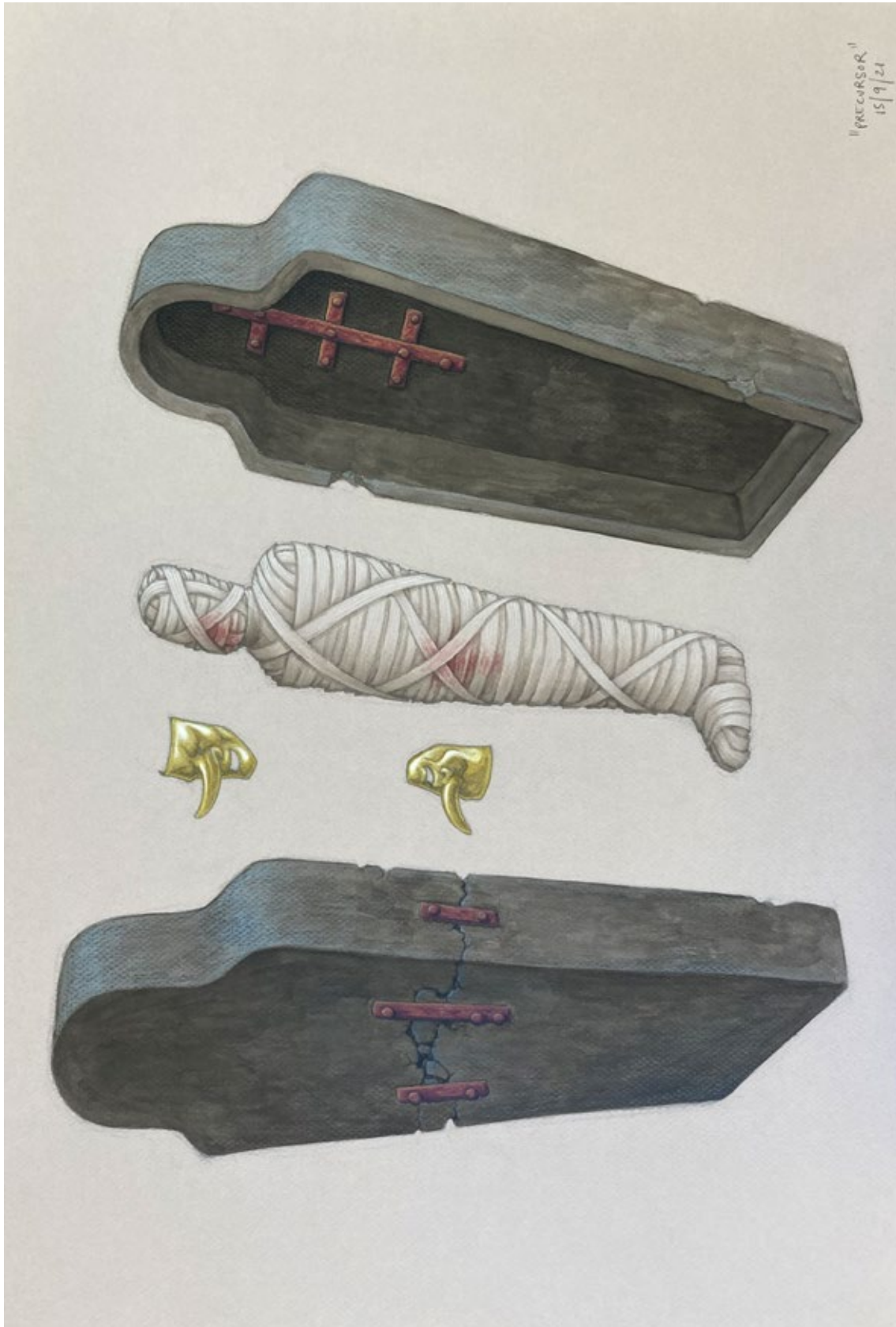
With this drawing I was really trying to embrace the outline and flat colours... but I just couldn't resist sneaking in some shading!



With another gloomy drawing showing through!

"precursor"

September 20, 2021 | Tags: cancer, cystoscopy, drawing, inspiration



This probably seems like a strange one to celebrate 10 years since my original diagnosis, 10 years cancer free.

Sometimes I have bleeding and it stresses me out, but as a drawing this was a dream to work on! The geometry of the shapes, the textures, even a couple of things that went wrong turned out for the best. About the only thing I'd do differently is the highlights on the sarcophagus, which took too much grain from the paper.

Now for a drawing about my sore shoulder!

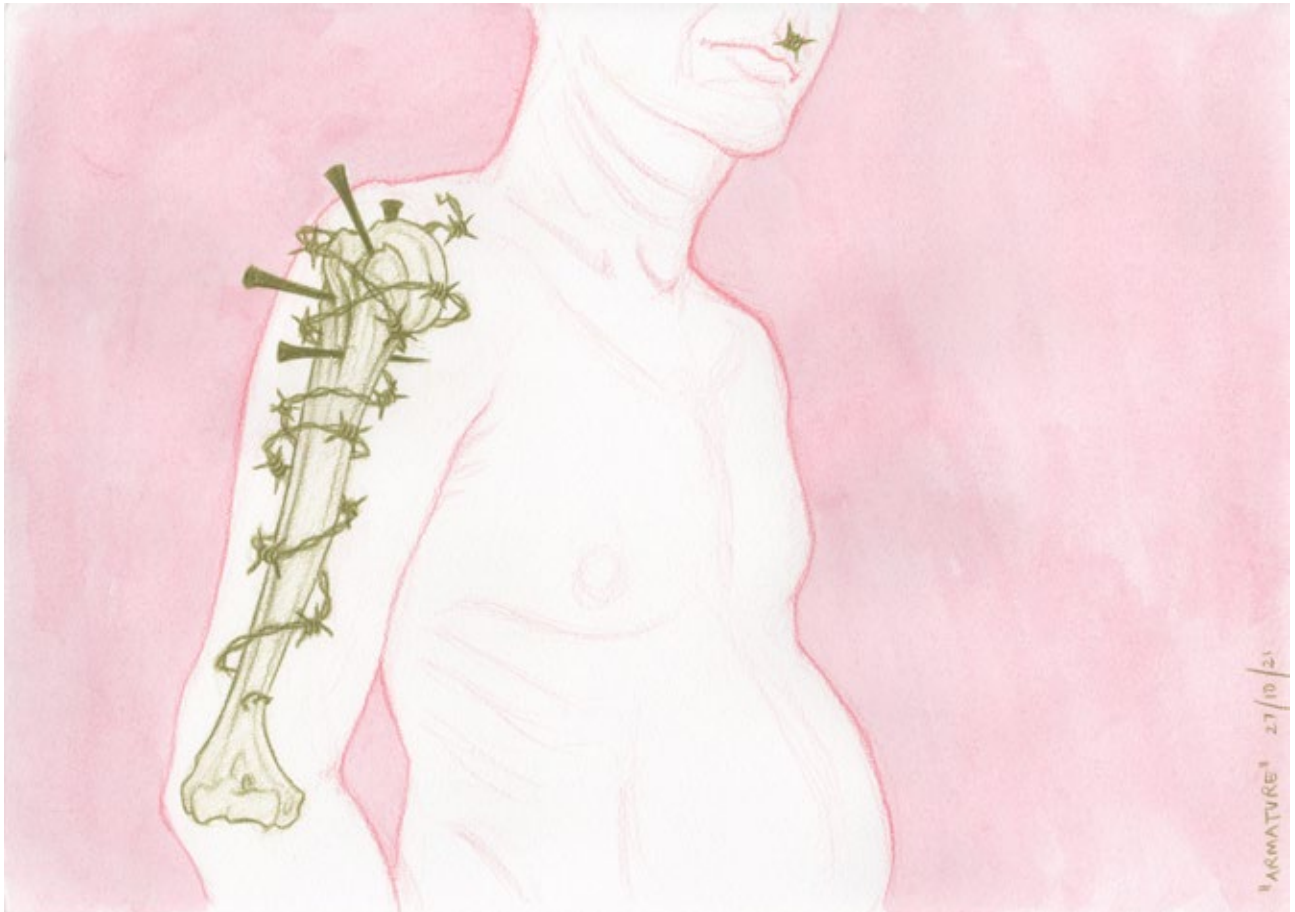
Comments

Michael Taplin | December 31, 2021

After questioning you, I finally understand this piece. Maybe I could give you tips on "gradient shading"...God, knows how I do it with pencil!

"armature"

October 27, 2021 | Tags: drawing



Having a crack at a one-session-speed-drawing on my day off. A little rough but mostly successful, if a bit pinker than I expected.

All about my sore shoulder, healing slowly with some painful ministrations by the physio. In the greater scheme of things, not so big to complain about...

Comments

Michael | October 28, 2021

Hey, great for a quickie! The rough bits just give it more character. Like the background wash too.

Dan Kuss | October 28, 2021

Hey Dan! Glad I clicked through and had a look at your work. It's been a while since I've dug through it. It's making me laugh – and cringe

2022

"happy place"

April 20, 2022 | Tags: drawing, inspiration, work



I was making good progress on this one, getting started first thing in the morning like a day job on my days off. Then I got sidetracked by applying for an amazing job... interstate. Spent a day off writing up a letter and resume. It was a weird bit of escapism, like I could jet off interstate and prop up my ego being a big shot. Except I got an interview, and found another amazing job to apply for.

Spent a second day off in a row writing a different application. Then the third day off I had to move the first interview to book in a second! To cut a long story short, I didn't get the one I wanted and withdrew from the other. You do have to think of what's happening around the world and be grateful, but still, I had a day or so of moping.

Onto the drawing, about enjoying beers a bit too much, even just browsing a bottle shop or online store is my happy place. The drawing came together surprisingly easily and the only regret I have is that the hop green turned out a little dark, hiding the outline work. The final photo had some reflected light which added some extra contrast!

Comments

Michael | April 20, 2022

Excellent art work again Cuz! Your "Hoppy Place"? I enjoy beers with you too.

"totemic / systemic"

June 1, 2022 | Tags: drawing, inspiration, work



I really wanted that new job I didn't get. It sounded interesting and challenging, but in the same way I imagine having an affair avoids any awkward self examination.

Is security enough to get out of bed in the morning for? Is waiting around until my long service leave comes through enough of a plan for the next year and a half? Does it feel like you've achieved enough at 50?

This piece is about again **choosing a path in life**. I love drawing, and these last few have really been hitting a great standard but what are they for? I'd love to show them in a gallery but they're so personal I couldn't bear to sell any! They're physical links back in time to moments and emotions in my life.

The long straight shapes got me using the markers better, long strokes and using the brush nib very side on, so this was a win on a couple of fronts. Kinda wish I'd gone for a straight pine like those I see on the walks where this idea was hatched, would have made it super geometric!

"catch and release"

July 6, 2022 | Tags: drawing, inspiration



One of those odd drawings that springs forth almost fully formed, and without too much conscious meaning. I was thinking about the **flower/faery happiness/growth avatar**, and the fleetingness of happiness, when inspiration struck. It came together in a hot streak four mornings of drawing, and had me hanging out to get back to it, seeing it on my desk in the working week in between.

Something that has really helped these last couple of drawings has been not just finding reference images but bashing them together into a mockup. For this one I even cropped it to the frame which was amazingly helpful to place it on the paper. Still crushed it right to the edges though...

Comments

Michael | July 6, 2022

Hah. I like your reference/ mock up image. Love the lurid fluoro colour contrasting with the grey and white. A great drawing with good shading. Flower Power!



"minimum viable product (drone #4)"

October 27, 2022 | Tags: futility, stress



This was probably the lowest point of my mental state, coming at the end of the worst few weeks I've ever had. It's much easier to deal with your own pain than that of others. I was out walking, feeling that there was nothing to be hoped for but swimming hard to even keep the surface in view, thinking that the only way to get through was to not feel anything.

Happily things turned out better than expected, the bleak tide receded to leave us catching our breath. Part of it for me was having some time to draw this week, getting it out on paper. It came together pretty easily, apart from a near disastrous attempt at a wash for the background which left it warped and dripping.

Maybe that's some sort of metaphor, mopping up and pushing through.



"kettle bitterness"

November 9, 2022 | Tags: biro, futility



To take the boiling frog metaphor right to its end, at that moment a month or so back it was more like sitting scorching on the bottom of a boiled dry saucepan.

I really jinxed it the day of that last post, writing and telling people things were getting better. Tempting fate by buying some beers in preparation for a boys night to blow off some steam. The only reason we didn't end up back in emergency that night was because the ambulance took too long to come...

About this drawing, I had wanted to do something different, work in black and white with flat colours like a print. I'd done a beautiful free biro thumbnail but my redrawn big pencil version was stiff and lacklustre. Plan B was to blow the thumbnail up to A4 and use it as a base to work over. Need to do more quick pen drawings, but I'm not at all convinced by the fake colour. Oh well.

Comments

Michael | November 9, 2022

Looks great! I think though the frog could've been green?! Hopefully, you're out on the hot water now...

MD | December 8, 2022

That sounds serious. Everything okay?



silver pox

December 17, 2022 | Tags: drawing, inspiration

This is a stop gap while recovering from covid, delaying the bigger picture I was working on, the shitty icing on the shitty cake of the year!

I've been jotting in these notebooks for years, and noticed that the number of ideas for drawings dropped off, some of them were almost entirely book reviews. I guess I got busy with life in happier times. Funnily enough this last has been solid with drawings, proof of the old adage that misery makes better art than happiness.

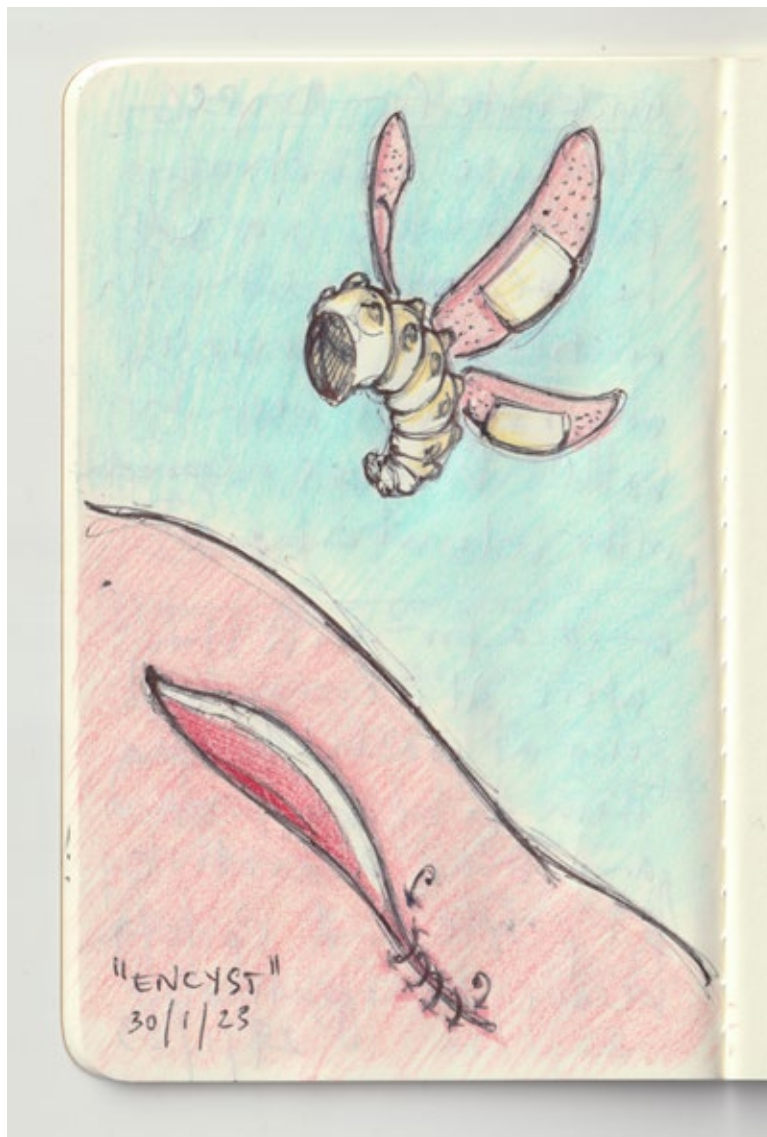
Some level of silver lining.



2023

"encyst"

February 1, 2023 | Tags: beer, drawing, inspiration



Celebrating getting my stitches out, having a day to myself to draw after the school holidays, and having a beer after four weeks dry on antibiotics. This was a midnight quickie in my notebook from a few days ago, needed a bit more work on the title... probably should have been "uncyst" after getting it cut out two weeks ago.

The drawing I worked on today was one started in December, one a bit bleaker about torching the year just been, itself displacing an

older drawing about getting older. Ironically I'm still in my usual new year bounce, feeling positive and looking ahead. More drawings, more beers and not having a festering wound on my back. That's enough to start with.

Comments

Michael | February 2, 2023

I encyst it's a great little drawing.

"absorbing Markov chain #2"

February 22, 2023 | Tags: beer, drawing, futility



This was one from December last year, a patch emotionally dark but creatively fertile. I was glad to see the end of 2022, but not expecting much brighter from 2023. Luckily I've been proved wrong so far, following up my usual new year mood rebound with some family wins. Like the drive to live life to the fullest after a brush with mortality, I'm feeling the buzz of difficult being easy compared with fucking awful.

Researching a previous picture vaguely based on snakes and ladders, I came across the idea of the [absorbing Markov chain](#), a mathematical theory of probability where each state leads inexorably to the next. In that game there are different paths, some longer and some shorter, ways to loop back past and delay, but it must come to an end.

Along the way I was also working out how to [chart my beer consumption](#), the cans here graphing that curve too. All that said, it was an enjoyable one to draw with a big chunk of geometry through the middle, and an excuse to buy a couple of new markers. Maybe the cup is half full. Cheers.

Comments

Michael Taplin | February 24, 2023

Grasshopper says: "The glass is neither half full or half empty. It's just half."

"libertarian"

April 5, 2023 | Tags: drawing, futility



As a drawing, a noble failure. Perhaps like its creator.

I had been fantasising about an escape, taking my long service leave and heading to Japan on a solo trip. Renting a campervan and being a wandering hermit for several months. This consoled me through some rough months of family dramas, visualised on my Saturday walks amongst the pines.

But the fantasy wore thin. I couldn't leave for that period of time, particularly with a new high school beginning about to happen.

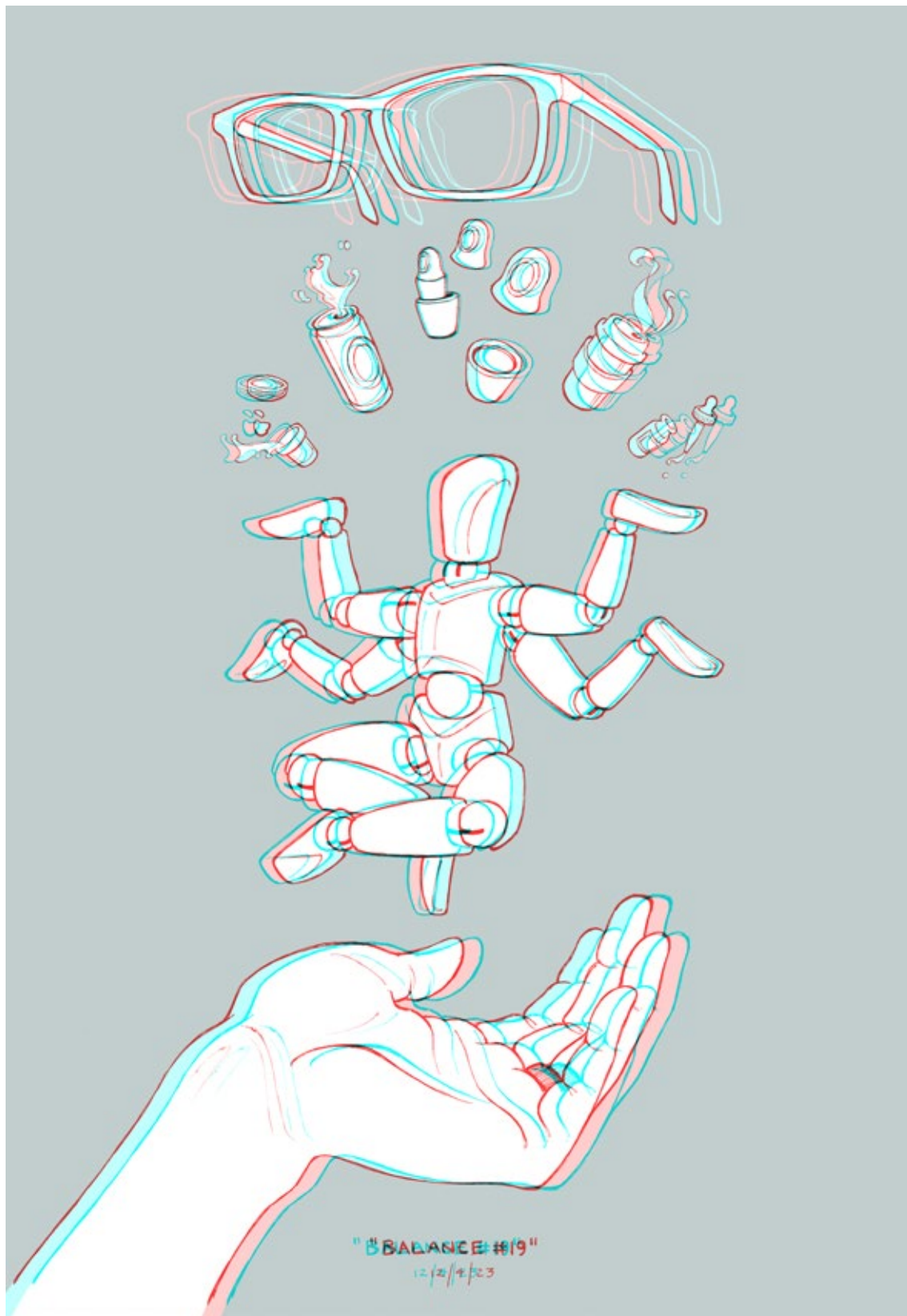
My original plan for my 50th was to take the family to New York for a week, see the galleries and museums, the classic sights, a Broadway show. Cruelled by Covid, cancelled by family mental and physical challenges and refusals, after reading about the explosion of legal weed it was reborn from the ashes, rebooted as a desperate flight of fantasy, a week to myself in New York getting wasted and relieved.

This drawing was meant to be subversive, breaking the rules to celebrate forbidden "freedoms", a coquettish pin up dream. Somehow it ended up darker, more of a pipe dream. It came together pretty quickly, but my desire to jump on it meant working with the paper at hand... paper that couldn't take an ink wash. Hence buying a single use Copic for the corroded bronze, which was too dark and undermined the outline. Busting out the Derwents rescued some of the roughness of the rendering, but the big flat areas are a bit amateurish.

But the positives, on the main two Wednesdays I worked on it I went hard, drawing all day rather than quitting out after a couple of hours. Pushing through the failures to wrestle it into some level of submission.

"balance #19"

April 16, 2023 | Tags: classic stuff, drawing, inspiration



I was thinking about the 3D poster from way back at the end of my studies. About how oversimplified, how black and white I thought the balance was. And how perfect a metaphor the eye scorching anaglyph was for the mixed up greyness of life, and the pain of my blurry eyes!

The drawing itself came together in a mega single day session, drawing till the eye fatigue made the last few lines a squint with my head almost on the paper. Pushing the colours in Photoshop late at night till I was seeing double even with the glasses on.

The sweetest spot was thinking about whether to use the artist figurine as one of the juggled objects, but swapping it for the main figure. It turned my vague anxiety about getting the crossed legs right into a pleasure of geometry. The four arms were meant to alternate with the colours of the anaglyph, show some movement, but ironically it looked too unbalanced.



"the law of diminishing returns"

May 17, 2023 | Tags: futility

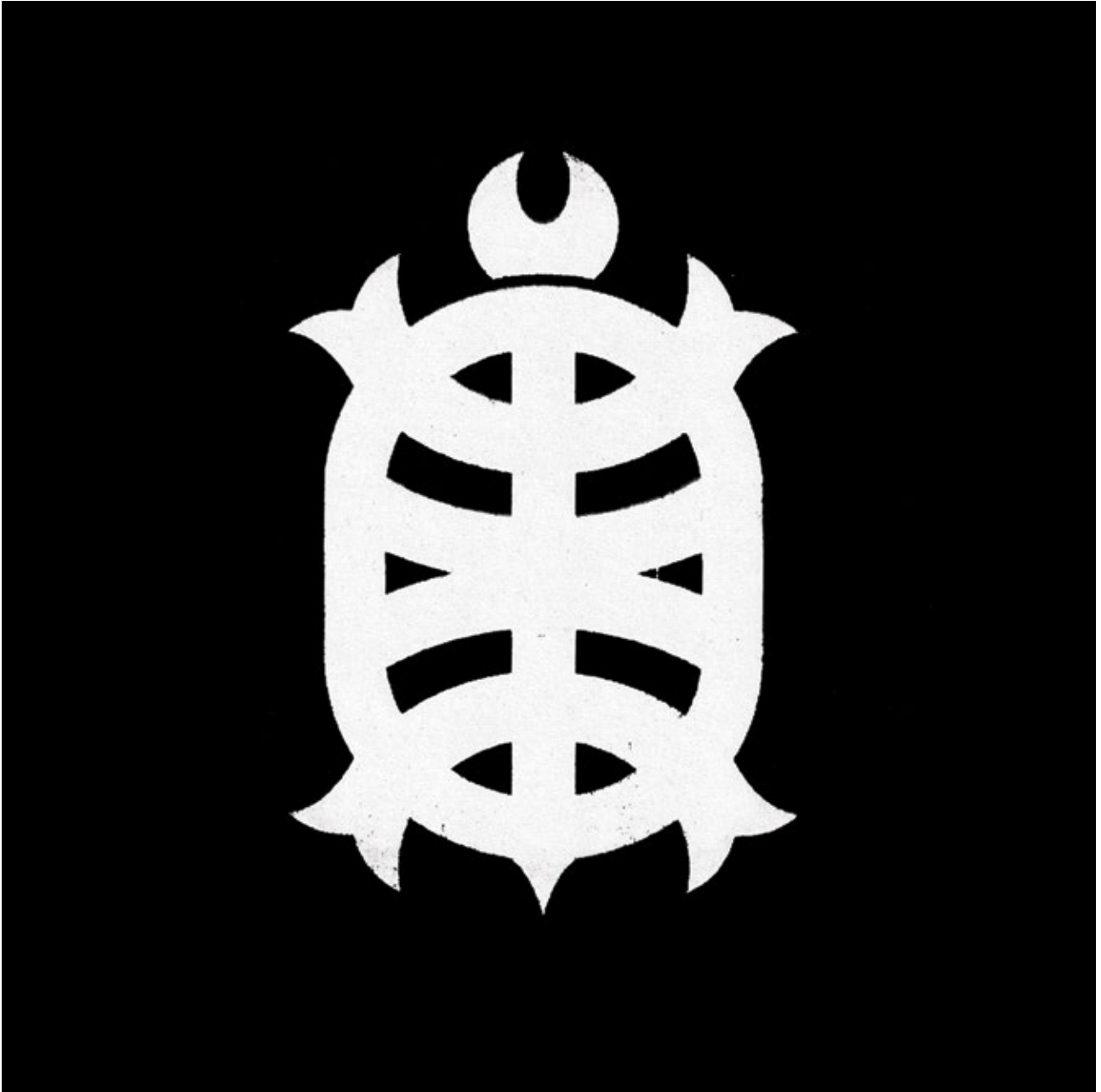


This one sat half done on the sidelines for a while. I got stuck on how to do the sky, but

waited so long I forgot what I got stuck on!
Procrastination not really a winning strategy...



July 5, 2023 |



"double dissolution"

July 12, 2023 | Tags: death, drawing, futility



Last Wednesday I couldn't face the picture I'd been working on. Another one that's a bit grim, but somehow didn't seem dark enough. The Wednesday before that I'd sent a progress photo to cousin Michael like I always do when I'm working on something.

I'd thought I was sending texts and photos for him, keeping a flow of human contact to help him through. Drawings, graffiti, motorbikes and most of all beers. Turns out I needed it just as much, contact with a fellow traveller looking at the debris washed up on the shore.

This drawing isn't about Michael, or even grief, but a gentle distracting concept. Feeling like I was burning my emotional energy on too many fronts.

A tidy little drawing, done in a single sitting, nothing groundbreaking about the technique or imagery. With no one to send a picture to.

Comments

.mike | September 23, 2023

Hey did something happen to Michael??

pulling out the rug

September 28, 2023 | Tags: balance, death, futility



I keep forgetting the details.

We were talking the other night about how Karen's gall bladder emergency was a major trigger last year for Brigitte's breakdown. But then we remembered the boy who was stalking her, and talking about killing himself, just beforehand.

I'd been so focused on the aftermath that I'd forgotten that when Michael's parents rang me to say he'd gone missing I had to keep the conversation short, as I was waiting in the car to pick up Melanie. To take her to a hospital appointment about eating disorders, and realising I could only choose one crisis in that moment.

There's an old drawing about a patch of misfortune, Karen and I laughing that

it was the point in a movie plot where you'd say it was too farfetched, that couldn't all happen to one family.

Each death, each close call with it, used to give me a burst of feeling... live life to the fullest, you never know how long you've got, bla bla bla. But it's never sustainable, both the shadow and the motivation fade.

Now I'm trying to flog myself to a similar feeling... be glad it's not worse, not being at school is better than self harm. But that's even harder to sustain.

Mostly I'm just trying to have no expectations, but failing at that too. Mostly I expect it won't get any better, missing the things that are gone. People, dreams for the future, simple pleasures.

Sometimes I expect it will get worse.

"proscribed burn"

November 1, 2023 | Tags: death, drawing, futility



A gentle drawing about grief. I finished it last week, but the hardest part was not being able to text a picture of it to Michael.

I should have posted this then when I'd had two Wednesdays off to myself, for the first time in months, when I was feeling positive about things being back to "normal".

About the only thing I would change about this one is making the edges of the ground burn fuzzier instead of a hard edge.

Comments

Michael | November 2, 2023

Apologies, I've got a new phone and can't work out which number is yours. I just wanted to say that I really mourn the loss of Michael, and I can't stop thinking about the poor bugger. I know how important he was to you and what a rich history you guys had together. I really just wanted you to know that I considered Michael a friend, which is why I invited him to my wedding, and if you could kindly pass that onto his parents it might (or might not) make them feel better...ish.

draught

December 4, 2023 | Tags: beer, drawing, futility



I'd love to work on the painted version of this, but it's a double fantasy.

I've been getting caught up in beer, drinking it and thinking about it, at times unhealthily so. Looking through the cans in the fridge at breakfast time wondering which one to drink that night. Checking and rechecking the websites of brewers and online stores to see what new brews have been put out. And most recently, plotting to study brewing and make a career change.

There have been plenty of juvenile drawing ideas, running the gamut from hop and malt maidens in wooden vats of beer, right

through to a Pieta style alcoholic martyr in the arms of a green hop mother.

It finally coalesced into this, temptation and submission and desperation, paradoxically just when I was on a high waiting to interview for an industry grant to pay for my brewing studies.

Like the New York escape, also something unlikely I was clinging to in place of hope. I haven't entirely given up on either, but even the painting of this seems unlikely, another pinup pipedream I won't get the privacy to work on.

I've realised I can't drink my way to happiness, but I'm not sure I can draw my way there either.

untitled octopus drawing

December 20, 2023 | Tags: death, drawing, inspiration



The original idea for this came early last year, back when my biggest worries were getting old and disillusioned. I started drawing it later when I knew better.

It all got too hard, both life and drawing, and it stalled until six months back. It came together surprisingly quickly and I sent a photo of the finished pencils to Michael.

"Where's the Prince Albert?!" he joked.

I was feeling so positive I even wrote the words to go with the finished drawing...

"It does sometimes happen that I'm happy and I find myself lost for what music to listen to. My bookmarked songs are all anger or despair, or both.

No issue choosing today. I started this drawing late last year, and put it on hold when it wasn't coming together. I've had a new idea brewing the last week or so, with the plan to reuse this drawing board and erase what went before... but it still fit. Also with anvil, sledgehammer and clamp, just with a gut octopus flavour of pain rather than a bone android flavour.

New year, different child, same despair. The happiness never lasts long enough for a drawing, let alone a theme that repeats.

Restart the playlist."

The next day Michael was dead.

2024

"into nothingness"

January 1, 2024 | Tags: classic stuff, futility, resolutions



I've been trying to put things in order,
looking through old calendars and
sketchbooks to put dates to it all.

I used to draw up resolutions for the new
year. There were a couple of things I wanted
to start before 2023 ended and did. A
eulogy for Michael, a final drawing about
building a new self for a new future.

This drawing from 1998 seemed pretty apt.
Looking at the drawings it all seems pretty
grim, and this was about the futility of things I
was trying. Applying to get into study. Sending
out samples of artwork trying to get into
comics. Love letters. Looking at the entries
written on the calendar I can't see why I
was so unhappy. Working on a big painting.
Having a fling with a girl. Going out on the
town a couple of times a week with friends.

Like wanking into the void I've been feeling
the futility of new efforts. Drawings that can
never be shown or sold. Endless emotional
support poured out for diminishing returns.
Unsuccessful applications for jobs and
courses that I couldn't have done anyway.

I always give that 20 something me lots of
credit for having a crack, trying hard things.
Maybe I should give 2024 me some of that
credit for still trying after two awful years.

So, goals and resolutions. See bands. Drink
with friends. Draw and write. Setting the bar
low, just get through to the middle of the
year then all options are on the table.

"compartmentalised"

February 7, 2024 | Tags: drawing, futility



Is it life imitating art, or the reverse? Neither are turning out the way I expect.

Feeling like I had no burrow to retreat to, no place in our house that was mine, I bought a partition. Built myself a wall around my desk to draw in peace.

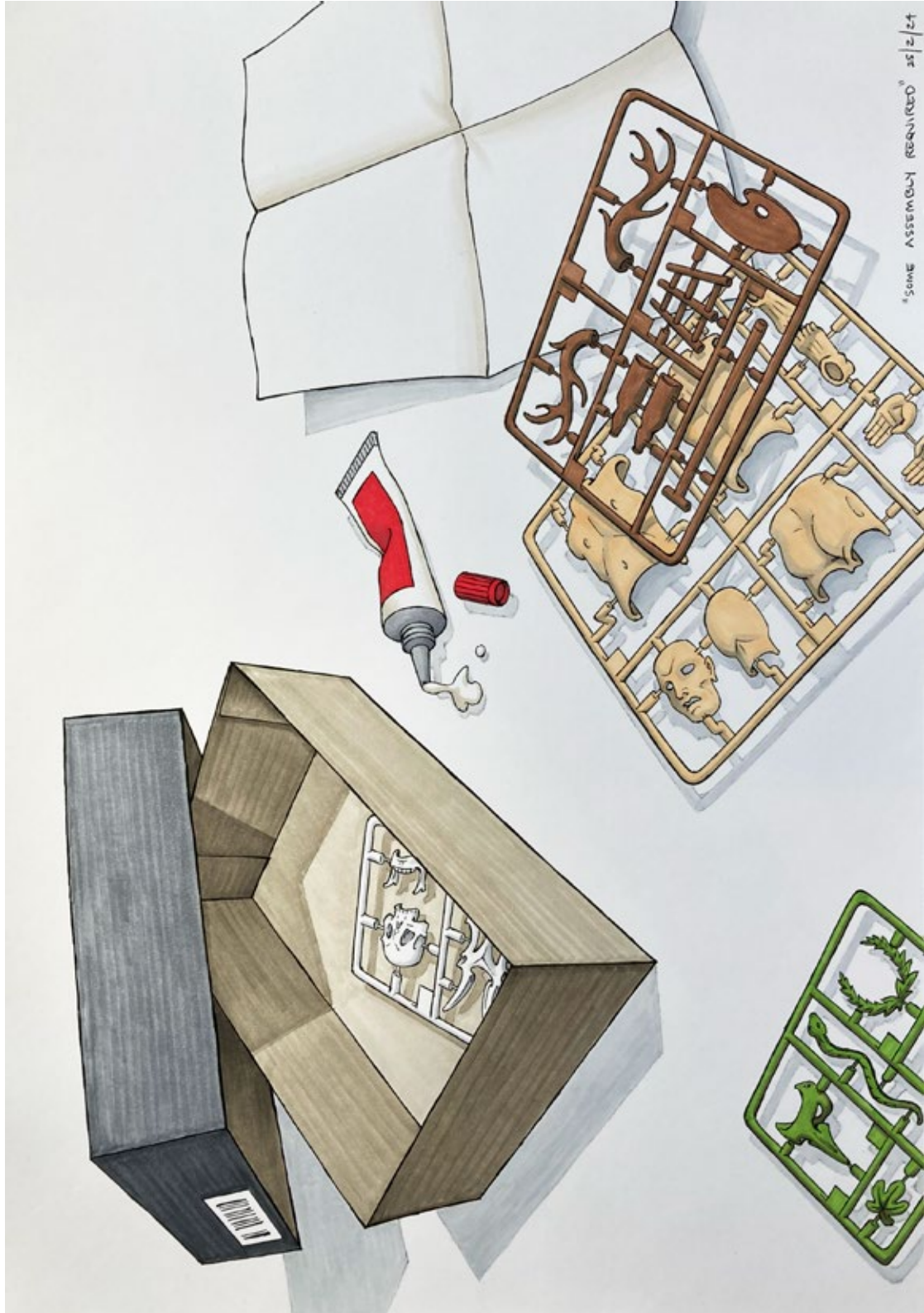
Emotionally I've been doing the same. Telling myself I'm embracing moments of joy, but most of those moments are on my own.

There's a metaphor here somewhere. That the mess and pain are still on the other side, that those moments of peace and joy are so bright because of the contrast, because of the darkness around them.

I stated drawing this as defiant, but it just feels isolated instead. Art imitating life.

"some assembly required"

March 27, 2024 | Tags: Copic markers, resolutions



I started this one a while ago. It had a bit of the new year's resolution to it, more I've got to do something than knowing the direction. Things have changed along the way, mainly seeing a counsellor, which is helping.

If the pieces of the model were choices that could be made, the notebook idea was about the options that have gone. About letting go of them.

Today I went to a campus to explore a beer brewing course, looking towards the future. Tomorrow I go to spread Michael's ashes in the forest, one last time looking back.



"effigy"

September 1, 2024 | Tags: drawing, futility, inspiration



Nothing too profound to say about this one. After rejecting the message of this idea in the last post, I couldn't stop thinking about it. And what a joy to work on it's been, learning to push myself to do it in awkward gaps of free time now I'm spending my Wednesdays at the beer course. A life option that I didn't discard despite what this drawing says.

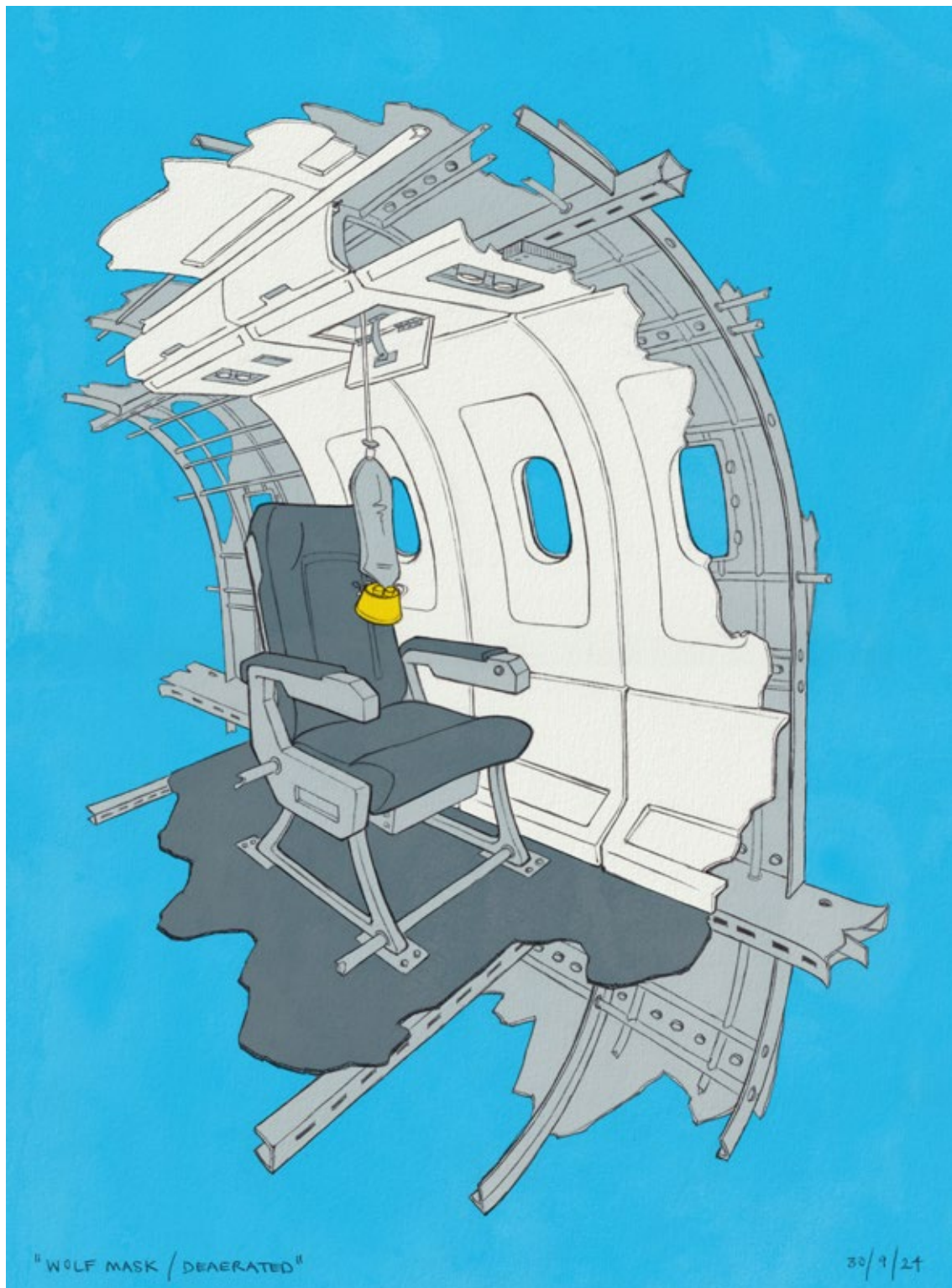
What does it mean that the negative ideas are the most satisfying? Is it cathartic to get them out on paper? Or are the things I want to say about happiness shallow?

Either way, there are a few small technical things I'd change about this, and I wish I'd thought to set the bonsai on fire, but the icing on the cake was unplanned. The blue ripples were a last minute addition and they really bring the whole thing together.

Maybe that's the profound thought. Keep rolling the dice, and jump when the numbers go your way.

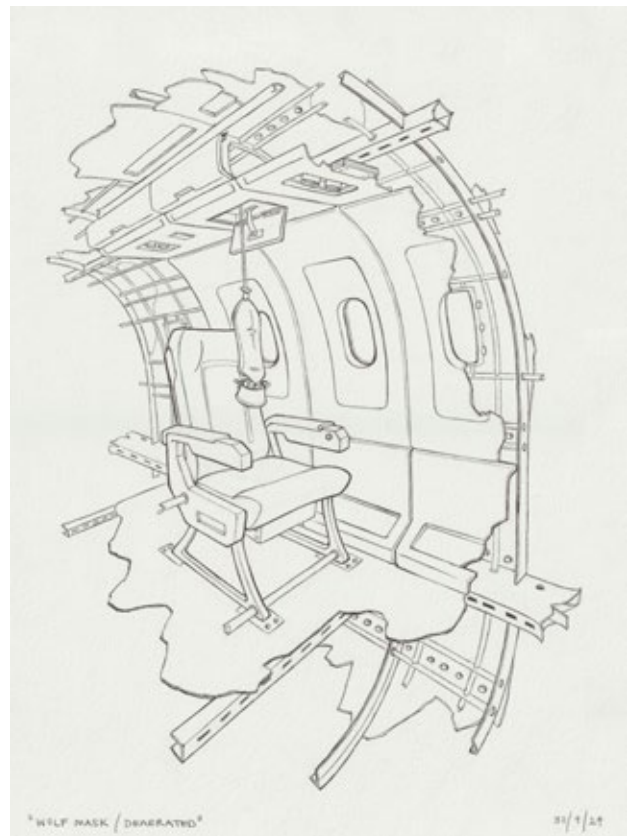
"wolf mask / deaerated"

October 1, 2024 | Tags: biro, resilience



I often trot out the aphorism about putting on your own mask first, but lately I feel like no one else is putting on theirs afterwards.

It was loosely meant to link back to the sequence of **"aversion"** and **"reversion"** but I was loving the pure geometry so much I didn't draw myself in the chair.



"WOLF MASK / DEARRATED"

21/7/24



"WOLF-MASK /
DE-ARRATED"

28/8/24

"recursive"

December 26, 2024 | Tags: futility, resilience



Irony that the most angsty pictures bring the most joy to draw. Or maybe just the law of averages, if most of them are angsty.

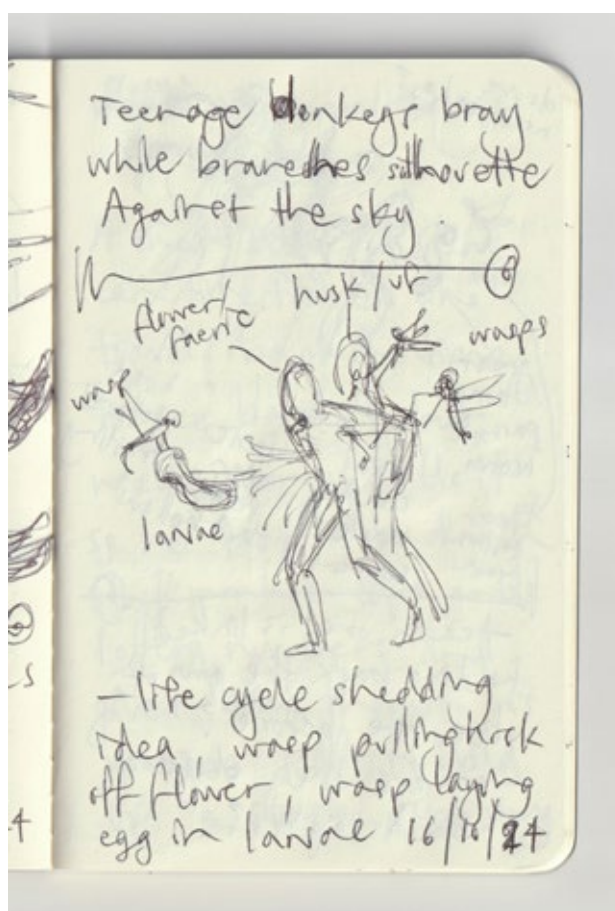
It's been a slow year for drawing, but mostly for good reasons. Like spending 6 months doing a brewing course. It's been a tough year for life, settling into a new normal that sometimes seems bleak, but fighting it and having some wins. Now there are no quiet Wednesdays on my own, to draw in peaceful solitude, I've learnt to carve out time and draw with the bustle of family breakfast around me.

I saw an old picture of the flower faerie growing out of the unnatural flesh, and thought about all the variations I'd done, about the layers of shedding, layers of renewal. Remembered an early sketch about confronting your own mortality, that a friend could only see as homoerotic.

This drawing had a slow and joyful gestation over a couple of months, with some wonky knees my only real gripe. I did at times wish for the freedoms of digital processes, to rejig the placement and colours without hard rework. But the accidents made it better, like starting the shadows with the wrong marker, making them way bolder and tying the figures together.

It's about circularity, the possibility of regrowth, of new beginnings. But mostly about repetition, the seeds of the ending being embedded at the start.

Postscript: I didn't get around to posting this until 5 days after writing the text... with a morning's work experience mashing in, booking an interview for a brewing job, and a successful family Christmas in that time the outlook is a lot brighter!



2025

"hubris"

January 1, 2025 | Tags: resolutions



I nearly did this as a wedgie drawing before the last was finished. The wheels fell off a few things and it felt like a reminder to not get ahead of myself.

But things have gone well since, maybe a reminder not to assume things will go badly either.

Bring on the new year.

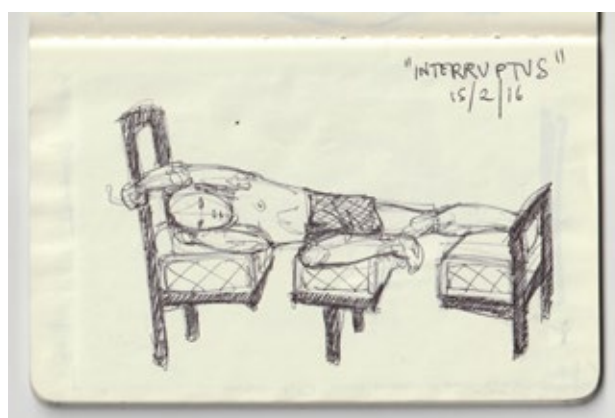
journals part 2

January 27, 2025 | Tags: happiness, inspiration



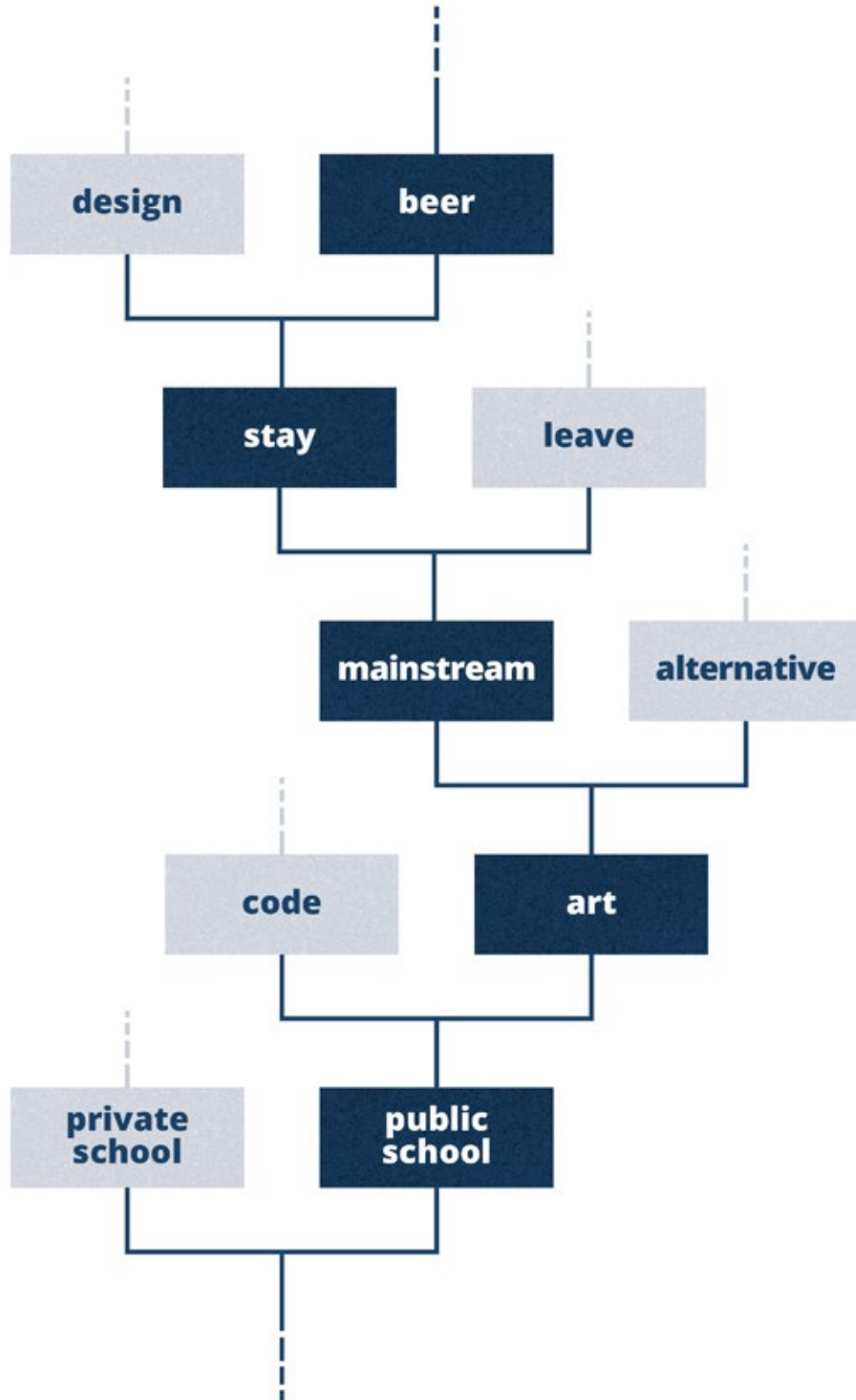
They say misery makes good art. I've had a great summer, finishing off with getting offered a new job while on holiday by the beach. I haven't quite figured out how to draw that yet...

It's been ten years and nine volumes since the [last post about journals](#). A lot has changed in that time, the last two journals filled quickly with grief. Flicking through I found this in the first Moleskin, obviously bad sleep not being one of them!



bifurcation

April 29, 2025 | Tags: resolutions



There were a few birthdays back in the day
that had meaning, milestones with parties,
but now even the big round numbers seem
redundant. This one just past was significant,
for the excuse to get tattooed on the day,
but that story is for another time.

The big moments in life never land
neatly on those days. Some so gently you
only realise afterwards when the seed
has grown tall, and others like meteors
that tear down what was standing.

I'm working on a drawing about the work
switch from being an office-bound graphic
designer to a high-vis-wearing brewer.
A big choice made consciously, despite
knowing the big changes it would wreak.

Looking back, it's surprising how few real
branches in the path there are in life. Some
that seem momentous, like moving cities
or having children, don't actually change
the track you're already following.

The first I chose as a child, without knowing
the weight of the decision. A teacher's
recommendation had won me a part scholarship
to a prestigious private boys-only high school,
to continue on the path of math prodigy. I'd hit
puberty early, with a moustache and yearnings
at age 12, and wanted to be around girls.

I've never regretted it, but I do sometimes
wonder where that boy on the other
path journeyed. Where they all did.

53

May 11, 2025 | Tags: death, dice, happiness



15 years ago today I took Michael to get his turtle tattoo for his birthday, his 40th. It was before we had fancy phones, and there are no photos of the day.

2 years ago he died, and I realised how few photos of him I had at all. The best moments of each year were spent with him, a rough morning selfie and lines of cans the only evidence they ever happened. The last couple of months were tough, with his 53rd birthday in hospital. He was my cousin on my mum's side, my best mate.

They say everyone is unique, but maybe he was a bit more so. A rebel in the true sense of the word, subversive and destructive, with a burning sense of fairness and how everything could be done better. Happy to wait in the trees for his chance to throw a brick through the window.

He was definitely a contradiction. A perfectionist who wanted complicated solutions but a procrastinator who often couldn't get started on them. Paranoid to the point of delusion about surveillance, he installed a tracker

with a sim card on his motorbike, so that a company in eastern Europe knew his every move, to get the exact ride data he wanted. Loyal and generous to the point of going short of food to buy presents, but capable of flipping friendships into implacable feuds.

1 year ago my cousin on my dad's side, Scott, committed suicide. We weren't close, the last time I'd seen him had been a decade earlier at our nana's funeral. He'd just turned 53.

Our dads, brothers, never got along, so the families didn't meet up much. From a distance he always looked like a tough cool guy, plenty of mates, great at hardcore sports like waterskiing and kickboxing.

This year is my 53rd, and if I die I'm going down swinging. Not as an office drone, not wondering what those other paths would have been like. This tattoo is to remember Michael, but it's mine.

Thanks to [Jaya](#) at XO Temple for his amazing work. And for politely bypassing my bad ideas!



"midstream"

June 7, 2025 | Tags: inspiration, resilience



Funny that I don't have as much to say about the pictures that make me happy. This one is about making changes in life, countering the old saying... the original idea had them standing in water but I chickened out at the thought of the upside down rippled reflections!

Inspired by seeing this [old picture](#), the birth of the monkey/donkey avatar.

The drawing isn't perfect, and it calls out some of the bad stuff, but it was great to work on. I cooked up a reference mockup using objects from [Sketchfab](#) which really helped, foreshortening is tough. (I cropped off all the selfie photos of me in underpants posing!)

Got a great idea for the next one too.



"drone #4"

July 20, 2025 | Tags: beer, happiness, music



A joy to draw, geometry with a bit of technical experimenting, combining two different ideas.

The first was definitely more angsty, the amp robot with a rotating set of heads, constantly headbanging, with a conveyor belt of beers, constantly drinking. This was at the end of last year when I thought my brewing escape plan had failed, listening to music of anger and despair and drinking too much.

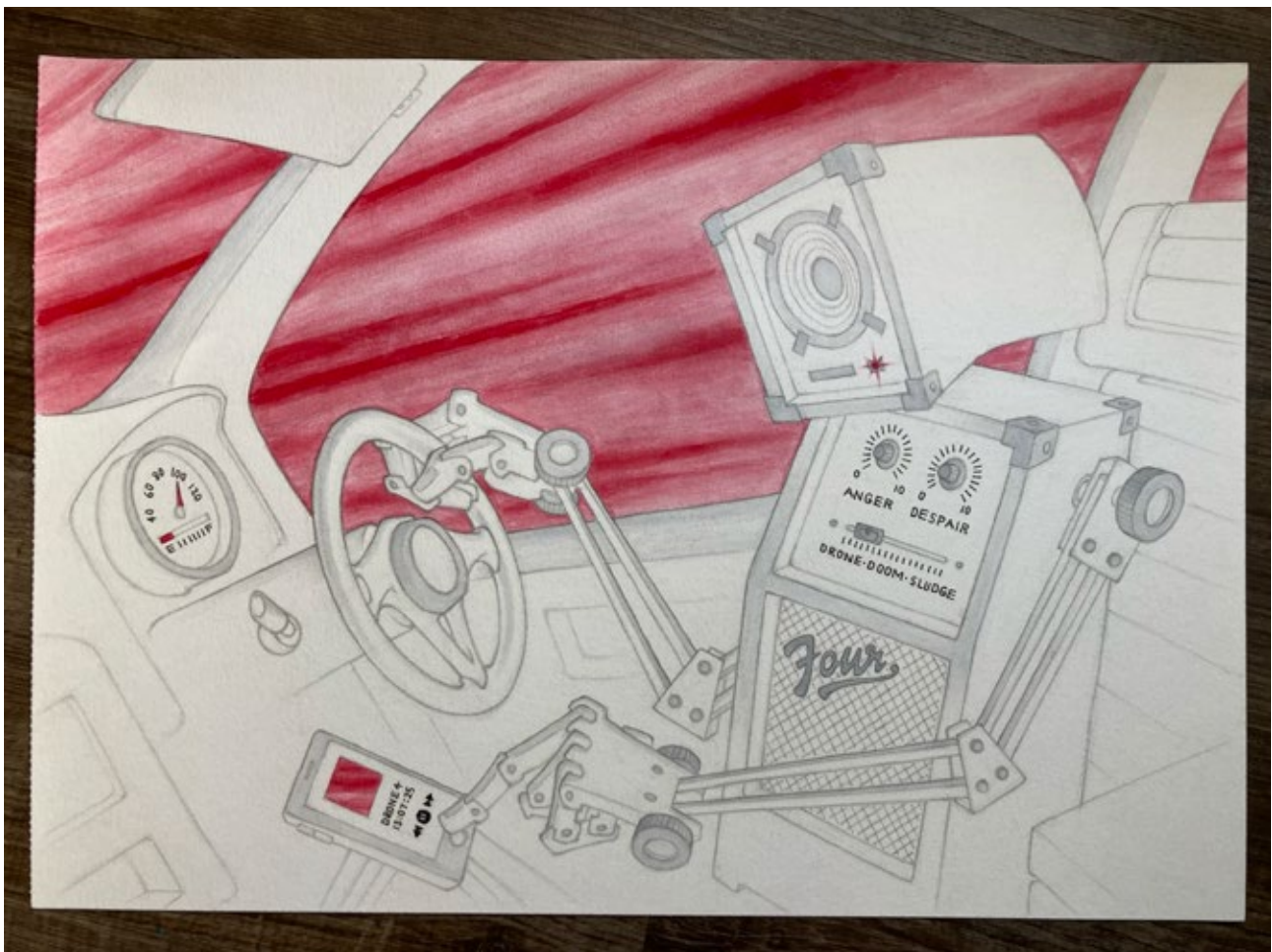
The second was after the escape plan had succeeded, about my experience of driving late at night on empty roads or amongst streaming car lights, listening to spacey heavy music and feeling like a astronaut flying through space. (Shift work can get a bit spacey!) I

only had a vague idea, inside the cockpit of a battered old spaceship, star fields blurring.

Serendipity was joining the two together, happy enough in life that I didn't put indicators on the dials, my anger and despair tuned down.

Is it that the unhappy drawings are more meaningful that makes them more satisfying to work on, or are they cathartic? A test will be the next couple of ideas bubbling away, fun concepts. I've found the [playlist for not being miserable](#) too...

[Drones #3, #2 & #1](#) and I just realised this should have been #5 after [this one!](#)



The original drawing, un-inverted

"mendicant"

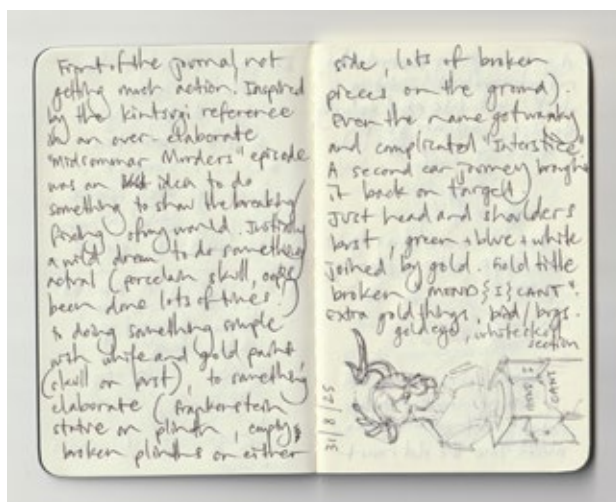
October 19, 2025 | Tags: change, resilience



Quoted verbatim from the notebook...

"Inspired by the kintsugi reference in an over-elaborate "Midsommar Murders" episode, was an idea to do something to show the breaking / fixing of my world. Initially a wild dream to do something actual (porcelain skull, oops, been done lots of times!) to doing something simple with white and gold paint (skull or bust), to something elaborate (frankenstein statue on plinth, empty broken plinths on either side, lots of broken pieces on the ground. Even the name got wanky and complicated "Interstice". A second car journey brought it back on target. Just head and shoulders bust, green + blue + white joined by gold."

There are a bunch of things that I didn't quite nail (textures, cramped head space) but it was one of those drawings that kept me excited to get back to it. First large format figure since Melbourne, and some on the fly decisions that worked well (making the wreath gold not white, challenging myself to paint gold not use gold metallic ink.



the meaning of life

November 5, 2025 | Tags: nostalgia, resolutions, shit

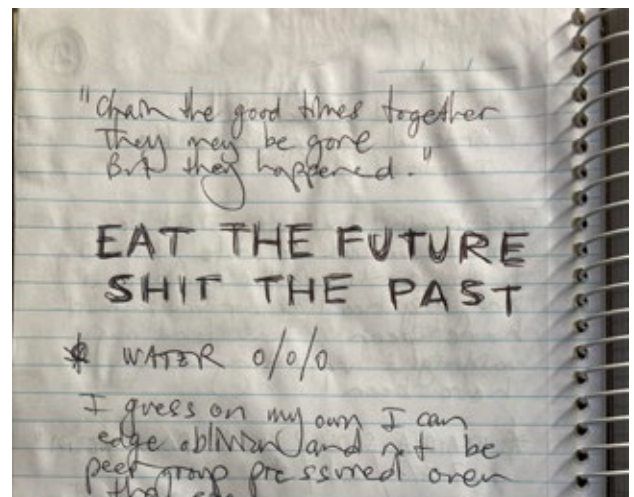
EAT THE FUTURE SHIT THE PAST

A few weeks back I did an overnigher at Rocky Paddock. There were a few tears but it was a great night, sitting by a fire at site 24 drinking beers.

Definitely time away to recharge, reclaiming the place and not needing to write myself off. Writing haiku and reminding myself to think about the good memories.

Scrawled at the end of the beer reviews, a poster slogan, not ironic or sarcastic. I had grand plans to do it as an elaborate hand lettered thing, set it up on a cliché poster mockup with wooden pegs and a cactus on the side.

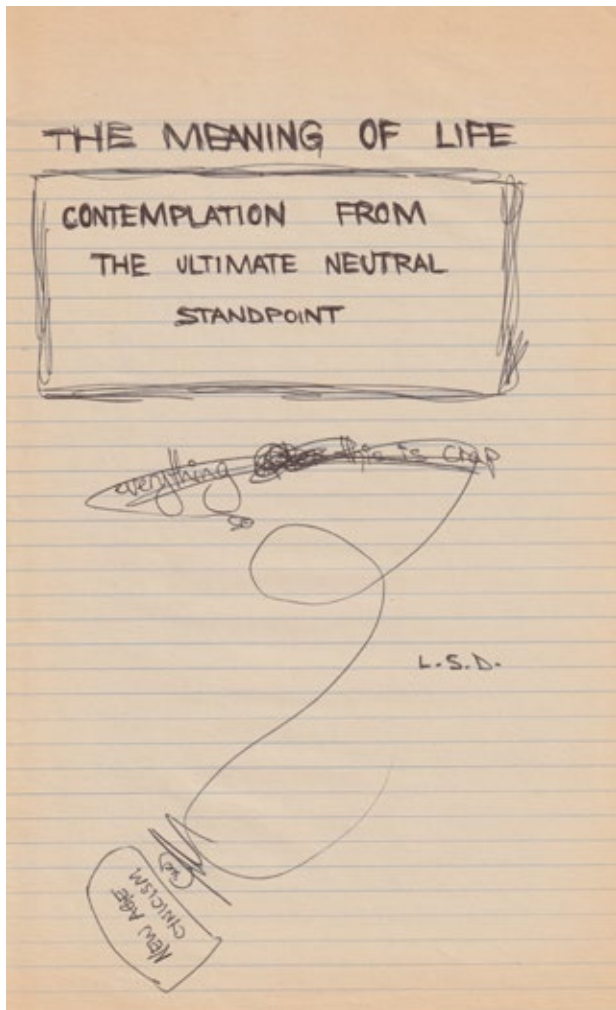
Funnily enough after the last two drawings also involved custom lettering I lost enthusiasm!



Working on the laborious scribble writing I remembered back to 1991, a visit with the Gover St crew to somewhere nearby at Mount Crawford. Tripping, I had crawled into a thorn bush and gotten stuck, had an epiphany and was writing down the meaning of life. Slowly. Scribbling out the letters, convinced that an out of control four wheel drive would come down a nearby track, would kill me before I could finish and reveal it. But didn't write it any simpler or faster!

There was no ultimate neutral standpoint to contemplate from, but not everything after was crap.

Ironically I'm working on this while drinking heavy duty laxative to prep for a colonoscopy tomorrow. Shitting the past indeed.



13 years, 159 posts

November 17, 2025 |

This all started from the realisation that I needed to back up the blog in a way that wasn't a dataset, a way that was readable by humans.

If my Act 1 was learning to draw, then Act 2 was learning how to create documents, which came in handy automating some big chunks of setting this up.

Back in 2014 I set up volume one. Just 42 posts long and intended to be the first of many, promised as printed copies for the only three people who commented on the blog: my old boss Dan, Melbourne Mike, and cousin Michael.

11 years late, but delivered in full.

controlfink.com

