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June 2018

Professional Illustration Portfolio Development

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Abstract:

This paper will explore my growth as a narrative artist and my artistic influences over the years. It will also go into detail about my artistic processes, my plans after graduation, and the context of my thesis artwork.

Professional Illustration Portfolio Development

by

Andrew C. Pappas

B.A., University of Pittsburgh, 2014

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Illustration.

Syracuse University

June, 2018

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To me art is a way of telling stories. I have always had characters and narratives running around in my head and art has always been the only way for me to bring them to life. When I was little, I was inspired to draw by the cartoons and videogames I saw on television. I would often make drawings in a sequential order, telling stories that featured my favorite cartoon and videogame character. I was a big fan of animators like Chuck Jones, Don Bluth, and 1970s-1990s Disney. Nintendo videogames were always my favorite. *Kirby Superstar, Paper Mario,* and the *Legend of Zelda* series were three of my most favorite titles. I was also a huge fan of virtual pets especially the web based Neopets. I drew a lot of fan art of the magical little animals.

Fig. 1. Chuck Jones, Scene form *Bunny Hugged*, 1951, animation, available from: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/505810601884412343/ (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 2. Disney, Scene from *Robinhood*. 1973. Animation. Available from: http://www.digitalspy.com/movies/news/a822870/robin-hood-movie-adaptations-seven-in-development/?zoomable/ (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 3. Nintendo, Game Play for *The Legend of Zelda Majora's Mask*, 2000, Video Game, Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFO_RJboE10 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 4. Nintendo, Cover of *Kirby Superstar,* 1996, video game, available from: https://venturebeat.com/2018/03/14/theretrobeat-1996s-kirby-super-star-remains-the-pink-heros-best-outing/ (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 5. Nintendo, Cover of *Paper Mario,* 2000, video game, available from: http://www.mobygames.com/game/paper-mario/cover-art/gameCoverId,9742/ (accessed April 11, 2018)

When I entered Middle School, I caught the anime bug. I began to read manga like *Naruto, .Hack//,* and *Azumanga Daioh* and fell in love with the many Studio Ghibli films. I also developed a taste for Japanese RPG videogames, my favorites series being *Final Fantasy*, *Kingdom Hearts*, and *Dragon Quest* (formerly known as *Dragon Warrior)*. I taught myself how to draw in the stereo typical anime style using a book called *How to Draw More Manga,* so that I could make my own original anime characters. I drew character designs and comics inspired by mythology and high fantasy such as werewolves, fairies, anthropomorphic animals, and classical deities. This was due to the old English folktales about unicorns, druids, and fairies from my maternal Northern English family, the very robust mythological education I got in my English, Latin, and history classes, and the fantasy Novels I read with my younger brother and father. I was also played the *Magic: the Gathering* trading card game with my friends, but mostly collected the cards for the artwork. It was through anime and manga that I realized, explored, and grew my love for fantasy and mythology. It was my first real voyage into story telling.
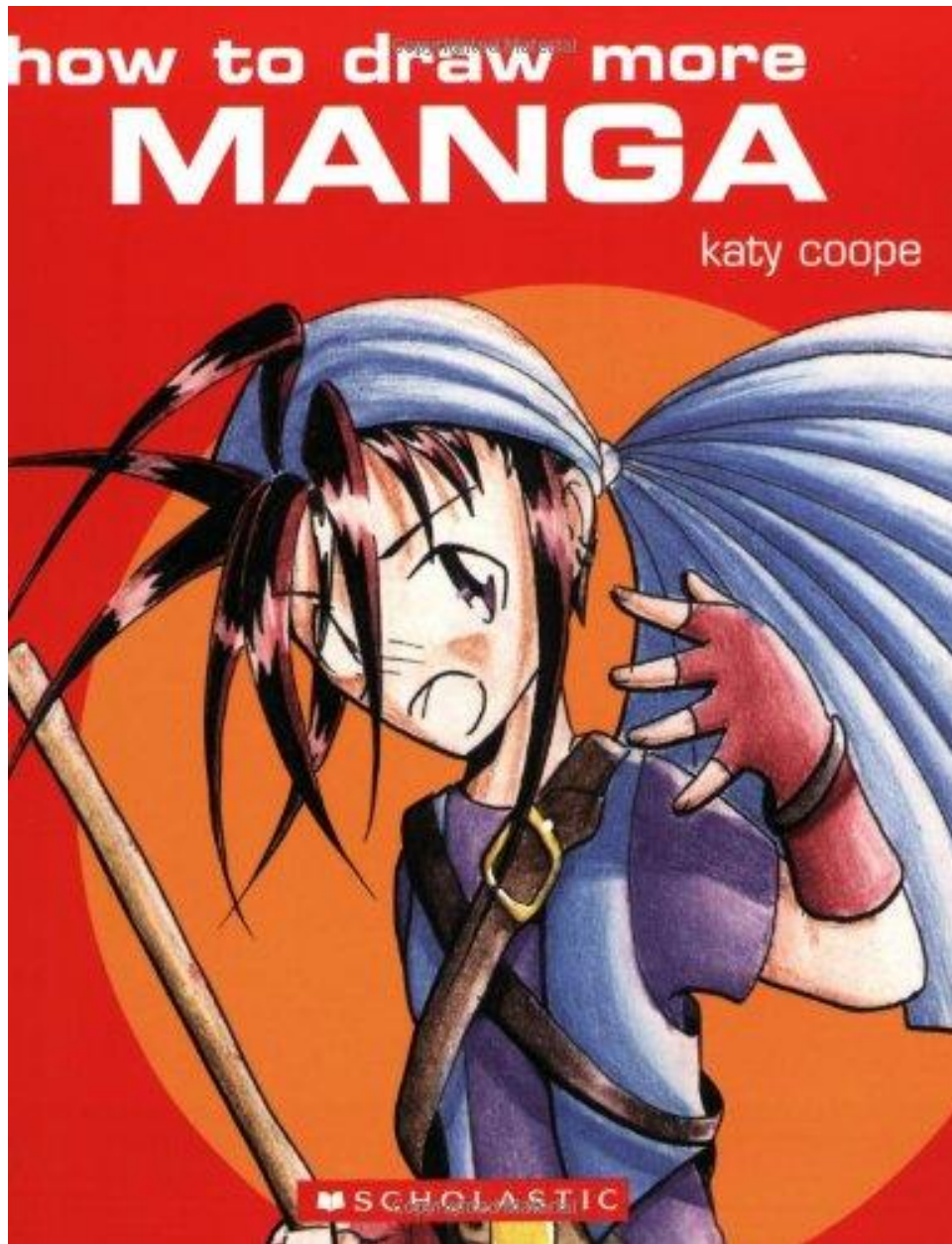
Fig. 7. Kate Coope, Cover of *How To Draw more Manga*, print, 2004, available from: https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/how-to-draw-more-manga-by-katy-coope/ (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 8. Kiyohiko Azuma, Book Jacket of *Azumanga Daioh Omibus*, print, 1991, available from: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/186031.Azumanga_Daioh_Vol_1 (accessed April 11, 2018)

Fig. 9. Masashi Kishimoto, Cover of *Naruto Volume 1*, Shonen Jump, print, 2003, available from, http://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Naruto-Vol-1/Masashi-Kishimoto/Naruto/9781569319000 (accessed April 11 2018).

Fig 10. Satomi Hongo, Cover of *Final Fantasy Tactics Advanced* Square Enix, Video Game, print, available from:
https://matome.naver.jp/odai/2133791849748929701/2141403088441894803 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig 11 Hayao Miyazaki, scene from *Spirited Away, animation,* Studio Ghibli, 2002, available from: http://mentalfloss.com/article/60237/15-fascinating-facts-about-spirited-away (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 12. Akira Toriyama, Poster for *Dragon Quest: Monsters 2*, Square Enix, 2001, video game, available from: http://dolap.magnetband.co/dragon-warrior-monsters-2-chart/ (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 13. Ron Spears, *Elf Soultiller*. Wizards of the Coast. 1993, card game, available from: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/lilmikeegee/christopher-moeller/?lp=true (accessed April 11, 2018).

Just as easily as I fell in love with anime, I fell even harder out of love with anime during my sophomore year of high school. I realized how commercial and conformist the style was and how poorly written, derivative even, the bulk of the stories were. Since I felt anime was holding me back artistically, I renounced all things anime to better myself, though I continued in my love of Japanese culture and language. I started to read more western comics and watch more western animation to distance myself as far as possible from anime. I soon discovered the work of three contemporary comic artists that I wanted to emulate: Eric Powell, the creator of *The Goon*, Mike Mignola, the creator of *Hellboy*, and Jamie Hewlett, the co. creator of both *Tank Girl*, the virtual band the *Gorillaz,* and designer for the London based Chinese Opera, *Monkey: Journey to the West*. I liked these artists for their distinct styles, narrative capabilities, and use of mythology in their work. I copied the styles of these three artists religiously, trying to completely purge myself of the anime virus. My drawing back then became a perfect synthesis of the three, but there was still a hint of anime in my style which haunted me.

Fig. 14. Eric Powell, Poster for *The Goon*, print, 1999, available from: https://www.artstation.com/artwork/4n4JL (Accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 15. Mike Mignola, cover of *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction*, print, 1994, available
from: https://www.darkhorse.com/Books/12-743/Hellboy-Volume-1-Seed-of-Destruction-TPB
(accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 16. Jamie Hewlett *Tank Girl and Booga*, 1988, print, available from: vspiegel.com
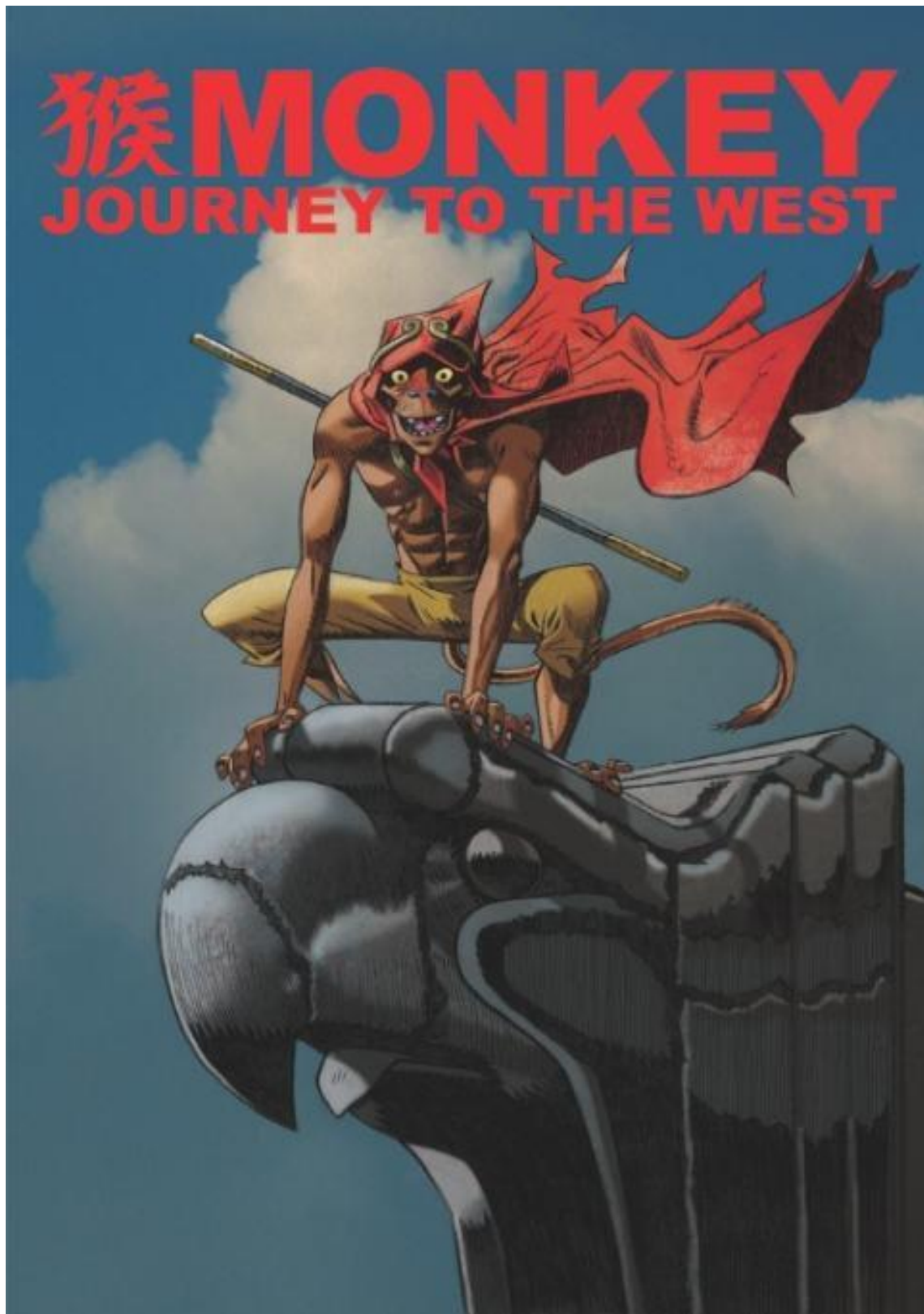(accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 17. Jamie Hewlett, poster for *Monkey: Journey To the West.*. print, 2007, available from: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/265360603019157616/?lp=true (accessed April 11, 2018).

The summer of my junior year of high school, I attend a fine arts college prep program during the summer at Carnegie Mellon University. There I was forced to draw realistically using live reference and abstraction. It was when I attended my first nude figure drawing session and found my love of realism. I began to look a bit more at traditional fantasy illustrations and historical painting more than just comic books and animation from then on. I was fond of the impressionists and the realists.

After I graduated high school, I started college at Slippery Rock University, majoring in Art Education and Asian Studies. I studied there for two years, including one semester where I studied abroad in Japan, but I soon realized I did not want to be a high school art teacher like my parents wanted me to, so I transferred to the University of Pittsburgh as a Studio Arts and Japanese major. I was required to take a lot of art history courses at the University of Pittsburgh, (I was just short of an Art History minor) and was introduced to new historical painters like John Singer Sargent. I interned at the Carnegie Art Museum of Natural History illustrating snail shells for a scientific catalog, and spent my free time drawing the beautiful taxidermy exhibits, and dinosaur fossils at the museum but I always made time to visit the European Painting wing to view the work of Monet, Gustave Dore, and the other old painting masters.

#18. William Turner, *Fort Vimieux*.. 1831, Oil on canvas, That Britain, London, 711 x 1067 mm. From: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-fort-vimieux-tw1739 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 19. . John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of a Boy*, 1890, Oil on Canvas, 59 13/16 × 55 7/8 in. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. From: https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/21454 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 20. Claude Monet, *Waterlilies*, 1922, Oil on canvas, 77 15/16 × 234 7/8 in, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. From: https://collection.cmoa.org/objects/7053d468-bf1f-42c9-b5bd-c7ccdb335c66 (accessed April 11, 2018).
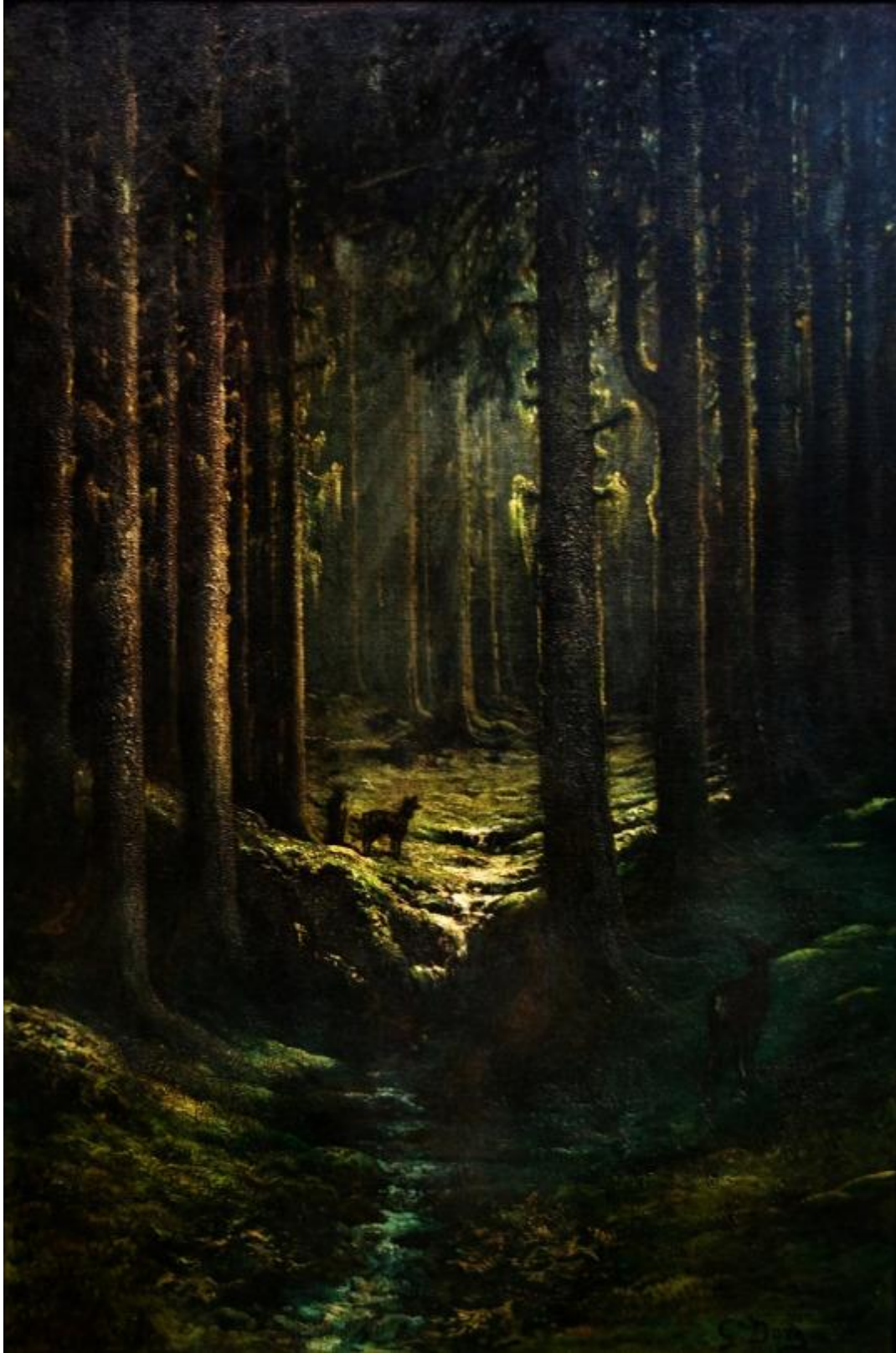
Fig. 21. Gustave Dore, *Forest at Twilight*, 1865. Oil on Canvas, 76 7/8 × 51 3/8 in, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. From: https://collection.cmoa.org/objects/8e66c624-8e1b-4968-8b78-6af3acce6505 (accessed April 11, 2018).

As well as the old European paintings, I began to look at contemporary fantasy illustrations and concept art. It was then I decided I wanted to become a concept artist. Noticing most of these gorgeous illustrations and concepts were painted digitally, I decided to learn to digitally paint. Since none of my college professors knew how to or did not specialized in digital painting, I taught myself the medium by watching tutorials on Youtube. Freelance concept artist Xia Taptara's tutorials were always my favorite. I liked his style because it was more spontaneous, less tedious, and more painterly than. most other digital painters, who are more formulaic and tight in process. His process of working in black and white then glazing in color gradually was reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age artists, such a Vermeer, Rubens, and Van Dyck. Those three artists were and are a big influence on my artwork as well. I began to use his technique regularly and was surprised how easy it was to make realistic art work. It allowed me to consider the elements of my paintings in parts rather than all at once.

Fig. 22. Xia Tapatara, *Night-Stalker*, 2017, digital. Available from: https://www.artstation.com/artwork/ReAQD (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 23. Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, 1658 ,Oil on Canvas, h 45.5cm × w 41cm,
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands. From: https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-2344 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 24. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus,* 1618, Oil on Canvas.
Available from: http://www.peterpaulrubens.net/the-rape-of-the-daughters-of-leucippus.jsp
(accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig, 25. Anthony van Dyck, *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* 1620, Oil on Canvas, height: 225 cm.; width: 197 cm., Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. From: https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-crowning-with-thorns/8115e55f-004f-45c3-b574-fb9880c2fb57 (accessed April 11, 2018).

When I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, I expressed my interest in going into the entertainment industry to my professors. They all urged me to go to graduate school for illustration to pursue my dreams. I applied to graduate school shortly after graduation and was accepted into Syracuse University for the fall 2015 semester. I had one year to kill, so I worked as a waiter at a local diner chain called Eat n' Park and took private digital painting lessons under Xia Taptara through correspondence online. He taught me many basic painting and figure drawing fundamentals I was not taught during my undergrad years. He made me copy old John Singer Sargent and Frank Frazetta paintings, taught me the importance of having a strong silhouette, how to do diligent visual research, and the common practices used by concept artists to make artwork fast and efferently to meet harsh deadlines.

Fig. 26. John Singer Sargent. Portrait of *Mr. and Mrs. I. N. Phelps Stokes*, 1897, Oil on Canvas, 84 1/4 x 39 3/4 in. The Met, New York City. From: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/12140 (access April 11, 2018).

Fig. 27. Frank Frazetta, *Snow Giants*, 1967, Oil on Canvas. Available from:
http://reelartstudios.com/News/snowgiants-02.htm (accessed April 11, 2018).

I continued to look towards Frazetta and Sargent for inspiration during my first year of graduate school, but soon rediscovered at the Dutch Golden age artists and the detail oriented work of Orientalists.
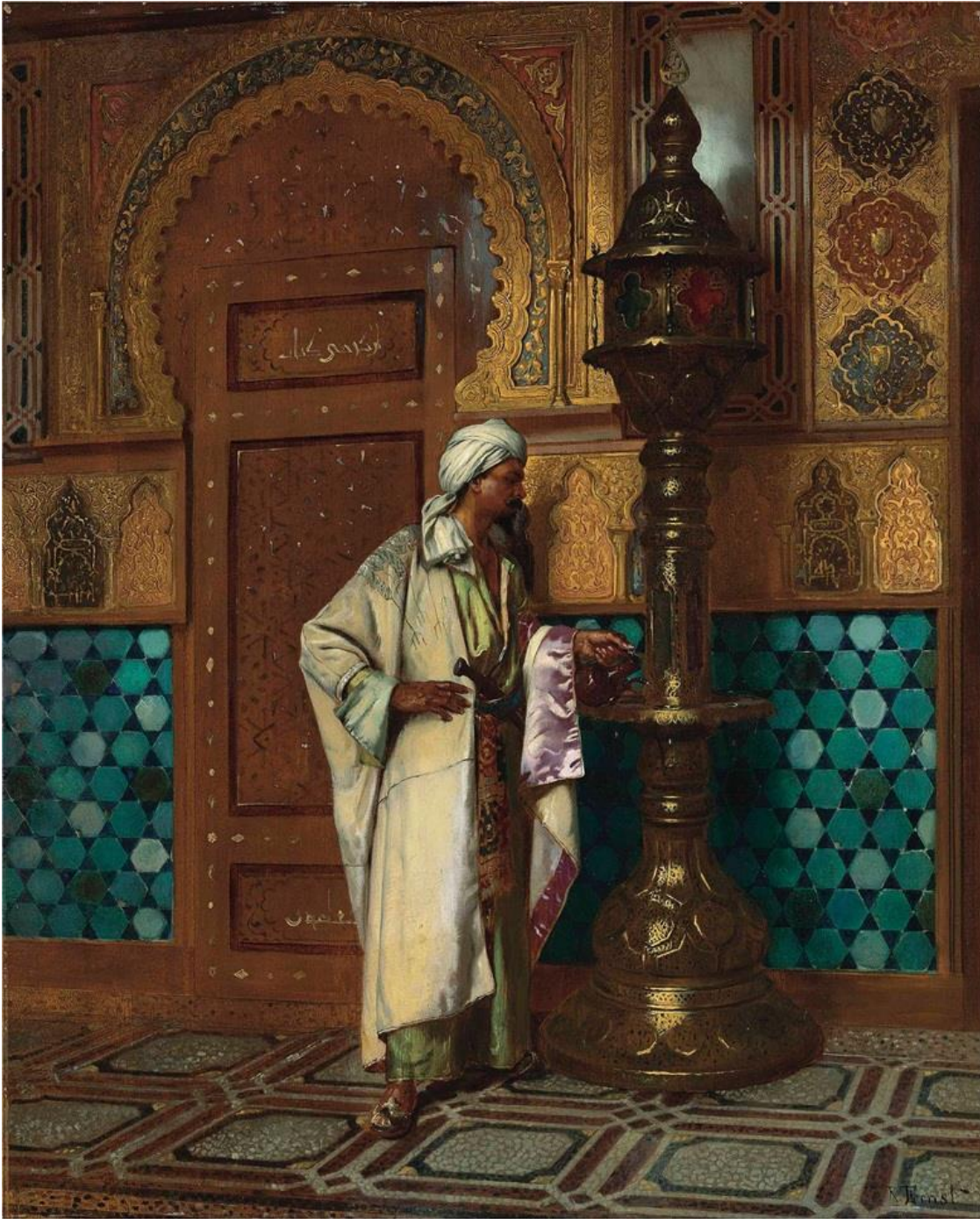

Fig. 28. Rudolf Ernst, Tending the Lamp, 1800s, Oil on Panel, 22 7/8 x 19 1/8 in. Available from: https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/rudolf-ernst-austrian-1854-1932-tending-the-lamp-6089090-details.aspx (accessed April 11, 2018).

In addition to the Dutch Golden Age and the Orientalists, I began to be inspired by the works of Syracuse alumni artists Sean Andrew Murry and Donato Giancola, and illustrator Jon Foster. I admire Donato's craftmanship and skillful use of oil painting techniques. I think Sean Andrew Murry has some of the most creative environment and character designs, and I find his mixed media digital painting techniques inspirational. As for Jon Foster, I believe he has the best compositions of the three. His shadow shapes and the movement of his object through space makes his work dynamic. It is from looking at the art of all three of these artists, coupled with the influences of the Dutch Golden Age and the Orientalists, that I have devised my own process of art making that incorporates both traditional and digital media.

Fig. 29. Jon Foster, *Dragon and Thief*, 2004, mixed media. Available from: https://www.jonfoster.com/store/p32/%22Dragon_and_Thief%22.html (accessed April 11, 2018).
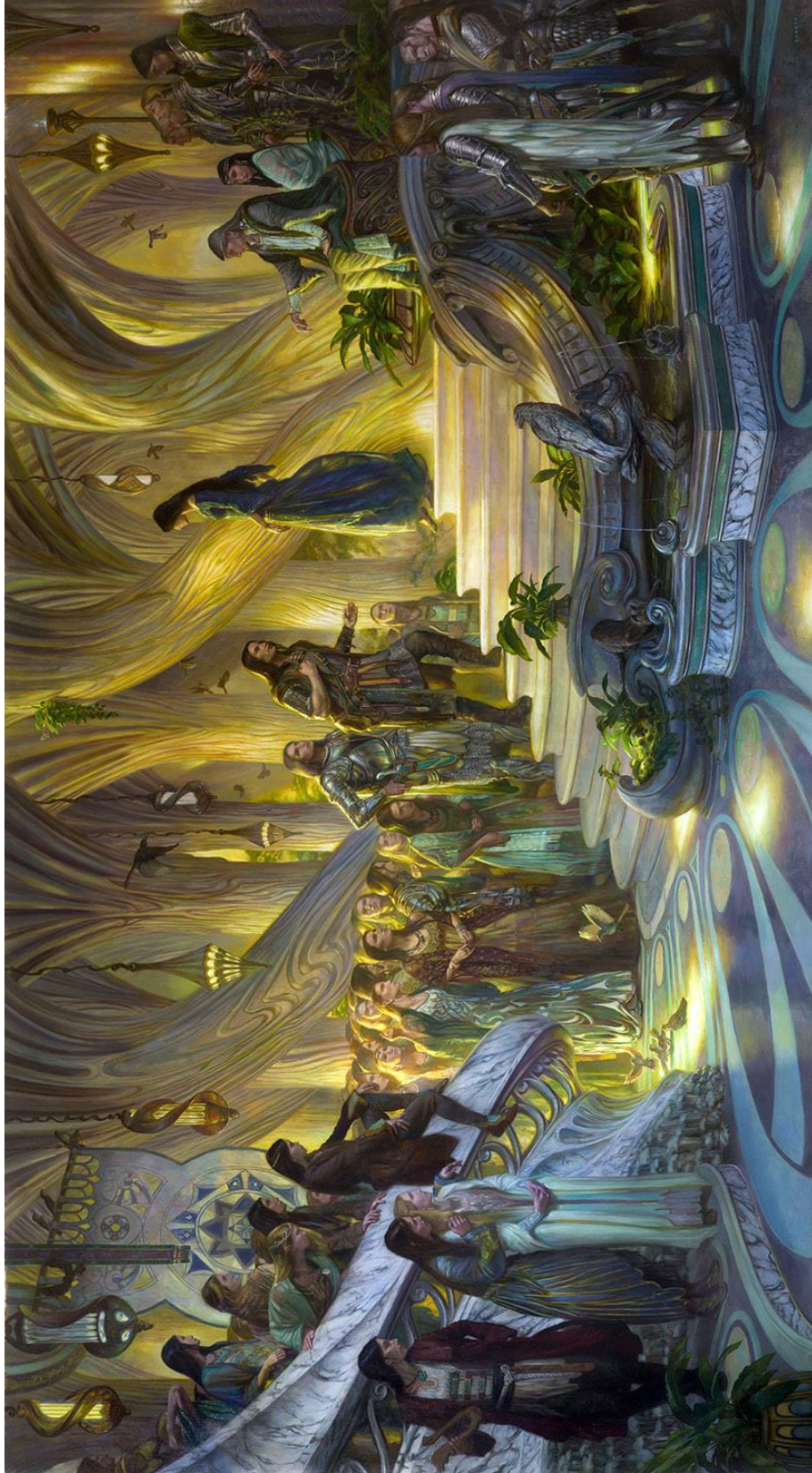
Fig. 30. Donato Giancola, *Beren and Luthien in the Court of Thingol and Melian*, 2015, Oil on Linen. Available from: https://www.artstation.com/artwork/Yg4V3 (accessed April 11, 2018).

Fig. 31. Sean Andrew Murry, Wizard Alley, mixed media. Available from:
http://seanandrewmurray.com/portfolio-posts/wizard-alley/ (accessed, April 11, 2018).

Digital painting is a fun, fast paced process that gives the artist a lot of control, but it has no physicality at all. There is something about drawing with pencil or paint that feels way more liberating and immersive than digital media. Traditional media, however, take a lot more time to set up, execute, and clean up. It is also more expensive. While I indeed enjoy the experience of traditional painting more, I default to digital painting due to the convince of the medium and how cost effective it is. To counteract digital's lack of physicality, I try to use traditional drawing in my work then go to digital. I feel my skills in traditional drawing are stronger than my skills at digital drawing.

I start my illustrations traditionally with pencil drawn thumbnail sketches on grey toned paper. I block in light and shadow in interesting compositions to find one that resonates. Once I find a composition that resonates, I blow up the thumbnail sketch size and trace it onto a new piece of toned paper to make a more refined final sketch. I then gather all the references I need for the painting by searching the internet or creating what I need with photography. Next, I blow the sketch up to scale, trace it onto tracing paper, and begin refining the linework. Once the tracing paper drawing is finished, I transfer it again onto a large sheet of grey paper, using graphite transfer paper or a light box. I block in the light and shadow with graphite and white colored pencil to create the finished value drawing. I then spray the drawing with workable fixative and scan it into the computer for editing.

Once scanned, I begin to paint over the piece in photoshop, keeping it black and white, to correct values and add texture. When the value and textures are acceptable, I glaze color into the piece using a mixture of overlay and color layers and adjustment layers if I feel I need to change the tone of the entire piece. The last thing I do is the overpainting, which I do to correct mistakes

in the coloring, texture, and rendering. The process results in both an original hand drawn piece that I can sell separately as an original piece of artwork, and a finished digital illustration ready for the publishers.

Though I've become quite efficient at this process, I was painfully slow at it at first. Before I started fusing traditional and digital media together, I was a very fast digital artist who could finish a painting in one or two days tops. When I started this new process, it took me three weeks to over a month to complete one piece. I felt I was taking a step in the wrong direction. "No one in the Entertainment industry will hire me as a concept artist if I work so slowly," I thought. Though the process did slow me down a lot, it was not until I compared my old work to my new that I saw the benefits of this new process. It forced me to take my time with my art work, to develop it more thoroughly. I had more time to really understand my subject matter and add small refined details. My old work looks like half-hearted slop in comparison. I decided to stick with the new process even though it was a lot slower. To my great surprise, I became faster and faster at the process the more I used it. I can now produce a finish piece of artwork in about one to two weeks. I still can create something simple like a character design in one day using only digital media if I need to, but my mixed media work is still much stronger and more sophisticated.

My thesis work consists of illustrations and concept art for a series of short stories I am writing. The stories are a fusion of American History (specifically the American Civil War), high fantasy, and world mythology. I currently call the project "The Tales of Our Ancestors" but I am not one-hundred percent sure about the name yet. I originally conceived the concept for this project during my sophomore year of college, when I was studying abroad in Japan. I was inspired by how the Japanese weave their mythology and history together in pop culture to recreate a highly romanticized version of their past. I wanted to do the same thing with American history and western mythologies. I was very interested in the American Civil War growing up, so I began my little historical-fantasy project with drawings of union soldiers who were also magician, werewolves, knights, and dragon riders in my Japanese History notebook. My Japanese history teacher and classmates got a real kick out of the designs which reinforced for me that this was a good idea for a concept. I originally envisioned this project as an idea for a tactical RPG videogame series in the vein of *Final Fantasy Tactics Advanced* or *Pokemon: Nobunaga no Yabou*, two of my favorite RPG videogames during my time in Japan, so I approached the project as a videogame design. I created a deep race and class system in the vane of *Dungeons and Dragons* with a branching class system inspired by the branching evolutions of the Japanese *Tamagotchi* and *Digimon* virtual pets. I also created a system of magic that I categorized into five color coded schools (red, green, blue, white, and black) inspired by the magic in the *Final Fantasy* series.

As this project developed over my year in college, I began to realize turning this musing into a videogame would be a little too challenging for one person to take on alone, especially someone who has no programming knowledge or connections in the videogame industry. I decided to transform the project into something that I could accomplish myself and work with

entertainment companies to turn it into a videogame or animation later on. I decided to make the project into a series of short stories that I would write, illustrate and later string together into a novel. I was inspired to take the literary route by my favorite writer, Susanna Clarke, who dealt with the same historic-fantasy subject matter in her novel *Johnathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* and her many various short stories.

The main breadth of my story takes place in Victorian America, before and during the American Civil War. The series will mainly focus around the School family, an Anglican-American family from Western Pennsylvania, and their friends as they struggle with the fracturing of our great nation, racial and identity, and the immortal gods of nature known as fairies. I wanted to set the story in the Victorian age, not only because I was fond of the Civil War growing up, but because it was an age of adolescence for the United States and laid the frame work for our modern society. My story will feature a mixture of real historic events and elements from high fantasy and Celtic, Germanic, and Native American mythology with other world mythologies for flavor. It is my goal to comment on the themes of spirituality, diversity, and conservationism, and question who we are as a nation and culture.

While I work on my story project, I have prepared myself and my portfolio to work in the entertainment industry. I plan to find a job in the entertainment industry by applying formally to videogame, animation, and production companies as a concept artist. I am attending the L.A. Maymester class this May for the exact reason of job searching and networking in the Los Angeles area. Meanwhile, I will be seeking freelance work illustrating board games and book covers by sending out frequent mailers and emailers to potential clients. I have tailored my portfolio to be attractive to both the entertainment industry and the board game and fantasy novel industries for this reason. I am promoting myself currently by being more active on social media websites such as Instagram, Tumblr, and Art Station. I have started to put together a list of clients and companies I want to work for and am readying myself to send out my first batch of mailers soon after graduation.

I am excited to get started in working on my career after school. I feel confident in my abilities I attained here at Syracuse University to land me a dream job in the field I desire. My time here has given me the time and focus I needed to grow not only as an illustrator, but as a person. I will never forget what I learned here and all the wonderful people I met along the way. I never stop working towards my dreams and will always be willing to lend a helping hand to struggling artists in need.

Thesis Work:

Fig. 32. Andrew C. Pappas, *Flick Attaway*, 2017, mixed media.

Fig. 33. Andrew C. Pappas, *Kokumthena*, 2017, mixed media.

Fig. 34. Andrew C. Pappas, *The Gris Gris*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 35. Andrew C. Pappas, *Daoine Sidhe Woman,* 2018 Mixed Media

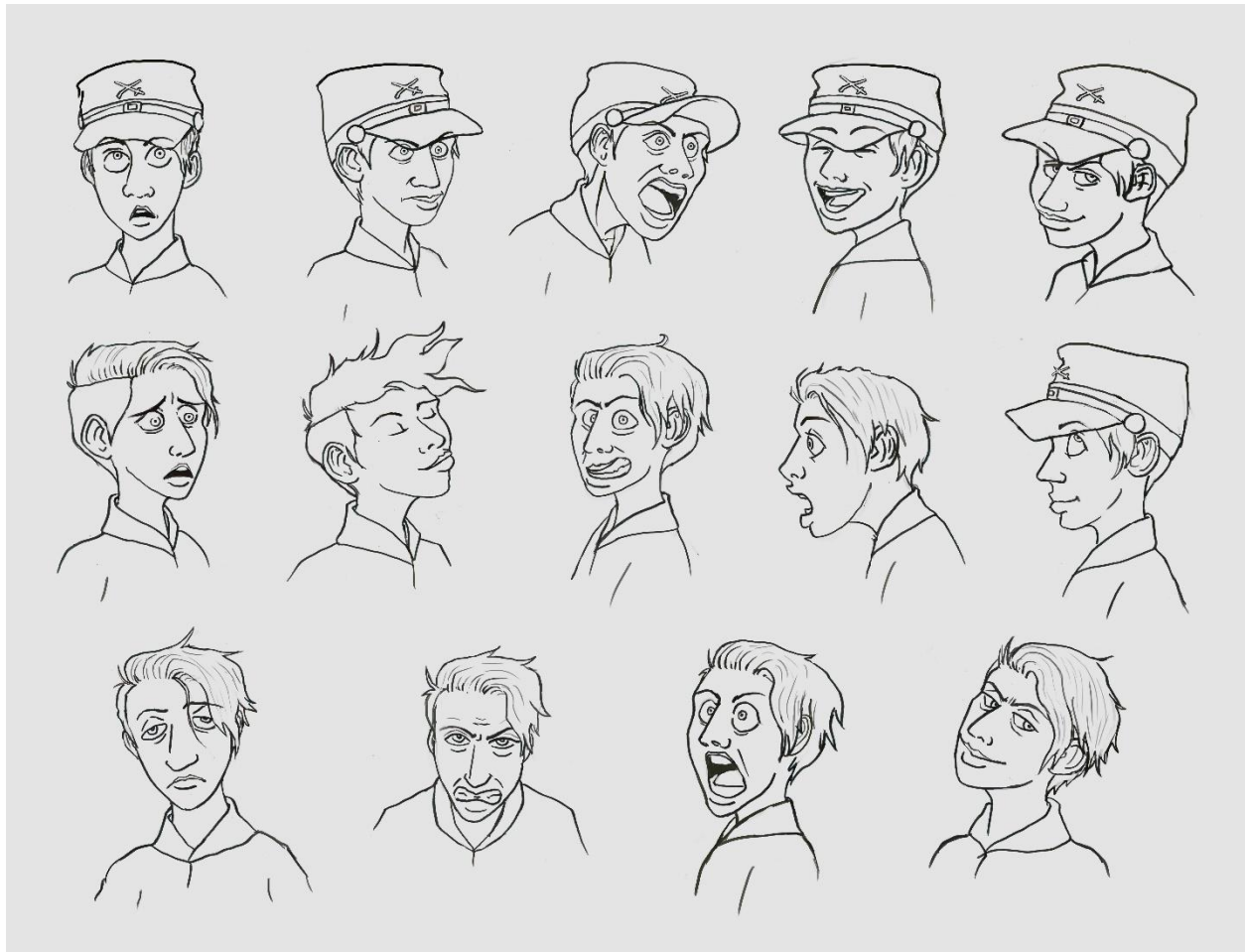Fig 36. Andrew C. Pappas, *Daoine Sidhe Man*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 37. Andrew C. Pappas, *Character Expressions*, 2018, mixed media.
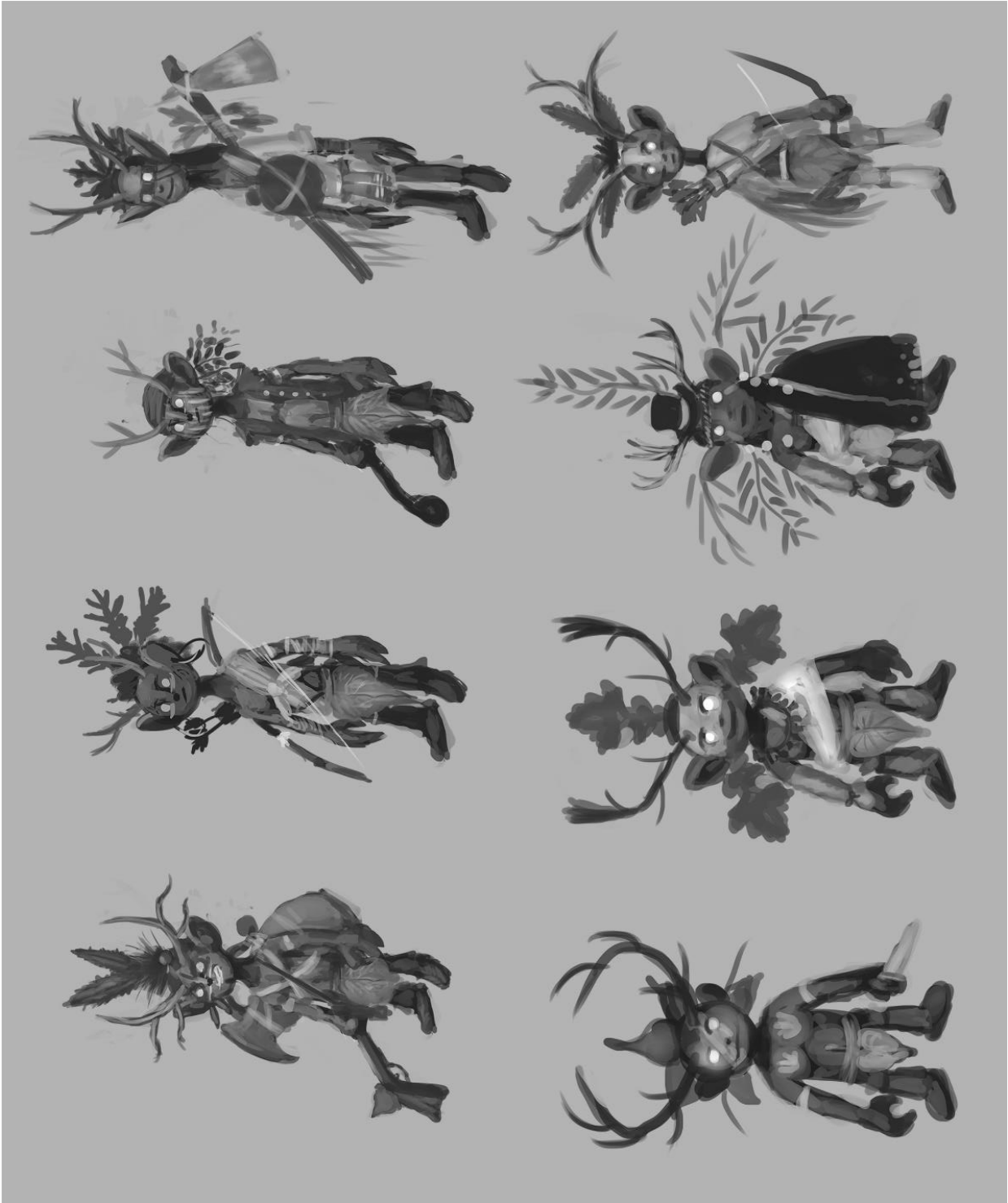
Fig. 38. Andrew C. Pappas, *Male Wematekan'is Character Design Thumbnails*, 2018, digital.

Fig. 39. Andrew C. Pappas, *Male Wamatekan's*, 2018, digital.

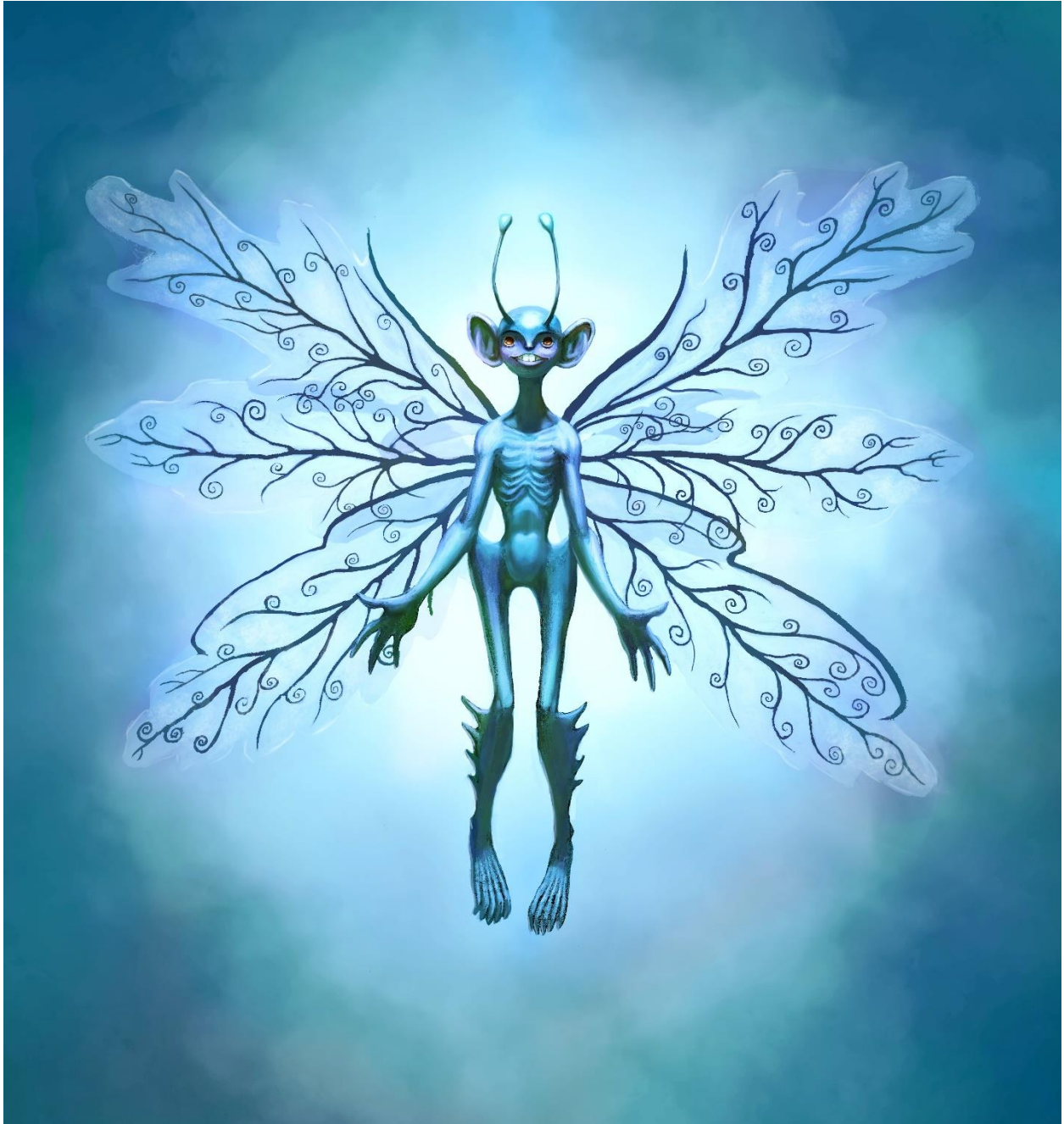Fig. 40. Andrew C. Pappas, *Jeremey and the Yu-Jeep*, 2017, mixed media.

Fig. 41. Andrew C. Pappas, *Oxygen Sylph*, 2018 mixed media.

Fig. 42. Andrew C. Pappas, *Excalibur*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 43. Andrew C. Pappas, *Races of Werewolves*, 2018 digital.

Fig. 44. Andrew C. Pappas *Minatultu Race*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 45. Andrew C. Pappas, *Female Wematekan'is*, 2018, mixed media.
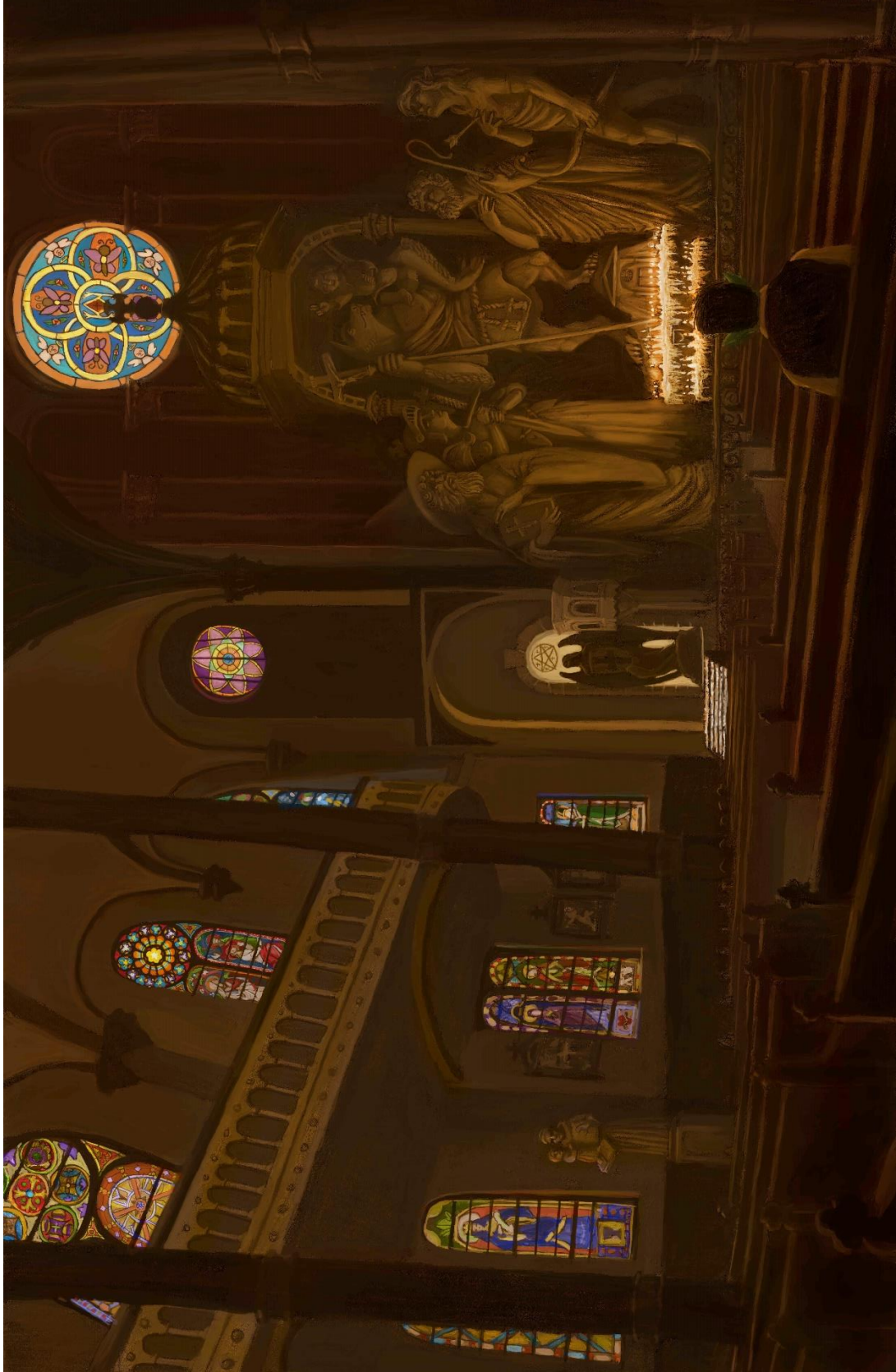
Fig. 46. Andrew C. Pappas, *Fantasy Church*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 47. Andrew C. Pappas, *Magician's Alley*, 2017, mixed media.

Fig. 48. Andrew C. Pappas, *Thunderbird*, 2018, mixed media.

Fig. 49. Andrew C. Pappas, *Wendingo*, 2018 mixed, media.

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Coope, Kate. *How to Draw More Manga*. United States of America: Tangerine Press, 2004.

Kihimoto, Masashi. *Naruto Vol. 1: Uzumaki Naruto*. United States of America: VIZ Media LLC, 2003.

Mignola, Mike. *Hellboy: Seed of Destruction*. New York, New York: Dark Horse Books, 2004.

<center>Vita</center>

<center>

ANDREW PAPPAS
Illustrator and Concept Artist

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EDUCATION
Syracuse University, Syracuse University, NY, May 2018
Master of Fine Arts in Illustration

 University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, April, 2014
Bachelor of Arts in Studio arts with Japanese Minor
GPA: 3.23

Kansai Gaidai (University), Hirakatashi, Osaka, Japan
Study Abroad
Japanese Language Studies

Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA, Sept. 2010- June 2012
Studio Arts and Asian Studies Associates Degree
GPA 3.33

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
-VPA School of Fine Arts, Illustration Department, Syracuse NY, August 2016- May 2018
Teacher's Assistant for History of Illustration and History of Comic Books
- Take and keep track of attendance
- Hold review sessions
- Grade tests and research papers
- Teach lessons
- Critique student works

-Talent Agency Summer Program, VPA School of Fine Arts, Illustration Department, Syracuse NY, July 2016- August 2018
Digital Illustration Teacher
- Taught Digital Illustration skills such as photo editing, digital painting, and .gif animation to high school students.

-VPA School of Fine Arts, Illustration Department, Syracuse NY, March 2016- August 2016
Print Room Monitor I.A.
- Managed and Cleaned printer room
- Ran maintenance on printers copiers, and other electronic equipment
- Managed keys to all rooms within the Illustration department.

-Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA, April 2013- September 2013
Illustration Intern
- drew accurate snail shell and slug scientific illustrations for a Western Pennsylvania mollusk catalog