



## Harnessing the Void: Part 1 of 2 Construction and Design

Welcome to Part 1 of our **Step-by-Step Guide** for April 2019!

Today we will be working on the drawing for *Harnessing the Void!* The goal of this image is create a single, dynamic figure in a dramatic, atmospheric environment.

### Materials List:

- Kimberly 2H
- Staedtler 0.5mm Mechanical with Ain Stein 2H and 2B leads
- Pentel Graphgear 0.9mm Mechanical with HB lead
- Tuff Stuff Eraser
- Huion Lightpad
- Photoshop + Wacom Intuos Tablet.
- Basic Inkjet Printer
- Strathmore 400 Smooth Bristol (4-ply)
-



*Tools Used*

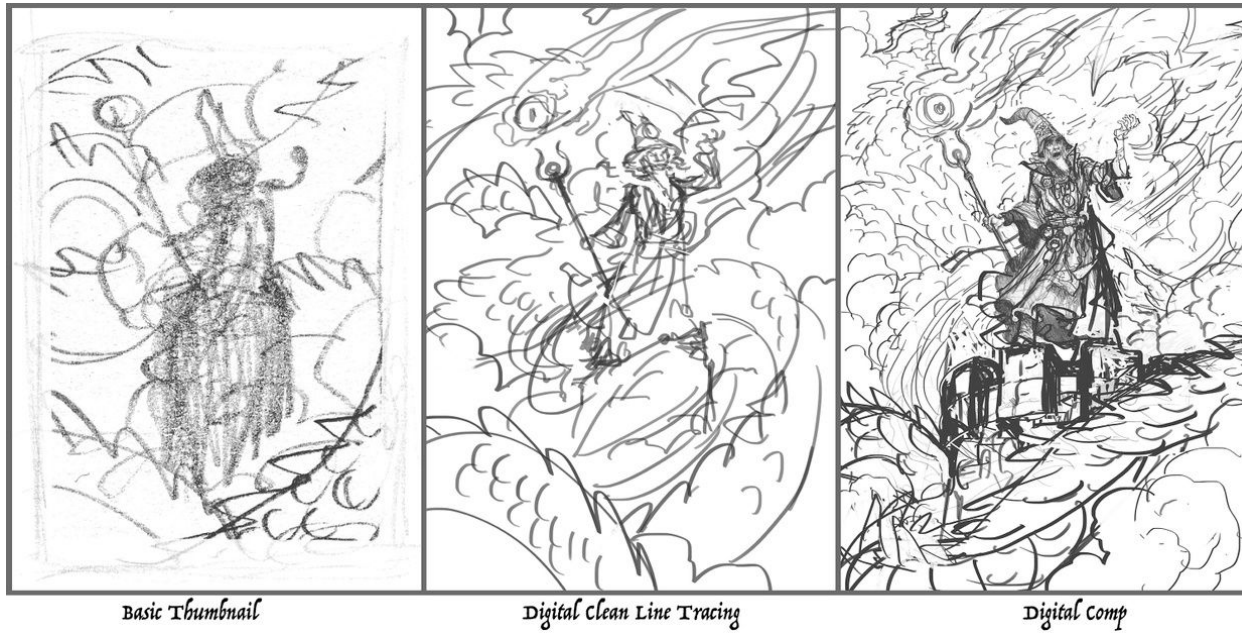
## SKETCHING

Before I begin working on the image I like to play through the scene I am illustrating in my mind, as if it were a movie. What moment from that scene would be the most impactful? What moment would best be able to tell the whole story in a single image? Once I think this out a bit, I start scribbling away in a sketchpad making tiny, barely intelligible sketches and thumbnails.



I work until I hit upon one that really seems to capture the idea that I had in my head.

Now that I have that idea down, I scan it into Photoshop to refine the composition. **Remember!:** The #1 key to making good illustration is redraw, redraw, redraw! Professional creatives aren't magically gifted, mystically perfect people, they just use best practices.

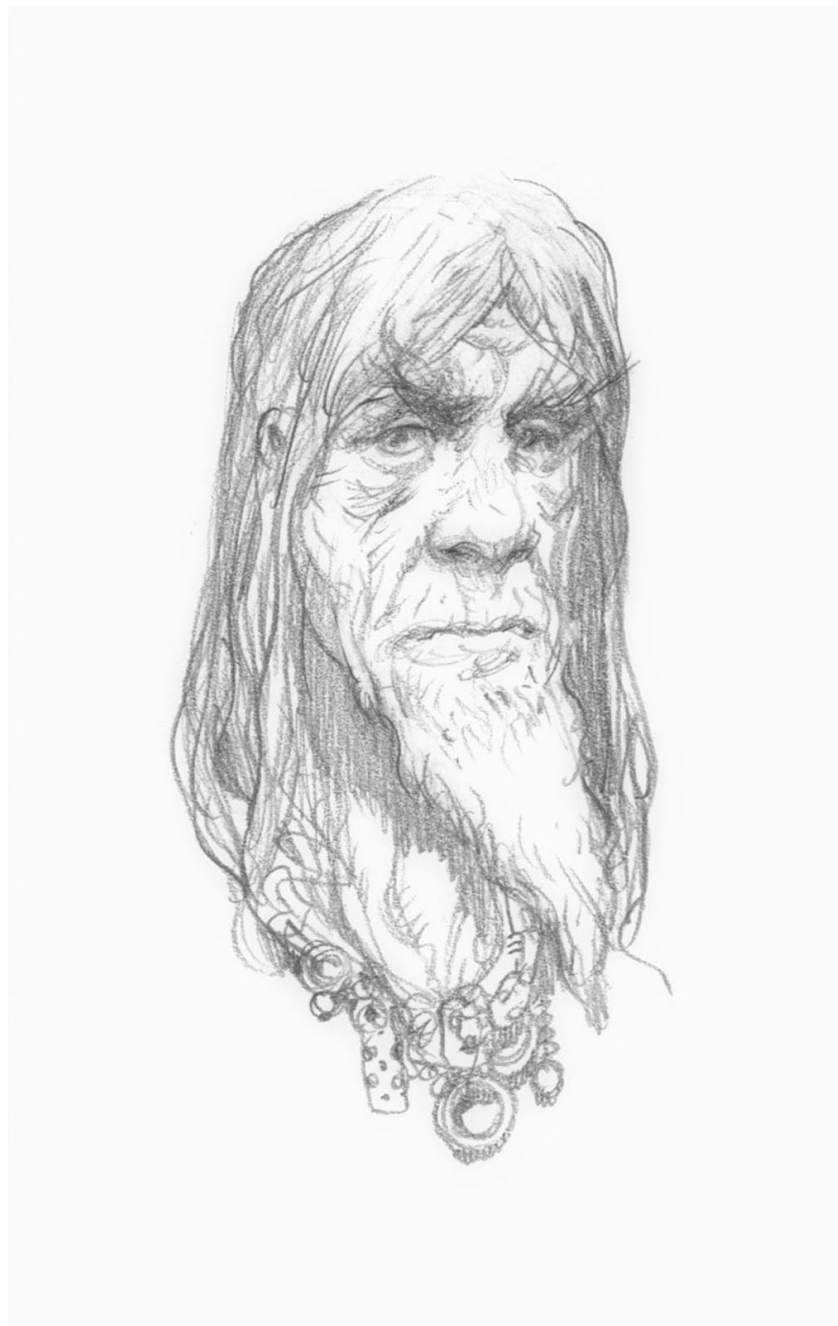


*Basic Thumbnail*

*Digital Clean Line Tracing*

*Digital Comp*

None of these images are ones I would normally show people. They are the dirty tricks, the muddy trenches, the ugly stages. But they are nonetheless one of the most important parts of constructing a complex image. As I work through this stage I am constantly flipping the image horizontally in Photoshop to ensure it is not out of whack. I don't leave this reworking stage (shown above) until I have arrived at a clean composition. One where I feel I truly understand all the shapes, proportions and environmental designs. I DO NOT want these issues cropping up to surprise me in the final image. So I do not leave this stage until I am satisfied that I've idiot-proofed my image.



Next, and before I dive into my final drawing, I want to make sure I understand the characters. I often do little studies like the one pictured above to make sure that I really understand the character. These are excellent and can be very helpful.

**But Remember!:** The #1 key to making good illustration is solid reference! If you have good figurative reference to lean on that can do most of the heavy lifting in your work and will act as a guiding beacon for you from the drawing to the finished artwork.

But what if you don't have good reference? I certainly don't have a dark wizard on the edge of madness here do I? Or wait... do I?



**Pro Tip: When in doubt, use the webcam!**

It's hard for me to overstate what a useful solution this is when you run into problems of facial and hand expressions. I use it all the time. In the past artists simply kept a mirror next to them to achieve this, so it is not a new solution, it has just been made more convenient for the modern artist. And so what if you don't look like your figure. *Photoshop can make you look like anything you want!*

This method not only gives you some solid reference on facial construction, but I find that having to act out my figure and make my face fit their expression helps me truly understand it and I am better able to paint it. With this trick I am essentially method-acting my characters.

It also of course provides an enormous amount of blackmail potential were access to your files ever to fall into the wrong hands...

**MAKING A TRANSFER**

Next, I print out my comp at 11"x14". This proportion is a standard frame size. Working in standard frame sizes always makes your life waaaay easier when it comes to selling your work.

I use a Huion lightpad to trace my comp onto a sheet of Strathmore 400 Smooth Bristol.



For the transfer I only do simple lines to act as guides. I don't tend to do any shading until I have my lines down. On the right side of the picture above you can see the level of tracing I tend to do when working on the lightpad. On the left side of the image you can see what the drawing looks like as I slowly begin to fill in lines and occlusions from left to right. (Being right-handed I always work left to right to avoid smudging.)



*Shading with the Edge*



*Detailing with the Tip*

When I work with Pencils I love to use the edge of the pencil to fill in solid shadow shapes, and then the tip of the pencil to add lines and details. For this image I really wanted to play up the swirling movement in the atmosphere. To do this I have smudged the graphite in the blurry areas, but for most of the shadows I just use the edge of the pencil. As I work I am continuously switching back and forth from edge to tip. This not only keeps the pencil very sharp, but it helps me achieve wonderful variety in the scene. The detail areas look very sharp and the shadow areas look murky and dense. Overall, this helps keep the image interesting and pencil-work lively.

Remember that details express themselves the clearest in the place between full light and shadow.



### *Fine Detailing with 0.5mm Mechanical*

For fine detailing I switch away from my Kimberly 2H pencils to a dark .5mm 2B mechanical pencil. I don't use this pencil everywhere, only in areas that need to be clean and sharp. I don't want to overdo it, and for this image I focus most of my detailing efforts on the figure, which is always the most important area. You will notice I am using a sheet of paper as a guard at this point to protect the drawing from being accidentally smudged by my hand as I draw.

Finally I go back in with a 2H pencil (in this case a Pentel Graphgear 0.9mm mechanical with 2H leads) to add very soft shading to edges and forms. This soft shading is wonderful for adding volume to heavier shapes like the clouds and the tower.

I use a Tuff Stuff eraser to make alterations, corrections, details and add volume to areas of light. This helps give the forms more clarity and dimension. It's the last little touches like this that often take the image from average to excellent, so I spend a lot of time at the end noodling around on the image to make sure it is reading clearly.



And that is it! Now we scan it in and prepare to dive into colors. Thanks for joining me for this tutorial. Stick around for *Harnessing the Void Part 2: Color and Detail*.