

# STUDY UNIT I

## Introduction

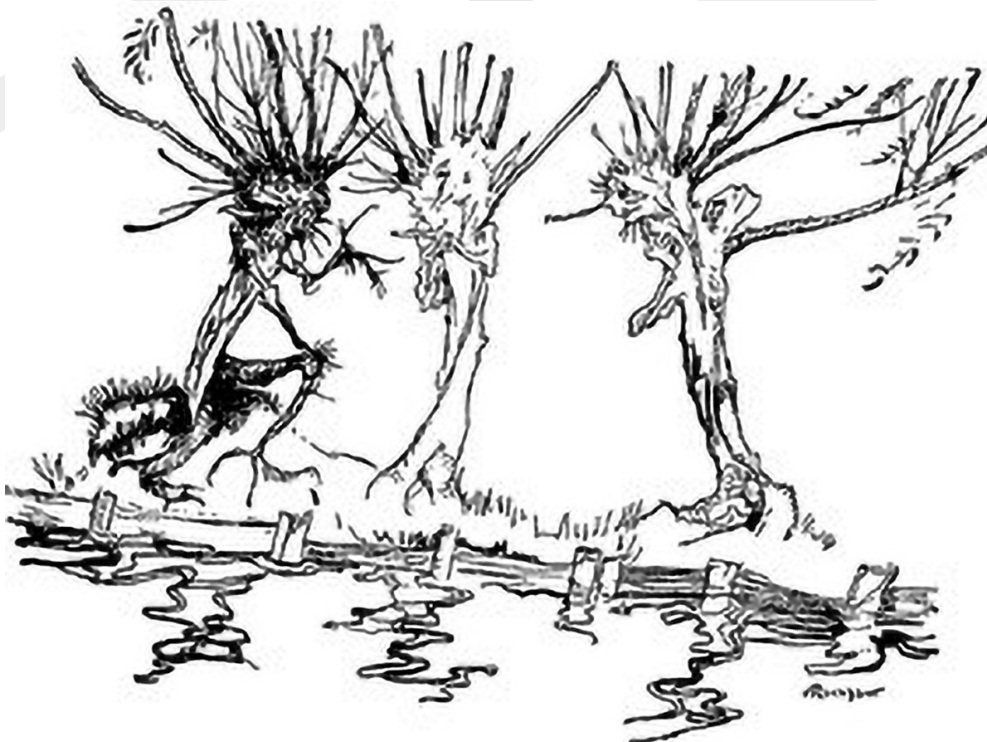
This course is designed for students with experience in basic drawing techniques and some basic knowledge of painting in different mediums.

Fantasy art has a long history. Monks illuminated the first books in Europe with creatures of the imagination, as allegories and warnings of the dangers of leading a life bereft of the benefits of the Church's jurisdiction. You may be aware of the paintings of Piero Di Cosimo or the nightmarish work of Hieronymous Bosch and Max Ernst, two artists who reflected death and despair during an epoch of plague and disruption.

As map-making rose to prominence in England during Tudor times, maps were often embellished by sea monsters and malevolent cherubs blowing gales. Let us not forget the many other cultures, ancient and modern, throughout the world who have depicted hybrids of human and animal and creatures of myth as something 'other' to be feared and respected.

On a lighter note, fairy stories and accompanying illustrations were developed to widespread and long lasting acclaim during the Victorian era, inspired by texts such as Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream".

Here is a simple pen and ink drawing by *Arthur Rackham* from "*The Wind in the Willows*". You will observe that a few deft lines have given character to this group of trees. Faces seen within the bark of trees and other non-human objects are a popular fantasy art theme, and one that we will be returning to.



This situation has its downside in that a certain 'Hollywoodisation' of science fiction occasionally rears its head. The original Greg and Tim Hildebrandt Star Wars poster contains fairytale elements of wholesomeness and implies innocent family entertainment yet is the very elements that make it so distinctive, borrow from modes of lighting and posture associated with the Theatre and Renaissance painting, both mediums with room for much darker themes.



This example of late 1970s comic book paperback cover art is an indicator of how a market floods in the wake of a successful originator. Notice how it is similar to a movie poster in format in that images from crucial points in the narrative are juxtaposed with one another.

Considering that the characters are all of differing size therefore, the actual composition and colour scheme serve quite adequately. However, the 'villain' to the right borrows too heavily from the Darth Vader baddie mould and any aura of authenticity and mystery is tarnished by the cheesy image of the 'Handsome Hero' who is all too obviously the good guy. It is a good reminder as we work through the course to learn as much as we can from successful sources, whether movie posters, comic books or fantasy paintings and cover art, but also to be wary of copying particular artists or successful characters too closely. We want your work to be admired as original in its own right, rather than just as copy of somebody else's ideas.

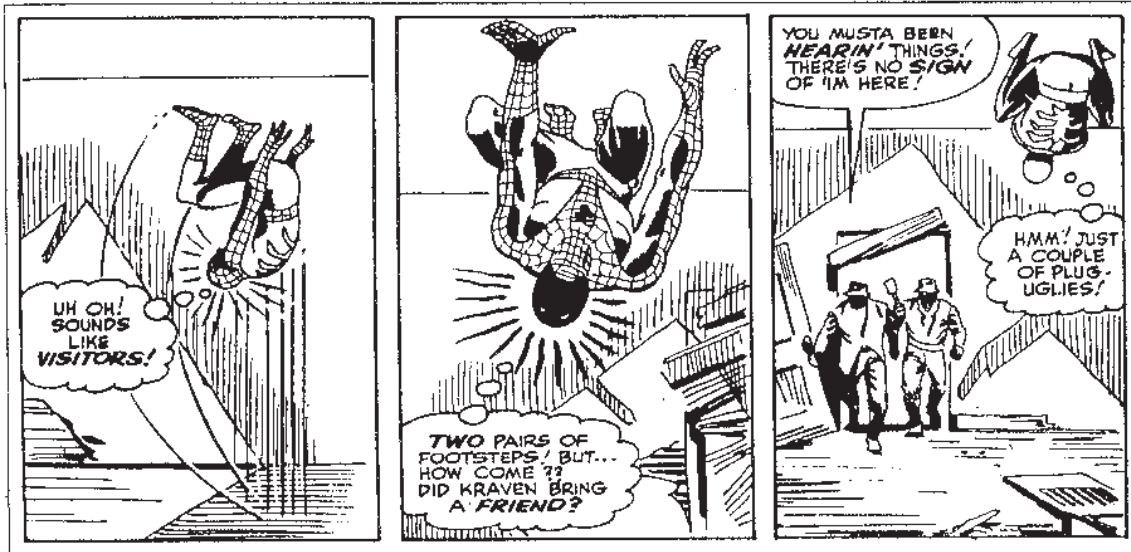


THEN A SINISTER *METAMORPHOSIS* OCCURS, AS UNWORLDLY *FRAMES* OF PULSATING COLOR SWEEP ACROSS THE FACE OF THE *SPECTRAL VILLAIN*. ...COLORS EVER SHIFTING, FLICKERING, CHANGING, TWISTING, PUNING IN SHAPE AND SHADOW UNTIL STRANGE FEATURES BEGAN TO FASHION... FASHION INTO THE FORM OF A FACE MOST *UNFAMILIAR* TO THE UNSEEING EYES OF *ARCH FURY!* THERE, STANDING BEFORE HIM, A MAN HE THOUGHT DEAD, YET SOMEHOW *STILL ALIVE*... THE POWERFUL, BYZANTINE FIGURE OF *SCORPIO*... PULLING THE FALLEN HERO FROM THE TANGLED AND TWISTED WRECKAGE AS A *HAWK* WOULD PLUCK A MOUSE FROM HIS BURROW...



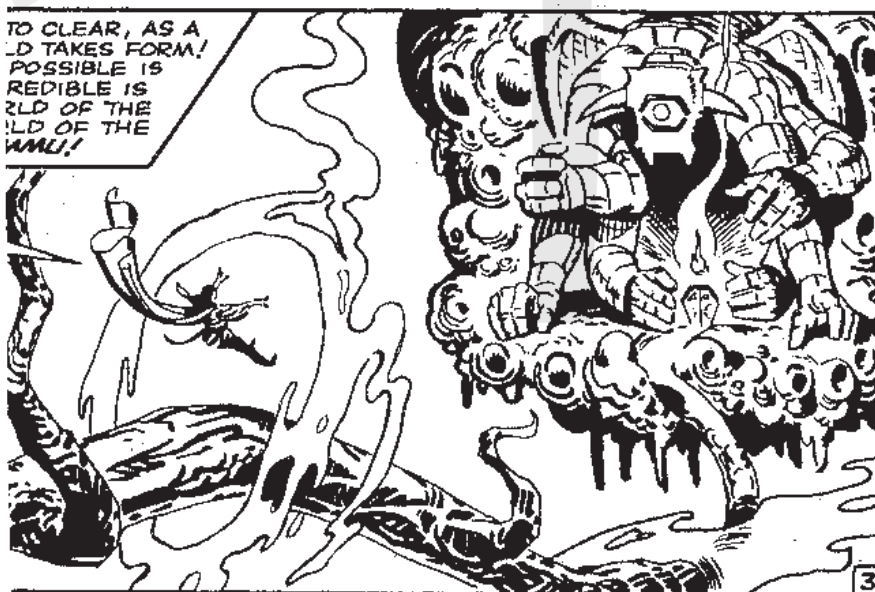
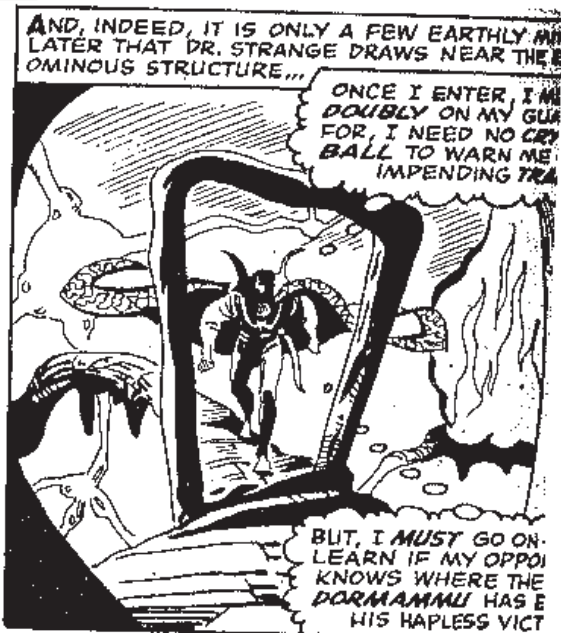
"SO, WE MEET AGAIN! OF COURSE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D SEEN THE LAST OF ME... **HARDLY!**  
I ESCAPED AFTER MY KEY TO THE ZODIAC PROTECTED ME WITH SOLAR FORCE WHEN MY SHIP FELL AND BURNED, JUST AS IT CAUSED YOUR CAR TO CRASH NOW!"

"YOU SHOULD HAVE HEHEED THE WARNING YOUR HOROSCOPE CAST FOR YOU TODAY!  
UNFORTUNATE, INDEED, FOR YOU! YOU SEE, MY OWN CYCLE IS HIGH... TODAY IS DESTINED TO BE OUR FINAL MEETING!"



**Artist Styles: Steve Ditko**

Steve Ditko, co-creator of Spiderman in the early 1960s (see above) was also involved in producing the artwork for Marvel Comics' "Dr. Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts". Many feel that Ditko was the definitive artist for that strip with its flexible storylines of entering dreams, breaching portals into adjacent and distant dimensions and obscure occult conjuring offered the artist infinite possibilities to stretch his imagination. Ditko is certainly a good example of 'comic book' art in a very fantasy orientated style.

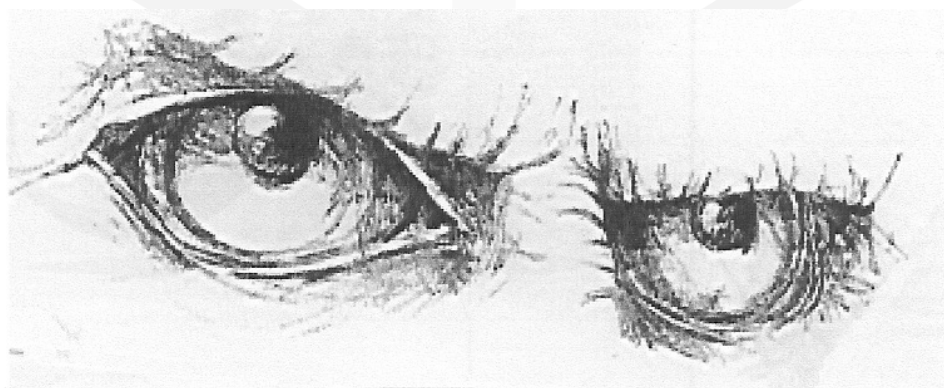
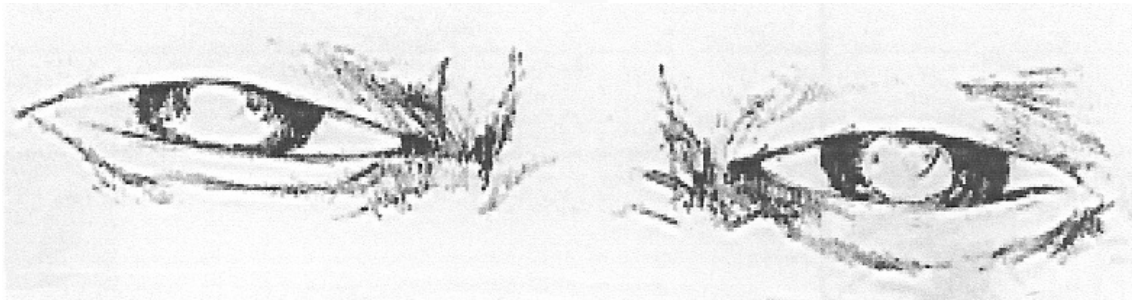


Note the use of mood and shadow in these two panels to convey atmospheres of weightlessness and surreal menace.

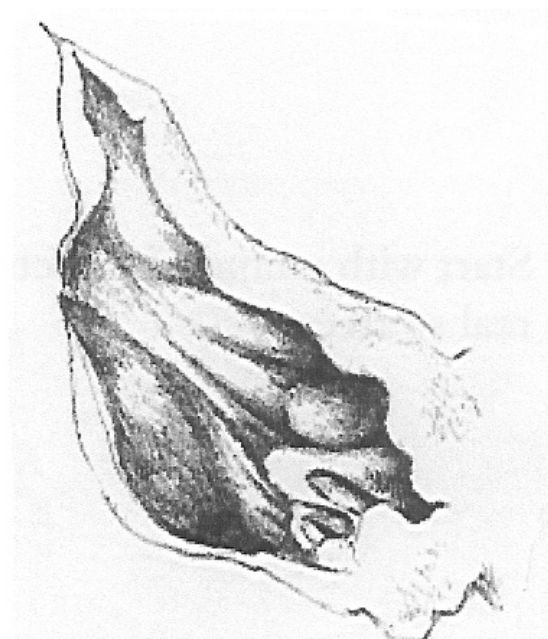
This expression has come 80% from imagination but the position was borrowed from that of a delighted striker who had just scored a goal. In reference to the 'Chinese whispers' system of sketching, the three onlookers in the middle foreground were based on participants in a white water rafting exercise but elaborately improvised on while the creature who has crawled from the wreckage of his spacecraft in the foreground is inspired by a defeated golfer!

Aliens seem to have three blueprints according to film makers - humanoid, insect and reptile.

Humanoid eyes have to be set in sockets in a skull, but the shape of the skull may be different and therefore the variety of possibilities is increased.



Ears can be distorted to any shape but keep the structure in mind - it needs to be a combination of firm cartilage and soft tissue - keep the textures different.



## EXPLORING EROTICISM

Erotic images are a of course a fundamental part of fantasy art. Early science fiction and fantasy illustrations were a vehicle for eroticism. Because the humans and the creatures were 'unreal' it was acceptable for the illustrators to portray them in provocative clothing and poses-often more so than other art forms might allow.



Thankfully, a wider range of themes and the rise of many excellent female artists and writers is changing that stereotype in the modern media world.



Reflecting the fact that commercial sci-fi and fantasy was often targeted at teenage males, the glut of over the top artwork obsessed with naked ladies of unrealistic proportions which resulted is probably one of the main factors contributing to the genre's lingering but unwelcome 'spotty fanboy unable to talk to real girls' image.

