

FANTASY ART **NOW**

THE VERY BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASY ART & ILLUSTRATION

General Editor **MARTIN MCKENNA**

Foreword by **BORIS VALLEJO**

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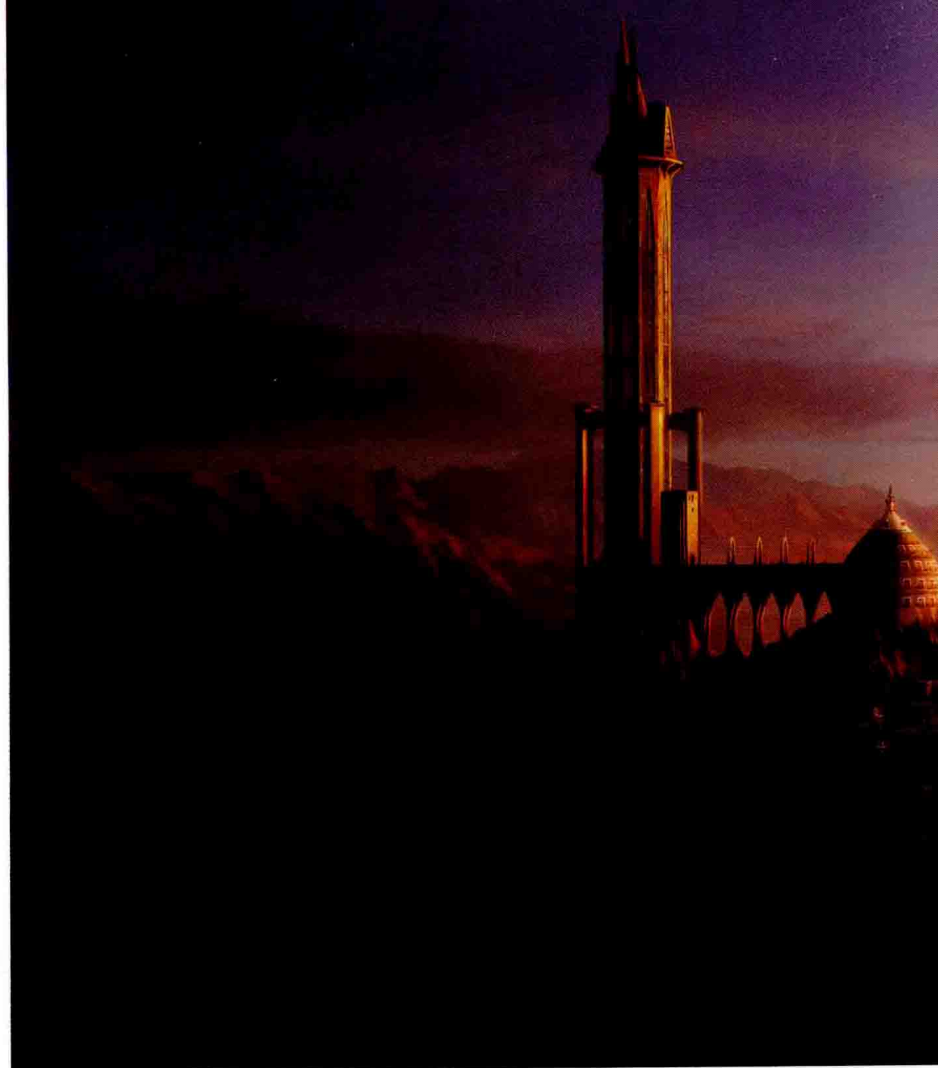
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Foreword

Reality is stranger than fiction, or so we are told. Present technology seems to confirm that statement. The arrival of personal computers has revolutionized the way we do most things in our daily lives, including art. It was not too long ago that Chesley Bonestell amazed the world with hyper-realistic renditions in oil of other worlds' landscapes, and today we have the luxury of seeing this in actual photographs.

The job of a fantasy artist is to even out the odds and make fiction stranger than reality. Years ago, during the first third of the 20th century, publications known as pulps featured fantasy short stories. Accompanied by somewhat garish illustrations, they often showed an artist's vision of alien inhabitants on other planets. For some reason, all of them were very anxious to invade our Earth; it was the infancy of this artistic genre. The artists worked for low pay, and always under the pressure of tough deadlines. The pulps came to an end in the early part of the 1950s, but not before having earned large legions of fans. Although paperback books have been around since the 19th century, the '50s saw the start of higher quality art on the

covers of these mass-market publications. The following decade was to be crucial in establishing the quality of an art form that was now achieving maturity.

In order to create a good illustration, an artist must have a number of attributes; training, good imagination, and good narrative, among other things. In order to create a good fantasy illustration, the artist has to also be capable of pulling ideas out of thin air, since often they have to paint things that do not exist. To do this, the artist has to refer to their mental knowledge of things that *do* exist, and be able to modify them to be both strangely different and believable; this is what will make the finished illustration successful.

The 21st century is here.

Is reality stranger than fiction?

Is fiction stranger than reality?

You hold this book in your hands—you are the judge.

Boris Vallejo, 2007



Introduction

Bringing *Fantasy Art Now* to fruition has been something of an epic journey.

Editing this book, and collecting together such a wealth of exceptional artwork, has given me the opportunity to embark on a truly global exploration of modern fantasy illustration. It has been a delightful, horizon-broadening expedition that, albeit for the most part undertaken in only electronic form via the Internet, has been nonetheless intrepid. It has enabled me to work with artists I've admired for many years, providing a great excuse to investigate the latest exciting projects by old friends and colleagues within the industry, and perhaps best of all, I discovered the work of a new wave of incredibly talented creators.

My search has brought me into contact with leading artists all over the world; across the U.S, Canada and South America, throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. With such an international gathering, it's fascinating to observe the various differences, and perhaps more interestingly, the great many similarities of contemporary fantasy art that comes from different countries and cultures around the world.

The best fantasy art can provide a seductive escape route into a world of make believe; a way of blurring the borderline between the external reality we all share, and an artist's individual mental landscape. But a certain globalization

of the high fantasy genre is apparent today; undoubtedly due to the widespread influence of fantasy films, computer games, and other popular media from Western Europe and the U.S. This often leads to artwork that conforms to accepted interpretations of over-familiar high fantasy themes.

Combined with this, painting styles also become extremely similar in the pursuit of fashionable effects, particularly in the field of concept design. Here, individualism can be obscured through the emulation of certain universally adopted fast-and-loose digital techniques, which can produce quick and effective, but sometimes anonymous, results. It's refreshing to encounter distinctive work that reflects an artist's unique cultural heritage and a wider frame of reference, and I hope I've presented some exciting examples of such work in *Fantasy Art Now*.

I've selected work from a broad spectrum of artists, some of whom are already extremely well-known and respected in fantasy art circles, some who are exciting rising stars well on their way to great success, and also from a range of brilliant new artists who, through this book, will see their art in print for the very first time. I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to bring together all these tremendously talented people and showcase their work, and working with each one has been an interesting experience. I think you'll agree that the book's combination of established fantasy artists and fresh new talent has resulted in an inspirational collection of fantastic imagery.

An interesting mixture of traditional and digital media is presented in the wide range of artwork on show in *Fantasy Art Now*. This reflects the degree to which the two disciplines currently coexist, but the widespread adoption of the digital approach will continue to increase as its advantages are obvious, particularly to busy illustrators with a need to speed up production time within tight deadlines, leveraging their natural talents and techniques. Many artists employ a workflow that utilizes elements of both, most commonly maintaining the spontaneity of sketching on paper, and then scanning to paint digitally. A software package like Corel Painter can emulate so many aspects of natural media successfully to be virtually indistinguishable from the real thing, and, with many paintings in this collection, you may find it is necessary to consult the caption to learn whether digital or traditional media has been used. As the digital medium matures, it's gaining something of its own aesthetic, as previous new media have done before it. The digital artwork in this collection heralds the new wave of contemporary creators and their endlessly adaptable new medium: the computer.

Many of the pieces presented here are brand new and exclusive to this volume. Other artwork comes from virtually every kind of fantasy-themed media, including book and graphic novel covers, role-playing games, and collectible card games. The material appears here uncropped and free from additional graphics, so in many cases it's the first time the imagery can be seen the way the artist created it. Also showcased is concept and

production art for computer games and film projects, which includes work not intended for print elsewhere; so many of these images are seen here for the very first time.

The role of an art book like this could conceivably be questioned in the modern digital age, given the prevalence of excellent online fantasy art galleries. From an artist's point of view, it's true that an effective personal website will ultimately provide them with more exposure, reaching a far larger potential audience than a book release is ever likely to achieve. Nevertheless, no matter how much wonderful artwork there is to view with ease online, it ultimately feels like a rather transitory interaction. No amount of Internet clicking quite equals the greater sense of permanence gained from the intimate, tactile experience of leafing through the glossy pages of a book which contains well-reproduced and carefully chosen examples of the best of a genre's art, and that has been our ambition with this volume.

Here, you will find some of the finest, freshest, and most exciting talents in the world of fantasy illustration, brought together in a dazzling array of artwork presented for the first time in one luxurious showcase volume. This is not a book of retrospectives, but examines what illustrators and painters are creating today in their approach to fantasy art, and represents them in a book that looks forward rather than back. The following pages are graced with some of the very best in contemporary fantasy art. This is fantasy art now!





CHAPTER 1

BRAWNY BARBARIANS AND HULKY HEROES

▶ Odin

Glen Angus
Portfolio work
Adobe Photoshop
www.gangus.net

This character was created in the wake of the artwork Glen had done for Wizards of The Coast's new edition of the Dungeons & Dragons Deities and Demigods book. "An earlier edition of this book first inspired me as a budding artist to get into the fantasy art business. I was extremely lucky to get to illustrate many of the Norse Gods in the new book, but wanted to do my own interpretation of Odin as I have always been fascinated by all things Viking."





◀ **Solomon Kane**

Greg Staples

Movie poster illustration

Solomon Kane from Davis Films

Corel Painter

www.gregstaples.co.uk

This painting was created as a poster for a film festival, to promote the movie version of Robert E. Howard's *Solomon Kane*. The film has since gone into production, and Greg is the concept artist on the project. "I've been working on the movie, doing concept art, production paintings, and this poster, which I produced for the Berlin film market. It's a great script, and I'm looking forward to seeing the finished film."



◀ **The Golden Armor**

Felipe Machado Franco

Portfolio work

Adobe Photoshop

<http://finalfrontier.thunderblast.net>

Felipe created this artwork as a gift. "My girlfriend playfully hinted that recently I hadn't featured her in any artwork, so I made something especially that she would like. I started with a photograph of her, taken from a series of sword attack poses. As the basis for the horse, I used a photo of a sculpture, and the armor was made from simple shapes, carefully repeated and shaded."

