

Interview With Ivan Reber

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Website: <https://graphiccompetitions.com/>



I was born and raised in Bienne, Switzerland and I have always been passionate in drawing since I first hold a pencil. After a degree at the School of Arts in Berne, I thought I had to become a graphic designer like most of the students back then. Fascinated by architecture and design, I did an internship in an architecture studio. It did not take a long time to realize that my hunger for creative work would have been more satisfied in the advertisement industry. After my apprenticeship, I worked in various advertising agencies.

When I turned 30, I discovered the world of digital painting. In the evenings and on weekends I practiced on my fresh acquired Wacom Cintiq until my hands were sore. I was still working in advertisement when I got asked to work as a designer for illustrating concepts of wellness areas for luxury hotels. It was in that time I've started to attend to art events abroad like THU (Trojan horse was a unicorn) in Portugal. It was a life-changing moment for me to meet and talk with other like-minded artists from all over the world. I decided to reduce my work to a part-time job to cope with requests for freelance opportunities. Some years later I found myself working as an industrial designer for luxury Swiss watches. The urge to spend more time on my personal artwork led to the decision to go full freelance. I moved to France because of love and the fact that the cost of living is perceivably lower than in Switzerland, which makes it easier to survive as a freelance artist.

Besides my personal projects I do clients jobs for film and game industry, for marketing illustrations or architecture visualizations amongst many other things. My personal artworks are risen from my own imaginary universe. Inspired by my travels, I want to create worlds that are both familiar and yet unknown. A mix of fantasy and sci-fi are recurrent elements. I am inspired by works of Brom, Moebius, Simon Stålenhag, Piotr Jabłski and Craig Mullins.

What are you working on at the moment?

I just came back from my home country where I was invited to expose at a convention. Now back in France I will try to spend some time to participate in an art challenge before the next client jobs needs to be done. Also, I started some character designs that I would like to finish soon.

What does a typical working day look like?

There is no regular day in my life as freelancer. It all depends on what I am working on and for who am I working for. I wake up in the morning around 9 o'clock. After having some coffee in my body I am ready to check my emails and social media sites. Living in a little flat in France with my girlfriend, who is also an artist, I have set up a small workplace that serves me as a professional studio. Depending on the job and deadlines, I spend most of my time in front of the computer until the early morning hours. In between, I have to force myself to leave my work to give my body some food. If I get too much cabin fever I take a break and go in a coffeehouse to practice in my sketchbook. After calling it a day I like to take a promenade through the city at 3 o'clock in the morning. When the streets are empty and the only one I meet are the stray cats. It often feels like in a Hayao Miyazaki movie and it helps to clear my mind after a long day of work.

What tools do you use most for your work?

I work with a Wacom Cintiq on a Mac. Most of my work is done in Adobe Photoshop. Depending on the job, I like to combine my work process with additional software such as 3D tools. For environments or architectural works I use Cinema 4D, ZBrush or Daz Studio as an efficient solution to develop initial layouts and compositions in the early phase. The rest and most of the process is done in Photoshop. It also happens that I create an artwork out of a pencil sketch, which I scan and overpaint in digital.

What skills have you learnt along the way?

I learnt to deal with difficult clients. In order to avoid any misunderstandings most problems can be prevent with writing a well defined contract before starting the job. Any written record protects me from unjustified complaint. As a freelance artist, it is recommendable to cultivate a good network. It ensures industry contacts and work opportunities. No less of importance is to keep life in a good balance with other interests besides the daily routine. That's why I love to travel. On my field trips, I rarely have a sketchbook with me. This forces me to focus on observing rather than on drawing.

What advice would you give to a young creative?

I think a high school diploma is overrated and attests more about the adaptability to a system than capability. I believe in self-education and willpower. Focus on your goal and prepare to work hard for it! Practice a lot and be persistent! Go out and meet other artists! Art events give you the chance to meet industry professionals and expose yourself to new opportunities. Put a portfolio with your best works online (I recommend on Artstation.com) and make yourself visible to a community! Expect set-backs, especially those that go out of yourself. Accept the burden of processing uncertainty. Sometimes you win and sometimes you learn. Don't forget to keep pleasure in creating your art and stay curious.
