

Enter a world of

Magic & Beauty

and become a kick-ass fantasy artist in 3 months
[might change the title]

To all of you who create a world of Magic & Beauty.

Intro (book cover)

This book introduces you to fun fantasy art techniques and exercises that can make you **kick ass** in just a few months. But most of all it invites you to the essence of fantasy art, to worlds of magic and beauty and to places you don't yet know exist. For some of you it can be a life-changer and the start of a grand journey into the unknown.

A hidden theme

There is an underlying theme that runs through this book. It is hidden for many and obvious for a few. Perhaps you'll get it the first time you read it, or you want to read the book several times before you clearly see it. When you do see it you'll know the essence of fantasy art and can begin to unlearn everything you thought you knew in life.

You can do it!

A book cover shows a beautiful fantasy heroine in a surreal environment. People gather around it like bees around a honey pot and the buzzing begins:

– Beautiful!

– I wish I could do that.

– Could you do something like that, Stefan?

– Yes probably, I might answer. But many could do that, they just don't know it yet.

Few believe me, and even fewer try. The establishment works hard at keeping you believing that you can't: Some authorities write step-by-step tutorials on how to do fantasy art and give the impression that this is a science, art schools present long and expensive teaching programs, experienced artists say that it takes many years to get good, and you continue to believe that you don't have the natural talent. That you can't.

I want you to see through all that nonsense. To see the simplicity in creating beautiful fantasy art. To see that you CAN. You mostly need passion and focus, and a clear understanding of how to get really good. The technical details and small difficulties will sort out by themselves as you... just DO it.

My first three “real” paintings

I went from total beginner to doing these paintings after three months.



I honestly believe that also you can learn this fast. Come along and I'll show you how.

1. From beginner to kick-ass in three months

I sucked at art in school. My teacher considered me to be below average. Okay, I knew the very basics, like how to draw trees, plants, and the human body – proportions and all that – but drawing never was my strong suit, and using colors seemed so advanced I barely tried it.

Learning the very basics

In my early twenties I sometimes drew nude girls in titillating positions. One day I thought “What if I could color them? Then they would look more real!” My love for girls and female beauty made me book a basic ten-hours arts course to learn the difference between acrylics and oil colors, what effect dark versus light colors have on a painting, and so on. I also spent a week getting the hang of Photoshop.

Then I started to experiment with pencils, brushes, and Photoshop and ended up doing this:

- A crappy pencil drawing of an ocean wave.
- A water color painting of a nude nun with a devilish smile and strange body proportions.
- An ice man.
- A reindeer that looks like it is tilted to the left.
- An acrylics painting of a woman showing her breasts and looking up in the sky.
- Another acrylics painting of another, ahem, nude woman. (My girlfriend gave her red hair and a green background.)
- A samurai woman in red.
- A portrait of DMX (the rapper).
- A couple of... abstract paintings.

Check out some of it [here](#).

Basic Exercise

(For the total beginner only)

Learn the very basics

If you want to do traditional art, then simply go to the shop, buy colors and brushes and start having fun.

Want to go digital? Learn the basics of the software programs you want to use.

Have FUN and don't worry if it looks like crap in the beginning.

The way I did the Basic Exercise

I went to the local art store and bought some cheap brushes, acrylics, and pastels, then went home and started to experiment. It felt really weird to hold a brush. I played around with the colors and learned how they work together. What happens if I put dark... here and white... there.

Hair. How the heck do I make great hair?! A difficult one. After many hours and days I learned that I could use a big and very crude brush, so that each bristle of the brush created a hair in the painting. Wow, all of a sudden it took just twenty minutes (instead of hours) to make great hair! What about the body? I searched for pictures of girls on-line and printed the ones I loved most. Then I tried to copy them from the photo to the artwork, and filled it in with some colors.

I made a few paintings like that. They were something my high-school teacher would just nod at. But I learnt my tools, and that is one key to becoming a good artist.

A few weeks had passed since I bought my first brushes.

What I mean by fantasy art

I am not much for defining art, but to avoid confusion, when I write “fantasy art” I also mean related genres like fantastic art, folklore, sci-fi, dream imagery, magic realism, and so on.

What I mean by kick-ass

If your art is as “good” as the top 1 percent in your favorite field, then you are kick-ass.

Finding the top 1 percent

Magic & Beauty

Fantasy art is often about intuition, and about magic and beauty. So a book about fantasy art must also be a book about our ancient link to the spirit. After all, it is your inner passion and spirit that makes you do fantasy art.

That is why I cannot just give you some boring step-by-step tutorials how to do cool paintings. I must also feed your very soul and take you to places you don't yet know they exist. For some of you it can be a life-changer and the start of a grand journey into the unknown.

How Magic got into my life

My passion for magic and beauty – especially female beauty – made me roam libraries and the internet, searching for books written by authors like Carlos Castaneda and Olga Kharitidi, and for more regular photo books, art books, on-line fantasy art, and glossy magazines that oozed with beauty.

I was back in Sweden after an internship at the UN in New York, got my master's degree in economics and was heading for an international career. Then what did I do? I threw it away. Or I lost it. It really wasn't my choice, it just seemed to be. "It" made things go that way. "It" helped me discover new ways of existence, of shamanism, non-linearity, and of our lies about time, space, and reality.

Light began to grow within. Not because I didn't like being an economist, but because I was discovering magic. I was rather alone at that time. Not lonely, but alone. And I started to experience magic and beauty everywhere: the perfect rhythm of the wind in the trees, the tranquilizing sound of traffic in the far distance, shadows almost coming alive, and the girls, oh the girls. I was surrounded by world class art. In 3D!

I sent text messages to friends and described what I was seeing, but they doubted I was serious. They didn't see what I saw.

I became an enthusiastic member of on-line fantasy art communities, like elfwood.com and epilogue.net. I even visited churches and sacred places. I went into the forest on a vision quest and spent a night up in a tree, fell asleep and was woken up by a reindeer sniffing at me. Some winter evenings I even dressed up as a girl and went out on the street.

Doing all these crazy things was part of a larger and more abstract plot, and I will write about them later in this book.

Life turned into a magic adventure. Sometimes I could walk around the city for an entire day and absorb everything, without thinking at all, and when you're in inner silence everything gets very beautiful, everything is presence, and the world is the way it should always be. The way it was before we had a language. The way it was for our ancestors. Before thought. Before linearity existed. Magic.

Found it!

One day I somehow waltzed into an antique shop filled with old furniture and big books. I opened one of them: "Illuminatus – The Art of Robert Venosa". And I was caught. The brilliance of his technique and his feel for reality-dream was beyond words.

I studied Venosa's art for many hours, then bought the cheapest cartoon paper I could find and started dabbling with my colors, focusing on his work [Dos Angeles](#). I picked that one, because there were no difficult figures in it. I had no idea what I was doing, just playing around with his book in my left hand and my brush in my right hand. After a while I got really absorbed. I went more into the details and learned how he created highlights with white and depth with dark colors. I was really impressed by

how he first painted a basic structure, then let the colors dry, and later put a thin and transparent layer of white over it, creating a see-through effect. I studied it carefully and tried to do something similar.

The result was one of my very first paintings. It is called [In the Moment](#). [Maybe display the painting]

Exercise

Find your top 1 percent

Go into an art frenzy! Visit libraries and art bookshops, roam the internet and absorb all art you love the most. Dig into it for some days or weeks until you find the artworks that (to you) are the most kick-ass in the world.

Fantasy art has many related genres, with various styles and fields within every genre, and they change all the time. Soon you will find your favorite little niches and dig deeper into them, ultimately becoming an art expert within your favorite fantasy art field.

You'll get to know the top 1 percent in your favorite field and have some idea of how they created their artworks.

When you find yourself staring at their works, remembering that moment for the rest of your life, then you will know you have found your top 1 percent.

Give it all you have — or cut off your finger

Having found my top 1 percent I went to a nearby art shop, bought some big Masonite boards and went home to experiment with colors. I looked at Venosa's work, looked at my own, hesitantly added some color here, some color there, chuckled and mumbled "What am I DOING", and continued. I laid down on my bed, still gazing at my work. I looked, focused and looked. How do I continue? How!?

It could be like this: Adjust, step back, lay down and rest for ten minutes, open my eyes, take another look at Venosa's artwork. Get some rest. Go out in nature. Have fun. Back to the Masonite board. Look, focus, and look again! Contrasts. Adjust and improvise. Look, figure out. Half asleep. Rush up and adjust.

It was like being a little obsessed. Being a tool in the hands of the gods. Being a small part of something larger. And finally, many hours later, the painting came together in this piece.



It was now about three months since I first touched a brush.

This shows that making great fantasy art

Is NOT about experience.

Is NOT about knowing the tools to perfection.

Is NOT about taking art classes.

Is NOT about being born with talent (I will discuss that later on).

Sure, these things help, but mainly

It is about YOU doing what you love.

It is about YOU giving it all you have.

Fantasy and Magic

When switching off from the everyday buzz something opens up in us. I figure that sums up most spiritual teachings: Get off the main road and see that there is so much more to you and to the world.

It's the same with Harry Potter (yes, I mean it). Sure, there is the commercial entertainment, invented drama, and excitement, but it also expresses our ancient link to the magic creature in us. In Harry Potter it is very distant, but it is there. It's no different with fantasy art (and related genres).

In that sense a book about fantasy art is also a book about magic. I am not just talking about some wand-swinging Harry Potter now, but also about the essence of perception and that which goes beyond description.

“Scrape on the surface of anyone and you'll find a magical being.”

Lucid dreaming

What if you are dreaming right now, in a sense?

Perhaps you know it is possible to dream and be aware of it, just like you are aware right now. Some call it lucid dreaming and many people do it.

In my experience, one of the most powerful ways to induce lucid dreams is to wake up a couple of hours earlier than usual, get up for ten minutes, and go back to half-sleep in a place other than your bed. When you're in between awake and asleep, you can get into lucid dreaming.

You may become weightless and enter new worlds, or why not pass through your bedroom window with your dreaming body and roam the city? “It” decides what your dreaming body will do and what will happen in your dream. You may wake up, or so you think, and start your day, until you perhaps see that you glide through the chair. – Oops, still dreaming!

Realizing that you are still lucid you go back to bed, imagining that your more solid physical body should be out there somewhere. And perhaps you wake up in this world where you can read this book, and the lucid dream turns into some distant memory, like something that happened a year ago, or yesterday.

But that which happened yesterday, how much more real is that than lucid dreaming? Try to put your finger on “yesterday” and see for yourself. Ah, let's make an exercise of it:

Magic exercise

Put your finger on 'yesterday'

I bet your teachers never gave you that exercise for homework? It's quite obvious why, since their task is to construct your rational mind, not transcend it. It is valuable to know rationality at its most intricate, because when we do, we'll begin to see its lies and illusions and can start to transcend it, to unlearn, to understand that we never understood anything.

That can be a tough realization. But what choice do you have?

Now let us examine other things that seem so real and obvious: Beauty. Fame. Fairness.

See? These are pretty much abstract mental concepts we confuse for reality. Our world which seems so physical and predictable is rather based on perception and thoughts. Ask a physics student about the chair you are sitting on and he might prove that it is not a chair at all, but energy and space, or something else we cannot really comprehend.

Maybe you clearly see it, but probably not. It usually takes years of hard work to really see the lies society has put on us, to clearly see the non-existence of time, space, of you, and of many other things we take for granted. So we must live in these lies as if they were the only truth, because that is the normal thing to do. No one wants to be the weirdo, right?

So we return from the lucid dream and begin to think. And our thoughts glue us to this world, give us a language which tells us that “this is real” and “that is impossible” and “you are there while I am here” and “of course I am right”. And we go to our schools and our jobs and forget about “it”.

But something in us doesn't forget. That something feels like everything isn't all right. It is like a vague bitter taste in your mouth. You talk, listen and laugh during the day, but still that bitter taste is there. You forget about it for a while, and then you sense it again.

A faint voice within. “It” cannot lie because it has no language. It cannot think yet it knows. And it makes you read Harry Potter, or do fantasy art or listen to the trees. It might make you absentminded and in love, or confused without knowing why.

Hah! You thought this would just be some instruction book on fantasy art? Sure, it is. But this book also touches on the very essence of fantasy art. It whispers about ancient secrets in your ear, about goldmines for you to discover, forces that can make you burn with desire for beauty, and ignite a lust to create magic and beauty. That force is what *really* makes you a kick-ass artist.

Although this book will give you a few unusual exercises that can take you straight to the top (if you do them very well) it is the essence of fantasy art, that wordless power that gives you the soul of a great fantasy artist.

Your daddy perhaps looks at you with a little worry now, because he loves you and cares for you, and he points out that lucid dreams can be scientifically explained, measured, and predicted. So it is just bogus. Well, he is lost. An experience is an experience, no matter if the indicator says 15 or 18, no matter if you could induce it using pills, no matter if you can define it with words that seem to make sense.

What does he think? That our ill thought rationality is the ultimate truth? This rationality is based on words that cover just a tiny speck of our total existence.

The day your daddy clearly sees that everything he has ever said, heard, read, and thought is bogus, that is the day you can begin to teach him magic.

“We are succumbing to illusions produced by our self-created language, without reaching a better understanding of anything.” Albert Einstein

You see? Einstein understood magic. Really smart people do.

The lucid dream slips away and you lay there in bed, in the twilight between dream and awake, in true peace. No thoughts. No body (you don't feel it). Being pure existence.

Exercise

See the beauty around you

As you move through everyday life, see what things really look like. Look at the way shadow and light play with each other, at the rich texture of things, at people's hands and faces, at everything.

This exercise will give you a better intuition when creating art.

Fantasy art and witchcraft

You wake up and perhaps see that some witches actually could sneak through keyholes and fly on a broom like Harry Potter and the gang. Magic existed and they did those things, *but* they did them from another point of awareness.

There is one awareness for flying on brooms and another for lifting weights in the gym. Ancient mythologies create people with ancient powers, and modern mythologies creates people with other qualities. Later in this book I'll show you how you can learn exactly how it feels to fly on a broom and have a full-blown experience of being weightless. I am not kidding.

You get out of bed and... what is this?! A deep feeling of... something ineffable getting a hold of you. Maybe you are off school, and go on an adventure into the forest. No thoughts, just being. The shadows are so alive. It really feels like the trees are whispering, telling you about life. And oh, the wind that makes the dead leaves rustle and sing. You are everywhere! Bubbles of wellbeing running through your body. Sunrays reflecting in the grass. Oh yes.

And what do you find? Over there. To the left. Down. Look! It is hidden. Hidden but always there. Treasures in the forest, glimmering with gold. And you wonder, is *this* why they burned witches in the name of God?

Some fantasy artists have had that glimpse of the end of the rainbow. Then it was gone. Almost.

She wielded her magic wand and said, "Sure I love soul, heart, and magic. But I also want to get famous. So SHIZAAM ! Show me some exercises and turn me into a star!"

Your inner goldmine

“Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone’s task is unique as his specific opportunity.” Victor Frankl

Working for something larger than yourself, something beyond your personal needs, will make your acts stronger.

Take this book, for example: I started writing it because I know that being an author in one of my favorite fields is a great way to profile myself and get opportunities. That is the ego part. But to have the energy to finish an entire book I must write about things that truly excite me, and the exciting things are the hidden themes in my life. My inner goldmine. Things that feel like I was born to do them.

What were you born to do?

Exercise

Find your inner goldmine

What excites you? What is your natural bent? What do you want to give to this world? When you find the true answers to these questions you might feel a rush of energy in your body and an urge to get into action. At that moment you have found your inner goldmine.

Is it connected to fantasy art or to something else?

At first it may seem like your life has been a mess of different themes, but if you look carefully you can find one or very few themes running through your life, defining your inner goldmine.

Look at your life and what you have been doing. What things you have a natural bent for. What people you usually end up being with. After some thinking you should find a few main themes in your life that help you define your inner goldmine, your mission in life.

When you’re expressing your inner goldmine life gets easier. You are at the right place in the universe and people can feel it. When you have found it you might forget about TV and movies and about consuming things that just make you tired. Now you can produce, create, and feel more alive.

I’ve found that I have a natural bent for abstract concepts and mysticism, for the space between thought and feeling. I also have a great urge to create things, abstract or beautiful, and to push

humanity forward. That gives me enough hunger to finish an entire book, or work for 100 hours to finish a painting.

The following story is about someone who seems close to his inner goldmine:

Stepping out of the studio

The other studio members have left and it is just me, the radio and eternity outside. And the painting in front of me. No reflection on how long I have been here, because there is no language in me. Or very little of it.

“Two more sessions and then it should be finished”. Wow, a thought! He cleanses the brushes and steps outside.

Having worked visually for hours he is still in the beauty of it, seeing leaves with perfect shapes, feeling the sound of a bus in his body. Shadow and light everywhere, accompanied by the autumn rustling of the trees, adding to that particular feeling we can't put words on.

Hopping on the bus, he sees a perfect dance of sunlight and wind playing with the hair on the girl in front of you, creating such breathtaking beauty out of nothing. The total perfection in the shape of everything, like the woman who is grabbing a seat to sit in, grimacing slightly as the bus driver stops the bus too abruptly.

Why not step-by-step instructions?

I avoid giving step-by-step instructions, because I don't want to make things look more complicated than they are, or make you tired for little reason.

Let us say you want to draw a dragon. Then I would say: “Find some dragon images you absolutely adore and make something similar.” Perhaps you ask: “How do I do something similar”? Then I would say: “Just do it and you'll find out.” It is about getting into action, not reading instructions.

Land directly on the top of the pyramid instead of slowly climb from the bottom.

In other words, simply pick the greatest images you can find and try to do something similar. Problems will arise along the way, and you'll be forced to solve them. I will help you as you progress.

Let's say that you have found your inner goldmine and know that it is linked to doing fantasy art. Then get straight to the big, fat exercise in this book: