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ARTIST NEWSLETTER

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MAIN FEATURE

Adventuring in Ink

By Luke Eidenschink



Black ink on white paper. Such a simple medium to work in, it would seem. In fact, it's a medium of amazing complexity and endless possibilities. When I sit down to draw, even after all these years of practicing the craft, I'm transported to a different reality. It's a world of textures and tones, light and shadow, composition and movement. Often when we see step-by-step art processes, there is a clear progression from rough layout to finished work. We know what it's going to be, and the full piece emerges as it is worked throughout from beginning to end. I usually draw that way, with a clear plan, especially when it's commissioned work. But sometimes I want to create a drawing without knowing what it's going to look like. I need to just play and explore. So what I'm going to share with you here is a technique for exploring a world as you create it on the page. A process of discovery. We're going on an adventure - an adventure in ink.



> *"Never be afraid to erase and redraw - this is part of the creative process."*





1. I want to create a fantastical world. Right now, that is my only goal. Start by sketching a main subject, a focal point of the drawing. In this case, it's going to be a person, but it could be anything. A creature, a plant, anything that seems interesting to you. I'm using a simple pencil and very roughly making an outline. I'll draw and erase as needed, until I find a pose I like. Never be afraid to erase and redraw - this is part of the creative process. Here I'm using a Strathmore bristol with plate surface. It holds up nicely to erasing, and also can take a heavy application of ink.

2. Once the character is mapped out in pencil, dive in with the ink. Because we will be erasing our pencil lines, we want to be sure to use an ink that will withstand the erasing process without being smeared or dulled. (I use dip pens with a waterproof ink, and there are many types of technical pens and fountain pens that use a good quality ink. Any 'waterproof' ink will do.) Start by blocking outlines for the basic shapes of the figure. Remember, this technique is more about the creative process than it is drawing in any particular style.







3. Now for the detail work. This is where we have fun fleshing out the character, the final look of it. Don't worry about precisely following the penciled lines. They are there if you want to use them, but be creative and improvise some of your details. Use heavier ink lines and layer crosshatching to create shadows. Keep in mind that this is only a part of the drawing, so don't get caught up trying to make everything perfect. You can always circle back around to this part and add more tone later.

4. I want to really make this into a fantastical world, and what better way than to add a little dragon? As I was working, I was thinking of making a companion for our traveler here, and a little dragon seems perfect. Every time you add a new element to the drawing, if you want to, you can just switch back to pencil and work with it until you're happy with it. (Remember, the eraser is your friend!)

5. After getting the shape where you want it, switch back to ink for the final look. I used dots to make a different texture for the wings here, keeping the tone fairly light. This is just one small part of the drawing, so don't worry too much about getting everything perfect. One trick with ink is to use small marks to imply detail, rather than overwhelming the piece with too much information.

6. Notice how, so far, we haven't done any work on the world around our characters? As I've been drawing, I've been thinking of where they are, what they're doing, where they're going. This is where we switch back to pencil and play around with worldbuilding! Notice how this process keeps the drawing exciting. We're not just doing all the creative stuff up front and then slogging through the rest. We've created characters, we can see them and appreciate our work so far.



And now we have the excitement of using our imagination again, building a world. So pencil out your ideas, and don't be afraid to erase and redraw until something grabs you. Look at nature and the world around you, or photographs of exotic locations for inspiration. Have fun with it! Here, I'm going with a forest of fungus. Mainly because I like drawing mushrooms (who doesn't?), and also because it makes the scene very fantastical.

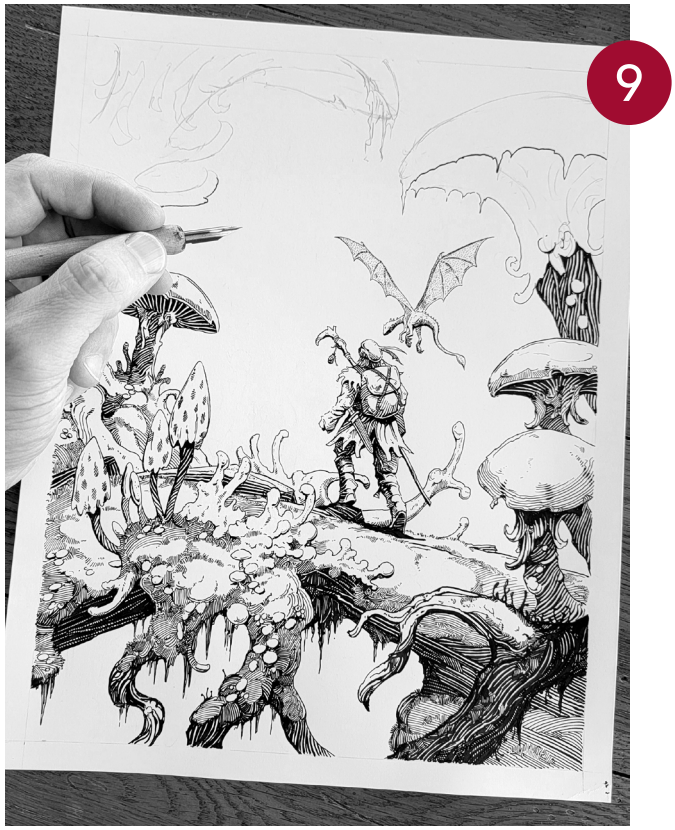


7. Once the basic concept of the surrounding world is established, it's time to switch to ink again. With ink, it's best to work foreground-to-background. So, start with whatever is in the foreground, and move gradually backward. In this layout, there isn't too much depth to the landscape, it's mostly foreground.

> *"Keeping the process exciting by allowing myself to invent something new at every turn"*

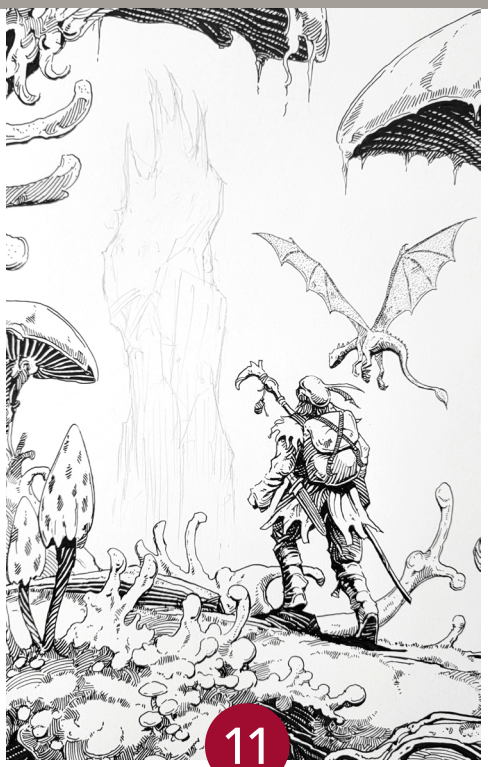
8. Even though the main things are mapped out, I am still making little changes to the world as I go. I will pause in my inking and pick up a pencil to sketch out a new idea here and there, just to test it out, see what it looks like. Keeping the process exciting by allowing myself to invent something new at every turn. If you look closely, you'll see how some of the fungus on the left changed from my initial penciled layout. There was no particular reason, I was just playing with ideas.





9. Notice how I'm moving back, into the distance as I ink. The two tall mushrooms on either side are a bit behind everything else, so I inked them last. That way I can ink around whatever is in the foreground. Inking foreground-to-background like this also allows you the freedom to change whatever is in back, right up until you ink it.


10


11


12

10. The foreground is completely inked. At this stage the drawing could be considered finished. I want to add something in the background, though. Again, as I've been inking my fungus forest, I've been thinking about the world and the story I'm creating. Where are these characters going?

11. I've decided to put a castle, or a castle-like pinnacle of stone, in the distance. As we did in previous steps, we're going back to pencil and eraser for a bit of design work. Once we have something we like, we'll switch back to ink.

12. Since this castle is far in the distance, I've used thinner lines to create a slightly gray tone. This way, it implies distance, and does not compete with the darker, bolder lines of the foreground. In linework, the eye will usually interpret thicker, darker lines as being closer, so objects in the distance should use lines that are thinner than those in the foreground. Once all the ink is dry, go back and erase any pencil lines still remaining. Step back and look at the drawing. You can still go through and change the tone or add texture by thickening lines or adding areas of crosshatching or dotwork, if you determine that it's needed.

So that's my process for just playing around and 'Adventuring in Ink'. I hope you were inspired to try this process for yourself. It can also be a useful tool if you're experiencing 'Artist's Block', to free up your creativity. You're welcome to use the idea that I've presented here, or come up with an entirely different one - the formula can be adapted to countless subjects. The point is to be creative and have fun!



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Artist and illustrator Luke Eidenschink works in the medium of ink on paper, using the traditional tools of dip pens and brushes to create scenes of epic Fantasy, heroic Sword & Sorcery, weird Sci-fi and creepy Horror.

He loves to tell stories with his illustrations. The characters and creatures and the worlds which they inhabit are worn and weathered, suggesting a history and building sense of wonder. His work has been featured in books, comic books, role playing games, trading cards, and more

Instagram *@luke.ink*
Threads *@luke.ink*
BlueSky *@lukeink.bsky.social*
Youtube *@Luke.Ink*
Patreon: *@lukeink*



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With Instructor Sofia Pavan Macias









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Nov. 3, 2025

We'll paint summer gouache illustrations; a cactus, watermelon slice, and seashell, while Sofia shares tips for vibrant color and mixing with a limited palette.

LESSON 2
Fall: Layering Gouache for Depth & Dimension
Nov. 10, 2025

We'll paint cozy fall-themed illustrations; a slice of pie, an acorn, and a pumpkin, while Sofia guides you through layering gouache to add depth and dimension.

LESSON 3
Winter: Using References Creatively
Nov. 17, 2025

We'll paint cozy slippers, a mug of hot chocolate, and a pomegranate. Sofia will share her process for creatively illustrating from reference photos.

LESSON 4
Spring: Capturing Textures with Gouache
Nov. 24, 2025

We'll paint a baby chick, a tulip, and some wild strawberries. Sofia will demonstrate how to capture a variety of textures, from soft fur to the glossy skin of a strawberry.

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ENTER THE CLASSROOM

TONED PAPER FOR PEN & INK

Toned papers are a favorite among pen and ink artists for their ability to bring instant depth and contrast. The paper's neutral color acts as a midtone, allowing the artist to push darker values and also add light highlights. Perfect for expressive sketches, studies, and finished illustrations alike.



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ARTIST how-to series

INKING WITH LUKE EIDENSCHINK:

A FANTASY ILLUSTRATION SERIES

Join Luke as he takes you through the complete process of creating a detailed fantasy ink illustration.

Across four episodes, Luke shares his favorite materials, inking techniques, and insights into composition, tone, and texture. Follow along as he builds his scene step by step -beginning with a wizard, expanding into a dynamic landscape, introducing a dragon, and finishing with stylistic background details.

MATERIALS:

- Strathmore *500 Series Bristol Plate* (Smooth) 100% cotton
- Strathmore *300 Series Bristol* (Alternative)
- Daler-Rowney Calli Jet Black India Ink
- Daler-Rowney FW Acrylic Ink (Black and Cool Grey)
- Dip Pens (variety of nibs)
- HB Pencil
- Eraser
- Lightbox (for sketch transfer)

FOLLOW ALONG HERE





BRISTOL SMOOTH VS. VELLUM: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

What is Bristol?

Bristol generally describes a heavyweight drawing paper that provides a stiff, strong surface to work on without the need for mounting. The term Bristol derives from the early days of European papermaking when mills would send their finest papers to Bristol, England to be pasted together to form heavyweight drawing sheets. Bristol papers typically have two types of surfaces: smooth and vellum.

Smooth surface is great for pen & ink, mechanical pencil, airbrush, and markers. There is little to no tooth, making this surface great for creating fine lines, detail drawings, or marker drawings.

Vellum surface is great for graphite, colored pencil, charcoal, pastel, and crayon. The surface has peaks and valleys which grab dry media, allowing for lots of layers. Even shading and deeper tones can be achieved on a vellum surface.

Ultimately, it may come down to individual artist preference and what you feel works best for your style and desired outcome.

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