

*"I have found that
beautiful things can be
very simple..."*

Jason Juan is a young artist who, after studying Maths, decided to take a life drawing class in Seattle. This led to a career in the games industry where he currently works at Arena.net as a character artist, whose credits include the Narnia DS game and the very successful Guild Wars

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JASON JUAN

WEI CHE JASON JUAN

Can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to work on Guild Wars?

I got a BA Degree in Maths in 2001, when I was in Taiwan, and after 2 years duty in the military I decided to take my first official drawing class at the Art Institute of Seattle, in 2004. Right after I graduated, I met many Arena.net artists in a life drawing session that I usually attend. This was how I got the chance to know this cool art team and it inspired me to want to work with them.

What was it specifically that prompted you to take that first life drawing class in 2004?

I learned Maya in 2003 in Taiwan. I followed a very intensive class, called "DFTC Maya Training", for about one month. I thought that when I learnt how to use Maya I would know how to make good 3D characters, but I realised that just knowing each function in the program doesn't give you an idea of how to make better characters, and so I decided to start from the very basics through drawing classes.

You have a number of life studies on your website. How important are the life drawing classes to you with regards to your concept work?

Before the Art school, I didn't even know what life drawing was, and I had no idea how to draw a good figure, but after the first life drawing session I realised just how much I loved to do this. Gradually, I found life drawing was not only a benefit to character concept work, but also benefits animal drawing, too. Now it has become a part of my life and I still enjoy doing it. I believe that life drawing helps us to see the beautiful curves of the human body and to see the beauty in our world. It also helps us to practice many different compositions in a short period of time. Since it helps us to see the



beautiful aspects in the world, it also helps all different kinds of visual art, including my concept work.

What examples do you feel are the best expressions of the beauty of the human form, and why?

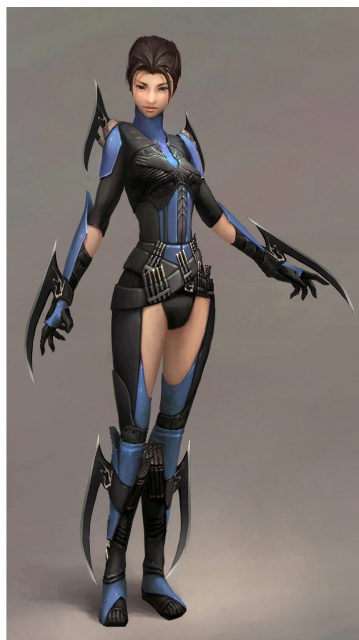
I really like some of Peter Paul Rubens's drawings, Nicolai Fechin's drawings, and Rembrandt's paintings. They have totally mastered the perfect skills to draw and paint the beautiful human form. Their drawings have a really strong and powerful line quality, without wasting any strokes. Rembrandt's paintings demonstrate wonderful skin tones and beautiful colour variation.

Which artists, including any of the Old Masters such as Rembrandt and Rubens, would you say have influenced you the most?

Digital and Fantasy: Craig Mullins, Ryan Meinerding, Matthew Barrett and Scott Albaugh.
Traditional Painting: Nicolai Fechin, Ingres, Gustav Klimt, Peter Paul Rubens, William Bouguereau, John Singer Sargent and Jerome Lipking.

What is it about the human figure and character design that captivates you the most?

Body curves and people. I have found that



beautiful things can be very simple. There are many possible ways to draw a line, and if we do it right then just one line can be very beautiful. People are very fun subjects to observe and it is about characters.

Do you find the female form more interesting or are you impartial?

I believe both females and males are interesting to draw and I just want to explore this. Since most life drawing sessions hire female models, more often than not, I do not get many opportunities to draw good male models, and it does create an interest to want to draw the male form sometimes.



Regarding Guild Wars, there is a mixture of both concept sketches and 3D characters in your portfolio, so what was your role on the game specifically?

Character Artist. This is how they refer to us here. We design characters, make 3D models and do rigging. We also have five Concept Artists and they only do concept art.

What are the typical poly counts of the Guildwars's characters and the size and number of the texture maps used for each?

In Guild Wars One, we have around 2,000 to 2,500 triangles, and a 512 x 512 texture size for the characters. For some of very large sized creatures, we have two 512 x 512 textures, but the poly count remains around 2000 - 2500 triangles.

How do you find your digital concept work on the game, compared to your traditional painting?

For me, both mediums are cool. Sometimes I like to paint in Photoshop, and sometimes I like to do traditional oil painting. I believe digital



media is very cool to use. When compared to traditional media, say for commercial purposes, it totally rules, but there is something that cannot be achieved through digital painting, such as some of Rembrandt's paintings and some of the Old Masters' oil paintings.

Another reason why I still paint traditionally is because I like to actually to hold brushes and mix paint, physically. I also like to go outside and paint the landscape. With traditional media it is so much easier to do this.





Computers are a great tool when wanting to learn new techniques, since we can view a lot of paintings and photos at the same time and decide what we can do next, or what we can do to improve, and they include the Internet. Traditional media is not easy to zoom in and zoom out of quickly, so it takes longer to figure out what the problem is.

And finally, what is your favourite period from art history?

I will say I enjoy living in the 21st Century since there are tonnes of possibilities and all different kinds of ways to make art, and the computer is a very fun tool to play with.

Jason (wei) chel Juan

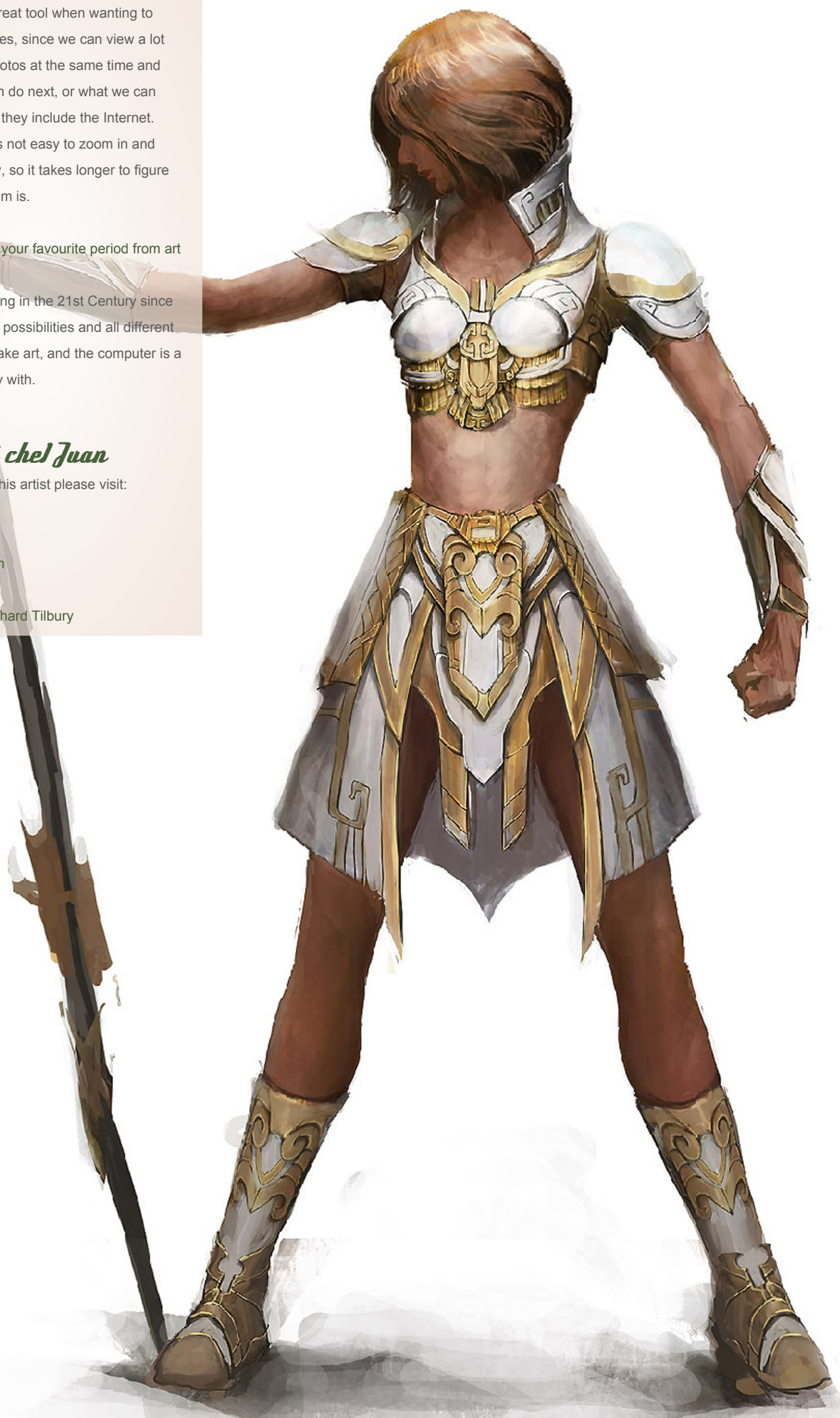
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