

"WHILST WORKING ON DESIGNS FOR GOBLIN ARCHITECTURE, IT CAME TO ME THAT GOBLINS COULD EVEN CUT CAVES STRAIGHT INTO THE ROCK AND BUILD ADDITIONS OVER THEM, JUST LIKE THE RESIDENTS OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF MATERA DO."



SKETCHBOOK OF JULIA UDALOVA

Julia Udalova, otherwise known as Falinor, is with us this month to take us through some of her recent sketchbook additions, covering cute designs for children's games, a clumsily-built goblin city, and mysterious female heroines. Sit back, and enjoy!

SKETCHBOOK OF JULIA (FALINOR) UDALOVA

Hi, I'm Julia (Falnor) Udalova, I currently work as a lead concept artist designing characters, locations and objects, and this is my sketchbook!

Drawing characters, backgrounds, interface elements, smilies, icons, and even comics are within the scope of my activities in my role as concept artist. At present, I'm working on an on-line project for children, where all the characters and animated objects are vectorized – creating vector characters is also one of my many jobs.

When designing a character for a game I find that you should always consider not only the age of your audience, the genre and the type of game, but you should also keep in mind how the character will be animated, and its movements. So to start things off I'd like to first of all tell you about some sketches and characters I've designed recently for a children's game.



CHILDREN'S CHARACTERS

Let's consider then an on-line project for preschool kids and their parents. For the children, I had to design characters – an avatar for the player (a boy or girl) and several "quest" animals. I initially designed the girls as shown in Fig.01, but they were too cheeky and grown-up looking for small children, and therefore the kids using the website wouldn't have been able to connect with them.

So I went through a number of children's images to do some research and came to the conclusion that I should keep the style of character and the "fidgetiness" of them, but simply change the age range of them to something much younger, and more in keeping with the children who were going to be using them.



Fig.01

When working on a character I quickly design details, components, combine ideas, and sometimes complete some of the designs if I feel they're working. With this particular project, in the end I had many different types of

children, but I realized that the more fantasy or doll-like characters just didn't fit with the brief. So I decided to run with the cute baby-faced designs, as marked with a tick in Fig.02.



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Fig.02



Fig.03
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Images of small animals for a magic world can come from anywhere – a dream, folk tales; they could be inspired by watching a cartoon ... One thing these animals needed though, for this particular project, were real animal features, to make it easier for the young players to dive into an unfamiliar world. I had to be sure not to forget about the age of the animals, too; they also needed to look young in character, because the game was for small children, after all. I also went ahead and designed some housing for the creatures, for different climates (Fig.03).

You'd think that a raven design would be easy, but actually there are lots of different ravens and I had to find one that worked. The first version in Fig.04 looks like a pelican; the second like a young jackdaw. So I continued searching for the right design, playing with proportions and characteristics, and eventually my raven turned into more of a sly and cagey character, which is very much in keeping with the real thing!

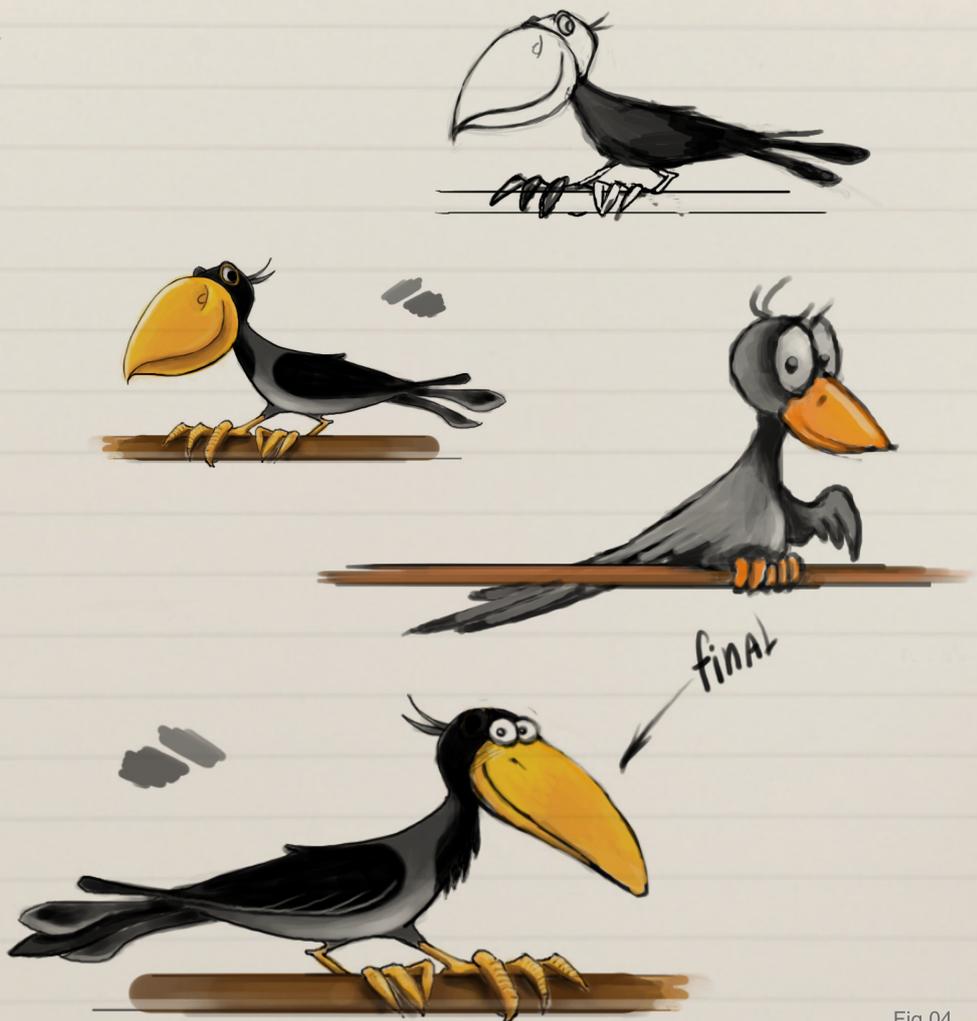
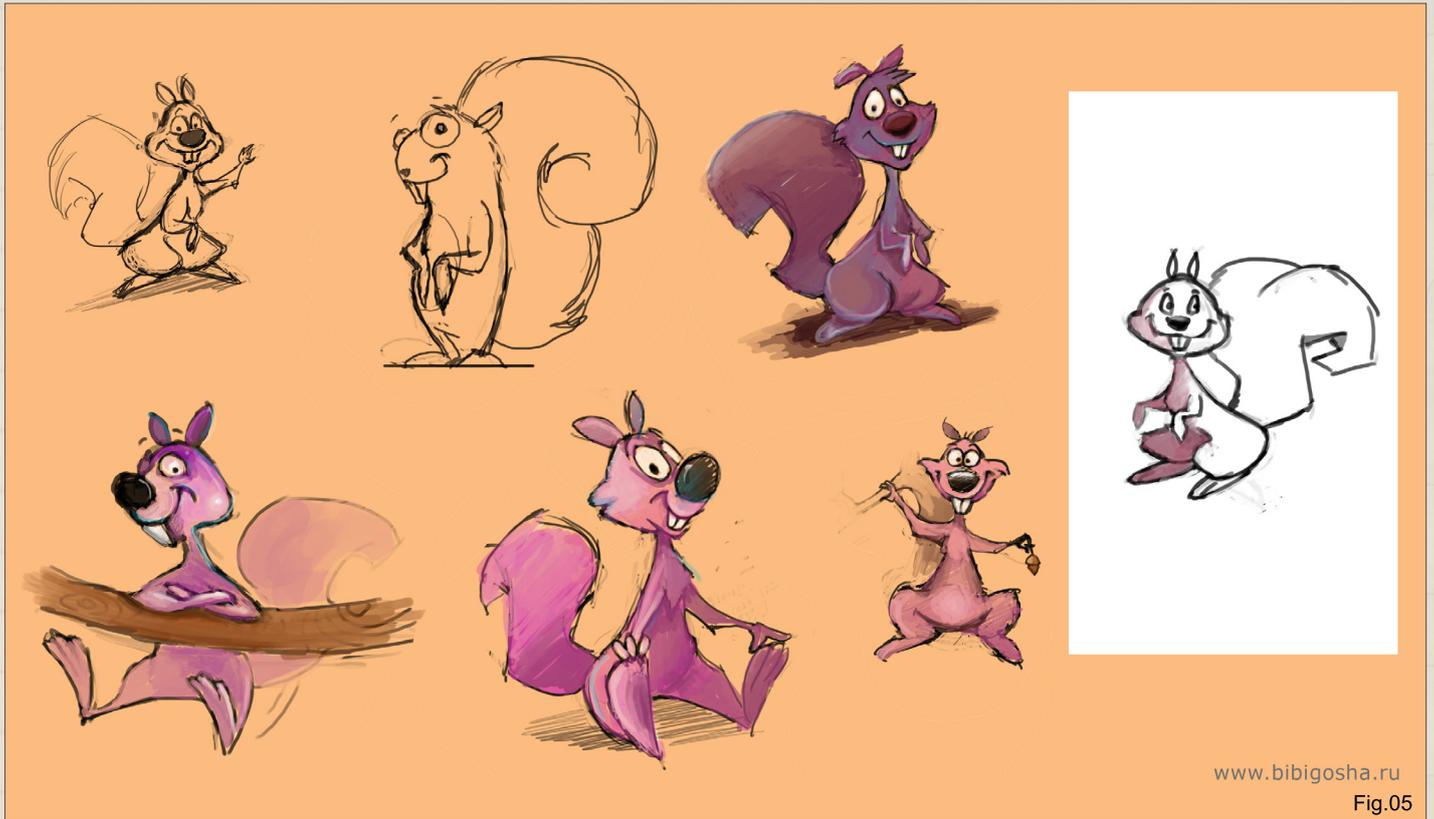


Fig.04



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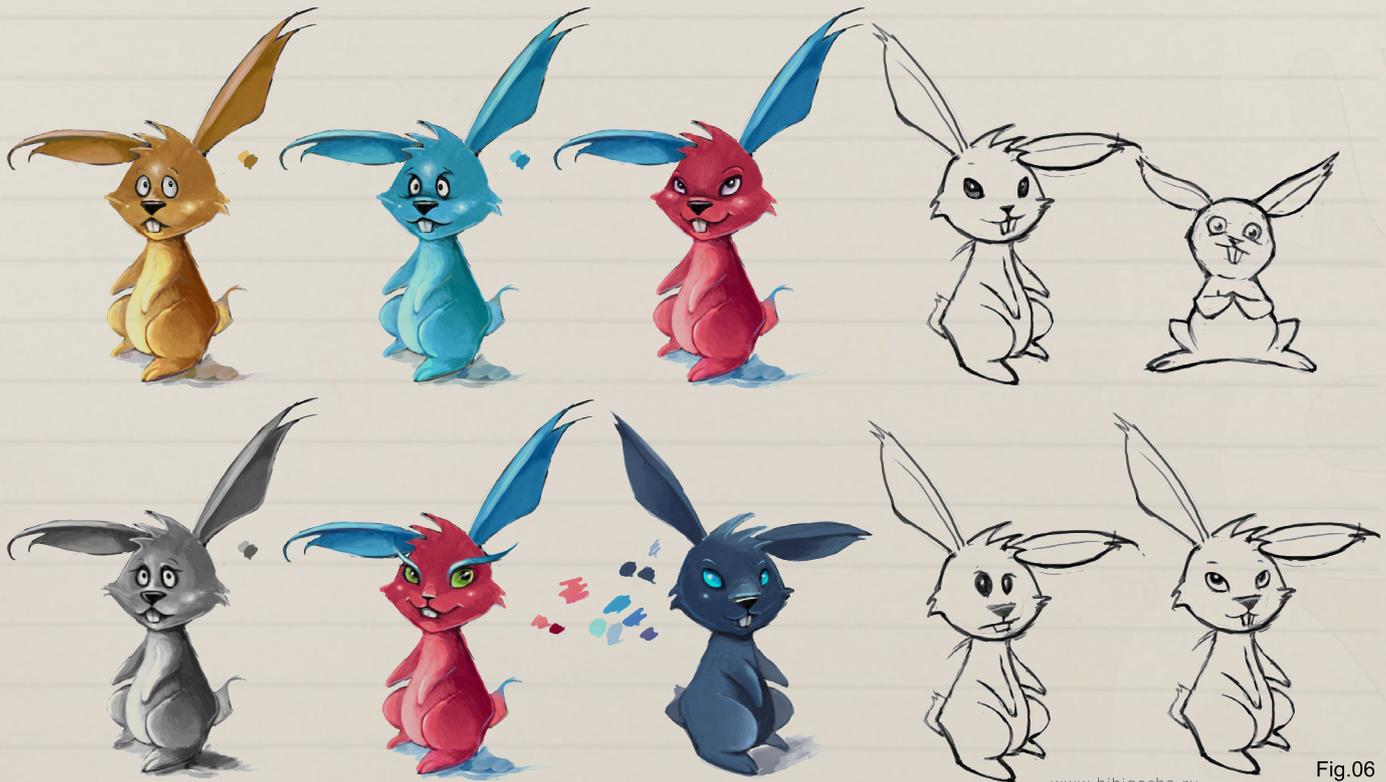
Fig.05

Likewise, a squirrel is a cheeky nut beggar. In a magical world for small children, a squirrel could even be purple! The main thing I had to keep in mind with this one was that the basic appearance and characteristics remained recognizable as squirrel-like, even though I was

changing the natural color to something more fantastical (Fig.05).

A rabbit is a cowardly and slightly silly character. After designing ten rabbits, I chose to run with a brown one. He has a discouraging

expression and a face that completely corresponds to a quest which he gives to the player. The others are too aggressive or have acidic colors — a child might be frightened of such a mutant! (Fig.06)



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Fig.06

I don't just draw for children, though, so let's now take a look at some sketches I've created for goblin architecture to move this article onwards!

GOBLINS

Goblins are stupid creatures. Their architecture is primitive and also slightly ridiculous. They use materials at hand, but they're badly treated and clumsy looking. Goblins don't care about beauty – only convenience matters (Fig.07 – 09).



Fig.08

Fig.07

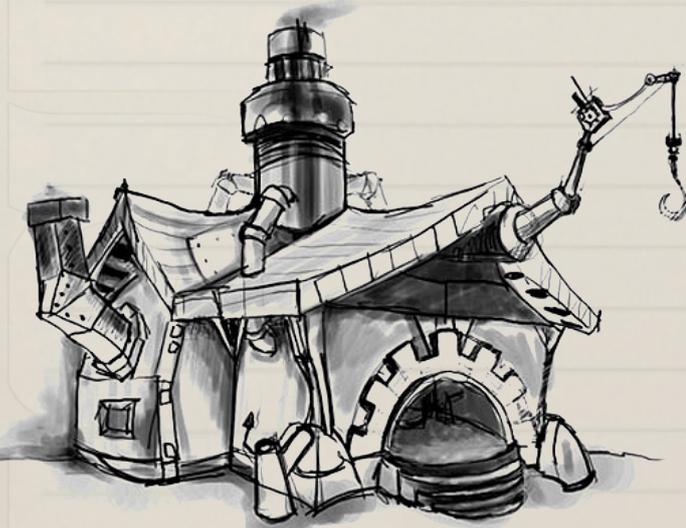


Fig.09



Fig.10



Fig.11

A goblin building could be constructed on a rock, to make it easier to defend. The mine, tavern, blacksmith could be settled in the same location – or perhaps even in rocky caves that form a small town that way (Fig.10).

Whilst working on designs for goblin architecture, it came to me that goblins could even cut caves straight into the rock and build additions over them, just like the residents of the ancient city of Matera do (Fig.11).



Fig.12a



Fig.12b



Fig.12c

Or they could build structures of stone, with logs and planks, constructing massive buildings that look like boxes with lots of useless elements to them (Fig.12a-12c).

And so, from various initial ideas I started work on the sketch for a goblin town. At first it was just a spot with a pair of houses and a bridge. Then the spot turned into a rock and useful buildings began to appear. As a result, there appeared a blacksmith, a tower, a monastery, a shaft, and other necessary buildings (Fig.13 - 14).

Goblins are such funny, foolish beings – and huge fans of beer and toys (Fig.15)!



Fig.13



Fig.14



Fig.15



Fig.16

FEMALE CHARACTERS

Even a villain can be sexual: positive, brutal...

A female character will look cooler if, to her beauty and brutality, you add a zest that makes her different from other heroines. For example, it could be a firm gaze, good posture, or deliberately negligence – it's all in your hands!

General Ainia, who I painted for the Dominance War competition, looks tired and a little cold hearted (Fig.16 – 17). War is her work, and the portrait reflects that in her character – she's a militant woman, in armor, with a firm gaze and a determined posture.

A heroine could even be airy, just like this fairy (Fig.18). The main thing is that the character has unique features which stand her apart from others. Don't you think that a heroine with character and history is far more interesting than just another empty beautiful picture...?

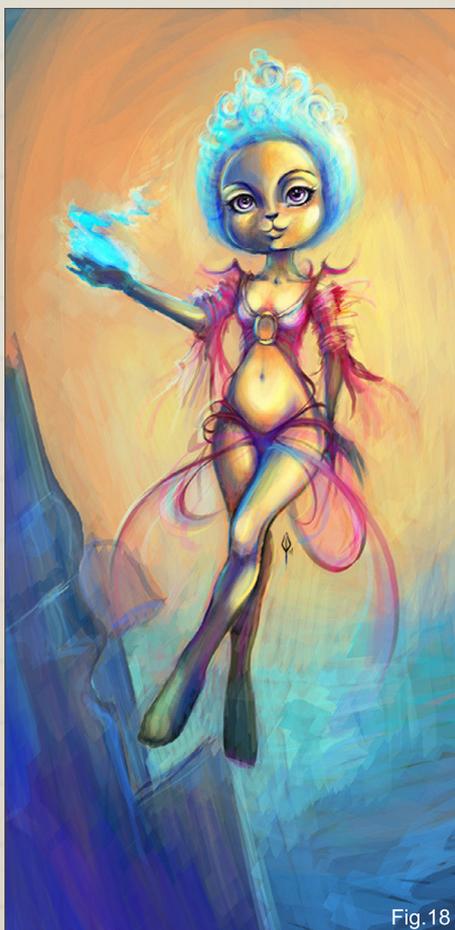


Fig.18



GENERAL AINIA

Fig.17

Well, that's about it from me, I hope this insight into my sketchbook has been interesting, and I wish you every success with your own concepts. Thanks for reading!

JULIA (FALINOR) UDALOVA

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