

8 STEPS TO...

**MAKING
PROFESSIONAL
ILLUSTRATIONS
WITHIN 24
HOURS**

———— KRISTEN PALANA ————

8 Steps To Making Professional Illustrations Within 24 hours

By Kristen Palana

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

- Lao Tzu

Quick Summary:

So let me just write down a quick summary of this post as I want to make sure that I'm not wasting your time:

Cool?

Let's go!

1. Grab a photo (your own or royalty-free) to use as a guide.

2. Use the “ASAP” technique to create an initial draft that will save you hours.

3. Now, start tweaking that initial draft to make it more clean and polished.

4. Next on top, make a B&W line drawing so you can go from draft to a “wireframe” that you’ll use to quickly finish up your design.

5. Eat away at the photo guide with an eraser. This is a cool effect people are constantly asking me about.

6. Time to polish up! I mean, use the dodge and burn tools to get some lovely stylized effects.

7. Avoid killing your design in this last step. Save for print and the web like a boss.

8. Add to your gallery and web portfolio. Give as unique gifts or use in books, on T-shirts, and as products in your online store.

Want to know the details?

They'd spend just 45 minutes with me and they ALWAYS ended up freaking out...

Why?

Because they went from not being able to draw...

... even on paper ;-)

To creating their first social media graphics...

Their first couple of illustrations...

All within minutes thanks to this system...

Crazy stuff, no?

My students were so amazed at their immediate results.

I later started building my online courses around it.

It's also the process I follow when creating my own artwork...

...as well as for clients to help me **save time being on the computer.**

The process is shockingly simple, yet powerful enough to jump-start your creativity, build your portfolio, and **start you selling your work.**

Once you read this you'll have all the info and motivation...

to get started creating your own epic images that **you will be proud to show others.**

So in a nutshell, this is how it works:



[Download the high quality version of this graphic](#)

What's the coolest part about this process?

You can be up and running right away **even if you hate to draw** or think you “can't draw.”

How?

Every time you use this method you learn more and **create better and better images.**

Imagine what your portfolio could look like after just one month if you made one image a day or just three a week!

So let's zoom into the details then shall we?

The coolest part though is once you start using this workflow, you'll have a foolproof system of making images that **saves you time, money, and sanity.**

-And you'll never have to hire another designer again!

Below is a digital painting made from a photo I took in Venice last year.

It was made in under 30 minutes! (I force myself to set a timer so I won't fuss all day.)



Step 1: Grab a Photo to Use As a Guide

Here is my original photo.



I chose this image to work with because my son looks dreamy and is turning away from the usual attraction of a gondola passing by.

Did you notice that this photo is not so great?

It's got a splotch of light in it and is overexposed and blurry in places.

No matter though! Since we are going to paint right over it and erase the photo away anyway, **we can get away with it not being perfect.**

Before we continue, download the [FREE program Gimp](#) or get a 7 Day FREE [trial of Adobe Photoshop](#).

Don't have your own photo to start with?

That's where royalty-free and public domain goodies come in!

These are **images you can use absolutely free in your projects** without fear of lawyers coming to your house and dragging you off to court to pay millions for copyright infringement.

Royalty-free goodies often require you give credit to the creators, sometimes in a very specific way so please read the fine print.

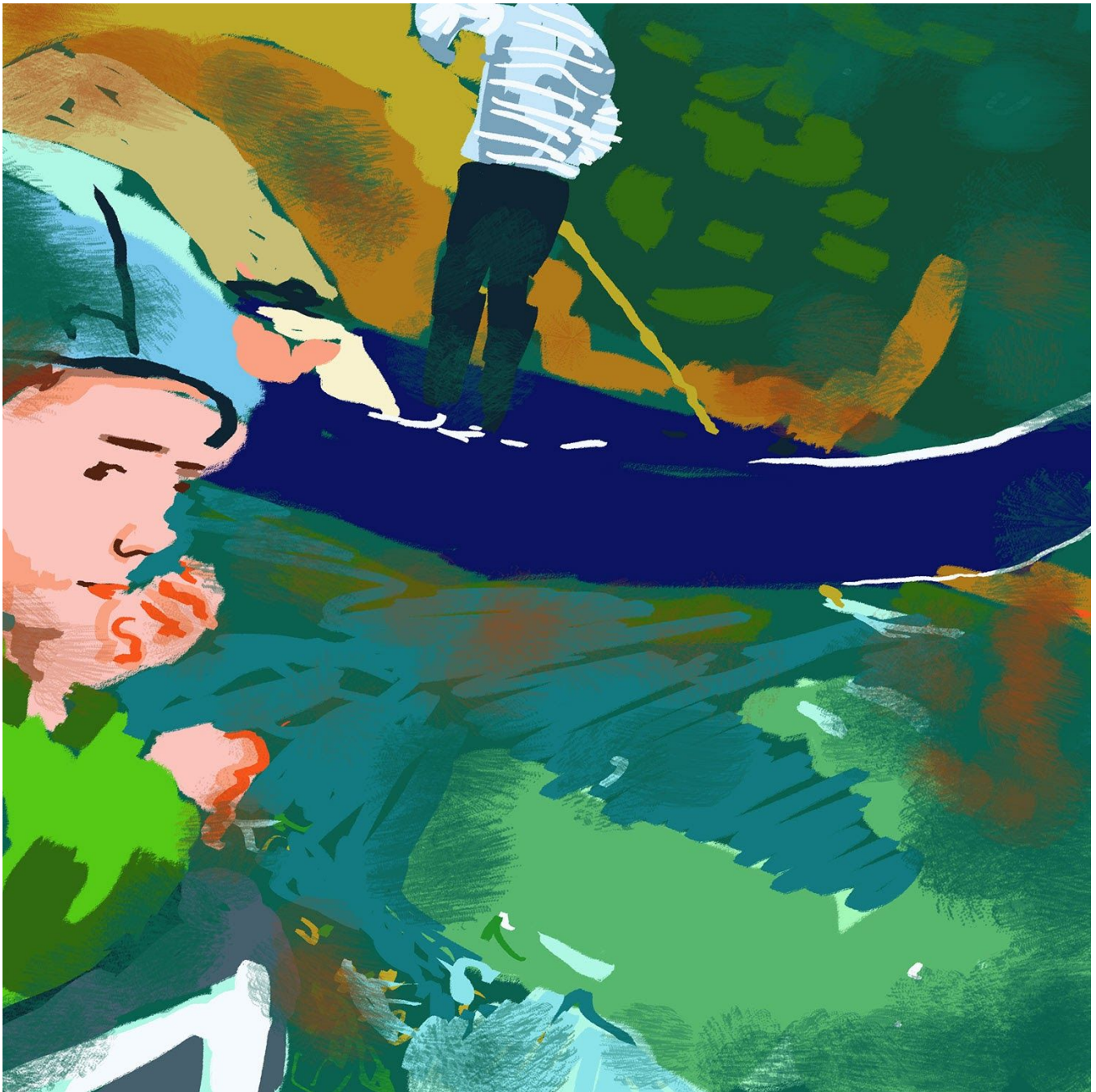
For **public domain** goodies, you can usually use whatever you want and don't have to credit anyone.

Where Can You Find Them?

Check out my list of [75+ Places to Get Free Images, Music, and Video For Your Projects](#)

Step 2: Make the photo a bit transparent and paint below

I then made an under-painting in a layer below the photo with really vibrant colors using some of my favorite brush tools in Photoshop.



[Get my free tutorial for more on how I use Photoshop's powerful brush tools the easy way.](#)

Wait. What the heck are layers?

When you are drawing on a regular piece of paper, everything you are sketching is on that one sheet of paper.

This is virtually how we all start drawing as kids.

There is nothing wrong with drawing this way.

However modern imaging programs like *Photoshop*, *Gimp*, and others have an awesome and useful feature known as **layers**.

Layers are like transparent sheets of acetate that you can stack on top of your default layer (piece of virtual paper).



[Watch my free video tutorial on why layers rock and how to use them](#)

(*It's just 2 minutes and 10 seconds long.)

So if you draw a beach scene for example, instead of drawing everything on just the default layer (aka: like a sheet of paper)...

...in an imaging program you might put the sky on the bottom layer, the sea on another layer, then the sun on a third layer, and so on.

The benefit to using layers is you can more **easily edit individual elements of your image**.

So if you wanted to tint the sky, if you only tint the layer it is on, it will not also accidentally tint the sand, clouds, boat, etc.

[More on how to create a new layer in Photoshop](#)

[More on how to create a new layer in Gimp.](#)

**Step 3: Make an
“overpainting” in the layer
above the photo.**

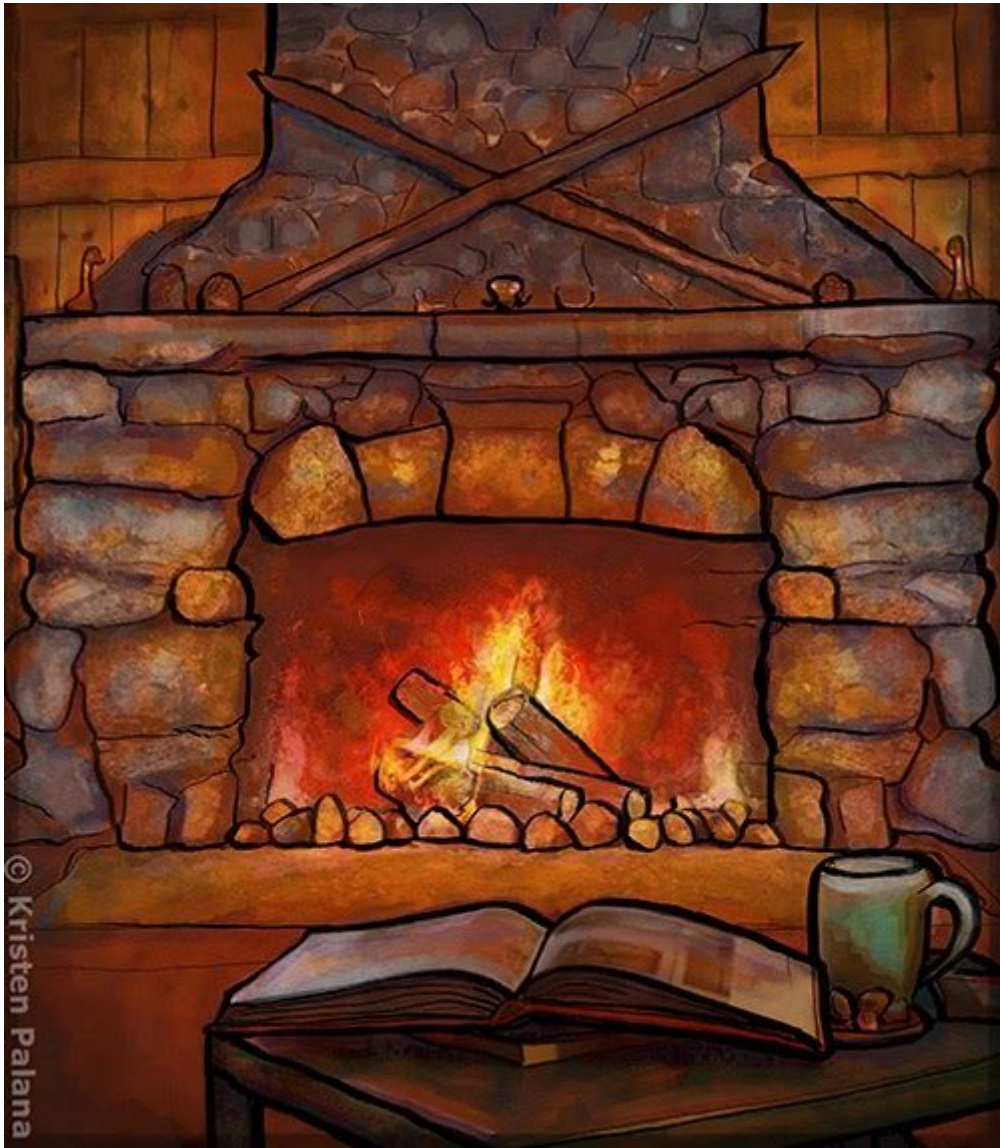
I adjusted the opacity on all layers to play around with what shows through and how much.

This is for 3 kinds of people:

- You struggle to get your ideas out of your head and onto the computer
- For people wanting to illustrate their own children's books
- For people wanting to create images and start drawing rather than spending hundreds of hours googling for information

If that's you, this is going to be incredibly helpful.

The Instant Illustration Generator



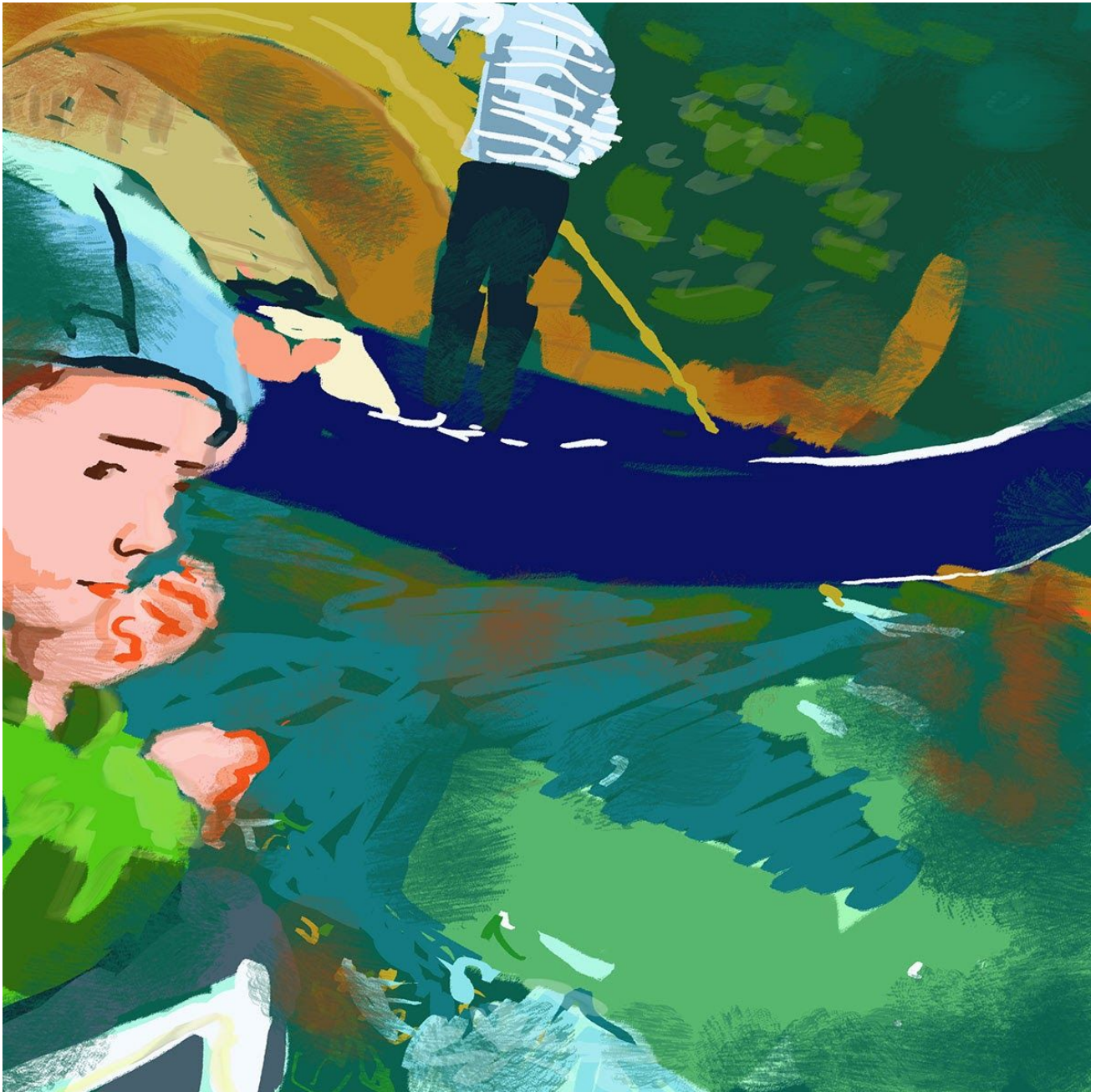
Careful! Hot stuff. :)

These techniques started out as a **humble in-class assignment**.

This is the exact process I have taught...

to **thousands of university students** in the USA, Italy, Myanmar, (and soon also in Malawi).

It was an assignment students actually **LOVED**.



Sometimes I will have lots of layers above and below the original photograph.

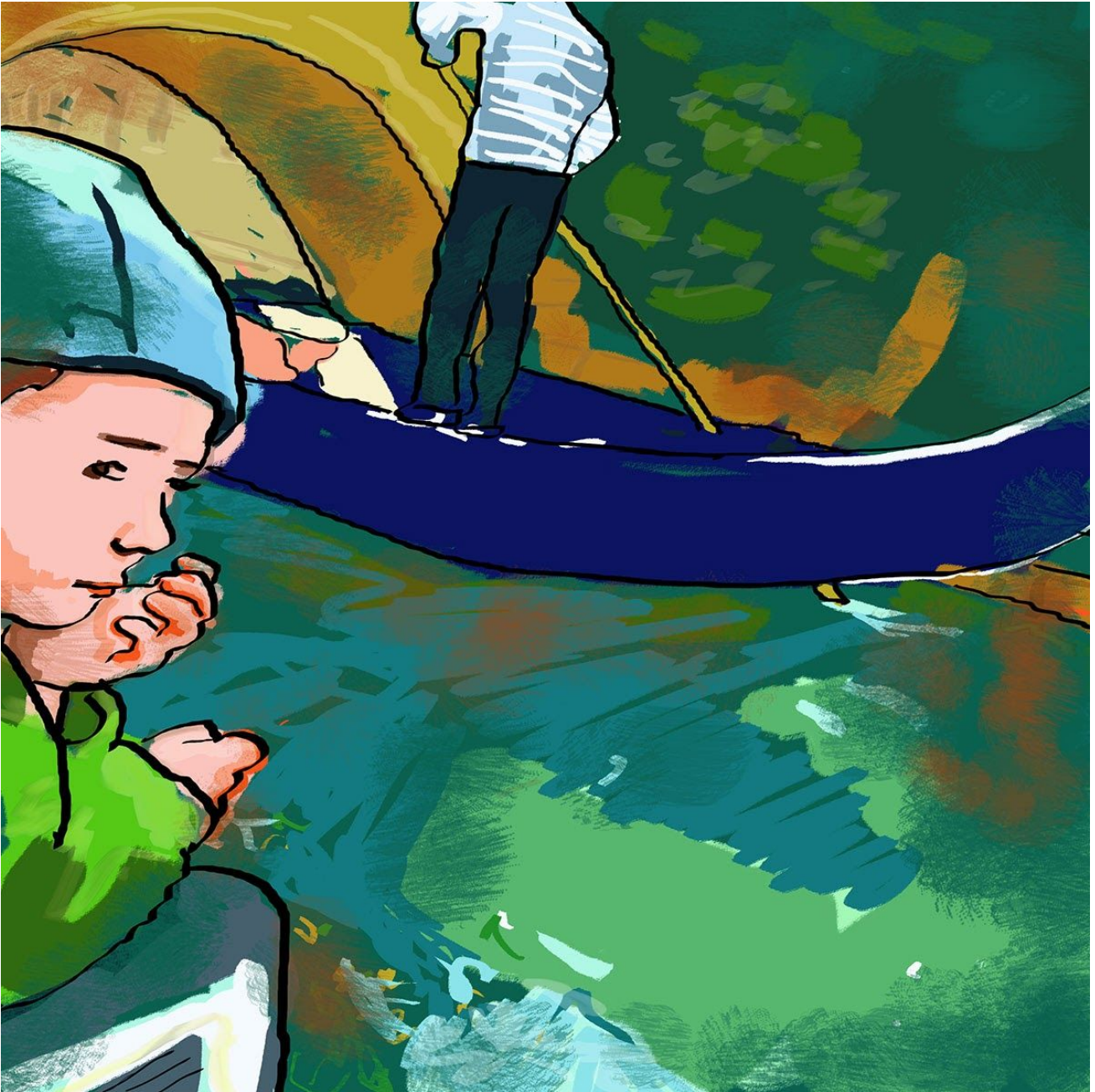
I also like to **save many versions of my design** under different names every 15 minutes or so using “Save As.”

This saves me pain and suffering later if the file gets corrupted or I overdo the painting and need to **go back to an earlier version**.

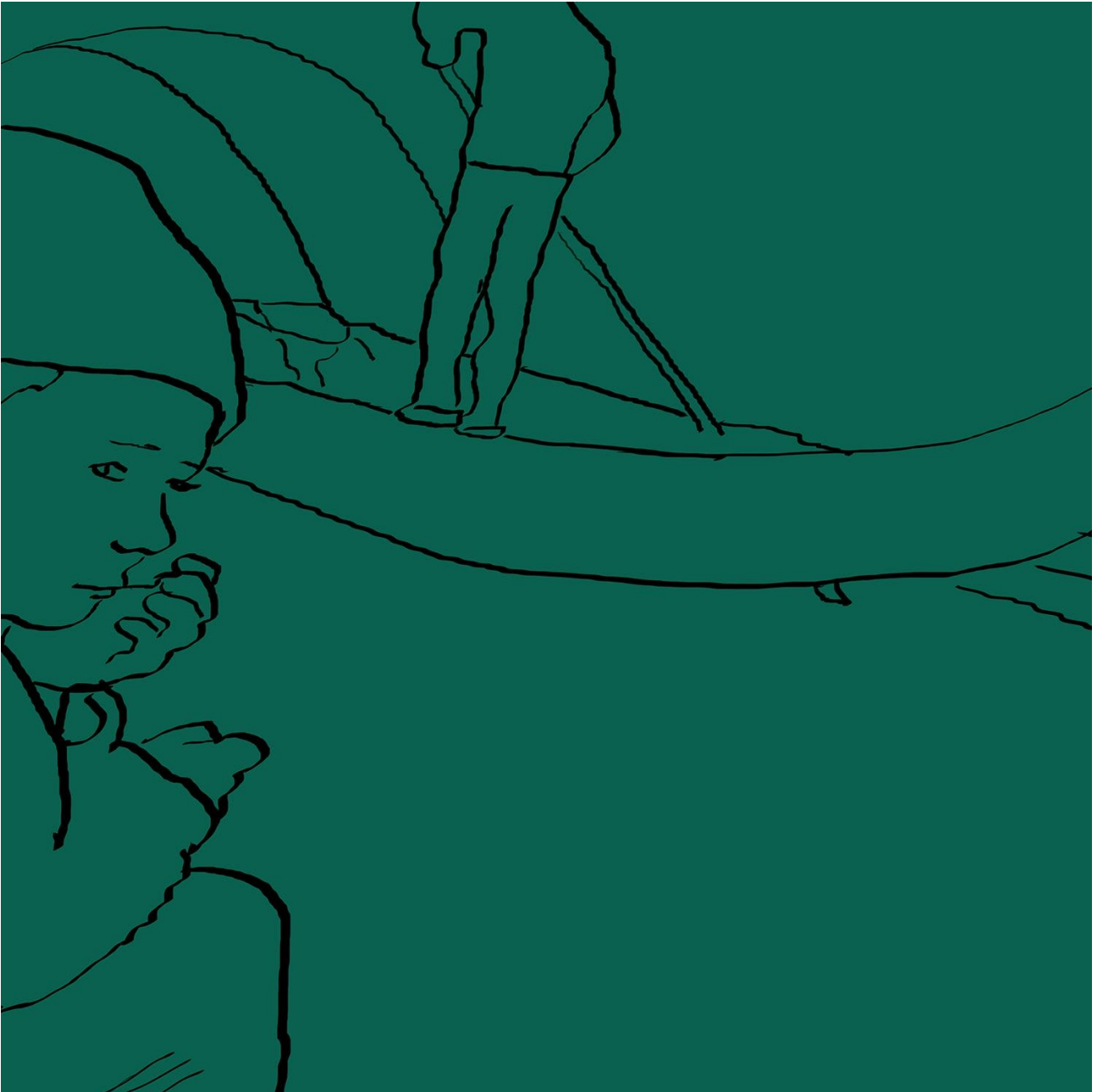
It’s seriously a lifesaver to have many versions of your design saved in a folder somewhere safe on your computer as well as the cloud!

Step 4: Now on top, make a B&W line drawing.

I made another layer on top that was just the black line drawing. I sometimes save this layer as another version by itself.



Want to see how it looks by itself?



This particular line drawing is nothing to write home about.

But...

If you spend enough time on this step, **it can be good enough to stand alone as is.**

Here's some recent student work from my time teaching ICT at Thalun International School in Yangon, Myanmar.

My students were *kids* aged 10-17 years-old and most of them never had taken art or attempted to draw on the computer.

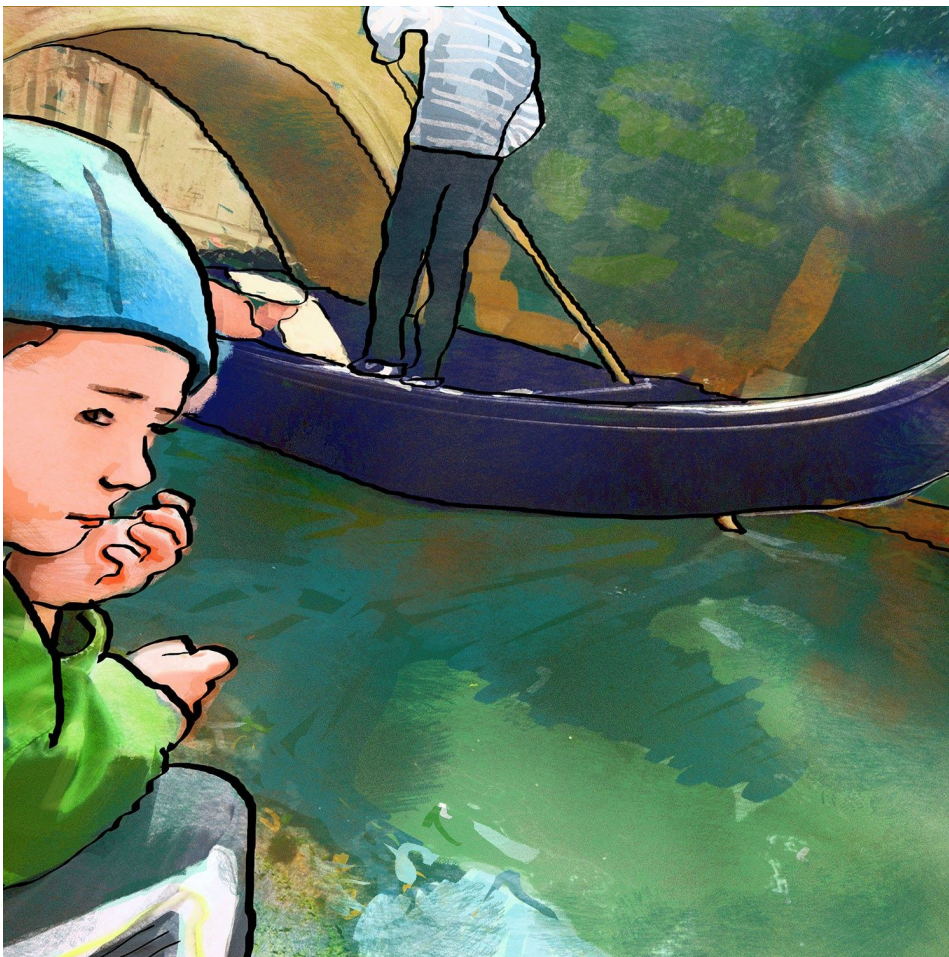
These are some of their first illustrations ever using the exact technique I am describing.



Step 5: Eat away at the photo guide with an eraser.

Finally I went into the photo layer with a very “spluttery” eraser and tap tap tapped to eat away at the original photo.

If you look closely though you can see where some parts remain.



*Get my bonus course lecture I use with my own university students that will introduce you to: [The tools in your imaging program that NEVER go out of style](#) (*that you can use even 20 years from now. No joke!)

Step 6: Time to polish up!

Finally I finished things off by flattening all layers and dragging **the burn tool** around the edges for a stylized look.



Step 7: Save for print and the web.

I always save a high quality version for print first and make lower-res web versions for my blog or social media pages later.

Save under different names so you don't accidentally overwrite anything.

What happens if you do this wrong?

You'll be left with just one version of your design. If your file gets corrupted, you'll have to start all over again from scratch.

But...

If you have **multiple versions**, you can just go back to the last saved step and continue from there.

Also...

If you are making a web graphic for a client, they may suddenly ask later for a print res version because they now want to make a T-shirt.

If you started with a high res, print version to begin with, you can send it to them ASAP with **no fuss on your part**.

It's always easier to save a lower quality web version from a high res print version than vice versa.

Amateur Mistake Alert: DON'T try and take a small, web quality image and scale it up to print resolution in your imaging program!

It will get pixelated, look distorted, and basically look horrible.

Finally...

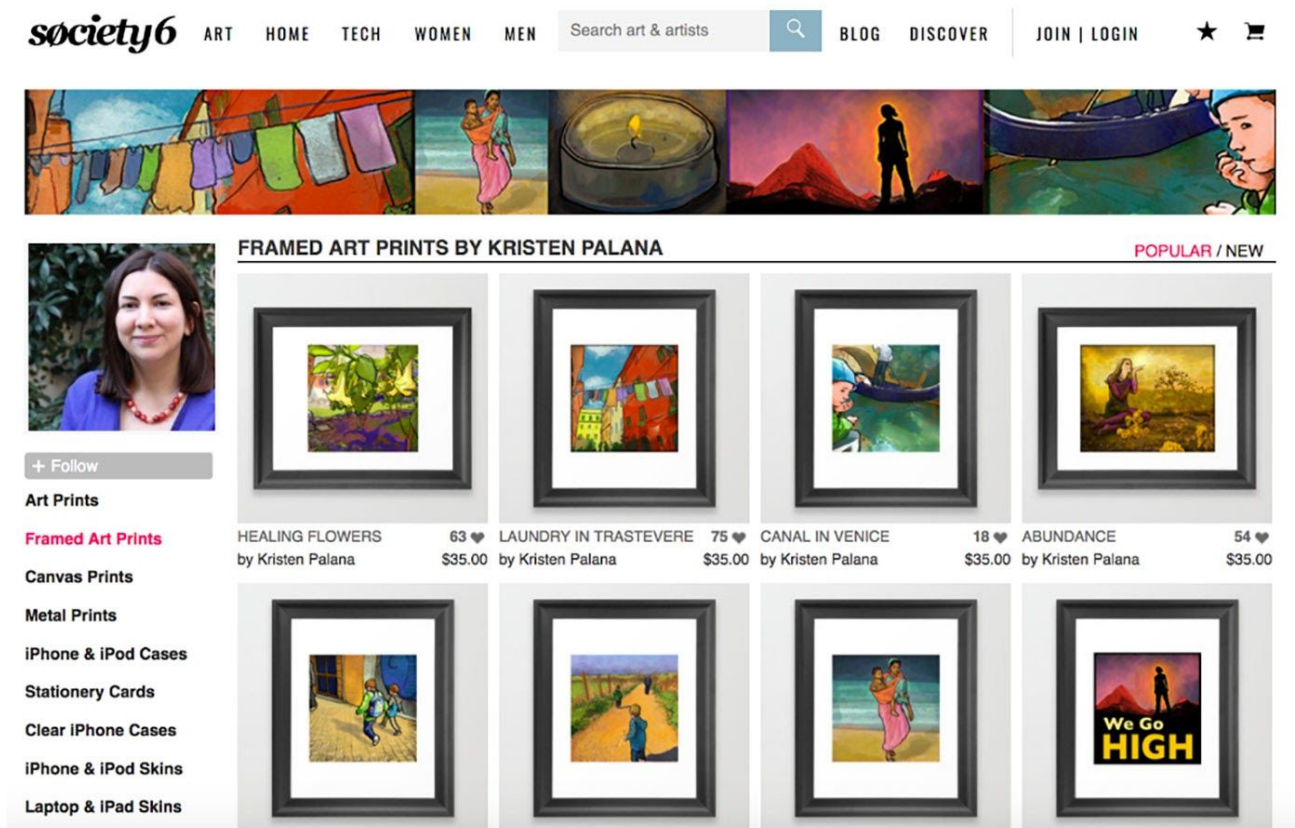
-Don't forget to save the original file with all the layers so you can **easily edit later if need be!**

Still need help with this?

Have a look at this article: [Graphic Design for Print vs The Web: 15 Vital Differences You Need To Know About](#)

Step 8: Use on books, T-shirts, and products in your online store.

This bit is optional but recommended. Once you get good at the process, you can **start selling your art or freelancing**.



I recommend you start by setting up a free Society 6 online shop.

[Come visit my shop and then set up your own by registering.](#)

There are actually hundreds of ways you can start selling your artwork online.

Here's a great article that details the [six best places to get started](#).

Once you get more comfortable making your own illustrations, you might even consider freelancing!

Great places to start include [Fiverr](#), [FiverUp](#), and [GigBucks](#).

So...

Pretty straightforward right?

OK. Let's Recap:

- Make a quick draft using a photo as your guide.
- Draw over and under the photo using brushes and layers.
- Erase the photo, finish up, and use on your website, in books or games, in your online store, etc.

Next Steps

Hope this helped!

So let me ask you this...

Want to create lots of images and illustrations?

That look **professional**?

And use them in your books/projects?

Or to earn you extra money as a freelancer?

Then if you're feeling like it's time to level up **click the button below** to get access to all the resources I shared in this post:

[Start Creating Your Own Illustrations](#)

