

Research Notes – Christin Jaynes

For this project, I was tasked with creating a character painting in watercolor at least 6 inches by 8 inches in size. I chose to illustrate a character I had created last semester. The character is a dragon rider who lives in a cold mountainous climate, so there were a number of factors to consider when designing her and the dragon, such as practicality versus artistic license for a fantasy image, and laying out the composition, such as how close up or far away and what position they are in. I also had to factor in the medium I was working with, which would impact what textures and techniques I could use. There was also a decision to be made about size; whether I wanted a small piece or a large one, and what mood or feeling I wanted to convey. The feeling I wanted would impact what colors I chose for the painting, so this took careful consideration. I also had to decide if I wanted to do a more illustrative style or something more realistic in nature; this would have an impact on the mood of the piece as well. All of these various components had to be considered before painting even began.

For this project, I wanted to convey her personality and her relationship with her dragon and imply a little about where they live. In order to communicate her strict personality, her pose could not be relaxed. It did not have to be tense, I like to convey a bit of movement and life in my poses, so I didn't want something stiff. However, her pose did have to be one that shows she is at attention, and having her hold her weapon as though she is on guard was the ideal solution. Her facial expression and hairstyle also contribute to the expression of her character. Her outfit also conveys a bit about her character, especially her practicality, but also shows a more elegant side that counters her stern strength. The clothing choice also reflects the practicality of living in a cold climate, which helps to imply the climate of where she lives. Her clothing also helps to suggest the relationship between her and her dragon with the outfit being similar colors to his patterning. Their relationship is also implied in the fact that neither seems concerned about the other's presence, and that she would let such sharp teeth get that close to her shows the trust between them.

When designing her outfit, I had to consider both the climate, which is cold, and what she would be doing. She is dragon rider warrior, so her clothes must have some sort of practicality to them. However, it is a fantasy piece, so it also must look unusual and fantastic. So, I looked at a variety of clothing styles, often focusing on Viking-style garb for inspiration. I made several rough sketches of clothing possibilities before settling on a design I liked. I then did a couple of color studies to decide on the color scheme of her outfit. The result was an outfit that looked like it fit within a fantasy setting, but was also quite practical. I then moved onto her hairstyle, focusing on her personality and practicality. With a strict demeanor and the need to keep her hair out of her face, I decided a bun would be the best option. Adding an unusual hair piece I have to the design added to the fantasy element and gives her a touch of elegance. I then thought about her weapon, and considered the fact that most of the time she would be fighting would be from the back of a dragon, a pole arm seemed the most practical. Once her design was finished, I turned to designing the dragon. I wanted a dragon that was easily recognizable as such, but did not look like the average dragon. I wanted him to be unique. I chose to merge the facial features of two different animals, a parrot beak and a rhinoceros horn, to create his unique profile. For the scales and horns, I looked at animal references and what other artists had done and did several rough sketches to get his look the way I wanted it. I did a couple of color studies for him, considering animal patterning and how it might translate to a dragon.

With both characters designed, I then did several rough sketches to figure out the composition of the piece. I settled on a medium shot of her with the dragon's head behind her. I then did a final sketch and a color study for the whole piece. I wanted a complementary color pallet, so with the blues and violets as the main color, I kept her skin, hair, and the dragon's eye in the yellow and orange spectrum to add nice touches of color and balance out the blue tones. I then transferred the sketch to watercolor paper and began by outlining them with ink, ensuring her line was thicker than the dragon's to emphasis her placement in front. I then started painting with the cloudy grey background. I then laid in the basic colors for the dragon, rather lightly to allow for shading and color adjustments. Subsequently, I laid in the shadow for both the dragon and the girl with violet. Next I added more blues to the dragon, blending the shadows in to his colors. Then I laid in and worked up her colors to the point of near completion. Next I made the fine details, using a gel pen for some of the tiny highlights. I then looked over the whole piece, punched up a few of the details, and signed it.