

Inside guide to everything that you need to know to make it as a professional digital artist, including university and college courses, industry advice and interviews with pros

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An interview with...

ARNAUD SIMON-LAFOREST

The illustrator and character designer for videogames talks to us about Photoshop, going freelance and staying passionate about his work



About the insider

Job Freelance illustrator/character designer

Clients Gameloft, Electronic Arts, Monte Cristo

Awards CG Hub Master Artist, 3D Total Excellence Award, CG Gallery Editor's Choice, deviantART's Daily Deviation

Website www.eyes-l.com

Biography Arnaud Simon-Laforest is currently working as a freelance illustrator and character designer. His work can be seen in various games from Gameloft for mobile phone formats, as well as in *Silverfall* from Monte Cristo Games on the PC or PSP. He has also done work in the past for EA Games

Arnaud Simon-Laforest is better known by his online alter-ego Eyes-L, but the 30-year-old freelance illustrator has built up quite a name for himself with his work for global videogames companies. Currently working from his home in Villeurbanne, France, we pin him down between commissions to find out more about the man behind the art.

Advanced Photoshop: Bonjour Arnaud! You're a freelance illustrator and character designer now, but where did it all begin for you?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: After high school, I entered a French art school in Lyon, called Ecole Emile Cohl. I studied there for four years, and during the last two years I began working as a character designer for Widescreen Games, a videogames company in Lyon. After four years of drawing and modelling characters and creatures there, I decided to go freelance.

Advanced Photoshop: Why did you choose to make the step into freelance?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: I wanted to improve my drawing skills, work on different projects as well as focus on illustration. Being freelance can be an exhausting job... but I like it and I wouldn't pick another one. I'm still learning and always looking forward to see what I will be drawing the following month, knowing it'll probably be something unexpected. And that's also why it is interesting, because you sometimes have to draw the unknown, what's uninteresting to you personally, and understand it to find your own way to make it interesting to draw and to look at... I never get bored!

Advanced Photoshop: Does any piece of work stand out in particular for you?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: There's one I like a bit more than the others: an illustration I did for *Hero of Sparta* for Gameloft. I was free to do what I wanted; I tried to find a dynamic action before choosing a dynamic point of view and I think the result is fun to look at. I tolerated the mistakes I did because they don't prevent the eye from enjoying the energy of the scene. I also had fun drawing the pack illustration of Gameloft's *Chuck Norris - Bring on the Pain*. And I was thrilled to know that Mr Norris asked for a copy to have!



GANGSTAR 2: This image was created using pencils and Photoshop
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"Being freelance can be an exhausting job... but I like it and I wouldn't pick another one"



ZOMBIE INFECTION: This image was created using pencils and Photoshop
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Advanced Photoshop: What would you say your dream job would be?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: Working on my own comic book. I would prefer to say graphic novel, because I would like the pages to look like illustrations. I would like to be proud of it. But I'll need a lot of time to make that dream come true...

Advanced Photoshop: What projects are you working on at the moment?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: I'm working on different projects, but unfortunately I'm not able to say much about them because of the non-disclosure agreement I have to sign in my contracts. All I can say right now is that I'm working on quite a big illustration and on another with one of my favourite superheroes! I am also working on a point-and-click game where my characters will appear on screen, which is a very good way to see them come to life.



HERO OF SPARTA: This image was created using pencils and Photoshop
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Advanced Photoshop: How do you go about creating your images?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest: I begin with a quick rough on a paper or on screen, then I draw the line on paper and scan it. Afterwards, I use Photoshop to add colours, lights, shadows, effects, etc. I always work with a lot of layers, all named and organised so I don't go crazy. It allows me to easily modify my work to fit the client's requests.

Advanced Photoshop:

Do you have any advice for artists wanting to break into the industry?

Arnaud Simon-Laforest:

Be passionate! Always draw what you feel like drawing (even if teachers or employers don't like it) because drawing has to stay fun.

Always keep an open mind about how you could evolve your art. Feed yourself with what you see, listen and watch, and put your personality in what comes out of the mix.

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