Greetings to you all.

Infernal creatures and beings of machine-flesh alike, gladden your hearts: for volume six of 28 has arrived!

Brought to you fresh from our white-hot, screeching scriptoria-looms, inside this volume you will discover many tantalising and enticing secrets: from our interview with the grandfather of Grimdark John Blanche, to the winner’s reveal of the 28 Indie Games Challenge, event reports such as Turm 2023 and Wealdcon, plus a host of features, tutorials and essays from passionate artists.

It has already been a busy year for us at Team 28. Our International Womens’ Day special issue has returned for 2024 (available at 28-mag.com), packed with insights and inspiration from some of the many talented women of our hobby. Our range of Fist In The Eye miniatures has been a great success; you can see the next miniature due for release in our Fist In The Eye painting guide in this very volume!

As 28 continues to grow and evolve, we remain cognisant of the fact that 28 does not define the community; we reflect it. Our objective is, and always remains, to showcase the best, most intriguing, most original creations and ideas that the community has to offer.

We are merely the strange guides to an even stranger landscape and it is our privilege to aid you in exploring all there is to witness. So please enjoy, savour, suckle at the teat of and celebrate our latest offering to you who are the beating heart of this wild beast.

Volitare-28 // Editor
ADAM WIER
As a profession, Adam is an electron microscopist focused primarily on cancer research. When it comes to the hobby, Adam continues to push his ability to create properly scaled and detailed firearms for his models while also testing the waters for fully sculpting a miniature himself.

ALEXANDER WINBERG
Greater Daemon of 28, slave to darkness. Summoned to the scorched earth to oversee the ultimate triumph of a more open and interesting hobby. There will be no rest for the wicked and no respite for the just. He also likes painting really old miniatures and playing silly games.

MIRA MANGA
Mira is a writer and editor from London, UK. She runs a uniquely curated YouTube channel where she interviews authors from the Black Library, embarks on Fighting Fantasy adventures and contributes content mostly adjacent to the grimdark universe. She is still waiting to hear back about her fast track Inquisitor training application.

WILL RAHMAN-DAULTREY
When not creating miniature games about the end of the world Will works in climate change trying to stop the actual end of the world. If you have turned on the news lately you can see he’s doing a great job too. Mind behind Forbidden Psalm, Last War and Dread Nights.

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GREGORY WIER
Gregory has been helping playtest the upcoming mech combat game Flames of Orion, while continuing to write for his music blog (Fine Enough, I Suppose) and creating abrasive soundscapes via no-input mixing.

ERIC WIER
Professionally, Eric works as a toxicologist at the Food and Drug Administration trying his best to ensure vaping does not become the next public health scourge. On the hobby front, Eric has finally shifted away from painting Dark Angels to focus on improving his ability to create silicone molds for resin casting and to start writing lore for the Vastarian INQ28 project (detailed in this issue!).

SAMPSA NYLUND
A true Ministorum adept from Helsinki, Finland. Really passionate about cooking, gin and finding his own queer, eldritch and baroque voice in miniature painting. Often foiled by his crippling hobby ADHD. He vows to get at least ten models painted this year, for real. Dreams about living somewhere less inimical to life. Possibly Alpharius.

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HUGUES LA BLANCHE
Hugues La Blanche has been doodling stuff for his local punk rock and graphzine scene for far too long. He's been lurking in the columns of 28 since Vol. 5, and most of the time he's busy kitbashing and painting tiny little soldiers, or getting his ass handed to him in obscure indie wargames played by less than 200 people in the world.

IVY HILL
Ivy is a small but vicious dog from New York let loose into the wilds of Canada. In her spare time she dabbles in RPG writing, converting miniatures, and bullying her two cats. Really likes a good injury table.

STEVE ROWLINSON
Steve escaped the Industrial hive-world known as “Manchester” a decade ago to live in the wilds of Central Scotland with his wife and two dogs. Steve is a painter, writer and amateur game designer who likes nothing better than wandering out into the woods, hoping to encounter eldritch beings or find cool sticks.

BILL FORD
Former sailor, former soldier, tinkerer...most certainly not a spy. A husband and father first, Bill has been described as being, ‘good at doing things’. When not inserting himself into other’s 28-related projects, he enjoys terrain-making, writing poorly and generally not having a life.

JAMES SHERRIFF
Last seen walking barefoot into the battle mists of the Trench Crusade, clutching only a battered old dataslate and a rusty spoon, James was lost to us for some time. Voltaire was about to redact him from the 28 datorium, when we received a garbled radiotelegraph from the Front. Reams of punch tape regurgitated his instructions for the layout of volume 5. Blessings of the bomb upon his wretched biomass.

BORIS MONCEL
Fueled by stout & coffee dosing cortical implants, Boris is an illustrator and graphic designer from Lyon, France. Ill-fated rogue and freelancer in the videogame industry, he has vowed to spread his vision of war and decay to the 28 community. He enjoys converting his miniatures and warbands when not writing his graphic novel or taking care of his daughter.

MARTIN MCCOY
Martin is a tattooer and illustrator based in Richmond Virginia. Never has he felt so connected to the hobby and the 28 community. It really is such a bright source of joy and human connection. So he’s going to take this chance to thank, from the bottom of his heart, everyone who makes 28 possible and this community so welcoming and fun. Thank you. He works on Mosscairn and Necropolis.

TREY GREER
Trey is a writer, designer, and musician based out of Providence, RI. He is stretched upon the plain and covering some nine acres of ground. Two vultures on either side of him are digging their beaks into his liver, and Trey keeps on trying to beat them off with his hands, but cannot.
CONTENTS

10 COVER ARTIST // John Blanche
34 ESSAY // VASTARIAN
44 EVENT // ABZU
50 ARTIST FOCUS // Cole Griffin
56 ARTIST FOCUS // Robert Mccoll
64 THE FORGE // Down and Dirty Sculpting
66 THE FORGE // Painting Yellow
70 ESSAY // Demaking Warhammer
76 ARTIST FOCUS // Thomas Sigl
82 HAZMAT //
90 ARTIST FOCUS // Marcello Rizza
94 EVENT // Mordheim 2022
100 ESSAY // We Don’t Just Love the Medieval
102 THE FORGE // Fist in the Eye Miniatures
124 ARTIST FOCUS // Julia Nevalainen
132 EVENT // Rot Of Hondious
142 THE FORGE // Tips for Tonks
148 THE FORGE // Sculpting the Boglanders
156 28 // Free Miniature
158 EVENT // WeadCon2023
170 EVENT // Azure Crescent
176 ESSAY // TSPN
178 EVENT // Turm 2023
192 28 CHALLENGE // The Indie challenge
208 ESSAY // Trench Crusade Final Faction Reveal!
212 ESSAY // Trench Crusade World Building
214 EVENT // Forbidden Psalm x Turnip28
216 28 CREATES // Going To Print
218 ESSAY // Altar of the Dead Gods
226 ESSAY // Non combat tabletop
232 CREDITS //
John Blanche is an artist whose name rings high and low amongst those engaged in the tabletop miniature community. Known for his blend of anachronistic, gritty and at times punk-rock aesthetic, his artwork has given visual language that informed the Games Workshop studio for close to half a century. Indeed, it is this bizarre style that spawned a unique means of model customization called the “Blanchitsu” movement over a decade ago, and we at 28 would not be where we are without him.

While John has recently begun to enjoy retirement, his creativity continues to flow into personal and other private projects, namely Trench Crusade and playing games of Mordheim with friends.

I think the person who was behind it all, who had the vision, was Brian (Ansell). He made an industry.

Could you speak a little more about your background?

I was into youth culture – in my final years at school I desperately wanted to own a pair of winkle pickers and all that, but my parents would never let me. But the Beatles appeared on telly in ’63 and everybody went to school with their hair combed down and the headmaster turned up with his stick and sent loads of people home, told them not to come back until they dressed properly and stopped trying to look like girls. I thought it was wonderful.

It’s very moving to know that there are people out there who are genuinely grateful for the hobby. The number of people who were shaking my hand at events and the people I met – just incredible. I met an art director recently who told me “I wouldn’t be doing what I do if it wasn’t for you.” What, really? Wow, that is really moving.
I started going to clubs when I was 16, watching bands like the Yardbirds and the Pretty Things and other early rock bands with a big blues background. Culture seemed to dramatically change overnight. Everyone started wearing really sharp, hand-stitched mohair suits and riding scooters – a lot of American soul music. Then, when I was 16 hearing the Isley Bros in a club in Nottingham, I’d never heard anything like that before in my life.

I was interested in multi culture and drawing strange pictures. Hard to describe what I was drawing back then, but hippy culture was like a bag of bricks. I was at college in the late 60s, listening to Cream and Hendrix, going to festivals and growing my hair long, when I started to see fantasy art appearing around this time. A lot of Roger Dean. I’m not going to say it inspired me but it gave me permission to draw fantasy and it was quite airy-fairy fantasy. Then my art college tutors insisted I read The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings. Took me a matter of days – it was fantastic! All of a sudden, I had a framework to draw my pictures in. So it was kind of these youth culture influences making their way through to the person I became.

One day I was helping Roger Dean do an exhibition at the RCA in London. And at the end of the day we had a meal with Roger and then he asked if I wanted to go and see some bands with him. I thought that would be great Roger, yeah. So we got there and I was looking at the queue of people – and they were really weird! These guys in ripped blazers and safety pins and sticky up hair – it was extraordinary. But yeah particularly because everyone I saw everywhere else has long hair. So we went and saw Chelsea and another band called Eater. Chelsea had Billy Idol in it – he looked about 14. I thought, they’re mad! They can’t play, but they had this energy that I was quite impressed by.

I got back to Nottingham and all of my friends discovered the punk revolution, and some started putting on some punk nights in Beeston in Nottingham, and that again had a big influence in what I was drawing. Rather than drawing “nice” fantasy, punk gave me permission to paint “nasty” fantasy! So, kind of move forward a few years – I can’t remember the dates – but when I saw the Duellists and Bladerunner, that gave me permission to make everything rather dismal. It rains everywhere! Of course it does, rains all the bloody time.

So again we’ve got cultural influences playing on my style and allowing me to do things that subsequently had a tremendous influence on my later GW career. And then you can see the connection with real life, where you have to look at woodcuts from 1500, warfare from that time, medieval knights, orders – Templars, Hospitallers and the Knights of Lazarus which often get left out. Wow! Groups of knights, lepers… Knights of Lazarus have leprosy! If you look at things with kind of an open eye, you realise that stuff out there is weirder and more sense of gravitas that no art could ever do.

I remember seeing a parade of guys in India, it was this big festival, and they were all marching in formation, lines and lines and lines of them – all stark naked, all with bricks and stones tied to their members. And they’re all marching along and the brick is swinging. Or this guy who has held his arm up for thirty years and it’s all atrophied. People do some really strange things!

I was watching an Islamic festival in Baghdad and they were walking in homage to this particular festival, and all the young men were marching in files, in beautiful white shirts and they were flagellating themselves! Each step was a blow to the back. The white shirts were covered in blood. That is so weird to me!

But it makes it a number of influences as well – the influence of natural history and geology, and especially the influence of weather. I considered the fact that I have never drawn the weather, and I’d love to draw the weather, Turner does the weather. I’d love to translate that into my images. I tried it with the Voodoo Forest, but there’s more to it – stuff you can’t see in the distance.

Of course my studio, it faces north but also slightly east, and the prevailing weather formations come over from the west, and so catching clouds going over is something I get all day. I get to watch Lin at her gardening and watching the clouds. So, I’ve got all these influences in me – these are the things that activate me as an artist, and drawing – I

“John chose the fantasy genre because of the freedom to explore ideas and the potential to depict the impossible. His view is that fantasy demands a high sophistication of technique and skill, a necessity to ‘overstate the case’. You have to make the impossible look real.”

(Sean Masterson, WD 95)
meet so many people now who want to draw videogames or a film they’ve seen, but I’m – but they’ve all come out of someone’s imagination. Where did they get their influences from?

I think Dave Gallagher shares the same... I think he’s got an understanding of kind of religious iconography and real history; it is ever so strong in real life. Most people don’t see. Inside of churches are fascinating. Look at the misericords, carvings in Beverley Minster – go to Nottingham, the village of Attenborough – it’s where Oliver Cromwell’s sister married John Ireton – that church couldn’t be any further from the sea in any direction. Yet the church has all these carved mermaids. Why?

How is retirement treating you?

I love it! Well, apart from ending up in hospital! Hopefully it will all get sorted in the next few days. When I get back home [we can happily report that John is safely back home now] I will have a beautiful studio to work in, small but fantastic. I can dabble in lots of different projects that interest me. But I’ve got to be careful though, I can’t say yes to too many things! Particularly being in the position of saying yes, fine I’ll do it for you, but not as a proper commercial project. That is the luxury I have now. I’ve been turning down a fair few jobs, but they always come with expectations, a deadline, and my mental state will not tolerate any of that anymore.

But I’m busy doing Voodoo 2 – that is really a series of colour characters that live in the Voodoo Forest. It’s called Voodoo Scions. I’ve pretty much finished it now, about 35 vignettes in total. They’re going to Italy to be printed.

We did hear something about your Italian publisher possibly making a game based upon your work. Did we hear correctly?

Yeah, it wasn’t a definite thing – it was kind of thinking aloud, really. Doing some kind of game. Not got a clue what they might be up to, though! They do have a very good group of sculptors. In a way I don’t want to get involved – it’s a lot of work and I don’t need any of that!

Can you tell us a little bit about your Voodoo Scions, your follow up to Voodoo Forest?

I’ve always drawn and painted outside my full-time job, because I have so many images inside my head that I want to get out and it’s a different thing to what I was doing at Games Workshop, which is about orcs, marines, soldiers and suchlike. I wanted to draw pictures that are more pastoral, so Voodoo Forest was about landscapes, but with some characters in it. All very fluid but controlled. Voodoo Scions is mainly full colour, character studies – these are the people that populate the Voodoo Forest, creatures that roam the land and live by [sticking their fingers up at fools and catching the chicken]!

Will there be a third instalment in the Voodoo series?

I can’t see myself doing a third one, I just don’t have the time or the energy. I only get a couple of hours in the morning these days to do art. Still have a head full of ideas, though! But I do find it refreshing drawing a picture of something set in the Trench Crusade, for example, because I don’t have the baggage of carrying the whole thing with me and trying to influence others, I’m just following along with what has already been created anyway. That is so refreshing!

How do you feel about leaving GW after four decades? What you’ve contributed, what you’ve left behind, what you’ve helped to grow.

A mixture of feelings. It’s early days yet. I’m getting a lot of visitors right now – people who work at GW and some who used to work there, that’s been really nice. Maybe when that begins to fade away I’ll miss it more than I do at the moment. It’s still very fresh – it’s like it hasn’t really happened yet! Like looking in WD and seeing adverts for new figures and getting excited about it. There is that excitement of seeing things going through different stages of production. But I can’t put figures together very well now – I have neuropathy in my fingertips. So it stops me building miniatures, let alone painting them – I have to adopt a very different style. Or I get other people I know to paint them. Trench warfare – that’s what I want to do. Expressionistic style. Being retired has allowed me to become a more fully formed hobbyist, and that’s been great fun.
Where do you see GW going in the future and what direction would you like to see them go?

I think they'll just get more and more corporate. That's what it feels like at the moment, they make what they think people want to buy. I'd always want to make what people never knew they wanted to buy. So I think there's space for coming up with new ideas and working with them in mad ways barely exists at GW at the moment. I think that will disappear in the future which I think would be a great shame.

Did you know that suddenly the Second World War looks more grimdark than everything else. I think people's perceptions can change as well. I think the generation that were kids in the 90s, they're the ones that are buying a lot of the stuff at the moment – the nostalgia is big. But there are also a hell of a lot of young people coming into the hobby that seem to like the brightness and brashness of it all. I always thought that was a bit weird – the brightness of what it has become now. Turquoise space marines are ludicrous to my eye, but it seems to be really popular. A lot of hobbyists seem to like it colourful. Space Marines painted pink just baffles me. It's not just an exercise in miniatures and paint, it's an exercise in a world. But a lot of that world I was involved in, I think it's going to go. Particularly the sculpting studio – must be over 30-40 sculptors now. A lot of people with various sensibilities. But some of the sculpting is a bit florid for my taste.

Can you tell us about some of your favourite pieces and artists from your time at GW?

Kev Chin, Paul Dainton, Alex Boyd, Phil Moss, Lewis Jones...hope I haven’t forgotten anybody! [Laughs] A couple of Inquisition pictures that Alex Boyd drew, b&w, one was a trial – that’s now hanging up in my medical facility. Fabulous piece. You know, Alex Boyd came for his interview and he was painting pub signs for a living, it was so nice to give him a job. Phil Moss and Paul Dainton are going to work for CMON. When I went to Lucca games in Italy they had all the CMON artists – Paulo Parente, Paul Bonner, Adrian Smith – that was a great time. So talented. Paul paints a mean miniature, too. His style is very painterly – same with Paulo. I’m trying to entice them over to Warhammer World and have a really big ork game!

Which piece (or pieces) are you most proud of, from any time in your career – personal work or for Games Workshop?

Get asked that a lot! "What’s your favourite piece?" I finish things, then I look at them and think, "Well, I could have done that better". So I finish it and try not to think about it anymore, go on to something new. And the new thing is going to put right everything that was wrong and be brilliant! Of course, the same thing always happens and I see bits where I think I could do better. So it’s a constant movement, rather than stopping and liking something. The next piece will be better! [Laughs]

What specific colours do you have in your palette?

Warm autumnal. I go from yellow to ochre to sandy colours, tan type colours, going into browns. A very rich yellow underneath everything. So if you’re using paints with an iridescent quality, it shines through and makes paintings look incredibly warm. Got all that really from looking at Rembrandt.

I use blue rarely because it is the opposite of all those colours. I paint a lot with inks because they contain shellac (a resin secreted by tree-dwelling bugs in Asia), and they have qualities like an oil painting – very translucent. But the blue in that shellac range is fugitive, which means after years it fades to nothing, so I try to keep away from it.

Your work has always had this incredibly vigorous confidence. You seem to absolutely commit to whatever premise you’re running with – if you draw a pile of skulls it’s a massive pile of skulls, if you’re putting heels on someone the heels are made of metal and dagger thin. Similarly, a lot of your mark making has this bold, committed vitality to it. Did you have to find that confidence as you developed? Was that part of the art direction and approach of GW at the time or were you already painting like that?

Yes. Mainly because I was doing conceptual work for various ranges for GW and there was always pressure with publishing dates. Mainly the work I was producing wasn’t published, but the minis had to be made to schedules, so there was a deadline there for me, but also I just had so many ideas, it’s like my head was just full of them, so I had to work fast. I was a bit worried about it at first, but gradually over the years
I became more comfortable with drawing fast and loose. Some of it was atrocious but you learn from your mistakes and I gradually got more and more confident. So much so, I am more or less completely confident working in that fast and loose style now. Which is a godsend, because now my fingers have constant pins and needles – I can’t hold pens and brushes properly but I can make very fast, gestural marks and if I keep that controlled I am still managing!

Well, you clearly seem to be managing with the new artwork you have shown me, with your Voodoo Scions and the jaw-dropping piece for the Trench Crusade – they are simply stunning and I would never have been able to tell that you suffer with constant pins and needles in your fingers.

It’s strange. I never would have thought of myself as being competent at all – I find myself looking at the work of others and thinking, wow, I could never do that! [laughs] If you look at, for example, Jim Burn’s paintings in the flesh, they are just remarkable. An interesting story there, I was at a friend’s wedding down near Bath, out in the countryside – the reception was at this large farm complex. There happened to be this big outdoor art group going on and I noticed this lady. I said to my wife, I know Jim Burns lives down in this part of the country, that would be dead funny if that was his wife, you know. Well, go and talk to her, my wife said. I can’t do that, I said, so my wife did! And it actually was Mrs Burns. She gets on the phone to Jim and said, John Blanche is here, so he gets in his car and comes down with a car full of his paintings! And he gave this impromptu outdoor exhibition of Jim’s paintings, and they are breath-taking – I’ve never seen work that is so fine, so considered. Beautiful stuff.

Well done to your wife for going and making that introduction!

I’m very shy.

Can you explain your love of pastiche? On the subject, your famous painting, Baron Heinrich Von Torlichhelm, Master of the Order of the Knights Panther (1986), was in itself a pastiche of Gericault’s Chasseur a Cheval (1812). In White Dwarf 83 it was said: “… paid homage to a man whom John believes might have been another Frazetta, had he been alive today”. And then in WD95 (Nov ’87): “All the elements there. It’s both dynamic and extremely attractive to the romantic mind.”

– John Blanche. What is it about the original Gericault piece that drew you to it and caused you to create the Knights Panther piece from it? Was it as an homage to the original?

Yeah, I love doing pastiche. Very comfortable using Rembrandt characters, buried in a Sisters of Battle painting, for example. In this case it was Gericault’s Chasseur. I think if those artists were around these days, they would probably be working in the gaming industry. There would be plenty of work for them!

Absolutely he would have been another Frazetta! My first war games army was French Napoleonic, and the Imperial Guard had these great big busbies, with these mad, almost extreme, pantomime costumes. So, the image is there in my head, and seeing the original painting in the Louvre – it’s huge! I don’t know how people paint to such a huge scale to be honest with you. I like to see the whole thing in front of me whilst I am painting so I can control it. Anyway, I thought to myself, Brian Ansell’s like Napoleon, so I’m wondering what if he was doing a Warhammer painting, what would it be like? So I painted the Knights Panther. It was just for myself, by the way, for my own amusement, but it was adopted by GW. Actually, that is where the Knights Panther came from – my painting.

Leopard saddle cloth, like they did in real life. You know, I mean it is… the originals are chasseurs, Imperial guard, but there are other kinds of chasseurs as well. It fascinated me the way Napoleonic regiments used colours, because you’ve got all of the green, the facing colours, each squadron had a different colour, like salmon pink, orange or yellow – and that kind of did things to my brain, in terms of colour. Then the trumpeters reversed all the colours, so if they were in a squadron with yellow facings, they’d have yellow jackets with green facings and white busbies. I find all that really amazing, so I hope Ridley Scott’s new Napoleon movie is truthful to such things! He generally isn’t – some of the helmets in Gladiators were, well, you know. I think the real-life historic stuff is just as exciting – more exciting – so why change it?
COVER ARTIST // JOHN BLANCHE
What are your favourite periods of history? What is it about these periods that might intrigue or inspire you?

All of them! They are all exciting. Getting a glimpse of the way people were, how they did things, what they thought – in whatever period that might be – is just really exciting. All of it. I love it. But I like it to be right, at least from our current knowledge. Like when I see Vikings fighting… why is it with battles in films, they are just running at each other? Where are the tight formations? For instance, Kingdom of Heaven. Great series, but you’d get the Vikings with their shield wall, then you’d get the Saxons with their shield wall… where did that come from? You’d have hundreds of men with their shields just pressing against each other, pressing, pressing. And stabbing through the gaps! Why can’t they do that in the bloody films? That would be just as dramatic. The books are great, though.

It is strange – wargamers are generally such peaceable folk and yet they play with these little soldiers that are about mayhem and death and savagery. Maybe it is a cathartic exercise just to get rid of that ‘masculinity’ that lurks inside us (men, that is)! Let’s go and chop some heads off for a couple or hours!

While your influences are clearly varied, from master painters like Rembrandt and literature from Shakespeare and others, work like your Voodoo Forest suggests that you also take a lot from studying natural history, geology and weather. Can you touch on that?

Yes, the weather! Trees, hills, countryside and the weather. You take a close look at old gnarly trees and they are far more fantastical than anything I could possibly draw. So yeah, nature is just so amazing. It’s also weird. I love it.

Back in White Dwarf 95, it was claimed that your favourite painting was Battle of Alexander at Issus (1529) by Albrecht Altdorfer. Is this true and, if so, is this still the case? What makes this painting so special for you?

Yes, it’s true, but nowadays it is one of many favourites. But look at it, it just sticks out. The painting is incredible. A real battle going on, thousands upon thousands of troops, and I think to myself – wow, that guy has painted all of that going a bit back, can you tell us about your work on the Tolkien Bestiary and the first edition of Dungeons & Dragons? How did that work come about?

Yes, that’s a long time ago! I did the cover for the first published English version of Dungeons & Dragons, but that was it with D&D. Really it was mostly Fighting Fantasy game books and the Sorcery series – terribly paid but I must have done hundreds of illustrations for them. But the Tolkien Bestiary, that was very well paid, proper money.

I did a set of postcards for Roger Dean at Paper Tiger. The Tolkien Bestiary publishers were looking for people to illustrate the book and simply picked my name up from those first postcards. That’s also where I met Ian Miller, you know.

Of course, Ian Miller did work for the Tolkien Bestiary too, didn’t he.

So there’s Ian and me stood in a lift, never met him before, never seen him before, and I can remember saying “I think you’re Ian Miller, aren’t you?” Not sure where that came from, but I was right!

So that would have been back in the late 70s?

Yeah, getting on for 1980. Wow, you are stretching my memory so far back! It’s a lifetime ago!

You’ve mentioned in the past (WD300 – 2004) “The Illustrated Man” – “Fantasy is much darker than US high fantasy”… can you expand upon this?

I think a lot of the early D&D illustrators and fantasy artists mainly in America didn’t extend the imagery. If they are going to paint a knight, they will paint a sort of knight, sitting on his horse with a lance. They don’t make it what it could be – don’t extend it at all. The big fantasy thing, people going on about how dark it is – “winter is coming”. And I go, well, I look at the people, the warriors, and I think “boring”. The art director of this show has barely paid any attention to real life arms and armour, because what they’ve come up with is not as good as the real thing. Look at the real thing and look at what some European artists have done with it. I think that was the case back then and is still the case in many ways now.
I’m always let down. Come on Ridley Scott with helmets in *Gladiator*. The real ones were awe inspiring, and then the Hollywood version is such a let-down. Then there is the *Duellist* – someone said you can’t have the star of the film covering his face. I’m asking them, please give him his full-faced helmet, all the regalia. Read about real archaeological finds. Show the real history. I find it frustrating.

Are there any current artists or people in the hobby that you admire?

Mike Franchina. He’s doing what I always wanted to do and he’s imbuing illustrations with a medieval religious aspect. I think he does it perfectly. Beyond that there are hundreds who I admire, too many to mention! That goes for hobbyists these days too.

We also wanted to ask you about how you became interested in *Trench Crusade*. What is it about the setting created by Mike Franchina that appeals to you?

Well, it’s doing what I always wanted 40K to be. But I obviously couldn’t, because orcs and elves, dwarfs, Space Marines and so forth that had existed since the beginning (*Rogue Trader, 1988* – Volitare). I wanted more human, more religious, more just nastiness full-stop. So I hope there aren’t going to be any orcs in the *Trench Crusade!* [Laughs]

Crusades are such an interesting period to go for. I don’t know how many people know about the novel by Umberto Eco called *Baudolino*, but it has such an amazing narrative which follows the historical structure, but it has this amazing made-up story to go with it. Towards the end of the story it goes into fantasy – Eco manages to meld all these things together. You’ve got this peasant boy in 13th century Italy being adopted by Emperor Frederick the First, turned into a crusading knight, going to Constantinople where the crusaders raze it to the ground, then getting involved with the trafficking of religious artefacts… I can’t remember the whole plot, but it was a most enjoyable read.

In mythology, in crusading mythology, there is a knight who got rid of all his possessions – armour, weapons, everything – and he went off in search of this mythical country called Hy-Brasil. They find it pretty much where India is, I think, and there are all kinds of mythical beasts. Well, I don’t have the strength to read it again, I’ll have to see if I can get an audio book! Have you ever read *Moby Dick*? That was an absolute eye-opener for me. You have this Polynesian chief working on this whaler, he was in Nantucket, and he has this collection of shrunken heads, and he’s walking around town with a wheelbarrow full of shrunken heads, selling them! The image of that is just astonishing.

Books have given me so much, although I don’t consider myself well-read. Dickens and Shakespeare I find a lot harder to read. I had to study MacBeth at college. I never read anything by Moorcock; I know nothing of him other than Hawkwind! Actually, Hawkwind came up to the studio a couple of decades ago.

But the book I find really exciting is *Gormenghast*. It gives such a strong, visual imprint – only an artist could have done that, you know. Mervin Peake’s penwork is just sublime, his *Treasure Island* illustrations are absolutely glorious.

What is it about narrative gaming that draws you to it?

A complete disregard for being controlled by rules! Because when you are immersed in a war game, all sorts of things have potential, different possibilities – narrative gaming makes the whole experience a lot more enjoyable for me. A lot more fun, very anarchic – if that’s what’s meant by narrative wargaming! I have a complete disregard for rules. Why? Because I can’t remember them! I read a page of rules, turn the page and I’ve already forgotten what I just read. I’m also terrible with numbers; I’m the equivalent of dyslexic with numbers. Numbers can reverse themselves on the page for me, so that’s a bit of a disadvantage to start with. So why should I be excluded from the fun of wargaming just because I can’t cope with the rules? But generally, the people I game with – they know the rules a lot better than me and are very patient, so it all works out nicely and we always have fun.

Telling stories is an extension of the miniature. If you are painting warbands instead of armies, you can have a closer relationship with the miniature you are painting, since they are individual characters, not a mass regiment. So the whole thing, from painting to playing, becomes narrative-led. It’s all to do with the imagination, really.
The Church of the Red Athenæum under the steps of Daylight Wall from the Pilgrym game (2016).
“One of the strongest images for me is how the Warhammer 40,000 universe takes human characters and characteristics and deconstructs them. There exists a dark fascination within 40K with bio-engineering – many of the characters have been radically changed until little remains of the original human... The 40K universe is built upon many such ideas of quasi-humans and is an exaggeration and twisting of much that we see in the modern world.” (John Blanche, WD257, May 2001).
I’ll always remember posting a vampire lord firing a multi-barrelled pistol on a Mordheim Facebook group once and they ripped me to bits! You can’t have this! It’s not in the rules! Hang on, I thought. I can’t have it? But it looks great! Lore is only made up by someone sitting in a corner. That’s all it is. Why can’t anyone else be creative?

**How does your painting process compare to your mini building process?**

I don’t sketch any concept first – it is a freeform journey. For me, what is the point of making a sketch? You get this initial idea and go on this journey of discovery – that is important for me. I try not to be scientific about the process – for me it comes from the heart. I don’t know what’s going to come, the art reveals itself to me.

Jes is very different – he doesn’t make a mark on paper until it’s resolved itself, almost, in his head. The mark on the paper will be The Mark – the correct thing in the correct place. Strangely or not strangely, artistic people I’ve found, there’s a number who don’t like cars and a number who don’t like football. Jes is one of those. I do however remember when he started getting a fascination with F1 cars and started watching races. The ergonomics of those cars, I would say, found their way into his Eldar vehicle designs. That’s amazing. I just sit at the window watching clouds (laughs).

**How would you define Blanchitsu? How did it start? And who coined the term (we heard it was Rick Priestley)?**

There’s a good answer to that. For me, Blanchitsu is a spread of different methods of painting GW miniatures, primarily. But there is one common thread – these are not like miniatures painted for ‘Eavy Metal, which are pristine miniatures with, for me, over-exaggerated highlights, because that works best for photography. Miniatures are something that partakes in action on the tabletop, they are not to put in glass display cabinets to be looked at, they are to be played with. If a miniature was to be engaged in war in real life, they would be covered in dirt and grime. They’ve been in a campaign for so long, that the finished, painted result should reflect that. So I started painting in a more earthy style. And so do some of my friends, especially the Scandinavian ones (and a couple of people from the north of England)! Mainly playing *Inquisitor* games. Blanchitsu has been dragged into an area which I feel is false – that’s because some people seem to be assuming that it is dirty, messy, scruffy – and just throw paint on. It’s not true. You just look at some of the old Blanchitsu articles in White Dwarf, there are some beautifully painted miniatures.

So there’s two things going on there. Let’s make it muddy and realistic – you don’t have to be an ‘Eavy Metal painter to achieve the effect. So there’s part of it going on, producing gaming miniatures is a big part of that. When we had the *Inquisitor* games going, I guess the most famous one was The Pilgymme [An narrative INQ28 event created by the hobbyist collective Iron Sleet and held at Warhammer World (2016), where different warbands attempted to find a fabled “Pilgym,” whose fate was linked to that of the Emperor Himself, on the hallowed steps of Daylight Wall on Holy Terra. - Volitare], it was just so much fun. It was the highlight of Blanchitsu (the Pilgryme), that was.

Oh and yes, it was Rick Priestley who came up with Blanchitsu. I never liked the term anyway – one of Rick’s jokes, that was. [Laughs]

There have been multiple definitions of grimdark over the years, but what is yours? What does grimdark mean to you personally?

Well of course, the words ‘grim dark’ came off the strapline for 40K. But what does it mean to me? Not drawing happy, jolly things! If you are going to draw a fantasy tiger, for example, it has got to have massive, sabretooth teeth, a big horn coming out of its heads, a great beak, muscle-bound, threatening. There’s nothing happy about it – it’s not a pet cat, it’s going to bite your head off. The same thing goes through all art, you could draw some pink, fluffy bunny rabbits, and some people do, that’s fine. I just sink into the art from around 1500, you know like Altdorfer, Dürer, Rembrandt. What beautiful, earthly tones. They are very warm, yet the characters tend not to be nice – crude people with gnarly faces and gnarly beards. It just appeals to me. I think it goes back to childhood, you know. I think what I do is draw a combination of all the things that used to frighten me as a small child. Skulls. Why put a skull on something when you can put 20?
Do you have a vision for the future of grimdark?

Absolutely not. I don’t believe it will exist – it will diffuse. Most people I know don’t have that understanding or deep fascination with it. So I think it will peter out over the years.

Who’s your favourite Chaos god and why? If indeed you have one!

Indeed I do not! To me, they were more of an amalgam of one thing, and that one thing is personified by entropy. This world and everything in it is created and formed by energy, and that energy ultimately turns into entropy and breaks down again. That’s what all the Chaos gods are about – they are all part of one whole.

What are your interests beyond art, gaming and the grimdark or the baroque?

I don’t think I have any! I think it’s all-consuming for me.

Thank you so much for your time, John and for welcoming me into your home!

Pleasure.
ESSAY // VASTARIAN

VASTARIAN: DREAMS OF THE PIOUS
A newly awakened psyker of the Chisel of Oblivion searches the desiccated ruins of Vastarian for relics of a bygone age. Model created by Matt Ross (@totally_not_panicking on Instagram).
ESSAY // VASTARIAN

By Eric Wier

28 magazine has always been about showcasing the creations of people who shy away from mainstream iterations of the miniature wargaming hobby. It often focuses on converting and painting models, along with playing games that do not fit within the confines of currently published miniature games. Getting involved in this creative endeavour can be challenging, as most of us get into the miniature wargaming hobby via one of Games Workshop's games, which can be very prescriptive - rigidly creating an army following a codex book, fretting over magnetising weapons and chasing the meta of what is best, before realising a new edition of the game is on the way. Since this is what Games Workshop promotes in all its publications and media, it can be difficult to break out of this cycle. It was only after starting our blog, Between the Bolter and Me and connecting with people from the wider hobby community, like 28's very own Alexander Winberg and the hobbyists behind the collective Iron Sleet, that we really started to venture outside of Games Workshop's mould and into the nebulous world of INQ28.

Since getting involved in INQ28, we have had the good fortune of taking part in a variety of narrative 28-style events including the Pilgrym, Mordheim 2019 and the Rot of Hondious (featured in this very issue!). These pushed us creatively to reimagine some of Games Workshop's intellectual property and make it our own, while building models, creating characters and tailoring game systems to fit within the narrative framework we were collectively building with the other participants. Having had so much fun over the years diving into the world of INQ28 and participating in narrative events, we wanted to create our own narrative setting and situate it to act as a springboard for other hobbyists to get involved in it, encouraging them to dive into the often weird, but incredibly satisfying world of INQ28. We have done this by regularly posting on our blog, showing our progress creating warbands, characters and lore, while also giving suggestions about how to play games within the setting and ultimately doing what we could to get others excited about stepping outside the box Games Workshop tries to keep you in. All of this led to the creation of our Open Invitational: Vastarian - Dreams of the Pious. In this article we wanted to talk about what Vastarian is and how people can get involved!
The Concept:

When thinking about creating a setting for 28-style games, we started by reflecting on what aspects of Games Workshop’s settings and games appealed to us. Of all of Games Workshop’s creations, the 54mm tabletop role-playing game *Inquisitor* had the most influence on us. Its resonance with us was not because of game mechanics, in fact we only ever played it a few times. Instead, it was the game’s setting and narrative focus that really stood out. For the first time, inquisitors, and the Imperium in general, was made nuanced and believable. Instead of hyperbolic representations of good and evil, *Inquisitor* created believable factions within the inquisition, each with their own plausible interpretations of the Imperial Creed and how to best serve the God-Emperor. Finally, the central figure and animus for endless war in Warhammer 40,000, the Emperor of Mankind, had depth and a foundation upon which faith could be built around. By extension, all the characters within the game were more meaningful because they were all fighting for deeply held beliefs that were grounded and plausible. There were no separate profiles for Chaotic or puritan inquisitors, as none of the characters you were portraying thought they were agents of the Chaos Gods.

Instead of black and white, the conflicts and morality in *Inquisitor* were in shades of grey, which is far more interesting. Faith and morality are very human attributes; *Inquisitor’s* focus on these made it relatable in ways
Warhammer 40,000’s superhuman Space Marines and brutish orks could never be. The game also spawned Dan Abnett’s seminal Eisenhorn trilogy, which helped develop this further and gave a glimpse into what life might be like for civilians in the Imperium. Since the game’s release, we have been fascinated by the intersection of faith and civilian life in the 41st millennium, something that helped push us into the INQ28 scene to begin with. If we were going to create a narrative setting, it had to contain elements of this. Having created a brutal Imperial cult, the Church of the Red Athenæum, for the Iron Sleet’s Pilgrym event years back, we realised it would be great to create a setting that focused on the diverse ways people venerate and worship the God-Emperor, similar to the various ideologies within the Inquisition. This led us to create a loose narrative prompt for the cathedral world Vastarian, that has been thrown into turmoil due to the opening of the Cicatrix Maledictum, causing a massive psychic awakening amongst the general population and fomenting conflicts between different religious sects:

Vastarian is a vast cathedral world located within the Totradus Sector, in the southern region of Segmentum Solar. Although it is on a well-travelled route used by the faithful on their pilgrimage to holy Terra, that is not what makes it special. Instead, it accumulated its renown from two particular aspects. The first is its many architectural marvels: massive houses of worship, an expanse of stained glass and minarets, labyrinthian catacombs revering the hallowed dead and cavernous libraries and repositories of holy texts and religious scholarship. The second, and more surprising aspect, is that in an age characterised by intolerance and persecution, Vastarian welcomes thousands of disparate orthodoxies and splinters of the Imperial Creed, where they all live in relative harmony together. Provided the God-Emperor is venerated above all others and His will is promulgated, the Ecclesiarchy turns a blind eye to minor deviations and differing interpretations of the Lectitio Divinitatus. After all, isn’t all of humanity a part of His flock, of His Grand Design? While there are some documented instances of schisms that led to bloodshed, most were limited to internecine disputes and selective purges by the ever watchful Ordo Hereticus. But nothing lasts forever and this shining jewel of faith and understanding started to crumble as the 41st millennium came to a close. With the opening of the Cicatrix Maledictum and the darkening of the Age of Witches, the inhabitants of Vastarian were wracked by unified dreams, dreams of spectacular derangement and miracles of metastasis and biological dysfunction that offered each dreamer their own personal apocalypse. After months of these collective visions, centred on the ruins of reality, they started to shift and began to be dominated by a radiant light emanating from a figure whose features could not be made out, a being that seemed to pacify the encroaching ruin. The figure’s form was not consistent, as though it was taking on an aspect of the dreamer. These dreams seemed to coincide with an unprecedented psychic awakening, one that touched virtually every religious sect on Vastarian, fomenting zealous conjecture within each denomination that they alone had been touched by the Emperor Himself, birthing a Saint that would rise from the ashes of a burning Vastarian. Finally, after centuries of tenuous peace, the religious tolerance that defined the planet collapsed. The war for the Emperor’s soul had begun, for there could only be one Saint and the rest false idols and apostates.

Open Invitational:

Rather than just being a setting that we defined, we wanted other hobbyists to get involved in the creative process by building models, writing lore and playing narrative-style skirmish games. To encourage this, we...
ESSAY // VASTARIAN

announced Vastarian on our blog, *Between the Bolter and Me*, as an open invitational. The basic concept was to have people write lore and then convert and paint models for their own Imperial Cult (the more eccentric and deranged the better), who’s spiritual well-being and fanaticism was intimately tethered to the emergence of a powerful psyker in their midst, their own patron saint of the God-Emperor. The hope was that the prompt was both specific and general enough to allow hobbyists to be creative and take part, no matter their skill level or experience. It could be an entry point into the world of INQ28. We created a simple hashtag (#vastarian) to allow people to share their work online and easily connect with other people who were interested. Over the years we have found that networking with other like-minded hobbyists has been an important part of our hobby journey into the nebulous world of INQ28, providing inspiration and allowing us to gain confidence about our own work.

Cults of Vastarian:

Vastarian is a world that is home to thousands of unique cults, allowing participants limitless creative possibilities. To get peoples’ imaginations flowing and allow them to create their own Vastarian cults, we commissioned 28’s own Martin McCoy to create a piece of artwork that displayed a host of different cults, to emphasise how eccentric and divergent they can be from one another. Martin created two amazing pieces of artwork, one is displayed in this article! Two of the figures in the artwork are actually representatives of cults that have already been created for the setting, the aforementioned Church of the Red Athenæum and a faction of enigmatic Spyreheads. Below are short narrative descriptions of each.

Adeptus Arbites clash with militant cultists in the ruins of Vastarian.
The Church of the Red Athenæum:

The Imperial Creed has spawned all manner of eccentric cults across the Imperium and although the Ecclesiarchy permits some level of deviance from established practices, the line between heresy and acceptance is often blurred. The Church of the Red Athenæum is one such oddity, which is often persecuted for their extreme beliefs, stemming from the idea that salvation can only be obtained by sustaining an existence fashioned after the Emperor's suffering. Casting out their worldly possessions and desires, its followers are obsessed with the physical sacrifice and suffering of the Emperor and view the wounds inflicted to Him in his final battle as holy. To venerate the God-Emperor, and to join the cult, each member ritually mutilates themselves to emulate one of His holy wounds. In doing so, they are endeavouring to replicate and feel His pain. Ironically, since the exact details of this iconic battle were never shared with the general population, what wounds they inflict in the Emperor's name are based solely on myth and rumour. However, there are a few common selections: the removal of the left eye, removal of the larynx, or cutting the tendons in the wrists or removal of the hands. Some even go so far as having their spines severed, or entire limbs removed.

The higher ranking members of the Church tend to have multiple wounds, in an effort to get closer to His existence. This butchering is not the radical element that concerns the Ecclesiarchy, however, it is their belief that the Golden Throne is not a benefit to Humanity, but a prison trapping the Emperor's soul on Terra and preventing Him from implementing His Divine Will. The Horus Heresy was a period of great suffering for the Emperor, but it was only the beginning of this pain. Since being entombed in the Throne, His entire existence has been one of suffering. He watched His empire crumble into a pale shadow of its former glory, with the Imperial Truth being replaced with the Imperial Creed. He is enslaved by the corrupt High Lords of Terra, tethered to a damaged relic from the Dark Age of Technology, with the sole purpose of keeping the Astronomicon lit. It is not His Will that is being promulgated, but that of an amoral Senate of fools. The Church believes that in order for Mankind to achieve its next stage of evolution, the Emperor must be free to lead His people both spiritually and physically, something that is impossible when He is chained to the Golden Throne.

Spyreheads of Vastarien:

When creating the Vastarian setting, we knew it would not be complete without a sect of Spyreheads. Ahmad Jafar (@Stygian_thorne on Instagram) created the concept of these architecture-wearing pilgrims, taking inspiration from a piece of artwork created by the legendary John Blanche for Iron Sleet's Pilgrym event, entitled Ascend the Celestial Stair. We thought a world like Vastarian, which is covered in monolithic houses of worship, would attract devotees to the Emperor and the Arxvs Dedicatvm. We even commissioned Ana Polansčák of Gardens of Hecate to create the first five Vastarian Spyreheads!

While there are many divergent Spyrehead sects across the Imperium, they all exhibit some manner of veneration of spyres, cities and architecture, which leads them to build miniature replicas of these to wear, hence the name Spyrehead. These cults are often harassed and oppressed by other more dominant sects of the Imperial cult. As a result, those of Spyrehead faith often develop a sense of submission to others, knowing their faith in Him will be rewarded in death. Their beliefs tend to align with an Amalathian philosophy of things, trusting that the Emperor has a plan that is unfolding as it should. Who has the arrogance to
second-guess the will of the All-Knowing Emperor of Mankind?

The Vastarian Spyrehead faith has been shaped by the planet itself and the vast oceans that cover it. Lighthouses are common on Vastarien due to oceans covering over 60% of the planet. Most are no longer used due to cogitators and other technology, but many remain in their silent vigil, abandoned. Vastarien spyreheads place great significance on these lighthouses, as they symbolise His guiding light, which shows the faithful their way, not unlike the Astronomicon which guides humanity through the Warp. Lighthouses also symbolise how He lights the way for each faithful soul upon death to be united with Him. Relatedly, the Spyreheads have a strong commitment to honouring the dead, ensuring their souls transition peacefully. As such, in addition to spyres, they also adorn their heads with ossuaries and mausoleums, filled with skull motifs and other Memento Mori’s.

Playing games of Vastarian:

INQ28 is not simply about building models and sharing photos with people. Using those models and playing games with them can really elevate the hobby and allow narratives and storylines to grow. Taking the step to play games with a set of intricately converted models can be daunting, particularly because most miniature game rule sets are rigidly designed for specific models and unit composition, without the thematic and creative freedom that defines INQ28. Most wargamers come from games like *Warhammer 40,000*, which is defined by constantly cycling editions, Codex books and erratas, all vainly chasing balance. Therefore, when someone is looking to get into INQ28-style gaming, it is often asked: “what are the rules for this?” This, however, is somewhat missing the point of INQ28. If the modelling side of INQ28 is characterised by immense creative freedom to do whatever you like to build evocative miniatures, why would rules for using them in a game be any different?

While the majority of the INQ28-style events we played in have been based around a Games Workshop ruleset, they are rarely adhered to tightly. Often the warband creation rules are jettisoned for something more flexible and the games themselves are played without a rulebook on hand, encouraging the players to stay in the moment and allow the narrative to emerge naturally. If there is ever any doubt about something or a neat idea comes up that is not defined in the rules, a 4+ on a D6 is always an easy way to resolve things. This malleability in the ruleset might seem odd coming from one of Games Workshop’s games, but it is important to keep in mind that INQ28 games are rarely competitive. Instead, they are focused on telling a story and ultimately having a good time, win or lose.

Ideally, if you are considering playing games in the INQ28 style, we would encourage you to base it around a ruleset you already enjoy and are familiar with. You do not need to use the 54mm *Inquisitor* rules because that is where the INQ28 movement started, nor do you need to use *Necromunda* rules because you read that another INQ28 event used them. You should use a ruleset you know well, because that familiarity will make it easier to modify rules in the moment, to better fit the game as it is happening. Not only do you have the permission to change things, we would encourage it, as it is just part of the creative process and it makes games more enjoyable.

With all of this in mind, building a Vastarian cult is only the first step in the Open Invitational. The second is to use that cult in games within the Vastarian setting! As suggested above, any ruleset you enjoy can be a starting point for playing Vastarian games, remembering the focus is on building imaginative warbands and crafting a narrative rather than slavishly adhering to a ruleset. Once you open your mind to it, it is quite easy to transition a warband list to other rulesets. To help with this process, we wrote a *Between the Bolter and Me* blog post showcasing a Church of the Red Athenæum warband created for *Necromunda, Forbidden Psalm/Kill Sample Process* and Ramshackle Games’ *MiniGangs* (the post on the blog is called “Vastarian: Rules for the Church of the Red Athenæum”). Currently, the majority of our personal games are played using a loose interpretation of the current *Necromunda* ruleset. We do this simply because we have been playing Games Workshop-style games for many years and feel very comfortable with them, albeit we streamline them for simplicity.

Conclusion

We hope this article has given you a little insight into what the Vastarian Open Invitational is and our thought process when creating it. With a little luck, it will push you to take part in the invitational and create your own zealous Imperial Cult and help develop the world along with us! Even if you don’t take part in the invitational, we hope the article excites you about the potential of getting involved in the INQ28 movement or another similar 28-style narrative game and leads you to connecting with other like-minded hobbyists.
ABZU, in simple terms, was an entry into the Grimdark Film Club Invitational. Participants were tasked with crafting models inspired by non-GW fiction and art. ABZU drew its inspiration from the film Event Horizon. “Where we’re going, we won’t need eyes to see.” Yet ABZU is not a direct representation of the movie’s events. Instead it embodies a destination the Gravity Drive might lead to.

The contest acted as a portal between our world and the enigmatic moon looming over Salvatore 28. Salvatore 28 is a science fantasy setting developed by Colt. In this setting, moons are powerful forces and evocative locales. ABZU, the moon chosen by the team, held the “You break all the laws of physics and you seriously think there wouldn’t be a price” Gravity Drive, a central piece of the team’s submission. The description for ABZU was this:

One celestial horror is known but as a myth amongst the remaining civilized pockets of Nimbus. Cast into many star cartographer’s lost and unknown records, the body was named by early star cartographers as UpsilonBeta1. An ancient and terrifying entity, it has been seen only twice since warp storm RoeMega88 cut off Nimbus from Imperial rule. This Orange Giant has cast an ominous glare upon its parental body in the most dire of times, setting in motion events which would alter the path of the planet’s destiny. So it is now that etched mausoleums, great murals and intricate chronicles depict a deadly Umber Omen set to return upon a day of reckoning. An ancient and terrifying power now breaks its furthest elliptical and sets its path for home. The moon cults have given this great orb a name… ABZU - IntoTheGreyNorth || Colt
While Colt started the project based on his own setting and the film’s inspiration, he formed a team of collaborators who contributed ideas for the setting and played vital roles in different project aspects:

- **IntoTheGreyNorth** (Colt)
- **Lunax7070** (Shane)
- **ThatBeyondTheLight** (Gareth)
- **Symptomatic_Chaos** (Chris)
- **_Heretek** (Luke)

Interestingly, Gareth had already commenced work on a Gravity Drive before learning about ABZU.

I was going to have these three little explorers who’d gone into this room, found this horrific scene of psychics being used to power an interdimensional engine. I wrote a little lore, kind of got the bowl sorted and the sphere and started filling it with some bits. And then Colt messaged me out of the blue and said, “Me and a couple of guys are working on a similar project to do with Event Horizon. Do you want in? Because we’re at a loose end of how to do the warp drive.”

- **ThatBeyondTheLight** || Gareth
Each member added their own touch, making ABZU more than a mere movie replica. It became a shared creation, while reflecting their unique perspectives.

ABZU provides a sense of doom for the setting and an intractable expiration date for many of its characters. Thinking about it stirs that old feeling in me, the indescribable terror I first encountered as a child. ABZU is that experience of approaching the precipice of the unknown and unknowable. Everyone who contributed to the project was instrumental in bringing this night terror to life and I am overjoyed I was able to take part in it. There are more stories to tell on the demon moon and I look forward to exploring the setting further in future installments.

- Lunax7070 || Shane

ABZU isn’t just a picture of some plastic toy soldiers painted on a board, you know, like this is a story. Having that personal connection and making the model more than just, like, the physical thing that you’ve manipulated. Putting some personal, creative, like, heart or energy into something became a little bit more important.

- Symptomatic_Chaos || Chris
ABZU didn’t just display models on a table; it used them to craft evocative images. Manipulated in post production to add depth and texture, these images acted like windows into a world both sublime and horrifying.
I’ve been thinking of Beksiński, the European artist. He had a piece called AO. And it was just this huge monolithic structure.

One day, I saw this piece of an end table that was about to be thrown out. I said, Oh my god, that’s AO right there, and I just saw it immediately at that point, and I was like, I got it, I was like, you’re not throwing this way.

- IntoTheGreyNorth || Colt

We took inspiration from the now debunked astronomical hypothesis that the periodicity of mass extinction events on Earth was related to a large and distant gravitational body in the solar system. The idea was coined in 1984 as Nemesis Star and was thought to be a brown dwarf orbiting past the reach of any known planet. The orbit was elliptical and as the star approached the sun it would pull asteroids through the inner solar system causing impacts and destruction on Earth. We ported the spirit of Nemesis Star over into the Nimbus System as the distant, demon moon ABZU, whose approach would herald a time of increasing chaotic influence on the inhabitants of the hapless world.

- Lunax7070 || Shane
The Gravity Drive opened a portal to ABZU. What have we brought back with us from that journey?
ARTIST FOCUS // COLE GRIFFIN

COLE GRIFFIN

[Image of a figurine by Cole Griffin]
I have been making art my whole life, but not until recently have I felt like an artist. Growing up, I loved to draw weird and macabre subject matter. I was awed the first time I saw painted miniatures at a local toy store; fantastical tiny scenes and characters made manifest. My parents, especially my mother, always encouraged creative play, and so my brother and I built and painted a few soldiers and goblins then promptly forgot about miniatures for almost two decades.

I studied fine art in college where I decided that I was not, in fact, artistically talented, and dropped out of school. At age 28, I turned my life around, and the following year I got into the miniatures hobby proper during some world-mandated down time (I am 32 at the time of writing this). What started as a pastime in an unexplored medium quickly became an obsession to create again. I was immediately drawn to the grimdark aesthetic which invariably brought me to this publication. I have since and subsequently gone back to finish my art degree, began producing artwork for the first time in years, and found the amalgam artist collective I had been yearning for.

There is no original sin, only our individual exegesis. I look primarily to other artists within the community for inspiration. Studying the works of artists like Chris Beckhusen, Matt Ross, Ana Polanšćak, Giovanni De Pol and Nick Borelli, learning to borrow and steal inspiration, collaborate and mimic, grow and diverge. Art history is also a great source of inspiration to me: the assemblage work of Duchamp, expressionists Lang, Murnau and Wiene, Michelangelo’s use of La difficultà and Terribilità to convey beautiful divinity and otherworldly terror, the contrast of Caravaggio’s chiaroscuro, Zorn’s palette, and William Blake’s championing of imagination.

With or without a prompt, my creative process is very similar: dump every single bit I own onto the desk, start piecing them together like a defective jigsaw puzzle until the idea and pieces have cohesion, glue madly and blindly, deconstruct and reconstruct until my headcanon is in the right spot. My bits range from chopped up models to garbage. I have a pretty bad habit of cannibalizing my own finished miniatures for parts. The busyness of my builds gets dialed back during the painting process. I’ve committed to painting almost exclusively in oils and using a limited palette. I enjoy their richness and malleability. Simplifying form and losing detail in the sculps, favoring gestural brush strokes and thick paint application. This feels more expressive to me, but also turns my models into little “I Spy” puzzles. I encourage visual exploration and want to keep your eye moving without being too obvious. I’ve leaned less and less into the “dark” aspect of grimdark, finding that I can still communicate ghouliness and creepiness with bright colors. Sometimes, I incorporate 24 karat gold into my work. I have an emotional connection to the practice of kintsukuroi (golden repair). Imbuing a miniature with a little piece of gold makes it feel like a small extension of myself. When not kitbashing, I love to paint older sculpts in my own style. It feels a bit naughty and irreverent.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the top aspect of this hobby: community. I knew what 28 was years before I picked up a model kit. I truly believe in the virtue of attraction rather than promotion. The “28” style and artwork at large drew me in, but it was the community itself that ensnared me. I responded to a prompt to write an article about miniatures as art, which led me to reach out to artists that I admired and was met with overwhelming positivity and support. Shortly after I was welcomed into the Under The Dice community and joined the In Rust We Trust Discord channel. Whether I am making art for Smash Bash, Mordheim, Lobsterpot, The Rot of Hondious, Slug Wizards, etc., I am met with encouragement and friendship as well as the needed tutelage of critique. Truly, this niche within a niche is the long-lost collective I had been searching for.

If there were anything I could impart onto you, dear reader, it is this: be kind to yourself. Be kind to others. You are not alone. Dilige et quod vis fac: Love, and do what you will.

“Come freely. Go safely; and leave something of the happiness you bring.”
Hi, my name is Robert “Berti” McColl and I paint minis. I think I was fairly lucky, as I was able to play a wide variety of games while growing up. From board and computer games to what would become the primary focus of my hobby and fun times: tabletop miniatures games. I remember playing games including *Space Crusade*, *Talisman* and *Shogun: Total War* with my dad and my younger brother, with the art as well as the gameplay really sticking with me. This interest soon turned into an undead army at the start of Warhammer fantasy 4th Edition. I haven’t really looked back and have been building, painting and playing with minis ever since!

Since ditching what was the main focus of my hobby, 40K, I have been happier than in all the 30+ years I have been participating in the hobby. Having been introduced to the many other games and worlds out there, I feel freer than ever and have truly enjoyed branching out and letting my hobby imagination go wild. The first game my little game group decided to try out was *The Weald* and we fell in love. The community around *The Weald* (especially on Discord) was one of the main driving forces that encouraged me to set out on this journey of exploring the smaller indie game community and all it has to offer. Seeing what the community has made, whether it be minis, games or art has been inspirational to me and has motivated me to try and do the same. It was in the early period of looking at new games that I created my first fungal zombies, from what would turn out to be my last GW purchase (the new zombies for the Soulblight Gravelords army back in July 2021).

Discovering the many varied indie games and delving into their themes and aesthetics is a huge influence in what I create. I have a tendency to start making up miniatures and terrain for a game before I try it out or even find someone to play it with. I’m quite certain many of us do the same! When it comes to inspiration for this, I pull from a wide variety of sources from games (computer/board and other miniature games), films, books and art, as well as what my fellow hobbyists have made. Even going for a walk can be a great source of visual inspiration. It was seeing an abundance of golden yellow chanterelle mushrooms while hiking through the forests of the Scottish Highlands that inspired the orange/yellow fungus I now utilise in much of my work.

Much like my 2D paintings and drawings, I tend to not plan very much when making a miniature. I’ll use the visual references I have built up for an idea, then not focus too much on a single idea and mash them all together and see if it works. This is usually a very messy process, so I am lucky to have a hobby space I can shut off from the rest of the house (lest my wife see the true extent of the mess!). I tend not to focus on one project at a time, so I often work on several. I’ll glue pieces of one model together while I wait for the paint to dry on another, so my hobby table is often covered with the detritus of many different projects.

This approach to the hobby seems to be one shared by many of the numerous fellow hobbyists I follow and chat to on social media. I am quite active on Instagram and Discord in particular and I have, over the years, started to regularly chat with quite a number of people. This is perhaps one of the biggest positives I have found in this hobby. The passion of the hobby community is certainly infectious and I find we often support and encourage each other to create some truly weird and wonderful works of art! It is also through this community that I have had several opportunities to illustrate and paint images for rulebooks and even some interesting commissions. Particular highlights for me were being asked to create the front cover of the *Forbidden Psalm: Last War* hardcover rulebook as well as being a part of the team painting minis for the *Bone Forest* game modelling book. Being able to collaborate with the makers of great games has been a dream come true and I hope to be able to do more in 2024!
ARTIST FOCUS // ROBERT MCCOLL
ART WORK FOR FORBIDDEN PSALM LAST WAR
By Evgeny Kirsanov

Hello, my name is Evgeny and I love kitbashing and sculpting miniatures in a grimdark Warhammer style. I was never professionally trained, but over a period of years gained some experience and would like to share some of my personal tips in modeling.

1. Help of professionals
Naturally, if you have never trained in art school or had another form of professional training, some form of guide is very helpful when learning to sculpt. Initially, my biggest challenges were sculpting clothing and creating natural postures, and two fantastic guides helped me tackle them. *How to Draw Folds and Clothes: For the Extreme Beginner* by Liron Yanconsky is a small book which introduces the concepts of how fabric behaves, teaches about effects of gravity, tension, and stretching. *Figure Drawing: Design and Invention* by Michael Hampton is a more indepth read which starts from the most important step: choosing the balance and posture for your miniature. There are many other great guides available, and I strongly encourage you to explore and find more on your own! I would also like to point out two of my favorite sources of inspiration online: Boris Woloszyn and Raffaele Stumpo.

2. Tools
Unsurprisingly, your selection of tools is important. The tool I use 90% of the time is a chisel shaped color shaper. The silicone/rubber of the tool helps with smoothing and shaping without tearing soft substances like green stuff or other putties. Brand-wise, I love Royal Sovereign UK, particularly the Firm variant. Softer, cheaper versions from other manufacturers I have used did not impress me, as they sacrifice control. Another important tool is from the dentist world: plastic composite filling instruments. They have the perfect shape and sharpness for sculpting, particularly for more intricate and small details. I also think it is worth mentioning the scalpel, with a Swann Morton blade, is a great tool for sculpting. Again, I have found that cheaper alternatives are not worth it, as they are more difficult to use.

3. Materials
I admit, I stole this tip from a friend of mine, Kirill Kanaev. He always adds Apoxie Sculpt to green stuff in equal proportions, making a very light green mixture. This mixture makes it much easier to create sharp edges than green stuff alone, which is too elastic for such a job. On the other hand, Apoxie Sculpt alone is more fragile and breaks more easily, as it is lacking elasticity. Together, they allow you to use the best properties of both materials.

4. Timing and the post-dried phase
Sculpting can be a slow process. You never want to sculpt too much, and always want to start from basic forms, let them dry before adding more. Once the sculpting putty has dried/cured, it is time to use a scalpel and sandpaper to make the edges sharper, remove excess, and check for symmetry.

5. Removable Mounting Putty for extravagant shapes
You can gently insert a piece of removable putty (I use Scotch Removable Mounting Putty) under drying green stuff to provide support when the putty is curing. This helps you to create the impression of twisted cloth or to shape armour pieces. Once the green stuff dries completely, you can cautiously remove the putty. From experience, it usually does not stick to the solidified green stuff, but if a very small amount still remains attached, it can be easily removed by tapping it with a larger chunk of removable mounting putty.

6. A camera for feedback
I think this final tip is the most important. Our eyes are an extension of our brain and when working on a project for too long, we become blind to its flaws. It is almost like the brain “corrects” the miniature image by hiding its imperfections. You can break this illusion by periodically using a camera to take pictures of your miniature. When looking at the miniature in picture form, often you will immediately notice flaws that you were missing before. While it is natural to feel a sense of frustration when finding an obvious mistake that was in front of you the entire time, it will allow you to create better miniatures. Fix it and eventually take another image.

Thank you very much for your time and best of luck with your ideas and projects. You can find me at @pax_acrylica and ask any question.
Hi, my name is Tom but some of you may know me by my Instagram handle @gnoll_brush. I am probably best known for my work on Oldhammer miniatures and historical subjects. I currently work full time as a freelance miniature painter. Today I’d like to share a tutorial on how I paint tattered yellow robes for 28mm scale figures. I’ve used this method many times for both customers and my own personal Undead army. It is both visually effective and relatively quick to achieve, not requiring too much fancy brushwork. I hope you will give it a try!

For the purpose of this tutorial, I will be painting a ghost model by Citadel Miniatures from the mid 1980’s. I will also provide photographs of the technique applied to several other models to hopefully give an idea of how it will appear on different subjects.

Paints Used
- Humbrol Matt white (no. 34)
- Nazdreg Yellow contrast paint from Games Workshop
- Seraphim Sepia wash from Games Workshop
- Lamenters Yellow glaze from Games Workshop
- Off-white from Vallejo Model Colour
- Sand Yellow from Vallejo Model Colour
- German Camo Black Brown from Vallejo Panzer series (optional, see step 8)

Please note that although I have listed specific paints that I have used, most of them can be substituted with similar alternatives from other ranges. By way of example, I universally undercoat my miniatures with enamel matt white paint using a brush. However, any method of undercoating miniatures (as long as it’s white) will work fine be it brush on, rattle can, airbrush etc. Similarly I believe Lamenters Yellow glaze is no longer available from Games Workshop. You can make a perfectly serviceable substitute with artist acrylic yellow ink thinned with a medium (I would recommend Vallejo glaze medium but any will be fine). Let’s get painting!
Step 1
Clean your chosen miniature by removing any mould lines, flashing etc. and glue it to your chosen base (although for old school credibility they of course must be square!) and texture. I use Tetrion filler and sprinkle on sharp sand while it’s still wet. Make sure the basing is fully dry before painting or you may get grains of sand in your paint while undercoating.

Step 2
Undercoat the miniature white. As stated previously any method will work fine. I use enamel paint as I find it to be more durable than acrylic and I apply it with a brush so I’m not at the mercy of the English weather (heavy rain and spray paint don’t mix!). Let it dry fully or the solvents still present will affect the next step. Often, I will do this step in big batches of miniatures and leave them overnight to dry.

Step 3
Paint all the robes with Nazdreg Yellow contrast paint. When applying contrast paints try to move from one area of the miniature to the next without going over an area you have previously touched as it will tend to “tear” the paint. Work relatively quickly for the best results and don’t worry too much about being neat. The main objective is to cover all the area with paint and get it into the creases and folds of the cloth. Let it dry.
Step 4
Next, we want to make all the raised areas stand out so drybrush the whole thing with Vallejo off-white. I use off-white but honestly any white, off-white, ivory, cream etc. will do the same thing. Drybrushing, for those painters out there just starting out, is where you get a large round or flat brush, dip it in your paint and then rub it back and forth on a clean paper towel or cloth until you’ve removed almost all the paint from your brush and it is effectively ‘dry’. Then taking your dry brush rub it back and forth over your miniature so the paint catches all the raised edges of your model and creates highlights.

Step 5
Once you have drybrushed your model, apply a wash of Seraphim Sepia over the whole thing in the same manner as the Nazdreg Yellow in Step 3. Try to avoid letting the wash pool up in deep recesses or at the base of the figure by wicking excess wash away with a clean brush. Again, try to avoid reworking areas as it will move the pigment around giving an unwanted finish. Let the wash dry thoroughly.

Step 6
Drybrush the whole area with Vallejo Sand Yellow. This step has two functions. Firstly, to re-establish the highlights after the Sepia wash and secondly, to make it read as more “yellow”. This drybrush is best applied lightly and sparingly. Keep pausing and checking your model to see how it looks. Stop when you’re happy with it. Remember less is more.
Step 7
Give all the robes a coat of Lamenters Yellow glaze (or your homemade equivalent). Just apply this as you did with the sepia wash. Don’t worry about any fancy “glazing” techniques. As with Step 6, we do this to reinforce the yellow. Avoid pooling in deep recesses, as it can affect the shadows and let it dry.

Step 8 (optional)
Now it’s perfectly acceptable to leave the painting here. Stopping here is very beginner friendly and only requires the use of a medium size brush to apply the washes and a drybrush for highlights. But if you want to elevate the paint job, we can push those shadows a little further. You will need a brush with a good point, but not too small (a size 2 or 3 is perfect). Get a small amount of Vallejo German Camo Black Brown (or mix your own from black and brown paint) and thin with a small amount of water, just enough to make the paint flow more easily. Start “pushing” the black brown into the deepest recesses of the folds and tears of the fabric. Move your brush from the lighter areas into the darkest. If the brown is too strong, quickly drag the still wet paint into the recesses again or wick it away entirely with a damp brush and start again. This can be a little tricky and hard to show in photographs, but just practice and don’t be put off if your first attempt isn’t exactly how you imagined.

Finishing
That concludes my method for painting tatty and dirty yellow robes in I hope a simple and easy to follow method. Once done, I painted the hands and face of the ghost and gave the whole model a coat of matt varnish (again with a brush) before painting the base. If you attempt this method yourself, I’d love to see the results and hear how you got on. Or if you have any questions feel free to contact me on my Instagram account. Happy painting!
DEMAKING WARHAMMER: OF PLASTIC, LEAD AND WHITE METAL
When Games Workshop announced *Warhammer Quest: Cursed City* (WQ:CC) I was really intrigued by the premise. The Warhammer Quest games had a good reputation and while I had not played any of them, they had always been on my radar as something I would love to try out. On the other hand, I already had a growing collection of older Citadel miniatures, and it kept growing at an alarming pace. Did I really want to add more plastic to that?

Maybe it would be possible to combine my love for Oldhammer (Citadel miniatures released roughly during the 80s and early 90s) with WQ:CC? After all, I could not wait to play WQ:CC with its gothic themes that reminded me of *Castlevania* and *Bloodborne*. So, I started looking into my boxes and fishing out various miniatures, some from Mordheim, others from Warhammer Quest and some even from the 80s. I was on fire with my Oldhammer Remake when my friend Tammy Nicholls pointed out that I was making a demake.

I am sorry, you say, what is a demake? Well, TV Tropes describes a demake as the polar opposite of a remake, an interpretation of how the game might have looked if made during a previous era. This is mostly related to video games, but sure, let's demake Warhammer.

We all know that WQ:CC had a troubled release, maybe best to leave it at that. But I was fortunate to get my hands on a really cheap copy, cheap because it did not include the miniatures, which worked out great for me. A project like this is all about research, finding the right pieces for the puzzle and I had enormous fun scouring Stuff of Legends in search of just the right miniatures. But I did notice that the more I searched the pickier I became, and all those 90s miniatures slowly dropped out until the collection consisted almost exclusively of 80s lead, what a joy!

As you can see in the pictures, I have not gone for exact duplicates (if that would even be possible) of the miniatures in WQ:CC. Instead, I have tried to capture the themes they represent and keep a certain mood. In my take, the city of Ulfenkarn is replaced with Castle Drakenhof, lair of the von Carstein vampires and it takes place just before the outbreak of the Vampire Wars. It is small things like this that I find most interesting about the hobby anyway. This is also why the main villain, Radukar the Wolf, is replaced by Vlad von Carstein, a mid-90s miniature. Theme trumps everything, even using era appropriate miniatures.

*By Alexander Winberg*

Radukar (or should we say Vlad?) flanked by his trusted Kosargi.
Other demakes

My long-term hobby project for the last couple of years has been to play through the Lord of the Rings books using Games Workshop’s Middle-Earth: Strategy Battle Game (MESBG) campaign books. But as a demake using primarily Citadel miniatures from the 80s. A perhaps little-known part of Games Workshop’s history is that they had the license to produce Middle-Earth based miniatures between 1985 and 1987. In that short span of years, they produced an eclectic collection of miniatures, over 200, and it has been a lot of fun to slowly collect them. Of course, there are some large gaps in the range. For example, they only ever made one Guard of Minas Tirith! But fortunately, Citadel produced a ton of suitable replacements in the 80s and some of them are even still available from Wargames Foundry, so no need to pay outrageous eBay prices. So far the Fellowship has reached the Redhorn and been forced to turn around and travel towards Moria; I have a lot of fun ideas for what miniatures to use as the story progresses from there.

Warhammer Quest: Silver Tower (WQ:ST) was released in 2016 and unlike WQ:CC it did not really make much of an impression on me; it just seemed to lack a good theme and made me think of HeroQuest *shudder*. But I had for some reason picked up a copy, sans miniatures, for a song and when I was done with WQ:CC, I started looking at WQ:ST. Could I do for it what I had already done once, and would it be any fun? In my collection of unpainted and unloved miniatures languishes a sizable pile of old and ugly plastic chunks from the mid-90s, most of them from the game Talisman’s third edition. Trying to paint them up nicely could be a fun challenge I thought, so as a slight side distraction I have now also started to demake WQ:ST, under the theme of Chunkhammer. Big and clunky miniatures — who wouldn't like that?

In the future, I also hope to make a demake of Warhammer Quest: Blackstone Fortress, probably using mostly second edition Warhammer 40,000 miniatures. One day I might even try to remake the original Warhammer Quest with modern Warhammer: Age of Sigmar miniatures, or maybe not, we will have to see. I hope this might inspire you to look at your own collections of miniatures, maybe there are some gems hidden away that would be perfect in a demake project. Given Games Workshop’s current nostalgia milking, I have no doubt that even the oddest miniatures can find a new life, with or without a rules update.
Qulathis, Brutogg and Octren prepare to put down Watch Captain Halgrim and the vile Gorslav.
The brave Trollslayer takes on a Kairic Acolyte and Deathrunner the Skaven.
How did you get started?

Most children draw, and I was fortunate to have the right environment and encouragement to continue drawing. I was also lucky to be surrounded by creative individuals. My grandfather was a carpenter and had a significant collection of art literature. I remember browsing through books about Adolph Menzel and other 19th-century painters. One of his friends was a well-known local painter who created landscapes, portraits, and still lifes with great precision.

This initial exposure to art differed greatly from my current work, but with this input, I began drawing by attempting to replicate black and white photographs by Robert Capa, particularly his soldier portraits. It was during this time that I developed a preference for black and white pieces, which I still maintain today. Surprisingly, my grandfather also had two books featuring the works of Frazetta. After being exposed to classical art, creating scenes purely from my imagination was what I wanted to do.

What is it that motivates and inspires you in creating art/miniatures?

Book illuminators, wood cutters, and engravers were masters of calm and moderation. Eberhard König spoke of an “undisturbed dignity” inherent in their work, which fascinated me. My drawings are inspired by the great graphic masters, such as “The Master of the Playing Cards,” the “Master of the Housebook,” and my personal favorite, “Master E.S.” The late medieval printed images have a certain vulgarity due to their mass distribution, which I find appealing. The earliest illustrations, often still uncertain in their line work and shadowing and occasionally clumsy in their arrangement and design of generous forms and simplified folds, possess a certain charm. This and the directness of the medium resonated with me. Apart from that, I too want to create works that speak to the “something” that lurks in our minds, the marginal, which the viewer must decipher both iconographically and aesthetically. Inspired by this, and with the encouragement of a good friend, I decided to abandon Photoshop and return to working with pen and paper.

What is your creative process like?

My pictures function like very small (mostly 7 cm by 10.5 cm) windows into another world.
This kind of art, along with other visual art forms like stained-glass windows, was utilized to visually tell stories and was often intended to generate devotion and contemplation. Similarly, I align and present the attributes of my images so that they invite the viewer to read and interpret them in addition to a written text. The scenes have a stage-like and artificial appearance, reminiscent of a sculptural relief. Figures are depicted in a front-parallel position, emphasizing their importance, and allowing the viewer to easily engage with the topic. I smooth out the natural irregularities of forms, resulting in a delicate realism. The figures' volumes and spatial relationships are reduced to patterns, while their eyes become large and expressive, and their hands take on gesturing poses. I also sometimes incorporate motifs, compositions, and poses that were prevalent during the late 15th century. All this enhances the narrative structure.

The glories of a visionary realm are depicted through various techniques and strategies of linear representation. Tonal values are broken down into systems of curves, parallels, cross-hatching at different angles, varying lengths of line, dashes, flecks, and stippled dots, which create a textured and detailed effect. Additionally, the use of untouched white paper plays a significant role in the composition. The backdrops are schematic, providing minimal spatial integration of the image attributes.

Despite the lack of spatial integration, every detail is interconnected and contributes to the creation of a cohesive image event. The ornamental structure of the composition serves to differentiate the elements, emphasizing the sequential reading of the piece. This allows for the aesthetic implementation of the literary imagery from the text, presenting it as a picture narrative. In this way, I hope I can catch at least a glimpse of the quiet dignity and dramatic force of late medieval art.

What are some of your favorite aspects of the hobby/work?

I enjoy creating complex patterns directly from lines, stylizing nature and creating a play of shapes and light, with relative simplicity but complexity in the variety of forms. Graphic language has a rawer power and a wonderful balance between mimesis and artificiality, that is, between the line's responsibility to represent natural forms and its participation in larger graphic patterns and sequences that create and ensure aesthetic coherence.
I am Marcello Rizza "Uollas", the Italian guy who takes pictures of miniatures on an orange background. For me everything started 32 years ago. I was a little child and my mom took me to a library. We used to go there often, but that day... That day there were cabinets full of little creatures, monsters and skeletons. My mind started racing, how many stories must be in those little toys! I was instantly hooked on minis. I used to paint minis with my mom. She was way better than me; I was eight at the time. I remember vividly how much I hated the fact that she didn't care much for miniature painting and was that good, so I kept practicing until ... Well, I'm still practicing today.

Growing up, I played a lot of role-play games like Dungeons & Dragons, Cyberpunk2020, GURPS and Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, a lot of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay. Then I stopped for quite some time. I stopped playing and I stopped painting. Some years ago I started playing Dungeons & Dragons again. This led me to painting some minis again and that spark reignited the fire in me. I discovered that the world of miniature painting had changed a lot since I left and I was eager to discover more.

I am really bad at drawing and to me miniatures are my creative outlet. What motivates me to create is to try to bring the stuff I have in my head out of it. Ideas pop in my head pretty often, could be a religious zealot doing laundry (still have to kitbash this one) or a walking vegetable. I’m mostly a painter, so I just try to slap paint on minis and have fun doing it. I really dislike building plastic kits and searching for the little numbers on a sprue; give me back the head/torso/legs/arms plastic minis! So the mega corp miniatures are mostly used as bits for the few conversions I do, even if I am trying to do more.

This is a selection of miniatures that I did in the last few years. Some of them are conversions, others are simply painted the way I like, but all of them are meaningful to me. This is primarily because they made me connect to people that today I call friends.

01 "That Guy" is a miniature that has accompanied me to a lot of events and is a sort of lucky charm for me. He was sculpted by Andrew May for his Kickstarter Medieval Marginalia (1st wave).
"Marc the Dead" is part of a project I did with some friends, each one of us kitbashed a miniature for a Forbidden Psalm warband that I brought to the Turm 2023 event by Ana Polamščak.

"Spitting fire like a damn lama at the zoo" I scratch-built this mini using some aluminum that spilled on the floor at my workplace (I work in a foundry). A clip I broke off from something, some synthetic fur and a piece of string. The whole idea was to create something from things that are not from the modeling world.

"The screamer" I converted this guy to fit the minis from the first kickstarter Andrew May and Moritz Krebs did together. This mini was one of the first conversions I did and I tried a lot of things during the process. I am particularly happy of the cross that I sculpted from scratch and of how I painted the faces, which is heavily inspired by Filippo Simonini’s way of painting.

"Froggo" I converted this little fellow to explore a less grimdark and a more funny and weird side of miniatures. I always liked frogs and this was the opportunity to paint one. I really want to convert more little animals; they are really funny and also quick to do.

"Declin the actor" was a pretext to paint my favorite head of all time, the severed head from the old plastic zombie kit. I had it laying around for quite some time and when I got the original mini from Dunkeldorf, I knew that I had to do the head swap right away.
07 "Buburabba" This mini is just a mysterious creature wandering in the woods.

08 "Wild and free eggplant" A young eggplant wandering around in search of love. I sculpted this mini from scratch. I have to thank Andrew May, Alessio Cisbani and Giuseppe Del Buono for all the advice they gave me on sculpting. I definitely want to sculpt more minis now!

09 "Drunken dwarf" I painted this mini for a close friend, the only one I can talk about minis around where I live. He has a huge collection of Oldhammer dwarfs. We usually have beers one Friday a month, so painting a drinking dwarf for him was fitting.

10 "Renny" This mini is from the Dunkeldorf range, sculpted by Alessio Cisbani. It was the first mini where I tried to step up my basing game, following my "brother in pork", Matteo Orsi's advice. Renny is now in America, happily in the hands of my friend Brian Roussel (if you don't know him and his Mœbius inspired miniatures, you are missing out).
In November of 2022, I held a small Mordheim Invitational in Houston, Texas, gathering together a group of passionate Mordheim artists and hobbyists from around the world. It was an incredible experience that was as rich as it was rewarding, but it required an immense amount of work. In this essay, I'd like to document some of the event's origins and the struggles I had as a novice event-organizer - or, the Who, What, When, Where and Why (and How) of narrative event organizing.

In 2018, I discovered the blog Echoes of Imperium and learned of the drive for the Mordheim 2019 event held by Alexander Winberg in Helsinki, Finland. This gathered together a congregation (or murder?) of incredibly talented artists from across the globe to celebrate Mordheim’s 20th anniversary. In the aftermath of the event, I listened to Alexander’s interview on ‘Dragged Into Turbolasers’, a podcast I had been listening to for quite some time at that point.

Throughout the conversation, both the hosts and their guest, Alexander, all prompted the listeners to reach out to event organizers to see how they can get involved – to quote, “we think you would be surprised with the responses that you get.” So, I thought to myself, why don’t I organize my own version of a ‘small’ narrative Mordheim event?

**The Five ‘W’s (and H)**

**WHY?**

Why did I do this to myself? The short answer was because I was Goblin Green with envy of the Mordheim 2019 event. The event looked to be the pinnacle of what the hobby means to me - amazing miniatures on amazing tables, played by passionate friends who genuinely loved the game of Mordheim. The spring of 2022 was also a difficult year for me, shaped by a lot of major life changes - I find turning to nostalgic escapism helps me cope at times. Mordheim is one of those awfully wonderful worlds.

Somewhere in that early spring, I became committed to the idea of holding an event. Originally, I simply wanted to have a small gathering of Mordheim players for a short weekend of gaming. However, I did not have a local network of friends to play with or to help set such a thing in motion. I had to turn to Instagram and invited about thirty people that I knew genuinely loved the game of Mordheim and whose work I had admired for a long time. What was the worst thing they could say – no?

After more and more people said yes to the invitation, my view of ‘why’ shifted to prioritizing a narrative focus over a casual weekend of gaming. I wanted it to be within the same vein of passion, talent and love for Mordheim as the Mordheim 2019 event, but with my own distinct twist and touch to it.

**Why Mordheim?**

Seriously? Mordheim rules. If you are reading this essay, then you likely have heard the name Mordheim whispered in conspiratorial tones, or used as a name to frighten children
into obedience. Mordheim was the very first Games Workshop ‘big box’ game I saw, back in 1999. I had seen blisters of Warhammer models and those few small cartoony boxes of troops at game stores, but nothing like the box art for Mordheim.

Additionally, the entirety of Mordheim is a beautiful project, even beyond the game itself. The artwork, the macabre and allegorical themes, the writing, the genius of the setting. It allows enough creative freedom for any artist willing to take the plunge into the weird sliver of the darker side of our hobby – to tap into that Jungian shadow.

WHY DOST THOU RETURN?

Next, I needed to give a reason for why warbands would be foolish enough to return to Mordheim in the year 2023. The organizer of the Mordheim 2019 event, Alexander Winberg, pushed that it should be held in the Imperial Calendar year of 2019 and the city should be reflected as such. I chose to echo that, but I needed to come up with a compelling reason for people to still care about the City of the Damned in 2022.

The city of Mordheim was ruled by the Elector Count of Ostermark, Count Steinhardt, allegedly killed in the disaster that destroyed the city. An idea jumped out at me – what if the Count really wasn’t dead? And what would the last 22 years have done to him?

WHEN AND WHERE?

I decided to allow a seven month build-up to the event to allow the players enough time to make travel arrangements, create their warbands and - just as important - time for me to make enough tables to play on! This also enabled us enough time to get feedback on our warbands through virtual ‘hobby hangouts’ on Discord and to familiarize ourselves with one another. This helped soften up the surrealness of meeting fifteen new faces for the first time. By the time of the event, I felt like I’d known everyone for years!

Picking an appropriate site could make or break the accessibility of any event. The attendees ranged from medical doctors, biologists, content creators and unemployed. As such, I tried to keep the event as affordable as possible. Overall, three Air BnB’s were booked to accommodate all of us, which spread the financial pressures around.

Additionally, the event was held at a legendary punk-bar in Houston. I approached the owners and asked if they could cordon off half of the pub for us and they agreed for free! We were also fortunate that the manager came in a few hours early on the first day to allow us to set up the terrain and kick things off, giving us a full nine hours. Having the event at the pub allowed us to have drinks and food on-demand, enabling us to make the best use of our time playing and having fun.

EVENT // MORDHEIM 2022
HOW?

Before I began to put anything into action, I needed more information to see if it were something I would be able to pull off alone, or if I needed additional resources. I had no one to help me conduct the event, and since it was my first time organizing one, I wanted to make sure I did not get in over my head. I began by asking Alexander Winberg for a brief Zoom call to pick his brain and he generously obliged, giving me wonderful insights on things he thought went well for his event and things he’d do differently.

Afterwards, I reached out to a spooky gentleman named Sturmgard on Instagram (dark_ages_workshop). I saw that he conducted his own Mordheim events in Italy that year and I saw his own unique take on the game. After our meeting, he advised me to truly make the event my own and to encourage participation from the community.

Last on my list was Ana Polanšćak, from the incredible blog, Gardens of Hecate. I had been reading her blog for only a few years, but I had fallen in love with her battle reports. Everything was hand crafted from the cards she uses down to the props. In our short Zoom chat, she advised me to stick to a strong narrative theme, create props and utilize LED candles and have dungeon synth music playing to really stick with the immersion.

WHO?

This was a difficult topic for me to wrestle with. Initially, I wanted to have an open invitation and have any and all comers. I tried posting on several gaming group Facebook pages in Texas, forums and calling game stores in my area with my contact information and bided my time to no avail.

I was a little disheartened at first, but not put out. Barring a few individuals, my ‘local scene’ was extinct for a game that has not been officially supported for years (a dead game). Combing through Instagram, I took the Wier brother’s advice and began commenting on people’s work, asking questions and generally engaging with others – this made me think critically about who to invite, and I began asking individuals whom I thought had enough passion to want to travel to Houston to play a dead game.

Some of the hobbyists were in America, some in Europe, some in Canada. Incredibly, one by one, they all began saying yes!

During this process, I started to consider how to entice those who were on the fence about attending – and how to be respectful of what I was asking them to do: fly down to play with a group of internet strangers. And so I put myself in their shoes – what would make this event unique or cool? What would make it ‘worth it’ to them to attend?

This led to the idea of making custom invitations, where I researched how to make them closely model what I envisioned an Imperial communiqué would look like in the Warhammer universe.

Lo and behold, it worked!

By the summertime, we had 23 total signed up to attend. Unfortunately, as life happened, people dropped out until we only had 15 people left. As it turned out, this was the perfect amount of people for the event! Not too large and not too small, allowing us to develop a close rapport and friendships in the lead up to November. Additionally, it allowed us to keep a tight focus on the narrative theme and the reason for investigating Mordheim in 2023.
Will Rose’s Strigoi vampire claims the Count, sculpted by Jimmy Henriksson, in the rotten sewers for himself in the final battle.

Matriarch Josephine Muhenje leads her Convent into the ruined streets of Mordheim. Warband created by Adam Wier.
In keeping with trying to make the event excellent, I reached out to the creator of Mordheim, Tuomas Pirenen, to see if he would be interested in giving a short virtual presentation about Mordheim to those attending. Not only did he agree, but after describing the theme of the weekend’s Hunt for the Lost Count Steinhardt, he chose the location for the final scenario!

WHAT?

One of the largest barriers to holding an event is terrain - and Mordheim certainly is chock-full of it! To this end, I immediately looked into how I could cut down on construction time while also creating interesting areas to play on. The last thing I wanted for my event was to have a dozen boards of ruined buildings, all looking the same. While it is a great place to start, I wanted to have variety!

Having played a few games in the past, the recommended Mordheim board size of 4’ by 4’ always seemed excessive to me. The first turns seemed to revolve around maneuvering around the board and did not add to many of the scenarios. Since we only had three days to play, it made sense to minimize the size of the boards down to 3’ by 3’, with some even being 2’ by 3’. This would allow games to proceed quicker and - in some instances - be even bloodier! While it took a lot of effort to create the five tables I brought to the event, each had their own distinct feel and look; including a city harbor board on the river Stir, a sinister sewers board, another capturing the claustrophobic feel of the catacombs of royalty, a royal memorial gardens board, as well as one depicting the decrepit settlement of Sigmar Haven!

To help paint the picture of Mordheim and the greater part of the Empire in the year of Imperial Calendar (I.C.) 2022, I created several digital newsletters to distribute to the players - and anyone interested - showcasing their warbands, backgrounds and even short fiction that was submitted. This helped to immerse the players in not only Mordheim, but the misery that accompanies a country simultaneously embroiled in two wars – one against the undead and another pitted against itself. Additionally, this created a venue for the participants to expand on the stories of their warbands, building to an ultimate culmination in November.

The Tower Board, created by MSTerrainLab, was brought to the event by Alex Van Allen.

A custom letter sent by mail to those invited.
To add to the macabre feel of Mordheim a selection of Ian Miller’s Grim Tarock deck cards were pooled and drawn on the first day to initiate player and board selections. When players arrived at their assigned board, many of them had optional custom scenarios that I had created to give them a unique sense of danger and reward.

While there was no conventionally competitive feel to the event, the player’s impetus for diving into Mordheim in 2022 was to locate the Lost Count for their own ends. Each victory in a game would allow them a greater chance to participate by locating ‘clues’ to the Count’s whereabouts. The final scenario involved the Lost Count and his retinue, with artists from all over the globe sending models representing the deranged and maddened courtiers and sycophants of his Court. While fought on the last day, it was a nail-biting affair with a lot of ‘1’s rolled and a few serendipitous ‘6’s that Mordheim is known for.

All in all, the Mordheim 2022 event was one of the best times of my life and something I am privately very proud of. If you are reading this, I strongly encourage you to connect with the community and set something up of your own. I think you will be surprised by the responses you get!
ESSAY // WE DON’T JUST LOVE THE MEDIEVAL, WE ARE MEDIEVAL.

WE DON’T JUST LOVE THE MEDIEVAL, WE ARE MEDIEVAL.

By Will Beattie

My day job is reading about the Apocalypse.

I’m a graduate student in Medieval Studies. I research the evolution of apocalyptic thinking in early medieval England. I read poetry and study artwork, but mostly I comb through religious sermons. Sermons filled with descriptions of terrible calamities that will befall humanity, joyful salvation is waiting for the pure of soul but there is only utter damnation for the sinful. These texts emerged from centuries of deep theological discussion and a constant exchange of ideas. Many medieval writers were obsessed with the Apocalypse and sought to unravel the mysteries wound into its complex symbolism.

In our own little corner of the miniature wargaming landscape, we too are obsessed with the Apocalypse. One need only glance at the covers of this magazine to see it. Flensed skulls grin from the mud of desolate battlegrounds. Great, rusted hulks dripping with ichor and oil stalk ruined cities. Through it all, hooded warbands hobble adorned with icons and illuminated by glimmering torchlight. So many of the incredible miniatures in 28 could be mistaken for bands of monks roaming the medieval world in search of salvation. Their garb, their tonsured hair, and those holding aloft banners proclaiming ‘the end is nigh’ all allude to a medieval, monastic world. Only their multi-meltas and laspistols might betray their anachronism.

The similarities between the medieval world and our own peculiar sphere are not limited to surface-level apocalyptic imagery however. The very structure of our network and of projects like 28, makes us a fundamentally medieval community.

When Gutenberg developed his movable-type printing press in the 1440s, he started a revolution. Whole books could now be copied with ease. Knowledge could be disseminated rapidly. But the text was fixed. Whatever the text’s creator (or his affluent patron) wanted to say could be communicated with precision, nothing lost in transmission.

Until the printing revolution knowledge had been recorded and spread by hand. Networks of scribes and scholars shared their ideas directly with one another. Texts were recorded and re-recorded over generations. Within that process there was space for interjection and adaptation of the source material. Subsequent copyists revised earlier works. They might have added a couple of sentences of exposition or perhaps they would incorporate part of a sermon they thought was relevant into the material they were working on. Their tight-knit communities, separated by hundreds of miles, shaped intellectual culture through every manuscript sent, copied, compiled and returned across medieval Europe.

One of my favourite texts, De ortu et tempore Antichristi (‘Concerning the Origin and Time of Antichrist’), was written by Abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der for the Frankish Queen Gerberga ca. 954. It is perhaps the most detailed biography of Antichrist in the Latin West. In it, Adso explores Antichrist’s birth and parentage, his political activities, his dominion over humankind, and his eventual death at the hands of the Archangel Michael. The text was so popular that it survives in almost 200 manuscripts.

Copies soon arrived in England, where the influential abbot Ælfric of Eynsham incorporated it into his own work. When he wrote a Preface to his Catholic Homilies: First Series (a collection of sermons for feast days throughout the year), he drew heavily on Adso. Ælfric had to explain why he had written the series. In his explanation he stressed that Antichrist was due to arrive any day now, and his book would help people to spiritually prepare. Adso provided the biographical evidence Ælfric needed. Adso was reshaped and repurposed for a new context. Through Ælfric, he reached dozens of other monasteries across Europe and found his way into yet more writings.

For students of medieval England, the most famous preacher on Antichrist is Archbishop Wulfstan of York. His entire career seemed to revolve around Doomsday and its characters. By the time he discovered Adso, he had already written several sermons on the subject. After reading Adso’s biography, Wulfstan neatly integrated it into his work. But Wulfstan wasn’t just a churchman; he was a political player too. He drafted law-codes for both King ÆThelred (r. 978-1013; 1014-16) and King Cnut (r. 1016-35). Wulfstan adapted and used Adso in tracts that blurred the lines between religious and political discourse, for example his Sermo Lupi ad Anglos (‘Sermon of the Wolf’), to shape policy. He frequently employed the image of a throne on three legs to describe the ideal kingdom: a king equally supported by labourers, preachers, and soldiers. But within each group hid the
‘limbs of Antichrist,’ insidious heathens trying to undermine the nation. Society had to be stable and pure enough to resist Antichrist’s thralls. Arguably, Adso’s influence survives in the very foundation of English law.

Of course, these brief examples don’t convey the complexity of the networks. Monks and nuns were writing to each other across Europe, Asia, and northern Africa. Adso influenced and was influenced by many others. Everyone was deconstructing and reconfiguring earlier texts for their own use.

For medieval writers, originality and authorship weren’t part of the equation. What mattered was the network. Manuscripts were composed, ideas explored, new elements integrated. Adso et al. wrote about Antichrist, but the same pattern played out in all areas of literature.

Manuscripts were carried over vast distances, from monastery to monastery. They were read and scrutinised at their destination. Scribes copied them—sometimes faithfully, sometimes making slight alterations when they felt they were necessary. New versions travelled onward. Eventually Adso’s own monastery might, decades later, receive a ‘new’ sermon which contained at its heart the very writing of their now-dead abbot.

We live now in a world of publishing giants who hold the lion’s share of the industry. For decades publishing has been a relatively centralised, unilateral, top-down enterprise. The text, whatever it might be, is given to the consumer as a static and complete artefact. Manuscripts have been replaced with computers. The ancient roads along which knowledge once travelled are now fibre-optic cables laying across the great ocean-beds of the world. But the medieval network is there. Through 28 and social media, we can compose our own visions of Apocalypse. We render them in paint and plastic; share them with each other across great distances. As we do so, we inspire others to create their own vision. We are our own grimdark monastic network.

I’ve been inspired by what I’ve seen in the pages of 28. Perhaps in years to come, a hobbyist will come across an article showcasing new work. They might marvel at the detailing, the design of the piece; never realising that the seeds for it were sown by their own hand, many years ago.
Readers of this magazine will almost certainly be aware that the team behind 28 have been working with a number of well-respected names in our community to create their own line of miniatures. This has given birth to the joyfully named “Fist in the Eye Miniatures” (FITE for short). I have been lucky enough to get the chance to paint these miniatures and the folks behind FITE asked if I’d be interested in writing a guide for 28, which of course I was! So here is my quick(ish) guide to painting FITE miniatures. I hope you enjoy it...

The Tooth Demon

The first mini I will tackle is the most recent addition: The Tooth Demon, a delightfully spiteful looking chap who was incredibly fun to paint.

The FITE miniatures are cast in resin and come pre-cleaned by the caster, who also uses no release agent in the casting process. This means there is little, if any clean up to do on the minis prior to assembly for painting. The resin bonds with superglue very well, making them easy to assemble and glue to a base.

The Tooth Demon comes in two parts: the demon itself and his wings (plus a bonus lifesized tooth which can be added to his base). I originally chose to leave the wings off when I began painting as I thought it may make the process easier. However, fairly early into the painting process I decided to attach them, as they didn’t cause any obstruction when in place.

1. I primed the mini in a 1:1 mix of Vallejo Matte Black Primer and VMC German Camo Black-Brown (with a little water, to thin it). Doing this saved me the time of having to prime and then base coat. As I wanted to paint the demon primarily red, starting from a dark brown rather than pure black helps the red look richer and avoids it becoming muddy.

2. I washed the entire mini, except for the horns and claws, with thinned-down VMC Violet (about 1:2 paint to water). Whilst this was still wet on the mini, I added VMC Flat Red to the Violet on my pallet in roughly equal quantities and used this mix to paint all the raised and upwards facing part of the demon’s body, allowing the paint to mix naturally with the still wet Violet underneath.

3. Once the previous step had fully dried, I used pure VMC Flat Red, thinned 1:1, to pick out and lighten areas such as the head, arms, upper wings and knees to enhance the red.

4. Once dry, I gave the mini a coat of Vallejo Gloss Varnish (except for the horns and claws).

5. After the varnish had dried, I reapplied the Flat Red to the same areas as before.

6. I mixed AP Elven Flesh with the Flat Red 1:1 and thinned this with some more water (1:1 paint to water). I used this mix to highlight all the red areas (including the membranes of the wings, but not the limbs of the wing itself). I performed this step twice, adding a little more Elven Flesh the second time and also concentrating on smaller areas and edges.
7. To paint the bones around the ribcage, teeth and the protrusions on the legs and lower arms, I started by basing them with VMC German Camo Black-Brown.

8. I made the first set of highlights with a 1:1 mix of the VMC German Camo Black-Brown and GW Ushabti Bone. I thinned this mix 1:1 with water and used it to cover most of the previous step, leaving the recesses.
9. I added more Ushabti Bone to my mix and started to highlight using a stippling motion to create small marks with the paint and ensuring to keep it thinned down.

10. Using pure Ushabti Bone thinned 1:1 I added final highlights in the same way as step 9. For the horns, claws and wingtips I first painted them with VMC Dark Sea Blue, then progressively added small amounts of Ushabti bone and used this mix to highlight them. I used these same mixes to pick out the little veins on the membrane of the wings.

   To paint the eyes I first applied small dots of VMC Intermediate green and then used a mix of Intermediate Green and VMC Ice Yellow to highlight.
The Orcs

For these minis, rather than present each process step by step for each, I will cover the significant elements. Unlike the Tooth Demon, the majority of these steps and principles can be carried over between each mini or adapted to suit your own preferences.

Orc skin

For the skin you can use any choice of colours; you just need a dark green, a mid green and a lighter flesh-tone colour for the highlights. I chose to use GW Caliban Green; VMC Intermediate Green and AP Elven Flesh.

1. I applied a base coat to the skin in GW Caliban Green, using it slightly thinned and applying two coats to get a smooth finish. Once dried, I washed the skin with VMC Violet, thinned about 1:4 with water and focused mostly on the recesses.

2. I mixed 1:1 GW Caliban Green and VMC Intermediate Green, thinning with water at least 50% and I used this to paint the raised sections of the skin, outward facing areas and large sections of muscle. After this, I applied a thin wash of VMC Red Leather (again about 1:4 with water) over all the skin.

3. After adding more VMC Intermediate Green to my mix, I repeated step 2, focusing on slightly smaller areas.

4. I added some of the AP Elven Flesh to my mix and picked out the lightest highlights, making sure to take time on the face and hands and any large muscles of the arms.

5. I added more AP Elven Flesh to get my final highlight colour and repeated the last step, but focused on very small highlights. Remember to thin your paint each time you add more colour to the mix.

6. The lips were painted in VMC Red Leather, and some AP Elven Flesh added for some small highlights. The eyes were dotted with AP Demonic Yellow, and another wash of very thin Red Leather was applied in the eye sockets.

Red and yellow elements

1. Any cloth was base coated with VMC Red Leather and given a wash of VMC Violet, as in step 1 of the skin process.

2. I used a mix of Red Leather and VMC Flat Red to build highlights.

3. I added small amounts of AP Elven Flesh to the mix for the brightest highlights.

4. Further glazes of VMC Violet were used to smooth any transitions. When glazing you should ensure your paint is very thin, like coloured water. Do not overload your brush, wipe excess off if needed. Draw your brush towards the point you want the deepest saturation to be (in this case the recesses of the cloth).

5. The decoration on the first orc’s hat was painted first with GW Zandri Dust, then given a thin wash of VMC Woodgrain and highlighted with a mix of Zandri Dust and VMC Ice Yellow.
The face plate

1. The face plate on the belly of the second orc was first base coated in VMC Red Leather then given a wash with VMC Violet.

2. VMC Red Leather was reapplied to the raised sections.

3. Highlights were applied using a thinned 1:1 mix of VMC Red leather and AP Elven Flesh, and then final highlights were applied using the same mix but with a small amount of VMC Ice Yellow added.
The cloak
1. To paint the cloak, I started with a base of VMC Dark Sea Blue. Whilst this layer was still wet, I used a 1:1 mix of VMC Dark Sea Blue and VMC Intermediate Blue to add dimension by wet blending onto the folds and raised parts of the cloak.

2. I used thinned VMC Dark Sea Blue to glaze into the shadows and thinned VMC Intermediate Blue to highlight.

3. I added a small amount of VMV Matt White to the 1:1 mix of Dark Sea Blue/Intermediate Blue and used this to paint horizontal lines across some areas of the fold of the cloak to create texture on the fabric and also to act as further highlights.
Orc shields

One of the most enjoyable parts of painting the orcs is painting freehand designs on their shields. The idea of doing a freehand design can seem a bit daunting at first, but just remember that all you need to do is focus on making some simple bold shapes and to take your time. Orcs are known to be crude with their artwork so you have a lot of leeway!

1. I started by getting the base colours for the background done. For this I used VMC Deep Sea Blue, VGC Leather Brown and GW Zandri Dust. I applied these starting with the darkest colour at the bottom and worked up the shield, applying each colour with the previous still wet to create a wet blend on the shield. This may look messy at first but you can go over the shield several times until you like the result; make sure to keep your paint thin to avoid texture building up. I finished by using thin glazes of GW Zandri Dust, glazing from near the bottom of the shield and finishing my brush strokes at the top to concentrate the paint there. I also did a little bit of random stippling; this was mostly focused on the upper half of the shield.

2. I wanted to paint red checkers on one side of the shield, so I started by using VMC Red Leather to paint the first diagonal strip of checks from the centre out to the edge (I find this easier than trying to paint two alternating strips of checkers at once).

3. With the first line in, it is easier to add the alternating lines above and below, using the previous lines as guides.

4. I highlighted some of the upper checkers with a mix of VMC Red Leather and GW Zandri Dust. Just a small dot of this mix in each centre will do (keeping your paint thin).

5. Using VMC Deep Sea Blue I painted a thin line down the shield on the other side and then sectioned the line into triangles and filled them in.

6. I did the same with AP Mummy Robes to create opposing blue and white triangles.

7. I highlighted the blue triangles VMC Deep Sea Blue mixed with a very small amount of AP Mummy Robes and I highlighted the white triangles with a small amount of VMC Matt White.

8. I glazed the bottom of the shield with a leftover mix of VMC Deep Sea Blue and VGC Leather Brown. This was a very thin mix, probably 1:5 paint to water, just to darken and integrate the patterns with the lower half of the shield.
The scabbards and leather materials (and wood)

1. For these sections, I based each with VMC Woodgrain.

2. Highlights were added using a 2:1 mix of VMC Woodgrain and GW Ushabti Bone. I made small lines to look like scratches and texture on the surface.

3. I added more highlights with a 1:1 mix of VMC Woodgrain and GW Ushabti Bone.

4. I glazed some very thin VMC Woodgrain over the entire area, painting towards the shadows/recesses.

5. I reapplied the final highlight colour but in smaller and more selective areas.

6. I used the same process for any leather, wood or similar materials.
Weapons and metals
I chose to use metallic paints rather than painting the weapons etc. in a non-metallic metal style (NMM), as I think it is more in keeping with the classic Oldhammer style of these orcs. I use mainly two paints for all my regular metallic needs: AP Chainmail and AP Platemail (Chainmail is the darker of the two; I use Platemail for highlights). Remember that silver paints are essentially “metallic grey” and gold paints are “metallic yellow”; you can add conventional colours to get different effects, or black and white to darken or lighten the colours. I recommend you always apply metallic paints over a dark base or primer; black or very dark browns work best I find. Painting metallics over a lighter colour can make them look washed out.

1. Starting from the black primer, I painted the blade entirely in AP Chainmail. I only gave this one coat, as I applied further layers of other paint. As you can see from the first photo: the slightly patchy coverage over the black primer already gives the impression of scratched and battered metal so this is beneficial.

2. I used VMC Woodgrain to glaze the blade. I diluted this paint about 1:3 to water.

3. I next glazed the blade with VGC Leather Brown, slightly more diluted as this is a thicker paint. I made sure to glaze any areas where the previous glaze was patchy and then mostly focus toward the bottom of the weapon, even stippling some little dots of paint to give the appearance of texture.

4. My final glaze was with VMC Fire Orange, diluted to about 1:4 with water. First I gave the entire weapon a thin glaze. Once this dried I stippled some small areas, mainly in the middle and towards the bottom of the blade.

5. I finished off by edge highlighting with AP Platemail and using this to add some scratches to the flat surfaces to create visual interest.

Armor
For the chainmail armour the orcs have, I first based them in AP Chainmail, leaving the recesses of the armour between the links black. I glazed the armour with the VMC Woodgrain and VGC Leather Brown glazes from the previous steps, focusing the Woodgrain glaze in the shadows. I then highlighted the armour with AP Platemail.
The Explorer

We have now arrived at our final mini: The Explorer. Having already painted her once in a scheme of my own devising, I thought it would be nice to paint a version of her that more closely resembled the excellent concept artwork composed by Nicky Grillet. Using that as my guide and inspiration I painted the mini as follows:

Coat and belt

1. A base of VMC Woodgrain and VGC Leather Brown in a 2:1 mix was applied to the entire coat area.

2. A thin wash of VMC Woodgrain with a small amount of VMC Dark Sea Blue was applied all over the area. Once dried, a second coat was applied.

3. More VGC Leather Brown was added to the mix from step 1 and applied as a layer to upper and exposed areas.

4. A small amount of GW Ushabti Bone was added to the mix and highlights were applied. This was done mostly through stippling, edge highlighting the material and making small marks and scratches on the leather material.

5. Further GW Ushabti Bone was added to the mix, making it the dominant tone of the mix. This was used to apply the final highlights (I later decided to boost the highlights a little more by adding some AP Elven Flesh).
The trousers
1. I started with a 1:1 mix of VGC Leather Brown and VMC German camo black-brown to base the trousers.

2. I added more VGC Leather Brown and applied a layer, painting most of the trousers except for the deepest recesses.

3. To highlight, I added some GW Ushabti Bone to the mix. I applied highlights sparingly, as I did not want the trousers to compete with other elements of the model. I like to try and focus the brightest highlights on the upper parts on a mini, drawing the viewer towards the face.

The shawl
1. The shawl had a base of VMC Red Leather, followed by three very thin washes of VMC Violet (probably about 1:4 paint to water for this).

2. I then reapplied the VMC Red Leather as a layer to the shawl to re-establish the red colour.

3. I used a roughly 1:1 mix of VMC Red Leather and AP Elven Flesh to highlight, adding further smaller highlights in a second pass with more AP Elven Flesh added.

4. The patch on her knee and the sword scabbard were painted the same way.

Boots and gloves
In the artwork these appear to be similar, if not the same in colour as the coat. I chose to change this and make them slightly darker to keep focus on the upper parts of the mini.

1. I used a 1:2 mix of VMC Dark Sea Blue and VMC German Camo Black-Brown to base the gloves and boots.

2. I highlighted these elements by using several successive lighter mixes, adding VMC Pale Sand to do this.
Metal armour and pickaxe
I chose to paint these elements in a non-metallic metal style (NMM), as I felt it suited the feel of the original concept art and allowed me to introduce some colder tones to the miniature. The technique I used for this is not especially difficult, as I was not attempting to simulate the realistic effects of light on metal but instead relied on painting small chips and scratches to simulate the idea of reflection on battered metal. If you don’t feel comfortable doing this or don’t wish to paint these areas as NMM, then simply use regular metallic paints.

1. Over the black primer I applied some thin VMC Dark Sea Green. I did not seek full coverage, but rather wanted to start mapping out areas where I would build highlights/texture. I made sure to hit any raised edges and break up larger flat areas with some of this colour.

2. I mixed a small amount of VMC Pale Sand into the VMC Dark Sea Green and focused on emphasising the areas I had previously applied VMC Dark Sea Green.

3. I added more VMC Pale Sand and highlighted further, making my marks smaller to simulate small dents and scratches in the armour that are catching the light and also highlighting the edges.

4. I made a final mix of mostly VMC Pale Sand with a small amount of VGC Dead White and added final highlights. These highlights are very small and selective but in the same manner as the previous step.

5. I made a glaze of VGC Leather Brown, about 1:5 with water and glazed this sparingly into darker recesses of the metal to add depth and simulate rust. It is better to apply several very thin coats of this until you are happy with the result rather than apply a single thicker glaze as it is easy to overdo it.

6. The metal areas of the sword scabbard and guard were painted with GW Zandri Dust.

7. Highlights were added with VMC Pale Sand.
The torch flames
1. I started by painting the flame with VGC Dead White, with a very small bit of VMC Ice Yellow mixed in.
2. I next used thinned VMC Flat Red to paint most of the flame, leaving the centre area white.
3. I mixed VMC Flat Red with AP Demonice Yellow until I had a bright orange I was happy with and blended this onto the flame with the still wet VMC Flat Red (I used a lot of stippling for this).
4. I further stippled some AP Demonic Yellow (Thinned about 1:3 paint to water) and a very small amount of the original VGC Dead White/VMC Ice Yellow mixture into the very centre of the flame.

Wood
1. The wooden parts such as the sign on her pack and the handles of the torch and pickaxe were based in a 1:1 mix of VMC German Camo Black-brown and VMC Dark Sea Blue.
2. I added a small amount of both VGC Leather Brown and GW Ushabti Bone to this mix and mapped highlights, focusing on edges and raised areas.
3. I added more GW Ushabti Bone for final highlights.
**The face and eyes**

The face and eyes are very small details on this mini so I did not wish to overcomplicate this process. Make sure you keep your paint thin for this step, as it is much better to paint with multiple thin coats than obscure detail with a single thick coat of paint. Layers of thin paint will also naturally help you achieve a smoother looking finish on her skin.

1. I made a mix of mostly VMC Violet with small amounts of GW Ushabti Bone and VMC Flat Red and used this as the base for the skin tone on the face.

2. I added more GW Ushabti Bone and used this to paint the focal point of the face, the area around the eyes, nose, cheeks and chin.

3. I then added some VMC Pale Sand to this mix and added further highlights to the nose, the cheeks and the chin. I used a very thin glaze of the mix from step 2, to smooth out any rough areas, then reapplied the highlights where I felt it needed them. I repeated this step several times until I was happy with the outcome. I also used some of the original colour mix at step 1 to carefully paint the lips.

4. I painted the eyes with VMC German Camo Black-brown. I used a very small brush with a fine tip and took my time to establish the shape of each eye.

5. I then used GW Ushabti Bone to carefully paint inside the previous step to create the whites of her eyes.

6. The eyes were finished by applying a tiny dot of MVC Dark Sea Blue.
The Backpack
1. The backpack and roll had previously been based with VMC German Camo Black-Brown. I used a 3:1 mix of VGC Leather Brown and VMC German Camo Black-brown to highlight, using this to create marks and texture.

2. I added some GW Ushabti Bone to this mix to add further highlights.

3. I used GW Ushabti Bone to place final highlights on the bedroll above the backpack

Finishing touches
All that remained was to paint the bird perched on the sign and add some text to finish things off. Although a bit fiddly, these were quite simple. I painted the bird first using some of the leftover VMC Leather Brown and VMC German Camo Black-brown from a previous step. I added some of the orange I had mixed to paint the torch flames and highlighted the front of the bird with this. Then I used a little GW Ushabti Bone to highlight its beak.

For the sign I chose the words “No Exit” as it felt suitably grim with a dash of humour, and would also fit nicely onto the available space. I used the same small brush I had used for painting the eyes earlier. I started by mapping the letters in VMC Red leather. I then went over this carefully with some VMC Flat red and then finally with a mix of VMC Red Leather and VMC Pale Sand to create a very light pink. At each step I tried to make the line smaller than the last, leaving the previous colour around the edges. With that done the Explorer was completed.
How did you get started?

I’ve dabbled in artistic hobbies since I was a little kid – mainly drawing and miniatures - but I would say that I truly started to feel art as my calling during my time in the Liminka School of Art here in Finland. I had some education in visual arts before that, but back then it was more about finding something to do after dropping out of college. While studying in Liminka, I first started to feel like this is what I want to do for the foreseeable future.

What is it that motivates and inspires you in creating art/miniatures?

I’ll be honest, much of it is about external validation. My art is the one thing that’s always led to me getting compliments, so it’s always felt like a no-brainer to stick with it. I haven’t come to regret it yet and, vain though it may be, I do love the praise!

Looking inwards, I pretty much see my art as my primary source of therapy, so unsurprisingly it is often autobiographical in nature. My art can be as much about getting thoughts out of my head as it is about presenting them to people. Since coming out of the closet as a trans woman, much of my life has been about exploring my newfound queerness. There’s a lot to unpack there, so of course that exploration has become a recurring theme.

Three years into my transition and I still struggle to believe it – that this is my life now. It all feels like something I simply must share. It’s too miraculous not to.

What is your creative process like?

I have a very intuitive approach to art, just getting to work with minimal planning and letting the work grow during the process. It doesn’t always give the best result on the first pass, but it just feels right to me. This is one reason why I rate digital tools highly; experimentation is easy when I can just undo any mistakes. Traditional media is a lot more stressful, since you can’t always fix what goes wrong.

The seasons certainly have a major effect on me. I adore Finland’s summer as much as I dread its winter. The long winter dark saps me of energy to the point that I wish I could just hibernate through it, but on the flip side, every arriving spring makes me feel reborn. It’s quite a humbling cycle that has certainly moulded me as a person.

What are some of your favourite aspects of the hobby/work?

It’s definitely when the inspiration hits. Feeling the moment when you know exactly what you want to do to a piece, or what to try next? I only wish these moments wouldn’t happen when I’m trying to sleep.

Can you share some good advice or a random anecdote?

I know this is going to come off as a hollow platitude, but don’t try too hard. Perfectionism is the death of art. Accepting that you will have your share of duds in your portfolio – just like any other artist ever - is freeing. Just do art; play around with it; experiment with it; fail at it; forgive yourself; learn what you can and move on.
THE ROT OF HONDIOUS
In the spring of 2023, Martin McCoy approached me about running a narrative INQ28 event with him. He was eager to put together something of his own and after having conducted my own Mordheim event the previous year, Martin wanted to lean a bit on my experience putting together narrative events. Needless to say, I was overjoyed and excited to help!

Hondious, a feudal world on the far-flung edge of the galaxy so bereft of resources that even the greedy Imperium would not bother bringing it back within its fold, was Martin’s brainchild. Coming to the table with the setting, we then started brainstorming the current state of the setting. Naturally it had to be in some form of collapse. Combining some of his favorite themes, Martin formulated the “Red Joy,” partly inspired by the Dancing Plague: a mania that swept through Germany in the 1500’s. He really wanted to create an antagonistic force with human pathos. The serfs of Hondious suffer terribly from Imperial and Noble neglect. What if the Red Joy addressed those grievances in some way? Could we write a plague story that makes infection seem more desirable than continuing to live as a cog in the Imperium’s shadow? It seemed like a direction both promising and tragic. So we began imagining a plague that rotted the bodies of the infected but filled them with empathy and joy as it happened. What would be particularly joyful on a planet cut off from the rest of humanity by bad luck and poverty? Connection. The thing Hondious had been most denied. So we finished our plague by deciding it networked those it infected together into an empathic hive mind. It made them feel unnaturally elated, made them want to dance and blow horns, connected them and filled them with joy all the while rotting their flesh down to bloody rags and fusing their ruined bodies into new, shared, abominable forms.

But we wanted inquisitors and offworlders in our story, so we needed a compelling reason for the Imperium to care about Hondious - at which point, we asked ourselves: what if our empathy plague became sentient, once it touched its first psyker? What would happen if it infected enough psykers to make it even more powerful? Martin created a fictional character, Surveyor-Prefect Miscaruss, and detailed his disdainful encounter with the world, so we decided that the Prefect had left behind numerous materials - including his own survey station. Perhaps the Red Joy’s goal was to seek the survey station, to ultimately utilize its powerful communication systems to project itself psychically off-planet?

With the narrative out of the way, we could focus on the bloody work of rules. A number of rule sets were discussed, but thanks to the help of Steve Hupfer (of Hive Scum and NEMO infamy), a modification of Forbidden Psalm was juxtaposed with The Last War to bring to life a sleek set of rules. With only a short amount of time to play and most players meeting for the first time in Richmond, it was decided to favor function over form in order to ease the experience for those involved.

The overall Grim Richmond event had a Google Docs sheet that enabled any of those attending to sign up for one of three factions: Feudalists, native and low-tech Hondiouns, Inquisitorial retinues or feverish gatherings (or murders?) of the infected Red Joy. While the event was initially intended as a ‘traditional’ INQ28 event of ‘Inquisitors versus a threat,’ Steve suggested that players be allowed to participate as the Red Joy as well - which yielded spectacular and artistic hobby results! We decided to limit the participation to twelve players in order to keep the story focused, concise and have a firmer hand in orchestrating the event the day of. Each faction had a few strict limitations to keep in terms of model count, starting points to spend, etc; but more importantly, I kept the overall faction descriptions broad to better
allow players to create their own unique take on their retinues and their story.

Throughout the buildup to the event, the idea of Hondious became more and more clear. Martin and I’s working relationship involved the following: Martin had a vision of the planet - and I would ask clarifying questions to better craft the world and help flesh out its history, heroes and villains. Through this, I created an event information PDF that had a short description of the planet, the three factions involved and concluded with Steve’s rules. This helped the players get a feel for the planet and laid out expectations for the overall culture of the narrative event.

Additionally, Martin had made several pieces of art to represent the mania of the Red Joy and the body-horror it contains. These helped to set the tone for a shared vision of what the Red Joy looked like and the miserable conditions present on the planet of Hondious.

To further flesh out the world of Hondious, I began writing short fiction with an open invitation for others to participate and collaborate. This was another avenue for hobbyists to engage with the event if they were unable to attend in-person or make miniatures for it. While Martin had laid the foundation, we hoped to build towards the sky and more intimately document the events that had transpired on Hondious. For this purpose, I gathered and crudely edited a number of short stories from multiple authors over a series called “The Rot” to better bring the world to life before the event.

Most INQ28 events are not complete without terrain to play on. With less than ninety days from conception to execution, this was one of our largest challenges. The amount of effort and physical size of terrain I believe proves to be one of the largest barriers facing any event. Thankfully the community stepped forth and were able to provide two of the four boards; a sinister woodland board, originally built for an event that was COVID-canceled from Shane Brockway and a grain city district from Doug Mueller, that was purpose-built for the event. The third involved a vertical clocktower Mordheim board that I had been experimenting on, specifically built for easy transportation on flights. Lastly was a large labyrinthine, modular board that would represent the original site of the Imperial Survey laboratories, left and neglected for two decades. While it was the most time-consuming aspect of the entire event, it was rewarding experimenting and designing the layouts and proved to be my favorite piece of terrain I have made in my life!

Building from the Mordheim 2022 event I held, I wanted the experience for those players involved to be even better. After seeing for years how Ana Polanskičák conducts her own events, I created a spreadsheet of secret primary and secondary objectives for each faction on each board, consistent with telling a story of Hondious’ miserable conditions. To help solidify the secretive nature of these, I
Some Red Joy models, including the towering monstrosity in the back (created by Totally Not Panicking), the flesh construct Plaxico (on the left) that Martin sculpted, and a corrupted Spyrehead Lucretia Barghest with two bloody goblins (created and painted by Adam and Eric Wien).
The Clocktower of Heimdall III that I built for Mordheim but brought for the event.

Sealed secret objectives, weathered board-specific scenarios and lots and lots of teeth!
Lucretia Barghest, corrupted by the Red Joy, steps from the shelter of a ruin, eager to take advantage of the destruction around her and meld with the half-dead Sisters of the Altarwood writhing on the forest floor.

Sculpted wax seals for each faction to conceal the objectives in envelopes. The objectives, as well as board-specific scenarios, were all stained to represent the ruined vellum of the world of Hondious. Lastly, Martin created a pockmarked board to help keep score of players’ victories and, keeping in the vein of the rictus grins of Red Joy victims, asked KnuckleBones Miniatures to design 3d teeth to represent the “victory points” for those participating. Two teeth would be awarded to a player for achieving their primary objective and one tooth for their secondary.

Finally with the factions, backstory, rules, fiction and terrain complete, the day had come. Until the 11th hour, players were feverishly creating their retinues and putting the final touches on their paint jobs and, an hour into the event, we kicked things off. Martin presented an overview of the situation on Hondious and I described how the games would work and players would rotate. Each table had a retinue from each of the three factions with their own specific secret objectives, tailored for the board they played on. Players would then rotate to a new board, with new secret objectives and tally up their “teeth” at the end of two games. The four players who had the most teeth would be able to participate with their full retinues in the final event against the Beast and other retinues could contribute a single model. This last confrontation resulted in a fantastic, if chaotic, last battle that had over twenty people crowding a table yelling over dice rolls and models.

All in all, I would call the event a success! If you would like to read more on the Rot of Hondious’ final battle, you can get a thorough retelling on the blog Between the Bolter and Me! I find that putting together narrative events is extremely rewarding. When you look up and see others enjoying games or immersing themselves in the stories they are telling, it really makes the monumental effort worth it.

EVENT // ROT OF HONDIOUS
Having fused with the most powerful psykers on Hondious, the Beast descends upon the Imperial Survey Facility of Prefect Miscaruss, intent on expanding to neighboring worlds...
EVENT / ROT OF HONIOUS
During the early days of the pandemic - when food, inspiration and toilet rolls were all running dangerously low - I revisited a classic that I fondly remembered from my childhood.

White Dwarf issue 136 (which I was too young to get in 1991, but found soon afterwards in a local charity shop) had detailed instructions and templates for an Ork Gobsmasha. My initial attempts as a wee lad were made from paper and card, and were very unsuccessful. But I enjoyed trying. I fear this early encounter with BUILDING YOUR OWN TANK set me on a near inescapable path to where I am now.

Plasticard was one of the few hobby supplies I could order online and have safely delivered through the letterbox, so I set to work making my new grown-up version of this classic with a pdf of issue 136. I painted it dayglow “Bad Moon” yellow in a desperate attempt to rouse serotonin from within my brain. It worked and I was overjoyed. I’d found myself again, I’d found Tanks!

I have made many tanks since then. Everyone has their own process and ways of doing things, and here I would like to share mine. These are loosely grouped into Building & Painting - and being very impatient, I frequently overlap these groups.

Building

1. General shapes - I often do some doodles before I start a project. This can be for a physical or digital tank building endeavour. I can be influenced by kits I’ve seen, or I might go and find a kit to suit a doodle. Organise your bits box. Combine big shapes. Try lots of different combinations. Hold your model at arms length and see what the silhouette looks like. Sometimes squinting or holding it up against an illuminated backdrop can help discern the silhouette of a model.
2. Greebles - very rarely do those big shapes fit together well. Hide the gaps with more stuff. Break up big flat areas with gubbins. Think about what bits of the machine do what. It’s a great way to add narrative to a grimdark vehicle. Plasticard is a forgiving material, as is plastic rod. Repurpose things as you go (make a cannon into an exhaust pipe etc). Add rivets to edges and add pipes joining up some of those big shapes to tie it together. Rod cut thinly makes good rivets & fixings. Handles and hatches add scale and can help if you’re mixing components from different scaled sources.

3. Getting messy - there will still be gaps or things that look flat or boring. This is where the “building” and the “painting” start to interact a bit. I use Vallejo “plastic putty”. It doesn’t shrink and dries smooth, great for gap filling and making big mineral deposits/gunk.

4. Getting really messy - if during the build some bits are still wobbly, baking soda and superglue makes the hardest substance known to humanity. Again good for gap filling and adding texture to your grim dark tank. I also use Citadel’s cracking Earth paint to simulate chipped paint. I splodge it on panels where you’d expect things to get wet and rusty. Typhus corrosion is also great. These paints are a little fragile and can lift off unprimed plastic. But by doing these textures first, and then priming, you should seal in some interesting details that will even survive the rigours of tabletop use.

Painting
1. I usually use 2 different coloured rattle cans to “zenithal highlight” my tanks. The model gets a darker coat all over, and then a lighter one from above. This does a lot of the heavy lifting and brings out that texture & detail. I also try to use cooler colours for the “shadow” first layer. Two layers of primer also helps with tabletop survivability.

2. Shading/highlights - I instantly hit all rivets and recesses with Agrax Earthshade or some Streaking Grime. I then pick out the rivet tops and edges with a light version of whatever the top coat was.

4. Rust - Dirty Down rust is renowned and rightly so. Make sure to shake it thoroughly before use, and use in a well ventilated and warm room. I mean really really shaken. Use a sacrificial brush that you want to punish. Also experiment with water - by running it into the recesses or creating pools underneath features you can create rustier bits of rust of a much brighter orange. Layers of patina can be built up this way. A bright silver patchy edge highlight really pops and makes it look like a well-used chine. Don’t forget typhus corrosion too!

5. GLOSS - gloss finishes are a great way to add interest to bits of model vehicles. Agrax Earthshade gloss is brilliant for greasy and oily stains. Again, paint it in drips around fixtures and fittings to create a worn and aged effect. A gloss varnish is great for vision slits and portholes. Gloss brown over the entire lower half of a vehicle can make it look like it’s been freshly driving through a horrible mess.
6. Freehand - is another way to make vehicles really catch your eye. A little bit of freehand heraldry or a striped camouflage scheme draws in the eye. I find multiple coats of contrast paint are easy to work with and pretty forgiving for this process. Also the Army Painter “wargame:character” brush I have found to offer the right level of control and detail when using paint this way.
7. Decals - Micro Sol and Micro Set changed my life and I can’t imagine not using them. It can make decals adhere to pretty bumpy textures. Mix and match transfers from different kits to find something that suits your creation. I always put down a gloss varnish first to aid adhesion, and then apply matt varnish over the top, after applying the decal, to reduce the sheer and to help keep the fragile decal in place. I have also recently been experimenting with printing my own decals on my home printer, with A4 sheets of transfer paper, which are readily available online.

8. Weathering - Sponging on dark browns is a simple and quick way to emulate chipping, focussing on corners and raised edges. A flat wide brush is a great way to streak enamel washes to look like drips.
The Boglanders are my latest range of figures. I wanted to do a project that charted the development of the goblin, from the old folk-lore portrayals through to modern orcs. The first mention from literature appears in the writings of Orderic Vitalis in 1141, where he names a demon or devil from Evereux in Normandy as “gobelinus”. So from the outset, “goblin” is synonymous with “demon”, their origins are spiritual in nature. They then appear in many writings across Europe, and become conflated with elves, red-caps, boggarts and many other goblinoid depictions. They are also present in marginalia illustrations. Then as we move into the modern and postmodern era they become solidified into a distinct look. Games like Dungeons and Dragons took the ideas that Tolkien invented and gave them concrete rules and set them as fantasy races. In Lord of the Rings, orcs and goblins are often used interchangeably.

I wanted to capture this mix of old and new depictions of goblinoids. It has taken about nine months to get the set designed, sculpted, moulded, painted and photographed. There are forty five figures, plus a bunch of tokens and some statues. I also made separate arm sets. I hand sculpted all the figures and parts so I thought I’d show some of the masters and write a bit about them.

I sculpt using a set of tools that I hand made from coat hanger wire. I don’t like to use commercial tools for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I sometimes lose my precious tools, so I reasoned that if I can make them myself from easy to get materials, I could just make a replacement! Secondly, I prefer the lighter weight tools I make. The inertia of larger, heavier tools makes doing tiny details much harder!

I use ProCreate to sculpt with. It’s basically the same as green stuff, but grey instead of the horrible green colour! I usually start with the feet of the model, and work up from there. I first created some “dollies” so I didn’t have to sculpt the feet over and over again, and to try to standardise the height of the figures. I created moulds of the dollies and cast additional copies. I then sculpted over these copies. This was mainly so that I could actually do some gaming with them, but also meant I could do resculpts and conversions over the dollies. In the photos you can see the putty is slightly more yellow, while the resin is a bit more blue.

I wanted to have separate arms on some of the models. There is a trade-off with multi-pose models. If I sculpt them whole, it’s easier to get good poses. On the other hand, being able to easily alter the equipment with swappable arms is great fun too. The way I’m selling the models also influenced my design choices, in that the figures are in sets of three models on a mould (plus a token). This lets me do the sets without arms pretty cheaply; it’s £4 for three models BUT some of them need their arms! What can you do if you don’t want the arms? To get around this issue, I simply added detail to the arm socket. I decided that parasitic worms eat the Boglanders arms off, so the sockets have writing worms modelled in them and spilling out. This way customers can use them as they are, or add arms if they desire.
01. Tools used for sculpting

02. Swords The masters often break while cutting them out of the mould. I usually design the parts to break off the sprue easily, to make the cuts easier to make.

03. Guns The gun masters were made from plastic rod and sheet. I cut and sand it.

04. Pistols mould: The pistol arm’s mould

05. King and Queen Hand sculpts, with plasticard details. The left one is sculpted over one of the dollies, you can see the base is resin.

06. Shields I like to texture the plasticard, I usually chew it then attack it with a knife.
I use two different resins across my ranges, and wanted to combine them with the Boglanders. The resin I use most is polyester, the same stuff used for fibreglass. It’s a really easy to use resin and it’s quite cheap. One of the Ramshackle Games principles is to provide excellent value, and polyester resin lets me do this. However, it’s quite brittle, although not as brittle as most 3D printer resins. The upshot of this is that the models need to be designed to take advantage of the pros and reduce the impact of the cons. The Boglander bodies are super chunky with nice integral bases. I like integral bases, they make it easier to use moulds and I like being able to stand up the model straight away.

The other resin I use is the superior polyurethane resin. Specifically, I use Axon F38, which is a gorgeous material. It’s a bit like coconut flesh when it sets. It’s easy to cut, lightweight, strong and has a little flex. It’s not brittle like polyester. Again though, it needs to be carefully designed to reduce the chance of trapping bubbles in the mould during casting. It’s imperative to add parts to the sculpture that will form the sprues or “gates” that support the model and allow the bubbles to escape during casting. This however means that resin is wasted. I hate to see quality resin go in the bin, so I detail all the sprue pieces on my models. That way they are great for basing or scatter terrain, and are less likely to end up in the waste cycle.

I also use plastic sheets and rods to make a lot of the details and casting sprues for my model. It’s great for doing hard edges or regular shapes. Things like the weapons, spoons and some of the armour was created using plastic. One of the advantages of casting in resin, versus metal, is that the moulding process is very gentle, and so I can use softer materials like plastic that would not survive the process for making moulds for metal casting.

I make the moulds from silicone rubber. This is really forgiving and quite easy to use. I make an open top, foam board box around the master sculpts. These are glued to the bottom and then silicone is poured over and vacuumed to remove any trapped bubbles. I then carefully split open the mould with a knife. Before pouring the mould, I draw a line on the original model where I want the cut to be. Then after pouring the mould, when the silicone is set, I cut the master parts out, following the line I drew.

I hope you like the models! I had a lot of fun making them. I often feel a sense of anxiety when sculpting; I want it to be perfect and get worried about messing the sculpt up. With the Boglanders though, I tried to relax a lot more and not worry about “doing them wrong.” Because of this more laid back attitude, ironically, I think I made better sculpts.
Tine Of The Fields is a freelance creator who specializes in sculpting hardcore cottagecore miniatures. You can buy her miniatures from [here](#). Her Instagram is filled with delightfully strange creations, take a look [here](#). Why not support her work over at [Patreon](#)?
Ryan, also known as Blightbones is a miniatures sculptor known for his macabre creations, among them his twisted undead nightmares for Necropolis28.

You can follow Ryan here

His miniatures are available here or you can join his Patreon and help him create new miniatures.
Late August 2023: In a small European municipality on the outskirts of the Black Forest, members of the Weald community gathered from across Germany, Switzerland, France, England and Scotland to embark on a bloody campaign over the course of a weekend. As the mist settled over the tall pine trees surrounding our destination, it felt like the perfect place to throw some dice and meet those whom we had cultivated friendships with online in real life. WealdCon was the amalgamation of all those grand plans: narrative ideas, rules discussions and enthusiastically kitbashed models. We were incredibly lucky to have the most delightful hosts, a large space where we could let our games take place on beautifully built terrain, and the company of those who share our passion.

What devilry is this?

A little bit more about the Weald, for those who don’t know. The game is a low fantasy miniature skirmish game that follows the ethos of 28-style gaming: a relatively low model count, focusing on grim and brutal narratives rather than larger mass combat, storytelling, exploring themes of isolation and superstition, and of course an encouragement of converting and kitbashing unique warbands to fight with.

The setting is a wide forested expanse known as “The Weald”. Villages and outposts toll to raise small warbands known as “Wardens” to defend against the oncoming scourge of The Rot; a mysterious blight that plagues the land and consumes humans and animals alike. Those unfortunate enough to become infected turn into shambling monstrous shells of their former selves, who the people of the Weald call “Gnarl”. The Weald is a brutal, miserable place, full of superstition and dread.

The Weald, for the majority of us, has become a place where a community has thrived around a centralised Discord server. A springboard of inspiration to enjoy that has space for everyone to make it their own. The loose setting and spectrum of the theme allows everyone to have their own take on the world in which these Grimdark fantasy skirmishes take place. The factions are open to interpretation, much like the other indie 28 games occupying this sphere. This framework inspires creativity and collaboration and allows the (poorly coined!) “Wealdiverse” to expand in scope—with many members of the community discussing updates to the rules, amendments and expansions, whilst more often than not embarking on their own side projects. This collaborative incubator made it a no-brainer for our social gathering to be based around a centralised campaign - and so “The Siege of Mudmire” was created.

We designed a campaign that would be played over a two-day period, with games taking place on multiple tables. “The Siege of Mudmire” pitted a regiment of Warden warbands against an invading swarm of Gnarl warbands - each played by a team of 4-5 players.

The Siege of Mudmire
The village of Mudmire is perched in a clearing in the South West of the Hollar - deep within the Weald. Connected by the Baron’s Road. It is a vital point of trade and agriculture-historically significant due to peasant rebellions, Summer fayres and rumoured cult connections. At the request of Baron Von Julian III, multiple parties of Wardens have been summoned to defend it from troubled happenings over recent weeks.

Various Gnarl sightings have been reported in the nearby forests and the Baron requires this vestige of trade, food supply and coin to be defended at all costs. But the Gnarl have other plans.
Mudmire was split into nine different areas representing the village, the forest and contested spaces between, with thematic rules and rewards for each area. Fisherman’s Swamp, for example, had a giant Eye Toad (a one-eyed toad from Weald lore) that would leap around the map, causing damage to models it landed near, whilst the Dilapidated Church and Graveyard had a simple central objective that battles would be focused around.

The main aim of the campaign was to have as many people playing games at once, in various areas of Mudmire, the results of which would feed into a broader battle map and outcome. With space for players to experience the post-game rewards and warband growth - altering their model count and equipment to suit the next game. After each game, the winner would be rewarded with an item, new model or campaign-altering trinket that could impact the game state slightly, or just allow them to buy new weapons, mutations and upgrades. Between games, each team’s players were also allowed to reinforce their fellow team members with models - in hopes they could turn the tide in the next game, and so to the overarching campaign.

Upon winning a game, territory was gained or lost. Victory in a contested territory resulted in the winning faction being awarded a “Crown”, a currency we used to determine the overall score. Play would proceed with teams deciding which areas to try and take, defend or reclaim, in hopes they could dominate the majority of territories on the battle map. The entire campaign document is available for download on the Weald Discord server.

Waging war
Over the course of the two-day campaign, fifteen games were played in all, with the Wardens achieving eleven victories.
against a paltry four wins for the Gnarl players. Mudmire was saved, and the siege failed! The Wardens held strong and the Gnarl were pushed back to the forests from whence they came. Whilst all the games were incredibly fun and the overall campaign worked well - the wins did sway towards the Wardens by an overwhelming number and it was difficult for the Gnarl to recuperate, with various injuries, lost models and a potentially more complex play style.

There were some games that were super close, with the last few models battling out for dominance - many blamed some bad dice rolling, whilst others questioned some of their offensive and defensive decisions from previous turns. Each game was filled with desperate combats, valiant feats and glorious failures. The Gnarl players accepted their decimation with good humour and the whole campaign was a riot of fun.

Key learning points taken from the experience, for us as game designers, and players, was that there is always a portion of luck, knowledge of rules and playing experience that feeds into the overall balance of a ruleset. Whilst a top-down view of the game seems as though the factions are balanced, there were some small inconsistencies with the various abilities and mechanics that could be tweaked and often required some quick adjustments or clarifications in the midst of battle. These often led to comical moments where players chose to interpret improvised rules in ways that would partially benefit their situation, or felt like a more narrative-driven option. A great example of this was when a player had the option of disengaging by being pushed near a ledge. It wasn't stated that this action would force them off the ledge, but the player declared "I choose to fall!" - incurring damage but allowing their pesky Gnarl to go and terrorise another Warden. Many notes were taken for future development.
We’ve always aimed for the Weald to be a space of narrative gameplay, and combined with the campaign setting, it fulfilled this expectation. We learnt a lot from this compact series of games that could not be obtained from singular pickup games at a club. I think one of the main takeaways is that playtesting in a compressed setting has so much value when it comes to game design - small issues, flaws, understanding the rules and accessibility are laid bare when you observe the outcomes of multiple games. Like some sort of experiment, WealdCon will now serve as our “control” as we tinker with the rules, improving playability and balance, while expanding on a game and setting we love, for a community we adore.

Spreading the infection

Like a hideous rot-ridden Gnarl hulk, the Weald as a project is always growing and adapting, driven by the collective vision of the Weald community and its enthusiasm for the game. Plans are afoot for a new edition of the core rules, with many adaptations that are a direct result of the information gathered at WealdCon. Crunchy updates such as reevaluating the weapons and armours; more flavourful aspects such as new abilities and effects; separate injury tables for Wardens and Gnarl; and further refinements of the experience and campaign systems are all being devised. Other plans for the future include more supplement releases such as rules for hireable creatures and characters, as well as curated collections of community-made stories and artwork about life (and death) in the green hell of The Weald.

One final sentiment that can’t be stated enough is the importance of community - we live in such a troubled age, but it really gives us all hope and widens our worldview when talking to fellow members of the 28 community from across the world. If there is one thing we took away from this experience, it is that you really get out what you put in: everyone was excellent and we genuinely had such an incredible time. Don’t be afraid to pack up some models in your backpack, travel to meet some like-minded souls and most importantly: throw those dice! Perhaps we will see you at WealdCon 2024.

Special thanks to Julian Wild (@hightechoger), Marcus Harland (@reliquat28), Sam Derache (@sam_f_derache), Pierre Berthierr (@grimstuffworld), Thomas Burlett, Florian Baumeister (@dark_surge_studio), Fabien de Vries, Tom Pedley (@petlozki) and all the Wild family for hosting us!
AZURE CRESCENT

EVENT // AZURE CRESCENT

AZURE CRESCENT
I was sitting in a small study cubicle procrastinating from studying for my advanced level exams when the urge to build terrain hit me. It was an urge to build seamless, one-piece terrain that no one in their right mind has the room to store, unless it is very small. So to Google I went, with a desire to find the miniatures game with the smallest board. My first port of call was *Bushido* (24”x24”) and then *Warcry/Kill Team* (22”x30”), but neither of these appealed to me, so I meandered around the internet until I stumbled upon *Necropolis28*. Calling itself a ‘diorama skirmish game,’ it was played on 16”x16” (!) boards. It sounded interesting and it had a Discord group, so I ventured in to discover more. By the next day I had signed up for an event and put myself down to build a board, now I only had to discover how to play…

*Necropolis28* is a diorama skirmish game where small warbands of 1-7 undead monstrosities smash each other to pieces across tiny boards, under the orders of their lich or revenant masters. The world is one of the dead, a cataclysmic event ending all life and forcing those who do not have the skills to sustain their cadaverous bodies to bind themselves in service to those that do, lest they end up a sentient pile of bone dust, blowing down ruined streets.

Azure Crescent was a one-day gaming event held near Oxford, England, that consisted of a series of friendly games allowing the creations of various hobbyists to clash as undead wizards sought to claim the power of the azure moon or purge its taint from the city: A pale cerulean moon hung low over the city, its arcane light bringing a fervour to each necromancer touched by its glow. Some saw it as an opportunity for power, while others vowed to tear it down from the heavens themselves, along with anyone who would attempt to commune with it.

It was a dreary day in which I arrived on the scene and, after a short walk through a graveyard, I found myself at the most narratively fitting venue possible: a small gothic church, with enough biscuits, tea and coffee to ensure the day would go splendidly. The tables were decked with a collection of some of the most beautiful terrain boards I have ever seen, making each game truly live up to the sales pitch of a diorama skirmish game. The warbands on show were equally stunning, a menagerie of skull-filled trees, candle spiders, ghiests, ghosts and ghouls ready to put up fierce opposition to my bog dwelling corpses. I brought Syr Lutum, the Bog knight, his faithful squires and a corpse louse which had been summoned from the deeper parts of the marsh. Syr Lutum believed the profane light of the Azure Crescent had no right to shine on the sacred places of the Mud Mothers bog. With his squires following, he trudged into the marsh to cover its light with blessed filth. Their first battle was over quickly, a lucky crossbow bolt (guided by the arcane power of misreading the rules) tossed the enemy lich off a ledge and to his doom. Their second skirmish was a setback, as an enemy’s familiar was able to resummon their master and make off with morsels of the moon’s cerulean power. Another enemy was crushed under rusty iron shod boots on the outskirts of the city, before a final, climactic 4-player game against two of my previous opponents. Syr Lutum met his untimely demise, but the corpse louse was able to climb to the highest point on the battlefield to block the pernicious light of the azure moon from tainting the holy swamp of Mother Mud…

It was a truly special day. It was the first non-tournament event I have ever been to, and the atmosphere was wonderful. While I may be preaching to the choir here, I would recommend wholeheartedly searching out tiny, special games and planning, running or attending an event for them. Twenty people and a handful of undead miniatures was an ideal formula to create an unforgettable experience.
TSPN (pronounced 'teaspoon') was created because I wanted to play a solo tabletop pet simulator and couldn't find a system for it. I began to think about what the game would look like and how the mechanics could work. I mulled it over for quite a while before mentioning the concept to some hobby friends. They told me the idea had merit and encouraged me to create it.

I never liked the idea of creating a system for profit. Anything I create I want to be available for free online, and if people really love the work they can purchase a physical copy (or bootleg it themselves).

At AdeptiCon 2023, the impetus to create the system was thrust upon me by members of the Hive SCUM podcast. They gifted me some vegetable people models, explaining that no money would be exchanged but instead I would need to create the system I had told them about as payment!

TSPN is a system created for me, by me. Its name is an eponymous reminder as it comes from the nickname Teaspoon (or "TSPN") that I was awarded by Bryan Ruhe of SLUG WIZARD fame, which stemmed from my signature initials and avid tea drinking.

I created the system from the comfort of my own couch, haphazardly doodling rules in a stream of consciousness. I started with basic rules and pet generation. I then began to reference mechanics which didn't exist but I felt should not worry about it until later. Occasionally I would realize I mentioned a mechanic I forgot to include.

I playtested the basic rules myself and found them to be initially exciting. Fun, as with real pets. This first burst of excitement wears off and it becomes tedious. I think that's part of the beauty of the game: it mirrors the experience of getting a new pet.

In my personal life, I enjoy caring for insects and crustaceans. I currently have pet Madagascar hissing cockroaches, dwarf freshwater isopods, and a fiddler crab. These pets initially were fun to keep. I enjoyed setting up and designing their enclosures, researching them, and caring for them. Over time, I still love my pets but I find keeping up with them a hassle.

TSPN captures this tedium through its real-time simulation mechanics. In designing an enclosure, the player roughly mimics the commitment of creating an aquarium or terrarium for a real small pet. I suspect many players enjoy the process of creating an enclosure and generating a pet more than the actual mechanics of the game, although this has not been confirmed.

Interestingly, TSPN does not specify the materials used in creating a pet or enclosure. I have seen fully two-dimensional paper pets and enclosures, felted enclosures, enclosures made out of play-dough, and everything in between!
Forbidden Psalm is a tabletop miniature wargame by Will Rahman, based on the apocalyptic TTRPG Mörk Borg. After playing the campaign from the original Forbidden Psalm rulebook, I was in love with the game, so when the local club asked me to organise another summer event I immediately knew what it would be. Just like the past two gatherings I had organised: Legen (2018) and Sunhold (2022), Turm was hosted at the modellers’ and wargamers’ association UMS “Agram” (ums-agram.hr) of Zagreb, Croatia. Unlike my past events, this time participants were not selected and directly invited. Turm would be open for anyone - first come first served until all player spots were filled. The date was set for July 1st 2023, and online applications were opened six months earlier, in January.

THE NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Although this event was structured like a tourney, I like my games to be immersive - so establishing a narrative reason for why all these warbands were there was a must.

Turm, also known as the Tower City, is hit by a devastating lightning bolt from the sky and reduced to rubble. An order of necromancers who make up the city’s ruling class is struggling to pick up the pieces and re-establish order. In the damp caves beneath the deep dungeons of the city still dwells their god Vvolos, who eats souls and shits gold. The player warbands are there to take advantage of the disaster situation and take away whatever loot they can. There’s resistance from the still surviving Cult of Vvolos: the yellow-robed necromancers, with their minions living and undead.

It’s not particularly elaborate, nor does it need to be. It’s here to give the event a recognisable identity and the players’ imaginations something to grab onto. Warbands coming to a ruined city to plunder is a well used trope in skirmish games, and I’ve used it before in last year’s Sunhold event. The particular setting of Turm was plucked from an AoS28 project I had shelved a while ago. Turm can live again transplanted, feeling quite at home in the vaguely outlined doomed world of Forbidden Psalm and Mörk Borg.
THE RULES

There was a cap of eight players for the event. The venue UMS “Agram” provided us was a relatively small underground room that could comfortably fit a maximum of four tables. The eight spots were filled within a day or two of the announcement. There were a couple cancellations in the months preceding the event, but those players got replaced promptly and on July 1st we had our eight warbands on the spot ready to compete. The players who showed up hailed from Slovenia, Serbia, Germany, Italy, and the United States.

The day’s gaming on Turm was organised into three rounds of player vs player encounters, with the addition of a special battle royale round as the finale. Encounters took the form of warbands exploring the disaster site and skirmishing with Turm’s denizens and each other. The scenarios were modded from ones in the Forbidden Psalm rulebook: reskinned, with custom monsters and spells added. I made sure each table had a sheet with the encounter rules to make it easy for the players to set up and run the game on their own.

In Scenario 1: Vultures Descend the player warbands arrive in the outskirts of Turm and begin looting corpses, while fighting off undead creatures. Each table was assigned one of the four necromantic doctrines: Flesh, Bone, Blood, and Spirit - and spawned corresponding undead minions: Zombies, Ghouls, Skeletons, and Ghosts, respectively. That way everyone is playing the same scenario, but there is slightly different flavour with monsters on each table.

In Scenario 2: The Yellow Robes, the warbands run into Turmian Necromancers: Vedrana Gangrena, Ikorid the Duplicious, Iulia Doctasophosse, and Havok the Archwraith. Again, each appears on their own table and summons their own type of undead minions. Killing and robbing the yellow-robed wizards is the goal for players here.

In the third scenario, Eats Souls and Shits Gold, the players happen upon cultists performing a ritual which summons a Spawn of Vvolos from the dungeons underneath the city. The creature is huge and has the ability to petrify with its gaze. More cultists come to help their reptilian demigods as the game progresses.

This is where the campaign portion ends, and the final round is a battle to the end among eight champions. Each player selected a single warband member, kitted them with the best equipment they had accumulated during the campaign, and sent them into the arena. This was utter chaos, particularly because they had Relics that created insane situations I hadn’t predicted, including a plague of vampires and a giant invisible tadpole.

TERRAIN, MINIATURES, AND OTHER MATERIALS

The tables, scenery, and monsters were sourced from my personal collection. You may recognise them from my Forbidden Psalm battle report series, or from the Sunhold report in the previous issue of 28. Some figures, namely the 3D printed Vvolos cultists and Spawn of Vvolos, were painted specially for the event. Dozens of Cultists and four Necromancers were sent to us by our sponsor Bestiarum Miniatures, while the four Spawn are Basilisks I purchased from Asgard Rising.

Forbidden Psalm can be deadly for characters; one can lose a member of their warband in the middle of the campaign. For that reason I wanted to have a selection of reserves for hire. Some of those figures were mine, others were brought by the players, and some were even sent by people who wanted to participate but weren’t able to join us in person.
I designed custom Omen decks to give away to players, but my shipment got thoroughly lost and missed the date. Sometimes even when you do everything well ahead of time it still doesn’t work out! The decks had to be mailed out to the participants a few weeks after the event, when the replacement shipment arrived. Will, the creator of Forbidden Psalm (forbiddenpsalm.com), kindly provided a free digital copy of the rulebook to each of the participants. Thank you Will! He was going to join us in person, but unfortunately couldn’t make it in the end.

HOW DID IT GO?

Players were awarded for different achievements:

- Vane Dolenc - Marauder (most treasure collected)
- Miran Bratuš - Slayer (most monsters killed and enemies downed)
- Miran Bratuš - Triumphator (last one standing in the Battle Royale)
- Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov - Best Painted Warband
- Marcello Rizza, Giuseppe Del Buono, Giacomo Lunardon, Eugenio Favaretto, Brian Roussel, and Fabio Veronelli were collectively awarded the UMS “Agram” Best of Show medal for their awesome group-built warband.

Congrats!

The four title winners got figure sets from Bestiarum, but everyone else also walked away with goodies. The figures we gave away were courtesy of our sponsors:

Ramshackle Games
Bestiarum Games

Thanks to UMS “Agram”, to Kevin, to our sponsors, and to all participants, whether they joined us in person or sent their figures. I’d love to run Turm again next year, with a few things tweaked based on what was learned from this one. The tournament format was far simpler for me to manage; everything ended up being done within scheduled time and the players could be left alone since they were guided by written scenarios. My 100% narrative events Sunhold and Legen went on for far longer than predicted and they needed ceaseless involvement from a GM, who ended up completely mentally exhausted by the end of the day. However, adding more narrative moments to the game is extra interesting for the players. It’s a balance I’ll once again be aiming for next time.

PLAYERS:

Lüder Ansorg
Marcello Rizza
Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov
Luka Jare
Vane Dolenc
Tadej Murovič
Cameron Biringer

OTHER PARTICIPANTS:

Brian Roussel
Pierre-Guy Auger
The Purple Hag Bunch is a group of disgraced beings, sent to pillage Turm by their patron (or owner...their life is so expendable!). As soon as I realised I got a spot on Turm2023, I wanted to do something different...using the event as an excuse to do something with friends. The idea was to ask friends to join me in making the warband: each one of us would create a warrior to send to Turm. Giuseppe Del Buono (@gdmbakesweirdthings), Giacomo Lunardon (@addio.tensing), Eugenio Favaretto (@__malvino__), Brian Roussel (@rojasnoirlac) and Fabio Veronelli (@fabio_morghot) agreed to do this project with me.

I didn’t want to simply ask them to convert a mini for the event (that would have been boring to me and them, I think) so each one of us (aside from Giacomo and Eugenio who created a mini together) rolled to decide the stats of our warriors. Each one of us worked alone since we all live far from each other. We made a WhatsApp group to keep up with what the others were doing. The colour palette was pretty much decided by Brian...simply because he isn't a lazy Italian and was the first to finish his figure. He asked for suggestions on the palette, but the answer was: “do whatever you want, we will follow”. And we did.

When all the minis were finished, they were shipped to me. I did the basing and coated every mini in matt varnish to help tie them together. We were pretty happy with the end result and, most importantly, we had loads of fun! So I headed to the event with a bunch of miniatures of misfits that weren’t used to fighting together, hoping for the best.
In a distant land called Pigmoria, a realm filled with magic and mythical creatures, there existed a unique tribe of pigmen known as the Porkanians. These pigmen were renowned for their exceptional strength, untamed spirits and insatiable love for adventure. Among them, there were five legendary treasure-seeking barbarians named El Bobo, Krust Baby Legs, Flem, Poog the Terrible and Spam the Ham.

Together, they embarked on epic quests, seeking out ancient and hidden treasures scattered across the realm. They delved into perilous dungeons, traversed dangerous terrain and battled fearsome monsters, all in the pursuit of wealth and glory.

The Pigmen were built from scratch by Tadej from Ljubljana, Slovenia. Mostly sculpted from Milliput and Greenstuf with minimal plastics involved. Tadej is a grimdark-blanchitsu painter, miniature kitbasher and sculptor.
He looked over to the old ruins. The group came from far away to reach their target. El’Thain looked down from the hill crest while his retinue camped on the backside. They had travelled far by caravan and boat to enjoy this view. Their task was to gather mysterious, long forgotten knowledge, ordered by the high Lords of the distant southern oasis. Their home was a place lying in everlasting shadows, a dry region in contrast to the dense woods and lakes in front of them. El’Thain saw his scout Min’Zoran coming. A fast runner only carrying a spear for his defence: “The path ahead of us is free, only some insects crawling around.” With two hits on his shield El’Thain gave the signal to move and the group headed down to the ruins.

For three of the models I had in mind what they should look like. For the rest, I built seven additional miniatures and picked the two I liked most in terms of their looks and possible equipment. Inspiration for the warband came from various sources: a little H.P. Lovecraft, Conan the Barbarian, my fragmented memories of the Disney Aladdin Series I saw in my childhood, and the steampunk novel Jack Cloudie by Stephen Hunt.

Their backstory is that they come from an Arabia-like place that is really dry and cloudy, so it is always in twilight. The vast sandy desert is dotted with small oases inhabited by the people of this region. These people base their magic on the gifts of the demons they worship. The ruling caste of their cities are the High Lords, coming from the highest ranks of magicians. The inhabitants of the Southern Oasis are always in search of scrolls of magic from places all over the world, so they send groups to find new knowledge for their great libraries.

Overall it was a great tournament with nice people and a fantastic atmosphere, with lots of fun. The other players’ warbands looked amazing and the stories behind them were creative as well. I will definitely come back next time!
The boggards of the Murky Lake, The Intrepid ones, Freking pests and Hey, That is my shoe! are some of the names the self-appointed Knights of the Oozing Stone have been called. The goblins have long coexisted, in the loosest term of the word, with the local human population of a village near their swamp, until one year the war rolled in and devastated the nearby landscape. But the Goblins, largely ignored by the invading forces and attracted to shiny things, took to looting the corpses of the fallen, growing ever more courageous and attempting to mimic the behaviour of the new humans they observed.

These capable warriors, by goblin standards, started lusting for glory and fame which couldn’t be found in the swamp or the destroyed village. Not fully understanding the finer points of arms and armour, nor a lack of proper training, could stop these go-getter goblins. Where there is a will, there is a way! If it was shiny, they wanted it!

Over time, these goblins started raiding nearby settlements in search of more shiny things and colourful clothing. And as luck or fickle gods would have it, the goblin “Ron Swansong” happened upon two magic scrolls along the way. And never has a goblin found himself inconvenienced by such a thing as the inability to read. Scrolls in his hands, he was determined to prove himself a magician.

Every band of knights needs heraldry. So the band picked a symbol that would represent them well. A toad they found near a particularly slimy rock was an obvious choice. Into the backpack it went and they headed on their merry way.

As it turned out later in their adventures, the toad seems to be exhibiting some magical properties, and possibly the ability to read, as it has enabled the successful casting of one of the found scrolls... once... The goblins aren’t sure it can happen again.

The self-proclaimed “Master-at-arms, Kni’git”, found a particularly long stick (lance) which he deemed a weapon worthy of his stature. Seeing as he was holding a pretty big stick, no goblin chose to correct him on his claims. He wields his mighty weapon into battle with varying degrees of success, to the amusement and amazement of anyone who beholds the sight of the whirling piece of wood slamming down on the heads of often befuddled foes.

The supposedly most noble and righteous of the bunch is “Sir Gen Eric”, who sadly had yet to procure himself a proper sword before their first battle. They took to battle with a particularly flashy piece of wood and a shield. But not to be outdone by his brothers looting abilities or what they understood as “knighthood”, Gen Eric was able to strip down one of his enemies to his breeches mid battle and made off with all their gear, thus properly arming himself.

Leading this band of intrepid goblins is a particularly vile and nasty goblin atop his giant tadpole, “Toady McToadface and his trusty companion, The Knight”. There is chatter and speculation among the goblin tribes as to which is which. But any direct line of questioning presented to them ended swiftly with the asker being devoured by the oversized tadpole.

In modelling terms the miniatures were put together by kitbashing (and digital kitbashing) of several medieval and goblin sets.
Reeking of sulphur, this small group of low-life petty criminals was banished from the pit of Gravenoire, a half-ruined city of black stone erected inside a dormant volcano crater. At first out of spite for their former kin, the exiled took up to robbing and murdering travellers, exhilarated by maddening visions and spirits lurking in the wild around Gravenoire. Prompting a full militia detachment to hunt for them, their heads then turned to Turm, hoping to disappear in the depths of the Tower City and make coin as hired swords. There, in the muck of Turm, their common struggles would soon be forgotten in favour of the highest bidder.

This warband was first rolled randomly as per the Forbidden Psalm rules. My goal was to fully kitbash the warband with what I had in my bits boxes (and a bit of green stuff), while trying to reflect as closely as I could the names, feats, flaws and equipment of each character. For example, Azazoth the Night Child, with his Barkskin feat, literally got bark skin as I used the lower half of a GW dryad kit for his legs. His name implied that he would get “Night themed” so he got crowned with a moon crescent taken from a Victrix kit on his head, but I played around with the “Child” part, giving him a very long beard made out of green stuff. I had a blast mixing up fantasy and historical parts to make unique characters.

For the paintjobs, I wanted to limit myself to a small palette to tie them together as a cohesive unit, but also because I was preparing to move overseas, which greatly reduced my hobby time. Wanting to get the feel of my warband in-line with what Ana had already shared of Turm, I decided to pick what I see as the holy colours of Grimdark: Red, Yellow, Black, Brown and Ivory, having been inspired by the amazing art of John Blanche for a long time. Oddly enough, he announced his retirement from Games Workshop on the same day I painted the first miniature, so I figured this warband would be my own little homage. Finally, to go with the warband, I made a little treasure token out of balsa sticks, Milliput and plastic bits, which was straight out copied from a striking drawing by John Wigley and showcased in the previous issue (#5) of 28 Magazine.
Beset by strange dreams, Sand has surrounded himself with a motley band of poor devils. His instinct guided him, without words and without logical explanations. He was following a direction, quite incapable of explaining to his companions why… But the latter were following him, come what may, as if convinced by a superior reason.

They came to the outskirts of Turm as the sky filled with evil magic. A very dark quest awaited the hermit and his friends of fortune, but none hesitated and all advanced with a determined step, crossing the imposing portal of the city. Since his forced hermitage, Sand no longer had any appetite for crowded cities and massive stone works. But it wasn’t the crowds, the noise, or the smells that interrupted his thoughts now. It was the emptiness. Totally deserted, not a living soul in the city, just the coldness of the stones and the dust stirred up by the wind.

Caressing the golden mask that covered his scarred face with his fingertips, Sand remembered how his companions had come to him while he was looking for them without really knowing it. First there was Shorty Namtanby, a miserable wretch with miraculous hands: he was able to heal the worst of wounds. But his power, far from being a blessing, filled his body with a thousand ailments, from which he did not seem to suffer. Scaly patches, bedsores and decompositions of all kinds ran through his puffy being, while he tried to save others… Unfortunately, people don’t allow themselves to be approached by so much ugliness…

Reed then came to find him. This extravagant didn’t reveal anything about who he was but seemed to know a lot about Sand and his upcoming quest. His cryptic words implied that he was a deity, excommunicated by the other gods, who was trying to regain his status. Poor fool…

Anja Saint Froid was the most difficult to find, but it was easy to convince him. Lost in a dark forest that seemed to change every hour of the day, Sand and his companions found him by chance and got out of the cursed woods safely. But Anja revealed to them that he was the one looking for them, and not the other way around! This fallen knight dreams of glory and knew that a grandiose quest awaited him alongside Sand the Hermit.

Finally, the taciturn and mute Rizzen, child of the night, was waiting for them on the side of the road. He joined them without a word, his annoyed and impatient look suggesting he had been waiting there for some time. Was Sand late?

Several days before arriving in Turm, as their destination was finally becoming clearer, an armoured giant appeared. He kept a good distance from the group, but never let himself be left behind. Was it an ogre? A man? A monster? When Anja voiced his concern about the creature following them day and night, Rizzen’s impatience encouraged the group to continue on the journey, not backtracking to hunt the monster. They lost track of him as they entered Turm, not knowing if he was friend or foe…
I have wanted to explore the theme of cynocephali in gaming miniatures for a while now; I was just waiting for the right opportunity. My favourite take on them is from the book Ale i Bauci, a humorous fake encyclopaedia of fantastic creatures, which literally equates them to ghouls. That makes some sense to me and ties into Lovecraft’s depiction of ghouls, but since ghouls are already a thing in the MÖRK BORG universe, I had to figure out something different for Turm. I wanted to keep the connection to dead bodies and graveyards. And so I came to the obvious idea to make them guardians of the dead, which brings them in direct conflict with necromancers and the undead, the game’s antagonists. Finally, all they needed was a tragic backstory of loss and failure to set them on their quest for redemption while the world is slowly falling apart.

For the models, I had high expectations of myself but not too much time, so I made it easy by just sculpting the heads, not complete models from scratch like I did for Sunhold, Ana’s last event. The perfect opportunity presented itself in a very lovely, crazy woman model by Andrew May of Meridian Miniatures. I was saving the model for something special, but I had dropped it and its head broke and was lost. Once I completed that first model by sculpting her new head, I felt very pleased so I quickly finished the other four. I’m also very satisfied with how I painted them – recently I significantly upgraded my patience level when it comes to painting, so I allowed myself the time to do my best, methodically painting one model at a time, surface by surface, detail by detail. I only used a wash as a starting point, and while I stuck to a desaturated brownish palette, I tried to use as many colours and hue shifts as possible while keeping the contrast limited. In the end, my models landed on the lighter side of grimdark, but I feel it worked out.

The game went very smoothly for me; all of my opponents were awesome and we played our games quickly. I think we only forgot about some morale rules, but it wasn’t that important. What I loved most about the game were the relics, which provided spontaneous gameplay elements, like the surprise boss fight with the vampire. As for the rules system, two of my favourite things are how shields work, and throwing weapons. It’s really fun to stock up on axes and just start flinging them!

Story-wise, my dogheads accomplished everything they wanted, killed some necromancers, fought some undead, found a couple of trinkets to bring back home, and all of them made it back alive, with a newfound sense of honour and worth, ready to face the upcoming end of the world in peace with themselves. I was a bit sorry that I wouldn’t get to use any of my replacement models, so I found a way to switch out one of them without affecting the game mechanics. I really wanted to show off my anti-grimdark warrior princess!

The only thing I would add to the game narratively is some kind of relationship between the player warbands, like maybe we would each roll something on a random table or pick an option or something. This could be another element to incorporate into the backstory and a definitive motivation to fight or cooperate during gameplay. Overall, the tournament was a huge success, especially since it cost Ana a lot less time and effort to prepare than her previous events, but it was just as fun. This time she made it feel easy, like anyone could do it, and I do hope others will follow through, myself included.
Cameron Biringer (United States)

As the world unravels in the midst of the apocalypse, many nobles get desperate for new hires (and meatshields). That is when a noble turned to his local (overcrowded) prison!

With a couple of gold coins and an official stamp, the Heretics of Grift were formed. Featuring Tiny Tom, Wormtail Will, Stabby Steve, Pigrider Paul, and bookworm Barry, they were… expendable!

For my mercenaries, I wanted to reflect the lopsided style of MÖRK BORG. Most, if not all, of the parts used for these models were from my bits bin. I wanted to create completely different shapes and sizes, while tying them together with similar paint schemes. I'm really happy with how they turned out, and it was a blast playing with them!

The innumerable strata of urban accretion upon which Bastion lies results in a particular set of challenges, when sewers, cellars, canals and building sites all run a chance of happening upon more ancient, unexplored and dangerous parts of the city. Among the varied dungeoneering associations, exploratory academic bodies, cryptonaut companies and individual adventurers that occasionally get employed by the city council, is the “deBrass Dungeon Delving & Cryptonaut Company“, established and run by Jacques deBrass, a retired marine thaumaturgist. While not as well known as some other groups with better PR and flashier uniforms, the crew has a reputation that has earned them a begrudging nickname from the dungeoneering community, one that betrays a degree of respect (and the address of their offices) – “the Brass Balls of Bering Street“. The word on the docks is that Jacques and his gang boarded “Skipping” Milan’s battered old smoke-bucket bound east, with enough equipment and provisions to fight a small war.

The crew consists of:

Jacques deBrass
Retired marine thaumaturgist, who applies ocean diving principles to dungeoneering, prefers to hang back and cast spells. His old diving helmet helps channel the energies and prevent things going spectacularly wrong on inevitable miscasts... in theory.

Pinhead Charlie
Left with a body of an ox and a mind of a child by a particularly cruel and creative magistrate, Jacques bought Charlie from a disreputable longshoreman outfit. He is indispensable at the front of the group as it makes its way through unexplored underground. Charlie refuses to go anywhere without Tank, his trusty pet tortoise. Good thing no-one has the heart to tell him that this is the fourth Tank already (dungeoneering is a dangerous profession).

Tomb the Iron Dwarf
Tomb goes way back with Jacques, to their first misguided attempt at raiding some crypts in the Pastel City that they barely escaped with their lives. Not that you’d know this, as Tomb saves the choicest of his volatile rebukes and curses for his old friend and employer.

Fishy Frank
Fishy Frank is a singer so bad that he is (by Tomb’s insistence) required to wear his frog-mouth helm and cuirass for an hour before and after every delve. His sense of rhythm, however, is impeccable, which comes in handy when he goes to work with his glaive.

Hood
Nobody knows much about Hood’s origins, except that the silent and deadly huntress came from the deep country up north and not even Tomb dares ask if her canine form is hereditary or a result of a terrible curse. Unknown to the rest of the group, she volunteered for the expedition when she learned that a group of cynocephali adventurers was also headed for the fallen Tower City.

Fishy Frank, Jacques deBrass, Pinhead Charlie, Hood, and Tomb the Iron Dwarf.
As the world unravels in the midst of the apocalypse, many nobles get desperate for new hires (and meatshields). That is when a noble turned to his local (overcrowded) prison! With a couple of gold coins and an official stamp, the Heretics of Grift were formed. Featuring Tiny Tom, Wormtail Will, Stabby Steve, Pigrider Paul, and bookworm Barry, they were... expendable!

For my mercenaries, I wanted to reflect the lopsided style of MÖRK BORG. Most, if not all, of the parts used for these models were from my bits bin. I wanted to create completely different shapes and sizes, while tying them together with similar paint schemes. I’m really happy with how they turned out, and it was a blast playing with them!
The Great Whale, Eater of Worlds, is come and all is lost. But the Church of Sin will not sit idly by while the world dies. There is still work to be done while we draw breath. We must travel in all directions as far as our ships, steeds, and legs will take us in the time we have left. We must seek out the savages, the primitives, and the unbelievers of distant lands languishing in their blissful ignorance and we must bring them the word of Sin. We must tell them before time runs out, before they perish without knowing. Tell them that it is their fault.

Modeling-wise these are mainly just kitbashed Wargames Atlantic plastics and prints with heads by the illustrious Saint Decent, painted purely in Contrast over a creamy zenithal.
The 28 Challenges have grown into a popular tradition with plenty of amazing entries over the years. This time we wanted to shake things up a bit with plenty of categories and a focus on various underground indie games. The common thread was that the games are mostly self-published and lack a dedicated range of miniatures, so everyone would have to come up with their own spin on the settings and be free to explore all kinds of miniatures. Having the game designers judge the entries to their respective games was an extra bit of fun and they were delighted to see all the energy at play.

We were not disappointed by the creativity displayed and some of the entries were just insane. A huge thank you to everyone who sent in their entries, whether they made it to the top or not; it was great to see what you all made.
Winner
Tara Dillenburger-Keenan
Kuggköping

Best Miniatures
Scott Ward
Best Narrative
Matthew Naughton
Hon. Mention
Scott Ward

Hon. Mention
Robert McColl
Winner
Chris White
Hon. Mention
Didac Calventus

Hon. Mention
Michael Lippert
Winner
Damien Hansen
Hon. Mention
Brett Evans

Hon. Mention
Tim Gerber-Fleury
Winner
Kristofer Haugvik
Hon. Mention
Alessandro Sturmggaard

Hon. Mention
Bryce Goodlett

Hon. Mention
Dom Brierley
Winner
Sam F. Derache
Non-Combat Tabletop

Hon. Mention
Leo De Voogd

Hon. Mention
Ed Key
Winner
Robert McColl
Hon. Mention
Luke Waddington

Hon. Mention
Kostas Paraskevopoulos
Winner
Cole Griffin
AUTHENTIC GUIDEBOOK

COMPOST28

A GARDENPUNK TABLETOP GAME

TO BE CONTINUED ANNUALLY.

VOL 1.

INCLUDING THE YEARS.

2023
Compost28 is a gardenpunk tabletop game about composting.

The goal of the game is to keep your compost stable so that the content will decompose and you will gain quality soil for your garden. There is no way to win this game. It's just about having a little bit of fun.

You start the game with 10 gobins, gobins is the local currency and can be spent on daily activities.

Next you need to get your compost pile going. Roll first on the Nitrogen and then on the Carbon tables. This is the starting pile of waste you have at your disposal. Be careful with it.

Written & Designed by

Alexander Wimberg

Art by

Dead people + Canva
MY FIRST COMPOST, A BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO STARTING OUT IN THIS FASCINATING ENDEavour.

The compost needs to be turned regularly, roll a D10 and that’s the starting Oxygen level in the compost. Finally, you need to add some Water. Toss a coin, heads you add 1 unit of Water, tails you add 2 units.

After that’s all sorted out you can spend any gobins you have, or you can save them in a tin can above the stove. Don’t worry, at the Start of each turn you earn D10 shiny new gobins.

A SOUNDS & HEALTHY COMPOST CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING STATS

- Carbon
- Nitrogen
- Oxygen
- Water
- Health

If any of the stats goes above 10 or drops below 1 then the compost has utterly failed and needs to be burned to eradicate the shame. You lose the game, just start over or play something else.

Each turn you can spend gobins as you see fit. The gobins can be spent on the following activities. You can do up to D3 activities per day.

a. Buy Nitrogen, then add it to the compost.
b. Buy Carbon, then add it to the compost.
c. Turn the compost (it’s free and adds D6 Oxygen).
d. Add Water (it’s also free, add D6 units of water).
e. Buy protective gear.
f. Buy creatures.
g. Hire a parasite remover or a mold inspector.
h. Visit the Doc.
WHAT CAN YOU PUT IN A COMPOST?

ORGANIC GREEN WASTE (IT PROVIDES NITROGEN). IT COSTS 1 GOBIN TO BUY A RANDOM TYPE OF GREEN WASTE.

I.....Food waste (contain 2 Nitrogens) (Vegetables)
II.....Grass clippings (contain 1 Nitrogen) (Garden waste)
III.....Garden trimmings (contain 1 Nitrogen) (Garden waste)
IV.....Fresh leaves (contain 1 Nitrogen) (Garden waste)
V.....Fruits, relatively fresh (contain 2 Nitrogens) (Vegetables)
VI.....Carcasses (contain 4 Nitrogens) (Meat)
VII.....Roadkill, still warm (contain 2 Nitrogens) (Meat)
VIII.....Butcher residue (contain 2 Nitrogens) (Meat)
IX.....Root vegetables (contain 3 Nitrogens) (Vegetables)
X.....Seeds (contain 3 Nitrogens)

CURE FOR POISONED SHEEP.

IN A COMMUNICATION TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW ENGLAND FARMER, WE HAVE THE INFALLIBLE CURE FOR A SHEEP THAT IS POISONED: WHICH WE HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY TO TRANSCRIBE, FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR PATRONS.

"BRUISE THE BUDS AND TWIGS OF WHITE ASH. BOIL THEM ONE HOUR IN WATER ENOUGH TO COVER THEM WHEN PRESSED DOWN WITH A STONE OR SOME OTHER WEIGHT. TWO SPOONFULS OF THE DECOCITION THUS MADE. IF ADMINISTERED WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER THE SHEEP HAS EATEN THE POISON, WILL GENERALLY EFFECT A CURE WITHIN ONE OR TWO HOURS. IF ADMINISTERED AT A LATER PERIOD IT WILL GENERALLY EFFECT A CURE, BUT NOT SO SOON." — R. NEWMAN

ORGANIC BROWN WASTE (THAT'S CARBON). IT COSTS 2 GOBINS TO BUY A SOURCE OF CARBON.

I.....DRIED VEGETATION (CONTAIN 2 CARBONS)
II.....FALLEN LEAVES (CONTAIN 1 CARBON)
III.....STRAW (CONTAIN 1 CARBON)
IV.....WOODCHIPS (CONTAIN 3 CARBONS) (WOOD)
V.....PAPER (CONTAIN 1 CARBON)
VI.....LIMBS (CONTAIN 2 CARBONS) (WOOD)
VII.....LOGS (CONTAIN 4 CARBONS) (WOOD)
VIII.....PINE NEEDLES (CONTAIN 2 CARBONS)
IX.....SAWDUST (CONTAIN 1 CARBONS)
X.....WOOD ASH (CONTAIN 2 CARBONS)

TYPES OF NITROGEN & CARBON

The waste you add to the compost may be of a certain type like meat or wood. This is only important if there is something that impacts the use of that particular type. For example, Termites will prevent Wood from being added to the compost.
DISEASE + SIKNESSE

Each time you interact with the compost there is a chance you might catch a disease. On a roll of 7+ on a d10 you have caught a disease. Roll on the disease!! Table to see what you are suffering from.

Disease!!

Roll a d6 or choose one that suits you.

1...Aspergillosis - You have mutated and crave the delicious nutrients of the compost. Lower carbon by one at the start of each turn.

II...Farmer's Lung - Deadly if not cured by the doctor, you die within d6 +1 turns.

III...Histoplasmosis - Fungal infections. If untreated the compost will be infected by mold on a 4+ of a d6 roll.

IV...Legionnaires Disease - You need to isolate for d3 turns and cannot buy anything during that time.

V...Paronychia - Your hands wither, add 1 less oxygen each time you turn the compost.

VI...Tetanus - You start to feed on the creatures in the compost. Each turn there is a 8+ chance on a d10 that you will devour either a vermin or a creature.

To avoid disease you need protective gear. Protective gear costs 10 gobins for each piece. Each piece lowers the chance of getting a disease by 1. You can wear a maximum of 4 pieces. Roll a d6 each time you roll if you get a disease. On a 1 the protective gear breaks and should be removed.

What have you done to your hands? Have you paid too much attention to your feet?
An amazing opportunity!
Visit Dr. Kobb for all your health problems. Pay only 10 goblins for a free consultation and a home brew remedy.

On a D10 roll of 5+ she cures you of one random disease. If you had no disease she gives you one for wasting her time.

PARASITES!

1. RATS - FAT AND MEAN LOOKING, THE RATS SPREAD CONTAGIONS, ON A ROLL OF 5+ OR A D10 YOU GAIN A DISEASE.

2. COCKROACHES - AT THE END OF THE WORLD THE ROACH WILL RULE ALL, BUT NOW THEY RULE THE COMPOST HEAP AND YOU NEED TO PAY D6 GOBINS AT THE END OF EACH TURN TO REPAIR THEIR DAMAGE.

3. A LOST HEN - THE HEN LOVE TO PICK THROUGH THE COMPOST, LOOKING FOR WORMS AND DISRUPTING THE DELICATE ECOSYSTEM. KILL IT TO GAIN 3 NITROGENS (MEAT).

4. A踊ING PLANT - THE POISONOUS PLANT WILL TRY TO BIT YOU IF YOU COME NEAR IT, ON A ROLL OF 0+ YOU GAIN A RANDOM DISEASE.

5. TERMITES - THE TERMITES WILL DEVOUR ANY WOOD YOU ADD TO THE COMPOST. YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR A NEW ROLL.

6. SPIDERS - THERE ARE STICKY SPIDER EVERYWHERE, YOU GAIN ONE LESS ACTION PER TURN, DOWN TO A MINIMUM OF 1.
| I  | CHAETOMIUM! YOUR COMPOST IS TOO WET AND MOLD IS THRIVING! ON A D10 ROLL OF 6+, THE HEALTH IS LOWERED BY 1. |
| II | BLACK MOLD! YOUR LUNGS ARE FILLING UP WITH STACHYBOTrys. YOU GAIN A DISEASE ON 5+ ON A D10 AT START OF EACH TURN. |
| III | TRICHODERMA! THE GROUND BENEATH YOUR COMPOST IS TOXIC. LOWER HEALTH BY 1 EACH TURN. |
| IV | ULDOC LATION! YOU SHOULDN'T USE YOUR COMPOST AS AN OUTHOUSE. RATS ARE ATTRACTED TO YOUR COMPOST AND MOVE IN. |
| V  | SERPULA! THE CARBON IS INFECTED AND STARTS TO ROT! SET CARBON TO 1, YOU WILL NEED TO BUY MORE SOON. |
| VI | ASPERGILLUS! THE OXYGEN IS FILLED WITH MOLD! YOU NEED TO TURN THE COMPOST EACH TURN OR GAIN ANOTHER MOLD. |
| VII | AUREOBASIDIUM! THE NITROGEN IS TOXIC AND UNSTABLE. LOWER NITROGEN BY D3 EACH TURN. |
| VIII | PENICILLIUM! THE COMPOST POISONS YOUR WELL. GAIN A RANDOM DISEASE. |
| IX | MUCOR! STICKY AND DISGUSTING, WITCHES LOVES THIS TYPE OF MOLD. SELL IT EACH TURN FOR D6 GOBINS. |
| X  | ALTERNARIA! THIS GREEN GLOWING MOLD ATTRACTS PARASITES. GAIN A RANDOM PARASITE. |
After a you have
gotten everything
in order and used all
your actions you can
finally relax. But then something
happens...

**ROLL A D6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What a day!</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11... Imbalance causes havoc. Reduce Carbon by D3 &amp; increase Nitrogen by D3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12... Parasites thrive! Roll to see what kind of Parasites has invaded the compost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13... Mold – disgusting! Roll on the Mold table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14... A mean looking snake makes its lair in the compost. It will eat any parasites, but bites you on a 8+, killing you if you are unprotected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15... The compost becomes anaerobic. Reduce Nitrogen by D3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16... It's harvest time, you reap the benefit of your hard work and extract fine soil. Gain 2D6 goblins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 21... Heavy rain ruins the fun. Add Water by D3. |
| 22... Suffocating heat kills the earth. Reduce Water by D3 |
| 23... A surprise visit – The Parasite Remover stops by for a smoke, he offers you some advice and you learn to remove Parasites for free. |
| 24... Manure thief! Some sicko has been stealing from the compost! Reduce all components by D6 (roll once). |
| 25... Toxic, interacting with the compost becomes more dangerous. You will catch a disease on 6+ now. |
| 26... Lazy summer day, time enjoy the nice weather. Everything else can wait. |

*COMPOST20 IS FREE TO USE AND ADAPT IF YOU ACTUALLY WOULD WANT TO DO THAT FOR SOME REASON, THE GAME MAY NEVER BE SOLD OR USED AS A GUIDE TO COMPOSTING, DO LET ME KNOW IF YOU ACTUALLY EVER PLAY THIS GAME, FIND ME IN THE DB RECOR.*

*THE FOLLOWING ACTS INSPIRED COMPOST20.*

*FIRST AID KIT, ETHYL CAINE, WILLIE HAZELWOOD, MIRIELLE GUREVICH, EDGAR OLD, FARMERS ALMANAC, TSPN, ALICE, THE PEACEMKRS IN THE NON-COMBAT TABLETOP COMMUNITY, TAMMA.*

DEDICATED TO MARIA.
31... Acidic and volatile. Increase Nitrogen by D3.
32... An unwanted earth elemental moves in, they love Carbon and will eat some everytime you throw it in, count added Carbon as 1 less.
33... Bountiful eruption. Increase Carbon by D3.
34... Stable and calm, the compost stabilizes, freely move the components so that the compost is stable.
35... Compact, there is too much waste stuffed into the compost. Reduce Oxygen by D3.
36... Complete collapse opens up the compost's core. Increase Oxygen by D3.

41... Creepy crawlies! See the Parasites! to find out what has invaded your heap.
42... Hog invasion. Your neighbor's prize hog gets into your garden and digs into the compost. Lower each stat by D6, roll separately for all stats.
43... There are bats in your hair! Bats swarm you, covering you in feces. You are infected by a random Disease!!
44... Lowered toxicity, the compost becomes safer to handle. You will catch a disease on S+ now.
45... A fortunate discovery, you find an old ring in the compost, you can either keep it or sell it for D10 goblins.
46... A fungal growth spreads and you need to find out the type of Mold.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON
AND A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE AND TO THE HEAVENS

A season generally lasts for 16 turns, after 16 turns roll a D10 at the start of each turn. If you roll 6 or more the season changes. Follow the optional rules for seasons if you think it will bring more joy to your game. Otherwise you should feel free to ignore them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WINTER</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
<th>FALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YOUR COMPOST HIBERNATES DURING THE FROZEN SEASON. You can always choose to lower any additions or deductions to any stat by 1. If you want your compost to stay active during the winter you need to make sure it is heat isolated, otherwise the progress might stop completely.</td>
<td>THE EARTH IS AWAKENING AGAIN. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ADD APPROPRIATE AMOUNTS OF WASTE. IF YOU DON'T ADD ANYTHING TO THE COMPOST DURING A TURN YOU MUST LOSE A RANDOM STAT D1. IT'S TIME TO GET THE COMPOST IN ORDER. MAKE SURE YOU TURN IT REGULARLY AND THAT THERE IS STUFF MATERIAL IN IT.</td>
<td>THE SUMMER IS THE SEASON OF COMPOSTING. IMMEDIATELY MOVE THE STATS SO THAT THE COMPOST IS STABLE WHEN THE SUMMER BEGINS. EACH ADDITION TO THE COMPOST COUNTS AS TWICE THE ADDED AMOUNT.</td>
<td>A SEASON OF HARVEST. ANY ADDED GARDEN WASTE CAN BE INSERTED AS DOUBLE IF YOU SO CHOOSE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSIDER USING THE FALLEN LEAVES FOR YOUR GARDEN NEEDS, OR YOU CAN SHRED IT TO HELP TO COMPOST DURING THE WINTER.</td>
<td></td>
<td>TAKE CARE OF THE COMPOST DURING THE SUMMER AND YOU CAN GAIN SEVERAL BATTLES OF FINE COMPOST FOR YOUR GARDEN.</td>
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<td>Page</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Your garden fork break suddenly. You cannot turn the compost until you buy a new one for 10 gobins.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>You tear your clothes while working, remove all protective gear. If you were unprotected, you gain a Disease!</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Newcomers, you notice that a new type of creature has moved into the compost. Look for the newcomers in the creatures section.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Conscious and alive, the compost awakens. Play TSPN with the compost as your pet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Things are going great and the compost is really coming along. Add or deduct 1 from each stat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>You notice that the compost seems to be thriving. Add 1 to Health.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Something is wrong, you are not sure what the problem is, but the compost looks a bit unhealthy. Remove 1 from Health.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Crow wisdom. An old crow offers you some advice, increase 1 stat by 1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Stealing magpies! - A magpie steals D4 gobins from you, bastard!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Things take a turn for the better. You notice that the mold in the compost is receding, any Mold infections is removed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>The Doc comes over for tea. You have a really nice chat while sipping compost tea. She even cures you for free from any Disease you might have.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Freezing cold leaves your compost a frozen solid Reduce Carbon by D3.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GIVE A MAN A FISH, AND YOU FEED HIM FOR A DAY; TEACH HIM HOW TO FISH, AND YOU FEED HIM FOR A LIFETIME.**
ALTAR OF THE DEAD GODS: THE BIRTH OF A LOVECRAFTIAN WARGAME

By PAOLO BORACCHI

Altar of the Dead Gods is a Lovecraft-inspired, miniature-agnostic skirmish wargame. Set in a vast, underground temple, warbands battle for control of eerie altars, vying for the favor of the Buried Gods. In this article, the game’s designer discusses its creation, mechanics, and evolution.
LOVE, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND A PIZZA SLICE

I've always been a horror literature enthusiast. I had a steady diet of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King, and H.P. Lovecraft in middle school but later delved into fantasy and other kinds of media so this passion was overwritten by more novel experiences. And yet, my love for Lovecraft came back roaring with the release of Bloodborne, the FromSoftware videogame.

The atmosphere of that game, its hyper-detailed Victorian environments, and the nightmarish monsters... I was immediately hooked! I dusted off my old books and started exploring movies, video games and anything I could get my hands on. My mind was racing with enthusiasm.

During that period, I was heavily into playing Kill Team and met regularly with a dedicated group. Our excitement was high when Kill Team 2 was announced. However, upon its release, it became clear that the new edition didn't align with what I had enjoyed about the previous one. The game had shifted its core elements, leaving me feeling disconnected. Despite its subsequent commercial success and popularity among many players, I found it personally disappointing. Torn between these two feelings of enthusiasm and disappointment, I went for a pizza with a couple of friends (I'm Italian after all), and that night something magical happened: I got indigestion.

In the feverish dreams that haunted me that night, I synthesized those emotions into a single purpose. I would build my own miniature agnostic skirmish game! And what better setting for a game than a Lovecraft-inspired fantasy world?

THE SPACE IS WRONG

I immediately started sketching a prototype. I wanted something light and fast, suitable for multiple matches in a single gaming session with friends.

Two crucial elements came up pretty quickly: line of sight and movement. I wanted a simple game, with clear rules. Being a musician and a programmer, the solution for me was obvious: quantize everything! Just like a picture can be divided into pixels I thought I could separate space into simple squares like many games have done in the past (remember Warhammer Quest?) and that would allow me to create clean and easy-to-pick-up rules.

When I first started exploring the square grid for movement, I noticed that many game designers struggled with the fact that diagonal movement feels wrong because it takes the
object further than a horizontal movement, even though the movement is the same in terms of squares. To me, this twisted perception of space and reality PERFECTLY fit the literature of H.P. Lovecraft. I didn’t fight the rules but decided to embrace the feeling that they conveyed and let the game be inspired by it.

In addition, on a square grid, miniatures can have a clear facing. This inspired the addition of a blindspot, allowing players to backstab unsuspecting enemy miniatures. This is a tribute to FromSoftware’s signature mechanic of executing critical attacks from behind when striking enemies.

FROM THE DEPTHS

When I designed the first prototype I only had a square grid and 2 kinds of models: Heroes and Minions. Heroes were beefier and stronger, minions weak and numerous. Every single model could inflict three kinds of special effects when attacking: bleed, cripple and push. These three effects later transformed and each served as the foundation for a faction in the game, all due to the unconventional approach of bottom-up design. At the heart of bottom-up game design lies a fundamental shift in perspective. Instead of crafting a set of rules and mechanics inspired by a concept, designers can let the rule set INSPIRE new concepts.

For example, what faction can be better suited to the use of “bleed” tokens? Vampires, of course! And what about a faction that relies on adding Cripple tokens to its own models to gain bonuses? Could it be the Pilgrims of the Church, kneeling in prayer?

This approach felt right and exciting: I could squeeze a lot of juice from the smallest amount of rules, keeping them simple and coherent. It’s energizing how much feedback you can get by mixing bottom-up design with its opposite approach. Rules inspire concepts, which inspire rules, which inspire concepts.

In the end, I had 6 factions ready: Hunters, Vampires, Cultists, Blood Witches, Pilgrims of the Church and the Decadent Waltz. Each with its own spin and peculiar interaction with the basic mechanics.

TENTACLES, FLAVOR, AND ART

As we playtested and improved Altar of the Dead Gods, I realized that the puzzle pieces were falling into place. The game was fast and easy to explain, and my players were having a great time. It was time to raise the bar.

I decided to bring Michele Finelli into the project. Michele is a graphic designer and long-time hobbyist. He has quite the resume, being part of the Games Workshop team that worked on the Italian adaptation of Mordheim.
He helped me with the layout of the game, pushing me to create illustrations and flavor texts. His contribution was vital and gave Altar of the Dead Gods a beautiful look that I couldn't have achieved without him.

We took a whole summer writing short stories, coming up with digital collages of copyright-free images to communicate the late Renaissance, gothic and cosmic-horror aesthetic of Altar of the Dead Gods. Writing one-page stories was my favorite part of the process. The strict space constraint really pushes you to instill every line with as much juice as possible and it is not such a long process that it becomes tedious. It never felt like hard work, just an enjoyable creative pursuit. I loved it.

SELF-PUBLISHING AND CONVENTIONS

I wanted Altar of the Dead Gods to be free-to-play in its infancy. I wanted people to try the game with as little effort as possible and to build a community rather than an audience. In September of 2021 we set up a simple website with a free download page and started promoting the game on Instagram. At the same time, we printed out the first run of physical copies of the core rules and started presenting them at a few conventions around Italy. I was so scared: it all happened so quickly that I felt like I had no control over the situation.

Fortunately, the small books sold out in about three months. We were so happy. We started organizing small local tournaments which was such a crucial step. We could see players digesting the rules, playing with the composition of their warband, converting their miniatures, and crafting their boards. It was also a great opportunity for us to playtest the game even further, with new missions, models, and rules. To this day we are improving and expanding the game with new factions, scenarios, and everything that stirs our eldritch nightmares!

THE FUTURE

We recently had the privilege of showcasing Altar of the Dead Gods at Modena Play, a major board games and wargames convention in Italy. It was a tense experience: we spent a lot of resources preparing for this event and during that period Modena was subject to very serious floods and alarming weather conditions. Fortunately, the convention was safe to attend and was a huge success! We had four dedicated demonstrators working nonstop on separate tables for two days straight. I can't say much, but in that convention, we had the chance to speak to many central figures in the Italian hobby-sphere, especially to PWork Wargames so... expect some serious news soon! In the meantime, you can keep an eye on our website www.aotdg.com where we post experimental designs, news and updates!

I would like to thank Alexander and the entire 28 team for allowing me to feature my game in this magazine. Projects like 28 have been a constant source of inspiration for me and my whole community.

Praise the Dead Gods!
28 PSALMS COMING SOON A FORBIDDEN PSALM GAME FOR THE 28 COMMUNITY
One of the “innovation tools” I’ve learned over the years is to ask for the opposite. What happens with a concept, miniature, terrain piece when I do the exact opposite? Wondrous things can happen. What would, according to this, happen with our beloved “wargaming” when we do the exact opposite? “Peacegaming”? Can this work?

To be honest with you, I would have never thought of this if it hadn’t been for my son, my wife, and the pandemic. In this article, I try to capture how a single attempt to do some lockdown-era bonding project with my son ballooned into the Non-Combat-Tabletop movement.

But let’s start at the beginning. As with many interesting things, the pandemic and the drastically changed life situations the lockdowns brought, this all roots in the fact that my family had been isolated for a good while, and we had reached the melting point. In a fight I had with my wife, she threw two things in my direction: a) I should do more things with the kids, and b) she loathed that she and the kids were exposed to my “objects of violence glorification” day in and day out. To be honest, my miniatures and action figures had left their assigned shelf in the living room and were taking over other spaces for quite some time now. She wanted them, if not stowed away completely, at least back to their place. And, as contradictory as it might sound, her idea was that I sit down and work on some models with my son.

Having a raised awareness of the topic “violence,” I started to look for the least violent-looking kit in my collection. I ended up with the “Folk Rabble” box from FireForge Games, which contains peasants with various tools of their trade, which of course can be used as weapons. I sat down with my son; he chose a body and a head from the sprue, we thought of a name for the peasant, and he asked me what that one tool was for. Today I know it is a medieval hay fork; back then, I didn’t know what it was and tried to make something up as quickly as possible. And the only thing that came to my mind was that this had to be an “apple picker tool.” From that onward, we built stuff for our “apple picking game.” What followed was a true creative flow experience: we built a board, primed the miniatures, painted them, built and painted terrain and tokens… all that within a couple of days.

I have talked in other places about doing our beloved tabletop hobby with kids, but that is another story to tell in another place (i.e., I talked at length about this topic on the “Xenos Alchemist” Podcast). The main things I learned though, here in a nutshell: a) the kids ought to have fun, b) patience is a virtue, and c) be courageous.

I wanted my kid to have fun with all of this because I want him to love what I love so we can hobby together in the future. For him to have fun, I have to question my expectations and my standards; in the end, it is more important that he actively did things himself, and it looks “ok” to me; than it looks fabulous, but he went playing with his toy cars because I had to add more and more details to reach my standards. Finally, be courageous; even a 4-year-old boy can handle superglue if you are there to guide him. This will enhance the joy and the respect for the material and, most importantly of all, the self-efficacy.

If I hadn’t paid attention in that very sensitive moment, I would probably have lost my son’s interest in this endeavor: At some point he asked me how this game was going to work. And more importantly, if we are playing together. I had luckily the headspace to see what he was aiming for. He did not want to compete with me in the game. By teaming up with me, he expected a higher chance to “win” the game, while if we would play against each other, he would most likely lose. Until this moment, I had automatically assumed that we would play against each other, the goal of the game being to collect more apples than the other player.

This was when all these things that had happened previously collided into the understanding that almost all the tabletop games I had played until this point had been AGAINST each other, and even worse, all these games had been a more or less accurate reproduction of violent conflicts. Now, most of us wargamers are aware of this, but at this point I felt like one crucial element of our hobby was no longer accessible to me. Which is where I am going full circle to the start of this article. I was faced with the question, “What happens when I do the exact opposite”? Can I make a non-violent, cooperative tabletop game? Does it still feel like a tabletop game when there are no chopped-off heads or guns blazing?

By Simon Schnitzler
and Matt Farmer

"One of the "innovation tools" I've learned over the years is to ask for the opposite. What happens with a concept, miniature, terrain piece when I do the exact opposite? Wondrous things can happen. What would, according to this, happen with our beloved "wargaming" when we do the exact opposite? "Peacegaming"? Can this work?"

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"I was faced with the question, "What happens when I do the exact opposite"? Can I make a non-violent, cooperative tabletop game? Does it still feel like a tabletop game when there are no chopped-off heads or guns blazing?"
Having a closer look at what I consider “hobbying:” building, painting, and converting miniatures; building and painting a board and terrain to go along with it; using a measuring stick and rolling dice…. All these aspects are still there. Only the “slash and bash” part was not there. And, to my surprise, I didn’t miss it.

The rest is sort of history. My son and I liked this project so much that I used the input my 4-year-old co-gamer gave me and made a setting, some doodles, and finally a rule book pdf, which I provided to the community. I called the game Applepicking28 for two reasons. One is the, nowadays less reliable hashtag system on Instagram. The 28 in the name helps to differentiate it from agricultural content. The other reason is the homage to the pure innovative force that is the 28 community.

The story would have been over at this point if it hadn’t been for Tara (@manglingminis) and Ben (@apocrypha_now). These two extraordinary gentlemen somehow got hold of the Applepicking28 ruleset and were inspired by it. They made their own rules in the spirit of apple picking, focusing their games Herding28 and Fishing28 on non-combat situations. As creative as the community is, it wasn’t long before that others followed. When Matt (@ierthing) joined us with his idea for a narrative game about kids in a medieval village, we had to agree that a single Instagram chat was too small to support all the playtesting feedback and advice we had for each other, so we moved to the Discord platform.

We invited everybody to join our endeavor to dive into the niche of a niche and were surprised by how many followed this call. There are articles that look at similarities between our hobby and the art-world, and here one could observe the same developments that groups like the futurists, the cubists, or the surrealists faced. In the beginning, there was a vague idea, a rough concept, but with more and more people joining in, more questions were asked...

We needed a definition of what this is that we do, and we agreed to call it “Non-Combat Tabletop.” The borders of this definition were tested, and we had some exciting discussions on where to draw the line. And, even after almost a year, it still isn’t completely defined. To me, this is a good thing, as it allows for expeditions into the unknown, exploring new places and concepts, and marveling at the wonders that come from these trips.
In addition to the ways non-combat games can broaden the tabletop audience, they also present a stimulating challenge to the game designer. In traditional wargaming, violence is often the primary source of tension, excitement, and competition and becomes the focus of many elements of design: how strong is that soldier? What weapons can they carry? What is the range of their guns? The non-combat game designer has to ask themselves: what makes my game interesting to the player if it’s not a life or death struggle for victory in war?

Artists in any medium will tell you that restrictions can produce unexpected creativity, and that has certainly been our experience with the non-combat community. Some of our games produce tension through a race against the clock, like the battle against the tides sweeping you towards the shore in Fishing or the onset of nightfall in Foraging. Others, like The Floor is Lava or Golfing in Hell, draw on sports, athletics, and other physical contests to produce compelling competition. Games like Herding or Folkrace produce joy through chaos. Some designers have found that in the absence of violence there still can be lives at stake, as in the dramatic rescue efforts of Brink or Fires at Midnight. In Children of the Village, folk horror replaces the horrors of war. Some games embrace the absurdity of social conflict, like Masquerade or Prejudice (think “Pride and…”). Some of our designers have taken the freedom of the non-combat world as an occasion to embrace the surreal, as in Compost. And finally, some discard tension for a focus on aesthetics and even tranquility: witness the strangely mesmerizing cult dances of Ritual. The fun in wargaming traditionally comes from the competition to do the most effective violence to one’s opponent, and setting that aside presents a curious, provocative challenge that could, we would argue, open up creative possibilities for
designers of combat-based games as well.

Another key element to this genre is the lack of miniature support. Until now, there is no company selling miniatures just for one of the games. This means that you will have to build your own gaming material. But with this obstacle comes a great creative freedom.

The #applicking28challenge was the first of many expeditions into these miniature-agnostic terrain. No one said that the apples in Applepicking28 had to be apples. Mushrooms or pumpkins work just as well. No one said that your apple pickers have to be human peasants. They can be robots, skeletons, Orks, pig people, or whatever your Bitz Box provides. And this can be stated for all the other games as well. You don’t want to herd sheep in Herding28? Fine, let it be mushrooms instead.

As of right now, we have almost twenty different rulesets, with wonderfully designed rule books, ranging from Dogwalking28, BugCatching28, Children of the Village up to Compost28, The Floor is Lava, or Golfing in Hell. And these are only the games that have reached a semi-finished status. For example, the current version of Applepicking28 is number three. The first being just the core mechanics to which the later editions added equipment, scenarios, and other extensions. Other games are still in development, and the list of playable games continually grows.

And all that, without a single bolt pistol being fired.
Thank you to all our Team and Contributors.

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