

THE VILLAGE

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SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop CS3



INTRODUCTION

The Village was created as a concept for a friend and colleague of mine.

He was in the making of a World War II tank and needed an environment to place it in, so he asked if I could create something for him. I had

recently looked at some of John Wallin's work on *Gears of War* and I had fallen in love with his ability to create winter scenes with a very loose and yet clean style. I really wanted to try something similar with this particular scene, and my goal was to create an environment that had been touched by war, but also something colorful and with a nice feeling of serenity to it, since most WWII pieces are very desaturated, gritty and dark.

WORKFLOW

I chose to do a "matte painting concept", which means working with real photos but still keeping it pretty rough around the edges to save some time. I found a really



Fig.01

good photograph taken by Paul Stevenson that I used as a plate (**Fig.01**), and started by blocking out the changes I wanted to make to the composition (**Fig.02**).

Since the original photo is sepia toned, I created a few layers with mainly blue and orange colors and played around with the blending modes until it started to look



Fig.02

interesting. I also started painting some snow, looking for some nice values (**Fig.03**). After that I copied and pasted some parts of the image and used the Warp tool to reshape them; for example, the road was too straight for my taste, so I made it a little curvier (**Fig.04**). The Warp tool is really helpful and I use it frequently.

After that I continued working on the snow and the little town square in the middle (**Fig.05**). I kept it very loose with a simple round Photoshop brush. There was no need for custom brushes on this one – I actually rarely use custom brushes for my concepts. Since I used a plate for this one I didn't have to spend that much time on the composition and could go straight to figuring out the lighting, which I think is the best part of this image. I was actually just playing around with a gradient layer set to Screen that made the top of the buildings highlighted, creating the feel of an early evening. I really liked it,



Fig.03



Fig.04



Fig.05



Fig.06

so from then on it was just a matter of finding the right values for the shadowed areas and starting work on the details.

If I'm working on a high end render or a detailed matte painting I always use tons of layers, but when I have a tight deadline, and if I'm doing a concept like this one (one day), I never use more than four or five layers at once. I flatten the image every now and then throughout the process, just to force myself not to go to crazy on the

details and to keep it simple and efficient. As you can see, the brushstrokes are very rough in some places; it's just a matter of fooling the eye to make it look detailed (Fig.06 – 07).

I was starting to see the end at this stage (Fig.08), basically just working up the details from here on in. The big advantage of working with a winter scene like this one is that you don't have to worry that much about tons of different values; once you find the right tone for the snow you can use it pretty much over the entire scene. And as you can see, I found this pretty early in the process. I picked out two very similar values to work with, and for the final image I also integrated a few photos of real snow (taken by me) (Fig.09a – b), along with a great image that I found on cgtextures.com for the sky, to give the image a more authentic effect (Fig.10).



Fig.07



Fig.08



Fig.09a



Fig.09b



Fig.10

CONCLUSION

This was a really fun concept for me to do: I found a good plate rather quickly, the process was smooth, and the result pretty much what I aimed for. There's something about post apocalyptic sceneries that really speaks to me. I love the serenity and the beauty of destroyed civilizations. Everything looks so peaceful and calm, and that's what I hope people will feel when they look at *The Village*.

ARTIST PORTFOLIO



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