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## 28 Assembly 2008 - Graphics Review

Wade, Mon 01 Jun 2009

Assembly 2008 Graphics Review

By Wade/Alcatraz

### Introduction

It is unfortunate that there isn't much incentive for digital artists participating in the scene these days. While forums such as Pouet, Bitfellas and Nectarine celebrate the work of coders, musicians and animators, the 2d artists generally get left out and soon find their party releases disappearing into obscurity as soon as a party ends... no praise or criticism, no thumbs up or discussions.

For this reason I decided to take a look at some of the graphics entries into this year's Assembly and offer a few words of feedback and try to draw attention to some of the better entries...

#### 10. How catty! by Caratra

A very cartoony image, which looks like the work of someone who is new to computer painting. The colours are fine and the general shape and proportion isn't bad, but the subject isn't very ambitious and is probably not the best Caratra can do. This image fails to impress, but maybe there is potential to produce better work in future.

#### 9. Afterdeath by Ra of noon

It is a pleasure to see Ra back in the scene and showing off another new style - something much lighter and cleaner than anything he's shown us before. It is a surprise that he placed so low, but it probably comes down to the perception of the audience. At a mainstream party like Assembly, images need more of a sudden impact to win votes (tits, monsters or big spaceships usually do the trick), but Afterdeath is a subtler piece of art that leans towards the abstract and takes a moment to appreciate. It truly is a unique and beautiful piece of work, full of style and texture that really grasps my attention.

#### 8. Hey Tom, when I grow up I'm gonna build a timemachine and come back here to zap you! by Kinnerean

This one really brought a smile to my face. The idea is brilliant and well thought out, and while a lot of good ideas fall flat when it comes to realisation, this is nicely painted in a style that compliments the theme. The colour and lighting are well arranged, and the characters have quirky expressions that bring them to life. Not technically impressive, but as a whole it works perfectly. Very good work!



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#### 7. sika-ari by Elukka

On one hand, the perspective is pretty good and the motif is very captivating, but on the other hand, the painting style looks very rushed and messy, and the colours look like they were taken from the default palette of MS Paint. The values are over contrasted, and no effort has been made to create a harmony between tones, blend the strokes, smooth outlines or add in any fine detail, and the result looks like it was scribbled together in a few minutes.

#### 6. It Will Rain by Codsarmo

I think it is very bad organising to allow photomanipulations and matte paintings such as this to compete against pure digital paintings, and I'm sure many participants felt cheated. That said, my criticism here is aimed more at the Assembly judges than at the artist. There is a skill to photomanipulation and I give Codsarmo full credit for his work and his idea. The composition is very good as is the perspective, and the colour scheme is consistent and eye catching.

#### 5. Can we join too? by juriga

Another cartoony image here. In some cases simplicity can work, but I feel this is perhaps too simple. The characters are stiff and lifeless, and the environment looks a little too stencilled. Although I like to see texture in paintings, I don't think it works so well when applying the same texture to every feature. On the plus side, the colours are very easy on the eye and the mountains have a nice misty quality that gives a feeling of depth.

#### 4. Witch Hut by mangis

A pleasure to look at. While I am generally not impressed by this loose style of painting, I find its simplicity here quite charming. The scene has such an enchanting atmosphere that draws me in, with its moody palette and intelligent use of lighting. This would make a good piece of concept art for a game or animation.

#### 3. Koi by Egge of granma

This is a really great mix of digital painting and graphic design. The character is well painted with plenty of definition and subtle flesh tones, and the background works well with its low saturation sunburst and fish pattern. Although there is no mind-blowing detail or high impact features, the colour and composition are very soothing to look at. The motif is very fascinating too, and gives the image an element of mystery.

#### 2. Wildlife by BassBoost

This entry makes a mockery of the whole graphics competition. What we have here is a stock image of a landscape with some colour adjustments and a 3d logo placed into the scene... that's it! While many competitors strived for hours, sketching, planning and painting,



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Bassboost simply downloaded a picture, fiddled with some sliders and took home 2nd prize. Shame on the audience who voted for this.

#### 1. Scene Accordion by Ray Noa

Cartoon themes appear very popular at this year's Assembly. The idea behind this image is fun and imaginative, but the painting is average at best. While the accordion and the tree behind the bear are painted with some detail and consideration, other areas of the picture, such as the grass and the foreground tree look very sketchy and unfinished. The lighting isn't too bad, but the lack of shadows makes some of the features look flat and superimposed. On a more positive note, the background silhouettes create a convincing sense of depth and the colours are quite vibrant. Not an exceptional effort in terms of realisation but an appealing idea nonetheless.

#### Conclusion

For a party the size of Assembly, with all its commercial sponsors and hype, I expected the graphics to be of a much higher standard. Considering the times in which we live, the advances in technology, the wealth of tutorials and how easy it has become to paint digital images, I am confused at the declining quality of scene art. Maybe it's down to the lack of encouragement from the scene and party organisers that means artists are just not willing to invest much time in their work. Or maybe artists of today have become lazy and too reliant on their tools.

Another sad fact is the poor judging and organising of this competition. Instead of watering it down with "fast graphics" and "extreme graphics", isn't it more logical to separate photomanipulations, 3d and hand painted images to create a fair contest? I'm sure many artists felt cheated, and I'm sure it puts the more talented artists off competing in future events.

Aside from a few half-decent images and the appearance of Ra, the graphics competition at Assembly 2008 holds very little significance.

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