

THE **BIG BAD**  
WORLD OF  
**CONCEPT ART**  
FOR VIDEO GAMES

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CONCEPT ART

# BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDE

FOLLOW THIS GUIDE TO FIND THE SCHOOL THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

- PLUS:**
- Four things to confirm before you enroll
  - Learning on your own: advice from self-taught artists
  - Five great ways to find time in your day to draw
  - Advice for international students



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LET'S DISCUSS THE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS THAT GO THROUGH THE MINDS OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO WANTS TO LEARN ABOUT CONCEPT ART

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# CHOOSE THE RIGHT SCHOOL

*Traditional art colleges versus concept art-focused schools: which are better?*

Every individual who wants to learn about concept art has probably asked themselves this very question. So let's discuss some thoughts on concept art education, and how to make the most of it.

You should know what to look for and understand what the different types of education will mean for your career.

Hopefully these answers will point you in the right direction...



## What type of school should I attend if I want to become a concept artist for video games?

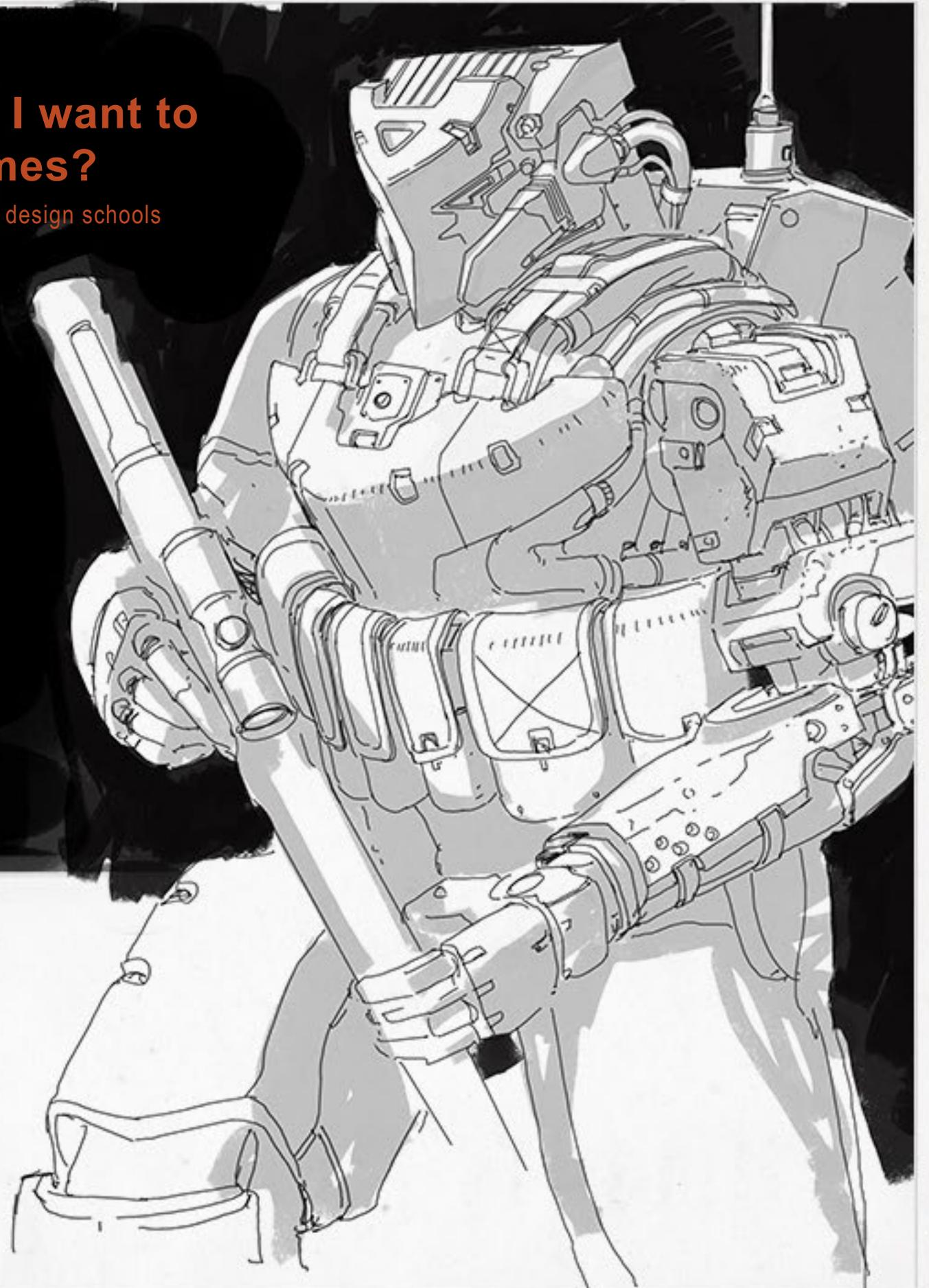
The pros and cons of traditional art schools versus concept and entertainment design schools

The truth is, there really isn't a simple answer here as there are no guarantees in art, nor is there a set path that each artist must take. A few years ago, the Internet debated which type of degree was most useful to a concept artist: Illustration or Industrial Design. Recently, however, as industry awareness has grown, concept art-focused schools have sprung up all over the place, making that previous conversation somewhat (but not entirely) moot.

To begin with, let's discuss the various types of education and schooling you can get...

Feng Zhu has a great video explaining the difference in school structure, curriculum and program between illustration and industrial design schools. It's a great place to start when entering this discussion.

CLICK THE IMAGE ABOVE TO BE TAKEN TO THE VIDEO.



# Traditional art colleges (Illustration and Industrial Design majors)

While traditional illustration art schools tend to be large, well-established institutions, they can be slow to update their curriculum and may not offer classes specifically for concept art. Instead, you'll likely be exposed to a variety of different art styles and philosophies. It's also worth mentioning that traditional Illustration is a shrinking industry and isn't as prevalent today as it once was, as the field continues to be replaced by photography and CG. This can cause some confusion and anxiety for the students as they try to figure out how and where they fit into the workforce. It's also worth noting that there are far fewer industrial design schools than there are dealing with illustration.

## The pros of attending a traditional art college

- Three- to four-year majors give you plenty of time to experiment and learn at your own speed.
- Teachers and students come from all areas of art, broadening your exposure to art culture.
- Pressure of peers around you can be a good motivator to succeed.
- Large student body increases your chances of developing personal connections and positive experiences.
- Plenty of well-maintained facilities and student resources at your disposal.
- By using a variety of media, students learn a range of skills, tools, and drafting techniques.
- Can be a good fit if you're also interested in fantasy design, children's books and book cover illustration, board game box cover art, product packaging design, playing cards (Magic: The Gathering), storyboards, editorial magazines etc.
- You may also be able to find work in other industries besides entertainment, such as toy production, theme parks, medical illustration, product design etc.
- The school is usually accredited and generally offers governmental financial aid.
- Campus may be local to your area but will likely accept international students as well.
- Graduating from a four-year college meets some employers' minimum job requirements.

## The cons of attending that same traditional art college

- You may be forced to take classes that have no relevance on your future profession, which might be seen as a waste of time and money for someone studying to become a concept artist.
- Enrolling in the wrong major may limit your access to certain school resources and facilities.
- Graduates can feel uncertainty or anxious when thinking about entering into the workforce: "I've got this degree... now, what do I do with it?"
- The pressure of being surrounded by your peers can cause anxiety and stress. For some, the shock of suddenly becoming 'a little fish in a big pond' can be overwhelming.
- The school may not have access to many employers in the video game or film industry.
- Teachers may or may not be working professionals, let alone leading professionals in the field that they teach.

# Concept art or entertainment design-focused schools

Nowadays there are more concept art-focused schools, whose courses, for the most part, are taught by leading industry professionals who do great work. They offer a similar foundational curriculum as traditional illustration and industrial design schools, but the material is taught at an accelerated pace since enrollment usually only lasts for a year or two.

With the exception of a few schools that have been around for half-a-dozen years or more, most are still in their infancy and don't yet have a proven education track record. With these newer schools you may experience growing pains as the school positions itself, and a rotation of instructors or changes to the curriculum can cause the quality of education to vary from semester to semester.

## The pros of attending a concept art-focused school

- Short enrollment period (usually just one or two years).
- Intensive curriculums get you on track fast. Expect to spend 10-18 hours per day working on your assignments.
- Pressure of peers around you can be a good motivator to succeed.
- Usually taught by working industry professionals.
- You'll be learning exactly what you want to learn without the distraction of unwanted classes.
- Classes may be taught by some of your favorite artists. This presents a great chance to pick their brain and learn their secrets.
- Some schools have smaller class sizes compared to a traditional art college, which means more one-on-one time with your instructor.
- Several concept art-focused schools offer an on-line curriculum, making it easy to receive your education even if location is an issue.
- The few schools that are accredited may be able to assist with financial aid and international student visas.

## The cons of attending that same concept art-focused school

- Can be very expensive and may only offer limited financial aid.
- Students may only receive a limited or narrow field of view in art and art culture.
- You may have to travel outside of your home state to attend. Many are located in California but can even be found as far away as Canada, Singapore or even Australia.
- Schools may not provide the student visas required in some countries.
- You undertake the trial-and-error of curriculum and faculty at your own expense.



**TIP: Before putting down your hard-earned money, confirm the following with the school:**

1. What is the school's policy on staffing its instructors? For example, do they have a set curriculum in place and hire qualified teachers around it – or is the curriculum formed around the skill-set of the instructors who are currently employed?
2. If you're unable to take a class this semester, how often will teachers rotate their schedules and/or class topics?
3. Who will be teaching what class during your first semester? There have been instances in the past where a certain artist was announced to teach a class, but for whatever reason the class had to be canceled. If you were attending that school to learn from that specific teacher, it would have been a major disappointment.
4. Have the software programs that you wish to use been installed on the computers at school? Institutions can sometimes have issues securing licenses for all of their students, which can lead to complications down the road.

**Top questions to ask:**

1. Ask for their employment placement success rate. That is: what percentage of students have landed employment opportunities within six months after graduating – and at what companies? Request this information for the past three years (if possible).
2. What amount of financial aid is available? Are there any qualifications needed to receive it?
3. Is there any accreditation for certificate or degree programs?
4. What kind of access will students be granted to school resources? For example, can the school lab be used after-hours? Can equipment be rented out on weekends? And so on.
5. What assistance is there after graduation? Are there any employment resources, job placement assistance, or internship programs available?
6. What is the enrollment policy for international students?



Back in 2000 I enrolled at the School Of Visual Arts, a traditional illustration art college, and that education has served me well for many years as a professional concept artist. But had there been a concept art-focused school around at that time, I might have considered it the better option.

# Game design schools are not art schools

(Why a video game school may not be the best place to learn art)

There is a very big difference between enrolling in a school that focuses on video game development and one that focuses solely on art. A video game design school is a school that offers a degree focusing on the various disciplines that comprise video game production. At these schools, students are usually required to study various parts of video game development and take a variety of classes, but only one or two of them may be art-related. The others cover things like animation, scripting, level design, audio, and so on.

If you knew you wanted to go into the video game industry but didn't know which area to focus on, or if you wanted to be a producer at a studio and dabble in a bit of everything, then taking a mixed-discipline course like this might be great for your needs. However, since you've probably figured out that you want to be a concept artist, taking a course like this is terrible. That's not to say that schools like these are bad, just that they aren't the proper environment to grow your artistic needs.

## Let's put this into perspective...

Pretend that you're currently taking five classes a week (each three to six hours long) at a video game development school. Of those five, if only one relates to drawing or art, then the other four classes you're paying for may be useless in helping you become a concept artists – thereby wasting your time and money.

Compare that to a concept art-focused school like, say Feng Zhu Design, where you're studying drawing and learning about art for eight hours each day, five days a week. At a school like that your course curriculum is focused and intense; you'll learn more at an accelerated rate.

To emphasize the point, for every week you attend a game design school, at best you may only get six hours of art per week. Meanwhile, at FZD, you'll do eight hours in a single day. When you add that up, it will take you over a month and a half at a game dev school to learn the exact same thing you would learn at FZD in a week. Yikes.

(I'm using FZD as an example, but there are dozens of equally amazing concept art schools out there – you can choose whichever one suits you best).

You'll know you're attending a game design school, when you can evaluate the quality of the artwork coming out of its graduating class and be unimpressed. If you aren't blown away by the quality of work that most students produce, then when it's time for you to graduate there's a good chance your portfolio will be no different. And if it doesn't impress you, it certainly won't impress employers.

# Where should international students study if they can't travel to the USA?

Concept art schools abroad and alternative solutions

If you live outside of the United States and are looking to attend a concept art school, there are a few ways to go about it.

## 1. GOOD Option

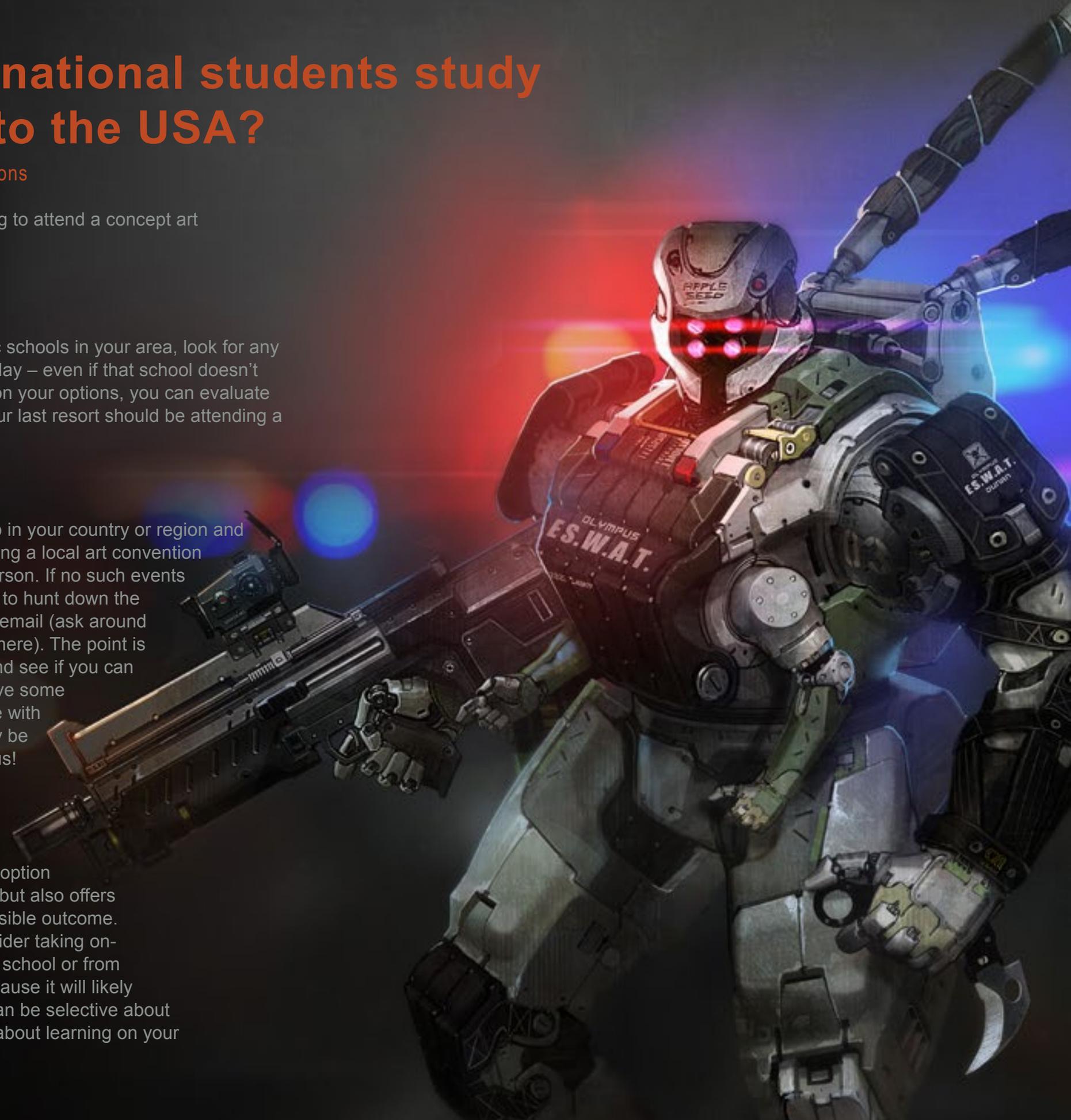
Assuming there are no concept art-specific schools in your area, look for any school that will teach you art every single day – even if that school doesn't specifically teach concept art. Depending on your options, you can evaluate the school and pick the one that's best. Your last resort should be attending a game development school.

## 2. BETTER Option

Find a concept artist who works or grew up in your country or region and ask them what school they went to. Attending a local art convention or expo is a great way to meet artists in person. If no such events are taking place near you, then you'll have to hunt down the artist's portfolio on-line and shoot them an email (ask around for anyone who may be able to assist you here). The point is to find out how they made it as an artist, and see if you can follow in their footsteps. They may also have some valuable insight that they're willing to share with you, and if you're a smooth talker, you may be able to convince them to mentor you. Bonus!

## 3. BEST Option

Relocate to a different city, state or even country to find an appropriate school. This option requires a huge commitment on your part, but also offers the highest potential rewards and best possible outcome. If relocating is out of the picture, then consider taking on-line classes through a concept art-focused school or from an individual artist. This option is great because it will likely be cheaper than full-time tuition and you can be selective about what you learn. (For tips and suggestions about learning on your own, keep reading).



# Summary: What's the best school to attend?

There is no such thing – only the school that's right for you. Any school that you can afford and will equip you with the skills necessary to compete and thrive in this industry is the right school for you. You can also choose not to go to school at all and be self-taught. The trick is to evaluate your options and choose the one that will provide ample opportunities to develop the skills you really need, with the least amount of distractions. Focus is key: your level of commitment and determination to break into this industry, coupled with your work ethic, will have a direct correlation to your long-term success.

**You're responsible for your own education. Once you've whittled down your list of potential schools, consider the follow-**

## **Curriculum structure**

What classes will you be taking and for how many days per week? Look for a school that teaches art every single day for at least six hours a day and at least four days a week.

## **The type of classes you'll be taking**

Do you value their relevance towards concept art?

## **Who are the teachers teaching your classes?**

What do the teachers specialize in? Are they in the industry currently? How many years of industry experience do your potential tutors have under their belt?

## **Does the school offer job-related aid?**

Pay attention here: every art school will publicize their senior art show, but the good ones have connections in the industry and will invite recruiters and professionals from various gaming and film studios to attend. Considering this may be your chance to 'wow' an industry professional, it can be an invaluable springboard for your career.

## **Location.**

If there's no school in your immediate area that specializes in your chosen subject, you'll likely have to relocate. The alternative is taking on-line classes. You don't need to attend the 'best of the best' high-priced art school, just a good one that provides a quality education – plus your own drive to succeed.

**What kind of degree should I shoot for? Is getting an on-line degree a good idea?**

Since you'll ultimately be hired based on your merits as an artist in this industry – which means having a killer portfolio – things like college degrees, certificates of completion, and other such pieces of paper won't carry as much weight as they would in other professions. Don't focus on the degree itself but focus rather on the education you'll receive.

## **Degrees can be helpful when...**

- 1.** Trying to secure employment overseas. If your degree is in the same field as the job you're being hired for, it can assist with the visa papers and expedite the process.
- 2.** Perhaps you'll want to teach full-time at a college in the future? In this case having an MFA (Master of Fine Arts) is usually mandatory.
- 3.** If you've earned an MFA, and are savvy enough, you may be able to leverage it in your favor during salary negotiations.

## **Degrees to avoid:**

- 1.** Fine Arts majors – classes tend to be more abstract and less practical for developing the critical eye needed to be a concept artist.
- 2.** Game Development majors – these courses can also steer you away from proper critical thinking and analysis needed for a career as a concept artist.



# LEARNING ON YOUR OWN: ADVICE FROM SELF-TAUGHT ARTISTS

With so many training tutorials and on-line resources around, is there still a reason to go to a bricks-and-mortar school – or can you learn enough on your own at home?

## Studying at home (self-teaching)

So, can someone self-taught with a day job ‘make it’ as a professional artist? Yes, anything is possible. The thing to keep in mind is that the person will likely have to work much, much harder and need the drive, focus and determination to succeed. Personally, I think on-line resources should be supplemented with your main education.

I’ve reached out to several self-taught artists for feedback and here’s what they said...



**Neil Blevins** is a self-taught 3D artist and educator who has worked in the entertainment industry for many years. On his [education page](#) he lists a few specific advantages that going to an actual school provides...

**1) Building your mental visual library:**

On Facebook, if you like something, you hit the 'Like' button. As you like more things, Facebook starts to only show you things similar to what you've liked. Facebook will ultimately show you feeds on things you're most interested in, and the danger is that you end up having a very narrow focus of knowledge, experience and visual reference.

Art history classes are good for getting a broad understanding of a lot of different types of art. This is important because it gives you some idea where to start when you need to make something outside of your current focus. By taking small elements from, say, Cubism and incorporating it into the stuff you love – such as sci-fi robots – it adds variety and possibly a brand new style that differentiates you from the other people who have a narrower focus.

**2) Motivation:** When you're in a class with a bunch of other like-minded people, there's motivation to actually work hard on your art. That motivation may be more difficult to come by sitting at home. Outside of the classroom setting, you won't be challenged as hard and may be tempted to fall back on what you already know.

**3) Answering questions:** In a school, the teacher is a professional artist whose job it is to answer your questions, as opposed to a professional on-line who may not have the time to respond to your queries. Finding a one-on-one mentor can help replace this.

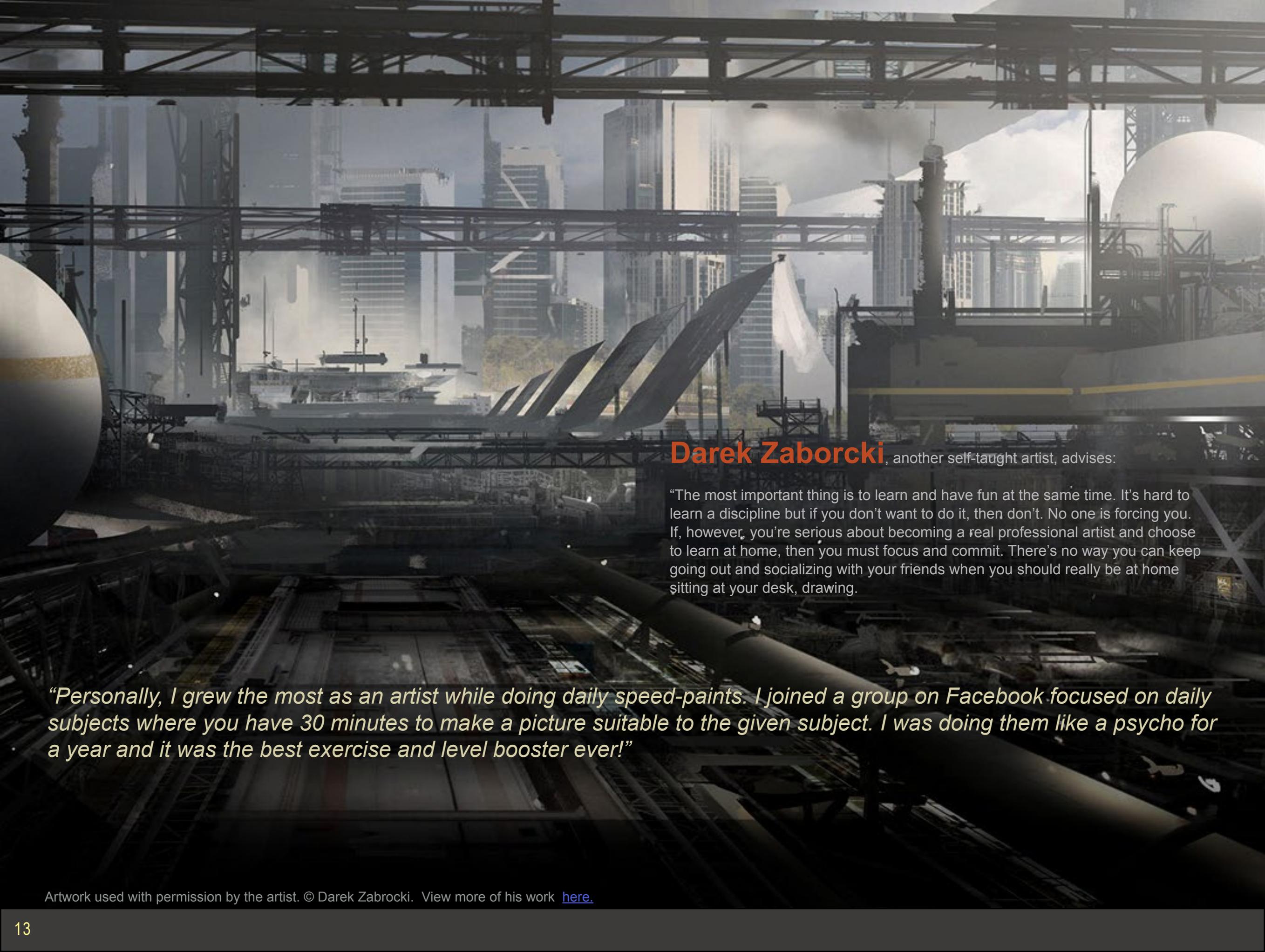
**4) Criticism:** While you can get your work critiqued on-line, you never know for sure who's critiquing you. Are these critiques coming from a professional – or someone who may not know as much? Also, a big chunk of doing well in this industry is how you react when someone tells you to your face that your work sucks and changes need to be made. The only way to get used to that is to be critiqued in person and see how other professionals take criticism in person.

**5) Working in a team:** If you're planning on working at a company, you need to be able to work as part of a team. Many life lessons are learned here, including how to ask things of other people, how to communicate effectively, and how to manage your time while working to other people's schedules. These are all important and very difficult to replicate unless you're a part of an actual team. School projects can help simulate that environment.

**6) Work visa:** If you plan on getting work in a country other than your own, many work visas are easier to obtain if you have a degree in that field of employment.



Artwork used with permission by the artist. © Neil Blevins [View more of his work here](#)



**Darek Zaborcki**, another self-taught artist, advises:

“The most important thing is to learn and have fun at the same time. It’s hard to learn a discipline but if you don’t want to do it, then don’t. No one is forcing you. If, however, you’re serious about becoming a real professional artist and choose to learn at home, then you must focus and commit. There’s no way you can keep going out and socializing with your friends when you should really be at home sitting at your desk, drawing.

*“Personally, I grew the most as an artist while doing daily speed-paints. I joined a group on Facebook focused on daily subjects where you have 30 minutes to make a picture suitable to the given subject. I was doing them like a psycho for a year and it was the best exercise and level booster ever!”*

**Dan Luvisi**, a self-taught artist, illustrator and entrepreneur, says:

*“I’m cut in the middle. While half of me definitely encourages students going to school and absorbing as much as possible (not to mention taking advantage of the connections they will meet), the other half acknowledges that I just pushed hard and worked my ass off to get where I am today.*

*It’s possible to make it as a self-taught artist, but it’d be a lie to say I don’t think about going back to school in the near future.*

*One can always learn.”*



Artwork used with permission by the artist. © Dan Luvisi. View more of his work [here](#)



# OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

Additional advice to get you off to a good start



# Other Helpful tips:

## 1. Get your parents involved

If you're a teenager, inform your parents of your intentions to become a concept artist. This may require that you educate them on what the job entails, where the career can take you, how much salary you can earn etc. (Do your research first so you can give a convincing pitch.) With their help – and, hopefully, support – your parents can be a great motivator, keeping you on track and focused. They may also be less likely to volunteer you for after-school activities and events that you may not care for.

## 2. Join or create a sketch jam group.

James Paick, concept artist and founder of Scribblepad Studios, reflects on his own jam sessions as a student:

*“I'd set up small sketch groups with classmates during break, and create projects that we could design together. We would meet once a week, submit work, and critique ourselves in order to essentially ‘create our own class.’”*

This is a great idea since working alongside like-minded individuals can add fun and focus to the mundane task of drawing art every day. It can also be a great way to get comfortable receiving constructive criticism from others. Just ensure you do more drawing than socializing.

## 3. Take summer art classes

While everyone else is out playing, you'll be at an advantage if you're in school continuing to improve your skills. Staying sharp on those skills will give you a leg-up next semester and enable you to develop at an accelerated rate. With enough time and practice, you'll begin to distinguish yourself from the rest of your class.

Involving your parents is crucial. When I was in middle school, my dad would wake me up at 5:00 am, so we could get out of the house early and draw in front of the school. By the time I reached high school, waking up early became natural and almost therapeutic for me.

# Reclaim your time: Five great ways to find time in your day to draw

It takes an incredible amount of effort and dedication to make it into this industry. Regardless of whether you choose to go to school full-time or study on your own over the weekends, you should be spending about ten hours each day practicing your art. With that goal in mind, here's how to find the time in your day to draw...

## 1. Wake up earlier and/or go to sleep later.

Develop and maintain a routine of sleeping an hour later each night and waking up an hour earlier each morning. If you can power through the exhaustion, that additional 10 to 14 hours of drawing each week can really pay off in the long run.

## 2. Reduce the amount of TV-watching or video game playing

Keep the TV watching/video game playing down to an hour each day. Seriously. Use the gained time to practice your art.

## 3. Ignore your distractions.

Social media can be great for networking and keeping in touch with friends, but too much can be a major distraction that destroys productivity. Get into the habit of checking your phone only two or three times a day and keep it on mute while drawing so you can focus for extended periods of time without interruption.

## 4. Replace your cell phone with your sketchbook

Got five minutes to kill? Instead of reaching for your cell phone as a distraction, pull out your sketchbook and doodle. You'd be surprised how much you can draw while taking the bus to school or sitting on the toilet.

## 5. Socialize less

Spend less time hanging out with friends or in the company of others. That's not to say that you can't have a social life, but limit the frequency and duration of your social encounters. As a student you need to be focusing on your artwork.

*"I'd like to think that I was very disciplined during my education. I did socialize a bit, but I made sure to mainly do so during class breaks. I followed the advice from an instructor, which was: 'Get whatever the assignment was, done the day it was assigned'. How did I do it? I made sure not to stop until the assignment was done." James Paick*

*"If you're getting nine hours of sleep every night then chances are, you aren't working hard enough. "*  
**Elliott Lilly**

Find the motivation to keep going at 1:00 am. Your willingness to succeed is your strongest ally when studying art.

In high school I averaged six to eight hours of sleep each night. While developing my portfolio in college, it was three to four. Right now, in my professional career, I average about five hours every night.

# Art education is expensive, but don't be put off

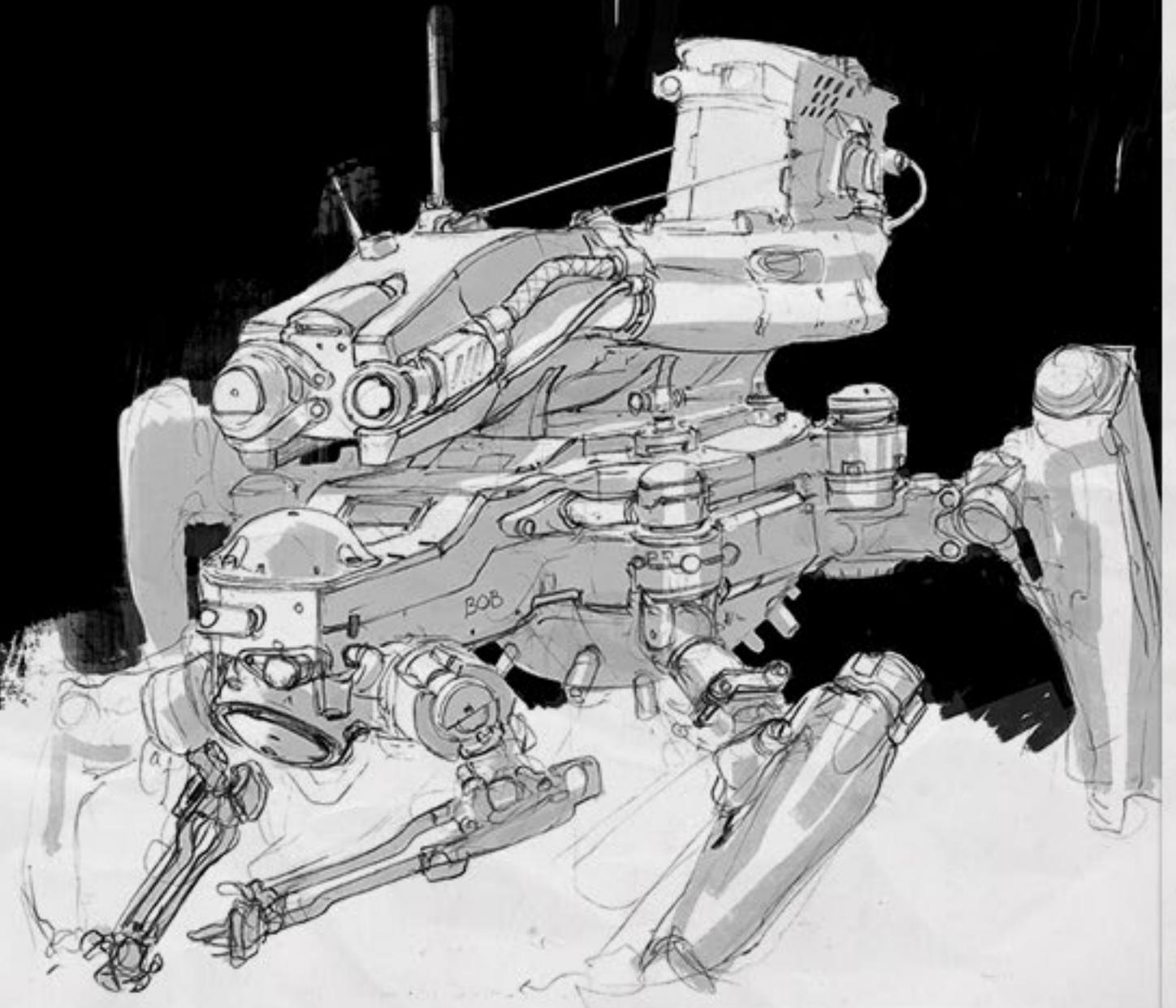
It's no secret that art education is costly, but Noah Bradley, a freelance concept artist and educator, set the Internet on fire in 2014 when he published his article '[Don't go to art school](#)'. In it, he points out the exorbitant price of education and subsequent debt that artists face, compared to the amount of value that education actually has.

*"...I am saddened and ashamed at art schools and their blatant exploitation of students. Graduates are woefully ill-prepared for the realities of being professional artists and racked with obscene amounts of debt. By their own estimation, the cost of a four-year education at RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) is \$245,816. As way of comparison, the cost of a diploma from Harvard Law School is a mere \$236,100."*

And Noah is not wrong. But I would offer some advice: don't ignore a college just because of its 'sticker price'. If a college has higher tuition and is accredited by the government, students can often get more financial aid to help cover costs. You'll have to do your own research, but grants, loans, scholarships and work-study jobs are usually available to reduce the cost of college.

Giuseppe Castellano, an award-winning designer, illustrator and art director with more than 16 years of book publishing experience, wrote a direct response to Noah's article entitled '[No, go to art school](#)'. Before you rule out art school, due to its cost, [check out his article](#) where he lists direct counterpoints to Noah's statements.

In his article, Noah proposes his \$10,000 Ultimate Art Education plan. (An alternative solution that equips students with everything they need, without the extra college expense). If you're thinking about self studying, then you should check out his solution



# Tips to help mitigate education costs

With all of those aspects considered, if money (or anything else) still prohibits you from making the trek to your dream college, then here are some alternatives to consider...

## Online classes

In this age of technology, it's not absolutely necessary to attend a school in person. There is a plethora of on-line classes, workshops and training materials out there. Taking individual classes will allow you to pick your teachers and learn at your own pace.

## Continuing education

Instead of taking the full curriculum, some colleges allow you to pay for and attend individual classes. So be selective and pick the ones you really need as this can be drastically cheaper than attending a full semester at a college.

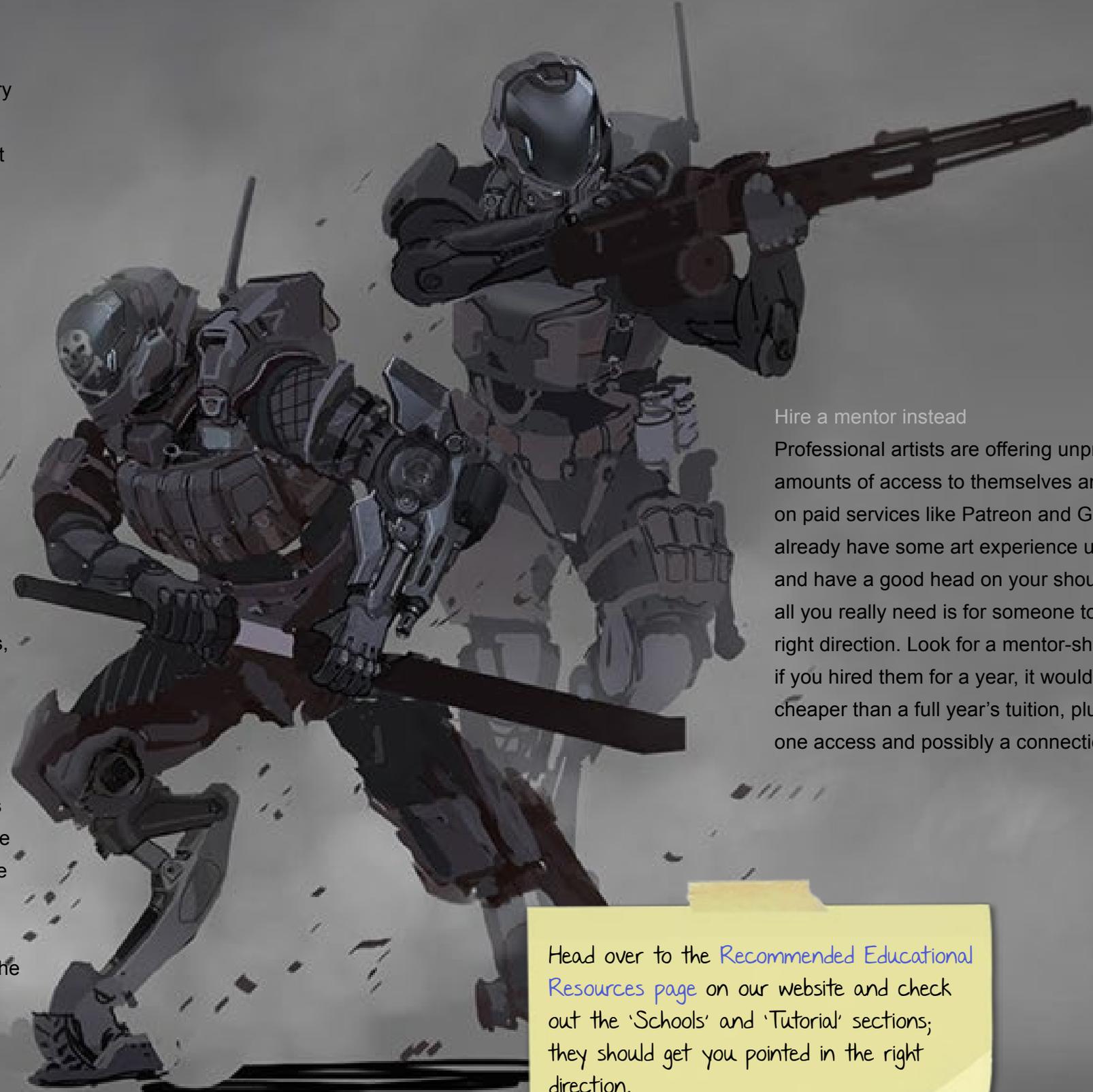
## Take college courses while still in high school

If you reside in the United States, some community colleges don't require students to have a high school diploma to attend. By taking a class or two at a community college during two high school semesters, you may be able to eliminate a semester's worth of general education requirements.

If you've already graduated high school, attending a community college before heading off to art school is a great way to get your prerequisite classes out of the way at a much cheaper cost per credit. This can save you thousands of dollars at your dream art college.

In either instance, do your research and make sure the credits are transferable between schools.

*Community college costs are thousands of dollars cheaper per semester than the expenses of most universities*



## Hire a mentor instead

Professional artists are offering unprecedented amounts of access to themselves and their work-flow on paid services like Patreon and Gumroad. If you already have some art experience under your belt, and have a good head on your shoulders, sometimes all you really need is for someone to point you in the right direction. Look for a mentor-ship program – even if you hired them for a year, it would still likely be cheaper than a full year's tuition, plus you get one-on-one access and possibly a connection to the industry.

Head over to the [Recommended Educational Resources](#) page on our website and check out the 'Schools' and 'Tutorial' sections; they should get you pointed in the right direction.

# How do I balance my job and studies?

The dilemma of work versus full-time study is quite common. Even working part-time while attending a full curriculum can hinder your learning efforts, which is why I believe that every aspiring artist should only focus on their studies while in school. No part-time and certainly no full-time work. Just study.

However, everyone's situation and life circumstances are different, and this tactic may not be possible for some students. If you're currently in college and working in a part-time job, or if you've already graduated into the workplace but wish to go back to school to seriously pursue art as a career, then here's one way to leave your job and get back into your art...

## Create a goal

First: sit down and really consider where you want to go with your art. (Hint: "Anywhere that will hire me" is the wrong answer.) Do you want to work in a video game studio? Be a freelance Illustrator? Or maybe you'd like to work in film and TV. If you're unsure, then you need to do some research into each of these professions. Don't take this step lightly – the more research you do, the more information you'll have and the better prepared you'll be for the challenges ahead. Once you've found your answers, you can determine where you need to focus your efforts and target your development skills.

## Determine your trajectory

First, evaluate and get feedback on your best pieces of artwork (we show you how to do this in Chapter 4 of An Insider's Guide For Student's), then figure out what it will take to get you to where you want to be artistically. Do a side-by-side comparison between your work and the work of professional artists who do what you wish you were doing. Honestly consider your weaknesses and where you need improvement so you can decide what the best resources are to get you there. For example, can you get away with taking one or two on-line classes, or do you need the training and guidance that enrolling in a full-time art school can provide?

## Determine your monetary requirements

From the previous answer, determine how much money your trajectory will cost and how much you can actually afford. If necessary, seek out any type of financial aid that's available to you, be it from friends and family or the government. Once you've tallied up all of the monies at your disposal – savings, checking, loans etc. – determine if your finances will cover your expenses and the cost of living while you train as an artist.

Here's the hard part. If, after doing all of the calculations, you realize that your funds are insufficient, you need see where you can cut daily spending – and for how long – to save up enough money. You need to make heavy sacrifices here until it hurts; anything from giving up your favorite cup of coffee each day to moving back in with your parents to save on rent. Otherwise you might have to find an alternate trajectory plan.

## Create an exit plan and time-line

An 'exit plan' is a plan to leave your current job situation and transition into a new one. It details all of the things that you'll have to do between now and your employment termination date. The amount of money at your disposal directly affects the start date of your exit plan. If you can afford to do so, then quitting your job immediately to train in art is ideal. But if you don't have enough money – which is far more likely – then create a time-line that accounts for that. For example, if you can reduce spending and save X amount of dollars over the next three months, then you'll be able to pay for your trajectory plan and start taking art classes at your chosen school in September.

## Implement the exit plan... and stick to it

Once you've set a schedule, the most important thing is that you stick with it. When dealing with money there's always a temptation to spend it or lend it. But remember: giving away your money is like giving away your future.

On the next pages you'll find our list of recommended concept art-focused schools with details about class offerings, accreditation, location, financial aid availabilities, and lots more...

### TIP:

You're never too old to go back to school. How much you want something will determine what you're willing to sacrifice to get there.



**And that's it.**

**We hope this eBook has been helpful and informative. Still have questions? Send an email to [me@eliottlillyart.com](mailto:me@eliottlillyart.com)**

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Art education is an important topic and you can read more from us, including the popular Question and Answer series for students and illustrators at [www.bigbadworldofconceptart.com](http://www.bigbadworldofconceptart.com)

The Big Bad Team

**But wait, there's more...**



# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

## About BBWCA

The idea of becoming a professional artist can be an overwhelming and daunting task for anyone, especially aspiring artists who are just starting out. With the ever-expanding marketplace of concept art resources and services available, it can also be difficult to determine which ones are good and worth the time and money.

As artists ourselves we understand that finding the right advice and guidance is crucial, so we scour the internet and only promote the best material based on their quality and resource it provides for artists. By cutting through the clutter, we aim to present the most insightful and honest options first so you can quickly get the information you need and get back to your art.

The BBWCA team is comprised of industry professionals, teachers, and students who all volunteer their time on this project. Evaluating resources from different skill levels and different points of view makes our critical analysis of current resources even more stringent.



# Bricks and mortar concept art-focused schools

We've compiled a list of the top schools from all over the world that offer concept art-specific courses. This guide is meant to provide a global picture that will assist you in your school search, but by no means represents the entire spectrum of resources available to you.

Click on the row to be taken to the school's website.

School name	Location	Web Address	Majors	Degree categories	Financial Aid	Accreditation
	Glendale, California USA	<a href="http://brainstormschool.com/">http://brainstormschool.com/</a>	Entertainment Design	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Full/Half Scholarships	No
	Adelaide, Australia	<a href="http://www.cdwstudios.com/">http://www.cdwstudios.com/</a>	2D/3D Entertainment Design	Eight-Week, Three-year, Full- time Program	Scholarships	No
	Pasadena, California USA	<a href="http://conceptdesignacad.com/">http://conceptdesignacad.com/</a>	Entertainment Design	Ten-Week Course	CSATTF Tuition Reimbursement Program	No
	Singapore	<a href="http://fzdschool.com/">http://fzdschool.com/</a>	Entertainment Design	One-year Diploma Program, Advanced Diploma	Grants for Singaporean/ permanent resident only	Registered with Council of Private Education
	Hollywood, California USA	<a href="http://www.gnomonschool.com/">http://www.gnomonschool.com/</a>	Entertainment Design & Digital Production	One and Three-year Programs, Individual Courses	Yes (full-time programs only)	Yes
	Montreal, Canada	<a href="http://synstudio.ca/">http://synstudio.ca/</a>	Concept art and Illustration	Non-degree	No	No

More schools open (and close) every year. Head over to our [website](#) (specifically, our [Recommended Educational Resources page](#)) to view the most current, up-to-date list.

# Brick and mortar traditional art colleges

If you are considering a traditional art college, this list will help you choose from some of the best.  
Several schools featured here offer more course options than listed.

School name	Location	Web Address	Majors	Degree categories	Financial Aid	Accreditation
 ACADEMY of ART UNIVERSITY FOUNDED IN SAN FRANCISCO 1929	San Francisco, California, USA	<a href="http://www.academyart.edu/">http://www.academyart.edu/</a>	Animation and VFX, Game Development, Illustration, Industrial Design, Visual Development	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 ArtCenter	Pasadena, California USA	<a href="http://www.artcenter.edu/accd/index.jsp">http://www.artcenter.edu/accd/index.jsp</a>	Advertising, Ent. Design, Env. Design, Graphic Design, Illustration, Photography and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 Fashion Institute of Technology FIT	Sarasota, Florida USA	<a href="http://www.fitnyc.edu/">http://www.fitnyc.edu/</a>	Illustration, Toy Design, Advertising Design, Interactive Media, Graphic Design and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art IAFA	Los Angeles, California USA	<a href="http://laafa.org/">http://laafa.org/</a>	Fine Art, Entertainment Art, Foundational	Degree, Certification	Yes	Yes
 PARSONS	New York, USA	<a href="http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/">http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/</a>	Illustration, Product Design, Architectural Design, Industrial Design, Photography, and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 Pratt	New York, USA	<a href="https://www.pratt.edu/">https://www.pratt.edu/</a>	Digital Arts and Animation, Graphic Design and Illustration, Industrial Design, Digital Design and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 Ringling College of Art + Design	Sarasota, Florida USA	<a href="http://www.ringling.edu/">http://www.ringling.edu/</a>	Advertising, Ent. Design, Env. Design, Graphic Design, Illustration, Photography, Product Design and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 RISD	Rhode Island, USA	<a href="http://www.risd.edu/">http://www.risd.edu/</a>	Graphic Design, Architecture, Illustration, Industrial Design, Photography and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes
 SVA	New York, USA	<a href="http://www.sva.edu/">http://www.sva.edu/</a>	Animation, Cartooning, Computer Art, , Illustration, Photography, Visual Narrative, Computer Art and more	Undergraduate, Graduate, Public Programs	Yes	Yes

# OTHER GOODIES FROM US

GET YOUR FREE REFERENCE  
PHOTO PICTURE PACKS

- HUNDREDS OF PEER-REVIEWED RESOURCES
- INFORMATIVE BLOG
- READER-SUBMITTED QUESTIONS
- PORTFOLIO ADVICE, AND MORE

*Join us on fb where we continue the  
conversation of at, and art education*

## GET THE BOOK THAT STARTED IT ALL

An Insider's Guide  
for Students





**Final words of wisdom:**

*“There are no guarantees in art.*

*There’s no diploma that says you’re qualified for the job and should be hired. In the commercial world of art, you’re only as good as your worst image and whatever effort you put into your work yields a direct correlation with the success you achieve.*

*Always be in competition with yourself”*

**Elliott Lilly**

*Still have questions? Submit them to [info@elliottlillyart.com](mailto:info@elliottlillyart.com) and we’ll do our best to respond.*

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*For school and conference visits, teaching opportunities, and illustration commissions, contact: [me@elliottlillyart.com](mailto:me@elliottlillyart.com)*

*Thank You.*