

Critique on Rarity4.psd for DraconidsMXZ

Feb 2016 Patreon Reward

DraconidsMXZ: "In fact, I just begin to learn to paint recently. So this month, would you please give me some critiques about my work? Especially the color. I always have problems about which color I should use and my work also looks kind of 'grey', not colorful. I really need some guides or advices."

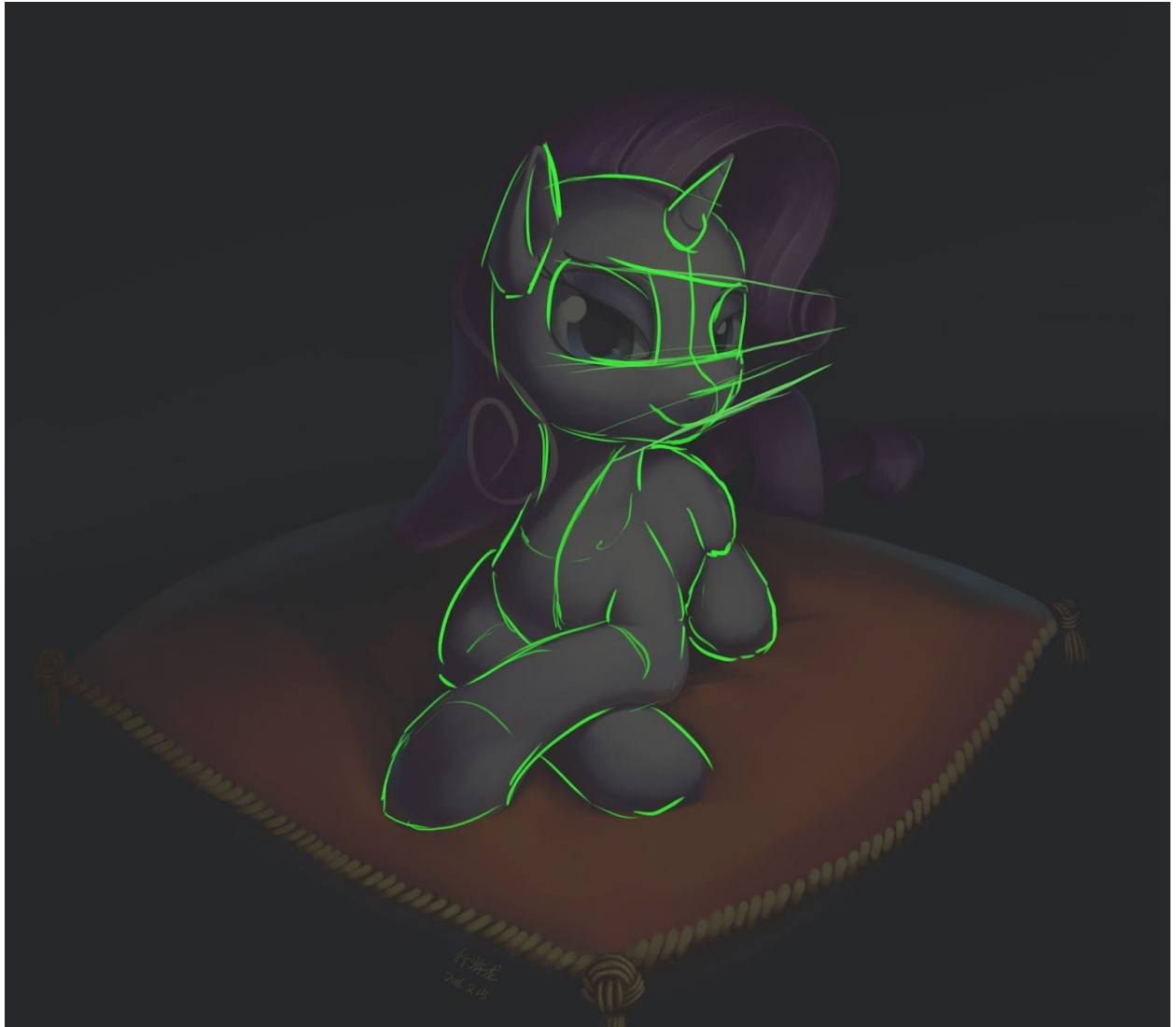


Alright, let's get started on this. I agree with the initial assessment that your colors are falling a little flat and I will spend the majority of time on that. But first, I want to cover some other things.

So, the major points of a painting are anatomy, composition, value, and color. With an intermediate level of painting like this, I think it's important to really hit all those points so that even if you're primary concern is color, you get some food for thought on the rest.

I need to emphasize that strongly. **These are just my opinions for your consideration. I'm not saying you HAVE to do it a certain way, just offering suggestions that you can take or ignore at your own discretion.**

Anatomy



Your anatomy here is pretty spot on. Most things that caught my eye at first, like her muzzle or leg shape, could really be more stylistic differences than actual objective issues. Without knowing how stylized you want to be, I can't really give any suggestions. The only thing I noticed is the small horn. Where most of the proportions you're using here are close to show accurate, the horn is comparatively pretty small. I tend to prefer the horn being more angled down, but the show varies a lot and different folks prefer different ways.

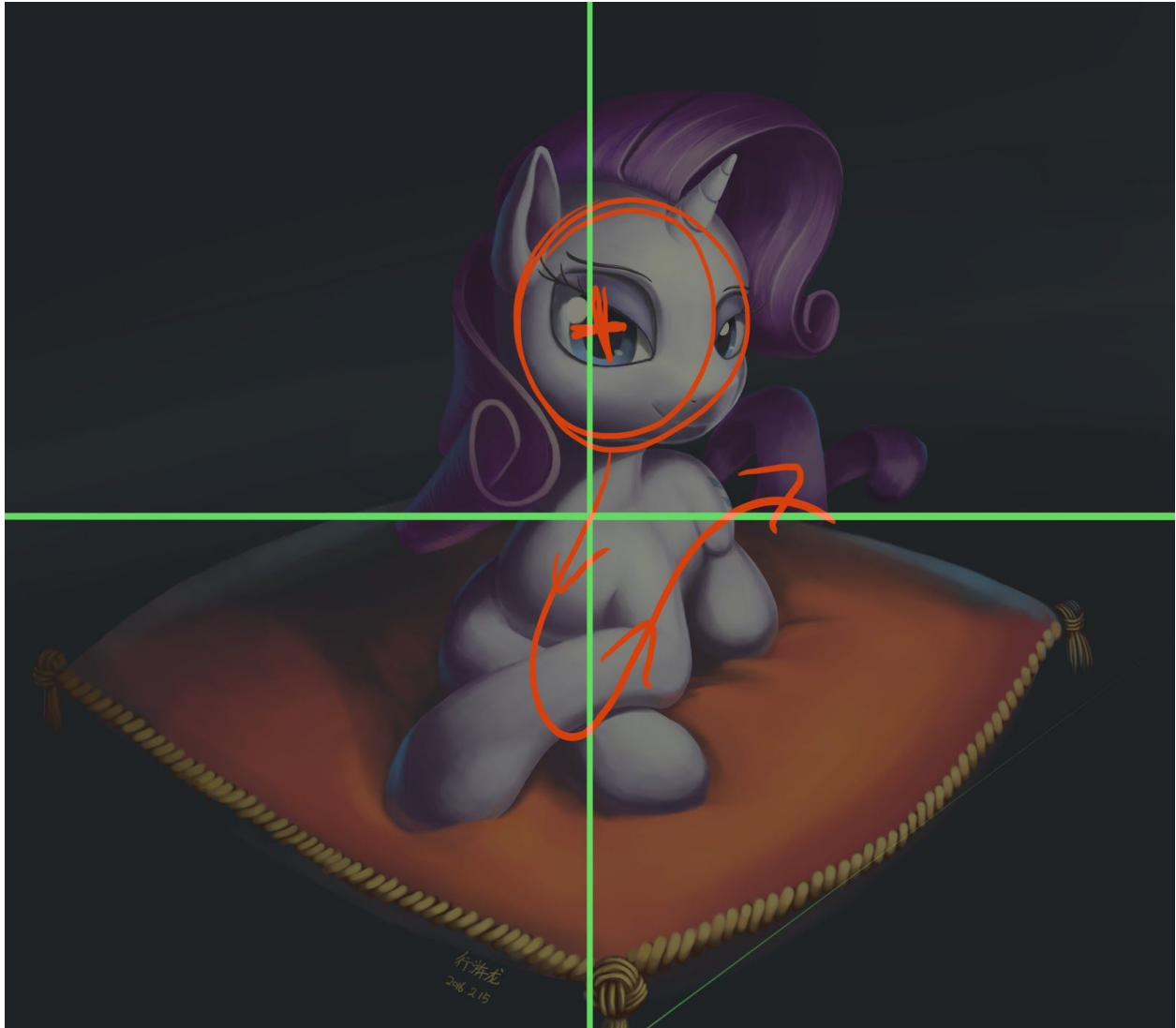


Rarity in similar angle for horn comparison.

The strong perspective going on in her face gave me a bit of pause at the first without anything else in the image to suggest that angle. It's actually very nice, much more interesting than an easier shallow perspective. I'd like to see that perspective pushed a bit further elsewhere in the image, such as in her body, pillow or maybe even a suggestion of a room behind her. Without the perspective being reinforced elsewhere, her face reads as misaligned.

Composition

This has some issues. You've got her pretty much dead center. The green lines here mark the center of the canvas and the red marks eye path. Rarity's right eye is the landing point, the first thing anyone looks at. They'll be looking at her face overall but that eye is dominant. From there the eye travels down her. This eye path is fine, but the centered composition is very static.



One possible solution is to really make Rarity dominate the entire canvas with very little empty space for the eye to lose its way in or glaze over. In the same effort, putting her off a little to one side, sort of like this:

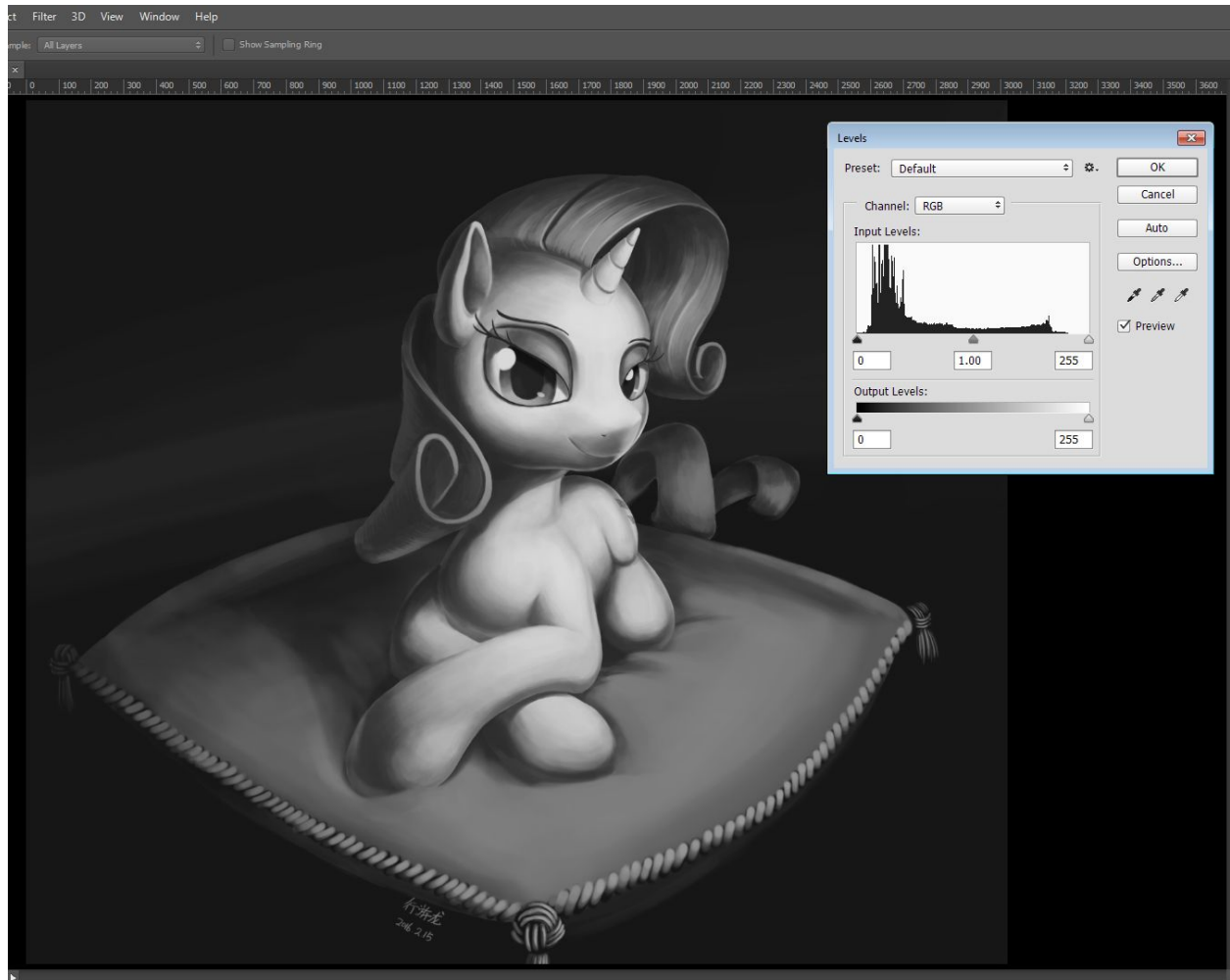


The primary thing is that it now feels a bit more dynamic. You still have that wonderful intimate feeling but a bit more amplified.



In addition, now instead of dead center, we've got the focal point working more with the Rule of Thirds and the eye now travels across the entire canvas rather than focusing in the center, leaving dead, empty space. You'll notice the crop I did made it a vertical rectangle, portrait orientation, rather than the landscape orientation it had. Especially if it's just one subject and little else, you want her to completely dominate the space available. The joy of digital art means we can alter the composition like this at any time, cropping away excess space.

Value



You've got a good range of value going on. I think it can be pushed just a touch, though. A few, very tiny moments of bright highlights like on her face and eye, and tiny near-black bits, such as in the ambient occlusion shadows of where her hind leg meets her body or certain spots where her body meets the pillow. In general, just push it a wee bit more. I noticed you had played with a Levels adjustment layer. It started to push it in the right direction.



This was a very brief push with just Exposure and manually painting in the brights and darks. It could be pushed even more but it's always tricky finding just the right balance.



Color

Okay, the thing you most wanted. Color-wise, you've got some really good moments. You've got color bouncing up from the pillow, a cool blue backlight and a hotter main light. That balance of warm and cool makes for a lovely overall color composition. I think most of your issues in this particular piece are from that main light. It reads as pretty hot on that pillow but none of that heat is on Rarity, all her colors are pretty cool. To better illustrate what I mean, here's a very quick explanation of the warm/cool problem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jFbFXYeqb0>

The main issue here is, as the guy in the video states, cool colors recede and warm colors pop into the foreground. That red-orange pillow is competing with a coolly painted Rarity for dominance. Having both warm and cools is important in an illustrative image (as opposed to something more emotional or abstract) so rather than cool the pillow down, I think the solution is to warm up the light parts of Rarity and to blend the colors a bit.



So, because I'm doing this all as post-processing, it won't quite have the same feel as if it were painted this way from the start. I used color dodge, color burn, overlay and color blending mode on top of the original. Useful for minor touch-ups, but doesn't look quite right if used as much as I did right here. But I'm just trying to illustrate a point. The first step is to warm up everything being hit by the main light. This presents itself mostly around the highlights and where the core shadows start. The mid tones get warmed up a little as well, but not as much as the highlights and shadows. Don't be afraid of punching the color and value up. You can always desaturate later.



Now, I also tampered with the cool portions. Primarily, I made the blues match a bit better. You had blue highlights that appeared in a couple of places but they weren't carried through consistently. It was a bit of rim lighting on our left side on Rarity, but also a smidge on our right side of the pillow and not on the same side as Rarity's highlights. There was also a slight difference in the type of blue with the rim lighting blue being a slightly warmer variant than what

is used everywhere else. So, I made the blues match a bit more across the canvas and softened the rim lighting. I made the rim lighting be all on the same side to suggest a consistent, soft blue light coming from behind Rarity's right, our left. I brought the same blue in the background into the cool side of the core shadow to keep it all together. The exceptions for the cool shadows is if there would be a bit of bounce light from the pillow. As Rarity is a near-white grey, she reflects colors far more readily than, say, Luna or Applejack.



Conclusions

So, again, you've got all the elements in place. Just be aware of your composition and ***don't be afraid of really punching up the color and value***. Play around with all the blending modes on separate layers, especially multiply, color burn & dodge, overlay and color so you can push it to an extreme where it's too strong of a contrast and too ridiculously saturated and then pull it back. I hope this helps out a bit and if you have any questions or rebuttals, let me know!

