

Beautiful, horrible, everything in between Behind the Canvas: rk post

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Wednesday, October 02, 2002



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"Somewhere between photo-realistic and equally twisted." Does that describe any artist you're familiar with?

"Pre-Raphaelite with Gothic sensibility." Does that ring a bell? How about "Twisted, freaky s#\$@!"?

Artist Randy Post, who goes by the name "rk post" professionally ("just to confuse people"), uses all those terms to describe his style. All are accurate. To say that rk's work is dark would be an understatement. Don't let that fool you, however. rk's creative mind and definitive style have produced some of the **Magic** game's most recognizable images, such as Ichorid and Morphling.

As is the case with many artists, rk grew up in an isolated location. "I was raised in rural Illinois. My parents had a five-acre farm, but it was on the end of a dead-end road, and nobody lived nearby." This boredom lent itself perfectly to concentrating on art. "I've been drawing ever since I was a kid. I did it constantly throughout high school. I didn't have many friends and I lived out in the country, so it was really easy to be by myself and do my thing." Even though he had a talent for art, rk went to college with the intention of studying veterinary medicine. After a semester, he decided it wasn't what he wanted to do, so he switched to graphic design. Regardless, he always kept his interest in illustration going. This led to yet another change in major. "It took me eight years to finally get my bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University, but I haven't used it yet. I didn't go to school full time, and I was also going into graphic design, which is a dead end. I got all the way to my junior year and realized that [graphic design] sucked, so I changed my major to illustration."

One of the ongoing themes in rk's art is that the women he paints are very similar. Is this woman someone specific or just an element of his style? "I do use models--and they're usually different people--but you're throwing the rk post sensibility on top of it. So, if you look at the original photo and then you look at the final piece of art, more often than not there's not much you're going to be able to pick out except for elements of the face and hands." Some **Magic** artists like to put family members into their pieces, but in rk's case, his style won't make it obvious. "Angel of Retribution was based on my wife, but she still looks like an rk post girl. It doesn't look like my wife at all."

If you ask rk why he likes to do fantasy art, his eyes will light up and you'll see a glimpse of that kid who grew up on a farm. "Fantasy art is fun! I'm getting paid for this? It's everything I liked drawing growing up, but now I'm getting paid for it!" Aside from the financial benefits, rk likes the fact that he can let his imagination run wild. "Fantasy art has very few preconceived boundaries and it's fun as

hell. You can be creative and nutty." He finds **Magic** art in particular to be great for this. "It's pretty wide open within the fantasy genre. There's a little bit of sci-fi in there, but the design sensibilities of the whole game itself are *really* good. I really enjoy doing it. Plus there are the perks of being a **Magic** artist, like exposure and travel." rk's first **Magic** set was *Exodus*. He had been a TSR staff illustrator, and once that company was purchased by Wizards of the Coast, rk contacted then - Art Director Matt Wilson about doing some **Magic** work. All went well, and he's been doing work for the game ever since.

rk's signature is unique: the word "Post" written inside a stylized scroll.

His

favorite **Magic** piece is *Unmask*, although "Angel of Retribution could probably give it a run for its money. Every painting is a crapshoot, and *Unmask* came out really good when I got done rolling the dice. I have an idea in my mind, and getting that idea onto board with paint . . . usually there's a whole lot of crap that can get thrown in-between that process and it gets really murky. But sometimes my ideas actually come out the way I think they should." And what happens when something doesn't work out the way rk saw it in his "slightly twisted" mind? "There are all kinds of little things that can go wrong, like maybe the palette isn't to my liking. For example, there's a painting I'm working on right now. And I painted these wings and they were just really happy and purple and pink and I was like, 'Oh, these are nasty!' So, I went back and repainted them."

Where playing the game is concerned, rk has had a little experience, mostly because he doesn't have the time to put into it. "I've played the *Starter* game a couple of times. I actually won once! Then I stopped and never played again. It's good to have a working knowledge of the game when doing art for it, but unfortunately I don't have that much time to devote to playing. Heck, I don't even play video games."

Lightning Angel

Art description: "Location: sky

This card represents White, Blue and Red magic.

An armed, armored angel streaks across a stormy sky. Small arcs of lightning sprout from her sword before her and in her wake. Focus on the angel."



The description for this card was very specific both because of the multicolor theme of *Invasion* block and because *Apocalypse* art had to reflect the combination of enemy colors. So did rk have any issues with the color-specific guidelines? "With basic coloring like that, it actually made the piece easier. There was much less to think about. With the drawing mapping everything out, some of the basic colors can pose a problem at times." While the colors are present, they certainly aren't loud or bold. This is due in part to rk's dark style. "If they specify a color, I'm usually able to work it in. Granted, it'll probably be really dark and unsaturated, but it'll be there." In contrast with those dark shades of color are the wings, which are bright and certainly stand out from the rest of the piece. "I needed something to even out the values and bring attention to the main focus. The white actually kind of frames the piece nicely. [The wings are] just nice bookends to the whole thing. Otherwise, her armor and everything would just get lost right in the background."

Something very noticeable about Lightning Angel is the fact that she seems to be very relaxed despite her powerful appearance. "I have done angry, yelling characters before and have fallen short, although that doesn't mean that it would not have been the best approach. I do like painting things that are static and that are just fun to look at. Dynamicism isn't my forte or best approach." Another challenge with creating a piece that depicts an angel is that the subject has been done so many times before. Still, rk finds room for originality. "I try to add elements that haven't been thought of before. I try to challenge myself. With Lightning Angel, there's a liquid battery strapped to the side of her. It's kind of hard to see on the card. Eventually, I find myself doing things I've done before, so I try to come up with something different."

Obviously, the finished product worked out exceptionally well. Lightning Angel has been nominated for a Chelsea award, which is awarded by the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists.

Ichorid

Art description: "This card needs to show a horrible-looking non-human creature about to attack the viewer. It should be coming out of a grave after feasting on a corpse."



Quite simply, when the average player first sees Ichorid, his or her reaction is likely to be "*What the hell is that?*" Well, the man who created it can provide a somewhat comforting explanation. "It's a big nasty critter with four arms--no it doesn't have any eyes. It's crawling out of a grave after eating some guy. That's basically what they asked for, and that's what I gave them. If I can make it look different from something else, then hopefully I've succeeded." But what was the motivation behind this concept? "It just struck me at the time. If I had done the sketch the next day, I'd have come up with something completely different." Also note that even though Ichorid is a mess of limbs and indistinguishable features, rk added a human skull to the monster. "It's a trophy for the creature, and a familiar element. Also, I wanted to give it some sort of sign of being smart. If it's wearing a headdress, you can look at it and go, 'How the heck did it put that on if it's just a stupid beast?' So, that gave it some sense of intelligence. It's not something you want to cross."

An interesting minor item involved in the transition from art description to the actual piece is that rk didn't include the corpse mentioned. "You're really not supposed to get too gory, so I just spilled some bones and things in the background." In addition, the piece was modified before going into booster packs, but rk approves of the slight change. "[If I could do it again] I'd pump up the contrast a little more. In the painting itself, the contrast is pretty flat, but [Wizards] pumped it up a lot on the card. That made it turn out really well."

Thorn Elemental

Art description: "A 40' tall giant plant elemental launches some of its natural thorns at a passing flock of birds. rk post redux?"



This creature was the subject of an interesting and rare occurrence in **Magic** art. rk created the original Thorn Elemental for *Urza's Destiny*--and was given a chance to do it a second time for *Seventh Edition*. As a result, rk was presented with an odd situation. On one hand, he was given the opportunity to improve the original piece, but also had to stay within the guidelines he set the first time so that the two Thorn Elementals still looked similar. "When I did the original, it was a small painting and not very impressive to behold. For the second, I kept it similar, but also different to maintain the appearance that the two pieces were related--yet also distinct and individual pieces."

One of these changes was to give Thorn Elemental a lot more personality, with glowing eyes and a maniacal smile. Even though "Thorny" got a new attitude, a lot of the old elements were still present, such as the big monster shooting at some birds in the sky. "Since Wizards of the Coast was going to use it on packaging, I wanted to push it a bit more to grab the viewer's attention. The shot at the birds is just a fun little way of poking at the original."

Overall, rk was much happier with the new version of his creation. "When we paint things, we rarely ever know how they will take off. I knew from previous experience that this was a great card--I could not half ass it. I personally think that I accomplished that." It seems, however, that the faithful readers of **MagicTheGathering.com** think otherwise. When both Thorn Elementals were put up against each other in a vote to see which would be included in *Eighth Edition*, the old version won. rk accepts this, but isn't likely to change his opinion on the matter. "It's always hard to beat a classic. But, if you saw the two paintings sitting side-by-side, the choice would be easy. The original Thorn was pretty small and much rougher."

Aside from **Magic**, rk keeps himself very busy. "I do stuff constantly for the *Star Wars* RPG, and I illustrated the *Essential Guide to Alien Species* (Star Wars) for Ballantine books. I have my art book coming out at the beginning of June through [Cartouche Press](#). I have done concepts for software, including some of the characters in the Japanese Sega Dreamcast **Magic** game. I've also done conceptual ideas for animation and television, but I will be lucky if any of it ever makes it to the screen. There's also a ton of game-related art that would take me a heck of a long time to list." rk lives in rural Washington (close to Tacoma) with his wife, Trina, and his three sons--Nathan, Garrett, and Brennan. For more information about rk post, check out his [website](#).

rk post Card Gallery

(Click each cardname to view)

Death Match	<i>Onslaught</i>	Worry Beads	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Supreme Inquisitor	<i>Onslaught</i>	Silent Assassin	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Swat	<i>Onslaught</i>	Unmask	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Jeska, Warrior Adept	<i>Judgment</i>	Dawnstrider	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Ichorid	<i>Torment</i>	Silverglade Pathfinder	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Pardic Arsonist	<i>Torment</i>	Cho-Arrim Legate	<i>Mercadian Masques</i>
Spirit Flare	<i>Torment</i>	Twisted Experiment	<i>Urza's Destiny</i>
Angel of Retribution	<i>Torment</i>	Encroach	<i>Urza's Destiny</i>
Blazing Salvo	<i>Odyssey</i>	Thorn Elemental	<i>Urza's Destiny</i>
Dogged Hunter	<i>Odyssey</i>	Covetous Dragon	<i>Urza's Destiny</i>

Leshrac's Rite	<i>Seventh Edition</i>	Damping Engine	<i>Urza's Legacy</i>
Thorn Elemental	<i>Seventh Edition</i>	Phyrexian Reclamation	<i>Urza's Legacy</i>
Worship	<i>Seventh Edition</i>	Urza's Armor	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Lightning Angel	<i>Apocalypse</i>	Abyssal Horror	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Primal Growth	<i>Planeshift</i>	Acridian	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Voice of All	<i>Planeshift</i>	Coral Merfolk	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Bog Initiate	<i>Invasion</i>	Sandbar Merfolk	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Defiling Tears	<i>Invasion</i>	Morphling	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Faerie Squadron	<i>Invasion</i>	Serra's Liturgy	<i>Urza's Saga</i>
Teferi's Moat	<i>Invasion</i>	Thrull Surgeon	<i>Exodus</i>
Avatar of Woe	<i>Prophecy</i>	Keeper of the Beasts	<i>Exodus</i>
Avatar of Might	<i>Prophecy</i>	High Ground	<i>Exodus</i>
Avatar of Fury	<i>Prophecy</i>	Foul Spirit	<i>Portal Second Age</i>
Avatar of Will	<i>Prophecy</i>	Archangel	<i>Portal Second Age</i>
Avatar of Hope	<i>Prophecy</i>	Shrieking Specter	<i>Starter 1999</i>
Nesting Wurm	<i>Nemesis</i>	Veteran Cavalier	<i>Starter 1999</i>
Mana Cache	<i>Nemesis</i>		
Lin Sivvi, Defiant Hero	<i>Nemesis</i>		
Voice of Truth	<i>Nemesis</i>		

Send questions and comments to editor@wizards.com.