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Sketches: Breakthrough

Generally speaking, **Magic** card art depicts a scene of what is "actually" going on in the card, like a painted snapshot of what you would see if you were actually there witnessing the spell being cast. In other words, it's naturalistic, or *representational*. For example, the art on **Treespring Lorian** represents what a Treespring Lorian actually looks like in the **Magic** world, and **Molten Rain** depicts the actual scene of what happens when the Molten Rain spell gets cast on your unfortunate town.

But sometimes R&D decides that the card concept calls for *non-representational* art, that is, an illustration that interprets the themes of the spell through suggestive imagery and symbolism rather than strict visual literality. This week's "Sketches" looks at such a piece: **Breakthrough** from *Torment*, an example of a non-representational **Magic** card art by Gary Ruddell.



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1. Art Description

Here were the instructions given to Gary Ruddell for the project:

"This piece should show, in an illustrative way, a blue wizard's head that is overflowing with knowledge that is represented by water. This water should reflect this knowledge and cascade down over the content wizard's face. This is a non-representational piece."

2. Sketches

Gary took that art description and came up with this initial sketch:

Breakthrough sketch 1

You can see that the artist took the non-representational instruction to heart. Clearly, the wizard's head is not literally gushing with water when **Breakthrough** is cast; the imagery of the cascade of water is meant to imply the forceful onrush of ideas and knowledge, and uncontrolled overflowing of some of that knowledge, that the wizard experiences when he casts the spell. The mechanic of the card is represented, too; **Breakthrough** makes you draw four cards (the onrush of knowledge) and then, depending on how much mana you pay, makes you discard some number of them afterwards (the uncontrolled overflowing).

3. Final Art

Gary's sketch pleased the R&D art team, and it was approved with minimal comment. The final piece emphasizes a bit more the flooding, watery nature of the wizard's spell, and has some details of the blue idea-imagery changed, but otherwise it is straight from the sketch.

Breakthrough final art

What other cards can you think of that feature non-representational art? **Stasis**? What else?

4. Card

Here is the card as you can see it in booster packs.





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