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# Sketches: Relentless Rats

Magic Arcana  
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Welcome to another edition of [Sketches!](#) This week we take a look behind the scenes at the art of *Fifth Dawn*'s **Relentless Rats** by Thomas M. Baxa. **Relentless Rats** was a card that designer Brian Tinsman had to fight hard to keep in the set. Today we get a special perspective from the art end of things -- the artist's! Below, Tom Baxa shares his thoughts about the creation of the piece.

## 1. Art Description

But first things first -- the art description. Once a card is designed, an art description is written to tell the artist what the card will do, what its flavor is, and what the mood of the illustration should be. Here were the instructions given to Tom for the project:

*A wicked-looking metallized rat in foreground, with many of its rat friends behind it.*

Tom Baxa has been illustrating **Magic** cards since *Tempest*. You can see his work on over fifty cards including **Lobotomy**, **Vampiric Embrace**, **Tsabo's Decree**, **Metamorphic Wurm**, **Rotlung Reanimator**, **Oversold Cemetery** and **Duplicant**.

## 2. Sketch

Mr. Baxa submitted this sketch:

Relentless Rats sketch  
**Relentless Rats** sketch by Tom Baxa

What was it like coming up with an illustration for this project? Let's hear it from the artist, himself!

"When I first got the art order for this card, I was a little intimidated. Any time you have to do a crowd of anything, it's a challenge to make it work and still be a striking image. And let's face it, rats are not the most fun creature to draw. Give me a whacked-out zombie any day! But this was Mirrodin, the metal world. So as I started playing with some sketches, I found I was having a lot of fun coming up with little metal implants and elements for the rats. And I wanted to create an energy, a frenzy to the rats. So I had a ton of them barreling over a mound, kicking up dust and running all over each other. Then I thought that it would be nice to have a victim in there somewhere. I just love the idea of a dead body 'surfing' on this wave of rats! And I have to thank Jeremy [Cranford], the art director, because he fought to keep that guy in the card. I think it makes the onslaught of the rats much more scary and menacing. I hope the players enjoy the image. I know they'll love the play factor. Players can see larger scans of the painting at my website [www.BaxaArt.com](http://www.BaxaArt.com)."

-- Tom Baxa

Special thanks to Mr. Baxa for his insights!

### 3. Final Art

Take a look at a blown-up image of the final art, complete with Tom's fought-for corpse "surfing" the wave of rats. We're sure that players already appreciate the relentless dedication he put into it!



**Relentless Rats** final art by Thomas M. Baxa

### 4. Card

And here's how you'll see the card in its final state, in booster packs of *Fifth Dawn*:



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