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Sketches: Silent Arbiter

Magic Arcana
Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Welcome to another edition of [Sketches!](#) This week we take a look behind the scenes at the art of *Fifth Dawn's* **Silent Arbiter** by Mark Zug.

1. Art Description

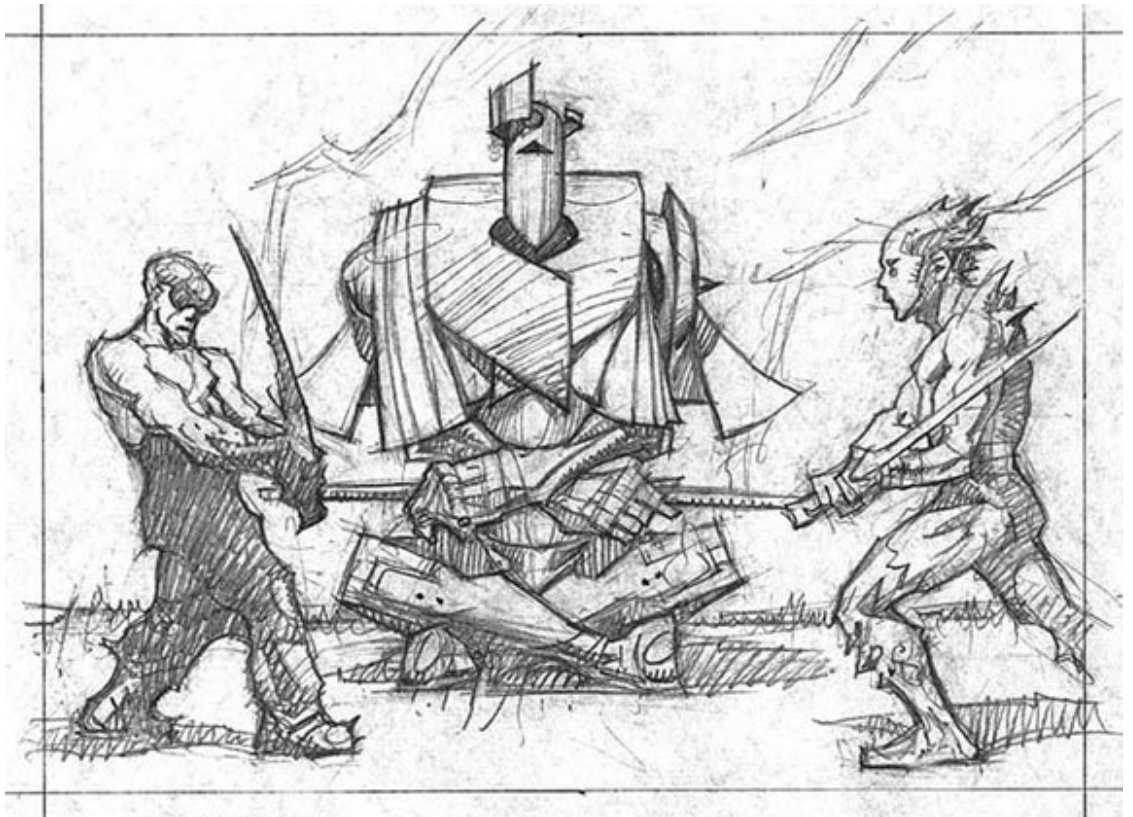
Once a card is designed, an art description is written to tell the artist what the card will do, what its flavor is, and what the mood of the illustration should be. Here were the instructions given to Mark for the project:

- Location: Razor Fields somewhere*
- Action: Show a larger-than-human artifact creature of artist's design. The creature should seem like it was created to be a judge, enforcer, or official. As long as this artificial creature is present, all combat becomes formal and ritualized.*
- Mood: Stern. This guy exists to keep the fight fair, like an artificial sergeant-of-arms.*

An interesting challenge, but to be sure, the artist was up to it. Mark Zug has over fifty **Magic** cards credits to his name, stretching back to *Exodus*. You can see his work on [Pegasus Stampede](#), [Gaea's Cradle](#), [Ascendant Evincar](#), [Darigaaz](#), [the Igniter](#), [Genesis](#), [Grinning Demon](#) and the Swords of [Fire and Ice](#) and [Light and Shadow](#), among others.

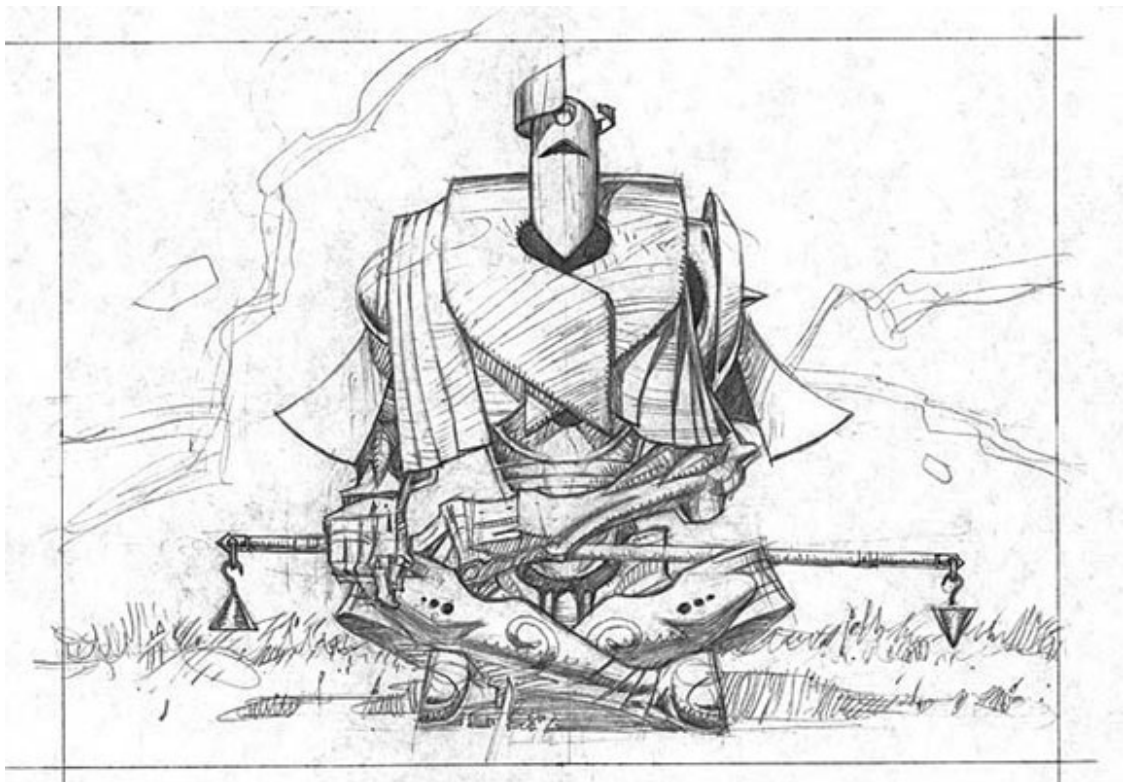
2. Sketches

Mr. Zug submitted this sketch initially:



Silent Arbiter sketch 1 by Mark Zug

You can see how Mark decided to show two combatants fighting in the sketch -- they look to be a Moriok human on the left and possibly an Auriok human on the right. It may pull too much focus from the Arbiter (called "Stoic Sentinel" during playtest) itself, though, so the art team opted to go with a more singular composition:



Silent Arbiter sketch 2 by Mark Zug

In this second submission from Mr. Zug, note how the combatants have been replaced by small weights on the Arbiter's staff, representing the judgments it makes and the balance it maintains. Interestingly, however, the weights are not identical (though they might weigh the same), and the composition of the Arbiter's plating and draped cloth is not perfectly symmetrical. Might this imply

that, when you play the card, one side might get more of an advantage from the Arbiter than the other?

3. Final Art

Now let's take a look at a blown-up image of the final art in its full glory. Here you can clearly see that the Arbiter is sitting in the Razor Fields (aligned with white, the color of balance and judgment, even though the Arbiter itself is an artifact).



Silent Arbiter final art by Mark Zug

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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