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Sketches: Meishin, the Mind Cage

Magic Arcana
 Monday, June 6, 2005

Welcome to another edition of [Sketches](#)! Today we take a look behind the scenes of the creation of the art of a deceptively powerful blue enchantment from *Saviors of Kamigawa*, **Meishin, the Mind Cage**. But first, some background on the artist, Thomas Gianni.

Artist Portfolio

Frenetic Efreed art by Thomas Gianni

Artist [Thomas Gianni](#) has contributed over twenty-five pieces of **Magic** card art since 1996's *Mirage* set. You can see his work on such cards as *Frenetic Efreed*, *Abeyance*, *Dregs of Sorrow*, *Tower of the Magistrate*, *Prison Barricade*, *Sphere of Purity*, *Manriki-Gusari*, and *Neverending Torment*, among many others.

Art Description

The first step of the creation of a card's art is its art description. The art description tells 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 Thomas for **Meishin, the Mind Cage**:

Color: Blue

Location: n/a

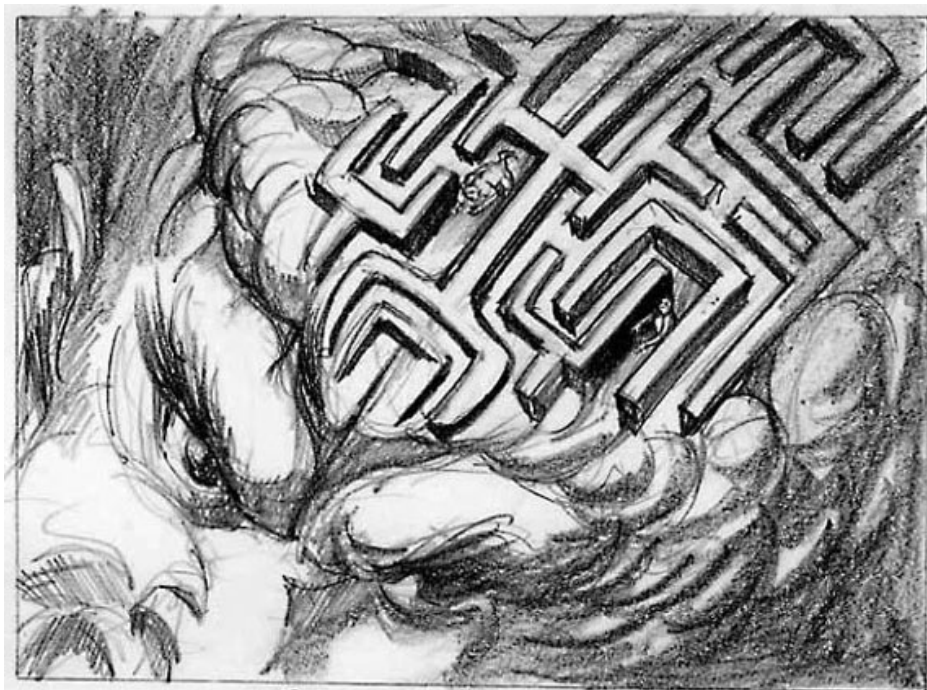
Action: This spell uses your own mental power to create an illusory maze that enemy creatures get completely lost in. Perhaps show this symbolically, with a brain whose folds come together like the passageways of a maze, with one or two tiny creatures wandering through, trying to find their way out. Focus: The illusory maze

Mood: Mind over muscle

The next step is for the artist to submit sketches of his or her vision of the art description.

Sketches

Here's Thomas's initial sketch submitted for **Meishin, the Mind Cage**:



Meishin, the Mind Cage sketch by Thomas Gianni

This is right on the suggested description, and gets across the feeling of being trapped in a blue mage's conceptual quagmire.

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The art team wanted to see a couple other options that had more rounded, brainlike folds of tissue in the mind-cage, and wanted to see what it would be like without seeing the face in-frame. Here is what Mr. Gianni came back with.

Meishin, the Mind Cage sketches
Meishin, the Mind Cage sketches by Thomas Gianni

The brainy tissues were a hit, but the art team actually liked keeping the mage's face in the frame.

Final Art

Thomas submitted this final art.



Meishin, the Mind Cage final art by Thomas Gianni

Wow -- most pieces gain a lot of richness from the addition of color, but this one truly stands out. We feel the plight of those creatures lost in this abstract brainscape, in play but useless to their master, subjected to the will of a blue mage with seven mana at his or her disposal (always a scary thing).

Finished Card

And here's the card in its final state, as you can see in booster packs of *Saviors of Kamigawa*. Get your opponent's creatures lost in thought (with a little help from Thomas Gianni) with *Meishin, the Mind Cage*!



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