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# Behind the Art of Rakdos Guildmage

Magic Arcana  
 Monday, May 15, 2006

**M**agic artist Jeremy Jarvis graciously took the time to share some backstory on the illustration of **Rakdos Guildmage**.

Want to hear the nitty gritty? Read on to find out how, in his own words, Jeremy culled inspiration from multiple sources to create the art for the block's angriest guildmage.

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This is a good example of how both a style guide and card conceping factor into a final piece of **Magic** art.

The art description was pretty minimal:

- Color: Black/Red guild*
- Location: Your choice*
- Action: Show a Rakdos guildmage in full evil regalia, looking sadistic. Use the grimacing wizard on "Delete" style guide p. 11 as a basis but feel free to add your own flair.*
- Focus: The guildmage*
- Mood: Magic is for artfully ruining things.*

The style guide image referred to was a single-color concept by Dan Scott, which was actually based on an earlier concept by Thomas Giorello, I believe. I looked at red/black as a whole and wanted to make sure that this thing A) was believable as a cohort to Rakdos, B) was truly intimidating... something that would likely hiss rather than speak, and C) was somehow on fire. After all, what's more intimidating than having to square off against something that's on fire and doesn't care? I produced a sketch springboarding from the style guide, and it was approved with no tweaks.



Style guide reference



#94311  
 © 2005 Wizards of the Coast (94311.1, Sketch)

Rakdos Guildmage sketch by Jeremy Jarvis

From there, I shot my reference. I typically shoot dookie Polaroid reference as a means to clarify gesture and hopefully a drawing issue or two. I gravitate to Polaroid because the quality is clear enough to inform drawing decisions, but the shots are horrible with light and color, so I know there's no way to use it as crutch at the painting stage. Whether an illustration is referenced or not, I never want it to feel like it's tied to a photo.

This particular reference shot features fellow **Magic** artist D. Alexander Gregory as the model screaming at the camera while his wife, Allison, held a light for me just out-of-frame.



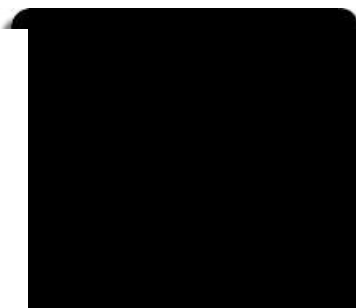
*D. Alexander Gregory as Jeremy's model for the reference photo*

From there, I looked at my sketch, looked at my reference, decided what I liked and didn't like from each, re-drew the image as I wanted it on heavy watercolor paper, and went to finish.

There you have it.



*Rakdos Guildmage final art by Jeremy Jarvis*





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