

An in-depth look at some of the new art for *Tenth Edition*. We're Bringin' Crazy Back

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Monday, July 30, 2007



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T*enth Edition* showcases some pretty fancy creative footwork, from within **Magic** Creative and our intimidatingly talented stable of freelance **Magic** illustrators. I thought it would be fun to show you all a peek behind the curtains at how we got from concept to sketch, to final art. Its always a blast to see how a talented artist solves a visual problem, especially tough or abstract one. I absolutely love sending out an exciting art description and seeing how an artist tackles it and takes it to final. Reading through these should give you a glimpse of how that feels... written word to finished art.

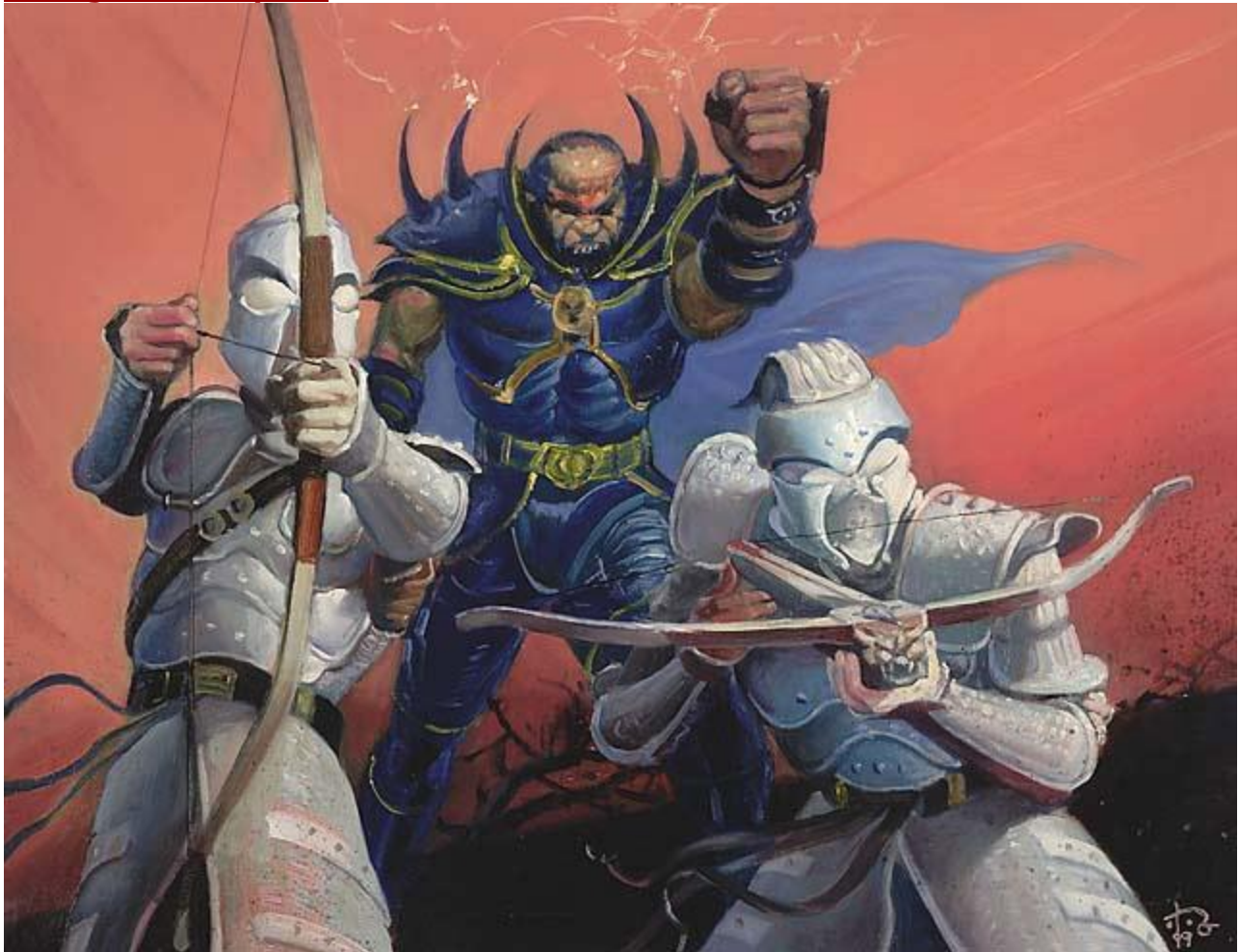
First, lets talk about how cards are concepted and assigned. Once the card file is stable (not likely to change or be yanked out from under us), **Magic** Creative starts combing through the file, looking at the raw card mechanics and deciding what the image will be that prints with that mechanic. 3/1 red creature with first stike... Viashino Pikeman? Dry, cracked-mud elemental (it's fragile, get it?) with long tentacle arms? Goblin with a slingshot? Green spell that doubles your mana... A forest where we can see streams of glowing sap dripping up? A stylized sun made of leaf motifs? And so on.

Brady Dommermuth is the long-seasoned pro at this. He's seen more mechanics taken to concept, assigned and taken to final than probably even he can count. He has an impressive gut for what will work and what will yield a muddy result. He is still the comptroller and voice of reason for all card concepts. The other members of the Creative Team also take a concept pass. We brainstorm and enter ideas, and then Brady usually picks one if several of us took a crack at it, writes it into our concept format (color, location, action, etc.) and usually creates the placeholder name. Obviously placeholder names aren't issues with a core set... it's a reprint and we know what the final card name will be. In a new expansion, however, it's cart blanche, and I firmly believe that the placeholder name is the most important element in affecting how the illustrator relates to the concept. It's the first thing you read, the first impression, and strongly colors your response to the art brief. And I don't mind telling you that Brady is fantastic at it. My placeholder names suck.

Anyways, back to process. The card concepts are done. Now the Art Director re-hones and tweaks those as s/he feels necessary into "artspeak" that the illustrators will relate to in the most exciting way possible. Then artists are chosen for each art description. The goal is to find an artist for each description that is best suited in skill and style and approach to produce the best painting that not only works in the best possible way for that particular card, but also is most enjoyable and rewarding for the illustrator. That's the goal anyways. Then the art is assigned, sketches come in, comments are made, revisions come back if they were needed, then the artist take the piece to final.

Blah blah blah. On to the art!

Stronghold Discipline



We wanted to divorce this from the old story line. Here's the new concept working between the mechanics and what we knew the card name was (again, this is not a luxury... or drawback... we have with non-reprints).

Color: Black Spell

Location: The dungeon of a black castle

Action: We see several howling, crying, or screaming prisoners neck-deep in a sea of blood (or very dark red ichor). They are shackled to each other by a grid of heavy chains intersecting at cold-iron collars clamped around each prisoner's neck. The prisoners howl in agony as they tread "water."

Focus: The prisoners in their horrible dilemma

Mood: This is what happens to those who cross the Stronghold Overseer

Sketch one:



This was actually a bit too morbid, with the chained up dude face down. Just a random judgment call, but that's how we called it.

Sketch two:



Hotness. Sold!

FINAL!



Nomad Mythmaker



Too "not fantasy" for my taste. It works, but a guy in robes telling stories, excitably or not, just isn't cuttin' it for me.

Color: White Creature

Location: Plains clearing near a rustic village

Action: A weathered but virile middle-aged battle-cleric sits, wearing the remains of his tattered studded leather armor, cross-legged in front of a small stylish pyre. The fire is surrounded by a ring of short standing stones (maybe 2 feet high) that are engraved on all sides with pictographs/runes. He is coaxing a magical tongue of flame (maybe it burns yellow, or pure white) from the pyre and has been using this magic flame to set alight the stones as if they were some sort of impossible candle. Maybe we see two already lit in this fashion. The pictograms/runes glow softly on these two lit cairns.

Focus: The cleric

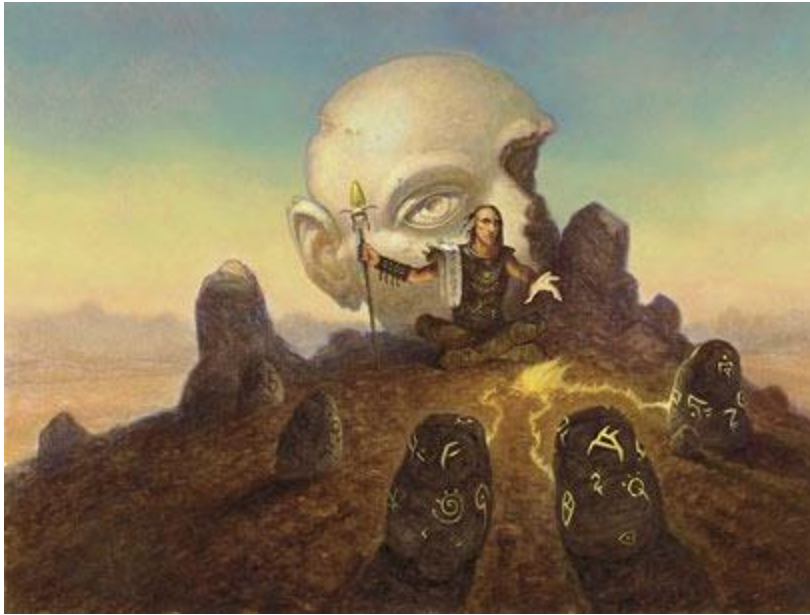
Mood: A weaver of magical tales

Sketch one:



I dunno where Darrell got the busted stature head idea, but I dug it. Kind of an Ozymandius-there's-history-here vibe. No Imp though, white-aligned dudes don't dine with Imps.

FINAL!



Evacuation



This just isn't blue to me. Fire chasing dudes out of the woods? Its pretty much everything BUT blue. Where's blue's mastermind-ing and magic and manipulation?

Color: Blue Spell

Location: Inside a shadowy wizard's library (or N/A)

Action: A grim human wizard holds his or her arm out above a strange five-sided fantasy game-board. The board was crowded with interesting game pieces (carved figures or abstract 3-D domino shapes), but now they're dissolving into thin, blue lightning or magical dust trails that unravel upward past his or her hand.

Focus: The empty fantasy "chessboard"

Mood: I can wipe the slate clean in the blink of an eye.

notes: this is about the vanishing and the manipulation. showing the wizard is optional.
just sell the idea.

Sketch one:



The object floating misplaces the emphasis away from the event and looks like it's object destruction, or artifact removal.

Sketch two:



Okay, the game pieces look like guys or creatures being powdered, but the floaty object still looks an artifact being destroyed.

Sketch three:



There we go!

FINAL!



Manabarbs



Wanted something more evocative.

Color: Red Spell

Location: N/A

Action: Show a stylized solid 'bloom' or burst of magical energy. On the outer edge of the 'burst' we see an intertwined ring of energy 'vines' that is fecund with incredibly vicious looking 'thorns'. Think a circle of barbed wire around a flower. Now make that out of magic.

Focus: The bloom and its barbed energy

Mood: the majesty...and cost... of magic

Sketch one:



Nailed it.

FINAL!



Angelic Chorus



This looks like a straight-up creature card. If we were going to print a 12/12 angel, this is what it would be conceptualized as ... a multi-angel posse.

Color: White Spell

Location: Under willow trees in a field

Action: We see the silhouettes of a trio of angels flying in formation, backlit strongly against the sun or very bright clouds. As we look upward, there are weeping willow trees cropping into the scene. We see that as the angels fly overhead, the willows that they have passed over now bear glorious white feathers rather than their 'leaves'.

Focus: The angelic feather-blessing

Mood: Holy, serene

Sketch one:



Hells yeah!

FINAL!



Upwelling



Kamahl's arm? Really? No way.

Color: Green Spell

Location: see below:

Action: This spell is a representation of an unimaginable abundance of raw magic that is possible only due to the player's affiliation with 'Green Magic'.

here are a couple ideas:

1) we see two billowy clouds parting in a scene of breathing taking 'god lighting', revealing the sun blasting through with rays of light as they part. Except the sun and light is a glorious green! on a closer look we see that verdant ivy has actually made it up

to the clouds is is growing on them as if covering stonework, and starting to reach even higher.

2) show a scene through the eyes of the most powerful Green mage. He sees the inner nature in things... trees, landscapes and even architecture and creatures are seen as if composed of stylized leaf veins and plant cells. (the nature version of how Neo sees the Matrix)

Focus: find a way to communicate the endless magical abundance of Green.

Sketch one:



Beautiful, but not "big" enough. Really wanted a supernatural EVENT for this mechanic.

Sketch two:



Okay, right track, but still kinda feels like just a bright sun. Magic it up. Feel free to use designy elements!

Sketch three:



YES! But just looks like treetops, we're losing the "ivy growing on clouds" gag, and that could be a really great gag!

FINAL!



Stoopid hot. I love this! Take THAT, Kamahl's arm!

TERROR!

I wanted a new, horrible and sexy image that was powerful, iconic, and we could live with for a long time. Jake and I gab about this on the [Podcast](#).

Color: Black Spell

Location: N/A

Action: We see the 3 layers of a humanoid creature foot-to-mouth, foot-to-mouth, foot-to-mouth in an eternal circle (like the snake eating its tail). One body is the skin and gear, the next is the musculature, the next is the skeletal/visceral. The shape should make it clear that these are all the elements of the same guy.

Focus: The circle of bodily layers

Mood: eternal and Horrific death!

Notes: The humanoid creature should not look like a black-aligned creature.

Sketch one:



Awesome! But we're missing the "eating the layers of himself forever" gag (or is it the "being stripped apart forever" gag... I don't really care which). And make sure the skin layer looks deflated and empty.

Sketch two:



On the nose!

FINAL!



What is there to say?!

Scratching the Surface

Well, seven seems like a good even number, so we'll stop there. There is a ton of art-sexy in *Tenth Edition*, though, so let us know if you dug this and we'll revisit with some more concept-to-finals.

In the meantime, make sure you didn't miss the Arcanas on [Holy Strength/Unholy Strength](#) and [Legacy Weapon](#).

xoxo

JJ