



Camellia DESIGN

DIGITAL GREY SCALE GUIDE - A BULLET



'Now this only ends one way: a bullet.' Lorraine Broughton - Atomic Blonde

This is a depiction of Lorraine Broughton in her role as the hard-hitting spy from the Movie Atomic Blonde. It was based on the 2012 graphic novel and the style I employed paid homage to these origins.

This is a good example of how a simple grey scale technique can be employed at the beginning of a digital picture to emphasise clear areas of light and dark. With the following application of a limited colour pallet a bold and dynamic result is quickly achieved.

This is an Artistic guide rather than a technical one, as there are numerous programs and tools available, each using its own technology to create digital renderings.

VULPA, artist



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STAGE 1



We join this work during the application of shade. The design and character lines have already been completed. The aim is to emphasise key points. The skyline is quickly defined as the primary division point, light above and dark below. The character's major features, hair, face and neckline are highlighted next. This leaves a large expanse of darkness which is broken up by light pinpoints on buttons. The legs are partially highlighted to draw the characters figure from the darkness but not so bright to hold the eye.

In grey scale it is easy to recognise the areas that need to be brightened and by how much. We are not distracted by colour and therefore we are forced to concentrate on the overall balance of the painting.

NOTE: Make sure the digital format is set to either RGB or CMYK. If the mode is set to Grayscale it will prevent the later application of colour.



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STAGE 2



I opted for a very simple approach to colour and chose the strong contrast of blue against pink. Two very popular colours in the mid-eighties, during the height of the cold war and the setting for the film.

With the application of these colours the picture instantly warms and comes to life. Pink covers the highlighted areas unifying the character with the bright skyline and the shadows take on a blue-black hue adding depth and structure to the darker areas of the picture.

I personally prefer to apply a new colour layer to the original grey background. However, this is merely a personal preference and there are many ways to achieve the desired colouring.



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STAGE 3



Now that the initial colours have been applied to the ground, I begin to build up additional depth and richness to the picture.

I intensify the pinks and the dark blues throughout the composition and skin tones are blushed to give a slightly more realistic complexity by increasing my colour pallet.

However, I am always careful to maintain the strong light and dark contrast and mindful not to overdevelop the deep shadowed areas.



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STAGE 4



I start the final stage of this picture by making a slight colour correction to the pink, altering the hue to harmonise with the cold blue I am using.

By using semi-transparent layers, I start to build up the final details and highlight the picture. My aim is to draw forward the key features and accentuate the contrasting shadows for dramatic emphasis.

Lastly, I use an overlay to outline the figure of my character creating a very eighties neon glow. I made a bold choice of electric blue which flows around the strong defining line often seen in graphic novels, this brings the figure of my heroine from the shadows with a punch without losing the initial contrast developed in the grey scale.

Our atomic blond is now ready to take on the world.