

URGENT DELIVERY

Submission to the Solarpunk Art Contest 2021

Or a glimpse on how to navigate the air and the sea in a Solarpunk world



01 November 2021

CONCEPT

URGENT DELIVERY DEPICTS THE AIRSHIP **ARGO** AS IT FLIES BY THE FLOATING FOREST **VITAMIN SEA** AND DELIVERS AN ESSENTIAL CARGO OF TOOLS AND PARTS THE SEAPEOPLE NEED TO REPAIR THEIR VESSEL AND CONTINUE ON THEIR JOURNEY.

We wanted to depict a scene that could describe two different aspects of the usage of technology in a Solarpunk world: new technologies (the Argo) and adaptations of old ones (the Vitamin Sea) co-exist in a post-transition world and contribute to the benefit of the entire society.

We hope that this illustration could inspire people to think about how to reclaim spaces and reuse them for positive purposes: to nurture humanity, to care for others, to foster creativity and Solarpunk innovation.





ILLUSTRATION

THE ARGO is a hydrogen-powered airship which is built for emergency response at sea. A cross between a blimp and a Canadair, it can make its own hydrogen from seawater through dismutation, using anti-corrosion electrodes and solar energy collected using its wings, which are made of flexible, ultralight PV panels.

THE FORMAT of the illustration is 8,5 x 11 inches, 300 dpi.



THE VITAMIN SEA, instead, started life as an aircraft carrier in the days of Late Stage Capitalism. Once armies were disbanded, a group of permaculturists, engineers and anarchists converted it into a floating food forest micronation. It cruises the seas with its priceless cargo of trees and other plants, delivering fresh produce and seeds to other micronations and scientific research stations dotted across the World Ocean, as well as to various ports. Like the Argo, the Vitamin Sea has also been retrofitted with anti-corrosion catalytic systems for hydrogen production. Between the Sun and the Sea, it has all it needs to keep cruising indefinitely. What once brought war and death, now is a oasis of life.



DETAILS



THE PROCESS

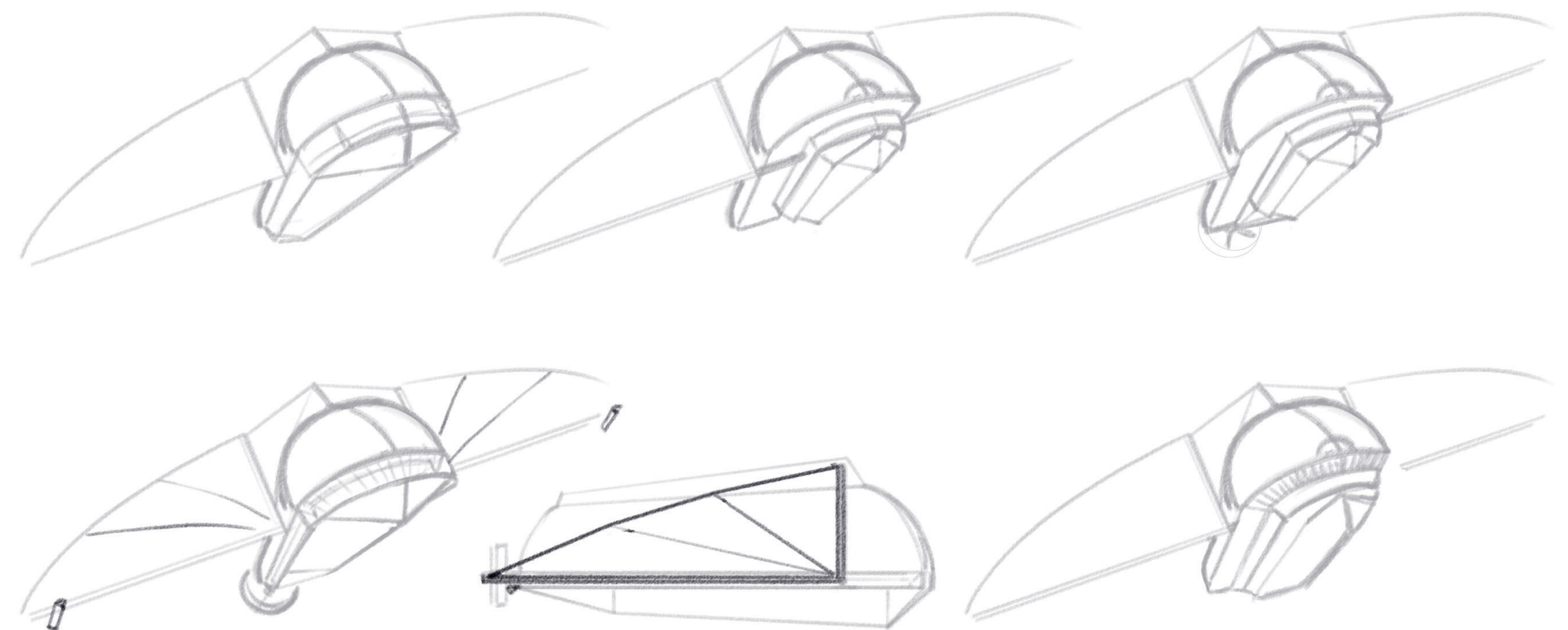
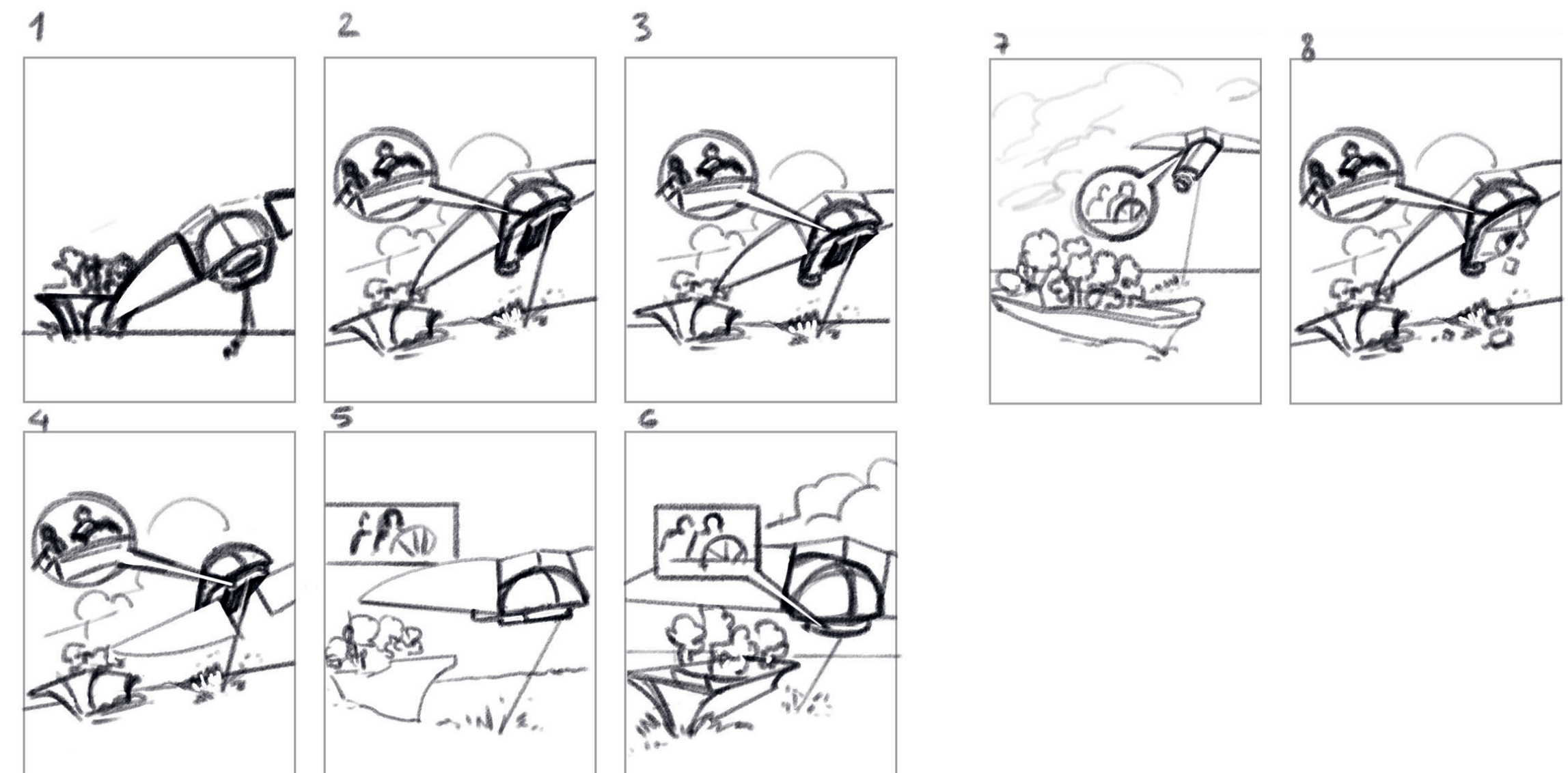
THUMBNAILS

It all starts with these tiny little sketches. Here you can see 8 thumbnails that I created to study composition and layout. This part helps to clear the mind as well, as provides a better understanding of the ideas that float in one's mind. Number 1 was too flat, while numbers 5 and 6 obscured a little the action by not showing the hatch of the Argo. Number 7 had a point of view that was to emotionally distant.

Number 2 seemed to be the winner for me and the others of the Commando, I just needed to refine the concept to include the revised version of the story, with the crates being released - the previous concept didn't make sense in terms of technology and in relation with the aircraft carrier.

CONSTRUCTION SKETCHES

Here you can also see some iterations on the shape of the Argo, mainly the hull. I took inspirations from the Canadairs, and I was trying to understand what shape it needed to have in order to land on water. As a group, we agreed that the shape in the bottom left corner would be the best, so I sketched out a side view to have a better understanding of the sails.



THE PROCESS

QUICK TONAL STUDY

To set up the planes of the composition and to distribute the darks and the light in order to make a compelling image, I did a very quick tonal study. I basically enlarged the chosen thumbnail and filled in the shadow shapes first, then the other tones. As you can see, at this point I was still trying to find a pose for the characters, but the idea for the kid looking down while leaning on the massive windshield was already there.

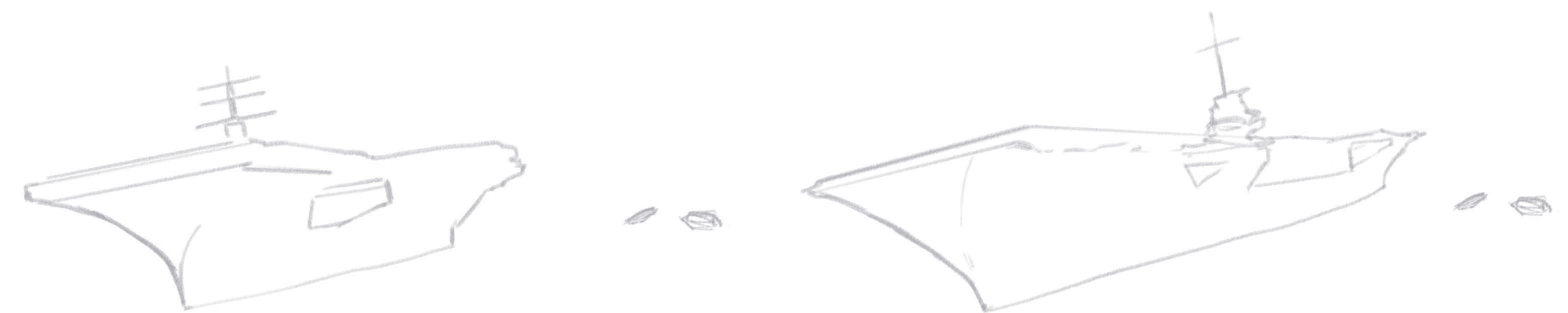
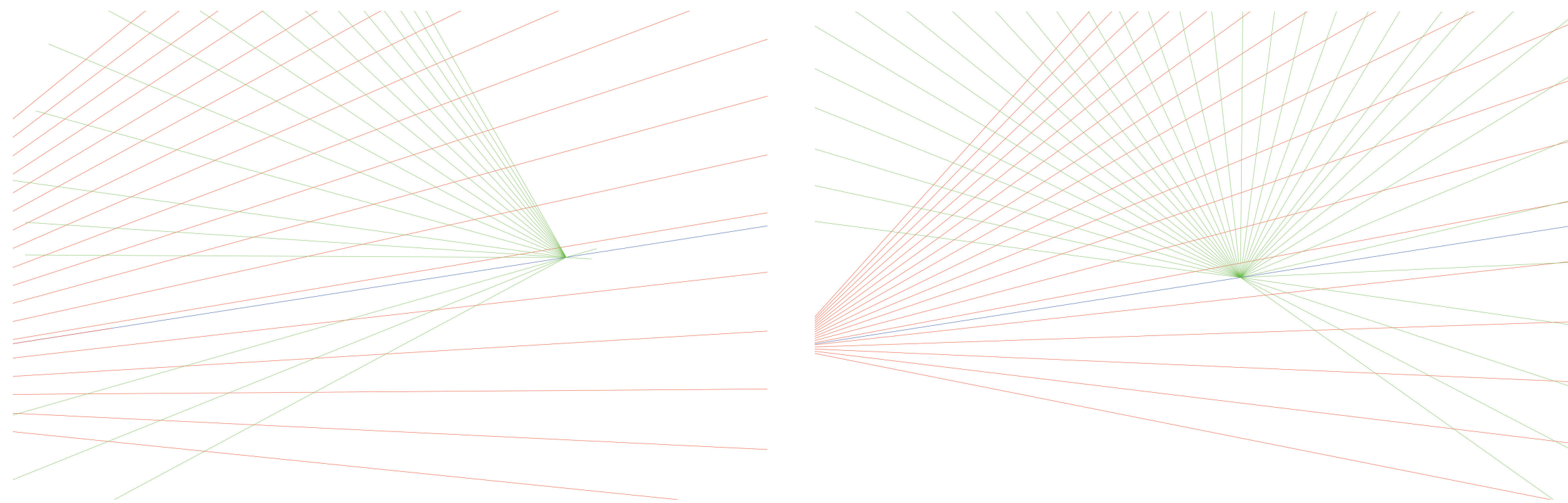


THE PROCESS

MORE SKETCHING

Once the composition is set, it's time to start drawing! I started setting up the perspective grids for the various elements: you can see them down here. They are two, one for the Vitamin Sea (left) and one for the Argo (right), and they share the same horizon.

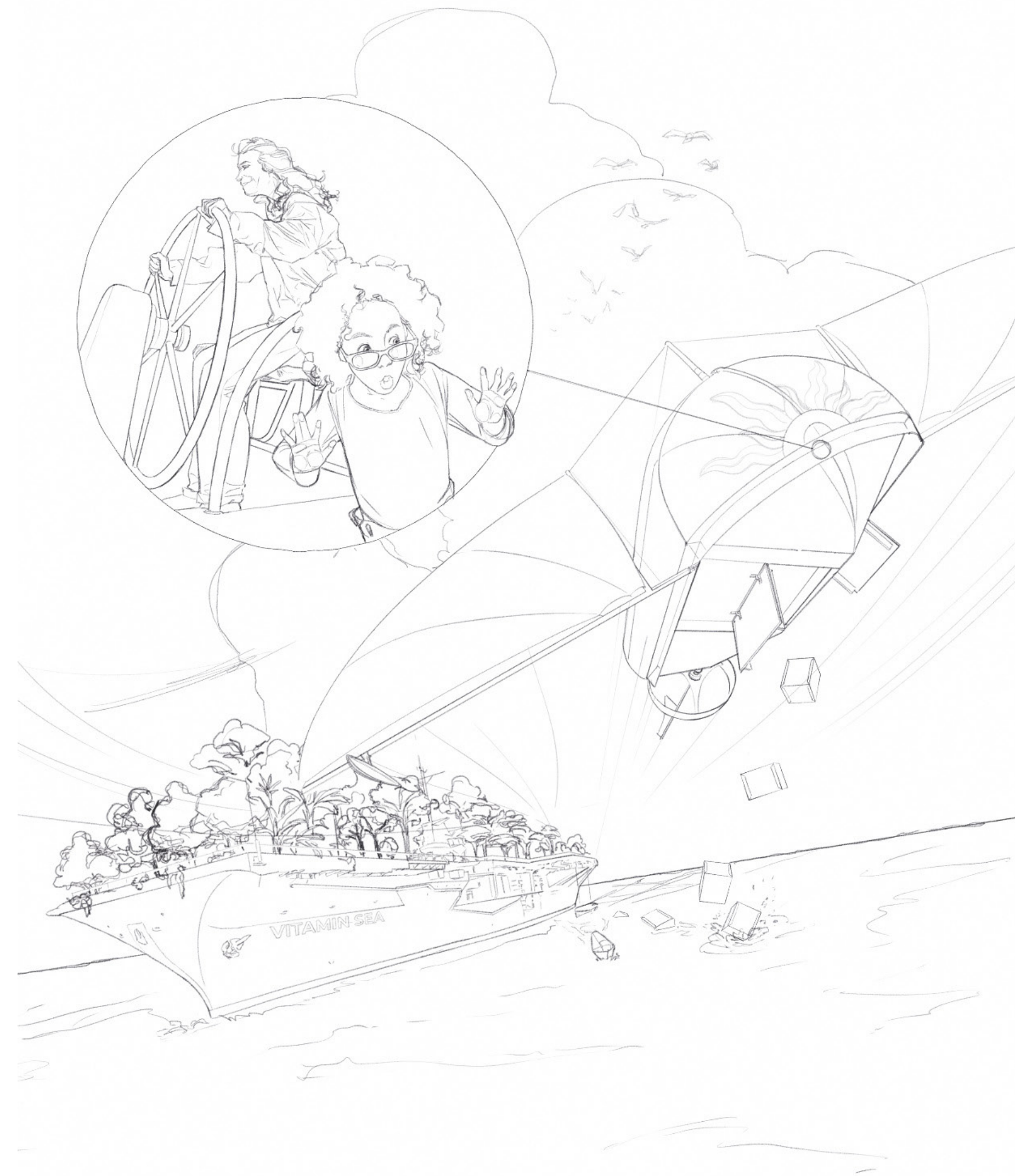
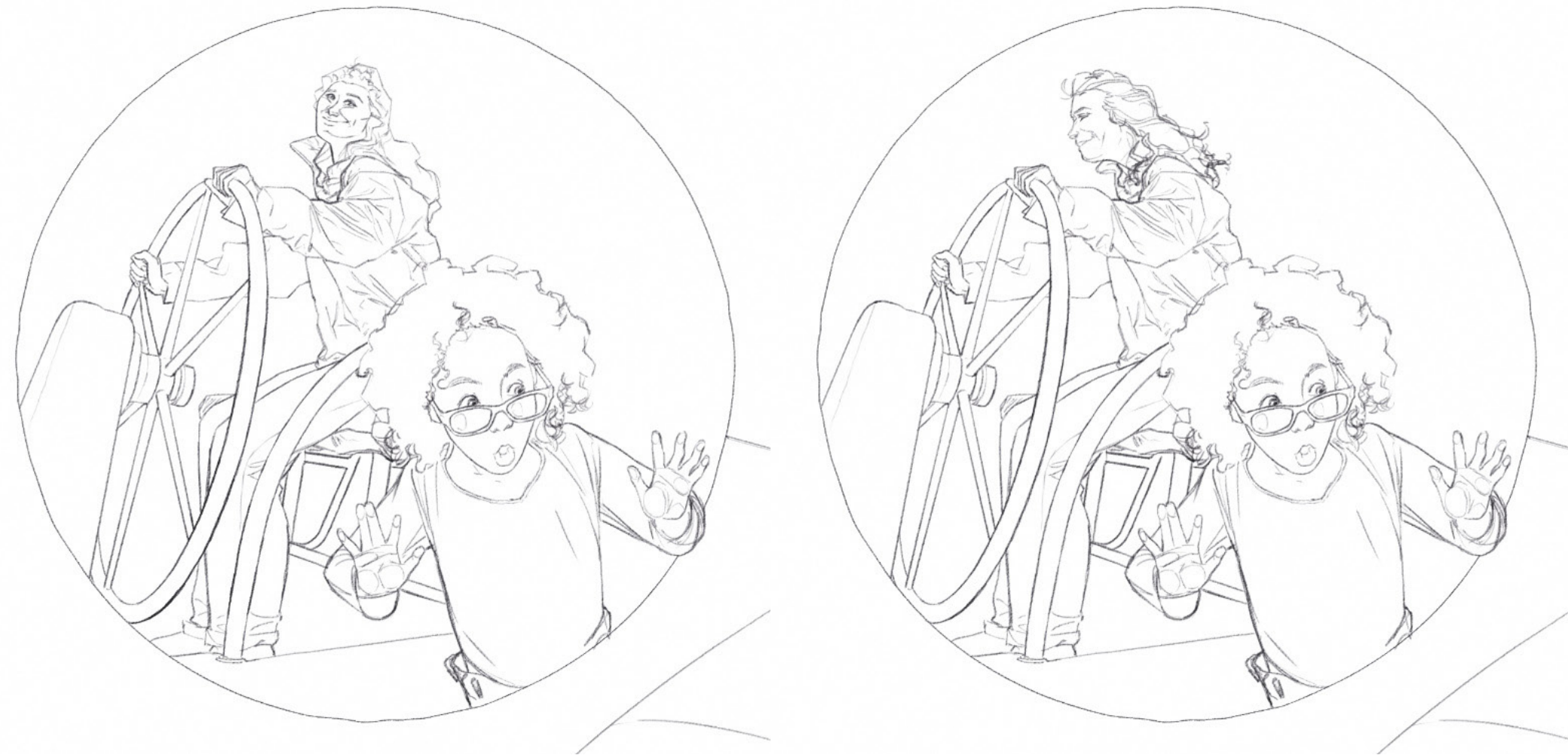
Then I started sketching out loosely the ships, the trees, the clouds and the characters: I was trying to understand which shapes, poses and angles would help convey the story in the most interesting way. At this stage I normally browse a lot of reference material, and I experiment a lot: opposite you can see a sketch for the characters and 2 studies for the aircraft carrier.



THE PROCESS

FINAL DRAWING

Once the sketching is done, it's time for the fun part! Here is the phase in which I get to concentrate on expression, both with the faces and the bodies or the hands, and I really give shape to the idea, defining most of the gray areas that are usually left. Still, sometimes there still is room for experimentation, like in the example below, where I was trying different poses for the pilot.



THE PROCESS

COLOUR SKETCH

One of the phases that helps the most is the colour sketch. Here I took the drawing, shrunk it down quite a lot (to avoid being too precise and focus on the overall composition instead), and started adding shadows and colours. The shadows go first, so I picked a hue that made sense with the background, a dark blue in this case, and made a quick pass over all the objects in the picture. The colours go right after, in a layer under the shadows, and this is the final result.



THE PROCESS

COLOURING - THE BACKGROUND

In this particular case, I had a precise idea of how I wanted the background to look like, so I actually made a pretty final version of it and used it right from the start of the colour sketching. Normally this isn't the case, and after the colour sketch I start by painting the background.

Clouds are always fun for me to do, and this time I tried a different technique from usual. I used the shape of the cloud to help the composition: you may have noticed that it is made of diagonals, and in this case the cloud shape highlights these lines and helps guide the eyes in the reading of the illustration. At this point the water is still a series of gradients, as I am still deciding between two different ways of finalizing it.

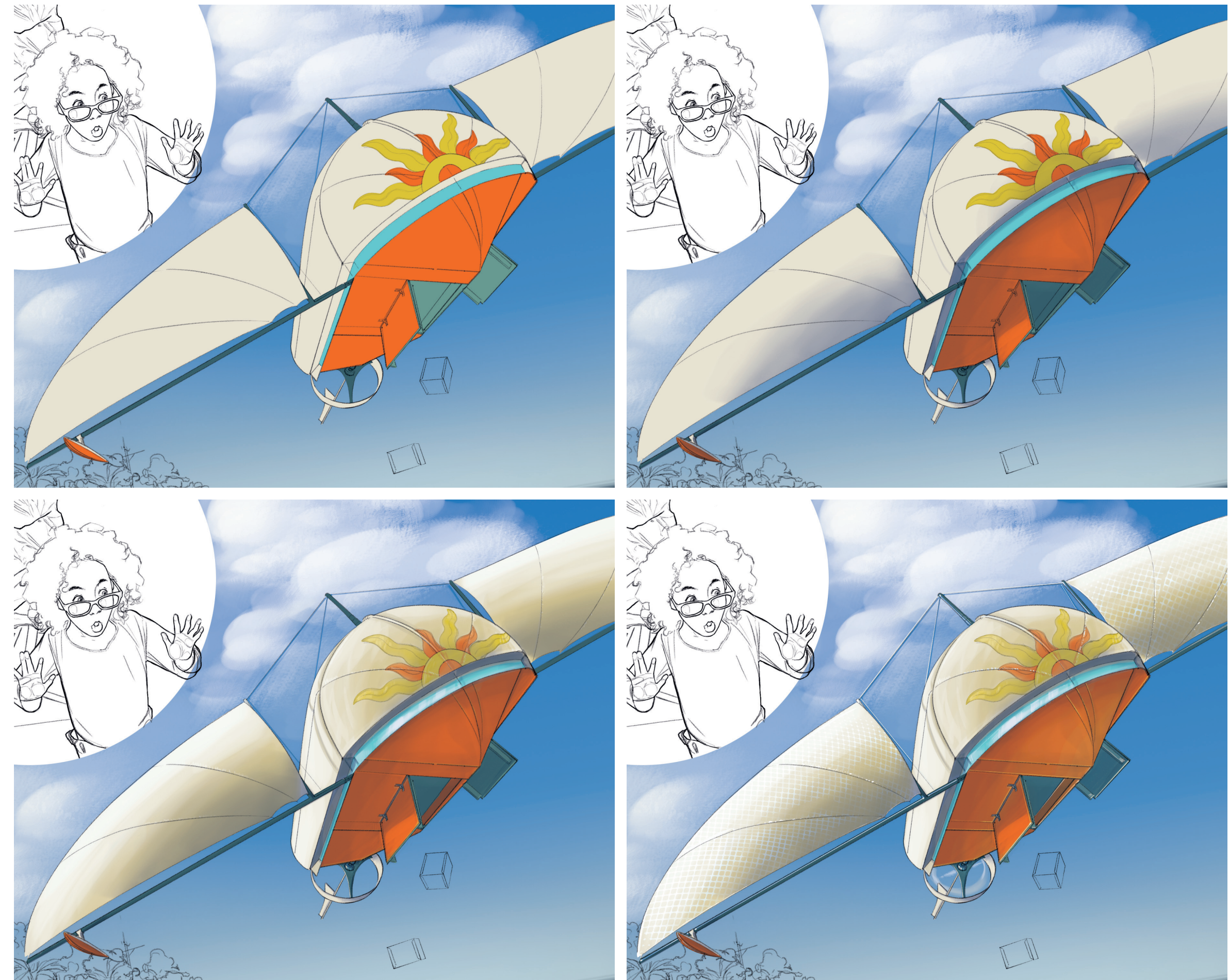
Here you can also see that I added some thicker lines around the characters, to help them pop out.



THE PROCESS

COLOURING - THE ARGO

The process at this point is very much the same for all the elements, what will change may be the technique or the tools being used, but the principles are always the same. I started by filling in the shapes of the Argo with base colours, then I added the shadows, using the colour sketch as a reference and refining them as I proceeded. Then there's a first stage of rendering, where I started adding in some colours to make the picture more interesting, like the brighter orange on the hull, the various lines that divide the plates, or the yellow of the blimp and the sails. As a finishing stage, I refined the colours, added some effects, and the texture for the solar sails, together with the highlights on the cables or on the hatch, for example.

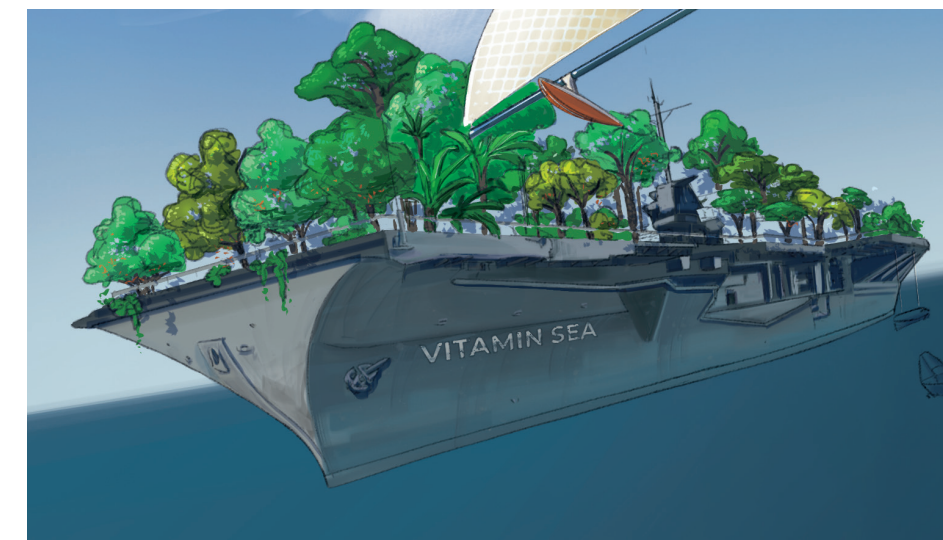
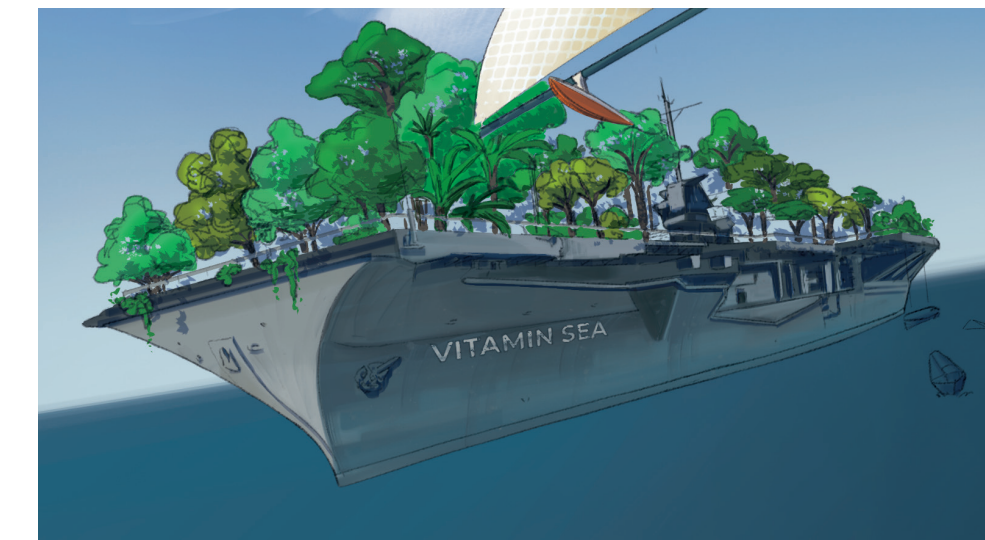
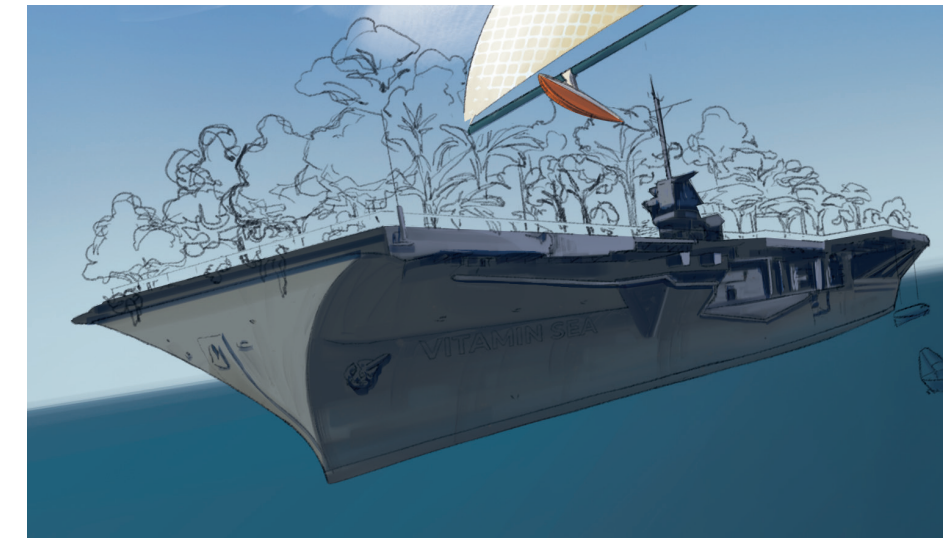
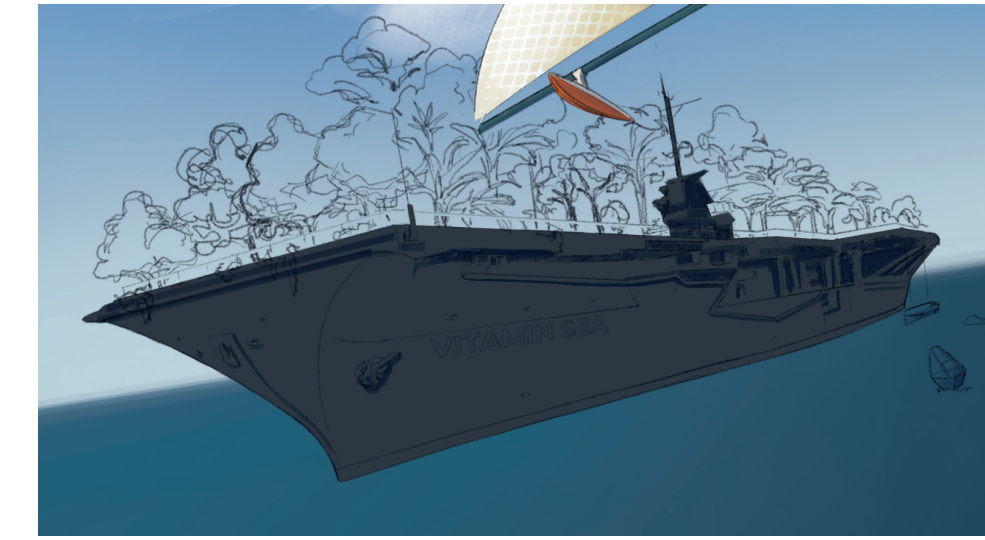
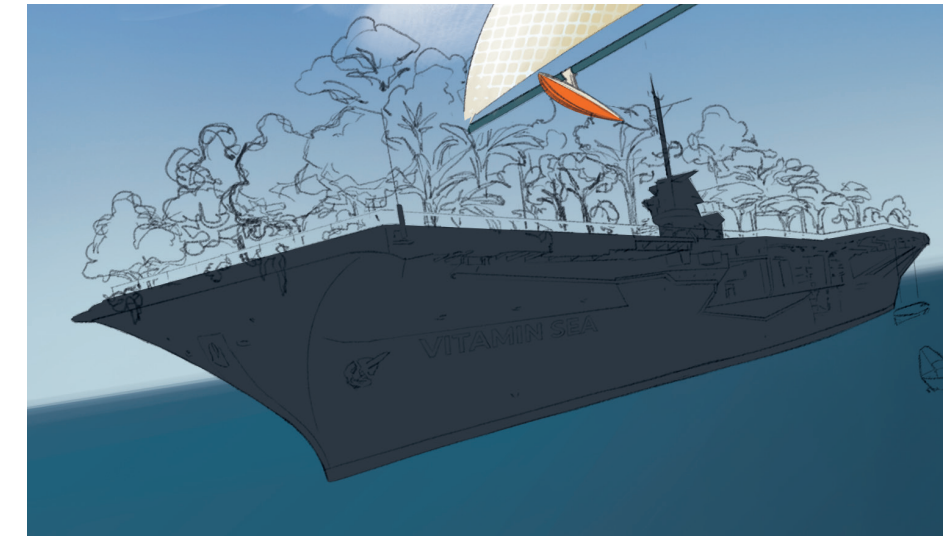


THE PROCESS

COLOURING - THE VITAMIN SEA

Here you can see the same steps applied to the Vitamin Sea, the floating food forest that brings vitamins to people around the globe. Colouring this element was a bit more difficult, as at first I wasn't too sure of the colours, so you can see that I adjusted them several times during the process. What helped in this case was also the addition of the reflected light from the sea, which I think helps to tie everything together nicely.

Then I moved to the trees, always tricky but fun. The challenge in this case was to provide enough contrast to make them clearly readable even at this small size. As I wanted the forest to look lush and flourishing, I added a little bit of ground level vegetation, so you can't really see through the trees.



THE PROCESS

COLOURING - THE CHARACTERS

I kept the characters for last as they are always my favourite part. I started from the background, a light blue because of the setting, then I started to work on the shadows. After those, the base colours and the final rendering, that you can see below here. Nothing much to say apart from the fact that I really enjoyed working on this couple, and I will leave it to you to imagine what is their story.



THE PROCESS

COLOURING - REFINING THE WATER

After adding the birds, and colouring the crates and the lifeboats that are going to retrieve them, I started refining the water, by working on the shadow of the Argo, the trails and the splashes. After this it was time for the little waves, for which I used variations of the colours that I had in the water and in the sky. As I thought it was too dark, I added some gradients that I merged and modified to enhance the contrast, especially to make the left side brighter. Last, the reflections (below) and all the other effects, like the speed lines around the sails of the Argo. I was considering painting a more dynamic version of the water, with mass of it being defined by the speed lines of the Argo. The problem was that the Vitamin Sea was starting to appear as if it was moving very fast as well, and it just didn't make sense for the story.



WHO IS THE COMMANDO?

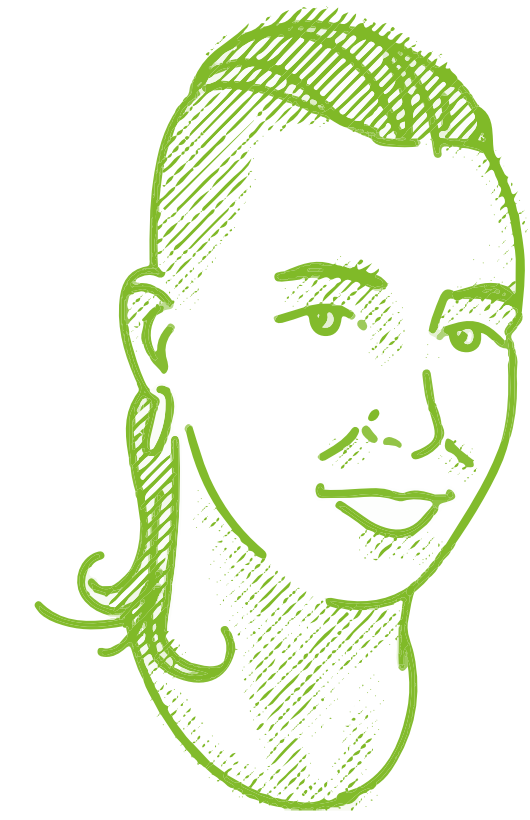


GUGLIELMO MICCOLUPI

Professional 2D Artist,
project coordinator

We are a Solarpunk collective with members both in Italy and in the UK. We do projects in which we try to conjugate technology and art with the idea of transforming the city in a sustainable version of itself. Simultaneously, our projects also focus on co-designing solutions with local communities, to stimulate a just transition that can spark from the ground up.

We are a band of two(-ish)! Together with Laura and Guglielmo, we have other members that are usually collaborating on specific occasions.



LAURA C Z DOMINGUES

PhD, Research Scientist,
technology expert





THANK YOU!
COMMANDO JUGENDSTIL
2021

commandojugendstil@gmail.com
Twitter + Facebook @CJugendstil