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# EVOLVING YOUR CREATIVE CRAFT

Silhouettes



## Silhouettes

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- 1 What is a Silhouette?
- 2 Silhouette Principle in Visual Development
- 3 Character Design Using Silhouettes
- 4 Case Study:  
Cristina Teaching Art
- 5 Summary



EVOLVING YOUR CREATIVE CRAFT

Silhouettes

# Silhouettes

What is a Silhouette?



### What is a Silhouette?

The word silhouette refers to the **simplicity of a visual representation of an image**. Its representation is a **solid shape**, usually black like a shadow.

The subject can be anything from the representation of a human character, animal, prop or an entire scene.

It can be a small scale like a **thumbnail** or a large full image such a **composition** [1].





### What is a Silhouette?

Without actually seeing the surface details **our brain creates simplified mental pictures** that we can read.

We perceive a surprising amount of information just from looking at a shape. We can read amazing detail and identify nature, animals, people and can easily feel that we are seeing a **perfect and complete picture** [1].





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# Silhouettes

Silhouette Principle in Visual Development



### Silhouette Principle in Visual Development

Silhouette drawing is a very common technique used in **visual development**. It can be used as a **brainstorming method to explore early ideas** about anything such as characters, props, vehicles, buildings or environments.

This technique is also known under names such as “concept silhouettes” or “thumbnails” and serves to **block the overall construction**. The key is to think in **contrast of shapes and proportion** [1].



### Silhouette Principle in Visual Development

The style may vary from one artist to another however, silhouettes are generally [1]:





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► Simple





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- ▶ Simple
- ▶ One single shade





### Silhouette Principle in Visual Development

The style may vary from one artist to another however, silhouettes are generally [1]:

- ▶ Simple
- ▶ One single shade
- ▶ With or without negative spaces





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## Silhouettes





## Silhouette Principle in Visual Development

Cristina Teaching Art's Blog provides some **general rules in creating silhouettes** for visual development [1]:



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- 1 **Simplicity** always works beautifully



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## Silhouette Principle in Visual Development

Cristina Teaching Art's Blog provides some **general rules in creating silhouettes** for visual development [1]:

- 1 **Simplicity** always works beautifully
- 2 Dominant **shapes and size comparison** must be obvious
- 3 Communicate a **message** so that the character gets an appealing tone



# EVOLVING YOUR CREATIVE CRAFT

## Silhouettes





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# Silhouettes

Character Design Using Silhouettes



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## Silhouettes

### Character Design Using Silhouettes

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## TIPS & TECHNIQUES

### Silhouette

When designing characters, artists often use a silhouette to test whether the character's basic design "reads" to the audience. From the silhouette we are able to see a distinctive and recognizable design without details and understand what the figure is saying with its overall form.

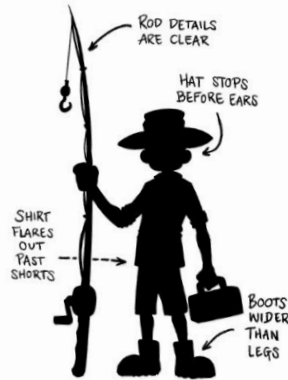
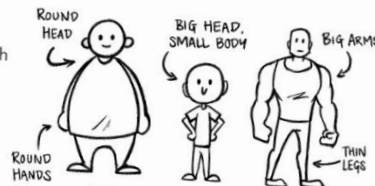


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**TIP:** Use simple shapes or play with the proportions on different parts of the body to give your character a unique style. Try changing the proportions of your character in size, weight, and height.



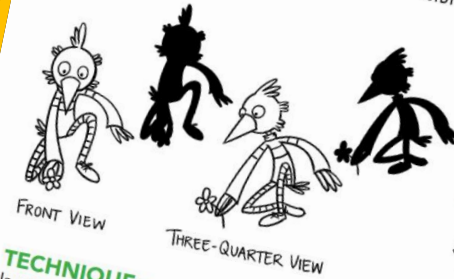
**TRIP-UP:** Placing too many complicated shapes in one design will lose its focus.



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**TIP:** Draw your character in a three-quarter view. It allows you to see differences on both sides of the body that would not be seen with a forward facing stance.

**TECHNIQUE:** Push your pose! Body language and posture can help show a character's personality or their action. To push your pose, you need to exaggerate what would feel natural in real life. Think as what they are doing, since there are no facial expressions.



**TRIP-UP:** Be careful of having actions take place in front of the character's body. These actions might get lost in the overall silhouette or cause odd shapes. To avoid this, try drawing your character and then fully color it in with a black marker. When blocked out, you will be able to see what's working and what needs adjustment.

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## Silhouettes

### Character Design Using Silhouettes

Here are some tips and techniques for Character design and animation using Silhouettes provided by the **Walt Disney Museum** [5].

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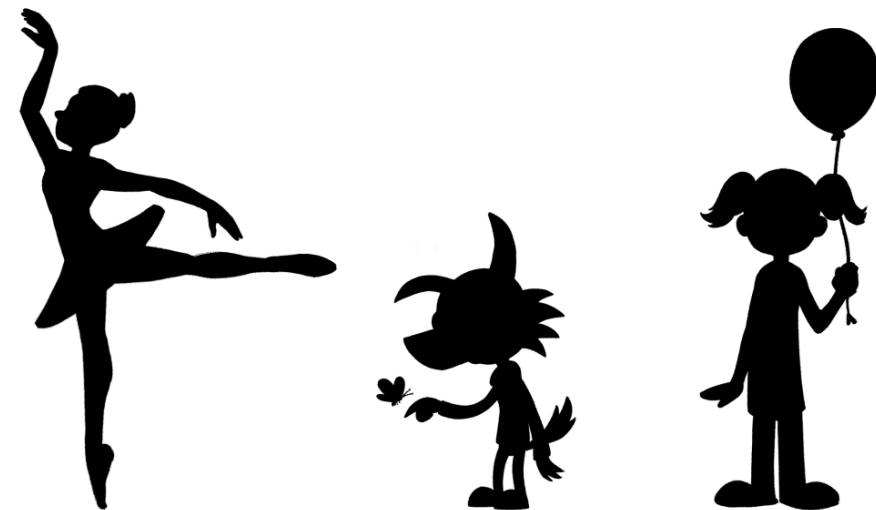
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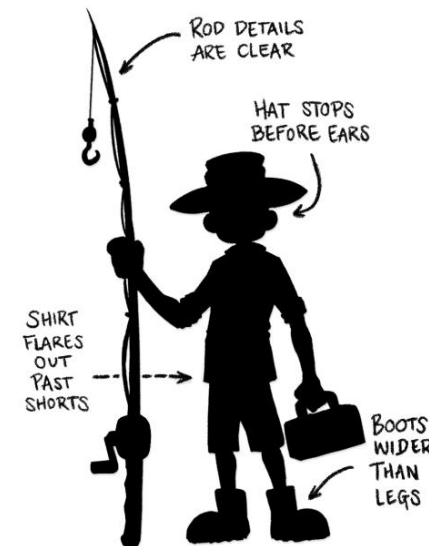
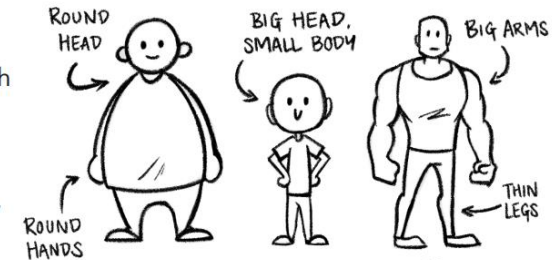
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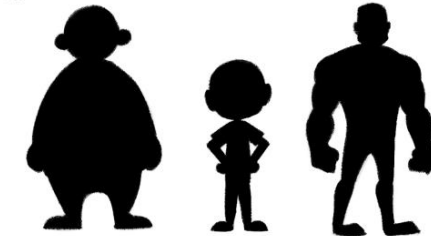
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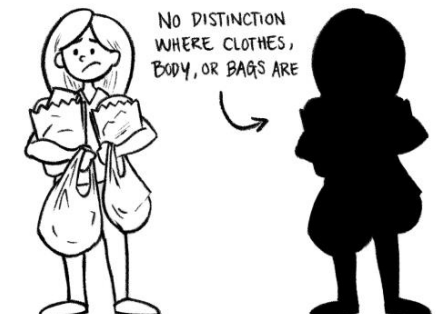
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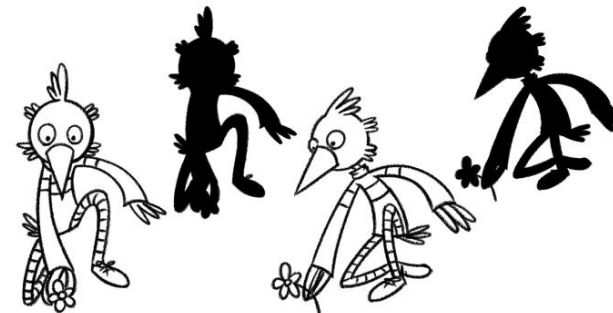
**TECHNIQUE:** Consciously and carefully place shapes on a character. Consider the outline and make sure each part of the character, whether the body, hair, or clothes, are separately identifiable from each other. Shapes should blend together naturally, but should not be layered on top of one another as to create a blob. Know where one shape starts and where another ends.





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FRONT VIEW

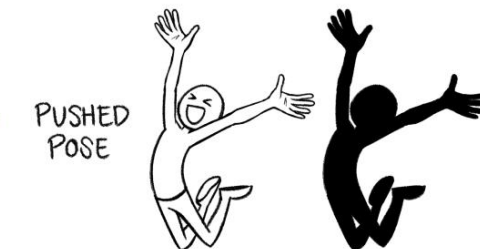
THREE-QUARTER VIEW

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**TECHNIQUE:** Push your pose! Body language and posture can help show a character's personality or their action. To push your pose, you need to exaggerate the gesture, sometimes even more than what would feel natural in real life. Think about how the character is feeling as well as what they are doing, since there are no facial expressions.



EXCITED  
GESTURE



PUSHED  
POSE



DON'T:

DO:

**TRIP-UP:** Be careful of having actions take place in front of the character's body. These actions might get lost in the overall silhouette or cause odd shapes. To avoid this, try drawing your character and then fully color it in with a black marker. When blocked out, you will be able to see what's working and what needs adjustment.



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# Silhouettes

Case Study: Cristina Teaching Art



## Case Study: Cristina Teaching Art - Professor Strange

Cristina Dimitru's blog shows a **full developmental process of a character** using the Silhouette Principles as a foundation.

This process is documented in both written and video form on the site and provides a good case study on how these techniques can **help with creative idea generation and development**.

- **Step 1.** Blocking the Silhouettes
- **Step 2.** Dressing up the Silhouettes
- **Step 3.** Final Concept



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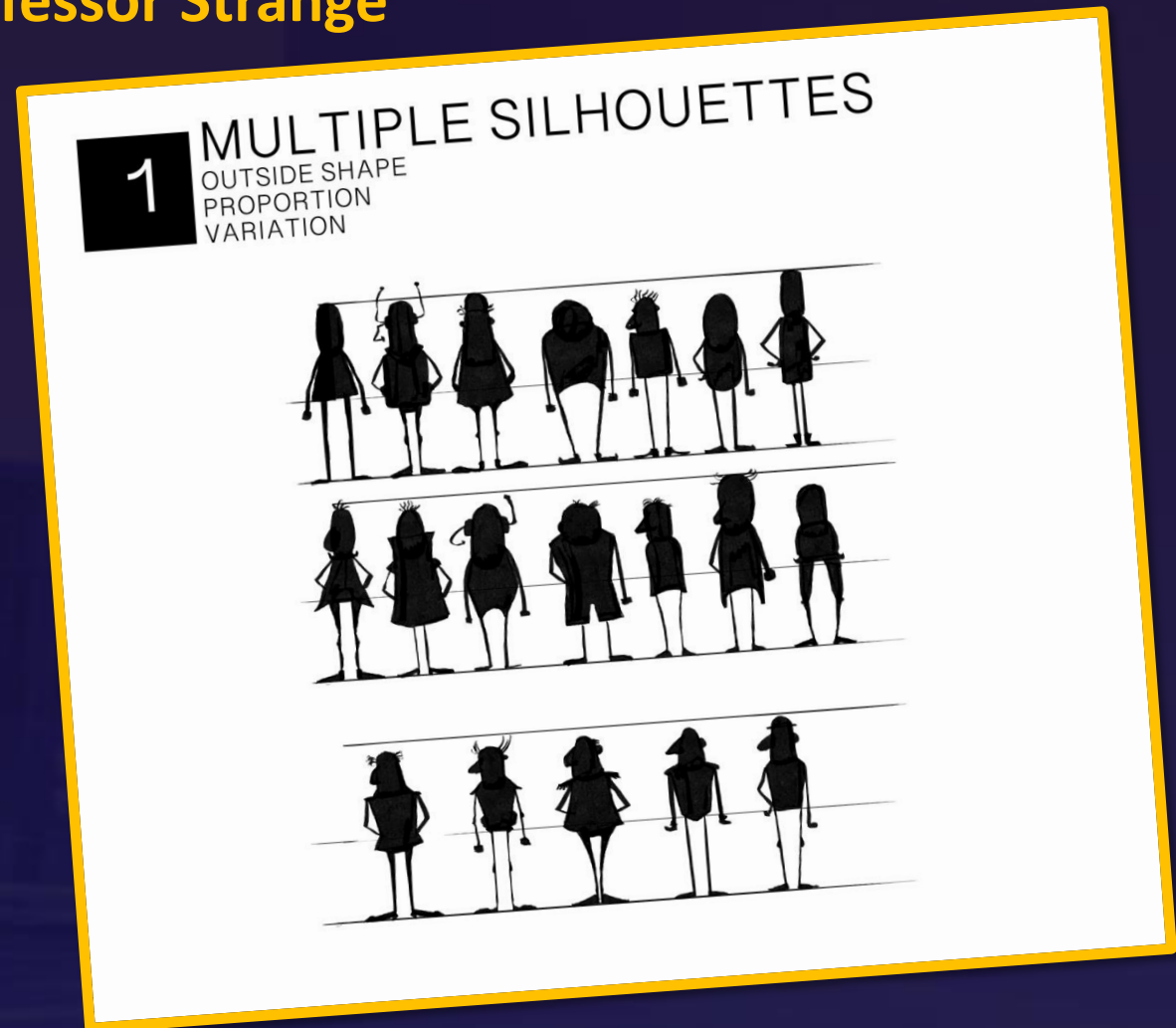
## Silhouettes

### Case Study: Cristina Teaching Art - Professor Strange

- **Step 1.** Blocking the Silhouettes

This means creating **outside shape variations**.

Start with **very broad ideas** and develop progressive variations exploring **shape and proportions**.



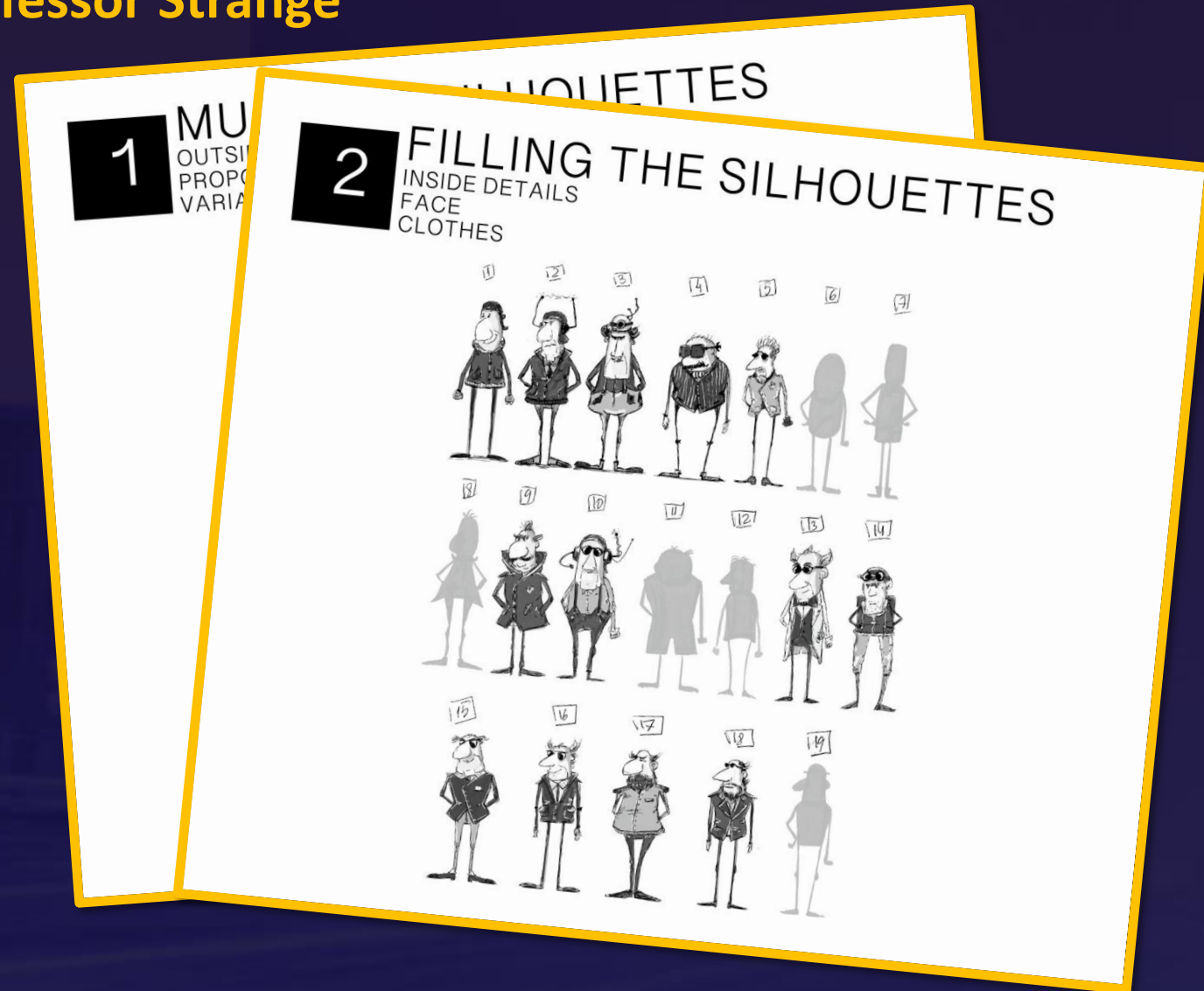


### Case Study: Cristina Teaching Art - Professor Strange

- Step 2. Dressing up the Silhouettes

This can involve creating **'inside' shape variations** to the silhouettes.

Inside details such as **face and clothing are explored**. The number of initial designs is also **narrowed down** to include just stronger/favourite designs.





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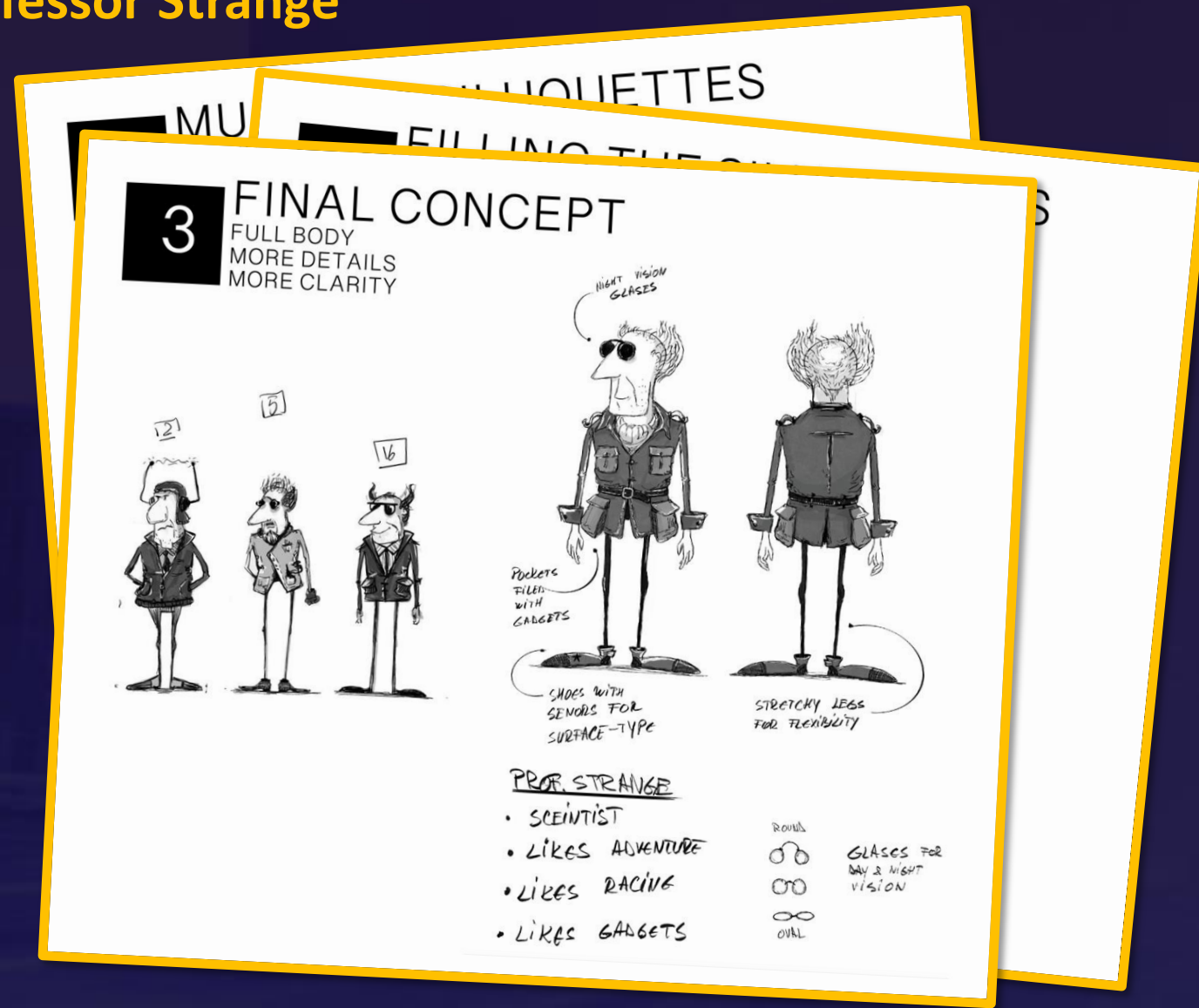
## Silhouettes

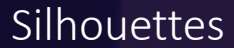
### Case Study: Cristina Teaching Art - Professor Strange

#### ■ Step 3. Final Concept

Focus is given to **one character idea**.  
Add more details for a clear concept.

Refinements for facial details and accessories may continue beyond this point but the purpose here is to **obtain an early character concept**.



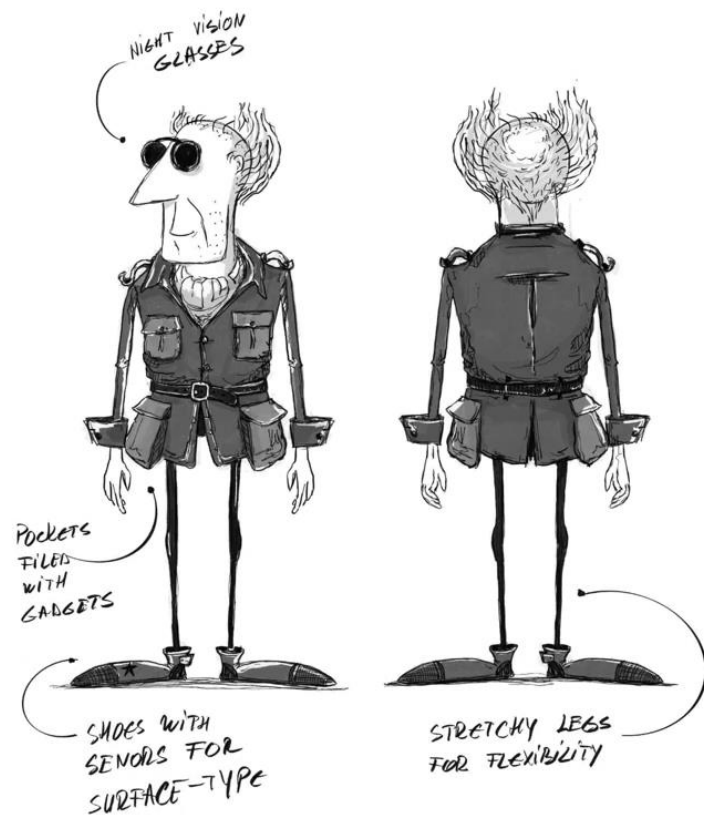


Cristina Dimitru also states that the **character silhouette process** runs parallel with **research and inspiration moodboards**. Using both to brainstorm, build and then narrow down creative ideas can be a useful process when developing creative work [1].



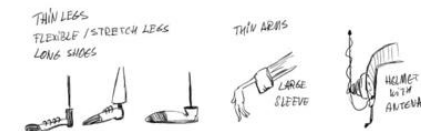
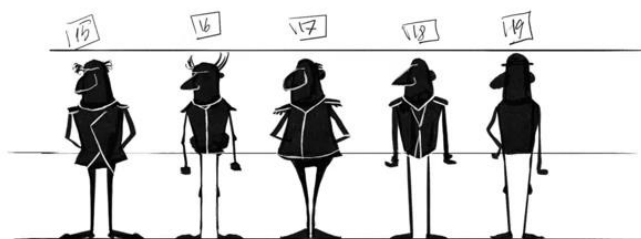
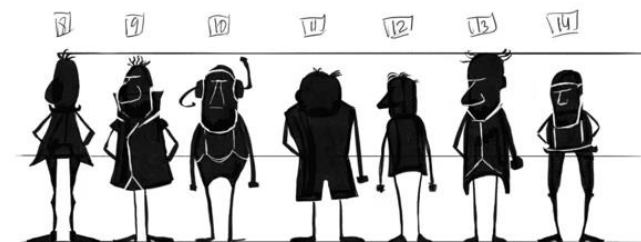
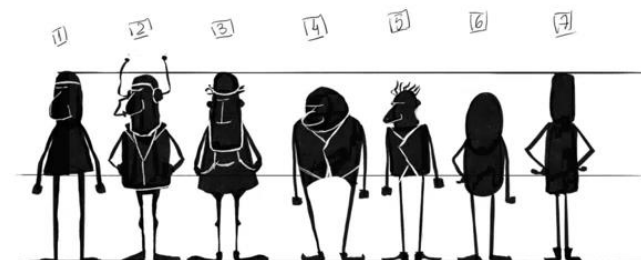
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## Silhouettes



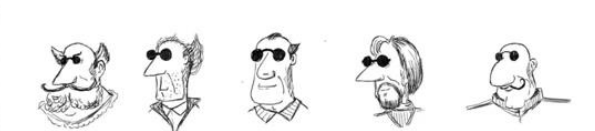
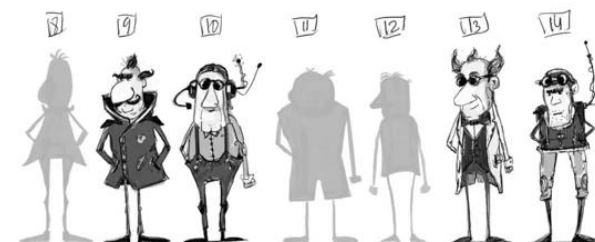
### PROF STRANGE

#### Silhouette concepts



PROF. STRANGE

- BIG NOSE
- CRAZY HAIR
- SKINNY LEGS
- GADGETS





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Silhouettes

# Silhouettes

## Summary



### Summary

Most visual artists think and draw lines. But for visual conceptualization it is recommended to draw **small silhouette shapes**. When you have to draw small you'll **force your brain to stay focused on the shape of the silhouette** instead of the details.

If you get the shape right then the details will fall into place much more naturally. This **will help maintain a high quality** of your drawings.

The purpose of the silhouette is to work with **simplicity and unity** as a whole [1].



### Summary

- A silhouette must be a **simple and efficient** way to visualize an idea.
- A silhouette is not characterless, but rather an **appealing representation** and talks by itself.
- A silhouette never feels like a fragmentary picture but rather as a **whole**. It can have strength, rhythm or motion.
- The subject, object or posture, must be **instantly recognizable** since it carries the essence of it.
- You can sketch or paint over a silhouette and become a complete picture because the silhouette is the **foundation**. [1]



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Any Questions?



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