

THE ART OF KUNG FU PANDA

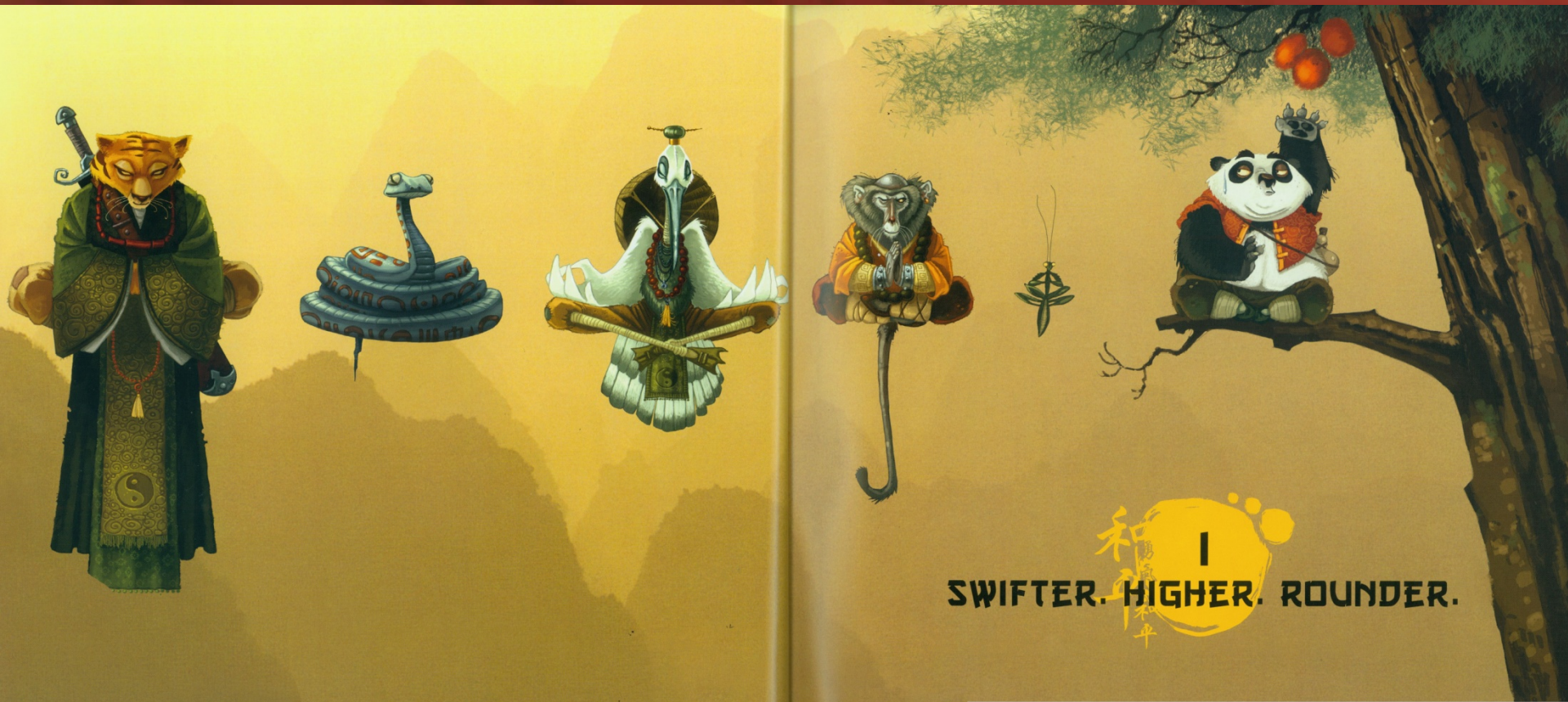
By Tracey Miller-Zarneke



Presentation by Liz Holt

Finding the Right Style

“John Stevenson and Mark Osborne knew that with a film title and premise featuring one key character, it was important to get that character right immediately, meaning a compelling character design had to match an equally compelling personal tale to fulfill such a weighty role” – Miller-Zarneke



The Furious Five and Po – Early Concept
Christopher Laurette – Layout
Raymond Zibach – Digital Paint



Po Fights Pig– Early Concept
Christopher Laurette – Character Design
Raymond Zibach – Digital Paint



Po – Early Concept
Tony Siruno – Character Design
Raymond Zibach – Digital Paint



“At first, Po resembled a human in a panda costume, we thought this is what we needed to do if he had to emulate human Kung Fu Moves” – Raymond Zibach



Nicolas Marlet’s style was noticed and selected above the others when he presented these Monk Po Designs.



Nicolas Marlet

Nicolas Marlet has been a character designer for Disney, Pixar, Universal, and Dreamworks during his career. He has done designs for animated series and movies like Balto, Monsters Inc., Madagascar, and Over the Hedge to name a few.

However, Marlet was presented with a unique opportunity for Kung Fu Panda that few character designers have ever had on any animated feature or series.



Also, unlike other current character designers, Marlet still works with markers, simply because it's faster as one will notice from his character design sheets.

Marlet explored the panda's form in these concept designs to help break from the assumption that the animal characters would have to have human forms in order to perform kung fu moves.





(Above) Po – early concept • Nicolas Marlet – pencil & marker

**"MY PROCESS IS TO DEVELOP THE SHAPE FIRST
AND PERSONALITY COMES OUT OF THAT LATER."**

—Nicolas Marlet, character designer



Oliver Pea & Viper - early concept • Nicolas Marlet - pencil & marker



Marlet's designs of Po convey him as humble and vulnerable , but most of all comedic.

Unlike other films in which the character will have hints of the voice actor's appearance, these designs were presented to Jack Black before he was casted to be Po's voice.



Unity

“Animated films often have a whole team of artists working together on character designs, but director John Stevenson wanted a more unified look among the characters in Kung Fu Panda.”-Miller Zarneke



“Whenever you try to design a film with more than one designer, you're going to have inconsistency,” –Raymond Zibach (production designer)

John Stevenson was sold on Marlet’s character designs, he felt that while the current animal designs were interesting to look at, they weren’t cohesive, which he felt would have been distracting for the audience. It was this realization that employed Marlet into designing the entire character lineup.



The Villagers

The film makers decided that the Kung Fu Masters needed to protect cute and defenseless characters, animals of prey, which is why the villagers consisted of pigs, geese, and rabbits.

Marlet continued with his process of shape first, personality later, as his designs expressed a lot of thought in size and shape variation to allow interesting silhouettes with any combination of the villagers.





The Teacher

Marlet originally drew Master Shifu as being much older when he was more of a father figure to Po, but when they needed Shifu to be able to fight Marlet revisited the design and made him a few decades younger.



Master Shifu Concepts
Nicolas Marlet –Pencil and Marker

"SHE'S ELEGANT AND GRACEFUL BUT POWERFUL"

—Nicolas Marlet, character designer



The Masters

Since animating ornate cloth on top of fur was too difficult for the cg modelers at Dreamworks, Marlet made each of the main characters , including the five masters sport interesting fur, scale, skin, or feather patterns. These patterns helped not only the animators but also helped to define the character's personality. They also made up for the lack of clothing on characters like Viper and Mantis.



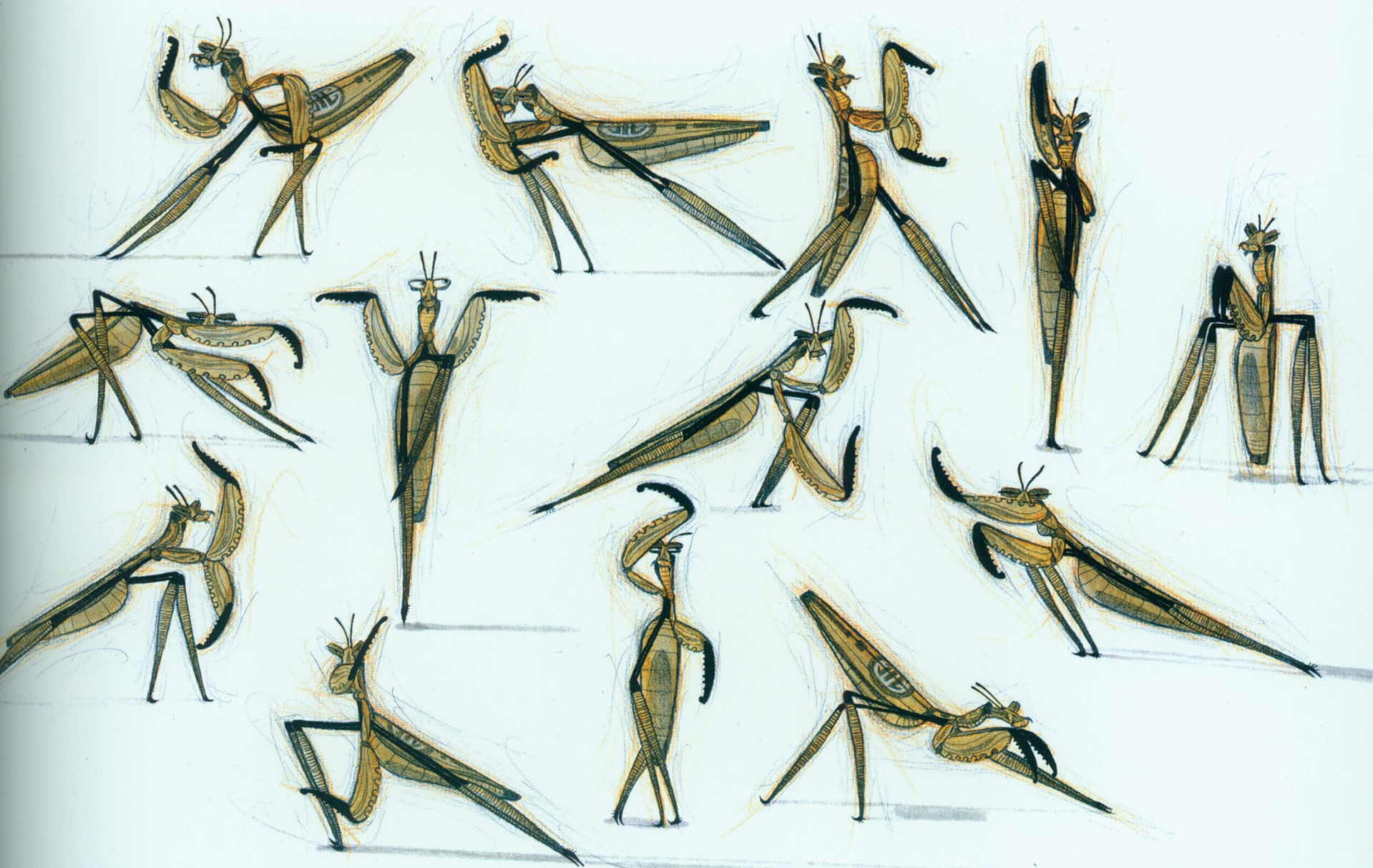
(Above Left) Tigress • Nicolas Marlet – pencil & marker
(Above Center) Tigress – early concept • Christophe Lautrette – pencil & digital paint
(Above Right) Tigress • Nicolas Marlet – character design, Raymond Zibach – digital paint





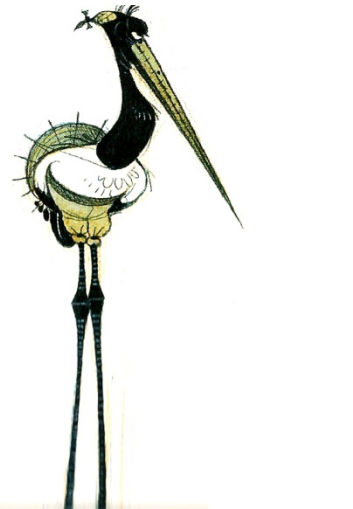
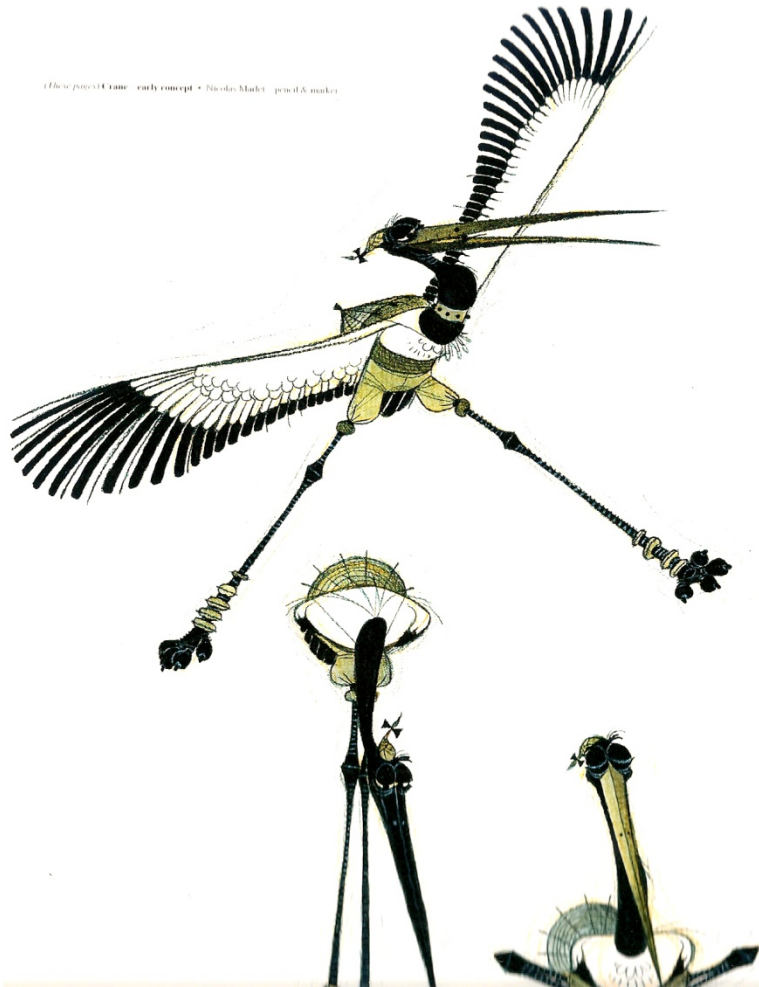
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How to Fly (Came early concept • Nicolas Malet pencil & marker)





The Villain

Tai Lung was to be a general with an evil army at his command, however Marlet took Tai Lung and turned him into a more intimidating one snow leopard army sporting a V shape body in contrast to Po's round body.

Marlet based his look off of a Chinese puppet and theatrical make up which can be noticed through his sinister expressive eyebrows.







Environment

To support the theme of contrast in the film, beautiful backgrounds were created in which the cartoony characters Marlet designed like Po live, train, and fight.



(Above) Noodle House – CG render • Rachel Tiep-Daniels, Max Boas & Bill Kaufmann – design, Manny Fragelus & Jaewon Lee – model, Andrew Harbeck – surfacing
(Above Right) Noodle House Kitchen • Rachel Tiep-Daniels – design, Bill Kaufmann – digital paint







The Training Begins

What I learned from this art book and Marlet's designs is to not fall in love or settle with the first initial character design I make.

While Marlet admitted he was nervous about taking on such an ambitious project since he'd never watched a kung fu film before, he did his research and created a beautiful award winning cast of characters.

But most of all, what I learned is to draw as much as you can when you can to explore your style.