

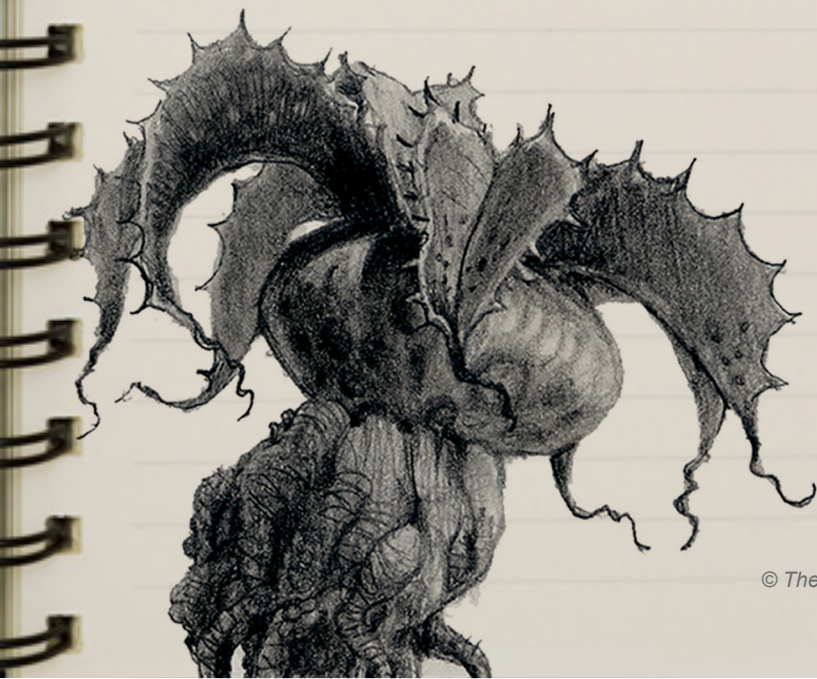
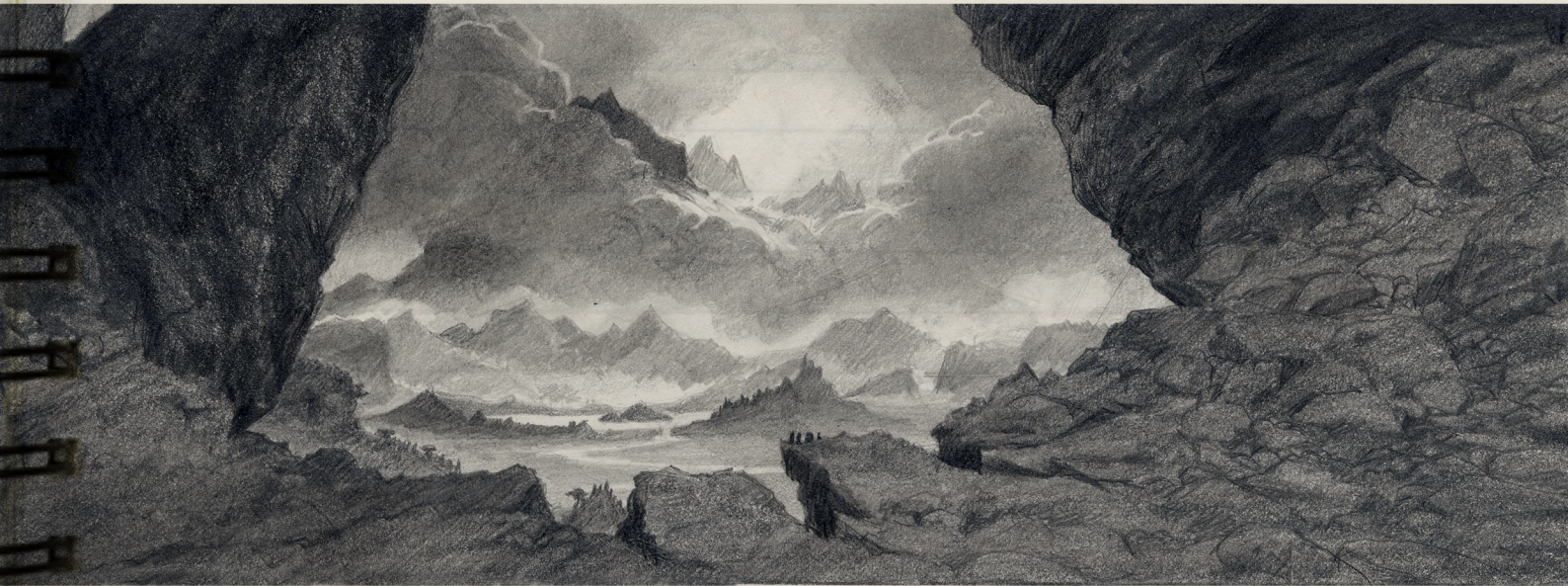
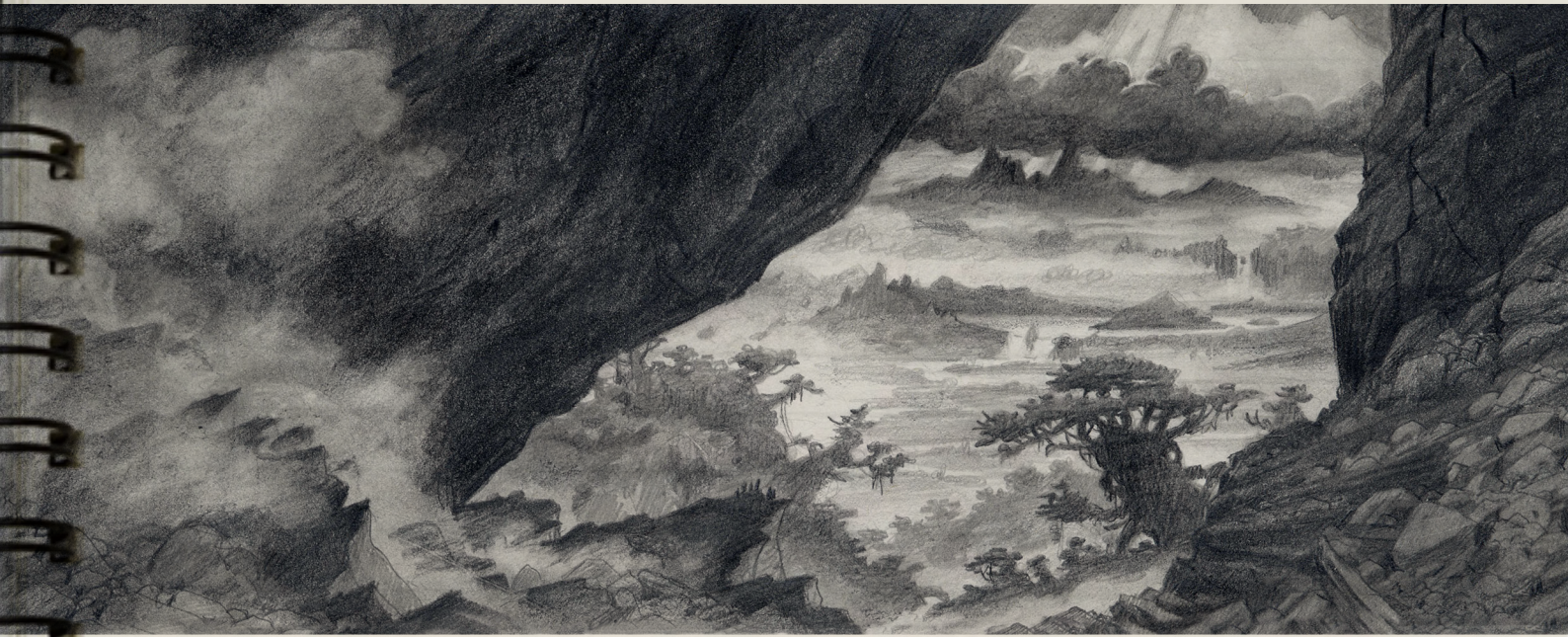
"I try to change medium every once in a while, even when staying with the same topic"



SKETCHBOOK

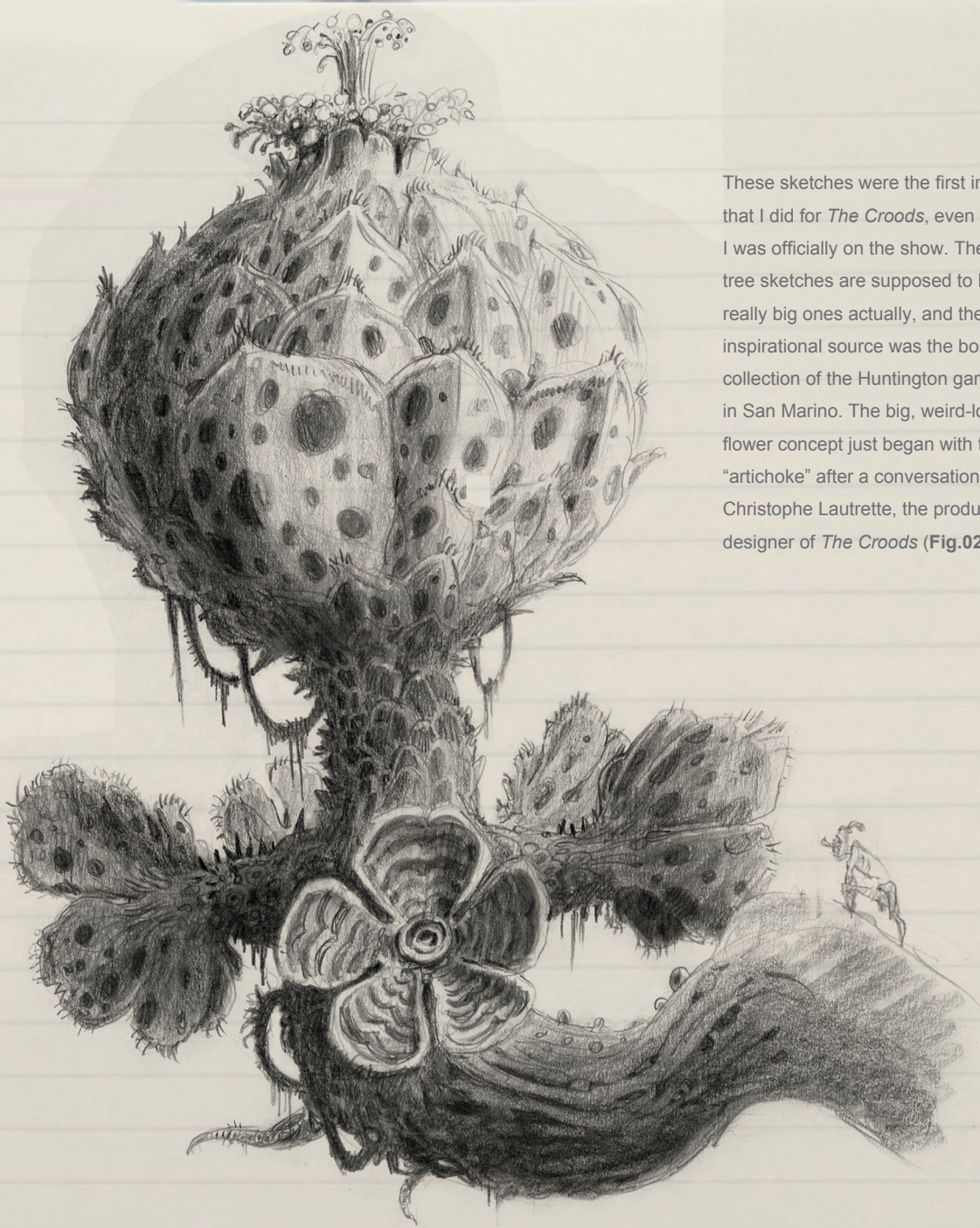
Of Nicolas Weis

Nicolas Weis, a dynamic visual development artist at DreamWorks Animation, who has recently worked on *The Croods*, shares his doodles and scribbles with us in this month's sketchbook.



Sketchbook of Nicolas Weis

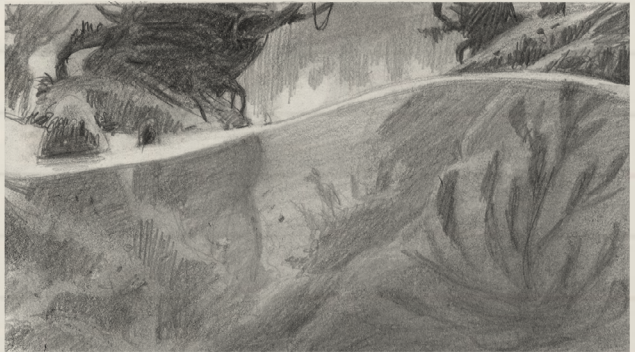
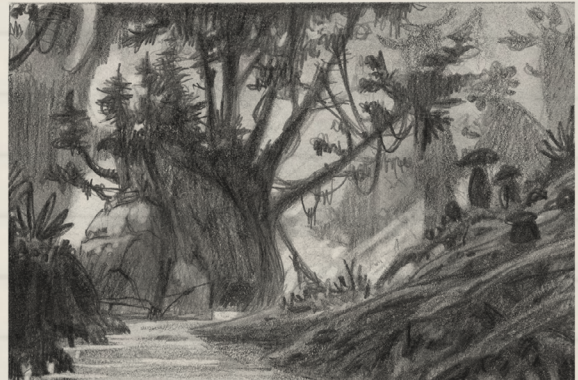
These sketches are a good example of what I draw on a daily basis while working in an animation studio, from a single, small and sun-burnt plant, to a wide view of a huge landscape. Both were drawn with the same pencils and I had fun on both assignments (Fig.01).



These sketches were the first images that I did for *The Croods*, even before I was officially on the show. The small tree sketches are supposed to be really big ones actually, and the main inspirational source was the bonsai collection of the Huntington garden in San Marino. The big, weird-looking flower concept just began with the word “artichoke” after a conversation with Christophe Lautrette, the production designer of *The Croods* (Fig.02).



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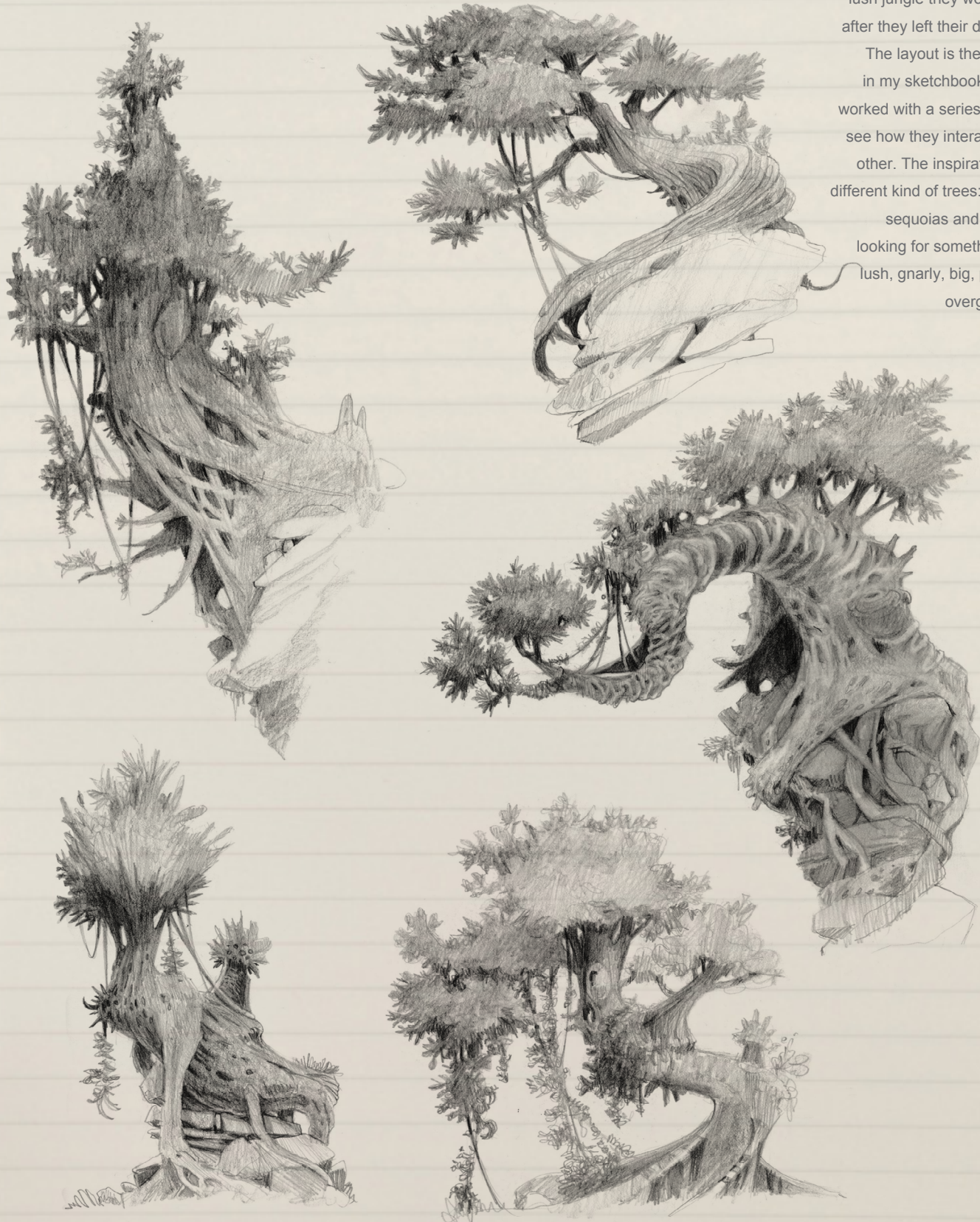
These layout sketches were supposed to help figure out the different camera angles we could use for the "new world" area (they are about four inches long). I drew them next to each other in my sketchbook to be sure that they were not exploring similar ideas.

The tree on the lower right area was designed for the first act of the movie, a deserted, dry and dangerous region. I decided to pose it like an animal to accentuate its ominous aspect (Fig.03).



These trees were the first exploration for the kind of vegetation *The Croods* would discover in the lush jungle they would go through after they left their destroyed cave.

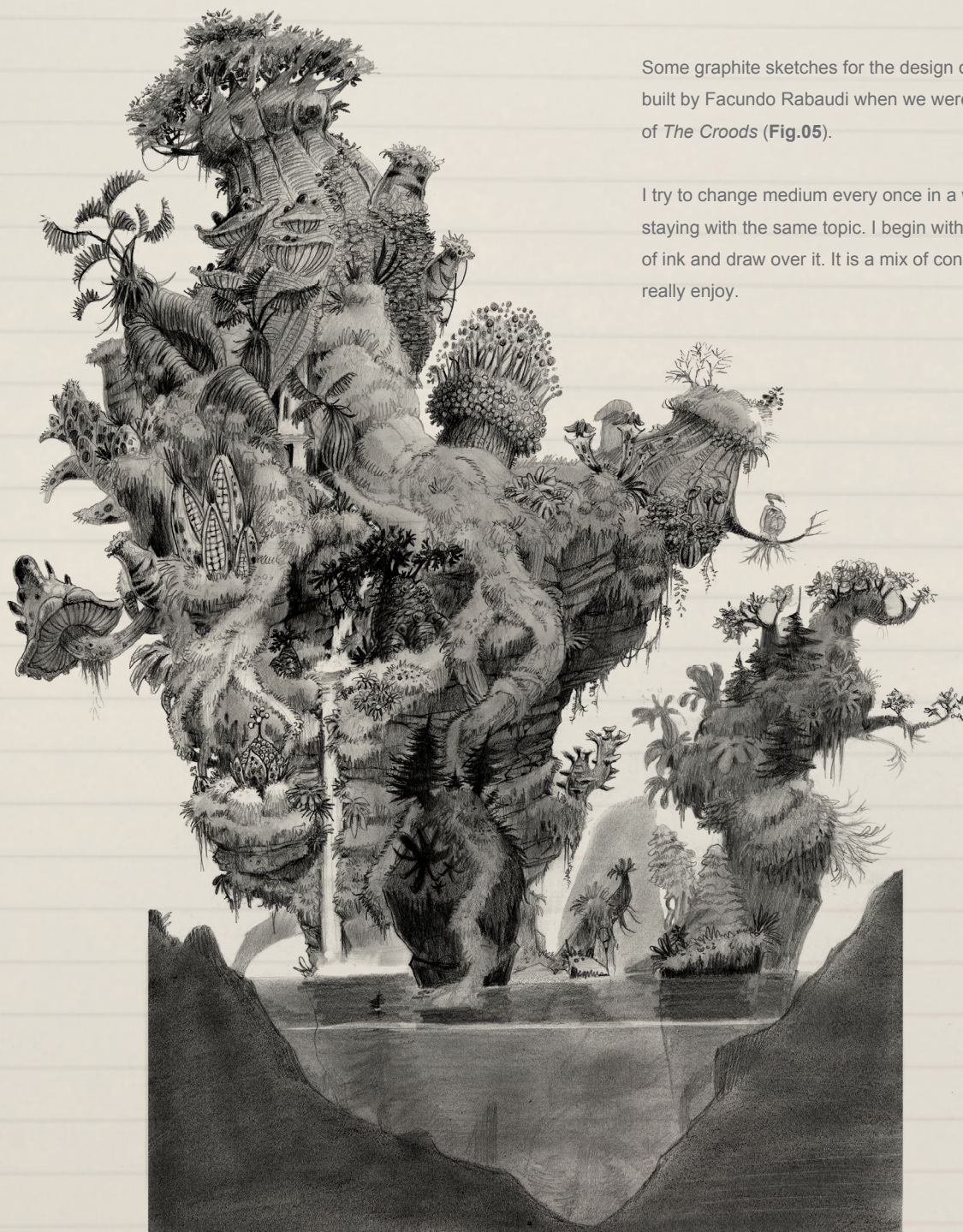
The layout is the original I have in my sketchbook; once again, I worked with a series of drawings to see how they interacted with each other. The inspiration came from different kind of trees: ficus, banyan, sequoias and bonsais. I was looking for something whimsical, lush, gnarly, big, precarious and overgrown (Fig.04).



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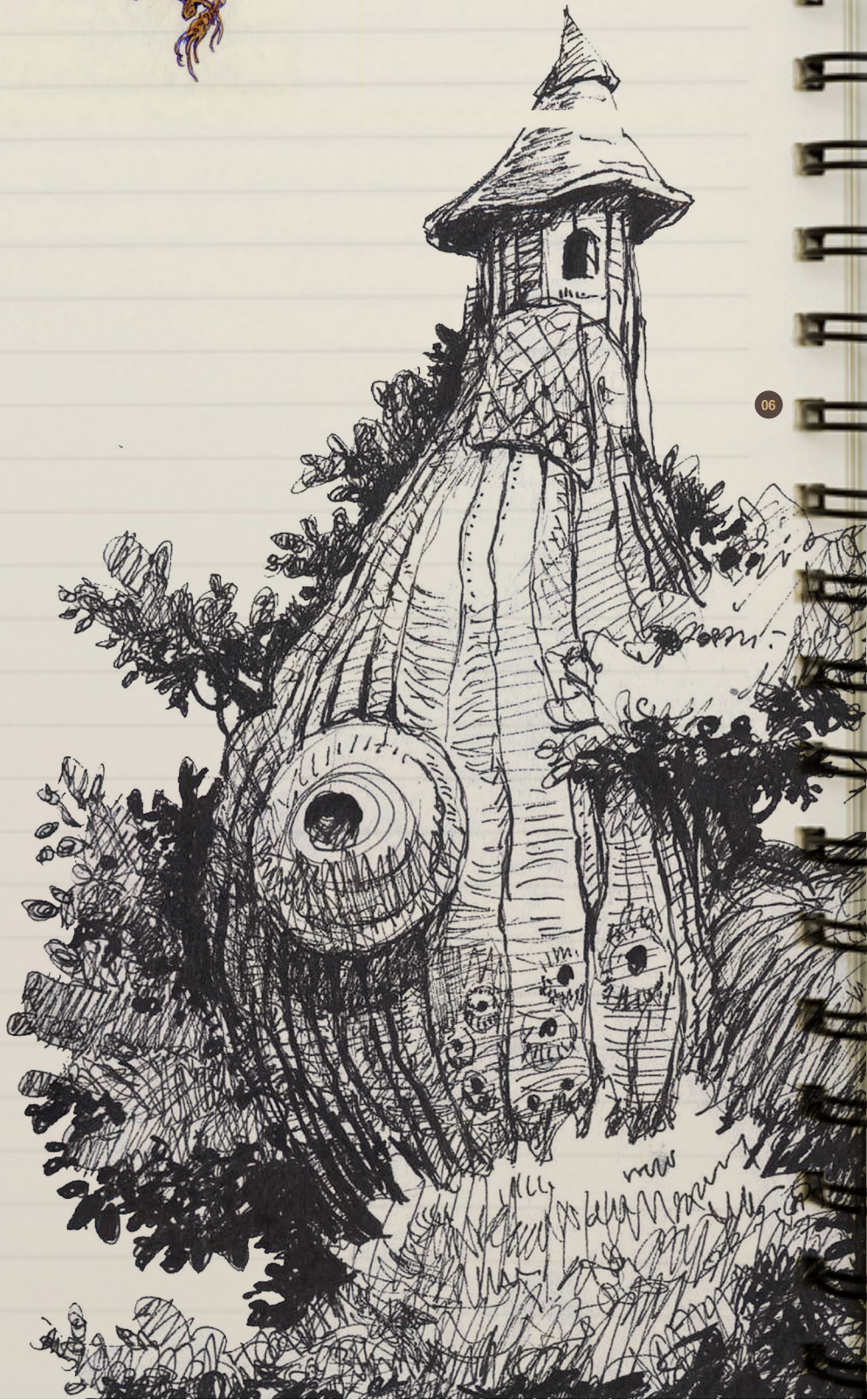
Some graphite sketches for the design of a physical model built by Facundo Rabaudi when we were looking for the style of *The Croods* (Fig.05).

I try to change medium every once in a while, even when staying with the same topic. I begin with a scribble or a splash of ink and draw over it. It is a mix of control and intuition that I really enjoy.

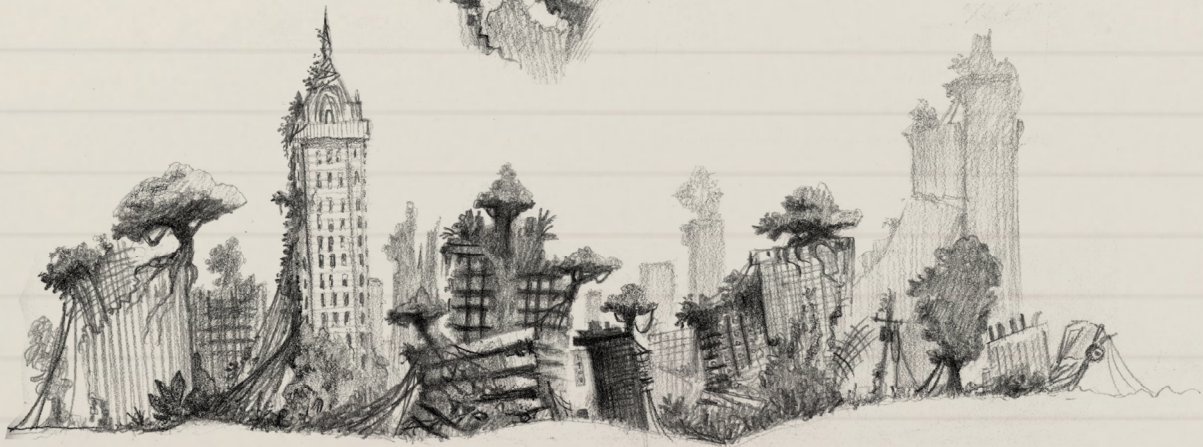
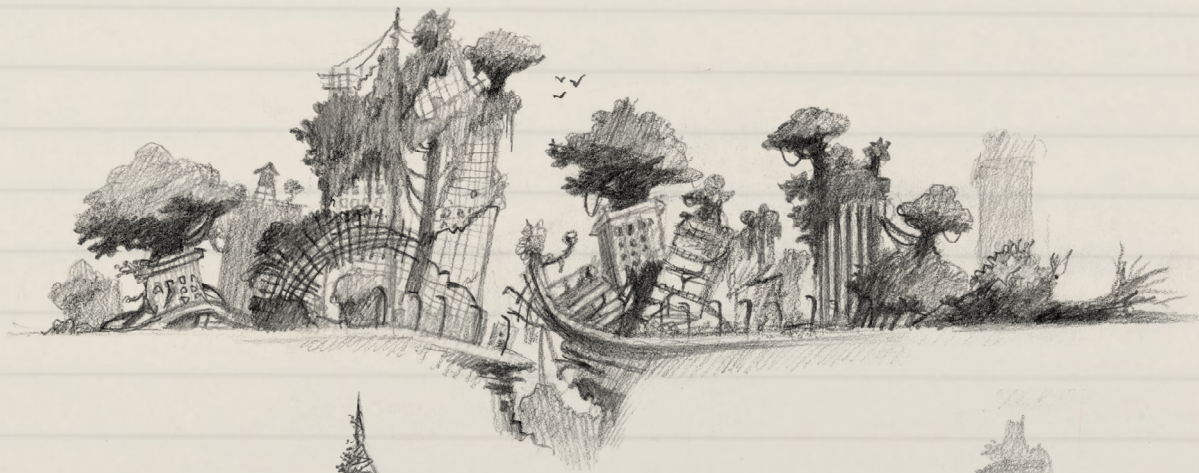
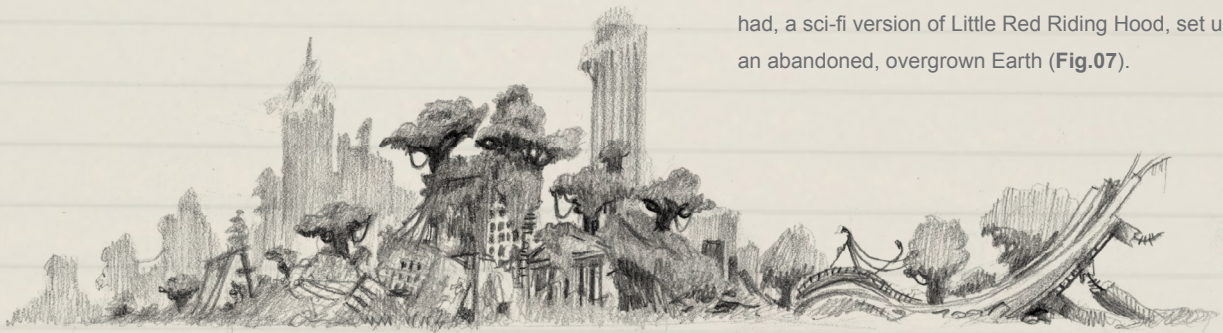


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This would be good advice to give to anyone who wonders what to draw: when you don't know what to do, do something, anything! Unplug your brain and make a statement, however minimal or abstract it may be. Then explore the potential of this shape and push it as far as you can (Fig.06).



These graphite sketches were made for an old project I had, a sci-fi version of Little Red Riding Hood, set up on an abandoned, overgrown Earth (Fig.07).



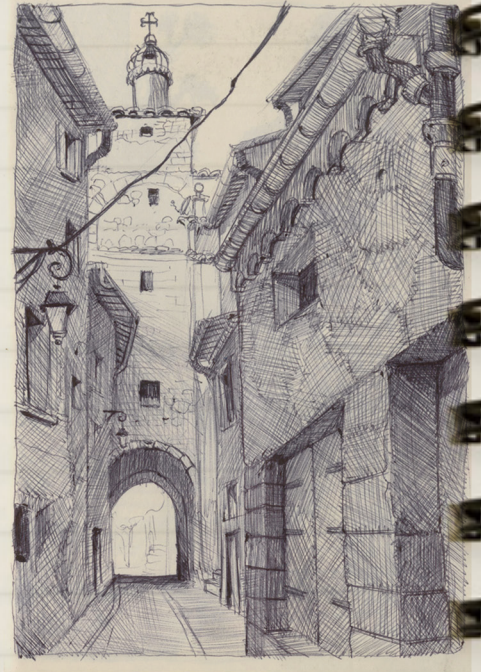
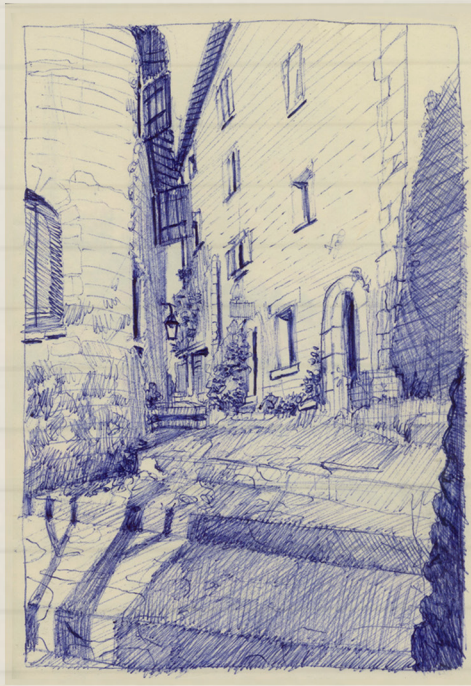


Fig.08 was drawn in the south of France, in the convoluted and cool streets of Bargème, Castelane and Roquebrune Cap-Martin, with the sun over my head. This is the unique taste of vacation.



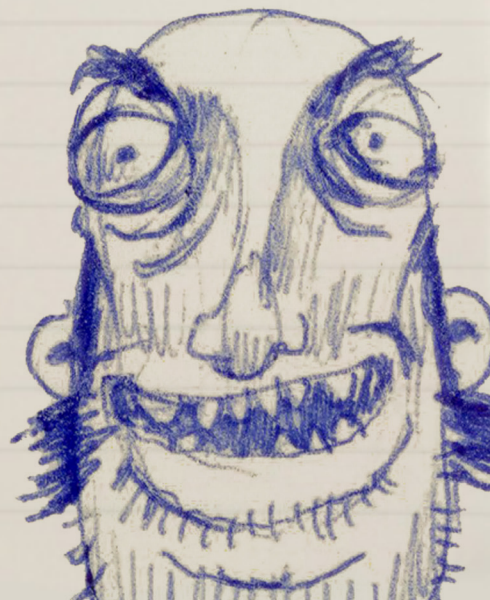
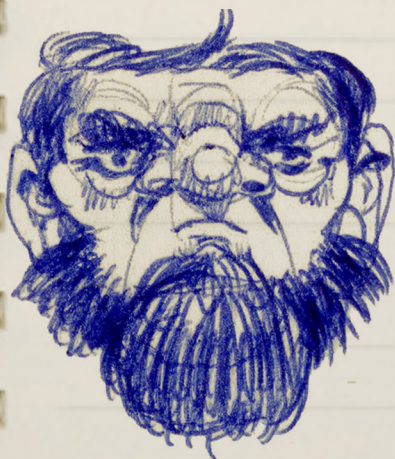
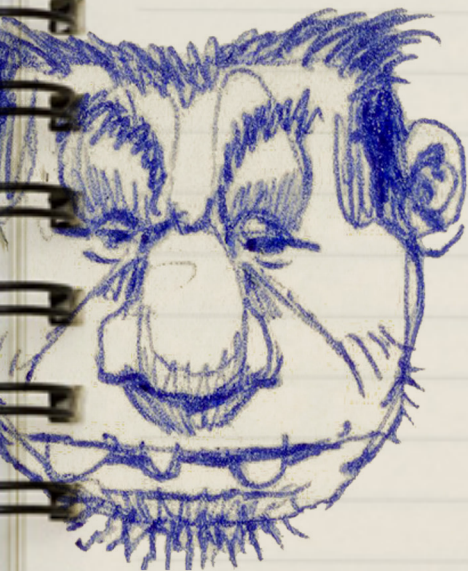


Fig.09 is a result of a fine night sketching with friends. I did the abstract splashes of watercolor, then looked at them as if they were clouds, trying to figure out if they were trains, flowers or birthday cakes. It turned out they looked like demons.



These sketches are a mix of copies from books and internet references, and drawings on location nearby one of the D-day beaches in Normandy. After you spend more than 20 minutes drawing tanks or any similar death machine you begin to feel bad about how exciting they are to draw. If you don't, you probably have more serious problems than perspective or the weight of your line (Fig.10).

I have been recently drawing a lot with ballpoint pens and I really enjoy it. Not fancy ones; the kind you find on any desk. The scope of their potential is really wide and it seems like every one of them has a special feel. Hence I have been gathering and mentally labeling every one I used (Fig.11).





Life drawing is where I come from as far as technique goes. A human body will teach you anything you need to know about perspective, shape, volume, light, shadows and composition (Fig.12).





Here is another example of the abstract splash technique. This time I used walnut ink and a few drops of watercolor that I dropped when it was still wet. I then used a quill for the line drawing and eventually added some more watercolors here and there (Fig.13).

It is a very fun and forgiving technique. You can work the first abstract shape a lot as long as it is still wet, and then use some water to partially erase some of the lines done with the walnut ink. It is a little bit like chasing imaginary animals while gazing at the clouds.





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I have been drawing a lot of dragons recently, trying to incorporate non-reptilian shapes and characteristics. I drew all of them on the Strathmore artist trading cards. Then I used watercolor and colored pencils. Once again, I tried to come up with a variety of shapes, poses and then colors. The small size of the support forced me to go as straight to the point as I could and to focus on the dynamic of the overall pose and on the cuteness (Fig.14 – 15).



All these weird little creatures began as a scribble that I did without looking at the paper. Then it was just a matter of picking the line(s) that inspired me and lead me to the final drawing (Fig.16).

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