BEYOND A LEVELS

A future in digital art

Mr Tan Yun Yang's dream is to create illustrations and animations professionally

Mr Tan enjoys adding different techniques and skills to his "artist's toolkit". PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

VALERIE KOR

MR TAN Yun Yang achieved good results in art at H2 and H3 levels when he was in junior college, but he continued working on his skills during his national service (NS).

He practised drawing during breaks, when most of his peers got some much-needed rest.

His efforts paid off — it was easy for him to compile his best artwork and complete four required observational drawings for his successful application to the DigiPen Institute of Technology Singapore after completing NS in March 2017. DigiPen is an overseas partner university of Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

Currently a first-year digital art and animation student at DigiPen, Mr Tan takes modules that cover a wide range of techniques: figure drawing, perspective, character animation and traditional painting.

While the demands of his course are taxing, he enjoys adding these creative skills to his "artist's toolkit". In general, he finds his school life fast-paced, with its rigorous curriculum in game development, art production, programming and various digital interactive media.

Inspiring environment

The 22-year-old enjoys being surrounded by like-minded students who study in closely related fields such as game design or programming. His peers and lecturers go above and beyond the minimum requirements, spurring him to do better as well.

He says: "In an animation module, we were tasked to make our character walk and transit to running.

"While our lecturer provided a basic character template for us to use, many students chose to create their own characters which were animated with greater degrees of complexity. The results had personality and polish."

Mr Tan is also inspired by his lecturers' high standards.

In the time that his class took to complete drawing a fire engine against the backdrop of a fire station, their lecturer, Mr Calvin Tan, filled an entire whiteboard with a detailed illustration of a sci-fi hangar, populated with planes, robots and soldiers — all rendered in a fish-eye perspective with the humble whiteboard marker.

"It was impressive and humbling. I realised we still have so much to learn to be on par with the other giants in the industry," he says.

Re-learning the fundamentals

One of the challenges that Mr Tan faced as a student at DigiPen was re-learning the fundamentals of art, since he had already developed his own style of drawing over the years.

"I had to start from square one and re-learn the basics of drawing. It was challenging to 're-wire' my mind. I'm glad to see that it has led to a great amount of improvement in my work," he says.

The aspiring illustrator hopes to start producing art professionally across different media. He says that digital media skills are in high demand today.

Mr Tan recommends the course for those who are seeking to develop a solid foundation in art and network with like-minded people in these specialised fields of work.