

What's in...

Sandara Tang's Wacom Intuos tablet

It is no secret that an individual's online persona can be vastly different from what he or she is like in real life.

This truly applies to Singapore digital artist and art teacher Sandara Tang.

Beneath a meek and mild exterior lies a wildly popular DeviantArt personality, who has posted more than 500 illustrations on the online artwork community, with each piece receiving more than 9,000 views.

The Singapore artist has also enjoyed commercial success working on projects such as Fantasy Flight Games' Lord Of The Rings and Game Of Thrones trading card games. Her notable creations include Asfaloth, the steed of Queen Arwen, wife to Aragorn, a protagonist in the Lord Of The Rings film trilogy.

Ms Tang (no relation to the writer) was invited to the United States to attend Magic The Gathering Grand Prix in Chicago last June, for designing the playmats which the event's competitors used.

She plays down her success, attributing it to her passion for painting and understanding clients. "Working for Fantasy Flight Games as a freelance artist was a great experience. There were little changes to be made to the original design which I created for each card and the communication process was smooth," she said.

It has not always been a bed of roses for her. She knew she had the skills to be a professional artist, but she took an engineering diploma at Ngee Ann Polytechnic to allay her parents' concerns about job

prospects for her skill set. Neither of her parents is an artist.

She said: "There was little opportunity for budding concept artists and game designers then. The industry was even unheard of at the time."

Her fortunes would change when video-game studios such as Koei Entertainment (now named Koei Tecmo) set up shop here in 2004.

It made studying for another diploma and degree in multimedia art at the Lasalle-SIA College of the Arts Singapore all worth it.

She fondly remembers working as a computer graphics artist at Koei: "Although they brought over the strict Japanese work culture, it was great working for Koei. It was the first big video-game company that set up shop in Singapore."

It paved the way for greater things and, eventually, led to her creating character designs for US video-game company Riot's popular multiplayer online battle arena title, League Of Legends.

This shows how far she has come since her first pieces of fan art for the Final Fantasy VII video game.

Today, she is a senior lecturer at the DigiPen Institute of Technology, but still works on freelance projects occasionally.

Her love for art and the fantasy genre seem to have rubbed off on her son, Drake, whose drawing of a dinosaur is lovingly displayed in her office.

She dedicated a painting to him when he was born. "My son is only four years old. He's too young to appreciate it right now."

By Ebel Tang

Who

Sandara Tang, 35, is a digital artist and a senior lecturer at the DigiPen Institute of Technology, a partner of the Singapore Institute of Technology.

Her DeviantArt page has garnered more than 4.4 million page views. She has worked on projects such as Fantasy Flight Games' Game Of Thrones and The Lord Of The Rings trading card games.

Her Wacom Intuos tablet

I've been using tablets from Wacom since I first started painting digitally.

I won this particular one as a prize and I like its durability and how it feels. I could create illustrations with a mouse and keyboard instead of a stylus, but that would take forever to complete.



PHOTOS: SANDARA TANG, CAROLINE CHIA

Baby dragon digital painting

I created this a week or two after giving birth to my son.

It depicts a baby dragon with its mother's arms around it.

It was also a way of commemorating his birth.

It wasn't a difficult piece to do technically, but the challenge here was the limited time I had, as I also had to look after my son.



Raccoon watercolour painting

This was done more than a decade ago, when I was still studying.

It took almost a month to complete and it was the first time I painted fur in such detail, almost down to every individual strand.

This piece was one of a few which I manage to salvage, as the bulk of my earlier paintings were either crumpled or damaged.

Hades and Persephone digital painting

This is one of my most popular pieces on DeviantArt, garnering more than 10,000 comments and 1.6 million views.

Perhaps this story of forbidden love between the lord of the underworld and a daughter of Zeus resonates with people.



Magic The Gathering Chicago Grand Prix playmat artwork

The image size for this was huge and it took a lot of time to add in all the details. Additionally, the backdrop was painted using an actual photograph of Chicago as a reference.

The whole process took about 20 hours.