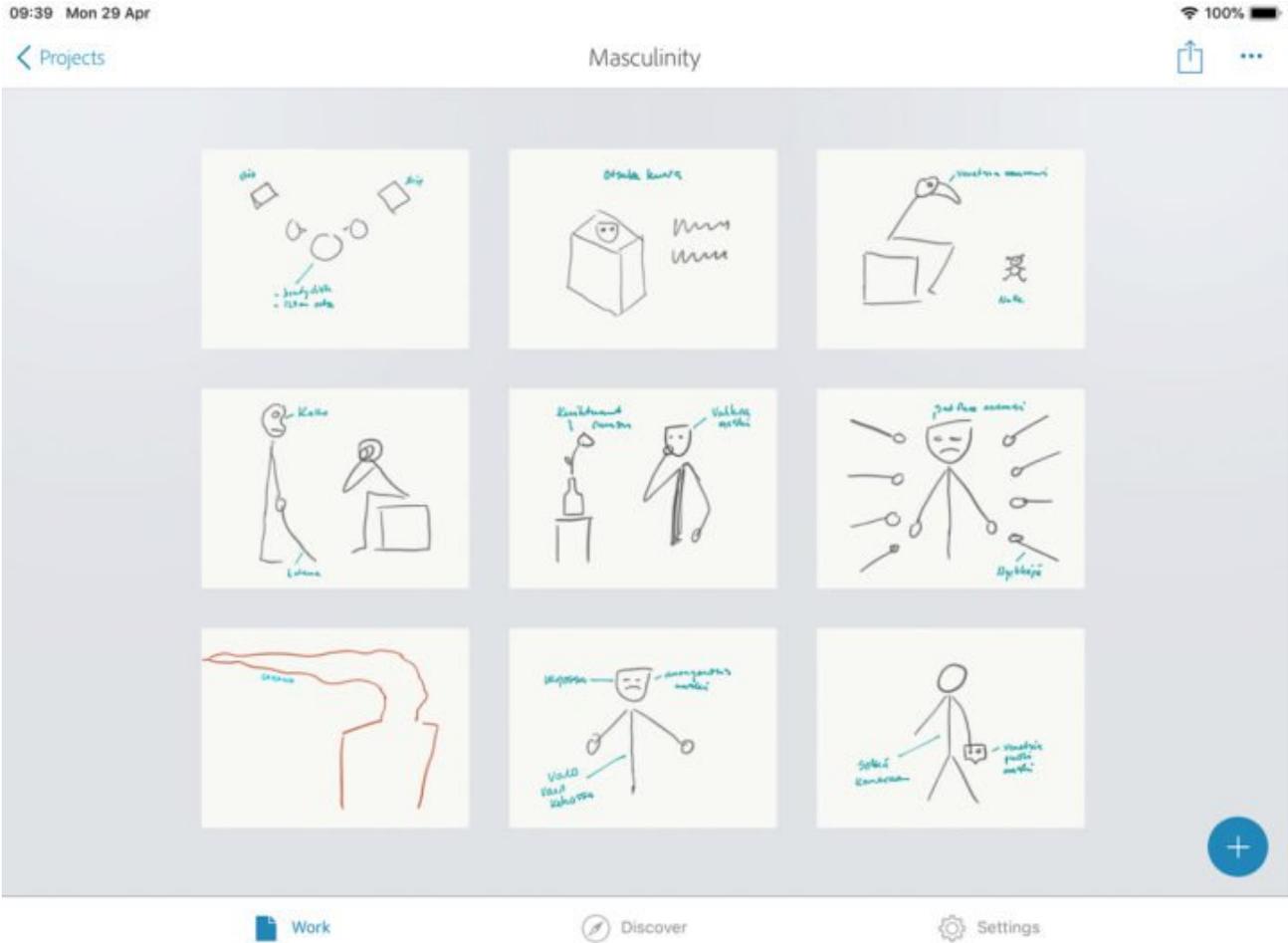


I have always found that the old model of what man should be is too restricted and often harmful. It inspired me to start this series and share my thoughts as images. “Toxic masculinity” term is used a lot nowadays and it was one of the things that made me think these issues more. I also think my history with depression shows in the images although it’s not so strongly present than in Dystopia series.

I do fine art images that are often a bit surreal. I think hiding the face often helps in getting the story more pronounced. If people see eyes they have more connection to a person in a photo. That is one of the reasons I like masks and I have a small collection of those. At the planning phase I thought that for this series masks fit perfectly to the theme. I ended up using many different masks changing them in every picture. For me, the fabric and even the skull works like a mask from the perspective of the image.

SKETCHES

If I'm not photographing some random idea I usually do sketches from the images I have in mind. With sketches ready it's also easier to 'sell' the idea to the model. We have had several photo shoots with Jake before and he was open to the idea. I usually follow sketches quite closely. I like to do the thinking for the images in peace so the photoshoot is not the best place for me to come up for new ideas. The images are quite ready in my mind before the shoot but there are times when some ideas don't work. This time one image took a turn to a different direction after the shoot in post-processing.



"Sketches in Adobe Sketch in iPad"

PHOTOSHOOT

I like to shoot on gray seamless. It's easy to texture in post processing and gives me lots of opportunities afterward. It would be nice to be able to build more complicated sets in the studio but that's not currently possible. My budgets for the shoots are quite small, but with photoshop and creative post processing, I get quite close to the ideas in my head. At the end that is the most important thing for me.

There was not a huge amount of time for the shoot but that's ok for me. I usually prepare well beforehand and make everything ready for the shoot. During the shoot, I can follow my sketches to work fast and usually I can do my shoots pretty quickly.

Lighting wise I had pretty much same lighting setup for all the images. A couple of shots were shot without the left strip box. I often like to use dramatic lighting so the light from straight up and strong rim lights are common for me. I like to use Godox battery lights also in the studio since it's our living room and I don't have draw wires every time. The less time it takes to 'open' my studio means more time for creative stuff instead of the boring stuff.



Setup in my home studio (living room)"

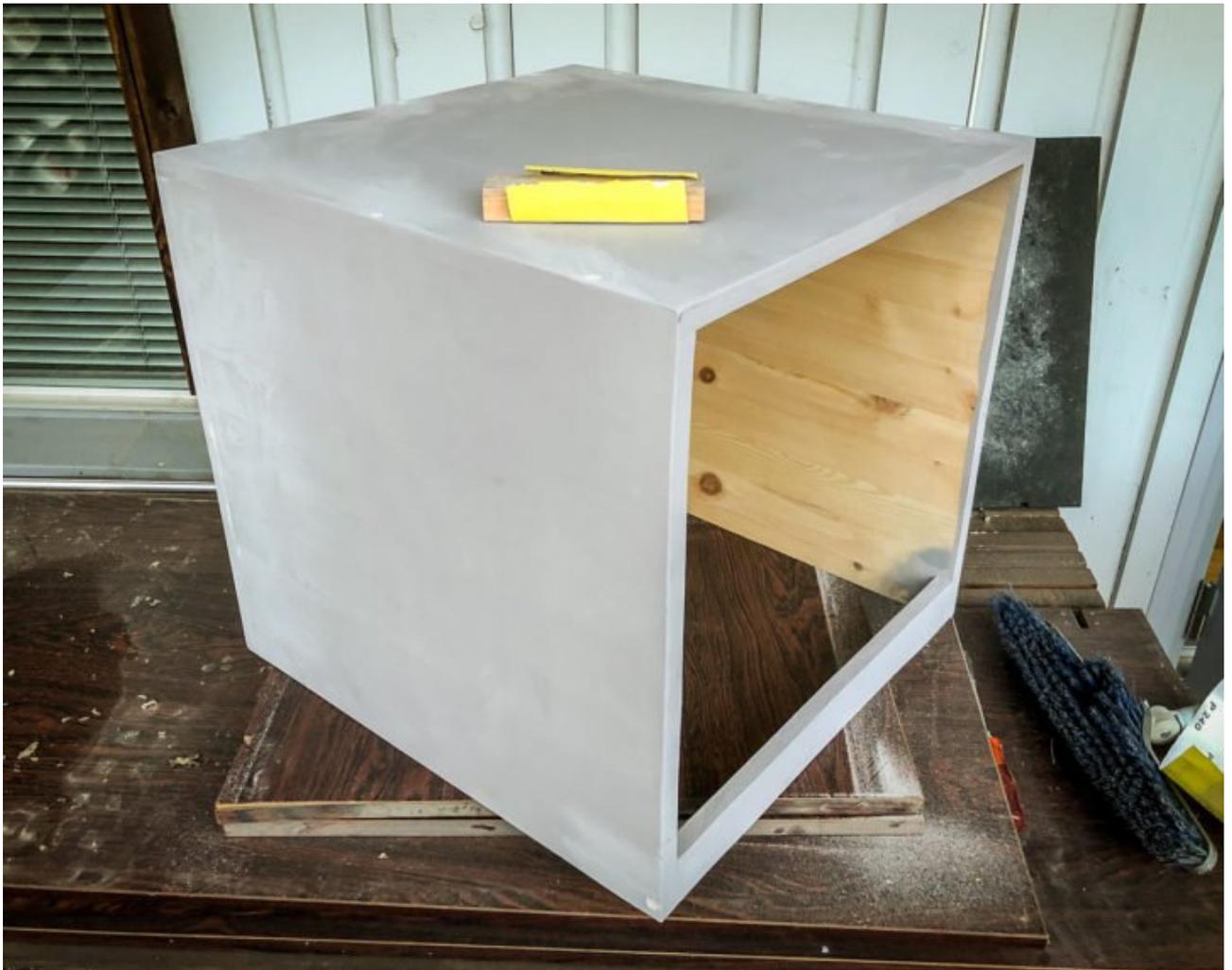
DIY

For this series, I also tried hand painting. I had old cabinet doors left from the renovation so I painted the background to one of them. I first painted it mat black with spray paint. The texture was created with acrylic paints using a plastic bag as a 'paint brush'. I then photographed it to a texture and used as a background. Some images have tears, tapes, and holes in the background. All those were photographed separately and were added as details.



"Plastic Bag was the best 'paintbrush' "

I used a cube in my previous series. Actually, it was a cheap Ikea table wrapped in cardboard. I liked it so much that I built a proper one for my home studio. I made this from one 200x50cm sheet of glued laminated timber board. It needed only 4 sides so one sheet was enough. I painted it gray with chalk paint to give it a nice matt finish.



"Wooden Cube"

EDITING

As always editing takes some time for me. Especially the first image if I'm making a series where I set the mood, textures, colors for the series. I guess you could say that I like more the image editing than the actual photographing. It's more peaceful and you have more time to make a decision. For this series first and last images have 27 minutes difference, but I did photograph additional things during the editing phase. Editing took 27 days. Well, I wasn't in a hurry with the series so I made them slowly. I guess one image took 2-6 hours. I also usually took some pause, perhaps overnight, and look image again. It helps me to find errors you can't see after working on a piece for a long time.

Photoshop editing: <https://youtu.be/Ay1STzcg6UE>

IMAGES



"Patched Childhood"



"Background Shadows"



"The Scream"



"You do what I tell you"



"Bullies"



"The Man and the Rose - Was selected as a Fstoppers Photo of the Day which was a very pleasant surprise."



"Leaving It Behind"

Credits: *Model: Jake Mattila*