

Artist Activities

Draw Alien Heads with Jess Johnson



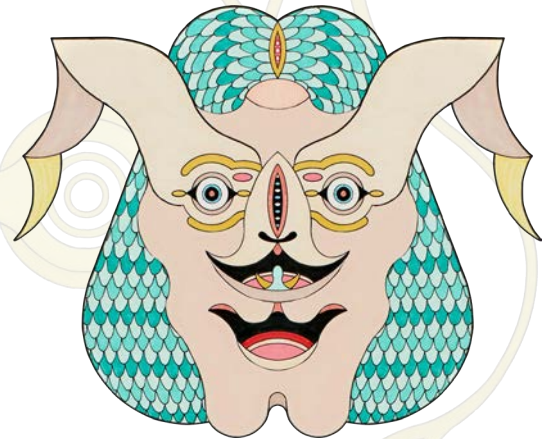
Jess Johnson is an artist whose drawings stem from her interests in science fiction, vintage video games, comics, architecture, and many other things. In her drawings she creates a fictional world set in a futuristic alien realm. She works with video artist Simon Ward to turn her drawings into animated video and Virtual Reality.

How I Draw My Alien Heads

Symmetry is found everywhere in nature and is important in my drawings, too. I always use reflective symmetry to draw my alien heads, where one half is a mirror reflection of the other half. I often draw half a head first, and then try to draw the other half as identically as possible. It is always surprising what the full head looks like!

My heads are made up of swirly organic lines and perfect geometric shapes. I often use plastic templates to guide to drawing circles, ovals, squares, and triangles. You can also use things you find around the house as guides. Look for objects that are small circles or wavy shapes to trace around.

Inspiration for the faces of my aliens – organic forms that occur in nature, such as bats, sea creatures, plants, and microscopic organisms. Below are some of my favorites: anatomical drawings by artist and scientist Ernst Haeckel.

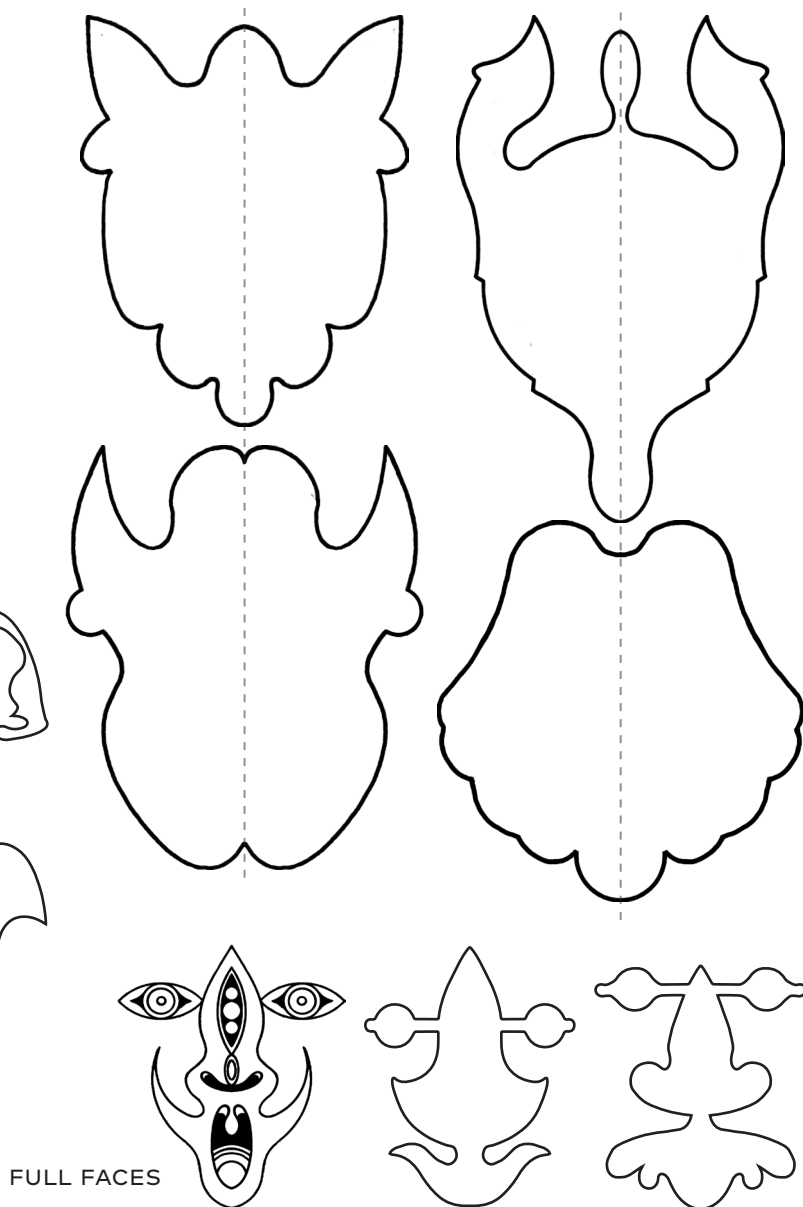
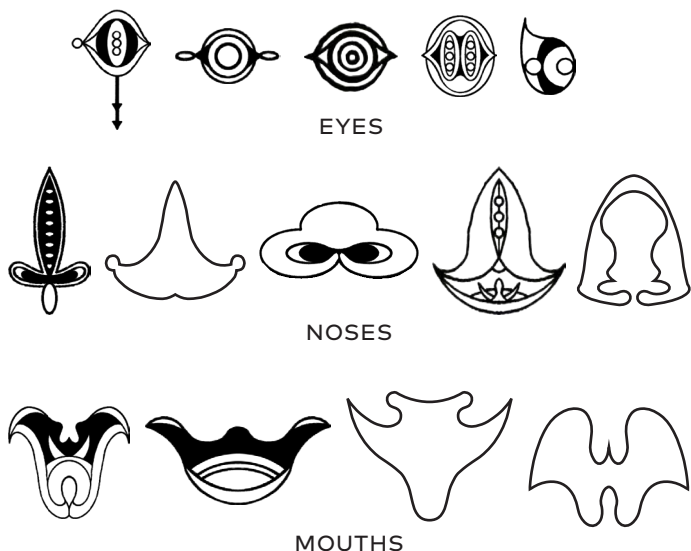


Art Forms in Nature, 1904, Ernst Haeckel. Images: Deutsche Fotothek/Wikicommons

Practice!

Use these alien head outlines to practice on. You can turn any strange shape into an alien head. My only rule is to try to make it symmetrical as possible!

To add facial features (eyes, nose, mouth, ears), look for examples in nature. Here are some examples of facial features I use for my aliens to get you started.



Make Your Own Head

Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. Outline one half of a head and draw in the facial features. Hold the folded paper up to the window with the blank side facing you. Trace what you've drawn to create the other side of your head. This will make your head symmetrical.

Color Your Alien Head

Add color to the different areas of your alien head using coloured pencils or markers. I usually keep to a selection of three or four colours per head.

Mix & Match

After you've drawn a few different alien heads you can begin to mix and match your favourite bits to create more! I often just redraw similar eyes, noses, and ears in different combinations on different heads to make new species of aliens. Each time I draw something again it changes a little and these small changes give my aliens different personalities.

