

nickelodeon

THE LEGEND OF KORRA



BOOK ONE: AIR

THE ART OF THE ANIMATED SERIES

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KORRA

MD: Following in Avatar Aang's footsteps is a hard act to follow, but as soon as we started talking about ideas for Korra's character, we knew she would be a worthy successor. We wanted her to be headstrong and aggressive, someone who would never back away from a fight. But we gave her a vulnerable side too. Early on, we hit upon the idea that Korra had been sequestered away in the South Pole, which is why she didn't grow up with any close friends and hadn't seen much of the outside world. She spent her childhood mastering water-, earth-, and firebending. But she had never been able to airbend, due to her lack of a spiritual connection.

JDS: The drawings to the upper left are actually my first and second attempts at designing Korra. Although the style of the show shifted somewhat, I think the essence of her character came across in these early passes and helped inform her evolution. Her athleticism and physicality were something that we discussed thoroughly before we even began drawing.

BK: I was hoping to find a background painter who had his or her own distinct style that we could adapt for the look of the new series, and got lucky when we were given Fred Stewart's portfolio while he was finishing his last year in college. This concept of Republic City at night from Fred's background art is the earliest example of what evolved into the Korra painting style. Painting by Frederic Stewart. (Providing spread)

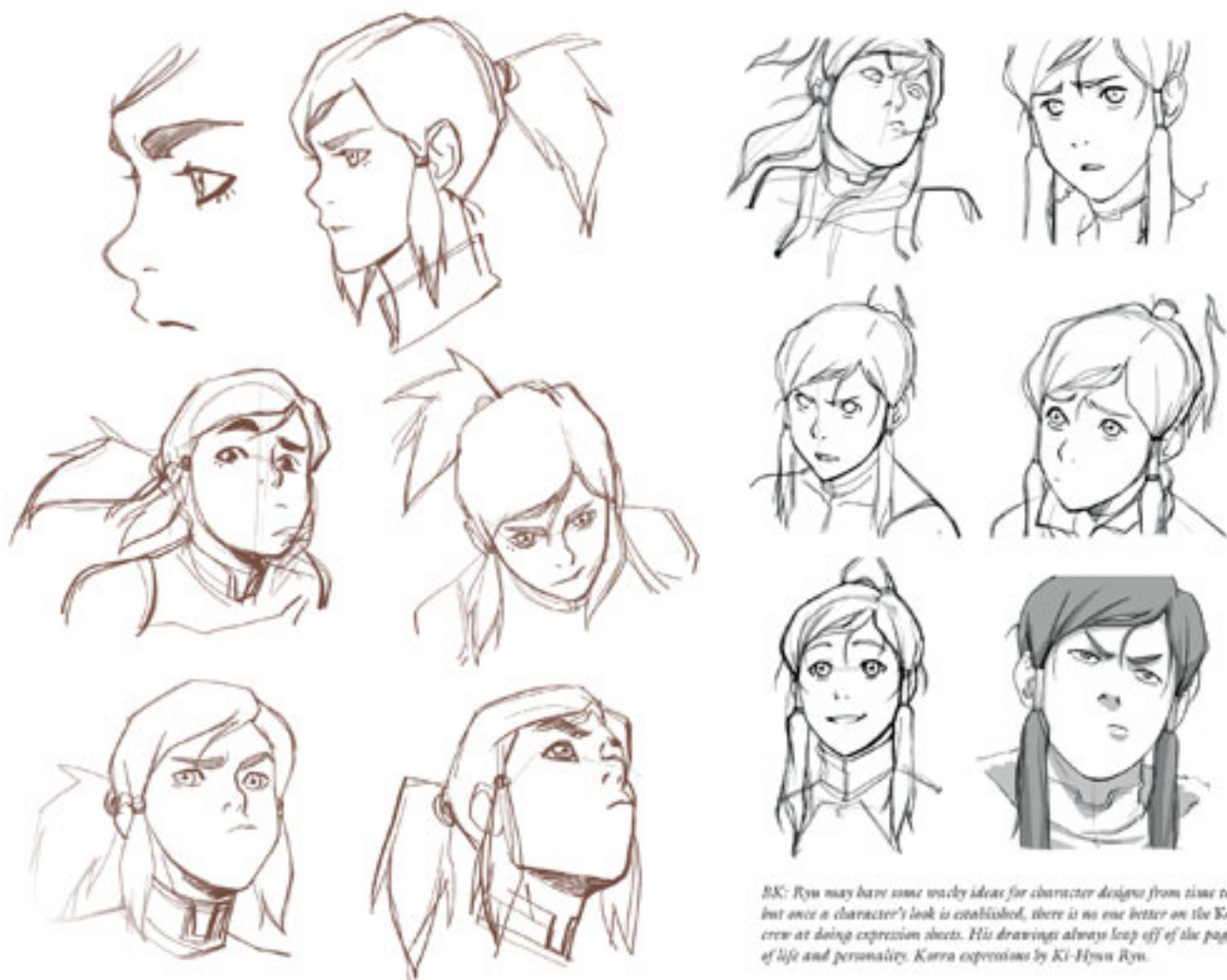


BK: Mike and I had the idea for Korra's character, but we really wanted Joaquim to be in on the ground floor when it came to her design. We had a phone call with him where we described her as being a Water Tribe version of a snowboarder or an MMA fighter. Joaquim went right to work and about an hour later, he e-mailed us the drawing on the upper left, which is very close to how Korra ended up looking. Korra concepts by Joaquim Dos Santos and Ki-Hyun Rym.





BB: Even though Joaquim figured out the general look for Korra within a very short time, it still took him, Ryn, and me several months to successfully combine our efforts and finalize her design. We would each take turns drawing over each other's concepts, in a sort of "two steps forward, one step back" pattern. The concept above is a revision Ryn did to one of my attempts, and it definitely helped inch us closer to the finish line. Concept by Ki-Hyun Ryn and Bryan Konietzke.



BB: Ryn may have some wacky ideas for character designs from time to time, but once a character's look is established, there is no one better on the Korra crew at doing expression sheets. His drawings always leap off of the page, full of life and personality. Korra expressions by Ki-Hyun Ryn.



MD: Korra versus the Metalbender cops. Bryan and Ryu collaborated on this illustration as part of a presentation to show the Nickelodeon executives how the action sequences in Korra could also have an element of fun. This piece inspired the sequence where the cops pursue Korra in the first episode.





JDS: In my opinion, one of the coolest aspects of the art direction in Korra is the hybrid nature through which some of these early designs were finalized. BK: For Korra's final design recipe, Joaquim provided the majority of the ingredients, Ryu added the spice, and I merely baked it all together. Korra design by Joaquim Dos Santos, Ki-Hyun Ryu, and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



glove detail

BK: It was fun to play with the familiar motifs of Water Tribe costumes by giving Korra a more fitted, three-quarter-sleeve parka, as well as clothing her blue outfit with firebending gear when we first meet her as a teenager, both things we didn't really see in Avatar. Designs by Il-Kwang Kim and Bryan Konietzko. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: "I'm the Avatar. You gotta deal with it!" Ryu wrote a version of this dialogue on one of his early sketches of young Korra. We loved how perfectly it summed up her attitude and personality and incorporated it into the first episode. Four-year-old Korra design by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Cleanup by Jin-Sun Kim. Color by Sylvia Filcak-Blackwolf.



MD: Mako and Bolin spent much of their youth running small-time scams in the mean streets of Republic City (above). Concepts by Ean-Sang Yang. Paintings by Frederic Stewart. Right: Ki-Hyun Ryu's wacky concepts of a version of Bolin that never came to be. JDS: You've got to love Ryu... Only he could envision one of the lead characters as a beer-cut-wearing rodeo clown. Bolin concepts by Ki-Hyun Ryu.

MAKO AND BOLIN

MD: We wanted to include a story about brothers in *Korra*, which is where the idea for Mako and Bolin came from. They also illustrate how family and culture had become more mixed, seventy years after the original series. Mako and Bolin's mother came from the Fire Nation and their father hailed from the Earth Kingdom, but they both were killed when Mako and Bolin were young. Forced to grow up too soon, Mako protected and shielded Bolin from the darker side of the world. This is why Mako grew to become the more cynical and serious of the two, while Bolin still remained childlike and naive.

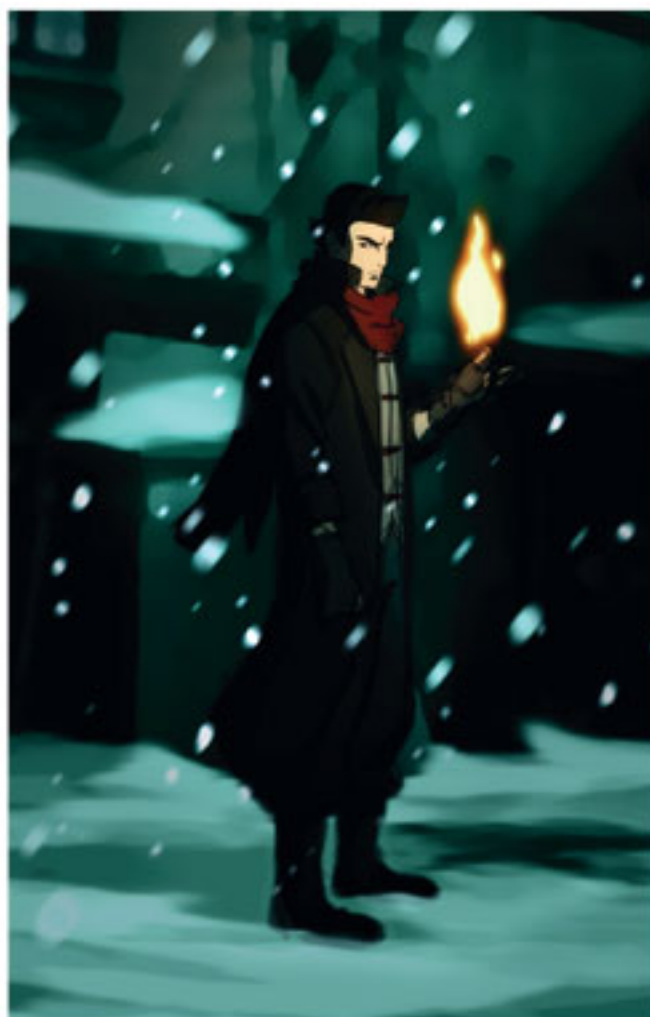


JDS: This is a pretty early pass I did on the brothers. It's kind of strange to look back at these now, as I think our initial instinct was to make Bolin a little pudgy. Still, you can see some of the DNA for the characters creeping in. I can remember struggling to find the impact that progress and industry would have on fashion in the Avatar universe. Mako and Bolin concepts by Joaquim Dos Santos.





BK: Once we trained in Ryu's outlandish takes on the brothers, he swept in and did a fantastic job finalizing both of their designs, all the way down to Bolin's skivvies. Mako and Bolin designs by Ki-Hyun Ryu. Color by Bryan Kowitzko and Sylvia Filali-Blackwolf.



JDS: Mako keeps himself warm during a cold, snowy night in Republic City. This concept was done to help get the tone of the character across. BK: Joaquim really had an Industrial Age/Dickensian take on the Korra world, especially in his explorations of the brothers. Mako concept by Joaquim Dos Santos.





MD: Bolin and Mako expression sheets by Ki-Hyun Rym. These types of model sheets help the storyboard artists and animators better understand the personalities of the characters. JDG: I can remember really pushing for strong poses on both brothers, as you can see in the top row of Bolin's expressions drawn by Rym. Ultimately, it was decided not to do this, and looking back now, I think that was a good choice.