INTERVIEW : TIERO

Tiero is an Italian digital designer who specializes in 3D. A Silver member at Fotolia, his portfolio mainly focuses on architecture, design and technical still life. He often mixes renders and photographs to shape a unique style.

Tiero, tell us how it all started:

Well, it all started when I decided to drop my architecture studies after realizing I could best succeed by following my real passion: digital design, particularly the 3D rendering. I continued to learn the basics of architecture from my father, a brilliant architect who taught me how to use Autocad.
On the 3D side I have started with "shade" an Autocad application, then went on through all versions of 3d studio up to the latest 3dsmax. Over the years I specialized in photo-realistic architecture and interior design images.

What is that you like about the 3D imagery?

" what I find interesting with 3D are the endless possibilities to create non-existing situations and locations with the ability to freely move within space. There are no limits to what one may create, no light, nor physical rules to take into account despite what happens in photography. The 3D for me is also an endless resource of backgrounds and "locations" for the subjects of my photographs. In fact, if you don't have a professional studio or don't have right locations handy, a 3D can help in a great way, as it allows you to create whatever background you may want to add to your photos. Lately, I am fascinated with those works where the background is blurred and gives the idea of an ambiance, rather than showing it in its full detail.
The process of a work goes through several phases: first, I draw on a paper what's in my mind and try different sketches with different views and angles. The original idea can sometimes get totally distorted through the 3D process experiments. In fact, when you set actual proportions in a 3D, results are often not the ones you were expecting and what comes out is not necessarily disappointing: at times what results from experimenting is more convincing to me than the original project where the actual proportions were respected.

What is your approach to the digital imagery, what is your style meant to express?

My approach to images is more rational and realistic. I like to transmit a concept in a simple way without many frills. As an example, a single red line profile is enough to ideally represent the concept of a house, a simple and clear concept with a single sign. For me that is the essence of my job: to be able to express an idea with a few strokes: Less is more is my concept.

What are your tips for being successful in Microstock?

I think there are several aspects that deserve special attention when producing for Microstock. First of them all is the universality of the subjects. A subject needs to be appealing to many different audiences and cultural contexts and has to immediately reach everyone, regardless of cultural coding.
Not less important is the colour combination. The right colours make the difference.

Time optimization: during my shootings I pay max attention to the lights, in the attempt to reduce post-production. My white backgrounds are actually as white as they come out from my camera.
To an author wishing to enter the Microstock game I suggest to first understand exactly what it is all about. Good photographers often give up when results don't come immediately and earnings are too small; this happens when the images that were submitted are not the right ones.
A period of familiarization and direct testing is essential. Don't listen to what others say, try things for yourself and find your own style.

What is your perception of the Microstock marketplace today, since you contribute to several agencies? How is this industry evolving according to you?
Over the past two years, Microstock has had a strong acceleration. The images available in various stock agencies have increased almost exponentially. Many amateur photographers and illustrators have tried this path and ultimately many professionals who first snobbed this distribution channel are now converting to this philosophy.

Microstock is experiencing its popularity at its maximum. It's so frequent to see well-known brands in major newspapers using such images, and the content quality has improved dramatically, keeping up with the highest requirements.

The only way to stand out in such a crowded marketplace is to take the path of quality and originality. Focus on quality is mandatory in order to "survive" amidst the harsh international competition. Search for originality is the other key to make the difference with the other authors' works.
What inspires your work?

Surely, the most important elements are freedom and fun feelings when creating images that you like without constraints and obligations. This is the positive part of being a freelancer.
The ideas come from the observation of everyday life and what happens around me. Also by browsing the best advertisings as well as keeping in touch with the latest trends and current market taste. Sometimes it's enough to just see an object or a situation and the image comes to light by itself! Some other times the ideas are re-worked over and over and they require some decantation time to shape the way I have them in my mind.
I always start from one or more sketches and periodically go back to them, re-touching them until a final version develops.
What counts is to believe in the power of your ideas, setting few goals ahead of time, and never getting discouraged. The main goal is to be able to do something better every day.

What kind of equipment do you use?

For photography I use a Canon 5Dmk2, several fix lenses and zoom, very handy while traveling, and four studio flashs. My 3D works are created with 3dsmax. For post-production I extensively use Photoshop CS4.