

**Roughing Out the Concept:** It's the most important step in the creative process. Here I roughly sketch out my idea. Notice the use of sticky notes. It's a good bad habit I've developed over the years.

**Drawing the Refined Sketch:** My rough is just that, a rough. I proportionally size my rough, then print it out larger and draw a refined tight sketch. I leave no room for guesswork when I move into the digital realm. Simply build what I've drawn. I make changes on the fly, too.

Having your art all dialed in and figured out up front will greatly improve your build time and the overall strength of your work.



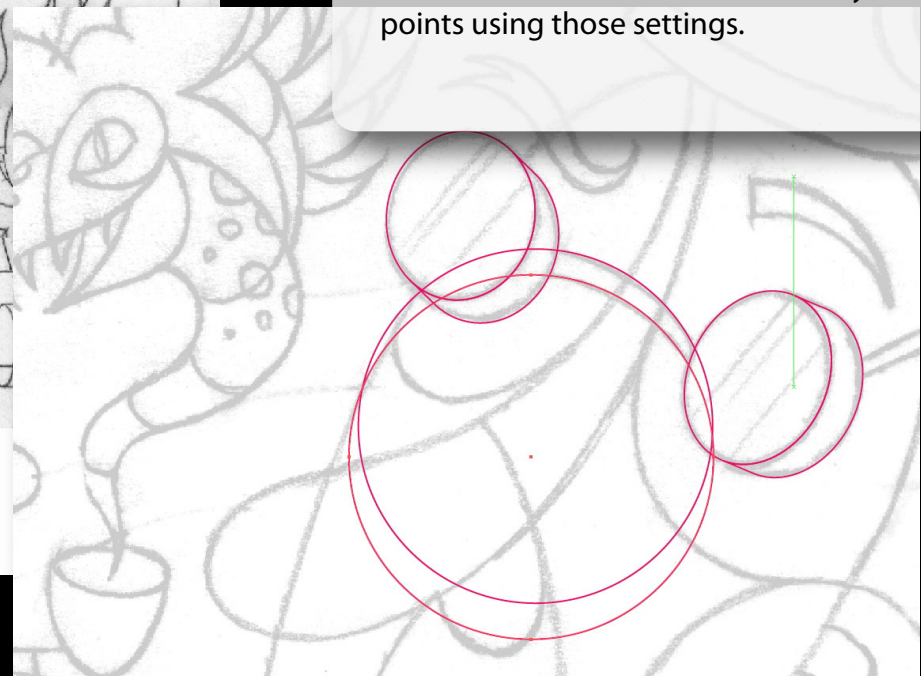
### Scanning the Sketch:

I now scan my refined sketch into Adobe® Photoshop® CS4 software and save it as a tiff file to place into Illustrator as my guide to build on.

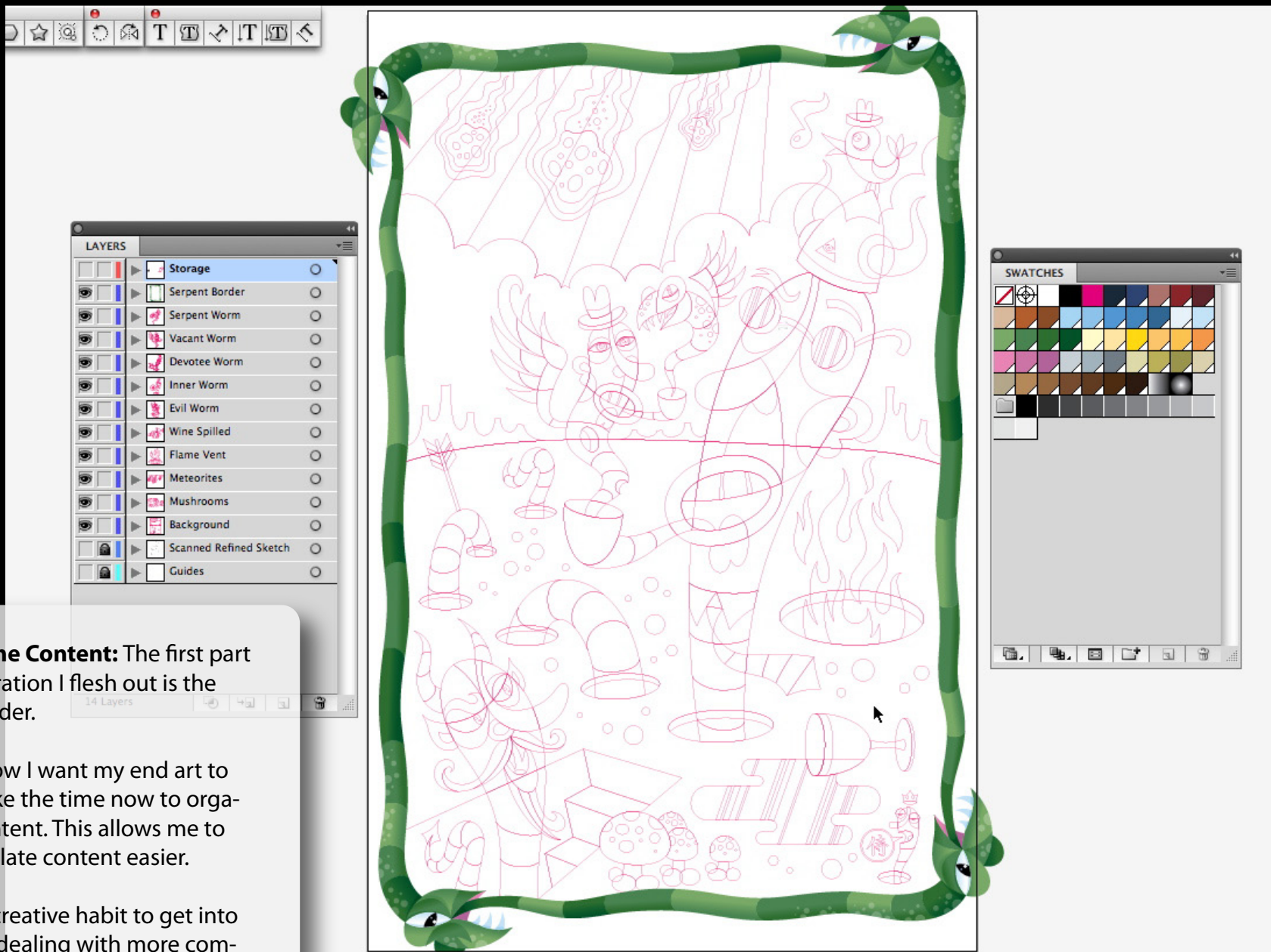


**Building Vector Graphics:** I place the tiff file of my refined sketch on its own layer and select Template in the Layer Options, which automatically dims the images and locks the layer. On a new layer, I start building my vector art based on my sketch.

I like to build all my core vector shapes before I start coloring anything. I color the strokes magenta and set the size to .5 points. I do this so that later I can isolate any stray points using those settings.







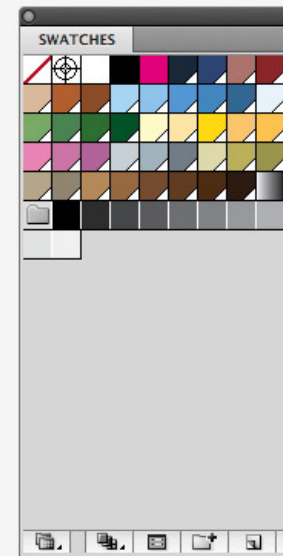
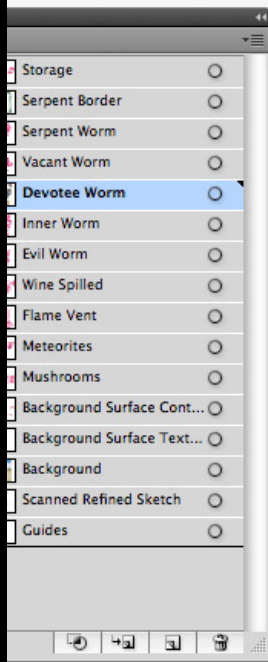
**Organize the Content:** The first part of the illustration I flesh out is the serpent border.

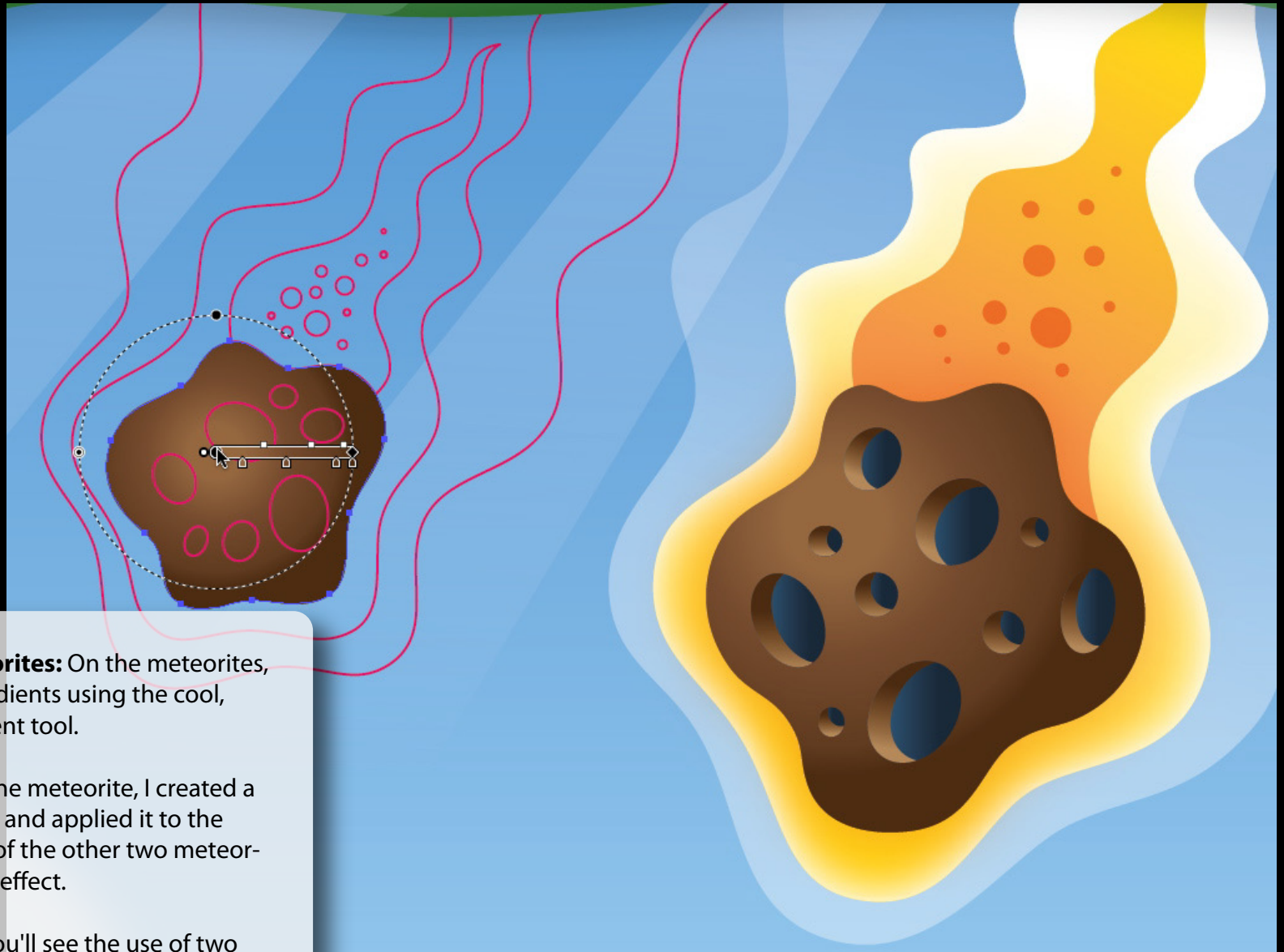
Knowing how I want my end art to appear, I take the time now to organize my content. This allows me to lock and isolate content easier.

It's a good creative habit to get into and makes dealing with more complex files far easier.

**Building the Design:** I start coloring my content. I use the new elliptical and transparent gradient features in Illustrator.

No more hinky opacity masks and shape blends. Giddy up.



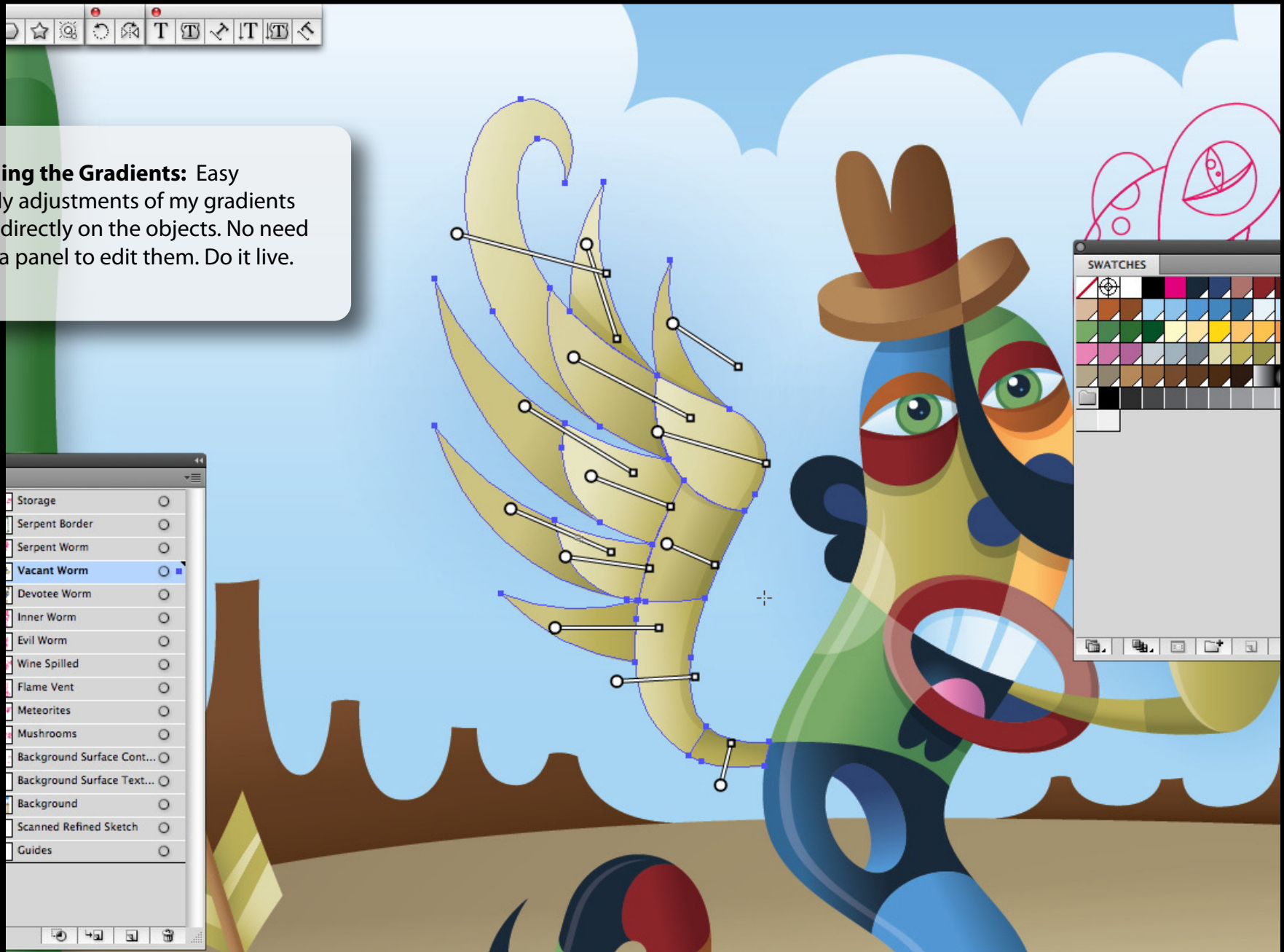


**Creating the Meteorites:** On the meteorites, I figured out my gradients using the cool, new, intuitive gradient tool.

After I fleshed out one meteorite, I created a Graphic Style with it and applied it to the base vector shapes of the other two meteorites to get the same effect.

If you look closely you'll see the use of two Photoshop effects in the art. All done easily in Illustrator.

**Controlling the Gradients:** Easy on-the-fly adjustments of my gradients are now directly on the objects. No need to go to a panel to edit them. Do it live.



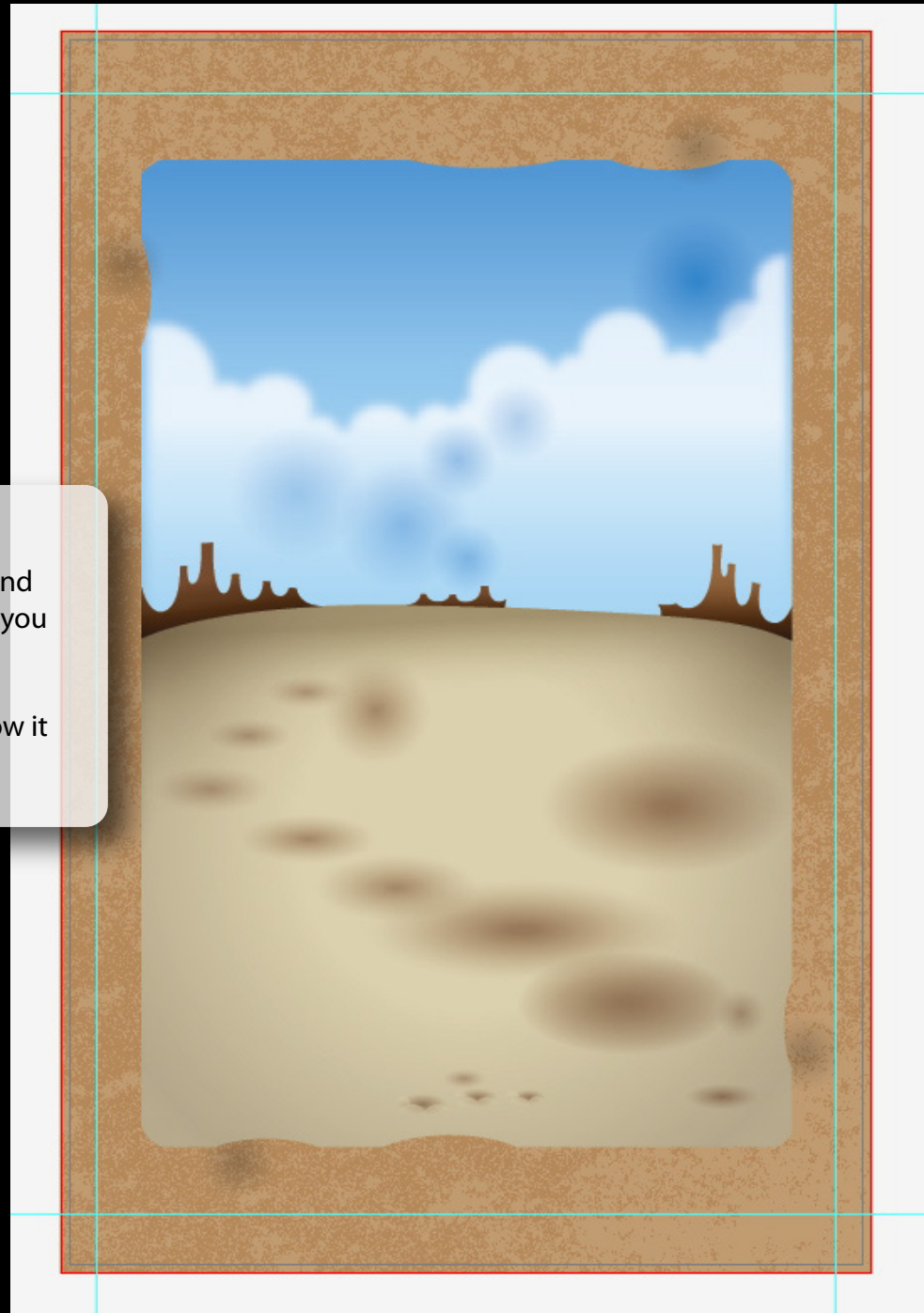


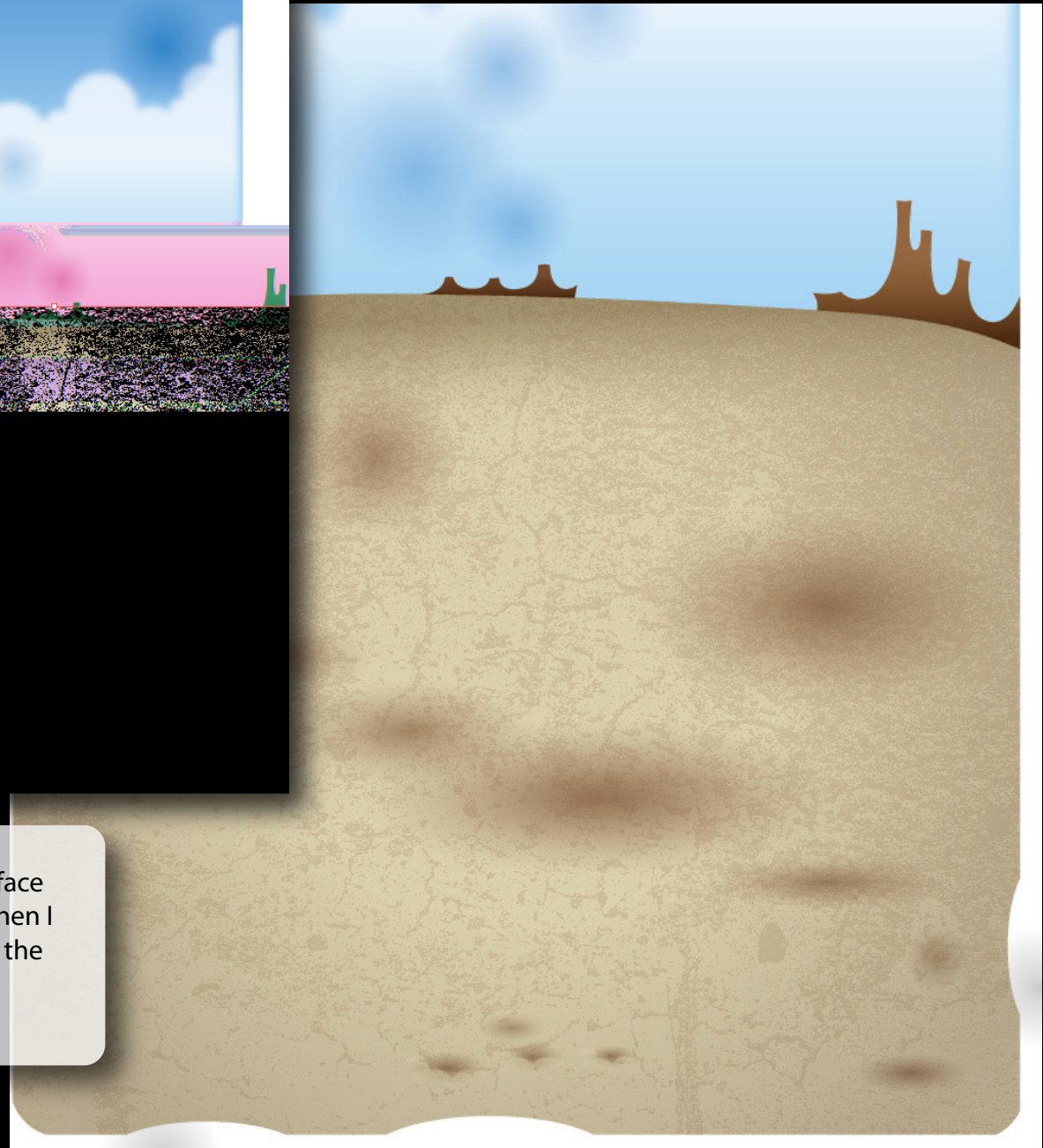
**Taking Full Control:**

New gradient controls let you work quickly with multiple gradients and provide useful feedback along the way.

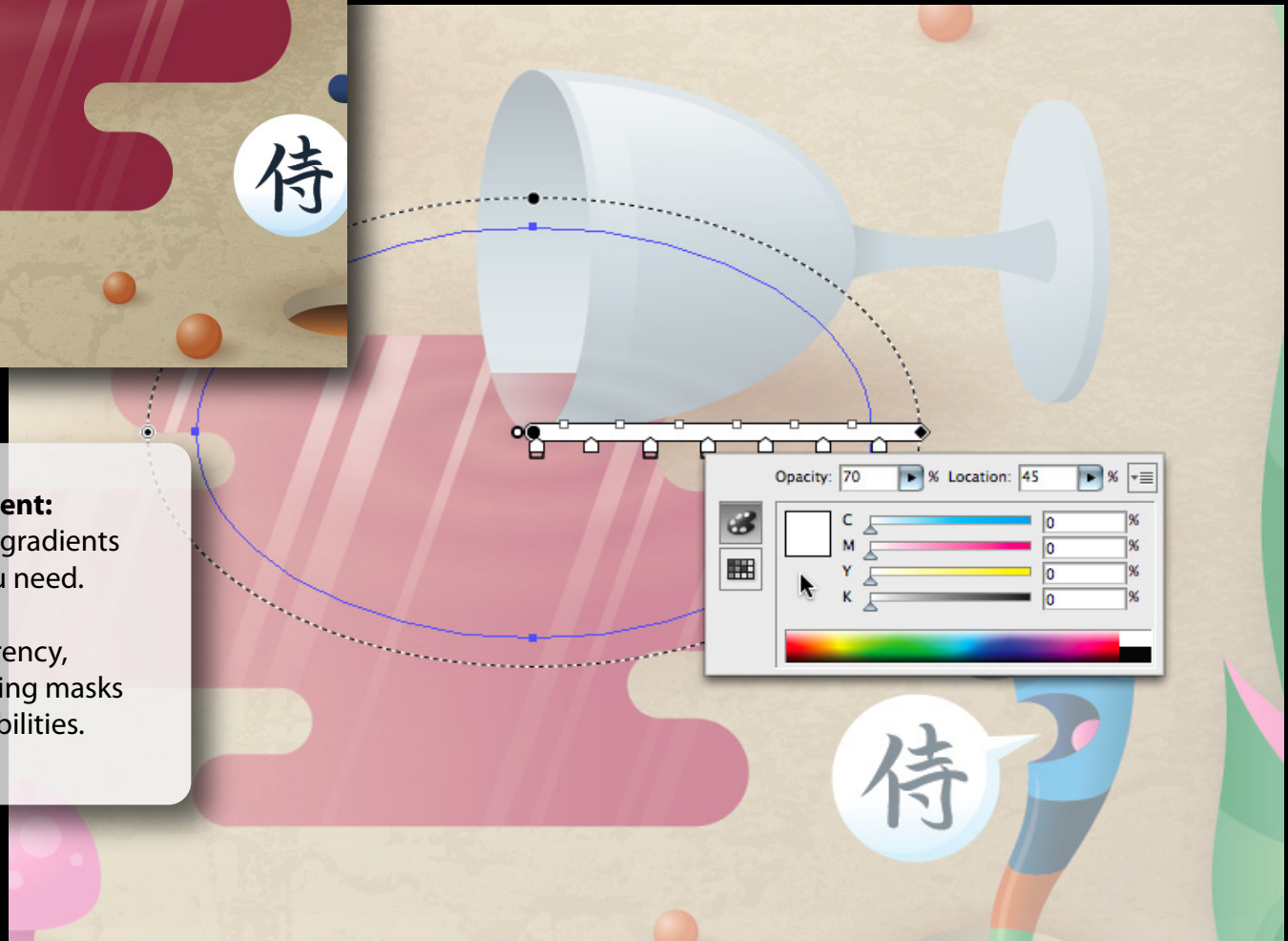
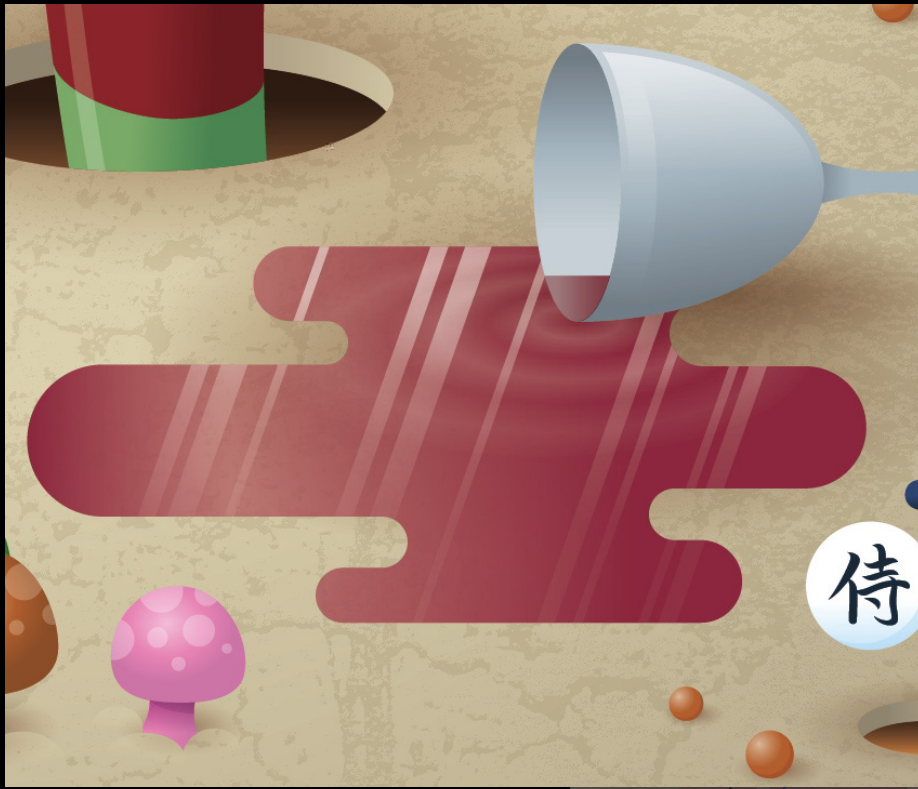
**Using New Gradient Shapes:** The ability to create elliptical gradients, combined with blend modes and transparency in gradients, allows you to add subtle detailing.

Compare this image with the final and see how it works into the overall art.





**Using Ground Textures:** I place a surface texture into my file, size and color it, then I apply it to the background area using the Clipping Mask feature.



**Making Gradients Transparent:**

The new opacity controls for gradients let you easily create what you need.

Combining gradient transparency, elliptical gradients, and clipping masks gives you have endless possibilities.

**Completing the Art:**

The final artwork. Everything you see is easily editable. You can make custom changes at any stage of your creative process, worry less about the tools, and focus more on the creativity.

Isn't that what you ultimately want anyway?



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