

When Artists Meet Video Games: Original Marketing Artworks by Jim Lee, Frank Cirocco, Mick McGinty & More Join Heritage's Video Games Auction

The January 19-21 event boasts artist's works alongside a collection of the rare vintage games

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DALLAS, Texas (Jan 2, 2023) — In 1989, when Robert Florczak was tasked with creating the cover art for a new video game by Jordan Mechner called Prince of Persia, the prolific commercial artist looked to an unlikely source for inspiration: actor, comedian and Saturday Night Live alum Kevin Nealon. The two men were good friends, so when Florczak asked his pal to model for Prince of Persia's cover, Nealon — who is a gifted caricature artist himself — was more than happy to transform into the game's traitorous Grand Vizier Jaffar.

In Florczak's mixed-media painting, Nealon-as-Jaffar grips the endangered princess's wrist while two swordsmen go at it, all laid over the bold crimson drapery of a grand proscenium. The piece has a vintage movie poster feel — very old Hollywood — so it's no surprise that when Florczak gifted the painting to Nealon, he held on to it for 34 years.

Now fans of the epic video game — which spawned numerous sequels and a 2010 film adaptation starring Jake Gyllenhaal — will have a chance to own a piece of Prince of Persia history. As part of Heritage Auctions' January 20-21 Video Games Signature® Auction, Nealon will offer the historic painting for which he posed more than three decades ago.



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But this work, which marked the dawn of the massive Prince of Persia franchise, isn't the only original art in the January auction. Heritage will also offer a selection of outstanding (and truly entertaining) original video game art by such greats as Frank Cirocco, Jim Lee and Mick McGinty. These pieces of history — original box art, concept art and advertisement art — are bursting with the charisma of the artists behind them, the games' characters and the games themselves. These artists defined their industries and knew how to tell epic stories within a single frame.



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"We are beyond thrilled to be the first venue to bring a wide selection of original video game art to public market," says Valarie Spiegel, Managing Director of Video Games at Heritage. "However, I would say we are just as excited, if not more so, to have the opportunity to immortalize these offerings on our website, as a means of preserving this history with free access to all."

Frank Cirocco, the Marvel and Disney veteran who co-created Alien Legion, has a handful of original artworks in the auction, perhaps most notably the original box art for 1988's Bionic Commando. Cirocco illustrated the popular NES game with a dynamic mixed-media painting of its airborne hero battling robots and soldiers (and soldiers piloting robots). Cirocco's preliminary art for Centipede's 1992 Game Boy version, also in this auction, gives you an idea of just how much an artist opens up his imagination in the process of bringing these games to the public. Cirocco's centipede, rather than a set of little roaming discs, is a massive fanged beast as ferocious as a T. rex, bearing down on a lone fighter while massive spiders drop around them on webs as thick as ropes and a scorpion the size of a horse lunges into frame.

Cirocco's most famous colleague, Jim Lee, also has an artwork in the auction: It's a dense and gorgeous original concept drawing for 2020's Gotham Knights, featuring Nightwing, Robin, Batgirl and Red Hood poised to do battle on Gotham's mean streets. The game is based on Lee and company's Batman: Gotham Knights comic-book series.



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Mick McGinty, an acclaimed illustrator who pivoted seamlessly from airbrush to digital in the course of his career, died just last year. He has seven works in this event, including the original ad art for Sega's 1992 Streets of Rage 2. McGinty, who also created the box art for the game, fleshes out the faces and action-ready physiques of fighters Axel, Max, Skate and Blaze in a way the game's flattened and pixelated graphics could not. This is what they look like. Conversely, McGinty's version of Die Hard hero John McClane, painted for the 1997 Die Hard Arcade box art, departs from the familiar Bruce Willis smirk (Sega didn't have the rights to Willis' face) and instead imagines McClane anew. Here the corruption-fighting cop stands in his bloodstained wife-beater as the Nakatomi

Corporation skyscraper goes up in flames behind him.

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