

ONCE I'VE GOTTEN AN IDEA, I MULL IT OVER IN MY MIND FOR ABOUT A MONTH OR SO, EXPANDING IT, ADDING PLOT TWISTS OR A SURPRISE ENDING TO GIVE THE STORY MORE SPICE.



I ALSO SPEND THIS TIME DOING RESEARCH. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF RESEARCH. IT WILL IMPROVE A STORY BUT LACK OF AUTHENTICITY WILL DAMAGE A STORY'S CREDIBILITY.



SINCE USAGI YOHIMBO TAKES PLACE IN FEUDAL JAPAN, I NEED A LOT OF REFERENCE MATERIAL TO MAKE THE STORIES AND SETTINGS AS CONVINCING AS POSSIBLE.



LIKE MOST CARTOONISTS, I HAVE TONS OF BOOKS AND A FAIRLY EXTENSIVE RESEARCH "MORGUE" AND, OF COURSE, THERE'S THE PUBLIC LIBRARY.



ONCE A STORY IS DEVELOPED, AN OUTLINE IS WRITTEN WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTION, SETTINGS, AND SNATCHES OF DIALOGUE. I ALSO PACE THE STORY, FIGURING OUT HOW MANY PAGES EACH SCENE WOULD TAKE TO FIT AS A TWENTY OR TWENTY-FOUR PAGE STORY.

4 pages Usagi walking. Something ominous in air, loosens sword, hears scream
 runs toward sound
 comes upon dead man
 examines - no sign of footprints except for man's but was killed
 with slashes as from sword
 How killed? sound overhead Usagi takes out sword
 Must leave him but takes his crossbow, later comes to village
 Villagers appear
 "That's my husband's crossbow!" Usagi: "Found him dead."
 villager: "Chi no Tsubasa
 Usagi: "? wings of blood?"
 With Village elder
 "The chi no tsubasa holds us in thrall."
 Usagi: "But what is it?"
 (bat) clan. They came and
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NACAE

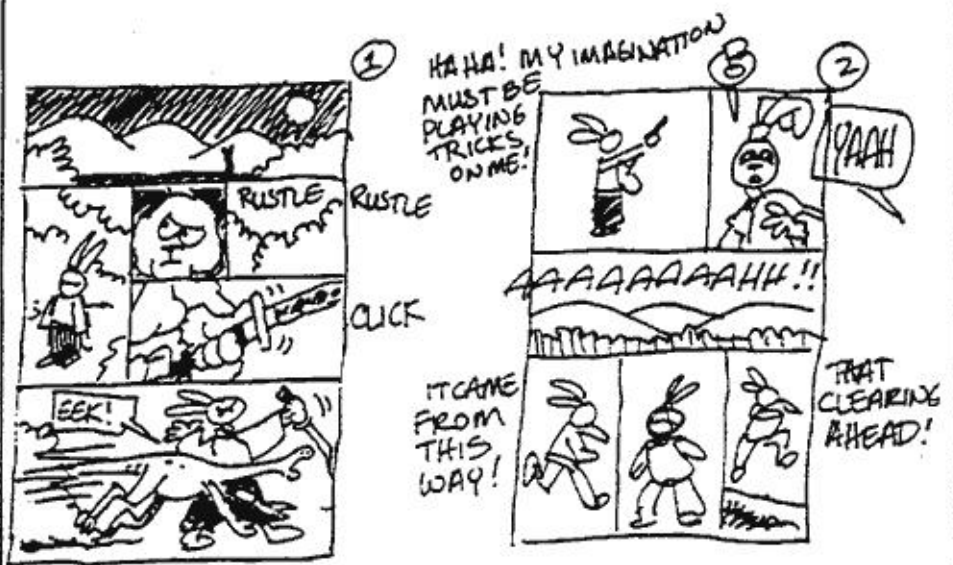
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THEN I DRAW A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF EACH PAGE, BREAKING DOWN PANELS AND DECIDING COMPOSITIONS.

REMEMBER, THE OBJECT IS TO TELL A STORY CLEARLY SO IT MUST FLOW SMOOTHLY FROM FRAME TO FRAME.

MAKE YOUR PANELS VISUALLY INTERESTING. VARY CAMERA ANGLES, SIZE, SHAPES, USE OF BLACKS, ETC.

THUMBNAILS OF PAGES 1 AND 2 OF USAGI vol.1 #21 ARE REPRODUCED ACTUAL SIZE.



BELOW IS THE THUMBNAIL SKETCH FOR PAGE 3 OF THE SAME ISSUE AND, TO THE RIGHT, HOW IT APPEARED IN THE BOOK.

NOTE, TOO, THAT THE WORKING SCRIPT IS WRITTEN ALONGSIDE THE THUMBNAILS.



THIS STORY APPEARS IN THE USAGI YUJIMBO BOOK 5 TRADEPAPERBACK COLLECTION FROM FANTAGRAPHKS BOOKS

NEXT I LAYOUT THE PENCILS ON A SHEET OF TWO-PLY STRATHMORE KID-FINISH BRISTOL (500 SERIES).

THE IMAGE AREA IS 10 X 15" AND WILL BE REDUCED DOWN TO 6 X 9" (60%) WHEN PRINTED IN THE COMIC BOOK.

I START WITH A HARD-LEAD PENCIL (3H) AND JUST BLOCK IN SHAPES. WORKING LOOSELY MAKES IT EASIER TO MAKE CHANGES IN THE ART.

THE LETTERING IS ALSO ROUGHED IN.

"HERE THEY COME! EVERYONE -- INTO YOUR HOMES!"

I'VE LETTERED QUITE A FEW COMIC BOOKS AND IT'S **FRUSTRATING** WHEN AN ARTIST DOESN'T LEAVE ENOUGH ROOM FOR THE LETTERING.

THOSE SCUM.

LETTERING RULES ARE DRAWN WITH A 3-H PENCIL, A T-SQUARE AND AN AMES LETTERING GUIDE SET AT 3/4".

I USE ROTRING ART PENS (FINE AND BOLD TIPS) TO DO THE LETTERING AND WORD BALLOONS. I DON'T USE THE INK CARTRIDGES THEY'RE SOLD WITH BUT, INSTEAD, REPLACE THEM WITH THE ROTRING INK CONVERTER WHICH ALLOWS ME TO FILL THE PEN WITH MY OWN INK.

A BOW AND ARROWS! JUST WHAT I NEED!

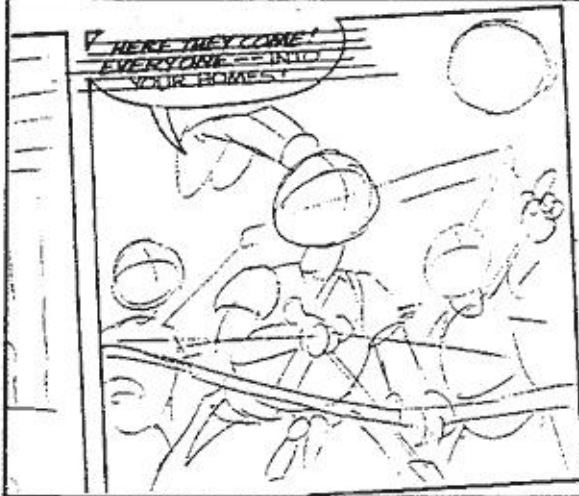
SAMURAI! SAMURAI!

HERE THEY COME! EVERYONE -- INTO YOUR HOMES!

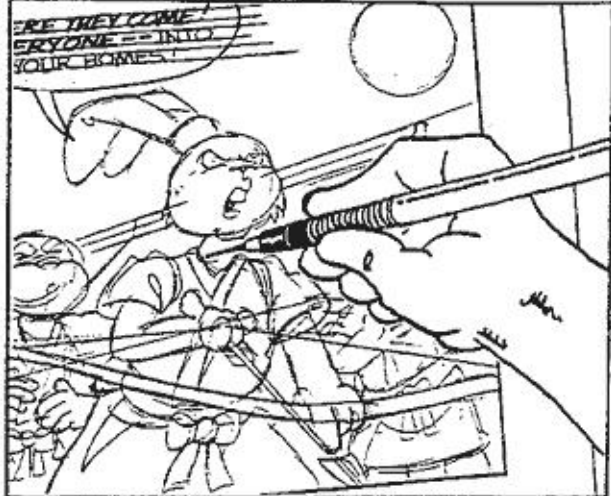
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AFTER THE LETTERING AND BALLOONS ARE DONE, I INK THE PANEL BORDERS WITH A # 3½ TECHNICAL PEN.



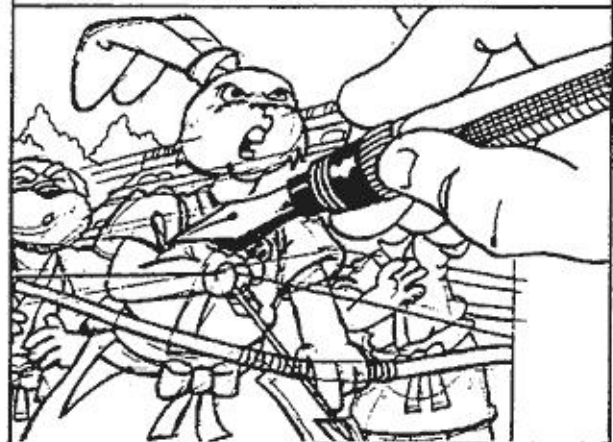
THE NEXT STEP IS TO TIGHTEN THE LAYOUTS USING AN H-B PENCIL WHICH HAS A MEDIUM WEIGHT LEAD.



SINCE I USUALLY DO MY OWN INKING, I CAN LEAVE OUT A LOT OF THE DETAILS IN MY PENCILS.



I USE A FLEXIBLE-NIB FOUNTAIN PEN FOR INKING. IT GIVES A VERY NICE VARIATION IN LINE STRENGTH THAT MAKES THE ARTWORK MORE INTERESTING TO LOOK AT.



THE LAYOUT USING BASIC SHAPES TO ESTABLISH THE DRAWING.



THE PENCILS.



INKED WITH A FLEXIBLE-NIB FOUNTAIN PEN.



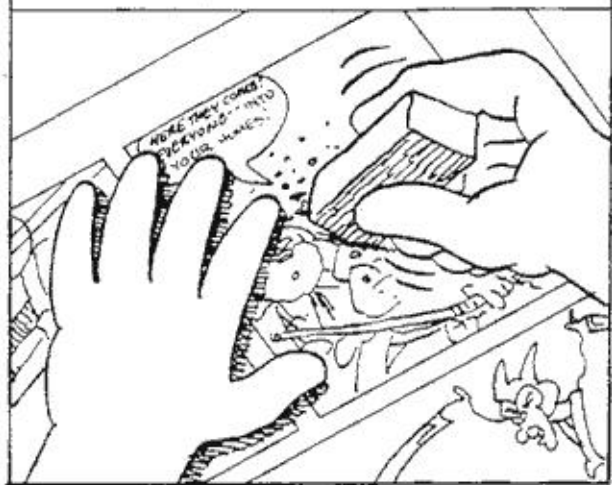
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THE INK THAT I USE IS FW BLACK. IT'S A FREE-FLOWING, FLAT, WATER-PROOF DRAWING INK.



AFTER THE PRELIMINARY INKING HAS DRIED, I ERASE THE PAGE WITH A SOFT ERASER SUCH AS THE FABER-CASTELL MAGIC RUB.



THE BLACKS ARE THEN FILLED IN WITH A WATER COLOR BRUSH...



...AND THE TEXTURES AND SHADINGS ARE DRAWN IN.



THIS WAS INKED WITH A FLEXIBLE-NIB PEN



THIS WAS DONE WITH A TECHNICAL PEN THAT DOES NOT VARY THE LINE WEIGHT



AND THIS WAS FINISHED WITH A BRUSH



REMEMBER THAT I SAID THE ARTWORK IS REDUCED WHEN PRINTED? WELL, THE PANEL ON THE LEFT IS PRINTED ACTUAL SIZE OF THE ORIGINAL (100%) AND THE ONE ON THE RIGHT HAS BEEN REDUCED DOWN TO 60% FOR THIS BOOK.



I THEN SHOW THE STORY TO A FEW FRIENDS WHO, OF COURSE, ARE ALWAYS IMPRESSED.



