

AUGUST 2026

#6

ROLL THE ZINE

THE ART

MAKES

THE CARD



THE ART MAKES THE CARD

The second trading card game themed Roll the Zine is here! In Roll the Zine #3, I showcased some of my beautiful hand-drawn Magic the Gathering tokens and told stories about them.

This month, we admire the art of proper artists who illustrate Pokémon TCG and Magic the Gathering cards. I'll share some of my favourites but I also asked around in my local gaming groups which ones they like the best.

While rules and mechanics design drives the gameplay, it's the art that makes the card memorable and unique. In Game Developers Conference (GDC) 2016, Magic the Gathering head designer Mark Rosewater talked about what he had learned from 20 years in Magic^[1]. One of the topics he brought up was how they learned that it's important to give players choices with art so they can make their deck feel like it's their deck.

Card art is not important only for collectors. It's an integral part of the experience also for the players and their relationship with their decks.

With almost 400 artists for Pokémon TCG and over 2300 for Magic the Gathering so there's something for everyone. Each player has their own taste for what makes cards or artists their favourite ones.

The artists discussed in this zine are all masterful illustrators and artists and their art truly elevates the cards they illustrate.

[1] 'Magic: the Gathering': 20 Years, 20 Lessons Learned, Mark Rosewater, GDC

Cover photo: Kelli Tungay / Unsplash License

Pokemon cards: Pokémon/Nintendo

Magic the Gathering cards: Wizards of the Coast LLC

birds of Chiaki



To begin, we need to start from 2011. Pokémon released Call of Legends and within it, Suwama Chiaki illustrated this trinity of birds that form my all-time favourite evolution line in Pokémon TCG.

The cards are functional reprints from the previous set, HS: Triumphant, where Chiaki also illustrated the originals but I like these arts way more than the originals.

I've had the pleasure to grow with the Pokémon games. My first game in the series was Pokémon Blue back in the turn of the millenia and Pidgey line as the first bird immediately made me a big fan of it.

Pidgeotto is my favourite of the three in design.



Pidgeot is the most majestic of all Pokémon birds. It's a charismatic in its simplicity — it does not need any party tricks to command attention in which ever party it lands on.

These three cards have a special place in my generation 1 Pokédex binder and were an inspiration to start one.

Special art found in ordinary cards

guest article by Ezageima

Few TCGs boast the same amount of artistic and thematic diversity as Magic: The Gathering does, and even fewer can do that while holding onto a very strong identity as both a game and a universe. Sometimes, though, you can't help but love card artwork that doesn't feel too different from what can be described as a "normal" MTG card.

I enjoy all the full arts, illustrator rares, frame breaks, special treatments, and foils found in many TCGs, but I especially appreciate cards that aren't special treatments and still feel special and noteworthy. Sometimes the artwork is on an uncommon that doesn't have much else than the artwork going for it, and sometimes it's a highly sought-after staple that goes into a massive variety of decks.

That's where Anna Steinbauer, in my personal opinion, shines the most: Artwork that truly feels like it fits perfectly on the card, and catches the feeling of Magic: The Gathering perfectly. There are many great examples of Steinbauer's artwork that feature a gorgeous blend of realistic and fantastical, ranging from awe-inspiring or outright creepy to melancholic and even sad.

The first card I want to highlight is Jace, Wielder of Mysteries. Jace is an iconic character, and this card is one of the most well-known printings of him in a card, but it's special to me for a personal reason: It was the first planeswalker card I owned. I had played a good handful of different Planeswalkers while on loaner decks, so I knew how they worked, but I didn't own any for the first two years or so when I played.



The artwork shows some of his ability to create illusions (there are illusory copies of him in the background he's using as a distraction), and some of his confident personality also shines through. A character full of determination, represented very well by an artwork that's grown to be synonymous with his name.



I've only played Magic regularly for 5 years or so, but I've been a fan of the artwork ever since I first saw some cards in another player's binder. I've always considered myself to be a bit of a powergamer, who looks to optimize everything and anything I play to the best version of itself, and one of the greatest pieces of optimization to a well-oiled deck is cards that can "tutor" other cards, and the best example of a card like that is Demonic Tutor.

A simple but very powerful card, now complemented by an artwork where the titular Demonic Tutor is the haunted doll sitting on the girl's lap. The artwork has a ton of details, ranging from the innocence of the scene to the black, leaking eyes of the cursed doll, to the minute details of a faint Planeswalker symbol found on the toy block in the background, or the stuffed bear whose head has been ripped off.

It's a very creepy artwork for a very powerful card, and it will always remain as a great example of an artwork feeling perfect for a card in my eyes.

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The first *tayu* card

ストームエメラルダ (eng. Storm Emerald) is the newest Pokémon TCG set. It was published in Japan July 31st, 2026 and will arrive in the west as Delta Reign in November.

While the rest of the TCG world is hyping for Mega Rayquaza ex, my eyes are on this beautiful Nidoran ♀.

It's illustrated by a new Pokémon TCG artist *tayu*. *Tayu* is an artist who makes stunning embroidery artworks of different Pokémon and it's wonderful to see their art in the TCG — hopefully for years to come.

Before this first official card, *tayu* participated in Pokémon Trading Card Game Illustration Contest 2024 where their Feraligatr artwork finished as First Runner-Up.



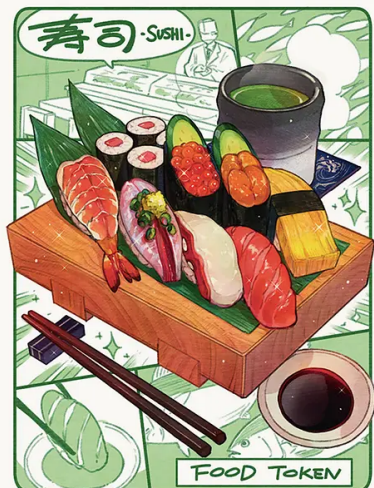


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Roll the Zine is a board and card game focused zine and a love letter to creativity, gaming and DIY culture. It's an exploration of media, imperfection and putting something out there.

We celebrate human creation, game design, joy of playing together and the art that elevates the games.

As Pokémon TCG World Championships starts in San Francisco, this zine celebrates the artists who turn TCG cards — both in Pokémon TCG as well as Magic the Gathering — into memorable experiences that inspire generation after generation into the wonderful world of playing trading card games.

Big thanks to Ezageima for the guest article.

Want to write a guest article to a future Roll the Zine issue about something board and card game related? Get in touch: zine@hamatti.org.

Welcome along the journey. You can find all Roll the Zine issues from zine.hamatti.org. You can subscribe via RSS to get new issues fresh to your reader.

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