VISUAL NARRATIVE

Game Arts

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Magical & Mysterious

Summary

My character was based on the role of a trader or merchant in a video game, which offers the player a way to exchange currency for items which can help them progress. The world is based around an anthropomorphic animal society, where the player can interact with different animal themed characters, possessing the key traits of their real-world counterparts, throughout a linear story. I wanted to create a character which could logically appear in multiple places around a fantasy themed world. Since the character had to be non-human, I chose the rabbit, due to its real-life ability to create tunnels interconnecting multiple areas. I wanted this merchant to be a kind of character guide, but still have a morally ambiguous feeling, so the player wouldn't feel like they were relying on them too much. I chose to give a more mysterious/dark look as opposed to the normal 'cute' look of a rabbit, in order to fit this role. As I had decided to make him a potion seller, I wanted to use the bottles in the decoration of the clothing, and to clearly show the function of the character to the player, as somewhere they could gain additional aid movement through the world, for example. Adding to the character, I chose to make him more magical-looking by including elements in his outfit like crystals, his staff, and longer flowing robes.

Moodboard

spooky

Adventures as old
- Magical + mysterious
- dark + dangerous
- out of this world

beetle backpack
carrying goods

trader/merchant — potions
- magical items traded through wrong
in game power-up

object

pandorus box

wizard

magic staff

inlaid w/ crystals

hollow log for

Adventures of old

animal character

wombat
sugar glider

edgy

spooky vibes

many packages/parcels/boxes

bunny
mouse box

w/ backpack
- many boxes/parcels
- pops out of ground at various places in world

potion wizard bby

morally ambiguous

dark/moody colours
- navy blue

- traditional travelling clothing
- neutral tones

- H2D

lobos lepus

belted

waistcoat open neck

open at the bottom

Mindmap & Concept Sketches

Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

Concept art

Cell shading
- mimics comics or cartoon
- simpler appearance
- can make objects more
  readable

Muted colours
- makes characters fit more naturally into
  environments

Fang + Bone
- many elements jumbled +
  packed together, looks like it
  could fall down

Beedle
- travelling merchant who can
  be seen in many areas
  of the game
- many bags + boxes +
  packages
  make his silhouette more
  round and inviting
- different shapes make
  his design visually
  interesting

Style Inspo
& Research

similar design
to donkey /
pack horse
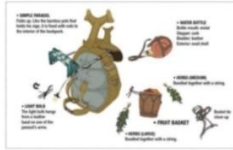
HADES

Character Portraits + Turnarounds
'Inside Hades - 3D Modelling + Rigging' - YT

Modelling
from 2D art

Model in
Maya

Full shading is done in
the colouring stage, over the
flattened character model
     flat colours
     shadows in multiply
     highlights
     extra lineart layer
     for details

Other characters
within the game
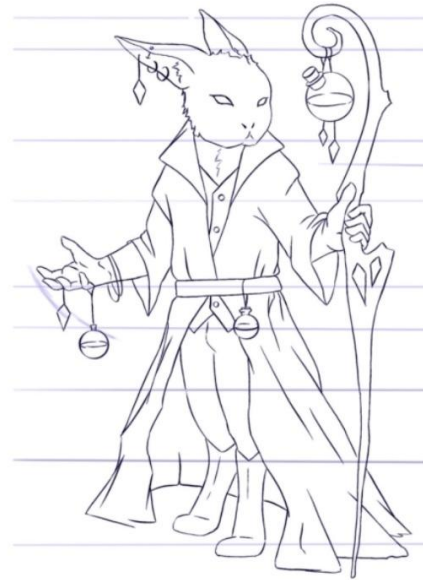share this same
comic style, which
has to be translated
into the 3D
model!

Character is
rigged for movement
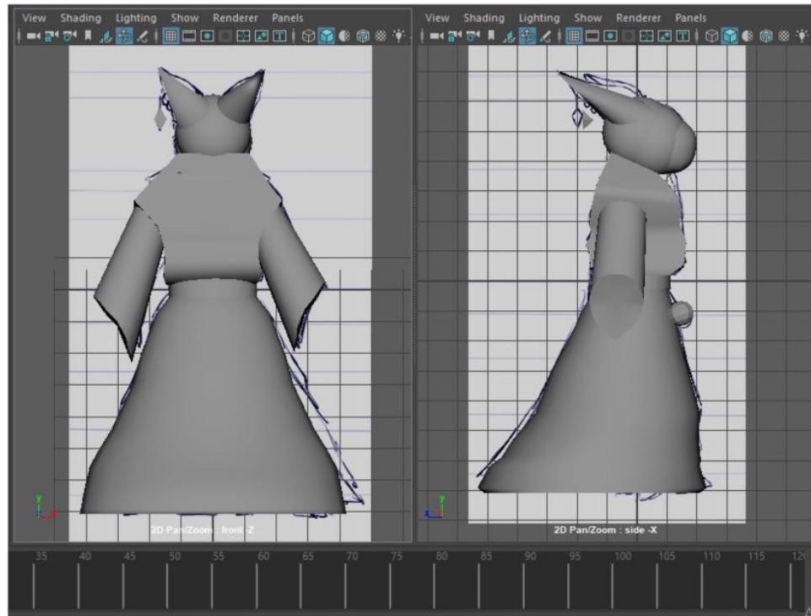+ rendered using
toon lighting to
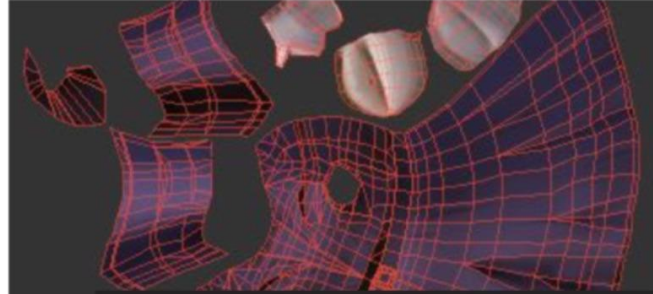give the black
outline

Style
Colour
Concept
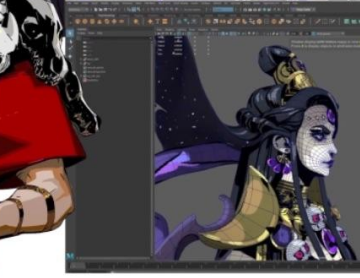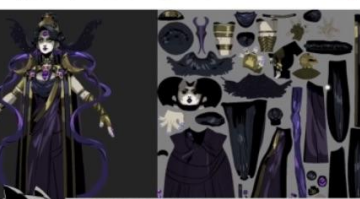
Final
Concept
&
Turnaround
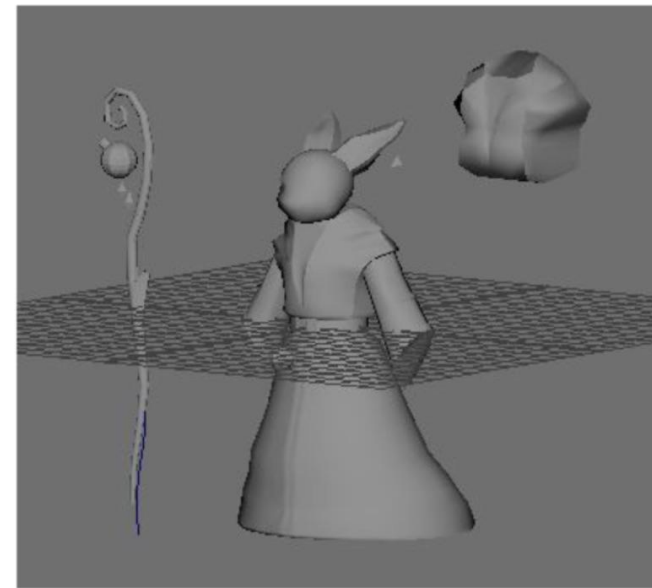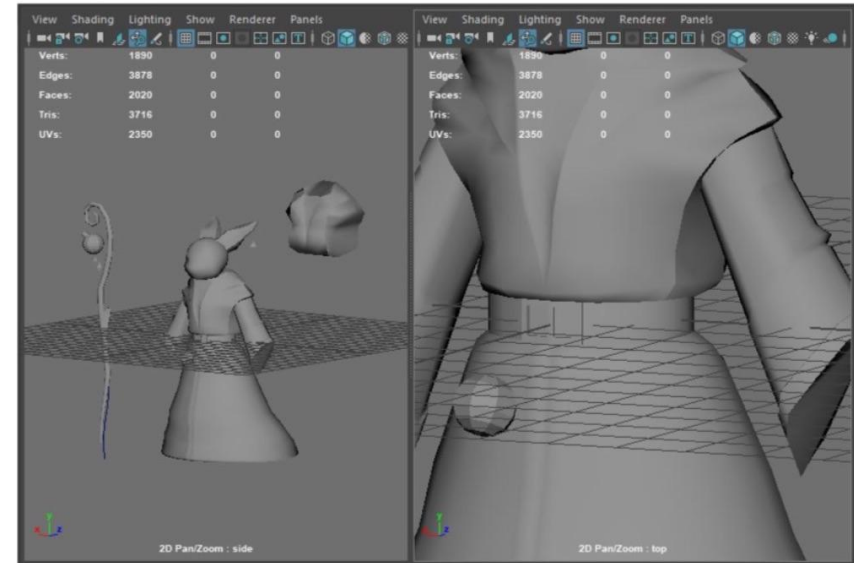
Progress in Maya

Maya Render View
INTO
ZBrush
INTO
Substance Painter

Texturing Process

GAME ARTS : FINAL OUTCOME

Final Outcome: https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/lobos-lepus-dca83061cb7d45d58e28de6ac6264fe3

Reflection

I thoroughly enjoyed working on this project, despite several technical issues that I encountered, as overcoming these made the outcome even more satisfying to me. During the design process, beginning from nothing and ending with a fully realised 3D model, I was able to work on things that I had previously done, like working out a character's personality through their appearance, as well as learning new skills, like modeling and painting in 3D.

Overall, I was very happy with the concept I came up with, especially having explored other options, such as the wandering trader theme, and eventually settling on the Bunny Wizard. Exploring different shapes, and then using shadows and silhouettes to build the character was a process that I had not experienced previously, but I think it helped to make my character more easily recognisable, as I could see the outline and defining features that needed to be distinguishable, such as the ears, and the staff standing away from the body.

Beginning from my moodboard and rough sketches, I was able to find artists to inspire the style of the character in-game. After working on sketches for a while and finalising the body and clothes of the character, I used the artists I had chosen to work out what style the final render would be in. I decided to work on a full colour and shaded concept piece, as I knew this would help me get the look that I wanted later on, when it came to colouring, and save me time down the line. I then used the lineart from this piece to create the turnarounds that would be translated into the 3D art.

Moving into Maya, I began to fill out the basic shapes for the head, ears, torso and skirt of the Wizard costume. I slowly worked on adding shape details, like the collar folds, trying to focus on the whole model at once, to prevent one area from becoming far more detailed than the rest. During this process, there were several pieces that I decided to re-do - primarily the torso and ears - as they did not finish how I wanted them to look and I realised it would be faster to start again earlier on, than try and fix them later on. I also experimented with Maya's fabric simulation mechanic for the skirt, but ultimately decided, due to limited polygons, that it was easier to model it as a solid object.

The most challenging part of this project for me was finishing the model so that it could be exported for ZBrush. I found that many of the edges between polygons had holes in, or multiple layers stacked on top of each other, and the process to merge each vertex together was very tedious. This was especially problematic around the ears, where I ended up with every face duplicated but separated, each of which needed to be removed or merged individually. Once this was complete though, the process of cutting and flattening the pieces was relatively simple.

In ZBrush, I realised that since I had spent so long working the details in Maya, I was already very happy with my model, so adding details was far easier than I had anticipated. I enjoyed being able to use the Wacom tablets, similar to the process of 2D digital drawing, to add fur and wood textures, and small divots to show wear. I then baked the new high-poly version of the model into Substance Painter, to begin the colouring.

I originally intended my main design inspiration to be the characters from 'Zelda: Breath of the Wild', as I wanted to keep the appearance simple, and use the flat, cel-shaded look. However, with the workflow we were provided, and eventually working in Substance Painter, I decided to include the visible lineart and blockier shading of the 'Hades' 3D character models. Having watched a video on YouTube of the 'Hades' artists' process, I found it a lot easier to understand the colouring process. One problem that I did encounter was that I didn't merge the sections of the model together before I started colouring, so I had to re-colour a large portion of the model. I did find that this allowed me to correct any mistakes I had made in the process the first time, so it was much faster. I coloured the Body, Staff, and smaller details individually, as that is how I'd worked in ZBrush, and then exported the whole piece in a format that I could upload to sketchfab.

Overall I was very happy with the product of this project, and I feel like I learned a lot throughout the entire process. I would have liked to have had time to experiment with rigging the model, so that the hand pieces and staff could have been seen in action, but hope to learn that myself in coming weeks. I plan to continue to practice these skills in preparation for next year.