



MARA GEDVILAS

Senior Project Reflection

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ARTIST STATEMENT

“As a life-long artist, I’ve been intimately aware of the story-telling process. Digital art is the ultimate tool in realizing the full potential of immersion. By combining my illustrations with web design practices, I strive to capture my audiences with a unique experience in new realities.

Initially drawn to these ideas at a young age, I became fascinated by the raw power of nature and its forces as well as the intrapersonal and psychological workings of the mind. Together, I believe these elements can provoke powerful messages and emotions. I’ve grown to focus on these themes along with fantasy elements, animal familiars, and symbolism.

I aim to continue to evolve my projects into interactive programs, to further personalize the experience. By expanding my techniques and talents, I believe I can provide an enthralling journey for my audience as well as shattering the glass window between possibility and stagnancy.

I utilize the aesthetics of a simple palette to offer a contrast to a busy world, while utilizing imagery that raises curiosities and layouts that flow easily. My focus is to offer my audience a unique experience by tapping into their psyche to leave a lasting impression.”

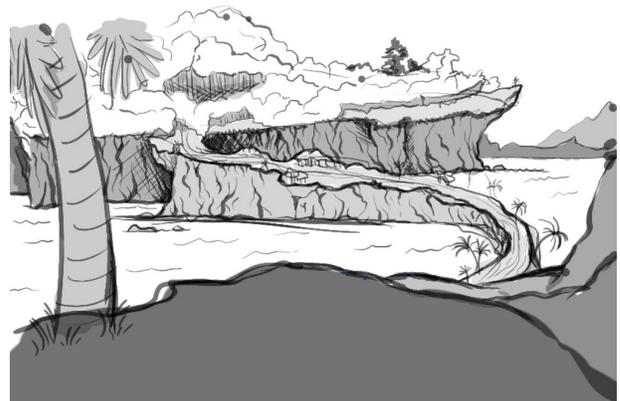
SENIOR PROJECT: PREMISE

Two and a half years ago, I started an Independent Study with Professor Santiago Echeverry to explore a story and world I had been developing in my head for years. My objective was initially to simply motivate myself to get it out on paper, but as I worked with Santi I began to truly shape and develop my world, its deity system, the story's plot as well as the character archs.

The course was meant to be used for visual creation, but most of the art pieces I ended up creating were sketches and concept work. The majority of my productivity ended up being focused in the actual writing of the story itself, and I ended up with synopses, character biographies, and three first-draft chapters. While I was satisfied with my progress, I was disheartened at the lack of finished, visual pieces.

My Senior Project remedies this, as I worked with Professor Santiago Echeverry once more in my world of Vemori, this time truly focusing on bringing the physical world to life via art. I decided to venture into unknown territory - digital painting - to tackle both my anxieties over the method as well as the subject matter of landscapes and scenery. As an artist who almost exclusively works with characters, branching out was a daring ambition.

I initially threw around some rough concept sketches and work (right), and explored both the territories and the inhabitants. In Vemori, there are humans and human-esque beings, though a fair percentage of both have the ability to morph into an animal form. Below I have concept sketches for two of the characters' Fiend forms, for Rhea and Sawyer.

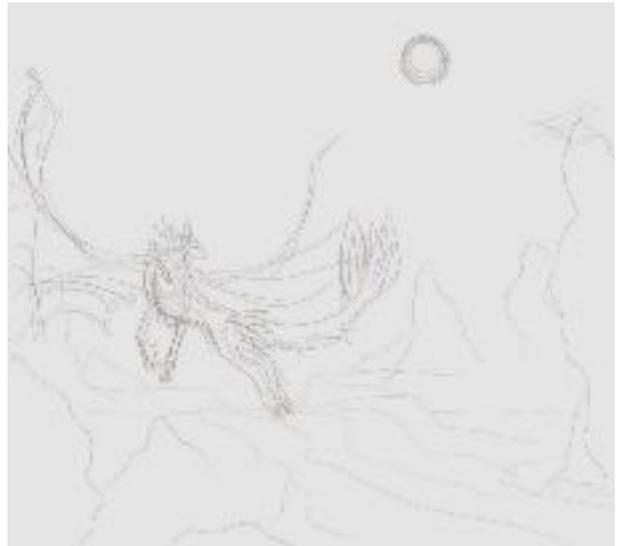


Ultimately decided to focus on three territories - The Verge, The Floating Isles, and Nazri's Shrine. At first I did have a fourth region as well - Rhea's homeland of the Te'krashi Forest and its coast - but in the end I had to focus on the other pieces so as to not sacrifice time or quality. I wanted to bring vivid color and a heavy presence of depth and weight to the scenery.

All pieces began as a pen sketch within my sketchbook, where I would break it down into shapes and outlines. From there, once I was satisfied, I'd upload the image into Photoshop and digitally paint the piece, using the sketch as a reference and guide.



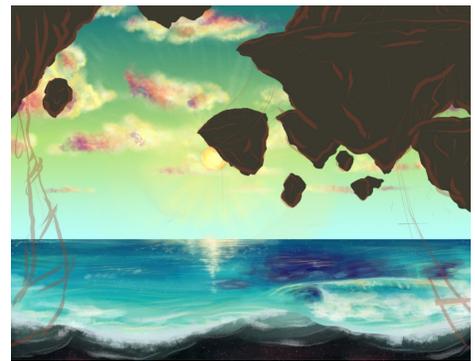
Left:
Te'krashi
Coastline.



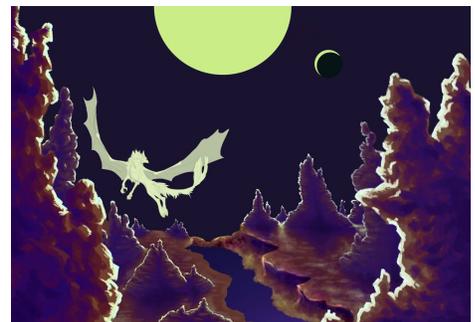
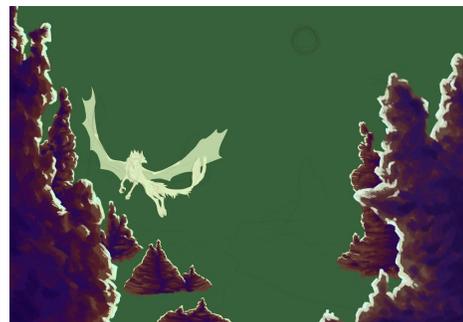
Right:
The Verge

WORKS IN PROGRESS

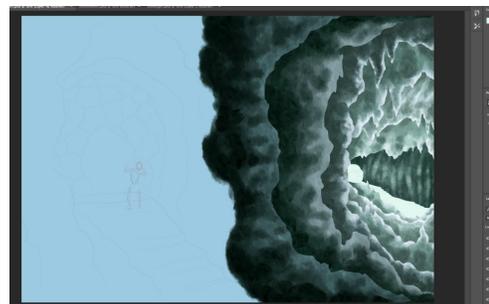
The Floating Isles



The Verge



Nazri's Shrine





REFLECTION:

This was a particularly ambitious project for myself, both because I was utilizing a new method - digital painting - that I had had limited experience with, as well as the fact I'd rarely worked with landscape and geographical design. There were many times I felt too intimidated or disappointed with my work to continue, but ultimately I'm glad I pushed myself into this process. I learned a lot about my own comfort zones and breaking past them, as well as working with color palettes to try and create moods.

In the future, I fully anticipate continuing this personal project of mine with the world of Vemori, following Rhea Riccus and her adventures with her companions, acquaintances, and rivals. I'm admittedly still torn between pursuing it for visual pieces or continuing the literature. Perhaps I'll find a happy medium utilizing graphic novel practices or even an interactive website for her.