

Production Diary

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NeoDrive

Previous Work

As this is the second semester we are working on this project, I thought it relevant to include an explanation of what has been done for the project up until this point. So far as a studio we have completed a Game Design Document stating everything we wish to achieve while working on this game, we have also completed a white box of sorts for the game we have named NeoDrive.

The studio has been split into the same groups as last semester and therefore everyone knows what to work on from the previous semester. There are three main groups, Overgrown City (which I am apart of), Neo Tokyo and Industrial. Each group represents a level for NeoDrive, and the people assigned to their level has responsibility of making sure that all that is needed it completed by the deadlines set.

As for the second part of how the way the studio works, each person in the studio has a specific role that had been set last semester, although it has slightly changed this semester as certain jobs are no longer needed, and others are a high priority. The people with the same or similar roles can help each other to overcome problems such as bottle necks and the like.

Planning

Contingency Plans

Once a week each group will have a meeting to check deadlines have been met and if there has been any delays or problems that might need addressing. From that meeting if necessary, a studio meeting will be arranged, and the other groups will be informed of any issues or delays. We will also share regular updates to studio as progress is made. Everyone has decided to use a personal Gannt Chart to keep track of progress and what needs to be completed by them for NeoDrive. Furthermore, regular meetings will allow for changes to the plans set, everyone has a personal Gannt Chart that they refer to which is saved to the cloud storage for other members to check what that person is working on any given week.

The studio had set up a shared cloud storage space for the project last semester, this was one thing that worked well last time therefore we will continue to use this space. The shared google drive has clearly labeled folders for everything needed for NeoDrive. Cloud storage is also a great way to back up work created, therefore everyone should have two personal copies of the file as well as the copy on the cloud.

The studio had set up an online group chat so that anyone could tell, ask or discuss something while not physically available. This was also something that worked well last semester therefore it was a good idea to continue with this form of communication. Each group has also set up their own online group chat to stay in communication with just group members. If there is a serious problem within development, this is the fastest and easiest way to inform the studio as not everyone is in the studio 24/7. After the message has been sent most members of the chat will get a notification via their phone or computer, this allows for problems to be sorted as and when the problem arises.

Production Diary

28th January 2019

Today there was a serious meeting concerning our design for the level, last semester we neglected concept art for the level. It was decided as a team that I would now take over the role of concept artist for the level as I had the most experience compared to the other members. It was also decided that Gareth would take on some of the work if a bottle neck started to appear.

During the meeting the theme for the level was defined, although we wanted a city that was neglected and had overgrowth, we hadn't defined the type of architecture that would be in disrepair. After a few suggestions as a group we settled on 1930's Architecture, specifically Art Deco in style.

We found references that were interesting and saved them so that we could use them on a mood board for the level. Below is a sample from the Pinterest board I created (Figure 1).

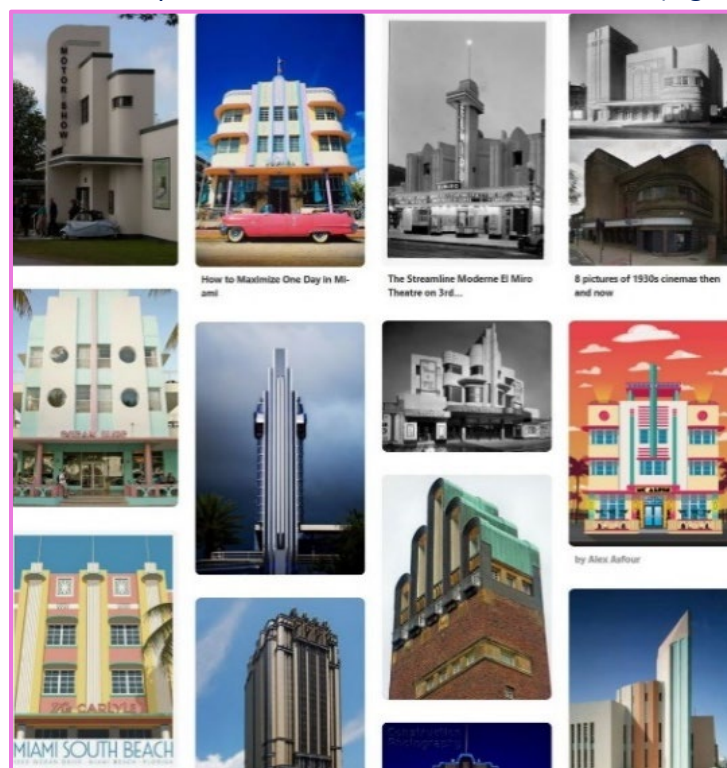


Figure 1

An asset list was also created during the meeting and all assets on the list was given a priority rating. From this list it was decided what needed concept art and what could be made from reference alone so that everyone had something to get on with while there was a short delay while waiting for concepts.

29th January 2019

After looking over the mood board, I felt inspired and decided to try and concept the first building for the project.



Figure 2

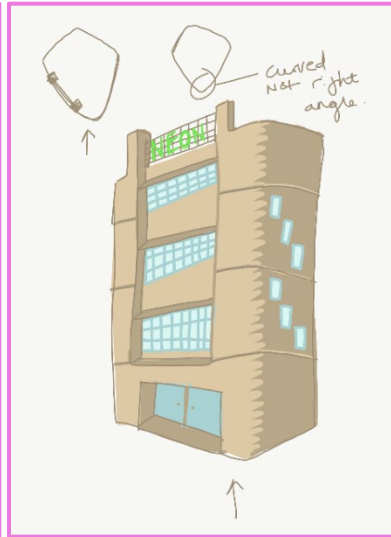


Figure 3

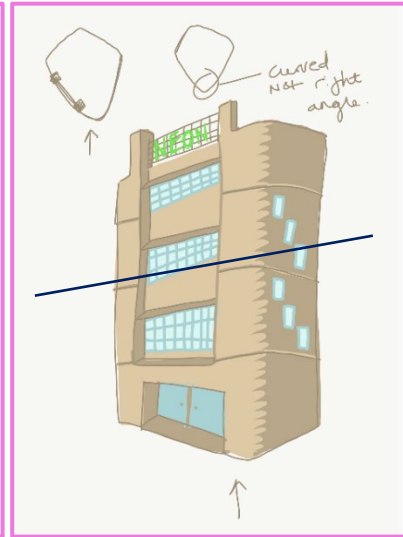


Figure 4

I wanted to try another way of drawing concept with this first design. I placed the image on the computer in front of me, I used adobe draw on my digital tablet separately. Adobe Draw as an application allows me to draw on multiple layers so that I can create a rough and then add detail on top without needing to keep the original sketch to get perspective and placement.

I am happy with the design; however, the actual concept drawing has many flaws. As I was trying to get the perspective right, I found that the windows in the middle have slanted up too far on the bottom, it should be more in line with the line of the building see above (Figure 4). Although there are some problems with the concept drawing, it clearly shows what is needed from the modeler assigned to it, but they can also ask via the group chat if there is a problem understanding it.

30th January 2019

Knowing that the concept art was needed before the building models could be created, I took a reference image (Figure 5) that had been put on the mood board during the meeting and decided to create a new building based on the photograph.

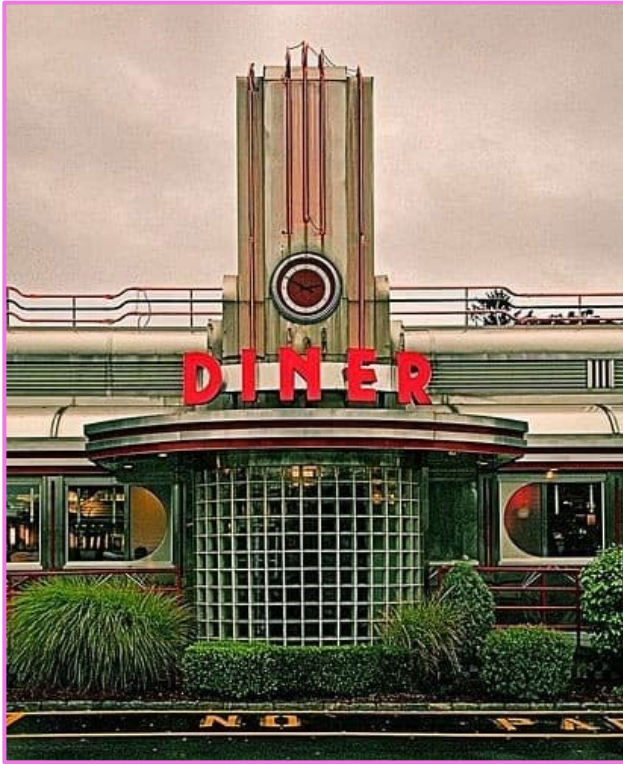


Figure 5

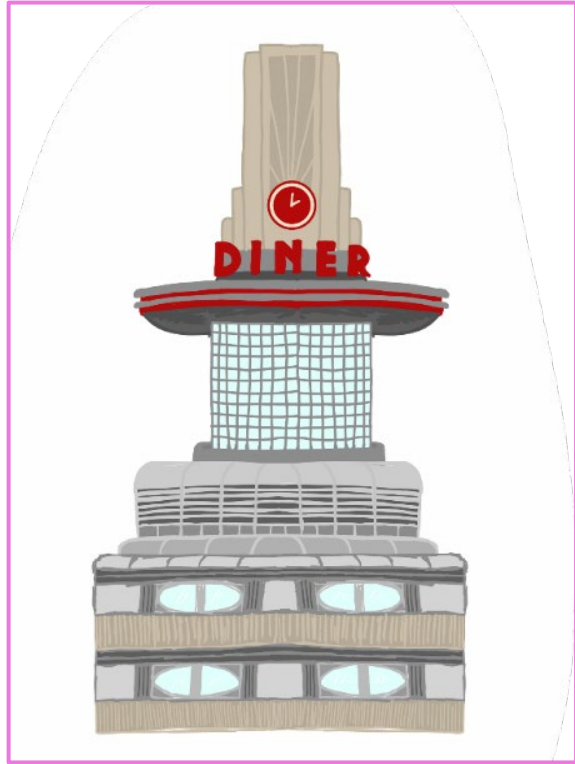


Figure 6

I took the photograph into Adobe draw, placed it on a separate layer and reduced the opacity. This allowed me to use it as reference but also clearly see what I was drawing and how that looked. I started with the lower level of the building, selecting the train car like design from the original photograph. I thought that this would make an interesting view when on the lower parts of the track as it is quite different from the top of the building.

I found this way of working with an image and changing key elements was a fun and creative way of creating new ideas or designs. I will use this method more as I explore other concepts for the level.

31th January 2019

Today I wanted to research more into the Art Deco Architecture that our group is using as reference for our designs. I wanted to find key features used in the architecture of the era; the easiest example of a building from this era is the Chrysler Building see below (Figure 7,8,9).



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

Looking from this singular building, you can see some very distinct features of Art Deco Architecture, some include sun ray effects, tall buildings, linear designs, arches and clear use of geometry in decoration. With this knowledge I can create more accurate depictions of architecture in this style.

Following my research, I decided to create another concept piece trying to use my new-found knowledge see below (Figure 10).

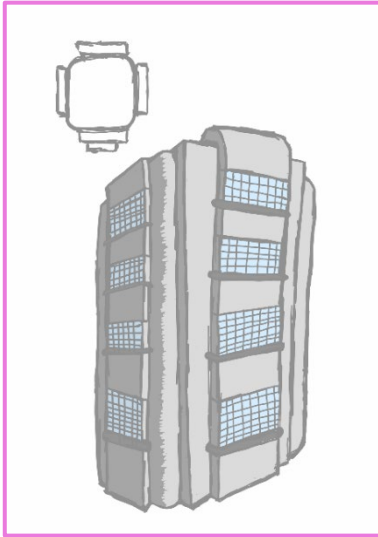


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

I decided to take the idea of the linear design with rounded edges, I used two different images as inspiration for this concept see above (Figure 11,12). This design is simple but pleasing, the front top of the building you can see something that is almost an arch as it “folds” around the top to create something similar to Figure 12 but different enough that it gives the concept building its own feel. The layout of the building more closely follows Figure 11, with its rounded edges on the main part of the build.

1st February 2019

Today during a meeting with the Overgrown City group, we officially assigned the new roles that had already been discussed in the last meeting.

- Gareth – Modeler and Texturer
- Hayden – Modeler
- Connor – Engine
- Joseph – Concept Art and Level Design

Another thing that happened during todays meeting, our first deadlines were set, this will allow for Personal Gantt Charts to be made. Knowing that certain assets could not be made without concept art, I decided I could complete:

- 9 new buildings by 11th February
- 4 Scenery Cars by 15th February
- 8 Neon Signs by 17th February
- Improve the Track Design by 15th February

This is considering I had already created 3 building concepts before the meeting and that I haven't made my personal Gantt Chart, therefore I have decided to create one by Monday so that I can keep track of planning and tasks in order of priority.

3rd February 2019

Today I finished my first Gantt Chart for this project, I'm certain it will change throughout the project as there will be unseen problems that will need to be combated.

On the Gantt Chart (Figure 13) it shows what happened the week just ending as I thought it would clearly layout how much time I would need for the concept art as this is the first time, I have been assigned this task for a project. To this extent I have left two weeks before the deadline for delays within my own work.

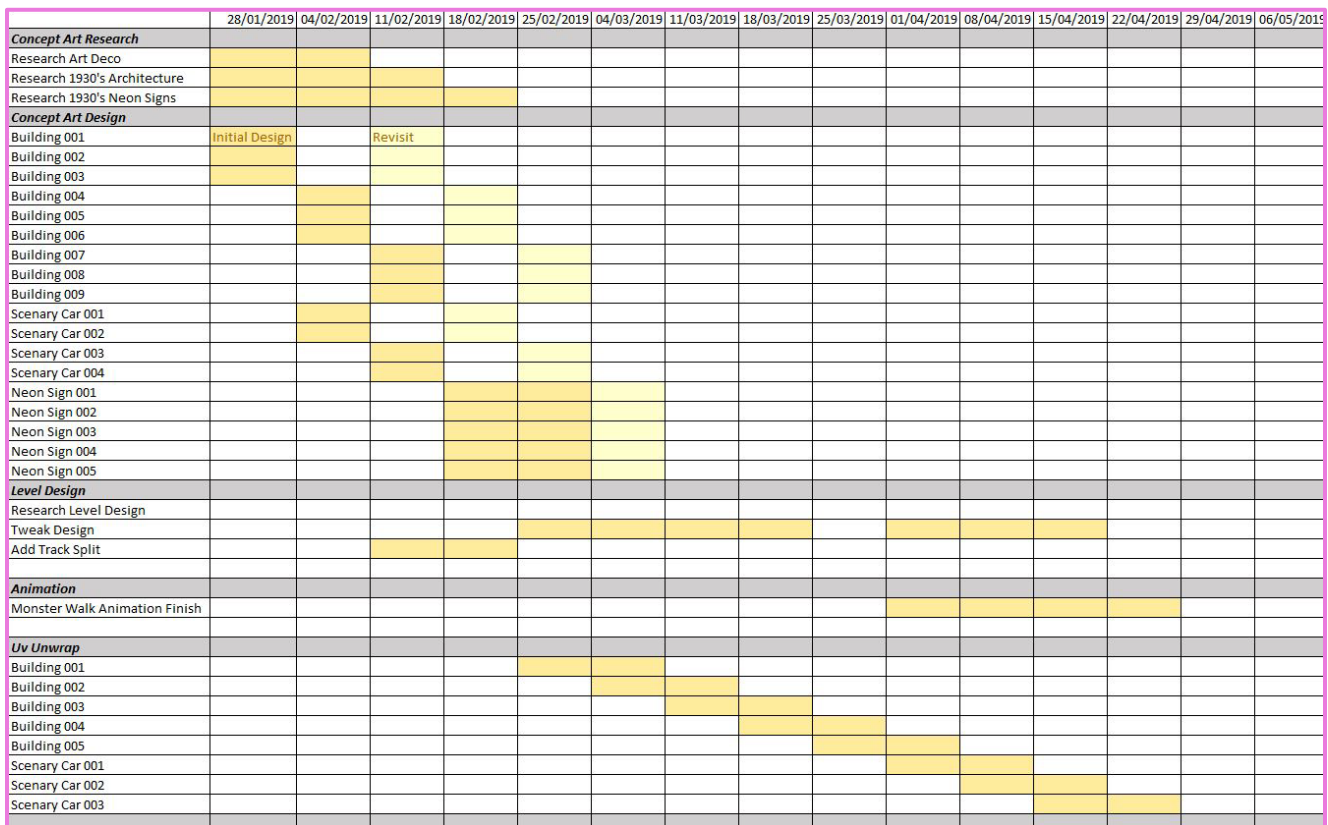


Figure 13

I am pleased with how my Gantt Chart appears, however there will be more needed from me as the project progresses, each one of the group members has the responsibility of picking up the "odd jobs" that have not been specifically assigned; either through not foreseeing the need for an item or out of necessity.

4th February 2019

I completed the below concept for today, this is another building designed within the Art Deco period style (figure 14). Taking the iconic sunray effect and unique window designs from one building and adding it to a differently shaped building.

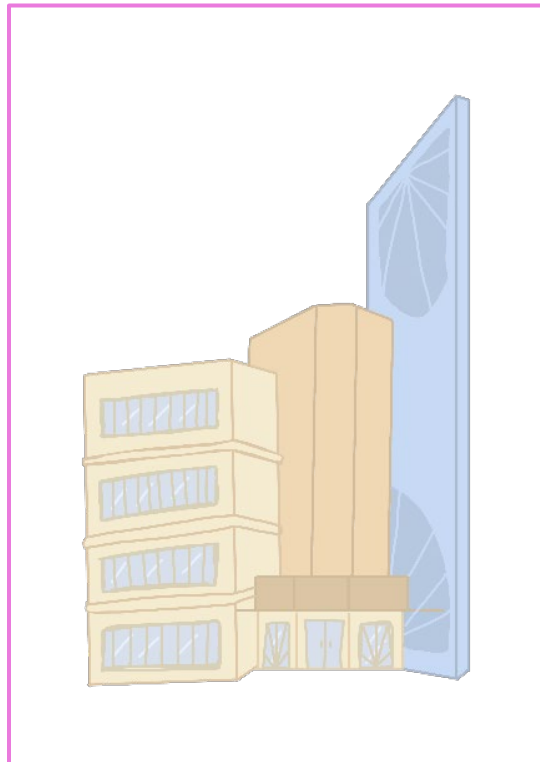


Figure 14

This concept piece is designed to fit within an awkwardly shaped place so that the city will be more dynamic in shape and feel.

6th February 2019

The idea of abandoned and broken cars, trucks and other vehicles being placed within the level for obstacles on the track. These would need to be maneuvered around so that the player would not crash into them. Below is my first truck design; I have never drawn vehicles before and although it is not a bad first attempt, this is not up to a standard that is needed in production.

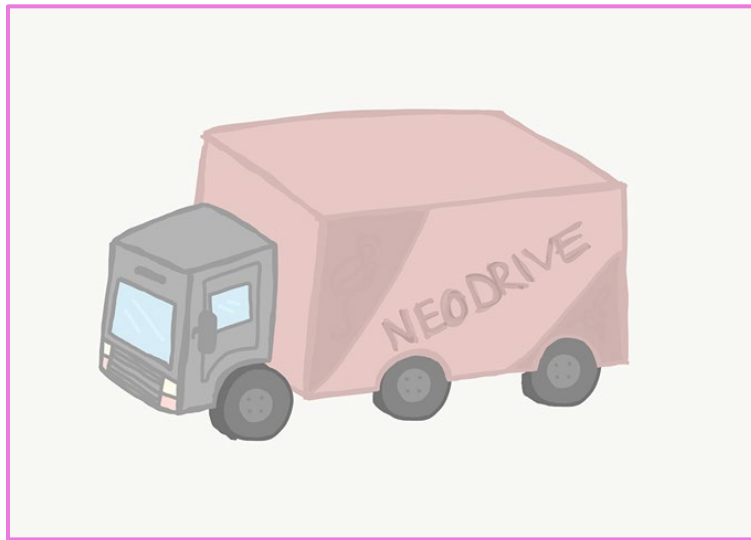


Figure 15

Perspective is incorrect, the truck squeezes towards the back where it should follow parallel to the other lines. The design is too simple and needs improvement; wheels aren't in line with the truck, the side design was a place holder but shows that my perspective is off.

With input from the rest of the Overgrown team, it is clear that learning to draw vehicles is not a priority; the decision has been made to use previous unused car models from last semester so that this piece of production can be dropped, and more important designs can be created.

8th February 2019

As I use my tablet and software more and more, I find that my drawings are improving. Take the new building concept finished today (figure 16); lines are straighter, perspective is improving, and the general idea of the building is giving more context to the modelers.

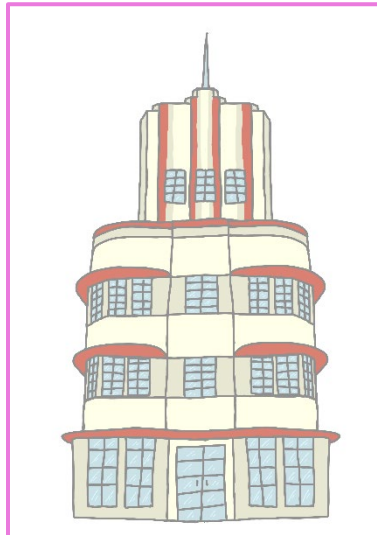


Figure 16

Although at first glance the building does not scream Art Deco, there are elements throughout the concept. Take for example the top of the building, the long stretching linear lines, the point towards the sky; these are all seen in buildings from the period such as The Empire State Building in New York. While looking further down the building you can see more Art Deco details such as the curved glass around the edges, the most famous example of this would be Florine Court in London.



Figure 17



Figure 18

9th February 2019

Today I completed another concept for a building. This is another tall building that can be used within the confines of the Overgrown City, taking inspiration from 1930's Architecture. I used decorative panels with sun ray effects and a linear design for the windows; the other main accent for the building is the awnings. These are shaped in a semi-circle keeping in line with the simple geometry decorations on this type of architecture.

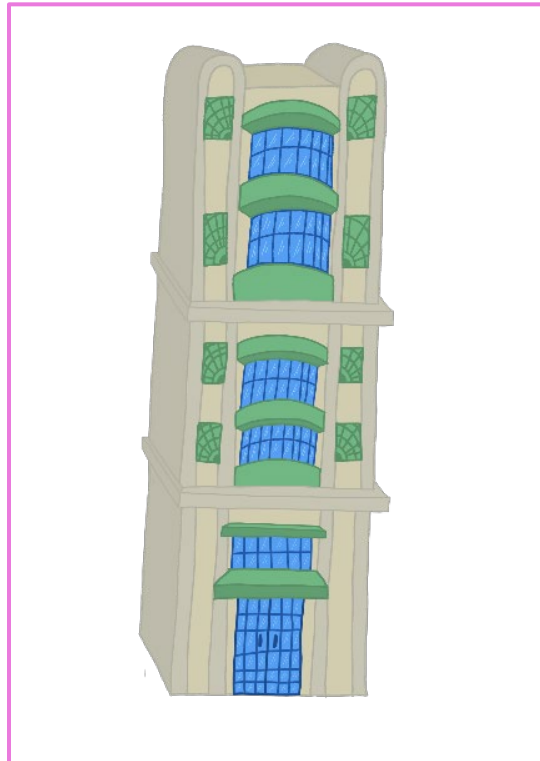


Figure 19

Although on my previous building design, my perspective had improved this entry is clearly missing something the last achieved. The building seems flat in comparison, although this building concept has height it does not feel tall; this definitely something I will need to revisit and improve upon within development.

14th February 2019

Today we had issues with all being in the studio at the same time; this caused issues with having a meeting to discuss problems or review any models created. This was the reason a group chat was created; and the best way to show the diverse way in which we as a group can communicate.

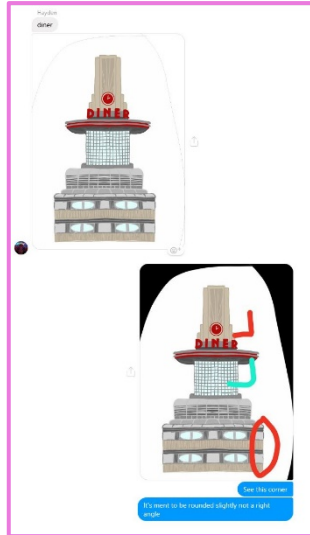


Figure 20

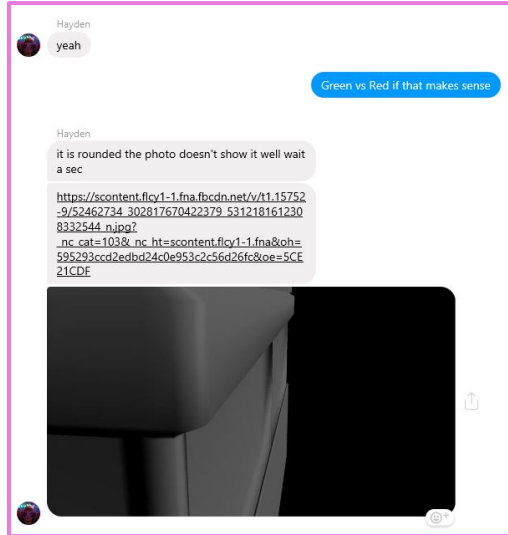


Figure 21

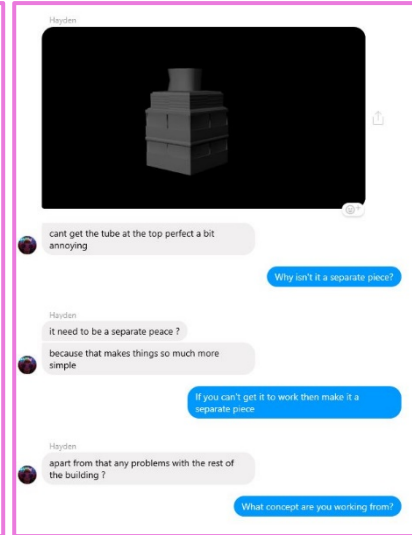


Figure 22

Above you can see the interaction between me and Hayden, as I was on my mobile phone while out and about, I was able to give feedback while not really being available. On the messenger app I was able to download the image and send it back with the red and blue lines to explain what I was talking about.

Although I have only documented this interaction, the group chat is in constant use in this manner as it allows for people to work when they are most comfortable while also having real time feedback as long as someone is available to message (I understand that this isn't 24/7 however someone in the group usually responds within a few hours at the latest).

16th February 2019

Here is the piece of concept work finished today, as you can see this follows a similar colour palette as figure 16. Sticking with the more pastel tones than used previously, this follows more closely with Miami art deco style, however it also has the telltale elements that traditional art deco adheres to.

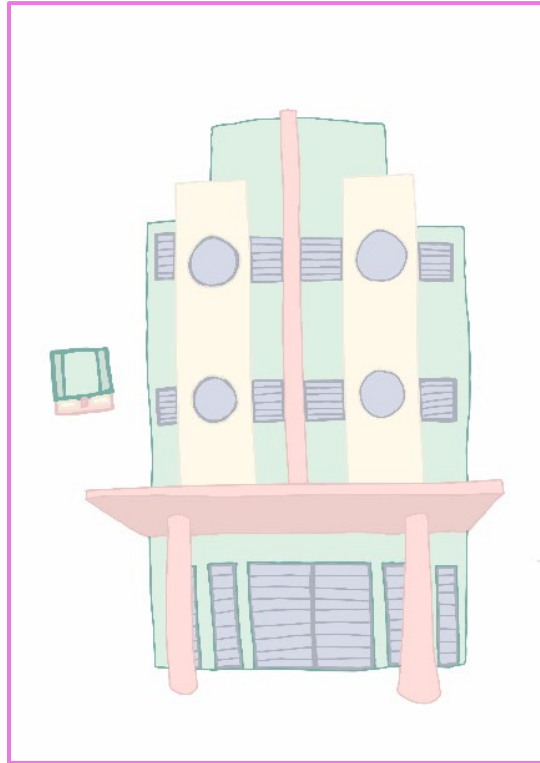


Figure 23

Although this is very different to figure 10 a city has a wide range of districts that can feel and look culturally diverse while using the same architectural period, in this case the 1930's. A way of blending the two forms of Art Deco buildings would be to use the different styles in a similar colour palette, although it would be wise to make the city feel dynamic.

17th February 2019

Here is another building concept, this building would serve to bridge the two different styles of buildings, making the shift between districts, of sorts, more natural and aesthetically pleasing. Browns and beiges serve as a good colour palette to jump between pastel coloured buildings and greyscale skyscrapers.

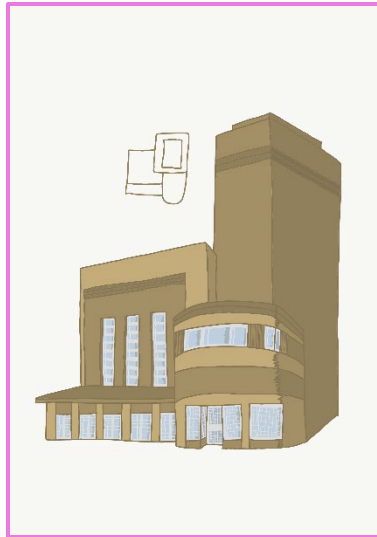


Figure 24

This building also follows the traditional art deco style with its unique curved glass front and tall, linear building style. This concept was inspired by an old cinema building shown below. As you can see, I made very slight changes to the building in the created concept art. The reason I made only minor changes is because the building already fits well in to the style and composition with the already created concepts, and to ensure it doesn't stand out from the ensemble of buildings I decided to keep the core elements of the building the same.



Figure 25

18th February 2019

Here is another concept to blend the two different forms of art deco together. This building is designed to fit within the corner of a street bend, this allows other buildings to be placed with ease in the directions they have been designed to face. This building uses elements of art deco with its tall curved wall and long linear styled sections.

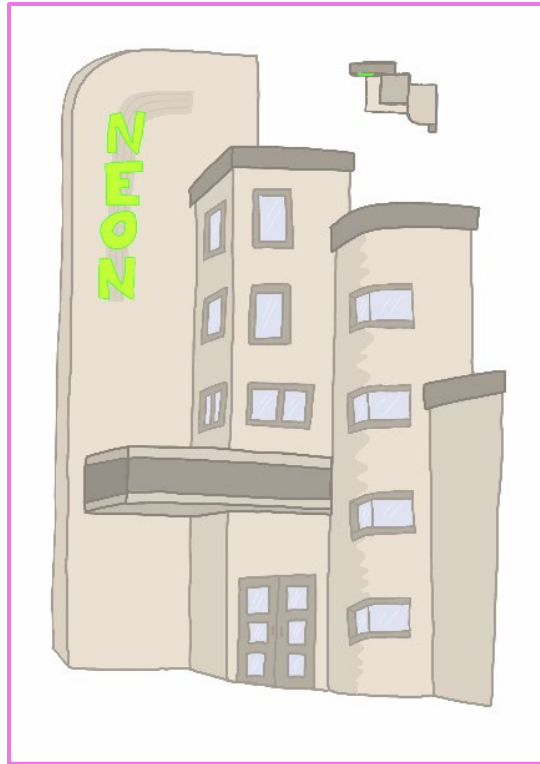


Figure 26

Above the building you can see a top down view, this is used in most of the building concepts to show the composition of the building in more than one perspective so the modeler can understand the idea behind the drawing.

19th February 2019

Today we had a meeting, a main issue brought up by a modeler was the time in which they must continue modeling other assets alongside being able to uv-unwrap the previous assets completed. This prompted a change in some responsibilities: the modeler was to continue with other models and uv-unwrap some of the completed assets whereas I would take over 2 or 3 already created to uv-unwrap and possibly clean up some minor topology.

After having an unplanned play test with a few individuals last semester, feedback from the players was very helpful in finding issues within the track design. The main consensus from the player testers were that the track felt boring in a way; this was because the track deviation was minimal it was either flat, ascending or descending.

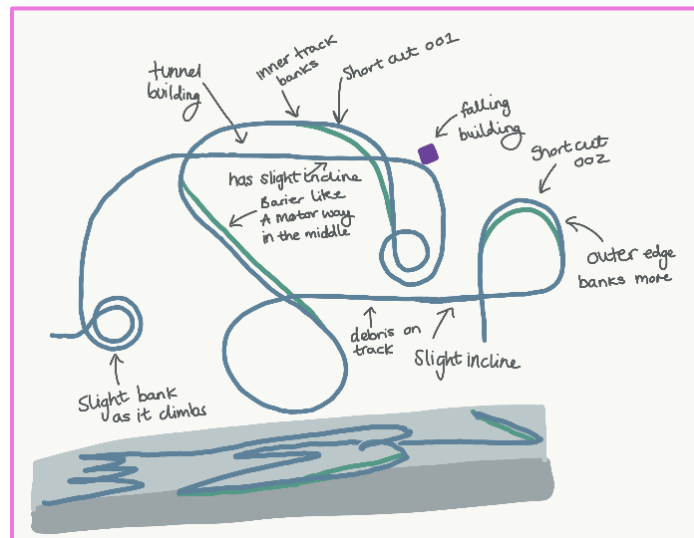


Figure 27

Taking on board the idea that the track needed more than just different elevations, it needed dips, deviation and banks so that the player would be always on their toes with what would be next. This is one way of making the track design more interesting for players without making the track unfair or difficult.

Another thing added within this design on the previous iteration are splits in the track, this was in the initial ideas for the track design however, last semester the execution was not possible due to time constraints. Here you can see improvements and design choices brought on by previous input.

22nd February 2019

As explained previously, three members of the entire development team were focusing on engine and mechanics. In a recent meeting, it has been found that the vehicles can “stick” to the track even when completely turned upside-down. This allows for more dynamic track designs, banking of corners and even corkscrews; these have been implemented within the track design below.

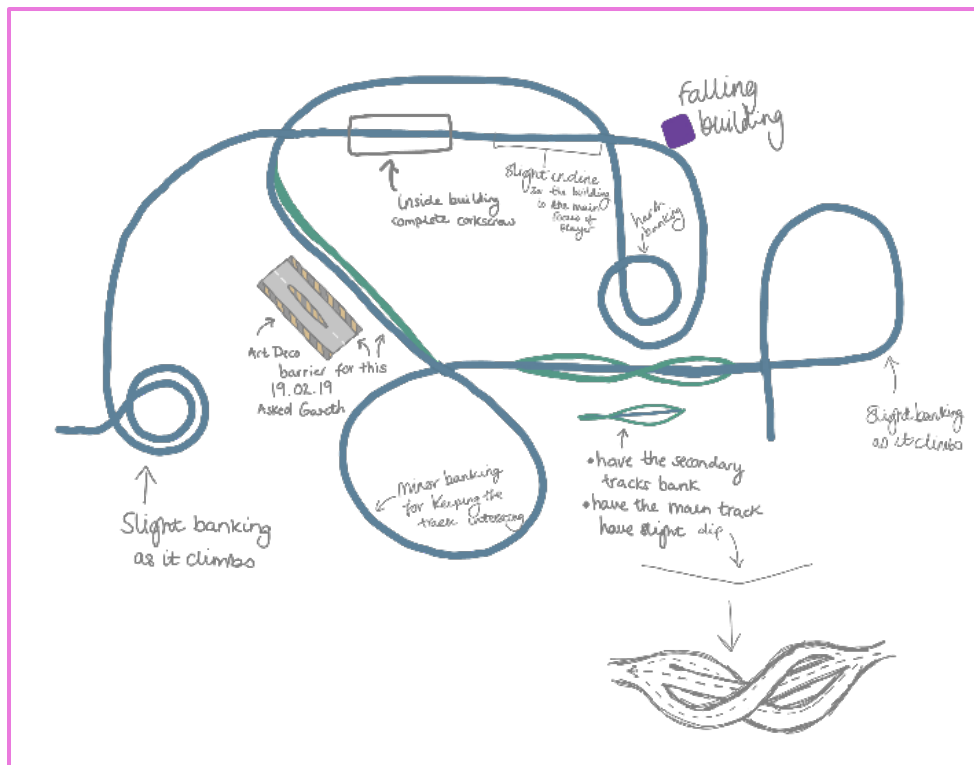


Figure 28

Due to time constraints and implementation, this will be the final design while minor tweaks and changes will be done within engine. I am happy with this design as it has a lot of clear instructions alongside the drawing to explain the track design, while it also considers previous feedback and implements the suggested improvements.

5th March 2019

Here you can see my first neon sign for the overgrown city, although the concept here looks clean and new. The actual iteration of the sign will be dirty, broken and old; this is so the actual sign will fit within the feeling of the level.



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31

It was suggested that the level needed something that would make the darker parts of the city more interesting; this is where the idea to investigate art deco signs came into play. Many 1930's neon signs show curves with cursive fonts, however the signs themselves are not neon; added onto the sign are rope lights to make it light up.

To implement this into engine, the sign will be made in Maya while the rope lights will be create separately; for ease of use and design, I created the rope lights on another layer and exported separately as an image on its own: Figure 29 for concept, figure 30 for sign and figure 31 for rope light creation.

6th March 2019

Here is another neon sign for the level, this one will be used on the side of buildings throughout the level. This concept also takes the idea of having a sign designed, then creating the neon part for it to work at night.

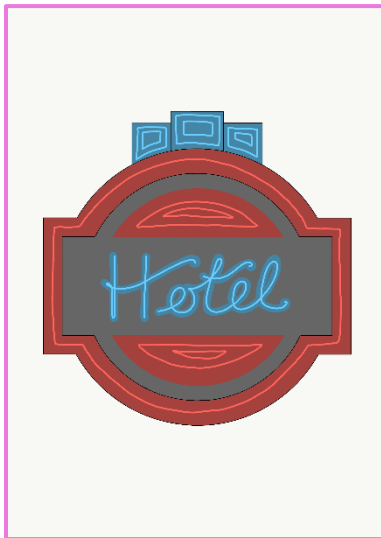


Figure 32

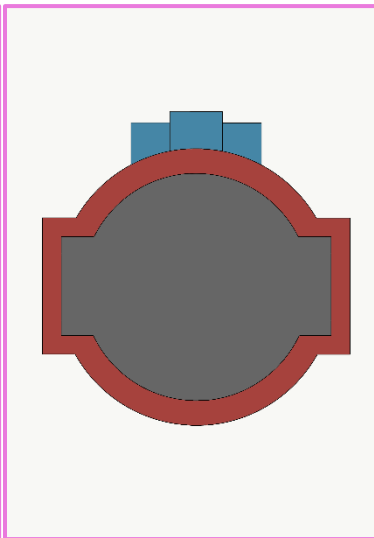


Figure 33



Figure 34

Although the design above denotes a hotel, the idea behind these designs is that the text can be substituted as well as the colours to create an entirely new sign to be used. This is subject to need as the project progresses.

This concept has also been created with idea of who will be using the drawing to create the final asset, making sure the different parts of the sign are created on separate layers.

8th March 2019

Sign 003

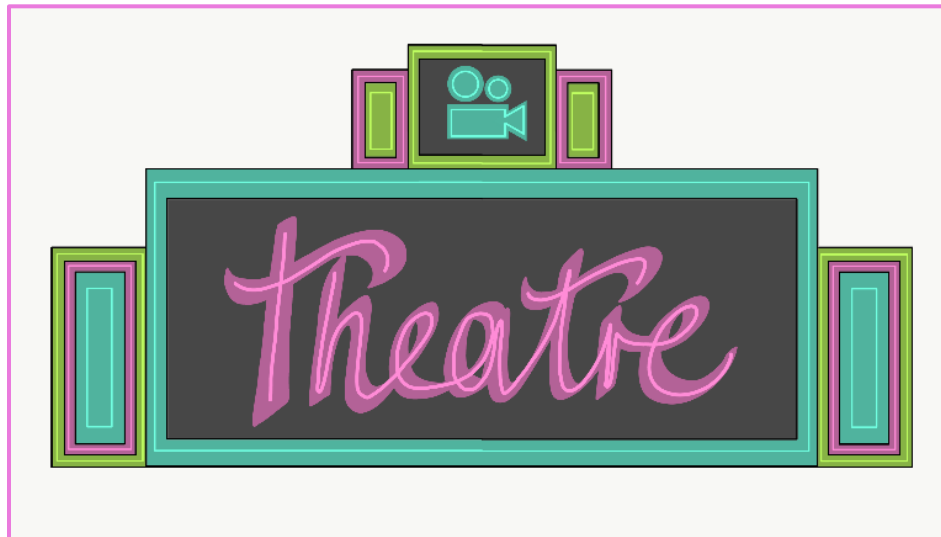


Figure 35

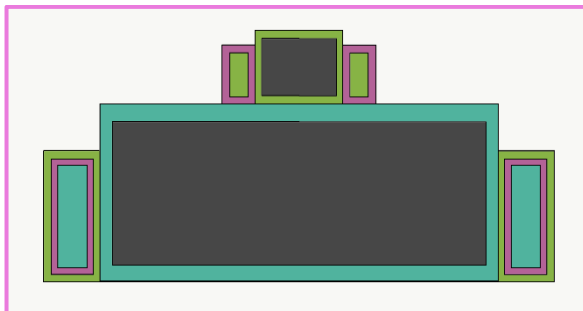


Figure 36

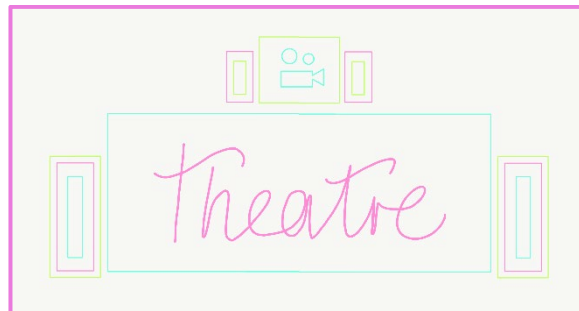


Figure 37

To make the signs more dynamic, I have decided to change up the elements used in this concept. This idea only takes the linear, simple geometry ignoring the curves and other elements used previously. This sign is more cluttered in terms of design, and I feel that if I were to revisit this design, I would change the colours and have less varying ones to make a cleaner design.

9th March 2019

Here you can see the fourth concept sign within the overgrown city; this concept continues the ideas of simple geometry to create interesting visuals on something as simple as a sign for a business. This sign although says café, this can be changed to fit any purpose that is desired; for example, even a picture could be placed instead of the writing. This idea of an image or logo instead of text could work well, I want to explore this idea further in future work.

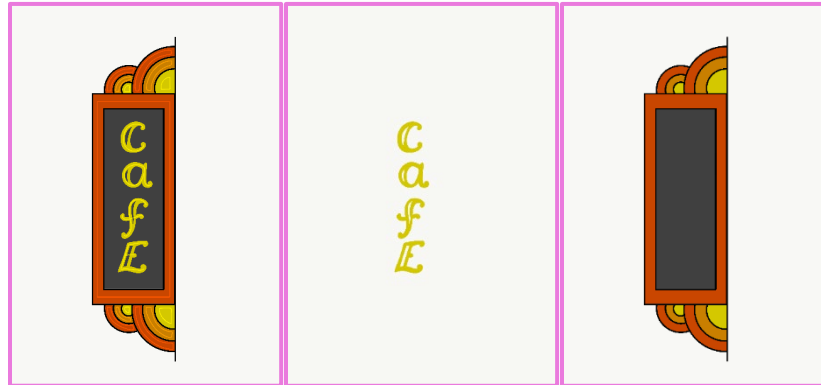


Figure 38

Figure 39

Figure 40

This sign was created using a technique I have been trialing within previous concept work, however, I thought it best to explain within this concept as I have found that this piece could show off the idea best. I started the process by using my tablet with adobe draw, this allows for drawing on multiple layers similar to photoshop; I drew the bottom half of the concept outline see figure 41. After completing the first half of the concept; I decided to duplicate the layer rather than spending time trying to replicate the same outline for the other half of the sign manually; this meant that I could guarantee that the sign would be symmetrical. After creating a second copy of the initial half of the sign, I was able to mirror the outline and place it joined with the other layer creating the concept. Merging the two layers then allowed me to save time with colouring the concept as I was able to use the fill tool within each section. For the neon rope lights, I used the same idea on a separate layer so that the lights would also be symmetrical when created.

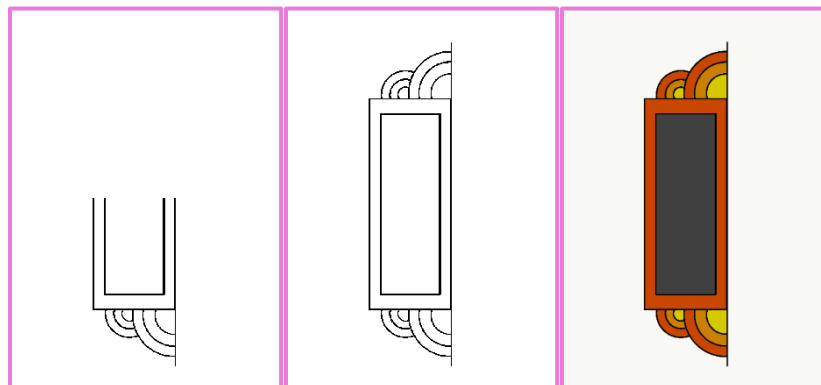


Figure 41

Figure 42

Figure 43

11th March 2019

Here is the concept I have finished today; this design has taken the idea of using a motif rather than text to convey the business. This was something I wanted to explore previously, it was also suggested by the team after a small discussion reviewing the other neon sign concepts created. Although this form of sign is not common within 1930's signs, creative liberty and need for more interesting visuals out way the need for historical accuracy.

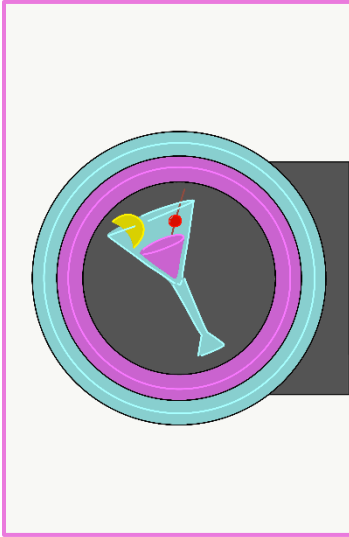


Figure 44

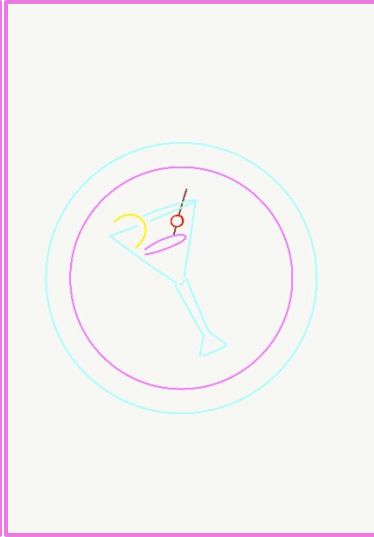


Figure 45

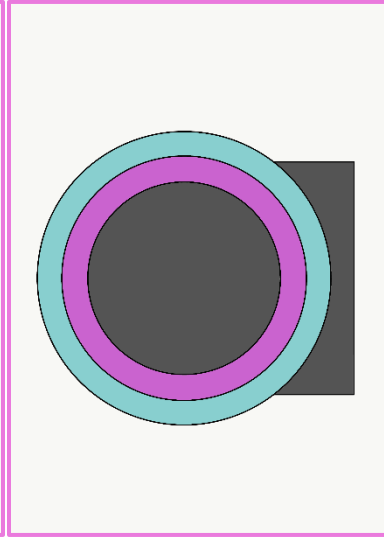


Figure 46

Looking at this concept piece while considering previous sign concepts, this design is clean and uncluttered compared showing a clear improvement with my ability of concept work. Although I understand that these concept pieces are not up to industry standard, they clearly convey the idea of the asset for it to be taken further into development.

12th March 2019

The main issue with creating designs that seems to plague my progress within concept art, is a type of writer's block for drawing. I have ideas of signs but somehow can not find a motif or text that would complete the idea. Someone suggested I start with finding inspiration from the surrounding area; during our spare time within the studio many of us play chess this is where the inspiration came from with this design.

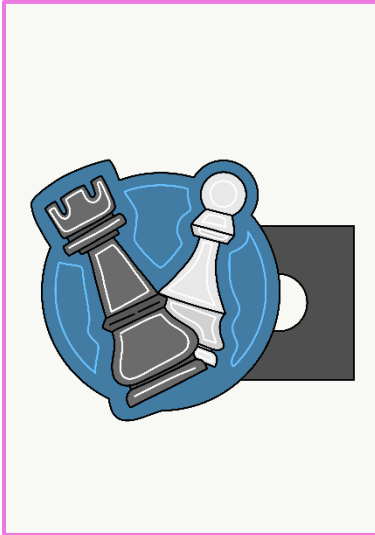


Figure 47

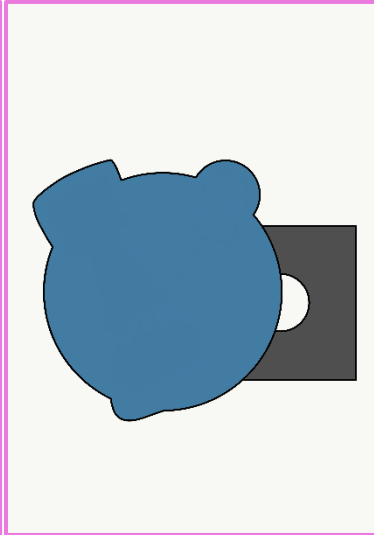


Figure 48

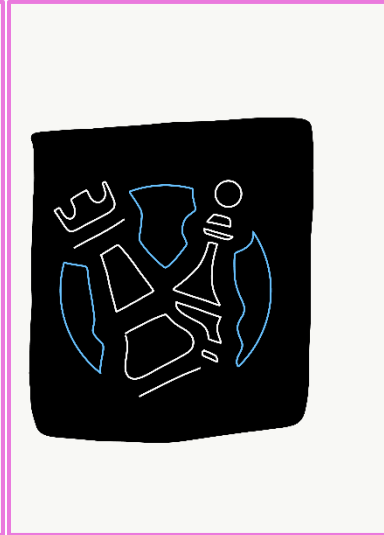


Figure 49

Although this design is not conventional, it was highly received by others in the group as its design has a dual purpose; it acts both as a new concept for a sign in the overgrown level, and as a small Easter egg towards the development team.

Looking at the actual design, using real life chess pieces made the outcome of the drawing more accurate unlike the figure(last page). The glass is tapered incorrectly on the base and stem, whereas looking at the chess pieces there are no glaring issues.

While talking with the team previously, it was brought to my attention that the neon rope lights were difficult to see on the white background; so to make it easier I added a dark background to the neon rope light jpeg figure 49.

14th March 2019

Today I created another sign concept; I decided to reuse the idea of a chess piece as it was received well by the team. While staying with the chess theme there also needed to be variation with the colour and design; too many similar pieces would make the city feel bland and without character.

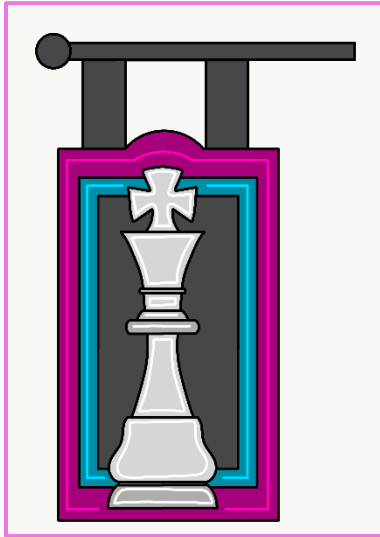


Figure 50

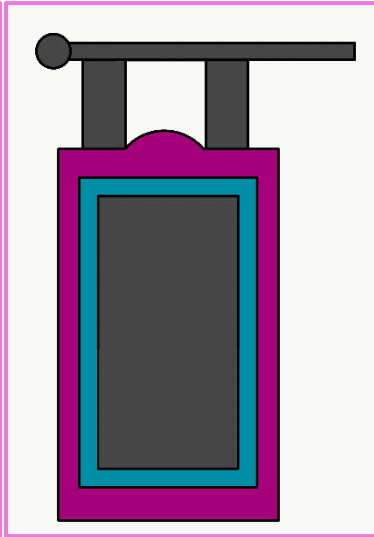


Figure 51

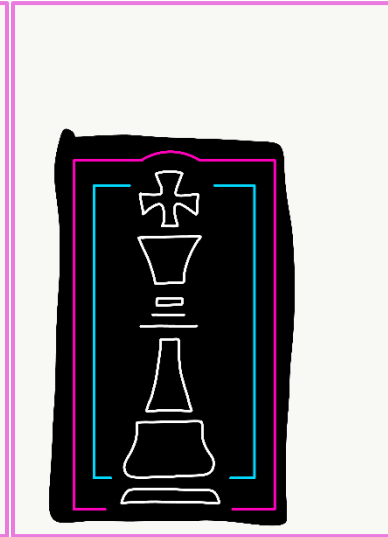


Figure 52

To create the chess piece I used the same idea of drawing half, duplicating and mirroring the outline; this worked well as the chess piece needed to be symmetrical as it was placed in the center of the sign. The actual backing to the sign is bland and boring compared to the previous design and needs development; a more dynamic shape around the motif would of improved the overall design.

15th March 2019

When issues surround textures being completed were brought up within a meeting, it was decided that I would take over creating the textures for the buildings. These textures would be created with photoshop and built in the unreal engine; this being something I have never even heard of before required research.

In the studio, I spoke with the lecturer to learn the idea behind creating textures within photoshop and was directed towards what I needed to research to understand the process.

To create a texture in photoshop and to build it in the unreal engine I had to learn what a Diffuse, Normal and Bump map were. In my research I found that the Diffuse is a photo or the texture that is desired, this sets the colour of the texture built in unreal (Figure 53). The Normal Map is created from the Diffuse, the Normal Map creates the height (bumps and groves) of the texture making it 3D in a way (Figure 54). Finally, the Bump Map creates the shadows and highlights of the texture, this is also created from the Diffuse (Figure 55).



Figure 53

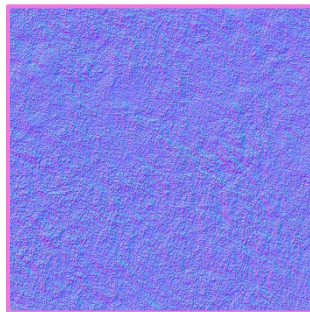


Figure 54

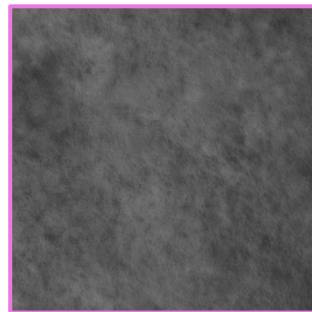


Figure 55

After researching, I found an image on google to test the process and create a texture. In photoshop I create a new document, making the canvas a 1000 pixel square; this made sure the targa file export would be a perfect square. I then imported the found image, resized it to cover the canvas. From there I used photoshop to create the Normal Map: Filter- 3D - Generate Normal Map.

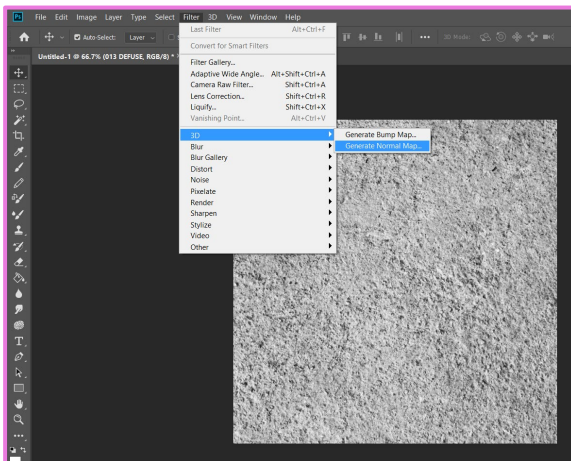


Figure 56

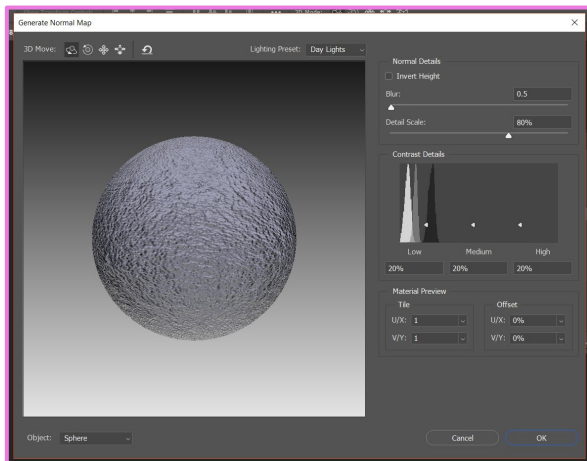


Figure 57

17th March 2019

Figure 58 shows the first model I retopologised and uv-unwrapped, the model was created by Gareth; however, the windows were previously individual polygons with window frames. Therefore, when reviewing the model before uv-unwrapping I decided to clean the model making it more fit for purpose.

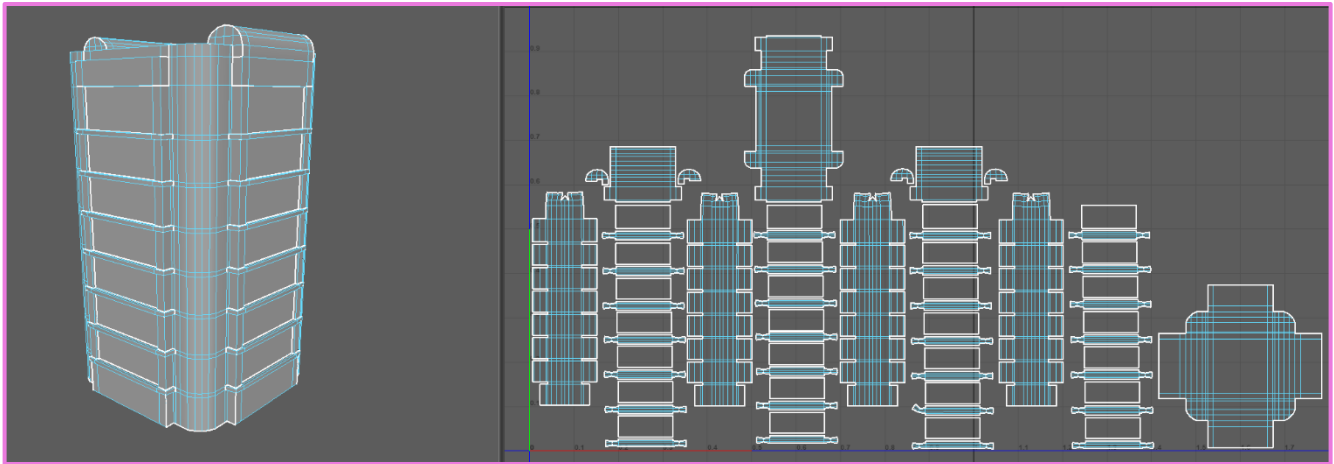


Figure 58

After finishing this Retopology and UV-unwrap, I took it to the modeler to show the type of model the group expects; Gareth is confident that he can retopologise his previous models excluding the one already assigned to me.

18th March 2019

After communicating with the modeler solely working on foliage, it was brought to my attention that he lacked good quality png images of leaves and branches. As I work with photoshop, I offered help where he could send me a jpeg image and I could change the image so that there would be only a transparent background. Below are a few examples from today, it has also been agreed that he will send me the relevant images as soon as he has acquired the images needed for the foliage.

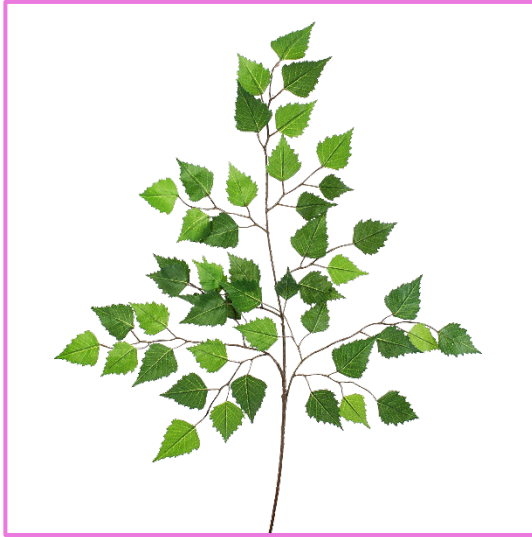


Figure 59



Figure 60

Another idea that came from talking with Hayden today was the need for a png image that could be used to create a simple cross section styled bush for the foliage, below are some examples of what could be used although they would need improvement.



Figure 61

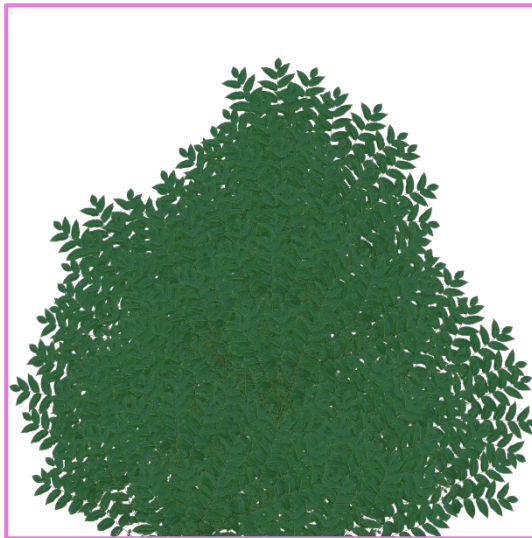


Figure 62

20th March 2019

Below are some textures I have been compiling ready to be built within engine to be used within the overgrown level. For the next project, I want to be able to photograph the textures I want to use rather than finding stock images online; this would make the textures fit better and be completely my own work.



Figure 63

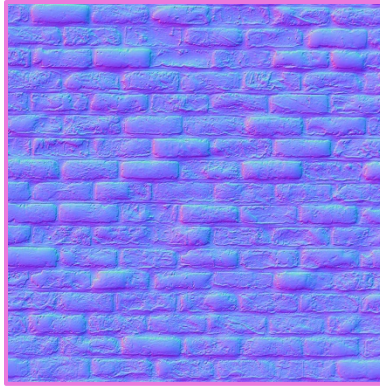


Figure 64

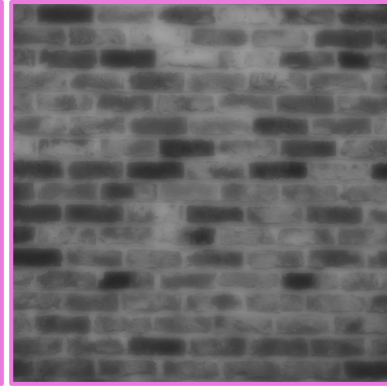


Figure 65



Figure 66

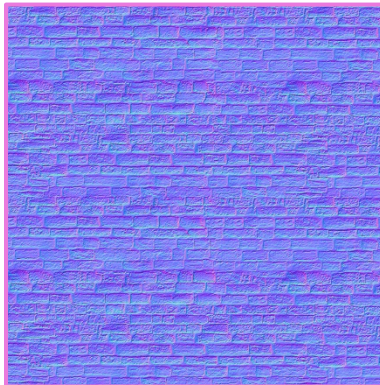


Figure 67

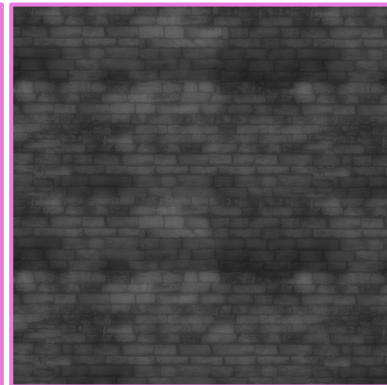


Figure 68



Figure 69

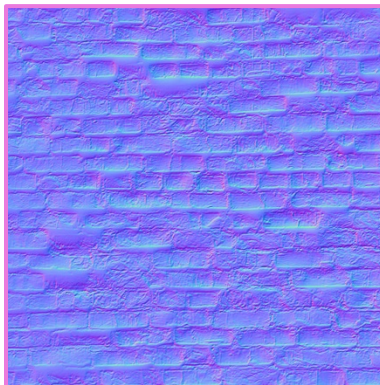


Figure 70



Figure 71

22nd March 2019

It was brought the attention of the team today, that we can show our game during the summer exhibition. To be able to show, it was decided that we would need a surround for the monitor so that it would be consistent throughout the exhibition.

Below is my first sketch to show the idea behind the surround I suggested within the studio. This was agreed to be a good candidate to be a potential design used for the final surround.



Figure72

After finding out that the design has potential, I decided to go through the process of making the design more finalised, using the already existing concept art and models as references. This would need to be changed to fit the actual surround measurements, although that should not be too difficult as each section of the drawing is built on separate layers and can be edited on their own.

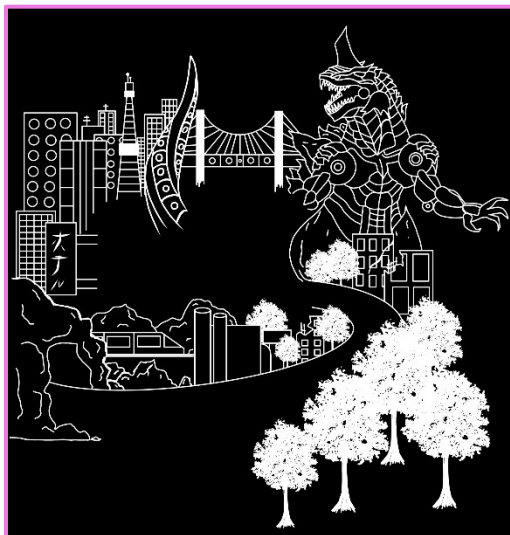


Figure 73

24th March 2019

After receiving the photoshop file with the measurements for the surround for the exhibition, I edited the drawing already created yesterday to fit and show all the details it could. This was sent into the group chat of the studio so that I could get real time feedback as the design needed to be finalised as soon as possible and sent for printing.



Figure 74

This design was well received, and the final iteration would be created by another concept artist working in a separate team.

26th March 2019

Here are more textures created today.



Figure 75

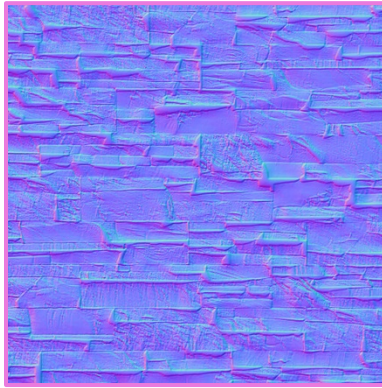


Figure 76

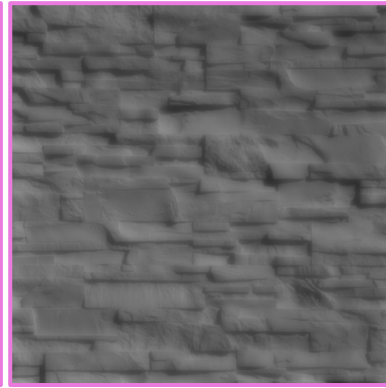


Figure 77



Figure78

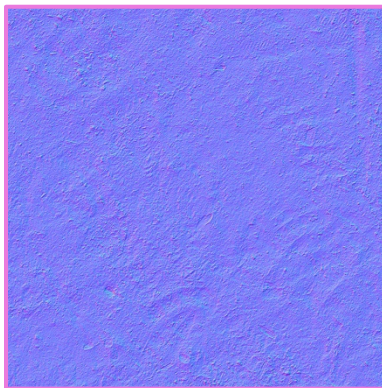


Figure 79

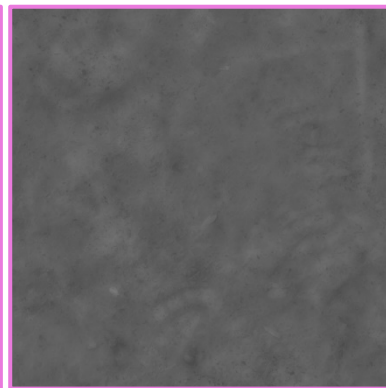


Figure 80

28th March 2019

Continuing work from yesterday to do with textures.



Figure 81

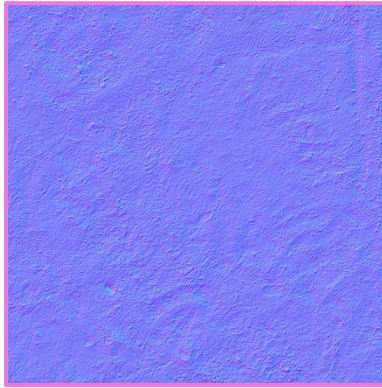


Figure 82

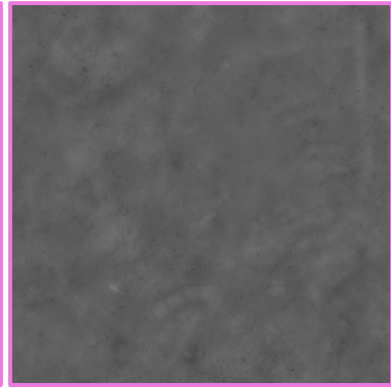


Figure 83



Figure 84

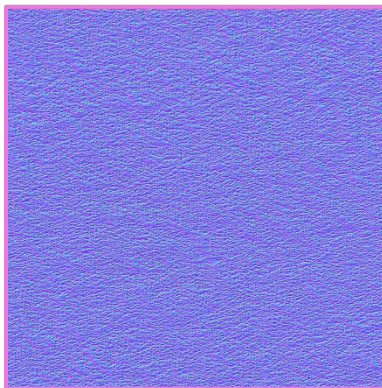


Figure 85

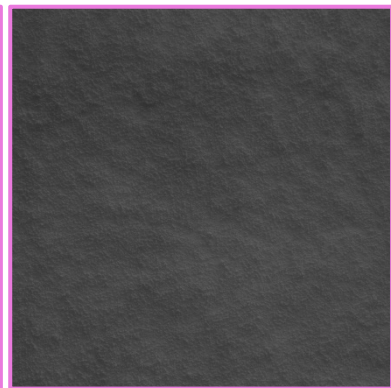


Figure 86

31st March 2019

When finding out the models were not taking the textures created in photoshop and built in unreal engine, I found out that the models had to be edited. For this form of texture work to actually work, materials needed to be added with a good naming convention to the uv-unwrapped model. See Figure 87 below.

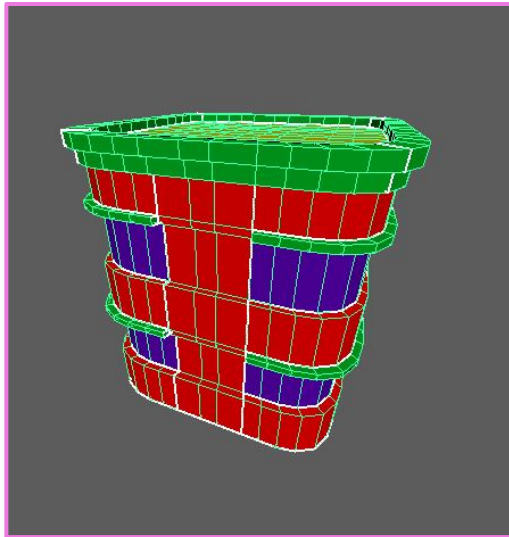


Figure 87

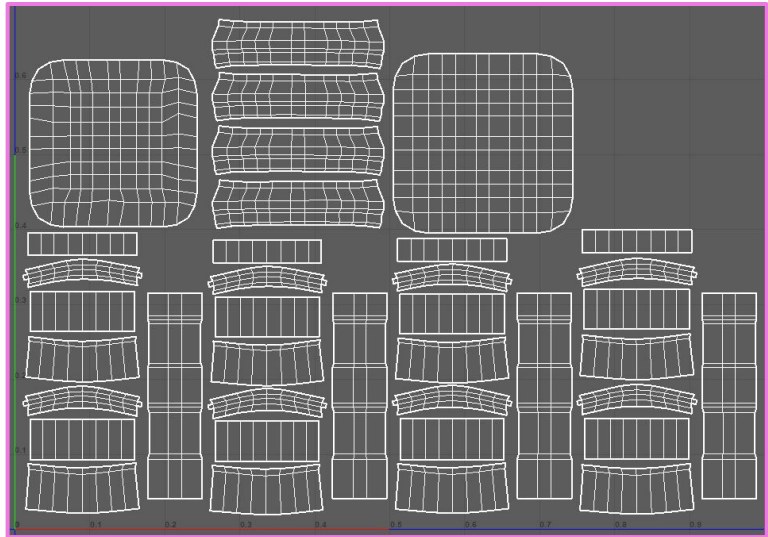


Figure 88

While I changed the material on the previous model I retopologised and uv-unwrapped, I also finished the above model today. This model has been optimised whereas the previous iteration was not fit for the purpose for neo drive.