



THE ART OF
I N F E R N O

BY HOLLY MCGREGOR



The background is a dark, monochromatic illustration. It depicts a landscape with jagged, rocky terrain and a sky filled with several birds in flight. The style is painterly and somewhat somber, with a focus on texture and light. The overall mood is mysterious and dramatic.

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ABOUT INFERNO

Inferno is a concept art series, based on Dante Alighieri's epic poem 'Inferno'. It shows an iterative design process, starting at basic research and following a working pipeline through to finished, polished concept pieces that could be taken forward to the next stage of the pipeline: 3D modelling.

Based on 'Inferno', the concept art series will throw the 14th century poem forwards in to a futuristic, Gothic setting, where Dante, Virgil and Beatrice will be designed in this process.

'Inferno' (Italian for "Hell") is the first part of Dante Alighieri's 14th-century epic poem 'Divine Comedy'. It is followed by 'Purgatorio' and 'Paradiso'. It is an allegory telling of the journey of Dante through hell, guided by the Roman poet Virgil. In the poem, hell is depicted as nine circles of suffering located within the earth. Allegorically, the Divine Comedy represents the journey of the soul towards God, with the Inferno describing the recognition and rejection of sin.







SECTION ONE: DANTE

Dante Alighieri is the main protagonist of *Inferno*. He is bound on a quest, set forth by him by the beautiful goddess Beatrice Portinari: to find his way through the nine levels of Hell, in order to become a more grounded and aware being.

Dante is afraid, and despite his age he is naive and emotionally fragile. However, he is inquisitive and a very eager explorer, and he learns from his guide and companion Virgil.

This design process incorporates

all of Dante's attributes in to a potential costume fitting for his character. Particular design choices were made in reference to his inner character, such as keeping a cool colour scheme in order to give an air of sadness about Dante's character, and to include bondage related items to suggest being bound to an uncomfortable task.

The process begins from the beginning, from preliminary sketches, through to a final feel image that can be developed into a 3D model.

Preliminary work begins by doing form finding exercises. These can be anything from loose pencil sketches, random shapes drawn on a canvas, or basic silhouettes that give some form of an interesting form on which to base

a character. At this stage, the object is to find something that has a silhouette that could fit the character, that can then be iterated upon at a later stage.

From the initial research,



there were requirements that the character had to fulfil, and they had to be a product of their environment. As the roles of the protagonists are also already written (based on the main characters in Dante's poem),

the costume should reflect the character's personality and reflect the journey that they have (or will) embark on. The silhouettes encompass both genders, and can be modified to fit any of the three main roles in Inferno.





This was the chosen silhouette on which to base the character 'Dante'.

It was chosen as it encompassed traditional elements of 14th century dress, such as the long drapery of cloaks and cut-off

tunics. It also included Dante's laurel wreath, which was a key design point decided in the initial research stage.

The legs were kept free to aid the manoeuvrability of the character around the environment.

After choosing the silhouette, the pipeline of design can begin.

Using a lighter shade brush on Photoshop and a new layer, the iterative stage begins. Shapes are blocked out on top of the existing silhouette, and details breaking

up the costume can be roughly detailed.

The iterative process is very fast, and it is here that quick choices can be made in regards to incorporating required design elements with the whole costume.







Important elements to include in the general design of these characters covered a broad range of influences, from hyper-futuristic armour, based on science fiction, through to bondage elements to incorporate a feeling of suffering and darkness to the characters.

On the previous page, another method of design iteration is put in to practice. A base silhouette is still used, but in order to gauge a more rounded and better illustrated initial concept, armour choices are drawn straight on to the body.

This method of working is also a lot easier to establish how practical an armour set would be - for instance, the environment of Hell is not a place that is populated by massive amounts of undergrowth or fauna, therefore drapery would not have an impact on the character's movement. Different

methods of applying drapery to various armour forms can also be quickly applied here, and it can be drawn over the top on a new layer without disturbing the underneath design.

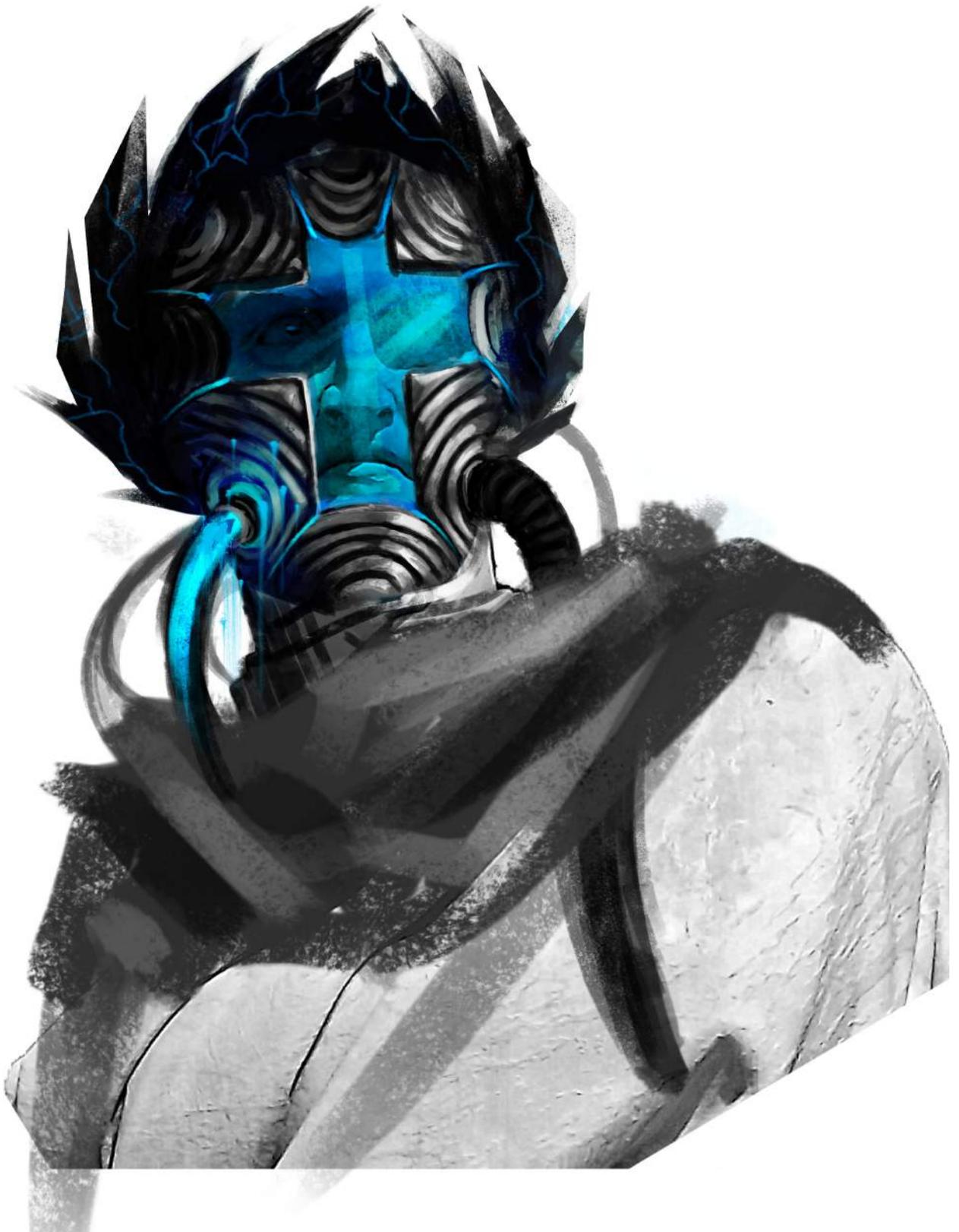
Armour, shape choices, asymmetry and drapery levels on a character can also influence how the player perceives them, for instance Dante is bound to his task and very afraid, so to make him heavily protected from the unknown enemies or threats he may encounter in Hell would make sense.

Design choices such as this will be discussed later on in the design process surrounding the next two characters, Virgil and Beatrice, as their personalities, attributes and place in the allegorical hierarchy of Dante's Inferno mean they will have very different costumes.



Using an existing statue of Dante himself allowed for design judgements to be made on a perfect representation of the character, without wasting time drawing it many times. This saves time and does not allow for any flaws when trying to interpret the age of the character, or any facial

nuances or defining features that the character might have, in this case it would be Dante's nose and defining heavy-set brows. The chaotic, spiky metal laurel wreath was the most effective at portraying Dante's conflicted feelings, and the visor represented his religion.







SECTION TWO: VIRGIL

Publius Virgilius Maro (or Virgil, as he is better known throughout history) was a Roman poet that helped Dante on his quest through Hell. Virgil was never baptised as a Christian, but was considered still pure enough of soul to not be eternally punished. For his religious status, he resides in the first level of Hell-Limbo, where the unbaptised and virtuous pagans resided and were left to wander the plains of a false heaven.

He was sent to guide Dante on his journey through the nine levels of hell by the beautiful Beatrice.

Dante has been in hell for over 1400 years, and has gained a vast amount of knowledge and an understanding of the environment and its inhabitants.

His colour palette is tarnished but bold, and his design is regal, yet worn, commanding and imposing. He has elements of Roman battle garments, practical materials adorn his costume and he carries a staff to assert his dominance over any who may test him or prevent Dante from completing his quest.



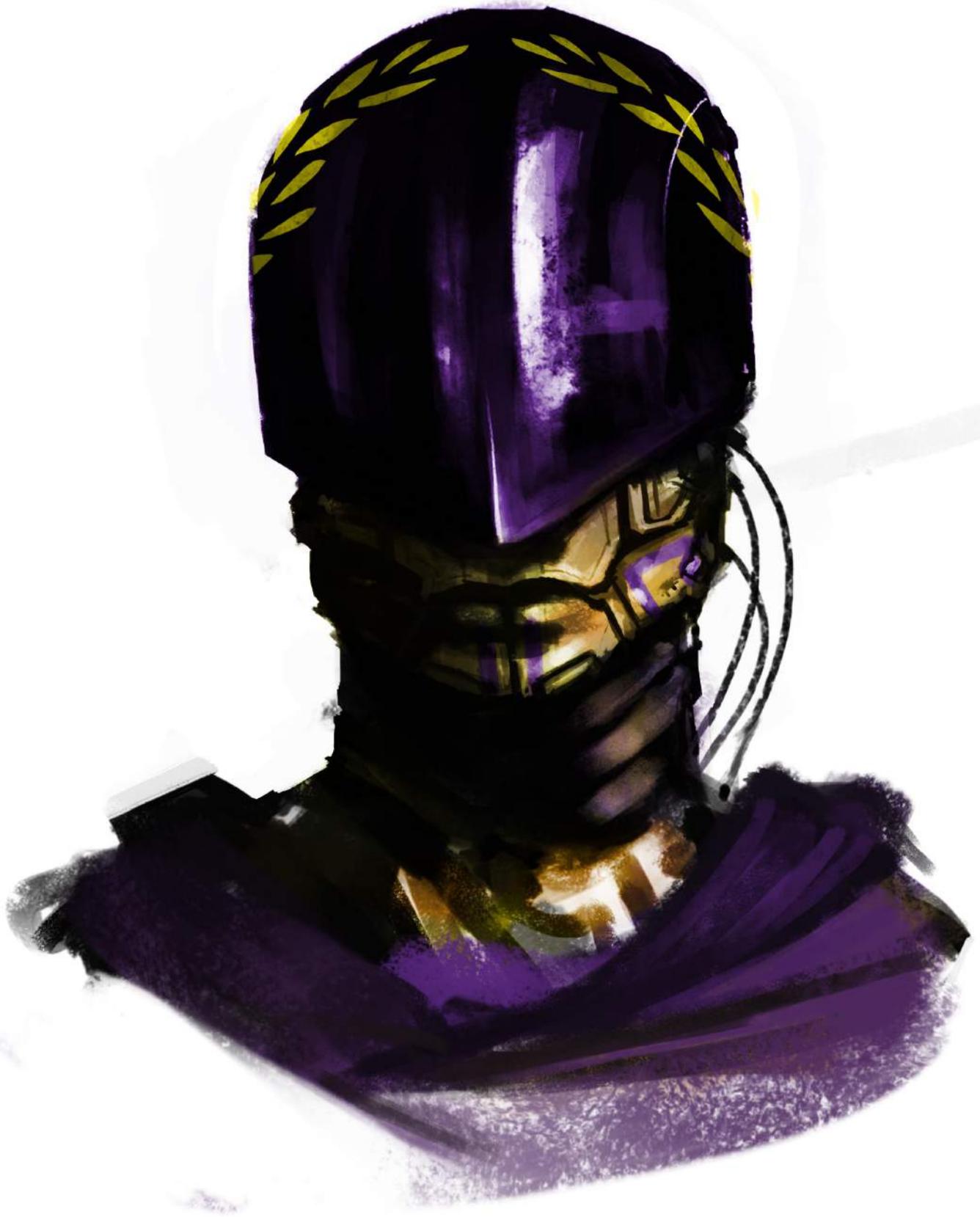
Virgil's chosen silhouette incorporated a good amount of the preliminary research - including items such as breathing apparatus, weapons or accessories would be very easy to achieve during the iterative stage.

As Virgil was a figure in Roman

politics (due to his educated status as a poet) his costume should include elements of a military or judicial uniform, rich patterns and cut a regal silhouette. His costume should also be much more worn than Dante's, due to his age and the environment in which he stays.







Virgil's helmet design was very easy to create. The mouth was left to show an almost assertive and blank facial expression, and gives a sense of unbiased justice being executed. The pursed mouth is also very reminiscent of a Roman statue.

The laurel wreath worn by poets is painted on top of Virgil's protective helmet, to add a sense of industrial manufacture, customisation and to establish a better sense of control of his emotions rather than Dante's chaotic mess of spikes.

As mentioned earlier, the cloth/ armour ratio of the different characters can establish what their role is throughout the story.

Virgil would have more cloth on his figure than Dante, as he has more experience and requires less protection in an environment that he is used to (see below). A more symmetrical pattern or cut to the fabric would also lend itself to Virgil's emotional stability, rather than Dante's emotional stress and turmoil.

The colour palette of yellow and gold versus purple gave Virgil's costume the same feeling as an ancient Roman soldier. Replacing the typical red tunic with purple added to his sense of being an outcast, but still regal and wise in all of his knowledge.

Personal prints/inscriptions and wear and tear was also a big consideration in Virgil's design, to imply self-maintenance and a 'used' aesthetic.





The above iterations are a loose version of the final feel of Virgil's costume. It was based on the original silhouette, but was instead worked on straight in to colour. The image is then copied, and parts edited and changed to produce a variety of colourful iterations.

This is a more effective method of working, as the colours can either work well or not at all, and this can immediately be seen and adjusted. It also creates a consistent colour palette to work with.

The black and white sketch on the right was an early example of the practical elements of the costume that could be considered - such as breather tanks, ropes and climbing hooks to navigate and survive the atmosphere, climate and environment of Hell. This aesthetic was abandoned in favour of a more fantastical feeling as it allowed more creative freedom.







SECTION THREE: BEATRICE

Beatrice Portinari is the final protagonist that underwent development during *Inferno*. Beatrice is the god-like woman that commanded Dante to begin his quest through the Underworld, Purgatory and eventually Heaven. In real life, she was Dante's inspiration and muse, but she was betrothed to another man and died very young.

In this version of *Inferno*, Beatrice is the benevolent, omnipotent and omnipresent entity that has complete power over Dante and expects him to complete this quest in order to become an enlightened soul worthy of her

company in Paradise.

As she is much more of a decorated character, design choices could include more ornamental armour, much more drapery and incredibly rich and colourful prints.

The design was very unconstrained and contained a lot of natural elements (including the colours of copper and polished brass) such as feathers, silks and ornamental decoration. The only constraint was her noted red hair and large green eyes, recorded by Dante Alighieri in his memoirs.

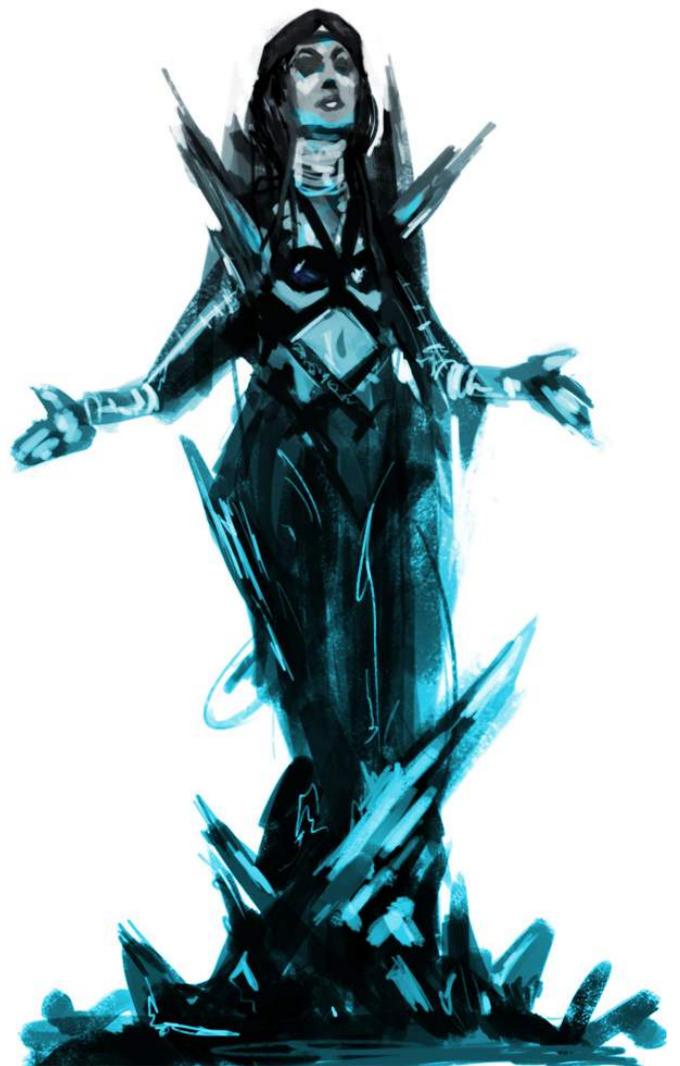
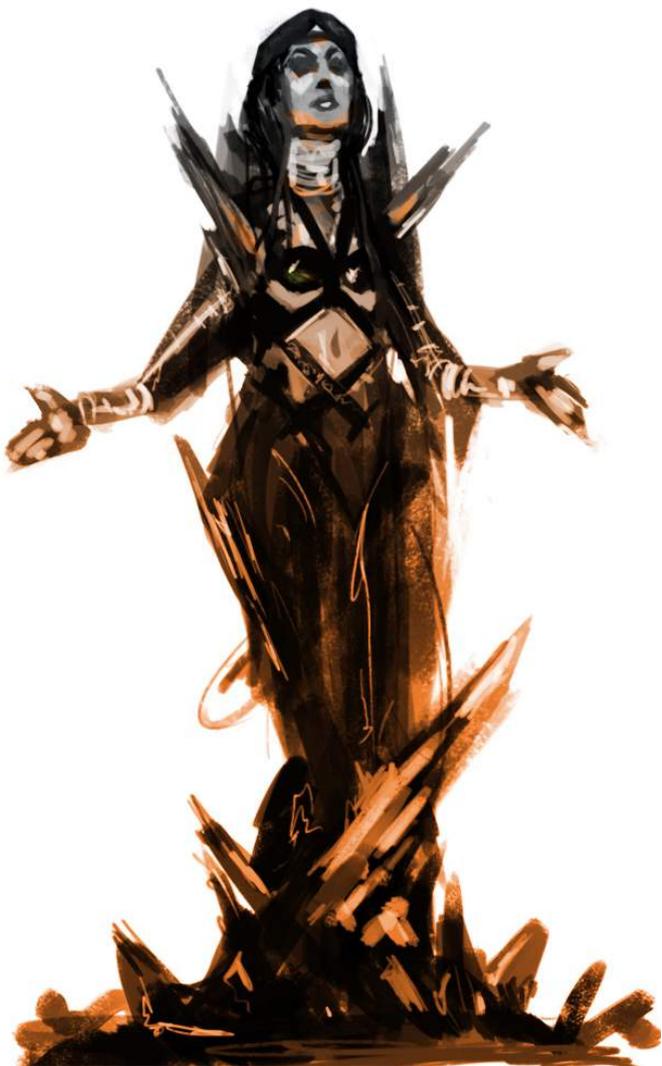
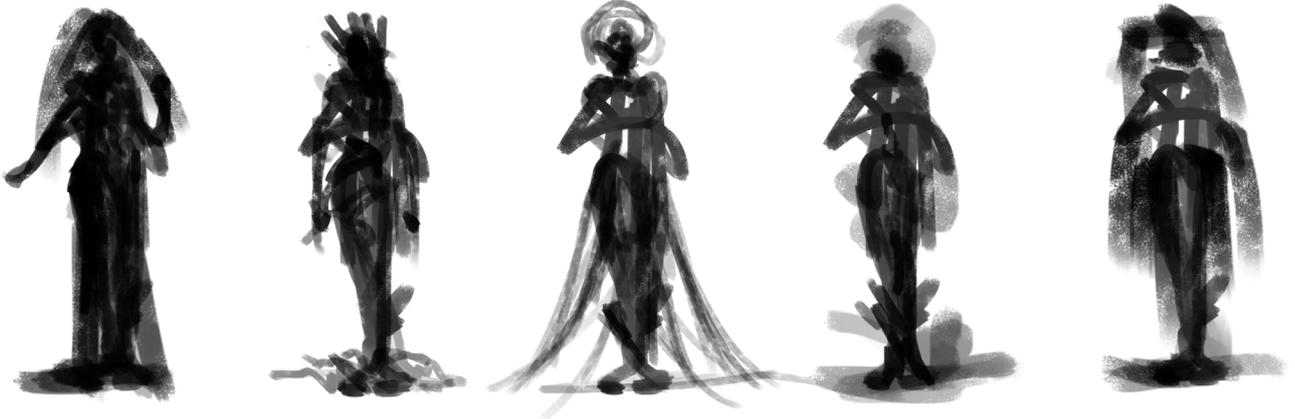
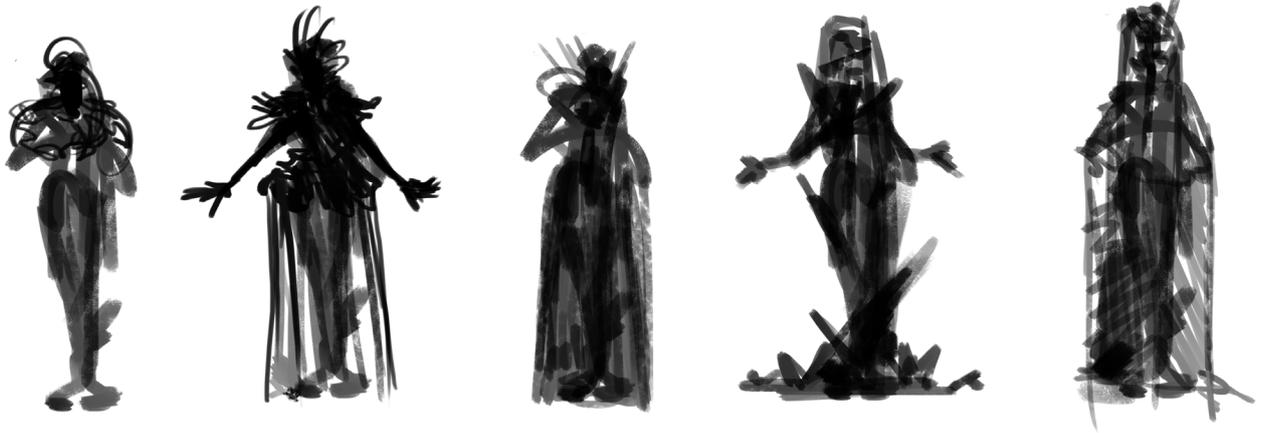


The chosen silhouette to continue iterating on was incredibly basic and plain to allow for instant iteration and shape deformation, as shown on the opposite page.

This allowed much more creative freedom when designing the

character, and it gave me a basic, delicate female form on which to add elements of drapery, armour and decorative pieces of clothing or accessories.

It was then easy to overlay colours to see what worked best.





This page - an early iteration of a silhouette. The intricate and delicate mask gave Beatrice an element of finery and regality to her character, but the 'death'

style of the mask detracted from her implied holiness.

Next page - An illustration of Beatrice's face intended headgear design.







Choosing a type of headgear for Beatrice was a process that required feedback, particularly as different colours and shapes could change the perception of the character. The different iterations on the page on the left

had different connotations. Some had more of a medical feeling, some felt more like a futuristic pilot. The final iteration combined the most effective points of the chosen iterations, and fitted the design requirements.

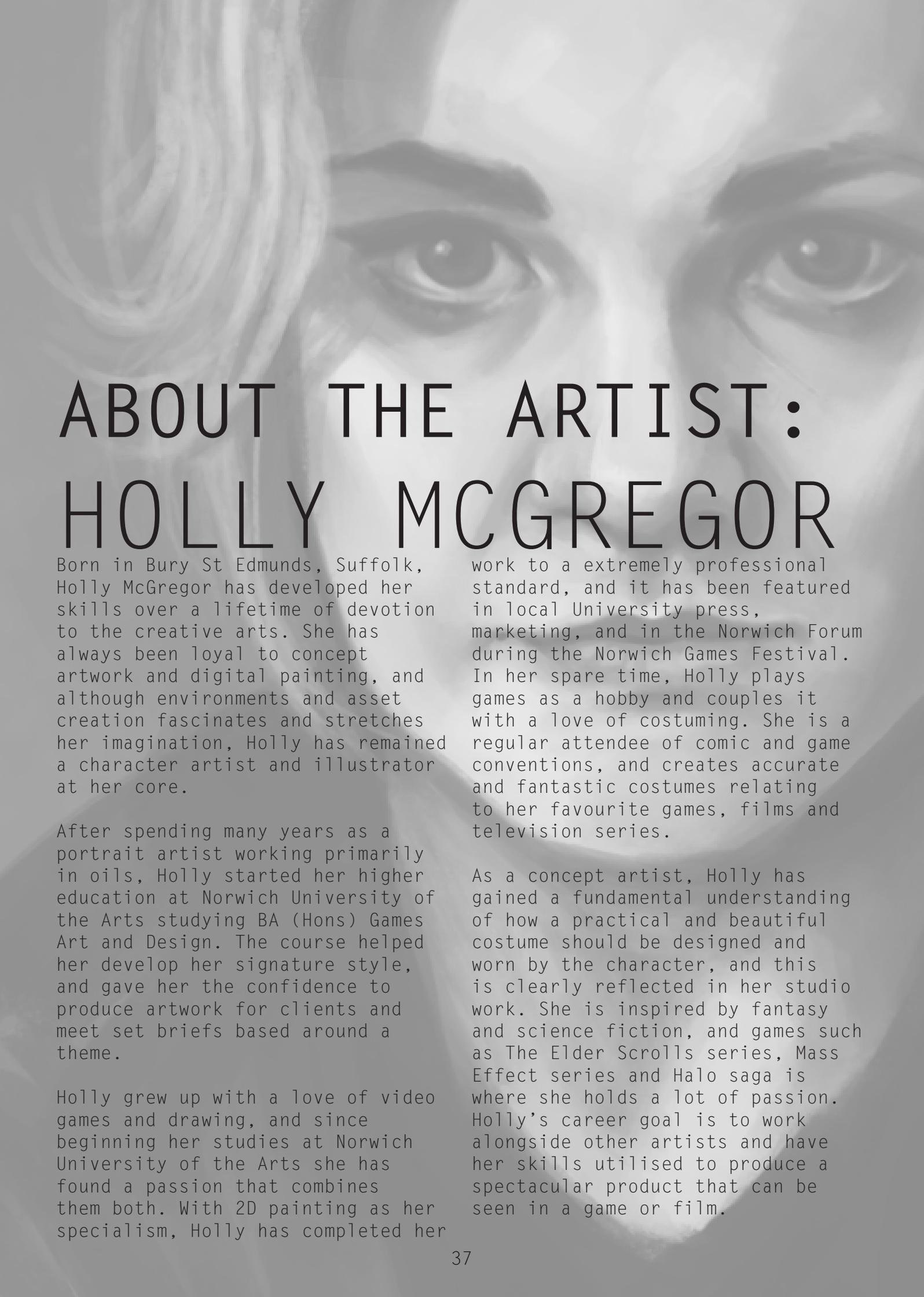


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ABOUT THE ARTIST: HOLLY MCGREGOR

Born in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, Holly McGregor has developed her skills over a lifetime of devotion to the creative arts. She has always been loyal to concept artwork and digital painting, and although environments and asset creation fascinates and stretches her imagination, Holly has remained a character artist and illustrator at her core.

After spending many years as a portrait artist working primarily in oils, Holly started her higher education at Norwich University of the Arts studying BA (Hons) Games Art and Design. The course helped her develop her signature style, and gave her the confidence to produce artwork for clients and meet set briefs based around a theme.

Holly grew up with a love of video games and drawing, and since beginning her studies at Norwich University of the Arts she has found a passion that combines them both. With 2D painting as her specialism, Holly has completed her

work to an extremely professional standard, and it has been featured in local University press, marketing, and in the Norwich Forum during the Norwich Games Festival. In her spare time, Holly plays games as a hobby and couples it with a love of costuming. She is a regular attendee of comic and game conventions, and creates accurate and fantastic costumes relating to her favourite games, films and television series.

As a concept artist, Holly has gained a fundamental understanding of how a practical and beautiful costume should be designed and worn by the character, and this is clearly reflected in her studio work. She is inspired by fantasy and science fiction, and games such as The Elder Scrolls series, Mass Effect series and Halo saga is where she holds a lot of passion. Holly's career goal is to work alongside other artists and have her skills utilised to produce a spectacular product that can be seen in a game or film.

