

# Character, Set Design and Layout



C2219031

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# The Trio of Troo



Hello! This is my portfolio for the character, set design and layout module, illustrating the creative design process that I undertook in order to create a production design for a 2D animation. Using my visualisation skills, I developed distinctive characters and environments based on a chosen prompt, with an aim to further my own artistic style.



**Chosen Idea:** *A group of animals embark on a journey to save their forest from logging*

I'm proud to say that the final results are different from this simple, original idea. I took it and made it my own, infusing cultural and historical elements that make up the bulk of my fictional world. The project is called 'The Trio of Troo', which will be explained as I guide you through my thought process and expressive approach. Enjoy!



# Initial Ideas

When first examining my chosen prompt, I knew that the target audience would be somewhat younger, since there were *talking* animals in this world, and I instantly began seeing possibilities for the style and feel of the project. I drew on this, and my passion for the idea, which stemmed from the environmental themes, and began hunting for visual inspiration. I also knew that I would need to do plenty of research in order to understand the concepts that I would be presenting, such as deforestation. Although I already had a good basis of knowledge here, I had plenty to outline. What era would my story be in and how would that change the logging methods? How do specific animals react differently to habitat changes? What kind of forest would I set everything in? Etc.

Below, I have inserted the slides from my very first powerpoint, where you can see what kind of direction I was thinking of heading in and what kind of facts I first wanted to take note of.





# Forest Logging

- Process of harvesting trees, sawing into appropriate lengths (bucking) & transporting to sawmill
- 19<sup>th</sup> century – felled by ax in colder region, conveyed by sled drawn by oxen, mules or horses to frozen river
- Mechanized modern logging – felled by crosscut saw/power-driven chain saw or machines that cut entire trees into one bite



# Effect on Animals

- Deforestation has negative impact on many species: causes habitat fragmentation, degradation & overall loss
- Less space to live in, more competition, higher risk of disease transmission
- Loss of shelter, water & food
- Changes in soil structure, water flow patterns, plant communities etc.







## Rainforest vs Forest

With some quick research, it's clear to see that jungles and tropical ecosystems are impacted by deforestation to a far greater extent than forests are, meaning animals like orangutans, elephants and big cats are more at risk of extinction. My first thought was to focus on climates like these and bring awareness to the more pressing issue, however after some consideration, I have decided that it would be more impactful to use more well-known forest animals. This also aligns with my idea since I want to play on the familiarity and sympathy of the audience, so my animals characters will need to be more cute and helpless than exotic & strong.





# First Sketches

With my powerpoint and various Pinterest examples in front of me, I started brainstorming what kind of animals I would want in the group and what styles they could adopt. At this point, I was already picturing the 'journey' that the group could go through; a journey of the mind and body.

To save their forest from the humans set out to destroy it, they each learn different forms of fighting and become warriors. A journey of martial arts and training, to gain power and become warriors of the forest! A tone was forming itself in parallel to this idea, a fun, heart-warming, yet educational animation, with different cultures (shown through different martial arts) and a strong message.

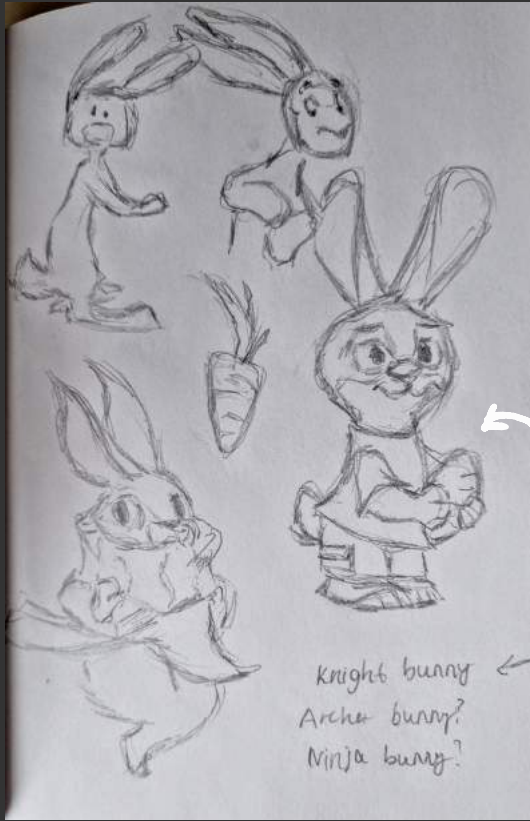
Please note that a lot of the sketches below are based on other people's designs. Here, I was doing a mix of sketching my ideas and also taking elements from pre-existing artwork, in order to get a feel for what kind of styles I could work in. This was important for me since I don't have a lot of experience drawing animal characters and needed to learn what I was comfortable with and capable of.

I really enjoy working traditionally throughout a project, especially at the start!

- Bear
- Rabbit
- Deer
- Bird - owl?
- Fox



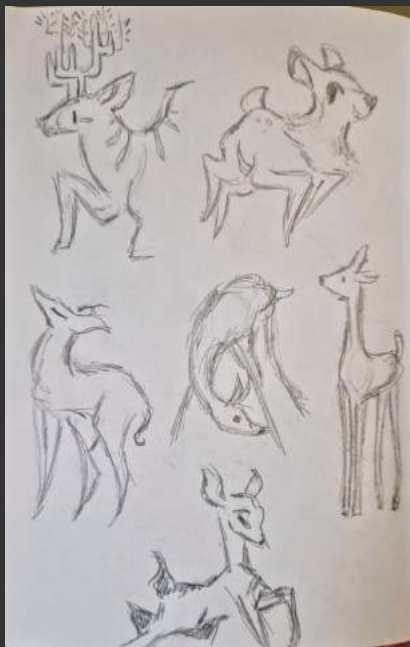
I had an idea of maybe making the characters a little fantastical by merging them with nature



At this point, I was still debating clothes for the characters

It was quite fun thinking of what kind of warriors I could make of each animal - how could I make use of their unique traits? what sort of weapons could I give them?





Drawing the deers was my favourite - they are such majestic and revered animals, and their horns provide wide creative scope



With the bird character, I was still undecided as to what kind of bird to choose, so I made sure to sketch a wide variety



# Deforestation Research & Machinery Studies

Here is some more in-depth research that I did to ensure that my work would be grounded in realism and that I wasn't spreading false information. I wanted to be certain that the main message of my project wouldn't be lost simply because the style is more on the comedic, Disney-like side of the spectrum; environmentalism remains my paramount focus.

Certain facts such as most deforested areas in the world helped me narrow down the location I would eventually choose. I also knew nothing about the sort of machines used except for what I had seen in pictures so this was a crucial document to make. I followed up with sketches of the contraptions to solidify my visual understanding.

*For reference, I do my research and note-taking in the program **Notion***





# Deforestation & Forest Degradation

Forests are integrated ecosystems that cover 31% of the land area of our planet and are home to some of the most diverse life, three quarters of all that on land. They purify air & water, are relied on by both humans and animals alike and perhaps most importantly, act as a carbon sink, thus mitigating climate change. Unfortunately, although widely known, forests are still massively under threat, mainly due to illegal logging and agriculture that lead to deforestation. This is a particular concern in rainforests, where much of the world's biodiversity thrives.



## Deforestation Hot Spots

- The Amazon
- The Atlantic Forest and Gran Chaco
- Borneo
- The Cerrado
- Choco-Darien



A forest in Sumatra, Indonesia, is clear cut to make way for a palm oil plantation

- The Congo Basin
- East Africa
- Eastern Australia
- Greater Mekong
- New Guinea
- Sumatra

## Main Causes

### **Conversion to Agriculture** -

expanding human population, more food is needed. Products like soy and palm oil as well. Rising demand means forests converted to farmland or ranchland, usually are gone forever once this occurs.

**Fires** - natural & beneficial for many landscapes except if wrong time, frequency, location or severity, all of which are happening. Often used to clear land quickly, alter forest structure & composition, water cycles & soil fertility, open them to invasive species & destroy livelihood of surrounding settlements.

Fuelwood Harvesting: about half of illegal removal of timber used as fuelwood, still quite popular choice for heating & cooking around world.

## Main Impacts

### **Increased Greenhouse Gas**

**Emissions** - when removed, emit carbon instead of absorb it. Contribute to rising temperatures & disrupted weather patterns. Alters habitats of forest-dwelling creatures, decreases food & water availability.

**Disruption of Water Cycles** - balance between water, land & atmosphere thrown off, causes changes in precipitation & weather flow.

**Increased Soil Erosion** - without trees to anchor fertile soil, rives sweep land & wash away, causing new plants to be unable to hold on to soil & agriculture producers move onwards, clearing more forest & continuing cycle of soil loss.

**Disrupted Livelihoods** - forests relied on for shelter, fuel, water & food security by many people, contributes to losses of homes & social conflict.

## Forestry Equipment



**Delimiters** - horizontally-mounted processors with system of three or more knives, grip trunk in order to pull tree through processor. Many models also feature topping saw to remove head of tree. As name suggests, main use is to remove limbs of the trees (branches & so forth).



**Feller Bunchers** - self-propelled machines with single cutting head. Operate more slowly but offer greater stability, can be used on wet/loose soils & steeper tracks thanks to self-leveling cabs. Applicable in both thinning & clear-cutting situations.



**Mulchers** - outfitted with either fixed tooth rotor system/swinging hammer, size & power tied to horsepower

**Stump Grinders** - remove tree stumps by means of rotating cutting disk, fixed carbide teeth grind stump and roots into small chips. Vary greatly in size, can be small as lawn mower/large as truck, some can be attached to tractors/excavators. Can completely remove roots of trees in few seconds.

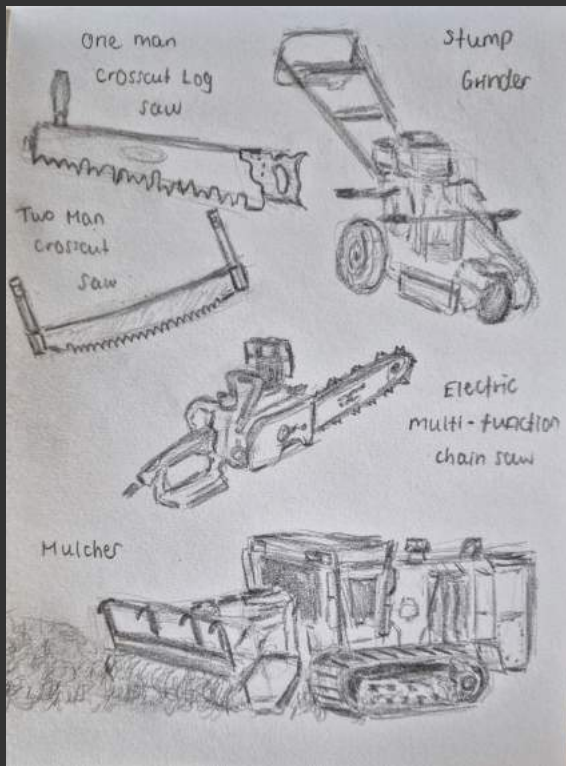


**Harvester** - self-propelled cutting machines, able to fell & process stems. Feature cutting head that fells, delimits & bucks trees to specific lengths & front/rear cab, either fixed/rotating. Ideal for tackling slopes, work well in conjunction with forwarders and self-loading trucks.

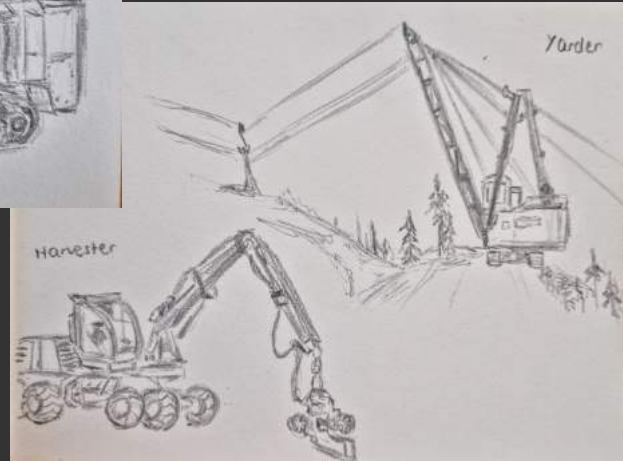
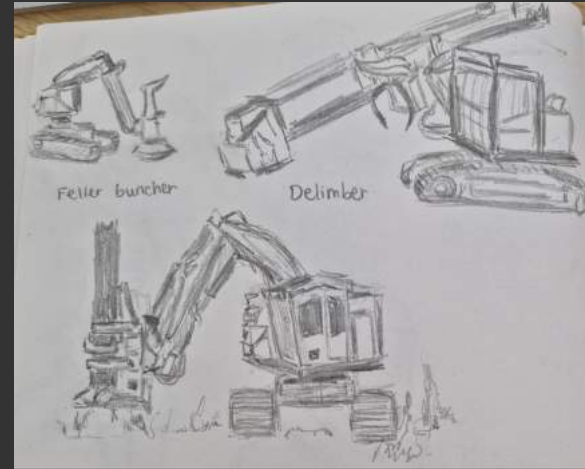
capabilities of tractor/vehicle attached to. As name suggests, cut, chop & grind vegetation into particles usually left on-site as mulch



**Yarders** - use system of cables to pull logs to a landing, either self-propelled/mobile. Cables mounted on towers (30ft - 90ft) typically made of wooden spars, steel or lattice. Employed when steep slopes/soil conditions reject ground based extraction methods.



As I was drawing from reference, I kept trying to take shortcuts, since in an animation, drawing in full detail each time wouldn't be cost-effective. My goal was to include the most noticeable, distinct forms and elements, so that each machine would be recognisable. I admit, I struggled rendering such complex hardware.



I knew that I would need to simplify a lot if I was going to include modern deforestation methods

# Design Research - Inspiration

Throughout the idea development stages of the project, we looked into various animated productions for ideas and inspiration. In my own time, I also conducted case studies to see what kind of work is expected and what is industry standard. The two main films that I explored were more beneficial to me since they were chosen specifically with my project ideas in mind and have resounding themes of nature and wildlife conservation.

I poured over the artwork that was available for each movie, analysing materials that were used, styles that were considered and subjects that were studied. It was truly fascinating being able to see all of the work that never reached the cinema screen, but helped build up the stories that we now know and love, and I gained a lot of insight into what kind of work I should be creating for my project.





# Design Research

One of the things that I am struggling with as of this project is the style & character design. I think that part of the reason for this is that I am undecided on the target audience, I lack experience in creating anthropomorphic & animalistic characters and I have also never taken the task of creating so many characters all at once. Whilst a little overwhelming, I really wanted to stretch myself and do something different for this project, especially since it is such a major portfolio piece. Furthermore, I feel great passion towards the themes that jumped out as soon as I read the prompt, namely the environmentalistic factor, which is something I am drawn to and often find myself including within my art. So, before diving into inspiration-hunting, research & idea development, I want to outline some key information and get the important project considerations out of the way.

**Main Idea:** A group of forest animals notice that their home is being destroyed by mankind and undertake a noble quest to save it through learning various types of combat and fighting back against the human invaders.

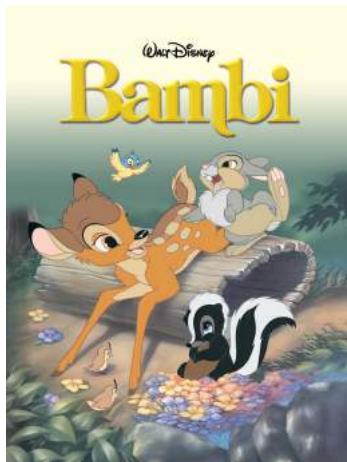
**Intended Animation Medium:** 2D

**Target Audience - Basic Demographics:** Ages 12 - 16, boys, primary/secondary education, native English speakers

The reason behind those demographics stems from the rough direction of the art style that I am thinking of going for. I want to personify the animals and gain sympathy from the audience, and the best way to do so is to make them cute & fun in terms of appearance. This is much more suited to cartoony, exaggerated features that younger age ranges really enjoy. As for the targeted gender, statistically, boys tend to like combat-based media more than girls, which is why they are the intended demographic. Please note that my project is for everyone and I have no intention of excluding other age groups, genders or nationalities - these are simply the 'target' characteristics, predicting who will make up most of my audience once the project is released and how widespread the message will be in terms of impact upon a specific viewership group.



## Main Case Studies









### Bambi

- 1942 American drama directed by David Hand
- Based on the 1923 book *Bambi, a Life in the Woods* by Austrian author and hunter Felix Salten
- Follows Bambi and his friends as he matures, discovers the world around him & becomes the Great Prince of the Forest

I chose Bambi as one of the films to draw inspiration on because of its evident relevance to my project, being an animation that revolves around a group of forest animals with a cartoonified, lovable style. The overall mood of the film is endearing and nostalgic and it brings the audience into a world of nature, friendship and the challenges of growing up. Not only does the charming art style exemplify this but we can also look through Disney's rosy tinted glasses when considering

the themes: important notions are portrayed, such as fear, loneliness and death but the world is no less a bright place to live. There is much to face in terms of life's challenges, but there is always hope and we come out stronger than before, something the audience is subconsciously influenced to believe through mise-en-scene and expert storytelling, which is exactly what I want to dive into and explore, in order to be able to apply a similar technique to my project.

	<p><b>Bambi</b> Under the guidance of his mother, Bambi learns about the wonder of nature and the power of friendship and family.</p>		<p><b>Faline</b> Bambi's mate. Bambi meets her for the first time in the field when they are young and becomes twitter-pated when they are older.</p>
	<p><b>Flower</b> One of Bambi's forest friends. When they first meet, Bambi mistakenly calls him a flower.</p>		<p><b>Thumper</b> A cheery young rabbit who introduces Bambi to fun in the forest.</p>
	<p><b>Friend Owl</b> Zany and yet affectionate, he is a father-figure to all the young animals of the forest.</p>		<p><b>The Great Prince</b> The oldest, wisest deer in the forest. Bambi's father.</p>



Note: the soothing watercolour wash that acts as the forest background, making the viewer feel as if they are living through a dream or memory, taking a step back into their own childhood.

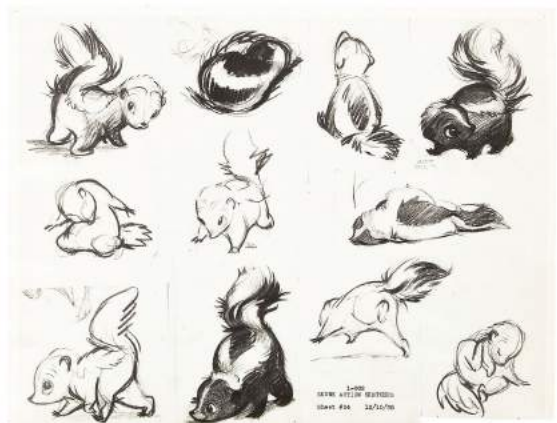
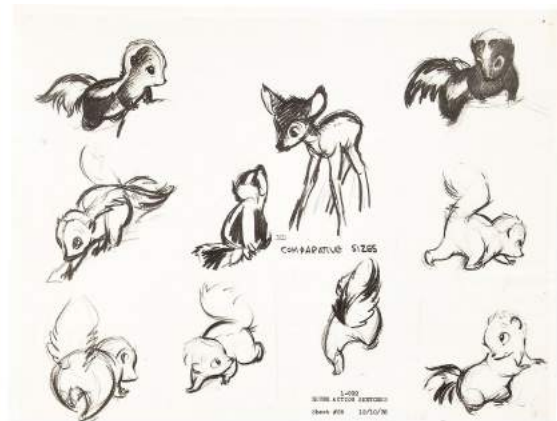
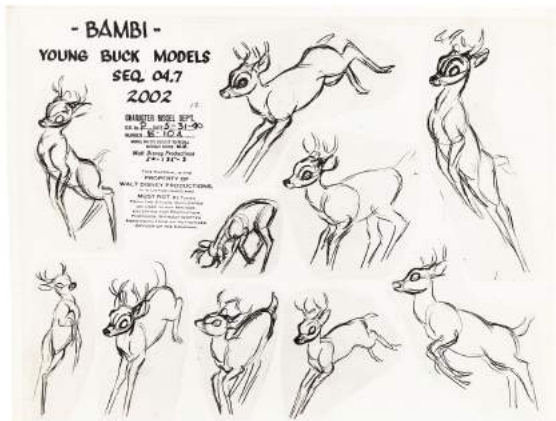
## ▼ Character Concepts

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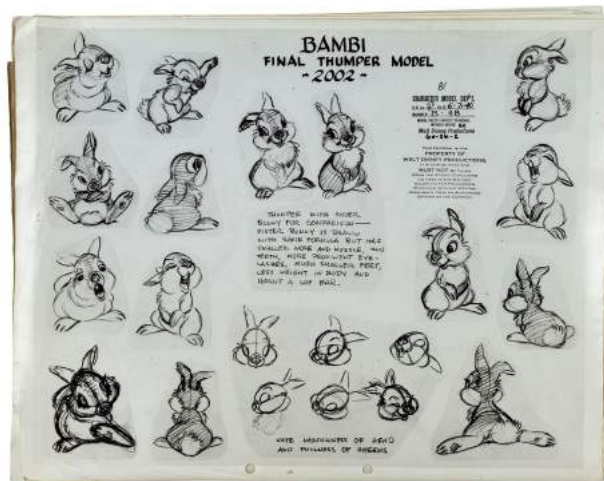






Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

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As we can see from the character art that I have gathered, early concepts had a sketchy, smudgy pencil/charcoal style which in my opinion, is ideal for capturing the feel of the characters. Both charming and lovable and full of life, the dark linework is

able to showcase the essence and overall tone of each character, such as the soft, curving lines used for Bambi's mother and the energetic, bouncy forms that make up Bambi as an infant.

In my observational sketches, I have gone into detail examining the breakdowns of each character (which is why the sequence sheets are a massive help, since you can see the initial shapes used for each pose) and noted down key features that can actually be applied to most of Disney's animal characters. Things such as big, expressive eyes and round, plump shapes guide the design methodology for the entire lineup. Since these are characteristics associated with babies, it's not wonder that we instinctively find the cast adorable and find ourselves sympathising and rooting for them from the very first scene.

A big thing that I have learned from my research here is that Disney greatly value simplicity, from the very first stages of character design, all the way through to even the final products: clarity & simplicity reign supreme. I found myself overthinking the designs a lot and this has helped me greatly by putting the most important principles of character creation back on to the forefront. Disney animators know that in order to be able to animate the characters, they need to have simple-enough breakdowns and still be appealing to the audience, which is a balance finely presented in *Bambi*. Note the form considerations in the sixth image, where the artist has outlined how the main circular disk runs through Bambi's head and which is the correct method of sketching it out, in order to line up the eyes and ears.

I really love how the style of the individual artists shine through each piece of concept art, such as the second to last, where there are lots of movement lines that bring life into the pose. The one before that shows our three main character groups and flower has a lovely, scratchy, bushy tail! Another really insightful aspect of Disney's design process is their pose exploration, shown through the various pose sheets. I love how the style differs from the portrayal of the younger characters' from soft, smudgy shapes to crisp, sketchy lines that put emphasis on elongated legs and the dynamism of each pose. It almost feels like the characters are about to jump off the page, thanks to the stretched out, unfinished poses. I can really tell how much effort went into understanding the movements of deer and how much study the artists must have done to capture this.

## ▼ Landscape Concepts



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com





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Once again, we are able to see a wide variety of styles in the concept art, which I think is one of the most gratifying aspects of that part of the production pipeline: having the ability of explore freely and focus on journey & expression rather than finality. This looseness really allows artists to communicate tone and theme and a few images can become guidelines for an entire feature film. From the detailed pencil sketches that render the beauty of every leaf to poignant forest landscapes rendered in paint, the story of Bambi can be felt in nuances of mood. By delivering them in different mediums, the viewer can explore a seemingly well-known location, at least to the eyes, in a vastly diversified network of sense and emotive understanding. For example, the fifth image is a beautiful rendition of young Bambi exploring the forest: everything is still new and bright, vibrant with possibilities and things to uncover, and the world seems a magical, calm place, where even the trees seem to bend and curl protectively over the infant - mother nature sheltering him as he opens his eyes to it's wonder.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have artwork like the final image, a simple background consisting mainly of negative space and a blaze of orange and red, not a tree in sight. The animals swim towards the shore, only a few lines trailing behind

informing us that there is water which represents the emptiness that the destroyed forest leaves in its wake and the hollow feeling that the survivors feel having lost their home. They themselves are expressed in the scratchy, dark grey of charcoal, bringing to mind imagery like ashes, dust and death. It is agonizingly simple, yet powerful and memorable.

One cannot forget the brilliant work of Tyrus Wong, one of the key artists that worked on the film. All of the magnificent washes that you see above are created through his simple strokes of colour with watercolour and pastels. These sample sketches were inspired by Chinese landscape paintings and paid special attention to light and shadow. Catching Disney's eye, Wong became the guide for *Bambi's* background artists, who were later trained to mimic his style.

*"He visualized the forest as being ethereal," Labrie says. "The sketches were more of an impression of the forest."*

## Brother Bear

- 2002 musical fantasy-comedy drama directed by Aaron Blaise & Robert Walker
- From a screenplay written by Tab Murphy, Lorne Cameron, David Hoselton, and the writing team of Steve Bencich and Ron J. Friedman
- Follows Alaskan native, Kenai, who is trying to become human again after being transformed into a bear as punishment from the Spirits for needlessly killing one



Once again, we have one of Disney's classics, a beautiful animated fantasy that has core themes of family, empathy & environmentalism, pushing the audiences to consider walking in another's proverbial shoes through an experience of magic that is signature

to their brand. In-between the humorous scenes that run alongside the main plot, there are incredibly intimate moments that describe the bond between loved ones and remind us that family is not defined by blood relation, but rather by the memories created and love shared, which is something that can also be found in the natural world and with animals too. I love that this story pushes the bounds of reality, blending both spirituality and environmentalism and spreading awareness about how we treat our world and how we treat each other. Ultimately, through Kenai's journey as a bear, he finds not only redemption for what he did, but also his *humanity*. Quite literally! At the end, he is transformed both physically and mentally, along with the audience, who grow undeniably attached to animals & humans alike over the course of the film and hopefully understand that we kill, too often, without thinking.



Left to right: brothers, Kenai, Sitkai & Denahi. Kenai's motive is revenge for Sitkai, who was lost to a bear. The film preaches forgiveness & love as the right path, not more death.

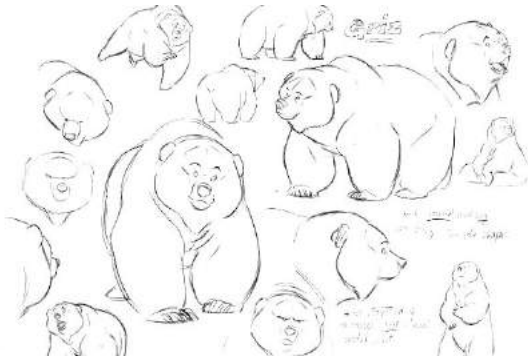


#### Art of Brother Bear

Kenai is a young Indian brave with a particular distaste for bears. When his brother Sitka is killed by one, Kenai in turn kills the bear, only to be magically transformed into one himself. To [view](https://characterdesignreferences.com/art-of-animation-8/art-of-brother-bear) <https://characterdesignreferences.com/art-of-animation-8/art-of-brother-bear>



## ▼ Character Concepts











With the concept designs for the characters of *Brother Bear*, we can see lots of facial expression work and pose sheets. Since the film's plot follows animals for most of the movie, Disney had to do what Disney does best and make them feel like *people*. The personification and characterisation of an animal is what allows the audience to connect with them and sympathize with them. By solidifying this understanding, audiences feel closer to the story, thus making a more entertaining film. This is why the artists go to great lengths to bring out the distinct qualities of each character through the way they move and express themselves. I will definitely be taking a page out of Disney's book here, since my project involves primarily animals as well.

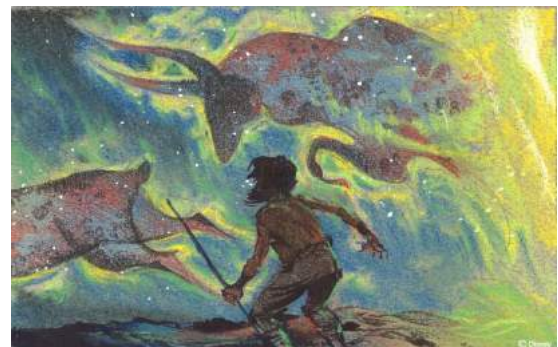
Moving on, we have quite a lot of 'technical stuff' as well, which is what I like to call all of the art that delves into the anatomy and natural behaviour of the creatures; their bone structure, habits in the wild and size differences are all meticulously studied and outlined for clarity and depth. Despite being a children's movie, if the animals didn't look or move correctly, the message would be lost to glaring realism issues, so it was incredibly important that all animators working on the film had a firm grasp on bears, moose, raccoons, otters and so forth, from the way they stood, fought and ate down to the very tiniest details like the structures of their paws.

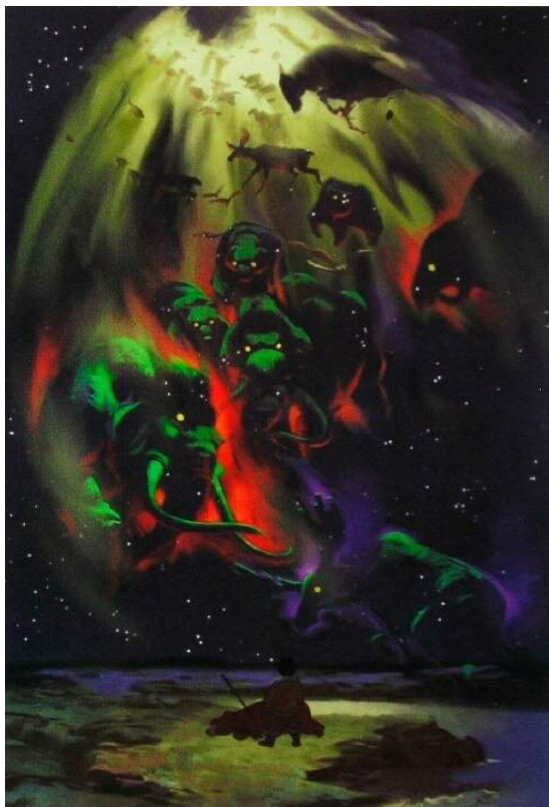
I'd also like to call attention to the beautiful pencil colour character sheets, which are all amazing expressive and raw. We get a real sense for each person through a few sketches and even the colour palette runs consistently through: the cool, soothing blue of the Alaskan mountain people. The trend amongst the bears on the other hand is that they are large, soft and round. These characteristics contrast greatly with the artwork depicting the mother's attack or how bears fight in general, where sharper, angular lines, more realism and focus on the teeth portray the ferocious creatures that society knows, and most likely what the tribe see as well. However, as we follow Kenai and Koda through the world of the forest, we see an entirely different

side to the bears, and the style reflects this. They instead look cuddly and endearing, and this was reached through a lot of shape experimentation (seen further down on the bookmarked site!)

Looking at the full library available online, you can really tell to what lengths the designers went to for concepts. Through animal studies, portraits of various characters and pencil sketches used for movement and detail, they really branched out with ideas and styles. I love the grounded, solid shading for some of these pencil pieces, which reflect the core aspects of a bear. The use of shadows is gorgeous! They even made wooden figurine versions of some of the animals in the movie, which shows exploration of different mediums and consideration of theme (wood fits really well considering the location and contextual motifs).

## ▼ Landscape Concepts





For the environment designs of this film, once again, there is a wide range of detailed pencil sketches, which capture the great scope of the mountain forests to

perfection. The high contrast and slight grainy texture brings the landscapes to life, even just in black and white. Of course, there are also many painting and coloured sketches, which are just as beautiful, if not more. As expected, there are lots of nature studies - simple shots of the woodlands from above or below, a moment captured between the trees or an impressive view of a mountain, all expressed with different mediums, colours and textures, building an impressive portfolio to pinpoint desired atmospheres and tonal ranges.

Notice also the dynamic brushstrokes used with the animals, whether they are real and running through the glades, or glittering silhouettes glowing in the skies. These pieces convey a real sense of magic thanks to the smattering of stars and the blends of green, blue and gold, acting as stunning backdrops for a hunter in position. Looking at this artwork makes me feel something indescribable, like some innate connection is being brought out from within and they are *anything* but still images. Like the film itself, all of the shots with elemental magic are teeming with life and wonder, which is a huge undertaking. The artists had to portray the belief of an entire culture; their ancestry and spiritual heritage brought to an audience with natural visuals - it couldn't be anything on-the-nose or tacky, but rather simultaneously subtle and majestic. Through certain textures and colours, I believe that they truly accomplished this! The last piece in particular is breathtaking - the glowing animals in the sky resemble Northern Lights, emerging from the constellations like kings from an older age, some ancient magic reverberating from the lands to the heavens. Everything, from the colours, to the composition give the impression of something deep and mystical. The piece feels intense and even holy, as though mother nature is bearing down on us with glowing eyes of judgment. There is a greatness that can only be felt in the heart and I think it is one of the most incredible pieces of art ever created, humanity stumped by the true power of the great wilderness, of Earth itself.



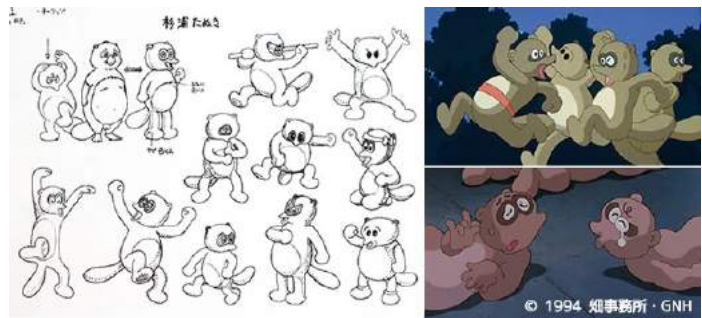
## Other Notable Inspiration

### Art of Kung Fu Panda (Trilogy)

Po might just be the laziest, clumsiest panda in the Valley of Peace, but he secretly dreams of becoming a kung fu legend. When the villainous snow leopard Tai Lung threatens Po's

📖 <https://characterdesignreferences.com/art-of-animation-7/art-of-kung-fu-panda-trilogy>





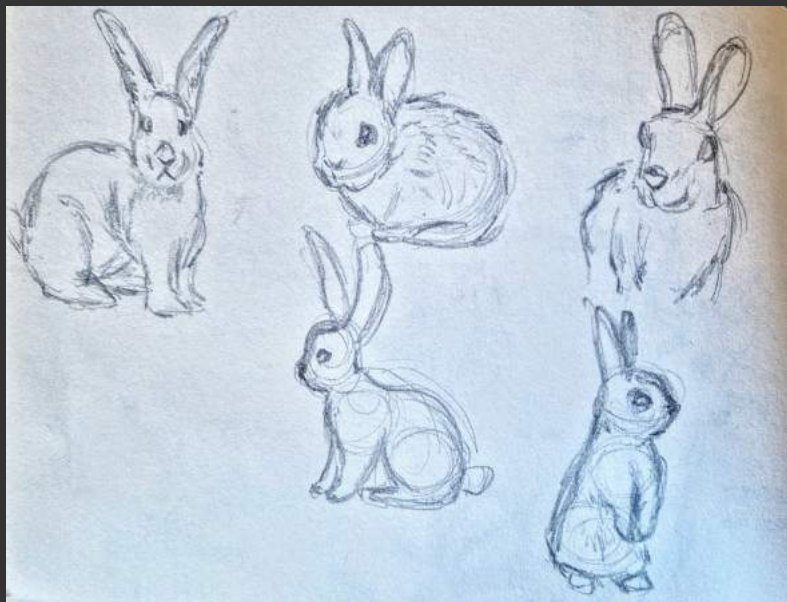


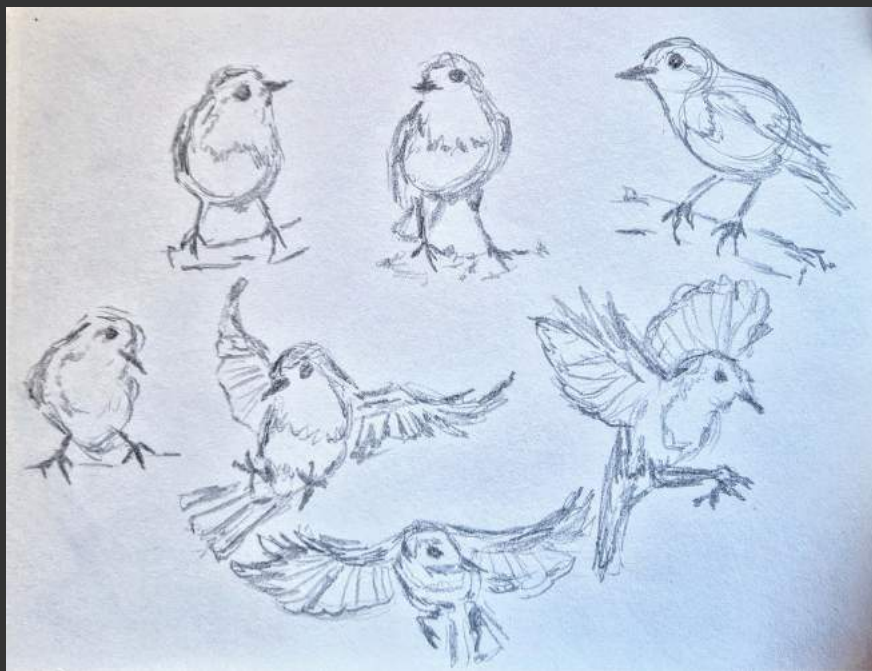


# Realistic Animal Studies

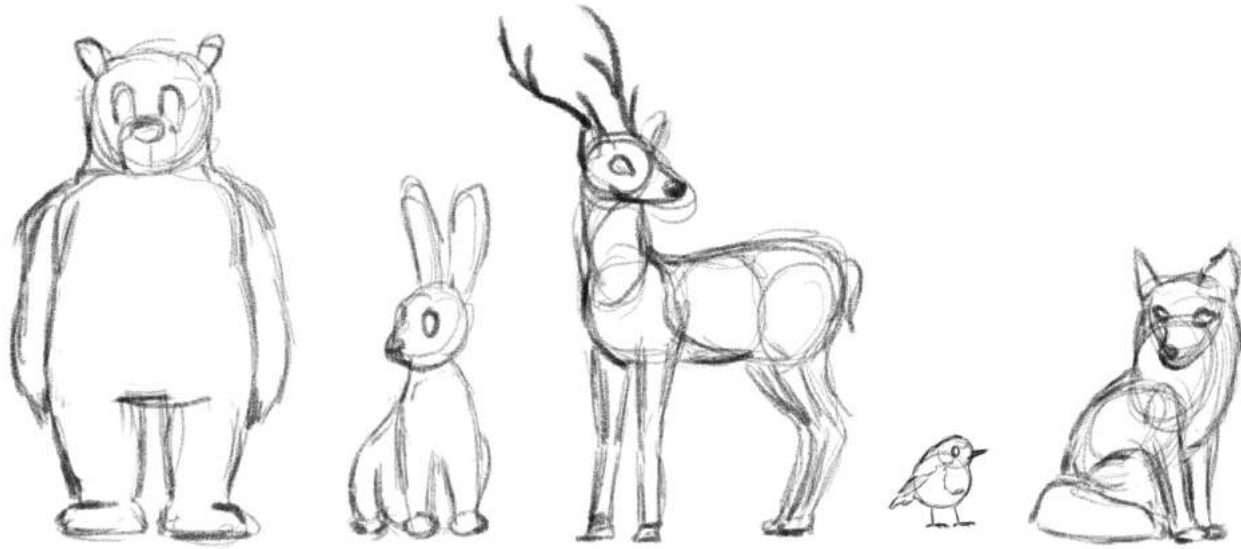
If there is one thing that I learned from my inspiration research, it is that films with animal characters require copious amounts of realistic study. All of the animators need to understand how an animal moves and behaves and be able to capture their essence in perfection, before even starting to think about personality, individual quirks and traits. I realised here, that I had jumped ahead and started thinking about style before even understanding the anatomy of the animals I wished to portray. I took a step back, and like the Disney artists who's work I marvelled over, I went back to drawing from life.







As you can see here, I had decided on the robin as my bird character, due to its bold, simple look.




With some newfound confidence in terms of animal-anatomy, I wanted to attempt sketching out all of my characters together. This is where I ran into my first major struggle however. Despite knowing roughly how to put them on paper, the characters just didn't fit together. No matter how I drew them, I wasn't satisfied with the outlook - this is the surviving sketch after many failed attempts. I couldn't see them as a group, and since that was the concept that my whole project was based around, I knew that I had to do something differently.



# Concept Shift & New Narrative



After coming face to face with this issue, I went through a lengthy artistic block. Where I was once excited about the fun, charismatic characters and charming style of the world, I suddenly felt the tone too childish and unfit with the sketches I had produced thus far. Everything felt disjointed somehow, like I had lost sight of the core of the project and was simply drawing animals for the sake of the prompt.



I decided to take a pause, re-evaluate my idea and see what could be done differently. I made some significant changes in the workload and also turned back to my trusted friend: research. There, I rekindled the spark that I had lost, with an added element that would tie everything together - a location, and with it, an entire culture. With this new direction, I felt more connected with what I was trying to tell the audience and my passion for the project returned with newfound force.



Almost instantly, a story had formed itself.



# Story Idea & Further Development

## // Previous Work & Extra Research

**Chosen prompt:** A group of talking animals embark on a journey to save their forest from logging 🌲 🦌 🌧️

↳ A group is defined as two or more people interacting with one another and being influenced by each other

After some work studying the various animals in the group that I created and making sketches for each, I realised that I wouldn't be able to handle the workload. I have a massive list of concept art and design sheets to complete and having five different characters, plus the antagonists and environments to do would mean a copious amount of time and effort.

I don't know if I would be able to handle the stress, complete everything to the standards I want and/or finish all the required work in time. I have made the decision to cut the number of characters I have back significantly in order to focus on expanding both the quality and quantity of my design portfolio, so from my original group of five animals, I am going down to three (which is pretty much the minimum for it to still be considered a group).

According to the FAO, Nigeria has the world's highest deforestation rate of primary forests. It has lost more than half of its primary forest in the last five years! However, since my focus is on woodland rather than rainforests, I wanted to look elsewhere for the location and visual inspiration as well. After a quick look into deforestation in Europe, one place stood out to me in particular: **Iceland**.

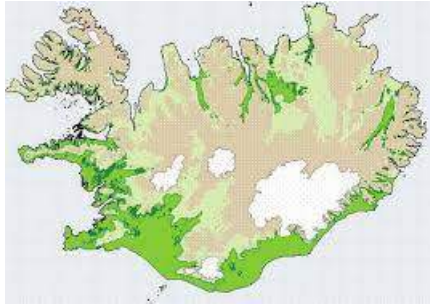
How Iceland Is Regrowing Forests Destroyed by the Vikings

Only about 2 percent of Iceland is now forested, down from as much as 40 percent before Vikings arrived.

<https://www.treehugger.com/how-iceland-regrowing-forests-destroyed-vikings-4864451>

Since the 9th century, when Scandinavians settled in, the country has undergone extensive deforestation. Between 25 - 40% of Iceland's land area was covered by birch forest and woodland before settlers began cutting down the forests and burning shrubland to create grazing land and fields. Whilst it is still a famously beautiful place, the land of viking-ancestry is almost entirely devoid of trees, with only about 2% of the land area now being forested. Agriculture is the main reason why the forests have not largely grown back, however Iceland is working to fix this, planting millions of non-native spruce, pine and larch trees as well as native birch for more than 100 years.

I think that this location would be an excellent setting for my project, since the cultural and historical roots are prominent and ripe for creative representation. I love the idea of portraying viking settlers and shedding light on how their actions disturbed local wildlife and forever altered the course of Iceland's naturescapes. It is also far more visually interesting and offers a wider scope for design than the more modern period I was considering up until now. I think that this shift, in combination with having less main animal characters is a brilliant new direction for the story that I have chosen!



Vikings Razed the Forests. Can Iceland Regrow Them?  
 The country lost most of its trees long ago. Despite years of reforestation, it is making much progress.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/20/climate/iceland-trees-reforestation.html>



(Apologies for the janky exporting here)

Originally, my chosen genre for this project was comedy-drama. I was imagining it to be somewhat directed for children, both showcasing the importance of preserving nature and entertaining through cartoon animals learning to fight to protect their home (something like kung-fu or karate). My vision was a cute, somewhat silly animation, with slight serious undertones and a fun cartoon style to match. However, I see now where my interests and current research have taken me: the tone has completely changed. It is almost like the project has a life of its own now and has swayed me entirely onto a new path, a different direction. I am inspired to include Norse mythology in lieu of the vikings who came to Iceland so many hundreds of years before.

## Landvættir

Landvættir (nature spirits) are chthonic guardians of specific grounds, such as wild places or farms. When Vikings approached land, they reportedly removed their carved dragon heads from the bows of their longships so as not to frighten and thus provoke the landvættir to attack and thereby incur bad luck from them.

My orientation now, lies deeply in ancient Norse beliefs, when incurring the wrath of the nature spirits was the worst of the human's worries. It was (and still somewhat is today) believed that guardians of the wild called Vaettir watched over forests, mountains and other natural grounds and even the vikings that first





stepped foot on Icelandic soil were wary of their power.

Instead of learning to karate chop the evil humans trying to invade their land, I want to make my story and character more nuanced and meaningful, so the animals will be used either as vessels for the spirits or gain supernatural powers themselves.



I am now grateful that I chose to research *Brother Bear* since a lot of inspiration will come from this film.

There are said to be four main Vættir of Iceland, the great guardians known as the *Landvættir*. They are traditionally regarded to each protect a quarter of the great country: the dragon (*Dreki*) in the east, the eagle (*Gammur*) in the north, the bull (*Griðungur*) in the west, and the giant (*Bergrisi*) in the south.

*Icelandic culture continues to celebrate the supernatural protection over the island and four landvættir can still be seen in the Icelandic coat-of-arms: a troll-bull, troll-eagle, dragon, and handsome giant. The troll-animals are actually jötunn who shape shifted into the form (and mentality) of an animal and such animals are supernaturally strong*





### Norse Mythology A to Z

Discover topics like art, norse, mythology, mildly interesting, the more you know, and the magic of the internet at Imgur, a community powered entertainment destination. Lift your spirits with funny jokes, trending memes, entertaining gifs, inspiring stories, viral videos, and so much

<https://imgur.com/gallery/zdMn46k>



## // Story

It was the late 9th century and our story took place in the small forest of *Troo*, on the edge of Iceland, where the trees were almost continually tipped with the pearly white of Winter's frost. The air was frigid but refreshing, a foggy chill trying to tunnel itself into the nooks and crannies where wildlife thrived; little squirrel gateways in the trees, rabbit holes and fox burrows. Although the forest seemed quiet and ordinary, it was teeming with life, and a certain mystical glow that lived in the fireflies at night, in the way the moonlight lit the riverlets and streams and the reflections that shadowed each living creature that wandered the dusky paths. Watched over. Protected. The spirits of nature occasionally roamed this forest, *Vaettir* they were called, guarding all life from the eyes of the skies and mountains and coming down only to play amongst the children of the land. Or to stop those that would threaten them.

What the revered sprites, or the animals, didn't see coming, were the vikings set sail for the Icelandic fjords, along them scattered a handful of vibrant forests - one of which was *Troo*. Headed straight for them aboard

fifteen boats was the mighty Thunder Clan from Southern shores of the world, come to reclaim new land, hungry for glory and proud enough to believe they could usher in a new era upon fresh soil, one where they were gods. But none was more starved for honour than their leader, none as proud and *none* with as heavy a scent of bloodlust draped upon their shoulders. A cloak of death worn like a crown. And he who wore it, although now faded from history, was marked as Erik Arkynbjorn in the viking legends of old. Bastard son of distant royals who were rumoured to be slain by his hands, unspeakable hunting prowess, a streak of hatred slashed across his neck and a pair of stony eyes that were said to make the winds weep and wither away.

The animals and spirits of *Troo* soon enough noticed when the strangers stepped onto their ground. At first, it was cautious curiosity, watching and wondering what the strange two-legged folk were doing in a large valley nestled under a nearby mountain. For a while, they simply kept to themselves, building their strange houses of thin, naked trees, speaking their strange tongues and melodies, eating their strange, smelly food. The woodland was not disturbed, so it did not disturb in return. But soon enough - too soon - the changes began. Strong clan members began felling trees on the outskirts of the camp, cutting and chopping and hauling away, or burning. Rabbits skittered away. Birds abandoned their nests. The spirits took no notice. But the greedy vikings did not stop; clearing the land bit by bit, hunting and razing to no end, mounting in number as time bled with the fallen. Our little trio comes in here, sick and tired of watching their home swept away by cold blades, held by colder people still, or reduced to ashes by their small vengeful suns. Why were the revered not doing something? *Troo* was soon to be no more if this continued.

Bear, bird and fox, as powerless as they felt against the growing horde of humans, decided that they would not allow this to happen, even if it meant giving their own lives up to slow the tide down - they would fight. And fight they did. Cutting down vikings one by one or in small groups, stealing weapons, even setting traps. But mostly, they pushed and pushed with sheer force, trying to slow the lumbering giants down with whatever means they had, toppling and disrupting and roaring and scratching and biting. All of the other animals were too afraid, but one bear, one owl and one fox took that fear and sharpened it into their nails, teeth and beak, into their minds. They spoke amongst themselves because they needed to, as all creatures could although they tended not to. Whilst the effect was little, it was there, and every day marked some progress against the horrible Thunder men. Erik's hate was fueled like a flame amidst dry grass, spreading throughout his clan in a frenzy. The pesky beasts had to be stopped, had to *die* - and in his madness, he would make it happen, no matter what it took.

Throughout all of this, the *Vaettir* still didn't bat an eye, at least until Erik one day cut down a great oak that had grown roots far and wide for many years and was home to numerous living beings. Three of those beings were our little trio of heroes. And when they found out that they had nowhere to retreat to, and their home was *truly* destroyed, their will crumbled. How could they possibly fight against such power?

It took five of the Thunder Clan and himself, but the roar that was heard that day could rattle your spine: a thrumming, tragic doom when the giant tree fell to the ground, cut down in its prime. And to this, finally, the great spirits turned their heads. The boom reverberated through the deepest earth beneath to the very tips of the mountains on top, lasting what felt like an eternity. And then it stopped. A silence stretched like no other, like a cat awaking from a long nap and languishing in each moment to uncurl its stiff limbs. It was *deathly* silent for a forest. Erik yelled at his men to continue hauling the tree and the men, uneasy as they were, obeyed with their viking grunts and nods. Bear, fox and bird sat by a bush not too far away as dusk had fallen, too tired and lost to even mourn, too defeated to notice the silence. And precisely then, when all of *Troo* was as still as stone, the miracle happened. Their ancestor - no, mother nature's protector no less, rose in the sky with a magnificent light. The stars themselves were dwarfed as *Dreki* unfurled his wings, drawing back in anger to let out not a roar, or a howl, or a scream, but a song. A deep, reverberating song, as if the heart of the land and sky had opened its mouth to protest - no weakness could be found here - for the echo was louder than the oak's death, louder than

any thunderstorm or wave of the sea and hauntingly powerful. Iceland's great guardian of the East had risen and called upon the magic buried in the the forest and animals and every living thing born in the mother's image under his domain.

Erik and his clan stood rooted in the spot, trembling. Even the greatest of warriors, feared by all of the animals, were absolutely struck by this indescribable sound and the image before them that they could not bring themselves to believe. They could all see the great dragon, even if the trees were taller than five, ten, even fifteen men combined, and their eyes were nigh on close to tears. Only Erik pushed the fear in his heart down, staring at the sky with both awe and malice. Only one question hung in the air when *Dreki's* song ended...what would happen now? Unfortunately to the humans, the worst was yet to come, for Iceland's *Landvaettir* had summoned all of the forest's spirits in one breath and awakened the forest's very core. Trees began to sway and move and grab, the sky stormed and spat, the ground shook and cracked. And the animals, *oh, the animals*. They finally got their sweet revenge, all fear swallowed, so that even the smallest bunny ran out and attacked, fighting alongside the spirits that had manifested temporarily into reality, joining the battle. And who was at the forefront? None other than our little trio, rewarded for their valiant efforts with extraordinary gifts, leading their army with newfound strength . With this supernatural boost, *Troo* fought back its invaders with ease - even Erik, who made winds weep and men bow, was no match. Every last man, woman and child scrambled to their boats and ran in terrible fear, knowing for certainty that they would never return, even as they twisted the tale to sing of their own false bravery for years to come.

*Dreki* only watched, no need for him to intervene, not just yet. For now, the forests still had hope, and it lay inside each of the children of the Earth, who slept peacefully that night, as the spirits returned to their eternal rest, watching. Waiting. But never gone.

## >>> Key Scenes

**Scene 1:** In the middle of the action, various scenes of the trio fighting back and thwarting the vikings efforts with different techniques & plain animalistic force. Erik has had enough and decides to fell the great oak which breaks all the fight left in the animals and ultimately awakens their doom.

**Scene 2:** The aftermath. Eriks forces stand in awe as they awaken the great spirit of the East, *Dreki*. With a terrifying, deep song, he awakens the forest and we see this happening bit by bit: the landscape reacting, the spirits stepping forth and the main shot: the animals gaining their new powers. The story board ends just as the battle is about to begin.

The struggle here was obvious for me, I was asked for a short story and instead, came up with something quite detailed that could easily be expanded on and have several more scenes if I wished. With a larger scope, more lore and more explanation required, I had to be much more selective with which scenes I would choose to include, since they would need to be adequate in terms of drama and fantasy in order to reflect the story themes but also linked and focal to the plot in order for them to make sense side by side. Aka, how can I relay all of the necessary information to the audience without exposition (I didn't want to start at the beginning since all of the impact happens at the end) and still make it both entertaining and clear? The answer was in the shortcut I took, by cutting out some of the end of a previous scene and merging it with a separate one. Instead of having an entire storyboard dedicated to just the animals fighting against the vikings (because again, this could easily be expanded, have a lot of different mini-stories/shots within), I would only include a hint of that to show that they are the 'good guys' trying to protect their home before quickly moving onto Erik's retaliation. That way, we cut quickly to the bulk of the drama, without any waffle and without skipping out on basic information.

# Storyboard Outline

Having created a full story for my project, I thought it would be good to jump straight into what I would want for my storyboard. Using the two key scenes I picked from my narrative, I bullet-pointed the shots I was picturing (of course, this was all very rough at this stage, but this is the plan I actually ended up using).

Brother Bear - Landscape concept Art Notes:

- Detailed pencil sketches - high contrast
- Dynamic brush strokes
- The pieces with colour convey a sense of magic, beautiful blends with coloured pencil
- Artists undertook difficult task of portraying the spirits through nature. Through certain textures and colours, can feel the mystique.
- Lots of nature studies, trying to capture the environments in different ways

That lost piece with the glowing animals in the sky: incredibly deep and mystical, feels almost holy. Animals like Northern Lights / constellations? Great!

## CSDL - Key Scene Ideas ☆☆☆

- Vikings stepping on land from boats pillaging & destroying forest
- Village expands (show forest border being pushed back)
- Animals are confused & scared (show them noticing + determination of the trio)/Anger

- Discussion between the trio about stopping clan (+ why aren't the spirits doing anything?)
- Series of attempts to thwart the humans:

Ideas:

- Stealing axes & swords
- Scaring them (Bear)
- Digging hole + covering with leaves
- Invisible lines (rope - also stolen?) stretched out to trip them up
- Fox scaring away chickens / letting animals loose
- Owl swooping down & attacking vikings trying to chop tree
- Releasing particular river rock / redirecting stream to flood ~~village~~ village

- Angry vikings with more armour on way to chop oak down
- Trio confused as to why not retreating - scared
- Vikings walk to giant oak & Erik gives order to chop it down
- With each chop, cut back to animals in horror - continuous zoom

- Tree falls, massive 'BOOM' & birds fly away in distance
- Pair of eyes open in the dark [Sc. 1 END]

- Silence & no movement. Trio are crestfallen, clan is confused & scared
- Erik yells to keep moving, vikings reluctantly continue hauling tree
- Ground rumbles & storm clouds gather overhead sky darkens
- Vikings look up (POV taller than trees), reflected in one's eyes: Dreki looming upwards
- Great dragon unfurled wings in sky, opens mouth as if to roar, unleashes song
- ~~But~~ storm clouds gather overhead, trees start snapping & grabbing at the men
- Ground cracks & splits around them - spirits come out, step out from trees & rocks too
- Clan starts panicking, look to forest in-dent
- Stepping out from shadows: trio with powers
- Last shot is them + animal army & Dreki in bg facing off with clan (about to battle)

# Mood Boards

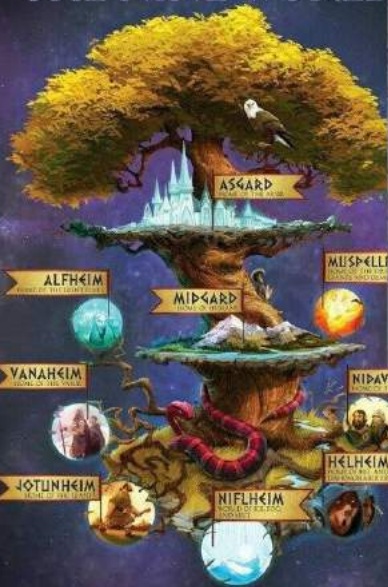
I now had an entirely different mood for the project, with the added depth of a culture's history. I launched myself into a new visual hunt, using Pinterest as my primary source for imagery.

Looking up ideas such as Vikings, Norse mythology, Icelandic art and forest spirits, I found myself looking at a rich, new aesthetic, filled with magic and war. I wanted to be careful not to lose my objective, which stood firm in spreading environmental awareness and saving a forest through the perspective of its inhabitants. This is why a lot of the art further on is more whimsical and natural, and in slightly leaning towards abstract styles, I felt that I could retain this core theme.





# THE NINE WORLDS



















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# Viking Studies



Since I had already done realism studies for my animal characters, I went head and applied the same process to the newly added character group, the Vikings. I didn't know exactly how many I would be doing, but I was well aware of how little I could draw when it came to their way of life. I got to work studying different poses and clothing, taking note of some of the key motifs and repetitive elements. I learned about what kind of fabrics and patterns they favoured, as well as how their outfits allowed them to move, fight and carry heavy weapons.

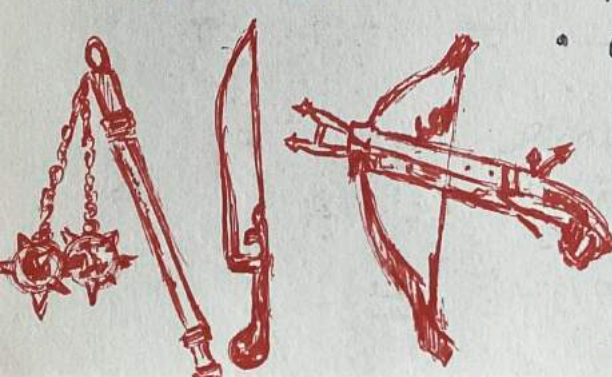




\* Taking note of textures, fabric, weaponry, elements of costumes (belts, fur lining etc. but focus on mobility).



- Horns, animal bones & skeletons
- straps, buckles, rings
- Hanging adornments
- Celtic patterns
- Fur, fleece, wool
- Pouches
- Cross cross, diamond



# Viking Research

I continued delving into Viking culture knowing I would also need a firm grasp on things such as their housing situations and daily lives. I had a harder time finding information on the latter, but in general, the stereotypes surrounding typical Viking behaviour are believed to reflect their reality back in the day. They were a rowdy, prideful people and took what they felt they deserved to have (which was most everything).

What was interesting to discover was that habitual aggression was not as prominent in their lives as we have been led to believe by the media. They mostly tried to live in peace when a particular landscape was selected as a home. During these periods, another kind of strength was revealed - the bonds of family and kinship.

However, for the sake of my project, this is not the side of Viking life I would be focusing on. I adjusted my focus on Iceland and the Viking-settlers that moved there for any extra facts that might make them stand out from other clans, but they, like most other invaders, cut, burned and deforested all the same.



# Icelandic Vikings

Many say that Icelanders are hard to tame because their Viking heritage lends them a strength that parallels that of the harsh nature their ancestors had to reckon with when first stepping foot on the land of fire and ice. Most of the Vikings that came to settle there were simply fleeing the rules and regulations in the Scandinavian countries.

*The one who is given credit as the first Icelandic settler is Ingólfur Arnarson, as he was the first to stay permanently in the year 874, and chose Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, to be his home. His brother, Hjörleifur, came with him accompanied by a flock of men.*

## Quick Facts

- Instead of hats with horns on them, Viking warriors sported headgear that resembling those found in other parts of Northern Europe at that time: metal helmets with pointed tops and protection centered around the nose and eyes.

*Note: despite this, horns could often still be seen - no Viking could resist the fierce animalistic fashion statement that was an animal's natural weapon.*

- Equality, unheard of? Perhaps not! Although there was a clear dividend between men and women, Viking women could in fact divorce their men at the time and even inherit property.
- As expected, most of their leisure time involved competition and strength-building fun. Hobbies included wrestling, horse riding, swimming, racing, building things, chess, archery, competitive eating, and competitive drinking.
- Although it had more to do with status/wealth rather than gender, archaeological findings have proven that Viking men and women wore jewelry!

## Turf Houses

The turf houses of Iceland have a rich history, which can be hard to believe considering the country was once largely covered and trees and one would assume that the new settlers would be partial to wooden housing more than anything. Research does in fact show that Icelander's used their darling birch: shedding the trees that once forested 30% of the land. As history goes however, the Vikings clearly didn't think ahead and the trees were quickly used up, leaving a despairing need for an alternative. This is where turf houses come in - the resolution found when digging deep into tradition and embracing something already quite appreciated in Norway, where most of the settlers came from. Turf roofs were recognized and reliable, offering premium insulation exceeding wood or stone, an excellent opportunity considering all of the suitable terrain Iceland had.



*At night people would gather in the largest room, the only one heated up with fire and tell each other stories, knit and make wool and skin products. Others would sing or recite poems and everyone would keep warm in this same room that everything took place in. This was called baðstofa, or basically the ‘bath living room’.*

## Life

The bad reputation that surrounds vikings comes from their rituals when first inhabiting a particular area. Initially, they were raiders, going from village to village and taking what they needed, even garnering their own word for their actions: landnám, or “land-taking”. However, although they were rightly feared during the height of their reign, honest living is said to be something they also indulged in, particularly true when they settled in a certain place, putting away their weapons and

focusing farming and fishing. This is very true of Iceland, where many decided to lead relatively peaceful lives (*interesting shift here, could this be the land that changed them? Could link with my project, since the clan arrive savage and glory-hungry but are changed down to their very core*). ✱

#### Life in Viking Times - Local Histories

By Tim Lambert Viking Society Upper-class Vikings were called Jarls (from which we derive our word, Earl). Below them was a class of farmers and craftsmen called Karls. At the bottom of the  
<https://localhistories.org/life-in-viking-times/>

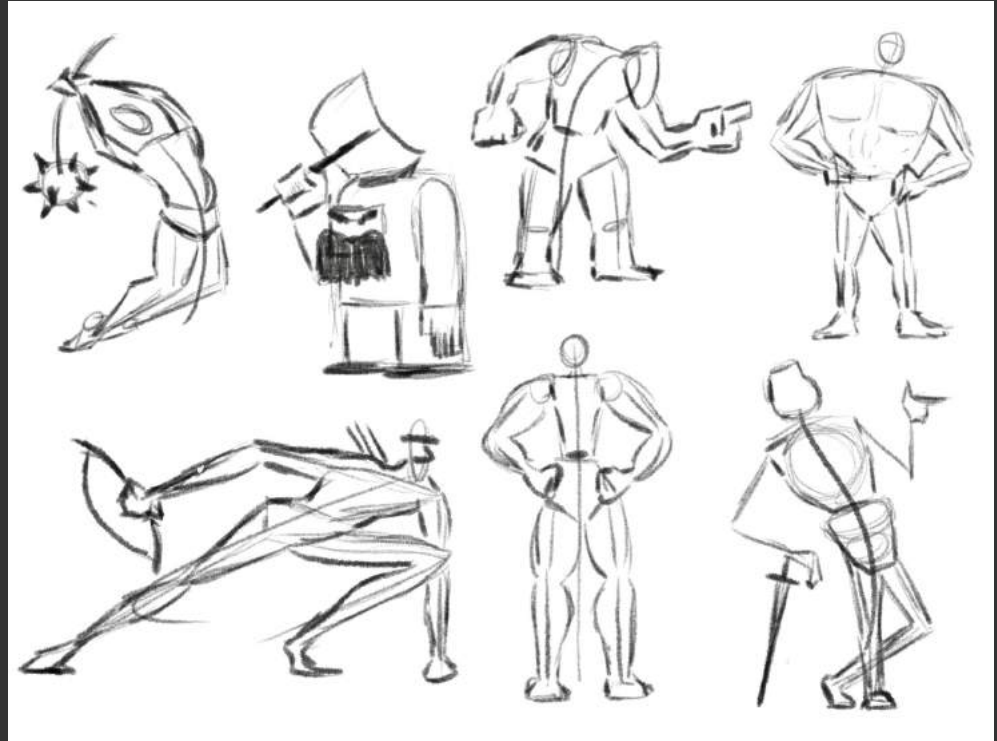


✱ The ending that I envisioned for my story is one that makes sense for the prompt I had chosen – the animals are our main characters, *they* are the good guys. It would make sense that we are rooting for them to save their home and drive the vikings out. An interesting alternative ending would be that a few choose to stay and change their ways: reconnect with nature and their own roots after having seen the forest come to life. They could devote their lives to the spirits and really hone down on the message I am trying to convey.

# Viking Thumbnails

Here, you can see how I have brainstormed different designs for the viking clan that would be invading Troo. I experimented with body shapes and proportion, ranging from blocky and rigid, to muscular and agile.

I particularly like this one, which has a stronger line of action than I intended!







Further designs



# Erik Arkyrbjorn

*"But none was more starved for honour than their leader, none as proud and none with as heavy a scent of bloodlust draped upon their shoulders. A cloak of death worn like a crown. And he who wore it, although now faded from history, was marked as Erik Arkyrbjorn in the viking legends of old. Bastard son of distant royals who were rumoured to be slain by his hands, unspeakable hunting prowess, a streak of hatred slashed across his neck and a pair of stony eyes that were said to make the winds weep and wither away"*



This is a passage taken directly from my story and is the first notion I had of the Thunder Clan leader, who I made a key character. Although not *all* of the features I described ended up being used in the final design, they serve to build up the image of him: a fearsome Viking who knew only death and power and the perfect antagonist to the heroes of Troo.

I sketched out a basic, muscular viking build for the base and sketched an outfit on top



You can instantly tell that the design is too cluttered.

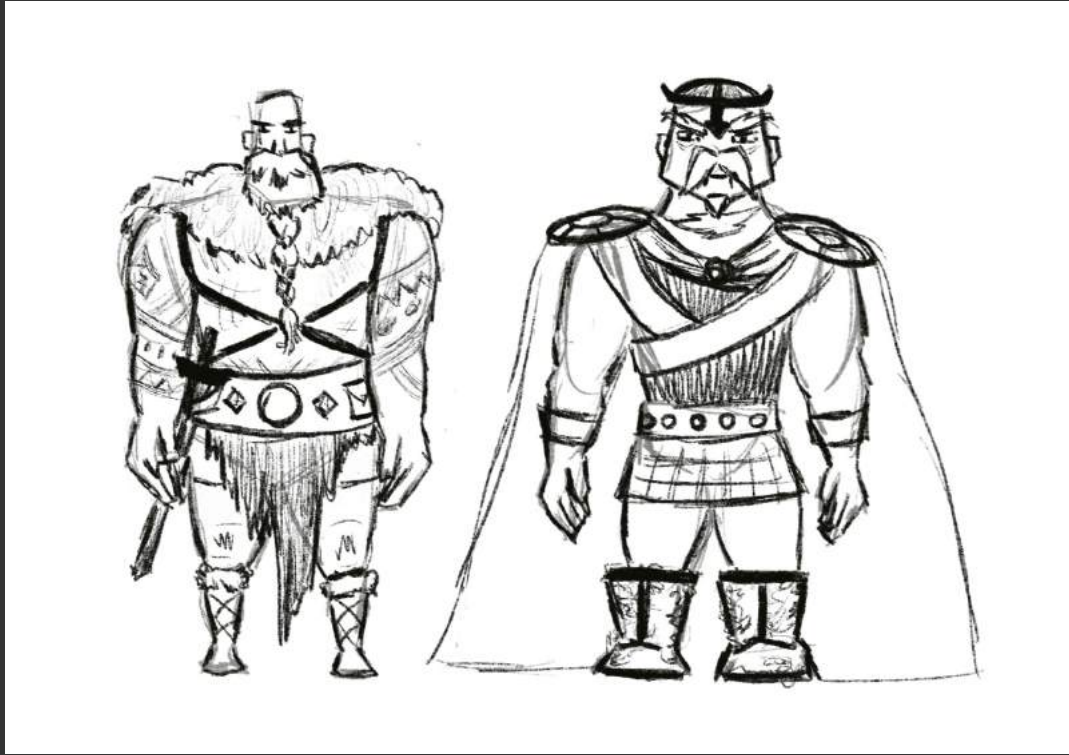
There is too much going on with the armour, making the silhouette confusing. The core essence of the character is also lost.

My ideas in mind were 'regal', 'leader' and 'mighty', hence all of the details

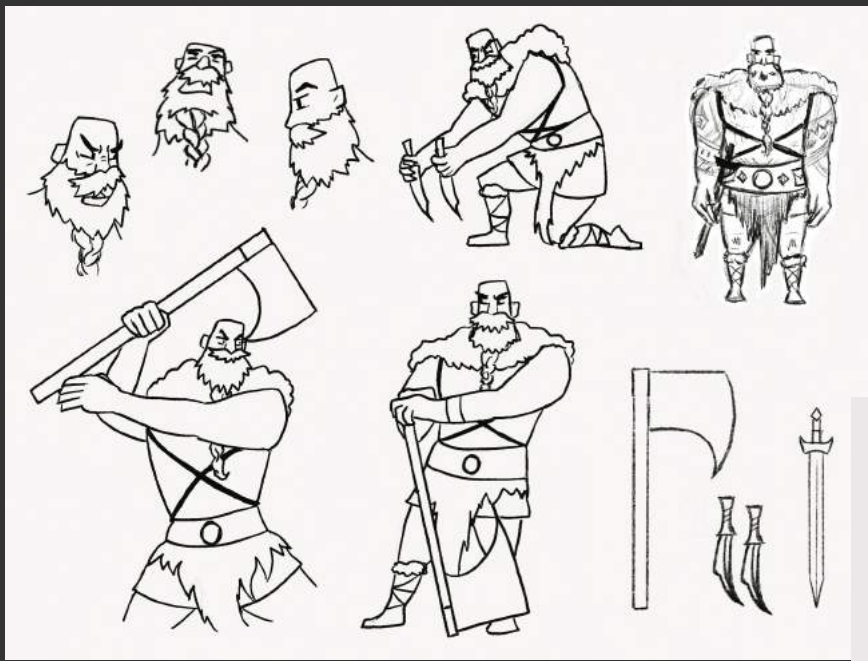
What I do like from this design is the giant axe! I think it suits Erik.

With these next developmental sketches, I aimed for less armour and a more discernible silhouette

I think that the broad shoulders, chest and tattoos really fit the aesthetic I was going for and make him look more fearsome



Although the sketch to the right has more of Erik's features visible (such as the scar and cloak), I find the one on the left to be more effective.



## B&W Character Sheet ↗

- Quick poses that describe Erik's body language
- Key facial expressions (mostly angry)
- Favourite weapons

Although the top right is quite eye-catching, I found that the darker colour combinations suited Erik better. The final palette is a mix of all of the tones I liked, de-saturated slightly to mix better together.

## Colour Experimentation ↘



# Coloured Character Sheet

Red: connotations of blood, danger and anger

Brown: earthy and deep-viking family (the clan)

Blue: cool, cunning - he is a good leader

Gold: wealth - a reminder to all that he is the chief-tan. Also hints at his past (son of royals).

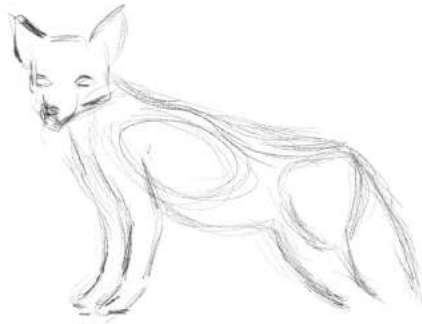


# The Trio



To reiterate what I said earlier, I decided that it would be better for the project overall if I decrease the number of animals in the group.

Instead of five, like I originally planned, I was going to focus on three instead. I thought about what animals I was most confident in drawing, the designs I enjoyed most and also things like height and proportion. I concluded that the most balanced trio would be the bear, fox and bird characters. Instead of a small robin, this allowed me to change the bird to something bigger and more prominent, like an owl! Here are some quick digital studies I did soon after to refresh my knowledge on their anatomy.



# Abstract Sketches ↘

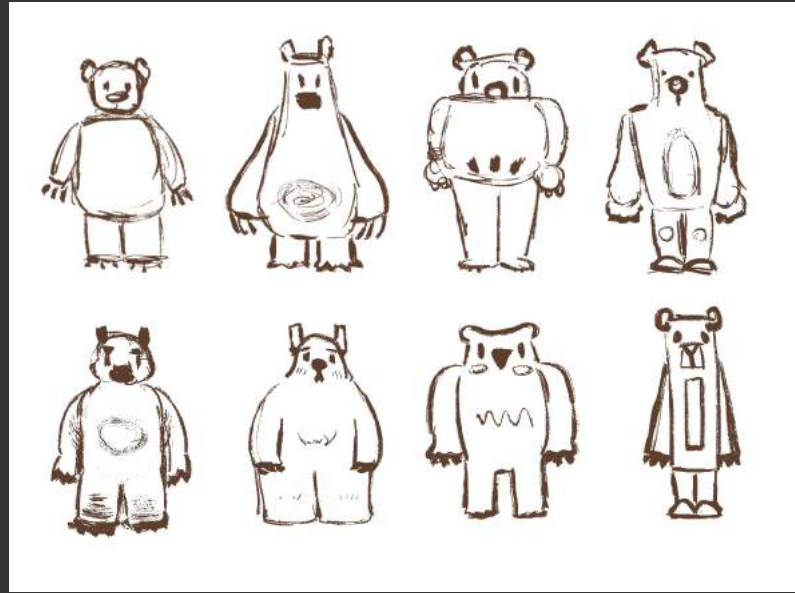


This brief really encouraged me to experiment with various materials and mark-making. Some of these patterned designs have elements that I ended up including in my final work!



# Bear : Sketches

The bear character is one of my favourites - right from the start, I knew I wanted him/her standing on two legs



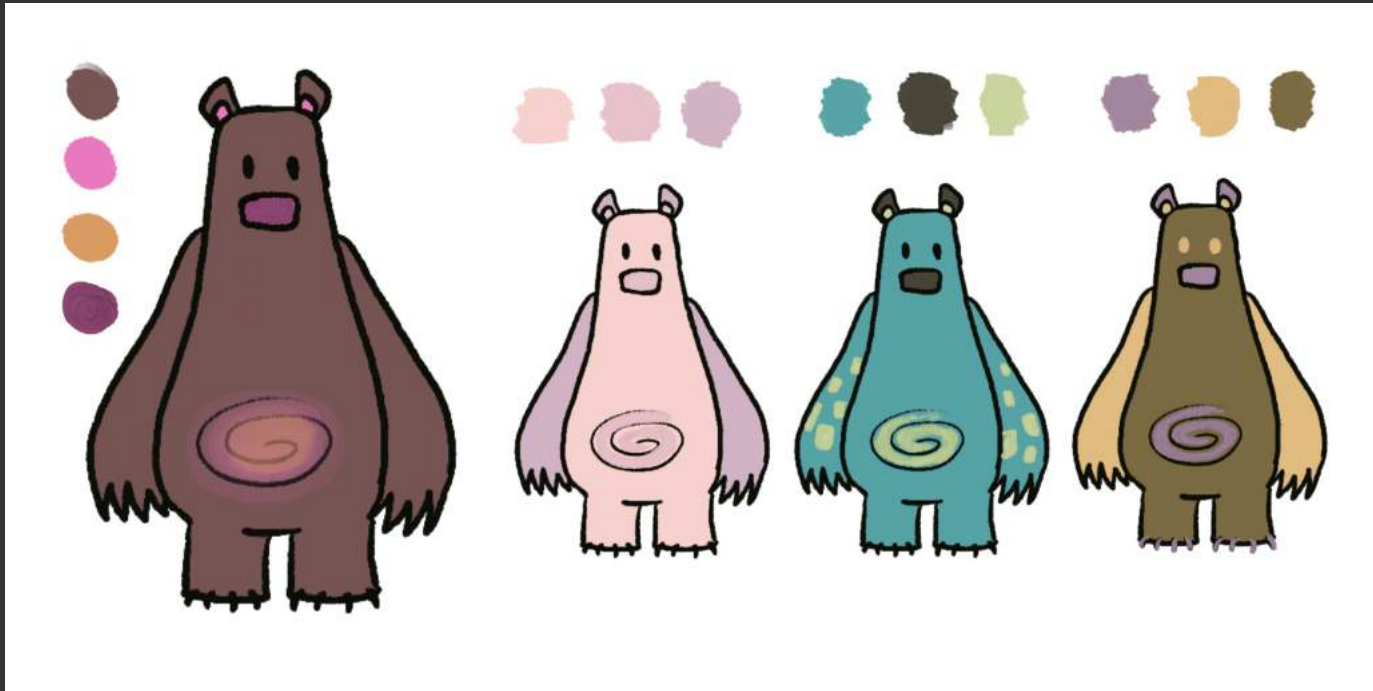
I wanted the term 'gentle giant' to be expressed through this character's actions - a protective, caring friend

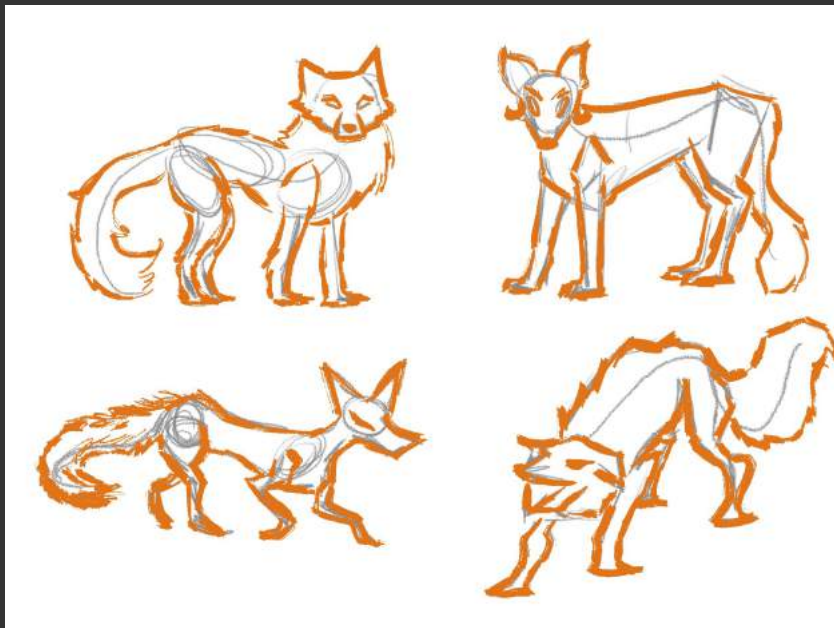
← Pose Sheet

# Colour Experimentation



The familiar brown and warm pinks felt most comforting in combination with the design, but the pastel tones were really lovely to apply as well





I landed on this lithe, dynamic form for the body shape and a slim, tapered snout. I think this design makes the fox more unique and reflects an adventurous nature.

## Pose Sheet ↘

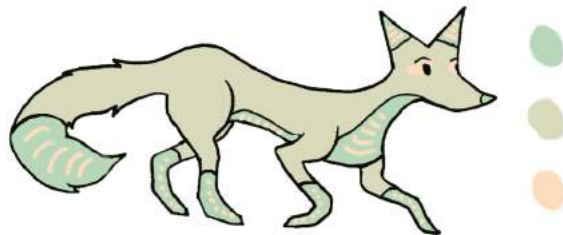
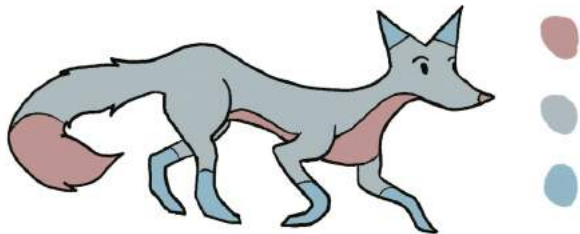
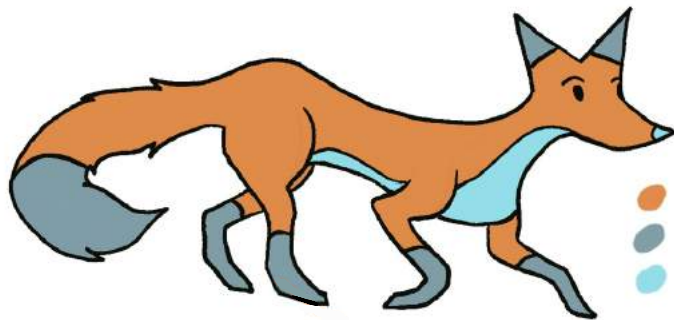


## Fox : Sketches ↗

The hardest part of the fox's design for me was the head. I had a hard time getting the correct shape, especially when stylised. Sometimes, it resembles a wolf, or a cat, which I wanted to avoid.

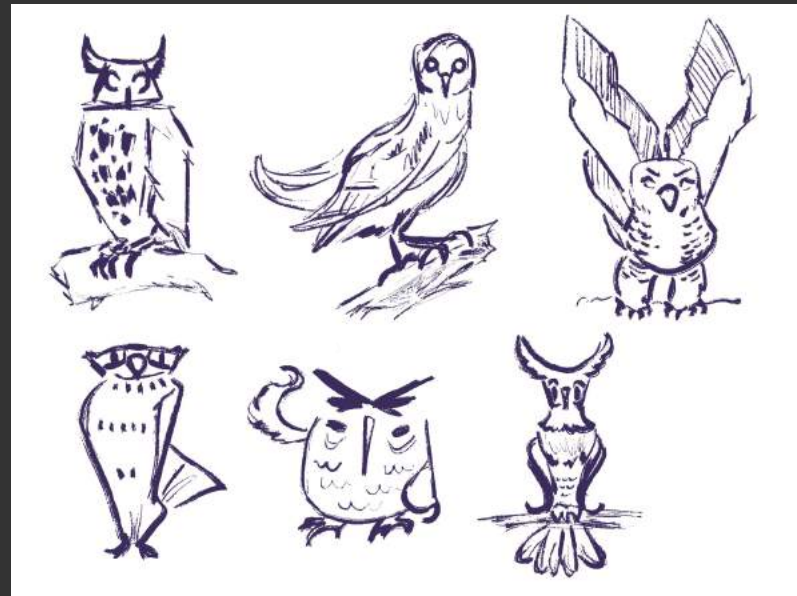
# Colour Experimentation

The bottom two are too muted and wouldn't stand out against a forest backdrop, and whilst the fiery palette is bold and exciting, it's a little cliché. The orange and blue combo is both complimentary and interesting!



# Owl: Sketches →

Since there are so many different types of owls, the design was really fun to play around with! I love the contrast between the elegant, curvy one and the small one.



The sketch that inspired me most, however, was the owl with the puffed-out chest. I like the mix of straight, angular lines and softer, rounded body, like the owl is kind-hearted but also sharp-witted.

← Pose Sheet

# Colour Experimentation

With the owl, I knew from very early on that purple would be the prominent colour. Purple and yellow have regal associations, which work well for a proud, capable avian character.

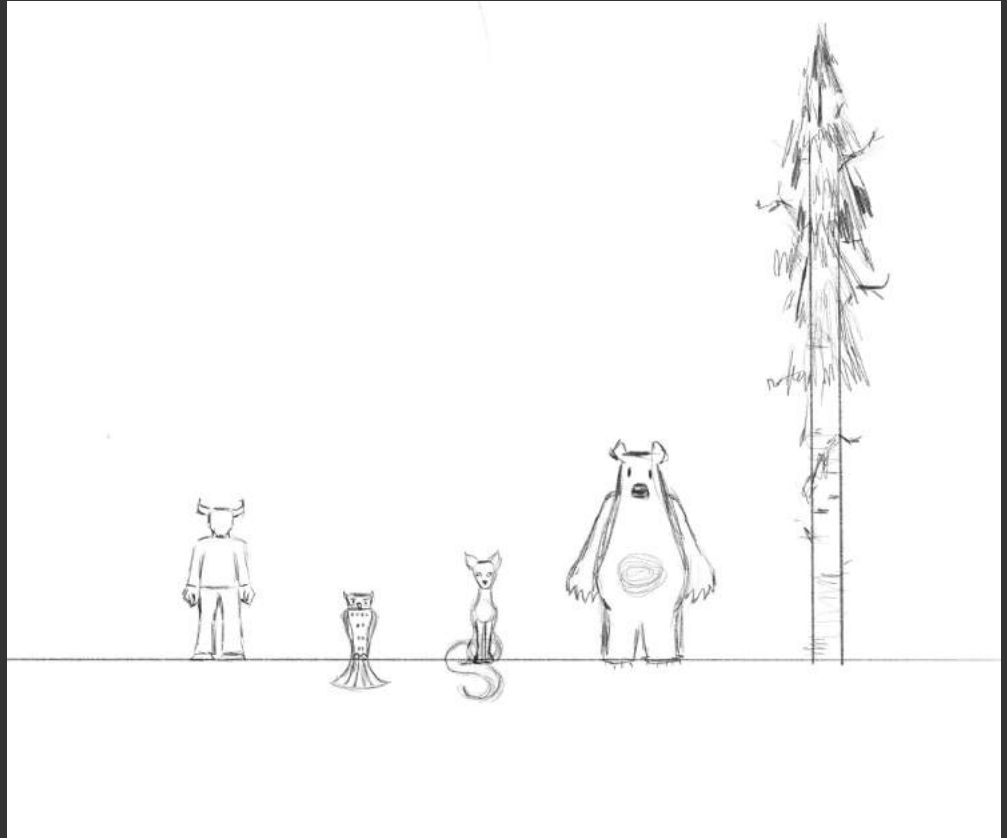


# Expression Sheet



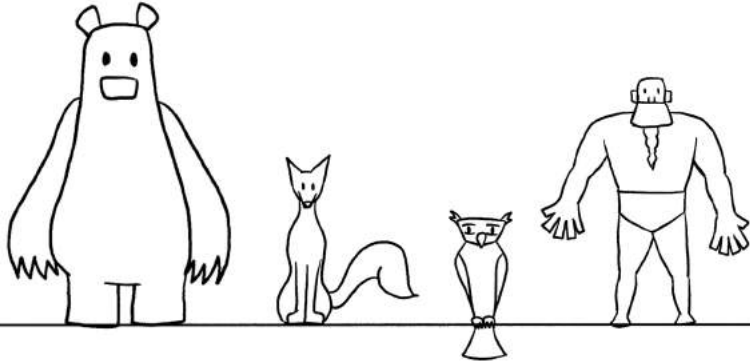
# Comparison sheets

This is the first one I created after my concept change. I still hadn't finalised Erik's design, so I drew a generic viking silhouette to determine how a human would compare to the trio, in size.



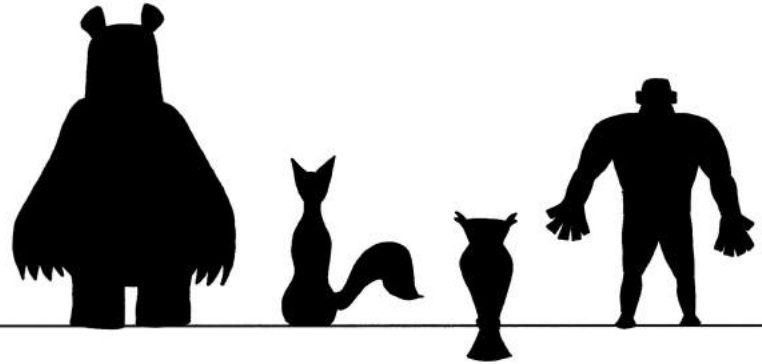
I also drew a typical Troo tree for further reference





Here are the updated size comparison sheets, with Erik included

I made a silhouette version as well, allowing the viewer to see the size difference more clearly





# World Building & Environment



Although the forest of Troo is a somewhat whimsical place, I still wanted it to be grounded in realism. The key point in my project is to direct the audience's attention to the injustice of destroying Mother Nature, so there cannot be too much fantasy. The natural landscapes need to feel familiar and real, so I would have to draw my references and inspiration from reality. I did this by going on a walk to the nearest park and having a mini photoshoot of Mother Nature herself. I also took the time to connect to the environment: notice the little things, the creatures and colours, the scents and textures and noises that could be heard.

Of course, I cannot forget about the magical aspects, even if they aren't prominent for most of the story. The spirits of Troo represent nature's power and Dreki, the guardian, is like nature's voice, guiding that power. When the great mother is disturbed, she fights back with ferocity - and so the consequences of harming the environment are manifested in a fantastical way, but the message still carries across.











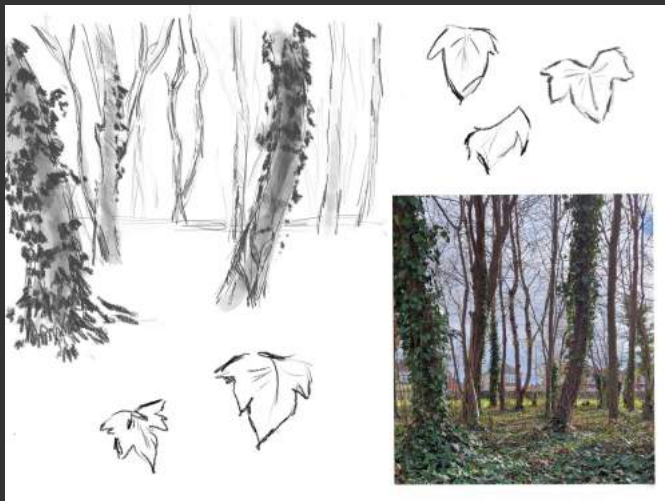




I took some of my photos and used them as references for these digital paintings

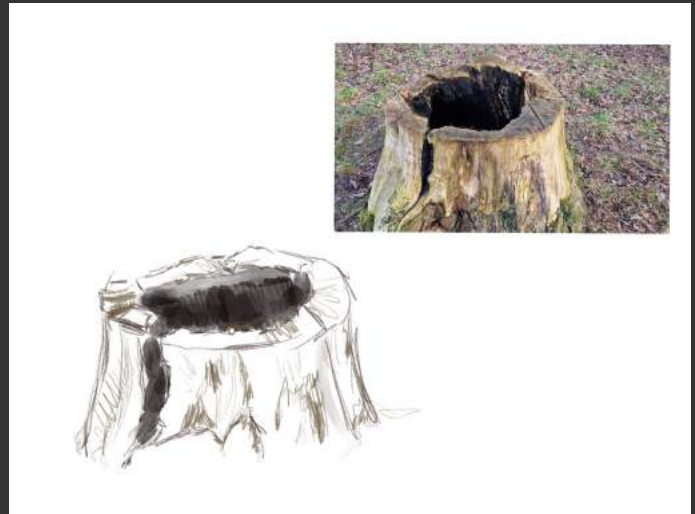








By recreating natural formations, I got a chance to explore textures, colours and various techniques to portray the wild



Using the quick and easy capabilities of procreate, I also did some mark-making directly on top of some of the photos. I created some interesting world ideas by mixing colours and patterns, and building layers





When I added the animals to the photo on the right, I had an interesting idea. Whilst not suitable for the current project, it would be cool to explore an animation with 2D subjects and photo-realistic backgrounds.





## Woodland Pencil Drawings

Of course, making sure to include traditional artwork throughout as well, I did some classic, realistic pencil sketches too

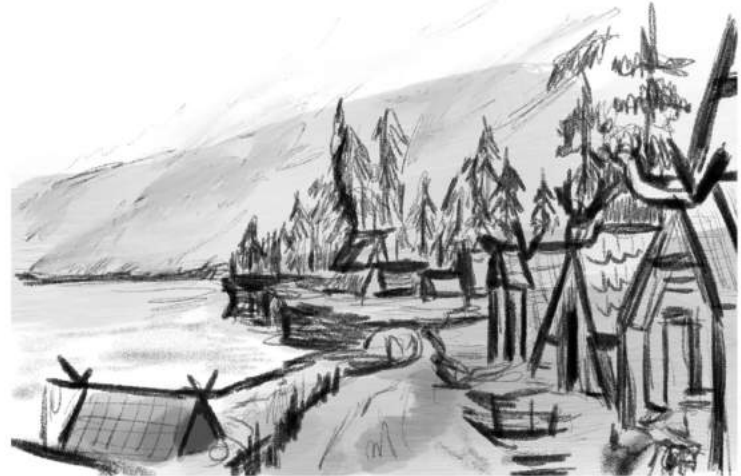
# Viking Village Studies

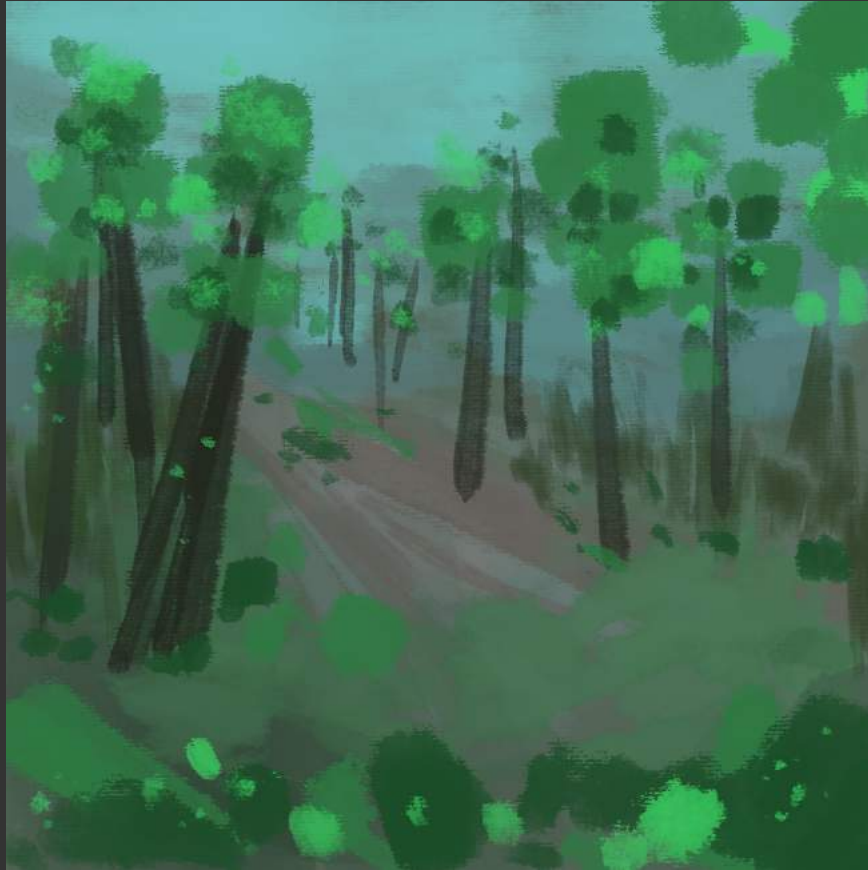


I had pretty much gotten the hang of portraying wildlife and elements of nature. I needed to focus on the home of the Thunder Clan next.

With this loose, scratchy style, I am able to capture a more raw way of living

These studies allowed me to see how the viking people set up their homes. They favoured clustering together, most likely for security and warmth. They also made good use of their surroundings, such as the natural shelter of a mountain-side, the resources of flowing water and even grassy materials for their roofs, as insulation.





# Forest

← Art

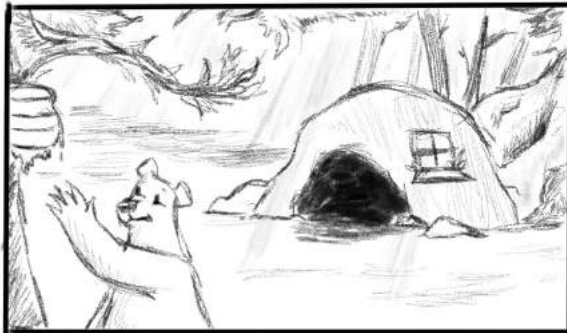
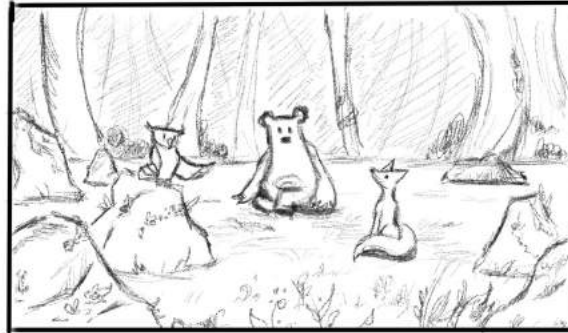
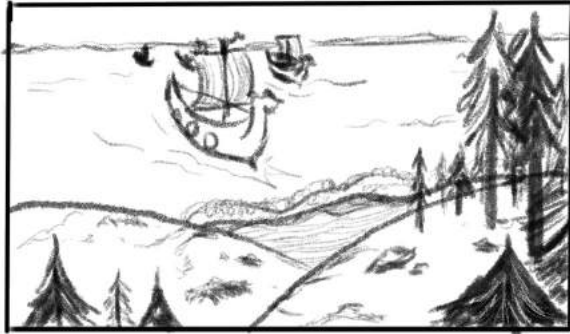
Here is an abstract rendition of Troo. I was thinking of ways to create a further visual distinction between the worlds of man and nature.





These pieces are in an entirely different style. I was going for bold and prominent, adding depth through the use of shade. It was interesting working in monochrome but Troo needs more life, so the lack of details won't do.





Thinking about the kinds of scenes my story would have, I drew various environments with characters interacting inside of them

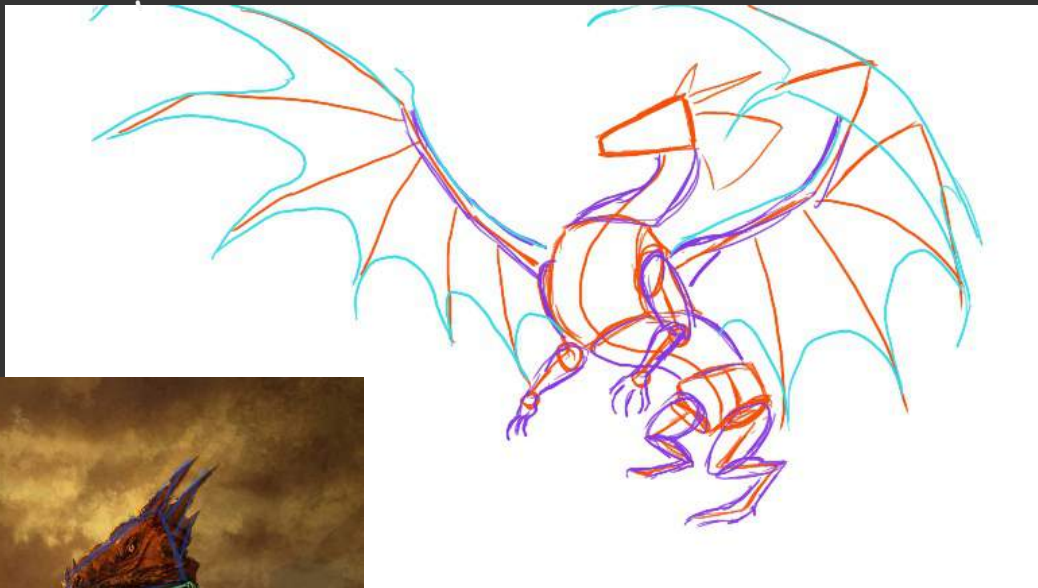
Note the use of the scratchy pencil style I have come back to - I think it works best for the world!

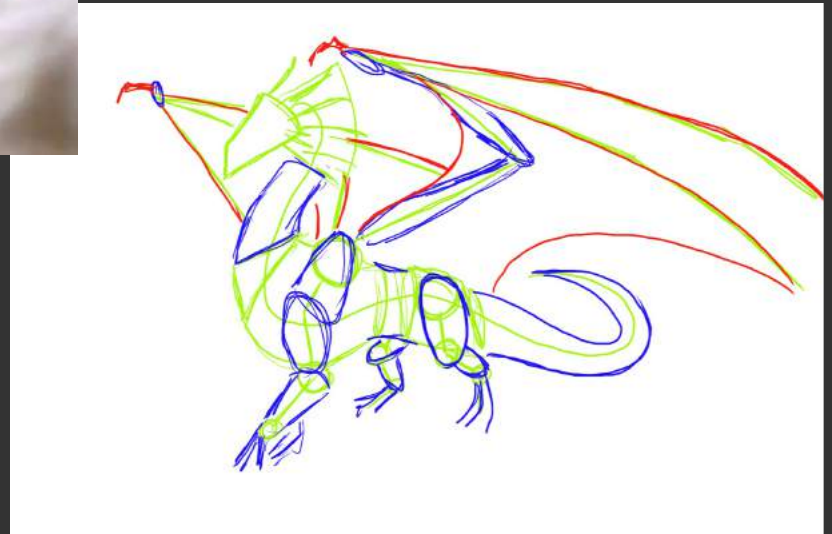




Iceland's guardian of the east, the Landvaettir, Dreki. I didn't want anything too extreme for his design, since he doesn't appear for very long. He would need to be instantly recognisable as a dragon, a fearsome force of nature and a mystical creature not quite of this world. As always, I began with some studies of dragon anatomy, since I had no clue where to even begin with posing and proportion.

The sketches below all have reference images underneath, but since I want to showcase the line art, I have only exported two of them with the original artwork. With the art as my base, I used different layers and colours to separate the skeletal and muscle structures, as well as extra features like wings and horns. At this point, I was only tracing, but with each attempt I got better at distinguishing the line of action and main body forms. I focused on recreating the poses in my mind with each layer on its own: bones and joints, muscles, skin and ligaments. How did the dragon carry its weight? How did it bend its limbs? How does the tail play a role when in flight? These are questions I posed as I sketched.





This exercise was most beneficial in terms of the wings. I learned a lot about the skeletal layout there, and how this plays into the different wing looks, e.g. bat wings.



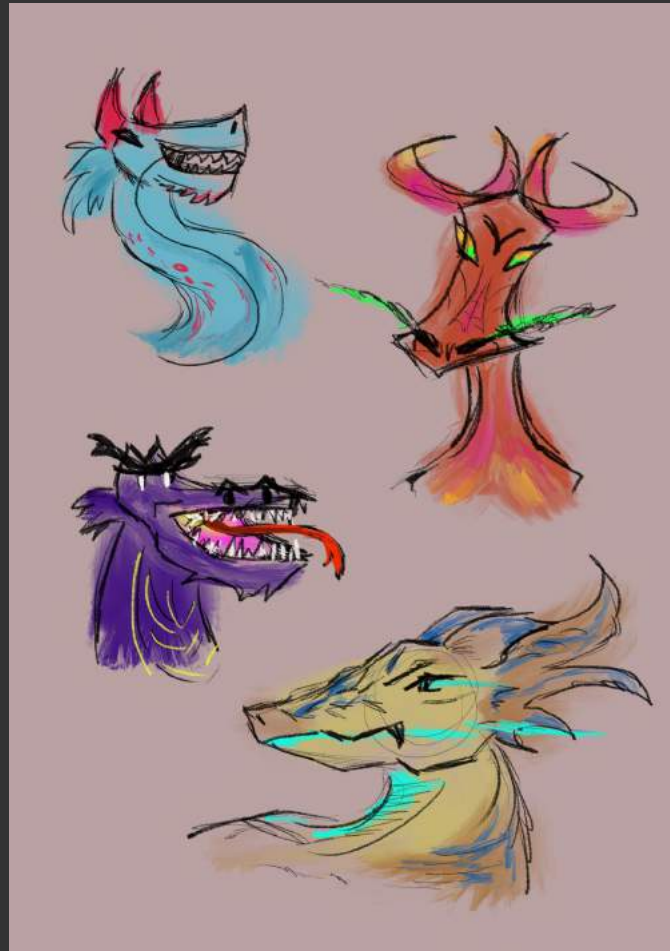
Of course, my understanding of dragon anatomy as a whole grew a lot as well. I felt confident enough to attempt to draw one myself, without any references at all.



# Design Ideas

These fun, colourful sketches were my starting point for Dreki's design.

They revealed to me that I actually want to go in a different direction with his look: something darker and more serious, to reflect the gravity of the situation when he has to wake.



The closest I got to a design that I liked was with this one.

The shape of the head and the eyes look powerful and daunting

# Dreki Concept

Art



This is my first attempt to capture my vision of Dreki in Troo, rising up in anger. I wasn't satisfied with the colours as he looks too much like a demon. The guardians of Iceland may be terrifying, but they aren't evil!

I tried to add green to the edge of his wings to off-set the red, but I still wasn't fully pleased with the outcome





# Forest Spirits



When Dreki rises, he calls on all of the spirits laying dormant in Troo, essentially waking the forest up, bringing it to life. I sketched out the general idea I had in my mind for how the spirits would look.



My two favourite designs - I was thinking of a way to merge them



I wanted them to look like lost souls, when in reality, they feel very different - like parts of the landscape walking or flying about - knowing and with innate power.



The top designs are a little basic, but work as smaller forest spirits



Being able to see some sort of glowing skeletal/nervous system on the inside was an interesting possibility

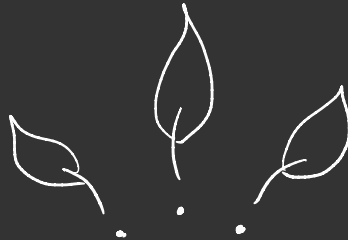
- The Spirits Awaken... Concept Art Piece •



# Storyboard

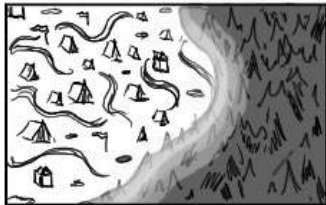
Due to some unforeseen time constraints, I didn't manage to complete as much as I wanted for the storyboard. As you will recall from earlier in the portfolio, my two key scenes were specified and fully outlined, and you can refer back to the written scenes to see what I had planned. The frames below are a preview into what I would continue with if I had the time and jump into the main dilemma of the story.

I enjoyed focusing on the characters and their interactions with one another, bringing another level of life to my project idea.





The vikings of the Thunder clan have settled and begun chopping trees down for wood and space.



As their numbers grow and village expands, the borders of Troa are being pushed back



Our trio, Hungry the bear, Himno the fox, and Auga the owl, stare at the wreckage.



They turn to one another in distress, pondering the dire situation at hand.



Hungry touches a charred, broken twig to further reiterate his point.



With a worried expression on her face, Auga questions the lack of response from the forest spirits.



Himinn proposes that perhaps, in their silence, the spirits were urging them to save Trod.



Knowing that they couldn't stand by any longer anyway, the others answer with determined nods.



Some time later, we find ourselves on the outskirts of the Vikings' home.



Along the borders, the clan liked to set up training camps, where weapons are often lying around...



With a pair of glinting eyes and one fell swoop, Auga shoots towards the weapons and grabs them.



As she soars away, satisfied, we begin to understand the trio's plan: disrupt, disturb and drive the intruders out.



And so began the operation to drive the vikings out with tricks and cunning like these.



The vikings flee in terror often nowadays - a mighty figure jumps out of hiding as they pass.



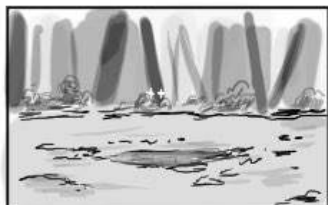
This trick is one of Hunang's favourites (he's especially proud of his roars)



The chaos continued - at a different time, we see Himinn digging a hole.



He grabs leaves and twigs, building a thin layer to cover the deep hole.



After successfully camouflaging the hole, he goes to hide in wait for some un-observant humans.

# Character Biographies

**Name:** Hunang (Pronounced Hoo - nank, Icelandic for 'Honey')

**Species:** Bear

**Age:** 15 years old

**Likes:** Honey & wild berries, playing hide & seek with the bunnies, afternoon naps

**Dislikes:** Thorny bushes, caves without windows

**Personality:** Strong, gentle & loving

**Habit:** Hums to himself when eating a particularly good batch of honey

**Role in the Story:** Protector of the forest

**Ultimate Goals:** Bring peace back for all of his animal friends & save Troo

**Name:** Himinn (Pronounced He - min, Icelandic for 'Sky')

**Species:** Fox

**Age:** 3 years old

**Likes:** Cloud-watching, hiking & finding little trinkets

**Dislikes:** Smoke & eclipses

**Personality:** Curious & funny

**Habit:** Starts the morning by looking at his trinket collection

**Role in the Story:** Protector of the forest

**Ultimate Goals:** Understand the world better (including the terrible humans) & save Troo

**Name:** Auga (Pronounced Or - gah, Icelandic for 'Eye')

**Species:** Owl

**Age:** 3 years old

**Likes:** Spying on her neighbours, soaring over the clouds at dusk & singing

**Dislikes:** Loud noises, black mice (believes them to be bad luck)

**Personality:** Pragmatic, polite & reserved

**Habit:** Finds the highest perch to observe mouse theatre but will always inch closer when it's opera

**Role in the Story:** Protector of the forest

**Ultimate Goals:** Wants to save all of Troo but the trees especially!

**Name:** Erik Arkybjorn

**Species:** Human

**Age:** 29 years old

**Likes:** Fighting, killing, growing stronger & a strange dessert with strawberries, butter and bread

**Dislikes:** Animals, most people he comes across - most everything in fact, apart from strawberries on buttered toast

**Personality:** Cold, brutal, stubborn & all-round merciless

**Habits:** Chops something every day, whether that be trees or heads

**Role in the Story:** Leader of the Thunder Clan, enemy to Troo

**Ultimate Goals:** Expand the village to an Empire and take over Iceland, followed by the world



**Name:** Dreki

**Species:** Landvaettir

**Age:** ???

**Likes & Dislikes:** Unknown

**Personality:** Unknown but seen as majestic & revered

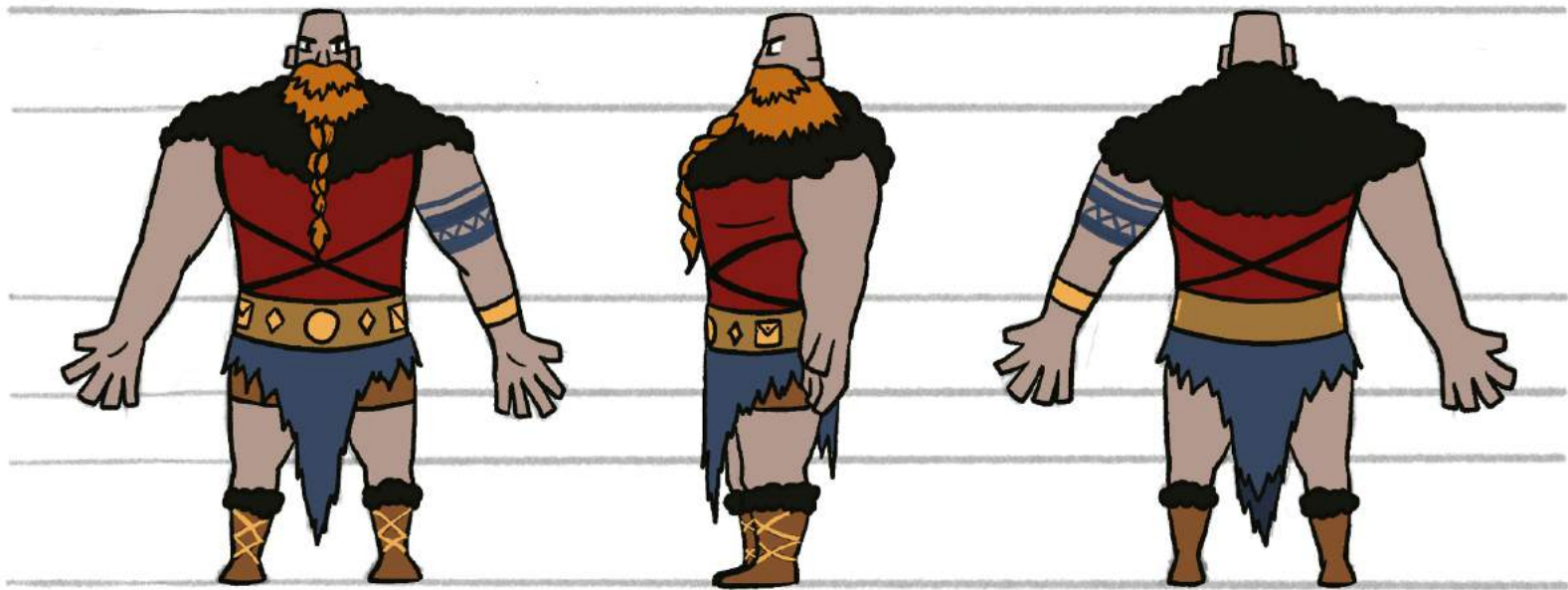
**Habits:** Unknown

**Role in the Story:** Guardian of Eastern Iceland

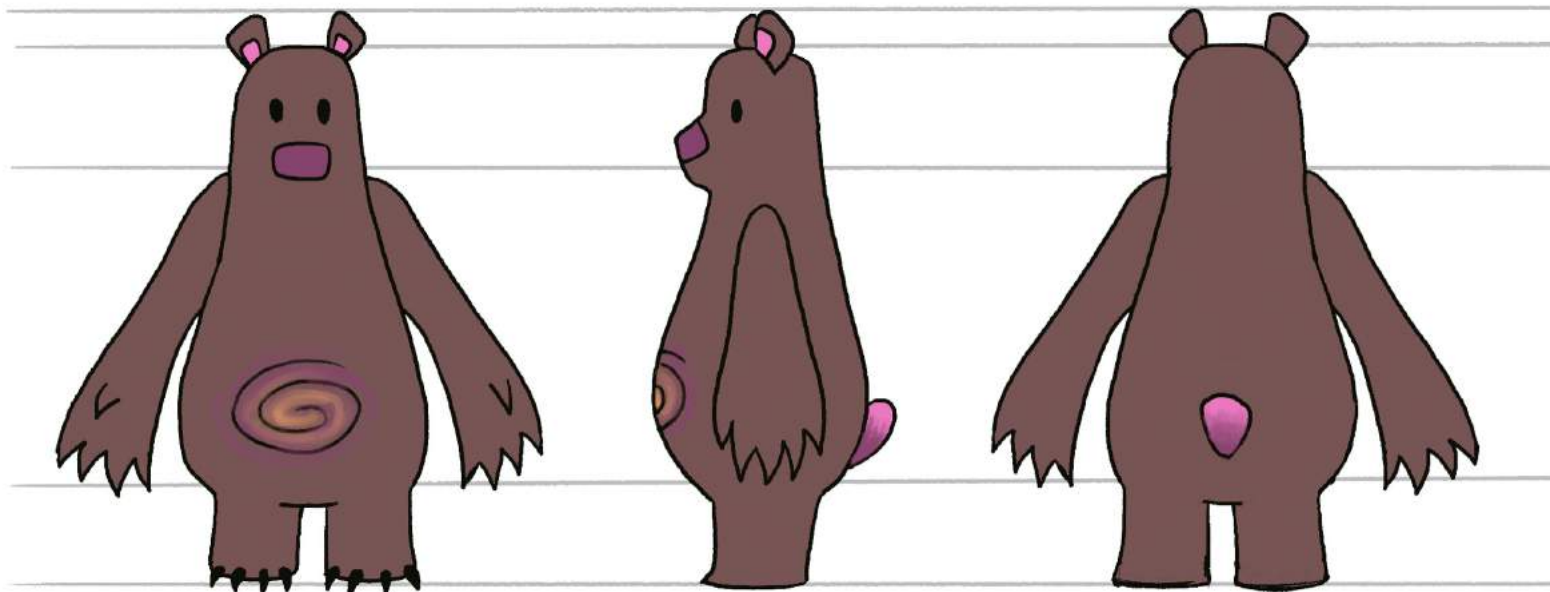
**Ultimate Goals:** One of them is to destroy any threat to Iceland's natural landscapes but could there be more..?



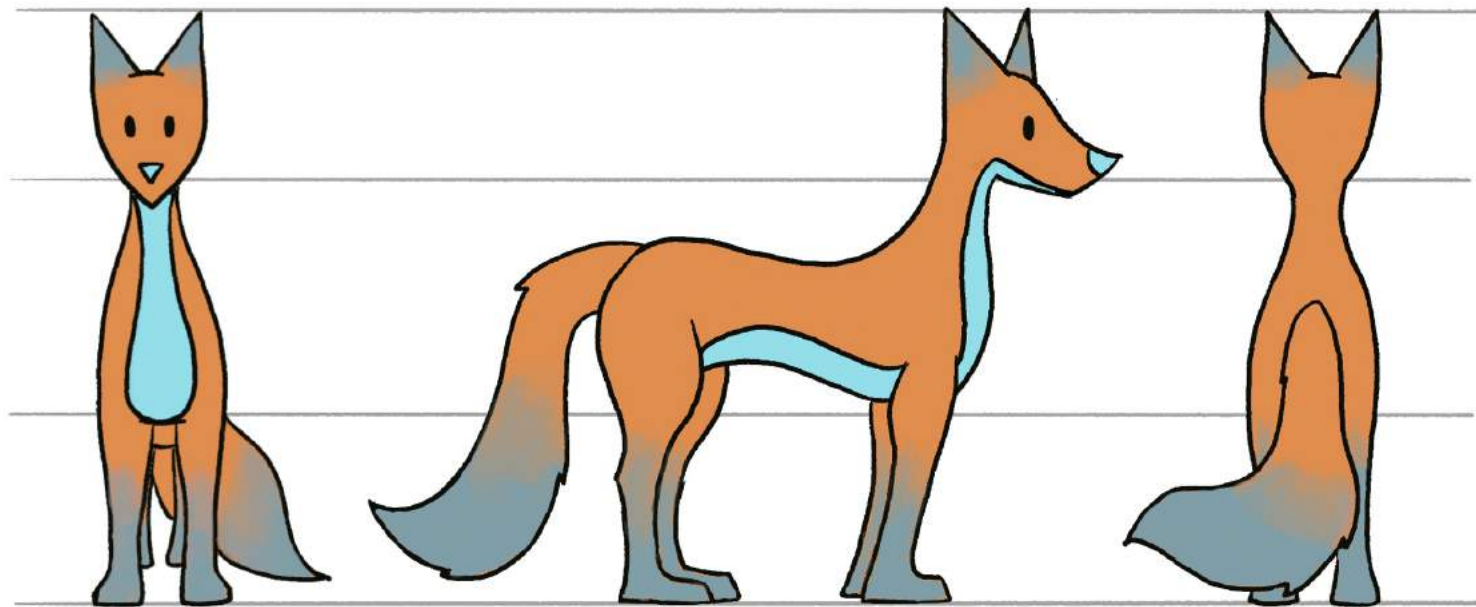
Final Work

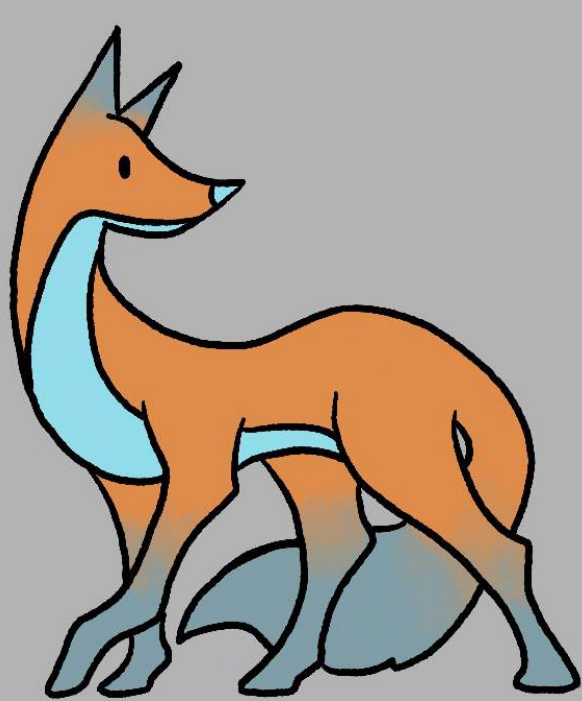




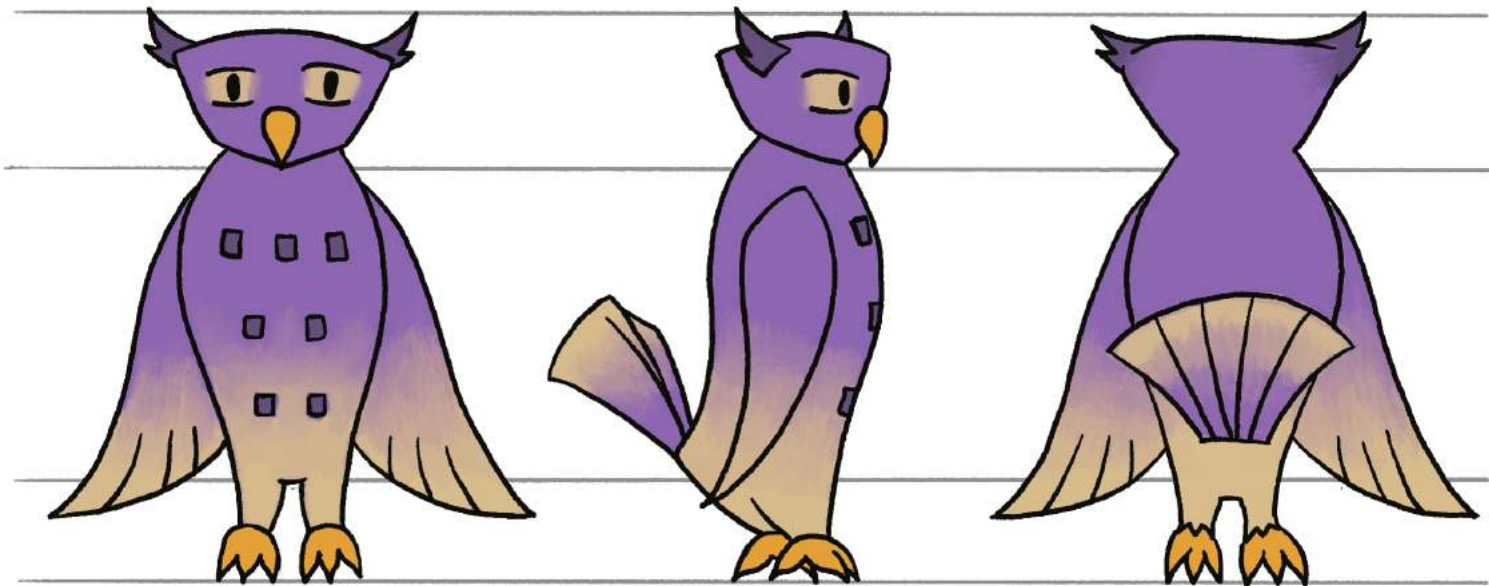






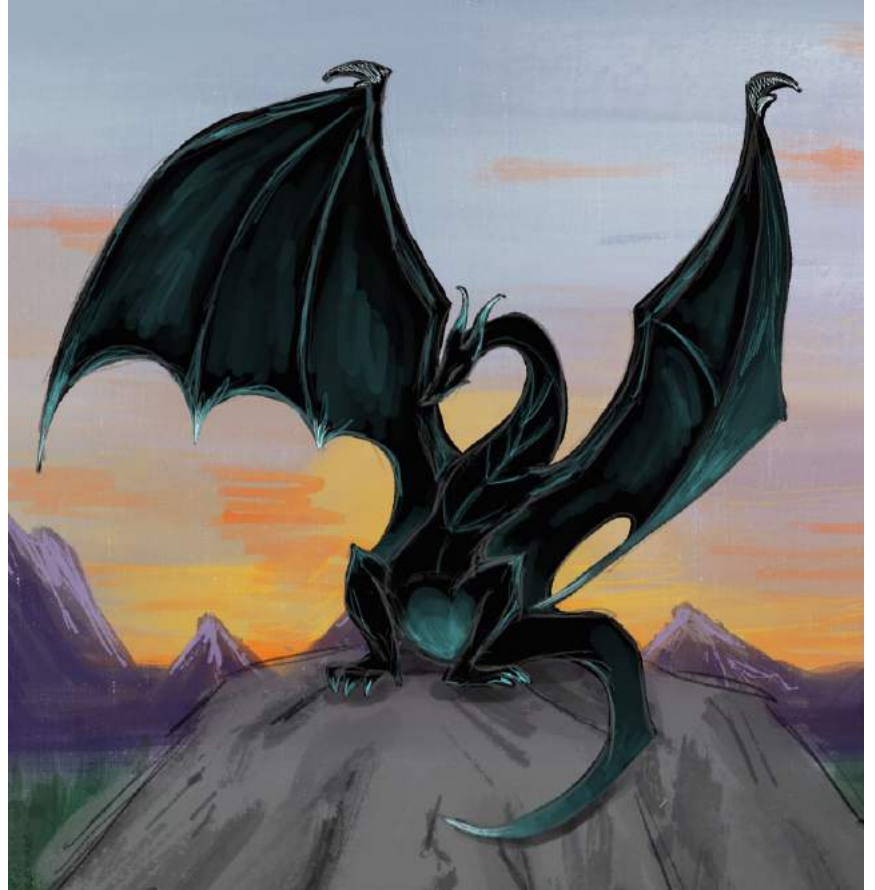


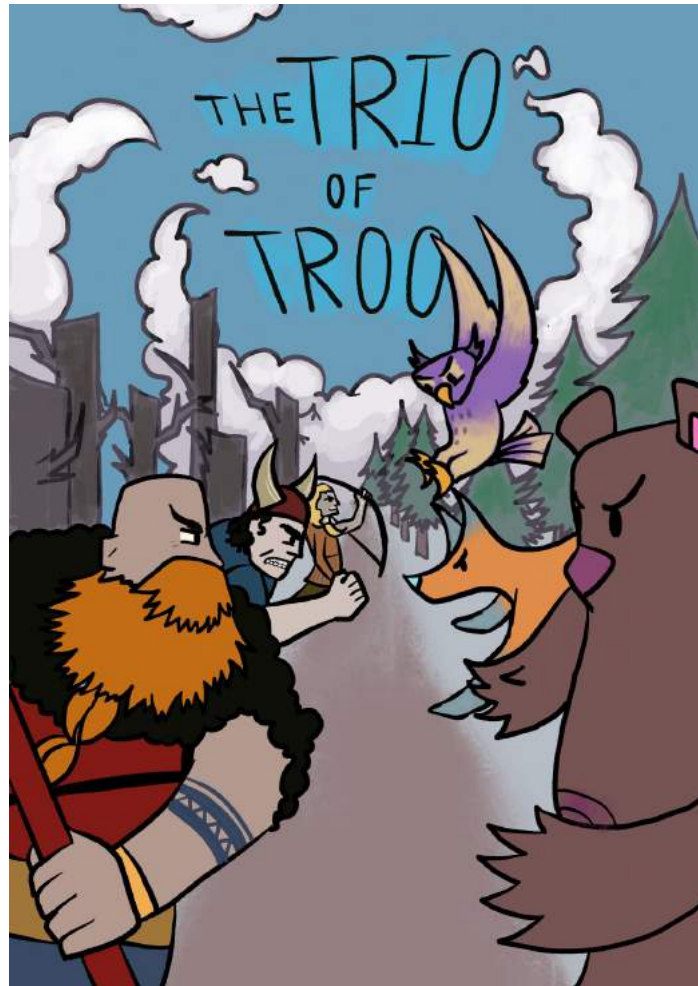












# Critical Appraisal

You have reached the end of my project portfolio, thank you for viewing!

This project has been a big eye-opener for me and I can say with complete confidence that I am stepping away from it with newfound skills and discoveries made about my own work ethic. I believe that I have created some successful pieces of design based on my chosen idea and despite the changes I applied, I managed to convey my passion and my design skills. In terms of finalised 2D work, I believe I am now able to create polished pieces to a much higher standard and my research & application has been developed drastically. I am also grateful for the knowledge I have gained on the production pipeline for an animated film and am certain I will be using this in the future.

However, I know that I could have done better, and produced a larger quantity of work, of a higher quality. My time management was poor and due to self-criticism, I avoided feedback, which hindered my work. Given the chance to do this project again, I would devote more effort into sharing and communicating my work progress and creating deadlines for myself throughout the project, in order to meet the deadline easier.