Alara's Hideout

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I have had interest in the fantasy genre for a very long time, where I frequently indulge in fantasy stories, comics and films. Given the flexibility of the design folio task, that gave me the opportunity to create a fantasy world of my own, in accordance to my personal interests and taste. That said, given the freedom to choose my desired brief, I have chosen to design an interior landscape for a fictional animated film, where the final piece will be a culmination of preliminary research and world-building ideation. Now, as thrilling as my choice was, I did not realise the momentous task I had brought upon myself due to the amount of work necessary to accomplish this task. However, I had great inspiration that would drive me through this task, namely Matthias Lechner and Paul Felix, who both have worked in the animation industry, designing environments for films such as *Zootopia* and *Encanto*. Much of their work has playful qualities yet is meticulously designed, and this is an attribute I want associated with work of my own. This is the reason why I executed my concepts all in line, as both Felix and Lechner proved that line drawings can effectively realise concepts.

Having completed a character design task prior to this folio, I wanted to apply that knowledge and create an environment that a character would occupy. I did not have much prior experience with environmental work, and I saw this a great learning experience and motivator for me to pursue that path. I wanted to develop a hideout where the character would reside, but also develop the surrounding environment to clearly illustrate the theme and atmosphere of the environment. I wanted a townscape with a sullen and decrepit feeling, where I was initially inspired by British portside townships, with stone cottages, but I soon directed my concepts in the more ornate directions, but still with a rustic atmosphere. To portray these qualities, I had dedicated a page to the exterior of the hideout structure, even indicating the motifs of the window dormers and the facade, but I was careful to not overdo the details as that would have deviated from my desired theme of rustic townhouse architecture.

Now the interior space was the main focal of this task, as it would inform the viewer about the character's occupation which was not made obvious in the character design. It is also a space where the character pursues her craft and interacts with. With that, designing an interior space proved difficult, as not only did I have to design the layout, but also the individual props and objects that situated in the space. This was the main reason why I wanted to focus on the hideout which contains Alara's alchemy lab and not the entire structure. Furthermore, the whole point of the hideout was that it was located in an inconspicuous townhouse, therefore the other rooms and floors were irrelevant.

In terms of design, I had decided to be conventional with my ideas and create an environment more in line with the typical conventions of the fantasy genre. In other words, I had stayed strictly to a theme that was largely inspired by historical sources. Several of the designers I had studied followed this methodology as well. An example of this is Kazuo Oga, who designed many of the studio Ghibli background work alongside Miyazaki, where his work is immensely detailed due to the environment incorporating antique furniture with an old architectural style. This use of detail will

contrast with simplistic characters, seen in the Ghibli films, which I initially wanted to achieve in my work. I directed much of my attention to developing the micro aspects of the environment such as the props that would surround the interior space. I had developed props relating to the character's occupation and craft, but also additional furniture items that would contain the smaller items. This process of designing from the ground up has been absolute throughout the entire task, even though some may argue it is wiser to focus on the larger picture, I designed each and every element with the grander composition in mind. This is evident in my intentional alteration of the facade to provide the interior with a window that acts as the focal point in my final piece.

Given the enormity of the task, where I had to design both a character and an environment, I can truly say that this task was very much a tough experience. Where prior to this task, I had unsatisfactory experience with environmental design, I saw that this folio would provide an ample opportunity for me to develop my skills and tastes in the field. Using many of my past inspirations, but also recently discovered individuals such as Gui Yuan, who designs awe-inspiring environments with his excellent knowledge of shape design, I had paid close attention to their workflows and attempted to imitate them within my own work. Where layout artists such as Paul Felix showed that you could develop masterful environments with merely a line drawing, and where I typically work in line, this was a great opportunity to bolster my line drawings skills and take them to new heights. Furthermore, I had explored various styles and mediums throughout the task such as the use of traditional media to illustrate environmental concepts which was new to me, but also my digital skills have improved due to the reliance on line work throughout the whole task. This task showed that I am more than capable of creating different types of concepts, whether it was prop design or environmental design, as previously, I was mostly a figurative artist. In summation, the flexibility of creating the task alone, has allowed me to cater to my strengths but also has allowed room for experiencing new techniques and design methodologies, as result, bringing my work to new horizons and enlarging my understanding of the visual development process.