



The Scuttlebar

Creature Design

Senior Project

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Concept

My goal and interest in DMD is Animation and Concept/Creature Design, and I wanted to utilize this to potentially work for a major studio one day.

This project investigates creature design through anatomy and visual development. The goal is to create designs that feel believable to a creature's anatomy and habitat, showcasing the process from start to finish of a model ready for the big screen or video game.

Both 2D illustrations and 3D models/animations will showcase a creature design timeline from beginning sketches to a final product.

Using the Chimeric style, I want to create a horse-like creature with different types of beetles and potentially birds or even dinosaurs like the parasaurolophus.

Justification

I want to create a creature that prioritizes believability over spectacle. I believe that Star Wars within recent content have fallen from that statement and what Terry R. Whitlatch's legacy was with that company. I want to design a creature grounded in real-world anatomy and environmental logic, showcasing familiarity from animals in our world to have the audience relate more to the creature while making it feel both original and plausible.

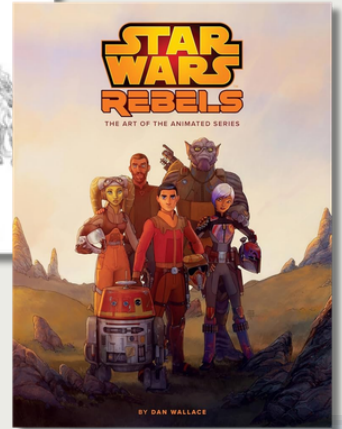


Inspiration

My goal is to reference these artist's styles and science behind creature while also referencing the following books:

- Science of Creature Design
- The Art of Star Wars Rebels

utilizing Terryl Whitlatch's portion about horses specifically and ways to sculpt a monster from one of the most historical creatures in our modern time.



DOUG CHIANG

Doug Chiang is an award-winning concept designer, illustrator, and film production designer at Lucasfilm.



TERRYL WHITLATCH

Terryl Whitlatch is an American illustrator who primarily creates creatures.



CHRISTINA ZHANG

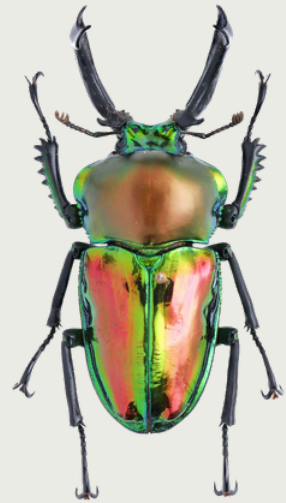
Christina Zhang is a student alumni from USC and Vis Dev/Character Designer artist.



Research

Rainbow Stag Beetle Key Behaviors:

- Wrestling, not biting:
- Males don't usually "kill" each other—they use their large mandibles to lift, flip, or throw opponents off branches.
- Territory = resources
 - sap flows
 - feeding spots
 - access to females



Mustang Key Behaviors:

Territorial & Dominance Behavior

- Stallions are highly territorial toward other males
- They compete for:
 - mares
 - control of the band
- Displays often happen before combat

Equignathus Monoceros

Equus (horse)

(Greek) gnathos = jaw

(Greek) mono = one, keras = horn

A "Jawed Horse"

Scuttlebar = Inspired by a scarab beetle

Scientific Name



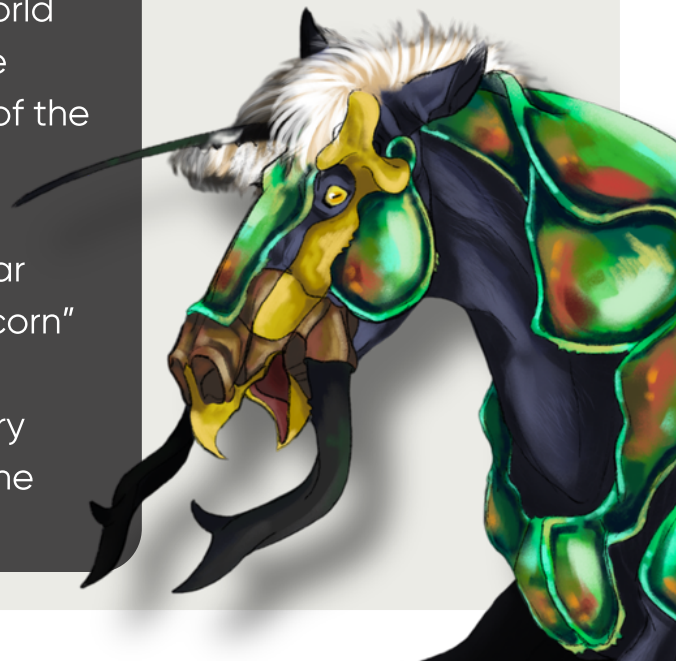
Character Sheet

The Scuttlebar is a chimera-style creature, born with traits of a Mustang and a Rainbow Stag Beetle. The frame takes after the Mustang, wearing exoskeleton plates like armor, giving the creature explosive speed and incredible defensive capabilities. The creature possesses mandibles that curve inwards from the head, used not only for combat and survival, but also dominance in competition with other males.

The Scuttlebar's are typically solitary creatures, and are fiercely territorial. This makes it even scarcer to witness one in the forests. Scuttlebars are also seen as mythical in the world they live in. Whenever one is found, monarchs will usually make jewelry from their armor, or bury them with someone of high status dies. Their considered pure and angelic in a sense.



The iridescent armor present the concept of rarity and high value to the creature. Within the world where the creature exists, the scales allow for camouflaging of the creature within its natural environment. This makes the incident of seeing a Scuttlebar almost parallel "seeing a Unicorn" in modern mythology. This presented a chance for history and depth for the origins of the creature with humanity.



Vis Dev

Originally, the creature was going to be designed in a more desert environment, with a more pale and sandy palette. However after feedback, I came to the realization that the design was too similar to a standard horse, transitioning me to finding different attributes to change.

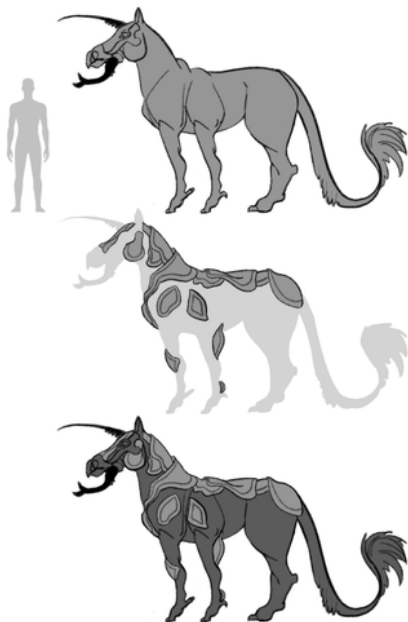
I decided to change the palette towards a cooler tone, with the Rainbow Stag Beetle's exoskeleton color providing more environmental development for the character, as well as a design that creates a more unique animal.

The primary goal was to have the Mustang be the core of the creature, but I wanted elements of other creatures that possess different qualities to be highlighted. This is where the exoskeleton, the mandibles and the horn were added. The feet of the creature also took more of the beetle's appearance, as opposed to the Mustang, balancing out the visual components.

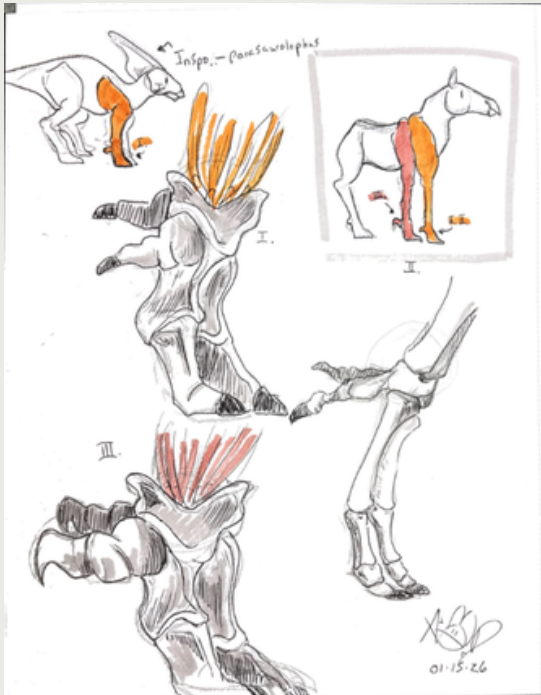
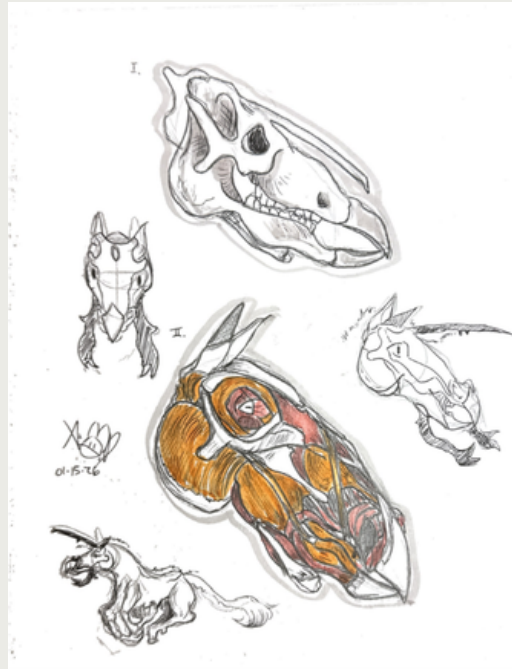


2D Development

Since this was a Creature Design project, I wanted 2D concepts and character sheets made. My primary intentions to have these sheets inspired by “Terryl Whitlatch” and the “Star Wars: Rebels” art book. I wanted to approach this creature from different styles, to present what the creature could look like in different mediums. This would also set the creature up for 2D renders, which was a core component of my project.



2D Development



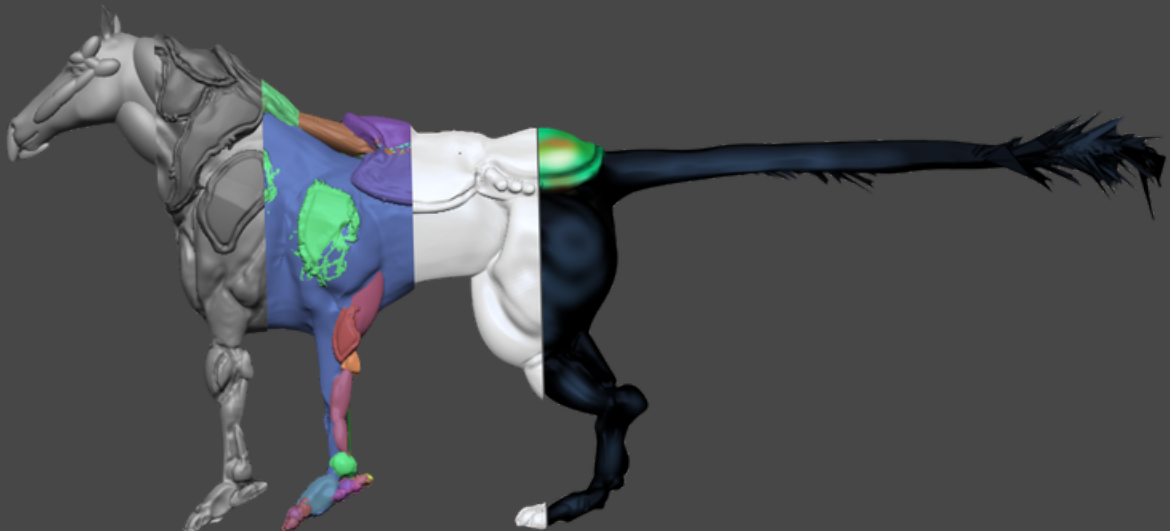
2D Development



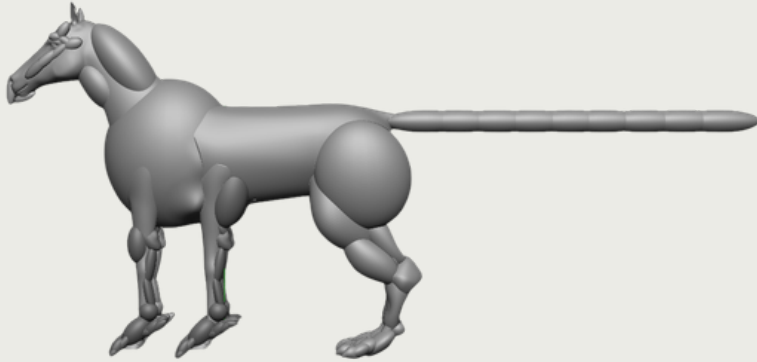
3D Development

The goal was to create a final model of the Scuttlebar, first designed in ZBrush, then imported into Maya for rigging. The process began with a base Horse model through ZBrush which I redesigned and adjusted to match my character sheets. This was done through the importation of shapes and then the reshaping of them to create the exoskeleton, the mandibles and the feet.

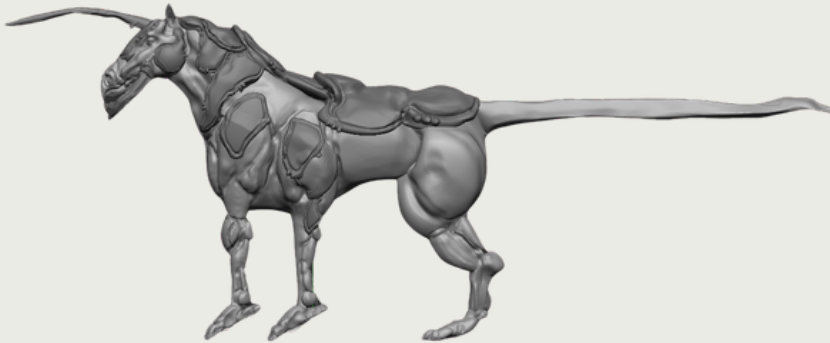
The model was then imported to Maya once completed and painted. In this program, I manually created a rig from this model, before fusing it with the skin. This allowed me to manipulate the rig to create the IDLE animations that were used in the final demo reel.



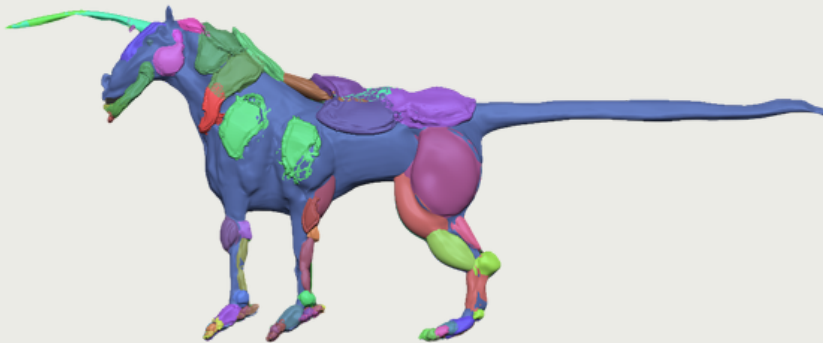
3D Development



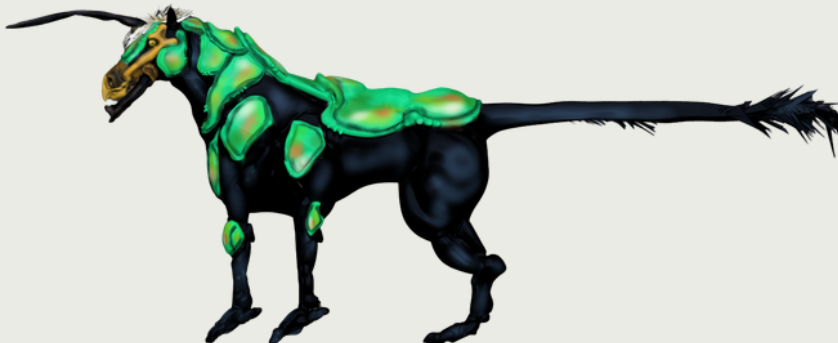
Building the Base
out of simple
shapes.



Sculpting out the
detail.

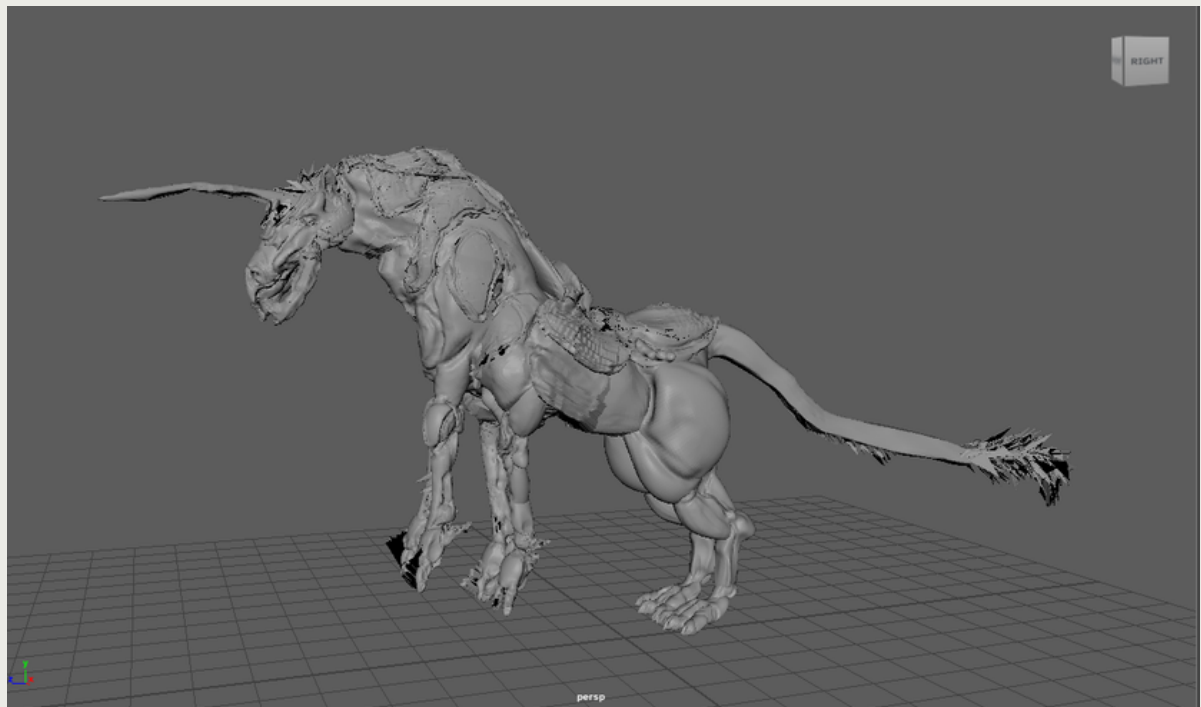
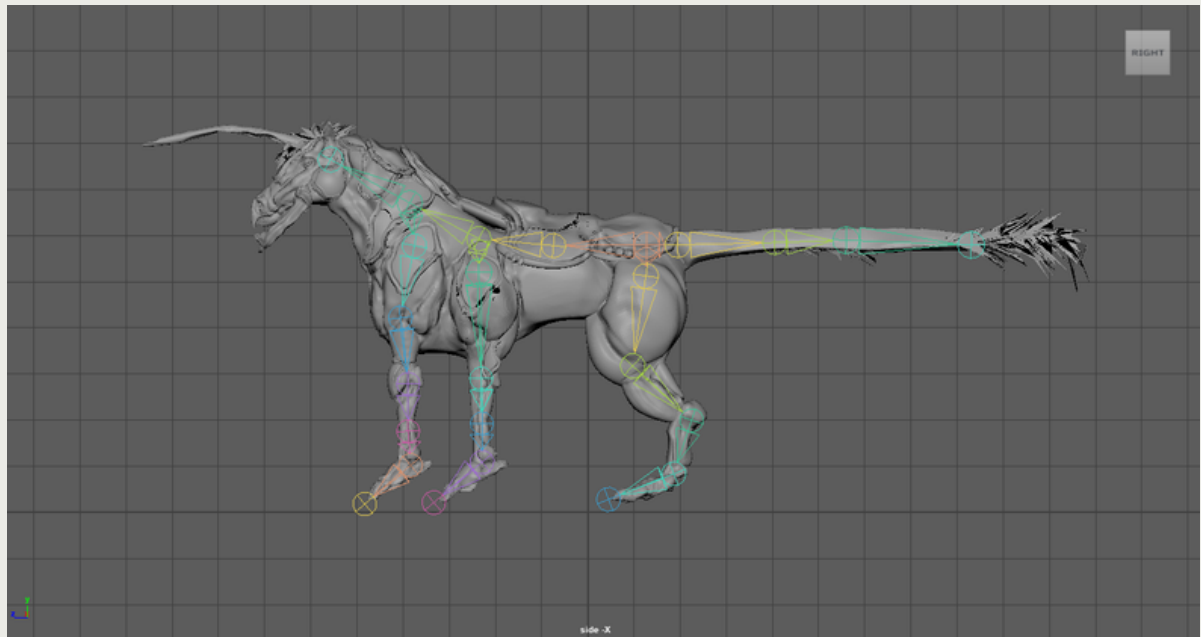


Re-meshing to
become a low-poly
model.

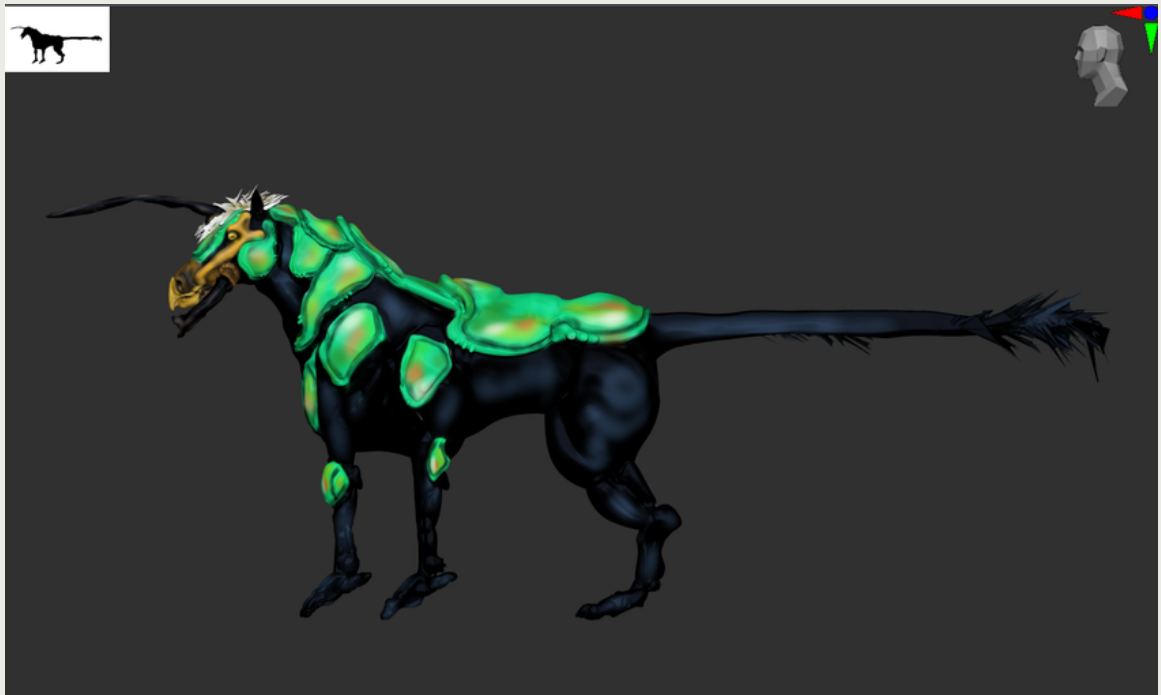


Painting model to
match concept
art.

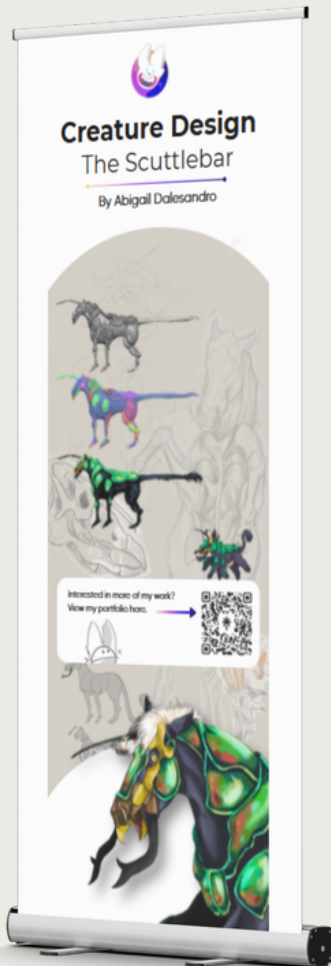
3D Development



3D Development



Branding



I wanted to have 3 core components for my physical presentation. I created a banner, business cards and a visual guide for the process of this project to accompany my demo reel. For purchase, I created a “chibi” version of the Scuttlebar to merchandise the creature during the showcase.



Booth

My original concept for the booth was different than what I was provided. I was hoping to assemble my presentation on a table, with boards of artwork. However due to the location and layout of the venue, I was not able to acquire a table.. For my final booth though, I was very pleased with how it turned out, as I believe the setup allowed the consumers to feel immersed in the project as they walked up to the items, as opposed to be trapped within the table.



Reflection

This project started back in December of 2025 where I wanted to originally create only the artwork for multiple creatures. This changed into what I have today with the help of my mentors and professors here at FGCU. The biggest challenges I seemed to run into was how much time a model truly took to be completed and animated. You start with your basics which is concepts, artwork, anatomy, but then shift to the actual modeling itself which was surprisingly the easy part. The worst of it was understanding UV's, Retopology, Rigging, How can you lower the poly count on the model so its actually usable to industry standard.

These where all learning blocks for myself and I believe I was able to learn what I needed to get stated in the industry. This being said, I personally believe this project not to be fully complete but still in progress. Completing a completly new Retopology, getting the final piece rendered and textured fully along with a full more intracut rig for a better animation. All of these processes I will be continuing on for the future.

This experience was truly important to me and my understanding of character design at its full scale and the final products where rewarding.



Works Cited

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Suryanto, M. E., et al. "A Deep Learning-Based Method to Analyse Complicated Intra- and Inter-Species Social Interaction Behaviour." National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2025. [PMC Article](#)

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