

ART REVIEW

NUMBER
25

ARTISTIC - SOCIAL PICTORIAL PERIODICAL

In today's issue

The entire issue is devoted to a behind-the-scenes look at the preparations and production of a new type of educational and entertaining **computer game** for both the young and the old.

Interview with the author team of **Introvert Legion** on a completely new project, working on the development of a computer game called **ROCKTOPIA**. In the interview, they reveal what inspired them to create, the artistic processes, techniques, and tools they use.

Exclusive photographs from the 'workshop' of the author team **Introvert Legion**.

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Interview with the Author Collective Introvert Legion

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Hello. Introvert Legion. Why such a name?

- Hello. Yes, our work tends to take a deep dive into creative individuality and solitude, which is essential in fostering our original voice. The name 'Introvert Legion' reflects a collective respect for individualism, even though we work closely on shared tasks.



Engineers from Introvert Legion

The full name of your game, 'Rocktopia: Invaders from the Past Future,' has a curious ring to it. Could you explain what it means?

- The game we are developing falls into the category of "Three-dimensional narrative

action platform adventure from a third-person perspective." It unfolds in a fictional prehistoric world where the fundamental building block of life is not carbon, but silicon. This is a deep mystification based on the concept of the Stone Age, in which literally everything is stone—animals, people, trees, bushes, grass. Into this world, invaders from the future arrive, harboring their own dangerous plans for the planet and its inhabitants.

The main character is a little stone dinosaur searching for his parent and siblings. Along the way, he encounters various friendly and hostile silicon life forms and future attackers - futu-humans (our working term for future invaders). He must solve a variety of spatial puzzles. His journey will take him to different corners of the rocky planet—whether on its surface, below it, or even to an alien world in the form of a space base of the futu-humans. The journey will become increasingly difficult, and the puzzles and challenges larger. And although our dinosaur will grow during his quest to overcome these obstacles, will the plot's twist be bigger than he is? We can't reveal that now. But he will have two sidekicks. The first is a somewhat faulty flying robot that the futu-humans forgot about. The second helper is something like a voice of the cosmos - a narrator who, in certain situations, speaks to our dinosaur.

However, the narrator is weary, old, his memory and judgment not what they once were, and thus his advice can sometimes be confusing.

Why "Invaders from the Past Future"? Enlighten us.

- A very good question. The answer closely relates to the choice of visual concept. Just as two worlds intersect in our game—the prehistoric stone world and the cosmo-futuristic world of the invaders—so too do two distinct visual concepts of these worlds blend. The prehistoric world has its own stylistic rules. The cosmo-futuristic world draws 100% inspiration from science fiction films of 1950 to 1969. This era marks the historical beginnings of the expansion of this theme in the film industry. The depiction and processing of space realities were then pure, original, and authentic. However, from a contemporary viewpoint, such portrayal is seen as perhaps a naïve past. But, nothing ages faster than the future. Essentially, we're talking about the past of the future. And that also answers your question.

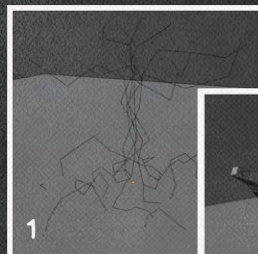
Tell us more about the depiction of the prehistoric world.

- This world is artistically original from a visual standpoint. We didn't seek inspiration from anywhere. We drew on our experiences, which were the pivotal pillar for the technical-artistic tuning of the prehistoric world. We wanted our stone world to be full and varied in shape. Thus, it was a significant and essential task to create processes that allowed for the quick, efficient, and simple production of a large number of objects. The key tools for achieving this goal are:

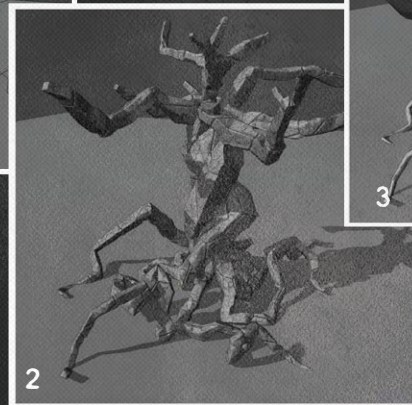
1. Distilling shapes to their basic essence.



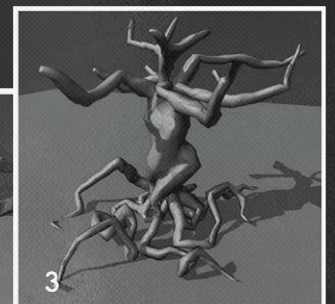
2. Simple object production – we always start with a basic shape in the Blender program, which we modify using carefully set procedural modifiers. Thanks to this, we can have both highly detailed and low-detail versions of an object simultaneously.



1 - basic lines

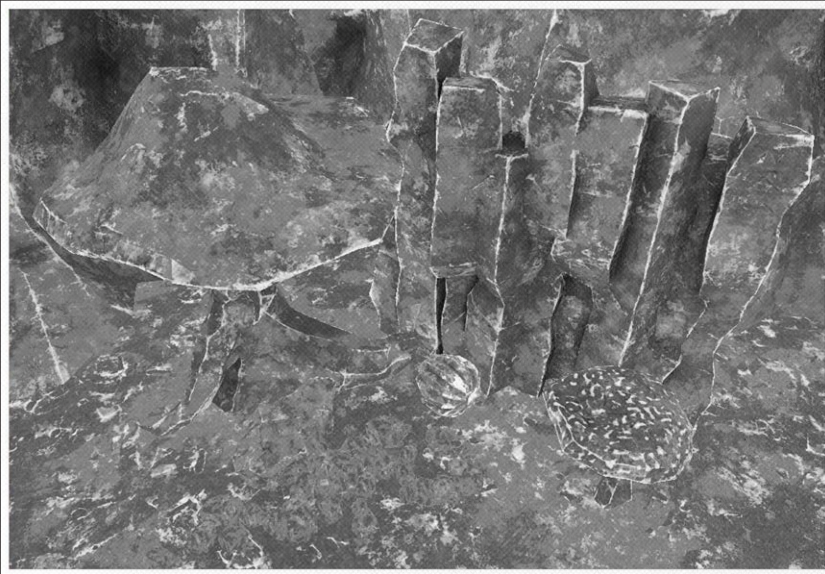


2 - modifiers enabled



3 - decimation to low polygon version

3. Consistent Detail - We create details through a universal structure that responds to the size of each object. This structure consistently covers all rocky objects, ensuring the level of detail remains consistent throughout the entire stone world.



Small or large objects - always carry the same level of detail. It is noteworthy that the detailed structure covering the objects is monochromatic.

How are the stone characters created?

- Actually, very similarly to other objects. The basis is the study of historical creatures. Here too, we define basic shapes, which we then transfer into three-dimensional space.

Characters in our game are made from stones, which are shaped to support the desired silhouette to a certain extent.



Basic model.

Model segmented into separate stones.



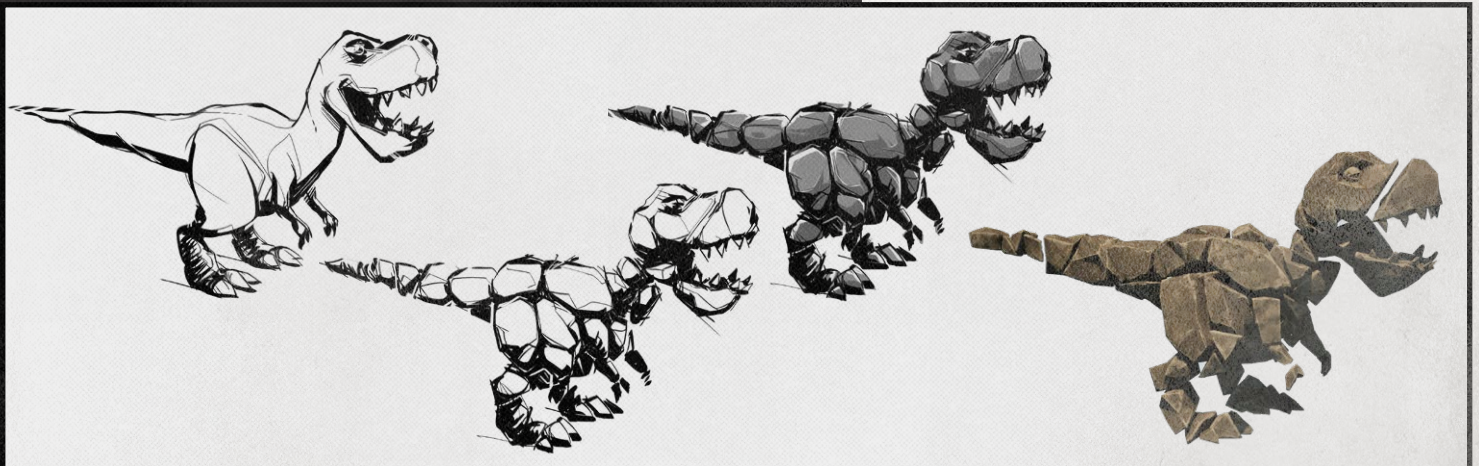
High-detail version.

Low-detail version.



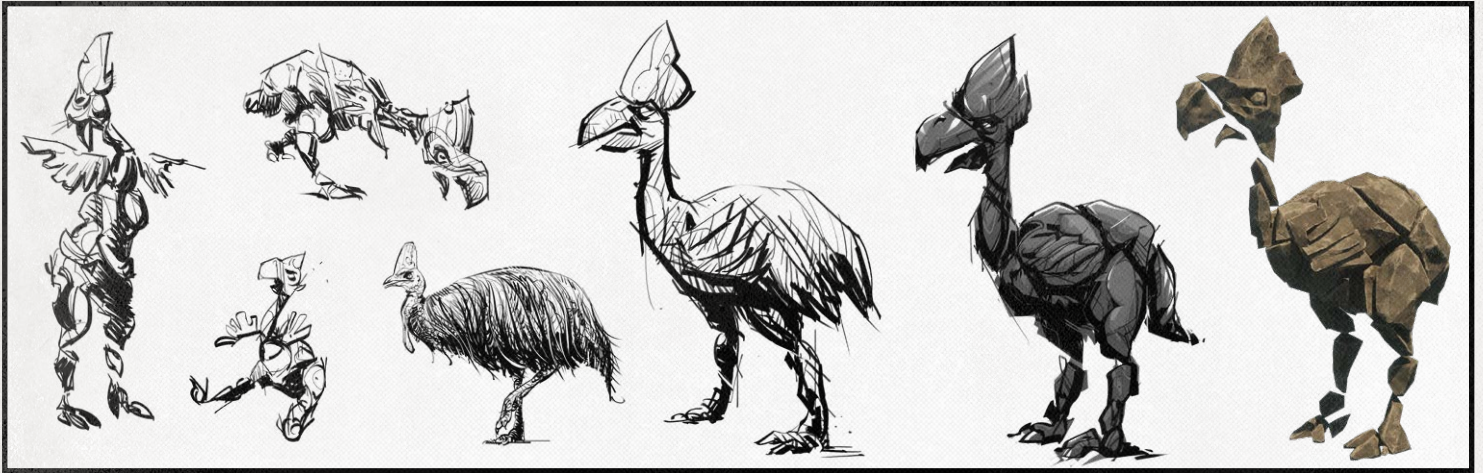
Game version with applied universal structure.

>>>>>>

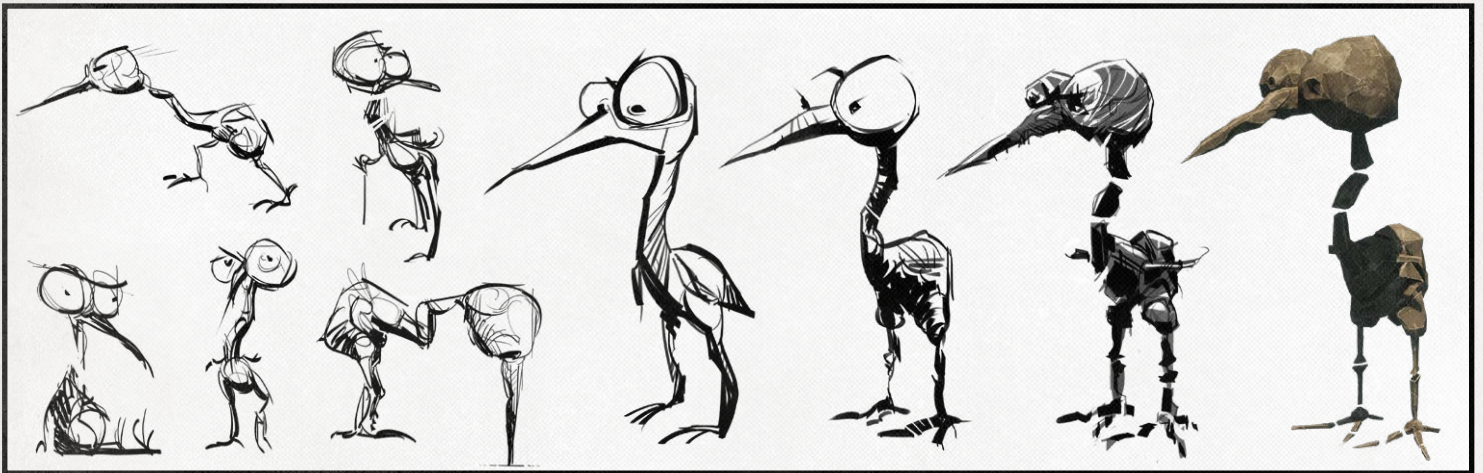


A brief overview of the process of creating a character. From concept to model.

We use the same recipe for the production of all other stone characters. I should note that the game is still in development, and many characters have not yet left the planning department. We can reveal at least some of them, at various stages of development:



Character Titanis. Inspired by the cassowary bird.



Character Kurosaurus (Chickensaurus). Loosely inspired by the small lizard-dinosaur, *Fruitadens haagarorum*.



Characters of stone people - Prehistorics - and objects associated with them.

I assume the same process applies to plants and vegetation. Am I wrong?

- You're not mistaken (*laughter, ed. note*). If the stone world is to be believable, the styling must be identical across all types of objects, including vegetation. You are correct in assuming that all plants are based on historical references. However, they have their own shape specifics. The level of geometric detail here is higher than with rocks. But, everything is unified using the previously mentioned universal structure. We also know that fungi thrived during certain historical periods. These form a significant part of our environments. Here are photos of some objects..



Trees inspired by the species *Calamophyton*.



Trees inspired by the species *Dendrosenecio kilimanjari*.

Trees inspired by the species *Fagus sylvatica*.



Trees inspired by the species *Albizia saman*.

Trees inspired by the species *Adansonia* (Baobab).



Shrubs inspired by the species *Cycadeoidea*, *Macrotaeniopteris*, *Raphia Australis*, *Indohyus*, *Bjuvia simplex*, *Onychiopsis*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Tempskyaceae*, *Equisetum pratense*.



Basic types of grass.



Mushrooms.



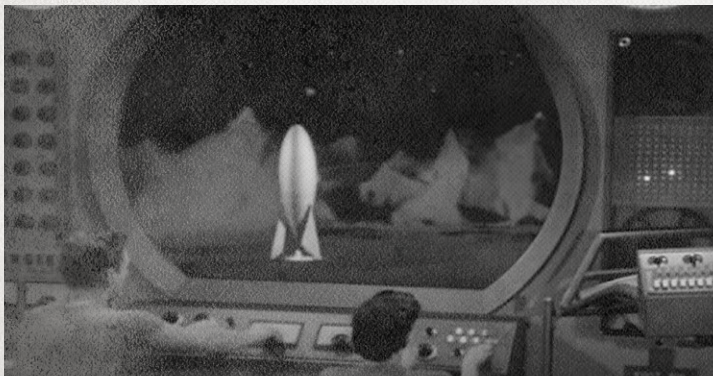
Basic types of rocks.

We have an idea of the historical world. Now, tell us about the other world you refer to as cosmo-futuristic.

- Cosmo-futurism is a term we defined ourselves. In the era of the 1950s to 1969, a considerable amount of science fiction and futuristic films began to emerge. However, this category also included films that had nothing to do with space themes—such as the Invisible Man or Woman, mysterious islands, mad scientists, monsters from the ocean depths. To clearly define our area of interest—films with a cosmic theme—we named this direction Cosmo-futurism. Here are images from films that were a major inspiration for us:



Flight To Mars (1951)



Project Moonbase (1953)



Der Schwierigende Stern (1960)



Gorath (1962)



Planeta Bur (1962)



Ikarie XB-1 (1963)

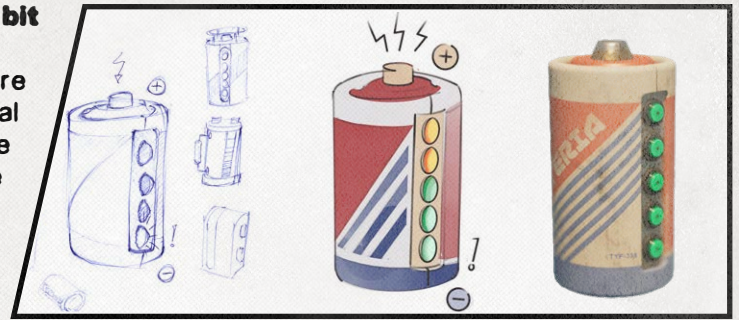


2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

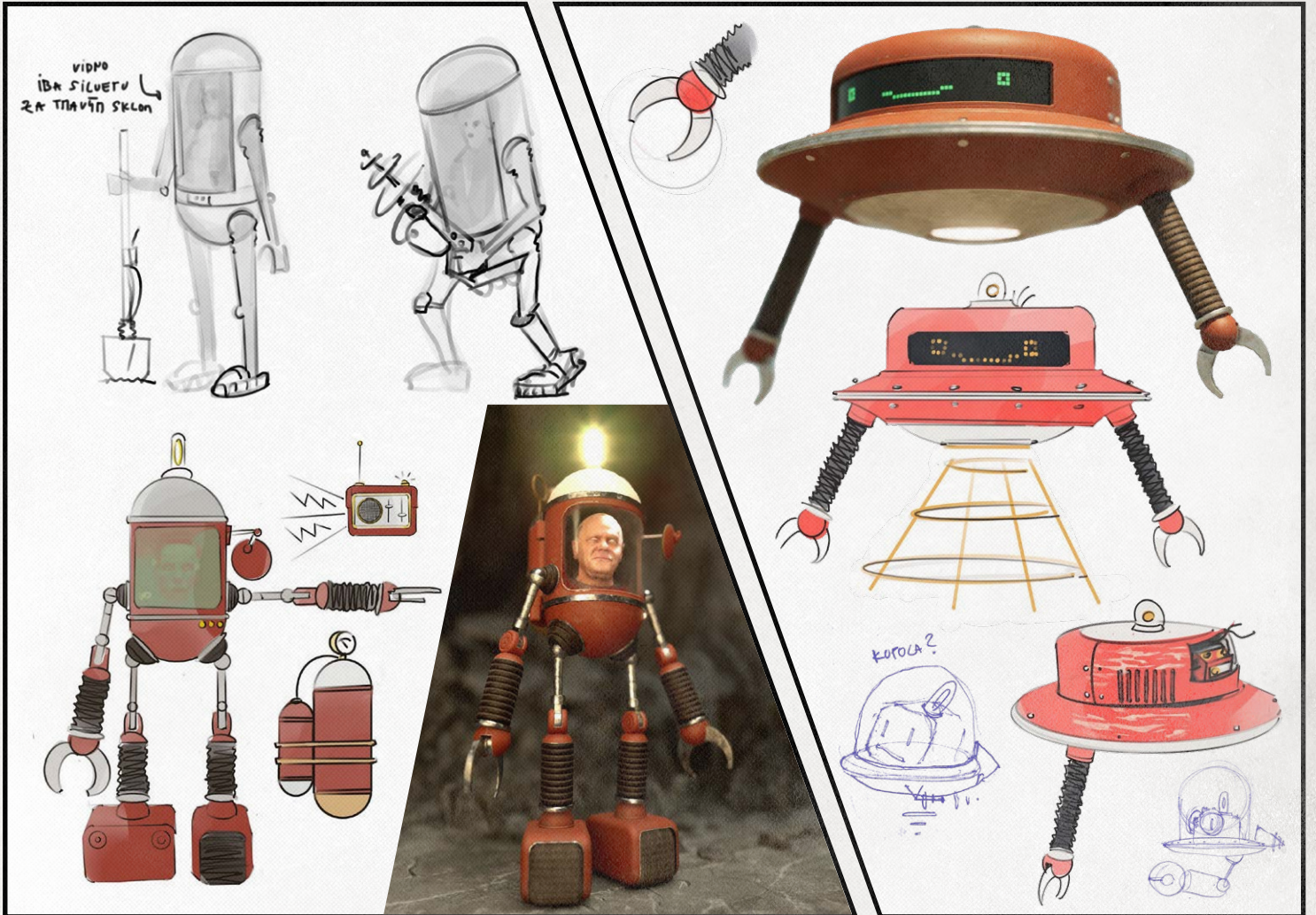
Retrofuturism is very popular today. It draws inspiration from the original cosmo-futurism, augmented with layers of the "digital" era. Almost all contemporary retrofuturistic objects have exaggerated shapes, detailed textures, and all edges are softened. From our perspective, this represents a manneristic disrespect to the original forms, colors, and surfaces. This is a path we did not want to take. The essence of original cosmo-futurism lies in the fact that all elements are made by hand, utilitarian and efficient. This makes them believable. Just look at the films from that period. Objects are made from existing parts—elevator buttons, motorcycle lights, shower hoses...

Sorry to interrupt you, but isn't such an approach a bit naive?

- Perhaps. Or maybe that's precisely the added value we're looking for. It perfectly fits into the fundamental ideological concept of mystification and unique humor. It took us some time to adopt these principles. Many game objects of the cosmo-futuristic type are only in the design stage. We decided to depict the Futu-humans as robots, yet with a human head in some kind of "brine". We can show some that are finished, as well as those still in design:

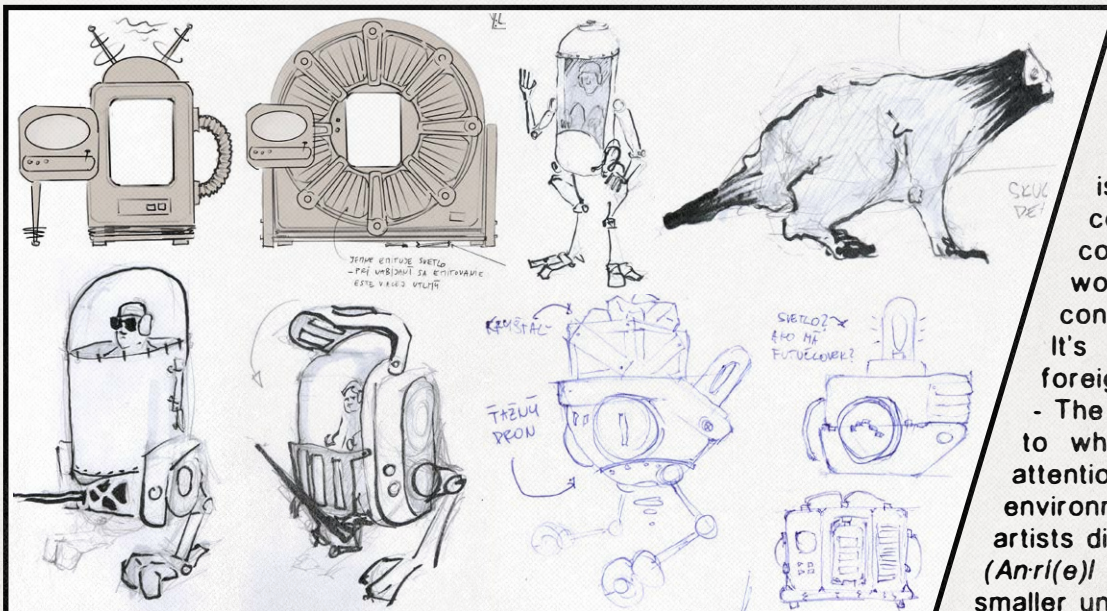


Futubattery



Futumen - from design to model.

Flying robot - from design to model.



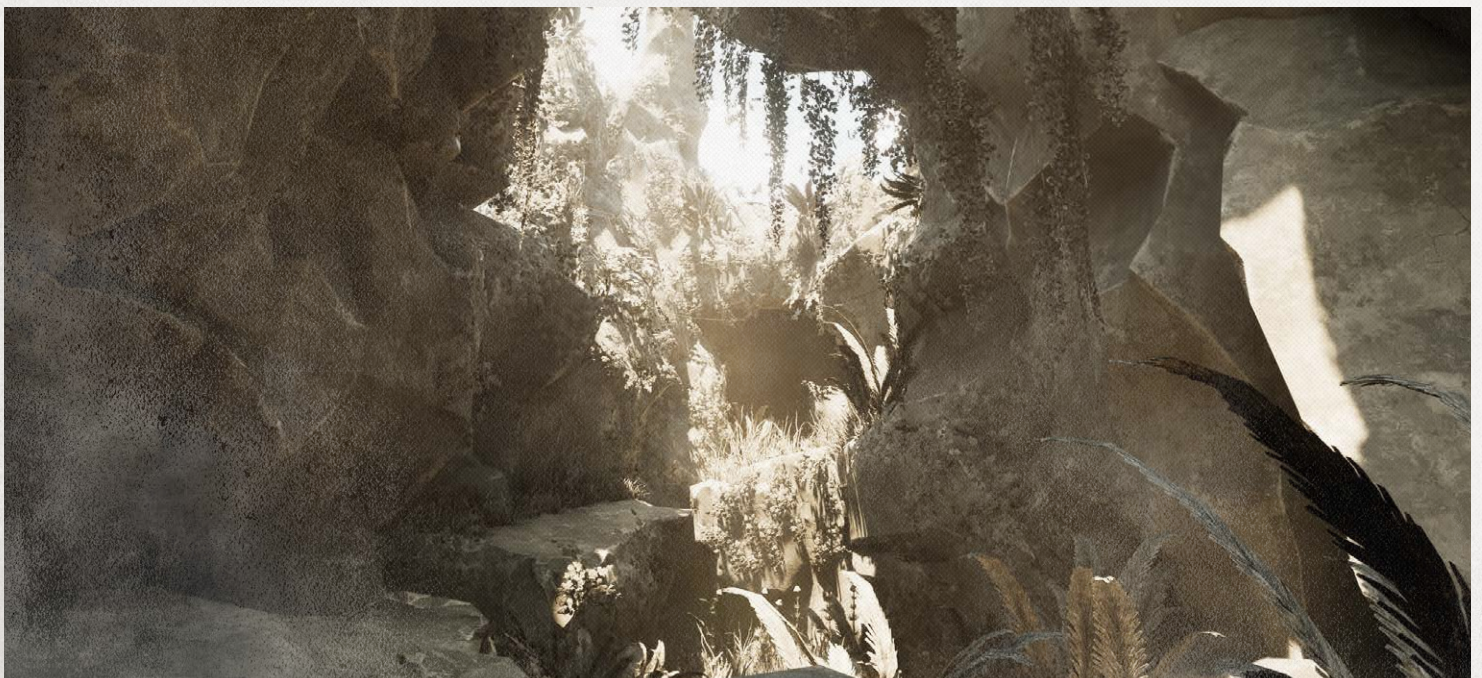
Devices and characters in the brainstorming stage.

How is it possible to combine these two different worlds?

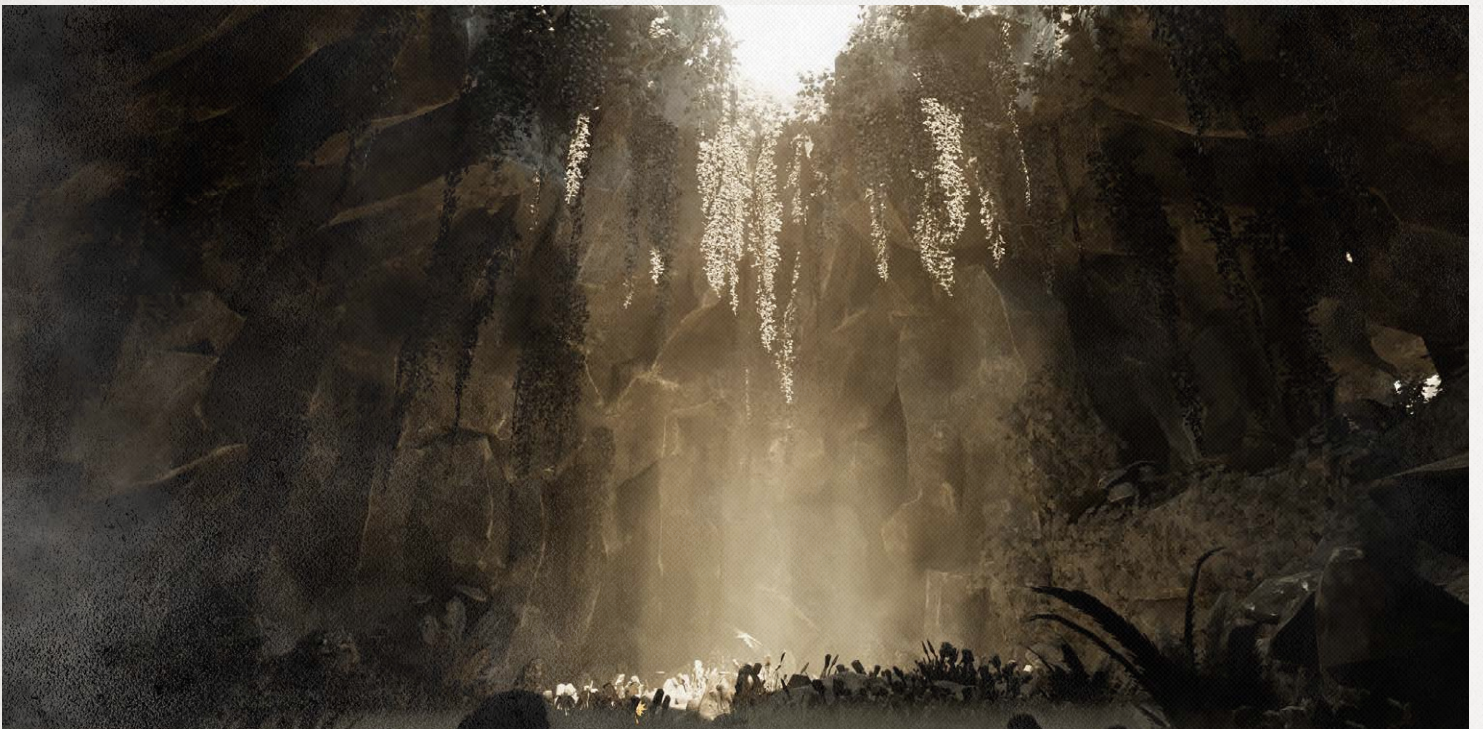
- It's surprisingly simple. The prehistoric stone world is monochromatic, while the cosmo-futuristic world is colorful. The elements of each world create a strong visual contrast in their interaction. It's immediately clear what is foreign on the stone planet. - The unifying element is lighting, to which we pay extraordinary attention. The compositions of environments are crafted by artists directly in the Unreal Engine. (Anri(ø) endž(i)n, ed. note). Every smaller unit in the game environment

is created as a separate composition with its own unique lighting atmosphere. This was a fundamental creative challenge. We use light as an elementary pillar of visual dramaturgy and as a powerful tool to support what is known as storytelling. The light in the

space changes smoothly according to rules we have set, to highlight exactly what we want to show. The movement of the dinosaur in the game environment will provide the player with a continuous tour of various compositions and atmospheres.







That sounds interesting. By the way, I used the word “sounds” intentionally. What about the music and sounds?

- I'm very glad you “tuned in” to ask that. We assert that good sound makes up 50% of the overall impression. Just as we have two visual concepts, we also have two musical concepts. The sound of cosmo-futurism is the sound of analog synthesizers—Moog, ARP, Mellotron. The music is composed by our sound engineer, who draws direct inspiration from authors like Klaus Schulze, Alistair Hawkins, Jean-Michel Jarre, etc.

- The sound of the prehistoric world will be entirely original. Everything you hear will be the sound of stones. Sand sounds different from gravel. The impact of granite on sandstone sounds completely different from tapping marble on flint. Our sound engineer constructed a stone xylophone, with which he records sound motifs. The music of the stone world will be raw and natural. In a sense, it will be the purest form of rock music (*laughter, ed. note*).

Is there anything else you can reveal about the development of your game?

- The movement of characters is created by the standard technique of animating a three-dimensional skeleton in Blender. The stones that make up the character are “glued” to the skeleton. If our dinosaur overcomes an opponent, his stones

will no longer hold together—the entire figure will disintegrate.

- We chose an innovative approach in processing the user interface (GUI) and in the form of the tutorial (the initial phase of the game, where the player learns to control the character). To not disrupt the gaming experience in any way, no GUI will be available during the tutorial phase. It won't be needed. The character cannot “die” at this stage, nor can it run out of energy. The GUI will be introduced right after the tutorial, when the dinosaur finds the flying robot. This robot will be capable of projecting important information directly into the player's field of vision.

- Regarding typography, we use 3 basic font styles: Arial (freely available), 1st Enterprises (purchased license), and a custom hand-drawn style meant to mimic the aesthetics of cave paintings. However, we don't use the first two in their original form. Each font undergoes our own modification to make it appear, for example, as printed on an offset printing press, displayed on an LCD panel, or painted using a stencil.



User interface projected by the flying robot into the player's field of vision.

- The processing of the tutorial usually happens in such a way that the game instructs the player through text boxes. We discarded this—it's extremely distracting from our point of view. The controls will be so simple and intuitive that we consider this explicit disruption with text boxes as underestimating the player's intelligence. Nonetheless, all necessary information and instructions will be fully available but in the most natural form—drawn on surrounding rocks in the form of prehistoric cave paintings.

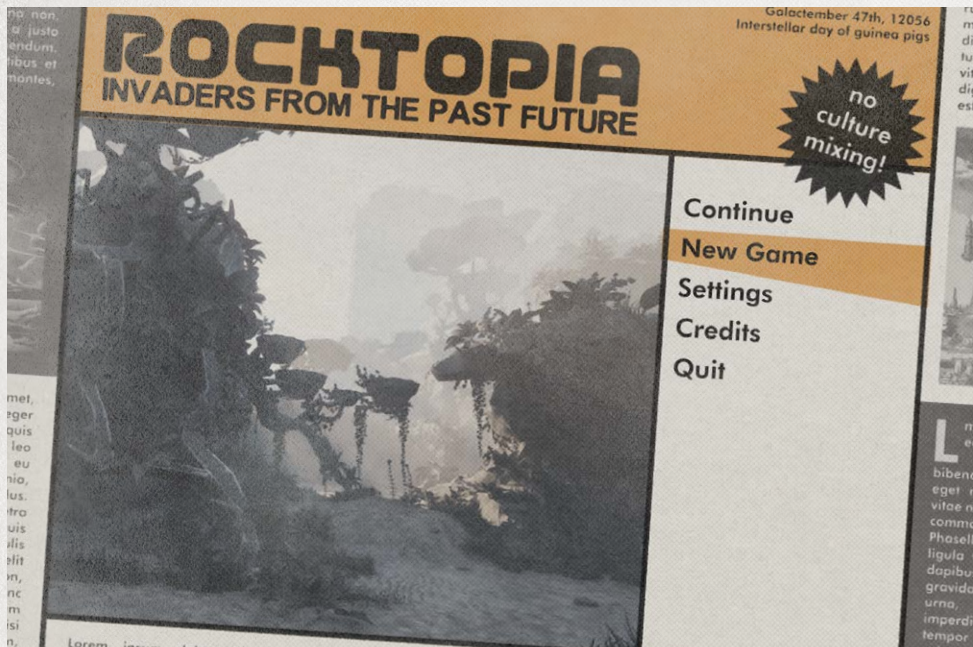


Titanis character and its skeleton.



Tutorial instructions naturally integrated into the game.

- The game menu will resemble a newspaper page from the 60s-70s. It will be a newspaper of the Futumen. In addition to the usual items that typically appear in a menu, it will be possible to read quasi-scientific articles, advertisements for quality lubricating oils, and the like in the newspaper.



User Interface - Game Menu.

What would you like to say to our readers in conclusion?

- We are creating a game. We mustn't forget that. And for us, the game is not just the end result, but also the journey. We play with its development. We play with game mechanics, with atmospheres, with compositions, with dramaturgy, with music. But we also play with the player. We want the very act of playing the game to be a game between us and the player.

We will certainly be keeping a close eye on the birth of your project ROCKTOPIA: INVADERS FROM THE PAST FUTURE. Thank you for the interview.

- We thank you for the invitation and wish you a pleasant day.


 Jednou z potravin, která pomáhá chránit tepny a cévy před vznikem sklerózy a srdce před infarktem je
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