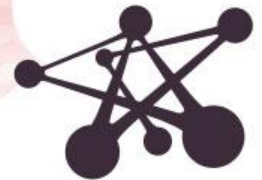


# GDC Europe

Game Developers Conference™ Europe 2011  
**August 15-17, 2011 | Cologne, Germany**  
[www.GDCEurope.com](http://www.GDCEurope.com)



**SOCIAL GAMES**  
— SUMMIT —

## **Skyrama: Art Directing a Social Game**

**Hector Moran**

*Head of Art, Sproing Interactive Media*

# About Myself

- **Hector Moran:**

- Head of Art at Sproing

- **Brief Work history**

- Streamline Studios
- Sproing
- Various Freelance and teaching gigs

- **Some Titles I Worked on:**

Saints Row, Overlord, Hoopworld, Mountain Sports, Dance:It's Your Stage, Fit in Six, Schlag den Raab 2, Skyrama



# About Sproing

- Founded in 2001, in Vienna, Austria
- Experienced, international team
- Licensed developer:

PS3 PSP PSVITA XBOX 360  
Wii NINTENDO DS NINTENDO 3DS PC CD-ROM

- Team Configurations:  
Free-to-Play Games  
Action & Thriller  
Sports & Activities



# About Sproing

- **Our Focus:**
  - High Quality Free-to-Play browser and console games
  - Among first to deliver great 3D graphics to browser games using Adobe Molehill!
- We uniquely combine experience in three key areas
  - **Console** game development
  - **Browser** game development
  - Adobe Flash "**Molehill**" game development

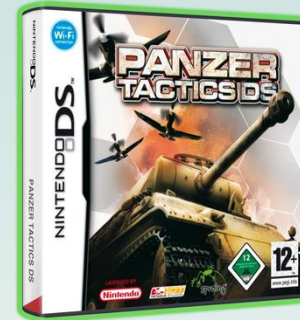
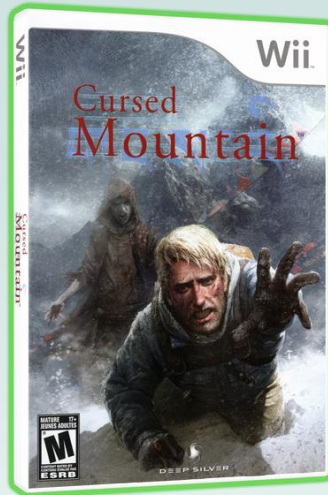




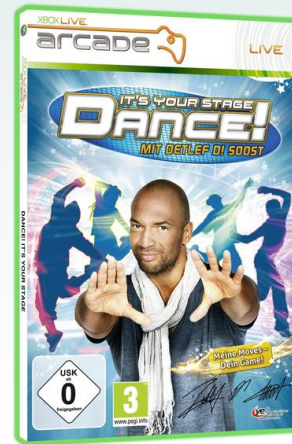
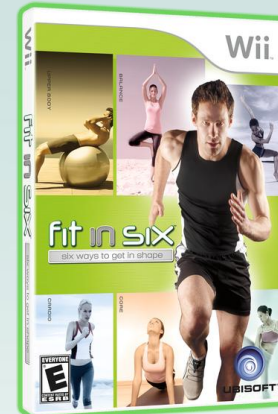
# F2P Games



# Action & Thriller



# Sports & Activities



# Skyrama – The Game

- [www.skyrama.com](http://www.skyrama.com)
- Social game published by:



- Create your own airport and send planes to friends all over the world!
- Highly viral
- Aimed at a global audience





# Skyrama Team Structure

- 1 Project Manager
- 2 Game Designers
- 2 Artists: one 2d Artist and one 3d Artist
- 5 Programmers
- 2 QA



# So What's Out There?





# Early Mockups (External)



- Off to a great start
- Nice colors
- Great render style
- Sleek but still friendly

# Early Mockups (Internal)



- Needs some work
- Colors too somber
- Render style isn't clear
- Cold and unfriendly
- Tackling too many things in one go.



# Back to Basics

Looking at the real deal...



# Back to Basics

...And other non-game depictions of that.



# Little Details



## Keep in mind:

- Windsocks
- Flowerbeds and plant areas
- Building sign/name
- Parking booth/canopy





# Planning Ahead



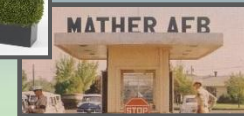
- First Building versions will be small and sort of retro versions.
- Second versions will be medium and more contemporary.
- Third versions will be large, sleek and almost futuristic.





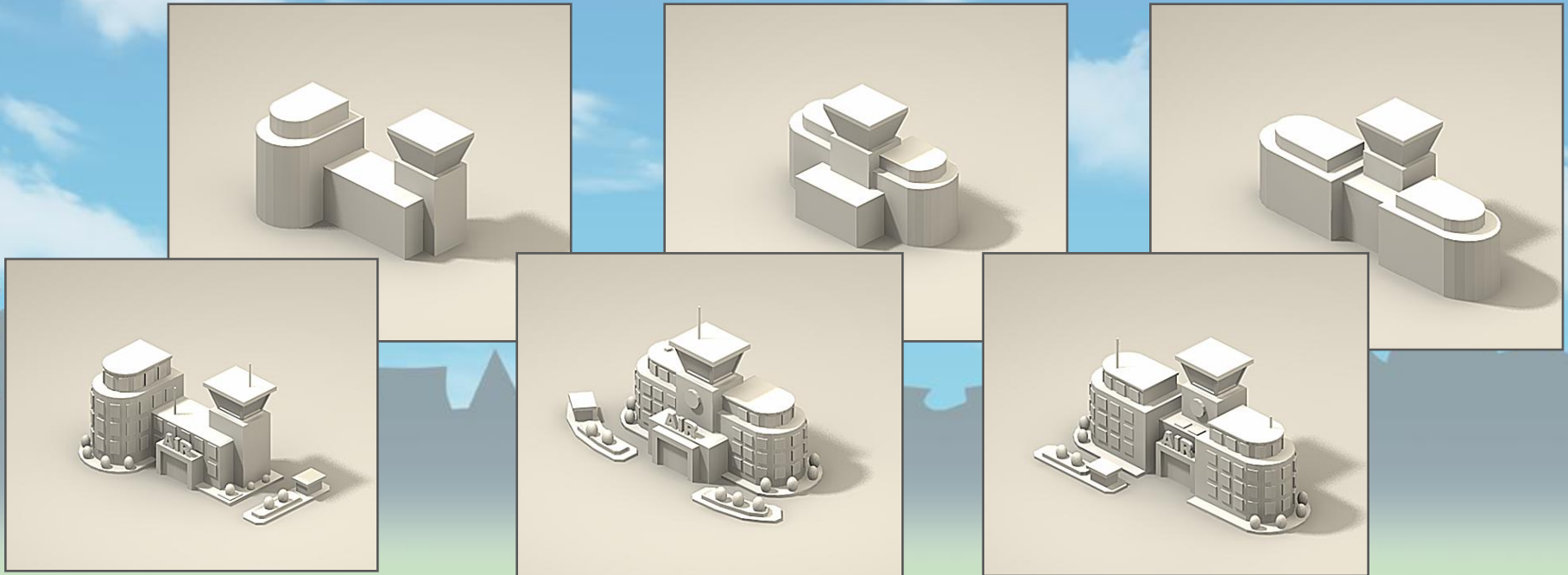
# Steps Breakdown (Airhut)

## 1. Reference Gathering



# Steps Breakdown (Airhut)

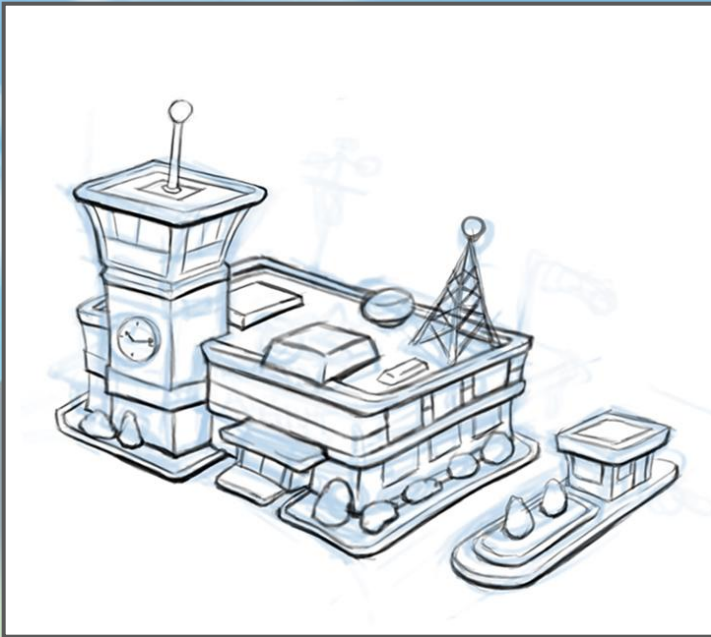
## 2. Block-Outs



- Explore layouts and architecture possibilities (Main Shapes and silhouette).
- Keep them rough and quick.

# Steps Breakdown (Airhut)

## 3. Quick Concept (When Possible)



- Figure out refinements and find the “Building Story Details.”
- Only necessary when block-outs aren’t enough.
- First assets are always the trickiest.



# Steps Breakdown (Airhut)

## 4. Final Version.

Straight



Distorted



- Refined model with "Story Details."
- Texture and Color assignments.
- Lighting and rendering.



# Steps Breakdown (Airhut)

## 5. Final Version... Really!



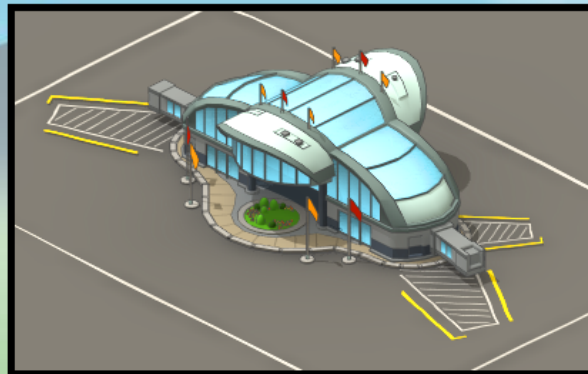
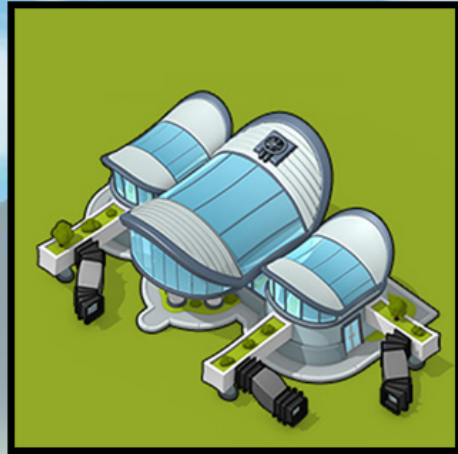
- Tower too short
- Plane looks too much like assets.
- Dish position didn't read well with silhouette.



- Tower fixed
- Plane replaced
- Dish is better placed
- Silly **Air** sign is gone.

- Small refinements and fixes.

# Progression



- We went through many versions before reaching that happy place where the style and details felt and looked right.

# Narrowing Things Down

## SKYRAMA

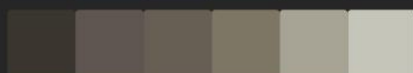
### COLOR GUIDE



**greens**



**cool grays**



**warm grays**



**blues**



**reds**



**yellows**



**misc**



**Avoid using pure white on building assets. Even white planes should use an offwhite tone and the bright highlights should be the only white parts.**



**Never use pure black on any building asset and do not let shadow areas reach pure black.**



**Stick to similar schemes on same building types. 2-5 colors should be enough for one building. This should help them remain identifiable at glance.**

**These guidelines aren't absolute, but should be followed as much as possible.**

- As we went along we figured out more about the style, the usual stuff.



# UI... Oh the HUD!



## References (to left):

RamaCity, Airport Signs, Flight Control DSI

- Plastic with lighting gradient (not flat colour).
- Simple colour schemes and iconography.
- Bold but 'soft' colours (e.g. grey not black).
- Curved edges, with trimming.



## Quick Mockup (above):

Old HUD layout reworked to prototype new GUI style. Final details TBD, our goal is nailing style.

- Floating elements (not whole width).
- Use Facebook resolution.
- Less vertical height to elements.



# UI Versions

Airplane Interior Theme



Airport Signage Block-out



Airport Signage Theme



Airport Signage Friendly



Airport Signage No-More



# Icons



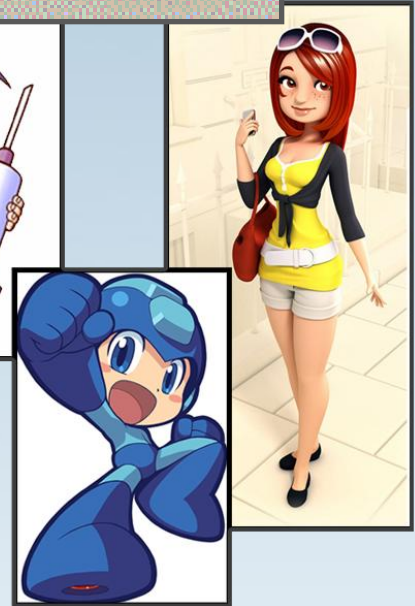
- They also had their own cycle of iterations.
- We gradually figured out principles and rules they should follow.
  - Exaggerated perspective on one corner.
  - Thick black outlines (but only on the outside).
  - Similar amount of detail on each.
  - Cell-shaded simple render style.
  - More flexible color guide than for 3d assets.





# Characters

## 1. Again, Reference Gathering





# Characters

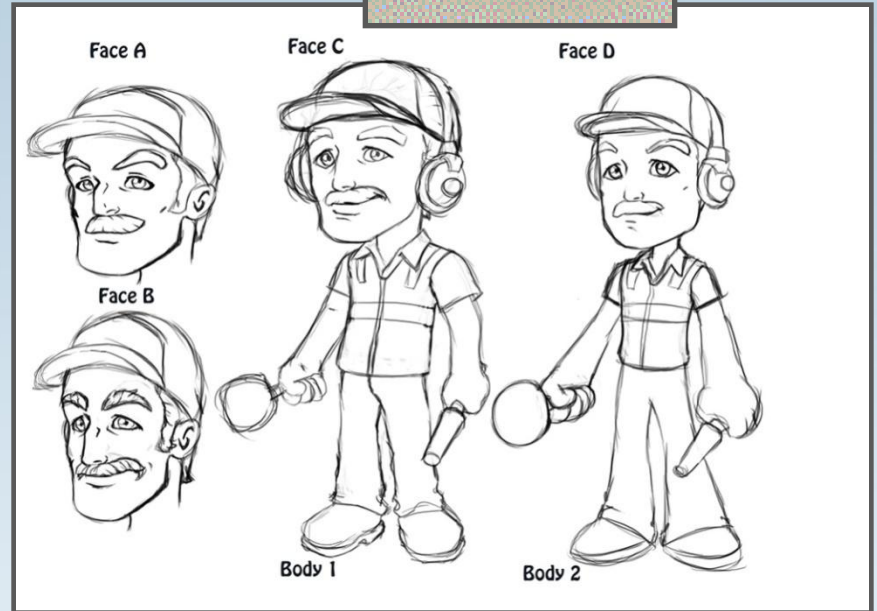
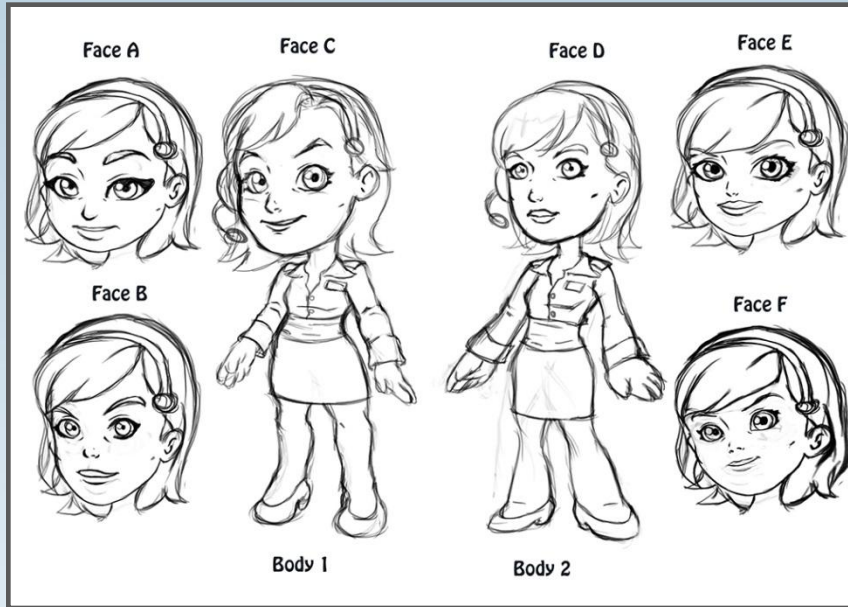
## 2. First Rough Draft



- Was too child-like
- Too much Japanese style
- Just not enough gun...

# Characters

## 3. Second Round of Drafts



- Adjusted SD proportions some more
- Used more western cartoon styles for faces
- Discussed with Game Designers and other Team Members

# Characters

## 4. Refining and Rendering



Was pretty straight forward once we figured out what we wanted and how we would use the characters.



# Characters

## 5. Final Versions



And so we had a crew!



# Logo

Yep... We designed it too.



And it was kinda fun!





And then...

# Skyrama



**BIGPOINT**





# Screenshots



Name: Rattenhirn, UserId: 327





# Screenshots



Name: PixelChick, UserId: 11261

10 018 2

Hol Dir Aircraft

932 / 1 420 11

5 590

Logout



Berserker666s Flughafen





# Screenshots



Name: PixelChick, UserId: 11261





# Regarding Art Direction



## Do

- Keep a balanced collaboration with Game Designers, Publisher, etc.
- Provide guides and process structures where needed
- Experiment and explore ideas
- Allow team to grow together and own the project
- Play to team's strengths

# Regarding Art Direction



## Don't

- Let too many cooks in the kitchen.
- Over-engineer processes and guides when time is tight
- Get too attached to your experiments or preferences
- Stray too far from convention and risk publisher and audience
- Expect to get things perfect on the first go

## Quick Stats



- 1.5 Million registered users
- Average of 30 k users online
- Nominated for Best Browser Game EGAs 2011
- Game still in Beta  
(as of August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011)



# Content Updates

First one has gone up...



... And more are coming!



Questions?



Thank You!

