



The background of the entire image is a vibrant sunburst pattern. It consists of numerous thin, straight lines radiating from a central point at the top, creating a sense of energy and movement. The colors are various shades of yellow and orange, with the lines being a slightly darker shade than the background.

BORDERLANDS

& THE 11th HOUR

**ART Style
CHANGE**

OR:

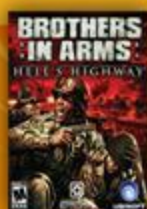
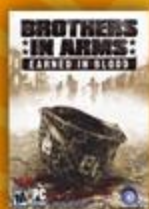
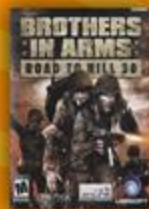
KIDS

**Don't
TRY THIS**

At HOME!

Brian's Background

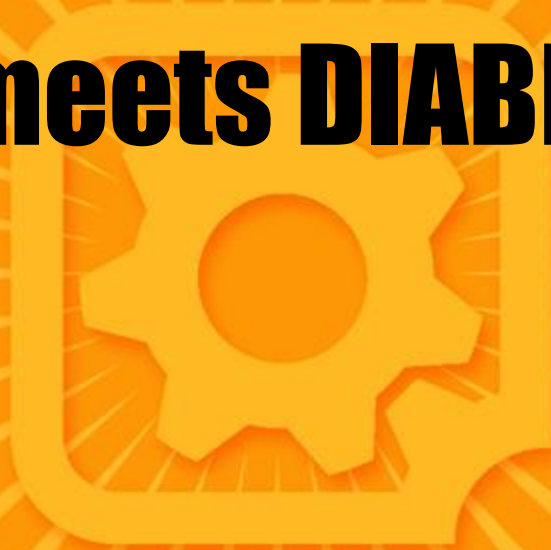
- Co-Founder/Executive Vice-President/Chief Creative Officer/Art Czar of Gearbox Software.
- Before helping to create Gearbox Brian Martel began his career at MicroProse working on Sid Meir's Civilization and a host of games from 1990 through 1995. In 1995 he moved back to Texas to work in the esteemed capital of FPS games at 3D Realms working on the Duke Nukem franchise. Working alongside Randy Pitchford he created a lifelong friendship and professional partnership that lead them to create a small studio Rebel Boat Rocker in 1997. Taking their shared experiences from that studio they joined forces with Stephen Bahl to found Gearbox Software eleven years ago. Gearbox Software continues to be one of the most influential independent studios making video games today.



CREATIVITY,
HAPPINESS
& MONEY

BORDERLANDS High Concept

- **HALO meets DIABLO!**



BORDERLANDS TIMELINE

- Concept: April 05 – Oct 05 (up until when we shipped EIB)
- Prototype: Nov 05 – Oct 06 (up until when BL got greenlit)
- Development 1: Nov 06 – Aug 07 (up until BL Leipzig demo)
- Development 2: Sep 07 – Oct 08 (BL Vertical Slice, E3/Leipzig demo, pre-alphas)
- Final Push: Oct 08 – Oct 09 (doubled team size, art style change, story and design finalized)

History of BL Art Direction

- The selection process; pretty unique way to go about art directing -- by committee
 - Building consensus on the art direction would help get everyone on board
 - “You can imagine how that made some of the artists feel”
 - I’m going to show you the boards
 - We will play a game. Let’s try it here!
 - Where did we end up?

REALISTIC

PLAUSIBLE

SERIOUS



TOUGH

MILITARISTIC

DARK

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REALISTIC

RETRO

MECHANICAL



SERIOUS

GRITTY

FANTASTIC

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EXTREME

INTENSE

GARISH



EPIC

OVER THE TOP

MACHO

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ANIME

TECH DRIVEN

KINETIC



CYBERNETICS

ROBOTICS

POLISHED

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DECO

IMPERIAL

REMOTE



GARISH

DIVERSE

DYSTOPIAN

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ADVANCED

FAR FUTURE

CLEAN



STERILE

TECH DRIVEN

SLICK

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CARTOONY

FUN

LIGHTHEARTED



OVER THE TOP

FAST

INCREDIBLE

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REALISTIC

RETRO

MECHANICAL



SERIOUS

GRITTY

FANTASTIC

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History of BL art direction

- Did it work?
- Kinda, yeah.
- It did demoralize the Art Director though.
 - This coupled with some other things led him to leave Gearbox and pursue different dreams.
 - In a different field.
- For the rest of the team it felt ok.
- In fact was the impetus for the Gearbox Truth Team.
- Still not specific enough.
- What does retro sci-fi even mean?

Where the game was up to the point of the change (2005-2008)


- Brown



Where the game was up to the point of the change (2005-2008)

- **Brown**





BANDIT!

ROLAND

MORDECAI



EXTREME
BLOOD EFFECTS

WOW!
EMMISIVE EFFECTS

KIT BASHED ASTHETIC

KIT BASHED ASTHETIC

EXTREME PIZZA CUTTER OF DEATH

KIT BASHED ASTHETIC

CRAZY PSYCHO BANDIT

WTF





SUPER LOOT CHEST OF AWESOME!



brown

What are we going to do?

- The economy of production
- Are we going to be able to make this look really good?
- How will it be received?(Poor Man's Rage)
- As an independent studio we're able to be dynamic and think about these kinds of things; but we're also not infused with massive amounts of capital.
- You can't just throw \$40M at this problem – we can't just put together a gigantic team to address art production problems.

QUALITY

?

!

!

TIME

MONEY









Welcome to
PANDORA

*Your Final Destination,
Guaranteed!*

Troubles?

So the game is in Trouble. What kind of Troubles?

- The game feels pretty good!
- The systems are really solid!
- The action is over the top!
- In fact that is one of the BIG problems!
- Art Quality Inconsistency.
- Incongruence.

If Art Direction Wasn't the Problem...

...shoring up your Art Director with the proper staff was!

- We were finding/formulating the right path on other projects.
- The Job of 5 People!
 - Art Direction
 - Art Production
 - Out-Sourcing Art Direction and Management
 - Art Leadership
 - Lead Environmental Artist

Art Direction Job Distribution

Art Director

Vision for the game!

Art Producer

Make the Vision Happen

Out-Sourcing Art Director

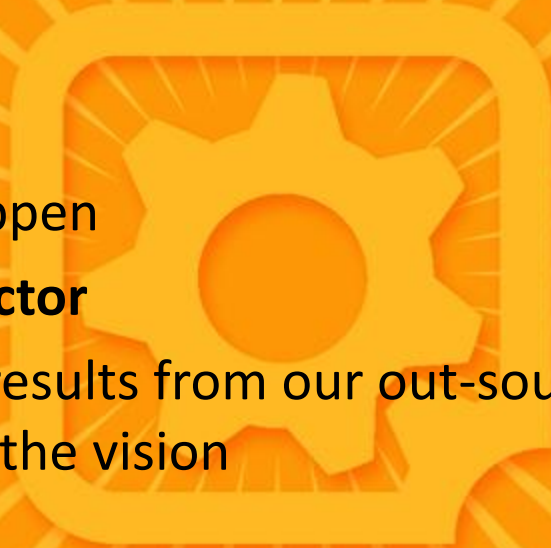
Assure high quality results from our out-sourcing partners that is synchronous with the vision

Art Lead

Assure happy artists or at least productive artists

Lead Environment Artist

Interface between Level Design and Art Director to assure vision



Art Quality Inconsistency

How do you get consistency in your art ?

- If you have variations in talent level, with a small team, you're going to run into problems with consistency
- Because we were doing a photorealistic art style with high poly modeling, high-quality shader work– even with your most exceptional people, it's hard to get great assets in a short timeframe
- If you have people of diverse strengths and weaknesses, how do you help everybody meet the mark?
- We have limited time to help people get better and meet the mark; training, etc. – we have to ship in a certain timeframe

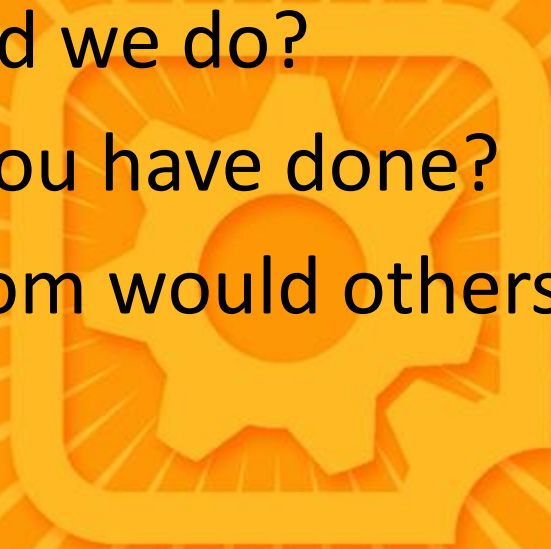
Incongruence

What do I mean by that?

- The game play was feeling a bit extreme more extreme than the realistic retro sci-fi would allow!
 - People exploded when I shot them.
 - Crazy Vagina monsters.
 - Massive and extreme boss monsters!
 - Psycho Bandits
 - Extreme jump height.

New Direction?

- So what should we do?
- What would you have done?
- How much room would others have had to maneuver?



Art Direction and Game Evaluation

To understand what we had wanted the game to look like I started looking back at the original concept art for inspiration.

What assets do we have?

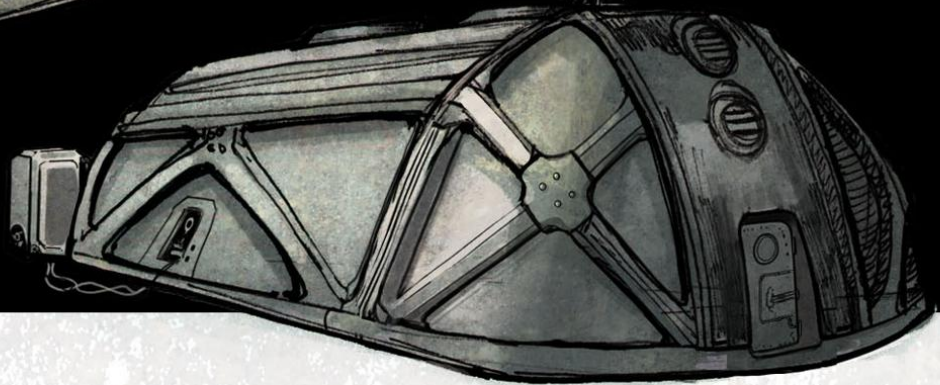
How are the levels shaping up?

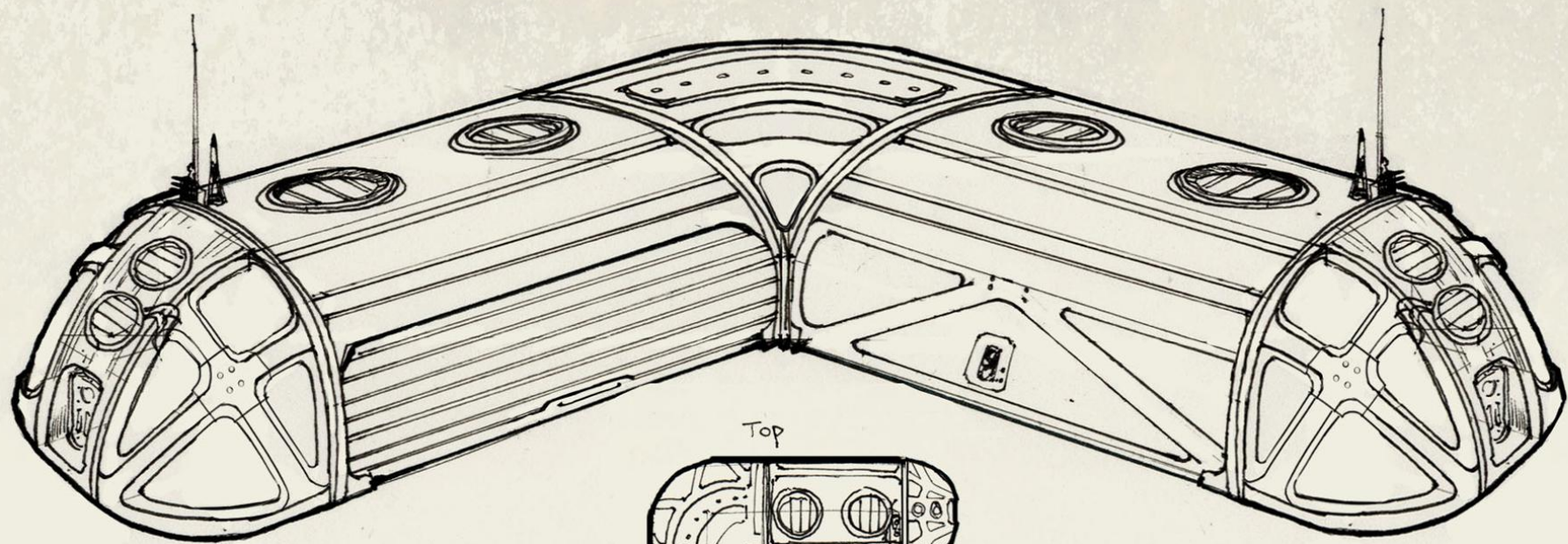
Game Design was in a great state, but was there something to improve there?

What are we going to do?

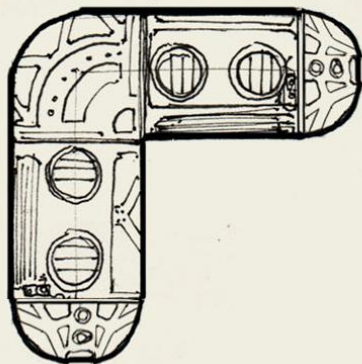
- We need a PURPLE COW!
- Seth Godin – The Purple Cow (Be Remarkable or Be Invisible)

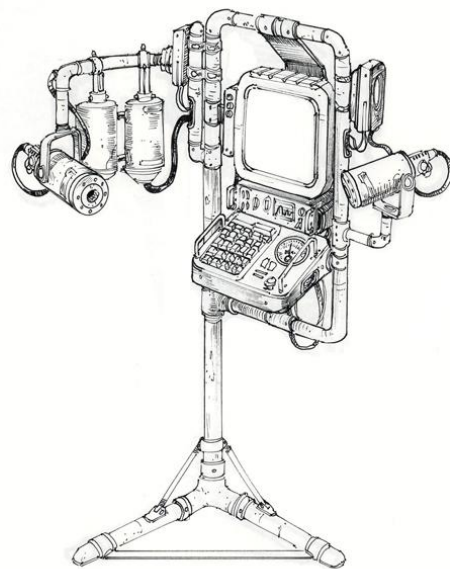
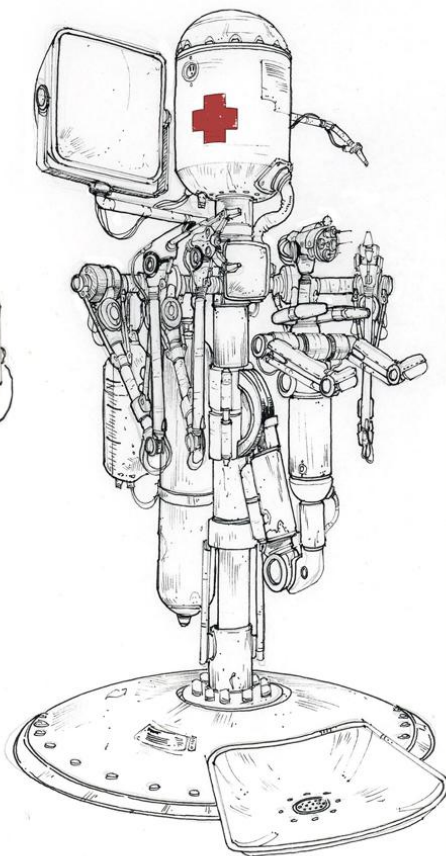
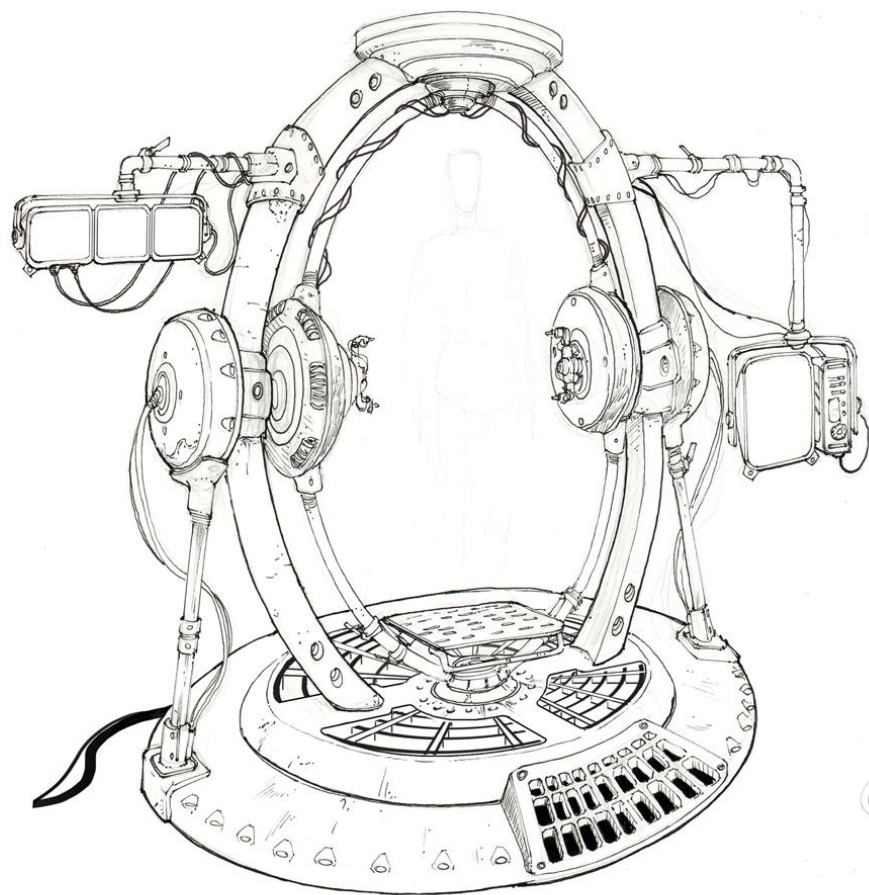




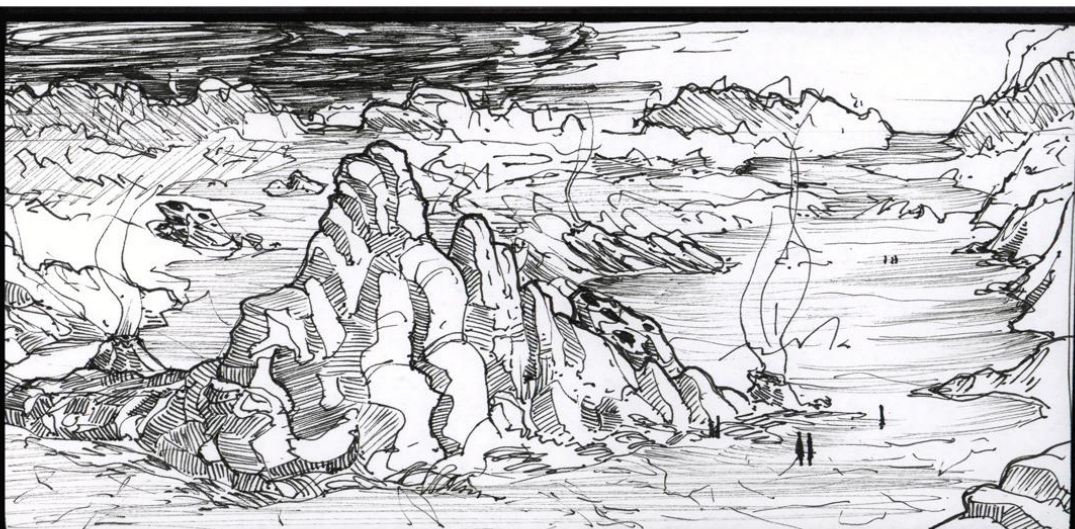
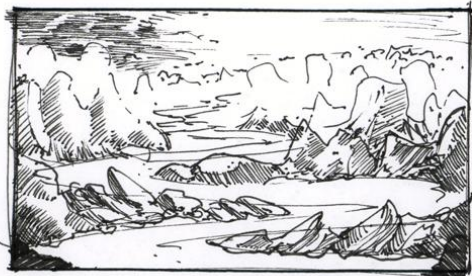


Top



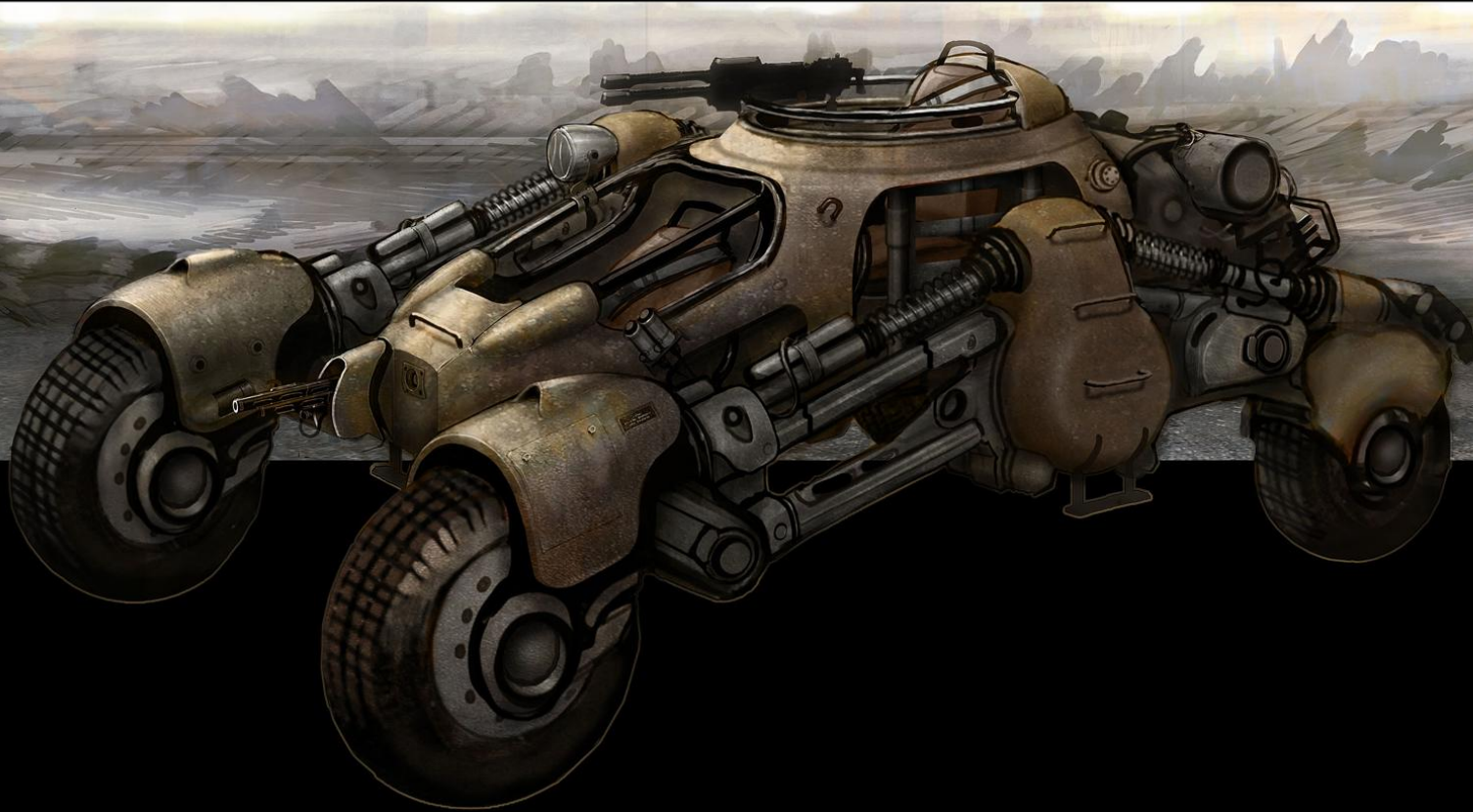






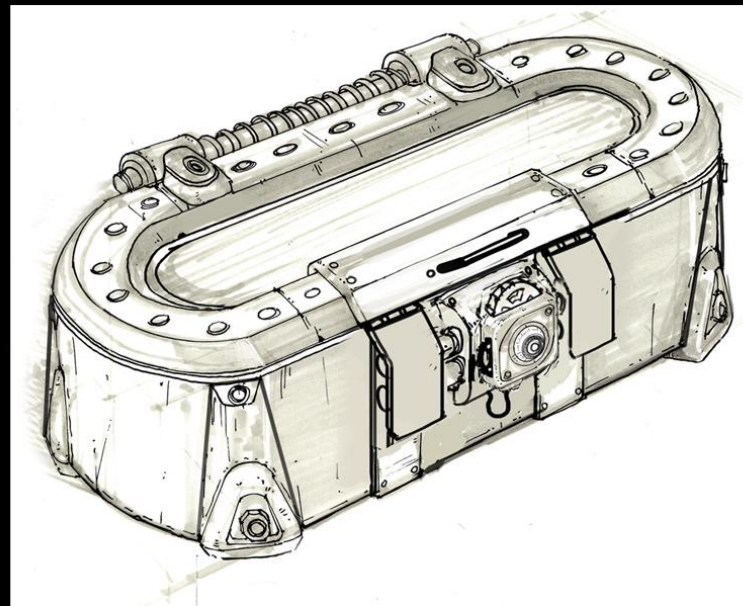
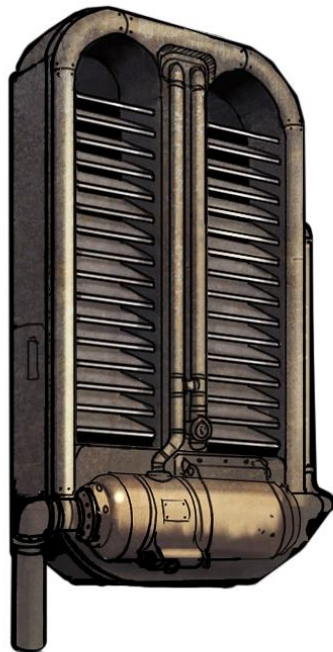








CESIUM CACTUS





Becoming the Borderlands Art Director

I decided we had to do something!

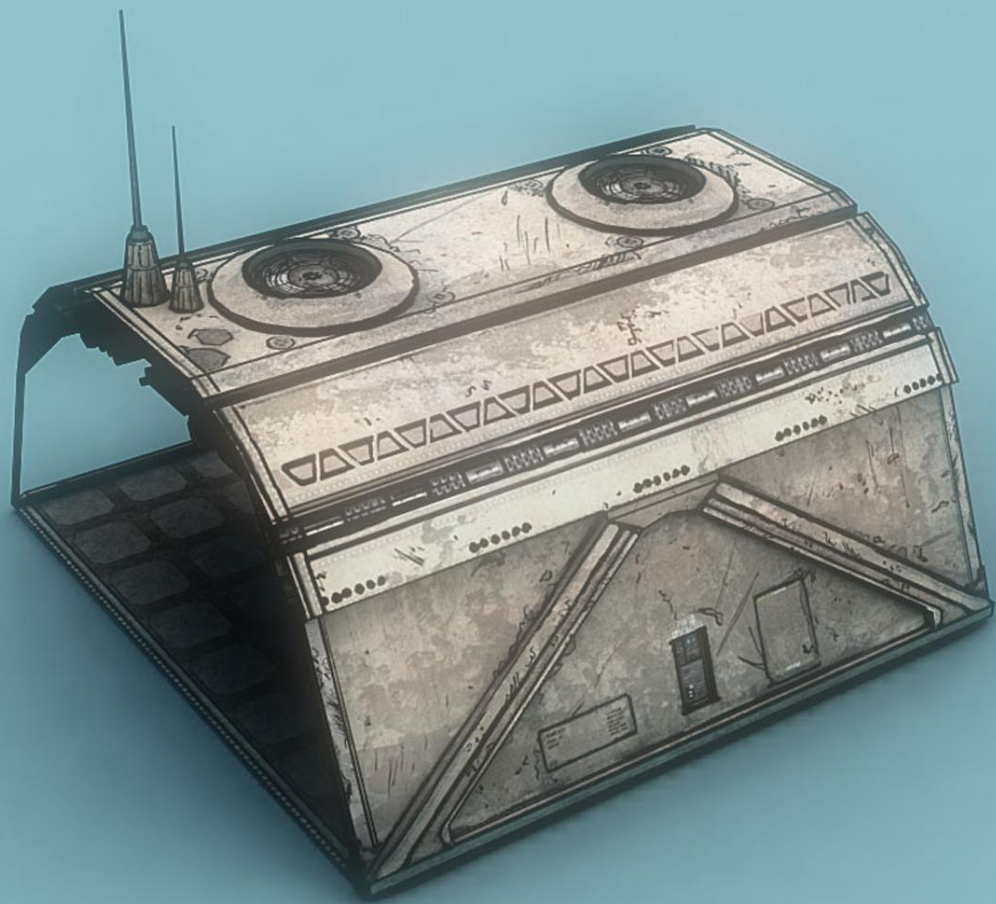
But What?

I have both the responsibility and the authority.

Be careful what you wish for.

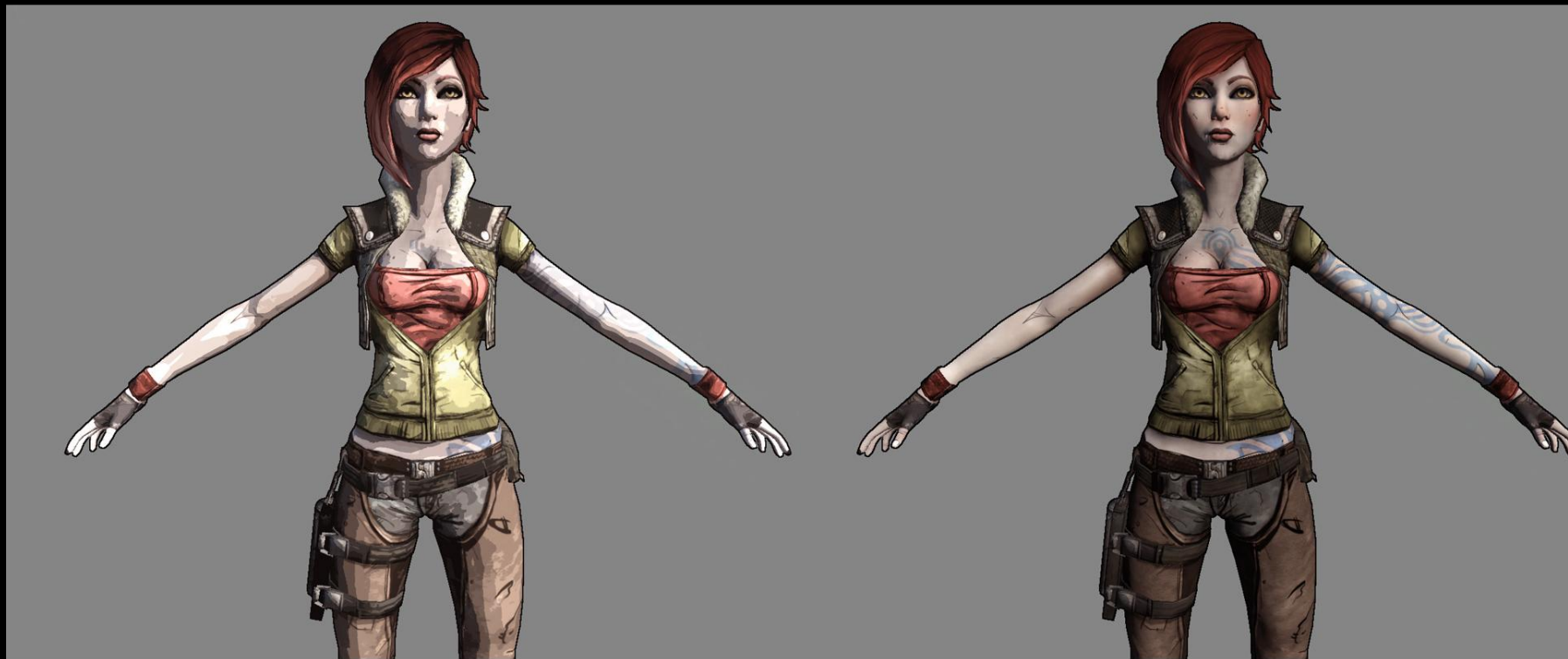
There is a level of credibility that I would have to put on the line; it is a huge gamble!

That is why we hid in a closet and did a secret prototype.







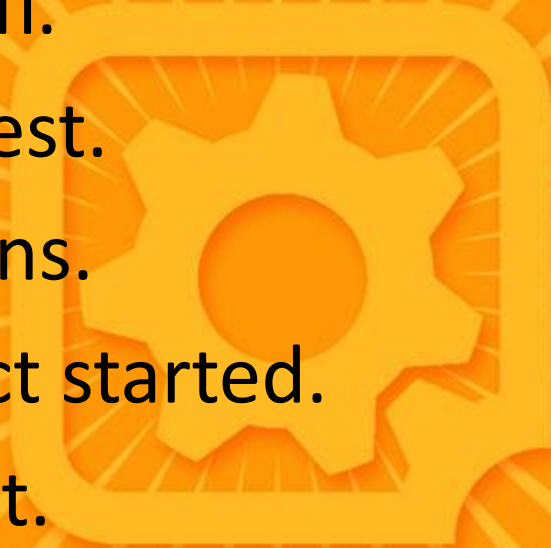


FAKE CEL SHADING

BORDERLANDS SHADING
(Concept Art Style)

SECRET PROJECT

- Getting Buy Off.
- Creating Interest.
- Fueling Passions.
- Snowball effect started.
- Getting Caught.
- Taking it to 2k!









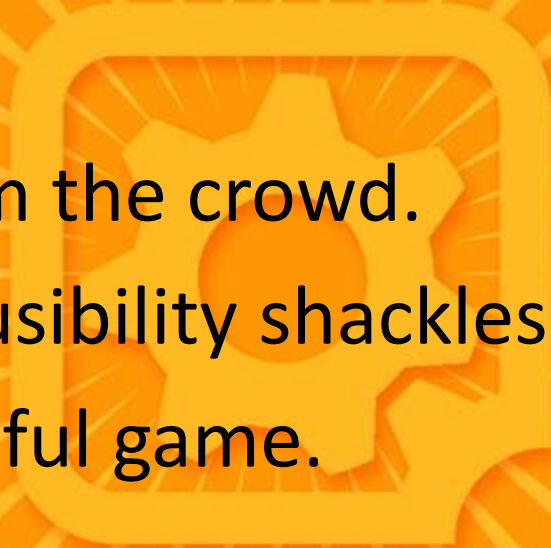


Psyched Publisher

- Randy went to 2K and pitched them on the new Art Direction.
- They surprised us and actually LOVED it as much as we did.
- Oh crap! Now we have to make it!

Reasons for Art Style Change

- Embrace fun!
- Stand out from the crowd.
- Break our plausibility shackles
- Make a beautiful game.









MASSIVE BLACK

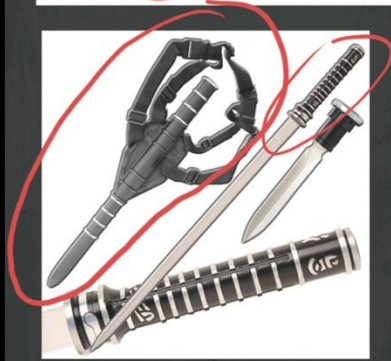
Client: 2K Games
Project: Project Willow
Description: Mordecai
Date: 05-29-07















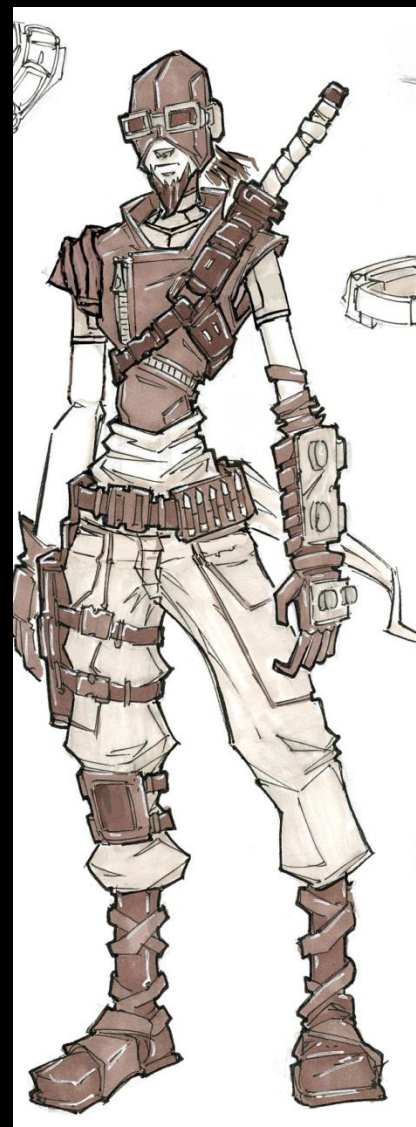
MORDECAI











Techniques



THE "INK" BRUSH



THE "PAINT" BRUSH



DIRT BRUSH



SPECKLED DIRT BRUSH

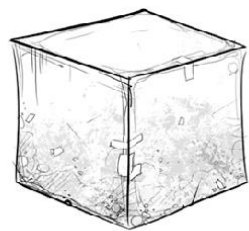


GRUNGE BRUSH



BLENDER TOOL

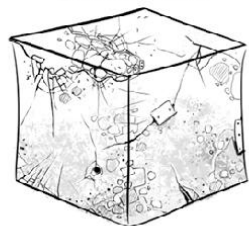




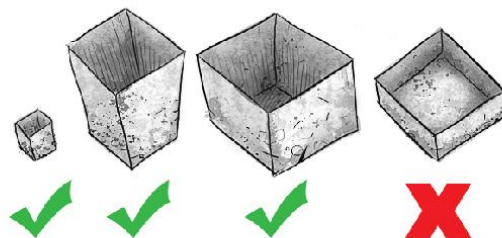
GENERIC BOX



METAL BOX



RAK/CONCRETE BOX



Sample Direction and Creation





ROB HERE IS THE BASIC STYLE WE ARE GOING FOR -- BUT WE ARE GOING TO BREAK IT DOWN INTO TWO ITEMS, MAPPED TOGETHER AND SHARING A TEXTURE. WE DON'T NEED ANY NORMAL MAPPING OR SPECULAR, BUT IT WILL REQUIRE AN EMISSIVE MAP.

THAT SAID, WE NEED:

1.) THE MAIN SIGN, WITH SOME ALTERATIONS -- IT SHOULD READ "ARENA" DOWN THE CENTER, WITH LIGHTS EITHER ON THE RIGHT OR LEFT. THE LETTERING SHOULD BE ACCENTED BY NEON -- SOME OF IT BROKEN, ETC. THE TOP SHOULD BE SHAPED TO ACCOMODATE THE CIRCULAR BIT MENTIONED BELOW..

2. A TOP PIECE WHICH WILL FEATURE A ROTATING ICON REPRESENTING THE ARENA -- IT WILL ROTATE **INSIDE A CIRCULAR SHELL**, WITH PORTRUDING LIGHTS -- MUCH AS PICTURED BELOW. YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING THE ICON, HOWEVER.



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Photo courtesy Tony Craig



Color pass - Base



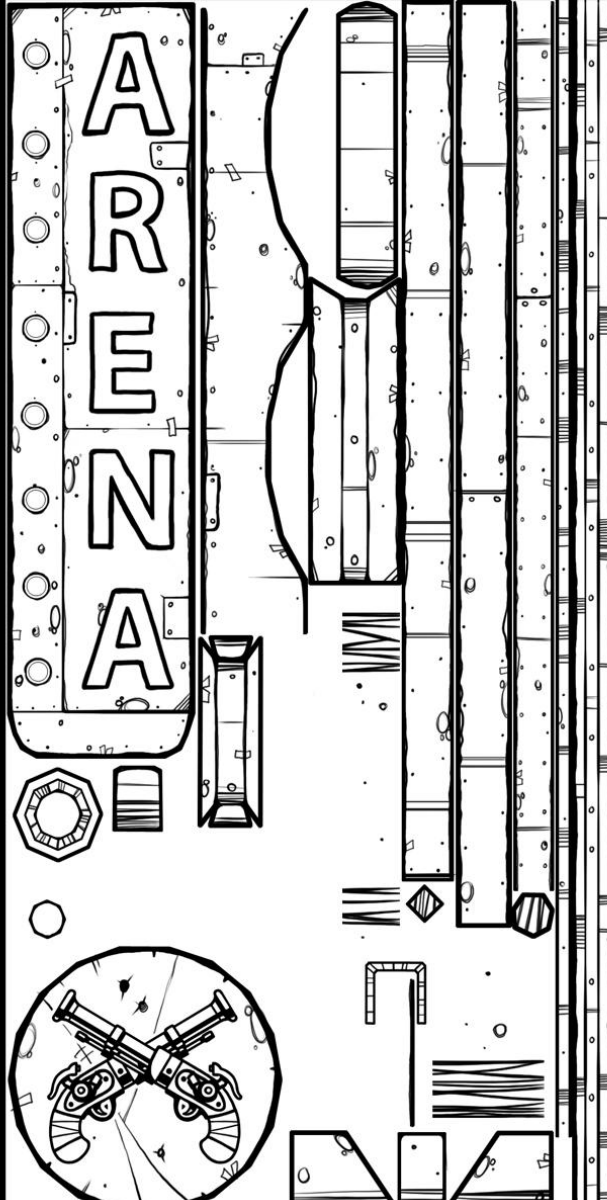
Color pass - Dirt



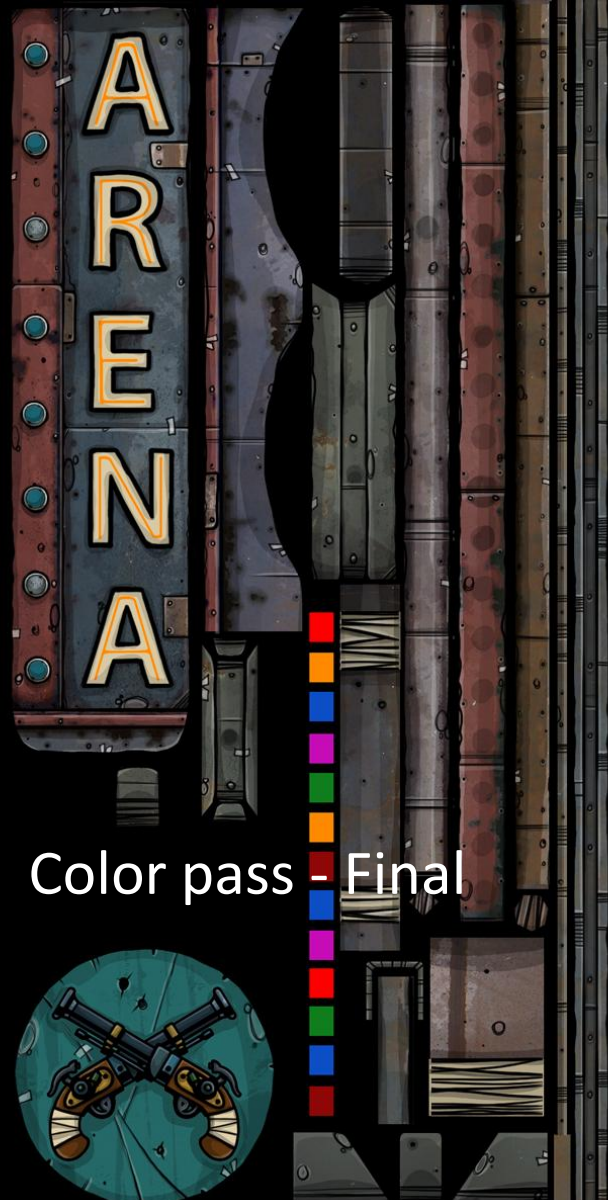
Color pass - Highlights

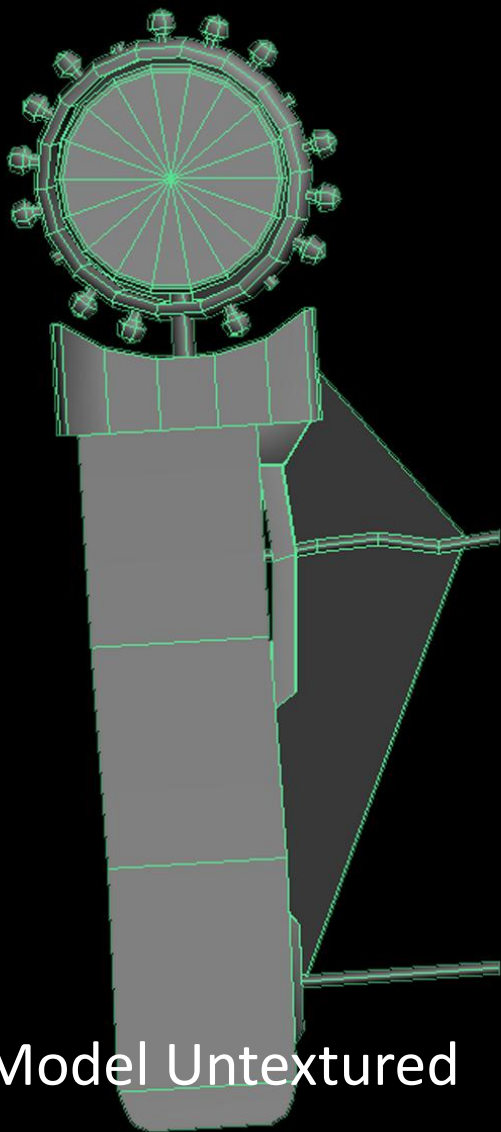


Inking

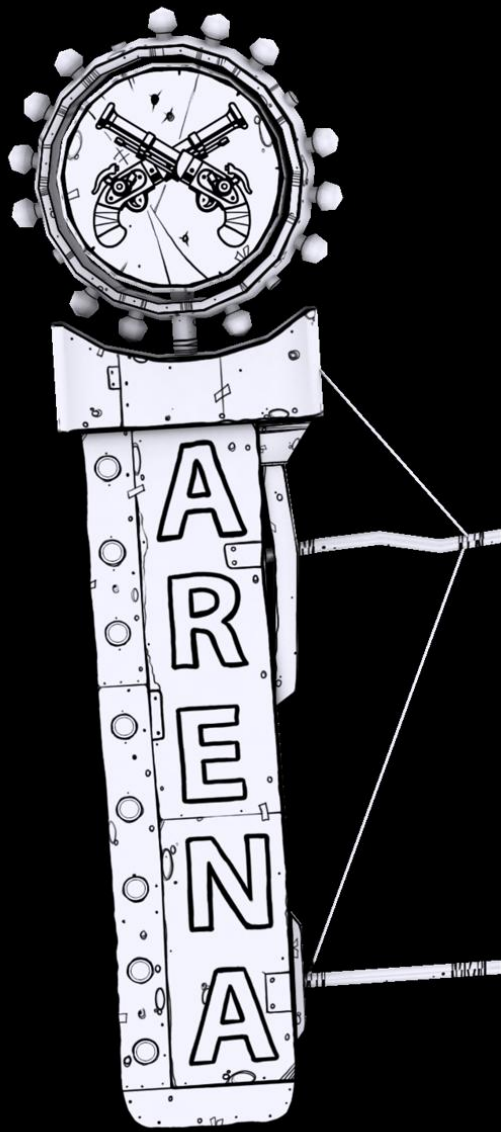


Color pass - Final





Model Untextured



Model Textured

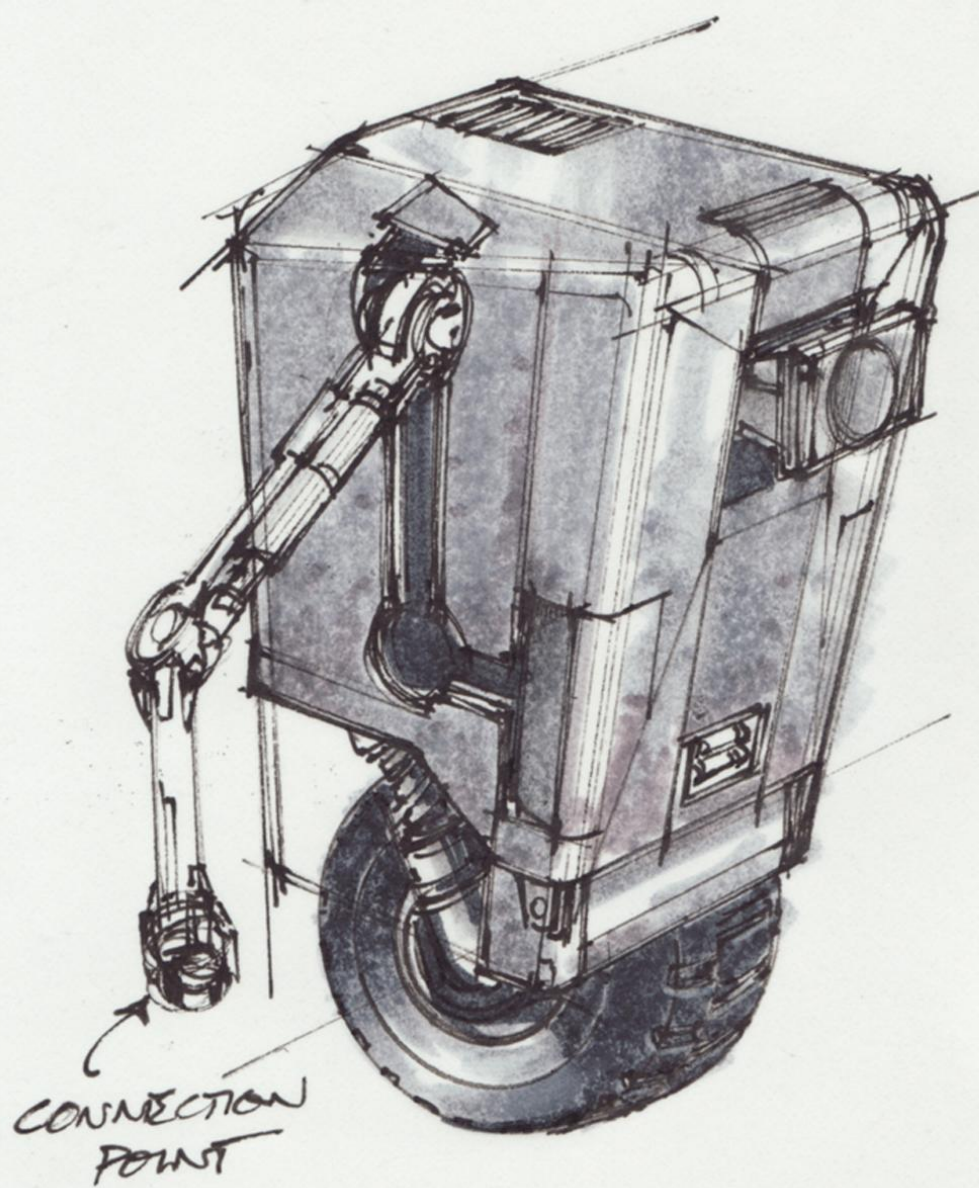
Another Example

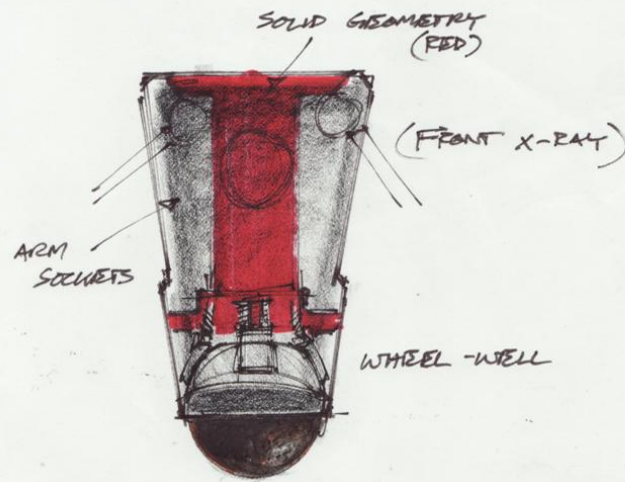
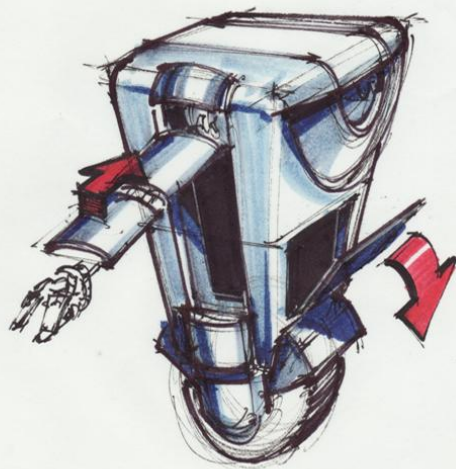
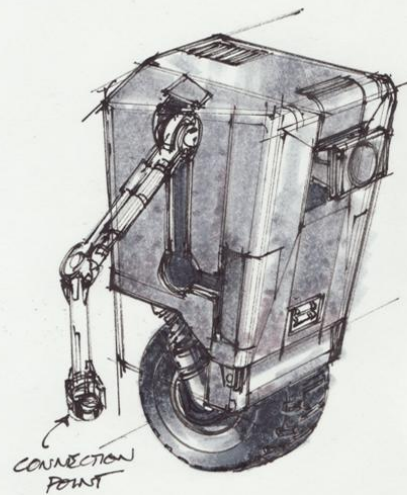
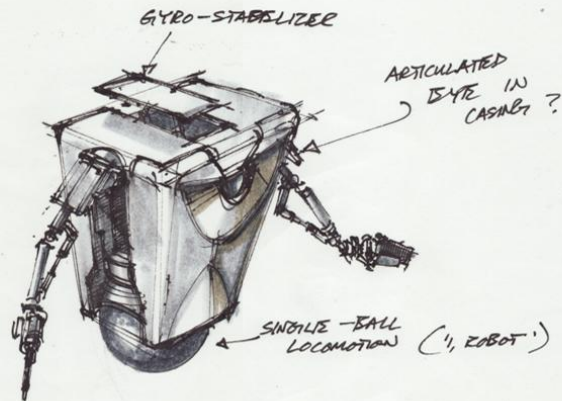
- CL4P-TP

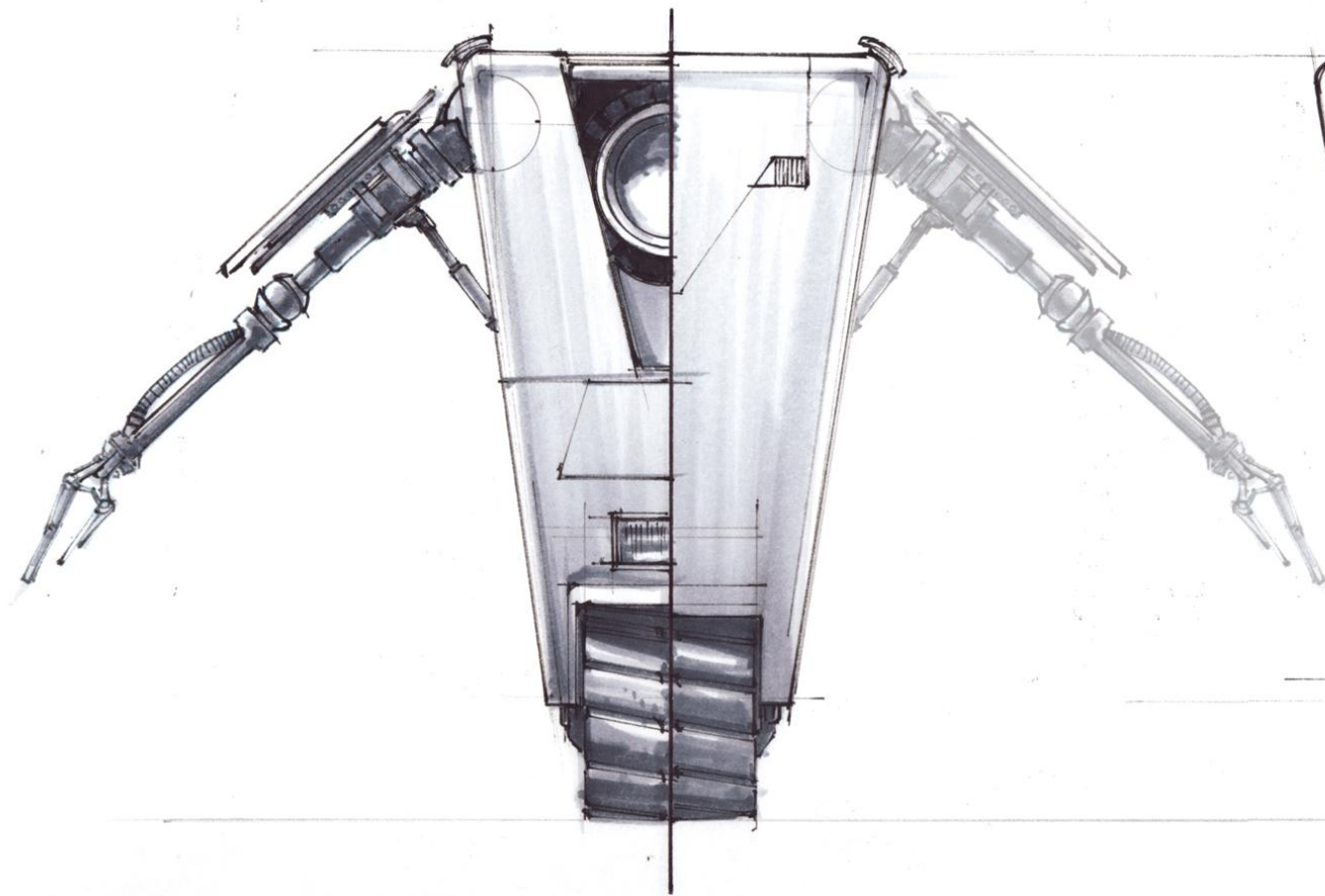




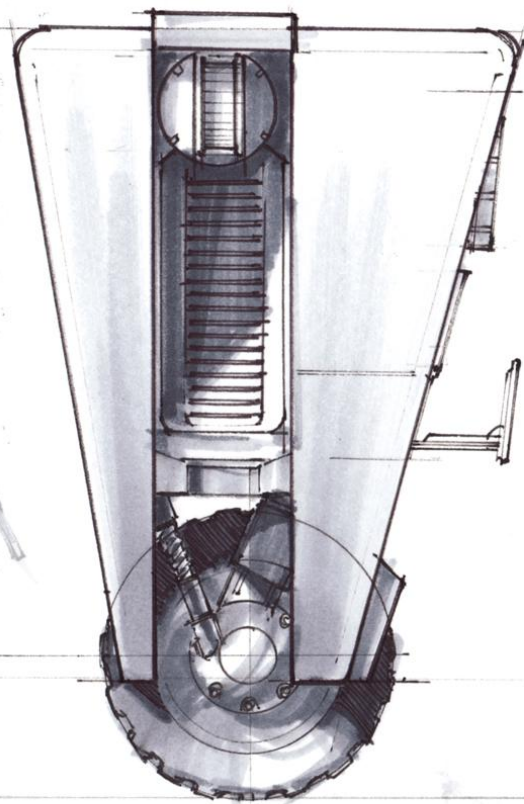
ZIPPT



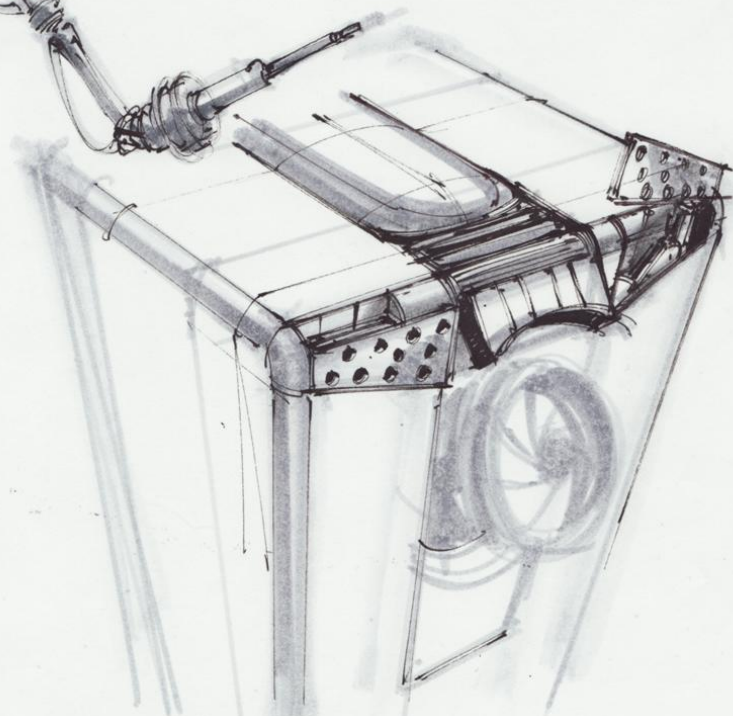
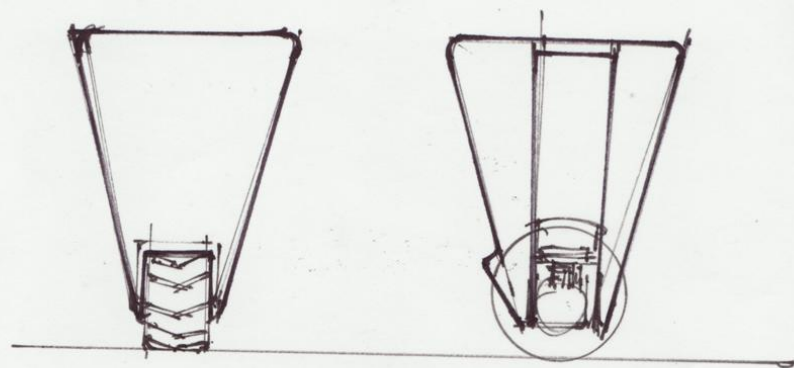
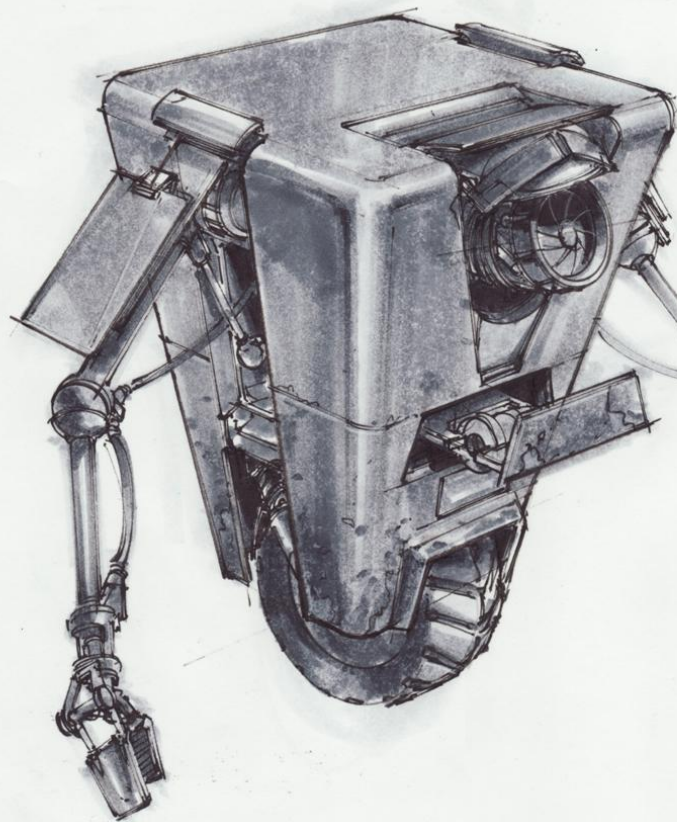




FRONT / REAR



PROFILE







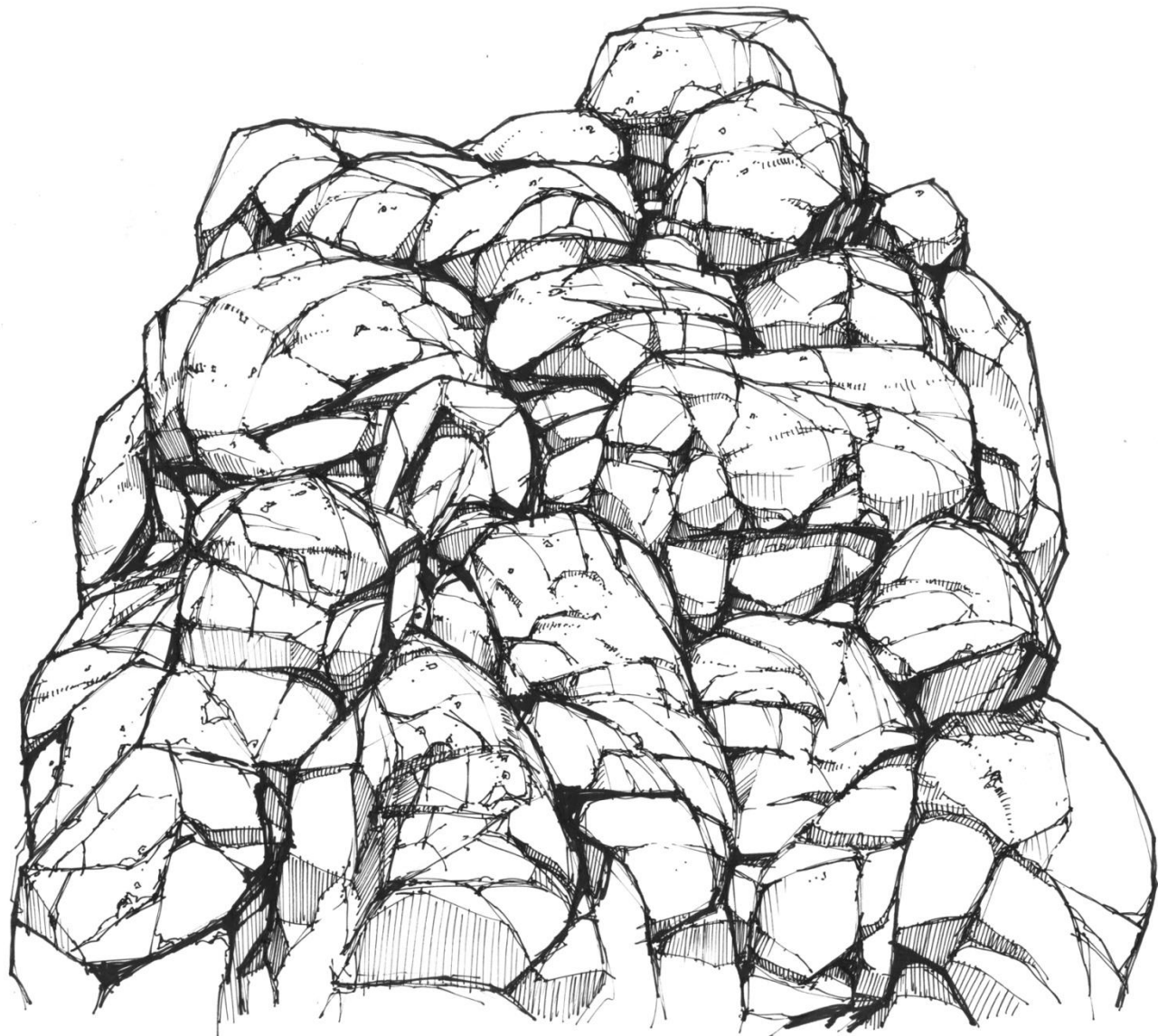


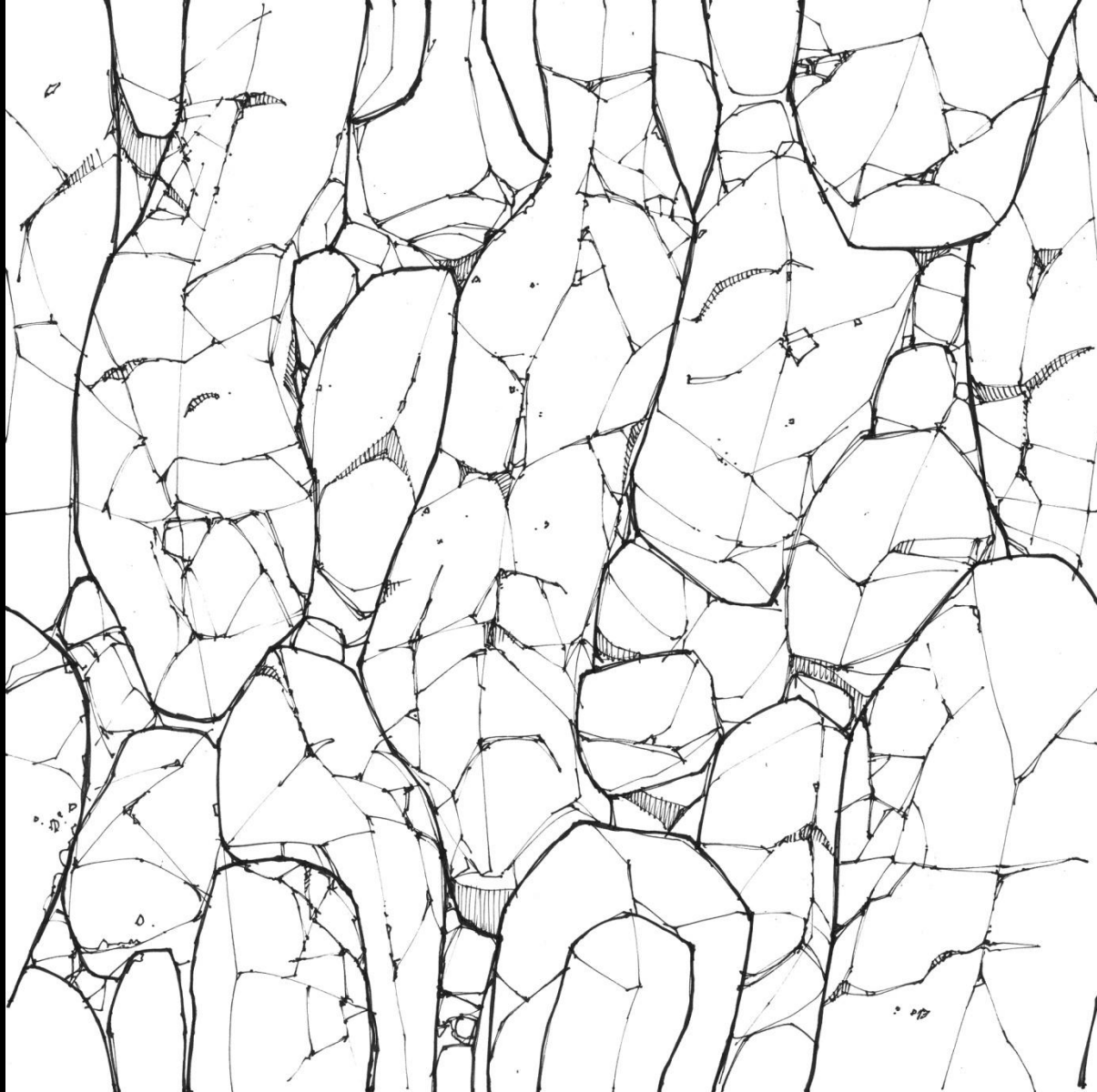




Content Examples











Brick

18



Mordecai

18



Lilith

18

Brick

Mordecai

Lilith

- Fuse A placed: ☐
- Fuse B placed: ☐
- Fuse C placed: ☒
- Pipeline Destroyed: ☐



141

61

NE
LV 18

6



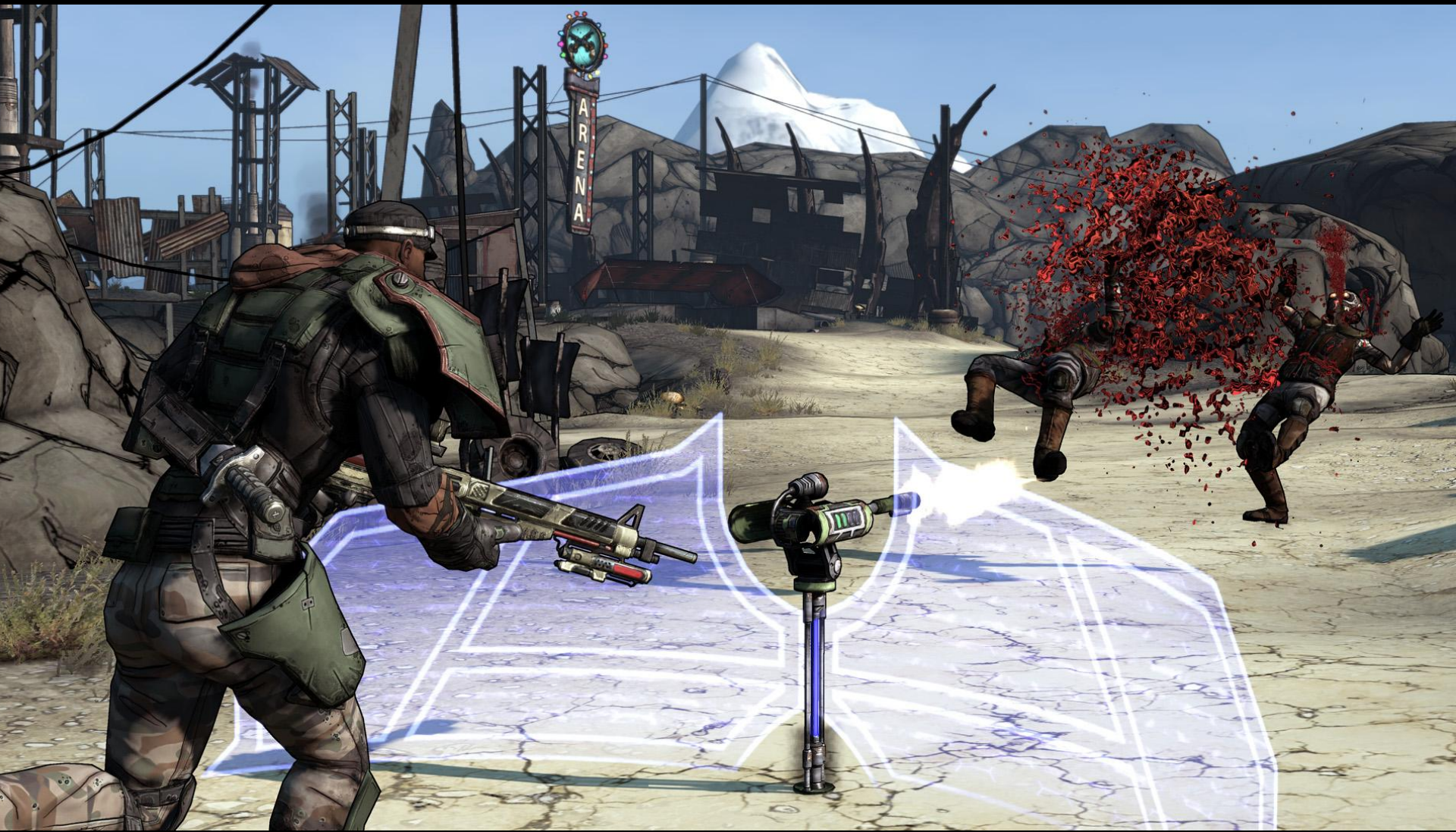
G

2 / 105

Effects Examples









Roland

16



Mordecai

16



Brick

16



16 Badass Fire Skag

Shock Crystals: 30 / 50



43

1



LV 16

NE



29 / 651








Key Tech Changes

- Edge detection for silhouettes.
- Split shadowmaps/lightmap hybrid for static directional lighting.
- Godrays / Flare-out.
- AO pass integration from Epic.
- Improvements on UE3 Light Functions.
- Skylight integration/improvements.



Edge detection for silhouettes.



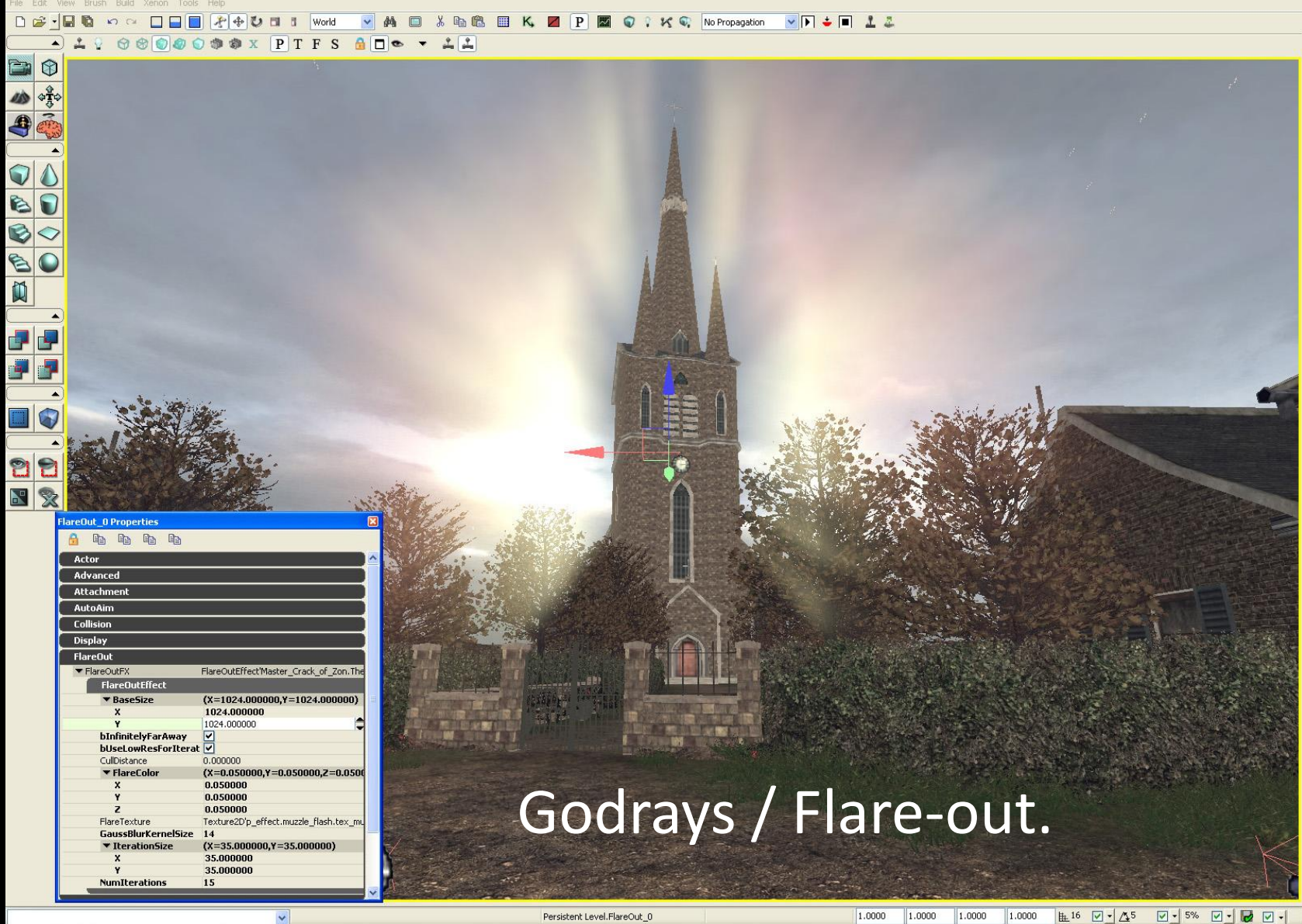
Split shadowmaps/lightmap hybrid for static directional lighting.



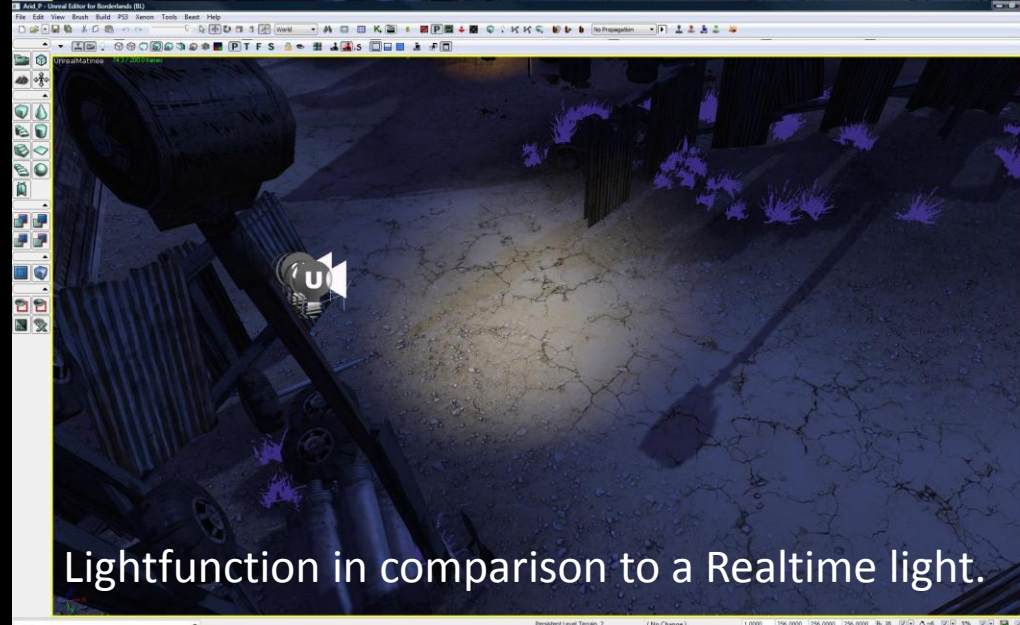
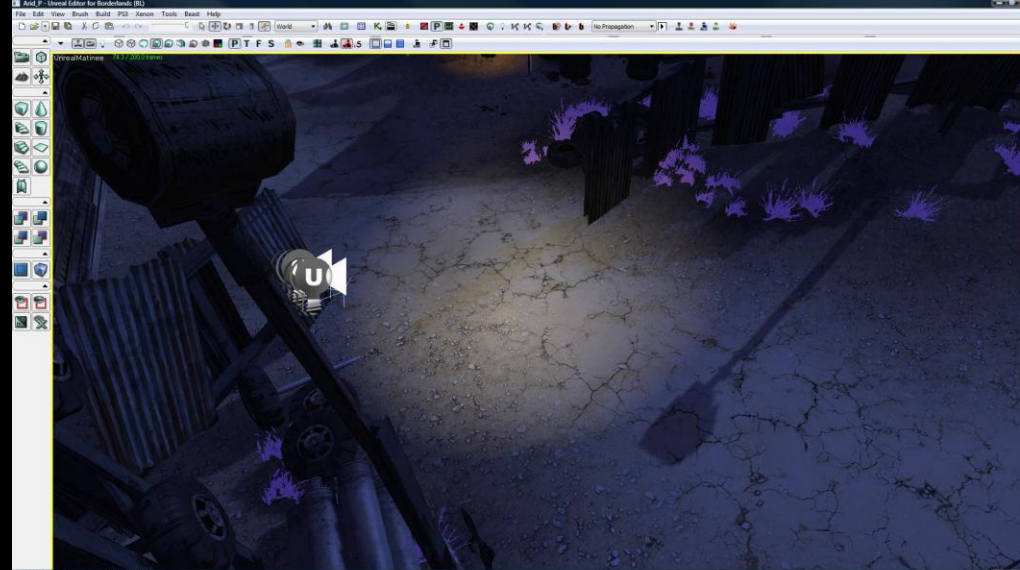
Split shadowmaps/lightmap hybrid for static directional lighting.



Split shadowmaps/lightmap hybrid for static directional lighting.



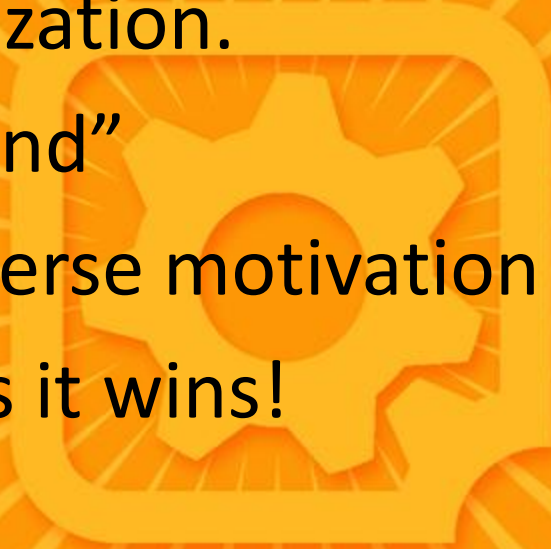
Godrays / Flare-out.



Lightfunction in comparison to a Realtime light.

How did we pull it off?

- Team reorganization.
- “Merry go round”
- Accidental reverse motivation!
- He who makes it wins!



Final Game Examples







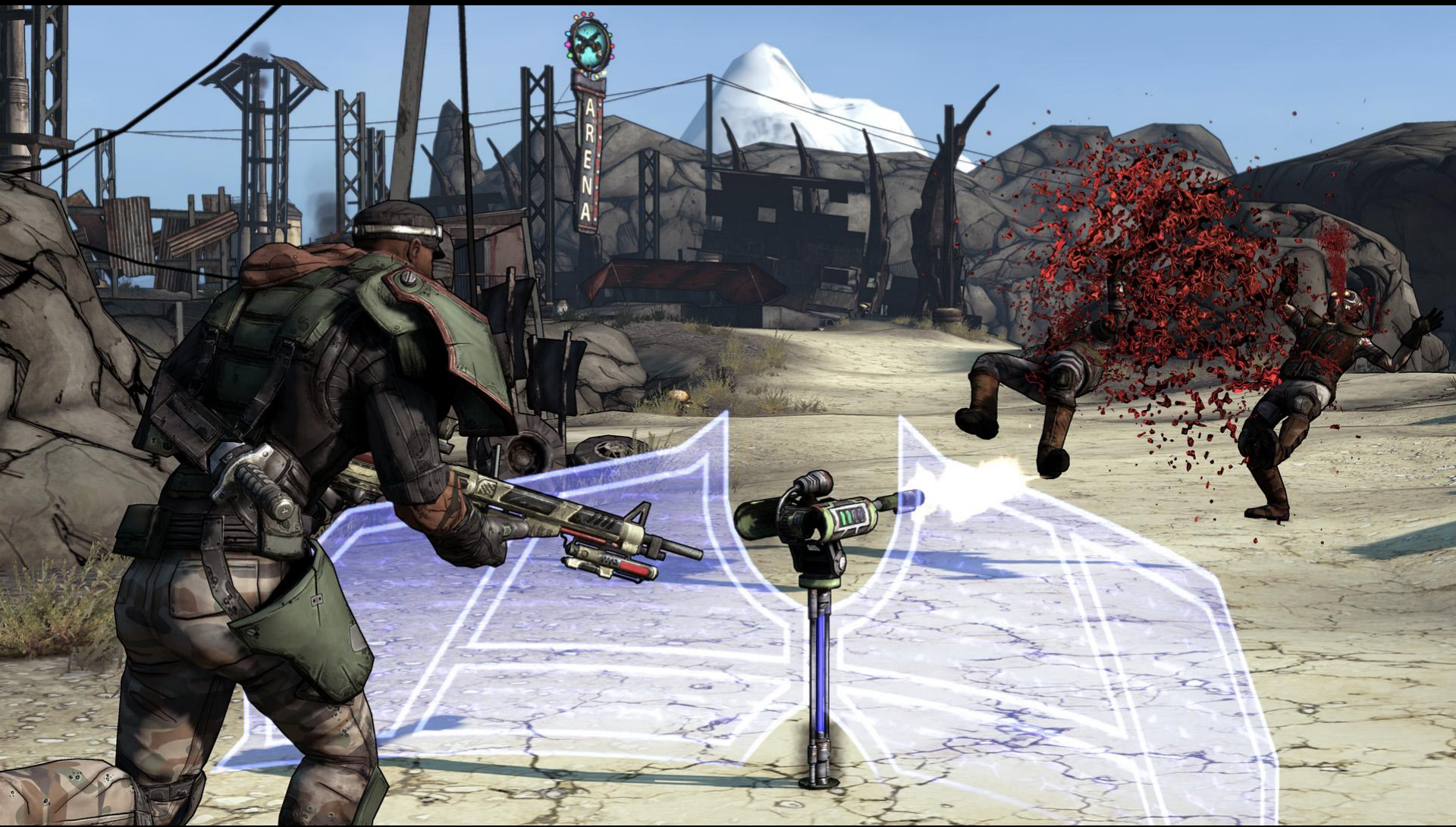














Success!

- At the end of the day, it was probably the most fun any artist has had working at GBX!



What did we learn?

- Passion and empowerment are everything!



Inspiration Drives Creativity and Direction

Main game

DLC

- Zombies
- Moxxi
- Mechs 'n bots
- ?



Good Luck to you all!

- Go do smart things.



CREATIVITY



HAPPINESS

MONEY

