

CREATIVE ART STYLE PRACTICE



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Introduction



In this art book, I will be discussing my recent project within the Creative Art Style Practice module.

The overall project looks at how I create a stylised game ready character, what challenges I faced and the feedback that I acted upon.

The goals for this project are to have a game ready character, that has some form of interaction within the final renders.

I have only created a couple of stylised characters before, and I'm excited to improve upon my stylised skill set.

I think the most challenging part of this project is the texturing, as I have chosen the game Wayfinder as my style guide.

Read on to find out the successes and failures of the project!

Project Inspiration



After choosing the brief 'Celestial Fantasy' for this project, I feel the concept fits quite well. I am unsure of the context I want this character to fit into - NPC or player.

Mohrbacher has actually started creating 3D prints of his art, so I was able to have a 3D reference for the project, as you can see on the next page.

It was useful to see the concept come to life, however it wasn't the same art style as I had chosen so I couldn't rely on it too heavily.

The inspiration for this project came from an artist I found online called Peter Mohrbacher on his website called 'Angelarium' (<https://www.angelarium.net/>)

These two pieces have come from his 'The Seraphim' collection. They are the same concept, in two different positions. One of the challenges I faced during the project was the fact that these concepts of the character do not match exactly. This meant that at times I needed to make a choice about which concept I wanted to follow.



References

The issue with using the 3D print as a reference is that it also has its differences from the previous two concepts. The halo at the back of the character is completely different to within the concepts, however I prefer the design in the 2D images, so I made the decision to use that as my reference.

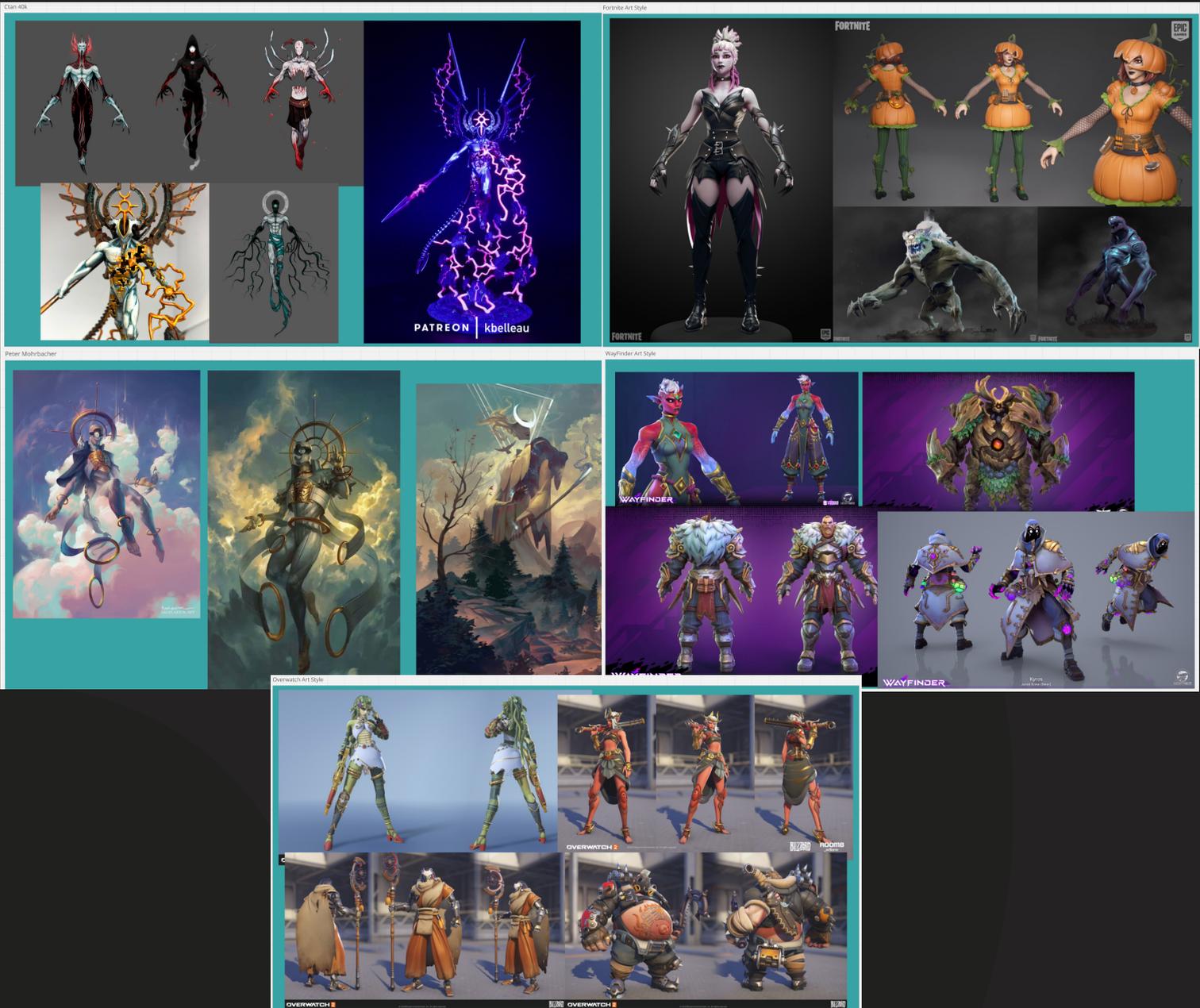
The rest of the 3D print is a good reference point. If I would have referenced this more often, I think the overall end model would've had a stronger composition. More specifically, the cape cloth, and the waist of the character are more readable in the 3D reference.



Mood Board

The mood boards for this project were created on Miro. I looked into different art styles I could follow, the one I chose was Wayfinder.

I chose this as my style guide because I liked the texturing that was used for their characters. It looks like a handpainted style, with some roughness and metal values in the textures too. Especially on the skin and clothes, there is a texture overlay.



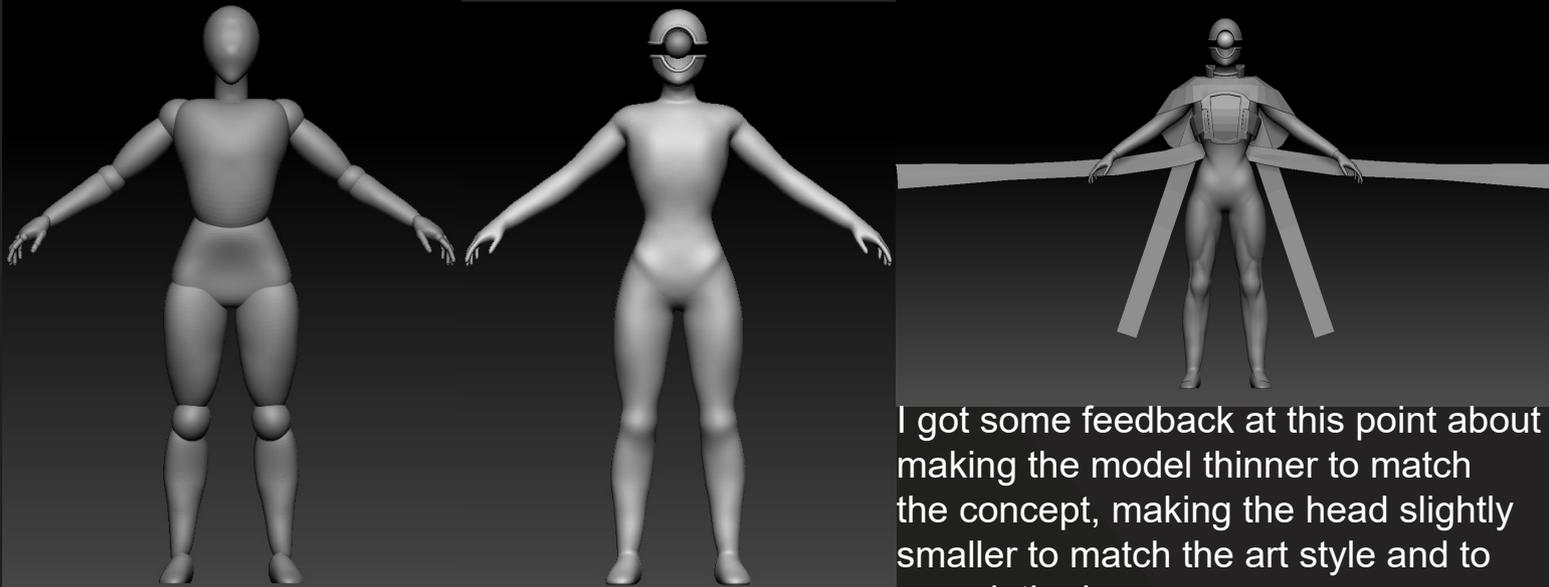
Art Style Breakdown



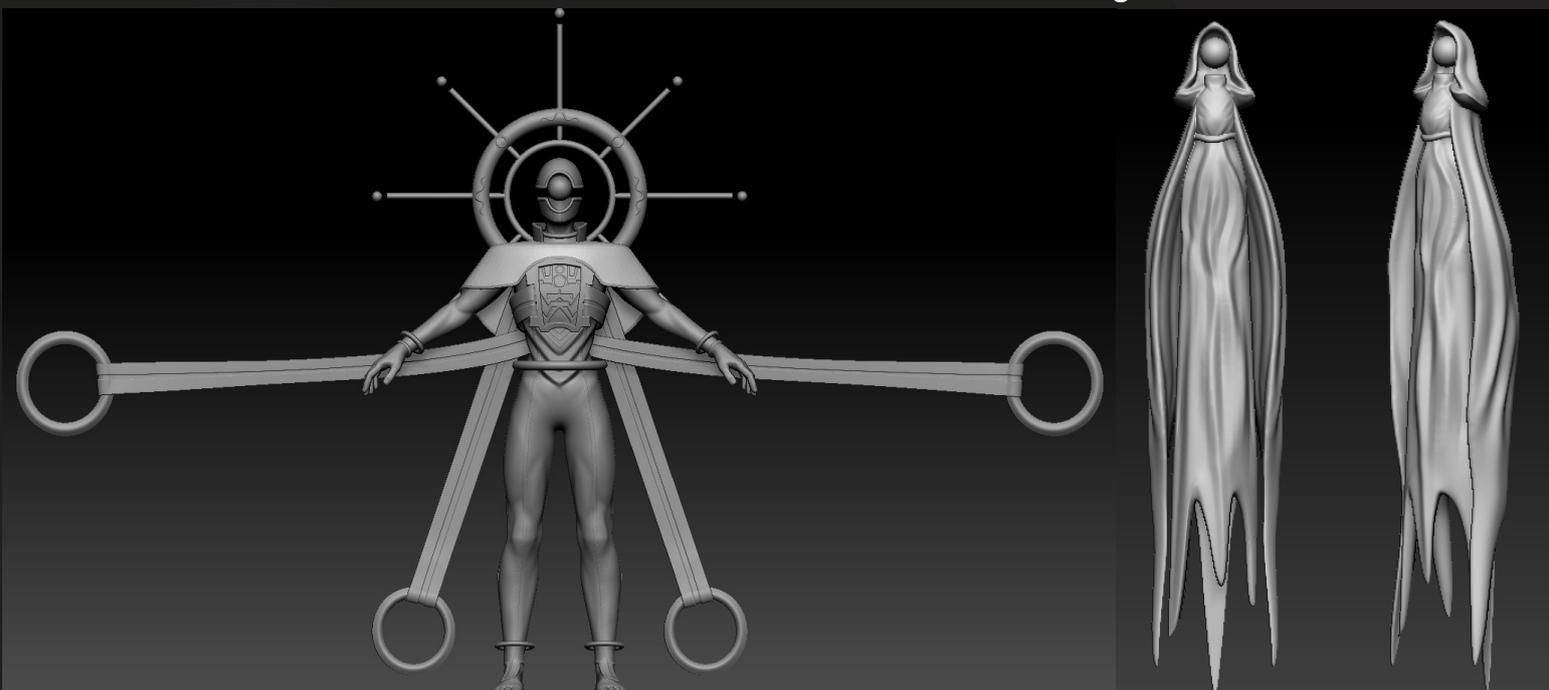
The Highpoly

The highpoly process took around 4 weeks in total. After using a week to research my art style and my concepts, I started to model in ZBrush. I was keeping the model at low subdivisions to keep it looking crisp, slowly adding them when I needed to add more detail like muscle groups and the detailing on the chest plate.

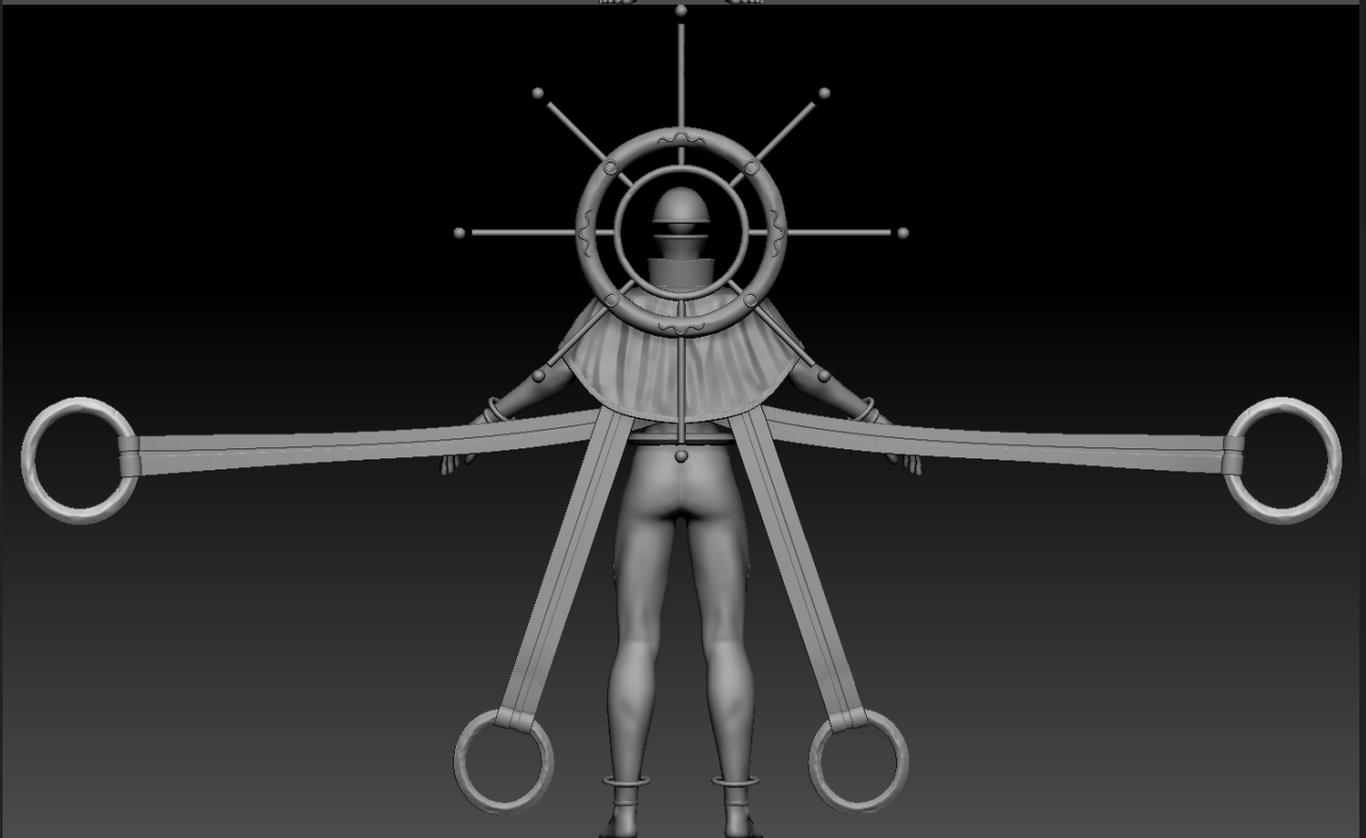
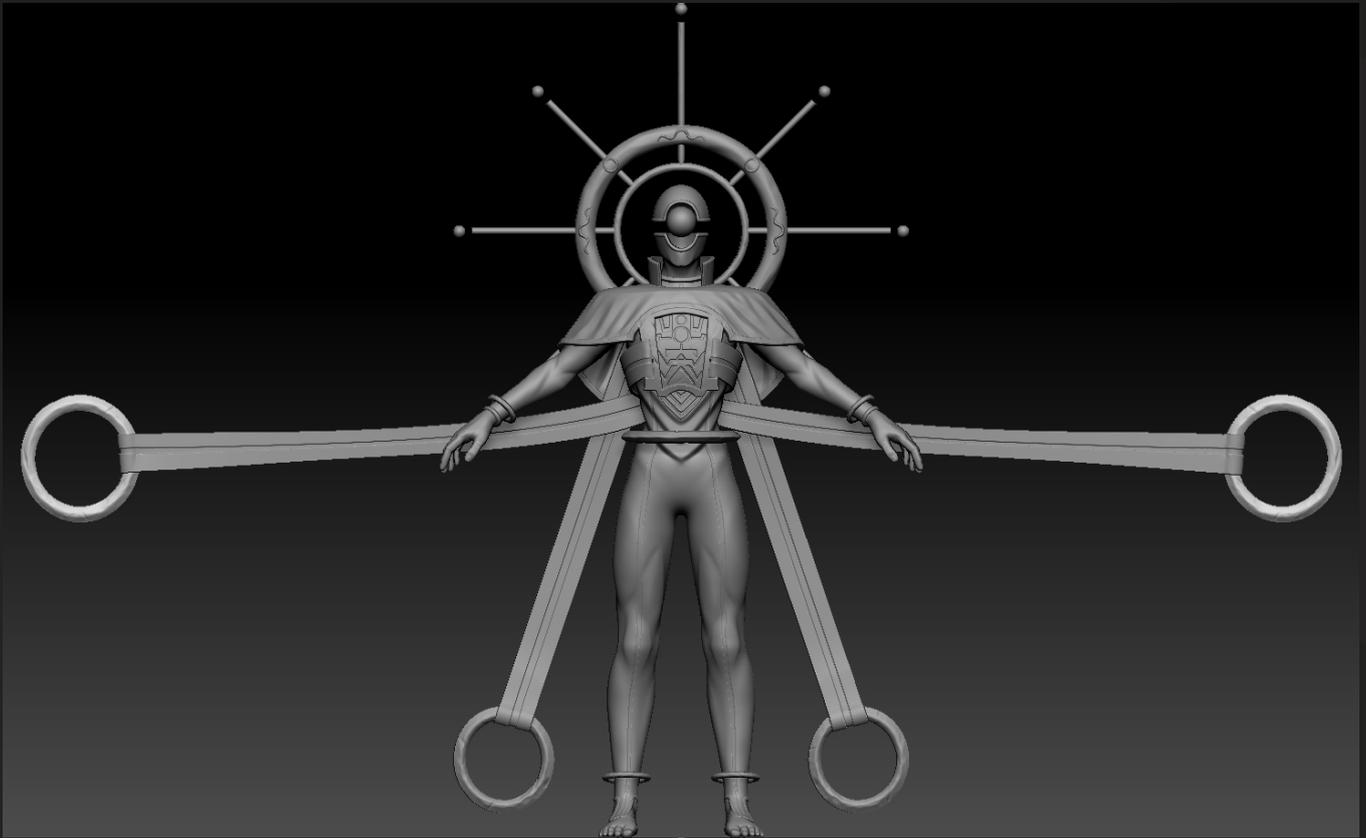
Orb Brushes pack (<https://orb.gumroad.com/l/nOkHw>) was used to help keep the stylised look to the model, along with ClayPolish and other brushes such as ZModeler, ClayBuildup and the Move tool. Booleans were also used throughout the model for the body and chestplate.



I got some feedback at this point about making the model thinner to match the concept, making the head slightly smaller to match the art style and to rework the legs.



The Highpoly



The Lowpoly

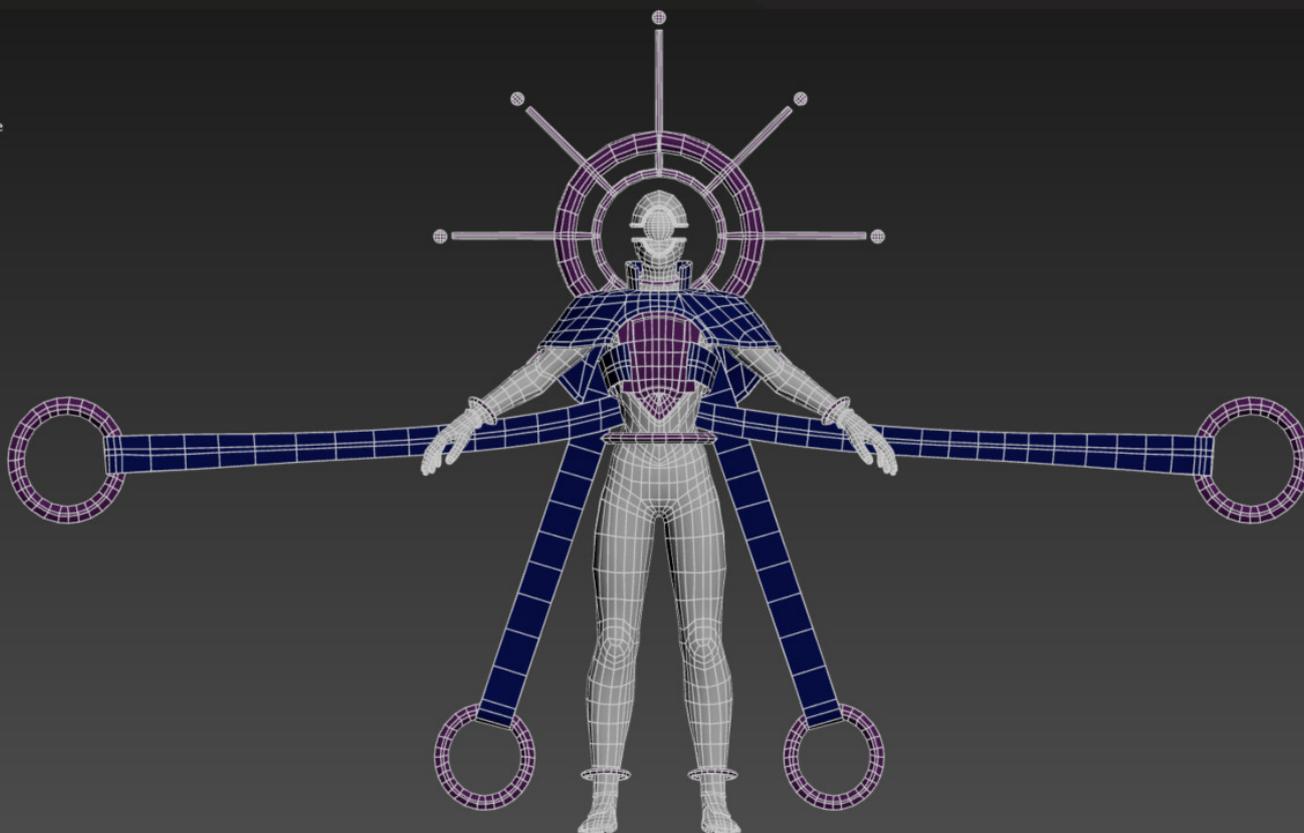
For the lowpoly, I used Maya to manually retopologise and then moved it into 3dsMax to symmetry the model and to get it ready for the unwrap.

Whilst completing the lowpoly I was thinking about the animation loops and trying to optimise the model as much as I could without losing the silhouette. Looking back on the model, there could have been more topology to help with deformation when animating. The cape also could have been a double sided texture instead of a physical asset.

The cloth going outwards also didn't need to have that loop in the middle of the topology, overall the topology is clean. It may need some revising in the future for better deformation.

I have given the model three material ID's to allow the model to have better texel density. The model is split up into: Body, Cloth and Accessories.

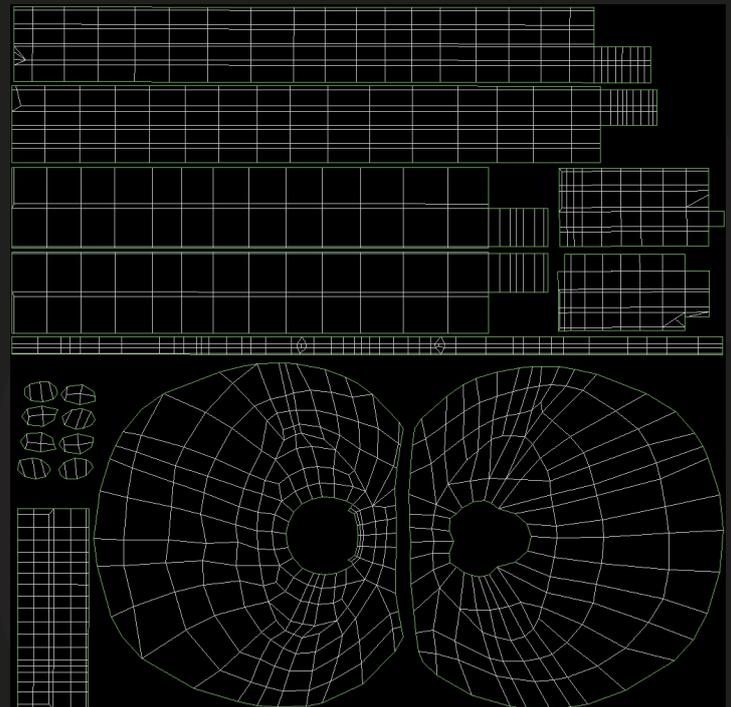
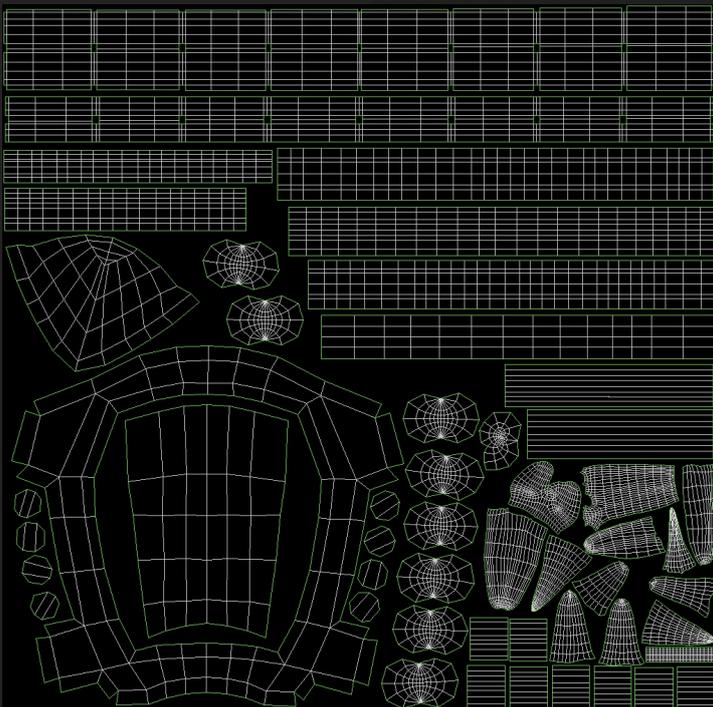
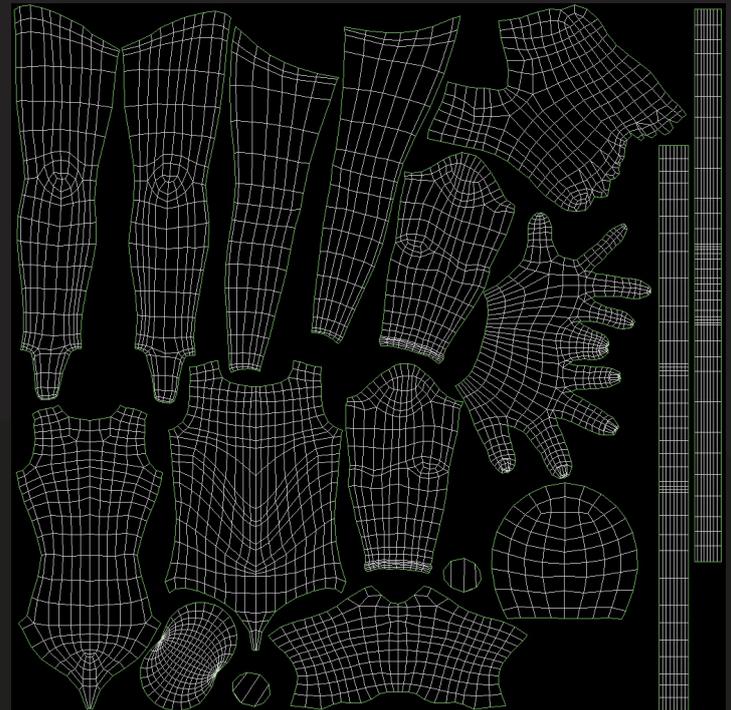
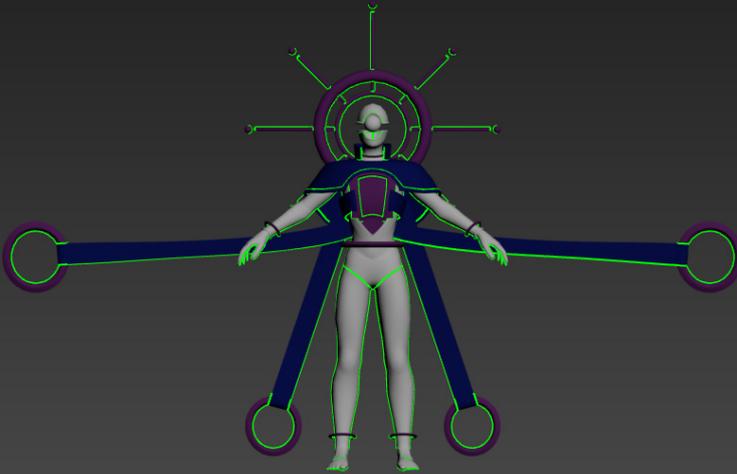
Total
Polys: 8,988
Tris: 17,718
Verts: 8,995
FPS: Inactive



The Unwrap

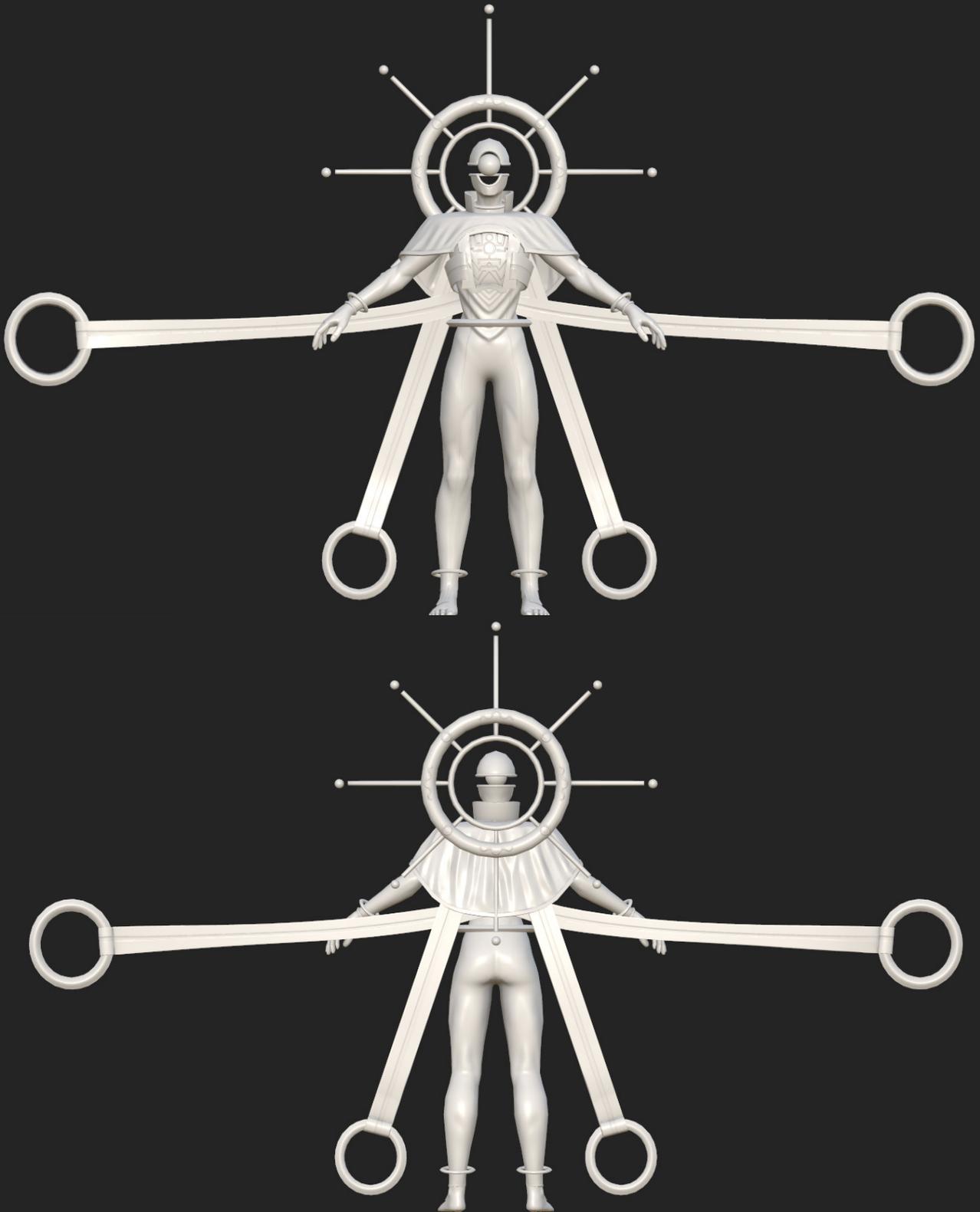
The unwrapping was done in 3dsMax. Using the planar mapping tool, the explode tool to create seams and then the peel to flatten the UVs.

The UV islands were hand packed into the 1-1 space, they could have been placed straighter, and more consideration could have gone into where the UV's were being placed.



The Bake

Substance Painter was used for the baking process. I didn't encounter any problems with the bake as I was using bake by mesh name so nothing was overlapping when the bake was computing.



The Texturing

After baking, I moved onto starting the textures. I have done one model with hand painted textures before and I absolutely hated the way it turned out. So I decided to take a different approach this time, using mostly curvature generators, blur slope filters and then hand painting some detail into the model at the end. I also used light generators to add larger highlights and shadows.



As you can see above, the blur slope filter has been applied to try and imitate the effect that wayfinder has on the character textures. The filter also helps to break up the model a bit more, and creates more visual interest for the player.



The example on the left is the effect I wanted to recreate, I think the intensity/size of the cells within the blur slope was too small on my model to imitate the wayfinder style properly. This is something I can improve easily within the textures.

The Texturing

Colour variations are used within the Wayfinder textures to create a more interesting visual, mostly on things such as edge wear and shadows. Again, I added some of this into my own textures, trying to get the best result I could.

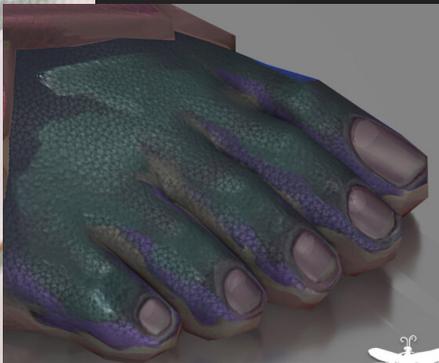


Above is an example of a cloak from Wayfinder.



The Texturing

The final part of the texturing was adding some hand painted touches, which can be seen most prominently on the chest plate. The more orange toned shadows and the highlights were hand painted in, and then a blur slope was added on top to match the rest of the model.



Wayfinder also adds a texture to the skin and clothing in their textures so I recreated this in Substance Painter using a fill layer on a mask. The roughness values were also affected using this technique.

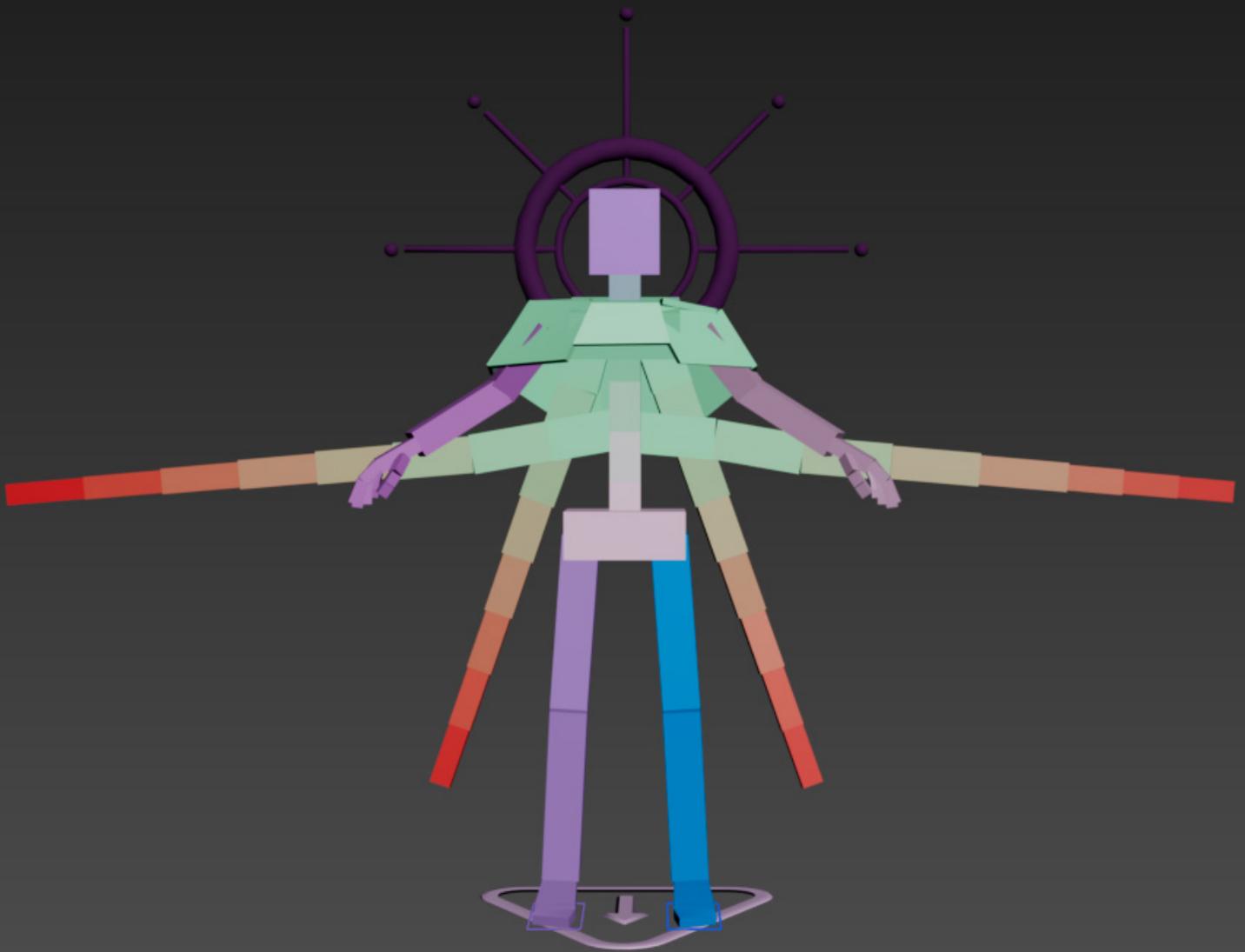
The top left images are references from wayfinder and the other images are of my model.



The Rig & Poses

The rig was done using a CATRig in 3dsMax, then posed and animated. I created two poses to match the original concept art by Mohrbacher. Then, I created idle animations of them breathing using the key feature in 3dsMax. The idle animations came out okay since I've never animated a model before, however they look slightly unnatural. Each piece of the character is moving at the same time, it needs some variation to look more natural.

Overall, the poses and rig look good, the poses that recreate the concept art look accurate and just need to be rendered.

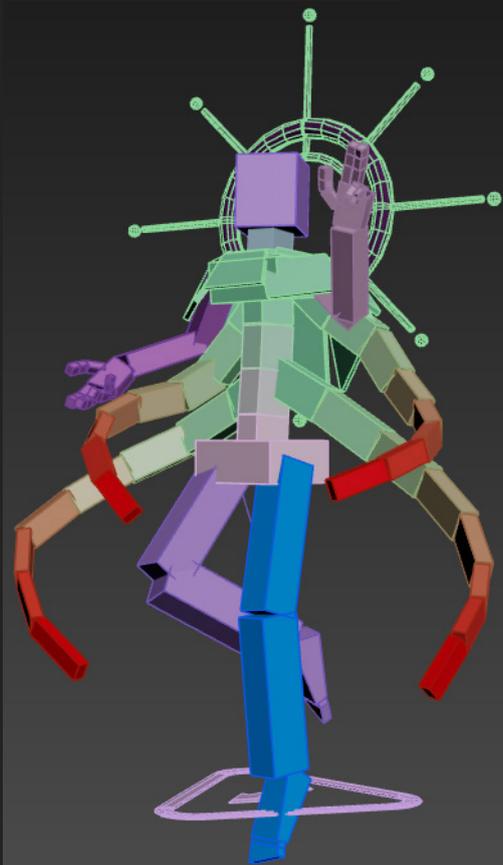
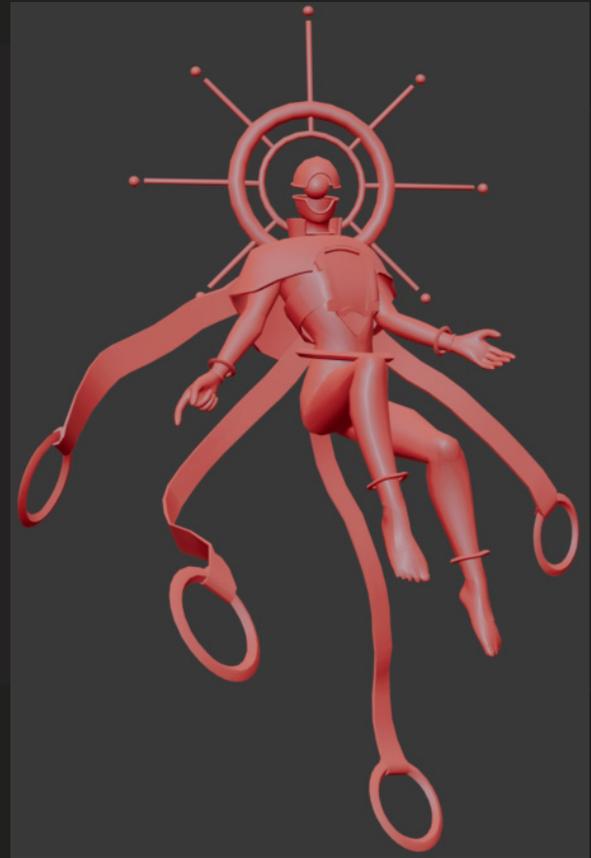
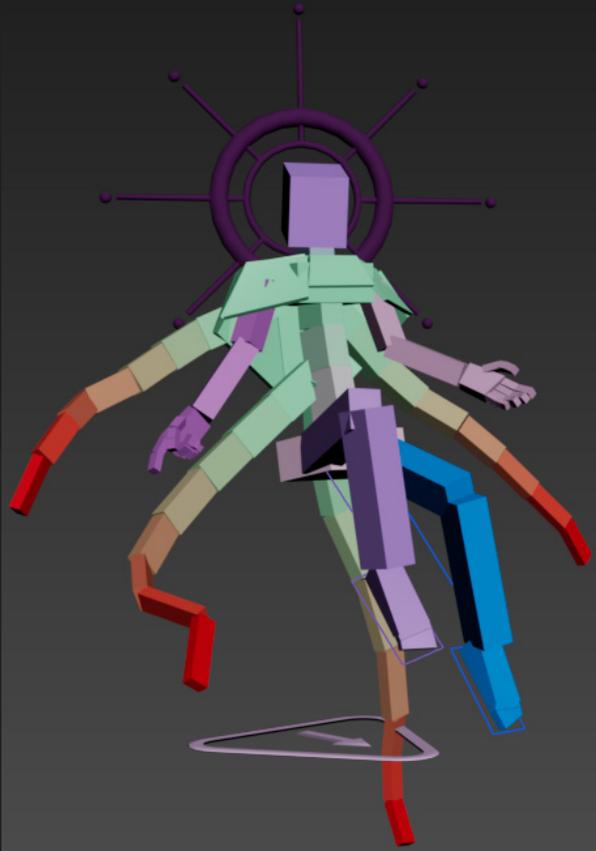


Animation Links:

<https://youtu.be/oxqxN3B-qRM>

<https://youtu.be/VvPfCPxkNvA>

The Rig & Poses



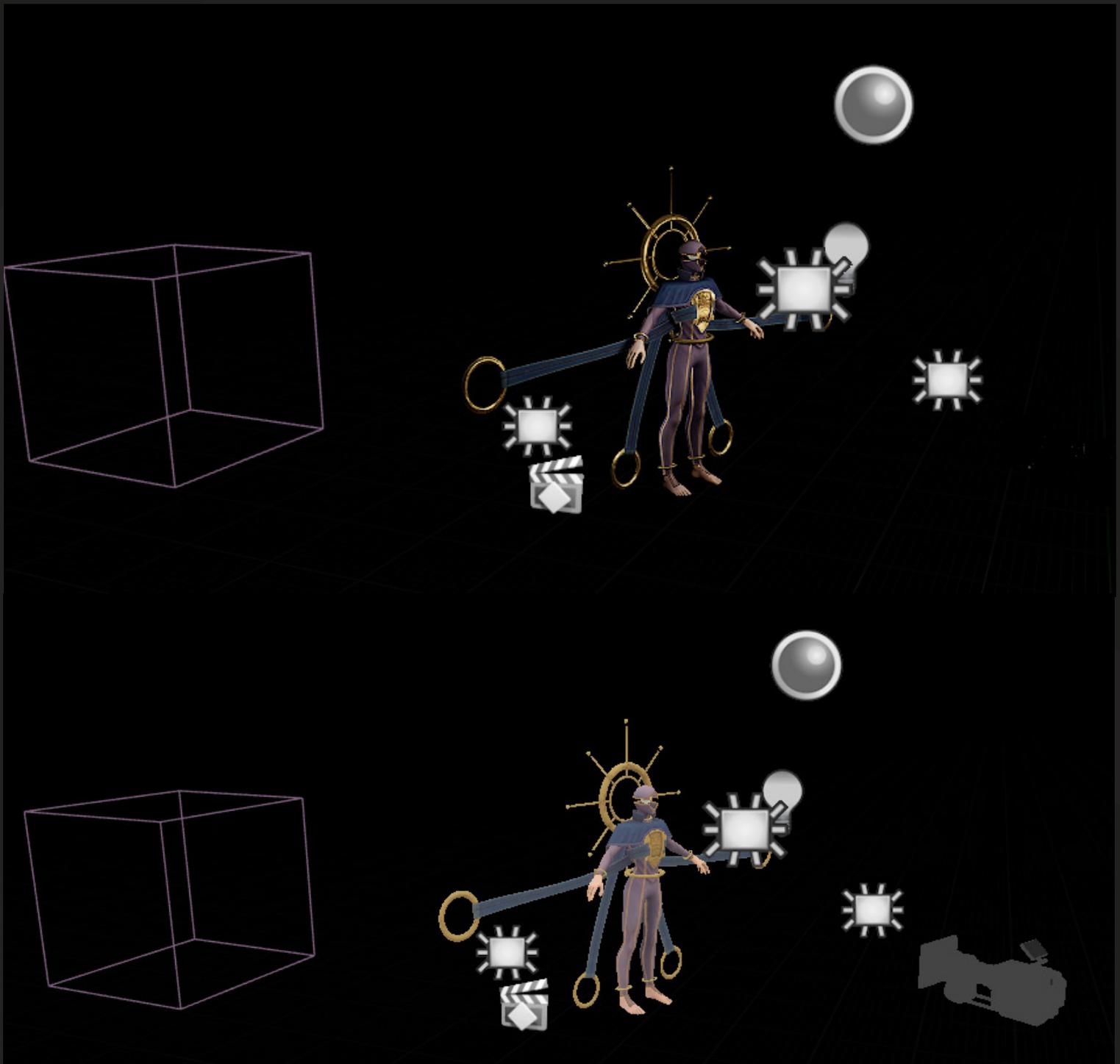
The Rig & Poses

There is one pose I have that is from Mixamo, at the time I wasn't sure about the animation side of my model so I got an idle animation from Mixamo. After creating my own poses and animations, I decided to take the idle animations a static pose, and pose the cloth myself so it looked like it was coming towards the screen. I feel this was very effective, it draws the viewers eyes towards the character and it looks more natural than my other poses.



The Unreal Setup

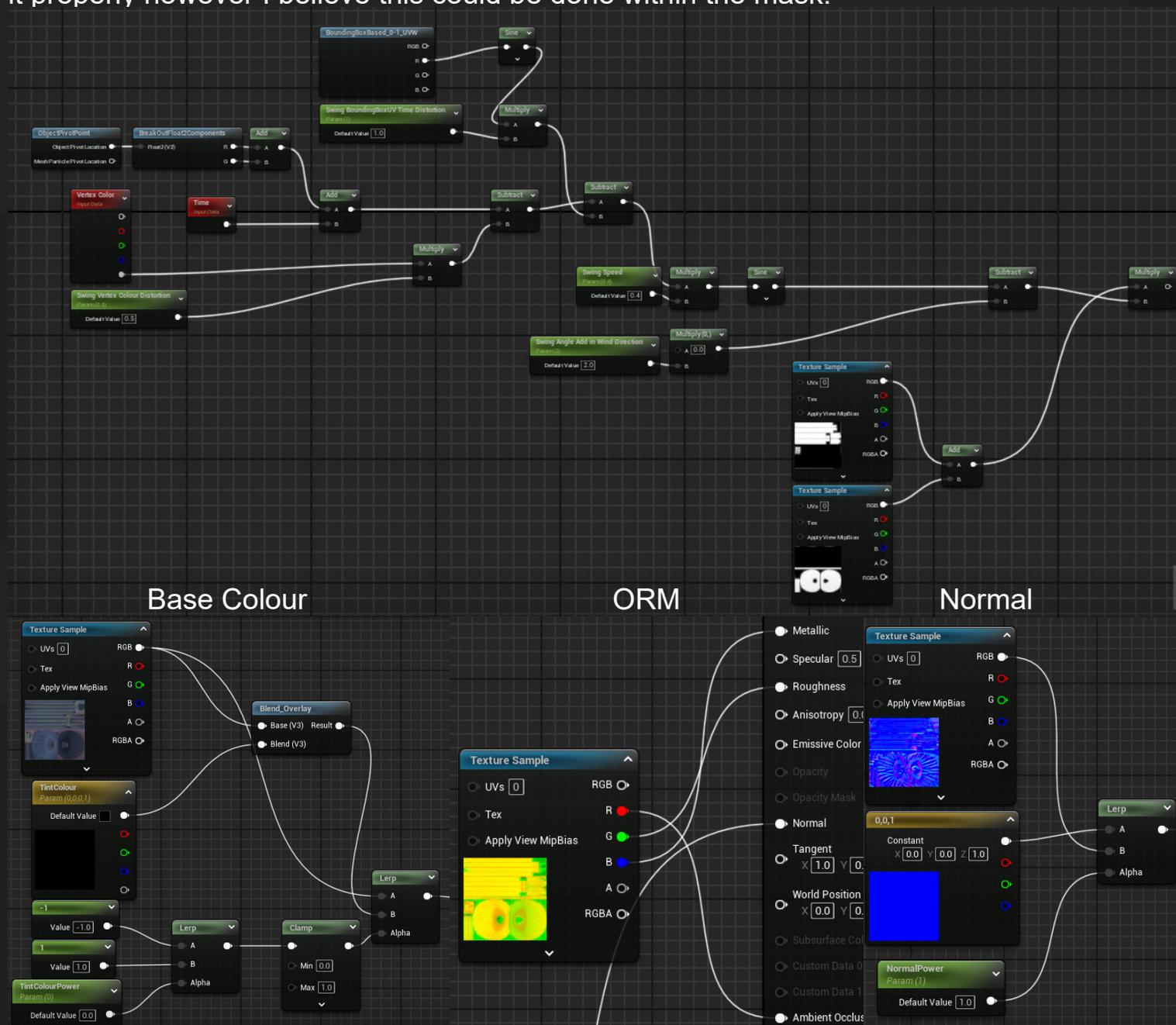
The first thing I did in Unreal was set up a 3 point light level for my static PNG renders. These renders will then be placed on presentation sheets in Photoshop later on. To create the 3 point lights, I added rect lights into the scene, each at different intensity levels, and a camera. To get the best renders I could, I then put a level sequence into the scene and added my camera so I could take the renders of my model.



The Material Setup

The material setup in Unreal was fairly basic except for the cloth parts of the model. I wanted the cloth to move as if it was swaying, almost as if it were alive. I found a video on YouTube by PrismaticDev (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEnLegZ2mM>) making bunting sway in the wind and thought I could apply that same work flow to my textures. I followed the way he set up his material into the world position offset, and then messed with the parameters to get the desired effect.

If I were to improve the model, I would try to create some sort of falloff towards the chest piece as the cloth seems to move too much around that area. I'd have to look into how to do it properly however I believe this could be done within the mask.

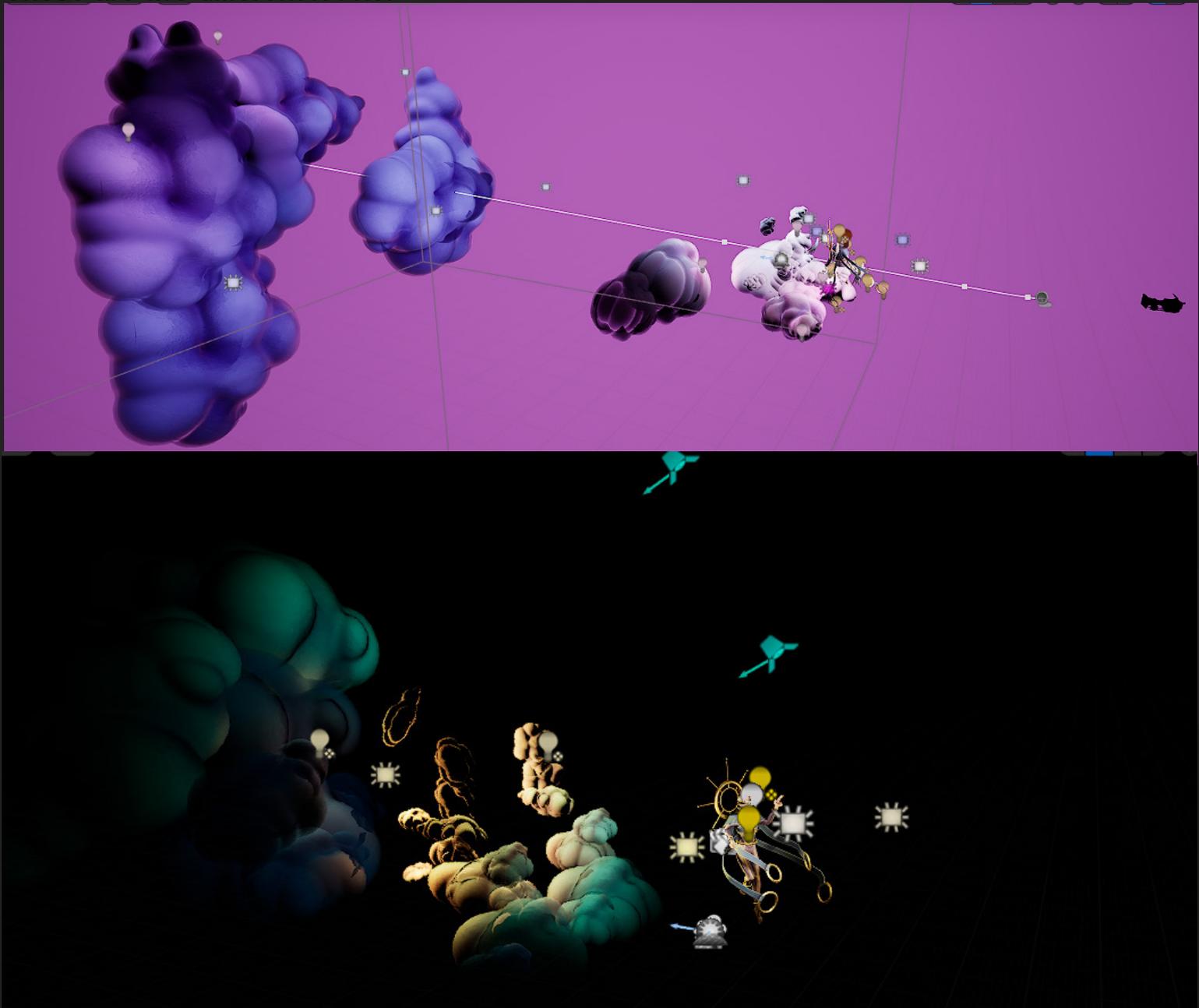


The Level Setup

I created some really simple clouds and added an opacity, base colour and normal to the mesh. Then, I added a noise into the material to add some variation to the vertices in the mesh. This gave them a sort of stylised 'fluffy' look. I also multiplied the noise with the cloth movement nodes so I could have the clouds slightly moving in the animations. I tried to follow a tutorial on how to move meshes along a spline however it did not work as I intended.

I also tried to create a sense of depth by creating instances of the cloud material and changing the colours, as well as moving the meshes further from the camera.

These are two different levels.



The Final Renders



The Final Renders



The Final Renders



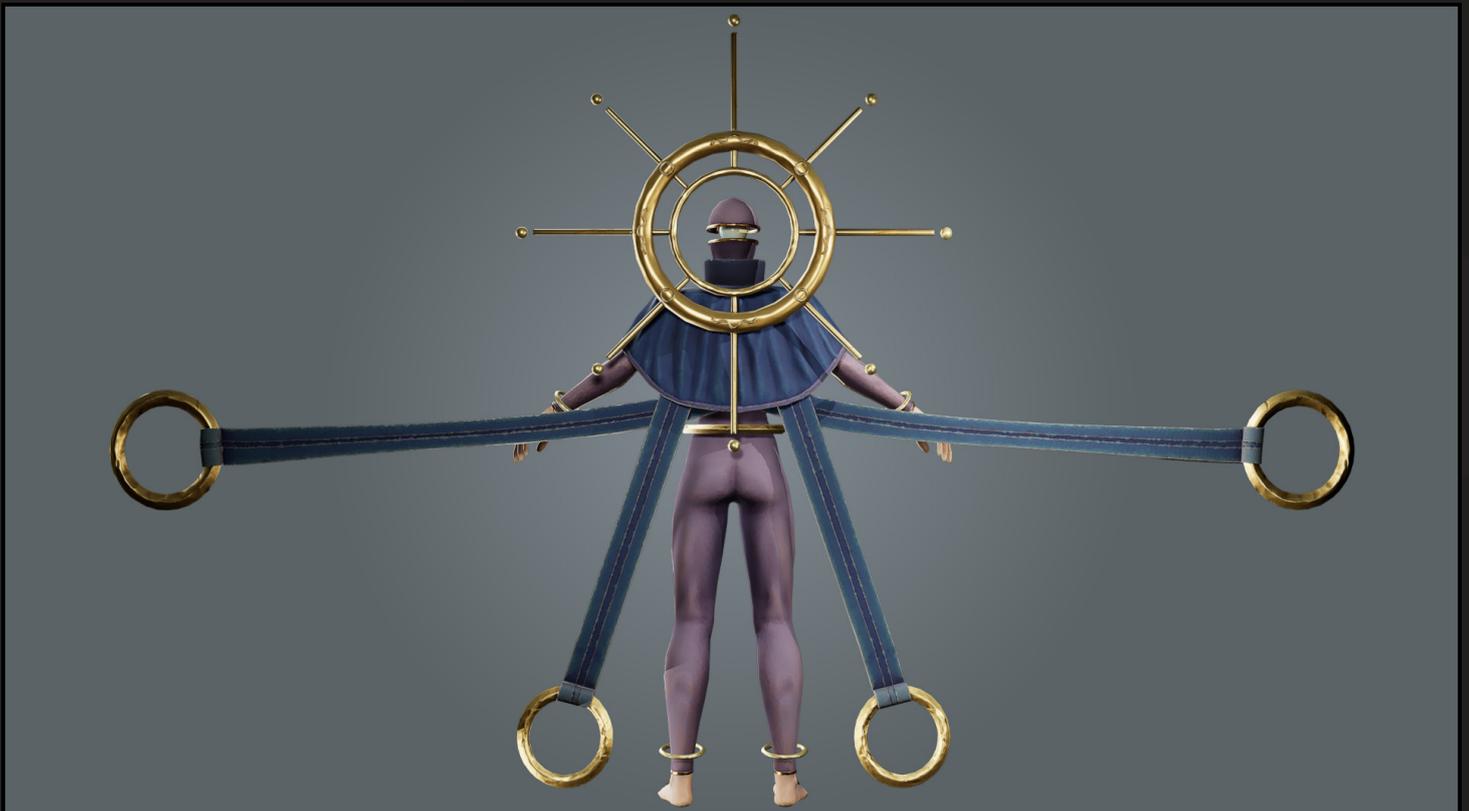
The Final Renders



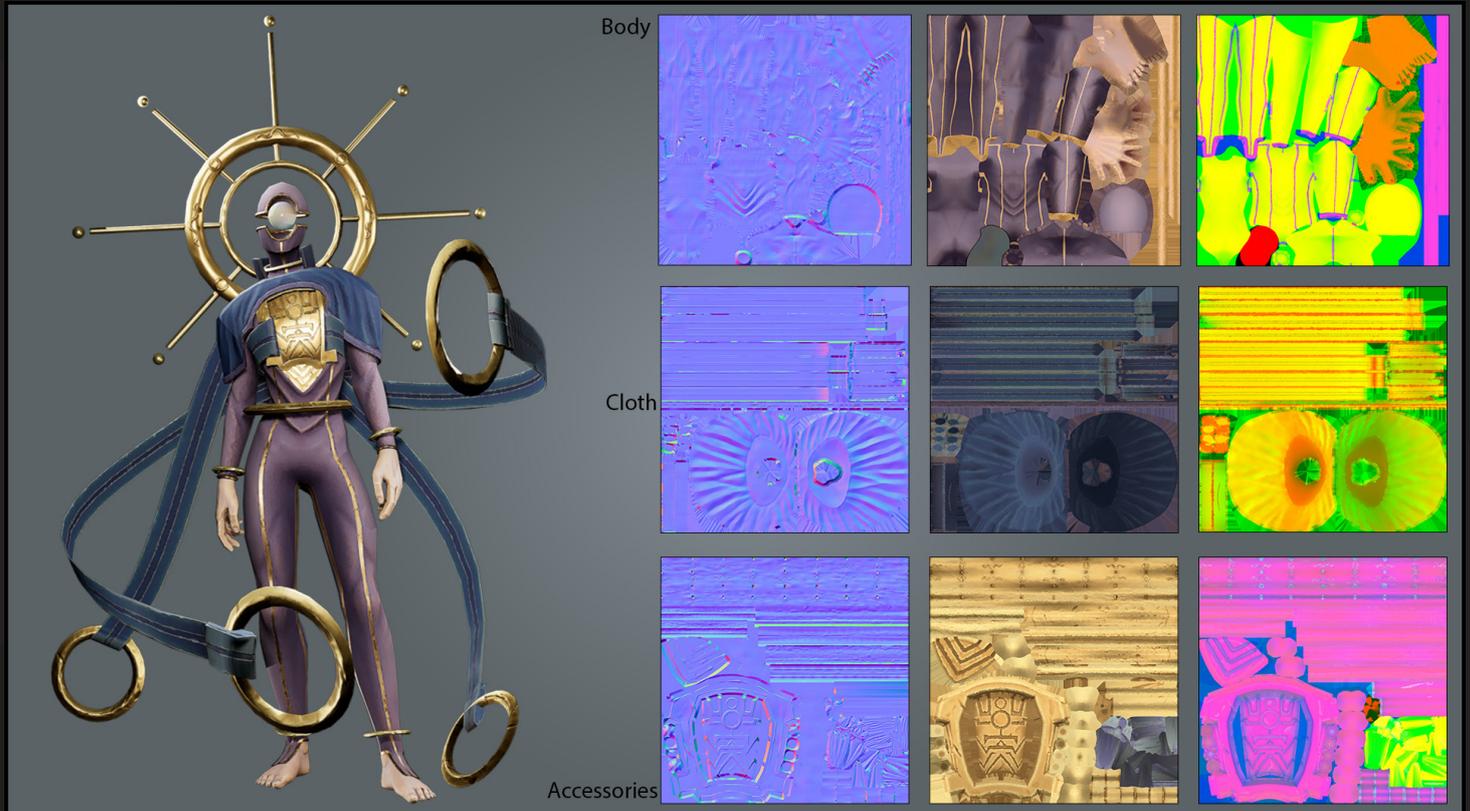
The Final Renders



The Final Renders



The Final Renders



The animation renders and turn arounds can be found through the following links:

Green Scene Animation - <https://youtu.be/VvPfCPxkNvA>

Pink Scene Animation - <https://youtu.be/oxqxN3B-qRM>

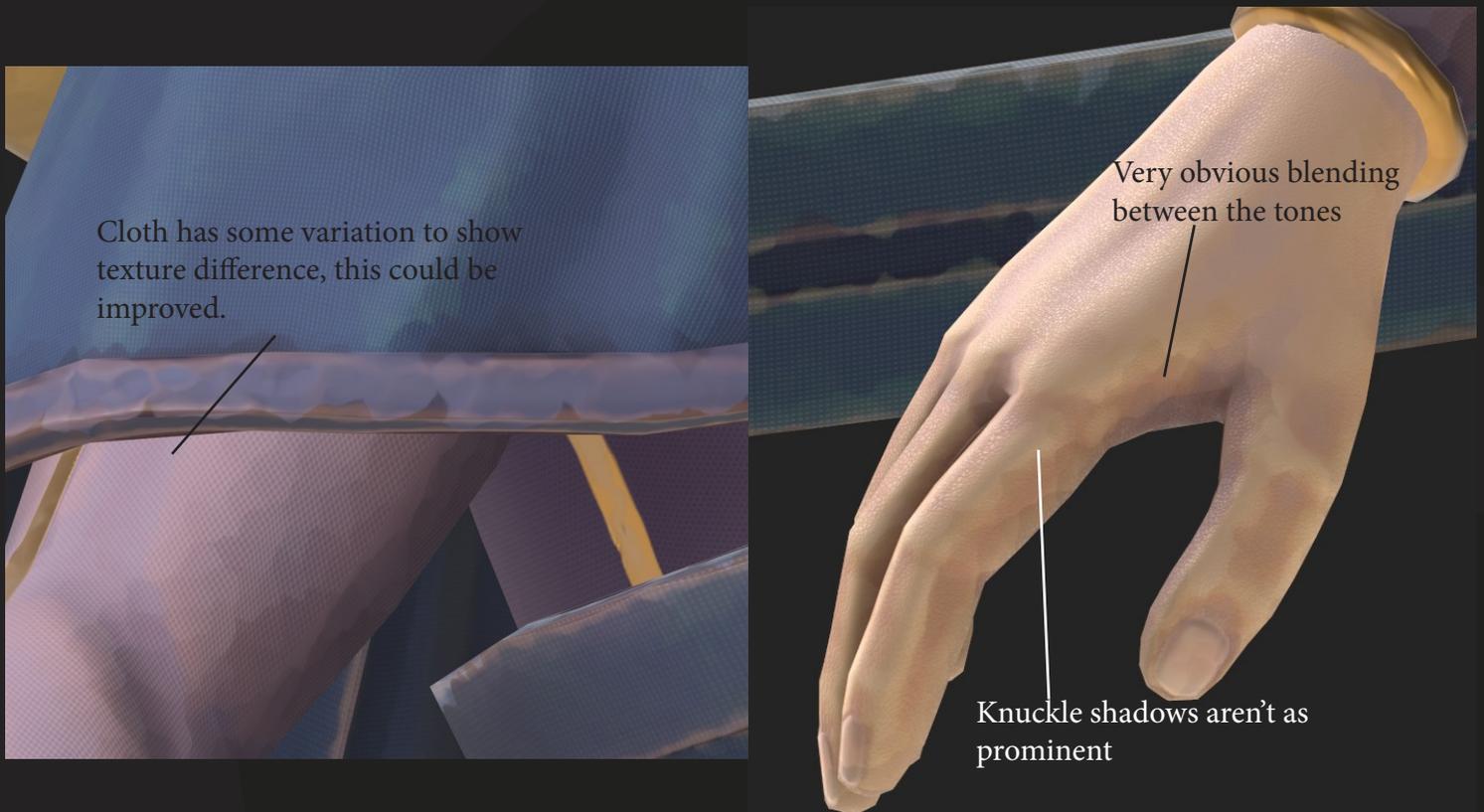
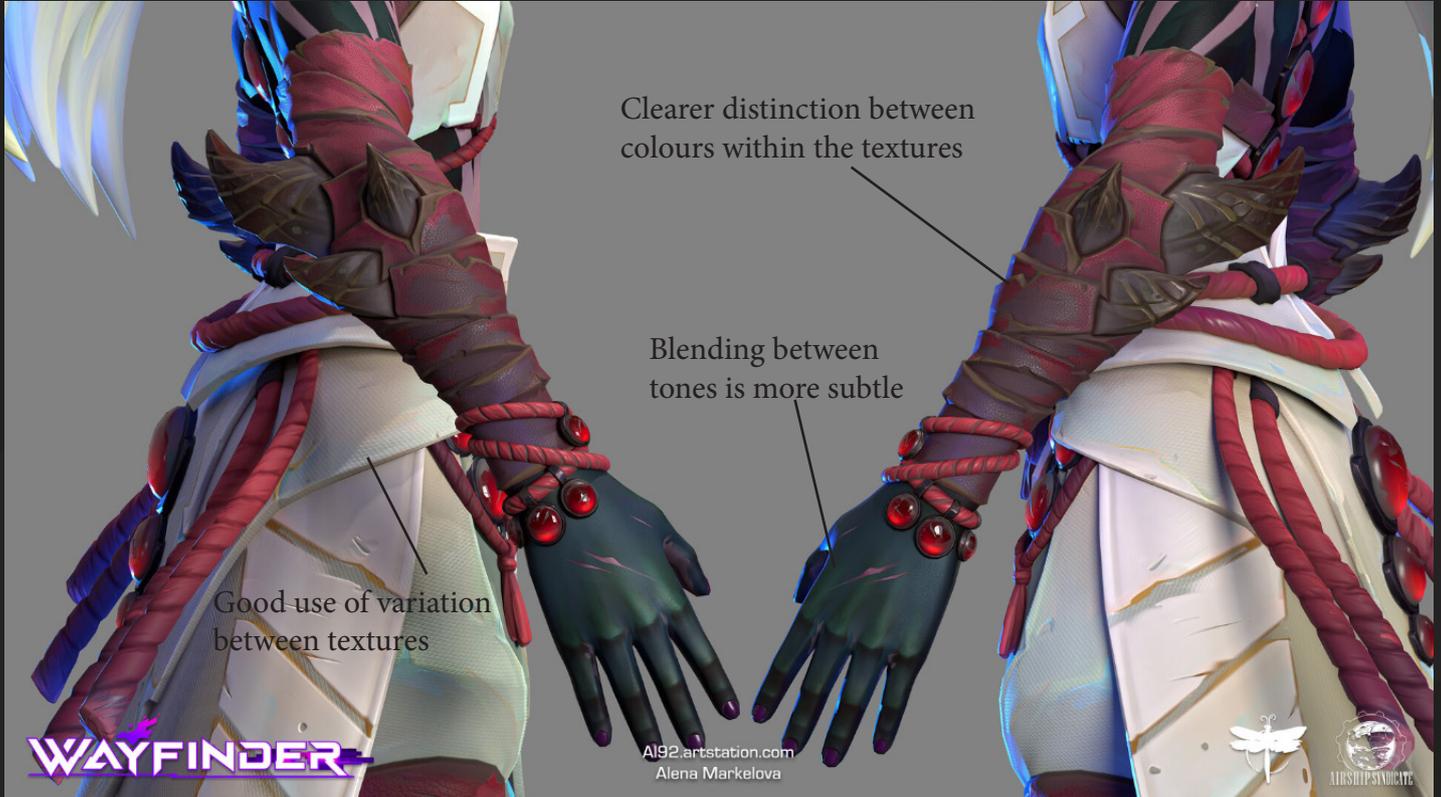
Turntable - <https://youtu.be/8zyYazsXIhI>

Wireframe Turntable - <https://youtu.be/KcMLHYyMFZ8>

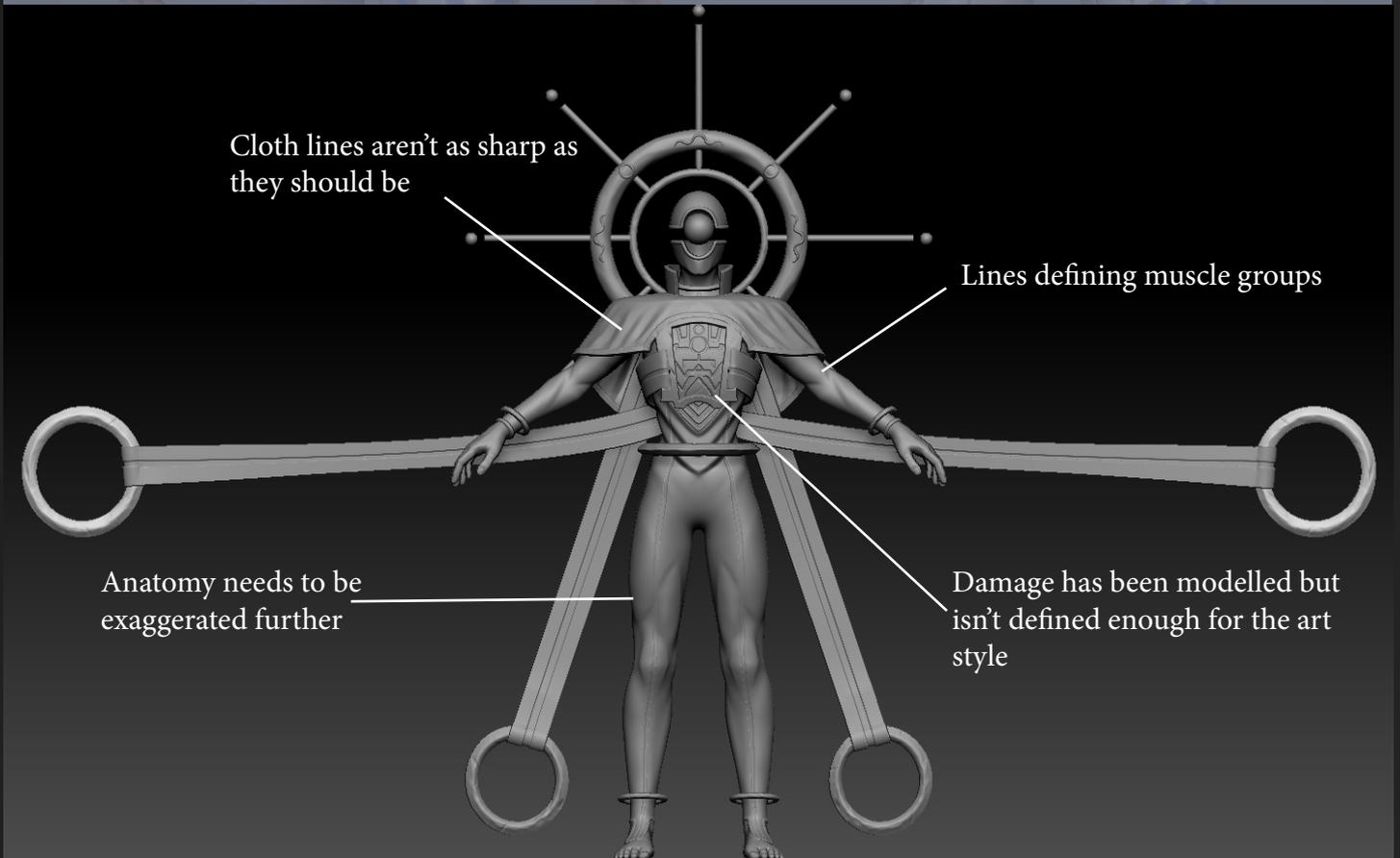
I have also uploaded the model to sketchfab so you can see more in depth:

Sketchfab - <https://skfb.ly/psq7M>

Industry Comparison



Industry Comparison



Conclusion

Overall, the project was successful in creating a game ready stylised character. I do, however think that improvements could be made.

Firstly, the textures don't match the Wayfinder style as much as I intended. The hues within my character could have varied more within the highlights and shadows to add more visual interest and complexity to the character.

Even though the concept was portrayed well in my character, the style of character within Wayfinder is inherently different. The characters tend to have lots of different accessories which my character does not have. Because of this, I don't feel that I was successful in my use of Wayfinder as an inspiration for the project.

The final render for the pink scene did originally look very washed out because of the values I had next to each other, I tweaked them in engine to try and make the render look less washed out. I have already changed the values, however I do think that more can be done to make this render more eye catching, maybe something in the post process.

The project as a whole is a high quality character, the brief of 'celestial fantasy' was hit, and the character appears stylised. I think the highpoly model could benefit from some revisions to the forms to exaggerate them more and the damage could be more intense. The textures could be revisited to add different coloured highlights and shadows to make the model pop more.

Thank you for reading!

