



The art of  
**The Lost  
Amber Palace**  
Holly Stokes

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# Introduction

My project is called The Lost Amber Palace. This is a project solely catered towards animation and the animation industry.

The problem that this project I'm trying to solve is: Accurately representing Lithuanian culture through character design in animation.

I chose this as there is still quite a big "hole" when it comes to representation for animation, especially outside of their original countries. I am very interested in eastern European history and found a lack of it shown in media, so I wanted to create something to shine a light on the culture, specifically Lithuania.

To help with my project I came up a brief story, as if this was a pitch for a show:

**Story synopsis:** After finding a book of a certain legend a young Lithuanian man sets out to find the said amber palace that was talked. Along the way he finds and befriends two creatures from Lithuanian folklore. Upon making his way out to sea where the palace was said to be he encounters a very angry yet sorrowful Sea Goddess whose name was one in the legend.



# Inspirations from Industry

My main industry inspiration for this project is the How to Train your Dragon movies. I wanted to create characters and creatures that have a bond of sorts.

I also use it as very loose point of reference for the stylisation and how I can make the creatures look stylised but also being able to fit into the same world.

I also looked at the movie Nimona for a bit of style reference as well. I really like how expressive the characters are made out to be and wanted to reference that.

Another movie I looked at was Wolf Walkers. What I liked about that movie is the way the characters are lined. Its unique and looks as if it's made from a pencil.



# Lithuanian Research

This research doubles for my first character

Since I decided that my story will take place within Lithuania in the late 1800s. I had to do some in depth research.

The research I started with was clothing as traditional eastern European clothing is completely different. To conduct this research, I searched online and came websites made by someone which talked about and shown examples of Lithuanian clothing from the time period I was looking at. I also looked at old paintings created by people which captured 1800s Lithuania and people can be seen in their usual attire.

When researching I always thought about the type of clothes Feliksas would wear. As there was still a big class divided between the rich and poor so I want to make sure my clothes match the class he is from while also sticking to his personality.



# Lithuanian Research

My next lot of research consisted of Lithuania itself in the 1800s along with legends and folklore that stem from Lithuanian folklore.

With the time frame of late 1800s I had to take into account that Lithuania was apart of the Russian Empire.

Something I found interesting while researching was “book smugglers” these were people who smuggled in books that still had the Latin alphabet as Russian wanted to make Lithuania use their language and Cyrillic. This ended up sparking the idea behind my characters and how I could make them all fit/interact.

## Book smuggler

- After Lithuania became part of the Russian empire
- Russian wanted to “russify” the language, getting rid of the Lithuanian language
- replacing books containing anything with the latin alphabet with cyrillic
- Book smugglers, smuggled in books containing the latin alphabet/Lithuanian language to keep it alive



Paintings



# Feliksas – The main character

**Synopsis:** A young Libarian often quiet with a nose stuck in a book about Lithuanian history. As apposed to his family he has an adventurous side, and he wants to get out there an explore these legends.



# Initial Ideas – Sketches

The initial sketches. I focused on trying to apply traditional Lithuanian clothing but also keeping in mind the class and personality of my character and how that would affect his look.



# Face Iterations

I started working on some face iterations. It was quite difficult to find exact hair references for the set time but on some of my reference the men seem to have longer hair which I went with. Which I still works for the type of character I am going for.



# Expression Sheet

There was an issue with my initial expressions which was a lot of emotion is conveyed by a person's forehead and eyebrows which with the hair covering the forehead it can be hard to tell. So to solve this I made a version without hair on the forehead and it ended up working much better and really helped me show the expressions better.

I also made more of an effort to change the eye shape which to also help convey the expressions better and give it a more stylised feel.



# Hair and Hat testing

I tested with making the hair seem more “realistic” as well as starting to iterate further on the idea of Feliksas wearing a cap of sorts. I did end up preferring my hair from the previous page so I stuck with that.



# Possible Designs

Combining elements that I thought were successful I ended up with 2 possible designs. I ended up going for the second one as starting base.



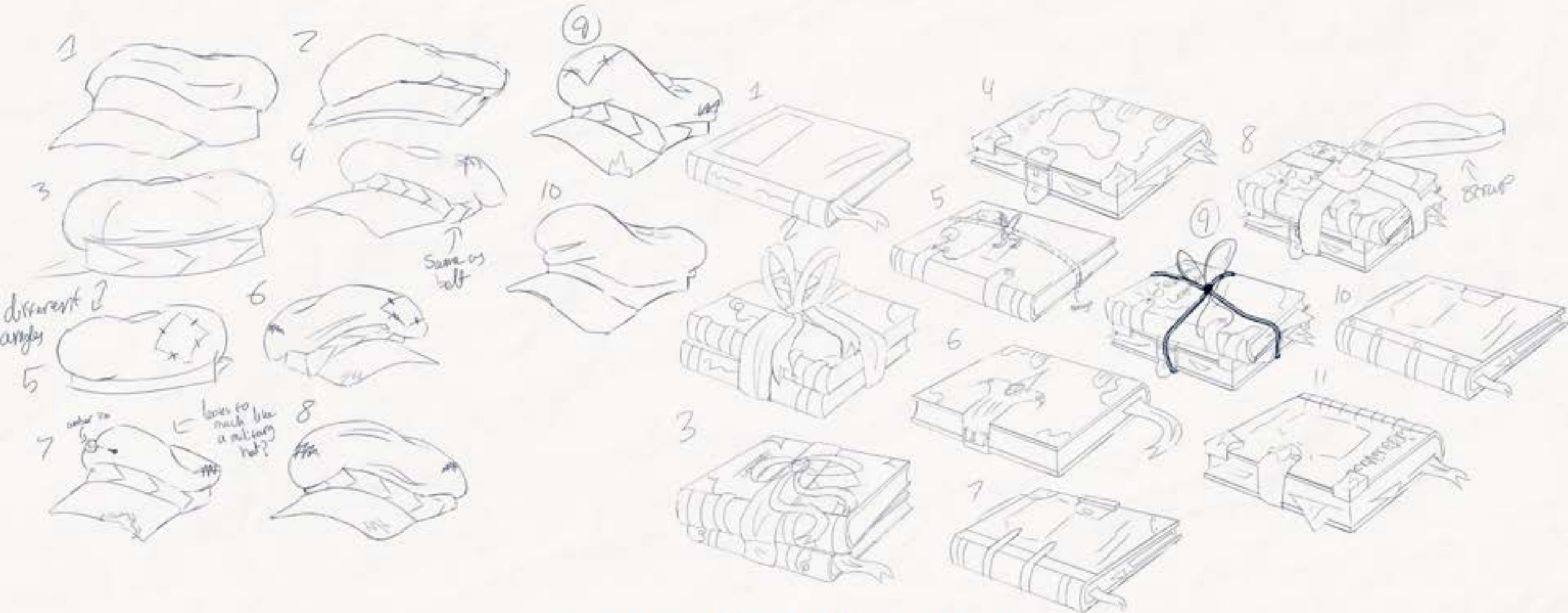
# Interactions

Didn't explore to much with this but I created a quick interaction art piece of Felixas the iron wolf – two stepparent occurrences from early in development to later. The other interaction is with my second character – Jūratė.



# Individual Details

Since in a lot of my early development I have drawn my character with a book It was suggested to show what that book actually looks like which is useful as it is an important prop to my character. I also did some iterations with his hat.



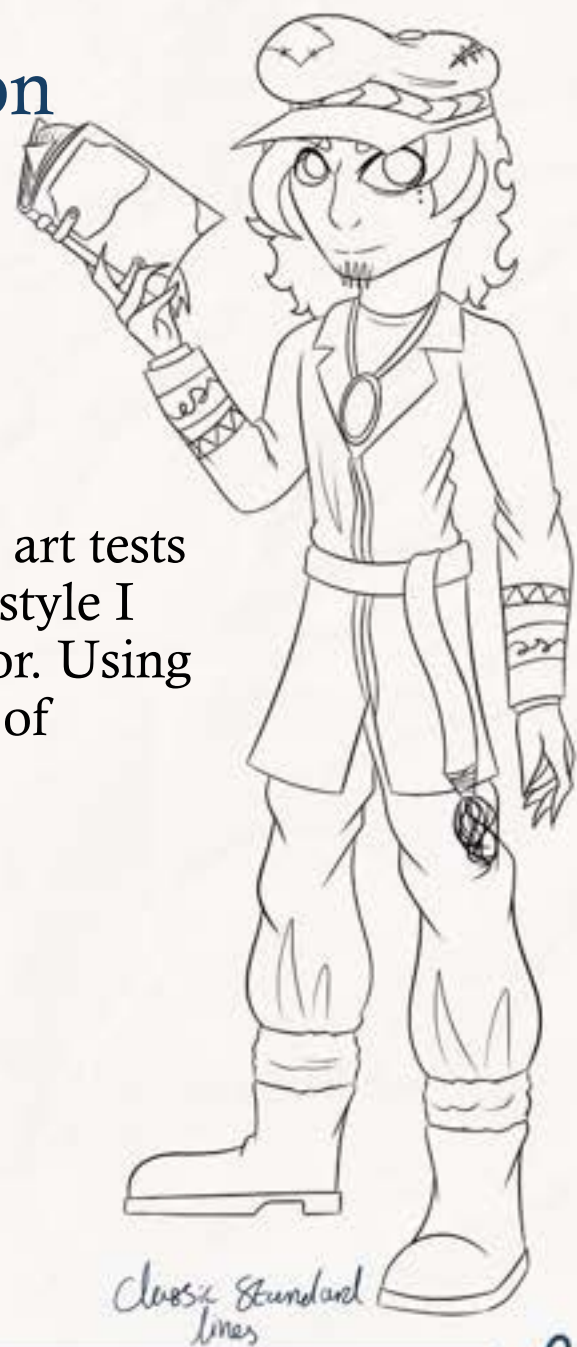
# Colours

I played around with a few colours. I really wanted to keep the clothing darker like a lot of my references show but I really wanted the woven sash part of the design to stand out and not match the other colours at all to show accuracy to the real sashes.



# Line Art Exploration

I did a few line art tests for the type of style I wanted to go for. Using different styles of animation for references



# Turn Around

A complete  
turn around of  
Feliksas



*Handwritten signature*

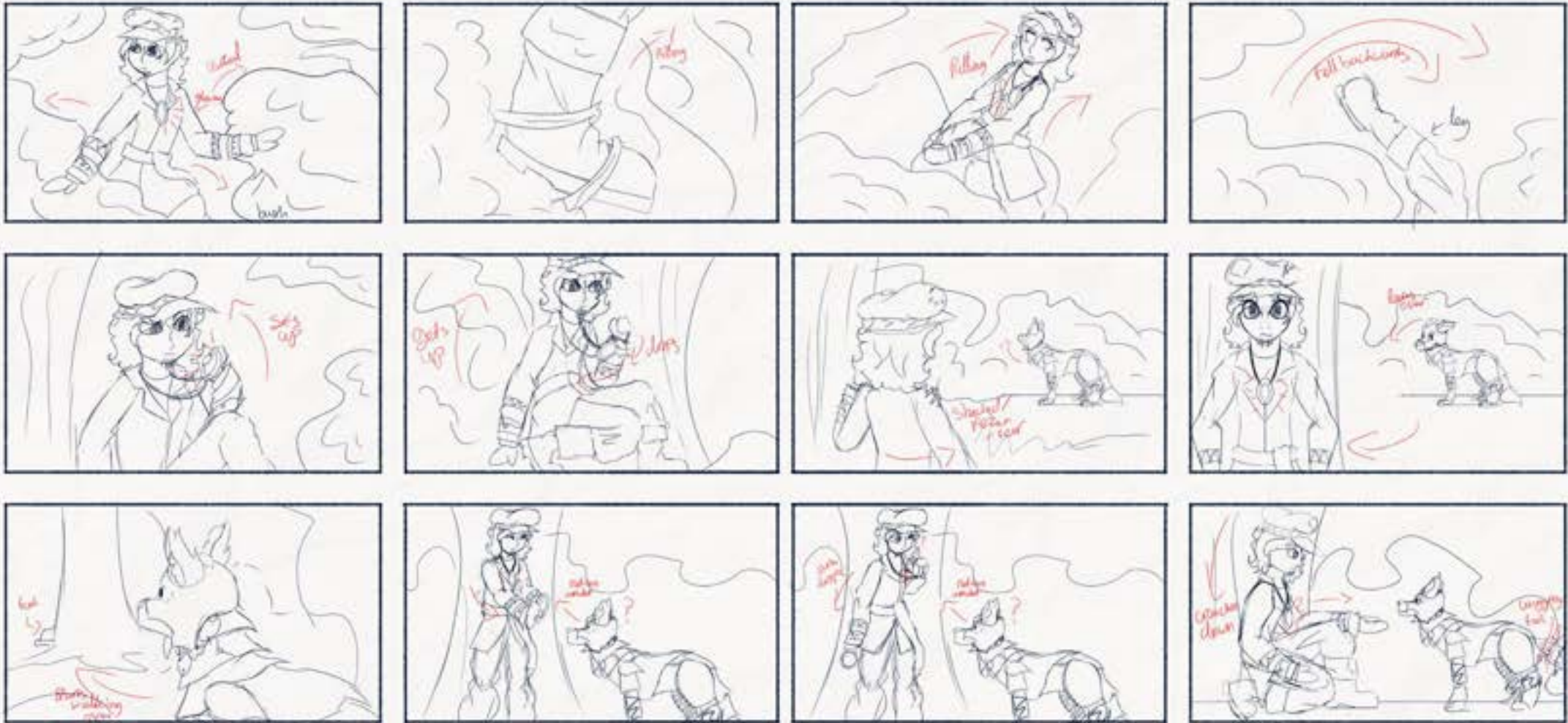


Feliksas Kymantas

The Lost Amber Palace

Holly Stokes

# Storyboard



One of my deliverables that I stated I wanted to do some work revolving around things done in the animation industry and its pipeline. One of those was trying out storyboarding.

I created this board here with Feliksas and one of my creatures. I got some feedback from a friend who studied an animation course to help me properly understand it and how much/little detail I can put into it.



# Jūratė – Sea Goddess

**Synopsis:** A Goddess who has been alone for centuries, living in an amber palace that is in ruins, pieces floating to the surface. She is fuelled on sadness, anger and revenge for a fellow God.



# Research

Jūratė is the name of an actual Sea goddess in Lithuanian history who has a whole legend, and it tells of how amber came about in Lithuania. So, with this design I wanted to make my own depiction of her.

I started my research looking into her story and trying to find any real-world depictions. Which there is not that many there has only been a couple of statues made depicting her.

She is often shown as either a person or a sort of mermaid which I play around with a little bit.



One of the only real life depictions of Jurate - sea goddess



Baltic sea inspired dress



Lithuanian Crowns for references



These crowns are from the medieval period (polish-Lithuanian commonwealth)  
The legend was first written down in the 1800s but the goddesses/gods have been worshiped as early as the 14th century



*traditional attire* ↗



# Initial Ideas - Sketches

One thing I wanted Jūratė to have was the idea of a dress made from water. I think it gives the character a more unique feel. But this also help tie the design back to the sea aspect.



# Face Iterations

Just like with Felixas I did the face iterations separately. A part of the design I wanted to incorporate small details that capture her personality



# More in Depth Iterations

I focused more heavily on the bottom half of the dress as I decided instead of having the whole thing being made from water just having one part. Then after focused on the top half



# More in Depth Iterations

Just like Feliksas I did iterations for single elements to her design. For Jūratė it is her crown. I played around with more fanatical designs as well as ones that relate to crowns from historical Lithuania. Playing around with colours as to test if what I wanted seemed to similar in value.



# Expression Work

Just like with Feliksas I did some expressions for Jūrātē



# Colours

I didn't spend too long on colours as I immediately liked the colour palette of the second one. I did mess around with some purples to maybe make the design less monotone but decided on the latter.



# Turn Around

A complete  
turn around  
of Jūrātē





Jūratė

The Lost Amber Palace

Holly Stokes

# Storyboard

A storyboard of Feliksas and Jūratė meeting.



# Iron Wolf

**Synopsis:** A mysterious and elusive creature made up what seems entirely iron only seen as part of a dream, no ones knows if its real or a legend. Its tale tells of it howling right where Vilnius stands.



# Research

The iron wolf was the first of my two creatures. So just like Jūratė I researched the legend itself and the history behind that. There are a lot of depictions I have to go off of for this creature as it plays an important role in Lithuanian history.

I also researched other things such as Lithuanian armour to help get a better understanding of what it looked like and maybe how it could influence my design.

Eurasian wolf



Native to Lithuania



Creature 1 - Iron wolf

- How Lithuania's capital came to be
- modern day - associated with the military



Looking into armour plating

Lithuanian armour worn

by a previous grand duke 17th - 18th century Lithuanian armour

v



Dog helmet



< From the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth  
Found it very unique



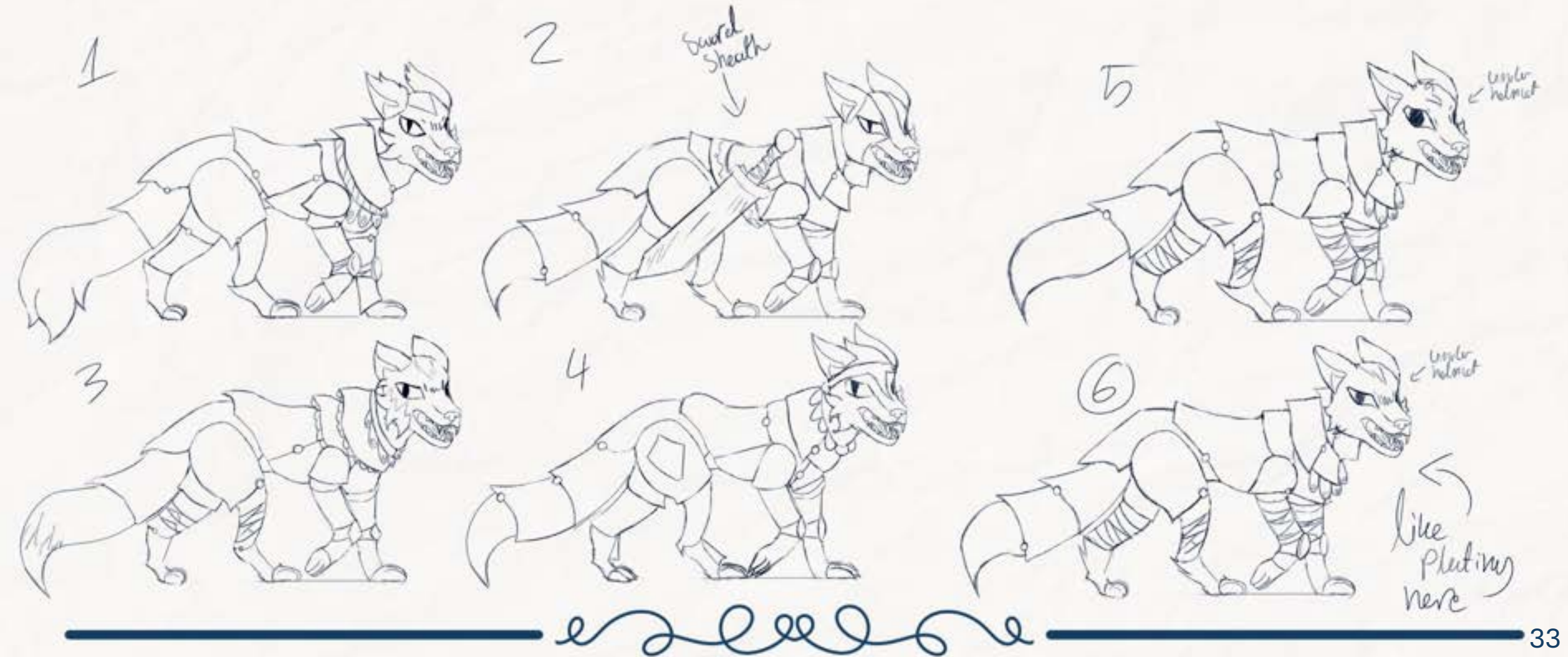
# Initial Sketches

I wanted this design to be a wolf covered in plated armour. I played around with a mixture of organic and mechanical looking plates as it give it a more unique feel. The real life statues play a big influence to the design



# Initial Sketches – Second Round

I explored how the plating itself will look with some added details to and even tried a concept with a sword.

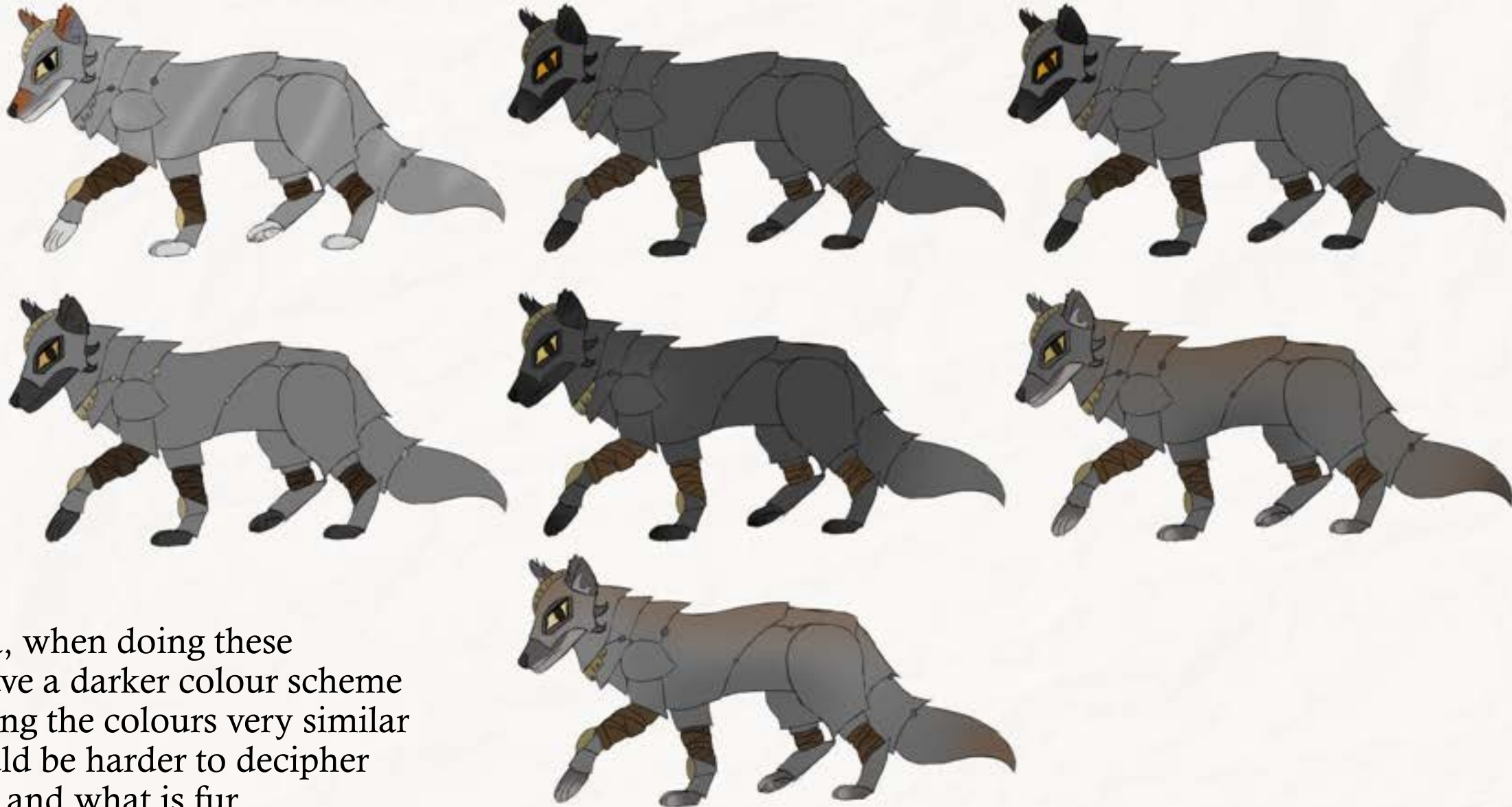


# Design and Helmet ideas

With the design I liked I drew it out with more Eurasian wolf anatomy and played around with some helmet iterations.



# Colours



I had the idea, when doing these colours, to have a darker colour scheme but also making the colours very similar so that it would be harder to decipher what is metal and what is fur.





Iron Wolf

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# Aivaras

**Synopsis:** At first glance it looks like a regular rooster until further inspection with a draconic appearance and fiery tail this creature is mischievous and will steal any valuables it can find.



# Research

My second creature, Aitvaras. Like with the iron wolf I looked into the history of this creature as well as finding a real life depiction. I looked into wyverns to look into ways of adding those draconic like features.

Creature 2 - Aitvaras



## Aitvaras

- A nature spirit in Lithuanian mythology
- Can be a black rooster with a fiery tail when indoors or a dragon like creature when outdoors, which resembles a comet when flying.
- It can bring both good and back luck to the inhabitants of the house it decides to lodge itself into
- Describe as mischievous and will steal gold and give it to the people in the house it will settle in. Making it almost good in a way?
- I want my design to resemble the in-between similar to how a real life depiction from a Lithuanian festival was shown



For how the wings fold??



# Initial Sketches

I wanted this design to mostly resemble a rooster while having draconic like wings. Along with a rooster shaped fiery tail.



# Figuring out the Wings

I did a lot of back and forth with the wings and how they would look and sit on my creature. I settled on a more wyvern looking wing as it seems to sit better against the anatomy of a rooster.



# Figuring out the Wings

More anatomical correct wing design.



legs human  
arm looking



# Colours

I stuck very closely to the real-world depiction, with the red and black. A lot of this colouring stage was focused on the wings and if I wanted to add a pattern to them.





Aitvaras

The Lost Amber Palace

Holly Stokes

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