



CHARACTER NAME: Willow the Wisp

ARTIST: Liliana Cahill



CHARACTER NAME: Mate Ā-Moa

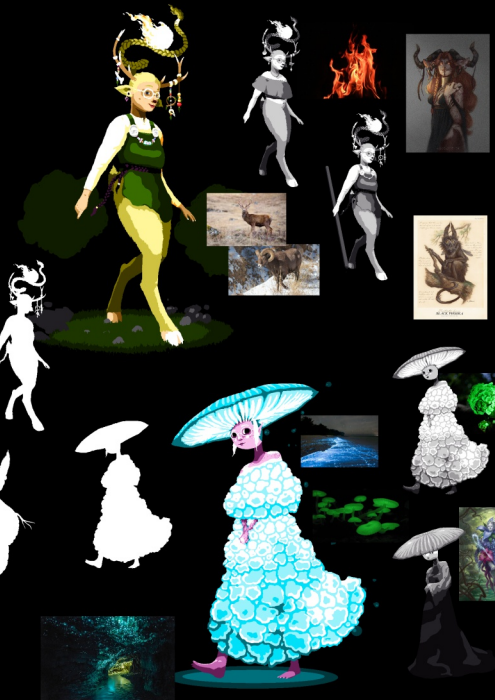
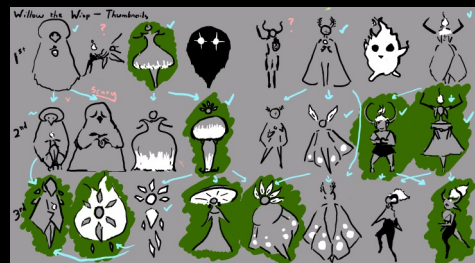
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Will-o'-the-Wisp - Willow Generation and Form



Due to the really wide folklore and scientific explanations of Will-o'-the-Wisp, I had a lot of different choices for how to represent them. A little bit spoiled for choice, I decided to jump the gun and fully render my 3 most promising ideas.



Out of the three of them, the Faun turned out to be the only design that really worked for the brief.

The biggest issue with the Moth was the silhouette. All of the detail was lost amongst those huge wings.

With the Shroom, the problem was more conceptual. The Wisp needs to be fast, and a mushroom just doesn't look fast.

The Faun hit a great balance of readability and style! She looks fast, fancy and mysterious.



From there I further developed the form repeatedly, and came across the golden nugget of a 'Moa Faun'. This really anchored the creature in Aotearoa, and also with myself. This is where I started to really develop a story and character for Willow; an imported folklore, changed by the culture of her new land, awesomely connecting with her folkloric ties to travellers.

From here I really wanted to sort the details of her form, and alongside many smaller changes, the biggest decisions I had to make were outfit and horn shape.

Outfit turned out to be fairly clear once all things were laid out. I found some options that would have worked fine, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that they didn't actually add anything to her character, and even confused her and her culture a bit, so I stuck with a nude look. This firmly placed her character in a mature setting, but she was already headed that way with the chains.

The horns were much harder. Everyone I asked had a different favourite, and a different one that they hated. The crowd favourite was the spiked goat horns, but they pushed her furthest from my vision of a fundamentally sympathetic creature of Aotearoa. I ended up staying with the red deer horns, but re-working them greatly.



Will-o'-the-Wisp - Willow

Colour and Finishing



With the form (mostly) set, it was time to bring her to life.

I started with some fairly wild designs (pictured left) based on what I really connected with. I think all of them have their merits, but unfortunately the more supernatural looking ones really pulled her into high fantasy and out of the more grounded setting the story was headed towards.



That left 3 options: The Deer, The Snowy Owl, and The Flame.

The Deer and Snowy Owl were both deliciously realistic, and offered a really simple but diverse range of natural tones.

The Flame gave a whole new angle to Willow, having her be a full on fire spirit, which would go well with her Folklore. It's fast, spiritual, and something to be cautious of.

All said and done, the natural tones were what I was drawn to most, and I began to experiment with joining them together to get the best of both worlds.

This was wildly successful, and while the spotty one kind of looks like a cow, it opened up the possibility of replicating actual bird patterns!

Basically all of these were enticing, and added such real personality to Willow. They grounded her in Aotearoa firmly, and gave her different associations based on the bird. In the end, the Kakapo felt the most tasty, and linked perfectly with being a hidden prey creature of the night.

After some last experimentations with line work, I settled on her design at last and began her final renders.



No Lines

+ Clean
+ Detailed
+ Realistic
- Tricky to read

Heard Variation
- Outline
+ Curves
+ Autumn
+ No Autumn
+ Time

+ Quick
+ Easy
+ Clear
+ Flattering

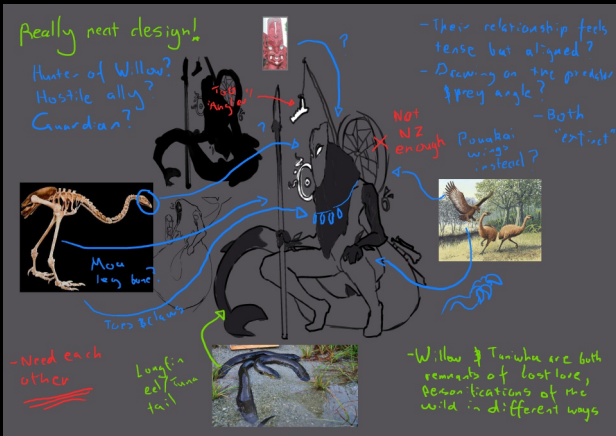
Varied Weight
Full Lines
All Spined
Away

+ Detailed
+ Elegant
- Time
- Contrasting

Varied Weight
Contrast
- All
- Zebra
- Bold

+ Clarify
- Muddy
- Time
- Tricky
- Inconsistent

Guest Creature: Taniwha Mate Ā-Moa / Extinction



I was quite pleased when I found out what my guest creature would be. Taniwha fits so perfectly with the story I was building for Willow, especially the way that Azrael was taking it. "A memory of an important moment in a place made real, and then distorted over time." Very similar to Willow's Folkloric past and fits in nicely with a story about memories and cultural shift.

I decided that it was a good opportunity to have a predator to Willow's prey creature, and attempted to make a Haast's Eagle Taniwha. This had.... mixed results. Taniwha are fundamentally water based creatures, and a lot of my designs pushed it firmly into avian territory. I ended up with two that worked well though, giving them an almost draconic appearance, fitting well with Azrael's Welsh Dragon link.



A large struggle that I had was making the Taniwha scary and monstrous, but also somewhat sympathetic and at least something you could talk to before they tried to eat you. Out of my final two tonals (pictured above) this ruled out the first one, which looked more like a Dark Souls boss than anything.

And so I had a viable design with just one big key problem.

The moa skulls were working to convey their monstrosity/scariness to Willow, but felt a bit un-cohesive with the rest of the creature. To fix this, I added bracelets and piercings across the creature, and toned them the same as the teeth.



Speaking of tones, I was able to find their colour palette fairly easily, as Willow's natural tones really didn't leave much room for getting too outlandish with the Taniwha. The tones of an underwater eel still helped them look powerful and strange, but grounded.

Finally a name to fit such a creature: Mate Ā-Moa: Extinction. A creature that represented the pure rage of lost paradise.

