

Character Design Capstone Notes

Maskers Notes:

This character concept for a species that mimics humans yet must wear masks came about during the start of Covid. (Shocker.) I had been seeing lots of masks with designs, including mouths, and it got me imagining them opening up like real jaws. That train of thought carried over to seeing tons of people in masks, and how our human history full of other plagues and other purposes for masks would allow some sort of mimetic hunter species of humanoids to evolve with and walk among humanity. Their masks would change with time, allowing them to exist with people and then eat them in secret.

I did a lot of research when designing the maskers, especially for Doc. I wanted him to have historical accuracy while not being a copy of the stereotypical plague doctor. I looked into not only the actual outfits from the plague but also Italian fashion from the time (1350s) and worked it into his outfit. I imagine he would have added those touches later in life to appear refined. One work that partially inspired this historical accuracy, beside my wanting to do research and be as accurate as possible, is a comic called *Apocalyptic Horseplay* by the artist Boredman. His comics have artifacts and details that are pulled from history, and he points them out and gives context after every chapter. It's cool to see these pieces of actual history in a comic that would take place on Earth.

I also have never drawn gore, or anything really spooky or gritty at this level of refinement, so I learned a lot from the process. Some of the gritty, horror of life energy that I was going for was inspired by the comic *The Sandman* by Neil Gaiman. (I really need to make more reading progress, it's so good!) This series covers some really heavy themes with a striking artstyle, and I admire the entire work. I wanted to touch on some of these themes with the maskers, especially with Jester. He pressures young men and women to consume drugs at his private parties, then consumes them while they are in a stupor. He chooses people who wouldn't be searched for, either because they have no one, or no one cares if they vanish. His characterization is cruel and predatory, and I wanted the maskers I drew to have these evil and disturbing practices. Doc purposefully chooses diseased humans, and even has hospitalized patients infected with deadly illnesses, whom he then eats later.

Golem Notes:

I began my next sprint of character creation by banning myself from anything grim, dark, or violent. I tend towards these things for some reason, and wanted to pivot into making a colorful, warm, and whimsical character. Something that could be in a kids show like

Adventure Time, one of my favorites growing up. The idea to make a flowerpot golem sprung into my head at 2am one night while trying to fall asleep, and after drawing her I knew she was the choice. I wanted to make a colorful character, so I gravitated towards simpler characters that could have bright colors and natural things like plants. The plants on her body are almost all from my childhood. There is a honeysuckle bush next to my house, and as a kid my friends and I would pull out the flowers and taste the nectar. I included peppers because every Mothers Day my mom and I would go to the garden store to get plants. I always got peppers since I thought (and still think) that spiciness as an evolutionary strategy is really interesting, and I'd want to see my mom eat the really hot ones. (I, meanwhile, have no spice tolerance and would never eat them.) There are succulents since I would always grab a discarded succulent leaf and plant it with the others, since the leaves can grow into new plants. I also have some succulents back home that I wanted to bring to college, but they didn't do so well so I left them behind. I think succulents are adorable and hopefully they can come with me after graduation.

After choosing to make a golem, I wanted her to be unlike the common depictions of golems while having some traits of golems I like from stories. Some of the references I thought about were the robots in the movie *Castle in the Sky* by Studio Ghibli, who were quite gentle at times and had a really interesting design. I also thought about the golem Reggie from the comic *The Sword Interval* by Benjamin Flueter. He is incredibly strong but kind hearted and likable. I also considered the original Hebrew mythology of golems as animated clay helpers or protectors, brought to life by a piece of paper with special writing being placed in the mouth or forehead. ...Minecraft iron golems may have also crossed my mind. All of these golems are masculine, bulky, powerful, and have little to no aspect of "softness" in their design. I wanted to make a golem that is a bit more feminine, less bulky, and has some softness to her. However, I like some of these golems for their gentle and helpful character, so I included this in my golem as well. The result is a plant-covered lovable golem who is kind, curious, and likes helping others.