Apsara

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For my piece 'Apsara', I chose to illustrate a Khmer cultural inspired character in a digital, video game splash art illustration style. The style of League of Legends splash illustrators was the main inspiration. Choosing the subject matter of the piece was a reflection of parts of my identity; my culture, my hobby of gaming, my love for art and the future path that I want to take as an aspiring artist in the game and film industry.

When I first started this practical, I was certain that I wanted to attempt this style, as I've always admired these fully rendered pieces, and I wanted to see if this is a process that I enjoy. As I really liked the traditional Asian inspired character designs, I decided to do it based on Cambodian culture, as I've never seen a character design based on this, even though the clothing and jewellery is beautiful.

I researched through folklores, and about the depictions of the carvings on temple walls, such as Angkor Wat. Many of these are temple guardians of various depictions, so I wanted to make the character a warrior of some kind. I ultimately settled on basing the character on the Apsara, which is a 'celestial dancing goddess', so I wanted to incorporate dancing into the character's pose and story of the piece. There is also a dance in Cambodia, where they dance the stories of Apsara, and I based the character design on both the dance outfit and the appearance of the original temple carvings. I also did further research into the elements that commonly go into the outfits such as the crown, style of the clothing, gold and more. However, I still wanted the design to have a modern aesthetic and fantasy element to it, like other characters.

From research and experimentation, I learnt how to use thumbnails to decide on the composition. This required placing elements together to give a composition rhythm, balance, harmony, variety and movement. Knowledge of perspective and anatomy proportions was also improved. Also, I used the technique of rendering in greyscale first to get the correct values. I learnt how colours are affected by light and how bounce light will affect the hue of objects. I learnt how to paint forms to look 3d and how to render different textures. I learnt these techniques by imitating League of Legends splash artists' work, such as a study of 'Spirit Blossom Ahri' by Jeremy Anninos. I also learned many techniques in the use of the digital software, Procreate, such as layer modes and adjustments.

From creating this piece, I discovered that rendering is a very time-consuming and high skill technique. I think that it is much more important to get the foundation of the piece right, such as the composition, perspective, proportions and light/shadow, rather than the detailed rendering. Therefore, because it was so difficult, I found this style not as enjoyable, but I think the final product is impressive.