Production Art for Games

10-Week Course Syllabus

This course focuses on the real-world process of designing environments for games. Students will develop a map theme from initial ideas through production-ready concept art, learning how to work within gameplay constraints, establish architectural language, create beauty corners, design over 3D blockouts, develop lighting and mood, and support a project through production. As your instructor, I will be acting as your Art Director, level designer, 3D artists. Your job each week will be to present and defend your ideas. The feedback will revolve around supporting the “teams” objectives and production needs. Meaning there will sometimes be unorthodox asks and feedback, that is not solely art related, but gameplay, or constraint focused.

WEEK 1 — Compelling Map Themes

Demo / Lecture

What is Production Art?

- Understanding the role of concept art in a production environment
- Finding a compelling **hook** for your map
- Establishing an initial visual palette between the two sides
- Using flat architectural sketches to explore different sides of the environment

Homework

- Develop the core **hook** for your map working within the established Art direction
- Create **10 dollhouse sketches** exploring the overall theme, architecture, and visual identity

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WEEK 2 — Broad-Stroke Thematics

Demo / Lecture

Building a Cohesive World

- Using a top-down map to establish broad visual themes

- Creating distinct biomes and areas within a map
- Designing different spaces that feel unique while still belonging to the same world
- Exploring how contrasting sides of a map transition and blend together

Homework

- Apply feedback from Week 1
- Select **1 dollhouse concept** and push it to a polished state
- Create a **top-down thematic map** exploring how the two sides of the environment are divided, connected, and blended together

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WEEK 3 — Beauty Corner I

Demo / Lecture

What is a Beauty Corner?

- Understanding the purpose of a beauty corner in game production
- What information a successful beauty corner needs to communicate
- Establishing architectural language, visual hierarchy, and design intent
- Translating broad map themes into a specific player-facing space

Homework

- Apply feedback to your top-down map
- Choose **one architectural side** from your dollhouse
- Create **5 architectural sketches** exploring how that language could be applied to the beauty corner 3d scene (scene will be provided)
- Include **prop callouts and/or hook concepts** where needed

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WEEK 4 — Beauty Corner II

Demo / Lecture

Materials, Props & Environmental Storytelling

- Creating material callouts
- Using props to reinforce theme
- Environmental storytelling through architecture, materials, and details

- Creating Target Renders

Homework

- Apply feedback to your beauty corner
- Create a **refined target render**
- Include a minimum of **3 material callouts**
- Refine key **prop and storytelling concepts**

WEEK 5 — Blockout I: Sketching Over Gameplay

Demo / Lecture

Applying Your Designs to the Blockout

- Translating the beauty corner and architectural design language onto a gameplay blockout
- Designing around gameplay restrictions
- Identifying opportunities for strong Points of Interest (POIs)
- Balancing visual impact with gameplay readability

Homework

- Apply feedback to your Beauty Corner target render
- Create **5 rough POI sketches**
- Select one direction and create a **refined POI sketch** to move forward with

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WEEK 6 — Blockout II: 3D Implementation

Demo / Lecture

Designing With a 3D Blockout

- Introduction to working directly with a 3D gameplay blockout
- Choosing camera angles that clearly communicate design intent to 3D artists
- Thinking about the environment as a complete navigable space rather than a single 2D image
- Using multiple views to solve design problems

Homework

- Apply feedback to your refined POI sketch
- Create a **rough 3D blockout**
- Produce **3–5 sketches from different viewpoints** around the 3D model
- Use these views to provide additional context and clarify the design

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WEEK 7 — Blockout Lighting Studies

Demo / Lecture

Lighting, Mood & Readability

- Using lighting to establish mood and atmosphere
- Designing lighting that supports gameplay and visual hierarchy
- Exploring compositions quickly through value and color studies

Homework

- Apply feedback and refine your blockout sketches
- Create a **lighting mood board**
- Create **5 Notan/value studies**
- Create **5 color and lighting sketches**

WEEK 8 — Connective Tissue

Demo / Lecture

Story Spaces, Vistas & the World Beyond the Player

- Making the environment feel alive beyond the immediate gameplay space
- Designing near-field story spaces
- Creating distant vistas and landmarks
- Using environmental storytelling to connect spaces and reinforce the larger world

Homework

- Create **5 sketches for a near story space**
- Create **5 sketches for a distant story space / vista**

WEEK 9 — Production Support

Demo / Lecture

Supporting the Final Stages of Production

- Understanding how concept artists support a project after major design decisions are complete
- Paintovers and texture support
- Skydomes and background elements
- Signage and graphic design
- Prop, material, and environmental polish
- Solving targeted production problems quickly and clearly

Homework

- Refine and polish any additional pieces you would like to push further for your final presentation or portfolio

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WEEK 10 — Final Portfolio & Presentation

Demo / Lecture

Turning Production Work Into Portfolio Work

- Selecting the strongest pieces from the project
- Presenting process without overwhelming the viewer
- Showing design thinking alongside polished artwork
- Building a clear visual narrative from initial hook to final environment
- Discussing what recruiters, art directors, and production teams need to see in an environment concept portfolio

Final

Present your completed project, including your strongest development work, production concepts, and final portfolio-ready pieces.