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# VOLSUNGA®

EDWARD DENTON

*Fig. 001. (Front Page) Young Lilly.  
Denton, E. (2020).*

# VOLSUNGA

## APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN: AN EXPLORATION THROUGH CHARACTER CONCEPT DESIGN

EDWARD DENTON

**"Beauty will save the world"**

-Fyodor Dostoevsky  
(1983, p.374)

## 0.0 PROLOGUE

### GOD IS DEAD

**"The only absolute knowledge attainable by man is that life is meaningless."**

**-Tolstoy**  
(1987)

Frederick Nietzsche observed in 1882 that rationality and science had destroyed religion, and that without the objective value framework it provided, we are left in a purely relativist scientific world with no external purpose or meaning. Without an external higher ideal, individuals are left only with their subjective view of the world from which to build a moral structure to derive meaning from. He argued this lack of external meaning can lead to a culture of materialistic hedonism, nihilism and depression (2000).



Fig. 002. *The Joker*. Phillips, (director). (2019).



Fig. 003. Johnny Rotten. Pictorial Press. (n.d.).

## PUNK'S NOT DEAD

**“Even the most convicted nihilists will not forsake their music.”**

**-Peterson**

(2018)

Despite our rationalisations, music, art and beauty in all forms still speak to us emotionally, and even in the pits of nihilism we still cling to works of art. Beauty offers an alternative to the cold hard truths of reason, it can inspire, motivate and invigorate our passions. The experience and appreciation of art is something uniquely human and perhaps in a world where ‘God is dead’ it is not through logic and reason that we can find meaning but through the appreciation of beauty.

Indeed Nietzsche proposed that such ‘Dionysian’ experiences might be the cure that balances out the despair of an overly rationalist ‘Apollonian’ worldview (2000).



## 1.0 ABSTRACT

In this research I will explore the polarity of Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives as they relate to the character design process for film. A science fiction adaptation of the myth of the Volsunga provides context for this exploration. The design response will use character designs as promotional artworks for a potential movie. The creative practice seeks to explore how an emotionally engaging character artwork can generate a meaningful Dionysian experience that speaks to our inner human nature and curiosity. The work intends to show how character concept design can be conveyed to the audience for a potential film before it is green-lit, and by appealing to a Dionysian impulse, persuade studio executives to take a risk on a more visually diverse project.

I explore Nietzsche's original concept behind the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy and the experience of the Dionysian as a potential answer for systemic nihilism. I then look at how these concepts have been expressed as archetypal characters and how they might be represented visually. Lastly I relate the Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives to the Waterfall and Agile design methodologies and to all of my design approaches. Through this lens I have explored the design of artworks for the six main characters in an original science fiction adaptation of the Norse myth of the Volsungs.

**"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,  
-that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."**

**- John Keats**

(1978, P.283)



# CONTENTS:

<b>0.0 PROLOGUE</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10.9 LINE DRAWING</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>1.0 ABSTRACT</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10.10 DESIGN REVIEW</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>2.0 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10.11 DEVELOPMENTS</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>3.0 VOLSUNGA SAGA</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10.12 2D COMPOSITIONS</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.0 APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10.13 3D COMPOSITIONS</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>5.0 DIONYSIAN FILM MAKING</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10.14 COMPOSITION AND SYMBOLISM</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>6.0 APOLLONIAN &amp; DIONYSIAN CHARACTERS</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10.15 3D DESIGN DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>7.0 CASE STUDIES</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10.16 DETAIL AND TEXTILES</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>8.0 VISUAL STORYTELLING IN ART</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10.17 POST PRODUCTION COLOUR GRADING</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>9.0 VOLSUNGA 2200</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10.18 RENDER TO PAINTING</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>10.0 DESIGN METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>10.19 FRAMES</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>10.1 CHARACTER BRIEF CREATION</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>11.0 FINALS ARTWORKS</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>10.2 MOOD BOARDS</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12.0 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>10.3 EXPERIMENTATION: TRADITIONAL PORTRAITS</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>EDWARD DENTON</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>10.4 EXPERIMENTATION: AI</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>13.0 REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>10.5 WORLD BUILDING</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14.0 FIGURE LIST</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>10.6 EXPERIMENTATION: DIGITAL RENDERING</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>15.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>10.7 DAZ 3D CHARACTER POSE SETUP</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>16.0 APPENDIX</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>10.8 SILHOUETTES AND 3 TONE SKETCHES</b>	<b>53</b>		

Fig. 004. (Opposite) BRYN. Denton, E. (2020).

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

For this project I take the role of Visual development/Pitch artist to develop promotional character artworks for a future science fiction film adaptation of the Volsunga Saga. I will be exploring the character design and presentation through the lens of Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy, clarifying the meaning of this dichotomy, and explaining how it can be represented visually and how design methodologies relate to these perspectives.

The Volsunga Saga is a mythic Norse story recorded as an epic poem originally passed down through oral traditions and written down in parts in the 11th century. It details the rise and fall of Odin's chosen clan, the Volsungs, whose lineage concludes with the tragic adventures of Sigurd the Volsung. For the adaptation to a film format I have chosen to focus Sigurd's life and death as this is one of the most intense sequences. It will follow Sigurd, as he slays the dragon Fafnir and wins his treasure before rescuing and falling in love with Brynhilda. As the story progresses, Gudrun with the help of her mother Krimhild gives Sigurd a love potion, making him forget Brynhilda and fall deeply in love with Gudrun. Ultimately Brynhilda, angered at Sigurd's betrayal, has him killed and immolates on top of his funeral pyre (Tolkien, 2009).

Nietzsche originally argued that artistic/emotional experiences, epitomized by the Greek god Dionysus, provided a life affirming balance to cold hard rationality epitomized by the god Apollo. He would later abandon these ideas saying they were "follies of youth" (Nietzsche, 2000) however contemporary artists such as Richard Wagner took up this idea believing that artistic experiences could raise up the human spirit in the face of rational nihilism. In 1876 Richard Wagner wrote *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a four part operatic epic retelling of the Volsunga saga. Roger Scruton in *The Ring of Truth*



Fig. 005. *Young Lilly Metal*. Denton, E. (2020).

argues that this was his attempt to provide a “vision of the ideal, achieved with no help from the gods, a vision in which art takes the places of religion in expressing and fulfilling our deepest spiritual longings” (2017, p.8).

This dichotomy between reason and creativity, order and chaos, speaks to me personally. In my role as a 3d Modeler, Manufacturing Supervisor and Art Director at Weta Workshop over the past 10 years I have always been in the nexus between engineering/manufacturing considerations and artistic/design considerations. Being able to have one foot in each field has enabled me to see where compromises from each side need to be made in order to achieve the best end result. Through my industry experience I have witnessed a continued trend for films to discount artist inventiveness in favour of more formulaic tried and true methods, which reflect a more controlled approach that reduces risk and maximises profits.

The Volsunga saga was of particular interest to me as my own heritage is from Denmark and I previously had very little in depth knowledge of the pre Christian stories from Norse culture. I have a keen interest in generational knowledge of ancient cultures and their myths and how, through a process of memetic evolution, complex concepts can be embedded in seemingly simple stories. So the Volsunga saga, with its Norse history, its existing relation to Nietzsche through Wagner’s opera, and its use as a key inspiration for J.R.R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings (while remaining fairly unknown in the West) made this story a perfect choice for me to explore.



Fig. 006. Young Lilly Metal. Denton, E. (2020).

My role in this project is to develop the visual style of a science fiction adaptation of the Volsunga saga through the designs of the main characters and develop a project pitch that presents them as works of art that emotionally engage the viewers and provide a Dionysian argument for the production. These pre-production artworks can then be publicly disseminated enabling studio executives to gauge public interest in the project and similar more speculative projects during the pitching process. These character designs will explore the dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysian through the use of character archetypes, visual storytelling principles such as symbolism, colour theory and composition. The research suggests that a Dionysian experience with the characters can elicit an emotional response from the audience which might be more persuasive for the success of the character design, than a purely rational, financial argument for design.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION:**

How can Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives influence the design of successful characters and their presentation within the film industry?

I will explore three primary ways the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy relates to character concept art. Firstly I will discuss the meaning of these terms and the ideas that they represent. Secondly, I will analyse the visual representations of these characters through character archetypes and popular culture. Lastly, I will explore processes that embody the Apollonian or Dionysian impulse.

# VOLSUNGA: PROJECT DIAGRAM

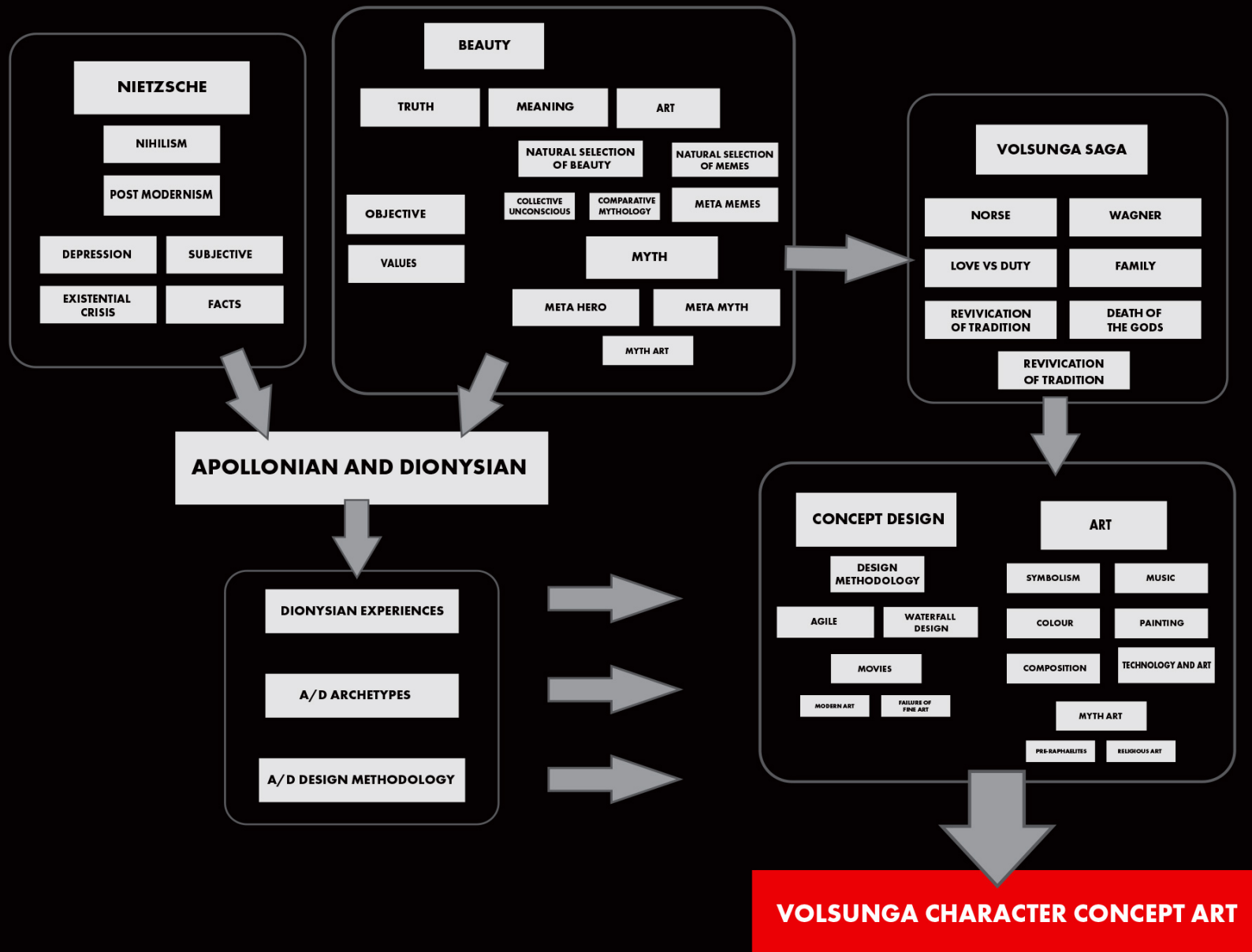


Fig. 007. Project Diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

### 3.0 VOLSUNGA SAGA

The Volsunga Saga is a Norse myth recorded in fragments in the Prose Edda attributed to Snorri Sturluson c. 1220. Other versions and related stories are found in the Poetic Edda, which is attributed to Sæmundr the Learned, a 12th century Icelandic priest. Both versions have key elements missing from the texts and logical contradictions and appear to have been recorded through a more Christian lens. This left philologists like J.R.R Tolkien to state that the surviving narratives are amalgamations “of different stories that cannot be combined, for they are essentially contradictory. Yet he combined them” (Tolkien, 2009, p.39). Supporting this interpretation is the appearance of a series of “Sigurd Stones” runes scattered across Sweden, depicting events from Sigurd’s earlier life. The earliest of which, the Ramsund carving, was created c. 1030AD (Düwel, 1988).

In my analysis of the myth’s evolution through several of the original source texts I have chosen to focus on the story from more recent retellings, namely *The legend of Sigurd and Gudrun* (2009) by J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Nibelungs* (2018) by William Morris. I have also drawn reference for this project from the *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (2010) opera quartet by Richard Wagner and accompanying illustrations by Arthur Rackham (1976). Each of these authors have tried to make the story make logical sense in their own way and are part of the narrative’s continued evolution.

Through my reading of these versions I was particularly interested in the representations of the character motivations, and the treatment of characters within specific plot elements that seemed illogical or were contradictory between sources, as I wanted to write an adaptation where the characters made consistent choices that are understandable to a modern audience.



Fig. 008. Ramsund carving. Denton, E. (2020).

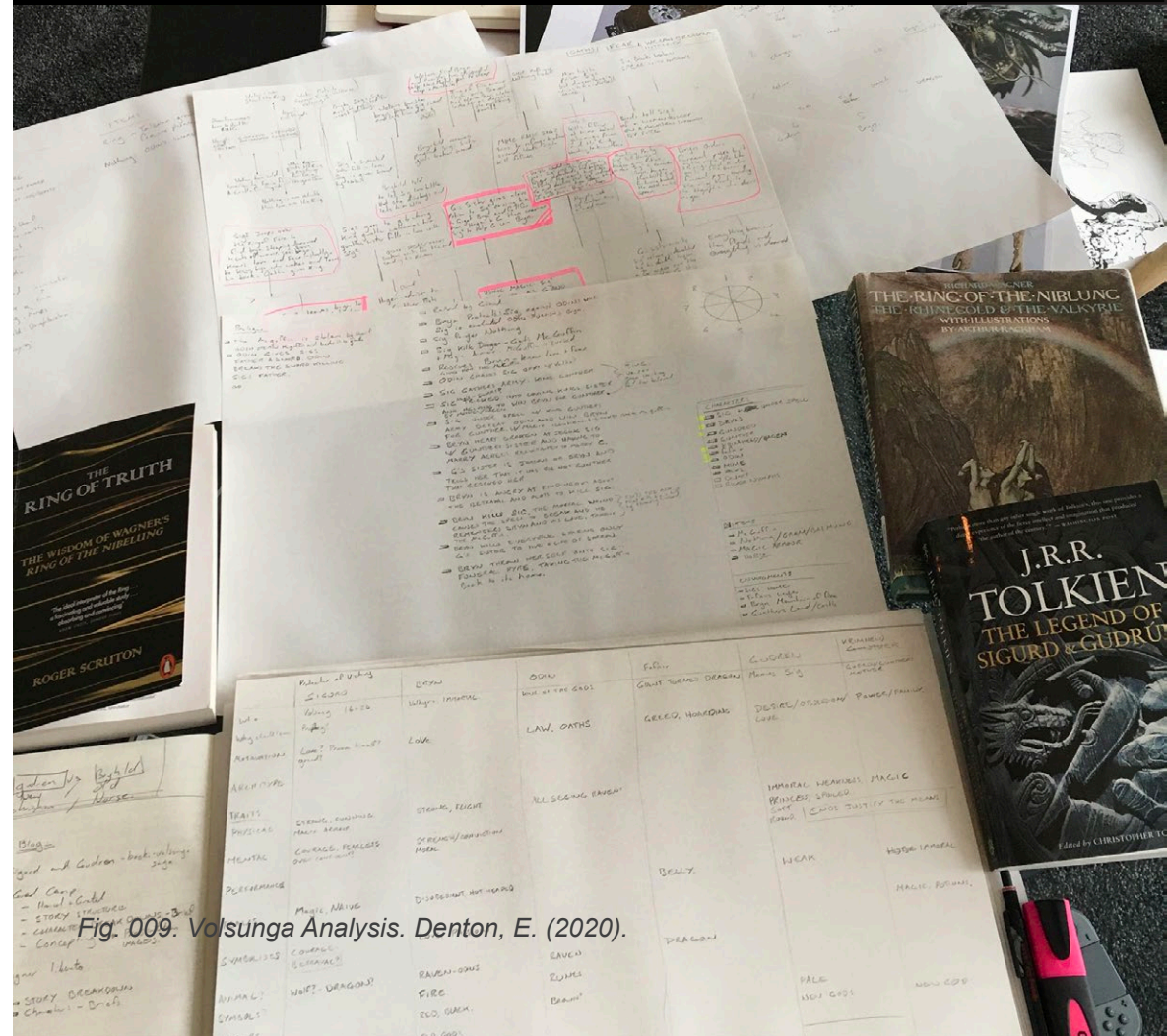


Fig. 009. Volsunga Analysis. Denton, E. (2020).

For example after the hero Sigurd kills the dragon he travels to a mountain top, and wakes the sleeping Brynhild who has been imprisoned there by Odin. Upon waking, they gaze into each other's eyes and fall immediately in love. Sigurd gives Brynhild the golden ring he gained from killing the dragon as a symbol of his undying love but then leaves her alone atop of a mountain ringed in fire while he goes off to find more adventures. His reason for leaving is never justified beyond him just wanting to go adventuring and is probably the result of the amalgamation of several different regional variations into one tale.

This myth and its various forms has influenced much of Europe's mythic traditions. Baldwin (2017) draws parallels to the tale of King Arthur, with Sigurd's father pulling Odin's sword from a great Ash tree and to Sleeping Beauty with the Valkyrie Byrnhild in her everlasting sleep on top of a mountain waiting to be awakened by Sigurd. Yet, despite its significance within western storytelling it has not been made into a successful screen retelling since *Die Nibelungen* by Fritz Lang in 1924.

Roger Scruton argues that Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* opera was an embodiment of his belief that beauty could replace God and provide an objective value framework from which to build a moral system. He describes the main themes as "love, death, sacrifice and the liberation that we win through sacrifice" (Scruton 2016). This has been a seminal input into this project and justifies its endeavor to create beautiful works of art not just functional designs.



Fig-010. Sigurds hands the drinking horn back to Gutrune and gazes at her with sudden passion. Rackham, A. (1976).

Of particular interest has been the analysis of the representation of Brynhild and other women of the story. Norse culture, although barbaric, maintained a certain level of gender equality enabling female land ownership, the right to request divorce, and positions on the battlefield. Most retellings pass the Bechdel test by giving Brynhild the opportunity to talk to other female characters about something other than a man. The Volsunga narrative gives “important roles and range of identities available to female characters” (Hancock, 2014, p.79). There has been strong demand in the film industry for female characters like Brynhilda’s who challenges gender stereotypes.

Brynhild is described by Amelia Yeats and Serena Trowbridge as the “active, desiring and desirable avenging warrior Valkyrie, the designated ‘Victory-Wafer’ who both goes into battle and leads men to Valhalla” and they compare her role to that of her male counterparts “her role in war defines her, just as Sigurd’s defines him”. Their analysis of Brynhild’s gender representation also reflects Nietzsche’s suggestion to maintain our Apollonian and Dionysian natures in balance “She is both masculine and feminine, and in his unity with her, Sigurd stakes out new territory for manliness, in which male and female are equal in action”(Yeats & Trowbridge, 2014, p.48).

There is criticism that although the female characters have been given empowered narratives, the text is named for the male hero Sigurd the Volsung. Theodore Andersson (1980), argues that Brynhild is the story’s real main character and real hero, and suggests that the title of the story should really reflect her story.

# VOLSUNGA: MOVIE

900-1200 AD: VOLSUNGA SAGA :Multiple versions across europe

1874: Richard Wagners operatic cycle: Der Ring Des Nibelungen

1876: William Morris: Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs

1924: Fritz Lang: Die Nibelungen: Siegfried

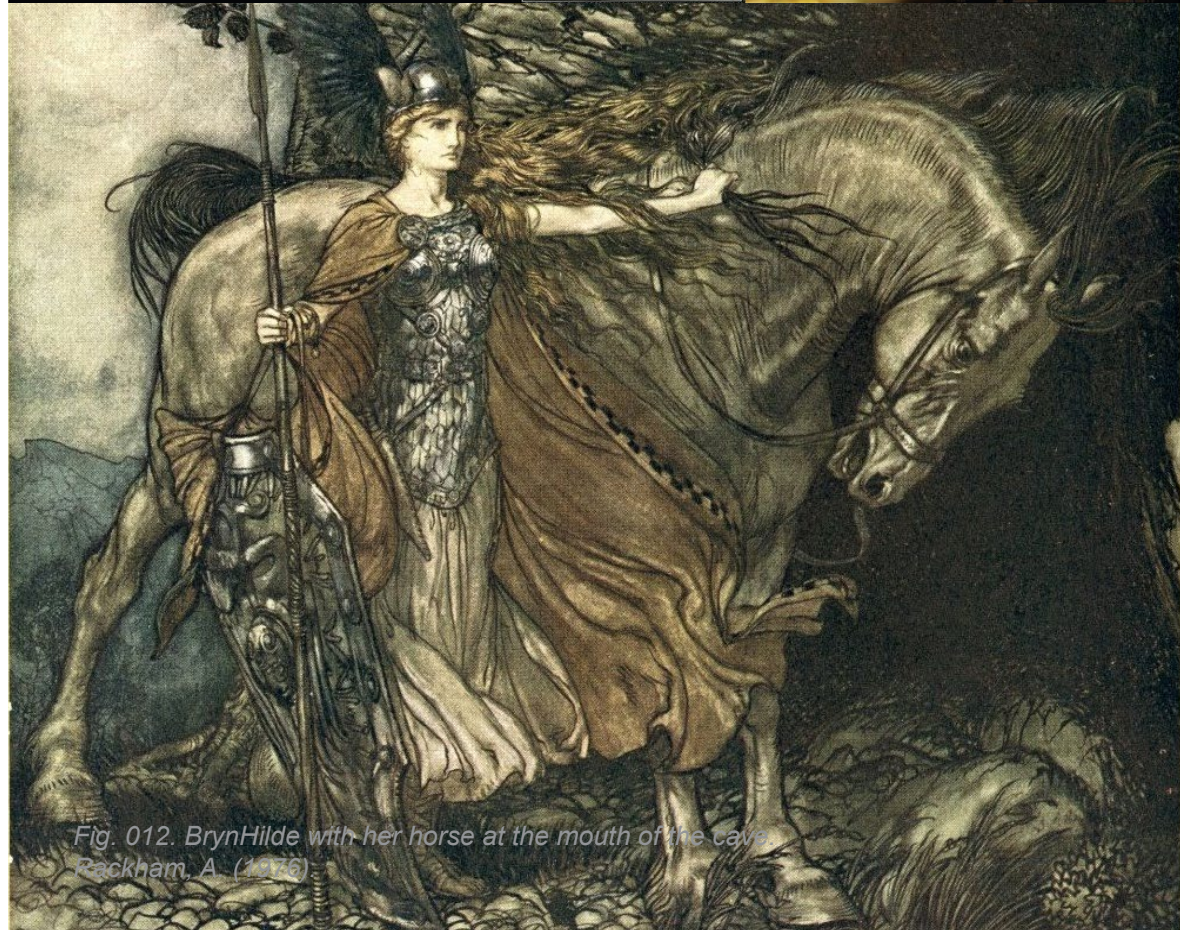
1930: J.R.R. Tolkien: The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun

2004: Dark Kingdom: The Dragon King

Influences:

- King Arthur
- Sleeping Beauty
- Romeo and Juliet
- J.R.R. Tolkiens: The Lord Of The Rings
- Star Wars

*Fig. 011. Volsunga Analysis 2. Denton*



Additional challenges for a positive retelling of the Volsung has come through the appropriation of aspects and symbols from the story by various white nationalist groups. The story of Sigurd particularly was used by the Nazis as an example of German racial supremacy. Franz Stassen produced a series of artworks as Nazi propaganda that depicted Sigurd as the ideal male (Wax, 2019), based on Wagner's *Der ring des Nibelungen* who was said to have been Hitler's favorite composer. In this use they focused on Sigurd's early life but conveniently ignore the second part of the story, of Sigurd's fall and Brynhild saving him from the unconscious depths.

Throughout my project I have endeavoured to reject these representations and avoid any symbolism that has been appropriated by such groups to ensure that my work cannot be interpreted or appropriated thusly. I want to return the original central motivation for Wagner's work, which as Roger Scruton argues, "is not German nationalism, racial supremacy, heroic triumph" as asserted by "his false friends and real enemies, but a boundless sympathy for innocent suffering, whoever the victim might be" (Scuton, 2016).

Through reading, listening and watching a wide variety of different versions and interpretations of the Volsunga myth I was able to build a good understanding of the story, its themes, ideas and characters but also the changes I would want to make to the narrative.



Fig. 013. Illustration for *Der Ring des Nibelungen*  
Strassen, F. (1913).

## 4.0 APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN

In *The Birth of Tragedy* while exploring how in the absence of religion humanity could create or agree on a unifying system of values, Nietzsche expressed human emotional and rational perspectives as the dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. (Nietzsche, 2000)

Broadly characterised, the Apollonian is our logical, more scientific, side, our left brain. It relates to reason, order, structure and rationality.

The Dionysian is our emotional, intuitive creative side, our right brain. It is the world of emotions, Art, passion, chaos and nature.

Nietzsche used the Greek gods as symbolic representations of these traits, Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, and his brother Dionysus, son of Zeus and Persephone, embodied a personification of these two ideas.

Nietzsche observed in 1882 that science had destroyed religion, and that without the objective value framework it provided, we are left in a purely relativist world with no external purpose or meaning. In a contemporary context, this statement is still relevant. Neuroexistentialism was defined by Gregg Caruso and Owen Flanagan in 2018 as part of their research into how a greater understanding of the mechanics of the brain has led to a growing societal existential crisis. Developments in our scientific understanding of how the brain functions further demonstrates that the brain is just a complex mechanical machine interacting in a deterministic way, undermining our ideas of self. This has led to a growing crisis of meaning, as individuals struggle with the consequence of a subjective deterministic worldview with no free agency, objective value hierarchy, and no perceived meaning to their lives (Caruso & Flanagan, 2018).

Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy* that through experiences of the Dionysian you could sense a “primordial unity” that could balance Apollonian rationality and point towards some underlying meaning (Nietzsche, 2000). He suggests that through the emotional rollercoaster the audience went through in experiencing an Athenian tragic play, the ancient Greeks were able to momentarily dip into their Dionysian side while maintaining their Apollonian structure. He argued that by witnessing a tragedy or admiring a sacrificial heroic deed we reaffirmed that the world was worth dying for (Nietzsche, 2000).

With *Das Ring Der Nibelungen* a 1876 operatic cycle retelling the story of the Volsunga Saga, Richard Wagner attempted to create the Dionysian experiences Nietzsche talked about, in doing so harbouring in a new age where Art and beauty could replace God and provide a fundamental sense of meaning for humanity (Scruton, 2016).

## **APOLLONIAN**

**ORDER  
REASON  
LOGIC  
SCIENCE  
FACTS  
LEFT BRAIN  
INDIVIDUAL**

## **DIONYSIAN**

**CHAOS  
CREATIVITY  
EMOTIONS  
RELIGION  
VALUES  
RIGHT BRAIN  
UNIVERSAL**

## ORDER AND CHAOS:

Psychologist Jordan Peterson recognises and describes the Apollonian and Dionysian archetypes in his book *Maps of Meaning* (1999) as Order and Chaos or the Known and Unknown. Expressed in the yin/yang symbol and personified by the Great Father and the Great Mother. He describes them as follows.

***“The known is explored territory, culture, apollonian control, superego, the conscience, the rational, the king, the patriarch, the wise old man and the tyrant, the giant, the ogre, the cyclops, order and authority and the crushing weight of tradition, dogma, the day sky, the countryman, the island, the heights, the ancestral spirits, and the activity of the dead.”*** (Peterson, 1999, p.104)

***The unknown is unexplored territory, nature, the unconscious, dionysian force, the id, the Great Mother goddess, the queen, the matrix, the matriarch, the container, the object to be fertilized, the source of all things, the strange, the unconscious, the sensual, the foreigner, the place of return and rest, the maw of the earth, the belly of the beast, the dragon, the evil stepmother, the deep, the fecund, the pregnant, the valley, the cleft, the cave, hell, death and the grave, the moon (ruler of the night and the mysterious dark), uncontrollable emotion, matter, and the earth.”*** (Peterson, 1999, p.103)

A contentious author, Peterson has faced criticism for his polarising representation of the Chaotic/Feminine archetype. I do agree and believe that Peterson has tended to focus more on the negative aspects of the Chaotic-Feminine and the positive aspect of the Orderly-Masculine, which is detrimental to a holistic representation of Brynhild's character. I believe his choosing of the terms Order and Chaos come loaded with a binary stigma. Nietzsche's terminology of

Apollonian and Dionysian presents both sides as morally equal and speaks to creative potential as the opposite to a rigid order and a duality of expression, rather than one side being more valued than the other. Nietzsche intended both the categories to lean into both their positive and negative sides

I also believe that Peterson misdiagnoses the state of current culture, he sees the rise of nihilism, depression and overbearing sense of meaninglessness as a symptom of a preponderance of Chaos and calls upon individuals to install Order in their lives and to take up the burden of responsibility as a way to find meaning.

In contrast I think it is almost the opposite, that because we as a society place greater value in our Apollonian side and undervalue our Dionysian side, it expresses itself in more destructive chaotic manifestations. That one answer to nihilism, depression and meaninglessness is to value the Dionysian more.

## 5.0 DIONYSIAN FILM MAKING

The filmmaking process itself can be characterised as Apollonian or Dionysian. With original, creative projects led by passionate directors striving to create works of art embodying the Dionysian spirit and a carefully planned formulaic and structured approach embodying the Apollonian. I would argue that too much of an Apollonian approach often results in a less powerful Dionysian experience.

This same Dionysian experiences that the Greeks found in their plays and Wagner attempted to create with his opera are experienced today in Film and TV. However as Christopher Saunders (2018) argues “Most films today may lack creativity and offer the same old cookie-cutter formula” that is driven by profit, at the “expense of what might actually be termed art” (para. 4). This adversity to risk, especially towards genre films such as science fiction and epic fantasy that typically require larger budgets and higher risks, has led to film audiences not getting truly creative, mythological and emotionally impacting Dionysian experiences that blockbuster films can provide.

The whole production process for Film and TV, our most consumed visual art forms, have become increasingly formulaic, with success only being measured by quantitative financial results. With only a few major studios competing in the blockbuster film space, sequels and big branded titles packed with explosions but devoid of content, are crowding out other more artistic works. Original scripts and passion based projects are increasingly being made “at Netflix after studios insisted on creative and financial concessions that the filmmakers weren’t willing to make”(LaPorte, 2019, para.11).

The rise of Netflix has enabled a new wave of more creative and Dionysian passion film-making outside of the stifling sphere of Hollywood influence, however budget, time restrictions and competition between streaming services has now generated a relegation back to a formulaic film-making approach.

Indie films that are allowed to experiment, push boundaries and seek to create works of art that move their audience, often provide a more impacting and lasting experience on their audience. In my experience it is these smaller indie productions, such as *Ex Machina* (2015) or *Donnie Darko* (2001) that more often provide an emotionally challenging experience, that prompts me to view the world through a new lens. They seem to be more honest artistic Dionysian expressions, whereas the majority of blockbusters merely provide a fun distraction but ultimately leave us feeling hollow and unfulfilled.

## APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN FILM PRODUCTIONS



Fig. 014. Apollonian & Dionysian Film Productions. Denton, E. (2020). Above is a selection of films that demonstrate either a formulaic process (Apollonian), or have been allowed to experiment and produce something with more artistic integrity (Dionysian).

This project explores the idea of presenting film pitch visualisations of the leading characters as works of Art. These character designs would set the visual language for the movie and could be released to the public as empathizable characters, for a very early teaser for the film. In producing pitch artworks that embody the same sort of Dionysian experience the movie itself hopes to elicit, the research suggests that we can provide an emotional argument to persuade producers and film executives to explore more risky narratives. Releasing these pre-visualisations to a greater audience could help generate a fan base and a consumer demand for the project so the end market is more reliable.

Concept designers taking the role of film visionaries is starting to happen more within the industry. One of the earliest examples are John Howe and Alan Lee visualisations for *The Lord of the Rings* (1955). While these were not intended to be works for a film pitch, their success and audience approval ultimately helped convince the studios that there was an appetite for the films. Ash Thorp, a prominent concept artist and aspiring film director, has started to produce and release inspirational artworks for a potential original *Star Wars* film, his intention is to both generate a fan base surrounding his work and also to signify to studio executives that his artistic vision is unique and worth taking a chance on.

In a world where “God is dead” (Nietzsche, 1974), it is hard to rationalise the creation of beautiful and artistic films over safe films that guarantee a profit. To make this argument against purely rational financial decisions perhaps we can use Art itself.



Fig. 015. Gandalf returns to Hobbiton. Howe, J. (1913).



Fig. 016. 007- At first light. Thorp, A & Leroy, F. (2020).

## 6.0 APOLLONIAN & DIONYSIAN CHARACTERS

Dionysian and Apollonian duality is core to the design of character archetypes, and an understanding of the visual language of these archetypes can be used in character design. The social value of character archetypes was first analysed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung in 1919. Erich Neumann (2014) explains how Jung argued that certain thought patterns and images are ordered within the human psyche in an a priori manner. One such a priori structure is character archetypes, where characters seem to be broadly categorized into similar groups cross culturally and throughout human history.

James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1923) and later Joseph Campbell in the *Hero with a 1000 faces* (2004) argue respectively that these characters act out similar stories across a wide variety of cultures. Some key character archetypes are the old man, the orphan, the king, the mother. While these categories are broad it is striking how similar these figures are to each other within popular narratives.

Regardless of whether these archetypes exist a priori, humans have a capacity for understanding the complexities of characters and throughout our storytelling history characters that personify complex ideas have been used as an effective communication method.

The visual depictions of these archetypes and their symbols convey a lot of information in shorthand form that enables the audience to understand the core values and motivations of a character quickly, and can be useful tools to use in character design. Through an understanding of archetypes we can compare a story's characters to ensure a wide variety of different characters.

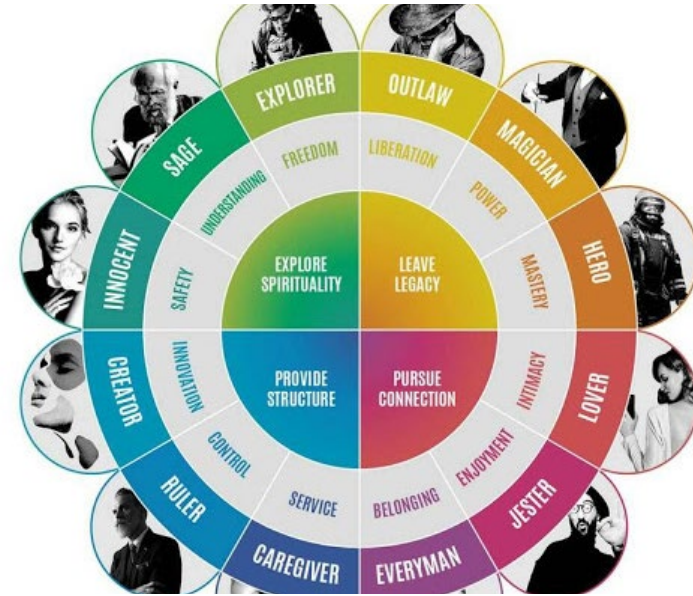


Fig. 017. Brand Archetypes. Cass, J. (2019).

### APOLLO AND DIONYSUS



Fig. 018. Apollo & Dionysus. Denton, E. (2020).

I have compared traditional representations of the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus. Some of the key symbols found from this analysis are, for Dionysus; chalice of Wine, grapes and vine leaves, the feline cheetah, Goats/horns, flute, sexual passion and religious ecstasy. For Apollo, the Sun or halo, the lyre (or harp), laurel wreath, the Raven, Archery, a chariot and the golden mean. These symbols are the visual language that has been used to communicate the complexities of the two characters and provide context and direction for future representations of these concepts (Fisher, 2020).

The Apollonian and Dionysian archetype exists in both a positive and a negative form. The Apollonian can be the Tyrannical King with his strict laws that everyone must follow believing only he is correct, or it can be represented as the wise old man, teaching reason and needed lessons to those he meets. Similarly the Dionysian can be represented as an evil witch using her creative powers to sow chaos across the world (a more primor example would be the dragon) or it can be the archetype of Mother Earth, the caring creative energy that promotes life itself and allows the world to grow (Peterson, 2016).

Exploring this further I have found both positive and negative examples of Apollonian and Dionysian character design within film and TV.

## APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN NEGATIVE ARCHETYPES



Fig. 019. A & D negative archetypes. Denton, E. (2020).

## APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN POSITIVE ARCHETYPES

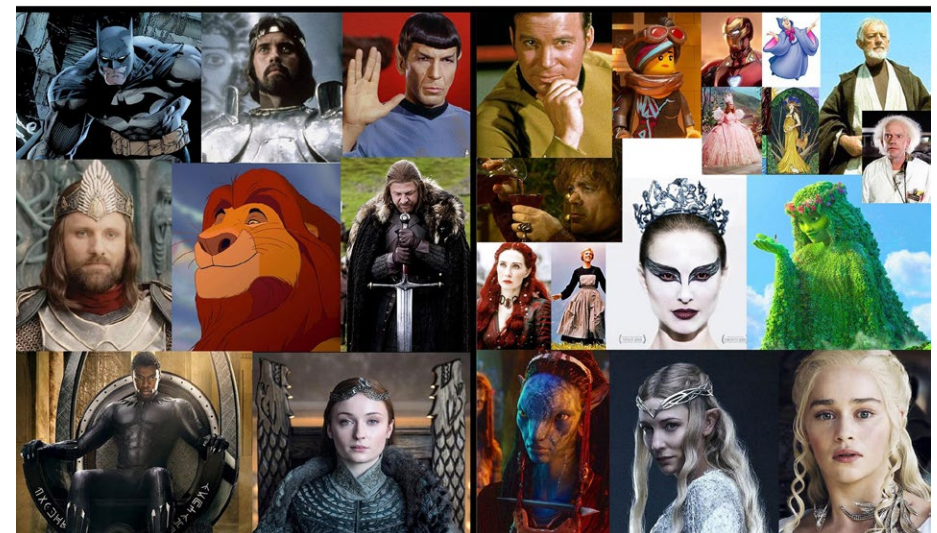


Fig. 020. A & D positive archetypes. Denton, E. (2020).



## 7.0 CASE STUDIES

I initially gravitated towards interpreting the Volsunga myth in a science fiction world as I felt there are a number of elements that could translate really well, e.g. the valkyries riding flying horses. But I wanted to have a closer look at examples of Mythic stories told within a Science Fiction world, from an Apollonian and Dionysian perspective. I chose *Star Wars - A New Hope* (1977), as it was heavily inspired by Joseph Campbell's (2004) *Hero's Journey* and Hideaki Anno's *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) as this science fiction animated TV series had a particularly strong impact on me personally.

### CASE STUDY STAR WARS – EPISODE IV – A NEW HOPE

On reviewing *Star Wars* from an Apollonian and Dionysian perspective it became apparent that the bad guys can be characterised as Apollonian, a systematic and orderly Empire, with their tyrannical leader Darth Vader. The good guys are a Dionysian ragtag group of young Rebels, quick, adaptive and creative. What makes the Rebels succeed is not superior science and logic, but rather hope, courage and friendship.

By contrasting the futuristic level of technology and scientific progress with the magic of the force, *Star Wars* and its avatar of the Apollonian, Darth Vader explicitly states that the unknown creative force of the universe is more powerful. Showing that no matter how far technology goes there is still a place for intuition and the creative unknown.



Fig. 023. Darth Vader. Lucas, G. (1977).

**“Don’t be too proud of this technological terror you’ve constructed. The ability to destroy a planet is insignificant next to the power of the Force.”**

**DARTH VADER**

(Lucas, 2006)

Star Wars has filled a deep hole within the psyche of modern culture and at a time when most of the global religions are in decline the Jedi order is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. In a 2012 UK census 176,632 people identified as Jedi knights (Booth, 2012). While this is obviously partially in jest, it still speaks to the massive cult appeal of Star Wars and potential a gravitation towards Dionysian film experiences that can provide a feeling of communal identity in the absence of religion.

## CASE STUDY NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

I wanted to look further at *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, a 1995 cult classic Japanese Anime, from an Apollonian and Dionysian lens, because of its incredible science fiction designs, its use of symbology and because of its emotional impact both on me as an individual and culture as a whole.

In *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, God and his Angels are the story’s antagonists, trying to wipe humanity out and only science and ingenuity can save humanity from that end. From a Apollonian and Dionysian perspective this is the exact inverse of *Star Wars*, with the Apollonian perspective being cast as positive and the Dionysian portrayed as negative.



Fig. 024. Berserk Unit 01. Anno, H. (1996).

The continued use of symbolism and references to religious texts adds to the pervasive sense of meaning behind Neon Genesis Evangelion, which has inspired an almost cult- like fascination with trying to decipher its true meaning. This referencing makes the world of neon genesis seem complete and almost an extension of our own world. It gives the story a real sense of meaning as if buried in its core are the secrets of the universe. This inspires me to infuse my own work with a layer of symbolic references that allude to the layers of thinking behind the designs.

The visual representation of the angels as both monstrous and beautiful has been a great influence of my designs for Fafnir and Lilly and shows that dangerous chaos comes in many forms.



Fig. 025. Neon Genesis Evangelion, Anno, H., (1996)

The overall take away from these two case studies was the realisation that in popular narratives we often see the Apollonian and the Dionysian pitched against each other in battle, with one side being portrayed as wholly good and the other wholly evil. Within the Volsunga narrative I think there is the opportunity to emphasise the idea that already exists within the narrative that both aspects can be forces of evil or forces of good, and instead of glorifying either maybe we should look towards a mix of both for a brighter future.

This idea is further backed up by Jordan Peterson (2017) who states that there are two types of heroes, those that battle the “dragon of chaos”, win its treasure and shares it with the broader society and the heroes that stand up to a corrupt state, forcing it to be reconstructed. “Because the two great dangers to human beings are unprotected exposure to catastrophes of the natural world and subjection to tyranny”, he claims that the “ultimate Hero is the person who that reconstructs the structure of the state by using the information he gathers by going out into the unknown” (@52:00).

By choosing to set a narrative in the present or in an imagined future you may in one way reduce its historical authority but you might also increase its perceived relevance to modern society. Reviewing *Star Wars* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* has solidified my decision to retell Volsunga in a science fiction world. The archetypal visual language of the contrasting character design between the Empire and the Jedi knights is a direct influence on my imagining of Odin and Lilly’s families.

## 8.0 VISUAL STORYTELLING IN ART

This research seeks to create engaging, emotional images that captivate the audience and leave them wanting to know more about the story. The artworks themselves need to elicit the same sort of emotional Dionysian experience in the audience that is the intended experience from the finished movie. Symbolism, Composition and Colour within the design of my character images will be key to elicit that emotional response. Below I examine artworks that I have found to be particularly impacting and specifically explore how they have used these visual story telling techniques.

I have always been captivated by the artworks of the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood specifically William Waterhouse and also those of the Art Nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha. Their reaction against the industrial world and a Rousseauian attempt to return to nature embodies the heart of the Dionysian impulse and serves as key visual precedents for my visual style.

### PAINTING EMOTION

The Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood, sought to rebel against the rigid constraints of what the academy considered good art by looking at examples from before Raphael (Trippi, 2005).

William Waterhouse was a British painter born in 1849, the same year that Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt established the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and first exhibited their works at the Royal Academy. By the time Waterhouse adopted the themes and style of the Pre-Raphaelites their style had waned but he drew heavily from their legacy and was greatly inspired by similar mythic and religious sources (Trippi, 2005).

Waterhouse communicates a lot of story detail and emotion within his artworks, his carefully considered compositions, expressive poses and use of symbolism adds many layers of readable depth to his images. Viewing these artworks is in many ways similar to a cinematic experience, where you are drawn in to the story moment and feel a real emotional empathy for the characters.

A key image of merit is Waterhouse's *Circe offering the cup to Ulysses*. Key character, the witch Circe is dominant and straight backed on a throne hemmed with lions, she is sphinx-like trying to control her visitors with a single sip from her cup. Waterhouse has her framed by a bay laurel mirror as her father was Helios/Apollo, that acts as a halo around her head. One of Waterhouse's favorite symbols is to denote magic acts - as represented by the tripod burning incense. Colour is also crucial to Waterhouse's storytelling - Decaying purple flowers scatter alludes to Circe's failed desires to royalty. He often pairs items to add further depth to the symbolism. In this case a poisonous toad seated beside the flowers alludes to aspirations of Royalty having poisoned her character. Background details are left suggestive and unfinished in the style of nonfinito and express the symbolist belief that not all phenomena can or should be rendered clearly ("Circe Offering" n.d.).



Fig. 026. *Circe offering the cup to Odysseus*. Waterhouse, W. (1891).

## ART AS ADVERTISEMENT

Alphonse Mucha practiced in Paris during the height of the Art Nouveau movement and his works have come to epitomise the movement. Mucha created many posters and advertisements by creating artworks that capture the essence of their product, personifying them and presenting them as a complete work of art that seamlessly integrates commercial aspects of typographical elements into elaborate decorative borders and more dionysian flavoured illustrations. He created whimsical figurative artworks that capture an emotion or specific idea and great care has been taken with the pose of the figure to correctly express his chosen idea. To achieve this he photographed his model repeatedly until he captured the precise emotion he wanted (Ulmer, 2007).

In this poster for the theatre production of Medee starring Sarah Bernhardt we see Medea, bloodied dagger in hand, towering tall above the limp corpses of her children. The golden sun setting behind her head acts as a halo illuminating her and drawing the eye to her face and her eyes wild with horror. The above mosaic shapes create a graphic border reminiscent of the play's setting in Greek antiquity and provide structure for the typographical elements (Ulmer, 2007). Similar to Waterhouse, Mucha has used the colour purple and adorned with purple irises, both symbols of royalty, however her snake formed bracelet speaks to her poisonous deceit (Sidelnikova, n.d.). In combining Art and advertisement Mucha was able to emotionally captivate his audience and suggest an alignment between the value of the product with the value of his artworks. By treating the pitch character designs for my project as valued works of art I hope to similarly signify the artistic value of the film itself. Many of Mucha's art works are in this iconic very tall format, which lets a standing figure take up the majority of the canvas space and be the images primary focus, I have taken this as inspiration for the format of my own works.



Fig. 027. Medee. Mucha, A. (1898)

## TEXTILES

Textiles are a key mode for symbolist representation within both Mucha and Waterhouse's work. Both dress their models in lush fabrics and sheer silks, with attention to fabric details a major part of their works. The textile artist William Morris a key figure of the The Arts and Crafts movement was a Dionysian reaction against the Apollonian industrialisation of Britain and was also an attempt to get back to nature and a more traditional hand made craft world. His designs focused heavily on flowers and the natural world, weaving symbolism and varying themes into each of his fabrics. Morris reluctantly agreed to using industrial machines to produce his textiles but he endeavoured to maintain the quality and feel of hand made products made with care and love (Parry, 2013).

Morris's rejection of the industrial world but his eventual return to industrial manufacturing is an example of how Apollonian processes can be used to produce a Dionysian result, if the intention and integrity is maintained. This has led me to be more confident in what could be considered Apollonian techniques and the use of 3D modeling within my project methodology.



Fig. 028. Compton. Morris, W. (1913)

## SYMBOLISM

By referencing cultural and emotionally charged symbols, artworks can tell complex stories and bring the viewer on an emotional journey. Semiotics, signs and symbols reference any part of culture that can be emotionally or intellectually understood through denotation or connotation. Visual language shorthand references past experiences and knowledge to convey visual metaphors and elicit emotional responses. Common symbolism references the natural world like spiders and snakes to convey danger and poison. A lion to suggest courage, trees can suggest growth and stability. Often symbolic interpretation is very subjective and can be read in multiple ways depending on context, often drawing on a history of previous cultural references. In this way a lion has come to symbolise courage and not danger or strength (Battistini, 2005).

By leveraging symbolic imagery within character design and presentation artworks the audience is able to visually understand the character in greater depth, requiring less screen time or exposition to explain their motivations and create empathy.

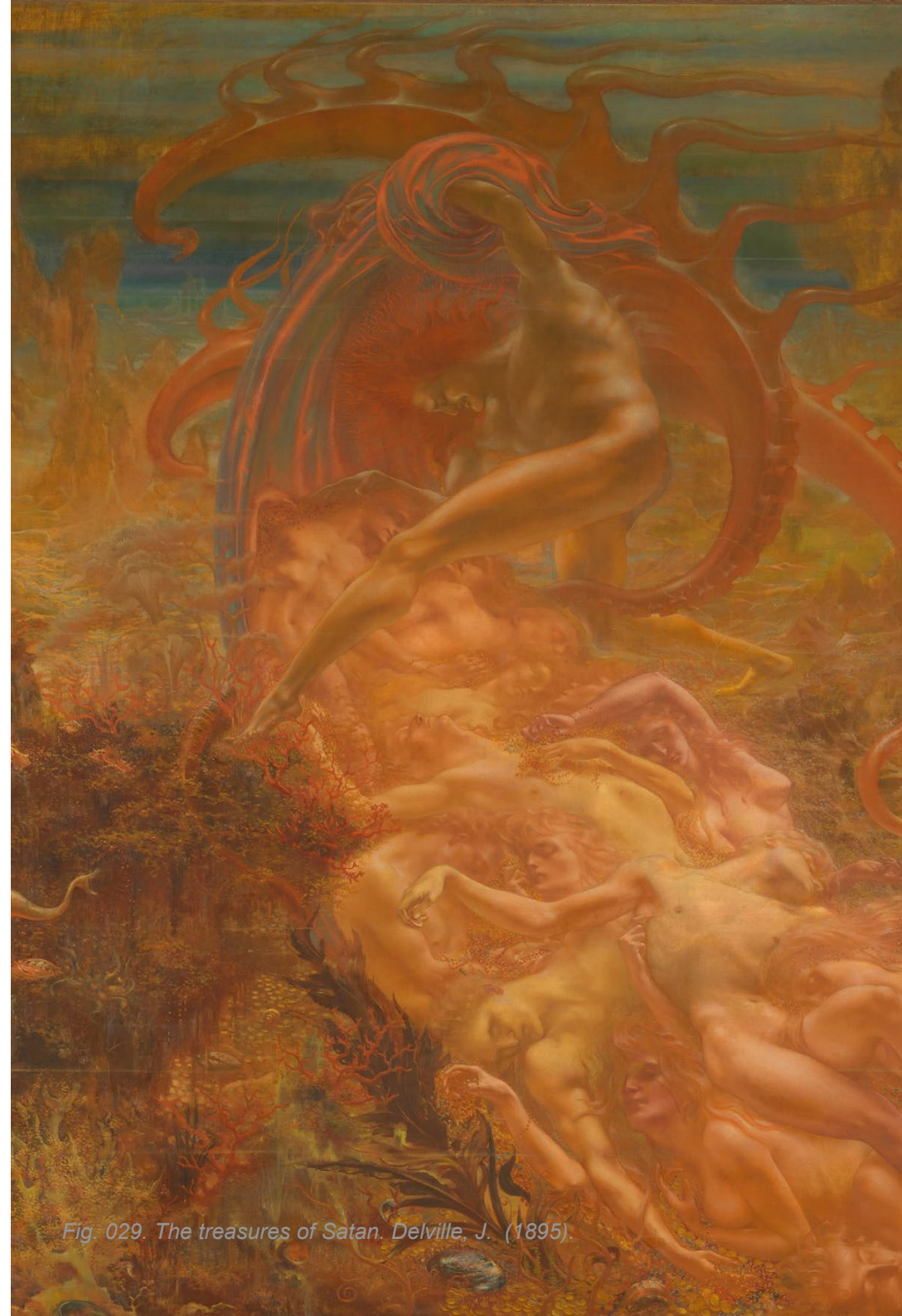
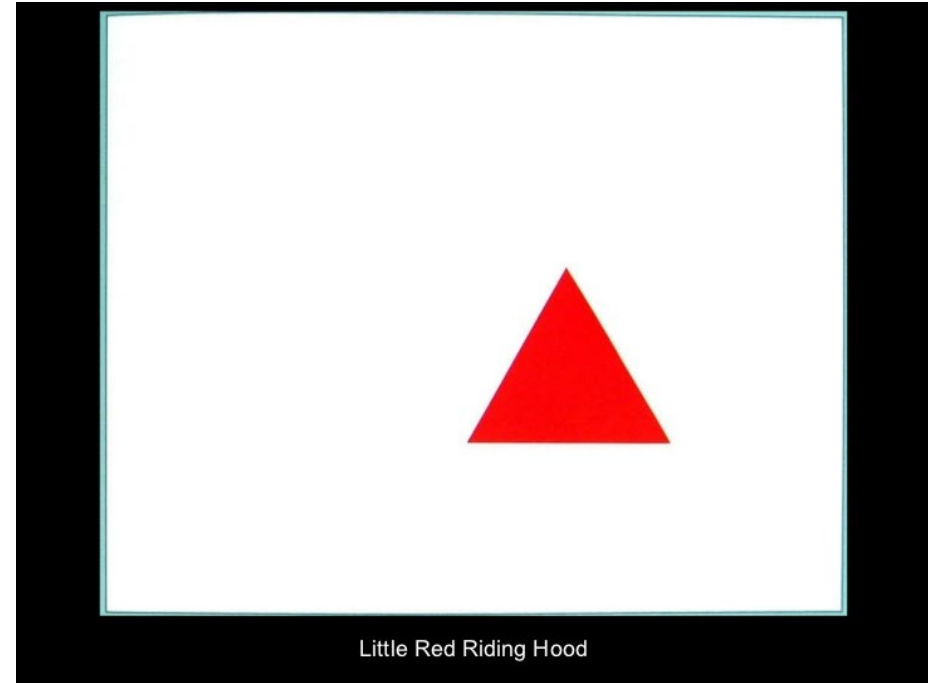


Fig. 029. *The treasures of Satan*. Delville, J. (1895).

## COMPOSITION

To further understand how to set up and design artistic compositions I took the Katz Atelier fundamentals of composition course. Over this course Atelier director Matt Katz explained how “compositions inform not only narrative story telling but more importantly enhance emotional impact by exploring the subconscious cultural biases of patterns, shapes and colours and interlinking their combinations” (Katz, 2020). This is the essence of Gestalt theory which describes the way in which humans will perceive a “unified whole” before we see individual parts (Arnheim, 2004).

Molly Bang (2000) describes how basic compositional shapes and the structure of a picture affect our emotional response. How shape, scale, colour and placement on a page in relation to other objects changes how we view an object and what emotional significance it has. She describes a technique for arranging a composition with simple forms and analysing its emotional response. For example viewing a red triangle on a white page as Little Red Riding Hood we can ascribe the attributes of ‘alertness, warmth, strength, stability, balance, vitality and with a sense of some danger’(p.8). In this manner we can design simplified versions of compositions that elicit appropriate emotional responses before going into the further details of the characters.



*Fig. 030. Little Red Riding Hood. Molly, B. (2000).*

# COLOUR

Colour is an important part of visual communication and can help the audience understand the emotional intention of an image or specific object. Colour can denote temperature and make a character appear warm or cold emotionally. Beyond Individual colours having specific emotional and cultural symbolic significance combining colours together to create analogous, complementary or triadic colour palettes can make an image feel harmonious, energetic or discordant. Contrasting colour can be a great way to provide hierarchy to an image and direct the viewer's eye to areas of most importance. Creative use of colour can enhance the emotional and symbolic meaning of an image and can be used to further reinforce composition elements.

Jame Gurney states that "colour adds emotional flavour" to an image, without colour it is still possible to understand what is going on in the image but you don't feel it (Gurney, 2010, p.136).

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The works of William Waterhouse and Alphonse Mucha provide examples of how effective use of the visual storytelling principles of Symbolism, Composition and Colour can create powerful and emotionally engaging works of Art that elicit a Dionysian experience. By referencing these examples and using these principles I hope to create character designs and artworks that are similarly impacting and can convince studio executives to take a chance on this project.

<b>RED</b>	visceral, bold, courageous, energetic stimulates appetite and the pituitary gland
<b>ORANGE</b>	friendly, cheerful, confident, fun, vitality lighter shades appeal to upscale market
<b>YELLOW</b>	optimism, clarity, warmth, positivism eyes see yellow first, great for POS displays
<b>GREEN</b>	balance, harmony, health, growth, freshness deep greens associated with prestige
<b>BLUE</b>	trustworthy, strong, dependable, secure preferred by men, popular in offices
<b>PURPLE</b>	wise, creative, imaginative, royalty lavender evokes nostalgia, sentimentality
<b>BLACK</b>	prestige, serious, bold, classic, powerful works well for expensive products

Fig. 031. Colour logos and emotion. Sortfolio. (n.d.).

## 9.0 VOLSUNGA 2200

(Please read Appendix 1:A for a written story synopsis)

By retelling mythological stories we are drawing on a foundational history of knowledge and experience that has coalesced over many generations and in large part forms the basis for our symbolic and ethical understanding of the world around us. Modern adaptations partake in the continued evolution of the stories and can be updated with modern social perspectives (Peterson, 1999).

To partake in the continued evolution of the Volsunga myth I have changed the story in several key places, while endeavouring to keep true to the core of the story and its thematic significance. I have adapted and emphasised the characters to reflect their core values. Some of the key character names have been changed while leaving the characters recognisable, this is an attempt to reduce influence from the negative historical associations of retelling of the Volsunga saga, and to enable the adaptation to stand on its own legs. Brynhilda becomes Bryn, Grimhild is Lilly and Gudrun becomes Genevieve.

I have endeavoured to keep the character of Bryn strong and passionate, being epitomised by the conflict between love and duty. She has become much more active in Sig's murder resulting in a highly emotional scene where he dies in her arms confessing his eternal love to her. This emphasises her character's evolution from a slave bound to Odin's law, to a passionate self fulfilled moral actor. Through the knowledge of love she finally finds liberation for herself and humanity through an ultimate act of sacrifice.

To further heighten the exploration of the Apollonian and the Dionysian I have positioned Lilly, the witch mother of King Gunther and Princess Genevieve as Odin's equal and rival. For Lilly's character I took

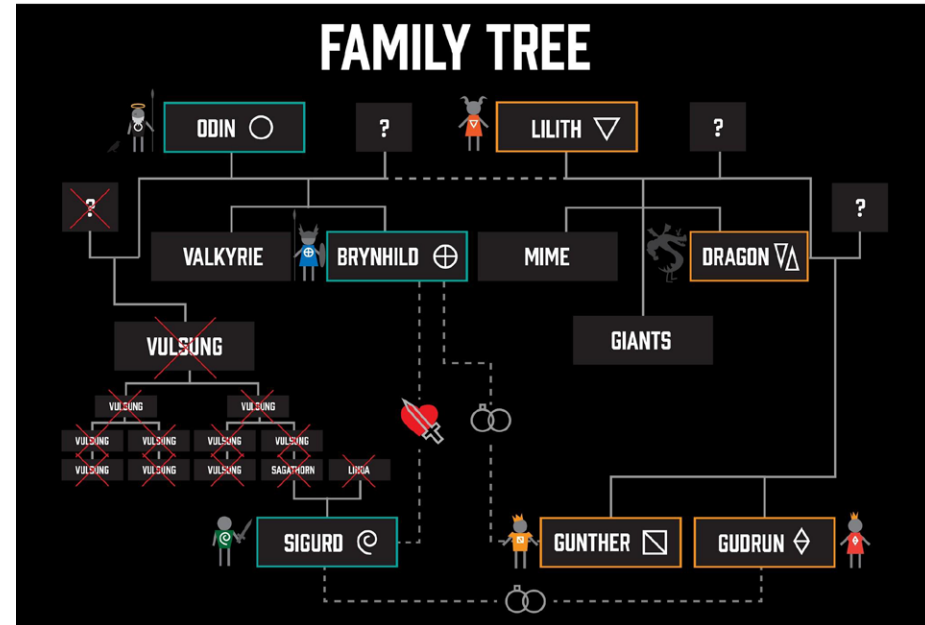


Fig. 032. Family Tree. Denton, E. (2020).

inspiration from the biblical figure of Lilith, a favourite muse of the Pre-Raphaelites and the first woman in the Babylonian Talmud (500). All records of the Volsunga are from a post Christian period with most of the authors being Christian themselves so the Volsunga as we know it has already been Christianised. Therefore I have chosen to play on the concept of the old and new gods being in conflict.

Odin and Lilly are Apollonian and Dionysian opposites but are equally tyrannical forces, leaving it to Sig and Bryn to develop both sides of their personalities and find a middle balance where they can find a path forward towards a better future.

This ultimately leads to Sig killing Odin in the battle to force Bryn to marry Gunther and Bryn killing Lilly in the final climax before her self immolation on Sig's funeral pyre.

Part of the need for continual evolution of myths is that our knowledge, perspectives and the values of society change, things that used to be commonplace are now unacceptable. I have chosen to remove certain elements from the story such as Sig's rape of Bryn, which removes her super human strength as it is not a relevant representation of her contemporary character. However I have kept the name Volsung even though it refers to Sig not Bryn, as an intentional audience misdirection setting up Sig as the hero only for him to fall to treachery and for Bryn to rise up and become an ultimate savior of humanity.

The killing of Odin and the focus on Bryn's hero status should prevent the adaptation being used by white nationalist groups which often are maligned with misogynist and gender stereotyped world views.

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As part of writing the story I have developed key diagrams that place the story on a five act Shakespearean tragic structure. This really helped me form a cohesive perspective of the story and helped me identify the key locations and moments within the story.

# VOLSUNGA 2200 STORY DIAGRAM

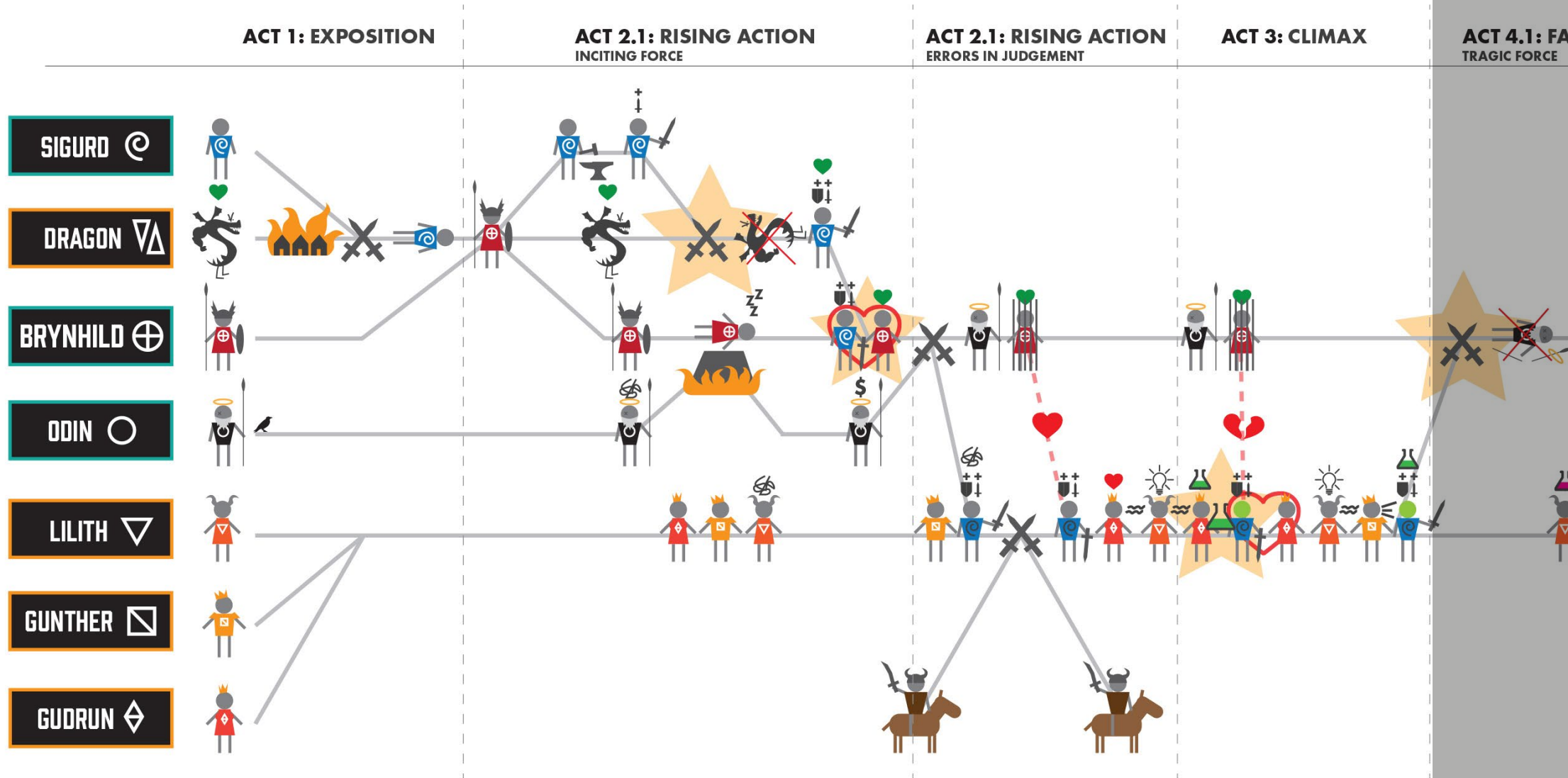


Fig. 033. Volsunga 2200 story diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

# VOLSUNGA 2200 STORY DIAGRAM

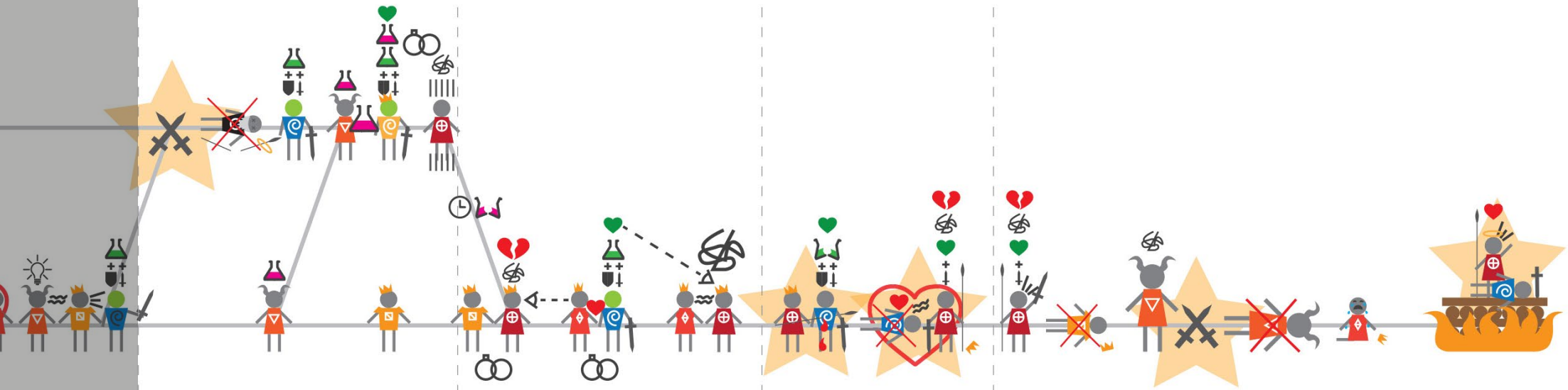
CLIMAX

**ACT 4.1: FALLING ACTION**  
TRAGIC FORCE

**ACT 4.2: FALLING ACTION**  
FINAL SUSPENSE

**ACT 5.1: RESOLUTION**  
CATASTROPHE

**ACT 5.2: RESOLUTION**  
GLIMPSE OF RESTORED ORDER



## 10.0 DESIGN METHODOLOGY

Looking at design methodology through an Apollonian and Dionysian lens there is a parallel between two frameworks. A Waterfall design process and an Agile design process, which can be further characterised as Intelligent design or Evolutionary design.

In the Waterfall model, often favoured by engineers, systematic analysis reveals a preferred solution, for which a detailed plan is developed before being executed to the letter. It is often associated with a heavily hierarchical system with the majority of the team following the orders of a single leader.

In the Dionysian Agile model, several possible solutions are resolved quickly to a testable level. From the results of these tests results can be compared and the better solution developed further, or you might get information that causes you to change the initial brief. It's very much a trial and error process where the solution evolves over several iterations. This more Dionysian creative process enables you to be more experimental and explore solutions that might be seen as more risky. Nicholas Nassim Taleb (2012) suggests that in complex or rapidly changing environments an Agile approach can reach a better solution faster than a more traditional waterfall approach.

This has led to the widespread adoption of Agile design methodologies in technology and software development since being initially defined in 2001 (Richet, 2013), however the film industry has been slow to adopt Agile principles. Several small start ups have recently started promoting an Agile approach to filmmaking “creating film and TV series prototypes, testing them with audiences, iterating and improving them and testing again until they’re good enough to make.” Simon Miller (2019) of New Forrest Films claims that an agile approach to filmmaking provides a methodology to be “able to assess

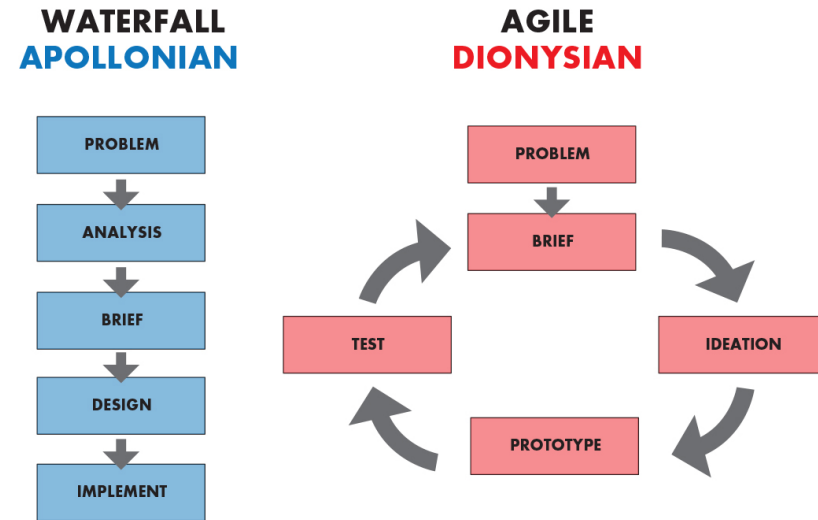


Fig. 034. Waterfall Agile. Denton, E. (2020).

the risk that the outcome will not be good.” Good not only in terms of “commercial success . . . [but] how well the creative ambitions of the story were realised, how moving, how meaningful, how worthwhile, how astonishing it is” (para. 4). They are currently using animated storyboards and similar techniques to prototype films however potentially concept artworks could become part of the prototyping and testing process.

In this research I have looked at the Character design process through the lens of an Agile/Evolutionary/Dionysian and Waterfall/Intelligent/Apollonian Design process. Designers naturally start with an open, experimental, blue sky ideation phase, which can take shape in an informal process. This is followed by a more rigid analysis of the criteria and functional requirements. This mimics a Dionysian phase followed by an Apollonian Phase. It is perhaps this dance between the two different frameworks that enables us to create solutions that are both beautiful and that function.

With my design approach I haven’t attempted to control which methods I use while designing specific characters but I have tried to always keep in mind when something is an Apollonian approach or a Dionysian one and tried to mix it up and go back and forth between the different perspectives.

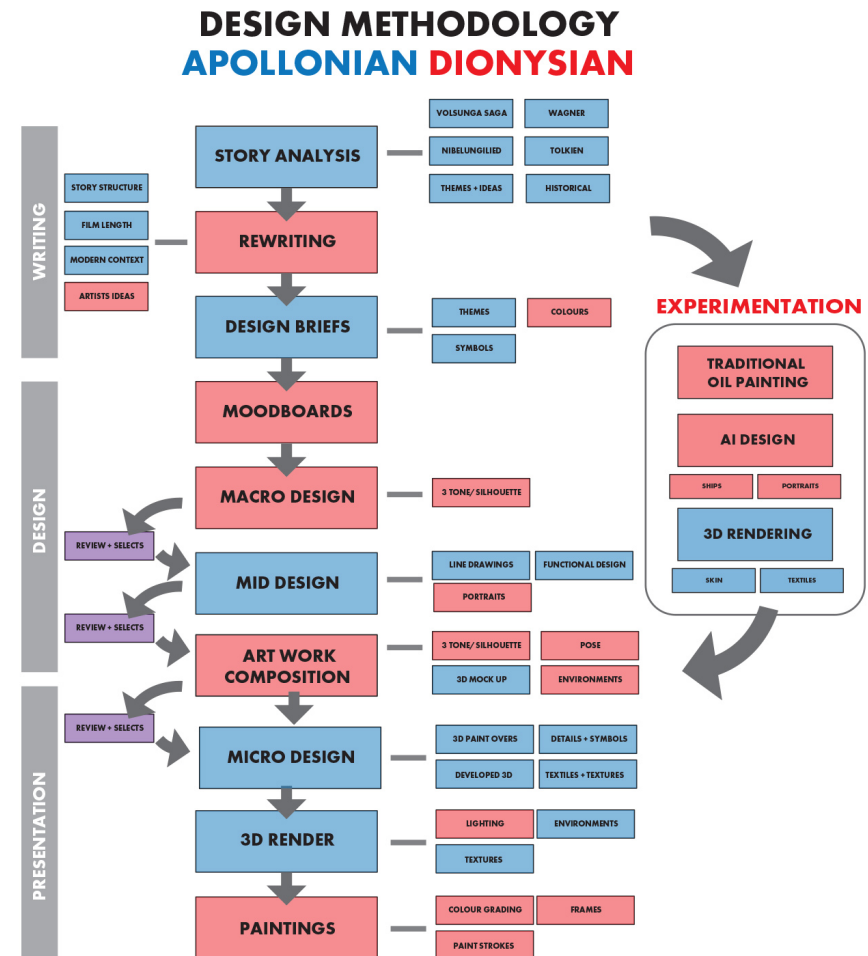


Fig. 035. Design methodology diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.1 CHARACTER BRIEF CREATION

The first critical step to designing the 6 main characters of the volsunga narrative, was to really understand who they each are and develop a design brief.

Because I wanted to create a single work of promotional art for each character I also had to select which key moments and costume from the story would show off the character best, keeping in mind how much of the story I wanted to give away. For example I knew that I wanted to design Bryn in her full Valkyrie costume even though for the majority of the movie she does not wear it, but it is her most archetypal look and primes the audience to her strong but troubled character.

Mapping the emotional journey and costume changes through the story helped to isolate their high and low. With Bryn you can see she goes on an emotional roller coaster, being punished by Odin, falling in love, being betrayed before finally taking her revenge and self immolating on Sig's funeral pyre.

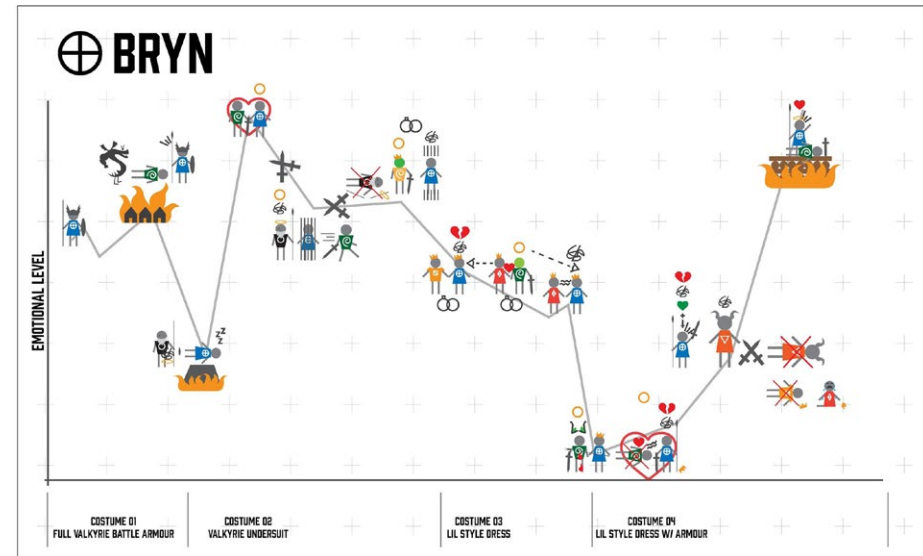


Fig. 036. Bryn story diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

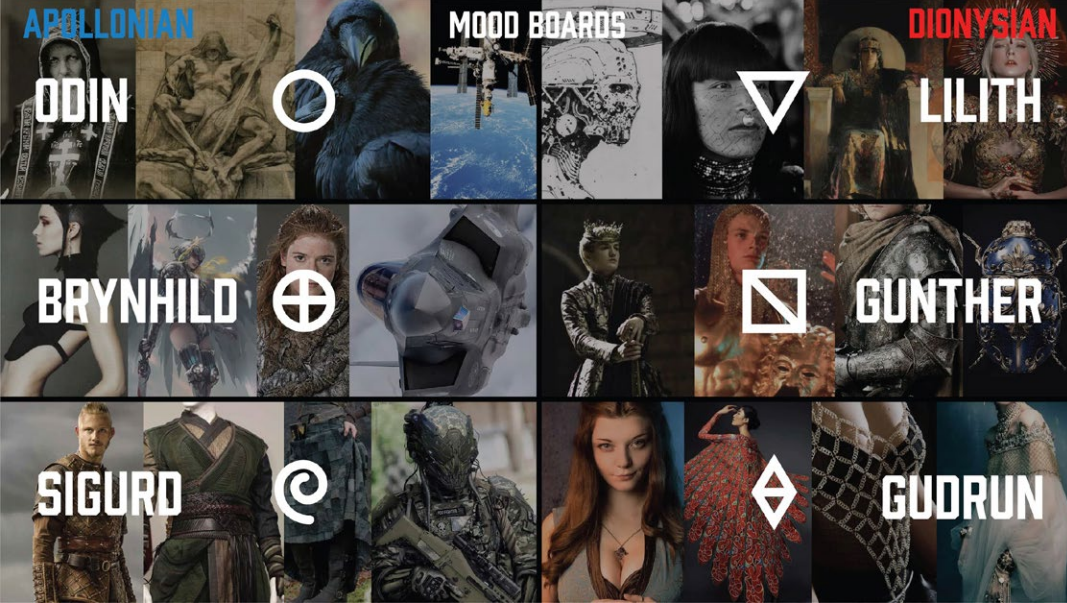
# APOLLONIAN

## CHARACTER CHART

After reading a wide variety of different versions of the source material, rewriting my own version of the story and mapping out each character's emotional journey I was able to develop a comprehensive understand of each character and I created this diagram so I could quickly see and compare each character, their motivations, personality types, general colour palette and initial cultural references. This enabled me to quickly compare and contrast all of the characters and ensure they express a variety of archetypes and motivations and quickly develop a system of colours, symbols and cultural references.

	ODIN ○	BRYNHILD ⊕	SIGURD @	LILITH ▽	GUDRUN ⚡	GUNTHER ⊠	DRAGON ∇
	ORDER SCIENCE GEOMETRIC			CHAOS RELIGION ORGANIC			
COLOUR REF							
CLAN COLOUR							
CHARACTER COLOUR	ODIN ○	BRYNHILD ⊕	SIGURD @	LILITH ▽	GUDRUN ⚡	GUNTHER ⊠	DRAGON ∇
CULTURES							
	ODIN ○	BRYNHILD ⊕	SIGURD @	LILITH ▽	GUDRUN ⚡	GUNTHER ⊠	DRAGON ∇
ARCHETYPE	TYRANICAL FATHER	REBEL/ ORPHAN	HERO	OVERBEARING MOTHER	SEDUCTRESS	CHILD	DRAGON
PERSONALITY	INTP LOGICIAN	ISFJ DEFENDER	ESTP ENTREPRENEUR	INTJ ARCHITECT	ESFP ENTERTAINER	ENFJ PROTAGONIST	N/A
MOTIVATION	LAW/TRUTH	JUSTICE/LOVE	GLORY	CONTROL	DESIRE	HEDONISM	GREED
ANIMAL	RAVEN	RAVEN	WOLF	SPIDER	PEACOCK	BEETLE	
SYMBOL	SUN	FIRE	WATER	LILLY/MOON	ROSE	THISTLE	
LITERATURE	GOD	ANTIGONE JULIET	KING ARTHUR	EVIL QUEEN (DISNEY)	CIRCE MORGANA	KING JOFFERY	DRAGON
TRAIT	ORDER	HONOUR	COURAGE	CONTROL	DESIRE	NARCISSISM	

Fig. 037. Character chart. Denton, E. (2020).



# DIONYSIAN

## 10.2 MOOD BOARDS

I had developed a good understanding of the characters and their specific costumes, I collected reference images and tried to settle on a style for the project, exploring high fantasy and hard science fiction. I knew from my research that Science Fiction was going to work well for an Apollonian visual language but I still wanted to explore a more fantasy style for the more Dionysian characters and was looking for a way to combine the two. Initially my reference was from other artists that inspired me, but as I started to settle down on a look for each character my reference became more and more focused on real world images that I could draw shape language from.



Fig. 038 Mood boards layout. Denton, E. (2023)

## DIONYSIAN

### 10.3 EXPERIMENTATION: TRADITIONAL PORTRAITS

I wanted to experiment with a fully traditional (Dionysian) concept art method so early on using oils I painted concept portraits for my characters from live models. This ended up being more of a fun practice rather than a pivotal process in my designs but focusing on the characters face so early on really gave a sense of understanding and empathy for the characters and some of the design motifs made it through into my final designs. I also experimented with the same process but in a digital medium.



Fig. 039. Sig Oil. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 040. Odin Oil. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 041. Lilly Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

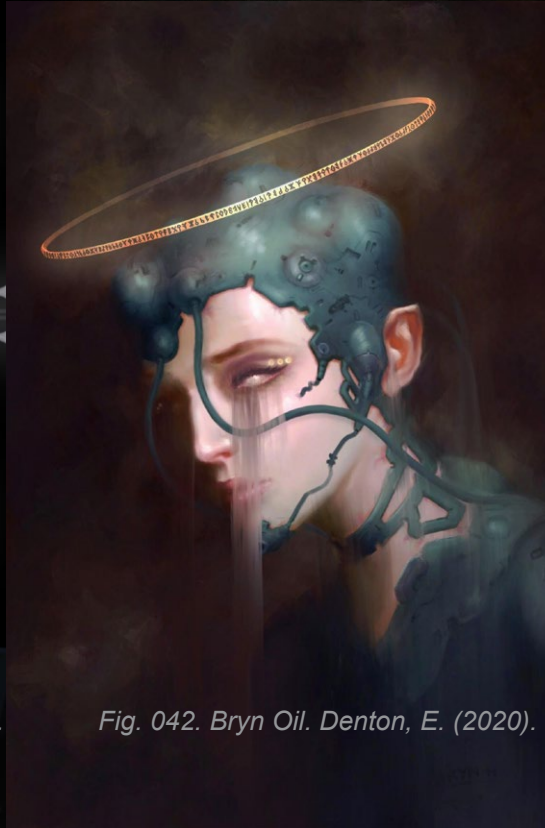


Fig. 042. Bryn Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.4 EXPERIMENTATION: AI

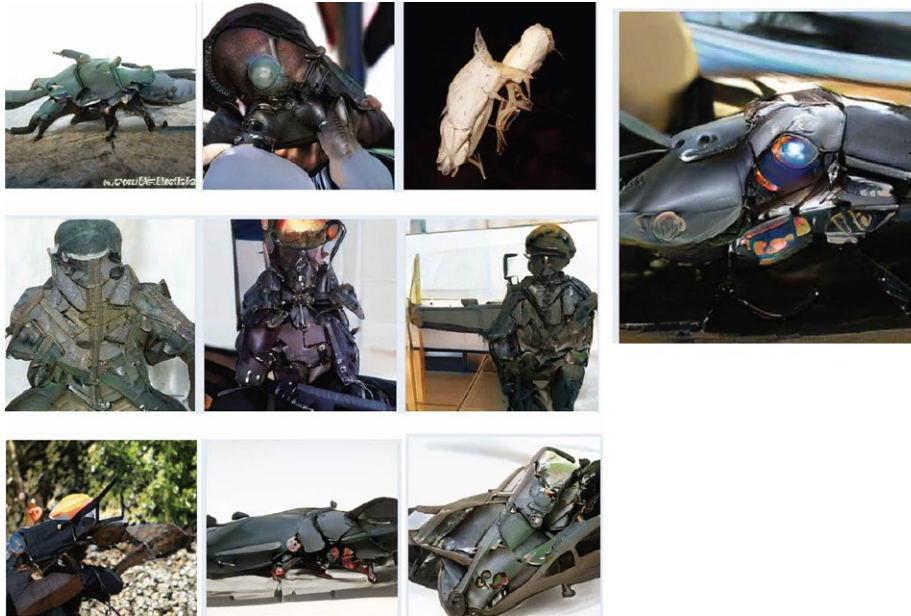


Fig. 043. AI bio suits. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 044. AI space ships. Denton, E. (2020).

In experimenting with the new field of AI generated images I initially thought of AI design as a very scientific, cold Apollonian process however as I began to use it I realised that its random trial and error process was almost a perfect model of evolutionary design. Wild and random experimentation under the selection of an art directorial hand led to crazy and interesting shapes that would have been very hard to design rationally.

Websites Artbreeder and Deepart and software like Nvidias Gauguin allow artists to utilise the emerging space of Neural network or AI design. Using Artificial Intelligence to create novel images from a variety of inputs below I was able to combine what an artificial intelligence thinks a bird is with what it thinks an aeroplane is. By iterating every few seconds and adding new inputs and directions you can art direct an image towards something you are happy with in a matter of minutes. This rapid design method let me look at areas I was not originally thinking of designing for example the space ships or biomechanical suits of armour.

I found the AI process very useful for designing the characters faces, because you could iterate so quickly and direct the evolution of the design towards specific directions and the resulting images could be cleaned up and developed into a working concept easily.

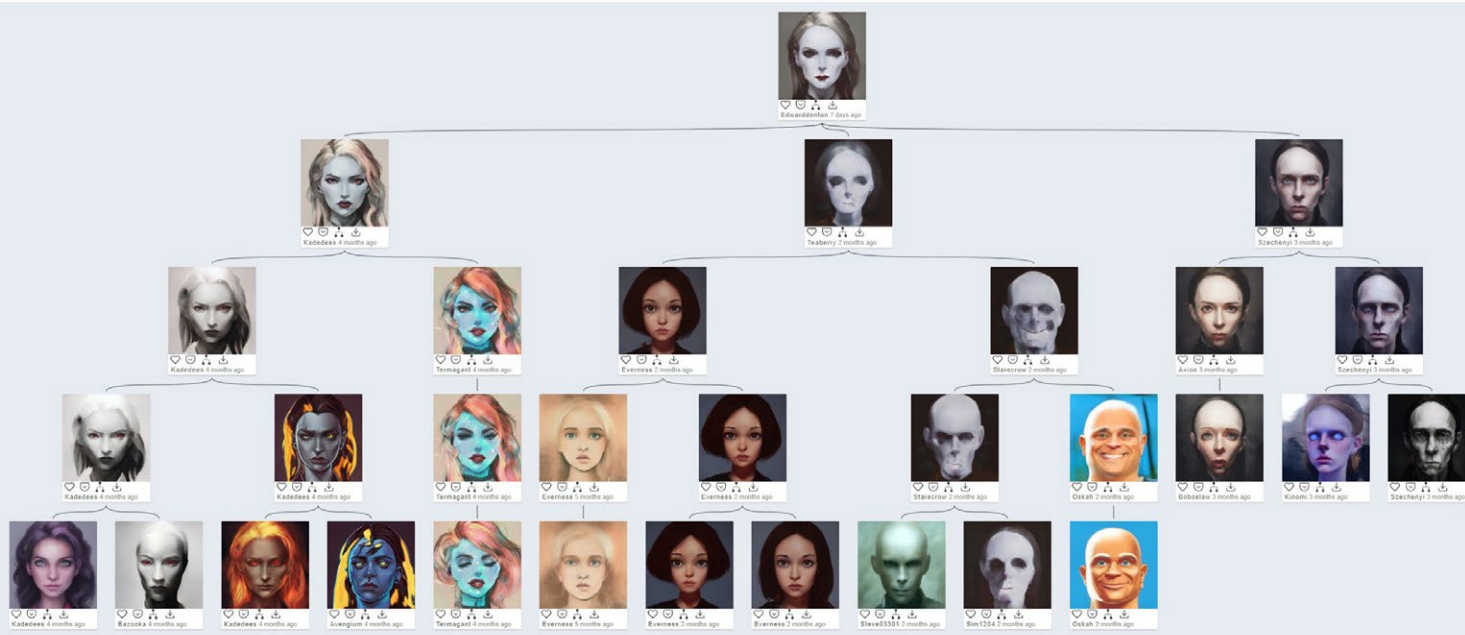


Fig. 045. AI character tree.  
Denton, E. (2020).  
The evolutionary design tree, with all the influences and direction that have been combined to produce the final image.

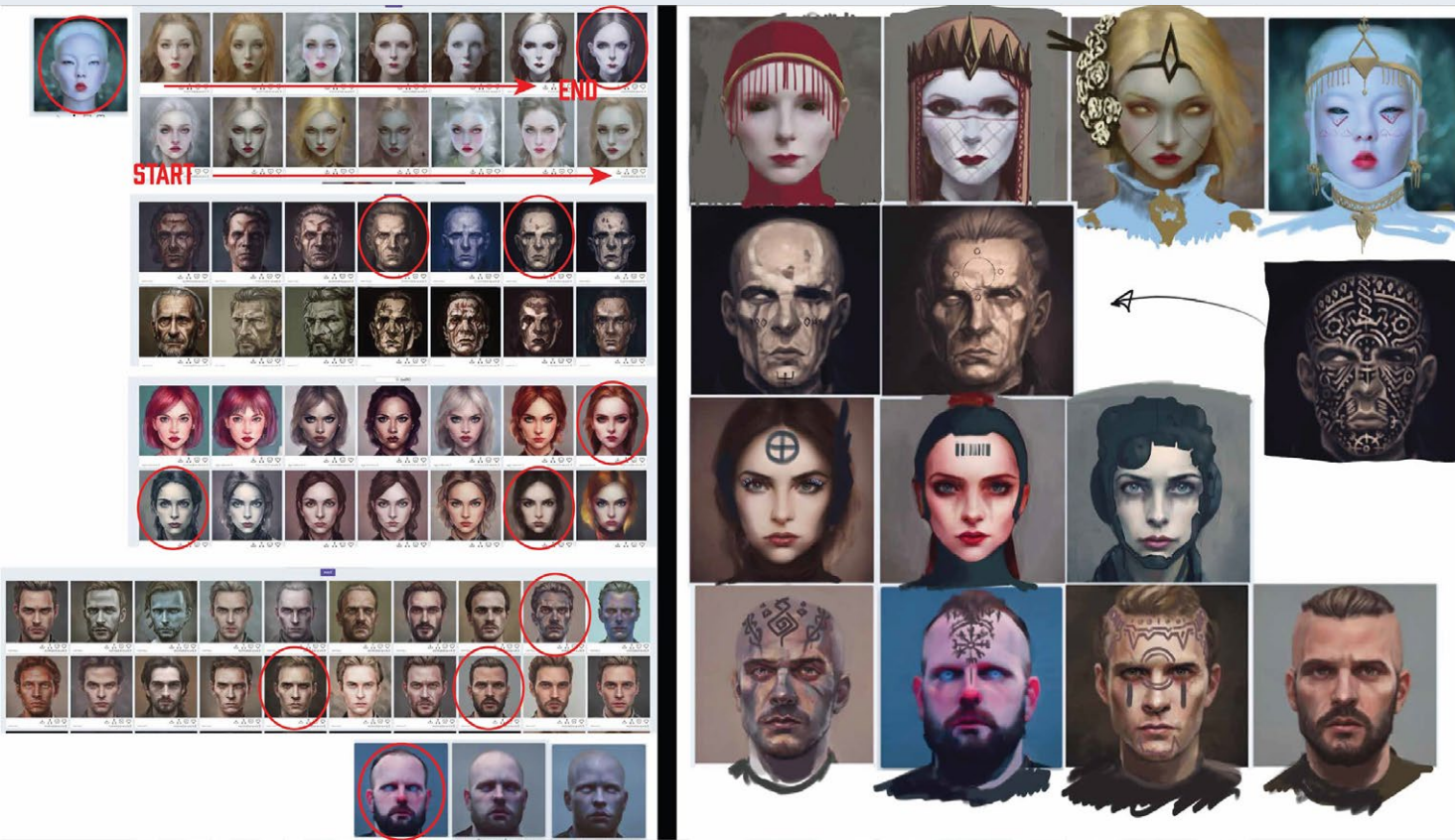
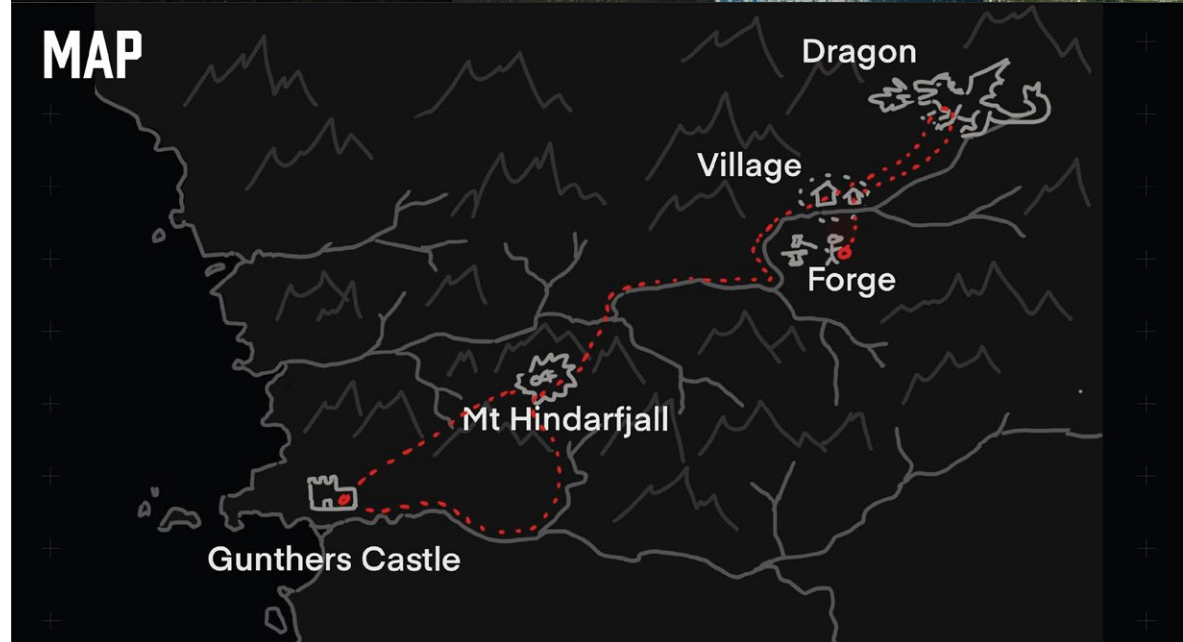


Fig. 046. AI character sketches.  
Denton, E. (2020).  
Selection of my AI generated portraits and quickly painted over them to create concepts for each of the charcters.

## 10.5 WORLD BUILDING

Using the AI experimentation and through traditional painting I was able to visualise some aspects of the world these characters inhabited and the geographic influences on their cultures. Lilith's family was from the warm lowlands with an abundance of cotton and fabrics while Odin was in space and the high mountainous regions, cold and harsh and heavily reliant on metals and insulating rubber.





*Fig. 049. Bryn Landed. Denton, E. (2020).*



*Fig. 050. Valkyrie flying. Denton, E. (2020).*

## 10.6 EXPERIMENTATION: DIGITAL RENDERING

Part way through my design process I took some time to develop my pipeline for design resolution. I knew I wanted to heavily use 3D and leverage a lot of my previous experience however I wasn't sure I would be able to achieve a high enough quality level and be able to produce renders that felt artistic.

Not having rendered characters before I wanted to experiment with rendering faces and making sure I could achieve a close to realistic finish. Using Albedo and Displacement images from TexturingXYZ I was able to map them onto a base 3d character model and experiment with skin rendering in Octane Render and created early portrait concepts for Lily using some tattoos and face scarring from my reference.

I then focused on fabric rendering as I wanted to create my own fabric for each character based on their specific logos and symbols. I followed a tutorial by Pauline Boiteux (2018) a French textile designer on how to create fabric material in Substance Designer and was able to recreate some of my favourite William Morris designs

Next I decided to try and tie it all together to produce a 3D render of a very early concept sketch of Lily, this involved designing and sewing her costume in Marvelous designer and creating 3D models of her jewellery in Rhinoceros 3D before rendering in Octane. While I was ultimately very happy with the fidelity of the result, as I continued to look at it as the project progressed I began to think that the 3D render was too stale and lacked the life and energy of a painting.



Fig. 051. Lilly face rendering. Denton, E. (2020).

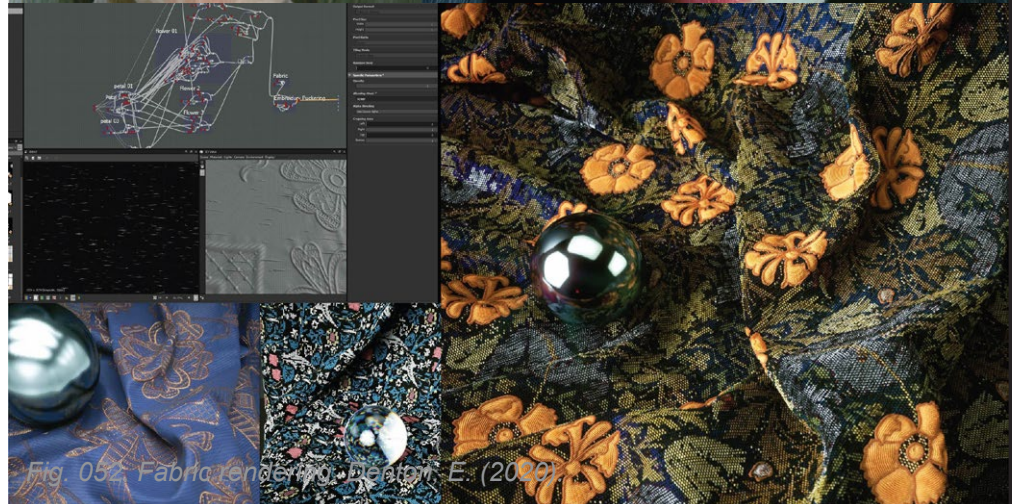


Fig. 052. Fabric rendering. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 053. Young Lilly process. Denton, E. (2020).

## APOLLONIAN

### 10.7 DAZ 3D CHARACTER POSE SETUP

I set up base characters in simple poses that I thought gave a good early representation of their size and posture. This keeps all of the concepts to general human proportions and in realistic poses, which is important as this is intended to be a live action film.



Fig. 054. Daz Posing. Denton, E. (2020).

## DIONYSIAN

### 10.8 SILHOUETTES AND 3 TONE SKETCHES

My character designs started as simple silhouette explorations, pushing shapes around and progressed into using three tones, this let me explore simple details while keeping the design process fast and free. With silhouettes and three tone it almost feels like you are pushing around the shapes and feeling your way towards a concept that works.

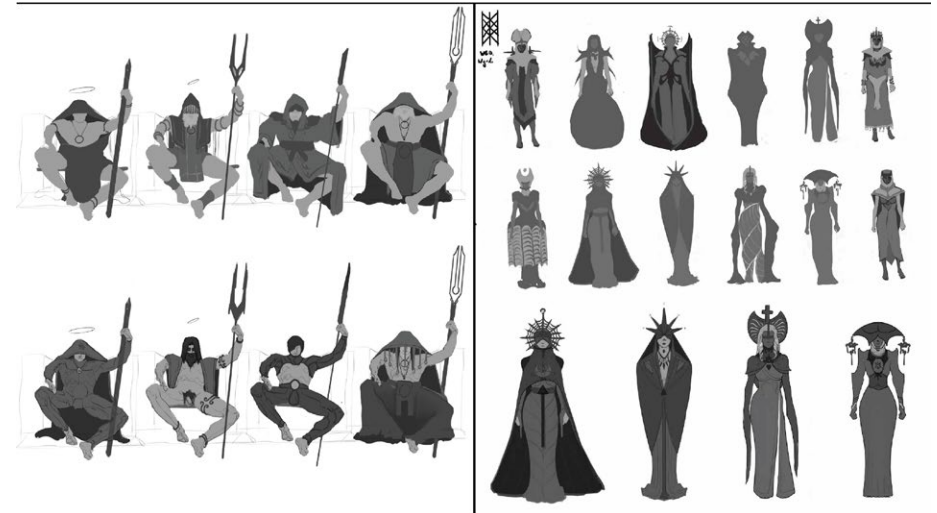


Fig. 055. Three tone sketches. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.9 LINE DRAWING

I find that tone drawing lets me find the volumes and shapes very quickly but as I need to start defining details and specific designs I like to draw over the tone sketches with line work. It seems to change how my brain thinks about shapes and lets me be more exacting. This feels much like an Apollonian process of prescribing what the form should be rather than feeling it out.

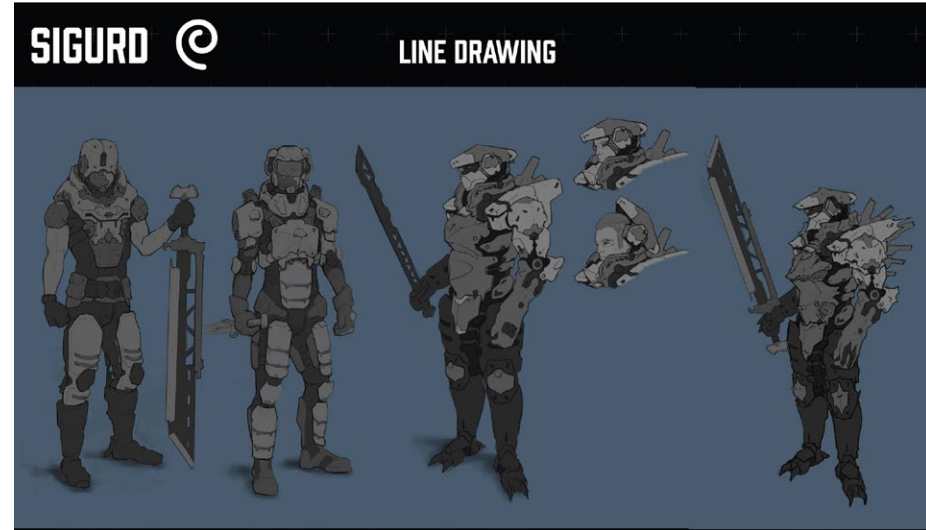


Fig. 056. Sig line drawings. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 057. Lilly line detailing. Denton, E. (2020).

10.10 DESIGN REVIEW

At this point I had selected and designed a few concepts for each character to a higher level and I was able to line them all up and make some decisions about the direction for each character. This is a key part of my process and I am constantly doing line ups and reviews at a smaller scale so I can evaluate things that are working and update my design briefs. I find it is important to mark key milestones with a more serious review and establish a direction.

Part of this review process was periodic Arohaehae reviews at Weta Workshop, where I was able to show my progress through presentations and get feedback from industry professionals. Using Wetas, "War Wall" technique I was able to show my work pinned up on a large wall and get an overview for the entire project, this helped keep a sense of unity across the project.

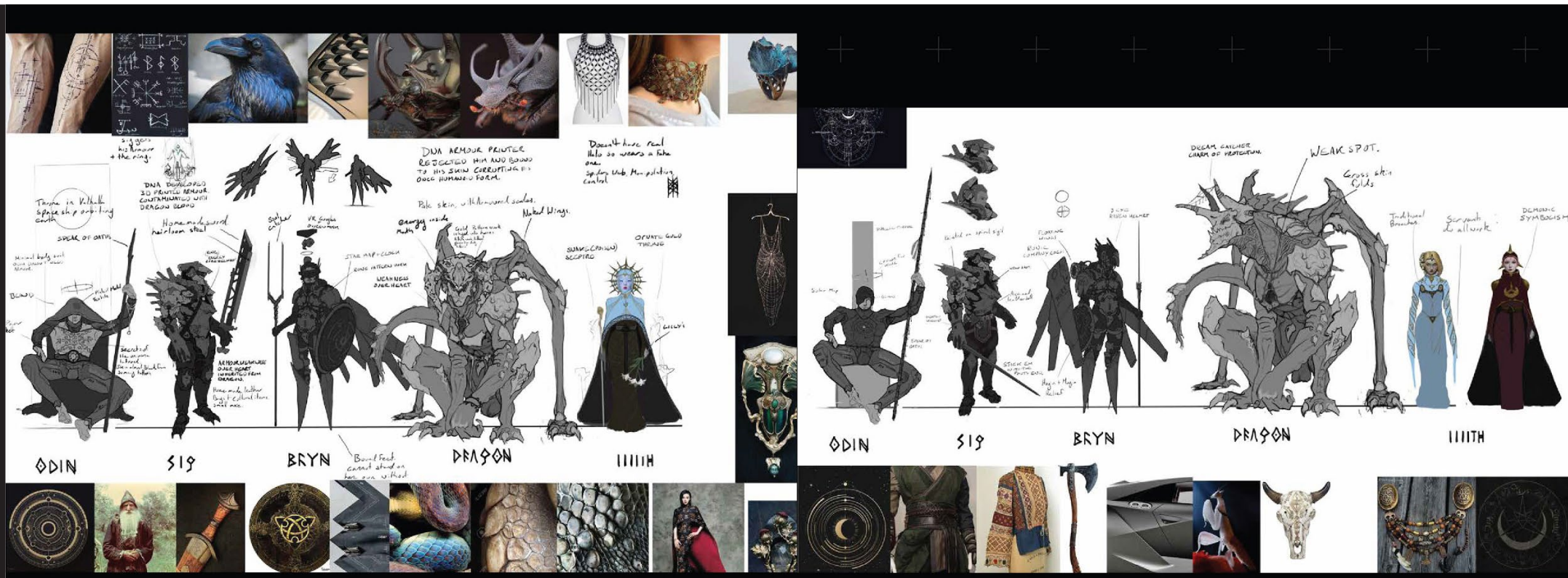
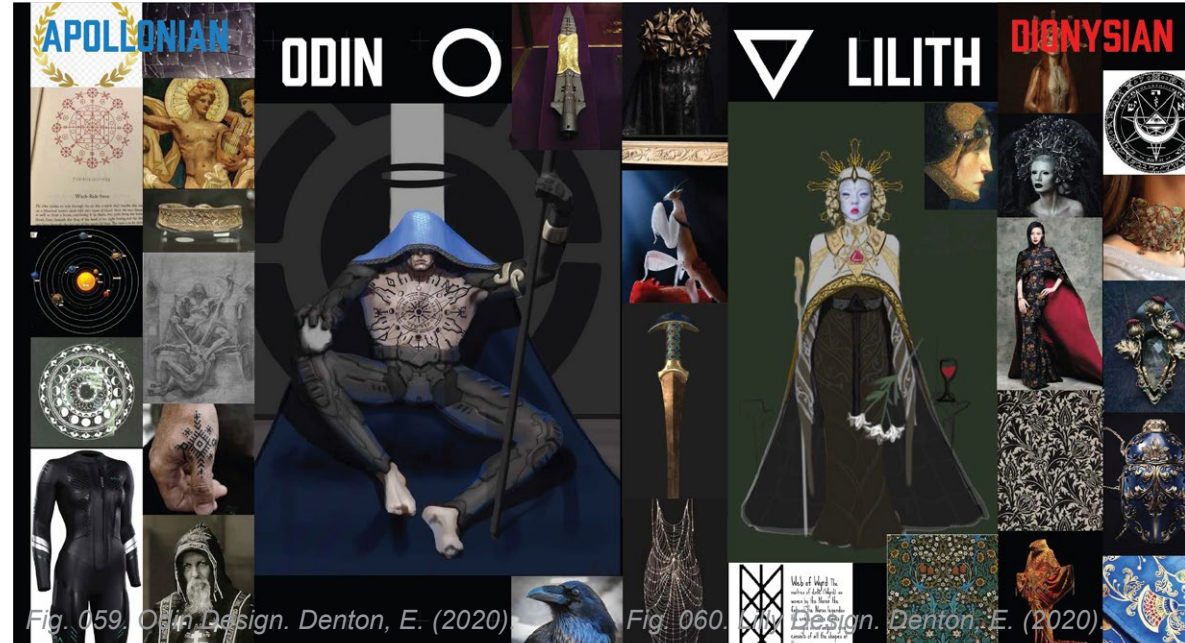


Fig. 058. Design review. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.11 DEVELOPMENTS

For my lead designs I used references from my mood boards to refined each concept further in 2D. This got me to a point where I knew what I had to model in 3D but leaving some aspects that I knew would change when I was modeling in 3D and physical shapes had to be functional and correctly proportioned.



## 10.12 2D COMPOSITIONS

I kept in mind how I wanted to present each character in the final artworks, here I was able to really start looking at each character's pose and how all of the artworks would work together. Using flat tone I quickly experimented with a variety of poses and formats.

To create a unity between all the characters I chose to show each character holding Odin's Eye (A sort of McGuffin that is a source of ultimate power akin to Tolkien's One Ring) expressing their motivations for wanting the Eye.

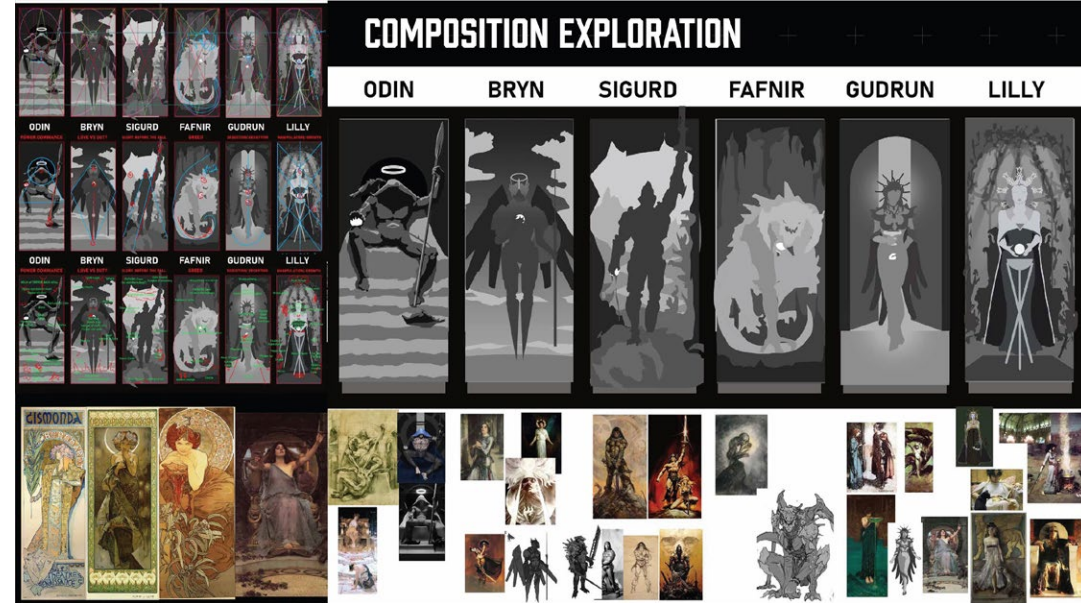


Fig. 063. 2D compositional studies 1. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 064. 2D compositional studies 2. Denton, E. (2020).

# APOLLONIAN

## 10.13 3D COMPOSITIONS

I knew that lighting was going to be a major factor in the compositions so I quickly sketched out 3D models to testing lighting variations and let me start refining the pose further.

These compositions gave me a really good idea of what the final images of each character would be and I knew what angle the design had to work from. This let me do a lot of cheating with the 3D models in areas that would not be seen, enabling me to save a lot of time.

To aid with pose realism I took photographs of myself role playing each character trying to get into their heads and taking subtle elements of the poses, such as hand position into my 3D models.



Fig. 066. Sty 3D Compositional studies. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 067. Bryn 3D Compositional studies. Denton, E. (2020)



Fig. 065. Pose reference. Denton, E. (2020).



# APOLLONIAN

## 10.15 3D DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Knowing the final pose and basic design I was able to work over a correctly posed 3D mannequin and build up a final resolved design, working back and forth between 3d software and 2D paint overs to design shapes. A variety of 3D software was used depending on the object and the fidelity it required. Very hard surface modeling was done in Rhinoceros 3D, and a more organic but still hard surface was done in Blender with detail added in Zbrush. Very organic shapes were sculpted in zbrush and fabric was sewn and simulated in Marvelous Designer.

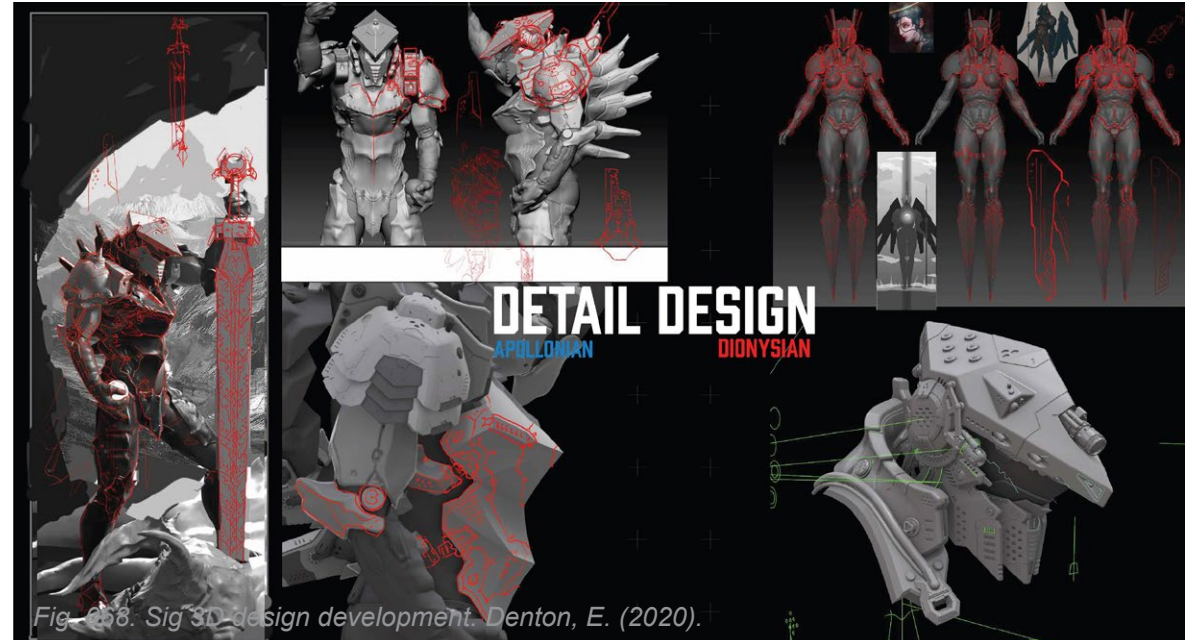


Fig. 068. Sig 3D design development. Denton, E. (2020).

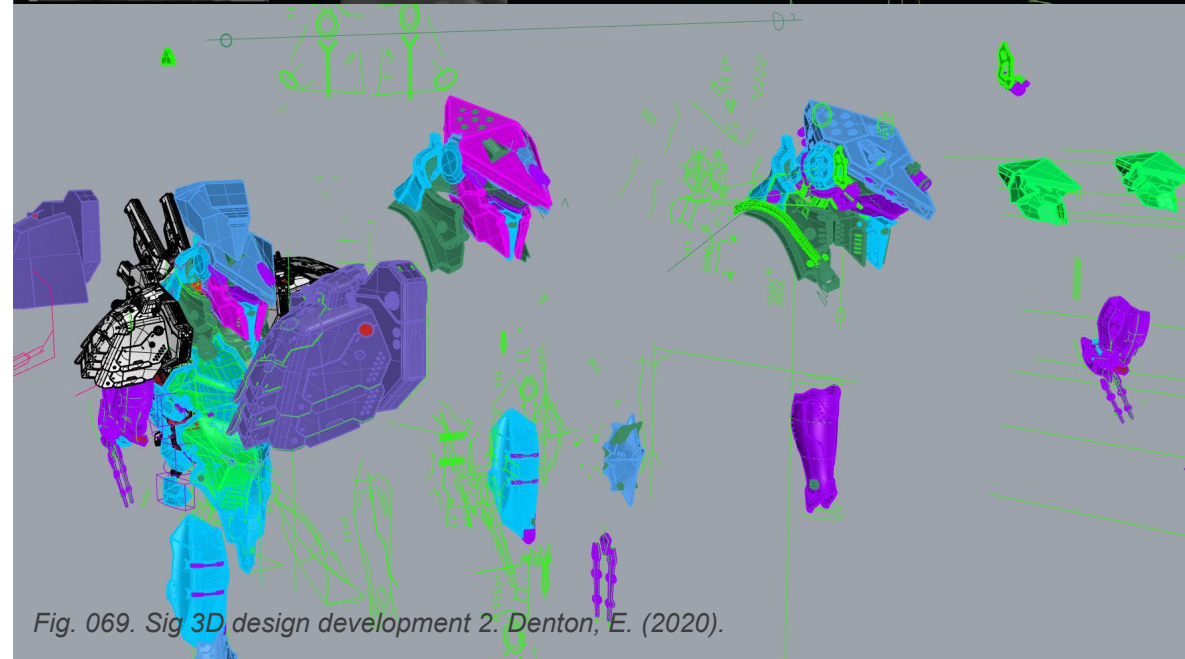


Fig. 069. Sig 3D design development 2. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 070. Bryn 3D design development 1. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 071. Bryn 3D design development 2. Denton, E. (2020).

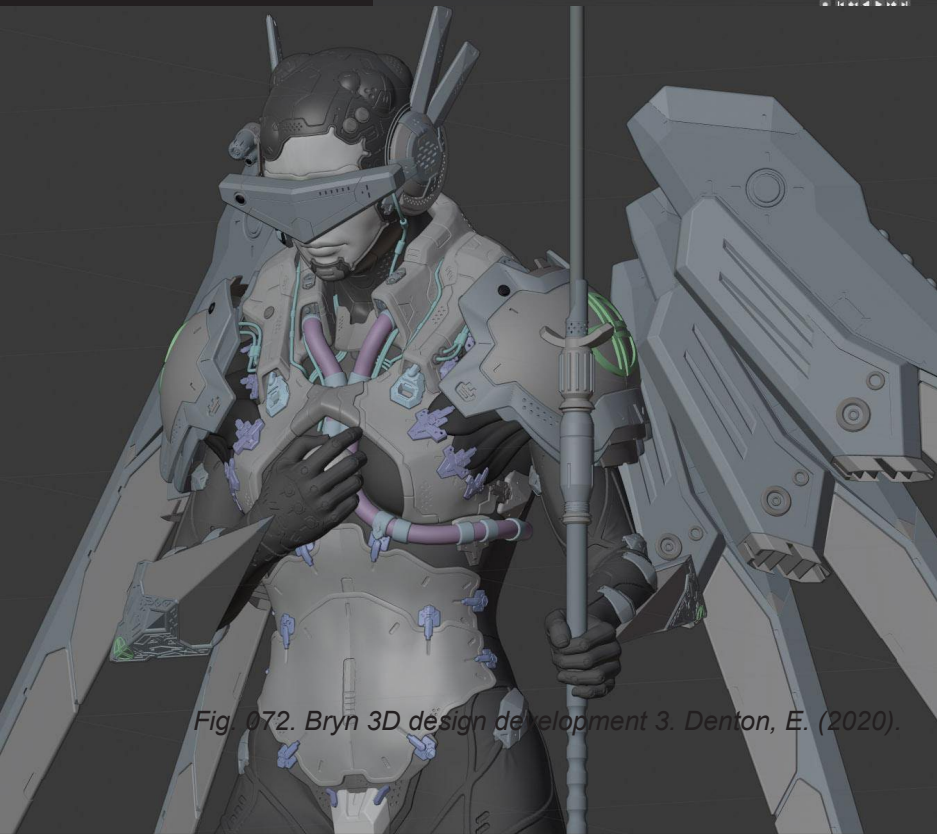


Fig. 072. Bryn 3D design development 3. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 073. Lilly dress sim. Denton, E. (2020).

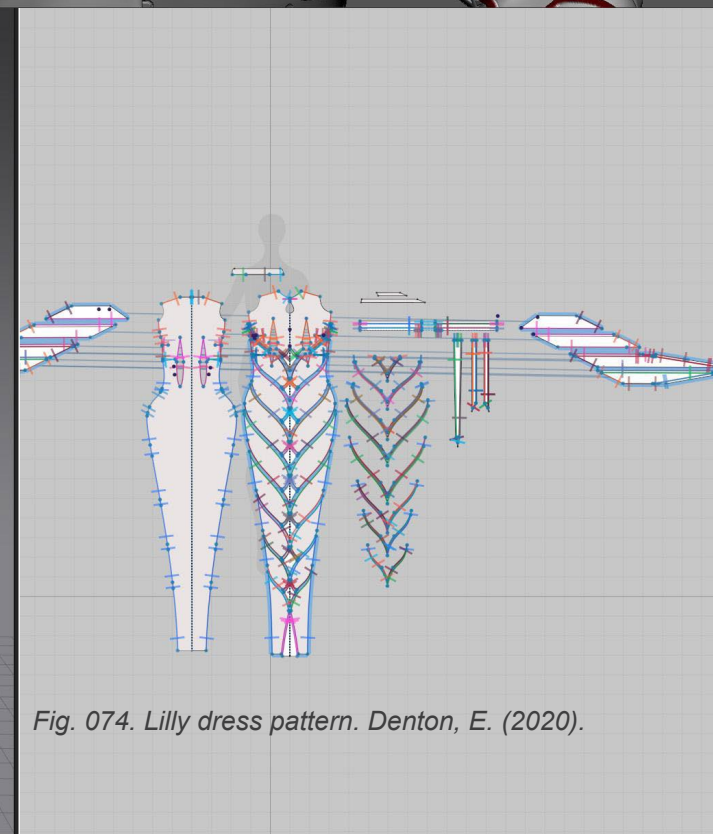


Fig. 074. Lilly dress pattern. Denton, E. (2020).

DIGITAL SCULPTING – ANALOG PRESENTATION  
APOLLONIAN DIONYSIAN



Fig. 075. Fafnir 3D sculpt clay. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 076. Fafnir 3D sculpt front. Denton, E. (2020).



FAFNIR



FAFNIR



## 10.16 DETAIL AND TEXTILES

With the base shapes modeled and as part of the rendering pipeline I designed the shaders and textures for all the materials, down to the level of roughness and scratches on the surface but also the specific fabrics and patterns over the materials. This is done through substance designer and in photoshop through 2D tileable textures that are applied to the 3D form.



Fig. 078. Sigurd texture design. Denton, E. (2020).

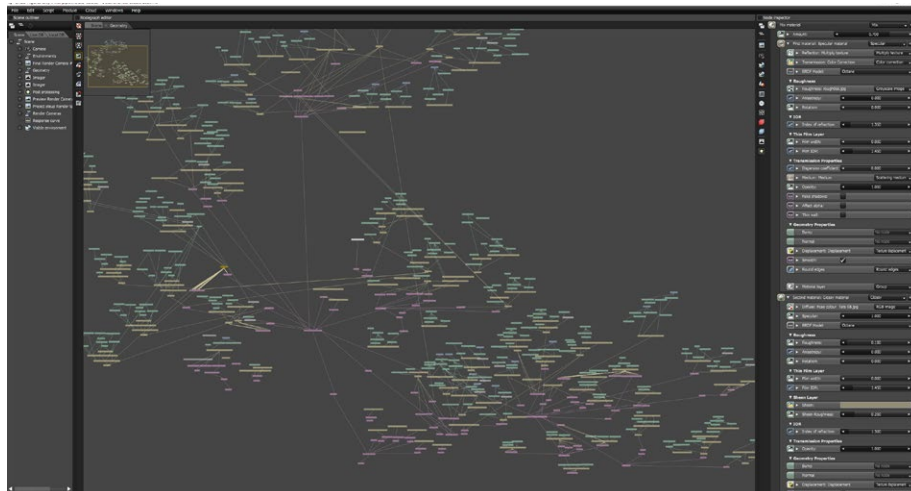


Fig. 077. Octane shader chaos. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 079. Genevieve textile design. Denton, E. (2020).



Fig. 080. Genevieve textile render. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.17 POST PRODUCTION COLOUR GRADING

After rendering a final image post production and colouring really help bring the final image to life and for me this requires a lot of experimentation and time analysing the images. I started to treat the rendered image like I would an Oil painting or a photograph and decided to lose most of the detail in the shadows and reduce the amount of information down to just a couple of tones with a colour shift, this really helped the image read better and feel less flat and static.



Fig. 081. Lilly colour correction. Denton, E. (2020).

## 10.18 RENDER TO PAINTING

While I was happy with how the final images were starting to look I still wanted a more painterly artistic look but I knew I didn't have time to fully repaint each image as a large scale oil painting, so I started experimenting with Photoshop actions and effects to recreate a more painterly evocative effect, without losing too much of the detail. I could then carefully add some brush stroke by hand to complete the effect.



Fig. 082. Genevieve brush stroke comparison. Denton, E. (2020).

10.19 FRAMES

To present the images as works of Art I designed and 3D milled out frames for the images, these frames link back to the influence from Mucha and are in two styles one for each family house.

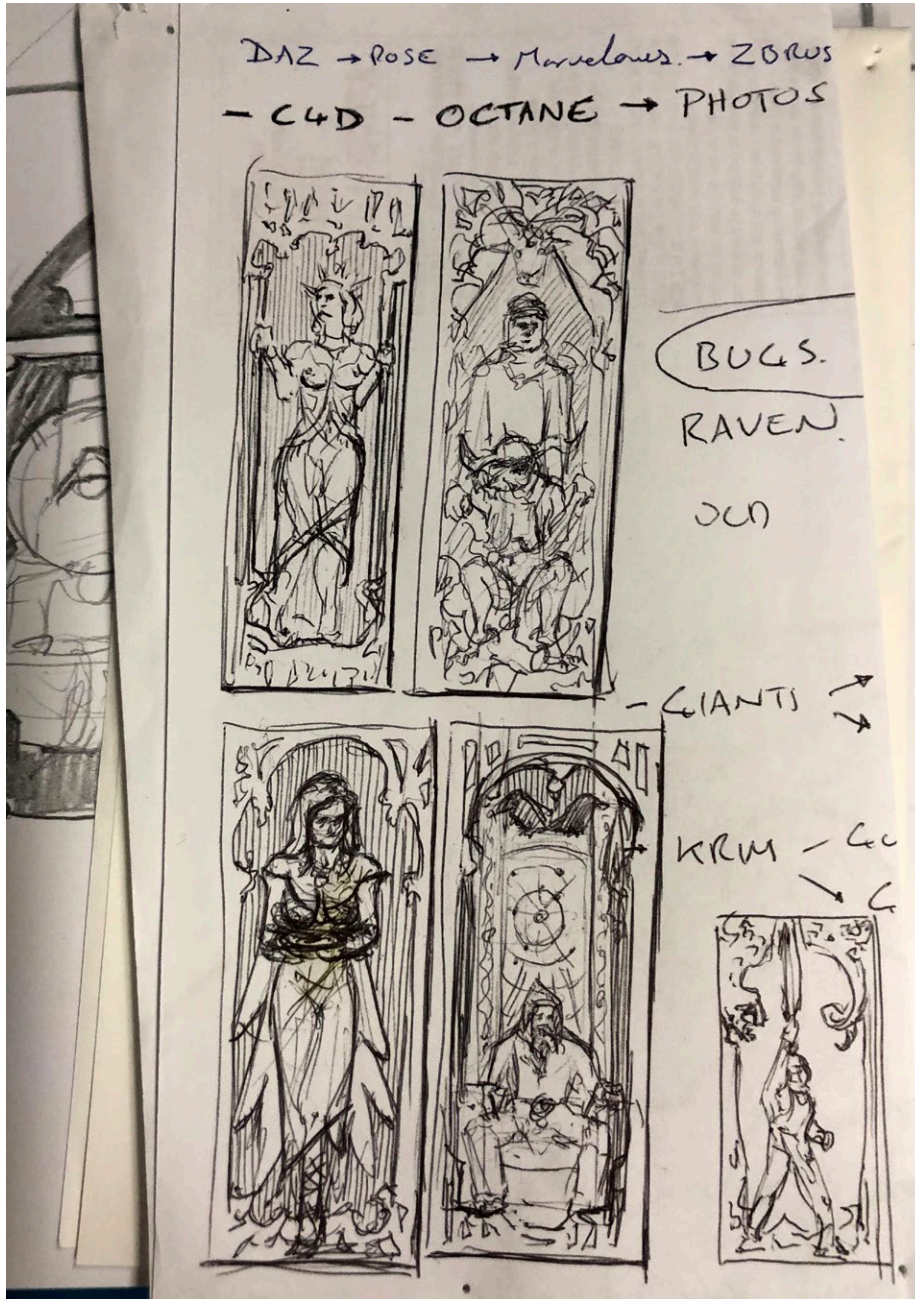


Fig. 083. Frame sketches 1. Denton, E. (2020).

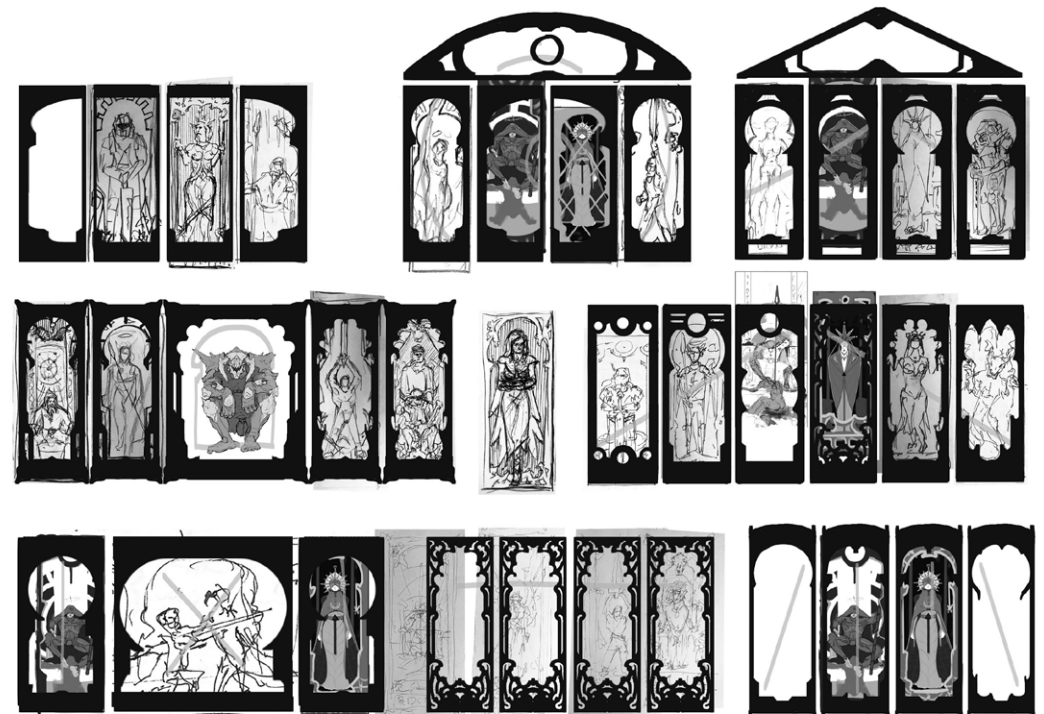


Fig. 084. Frame sketches 2. Denton, E. (2020).

# 11.0 FINALS ARTWORKS



Fig. 085. Volsunga lineup in frames. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 086. (Next Page) Volsunga digital lineup. Denton, E. (2020).



**VOLSUNGA**<sup>®</sup>  
**SIGURD**

EDRED WETA WORKSHOP EDWARD DENTON MASSEY UNIVERSITY



**VOLSUNGA**<sup>®</sup>  
**BRYN**

EDRED WETA WORKSHOP EDWARD DENTON MASSEY UNIVERSITY



**VOLSUNGA**<sup>®</sup>  
**ODIN**

EDRED WETA WORKSHOP EDWARD DENTON MASSEY UNIVERSITY



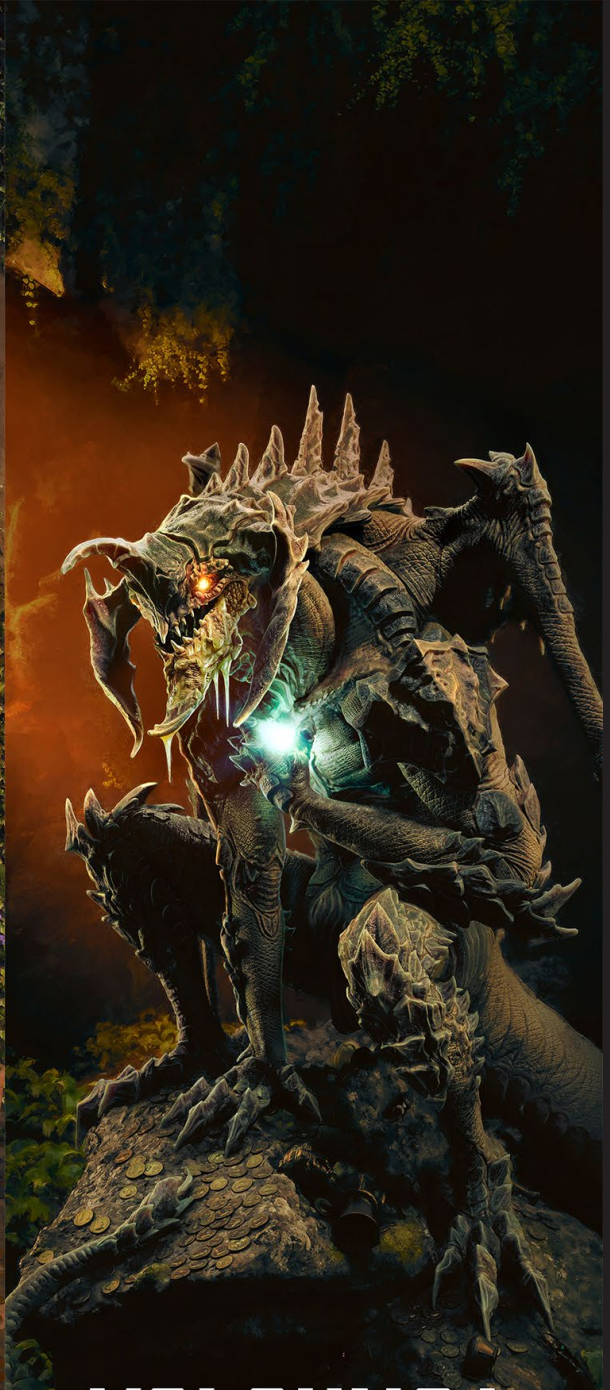
**VOLSUNGA**  
LILLY

EDRED WETA WORKSHOP EDWARD DENTON MASSEY UNIVERSITY



**VOLSUNGA**  
GENEVIEVE

EDRED WETA WORKSHOP EDWARD DENTON MASSEY UNIVERSITY



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## 12.0 CONCLUSION

Exploring the Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives greatly influenced my character designs and their presentation for my adaptation of the Volsunga saga. It has provided interesting and useful research directions such as understanding the Dionysian experience which gave me the desire to create such experiences through art. The visual language of Apollo and Dionysus and the archetypal representations of the Tyrannical Father and Overbearing Mother provided a framework for the two families in my character designs. An understanding of how the Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives underpin key different methodologies of design let me experiment a push boundaries so I could create prototypes to test my designs.

Focusing on creating a Dionysian experience has pushed me to develop my visual storytelling techniques and to remain focused on the artistic integrity of the images. This has led to the creation of more immersive and compelling imagery, which I hope will help persuade their audience that a film adaptation would be successful.

Exploring Apollonian and Dionysian archetypes provided a great historical and cultural framework for the design and visual representation of my characters. Through researching these archetypes I was able to add a layer of symbolic representation into both the character designs and the artwork compositions.

Looking at design processes through the lens of the Apollonian and Dionysian has been an insight into the different ways that a designer can approach problem solving and the need to marry both the Apollonian and Dionysian sides to ensure that both beauty and functionality are considered. Being aware of these different approaches has let me to utilise Apollonian design and presentation techniques while keeping the Dionysian emotive essence alive.

I believe that creating works of concept design and pitch visualisations with the intent of creating works of art that produces a Dionysian experiences has been successful. While it requires more time and effort than traditional concept visualisations, this is minuscule compared to the amount of wasted time caused but not having a clear visual direction at the start of production. I think it has led to the creation of more emotionally impacting artworks that can captivate a wider public audience and build consumer demand. By producing designs that are appeal to our Dionysian side we provide an emotional argument for film executives to explore more risky narratives.

This project has greatly influenced how I view concept art and has inspired me to keep pushing to create works of art not just works of design, and to marry both my Apollonian and Dionysian perspectives in all my creative endeavours.

**EDWARD DENTON**

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Fig. 022. Punk & Hippie. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 023. Darth Vader. Lucas, G. (1977).

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Fig. 033. Volsunga 2200 story diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 034. Waterfall Agile. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 035. Design methodology diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 036. Bryn story diagram. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 037. Character chart. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 038. Mood board layout. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 039. Sig Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 040. Odin Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 041. Lilly Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 042. Bryn Oil. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 043. AI bio suits. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 044. AI space ships. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 045. AI character tree. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 046. AI character sketches. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 047. World mood. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 048. Map. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 049. Bryn Landed. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 050. Valkyrie flying. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 051. Lilly face rendering. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 052. Fabric rendering. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 053. Young Lilly process. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 054. Daz Posing. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 055. Three tone sketches. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 056. Sig line drawings. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 057. Lilly line detailing. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 058. Design review. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 059. Odin Design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 060. Lilly Design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 061. Bryn Design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 062. Sig Design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 063. 2D compositional studies 1. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 064. 2D compositional studies 2. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 065. Pose reference. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 066. Sig 3D Compositional studies. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 067. Composition symbolic analysis. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 068. Sig 3D design development. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 069. Sig 3D design development 2. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 070. Bryn 3D design development 1. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 071. Bryn 3D design development 2. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 072. Bryn 3D design development 3. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 073. Lilly dress sim. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 074. Lilly dress pattern. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 075. Fafnir 3D sculpt clay. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 076. Fafnir 3D sculpt front. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 077. Octane shader chaos. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 078. Sigurd texture design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 079. Genevieve textile design. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 080. Genevieve textile render. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 081. Lilly colour correction. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 082. Genevieve brush stroke comparison. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 083. Frame sketches 1. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 084. Frame sketches 2. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 085. Volsunga lineup in frames. Denton, E. (2020).

Fig. 086. Volsunga digital lineup. Denton, E. (2020).

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## 16.0 APPENDIX

### 1 A: VOLSUNGA 2200 SYNOPSIS

#### Shakespearean Tragedy 5 [8] Act Structure;

Act 1: The Exposition

Act 2: Rising Action

2.1: Inciting Force

2.2: Errors in Judgement

Act 3: Climax

Act 4: Falling Action

4.1: Tragic Force

4.2: Final Suspense

Act 5: Resolution

5.1: Catastrophe

5.2: Glimpse of Restored Order

#### Characters:

**Sigor:** Heroic Viking son descended from Odin.(Analogy for humanity)

**Bryn:** Valkyrie daughter of Odin and Lilith. Saviour of humanity

**Odin:** Blind tyrannical God

**Fafnir:** Giant turned into dragon through the power of Odins eye

**Gunther:** King in the lowlands

**Genevieve:** Gunther's sister

**Lilly:** Gunther's Mother (Lilith)

## PROLOGUE (Not shown in film):

Odin and the gods walk the earth, Odin sacrifices his eye for knowledge and there is an age of high prosperity and technology, giant megalithic structures glorify the gods.

Through trickery the giant Fafnir wins Odin's last eye, a source of great power. Gradually there is corruption, Odin has become blind to the changing environment and as the world around him changes his laws do not, he is bound by his oaths and laws. Odin retreats to his castle in the sky, the mighty ring of Valhalla, the technology of old is lost and the world plunges into an age of darkness.

Lilly, the mother of Fafnir, her son king Gunther and Daughter Princess Geneieve, expands strength and influence of her family across the globe in Odin's absence. The giant Fafner has turned into a dragon to protect the eye of Odin, its power is the key to Lilly's growing influence.

Odin unable to directly break his oaths makes a plan to win back his eye, he has spread his seed into the earth and fathered a great clan of warriors, the Volsungs and his Valkyrie collect the bodies of dead warriors amassing a giant army to be reanimated for one last battle. Sigmund, Sig's father, won Odin's gift Nothung a great sword with the power to cut through stone by pulling it out of a giant ash tree. Sigmund wins many battles but Odin growing weary of his failure to win back his eye curses Nothung to break during battle and he is slain. His wife collecting the sword shards, escaped carrying their young son, Sigor. Escaping she was mortally wounded and the boy grows up as the adopted son of blacksmith, unloved in a harsh world without knowledge of his heritage save for the shards of his father's sword.

## ACT I: THE EXPOSITION

Fafner, now a wild dragon, fueled by the power of Odin's eye, wreaks havoc upon the world and attacks the village down the valley from the forge of Sigor's home, all their warriors are killed, blood flows in the streets. Sigurd runs to help, taking the biggest sword in the forge, arriving into the scene of gore Sigurd fearlessly confronts the dragon alone, still only a child. They engage and Sigor manages to avoid a deadly blow but his weapon has no effect on the dragon's stone hard skin and is struck back against a tree, coughing blood Sigurd rises. The Valkyrie plunge down through the heavens like meteorites, among them Bryn watches the young Sigor's valor. Under Odin's orders they are not to interfere in the affairs of men, they are just to collect the bodies of warriors who died with glory.

Again Sigurd is beaten down by the dragon, any normal man would be dead, and Sigurd is bleeding from numerous open wounds and continues to cough up dark black globules of blood, and yet he rises to his feet to confront the dragon, barely able to stand.

The Valkyrie detached from their drop ships descend to the ground in their power suits and begin collecting the dead. Bryn and her honour guard stand guard watching the scene with the dragon, she is filled with compassion for this young man, the last of the Volsung and yet knowing she is ordered not to interfere.

Sigor beseeches them to help and save the remaining Villagers, however they just stand and watch as the villagers are slaughtered. Again and again Sigor is knocked about, beaten and broken, unable to get up the dragon gets ready for the killing blow, now finally Askur is overcome by compassion and charges forward to protect Sigor. She blocks the dragon's blow, her shield shattering and her guards engage the dragon as she retreats with Sigor's limp body, her eyes meet Sigurd's for an instant before he passes out. One of her guards is slain by the dragon and the other critically injured before the dragon retreats and the Valkyrie return home carrying their fallen sister.

Sigor wakes, back in the forge, a week passes before he can stand, he knows now that the only blade that can cut the dragon hide, is the shattered sword of his father, Nothung. It must be reforged.

Bryn is admonished by Odin, he cannot abide by anyone that breaks his law and she is stripped of her Valkyrie status and condemns her to live as a woman and a wife. Odin places her in an everlasting sleep atop a mountain ringed in fire where only the bravest warrior can claim her.

## **ACT 2.1: RISING ACTION INCITING FORCE**

Sigor forges Nothung and confronts Dragon in his cave, after an epic battle, Sigor stabs the beast through the belly with his new sword but falls bathed in its blood into an old Valkyrie armour manufacturing vat, which reads his DNA, mixed with the dragons DNA and 3d prints a suit of armour around him.

From the Fafnirs neck Sigor pull free the eye of Odin which glow brightly with untold power. In the distance he can see a flaming mountain peak and is compelled to investigate.

Sigor climbs the mountain and leaps over the flaming wall and is met by the sight of a prone figure lying asleep on a central podium. The figure is bound by her armour which appears to have grown into her, he cuts her free and as he takes off her helmet she wakes and their eyes meet as he realises who she is.

He knows love and fear, and they fall deeply for each other and swear oaths to always love each other and no other. Sigurd gives her the eye of Odin as a symbol of his love.

## **ACT 2.2: ERRORS IN JUDGEMENT**

Odin with a host of Valkyrie descend upon them demanding Bryn give him his eye, when Sigor objects Odin attacks spitefully. They force Sigor and Bryn apart and push him back and he retreats, swearing curses at Odin. Bryn not wanting to give up her symbol of true love will not give up eye, so Odin keeps her imprisoned on top of the mountain.

Sigor travels to the land of King Gunther, the son of Lilly, in order to raise an army and attack Odin's host. Sigurd gives Gunther the gold from the dragon horde in exchange for his army but Gunther makes Sigurd help him defeat a northern army before he will agree to make war with Odin. During this time Lilly plots with princess Genevieve to make Sigor hers and to strengthen their family and reclaim the eye.

## **ACT 3: CLIMAX**

Upon returning from the northern war Lilly has brewed a demonic magic potion that will cause Sigor to forget his love for Bryn and fall for Genevieve, Sigor haplessly accepts the drink and falls deeply under its spell.

Sigor forgets all about Bryn still imprisoned atop the mountain, and falls madly in love with Genevieve. Lilly now comes up with the plan to have her son king Gunther marry the Valkyrie Bryn with Sigurds help to win her hand.

Sigurd agrees to help his soon to be brother win the hand of Bryn who he has forgotten all about and they raise the army to begin an assault of Odin mountain fortress.

#### **ACT 4.1: FALLING ACTION: TRAGIC FORCE**

Before the battle begins Lilly gives Sigor another potion that will make him appear to all others as Gunther. An epic battle between the forces of men and Odin's armies, Sigor jumps over the wall of fire and takes on Odin in single combat, enraged against Odin, Sigor is able to cut through spear of Law and kill him, his valkyries in shock retreat back to Valhalla in the sky. Sigor in the form of Gunther, rescues Bryn and carries her back across the wall of fire, claiming her as his wife he takes back the eye. Bryn refuses to submit to be his wife knowing Sigor will come.

#### **ACT 4.1: FALLING ACTION: FINAL SUSPENCE**

Sigor changes back to his true form and Gunther takes Bryn back to his castle. When Bryn see's Sigor and Genevieve together, betrothed and in love, she confronts him and is distraught when he says he never loved her and finally submits to marry king Gunther. The two wives quarrel and Genevieve tells Bryn that it was Sigor who rescued her and not King Gunther. Bryn enraged that she has been tricked into marrying a coward, vows vengeance.

#### **ACT 5.1 : RESOLUTION: CATASTROPHE**

Taking up the remains of Odins Spear of Law Bryn stabs Sigor through the only weak point in his armour and pierces his heart. Mortally wounded, the spell breaks, Sigor's eyes clear and veil is lifted from him, he finally remembers and sees Bryn before him, he kisses her with blood soaked lips and tells her he always loved her, asks for her forgiveness.

Bryn seeing then the extent of the deceit and treachery and knowing she has killed the man she loved and married one she did not. She takes the eye of Odin from Sigor's now limp body and with his sword in one hand and Odin's spear in the other Gunther's house falls to her hand. Slaying Gunther in disgust to his pleas of mercy, and facing off against a transformed Lilly, now in her true demonic form, Bryn cuts her in two.

Coming back to Sigor's body she finds the pitiful sight of Genevieve weeping over it, ignoring her, she takes his body, leaving her alone with only the blood of her around her.

A giant funeral pyre is built for Sigurd upon the banks of the river, lighting it Bryn climbs on top and holds the eye of Odin aloft while she is engulfed in flames.

#### **ACT 5.2: GLIMPSE OF RESTORED ORDER**

A great ring of Valkyrie watches as the fire burns.

