

# Concept Art & Visual Development — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into reps. Each section maps to one module and mixes timed drawing drills, fill-in planning worksheets, and review checklists used in real studio critique. Work through it with a sketchbook or tablet beside you, and keep every page you make even the ugly ones, because the volume is the point.

## Understanding the Concept Art Role

Internalize what concept art is for so every later exercise stays purposeful instead of decorative.

### Exercise: The Three-Question Audit

Pick any existing image: a movie still, a game screenshot, or a piece of concept art you admire. Spend ten minutes analyzing it against the three core questions from Module 1.

- What is it? Could you name the subject with no caption, and what visual cues told you?  
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- What does it do? What in the design communicates its function or role?  
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- How does it feel? Name the mood in one word and identify the two design choices that create it.  
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- If one of the three questions failed, what single change would fix the read?  
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### Worksheet: Pipeline Placement Map

Choose a fictional project (a game, film, or animation idea of your own) and fill in where concept art sits in its pipeline and what you would hand off.

Project name and one-line premise  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who writes the brief (art director, creative lead, you)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Three downstream teams that will use your concepts  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One concept deliverable each downstream team needs  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One question your first batch of concepts must answer  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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### Checklist: Job-Type Clarity Check

- I labeled this file as concept, vis-dev, or illustration before starting
- I can state the production question this image answers
- I am matching my polish level to the job type, not over-rendering an exploration
- I am referencing reality and other fields, not just other concept artists
- I wrote down who the audience for this image is (director, modeler, or public)

## Ideation and Thumbnails

Drill the highest-value concept skill: generating many ideas fast and selecting the strongest objectively.

### Worksheet: Brief Breakdown Sheet

Take this brief or write your own: design a desert nomad scavenger who repairs ancient machines. Mine it into research threads and design questions before you draw anything.

Load-bearing keywords pulled from the brief

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Five real-world reference subjects to gather (be specific)

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Tool or platform used to build the reference board

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Four design questions the thumbnails must explore

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One color that signals the character's core role

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### Exercise: The 20-Thumbnail Sprint

Set a timer for 40 minutes. Draw twenty silhouette thumbnails, two to four centimeters tall, in solid black on white. Do not detail; chase variety. When done, shrink them and run the silhouette test.

- Which thumbnails are still recognizable when shrunk by half?
  - Did you vary proportion, big idea, and shape family across the set?
  - Which three thumbnails did you push to a deliberate extreme?
  - Which idea surprised you that your first sketch would never have reached?
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### Worksheet: Selection Scorecard

Score your top five thumbnails one to five on each criterion, then total. The highest score, not your favorite, advances.

Thumbnail ID or quick label

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Silhouette readability score (1-5)

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Fit to brief keywords score (1-5)

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Story clarity score (1-5)

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Freshness or originality score (1-5)

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Total score and advance yes or no

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## Checklist: Ready-to-Develop Check

- I generated at least twenty thumbnails before judging any
- I tested every candidate as a flat black silhouette
- I selected using the scorecard, not emotional attachment
- I scaled winners up gradually instead of restarting large
- I am preparing three distinct options to present, not one

## Composition, Value, and Color

Make images that read instantly by designing value first, then composition, then a controlled palette.

### Exercise: Three-Value Notan Drill

Take one developed thumbnail and rebuild it using only three values: light, mid, and dark. No gradients allowed. Reserve your strongest contrast for the focal point.

- Does the focal point pop when you squint at the three-value version?

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• Is one value clearly dominant, or did you split the canvas in equal halves?

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• Where did you place your highest light-against-dark contrast, and why?

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• Did grouping small shapes into larger masses improve the read?

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### Worksheet: Composition Plan

Plan a single environment or character key image on paper before painting. Fill in each decision so the eye-path is intentional.

Focal point and the contrast you will use to mark it

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Leading lines or framing elements guiding the eye

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60-30-10 breakdown for value: dominant, secondary, accent

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Where detail density is highest and where edges go soft

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Entry point, journey, and destination for the viewer's eye

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### Worksheet: Palette and Light Builder

Define a limited palette and a lighting scheme before adding color, then verify your values survive. Color harmony chosen (complementary, analogous, split-complementary)

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Two or three core hues plus one accent

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Light temperature and the opposite temperature for shadows

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Three depth layers and how contrast drops with distance

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Result of the grayscale check: does the focal point still read

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### Checklist: Reads-at-a-Glance Check

- ] The image works in three values before any color was added
- ] One value dominates rather than an even split
- ] Highest contrast and busiest detail sit on the focal point
- ] Warm light is balanced against cool shadow or vice versa
- ] A grayscale layer confirms the focal point survives in color

## Designing Characters and Environments

Apply the full process to the two core deliverables and package them into buildable design sheets.

### Worksheet: Character Shape-Language Sheet

Plan a character so its silhouette and shapes carry personality before you render anything.  
Dominant shape family (round, square, or triangular) and the trait it signals

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Proportion exaggeration and the character type it communicates

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Three props or garments and the story each one implies

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Where the 20 percent of busy detail is concentrated

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One asymmetry or wear mark that adds history

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### Exercise: Environment History Pass

Design a single environment thumbnail, then do a deliberate pass to layer in believable history and scale.

- Which perspective type did you use and why does it suit the shot?

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- What human-scale cue (door, figure, vehicle) anchors the size?

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- Who built this, who lives here now, and what happened between?

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- Name three lived-in marks you added and the event each implies.

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### Worksheet: Design Sheet Layout Planner

Lay out a production-ready character or prop sheet so the modeling team needs no clarification.  
Orthographic views included and the shared guide lines used

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Hero pose angle and the attitude it conveys

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Callout details and what each one clarifies

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Material notes (for example brushed steel, cracked leather)

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Palette swatch strip and any glow or special-effect notes

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## Checklist: Production-Ready Check

- The silhouette is unique and readable in solid black
- Shapes and proportion communicate role before detail is read
- Orthographic views line up on shared horizontal guides
- Complex mechanisms have labeled callouts
- Materials and colors are noted so no one has to email me a question

## Your Action Plan

1. Set up a reusable reference workflow in PureRef and save a starter board for one chosen brief.
2. Run a 20-thumbnail sprint on that brief and complete the selection scorecard to pick three directions.
3. Develop the top direction through a three-value notan to lock the composition before color.
4. Build a limited palette and lighting scheme, then verify it with a grayscale check layer.
5. Design one character using the shape-language sheet, leading with silhouette and story.
6. Design one environment using a deliberate history-and-scale pass with believable perspective.
7. Assemble at least one full design sheet with orthographic views, callouts, and material notes.
8. Run each finished piece through the matching course checklist and log every failed criterion.
9. Revise based on the failed criteria, keeping the original value structure intact.
10. Compile three to five finished pieces into a tidy portfolio set and write a one-line brief for each.









