

Background Art


with Jamie Williams

Jamie Williams is a Visual Developer and Background Artist working from a wide range of locations worldwide. Graduating from Norwich University of the Arts with a BA in Animation, he has worked on internationally recognised projects - such as Pacific Rim: The Black - with Passion Pictures, Polygon Pictures and Flying Bark Productions.

Objective

This workshop will help you develop your planning skills in order to generate your own piece of background art. You will learn how to moodboard, and different ways to thumbnail sketch in order to get your ideas down in a coherent way.

YouTube workshop link

 [Youtube workshop video](#)

Workshop duration

This activity should take approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. Please adapt to your circumstances.

What materials do I need?

Traditional Drawing:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Pen
- Play-Doh or alternative (*optional*)
- Lego products or alternative (*optional*)

Digital Drawing

- Digital art programme such as Adobe Photoshop, ProCreate or similar
- Blender (*optional*)

Moodboards

You will also need something to generate moodboards. This could be physical (i.e. cutting and pasting from magazines, books etc. onto paper), or digital (i.e. Powerpoint, Canva or PureRef)



Brief:

Create a mood board and some thumbnail sketches to develop ideas for the following brief –

You find yourself in an unknown land facing the twilight of its life.

Filled with hidden paths, bizarre spaces and mysterious denizens, it feels familiar yet strange.

In this world, where would you build your secret hideout and what would it look like?



Task one: moodboard

Make a moodboard for your idea. Try to find at least 8 images that show specific elements of what you'd like your scene to look like. Think about gathering the following:

Time of day references– do you want midday, dawn, dusk, nighttime?

Colour and light - how can lighting reinforce your story? How does this affect the colours? Warm, cool, etc.

Landscape – Desert, ocean, mountains forest etc.?

Structures – will any structures appear in your scene? Trees, cranes, buildings?

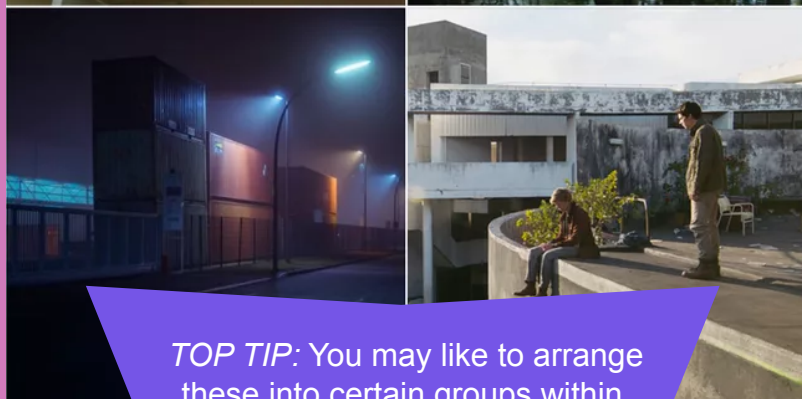
What textures do you want to portray? How will you convey this?

Any other references you'd like to use – clouds, rocks, water, light, windows etc.

You can include photos, drawings, other background art in your reference list. Remember these are for you to take inspiration from not to copy!

Catch up on the recording:

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TOP TIP: You may like to arrange these into certain groups within your moodboard to make it easier to reference



Task two: thumbnails

Gather everything you need to sketch out some ideas. You might use a tablet, iPad or pen/pencil and paper.

Create at least 3 drawings setting out ideas for your background art.

Think about the following:

What is the aspect ratio? (Dimensions of the piece)? Is it wide cinematic? Square?

What is the focal length and perspective you are using? Imagine you are looking through a camera!

What structures will be in the piece? Where will these sit? Break down your shapes into big, medium and small pieces.

Will you use shapes or lines to show whats in your piece? Or a combination of both?

Think about what colours you will use and how this shows the mood you want to show. You might also like to think about what textures are involved, how these reflect or absorb light?

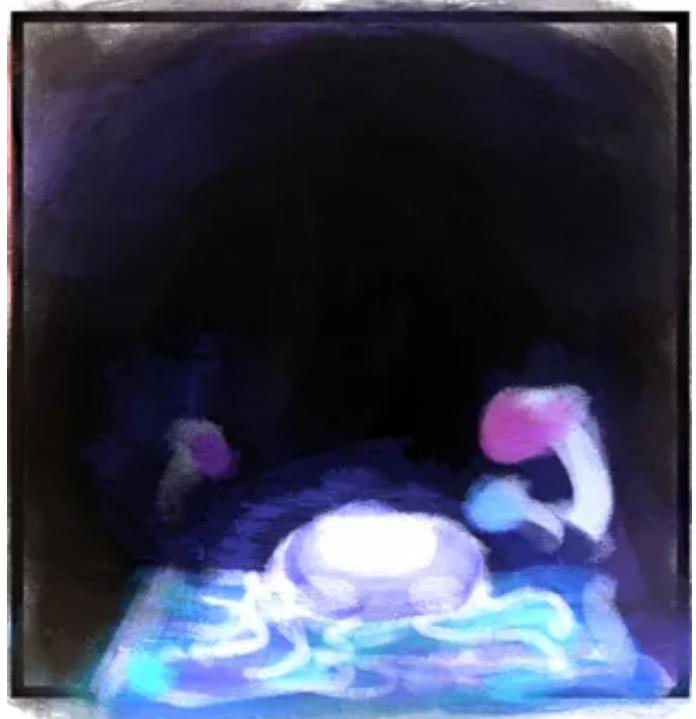
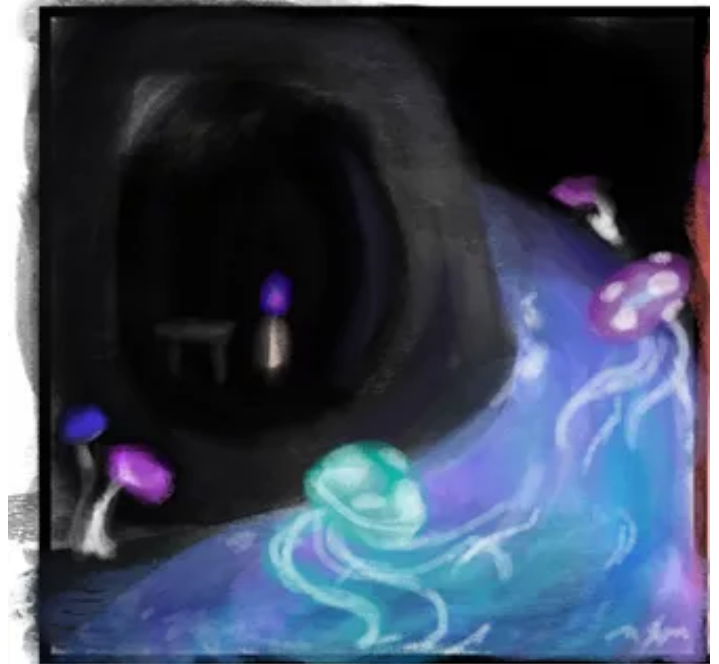
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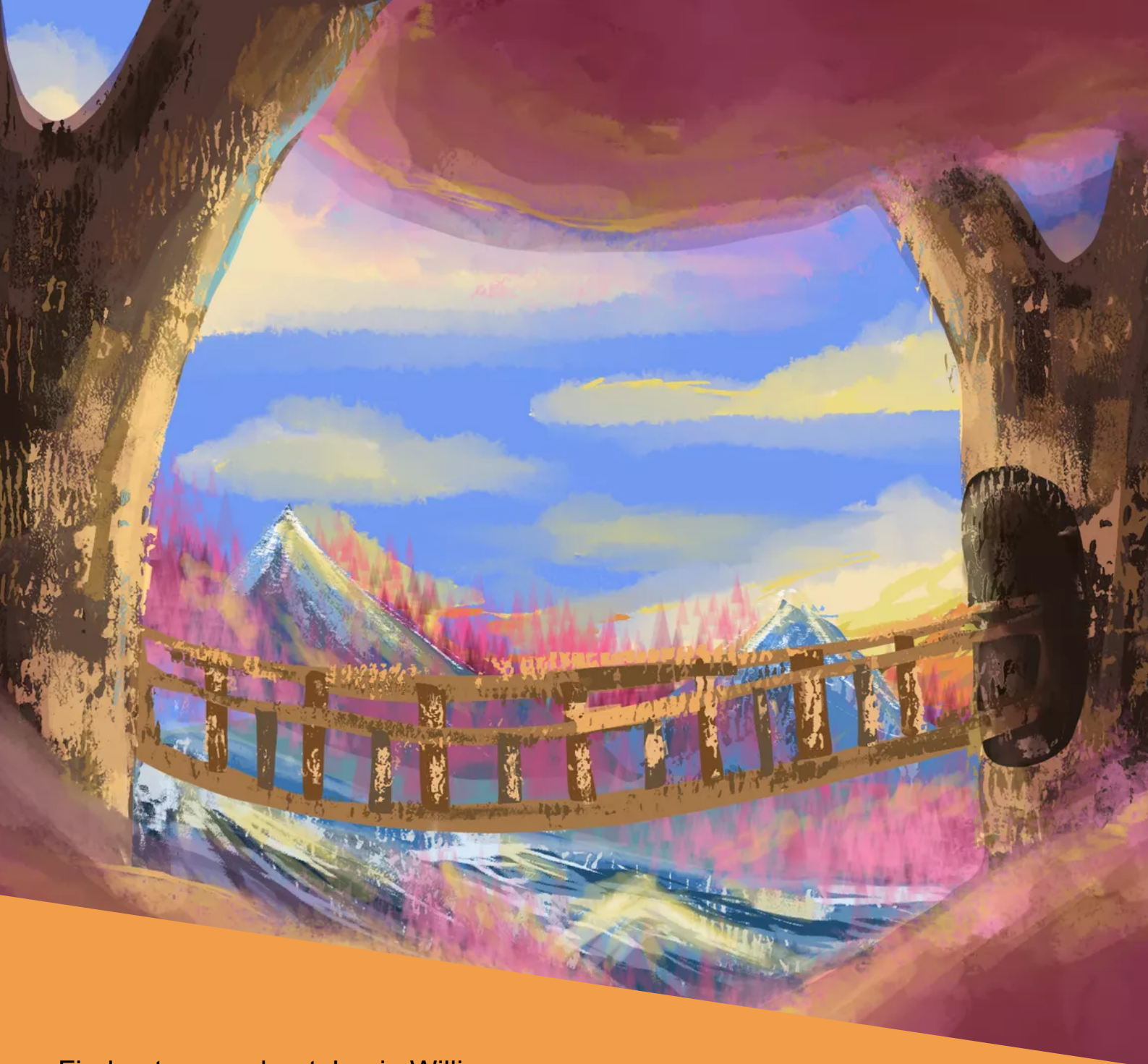
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TOP TIP: Generate lots of different thumbnails so you can get an idea of what you like and don't like!

Conclusion:

This workshop is designed to help you gain an understanding of the planning stages for producing background art. Now you have generated some ideas, you can now work on combining all of your ideas into your own piece.





Find out more about Jamie Williams

 [@dimiscott](https://www.instagram.com/dimiscott)

 [Jamie's website](#)

We would love to see your work! Share it with us on Instagram:


 [@norwichuni_outreach](https://www.instagram.com/norwichuni_outreach)


 [@takeyourplace_he](https://www.instagram.com/takeyourplace_he)

Take a look at our Padlet board from the live session to see how others responded to the workshop!

 [View our Padlet board here](#)

Further resources

 [Pureref](#) - a useful reference tool for creatives that provides an infinite canvas to place and arrange reference images.

 [Shotdeck](#) - the largest collection of searchable high-resolution movie stills. Great for getting cinematic reference images.

Useful links

 [@norwichuniarts](https://www.instagram.com/norwichuniarts)  [Creative Career Paths](#)

 [Take Your Place](#)  [Norwich Uni Arts](#)