NORWICH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE ARTS

Game Art & Design:

Character Design

You will need:

- Three A4 or A3 sheets of paper
- Pencils
- Colouring Pencils

Objectives:

- To explore the impact of the game industry in the UK
- To explore the roles and career paths within games
- To learn about character design used for video game design
- To create your own video game character

Video Games have entertained us for decades but the industry has recently boomed, creating a wide range of creative and technical job roles.

Here in the UK the Gaming Market is worth £5.7 Billion, which is more than the film and music industries combined.

(sourced from NUA)

Roles within the gaming industry can range from technical work like Audio Engineering and Programming to more creative work such as 3D Modelling and creating Concept Art.

Here we're going to be exploring an important aspect of Game Art & Design that is used in many other subject areas: Character Design.

Designing a character sees artists draw up multiple versions of the same character to experiment and find which visual design works best for that particular character.
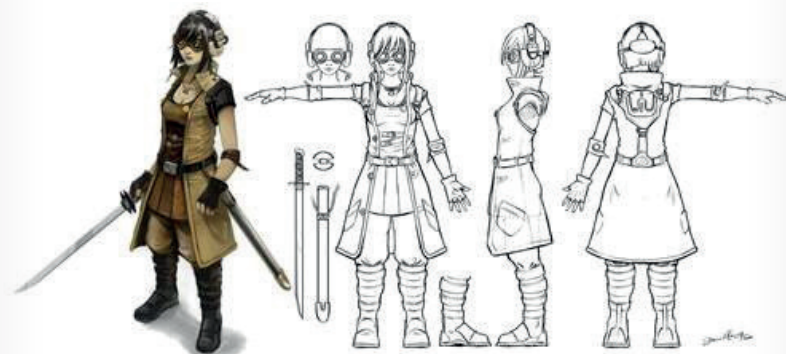
Task One:
Draw Your Character

Like the video game artists and developers, you need to think of and draw a character.

To start with you will need to think of a concept for your character and to begin developing their personality. This doesn't have to be a fully-fleshed character with a full backstory but one or two details will give you a good starting point to visualize them.

Below are some occupational roles and some adjectives to pick from:

- Student
- Builder
- Warrior
- Explorer
- Athlete
- Parent
- Queen
- Scientist
- Knight
- Doctor

- Intelligent
- Agile
- Jealous
- Leader
- Fearful
- Strong
- Cunning
- Slow
- Doubtful
- Anti-hero

Now you can begin to start visualising your character. Be it game design, animation or illustration, it is important to think about what the design you are drawing says about your character.

To help we can use shapes to visualise a character's personality:

Circle: Circular shapes are used to design characters who are friendly and harmless. Most protagonists are designed around circular concepts.

Square: Square shapes usually relate to strength and confidence. These shapes can be used as large, intimidating characters or those who are comforting and trustworthy.

Triangle: Most antagonists and villains are made up of diagonal and angular lines. The triangles appear sinister and aggressive, which opposes the softness of circular characters.

Tips:

- Use colouring pencils to develop your character further and think about what each colour says about your character.

- Enjoy playing around with different designs!
  Create different versions of your character with different features:
  the more you experiment, the more ideas for a final design you will get.

- Think about what are the distinguishing features of your character? Is it an item of clothing? An accessory? A particular facial feature or body part?
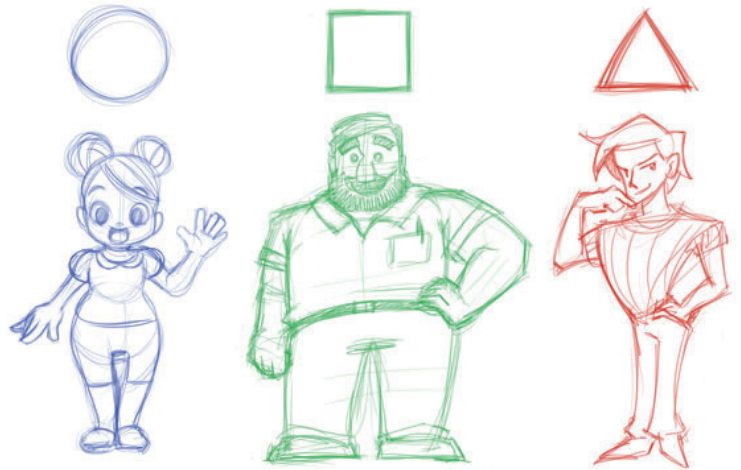
(Harriet Wilson's Blog- NUA Games Art and Design Graduate)

(source- Studio Goblin)

Task Two:
Simplify Your Character into a Side Profile

With your character drawn, we need to think about how to simplify your character into a 2D, side profile for the next activity.

You may have already designed your character from a side angle but if you haven't, consider what parts of your design stand out the most. Using Mario as an example, his distinguishing features are: Hat, Moustache and Dungarees. Pick the features that stand out the most and convey the personality of your character.

Tips:

- Use references! Looking up images of characters from a side angle might help with drawing your character from that angle. You could even use a statue or figurine at home to use as a reference.

- Start off simple: draw the basic outline of your character from a side angle then, once you have got the shapes right, start adding detail to your drawing.

Two things to consider when designing your character to be put into a video game level for the next activity: can you see aspects of the character's personality from visuals alone? And how could your character be used for gameplay?

(sourced from NUA)