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Creation of Video Game
Art Books: A deeper look into
what purpose art books for video games
provide

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis was to take a deeper look at the purposes of video game art books, analyse the process of their creation, and finally create a new art book based on the Norowareta: The Three Treasures game project by Studio Crying Spider. The primary methods used were qualitative research of various online archives and sources, as well as content analysis and comparative research on existing art books for video games.

The work discusses different topics such as a brief look into the history of art in video games, the types of art books that exist and roles they serve in the game industry. The thesis dissects the foundations and technical aspects of book design, including layouts, fonts, and content.

The outcome of this thesis was gaining a comprehensive understanding of the process and utilization of art books. The author succeeded in constructing a prototype art book for the Norowareta: The Three Treasures game project. The implementation and documentation of the process of the prototype is found in the final chapter of the thesis before the conclusion. This work provides a guideline for what one should consider and keep in mind when creating an art book based on a video game.

Keywords: video games, art book, art, design

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1 INTRODUCTION

Art books for video games are often thought to be an addition to the original source material, and a novelty item for the consumer to enjoy. Whether they are the dedicated fans who collect merchandise related to the game, or artists who purchase art books to admire and study the works of industry professionals. Art books have become a staple in the world of video games. However, how would one go about with creating one?

This project-based thesis focuses on the fundamental elements, purposes, and requirements of creating an art book for video games. The research portion of the thesis will focus on the history of video game art books, roles they serve for the game and industry, analysing and comparing existing video game art books and understanding the design principles of books. The data that is collected throughout will then be implemented in creating a new art book for the *Norowareta: The Three Treasures* game project.

Written studies of art books themselves are scarce and ambiguous, especially ones related to specific video games. Some earlier theses related to designing art books have been implemented, for example, *Pirkko's Book- Building Grid for Art Book* (Häkki 2012) and *Red Tunnel - Illustration and Layout for the Art Book* (Ikonen 2009). However, these examples are both written in Finnish and are a collection of artworks produced by a single artist, unrelated to video games or the game industry. If one was to try and search for the topic in a general google search, they will be bombarded with links to top ten lists where they rank existing art books and highlight which ones are favoured by players.

Finding proper documentation and research on video game art books was a difficult task, as most topics focused on their marketability and on ones that have been produced within the recent decade. This meant the author was required to break down the general characteristics of art books. This includes the history of video games themselves to make assumptions about how art books came to be, and research general book design in order to understand the process of their

creation. Perhaps with this thesis, there will exist more in-depth documentation of art books for video games in the future.

2 THE BRIEF HISTORY OF ART BOOKS

It is difficult to pinpoint when art books for video games began to appear, or more specifically what could be considered the first official art book. Early age video games of the 1960s to 1980s did not have advanced or complex graphics, and most were hosted in arcade machines. Artwork was prominently displayed on the machines themselves, in order to display a visual narrative of what the game was about and garner a player's attention (Figure 1). Regardless, having the games solely on arcade machines made the social connection for the players less personal, and owning game related merchandise was not yet mainstream.



Figure 1. Space Invaders arcade machine (1978)

Even after the production of home consoles such as the Atari 2600 (1977), the use of art was mainly focused on the box covers and cartridges for the games. Box covers worked similarly to the arcade machine art, in using art as a means to make up for the lack of details in the game graphics, and to catch the eyes of a player in the game store (Figure 2). It was not that there was no art being produced, but instead that there was not enough of it to be able to make a

collective art book to begin with. The creator of Space Invaders (Taito Corp 1978) Tomohiro Nishikado drew concepts of the game's enemies on a single page spread, which on its own is a prime example of how small-scaled the use of art production was during the time.

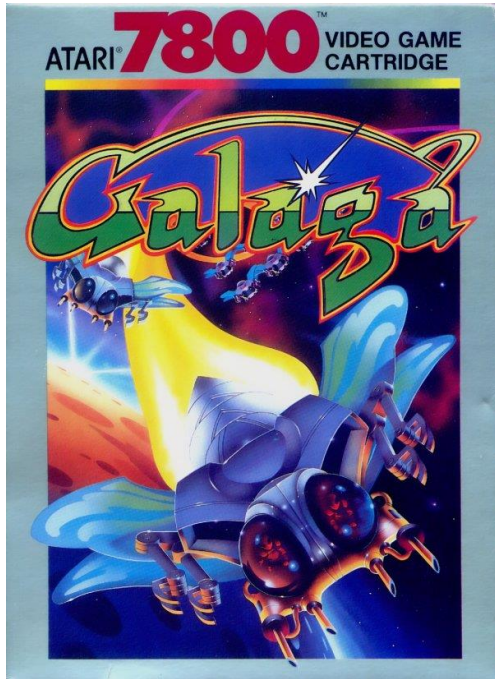


Figure 2. Box art of the game Galaga (1981)

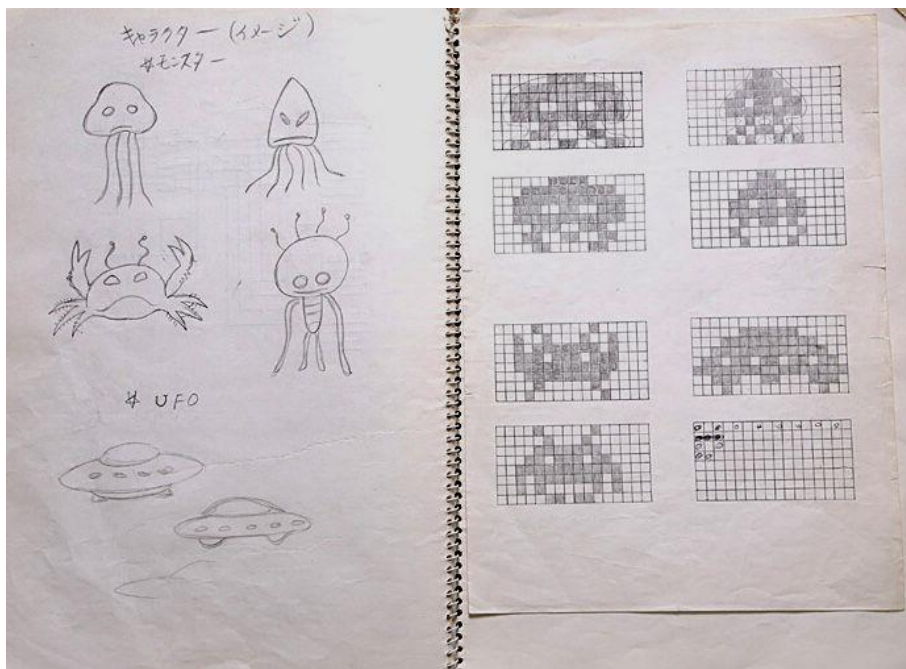


Figure 3. Space Invaders concept art (Nishikado 1978)

The earliest form of having art in books related to video games came in strategy guides. These artworks were not included inside the games of the time, and whether or not they were a part of the preproduction is unclear. They did not include concept work or sketches; instead, they presented as finished illustrations as seen in Figure 4. Regardless, they served a purpose to the player as visual additions to the game, which later would expand to becoming art books.

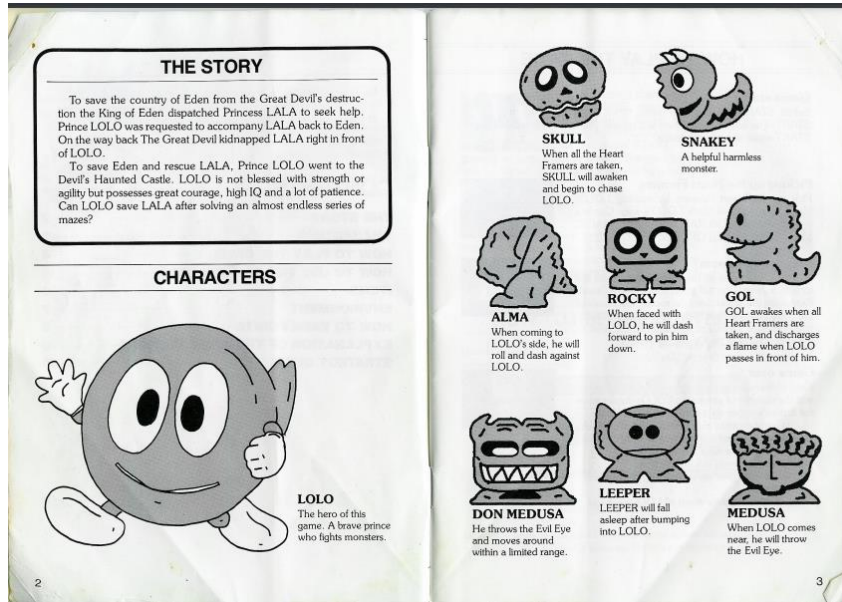


Figure 4. Page spread from the strategy book for the game Adventures of Lolo (1989)

Based on digital archives and art book collections, the author has made the conclusion that the proper forms of art books began to surface in the 1990s to mid-2000s. One of the oldest being Capcom Illustrations (1995), featuring illustrations of various Capcom game characters. From there on, more art books were being produced, as marketing for video games became more mainstream with the rise of the internet.

The history of video game art books is unsatisfyingly sparse and difficult to pinpoint. One can only make assumptions based on the history of video games themselves, and technological advancements. Art books may have appeared silently, but their presence have persisted and evolved.

3 WHAT ARE ART BOOKS?

An art book, in the context of video games, is a collection of artworks that were either utilised in the preproduction or marketing of the game or were implemented in the game itself. The type of artwork varies from unfinished pieces, concept art, rendered art, 3D models, key art, and finished illustrations. Art books may include unused assets and ideas, that had been cut from the game completely.

Art books can also provide insights into the choices and reasons behind the creator's design or game elements. However, not all art books include these commentaries, despite many being interested in hearing them, and learning more context to the artwork. For example, in the video *Video Game Art Books - Divisionlo* (Divisionlo 2021), the creator laments while showcasing examples of art books that have sparse commentary.

3.1 The types of art books

Despite the term "book" that is used to classify them, not all art books are in the form of a common book. For example, they can be in the form of a booklet and digital copy as well. The size and form of an art book depend on the purposes the game company wishes to achieve with their inclusion. Each form possesses its own positive and negative qualities.

Booklets have the advantage of being able to be included inside the game's case or are directly built into it as can be seen in the *Final Fantasy XIII-2 Collector's Edition* (Square Enix 2011) in Figure 5. The modern games that include art books inside the cases tend to utilise them as special editions, rather than a free inclusion. These booklets are often lacking in art, with little to no commentary, as they are smaller scaled. Pricing is difficult to pinpoint exactly, as ones that come with the game, are priced as a singular unit; thus, their individual value is speculative. It is fair to assume that the production costs are still lower than making a separate and larger art book.



Figure 5. Final Fantasy XIII-2 Collector's Edition, art booklet in the middle, attached to the case

Physical copies of hardcover and larger scaled books are considered to be vastly more prominent and of higher quality in comparison to the other forms of art books. They are able to include more artworks, commentary and behind the scenes information about the game. For this reason, their prices are valued higher. The Art of Star Wars Jedi: Survivor (Lucasfilm Ltd., Respawn Entertainment 2023) is priced approximately at 45-50 euros for a physical hard copy, while a digital kindle copy is roughly priced at 30 euros. A physical copy will naturally be a higher price than a digital copy; that is to be expected when taking into production and distribution costs.

Digital copies of art books are the cheapest form, and the most accessible. The cost of production is the lowest, as digital files will exist regardless of if an art book is printed to be a physical copy. The quality of the artwork is of higher quality by being displayed on a digital screen. However, they are rarely included in bundles and if they are included, they are in the lower tiers of editions. This is because they are not as favoured as physical copies. Despite the current digital age, people are preferring physical books over digital copies. Digital copies require a computer or tablet to be able to look through, which can be tedious when comparing it to the simplicity of merely opening a book. A Stora Enso survey in 2022, displayed that 65% people prefer physical books, 21% prefer e-books and 14% prefer audiobooks. With over half preferring physical books, it is

understandable why game companies would invest less in marketing digital art books (Colless 2022).

3.2 The purposes of art books

Much like how the form of art books varies, the purpose depends on the goal and function that the game company wishes to achieve when creating an art book. The art book for a video game cannot exist without the game itself, while the game can exist without an art book. They serve the various purposes that may enhance the player's experience with the game, as well as the profits and reputation of a game company.

Art books have been used as a celebrative merchandise to advertise the anniversary and success of a franchise and game company. One example is Capcom's 30th anniversary character illustration book (2013). Anniversary related art books are made up of a collection of art works from different games, rather than individual ones. This type of art book is not often produced, in comparison to ones that focus on a single game title.

It is not a surprising fact that one of the primary purposes of why gaming companies are creating art books is monetization. The rise of advertising and manufacturing has led humankind to live in a culture of consumerism and profitability. A gaming company's priority is to make a profit with their intellectual properties; therefore, art books have also become an asset in making profit.

Pre-orders are when the game is available for purchase before the release. This aids the companies to see how much interest there is towards the game and gaining money beforehand to aid in the expenses. Game companies have utilized art books by occasionally having them be available with the pre-ordered game, as an exclusive, which means they can raise the price as well. These art books work also as great promotional material for the games release.

Special Editions, Collectors Editions, Deluxe Editions and Bundles oftentimes do not differentiate from each other in any significant ways. They are merely a

collection of purchasable merchandise related to the video game. Having these collections is a form of price bundling, in which the products are not priced individually but instead as on collective unit (Indeed 2022). The most common product included in these bundles are art books.

The previously mentioned, *The Art of Star Wars Jedi: Survivor*, has a deluxe edition, priced at approximately 100 euros. This edition includes the art book, the creator commentary for the next chapter in the series' saga, and features metallic printing treatments, a protective slipcase, as well as a folio enclosing an archive-quality lithograph. The game itself is not included in this bundle, but it serves as an example of the different monetary collections one can organise with art books.

A final purpose to consider is by switching the perspectives. Instead of focusing on why someone would produce an art book, one has to take into consideration why someone would buy an art book. To be able to create an art book, one must understand who it is being made for.

Those who have played the game itself, or have an interest in playing, can develop a familiar connection. They crave to purchase things that are related to or remind them of what they enjoy. Products that connect consumers to their place, people and past is what drives them to purchase them (Eichinger et al. 2021). An art book is a strong reminder of the game that a player enjoys, being able to add to their experience and association with it.

One should keep in mind, those, who buy video game art books, are not necessarily playing either the game the art book is based on, or games in their entirety. Non-gamers are interested in purchasing art books, despite being a smaller target audience. Artists buy art books related to video games in order to admire the artworks, and those interested in working for the gaming industry study the pages to improve their own skills and ideas.

4 DESIGN

4.1 Basics of design

Art books follow the basic order of how books are designed. There is not one single way of designing a book, but there are aspects to keep in mind. This chapter shall focus on these three criteria: Layout, Text, and Content.

4.1.1 Layout

Having a proper layout is crucial in designing a comprehensive art book. The layout is a way to guide the reader's eye through the pages in an organized manner. The artworks should not be hindered by mismanagement of their placements, as their arrangement require deliberation. The layout of art books has two considerations: the functionality and the aesthetics.

The functionality of the layout refers to how well it works with the publishing of the art book. Margins are the prominent tools used for all types of books. Leaving space between the edges of the pages takes into account the requirements of physical copies as well as visual clarity of the pages. Having margins ensures images and text will not be cut off at the edges, or hidden within the middle of the spread, which is referred to as the gutter. While digital copies do not necessarily have concern of cutoffs or gutters, having proper margins are still valuable to follow. Margins assist in the readability of pages, as it keeps the layouts consistent and uncluttered.

The aesthetics do not refer to the artworks themselves, but to how the pages work with the artwork. Aesthetic choices allow the designer more freedom with the placements of the artwork, in order to make the content flow together harmoniously. Common book design rules can be changed, such as margins being ignored for certain pieces. For example, if an art piece is considered to be of higher quality and the designer wishes to give the reader an impactful viewing experience, the piece can take up an entire page, or spread. Ikonen made similar design choices with changing margins with the art book that was being created with the accompanying thesis (Ikonen 2009, 24).

Another factor in the design process of the layout is to consider where the text shall be located. Commonly the text that is seen throughout an art book is the artwork's description and information. Thus, having the text located next to the art piece is efficient. If the text is unable to be next to the art piece, then having it located within the same spread is a secondary option. Placing the text on a different spread to the artwork is dysfunctional, as it would require the reader to flip back and forth between pages. Moreover, such an arrangement would make the next page seem more cluttered. Text that is discussing longer topics about the artworks or the game itself, either require a separate and independent page or a larger area with less content.

An additional reason to why layouts change with various books is based on the size of the art book itself. Size affects what can be fit onto the pages: a smaller art book such as a booklet provides less space to showcase the art pieces. The less room there is, the less options one has with its layout, both functionally and aesthetically. Booklets risk making details unrecognizable if the images are sized down in order to have multiple artworks fit on a single page. In this case, it is better to showcase the artworks separate from each other or invest in creating a larger art book for the source material.

4.1.2 Text

Fonts, known also as typography, may get mistaken as an insignificant aspect of art books. However, they are equally a part of the design process, requiring effort in their designation. Having a poorly chosen font can make the reader's experience less than optimal.

The most important part in choosing a font is to make certain that it is legible. Readability is the barest minimum to how the text should be, to be able to provide the reader with the information that is being given. Size of the text itself affects how well one is capable of reading it, hence why one should choose a font which works in various sizes. An unreadable text is worse than having no text at all.

The secondary aspect of a font is the stylisation, and how well it is able to fit in with the source material. The typography should not be distractingly different from the artworks or the game, as it may clash with the reader's experience. However, stylisation is not only about having the font match with the art book. Byrne (2023) believes that a choice of font can add an elevation to one's product and "can create and convey a brand's entire ethos." While the game company may not share a similar aesthetic or culture as the game that has been produced, a font can still represent how much effort and thought the company places into its properties.

4.1.3 Content

Content refers to the substance of the book, specifically the artworks in the case of this thesis. A collection of art pieces cannot be placed haphazardly, without proper examination and organising. Having random unrelated pieces next to each other can create confusion and a disjointed narrative.

As an example, showcasing a character's final design first, while in a later page displaying the same character's scrapped concept design, can disrupt a reader's flow. There needs to be reason to the order of the artwork's appearances in the book. The reader should be eased in with the pages, building up the narrative without disruptions.

Separating artworks into their own categories aids in placing things in order. Whether it be having categories based on the topics of the artworks themselves, such as character or enemy designs. Or following the narrative of the game itself, showcasing artworks related to certain levels or areas for instance. Regardless of the categories, the artworks should relate to one another on the pages.

It is vital to recognise more prominent and higher quality pieces in the collection. Some pieces deserve to be displayed independently in the art book, in order to allow the reader a larger image to see all the details of the art piece or create a pause in the visual narrative of the art book. This should be limited to only a handful of pieces, as the impact will be lost if used too often.

4.2 Observations through comparisons

It is a difficult matter to make comparisons regarding to what is and is not good design for an art book. Aside from the general consensus of having it be comprehensive and legible. For when we discuss the artistic and stylistic matters of the topic, it is subjective to each individual. Hence, analysing possible reasons behind the design choices for these pre-existing art books will be productive research. A reader of this thesis is advised to keep in mind that a bias will still exist, according to the author's preferences and experience.

The author has divided three art book examples into three categories, which include aesthetic, information, and collection. The art books that are compared in this chapter are *The Art of Bioshock Infinite* (Irrational Games 2013), *The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* (Davies 2013), and *The Art of Last of Us Part II* (Naughty Dog 2020).

4.2.1 Aesthetic

In this case, aesthetic refers to the stylisation of the book's design, not to the artworks showcased. With art books especially, there is a significant number of aesthetic choices that a designer must make, as a book that is comprised mostly of text would have fewer visual considerations. Having a stylised art book can aid in making the art book more unique and add value to the reader's experience.

The game *Bioshock Infinite* (2013) has examples of aesthetic choices when it comes to the design of the art book *The Art of Bioshock Infinite* (2013). The more prominent characteristics are the choice in font and decorative borders that are added to each chapter head, and a few art pieces (Figure 6 & Figure 7). They are in accordance with the game's art style and setting which takes place in a floating city in the year of 1912. Similar borders and fonts can be found in the same decade's newspapers (Figure 8).



Figure 6. Chapter title with decorative frame



Figure 7. Concept art with decorative frame



Figure 8. Newspaper, Times-Dispatch; Richmond, VA. April 17th, 1912

The use of colour blocking is present in the layouts of *The Art of Bioshock Infinite*. While not something found on all pages, they are prominently displayed with how they are applied. Examples of this can be seen in Figure 9 by separating the art pieces with a long rectangle on the left, and in Figure 10 by fully having the background a solid colour that is not the traditional white. This aids the reader to focus on certain areas of the page, or separate elements from each other. Another reason behind coloured backgrounds is to give the art a unique tone or mood, or even to enhance the quality.



Figure 9. Spread from The Art of Bioshock Infinite art book

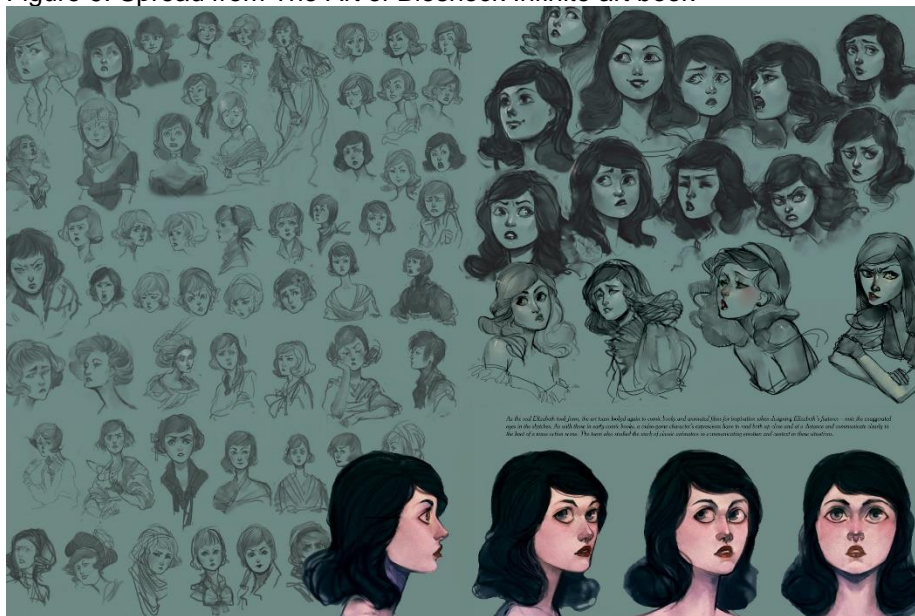


Figure 10. Spread from The Art of Bioshock Infinite art book

Not all art books are aesthetically noteworthy; however, they do tend to follow the original game's style or themes. The aesthetic choices for The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag are minimal and nearly unnoticeable. The pages mainly consist of the art displayed in larger geometrical cut outs (Figure 11). However, this minimalistic and nearly clinical approach is in accordance with the sci-fi elements of the game. In the game series of Assassin's Creed, the protagonists are placed inside of a virtual reality machine to access ancestral memories. Having the artworks displayed in these geometric shapes and sharp lines is not uncharacteristic of the game series.



Figure 11. Spread from The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

There are merits to whether one chooses a stylised or minimalistic approach with the design of their art books. Stylised art books have the advantage of appearing more thought out and add a unique quality to the book. However, the more stylised a book is, the more careful a designer must be with the choices they make, to not create a product that is considered garish and taking away from the art works themselves. Art books that possess a minimalistic approach can appear bland and underwhelming, but if designed properly, are unnoticeable, do not distract from the artworks, and do not affect the quality of the book.

4.2.2 Information

Information refers to the details and facts related to the artwork, and the game itself. It provides the behind-the-scenes knowledge of who have worked on the game as well as the design choices that were made in the preproduction.

Deciding how much information to include in an art book can be challenging and subjective. Some prefer minimal text to appreciate the artworks without any influence, while others desire to learn more about the design process and the people involved.

The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag is well versed with information in regard to its subject matter. Oftentimes, adding an entire multi-sentence paragraph of information for every few spreads, in regard to the behind-the-scenes and design choices that were made. On occasion, the text can resemble a prose rather than factual and direct information as seen in Figure 12. Again, it is somewhat difficult to consider whether or not this approach is favourable or redundant, as it is according to an individual's preference to how much they wish to learn.

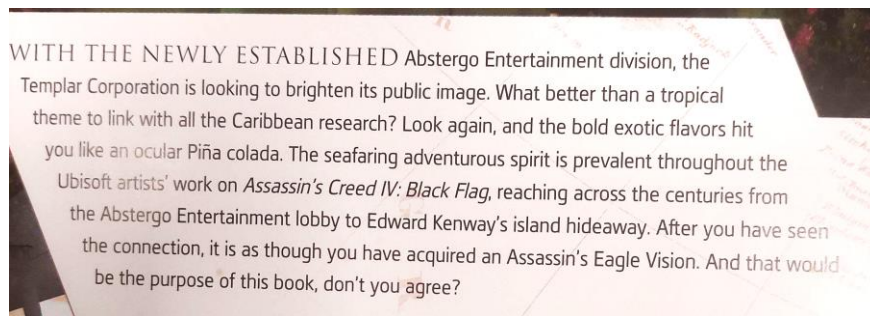


Figure 12. Paragraph text from The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

Both The Art of Bioshock Infinite and The Art of Last of Us Part II, in comparison, are more limited with the amount of information that is provided. The Art of Last of Us Part II provides a brief description for what the artworks are related to, while The Art of Bioshock Infinite inserts occasional snippets throughout the information with the artwork. Their wording and tone are direct and simplified, giving the reader the necessary information of what is being featured on the page.

PATROL

Unaware of the horrors happening just outside of town, Ellie and Dina begin their routine patrol in the mountains. Over the course of their duties, the girls inch closer and closer toward romance. When a vicious blizzard forces them to seek shelter, their feelings are realized. This passionate moment that took years in the making is interrupted by shocking news—Tommy and Joel are missing.

Figure 13. Description text from The Art of Last of Us Part II

Early ideas for a mechanical watchman, who would guard the dark nights of Columbia. While ultimately left on the cutting room floor, these early sketches helped define the feel of the mechanical creatures which would feature prominently in the finished game.

Figure 14. Description text from The Art of Bioshock Infinite

Crediting, specifically the artists, has been an interesting topic for the author of this thesis, as while crediting will be included in the art books, how and where exactly may differ. The Art of Bioshock Infinite designed to have their credits displayed in the content page, alongside the publishers, designers, editors and whoever else were involved in the creation of the book or game. However, afterwards, no specifications to who was responsible for an art piece are not included within the pages themselves. This can ultimately be somewhat confusing, as one would then have to look up each of the artists names to be able to figure out what piece they may have created.

This book features artwork by Jason Bennett, Chris Chaproniere, Chelsea Douglas, Scott Duquette, Claire Hummel, Jorge Lacera, Ben Lo, Shawn Robertson, Scott Sinclair, Mauricio Tejerina, Robb Waters, Tyler West, and Laura Zimmerman.

Figure 15. Credits from The Art of Bioshock Infinite

The Art of Last of Us Part II and The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, have a thorough and detailed approach to crediting their artists. For each page, the credits to the artworks are able to be found. The Art of Last of Us Part II includes their credits beneath the main information text paragraph, or underneath the artwork if it is a full spread with no other text. The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag have their credits similarly, although on occasion are as their own scaled down insert and break down to which piece exactly is being referred to. Another interesting note is occasionally commentary from the artists themselves are also included, as seen in Figure 17. Overall, this approach from both art books gives a clearer picture of who worked on the artworks, as well as how many artists were involved in the creative process.



Figure 16. Credits from The Art of Last of Us Part II

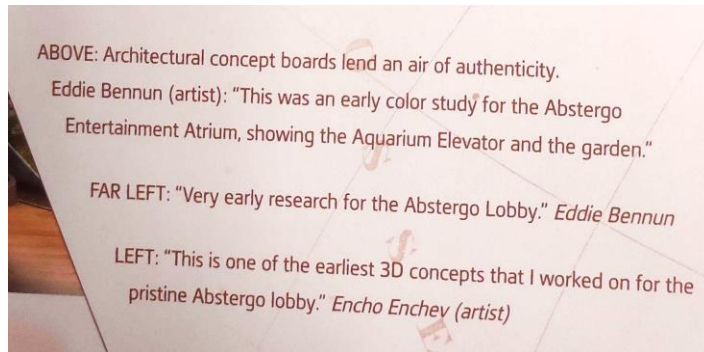


Figure 17. Credits from The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

4.2.3 Collection

A collection in this context refers to the actual artworks themselves. Examples of artworks chosen to be presented are concept art, sketches, finished pieces, key art, environment art, and character art, although not all examples are included. While creating an art book, it is important to have a balance between showcasing that adds to the game, as well as add merit to the book itself.

The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag showcases mainly polished and cleaner artwork, with fewer examples of sketches and earlier process of the preproduction stage. The environment was an important element of the game, which is why a fair amount of artwork related to the scenery was showcased the most. Having entire pages dedicated to singular pieces allow the reader to take in the details and atmosphere of the environments (Figure 18).



Figure 18. Spread from The Art of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

The Art of Bioshock Infinite contains an expansive collection of artworks, featuring early design processes, scrapped concepts, and various assets. Having unused ideas and artwork featured in an art book, adds value and content to the book, allowing it to be a separate experience to the game it is based on. Art books are often used as platforms to showcase these concepts that never moved beyond the preproduction stage, giving the reader more understanding to how much effort is put into creating a game.

However, as much as newer content can be appreciated, knowing when to stop adding pieces to a book is essential, as too many can make it appear cluttered. As seen in the earlier Figure 10, the spread showcases various sketches and

drawings of the character of Elizabeth. While this displays the various phases of a character being created, it can also feel redundant, with the reader giving a mere brief look over, before moving on. However, this does not necessarily mean these drawings deserve their own individual pages, with clearer separations, as that should be reserved for larger polished artworks.

Similarly, *The Art of Last of Us Part II* showcases a large and diverse collection, yet still keeps its pages curated, with limiting what pieces are showcased. Comparing to the concept process in Figure 10 with Figure 19, *The Art of Last of Us Part II* has a scaled down showcase of the phases for the character design. This allows the reader to see the various changes the character design goes through, while not cluttering the spread.



Figure 19. Spread from *The Art of Last of Us Part II*

5 THESIS PROJECT

As stated in the beginning of this thesis, the research that has been conducted is to be utilized in creating a new art book for the *Norowareta: The Three Treasures* horror game project by Studio Crying Spider. The art book is commissioned by Studio Crying Spider, which means that the final product will be officially a part of

the Norowareta: The Three Treasures intellectual property. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that the art book that is referred to in this thesis chapter, is a prototype art book, not the final product.

The beginning of this art book project was dedicated to going through all the artworks that have been produced throughout the game project. Most were chosen to be displayed in the art book, as the amount was not overtly excessive. Despite this, a few pieces did not make the final cut for the prototype.

Some had been created by former members of the project, and to ensure that there were no issues such as property and licensing disputes, these works were not included. Another reason for culling certain artworks were quality inconsistencies, most being the unclear photography of traditional artworks. If these pieces are documented with proper lighting and clean up, they may be included in the future. Even artworks that were chosen to be included, had some adjustments and clean up done to them, such as getting rid of unnecessary text, or making the files more streamlined.

The next phase was to organize the artworks in cohesive categories, in order to understand how and when they should appear in the art book. Based on the collection, the author of this thesis decided on four categories: Main Character, Enemies, Assets and Environment. Dividing the artworks in this manner, ensured a cohesive and balanced showcase.

Simplified thumbnail layouts were then designed in order to plan which art works should be displayed together, and how they should be presented on the pages (Figure 20). This included in figuring out the approximate number of pages that there would ultimately be. Potential spaces and placements for text was taken into consideration at this stage as well.

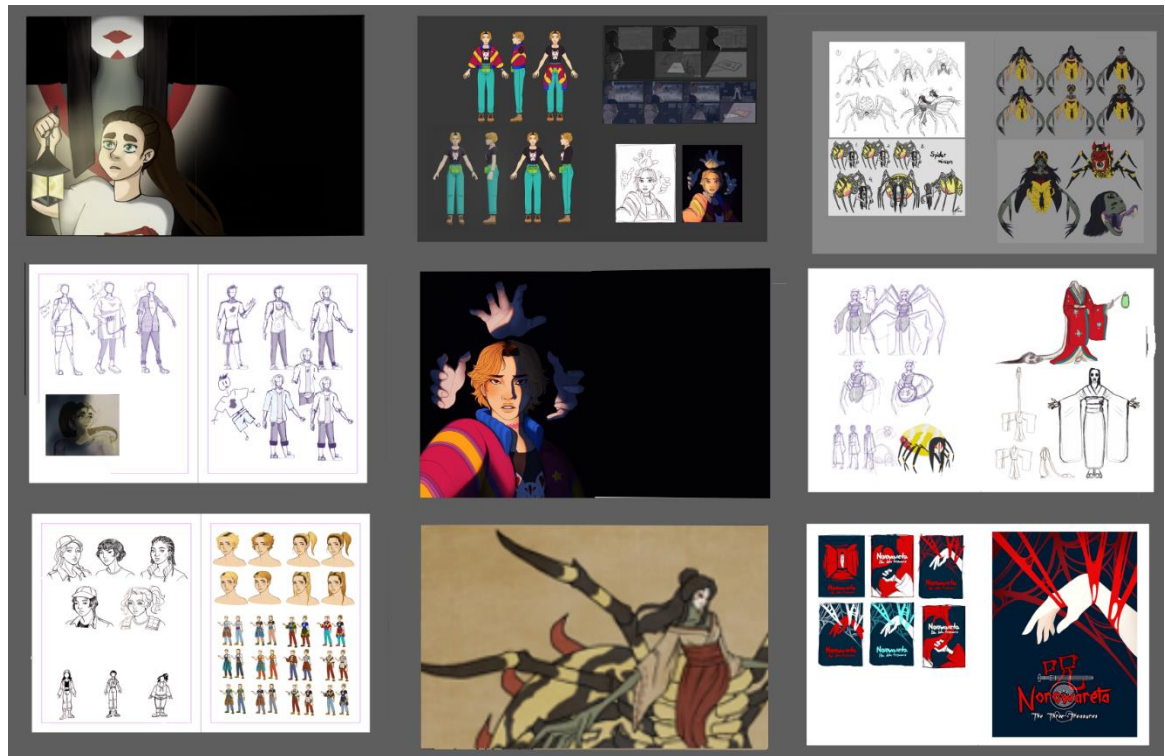


Figure 20. Mock-up thumbnail layouts

An oversight on the author's part had been the lack of forethought on what design software program to use to create the art book. This caused delays as further research was required in order to choose which program to use, and how to properly operate it. Adobe InDesign was chosen for this prototype project, as it was available and better known to the author. With further familiarity and research into how to use design software programs, it will improve the quality of future art books.

The first designed element of the art book was its cover. The Art of Norowareta: The Three Treasures was chosen as the name of the prototype, to mirror the current industry standard of names given to video game art books. The cover art is the poster that has been used consistently with the advertisement of the game (Figure 21). With this choice the cover of the art book is recognisable to familiar players, as the shrine itself is a well-known part of the game. The Castellar font while less stylised than the official poster's title, echoes similar elements such as the colour palette and outlines. As mentioned before, choosing a font to match a game's aesthetic and theme aids in having an art book appear cohesive and

thought-out, which is why a modern looking font would have clashed with the Edo period that the game takes place in.

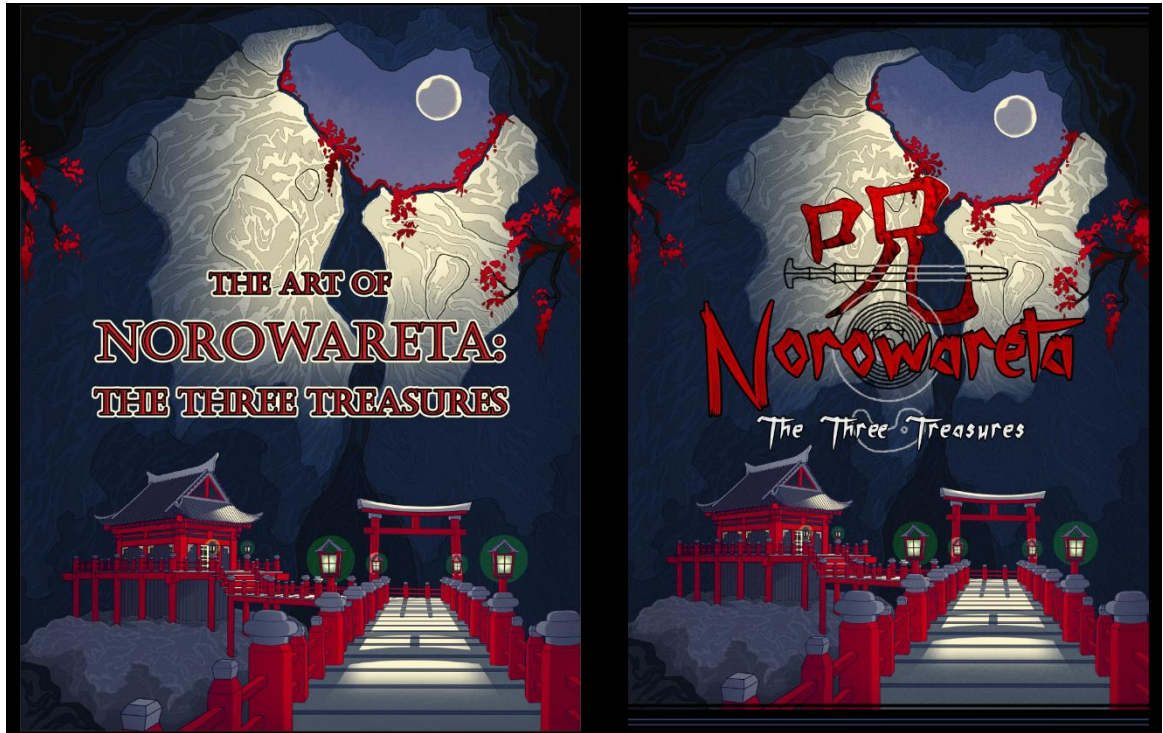


Figure 21. Art book cover (Left), Poster (Right)

Next that was added was the credits page, as most art books include their credits at the early stage. As a flat process of the poster art was available, it was utilised to be the background of the credits page, with the same blue from the poster overlaid on top (Figure 22). This was a similar design choice as *The Art of Last of Us II* did with their credits page (Figure 23). Having the background one colour ensures the text will not be overwhelmed by the image, while still creating an interesting visual.

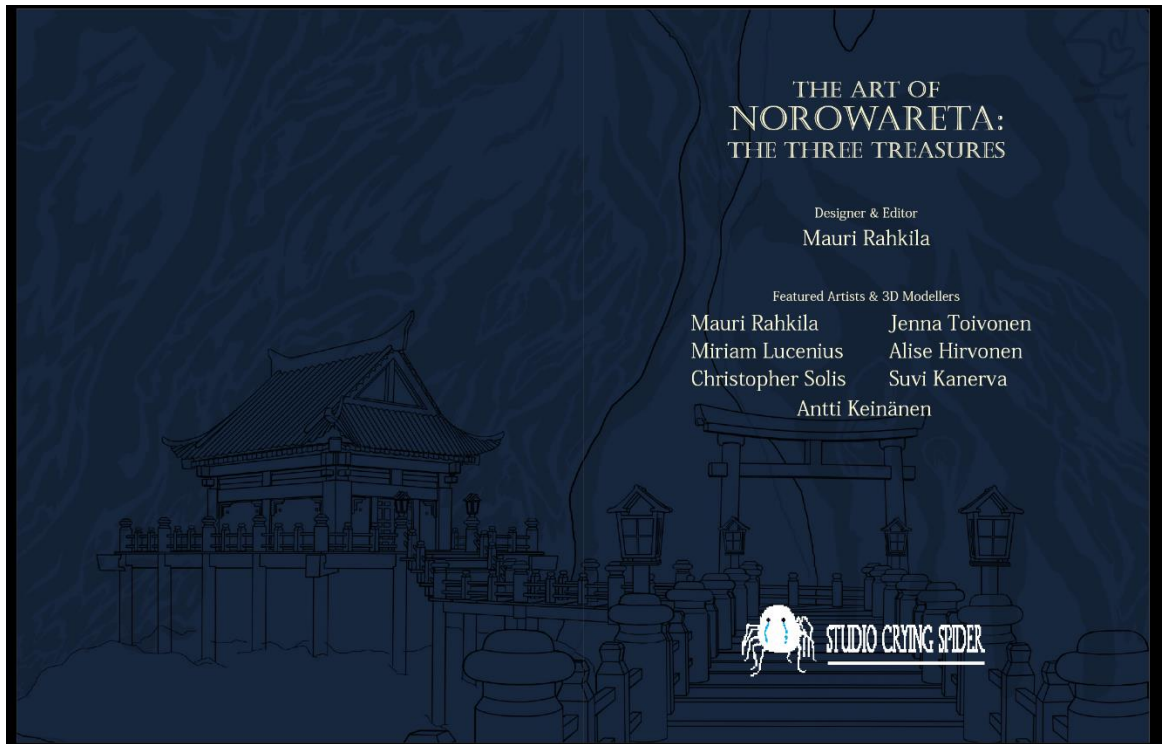


Figure 22. Spread of credits page

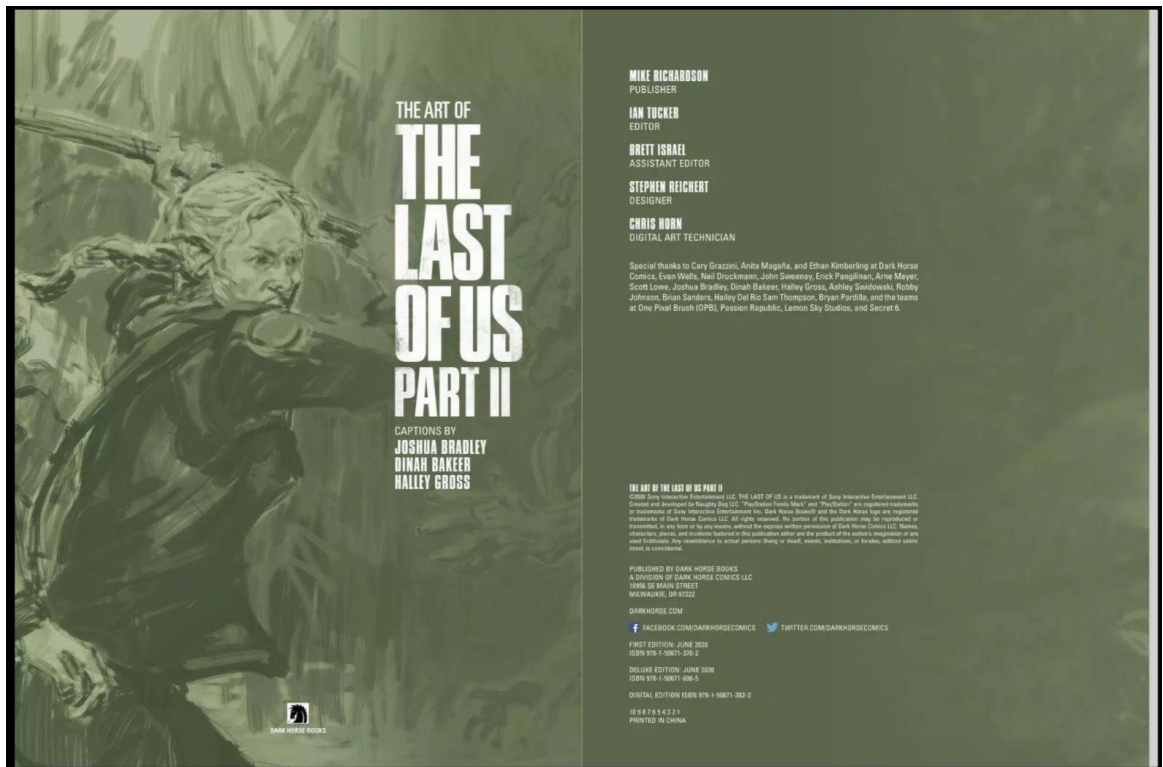


Figure 23. Spread of credits page from The Art of Last of Us Part II

The credits page includes the names of those involved with the art book design, and whose work is being showcased inside the art book. The specifications to

who created which artwork or model will be found throughout the pages. Adding a studio name or logo with the credits is also customarily with the credits. Additional information of the art book is missing from the prototype, such as publishing details, but can be added to a finalised version at a later date.

After the credits is the table of contents and the introduction of the art book. The table of contents refers to the previously mentioned four categories of Main Character, Enemies, Assets and Environment, and pages on which they can be found. The introduction page is a brief but detailed text about the Norowareta: The Three Treasures game project, and the purpose of the art book itself. With this introduction, those not familiar with the game project will be able to receive more context to the artworks.

With the set up and introductions finished, the artwork pages are designed. Each chapter and category receive a full spread close up display of a related art piece, and a brief introduction to what the chapter is about. Having an artwork displayed as the chapter presentation is a way to give a sneak peek of what is to come and is visually more interesting than a blank page.

Figure 24 shows an example spread of artworks related to the main character's early design stages. This page is dedicated to the alpha version of Norowareta: The Three Treasures, showcasing only artwork of the main character that was made during the time. Having the alpha version art pieces in one spread ensures everything is cohesive and connected and works narratively as the reader continues to the later development of the main character's design.

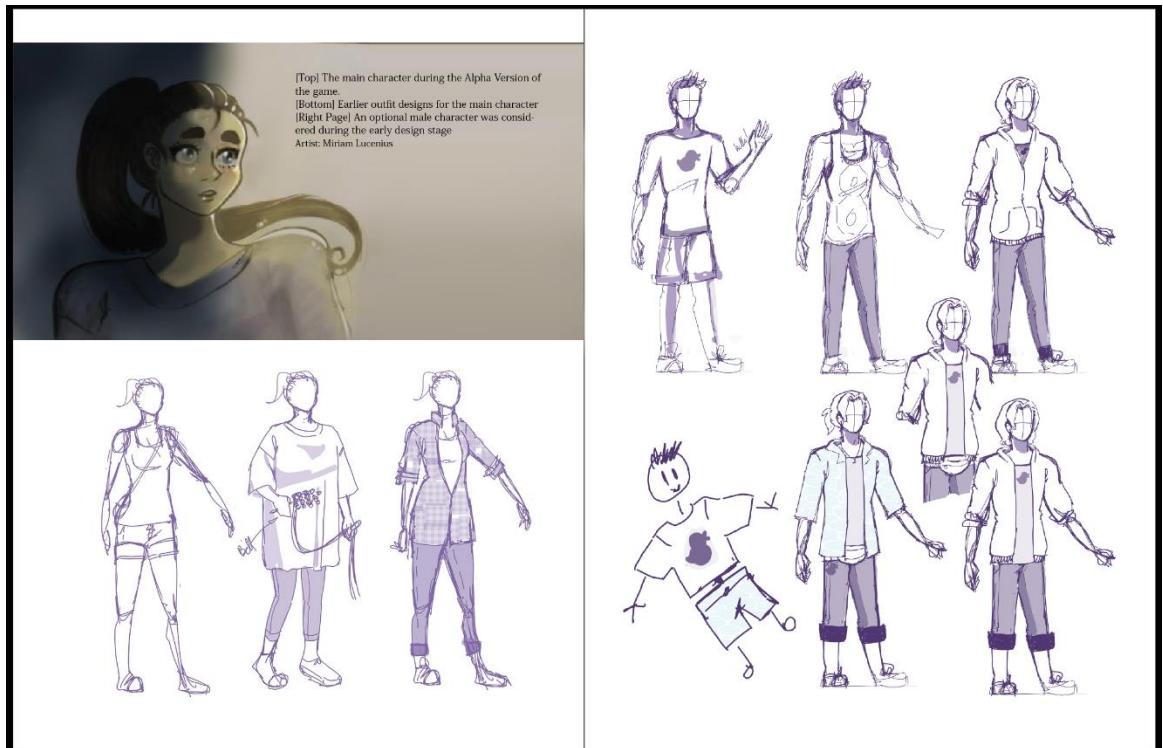


Figure 24. Spread of alpha version of the main character

An example of the text can be found on this spread. The author chose a similar approach to *The Art of Assassin's Creed*, where the placement direction was specified for each piece. A brief description of what is being showcased is included, and finally the artist is clarified at the bottom of the text. The font choice of Kozuka Mincho Pr6N was made based on the font being a clear, readable, and visually mature. As *Norowareta: The Three Treasures* is a horror game set in Japan in the Edo era, a childish or overtly modern font would not have suited for the art book.

In an Enemy category spread, the usage of a coloured page is able to be seen. The grey tone on the right page was picked from the boss enemy version lineup that was originally in its background (Figure 25). By using the same colour for the page, it hides the borders of the original image, allowing the line up to appear less restricted. This both mirrors a similar borderless look as seen on the left page's bottom image and eliminates a clutter of multiple boxes, as the other images also came with filled in backgrounds.

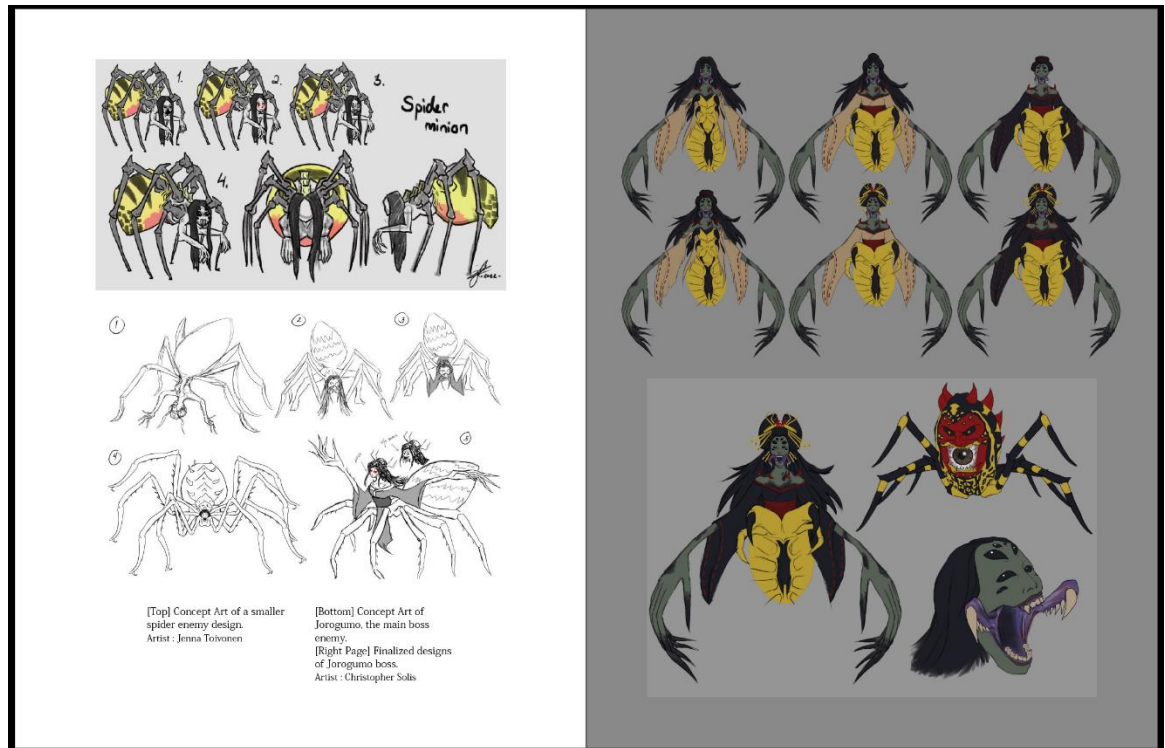


Figure 25. Spread of enemy design page

As a final example spread of this project, Figure 26 is a display of a larger and detailed artwork being showcased as its own page and spread. By making the right-side page dark, it becomes a continuation of the art piece, adding a dramatic tone to the spread. Whether the right page should include something, either text or be rid of altogether is a dependant on opinions and functionality. As this spread is the last before continuing to the next chapter, one could consider this a fitting and calm end to the chapter. Functionally, a widespread may be required in order to keep the pages even in their amount.



Figure 26. Spread showcasing the main character key art

Overall, the prototype that was constructed with the data gathered throughout the thesis, is a collection of design experimentations and a potential guideline. The author made independent decisions and scaled down the project due to time constraints, thus, creating an accurate and proper art book was not feasible. It is flawed and unfinished; however, it is able to serve as a visual sample in future discussions of a finalised version *Norowareta: The Three Treasures* art book.

6 CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to research what is the purpose of art books, what is required to make one, and then implement it in the creation of a new one. The purpose of art books does not have a singular answer, as it changes with what is wanted to achieve with existence. Creating an art book may not inherently seem complicated or difficult, however, the author discovered various nuances and skillsets that are required in the process. A creator for an art book requires a comprehension towards art analysis, an understanding on what layouts and fonts suit best, the knowledge of using a design software and creating a cohesive and immersive experience.

While the final product of the thesis project became a mere prototype, the experience has not been without benefit. The journey has given the author new perspectives to consider with the documentation of their own art, as well as now possessing a better understanding of the work and effort that is required for an art book. Anyone can create an art book based on a video game, but to create one that can add value to its original source material is a different endeavour.

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