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TRANSTAR

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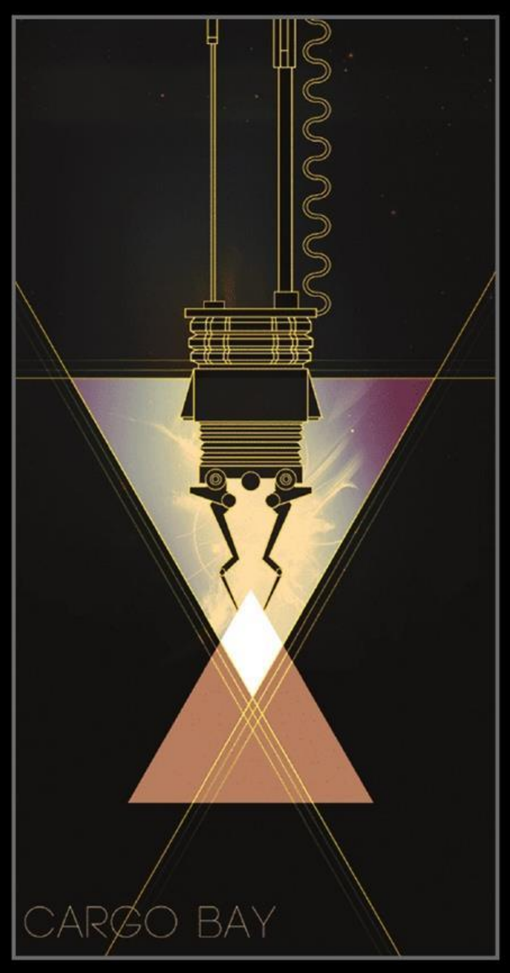
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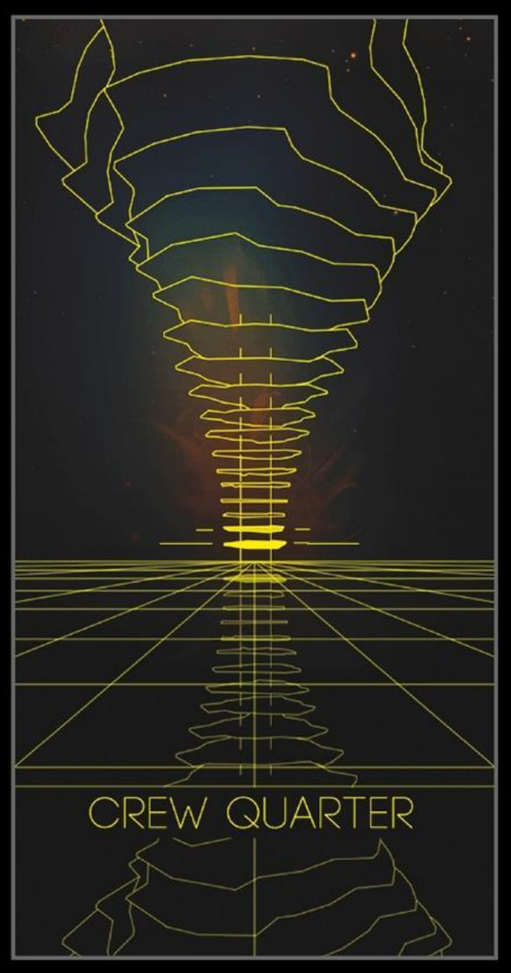
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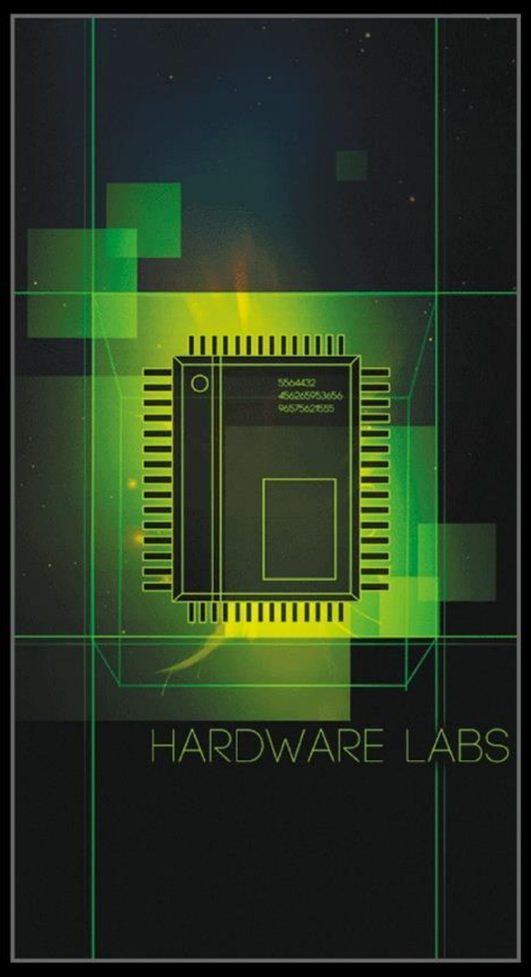
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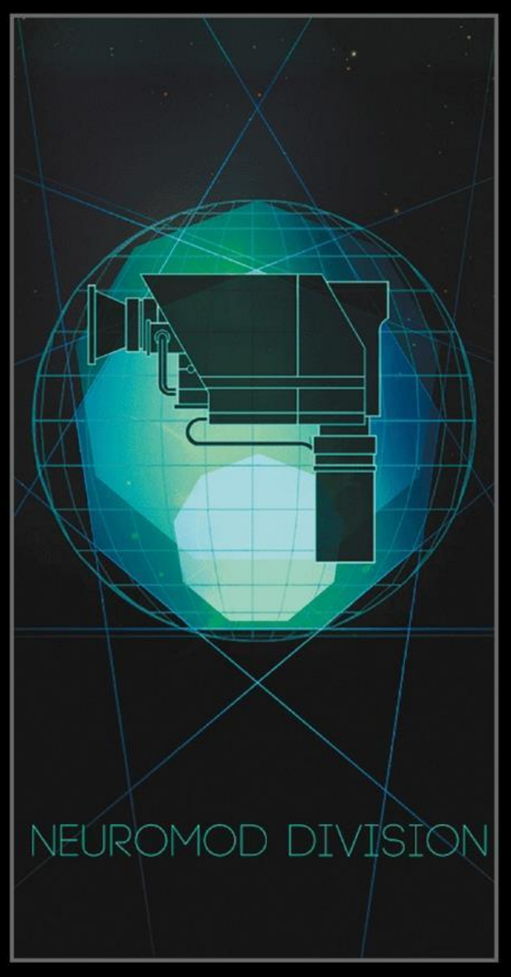

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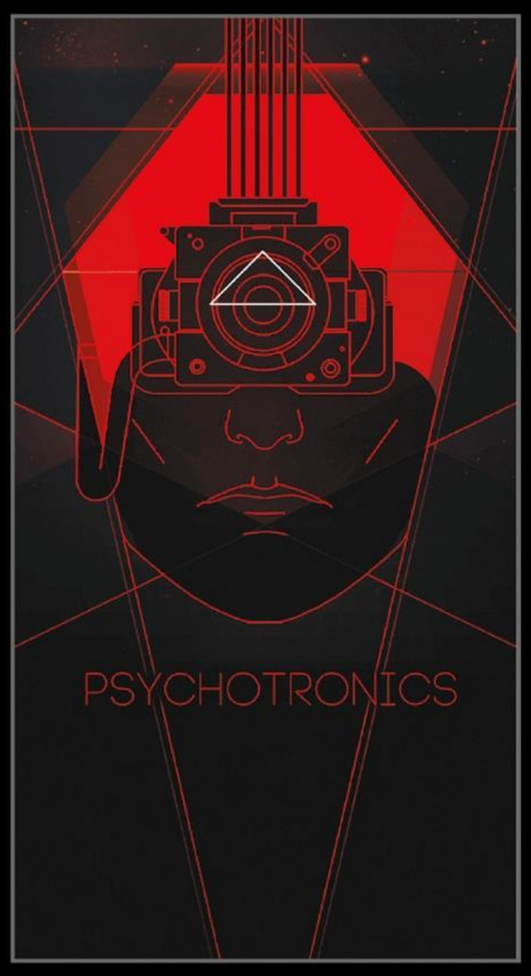

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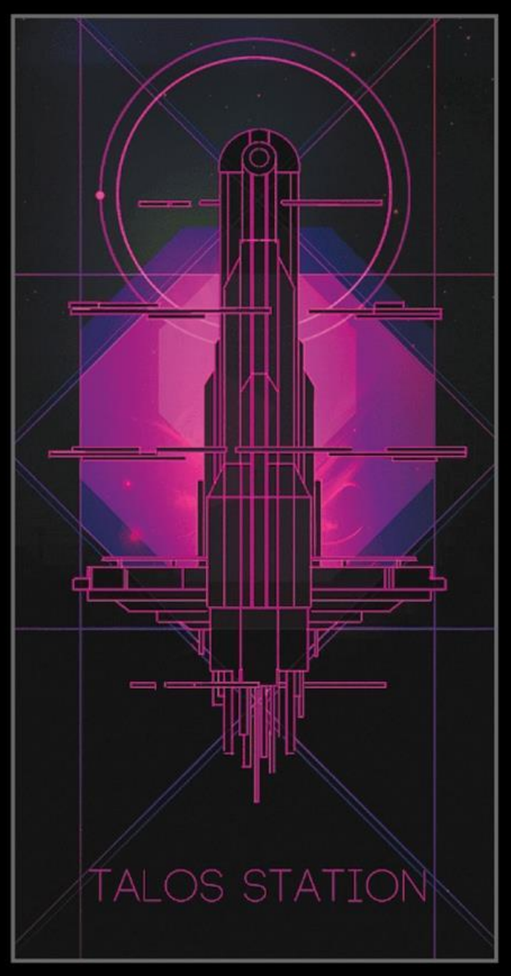

LIFE SUPPORT


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NEUROMOD DIVISION


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VIP SHUTTLE BAY


TALOS STATION


TRAUMA CENTER

FOREWORD

Deep and fascinating worlds have always been a core value at Arkane Studios. *Dishonored* had already raised the quality bar for what we hoped to accomplish, drawing players into a compelling and carefully crafted universe. As we grew as an art team during the development of *Prey*, we kept this cornerstone in the forefront of our minds.

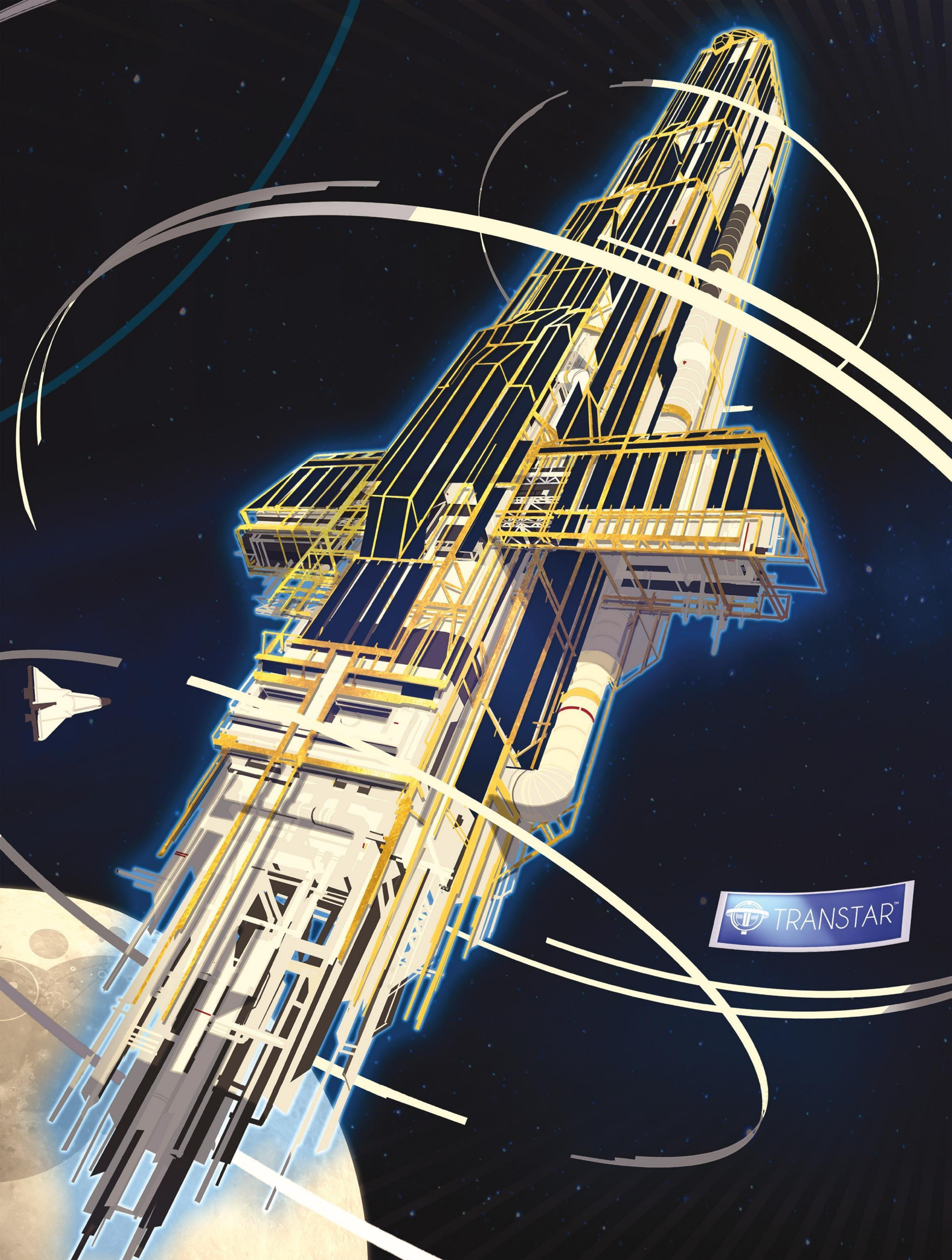
Even though *Prey* is set in the future, we began by looking back in time. So often when imagining a sci-fi universe, it's tempting to start with possibilities branching out from the current time and technology. By setting key historical plot points in the mid-twentieth century, we were provided with a plethora of potential inspiration, along with reference materials that purely and strongly adhered to the fundamentals of design. Our work became permeated by these fundamentals, especially the rule of thirds, contrast, and proximity.

From the first sketches to the final touches of lighting, our work is driven by sound construction and humanization. This applies not just to individual pieces or assets, but creating a history for everything to hang on as well. From the entirety of Talos I, to the smallest measuring tools used by a scientist, and even to the scientists themselves—everything is meant to contribute to a larger, grounded whole. Rooting our inspiration in an earlier era liberated us, allowing us to explore a truly unique vision that we could call our own—a vision of what the future could have been if history wasn't quite the same.

Sci-fi is a genre filled with conventions and pillars, things an audience has come to expect. Throughout the production, we constantly attempted to manipulate these concepts to fit our goals. The final vision became a group effort, with each talented artist on our team contributing to find that balance. The contents of this book are merely a glimpse into the whole group effort, and we hope it properly conveys the monumental dedication of our team as we made *Prey* a reality.

Many thanks to Sebastien Mitton for your guidance, and to Raphael Colantonio for placing your trust in us and giving all of us this unique opportunity.

Jessie Boyer, Art Producer
Manu Petit, Lead Visual Designer

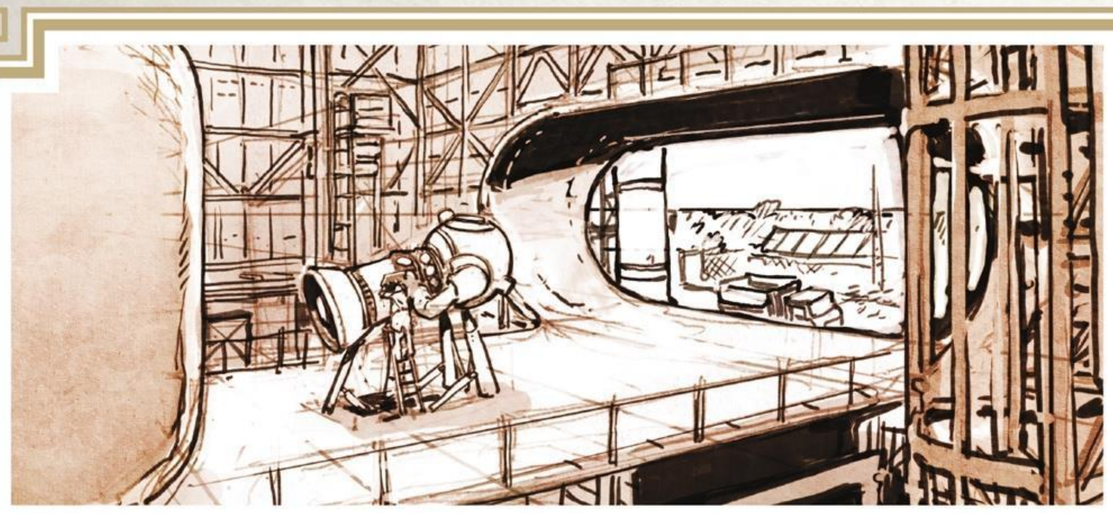

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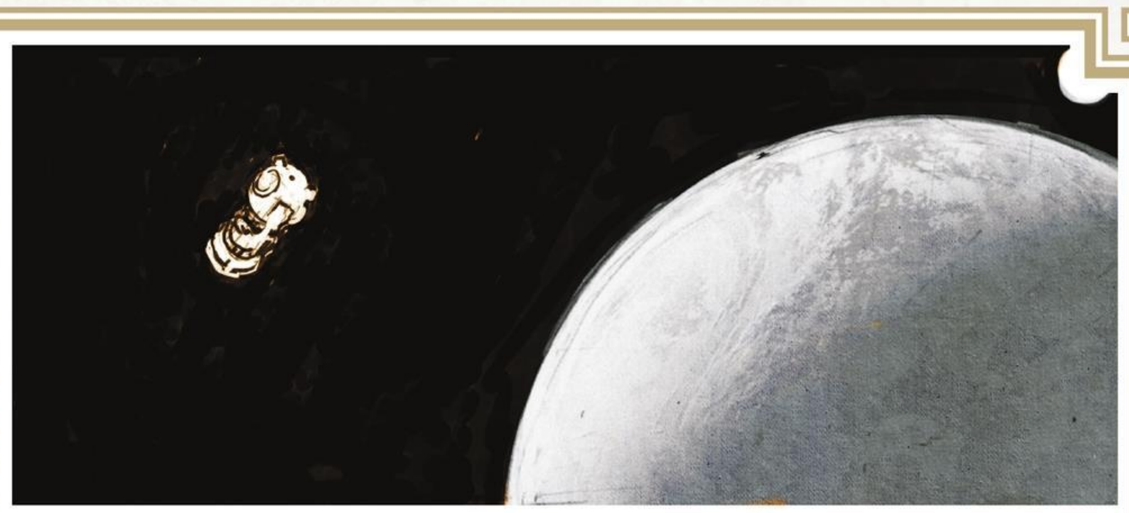
00

BEGINNINGS

When we started production in 2013, we hoped to deliver a unique player-oriented experience. We were presented with many challenges—new vision, new team, and new game—while we were expected to stay true to Arkane's core values.

To lay the foundations, we started by constructing a history and origins for everything else to build upon. This allowed us to ground our designs, find compelling references, and create our own unique vision for this sci-fi world. Over time, as the art team grew, the vision grew as well, thanks to the contributions of many talented artists.





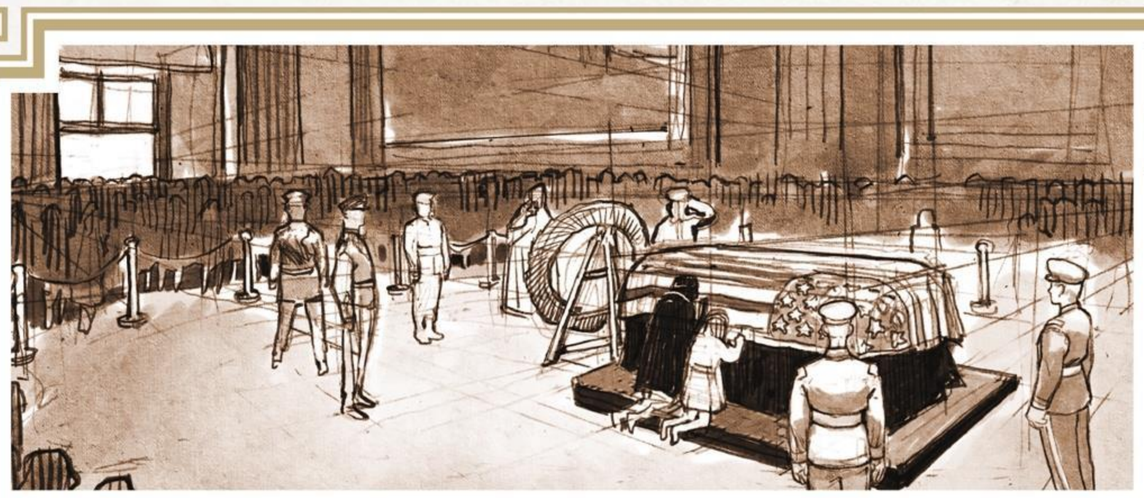


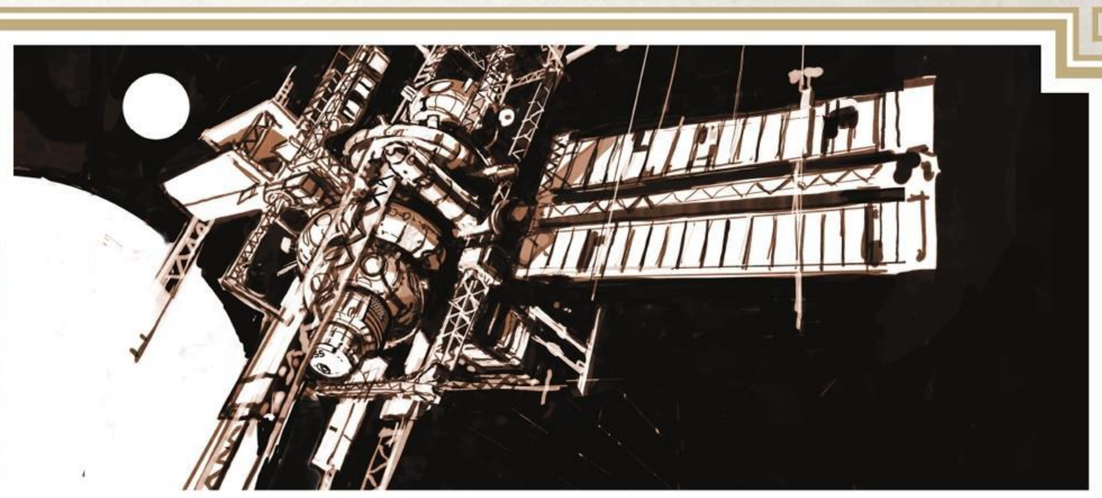


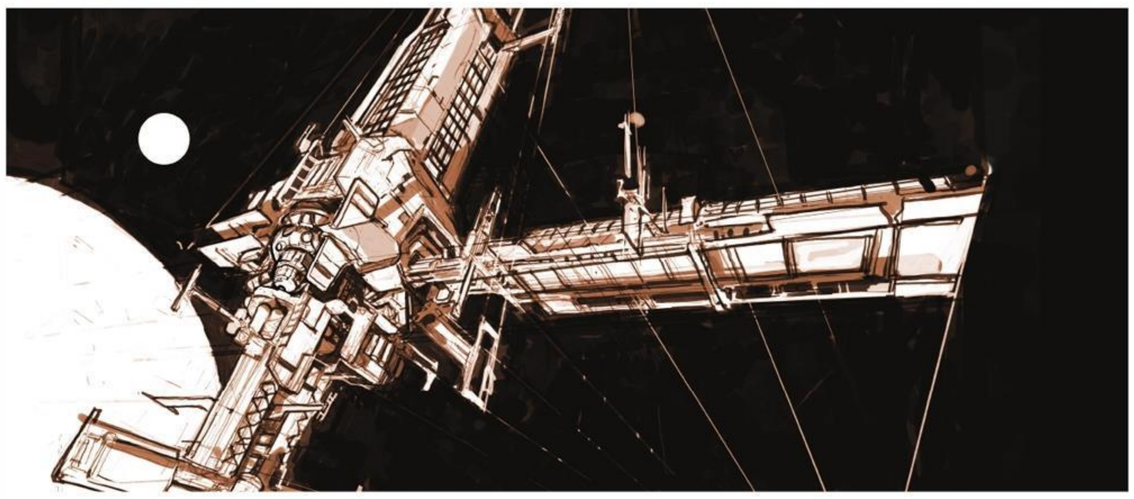


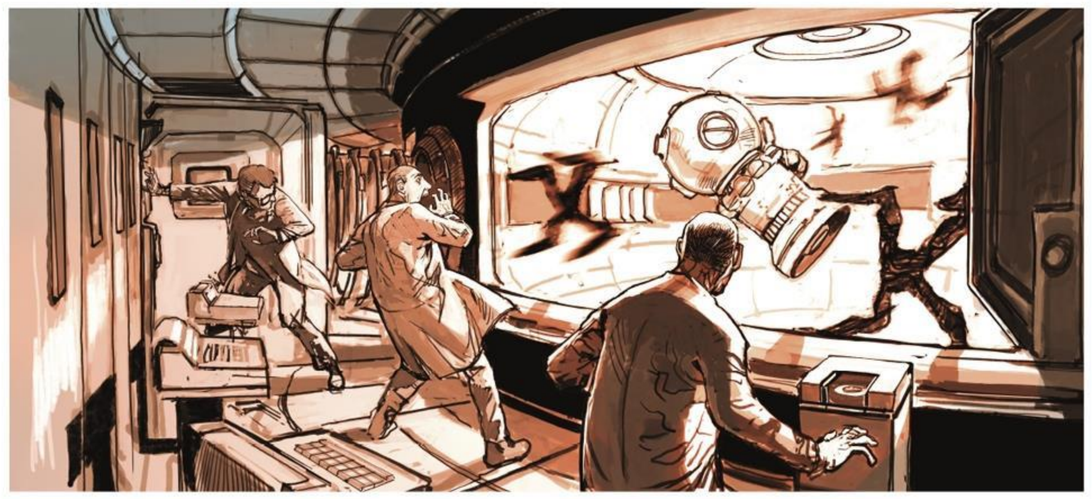




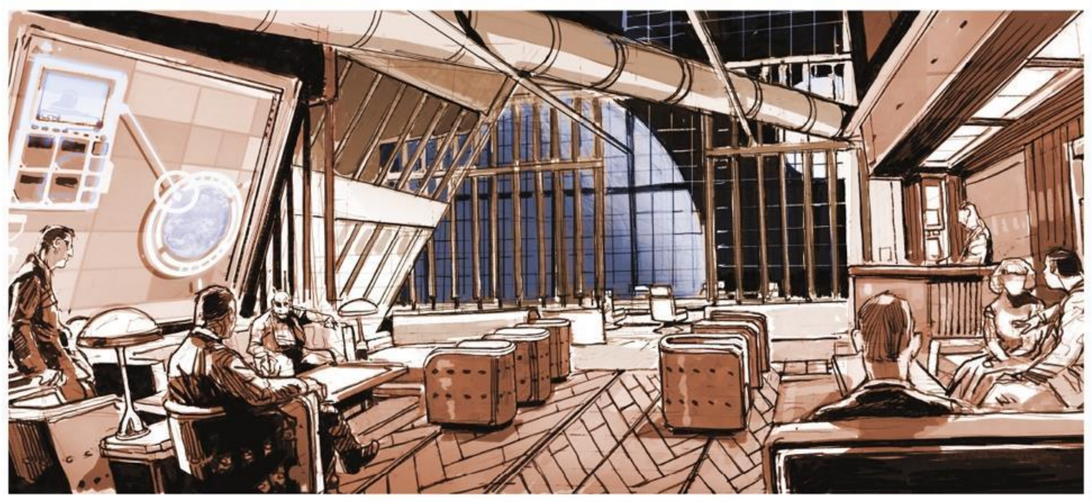


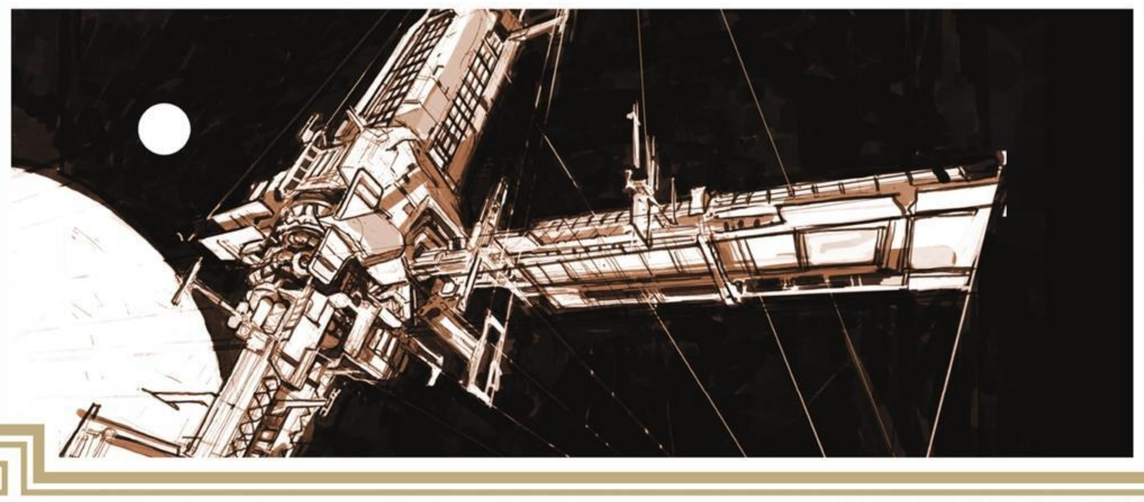
















SKETCHING OUR HISTORY

To create foundations for a unique world you have to envision its past. Who started it? Who built it? How did it evolve?

These boards depict the initial alien contact and key historical players, which were the basis for the rest of the art direction. This set the chronology and purpose of our visual direction; everything evolved from these story beats.

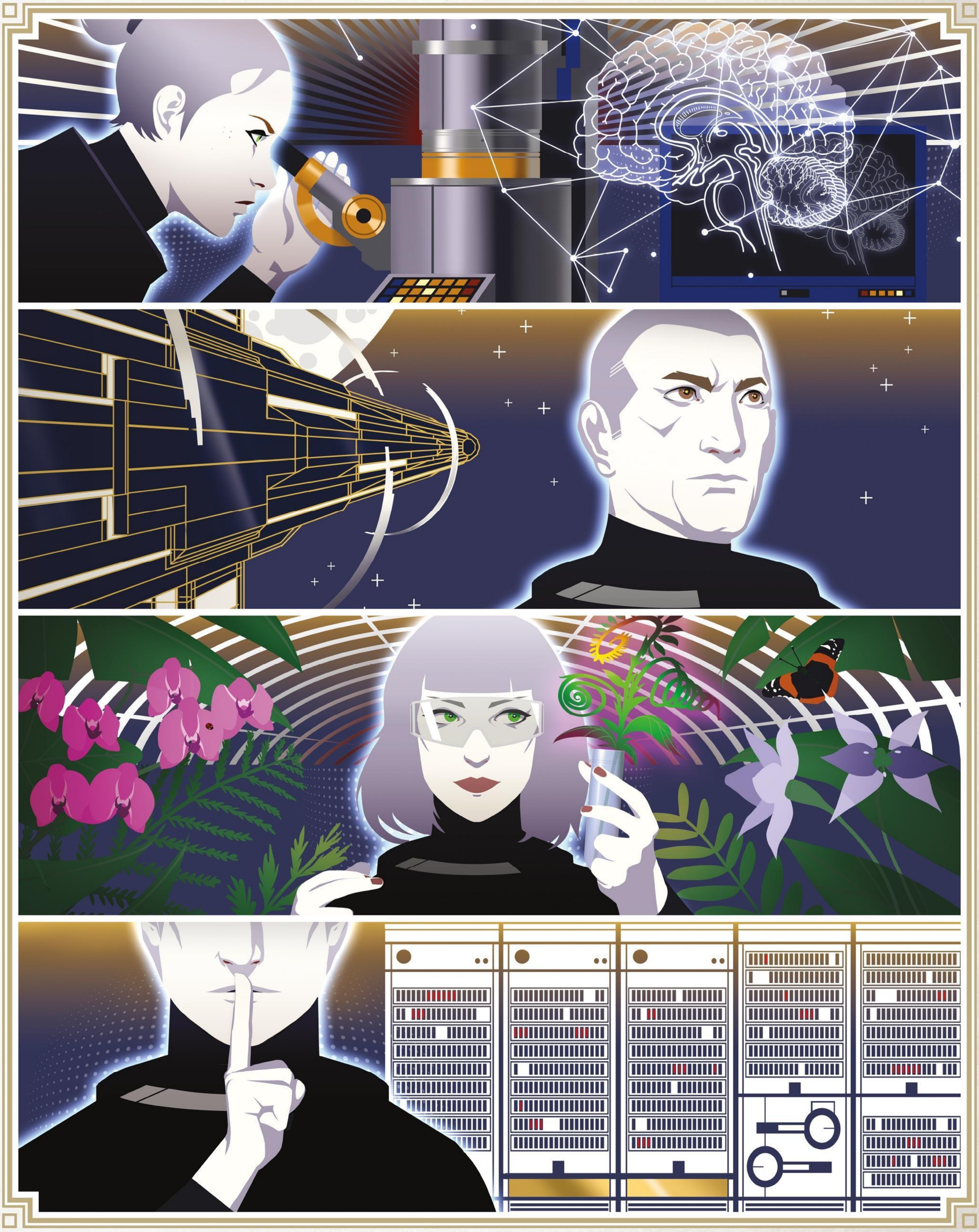
When defining a visual direction, you aren't just imagining the world. You're also imagining its inhabitants. What did people do on the station in the past? What preceded the current events? These contemplations and questions are critical to helping an artist create an authentic environment that goes beyond the baseline needs of the game.

Talos I has a peculiar history: built, abandoned, and then repurposed and renovated. This is extremely unique to Talos I and allows us to use the passage of time to build layers of storytelling. Each successive owner left his or her mark on the station in a distinct way.



TRANSTAR IDENTITY

With TranStar being the most recent entity to own the station, it was important that its corporate identity was clear and strong. The company has deep roots in the history of the station that needed to be represented, but this also had to translate into a more futuristic sci-fi language.





01

ARTWORK

Key art is important for crystallizing major influences into a coherent illustration. To mirror the isolation of the environment of the game, many of the key art pieces are centered solely on Morgan. It not only settles the player design, but it also helps establish the playercentric nature of the game.



Researching composition is key. Different compositions tell different stories. It's important that you tell the right story with your key art.


TRANSTAR

Contrasting the warm, rich humanness of the Deco design style with the cold emptiness of space is a recurring theme. The undefined nature of the aliens also gave us many opportunities to use their forms as compositional elements.


M. YU
MCMXIII
RENOVATED
2025


MORGAN


MORGAN



Some key art was more metaphorical than a straightforward depiction of Morgan—symbols of a broken psyche, or isolation.


M. YU

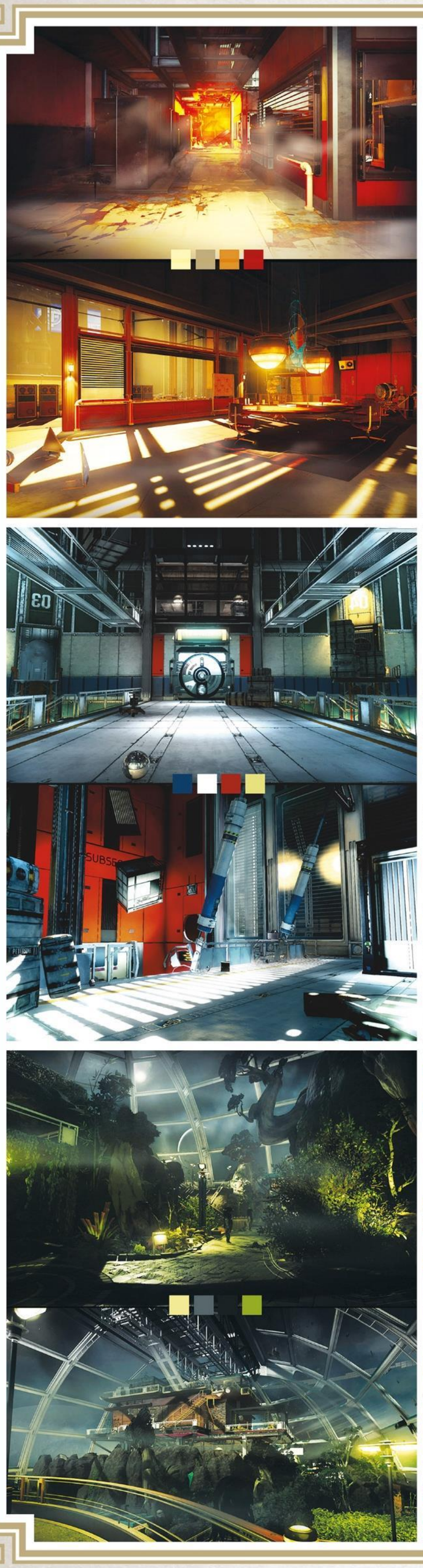

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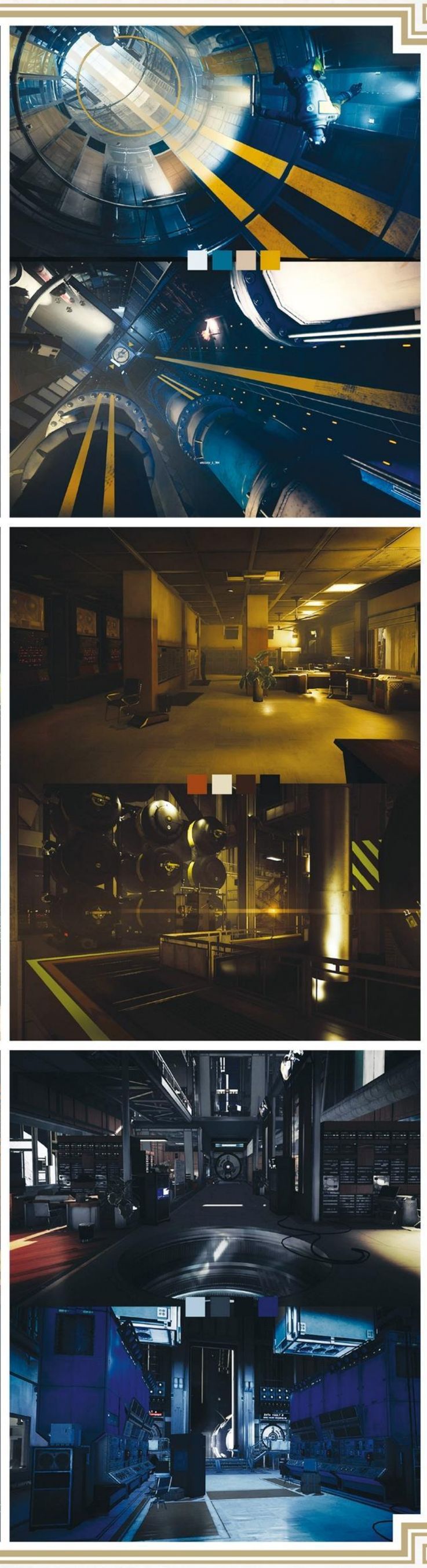
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WORLD

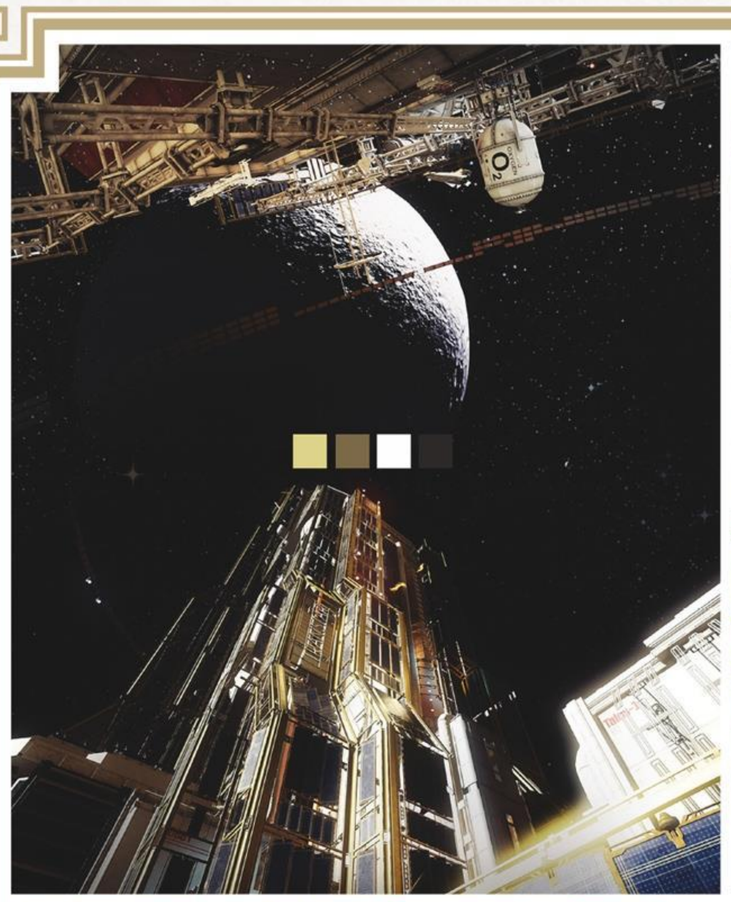
When we began constructing Talos I, creating a contiguous and unique, yet familiar, space was important. The station is full of dualities: life in unforgiving environments; the new built on top of the old; the small mechanical crawlspaces next to grand lounges; the strong, pure shapes in the environment versus the fluid, shifting nature of the aliens. The personality of the station's creators had to be apparent in the environments, and this was leveraged to give a sense of time passing and layers of history.

The current facility still reflects the personalities of the original minds behind the Axiom Program. The creators of Talos I were very powerful individuals, and luxury as a visual theme allowed us to express that idea in the form of a "Neo Deco" design. Our definition of Neo Deco is based on our interpretation of how Art Deco could have evolved in our world. American midcentury architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Overlook Hotel, and Bauhaus influences were all combined to create a vision of what Deco would look like if it were revived in the 1960s.





THE COLOR OF TALOS I

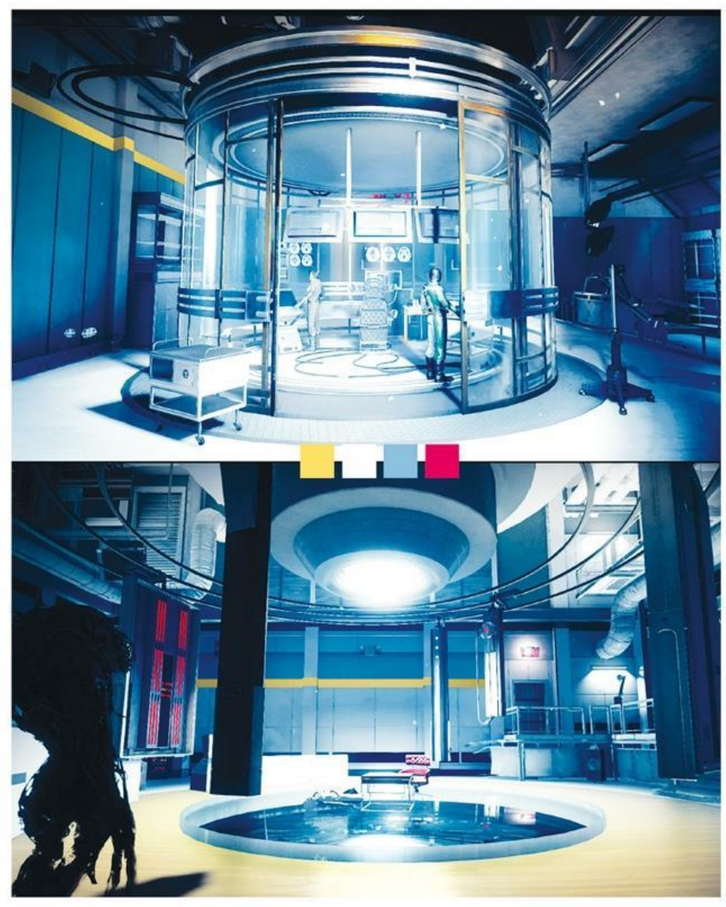




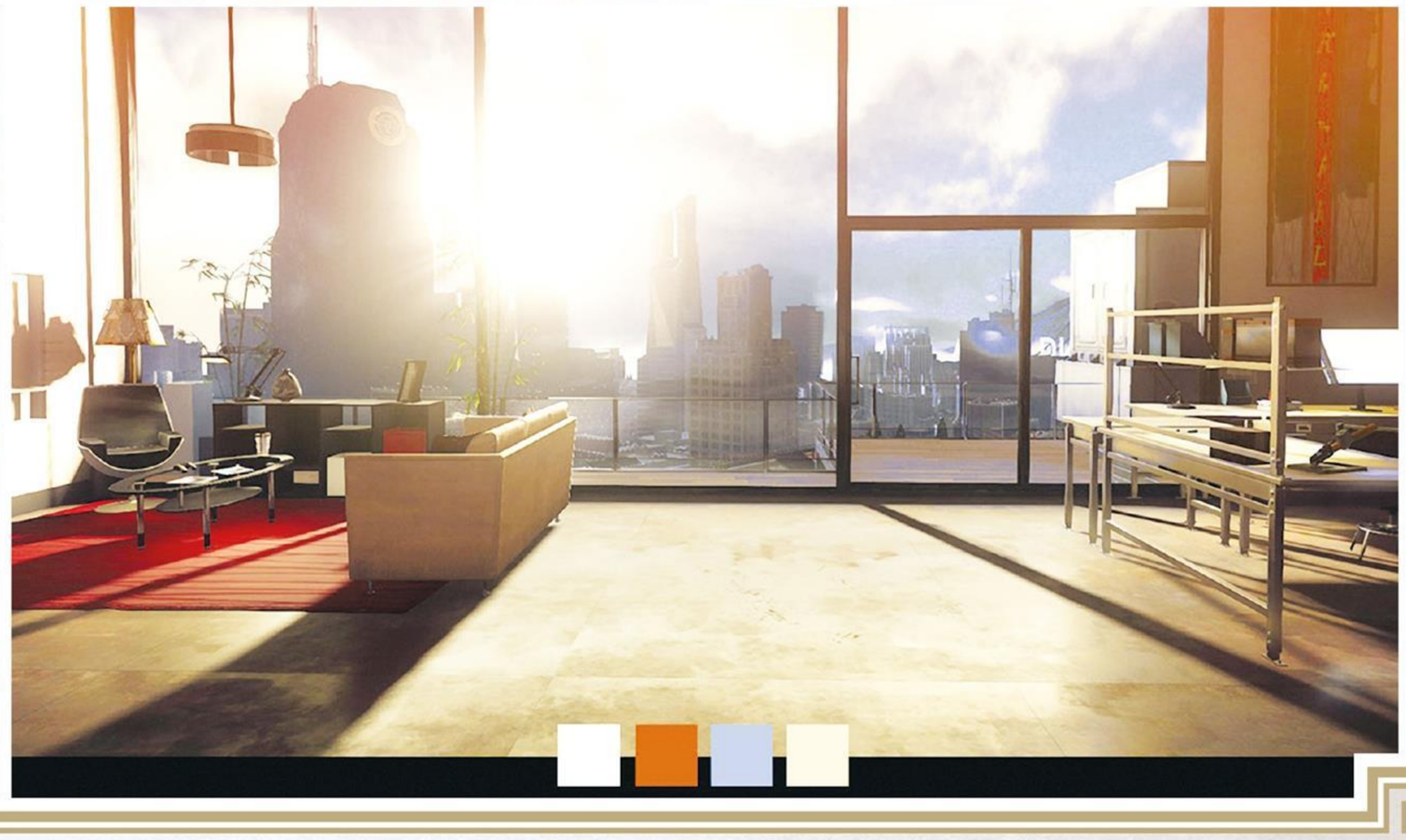












When looked at globally, each level needs to contribute to the bigger picture with its own distinct mood. Color scripts are useful for not only informing lighting possibilities, but also ensuring that the mood of the levels corresponds to the beats of the story narrative. It also helps to see where a level's identity can be pushed in a particular direction.

LEVEL

ARBORETUM

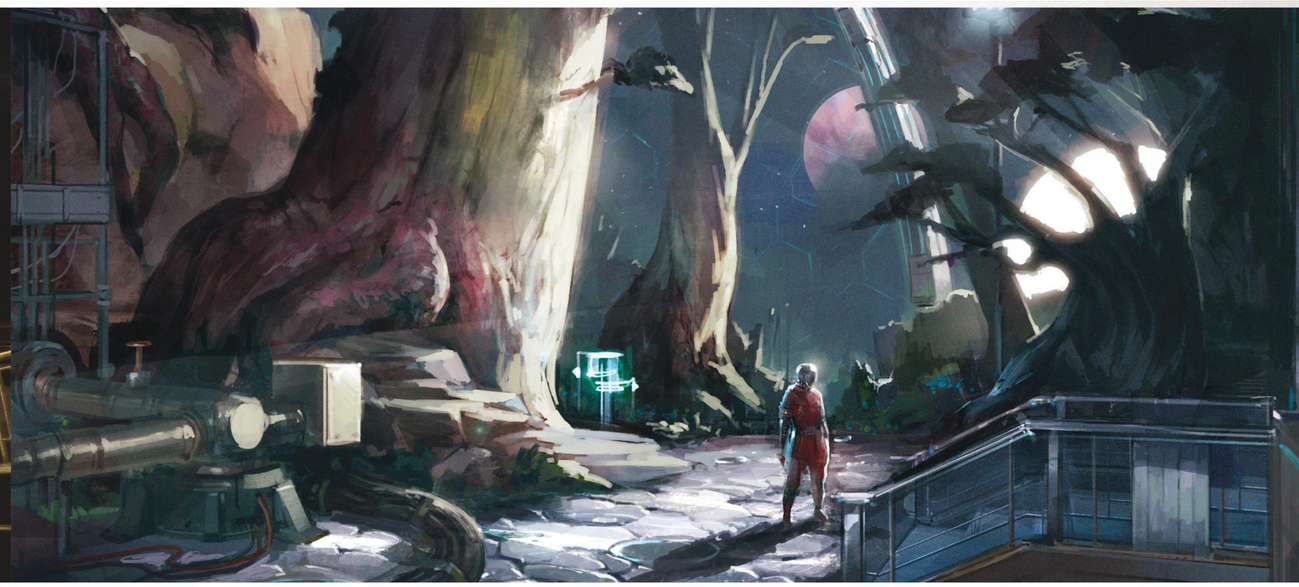
The Arboretum, which is artificial yet natural, exhibits a beautiful duality—a common theme on the station. Geographically it is located at the top of the station, much like a jewel on a crown, and functions as a hub that connects many executive areas of the station. It is also both an experimental and recreational space.





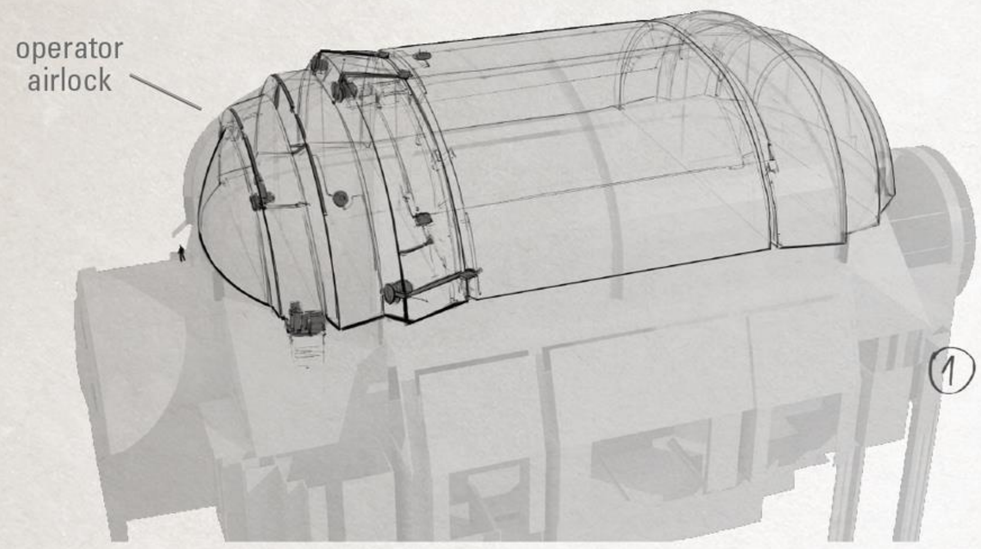


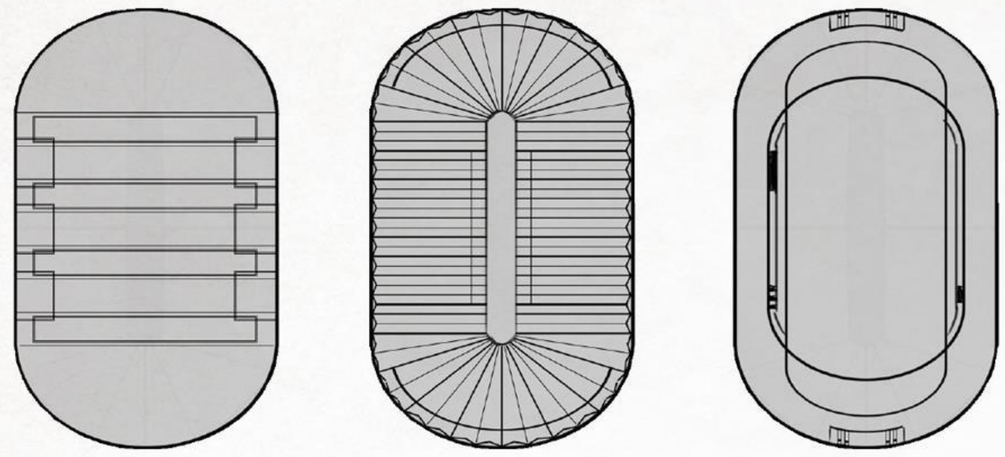


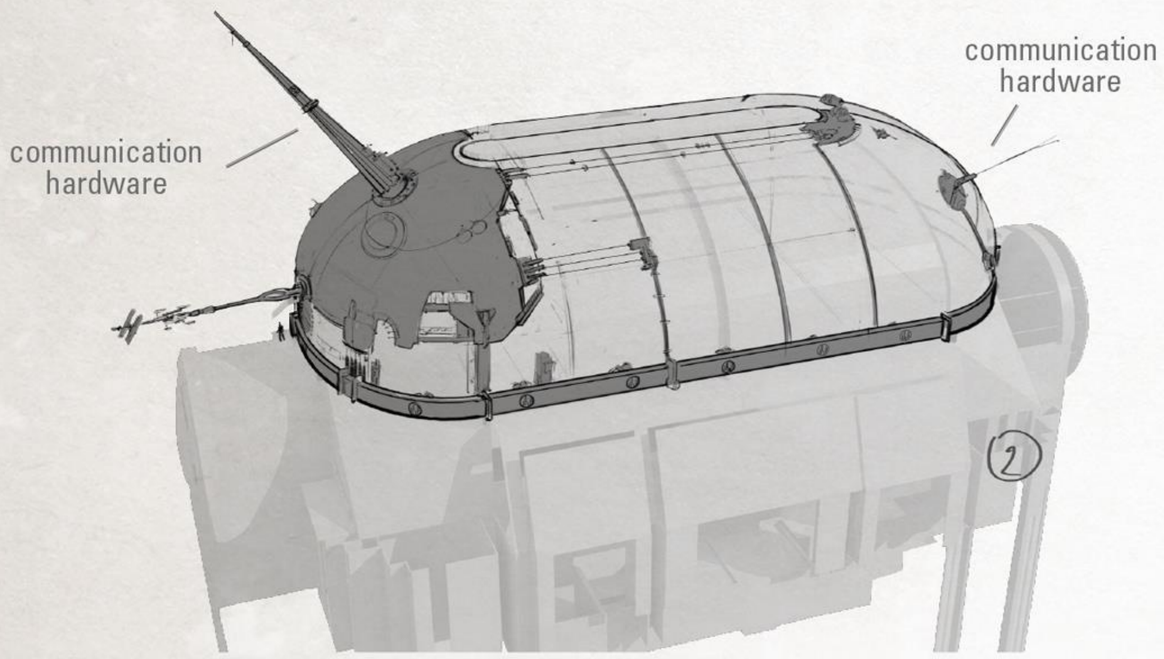


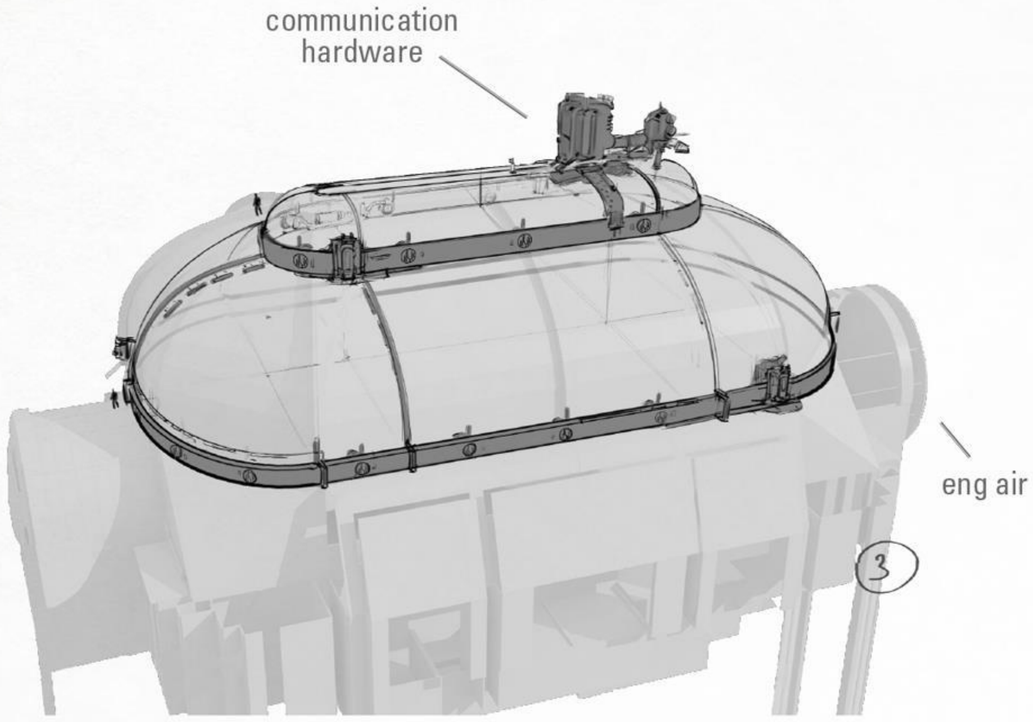
Not just a green space, the Arboretum features strong Neo Deco elements, such as the greenhouse, which hosts many botanical experiments.

For the mood, we aimed for an eerie ambience. To achieve this we tried to emphasize contrasts: the Deco versus the organic, the luxury versus the utility, the sunlight filtered through the bizarre trees found all around. All of the contrasts play against each other for an unnerving and unique mood.

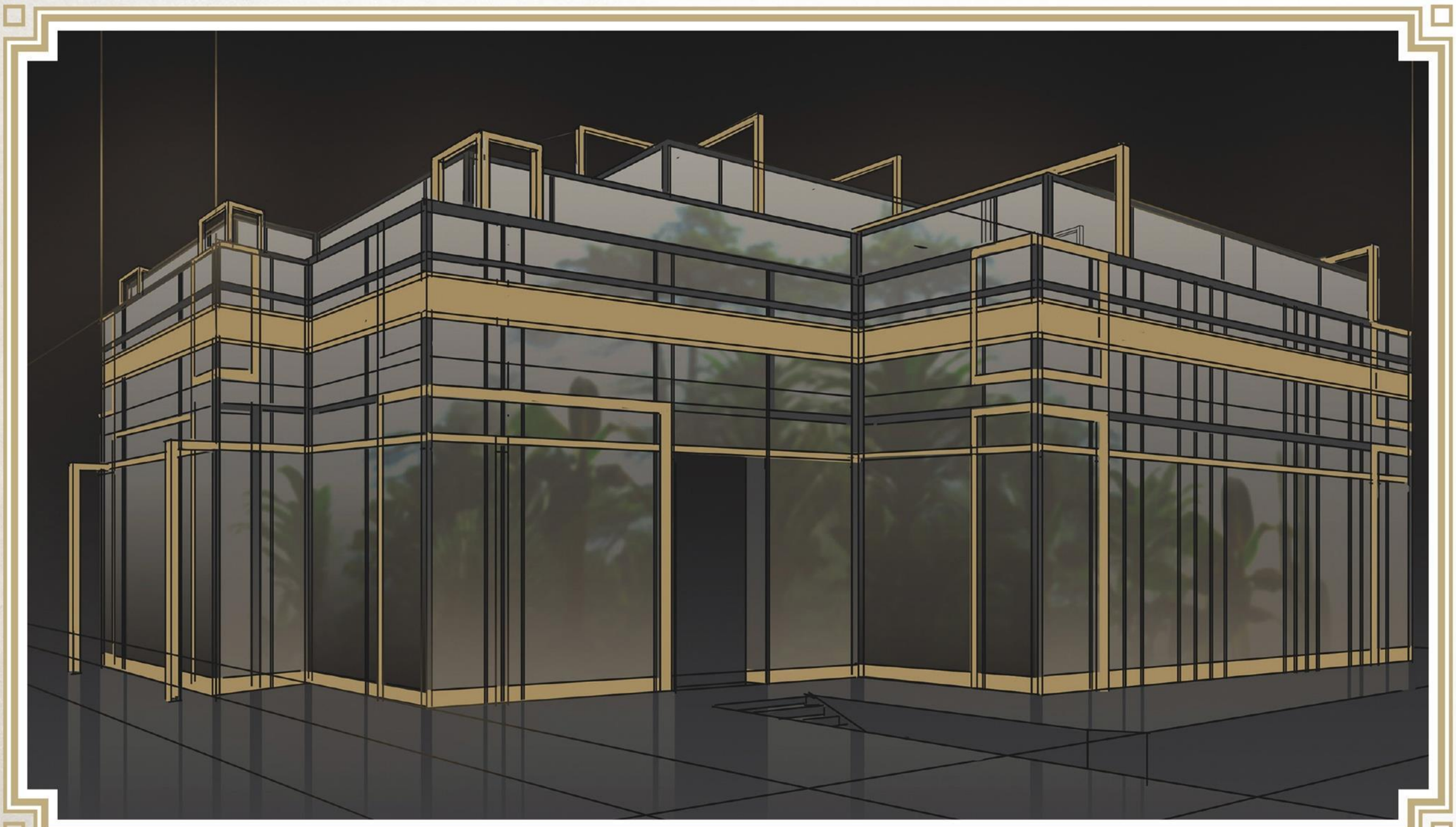






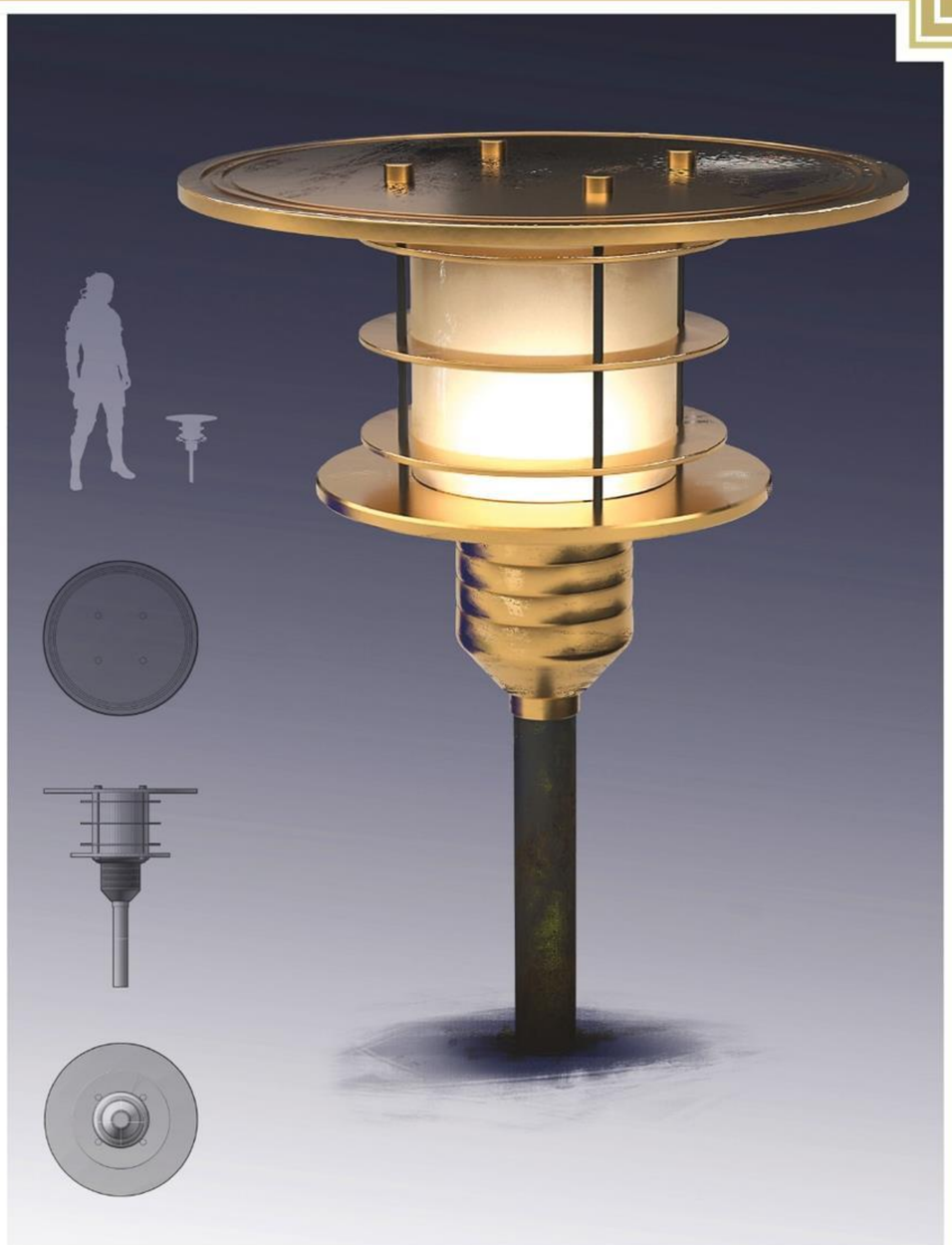


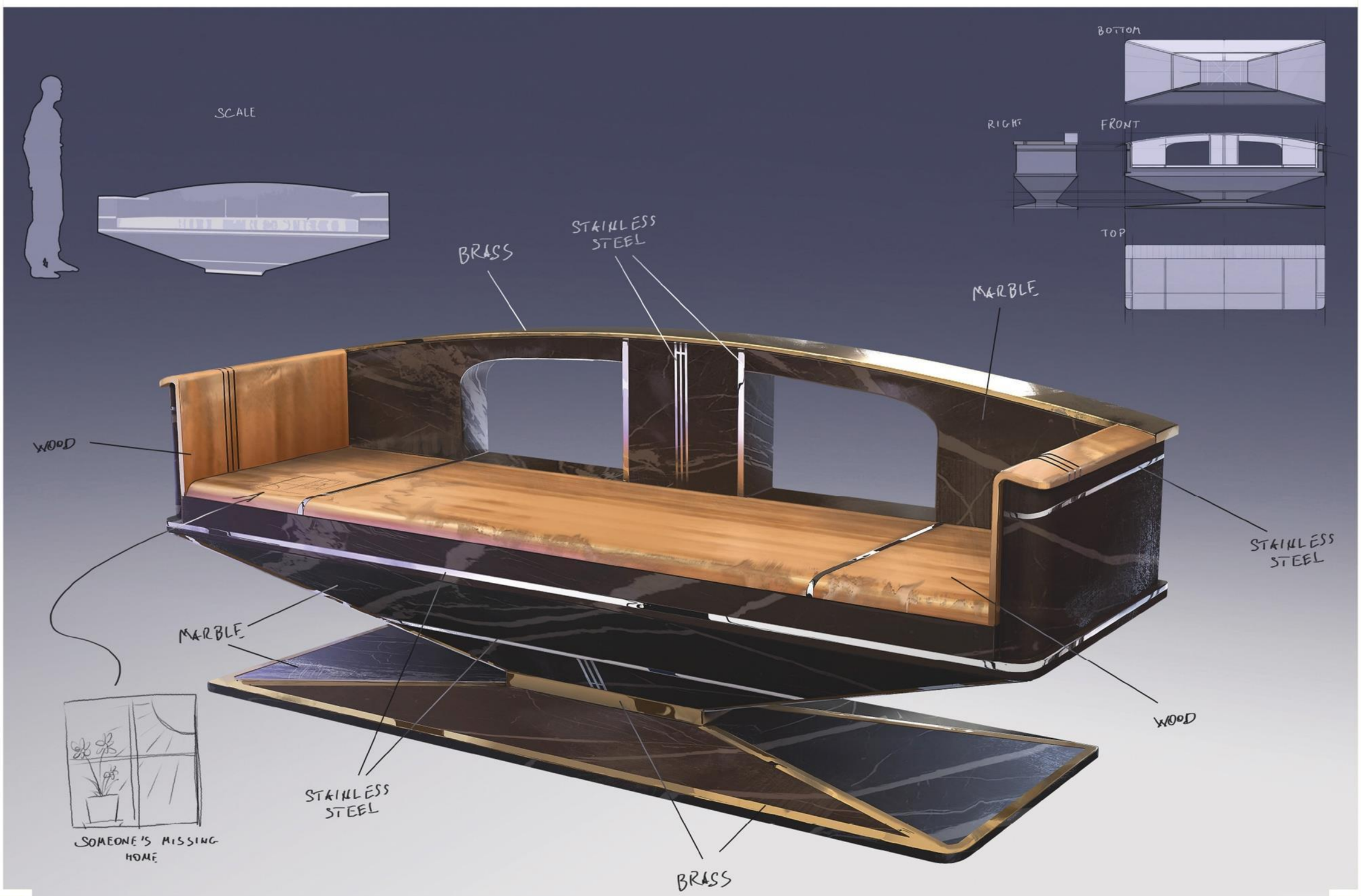
A sampling of our research for the dome. These explorations are important even if the final implementation ends up being radically different.



The greenhouse is a great Deco reminder—geometric and primitive shapes juxtaposed against an organic and wild-feeling space.







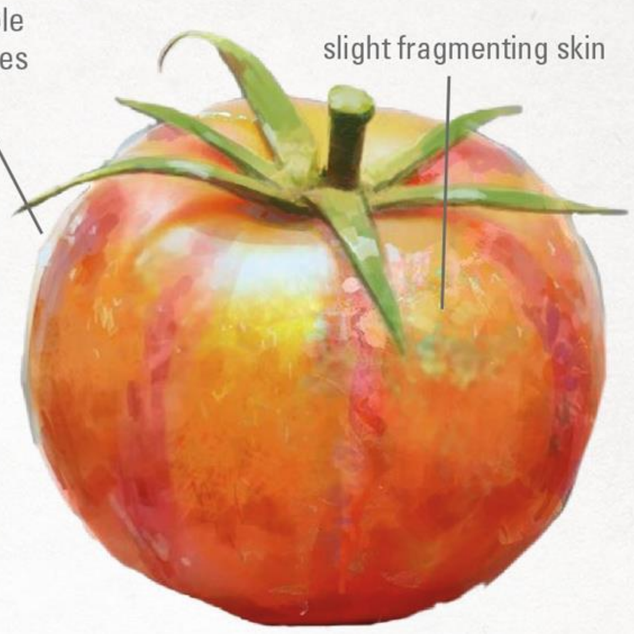
The Arboretum props were unique because they're the only props in the game that are meant for the "outdoors." They are made from rich materials that are still able to withstand weather and humidity. Like many other props, they are always based off of primitive shapes. The biggest challenge was to keep the simplicity while making something compelling.

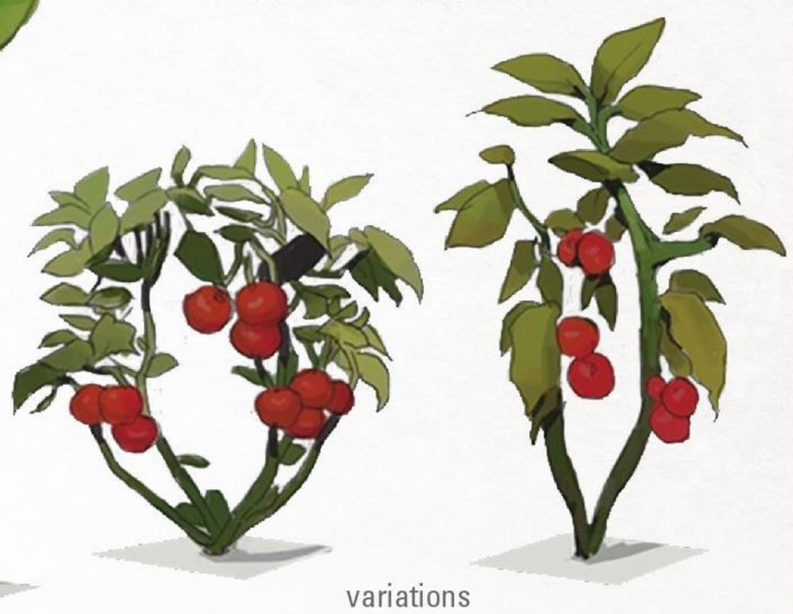


The vegetation had to be recognizable, but unnatural—you can't find these trees under normal conditions on Earth. However, they shouldn't be completely alien in nature either.

Fruits were required by game play—their designs had to blend familiarity with hints of genetic modification, while still feeling like they fit in with the surrounding vegetation.















The Arboretum is composed of manicured green spaces, penthouses, and scientific experiments—many motifs that may seem at odds with each other but coexist in this single map and come together to create the discordant yet luxurious atmosphere you'll find throughout Talos I.

One of our major inspirations was found in modern American architecture, in which the interior informs the design of the exterior. This influence is also seen on the exterior of the station.

LEVEL

THE BRIDGE

The bridge is the control center of Talos I. Critical decisions are made here, and thus it was important that the aesthetic conveyed a feeling of power. This is the epitome of Neo Deco values, supported by dramatic lighting. Mission control meets luxury here.



Meeting rooms are a recurring theme in the game. However, the bridge conference room needed to feel distinguished and dramatic.

The captain's chair (*top*) was influenced by retro and Deco furniture designs, but it's been outfitted with TranStar technology. The mural on the bridge (*bottom*) is based on the murals found on the great ocean liners of the early twentieth century. Instead of the open seas, we wanted the map to represent the cosmos. Special care was made to ensure constructivist art influences seen in other art pieces on the station were retained, and that the materials stayed true to the Neo Deco styling.



The consoles feature clean lines, monolithic forms, and wood and metals inspired by retro high-end electronics. Wood brought warmth and created a visual variety in materials. Designer Jacob Jensen was a key influence for driving the look of electronics aboard Talos I.

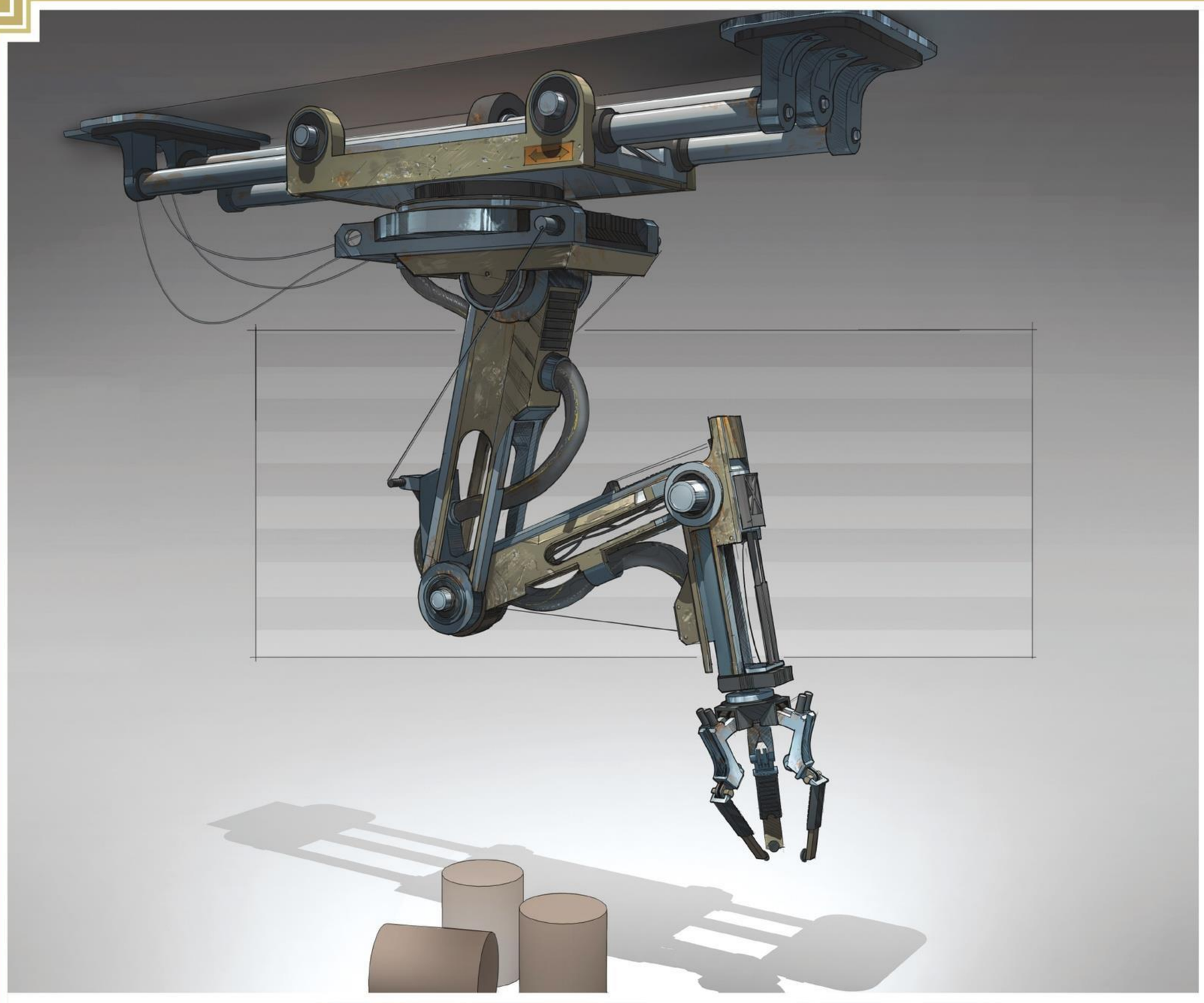
When designing the consoles, we aimed to keep them modular, yet able to be arranged into interesting configurations. In this way, we were able to embrace a ubiquitous sci-fi theme (tons of screens in a room) while making it our own.

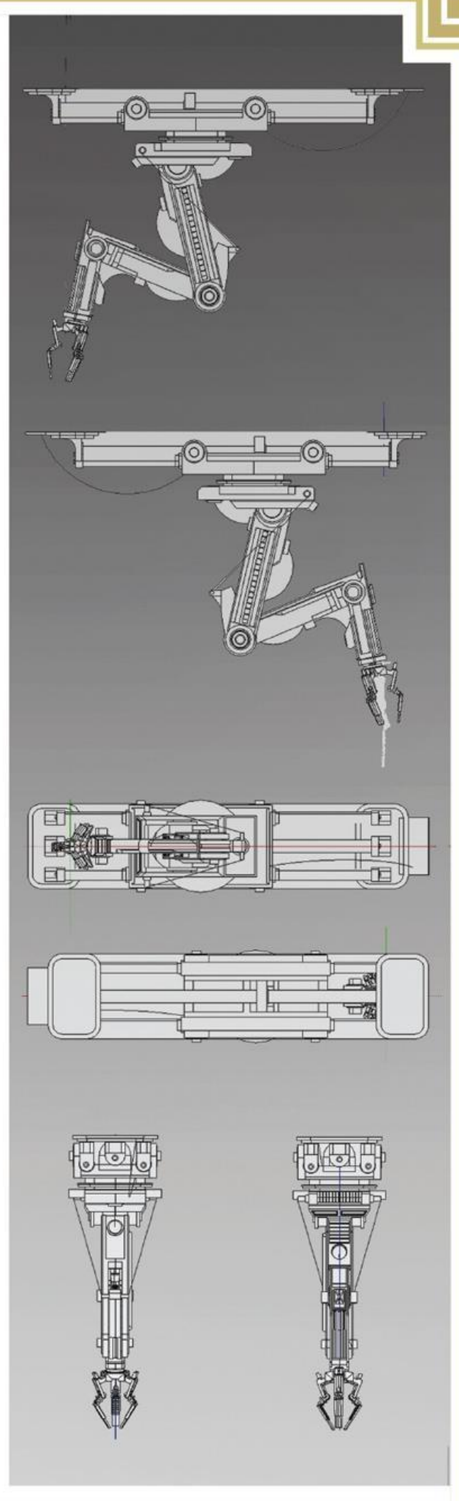
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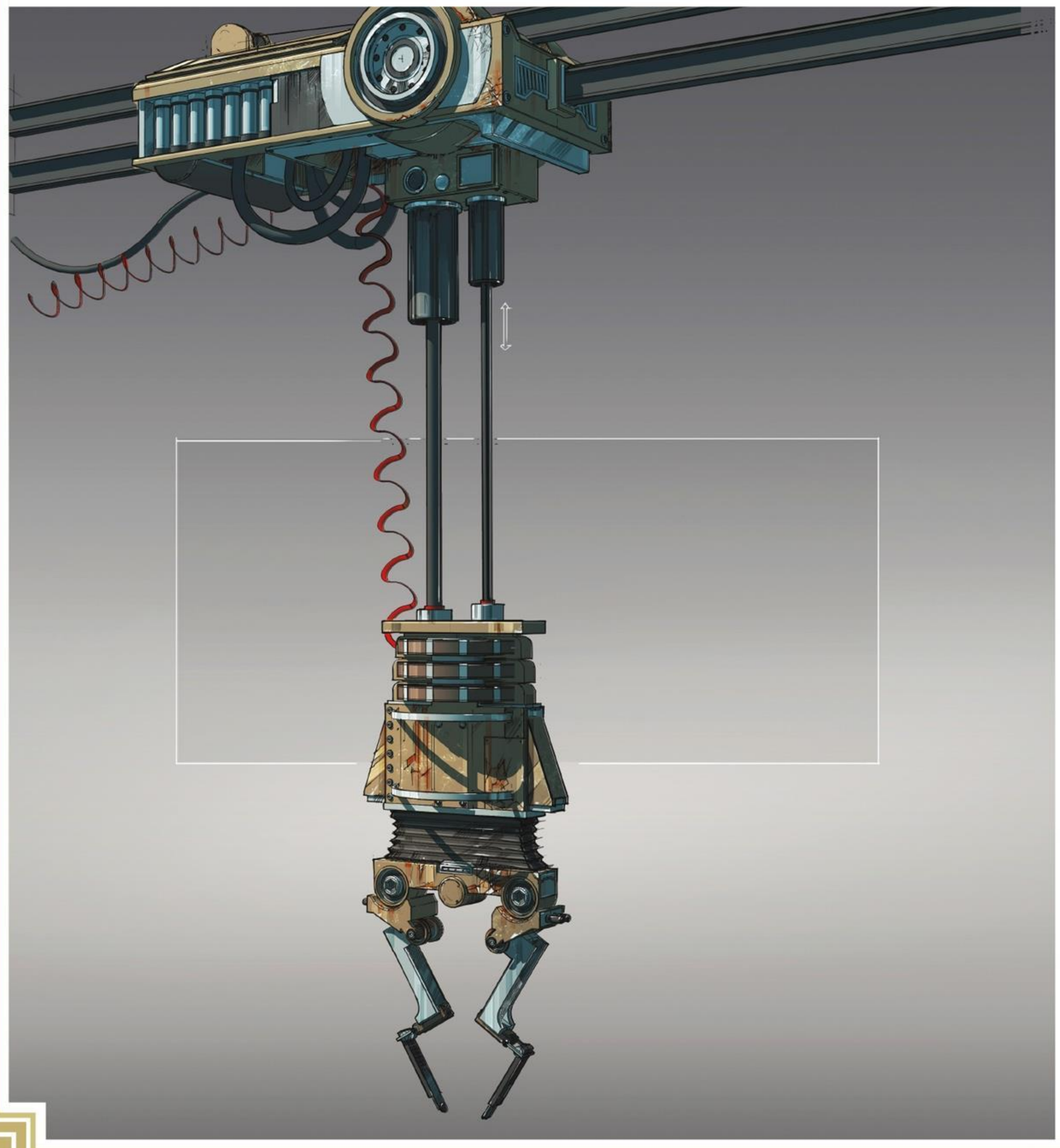
CARGO BAY

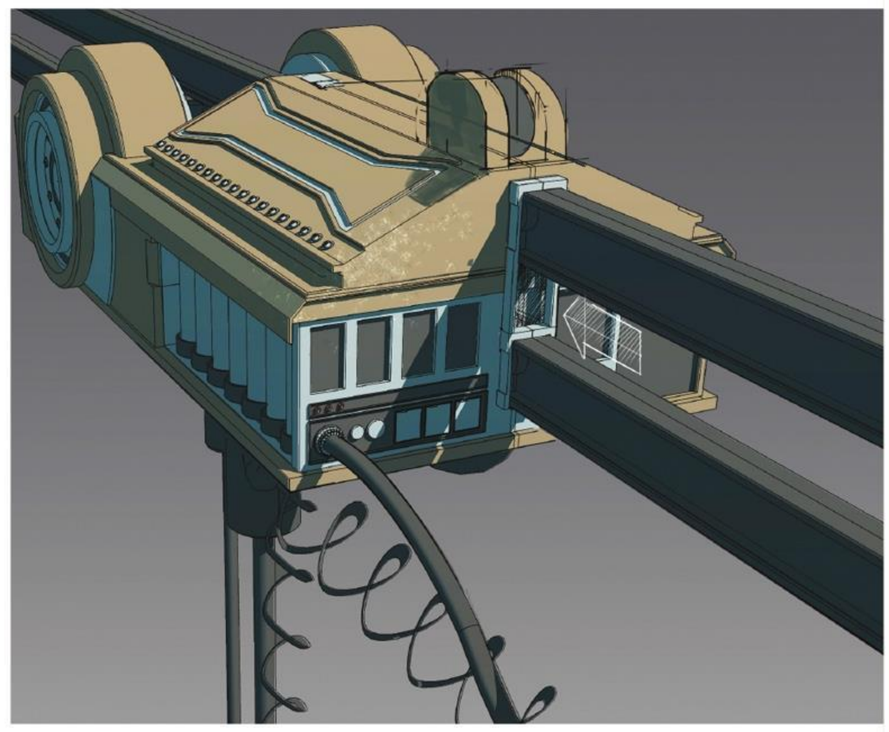
The cargo bay is the major entry and exit point for shipments. Unlike the more luxurious sections of the station, the utilitarian nature of Talos I is undisguised here. It's also the site of a major explosion, which afforded us the opportunity to make the demise of the station very evident.

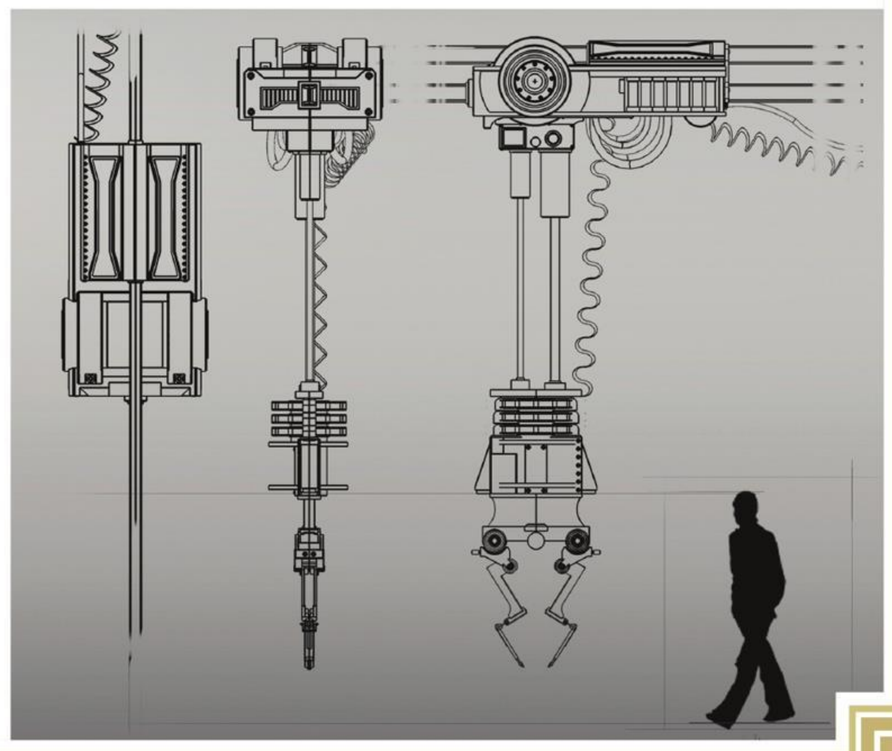
The cargo bay is where the player encounters most of the surviving humans on the station. This presented us with many unique set-dressing possibilities as we envisioned the remaining crew's struggle to survive in the face of overwhelming danger.

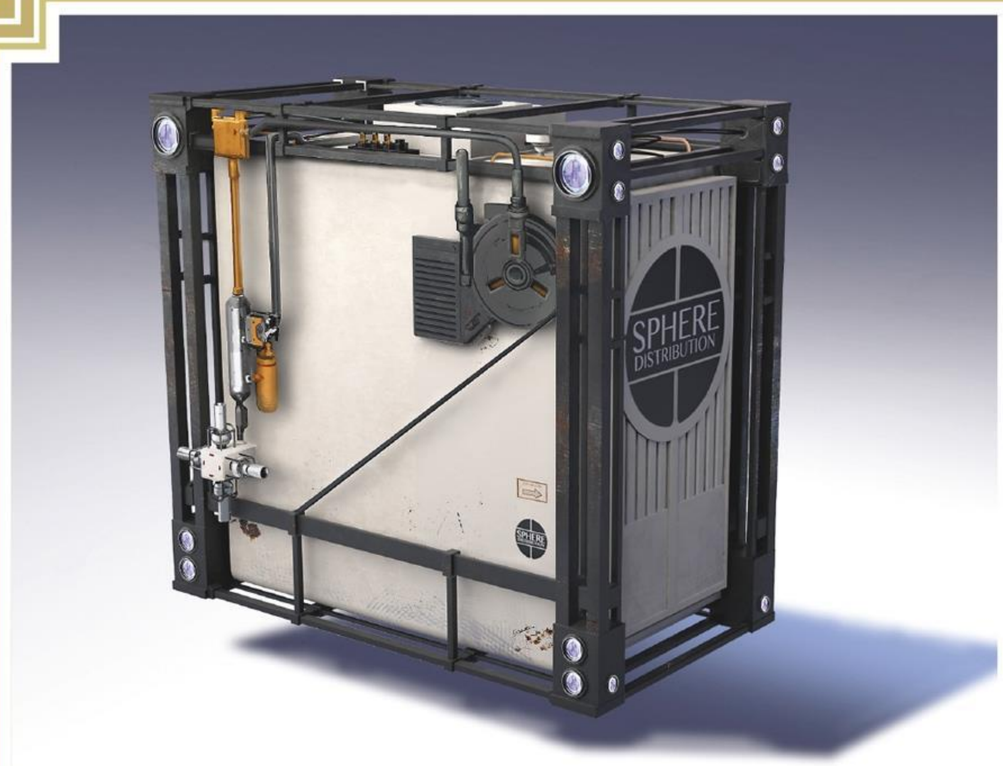








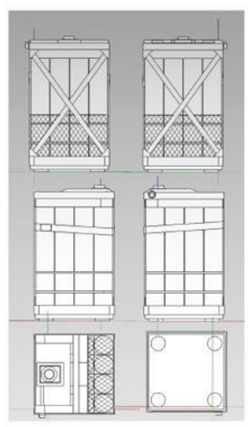


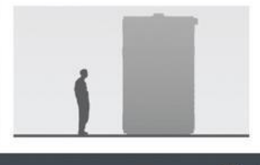


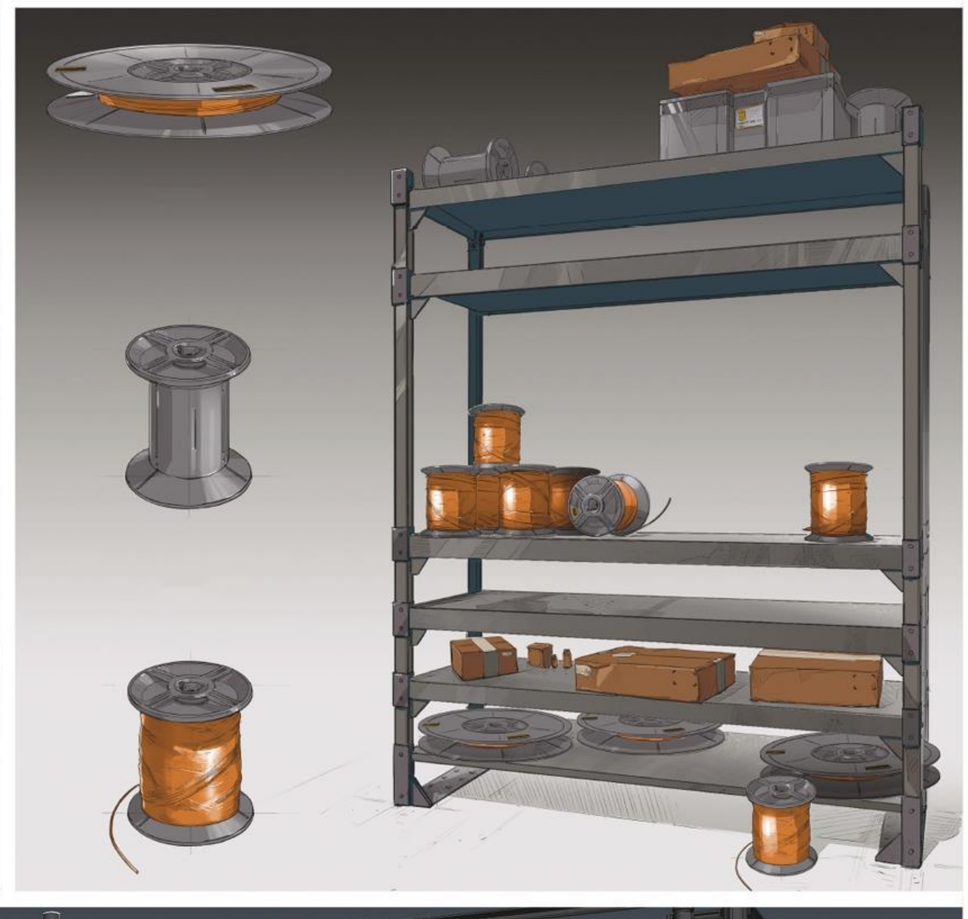


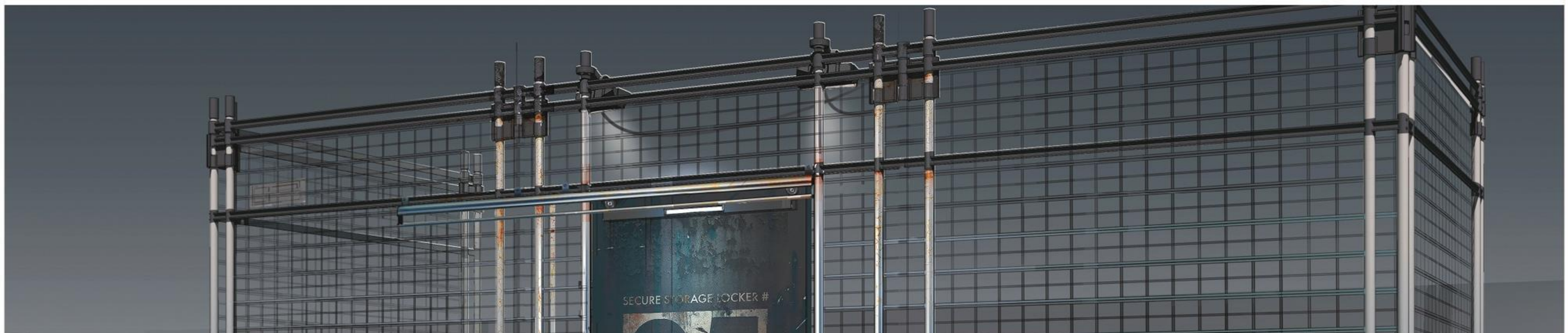












Containers and crates pop up everywhere across the station. This presented us with an opportunity for a constant "outer space" reminder, but they still had to be recognizable in function. For this we referenced materials commonly used by NASA aboard the ISS. Shelves were an added challenge because we aimed to create a world that felt populated, yet still conformed to game play expectations for interactivity.



The cargo bay adjoins two zones that feature zero gravity, and the level connections needed to strongly convey this. This can present fun challenges for the level architects who thoughtfully design the transitions.

LEVEL

CREW QUARTERS

Like a corporate campus, the crew quarters feature a variety of Earth-like amenities and housing. Dense and diverse in human activity, this level is full of stories to tell about the daily life aboard Talos I. Neo Deco permeates this level, reinforcing the importance of comfort for the crew, as well as its creators' taste for luxury. During the events of the game, a ghost town ambience is felt here due to the unsettling lack of inhabitants. Dim lighting, power failures, and smoky atmosphere all contribute to a feeling of unease.



Set dressing is critical to the player experience. A successful set dressing not only tells an appropriate story for the space, but it's balanced and composed based on its importance to the story and the world.

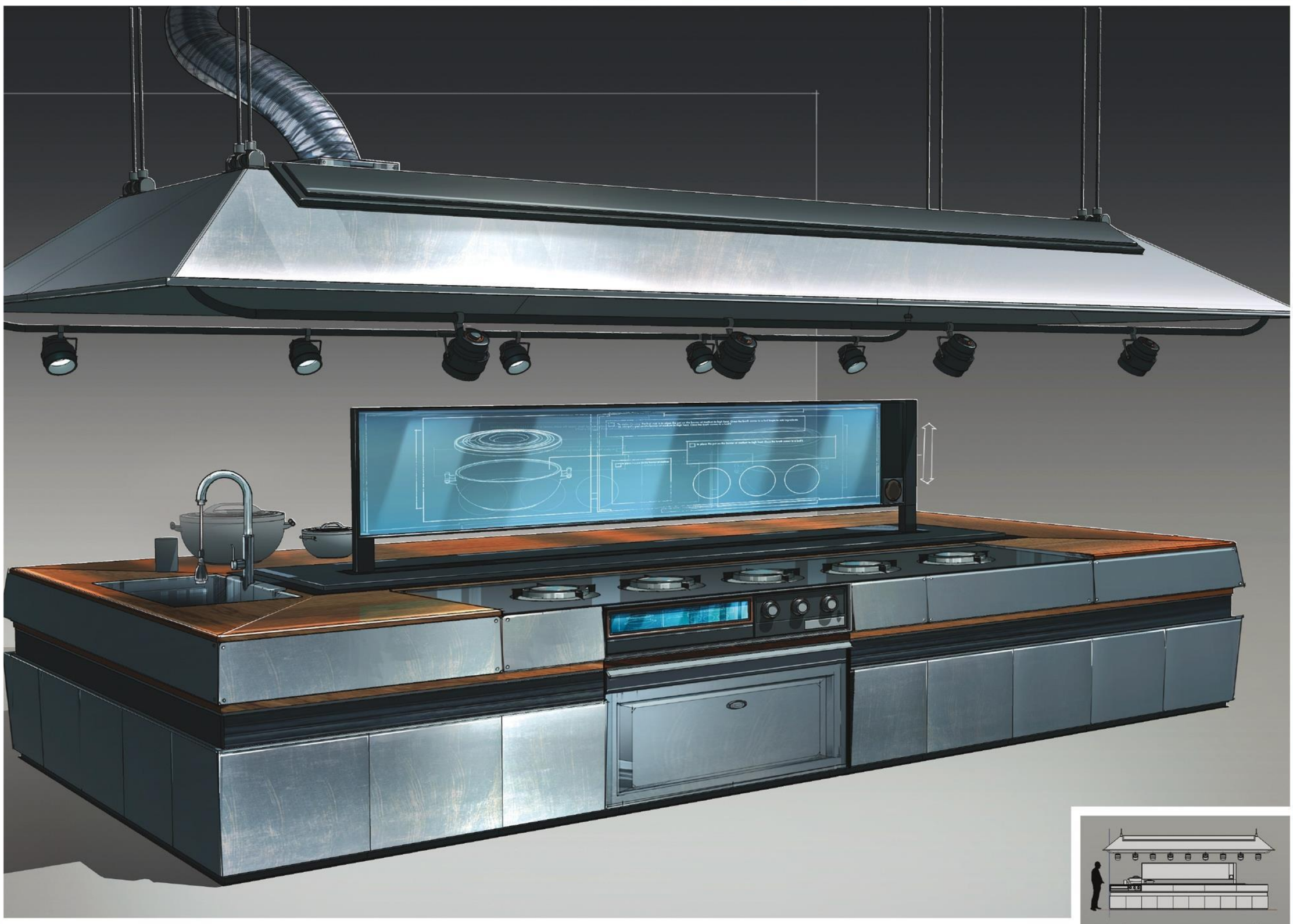




One of the most fun parts of designing the crew quarters was layering in the element of surprise. No one would expect to find a swimming pool or a karaoke bar aboard a space station.





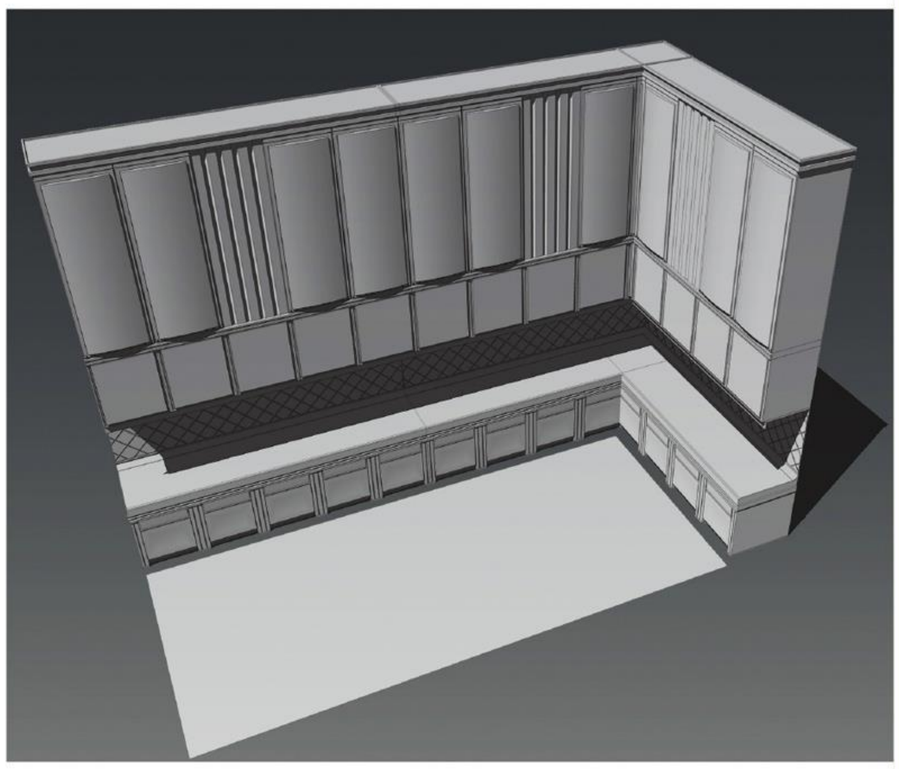


The kitchen is the scene of some memorable and twisted story events. Major inspirations were the Overlook Hotel from *The Shining*, and the Kingside Restaurant in New York City.





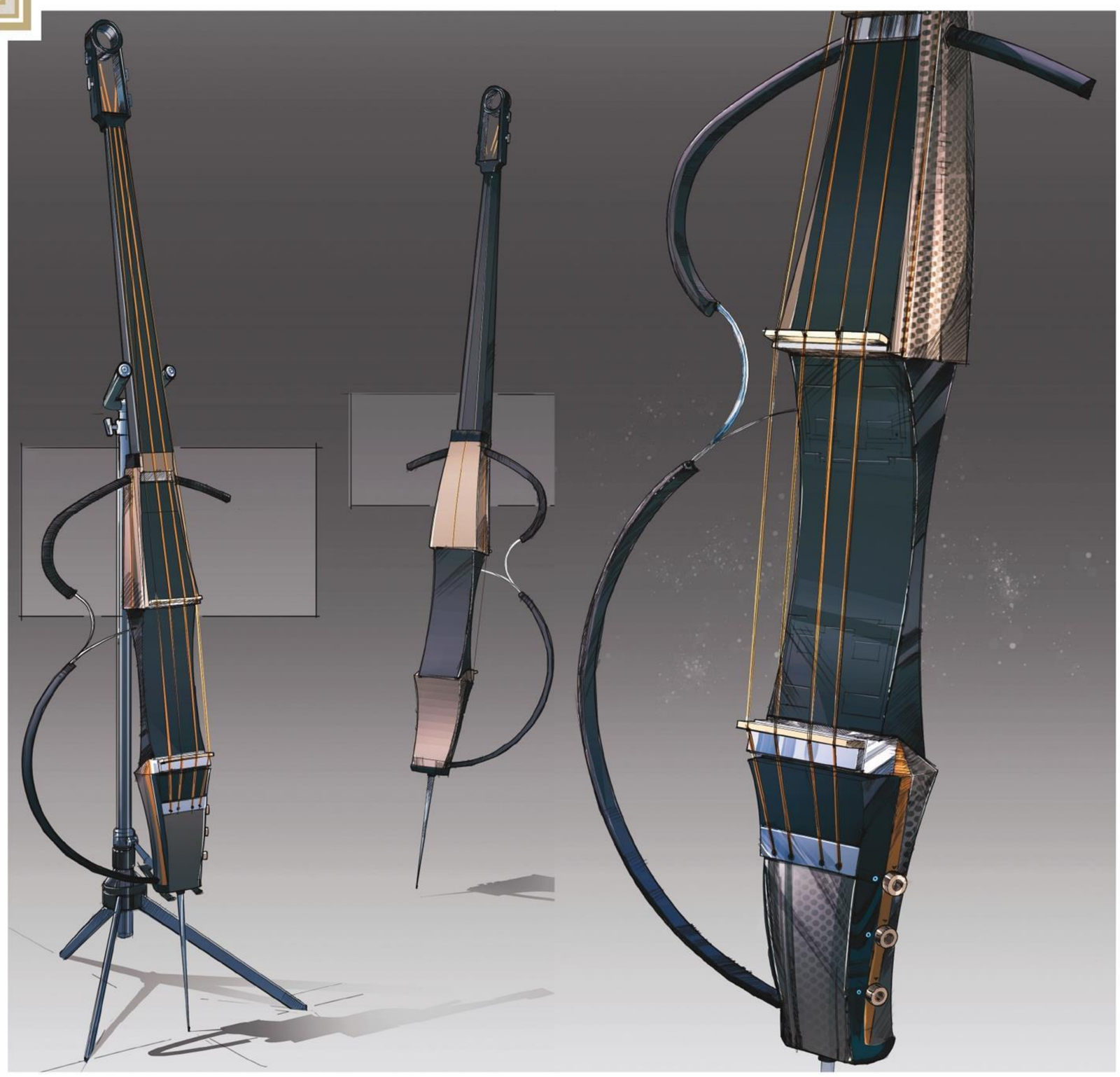




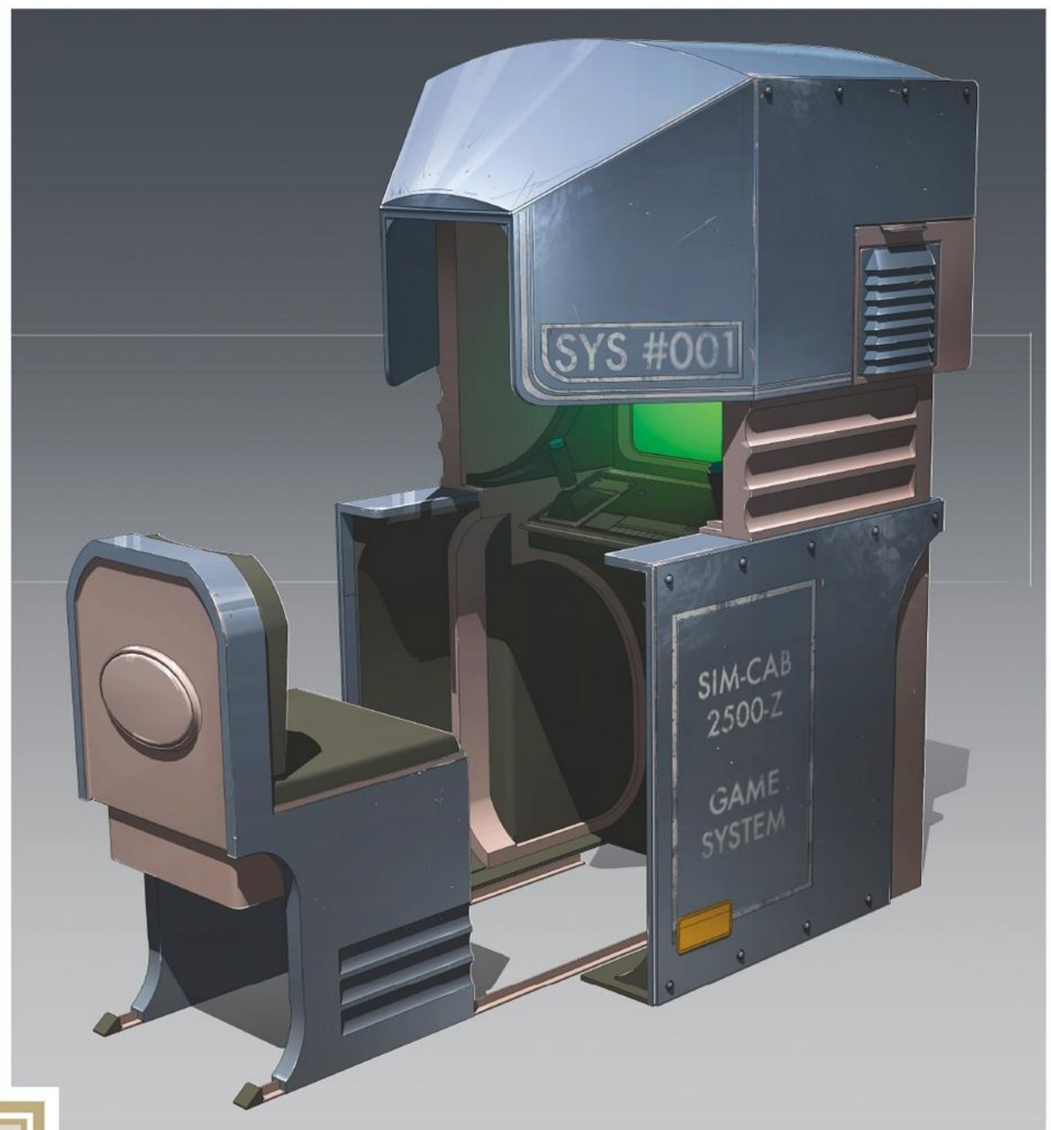




We wanted the kitchen to read as a functional commercial kitchen, while maintaining a distinct and memorable look. Props such as these kitchen fixtures are designed independently so as to be usable in a variety of modular setups, while still informing a part of the bigger picture.

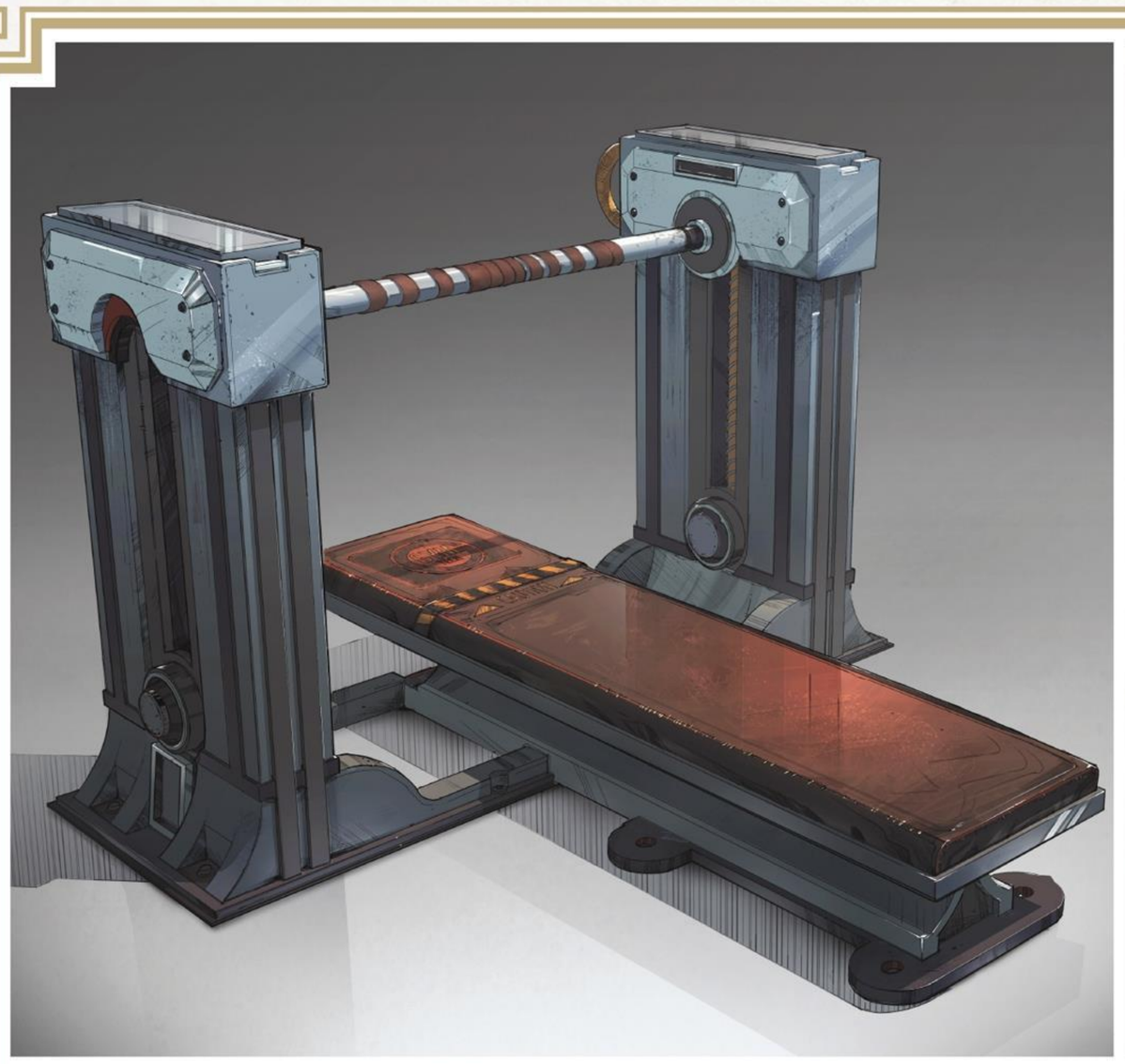




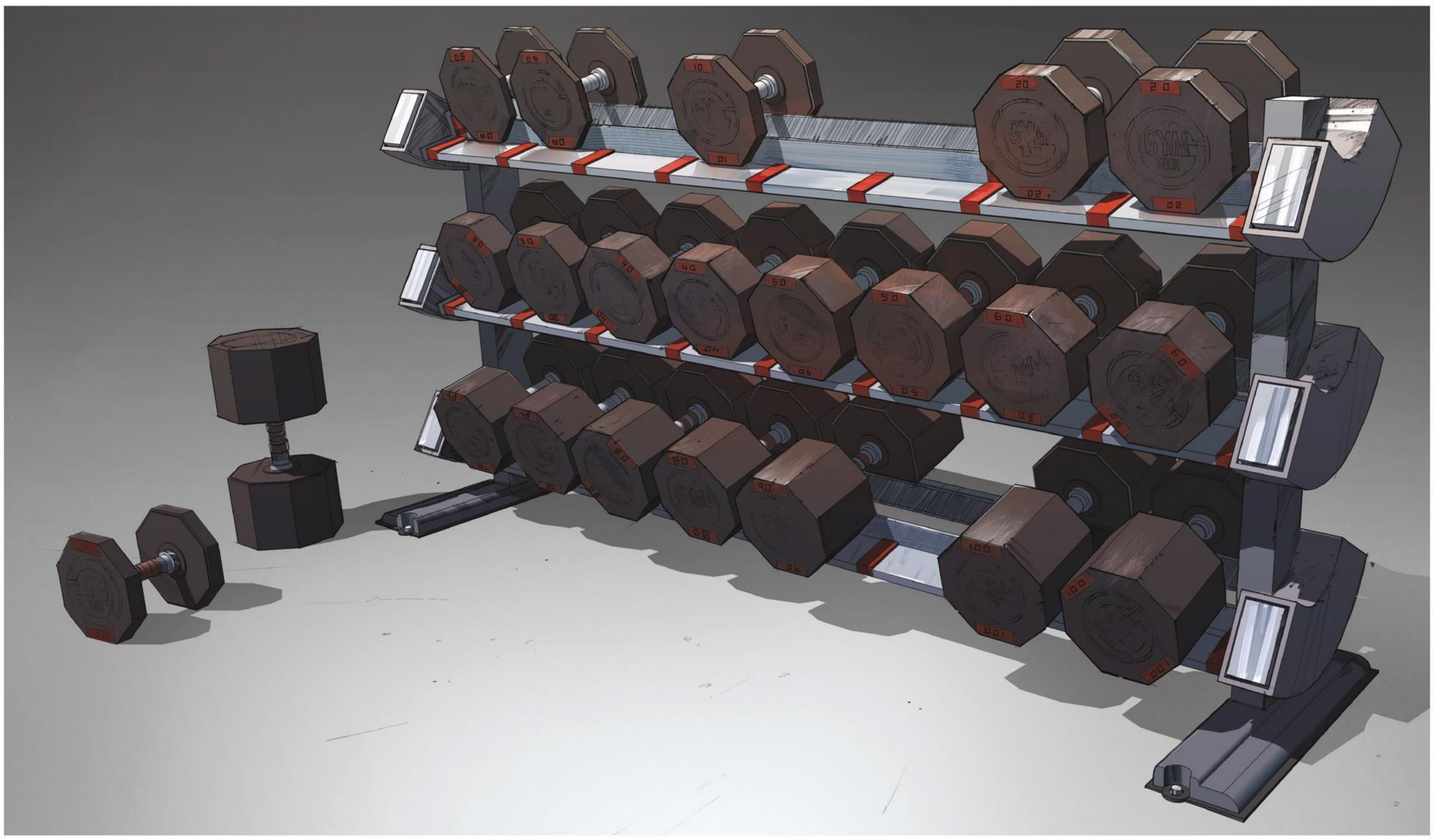


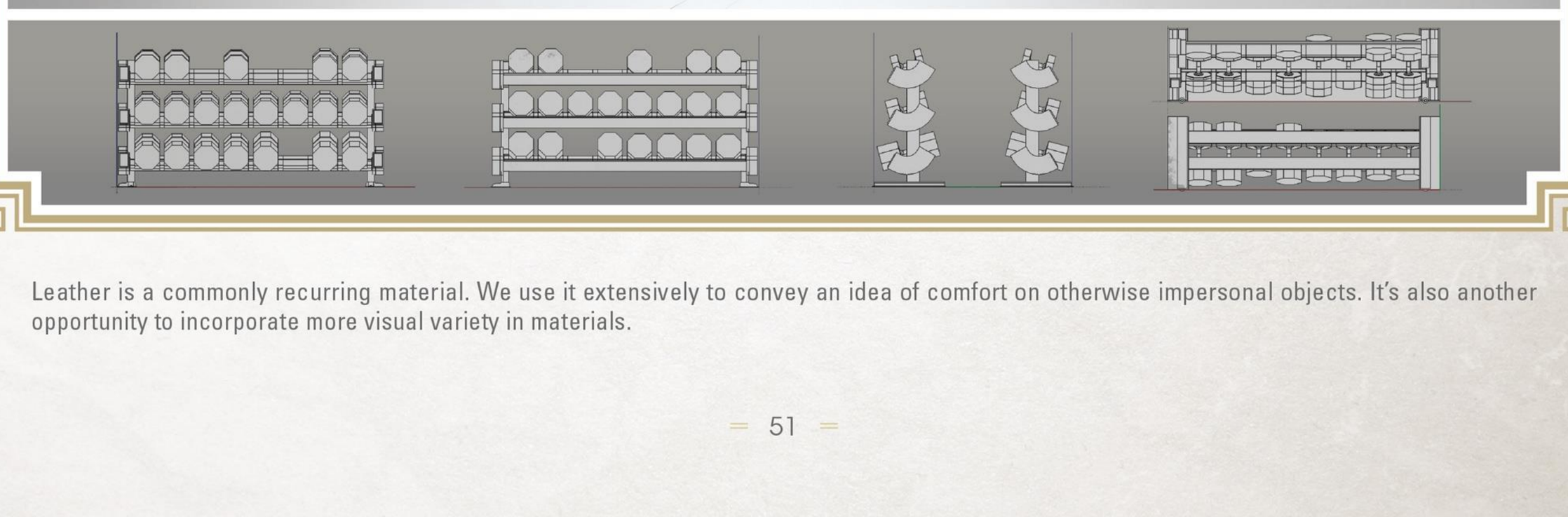


The props had to reflect the varied interests of the station's inhabitants. We also wanted constant reminders of retro influences, whether through shape and silhouette, or in older materials.









Leather is a commonly recurring material. We use it extensively to convey an idea of comfort on otherwise impersonal objects. It's also another opportunity to incorporate more visual variety in materials.



The crew quarters had a few challenges that the other levels did not. The space had to be large and grand enough to convey luxury, but not so large that you forget you're confined.

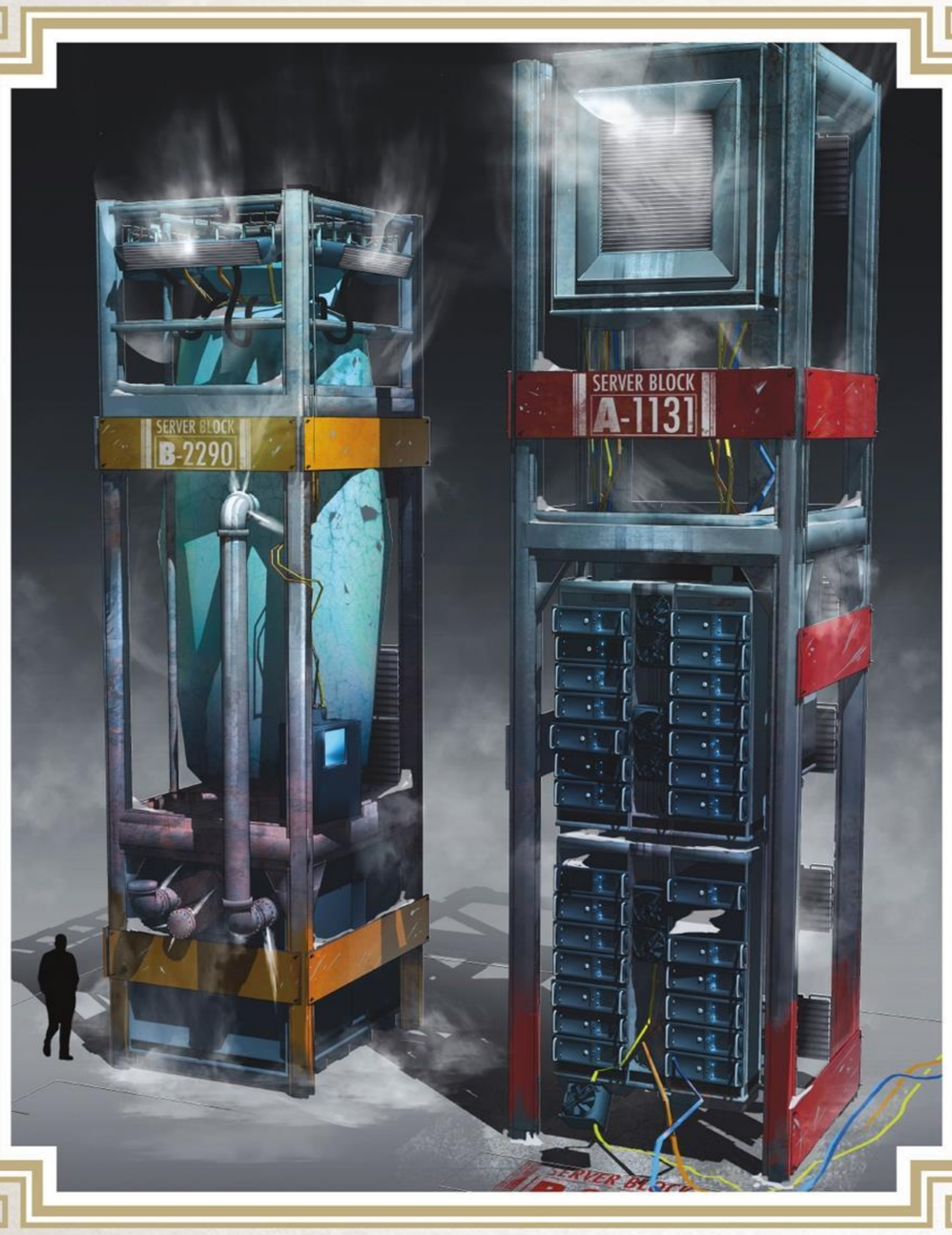


In addition to fancy cabins, we needed to design accommodations that could house hundreds of employees. Something that was efficient, yet still featured nice materials—and more private than a bunk.

LEVEL

DEEP STORAGE

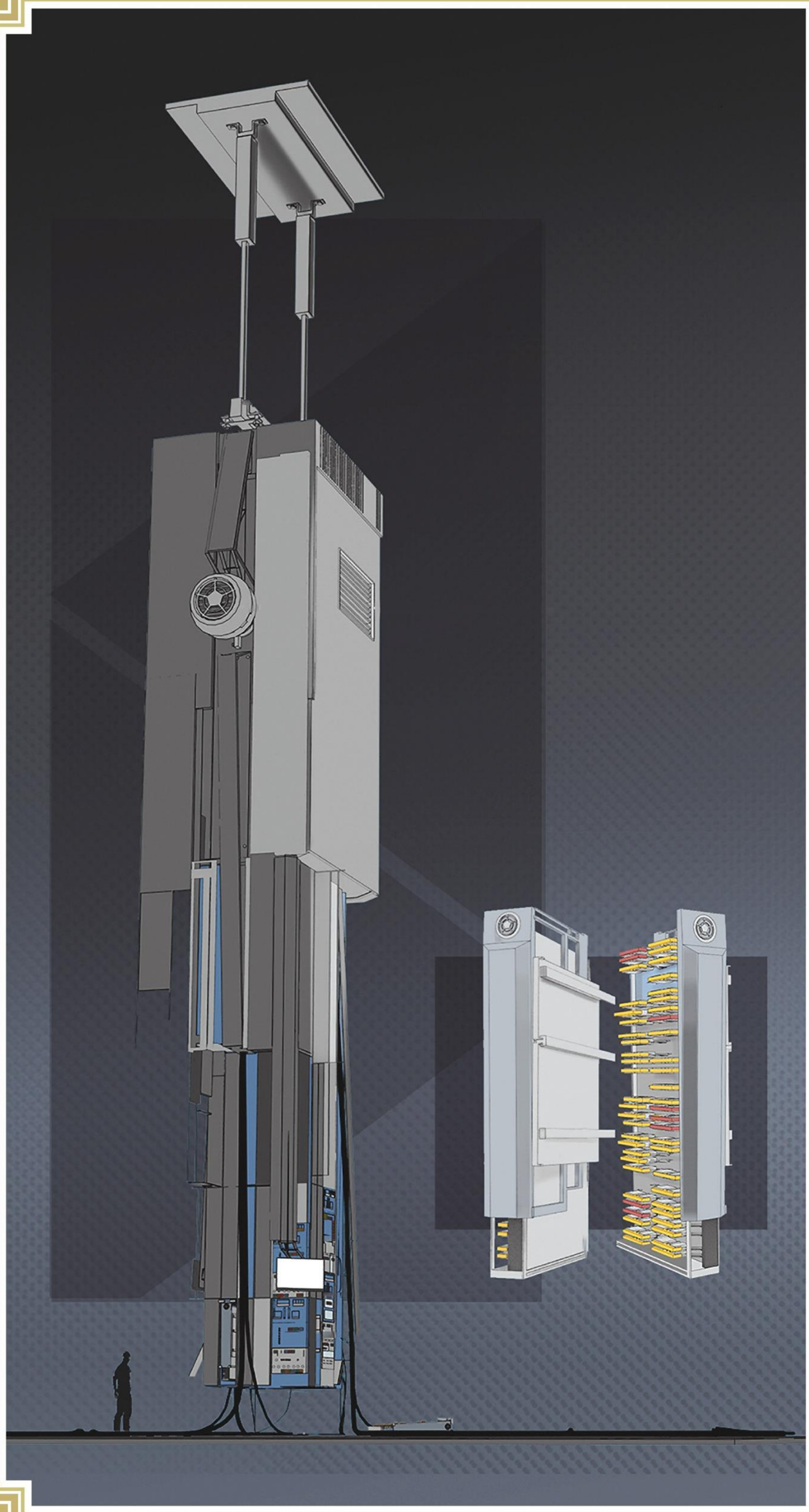
If the station had a subconscious, it would be here in deep storage. All of the data from the entire space station resides in this location. Everything from employee communications to experiment results is stored here. Major elements of this level revolve around secure data modules and safeguarding information.





DATA MODULE

Both of these designs are meant to operate in zero-g spaces, and both would have originated with the Axiom Program. They represent historical methods of storing and transferring data from the station to Earth.





TranStar would have brought its own technology and integrated it within the station. This server in particular is used to monitor and track TranStar employees. The prominent red eye at the top is a nod to HAL 9000.

The mood and lighting in deep storage were purposefully kept somber and dark to evoke the feeling of mystery and buried secrets.

When building a level, verticality and clarity of player orientation are always goals of ours. Verticality is especially important as it allows for unconventional player movement through a space.

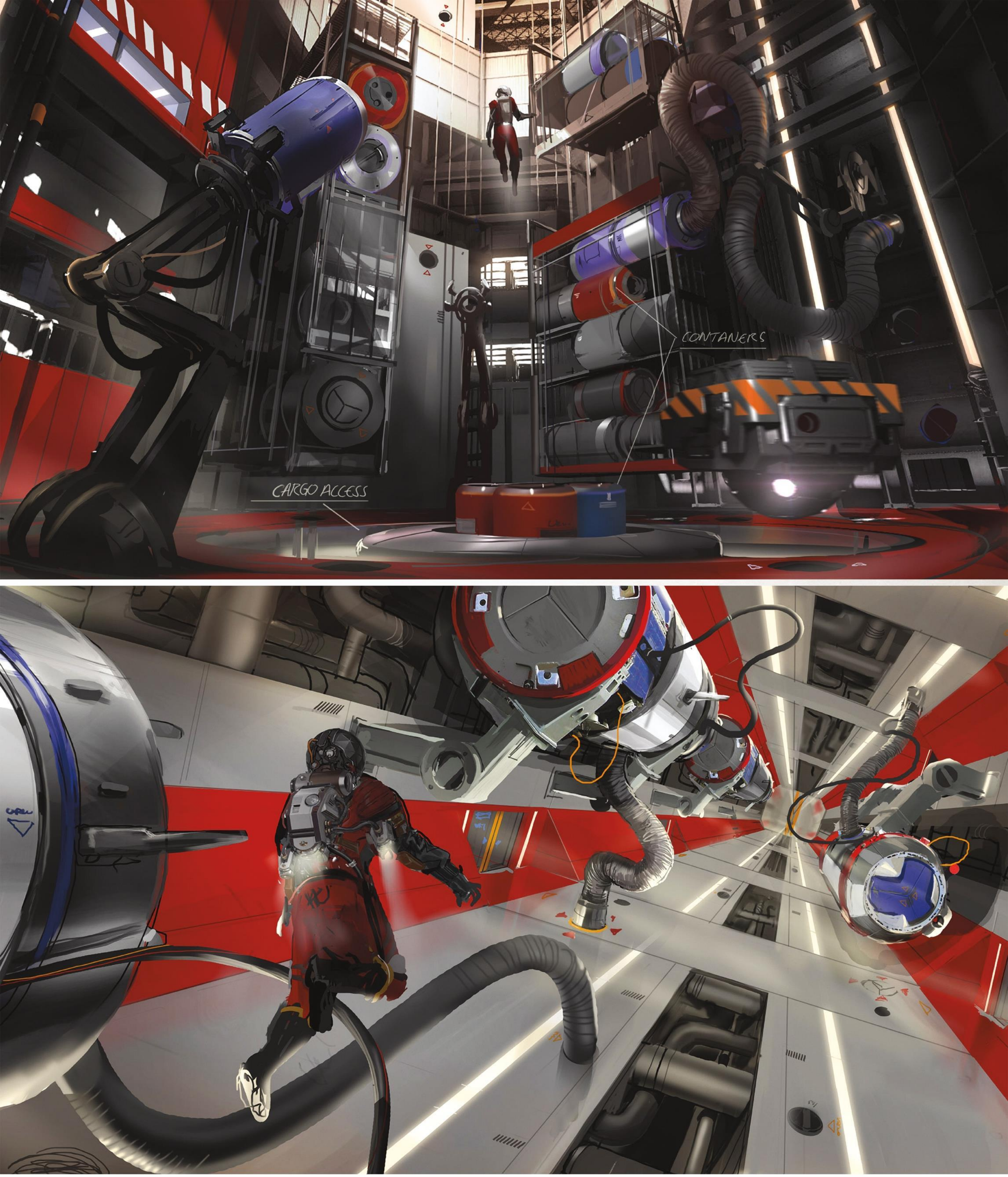
LEVEL

STATION GUTS

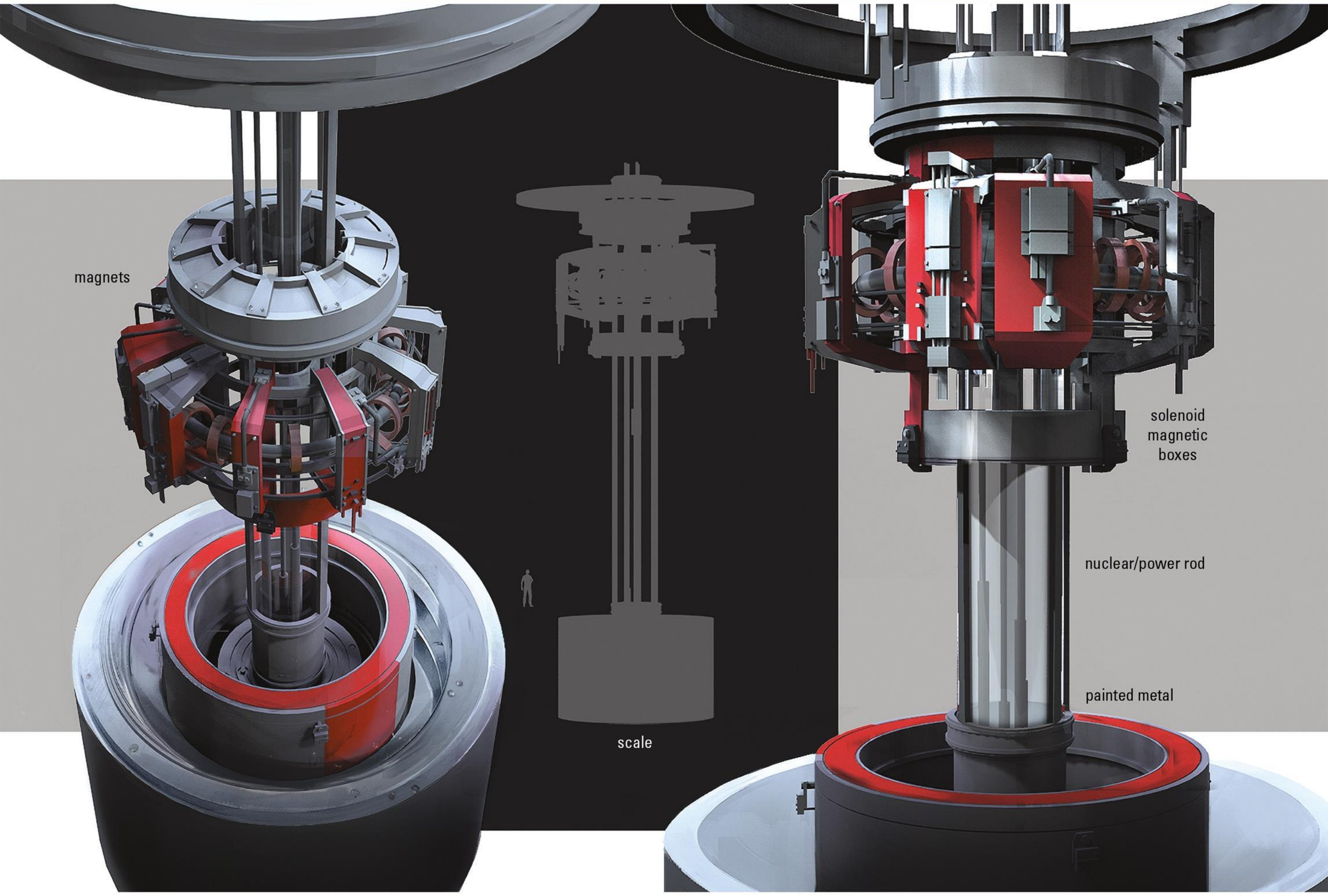
The zero gravity utility tunnels (GUTS) are the innermost mechanical workings of Talos I. The GUTS house the magnetosphere generator and are critical for utility transportation between parts of the ship. Air, cargo, and electricity are all carried through the tunnels to the rest of Talos I. Spanning the length of the station, the GUTS function as a backbone, both literally and figuratively.

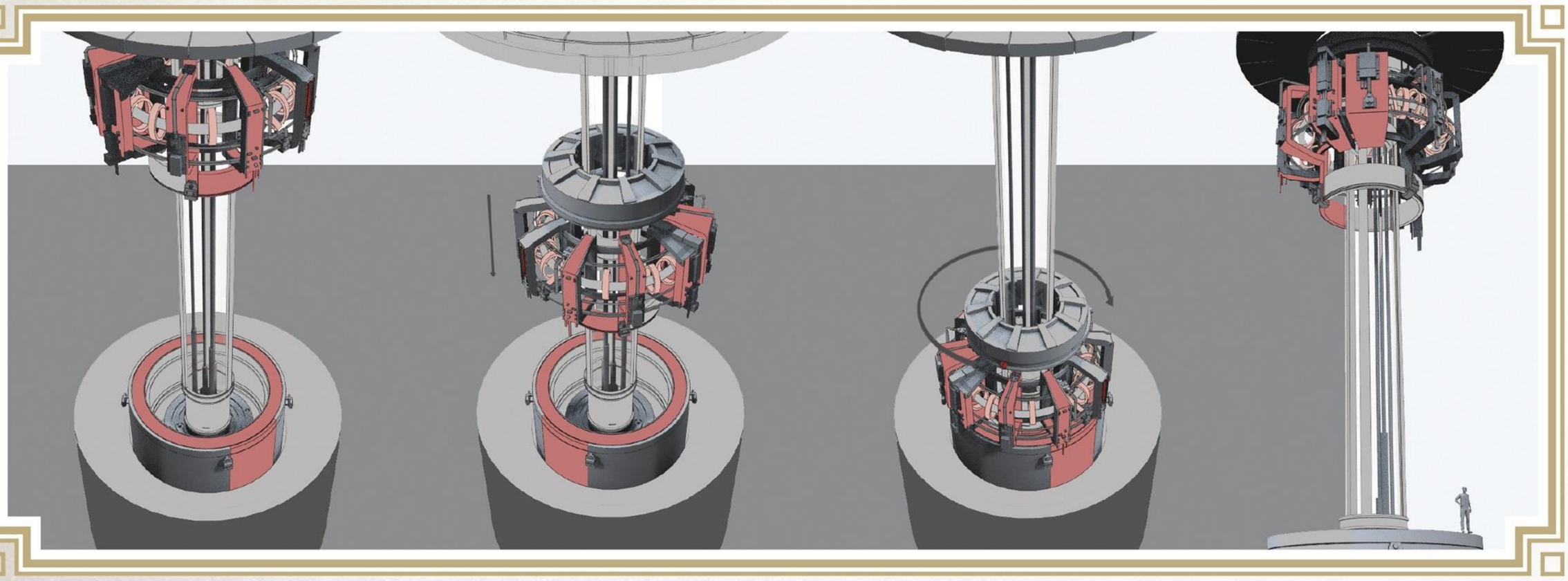


Concepts can help inform choices, but the major decisions are always made by the architects and environment artists.

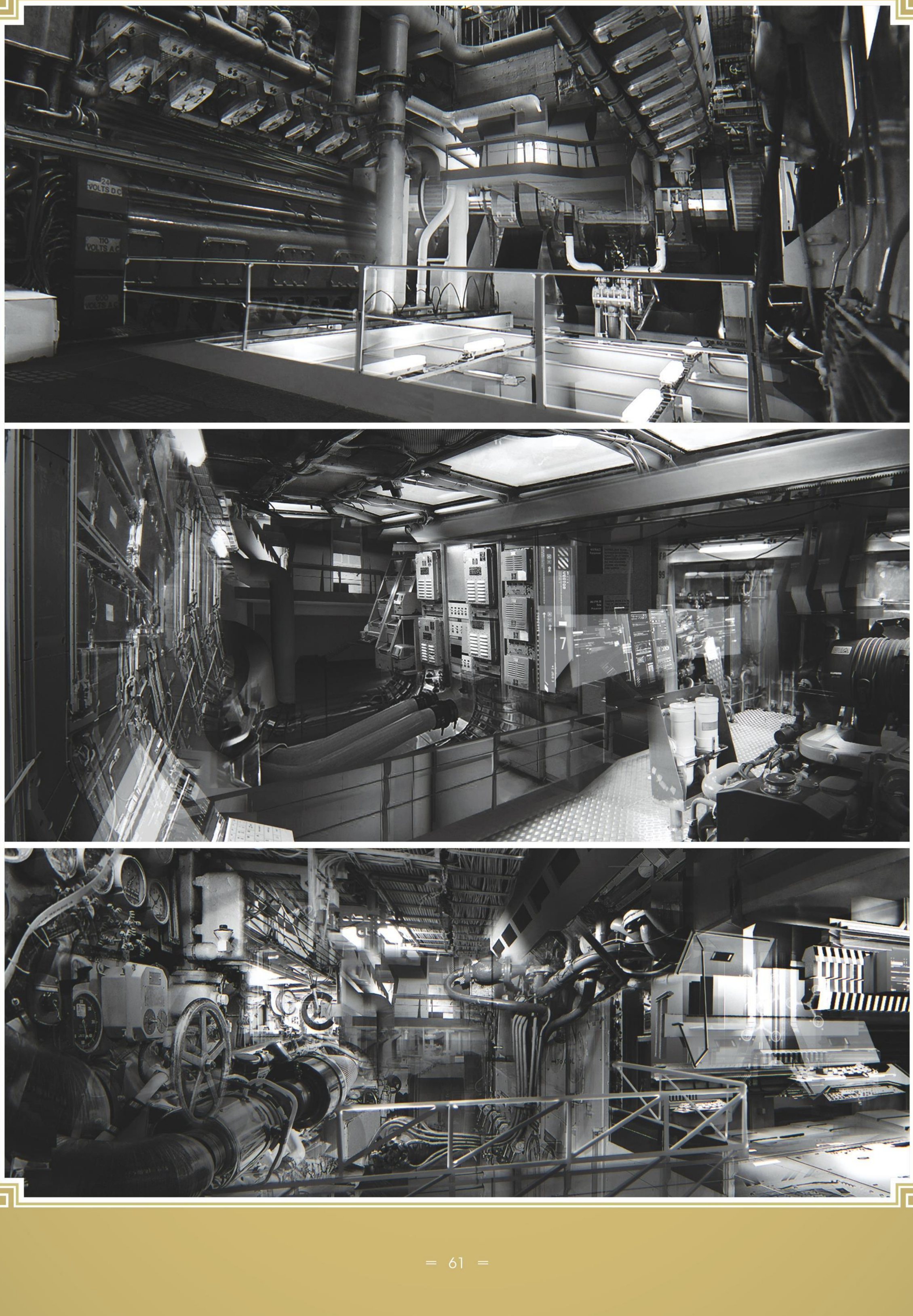


These early concepts explore how TranStar would have used zero-g to their benefit for transporting cargo.





A major feature of this level is the magnetosphere room. The station generates its own magnetosphere to protect inhabitants from cosmic radiation. The need for this imposing machine to be part of an explorable puzzle allowed us to design it down to the smallest detail. Very early research (*opposite*) tended to be much more claustrophobic and based on ships' engine rooms.


24
VOLTS D.C
110
VOLTS A.C
600
VOLTS A.C



Giant mechanical structures are interesting, though sometimes commonplace in sci-fi. The magnetosphere was a great opportunity to design one of these features for *Prey* and make it new and interesting.





The red color and motion light systems that are pervasive in this level are a reference to the bold color palettes in vintage sci-fi, like *2001: A Space Odyssey* or Philippe Druillet comics.

LEVEL HARDWARE

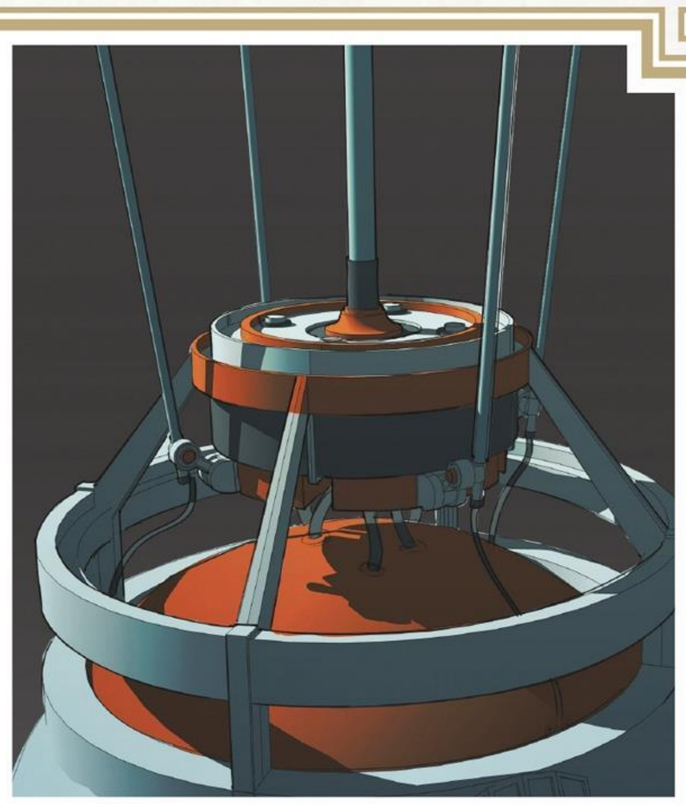
The major themes for this level were experimentation and disaster. It features many opportunities for storytelling, not just for TranStar R&D programs, but also for the employees who work here. All non-Typhon-related research is conducted here. Each lab features a centerpiece that's linked to the tech being researched there.

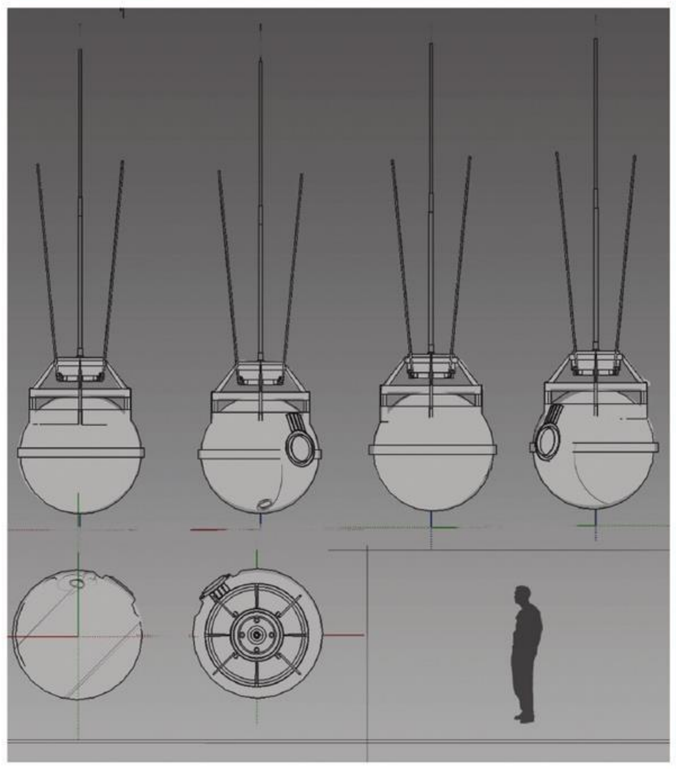


Demonstrations of current tech development are also a given in hardware, so we wanted to make sure this was supported in advertisements and signage.

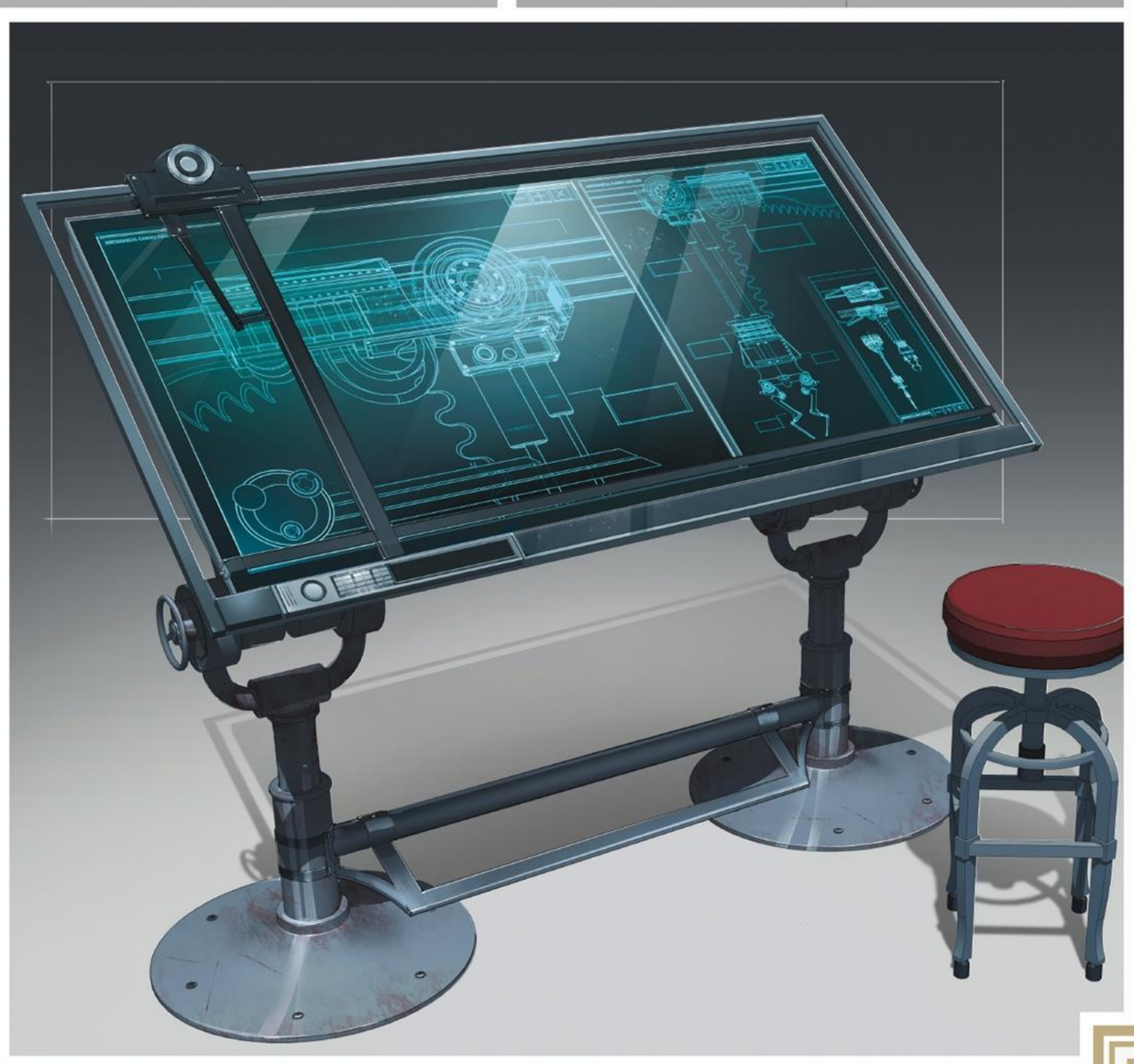
Paint-overs such as the one at the top help inform levels of wear, age, and details that can be interpreted in set dressing. The spherical shape of the recycler lab container is representative of a recurring theme—primitive shapes used to convey sturdiness and resilience.







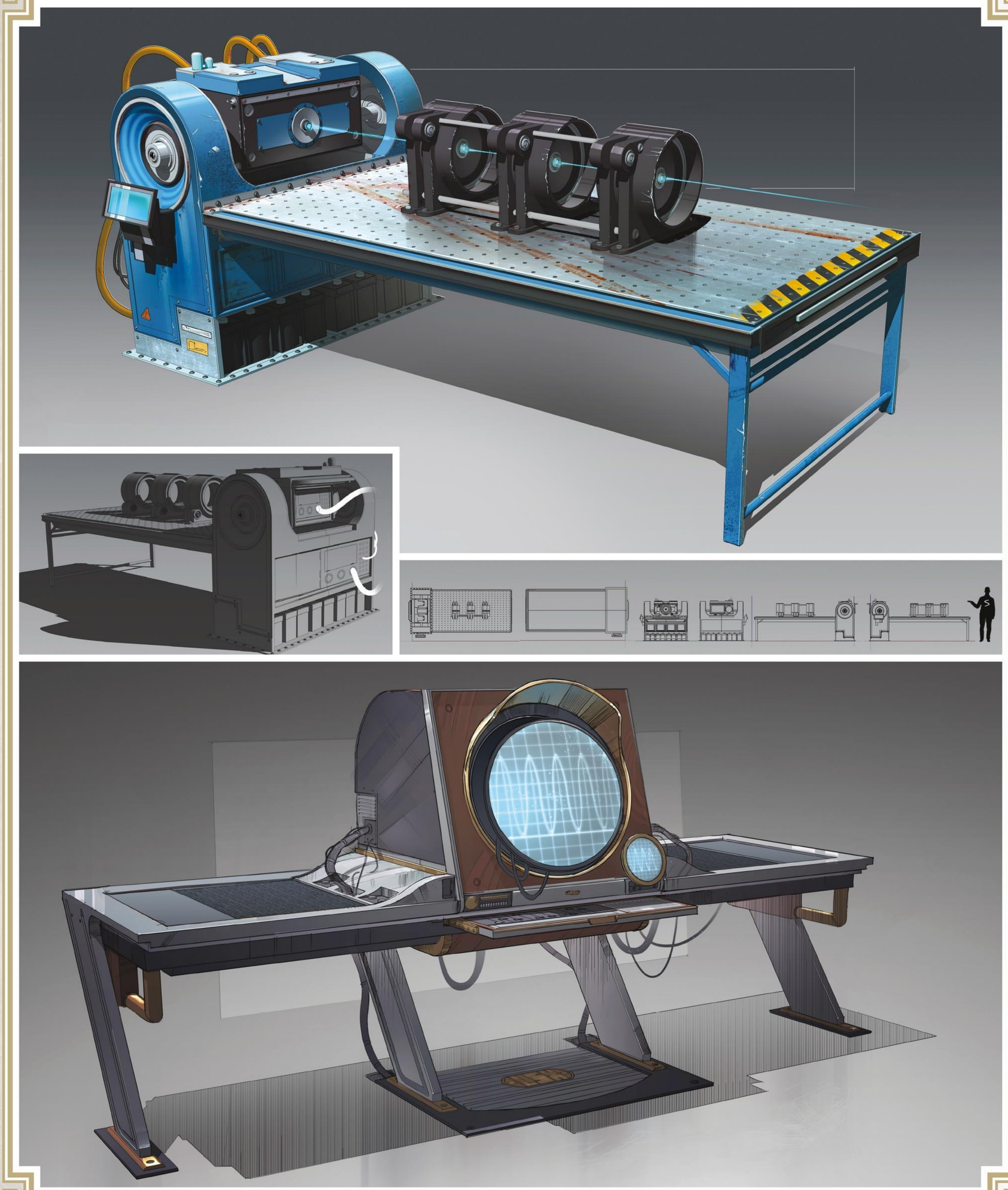




A big question when developing the props for the level is imagining the experiments being done. This helps inform architects and environment artists as to how these spaces are used.

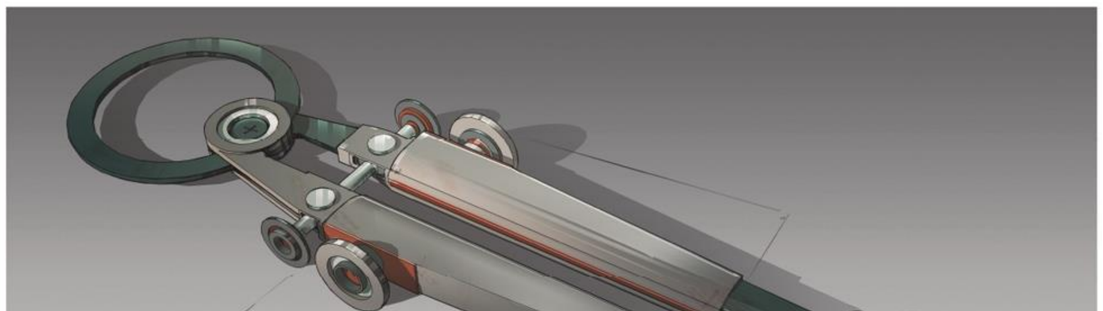


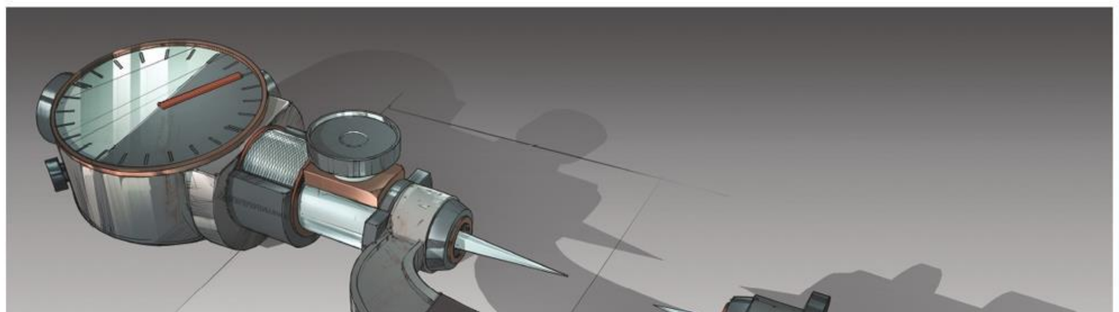
All of these props are mixes of high-tech and retro designs. You can see elements of retro and space tech, all mixed and twisted together, with vintage materials (Hammerite-style paint, Bakelite, etc.) applied.



Blue paint features in many of our prop designs. This particular blue is often seen on vintage computers and helps tie these props to an earlier era.

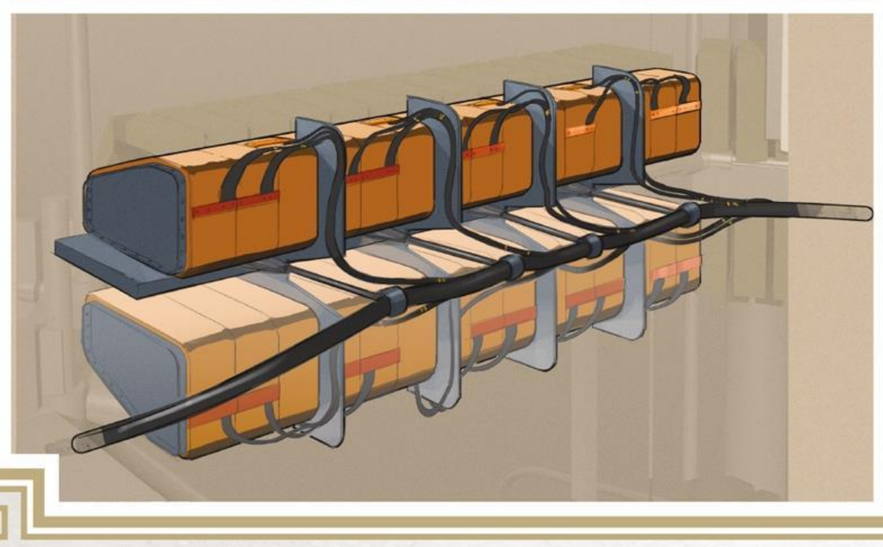


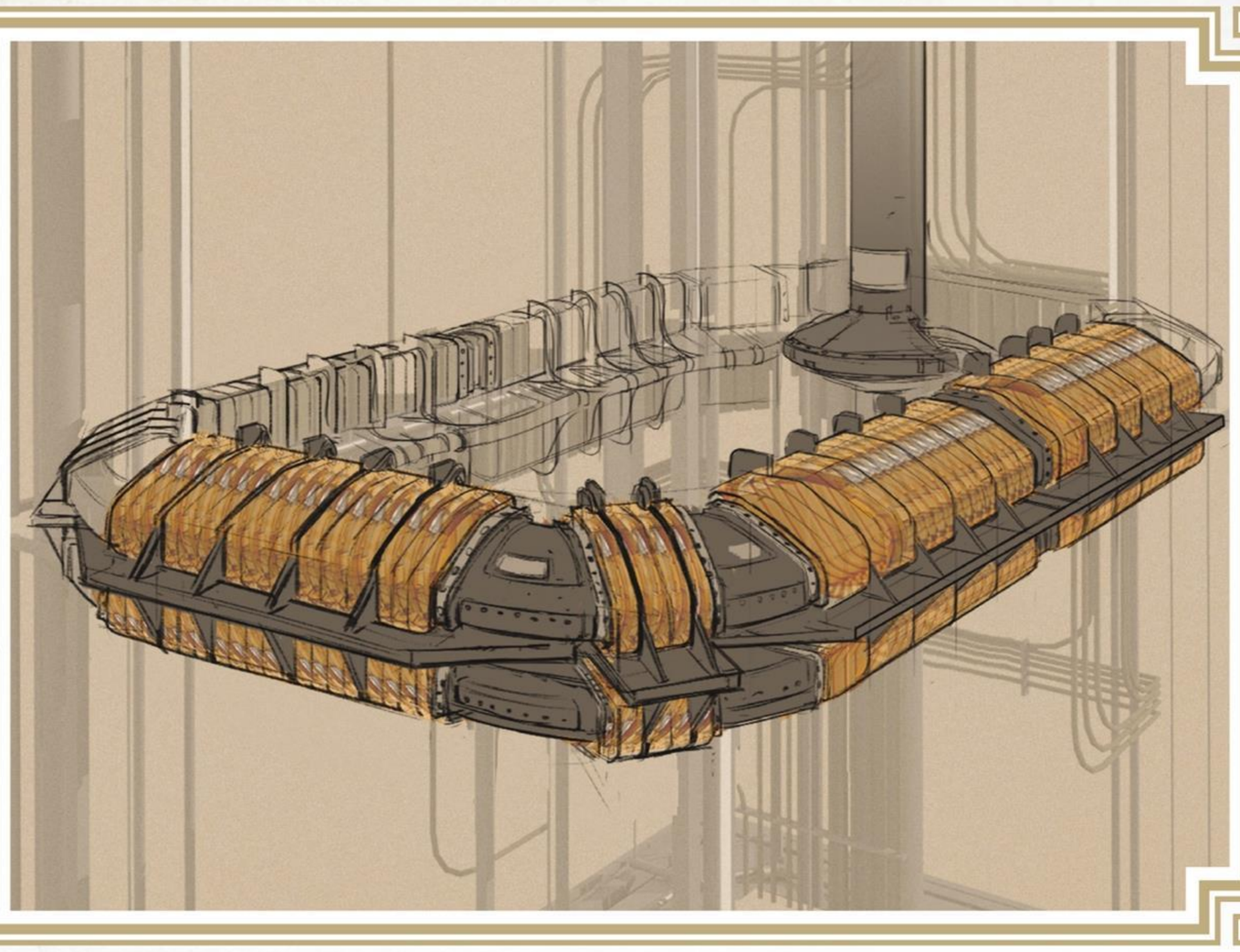




The microscope was one of the earliest designs we attempted. Even in this early stage you can see repeated themes and patterns being established—retro inspirations, complex details, and absurdly high-end materials.

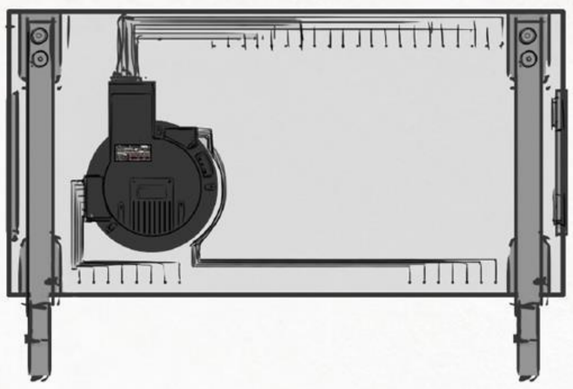


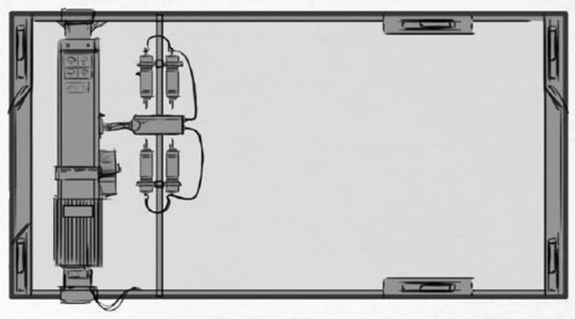




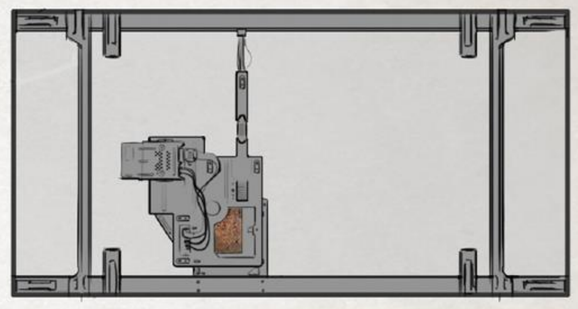


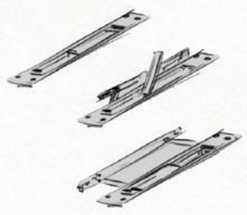
Game play props, such as the gravshaft, go through many iterations as we attempt to make sure they're well integrated into the world. They share a lot of values with the world aesthetic and go through many revisions with different departments, whose input informs the final look.

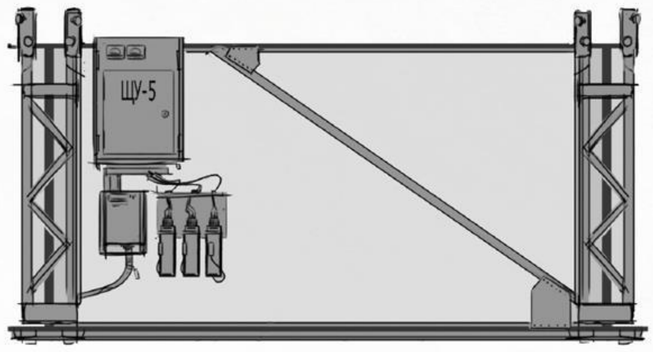




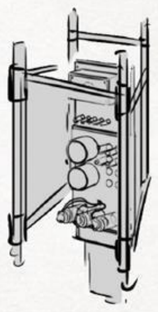


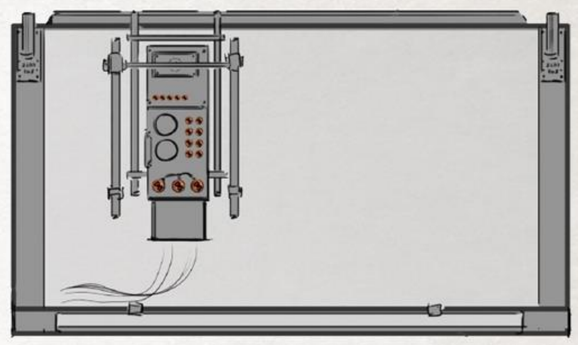


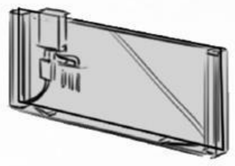


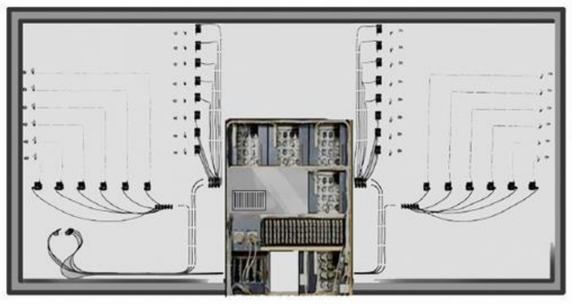






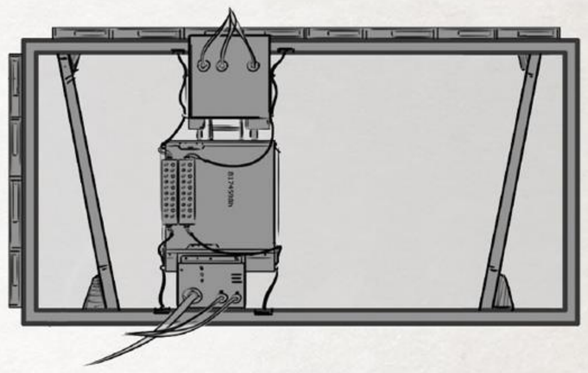


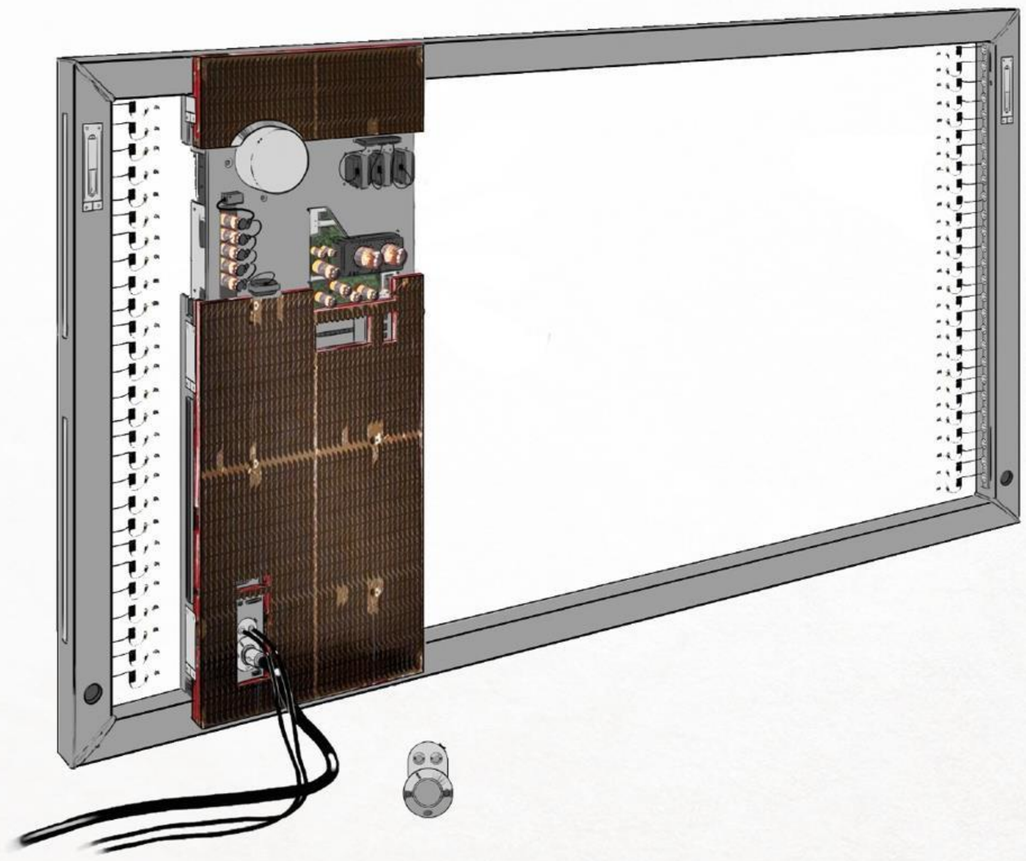


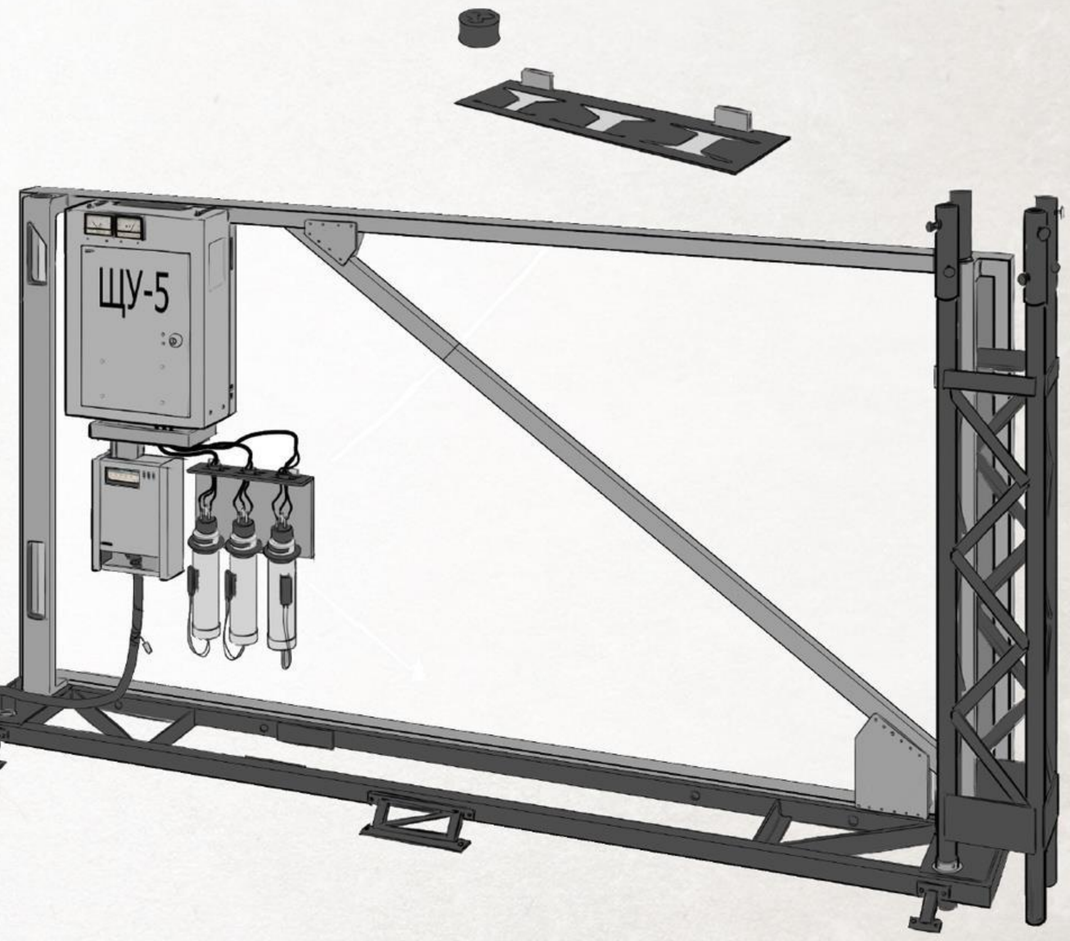












The Looking Glass design had to be both interesting and flexible in nature to be used in many different locations and installations. It's a great example of the Arkane approach of imagining how an object looks and functions from all angles, not just the front.

Hardware is the site of a major explosion witnessed at the beginning of the game. The explosion presented some fun storytelling possibilities that we discovered as we iterated on the level.





This place is a secured research space, but it's also public facing. An array of human activity and storytelling occurs here, which helps us show a lot of contrast in our themes—ultrasterilized labs next to warm human spaces.

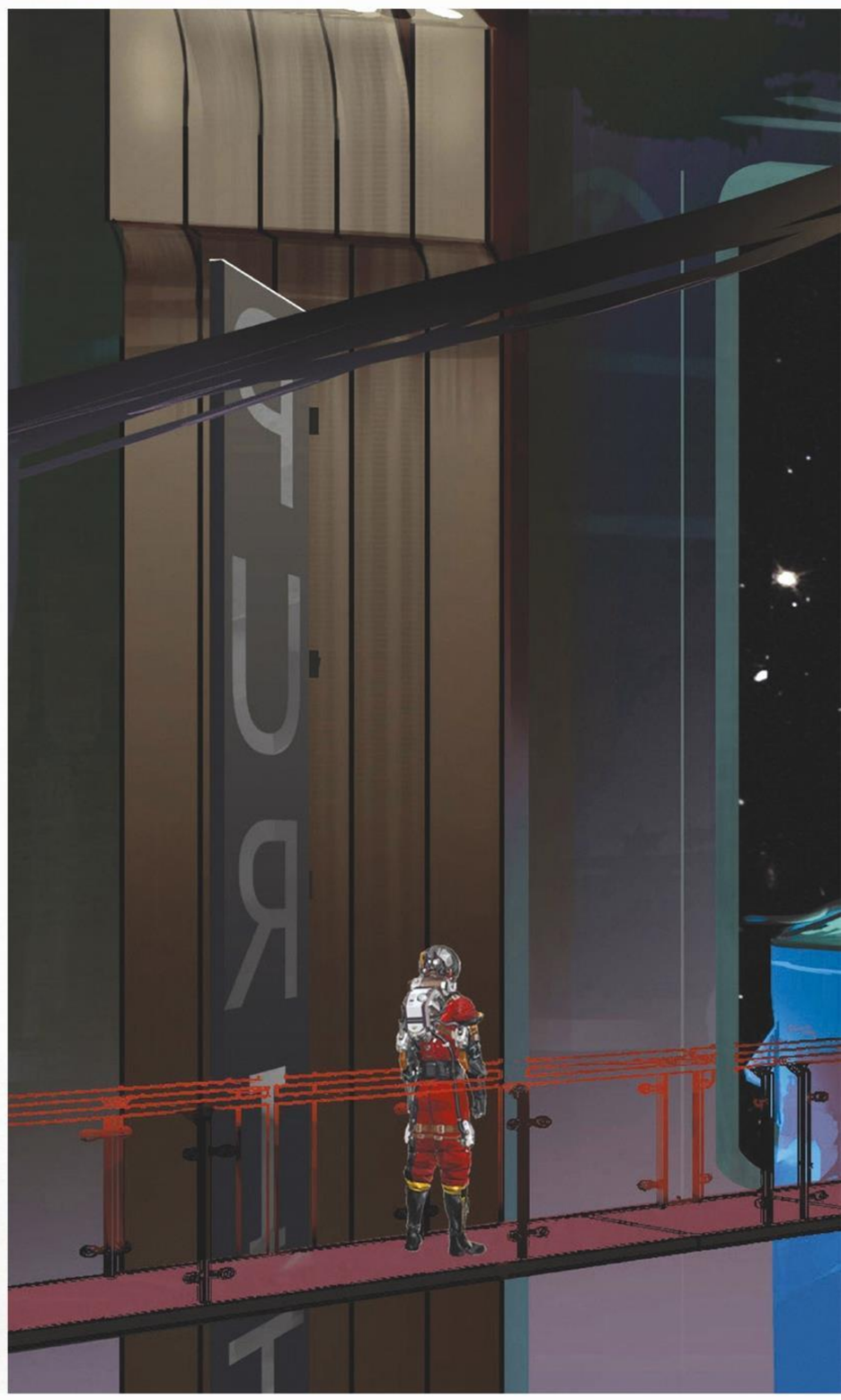
LEVEL

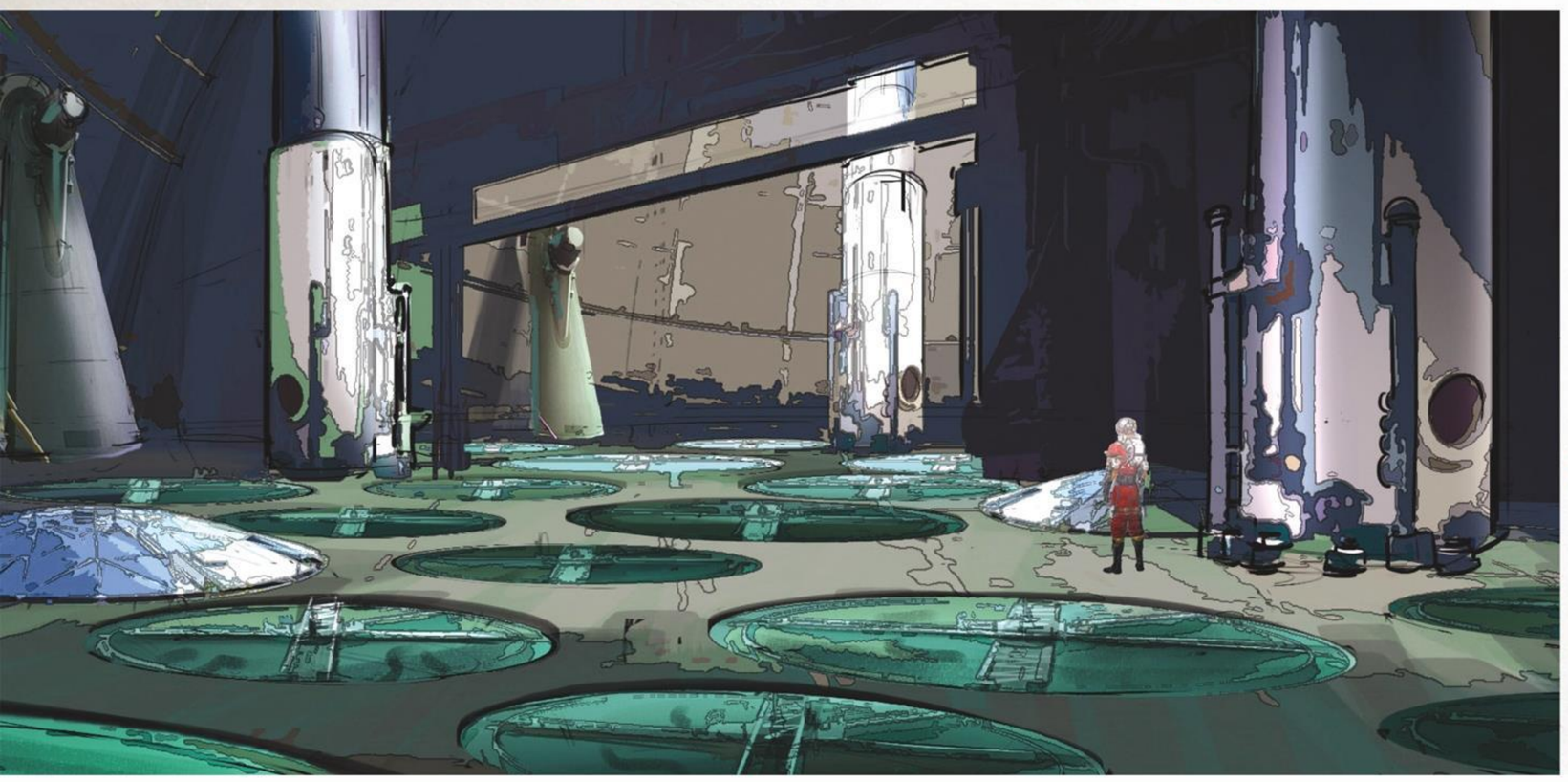
LIFE SUPPORT

Life support is the site of recycling and filtration for air and water—vital systems on the station. Along with GUTS, this is the only station module to feature no Deco influences. The main thought behind its design was that it had to be functional yet aged.









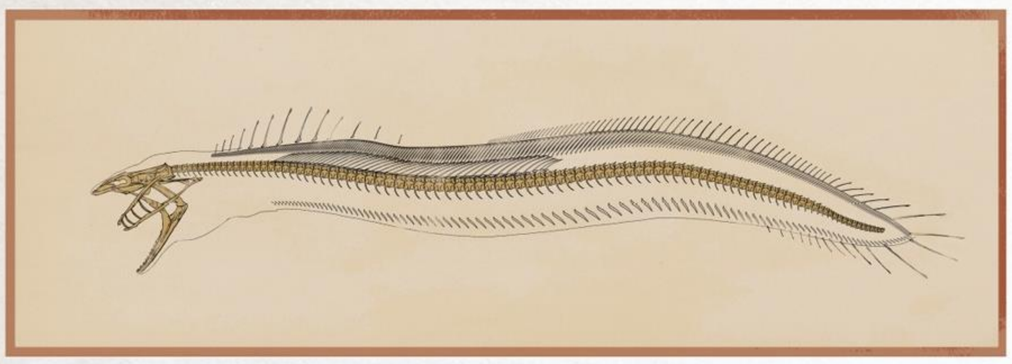
Cisterns, pipes, and tanks are common visuals across this level, and circulation and filtration are recurring themes.

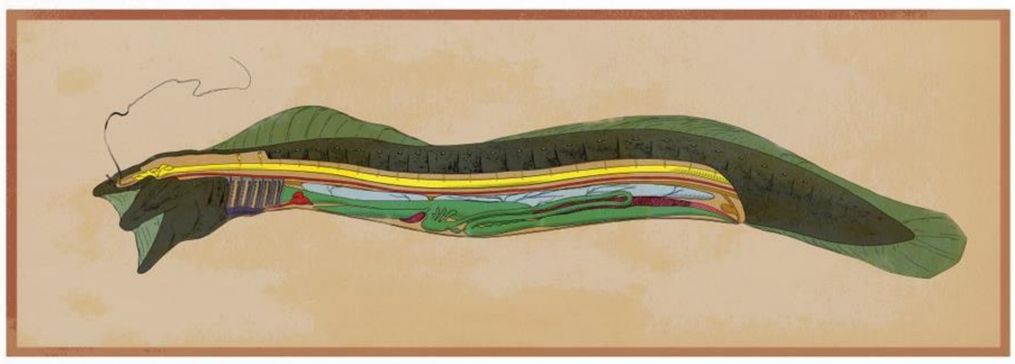
The rustiness and leakiness give the level a unique feeling that contrasts with the relative cleanliness or sterility of other parts of the ship.





The eels were genetically engineered by TranStar for waste filtration systems. They also taste excellent with a side of ginger and wasabi.















There were many early concept sketches for this map, but the final look was ultimately decided by the architect. The sketches are still useful, however, for inspiring mood and color ideas.

PLANT BOX

The plant boxes are a great way to remind you that you're in a contained ecosystem. Oxygen is not naturally occurring and is constantly being recycled through a large, well-integrated system. The contrast of an organic plant encaged in technology is representative of the artificial nature of the station.

The plant boxes also present us with opportunities to use vegetation to bring warmth and life into otherwise cold corridors and spaces without derailing the theme of a level.

vents





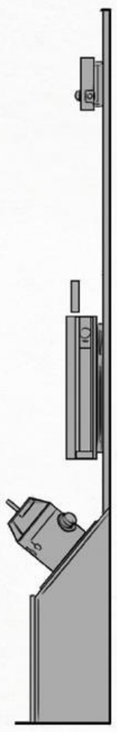


left



back wall

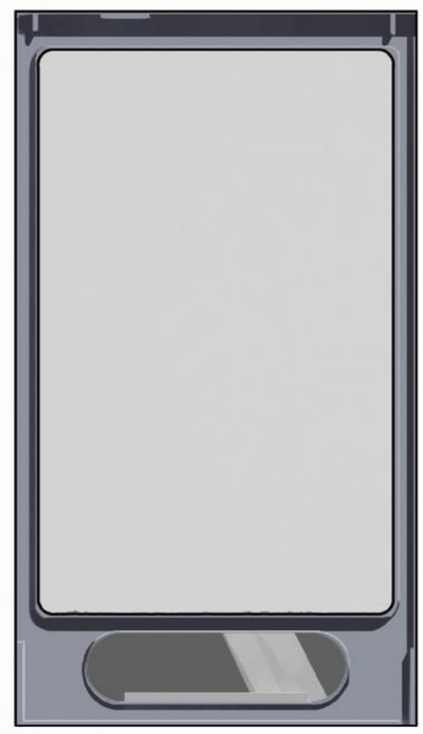




right



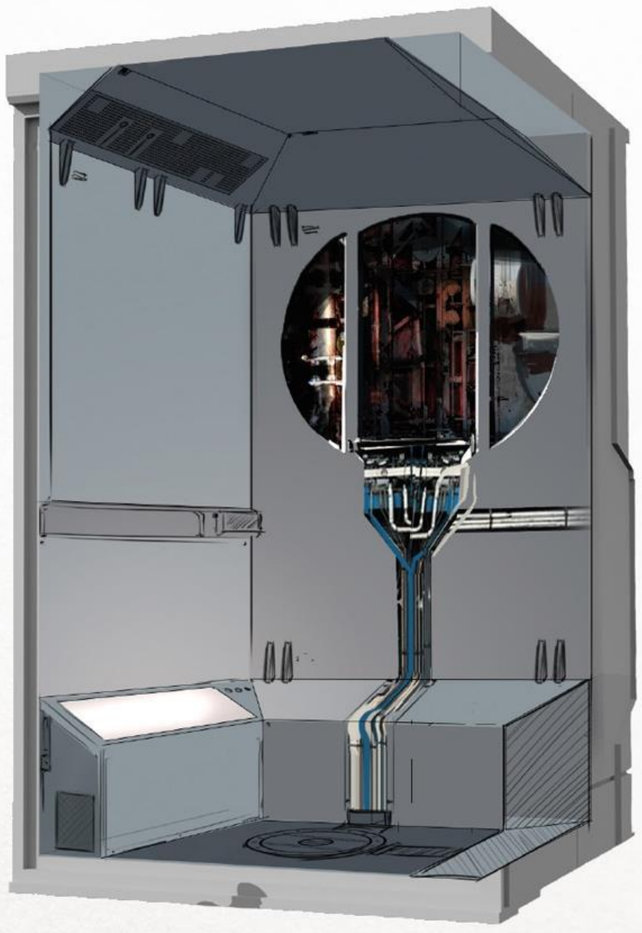
front panel











Due to the interconnectedness of the levels, we made the level transition doors highly recognizable (*top*). This was done with a combination of lighting, special iconic signage, and a recognizable and repeated shape language.

LEVEL

THE LOBBY

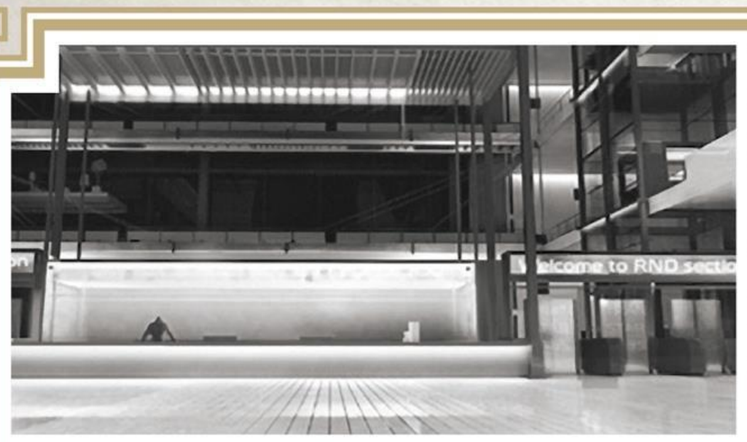
The lobby is the first thing someone arriving on the station will see. It's symbolic of the luxury of Talos I—every inch is made of absurdly expensive materials. It's illogical in its grandeur. Everything about this space is made to impress.

These paint-overs (*opposite*) helped show how time has taken its toll on the station and also helped refine the materials used in this space.





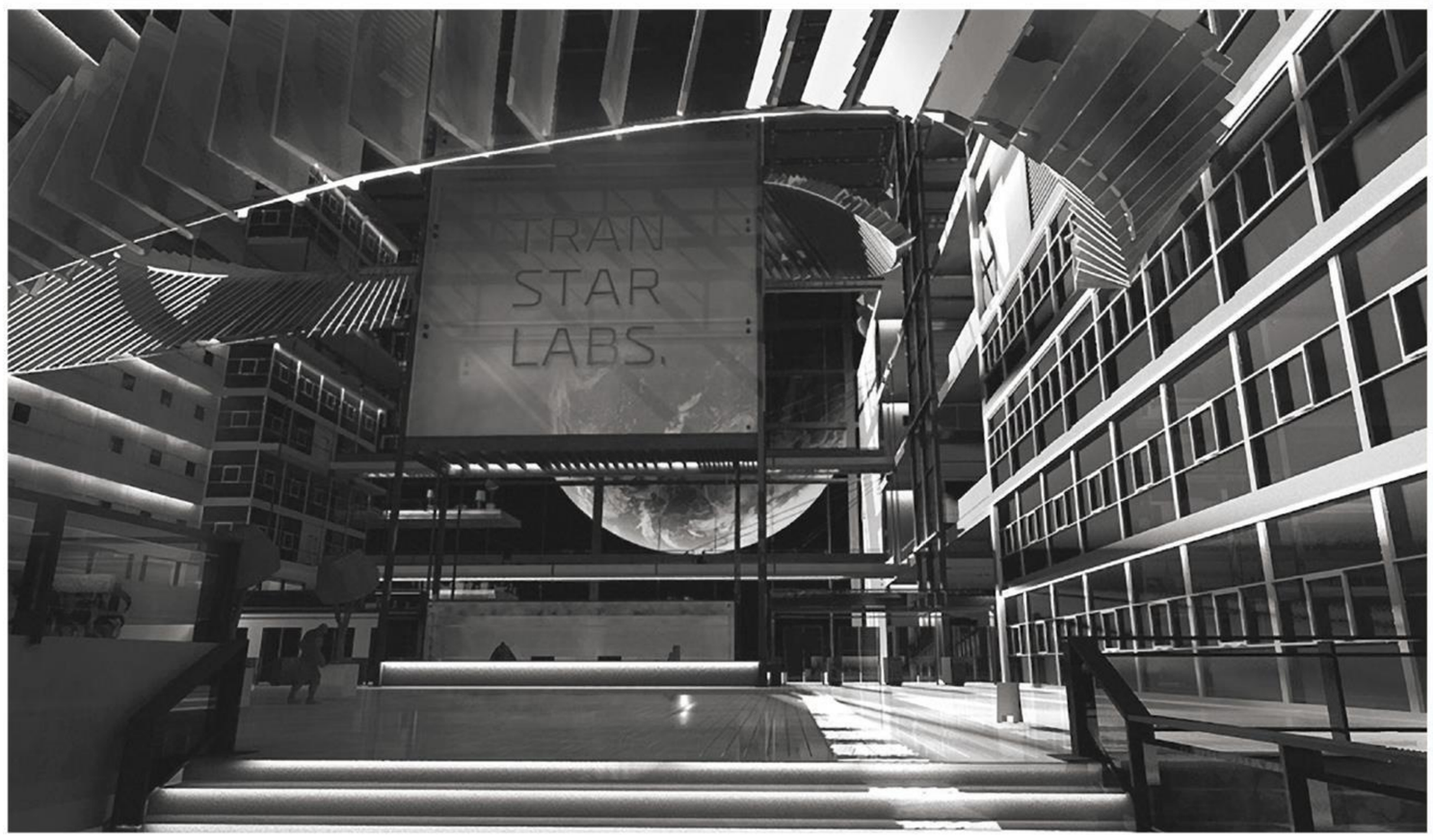

TRANSTAR
TRANSTAR
2025


elcome to RND sectio


TRAN
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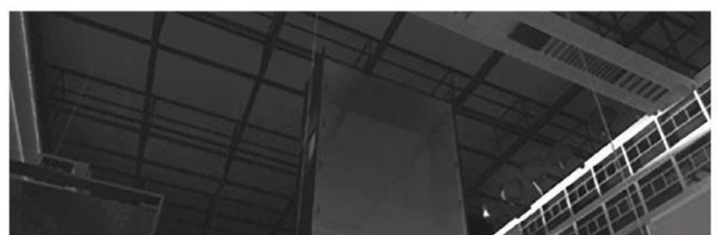

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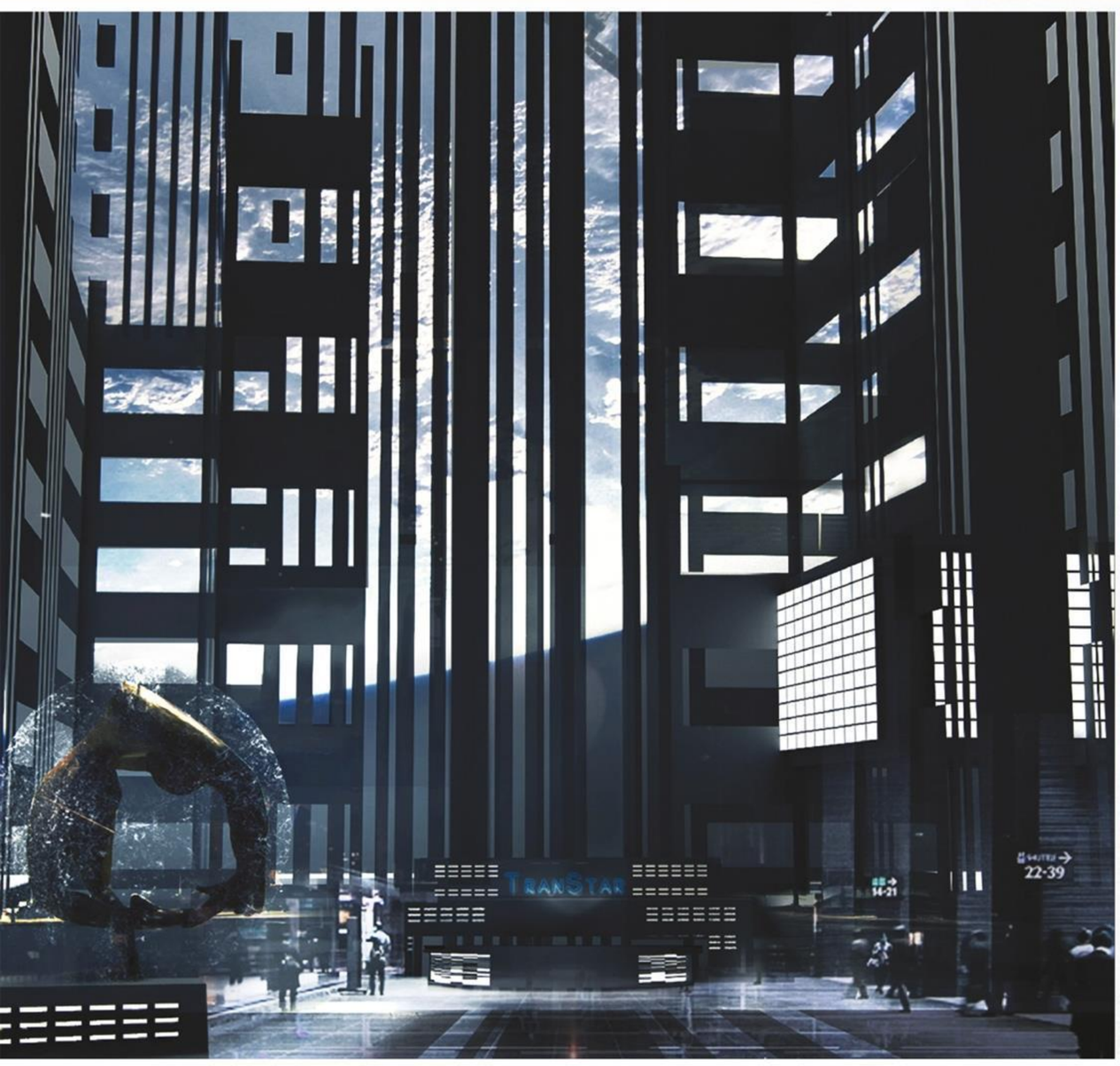





TRANSTAR


TRANSTAR







The lobby was the very first level we developed, and we started by imagining how someone who arrived on the shuttle would experience the station. This was the first attempt we made at introducing wood into an otherwise high-tech, sci-fi area. Early research had a much more contemporary, Silicon Valley corporate aesthetic, which we ended up moving away from.

SCULPTURE

Similar to the wood, we also wanted to bring in mineral references. Part of TranStar's backstory states that the company had facilities on the moon, so we imagined this refined "moon marble" as a possibility for additional surface variety.

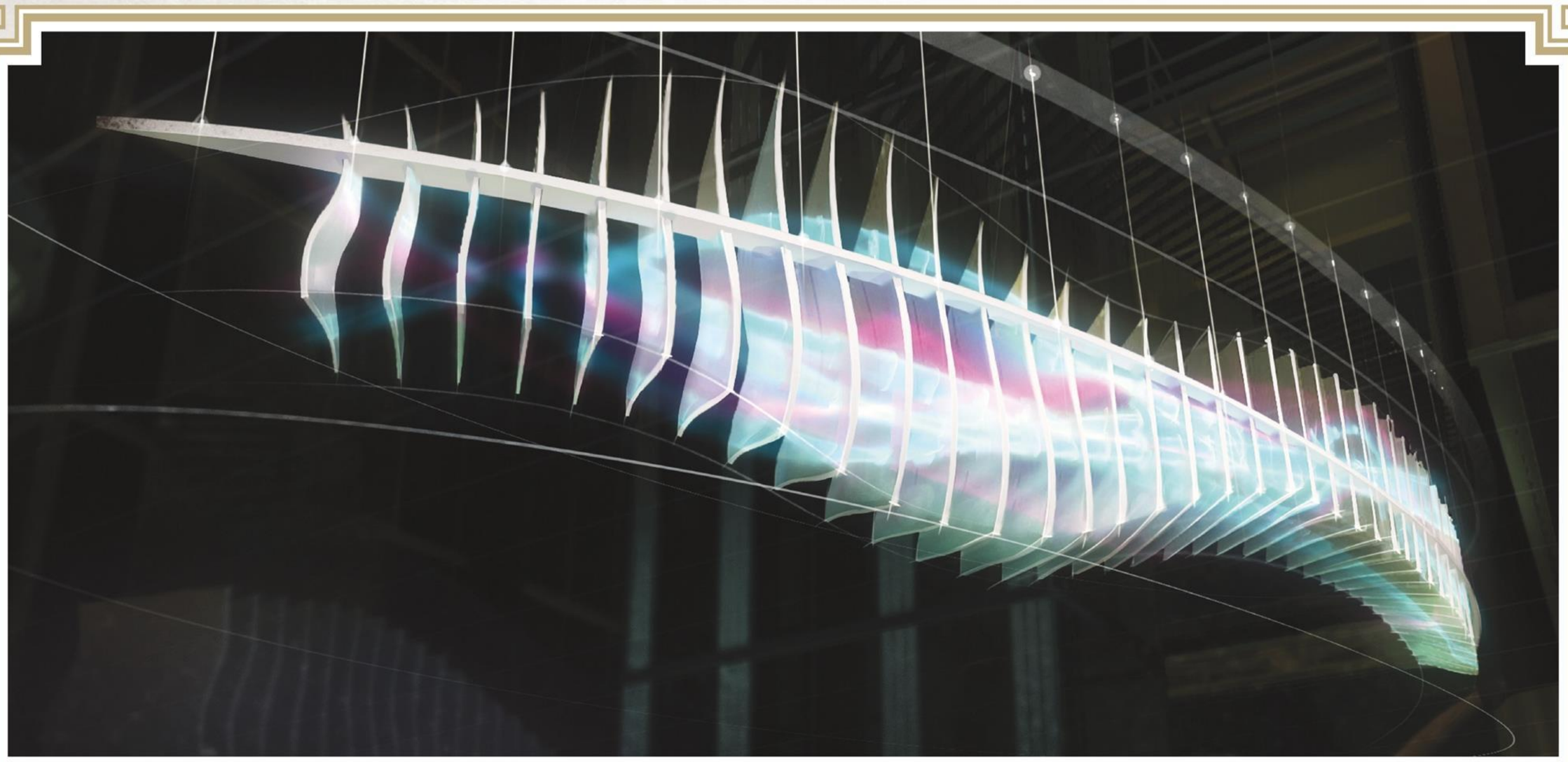
The sculpture that hangs in the lobby is representative of TranStar-era influence: something radically modern that clashes with the timelessness of the lobby.

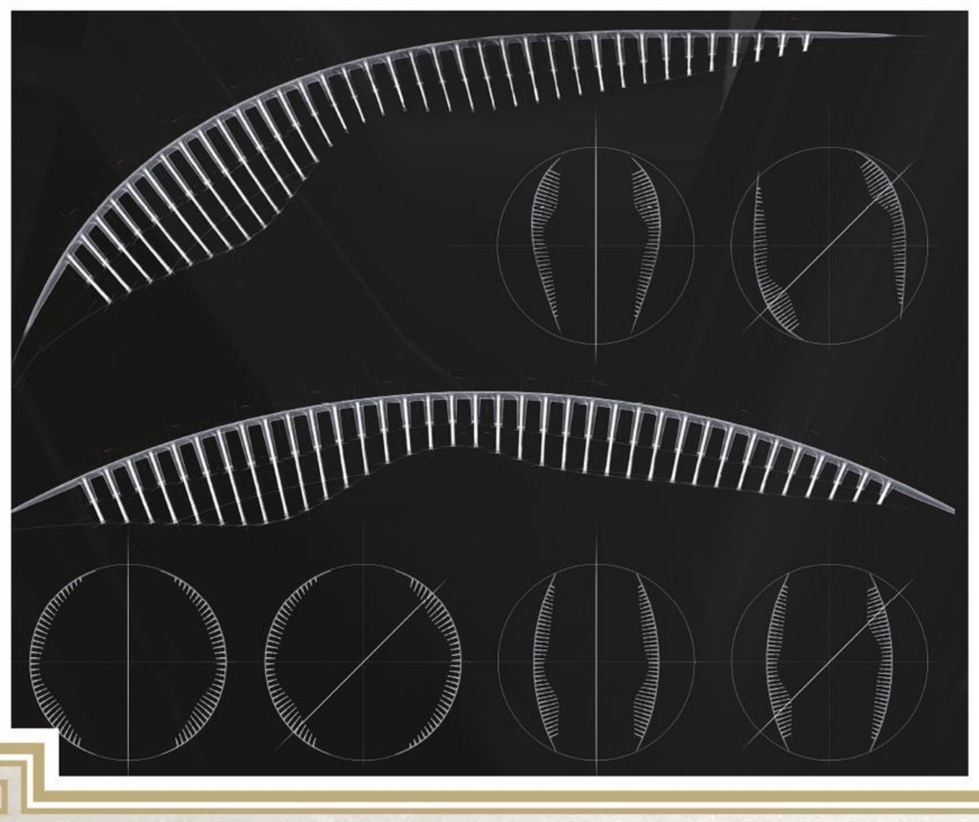




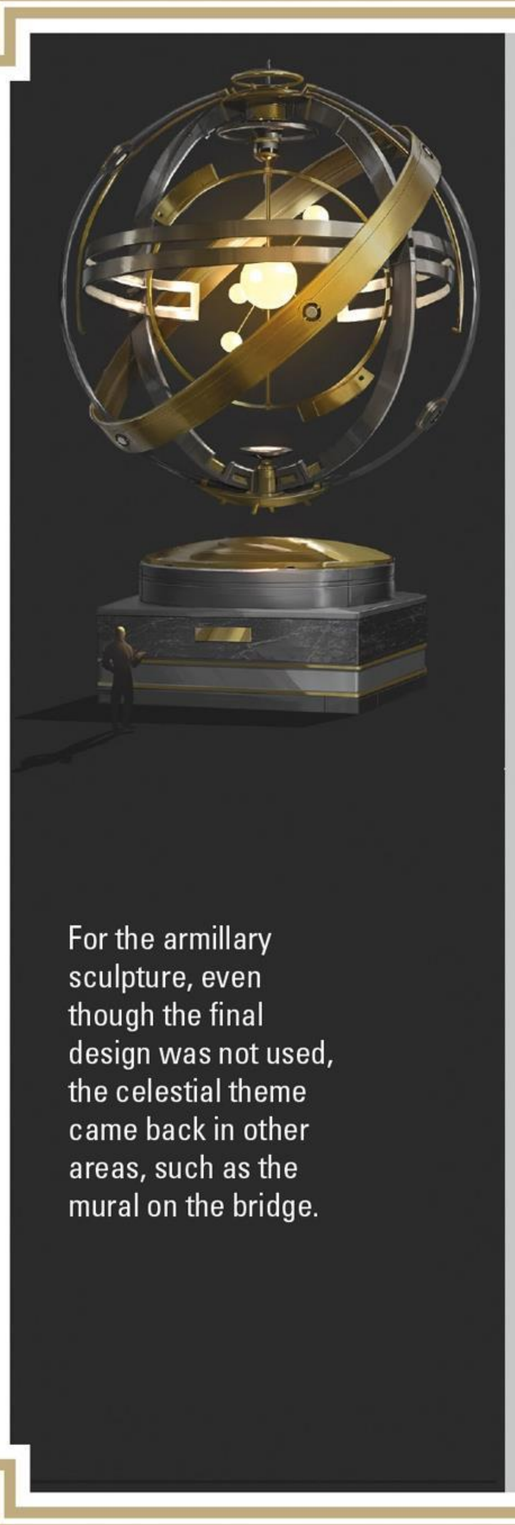


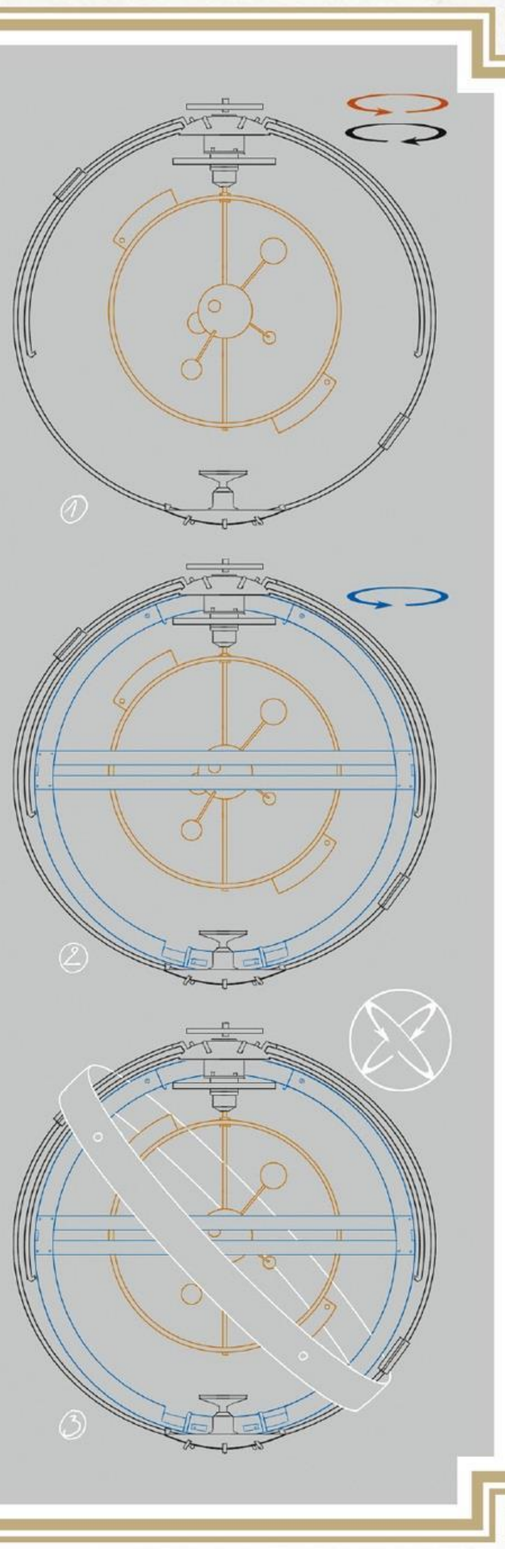








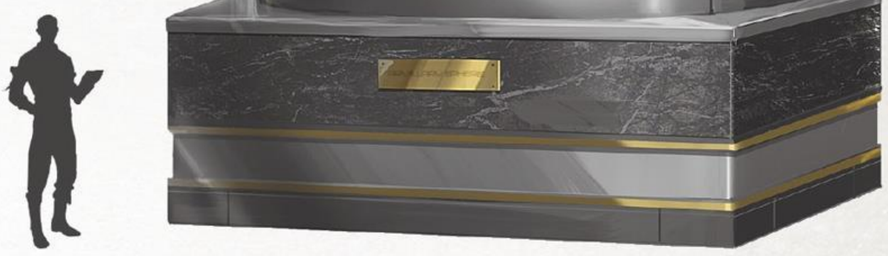




For the armillary sculpture, even though the final design was not used, the celestial theme came back in other areas, such as the mural on the bridge.



levitation system





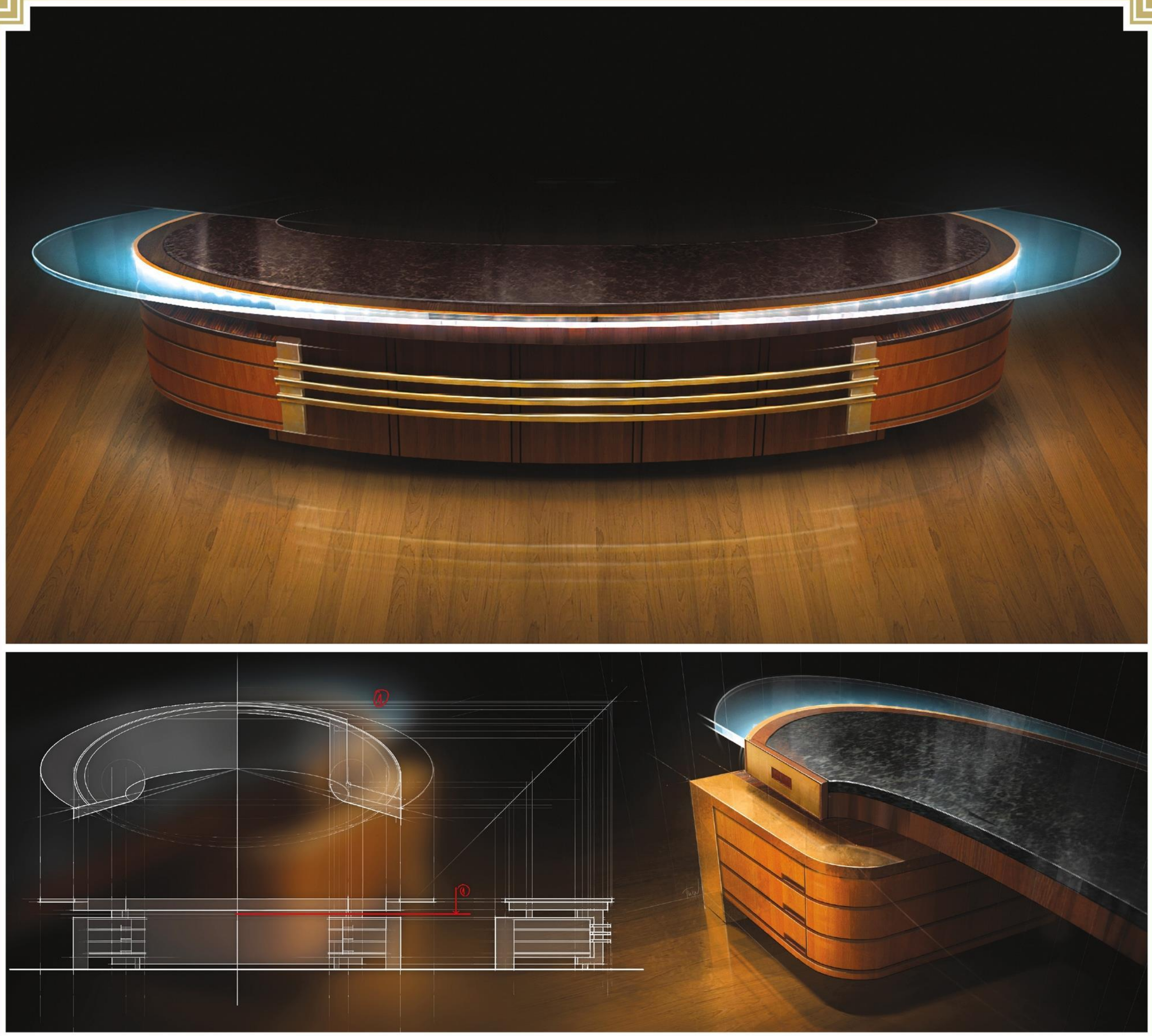
inside view



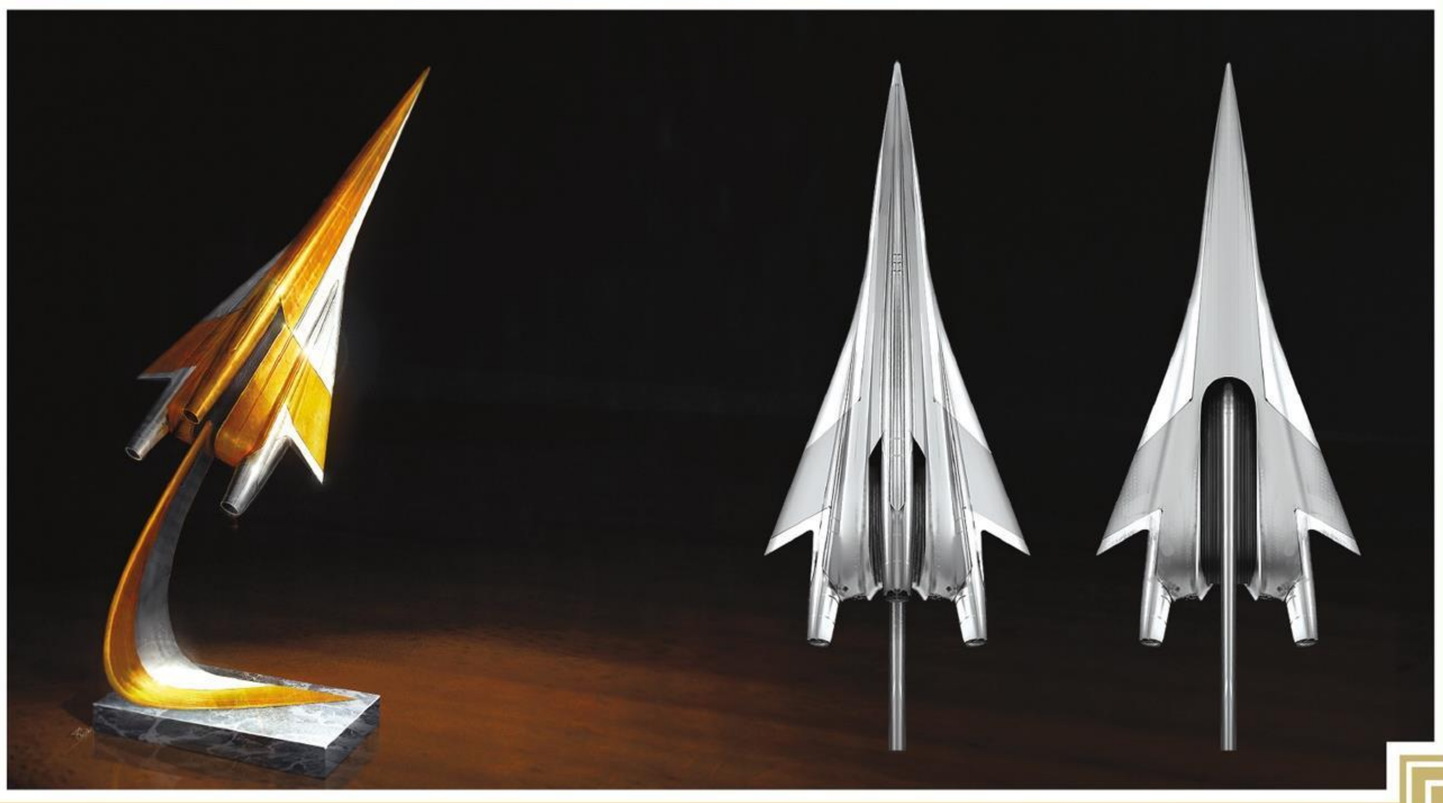
We tried to bring movement to the space by designing animated elements, such as sculptures and lifts. Compared to the GUTS and gravshafts, the lift is a recognizably human method of transportation. It's luxurious and more comfortable than other ways of getting around the station.



In addition to the lavish desks, we made sure to design the booze, in case anyone needed a stiff drink after a long day aboard a space station.

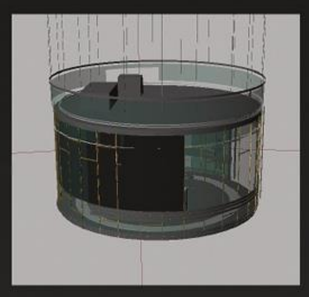






Alex's and Morgan's desks had to be particularly luxurious to convey their standing in the company. They are more heavily influenced by traditional Deco than the other props yet still feature glossy modern materials.

large, opaque,
one-way screen
with x-ray readouts

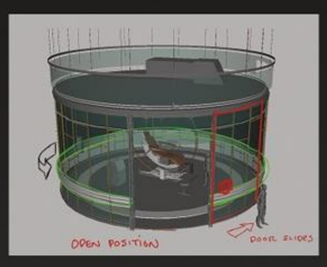


air exchange unit

closed
position



open
position





intravenous
fluids stand

diagnostic
computer





Originally, the trauma center was its own wing of the station; however, it was later condensed into a part of the lobby. The original concept of the med bay (*top*) was a much more complicated system. After it was simplified we found ways to rework the assets into other medical-themed areas of Talos I. The first research of the level worked to blend sci-fi, retro-inspired shapes and rich materials with a hospital theme.

Light fixtures in hospitals are very specific, and we had to design different mountings to work in various settings.

Even simple hospital props were given a hint of Deco—beds that are normally vinyl, metal, and plastic are instead wood, brushed aluminum, and leather.

Cyan-colored lighting was useful in not only conveying a sci-fi feeling, but also as a nice contrast against the warmer, more natural materials used in Deco spaces.



Windows are incredibly important. They constantly remind the player that they are out of their element. The juxtaposition of the harshness of space and the elegant luxury inside the station creates a constant tension. We felt this contrast gave a unique edge to the game.

LEVEL

NEUROMOD DIVISION

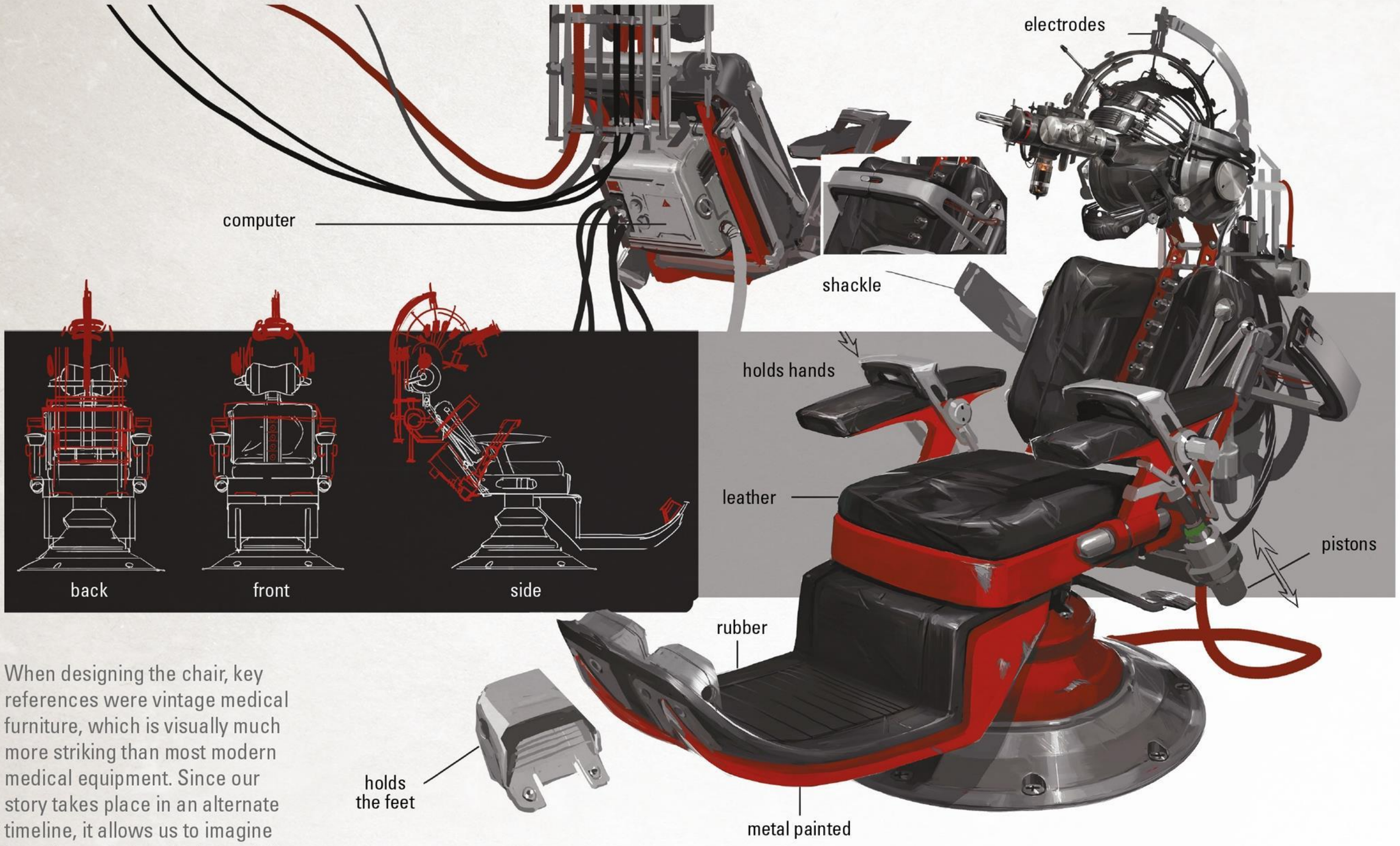
The simulation apartment—the player's first experience in the game—is a world within a world. We purposefully designed its look to be unique from the rest of the game. In order to fool the player and set this look apart from everything else, we chose a more grounded aesthetic. Along with the simulation, the neuromod division contains multiple research facilities. Both aesthetics coexist next to each other in the same module, and the stark transition from one to another creates a memorable moment in the game.



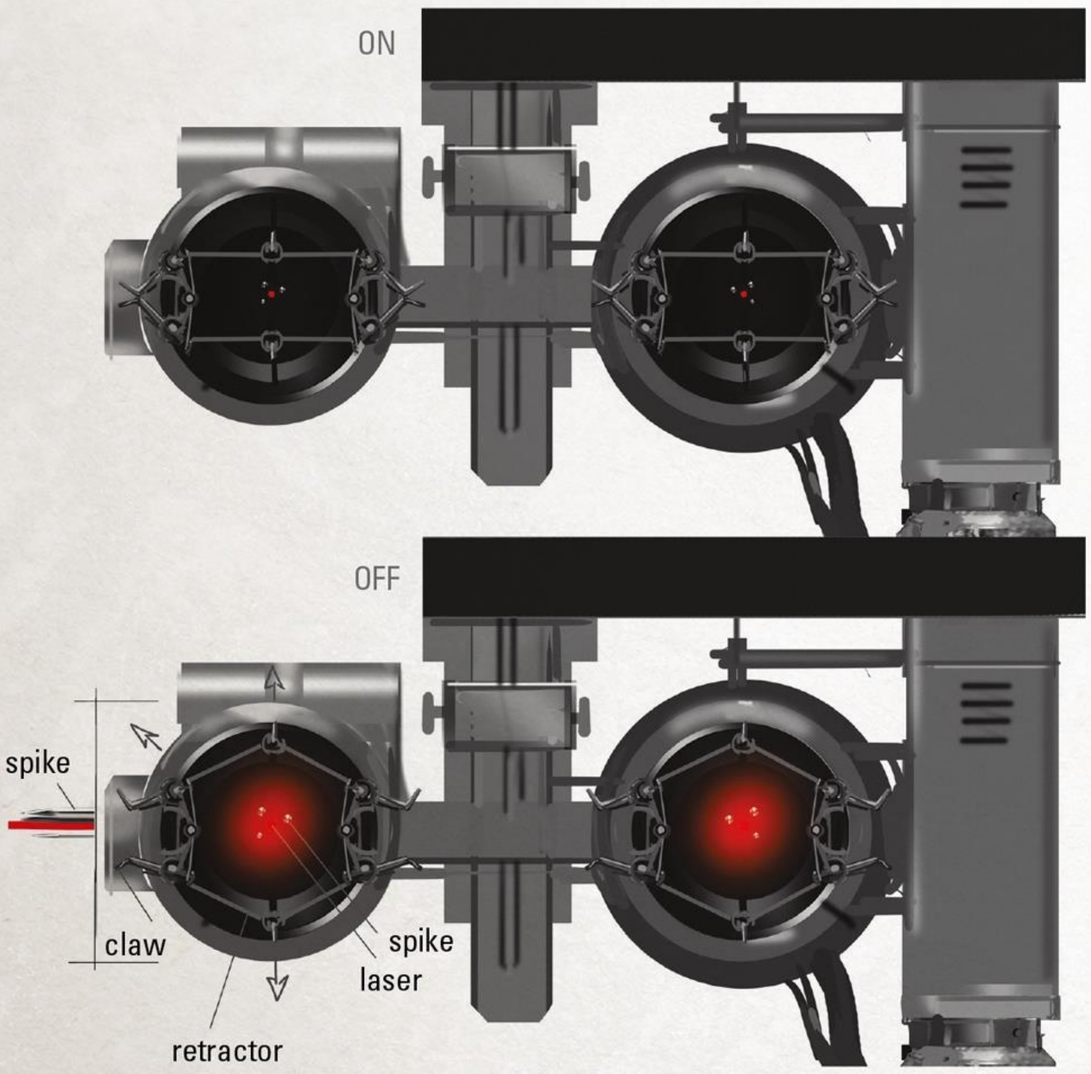
The fake TranStar lobby hints at the reality of TranStar as a corporation on Earth, away from Axiom-era influences. Synthetic materials, a more mass-produced feel, and a purposefully more conventional design all work together to set false initial impressions for the player.



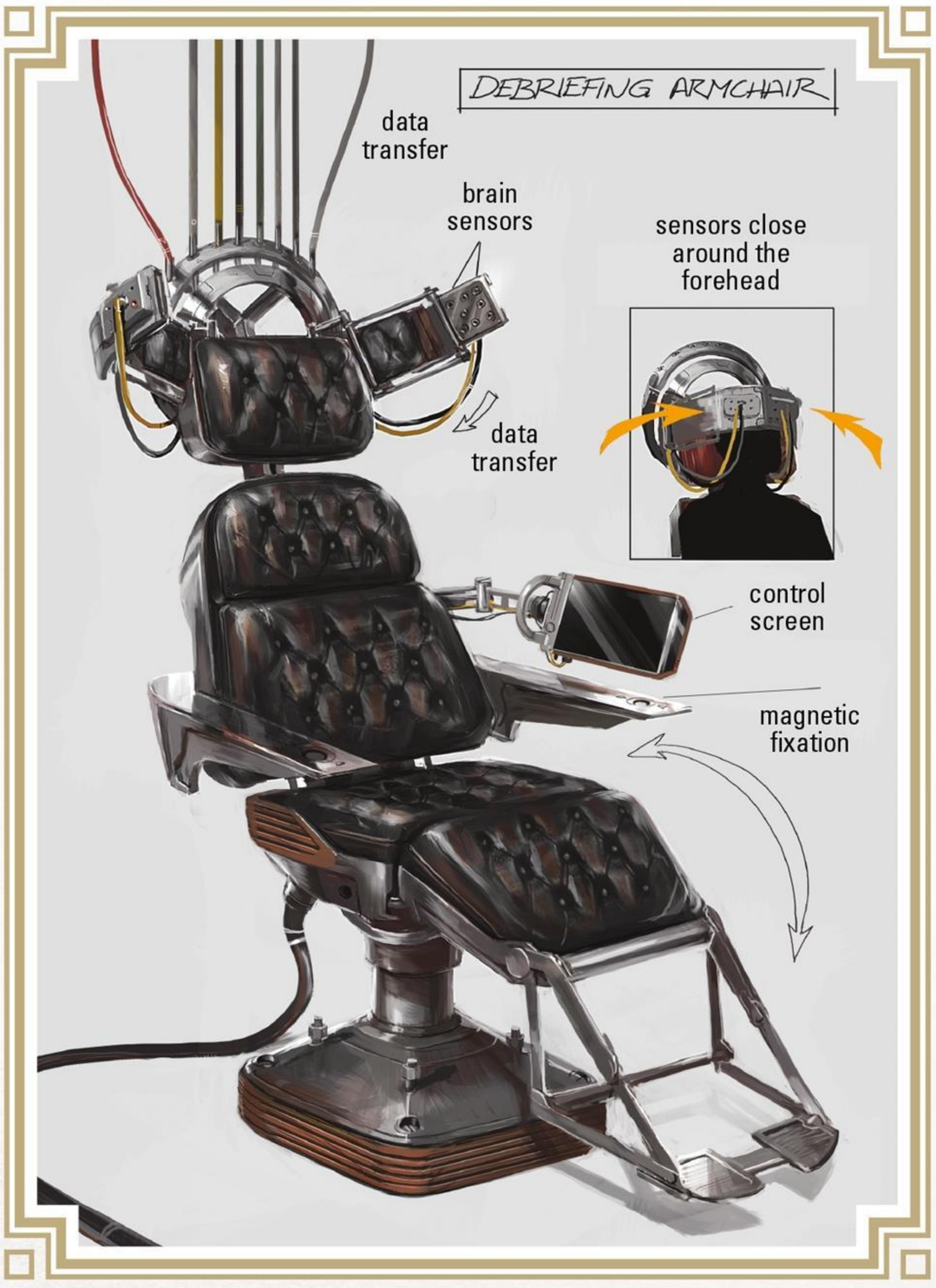
Bolder, brighter colors feature prominently in the simulation. Earth needed to feel like an energizing, vibrant place—a world worth saving.

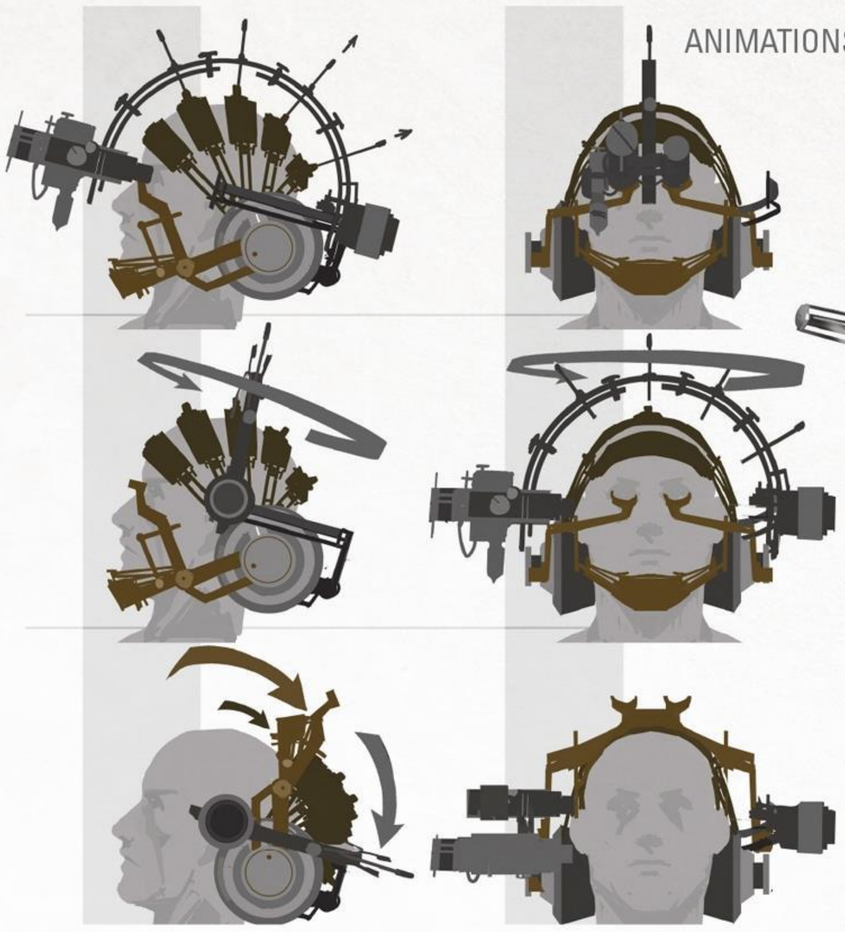


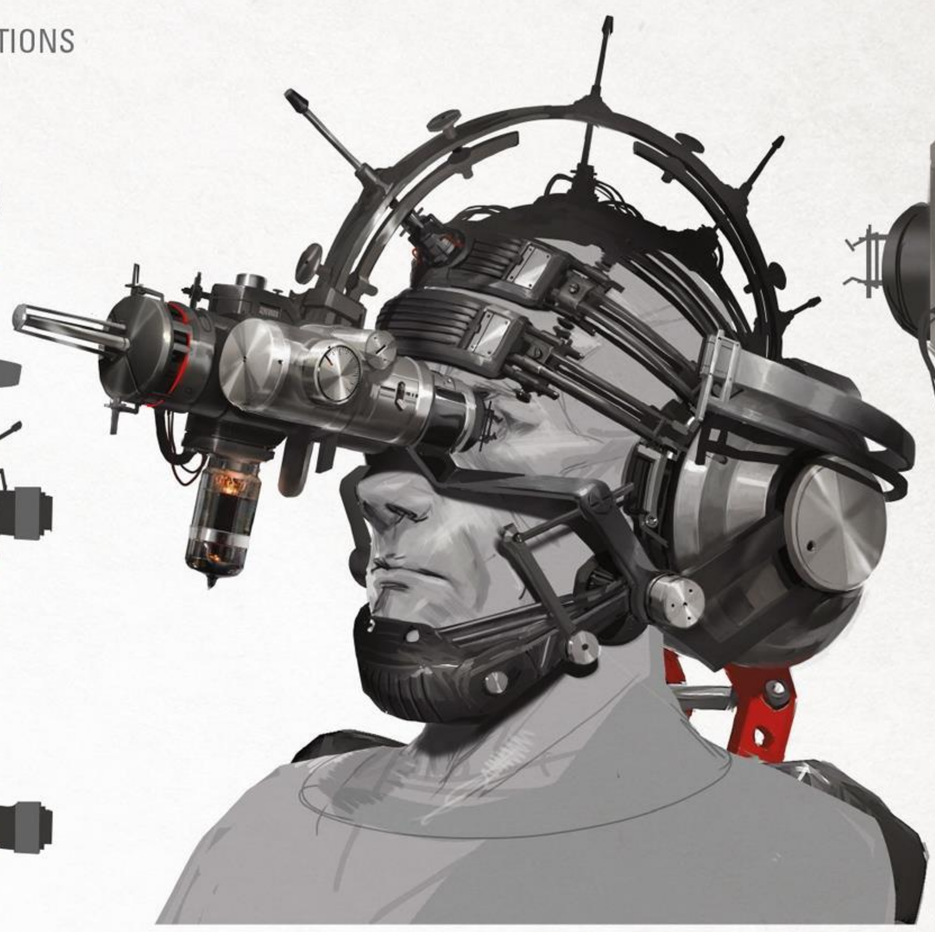
When designing the chair, key references were vintage medical furniture, which is visually much more striking than most modern medical equipment. Since our story takes place in an alternate timeline, it allows us to imagine how these vintage designs might have survived and evolved in a different future.

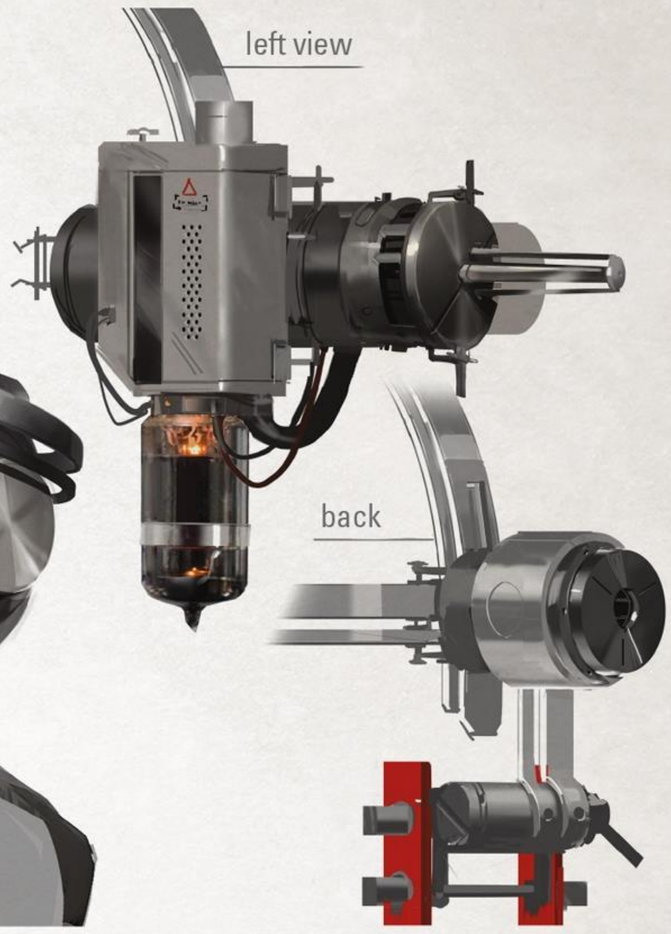


The key goal for designing the debrief chair was that it should feel invasive. The first pass (*right*) was not intimidating enough, so we took a second pass to make it even more intense.







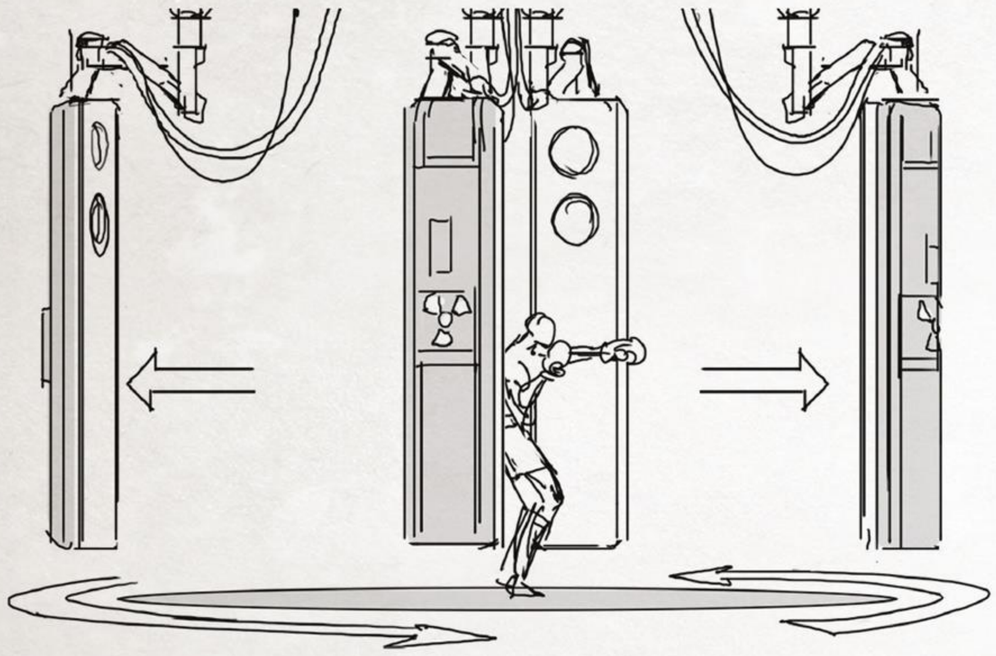


TranStar technology is typically more aggressive and skeletal in design. This contrasts sharply when placed next to the more monolithic and warm Deco elements.

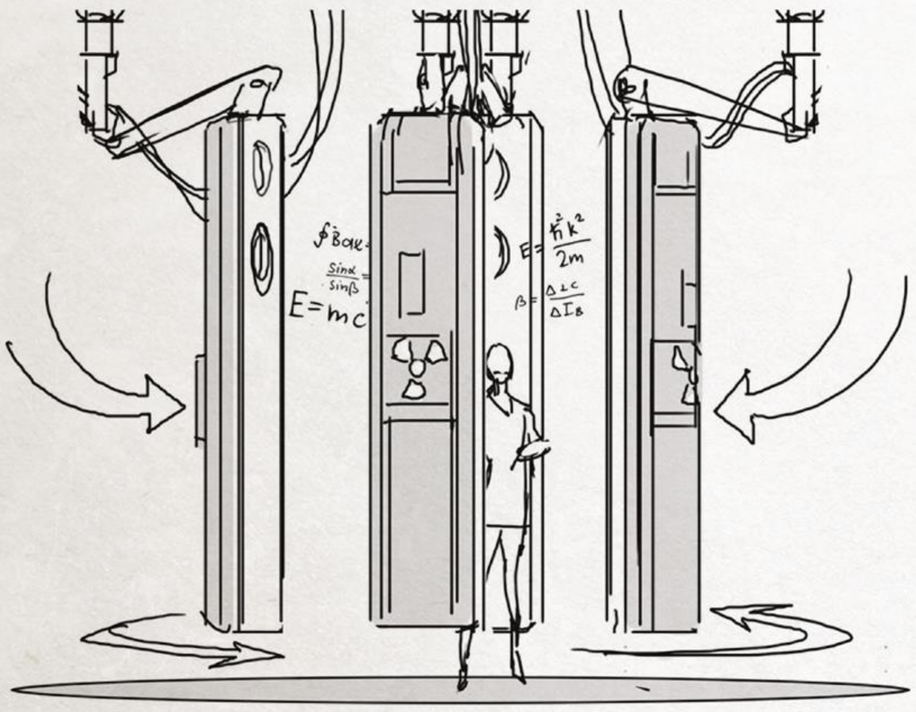


This early research tries to combine both retro and future sci-fi elements into a scene. This is a balance we constantly strove to achieve throughout the production of *Prey*.





wide position for physical skill



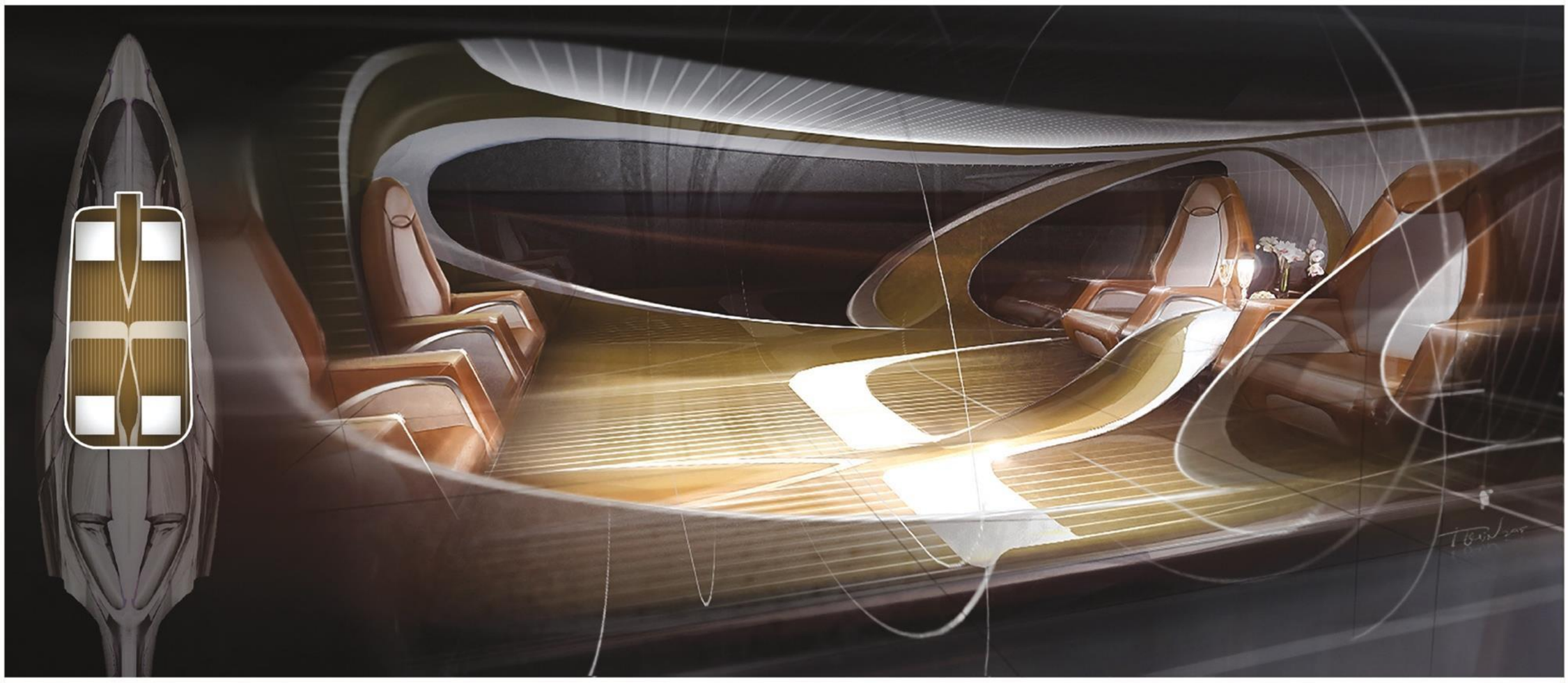
closed position for intellectual skill

SKILL SCANNER

The skill scanner is a device used to record the exceptional talents of individuals, which would later be encoded into marketable neuromods. We wanted the motion and function to be clearly implied in its design.





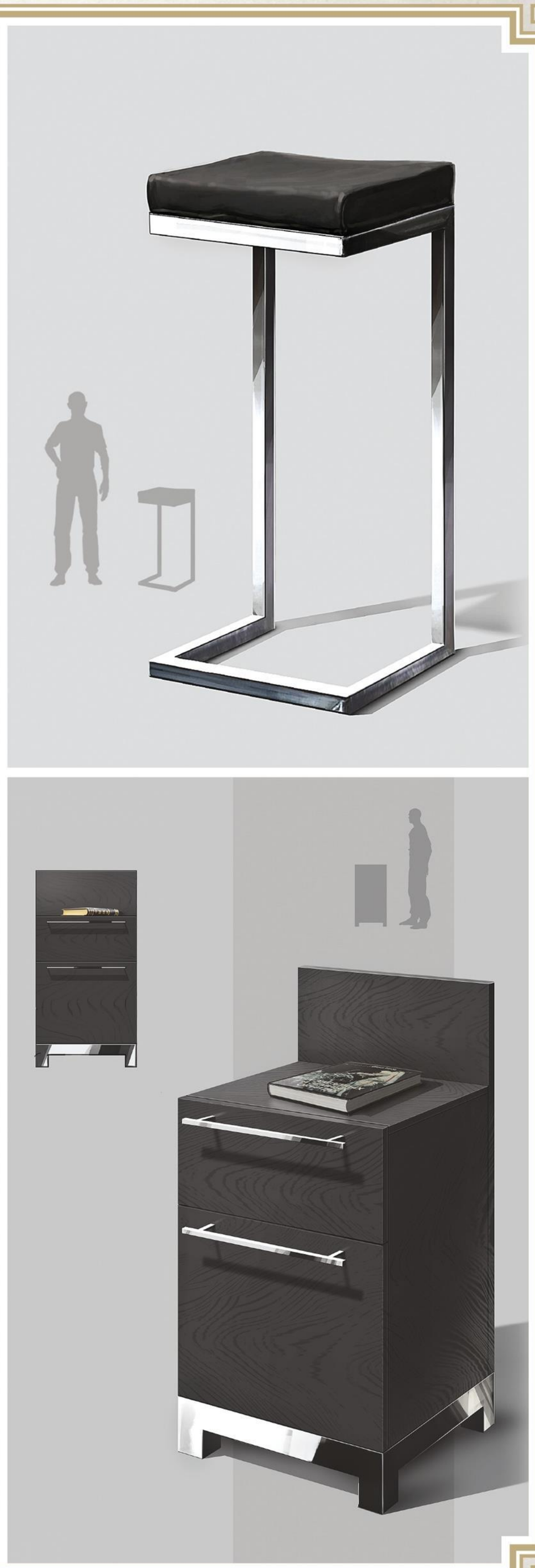




One of the first hero props the player encounters is the helicopter. The windows were made purposefully large to enjoy the view over the city, reinforcing a connection with Earth. The helicopter and its arm both had to be high end and high tech, symbolic of the fact that this simulation is no cheap production. TranStar has deep pockets and spares no expense.

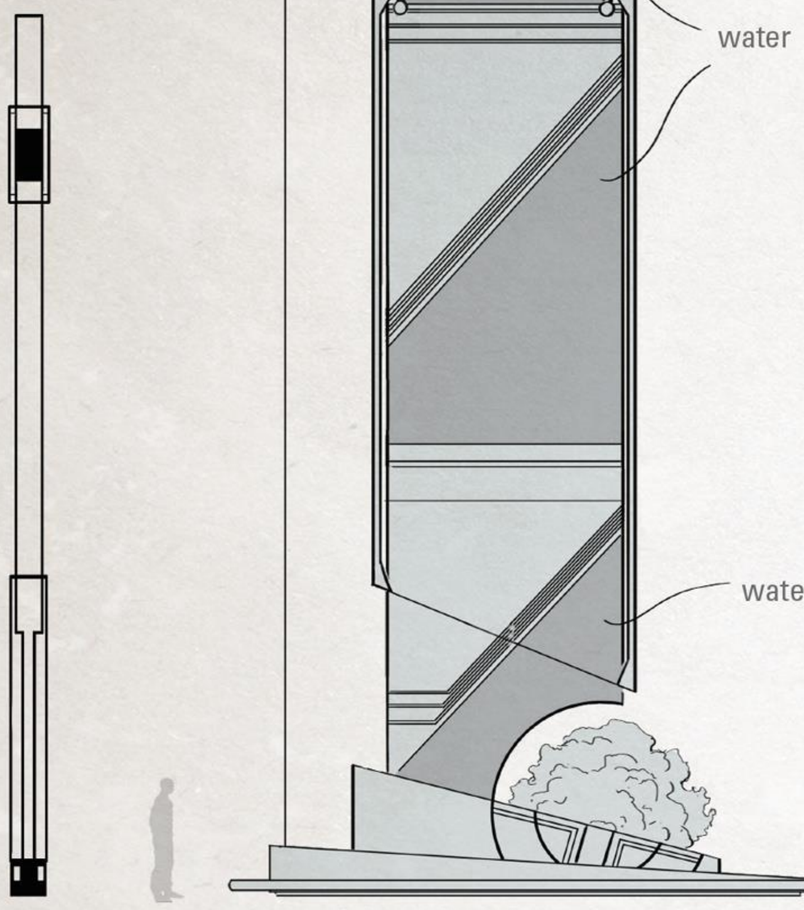
This is the first concept made for the game (*above*). Even though the final implementation evolved, the core ideas and goals stayed the same.





Even though the apartment is a small part of the game, creating a unique identity was important—down to the most mundane and basic props.

back panel design



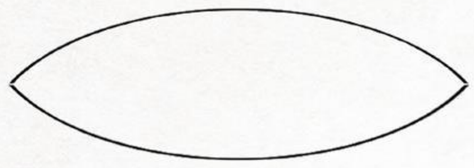
water

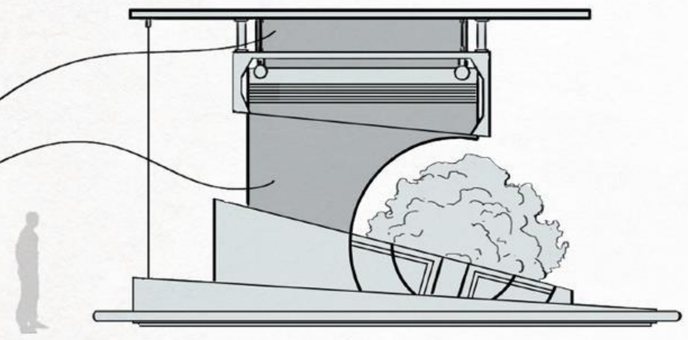
tall version

planter pattern



top view



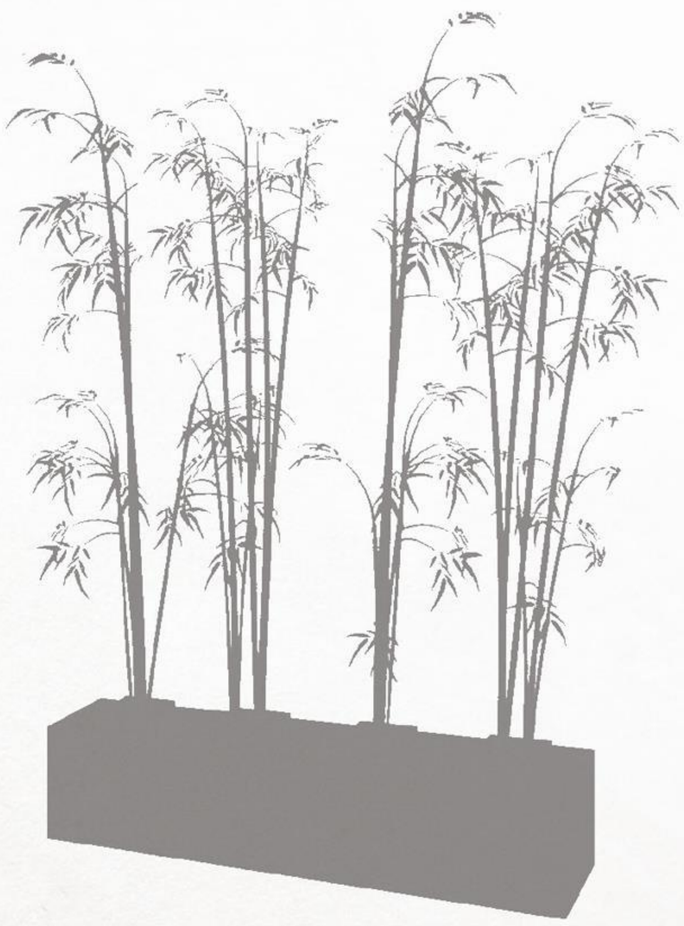


water

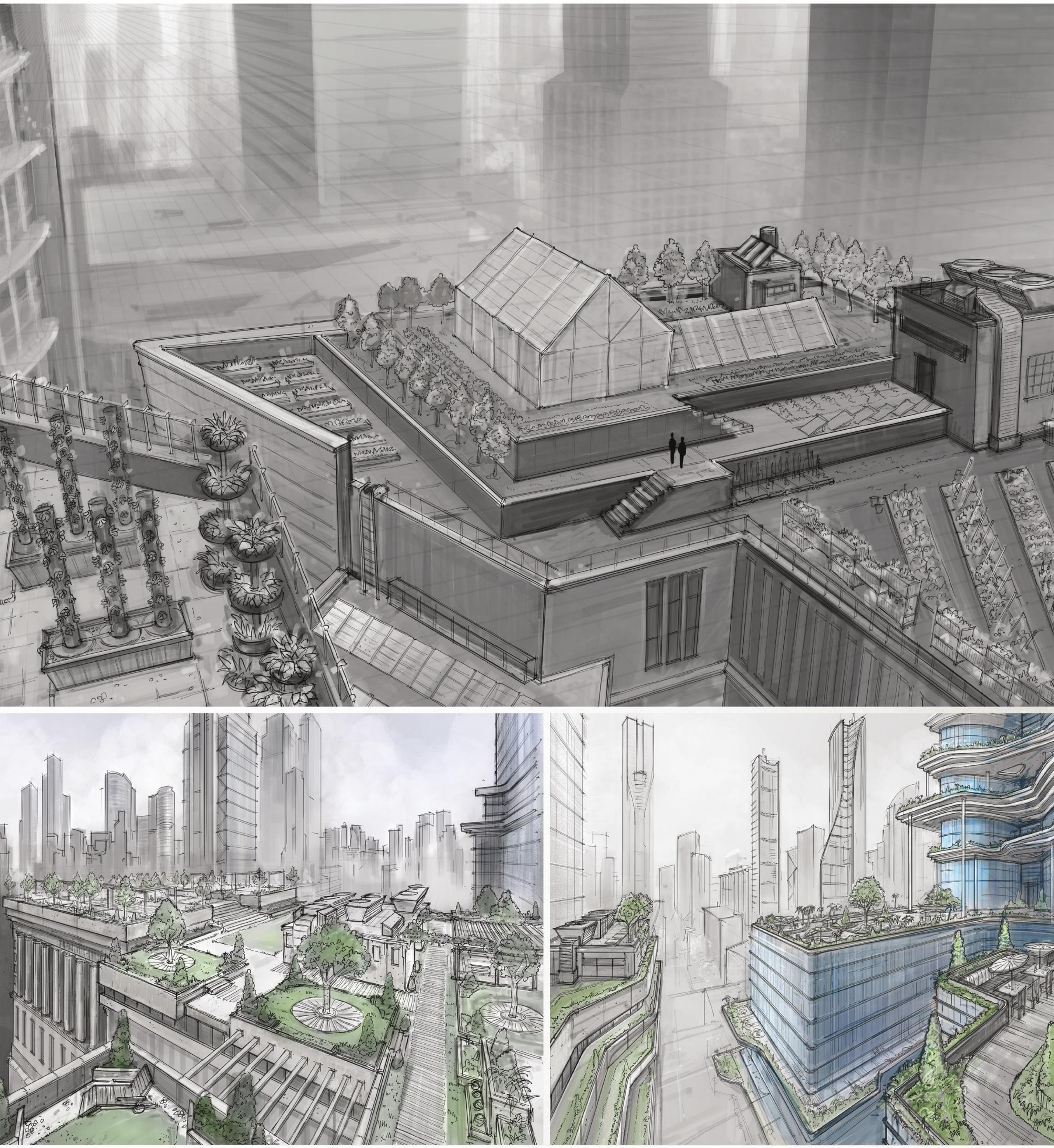
short version







We always look for opportunities to bring vegetation into a scene.







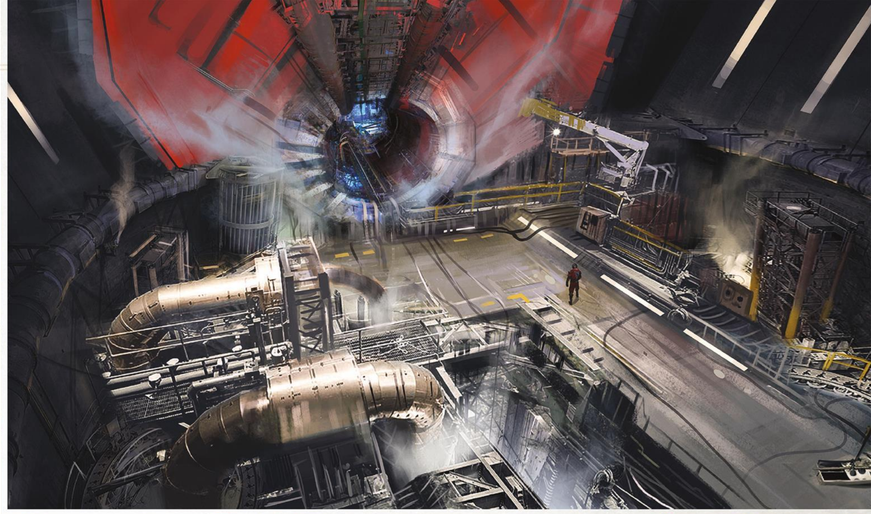
The Looking Glass required that we construct two scenes on top of each other—the reality of the simulation and the fictional Looking Glass city, a virtual world within a virtual world. Major cities on the Pacific Coast served as inspiration for the skyline. The city is a continuation of the apartment, in that it features mostly recognizable modern designs, with touches of grounded sci-fi blended in.

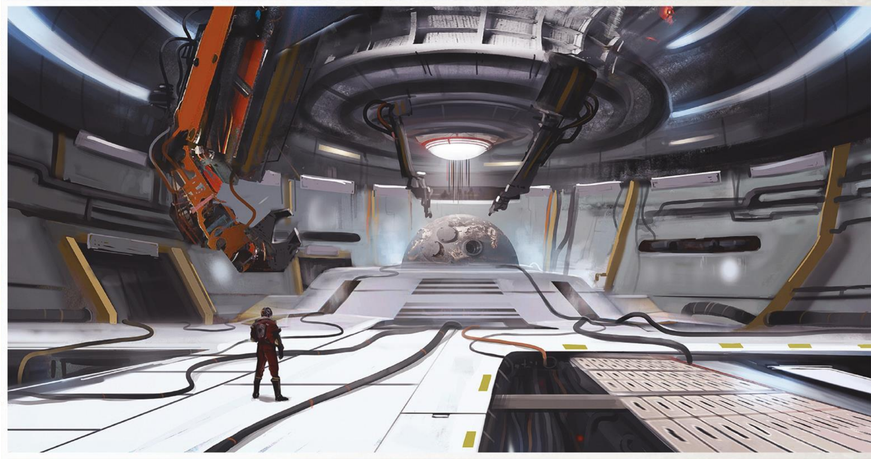
LEVEL

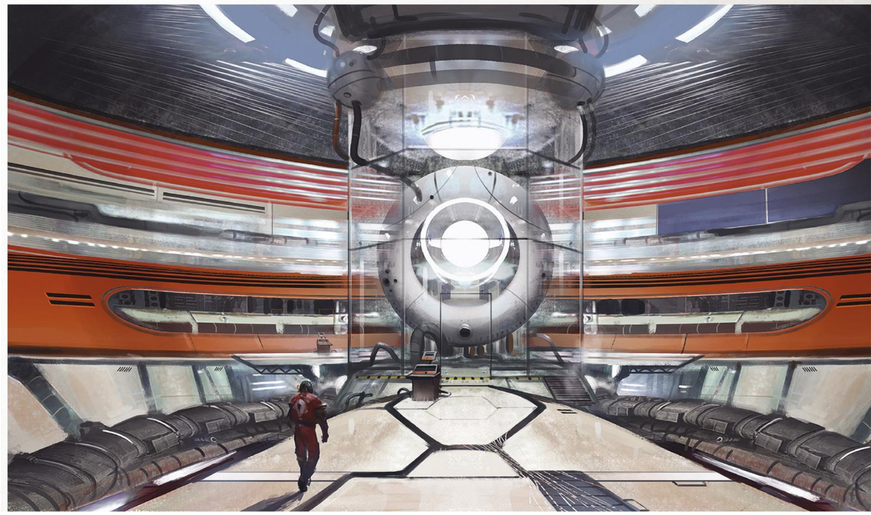
POWER PLANT

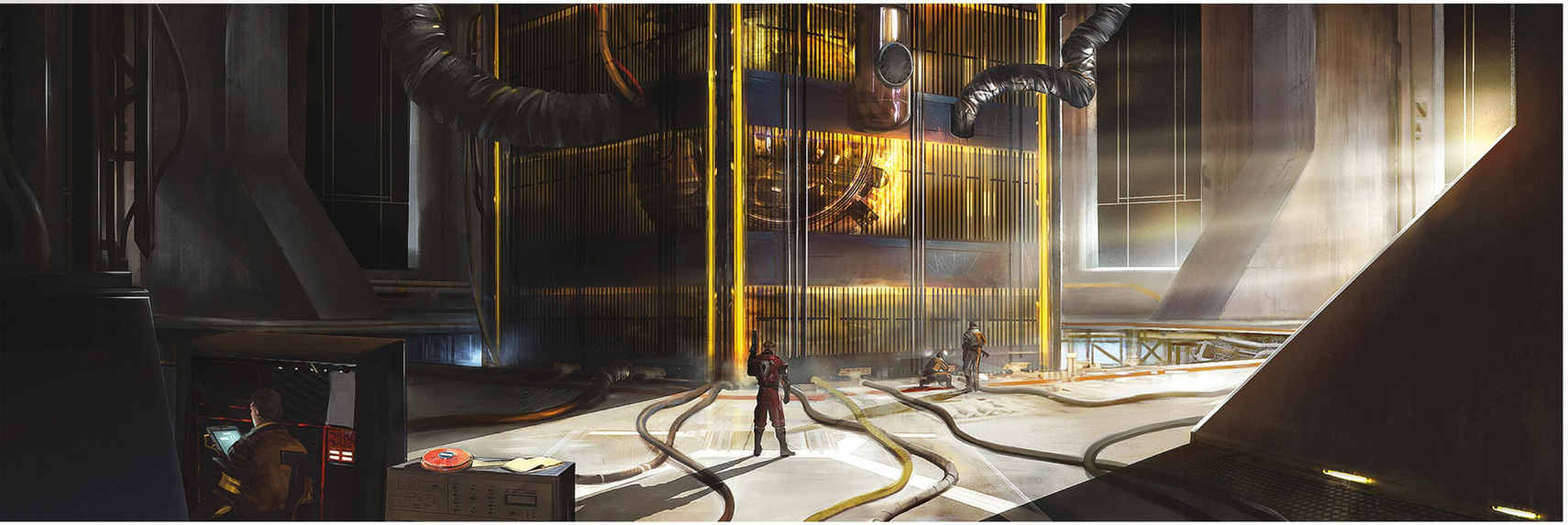
Talos I has to be self-sustaining, and this requires large amounts of energy. In addition to vast solar cells on the exterior, the station is also equipped with an aging tokamak reactor. The design of heavily industrial spaces such as the power plant was influenced by the work of photographers Stanley Greenberg and Bernd and Hilla Becher.











While we researched varying designs for the reactor core, we always knew we wanted the scale to be impressive.

While many other levels have multiple points of interest, this level focused on having just one central focal point: the reactor itself. After a lot of research, we opted for a more classic, less sophisticated fusion reactor look.

One challenge for the reactor room was its massive scale. This meant coming up with appropriately scaled large props to help fill the volume at ground level. Like other props in the game, these props are heavily influenced by older technology.



Even in large maps it's important for us to constantly have humanizing elements. These are great for helping the player identify the human purposes of these large spaces; they also help establish scale through level of detail.



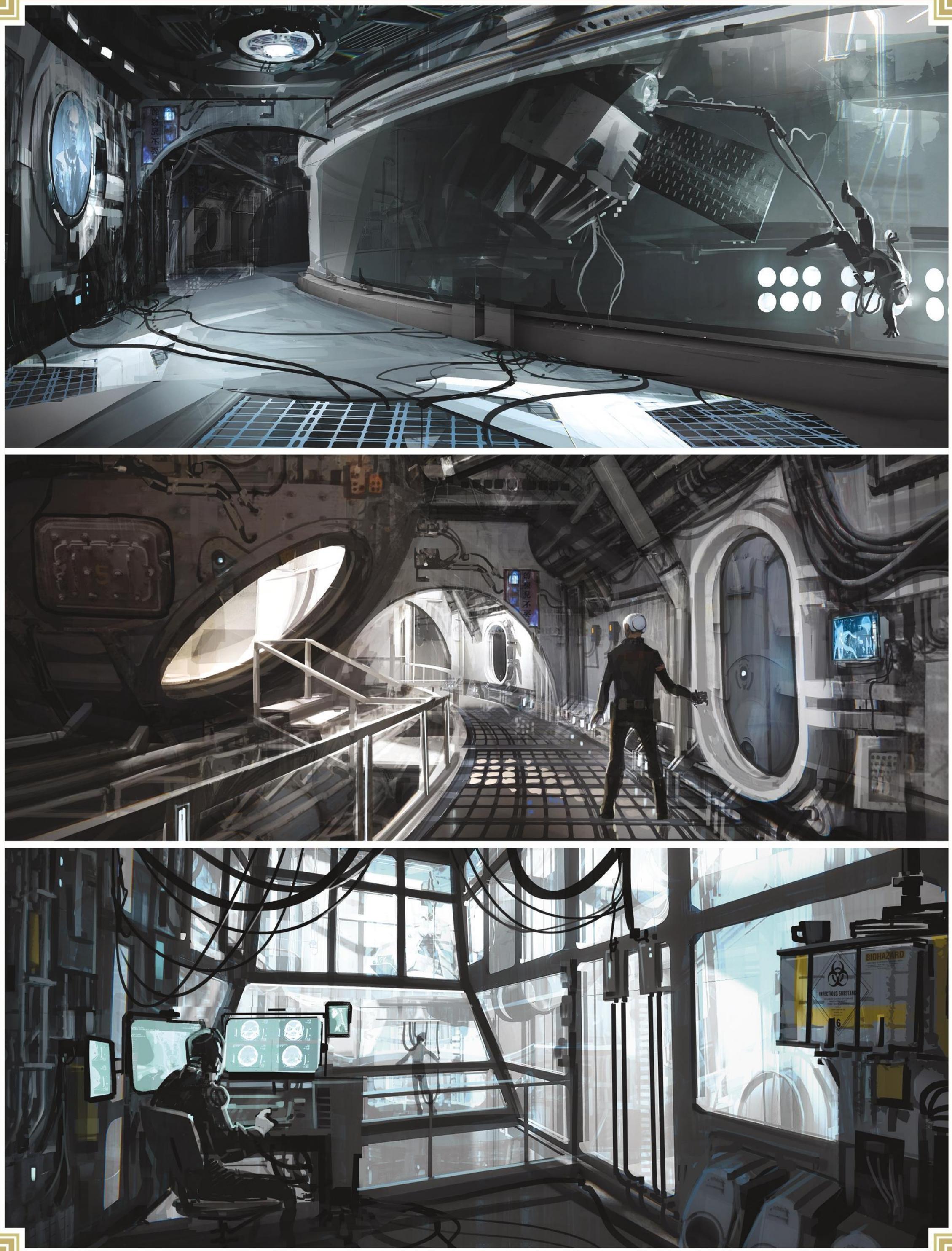
Security booths are a recognizable feature in many levels. Security is a recurring secondary theme that is evident in a variety of props, weapons, and environment art. This provides a constant reminder that TranStar keeps a close eye on its employees.

LEVEL

PSYCHOTRONICS

Psychotronics is the heart of the station. Comprising the Kletka—the original containment module from the sixties—and surrounding labs, it is the oldest part of the station. The technology found here is sturdier and more primitive, as is the surrounding architecture. This, along with the darkened lighting, hints at the secrets this area of Talos I was built to contain.

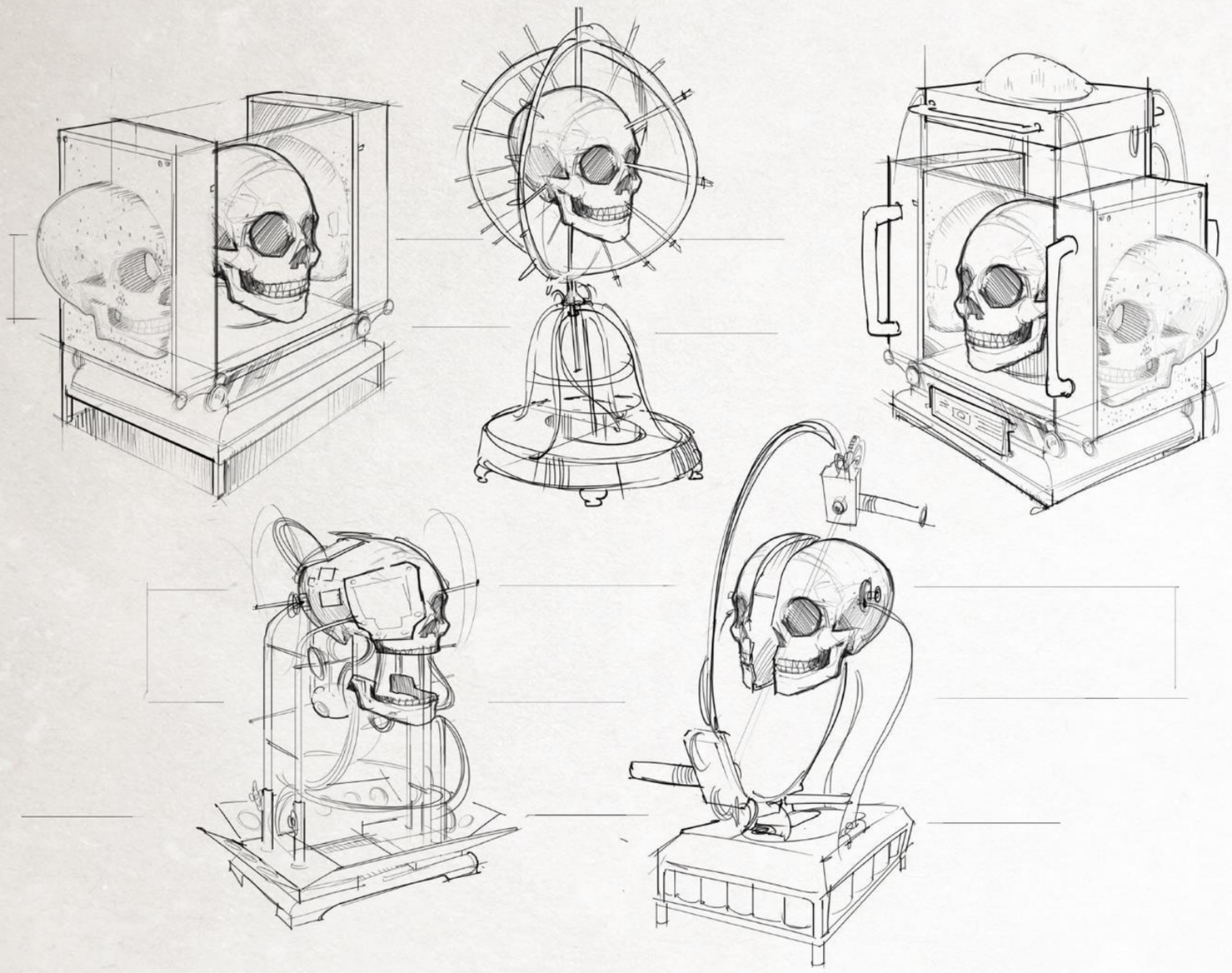
Human experimentation was always a key component of this level, although its implementation was revised many times. One early influence for our initial research was the work of Terry Gilliam. As production evolved, this was refined until we had something closer to the influences we chose for the Axiom Program (*opposite*), but many key ideas remained.

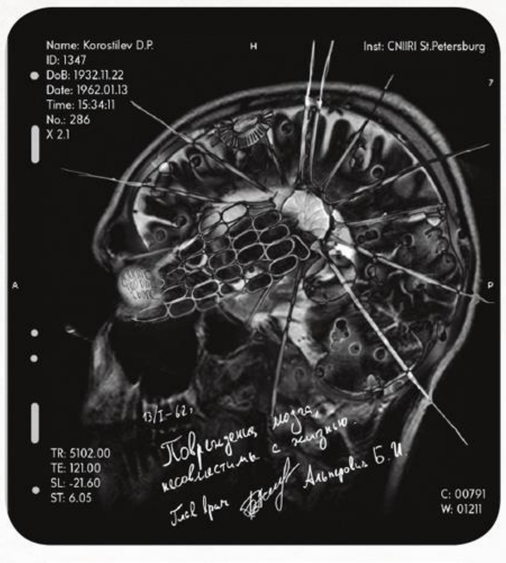

BIOHAZARD
INFECTIOUS SUBSTANC

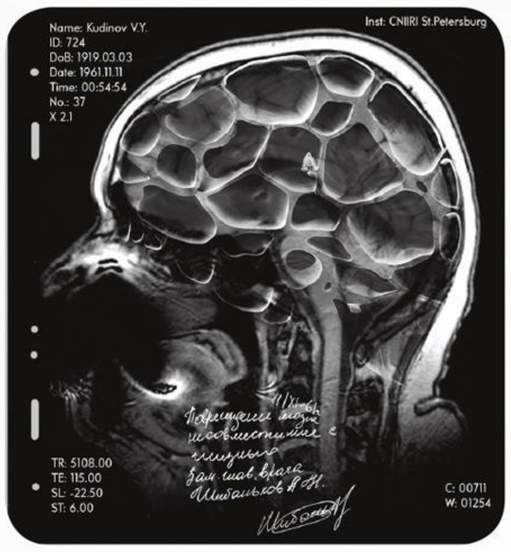


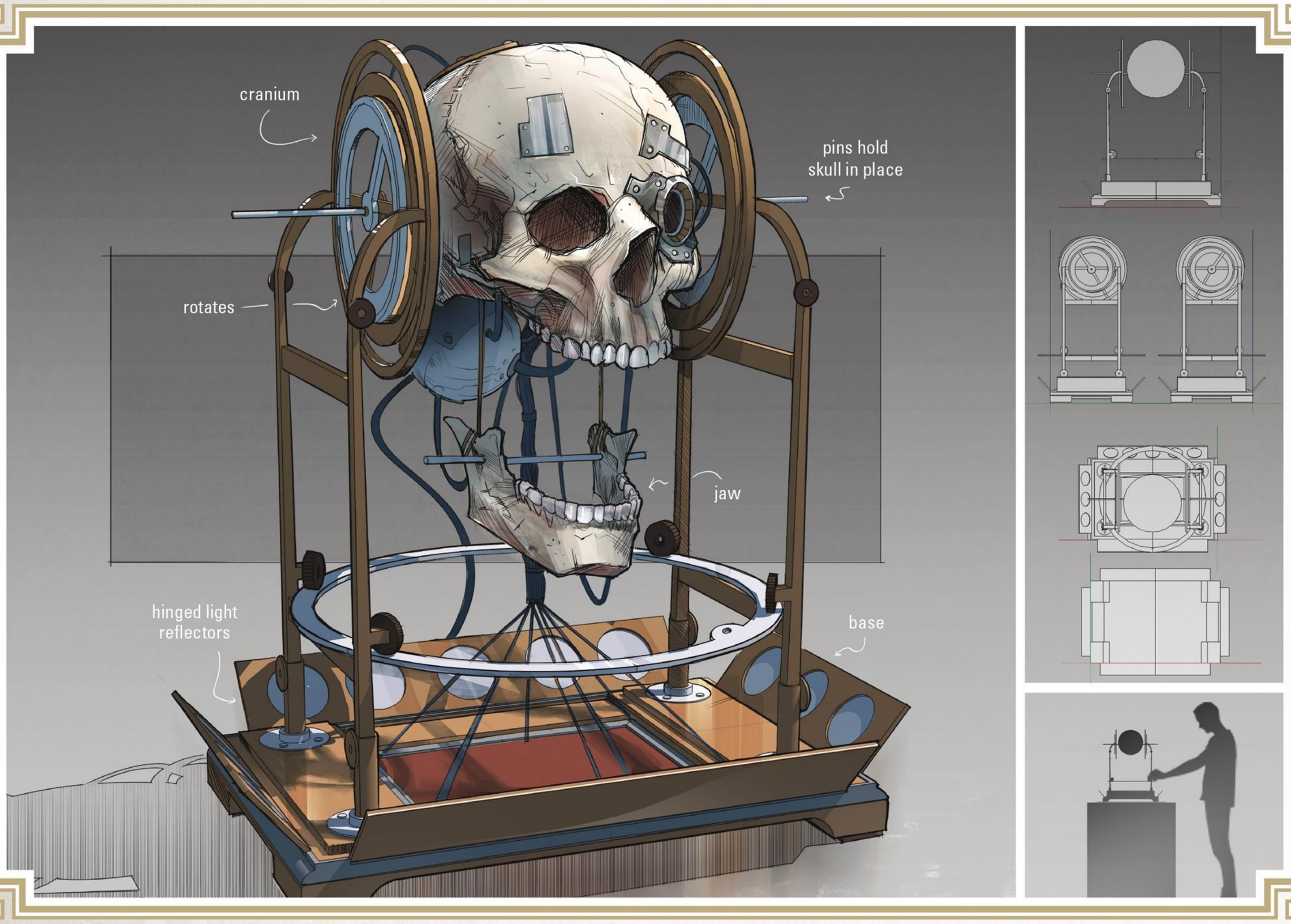
Containing aliens is the reason the station exists. For such ephemeral creatures, we imagined early containment devices would be extremely sturdy and made from repurposed industrial equipment.

Psychotronics was the second map we started working on after the lobby since it's critical to both the story and the world.

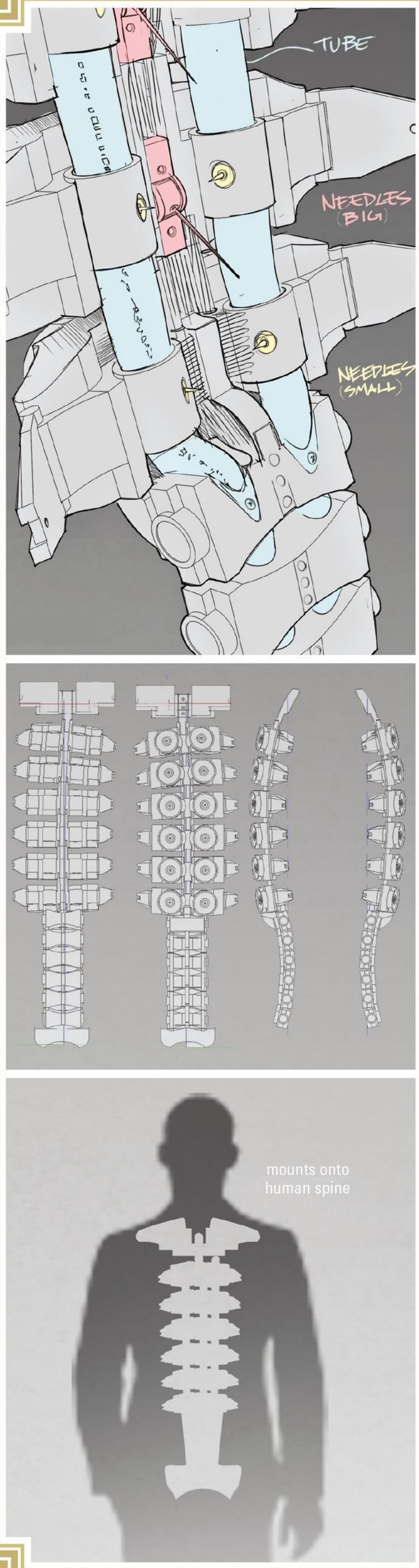




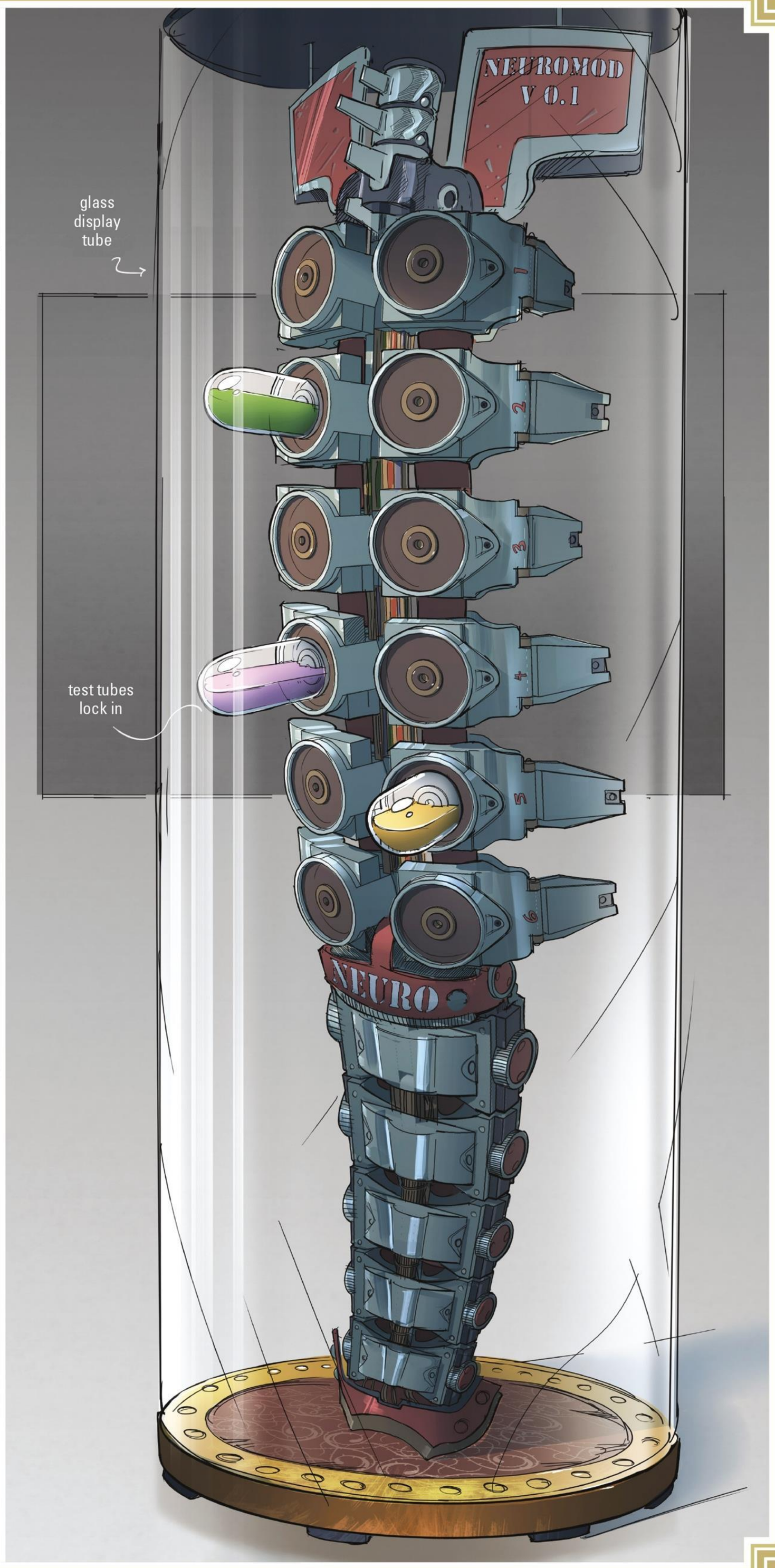


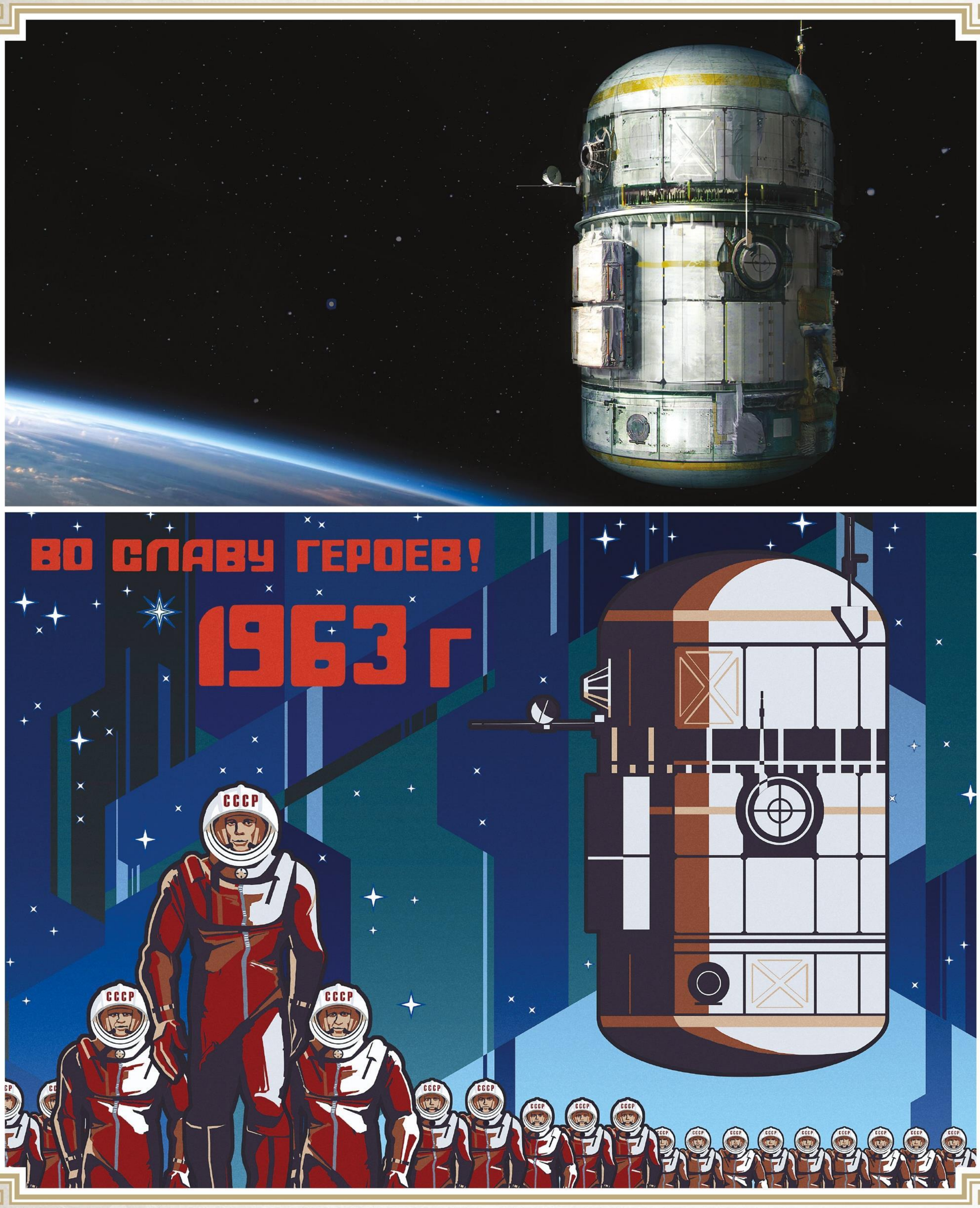


These are companion props for the Neuromod—a calibration tool and a prototype version. It's important to build history not just for people, but for tech as well. We wanted this object to feel like it had a development cycle.

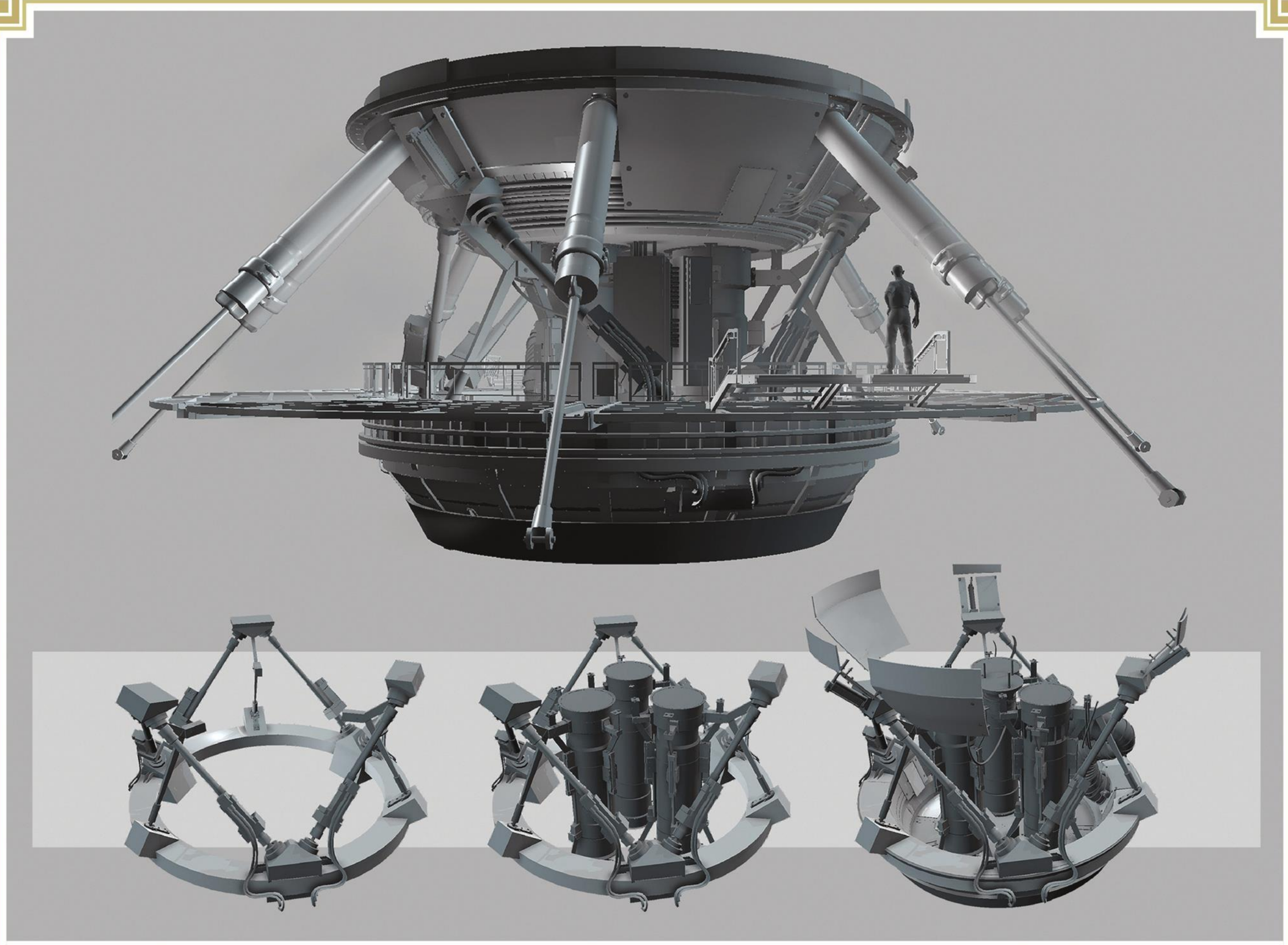

TUBE
NEEDLES (BIG)
NEEDLES (SMALL)

mounts onto human spine


glass display tube
test tubes lock in
NEUROMOD V 0.1
NEURO



Soviet and American space program influences are strong in this level due to the joint cooperation backstory. The Soviet influence is markedly absent from later expansion of the station, reinforcing that backstory.



Sometimes assets are not only designed to look cool, but also to add elements of parallax into a space which would otherwise feel flat or one-dimensional. This works especially well with prominent assets.

Keeping the feeling of mystery was vital when it came to lighting in the station. The instinct when aiming for this effect is often to darken the level. However, we had to strike the right balance so our aliens didn't completely disappear and key locations remained memorable.

Psychotronics provided plenty of amazing opportunities to go crazy when exploring mad scientist story themes. Vintage lab tiles helped further sell this setting.

LEVEL

SHUTTLE BAY

The Shuttle Bay is the port of entry for employees and visitors to Talos I. Functionally it features all of the amenities of a passenger terminal, as well as dedicated areas for shuttle maintenance. The lavish Deco style of the passenger entry is a display of both power and wealth; it also portrays the VIP experience of visiting Talos I.

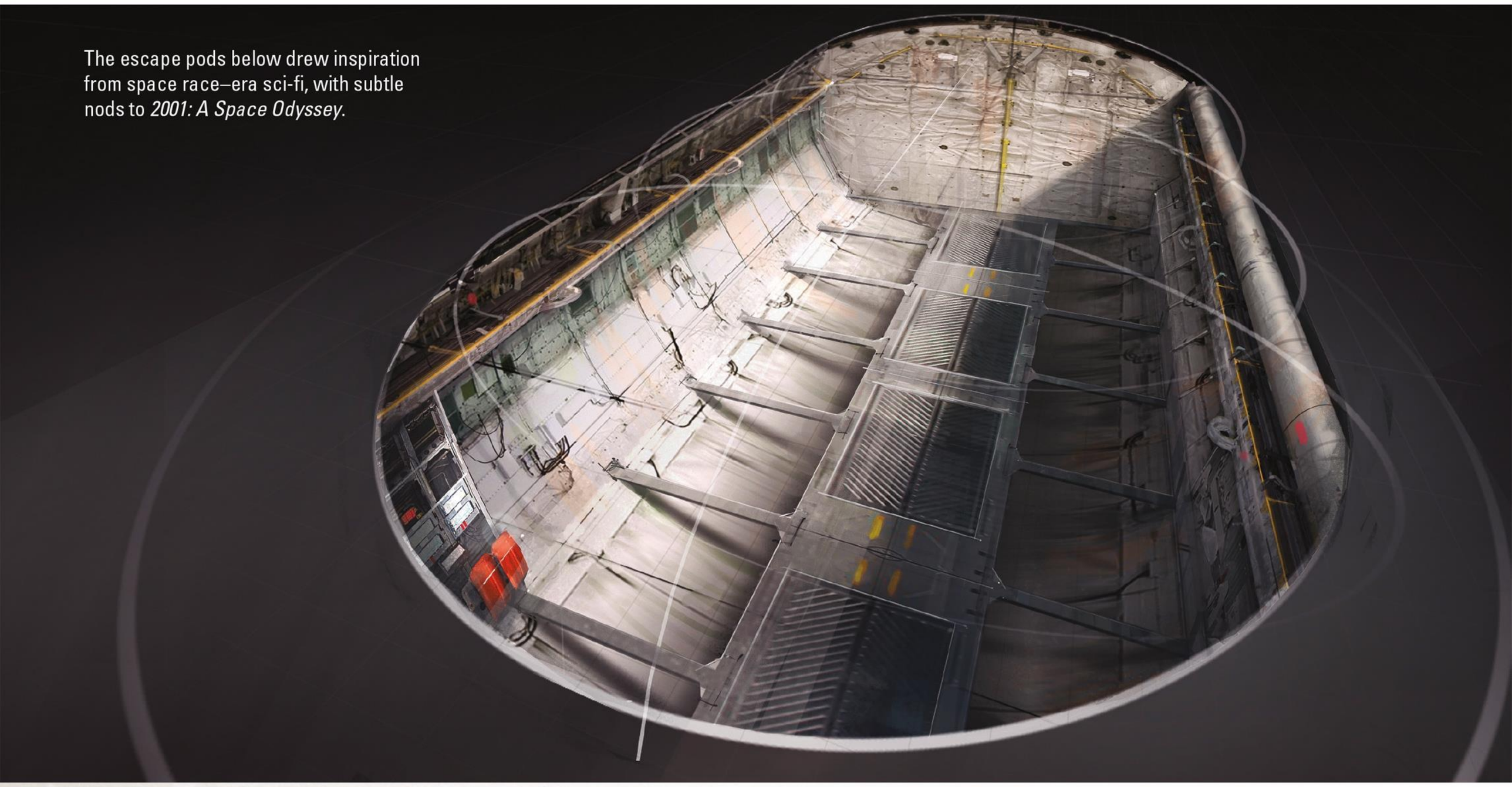




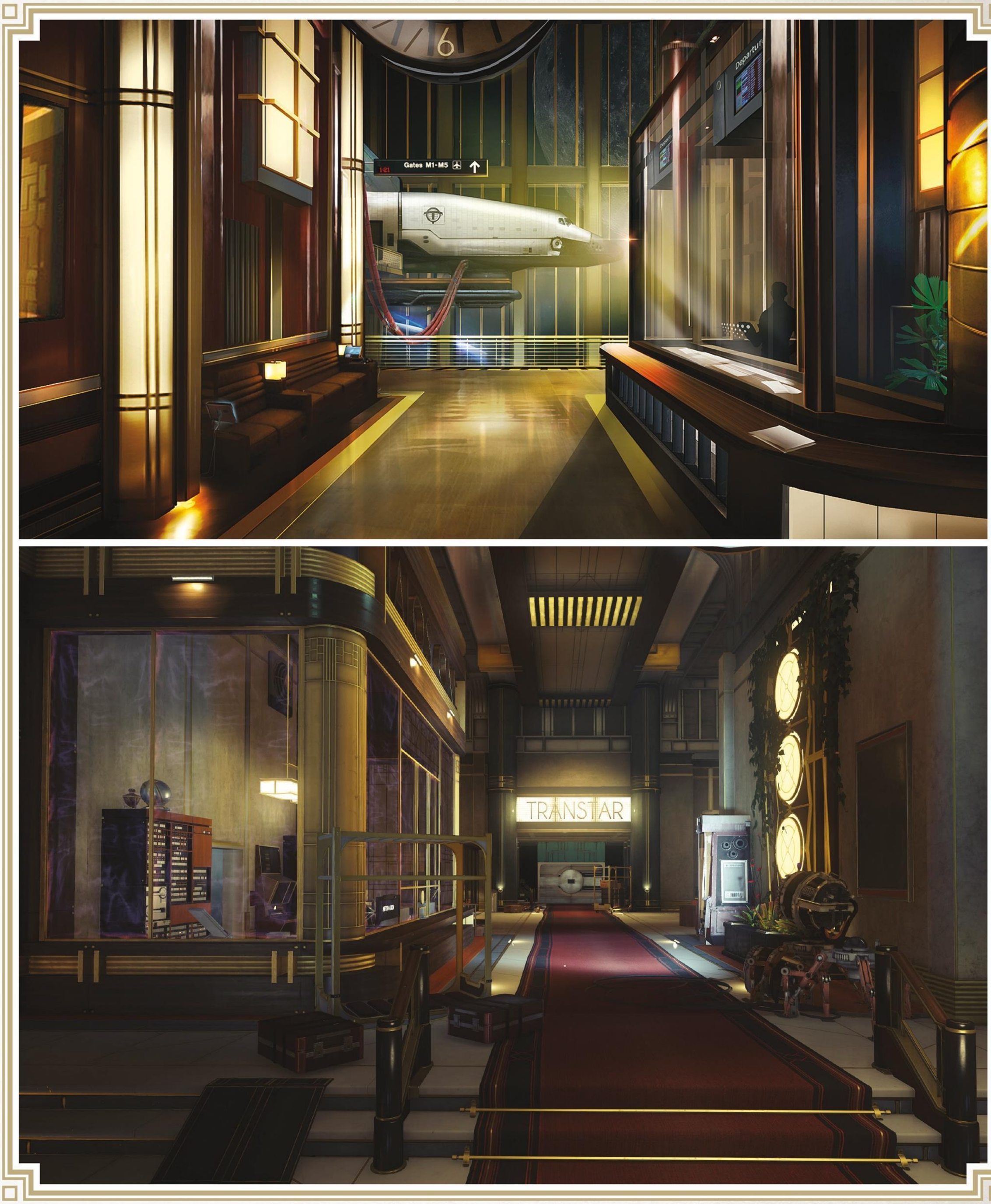
Although it isn't a permanent fixture in the level, the shuttle functions as the major centerpiece. The shuttle was designed inside and out. Like the helicopter at the beginning of the game, this is a luxury vehicle.

Inspiration for the interior was taken from private luxury jets and yachts, while also featuring a functional cargo space. Meanwhile, the exterior remained clearly functional—an evolution of the shuttle program vehicles.

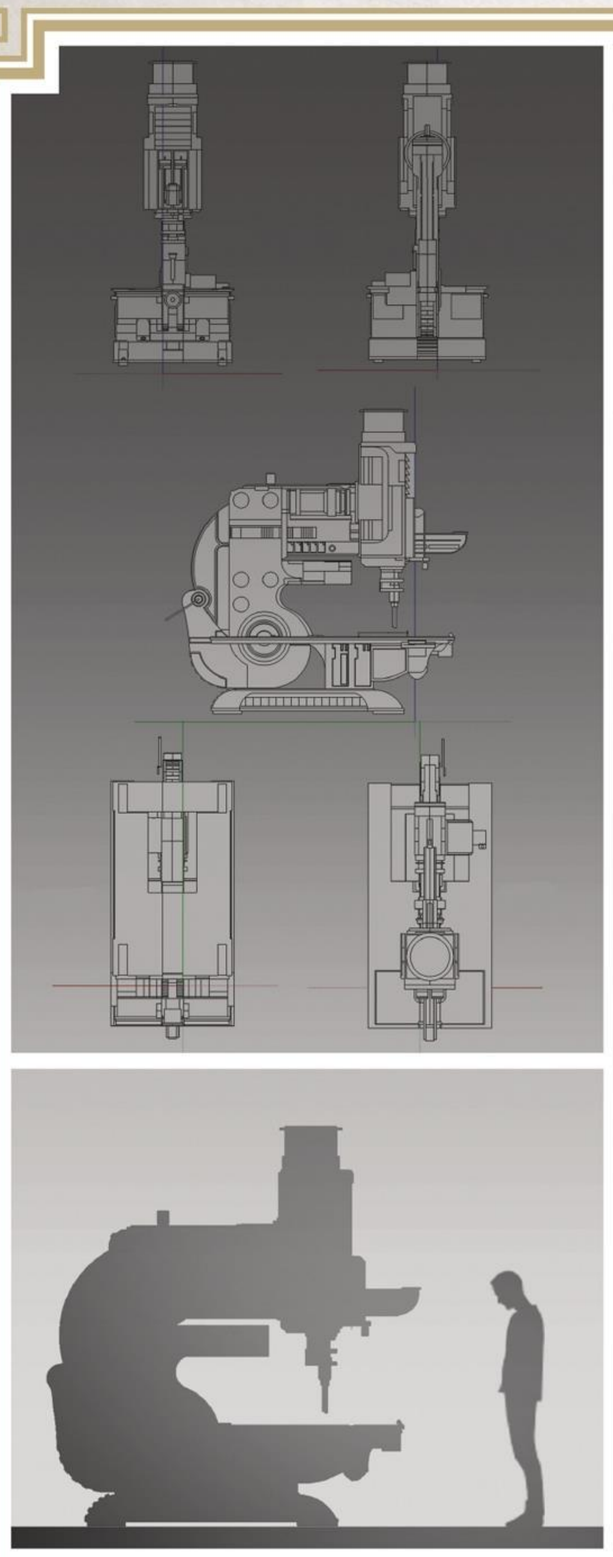
The escape pods below drew inspiration from space race–era sci-fi, with subtle nods to *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

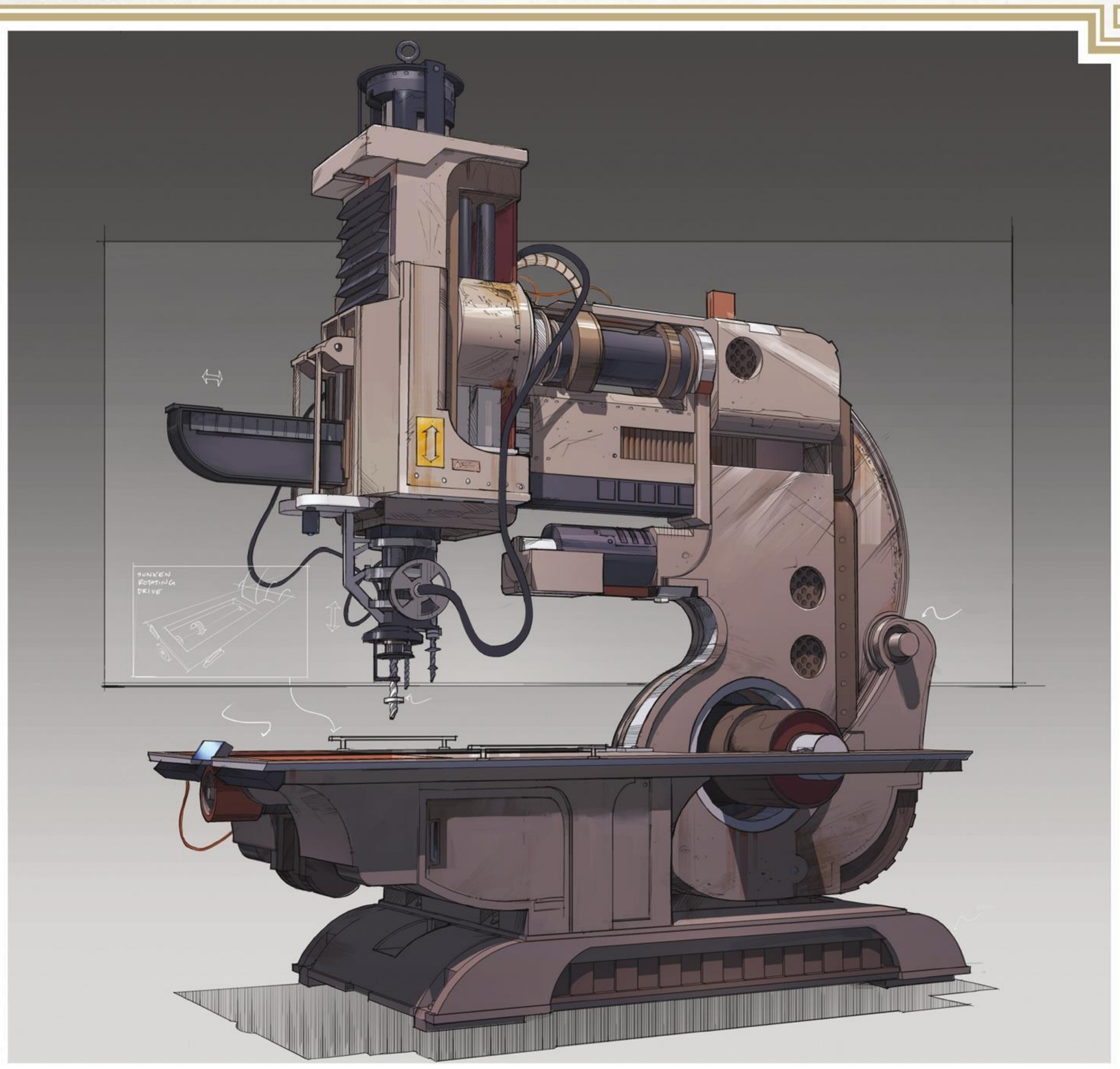






Early images (*top*) depict how Neo Deco elements might be layered into this otherwise industrial level. The shuttle lift (*bottom*) had to adapt to serve multiple functions while still being visually striking.

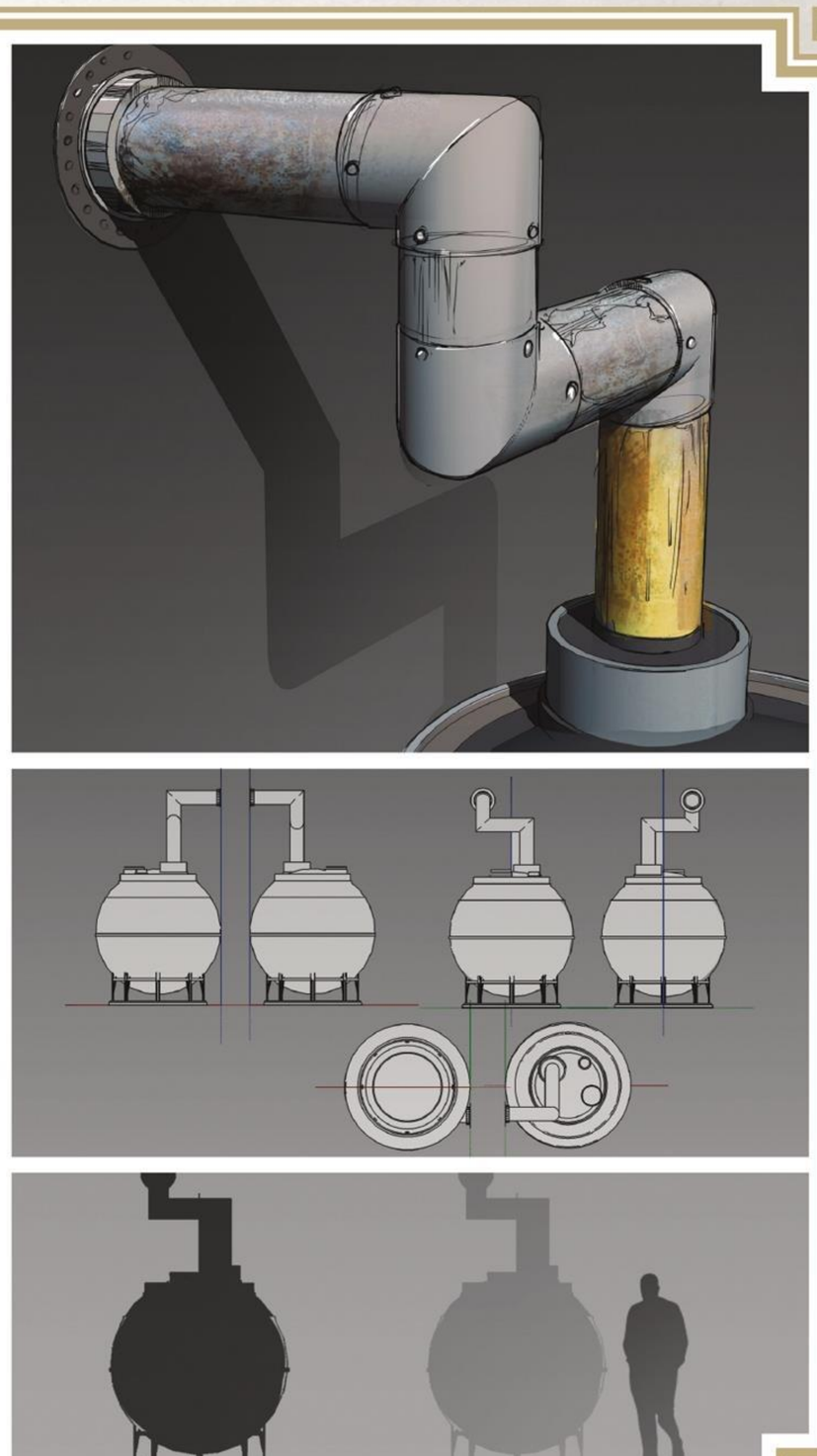




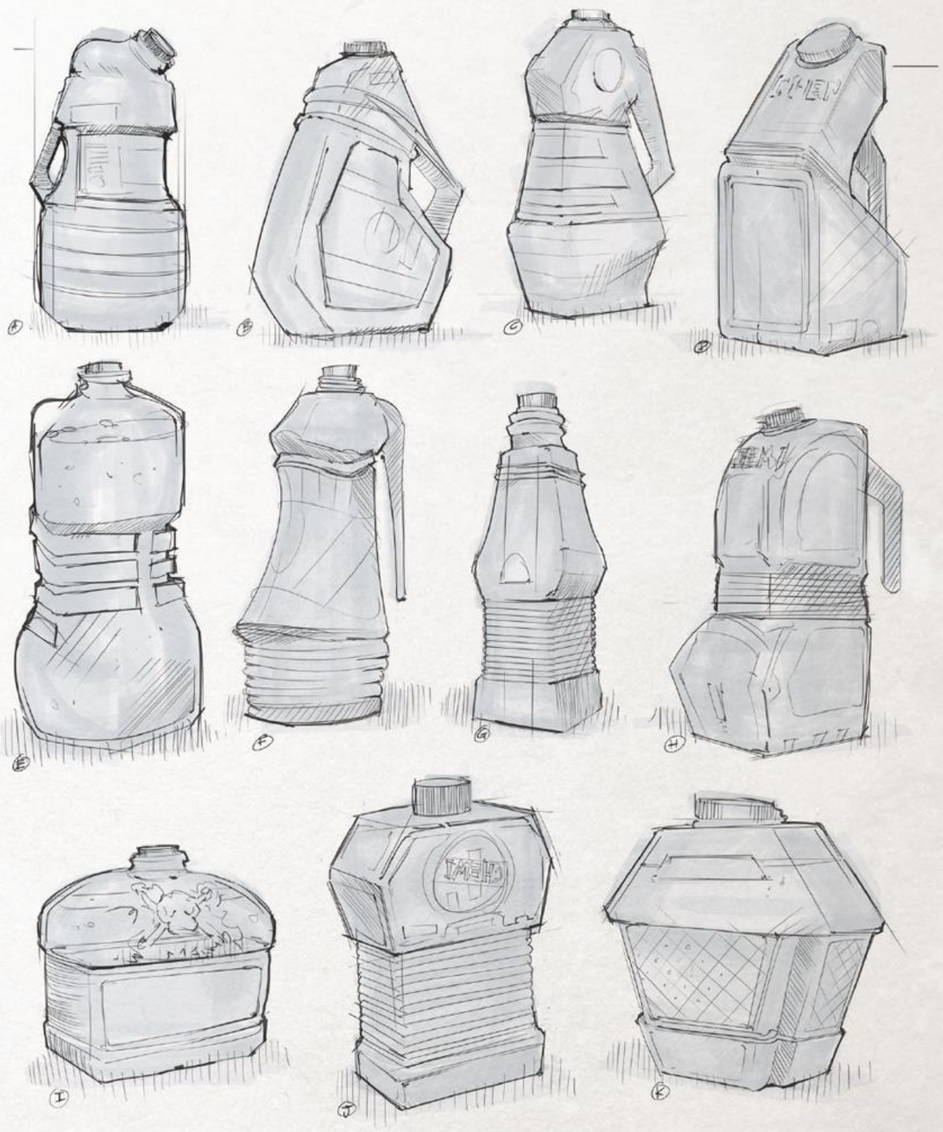


We designed a series of tools to help show that the engineers on Talos I are talented and self-sufficient.





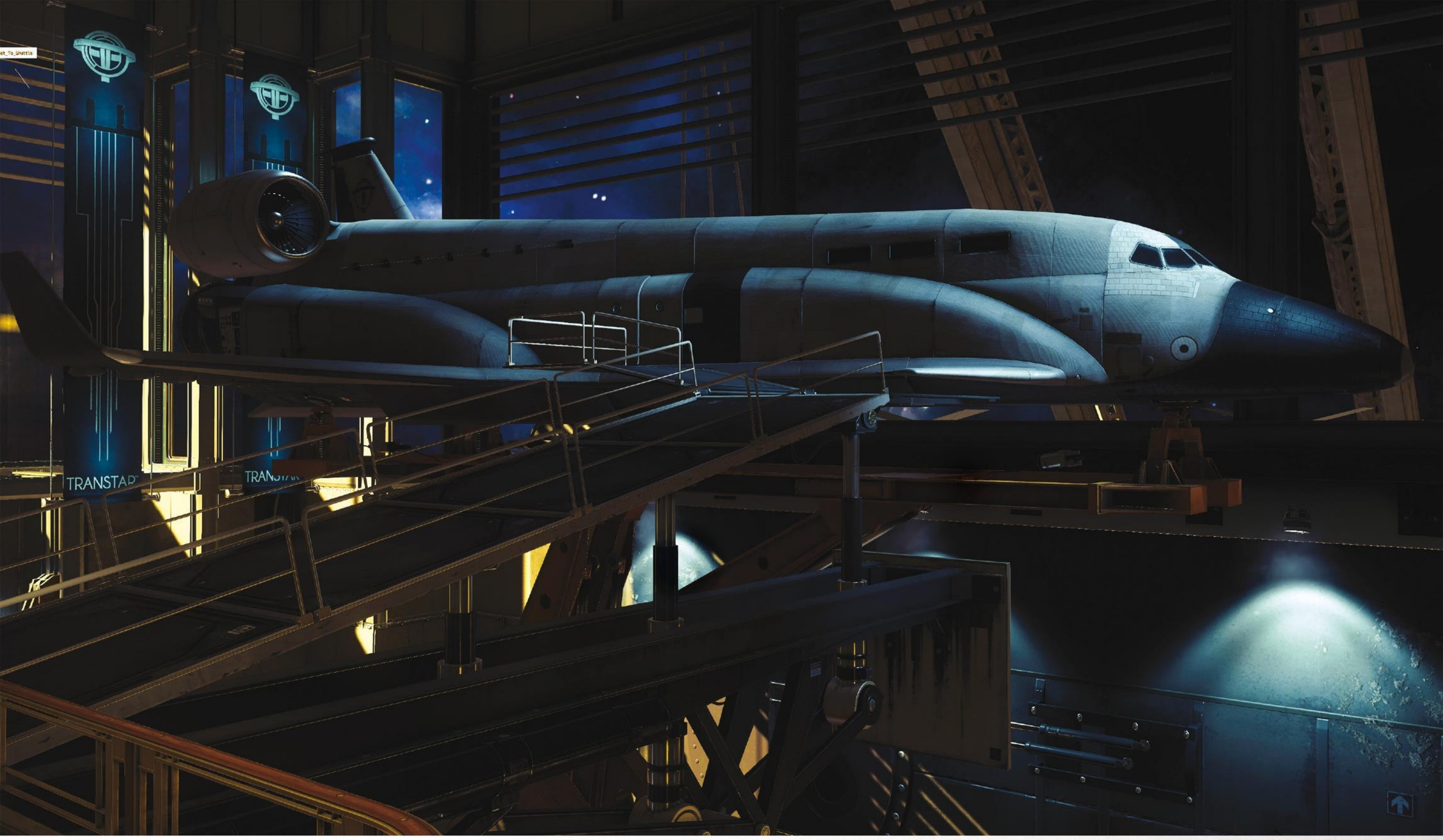




Even the most trivial and common props are mandatory for constructing a bigger picture and creating a human story, and therefore deserve attention.



Large warehouse-like spaces such as this are made more interesting to explore when we can partition them into smaller playable areas, such as the control booth and tool pit.





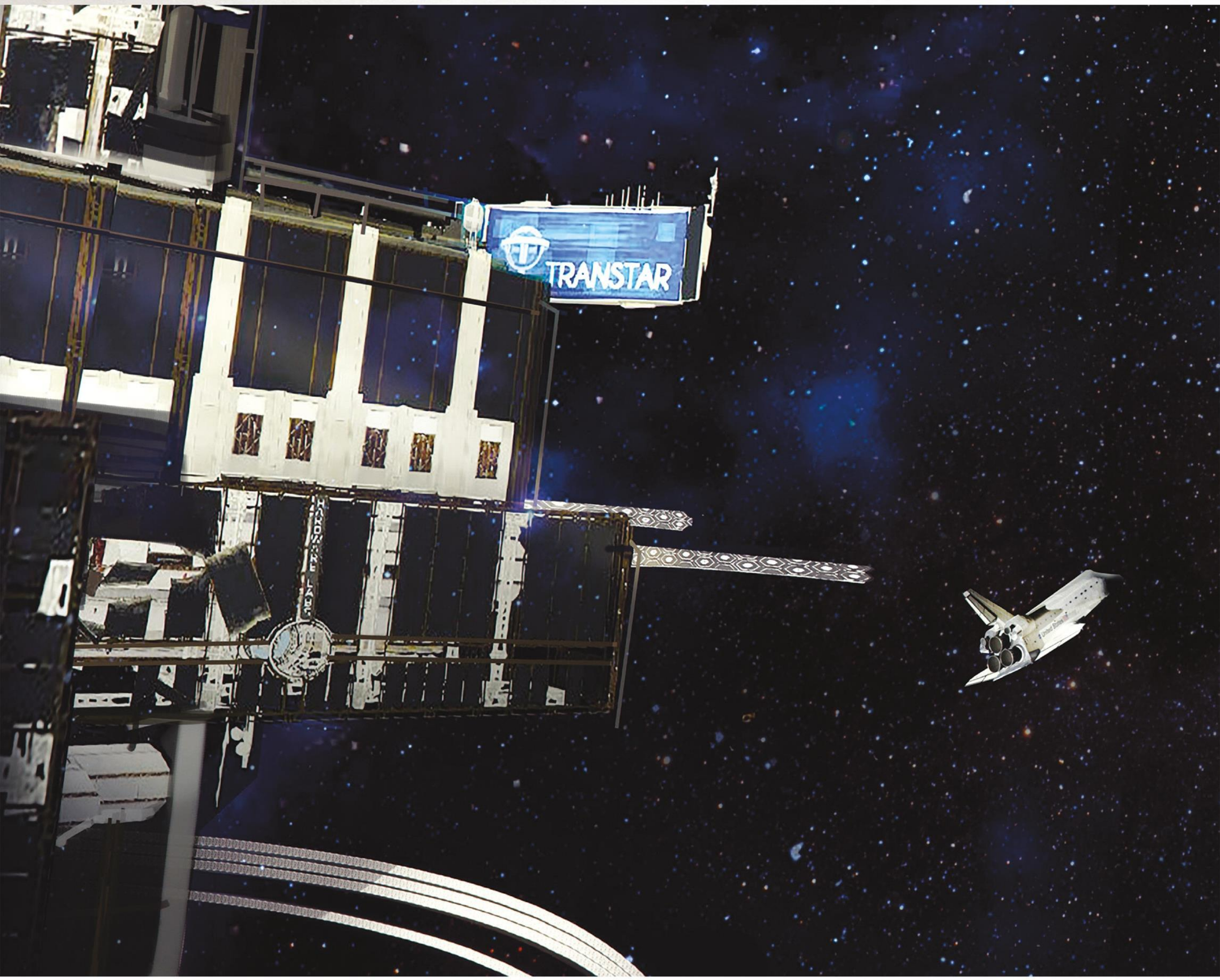


We make sure our mechanical props are constructed as if they are functional items with moving parts. This helps inform the animator's tasks and results in more believable animation.

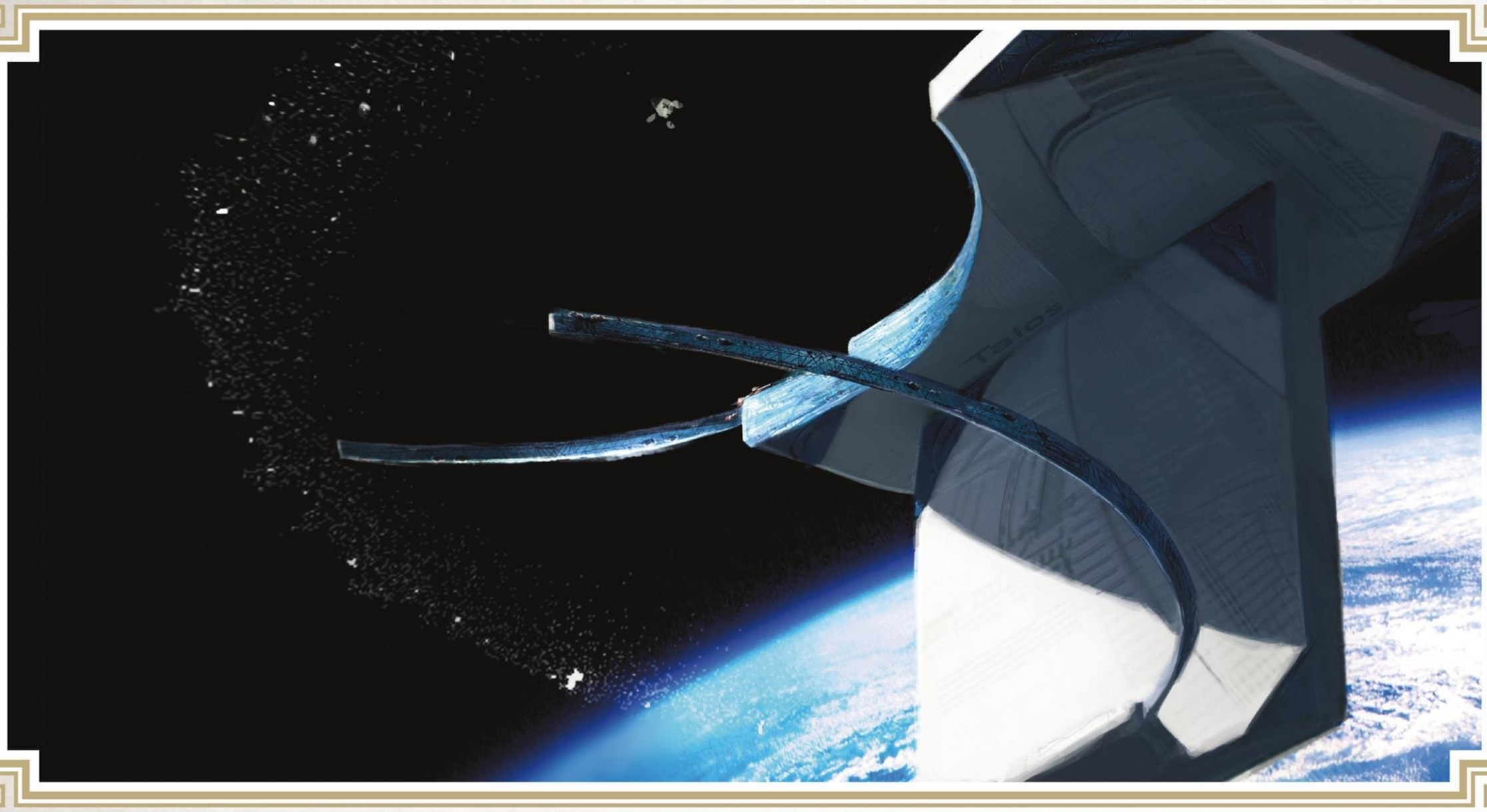
LEVEL

TALOS EXTERIOR

The exterior was challenging to create, as it's not only considered a level map, but also a large, carefully designed hero asset, much like any inspiring fictional space vessel. This is another great example of the principles of modern architecture applied to our world design. All levels were painstakingly measured and assembled to be geographically correct, and then an outer hull was constructed to house all the modules, thus informing the design of the space station from the inside out. The outermost layer of solar panels and glass is reminiscent of the grandeur of a skyscraper, yet in the incongruous setting of space.



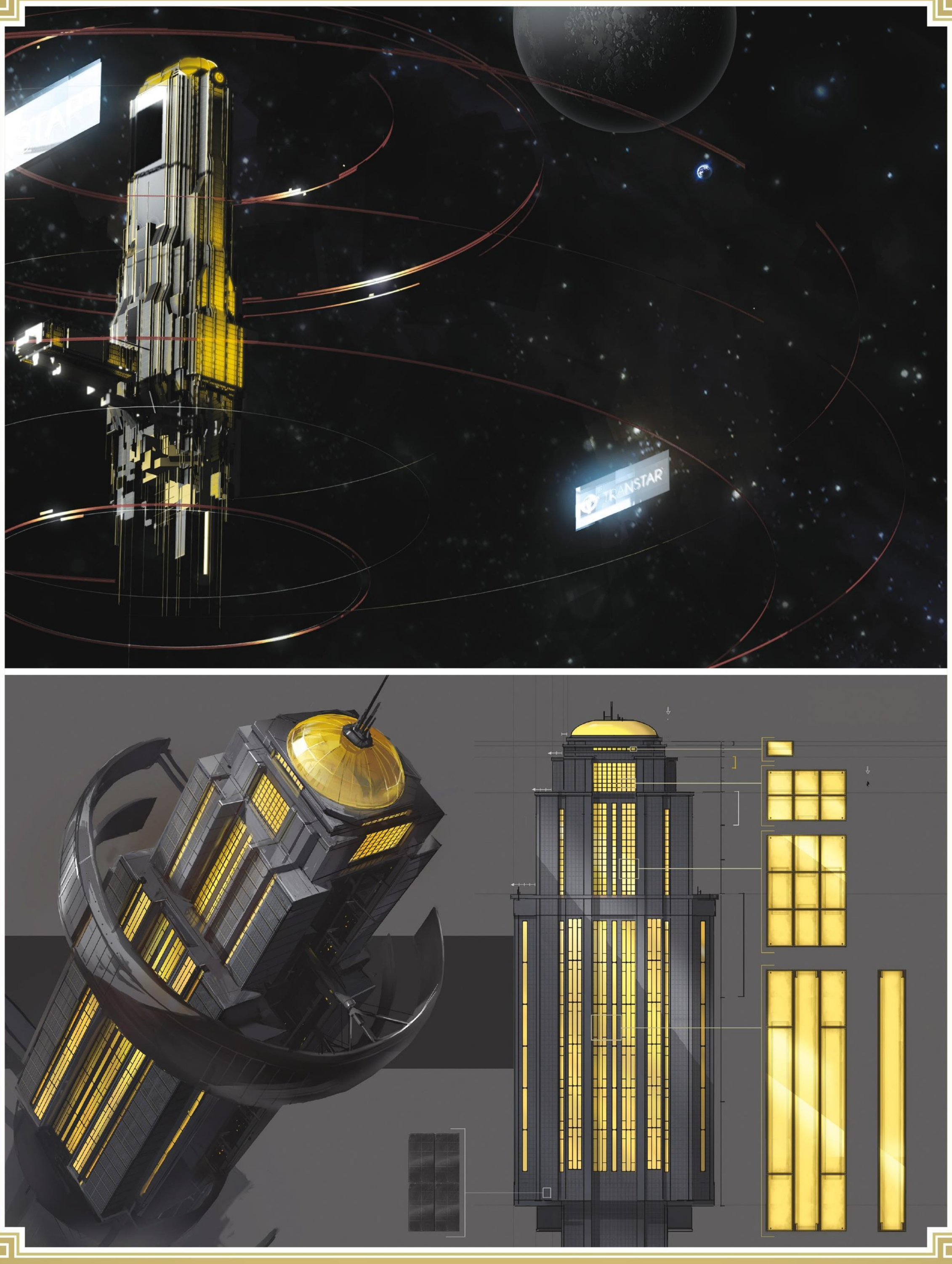
The rings and billboards are TranStar additions to the station. Early concepts of the rings had a much more intricate pattern, which was later simplified to reduce visual noise while keeping the original construction details.

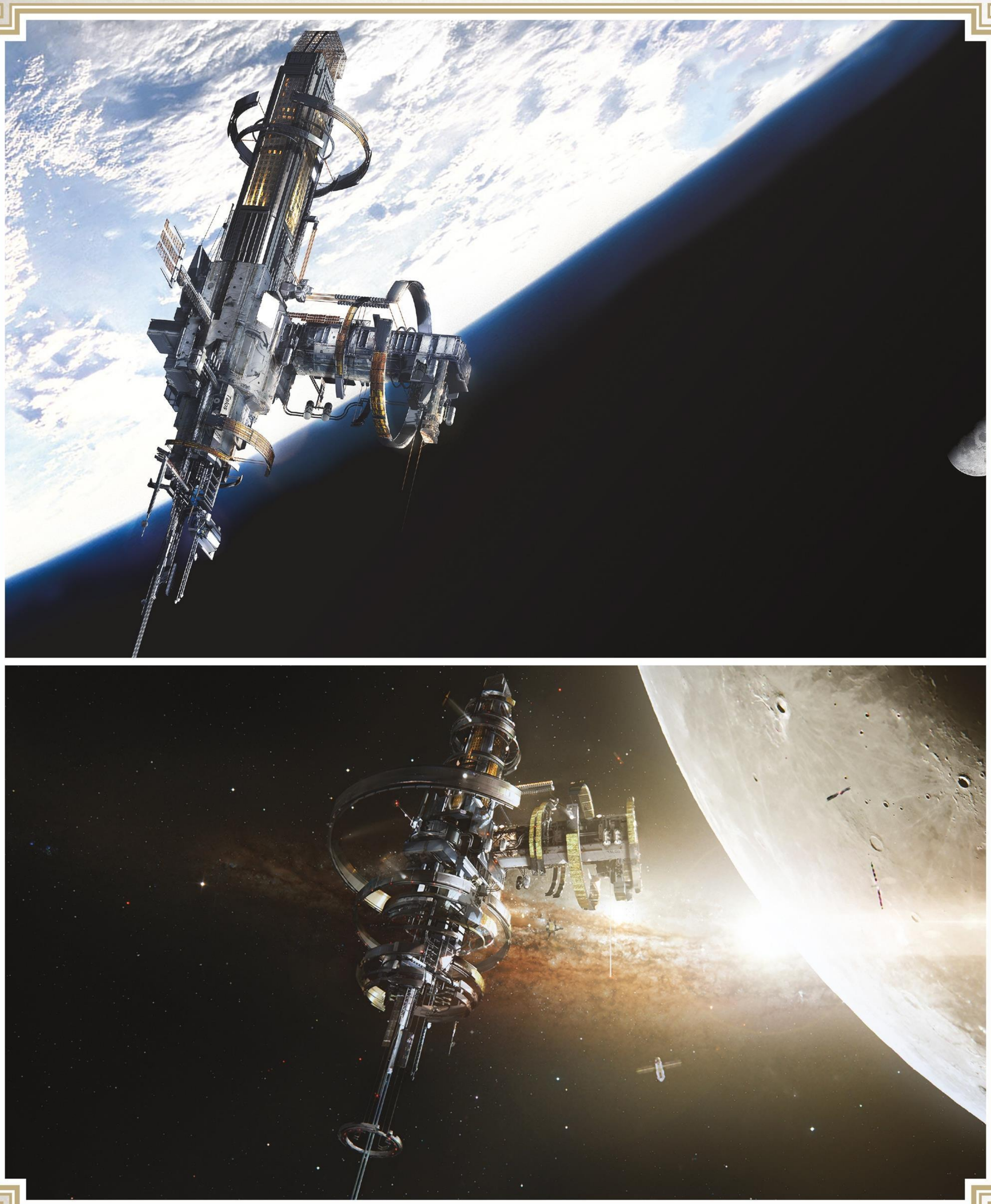


Designing Talos I was not a continuous process. There were pauses between the iterations, and as the story matured and became more complex, the station also evolved to reflect the history and depth.

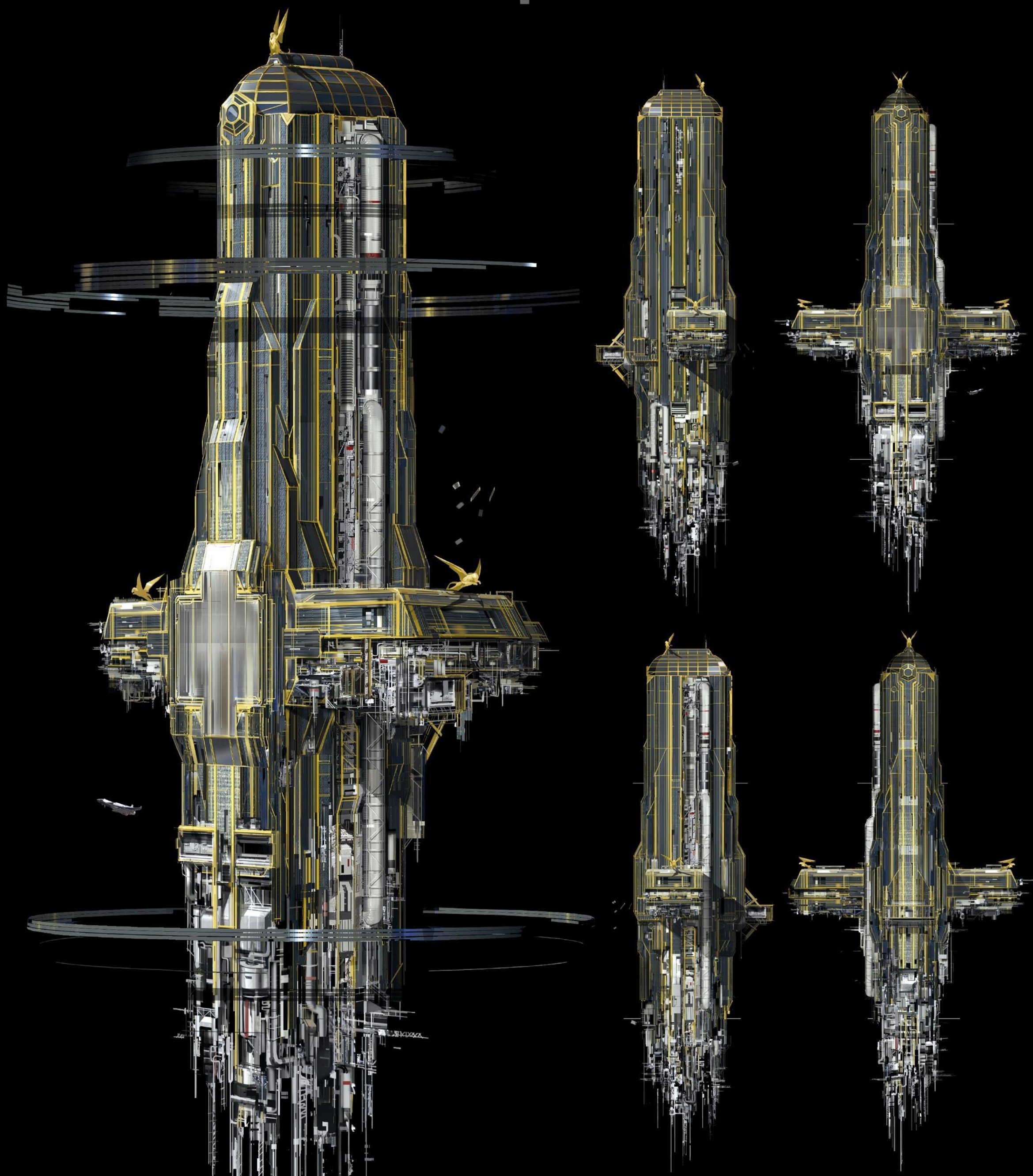
A common theme that applies to our interiors is luxury and public-facing grandeur. The imagery of a “skyscraper in space” appropriately conveyed the sense of absurd, over-the-top luxury we were aiming for. Any visitor arriving on Talos I would find this bizarre.

The size and placement of the modules and the look of the station informed each other throughout their development. We iterated on different ideas of global size, and when the initial block-outs for the first few levels were complete, the overall geography started to emerge and solidify.

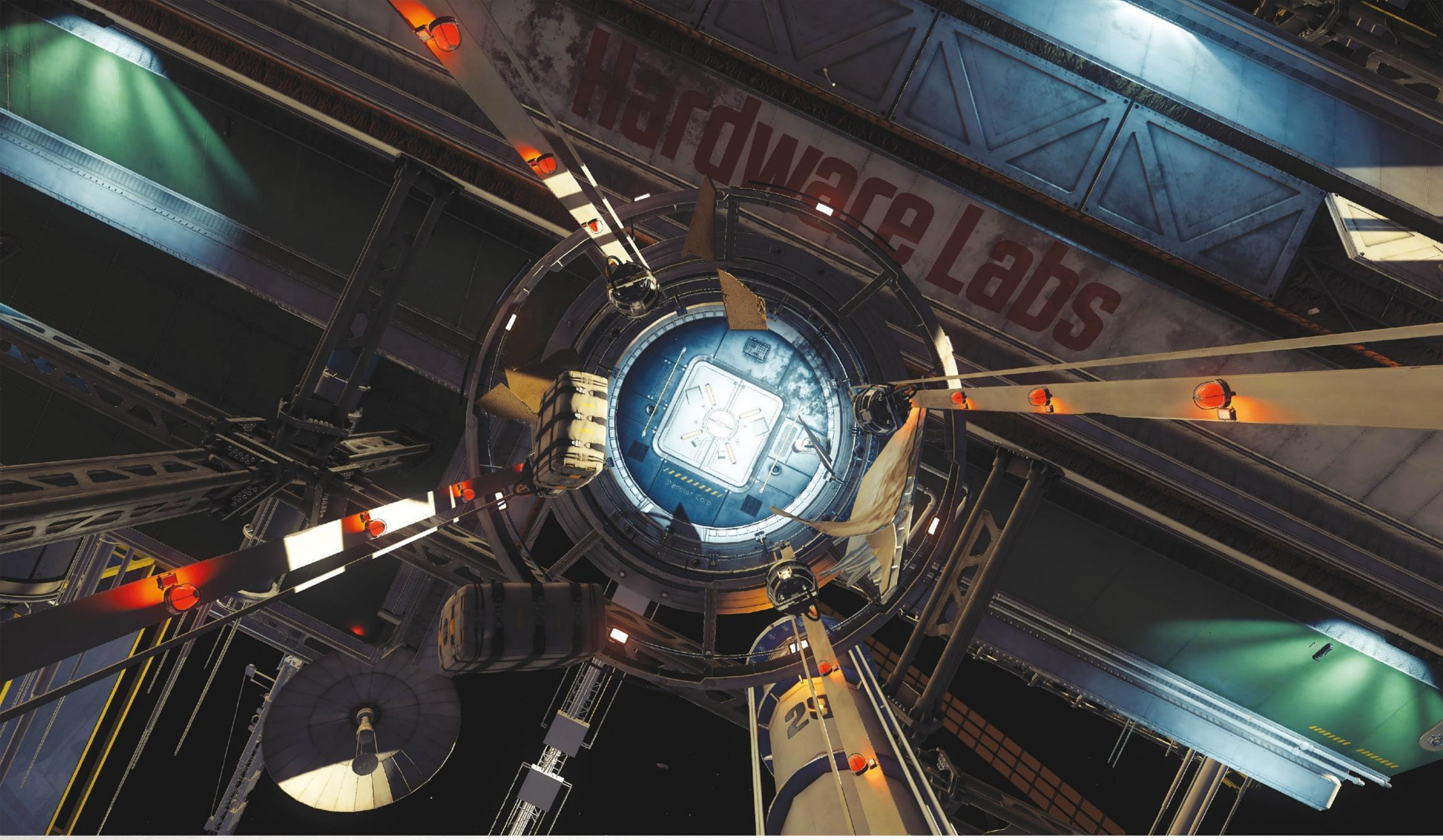

TRANSTAR

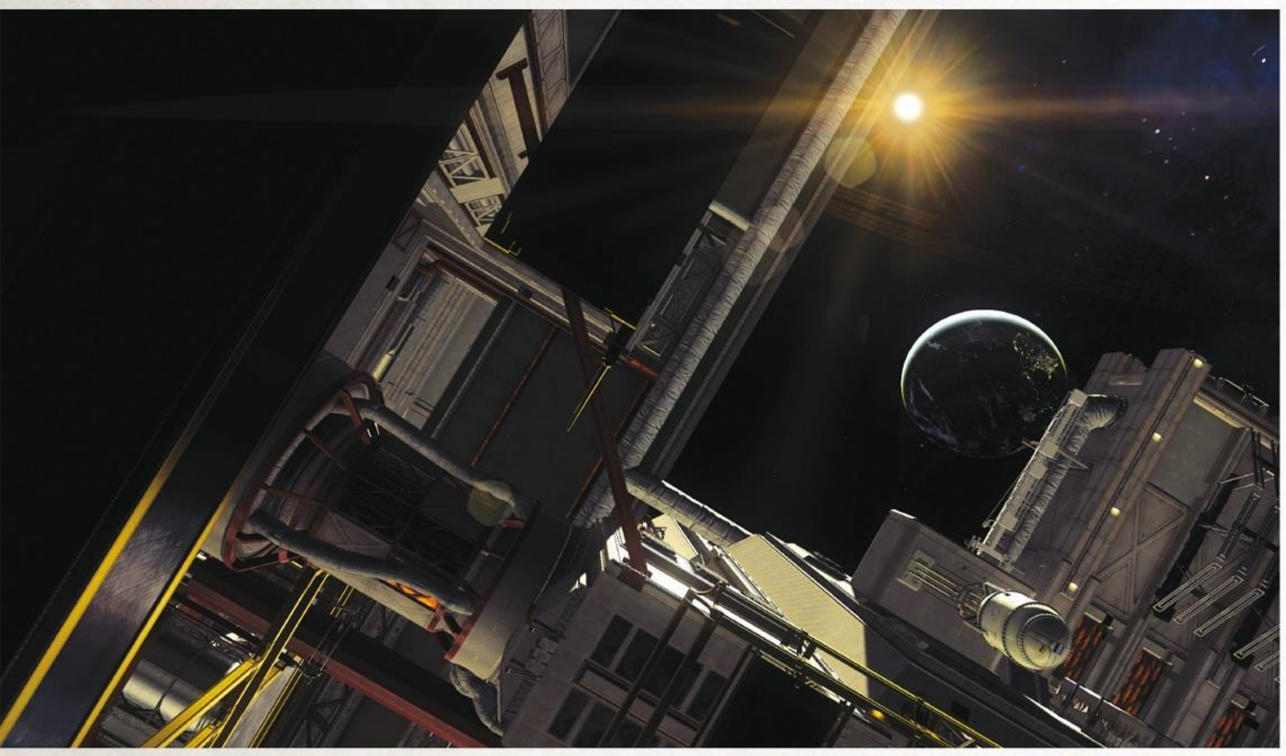


Balancing the contrasts of space tech and luxury was another aspect of this project that went through multiple changes. We knew that as luxurious as our intentions were, we still had to remind the player that this is a functional construct.

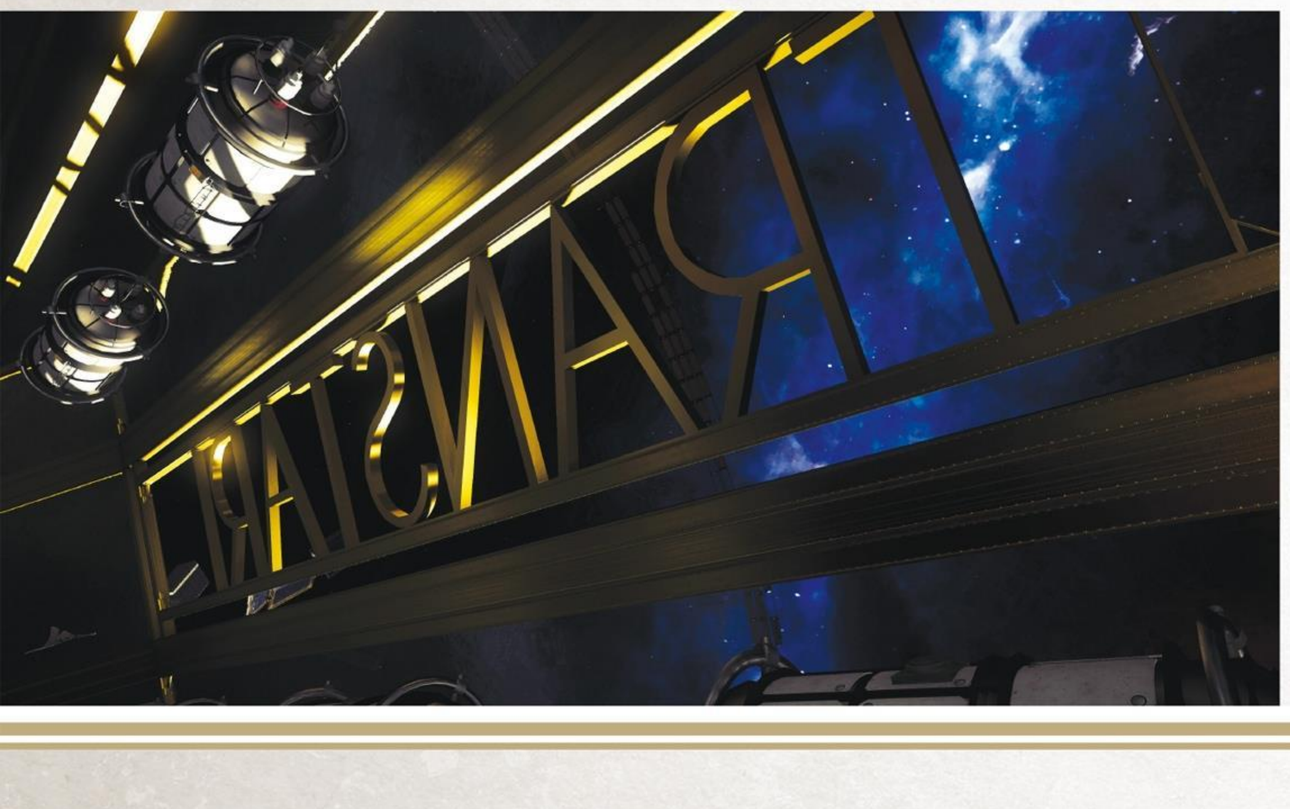


One hallmark of Deco-era skyscrapers is a tiered construction. The tapering shape implies ascension and ambition. This serves as a great metaphor for space exploration, as well as the work carried out on the station. The South Ferry Plaza project and Hugh Ferriss were great references for this idea.











In the end, the final implementation of the skyscraper look arrived as a façade of solar panels that overlay the entire structure. This provided a consistent yet flexible building method to achieve the desired look, and also supported explorative zero-g navigation.

The scope and complexity of this map made it the most challenging to develop in the game. The final result had to be a memorable and contiguous overworld. Concentrated efforts from multiple teams made this a reality.


NEUROMOD

03

EQUIPMENT

Anything the player interacts with requires special attention and care when designing. The concept designs need to act as a cornerstone to define the look of the weapon or device, while still remaining flexible to survive variations as systems mature. The accessories and weapons also had to convey their place in the history of the station—from the rudimentary and trusty wrench to the experimental prototype weapons.

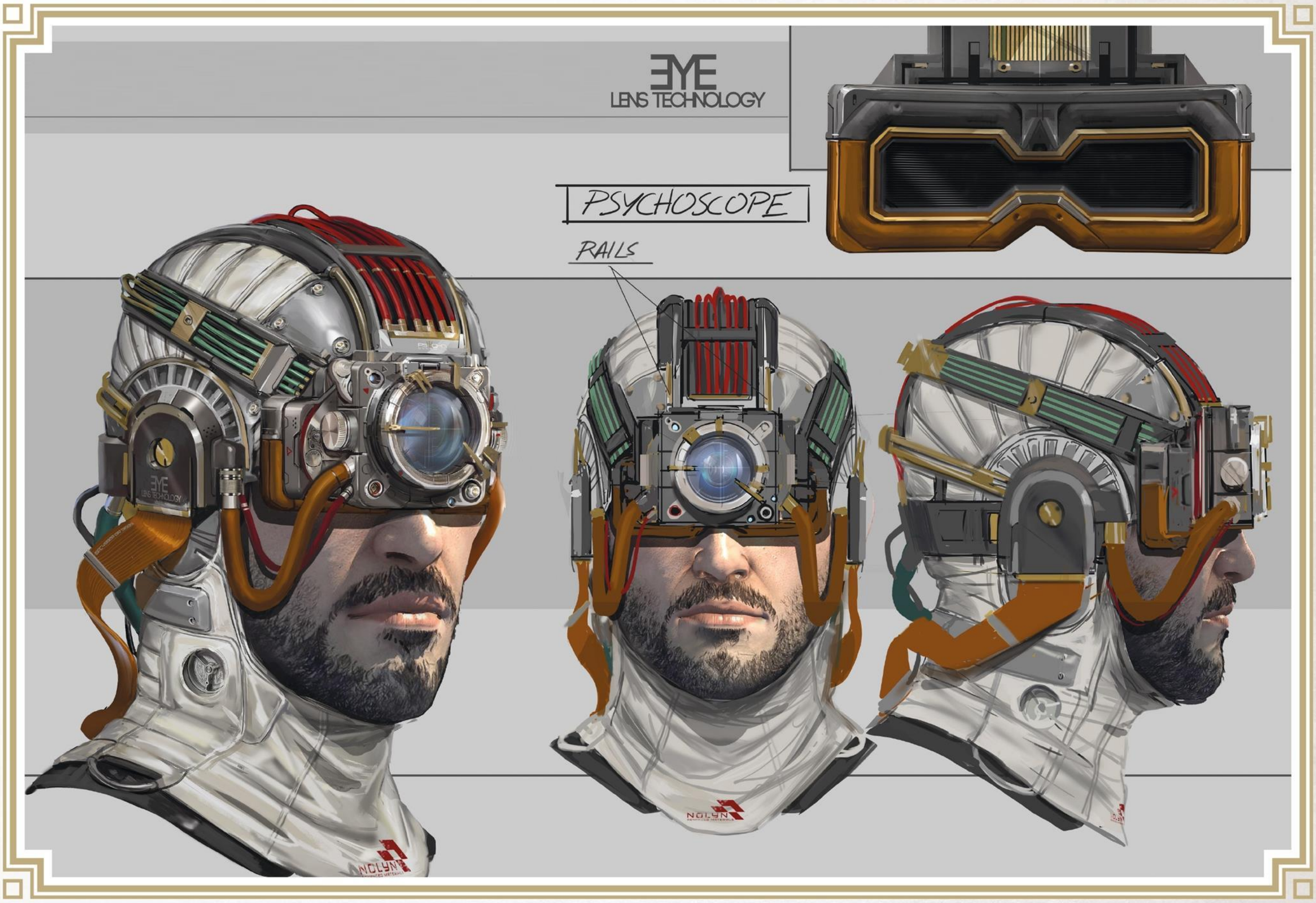
The influence of oxygen masks from fighter pilot gear is seen here. We didn't want to base our designs strictly off of space gear, but we still wanted the end result to look functional.





We wanted the final design to come to life through a kinetic deployment, with the triangles assembling over the wearer's face. The gold serves as a link between our two opposing themes: Neo Deco and high tech.



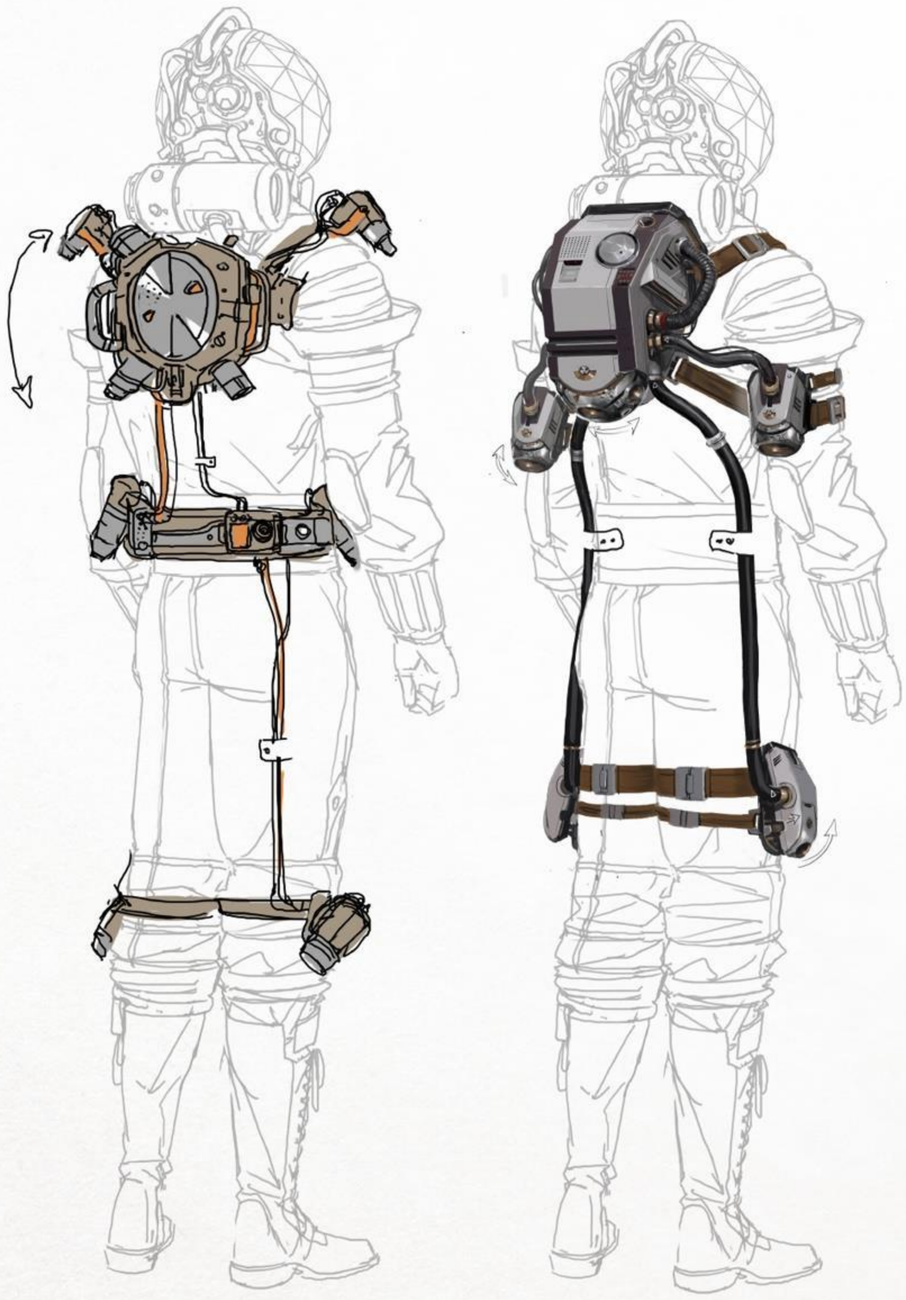


Initially imagined as goggles, the psychoscope evolved to feature a unique camera-like lens. Similar to other prototypes found across the station, it's influenced by the look of experimental robotics and optical apparatuses. The result is a design that feels like an unfinished piece of peculiar technology that suits its function. The logo for the game was based on the pattern that appears in the lens when the device is active.

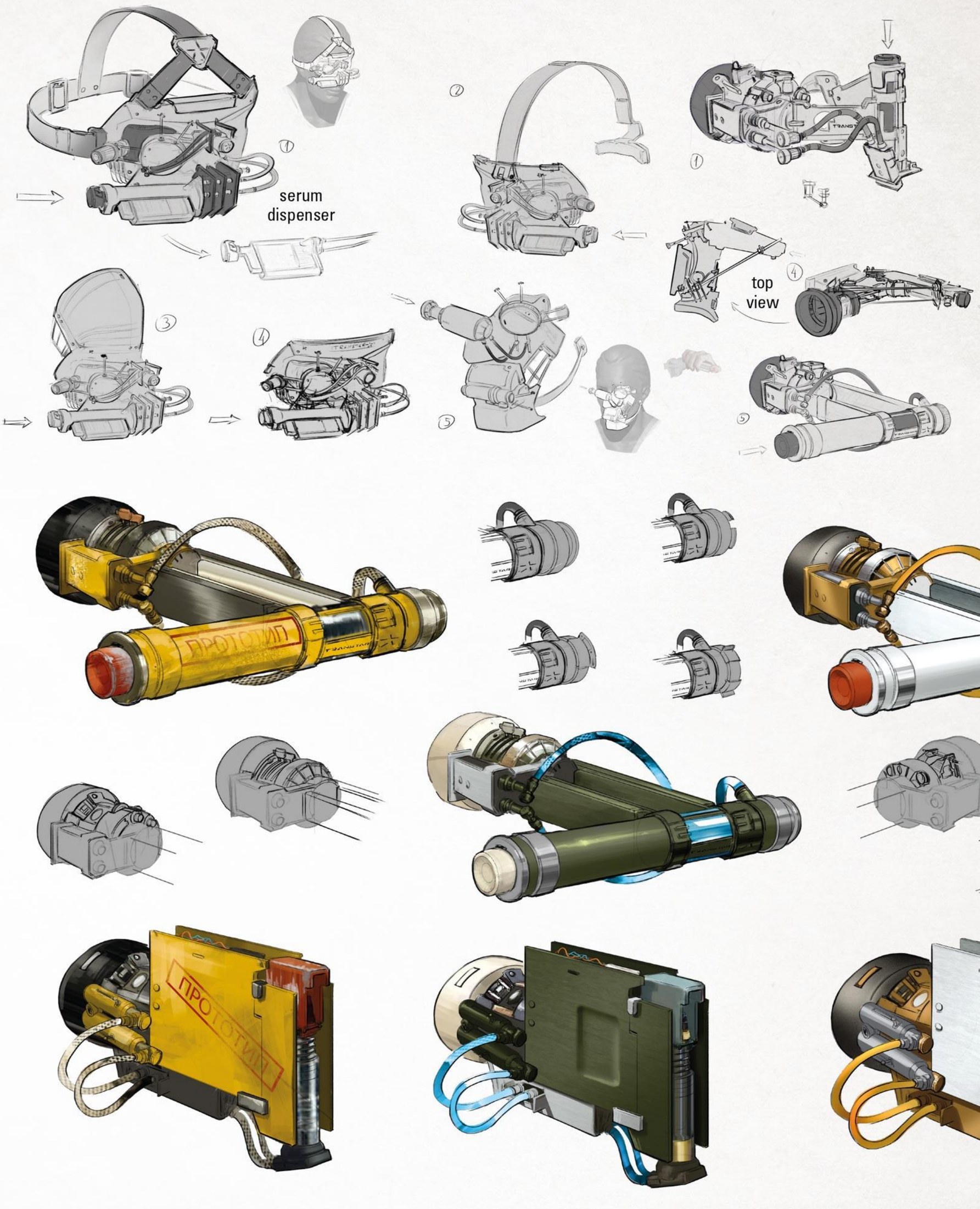








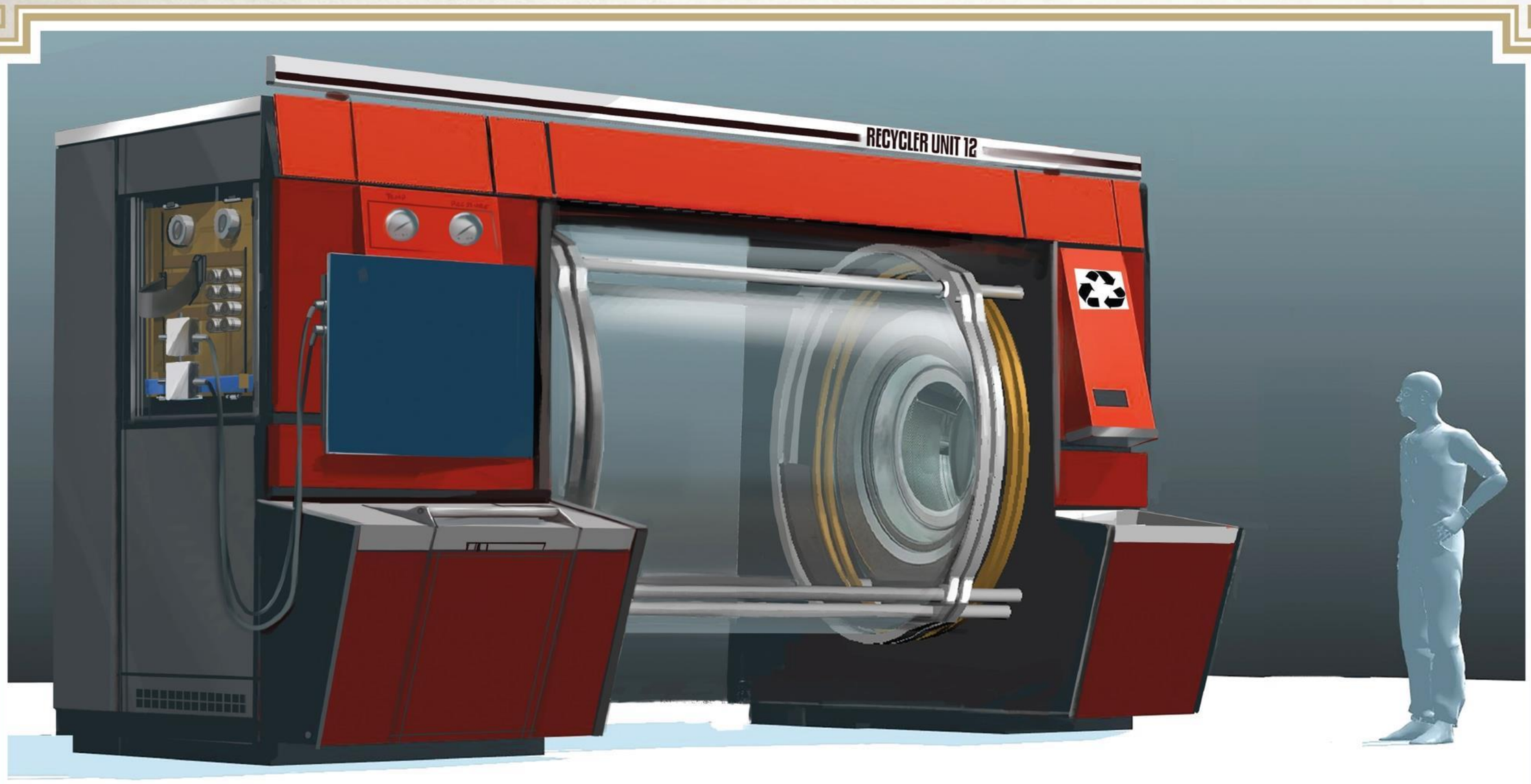
Morgan's suit is a version of the standard-issue TranStar uniform, but with technological elements embedded into the design. One of the most notable features is the Artax Propulsion System, which drew inspiration from high-end consumer electronics of the 1960s.

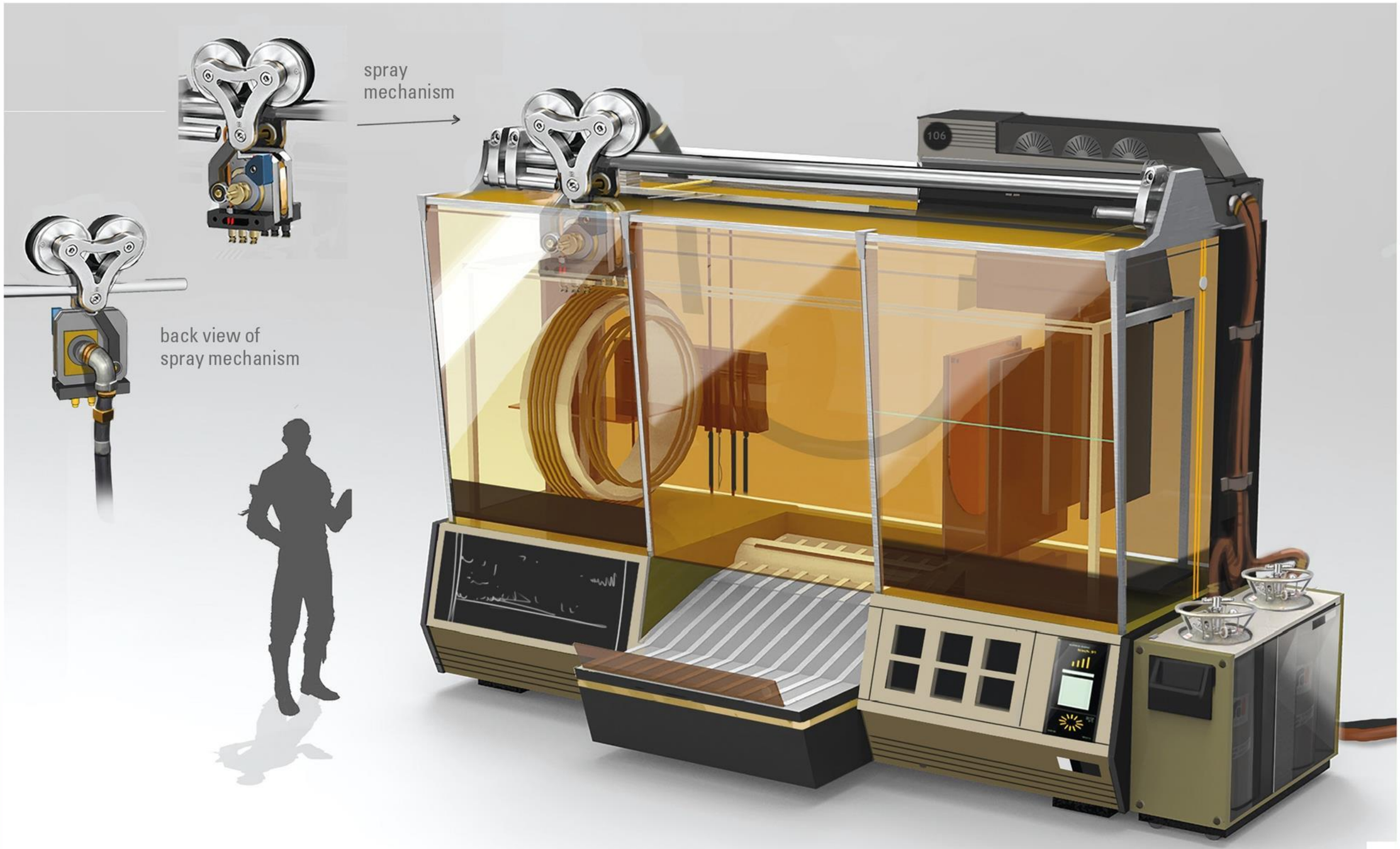




A key game play item, the Neuromod underwent dozens of design changes before we settled on a look that was inspired by vintage camcorders. The design had the added challenge of needing to feel disposable yet high tech. The eyepiece, added in later rounds, implies the usage of the object.







The Fabricator and Recycler are both based off of the notion that a certain amount of thriftiness is required to survive in space. When designing these machines, we imagined that scientists had disassembled obsolete servers and machinery, and repurposed the parts into the crafting machines found throughout the station. We also wanted to make sure these machines weren't just common dispensers, but had the opportunity to showcase some motion and visual effects when being used.





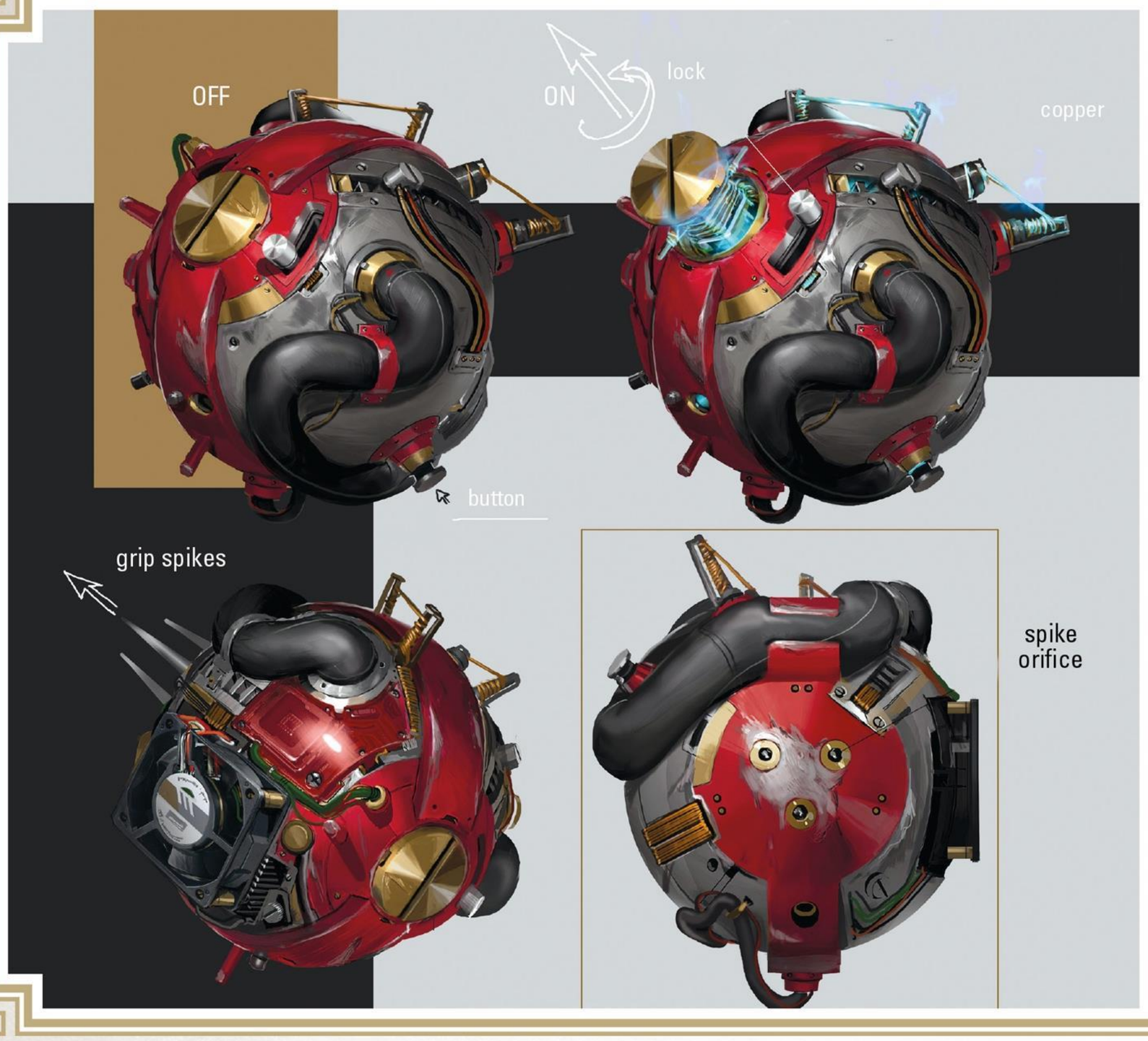


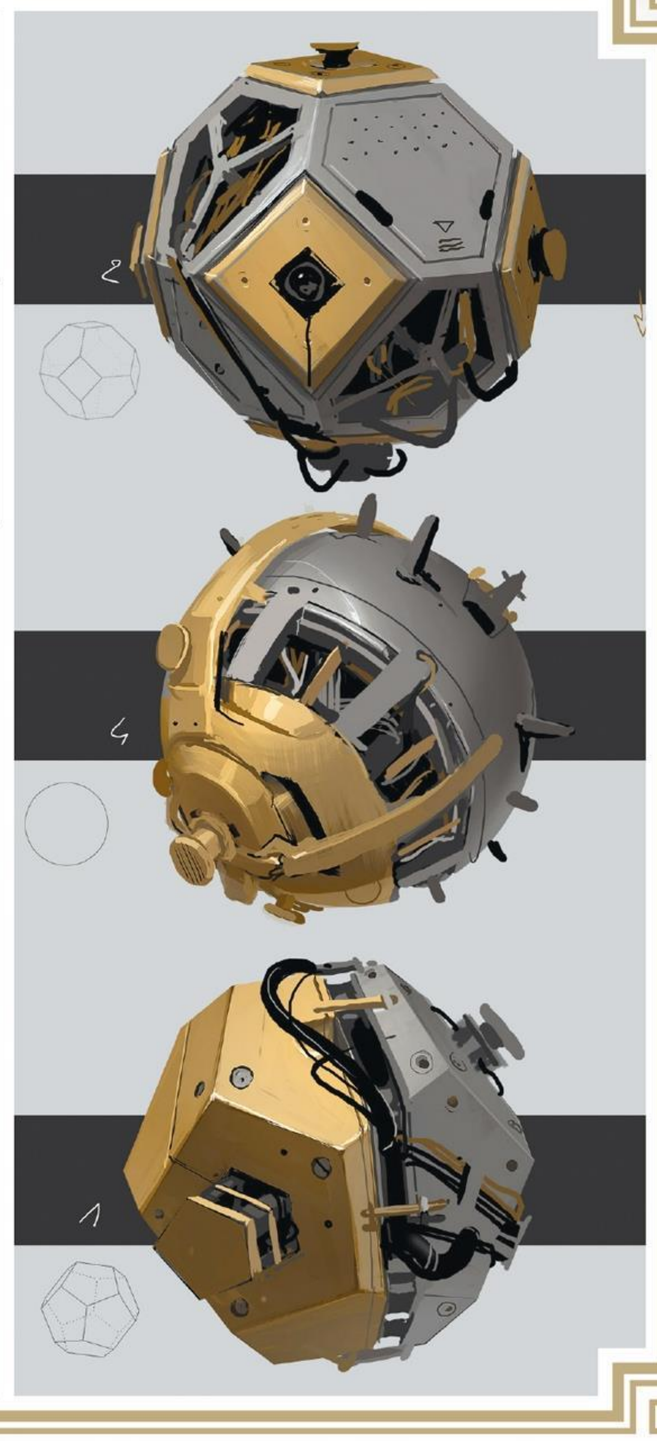


The crafting economy required a full lineup of fodder that could be foraged and recycled. To make the recyclable items stand out from other objects that were primarily used for set dressing, we made sure their role as junk was clear in their design.



















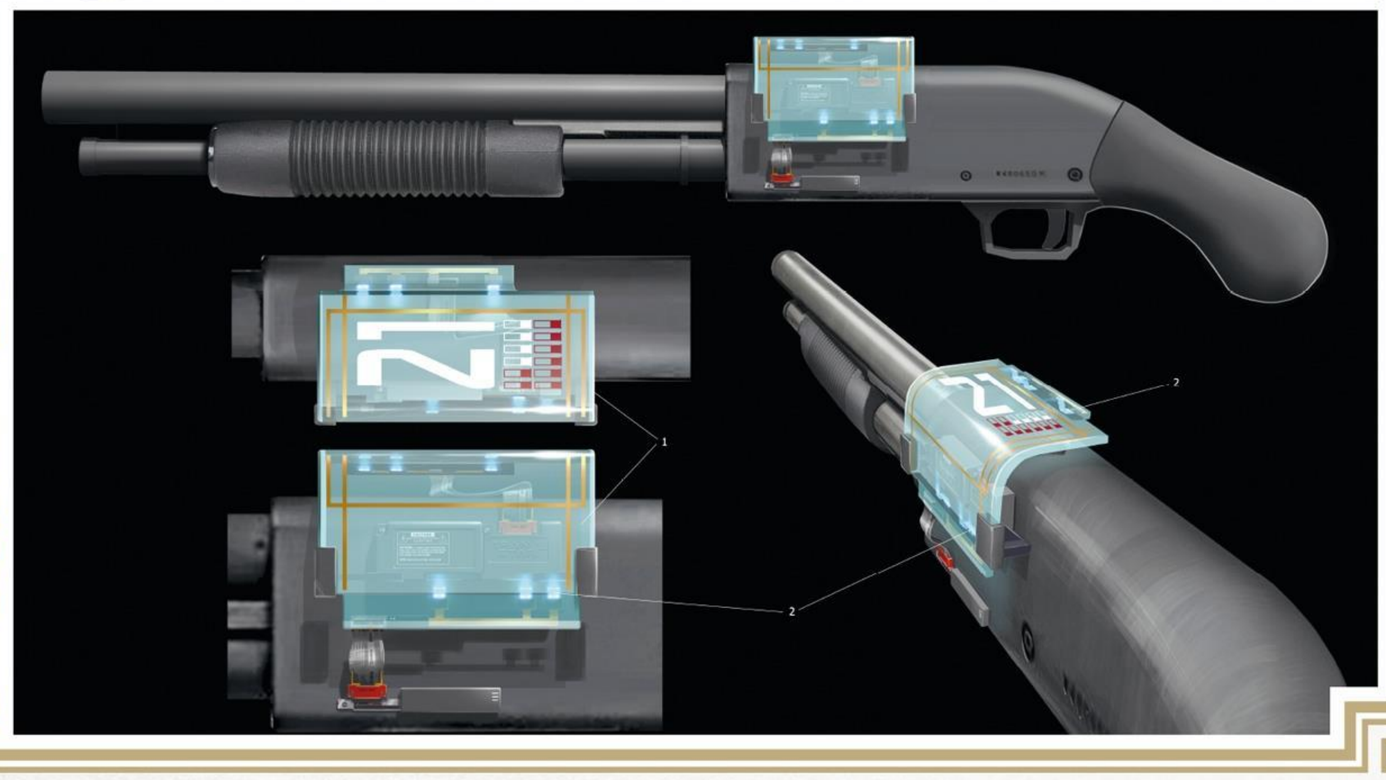


Originally just a utility, recycling becomes weaponized with the Recycler Charge. When designing such experimental weapons, clashing shapes and materials are often paired to make it abundantly clear that this is not something that came off of a production line. The main goal is for the weapon to have an identity, which can be hard to balance and establish when working with such incongruent details.

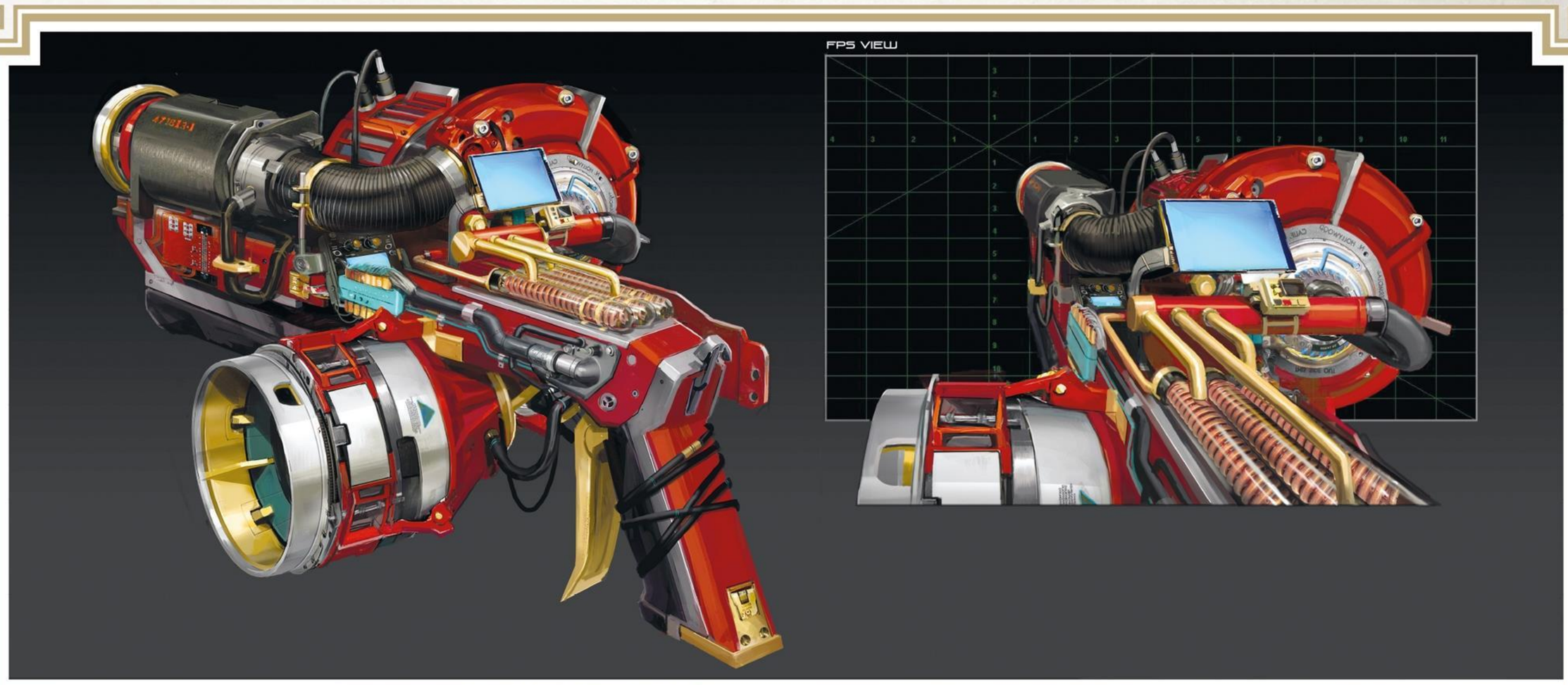
When designing a weapon, we try as much as possible to account for the primary views and functions in game, in addition to its aesthetic. Doing so helps inform the choices of multiple departments later in production.



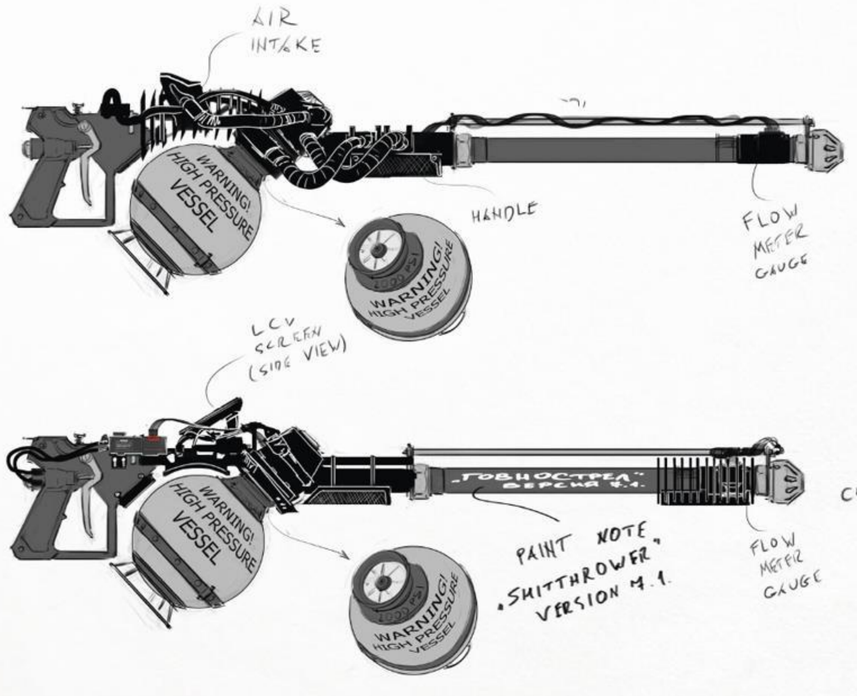


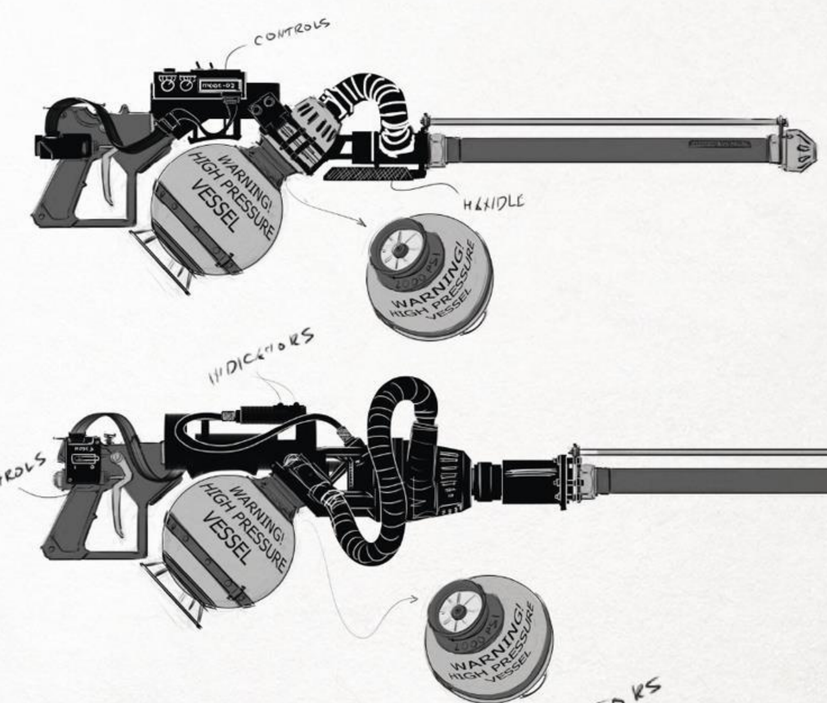


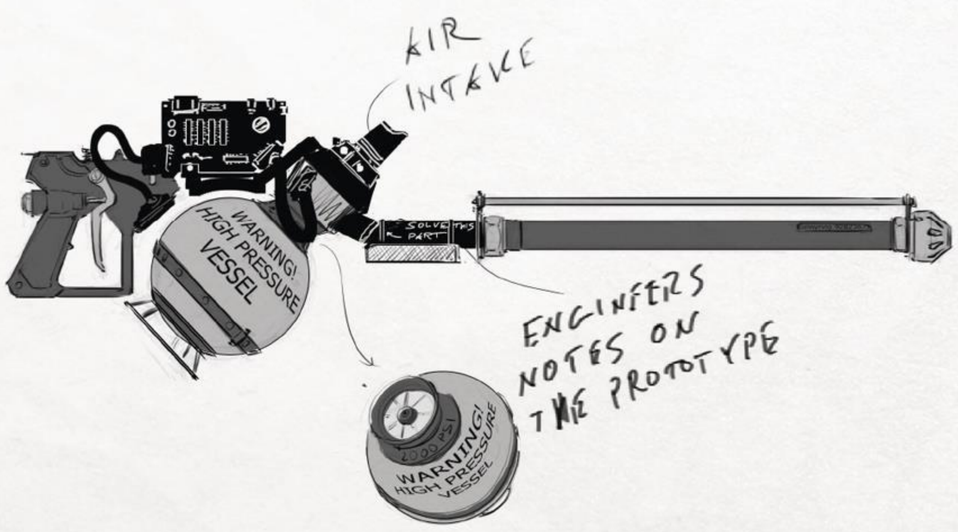
The shotgun had to be classic yet high tech. As an added benefit, the UI for the ammo count (integrated as a screen on the weapon itself) minimizes the impact of the HUD on the player immersion.

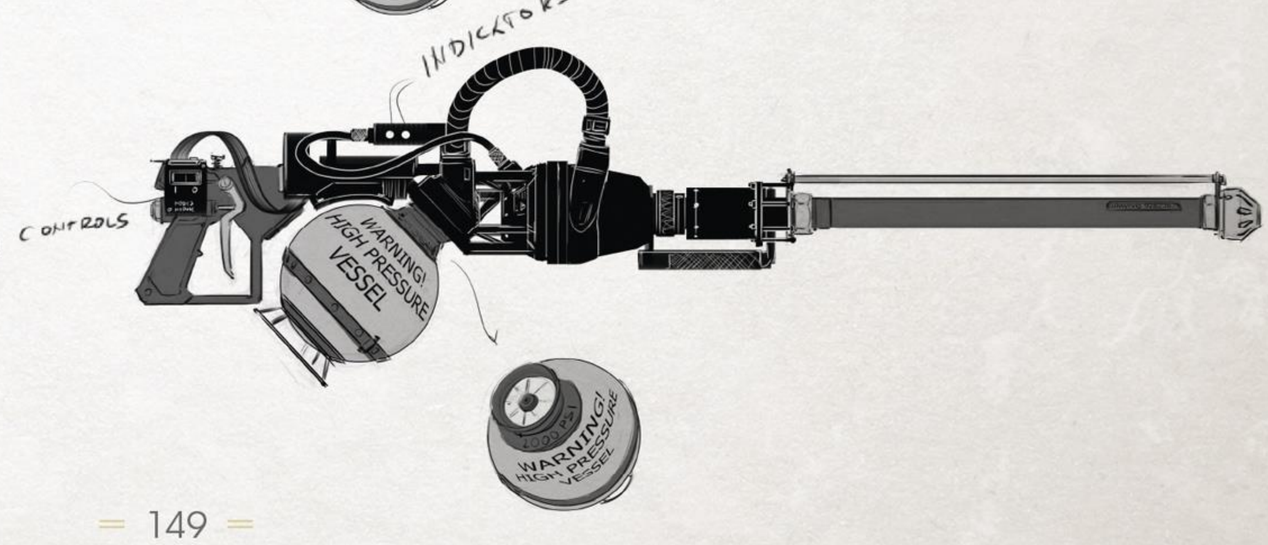








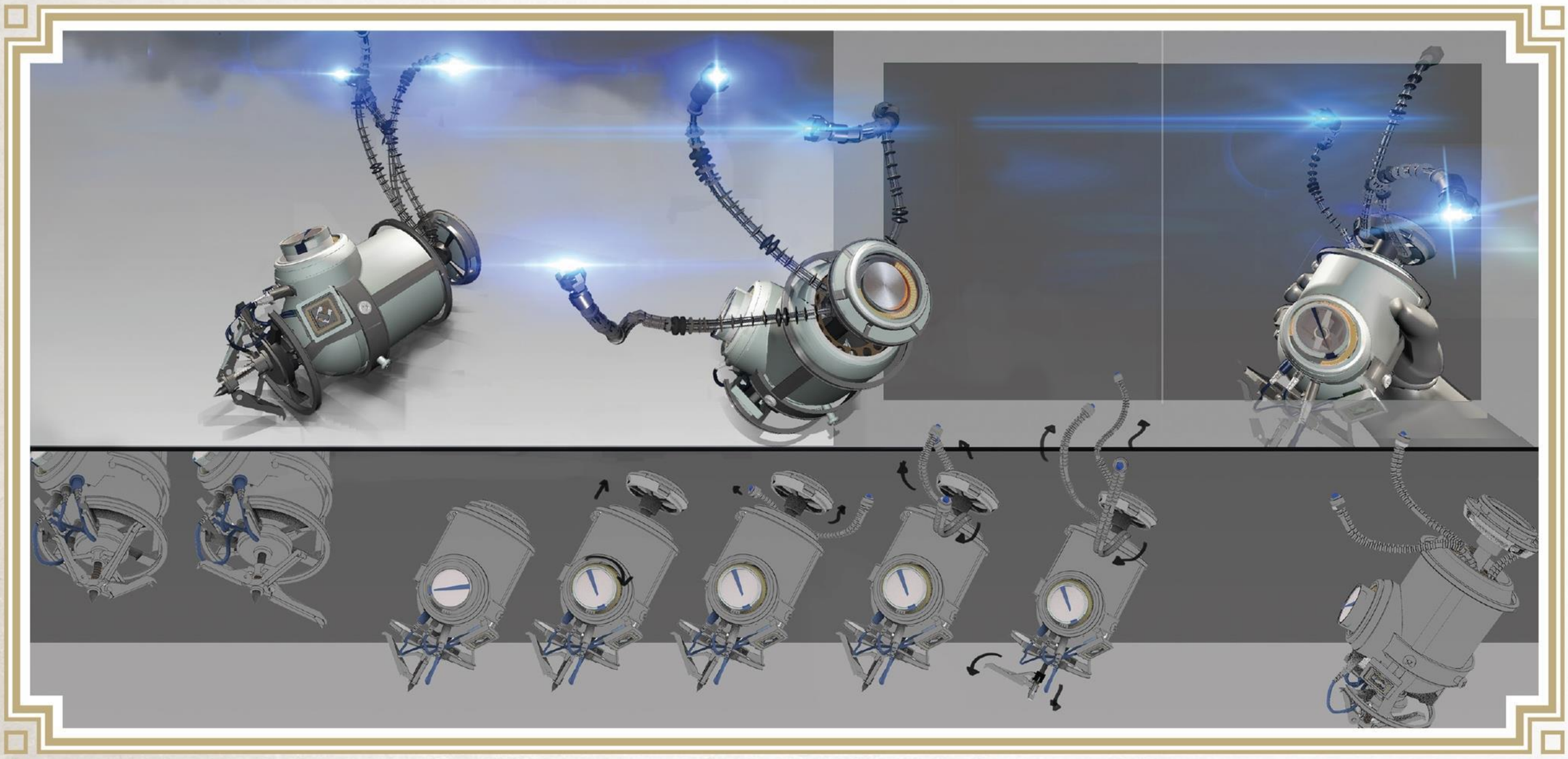




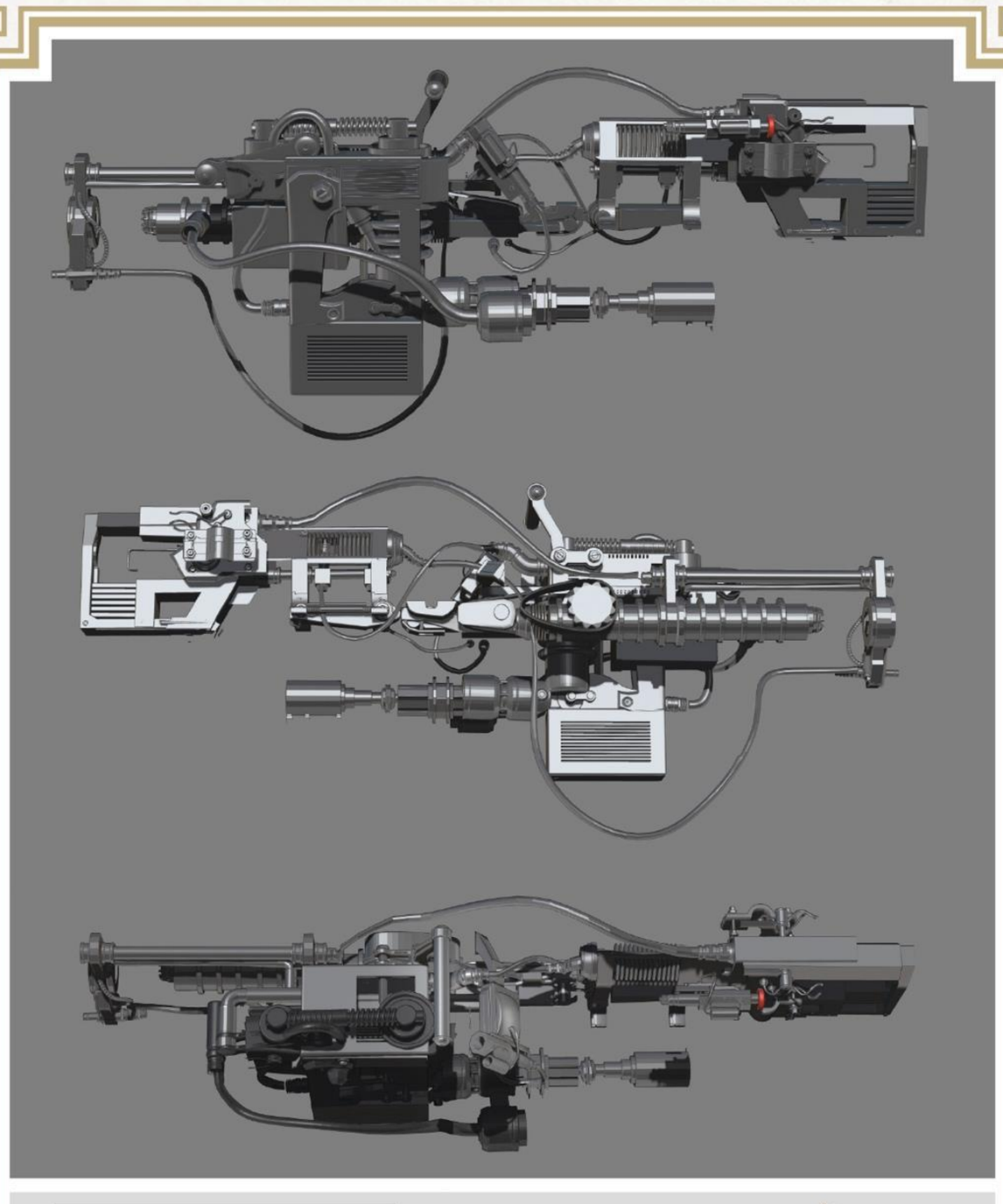
The GLOO Cannon features turbine-based technology to propel GLOO for a variety of purposes.

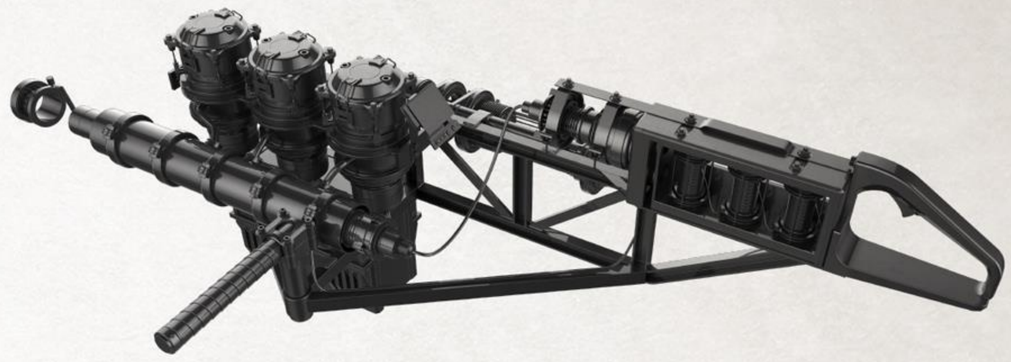


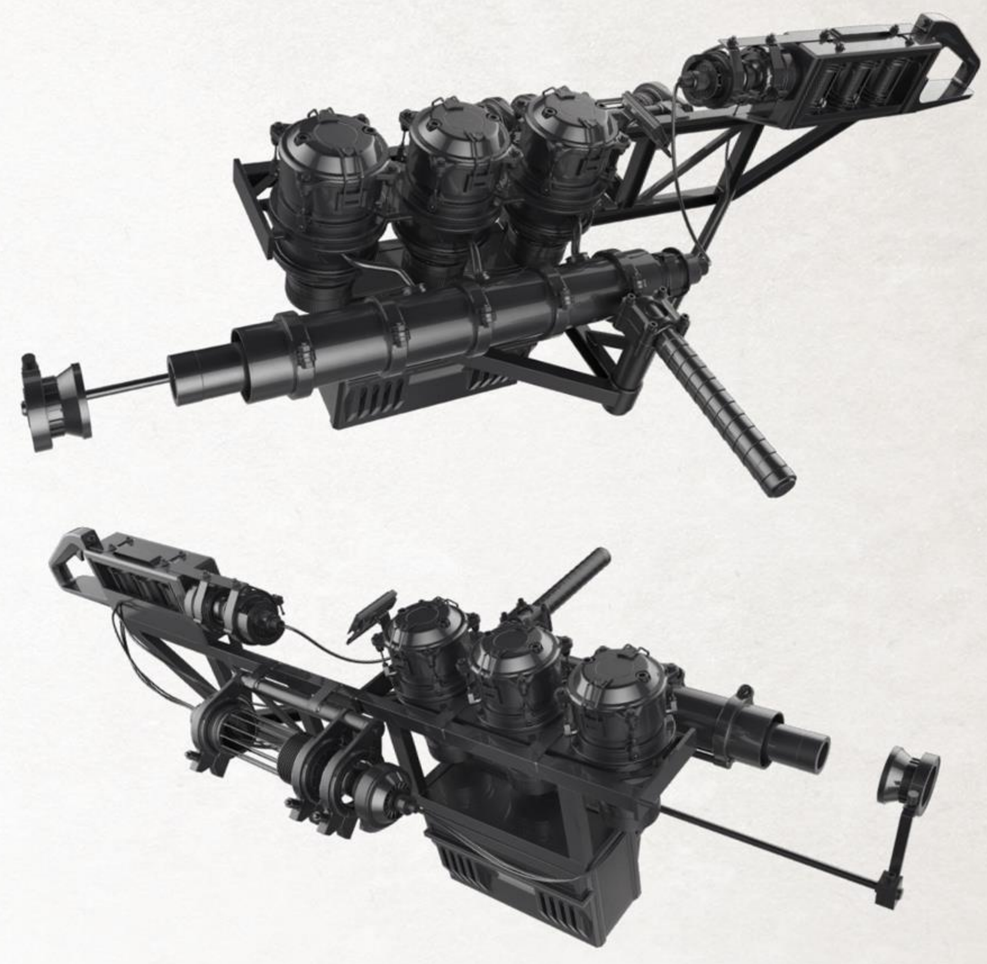
Since several of our weapons were smaller-sized charges, we tried to keep their silhouettes iconic and based on primitive shapes for distinctiveness.



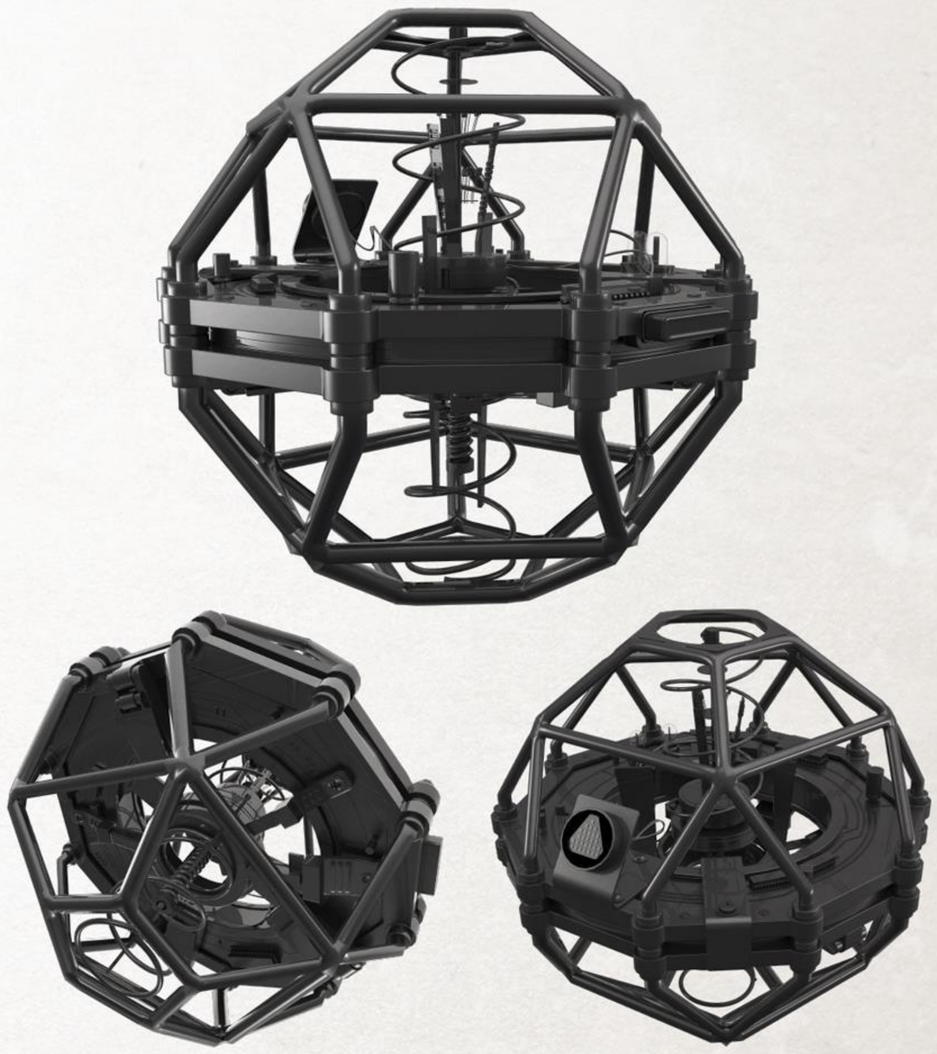
Details were added to imply a weapon's usage, such as an anglerfish-inspired bioluminescent antenna for the Typhon Lure.







Spartan structure and fragile-looking wires give a design an unfinished, experimental look.



Each charge features a unique method for deploying and, while they are all held in a similar fashion, each features unique animations.



04

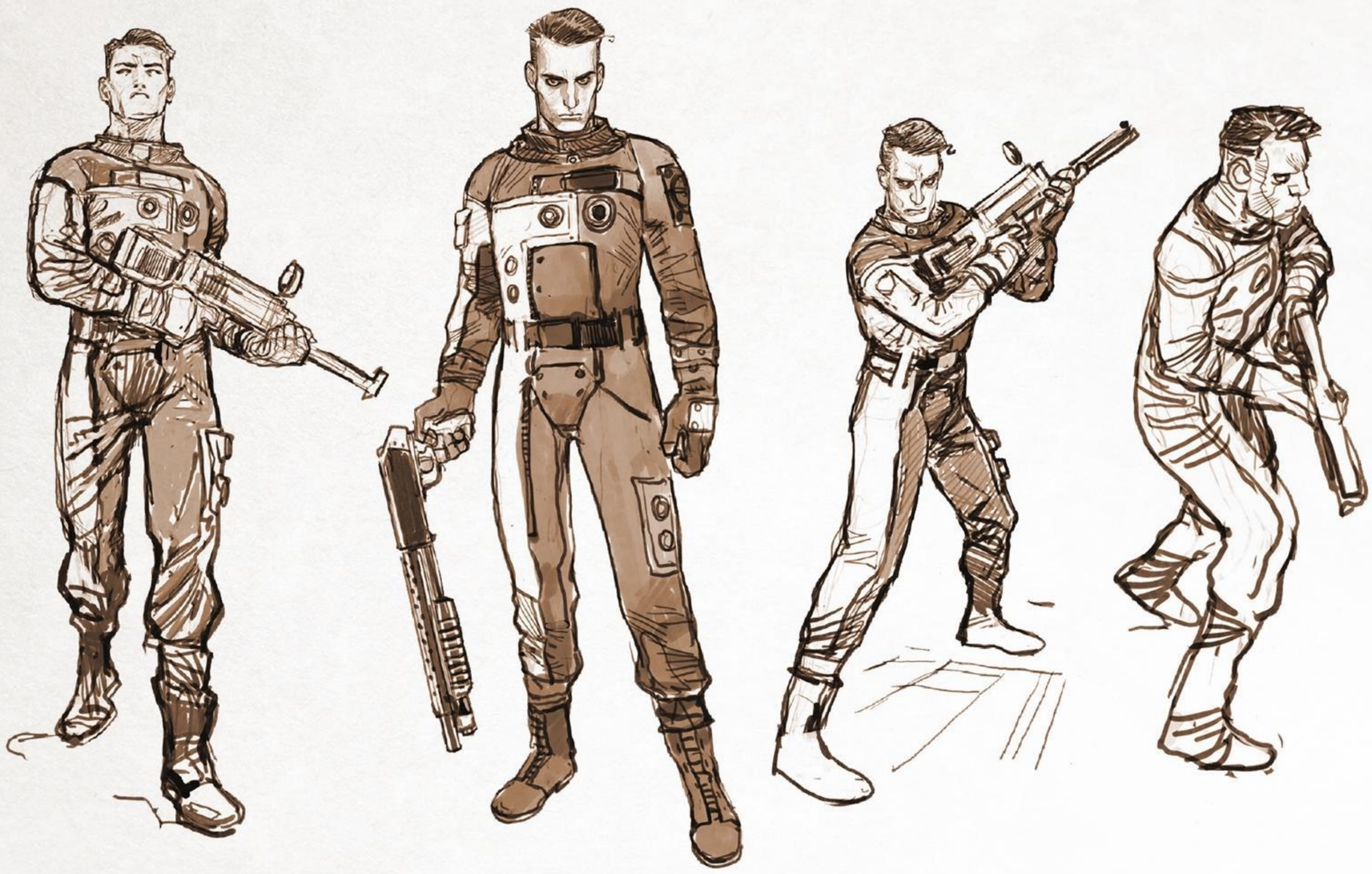
CHARACTERS

Characters are central to a memorable player experience. A well-executed character can drive home a narrative and bring a new level of meaningfulness to player interaction. The small cast size of *Prey* meant it was imperative that each character was perfectly crafted to fit their role.

Focus and careful attention were given to the faces at every step of the process, from the initial concept passes to the complex, yet flexible, facial rigs that brought the interactions to life. At the other end of the spectrum are the aliens. These creatures absolutely needed to be menacing, yet almost all of their threat had to be conveyed through silhouette, movement, and visual effects.

MORGAN

We knew from the outset that Morgan had to be of mixed heritage. Several rounds of research were done to find the right mix of features for our protagonist, and to ensure the balance felt correct in both gender options.







Refining a character doesn't stop once you have finished a concept. We continued to push and balance features well into the sculpting process.

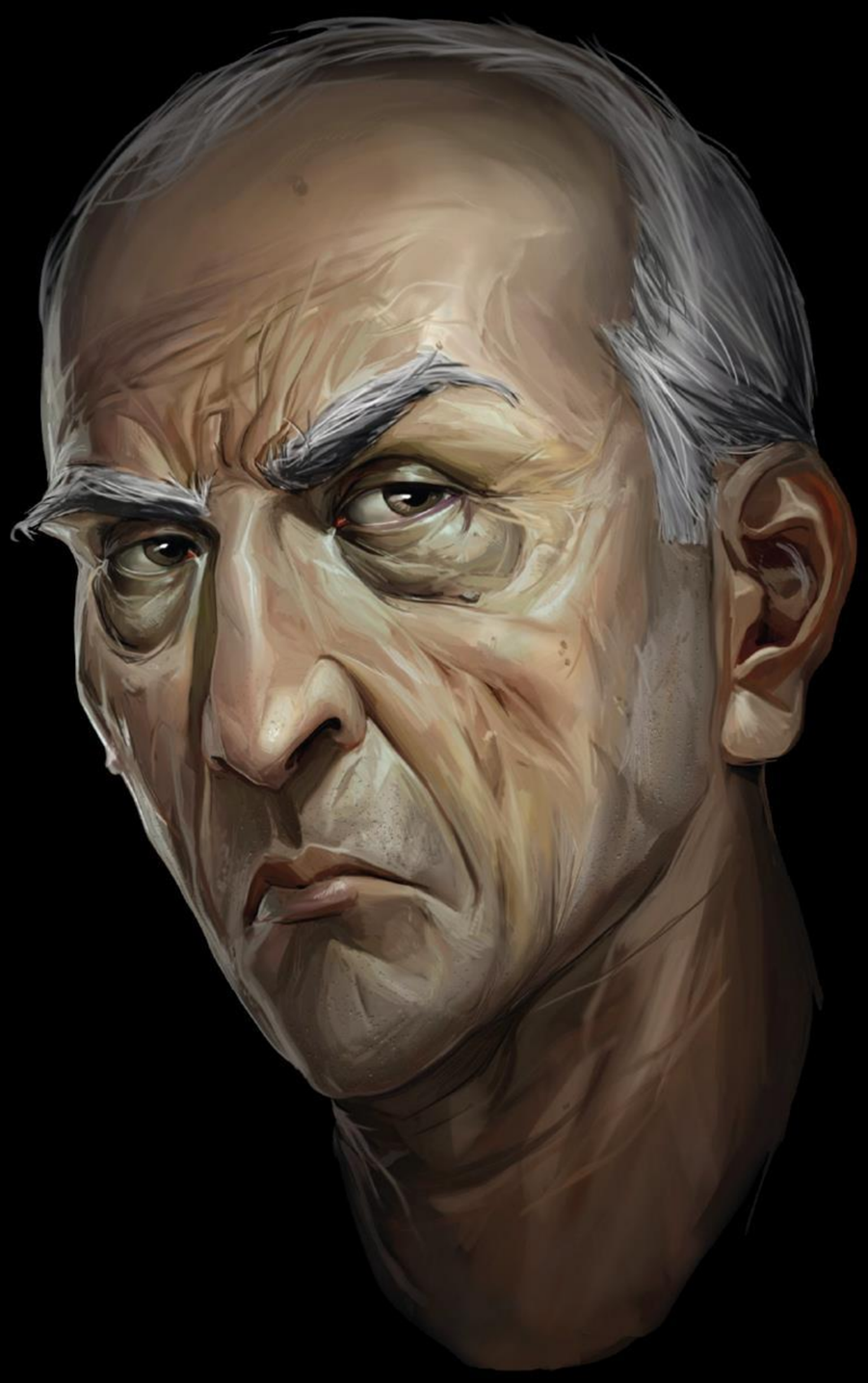
The end result for both genders is a character design that resides somewhere between the concepts we created. It was more important for us that specific features resonated well, rather than strictly adhering to a concept.



ALEX AND THE FAMILY

Alex has always been a pillar in the game. He was one of the first characters we designed and his creation helped set the quality standards and style choices when designing the rest of the cast.

Once the Yu family started to become more prominent in the story, it was important to us that the parents also had a certain depth to them, despite never being present on the station.









When designing prominent secondary characters, we try to not only capture the features, but something of the personality of the character as well. Having this conveyed in the portrait gives artists and animators a feeling to try to capture as they work. This information can lead to subtle decisions during the creation process that boost the personality of the character in the end.



With all characters dressed in standard-issue uniforms, proper hairstyling becomes essential for conveying personality. Sarah's hairstyle in particular is unique and really drives home her assertive demeanor.





Luka was one of the most fun characters to develop. His backstory was so rich that it provided tons of inspiration. His twisted personality gave us a really clear idea of where we wanted to go when designing him, so there was very little change during his creation.





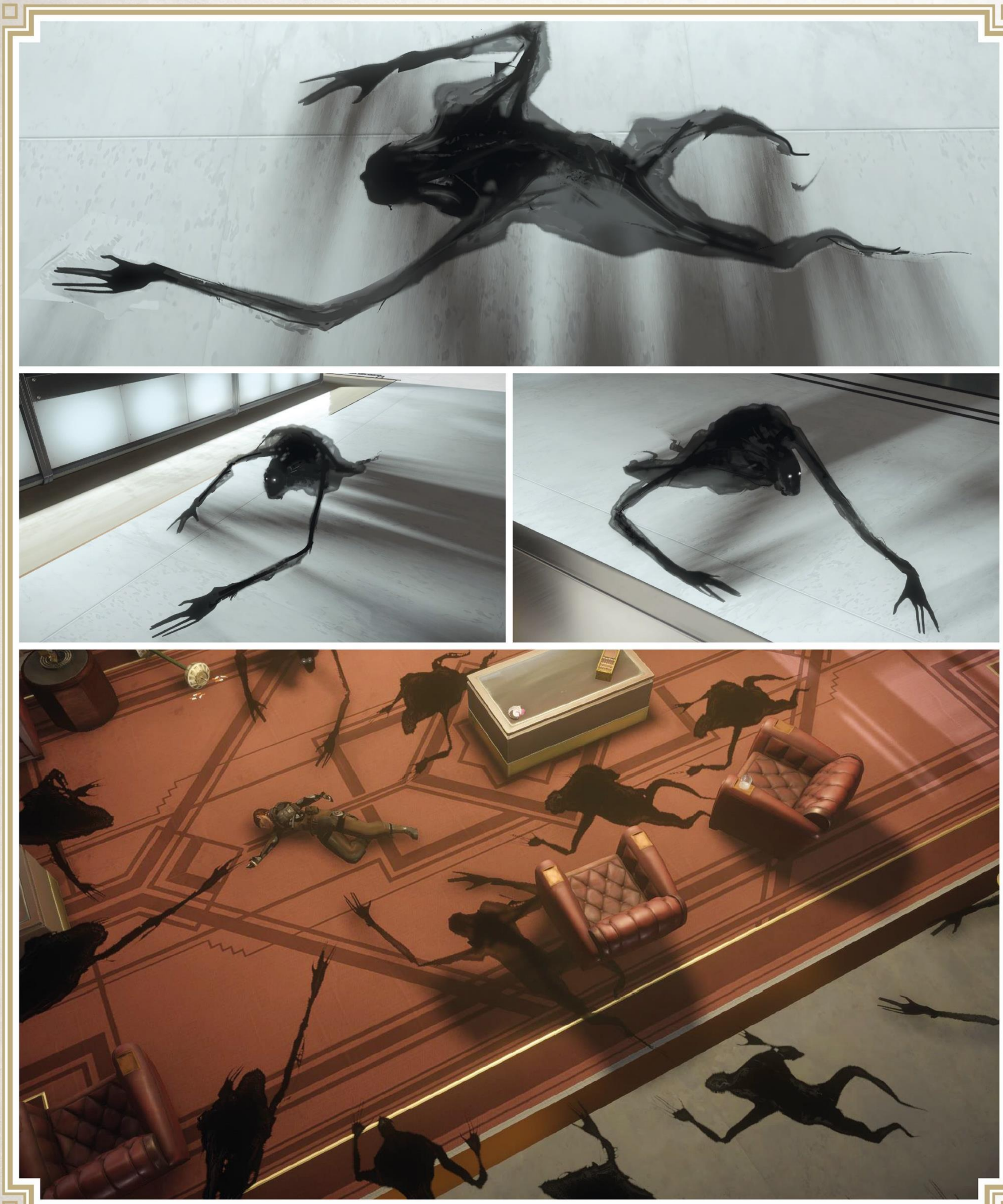
For general station inhabitants, we started by looking at the faces of elite members of society: Nobel Prize winners and prominent politicians. We looked for interesting features to inspire our research. The idea was that TranStar would attract the most prominent talent to Talos I and this would be reflected in countenance and, to a certain extent, age.

When designing the suit lineup, we opted to have all suits share a common basic design, yet be tailored enough to discern the role of different departments. This is not only reflected in the details, but also in the materials we chose for the different variants. The ultimate goal was to find a balance between functionality and brand identity. We drew heavy reference from more vintage space and sci-fi suit designs and tried to avoid overly streamlined or cyborg appearances.

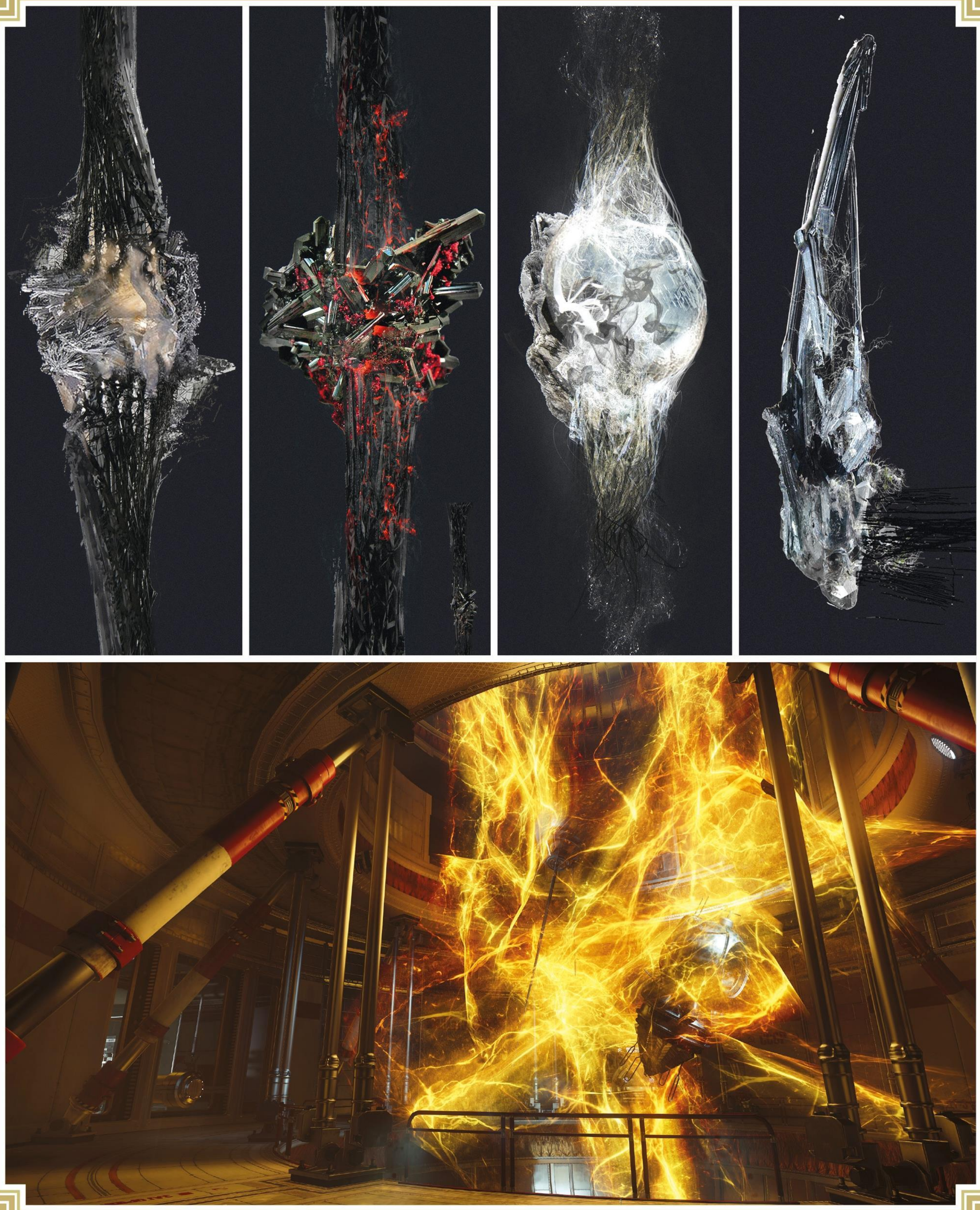




Dahl had to be designed with the idea that he was not a part of the TranStar Corporation. Originally he was envisioned more as a mercenary figure; however, this evolved into a more technical role as a pilot and hacker. We drew inspiration from early flight suits to help set his apart from every other suit in the game, and tried to incorporate more visible technology into his gear than would be found on the average TranStar scientist.



Even if a Poltergeist is invisible 99 percent of the time, we still needed a strong visual design to support his rare appearances. Drawing inspiration from the lore of a failed Phantom, we felt he should be more twisted and humanoid than any of the other aliens.

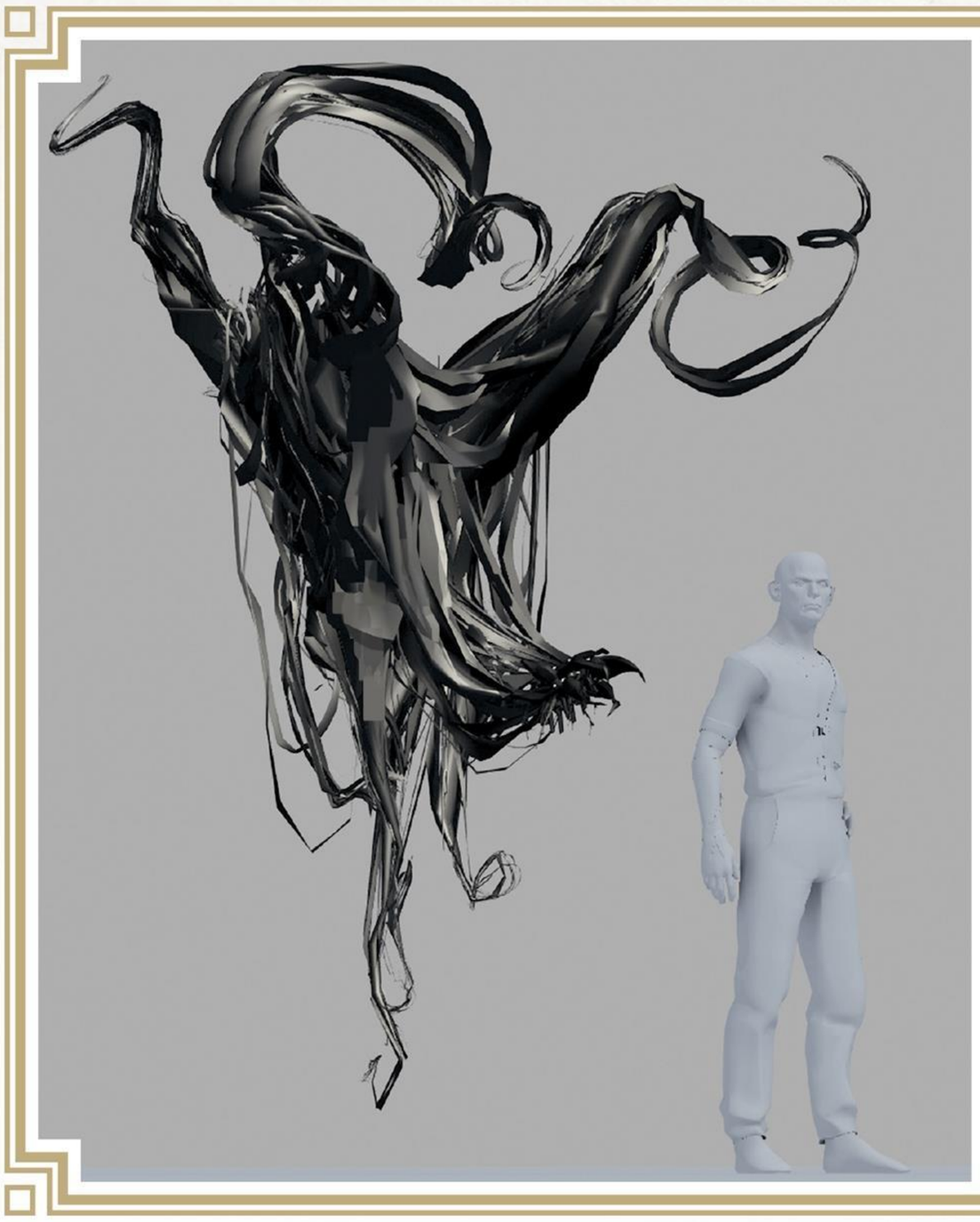


Originally envisioned as a mineral-like growth, the coral ended up being one of the more dynamic features of the environment. The final design was inspired by an early discarded concept for the Superthermal alien power. We were able to leverage existing systems in the engine used for foliage to give it subtle movements, making it feel more like a living structure.

The Technopath and Telepath are great examples of primitive base shapes that were converted into monster designs. The stark, blocky silhouettes make them stand out from the rest of the alien lineup, and we were able to leverage physically dynamic splines to give life to their tentacles and secondary shapes.

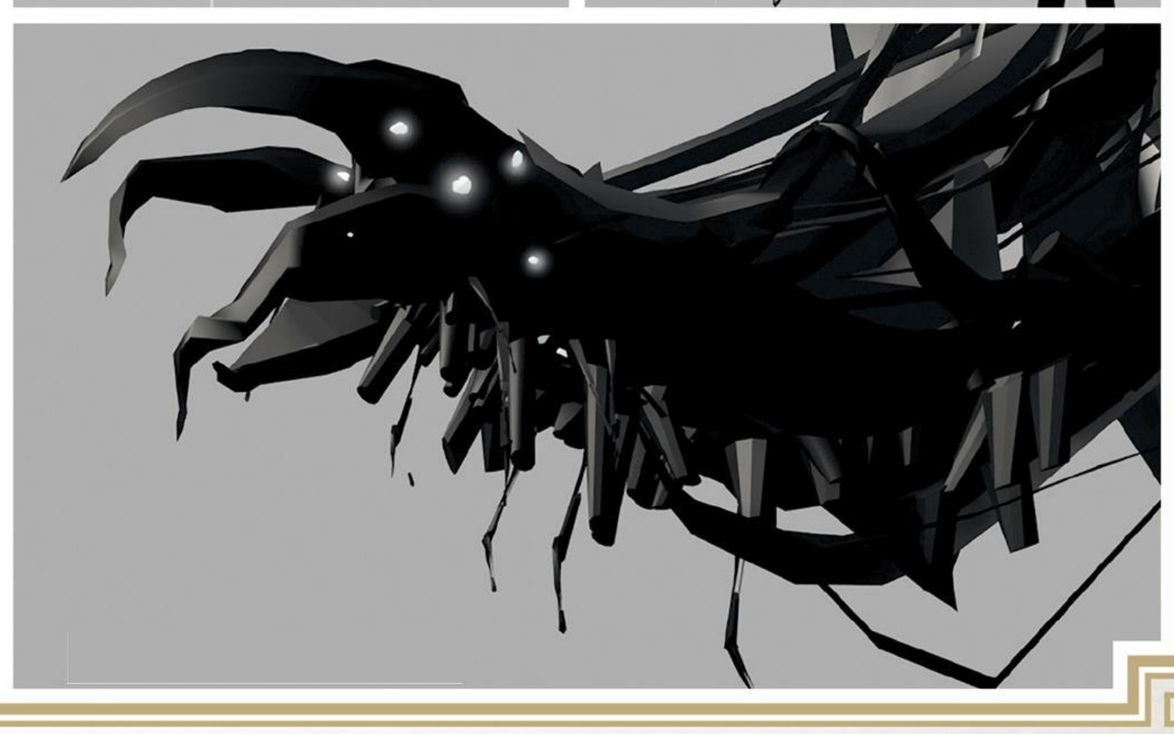


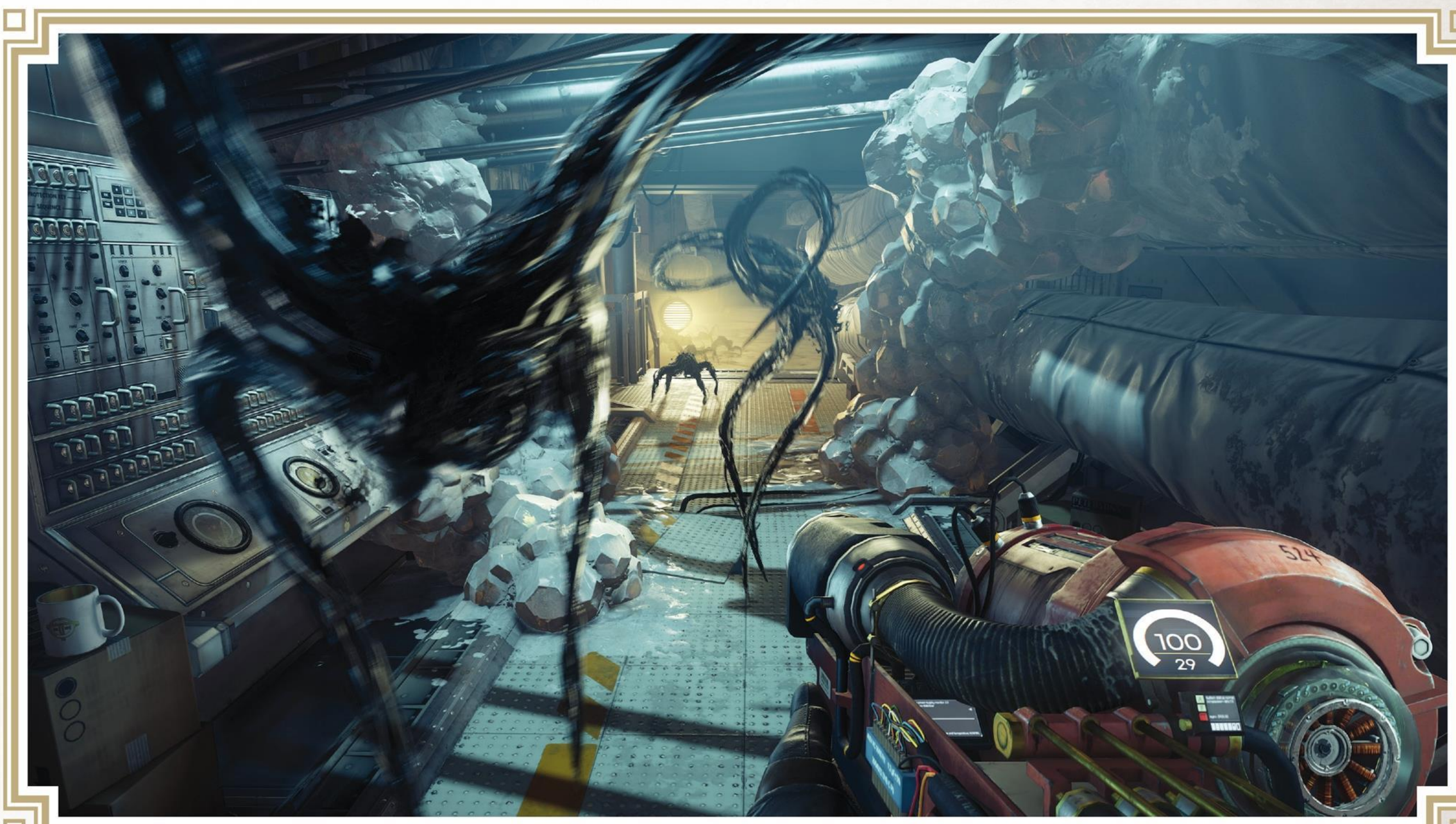












Being constrained to black, blurry monsters created challenges for multiple departments. The challenges included depth perception and visibility from the first-person view—ensuring they didn't get completely lost in the darkness of a failing space station—and how to correctly telegraph intentions to the player when all monsters are by design difficult to perceive.

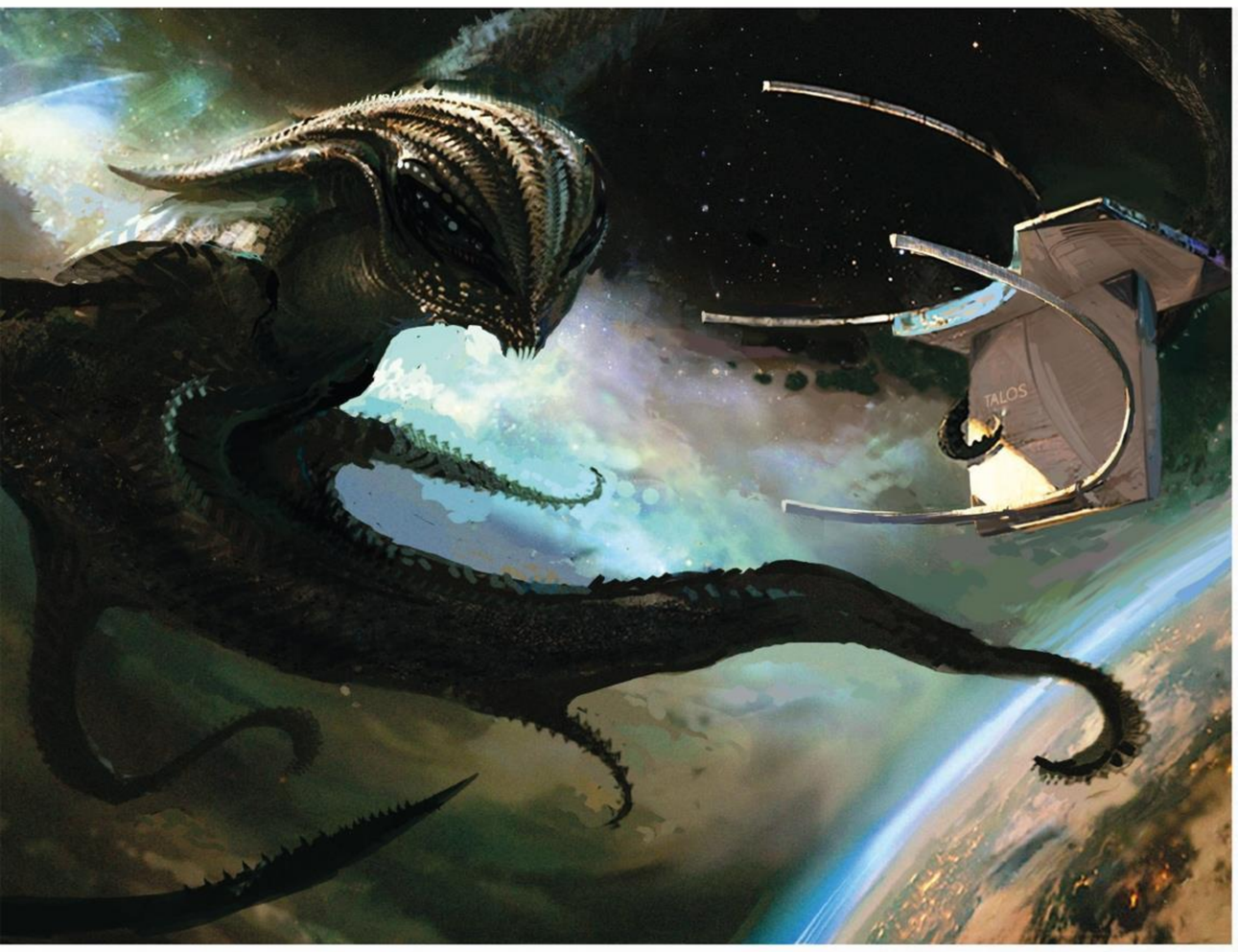
Phantoms were a challenge to develop, as they are the most humanoid of the alien ecology. There was constant iteration and revising to avoid the “man in a rubber suit” look. It was when we started implementing the visual effects that the final look tied together. The tests we did on the Phantoms really informed the look of the rest of the alien lineup.



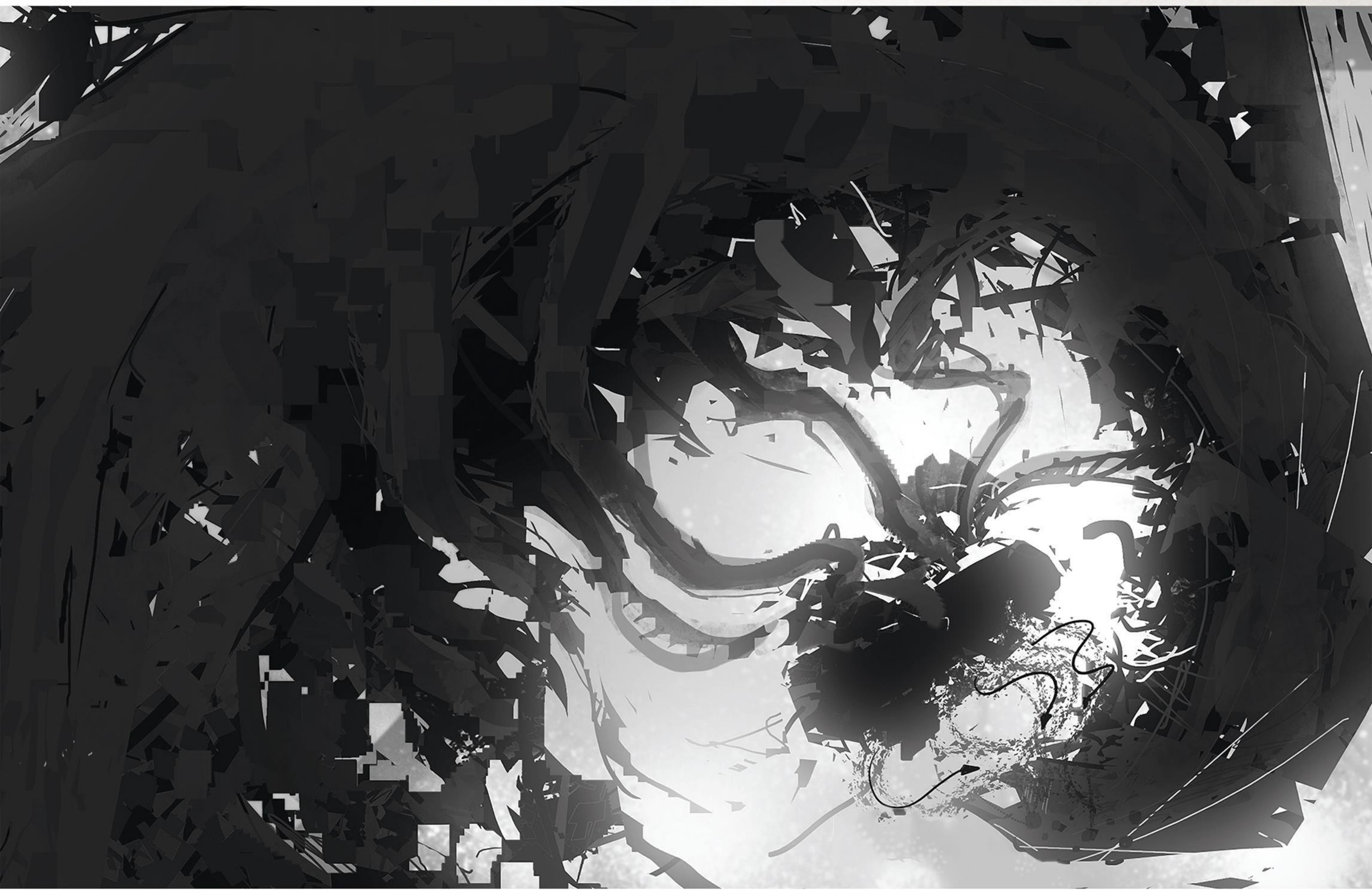












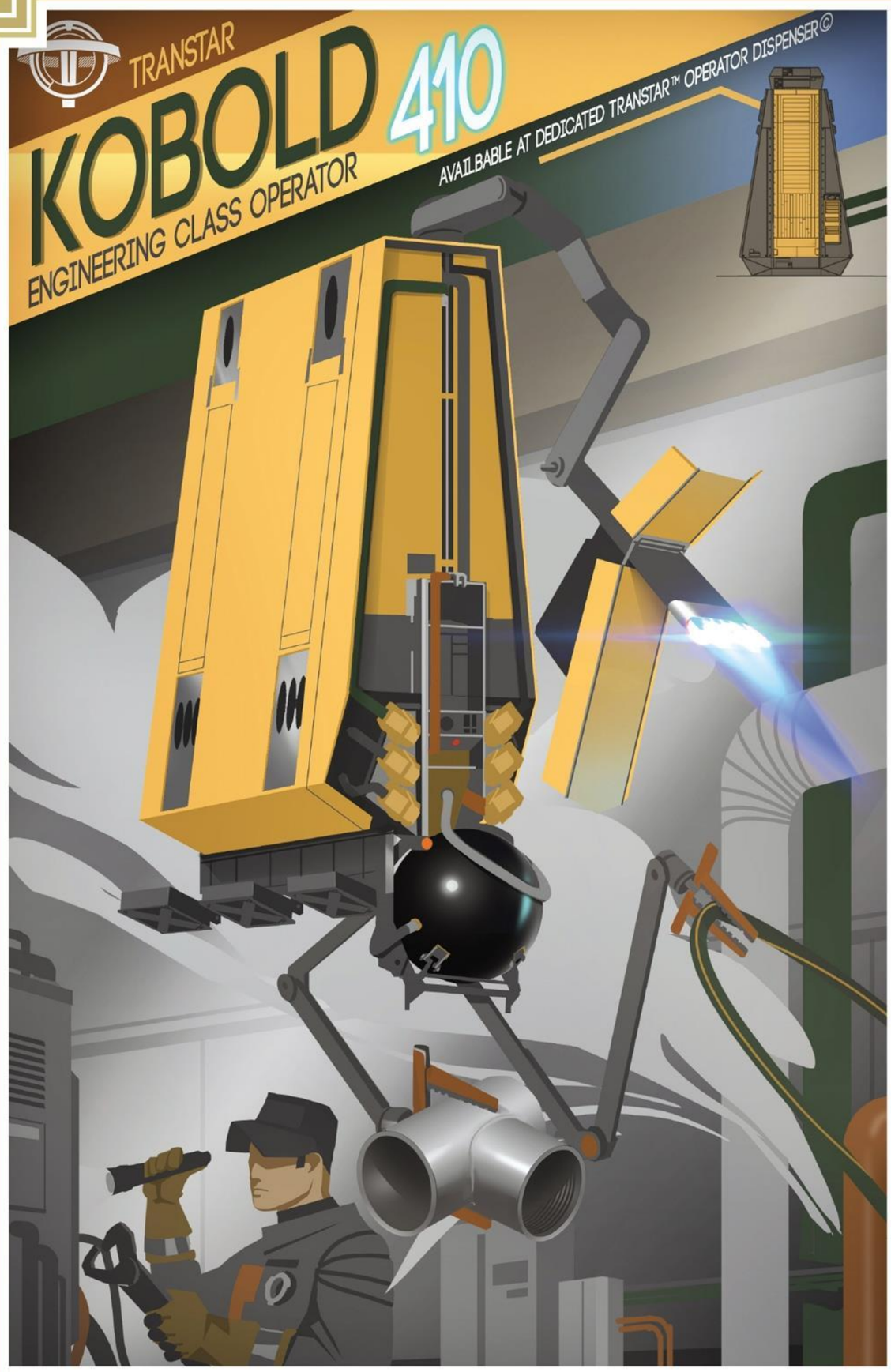
Designing an end boss that's meant to be a devourer of worlds is no small order. Like the rest of our aliens, he had to look related to the alien ecology, while retaining the feeling of being a force of cosmic power.



We designed the Operator fabrication system to look as though it could be related to the rest of our crafting system. Like the Fabricator and Recycler, the Operator Dispenser is monolithic in nature, making it easy to spot in game. The glass front also provides a full view of the creation process.



Operators went through many revisions, both in game play and visual design. The one thing that never changed in their design was their ability to hover and fly, as well as adapt to a variety of situations. Hidden security cameras and Google's self-driving cars, conveying a sense of always being watched, inspired the black eye.

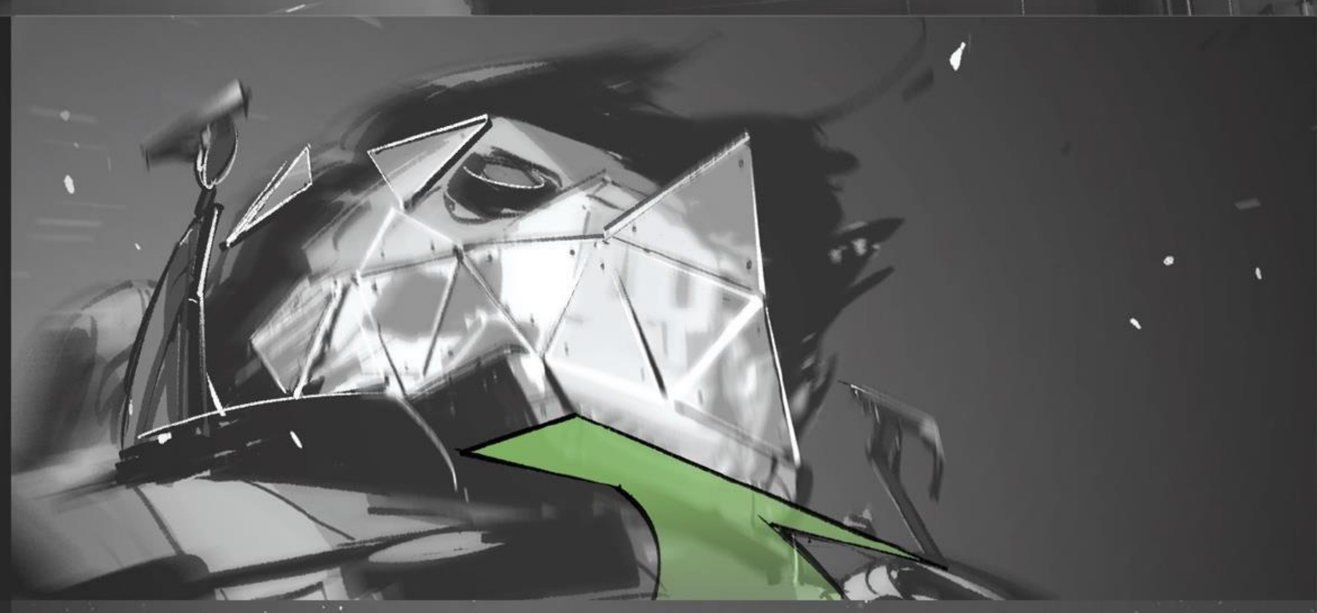

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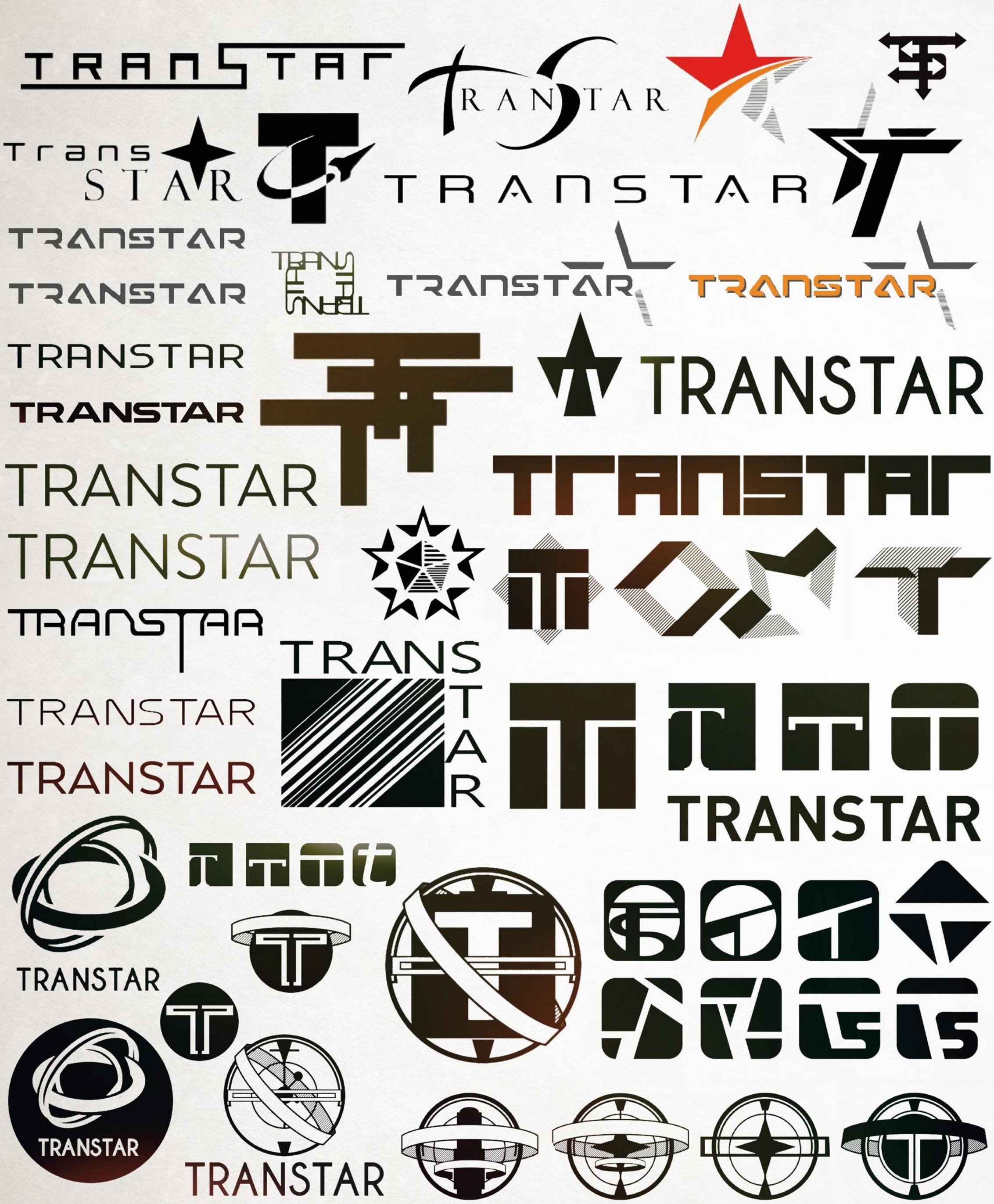




05

PRODUCTION

Many times incredibly useful art is generated that isn't featured directly in the final game. This section includes art pieces that inspire ideas, convey knowledge to the team, or are otherwise related to the creative process.


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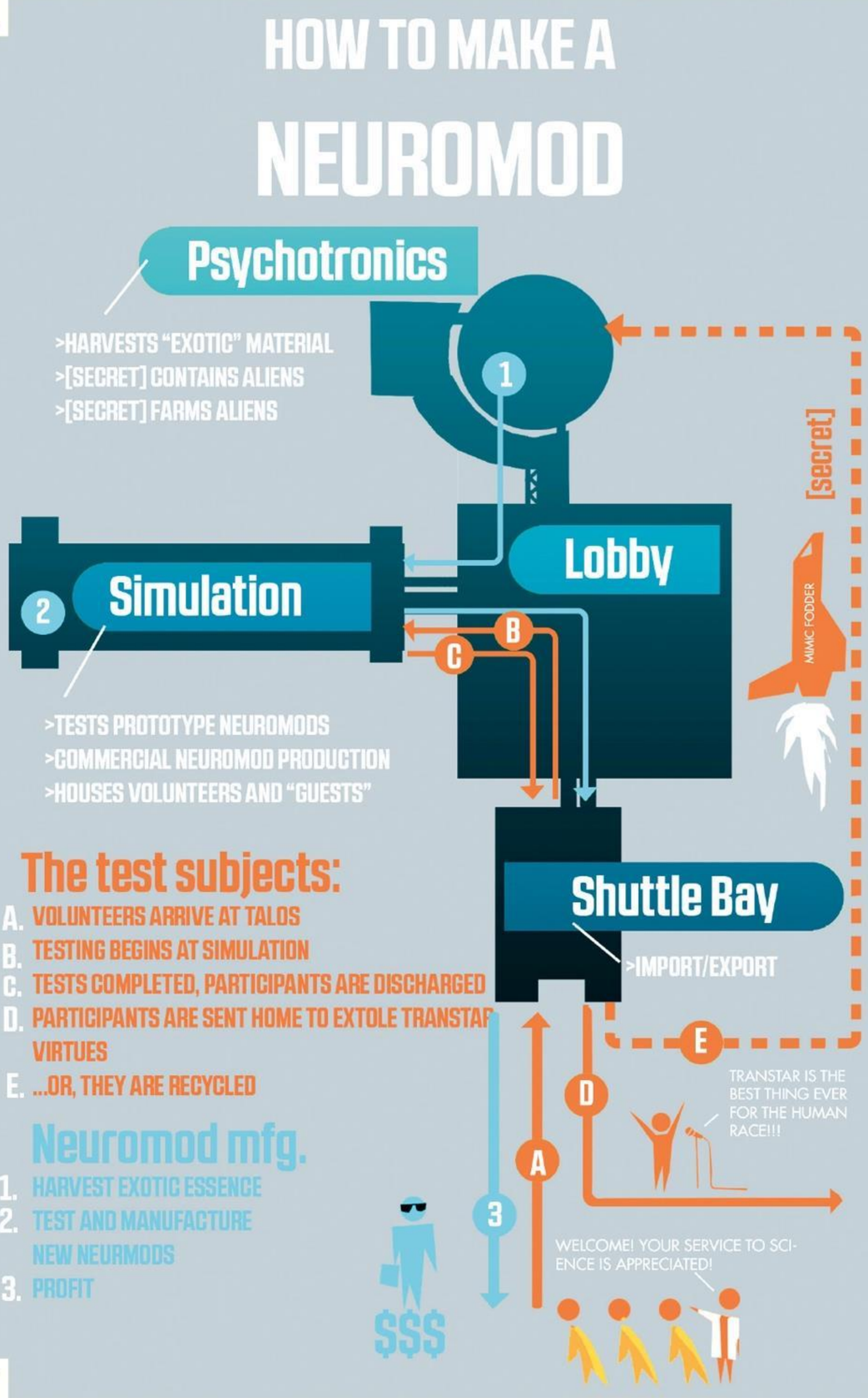
Our original plan for tutorial cards was to do a series of graphic images, as we used in *Dishonored*. After a few initial passes, we decided to pursue a different route, in an effort to more directly convey information using in-game systems and to reduce production time and costs.

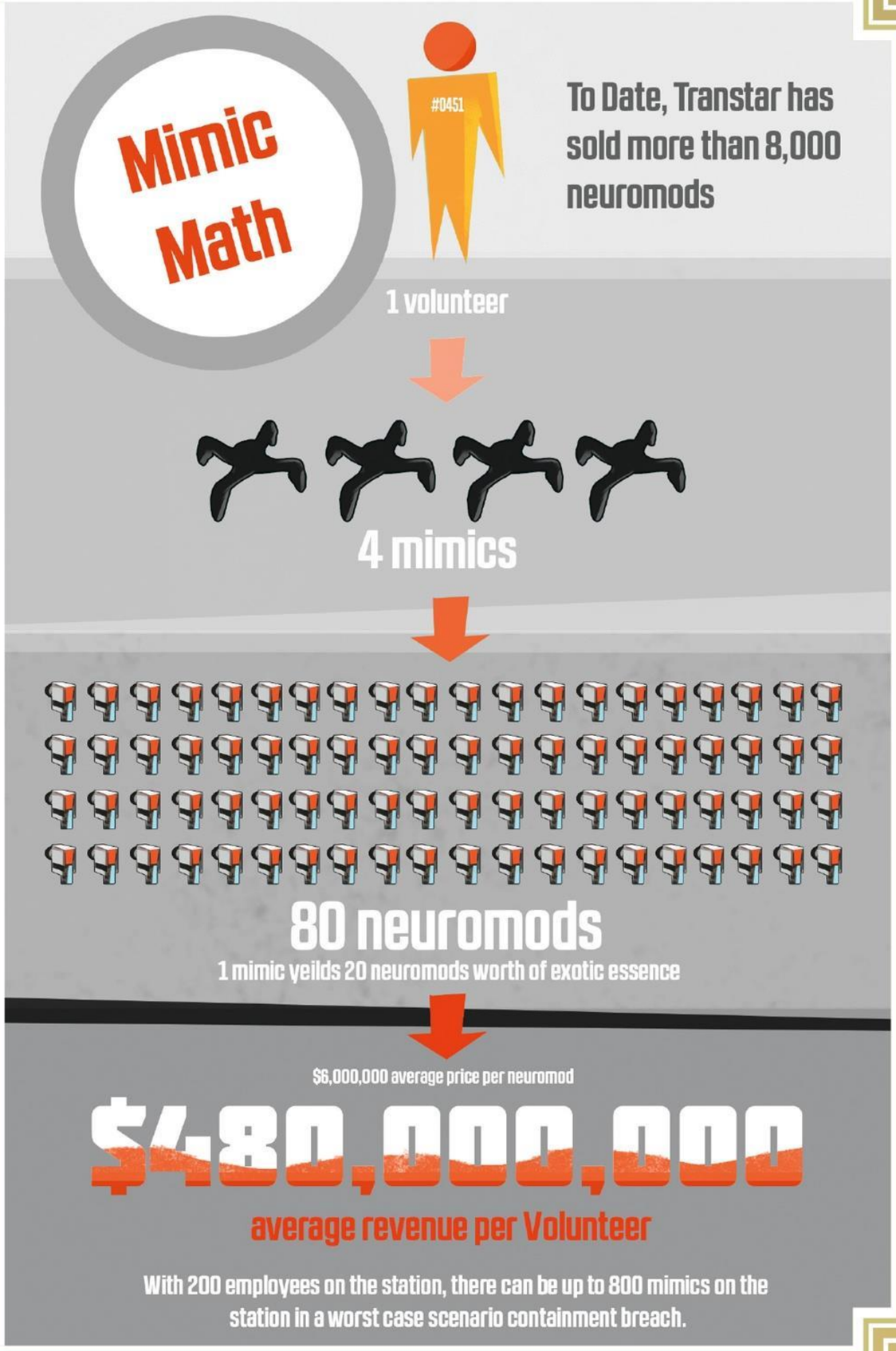


Before marketing started full time on the project, we commissioned a set of storyboards for a trailer proposal. It was very action oriented and showed off several abilities and encounters in the game.



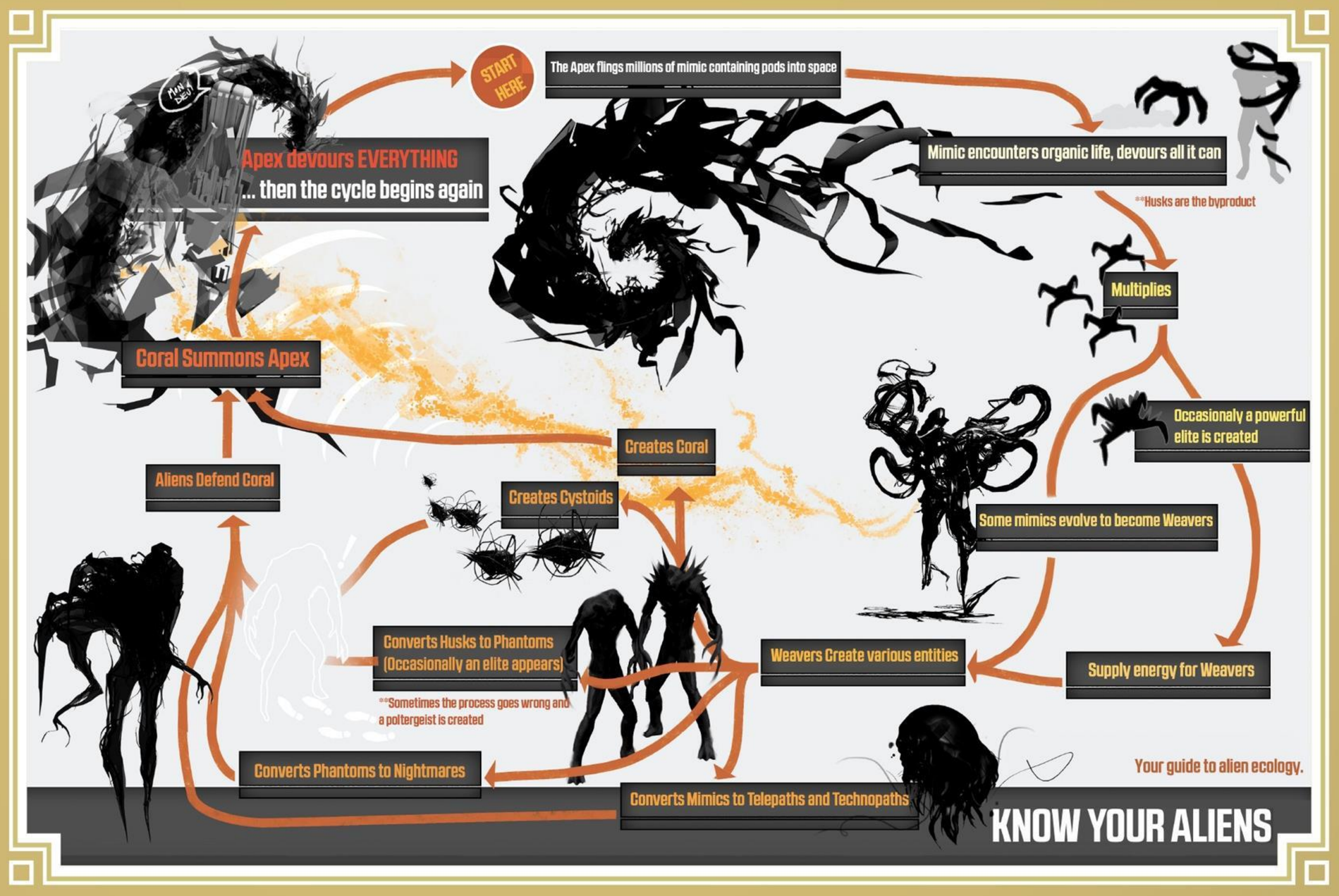
While the final trailer went in a radically different direction, the boards still inspired ideas for encounters and creative storytelling in the game.





Infographics are a tried-and-true method for explaining complex systems simply to large audiences.

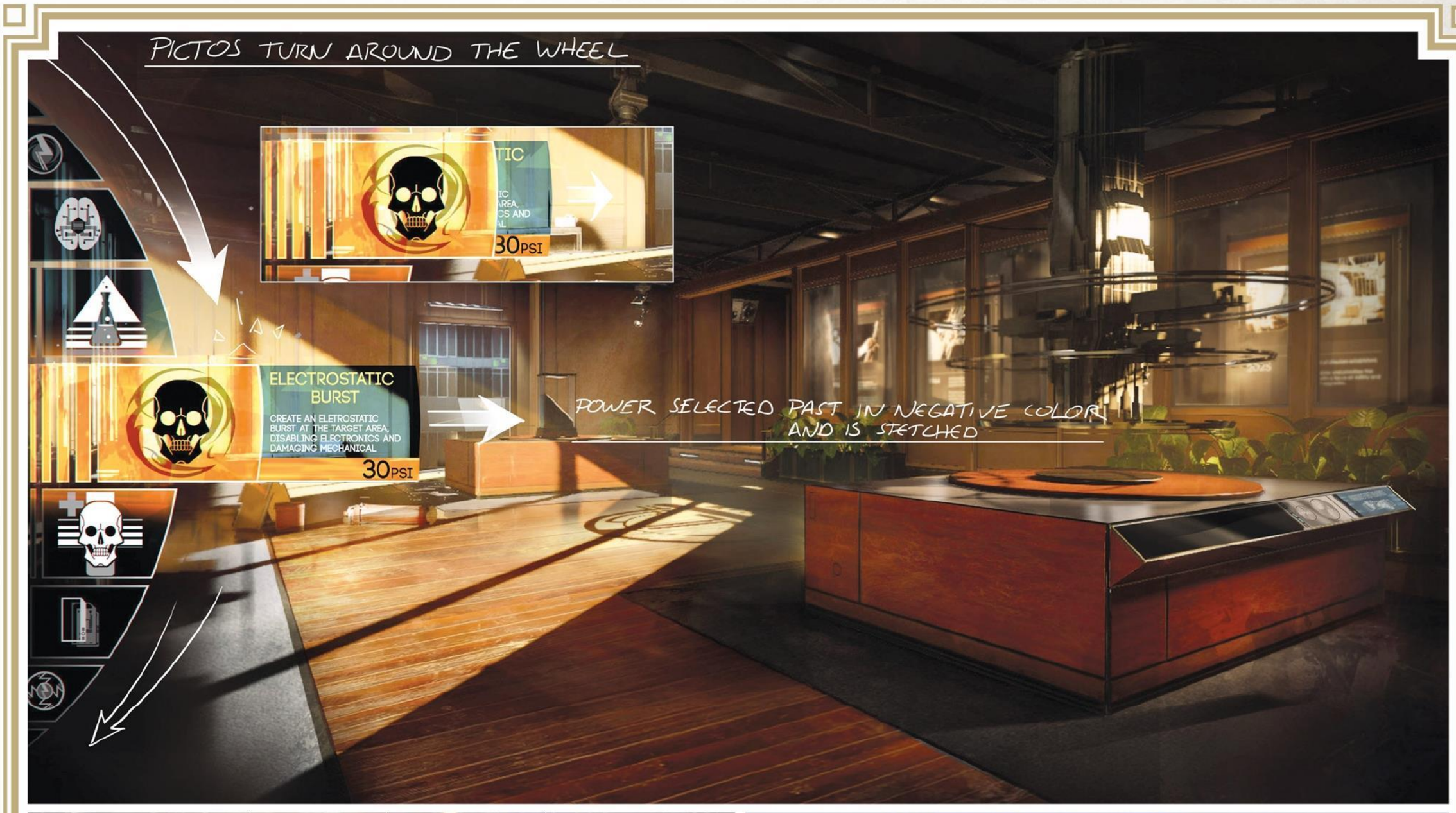
To help facilitate internal communication, we created several infographics to help the team understand the more complex economies and ecologies of Talos I.







The RPG elements in *Prey* required several complex UI elements. The UI for these systems had to be innovative and true to our visual identity, without sacrificing intuitiveness and familiarity.







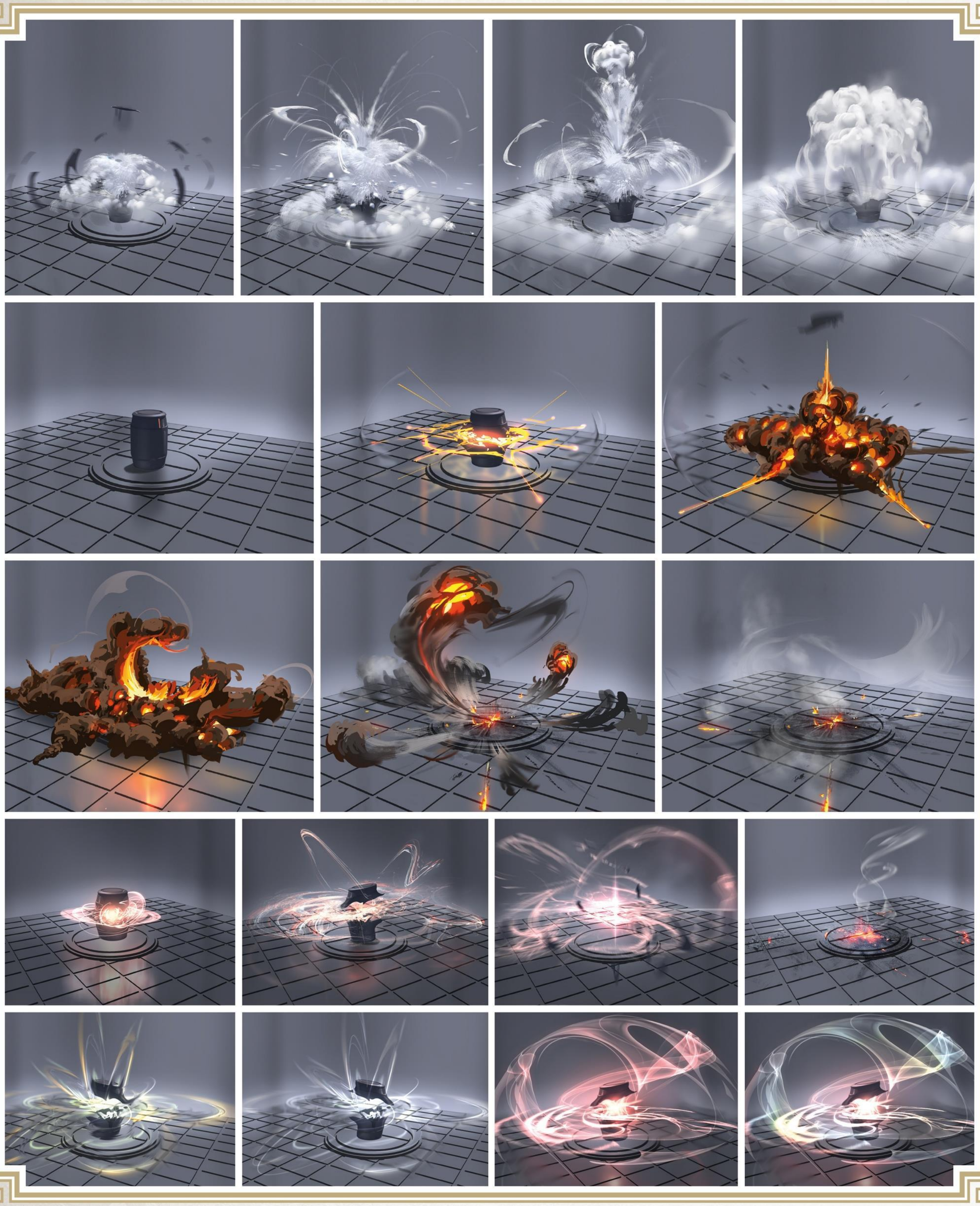
Perhaps the most challenging UI element to implement was the power wheel. We had to account for a wide variety of tools and powers being available to the player, without being overwhelming or cumbersome.



06

VFX

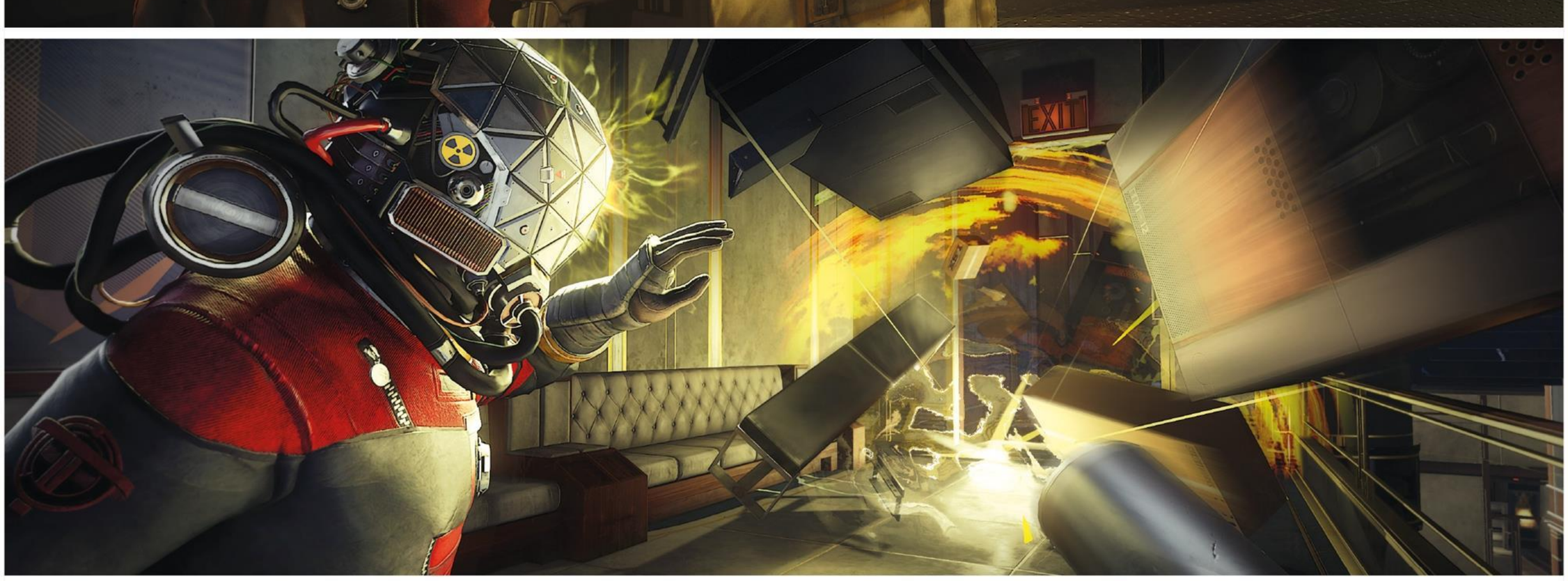
For *Prey*, visual effects went beyond being the icing on the cake; they went beyond making our environments and game play dynamic. Well-done effects were essential to the aliens' successful look, and were just as critical as animation in distinguishing the various Typhon. As we figured out what the aliens did with their powers, this further informed choices we made in their visual development.



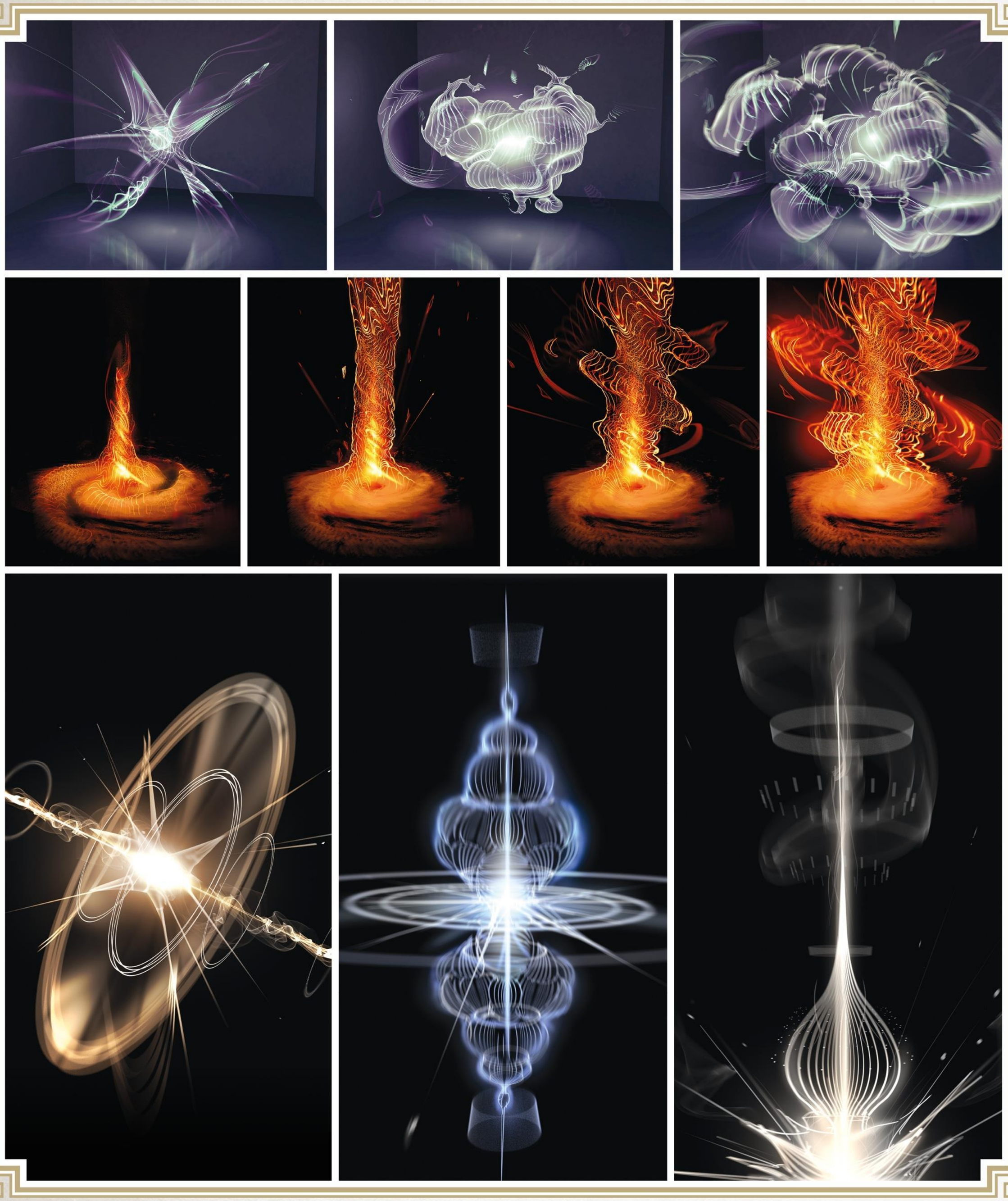
Here we have some familiar visual effects for commonly encountered environmental hazards. Research like this is great for inspiring an end product. It's difficult to reinvent an explosion in a game, so research helps give ideas on where style and originality can be pushed.


PETERSONS


PETERSONS


EXIT



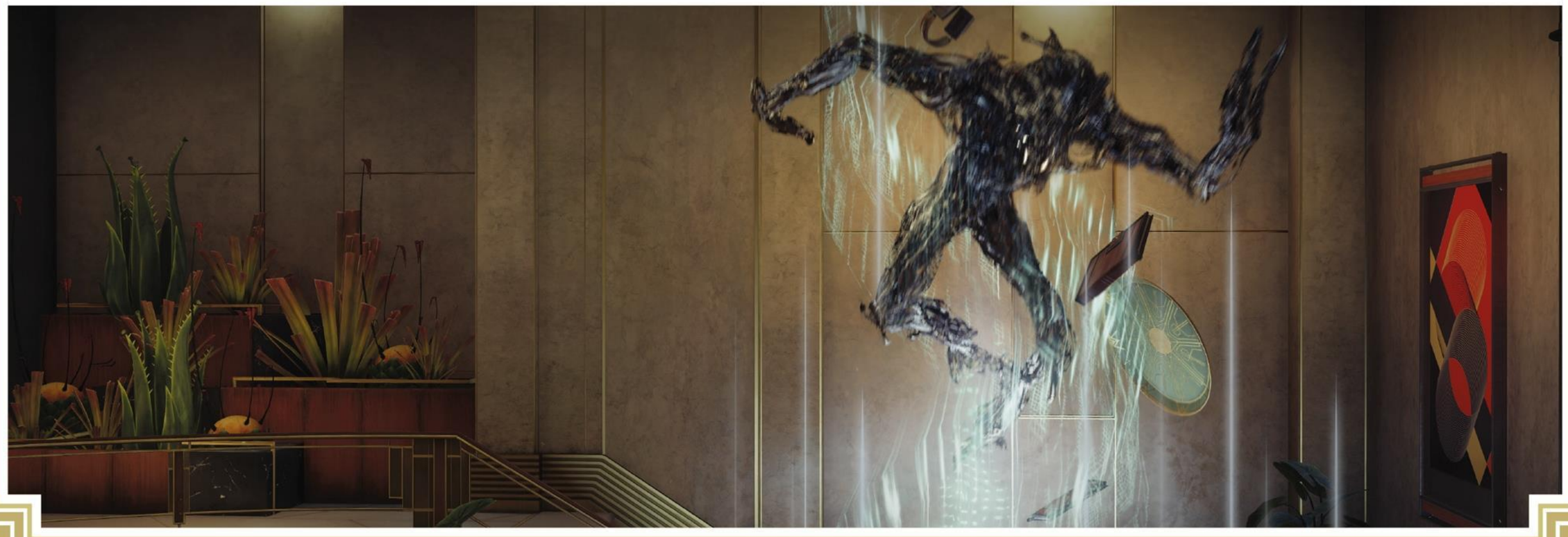


These concepts helped establish the visual language for psychic elements of the game. The first step is imagining how the alien derives its power, and then we look into how this would manifest into something visual. Above all, we wanted our alien powers to be otherworldly but not magical, with psychedelic connotations. Vector-based images, neon patterns, and fractal designs were referenced. This extended beyond VFX to inform other elements that appear in the game, including the coral, UI, and even posters found in the game world.











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Megan Walker, and everyone at Dark Horse
Fred Nolting
Our partners at Dhruva, Virtuos, ArtBully, and CGBot
Everyone at Arkane Studios

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A dark alien force torments the enigmatic Talos I space station, and you alone must stop the threat from destroying humanity. As Morgan Yu, survival depends not just on strength and weaponry, but wits as well. A bold new story set in a dangerous universe, *Prey*® is the highly-anticipated sci-fi action game from Arkane Studios, creators of the award-winning *Dishonored*® series.

Arkane Studios and Dark Horse Books proudly present *The Art of Prey*®, an exquisite and comprehensive collection featuring hundreds of pieces of gorgeous art showcasing the signature world-building, attention to detail, and unique take on futuristic design from the development of *Prey*®.

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