Introduction to Concept Art- After School Class

Concept art is more than drawing pictures every day; it is a form of storytelling for a very specific studio audience that informs how assets in media might be designed and communicated. Concept art is an ideas job, and those ideas happen to be expressed primarily through art. To express these ideas effectively, it's important not only to practice and explore art fundamentals, but also have insight and curiosity for the world around you.

Join us as we explore the essential underpinnings of artistic conceptual storytelling and discover industry techniques that save time and reduce frustration. Unlock your creativity with a series of projects that will effectuate a stronger understanding of shape language, lighting, color, anatomy, architecture… and more! Learn what skills are in demand at studios and get advice on the next steps as you create and pursue your artistic goals!

Begin your lifelong journey into the world of concept art through the eyes of veteran video game concept artist and educator, Andrew Johnson. With over a decade of continuous work in the industry, his unique approach to this material is something you won't want to miss.

Section 1- Introduction and Storytelling

1) Intro: What is Concept Art?
   A) Presentation: How is studio art different than drawing anything you want?
   B) Discuss: "Is this concept art? Why or Why not?"
   C) Discuss: course overview- what we'll be covering
   D) Demo: "Getting set up"

2) Fostering Visual Interest
   A) Discuss: "What makes something visually interesting?"
   B) Presentation: Create visual interest through story and understanding
   C) Demo: "Superhero Eggbaby, Sketches"
   Project: Superhero Eggbaby.
   A short warm-up project. Students will be challenged to draw their favorite superhero. However, there's an important catch: the superhero's body must conform to the shape of an egg. How do we take something that we're familiar with and adjust the design to meet a client's needs?

3) Identifying Story Components
   A) Presentation: "Telling a simple story with Art"
   B) Discussion/ Problem Solving: "What stories do we see?"
   C) Demo: "Superhero Eggbaby, Line & Fill Technique"

4) Visual Problem Solving
A) Discussion/ Problem Solving Series: How do we make the story work?
B) Presentation: Adding visual cues to drive story/ Interest
C) Demo: "Superhero Eggbaby, Finishing up"

5) Introduction to Shape Language
A) Class Review: Superhero Eggbaby projects
B) Presentation: How Shape Language defines Stories
C) Demo: "Table Monsters: Reference Gathering"
Project: "Table Monsters."
Building off of the techniques used in Eggbaby Superhero, students will be challenged to observe shape and materials over the coming weeks to design food-based monsters that conform to a particular style. The project will help students interpret basic shapes, apply simple lighting and color, and learn how to read and assimilate simple styles.

Section 2- Working with Shape

1) Perception of Shapes and Patterns
A) Discussion: Food- what foods can you recognize by shape alone? Why?
B) Presentation: Where do we see shapes in media, and why?"
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: What shapes do you see? Why do you see them?
D) Demo: "Table monsters, thumbnail sketches"

2) Shape and Composition
A) Discussion: What's the most important thing in your drawing?
How does shape relate?
B) Presentation: How shapes drive visual flow and hierarchies?
C) Problem Solving: Arranging shapes properly to create great visual flow
D) Demo: "Table Monsters, intermediate sketches"

3) "Shape Stories"
A) Discussion: How do shapes inform and suggest stories?
B) Presentation: Shape stories
C) Problem Solving: Telling a simple story with shapes
D) Demo: "Table Monsters, finding the story"

4) Problem Solving With Shapes
A) Discussion/ Problem Solving Series: Fixing the shape story
B) Presentation: How can we use shape to transform perception?
C) Demo: "Table Monsters, final sketches- stage 1"

5) Introduction to Style

A) Class Review: Table Monsters, Stage 1 sketches
B) Presentation: Style as visual context and identity
C) Demo: "Table Monsters: Stage 2-Context switching and resource gathering"

Section 3- Understanding Style

1) How to Analyze Style

A) Discussion: Media review- what's the style difference?
B) Presentation: Components of Style
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Changing style to suit the story
D) Demo: "Table Monsters, pivoting to stage 2: style conformity- sketch"

2) How Realistic?

A) Discussion: What is the importance of realism? When is realism unimportant or undesirable?
B) Presentation: How project limitations influence style
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Modify the style to meet the project limitations
D) Demo: "Table Monsters- final sketches"

3) Style is "Story Identity"

A) Discussion: Identity: What things are and are not. How does style contribute to identity?
B) Presentation: How style creates a unique identity for games and other media
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: How can we change the style to make the screenshots more unique
D) Demo: "Table Monsters- final line work"

4) Problem Solving With Style

A) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Changing style to meet your needs and limitations
B) Presentation: Creating a style library
C) Demo: "Table Monsters- creating fill layers"

5) Introduction to Light

A) **Class Review:** Table Monsters, Stage 2 Line Art
B) Presentation: Why lighting is a challenge
C) Demo: "Table monsters- setting up lighting"

Section 4- Understanding Light

1) How Do Light and Shadow Work?

A) Discussion: Media Review: How is light used by masters of the craft?

B) Presentation: Components of light
C) Demo: "Table Monsters- Blocking in Key Lights"

2) Working With Grayscale Value
A) Discussion: How does light make things appear three dimensional?
B) Presentation: The Form Principle
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Which surfaces get what kind of light?
D) Demo: "Table Monsters- Ambient Occlusion"

3) Storytelling with Light
A) Discussion: Media Review: How does light tell a story?
B) Presentation: Storytelling with light
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Which lighting scheme works best for the story I'm trying to tell?
D) Demo: "Table Monsters- Backlighting"

4) Problem Solving With Light
A) Discussion/ Problem Solving Series: Lighting analysis problem solving
B) Presentation: Observing lighting and materials
C) Demo: "Monsters- Double Checking the Form Principle"

5) Introduction to Color
A) Class Review: Table Monsters, Grayscale Lighting
B) Presentation: Color depends on Lighting
C) Demo: "Table Monsters- Color Treatment References"

Section 5- Working with Color

1) Going on a "Color Diet"
A) Discussion: Media review- How do professionals use color?
B) Presentation: Going on a "Color Diet"
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Which colors, when?
D) Demo: "Table Monsters, Color Blocking"

2) How we Perceive Color
A) Discussion: How does color change our perception of the world?
B) Presentation: Common color schemes and color psychology
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Which color scheme, where?
D) Demo: "Table Monsters- Color Cleanup"

3) Creating Stories With Color

A) Discussion: Media Review: How does color tell a story?
B) Presentation: Storytelling with Color
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: How do we fix the color to tell the right story
D) Demo: "Table Monsters-Last Looks"

4) Problem Solving with Color

A) Discussion/ Problem Solving Series: Color analysis problem solving
B) Presentation: Observing Materials and Color
C) In class work time

5) Introduction to Anatomy

A) Class Review: Table Monsters, LAST LOOKS
B) Presentation: Introduction to Anatomy
D) Demo: "Stylized Magical Character, Reference Gathering"
Project: "Stylized Character"
Students will create a stylized magical humanoid character in the vein of Overwatch. Students will be challenged to apply their understanding of shape language to the human form and explore anatomical and costuming concepts.

Section 6- Anatomy and Pose

1) Gesture Drawing

A) Discussion: What visuals make an interesting character?
B) Presentation: Line of action/ gesture drawing
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Figure analysis
D) Demo: "Stylized Character, gesture thumbnails"

2) Volumetric Anatomy

A) Discussion: How might we learn anatomy without the details?
B) Presentation: Learning anatomy through shape/ form
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Anatomical form analysis
D) Demo: "Stylized Character, Initial sketches"

3) Facial Structures

A) Discussion: Symmetry vs asymmetry, "classical beauty" vs interest
B) Presentation: Drawing faces, understanding facial planes
C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Make the face fit the story
D) Demo: "Stylized Character, sketching facial details"

4) Choosing a Pose

A) Discussion: Why are poses so important
 B) Presentation: Choosing a strong pose without obscuring your character
 C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Choose the right pose for the story
 D) Demo: "Stylized Character, sketching poses"

5) Tricks of the Trade: Anatomy

A) Discussion: What to do if you're having too much difficulty with anatomy: the studio solution
 B) Presentation: Anatomy tools for artists that are cheap or free
 C) Demo: "Stylized Character, final sketches"

Section 7- Costuming

1) Introduction to Costuming

A) Discussion: Why is costuming so important?
 B) Presentation: Costumes as identity
 C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Costume analysis
 D) Demo: "Stylized Character, Costume variants"

2) Folds, Wrinkles, & Materials

A) Discussion: Why is drawing fabric so tricky?
 B) Presentation: Folds and textile weight
 C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Textile storytelling
 D) Demo: "Stylized Character, Line and Fill"

3) Armor

A) Discussion: What is armor for?
 B) Presentation: Different types of armor
 C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Armor conceptualization
 D) Demo: "Stylized Character, Lighting & materials"

4) Patterns and Story

A) Discussion: How are patterns and prints used in costumes?
 B) Presentation: How patterns and prints tell stories
 C) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Pattern and Print Analysis
 D) Demo: "Stylized Character, Color"

5) Problem Solving with Costuming

A) Discussion/ Problem Solving: Costume Problem Solving
 B) Demo: "Stylized Character, polish"

C) In-Class Work Time

Section 8- Creating a Scene

1) Perspective = Camera
A) Class Review: Stylized Character Projects LAST LOOKS
B) Discussion: Why do perspective drawings usually look boring?
C) Presentation: Perspective = Camera
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, Gathering References"
Project: Simple City Scene
Students will be challenged to take previous understandings of living characters and apply them to a city scene. How do we take uninteresting, blocky buildings and roads and create a visually interesting scene with minimal effort?

2) Which Camera and Why?
A) Discussion: Media review: Why this angle?
B) Presentation: Finding interesting scene composition
C) Problem Solving: How should I change my camera if…?
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, scene thumbnails"

3) "Why Are We Here?"
A) Discussion: What happens in game spaces?
B) Presentation: Giving purpose to your camera
C) Problem Solving: Make the scene interesting!
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, 4 scene sketches"

4) Story Vs. Rules
A) Discussion: Is perspective more important than story perspective?
B) Presentation: Choosing the right balance of "rules"
C) Problem Solving: How can we skip some of the boring rules (if we must) ?
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, color blocking sketches"

5) Introduction to Architecture
A) Class Review: 4 Scene sketches (color)
B) Presentation: Introduction to Architecture
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, linework 1"

Section 9- City Architecture

1) Buildings are Characters
A) Discussion: How do buildings express character?
B) Presentation: Buildings are characters, Architecture is costuming

C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, linework 2"

2) A Brief History of Architecture
A) Discussion: Architectural contrast- why are styles so different?
B) Presentation: A brief history of architecture
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, linework 3"

3) Which Style and Why?
A) Discussion: Is there a right or wrong answer for a building style?
B) Presentation: Choosing the right style for the right narrative
C) Problem Solving: How can we fix the style to better reflect the story?
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, fill work 1"

4) Problem Solving with Architecture
A) Discussion: What happens if the architecture is wrong?
B) Problem Solving: What's wrong with our architecture?
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, fill work 2"

5) Introduction to Architectural Structure
A) Class Review: Simple City line & fill
B) Presentation: Introduction to Urban Structure
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, lighting 1"

Section 10- Urban Structure

1) Building Structure
A) Discussion: The importance of proper observation
B) Presentation: How are buildings arranged?
C) Problem Solving: What types of building would be appropriate for the gameplay?
D) Demo: "Simple City Scene, lighting 2"

2) Urban Structures Beyond Buildings
A) Discussion: Why is context to buildings important?
B) Presentation: City green spaces and parks
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, texture detail 1"

3) Road and Highway Structures
A) Discussion: The importance of understanding city infrastructure
B) Presentation: How does city infrastructure add to the story?
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, texture detail 2"

4) Scene Clues
A) Presentation: Scene clues add visual interest
B) Problem Solving: What can we determine about the location and placement of the buildings in the scene? (GeoGuessr sim)
C) Demo: "Simple City Scene, polish"

5) Introduction to Interiors
A) Class Review: Simple City Scene, LAST LOOKS
B) Presentation: Introduction to Interiors
C) Demo: "Quick Interior, reference gathering"
Project: "Quick Interior"
Students will create a quick, isometric stylized room interior, applying previous classes on architecture, shape, color, and lighting. Students will be challenged to demonstrate an understanding of interior composition and tasteful contrast to create a compelling space.

Section 11- Interior Design

1) Interior Arrangement & Flow
A) Discussion: How is a grocery store typically set up? Why?
B) Presentation: Arrangement and traffic flow in rooms and buildings
C) Problem Solving: How can we improve the flow?
D) Demo: "Quick Interior, Thumbs"

2) Form Follows Function
A) Discussion: What's the difference between a coffee shop and a bar? Why?
B) Presentation: Interior furnishings express philosophy and function
C) Problem Solving: What forms/ furnishings should change if we change the story?
D) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room setup"

3) Clean or Messy?
A) Discussion: Are all messes dirty? Why or why not?
B) Presentation: Making realistic messes in your scene
C) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room furnishings"

4) Interior Problem Solving
A) Discussion: Media review- outstanding interior work in games
B) Presentation: How should we fix the interior to match the story?
C) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room linework 1"

5) Introduction to Application
A) Class Review: Quick Interiors- linework

B) Presentation: Prepping for your career as an artist
C) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room linework"

Section 12- Studio Application

1) How does a Studio work?
A) Discussion: Are all studios the same? What's the difference?
B) Presentation: Game production at a studio
C) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room fill"

2) Studio Restrictions
A) Discussion: Why are restrictions in art production important?
B) Presentation: Types of restrictions studios often face
C) Problem Solving: How might we balance quality in restrictive cases?
D) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room color"

3) Managing Your Time
A) Discussion: Why is time management important?
B) Presentation: Tips on time management to facilitate professionalism and life
C) Problem Solving: Applying the "Getting Things Done" strategy
D) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room texture & detail"

4) What and How Should You Learn?
A) Discussion: How important is art school?
B) Presentation: Tips on creating goals for learning
C) Problem Solving: What should my goal be?
D) Demo: "Quick Interior, Isometric room lighting"

5) Building a Portfolio
A) Discussion: What is a portfolio?
B) Presentation: Tips on creating the ideal hiring package
C) Class Review: LAST LOOKS- All class projects