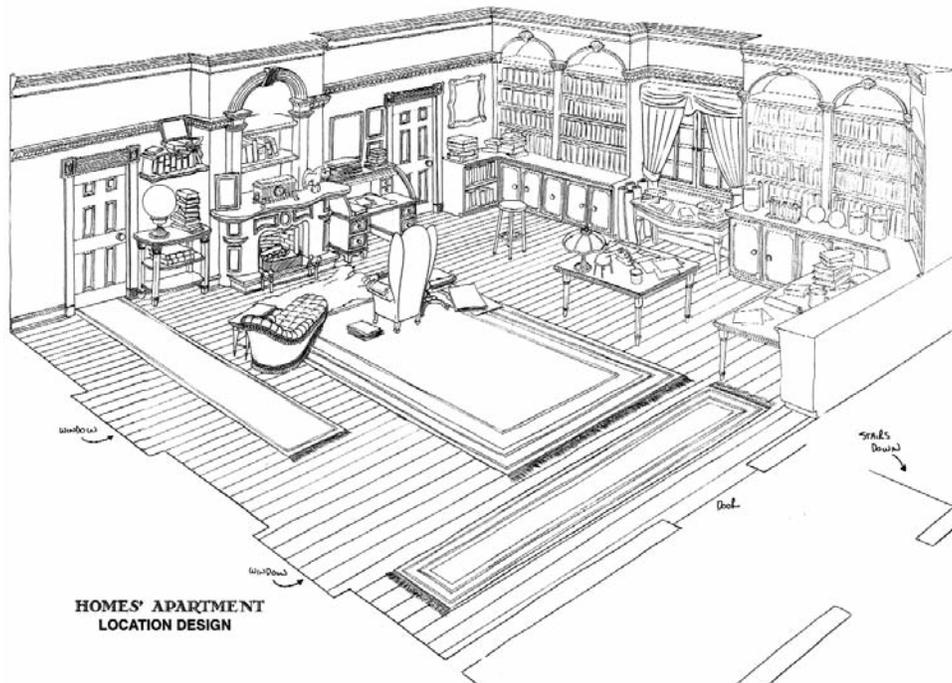
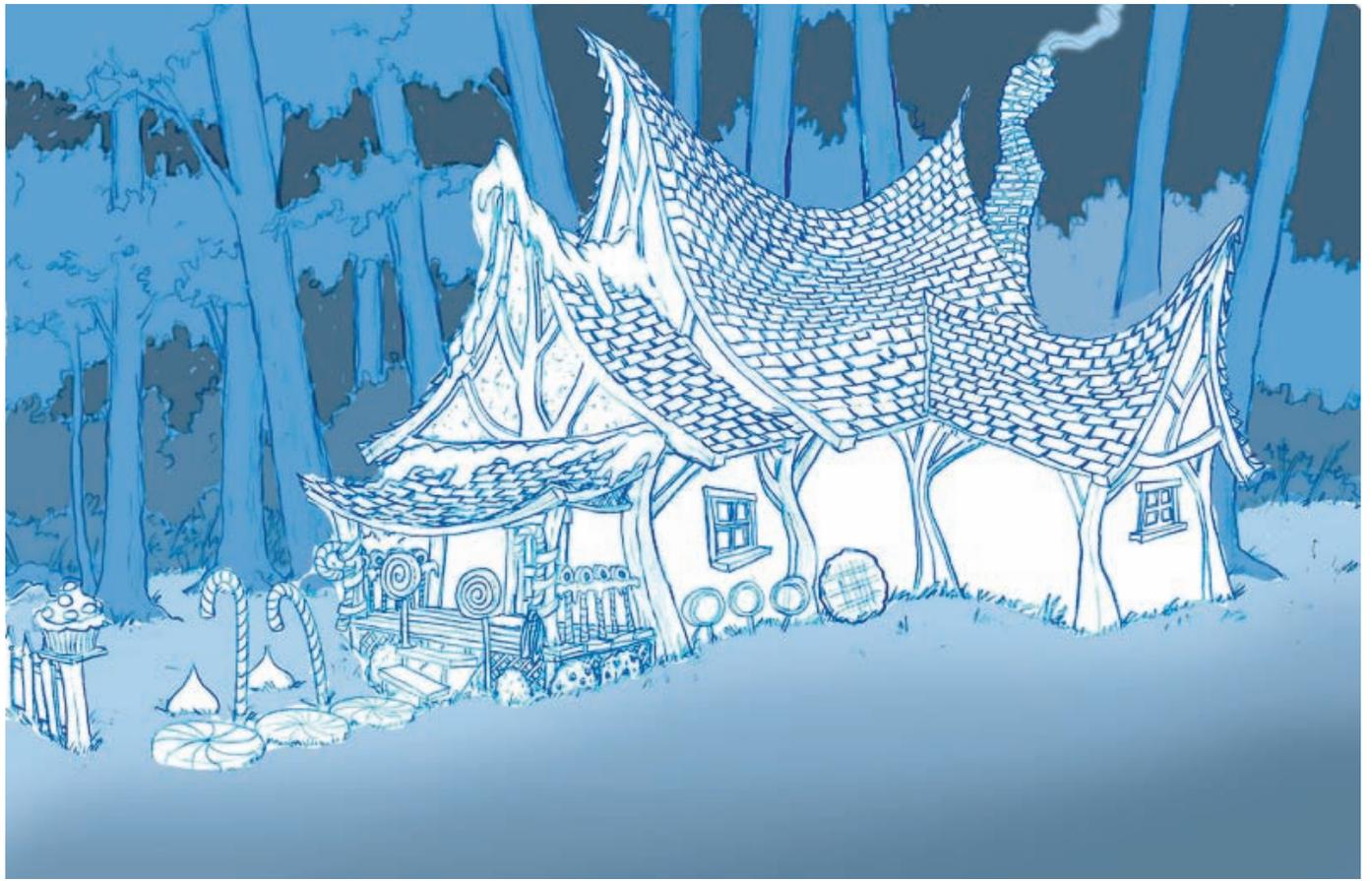
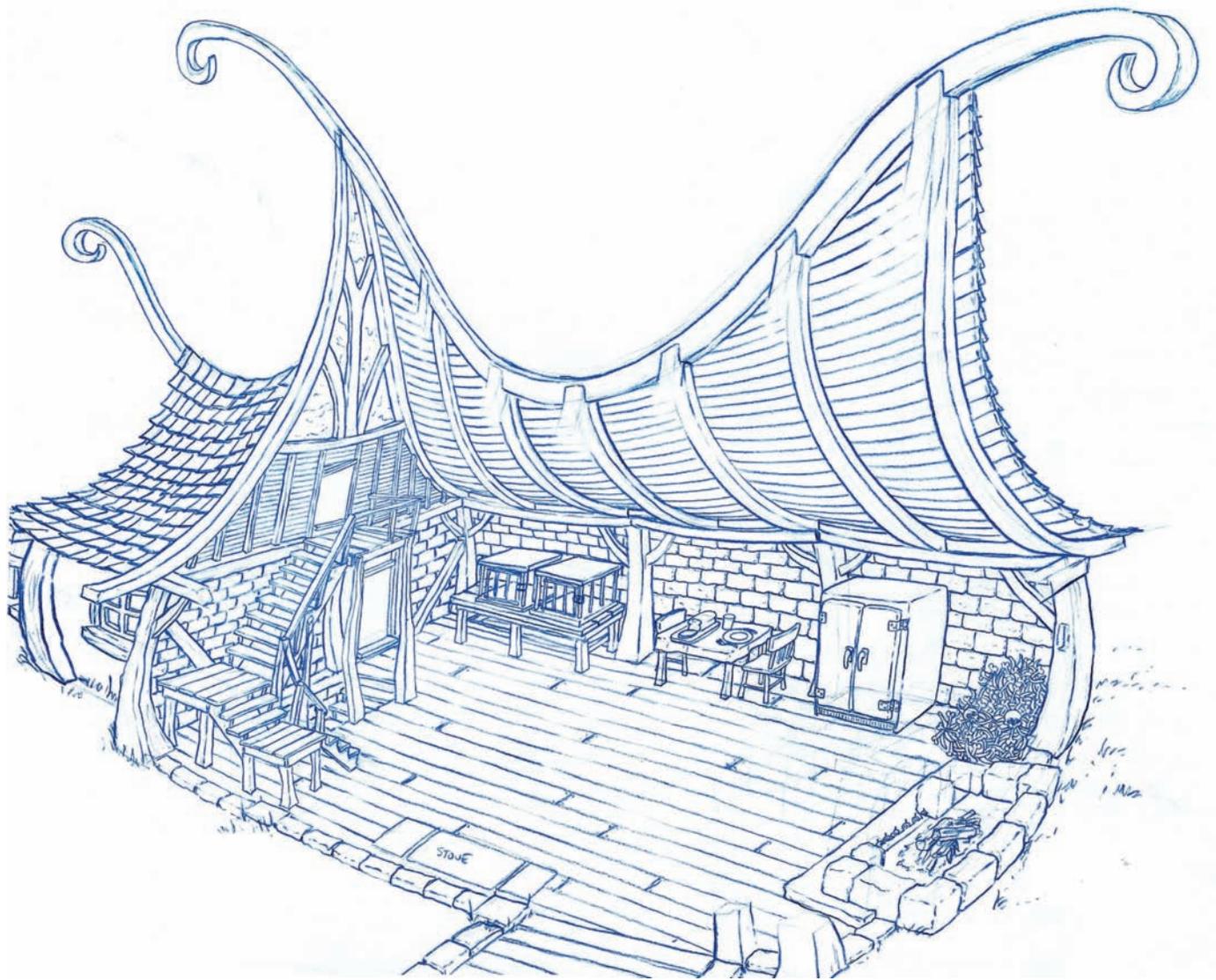


Production Art

by
Brian Lemay





So, What Is Production Art?

It's a very broad term for any artwork used in the production that you're working on, duh. It can be: location designs, orthographic views of walls or floors. Layout views of an environment, prop designs of the objects within the environment or props used by a character. Thumbnail sketches, rendered views, background paintings, storyboards, blocking sheets, cels, animation, character concepts, designs, model sheets, posters, workbooks, and bibles, whew.

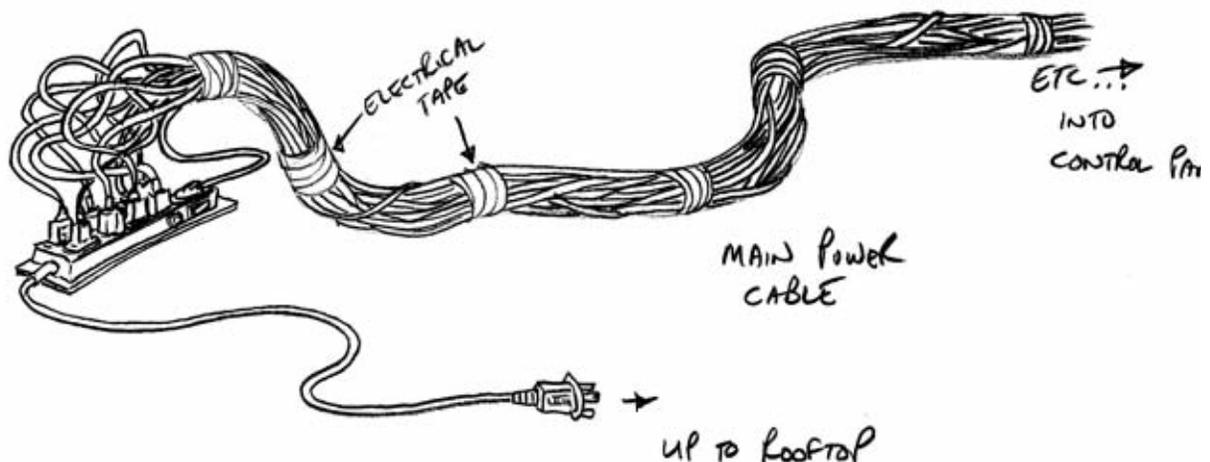
For this book we'll focus on these:

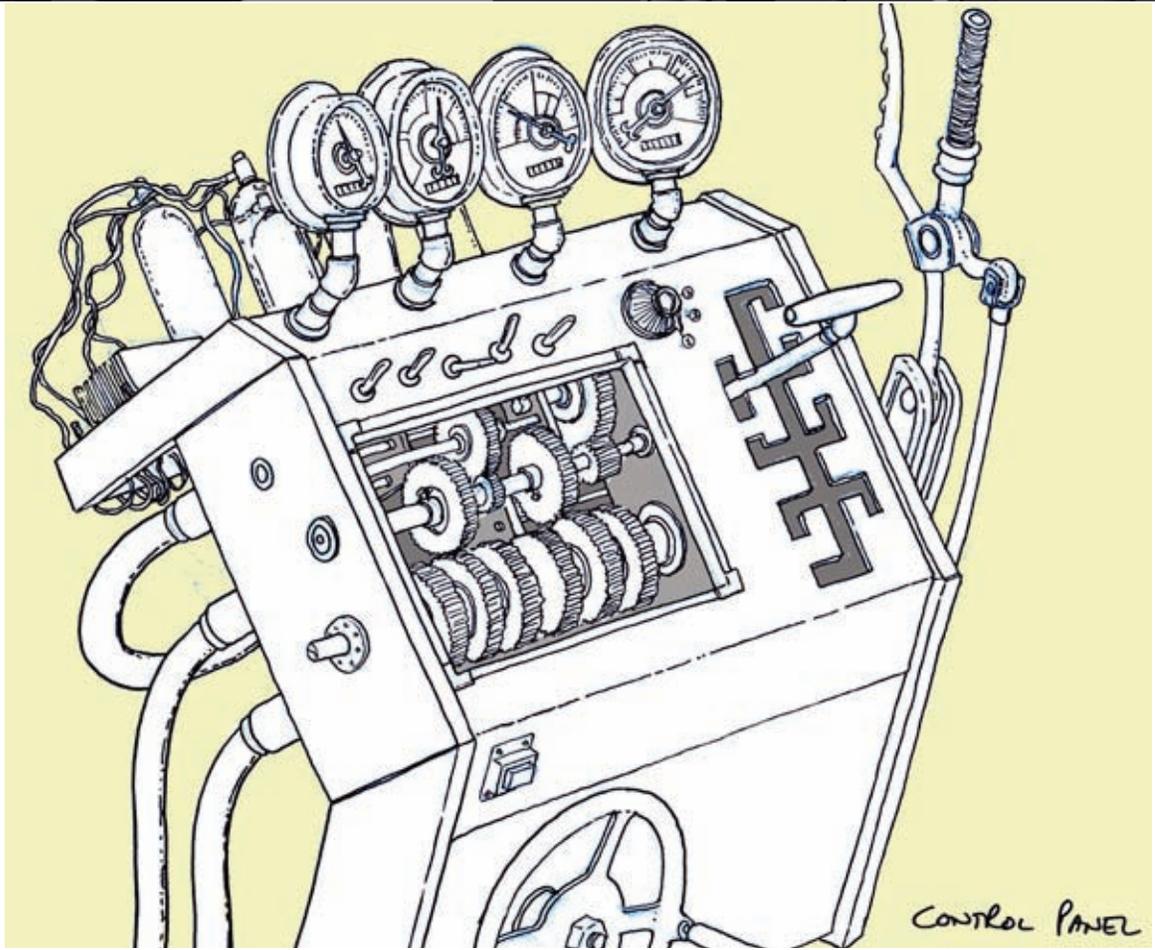
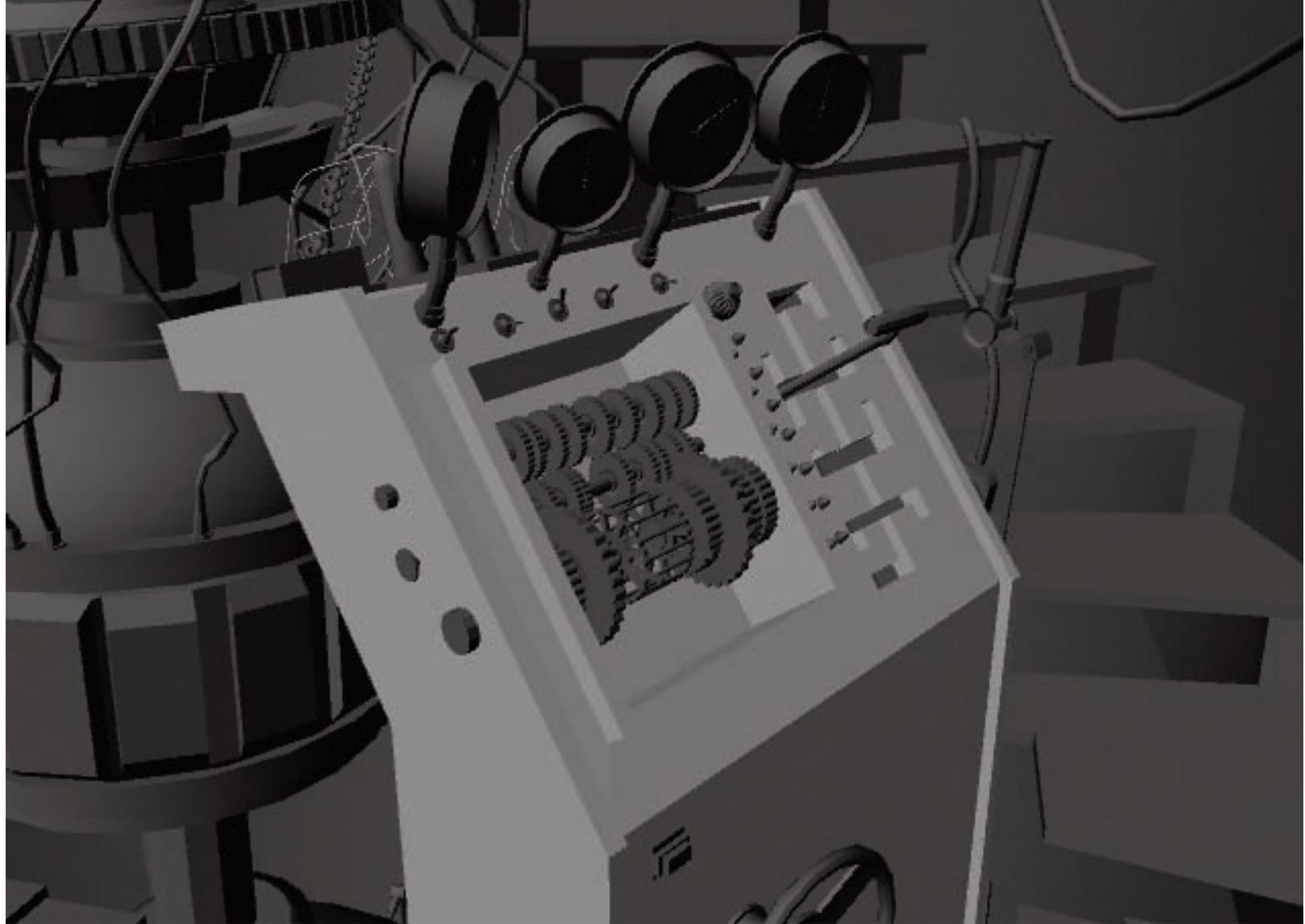
- concept designs
- location designs
- orthographic views of walls or floors
- prop designs of the objects within the environment or props used by a character
- blocking sheets

and how they later apply to these:

- thumbnail sketches
- storyboards
- layout views of an environment
- rendered views
- background paintings

My other three books on layout focus primarily on the actual layout backgrounds and some storyboarding concepts, so here I want to devote some time on the work that comes before those stages. I also cover character design quite extensively in the "*Designing Cartoon Characters for Animation*", "*The Animation Drawing Course*", and the "*Dynamic Posing*" books, so we won't get into that stuff too much.





Concept Designs

The very first stage in any production is the “IDEA”. This can take many forms. It can be a simple statement of characters in an environment such as: “orphaned beavers in the forest”, “boy and his dog on a pirate ship”, or “boy and girl panda bears in a zoo”. It might come from a cliché situation setup like: “mad scientist in his lab trying to take over the world” or it could come from an established story or fairy tale: “Hansel and Grethel”, “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”, or “Frankenstein”. Perhaps you’ve written something yourself, a short story or even just a gag set-up. These are all the core idea that gets you started. You don’t necessarily have to have all the details worked out in advance or a completed script with all the final dialogue written. You can just jump in with the basic premise and build from there. Sometimes concept design will lead your idea into a different direction from where you originally thought you were going to go, and that’s o.k.

Obviously, someone has to make hard decisions about what works and what doesn’t. This is usually either the executive producer, the producer or the director, and in some weird cases, it could be the person who is financing the project (not always the best scenario as history has well proven over and over again).

The job of the concept designer is to come up with as many images as they can to show as many options as they can so the people in charge can start to narrow their vision of the final project down. In most cases these days, the concept designer is someone with a very distinctive artistic design style. Rarely, (if ever) does the original style from the concept designs make it’s way into the final look of the project. It’s usually a metamorphosis process. Someone looks at a piece of concept art and mixes it with another design style which then is picked up by another designer who twists it into something slightly different and so on until the final look is achieved. Some studios such as Disney and Pixar have used the term “plussing” to describe this process of always striving to make the previous person or department’s work better.

If you’re reading this book as a guide for coming up with a portfolio of artwork that you can use when applying for a job as a concept designer, you may find it difficult to modify or transform your artwork significantly enough to have it look like the process I’ve outlined above. I speak for myself here as well, when I say, modifying your own personal style can be very difficult. The only way that I have found this possible is by starting off with a design style that is completely unlike my own. Using an established design style by someone else and then trying to draw like them is very difficult. You’ll constantly want to mould it to your style and then it looks like a cheap copy. It is however, an excellent exercise to help you develop your drawing skills.

I often tell my students that they should cherish the limited amount of time they have in school (usually 3 years) because once they move into a studio job, they will always be drawing someone else's characters... unless of course you get to be the character designer for a show and they ask you to use your own drawing style, which was the case for me on the "Inspector Gadget Show" from 1983. I got that job in a rather weird way.

Before the show began production, I was an assistant animator on the feature film, "Rock and Rule" produced by Nelvana in Toronto from 1980 - 1982. I was working with animator, Tom Sito and during this time I was also doing freelance illustration work for a youth magazine. This freelance work allowed me to draw in my own "personal style" which was basically taken from the "Roger Ramjet" animated show of the 1960's. I would pin up some of these drawings and various caricatures of co-workers in this style at my desk. From what I heard later, Patrick Loubert, one of the 3 owners of the studio would prowl through the offices and look at people's work at their desks. Apparently, he saw my drawings and knew they were going to be working on the Gadget show after the feature had wrapped up. He felt that they were in the same design style that the producers had wanted and decided to hire me as the character designer for the show.

The artist who originally designed the show was Bruno Bianchi and his style was very European; much like Asterix by Goscinny and Uderzo. I remember him showing me the original sketches he had done of Gadget, Quimby, Penny and Brain, but then he pulled out this card filled with Japanese anime characters and said he wanted the designs to lean in this direction. I kinda looked at him sideways and said, "You want them to look like anime characters with the big connected eyes??" (He had a very thick Italian accent), he said, "Yeah, you know, just a little like a dis, eh?"

Luckily, I was a big fan of both Asterix and Anime, (the big show at that time was "Star Blazers") so I knew where he wanted to go with the style. I do have to admit that after he took off, I pulled the characters back into my own design style. I only caught flack for it once in the production about 1/4 of the way through and then I guess they just gave up on it and decided to modify the characters as necessary at the Korean end of the production (which is where all the animation was done. "Kuckoo's Nest" was the name of the studio).

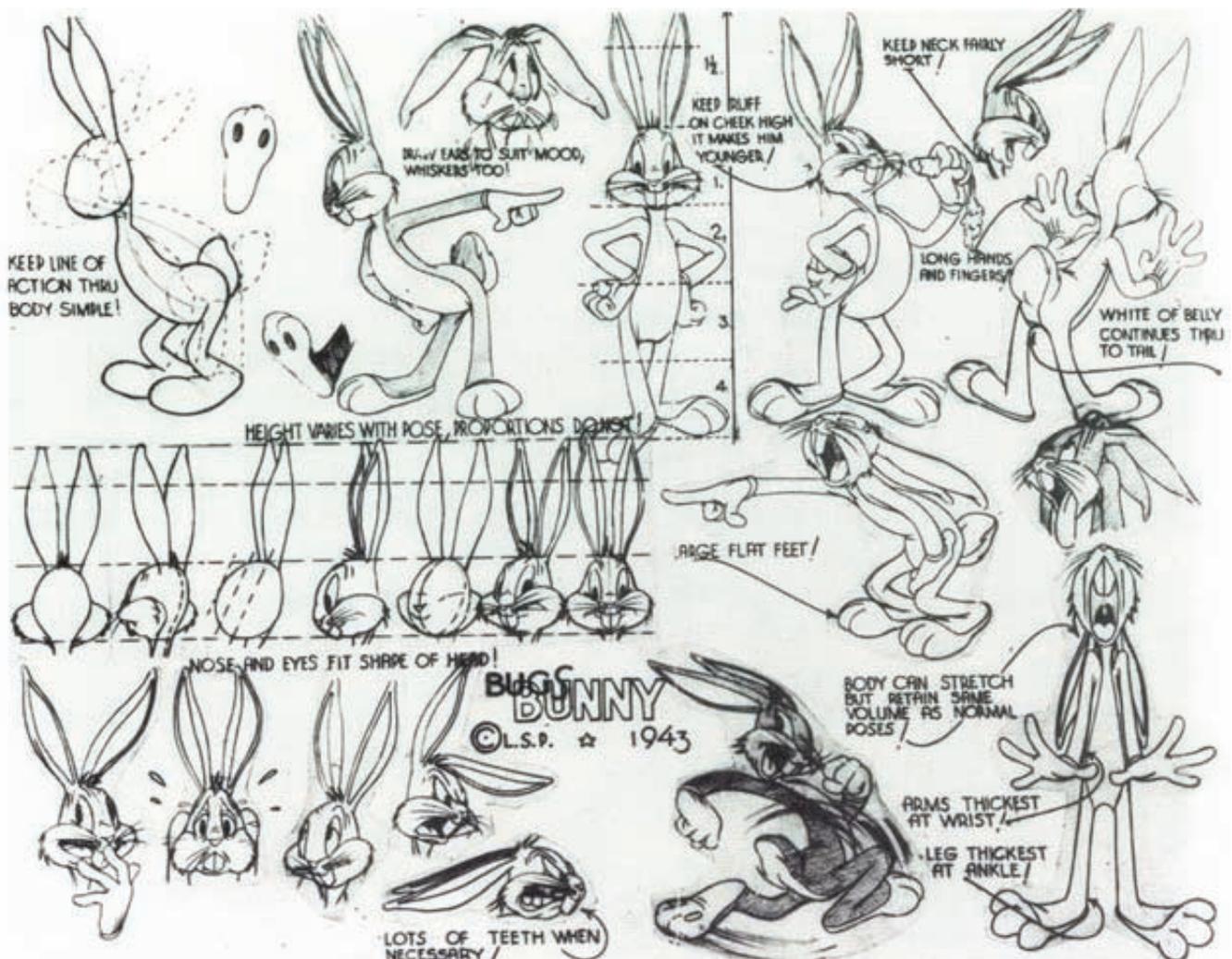
On shows like "Ewoks and Droids" for Lucas Films, we had to stick to the design style quite strictly in the layout department. On Carebears, it was the same thing... draw them "on model" or else. I remember Hanna Barbera being the strictest place for keeping the characters exactly on model. This was made really difficult though as we had two supervisors that looked at our work for approvals. Neither of them could draw the characters on model properly and so if they felt our drawings were

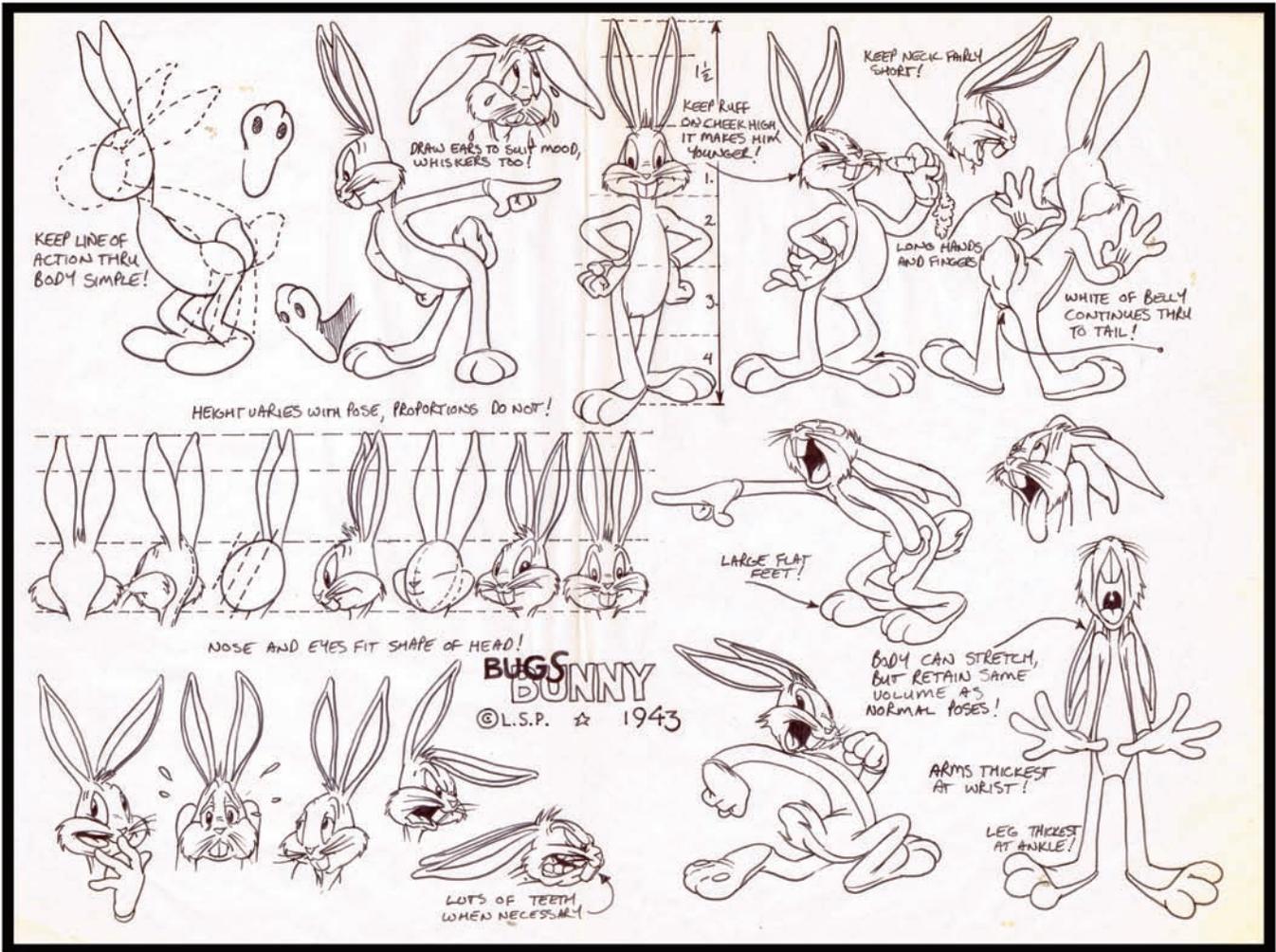
off, they would draw a correction to show us how to fix it. Problem was, they were so far off model, if you ended up taking it to the other supervisor for approval, they'd freak out over the fact that you didn't draw the character right (even though I had traced off the other supervisor's correction). It was terrible when you got caught in a loop between the two of them, which happened a few times.

All this to say, working for a studio means you need to become an "artistic chameleon" as one of my studio friends, Brian Lee once put it.

In more recent years, since I began teaching, I've been afforded the luxurious ability to draw as I please, in any style that I want. I do a lot of artistic study of various animation studio design styles and try to mimic the model sheets so that they look like the originals. I've done this as an exercise for quite a number of years now. One example is the 1943 Bugs Bunny model sheet. I took the original sheet (a photocopy several generations removed from the original), and copied it line-for-line in order to help me understand the structure of the character.

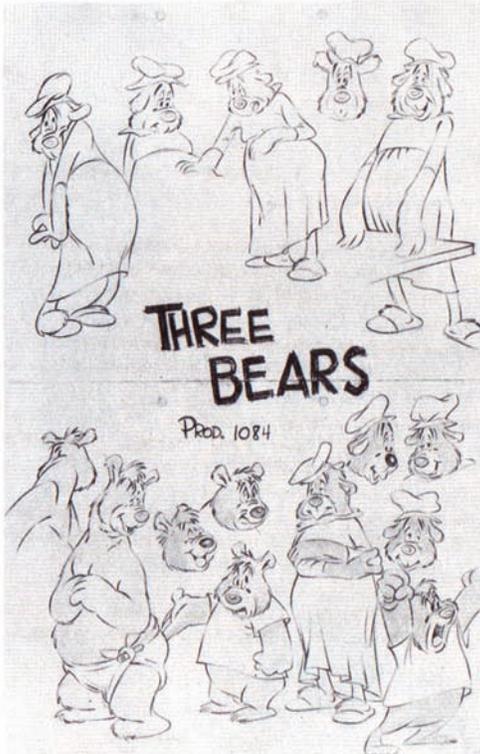
Here are the two sheets. The first is the original and the second is mine.





Another thing I like to do from time to time is find copies of original art from films like Snow White or Lady and the Tramp, etc and try to copy the style as closely as possible, basically trying to forge the drawing so it looks like the original. on the opposite page is a still frame of Grumpy and beside is my copy.

Below are some drawings of Chuck Jones' Three Bears that I redid. It's o.k. to do this to improve your drawing skills, you just can't pass the work off as your original ideas or put them in your portfolio. It's just an exercise to get into the original artists skin and see how they designed and drew the characters.



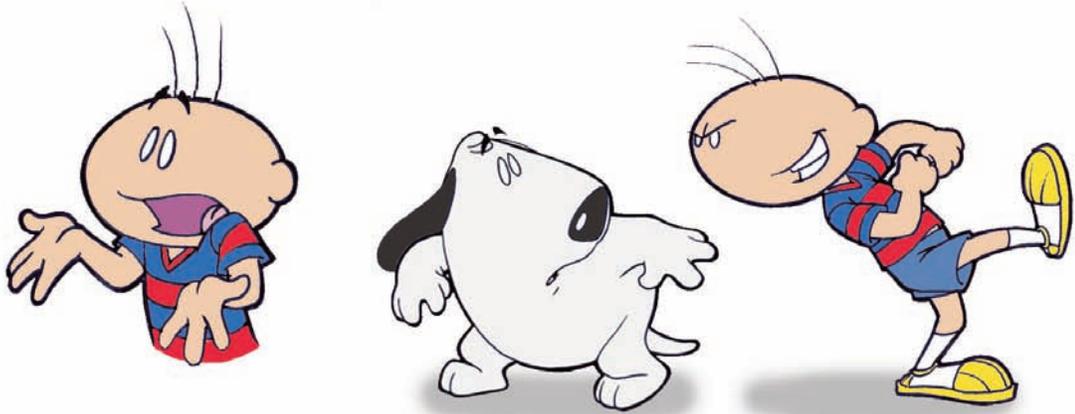
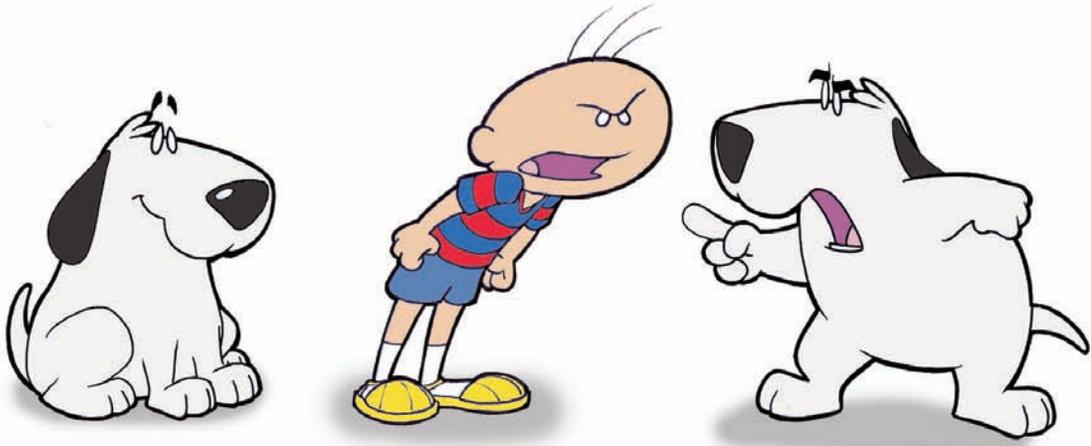
While designing characters is part of the concept designer's job, I'm actually going to focus this book primarily on location design and prop design. Where necessary, to give you context, I'll show some character designs that go with some of the locations.

As I mentioned earlier, you first need an idea before you can begin drawing. There needs to be a spark that starts the fire of your imagination. Most of the examples I'll be showing you here are from demos that I did for my students in the Production Art course at Humber College. I would give the students a springboard idea and then demonstrate the process by doing the assignment with them. The students would then have to come up with their own version. For this first example, I assigned them the story of Hansel and Grethel by the brothers Grimm. I'm sure you all know the story of the two children whose parents could no longer afford to feed them, took them deep into the forest and hoped they would "get lost" and never come back... gruesome parents huh? The two children happen upon a cottage made of candy and yummy stuff and get captured by the cannibal Witch living there. She tries to fatten up Hansel by constantly feeding him goodies. Being the little piggy that he is, Hansel proceeds to pork himself out. Grethel, on the other hand, only pretends to eat the food and because the Witch is almost blind, she can't see if she and Hansel are actually fattening up. Whenever the witch asks Hansel to stick out his finger so the witch can feel if he's getting fatter, he pokes out a chicken bone instead, to fool her. Over time, the Witch gets impatient and decides, fat or not, she's gonna have "kiddie pie", so she pulls out Grethel and tries to shove her into the oven. Porky Hansel escapes from his cage and knocks the witch into the oven and slams the door. The father finds the kids and is very sorry for sending them off telling them it was the step-mother's idea in the first place, giving all subsequent step-mothers a bad name in fairy tales from then on.

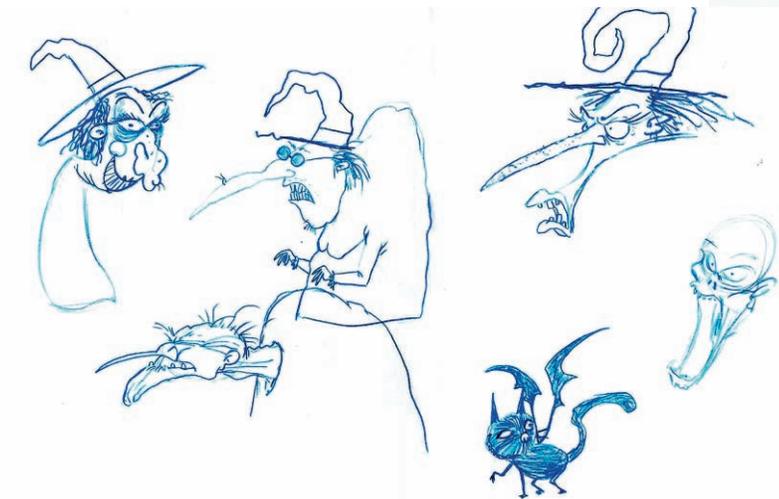
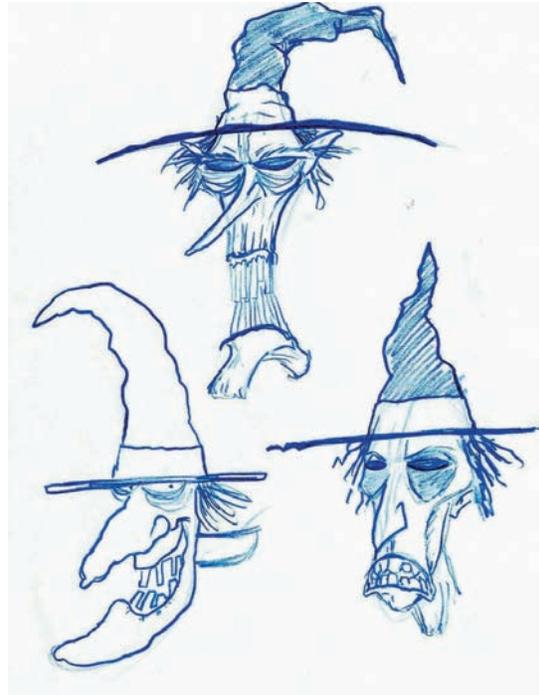
The student's assignment was to design the interior of the Witch's cottage and all furniture inside including the cages the kids are trapped in. They were to then come up with 10 storyboard scenes that move us through the interior and then select the 3 most interesting shots for full sized layouts. As an extended part of the project, we also designed the Witch as well as Hansel and Grethel.

Here are my designs and thought process:

First, I chose to make this a practical application assignment for myself. Try to kill two birds with the same stone. I had been developing two characters for a possible kids television show called, "Me & Max" about a boy and his dog who has an overactive imagination.



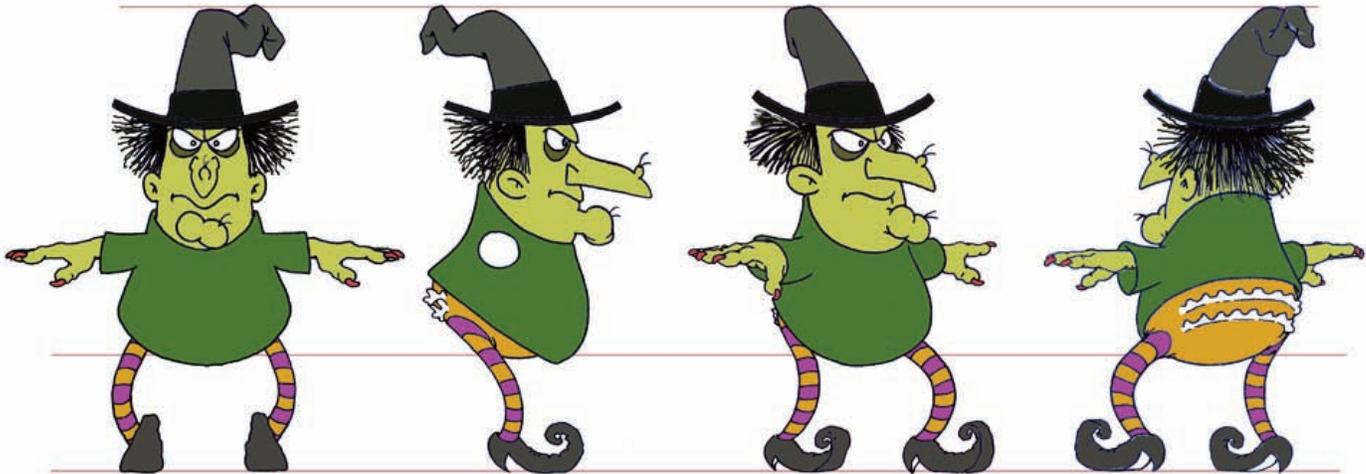
Since Me & Max were already designed, I started in on the Witch.



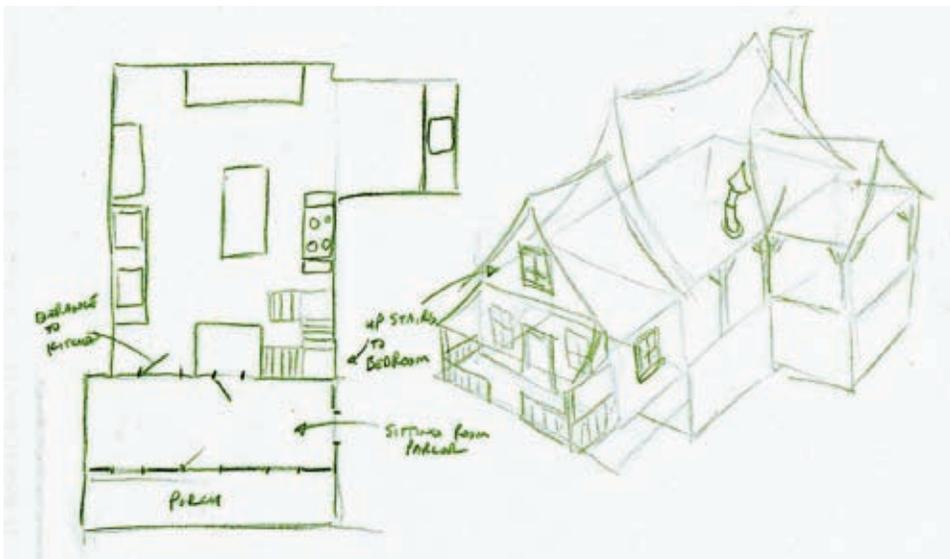
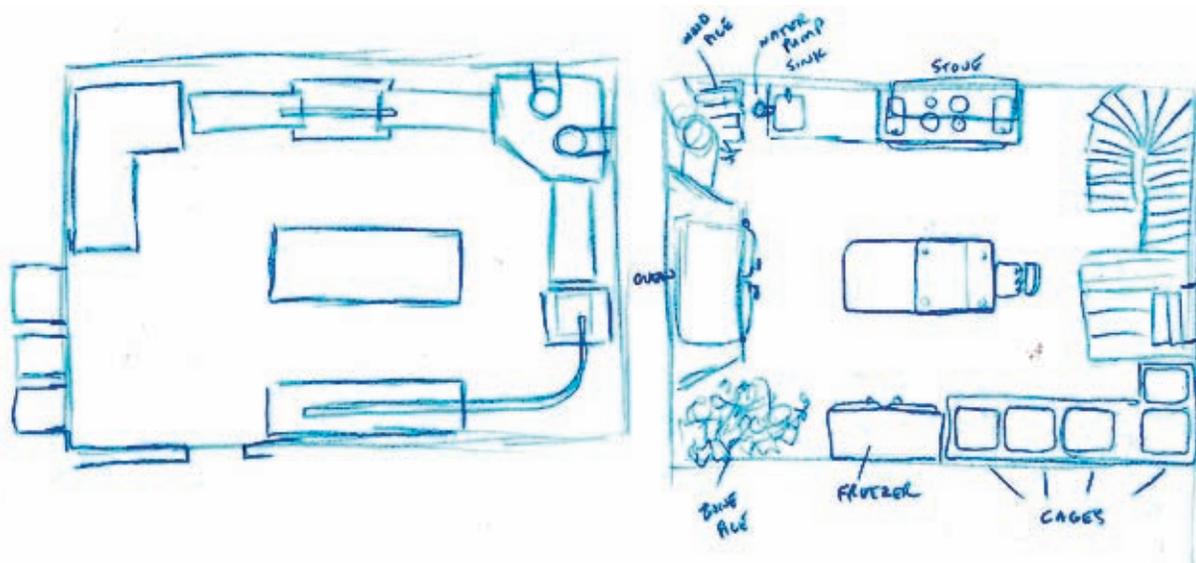
I finalized the design and did model sheets...



And did a turn around T-pose sheet for 3D modelling later, if I wanted to go in that direction.

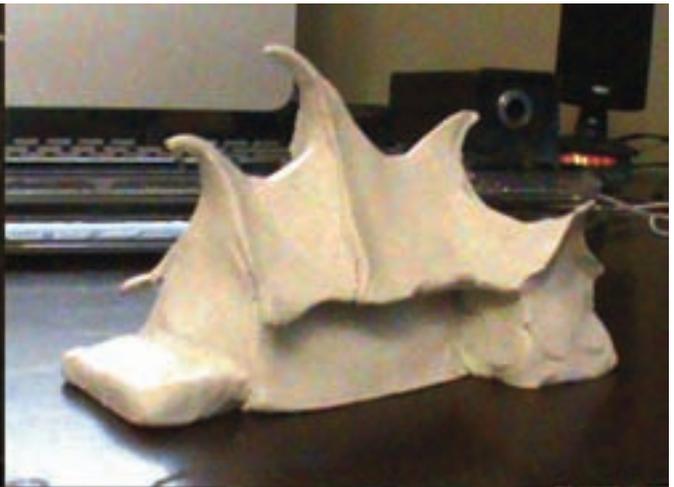


I then turned my focus to the cottage. I started by drawing out the floorplan.



Then a quick thumbnail of the exterior structure.

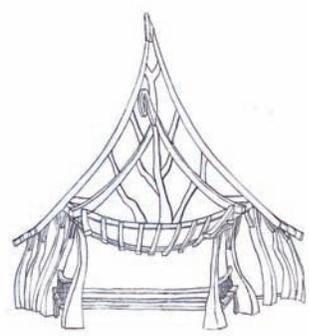
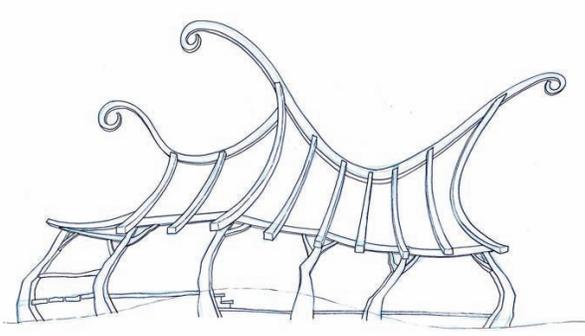
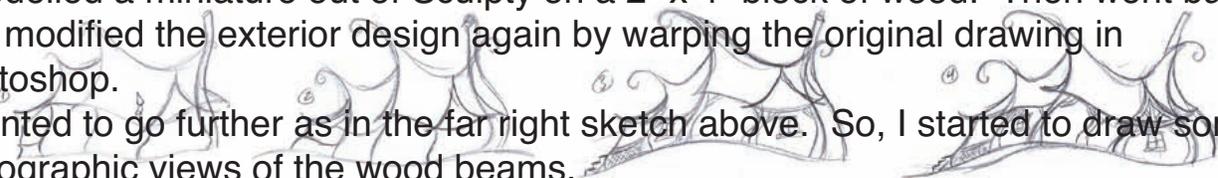


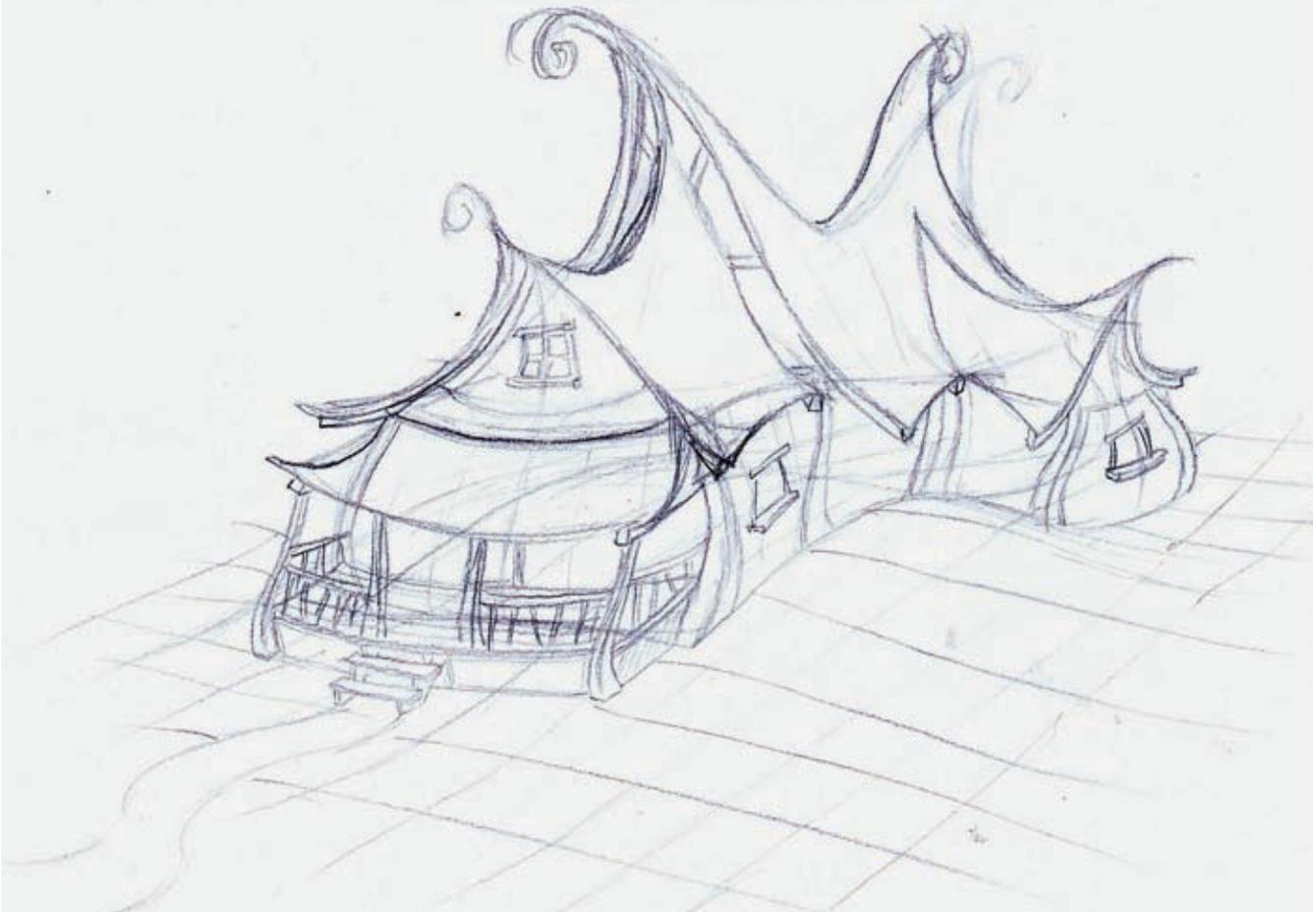
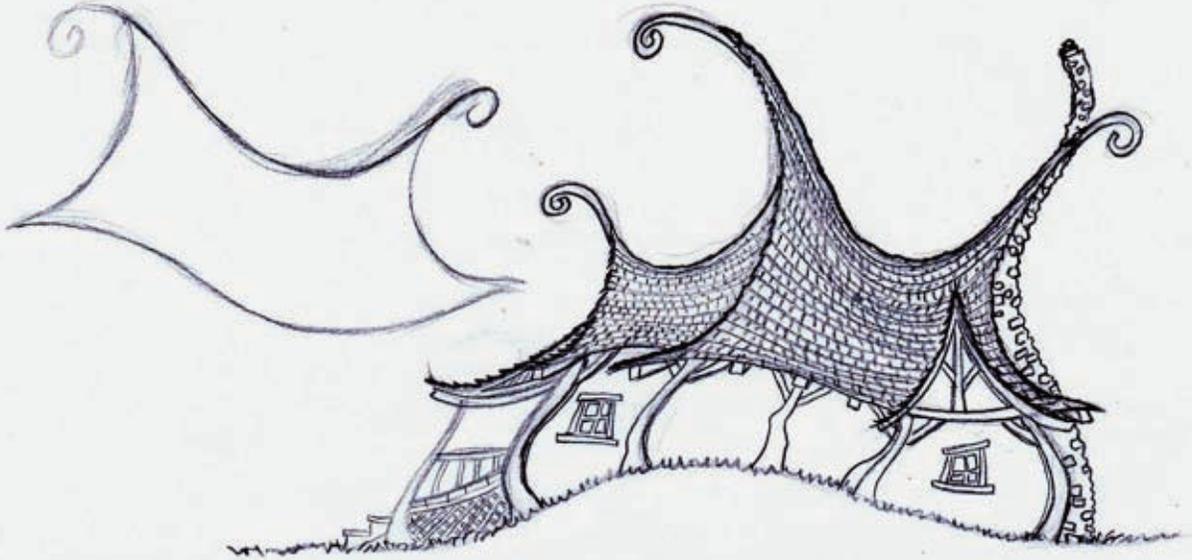
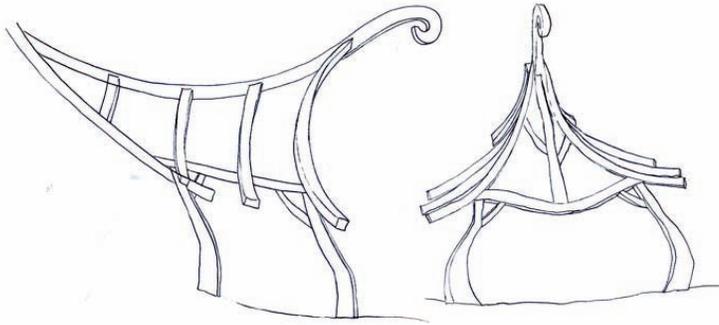


I then started playing around with the shapes.

I modelled a miniature out of Sculpty on a 2" x 4" block of wood. Then went back and modified the exterior design again by warping the original drawing in Photoshop.

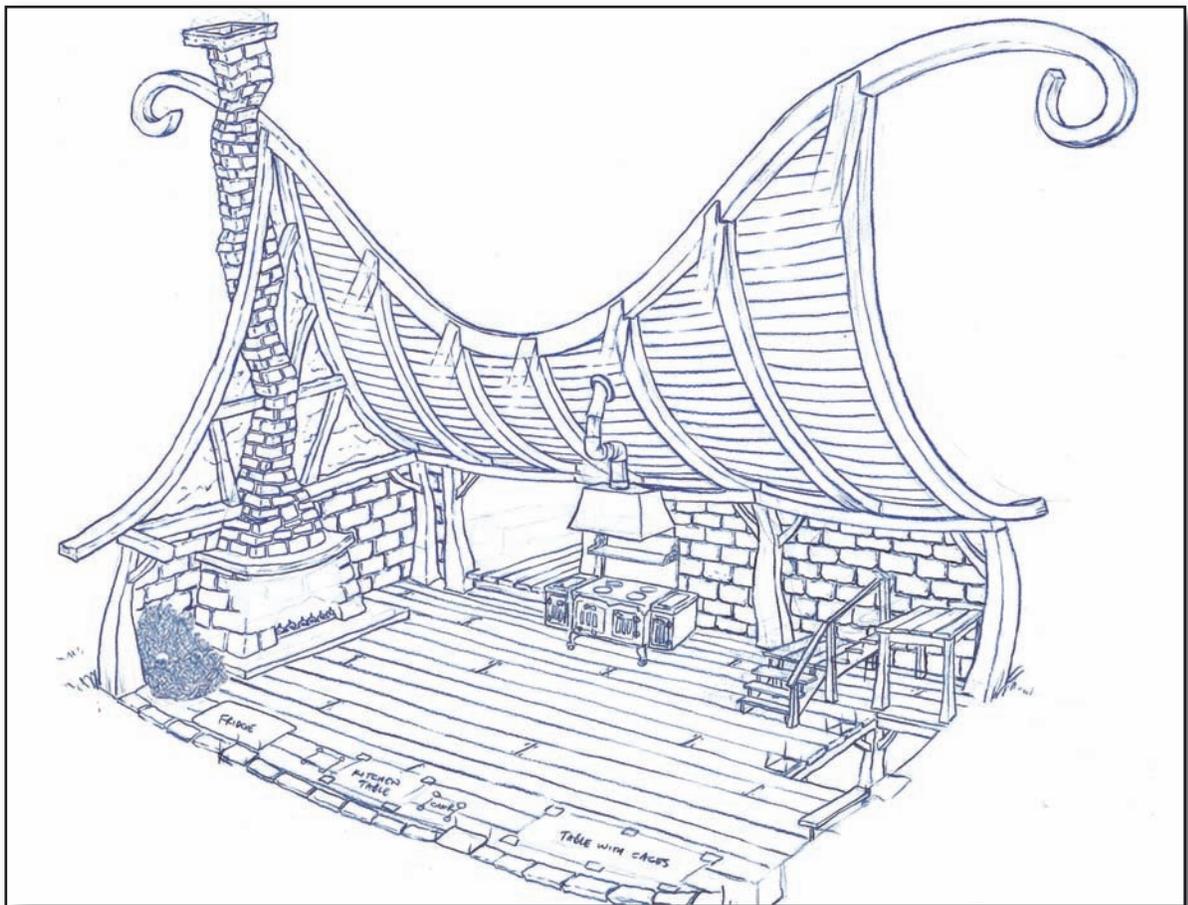
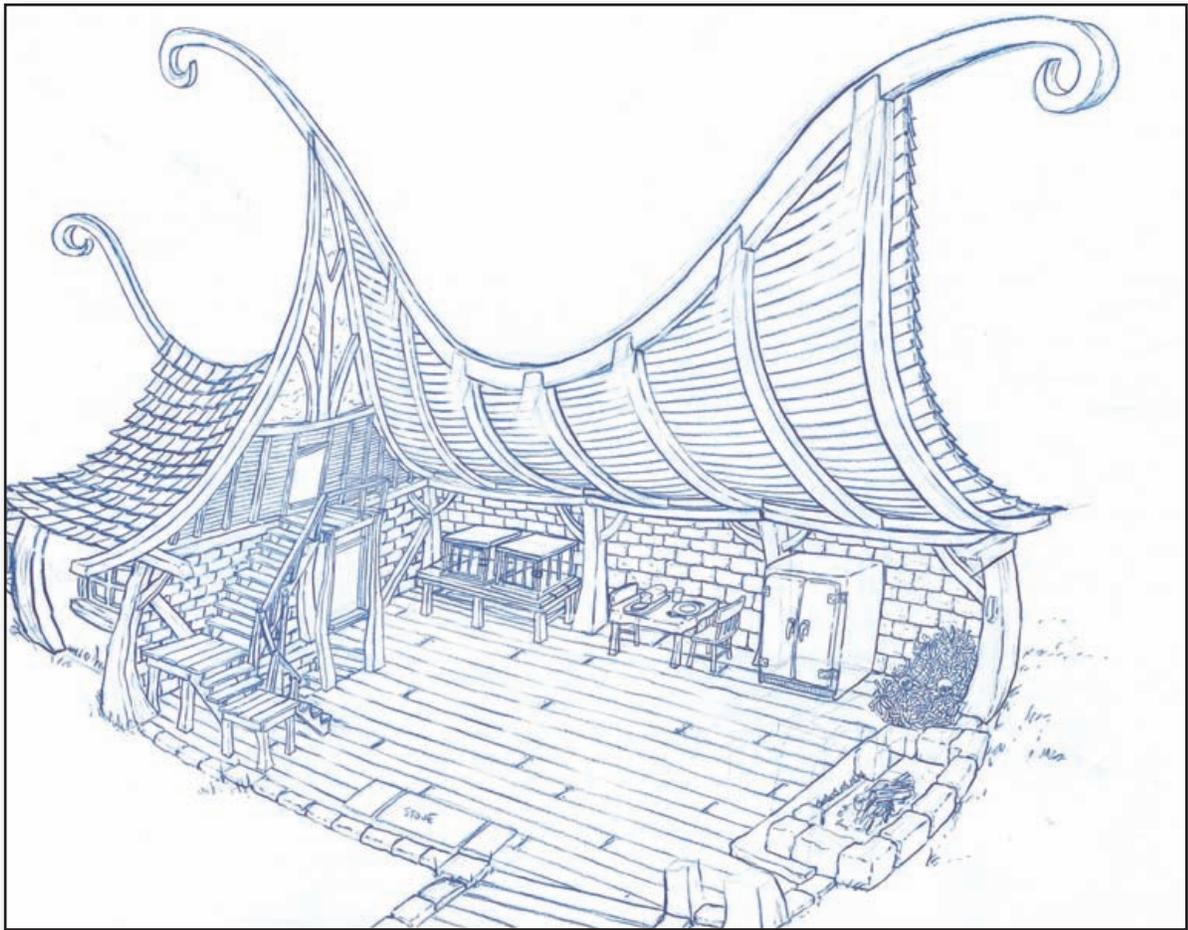
I wanted to go further as in the far right sketch above. So, I started to draw some orthographic views of the wood beams.

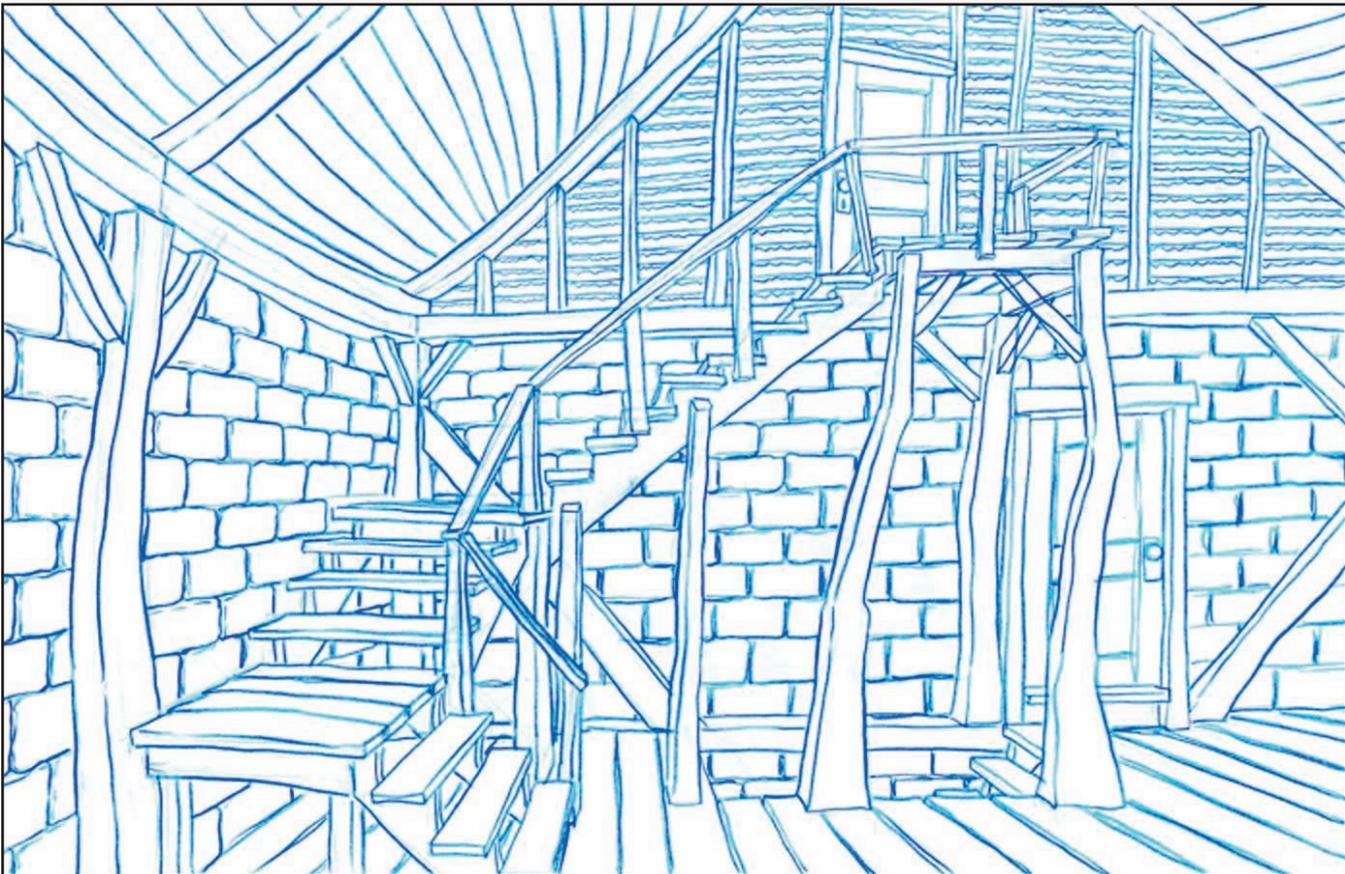
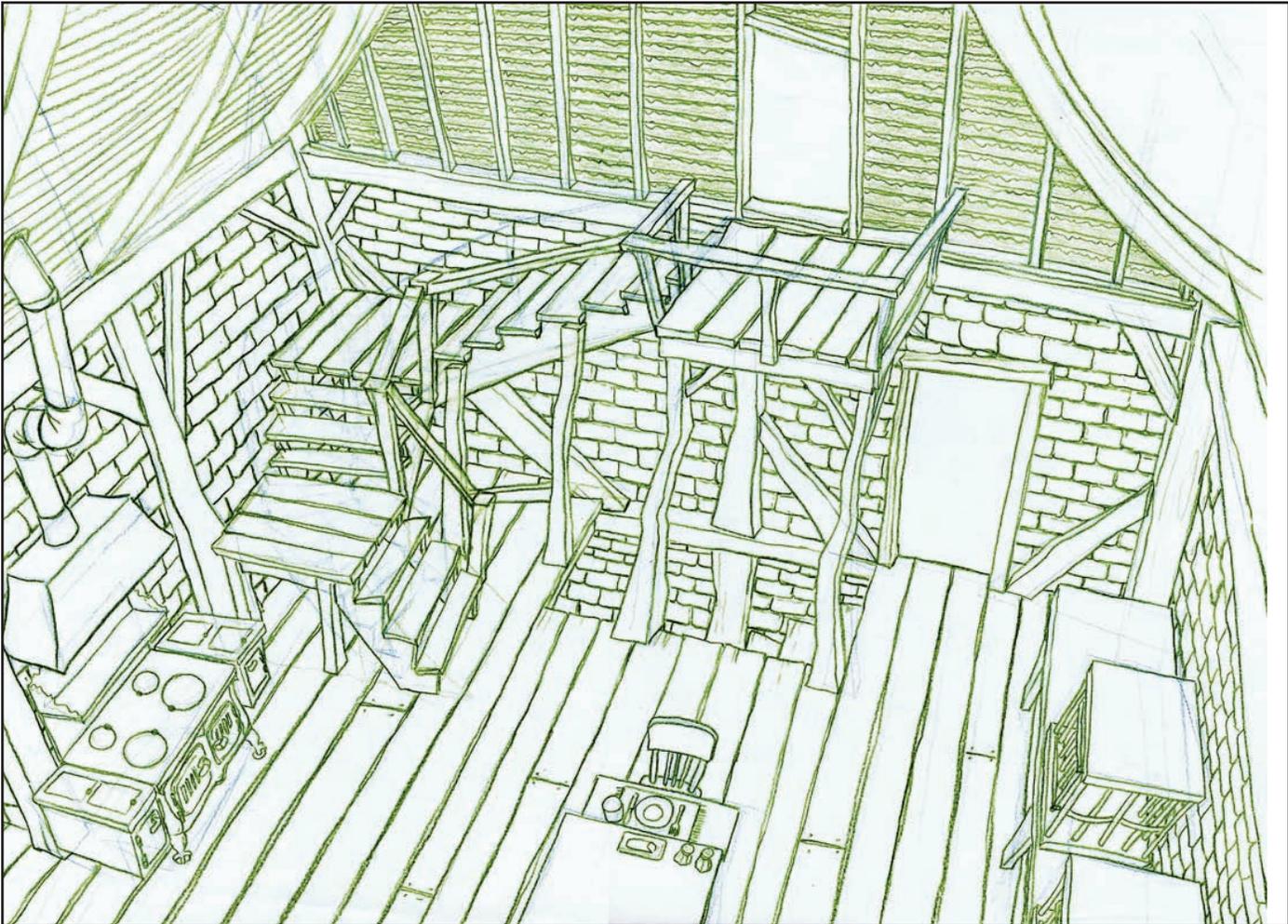


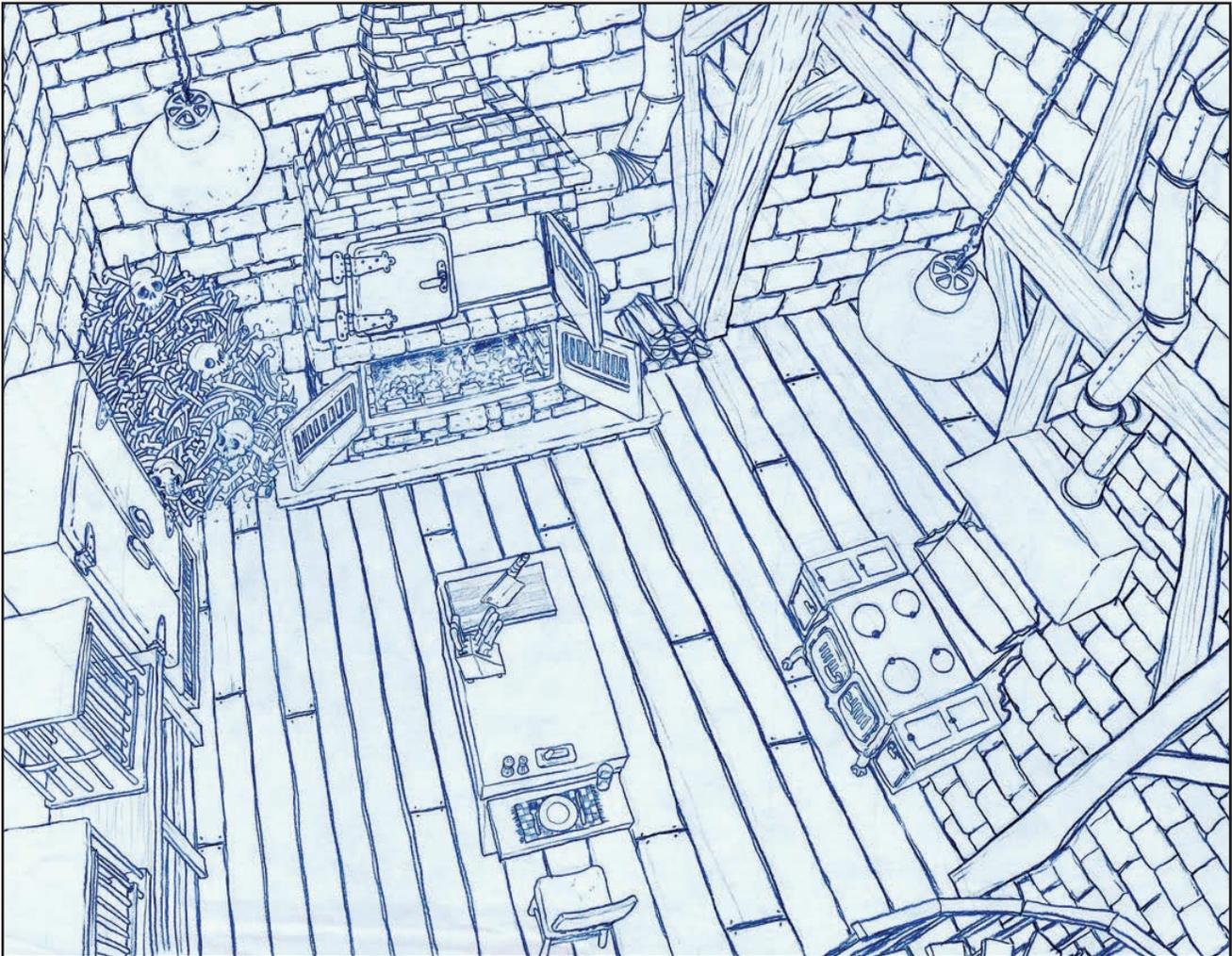
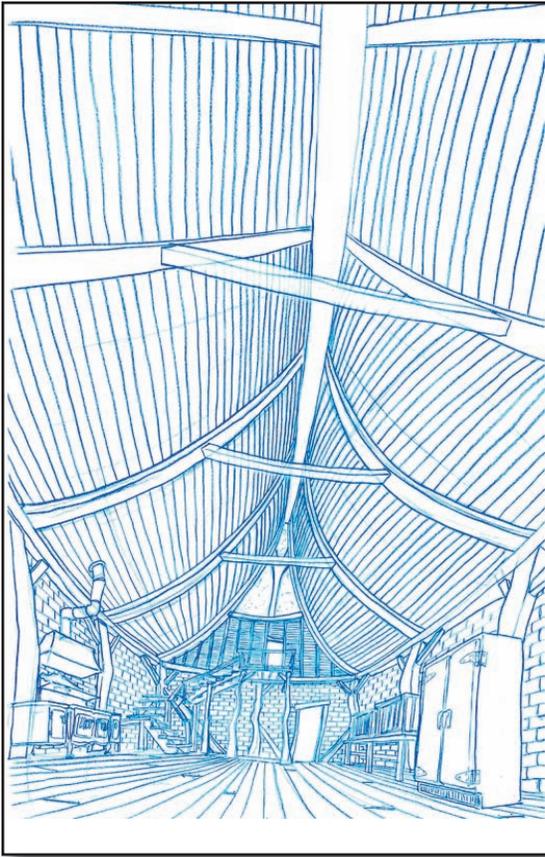


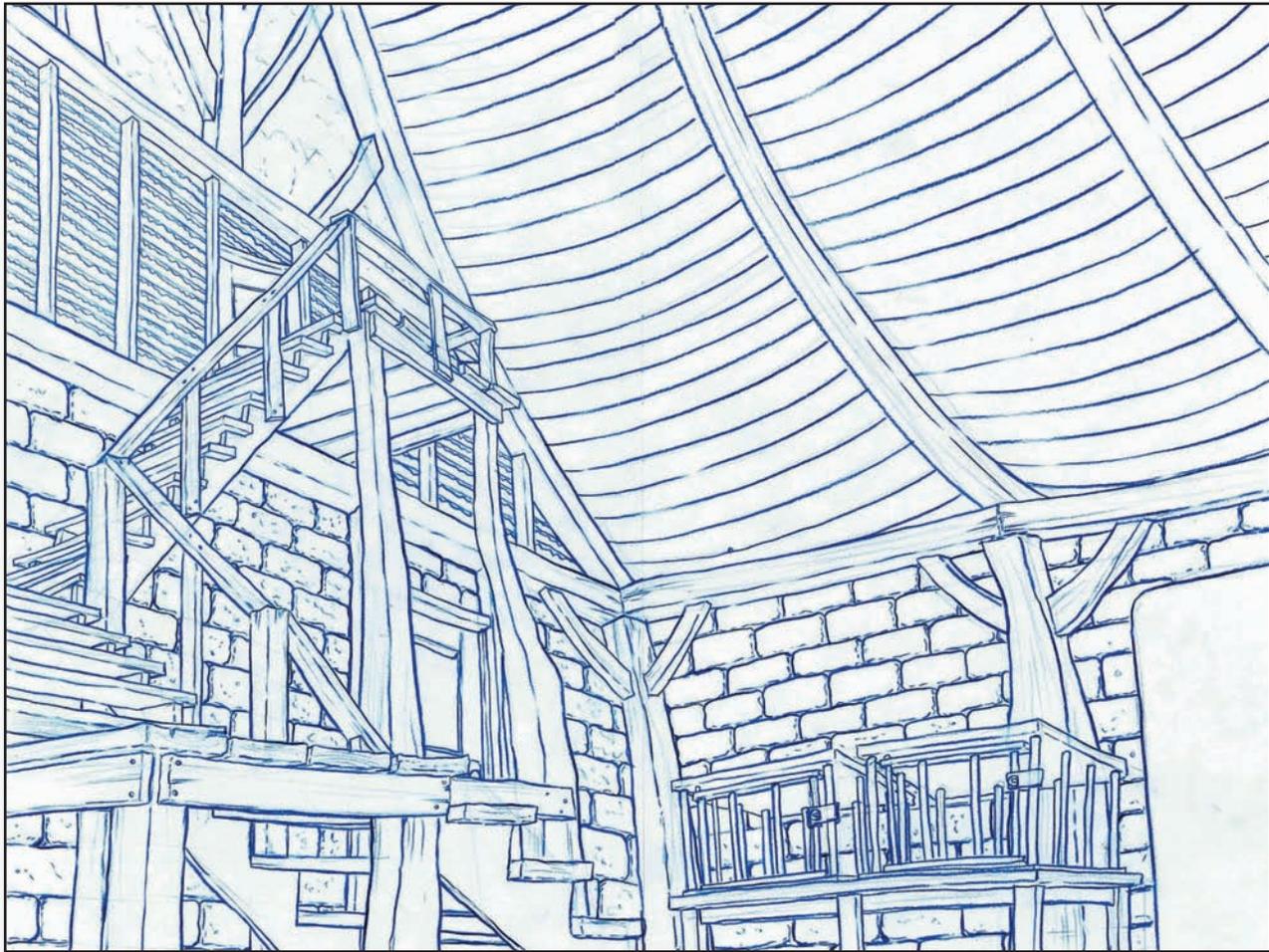
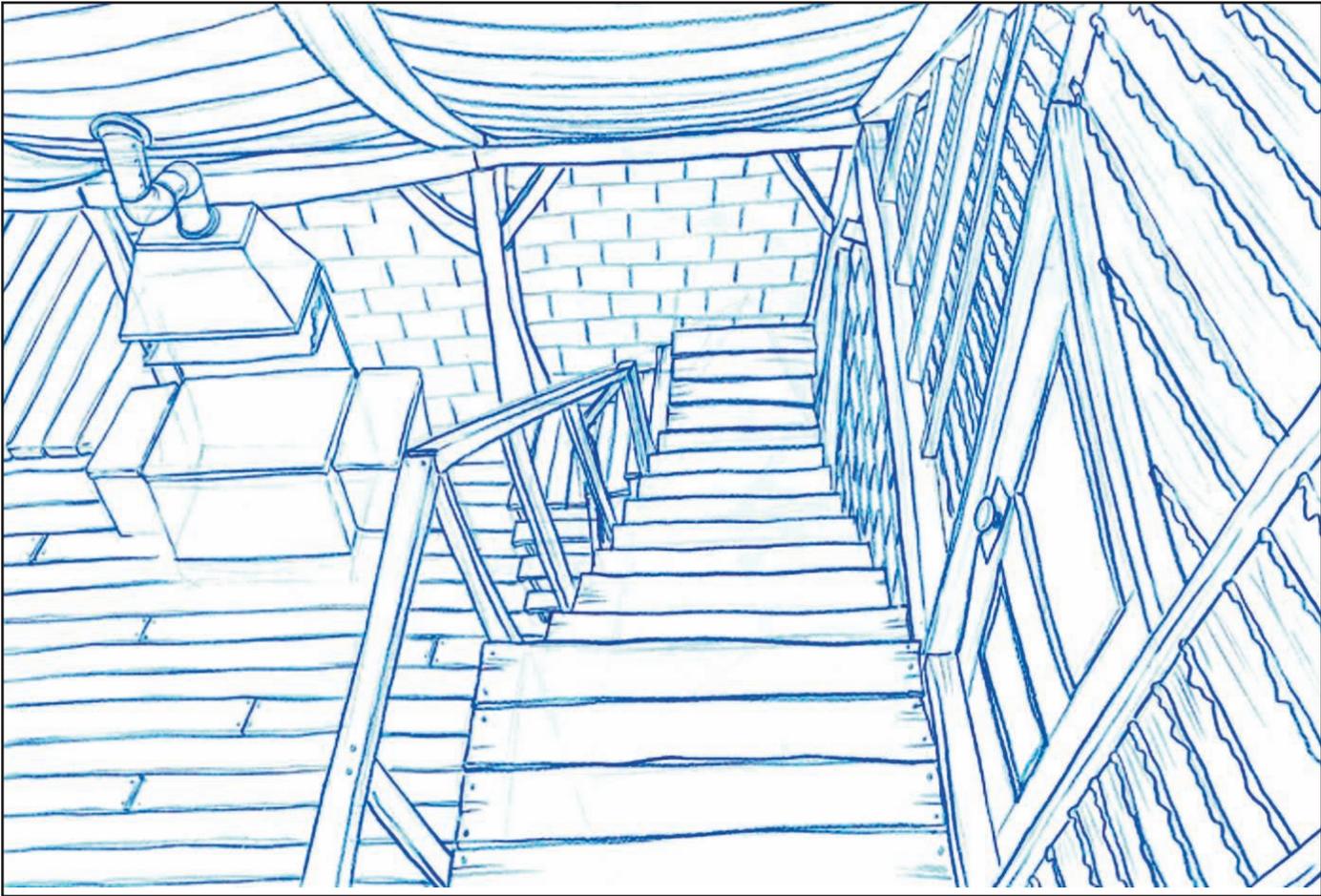
This was the final exterior design.

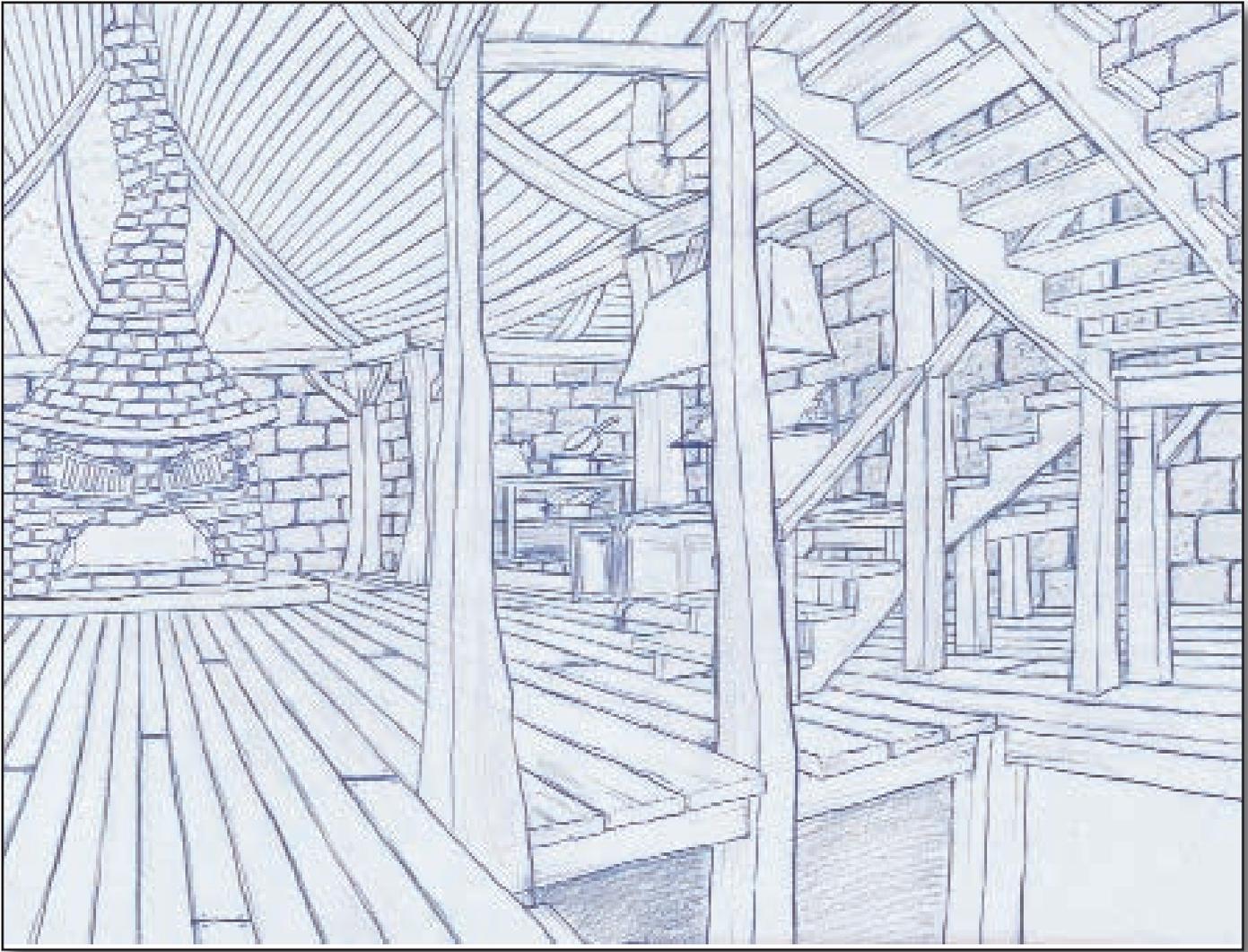
I then moved to the interior.







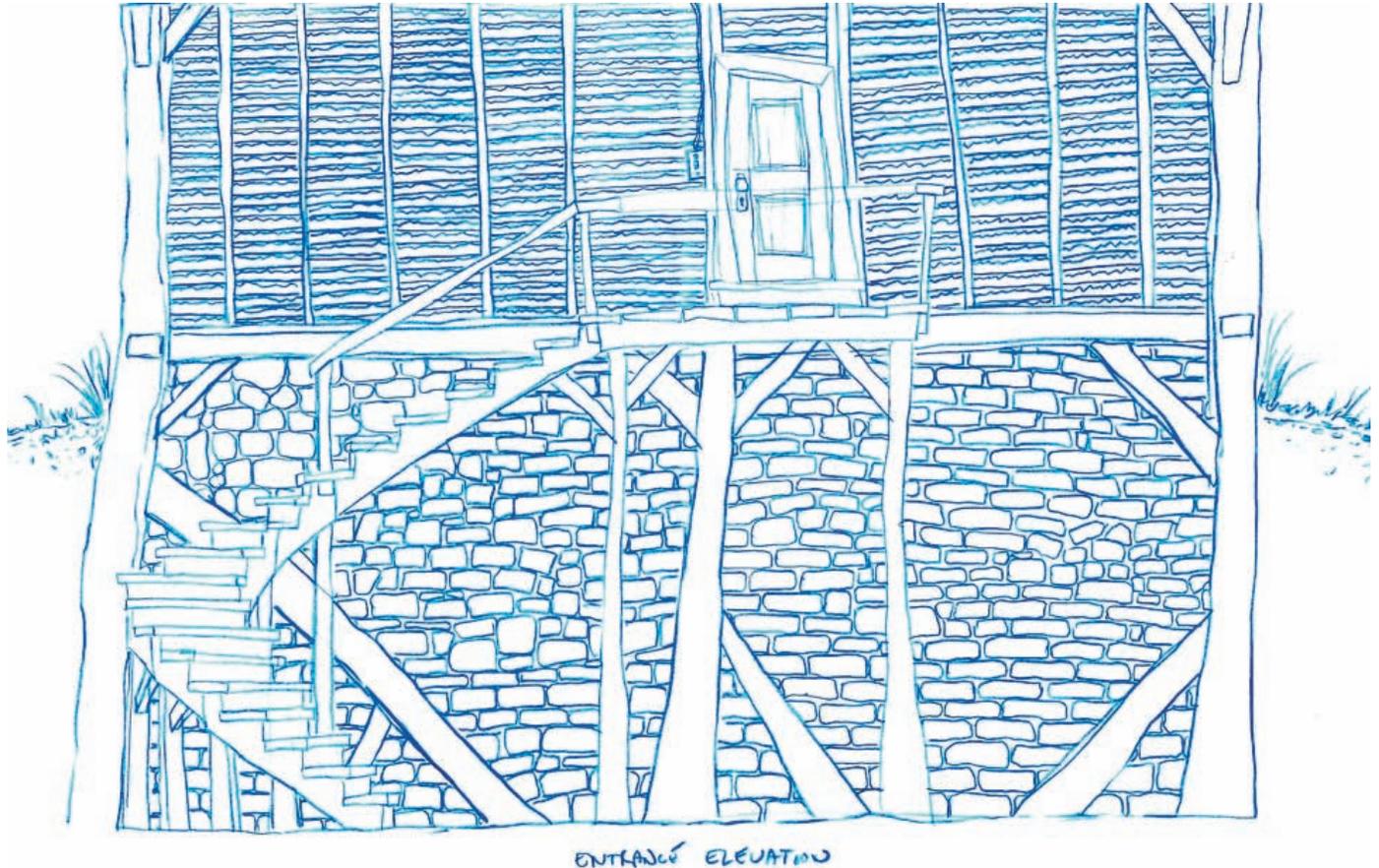




HANSEL UND GRETHEL



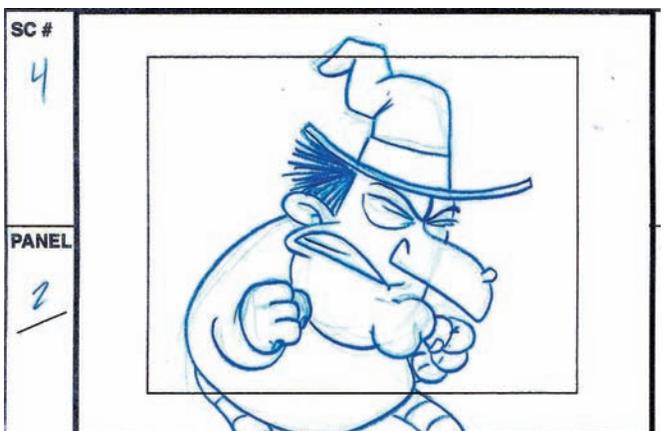
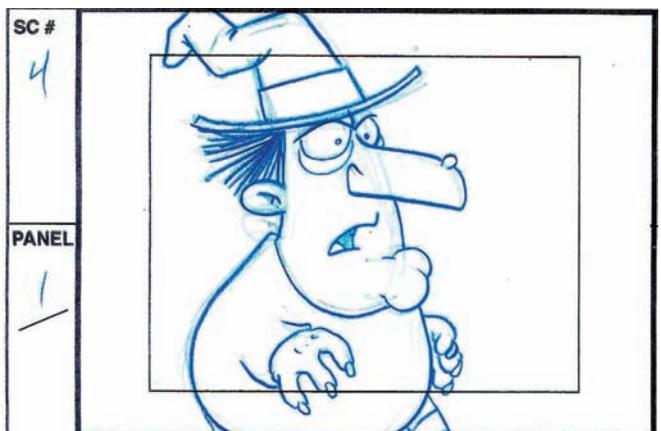
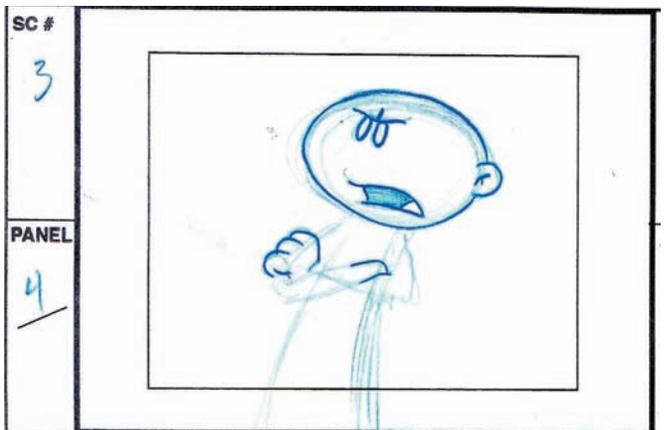
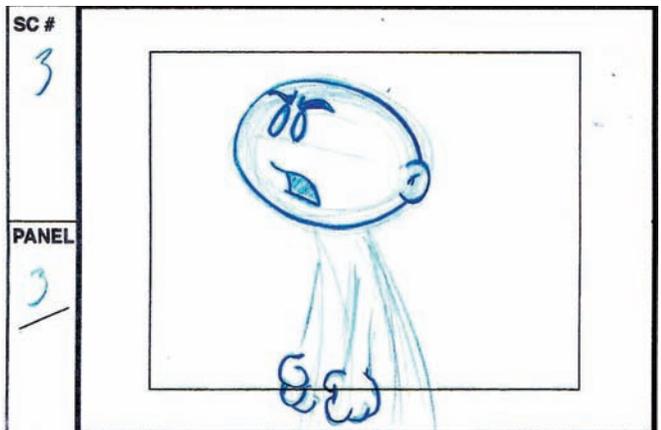
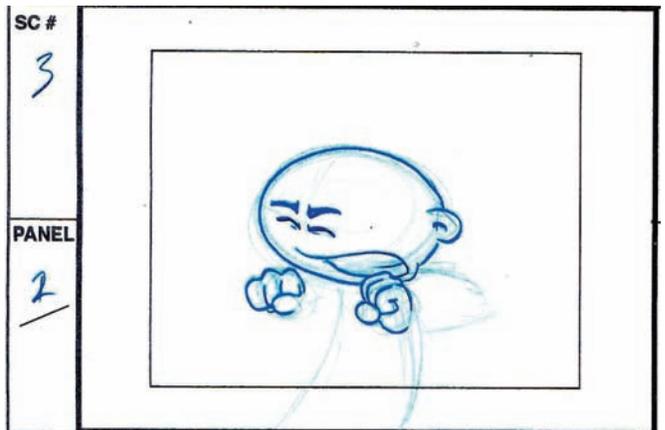
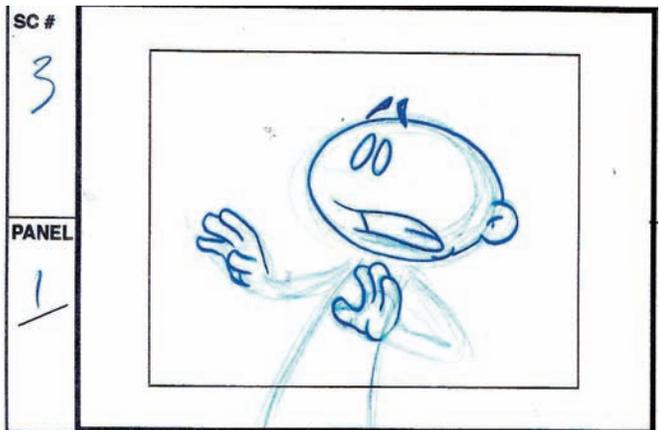
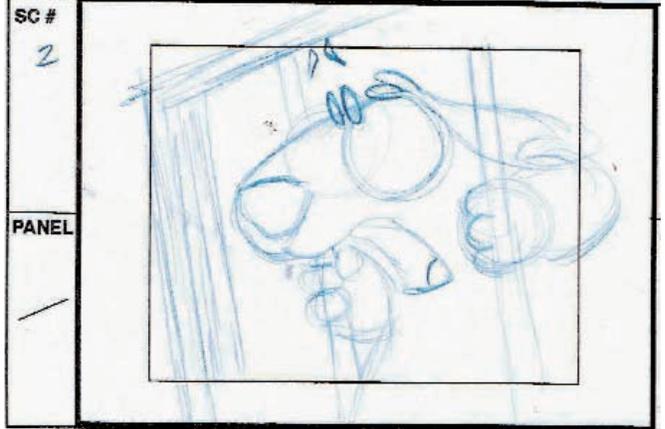
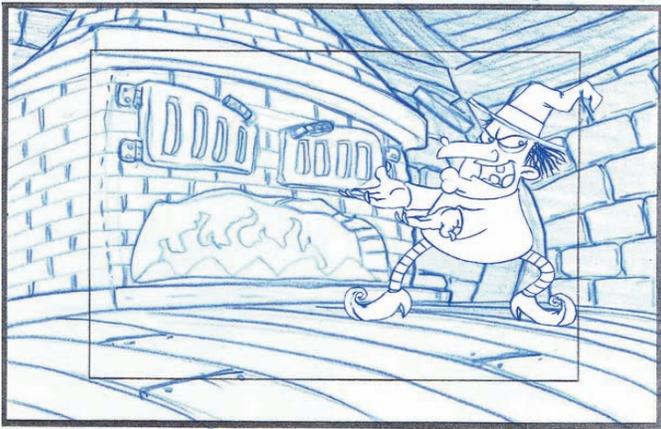
So, while these are not exhaustive production designs, they are enough to begin the process of 3D modelling. Having said that, What would be helpful at this point are “orthographic” drawings of the walls and a scaled floorplan. An orthographic drawing means, without perspective. It has width and height, but no depth. It’s also called, an “elevation”.

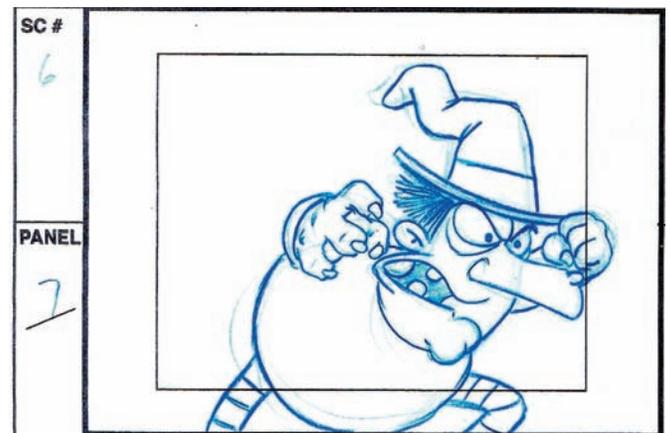
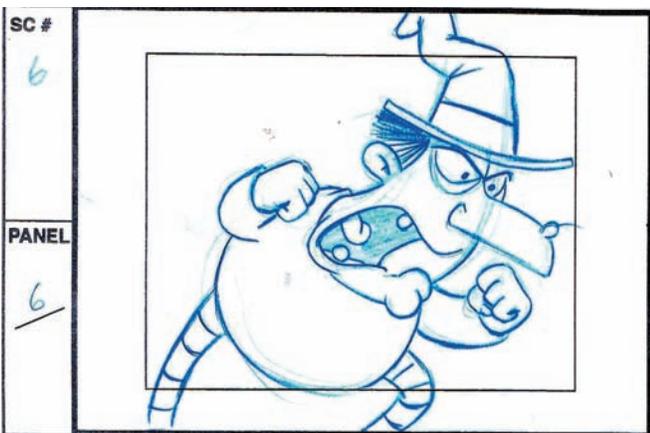
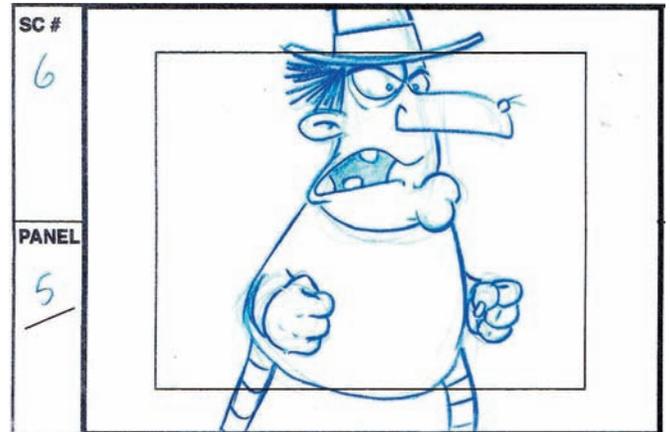
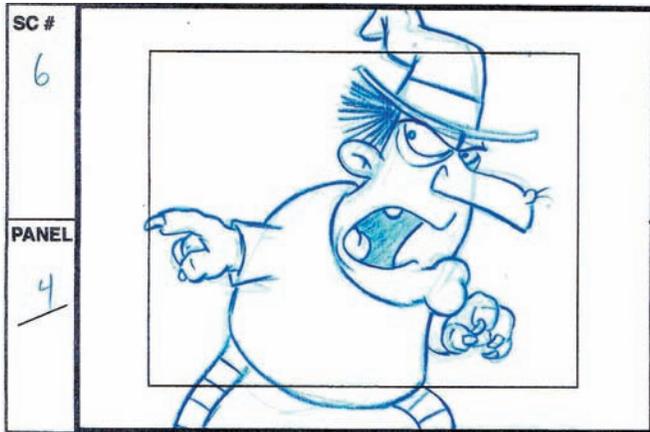
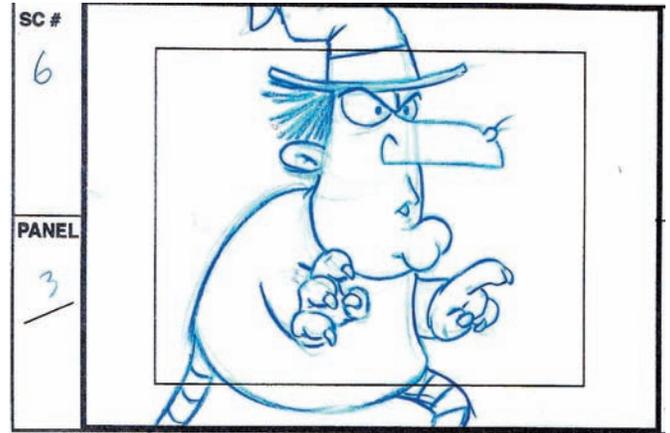
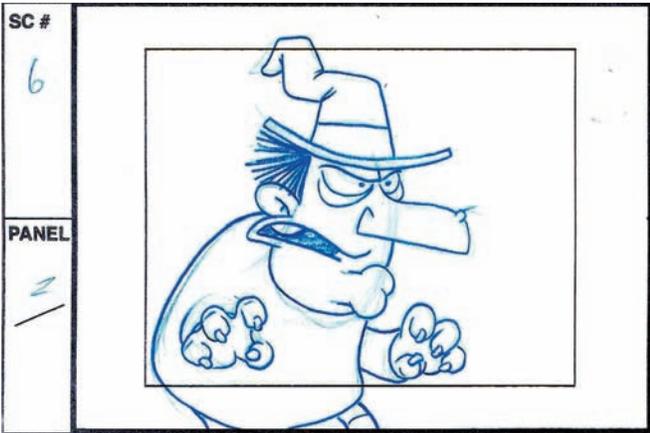
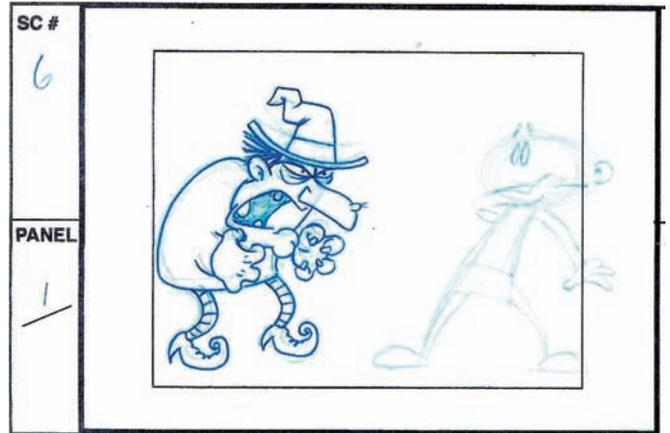
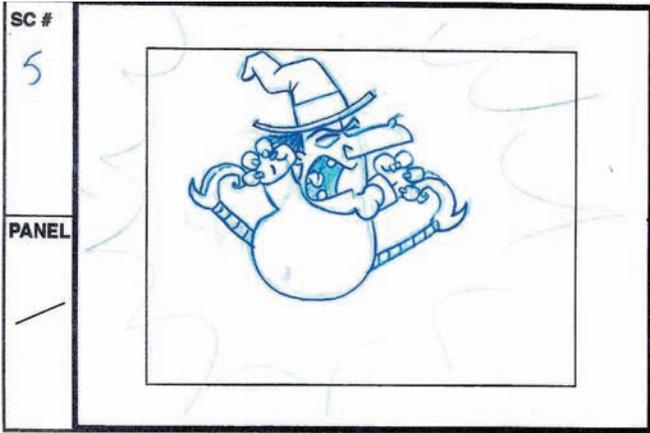


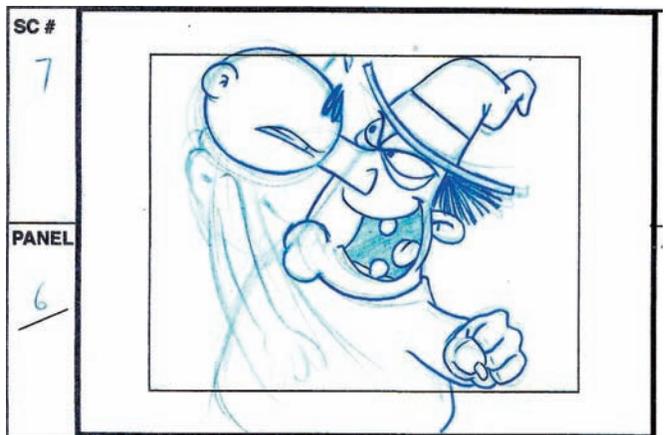
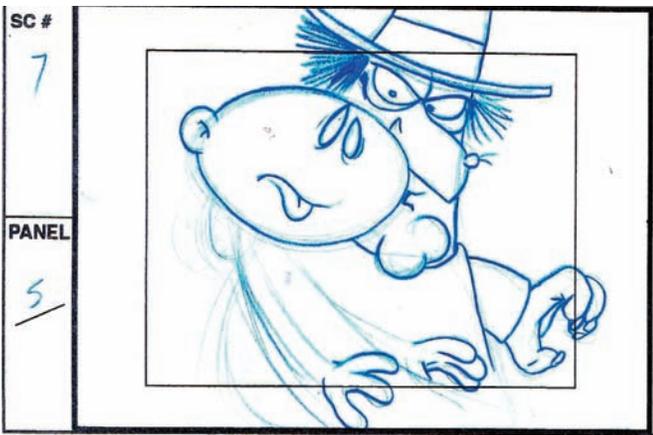
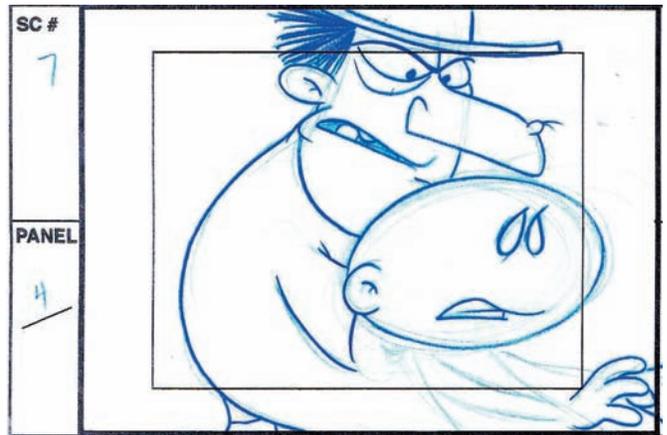
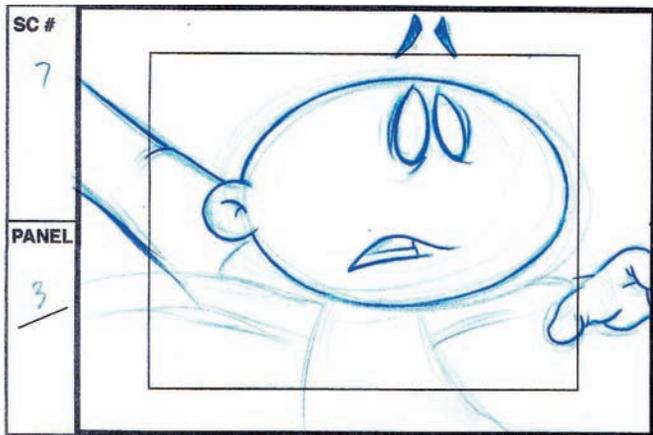
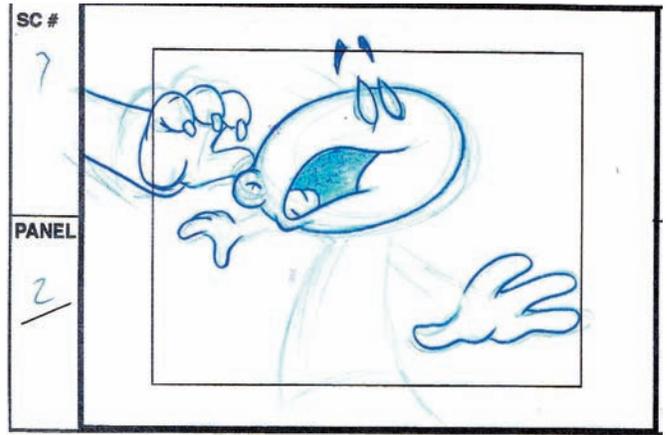
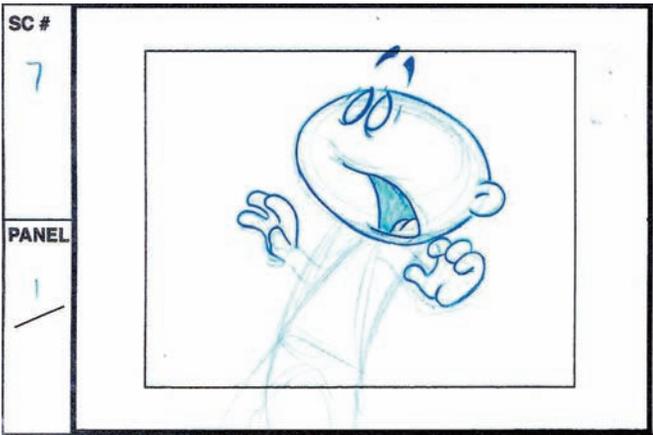
Without these designs, the scale and proportions would be up to the person who is doing the modelling. If you look very closely at the drawings that I have done, there are a few discrepancies in the scale of various things.

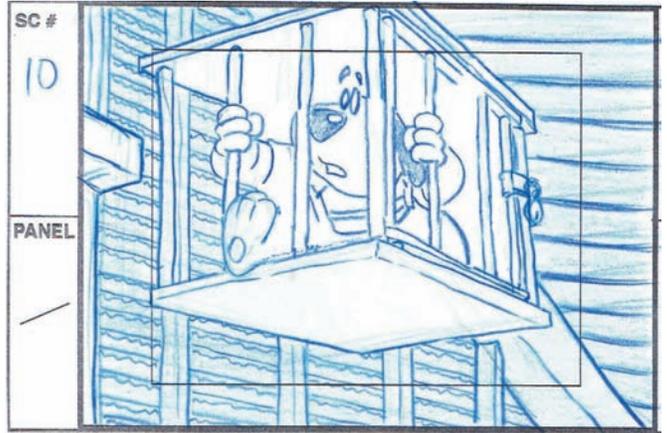
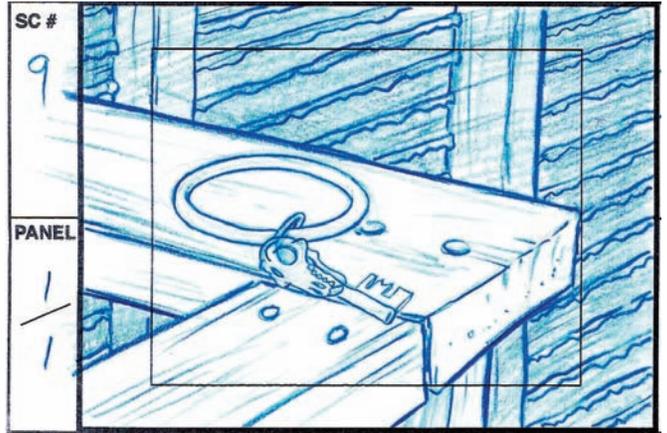
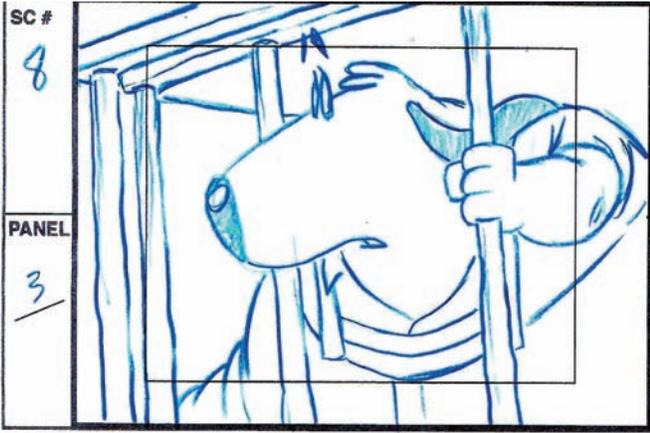
As the modeller begins the process of building the set, they may come upon these differences and the inevitable question that comes up is: “Which one do I use?” “Which scale is correct?” The modeller could default to the supervisor to answer the question or they could make the call themselves. The primary question would become, “What works the best for the characters and the storyboard?” If a storyboard is not available at the time of the build, the designer would be consulted to try to solve the problem and make it work.

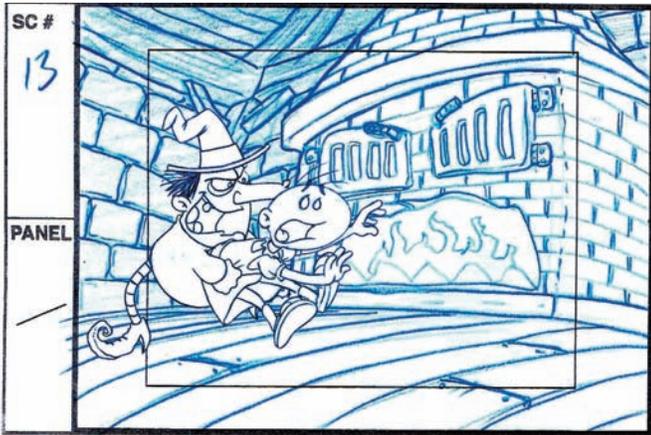
With the orthographic designs, the assumption would be that these are the final scale for everything. They’re basically; “building plans”.

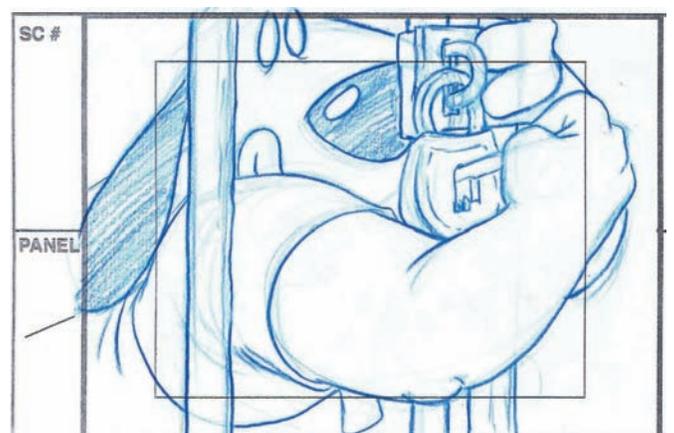
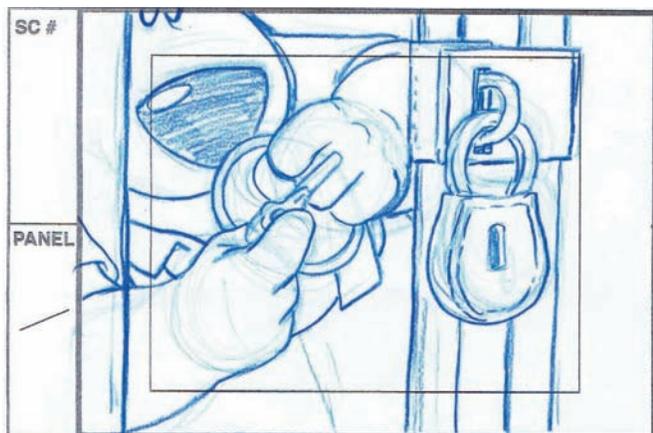
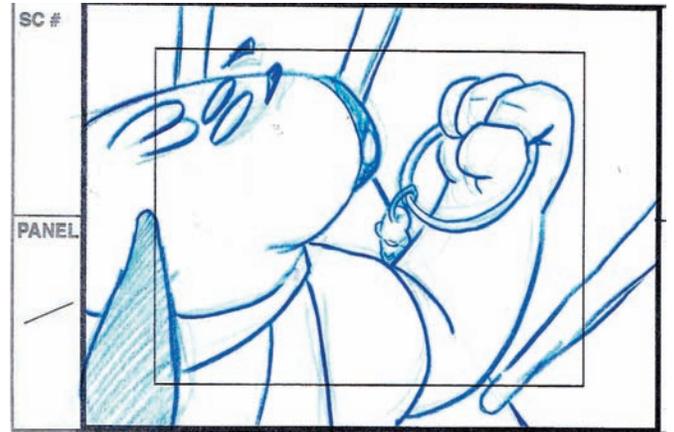
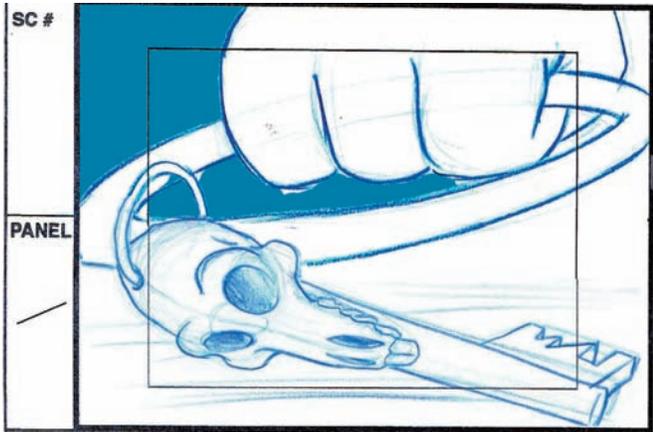
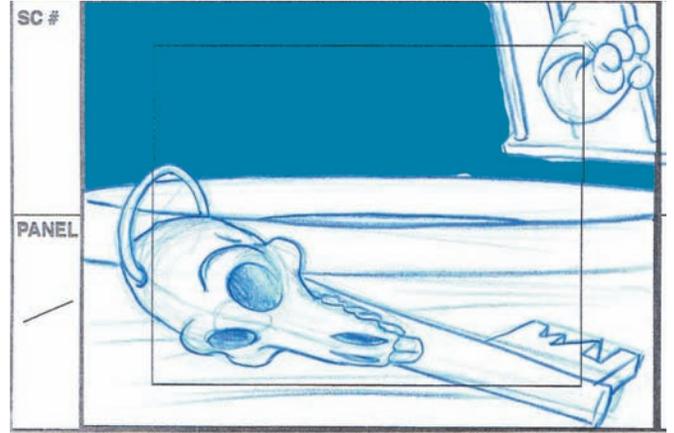
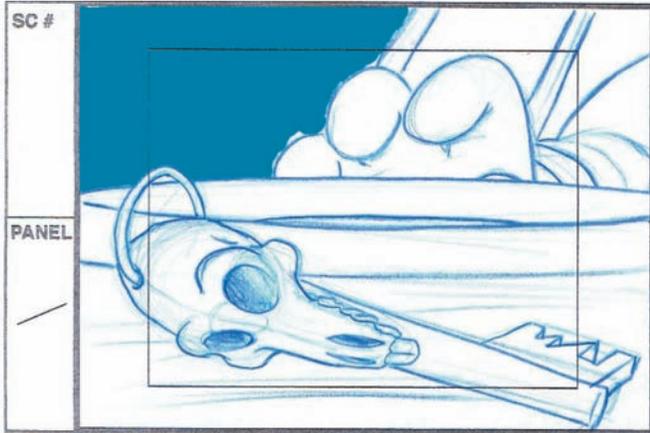


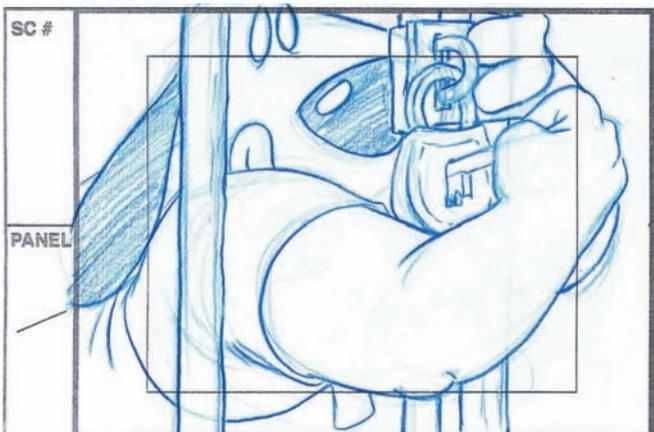
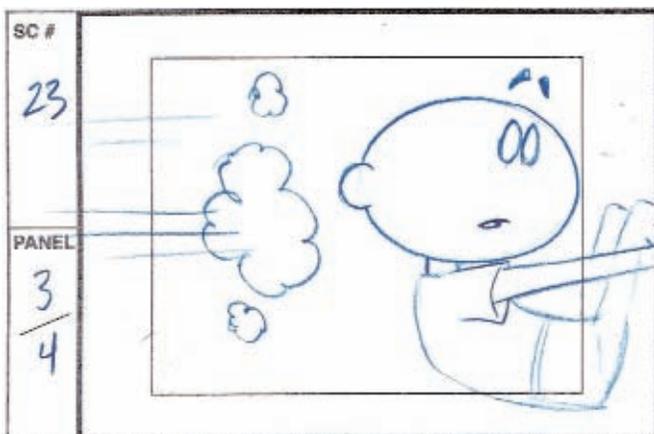
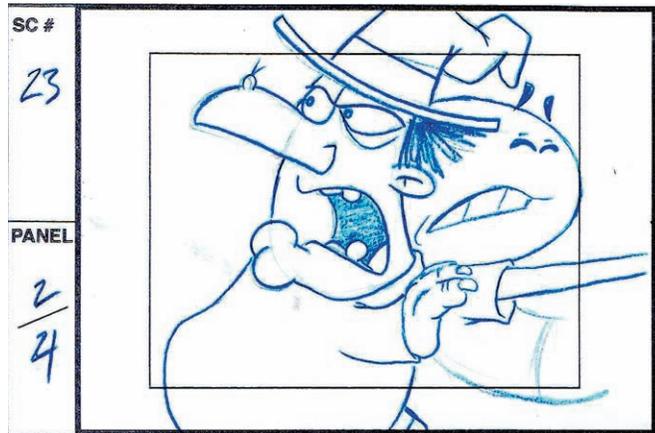
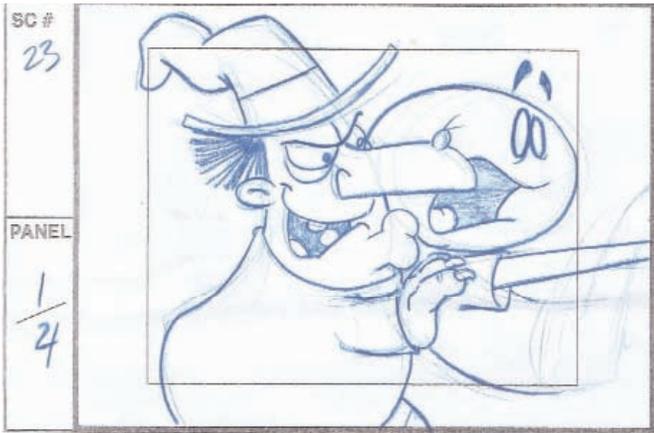


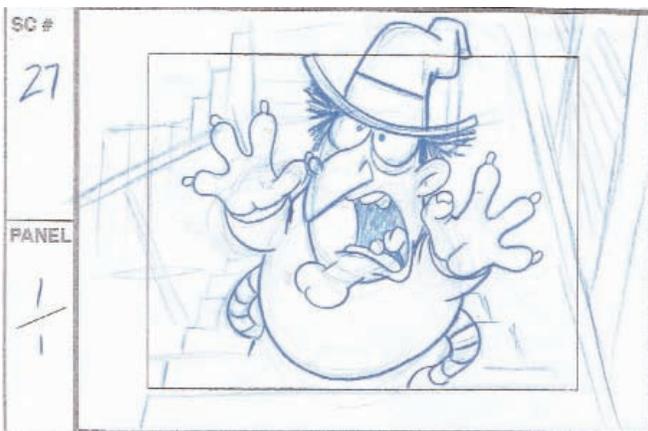
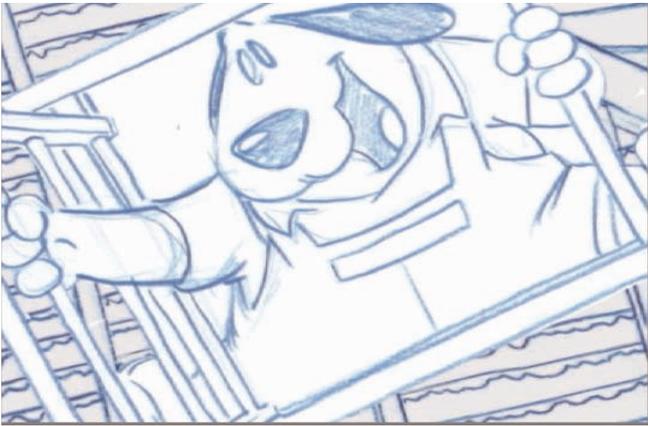
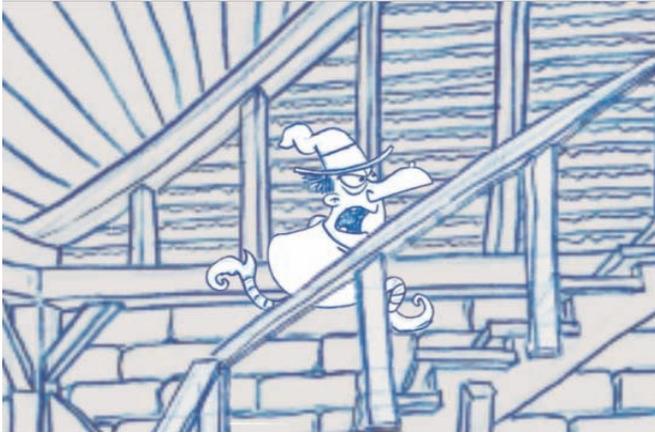


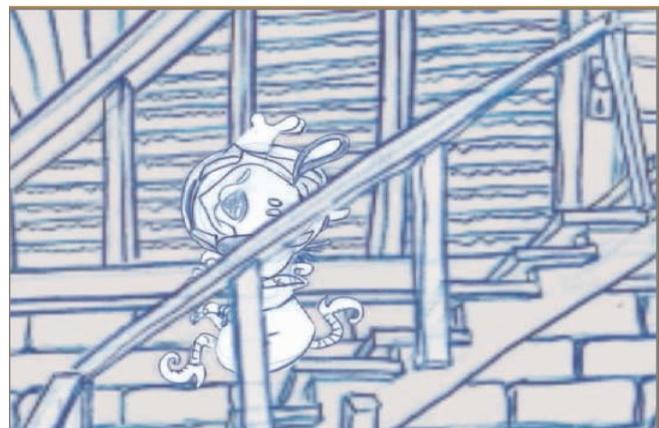


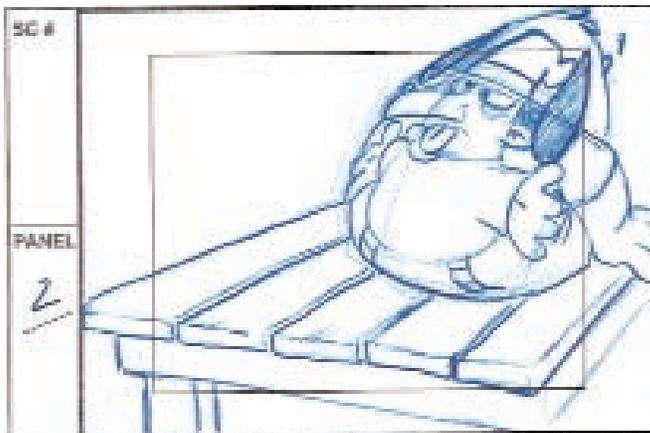
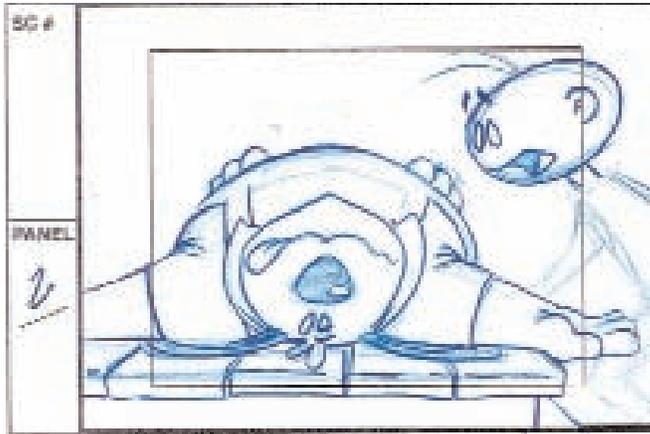
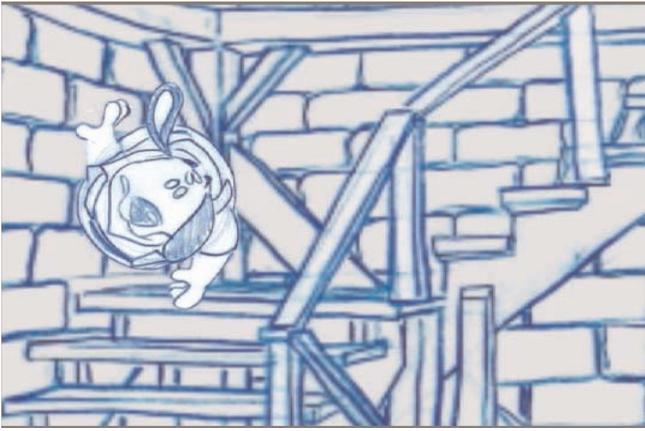


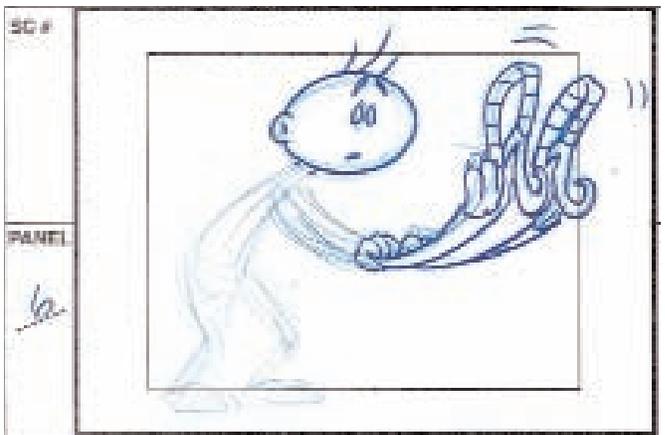
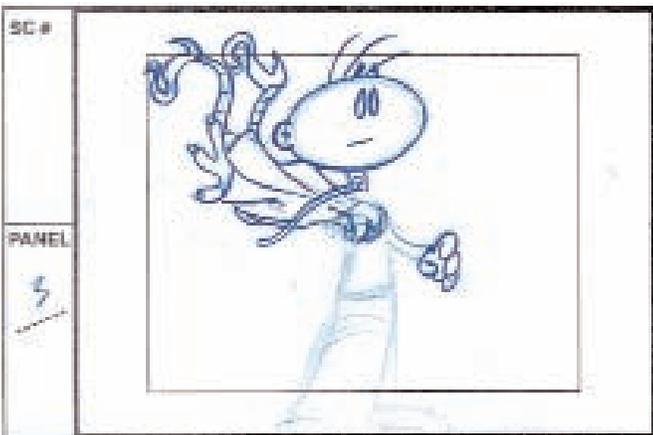
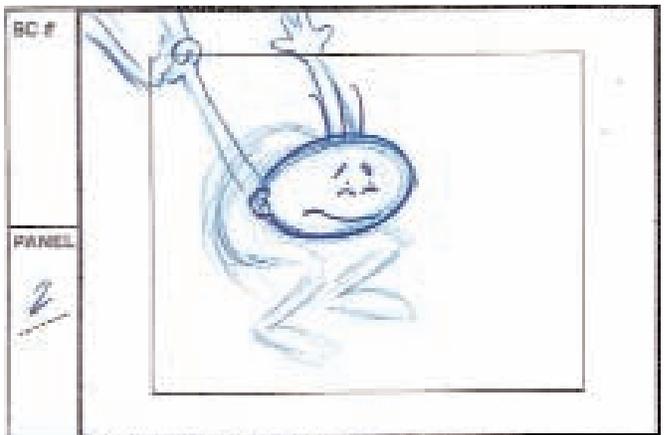
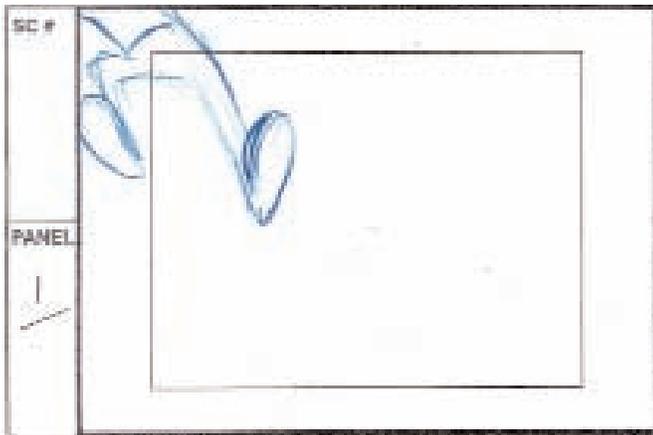
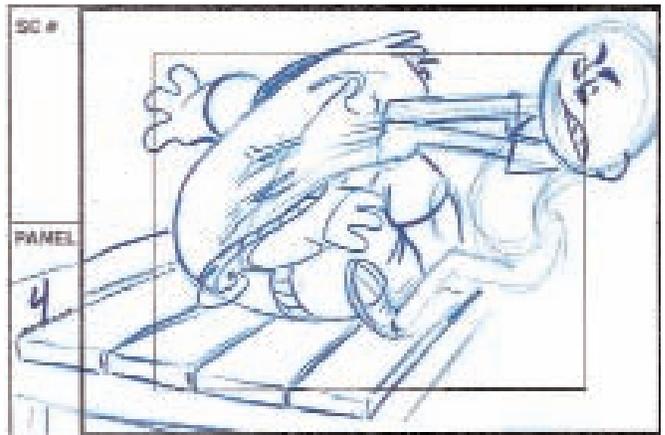
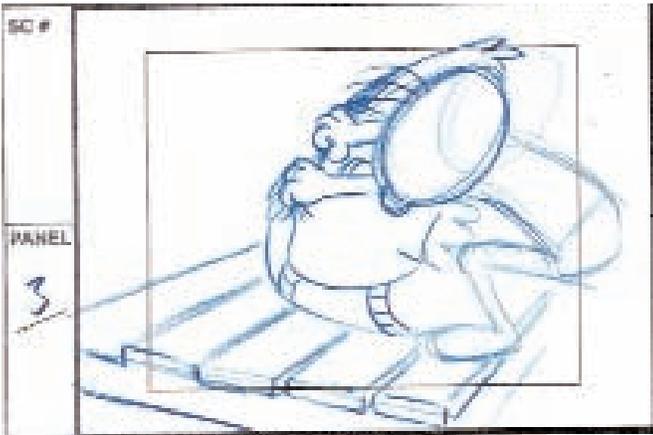


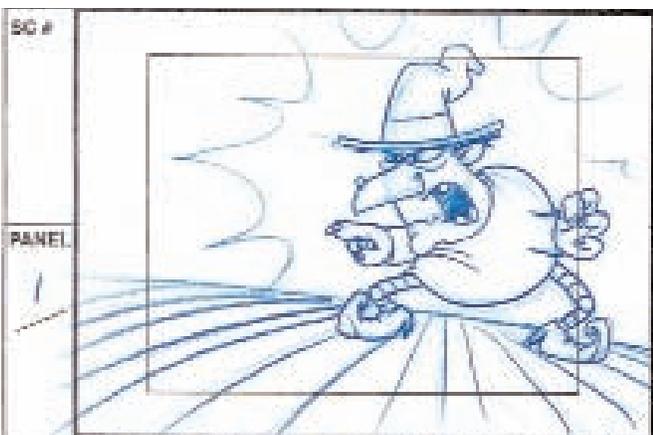
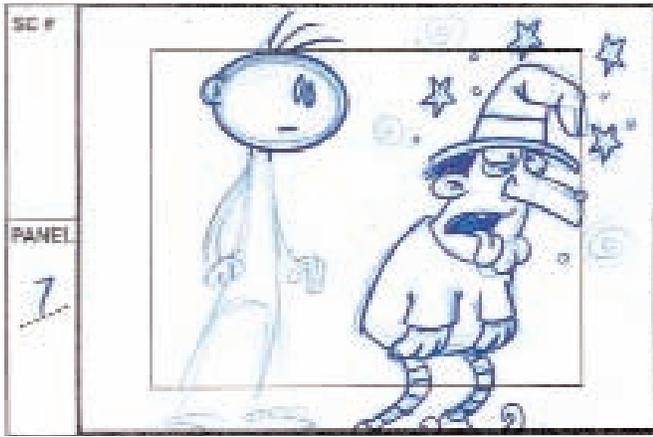


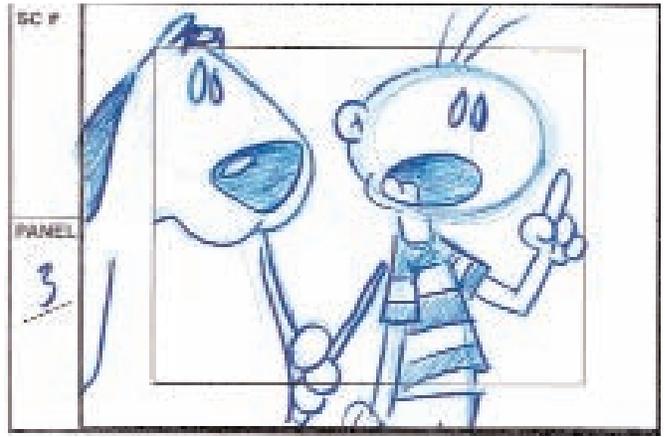


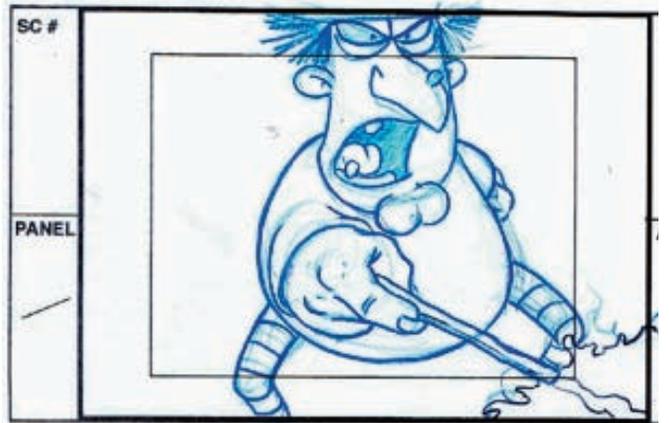
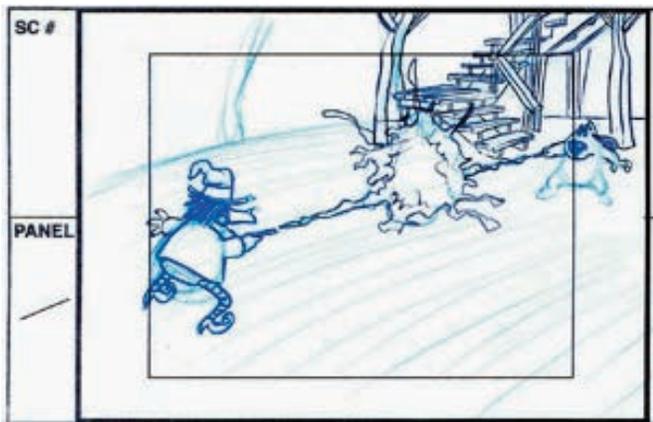
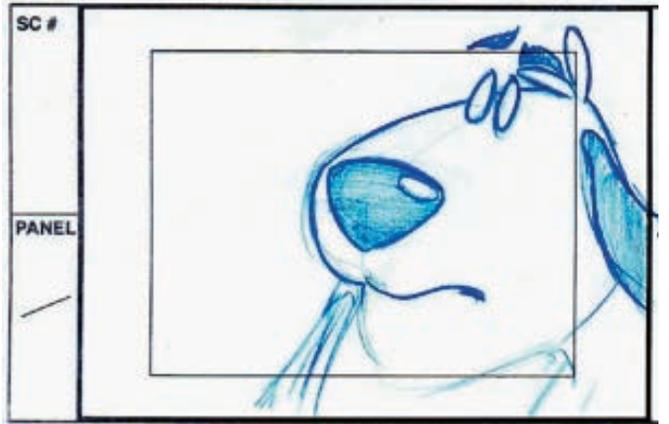












Production Art

Production art is the next stage in developing the look of your project. It's coming up with the actual designs that will be used in the final production.

Concept art gives a rough direction and provides inspiration, but eventually it needs to be refined down to the actual "look" that you'll be using. Production art includes the following elements:

- 1) Location Designs
- 2) Character Designs
- 3) Prop Designs

These are all produced by the "Design Department". It's usually split into these three categories with people who specialize in these areas. Location and Prop designers typically can have an artistic background in architecture or set design and possibly even interior design. They're very good at drawing things using perspective, 1, 2, and 3 point and even using some warped perspective when needed. They're also really good at spatial relationships and understanding the scale and proportion of everyday objects such as doors, stairs, chairs, tables, etc. They are really good at building things and knowing how things are put together. They also know how to caricature things when necessary.

Character designers are good at drawing both human and animals, both realistic as well as caricatured and anthropomorphic. They're also very good at life drawing, being able to pose a character in pretty much any position and facial expressions showing any different type of emotion.

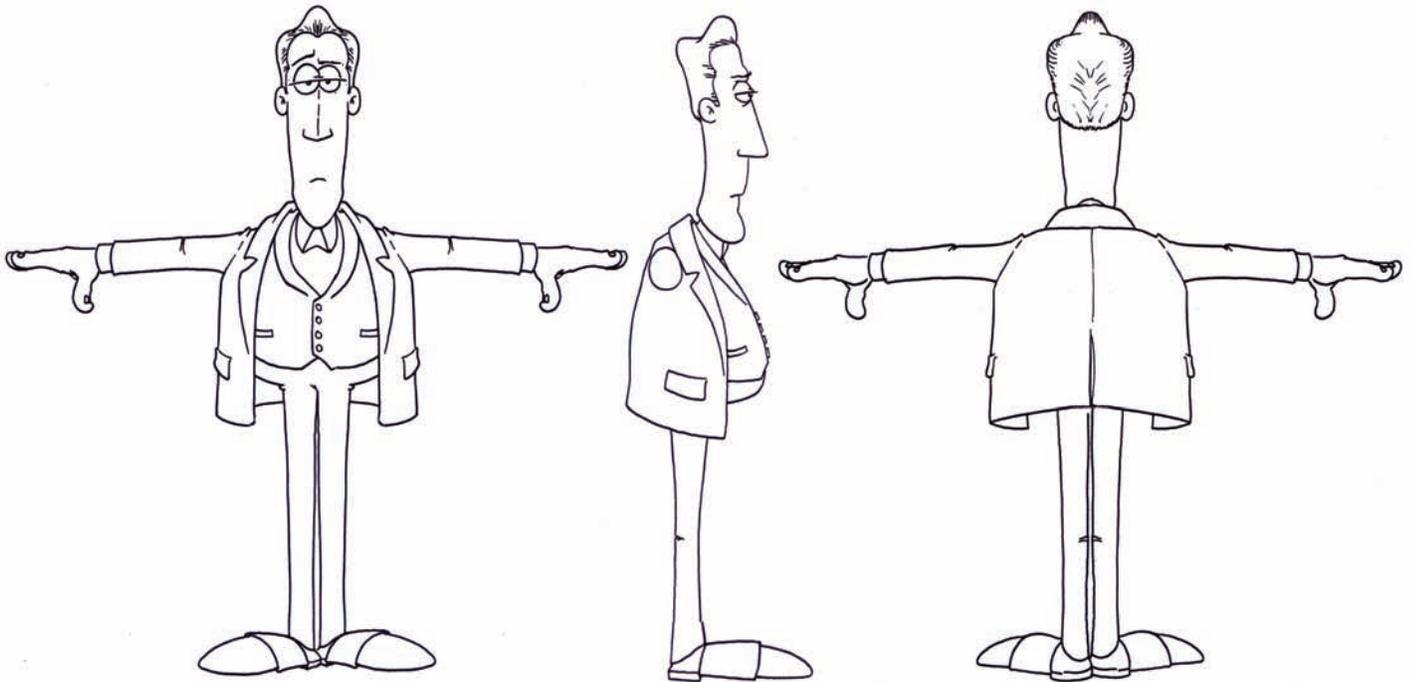
These people take the concept designs and come up with the "final design" for everything. They create what are called "Model Sheets" for all the other people in the studio to follow.

Location designers create the "Location Designs" that show all the environments from the variety of different angles so everyone knows where everything is in the scene.

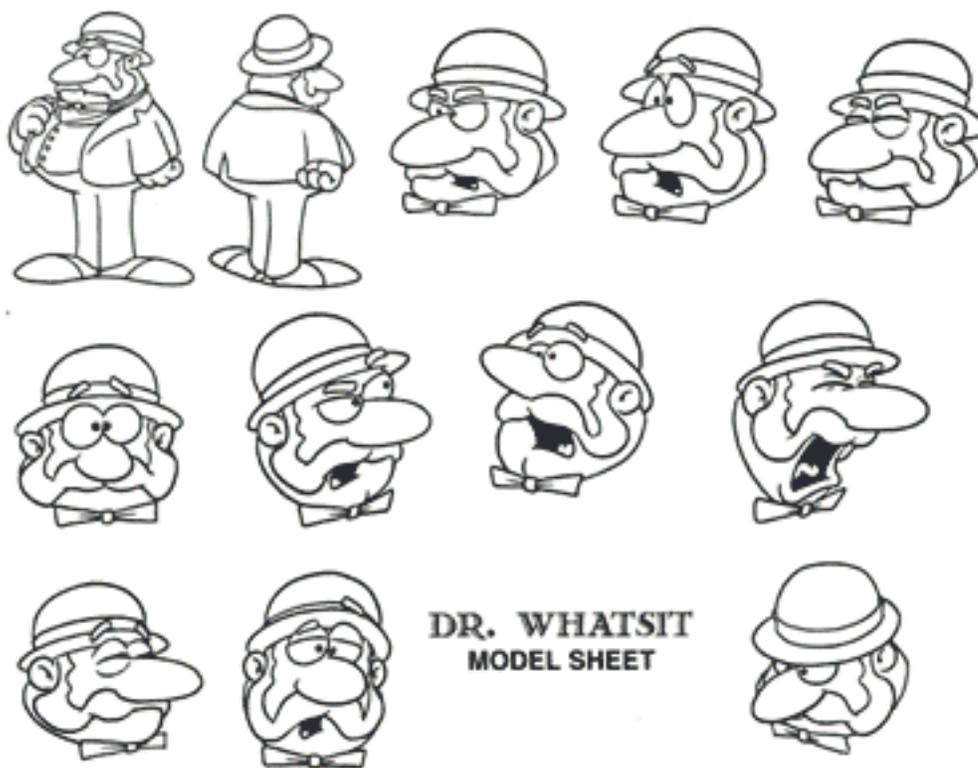
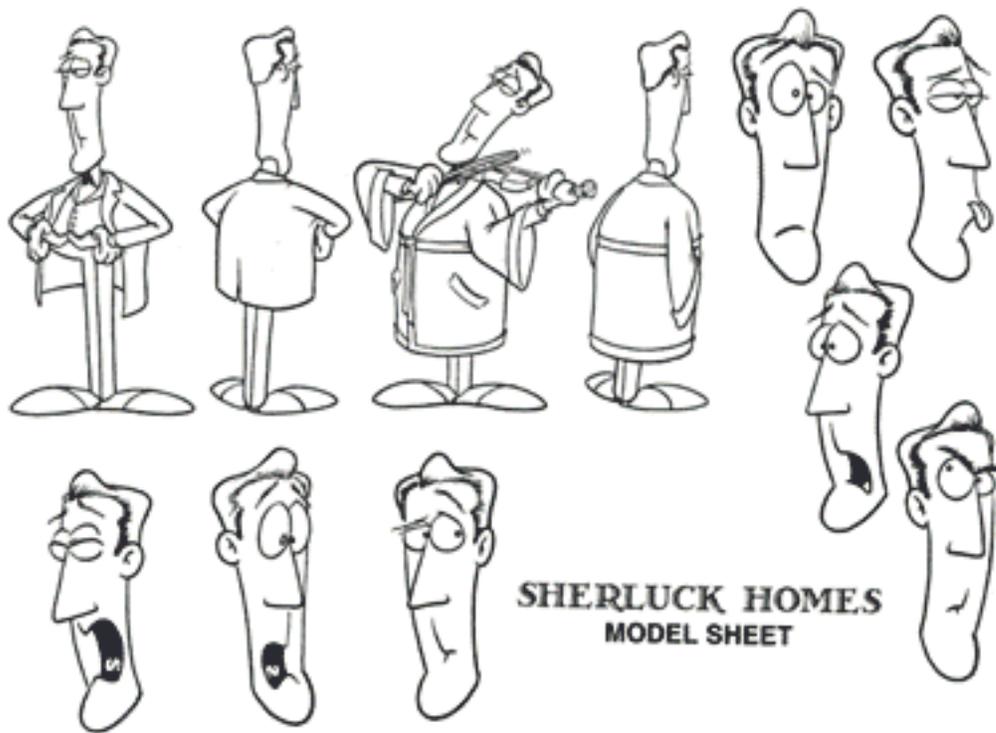
Prop designers come up with the "Prop Sheets" that show what the various objects that the characters will physically interact with in their scenes. They show what they look like from all angles and the scale of the object to the character and environment.

The character designers come up with the "Character Model Sheets" that show what the characters look like from different angles, in a variety of poses that they will

use in the film, any facial expressions as well as mouth positions for dialogue. They will also show what extremes the characters can go to without going “of model”. There will also be a “size comparison” sheet that shows how big the characters are to each other as well as their environments. In the case of a 3D show, characters are drawn in what is called a “T-pose”. This shows the character from a straight-on front view, a straight-on side view, and a straight-on rear view with their arms straight out to the sides (forming a “T”). This is so the 3D modeller can create the basic character sculpt and then the “Rigger” can create a skeleton for the model, which is used later by the animator to pose the model in the “Key Positions”.



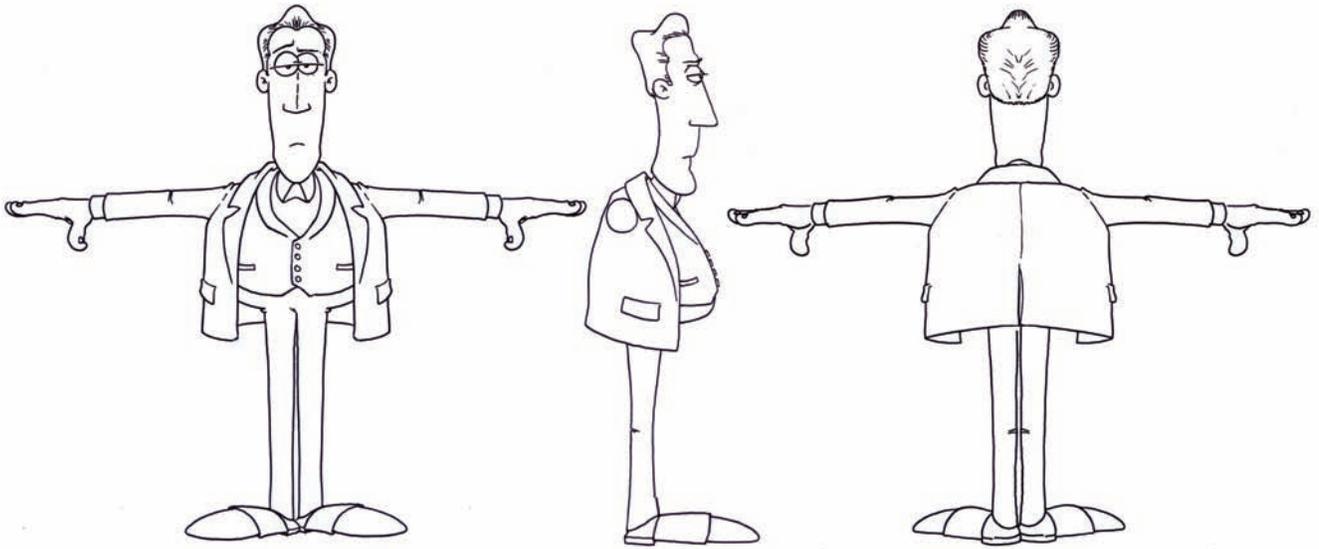
Sherlock Homes in suit



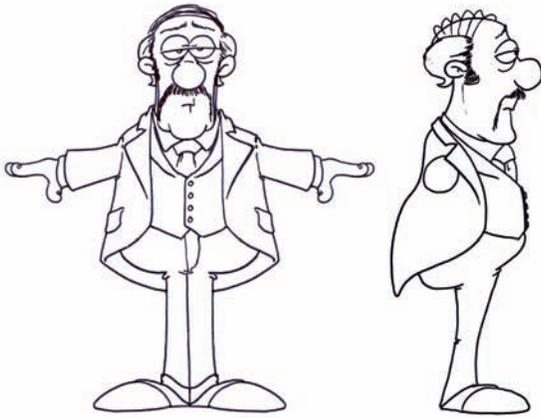


MRS. HUGESON
MODEL SHEET

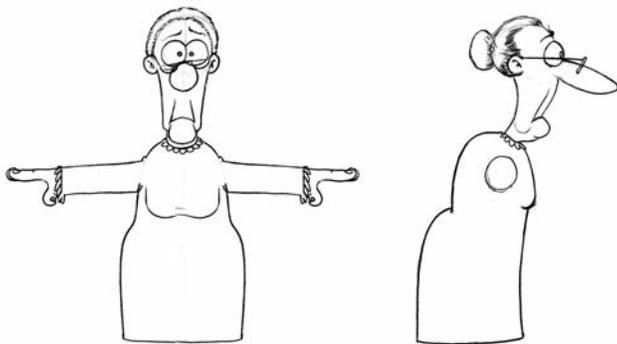
Sherlock Homes



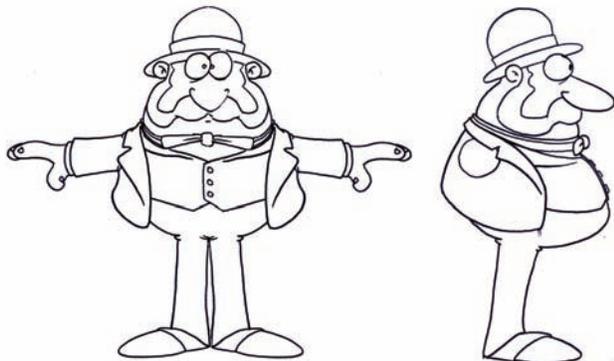
Sherlock Homes in suit



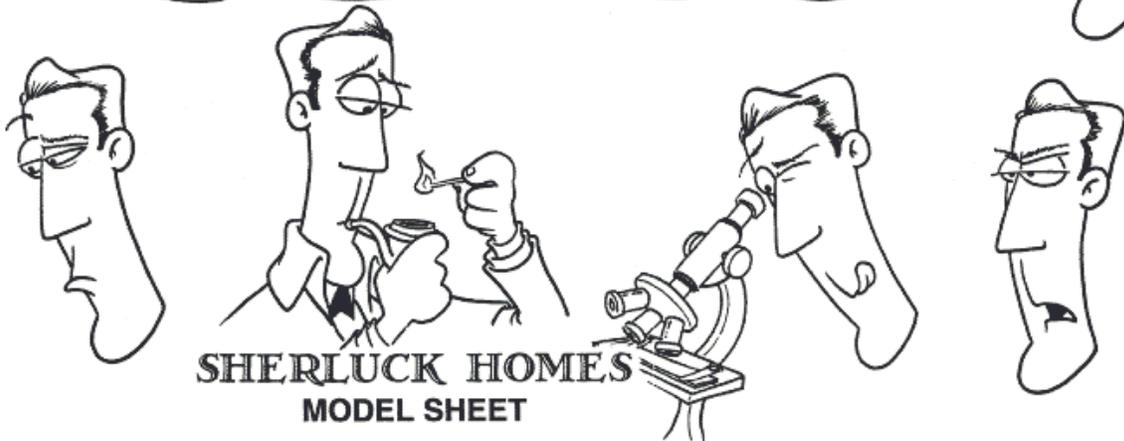
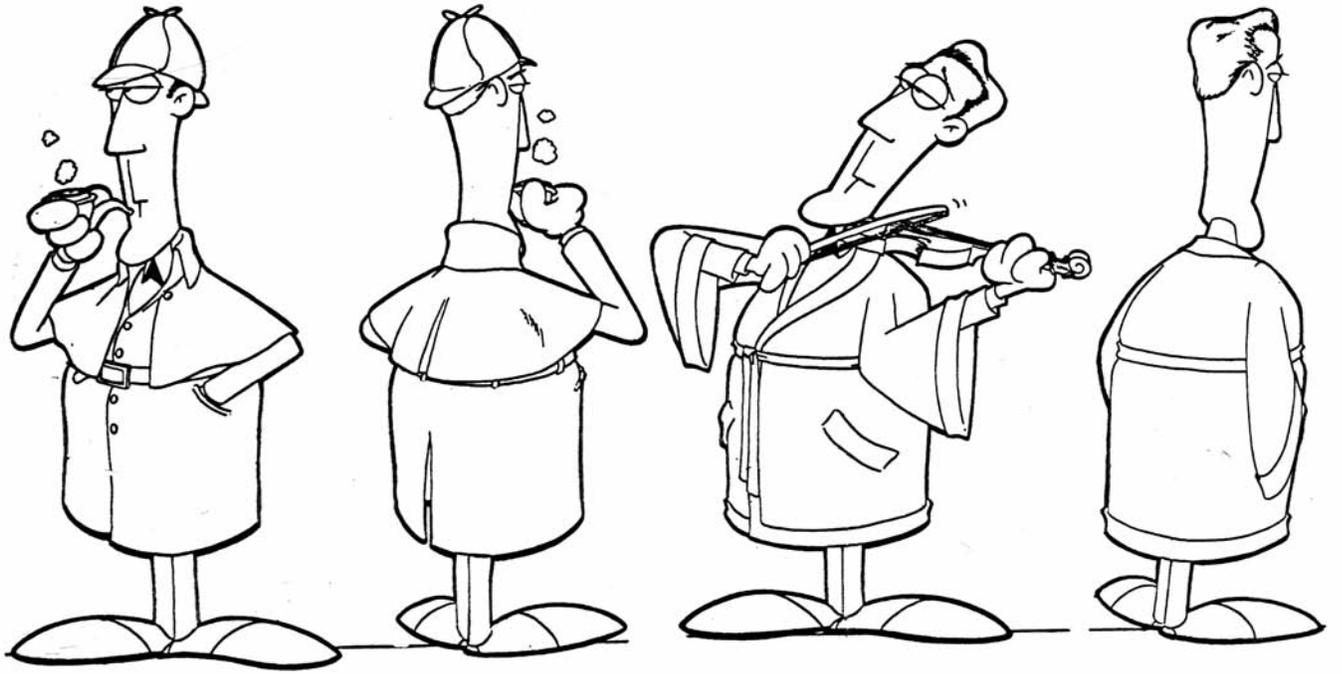
Inspector Lastrawed



Mrs. Hugeson



Dr. Whatsit



**SHERLUCK HOMES
MODEL SHEET**



A



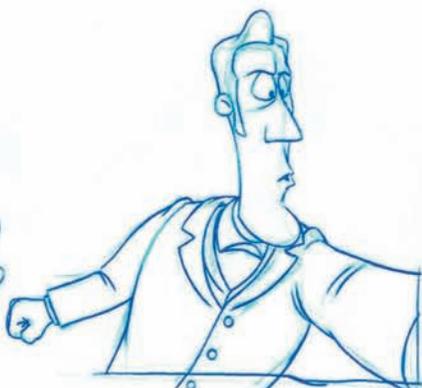
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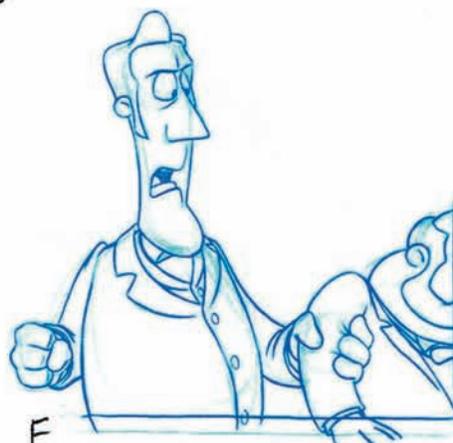
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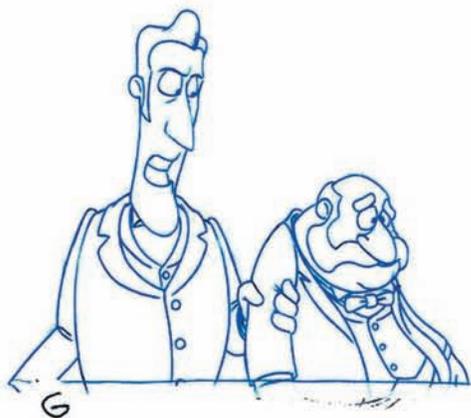
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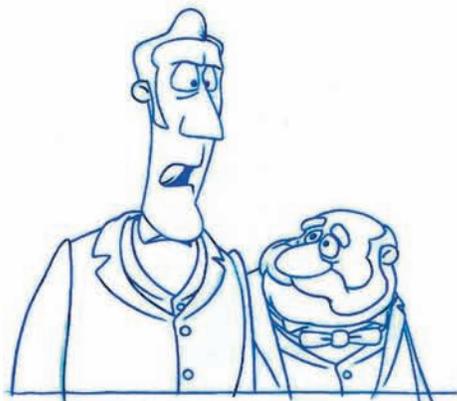
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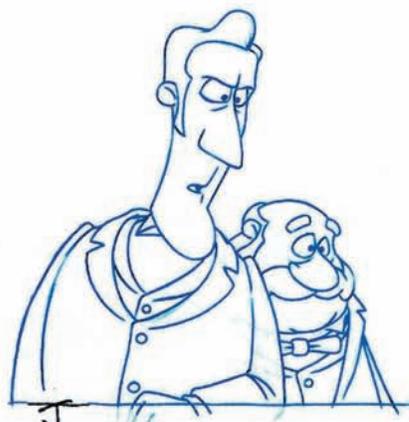
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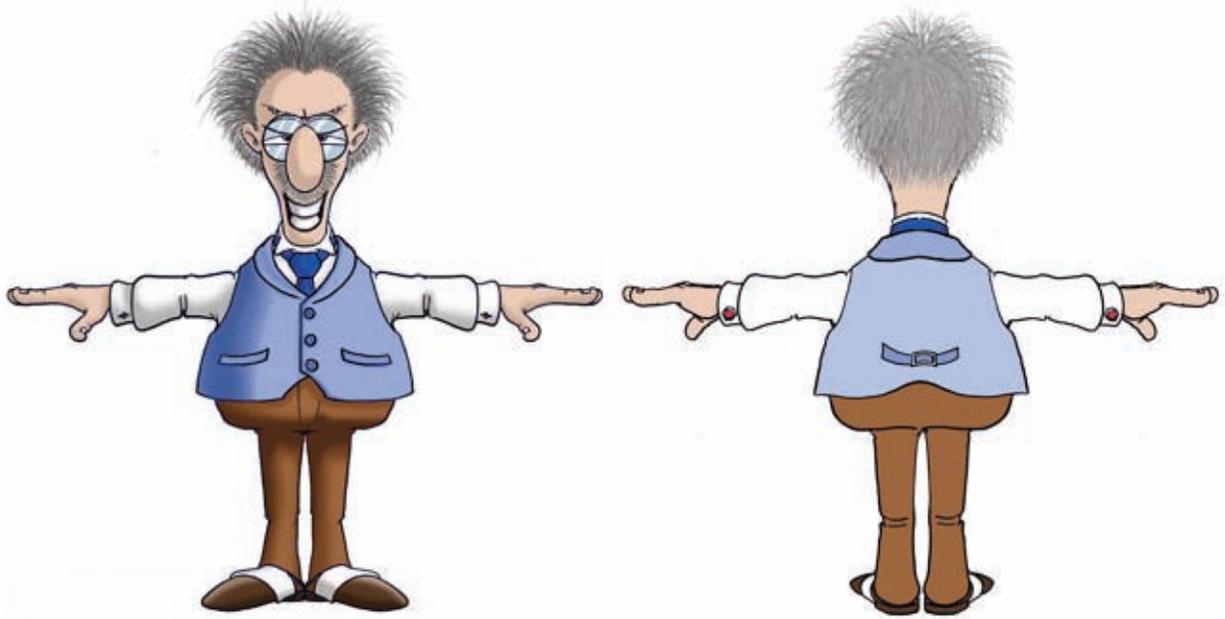
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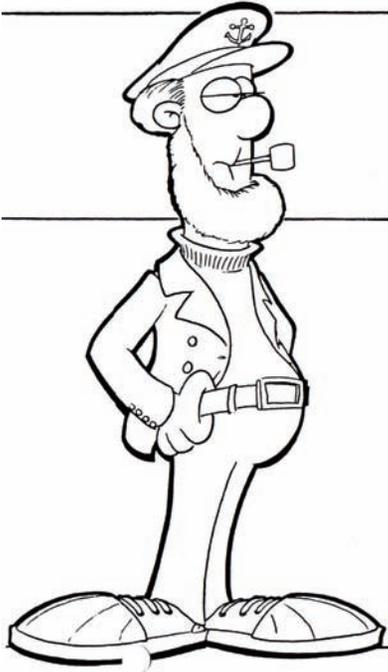
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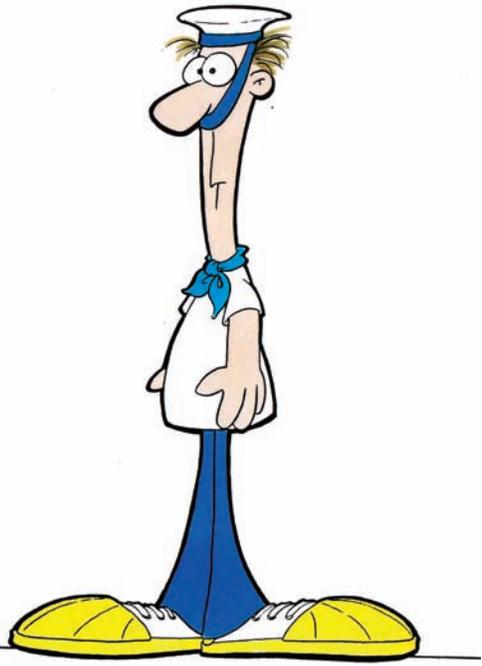
J



SAILORS
POSE SHEET # 1



SAILOR



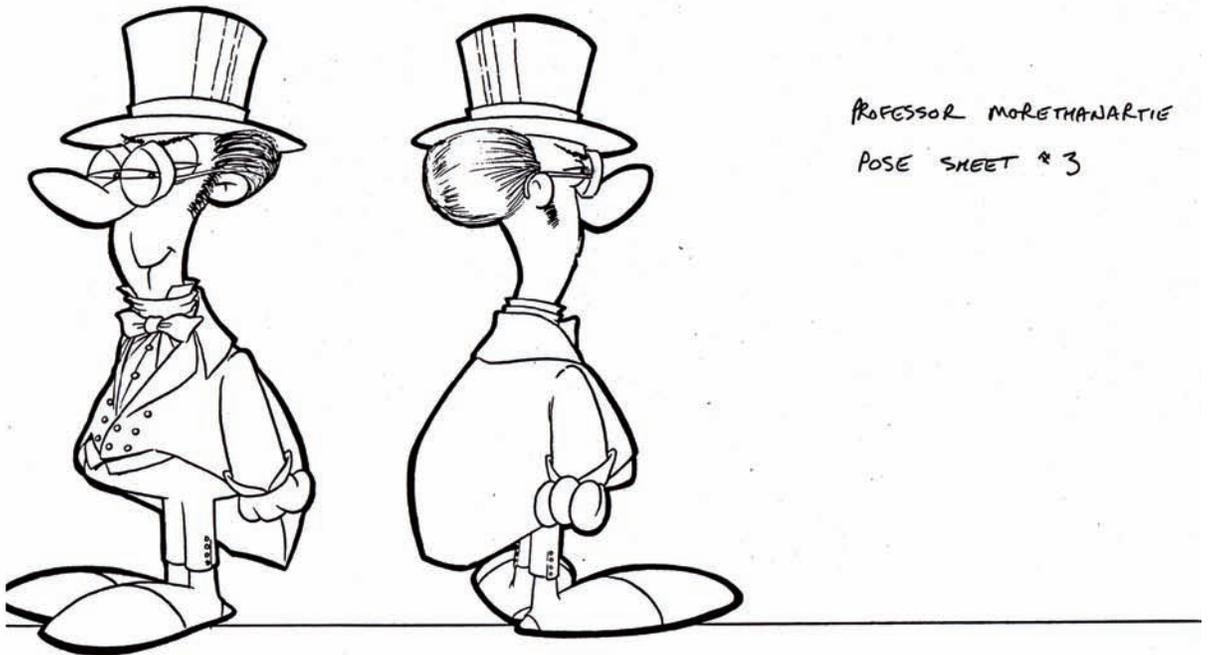
CRANE OPERATOR



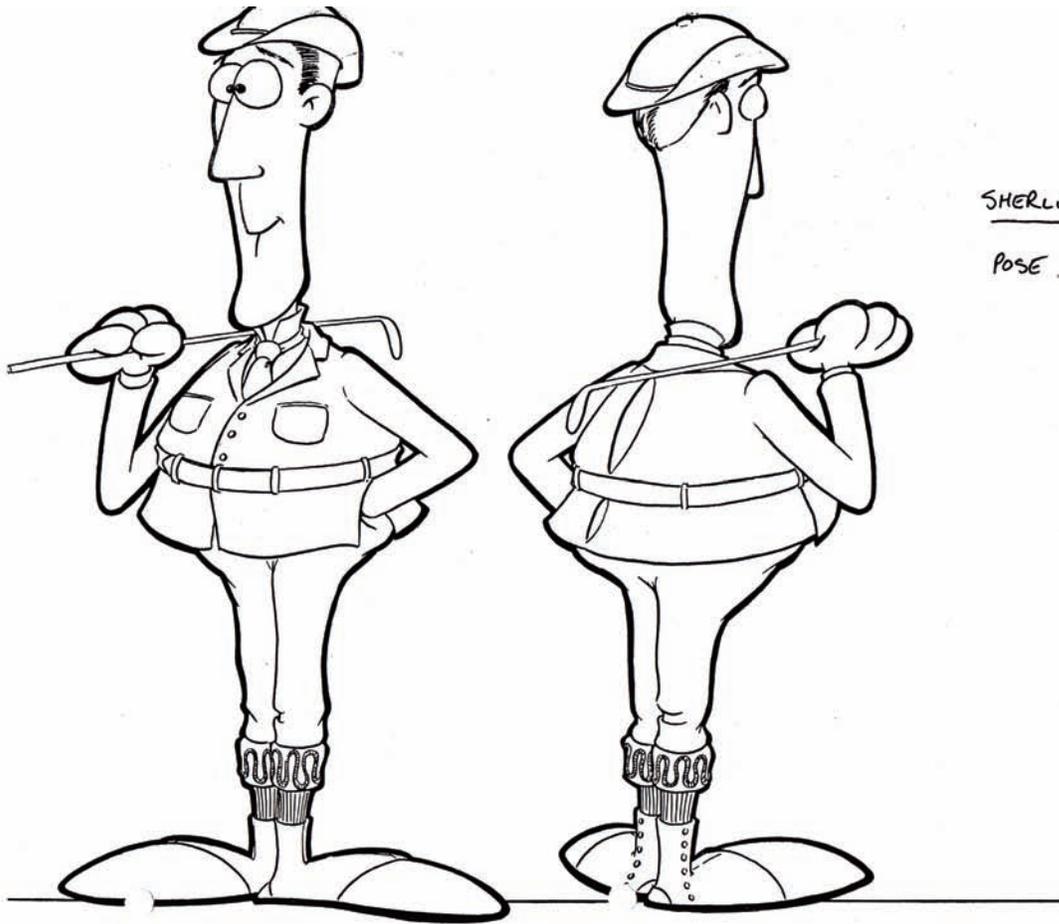
PROFESSOR MORETHANARTIE
POSE SHEET # 1



PROFESSOR MORETHANARTIE
POSE SHEET # 4

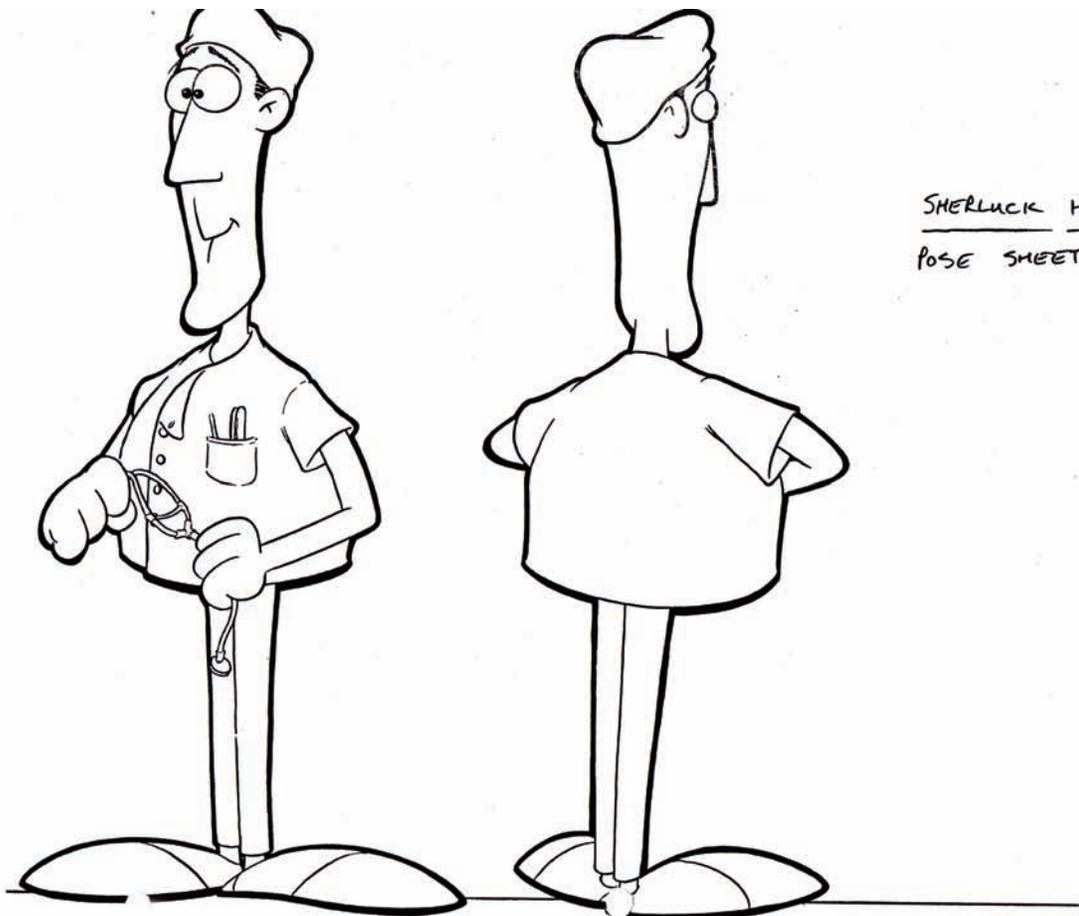


PROFESSOR MORETHANARTIE
POSE SHEET # 3



SHERLUCK HOMES

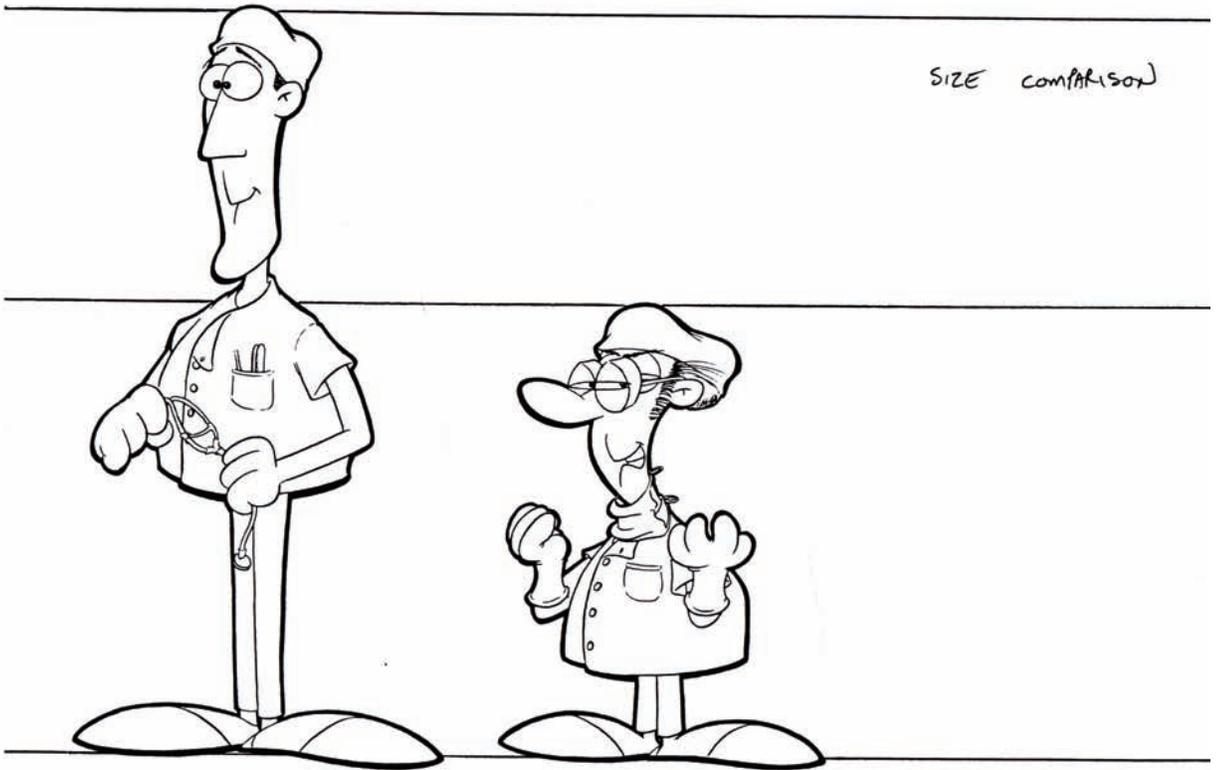
POSE SHEET # 5



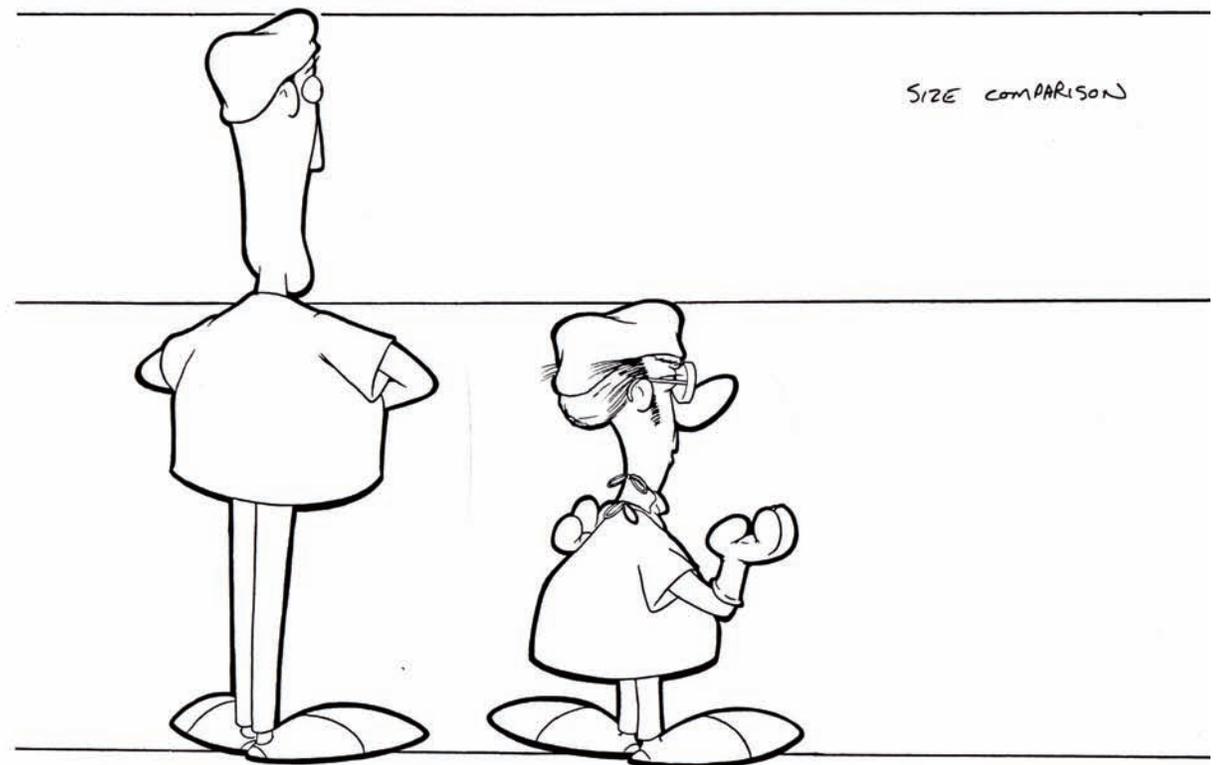
SHERLUCK HOMES

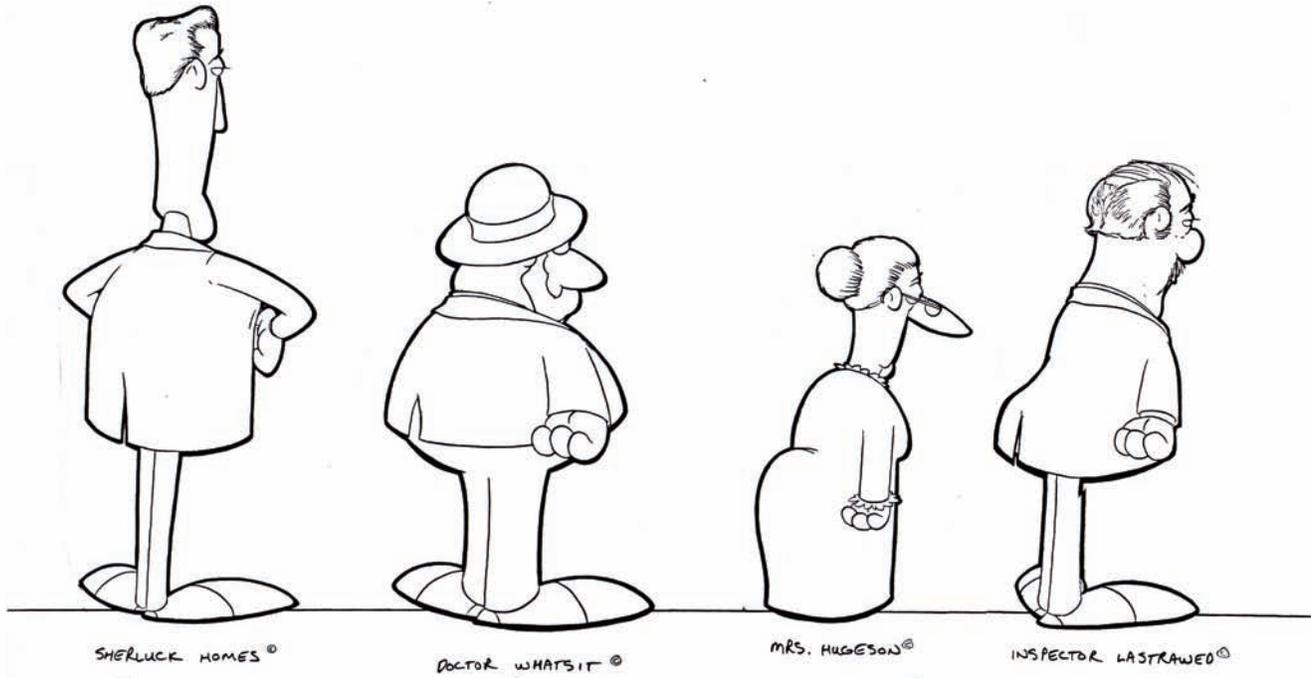
POSE SHEET # 4

SIZE COMPARISON



SIZE COMPARISON



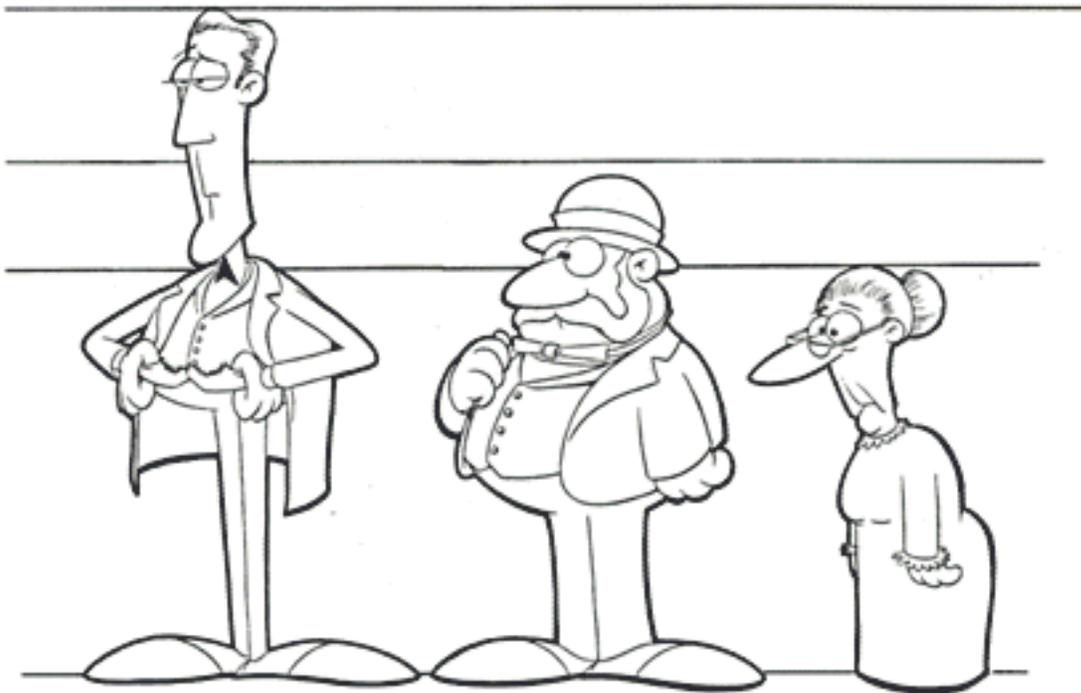


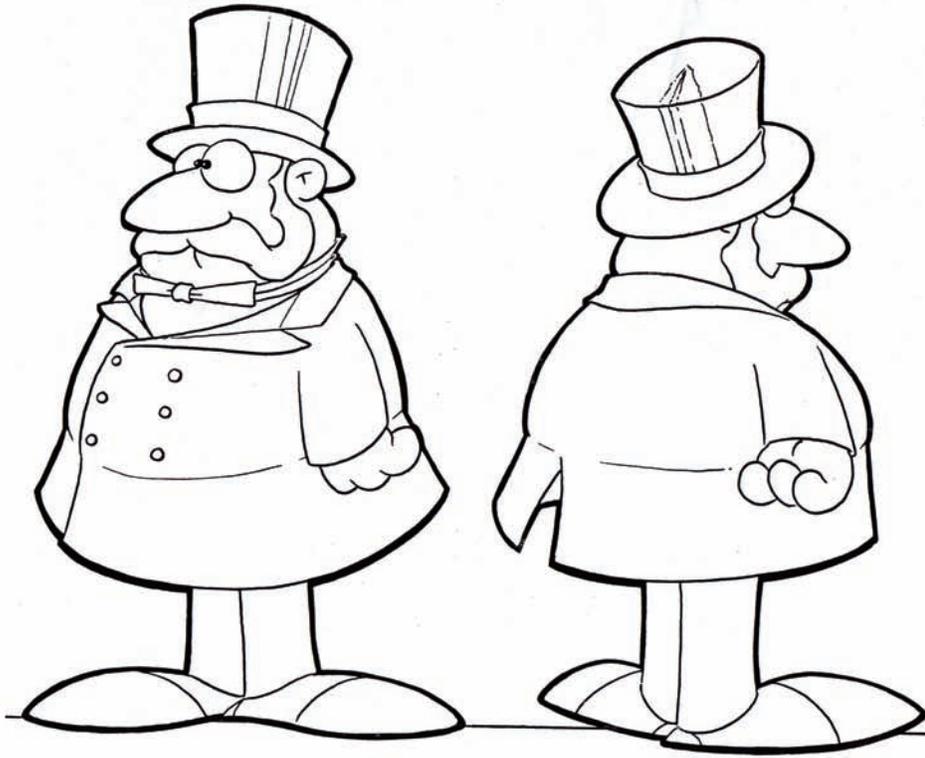
SHERLOCK HOLMES ©

DOCTOR WATSON ©

MRS. HUDSON ©

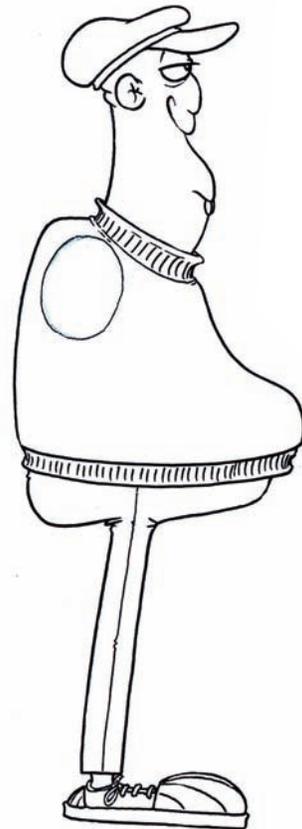
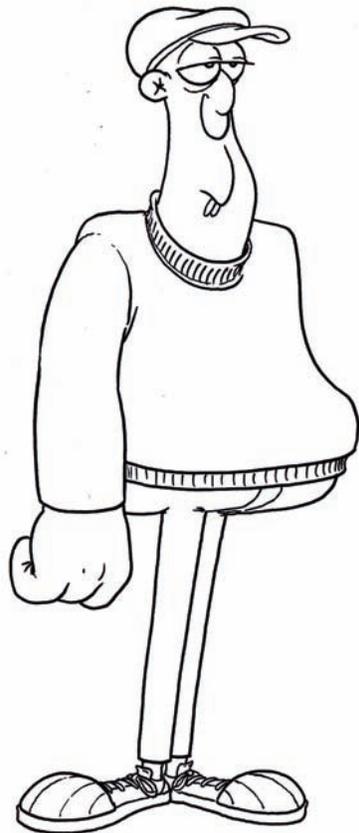
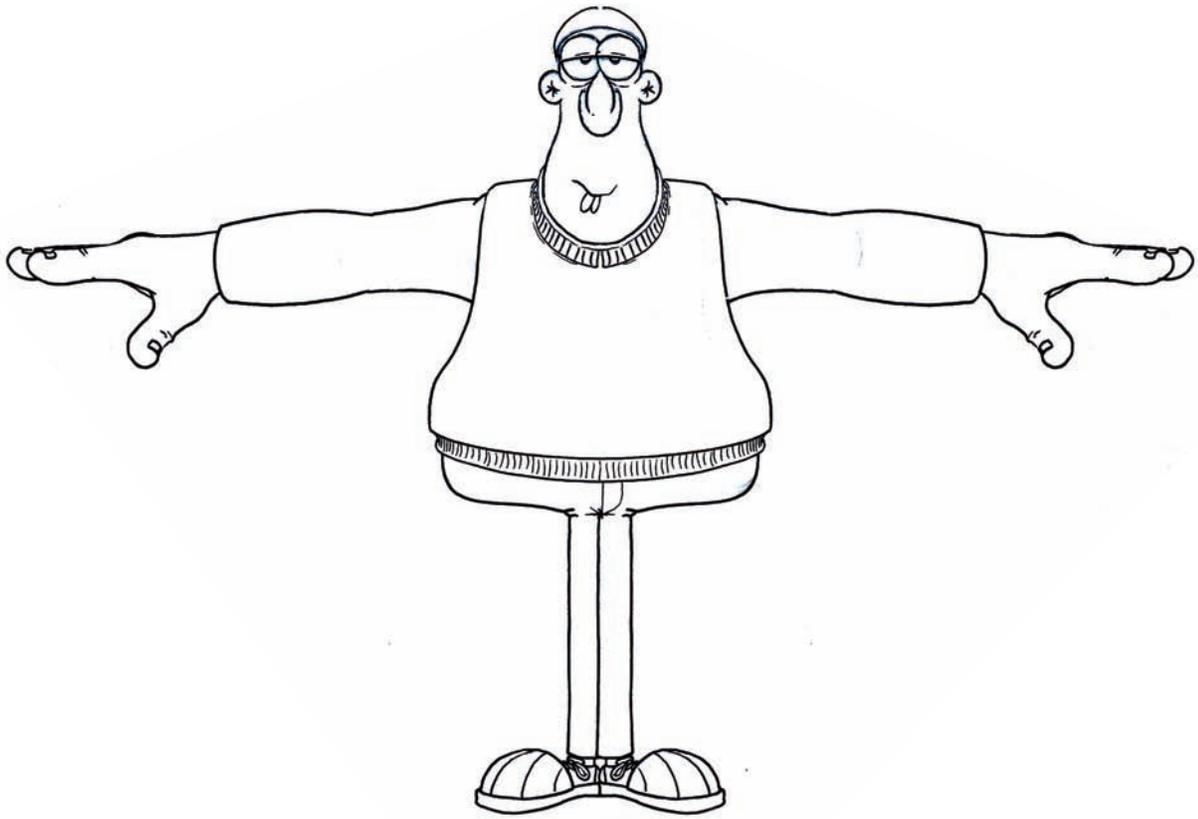
INSPECTOR LESTRADE ©

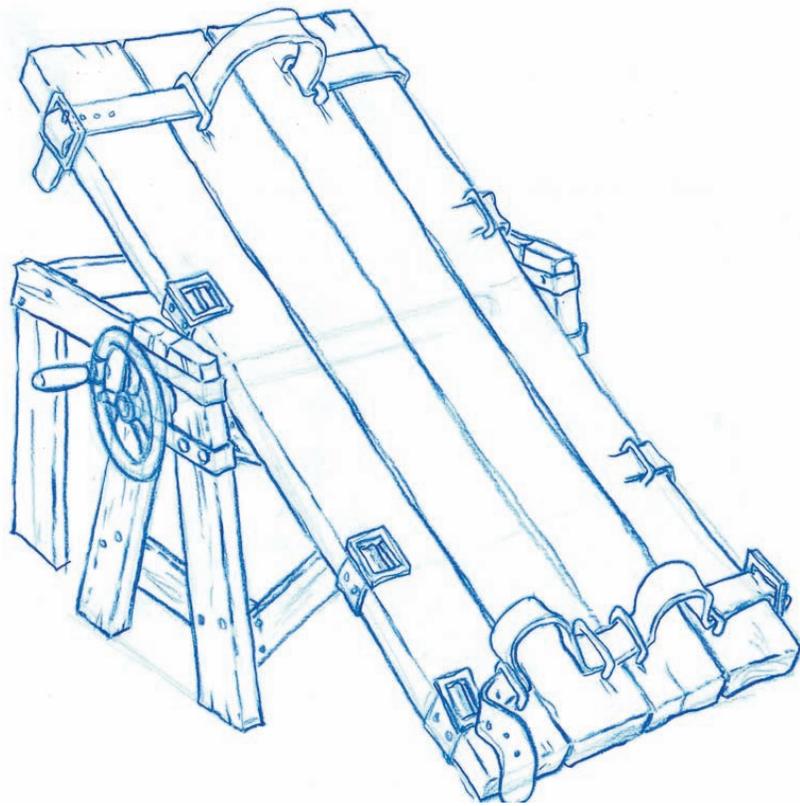




DOCTOR ...WHAT'S IT

POSE SHEET * 2





BUCKLE
CLEARS
END OF
LEGS

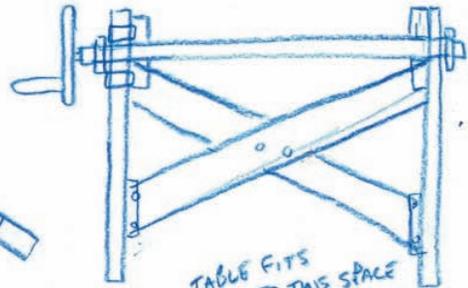
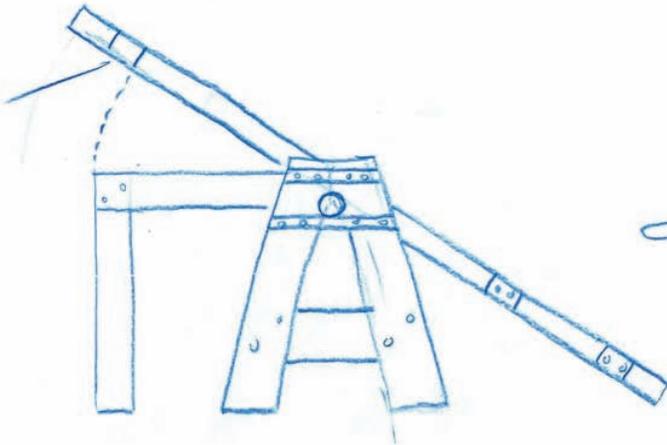
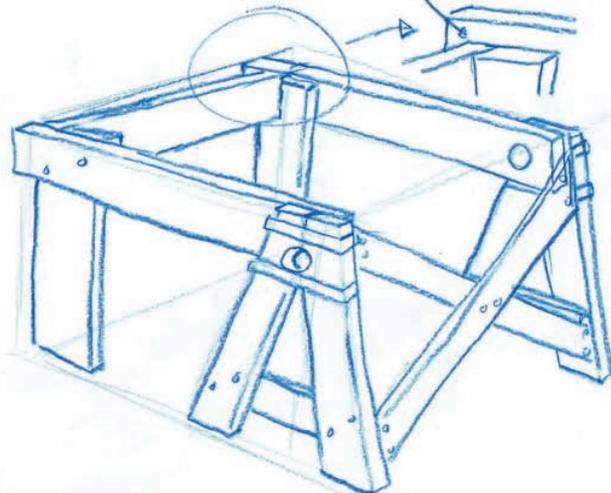
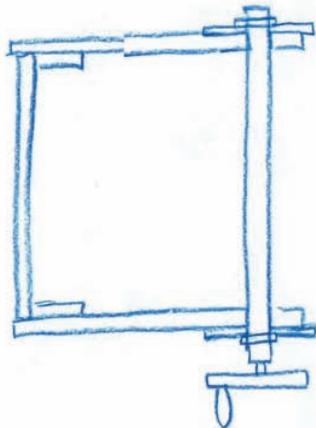
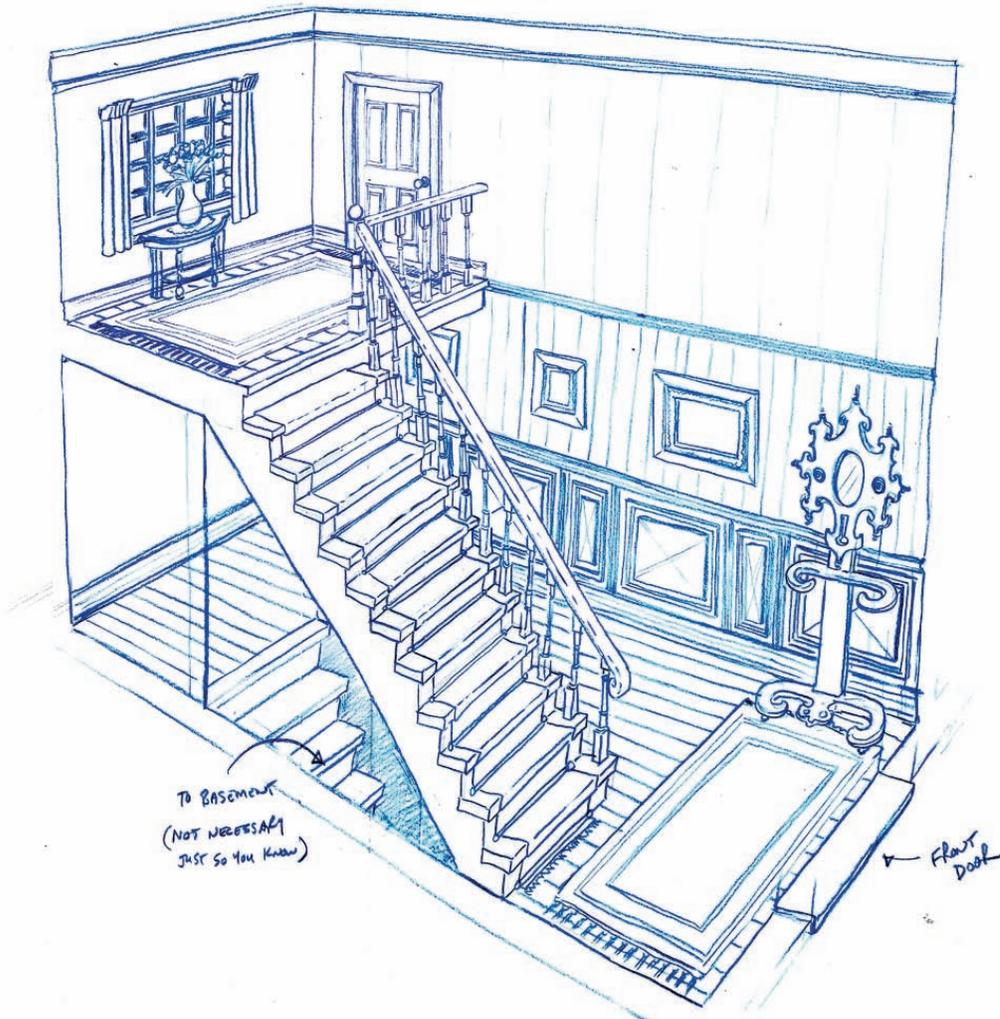
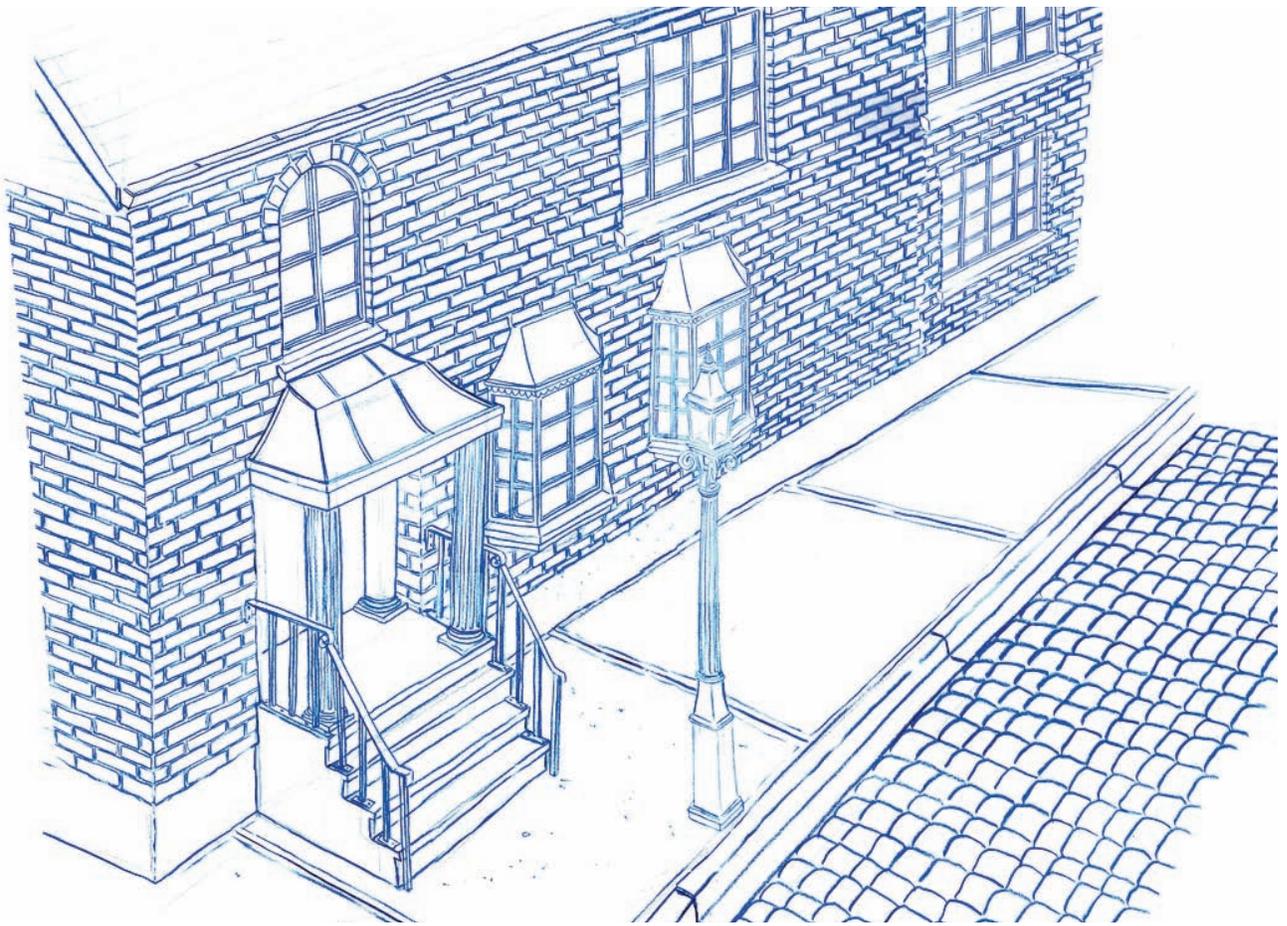
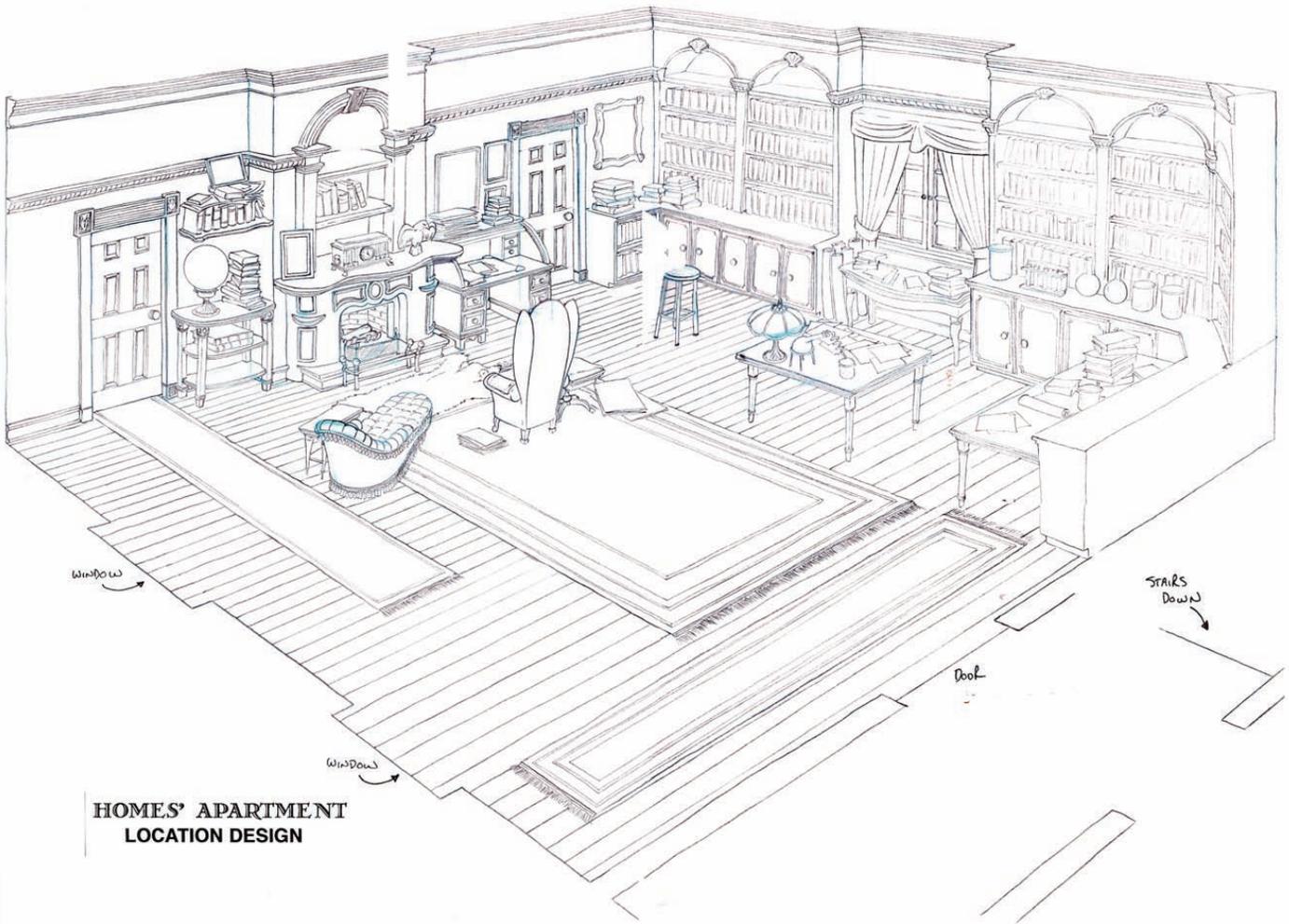


TABLE FITS
INTO THIS SPACE

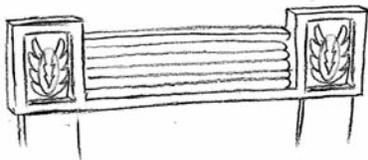
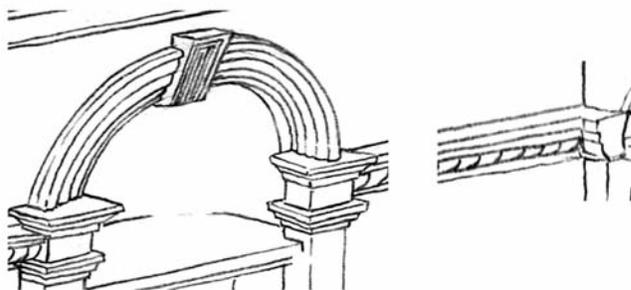






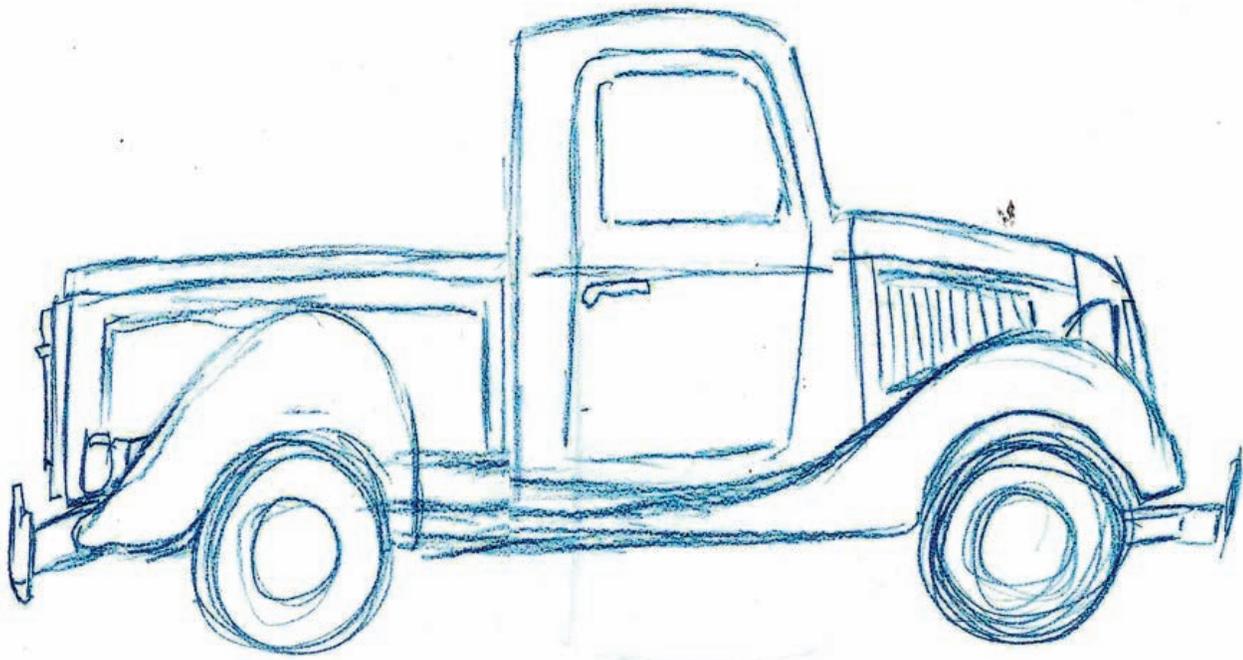


**HOMES' APARTMENT
LOCATION DESIGN**

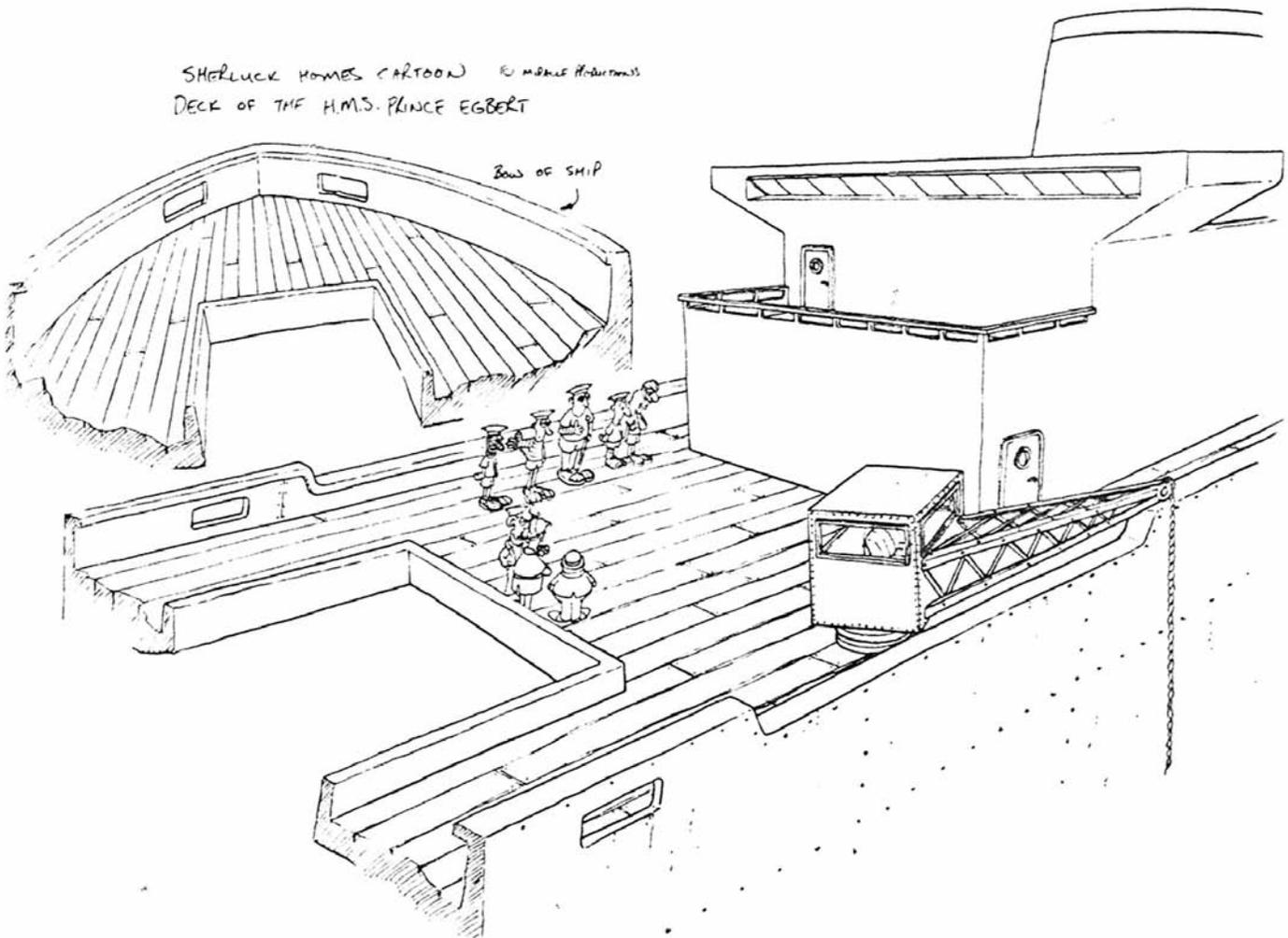


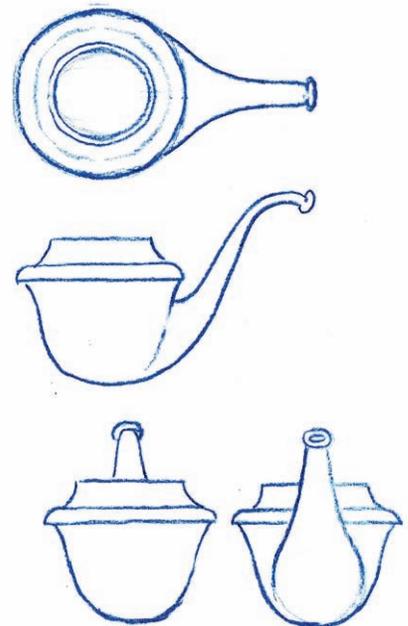
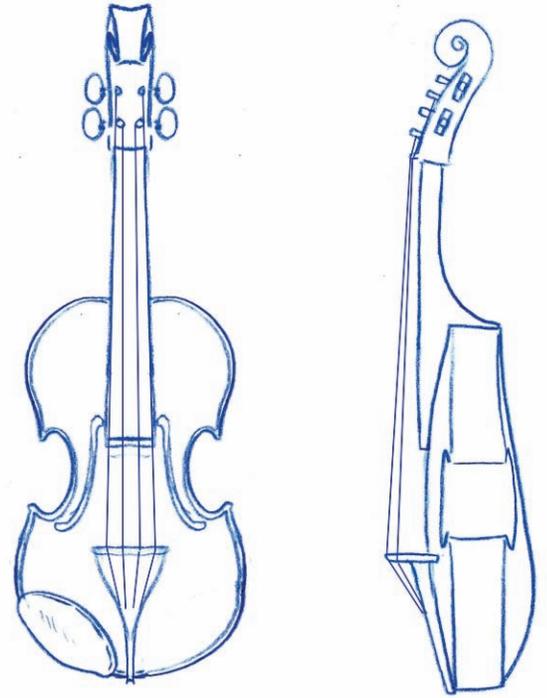
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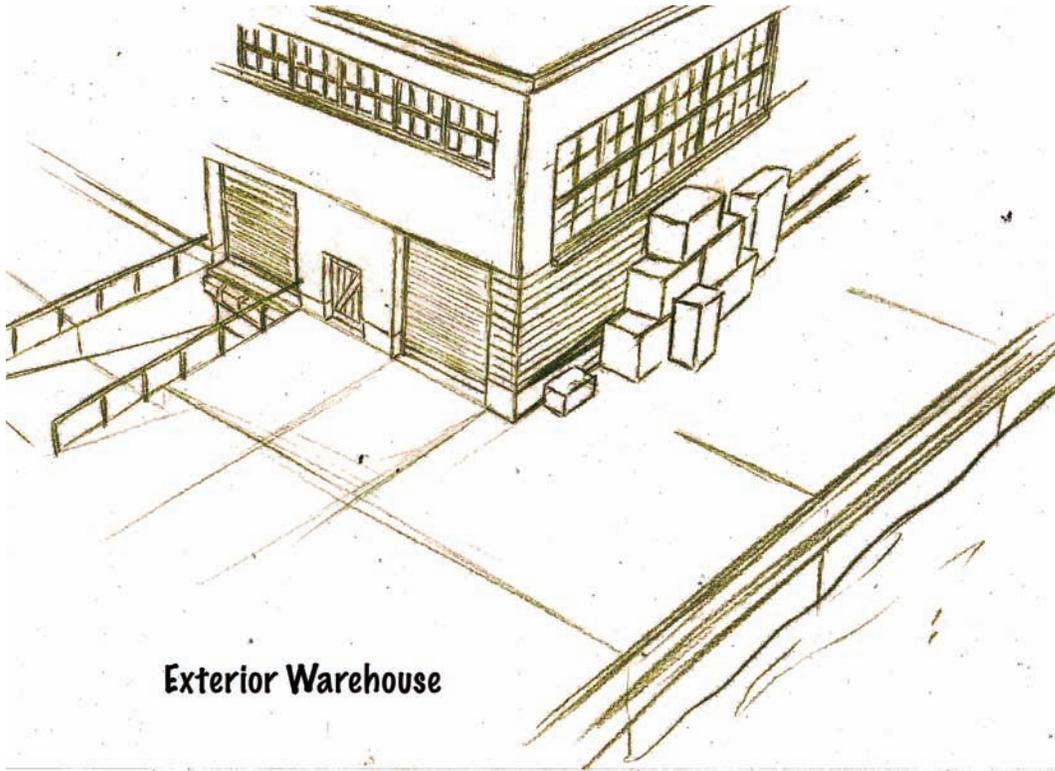




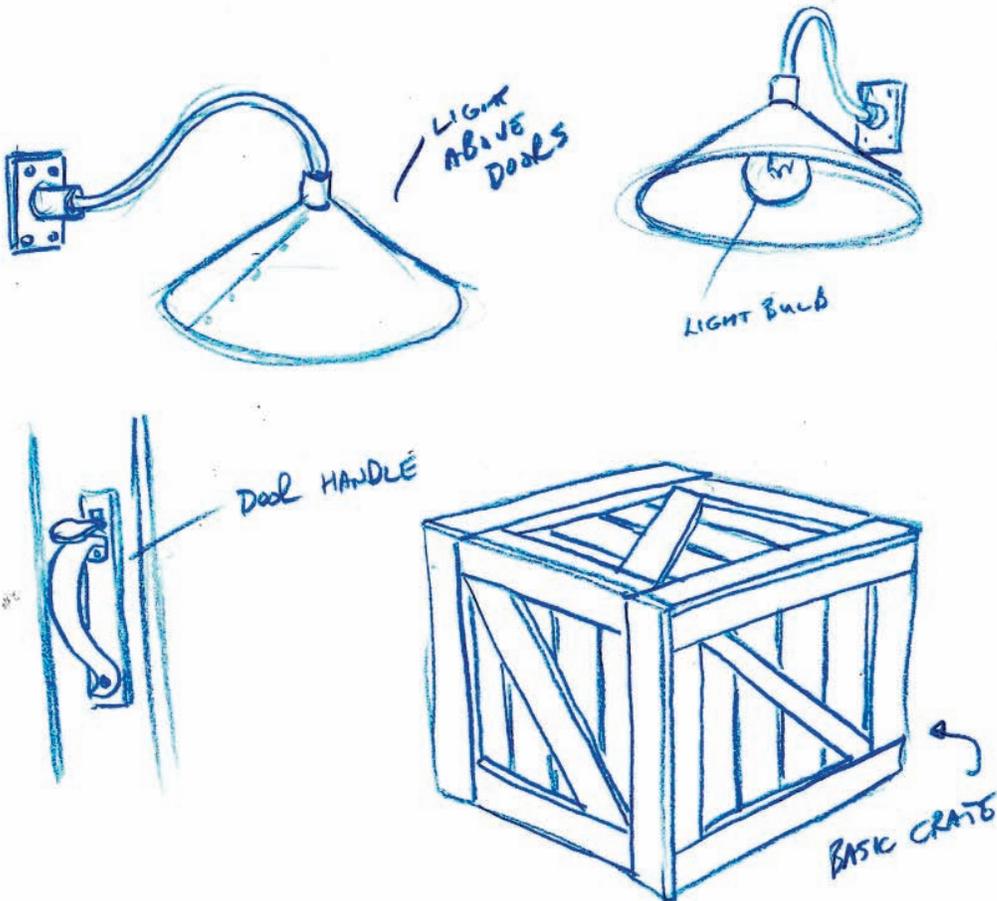
SHERLOCK HOMES CARTOON © MURIEL PRODUCTIONS
DECK OF THE H.M.S. PRINCE EGBERT

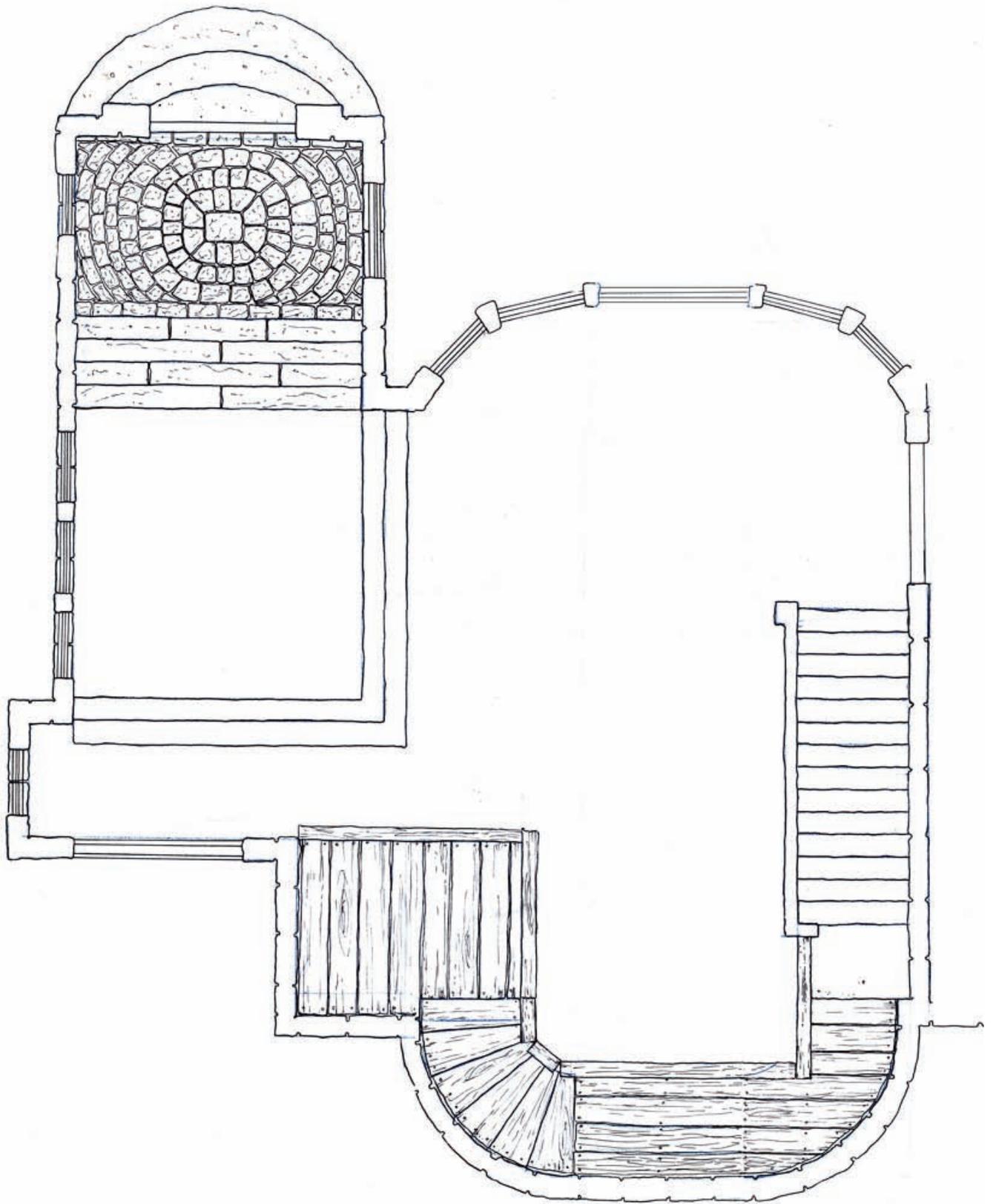


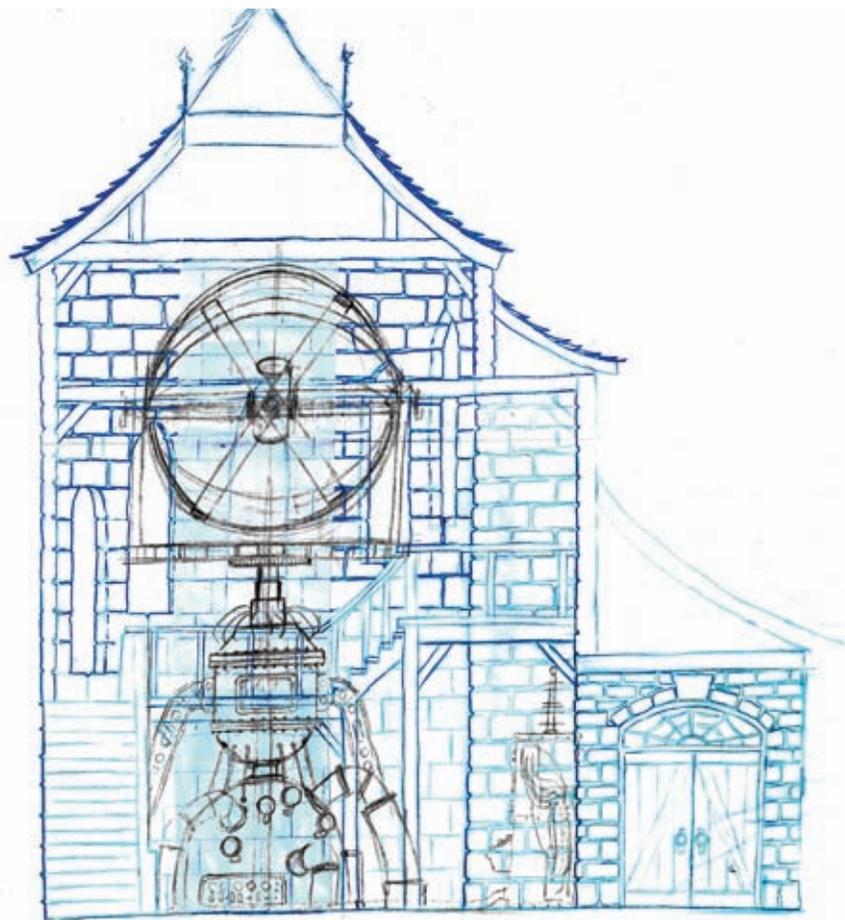
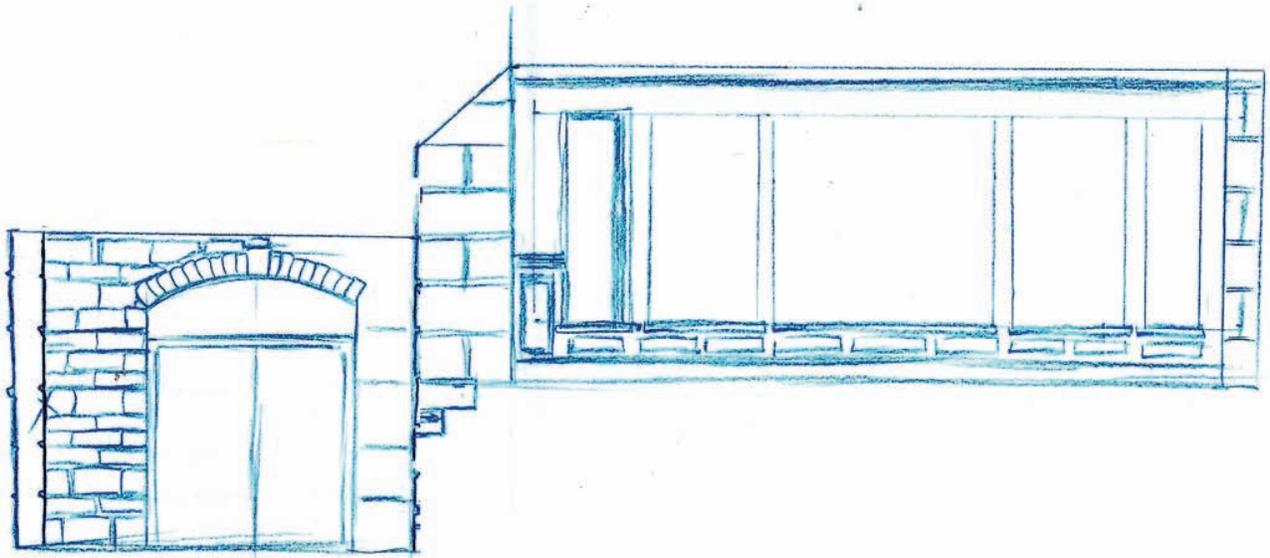


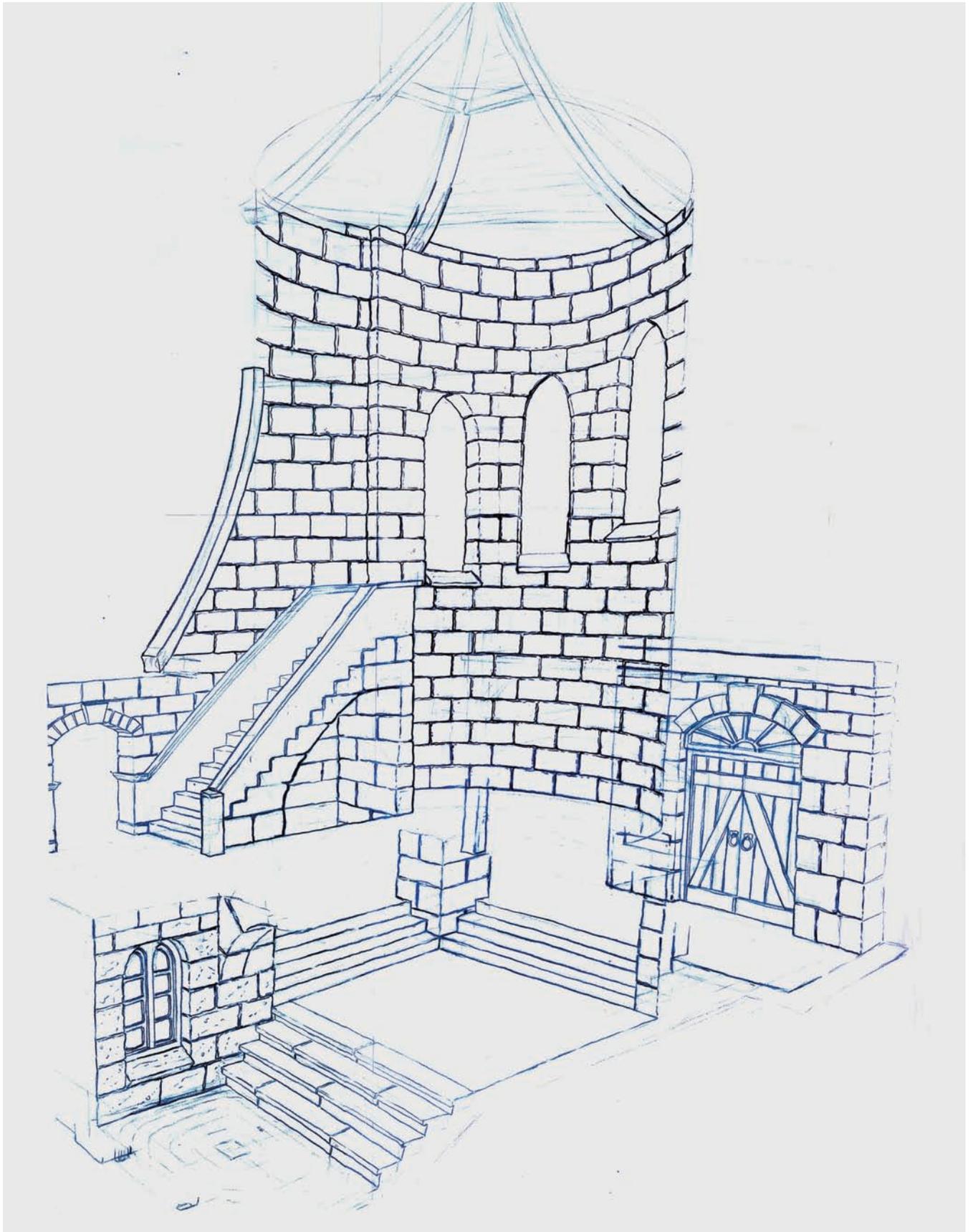


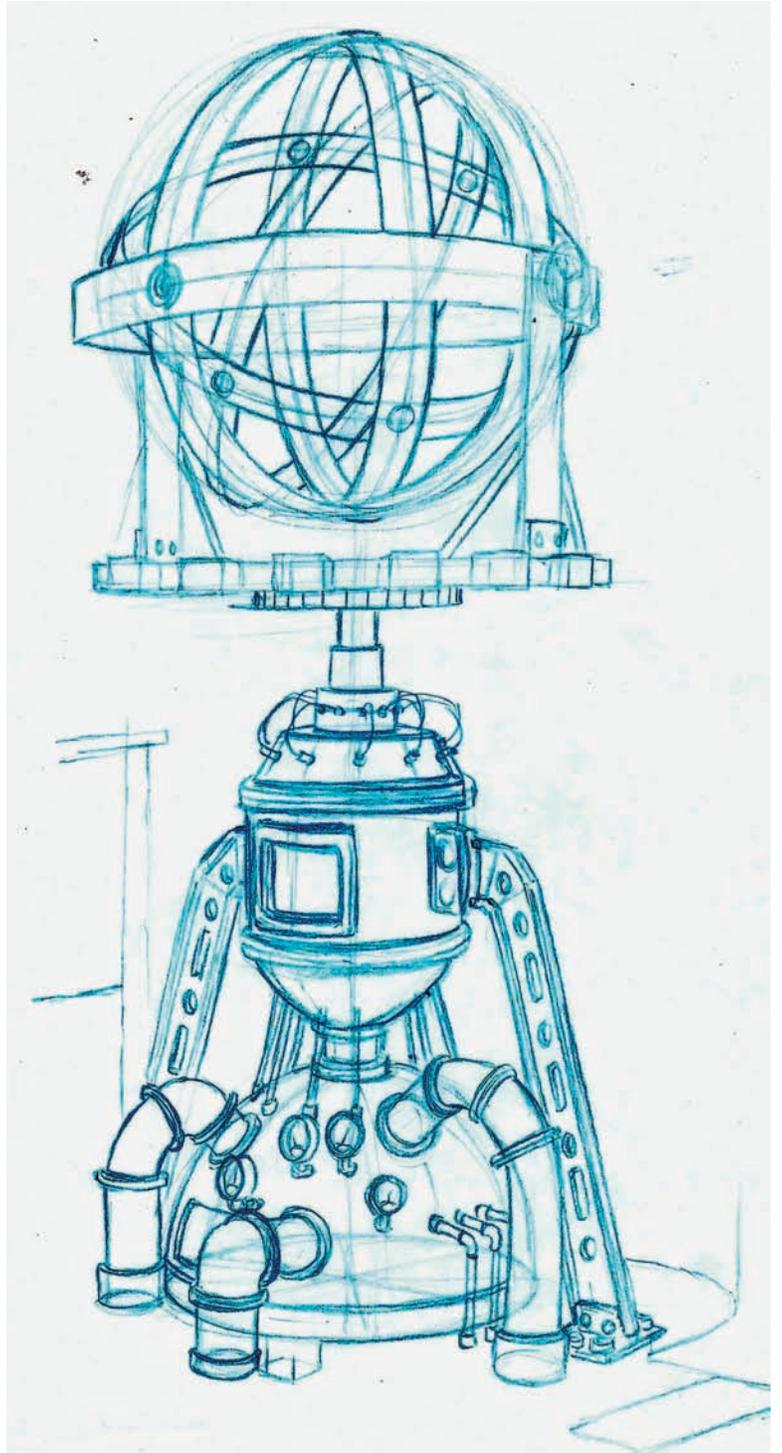
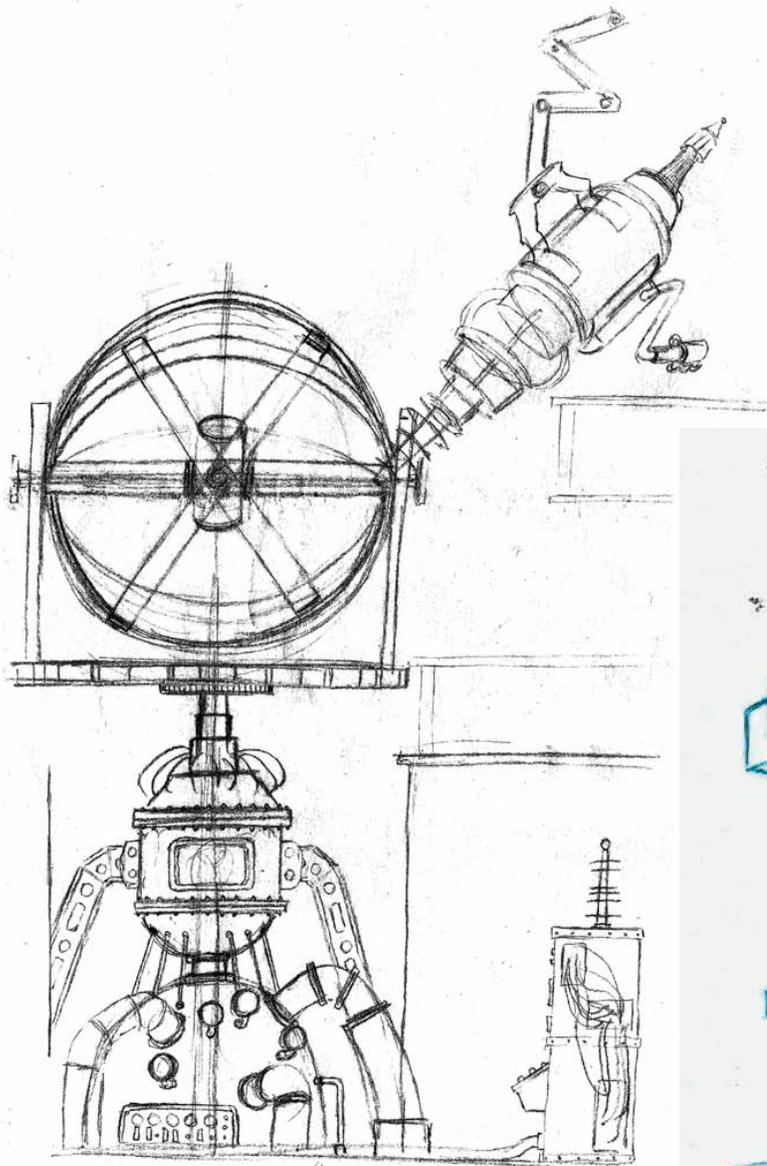
Exterior Warehouse

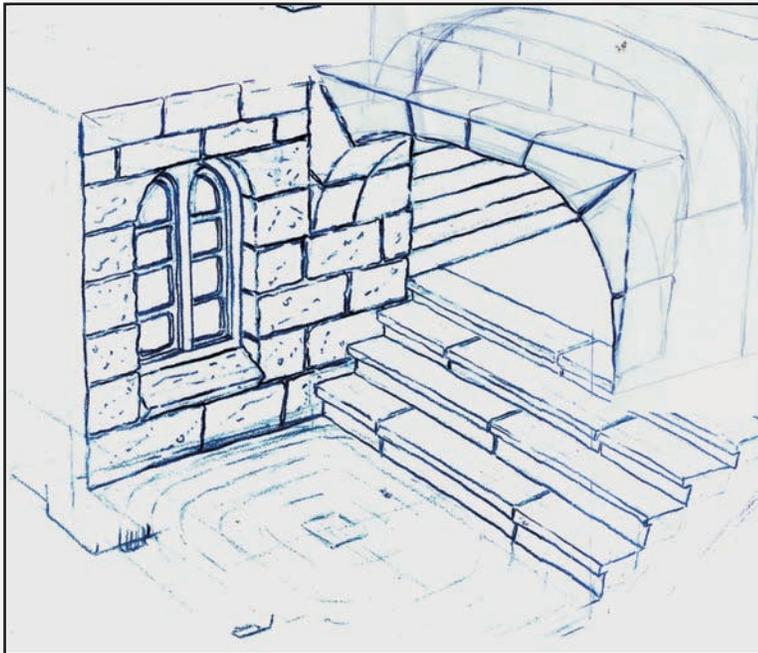
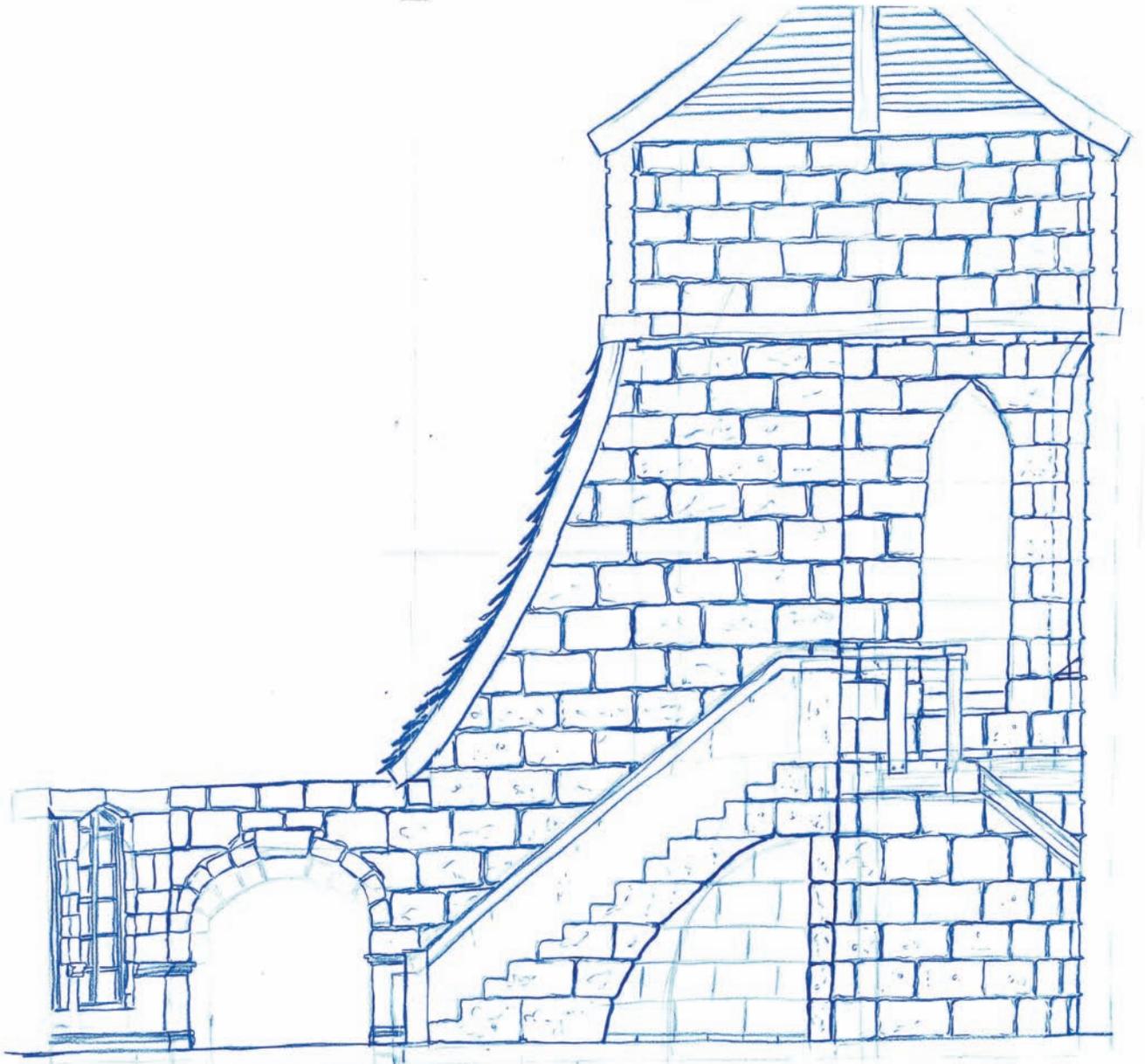






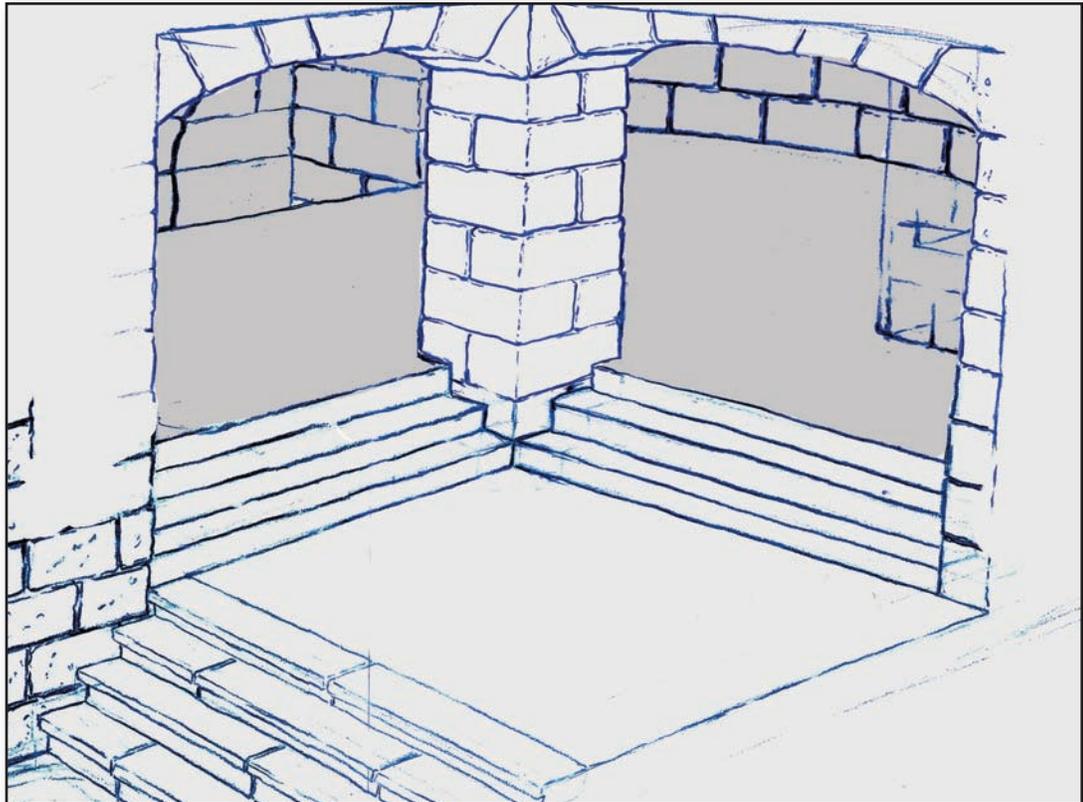
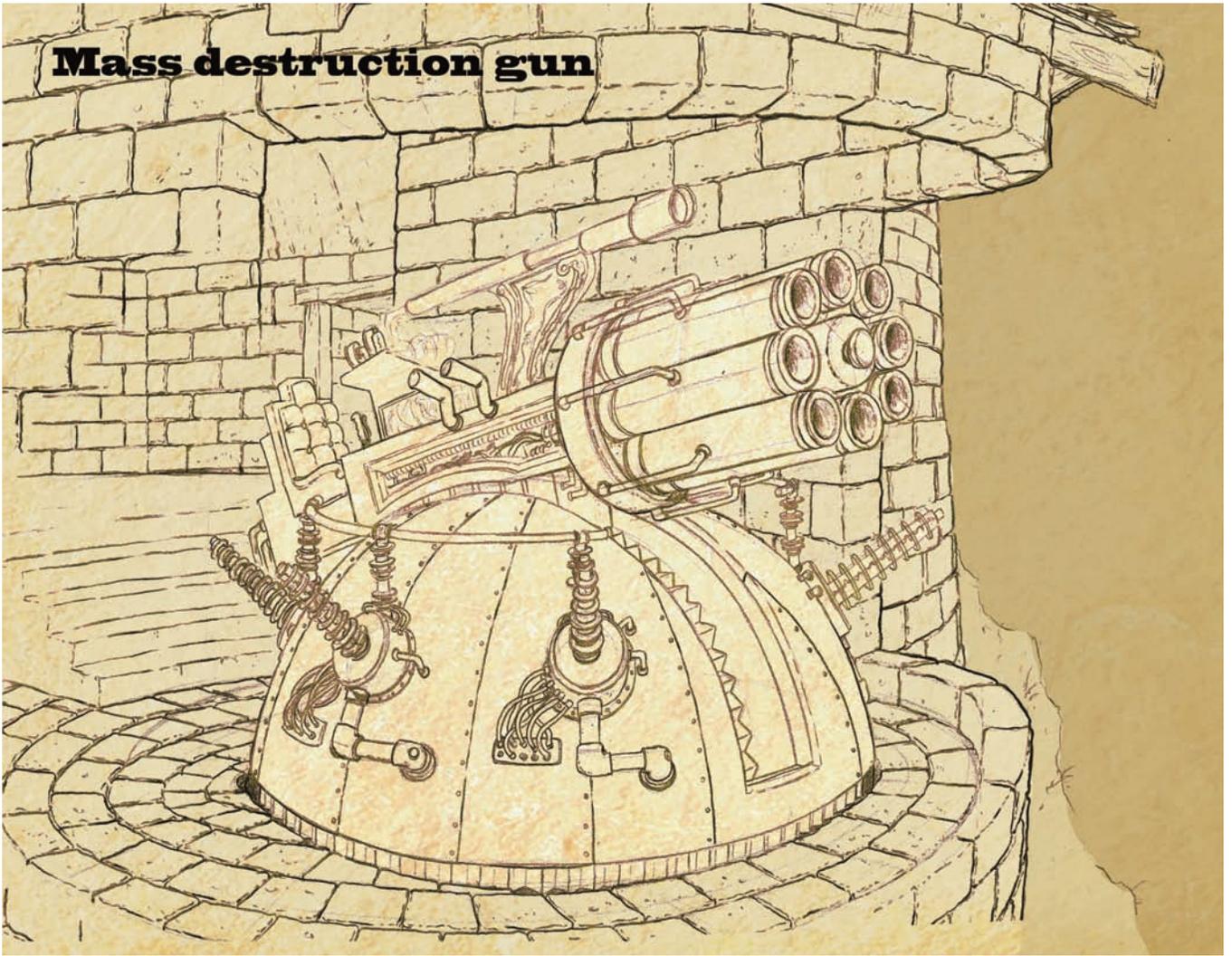


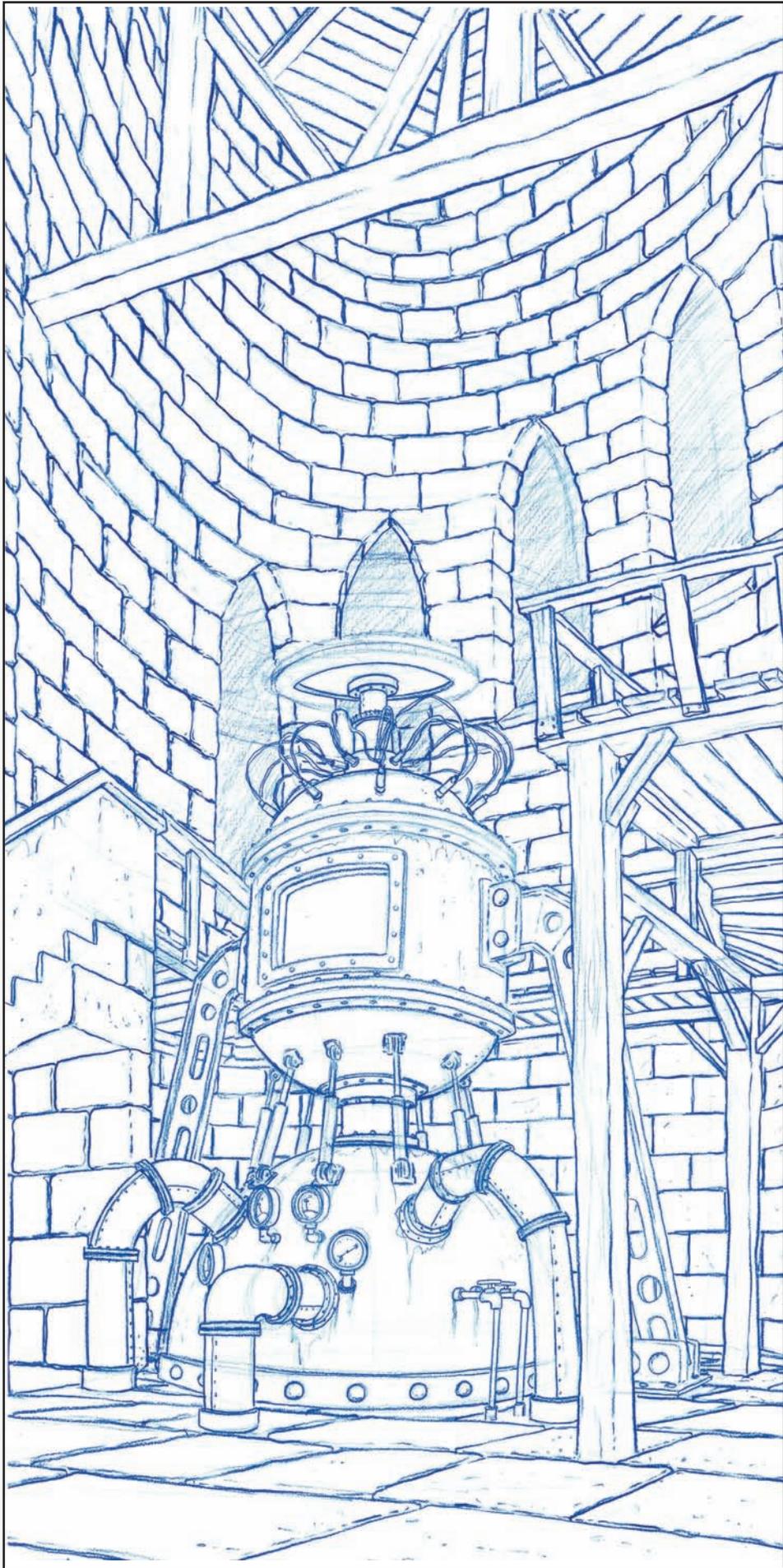


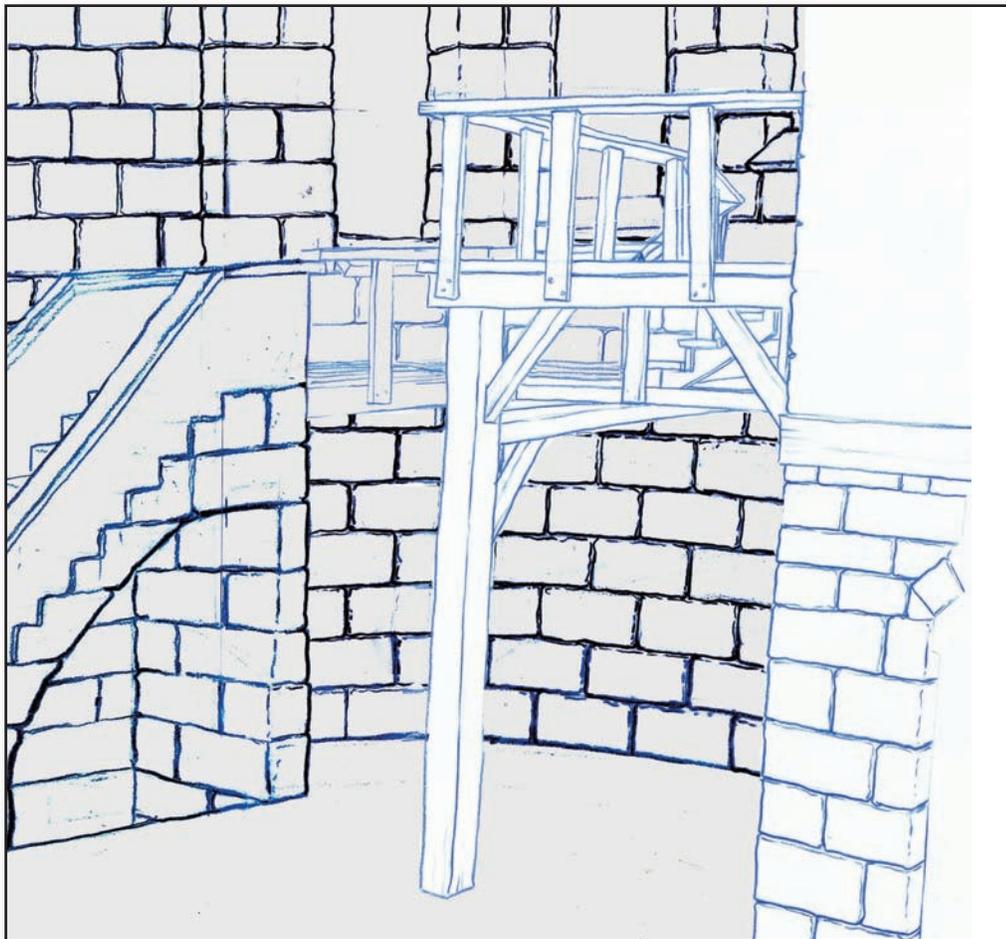
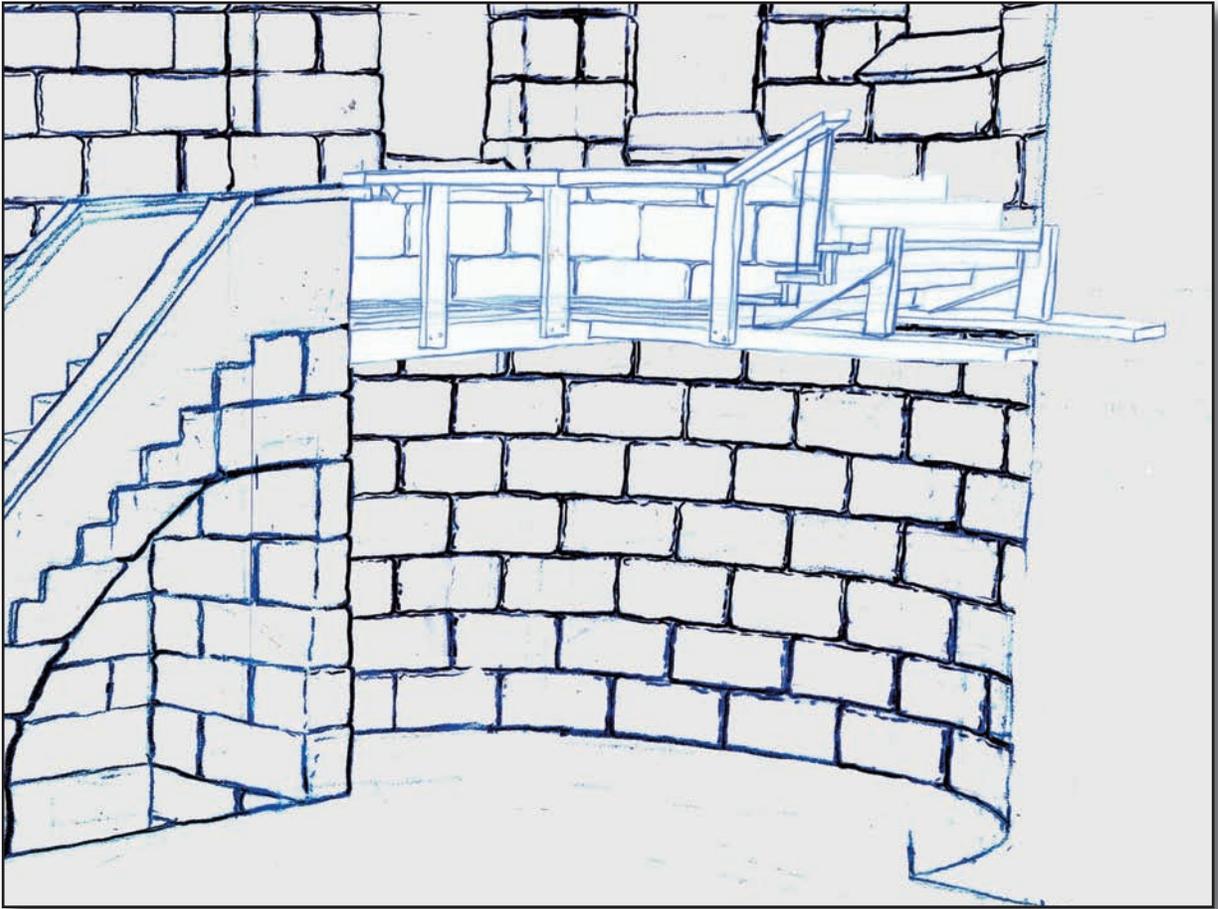


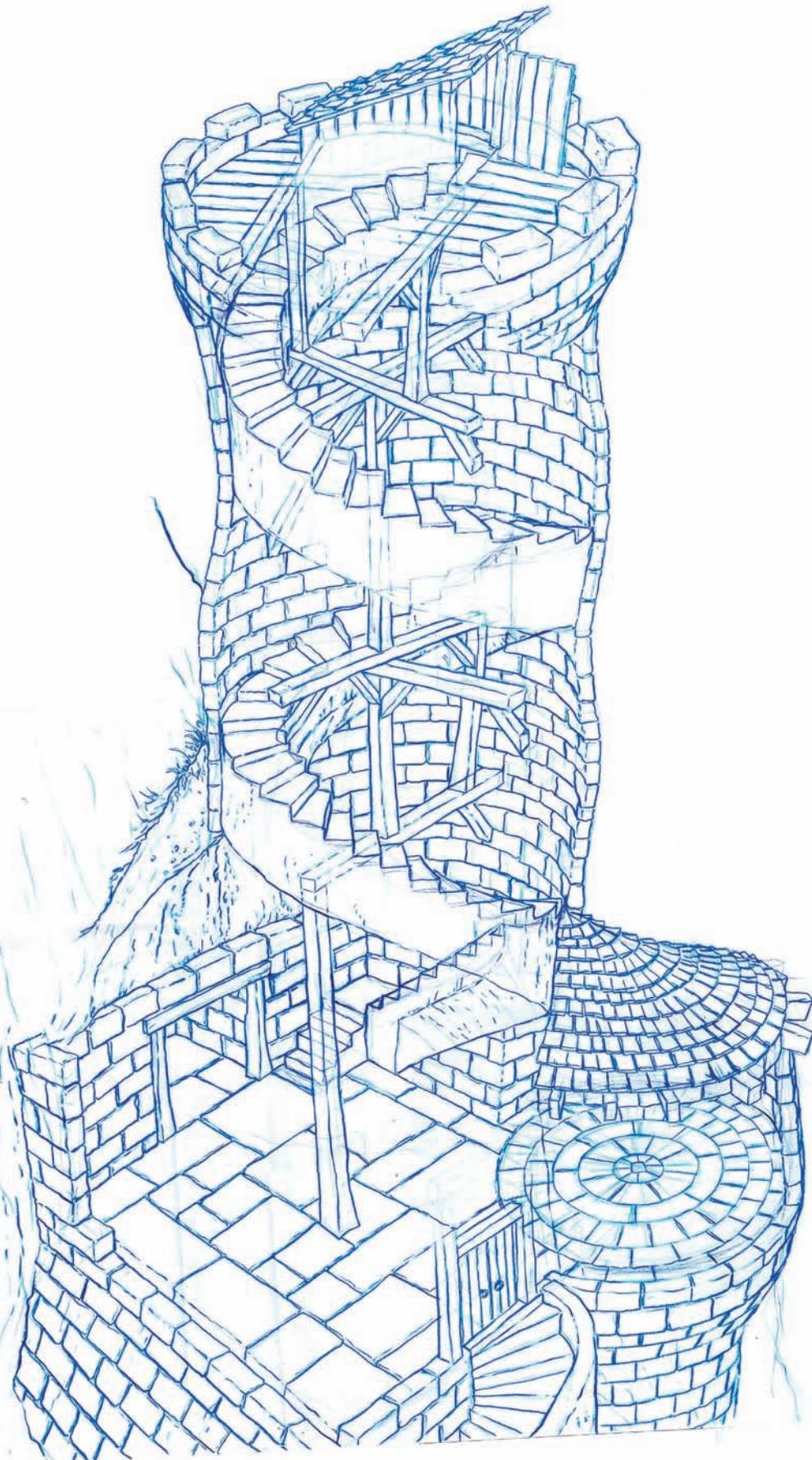


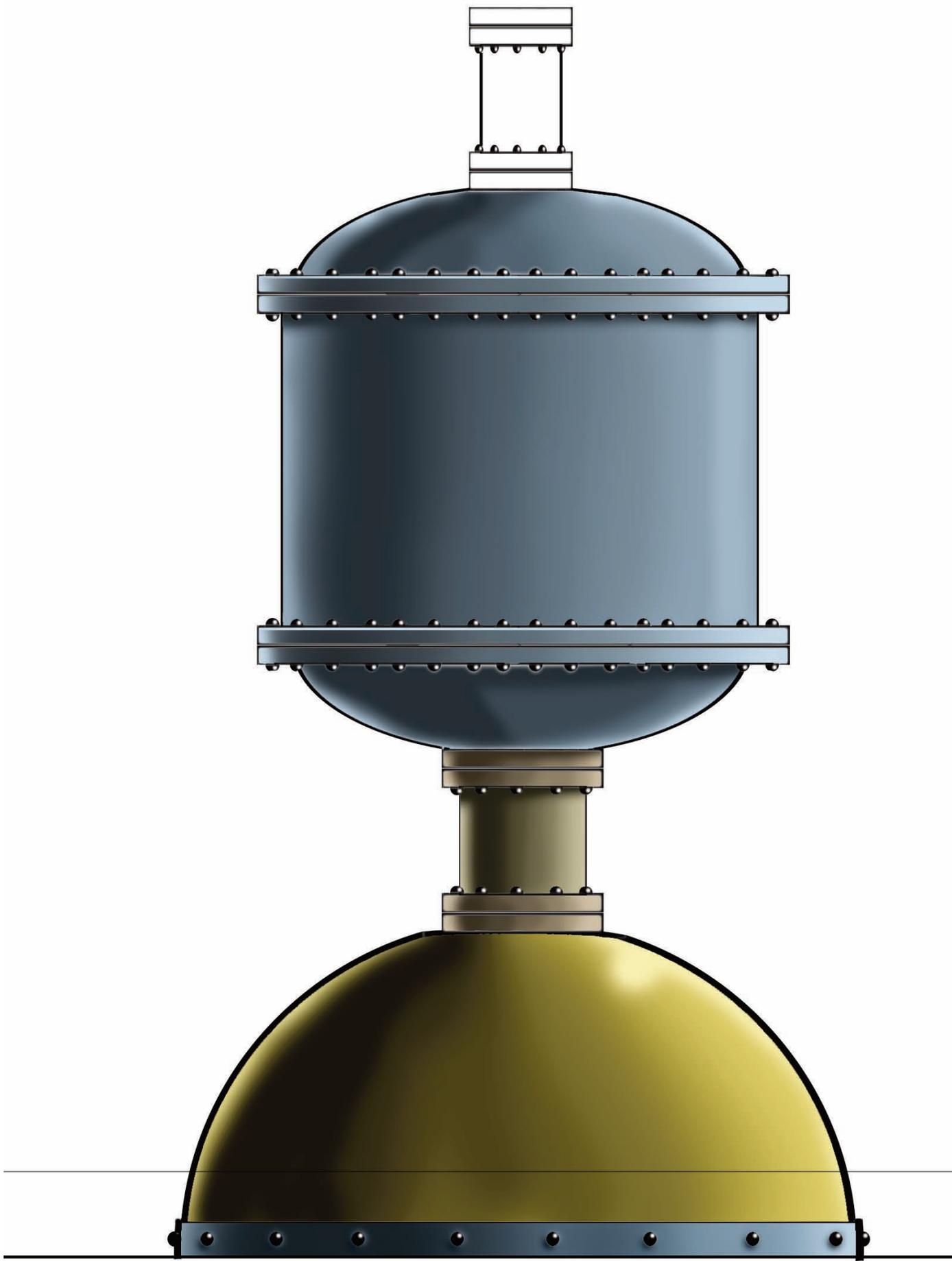
Mass destruction gun

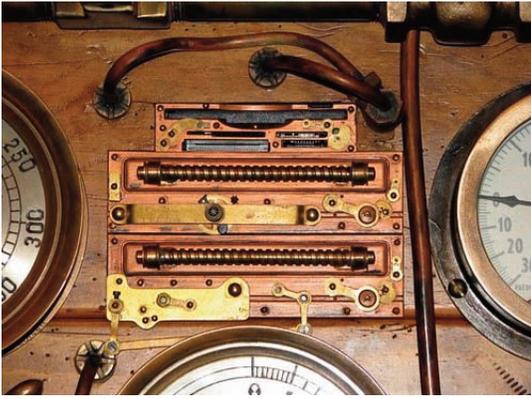


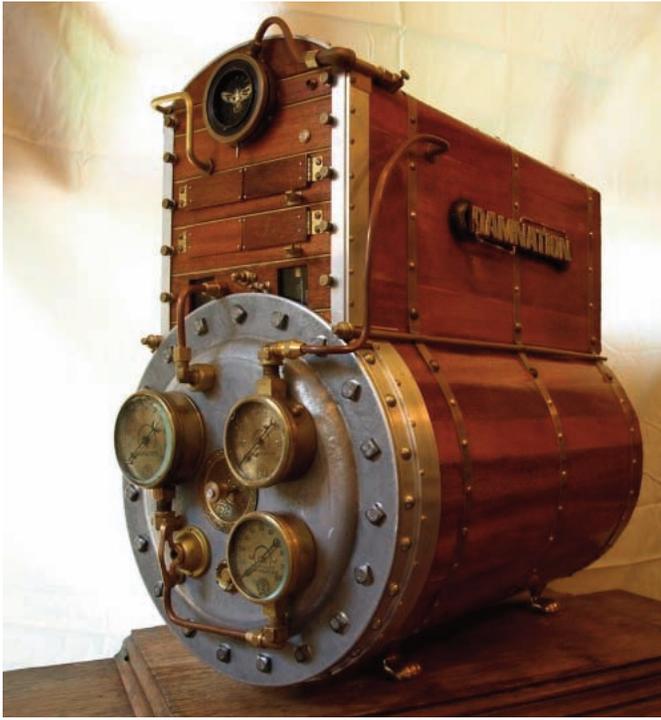


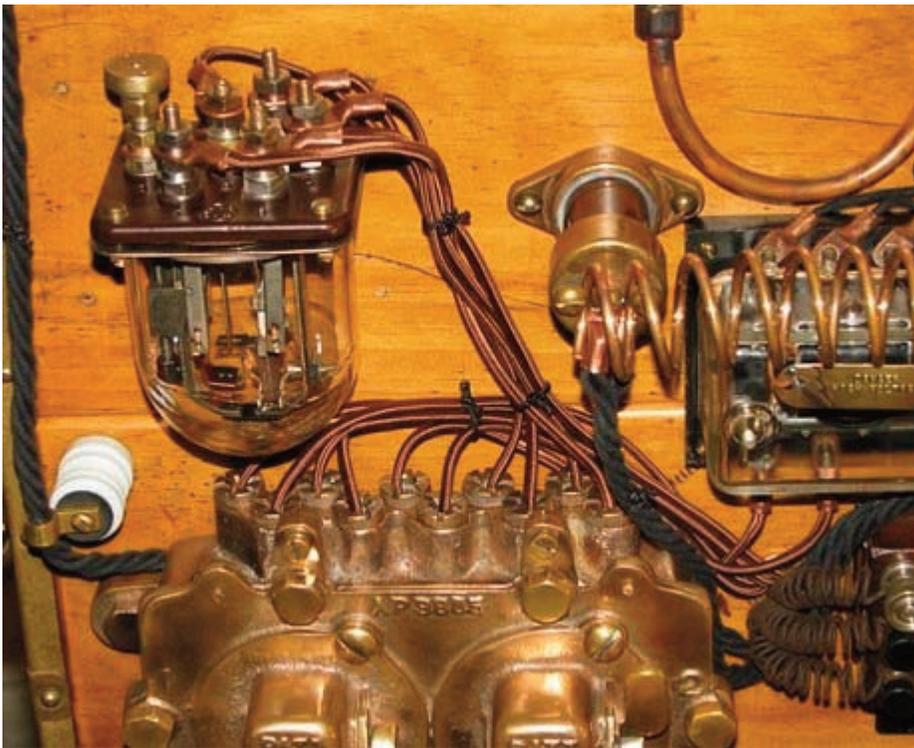
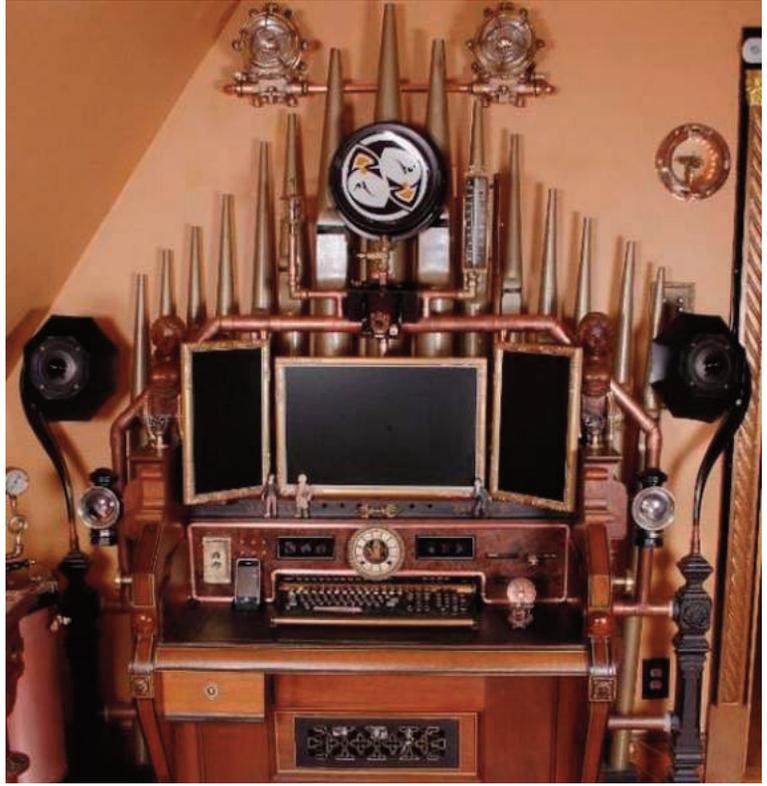


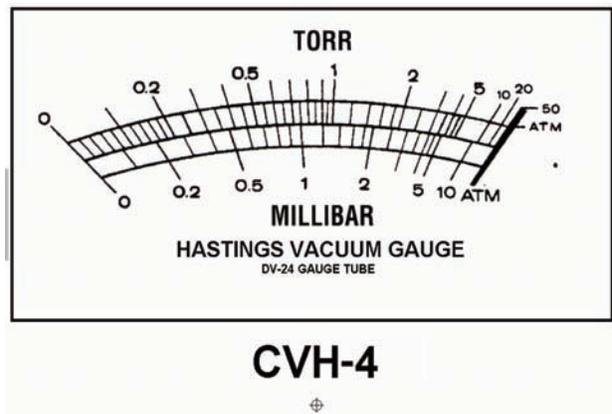
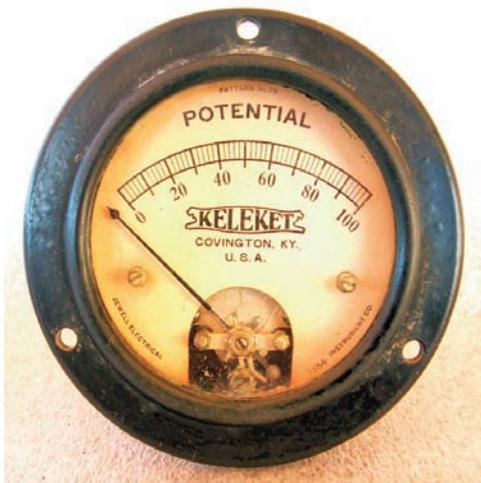
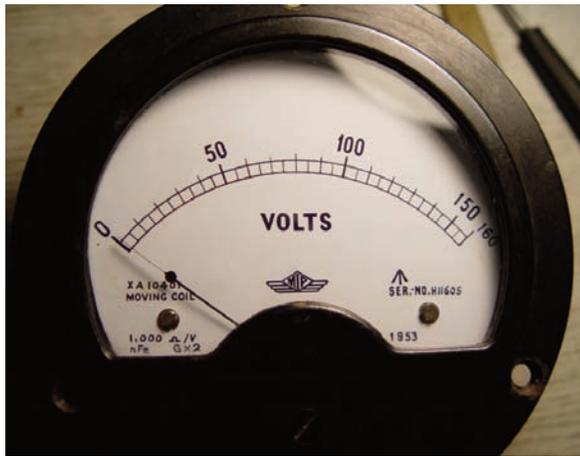


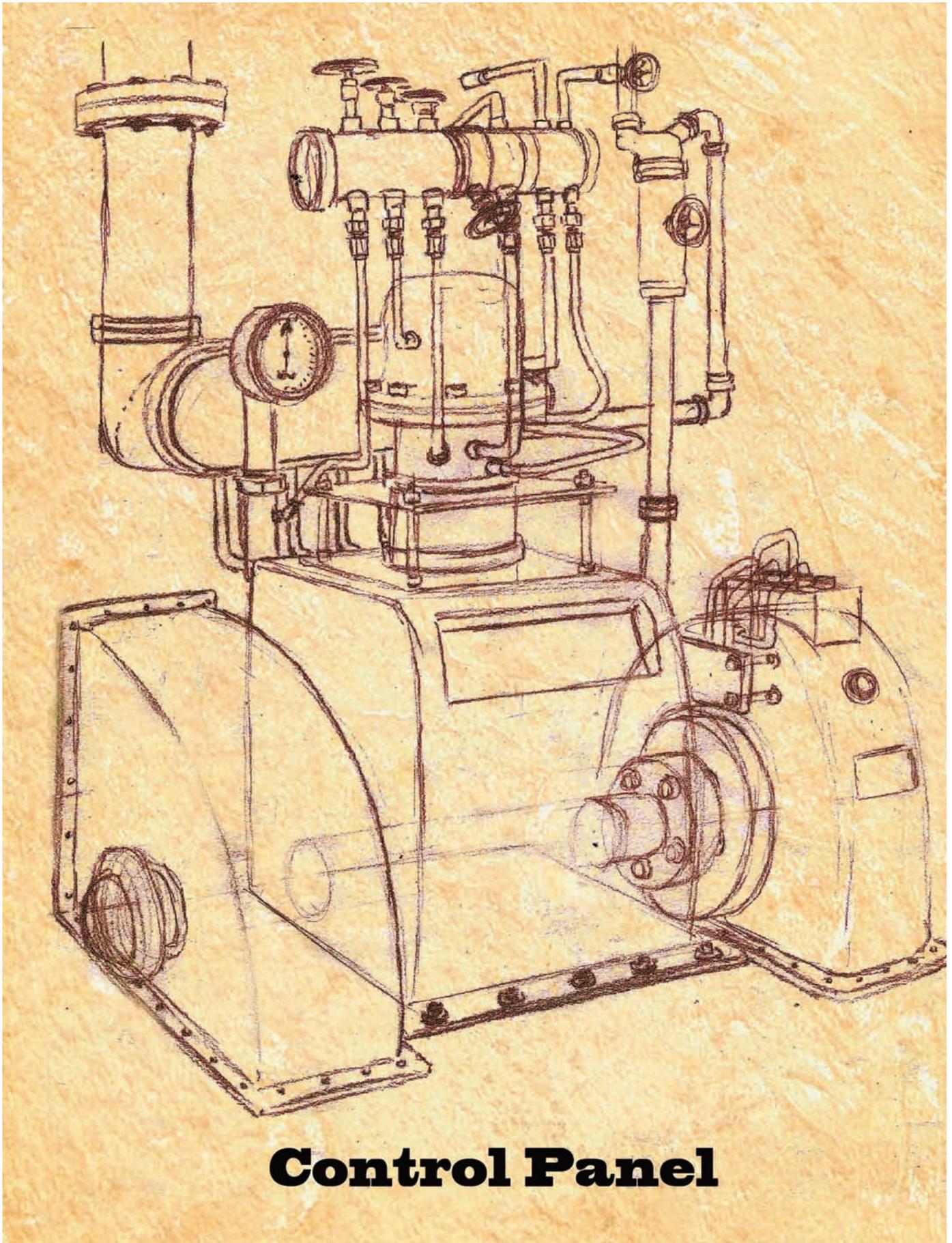




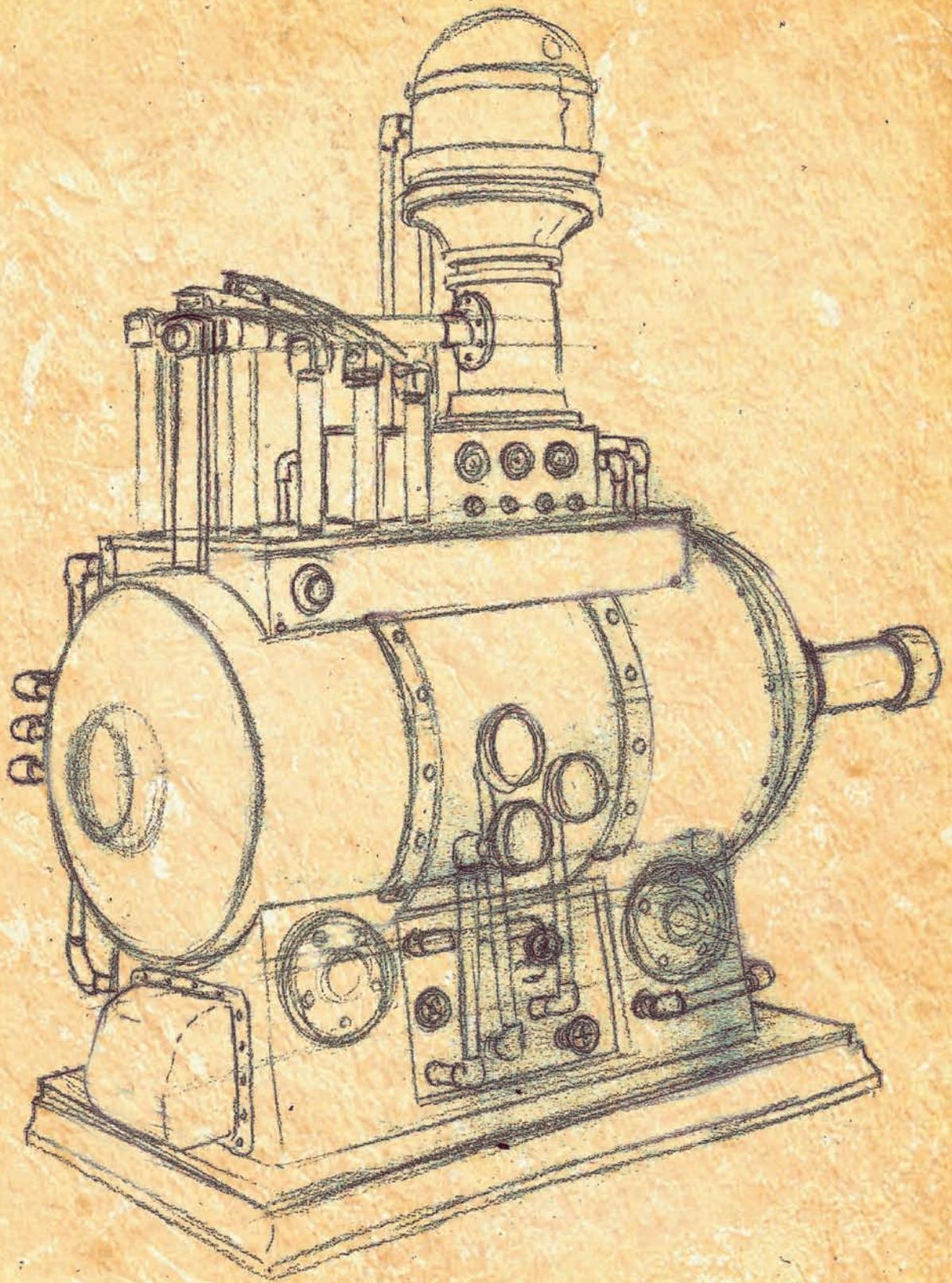








Control Panel



Power Generator