

Use of Sri Lankan Traditional Stylized Mythical Creatures in the Film and Video Game Industries (Practical project-based approach)

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Abstract

This study focuses on how traditional Sri Lankan mythical creatures can be incorporated in films and video games on a global scale. With this research, the richness of the artistic culture of Sri Lanka is together with modern concept art practices through a practical, project-based approach paving a new direction in cultural storytelling to world audiences. The project examines the Gajasinghe and modernises Sri Lankan art and therefore plots in contemporary narratives. This analysis explains how memory sketching and design visualization techniques already known in traditional practices, may be supplemented by modern possibilities of mood-boards and silhouette search in order to achieve a stunning visual impact of the characters. This research bridges the gap by merging the centuries-old artisan Sri Lankan art style with the vernacular requirements of the film and gaming industry and emphasizes the importance of such characters. Through this, such characters can be used to strengthen world visual culture but at the same time preserve the artistic heritage of Sri Lanka and add new angles to the world entertainment industry. This work argues that Sri Lanka possesses myths that can be very useful in the modern media industries through the creation of relevant and impactful stories.

Keywords: *Mythical creatures, Cultural symbolism, Concept art techniques, Practical study, Film and game*

Introduction

The relationship between culture, art and mythology is an intriguing starting point for the modern media industries like films and video games. In this sense, the stylized mythical creature in Sri Lanka showcasing traditions bears a national character that resembles craftsmanship, mythology, and philosophy. These include creatures such as the Gajasinghe which is a lion and elephant hybrid symbolized protection which can be used for the film and video game industries widely.

This research addresses the question of how specific mythical creatures from Sri Lanka could be transformed and incorporated into the production process structure through the backdrop of the project of an entertainment genre. The research examines the context of these creatures and how they were created, their artistry, methods and philosophy, and their potential impact today, especially within the realms of concept art. So the purpose is to find a way to transfer these skills into storytelling, to show how such designs can be used in the making of visually appealing stories. The traditional art of Sri Lanka is disciplined, is mastered with grace and has a form. Historical artists were taught to start off with simple shapes that gradually evolved to complex compositions. These together helped the craftsmen produce numerous seamless works of art which are all awe-inspiring.

In the motion picture and games sector, the creation of characters transforms into an energetic and multifaceted step as concept art of characters is specialized in the design of film creatures. However, it is important to mention that this approach cooperates perfectly with the one that was developed empirically in Sri Lanka. From first non-recognizable thumbnails through to sculptures and painted cut-scenes, artists utilize an iterative process that requires the ability to imagine different characters in a believable context but bringing a lot of unrelated elements together is how these characters turn out.

This research utilizes these approaches in the re-creation and modification of the Gajasinghe. It reconstructs the design processes of Sri Lankan artisans using project based practical approaches while examining the prospects of these designs in the global storytelling framework. The objective of the project is to bring together the traditional Sri Lankan art and modern concept art with focus on the cultural, aesthetic, and the story of these mythical creatures. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the richness and the artistic heritage of Sri Lankans which can add value to the field of visual narrations in the film and video games industries.

Research Methodology

The goal of this study is to investigate the incorporation of the Sri Lankan conventional mythological Gajasinghe animal into the film and video game industries within a practical, project-oriented contextualization. This methodology has three basic components, those are: research phase, design phase and application phase.

During the identified research phase of the study, traditional art of Sri Lanka is broken down into themes such as the techniques utilized in the symbolization of these creatures and the overall aesthetic value that was

attached to the creatures in the ancient Sri Lankan culture. This includes, among others, the analysis of ancient scripts, the temple's picture and reliefs and other sources which make it possible to determine the significance of such designs in the culture and philosophy.

The design phase applies insights gained from the research to conceptualize Gajasinghe. This step mirrors the iterative processes of modern concept art, including mood board creation, sketching, and refining designs. Emphasis is placed on maintaining the authenticity of traditional methods while ensuring the creature's design aligns with the visual and narrative requirements of contemporary storytelling.

Within the application phase developed designs are applied to some hypothetical situations from the film and computer games industries. This includes the preparation of original art depicting the character in the manner of a finished game, including the intricate detailing of anatomy, textures, and lighting effects to show how the creature can be used in visual narrative.

This methodology is effective in demonstrating the possibility of using Sri Lankan mythical creatures in global industries by lovingly together traditional art forms and modern technology.

Sri Lankan stylized mythical creatures drawing

Every culture is composed of different aspects that build the society, philosophy, religion, and craftsmanship. Art is the product of such complex influences and Sri Lankan traditional art is a classic example of this notion. One of these was the representation of fantasy animals, which has become one of the hallmarks of ancient Sri Lankan artists' work. Such beings can usually be twisted into real animals with some details surpassed by creativity and are often associated with key cultural, mythic, and religious concepts.

This particular thesis examines local specificities of traditional Sri Lankan mythical animal design and attempts to recreate some of the lost historical processes through a practical project-based approach. Further, the objectives of the study include reconstructing the methods used to create such a legendary bird as the Gajasinghe, a two-headed bird presenting strength, protection and balance. Finished pieces tribute to the antique methods and characteristic features of the lifestyle while bringing forward the system of composition, imagination, and disguise in the significance of Sri Lankan art.

Sri Lankan artisans of the past are known to have a neat and orderly way of doing things when creating art. From a young age, the students were trained to copy preset forms and patterns, starting basically with a dot and working their way up to a highly intricate Figure of a deity. Development was focused on

the use of sensory perception, composition, and memory, facilitated by tools, materials, and techniques developed specifically for the region. Such customs brought about a style that was founded on principles of conservatism and self-expression thus guaranteeing upholding and development of the form of art.

Philosophical and Aesthetic Perspectives in Sri Lankan mythical animals

In Sri Lanka, traditional drawing instruction placed a strong emphasis on following rules and being proficient with preset shapes. The Western emphasis on personal interpretation and modification of natural forms was different from this method. The craftsman's focus was on achieving balance, symmetry, and clarity in design, with little tolerance for deviation.

The act of sketching was seen as an intuitive process. Craftsmen visualized their designs on the drawing surface before executing them, resulting in precise and unambiguous works. In addition to maintaining historic techniques, the focus on memory and repetition fostered a profound comprehension of the art form. In Sri Lanka's organized traditional drawing training program produced talented artists who could both preserve and innovate within the limitations of their trade. The educational system placed a strong emphasis on discipline, memorization, and the smooth transfer of ancient methods into real-world applications, from learning simple shapes to producing intricate legendary patterns.

Traditional technique and process of Gajasinghe (Practical-based Studies)

In this study we going to applying traditional techniques and processes to sri lankan Gajasinghe design and analysis how they get the influence and ideas to create this mythical bird

In common, Gajasinghe's represented head of an elephant and lions body, the Gajasinhe required artists to pay attention to Felidae (Big cats) animals. Initial sketches focused on the core structure, followed by secondary detailing-like skin textures and tail enhancements. Patterns mimicked natural Felidae (Big cats) anatomy, modified to align with cultural aesthetics.



Fig. 01: Gajasingha
Embekke Devalaya, Wooden
carvings on the columns, King
Vikramabahu III, Gampola Era
(AD 1357–1374), Sri Lanka

Gajasinghe, also known as Gajasimha in Indian culture, represents an elephant head with a lion body. In addition, we can categorize this animal as a hybrid mythical creature. This hybrid mythical creature is very commonly represented on many occasions, like flags, jewellery, architectural elements, murals, and weapons in Sri Lankan history. When it comes to studying,

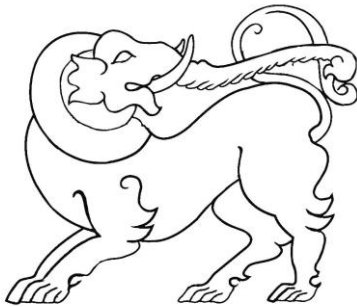


Fig. 02:
Base structure of Gajasinghe



Fig. 03:
Silhouette of Gajasinghe

Step one is to focus on the basic structure of this Gajasinghe (**Fig.02**). Mark down the overall shape and placement of the anatomy elements (heads, face, trunk, chest, tail, and legs). In common, the Sri Lankan representation of the Gajasinghe is a side view full body and heads facing back sides to enhance a more engaging look and feel to the animal. Because of that, classical artists use silhouettes that are more readable and clearer of the elephant head and lion's body (**Fig. 03**).

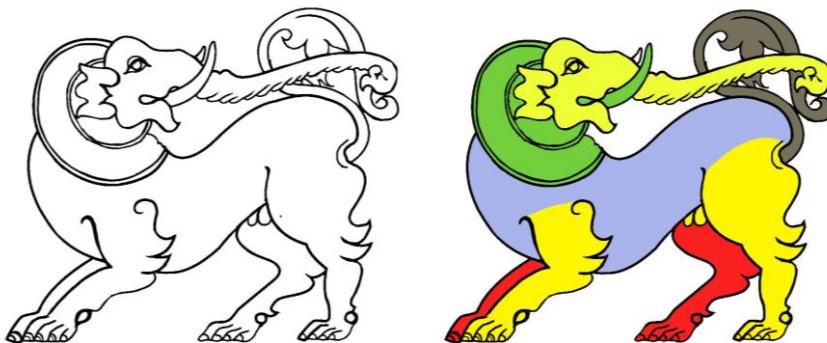


Fig. 04
Secondary details and dividing the forms Base structure of Gajasinhe Gajasinghe

Step two, adding secondary details and dividing the forms (**Fig.04**). Separating elements head and neck, neck and body, legs and tail, detailed eyes, eye shape, and form elements in the legs pow.

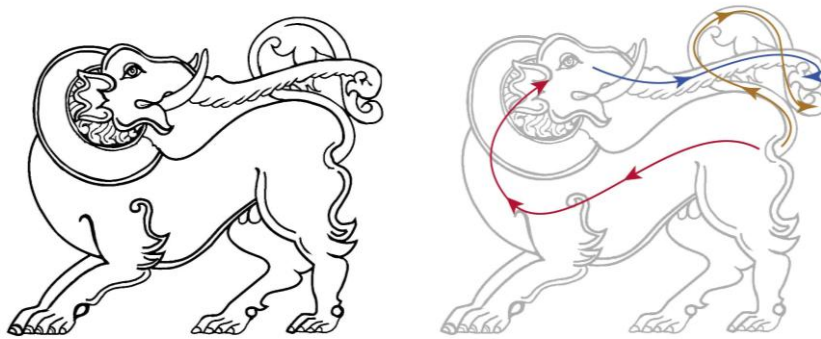


Fig.05

Enhancing and developing the main idea of Gajasinghe

Step three is enhancing and developing the main idea of creature design using patterns and shapes (Fig.05). To mimic organic animal elements like elephant heads, lion fingers with claws, and functionality of the trunk.

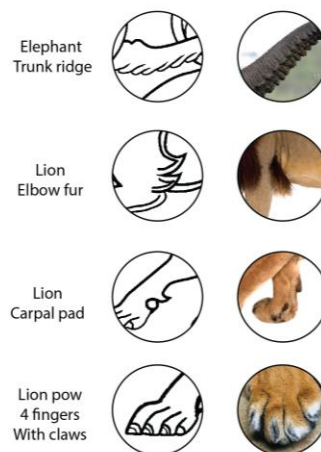
Step four is the final stage, fine-tuning the design and giving more esthetic to the creature design. Adding decorative and geometrical shapes to enhance the look, for example, lion's hair and a flower like an elephant eye and a decorative tail with stunning movement (**Fig.06**).



Fig.06.

Final design of Gajasinghe

In this study, I found out that when the classical artists create this Gajasinghe design, they influence real-life references for outer body anatomy structure and small details like nee fear and four finfers with claws of the lion and elephant trunk (Fig. 07).

**Fig.07**

Comparing anatomy elements to real-life elephant and lion body parts, *Gajasinghe*

In this study, we can realize that, when Sri Lankan historical artists craft these mythical animals, they are mainly influenced by real-life animals that can be seen in nature. Especially, deep detailed study and understanding of those animals, anatomy structure, facial elements, features, skin textures, patterns, habitats, and behavior types. They convert those characteristic elements into a dynamic stylish design form to craft these unique mythical creatures.

Process of using concept art in film and game industry

In the entertainment industry, concept art is an essential stage that provides a visual blueprint for movies, video games, and animation. In order to explore people, settings, and moods, artists first draft sketches and designs, which aid in establishing the visual style. Working along with directors and producers, this iterative approach aims to improve concepts and match them with the project's goal. Concept art ensures a unified look by serving as a reference for other departments, including 3D modeling and animation, once accepted. In the end, it improves narrative by illustrating concepts graphically, which makes it a crucial instrument for realizing imaginative notions.

To create any type of concept art there are two main components: ideas and concepts. An idea is a generated mental image, belief, or opinion by using words, pictures, or incidents. A concept, derived from ideas, is a formatted notion, which is more often visualized or verbalized. A concept covers the main idea and the supporting details, therefore serving constructive purposes. And the key role of concept art is indispensable in defining the visual look, tone, and feel of movies and video games. It is a guide that will lead the director, producer,

game developer, and other creatives in fleshing out abstract ideas into tangible visuals well before the production has started. When it comes to movie applications, It designs concept art on futuristic cities, alien landscapes, or costumes in science fiction films that inform and align visual effects, set, and costume designers with the director's vision for consistency and visual appeal. When it comes to video games applications, The concept design forms the identity of a game through character, environmental, weapon, and vehicle designs. It inspires tone and aesthetic that help flesh out immersive worlds. In fantasy games, for example, this would inspire the creativity of the 3D modelers and animators to bring mythical creatures and magical settings to life.

Concept art is the bridge from the abstract idea to the finished visual, as creative teams work through designs in rapid iteration before production commences. Concept art extends right onto marketing to fuel excitement through promotional materials created from early artwork. That helps to collaborate and communicate with other production team members. Concept art is a basis for visual storytelling in the entertainment industry, ensuring creativity, uniformity, and the ability to effectively communicate across all levels of production.

Creature concept art in entertainment industry

Creature concept art is one of the dynamic branches within the realms of concept art that deal in the creation of visually striking and imaginatively rendered characters for books, films, games, and other creative mediums. Its creation is detailed, not limited to being an art of competency, but rather an in-depth process of character formation.

It systematically proceeds from initial ideas to the polished final image, ensuring the created creature fits into the story while also being captivating and believable. This is the initial stage of the process, in which the foundation for the other creative phases is laid. This stage is dominated by creativity and research as the artist explores what could be. This phase often starts with a project brief or the story in which the creature will exist. Research plays a critical role, with natural forms, mythology, and real animals inspiring the designs. Consider how the odd shapes of oceanic creatures or the fearsome aspects of mythological beasts bring even imaginary creations into a sense of realism. Moodboards compile all the ideas, references, and design possibilities visually, which refines the conceptual direction.

When these ideas have been established, artists sketch in order to explore shapes, silhouettes, and profiles. Quick, simple sketches allow a person to experiment with composition without too much detail. The aim is an original

yet recognizable outline-a foundation for good creature design. Memorable silhouettes drive good character design. Once artists identify some promising thumbnails, they develop these further to include anatomical accuracy, stance, and other details that define the silhouette.

Once a likely candidate has been selected, it enters the polishing phase: detailed anatomy, textures, and unique features are added or finalized. Iteration is key at this stage, where an artist plays with all different design elements while remaining true to the conception. Refine shapes, add in tiny details, and explore exciting new areas of the creature's design. This may involve creating several variations in order to make sure the final designed product is cohesive yet innovative. Then, artists create color, texture, and lighting for the creature to bring it to life. By trying out different color schemes and surface textures, the artists make sure that the design looks real and will fit in with its environment. Here, lighting and shadow are highly important, giving depth to the character, enhancing its reality, and making it tangible within the story world.

The finished product is a final presentation of the completely formed monster in action postures, front and side views, and perspective. For further narrative and to place the creature in the story's universe, this might also entail presenting it against a plain background or in its natural environment. Imagination, technical skill, and storytelling are all combined to create visually appealing creature concept art Figures. Every step of the process, from the original idea to the last detail, guarantees that each creature is aesthetically pleasing, consistent with the narrative, and prepared to improve its ultimate medium whether it be games, movies, or books.

When creating creature concept art, the process is typically focused on 8 key steps. Here's a general workflow of the creature design processes in film and games:

1. **Research and Inspiration:** Research images; take ideas from various sources such as nature, mythologies, other works of art, or particular themes.
2. **Concept Development:** Create a moodboard for developments for the appearance, textures, external features, and internal organs of the creature. Place it in a context, its habitat, its activities, its role in your story.
3. **Thumbnail Sketches:** To understand new design ideas quickly and to test new design directions, discover multifaceted sketches of the same idea in thumbnail format and silhouettes of the designs.

4. **Detailed Sketching:** Select the most acceptable thumbnail images and design these sketches more thoroughly. Invent the basic characteristics of the animal and add more detail to the anatomy, features (e.g., claws, horns, wings), and texture ideas (e.g., scales, fur, armor).
5. **Selecting one of Design:** Select the most project related acceptable detailed sketch and enhance key elements and features.
6. **Color Exploration:** Look for color measures that could complement the design and setting of the generated creature. Consider the emotion and the mood you wish to project.
7. **Detailing and Enhancement:** Complete your designs with additional detail, textures or patterns to create realism or stylism. Light and shadowing should be emphasized to create a sense of site scope to the creature.
8. **Final Concept Design:** Produce a high-quality, fully rendered concept piece that showcases the creature in detail. Include important textures, materials, and lighting conditions.

Throughout this process, we have to keep in mind the narrative or purpose behind our creature concept, as this will guide many of our design decisions.

Application of Gajasinghe Figure to film and game concept art technique and process (Practical-based Studies)



Fig..08

Gajasimgha, Embekke Devalaya, Wooden carvings on the columns, King Vikramabahu III, Gampola Era (AD 1357–1374), Sri Lanka

Research and Inspiration

These are the research photos and references I utilize for the Gajasinhe design, which is a wooden carving discovered in Embekke Devalaya and Sri Lankan traditional designs of the Gajasinhe drawing (**Fig.09**).

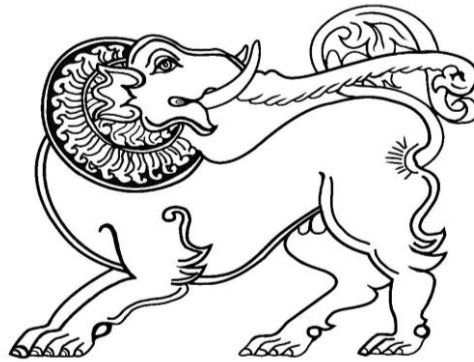


Fig.09
Final design of Gajasinghe

Concept Development

To develop the appearance of Gajasinhe design, I observe the elephant head and full anatomy of a lion. Moreover, morphology of mammals. And use those animal's gestures, poses, shapes, and external features to enhance this creature's look and feel. Also studied these animals' habitats, activities, and behaviors (**Fig.10**)

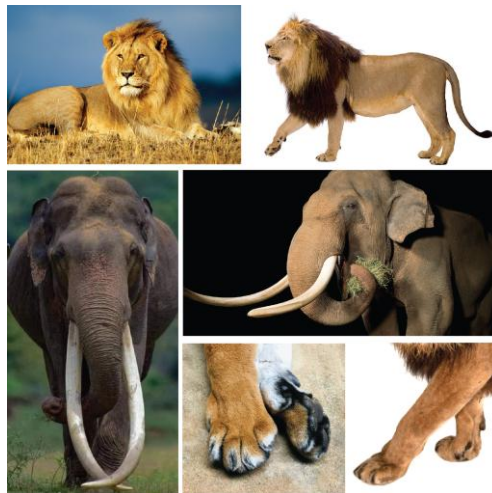


Fig.10
Animal reference images for *Gajasinghe*

Thumbnail Sketches

In this thumbnailing process, I mainly concentrated on preserving the ideal appearance of an elephant's head and lion's body; also, I attempted to retain the general contour of the animal (Fig.01) and the primary inspiration designs (Fig. 06). Also based on the moodboard that references **(Fig.11-I & ii)**.

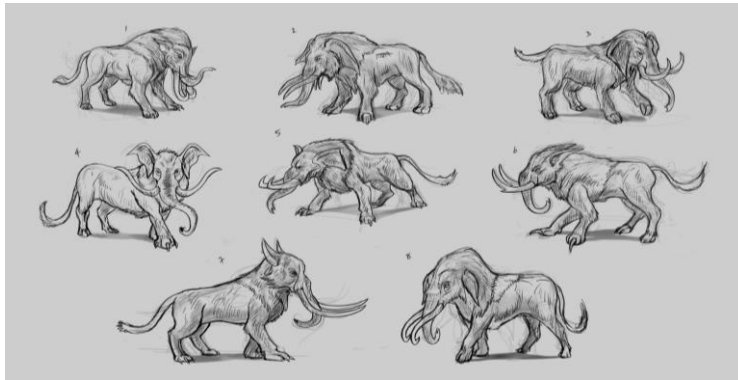


Fig. 11-i
Thumbnail panel of Gajasinghe

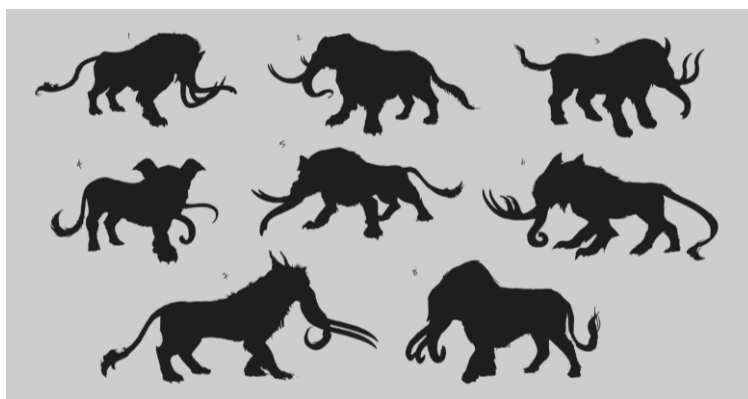


Fig.11-ii
Silhouettes panel of Gajasinhe

Detailed Sketching

During this step, I detail all thumbnail photos while keeping the design's silhouettes. Additionally, fundamental qualities are being added. Adding more complexity to anatomy and characteristics (such as the trunk, tail, and legs), as well as a few texture possibilities for fur **(Fig.12)**

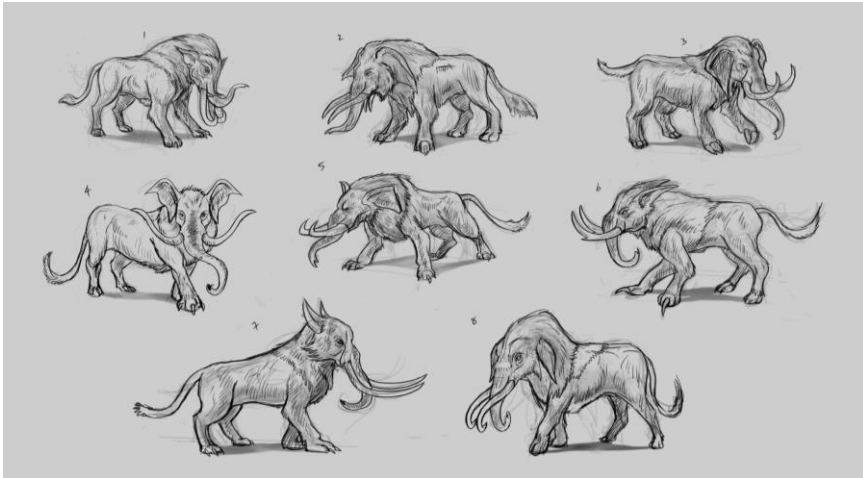


Fig.12
Detailed sketching panel of Gajasinghe

Selecting one of the design

Furthermore, to take the project further, I chose the 5th version *Gajasinghe* design (**Fig.13**) from the detailed sketching panel (**Fig.12**) because it is the most accurate design compared to original reference images.



Fig.13
5th version of detailed sketch for Gajasinhe design

When upgrading essential aspects and characteristics, the first step is to refine the detail drawing. The second step is to fine-tune the design's linework. In step 3, we add shading and shadows to create depth, and in step 4, we apply highlights to the design to improve the character's 3D appearance and realism (**Fig.14**).

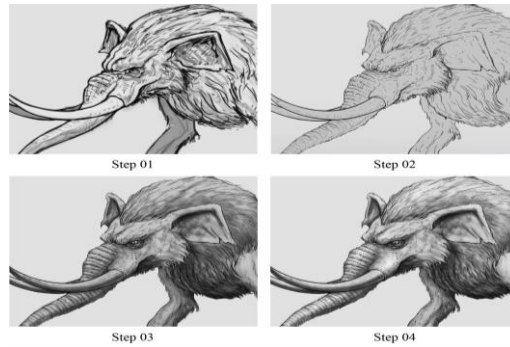


Fig.14

Enhancing and detailing process of Gajasinhe design

Colour Exploration

Once we've completed the initial detailing process (Figure 14), we can move on to colour exploration. During this step, I research and observe additional wild cats' (leopards, panthers, tigers) skin and fur textures, colours, and pattern designs, and then apply those visual components to our design. Figure 15 shows several possibilities for colour exploration design.

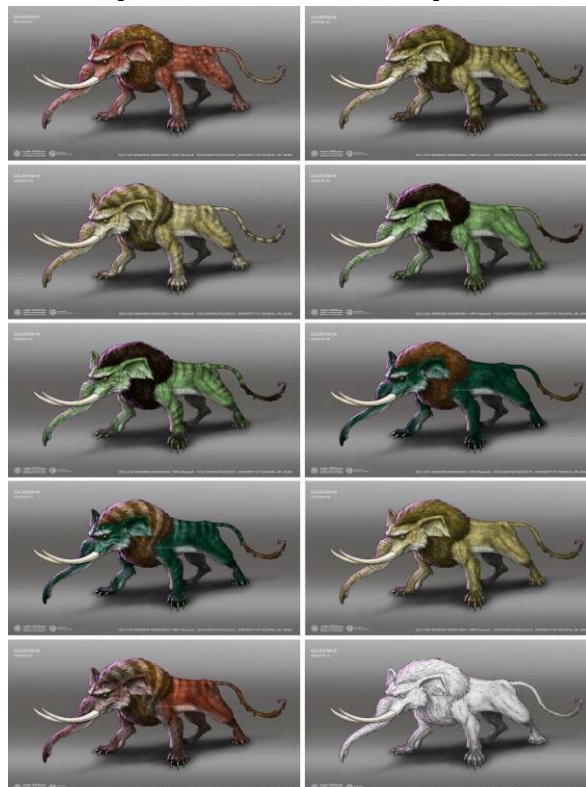


Fig. 15

Gajasinhe colour explorations

Detailing and Enhancement

The next stage is to finish the design by adding more face elements to give the animal a more lifelike appearance **(Fig. 16)**.

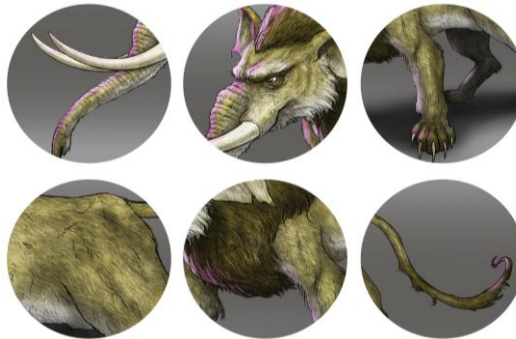


Fig. 16

Final stage of Gjasinha design detailing and enhancement

Final Concept Design

Finally, the fully rendered concept design that illustrates the Sri Lankan version of the Gajasinha mythological creature in high-quality form that can be used for the film and game industry **(Fig.17)**.



Fig.17

Final concept design of Gjasinha

Similarly, the Gajasinha concept creature designs that we generated are ready to receive comments from directors, art directors, and VFX supervisors in the film and gaming industries. This design can move on to the next step, such as creating callout sheet action sequences, which can subsequently be passed into a film or game production pipeline.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the grave importance of Sri Lankan traditional mythical characters in modern film and video games. The research targeting the Gajasinghe supports this idea as it showed how embodied in paint art traditions and practiced for centuries can be brought up to date to contemporary stories without losing their meanings. This process not only celebrates Sri Lanka's rich artistic heritage but also positions it as a vital resource for the global entertainment industry. The findings highlight how traditional Sri Lankan mythical creatures, such as Berunda Pakshiya, Makara, Athkanda Lihiniya, Sarapendiya, Kindura, Sinha Rupa, and Nara Sinha Rupa, can be systematically adapted for films and games. These amazing and unique creatures can be modernized for today's world through memory sketch think, natural observation, drawing, and other traditional means of designing and fused with modern techniques such as mood board and silhouette exploration. This research establishes the connection between traditional Sri Lankan art and contemporary character design, providing a solution to the problem of how to make characters aesthetic and authentic at the same time. Historical analysis highlights that it was the Sri Lankan artists who imbued nature and culture in their works and created hallmark representations. Real animals were the focus of their observation: its anatomy, skin, structure, and habitats, which were then stylized into myths. For instance, the design of the Gajasinghe has characteristics of peacock and parrots suggesting a comprehensive consideration of its anatomy, feather structure and also its whole shape. This practice is similar to how emerging creature design has natural reliable visuals and incorporates imagination to make the characters interesting.

Furthermore, islanders paid special attention to philosophical aspects of their creations that implied symmetry, balance, and purity of purpose. This is what made the works appropriate for an era beyond their own. Unlike Western individualistic approaches to art, Sri Lankan traditions embraced collective norms while allowing for subtle personalization, ensuring both continuity and uniqueness. This duality resonates with modern entertainment industries, where character designs must balance originality with universality. By revisiting and adapting the techniques of Sri Lankan artisans, the study demonstrates how these mythical creatures can be used to strengthen global visual culture while preserving Sri Lanka's artistic heritage. On the other hand, these designs enable the construction of strong narratives that are representative of the culture of Sri Lanka and open up a new path for narration in the global context.

In conclusion, this study stresses and explains how Sri Lankan mythology is still alive and the creative work surrounding it. It depicts the approach which would help in incorporating these cultural valuables to the international entertainment industry adding depth to the visual narration and protecting the heritage of Sri Lanka.

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