

Sculpting the Character

The character creation process started, like everything, with the concept art. Slightly unusually, the different concept art designs left room for the Character Artist to use more personal judgement in interpretation than is often the case.

The Character Artist began by blocking and sculpting the Kirin highpoly in ZBrush. The Concept Artist and Character Artist then spent time collaboratively reviewing this, to define an engaging final design for the Kirin which fit the Serekh world.

For example, the original character concept included fur, which was then replaced with spikes. The spikes have the advantage of a more defined silhouette for the Kirin, and can also be used to create more flexible, dynamic character customization options.

There is a lot of detailing on the body, but the Artist also took time to find areas of rest using the concept art and reference footage identified. These help ensure that the player doesn't become overwhelmed by the detail of the character design.

They then began identifying parts of the character body which could be customized and replaced. This modular approach to design allowed different visual ideas to be trialled, and provided greater scope for users to customize the final design in their own games.

During the design process, the Artist started to retopologize the mesh to optimize the character in Maya.

This made it easier to finish retopology and mapping after the highpoly was complete.

After this, the Character Artist spent a lot of time focused on creating and refining the right textures for the Kirin. They used the sculpt as a guide, working to maintain shape and flow of the character as they enhanced the basic model.

To make it easier to work with the sculpt, they created four 2k texture sets for the body, which could be combined as one 8k texture if necessary. They also created a single texture for each replaceable part.

Some adjustment of color took place in Substance Painter, but the Artist configured the export of the Kirin model so that this could be fine-tuned in the Unity Editor itself.

Creating the high poly model for the Kirin took approximately 19 days; creating the low poly model, UV and baking took four.

Throughout this process, the Character Artist referred back to the concept art to ensure that they were delivering on the vision set with the project, and collaborating with the Animator and Rigger to ensure that the model would meet their needs.