

THE WORLD OF ZODIAC

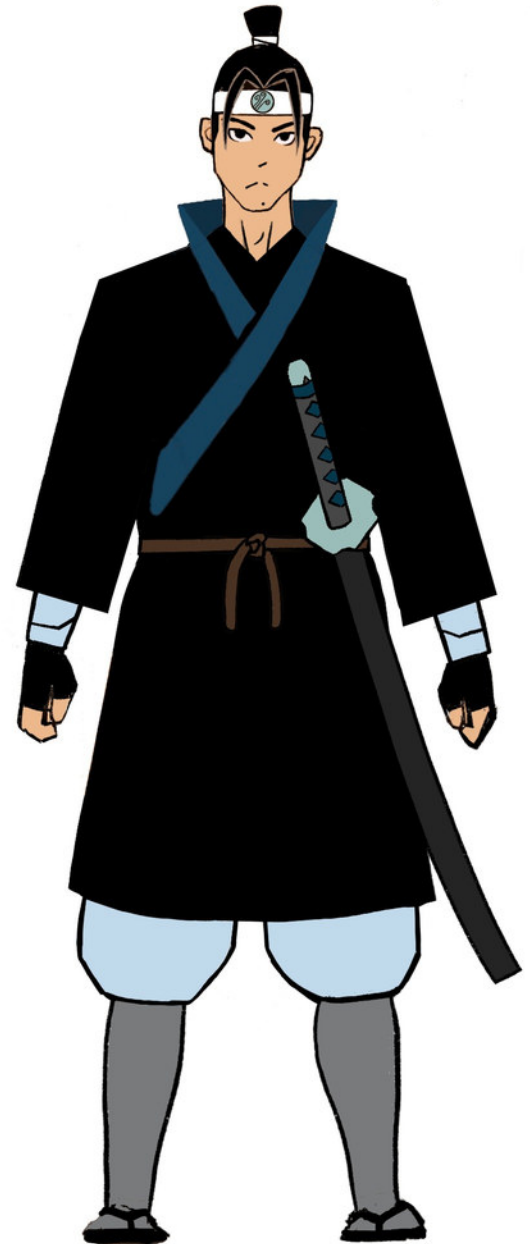
HIKARU
ONTSUKA



THE WORLD OF ZODIAC

Illustrated by
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Massart Senior
Thesis 2023-2024



THANK YOU

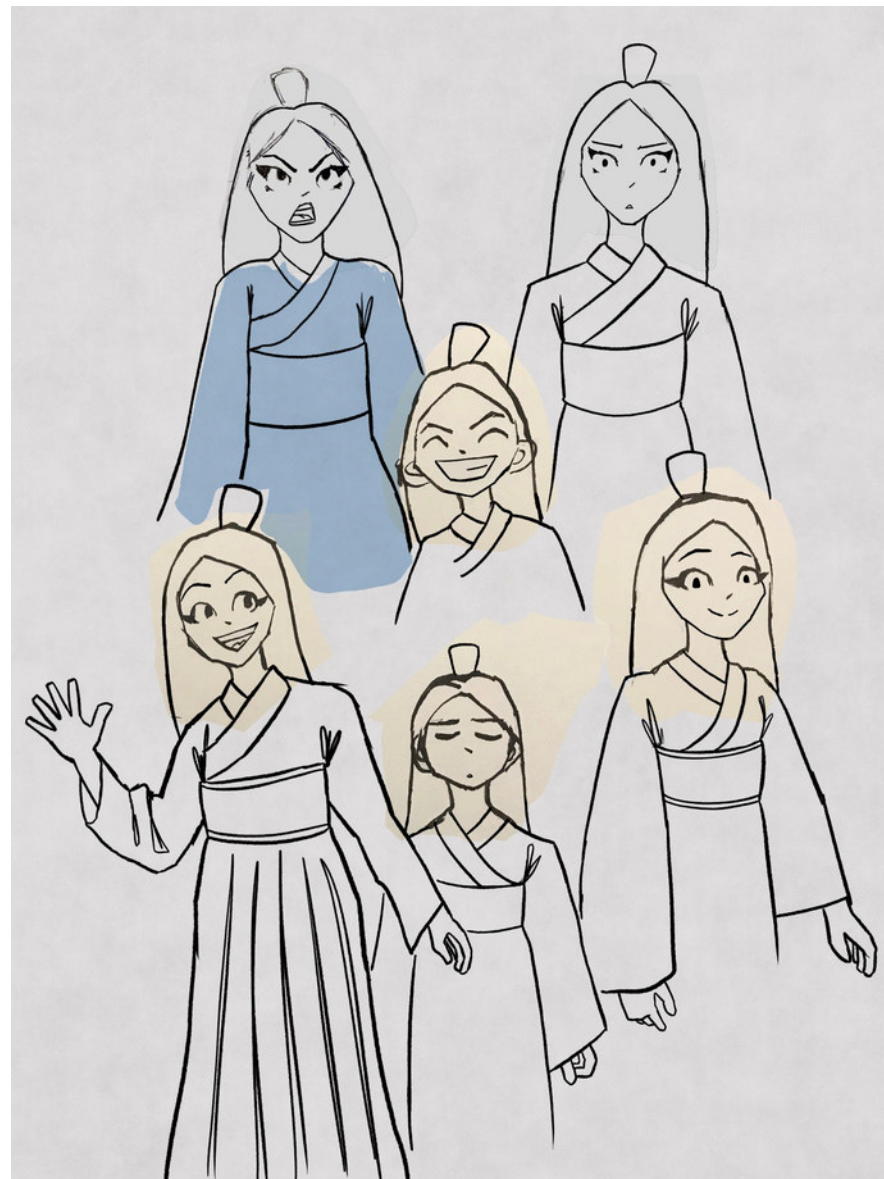
Thank you to all the stories that filled my youth with wonder, and to my friends and family for always supporting me and my dreams; May we never stop dreaming.

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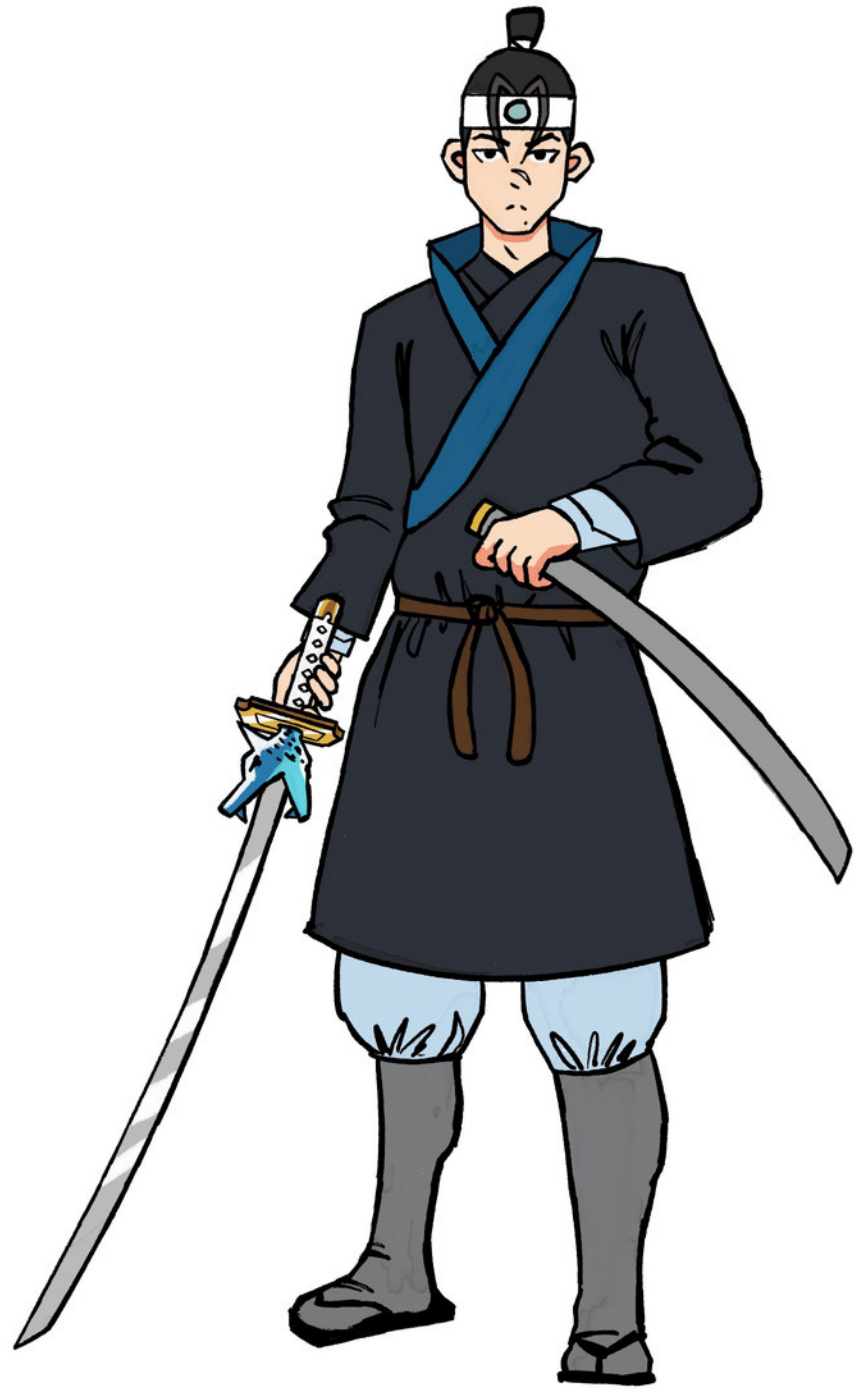
Building A World

The world of "Zodiac" began in March of 2020, during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. After listening to an album titled "Zodiac" by producer Xan Griffin, I was struck with inspiration. I pitched my idea to a writer colleague, who was quickly on board. We have been writing a graphic novel taking place in the world of "Zodiac" on and off since 2020, with a hopeful release date after we graduate in 2024-25. My thesis is a series of five digital concept art paintings, four of them depicting scenes from our novel, with one piece being a poster/book cover. Our novel and my thesis are a love letter to the stories of our youth: Avatar The Last Airbender, Star Wars The Clone Wars, Studio Ghibli films, and so many more. The goal will always be to create stories that inspire the next **I** generation of artists and creatives.



Left: "Bo" character concept drawing

Right: Akari pose/expression sheet



3 Left: Akari comic style test drawing
Right: Kenji comic style test drawing

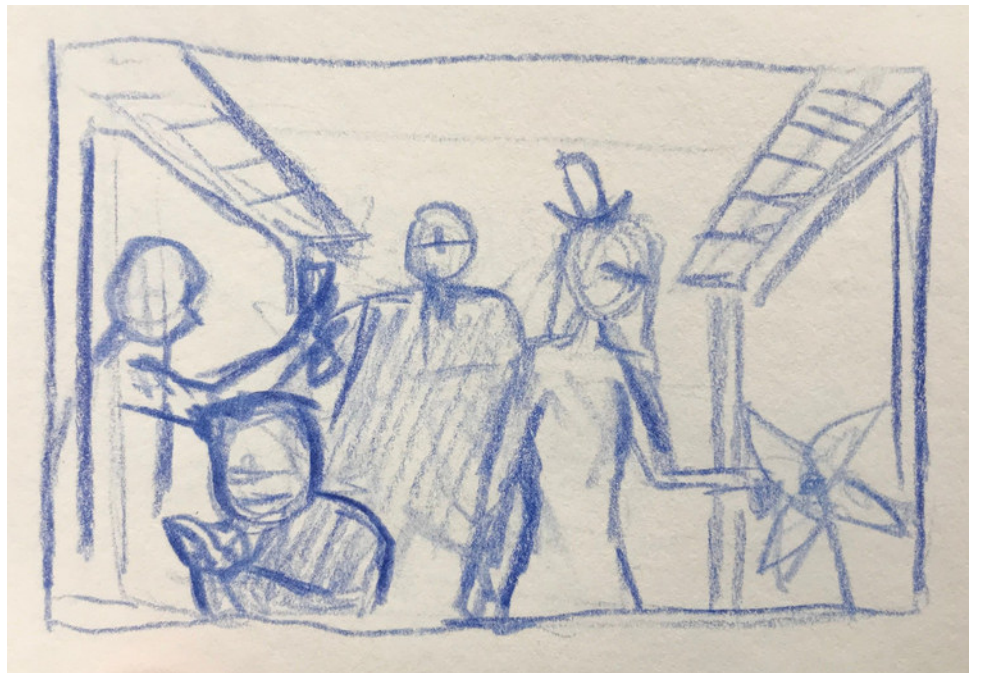
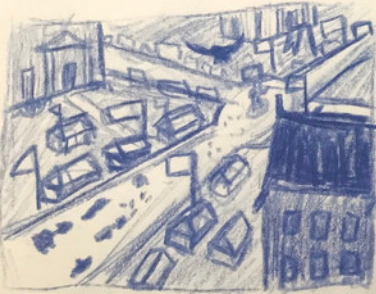


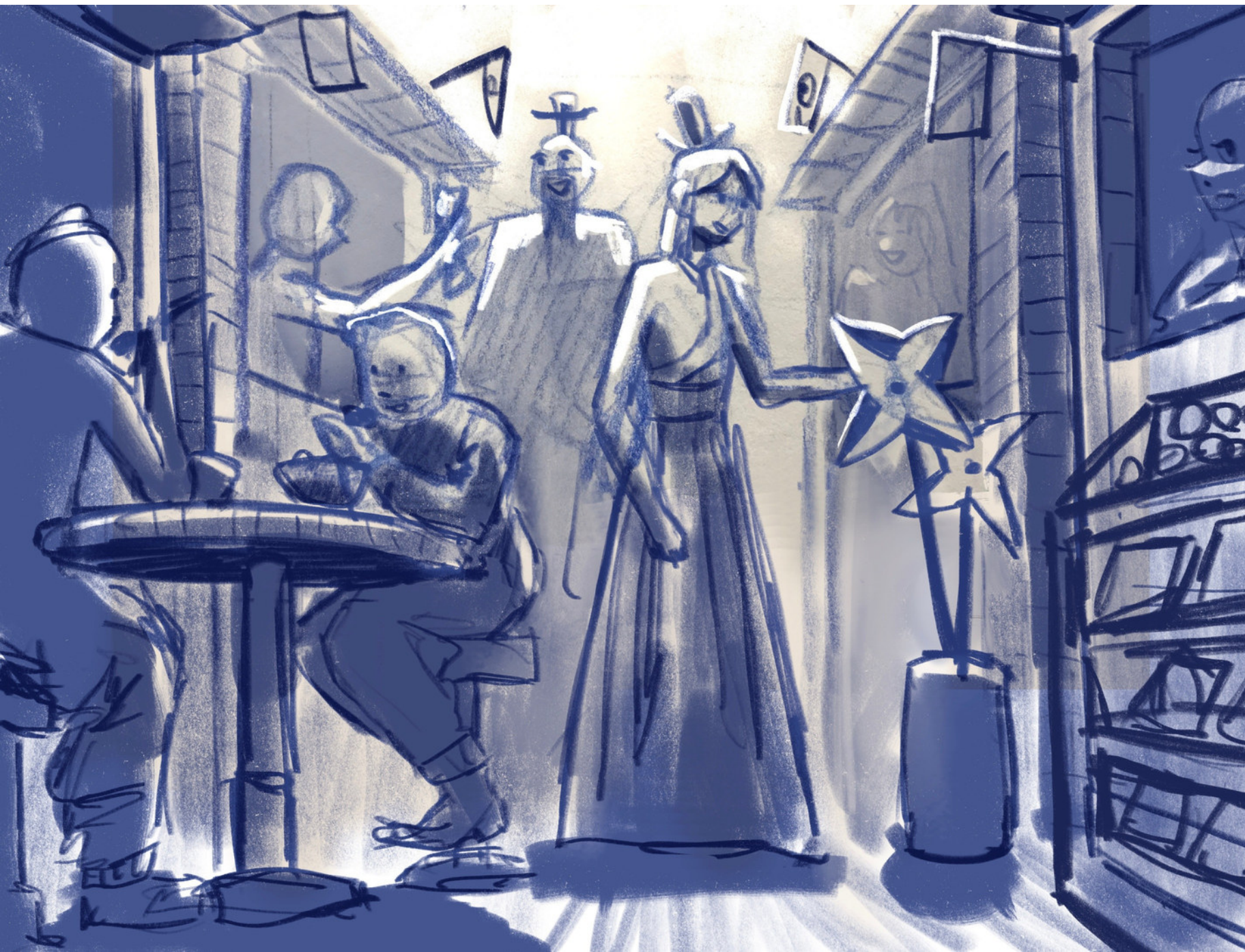


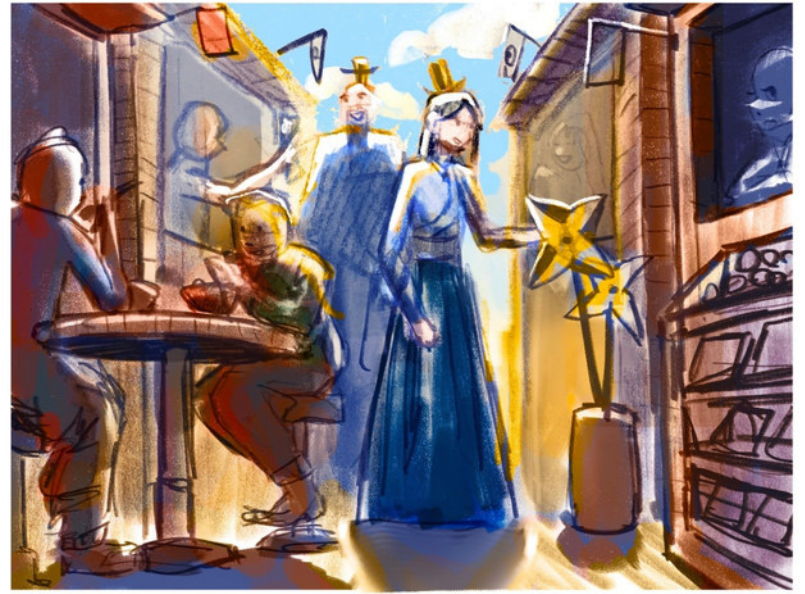
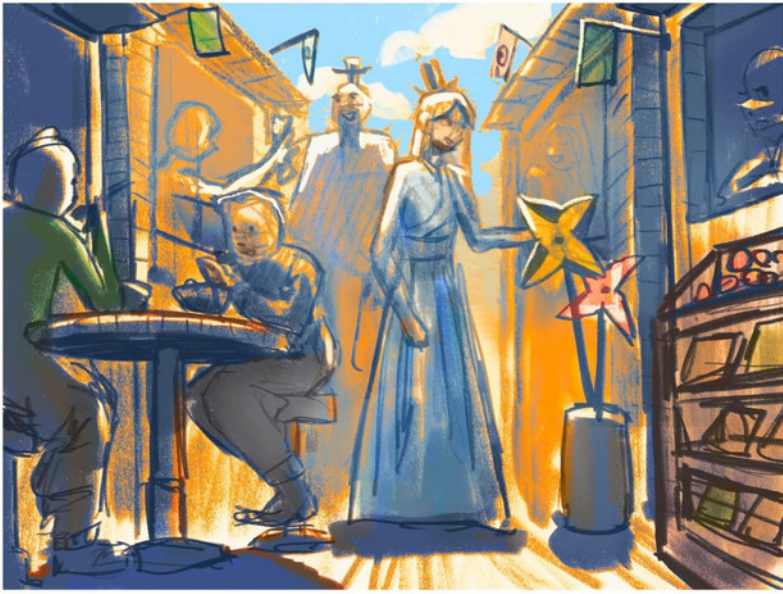
Painting #1

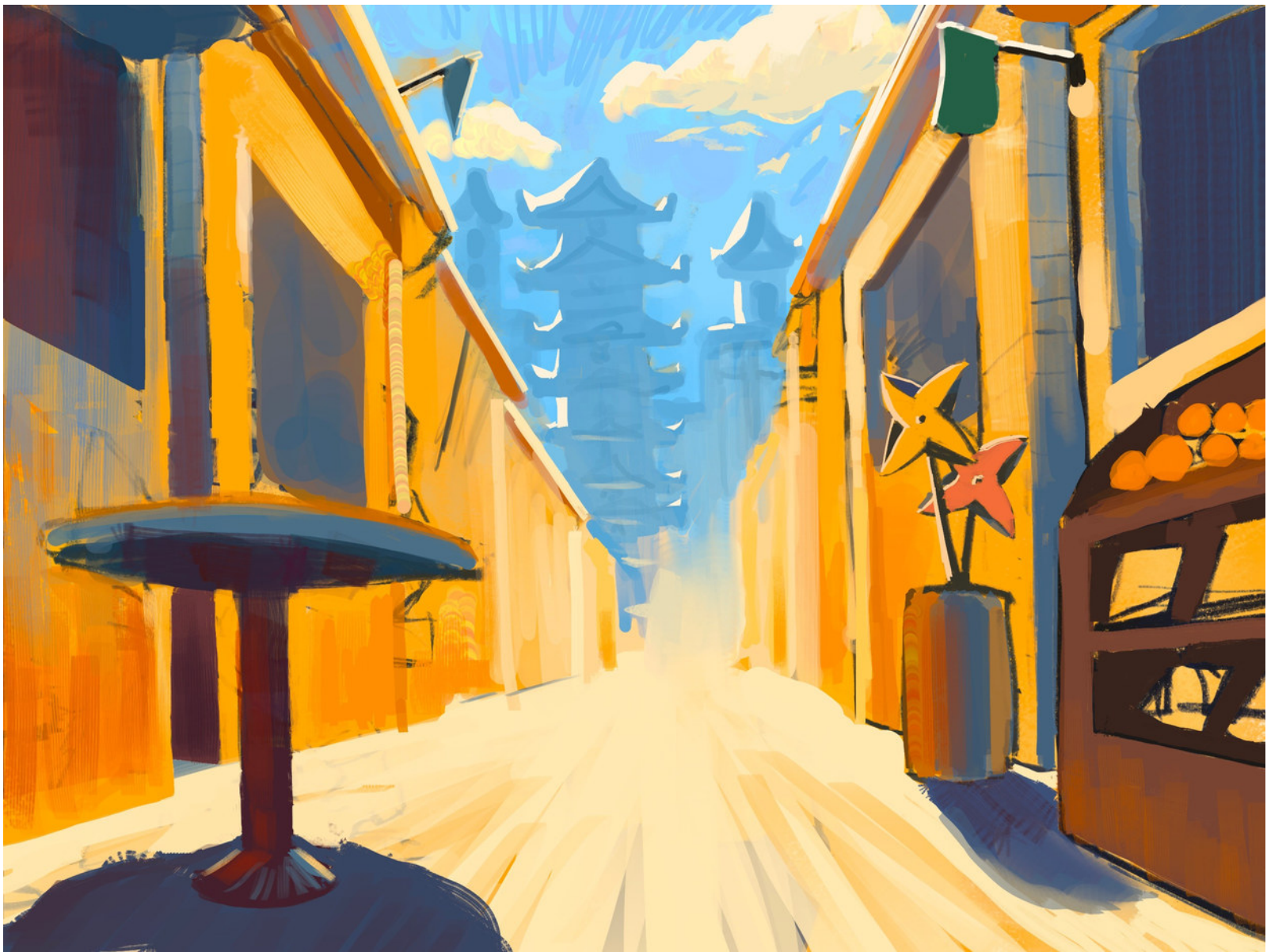
Harmony Day Market

To begin my thesis, we are placed in a lively marketplace scene. The painting depicts Princess Akari and her father, The Emperor, walking through a market during the Harmony Day festival. I began the process by creating separate thumbnails to decide the composition, angle, lighting, and color of the piece. Once I was happy with those, I painted the background, then cleaned up my character sketches and added in some fantasy creatures. I painted my characters in a very specific style based loosely off the work of Riot Games artist Su Ke. I wanted to find a balance between flat and textured brushes, and this piece was my first attempt. I also took inspiration from the shapely painting and bold primary colors of old pulp fiction novel covers.













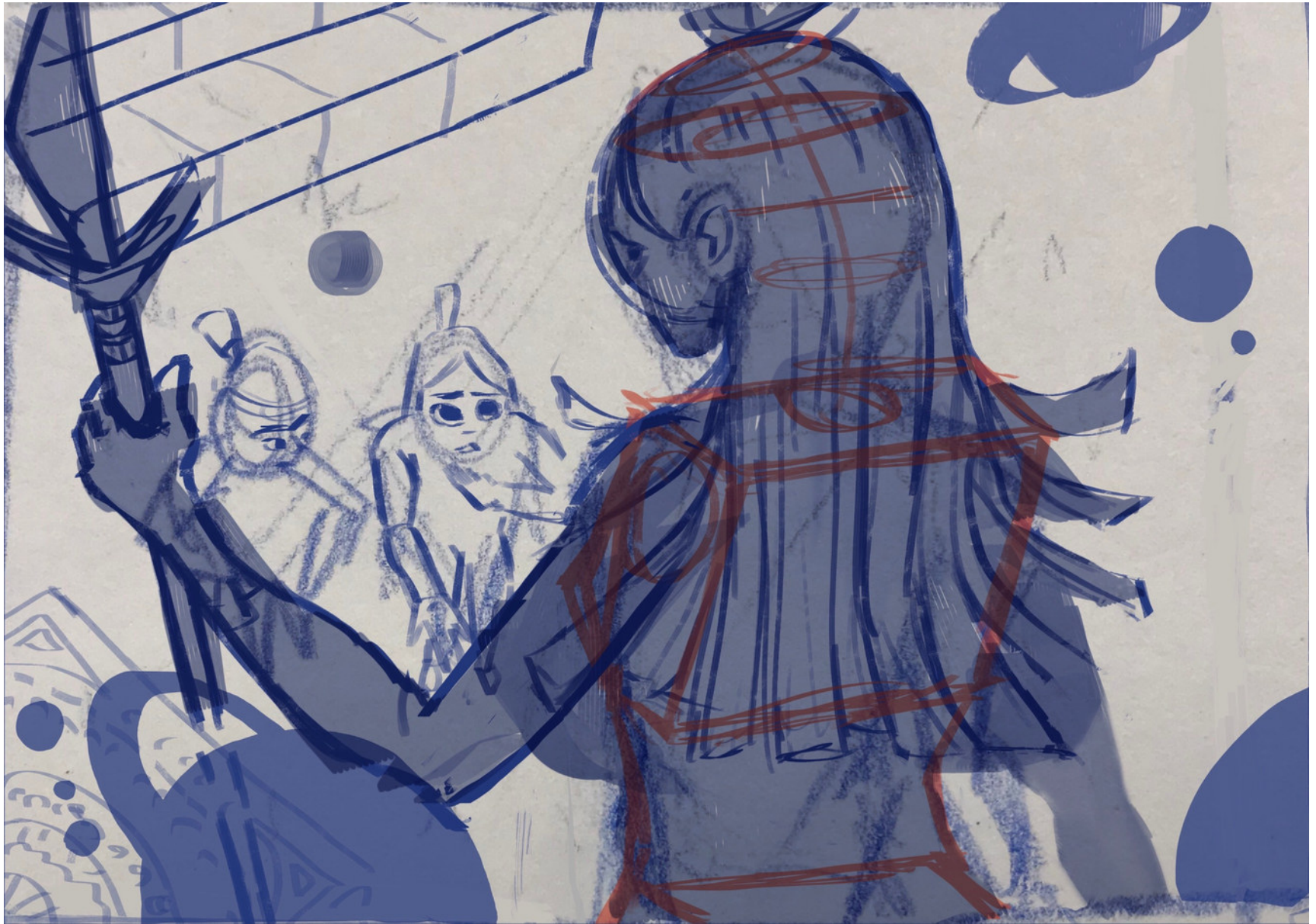
Painting #2

Awakening The Goddess

The second scene of my thesis depicts the moment when the main characters awaken an ancient goddess. The process of this piece is very similar to the previous, beginning with the background and then rendering the characters on top. It took a few tries to nail the perspective on this piece, hence the reference photo I used, which can be seen later this chapter. The biggest challenge was achieving the transparency on the goddess character, which was a mix of blending modes and lowering the opacity. My goal was to convey the magic and wonder of meeting the goddess for the first time.









1



2



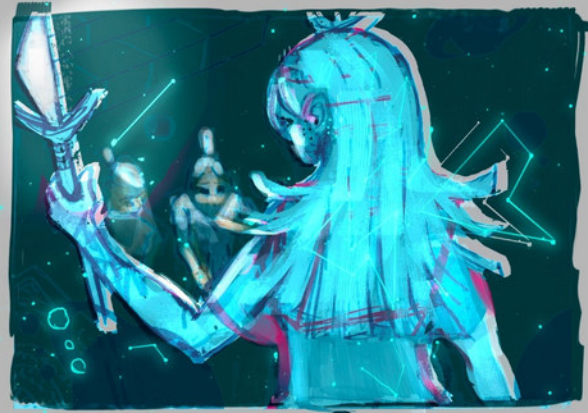
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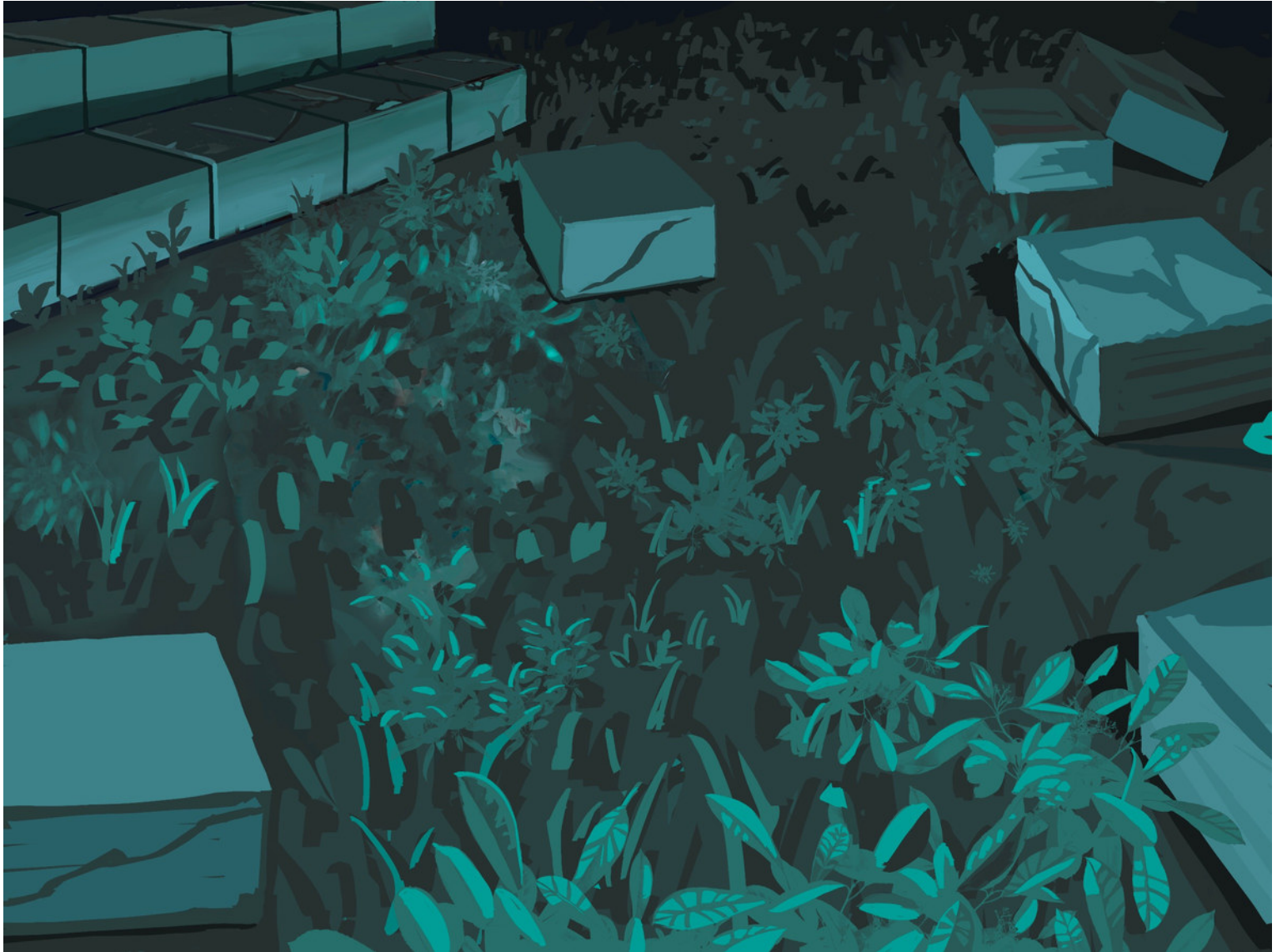
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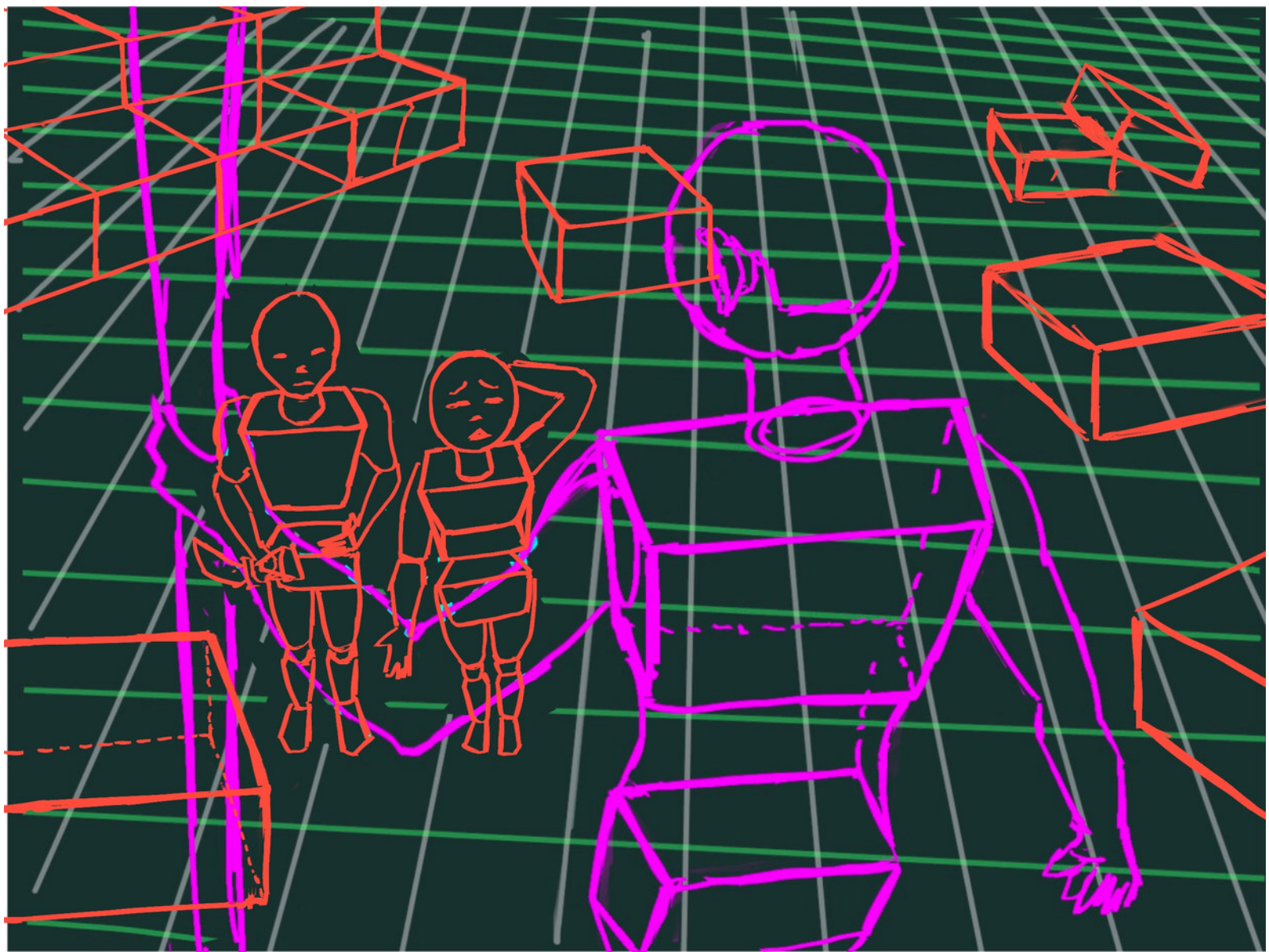


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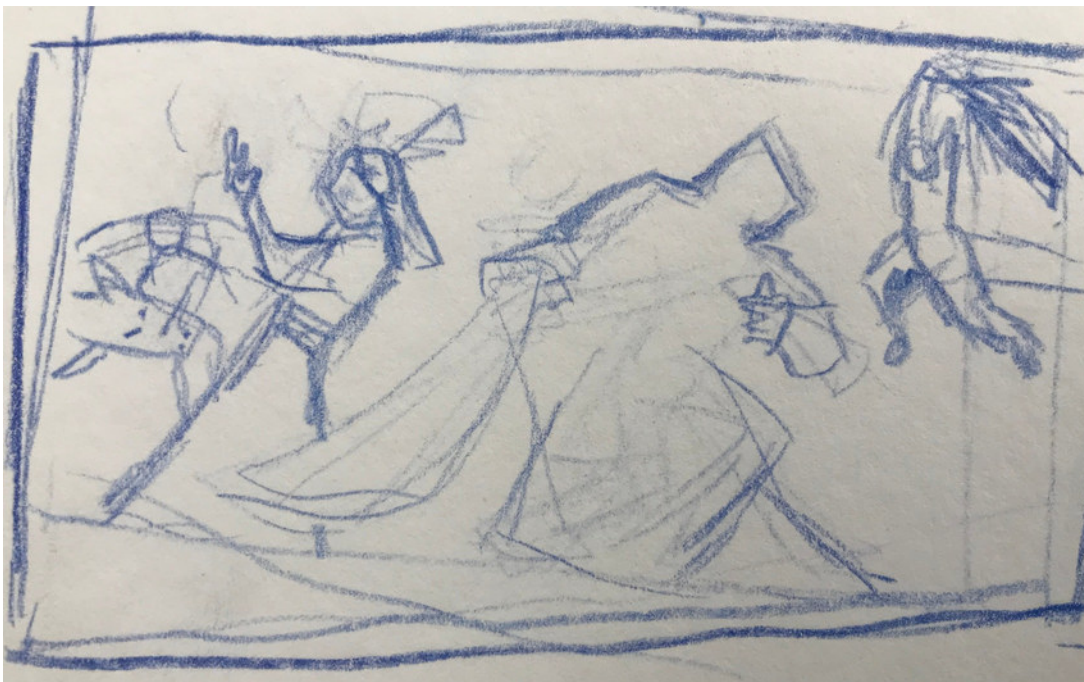


Painting #3

Ambush

My fourth piece, titled "Ambush," is the action scene of the series. It depicts a dramatic scene where the main characters are thrown into a battle, with the left-most character scrambling to free his dragon. I wanted the early morning setting to inform the colors of the piece, which contrasted nicely with the glowing sword in the foreground. This was the one piece that I imagined most vividly before painting, so the process from thumbnail to final went very smoothly.











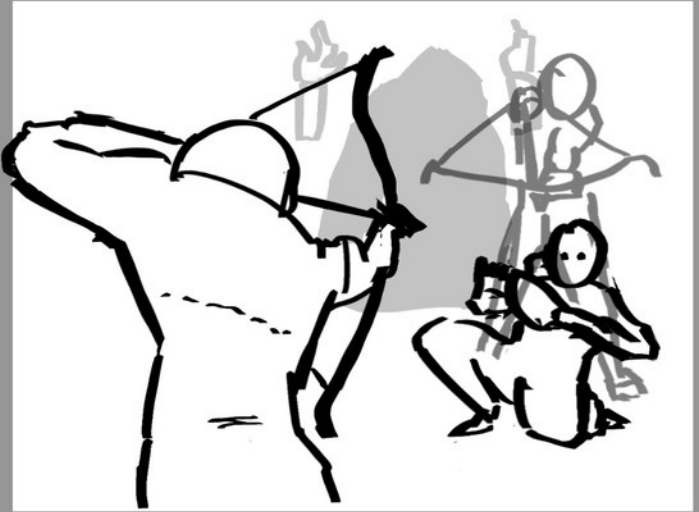
Painting #4

The Lady With a Thousand Faces

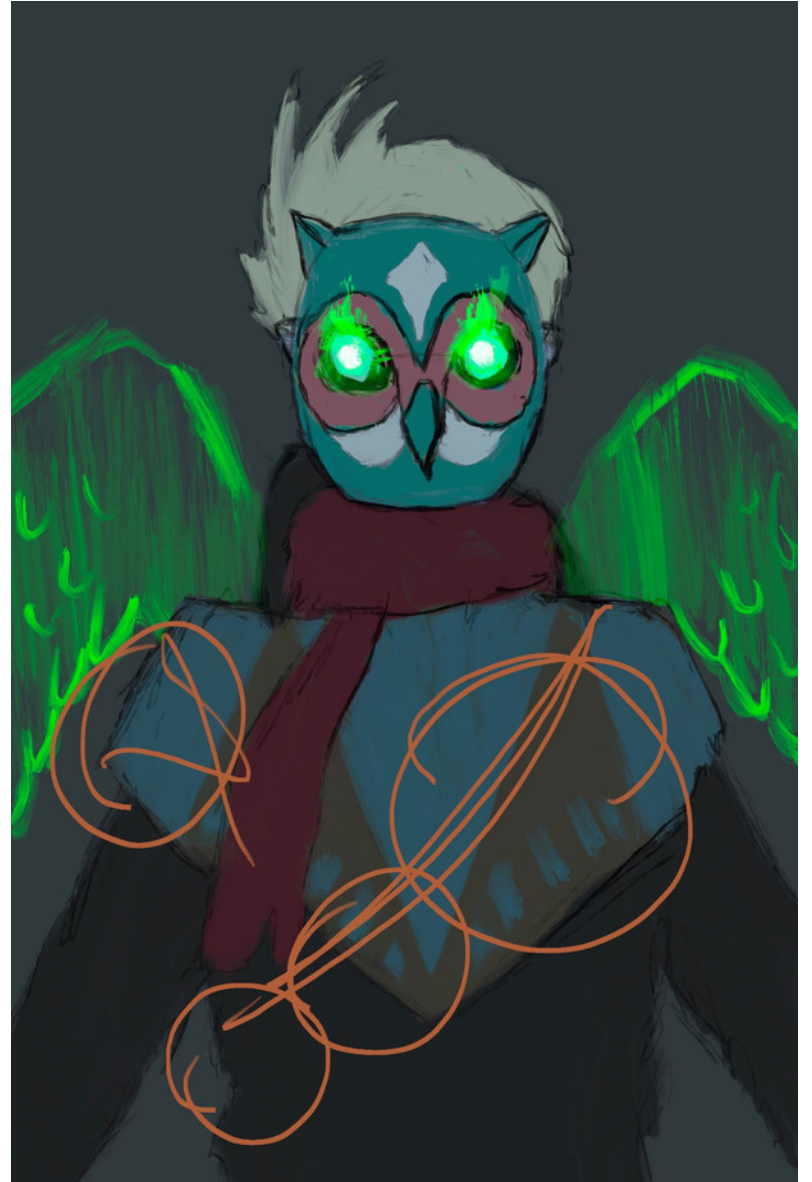
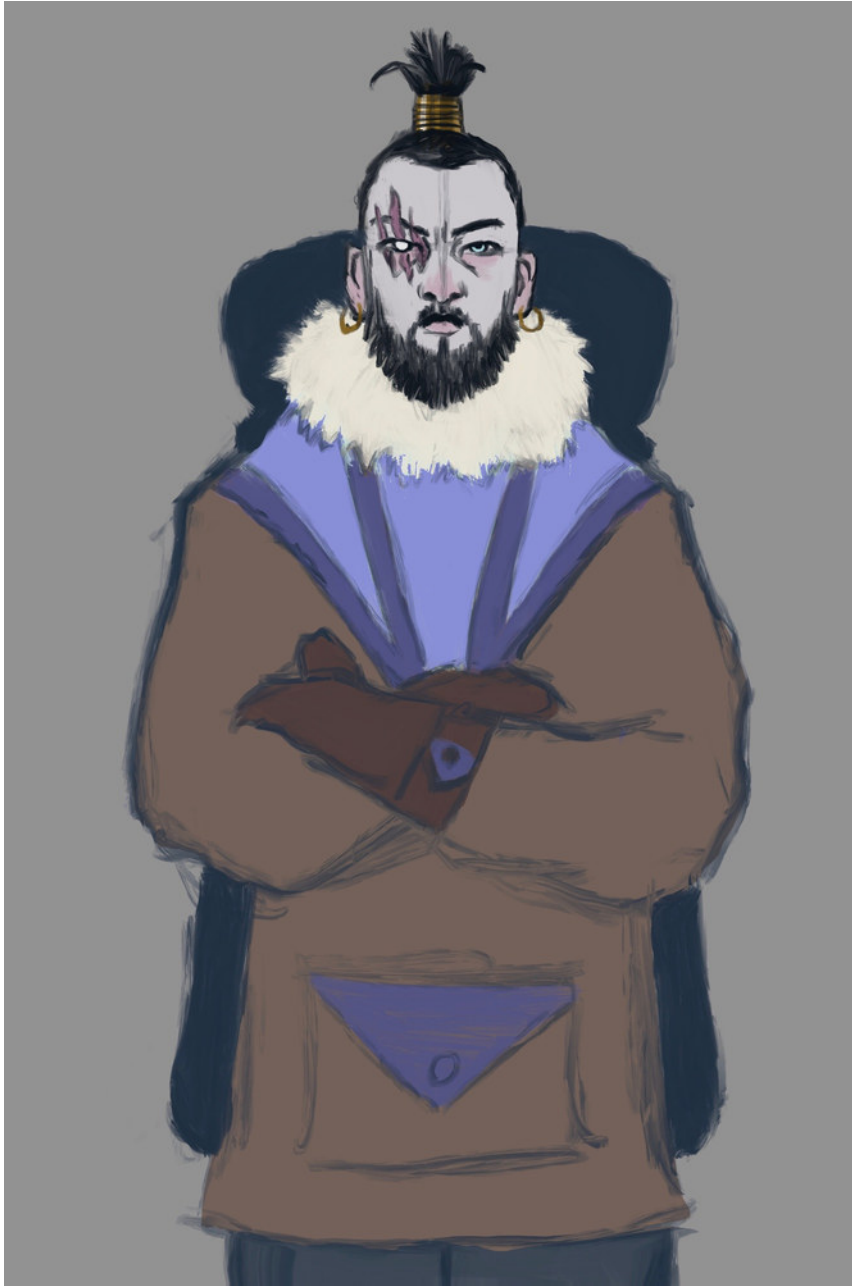
The Lady With a Thousand Faces turned out to be a great character from my novel to include in my thesis. In my story, The Lady is an "evil spirit" that has been terrorizing a nearby town, so our heroes go and investigate. The scene depicted in my painting is the moment the heroes discover that The Lady might not be the real enemy. Despite exploring different compositions, this side-on perspective ended up being the best choice to tell the story.











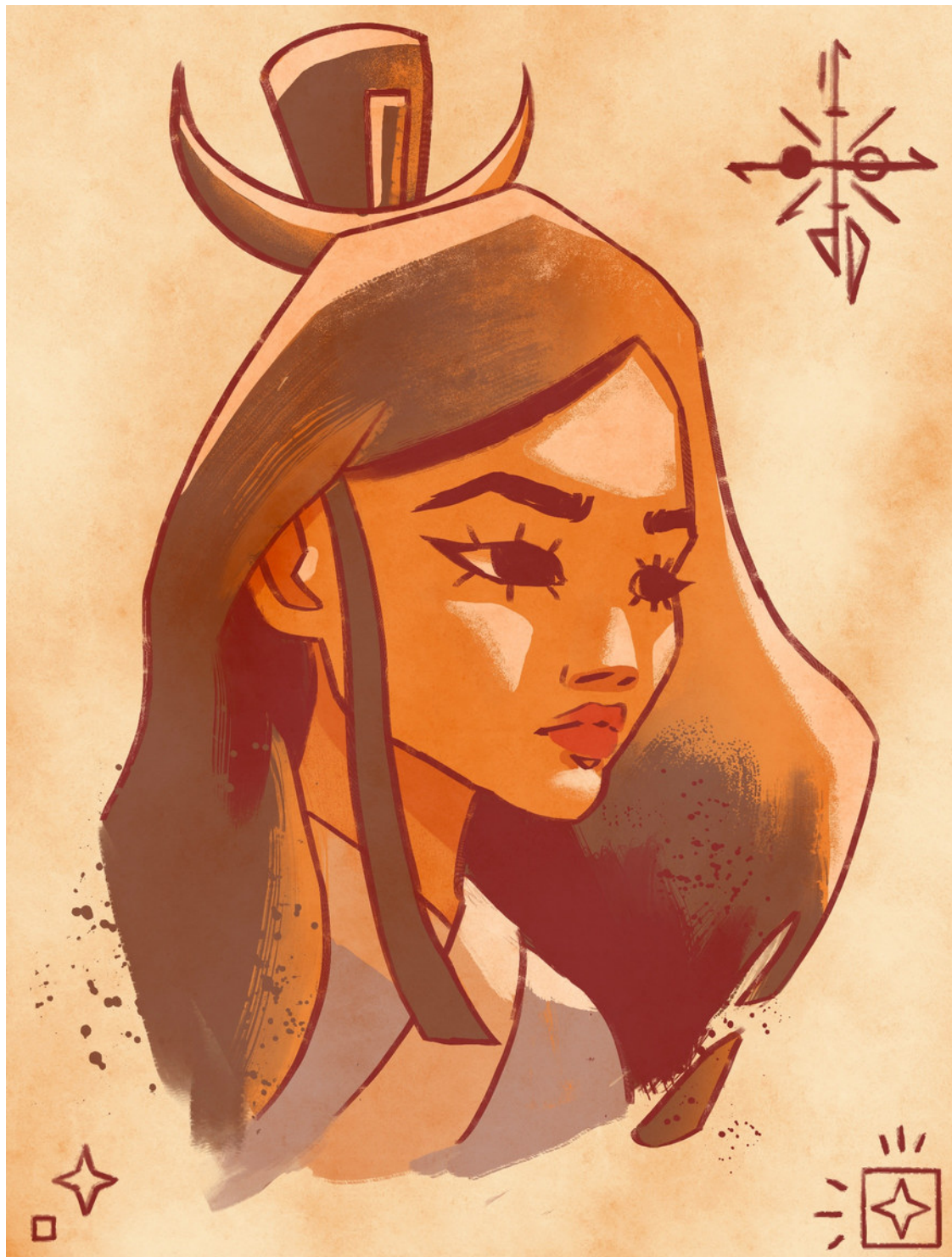


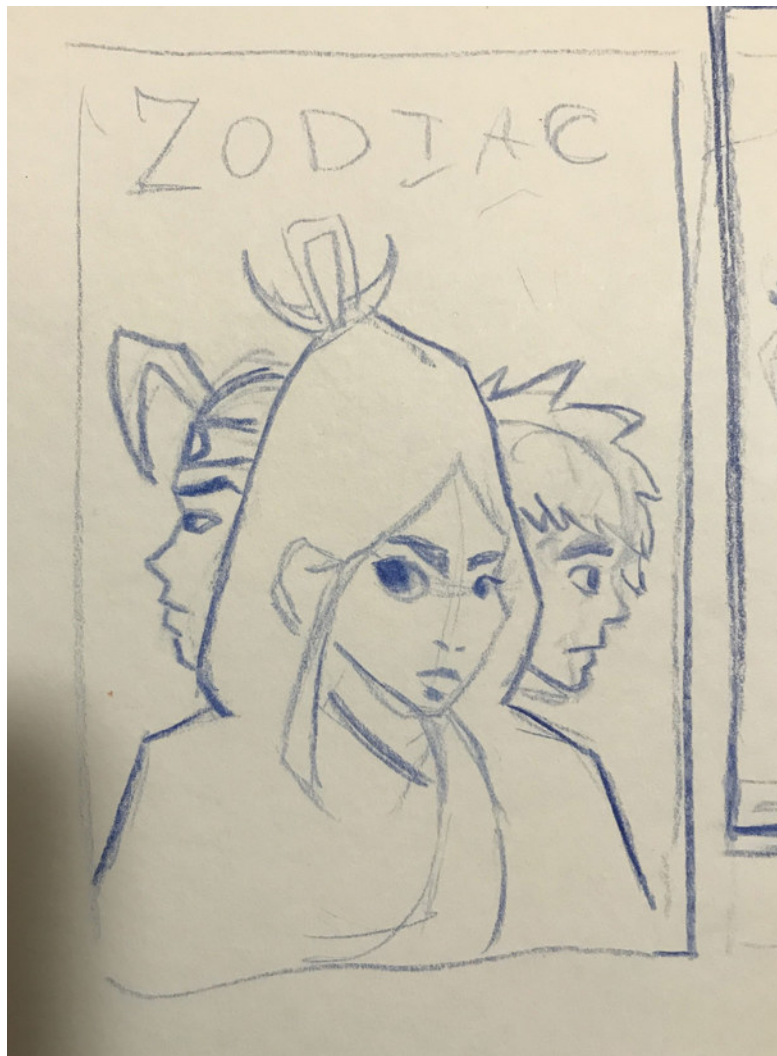


Painting #5

Akari Poster

My final painting deviates significantly from the previous four. With the Akari Poster, I wanted to explore my poster design skills to create a book cover/character poster for my graphic novel. The orange thumbnail sketch was done in highlighter in my sketchbook, and it immediately caught my eye. I used more textured brushes, experimenting to create a balance between graphic and textured. Reflecting on my thesis experience, I really enjoyed the freedom to create without an assigned prompt. I hope these pieces are a reflection of my enthusiasm for my graphic novel and storytelling in general.











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