



Santa
Monica
Studio™





What They Don't Teach You in Art School

Lessons for First Time Leads



(also God of War spoilers)

Introduction

Who am I?



How did I get there?



Introduction

What are we going to talk about?

- The “God of War” leadership experience
- Lead “muscles” to start flexing!



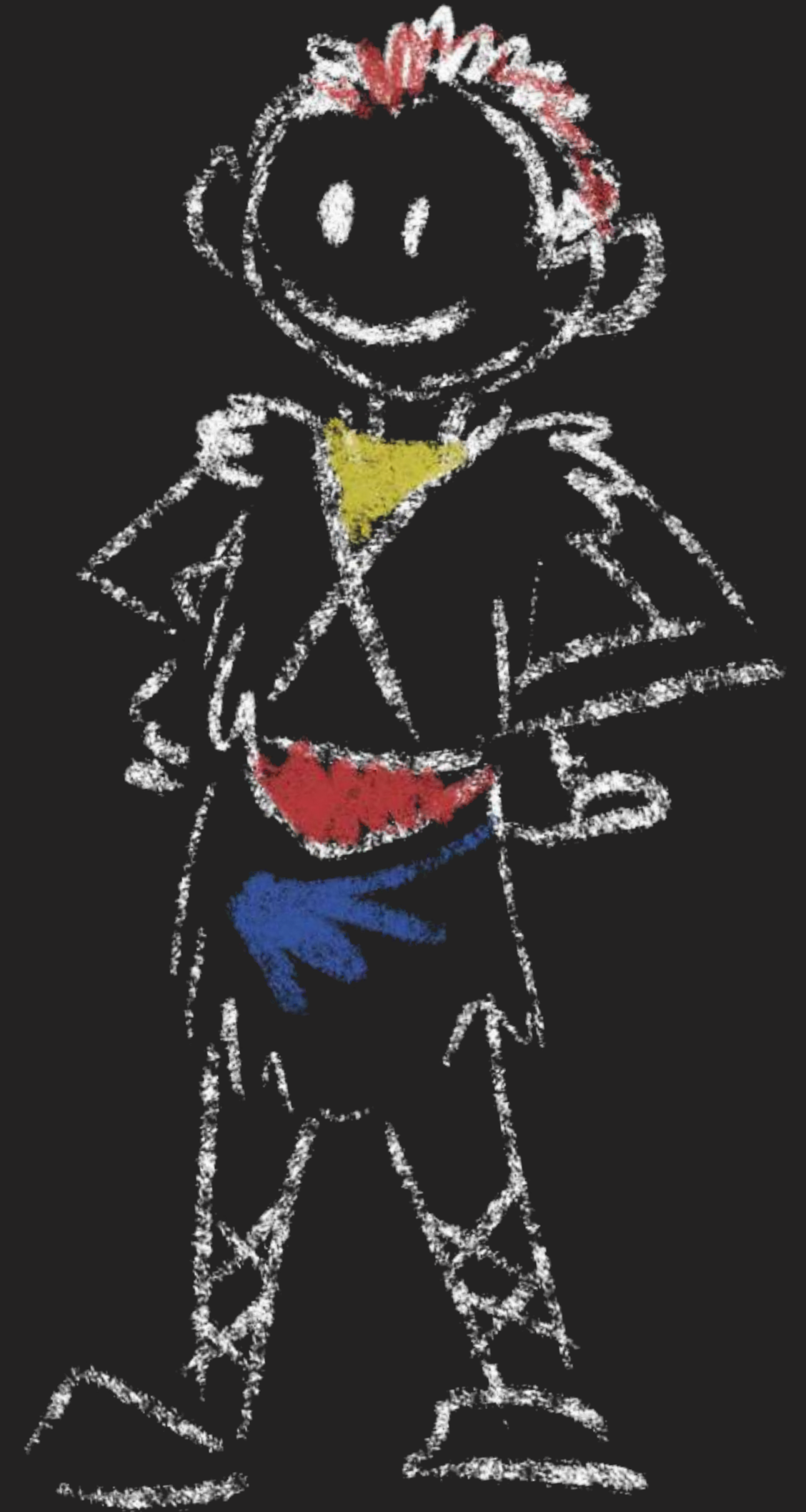


Audience Activity!

What Does A Lead Artist Do?

A Lead Artist's Work

- Communication
- Organization
- Inspiration
- Accountability
- Creativity





Communication

Communication

- Get out of “the groove”
- Stay aware of what your team is doing
- Sacrifice your own focus to benefit the needs of others, get the big picture
- Guide your team to do their work well (such as demonstrating a combat move to animators)



Communication

- Go AFK
- Benefits of in-person syncs:
 - Facial expressions, gestures
 - Conversation
 - Demonstration



Communication

- Go AFK
- At Santa Monica Studio, half the team is upstairs, half is downstairs
- Still better to get some exercise vs. IMs!



Communication

- Gather people together
- Everyone can prep and be in mindset to discuss topic
- Less chance of miscommunication





Audience Activity!

Interview Your Neighbor

1. Name
2. Why did you come to this panel?
3. Someone in your life who was a good leader

Communication

- It doesn't have to be scary!
- Messing up is better than saying nothing
- Keep talking to each other



Organization



Organization – Time Management

- Estimates
 - Gauge speed of each team member
 - Don't pressure them for "better" numbers
 - Plan for unknowns and setbacks
 - Little stuff takes time too
 - Be honest with yourself and producers!

Organization – Time Management

- God of War cinematic tracking in Shotgun

Cinema ★																	Cinemas	Animation
+ Asset ▲ Sort ▼ ▮ Group ▼ Fields ▼ More ▼ Pipeline ▼																		
Scene #	Asset Name	m p l e x i t y	Level	Duration sec	Timelock	Animator	SCR Status 100%	LAYO Status 100%	PRVZ Status 100%	PREP Status 100%	ASEM Status 100%	1CAM Status 100%	1IMP Status 100%	HANIM Status 100%	MPSPT Status 0%	JPTRNS Status 80%	LAMS	Cine Entrance
100 Assets				8,288	2													
010	OpeningScene	A	Prologue	142	✓	Erica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	Ready for LAMs	Other
013	LogBoatEnter	C	Prologue	41	✓	Erica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	Ready for LAMs	Interact
015	LogBoatExit	C	Prologue	31	✓	Erica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	Ready for LAMs	Interact
020	MothersKnife	A	Prologue	283	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Interact
025	DeerSurprise	C	Prologue	9	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	In LAMs	Not Needed
030	DeerMiss	C	Prologue	33	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	In LAMs	Trigger Zone
040	DeerSpotA	C	Prologue	29	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	No Dialogue	Trigger Zone
050	DeerSpotB	C	Prologue	25	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Trigger Zone
060	DeerHit	C	Prologue	60	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-		In LAMs	Trigger Zone
065	TrollSurprise	A	Prologue	30	✓	Umberto	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Other
072	TrollAftermathB	B	Prologue	84	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Death
078	AshesGathered	B	Prologue	78	✓	Erica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Interact
080	BaldurIntro	A	Prologue	150	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Interact
100	TimeToGo	B	Prologue	53	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Interact
110	RunicStave	C	Prologue	47	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Nav move
115	BridgeFall	C	River Pass	60	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		In LAMs	Trigger Zone
118	BanditCamp	D	River Pass	60	✓	In-Game	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	In LAMs	Interact
120	FirstHumanKill	A	River Pass	76	✓	Umberto	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Interact
130	BrokIntro	B	River Pass	120	✓	Umberto	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Interact
135	CanyonOverlook	C	River Pass	34	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	In LAMs	Nav move
136	NewTracks	D	River Pass	30	✓	Don	●				●	●	●	●	-	●	Ready for LAMs	Trigger Zone
137	BoarIntro	C	River Pass	31	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Other
140	BoarShoot	C	River Pass	37	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Interact
150	WitchIntro	B	River Pass	86	✓	Umberto	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Nav move
160	WitchHouseA	B	River Pass	108	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-			Trigger Zone
163	KnifeReturn	C	River Pass	33	✓	Mike	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●		Interact
165	WitchHouseB	B	River Pass	118	✓	Umberto	●	●			●	●	●	●	-	●		Interact
180	WorldSnakeIntro	A	Caldera	138	✓	Don	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-		In LAMs	Interact

Organization – Time Management

- Did not do a great job with estimates and time taken

Task Name	Link	Pipeline Step	Outsource	Status	Department	Bid	Assigned To	Open Notes	End Date
32 Tasks				77% ●		14 days		0	
▼ FirstHumanKill (32)				77% ●		14 days		0	
✓ Script	FirstHumanKill	Script	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Writing			0	
✓ Previz	FirstHumanKill	Previz	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Camera	1 day		0	
✓ Camera Layout	FirstHumanKill	Camera Layout	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Camera	1 day		0	
✓ Implemented	FirstHumanKill	1st Pass Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Narrative Design	1 day	Nathan McNamara	0	
✓ Interactive Elements	FirstHumanKill	1st Pass Entrance/Exit	<input type="checkbox"/>	-	Narrative Design	1 day	Nathan McNamara	0	
✓ Shoot Prep	FirstHumanKill	Shoot Prep	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation	3 days		0	
✓ Scene Assembled	FirstHumanKill	Assembly and Timing	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation	1 day	Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ 1st Pass Animations	FirstHumanKill	HandKeyAnim	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation		Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ 1st Pass Camera	FirstHumanKill	Camera Pass on .anim	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Camera		Megan Goldbeck	0	
✓ DOF	FirstHumanKill	Depth of Field	<input type="checkbox"/>	●				0	
✓ Transitions	FirstHumanKill	Update .anim + Transitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	●				0	
✓ Face Order	FirstHumanKill	Face Outsource	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation		Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ Audio Implementation	FirstHumanKill	Implementation Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	-				0	
✓ Exit Tech Rollout	FirstHumanKill	Final Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	-				0	
✓ 2nd Round Body Polish	FirstHumanKill	Final Transitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation		Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ Shoot Day	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	All			0	
✓ Body Order	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation			0	
✓ Audio	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Audio			0	
✓ Body Polish	FirstHumanKill		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation		Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ Face Polish	FirstHumanKill		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation	3 days	Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ VFX	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	VFX			0	
✓ Camera Polish	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Camera	2 days		0	
✓ Lighting	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Lighting			0	
✓ Scene Prep	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Animation	1 day	Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ Placeholder Props	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●			Thomas Cannell	0	
✓ Face Layout Order	FirstHumanKill		<input type="checkbox"/>	●				0	

Organization – Time Management

- Did not keep track of the small tasks
- Had to cut all of these story moments



Env Animations ☆

+ Animation Sort Group Fields More Pipeline

Order	Priority	Type	Animation Name	» GEO Status	» ANIM Status	» IMP Status	» ANIMP Status	» VFX Status	» AUD Status
▼ Narrative (35)									
		Needs As	Half-Life NPC						
		Needs As	Half-Life NPC						
		Needs As	Half-Life NPC						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	envRivFreyaCreatureIdle						
	A	Character	envTBDQuestGiver						
	B	Half-Life Wildlife	envForTheWalkHomeRavens01						
	B	Half-Life Wildlife	envForTheWalkHomeRavens02						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	envRivFreyaCreatureRise						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	envRivFreyaCreatureLayDown						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	envRivSonPetTurtle						
	A	Half-Life Wildlife	envRivBirdsFlyingBrokIntro						
	Needs As	Half-Life Ambience	passObjectSway01+						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfSpinStab						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfSentryKill						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfGatherMaterials01						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfGatherMaterials02						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfGatherMaterials03						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfPickupDrop						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfMaterialDropoff						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfStrongLightOneTakeDown						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive01						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive02						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive03						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive04						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive05						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive06						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive07						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	envAlfConstructHive08						
	Needs As	Half-Life NPC	AlfDarkOneIntroduction01						
	Needs As	Half-Life NPC	AlfDarkOneIntroduction02						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfLightOneInjured						
	B	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfDarkOneAllAround						
	Needs As	Half-Life Storytelling	AlfDarkOneFlyOutOfPartedWater						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	globBrokIdle						
	A	Half-Life Storytelling	globSindriIdle						

Organization – Time Management

- Collect data!
 - Tracking software options: Shotgun, JIRA, Hansoft, etc.
 - Everybody needs to pitch in!
 - Real data = better estimates and scope planning
 - As a lead, set a good example, give reminders

Organization – Time Management

- God of War: getting estimates through Perforce history

//int8-data/main/SourceArt/Narrative/010_OpeningScene/narForOpeningScene090CineScene.mb

✓	53	2594097	2/26/2018 8:11 PM	agrossman	armor spot-fixes using deformation2 mesh-lod.
✓	52	2591599	2/23/2018 10:24 PM	agrossman	adding animation adjustments to straps using deformation2_mesh
✓	51	2512934	1/17/2018 11:58 AM	epinto	fixing bandages so they don't clip through each other, also removing gimbal lock move on kratos' wrist
✓	50	2493440	1/9/2018 10:00 AM	darazi	fixed Kratos beard penetration
✓	49	2448890	12/19/2017 9:36 AM	epinto	fixing axe pop on Kratos
✓	48	2394126	11/22/2017 4:59 PM	epinto	breath pass for Kratos and Son. Reviewed by Umberto
✓	47	2372828	11/13/2017 3:26 PM	epinto	Shoulder/arm/bandage adjustments for INT-53758, reviewed by Umberto
✓	46	2364715	11/8/2017 12:15 PM	epinto	Maya files with foot planting data: OpeningScene HeadEnchant BrokCares LightOnesReturn HuldraR...
✓	45	2331611	10/23/2017 11:36 AM	epinto	removing gimbal lock from kratos' right wrist for INT-44931. reviewed by Umberto
✓	44	2303365	10/5/2017 10:20 PM	epinto	latest polish pass
✓	43	2282945	9/27/2017 5:41 PM	epinto	Updating OpeningScene to end in proper navCarryTreeTrunkIdle upright pose, adding walk cycle to ...
✓	42	2279281	9/26/2017 5:03 PM	epinto	updating end location, shortening son anim, gimbal lock issues
✓	41	2268569	9/22/2017 5:17 PM	epinto	body polish pass on OpeningScene, adjusting end position on kratos and ending in treeCarryIdle
✓	40	2222367	9/1/2017 11:40 AM	epinto	Fixes for INT-35170 and INT-24467: Fixing tree position, adjusting Kratos axe so it switches spaces...
✓	39	2216091	8/29/2017 11:30 PM	epinto	updating axe and shoulder/arm pose to show more of Kratos' face and hit the tree properly

Organization – Time Management

- Beware of Burnout
- Your team relies on you to establish a reasonable schedule and scope
- Keep an eye on your team's health and morale



Organization – Keeping Tidy

- Spreadsheets!
- Learn office software to help with asset lists, tracking estimates, order forms, etc.
- Make them pretty 😊

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Order ▾	Banter Name ▾	Anim type ▾	# ▾	Description of custom anim ▾
2	001	FirstBoat	Cine	1	Kratos and son tie a log to the boat to use for the mother's pyre
3	002	SurviveJourney	Banter		
4	003	FocusOnHunt	POI - NPCs	1	Son stops, looking for lost tracks
5	004	DeerTracks	POI - NPCs		Son finds fresh tracks
6	005	MythologicalTracks	POI - with Kratos	1	Son finds large creature tracks, startles crows in bush, pulls out bow and arrow.
7	006	WhyNow	Banter		
8	007	TrollAftermathA	Combat	1	Son takes massive hit reaction
9	008	CanITalk	Banter		
10	009	LostControl	TBD	1	Kratos and son do various actions inside the house when they hear Baldur outside
11	010	FirstPunch	Combat		Baldur idling waiting for player to attack
12	011	MyTurn	Combat	1	Baldur knocked down to one knee, gets up to start fight
13	012	CanICarryHer	Banter		

Organization – Keeping Tidy

- Documentation
- Best practices, workflows, tutorials, etc.
- Easier onboarding for new hires
- Handy reference during production



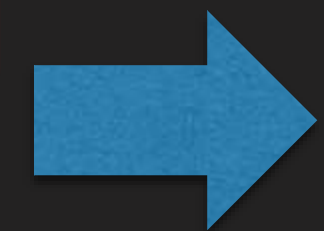


Audience Activity!

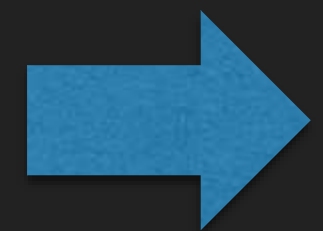
Flow chart

1. Where does your work come from?
2. What work do you do?
3. Who do you send your work to?

Writers, Level
Design,
DP



Scene
Assembly and
Animation



Implementation,
Lighting, FX,
Audio

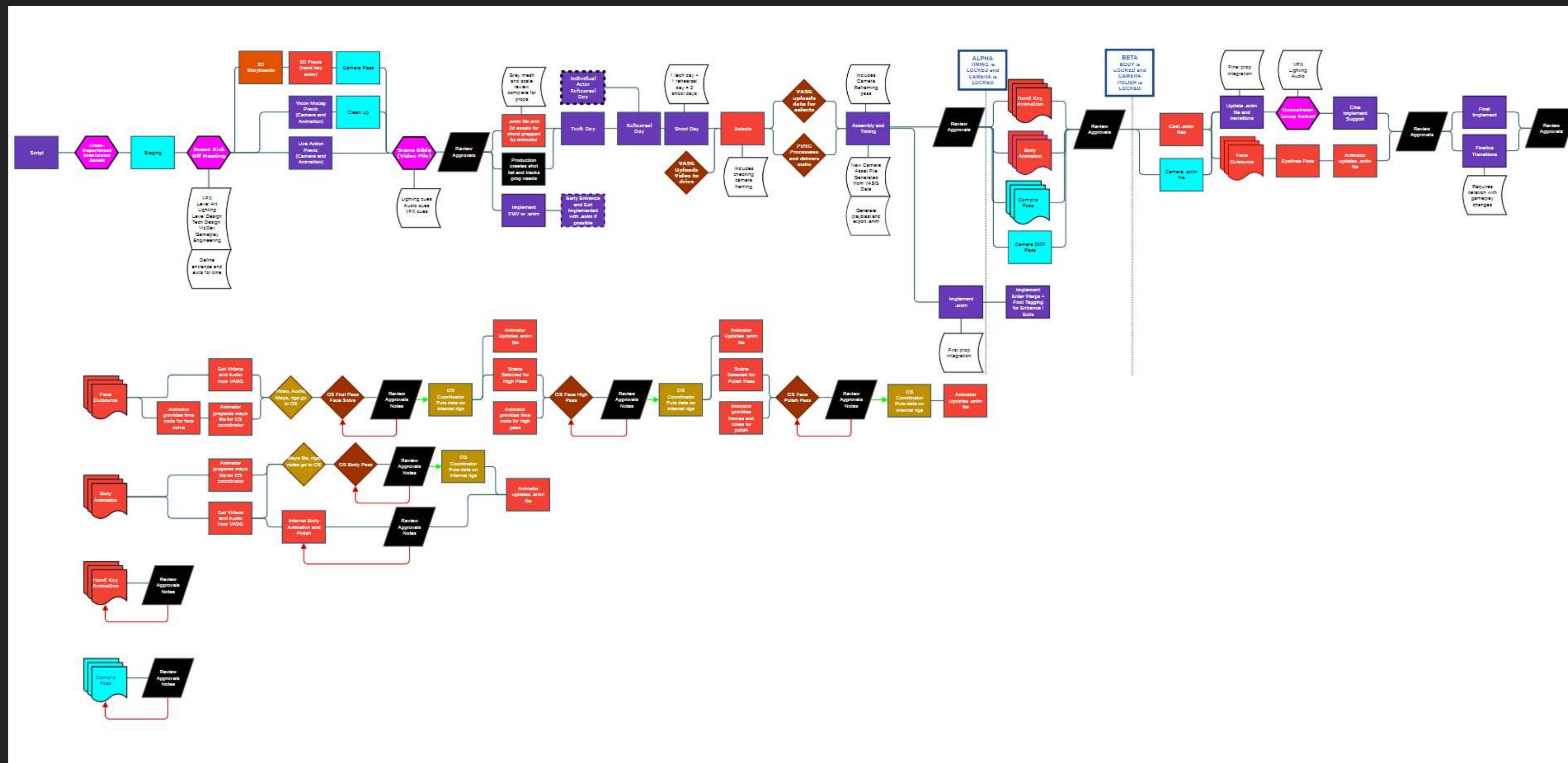
Organization

- Get the big picture by understanding the flow of production
- Learn how much time each task needs



God of War full narrative workflow

Identifying handoffs between departments, potential pain points, areas of simultaneous work



Outsourcing

- Get to know your vendors
- Give specific, detailed feedback: images, videos
- Time management is crucial
- Consider a coordinator

X6767 Please move Kratos' right hand further down the handle of the axe to reveal the rune underneath.



Inspiration



Do not be sorry!
BE BETTER!!



Inspiration

Be a source of positivity

- Sh*t happens
- Decisions made that your team or you may not like
- Scrapping work
- Things that make you want to rage out!



Inspiration

Be a source of positivity

- Monkey see, monkey do
- If your team sees you frustrated, complaining, worried, they will act out as well



Inspiration

Be a source of positivity

- Fake it 'til you make it
 - Boosts team morale
 - Mitigates self-negativity
 - Find outlets to let off steam
 - Talk it out with someone or find a stress-relieving activity (such as singing in choir!)



Inspiration

Giving feedback

- Get to the point
- Be honest but not belittling
 - If your team doesn't feel comfortable coming to you, how can you help them?
- Be encouraging
- Follow up



Inspiration

Request feedback too!

- Especially as a first-time lead, hard to know how effective you are
- Get your team to be honest with you
- Show them you care about getting better
- Inspire yourself to keep growing!

Inspiration

Understanding people for tasking

- Artists come in all kinds!
- Let them work on what they're passionate about
- But also push them out of their comfort zone



Leadership Homework

Inspire Your Team

How can you keep them happy?
How can you challenge them?

1. Scrappy new kid
2. Seasoned veteran
3. Super fast insomniac
4. Film/TV Specialist
5. Indie jack-of-all-trades

Inspiration

- Learn to speak each teammate's "language"



Inspiration

- Learn to speak each teammate's "language"
- Tailor your feedback and motivation
 - On God of War, spread out the "meaty" scenes among animators based on experience, speed, passion



Accountability



Accountability

Take responsibility for your team's
(and your own) impact

- Keep downstream departments in the loop
- Set the bar for quality
- Own up if you mess up



Accountability

Make your (and your team's) voice heard

- Take a seat at the table
- Come prepared
- Go to bat for your team





Leadership Homework

Accountability Check-up

1. Pledge to speak up at meetings
2. Downstream sync
3. Someone you want to talk to 1-on-1

Accountability

- When you are accountable to others, they will be accountable to you



Creativity



Creativity

DON'T try to do everything yourself

- Getting bogged down in lead stuff = no art
- Focusing too hard on art = no leadership
- Get help! Producers, managers, other leads
- Help **others** unlock their potential

Creativity

DO take time for yourself

- You are still an artist!
- Find a few juicy tidbits to keep
 - May be easier during early production
- Schedule “me time”
- Geek out on the new stuff





Audience Activity!

Geek out

Share something awesome you've seen
or want to see at GDC!

Wrap-up



What Does A Lead Artist Do?

Communicate

- Be an active listener
- Get away from your desk to talk to people
- Communicate your department's needs and dependencies to leads of other departments

Organize

- Collect data to make better estimates for your team's schedule
- Document best practices and keep track of tasks
- Be aware of scope and work to avoid burnout
- Be detail oriented, especially with outsource vendors

Inspire

- Be a positive force
- Give and receive constructive feedback
- Encourage your team to be their best and grow!
- Task your team members based on what they really love to do well

Be Accountable

- Understand and be responsible for your team's impact upon other departments
- Establish and enforce the quality bar of your department's work
- Go to bat for your team

Create

- Make some time to do your craft!
- Stay up to date on industry standards for your department
- Bring new ideas to the table and help drive the project to new levels of creativity and fun

Last Minute Advice

Do you **want** to be a lead?

- Leadership is not for everybody!
- Not a glamorous job, more like a service job
- Discern your career path
- You may prefer to be a specialist rather than a leader, and that's ok!



Your first time as a lead can be
overwhelming! That's normal!



Find a mentor



Failures and successes are
both powerful lessons

Keep practicing!

You can practice leadership even
before you become a lead

In fact, many leads get their roles
because they were showing
leadership qualities already



Every lead is different

What are your strengths?





Thank you!
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 psyham





Check out these other cool talks!

**Creating a Deeper Emotional Connection:
The Cinematography of God of War**

**Keyframes and Cardboard Props:
The Cinematic Process Behind God of War**



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