

an art direction framework

BUILDING A UNIQUE VISUAL IDENTITY



GENEVIÈVE ROUTHIER

HEAD OF ART @ EA DICE

SOME GAMES...



_AGENDA

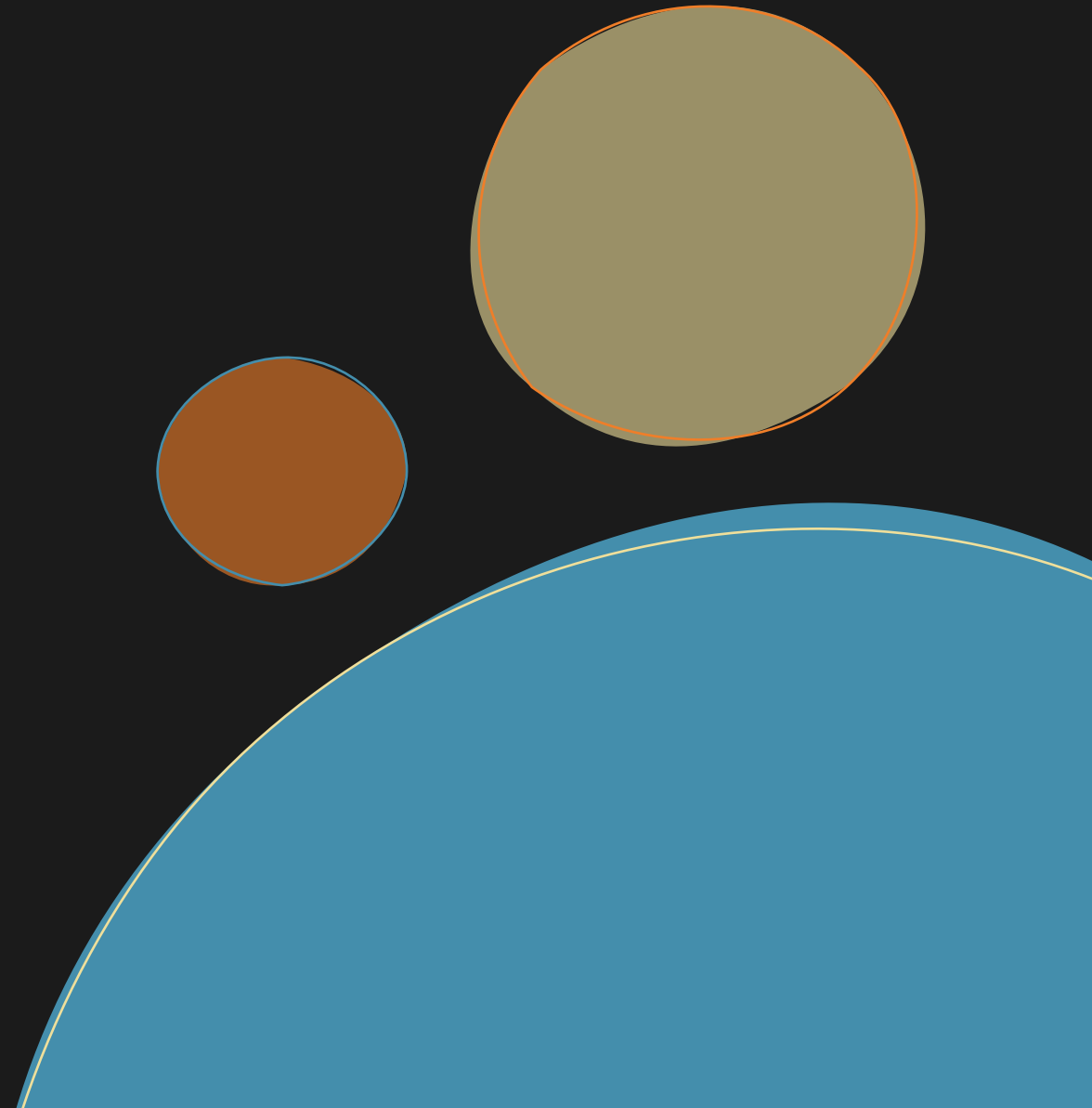
INTRO TO ART DIRECTION

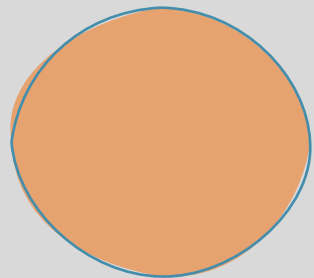
MINDSET

FRAMING THE RESEARCH

BUILDING THE VISUAL LANGUAGE

COMMUNICATION





a humble manifesto

ART DIRECTION

_PURPOSE OF ART DIRECTION

A perspective, a **meaningful** artistic choice



Goes beyond
bringing visual
appeal to a game



Supporting the
game experience at
minimum



Enriching &
enhancing the global
game experience
ideally

_PURPOSE OF ART DIRECTION

A perspective, a **meaningful** artistic choice



A framework for visual
consistency



Establish ambitious
but also realistic goals



Be solution-oriented
regarding the
constraints and
embrace them

_THE ROLE

You **don't** have to be
a great artist to be
a great art director

ARTISTIC EYE

CREATE AND ARTICULATE A VISION

ESTABLISH BENCHMARKS & AMBITIONS

LEADERSHIP

COMMUNICATION

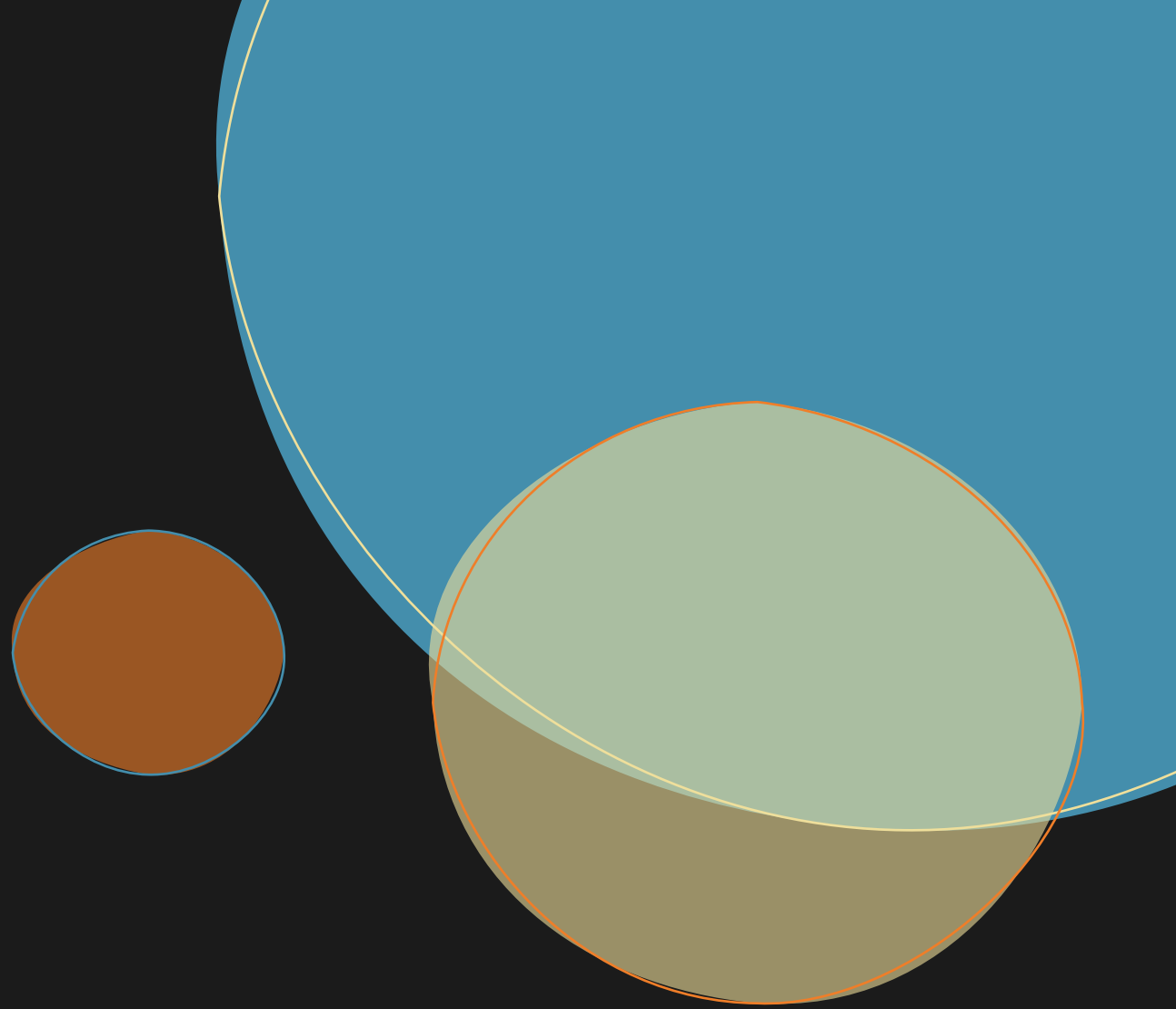
DRIVE, SUPPORT & RALLY THE ART TEAM

THE ROLE OF ART DIRECTOR IS CENTRAL & TRANSDISCIPLINARY



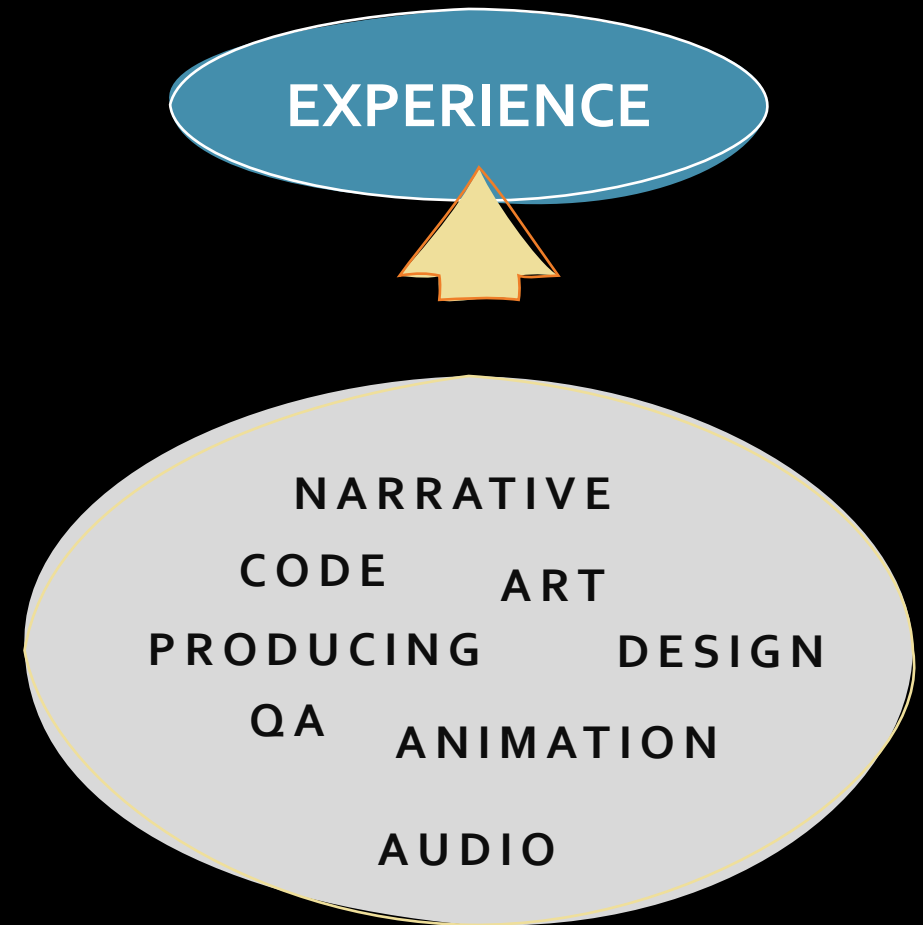
getting started

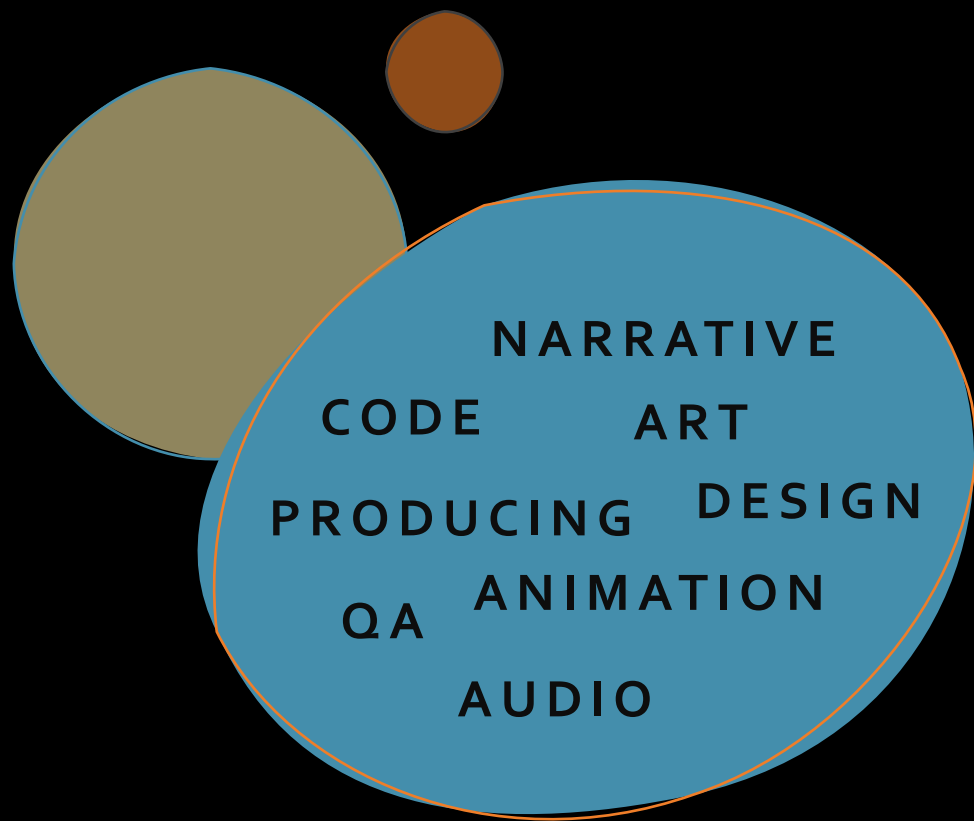
MINDSET



_EXPERIENCE FIRST

We're all working towards creating the best **experience** possible for our players. We can achieve this through our crafts' synergies.





ALLYSHIP between DEPARTMENTS

Understand their constraints

Find pertinent solutions together

Contribute and enrich the experience

Mutual help

Consistent game meaning and experience

_FIND YOUR WHY!

WHY

The global **experience** you want to **serve**

HOW

The **feature** or **context** this belongs to

WHAT

The **element** used





_TO KEEP OPEN MIND

When working on visual development keep in mind that making games is a lot of this:

EXPERIMENTATION & PROTOTYPING

ITERATION

ADAPTATION



finding the trees before the forest

FRAMING THE RESEARCH

CORE

GAME PILLARS

GAME TYPE

GAME TONE

COMPETITORS

AUDIENCE

TECHNICAL

GAMEPLAY CONSTRAINTS

ENGINE, TOOLS & TECHS

TEAM SIZE, STRENGTHS &

WEAKNESSES

TIME

BUDGET

CAMERA(s)

ERA(s)

TREATMENT

LOCATION(s)

ETC

INVENTORY
checklist

_ANALYZING YOUR COMPETITORS

WITHIN THE GENRE

ADJACENT TO THE GENRE

WITHIN THE GENRE BUT OUTSIDE GAMING

WHAT IS BEING MADE NOW OR UPCOMING

WHAT WAS MADE IN THE PAST

COMMON ELEMENTS

UNIQUE ELEMENTS

APPEALING ELEMENTS

PROBLEMATIC ELEMENTS

YOU ARE NOT THE CLIENT OF THE GAME'S VISUAL IDENTITY

YOUR AUDIENCE IS

Absolutely expected by the audience

Somewhat expected by the audience

Can be revisited



_SO MANY VARIABLES!



_ARTISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

Supporting and adding to
the game pillars



What element(s) should
shine

What are the most
important elements in the
game in regards to tone



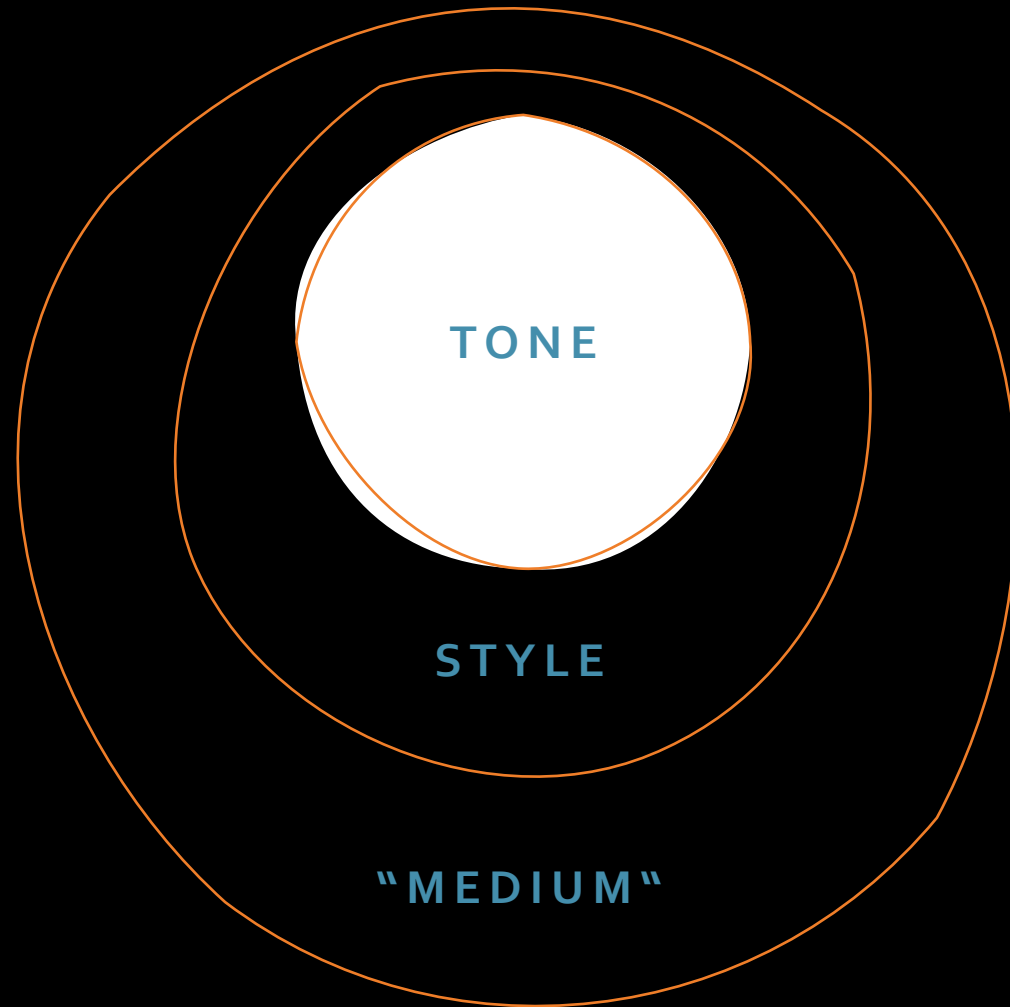
What are the elements
what are the stars of your
visual identity

The image features a dark background with a large, light blue circle on the left and a large, olive green circle on the right. These two circles overlap, creating a central area of muted green. A smaller, solid brown circle is positioned in the upper right corner. The text 'brick by brick' is written in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the words 'BUILDING THE' are in a large, bold, orange, uppercase, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the words 'VISUAL LANGUAGE' are in a very large, bold, orange, uppercase, sans-serif font.

brick by brick

BUILDING THE VISUAL LANGUAGE

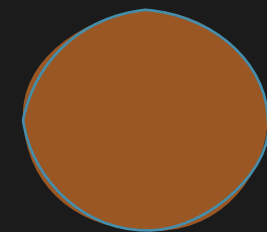
_TREATMENT



LIGHTING
COLOURS
POST FX
SURFACES
TYPE OF OBJECTS
ETC



_TONE



_WHAT'S YOUR STYLE

STYLIZATION

a perspective,
an angle



CARTOON

pushing towards
abstraction

REALISM

a mirror of
our reality

_WHAT'S YOUR STYLE

STYLIZATION

a perspective,
an angle



CARTOON

pushing towards
abstraction

REALISM

a mirror of
our reality

SHAPES

VOLUMES

SURFACES

PROPORTIONS

_MEDIUM

There is no **visual** medium truly specific to games!



We're also not limited by
technology anymore;
Any look is achievable!



The limit is your
curiosity, artistic culture
& imagination

_MEDIUM

3D LOOK

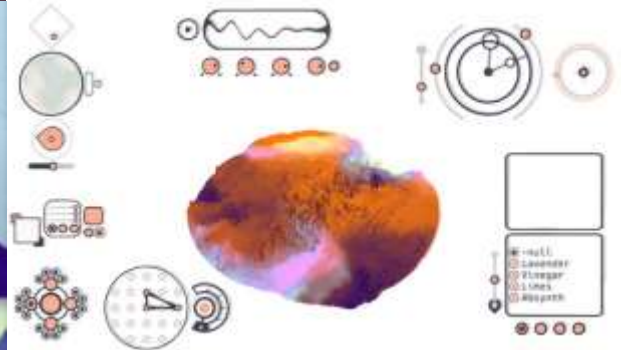
LOW POLY

HANDDRAWN

ILLUSTRATIVE

PIXEL ART






_MEDIUM

MINIMALISTIC
GRAPHIC DESIGN
ABSTRACT
TANGIBLE MEDIA




_FOR A MORE UNIQUE LOOK

Less navel gazing, more *outside* influences!

 movies

contemporary 
artists


photography 

 arts & crafts

sculpture 

 museum art

graphic novels 

 generative
art

An abstract graphic featuring a light gray background. In the upper right, there is a large yellow circle with a thin orange outline, partially overlapping a large orange shape that curves from the bottom right towards the center. To the left of the yellow circle is a smaller solid blue circle. The text 'half the battle' is positioned to the left of the word 'COMMUNICATION', which is written in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font and partially overlaps the orange shape.

half the battle

COMMUNICATION

_IT'S NOT JUST ART, DIRECTOR!

Spoken & visual communication is key



Images, moodboards and diagrams should support clearly the direction you are building, through examples of what is wanted, but also what should be avoided.



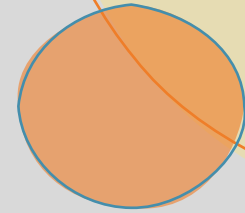
A good delivery is equally important, both when you collaborate with your team as well as when you present your direction.

_WORD CLOUDS & KEYWORDS

Bring clarity of mind

Help with research

Give you content to use almost as-is once you build your art direction document.



CONCEPTS

SENSATIONS

ADJECTIVES

TEXTURES

_MOODBOARDS



Synthetic materials
Texture & materials interplay
Extreme fashion
Rave & surreal imagery



Natural materials
Contemporary fashion
Soft & flowy fabric
Historical
Utilitarian

_TREATMENT SCALES



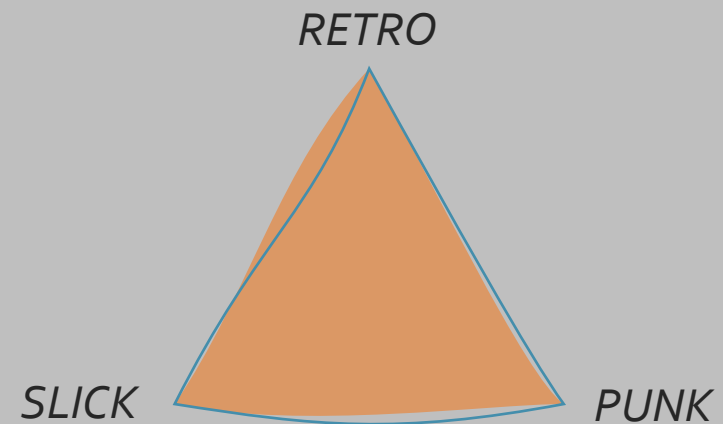
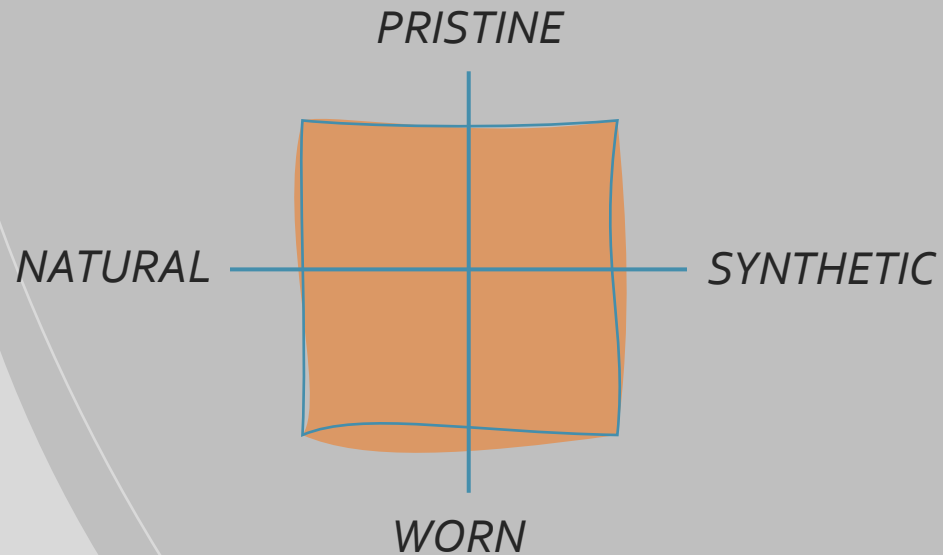
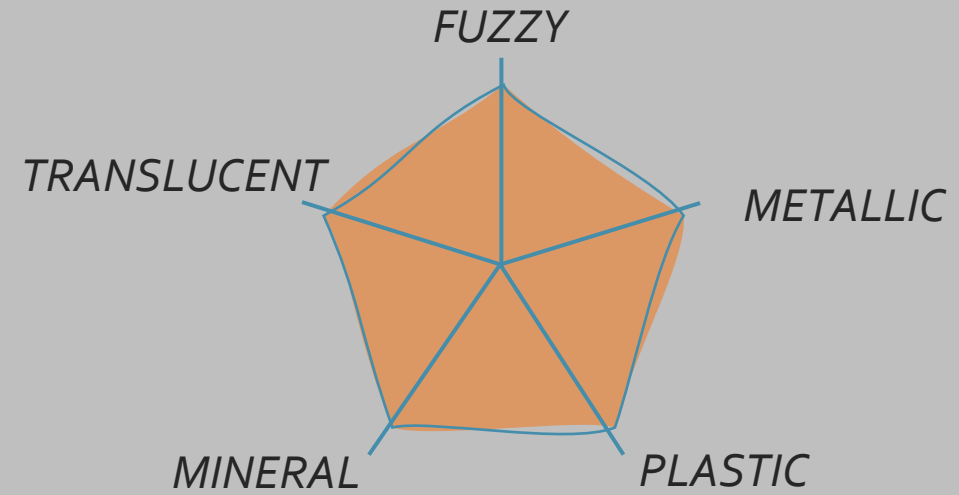
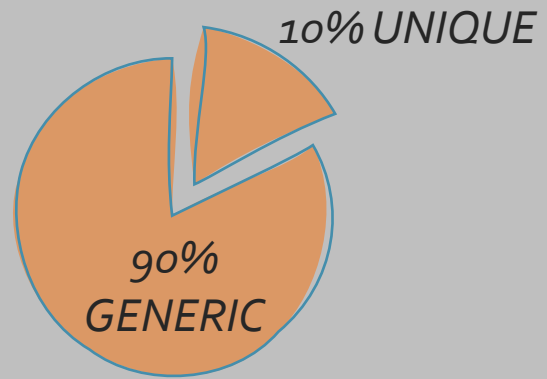
REALISTIC




OUR RANGE!

COLOURFUL
&
EXPRESSIVE

_CONCEPT MAPPING WITH DIAGRAMS



An abstract graphic featuring a dark navy blue background. In the upper left, there are two overlapping circles: a larger one in a muted olive green and a smaller one in a pale mint green. Below these, centered, is a small solid brown circle. On the right side, a large, thick, light blue curved shape sweeps from the top towards the bottom right corner.

a small best practices checklist

ONE LAST THING...

NO SINGLE ANSWER

No art director is the same!

We all have our own sensibilities, preferences, talents and experience, and our own biases and blind spots.

Identify what is YOUR *thing*.

What is your unique perspective?

What makes you passionate enough that you can do this on a daily basis, and inspire your colleagues as well?

_A FEW LAST TIPS & RECAP

We're all here to serve the experience

Making games is a team sport

Quality over quantity; watch content creep and focus on what's really a priority

Learn to understand, adapt and remix your references; what is interesting is the perspective you bring

Readability is more important than the « cool » factor;
Its a game, not a portfolio piece

_A FEW LAST TIPS & RECAP

Match your ambitions with your actual capacity
(team, time, tools, skills, etc)

Don't conflate visual technical feats with art direction.
They are not the same

An appealing, distinct identity is much more important than
snazzy realistic & top of the line graphics

Knowing how to iterate is a great quality;
Knowing when to stop is also one

A shipped game with good & even quality beats any super
ambitious but abandoned project

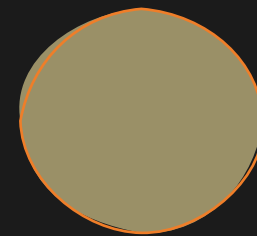
_HOW YOU CAN BE A GREAT ART DIRECTOR

BY LISTENING & BEING CURIOUS

BY LEAVING YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR

BY STEPPING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

BY LOVING WHAT YOU DO





THANKS!

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