



MARCH 18-22, 2024 #GDC2024

The Dark Place: Environmental World Building in ALAN WAKE II

INCLUDES GAME SPOILERS

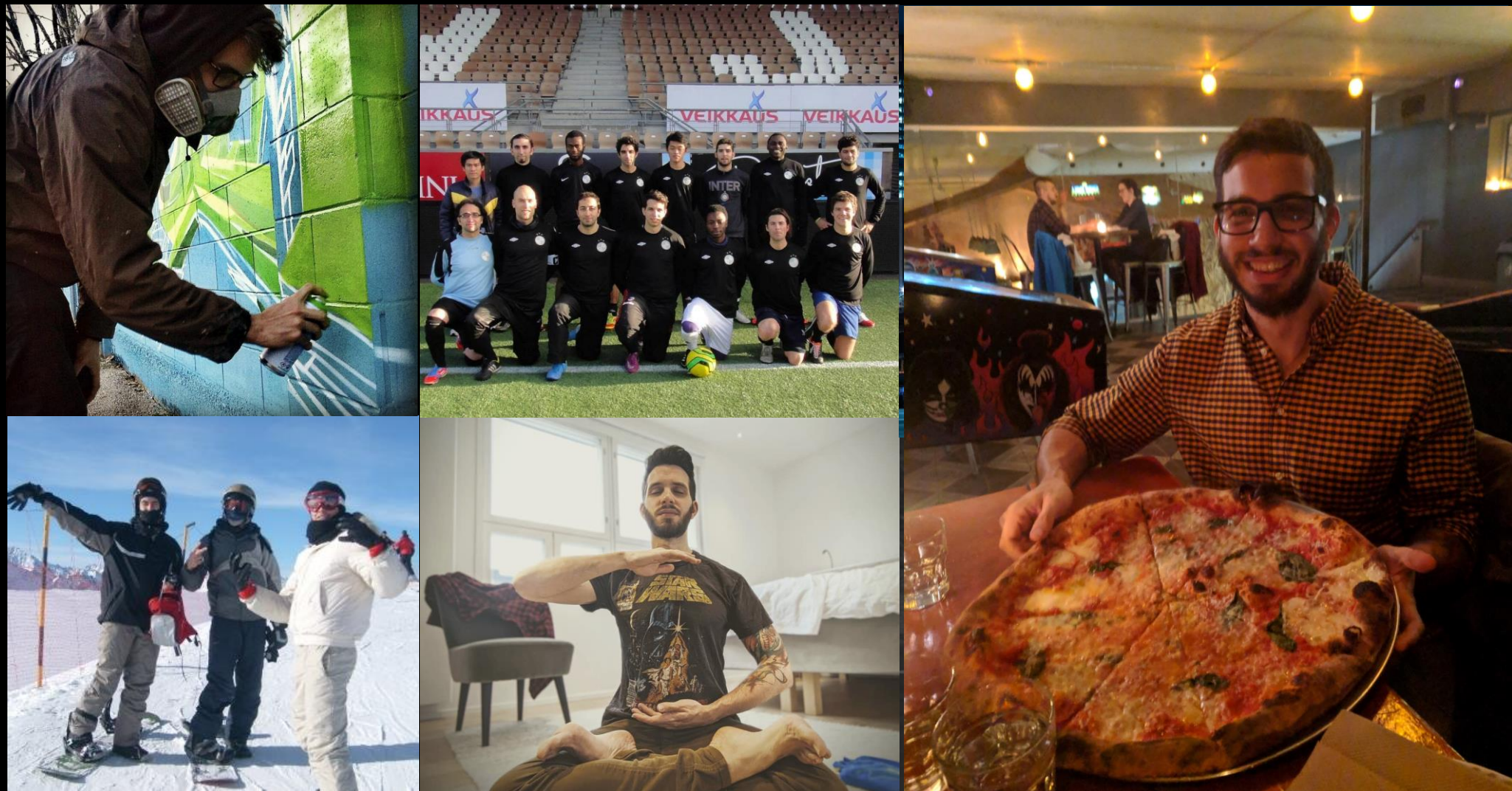
NAZARENO URBANO, LEAD ENVIRONMENT ARTIST ON ALAN WAKE II

22-03-2024



NAZARENO URBANO

Lead Environment artist on ALAN WAKE II

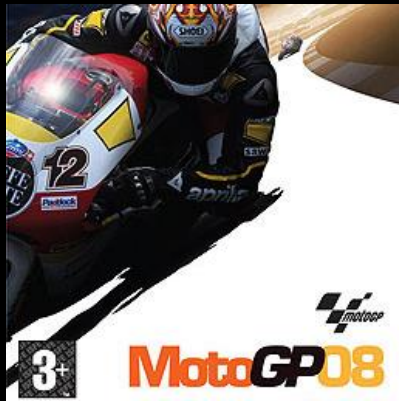
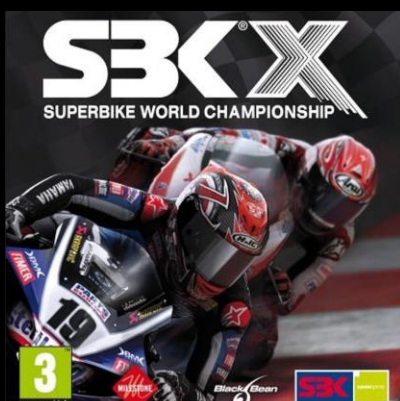
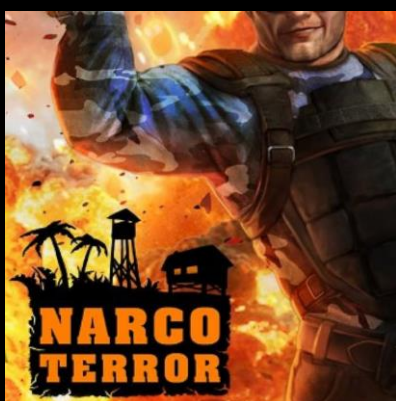


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ESCAPE THE DARK PLACE

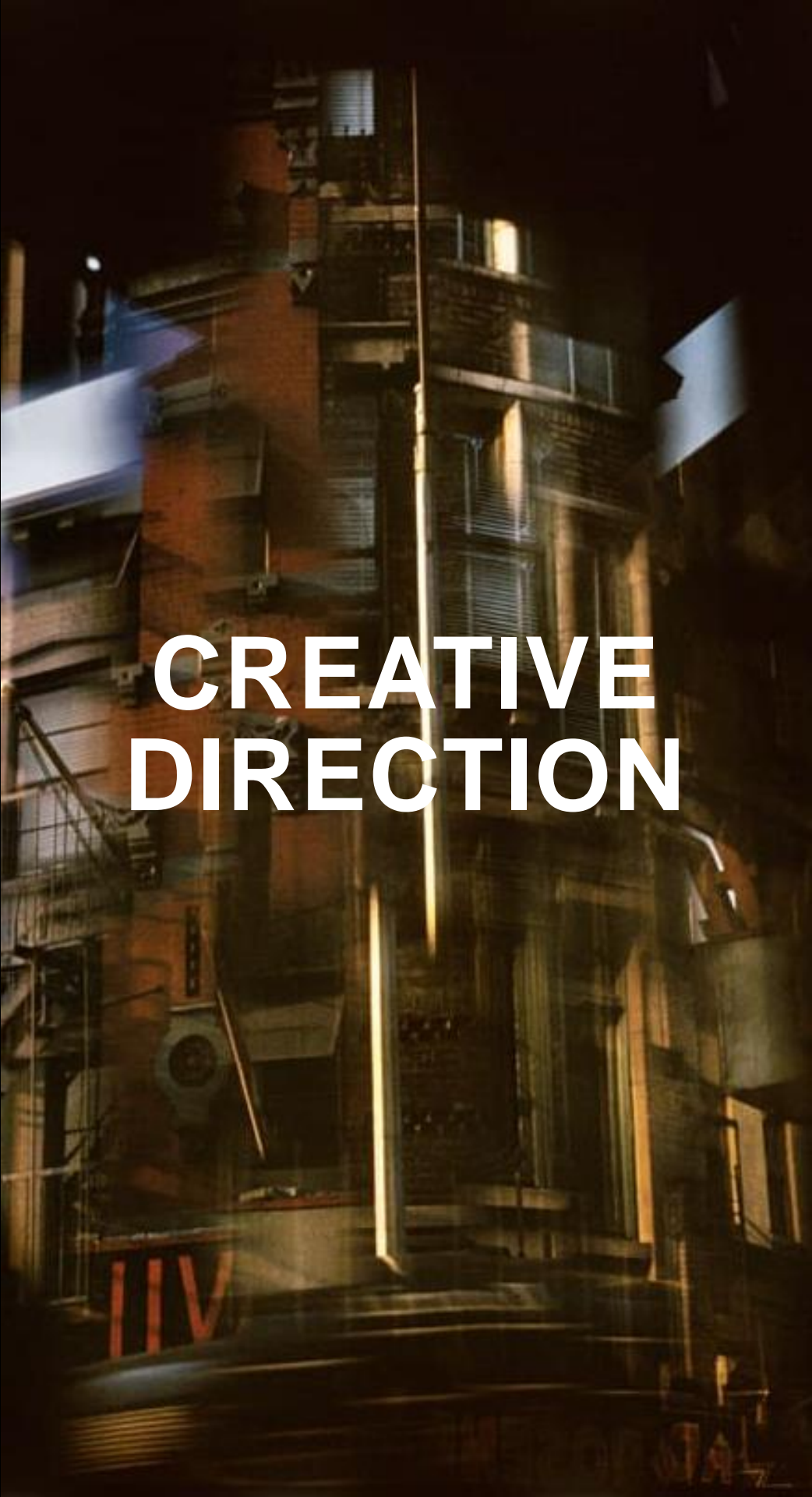


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CREATIVE DIRECTION



VISUAL SOLUTIONS



TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION



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CREATIVE DIRECTION

- The Story
- The Atmosphere
- The Construct
- The Nightmare

VISUAL SOLUTIONS

- Building the atmosphere
 - Research
 - Proof of Concept
- Building the construct
 - Archetypes
- Construct made of words
 - Graffiti
 - News Papers
 - Billboard and Posters
 - Neon

TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Teleport
- Reality Rewriting
- Light Shifter
- Live Action
- Conclusion



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A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a dark shirt, stands in a dark, dense forest. The scene is illuminated with a strong red light, creating a menacing atmosphere. In the background, a small figure of a person wearing a jacket with 'FBI' on the back is visible, holding a flashlight. The text 'PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL HORROR GAME' is overlaid in white capital letters across the center of the image.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVIVAL HORROR GAME



PROJECT. BIG FISH

CAULDRON LAKE PARKING

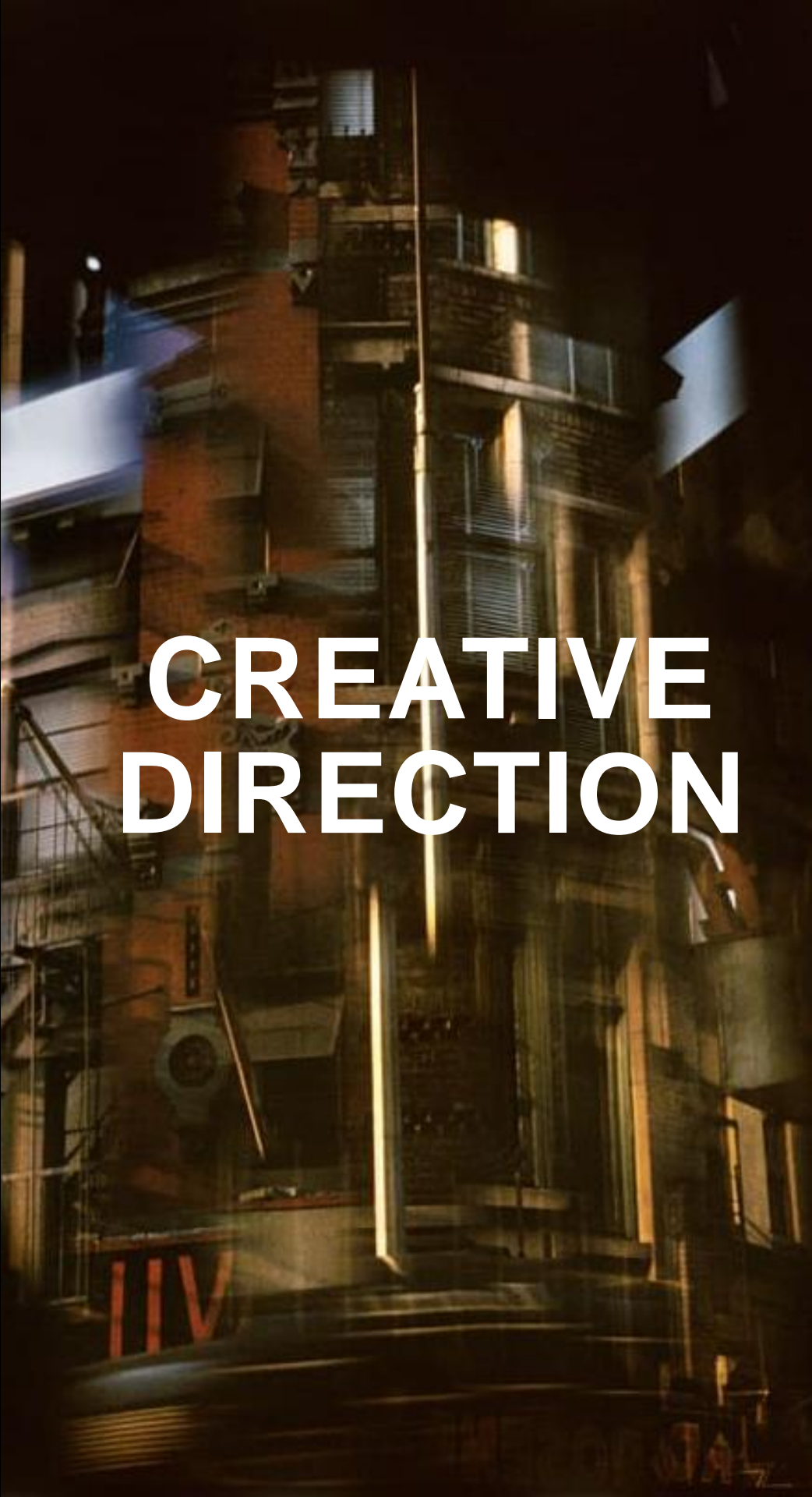
Concept Art by: Juhani Jokinen



PROJECT. BIG FISH

DARK PLACE

Concept Art by: Juhani Jokinen



CREATIVE DIRECTION



THE STORY



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*“The dark place is a nightmare dimension,
it is a source of dark energy that can make art
come true,
it makes dreams and nightmares come true.”*

INITIATION, CHAPTER 1



Concept Art by: Oliver Odmark



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CREATIVE DIRECTION

THE ATMOSPHERE



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CREATIVE
DIRECTION

SEEDY AND DANGEROUS NEW YORK



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CREATIVE
DIRECTION



NEW
YORK
FEELS
LIKE A BAD
DREAM



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CREATIVE DIRECTION

THE CONSTRUCT



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CREATIVE
DIRECTION

THE DARK PLACE IS A MENTAL CONSTRUCT



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CREATIVE DIRECTION

THE NIGHTMARE



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CREATIVE
DIRECTION

THE HORROR
COME TRUE



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Concept Art by: Oliver Odmark

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BUILDING THE ATMOSPHERE



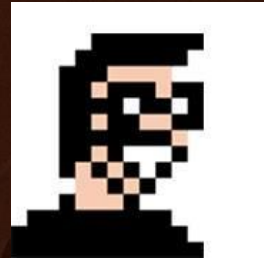
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RESEARCH



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ork



street



MARIE BORETZ 70s 80s 90s



THE URBAN PRISONER

Photographs by Matt Weber



R

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ARCHETYPE OF A BIG CITY



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COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF NEW YORK



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PROOF OF CONCEPT

Exploring atmosphere

Prototypes

Combine narrative and gameplay

How in the world are we going to
build The Dark Place? U_U



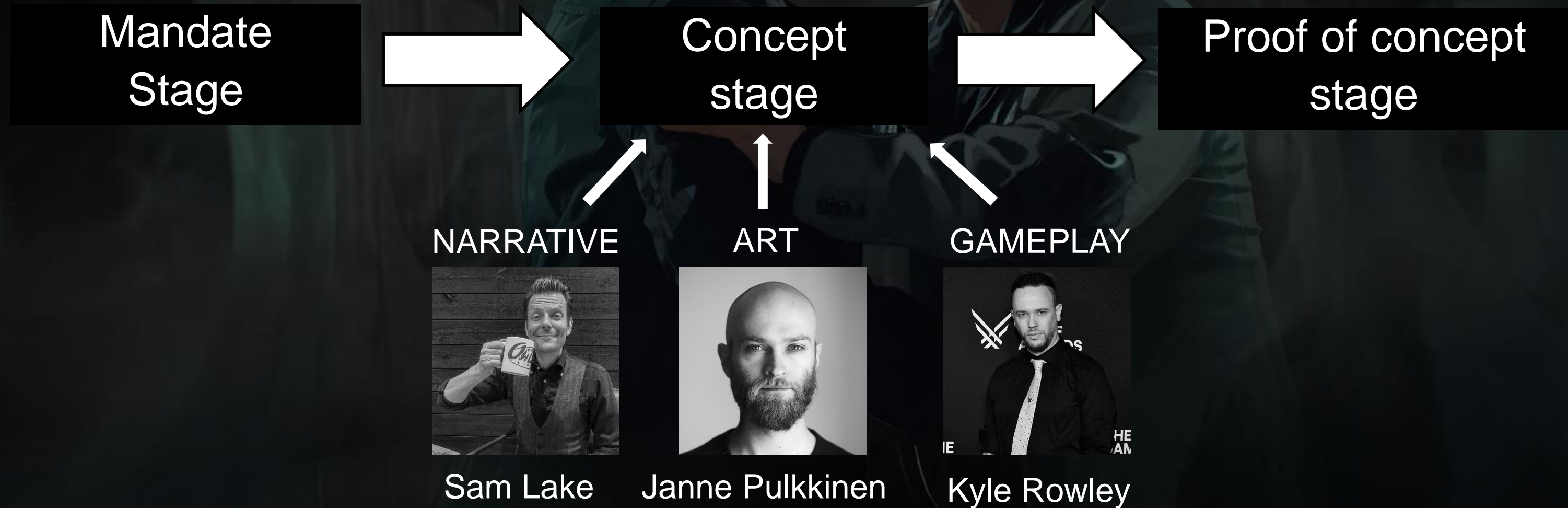
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STAGE GATE PROCESS



Concept Art by: Oliver Odmark



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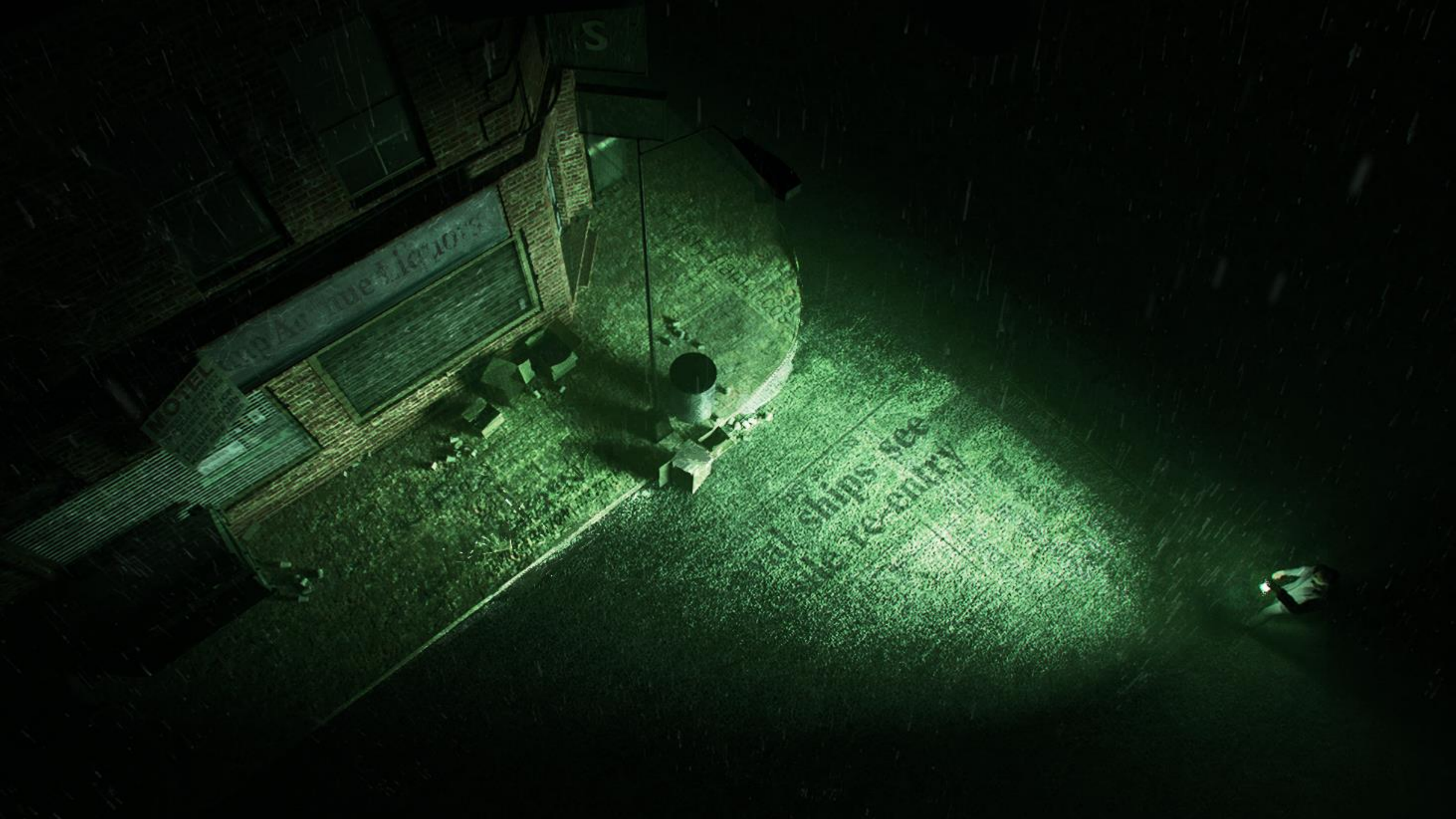


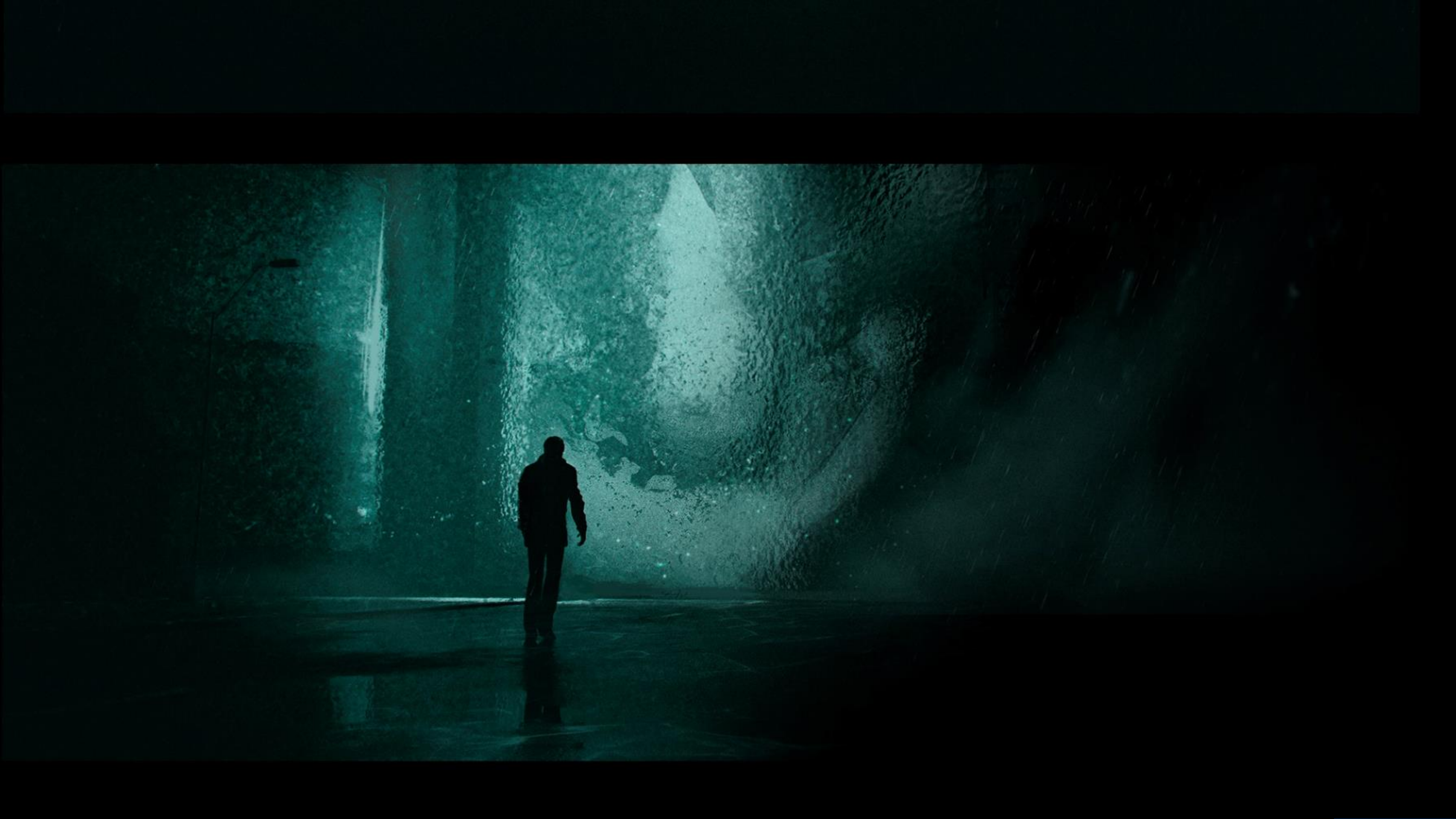
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INTERSECTION_DP_POC_v1_01









PROTOTYPE OF A DIRECTIONAL, FLOWING **DARKNESS BLUR** EFFECT
A KEY BUILDING BLOCK IN ALL SUPERNATURAL EFFECTS

Prototype by: Janne Pulkkinen

CITY INTERSECTION (proof of concept)

LIGHT SHIFTERS



Prototypes by Tommi Saalasti

phone
subway
subway

LOOK AROUND ZOOM EXIT

PLOT BOARD

CLUES



Streets

Clues can be placed on the Plot Board in the Write's Room, allowing progress deeper into the Dark Place.

CLUE LEGEND

- CORRECT
- INCORRECT
- DISCARDED

[NEW EVIDENCE AVAILABLE]

Prototypes by Tommi Saalasti

Proof of concept mission



Lamp Pulse  +  causes area of effect damage.

LEARNINGS:

- Main problems: backtracking, confusing puzzles, complex narrative
- The Dark Place was too dark :scale, proportions and silhouette.
We need more lights.

Main features:



LIGHT SHIFTERS

Unstable lights that
can change the
environment



REALITY REWRITE

The plot board Alan can
rewrite the story and
change the environment



TELEPORTS

Enclosed
environment used to
teleport the player

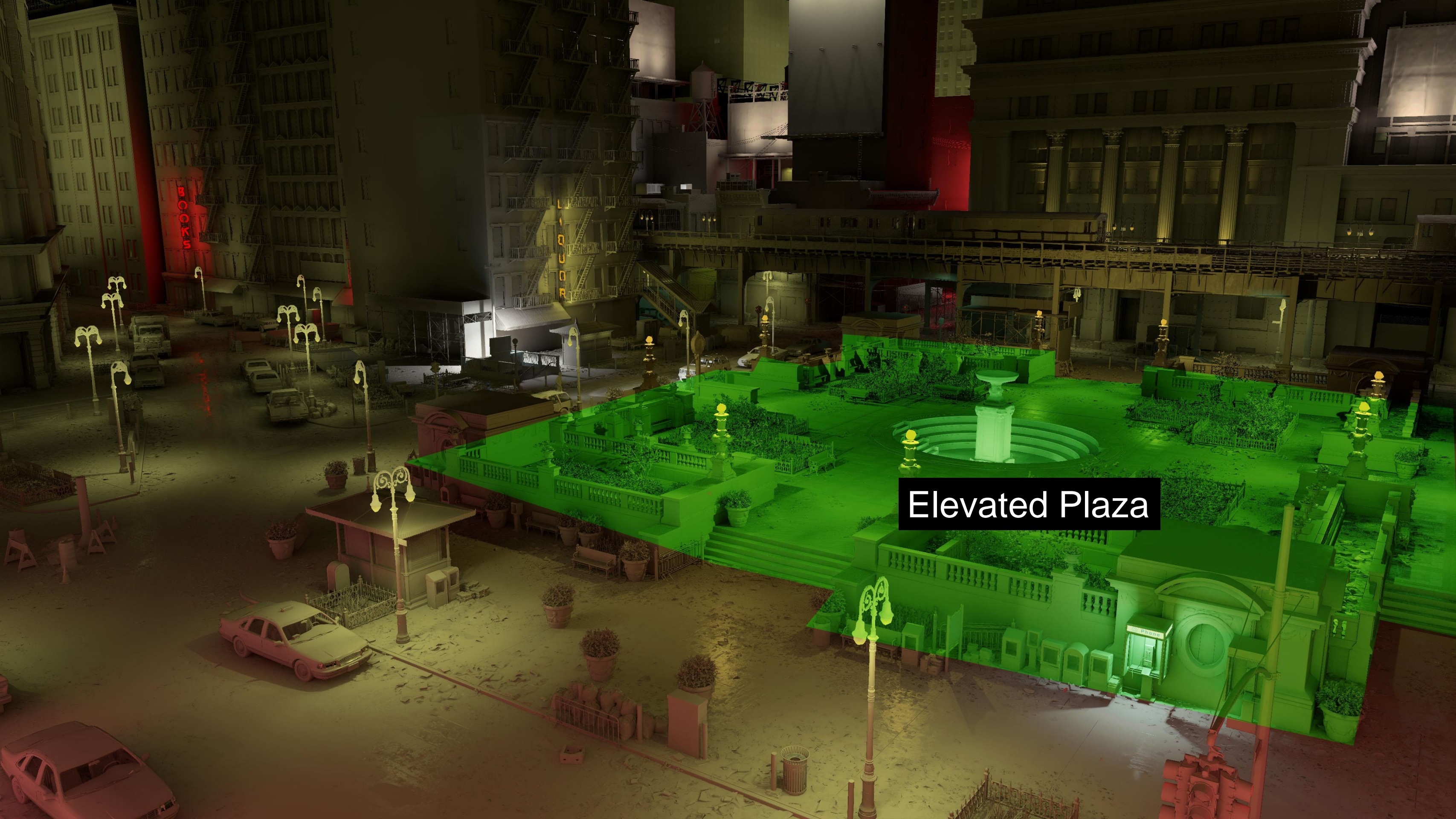
LEARNINGS:

- Flat city intersections **ARE BORING**, especially if the player speed is very slow
- Backtracking can be painful if the path is too long and there is no elevation

Sad Alan →







Elevated Plaza



Highline

Elevated Plaza



Highline

V intersection

Elevated Plaza

Rooftops

Highline

V intersection

Elevated Plaza



Cinema

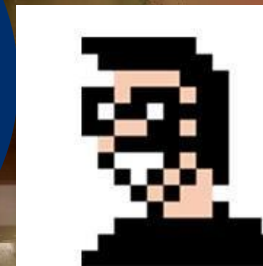


Parliament
Tower



Talk Show

Center
Plaza



HIGH LINE

Casey Alley

Subway



Hotel

LEARNINGS:



SHIFTER



SHIFTER



SHIFTER

Light shifters close to each other are problematic


We need better resource management



SHIFTER



SHIFTER



SHIFTER



SHIFTER



SHIFTER



SHIFTER

LEARNINGS

- BAD for navigation/camera/collisions
- Do not scale assets

LEARNINGS:

- BAD for Combat
- GOOD for narrative/exploration



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BUILDING THE CONSTRUCT



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ARCHETYPES



The **construct** does not belong to a precise timeline.

ARCHETYPES

Favor timeless and iconic models



ARCHETYPES



Model by Pedro Amorim



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ARCHETYPES



Model by Pedro Amorim



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CONSTRUCT MADE OF WORDS



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GRAFFITI

80s New York

The words come from Alan's mind



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NO STREET ART



NIGHTMARE GRAFFITI



Art is ~~not~~ a crime



Cold Casey
Alice
find Alice
Cult of the Word
you were here
your fault
Return
Initiation
write
don't write

you died here
AWE
fiction
remember
forget
stop
you lost her
ocean
die
guilty

you did this
lost
round and
round
Blessed
we see you
you are us
dark



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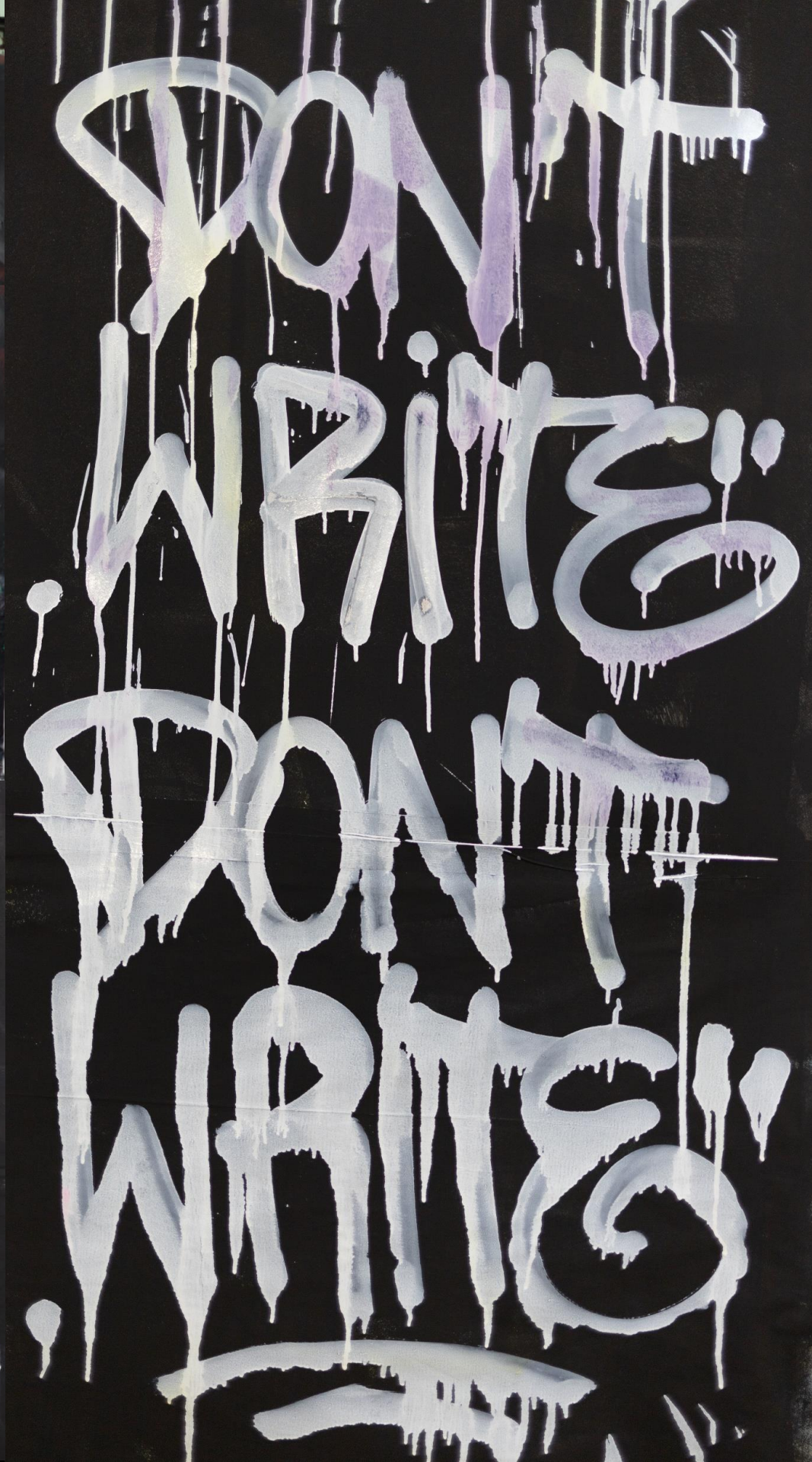
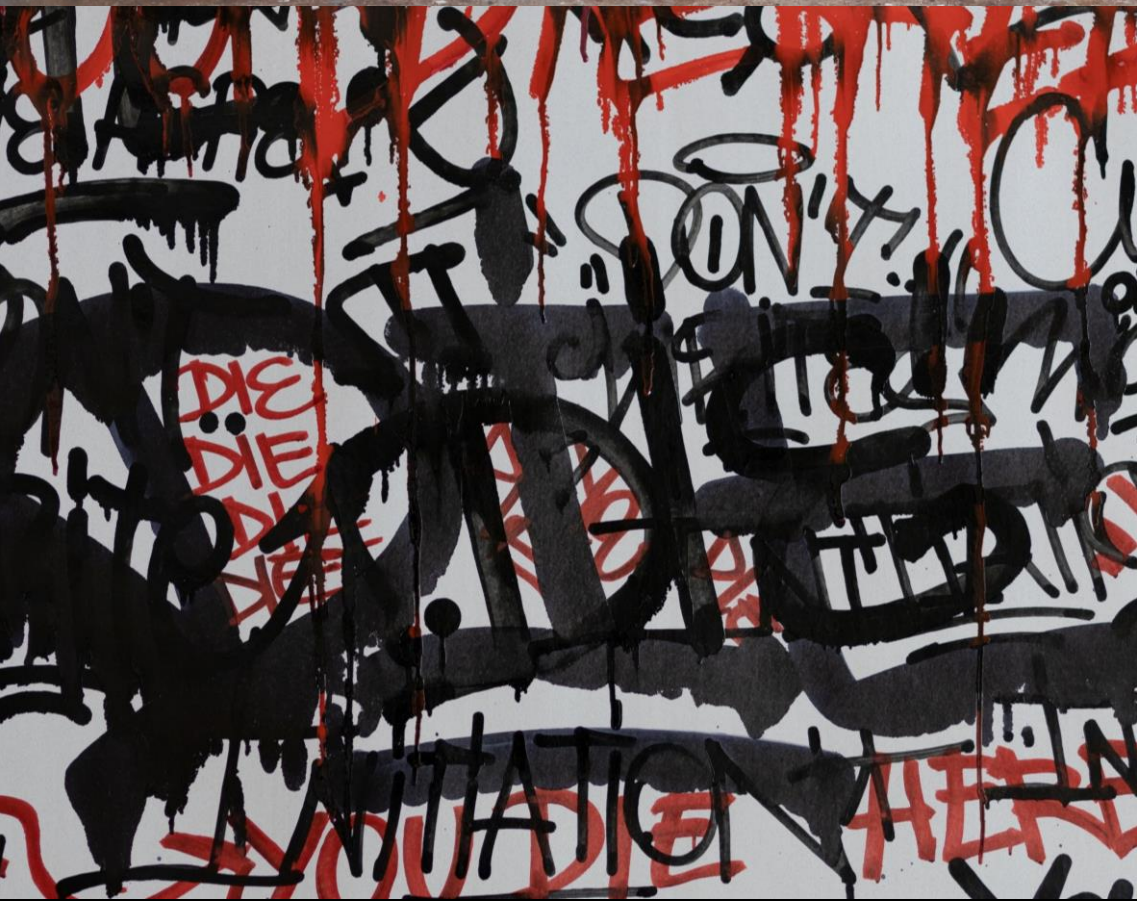
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Graffiti artist: @irwin_suimuri





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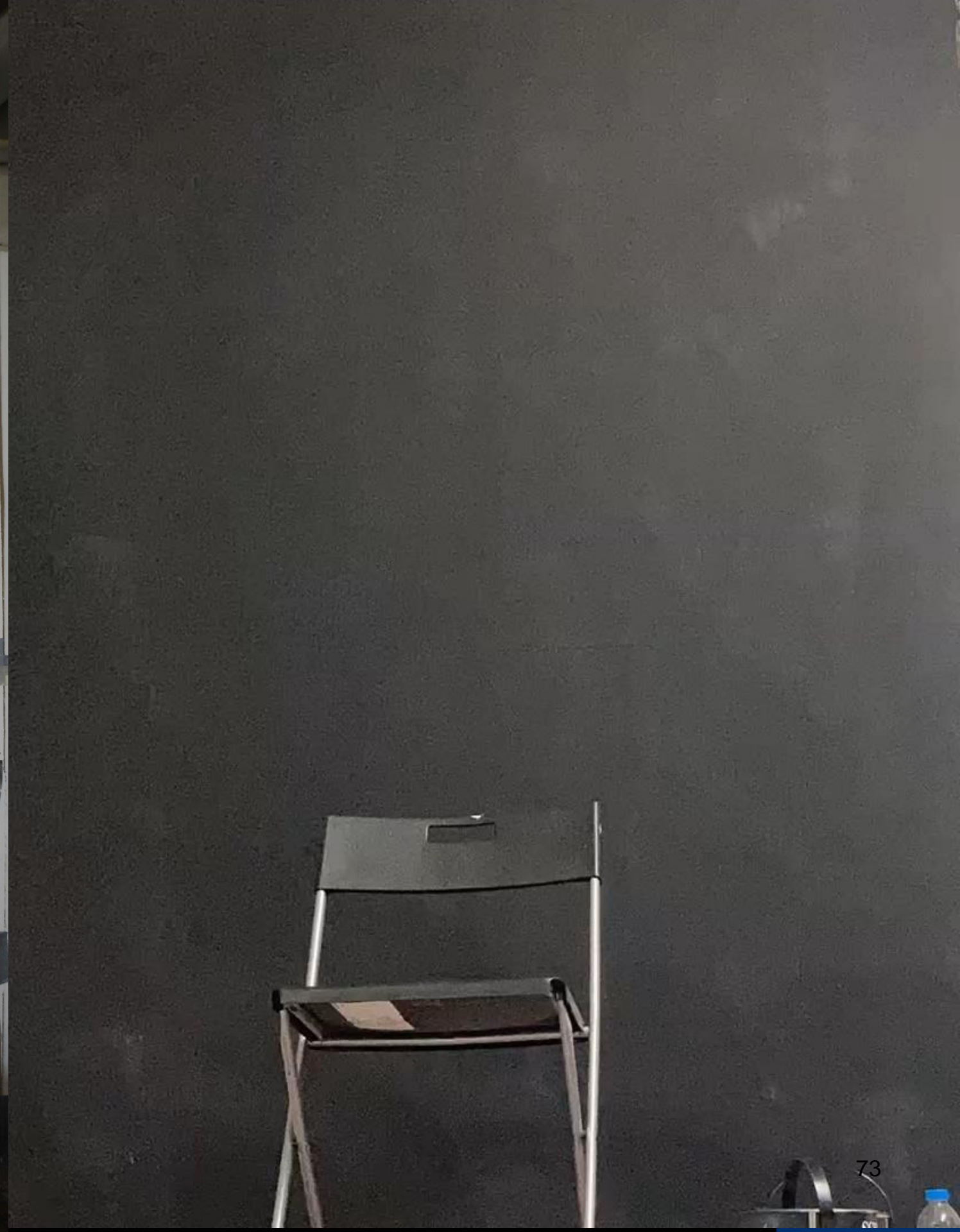
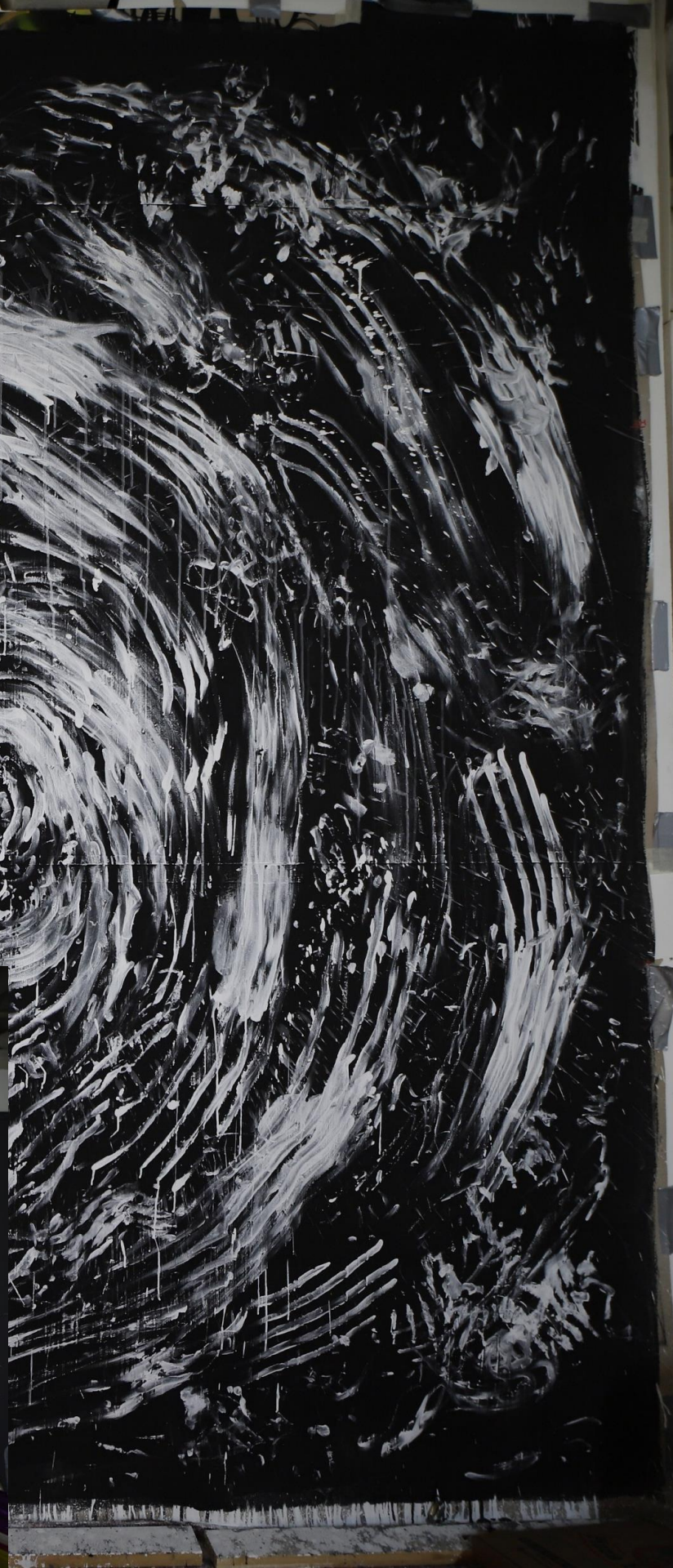
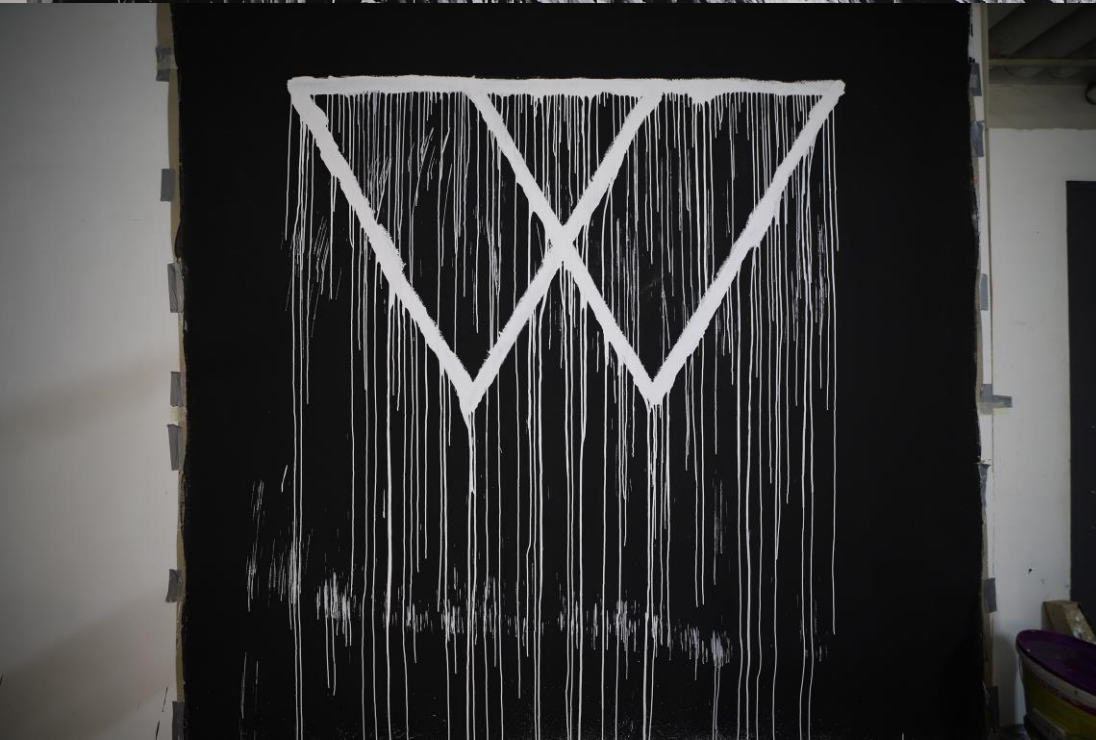
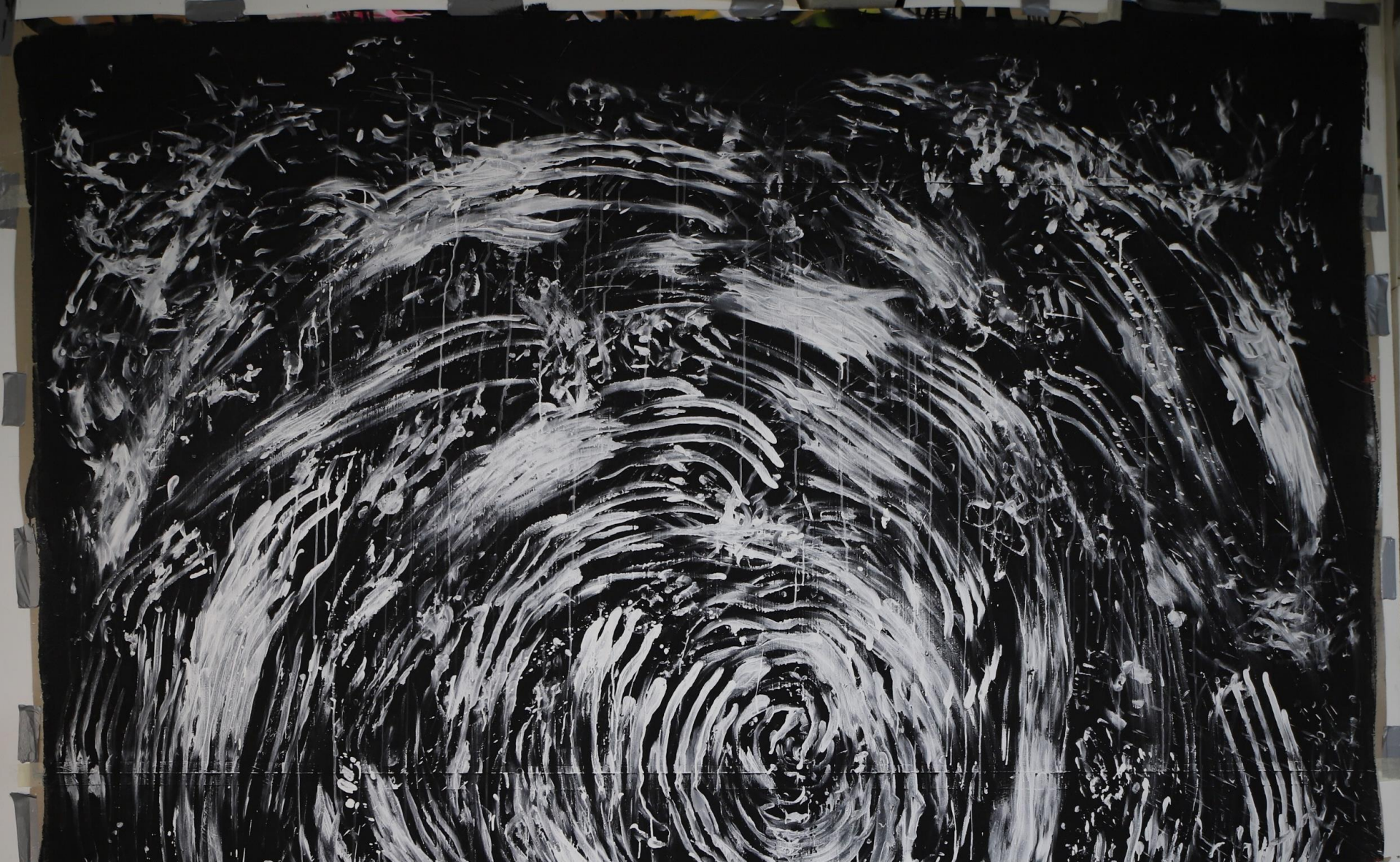


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D O N T Sleep St &
Again Av

Identity the
is on the floor

You may
not be
the only
"You"
out there

W

Identity the
is on the floor

You may
not be
the only
"You"
out there



D O N T Sleep St &
Again Av

Identify the
is on the floor

You may
not be
the only
"You"
out there

W



NEWSPAPERS



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BILLBOARDS AND POSTERS



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Hey New York,
Your subway
is now better
than ever!

Come see our newly-renovated
stations and cleaner amenities!



A forbidden play
brought to life.

THE CULT

An unforgettable immersive
theater experience.

See it live at
OCEANVIEW HOTEL

THE HEAT OF THE MURDER WAS LIKE
A CROWN BURNING ON HIS BROW.

A DARK PLACE FILMS PRESENTS

YÖTÖN YÖ

A THOMAS SEINE FILM

BASED ON A NOVEL BY VEIKKO ALÉN

STARRING ALEKSI KESÄ BABA JAKALA ILMARI HUOTARI AHTI
THOMAS SEINE VEIKKO ALÉN MUSIC BY AHTI AND THE JANITORS

MURHAN POLTE KUIN KRUUNU
LOIMUAA, OTSALLAAN.

ELOKUVAYHTIO
PIMEÄ PAIKKA ESITTÄÄ

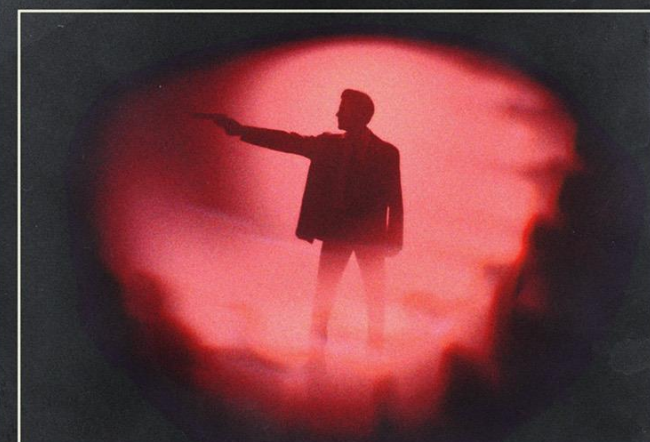
NIGHTLESS NIGHT

THOMAS SEINE -ELOKUVA

PERUSTUU VEIKKO ALÉNIN KIRJAAN

ALEKSI KESÄ BABA JAKALA ILMARI HUOTARI AHTI
THOMAS SEINE VEIKKO ALÉN MUSIIKKI AHTI AND THE JANITORS

Bullets, Bodies
and Bourbon

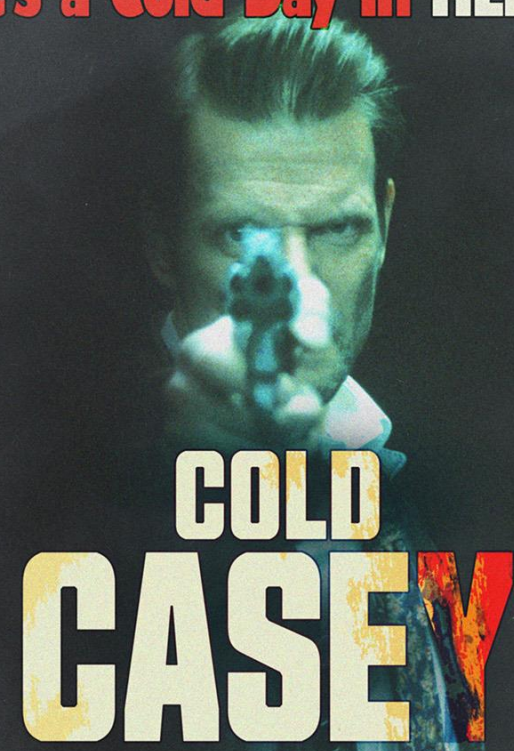


AN ALEX CASEY FILM

WORST CASEY

BASED ON THE NOVELS BY ALAN WAKE

It's a Cold Day in HELL



COLD CASEY

AN ALEX CASEY FILM
BASED ON THE NOVELS BY ALAN WAKE

WE'RE NEVER
OUT OF
YOUR WAY!

OCEANVIEW
HOTEL

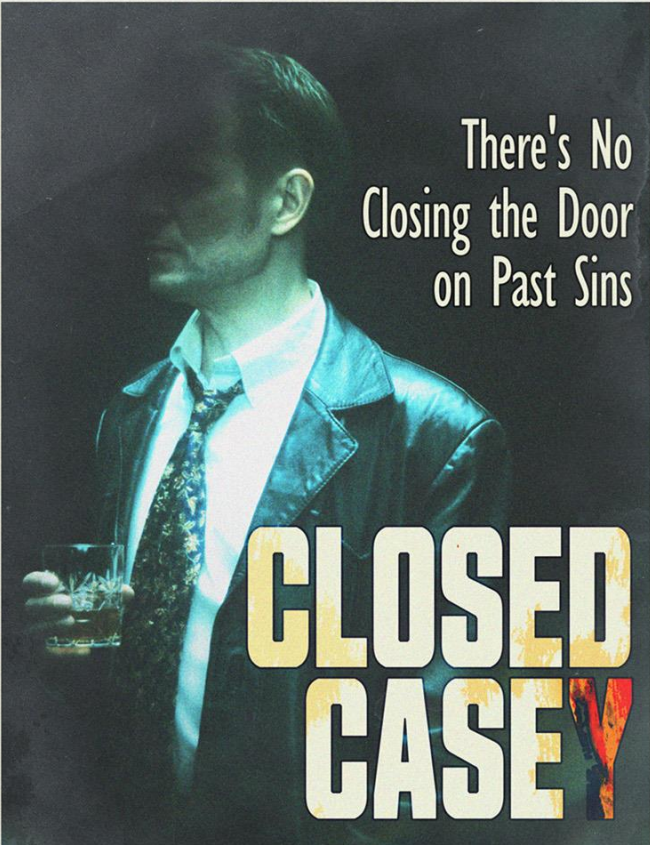
OCEANVIEW HOTEL | NEW YORK, NY

Hey New York,
Your subway
is now better
than ever!

Come see our newly-renovated
stations and cleaner amenities!



There's No
Closing the Door
on Past Sins



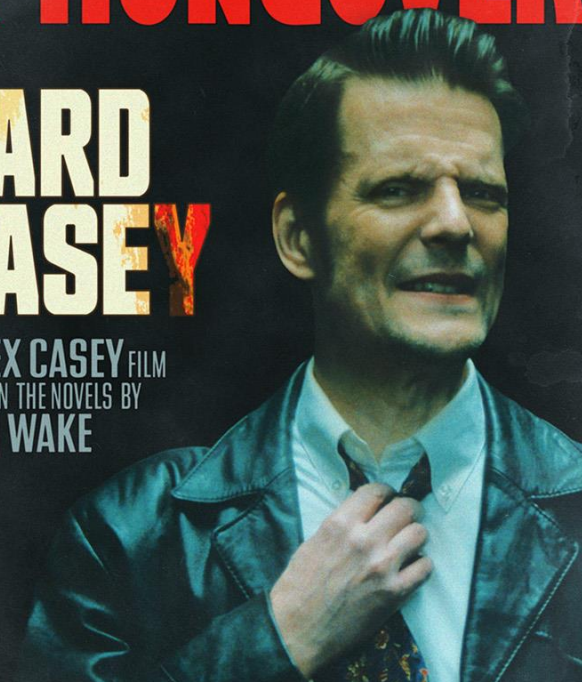
CLOSED CASEY

AN ALEX CASEY FILM - BASED ON THE NOVELS BY ALAN WAKE

HARDBOILED
& HUNGOVER

HARD CASEY

AN ALEX CASEY FILM
BASED ON THE NOVELS BY
ALAN WAKE



Graphics design by Laine & Hallami



ART HOUSE
CLASSICS ARE
FOREVER



POET'S CLASSICS ARE FOREVER

It's a Cold Day in HELL

THE HEAT OF THE MURDER WAS LIKE A CROWN BURNING ON HIS BROW.

A DARK PLACE FILMS PRESENTS

NIGHTLESS NIGHT

A THOMAS SEINE FILM

BASED ON A NOVEL BY VEIKKO ALÉN

STARRING: ALEKSI KESA, BABU JAKALA, ILMARI HUOTARI, AHTI

MUSIC BY AHTI AND THE JANITORS

CRATCHIT

COLD CASE

AN ALEX CASEY FILM

BASED ON THE NOVELS BY ALAN WAKE

CRATCHIT

CA

AN AL

BASED ON THE



FOLLOWING A TYPICAL NIGHTMARE PATTERN.

I was late.
Desperately
trying to reach
my destination.



A LIGHTHOUSE.
FOR SOME URGENT REASON
I COULDN'T REMEMBER.
I'D BEEN DRIVING TOO FAST
DOWN A COASTAL ROAD TO GET THERE.

I UNDERSTOOD

WHAT I HAD TO DO NOW.

I KNEW HOW TO WRITE THE ENDING
TO DEPARTURE. THERE IS LIGHT
AND THERE IS DARKNESS.

THERE'S GUILT AND THERE'S ATONEMENT. BUT THE
SCALES ALWAYS NEED TO BALANCE. EVERYTHING HAS A
PRICE. THERE'S A LONG JOURNEY THROUGH THE NIGHT
BACK TO THE LIGHT.

IT'S NOT A LAKE, IT'S AN OCEAN.



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NEON SIGNS



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Lighting Artist: George Phillips



OCEANVIEW
HOTEL





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THE NIGHTMARE



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A looping nightmare

Rewriting reality

BALLROOM

PLOT BOARD 



6 | 20

5

95

Buildings appear on each loop



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PROJECT: BIG FISH

OCEANVIEW HOTEL

Concept Art by: Juhani Jokinen

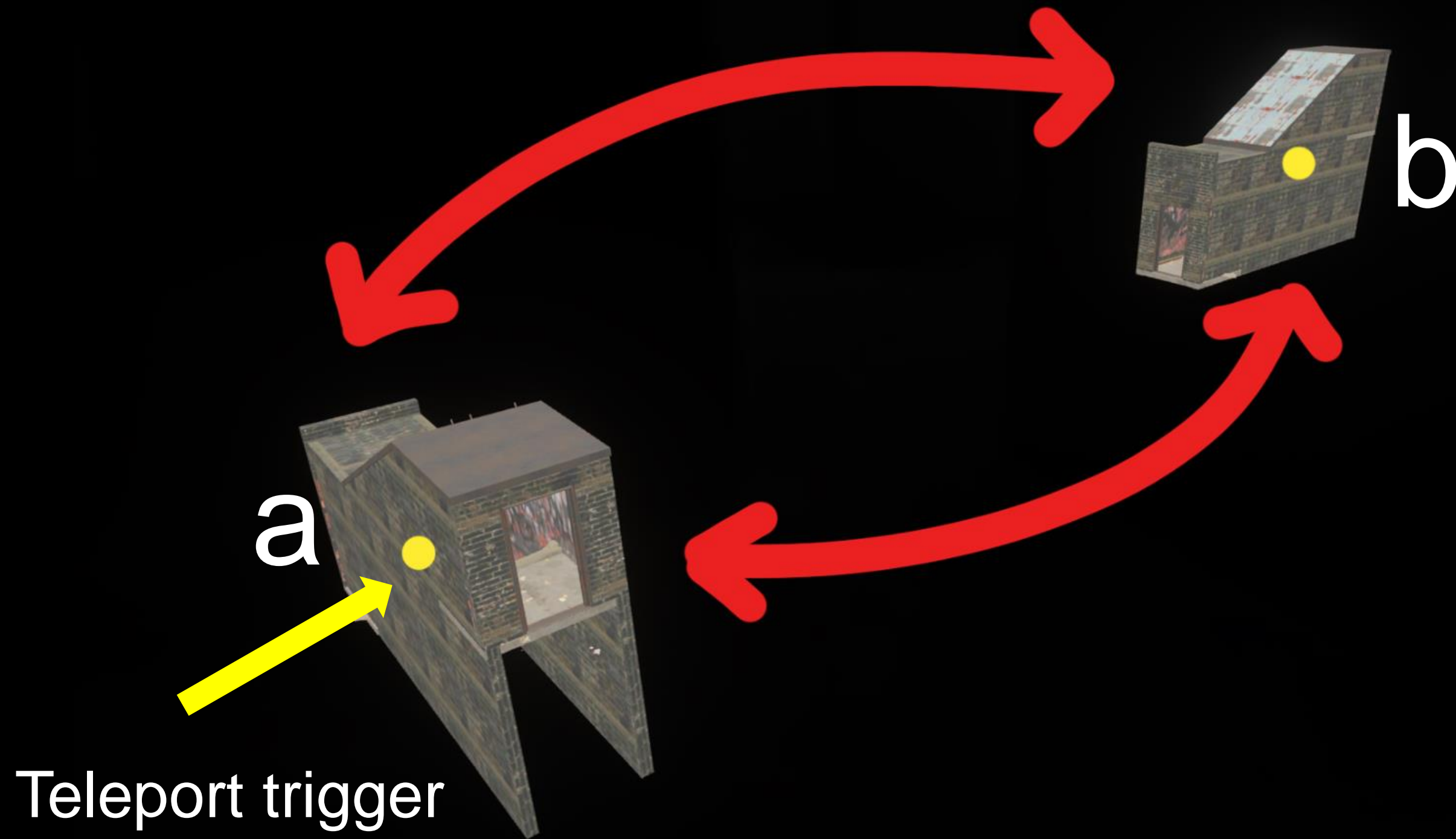
SEAMLESS TELEPORTS



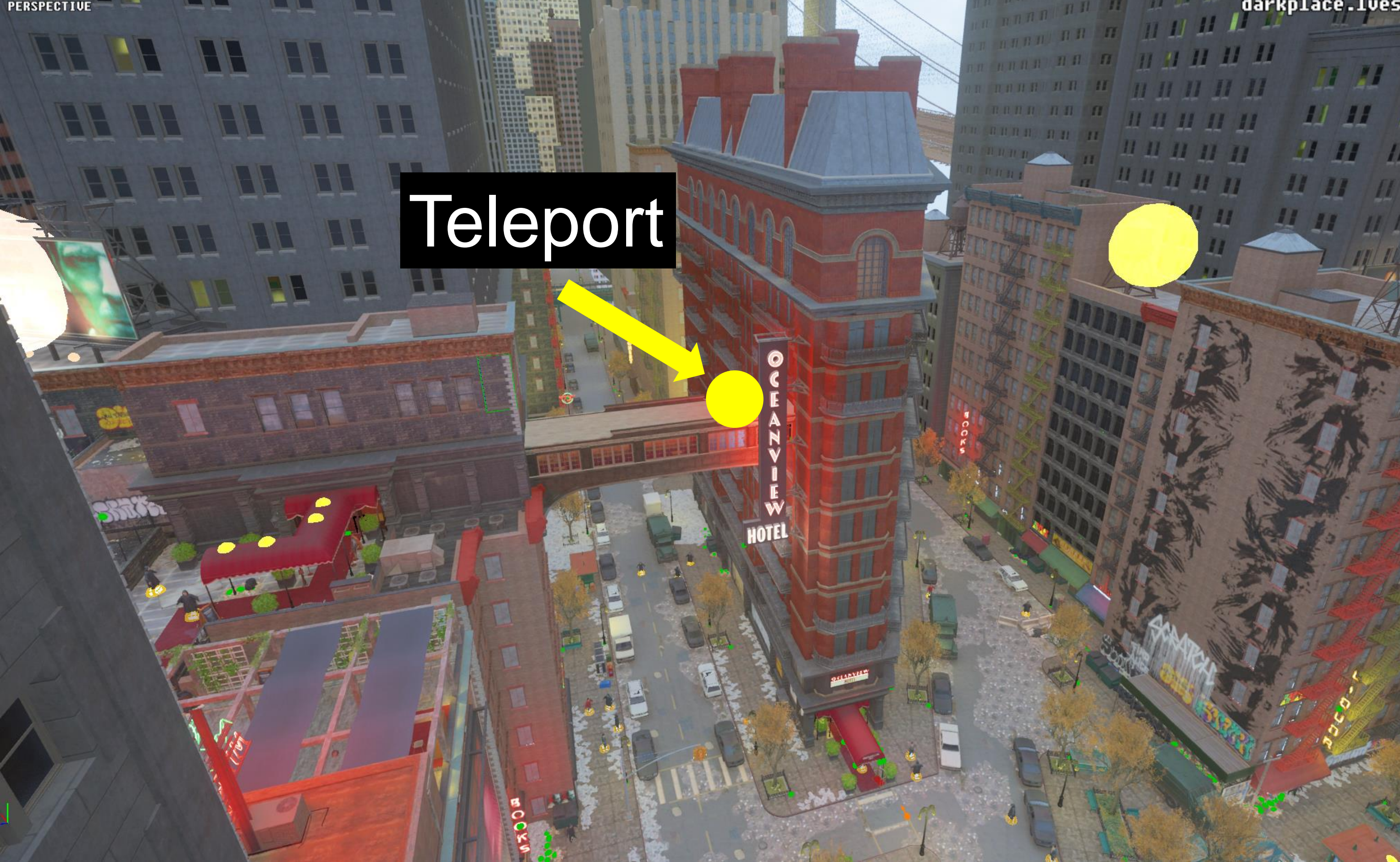
SEAMLESS TELEPORTS



TECHNICAL SETUP



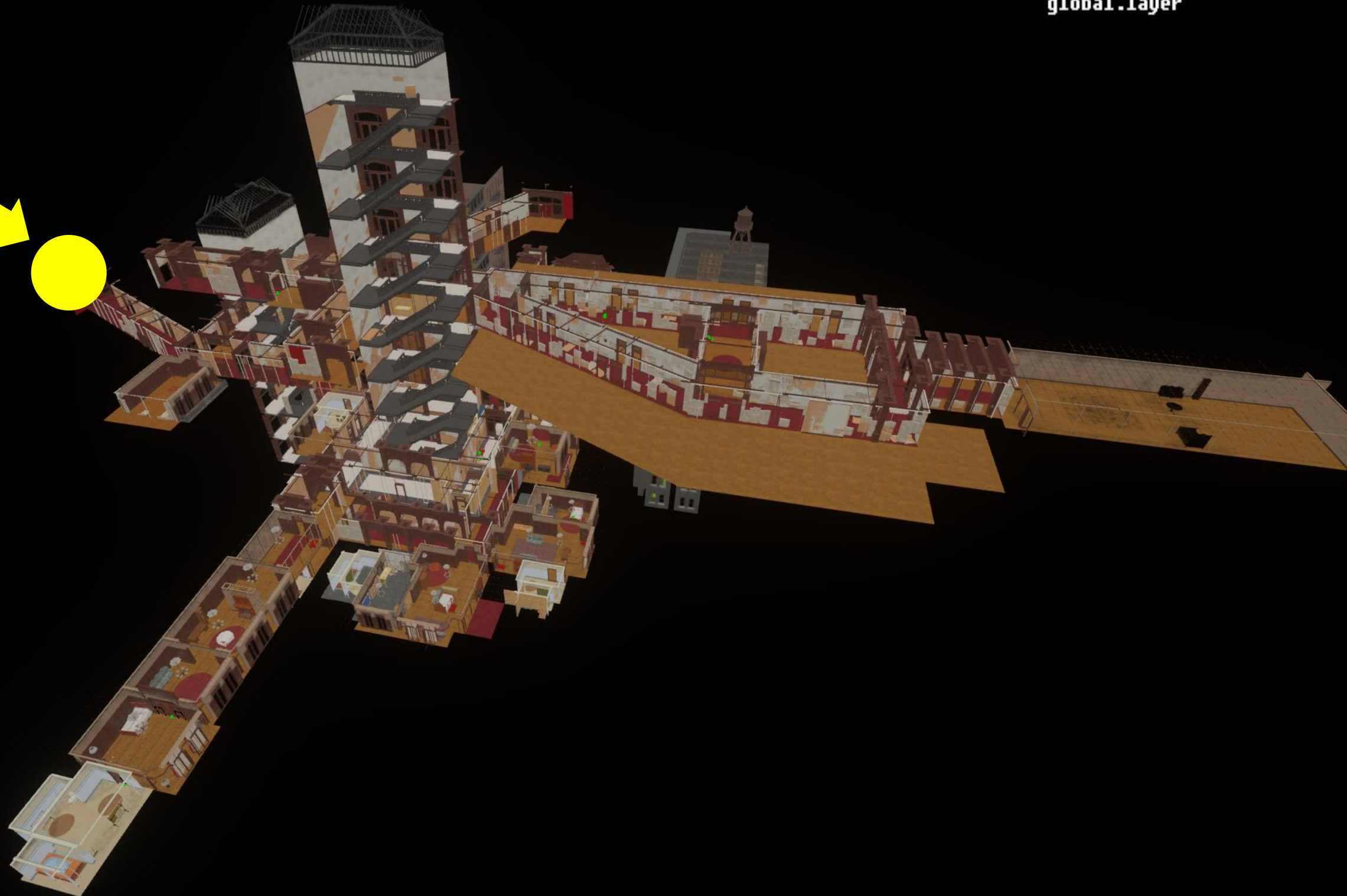
Teleport



TELEPORT USED AS LEVEL TRANSITION

Teleport

global.layer



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LEARNINGS FROM SEAMLESS TELEPORT



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Good for creating looping environments

The feature require a lot of iteration and bugfix

Video showing bugs





REALITY REWRITING

Concept Art by: Jenna Seikkula

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REALITY REWRITING

TECHNICAL SETUP



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Hierarchy

- End_Tracks
 - element_fbi_agent
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
 - element_homeless_people
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
 - element_murder_cult
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay (arthurt)
 - Lighting
 - element_summoning
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
 - Lighting_del
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
 - no_element
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
 - Relocators
 - scene_controller

PERSPECTIVE

1

2

3

4

5

- element_fbi_agent
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
 - Lighting
- element_homeless_people
 - Audio
 - ENV
 - Gameplay
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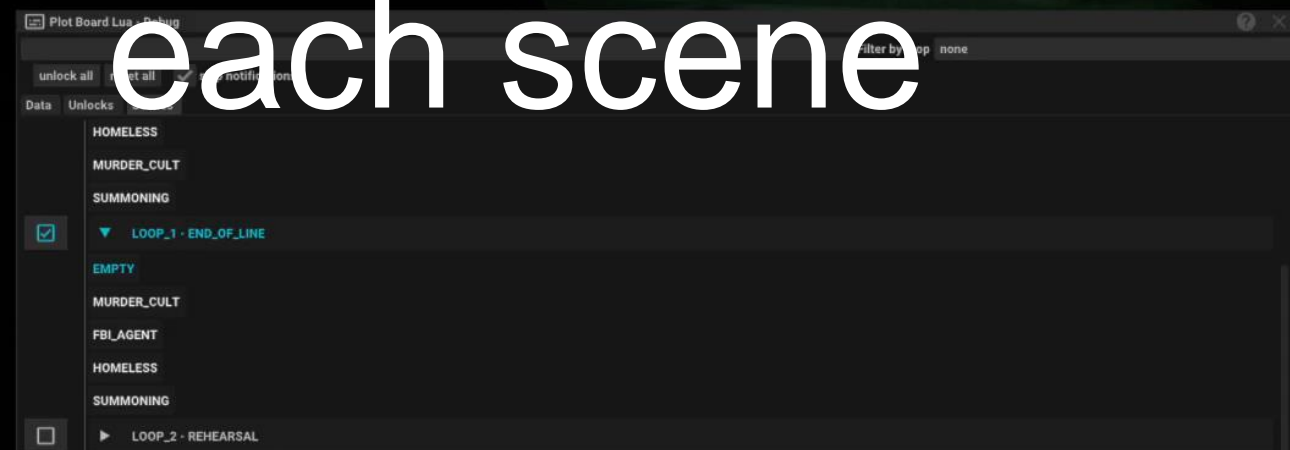
darkplace_light_sh

SUMMONING RITUAL

THE CULT PRACTICED THEIR RITUALS.

LEARNINGS

- Required concept art support
- All the permutations are custom
- Scope increases for all the crafts
- We scoped down and prioritize each scene



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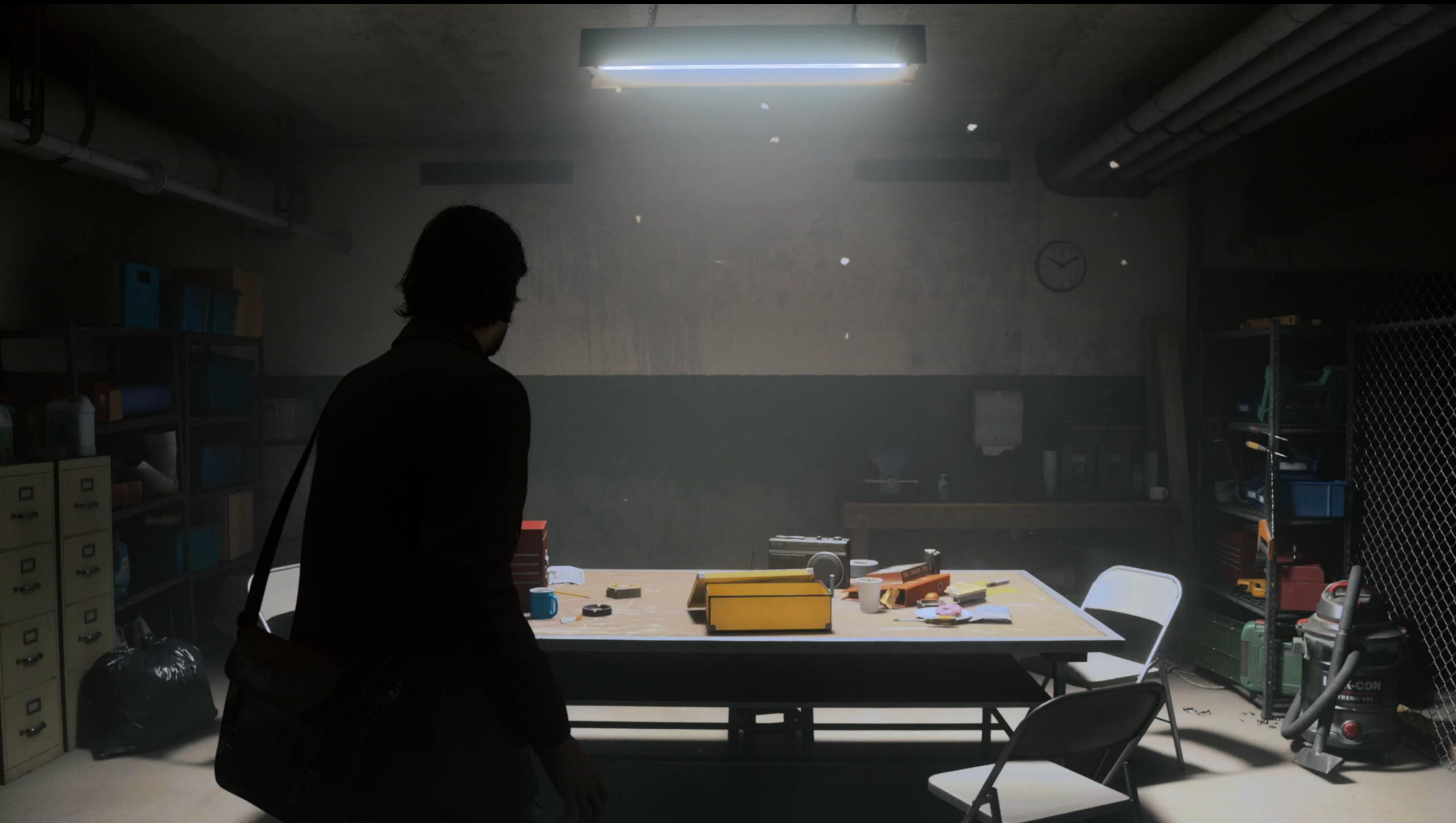


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LIGHT SHIFTERS





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Art Director



It is not just a door



Created a lot of different prototypes.
Failed multiple times.

Level Designer

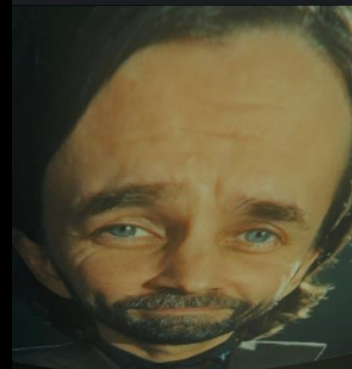


Most of the initial design are a door appearing



Asked Concept Artist to save us.
We created custom concepts for some of the scenes

Lighting Artist



I can't just put a light on a door

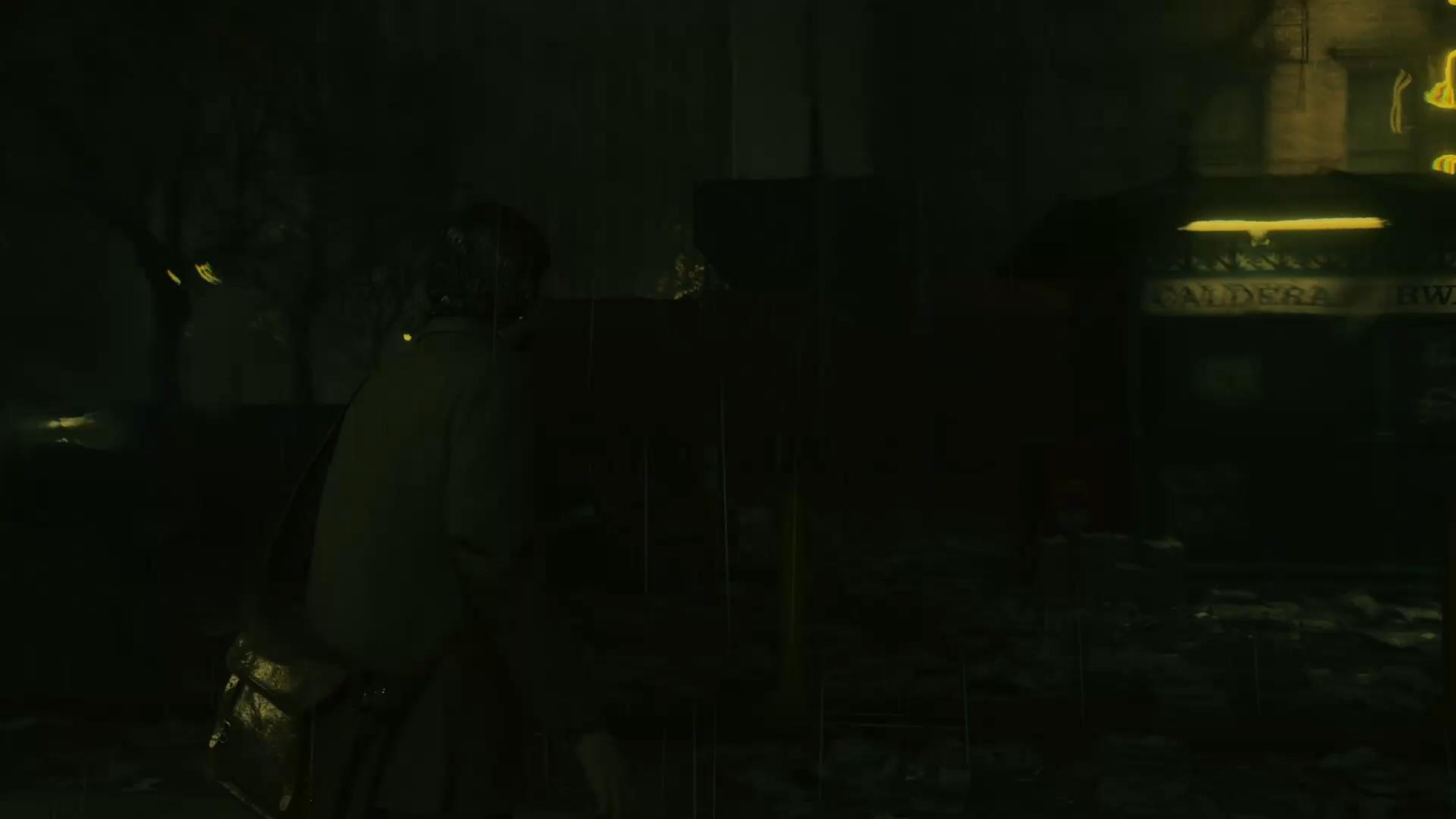
Game Design/UR



Player does not understand this light is important, they are stuck



Shifters are the only blinking lights in The Dark Place.
UI and audio helpers to improve guidance and visibility.



LIGHTING HIERARCHY

Lighting team:
Damian Stempniewski
George Phillips
Andrea Migliazza


Neon signs to help guidance,
Dim intensity and colored

Dimmer accent lights

Gameplay lights = pure color, brighter than other lights



COLLAPSED TUNNEL

PLOT BOARD 

LEARNINGS

- Constant collaboration between design, lighting, env art and audio
- Require a lot of iteration
- Hard to debug, they all comes with a different problems

Video showing bugs



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LIVE ACTION



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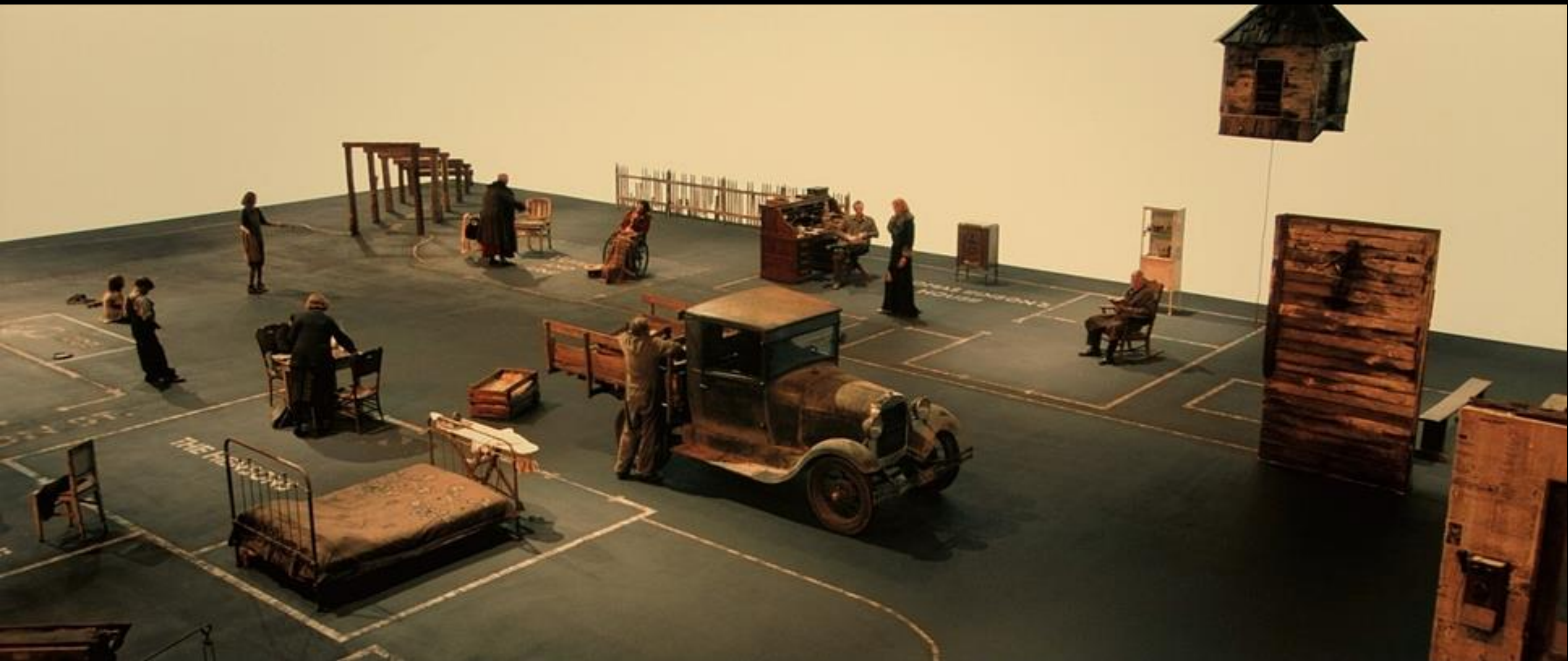
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665





Movie reference: Dogville
Lars von Trier



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PROJECTIONS TECHNICAL SET UP

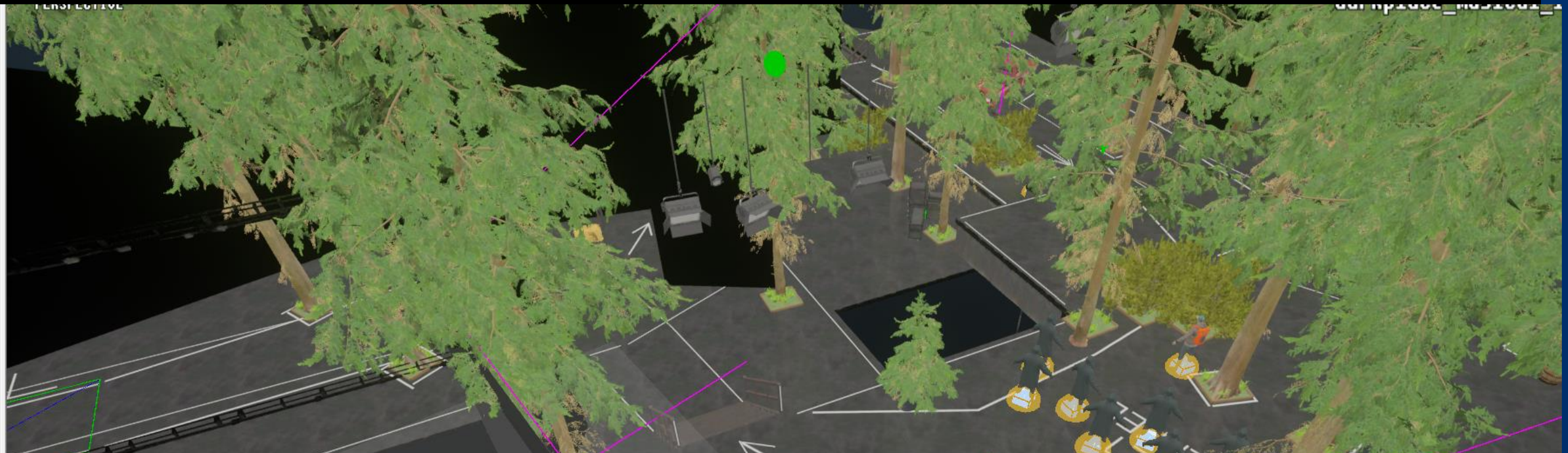
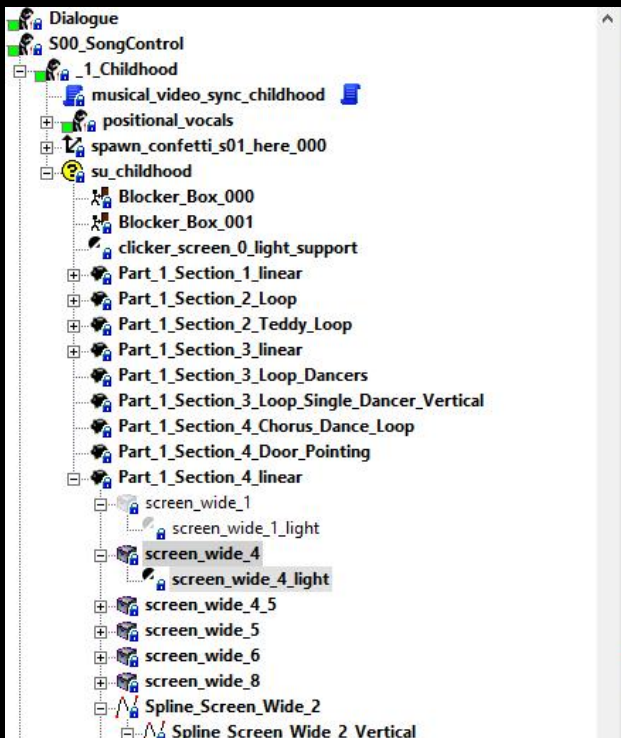


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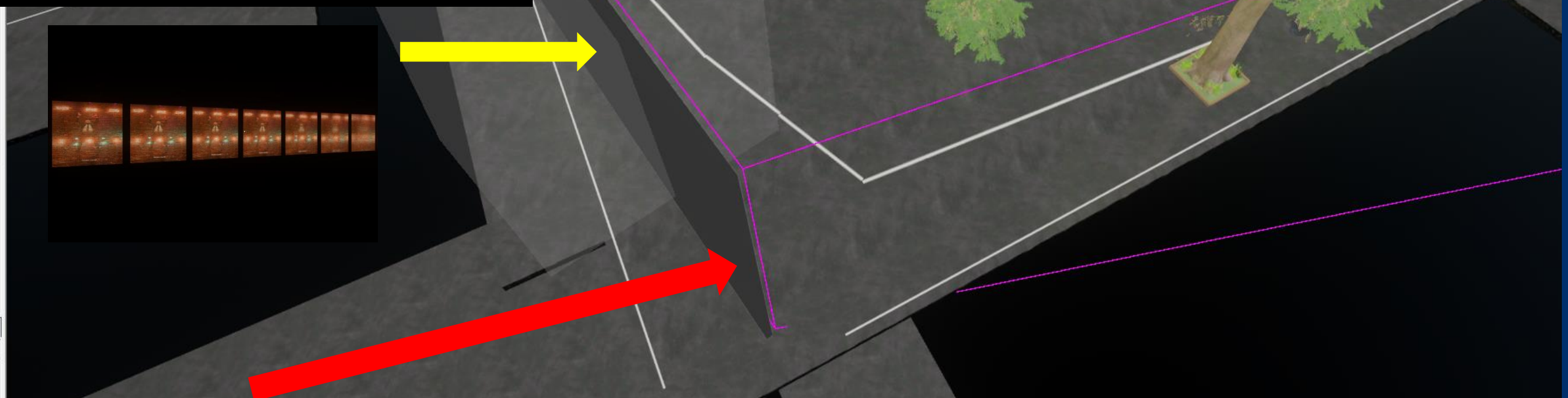
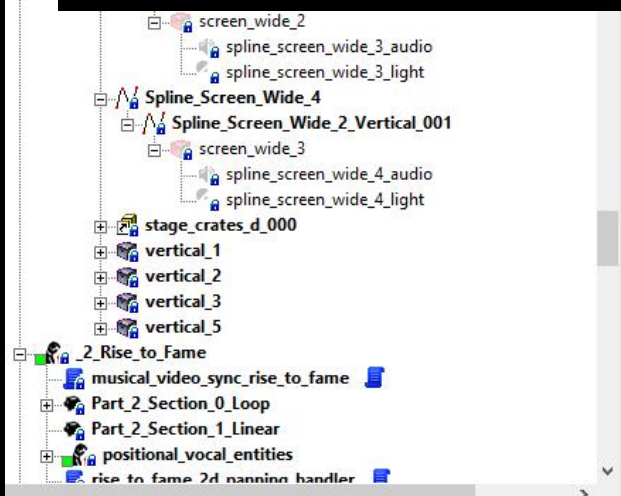


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Spotlight with low mip Projection



Cube with emissive videotexture material



#THEGAMEAWARDS



LEARNINGS

-3D set in game and the live action needs to match

-Build first the game environment and then let the live action crew recreate that on set.



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LEARNINGS (FROM QUANTUM BREAK)



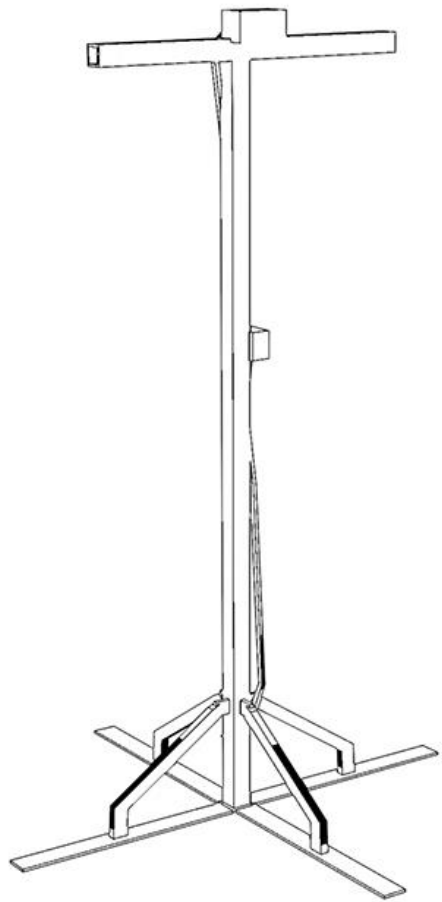
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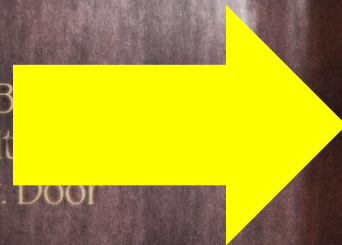
MÅNARK



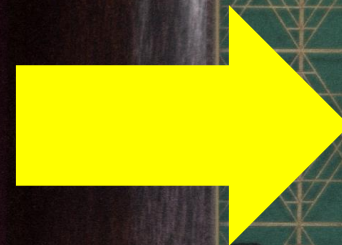
REAL LIFE
WHITE-BOX!

NO MEN ON EITHER SIDE OF YOU?

CONCEPT
ART



3D to Alpha



LIVE
ACTION
SET



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CREATIVE DIRECTION

- The Story
- The Atmosphere
- The Construct
- The Nightmare

VISUAL SOLUTIONS

- Building the atmosphere
 - Research
 - Proof of Concept
- Building the construct
 - Archetypes
- Construct made of words
 - Graffiti
 - News Papers
 - Billboard and Posters
 - Neon

TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Teleport
- Reality Rewriting
- Light Shifter
- Live Action

- Conclusion



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FIND THE LIGHTS



THE STORY

Let the story inspire you



ARCHETYPE

Place built from memories
Words with deeper meaning
Subjective reality



ATMOSPHERE

Noir crime city
Echo of New York
Dark and grimy



EXPERIENCE

Horror story
Looping environments
Trapped paranoia

A group photo of the Alan Wake II environment art team. The team consists of about 20 people, including men and women of various ages, posing in a studio setting. They are arranged in two rows, with some standing and some sitting on a blue sofa. The background features a large window with a city skyline at night. A sign on the right side of the window reads "BE W". The team is dressed in a mix of casual and semi-formal attire. Some individuals are holding props, such as a small child on the left and a cup on the right. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.





WHATEVER YOU DO, STAY IN THE LIGHT.

Thank you

If you like the nightmare we are hiring:
remedygames.com/careers



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ATTRIBUTIONS:

Movies:

- Taxi Driver 1976 Director: Martin Scorsese

Books:

- Lost new York: Marcia Reiss
- Forgotten New York: Kevin Walsh
- Viva La Pizza: the art of pizza boxes: Scott Wieneri
- The Urbano Prisoner Matt Weber
- Store Front: The Disappearing Face of New York James T Murray (Author),
Karla L Murray (Author)
- Street of new york teNeues MENDO
- New York City Carrie Boretz
- Berenice Abbott photofile Thames&Hudson
- New York in Color Ernst Haas
- Joker 2019 Director: Todd Phillips
- Games:
- -Quantum Break



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