Hidden Manor Set Dressing

Process Book - Lou Carroll

Fall 2015 - ITGM 502 - 2:00-4:30 TTh - Aram Cookson

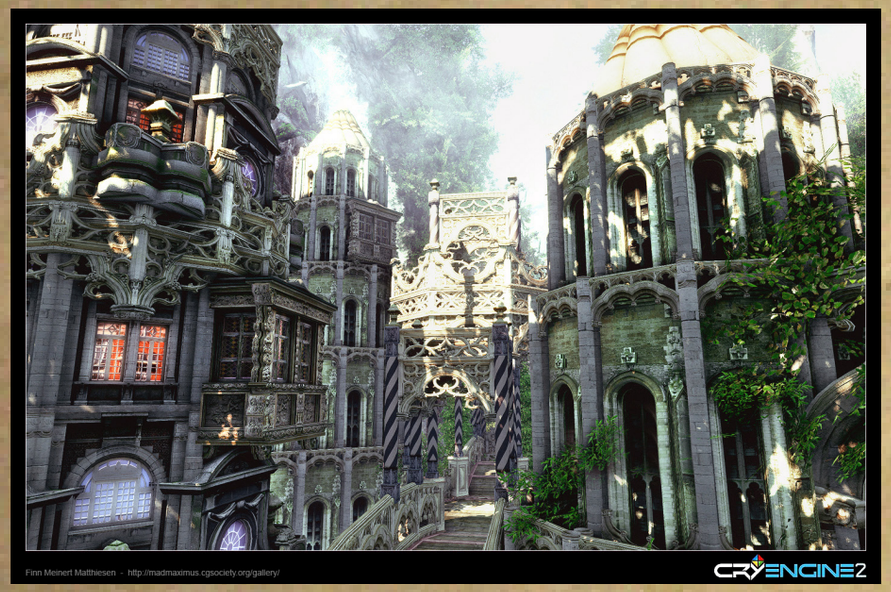
Project Overview

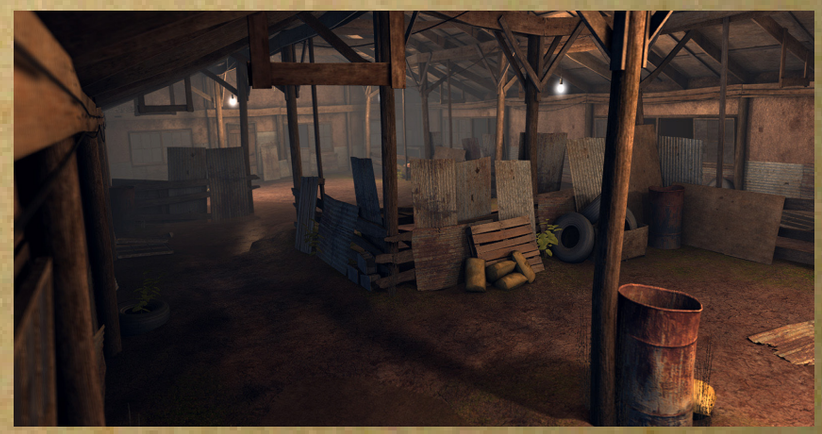
The goal of this project was to construct an environment in Unreal Engine 4 using a premade modular asset kit. The intent was to create a small, but convincing and visually interesting environment with developed lighting to establish the feel of the space, as well as sound effects. The final submission would take the form of a video flythrough of the environment, including establishing shots and sound, designed to walk the player through the space.

Creative Brief

Starting out, I definitely wasn't sure what to do with this assignment. Environments are not something I have much experience with, and the restriction of what modular kits were available to work with put me in a somewhat tricky position. After playing with some of the assets, I eventually settled on developing a manor hidden in a swamp - a demon prince's getaway home. I wanted to make the space dark and ominous, yet distinctly regal and rich, playing with a fantasy genre.

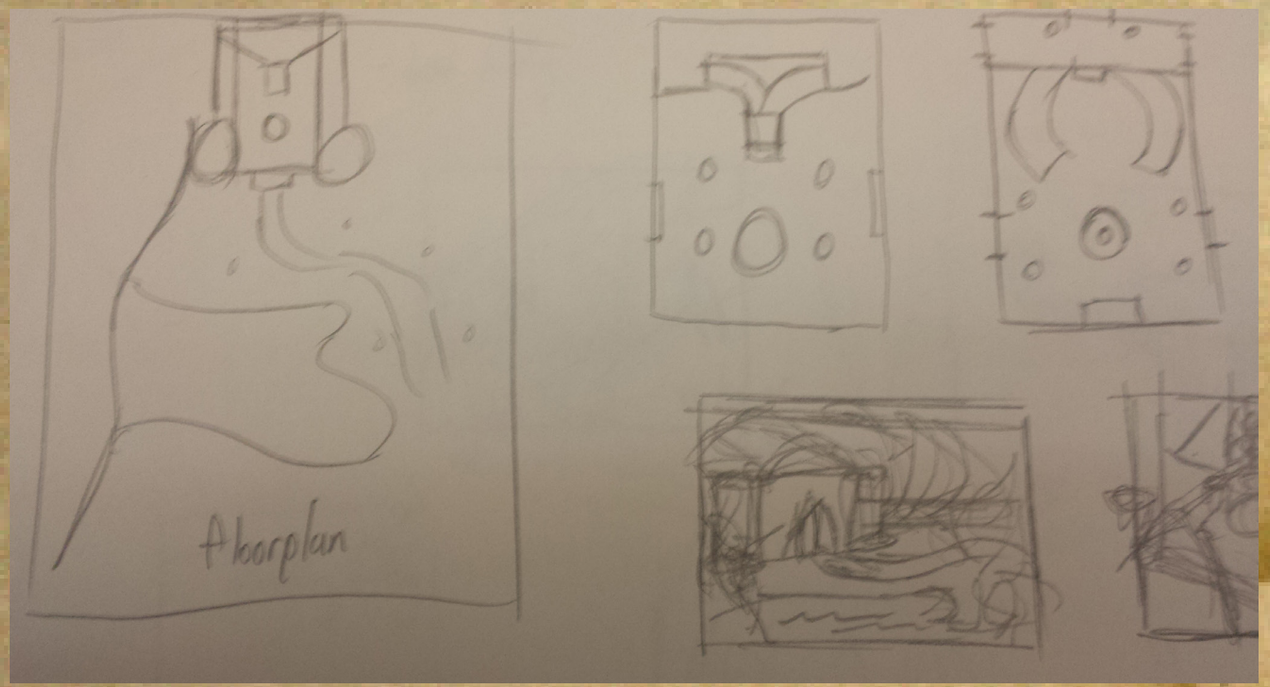
Research

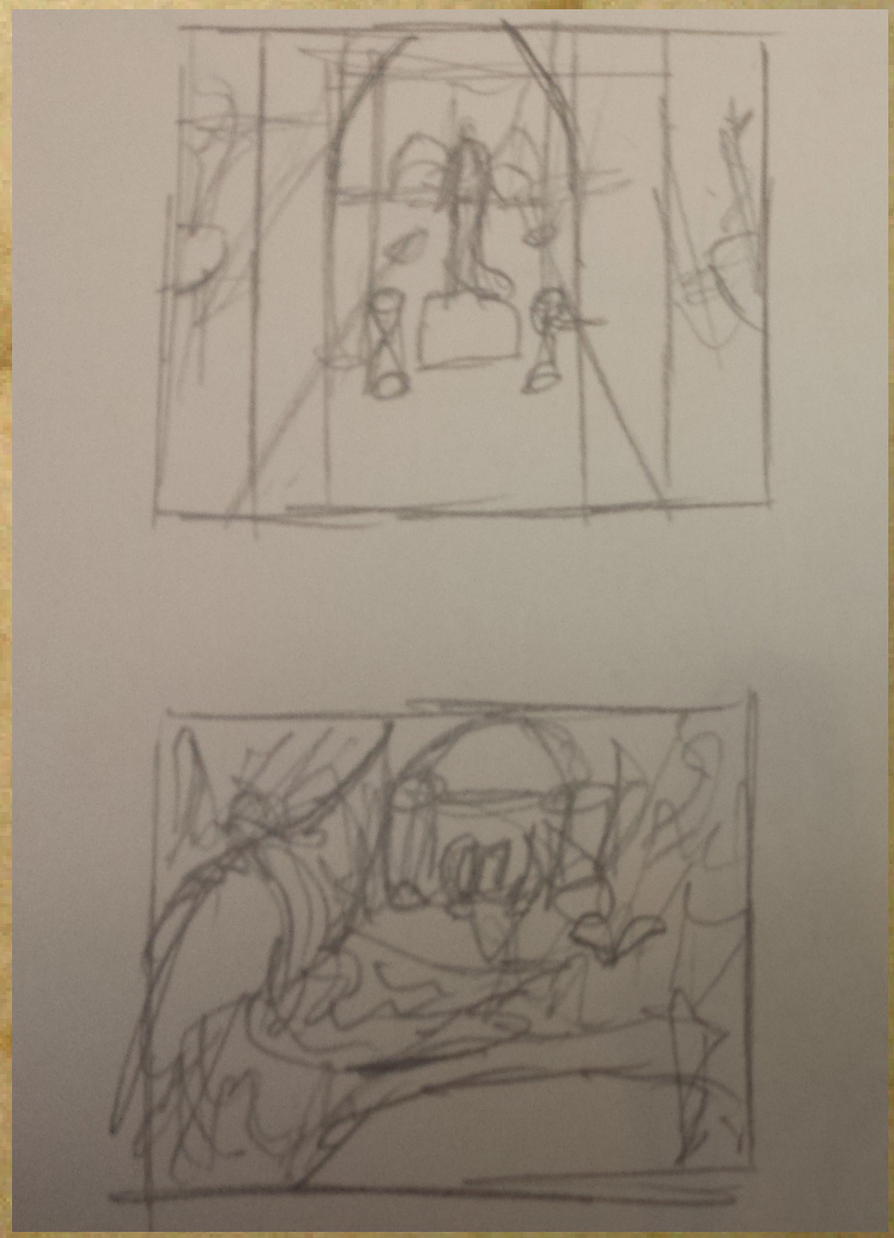


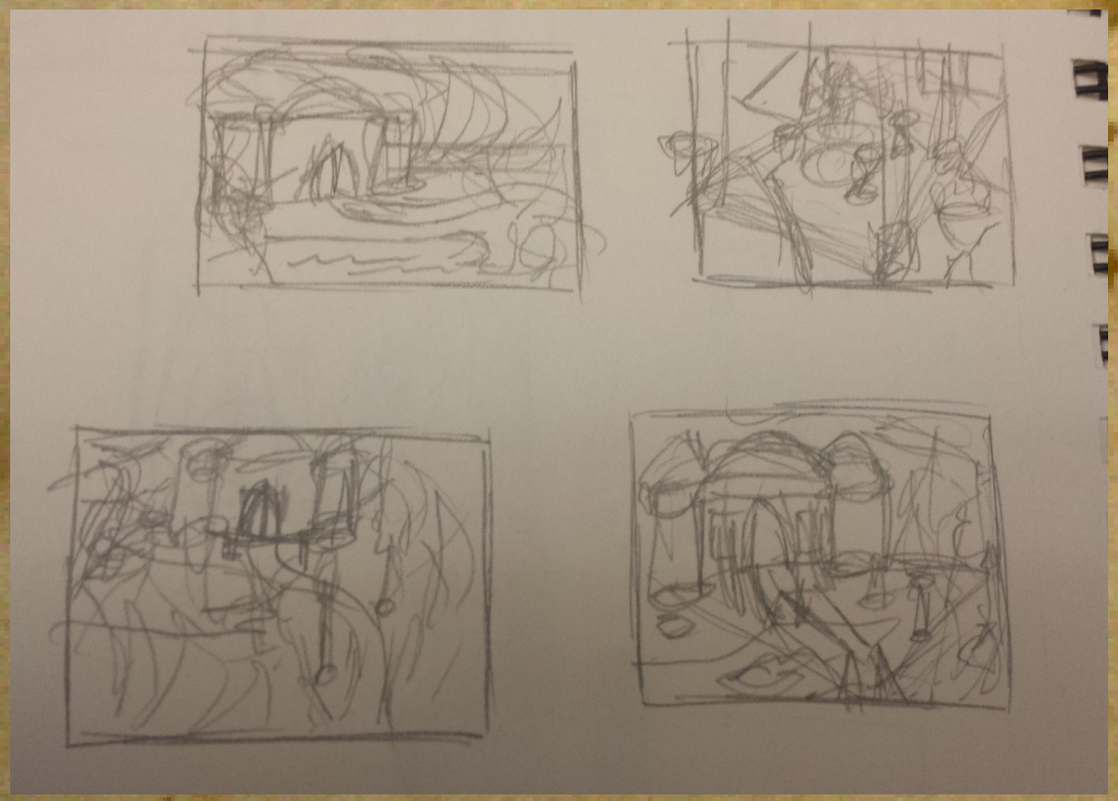


1. I like the architecture and the use of shadow and composition here - the pathway, in particular. Source: madmaximus.deviantart.com
2. I love the lighting on this one, and the camera angle! Source: TannerElison3d.com
3. Clever use of modularity. Source: Spellbound Entertainment
4. Hyper-realistic, so definitely not up the right style, but I like the shote. Source: jasongodbey.com
5. Another one with clever modularity. I also like the composition. Source: http://www.cgmasters.net/

Thumbnails

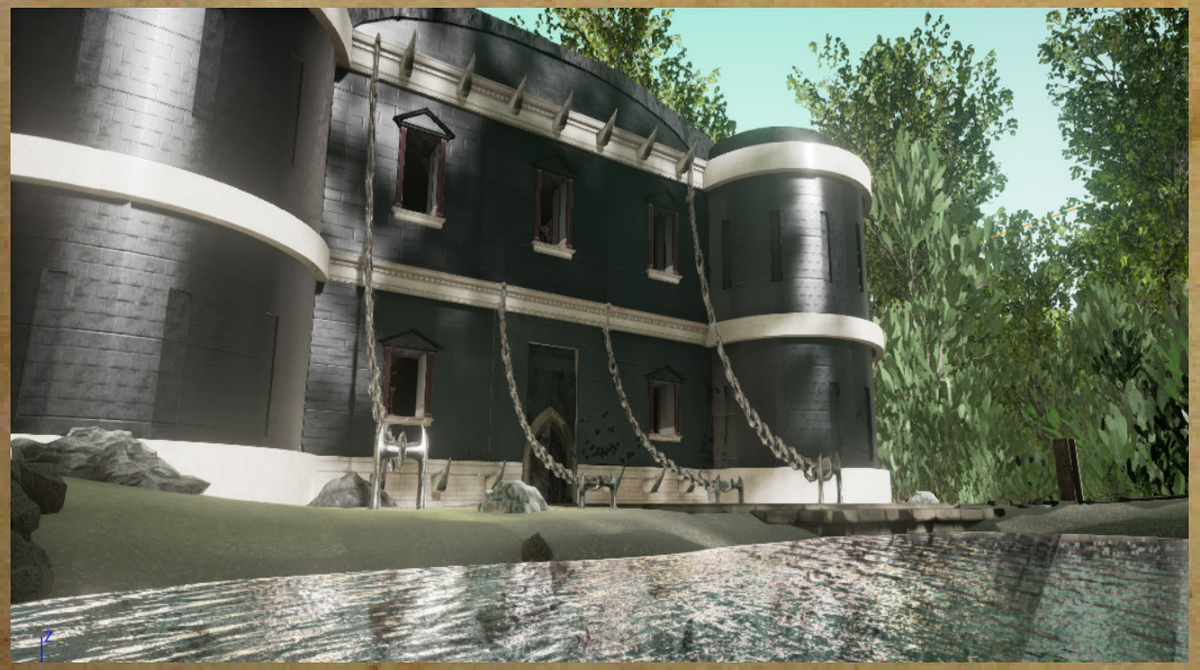






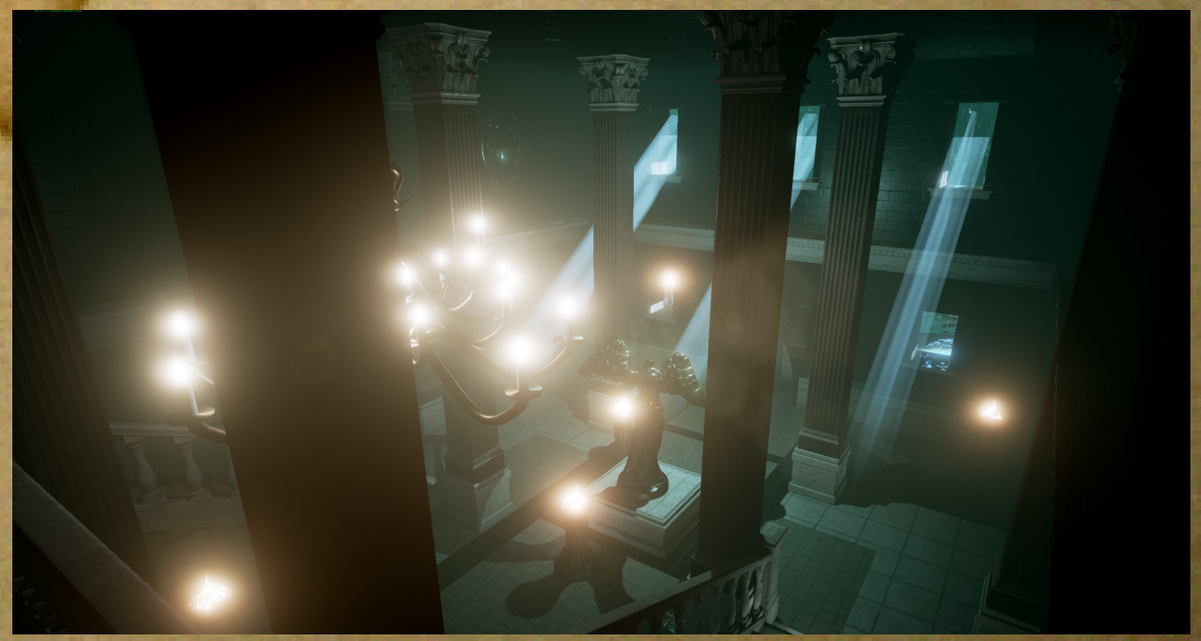
Roughs

Notably, my roughs are unlit and missing a few assets. Still, the general idea of the scene is coming together. Mostly, I wanted to apply fog effects, fire effects, and a lot more lighting.



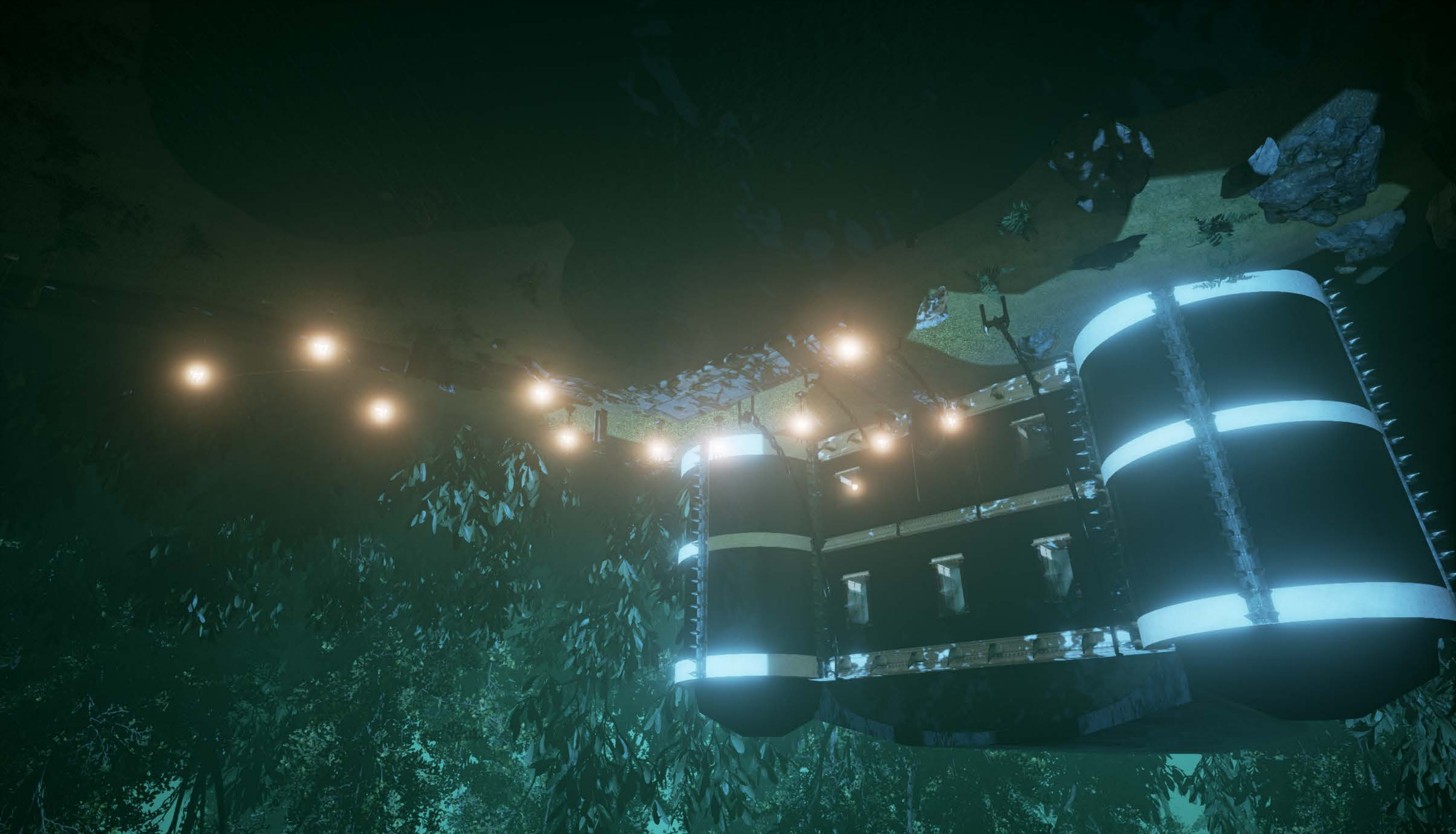
Comps

The lighting started to take form much better in the comp stage, as you can see, with the nighttime effect of the sky and the swamp fog applied to the scene. The bloom is a bit strong and there are some errors with the LOD on the foliage; there are also some visible seams in the assets that I needed to fix. I'd like to turn off the light beams from the outside and fix them so they'd cast in properly, also.



Finals

As I mentioned, this project was not particularly easy for me. On top of finding it somewhat difficult, I ran into a lot of technical (and unrelated) issues during the course of working on it, so there are many things that could still stand improvement.

For one, the bloom on the lights is still a bit too strong. There are still LOD errors with some of the rocks, and the foliage seems to have lost a lot of its texture and now looks somewhat awkward. It was brought up in class that the foliage doesn't all look naturally placed and that some of the scales of the trees may be too large; also, it would be better if I added more small foliage, such as grass, to the ground. I didn't manage to find a better solution for the light beams, but those would still look better if I could put more time into making them work with pure lighting rather than using meshes. I'd like to reduce the fog inside the building a bit; though it can't be seen in the stills, I'd also like to add some ambient music on top of the ambient swamp sounds, and I could speed up my camera motion a bit.

Overall, I agree with the classroom analysis that my interior is fairly solid, but the exterior could use a lot of work still. If I had more assets, I would most certainly have added more details to the interior, as well -- I feel that it is still a bit bare in parts for the look I was trying to achieve. Perhaps black was the wrong choice of color for the walls; I'd like to try a shade of grey, or perhaps a maroon color (like the columns) for them. I should definitely work on making the exterior feel more organic, should I revisit this scene in the future.