

Importing an Illustrator File to Maya

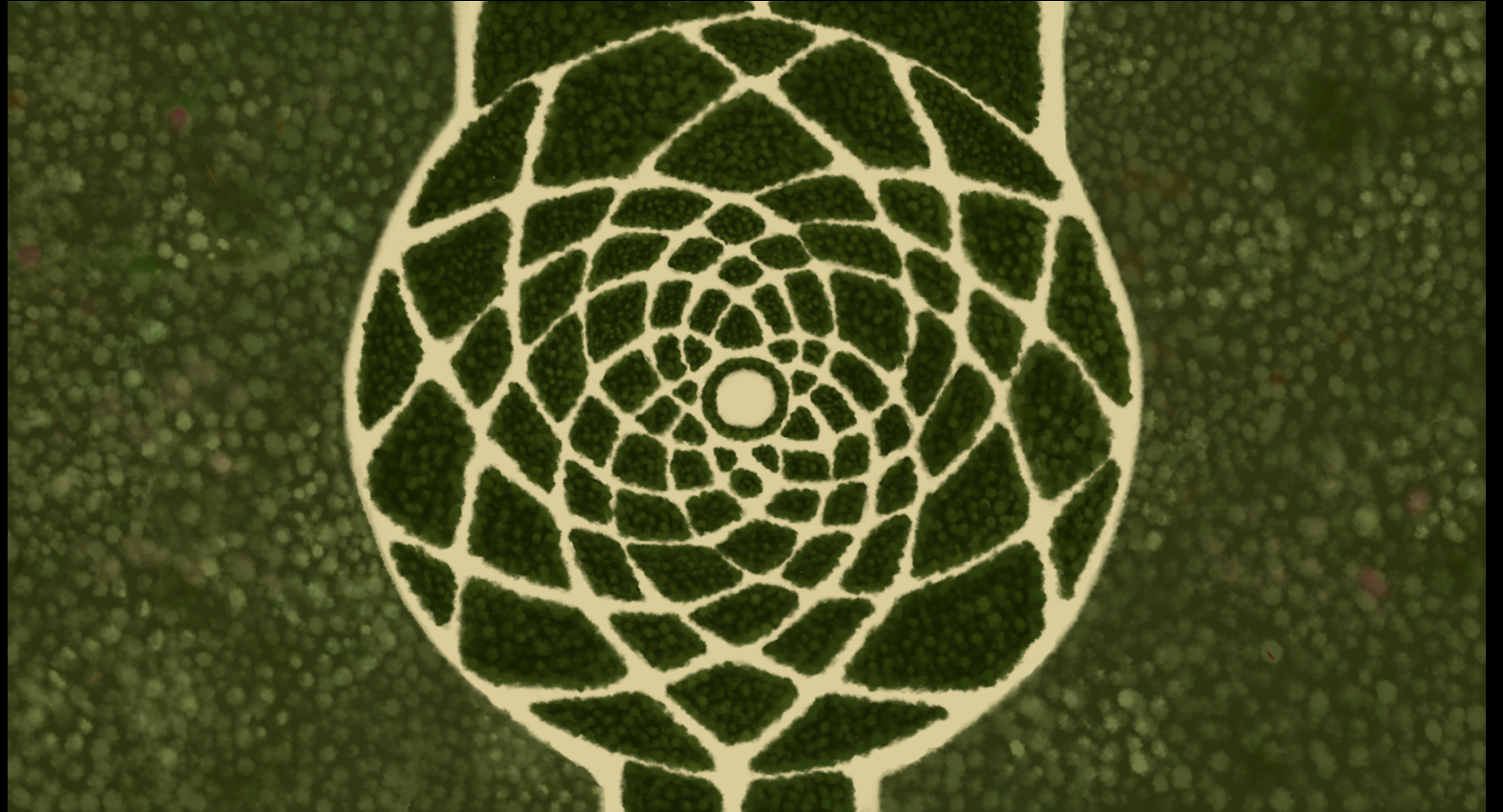
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Objective

- By the end of this tutorial you should be able to convert your 2D image created in Illustrator into a 3D model in Maya

Start

The initial design was a dream catcher themed maze. In our film we will be transitioning from the maze to the dream catcher so it's essential the two line up.



Final product

We will go from a drawing to a 3D model like this one.



What You Will Need

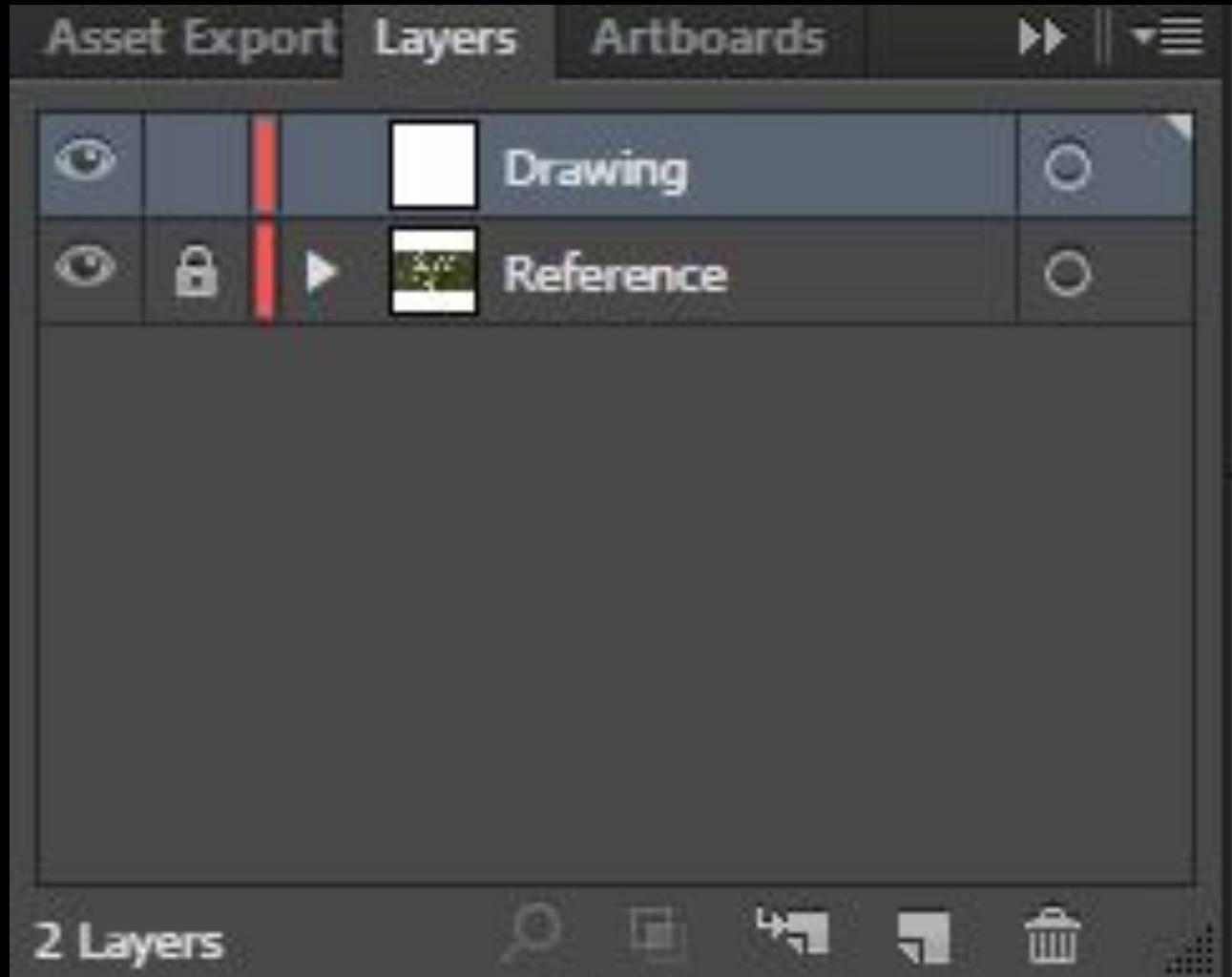
- Illustrator
- Maya

Why Illustrator?

- The reason we are using Illustrator over other design programs is because in Illustrator we have the ability to save our image as a non-destructive vector. Illustrator uses math to create the images and we have the ability to scale down or up without losing resolution.
- Illustrator has the ability to save the correct format of the file we need to import it into Maya.
- This is an easier way to create complicated 3D models that Maya will compute rather than going through the heinous task of modeling everything by hand.

Begin in Illustrator

- The first step is to decide what you are going to create, for my example I created a dreamcatcher for the film, Dreamweaver.
 - You can create whatever you want, the reason I chose to do the dreamcatcher for this tutorial is because modeling it in Maya would be much more complicated than this method. Maya will calculate the file once imported and mathematically create the polygons.
- If you have an image you will be tracing now is the time to add it to a separate layer. Make sure to lock your layer.



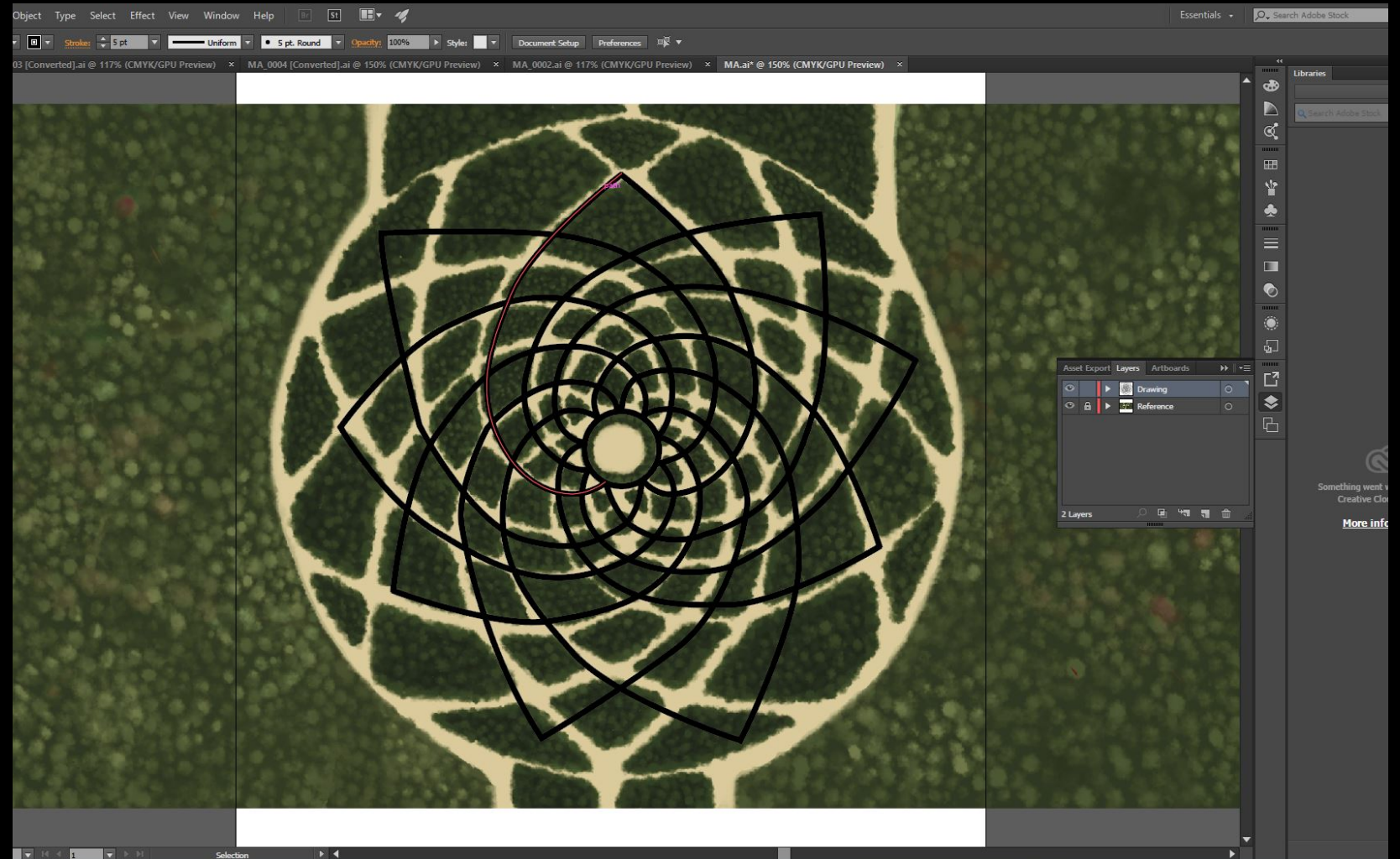
This is what your layers should look like now.

Next...

- Let's get to drawing now. On your empty layer using the pen tool begin your design. It isn't important now what color or thickness your lines are, we will adjust these later.

At This Point...

You should have something like this. Your drawing overlapping your reference image.

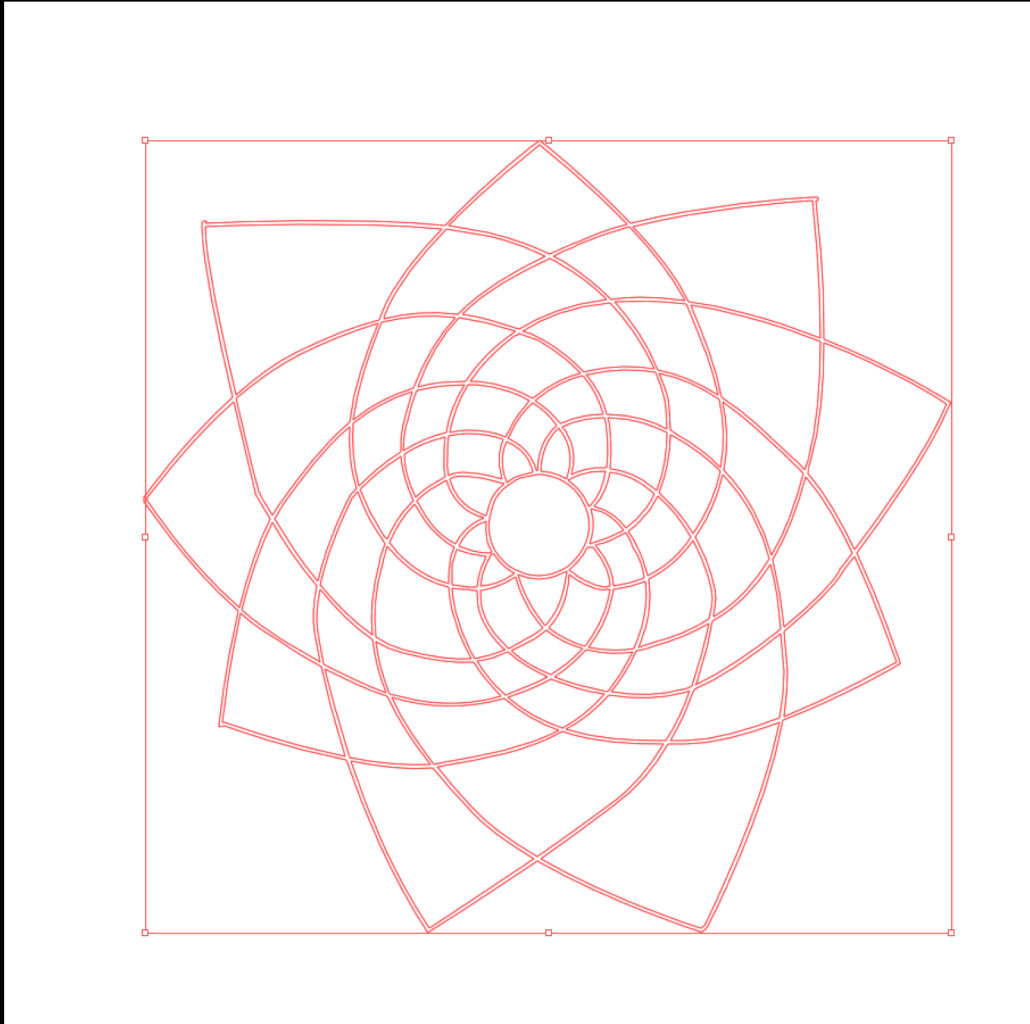


Now...

- Hide your reference layer if you have one. We won't need it anymore.
- All the pen strokes may not connect at this point. So we have to make it all one path.
- To do this select all your paths and go to Object > Compound Path > Make or Command 8.
- It's at this point when the paths are connected that you should adjust your stroke thickness to how wide you want your object to be.

Invert the Selection

- We need to get the outline of the object now since Maya reads the outline of the drawing and fills it in with polygons.
- To do this highlight the selected path and go to Object > Path > Outline Stroke.
- Then make the lines invisible by selecting no fill and no stroke.



The lines should be
inverted now like this

I'm selected on the lines right now to show
you my image because if it wasn't selected
you wouldn't see anything. The lines need to
be invisible at this point.


Wrap Up in Illustrator

- Now that our image is done we can export it for Maya.
- Save it as an .ai file this way Maya can read it.
- It NEEDS to be saved as an Illustrator 8 version to be read by Maya.

Here's what your...

Save options should look like.

Illustrator Options

Version: Illustrator 8 

Fonts

Subset fonts when percent of characters used is less than: 100%

Options

☒ Create PDF Compatible File

☐ Include Linked Files

☐ Embed ICC Profiles

☒ Use Compression

☐ Save each artboard to a separate file

☒ All ☐ Range: 1


Transparency

☐ Preserve Paths (discard transparency)

☐ Preserve Appearance and Overprints

Preset: [Medium Resolution] Custom...

Warnings

 Saving to a legacy format may convert all type to point type and may disable some editing features when the document is read back in. Also, any hidden Appearance attributes will be discarded.

Cancel OK

Time to Open Maya

- Open up a new scene in Maya.
- Set your project to the desired location.
- From the top toolbar select Create > Adobe[®] Illustrator[®] Object Options
- Make sure to reset your settings by going to Edit > reset settings
- Then hit create and select your .ai file.
- It will take some time for this to load now depending on how complicated your design is so be patient.

Finished

- At this point with your file in Maya you can edit it however you want. In my case since the file was so huge I had to optimize it.
- Hopefully this tutorial helped you successfully turn your drawing into a 3D image in Maya.

