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Univeristy of Central Florida
Emerging Media MFA Animation and Visual Effects Track
Cohort 3
Thesis Film Presentation

MAYA
Working Title

SUBJECT: Freedom   **GENRE:** Fantasy, Action-adventure

LOGLINE: A girl faces her innermost fears in the belly of the beast

INTRODUCTION:

Maya is a 2D fantasy action-adventure short film about self-discovery and freedom.

The story covers Taino and Puerto Rican culture as well as surreal imagery to convey my theme: Often what holds us down is our own fear.

SYNOPSIS:

This story is about Maya, a Taino Amerindian teenage girl who faces her fears in order to be free. Her ultimate goal is to fly. The only thing in her way is her own fear and inner conflict of not knowing who she is. We first meet her when she is trying to fly and fails for the hundreth time. Frustrated, she heads back to her camp when she encounters an enormous mystical owl, who swallows her whole. However, inside the owl, she is still alive. In order to escape, she has to face a number of surreal trials that test her abilities. With each success she feels more confident in herself. Then she ultimatley escapes the owl through his eye by taking a leap of faith. Only after having believed in herself, she is finally able to fly for the first time. Both Maya and the owl fly into the distance, acknowledging that she has transformed from a scared girl into her true self, the Hurricane Goddess.

Original Version

MAYA AND THE OWL

BEAT BOARDS

SETTING DESIGN

My thesis film is set in a fantasy world with three different settings: a forest, a cave, and the sky. During the course of the spring semester, I explored three variations for each setting based on the research of different cultures that have wind and storm dieties since my main character is a Hurricane Goddess.

Setting Design

Background Style

The background style for the film will be a combination of a graphic style with textered digital brushes to give the film a slightly painterly look.

Setting Design

Gothic Churches & Stained Glass Windows

A prominent feature in my film will be the use of gothic church arches. The symbol will be illustrated throughout the film to foreshadow that the main character is a goddess.
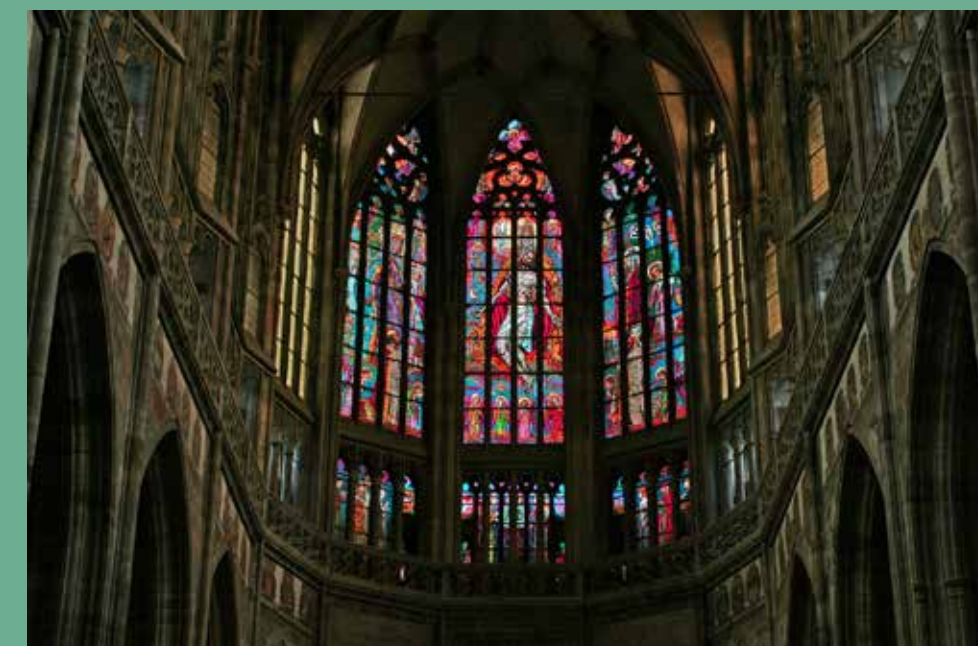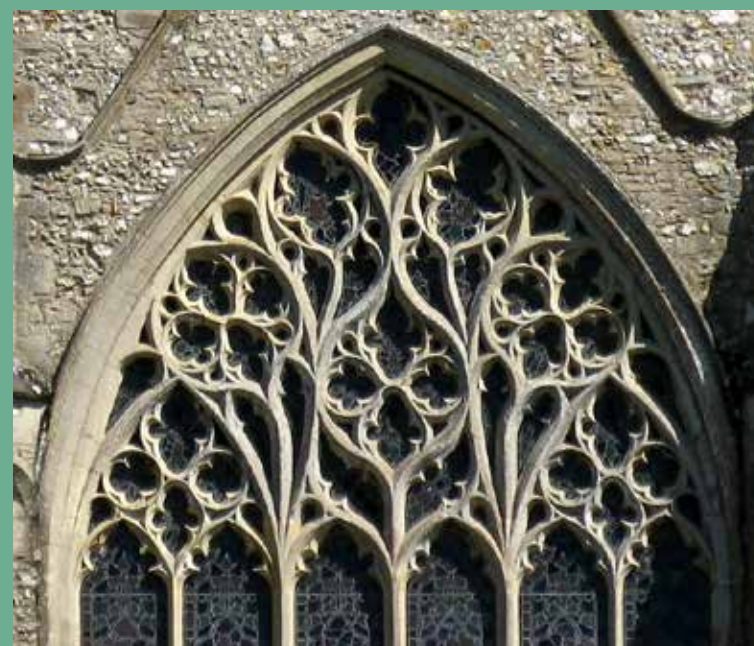
Setting 1: Version 1

Forest: Puerto Rico

The first version is based on my home country Puerto Rico and the Taino Amerindians that lived in the country before Christopher Columbus arrived as well as the Puerto Ricans that were born from the combination of the Tainos, Spaniards and Africans after the Spaniards settled in the island. This setting illustrates the tropical island and its colorful flora as well as assets based on Taino culture.

Setting 1: Version 2

Forest: Japan
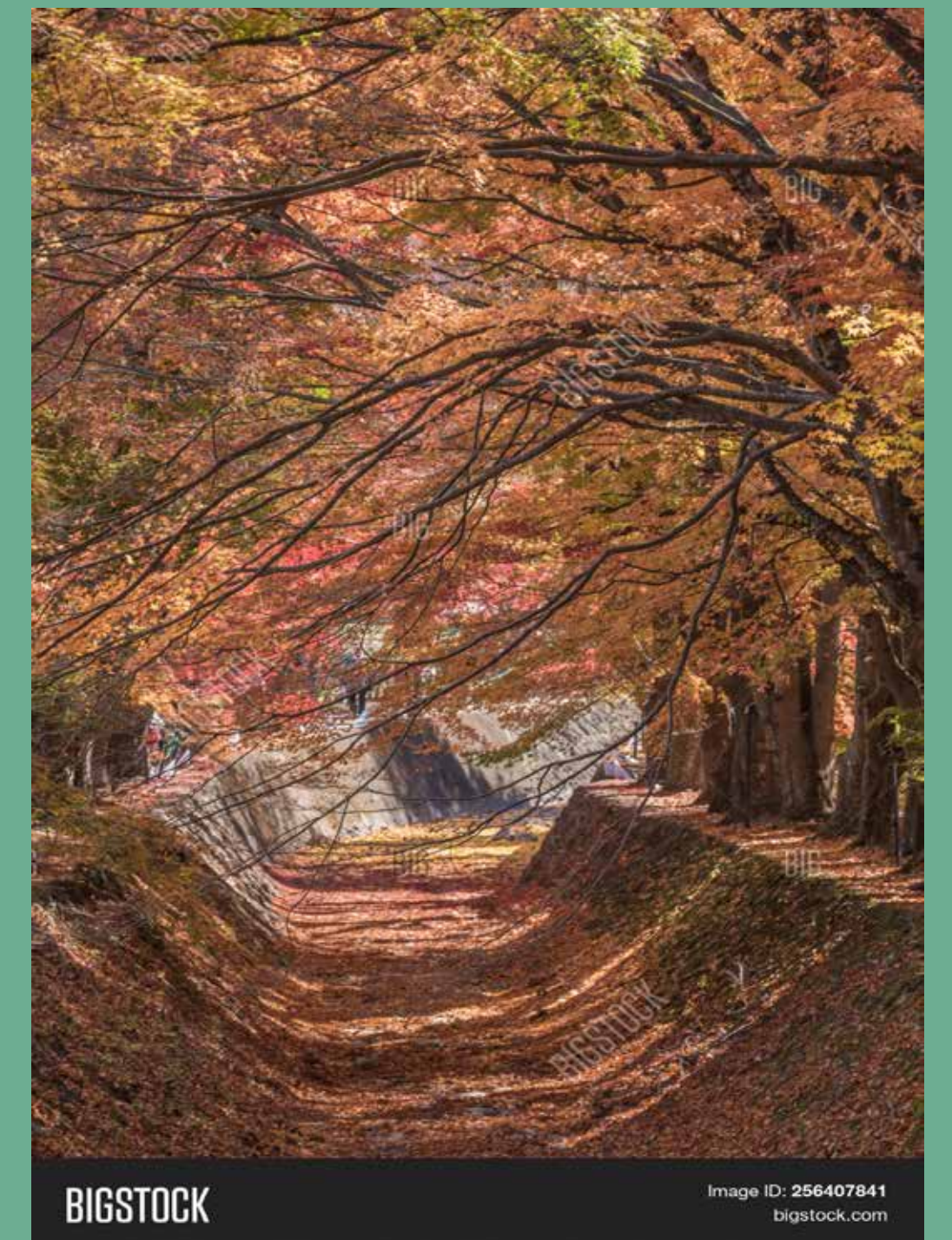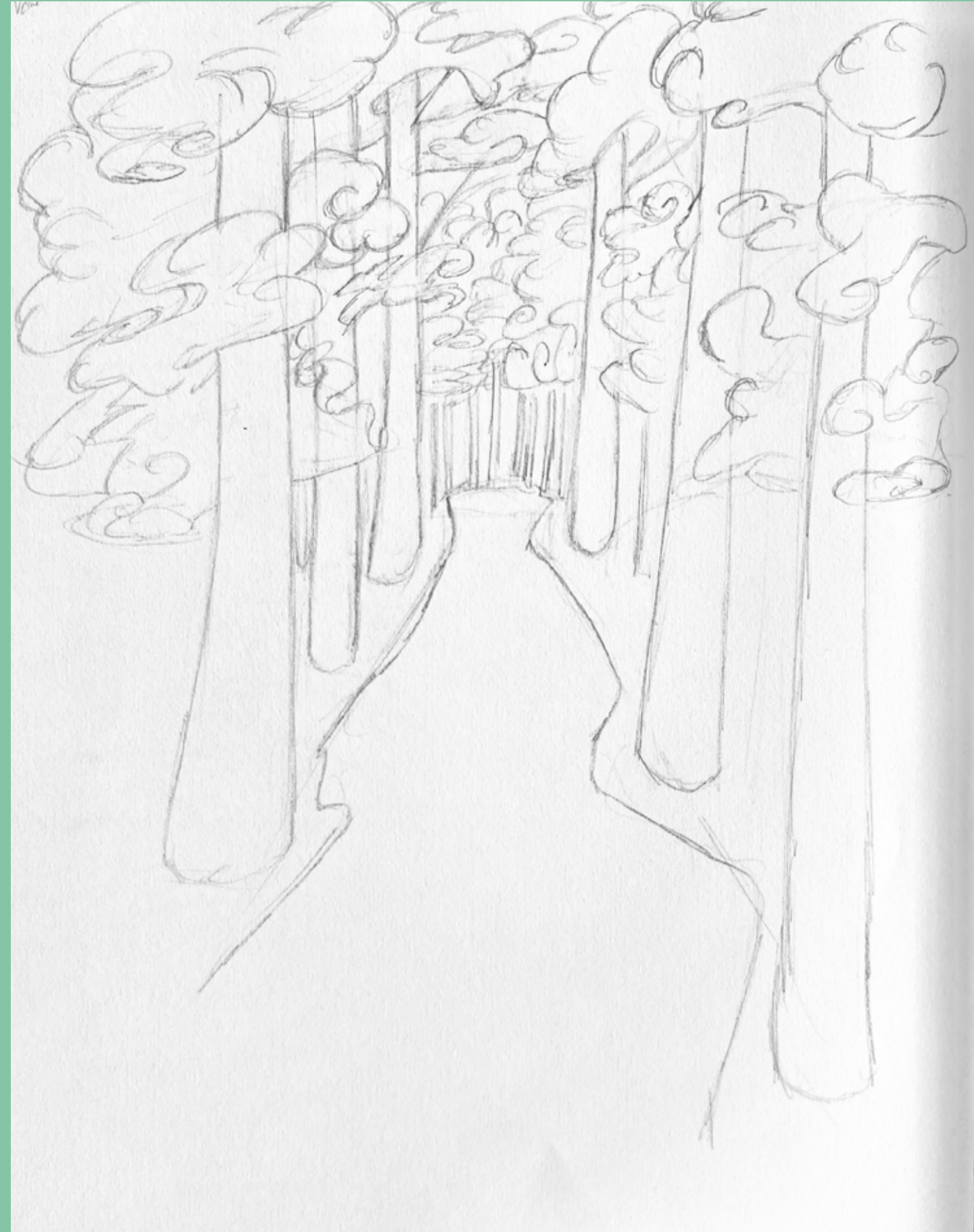
For the second version, I found that Japan has many shrines in beautiful forests where it is said to be where many of their mythical gods live.

Setting 1: Version 3

Forest: Ireland
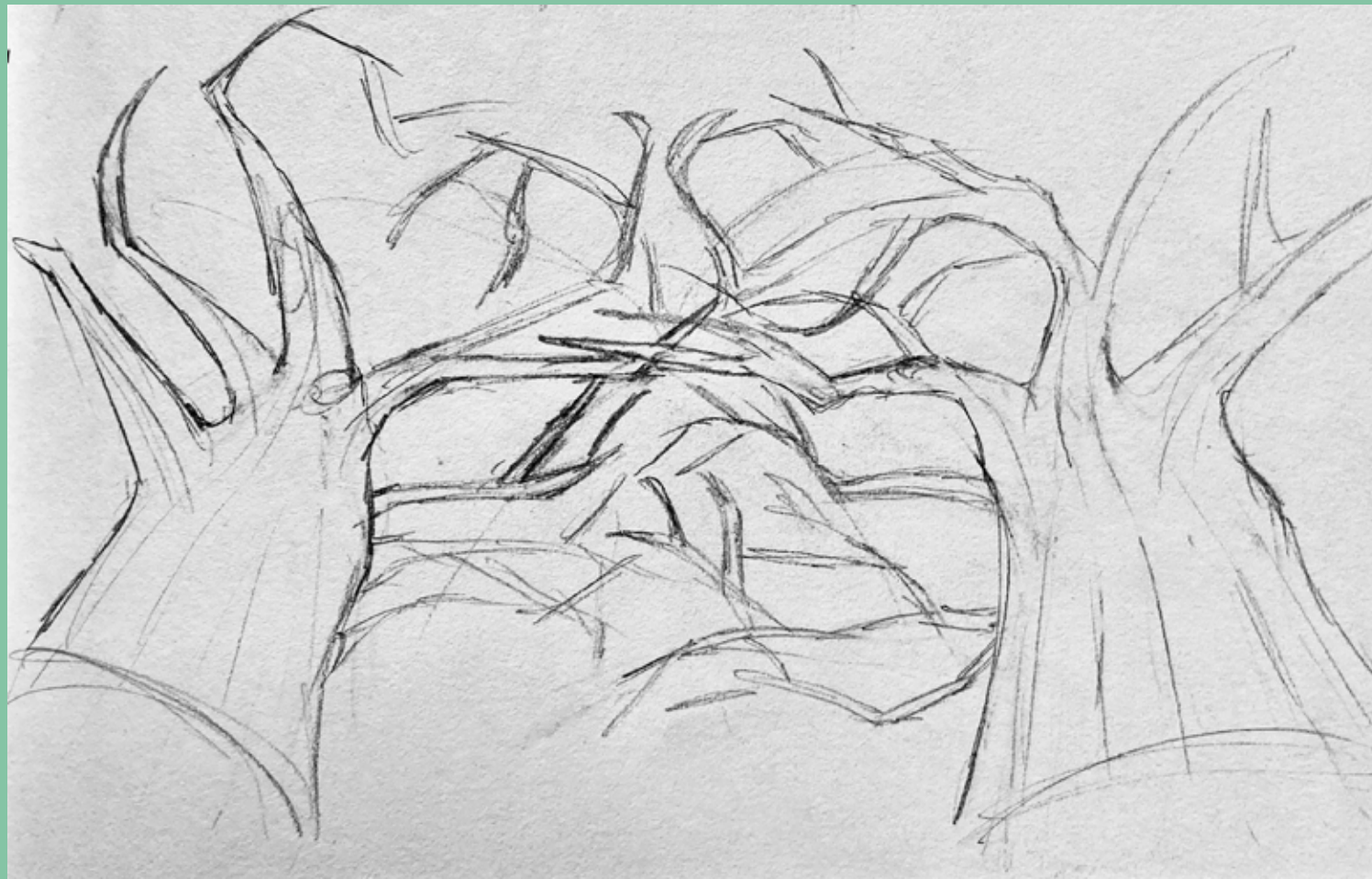
The third variation of my forest setting is based on Ireland.
Upon doing research, I found the Dark Hedges, which gave a
mysterious feeling to the story while also following the
symbol of the gothic arches.

Setting 2: Version 1

Cave: Puerto Rican Limestone Cave

For my second setting, I decided on the limestone caves of Puerto Rico like Las Cavernas de Camuy and the Cueva del indio.
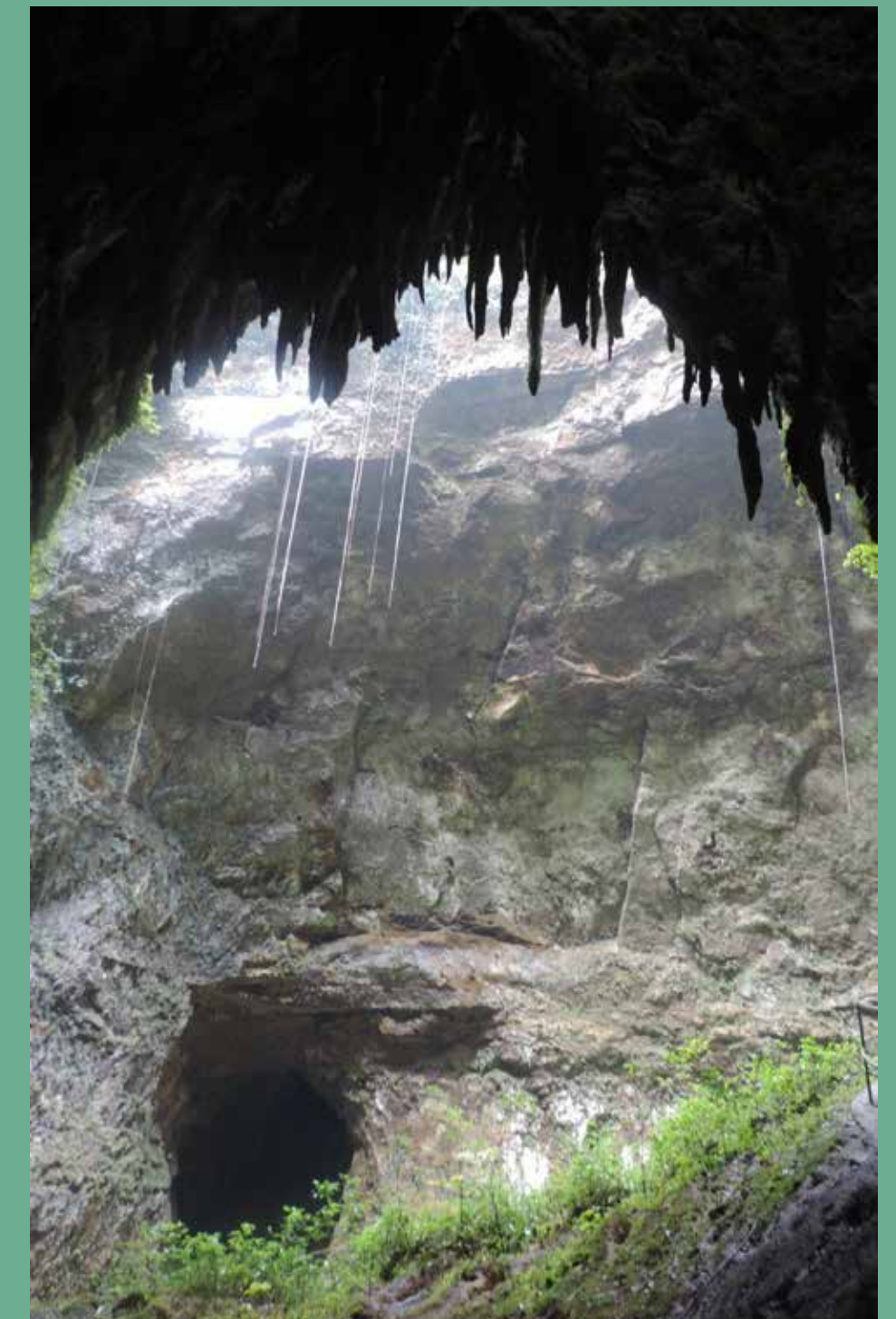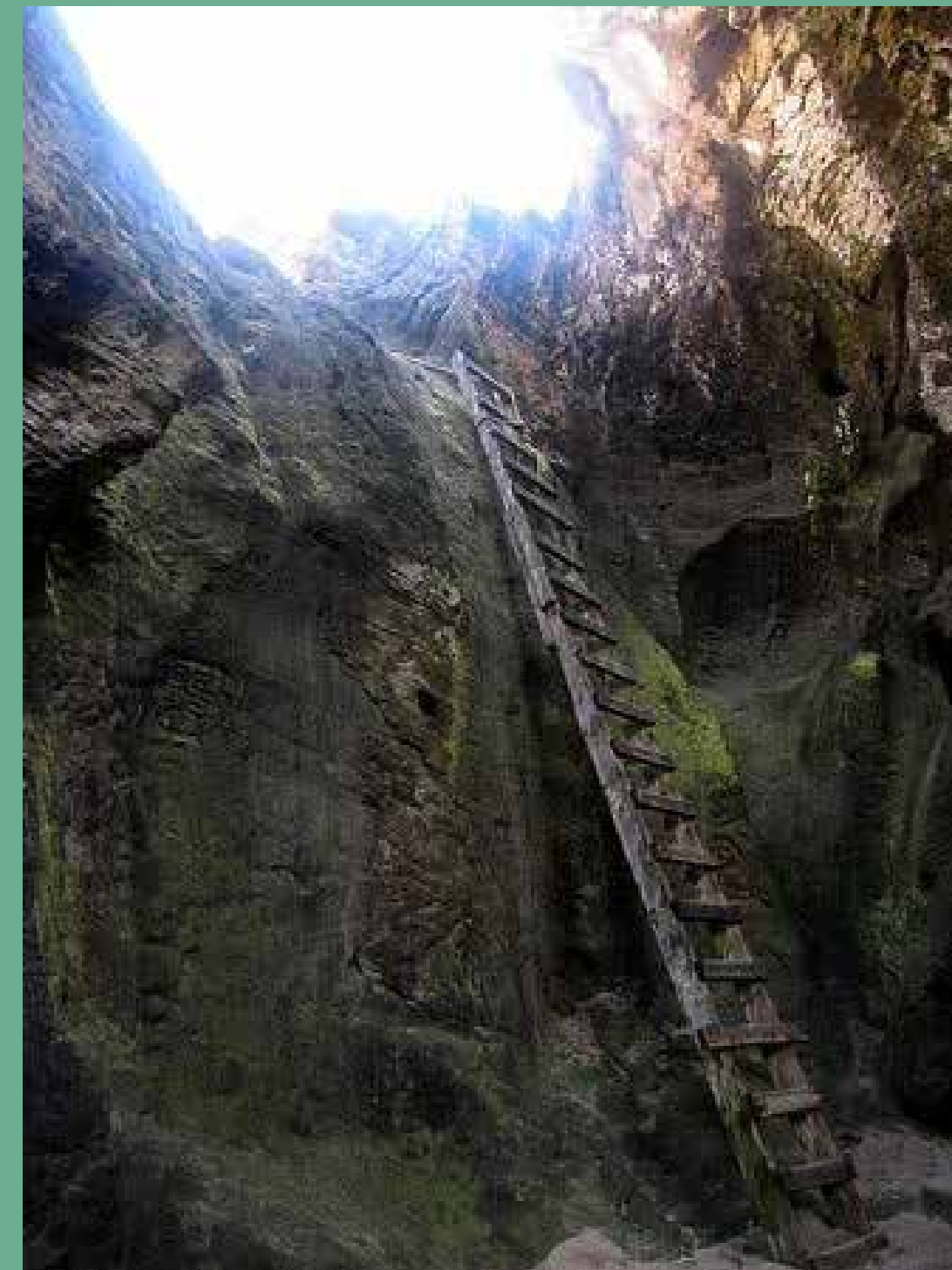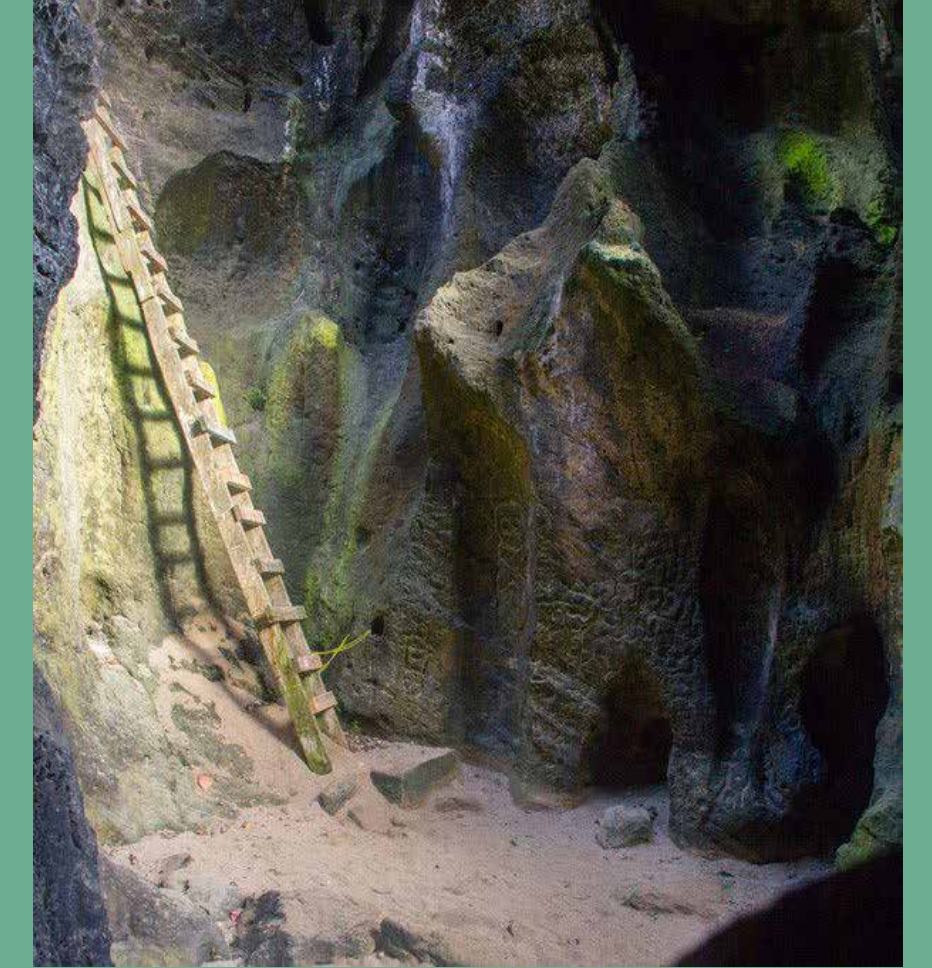
Setting 2: Version 2

Cave: Japanese Ice Cave
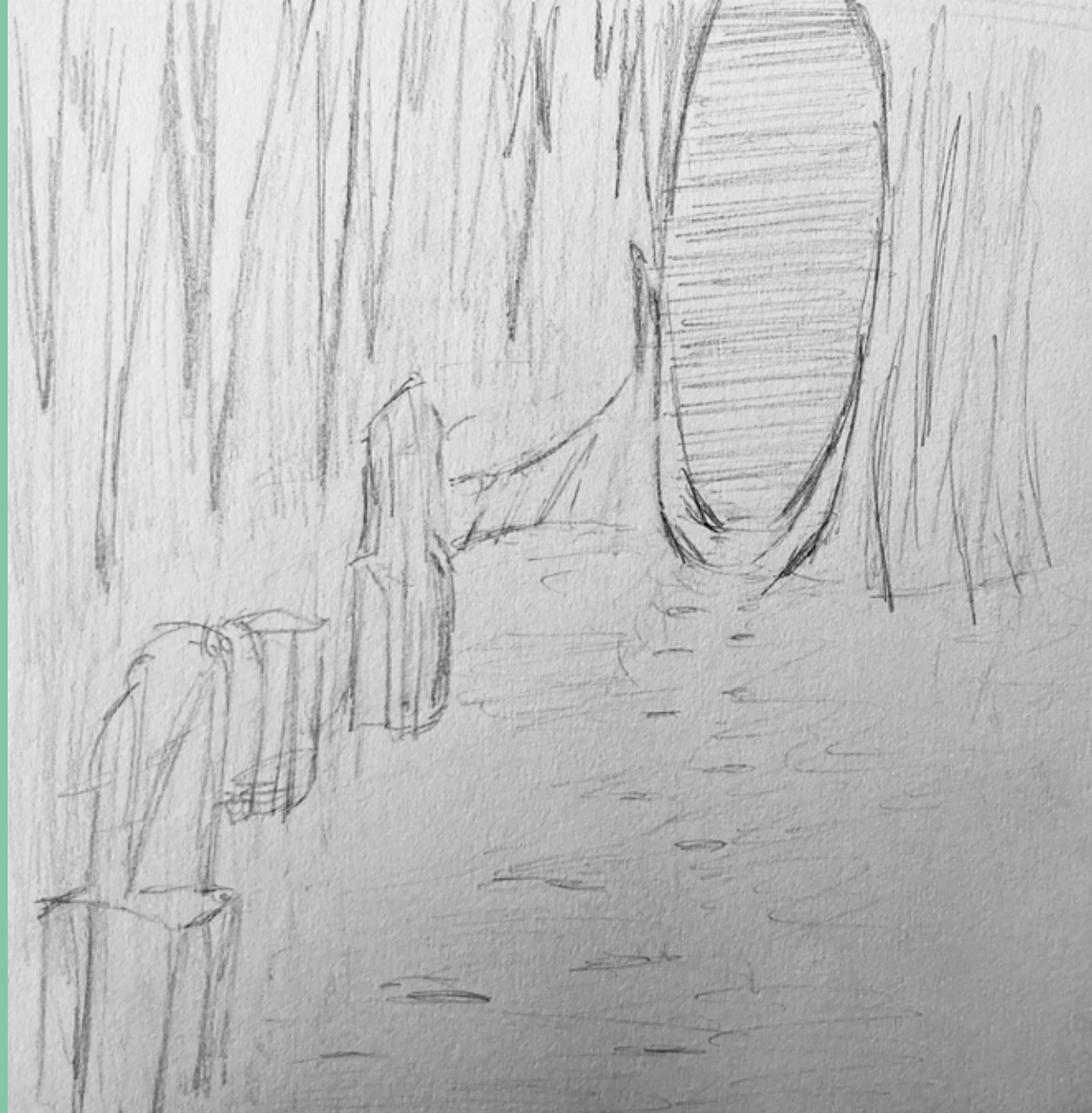
The second version of the cave is based on the Nagasaki Ice Cave and the Fugaku Wind Cave found in Japan.

Cave: Neo Noir Flower Cave
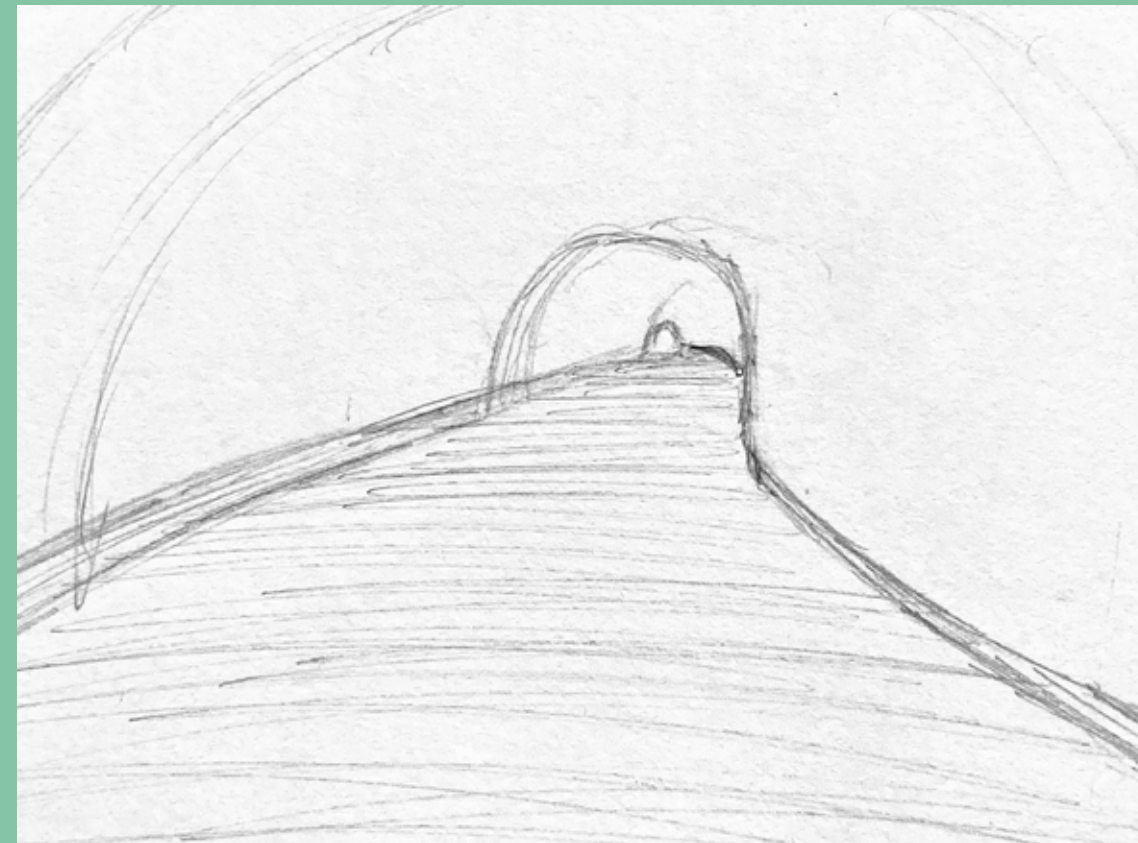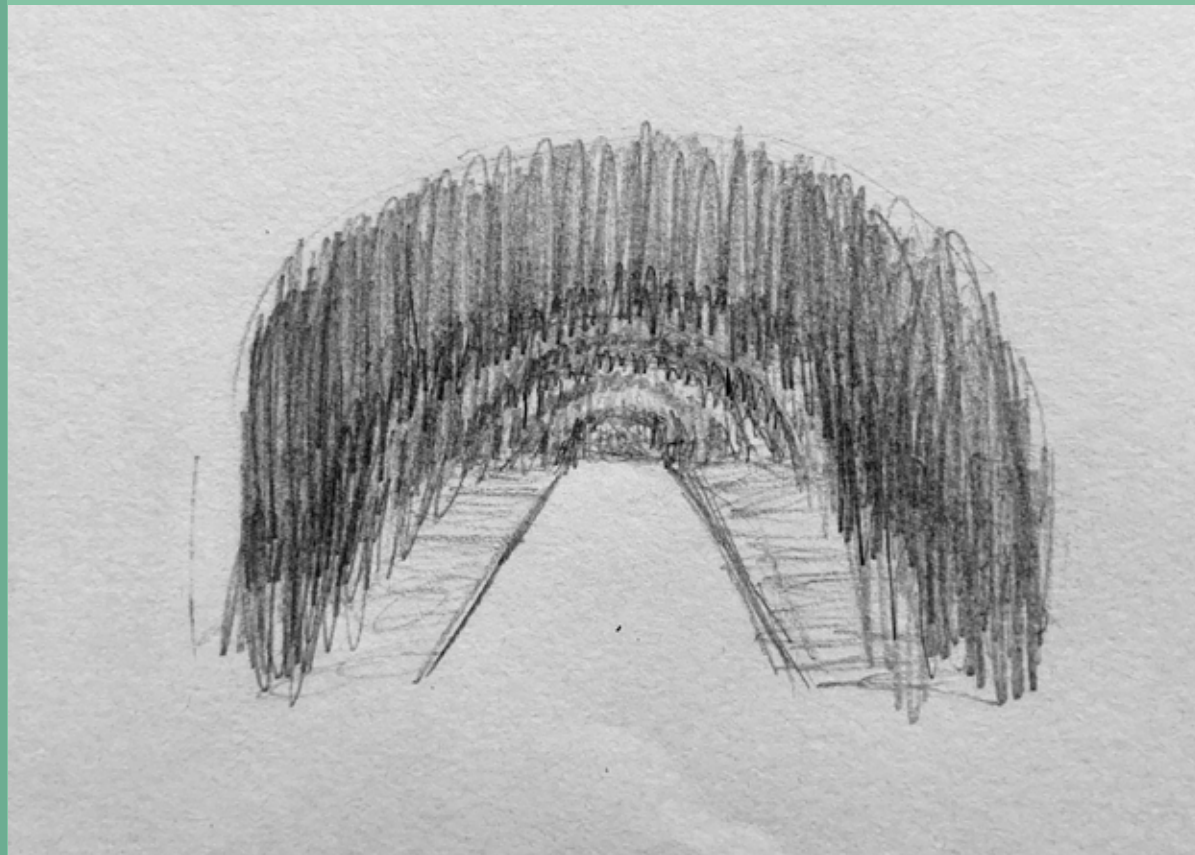
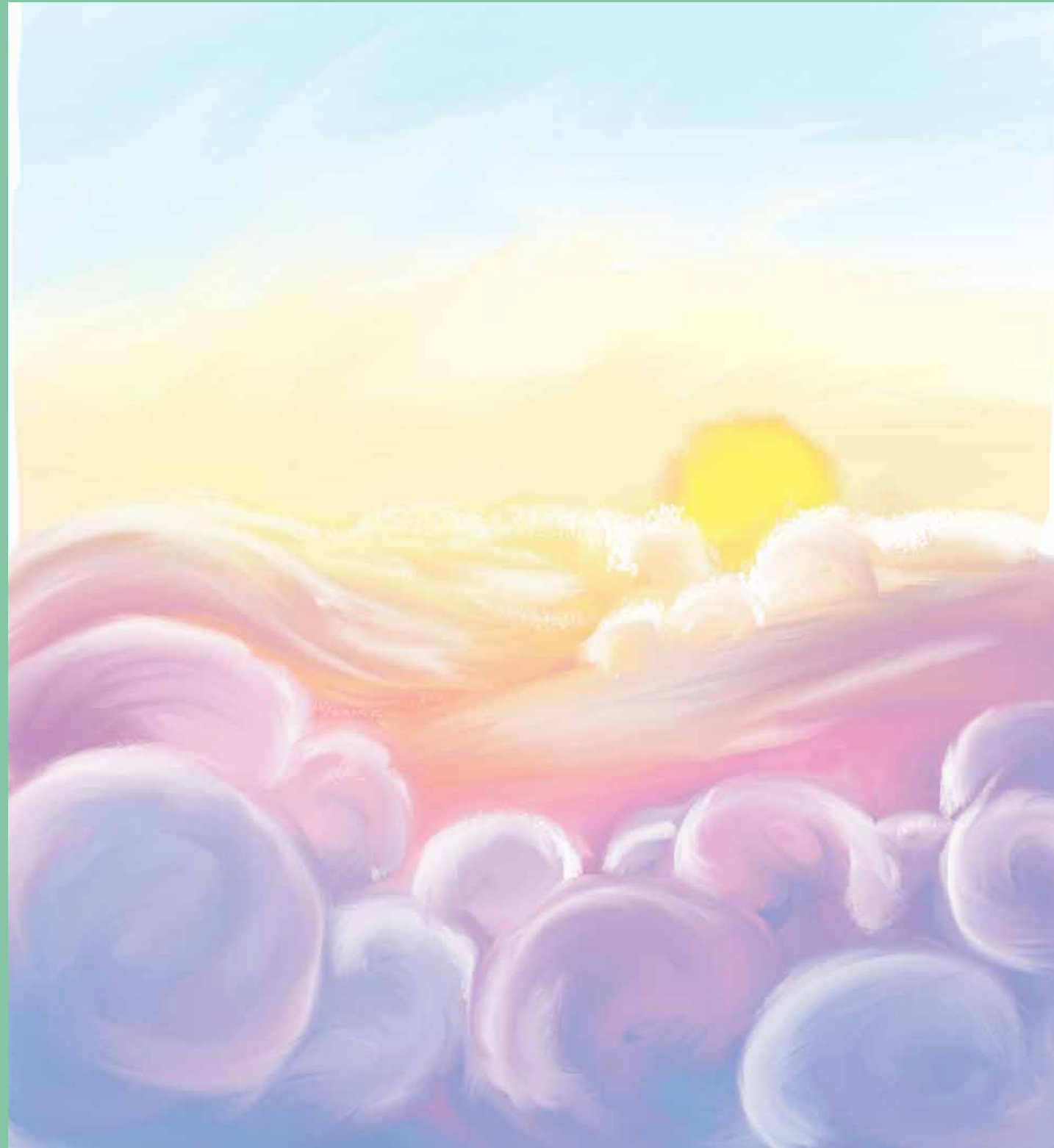For the third version of the cave, I based my design on the illuminated flower tunnels of the Ashikaga Flower Fantasy festival in Japan.
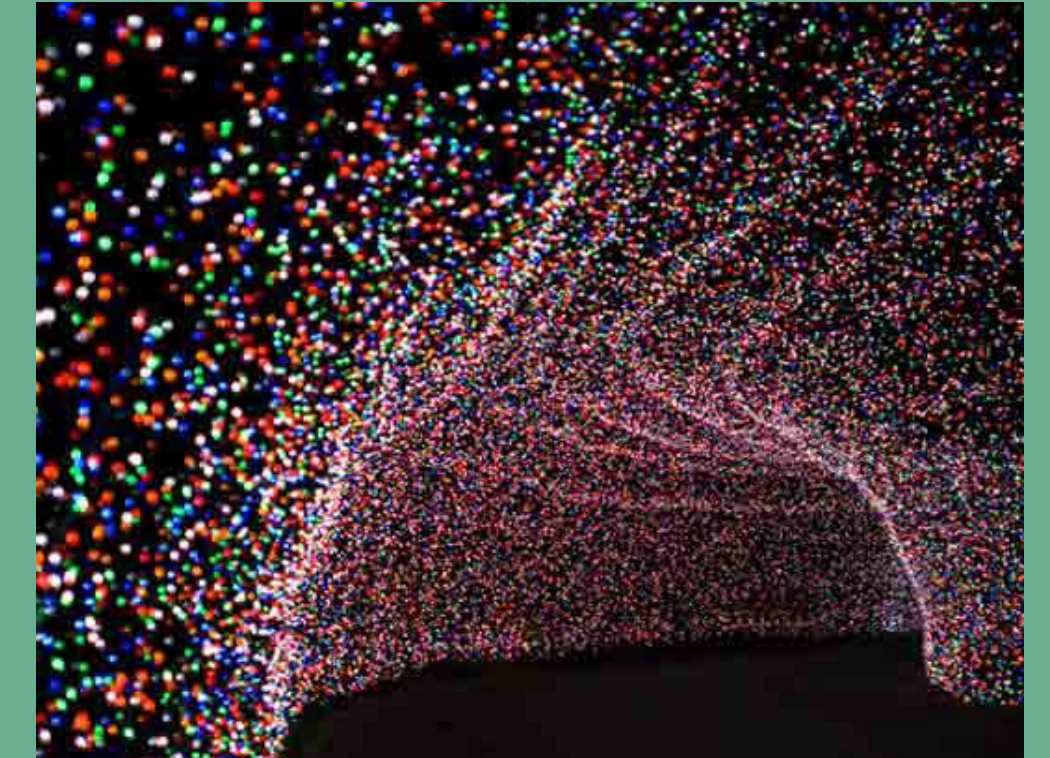
Setting 3

Sky
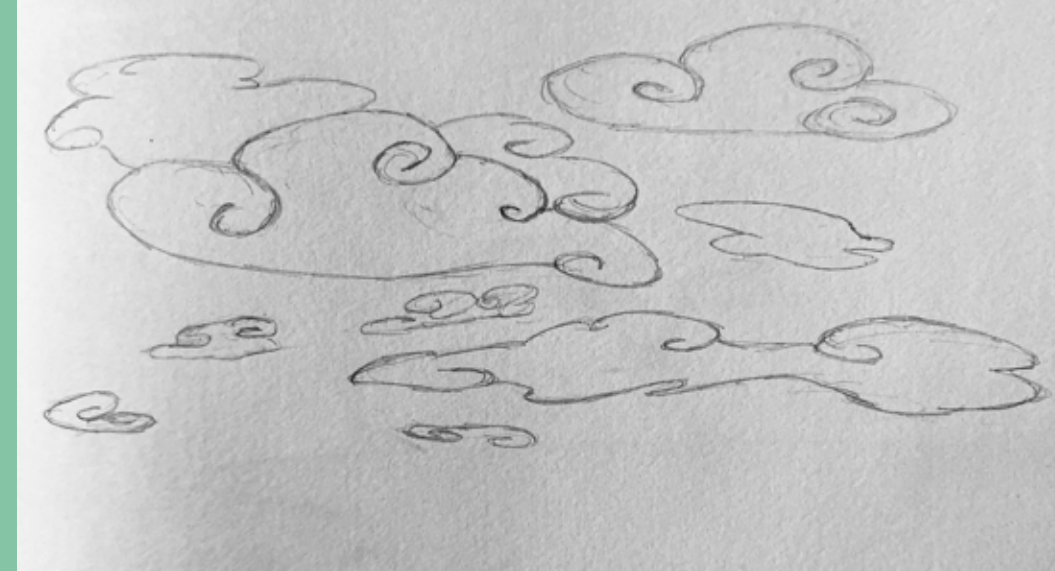
Since my story takes place in the sky, I decided to explore different times of day for the variations of this setting: sunrise, 10 am, and sunset.

CHARACTER DESIGN

Just like the settings, I explored two more variations for each of my characters, Maya and the Owl, based on the research of different cultures. By doing this, I discovered that many countries have similar myths with wind and storm deities that fit with my Hurricane Goddess idea.

CHARACTER DESIGN

Character Style

The main character is based on various references. Her facial and body structure is a blend between Chris Sanders, Glen Keane and "Avatar: The Last Airbender's" (2005) styles. However, both characters will be painted as if in a gouache style with no outline, similar to that of "Paperman" (2012) and "Feast" (2014).
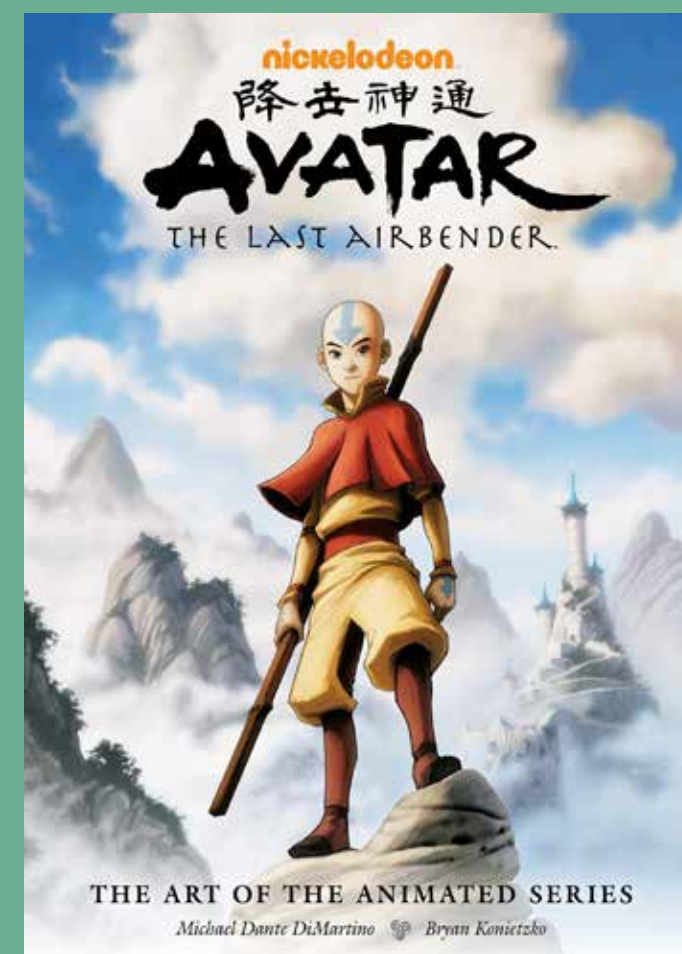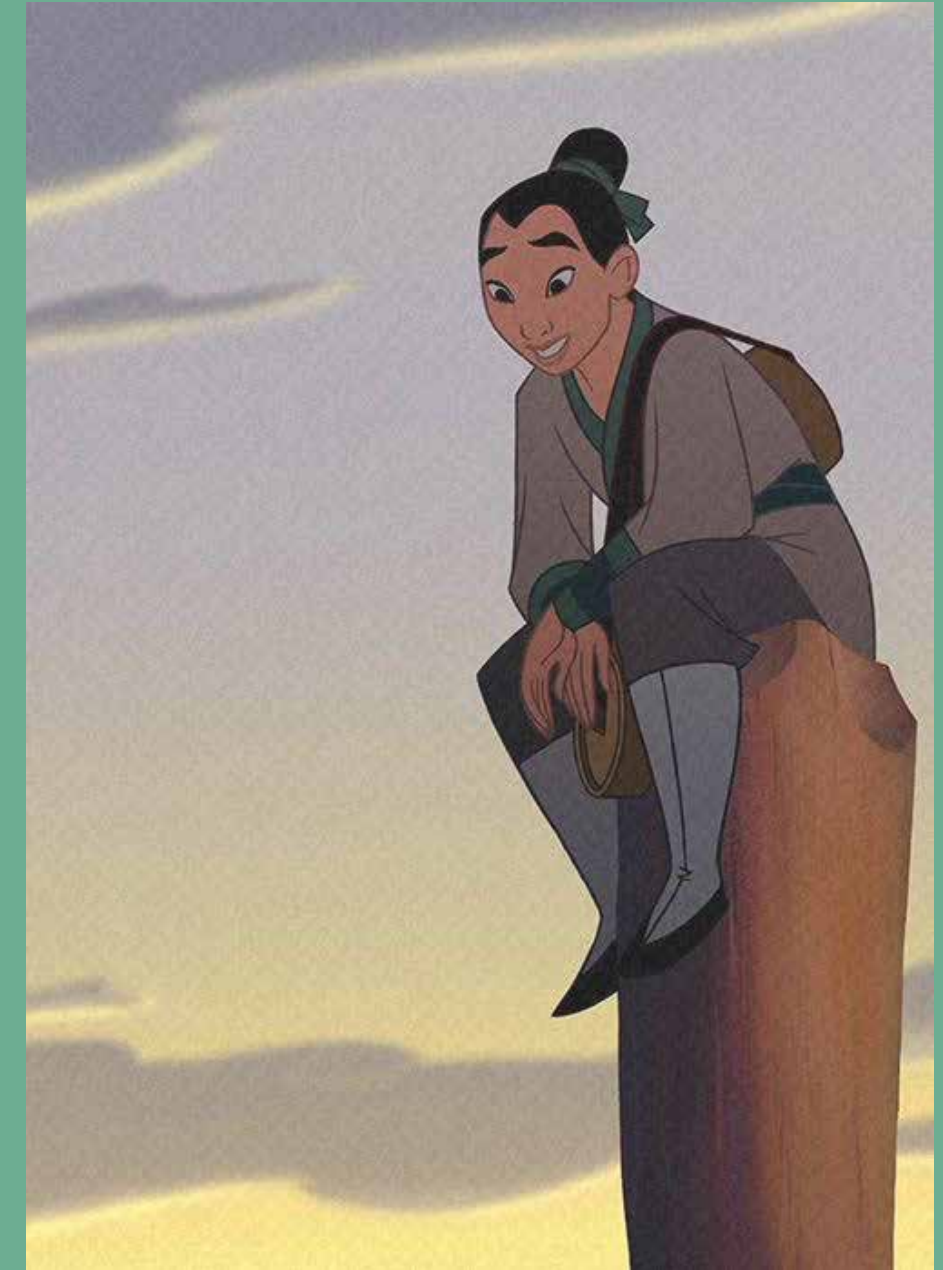
CHARACTER DESIGN

Animation Influences

For my main character, I was inluenced by animated characters of color such as Kirby from "Feast," Nani from "Lilo and Stich" (2002), Katara from Avatar: The Last Airbender and Talim from the "Soul Calibur" franchsie.
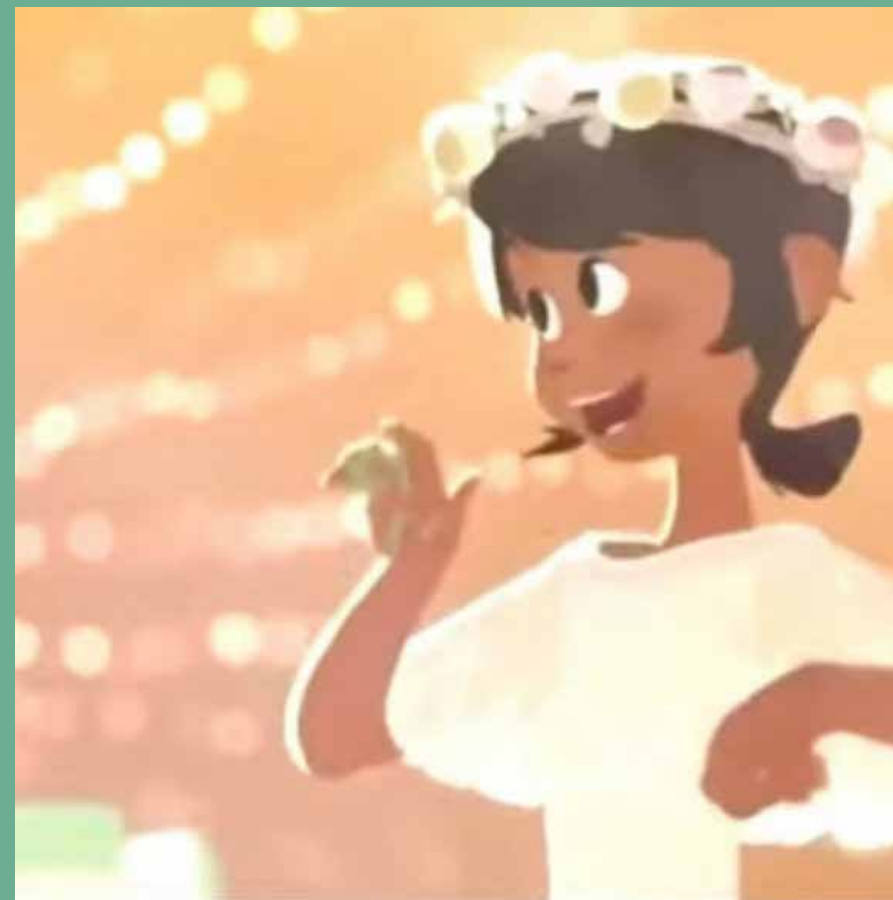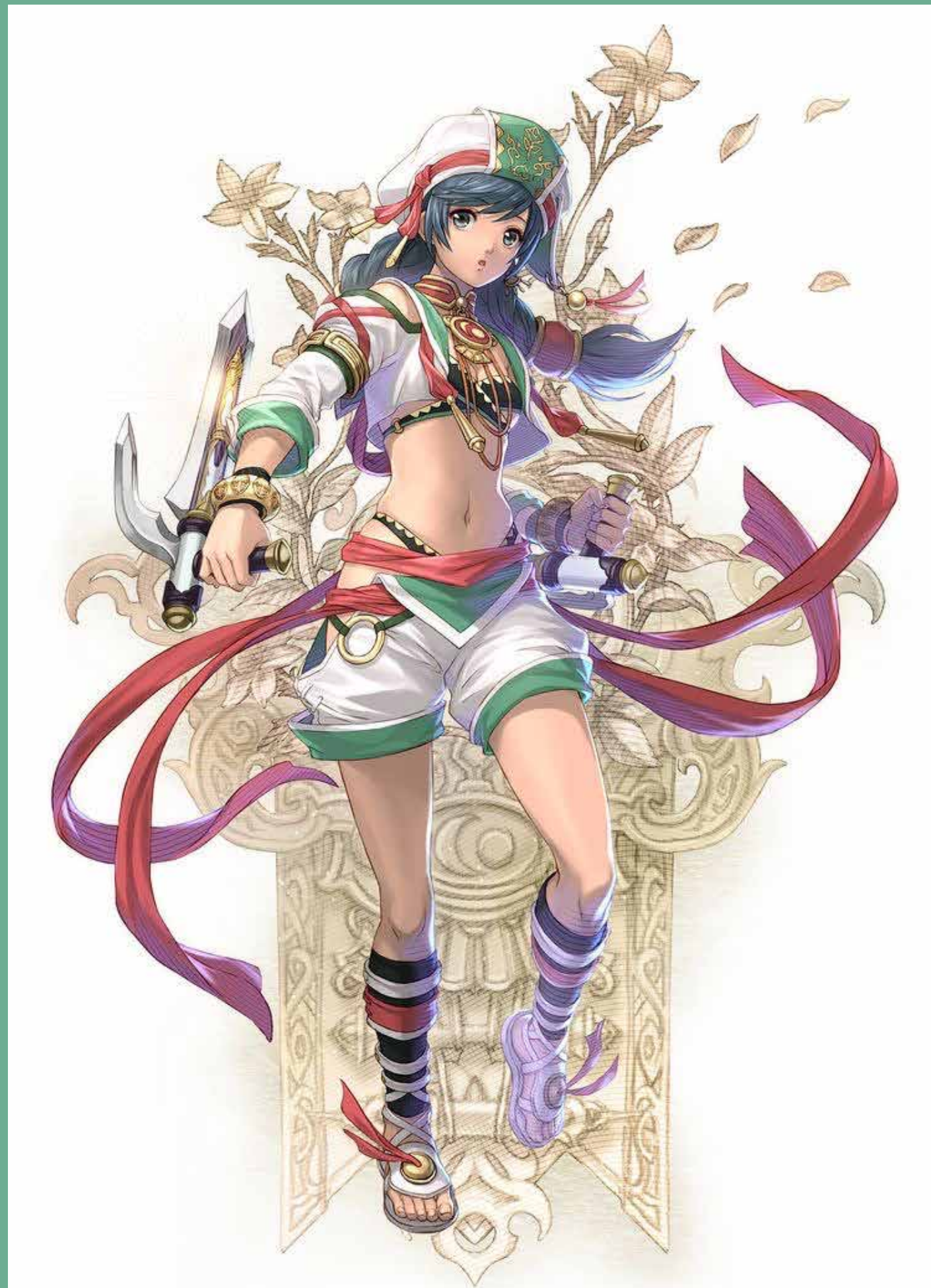
Character 1: Latina/Taina & Hurricane Goddess

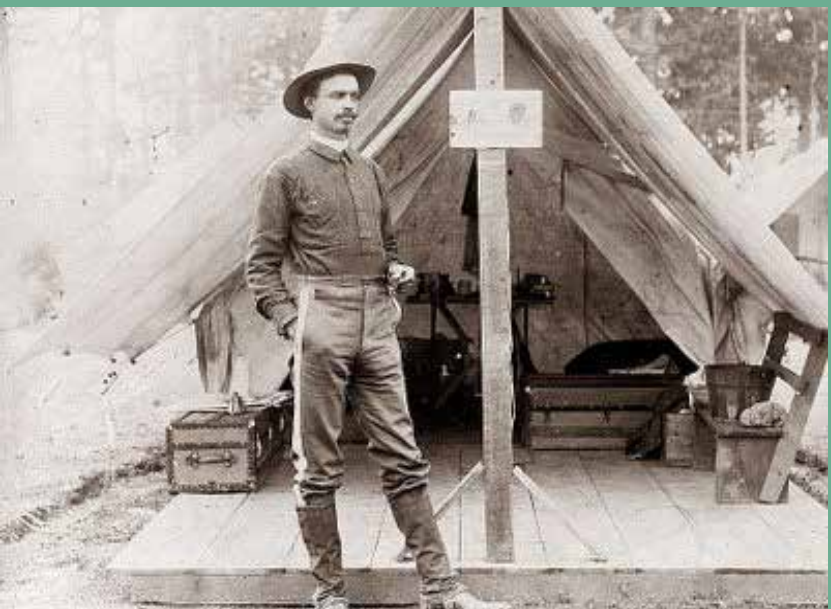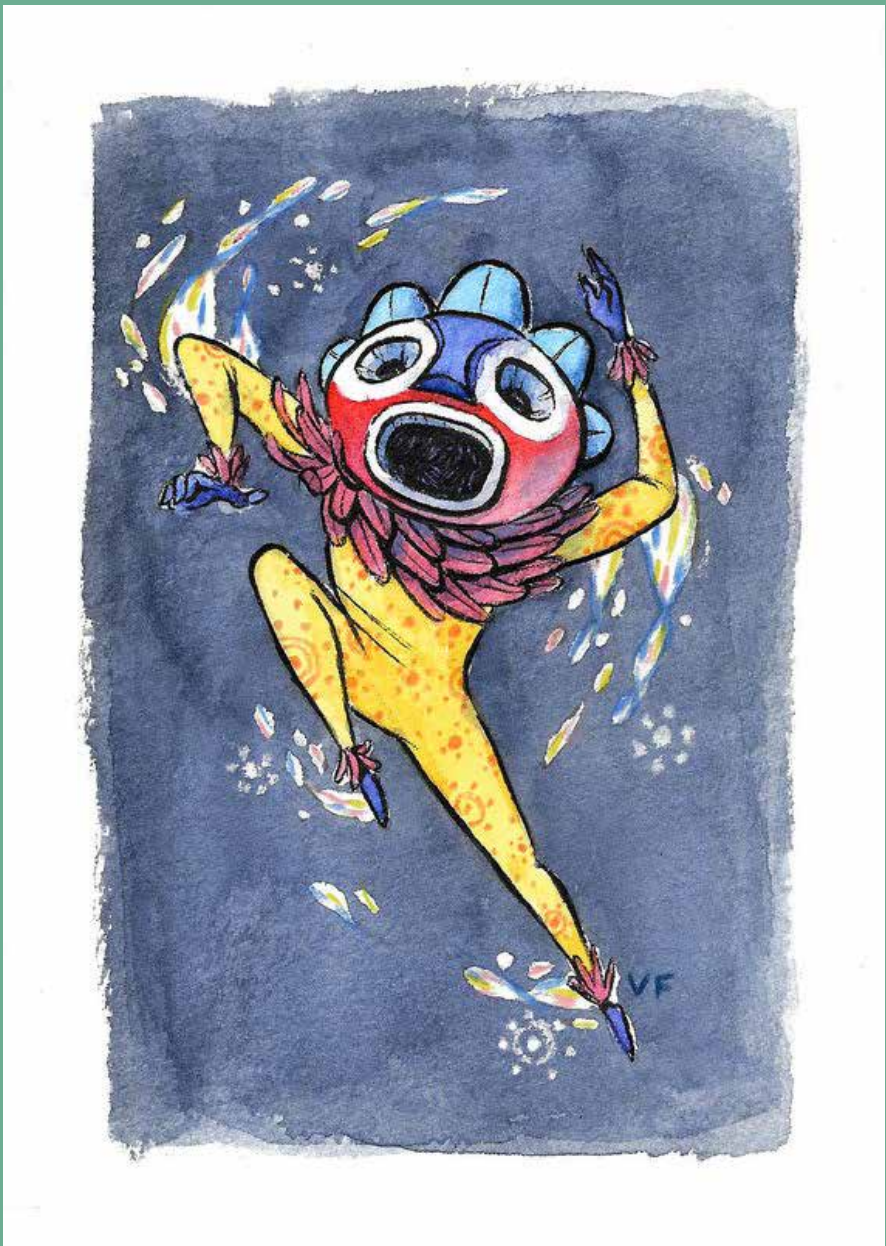The original design is of indigenous descent and is based on the Taino myth of the wind godess, Guabancex.
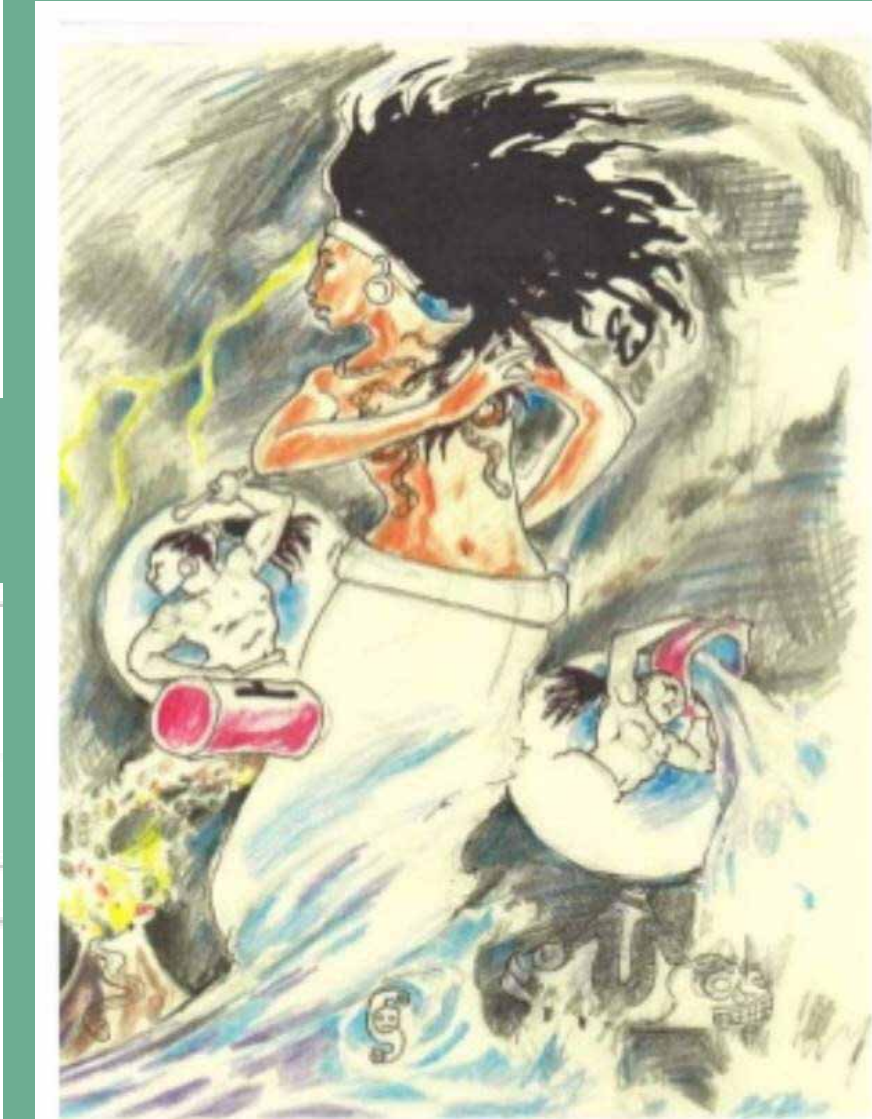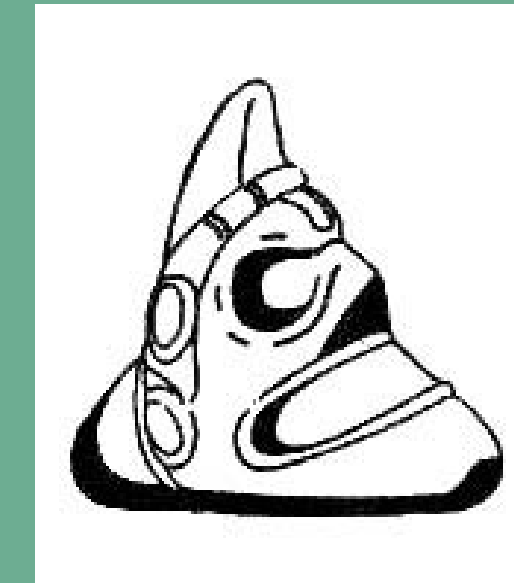
rafaelvelezjr.com

Puerto Rican Culture References:
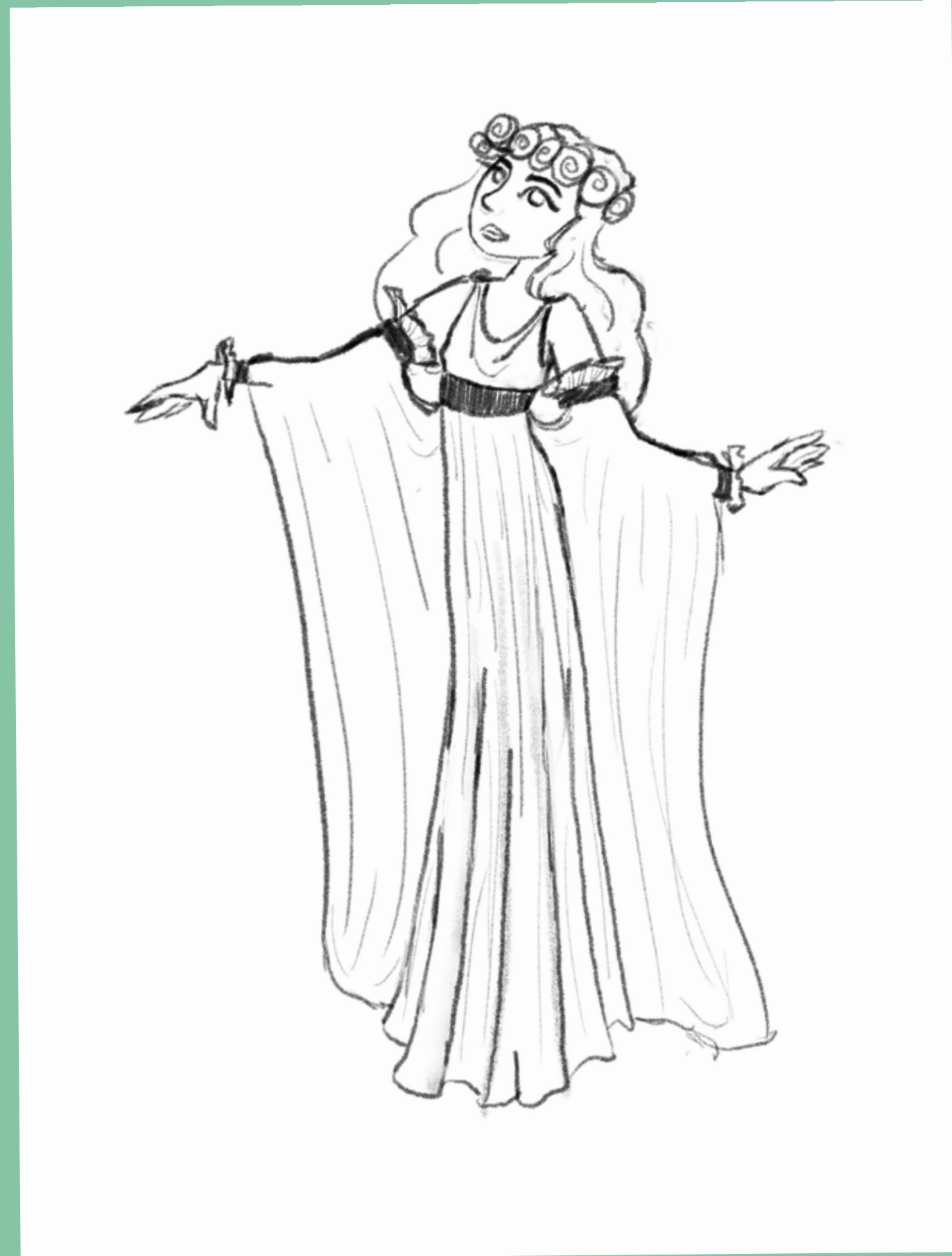Taino/Arawak Amerindians, V Gigante, Spanish Soldiers

Character 1: Japanese

The second design is based on onna-bugeisha (femle samurai) and geisha during Feudal Japan as well as the wind and thunder deities called Funjin and Rajin.
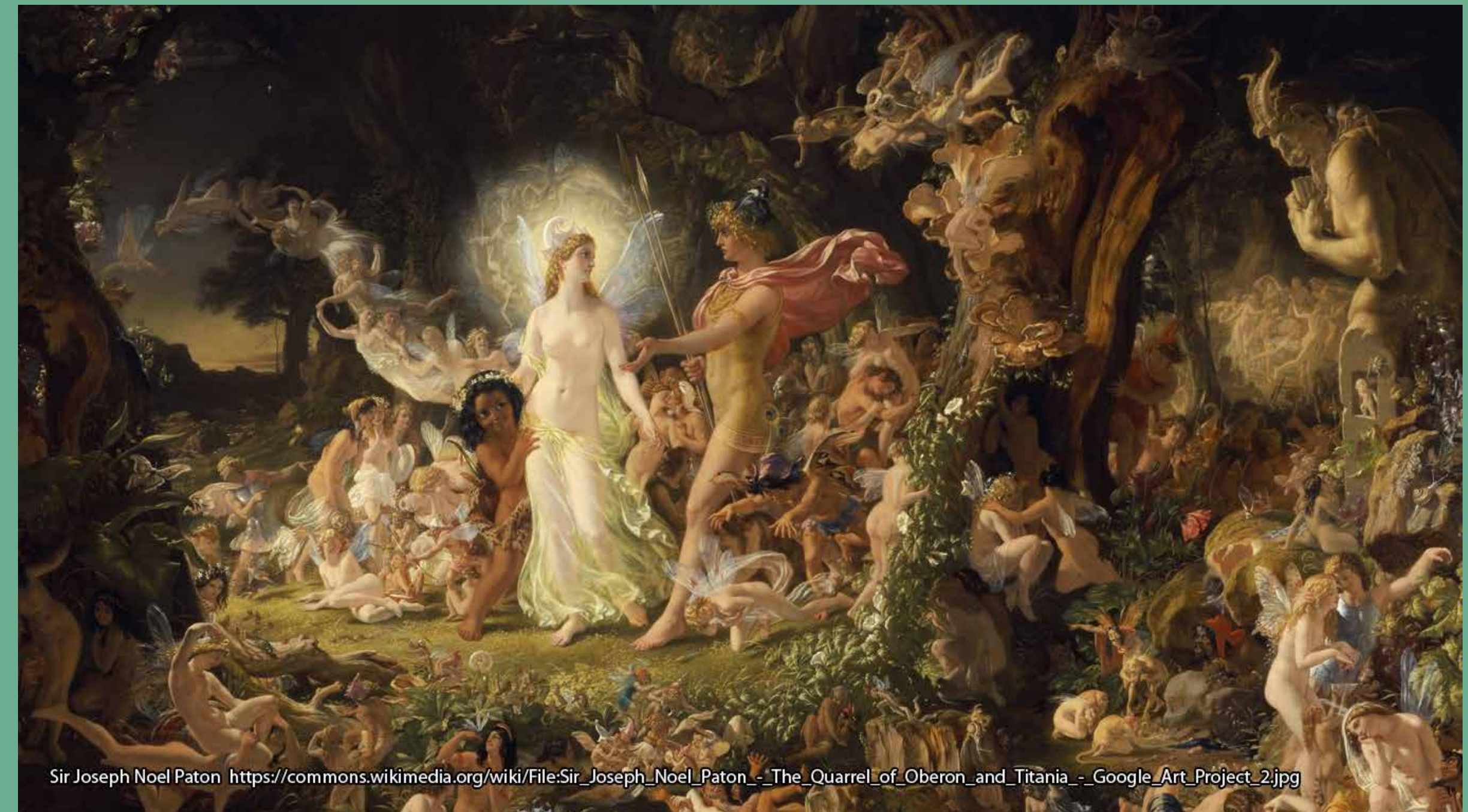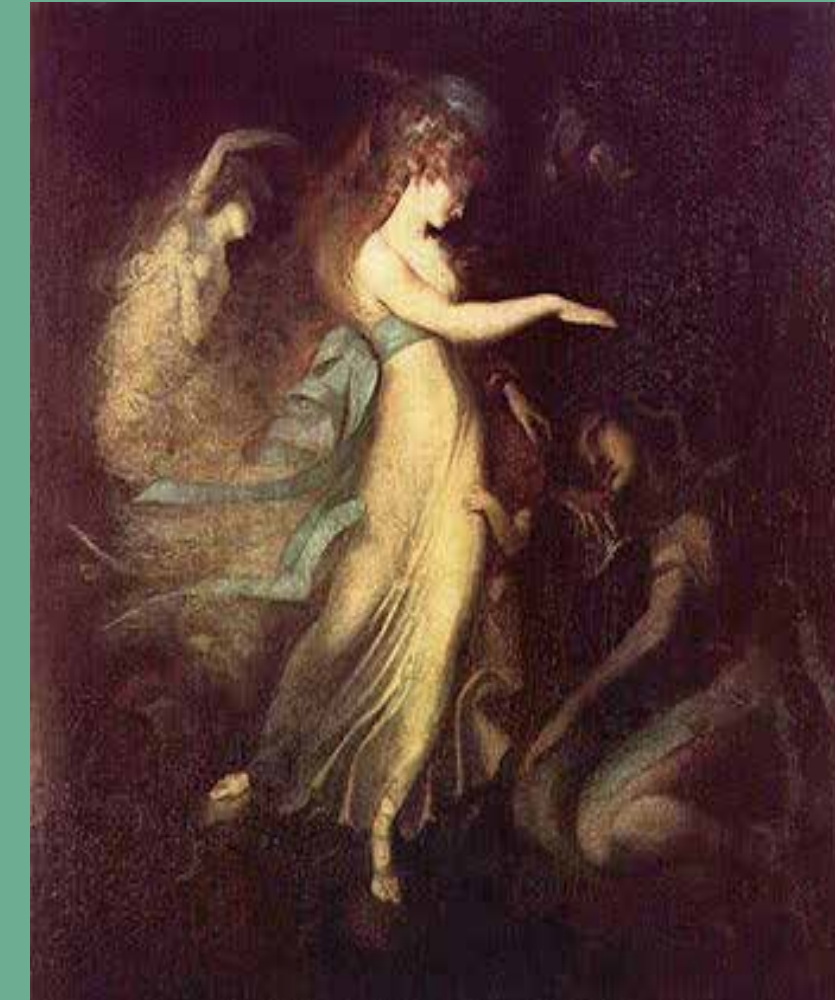
Character 1: Version 3

Character 1: Irish

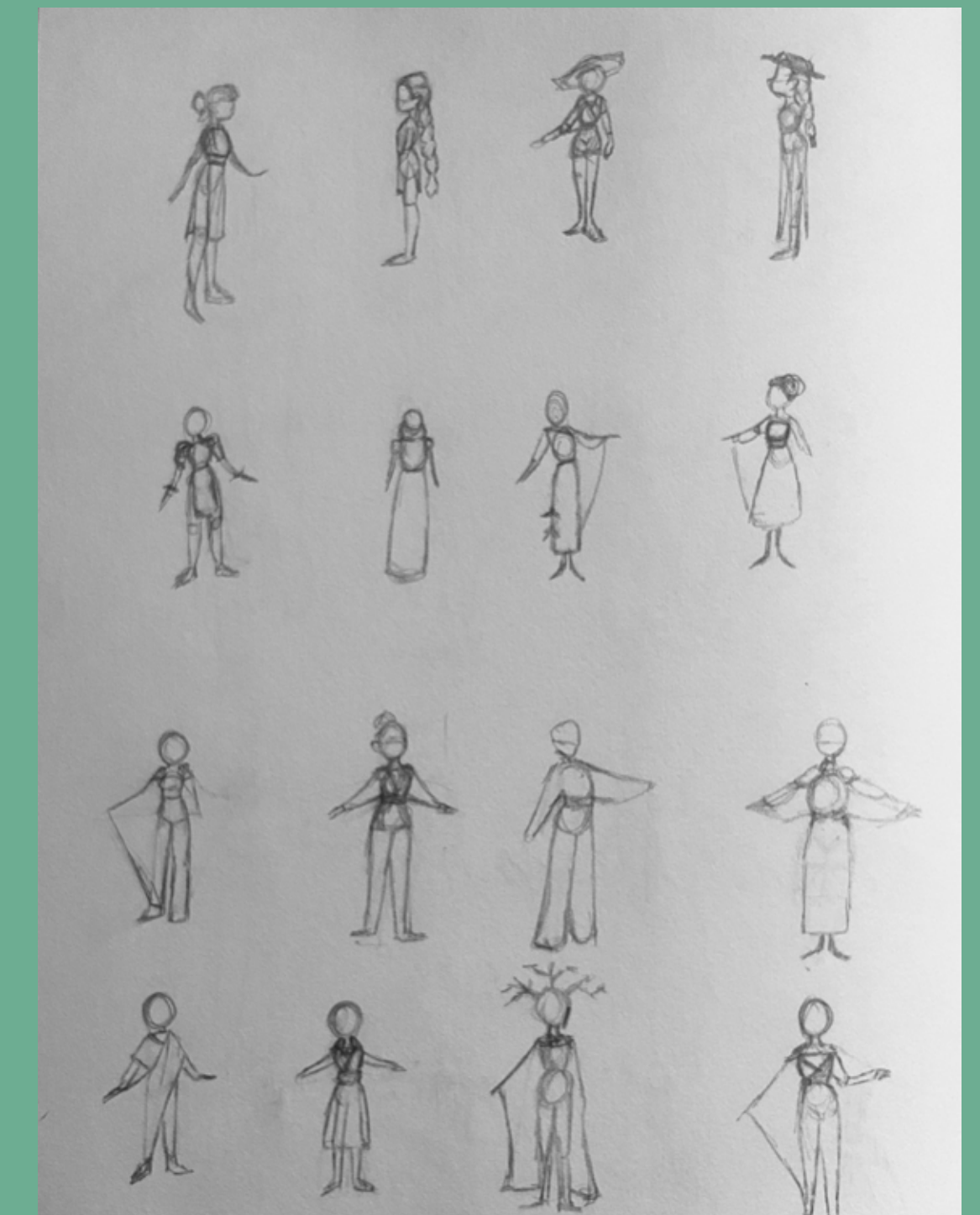The third design is based on wind deities called Aos Sí from Ireland.
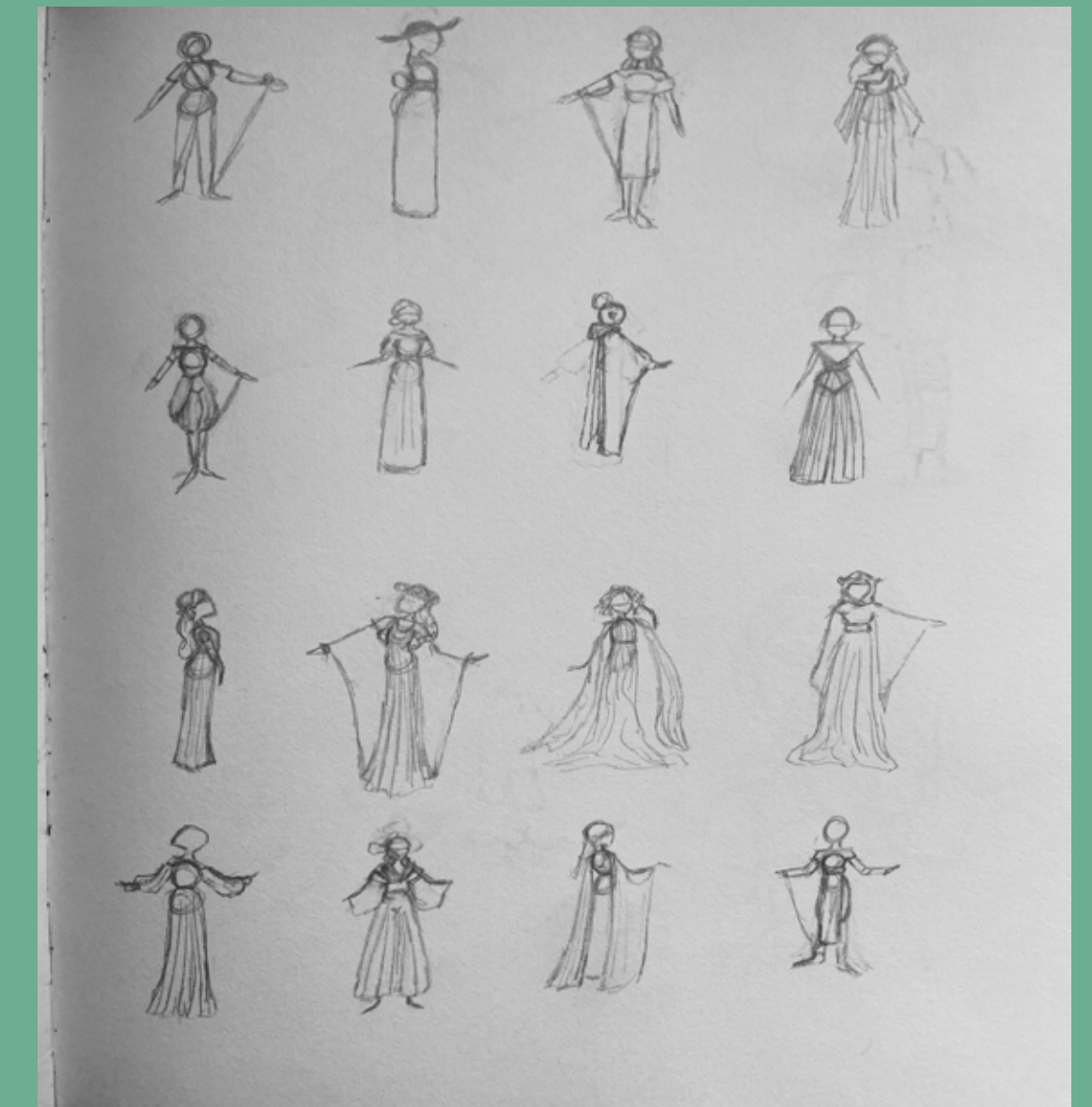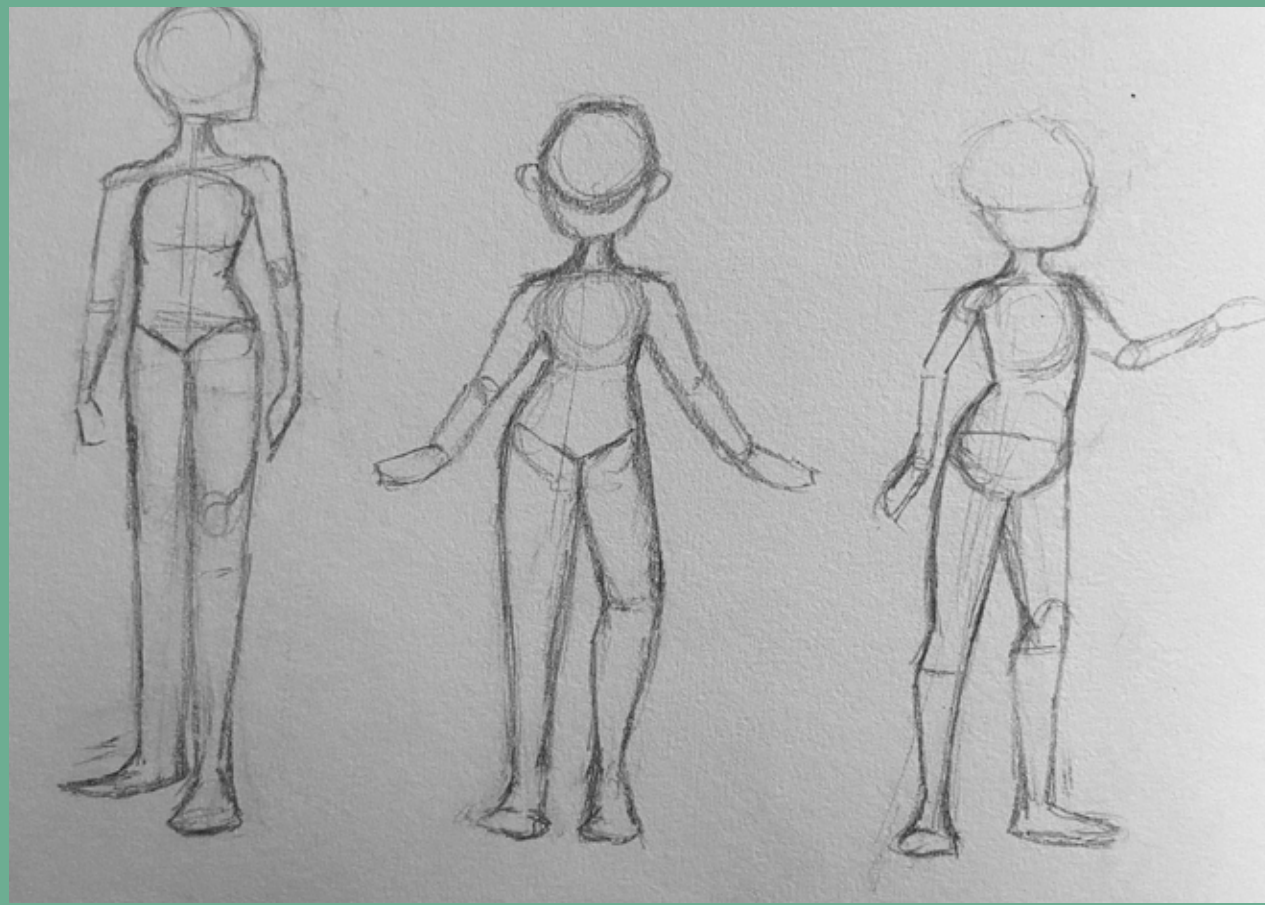
Sir Joseph Noel Paton https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sir_Joseph_Noel_Paton_-_The_Quarrel_of_Oberon_and_Titania_-_Google_Art_Project_2.jpg
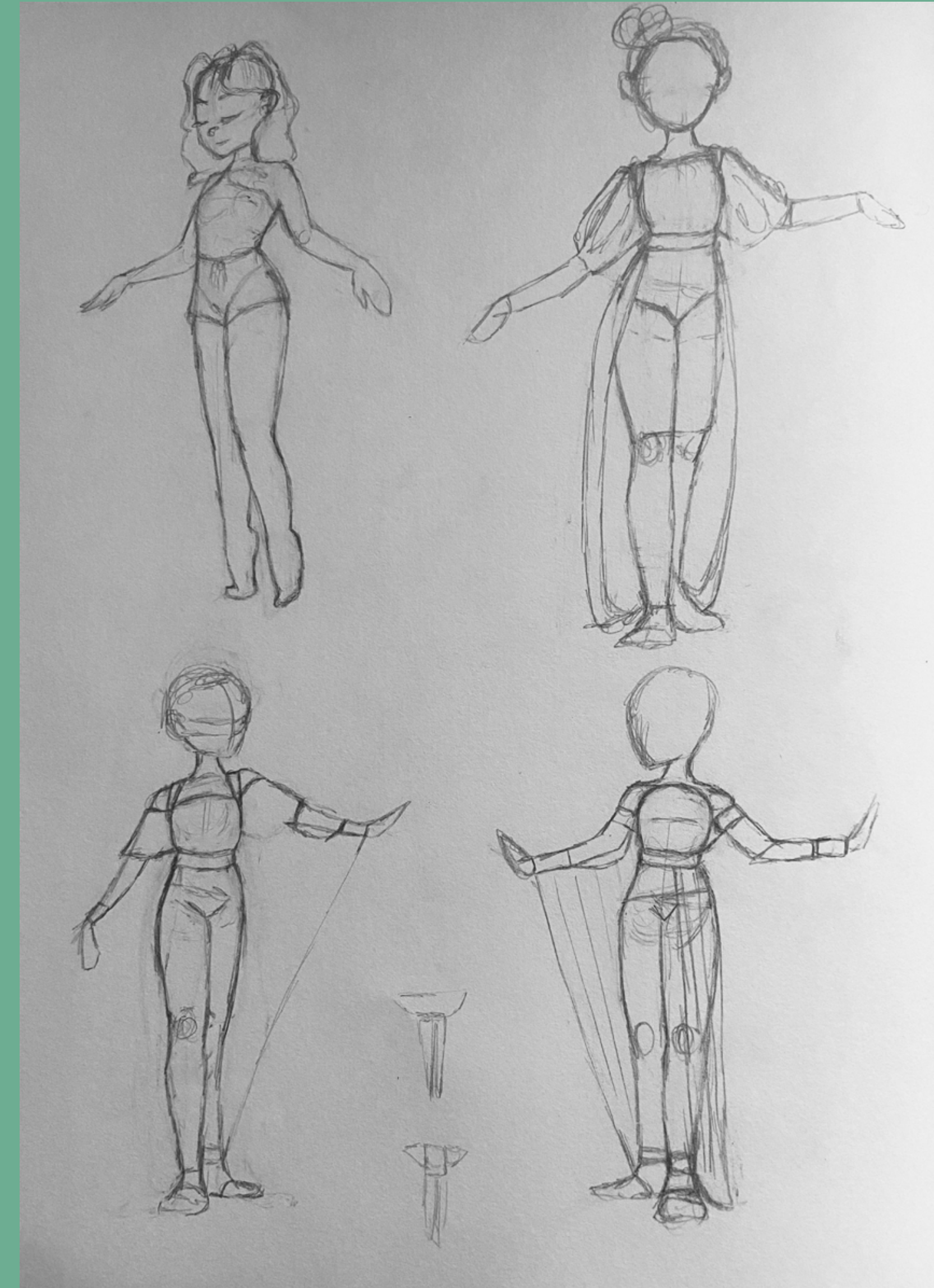
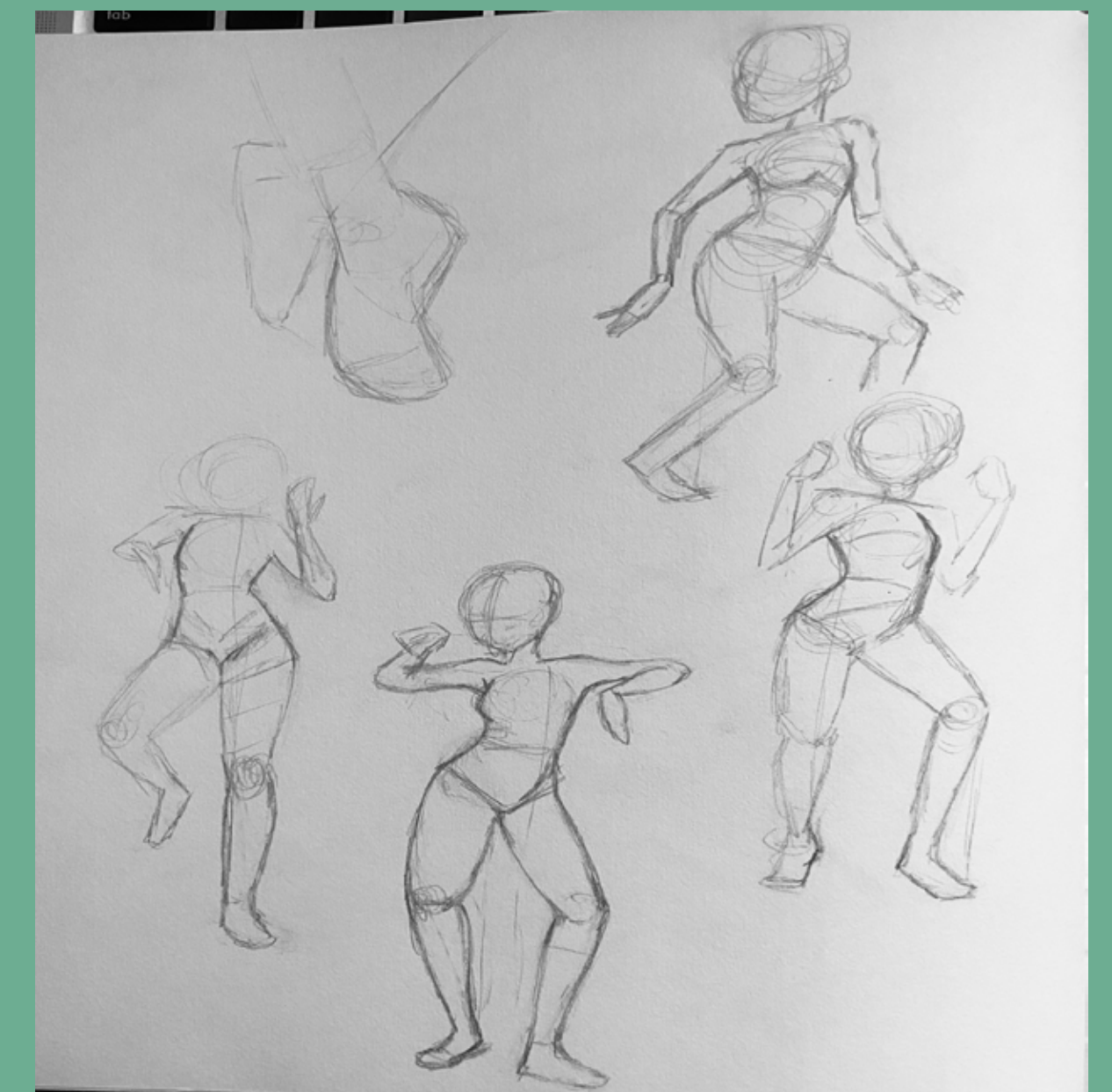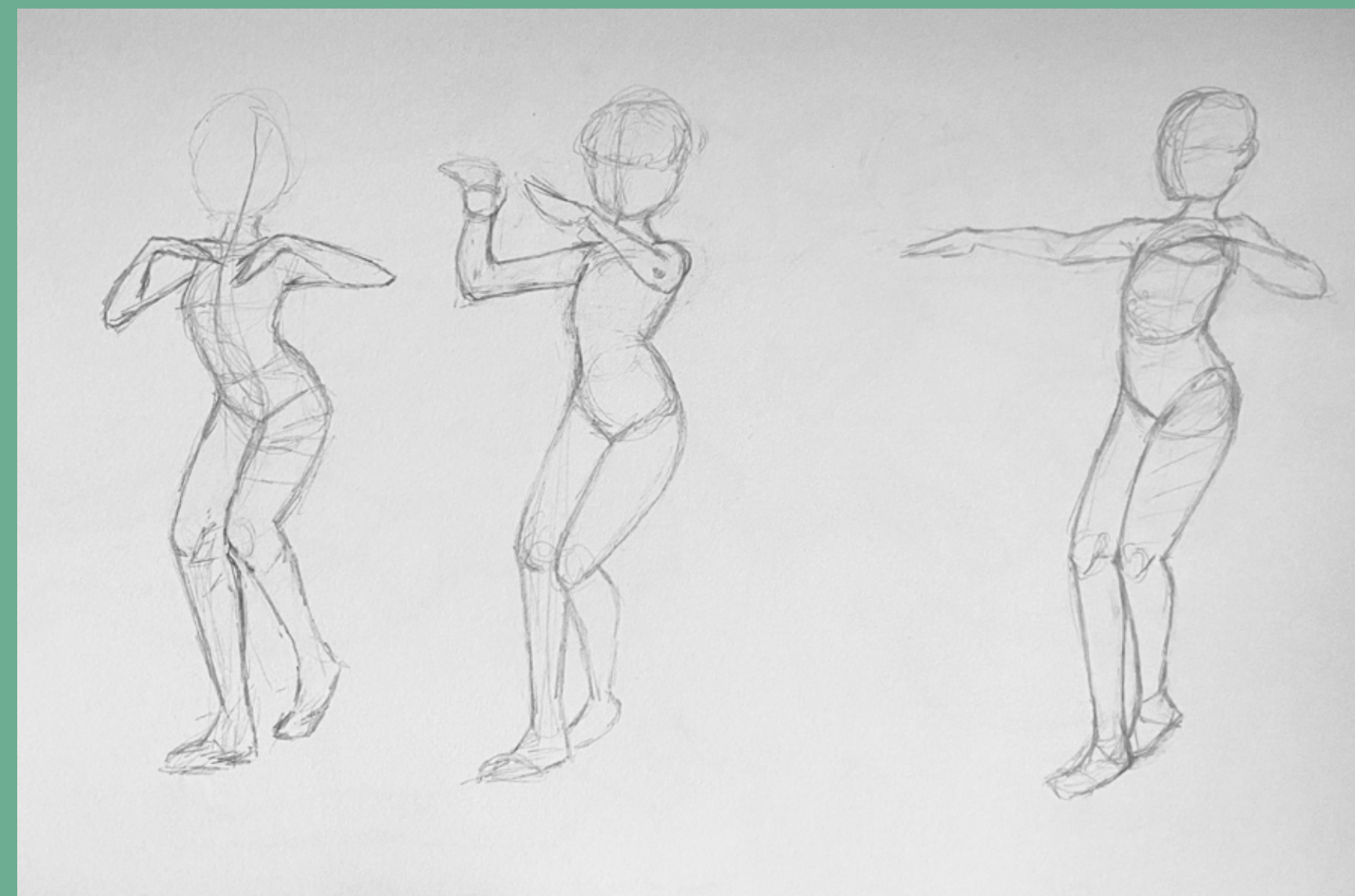# CHARACTER DESIGN

Thumbnails/Silhouettes

CHARACTER DESIGN

Wardrobe

CHARACTER DESIGN
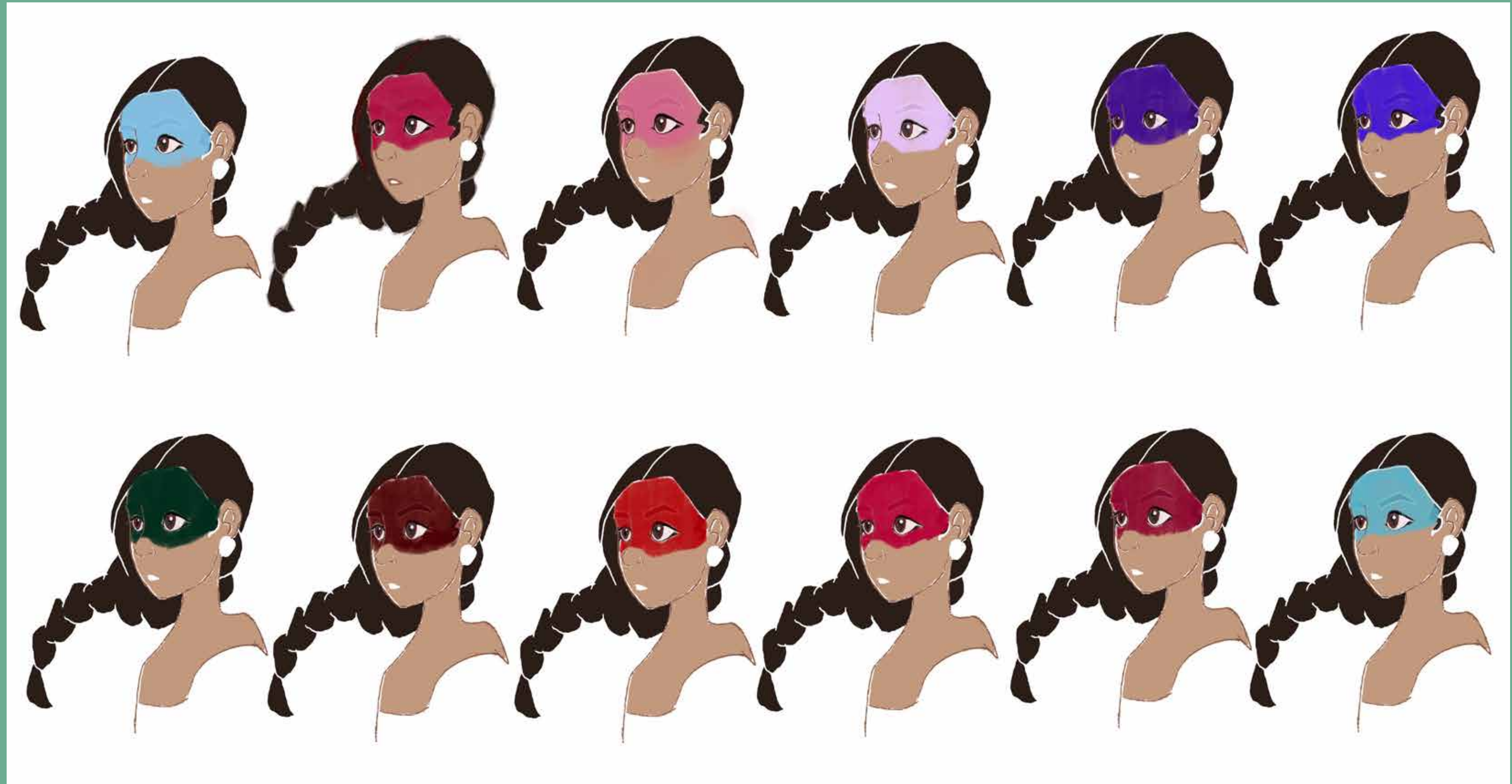
Action Poses and Expressions

CHARACTER DESIGN

Color Studies

Character 2: Version 1

Mentor Character: Owl

My first version of the character is based on the great grey owl, the barn owl and Wan Shi Tong from "Avatar: The Last Airbender."

Character 2: Version 2

Mentor Character: Taina

For my second exploration of the character, I decided to create a human version which the owl could turn into. This design is based on both my grandmother and great-grandother who are of Taino descent.

Mentor Character: Owl Griffin

My third version is a combination of a chinese lion,
a japanese dragon and a barn owl in order to create a sort
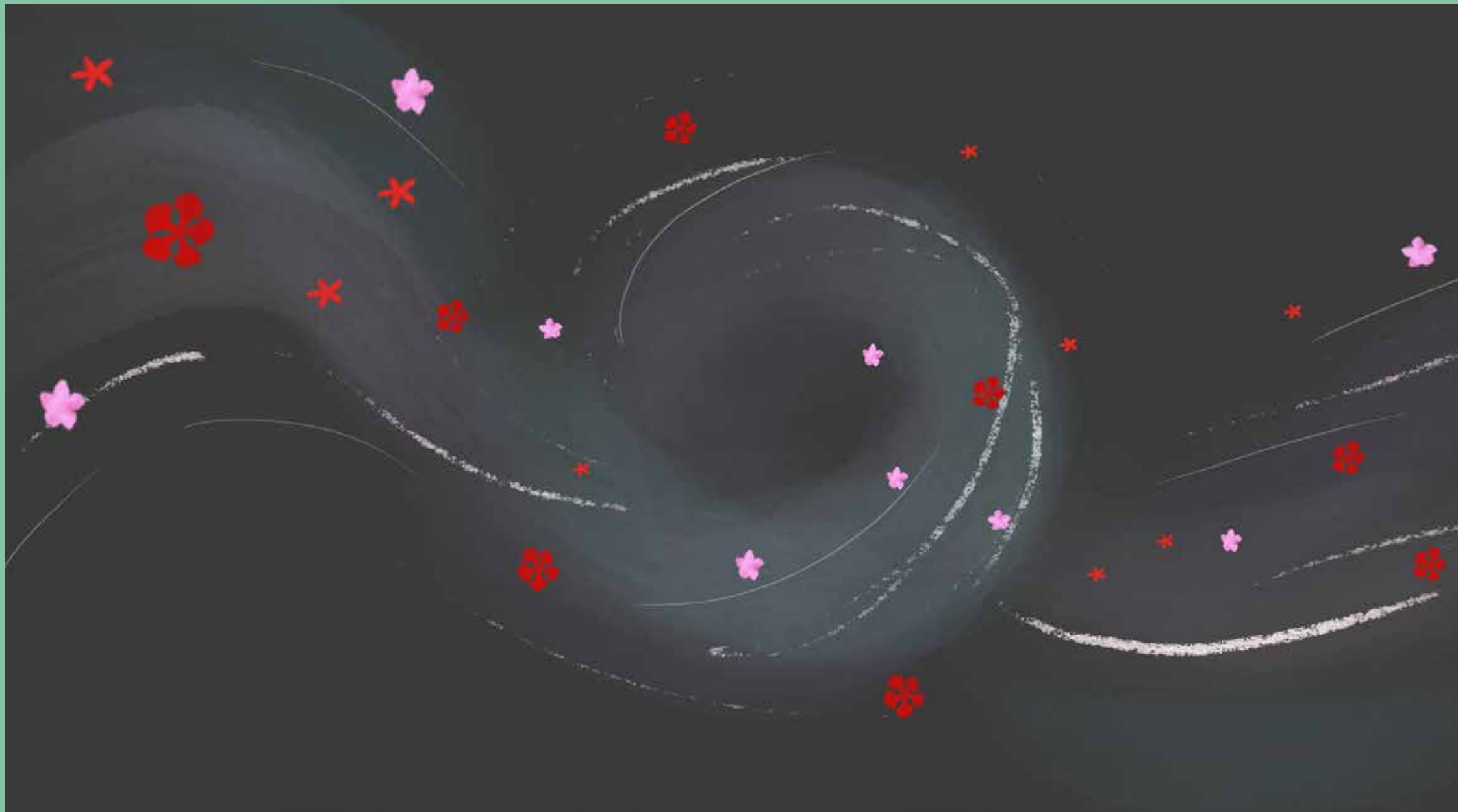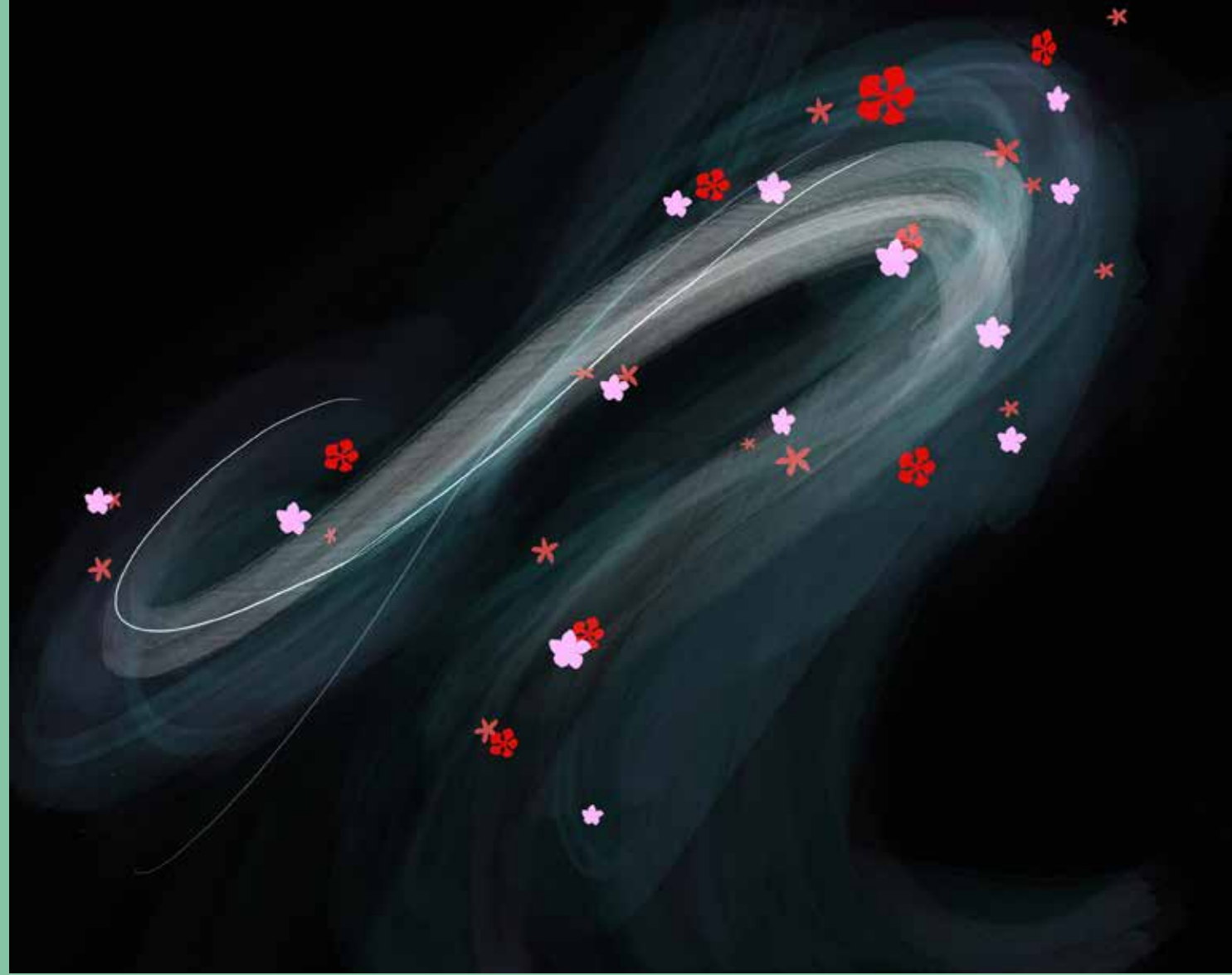of griffin, this way making the character more magical.

Visual Effect Design
and
Animatic

Visual Effect Design

Link to Animatic

Maya:
https://youtu.be/GioKDAqJBWg