

MASTER'S PROJECT

MA FASHION MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

<SYMBIOTIC SCRIPT>

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PROJECT BRIEF

This project is a gamified narrative film that explores how symbols, structure, and space within traditional Chinese culture can be reactivated under the shadow of technological alienation, offering an alternative way of sensing and connecting in the present. As technology continues to compress the relationship between humans and the world, culture is no longer seen as a static inheritance, but as an ecosystem within the human spirit—dynamic, interconnected, and fundamental to how we inhabit and understand the world. Through a reconstructed oracle-bone figure, metaphors of mortise-and-tenon joinery, and spatial storytelling inspired by Chinese gardens, the film centers on the creation and experience of space, seeking a path of symbiosis between tradition and the digital age to rebuild cultural consciousness.

TARGET AUDIENCE



Popular audience:
People who interested in how technology shapes tradition, identity, relationships, and ecology.

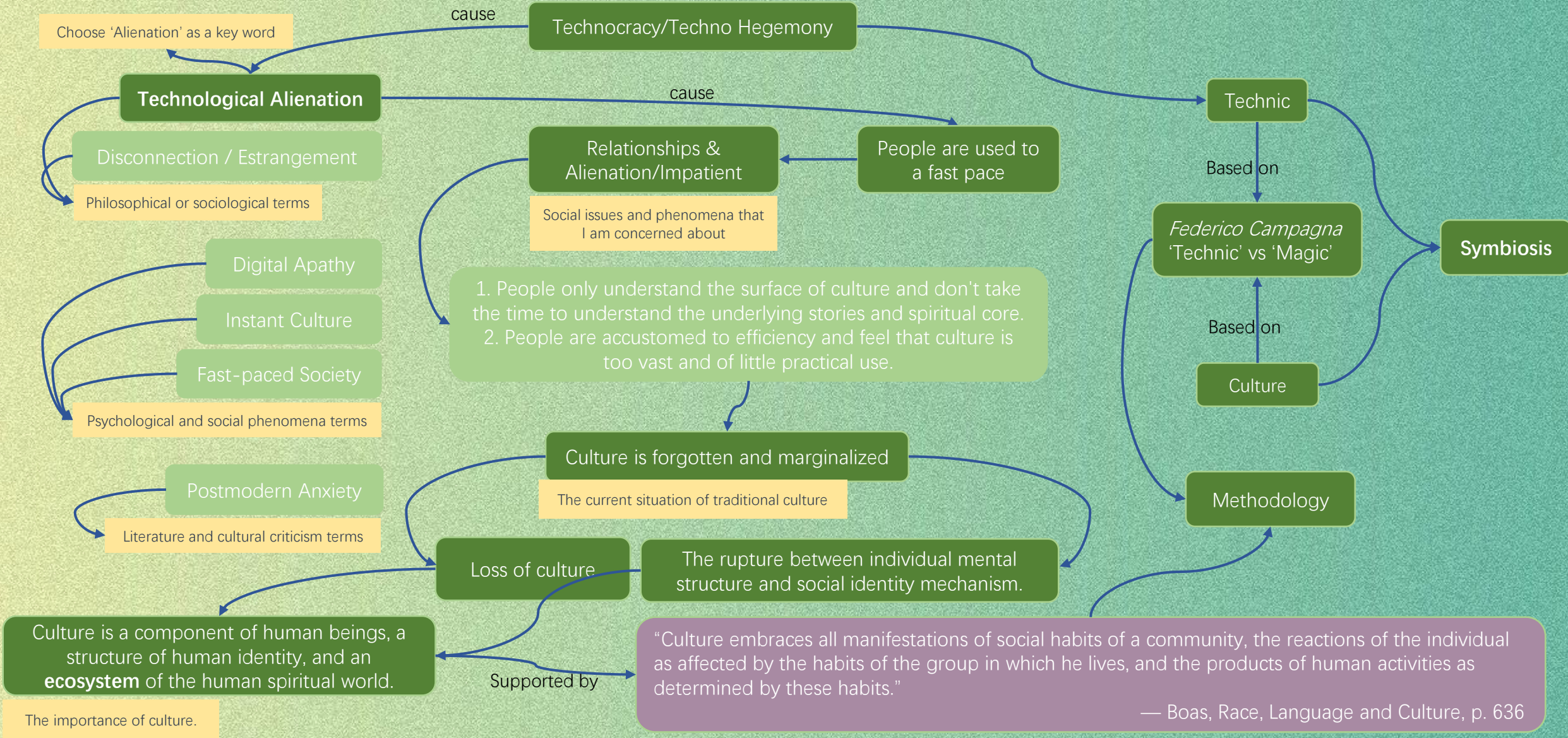


Creative practitioners:
Practitioners active in the art field that combines digital media and traditional culture.



Academic community:
UAL faculty, students and visitors - focusing on discussions on cultural heritage, digital narratives and technological criticism.

IDEA GENERATION



Choose 'Alienation' as a key word

Technocracy/Techno Hegemony

Technological Alienation

Technic

Symbiosis

Disconnection / Estrangement

Relationships & Alienation/Impatient

People are used to a fast pace

Federico Campagna 'Technic' vs 'Magic'

Philosophical or sociological terms

Social issues and phenomena that I am concerned about

Digital Apathy

Instant Culture

Fast-paced Society

Psychological and social phenomena terms

1. People only understand the surface of culture and don't take the time to understand the underlying stories and spiritual core.
2. People are accustomed to efficiency and feel that culture is too vast and of little practical use.

Culture

Postmodern Anxiety

Culture is forgotten and marginalized

Methodology

Literature and cultural criticism terms

The current situation of traditional culture

Culture is a component of human beings, a structure of human identity, and an ecosystem of the human spiritual world.

Loss of culture

The rupture between individual mental structure and social identity mechanism.

The importance of culture.

"Culture embraces all manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activities as determined by these habits."
— Boas, Race, Language and Culture, p. 636

Supported by



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can we reconnect with the value of traditional culture in a tech-driven world?
- How might this project rebuild cultural perception in the digital age through traditional Chinese culture?
- How might traditional culture retain their existential value within a function-driven technological context?

MOODBOARD

which shows the main aesthetics of this project.



RESEARCH AIMS & OBJECTIVES

◆ Construct a Virtual Narrative World

Create a short film centered on virtual scene-based storytelling. Using digital tools such as Unreal Engine 5 and Blender, construct a symbolic narrative world—featuring spaces like the "forgotten zone," garden maze, and mortise-tenon device—where technological order and traditional wisdom interweave.

◆ Develop a Symbolic Character Journey

Design and realize a symbolic visual narrative centered on the "Oracle Bone Traveler," following his journey to recover a missing part of himself, navigate a metaphorical maze, activate the mortise-tenon structure, and ultimately restore inner and external order.

◆ Integrate Tradition with Digital Language

Integrate Chinese cultural elements—such as oracle script, mortise-tenon architecture, and classical garden aesthetics—with digital media, procedural logic, and virtual materiality to present an organic and fluid visual experience of a "new civilization," beyond static heritage.

◆ Evoke Cultural and Sensory Reflection

Through spatial storytelling, metaphorical symbols, and sensuous aesthetics, evoke audience reflection on the fractured relationships between humans, nature, and culture within contemporary techno culture, and reimagine the role of ancestral wisdom in future coexistence.



ORACLE BONE CHARACTER

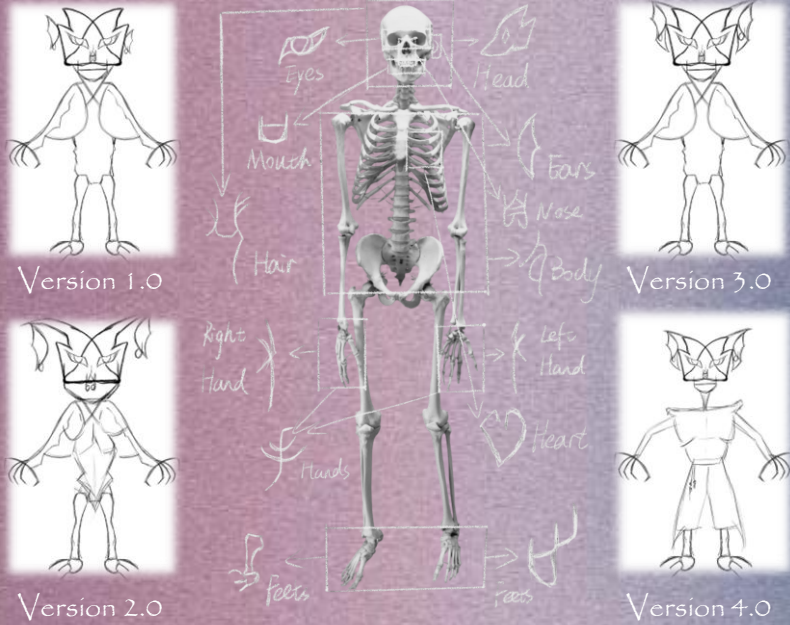
Oracle bone script is one of the earliest known writing systems in China, dating back over 3,000 years. It was carved onto turtle shells and animal bones during the Shang dynasty (c. 14th–11th century BCE) and used mainly for divination and recording important events such as rituals, wars, and harvests. Today, it provides valuable insight into early Chinese history, society, and culture.

1.1 INSPIRATION OF ORACLE BONE CHARACTER

Find out how each part of the human body is written in Chinese oracle bone script, and then deform, pull, and reassemble these pictorial characters into a human figure.

人 rén person	男 nán man	女 nǚ woman	子 zǐ child	夫 fū husband	妻 qī wife	王 wáng king	口 kǒu mouth
目 mù eye	耳 ěr ear	心 xīn heart	日 rì sun	月 yuè moon	山 shān mountain	雨 yǔ rain	田 tián field
土 tǔ earth	水 shuǐ water	火 huǒ fire	貝 bèi cowrie shell	大 dà big	小 xiǎo small	上 shàng above	下 xià below
力 lì strength	中 zhōng middle	先 xiān first	光 guāng bright	肉 ròu meat	出 chū to go out	刀 dāo knife	南 nán south
北 běi north	東 dōng east	又 yòu also	好 hǎo good	豕 shǐ pig	牛 niú cow	馬 mǎ horse	龜 guī turtle
鳥 niǎo bird	雞 jī chicken	鳳 fèng phoenix	象 xiàng elephant	豕 shǐ pig	虎 hǔ tiger	龍 lóng dragon	蛇 shé snake
一 yī 1	二 èr 2	三 sān 3	四 sì 4	五 wǔ 5	六 liù 6	七 qī 7	八 bā 8
九 jiǔ 9	十 shí 10	百 bǎi 100	千 qiān 1,000	萬 wàn 10,000			

Some examples about Oracle Bone Script.

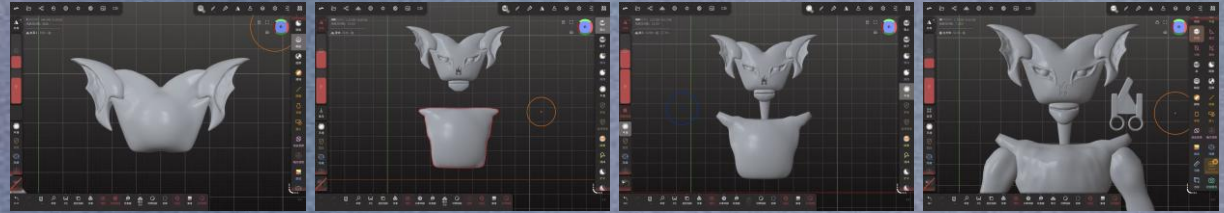


1.2 GENERATE BY AI TOOLS (Mid-journey & Runway)



1.3 BUILD A CHARACTER MODEL BY NOMAD

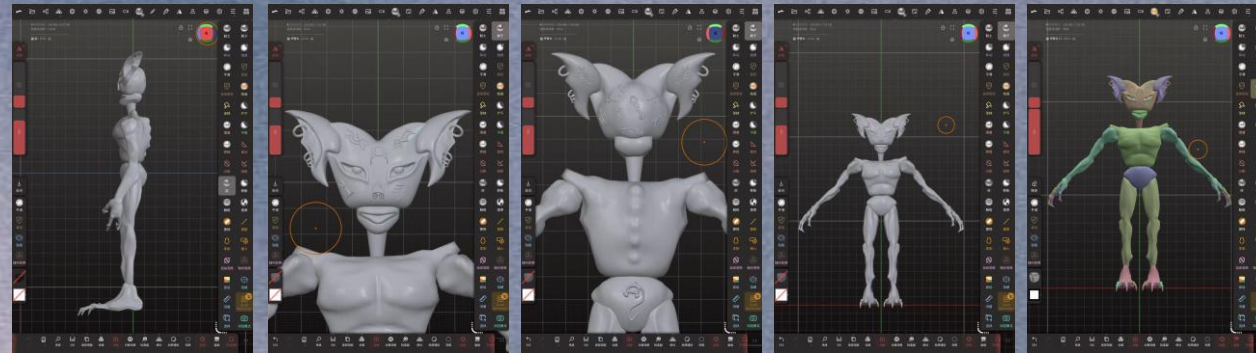
1.3.1 First, draw out the facial features and body.



1.3.2 Then pinch out the limbs and claws, and create a skeletal feel.



1.3.3 Finally, add earring accessories, oracle bone tattoos on the face, and outline the body.

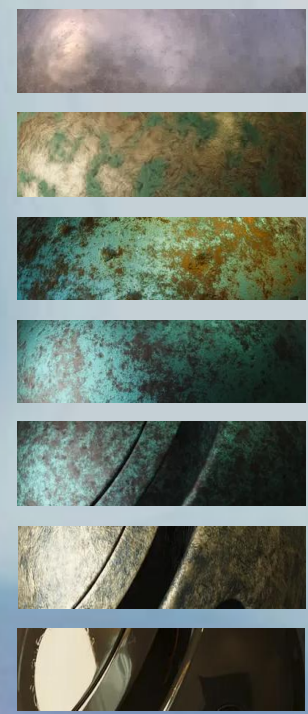


1.4 ADDING TEXTURE By Blender

1.4.1 Texture References



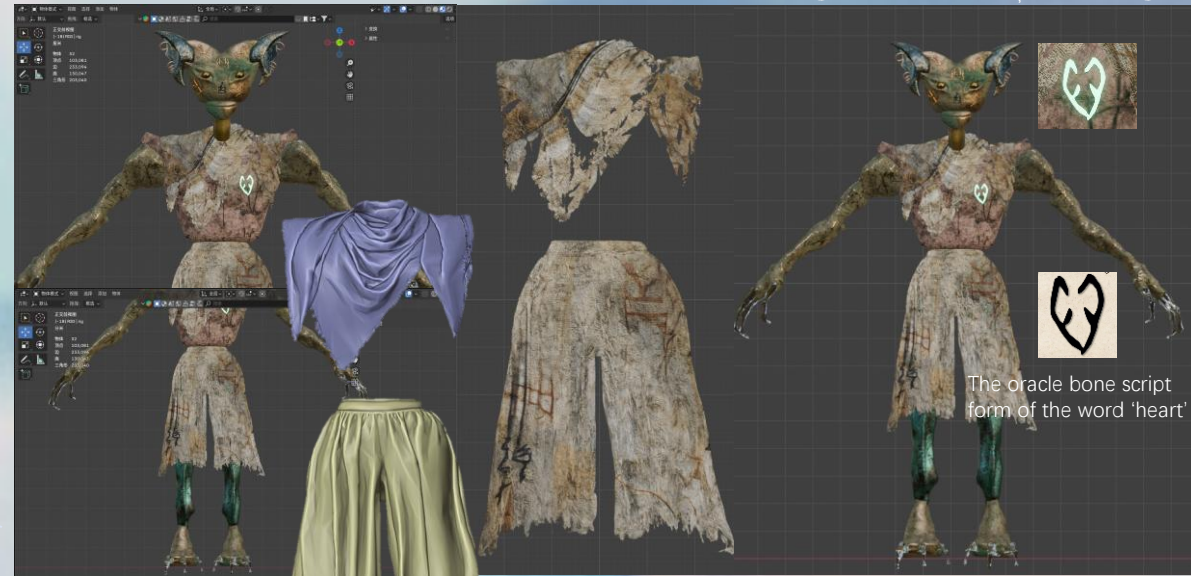
1.4.2 Texture Display



1.5 DRESSING THE CHARACTER BY

In an environment of technological alienation, this is a journey to find one's inner self, represented by the "Oracle Bone Figures", so the heart part is missing.

Outfit References



Fabric texture

Overall effect



The oracle bone script form of the word 'heart'

1.6 ADDING SKELETON BY BLENDER





WORLDBUILDING SCENE ONE

WORLDBUILDING SCENE ONE WITH PROGRESS

Inspiration: This is a forgotten data space. With the development of science and technology, many inefficient technologies and traditional cultures will be abandoned. The flashing data represents the abandoned technologies, while the glass display cabinets represent the abandoned traditional cultures that have been transformed into museums and symbols.

Environment references searched from Pinterest.

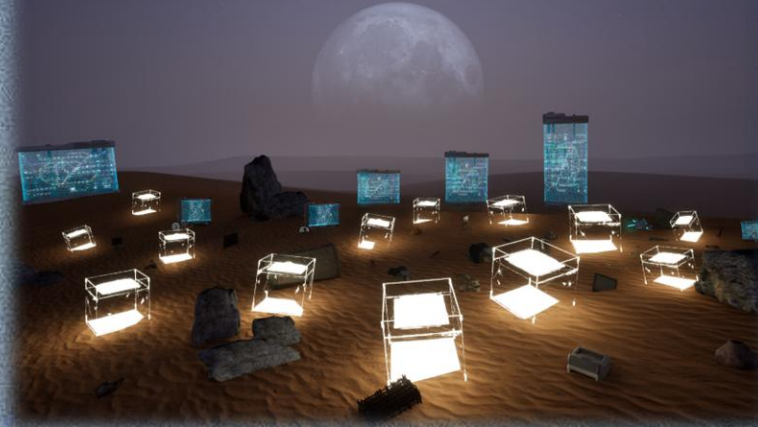


Environment references generated by Mid-journey.



Prototype & Progress

Original version: 1. The glass display case is too bright. 2. The stones are too few and sparse. 3. The data panels are too few and not aesthetically pleasing.



Version 2: 1. Added a data panel, but the colors are too uniform and look messy. 2. Added aurora weather, but the green light doesn't fit the scene. 3. Although there are more stones, there's no hierarchy.



Version 3: 1. Added a high rock pile, but it's not enough to surround the scene. 2. Added cacti, but it makes the scene look too lively. 3. The cultural relics representing traditional culture are scattered on the ground and not placed in glass display cases.

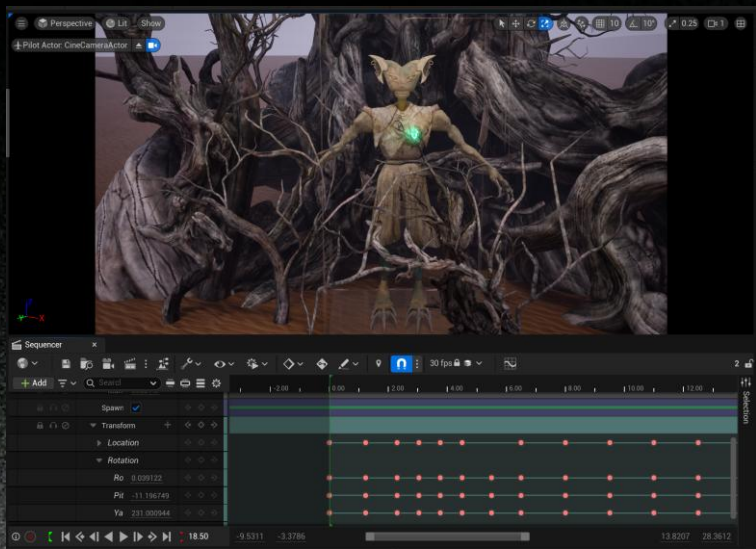


Final version: 1. Replacing the cactus with a dead tree better conveys the desolate feeling. 2. Adding an oracle bone model to highlight the theme. 3. The glass display case no longer emits light but instead uses point lights for a more natural and softer effect. 4. Adding fog to create a mysterious feel.

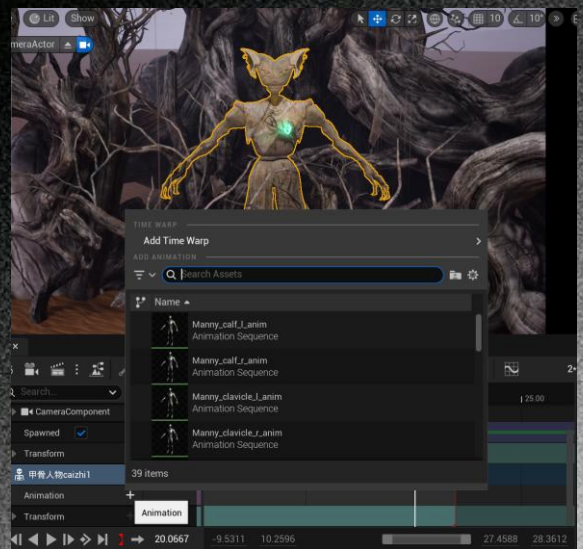


Character and other settings

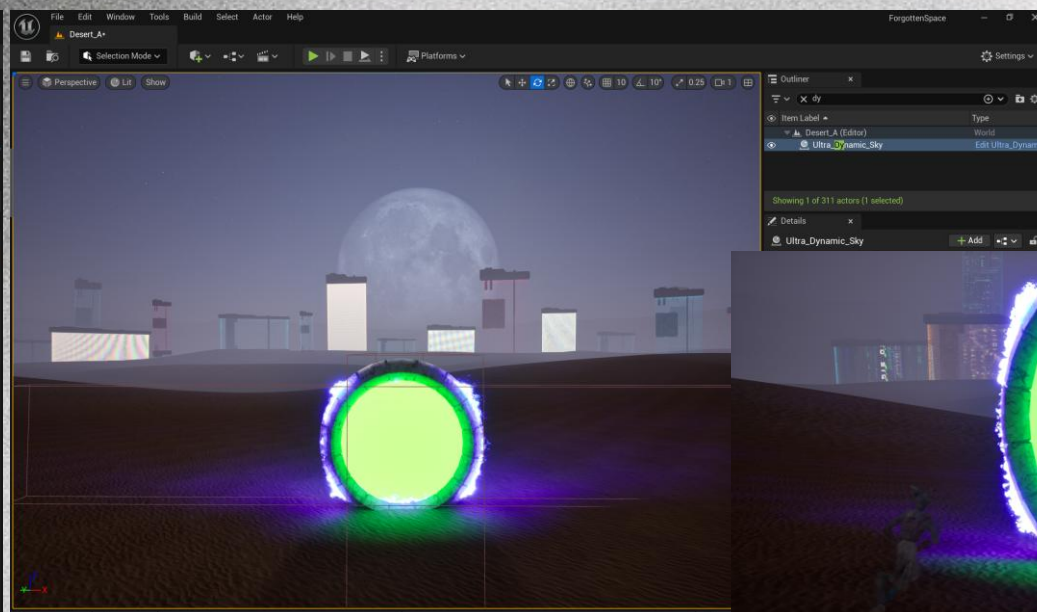
Rendering



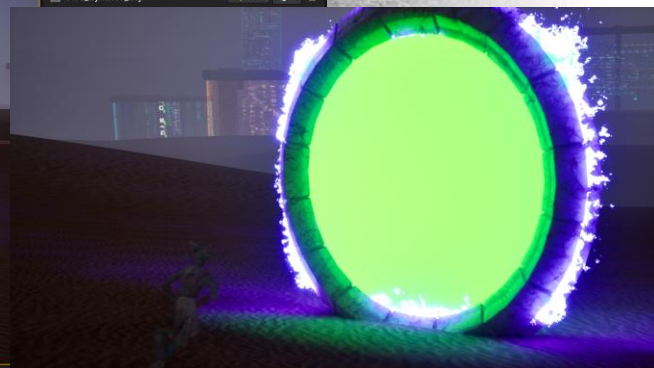
Character Animation



Character Position



Portal Setting





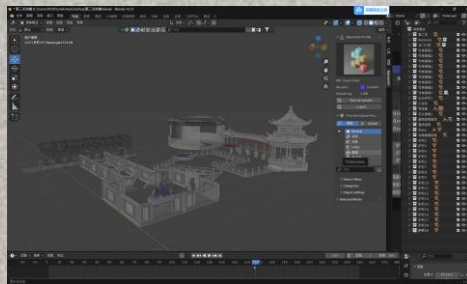
WORLDBUILDING SCENE TWO

A gamified narrative video.

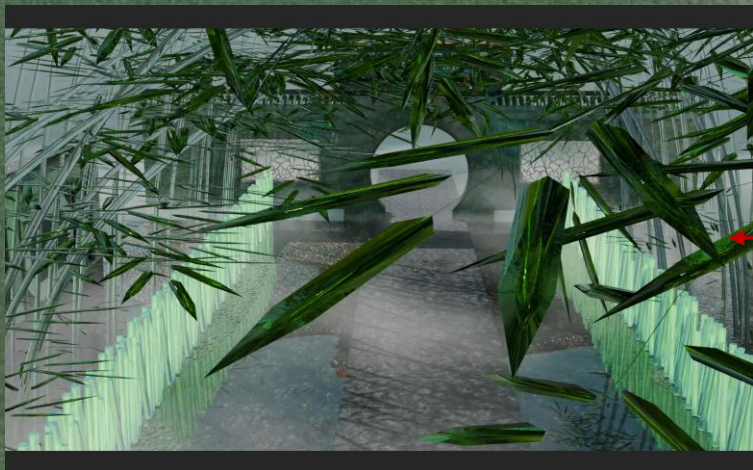
OVERALL LAYOUT



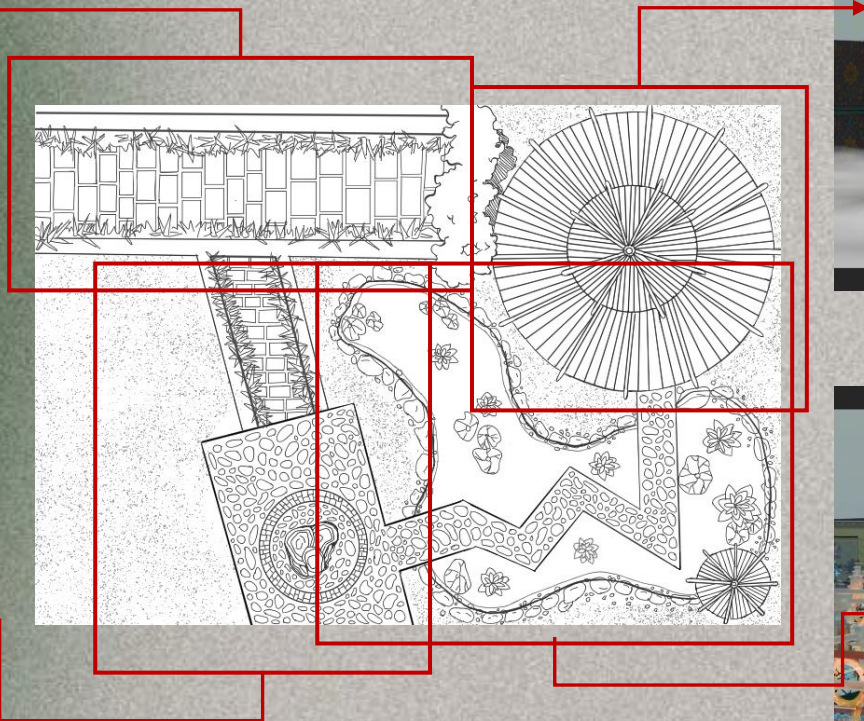
Reference from Pinterest



Building in Blender



The Realm of Endurance.

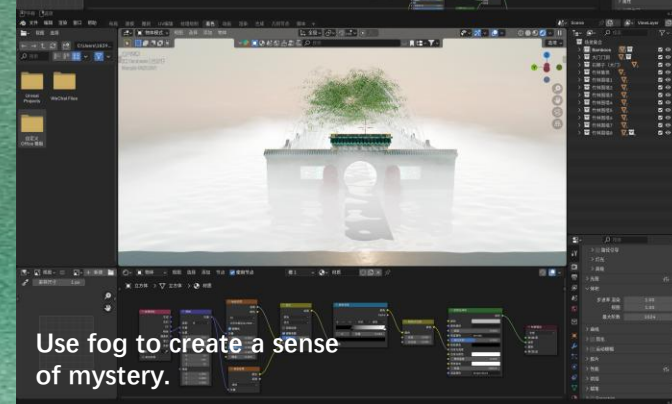
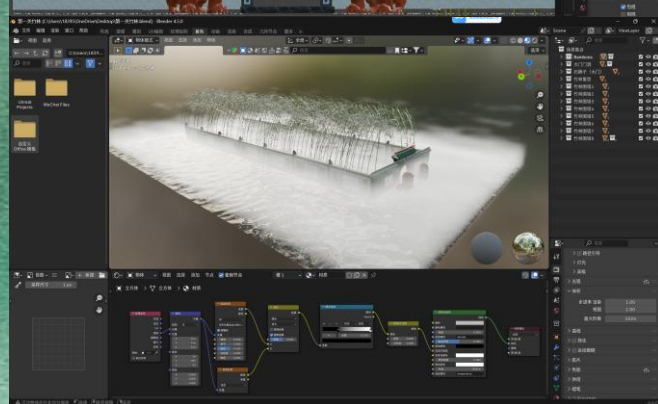
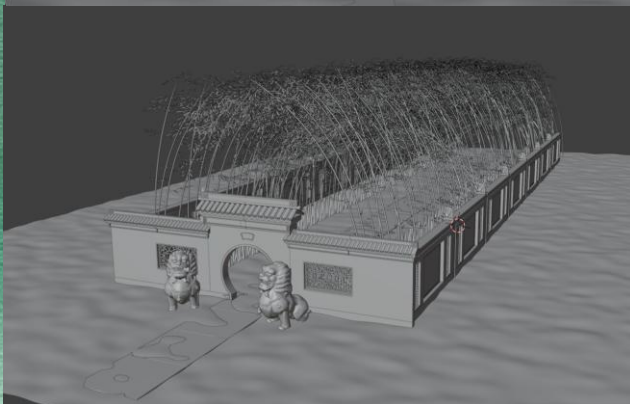
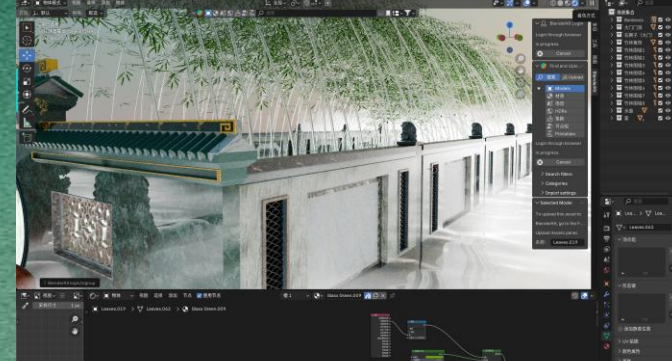
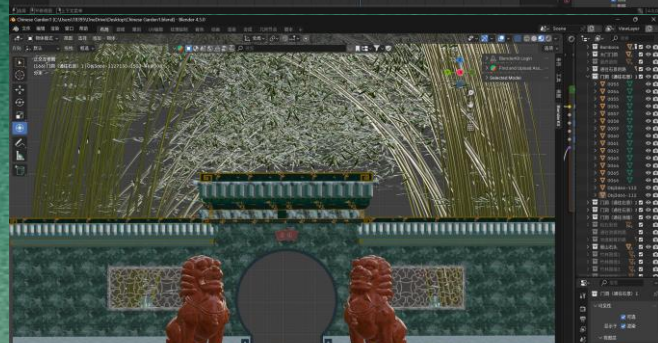
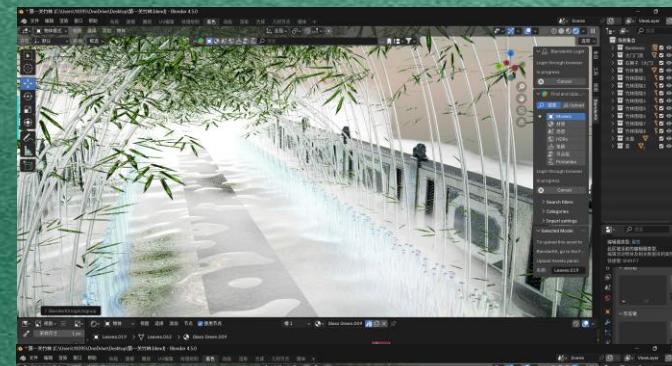
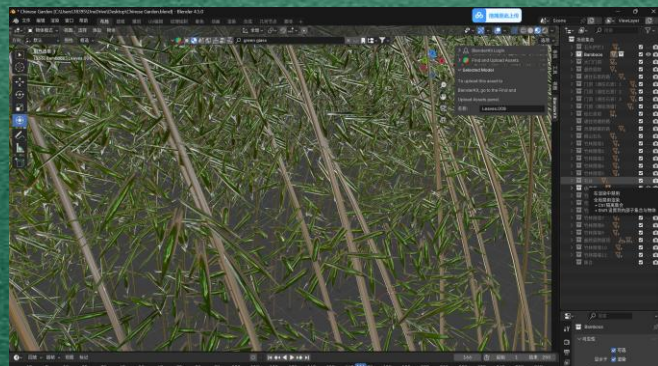


Join bamboo, stone, and water.



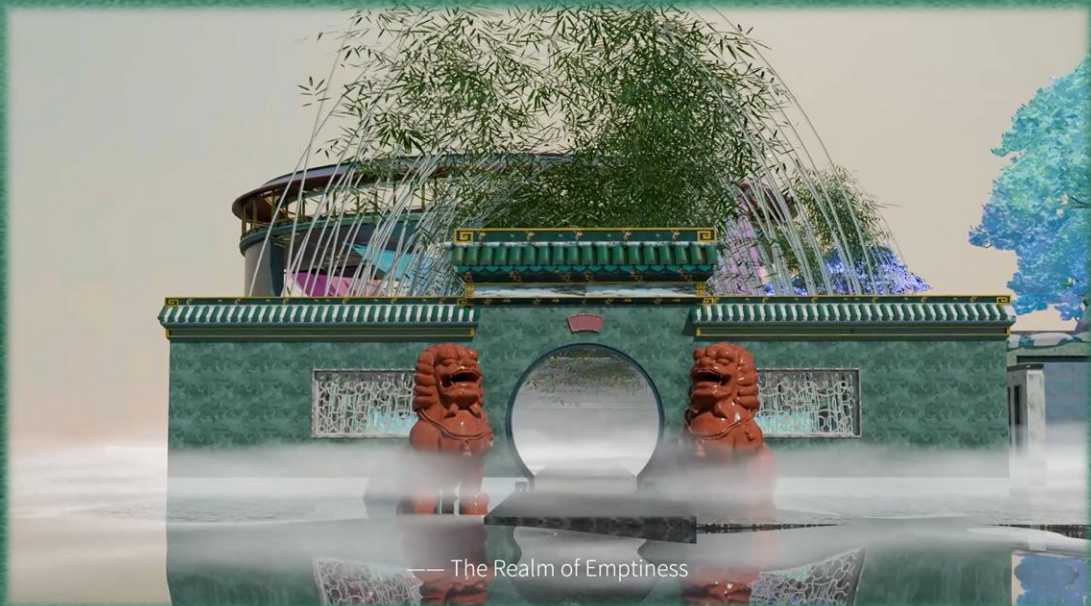
FIRST LEVEL—The Realm of Emptiness

In this level, the character acquires the element of bamboo. In China, bamboo symbolizes humility, breathability, and softness yet strength. For the project concept, this metaphor represents the first step in resisting the hegemony of rationality: letting go of impatience and learning to observe.



Use fog to create a sense of mystery.

FIRST LEVEL—The Realm of Emptiness



— The Realm of Emptiness



The bamboo-leaves are made of glass, but the color of bamboo leaves is still used, giving people a feeling of being fragile but also very solid. It fits the meaning behind the bamboo forest - soft but strong.



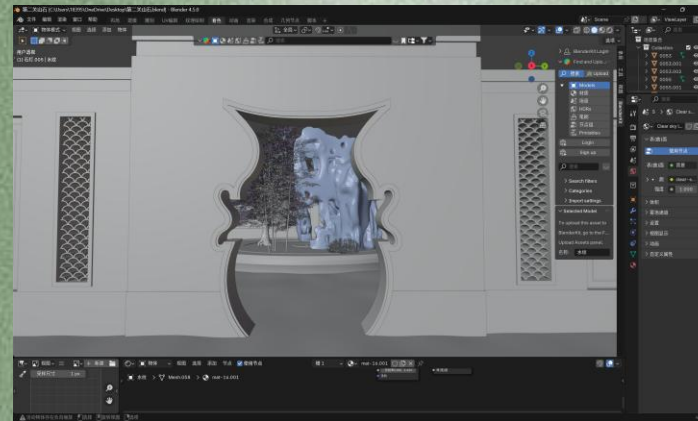
only in this way, traveler, you can move forward.



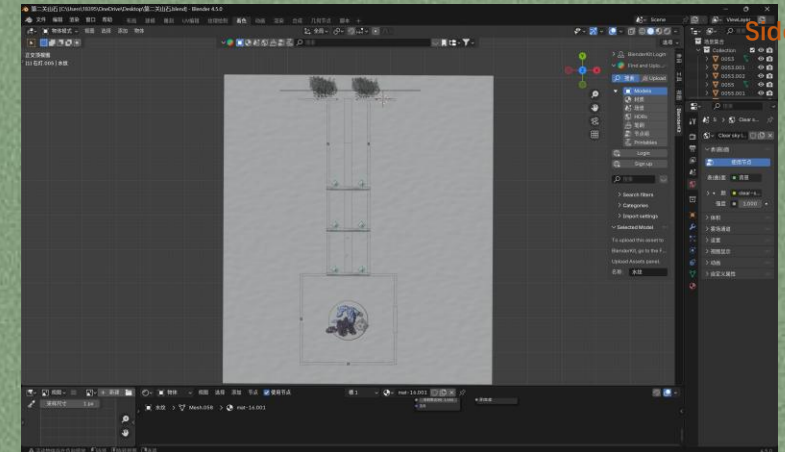
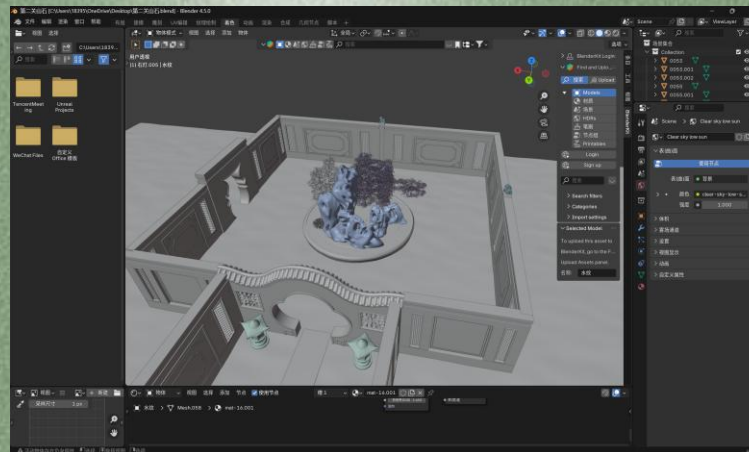
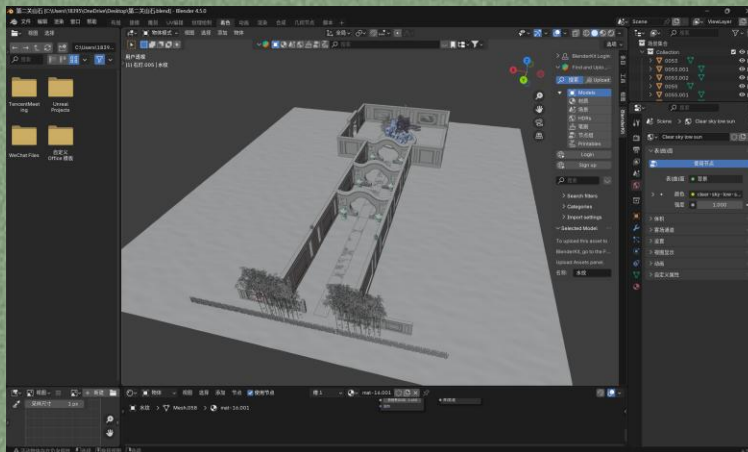
The material of the fences on both sides can be seen as different colors from different angles, achieving a sense of technological beauty.

SECOND LEVEL—The Realm of Endurance

At this level, the character acquires the element of "stone." In China, stone symbolizes calm, memory, and rootedness. In a technological system where everything is accelerated and consumed, stone reminds us of the permanence of existence. For the project concept, this metaphor represents the search for permanence amidst technological alienation and the reconnection with the land.



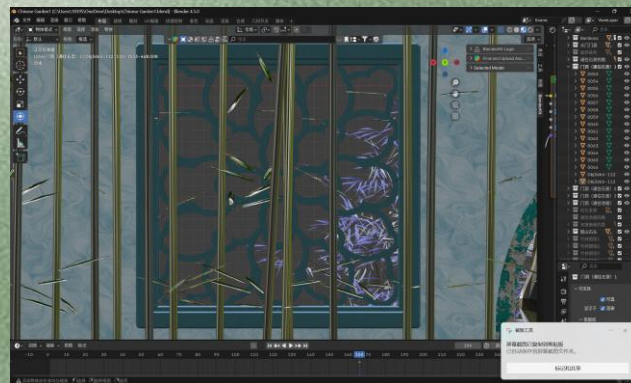
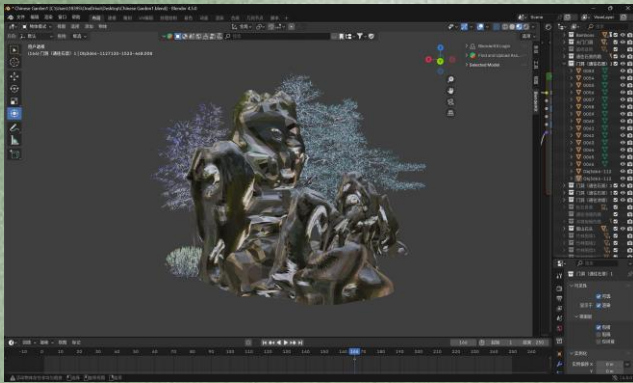
Side view



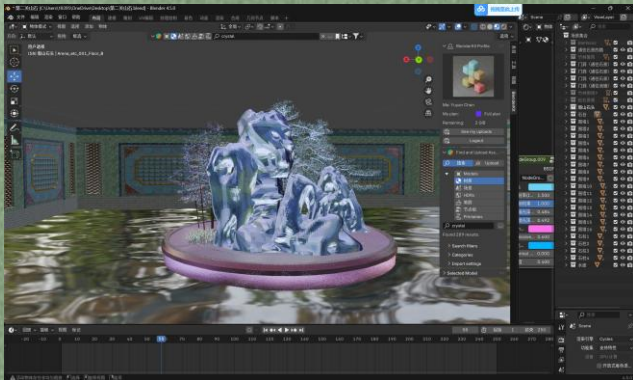
Side view

Top view

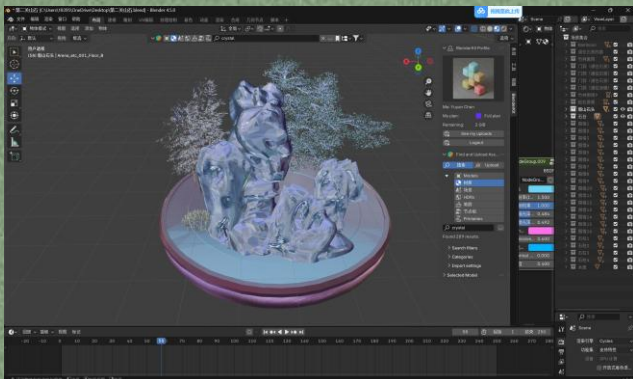
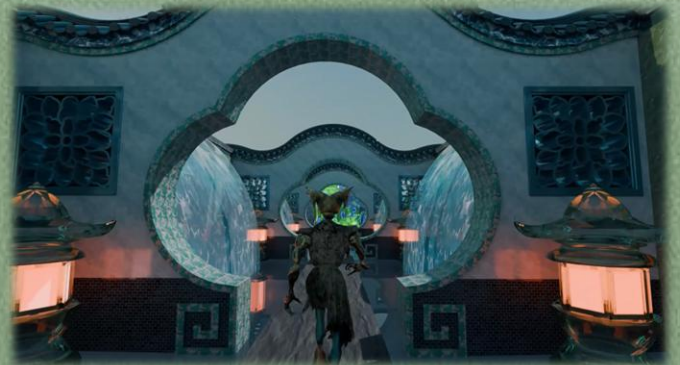
SECOND LEVEL—The Realm of Endurance



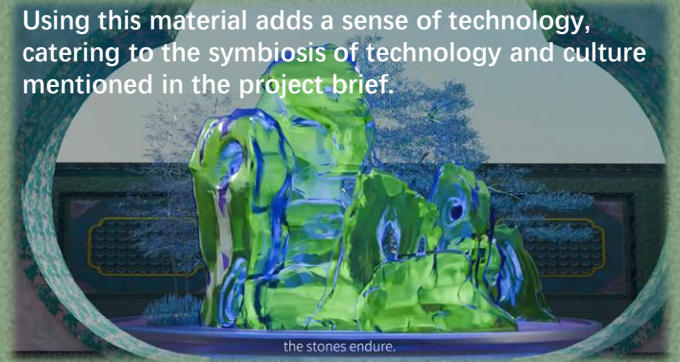
Use waterfalls to add a sense of flow.



The progressive layers of Chinese gardens

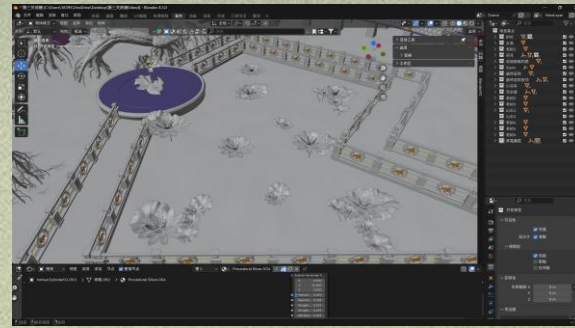


Using this material adds a sense of technology, catering to the symbiosis of technology and culture mentioned in the project brief.

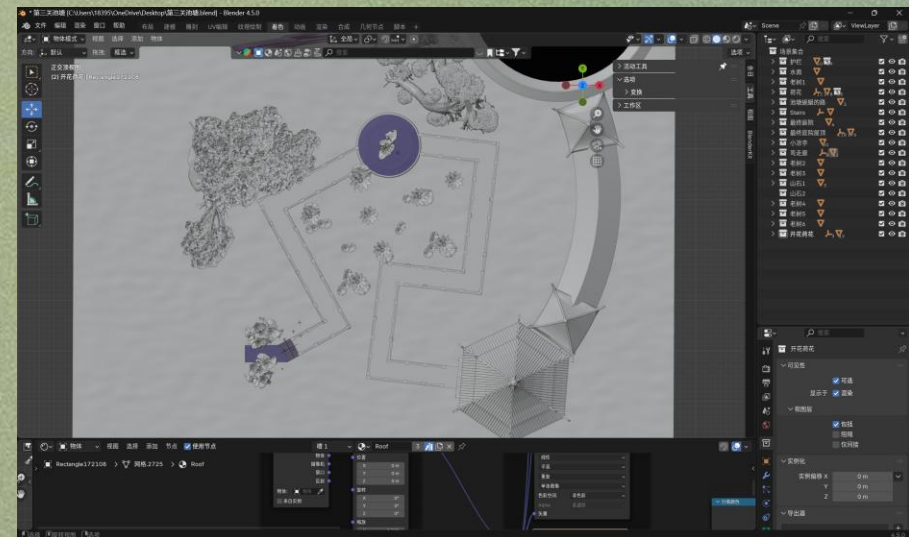
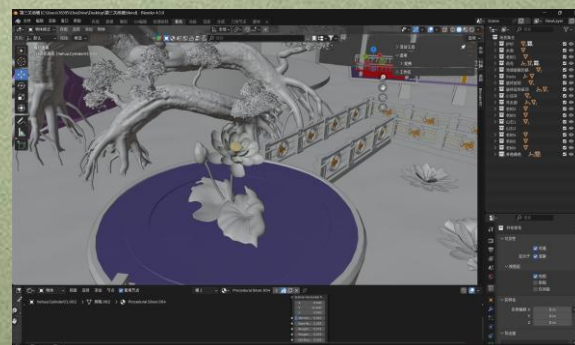
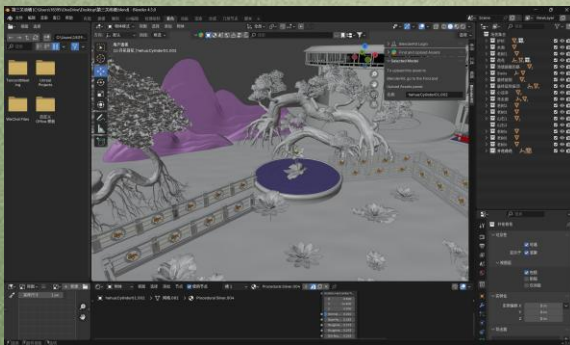
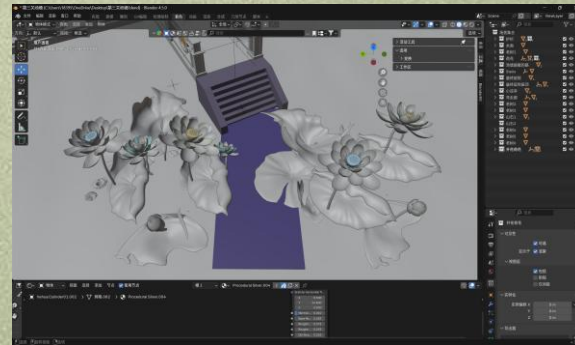
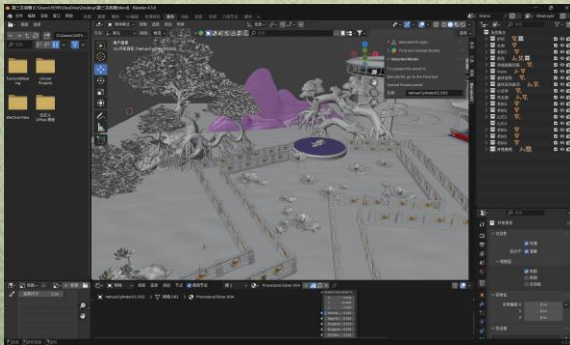


THIRD LEVEL—The Realm of Reflection

In this level, the character acquires the element of water. In China, water symbolizes flow, connection, and reflection. In a world of fragmented information, people lose connection with all things. The flow of water reminds us that individuals are not isolated, but rather ripples of relationships. In terms of the project concept, this level helps restore perception and rebuild connections.



Side view

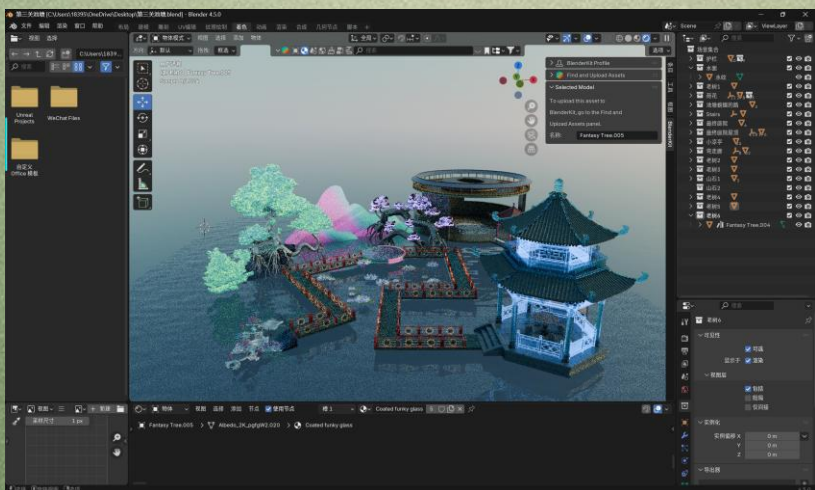
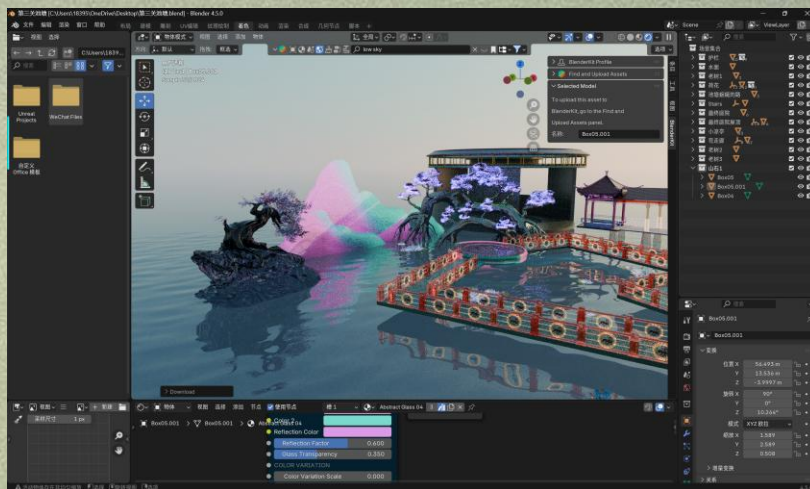


Top view

Use plants like tress and lotus to show 'tradition culture' like a 'ecosystem' in technical environment.

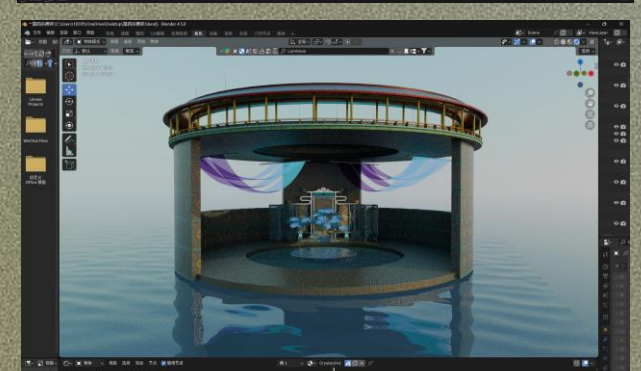
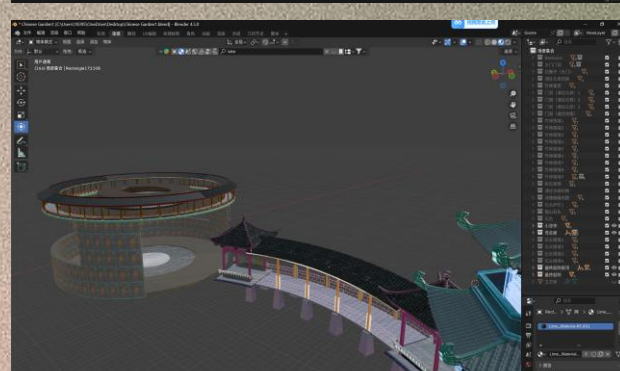
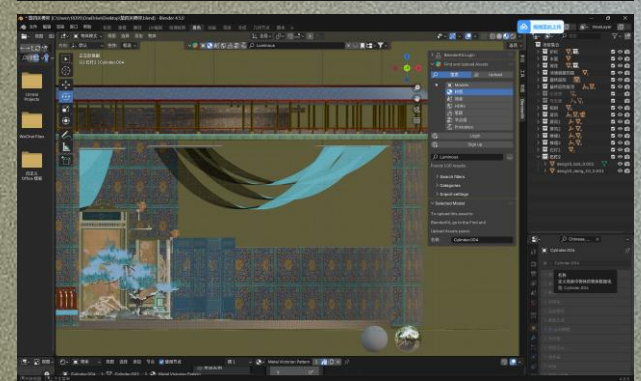
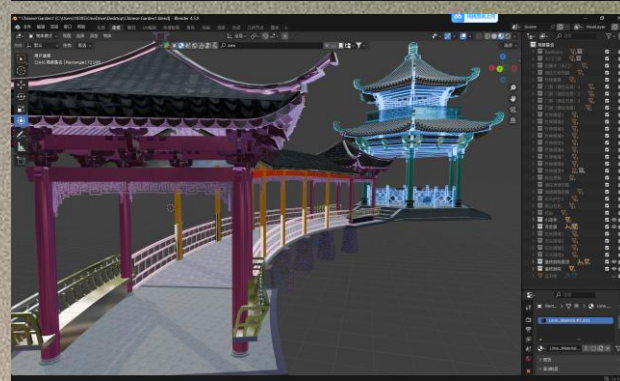
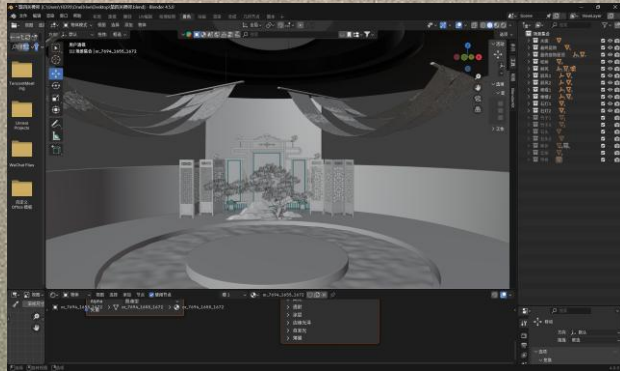
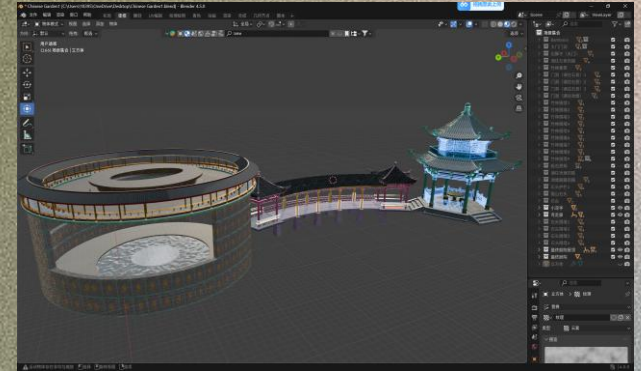
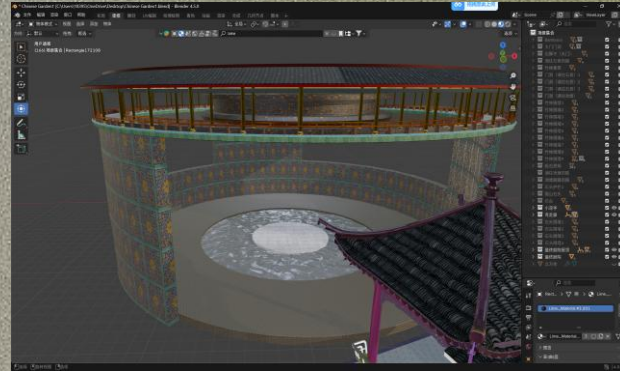
THIRD LEVEL—The Realm of Reflection

In the design concept of Chinese gardens, there is a very special point called "changing scenery with every step", which means that the scenery you see is different as you change direction. Therefore, the degree of curvature of the road here is determined in advance, and the scenery you see is different at each turn.



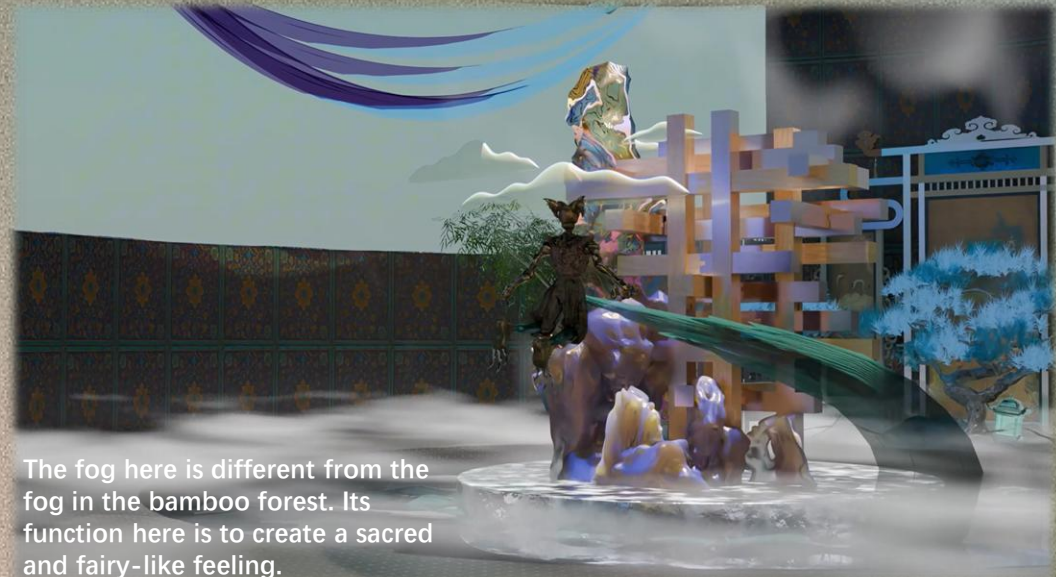
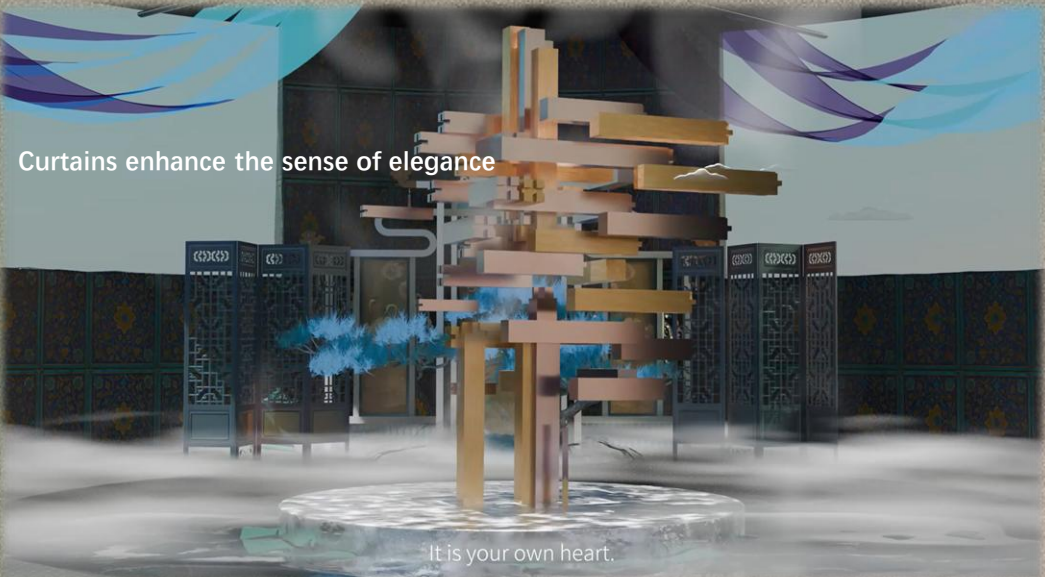
FOURTH LEVEL—The Realm of Unity

In this level, the character uses all the elements obtained previously to reconstruct the mortise and tenon joint. The mortise and tenon joint is a traditional joint method used in ancient Chinese carpentry, used to firmly join two pieces of wood together without the need for nails or glue. The mortise and tenon joint symbolizes connection, order, and integrity. In terms of the project concept, this final level metaphorically represents the fusion of traditional wisdom and technological order to rebuild the heartbeat of a new civilization.



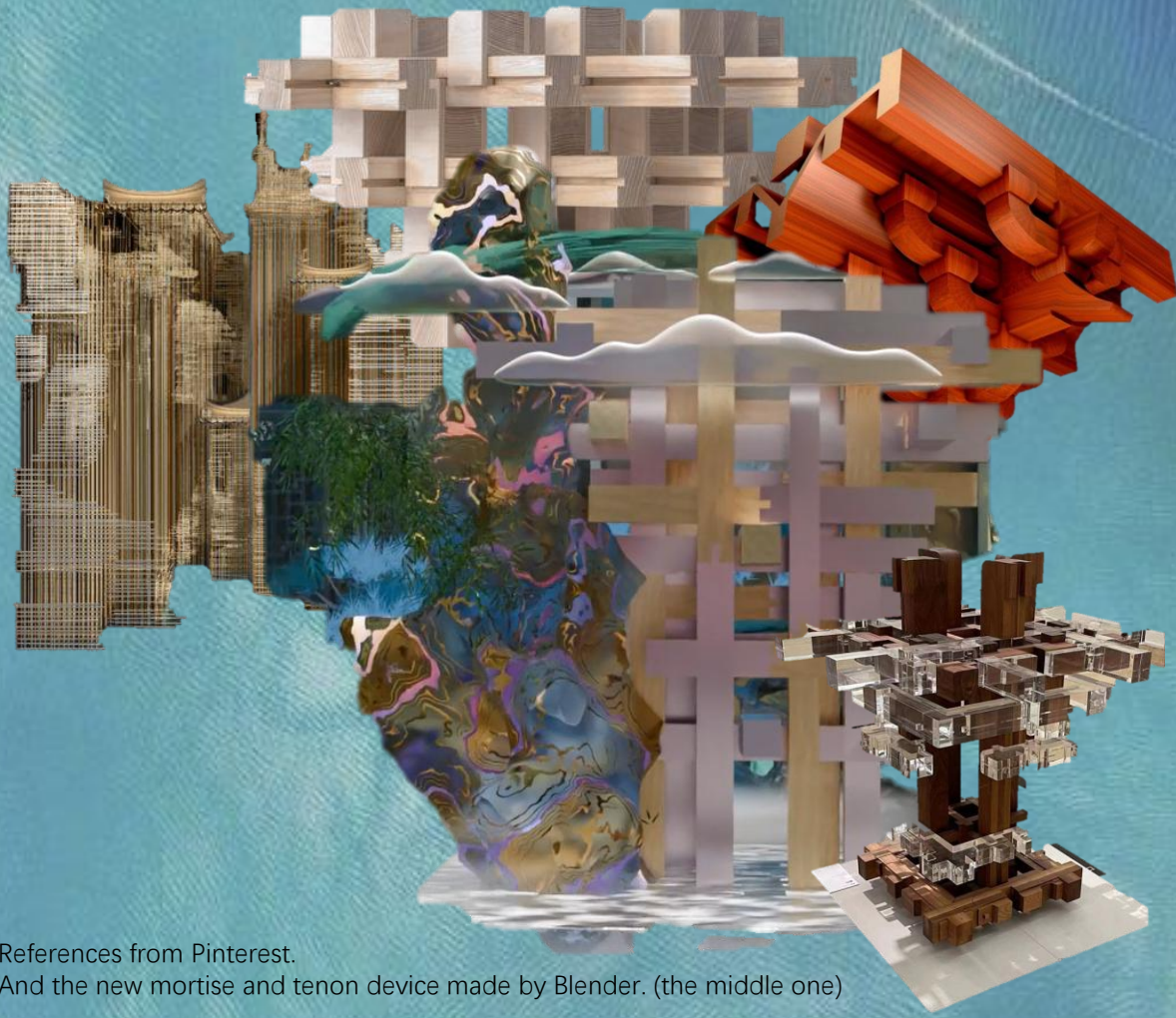
FOURTH LEVEL—The Realm of Unity

Refer to the interior design of conventional Chinese gardens.

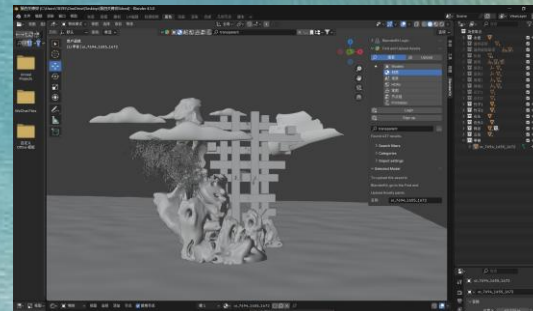
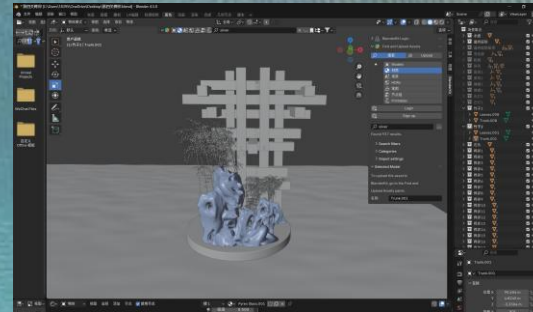
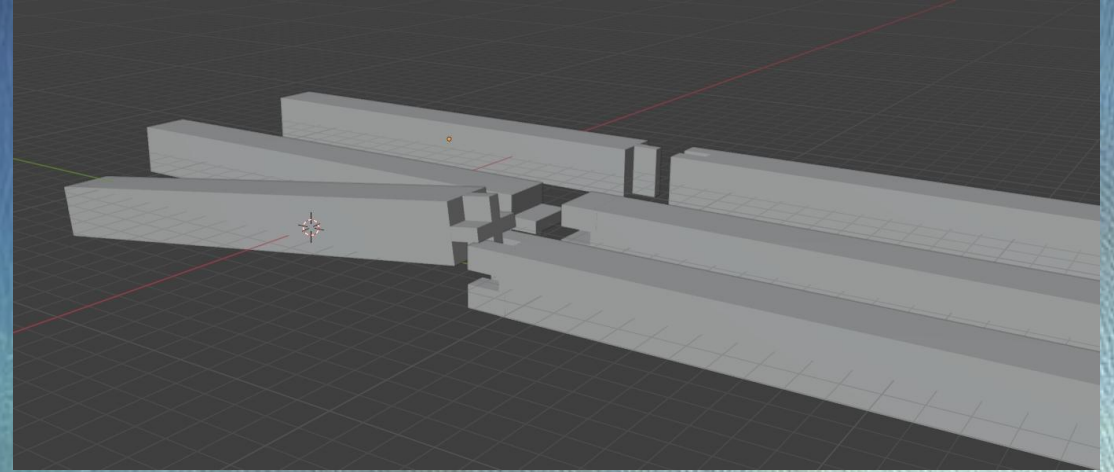


Mortise and tenon device

Mortise and tenon joints are a traditional method of connecting wooden structures and furniture. Instead of using nails or glue, they securely connect two or more components by interlocking the wood.

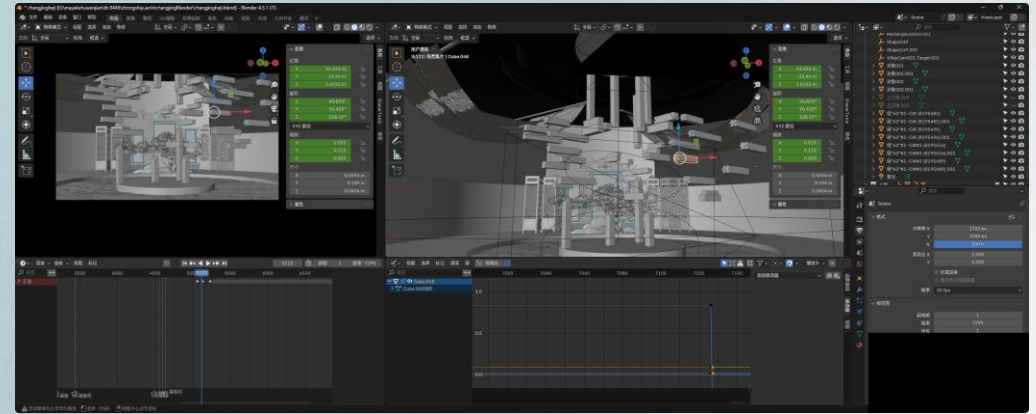
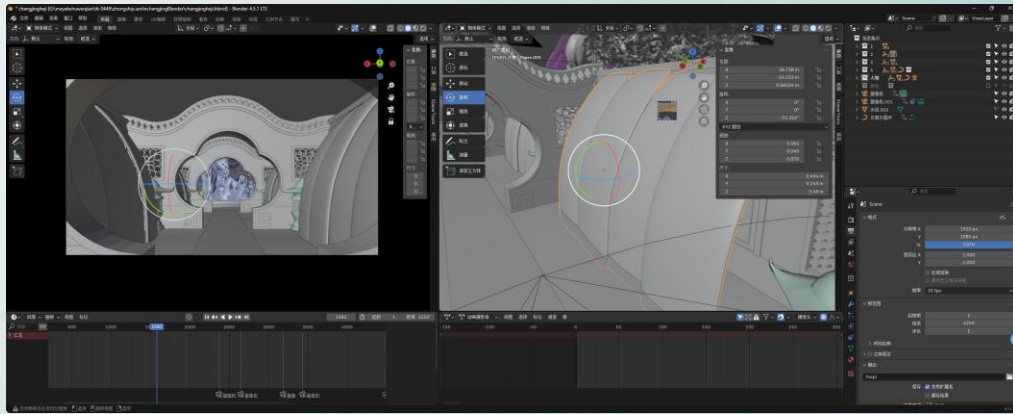


References from Pinterest.
And the new mortise and tenon device made by Blender. (the middle one)



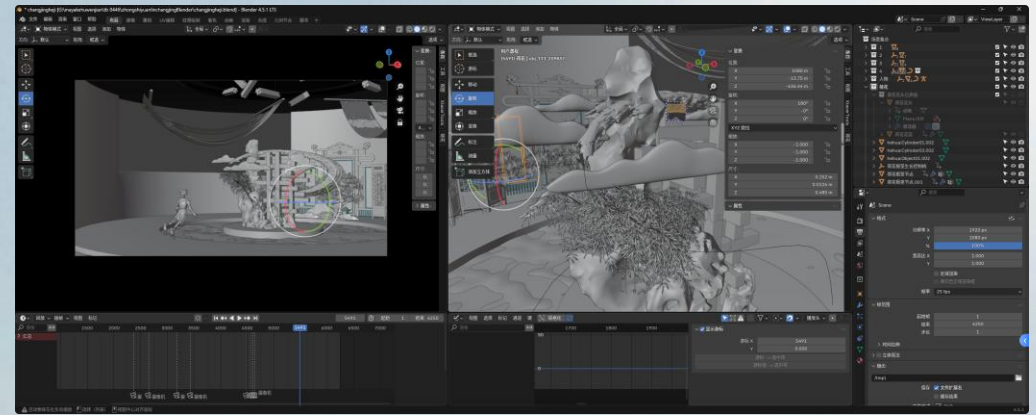
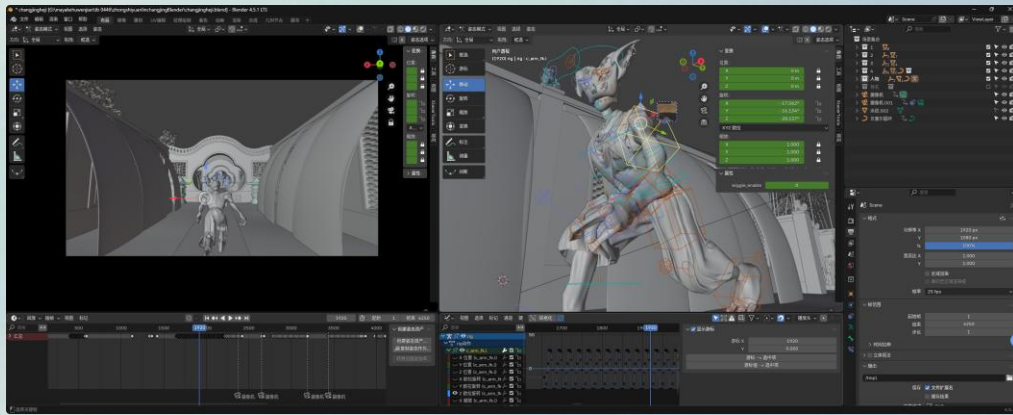
Animation Process Display

Waterfall animation



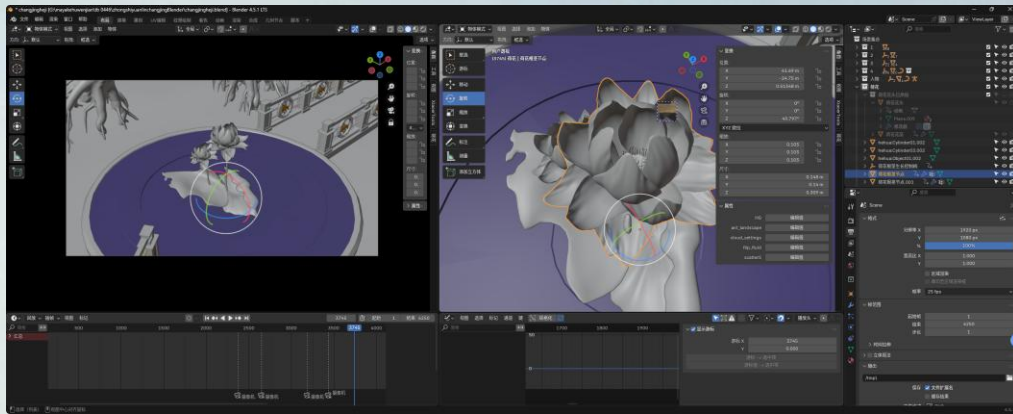
Mortise and tenon reassembly animation

Character running animation



Character floating animation

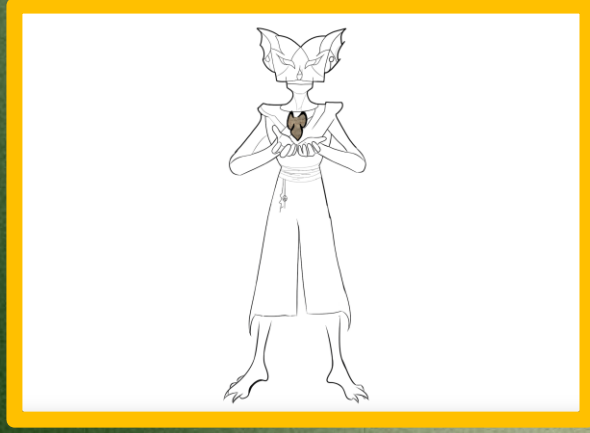
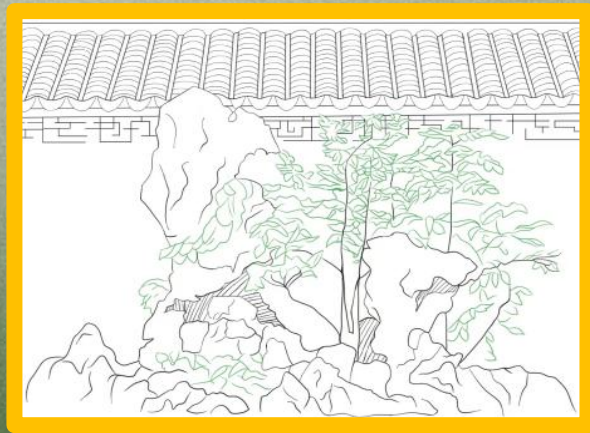
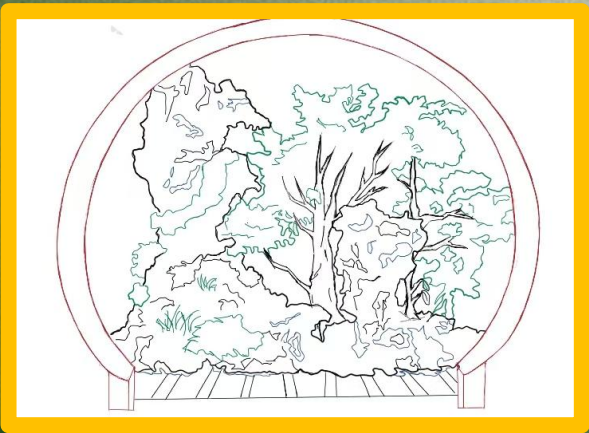
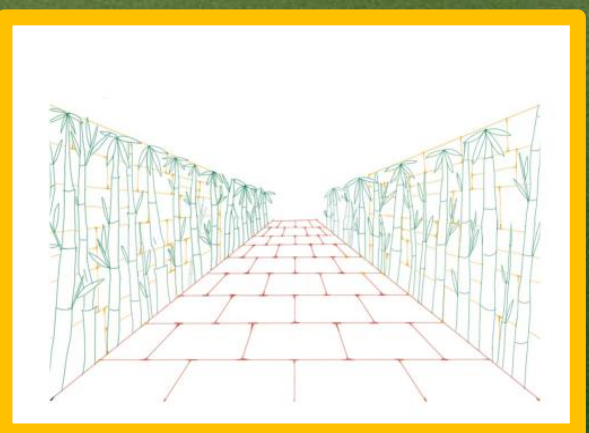
Lotus blossom animation



Character facial animation

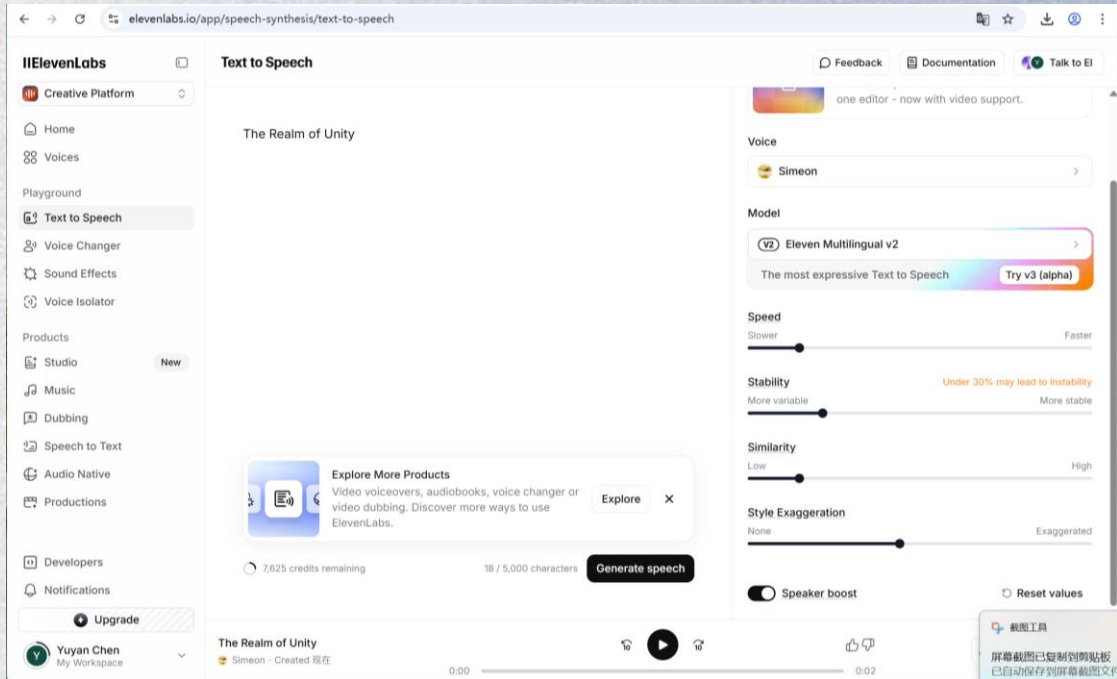
STORYBOARD

Color References



Language Settings

Mortise and tenon joints are a traditional method of connecting wooden structures and furniture. Instead of using nails or glue, they securely connect two or more components by interlocking the wood.



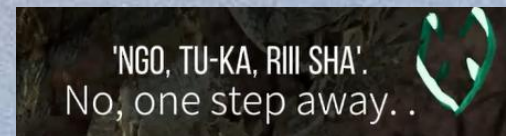
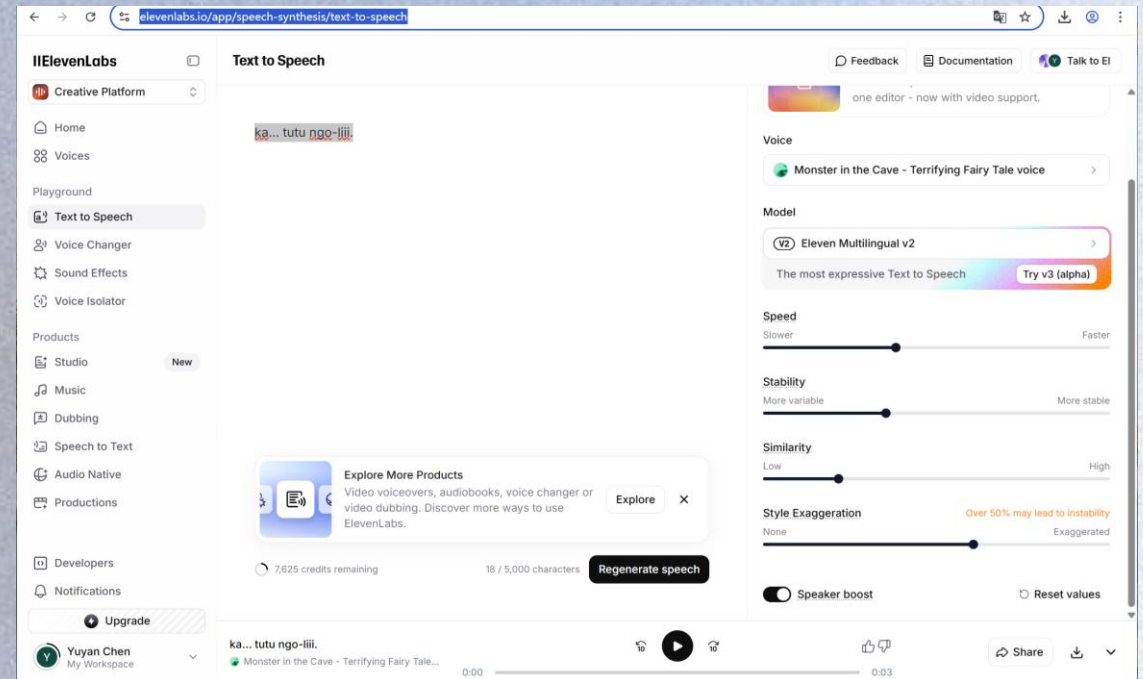
- Constructed languages:

A language created by a specific person is one that was intentionally created for a specific purpose, use, or for a specific group of people. The phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary of a constructed language are all deliberately designed by its creator.

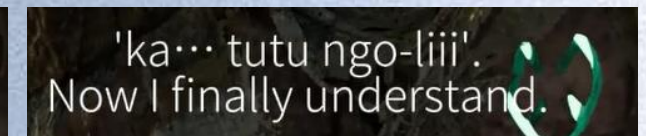
- Natural Language:

Languages that evolve naturally with culture. For example, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, German.

The oracle bone characters only speak two sentences in the film, so I used AI to create artificial languages, such as Klingon from Star Trek, Elvish from The Lord of the Rings, Na'vi from Avatar, and computer languages. This better aligns with the historical and mysterious feel of the oracle bone inscriptions.



<No, one step away>
 'No' → ngo
 'one step' → tu-ka
 'away' → riii·sha



<Now I finally understand.>
 'Now' → ka
 'I finally' → tu-tu
 'understand' → ngo-liii

Tools and Cutting Videos



- Chinese garden
- Mortise and tenon device
- Oracle Bone Character



- Oracle Bone Character
- Oracle Bone Script

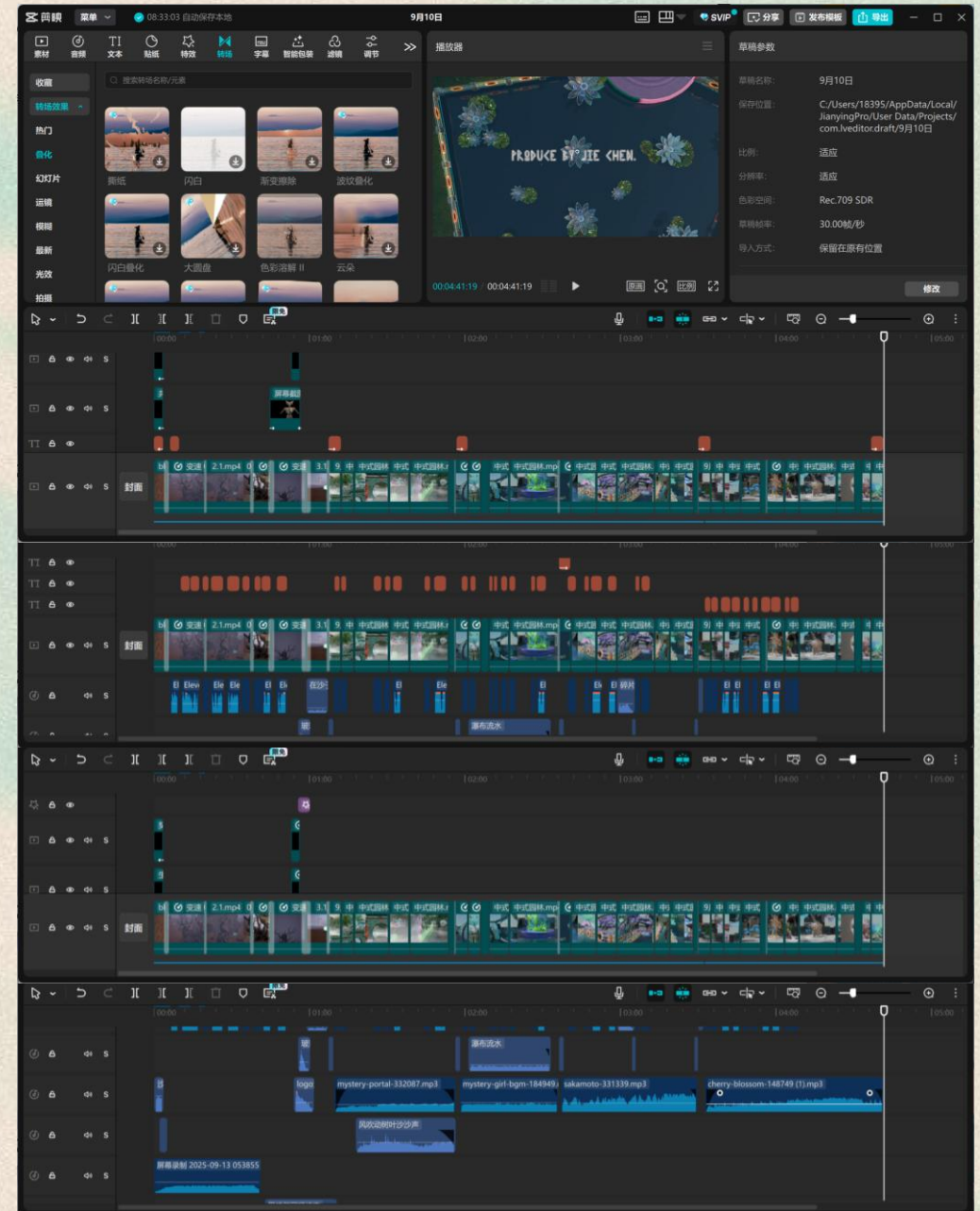


- Forgotten Space
- Character Animation

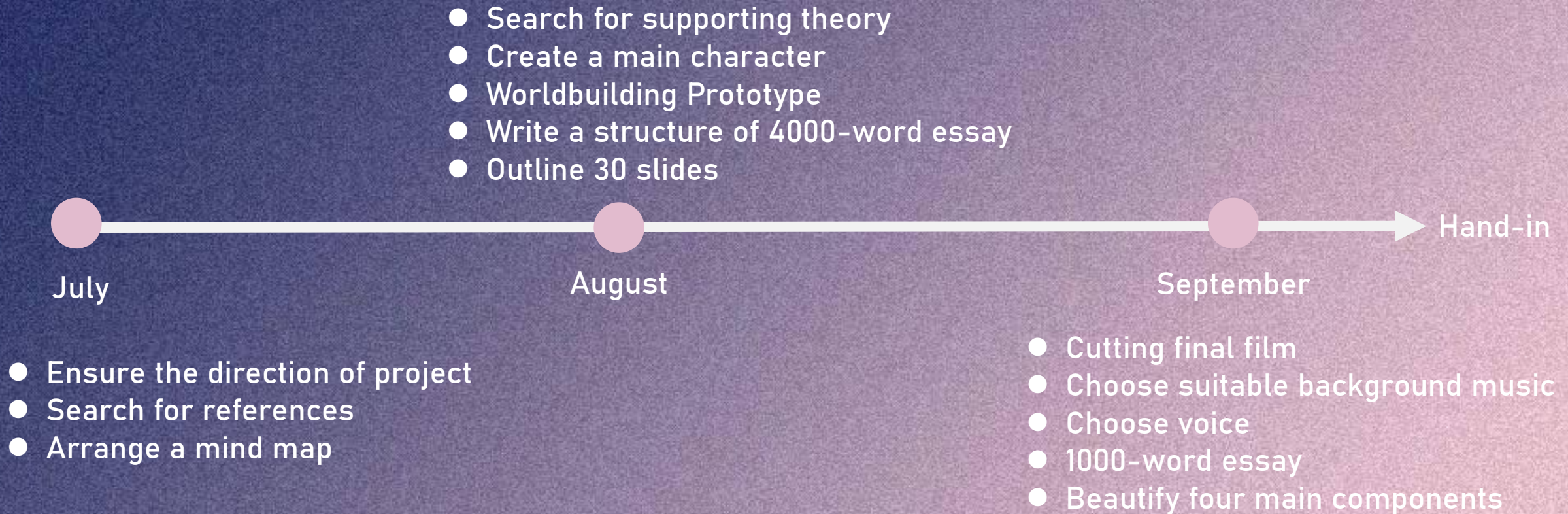


- Voice of Narrative
- Voice of Oracle Bone Character

Jianying Application



Timeline





THANK YOU.