



THE ART OF  
**GOD OF WAR**







# I

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## PRE-PRODUCTION

From the very start of development, the team knew it wanted to take the new *God of War* game in a different visual direction. "The old *God of War* art direction came to be described as 'heavy metal magazine meets Greek mythology,' and that had really given us something unique for a long time," said Luke Berliner. The team often looked back at the style of the early games as the franchise's "comic period"—big, mean, and over-the-top. What would happen, they wondered, if the approach became more cinematic and a bit more gritty, but still maintain those same ideas?

With those kinds of conversations happening, the team had to figure out just how grounded they wanted the new game to be. "We knew we wanted to lean a lot more on historical detail, but we also wanted to make a world that was clearly pre-Viking," said Berliner. "This was before man had really settled and when gods, giants, and monsters roamed the land—the period when the myth was really being made."



Of course, one of the most involved character designs for *God of War* was the new look of Kratos. Getting this character right meant a lot to the team, all of whom wanted to strike a balance of retaining the iconic elements of his design while bringing fresh ideas from the Norse world to the table also. "People have expectations for what he's supposed to look like," said lead character artist Rafael Grassetti. "It was kinda hard to push people to like a completely new design, but once we started just enhancing what was there before, it was a little easier to get people onboard."



Early exploration of Kratos. Artists: Dela Longfish (bottom right); José Cabrera





Artist: José Cabrera



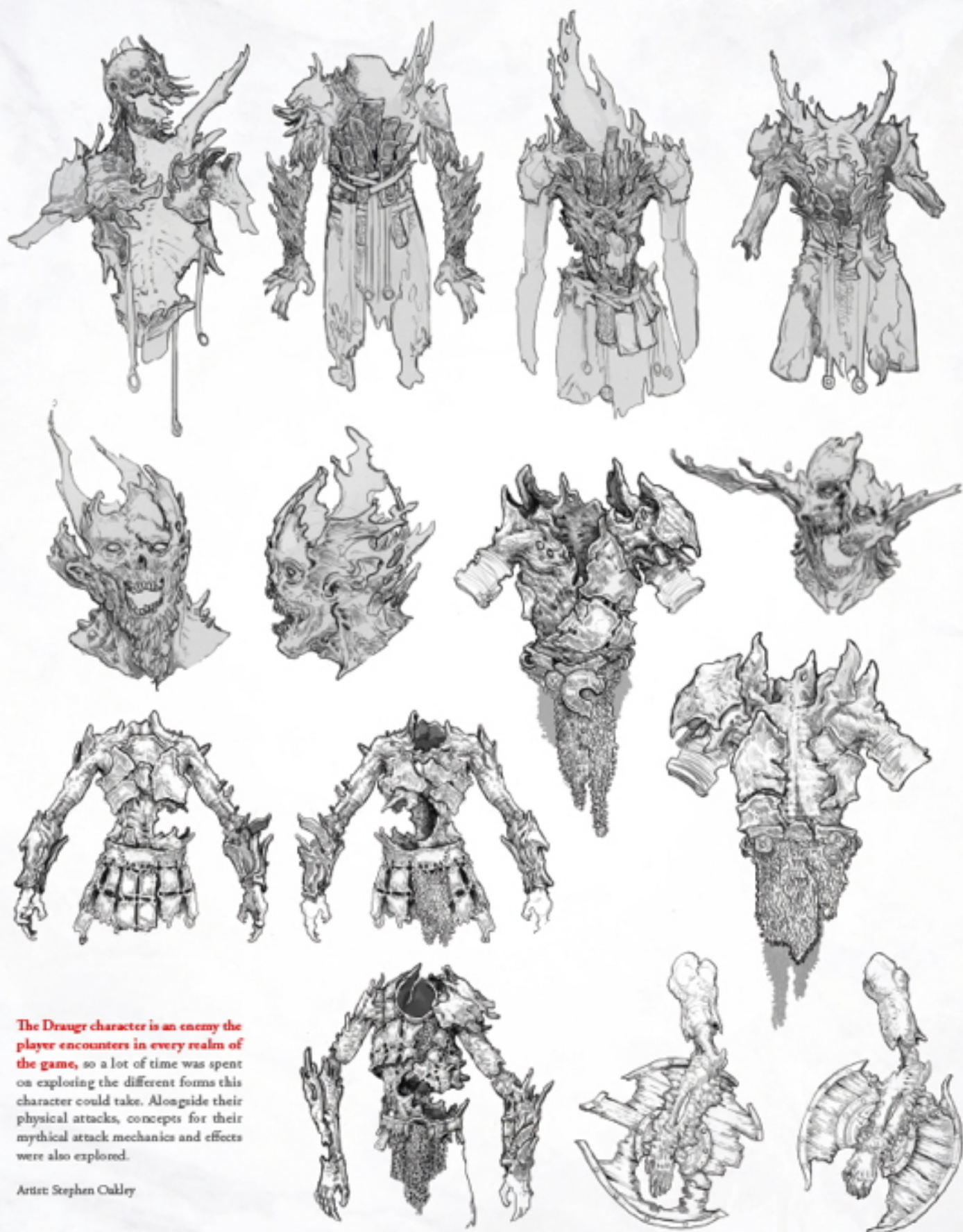
Rafael Grassetti sculpted these clay Troll maquettes as the team explored the creatures' design. These pieces serve as a prime example of the collaborative relationship that exists within the art department, since Deda Longfish initiated the process with pencil sketches which Grassetti then used as inspiration for his sculpture. He captured a wonderful candid pose with the Troll standing triumphant after a hunt, not only hinting at the character's personality, but using the corpse of the bear to communicate the size and danger of the Trolls within this world.



**Hand-sculpted Troll maquette.** Artists: Rafael Grassetti (sculptor), James Furlson (photographer), Cliff Childs (opposite)







The Draugr character is an enemy the player encounters in every realm of the game, so a lot of time was spent on exploring the different forms this character could take. Alongside their physical attacks, concepts for their mythical attack mechanics and effects were also explored.

Artist Stephen Oakley





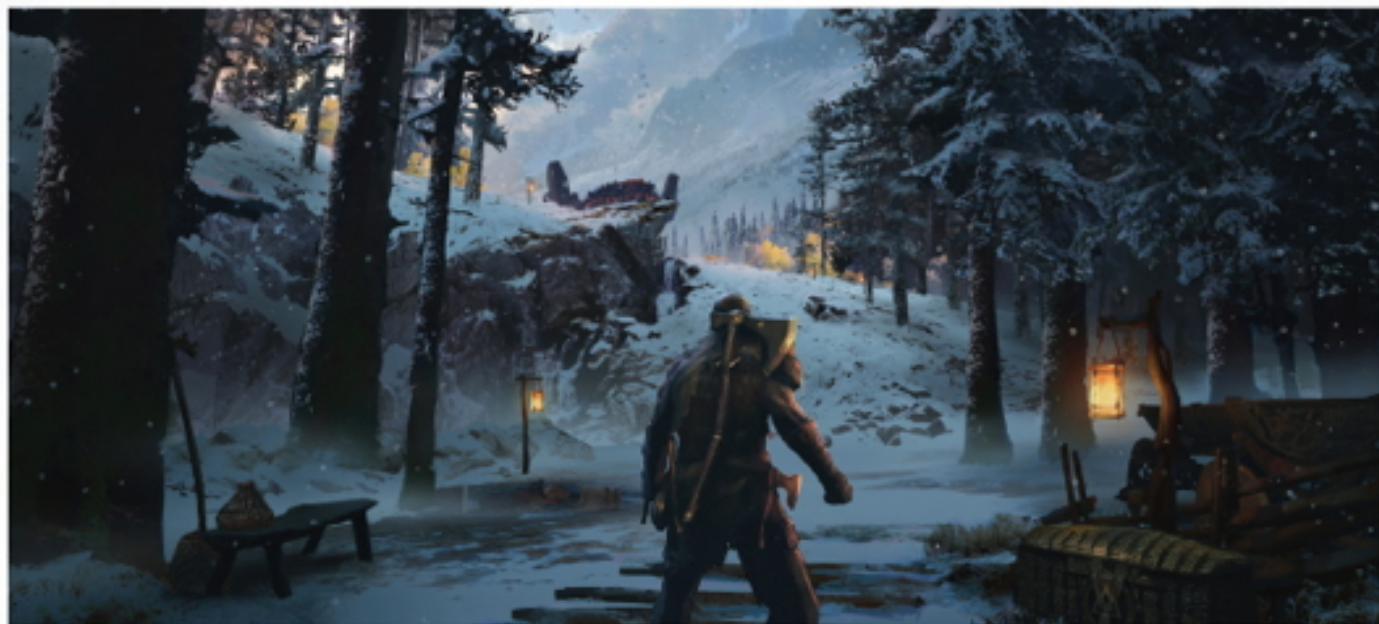
It was imagined the Draugrs' violent "rebirth" not only caused their bodies to break and fracture, but that the resulting reaction would cause hot magma or energy to be released from within, creating an additional supernatural effect to these characters. It's a constant goal to create a design that adds visual drama to a character that simultaneously makes game play more dynamic.



Adding a mythical element to the Draugr. Artist: Dela Longfish



For *God of War's* first E3 appearance, the team needed to come up with a global art direction style guide in order to exhibit a high level of consistency for the game's first public showing. After many meetings and lots of iteration, the team landed on its own version of mythical realism, which consisted of Norse fantasy, historical detail, and pre-digital color. Once these elements were folded together, things started to lock in and the world started to soften. Where before the game world had felt extremely dark, somewhat like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the elements of wonder now started to come through as the player started to see the world through Atreus' eyes.



**Close to home.** Artists: Dan McKim, Nate Stephens (top); Luke Belcher





Artist: Luke Berliner





Final look for Jörmungandr. Artists: Rafael Granetti, Igor Catto, Glasco Longhi



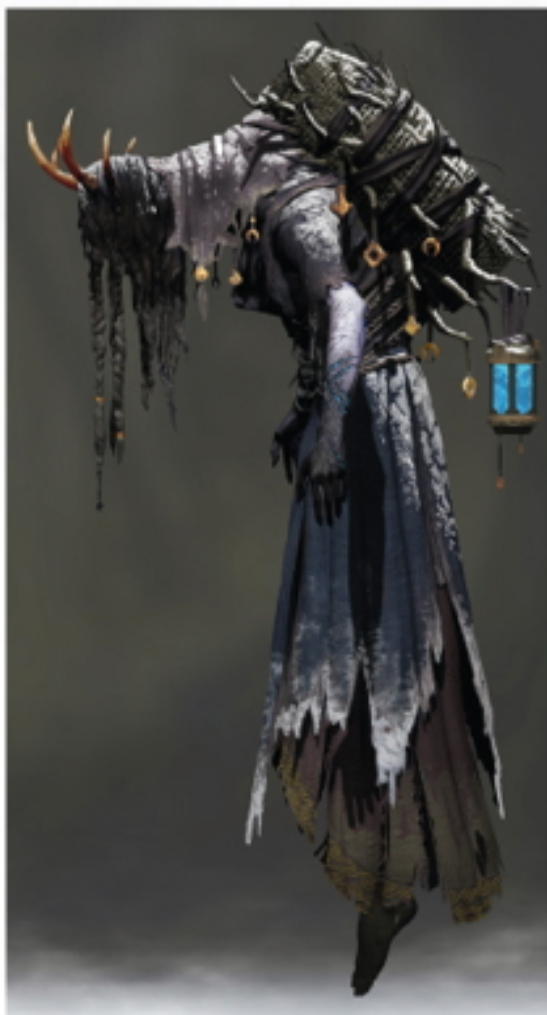


Artists: Rafael Grassetti, Axel Gromman, Igor Carro, Glauco Longhi

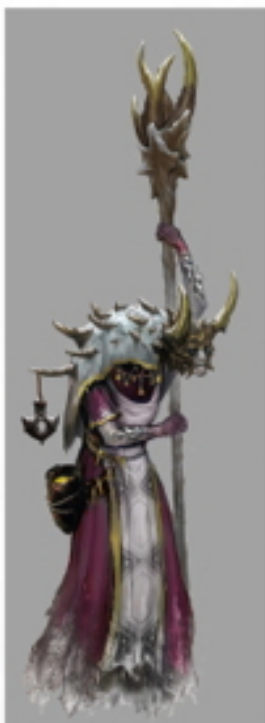
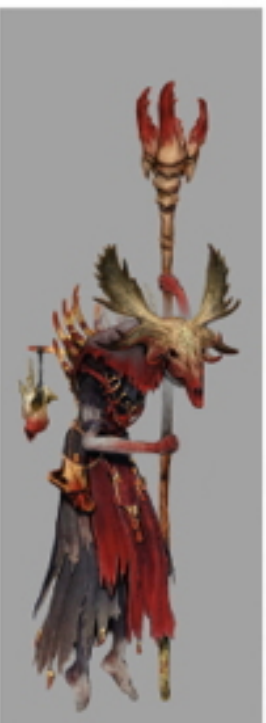
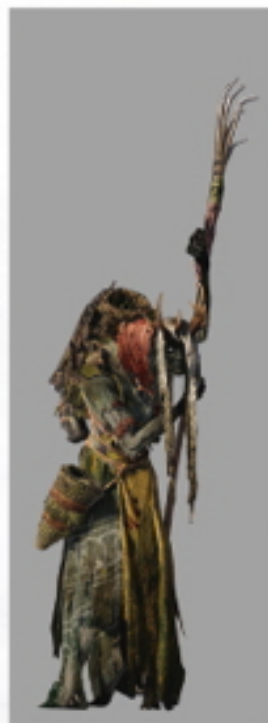








The final Revenant design depicts a character who seemingly floats above the ground and whose anatomy is exaggerated in bizarre ways to create an uneasy feeling for the player. Having arrived at a specific character design, the team is often required to create additional variations on that design for game play needs and visual variety. The goal is for each variation to look unique within a given class, but not so different from the base design that it feels like a completely different enemy class.



Final Revenant designs and game play variations. Artists: Stephen Oakley (top); Yefim Kligerman (opposite, bottom)