# Bachelor of Design—Digital Design

**To the lecturers at the AUT School of Art and Design *Te Kura Toi a Hoahoa***

Thank you for considering my portfolio for the Bachelor of Design – Design degree. I am currently a student at Cambridge High School, studying for NCEA level 3 in Visual Art (Sculpture), Visual Art (Photography), Design Visual Communication (Graphics), Digital Technology and English. As you can see from my subject choices, I have a passion for art and design and have focused my course to allow me to build skills that will start me on the pathway towards a career in the creative industries. Having visited the Digital Design department and learning about this course from Jason Kennedy, I am now looking forward to starting a degree at AUT as the next step in this pathway.

I was born in England and was already a 'maker' when my family moved to New Zealand before my fourth birthday. I was an early and avid reader of fiction and my creations were often based around the 'world' inspired by my reading – drawings, paintings, plans, designs, plasticine and clay models, origami, puppets and crazy habitats created from an anarchic synthesis of Lego, K'nex, string, toy railway tracks and natural materials dragged in from the garden.

As a young adult, my inspiration comes from the natural world, film and fiction, in particular graphic novels, fantasy, and science fiction. I also read and contribute to online communities of young creative people interested in graphic literature, digital art and modeling, music composition, sculpture, painting, and photography. I discovered an ability to work with tools in technology workshops in school, and broadened this to include tools and techniques for working with clay at evening classes. Added to this, I have independently taught myself to use a graphics tablet, Sculptris, SolidWorks, Blender, ZBrush, the Adobe Creative Suite including Photoshop, and a range of open-source graphics tools.

I gained Excellence Endorsement for both level 1 and 2 NCEA, including at level 1 Excellence in Design Visual Communication and Visual Art (painting) and Merit in Digital Technology, Maths, Science and English; and at level 2 Excellence in Visual Art (sculpture) and Visual Art (photography), and Merit in Design Visual Communication. I have been the first and only student to take Sculpture at my school so I have had to work independently and problem-solve around finding resources and ideas.

At school, my recent project work in Photography explores ideas of constructing and disguising identities, created reality distortions, and anamorphism. In Sculpture I am exploring the changing landscape between natural and man-made phenomena, using recyclable materials and contrasting organic and inorganic materials, including wire, lighting, tissue-paper, cardboard, twigs, feathers and clay. In Digital Technology, I am particularly interested in the concept of the uncanny valley and the fine line between machine and human. I independently conceptualised and produced learning worlds using Minecraft to teach younger students concepts in maths, key competencies and languages, and ran groups for these during lunchbreak. Outside of school I am involved in an ongoing collaboration on a graphic novel with another student. I am interested in the role of the artist in representing gendered stereotypes, particularly the construction of femininity in gaming where there is limited female participation possibly due to the representation of female characters as non-playable victims or sexual decoration. I also belong to the Hamilton Junior Naturalists, and I have a keen interest in exploring the relationship between anatomy and movement, and representing this digitally.

My aspiration is broadly to work in the area of moving image; I would love to work for Weta Digital creating creatures and worlds, but I am also interested in the gaming industry where there are few women designers and a need for gender-neutral or female-targeted games. At university I look forward to exploring the boundaries of the digital medium and to collaborating with artists with a broad range of skills and interests.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

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## Page 1

This is work I did independently at home, having bought a Wacom tablet and in the process of teaching myself to use Photoshop, between 2013-2014. I was experimenting with colour, texture and form. I was exploring ideas around anamorphism, particularly the technicalities of merging physical characteristics of two or more species, the stage at which one becomes more like the other, and looking at how the different anatomies would impact on form and movement.

The bird girl [a] was inspired by my reading of the book "Maximum Ride", and I was investigating how and where the wings might fit, what size they would need to be for flight, and also how clothes would fit around them. From an emotional perspective, I was trying to articulate feelings of being 'created' and unnatural, and to show the discomfort and awkwardness of having anatomy that does not 'fit'.

The lion [b] and lizard [c] were inspired by the Elder Scrolls games. For the lizard, I was trying to use my equipment to recreate a character in my own style, exploring how to use colour and shading to show the different textures of scales, horn and feathers. I took the idea of a cat-human from the games but changed the species from lynx-like to lion and investigating how to move it further from the human towards the feline while retaining an emotive face.

The werecats [d] came from ideas of transformation; I was wanting to show a non-sexualised female character who was feminine and unthreatening but also powerful.

The gorilla centaur [e] is a further investigation of a hybrid form – I was thinking how a human-horse hybrid doesn't confront our perception of what is possible anatomically because the horse has four legs, and wondering what the visual impact would be of a human-gorilla and how the gorilla's arms could be made to 'fit' the place where human legs should be. This one would be interesting to animate - how would the arm/legs function? How would walking look?

## Page 2

Again, this page shows work done independently at home. The top row shows Grimly Fiendish, an exploration of how to create a character using different media. I wanted to create something with challenging form so chose a troll. The first is pencil on paper [f] ; the second troll [g] is unfired white clay; I was focused on creating texture, form and expression. I have recently acquired Sculptris and have been teaching myself how to use it at home. The troll [h] was one of my first attempts at using the tool. It was made as one block; I am now trying again using separate pieces to make teeth, horns, eyes, jaw etc. that can be articulated together. I am still exploring how to use texture and colour using Sculptris and I noticed there are some tears in the colour on these first attempts.

The dragon teapot [i] is fired and glazed terracotta clay (20x40cm). I went to pottery classes at age 11 and this was my first large clay project made independently at home in Year 9, competing against Year 12 and 13 students to gain 2nd prize in the school art competition.

The final dragon [j] in the series is again inspired by the Elder Scrolls games. I used the Wacom tablet and Photoshop, and the idea was to create an ominous mood showing how the dragon might look at night suddenly lit up by lightning. I wanted to explore how light and shade could be used to show form, texture, opacity and movement.

## Pages 3 (detail)

Details from my Year 12 Photography boards, using Canon camera, Photoshop and Wacom tablet. I wanted to show a narrative series and chose the classic story of Icarus partly because of my interest in birds, feathers and flight, and the challenge in depicting these photographically, but also because it articulated the experiences of myself and my friends as young adults trying to define ourselves and our aspirations, and sometimes having goals beyond our means. The wings and feathers were all photographed from a live falcon, and I used Photoshop to reposition them in the final images to show the disintegration of the wings, having to manipulate the perspective, colour, and size of each feather individually to make this work. I had my brother jump on a trampoline and from trees to get the right poses for flight and falling!

## Page 4 (detail)

Details from my Year 12 Sculpture boards, using pencil and paper, clay, bone, frozen milk and wire, chicken wire, fairy lights, milk bottles, Canon camera, Photoshop. The brief was to explore the concept of 'drought' – all other students were studying painting; as the only sculpture student I had to independently investigate how to translate my ideas through 3D processes. Living in rural Waikato

I decided to consider the effect of drought on livestock, thinking of starvation and death. In an area that depends on dairy products as the main industry, this led to ideas around milk supply drying up as well as cattle dying - this is referenced through the empty milk bottles. I further explored the milk bottles as a material and found the shape, opacity and brittleness worked well to give the idea of a skull. The empty bottle is something that is discarded after the product has been used, in the same way a carcass is discarded. I moved on to thinking about the form of the skull / bottle, and the shape of the space within, and explored finding and representing this space with chicken wire, freezing the milk and light. At the same time, I was exploring installation of the skulls; initially in a space referencing the natural environment (such as farm fences), and later in a more metaphorical space with reference to concepts of cycles of life and death on earth from the wider perspective of galaxies forming and collapsing. Using lights to highlight the skulls led to ideas of stars and this idea, along with the milk, is synergised into the Milky Way galaxy, made with a coil of chicken wire.

## Page 5

Work in progress from my Year 13 Photography boards. My work references Daniel Lee, Amy Judd, and Martina Lopez, and I am now exploring the work of Loretta Lux. Initially inspired from thoughts about Facebook as a communication tool in fact leading to face-*less* interactions, I am exploring concepts of loss of individuality and identity through dehumanisation/anamorphism. I chose to show the loss of human identity by gradually masking or hiding the human face behind a bird-face. The inflexibility of the beak in contrast to the extreme malleability of the human mouth gives the idea of being literally 'dumbed down', unable to speak or give expression. As a further investigation of this idea of loss of social interaction, in the lake image, the birds are shown in a social flock, in a natural, coloured, environment to contrast with the extreme isolation and awkward positioning of the black-and-white human figures. The seated trio are grouped, yet physically distant and deliberately not communicating.

## Page 6

Screenshots from Maths World, an educational application of Minecraft designed to teach Year 9 students to solve complex equations whilst navigating a labyrinth game. I had the idea last year, seeing so many younger students spend lunchtimes in the computer room using Minecraft. Having crafted the initial Maths World concept and models, the Maths department was approached to become key stakeholders. Teachers have now embraced the gamification of learning and I and another student have crafted game worlds—and lead a lunchtime junior development team—developing worlds to teach digital science, languages and the key competencies as well as maths.
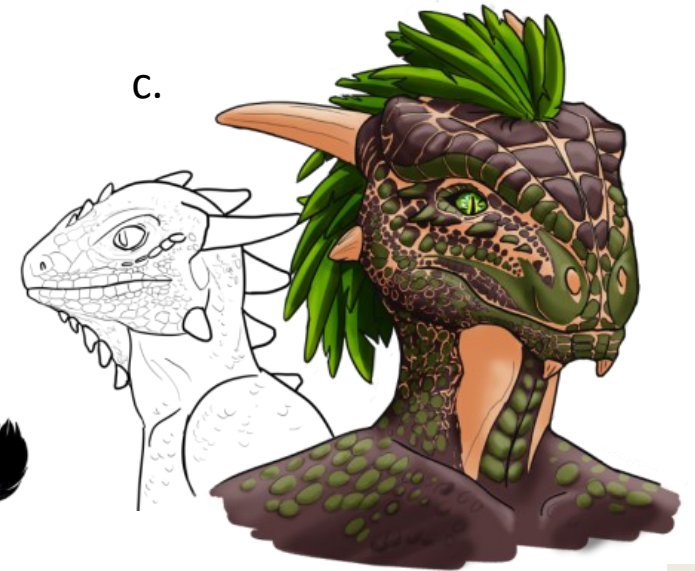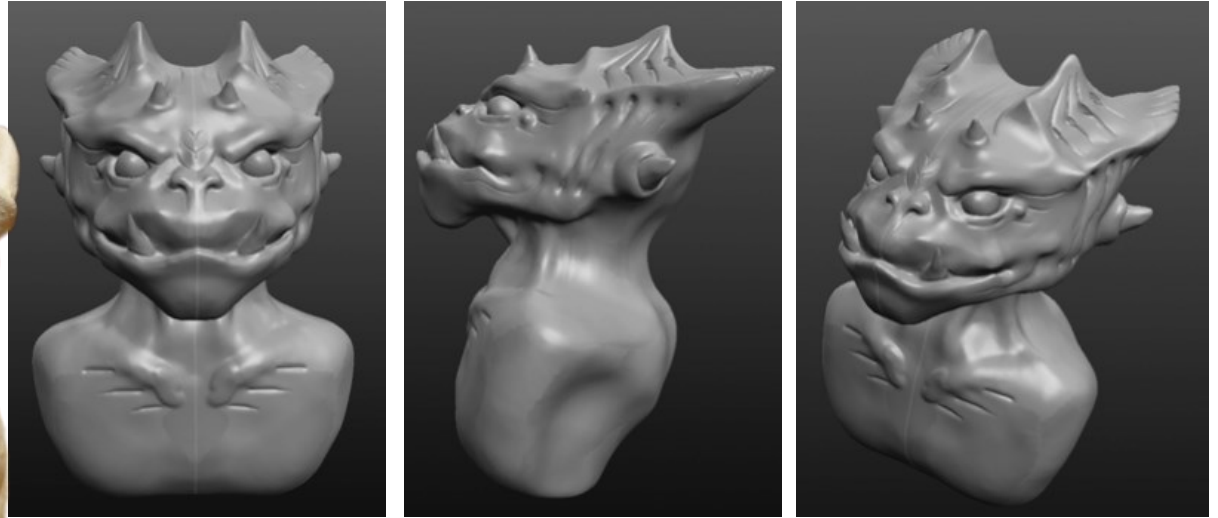
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Page 1

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