







# The Art of Warhammer Online

*Foreword by Alan Merrett*





# Foreword

**W**elcome to the incredible fantasy world that is *Warhammer* – a place of magic, monsters and adventure; a landscape of towering beauty, of fearsome horror and heroes aplenty; but above all else it is an unending field of battle and across its many and varied lands rages incessant, persistent, dominating WAR.

*Warhammer* stands as a unique and extraordinary fictional landscape. Part of this is attributable to its longevity – now 25 years in print; partly due to its utility – it was a tabletop miniatures games first and foremost but also, in recent years, a range of computer games, a plethora of novels, numerous comic strips, to say nothing of various card games, board games and others. The greatest debt, however, is owed to the unending development, expansion and refining of the work itself by the creative people who have had the fortune to work with *Warhammer* these last two and a half decades. At the forefront of these stand proudly the good men and women of Games Workshop – the owners of the franchise and primary developers of its content. Supporting their efforts over the years *Warhammer* has been blessed with some very fine creative input from those who have worked for its various licensees. The fine folk of EA Mythic are now added to that roll of honour and what a good job they have done bringing the world of *Warhammer* to life in their massively multi-player online version of the property.

This volume presents a visual essay through the war-torn lands and peoples of the *Warhammer* world as interpreted by the conceptual artists of EA Mythic for the *Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning* game. The host of images within are a testament to their passion and dedication to the subject. All the more pleasing for me, and all others associated with the original Games Workshop property (*Warhammer Fantasy Battles* the tabletop miniatures game), is how faithful and accurate the work of the EA Mythic artists has proven to be.

The essence of the *Warhammer* image is a medieval nightmare. The focus is always very much on battles, wars and conflict as this informs and defines the work. *Warhammer* is not a land of absolute good and evil – the champions of *Warhammer* are characters with feet of clay and the motivations of the bad guys are not always easily guessed at. Character studies sit at the heart of this book; the *Age of Reckoning* is, after all, a game that concentrates on characters and their development. The exhaustive detail and consistency of these studies is quite frankly awesome.

Successive waves of development over the last 25 years have scoured away earlier more naïve interpretations of the *Warhammer* mythos and its fauna and supplanted them with ever-more ‘realistic’ renderings. But this is a fictional, larger-than-life landscape and so the reality sought in the image is the hyper-reality of the fantastic. In *Warhammer* even benign real world animals can become creatures of dark terror or beasts of noble power; their fantastical potential explored and exaggerated for maximum impact. Similarly the creatures of the fantastic are portrayed with a persistent internal logic that impresses a sense of authenticity and encourages the viewer to perceive them as scarily real.

For all of its grim imagery and macabre styling, *Warhammer* is not bereft of humour; far from it! Although the gags may have been slightly toned down over the years, a streak of rebellious humour is still shot through the entire work. EA Mythic have embraced this aspect of the property and humour plays a big part in the character, content and presentation of the game they have crafted. It is an aspect of the *Warhammer* setting that is often overlooked and underplayed and yet is such an important part of the package.

In conclusion it remains only for me to mention just a few of the people at EA Mythic for their contribution to the project. Paul Barnett must bear a large measure of blame or responsibility for everything within as he has been the energising heart of the collaboration between EA Mythic and the old gits of Games Workshop. Greg Grimsby deserves mention and thanks for his Art Direction (just look at the art if you don’t get this). All of the artists should be appropriately credited elsewhere and their contributions noted. I thank them all. Finally the last, but certainly not the least, name on the roll of honour is that of Mark Jacobs himself. It was Mark’s passion and his absolute steadfast commitment to the *Warhammer* property that won EA Mythic the license from Games Workshop. The art and artistry shown in this book suggest that awarding it to Mark and EA Mythic was a pretty good decision and I am sure that *Warhammer* veterans and new aficionados alike will agree with me.

Alan Merrett  
Intellectual Property Manager and Old Git  
Games Workshop 2008



# Introductions

**E**very journey begins with a first step and my journey with Games Workshop began many years ago with a seemingly innocuous question asked by my friend, Paul Barnett (now Creative Director on *Warhammer Online*). He asked if some folks from Games Workshop could 'drop by' and visit Mythic Entertainment, the company I co-founded in 1995 with Rob Denton. They wanted to learn more about the process of building and running online games and I was more than happy to oblige. Over the years that followed, I came to know, first as friends and later as partners, the people that had created one of the most enduring works of fantasy, the grim world of *Warhammer*. These people continue to breathe life into this rich world, making it more exciting and vibrant than any other work of fantasy that I have come in contact with during the twenty years that I have been making games.

*Warhammer* – its name alone conjures up images of great strength and epic battles. It is a world full of dark images and darker deeds, but it is also a world where anyone can be a hero and turn the tides of war. It is rich with symbolism, archetypes and, at times, the uniquely bizarre. It is, in every way, a magnificent achievement. When you consider the many contributions that Games Workshop has made to the fantasy genre – green Orcs, technology loving Dwarfs, and the truly Dark Elves, whose name fits them so aptly – they should be celebrated and praised for their vision and imagination.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people at Games Workshop who have worked on *Warhammer* over the years shaping this

magnificent world. They are an inspiration to the entire EA Mythic team and we hope to faithfully bring their vision to life in our game. I could fill pages of this book expressing my deep gratitude for being given both the privilege and opportunity to work with them on *Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning*. As my space is limited, I will simply say this: I hope the people at Games Workshop can take as much pride in our game, knowing that it could not have been built without their years spent shaping this world, as we do.

I would also like to thank everyone at EA Mythic for their hard work and tireless attention to detail. By their efforts, the world of *Warhammer* is brought to life as never before. I am truly overwhelmed with a sense of pride every time I play the game. You have my deepest respect, admiration and gratitude.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the player, for having bought our game, opening this book, and embarking on a personal journey into this amazing world. It is a journey that I hope you will never truly complete; a journey that will take you to many of the wonderfully dark places within the *Warhammer* world for years to come.

Every journey begins with a first step and I hope you enjoy retracing our first steps as you flip through the pages of this book.

*Mark Jacobs*  
Vice President and General Manager  
EA Mythic 2008





**W**elcome to the ART OF WAR! Within these pages you'll find a collection of our favourite concept art created for *Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning* (or more simply, WAR). Why does all this incredible art exist? These drawings are created to visualize in suitable detail everything that makes up the world of WAR. They serve as guides for the rest of the game development team and help to inspire technology and content design. Thanks to the talent and imagination of our concept artists, these illustrations go beyond being mere blueprints and are an artistic ideation worthy of admiration on their own in a collection such as this.

In particular, the artwork in this collection is a wondrous window that looks out upon a *Warhammer* world that has never been seen before. True, there have been many artistic translations of the *Warhammer* vision over the past 25 years. Each translation has faced its own challenges wrought from the form in which it is to be played out. The novels use words to paint pictures. The miniatures use finely crafted sculptural proxies for the armies of *Warhammer*. For our game, we attempt to distil these many versions of *Warhammer* down to its core essence. From that, we created an amazing new translation of the *Warhammer* vision, one that is epic in scale and painstakingly detailed.

Fuelled by a quarter century of amazing visuals, fans of *Warhammer* have their own visions of the Old World and its inhabitants. Therein lays one of the greatest challenges of WAR, which is to create a world that *feels* like *Warhammer* no matter the experience or expectation of the fan. We believe that immersing the player in a true and evocative *Warhammer* experience is our most important responsibility. We are compelled and honoured to create a stunning new version of the world that is true to the *Warhammer* vision and can be enjoyed by all fans.

With that goal in mind, we embrace two very important mantras in our design. The first is that we are not making a fantasy game. Don't be fooled by the pointed-eared elves with bows and the castles. We are making a *Warhammer* game. The fantasy genre is filled with many different clichés and themes that have merged into a collective visual language. In making WAR, we focused on the aspects of *Warhammer* that make it unique.

The second mantra is that 'generic' is a foul word, worthy of a Witch Hunter's fiery brand. Early in pre-production for WAR, I remember showing a piece of art to the folks at Games Workshop and being asked, 'What is this tent?' and 'Who is it for?' Before I even uttered the words 'It's a generic tent', I recoiled in my chair as I realised what I was about to say. A 'generic' tent is not good enough for this game,

because it doesn't add flavour and character to the world; even the mundane needs to be made into something that reinforces the themes, iconography and emotional tenor of *Warhammer*. A table is not just a table; it is a work of art from the finest craftsman in Altdorf. A chair is not just a chair; it is the battleground throne of a Dark Elf warlord. The pages of this book bear testament to this philosophy and I believe we have been successful in this endeavour with WAR.

While giving birth to our massive battleground of a world, we did not always have Games Workshop material to directly reference. What does a Dwarf house look like? Where does an Orc sleep? What do female Warrior Priests look like? As WAR is an open virtual world where you can interact with Slayers and touch the gates of Karaz-a-Karak, we need to bring to life many details that were once left only to the imagination, or perhaps never envisioned at all. In so doing, the concept artists were very busy drawing at their desks. Over 6,000 concepts were created, culminating in more than 1,500 approved designs. This represents hundreds of new visual ideas that have never before been seen in *Warhammer*.

The art within this book represents the visual foundation on which *Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning* was built. You'll find many of our favourite images, as well as insightful commentary from the artists themselves. Hopefully you'll find this peek into the development process and the thinking behind these pieces as interesting as the art itself. Working with *Warhammer* has been inspiring and challenging, yet extremely fun to live and breathe these past several years. Only one salutation is therefore truly appropriate...

WAAAGH!

Gregory Grimsby  
Art Director  
EA Mythic 2008







# Dwarfs

*Dwarfs are an ancient and proud race dwelling in the underground strongholds scattered throughout the mountains of the Old World. For countless ages they have fought against the Greenskins, their most hated foes.*

*Their closest allies are the humans of the Empire, the two races having fought side-by-side many times against the forces of Destruction. Noted for their love of ale, their skill at metal forging and penchant for gold, the Dwarfs are taciturn and implacable warriors.*

*For the artists at EA Mythic, conceptualising the Dwarfs was particularly fun. Besides having incredible reference material to work from, we were able to generate a great deal of unique Dwarf content to be found exclusively in our game. The Engineer and Rune priest were particularly rewarding because we got to greatly expand upon existing ideas in the property and offer Warhammer fans something new.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director





*The core design philosophy for the Dwarfs focuses on the fact that they are essentially short Vikings with horned helmets, long beards and strong brows, a visual characteristic most evident in the Hammerers. However, even the Runepriests, in their embroidered robes, look brawny and unyielding.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director

















*Ironbreakers maintain the safety of the tunnels and specialize in clearing underground areas of danger. Encased in armour, they eschew horned helmets and extravagant ornamentation, as these would only get snagged in the close quarters of caves and tunnels.*

Michael Phillippi, Lead Concept Artist











*Dwarf Engineers use ingenious technology to preserve and advance their dying society. However, the Engineer is caught in a war of tradition versus progress. This is evident in his equipment where ancestor medallions are evident alongside complicated clockwork machinery.*

Michael Phillippi, Lead Concept Artist











Dwarfs possess little knowledge of magic and its casting. Instead, their arcane powers are tied to the forging and use of magic runes. Each of these specially crafted inscriptions contains a spell that can be unleashed by the Rune priest to heal allies, harm enemies, and protect themselves in battle.

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director



















*The Great Book of Grudges is a record of every slight and every wrong done to the Dwarfs. Its most prominent feature is the Grudge Rune, which dominates the book's cover. Additional Dwarf iconography such as stylized ancestor faces, dragons and knot work solidify the book as a Dwarf artefact. Gilded pages and a deep, rich red cover accented with gold give the tome kingly resonance.*

Eric Polak, Artist

















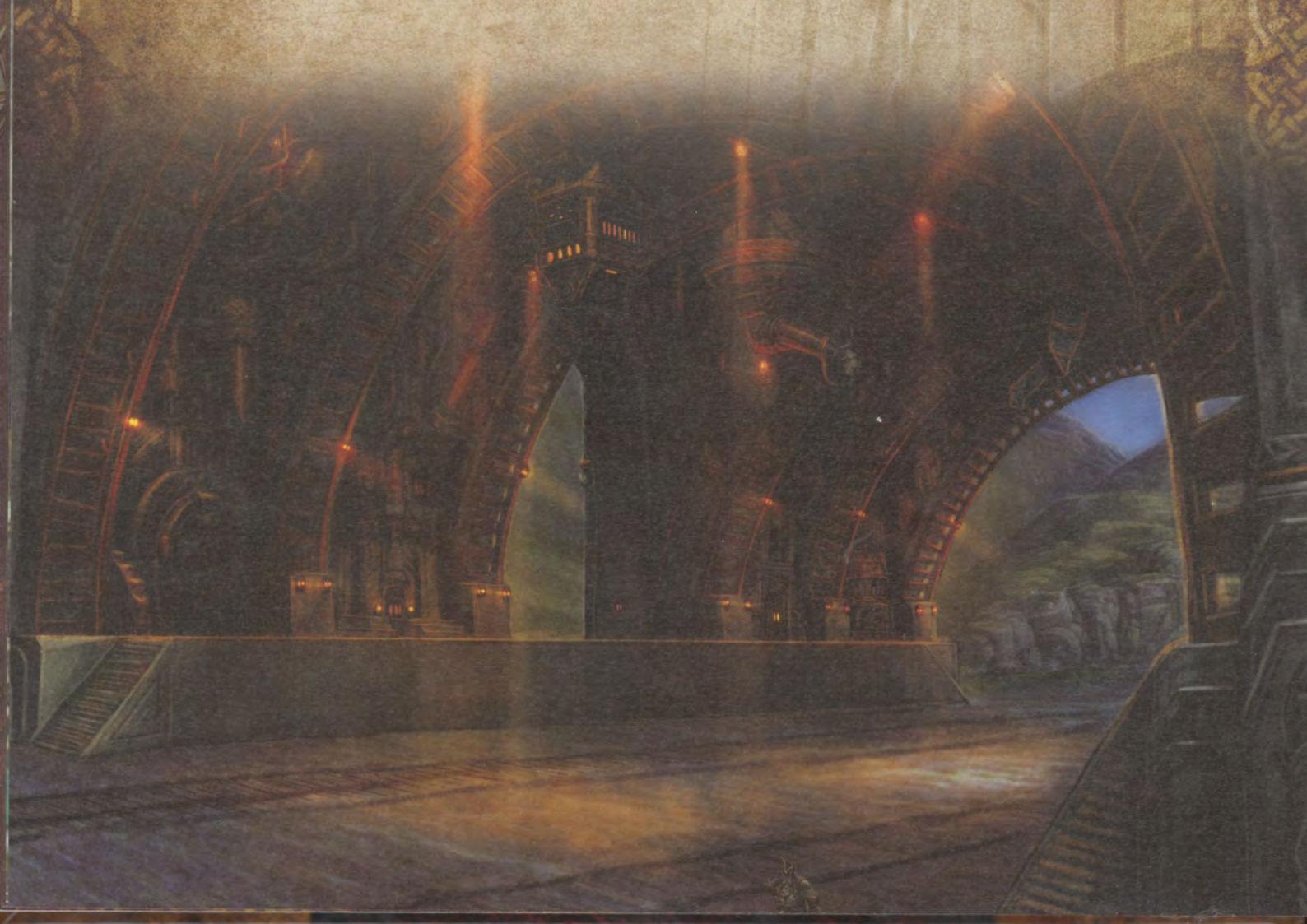


*The main feature of this city is the massive chasm you cross when you enter. Light filters down from a great height, and the vista down into the depths helps to establish the huge scope and complexity of Karaz-a-Karak.*

Eric Polak, Artist



















The Temple of Grungni and its twin, the Temple of Valaya, can be found in the heart of the Dwarf city, Karaz-a-Karak. The Ancestor God Grungni is shown here triumphantly lifting a stone veined with gold. Valaya is shown with the most familiar of Dwarf comforts, ale. I tried to establish a feeling of reverence for the statues with the polished stone floor and sunlight. I imagine the light reflected through miles of tunnels and vents by polished metal plates.

Lucas Hardi, Lead Concept Artist





*The Slayer Keep is home to many of the doom-seeking Dwarf Slayers who believe death in combat is the only way to be absolved of some previous misdeed. Following the bleak outlook of its inhabitants, the keep is austere, functional and imposing. There is an oppressive sense of duty and the weight of their ancestors standing in judgment over the dishonoured Dwarfs is ever present.*

Michael Phillippi, Lead Concept Artist







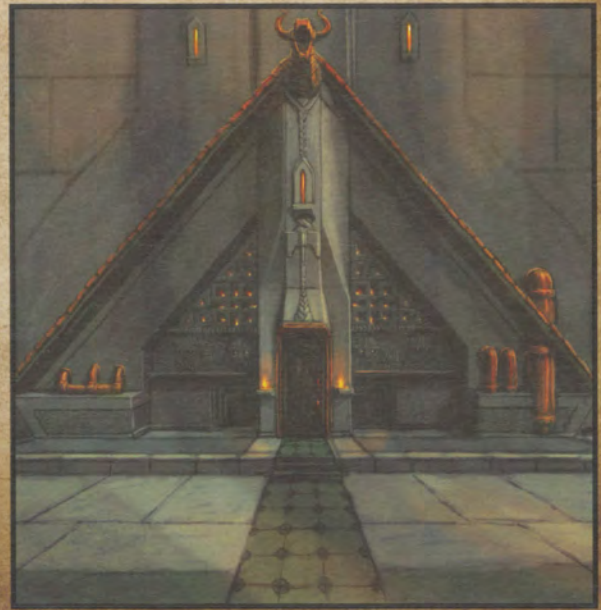


Much like the mountains they live in, Dwarfs are virtually immovable and their inherent toughness is evident in their armour design and architecture. We used compounded forms instead of insets to give walls, doors, columns and other elements a sense of endurance. Even their towers are 'stocky' with short, squat proportions. Our guide was "Dwarfs don't build tall, skinny structures; they build enormous, stout statues and hew cavernous cities that delve deep into the heart of a mountain!"

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director













The ironclad had to be a thick, armoured, squat monstrosity. Dwarfs hate water, so what kind of ship would a dwarf construct? A tank that floats on water, of course! When I was doing initial sketches I looked at some of the old Man-O-War Dwarf ironclads, which are pretty cool but not detailed. I also looked at pictures of Civil War ironclads to see what real ships looked like.

Jonathan Kirtz, Artist



















# Greenskins

*The Greenskins are the malevolent Orc and Goblin races found mostly in the Black Mountains of the Old World. Orcs are large, brutish creatures of questionable intellect but unequalled bloodlust. They live to fight, and do so with no greater relish than against their ancestral enemies the Dwarfs, or 'stunties' as they call them.*

*Big, strong and difficult to kill, Orcs excel at fighting and exert dominion over their smaller cousins, the malicious, but equally vicious, Goblins. Though smaller in stature, Goblins are the brains of Greenskin society.*

*When Greenskin tribes rally under the iron rule of an Orc warlord they form a mighty, rampaging Waaagh! Fortunately for the civilized world, these deadly armies have never managed to maintain their momentum as infighting and the self-destructive nature of the Greenskins usually leads to their dissolution.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director











*Orcs and Goblins are basically barbaric, crude, nomadic hooligans and the art design is centred on this core tenet. Orc armour is sewn and hacked together from bits of metal and leather. Visually it looks very shoddy, but serves the purposes of the Greenskins well.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director



















*Black Orcs are the biggest, meanest Orcs you'll find and they wear huge, studded slabs of metal. As they are the biggest, they can take all the thickest plates for themselves.*

Ted Bargeon, Artist

















*In designing the Goblin careers, the Squig Herder was a favourite around the studio. He adorns himself with loads of protective and spiky armour to look as unappetizing as possible to his 'pets'.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director





The problem with conceptualising the Epic Goblin Shaman armour is that Goblins just aren't epic in nature. They wear rags and light armour, dressing in all the bits that the Orcs don't want. The challenge was taking these cast-offs and making them into something that looks undeniably cool, hence the bigger hat, more bones and detailed staff.

Jonathan Kirtz, Artist







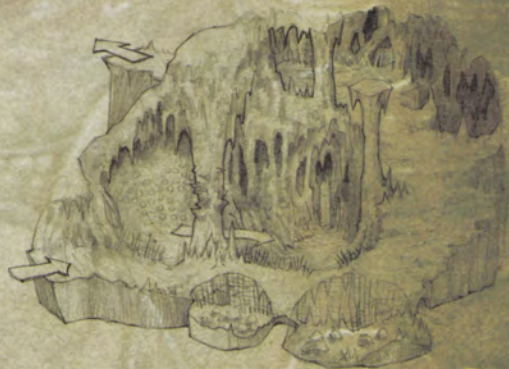





















*These are the ruins of an ancient society that self-destructed long before the rise of the barbarian king, Sigmar. Their obsession with necromancy was their ultimate undoing, leaving behind the shattered remnants of their once great civilization. Vaguely alien and replete with evil skull-like visages, even the Greenskins, current occupants of Mourkain, approach these malevolent edifices with caution.*

Michael Phillippi,  
Lead Concept Artist



*Once a Dwarf mining outpost, Mount Bloodhorn is now a Greenskin staging point for their great WAAAGH! against the stunties. It demonstrates the damage an ever-increasing number of Greenskins can do to a once fertile land as they strip it for their own selfish purposes.*

Michael Phillippi, Lead Concept Artist







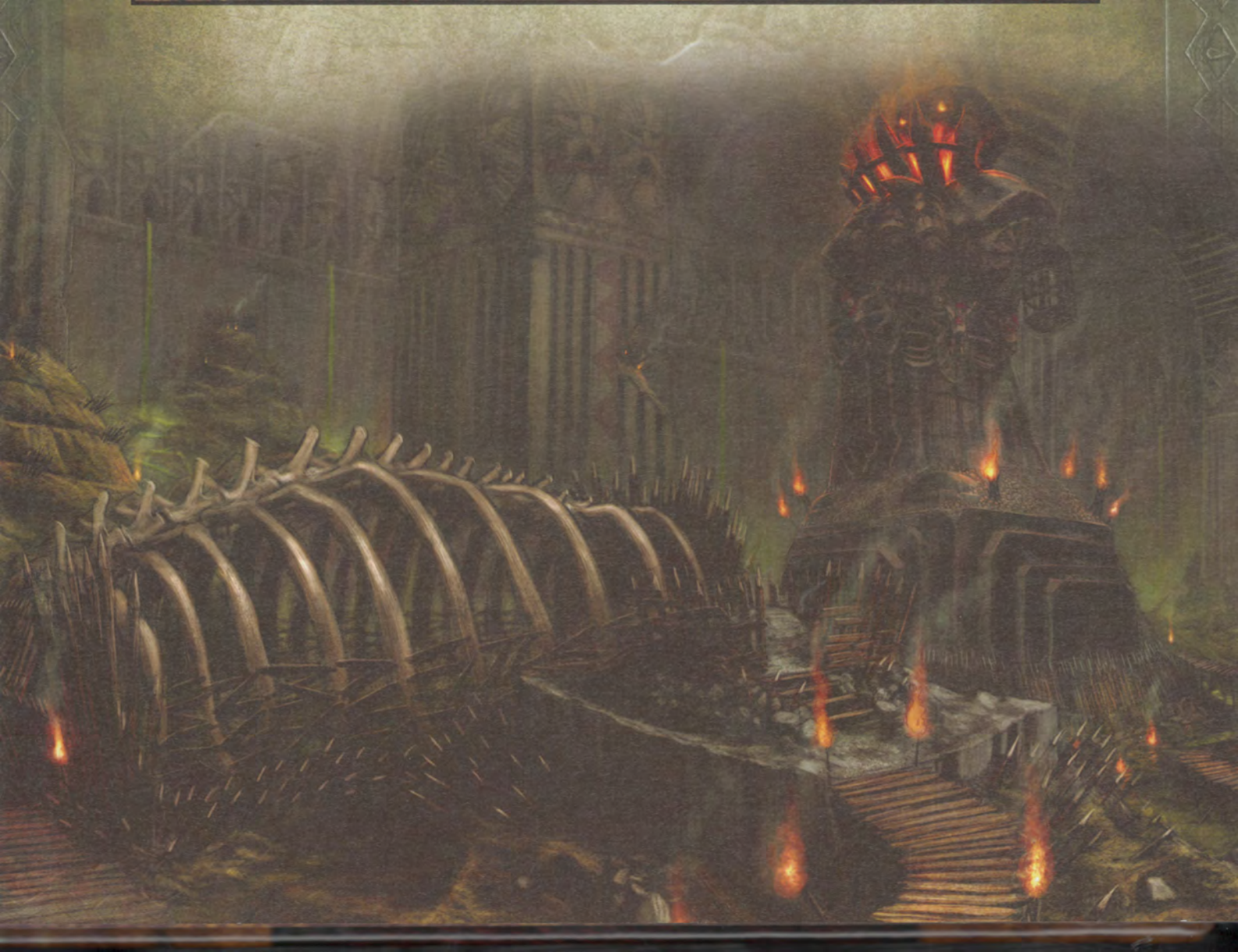




















*Creating props for the Greenskins was an exercise in contrast. We'd spend countless hours carefully designing something, such as a rope bridge, to be functional, yet appear as if it was haphazardly constructed and could fall apart at any moment.*

Michael Phillippi,  
Lead Concept Artist







*The Tree of Beards is a holy place for the Greenskins and a shrine of unspeakable insult to the Dwarfs. From afar, it presents an interesting vista to those that encounter it, but its true glory is revealed as the player gets close enough to see the severed heads and Dwarf beards hanging from the branches.*

Michael Phillippi,  
Lead Concept Artist



















# Empire

*In all Empire architecture, from a peasant hovel to the Imperial Palace, you can see the mark of successive generations as dormers, towers and even entire levels are tacked on to meet the needs of each new owner. This gives the streets of Altdorf and the towns of the Empire a great deal of whimsy, variety and character that goes far beyond its Tudor and Gothic style roots.*

*The Empire will be appealing to many players of Warhammer Online as it represents humanity in its most recognizable form. Engaged in a constant struggle with internal and external forces, the Empire is perpetually the underdog. Its citizens don't live forever, they aren't the most skilled craftsmen, and they don't have the backing of dark gods. What they do have is determination, loyalty and an uncanny knack for survival. There is a little bit of the Empire in all of us.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director





*The Witch Hunter is a tireless warrior rooting out and vanquishing evil wherever it resides. Incorporating motifs such as the twin-tailed comet, skulls and wax seals helps convey their dedication to the Empire and the destruction of its enemies.*

Eric Polak, Artist





















*The robes of the Warrior Priest signify his role as the healer in the game, but his armour and weapon allow him to support his team in battle. The challenge we faced with the Warrior Priest was affording players the opportunity to create unique and individual characters within the constraints of the career's silhouette.*

Michael Phillippi,  
Lead Concept Artist

























While working on this design, it was important to get all of the small details correct, especially the library of semiotics that differentiates the Bright Wizard from the other colleges of magic. The tattoos on their arms, the keys around their belts; these are the visual elements that help define the Bright Wizard.

Michael Phillippi, Lead Concept Artist







































The architecture of the Empire has a very run-down and dilapidated feel to it. Many buildings are constructed with defensive purposes in mind and have a haphazard feel to them as each generation of residents adds a tower here and a new room there. Structures are adorned with traditional motifs such as the steel cross, skulls and the twin-tailed comet, proudly proclaiming loyalty to the Emperor, the Empire and Sigmar. Some of the more fortified structures, such as the Altdorf gate, have a more solid feel due to the extensive stonework yet still maintain the essence of Empire architecture.

Eric Polak, Artist



























*This is the Temple of Sigmar found in the Empire capital city of Altdorf. It is designed to tower over the city and have a very cathedral-like feel.*

Eric Polak, Artist





















# Chaos

*Chaos is a powerful force that distorts, warps, and mutates all things. It is the corruption of the human soul and the physical manifestation of what happens to a man when he gives in to his own weaknesses, fears and vices. Our greatest challenge was to represent this somewhat abstract concept in the game world, complete with a hint of inherent randomness, and still deliver a feeling of great evil and destructive power.*

*Our followers of Chaos are designed to threaten and radiate oppressive, chaotic strength. They only seek to serve themselves by serving the Lord of Change. The Chosen is heavily armoured and adorned with symbols of Tzeentch, the Raven god worshipped by Chaos player-characters in WAR. The Zealot is adorned with feathers and bird motifs. The Marauder is the physical manifestation of Chaos with a mutating hand and his blind lust for battle.*

*Chaos has the power to seduce even the most righteous individuals and the ones with the most fervently held beliefs are often the ones to fall the hardest.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director











The iconic Chaos Chosen is a huge, armored vessel of death and destruction. As a warrior in the service of the Raven God, their armour is typically a cool blue colour offset by pale gold filigree and adorned with bird heads and feathers, fluting, dangerous spikes, and the symbol of Tzeentch.

Eric Polak, Artist



































A concerted effort was made to give each class a distinct look. Unlike the Zealot, the Magus needed a more civilized and refined appearance. My first attempt referenced a mounted Sorcerer of Chaos miniature. It was deemed too shaman-esque and similar to the Zealot. The high tier sets of armour were heavily influenced by an illustration of Ahriman by Paul Dainton, Melekh the Changer by Adrian Smith, Ian Miller's work and a visit by Alan Merrett.

Ted Bargeon, Artist





































*The Tzeentch Bridge started with the central form of an upside down pyramid to create an immediate sense of instability and improbability.*

*There is just a sense of wrongness about the structure that is further enhanced by horrific bird visages and the giant watchful eye of Tzeentch.*

Michael Phillippi,  
Lead Concept Artist









*With the longboat, the most important element to nail was the figurehead on the prow. The Norse worship the Chaos gods in many different forms, and represent them in many different ways. The figurehead of the longboat represents a minor deity of the sea, which may or may not be a facet of the greatness of Tzeentch.*

Mike Franchina, Artist















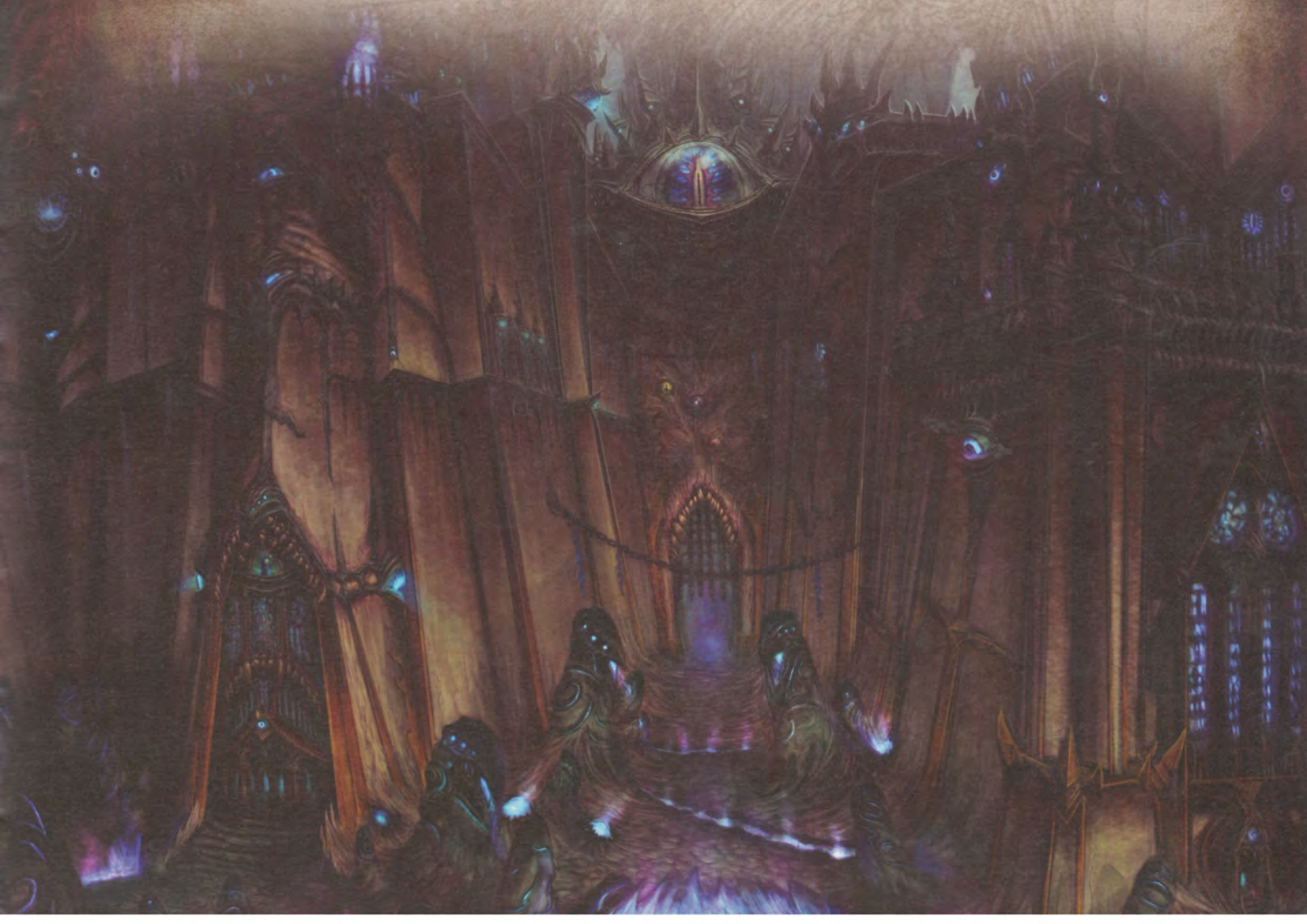


*The Inevitable City is located on the edge of an enormous crater and entry into this menacing metropolis can only be made via a cavernous pass carved through the crater rim.*



*The Inevitable City has an architectural strength and weight that feels suitably oppressive, accented with sculptural details portraying various representations of the Raven God and the watchful eye of Tzeentch. With its heavy stonework, claw-like metal crenulations, visages of the Raven God and arcane carvings, the Inevitable City feels as evil and dangerous as its corrupted occupants.*

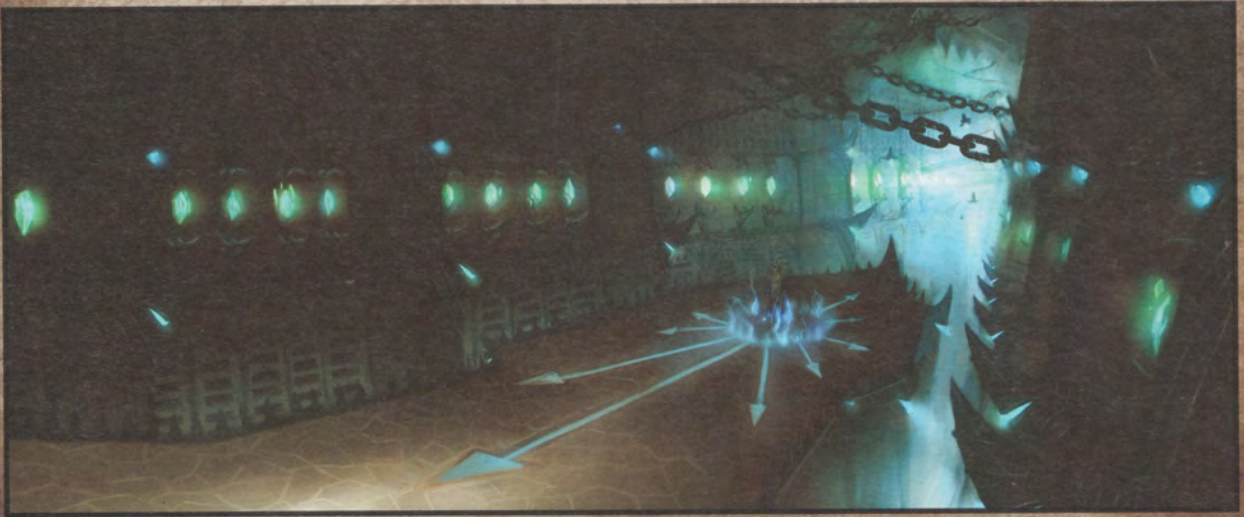
Gregory Grimsby, Art Director



















# High Elves

*The High Elves are the most beautiful, graceful and idealized race in Warhammer. They are 'artistry and refinement' personified and manifested in the extreme. The High Elves are also an ancient race, one of the oldest in the known Warhammer world. These two themes go hand-in-hand when designing for this army, as the High Elves have had millennia to craft layer upon beautiful layer of detail in all their artistic endeavours.*

*As with the other races in the game, we used a single key visual element – in this case, that High Elves are tall and thin – to guide our overall design work. Thus, they live in tall towers and many tall, white obelisks can be found as a reoccurring architectural element.*

*This focus on the vertical, and its repeated use in all elements of their design, gives the High Elves lands a unique grandeur. To add detail to the tall, white structures, we use a lot of flowing filigree, red gemstones and gold highlights to create a sense of opulence befitting the attitudes of their architects.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director













The high-ranking Swordmaster uses the repeated element of the eagle wing throughout his armour. In sticking with the High Elf theme of lighter colours, I used a very light blue for his main robe to create contrast with the bold burnt orange trim.

Paul Pham, Artist















*There exists a wealth of High Elf imagery from Games Workshop and I wanted to keep the same look and feel, but add slight flourishes that would make them appear even more elegant. Layers and bold colours were used to denote rank.*

Paul Pham, Artist













*With the Shadow Warriors, the hooded cloak and breastplate are used to convey higher status.*

Paul Pham, Artist



























Each faction's horse has a very different physical appearance. In the case of High Elves the horse is very lean but still muscular and fast. The horse's ears are lengthened and its eyes are almond shaped to echo the elves features.

Eric Polak, Artist







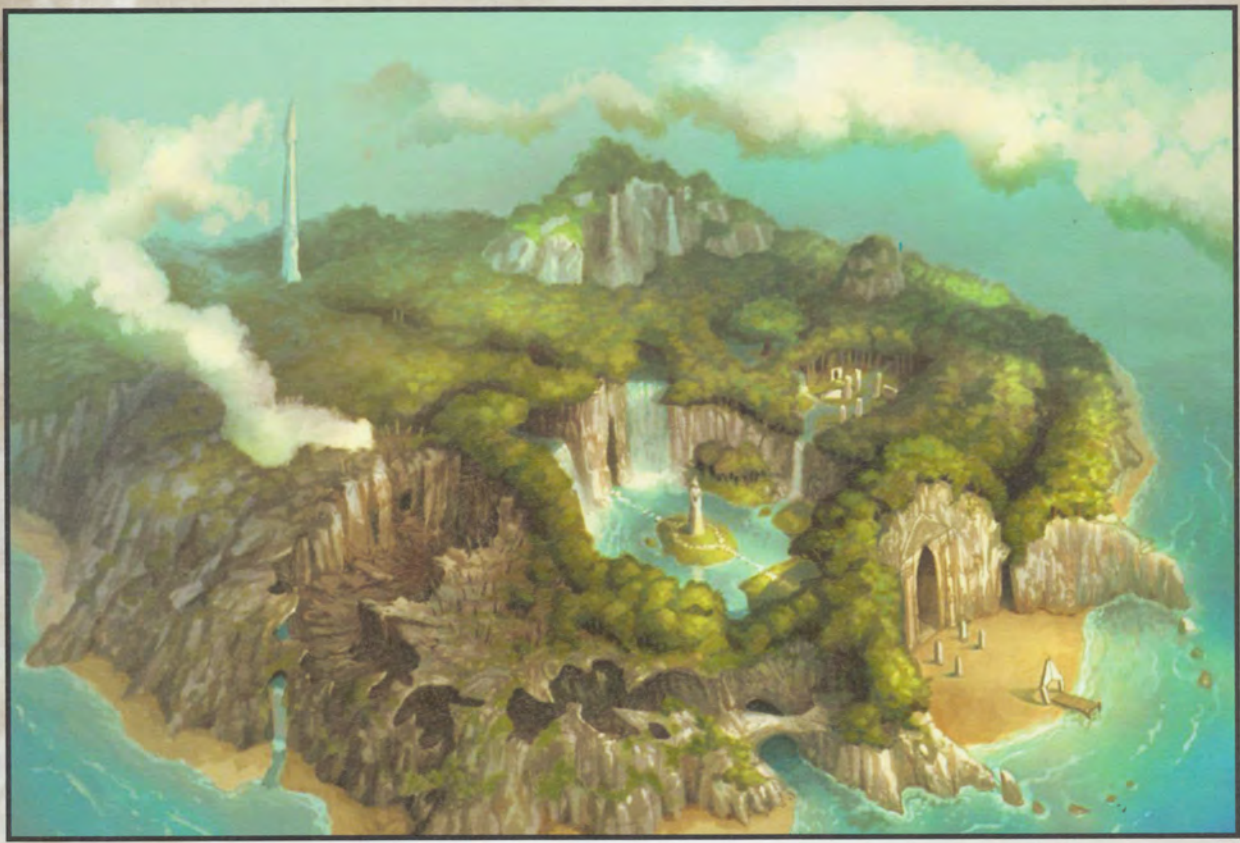




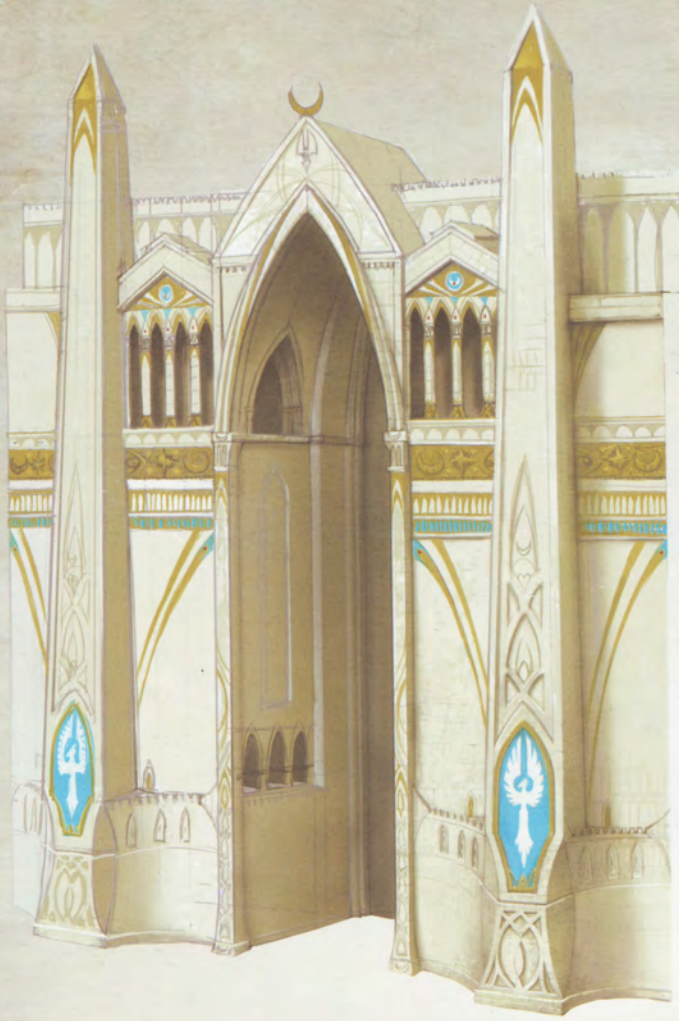
















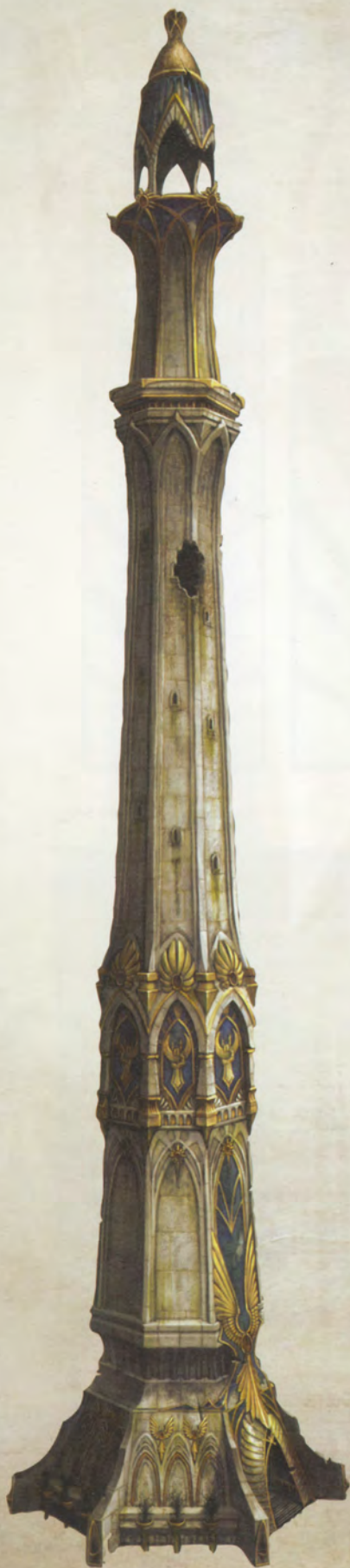
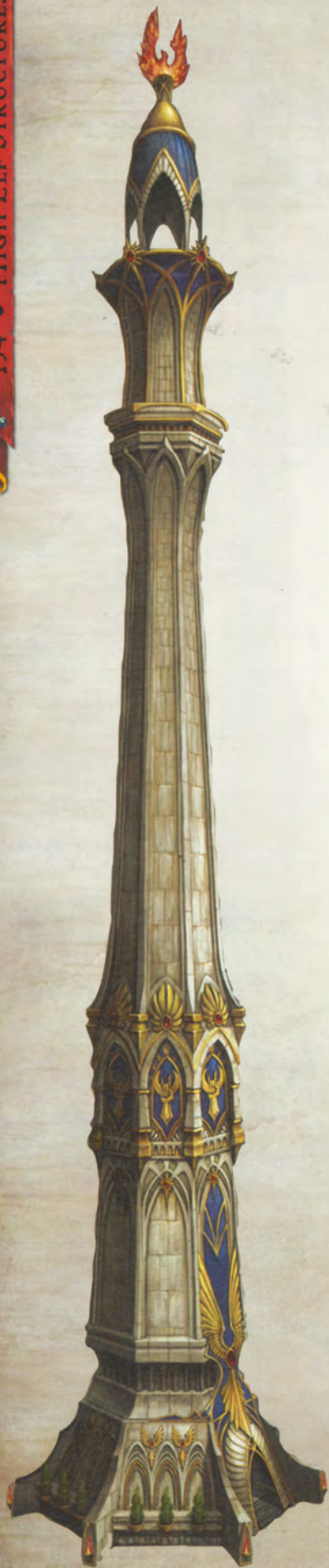
















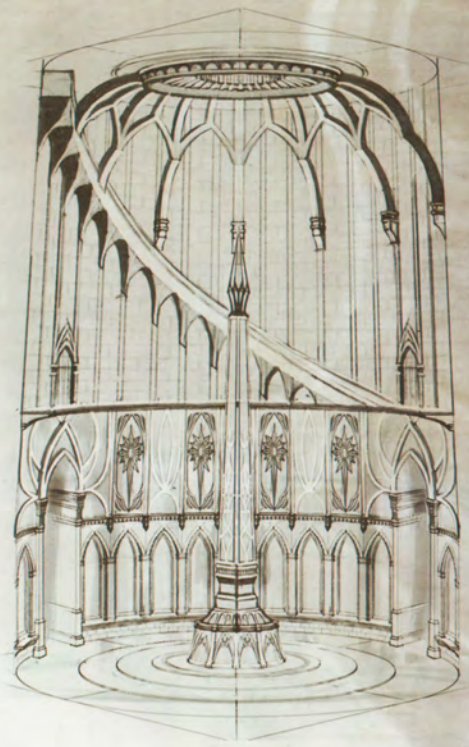
























# Dark Elves

*The Dark Elves gave the team its first chance to work on a beautiful, sexy look for our player characters. These denizens of Naggaroth are evil, enticing and bewitching, and their art design works very hard to showcase these qualities.*

*The Dark Elves, however, have much more to offer than beautiful female characters with a penchant for leather. The team was greatly challenged and inspired by the idea of the Black Ark: a floating, fortress-like city used by the Dark Elves to travel upon the ocean's waters. The Black Ark showcases a key motif that is used repeatedly with the Druchii – the layering of dark metal plates adorned with spikes and barbs. This imparts the art of the Dark Elves with a malicious splendor that fits their dark hearts.*

*The Dark Elves are the embodiment of beauty corrupted by greed, vanity and selfishness. They represent the lure of power and a willingness to do anything to attain that power. They are evil personified and we expect them to be a very popular army in Warhammer Online.*

Gregory Grimsby, Art Director







































The Dark Elf Sorceress was actually the first character class that I worked on. It was challenging trying to get the correct balance of cloth, metal and skin while still making her look like a spell caster. I went through several stages of revisions in terms of armour design.

Mike 'Daarken' Lim, Artist







































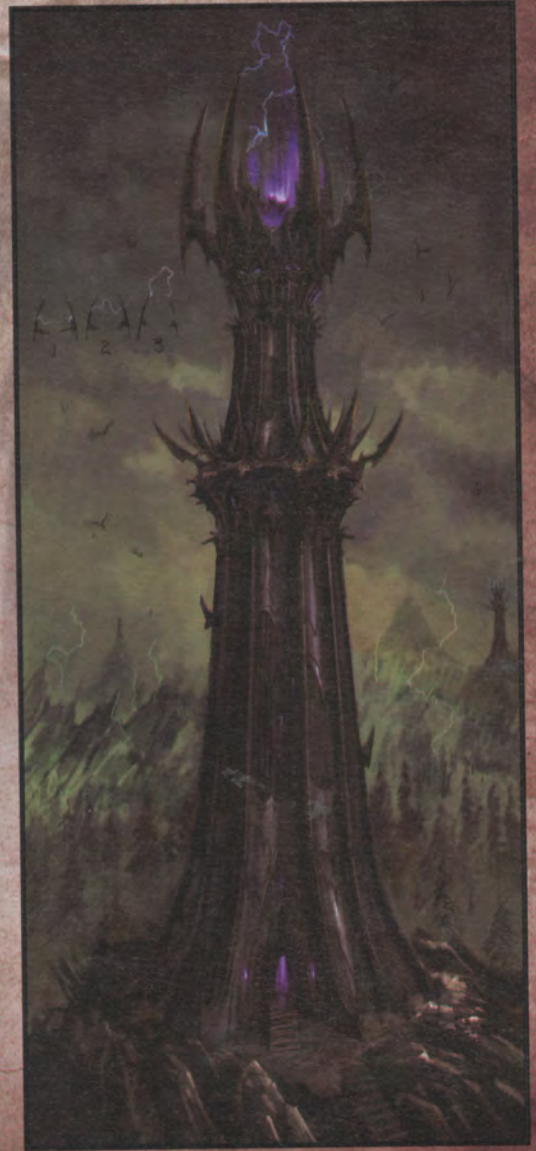




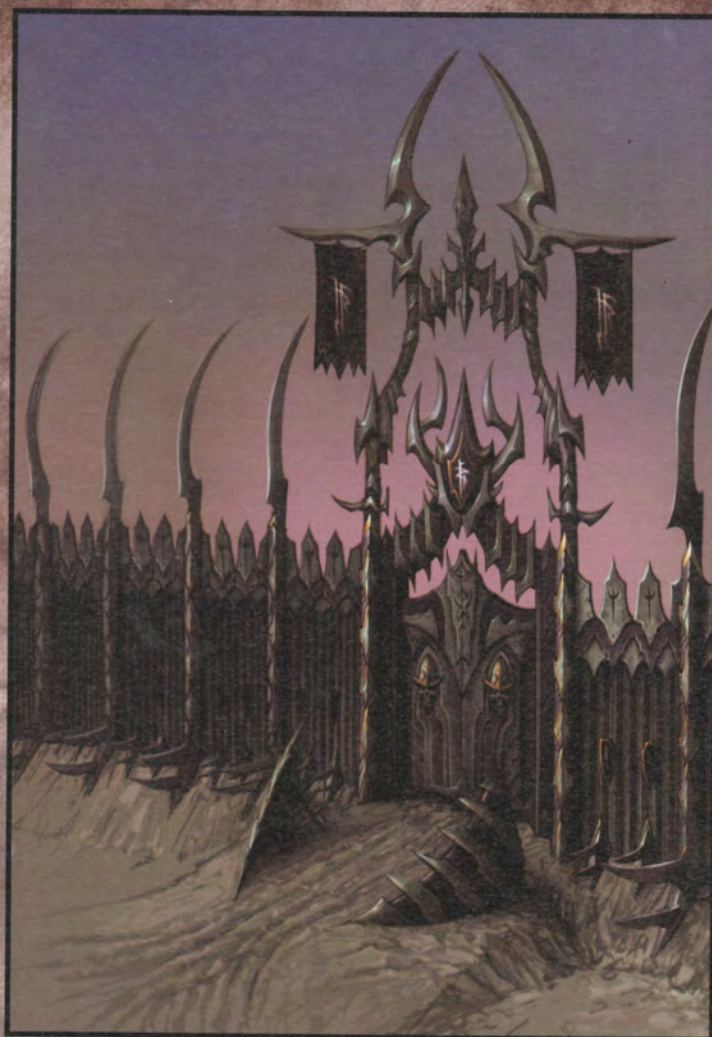
































# Monsters





























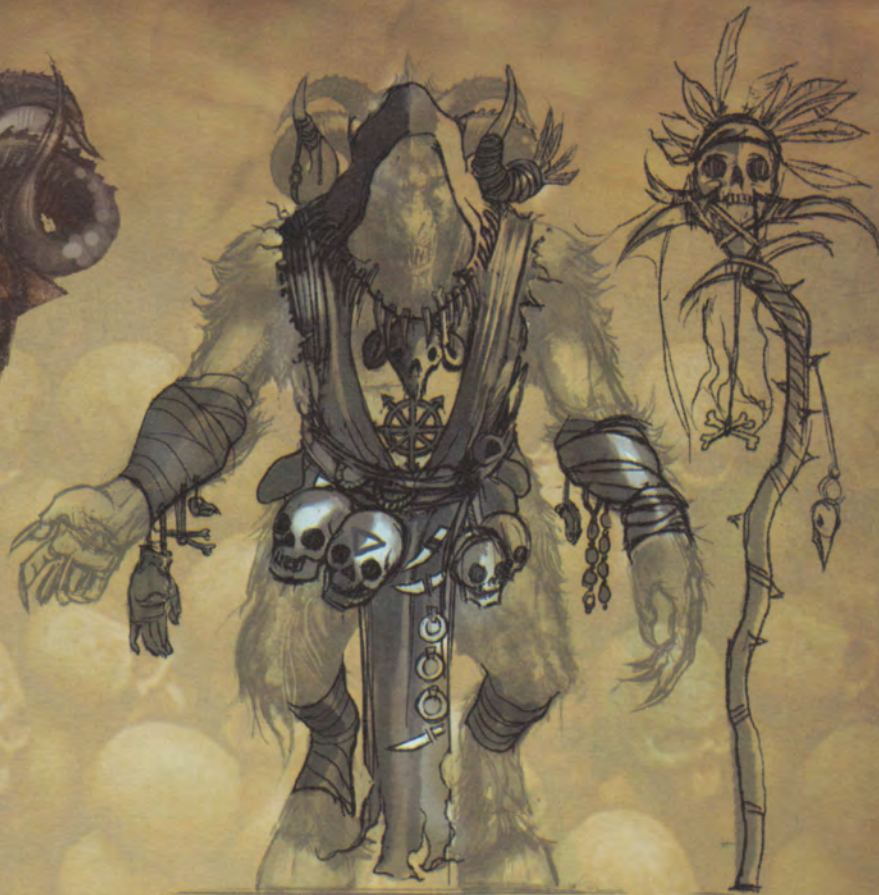
































































































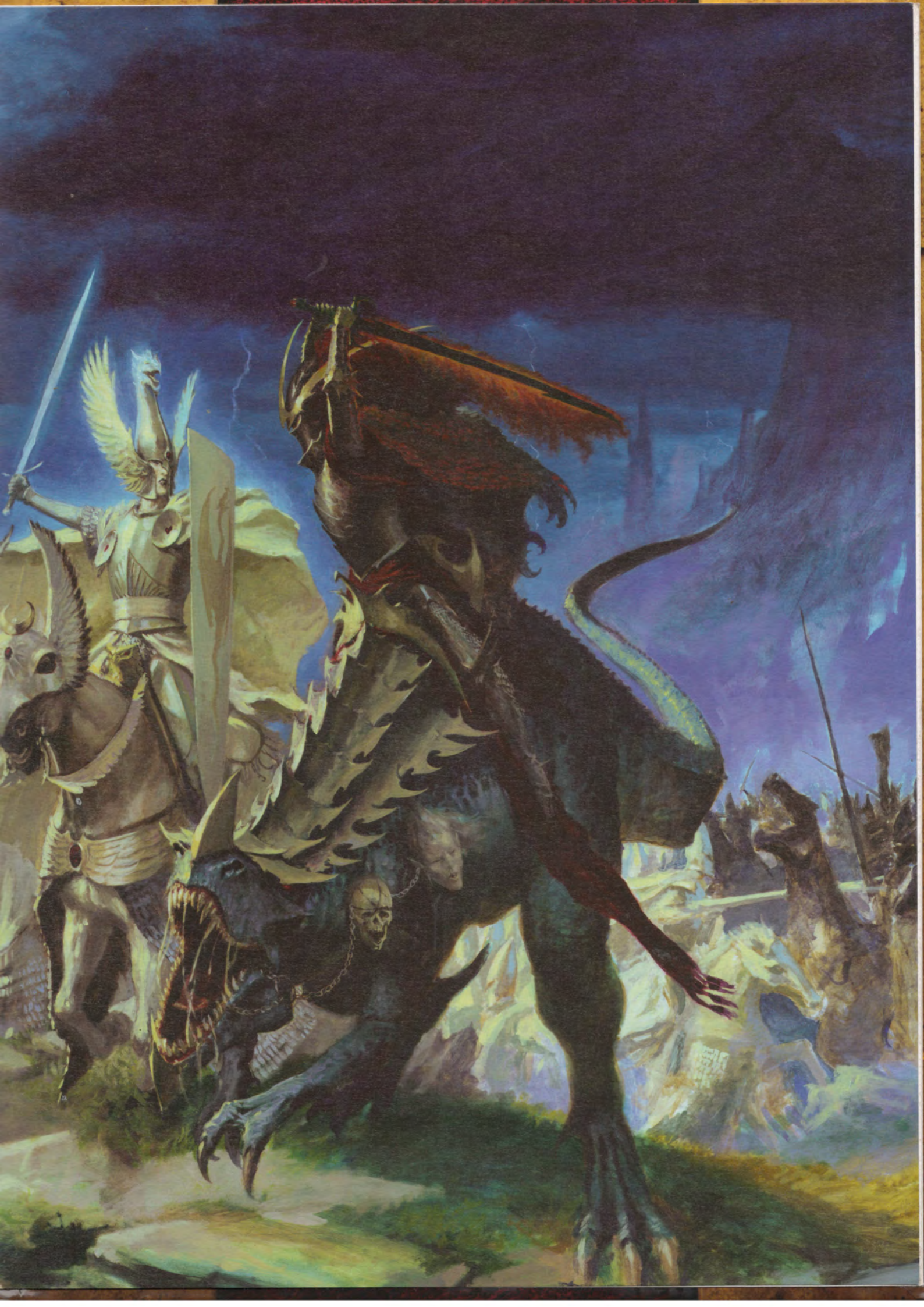














# Credits

## Lead Concept Artists

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