Pushing through Alpha – Condemned 2

Senior Producer Dave Hasle, Monolith Productions

We're continuing to push through Alpha and make the iterations that we feel the product needs. Two of those areas: world art and character art, will give you a brief taste of what our artists look for as they progress and what kind of changes they make artistically to strengthen the content.

First, Eric Kohler (Art Director for *Condemned 2: Bloodshot*) will give you a peek at some early model work and how he goes about providing feedback and paint-overs to iterate on the models.

1. Before the Character Artists begin to work on a model for in-game, they first generate some concept work. The cute fella' you see here above is a generic enemy that you'll run into fairly early in the game. Eric first meets with our Game Designer to understand the needs of gameplay for the character. He'll then start to crank out some concept pieces. Once the final concept piece is agreed upon, Eric will meet with the specific Character Artist to go over any particular needs for the model and creation will commence.


2. While the model is being built, Eric will swing by and review it with the modeler in progress. Once the model is complete, in this case – the high-poly count model, a screenshot is provided for the paint-over process.

3. The Art Director now makes his paint-over pass, tightening up the proportions and accentuating the muscular and bone structure of the model. The image above represents a typical paint-over that Eric Kohler would give to the modeler. The Character Artist would then move forward with the changes, again getting feedback from Art Director Eric as they continue forward.

4. The next phase will be the updated model now with the textures in place. Eric will now provide feedback to the Character Artist on the revisions that he'd like to see made;
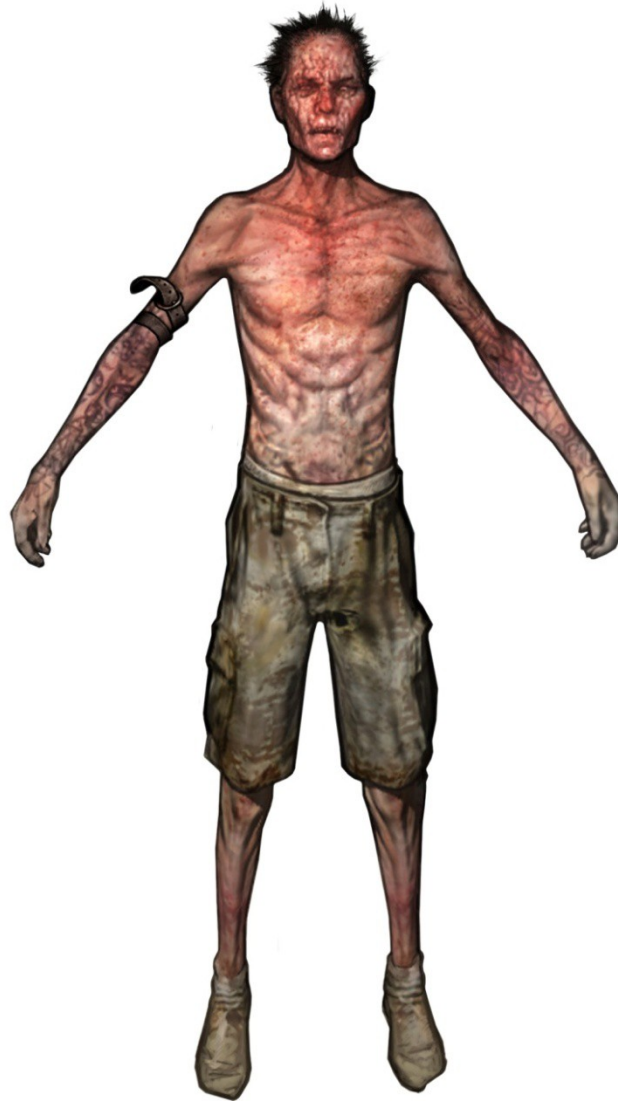
5. The Art Director will now do another paint-over showing what areas he'd like to see touched up. Even though he can convey the feedback in words, images and sketches can bring across so much more feedback. Key points that the Art Director wanted to see modified in the case of this enemy are:
   a. A few extra tuffs of hair to counteract the balding look, helping him read more as a younger guy.
   b. Thin out his chin and jaw to help make him look thinner. Maybe the neck as well if necessary.
   c. Reduce darks in the face and the rash along his chest and back.
   d. Crank up the red throughout his body to give his skin a more ruddy, irritated look.
   e. Add the belt to his arm
   f. Add a few tattoos above the elbows.

6. We now finally get to see him in action in the game with his new, improved form…

Secondly, in the area of world art, we set out with some loftier goals than we had with the environments of *Condemned: Criminal Origins*. We strived for more diverse environments. We also pushed harder for what we deemed as 'medium detailing'. There are the large aspects

to creating environments such as the scale of structures, interesting shapes while keeping them realistic, even compositional approaches using lighting. In the fine details, there is the richness of textures, the realistic feel to prefabs such as chairs, tables, windows and the polygonal count. In 'medium detailing', Courtney Evans, World Art Lead, and the World Artists worked to get a stronger realistic cohesion between the large elements and the fine details: how the wiring from an overhead light runs along the ceiling, how the molding works with the architecture, how the outlets built into the walls fit into the time period of the environment.

Courtney Evans, a very impassionate man when it comes to world art, takes you through a series of images and shows you the progression of the development of an area in a level of *Condemned 2: Bloodshot.*

Courtney Evans, Lead World Artist

At this point in development we're starting to add a lot of atmosphere to our levels. Atmospheric touches are pretty quick to make - it's not as if any one thing takes a lot of time but added together they can have a big impact on how a level feels. Here's an example of how we're approaching a factory level.

1. Here's an area of the level before we start our pass. It was initially modeled by Senior Level Designer Derek Chatwood and textured by Senior World Artist Geoff Kaimmer. There's a nice cool feel to the first-pass lighting, but you can see there's no sky beyond the windows, and the railings are pretty square and rough.
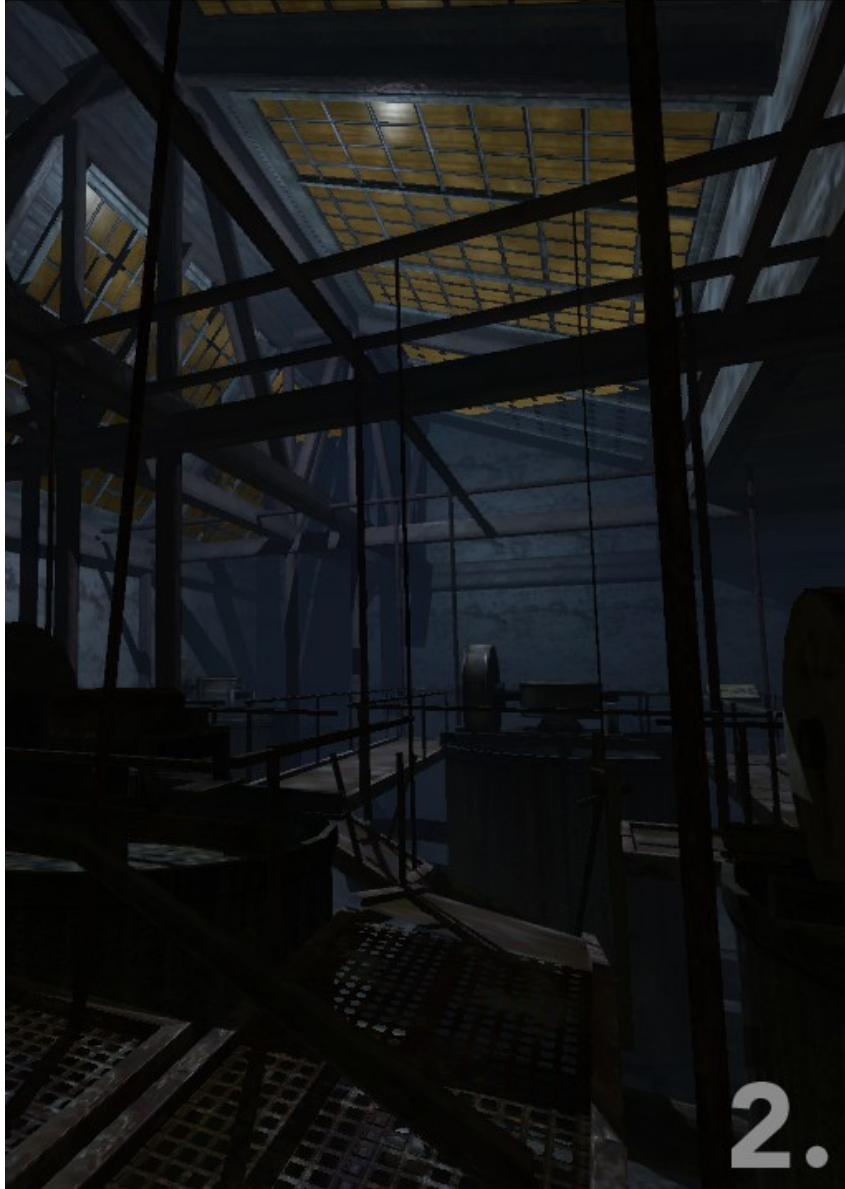
2. We'll then add the sky. The sky is pretty warm in tone, but it needs to be that way to stay consistent with the previous level, where there's lots of stuff on fire, so we're going have to change the lighting around in here to reflect that and keep that sense of cohesion.
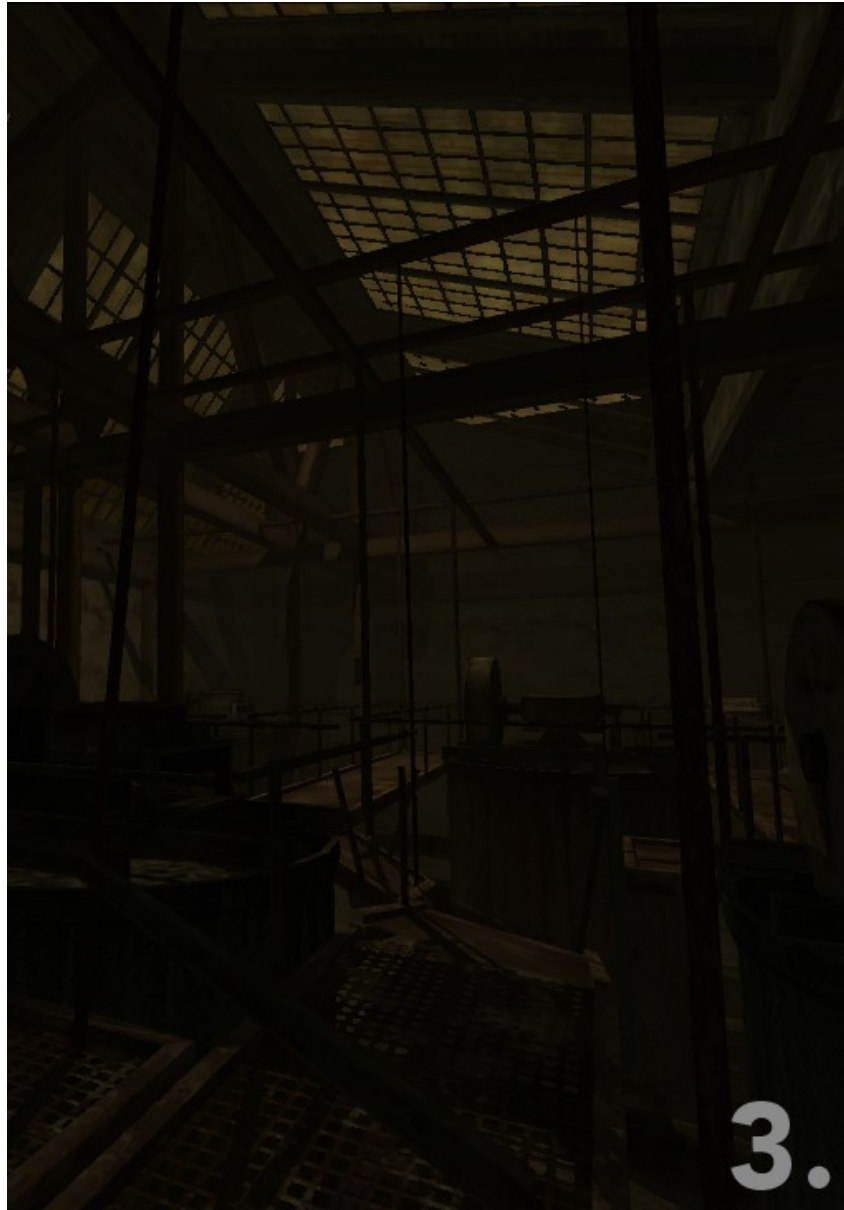
3. Here we've changed the lighting and the fog to better reflect the color of the sky. We've also made the primary light in the room more directional, more downward with very little light hitting the ceiling to better simulate a skylight.

4. Now we've added some volumetric beams of light simulating dust and smoke being illuminated by the skylight. This effect uses a new shader & shading method our programmers, Principal Software Engineer, Engine Architect John O' Rorke and Senior Software Engineer, Graphics Greg Seegert made, that pre-calculates a volume's density (using... science) so it can render quickly but accurately from any viewing angle. This lets us fill the room with a nice, thick dusty atmosphere that works from on the catwalks looking across or looking up from the floor below.

5. Now here's the level as it currently stands. The railings and catwalks have been remodeled by Geoff, putting in bends and curves, and the lighting's values are tweaked a little. Further atmosphere will be added when we put in screen overlay effects, more wear and tear to the walls, and more trash. (Almost any level can be improved in our game by adding more trash.)

After that we'll fix bugs, like the window frames that are vanishing in the distance. However, by then we'll probably have thought of six more things we want to do to the level to make it better... we're never done until they rip the game away from us and tell us to stop.

And it is usually me who has to rip the game away from the content guys and tell them the time is up and that they need to stop. It's part of my job as Producer – the luckless individual who has to yell STOP so we can make sure we make our dates and budget.

In the upcoming weeks, I'll be bringing on some gameplay updates through Alpha from our Lead Game Designer Frank Rooke and also some animation highlights from our Lead Animator Rick Lico as we continue to work on putting out *Condemned 2*. Thanks for your time!

- Dave Hasle