

PROFESSIONAL DESIGN

CASE STUDY

GD540 - ASSIGNMENT 5

KRISTIE ADAMSON

Project Brief



PROJECT
Dark Sanctuary

DISCIPLINE
Environmental
Illustration

ROLE
Illustrator /
Graphic De-
signer

FOCUS
Atmosphere •
Composition •
Storytelling

TOOLS
Adobe Photo-
shop

Dark Sanctuary is a digital environmental illustration created to explore atmosphere, storytelling, and the relationship between light, colour, and space. The project is intended for viewers interested in dark fantasy, atmospheric environments, and imaginative illustration. Its purpose is to create an immersive setting that communicates a sense of mystery and emotion through the environment itself.

The main challenge was creating a visually detailed sanctuary that felt cohesive rather than like a collection of separate elements. The final direction focused on strengthening the composition, establishing a clear focal point, improving depth and lighting, and creating stronger relationships between the architectural and environmental details. The visual

approach needed to maintain a dark and mysterious mood while still allowing important elements to remain visible and readable.

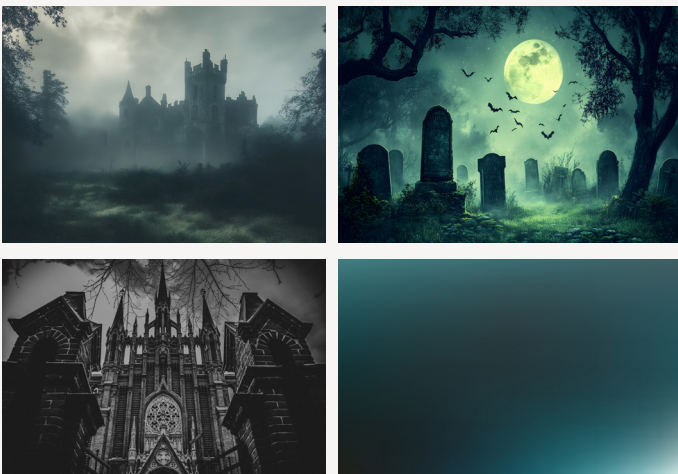
The completed project presents a fully developed illustrated environment with atmospheric lighting, architectural details, environmental elements, and a controlled colour palette. I was responsible for the concept development, visual direction, illustration, composition, colour, lighting, refinement, and final presentation. The project demonstrates my ability to combine imaginative world-building with intentional graphic and visual design decisions.

RESEARCH & VISUAL DIRECTION

Introductory text

The visual direction for Dark Sanctuary was built around creating a mysterious, atmospheric environment with a strong sense of place. References were used to explore dark fantasy environments, architectural forms, dramatic lighting, and muted colour relationships. These influences helped establish the mood and provided a foundation for developing the final environment.

PROCESS ITEM 01 — Mood / Visual Research



Caption:

Early visual research explored dark architectural environments, atmospheric lighting, organic forms, and fantasy-inspired spaces. These references helped define the visual language of the project and establish the darker, mysterious atmosphere carried through the final illustration.

PROCESS ITEM 02 — Concept Development



Caption:

Initial concept studies explored how the sanctuary could be structured as a contained environment while maintaining a strong focal point. The development focused on balancing architectural forms, open space, and atmospheric elements to create a setting that encouraged visual exploration.

PROCESS & DEVELOPMENT

01 — Composition Development



Composition studies tested the placement and scale of the major environmental elements. Refining these relationships created a clearer focal area and improved the viewer's movement through the scene while maintaining the feeling of a complete environment.

02 — Colour Exploration



Colour exploration focused on creating contrast between the darker environment and areas of light. A controlled palette helped maintain the intended mood while allowing important architectural and environmental elements to remain visually distinct.

03 — Lighting & Atmosphere



Lighting was refined to strengthen depth, mood, and visual hierarchy. The final treatment uses contrast between illuminated and shadowed areas to direct attention toward important elements while reinforcing the mysterious atmosphere of the sanctuary.

MAJOR DESIGN DECISIONS

03 — Environmental Storytelling

01 — Composition & Focal Point

The composition was organized around a clear focal area so the viewer would have an immediate entry point into the environment. Supporting elements were arranged around this area to create depth and visual movement without competing with the primary subject. This decision can be seen in the placement and scale of the major architectural and environmental elements throughout the final illustration.

Environmental details were selected and positioned to make the sanctuary feel like a place with its own atmosphere and history. Architectural elements, objects, textures, and lighting work together to suggest a larger narrative beyond the immediate composition. This allows the viewer to discover details while reinforcing the overall concept of the Dark Sanctuary.

02 — Colour & Lighting

A controlled dark colour palette was paired with contrasting areas of light to establish the mood and improve readability. Rather than making the entire environment equally dark, lighting was used selectively to separate spaces and highlight important details. This decision supports the intended dark-fantasy atmosphere while keeping the final illustration visually accessible.

FINAL OUTCOME



Dark Sanctuary

An atmospheric environmental illustration combining dark fantasy, architectural structure, lighting, and visual storytelling.

FINAL DETAILS



01 — Focal Area



04 — Environmental Detail



02 — Architectural Detail



03 — Atmospheric Lighting

Final Details

Close-up views reveal the visual details supporting the larger environment, including architectural forms, lighting, textures, and atmospheric elements. These details strengthen the sense of place and demonstrate how smaller visual decisions contribute to the overall mood and storytelling of Dark Sanctuary.

Project Conclusion

The completed Dark Sanctuary transforms the original concept into a cohesive atmospheric environment where composition, colour, lighting, and environmental storytelling work together. The project demonstrates my ability to develop detailed illustrated worlds while making intentional visual decisions that support mood and communication. It also reflects my professional direction toward illustration and graphic design by combining creative world-building with strong visual structure and presentation.

