

By The Bog of Cats Design Approach

A dead sheep is suspended in the water of a bog. Under the water the sheep's body is dirty but familiar, wool still puffy and soft ears pointing up. The arch of its back exposed above the surface is a ribcage, perfectly clean, nothing left hanging off the bones. Bogs are defined by acid and decay. This image would become the core of my design concept.

In *By The Bog of Cats*, the protagonist Hester Swane has lived in the bog her whole life. There she is eaten away by the father of her daughter, who has left her for a better family, the ghost of her half-brother, who she killed years ago, and a community which makes little effort to understand her. While she tries to stay strong and wait for the return of her mother, who left her there as a child, the forces stacked against her ultimately become too much for her to handle. For this concept I built an environment that can break down and decompose along with Hester as she fights but eventually gives in to the acidic nature of her home.

The bog starts clean, white, bleak, and sturdy. Through Act 1 more color is introduced as the white is dirtied into brown and sharp lines soften into more natural boundaries. Act 2 is where the conflict becomes increasingly complicated and the whites and off-whites go sour, saturating into blobs of green and blue. Finally, in Act 3, as Hester sets her hours ablaze, all definition is lost into one cloud with no structure or clarity, only shapes and pieces.

Visual research focused on photos of nature to understand the base environment and color palette as well as oil paintings which captured an interesting textured blending of color. Gel colors included standard warms and cools supported by yellows and greens to bring the decaying feel of the environment. Multiple organic gobos were used at three different angles to provide a broken-up texture with options for sharpness as the breakdown progresses. These elements come together in a design that creates a space which can rot alongside its protagonist.

Visual Research & Evolution



“Plants decay slowly in bogs, because flooding prevents a healthy flow of oxygen from the atmosphere. Bog soils are oxygen- and nutrient-poor, and are much more acidic than other soils” -*National Geographic*

Visual Research & Evolution



High contrast, clean lines, simple colors, pure.



Getting dirtier, starting to blend colors, introducing brown/green, the beginnings of decay.



Visual Research & Evolution



Dark and blurry, greens, blues, and browns.
Ominous. Energy is gathering.



One big cloud. Any definition has dissolved. Brown turns to orange.
All clarity is gone. A release.



Renderings



Act 1 Scene 1:
Hester Swane (right) questions the Ghost Fancier (left) while dragging
the frozen corpse of a black swan to its final resting place. The
landscape is bleak and Hester has lost the creature she felt closest to.

Renderings



Act 1 Scene 4:

Mrs. Kilbride (right) taunts Josie (left) about her mother's poor reputation. Josie remains bright and energetic despite Mrs. Kilbride's disdain for her upbringing.

Renderings



Act 2 Scene 1:

The Catwoman (right) takes a moment to herself enjoying wine while Caroline expresses concern about the wedding day to Carthage (left). The couple can feel that the day's events are going to get complicated fast.

Renderings



Act 3 Scene 1:

Hester faces away from her house which she has just set on fire. She has become what everyone thought she was. She is done with every part of her life that hasn't already rotted away.