Who?
Vince Proce
Why? Vince is new to **Magic** (as an artist, although he and his son play), but his resume as a high powered illustrator / art director in the videogame industry made him choice. I knew I wanted a scale and scope and atmospheric depth to the visuals not normally achieved on cards, and Vince brought a lot to the table.

Who?
Matt Cavotta

Why? Matt knows the brand inside and out. He has a history of not only producing great art for us, but also world-building with us. In a setting like this, where we knew we were going to deviate from business as usual, it's very important to have guys steeped in the goings-on so the deviations are on purpose.

Who?
Mark Tedin

Why? Same as above, plus Mark's special brand of informed-crazy, which we here in Creative find invaluable and endearing.

That was the in-house crew. Richard also had a number of other guys cranking away remotely, tackling chunks of world or filling holes as they arose.

Wayne Reynolds (who was especially key in allowing his deep knowledge and experience with **D&D** provide us with a party/teamwork feel that was *not* **D&D** visually. We wanted that adventuring party resonance, but not by stepping on the heels of another of our properties.)

Jason Felix (another new but brilliant addition to **Magic**)

Tom Baxa (**Magic** vet)

Dason Adamos (an extremely prolific and creative conceptor)

... and myself (for when we were absolutely desperate)

That was our talent roster (and a pretty fine roster at that).

The Look of the World

Typically it's easier to populate a world and build the details of how a civilization has evolved if you know the lay of the land, pun intended. What are the five basic land types, visually? That's the first problem we have to solve with each new world. How tight is the direction per color? Are all Plains on Mirrodin razorfields, or should they be broader? Well, we were given several directions as potential solutions for Zendikar. Here are ideas for Plains:

Physics takes a back seat!

No one dares walk under the disk-plains, because they smash down at irregular intervals.

We went broader and used multiple directions. The last thing a world as broad and treacherous as Zendikar wants is an overly predictable appearance.

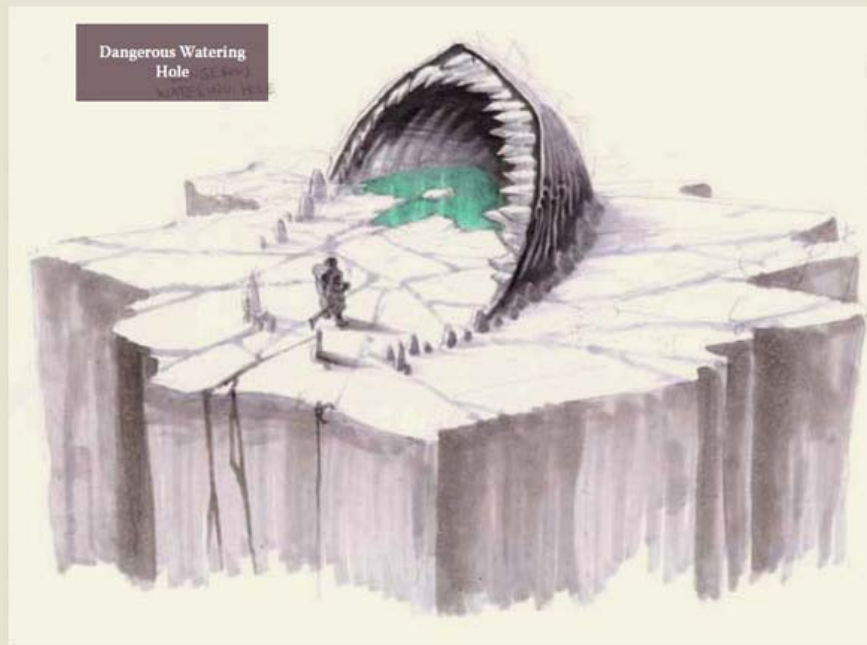Here are the things we decided Zendikar *did* want in its appearance:

Inaccessibility and danger. It's not easy to get anywhere. In fact, it's usually a deadly endeavor.
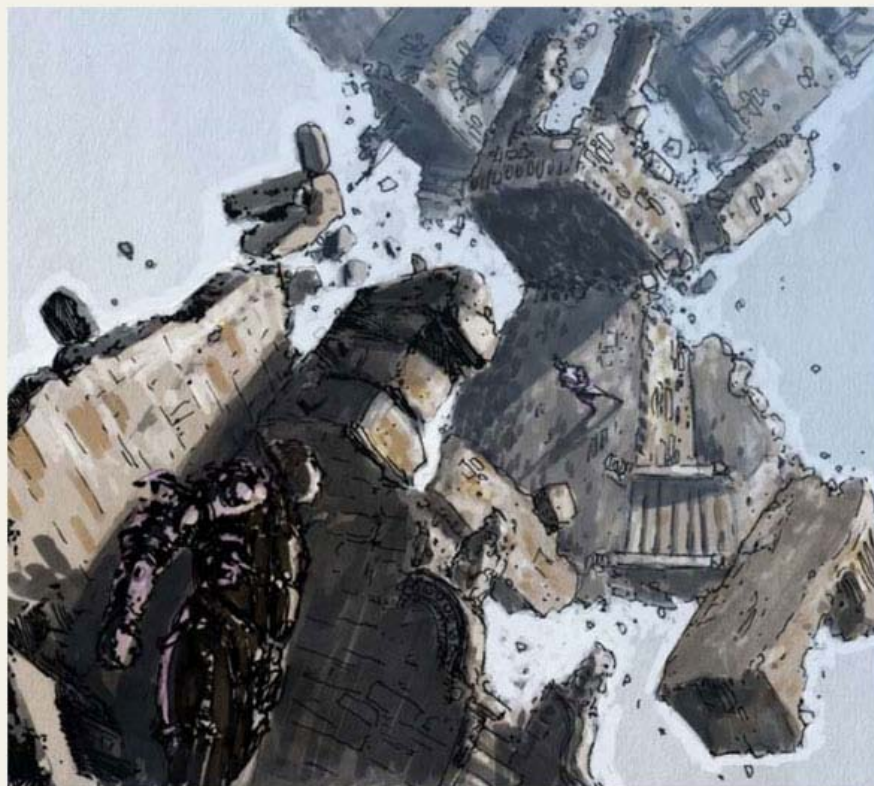
Sense of the unknown. Once you actually manage to arrive somewhere is there reward, or death?
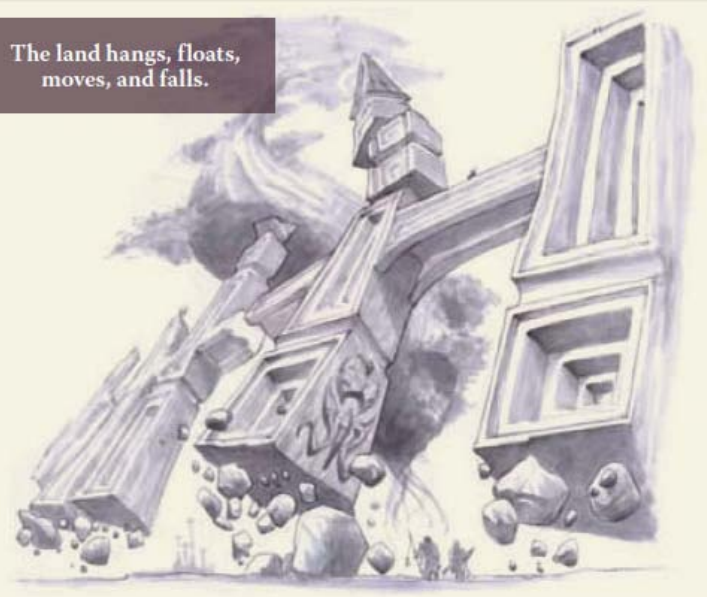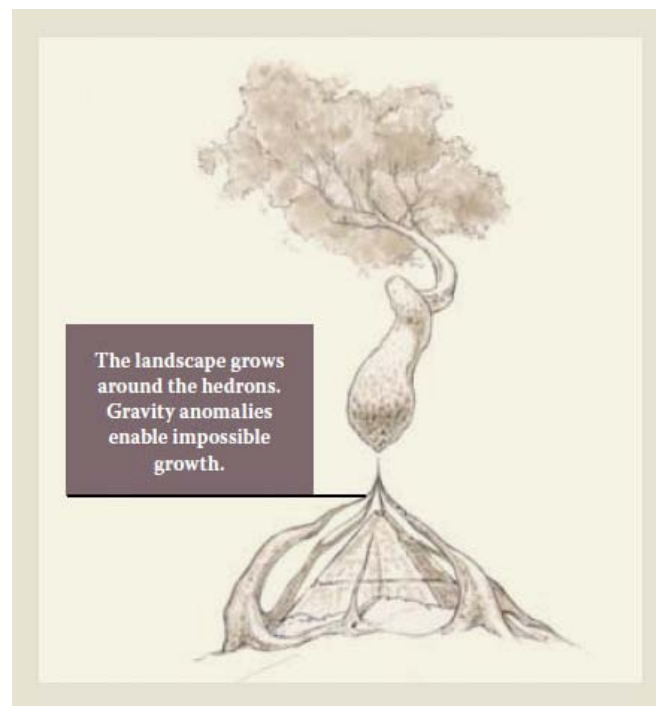
Very tangible but completely implausible physics. "How is that hanging there?" "I don't know, but don't touch it." Gravitational anomalies and so on.

The land hangs, floats, moves, and falls.

The landscape grows around the hedrons. Gravity anomalies enable impossible growth.

Vastness of scale and scope. Now this doesn't have to be hammered home in the style guide—it would play out more in finished art via the card art artist roster—but notice how much of it is apparent even at concept stage. The end aesthetic I wanted was "*Shadow of the Colossus* meets *Indiana Jones*."

Races of Zendikar

Now that we had directions for the world itself it was time to put butts in chairs. Do vedalken live here? Are there any indigenous races left, or is everyone here conjured by a visiting planeswalker? We knew we would need humans across all five colors. The visual direction for humans was this: no polished metal—Zendikar is too harsh an environment for the inhabitants to have nice things. At the same time, we talked openly about avoiding **D&D**'s design sensibility, so what we came to was this: gear and armor would be edgy and even complicated in design, but utilitarian in materials and construction.

Green? Elves. Richard pretty much nailed them with his initial drawings. Swarthy and stocky elves. The more petite variety were killed off by everything and its mother generations ago. It's survival of the fittest. And what's more green than that?

Red relied again on trusty ol' Goblins, still being eaten and crushed daily, but plentiful enough to keep trudging forward. Tedin pulled them into an almost monkeylike silhouette, a nod to how they might evade dangers, scale surfaces and swing away from (or blindly into) danger.

Hedrons

One of the biggest reasons that we have a lead concept artist in-house and plugged into the team is the ability to visually brainstorm very early on while we are all sitting around tables and whiteboards talking potential world ideas through. By the time we bring the conceptors in for the big push, Richard has already done a significant amount of ramp-up work. One of his early drawings, meant more to show inaccessible architecture than anything else, featured a central diamond shape, perhaps as some sort of gravity-hub. At some point these diamond shapes started creeping into multiple concepts. We all liked the way they implied some sort of earlier, almost forgotten civilization, but without directly quoting any sort of actual Earth culture. They were visually so fun and versatile that we dubbed them "hedrons," embraced them as a key visual element of this world, and even wrote them a shout-out in the setting's story.

Massive diamond-shaped stones known as "hedrons" are found throughout Zendikar. They are of unknown origin.

How It All Comes Together

I've talked a lot in the past about the immersive nature of our setting. When you are on Lorwyn, it is unmistakable. If you are playing all Jund, there's no confusing it with Esper. It has a look and a feel that hopefully complement the play style and add to the enjoyable elements of that set and setting. Again, that's what I hope for here. My goal was to have cards accommodate, to the best of their size-impaired abilities, a vast, broken world of surprise, danger and excitement. I wanted to help evoke that feeling of the first time through a video game, where you never know what the next step holds, what's around the next corner, or what's waiting for you in the underground chamber you just fell into.