

JUMP POINT

ISSUE: 10 01



IN THIS ISSUE →→→

| | |
|----|---|
| 03 | DEVELOPER INTERVIEW: Jumptown 2.0 |
| 17 | BEHIND THE SCENES: Making the Argo RAFT |
| 33 | GALACTAPEDIA: Orison |
| 35 | PORTFOLIO: Rise of the Red Festival |

FROM THE COCKPIT

GREETINGS, CITIZENS!

Happy New Year! I know there's plenty of doom and gloom about 2022 out there already but I'm choosing to believe that this is going to be a great year... at least, in *Star Citizen*, where there are plenty of exciting things coming down the pipe. It's also hard to believe we're kicking off YEAR TEN of **Jump Point**. That's a little bit of an exaggeration because year one had only one issue (December 2012) but the new year means putting a ten on the cover and I'll take it! (We'll see you for the actual tenth anniversary of **Jump Point** later this year.) Now let's talk magazine contents!

First up, we're looking at the concept design of the Argo RAFT, which was released back in November as a flyable ship. And honestly, have you ever heard of a more *Star Citizen* thing than the development team working hard on a top-secret spacecraft and having it be not a high-speed fighter or a deadly capital ship but... a toxic materials transport?! It's absolutely the ship you didn't know you needed in your life and, thanks to the eternal patience of Concept Art Director Paul Jones, we've got a whole lot of behind-the-scenes details about its design to share with everyone. It's deceptively hard to make sure a ship "looks Argo!"

As I write this, Jumptown 2.0 is in its final hours and, by the time you read it, it'll be another part of *Star Citizen's* increasingly detailed history. The original Jumptown was an example of exactly the way the

team has imagined *Star Citizen* working from the very beginning: gameplay that comes not from a perfectly scripted set of events but instead that emerges from the game itself in ways no one could've predicted. I vividly remember sitting around in early meetings talking about how players might create spacecraft races (this was before *Arena Commander!*) or organize their own inter-organizational wars that might be more impressive than anything we could ever dream up... and the fact that that sort of thing now happens regularly is pretty rewarding. For Jumptown 2.0, the team decided to see if they could recapture the thrill of the event with some additional design... and by all accounts, it worked! Since **Jump Point** is becoming something of a written history of *Star Citizen*, I knew we needed to chronicle the event. As a result, instead of one big roundtable interview this month we've got three individual interviews for you that track the process from the design to the testing to release!

Over on the lore side of the ship (we store it in the cargo bay), we've got a brand-new Galactapedia feature covering Orison AND a Portfolio entitled the Rise of Red Letter Day, a tie-in to the next in-game holiday. Check 'em out and we'll see you through the next **Jump Point!**

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DEVELOPER INTERVIEW

JUMPTOWN 2.0

The first Jumptown took the 'verse by storm, a case of *Star Citizen's* players capturing lightning in a bottle. For Alpha 3.16, the team wanted to end the year by recreating the excitement of the initial emergent event with additional design and balance. But how to capture the thrill of the original event? We interviewed three members of the team who saw Jumptown 2.0 through its design, testing, and launch. Let's find out how it all came together...

BEGIN TRANSMISSION →

PART 1 - DESIGN

JUMP POINT: *Happy (belated) Luminaria! Please let us know your name, title, and what you've worked on previously for Star Citizen.*

BEN DORSEY: : Back at you! My name is Ben Dorsey. I am the lead systems designer for the US Persistent Universe (USPU) team, though I was a senior systems designer while working on Jumptown 2.0. Previous to this event, I worked on the reputation system, the Ninetails Lockdown event, the Dynamic Events system, the player trading system, Combat Assist Service Beacons, Tecia Pacheco's behavior, and more.

JP: *Tell us about Jumptown 2.0. We've heard the story of how the first one came about through emergent gameplay. How did 2.0 come about and what kind of planning went into it?*

BD: When originally pitching a World Events system (which would eventually become the Dynamic Events system), Jumptown was one of the primary examples I used for what types of content we would want to support. Every time we discussed which Dynamic Event to do next, Jumptown 2.0 was number one on my list.

Jumptown was finally chosen this time because of its return-on-investment ratio vs the planned schedule for the end of the year. We're always strapped for time in Q4 due to the holidays and CitizenCon, so we needed something I could feasibly complete solo with minimal external support while also working on other features. At the same time, we wanted something that would be replayable enough to keep people entertained over the winter break. Jumptown 2.0 fit the bill.

JP: *What sort of design work went into turning Jumptown into a more organized and balanced event? How did you meet the challenge of recapturing that lightning-in-a-bottle feel of the original? (You were quite successful!)*



BD: We'll agree to disagree on that last part, but I appreciate you saying so!

This will sound a bit obvious, but my first step was identifying my intended experience with the event. I wanted something that would gather players together to interact, and I wanted to provide something for them to come into conflict over.

Next up was watching and reading players' experiences with the original Jumptown. I wanted to identify points where the experience didn't fit my goal and make changes to address them. For example:

PROBLEM: To attract players to an event with a high chance of PVP when the majority of our playerbase doesn't normally engage in PVP, there needed to be a strong motivator. With the current motivators available, that meant making the event extremely profitable. However, that meant it couldn't be constant like the original Jumptown, as that would cause inflation as the playerbase became saturated with money (since we currently don't have many things to spend on other than

ships), which would result in fewer and fewer players engaging with the event over time.

SOLUTION: The event would run for short bursts. This allows me to make it roughly 10x more profitable than would normally be acceptable, as it both concentrates people into that time (resulting in the profits being shared or fought over) and spreads the average profit-over-time for each month to an acceptable level.

PROBLEM: Finding the drug labs where the event occurs is tribal knowledge, something you either need other people (good, encourages player interaction) or external videos (not so good) to find. This would lower player count on an already small server, which ran counter to my goal of player interactions.

SOLUTION: Create a set of optional missions that players can accept to help them find where the event is happening. I ended up utilizing a

marker, though in a perfect world I would have used a slightly less hand-holdy method for guiding players (area indicators, radar, etc.).

PROBLEM: Players would purchase drugs at the shop kiosk. This would instantly fill their ship at which point they could fly away, with the whole process taking a handful of minutes. This made it so the overlap time for players to interact was very small, resulting in fewer interactions than I wanted. Since the shop's inventory is shared between all servers, players also couldn't defend a lab to try to monopolize its profit (someone on another server could just buy out the shop without you ever interacting with them). It also was narratively discordant for lawful players to pay a criminal organization for drugs, which is problematic when the vast majority of our current playerbase favors lawful gameplay.

SOLUTION: Make the drugs physically spawned. This keeps players at the location for a much longer period, increasing their chances of running into others. Players can be certain that anyone attempting to take

away from their profits must land in the area and acquire them through interaction with the existing players via guile, force, or charm.

These are all hyper-shortened versions, but they represent a large portion of how the event was designed. I worked from the template of the original Jumptown and made adjustments to fit my core intent. With that base plan I could move on to implementation (setting up data and scripting the missions) and coordination with other teams.

JP: What other disciplines did you work with to make Jumptown 2.0 happen? Did it need additional programming, artwork, animation?

BD: One of the stated directives for Jumptown 2.0 was minimal external support due to Q4's schedule. That said, there were a few pieces from other disciplines that we requested:

From the Mission Feature team, we received engineering support for adding a modifier to missions that would make law enforcement AI



full rework of the drug labs to make them an excellent FPS space. They managed to carve out a couple of days to kit-bash something together using existing pieces, but things like adding a second entrance or a more complex layout for the main building would have required new art and more time than was available.

JP: *Is there an aspect of Jumptown 2.0 you're especially proud of?*

BD: Weird as this may sound, I'm proud of its simplicity. I love simple events that let a game's systems shine through so that players can find unique and interesting ways to use their existing tools to overcome the ever-changing obstacle of other players. Keeping it simple also means fighting scope-creep, as there's always pressure to add "just one more cool thing," which can lead to confusing or bloated events.

JP: *We know there was something of a movement for players to work together and share the profits from the cargo runs. Was that something you foresaw?*

BD: The first rule of DMing and game design is that you can't predict everything your players will do. Jumptown 2.0 was built with a number of knobs and dials that could be live-tuned to help deal with any unforeseen player behavior.

That said, this particular outcome was actually something I was hoping for. Players making the event experience unpredictable is the whole point so that players don't become bored. Will I get attacked? Will it be peaceful? Will it be some kind of mix? Will it change mid-event? You can't be certain, and that's ideal.

Though I'll admit, I was hoping for something closer to a 40/60 ratio of cooperation vs conflict, and from what I can tell it was more like 60/40. We'll see how that particular balance shifts back and forth as the rest of the game changes around the event.

overlook players carrying certain illegal goods. We also received some engineering support from Systemic Services to allow for the event to have synchronized timers across all servers.

From the Props team, we received art support in creating a spawner for the drug boxes players collect. From the Sandbox team, we received art and a little level setup support to do a quick update of the drug labs, integrating the spawner and making the outpost more interesting layout-wise using existing assets.

We also had a large chunk of support from the Narrative and Dialogue teams to write, record, and clean over 100 lines of dialogue to add polish to the event's missions. I also particularly want to call out my team of embedded QA. They were instrumental in collecting community sentiment from the original Jumptown and acting as a sounding board so I design in a vacuum.

JP: *Did you work with Star Citizen's Narrative team to develop additional fiction behind the new Jumptown?*

BD: We did, though for this event I wanted a fairly minimalistic approach to the narrative wrapping.

Part of the goal with Jumptown 2.0 was to make a small, highly repeatable event, so the lore needed to be generic enough that it could

happen hundreds of times and still make sense. I also wanted the event to focus on player-created stories. As a result, the narrative is simple and self-contained:

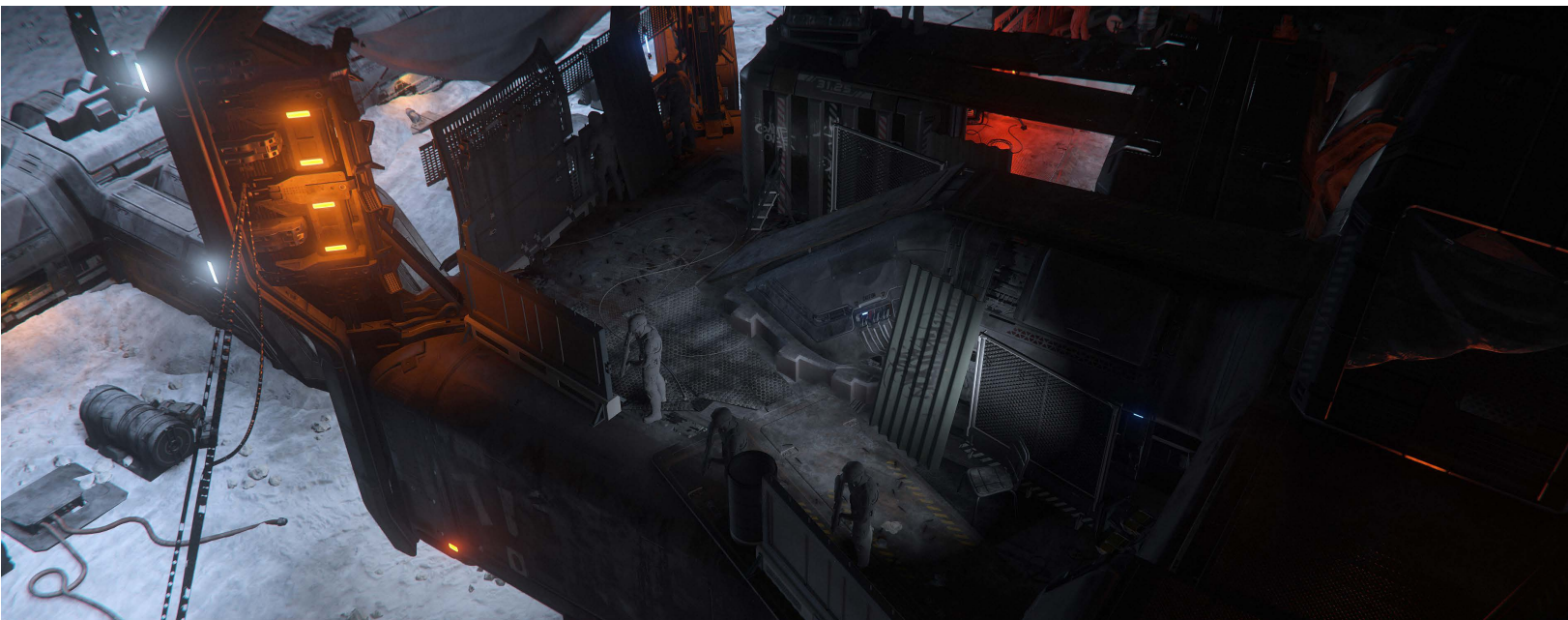
A group of criminals is arrested, leaving an automated process unattended that outputs a large volume of valuable drugs. Ruto wants to play information broker and profit from the opportunity, and the security companies want to confiscate the drugs to destroy them - just another day in Stanton!

JP: *Was there anything that was cut from the plan that you wished could've been included?*

BD: There was a bug that was found late in the process that prevented the event's missions requiring a reputation level to be accepted (due to the unusual method we use to distribute these particular missions). This forced me to fall back to cut the reputation requirements and instead rely on CrimeStats as the determiner for who would get which mission. CrimeStats come with some unfortunate systemic baggage but were deemed acceptable for this release.

Also, though it wasn't technically cut, from the get-go we knew there wouldn't be enough time in the Sandbox team's schedule to do a





JP: Did you follow players' experiences through the live release? Did they respond to the design in any ways you didn't expect?

BD: I tried not to. A big part of my job is watching players play, listening to and reading their feedback, and assessing what can be done to improve the game. But to keep a healthy work-life balance I try to avoid interacting with the game during off-hours. In addition, even a perfect gameplay experience won't hit the mark for 100% of players and this one wasn't perfect. Reading people calling you an idiot on the internet, even if the ratio is 10 positive comments for every negative, is a great way to destroy your mental health.

That said, my coworkers and friends sent me quite a few links to Twitch clips and Reddit threads throughout the break. It was nice

seeing people getting joy out of something I had created!

One comment chain stands out in my mind, where a player had been standing in line when attackers showed up and they had banded together with some other randoms to defend the lab. Afterwards they had added each other on discord and were talking about forming an Org and playing other games together. I hope they become lifelong friends. Helping to enable those kinds of connections is a big part of why I chose this career.

JP: What's next? Can we expect a Jumptown 3.0 or thereabouts?

BD: It's difficult to say. Currently there is nothing on the schedule, but after seeing the popularity of the event there have been a number of

people asking us the same question internally. I think the bones of this event are solid. My preference would be to instead use it as a platform for improvements to the larger game, which will in turn improve the event.

For example, the comm arrays were frequently brought up as a pain point in feedback. While I absolutely don't want to automatically shut them off as many people suggested (this would effectively invalidate an entire game loop), I do think some improvements to the gameplay of shutting them off and keeping them off would result in a better experience for both this event and the greater game.

Similarly, while an update to the outposts in Stanton has been planned for quite some time, this event has helped to emphasize that while Stanton has many beautiful social spaces, it is a bit lacking in combat spaces, particularly ones conducive to PVP.

There is also value in exploring other events that emphasize different gameplay (trading, mining, racing, etc.) while focusing on the same core goals of simplicity and player interaction.

Nothing is set in stone though. We recorded a variety of lines to cover future variations of Jumptown, including allowing for different locations, commodities, and even variants that introduce AI resistance. Other variants requiring players to deliver items or make an investment to get the drug spawner started have been discussed.

For now though, we're shifting back to more systems work.

JP: Do you have any messages for the players who are just finishing up the event?

BD: Post videos of your gameplay! I want to continue making enjoyable experiences for you all and the more I can see how you play the better I'll be able to do that.

JP: Finally, please let us know who else was involved in this event for our credits section.

Embedded QA Testing: Analicia Lara, Monica O'Hara, Teddy Hirschfeld

Production: Chelsea Statton, Mac McMonnies

Engineering Support: David Pollard, Tom Sawyer, Tony Zurovec

UI Support: Jon Hayter

Drug Lab Outpost Update: Brandon Lamb, Samuel Molina, Thomas Kennedy

Narrative and Dialogue Support: Bob Rissolo, David Haddock, William Weissbaum

Platform: Eric Green





PART 2 – TESTING

JUMP POINT: Please let us know your name, title and what you've worked on previously on *Star Citizen*.

MONICA O'HARA: Greetings, Citizens! My name is Monica O'Hara and I'm the principal embedded QA lead for the Systemic Gameplay Systems pillar, which includes the USPU team who primarily worked on the Jumptown 2.0 event. I've previously worked on the Origin 300i ship customizer, the moTrader app, FOIP and VOIP, the reputation system and Delphi app, the NikNax app, cargo and commodities, Nine Tails Lockdown, and several of the developer tools used to build missions.

JP: Tell us about your involvement in Jumptown. Did you play during the original Jumptown boom?

MO: Myself and the embedded QA on USPU were the primary testers for this event. We handled everything from making sure the variables were working correctly when setting up the event on the backend, to checking spawn rates, dialogue, mission functionality, selling prices, and location and structure integrity with the outposts. One of our own USPU embedded QA testers was a Jumptown veteran, so having this inside look was important early for development of the event.

JP: When did testing for Jumptown 2.0 start? What were the first iterations like?

MO: Testing for Jumptown 2.0 was started in October last year, but we had been talking about it and planning for it several months before that. The first few iterations of Jumptown were literally just making sure the drug spawner worked. It started out looking kind of like a vending machine and it turned into an entirely different room with a port in the wall by the end of it.

JP: What's involved in testing something like this? Is it a matter of playing the various runs in different configurations? If you can, walk us through a day of testing Jumptown 2.0.

MO: Testing varied from day to day depending on what aspect of the event was being focused on. Some days were spent enabling the event at different locations over and over to make sure that the backend and shop modifications were updating for each location correctly. Other days, we destructively tested the outpost locations and tried to find areas to clip through walls or drop bombs on the station to see what happened inside.

There was one situation that we accidentally caught that took us a while to figure out. It was when a player died inside the action area of the outpost, the drug spawner would stop working for several minutes. This eventually came down to tweaking some things with the spawn queue but initially had us stumped as it didn't have anything to do with the mission logic. At first, we just noticed that the drug spawner wasn't working and then narrowed it down to it happening only immediately after someone died nearby. From there we started setting timers and doing more direct testing until we got a 100% reproduction on the issue.

JP: Do you spend much time thinking about other ways players might approach the event? Did you foresee groups of players working together instead of battling it out?

MO: Oh, absolutely! Thinking about player behavior is a big part of planning, designing, and testing these Dynamic Events. How will a player approach the event? How can we test it in a way that feels natural to how a player would play the game? Once again, having an original Jumptown veteran on the team really helped with testing strategies and how we planned to approach the testing phase. We knew players were going to do both – work together and antagonize each other into all-out battles. That's part of the fun of these events and working on a sandbox game. These are player-driven events and can change based on who's playing and their play style.

JP: Now that Jumptown is live, have you noticed players do anything that didn't come up in the QA phase?

MO: Studying and understanding player behaviors is always fascinating and an interesting topic of discussion. Our community always finds new and intuitive ways to interact with the features of the project. It's commendable, really.

One thing that wasn't anticipated was that players would cooperate and wait in line, one at a time, for drugs. This just goes to show CIG that while we develop features with a focus on specific intentions in

mind, players always find new ways to interact with them.

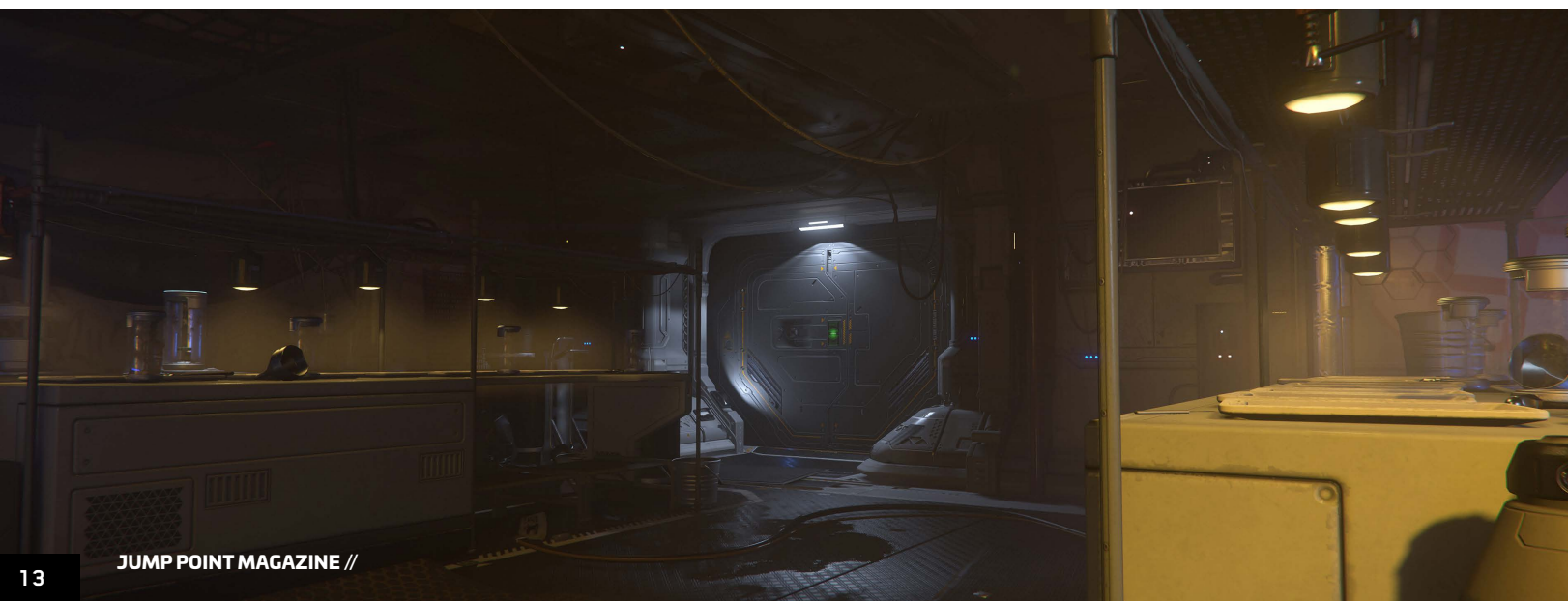
JP: What are you testing now?

MO: Currently USPU and the SGS pillar are working on the new shopping/selling feature that's coming in Alpha 3.17.

JP: Do you have any messages for the players who are just finishing up the event?

MO: USPU reads player feedback very diligently and we consider the feedback very important. Thank you now and in advance for posting your feedback on Spectrum. We work closely with the Player Experience team and discuss player feedback frequently to ensure our events are dialed in. We greatly appreciate the efforts players make to bring serious issues to light. While we can't always respond to the feedback posts directly, we're always watching and listening.

I'd also just like to say thank you to everyone who came out and participated in the event. Overall, I think the event was very successful and it's great to see so many players engaged and enjoying the game!



PART 3 - GOING LIVE

JUMP POINT: Hello! Please let us know your name, title, and what you've worked on previously on *Star Citizen*.

ERIC GREEN: Hello again! My name is Eric "Proxus" Green, I am the director of platform operations based out of Austin, TX. I have been a backer since 2012 and an employee since 2016. I have helped with the publishing process on every patch since Alpha 2.5 and have been involved with a fair number of updates and improvements to the RSI Website and RSI Launcher.

JP: Tell us a little bit about your experience with Jumptown. Were you playing when the original Jumptown boom occurred?

EG: Outside of internal testing for the patch release, I wasn't playing

during the original Jumptown. That being said, there were many of us who were very closely monitoring the activity around the anomaly, be it via analytics, player reports, Spectrum threads, Reddit, and the multitude of streams and videos.

JP: Is there a formal process to launch and end an event on your side?

EG: Yes! While Dynamic Events are a relatively new addition to the PU, we have formalized a process for any relevant stakeholders to "Request to Run" any given Dynamic Event. Once this request has been made, our Release Management team will coordinate with all parties involved to ensure that the event has been recently tested and there are no major red flags we should consider before formally scheduling the event.

Once we have the green light to run the event, all of the finer details are logged into a JIRA task and we execute the event as requested. Once the event is running, we have a number of people from various departments who keep an eye on things and verify that the event self-terminates once the end criteria has been met.

JP: Does the Live team have the ability to modify anything immediately based on how players are acting? Can you alter the price of goods or the abilities of the AI at all?

EG: The amount of granular control can vary from event to event but, generally speaking, we do have a number of dials we can tune to ensure things are performing as expected. We currently tend to let an event run its course before tweaking anything as each run has been discussed and values pre-calculated to achieve our testing or data-collection efforts. However, if things go off the rails in unexpected ways, we always have the ability to make snap adjustments or even terminate the event early.

JP: Is there anything special you've kept track of during Jumptown 2.0 to report back to the rest of the team?

EG: Most of my feedback is specifically about the tools we use to run the event and how we can better control and spice things up on the fly. Any time we encounter a crash or odd behavior I make sure the issue is logged for the team working on said tool.

JP: Have you provided feedback for the next similar event?

EG: While I do have personal thoughts on Jumptown 2.0 and how we can do Dynamic Events better in the future, the majority of my efforts on this front have been towards empowering the voices of the backers and internal dev testers who have put countless hours into the event on the live servers.

JP: Did you experience players doing anything totally unexpected this time around?

EG: I spent quite a bit of time watching backers play the event over the break. While there were many instances I would classify as "clever use of game mechanics," I don't think I saw anything truly unexpected this time around.

JP: Do you have any messages for the players who are just finishing up the event?

EG: I think I speak for the entire publishing organization when I say that we truly hope you enjoyed the Dynamic Events that have run throughout the course of 2021, and we look forward to sharing new encounters with you in the future!

END TRANSMISSION





MAKING THE ARGO RAFT

KEY CONTRIBUTORS :
ART DIRECTOR - PAUL JONES
CONCEPT ARTISTS - GAVIN ROTHERY
VEHICLE DIRECTOR - JOHN CREWE
DESIGNER - MARK GIBSON

Specifications and appearance are subject to revision during development.

INTRODUCTION

Argo Astronautics' spacecraft are a common sight in the 'verse today, from the MOLE to the MPUV. The company got its start, however, with a much smaller job: providing a personnel shuttle needed for *Squadron 42*. The MPUV series and the lore behind Argo were developed together, though less to create another pillar of spacecraft development and more to help fill out *Star Citizen's* world. While players were battling it out in the deepest regions of space with nimble fighters and other warships or trading goods with massive transports, it only made sense that there were also smaller utility support ships. With Chris Roberts always eager to add texture and realism to the game's world, developing Argo with a unique style and output to add purely industrial spacecraft to the game was the perfect solution.

Then, in 2021, Argo surprised players by taking center stage at the 2951 Intergalactic Aerospace Expo. Where prior expositions had revealed a

range of flyable spacecraft ready for frontline use, this year's offered a brand-new design from Argo for a role no one particularly expected! Born from a design request for a hazardous materials transport, the Argo RAFT (Reinforced Advanced Freight Transport) launched flight-ready and prepared to serve as a hauler from day one. Players were able to review the ship at the Expo and then test fly it straight away. To make that possible, *Star Citizen's* designers, concept artists, and implementers needed to plan for a lengthy lead time to make sure the RAFT was ready to set sail.

DESIGNING THE RAFT

Development of the RAFT began in late 2020 when it was first imagined as the Argo Hazmat Freighter, initially planned to be a specific type of hauler needed to safely carry dangerous materials. Vehicle Director John Crewe selected designer Mark Gibson to handle the design brief and then to collaborate with the eventual concept artist on the ship's specifics. The

first pass at the design brief was more specific to hauling toxic materials, laying out three key points for the two-person ship:

- Freighter specializing in the transport of volatile materials with a cargo hold designed with advanced inertial dampening and climate control
- Similar in size to the Cutlass and Freelancer but with a focus on defense rather than offense
- Dedicated VTOLs keep the ship stable during atmospheric flight

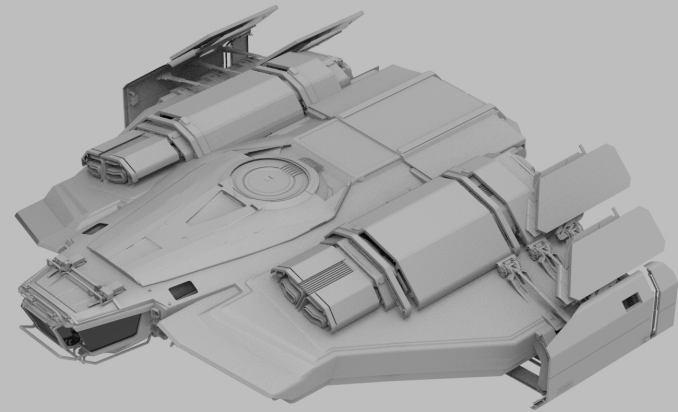
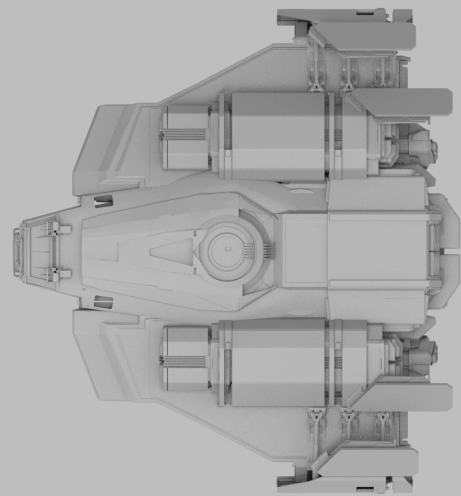
As the design process continued, an updated version was developed that added a tractor beam to move climate-controlled containers into place and a larger, more elaborate interior complete with kitchen, toilet, and beds. The second pass also added another set of feature notes for the concept artists:

- Cargo holds should be divided into three enclosed 24 SCU spaces to

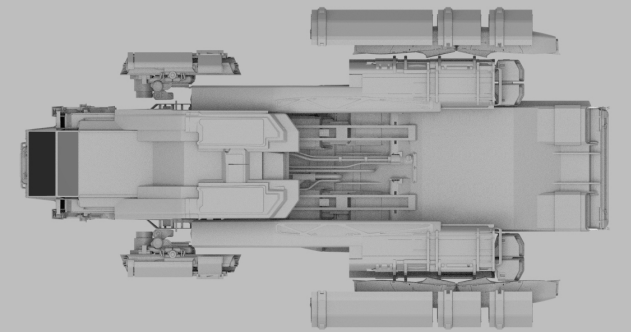
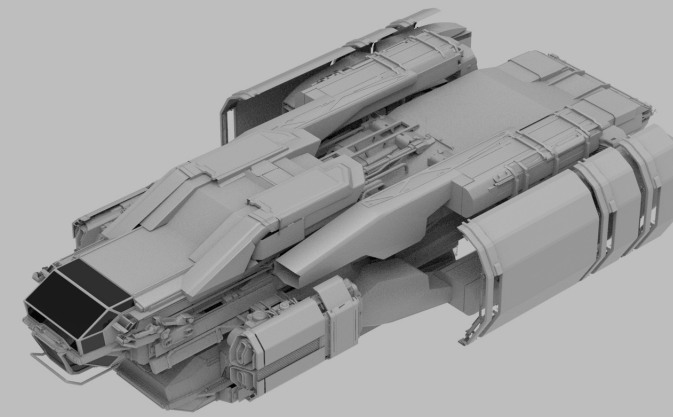
- allow the climate of each hold be controlled independently
- Features a dedicated station to monitor the cargo holds and stabilize volatile cargo
- Volatile cargo holds can be ejected when they become unstable and must be behind airlocked double doors (like the Caterpillar)
- Increased countermeasures and armor ensure the ship can withstand attacks while keeping cargo intact

The final version also expanded the original role beyond hazardous goods, making the design able to use its enhanced armor and shielding to protect other types of valuables as players require. With plenty of elements defined and the Design team signed off on the specifics of components and hardpoints, the challenge would be to determine how to convert everything into a single design that captured the Argo aesthetic while looking distinct from the brand's increasingly diverse ship lineup. The RAFT, later named via backronym, would need to look like more than just a large MPUV or SRV!

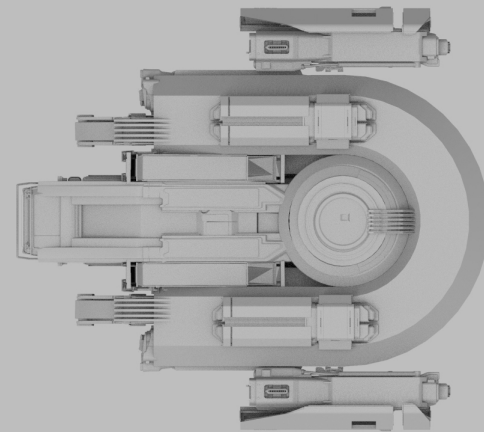
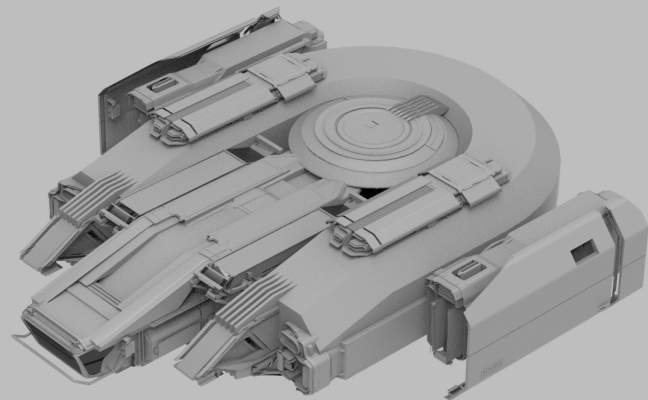
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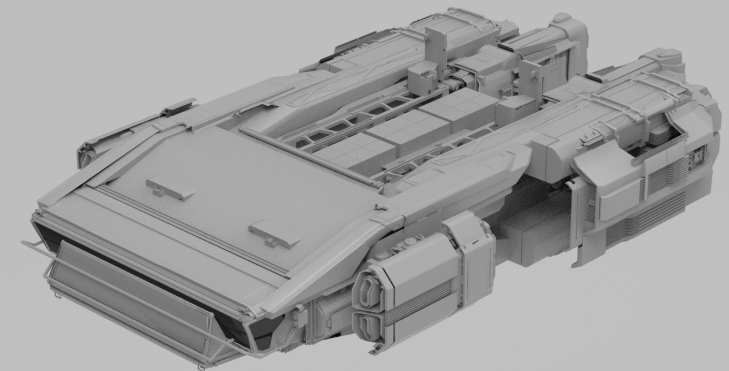
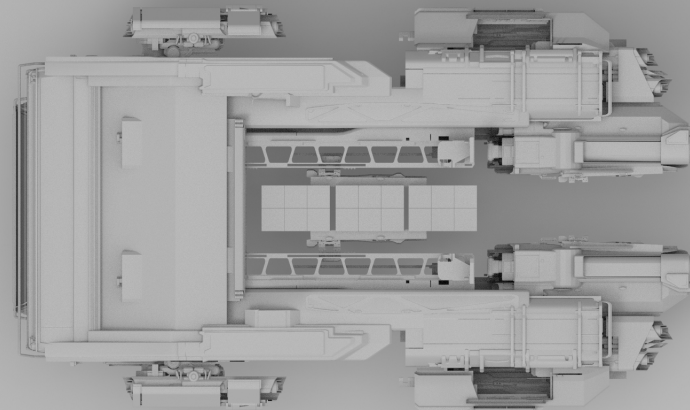
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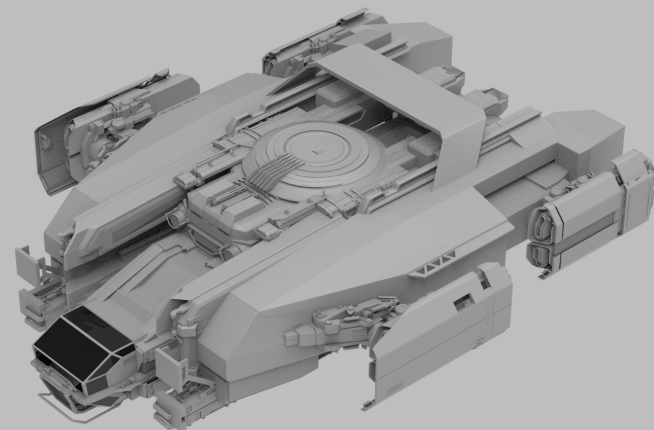
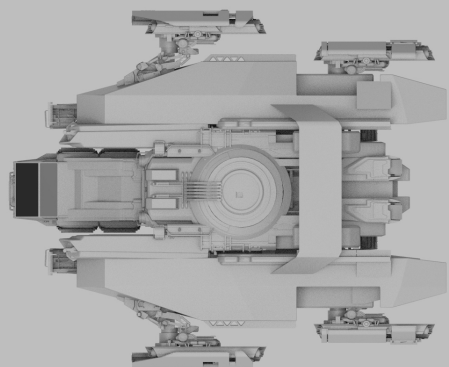
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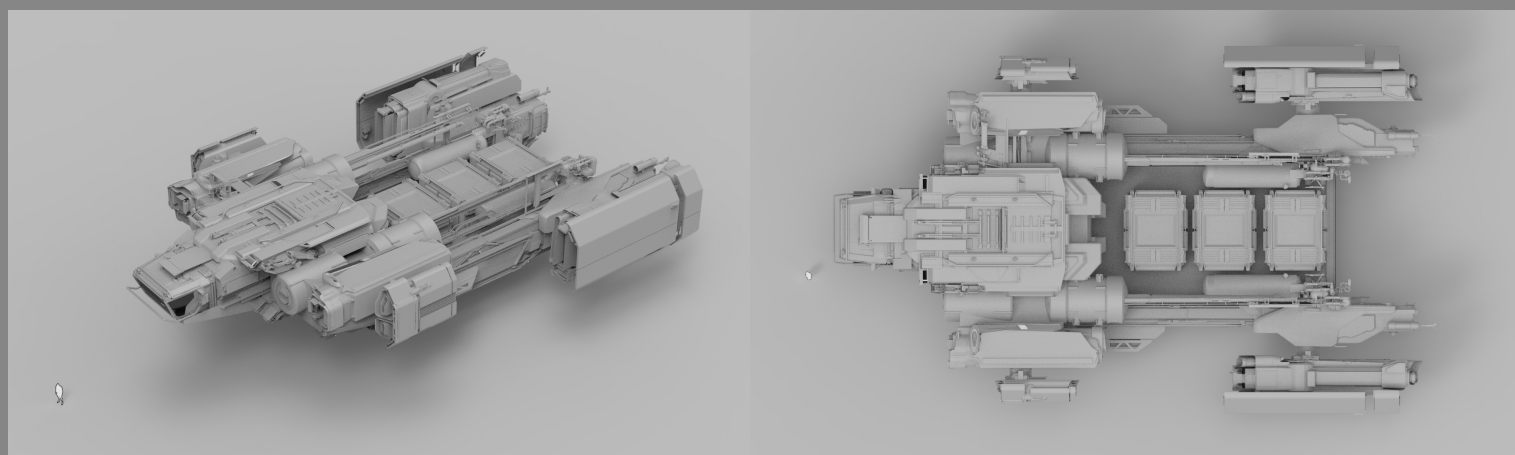
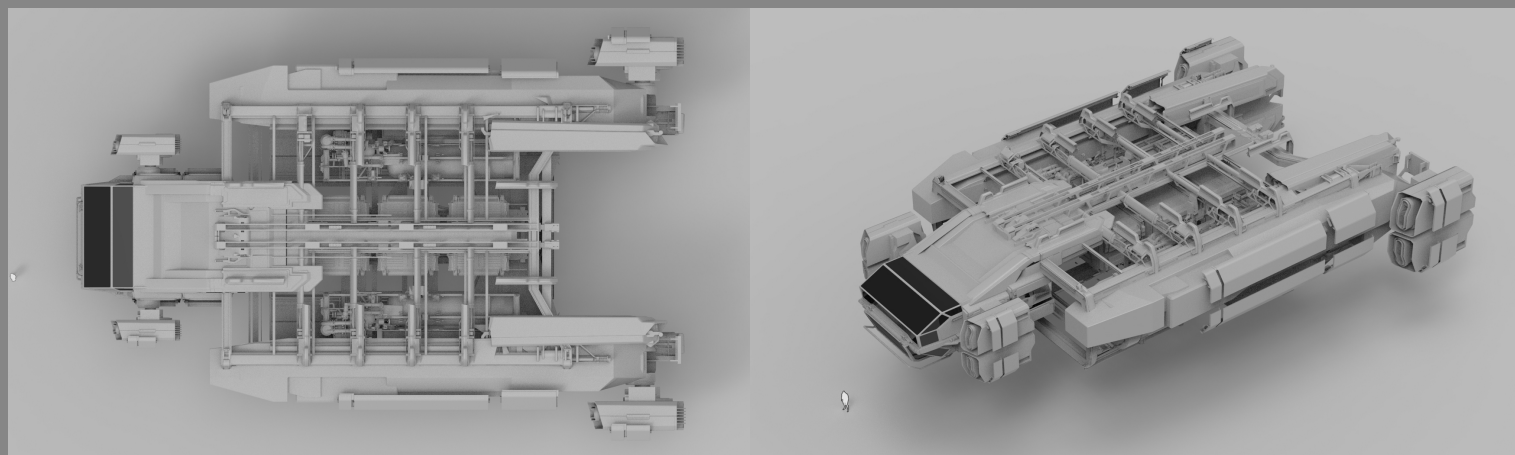
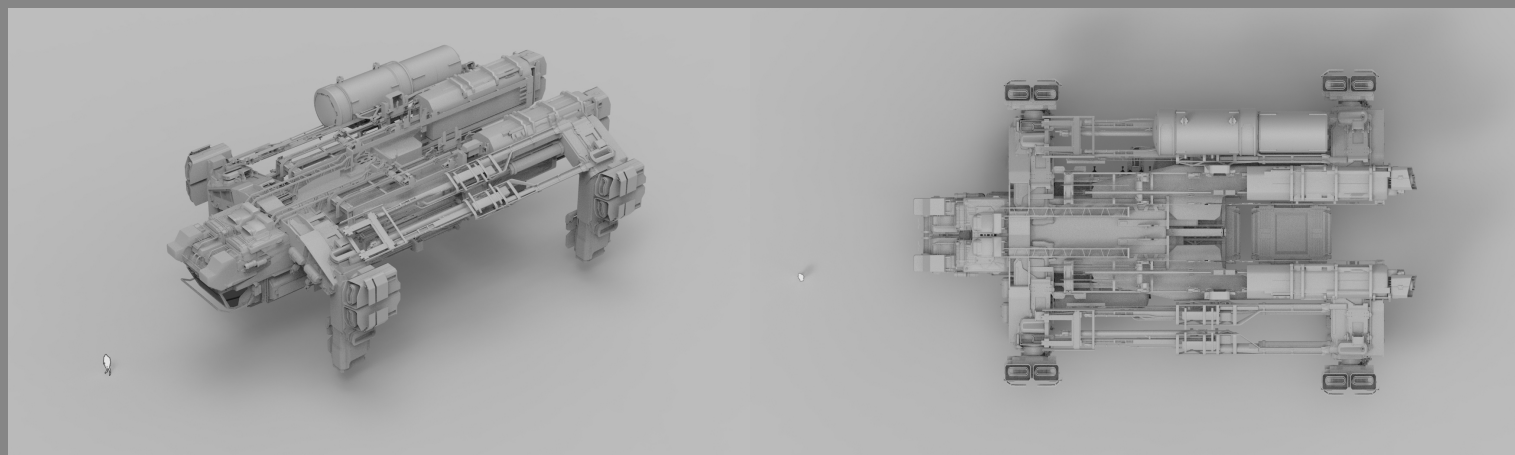
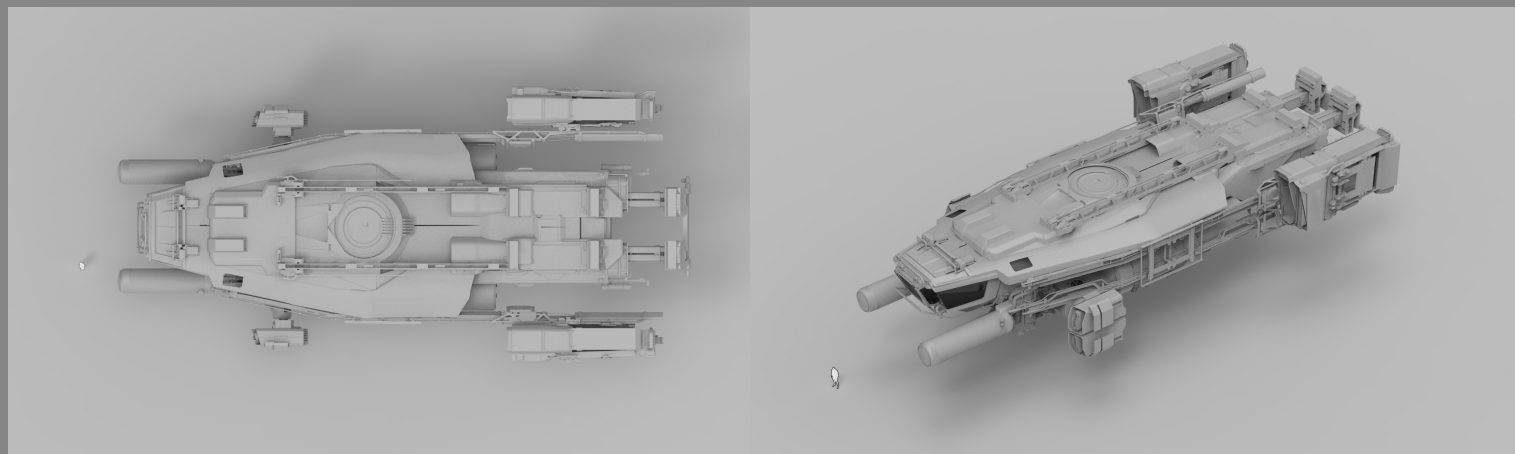
CONCEPT ART TAKES FLIGHT

For the job of conceiving the RAFT, Concept Art Director Paul Jones selected highly experienced external Concept Artist Gavin Rothery, a veteran of over twenty-five *Star Citizen* vehicles. Because Rothery had worked on so many different spacecraft, Jones wanted to provide enough reference to make sure he could specifically focus on Argo's aesthetic. He began by selecting references that included all of the previously designed Argo spacecraft, the Multi-Purpose Utility Vehicle (MPUV), Multi Operator Laser Extractor (MOLE), and Standard Recovery Vehicle (SRV), with a particular focus on the MOLE's cabin, which

was to be considered the current standard for Argo interiors. He added to these an array of modern industrial designs, including heavy industrial equipment, large multi-wheeled trucks, and twin-blade cargo helicopters. He also provided a variety of meshes for Rothery to kit-bash, knowing that he likes to provide his initial directions in 3D.

As concept art development began in late November 2020, Rothery started by providing models representing five possible directions. Each direction provided a distinctly different shape to the ship: a traditional triangle, a

more streamlined version, a heavy winged Starfarer-type look, a square shuttle-like design, and a flat rectangle of a ship that read wide and large. Jones notes that this stage is his least favorite part of the process; while many enjoy the early stages of conceiving where there seem to be infinite directions, Jones prefers the process of working towards a determined direction. "You need to avoid focusing on what you don't like and instead be very conscious of what parts you do like and how they might go together to make an even better ship. It's a vague process, but an ultimately rewarding one."

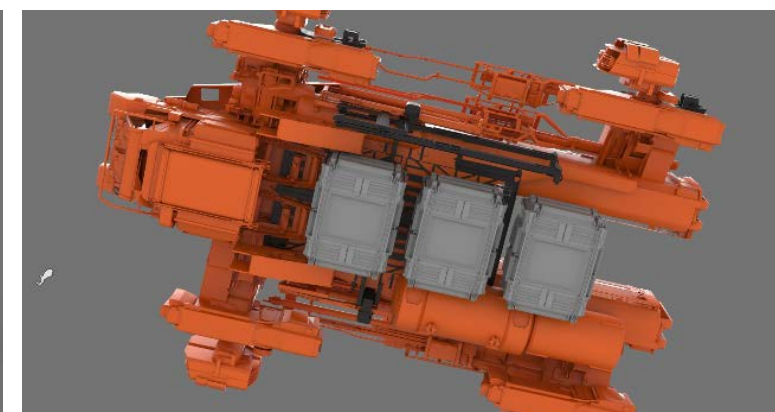


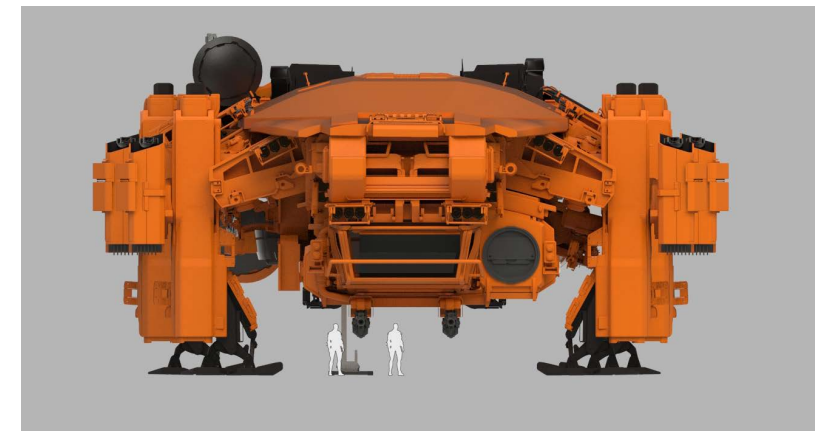
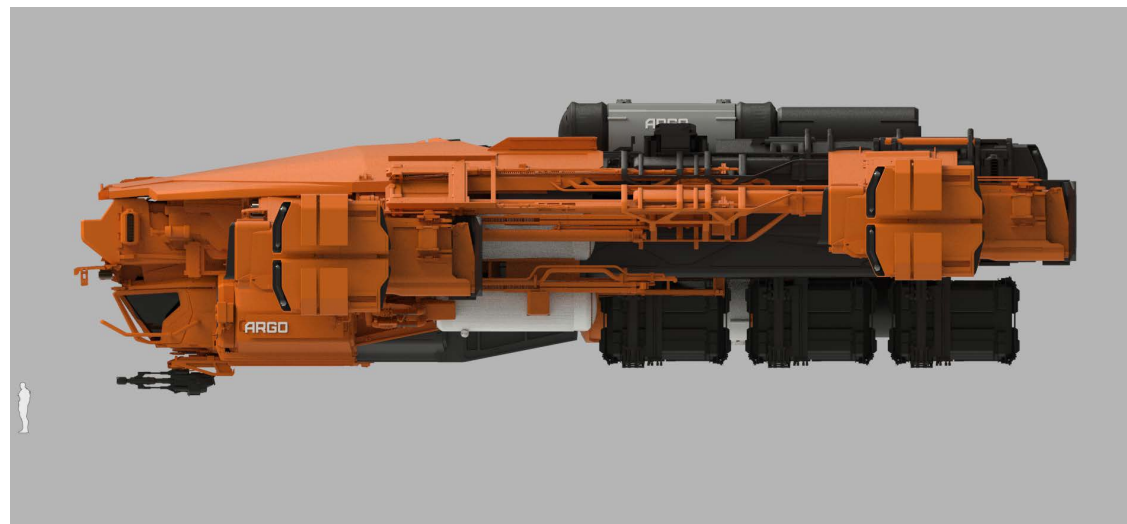
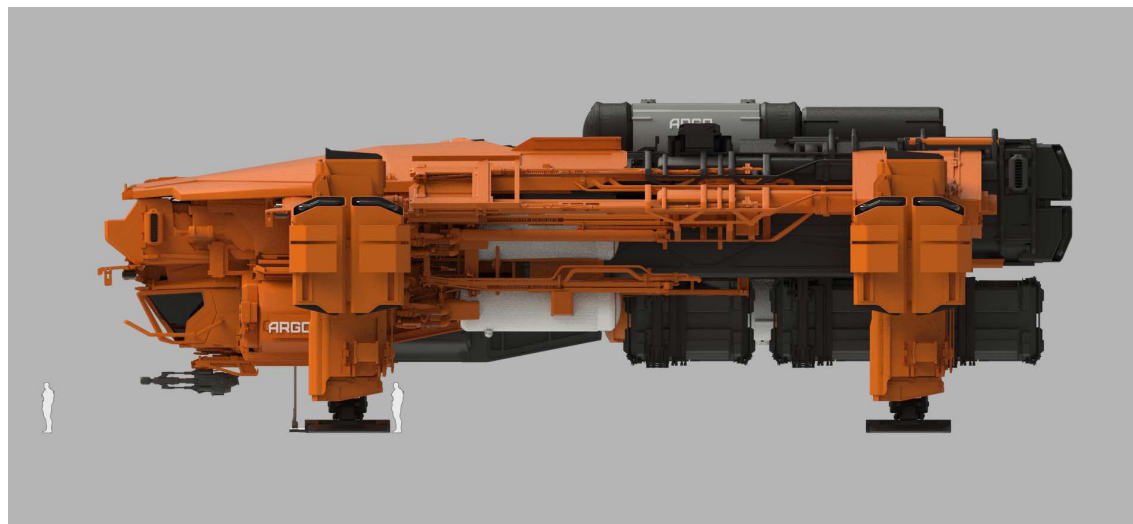
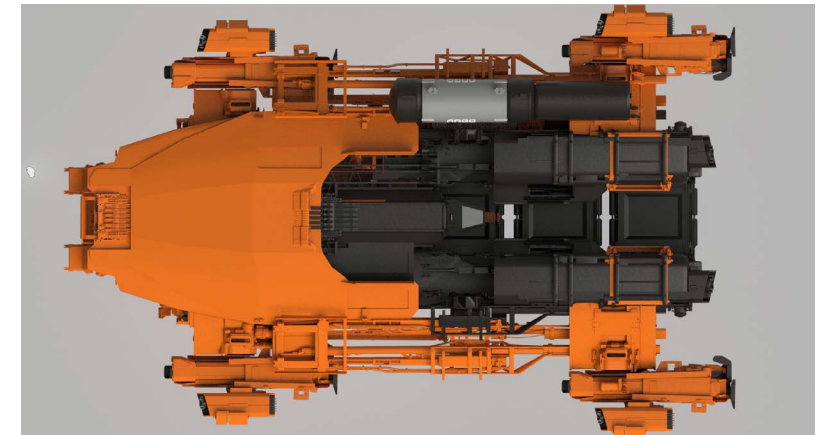
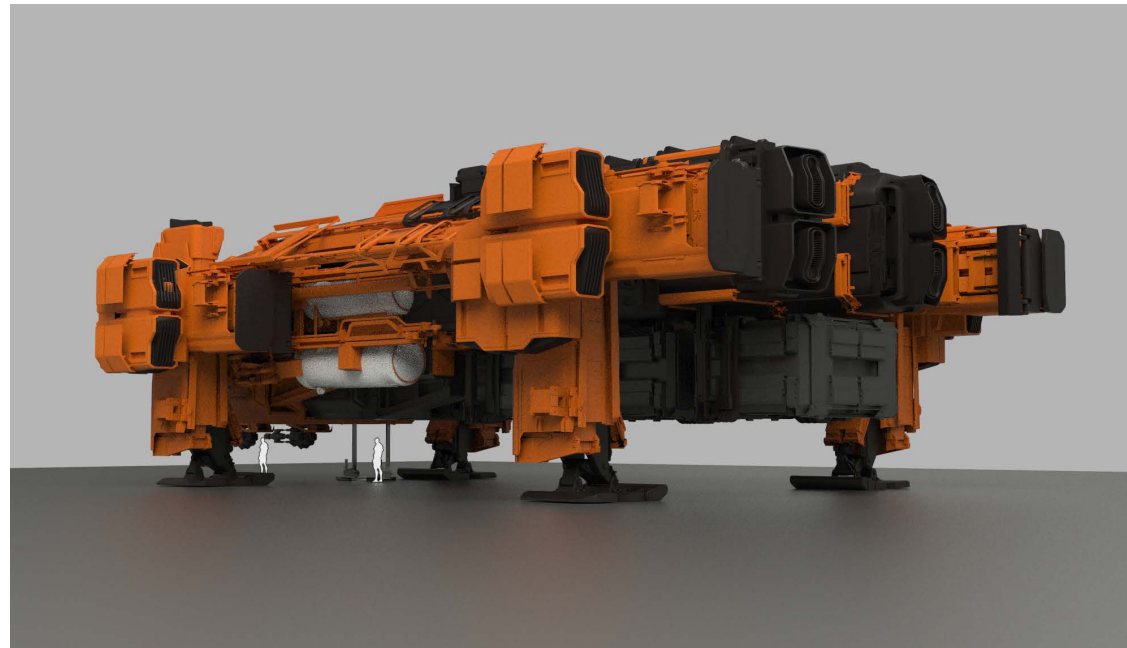
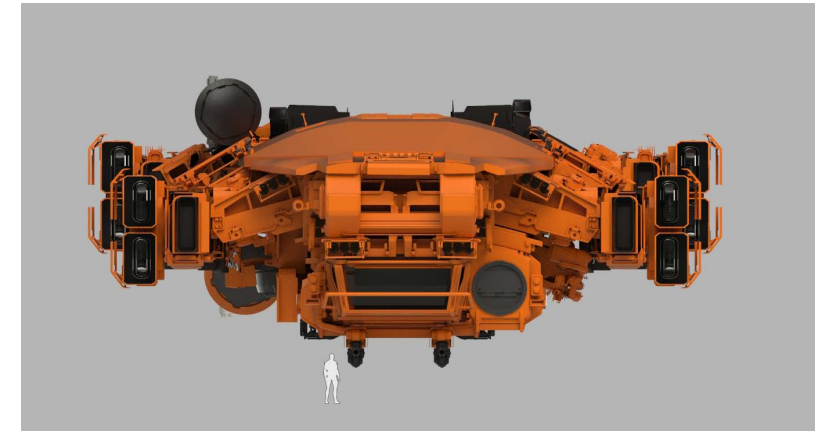
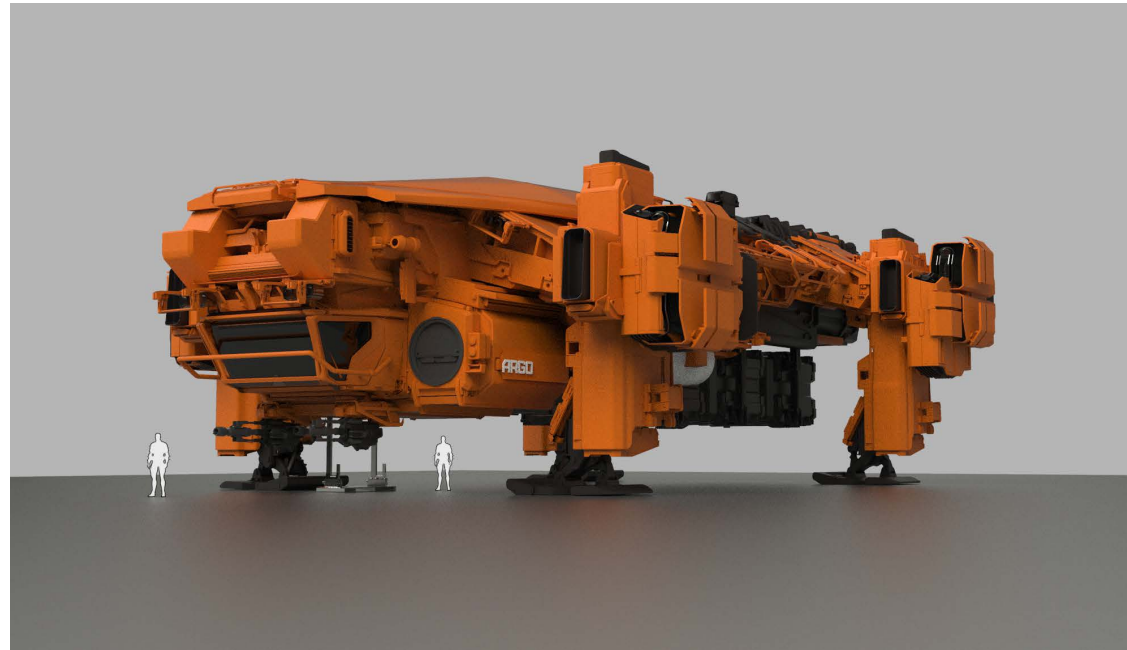
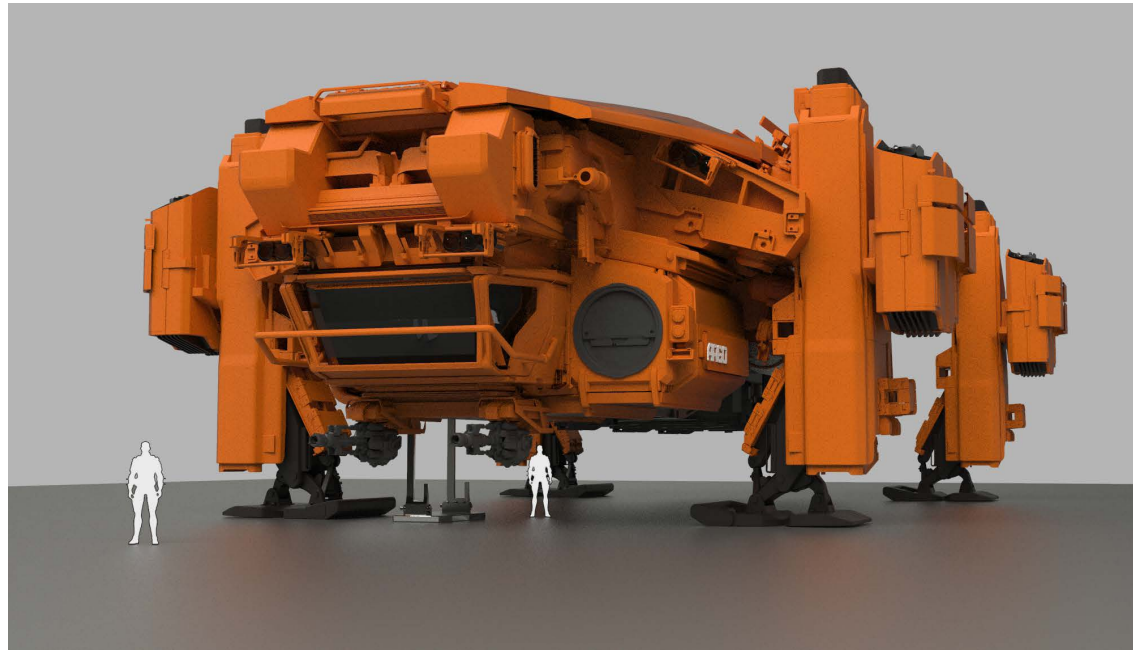
Jones liked the fifth version but felt that the proportions were wrong, implying a massive ship that had room for only a little cargo; a little too much like a flatbed truck. Jones took the mesh and did some reworking for the next pass, ultimately helping to develop a version in which the cargo crates now took up a great proportion of the interior. He also experimented with a “jazzier” color version that turned the Argo scheme on its head, utilizing a predominately dark hull with orange highlights. He also paid special attention to the cargo, which at this stage was stored externally but would eventually become protected by large panels that could lift up.

Jones also wanted the next pass to appear more mechanical, enhancing the heavy industrial look. Working from Jones’ notes, Rothery provided another pass of kit-bashed designs that Jones felt captured the Argo

style. These four versions took the current focus in several directions, including attempts to define how the cargo would load and unload and how the spacecraft would look landed. The landed designs ranged from distinctly tall landing gear to ones that were almost completely invisible. Jones took a special note of some of the interesting shapes in the silhouettes, including the large circular tubes mounted on one take’s nose, particularly liking the final landed pose.

Next, Jones took another pass at the model, working on the landed version to lower its overall height... and he colored it Argo orange in the process! His goal was to make sure it didn’t have a “walker” look to it while still feeling like it was armored and condensed enough to take a beating. (Minus a soft underbelly that could be treated as a weak spot. After all, every ship can’t be perfect!)





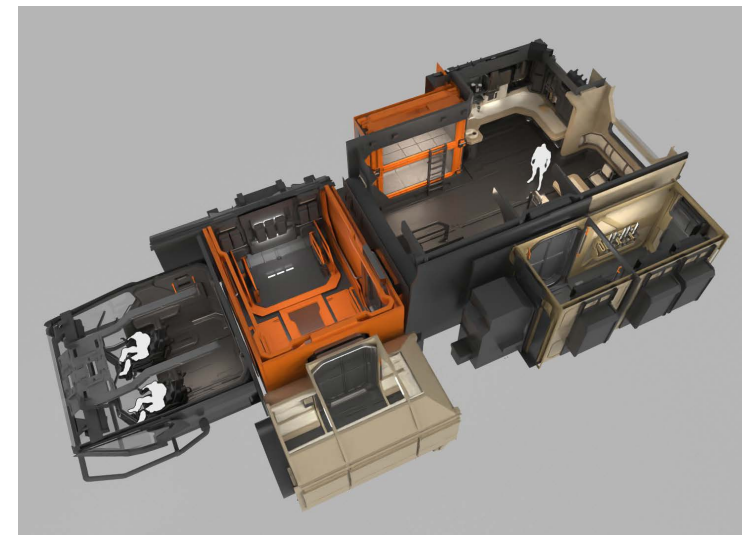
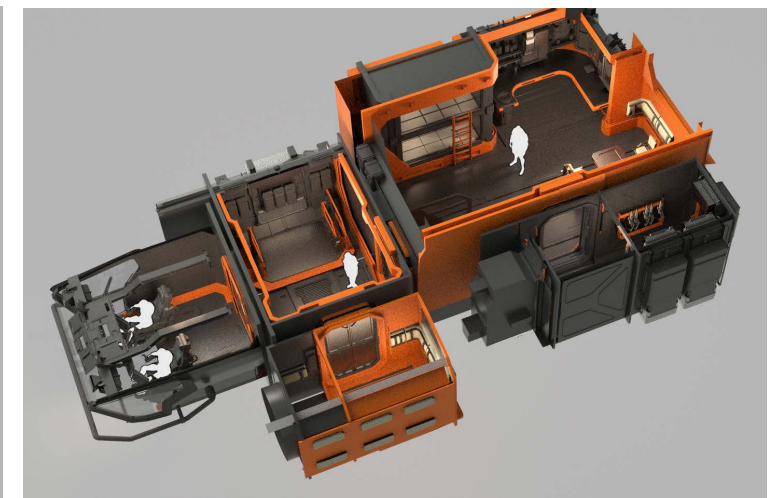
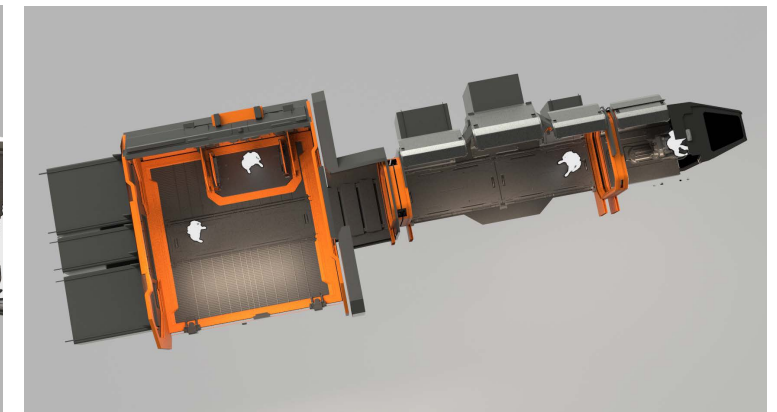
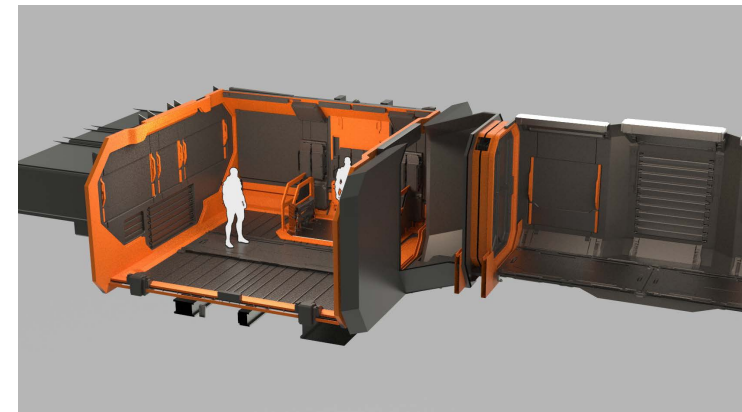
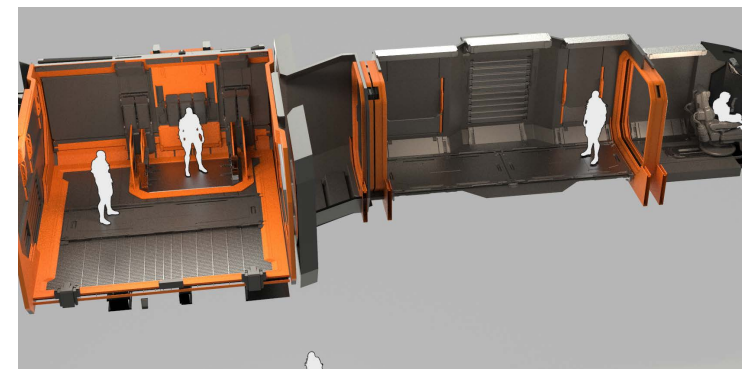
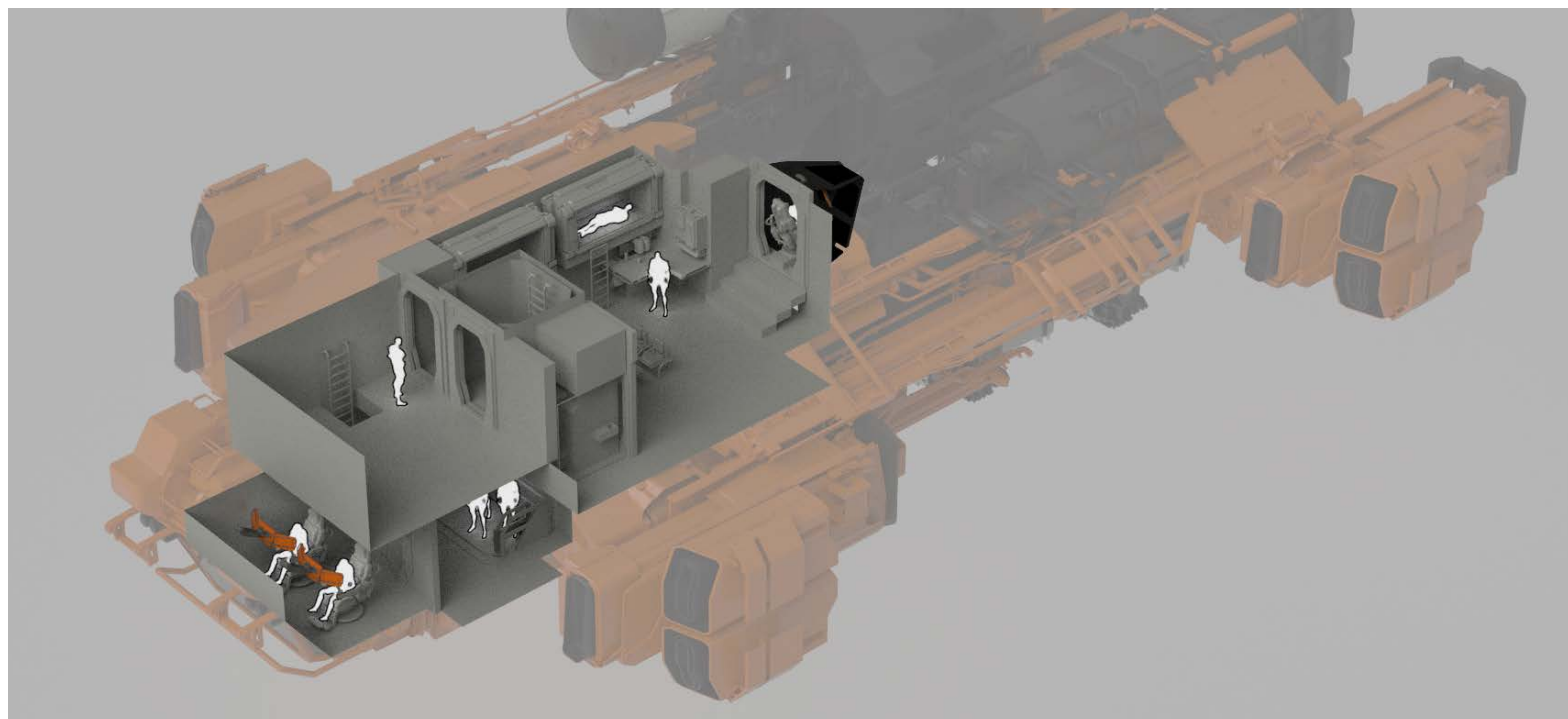
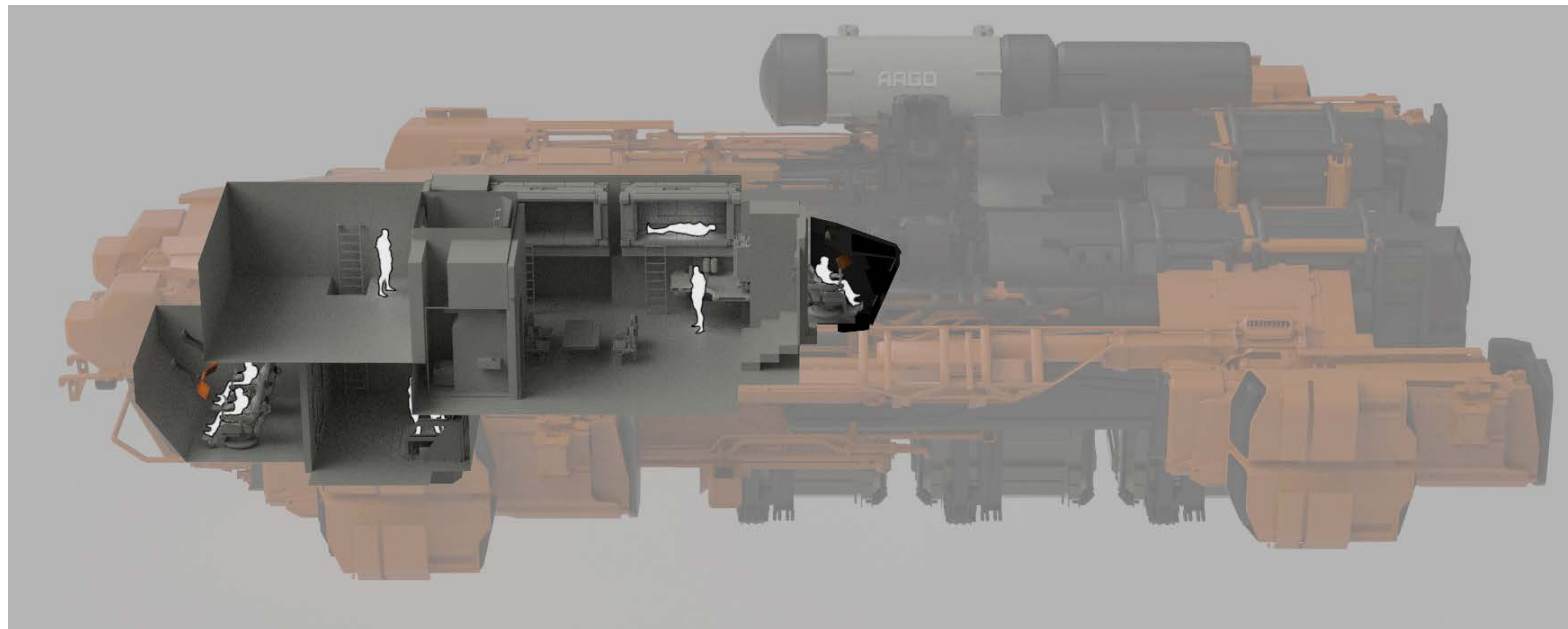
Jones and Rothery traded the design back and forth to advance from this look. One version added a more traditional Argo front, another tried a flatbed truck look. Jones ultimately made an edit that he felt worked well, “chunking up” the ship’s proportions to make some of the more distinctly Argo portions more dominant. Bumper bars on the front added to the distinctive look and gave a visual clue as to how the cargo would be protected.

As 2020 drew to a close, Jones presented two versions to Chris Roberts, one that was more squared off and one more elongated. Roberts’ chose the elongated version, which was also Jones’ preference. Happy that there was now a singular direction, 2021 began with Jones and Rothery dialing in to improve the design. Rothery began by reworking the mesh to alter its proportions to match recent design changes and he started to block out the interior. Discussion of the crew size reduced the maximum from four to two, impacting the interior design slightly at this stage.

As Rothery developed the interior blockout, it became clear that this ship was going to be very different from Argo's existing inventory because it would have a significantly larger interior. This meant that additional styles beyond those developed for the MOLE would be needed. Rothery provided an interior model to work from which Jones felt was "too multi-level" and should be simplified. Jones took the interior to work on, flattening out the overall area and adding a special rear viewing station for the cargo that he was very happy ultimately survived to flight status.

To fill out the larger than expected interior, Jones looked for options to give players more to do while in flight. The hazardous materials/

extended protection aspect of the ship meant that the Design team wanted it to include ejection beds instead of ordinary sleeping quarters. These would protect the crew in disasters, but they also meant a large block of the interior connecting to the exterior hull needed to be locked out. To reduce the impact, the beds were positioned asymmetrically, somewhat matching the exterior of the ship. Jones also discussed the eventual plans for the docking collar with Mark Gibson so as to mark off an area of the ship for it. They settled on an airlock room on one side of the ship, again located asymmetrically to further sell the industrial nature. The final rough layout included a first floor for habitation and an upstairs that included engineering and technical sections.

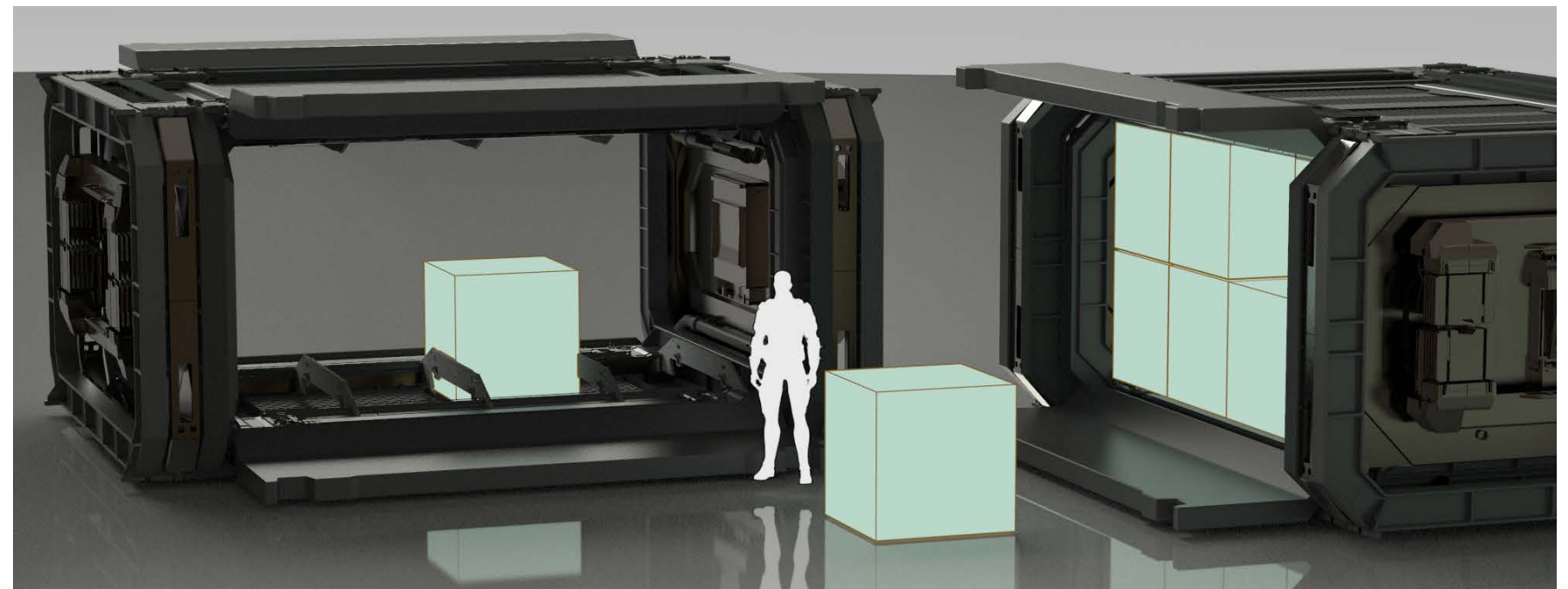




As the RAFT entered the first pass review stage, the design already looked a lot like the final ship. From here, it would be a series of many nips and tucks to make the final ship work. As an example of a routine pass, Jones provided this set of tasks to Rothery following the review:

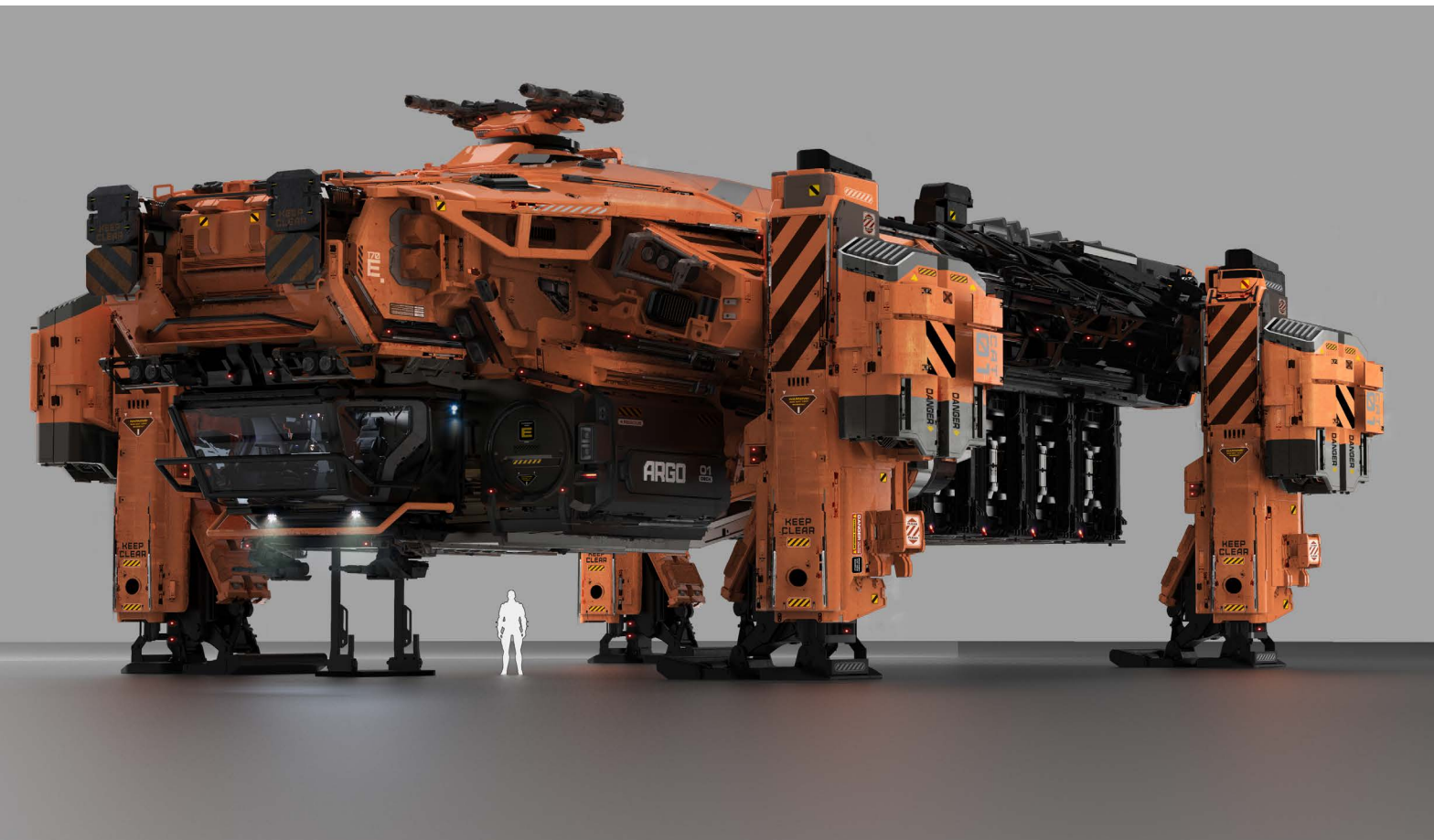
- Examine possible gun mounts or a remote turret
- Move the central cargo crates back to the left
- Figure out what goes on the upper front of the ship
- Give the piping on the side of the ship more implied function
- Revisit the rear landing gear (which felt too "frog's leg")
- Change the cab to dark gray
- Make cab narrower to give more breathing room to docking collar
- Consider additional tech for the center top of the hull
- Put grills on the front like those on the MOLE

From here, with less dominant frog legs installed, the artists worked on the overall dimensions, interior component placement, and the interior layout. Ongoing notes from Design continued to impact the interior layout, but none of the changes required significant rework. Work on the guns looked at both a static chin mount and a remote turret (both of which would ultimately be optional). To expand the interior, Jones focused on adding new materials like the 'padding' walls that appeared in the final ship. A lot of work was done to the cargo crates, making sure they held the proper number of SCUs. Luckily, while changes were required, the design of the ship was adaptive enough that there was plenty of space to fix it.



Gibson worked alongside Jones to review the interior, making changes to improve the gameplay and overall flow. The process of working through concept art alongside designers has become standard and has greatly improved the later implementation phase. The team was even left with extra space that was turned into an additional locker room with toilets. With the new interior materials and the more organic interior layout, Jones felt the interior now felt much more pleasant to be in. Jones also began developing a number of possible color schemes for the ship, several of which became skins when it was finally launched.





The second pass review was also positive, requiring only another round of crate work to add additional cargo to the ship. This was accomplished by thinning down the existing cargo containers and adjusting the interior space slightly. Jones signed off on four different paint options for the ship and the artists put together the package of renders, animations,

models, and material sheets that the implementation teams would use to prepare the in-game version of the ship. From there it was just a matter of waiting for its IAE debut ten months later. Jones notes he was especially impressed with the final in-game release and how well it included some of the smallest details imagined at the concept stage.

ARGO RAFT SHIP PAGE

<https://robertspaceindustries.com/pledge/ships/raft/RAFT>

SHIP PRESENTATION

<https://robertspaceindustries.com/comm-link/transmission/18436-Introducing-The-Argo-RAFT>

Q&A

<https://robertspaceindustries.com/comm-link/engineering/18441-Q-A-ARGO-RAFT>

GALACTAPEDIA

ORISON

Orison is a city based on a series of interconnected floating platforms located in the upper atmosphere of Crusader (Stanton II). Originally constructed by the United Empire of Earth (UEE) Navy to provide repair facilities for its capital ships, Crusader Industries (CI) saw the existing infrastructure as an ideal location for its commercial shipbuilding operations. Over time, the platforms drift from their positions to sink further into the atmosphere and must be moved back into safe orbit by the synchronized firing of large thrusters built into each platform. Due to the gas giant Crusader's natural beauty and the presence of unique fauna such as the stormwal, Orison has become a popular tourist destination for visitors to the Stanton system.

HISTORY

In the mid-2800s, the discovery of natural hydrogen and oxygen on the low-mass gas giant Stanton II made waves in the UEE. Colonization of a gas giant, long considered impossible, was now in reach. Initially, the planet was claimed by the UEE Navy, who constructed a series of platforms in 2855 designed to float in the upper reaches of the atmosphere in a region with gravity friendly to Humans as a way to work on its capital ships in a breathable atmosphere. For a few years, a skeleton crew served on the platforms, conducting repairs as needed for the vessels that passed through the system.

When the UEE made the decision to offer Stanton II up for sale in 2865, CEO of Crusader Industries Kelly Caplan purchased it. She considered the latticework of platforms the ideal place to save credits on the manufacture of their massive ships. After officially taking possession of the planet, CI converted the main capital ship repair drydock, Providence Platform, into a manufacturing center for commercial spacecraft. The company went on to save 40% on ship construction costs after only a year.

Caplan's success earned her a position of trust with the board of directors, who were initially skeptical of her plan to buy Stanton II. Her next proposal, to use a portion of the company's new profits to develop

the platforms beyond the shipyard complex, was approved the day the documentation was submitted. She named the settlement Orison after an old Human word for "prayer," in reference to what she described as the "meditative nature" of Crusader.

CITYSCAPE

Named after the founder of CI, the August Dunlow Spaceport is the city's main point of entry and is connected via Skyway Shuttle to the industrial district's Providence Platform and the commercial and residential district's Cloudview Center. The Cloudview platforms contain residences, shops, places to eat and drink, a Crusader Industries Showroom, Orison General Hospital, the Crusader Visitor's Center, and other amenities. Parks and other plant-filled areas built to invoke nature are scattered throughout each district. The iconic hosanna tree that decorates the walkways was created by CI to withstand high winds and low humidity, to self-pollinate, and beautify Orison with its pink flowers.

TOURISM

Orison enjoys a steady stream of tourists to the Stanton system, drawn to Crusader for its scenic aspects and unique ecosystem. Visitors interested in the skies of Crusader can visit the Grande Observatory underneath the visitor's center, which provides views of Crusader's prismatic clouds. Storms deep in the atmosphere can be observed there, along with passing animals that live their lives in the air.

One such animal, the stormwal, is another of Orison's main attractions. A colossal creature that can grow up to 100 meters long, the stormwal is a planktivore that subsists on the thousands of tiny plankton-like animals that float in the currents of the wind. Enthusiasts can board a Discovery Tour to visit the nearby Stormwal Sanctuary and observe these majestic fauna in their natural habitat. Those more inclined to say in Orison can visit the stormwal statue "Until Then" by artist Biphasha Zhu in the Cloudview Center.



RISE OF THE RED FESTIVAL



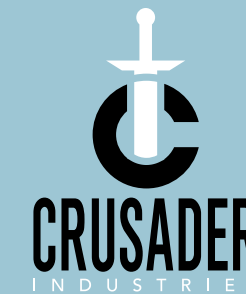
Each year, beginning in late January or early February, millions of gilded red envelopes are hidden across the UEE. Those fated to find one will discover a good-luck token or credit intended as a hopeful sign of the year to come. For centuries, giving friends and relatives red envelopes was one way to celebrate the Red Festival. Yet, it wasn't until the 26th century that hiding the envelopes for anyone to find became part of the tradition after the Banu enthusiastically embraced it as a way to honor Cassa, their Patron of Luck. People took to the new tradition and relished the chance to find a little bit of luck tucked inside a discarded magazine or hiding atop a storage locker at the end of a dark space station hallway.

The Red Festival originated on Earth well before Humanity explored the stars when some early cultures carefully observed the moon and celebrated the start of a new lunar year. The holiday eventually became known as the Red Festival as its reach and influence spiraled further and further away from Earth's orbit. Still, many of the traditions stayed the same, like wearing red and gold for good luck and exchanging gilded red envelopes. Humanity celebrated these traditions for millennia before colonists took them to Mars when it was settled in the 22nd century. While the Red Festival was celebrated on the red planet, its popularity wouldn't explode until the early 25th century when an explorer claimed it helped him make history, and many others came to believe that celebrating it would bring luck to their journey.

Today the Red Festival is more popular than ever and widely celebrated across the UEE and Banu Protectorate. So how did a holiday focused on Earth's lunisolar cycle become so beloved?

LIFT OFFWORLD

The United Nations of Earth (UNE) formed in 2380 to unify all of Earth's nations under one government. It was a historic moment meant to bring people together and facilitate Humanity's expansion into the stars. At the time, Earth was in a precarious position. Despite having terraformed Mars and the new system of Croshaw, Humanity's homeworld was still desperately overcrowded and pristine wilderness increasingly scarce. Pollution choked many major cities and people's quality of life was in decline. While advances in commercial spacecraft and terraforming tech made living offworld possible, it remained extremely expensive to leave Earth and surprisingly difficult to convince people that life offworld might actually be better. To address the issue, the UNE created the Eastern Expansion Program to support navjumpers on their search for new frontiers and encourage people to fill colony ships. The program was met with modest success before being rebranded Project Far Star in 2412. Now considered a key driver of the Human Colonial Expansion Era, Project Far Star opened offices in major cities around Earth to recruit colonists, aid explorers with subsidized ship upgrades, and more.



In late 2429, Wendell Dopse visited the Project Far Star office in Shanghai and submitted an application to purchase a discounted jump drive. The application was approved and Dopse received the component in mid-January of 2430. He rushed to install it then meticulously cleaned his ship so it'd be spotless when the Red Festival began on January 25th. According to legend, Wendell Dopse spent the next two weeks celebrating the Red Festival with his family and reconsidering whether or not to leave them. On the final day of the festival, his family attended a lantern festival where Dopse helped his daughter with a particularly difficult riddle. The two spent hours taking in the impressive lanterns and talking through solutions when the answer suddenly struck him. Dopse looked up and saw a solitary lit red lantern rising through the sky. Away from everything else. Off on its own. Convinced it was a sign, he noted its course. Then he said goodbye to his family, raced to his ship, and flew in the direction the red lantern was headed. Days later Dopse discovered the jump from Sol to Davien, upending contemporary scientific thinking that predicted no additional jump point existed in the Sol.

SPREAD OF THE RED FESTIVAL

Today, many people wonder if Wendell Dopse's story about the red lantern might have been embellished. They point to numerous voyages Dopse took into that sector of Sol before receiving his jump drive. On those trips he tested and refined new scanning techniques that, after his discovery of Davien, other explorers adopted and inventors integrated into more advanced jump scanning technology. His success inspired others to try their luck launching on the final day of that year's Red

Festival. The practice became so commonplace that several landing zones were forced to place a cap on launches on that day to reduce congestion. They eventually instituted a lottery system to award launch slots after an investigation by the UNE revealed that some landing zone officials were selling slots to the highest bidder.

Shanghai also became considered a lucky place to launch. People traveled from across the world to leave from that landing zone, and many of them celebrated the Red Festival. For decades, the Project Far Star office in Shanghai recruited and helped send more colonists to live offworld than any other. The colonists' eagerness to go, combined with their comms about what life was really like on these new worlds, convinced millions more to follow. They did and brought the traditions of the Red Festival with them.

In the 25th century, one of the biggest off-Earth celebrations of the Red Festival occurred in Davien where, in 2438, Humanity first encountered the Banu. Since then, Banu traders became a staple of the system and knew to stock their Merchantmans with red items and gilded envelopes around the Red Festival. While no one knows exactly who hid the first envelope for someone to find, the tradition began in Davien and expanded from there. Hiding and searching for these lucky envelopes became commonplace across the empire by the early 26th century, and as the tradition grew in popularity, so did the Red Festival. All thanks in part to Wendell Dopse's discovery of Davien, the millions of colonists who celebrated the Red Festival, and the Banu who adopted and evolved its traditions.

LIFT OFF!

Hold the powerful Hercules Starlifter in your hands with this exclusive set of plushies. Crusader Industries celebrates their iconic transporter with versions inspired by the A2 heavy bomber, C2 cargo hauler and M2 troop transporter. Now you can own soft and squeezable variants of this classic Crusader ship.