

Halloween norn development file! <3

I've always thought halloween norns were cool, but deeply wished they had all the sprites for direction/angle and life stages. Some of my favourite creatures breeds are the ones that really go out on a limb and try things that might not necessarily work- Curiosa norns are a fantastic example of that, and I thought 'hey, if curiosas got a remake, why not these?'

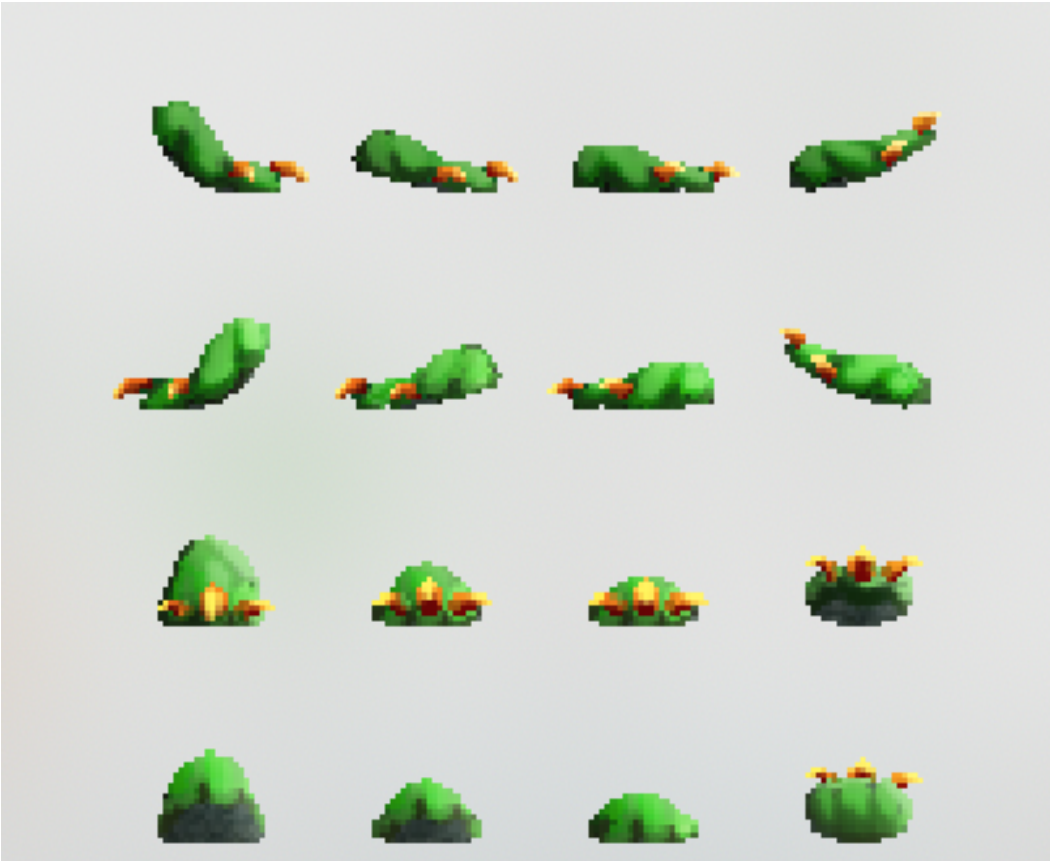
For the artwork, the original halloween norns have a very limited sprite set- unisex sprites for the body, head, hands and feet. All made of images of halloween props like gummy worms, slime and pumpkins.





(original vs really early concept scribble)

For their 'compatible' variant, I tried to keep as many original assets as possible and reuse them to fill out the details of the breed over an inconspicuous black-furred coat- The slime feet get candy-corn monster toes, the arms keep the silly string but also get big green clawed paws to match.





The body is made from a couple of different pumpkin images from the original body file rotated, transformed and occasionally repainted to give tilts, side views and pregnant sprites over a dark body shape: A smaller simpler one of the original pumpkins makes the body of the baby norn, another fanged one is for the teen and adult stages, and in old age I edited the marking so that the yellow 'light' of the jack o lantern turns black, and goes out.

I desperately wanted to keep their original googly, bouncy-ball eyes... Their late creator Jewels was famous for making rainbow hued color-changing breeds, and even the comparatively straightforward halloweens have eyes that randomly change color on every pose. In the end I physically took a handful of the googly eyes and set them into the face of a creatures village primrose norn as a template head. With such silly eyes the rest of the face naturally felt like it had to be cute and goofy and oh-so spooky, so I gave them a lolling tongue for several expressions similar to that found in ettins, and little toon-y vampire fangs. Their ears are tipped in slime green and as they age in place of the horns that some norns grow, the adults have a tuft of rainbow silly string bristles over their brows.



(a lovely wall-eyed halloween lady, complete with one gradient eye and one with an oddly shaped pupil, straight from the original source!)

Now, I'd had this idea that for a tail, a fake prop spider wiggling through the air would be really on-brand for these guys, since they already look like they crashed into a dollar store halloween aisle. Coincidentally my spouse Cosmisynth was considering once again attempting to learn blender, and I took my chance to ask her for a simple spider model as practice. She delivered fantastically and renders of her fuzzy spider-orb became not just the tail end (with silly string leggies), but also the base for the hair of the halloween norns' head! You can still see that the longer tufts of hair hanging down off their heads add up to eight- like the legs of a spider.



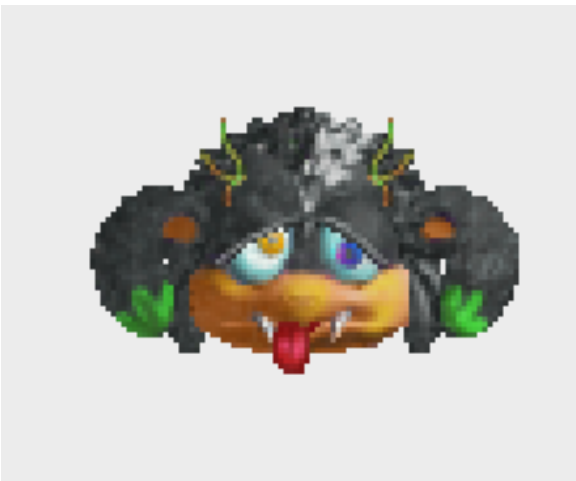
(pictured: Some of the renders of the 'spiderwig')



Here's baby's first photoshop composite of how it was coming together! In the end the only thing that needed any tweaks was the connection between the two tail sprites- a slight widening of the tail tip's connection point to the base. I was worried it'd be much harder to pull off in the kind of small area given by norn tail sprites, but it was really mercifully smooth going overall.

The final tweaks were making the old age sprites and deciding if they should have sexual dimorphism. I always feel a bit torn on this since canon breeds have this habit of nerfing female norns as a form of dimorphism- I really didn't want to take off features like horns or add human-esque hairstyles or anything like that. In the end I opted to add another shout out to Jewels by making the two sexes have different sets of rainbow eyes every frame- even more rainbow colors!

The old age sprites are mostly a slight paling and desaturation, but as mentioned before the light of their lantern goes out, turning the yellow belly patches black, and I gave their hair a white streak inspired just how many movie monsters and similar have this trait: Bride of frankenstein, Stripe from gremlins, Sweeney Todd, the list goes on. They HAD to have it.



(being old is tiring, huh fella)

The next step is the invisible but JUST as important creation of a genome for these new 'compatible' halloween norns. During all of this I'd looked at available downloads of the halloween norns, and noticed that they came with a Chi Chi genome. Now that can't be right, I thought. Halloween norns predate docking station's release by almost a year... Eventually after following some dead download links and site archives, I managed to crawl into a snapshot of Jewel's own creatures website. Here I found two downloads that still worked of a male and female halloween norn, straight from the source. Incidentally, her site lists them very clearly and repeatedly as 'Conversation Holloween Norns' right down to the misspelling of halloween as holloween. This could be due to speaking another language, as the site is also available in french and german, but either way we've all very technically been shortening it to Halloween (spelled correctly) this entire time in error.



(Happy Conversation Holloween, 25 years later!!!!)

Now Cosmisynth is pretty handy with a genetics kit so I threw them her way and asked her what their closest genetic match was- Jungle grendels apparently! Ah Jewels this is a halloween -trick- isn't it? Their genes are almost identical bar their sprite slot and their genus classification, so anyone hatching these would have been in for a nasty surprise when their Halloween 'norns' started beating the daylights out of their fellows. They also would have likely never bred, as their attraction is still wired to grendles, and the females still died of old age after one or two eggs are produced.

Happy to have the original genome (which should be shared with this download!) CS cracked her knuckles and went to work making a beautiful and very bespoke custom genome for the compatible halloweens inspired by it- It's structured like a norn genome (expressive bruin based) in terms of gene placement and count, but every gene that has an appropriate jungle grendel equivalent is swapped in. The grendel instincts are kept but their targets swapped around too- an angry Halloween will now seek a Grendel to hit instead of a norn, but their temperament is the same. Even a tweaked version of the ageing caused by egg laying and stress is there, although not as extreme. In testing this has the very interesting effect of causing them to reach life stages faster- The stress of initially learning how to survive (occasionally going hungry or getting disappointing



results from new interactions) leading to accelerated growth for a time. This short childhood means your Halloweens have a head-start in breeding, so you're likely to see their sprites breeding into a population immediately... Although too much stress for either sex and too much pressure on a single female to produce many eggs will see them burn out and pass earlier than their fellows. In comfortable living conditions however their lifespan is normal, if not potentially a little longer than a default norn due to grendel lifespan genes.



(breeding in just fine! c: )

If you've read this far, thank you so much for giving these new 'compatible halloween' norns a look. I hope they bring you a lot of laughs and maybe even some fun insights into the ways norn and grendel genes alter their behaviour and requirements.

Best of luck to you, and have fun! - Jesseth (The mossy shee) and Cosmisynth (The crafty shee)





