

Curiosa dev notes:

-Figuring out what a curiosa IS exactly  
^ sprite specifics, pose notes



At a glance, Curiosas look like some kind of classic kid's show version of something from the Alien Vs Predators franchise... But what ARE they? They're classified as a norn, and if you squint REALLY HARD, you can see altered chichi body sprites in the mix.

However, the rest of it is more confusing though- a sort of mix of metal, carapace, scaly bumps, spikes and fur. The real breakthrough in understanding what I was looking at was realising that the asymmetrical green area on the body is coiling hair-like tendrils with parts sticking through it.



The head is also particularly weird because it has yellow plate like structures that sort of resemble horns, but are capable of rotating independently, inferring they were possibly intended to be ears made of simple 3d modelled ovals.



The female heads are just lacking head structures altogether in exchange for child-like pigtails.



In the name of making them more, well, compatible with other breeds and a bit less infantilising the poor ladies get ears too.

Females and males have different facial structures, pretty clearly because the large hair given to the female sprites absolutely filled all the available space in the head sprite. Intentionally or otherwise though, the jaw is sort of graceful, so I tried to incorporate it. To add some other sexual dimorphism and not have the female 'hair' be so jarring, the green body fur was changed on females to match their head hair.



Because of the limited sprite size, there are actually some very unique and appealing in-game animations, like the way their long heads tilt from side to side as they look up and down. There's also a very graceful upturned hand gesture in the arm swinging animation that looks really cool when they hold items. It also makes them look like they're backhanding other creatures when they slap or hit which is hilarious.

-Extracting old files

^ missing files notes, means of unarchiving (genome discussed later)

Extracting the original sprite images was a strange and educational experience. For instance, there's a lot of evidence that the original Curiosa breed files were some kind of early project beta. They're extremely unfinished, lacking entire body parts like tails and upper arm sprites, having the same images pasted in multiple places in sheets or having holes in the sheets. An example is that they had two left arms, which was hilariously obvious from the front.



The fact that the sprites have gaps and omissions/duplications actually made them hard to extract from the game engine's c16 filetype: if you want to extract a sprite sheet using the usual dev tools for C3/DS, edos, it requires there to be a number of sprites that can be arranged into rows and columns.. The almost random gaps in the expected animation/sprite sequences means that there was no way to actually extract a sprite sheet using that kind of algorithm.

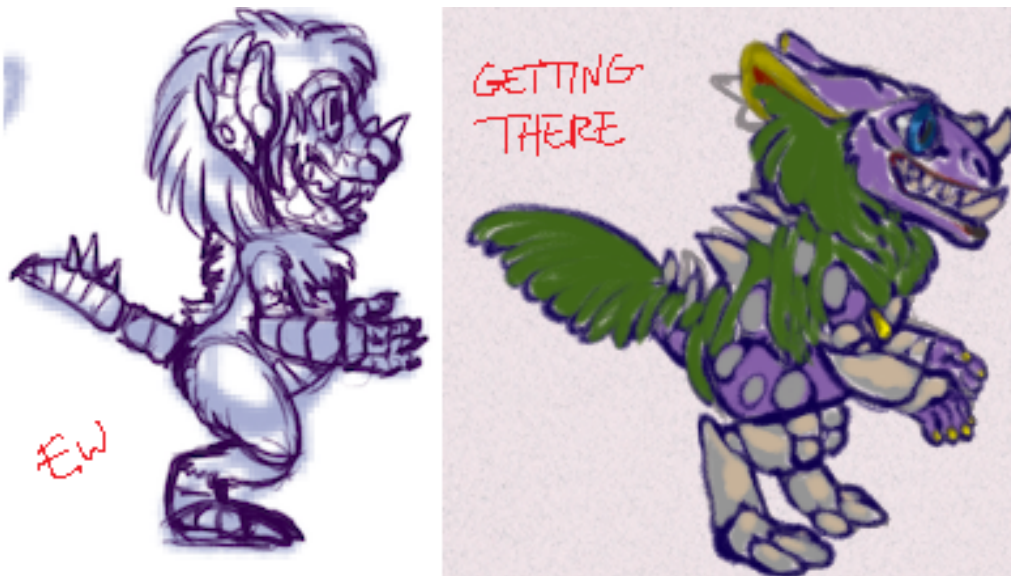
Instead each image had to be extracted one at a time from the c16 files in a manner akin to animation frames, and with there being plenty of images involved, it wasn't looking very feasible. Considering that the project is intended to make Curiosas actually work in-game correctly and make them safe to crossbreed with other creatures, it ended up making the most sense to extract just the most vital images and rework them and interpretations of them (for life stages: there's only one sprite-set for o.g curiosas) over the absolute default creature template: The Chichi Norn.



-Making new sprites, the megatopic:

^ referencing the old sprites for life stages where applicable, working over chichi base for classic reasons (does curiosa is chichi??) start with the parts that give the easiest results quickly to get that sense of satisfaction and commitment. Pregnant sprites are a pain to add in, but heads are just a nightmare.

Chichi norns were the only breed that way back when, Gameware allowed fans to use as a template for breed making, which makes the fact that curiosas are so weird looking while being chichi-based almost hilarious for just how derived they are. It almost feels like a spite move. I don't think that kind of 'law' regarding modded content even exists any more, but to keep in the spirit of things and enhance compatibility, we used chichi sprites and body data as the base for this as well.



As an aside, default norns have an absolutely freaky body shape, and unifying it with the boxy curiosa body was a bit of a challenge. In the end it made the most sense to have an underlying physiology a lot like the chichi, but with thick shaggy hair and growths of spines and uneven (mutated?) scutes bulging out of the body. Making the pregnant sprites while keeping in mind the 'scales' or plates on the chest resulted in a kind of 'baby bump', but hey at least they're not as massive and uncomfortable looking as default norns. XD



-The matter of body data, aka 'f\*ck the body data, all my homies hate body data'  
^ the secret of the legs, also known as 'know your body data connection points'

Curiosas originally had very unique and very broken body data. They essentially had

faux digitigrade legs caused by crunching the lower leg up high on the body and giving the curiosas absolutely massive tall feet. Even they only have three 'parts' to their legs like a normal creature does, despite the illusion of four parts (or additional joints if you prefer). I had a strong hunch that you could 'fake' a toe-walking stance years ago and luckily I had some really rough alpha files lying around from testing that in the past. The Compatible Curiosa project was just finally the place where those good ol' 'animal legs' could be refined for a release.



The real secret, the most important thing to remember, is where body parts in this game series attach. No matter what you draw in the space between those connecting points, if they still line up, it will animate correctly and not fall to pieces or cause 'floating' parts. Imagining the sprites as 4 or 5-frame animations also helps a lot- You aren't restricted to just drawing static parts at set angles: You can draw hair falling in the direction of gravity, hands turning on the wrist, toes bending... You get the idea. It's only in 2021 that we're finally getting a dev tool that lets you see body data files as visuals in realtime, so a lot of 'historical' custom body data has been a complete and utter \*nightmare\*... At least it's reassuring to know that you can still do almost anything within the existing body data with some blood, sweat and tears.



SOME BREEDING TESTS



-The absolutely ridiculous workaround to get everything sent, converted, adjusted, sent back, adjusted again, sent back again...

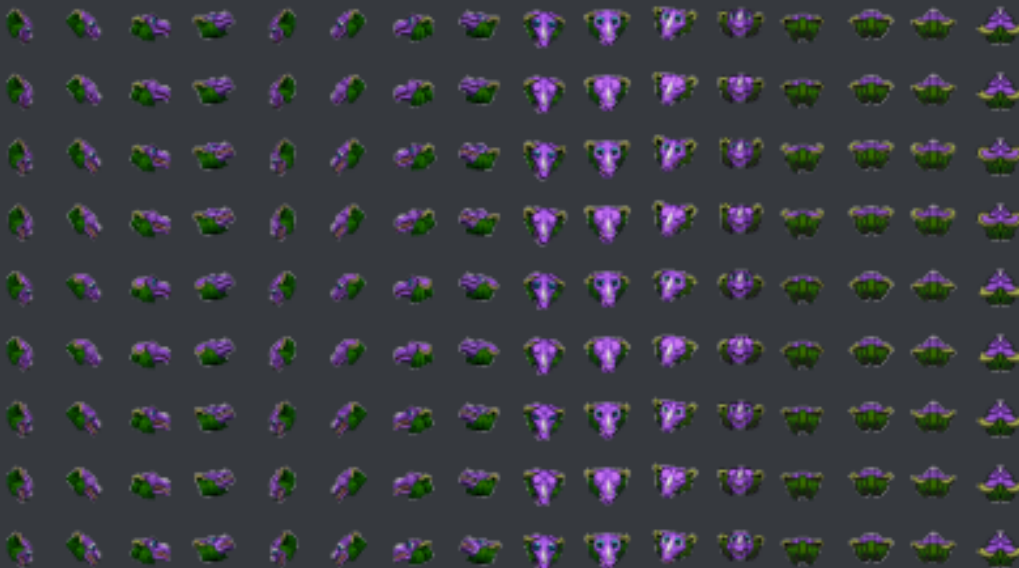
MALE AND FEMALE CURIOSA TEENS IN YOUR AREA  
ADULT CURIOSA BODY SPRITES TAKE THEM TAKE THEM

if i have to do this again I will sundown myself



And lemme tell you, it was stupidly hard work. Starting from december 1st 2021, I sat down from the moment of waking up to the moment of going to bed drawing sprites. I worked through my birthday.

BABY CURIOSA HEADS HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME!!!



I worked through a stomach bug. This was never a process intended for one person and definitely not a process intended to be done with hand-drawn art and not crops of 3d renders. If it weren't for the fact my wife was taking the art from me and converting and compiling it, we'd probably be releasing these in the winter of the NEXT year.

take tghese goddamned teenass pregnant ass curiosa sprites before I print them out and feed them to you



Funfact: The most commonly used dev tool for handling images in the creatures game series, EDOS, has a function for creating sprite sheets for editing. But it's wildly buggy, persnickety, and it can't actually READ sprite sheets when you're done with them. Instead we ended up with a combination workflow including one mac, one pc, EDOS, multiple specifically tweaked software components originally used for other things, and terminal commands. One day someone will make a suite for editing this game engine, but considering it came out about 20 years ago and we JUST got a dedicated body data editor, I might be dead by the time that happens. If you're reading this from the future, count your lucky stars!

**CosmicSynthetics** Yesterday at 8:08 PM

SUGGESTED OFFSET(Using facing right as example - like the image above)- scooch VERY TILTED UP right by -12 pixels. Scooch SLIGHTLY TILTED UP right by -6 pixels. Scooch FACING STRAIGHT FORWARD over by -3.

NOTE: Be sure to scale this per lifestage! (edited)

if i do this one more time I will become Jans undertale (Jess After Not Surviving)

(for more info on how we got this working, since I unfortunately can't really explain well, I asked cs to explain, and she basically said 'it's too complicated for words, take this link' so just pray this link works by the time you're reading this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLz0cjO8Pd8> )

Creatures genomes, or .gno files, are also weird as hell. Some people have a decent understanding of the basics of how they function and have made some wonderful things work, but there are also gaps in the communities' knowledge, hindered naturally by awful, bugged and outdated dev tools... Overall though my wife CS was able to glean some info on modifications that were made to the chichi genome to make curiosas back when. Things like custom colour genetics: Everything has a very slight cool lean in colour, which makes their actually more bone-coloured armoured parts look silvery-grey and metallic, and chichi-yellow parts appear green. They have some arguable improvements over chichis, like increased satisfaction for their efforts to find food, interact with buttons, doors, elevators etc that reduces their urge to spam behaviours until they die. One funny thing added in that I can't understand is that the elderly females get what I'm calling The Baby Fever when they hold eggs: They get fever toxin, a boost in female hormones, and weirdly the 'smell of machines' injected into their veins.





When I feel baby fever creepin...

I don't know what the original creator intended by this, but it sounds like the precise weird combination of stimuli someone would add in to try and mimic a natural and specific behaviour using in-game mechanics. Who knows what else is hidden in their DNA, but I can say that they do extremely well in the default Docking Station game area, breeding well and generally living contented lives.



At the end of it all, do we really know what a Curiosa really is though? Since there's no archive of their site of origin, and no sign of their german-speaking creator in decade/s, we can only infer from their visual design and genetics. The basic take-home would appear to be that their far distant ancestors were chichi norns, whose accidental space faring adventures as vagrant animals has caused them to finally return to their ancestral home as something very very different. Their scutes and spikes seem almost random, their teeth uneven and pointed, almost as if they were victims of rampant mutation, or perhaps inbreeding or outcrossing with something unknown. I can't say for sure what was originally intended, but I'd like to say that for Compatible Curiosas at least, that they aren't bio-technological despite their plated bodies, but covered in some kind of bony overgrowth that causes their spiny protrusions and armoured plates. Osteoderms

maybe?

I like to imagine that their survival to the modern day is in part due to the norn mascots of the german site 'insel der gobbypiraten' which housed pirate norns who collected lost creatures media and 'pirated' it by hosting it to keep it available to the public.



Heroes TBH



Obviously irl this is literally the case, as it was the only place to find the original breed for a long time, but it would be fun to weave an epic tale of 'space is an ocean' themed survival, wouldn't it? Perhaps that's another project. <3

- Jesseth, aka 'the mossy shee' ~x

p.s. And don't forget to thank CS aka Cosmisynth/the Crafty Shee for her hard work as well, and kudos to the mysterious Gulvet, who dumped the original curiosas into the ocean of the internet for the fanbase to pull up in their nets, rehabilitate, and give a loving home to.

