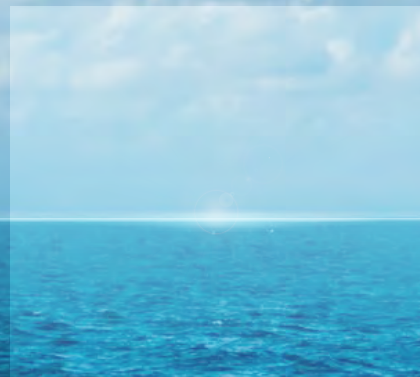




# THE ABBEY

PITCH DECK



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## Logline

Inspired by Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*:  
Fleeing a deadly pandemic, a security advisor infiltrates  
a luxurious floating city, hoping to find peace –  
but a friend's needless execution forces them to take action.

## The Pitch

While inspired by Poe's famous mood piece, *The Abbey* broadens its focus away from "Prospero and his court", to show the lives of the indentured people brought there to serve them.

Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*, with its focus on Prospero's hubris, missed a far deeper horror buried within its premise: the vast difference between how the extremely wealthy deal with catastrophe, compared to the limited options available to everyday people.

*The Abbey* addresses this, by contemporising Poe's tale and placing it in a spectacular, near-future setting – a lavish floating city in the Pacific. *The Abbey* then positions the fight for freedom and equality at the centre of the story, and fills it with memorable characters, stunning set pieces, and scenes of debauchery and shocking horror.

While staying true to the grim resolution of Poe's piece, the protagonist's fleeting victory over the wealthy tyrants who ruled the city will provide modern audiences – many of whom are ensnared in their own "abbeyes" – with a cathartic, if melancholy, experience.

## Introducing *The Abbey*

*The Abbey*, a fantasy, sci-fi feature, is an opulently decadent retelling of Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death*. However, instead of being set in the past within 'a castellated abbey with strong, lofty walls and gates of iron', the story is set in the near future aboard a luxurious city, floating in the Pacific Ocean.

Unlike Poe's mood piece, *The Abbey* broadens its focus out from 'Prospero and his court', to include the lives of the indentured people who serve the billionaires. It does this by following Iris Iranatu, a new arrival at The Abbey, along with her new employer and his retinue.

Iris is a Security Executive working for Alonso, a boorish, arms dealer with feelings of inferiority. Her first task is to protect him and his retinue by preventing him from becoming entangled in the political struggles between The Abbey's designer and CEO, Prospero, and the leader of a group of disgruntled investors, Hertog. She fails.

Soon after Iris talks Alonso out of charging his bonded consort, Titania, with treason, he proceeds to have his personal chef arrested for the same crime. The chef is then executed before she can intervene.

Distraught by the senseless death, Iris begins planning the overthrow of The Abbey's power structures. On her journey, audiences will be become immersed in the world of The Abbey, and meet an intriguing array of characters among the indentured workers, associates and their billionaire masters.

The world of The Abbey is divided in two.

## Introducing *The Abbey* cont.

On the one hand we have the ostentatious residences, and the lavish public and private spaces, where the wealthy and select members of their retinues, while away their days. These spaces are hugely extravagant in both design and in the materials used to decorate and embellish them.

On the other hand there are the spaces where the indentured workers live when they're not working. Cramped, grimy and worn, they dwell in an almost constant twilight, only glimpsing the sun when it's on the horizon and bathes the underside of the city in light.

Obviously, *The Abbey* is all about class and how the exceedingly wealthy use their power to maintain their position in society, while ignoring the needs of the very people responsible for creating the wealth they now hoard to themselves. This division between those who generate the wealth and those who claim it, is an issue with which today's audiences are becoming increasingly aware. Particularly as many of them find themselves ensnared within their own 'abbeyes'.

*The Abbey* does not shy away from Poe's bleak ending, however it does allow Iris to triumph over the billionaires. This short-lived victory gives audiences the win they desire, while also suggesting that, perhaps if the billionaires had been neutralised sooner, things may have been different. Possible parallels between the world of *The Abbey* and humanity's current situation, will be left up to audiences to determine and discuss.

## Look • Pace • Tone

**LOOK** • As noted in an insert page before the script, the colour red should not be used in the design of *The Abbey* itself. That said, the story of *The Abbey* would be best served by a naturalistic look to better contrast the two worlds that exist aboard *The Abbey*. First we have the decadent opulence of the Citizens' world, in which the billionaires and their retinues work and play (see **Look Book**). And in stark contrast to this, is the grimy austerity endured by the indentured workers in their world.

A naturalistic style will also increase the impact of both, the hallucinatory flashbacks interwoven through the script, and the final, dramatic arrival of the Red Death.

**PACE** • From the start, as audiences are introduced to characters, their world and what is at stake, the tension and dread will increase. This dark mood will be further emphasised by the flashbacks that depict the horrors of the “Fall of London”. And, while there are moments of respite, these are often closely followed by episodes of death and violence. The tension continues to build, until our heroes win their brief victory, which is immediately destroyed by the arrival of the Red Death.

**TONE** • Given the source material, the tone does naturally tend toward grimdark. However, while the world is terrible in ways similar to that shown in *V for Vendetta* and *Snowpiercer*, the humanity of our protagonist and her co-conspirators, together with their resolve to free their people, is encouraging and uplifting, despite the bleak ending.

## Short Synopsis

When Iris (a security executive) arrives aboard The Abbey, she believes she can now relax, safe from the horrific pandemic ravaging the globe. However a few days later, one of her friends is executed, an innocent victim in a struggle between the city's two rival factions. Distressed by their senseless death, and determined to prevent any more innocent people from being killed, Iris sets out to overthrow the billionaires who run the city.

In preparation for the day when she can enact her plan, Iris embarks on the dangerous business of seeking out an alliance with a secret cabal operating inside the city's population of indentured workers.

At the same time, Iris must also struggle to keep Alonso, her employer, from jeopardising the lives of his retinue, as he becomes entangled in the city's politics, while trying to impress the city's creator, Prospero.

Soon, the struggle between the city's rival factions intensifies until, in the bloody aftermath of a failed coup attempt, Iris is presented with the opportunity she needs. The winning faction's victory celebration: a decadent Masked Ball.



## Long Synopsis

An extravagant motor yacht roars across a brilliant Pacific Ocean. Among those onboard is IRIS (security executive, late 30s) and her new employer ALONSO (billionaire arms dealer, 55-65). They are fleeing a global pandemic the media has dubbed, “The Red Death”.

On arriving at The Abbey, a luxurious floating city with a population of nearly 29,000, they are welcomed by its founder, PROSPERO (45-55). Prospero is immediately infatuated with TITANIA (Alonso’s bonded consort) and compliments Alonso on his purchase. Prospero then welcomes the new arrivals, inviting them to join him in the creation of a new Golden Age. Iris accidentally snorts at this, embarrassing Alonso.

Iris’ hopes for a quiet, relaxing stay at The Abbey are almost immediately destroyed when Alonso finds himself caught in a power struggle between Prospero and another Citizen, HERTOOG (70s). Incapable of seeing himself as a mere pawn in their rivalry, Alonso accuses Titania of betraying him. Iris manages to save her from Alonso’s fury by suggesting Titania can be used to spy on Prospero.

However, a few days later, Iris is unable to save her friend, CERES, when Alonso accuses his chef of the same crime. Iris and Alonso are shocked when Ceres is summarily executed. Devastated by Ceres’ pointless death, Iris dedicates herself to overthrowing the factions who control the city.

To that end, Iris sets out to make contact with the secret cabal that operates within The Abbey’s indentured worker community (Interns).

## Long Synopsis cont.

Safe from the view of the billionaires (Citizens) and their assistants (Associates), Iris reveals she is not the obeisant, private-school-educated careerist she appears to be. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, GRIMES, the leader of the cabal (The Cell), makes it clear she has no interest in cooperating with her. Iris replies that she will proceed with or without The Cell's assistance, and asks that they reconsider.

At the same time, friction between Prospero and Hertog increases when Hertog wins a vote to have The Abbey relocate to another location. Prospero is furious because the complicated process of moving the city will deprive him of the workers he needs for his own project: the lavish refurbishment of seven huge rooms in his Imperial Suite.

Hertog's relocation finds The Abbey in shallow water when it is struck by a Category-5 Cyclone, causing it to run aground. A number of Interns are killed in the accident. At the same time, Iris is ambushed by Grimes and her bodyguards. Iris manages to turn the tables on her attackers with the aid of an illegal weapon, and kills them all.

Traumatized by what she has done, Iris finds comfort in Titania's arms ... only to then threaten to kill her if she suspects Titania may betray her. Titania is unfazed by the death threat.

The following morning reveals The Abbey has run aground near an island. Hertog and many other Citizens are terrified, fearing the island may harbour the Red Death, and demand they relocate immediately.

## Long Synopsis cont.

However, as Hertog's relocation is responsible for their predicament, and the fact that the The Abbey is damaged, their demand is easily defeated by Prospero.

Iris meets the new leadership of The Cell who, understandably, want to make the Citizens suffer for their years of abuse. Iris manages to persuade them to be patient, by revealing how they can not only defeat the billionaires, but survive their victory.

After an intensive survey of the island showed no signs of human activity, The Abbey is still attacked by a flotilla of kayaks. The attack is quickly crushed by The Abbey's automated weapon-systems, which kills all of the attackers, along with some Interns who were trapped outside. Suspecting that Hertog will use the attack as an excuse for a coup, Iris convinces The Cell to support Prospero, should it be required.

Hertog does try to usurp Prospero, but fails when squads of Security Interns intervene, and he and his supporters are arrested. The next day, Prospero punishes the 29 insurrectionists by executing their Associates, killing hundreds people. Horrified by the slaughter, Iris watches Prospero segue to his next topic: a huge, masked ball to celebrate the completion of his Imperial Suite. Titania congratulates Iris, saying she now has the opportunity she needed. Iris is appalled.

Prospero and Iris each plan for the big day. While Iris coordinates with The Cell, Prospero, accompanied by Titania, throws himself into overseeing every, tiny detail of the huge event.

## Long Synopsis cont.

On the big night, the Citizens and their guests gather at the doors of the Black Room, in preparation for the final phase of their revelry. Meanwhile, armed Interns seize control of The Abbey. They are met with very little resistance.

Unaware of the coup, the Citizens pour into the Black Room, only to be confronted by Titania, now transformed into the Red Death.

Despite suspecting the truth, Iris tries to bargain with It, in the hope Titania may still have some control over the entity. But Prospero, high on drugs and his own importance, shoves Iris aside and shoots It. The bullets have no effect. Horrified, Prospero sees blood seeping from his skin and he dies, screaming in agony. The Citizens panic and flee, even as others are overcome by the disease.

All over The Abbey, thousands of people die in blood-soaked agony as the Red Death, now a huge, glowing wraith, dances between the towers to the music of their screams.

In the morning sun, Titania (now free from the Red Death) cradles Iris as she lies dying. Titania praises Iris on her victory and consoles her for her loss. They say their goodbyes and Iris dies, leaving Titania free and utterly alone in the dead city.

## Themes

*The Abbey* is an obvious microcosm of the world today, and touches upon issues like freedom, equity and community. It is not subtle.

For example, the Citizens, who paid for their position (all billionaires, making-up 1% of the city's population), are portrayed as greedy and entitled, and not particularly smart or industrious. Even Prospero, who it could be argued has some talent and is perhaps “deserving” of his position, is shown to be not that different to the other Citizens, by having no care or empathy for the people who help turn his visions into reality.

In contrast to the Citizens, the Interns and Associates are our audiences' surrogates, and so are shown to be (mostly) relatively compassionate, intelligent and industrious. That said, the bleak ending does leave open the question: if the billionaires had been overthrown sooner, could *The Abbey's* grim fate been averted?

*The Abbey* is a condemnation of our global society, placing most of the blame for our current situation on the obscenely wealthy who both, benefit from the current system, and have the power to make things better if only they would. It is also admonishment to all of us in the 99%, to act now, before it's too late.

# The World

When the planet fell into the grip of a horrific pandemic, dubbed the Red Death by the tabloid media, those who could, fled to their fortified sanctuaries. And, when they failed, they fled to the “arks” located far out in the ocean. The Abbey is one of these, and is famed for both its decadent luxuriousness and the ruthlessness with which it defends itself.

The Abbey is capable of relocating, however it is not something that can be done at a moments notice, usually requiring a few days of preparation before it can deploy its submarine tugs.

## POPULATION & CASTES

When the story begins, The Abbey is home to 27,983 people. Of these, 281 are billionaires, who have paid for the privilege of being a “Citizen”. Citizens live on the upper floors of the seven residential towers.

Then there are 8,310 Associates, most of whom are employed by the Citizens as part of their personal retinues, while the remainder manage The Abbey. Associates employed by Citizens live in their Citizen’s suite, but usually near the core of a tower, where there are no windows.

And then there are the 19,392 Interns (indentured servants) who provide the bulk of the labour and services. Their dormitories, along with other infrastructure, are located below the towers, in the shadows of the decks above them.

As a general rule, the Citizens tend to be white and male, while the Interns are generally POC, and include more women than men. Associates tend to fall somewhere between these two demographics.

## The World cont.

### THE RED DEATH

The origins of the Red Death are a mystery, as is how it spreads. Science has been able to develop tests to identify its presence, but beyond that, very little progress has been made on controlling the disease.

Initially, the lack of knowledge around the Red Death lead to a wide array of conspiracy theories. Most of these theories, the political, the racial and the completely batshit crazy, have fallen out of favour ... except for those ascribing the Red Death to some kind of supernatural agency. What or who this supernatural agency is, depends on one's own personal beliefs. However, reports from around the world, of towering wraiths dancing among the dead and dying, are disturbingly consistent.

### OSTENTATIOUS DECADENCE

The Abbey's design, style and finishes are so preposterously over the top, it would make a drug-cartel billionaire blush. Everything thing about it reeks of vast wealth, and the waste and irresponsibility which it nurtures.

The interiors (see **Look Book**) demonstrate this with the ludicrously elaborate designs, and the expensive materials and finishes they employ. Not to mention the constant labour of hundreds of Interns which is required to keep the interiors clean and maintained.

In addition to traditional materials, like rare and expensive stone, wood, metals, gems, glass etc – The Abbey's interiors are also adorned with coloured lights, video screens, kinetic sculptures and much, much more.

# Introduction to Characters

The characters can, for the most part, be divided into two groups.

There are those who are portrayed as **everyday people**, trying to get by in an unjust world. These are generally the Interns and many of the Associates. The audience will empathise with these characters, as they watch them performing their duties while struggling to maintain their prescribed disposition, in the face of their clueless and entitled masters.

And then there are the **billionaire** Citizens. At first glance, they may appear to be little more than caricatures, rather than actual people ... until we remember the hoards of cartoonish grifters and bullies who currently infest our news feeds day-after-day.



# Character Descriptions

## IRIS • Security Executive (35-40)

Born in England of Indian parents, Iris Iranatu's speech and bearing suggest a comfortable, if conservative, upbringing with an expensive education. And, while a thorough investigation into her past will support the above, it is all a lie.

She gained her new job as a security executive (S.X.), after she “found” some lost property amid the chaos and horror of the Fall of London, and returned it to its owner, a billionaire arms dealer.

Now safe aboard The Abbey, Iris wants nothing more than to simply protect her employer and his retinue, while trying to relax and forget the real reason she's there. But it is not to be.

After the execution of her friend, Iris sets out to ensure that no more innocents need die as collateral damage, when bored billionaires decide to argue with each other. She enters the Interns' world and reveals herself to be far more dangerous than her “upstairs” persona suggests.

## Character Descriptions cont.

### **PROSPERO • creator of The Abbey (45–55)**

Billionaire playboy, artist and owner of a number of profitable patents, Petrus Milano, or “Prospero” to all who know and fear him, is the creator, CEO and Chairperson of The Abbey.

Originally envisaged as a new Xanadu (Kubla Khan’s pleasure palace), Prospero has seen his vision compromised by his investors, as each seeks to re-shape The Abbey to their own, individual vision.

A renowned hedonist, and known for skipping from project to project, Prospero’s decision to avoid any serious confrontations and allow his opponents to plot their schemes, is seen by many as further proof of his unfitness to rule. This is a mistake.

Prospero can be both patient and merciless. Confident in his ultimate victory, he waits until all those who would move against him, identify themselves. That way he can be sure, when the time comes, he will be finally free from their constant distractions.

## Character Descriptions cont.

### **TITANIA • Alonso's indentured consort**

Even as a horrific plague ravages the globe, Titania is famous the world over for her preternatural beauty. Of indeterminate heritage and age, she is coveted by many of the world's most powerful people.

As an indentured consort, Titania has suffered innumerable mental and emotional wounds. Despite this, she presents herself with a relaxed charm and confidence, that can still feel submissive to those Citizens who require it. Titania treats the Interns she meets with warmth and respect.

The question of whether or not Titania is aware she is the Red Death throughout the entire story, or if she is possessed by it moments before its reveal, is a question best left unanswered.

### **HERTOG • billionaire, investor (70s)**

Having inherited his fortune in his late teens, Hertog has always enjoyed using his vast resources to shape the world around him to match his vision of how things should be. Needless to say, the current management of The Abbey are not to his liking.

Being an early investor in The Abbey, Hertog had expected Prospero to accept and act upon his advice. Prospero's refusal to do so is seen by Hertog as more than lack of respect, but as a clear indication that he is wholly unsuited to his roles as CEO and "Chairman" (as Hertog insists on calling the role).

And so, similar to Iris, Hertog sees it as his mission to free The Abbey and lead it into a glorious future.

## Character Descriptions cont.

### **ALONSO • billionaire, arms dealer (55-65)**

Alonso Napoli believes himself to be an exemplary businessman who is deserving of his successes, and more. His lack of ethics and empathy, when combined with his wealth and limited intellect, make him perfectly suited for a world in the middle of an apocalypse.

However, despite his success, Alonso is haunted by feelings of inferiority when confronted by those more cultivated and sophisticated than he is. This is why he strives for the appearance of urbane worldliness, a quality in which he is completely lacking, by seeking out and obtaining, that which his more-refined peers desire.

### **SUPPORTING CHARACTERS**

There are about another sixty speaking roles in *The Abbey*. Some of the more prominent characters include:

CALIBAN, Alonso's stoic bodyguard;

CAPTAIN, The Abbey's pilot, who tries to avoid politics;

GRIMES, the corrupt leader of The Cell;

STEPHAN, Prospero's sleazy factotum;

TRINCULO, Prospero's dull security executive;

URBINA, housekeeper and later, a member of The Cell; and

WODE, golf instructor and Iris' liaison with The Cell.

Add to this, various Citizens and Associates, plus the dozens of Interns working jobs like cleaners, submarine engineers, administrative staff, factory workers, choreographers, and more.

## Teaser

*The following describes a scene that takes place at the height of a Category-5 cyclone as it lashes at The Abbey. Iris has gone to hear The Cell's decision regarding her request for their assistance in the planned coup:*

Kersk leads Iris into a large room lined with equipment lockers and benches. The roar of the cyclone can be heard through the thick, composite walls. She slows and looks around: "I'm guessing this isn't Grimes' quarters, yeah?"

CHR-R-RAK! Iris collapses, spasming. Kersk smiles, a homemade riot stick in his fist. He looks up as Grimes and two bodyguards enter.

Grimes looks down at Iris. "Thank you for joining us, Ms Iranatu. We'll try and keep this brief." Grimes goes on to tell her that The Cell won't be helping her. Iris is unsurprised, answering: "You either help me alive or you help me dead. It's your call."

Annoyed, Grimes leans over Iris: "Don't act the cretin! You lost! Fools like you always lose. There is no glorious revolution. No hope for a people's utopia. This is the world. This is the world as it has always been!"

Grimes pauses, before continuing. She sounds almost conciliatory. "It is unfortunate that it has come to this. In other circumstances, I suspect we could have worked together. However, your delusions render you unemployable. Believe me, there is no malice here." Grimes gestures to her bodyguards, "Drop her."

In that moment, Iris pulls out an illegal pistol, and shoots. BAP!

## Teaser cont.

Grimes screams, clutching her abdomen.

Iris rolls to the side dodging Kersk's riot stick. BAP!

The round hits his shoulder, causing him to drop the riot stick. He runs.

Iris swings around: BAP! BAP! BAP! The two bodyguards fall.

Ignoring Grimes, who is curled up, moaning and cursing, Iris pulls herself up and staggers over to the bodyguards. They are dead.

She returns to Grimes, who tries to negotiate. "No, no, stop! We can work this out." But Iris is not in the mood. "You should've said that before I started killing people." A number of Interns hurry in. One of them holds Kersk in an armlock. On seeing them, Grimes calls out: "Oh, god! Stop her! She's gone mad! She, she ..." Grimes stops when she sees their faces. They are not her side.

Iris examines Kersk. He stares back, defiant as she decides his fate.

"Yes? No? ... No." BAP! Kersk falls dead.

Grimes can't believe it. "You fucking morons! You can't beat them! She'll get you all killed! You're fucked! You are all fucked!" Grimes sobs. Racked with pain and anger, she glares at Iris.

Iris points the pistol at her. "There's no malice here." BAP!

## Is *The Abbey* a Limited Series?

*The Abbey* is not a cheap project. The story requires a large cast in huge, lavish environments, and with a number of spectacular set pieces. It also needs a fair amount of sex and nudity.

So how can a contemporary retelling of Poe's story be told, if the numbers suggest a live-action feature is not the way to go?

One option is to do it as an animated movie, similar to the "limited 3D" style used by the French studio Fortiche, in making the Netflix series, *Arcane*. Animation would provide absolute freedom to create truly breathtaking visions of *The Abbey* and the horrors of the Fall of London, while allowing the producers to bypass (most) concerns around the depiction of the sex and nudity. Animation would also help to convey Titania's almost supernatural beauty.

Sadly, however, there are still audiences who shy away from animated features aimed at adults. So another way to reach a wider audience is to tell the story as a live action limited series of seven\* episodes. A read of the script will show there are a number of supporting characters with lives worth exploring. For example, Urbina (housekeeping) and her daughter, Mitzu who befriends Titania. Urbina joins *The Cell* after her partner Shimizu (maintenance engineer) dies when *The Abbey* runs aground.

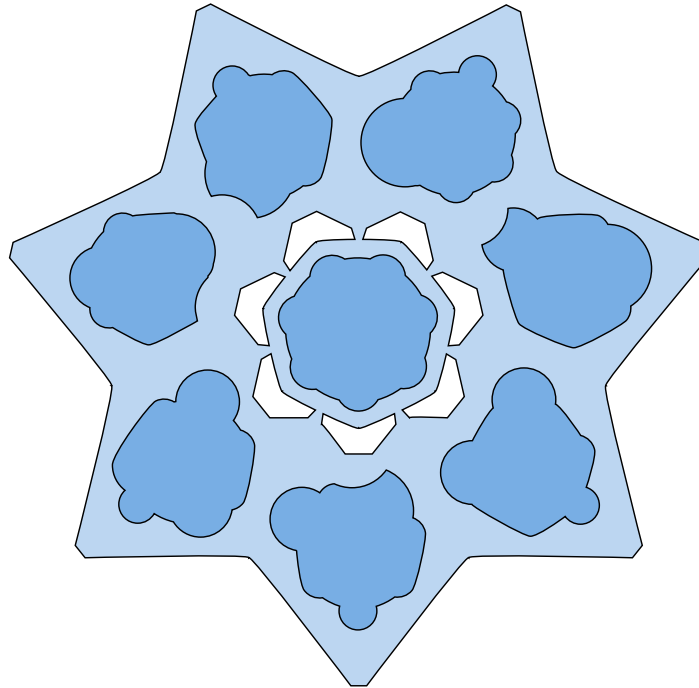
Whether it's live-action or animated, a limited series on a suitable streaming service could be a cost-effective way to get *The Abbey* before a broad, international audience.

\*Seven, because it aligns with the seven rooms in Prospero's Imperial Suite.

# Look Book

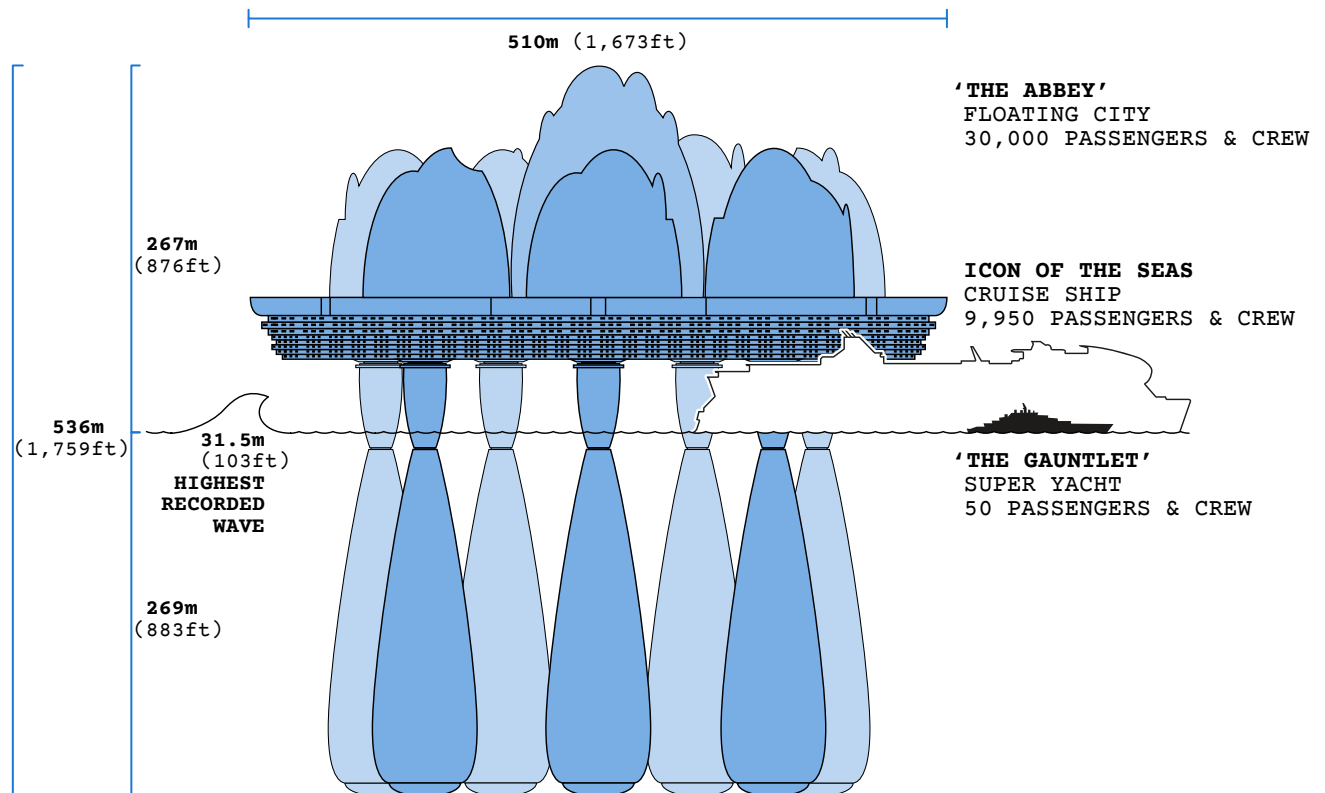
*A few images to help inspire your imagination ...*

## THE ABBEY - SCHEMATIC



**Please note:**

This schematic is only intended to show the general structure of The Abbey. No doubt the final design will look far more impressive.





## Look Book cont.

### THE ABBEY – EXTERIORS

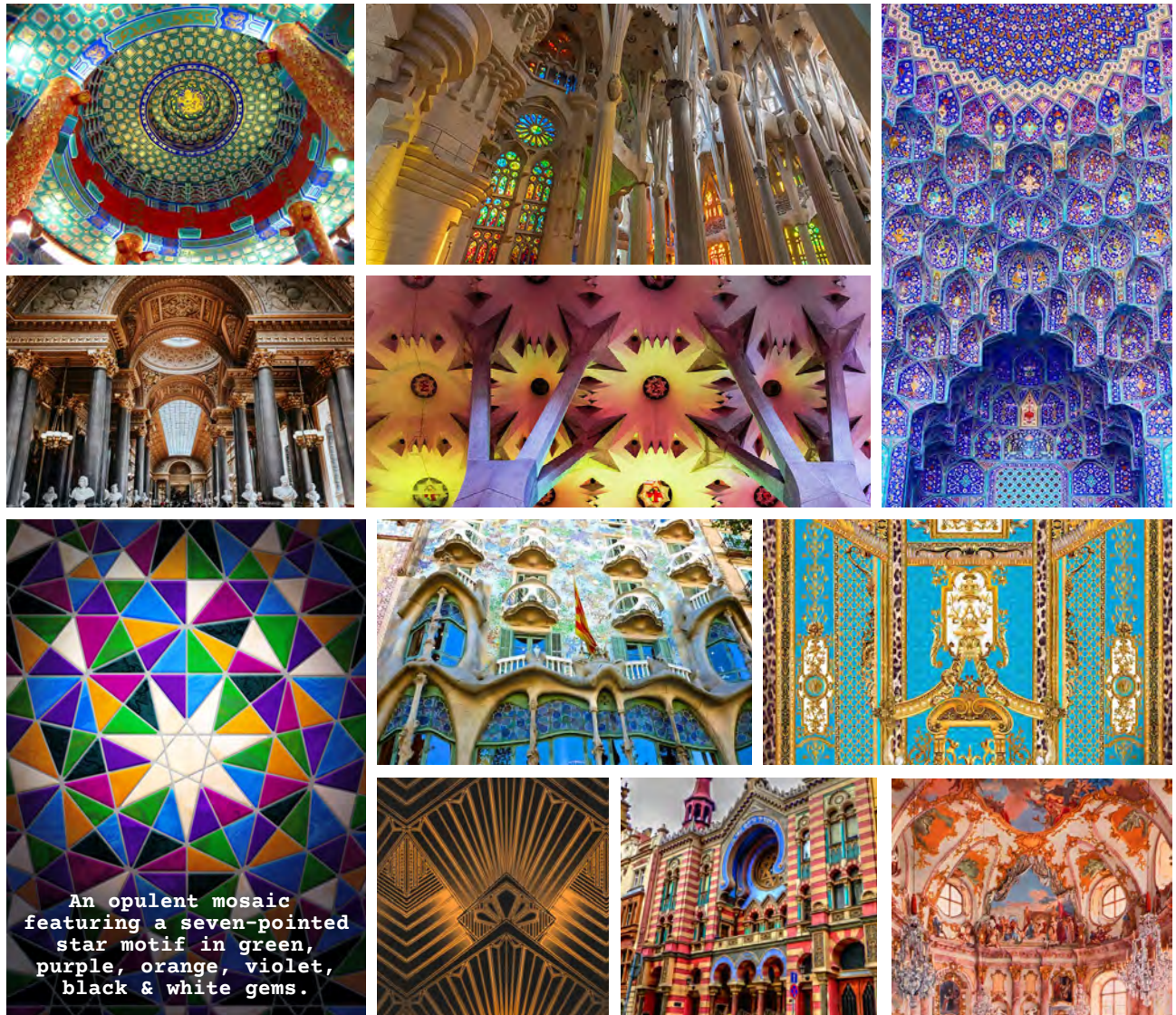


Think Gaudi's *La Sagrada Família*, but made from space-age composite materials and designed with far less restraint.



## Look Book cont.

### THE ABBEY – OPULENT DECOR



Please note: The above examples were all created using traditional techniques and materials. However Prospero is not so encumbered. He has access to LEDs, lasers, ultraviolet light, video projectors and screens, animatronics and much more. And so these examples are only the start of what is possible.



## Look Book cont.

### THE RED DEATH

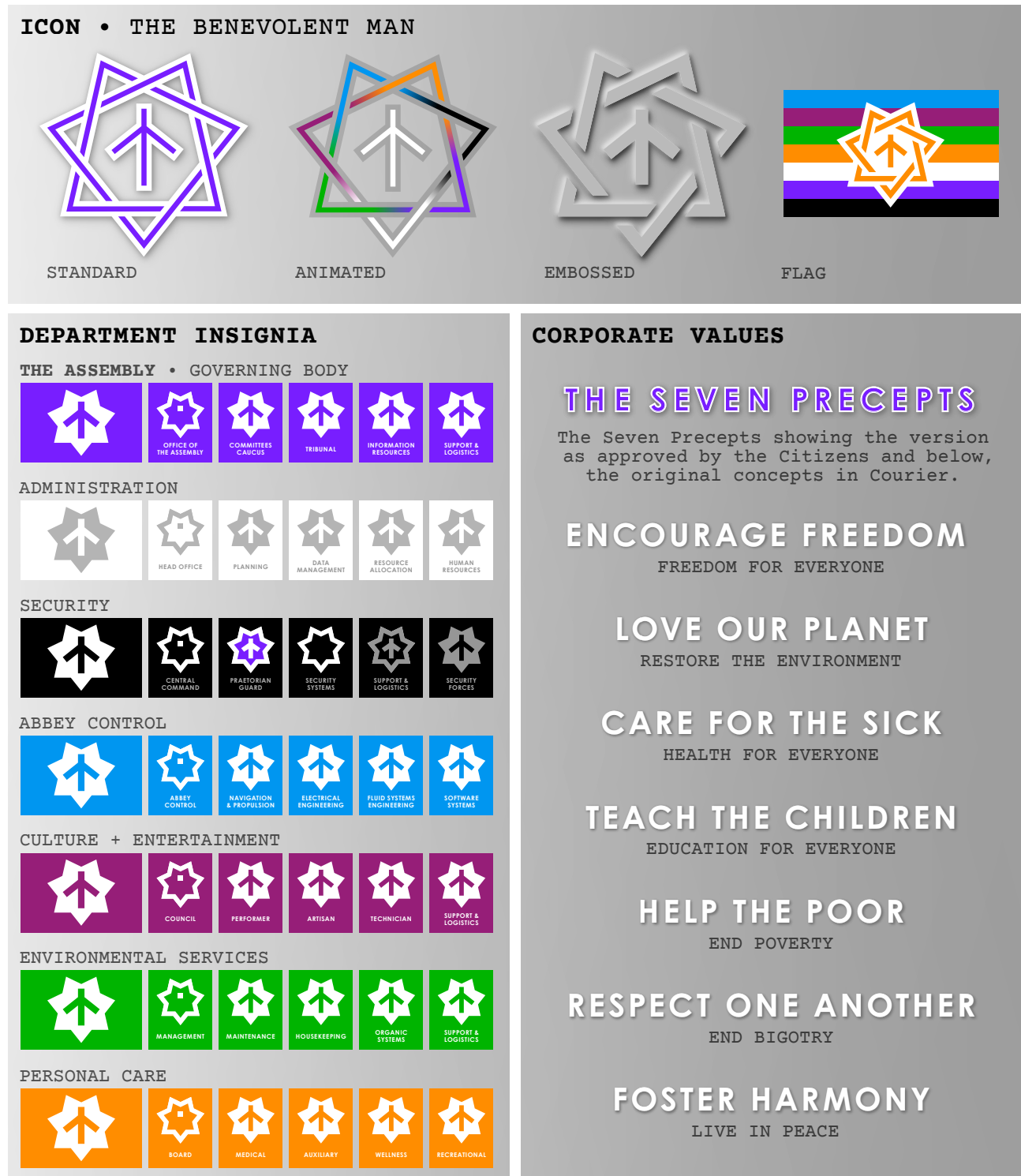


### THE ABBEY

NOTE: All images belong to the relevant copyright holder.

## Look Book cont.

### THE ABBEY – CORPORATE BRANDING



## Look Book cont.

### TEASER POSTER







# THE ABBEY

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