



# COMPANY OF HEROES™

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THE ART OF THE COMPANY OF HEROES™ SERIES

# FOREWORD

Our approach with *Company of Heroes* has always been to create an authentic World War II experience. One of the primary ways we deliver on that authenticity is by focusing on where environment meets gameplay, and try to answer the question: what is unique about the various regions of Europe and how do those regions influence the battles fought there? In addition to environments, we also raise the bar with our in-game units by using new techniques and software to further push the quality of our materials and delve deeper into the realm of believability.

As we began researching the Ardennes region in preparation for *Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault*, we identified defining features that would help our maps stand out. The overall color palette for the area, from buildings to the fields and forests were vibrant and almost untouched by the war. This was our angle. The idea of providing players a beautiful, pristine landscape to play in but also be able to destroy seemed very appealing. Forests

were the other important feature to this battle. They effected the outcome of the battle by slowing the German advance and making it difficult to flush out Allied forces. We further simulated the realities of this battle through the use of choke points for vehicles and infantry only sections.

Ultimately, this book showcases some of the art and game design concepts the team incorporated to help bring this renowned franchise to life. We feel we were able to deliver a quality product that hit all the notes we wanted it to. We hope you enjoy!

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Ian Cumming,  
*Art Director, Company of Heroes 2*

# CONTENT SUMMARY

- 4 Concepts and Prototypes
- 19 Map Design
- 26 Unit Visual Design
- 33 Shipping the Game

# CONCEPTS AND PROTOTYPES

## Mood Pieces

During the early stages of game development, concept art like those pictured in the following pages help set the tone for the overall game. They help the entire team share the same mental image of what the game strives to be like and guides the entire development process.

By comparing the pieces of artwork, one can understand the evolution of this franchise. And, in the case of *Ardennes Assault*, it's apparent how different the US Forces are from the other factions in the core game: less armored units at their disposal; tighter and more strongly coordinated squads and a more commando-style approach.

TS AND PROTOTYPES





Company of Heroes 2



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault

## Maps

Even before they are thought of in terms of gameplay and level design, maps must be considered in terms of overall mood, atmosphere and identity.

A great map is a subtle combination of how well it plays and how unique & memorable it looks. This is even more crucial for a single-player campaign, during which players are to follow a set and linear path tied to a storyline. In such case, not only do the environments have to provide a good enough sense of variety, they also have to heighten the tension and the drama of the plot.





Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts



Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts



Company of Heroes



Company of Heroes



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Company of Heroes



## From Prototype to the Final Game

Final art assets are often implemented at the last stages of development, long after gameplay mechanics and level design are locked down. The following prototype images showcase the evolution of game's engine over the development lifecycle. Pay attention to the UI and you will notice that the original *Company of Heroes* was actually prototyped using the *Impossible Creatures* engine.

These early prototypes are crucial as they give an idea of what we can realistically achieved once the game is completed. The team will create a tech demo early on enabling them to focus on a limited set of art assets and maps to act as a quality benchmark that represents the final quality of the game.

TS AND PROTOTYPES

## From Prototype to the Final Game



Company of Heroes (*Prototype*)



Company of Heroes (*Final*)

## From Prototype to the Final Game



Company of Heroes (*Prototype*)

Company of Heroes (*Final*)

## From Prototype to the Final Game



Company of Heroes (*Prototype*)

Company of Heroes (*Final*)



## From Prototype to the Final Game



Company of Heroes (*Prototype*)

Company of Heroes (*Final*)

## Evolution of the Angoville Map



Company of Heroes (*Prototype*)

Company of Heroes (*Final*)

Company of Heroes 2

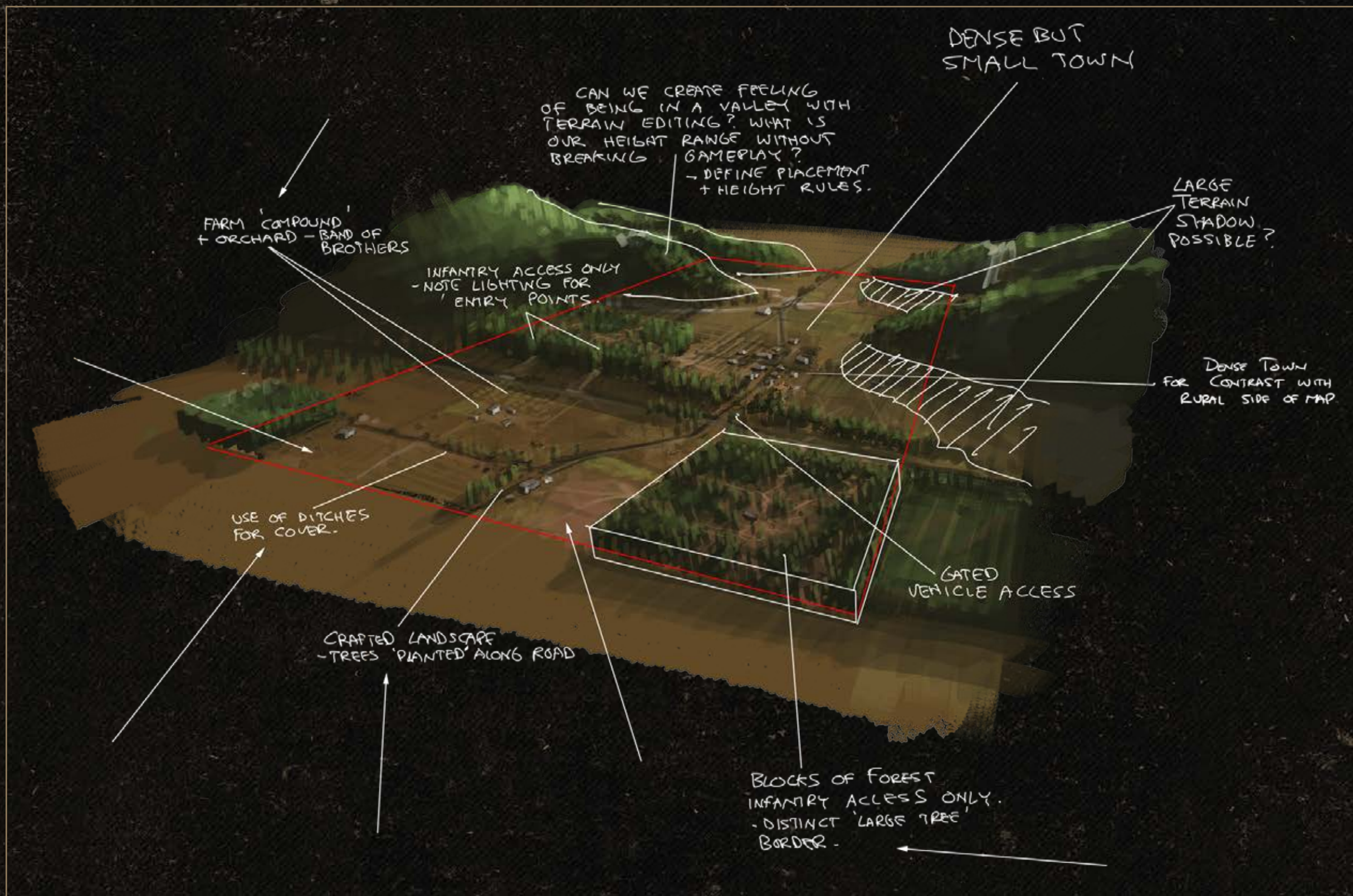
# MAP DESIGN

## Where Art Meets Gameplay

The *Company of Heroes* series calls for maps that balance the historical / visual fidelity with the demands of interesting gameplay situations. As can be seen on the map exploration concept on the following page, artists and map designers are constantly weighing their design decisions against a couple of key questions: Is it plausible enough? Is it visually interesting? Does it serve any interesting gameplay purpose?

Those are the three main objectives that the various components of the map have to meet to be part of the final design.

MAP DESIGN



## Map Goals

### Topography:

- A dense playable forest with vehicle prohibiting border
- Can it still hold up visually once bombed?
- 'Infantry entrance' treatment; lighting and terrain to lead player in
- How dense can we get a town without break pathing/gameplay?
- Achieve the 'feel' of being in a valley with terrain - what are limits?

### Pristine Landscape:

- Achieve a believable orchard that doesn't break gameplay
- Rural roadway and tree arrangements
- Belgian specific farm compound layout
- Belgian specific building treatments for town
- Belgian rural building treatment - looking for high contrast to terrain

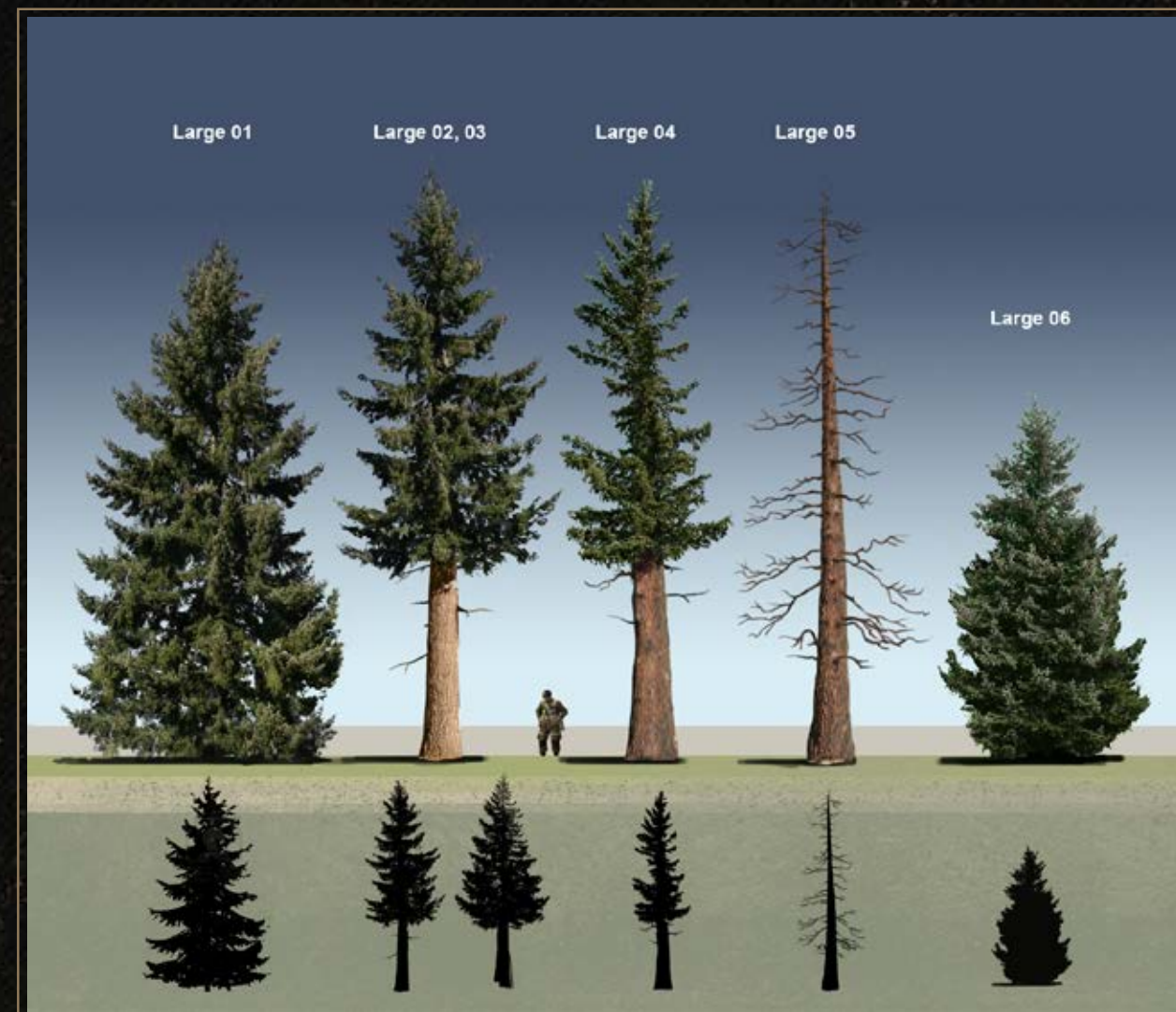
### Defining features:

- Iconic structures; what can we reuse?
- Iconic structures; what are we missing?

A lot of research goes into making sure that the battlefields created for the game are believable. And in the case of *Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault*, which takes place in the rather densely forested Ardennes region, trees were evidently given quite a bit of attention. Nevertheless, when it comes to game design, fun & balance trump realism. And so the foliage of some trees had to be made a bit thinner in order for players to still get enough of a glimpse of what is happening around those areas.



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
*Oak Summer variants*



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
*Pine variants*



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault

*Oak Tree L - Modifications (Left)*

- Punched holes in tree for more visibility of units to create asymmetry for better reuse throughout map
- Mainly deleted billboard leaves, very few static leaves removed
- Removed two secondary branches to create holes

## Color Palette & Identity

As *Ardennes Assault* focused on the events around the Battle of the Bulge, the game's single-player campaign faced the challenge of distinguishing a limited set of similar looking environments (e.g. the Ardennes forest region). In order to still give players a sense of progression and variety throughout the campaign maps, while still keeping a consistent setting, the art team used plants to build specific undertones into the environment. This resulted in each map having a subtly dominant color, with the overall color range mirroring the emotional journey of the player as he gets deeper into the darkest and grittiest parts of the conflict.

MAP DESIGN



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
*Before (Left)*



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
*After (Right)*



# Light – Colour

*XP – Persistent*



Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
*Company of Heroes 2 Colour range*

# UNIT VISUAL DESIGN



The design of the units – and their choice of gear – is motivated by historical accuracy as well as how readable their functions will remain to players. It's also critical to give each unit a unique style that is special and memorable.

The following pages, displaying side by side comparisons of antagonist factions, illustrates how distinct shapes and colors were used to differentiate the units (within their own army and their opponents) – all of it while staying within the realm of the plausible equipment for the time. *Company of Heroes 2* makes heavy use of climatic effects, this task was made even more complex with the introduction of skin variants for the winter period and the summer period.

AL DESIGN

# Unit Archetypes: US Forces



Infantry	Elite	Utility	Rear Echelon	Stealth
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simple silhouette</li> <li>- Plain pattern</li> <li>- Not a lot of detail</li> <li>- Monotone</li> <li>- minimize backpack</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complex silhouette</li> <li>- Broken pattern</li> <li>- Contrast and detail</li> <li>- Duotone</li> <li>- Heavier below waist</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Top heavy silhouette</li> <li>- Heavy backpack</li> <li>- Not as much contrast</li> <li>- lots of packs</li> <li>- Duotone, dark top</li> <li>- minimize side pockets</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simple silhouette</li> <li>- Long coat</li> <li>- Not a lot of detail</li> <li>- Duotone, coat/pants</li> <li>- minimal accessories</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simple silhouette</li> <li>- Monotone</li> <li>- Lots of detail, low contrast</li> <li>- Blends with terrain</li> <li>- Blend in accessories</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Variations</b> slight adjustments for variety but stays within Archetype guidelines</p>	<p><b>Paratrooper:</b> Elite Unit Follows pattern, colour and weight guidelines but doesn't utilize duotone. This still fits within the Elite Archetype guidelines</p>			

## Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault

- Warm hues
- Worn, battle fatigued
- Heavier winterized treatment
- Uniforms the same across seasons
- Not a lot of winter clothing
- Addition of scarves, gloves for winter



*Readability in game (Top)*  
Making sure the Archetype rules read and help identify unit

# Unit Archetypes: Oberkommando West



Brigadeführer (Officer, Major)	Panzerfusilier (Armoured Infantry)	Volksgrenadier (Infantry)	Waffen SS Infantry (Elite)	Fallschirmjaeger (Paratroopers)	Pioneers (Engineers)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low contrast duotone</li> <li>- Shearling jacket over uniform</li> <li>- No web-gear</li> <li>- No backpack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low contrast duotone</li> <li>- Overcoat + Camo smock</li> <li>- Some web-gear</li> <li>- No backpack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monotone</li> <li>- Overcoat</li> <li>- Minimal web-gear</li> <li>- No backpack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low-contrast duotone (light over dark)</li> <li>- Bottom heavy silhouette</li> <li>- Camo uniform</li> <li>- Some web-gear</li> <li>- No backpack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High-contrast duotone (light over dark)</li> <li>- Bottom heavy silhouette</li> <li>- Camo short-legged overalls over uniform</li> <li>- Lots of web-gear</li> <li>- Small backpack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High-contrast duotone (dark over light)</li> <li>- Bulky silhouette</li> <li>- Lots of web-gear</li> <li>- Large backpack</li> </ul>

Winter Variations

## Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault

- Cool blue/green hues, darker
- Clean
- Light winterized treatment
- Uniforms the same across seasons
- Organized, well equipped
- Addition of scarves, gloves for winter



Readability in game (Top)  
 Making sure the Archetype rules read and help identify unit

# Unit – Soldier

*Concept*

Archetype rules remain legible at each stage from concept to model

Patterns and Silhouette need to read clearly at each stage

*Model*

Some adjustments were made to push contrast back into the pattern design to make sure they were readable from default camera

Company of Heroes 2: Ardennes Assault  
US Forces – Elite Archetype (Left)

- Complex silhouette
- Broken pattern
- Contrast and detail
- Duotone
- Heavier below waist

## In Game



Readability in game (Top)  
Legible from Default Camera

## Company of Heroes 2: Uniform Colour Studies (Applied)

*Russian*

*German*

Summer

Summer



Winter

Winter



# Company of Heroes 2 Winter VS Summer Skin Sets for the Wehrmacht Ostheer

Officer

Pioneer

Ostruppen

Vehicle / Artillery Crew

HMG Squad

Sniper



Tank Hunter

LMG Squad

Mortar Squad

Panzer Grenadier

Grenadier



# Company of Heroes 2 Winter VS Summer Skin Sets for the Soviet Union

Officer

Combat Engineer Squad

Constripts Squad

Weapons Specialist

Tank Crew - Male

Tank Crew - Female

Maxim Machine Gun Squad



Sniper

Recon Squad

Mortar Squad

Elite Rifle Squad Soldier

Shock Troops

Soviet Medic





# SHIPPING THE GAME

## Marketing Assets

Even in the digital age, the box art of a game remains of paramount importance. It is the visual constant that everyone interacts with whether digitally or hard copy. Relic is lucky enough to have ownership of this critical touchpoint as opposed to having it created by a team outside the studio.

The studio's art team works closely with the marketing team to come up with key marketing visuals, as can be seen here with an early concept for *Ardennes Assault's* box art.

THE GAME

## Box Art Exploration



An early packaging exploration for *Ardennes Assault*, along with its previous “working title”

*Box Format*

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