

Cosmic Medieval Fantasy

One way I think of the atmosphere is that it's sci-fi as might be imagined by a religious astronomer from the dark ages. Let's address these aspects of the setting atmosphere one at a time, from easy to hard.

Fantasy

It includes and embraces classic fantasy tropes like elves, wizards, monsters, undead, ancient ruins, and so on. In marketing, it should be recognizable as belonging to the fantasy adventure genre. It should also stretch beyond the basics and be fantastical in the sense of wondrous, weird, and imaginative.

Medieval

Society is analogous to 1000 AD. Technology and institutions are at a medieval level. This implies a level of darkness and wildness to the setting. Maps are vague. Communication is slow. Travel is dangerous. Night is pitch black outside of cities. Books are handwritten and expensive. Monsters and nature impede civilization. Magic and Naga artifacts lend hints of sci-fi flavor, but the brand should project a Dark Ages feel -- not super-heroic, not steampunk, not gonzo.

Cosmic

Cosmic means the fantastical elements of the setting touch on the grandest scope, which mere mortals feel unable to understand an inadequate to deal with. The presentation of Veiled Age ought to evoke grand themes or motifs, like:

- Astronomy and planetary movements like moon phases, eclipses, equinox, etc.
- Literal gods, aliens, or unknowable beings
- Religion and philosophy
- Time, prophecy and fate
- Fantastical identity crisis (who/what am I really?)
- Other worlds, timelines, or planes of existence
- Forbidden knowledge, lost secrets, dead civilizations
- Death, immortality, souls
- Questioning the nature of reality or the universe

Note this includes cosmic horror, but the horror is optional. Veiled Age includes horror, but is more fantastical in tone than it is horrific. Here are good examples of works that feel cosmic but involve low-tech societies:

- Lovecraft
- Planescape: Torment
- Fromsoft games
- Stargate
- The type of stuff that happens in the 2nd half of a JRPG.

A Classical Style

Classical: (typically of a form of art) regarded as representing an exemplary standard; traditional and long-established in form or style.

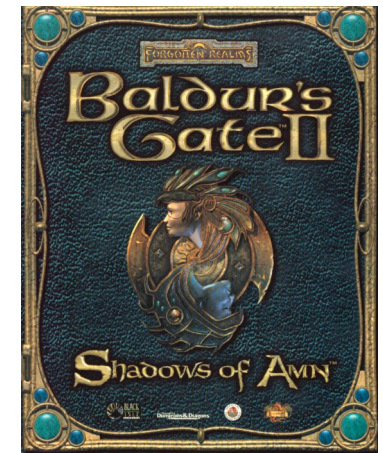
This is a hard one to define, but I mostly mean having high standards for the style in a way that feels timeless, beautiful, idealistic, and somewhat traditional. It is a sincere contribution to the fantasy adventure genre, not a deconstruction of it. Thus, the brand is not primarily ironic, subversive, sarcastic, satirical or cynical.

Classical Aesthetics

- Art is painterly, has a slightly dreamy quality but with semi-realistic style and proportions, not retro pixel art, crisp CG, cartoony, or anime.
- Art is colorful but must retain an atmospheric quality. Avoid the bright oversaturated mobile game look. Things can look simple but never cheap.
- Main characters are conventionally attractive or at least fun to look at.
- Classical doesn't mean purely white/European (world feels multicultural).
- Classical doesn't mean sanitized, naive, or one-dimensional (see below).

Traditional Themes, Well-Rounded Tone

- World and story have dark elements, but it is not grimdark and hopeless. The project as a whole should have a healthy emotional range: horror, friendship, mystery, humor, wonder, tragedy, hope, victory.
- Heroism is a theme. Player characters may face moral quandaries, but cannot do outright evil (sadistic) things. The plot of an adventure typically involves saving a life or some other empathetic goal. The canon ending isn't necessarily a Disney happy ending, but it always involves the player character actually accomplishing something meaningful (making a difference). Implied author shouldn't be nihilistic.
- Aimed at adults, but keep it PG-13. Sex happens off screen. Violence and gore aren't excessively dwelled on.
- Traditional doesn't mean childish or naïve. LOTR is instructive here: dark storyline, good vs evil themes, complex characters, goofy moments, but noble sentiments overall.



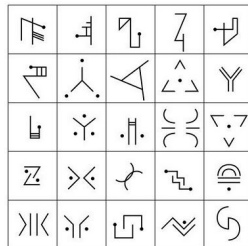
Enigmatic

Enigmatic: difficult to interpret or understand; mysterious.

Since we can assume intelligent and curious readers, and the world has cosmic themes, the brand should have a mysterious element. Veiled Age should intrigue people. We often find our curiosity piqued by a story when we encounter things that are cryptic, weird, creepy, unexpected, or unexplained. It can be summed up by the experience of suddenly asking yourself "what is this?"

Examples:

- Finding a drawn diagram in Myst (without understanding it)
- Discovering the Fair Lady in dark souls
- Encountering strange symbols, writing in an alien language
- 90% of NPC dialog in Fromsoft games
- The raven in The Raven
- Meeting December in Prey
- The beginning of a fantasy story where something weird intrudes on mundane life, foreshadowing the main plot without explaining it.



Numinous

> Numinous (/ˈnjuːmɪnəs/) means "arousing spiritual or religious emotion; mysterious or awe-inspiring"; also "supernatural" or "appealing to the aesthetic sensibility."

It's best explained by this video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlhBcsgIyIA>

It isn't just about spirits and ghosts. It's a more general feeling of smallness and reverence when faced with something grand, mysterious, otherworldly. It's closely associated with the concept of the 'holy'.

Examples:

- Spire in Myst IV, Ash Lake in Dark Souls
- Stonehenge, ancient temples, cathedrals, shrines
- Looking up at the stars
- Hearing about the largeness of the universe
- Looking up at gigantic natural landmarks
- End dungeons/bosses in JRPGs

