

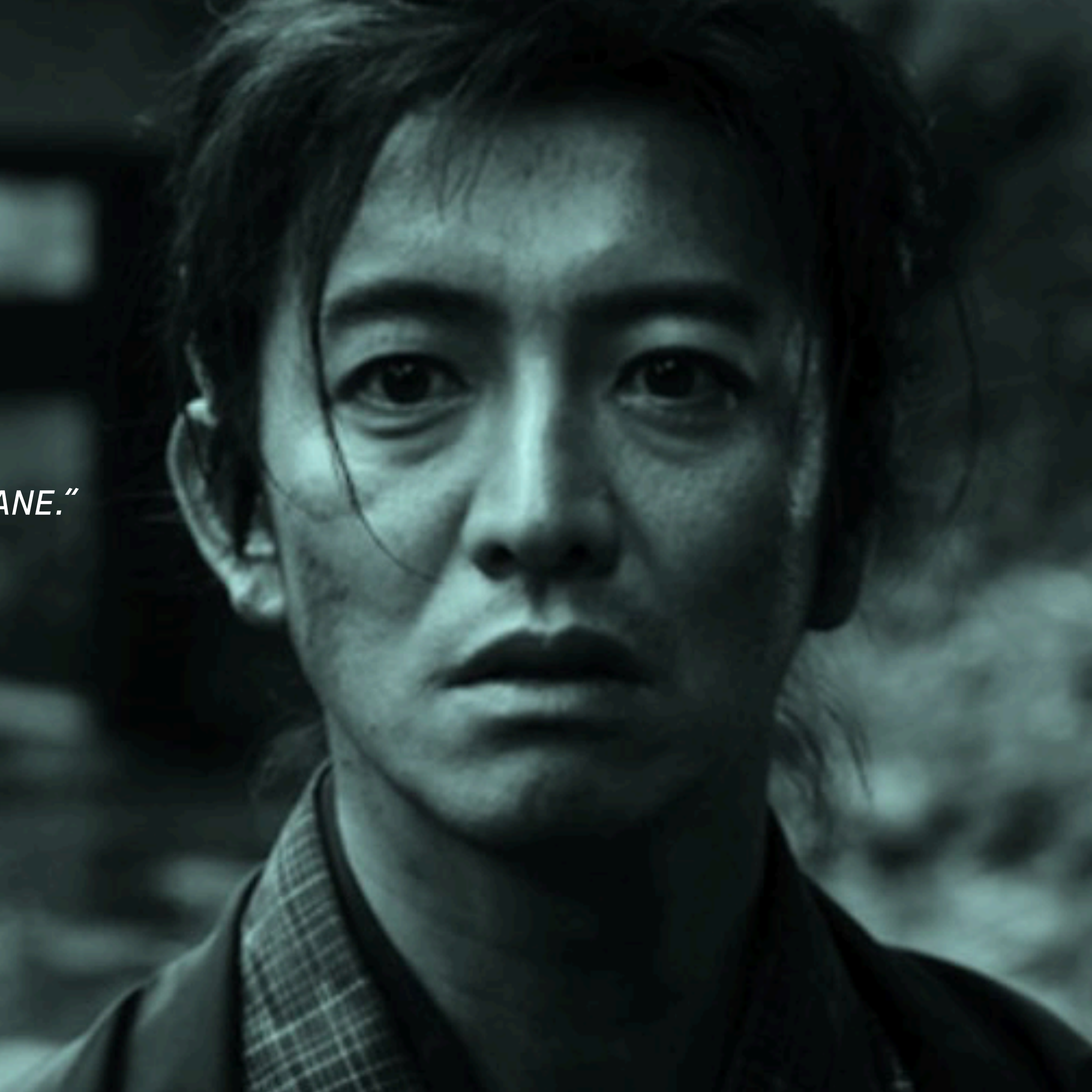
DIRECTOR'S TREATMENT BY ALADINO DEBERT // AUGUST 28 2019

GH[○]ST

OF TSUSHIMA

"IN A MAD WORLD, ONLY THE MAD ARE SANE."

AKIRA KUROSAWA





INTRO

I close my eyes and imagine Tsushima in the year 1274; the blossoms in spring decorating the lush green landscape, temples rising out of snowy mountains—a symbol of the rich tradition and devotion of the Tsushima people, and if I were very lucky, the sights and sounds of the people I love all around me. For many of the Tsushima people, they might’ve lived a peaceful life on the island, lucky enough to die before the Mongols’ many invasions. But if I close my eyes again, and I imagine this world that I love dearly on fire, and the scorched Earth stained with the blood of my people, a rage that would build inside of me, and I could be turned... I could be turned into everything I stood against, in order to save everything that’s dear to me.

THIS IS JIN. THE UNLUCKY WARRIOR FORCED INTO REVOLUTION, AND INTO AN IMMORAL BATTLE WITH THE MONGOLS AND WITH HIS OWN SOUL.

The themes of “Ghost” are universal. This is a coming-of-age story in the face of annihilation. Through our reluctant hero, Jin, we are transported into a world that is beautiful beyond measure and a culture on the verge of being snuffed out by Mongolian warriors. Revolution is unavoidable for Jin, but in order to win, he must evolve and adapt, he must abandon his samurai code of honor and embrace the sinister and, in his eyes, dishonorable tactics of guerrilla warfare.

REVOLUTION BEGETS EVOLUTION.

MY APPROACH

Nature has a balance. It can be peaceful but also violent. It is beautiful and horribly dreadful too. The Japanese have a tradition of understanding nature and the role it plays in their lives, culture, myths and traditions. Likewise, Kurosawa understood the importance of incorporating nature—fire, the wind, the rain, the snow—into his films because it grounds us to our mortality, and it stimulates a sensory response in viewers that is almost subconsciously connecting them to the story.

Inside of Jin there is another duality—his soul wrestles with the implications of what he must do to save his world, with moral and immoral thoughts and actions, his past in conflict with grim present and future.

Jin's way of life is being ripped apart, thus he must evolve for his people, his culture, to survive. But his evolution is not painless, and riddled with moral and ethical dilemmas. How thin is the line? What does it take to cross it? **WITH "GHOST", WE WANT TO CREATE THAT SENSE OF UNEASE BUT ALSO OF BALANCE—THE GRITTIENESS OF WAR AND BLOODSHED VERSUS THE SERENITY OF LIFE AND NATURAL BEAUTY.**

As we move through this treatment, we'll discuss the ways in which all of our larger themes—coming-of-age, revolution and our connection to Nature—infuse this story and allow our audience to feel on a visceral level: **this is a world worth saving.**



CHARACTERS - JIN

This is Jin's coming-of-age film; his backstory fuels his transformation from Samurai to guerrilla fighter and allows us to explore Jin's pathos through his actions. For example, does he perhaps look away at the last second when he kills a young Mongol fighter? Does he have a brief moment of appreciation for the beauty of the landscape? Does he consider, for a moment, following Lord Shimura into the shrine? We want to peel back the layers that give our viewers context to his circumstance, and at the same time, create a nuanced character, a complex hero, to drive the narrative.

JIN'S TRANSFORMATION IS PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND METAPHYSICAL.

Physically, we see his fighting style adapt from long sword duels to close-combat fighting with fists and short swords. In addition, we also see his armor come off—no longer posturing with heavy samurai battle armor, Jin's physicality begins to reflect his new style of fighting—stealthy, unassuming and highly maneuverable.

Mentally, we watch Jin's struggle to reconcile his bushido training and samurai warrior code of ethics with the new shadowy warfare he must wage on the Mongols if he wants to save his land and his people. Metaphysically, we see the transformation complete with the ghost mask—he is no longer Jin, he is now Ghost, a faceless killer belonging to no clan. And he becomes mythical. Myth becomes larger than man, and as with all power, it comes with strings attached...



A woman with dark hair tied in a bun, wearing a dark, textured garment, stands in a dimly lit room. She has several arrows with white fletching and wooden shafts tucked into a quiver on her back. She is looking over her shoulder towards the camera with a serious expression. In the background, there is a window with a grid of vertical bars, and a blurred figure of another person is visible on the right side of the frame.

CHARACTERS - YUNA

Yuna, the headstrong and conniving thief, is a fascinating character that leads Jin down a path of shadow warfare. In addition to a stealthy assassin skillset, her kin were also spies, clever and cunning in their ability to infiltrate enemy territory undetected, capable of silent murder or gathering intel. **YUNA IS A SKEPTICAL SIDEKICK IN A MAD WORLD OF BLURRED LINES BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG.** Her relationship with Jin can manifest itself in a few different beats of this film; for example, the distrustful look in Jin's eye when they meet in the rain to free the villagers, and conversely, the look of desperation in her face when she screams at Jin to wake up and continue the fight in the battle at the base of the temple. Jin has never fought this way, and for a bushido warrior, it must feel liberating in mind, spirit and body, albeit conflicting. Yuna helps guide Jin to that sense of freedom, and helps him justify breaking the samurai code for a cause that's far greater than himself.





CHARACTERS - LORD SHIMURA

Shimura represents all that is samurai, all that Jin must leave behind in order to become Ghost. In the final scene between Shimura and Jin, I think there are ways in which we can deepen the relationship between them and allow our audience to understand why Jin must become Ghost in order to survive. For example, does Shimura look at Jin after saying, “A good day, a good home” in a way that conveys the father-son relationship? Does he genuinely feel sadness when Jin doesn’t walk into the garden with him? We want to create layers to this final scene that provide insight into Jin’s transformation.





CHARACTERS - MONGOLS

The Mongols were a threat to any and all civilizations of the 13th century with their unprecedented use of strategy, skillset and technological innovation in warfare. **MONGOLS WERE NOT MINDLESS BRUTES, BUT INSTEAD INTELLIGENT FIGHTERS AND STRATEGISTS, HARNESSING GUN POWDER, INVENTING THE CROSSBOW, ARMORING THEIR HORSES, WHILE RIDING THEM LIKE NO OTHER, AND KILLING MERCILESSLY IN THE NAME OF KUBLAI KHAN.** In this film, we have an opportunity to understand the Mongols' intelligent and systematic style of killing, and in turn, gain insight into Jin's transformation to Ghost. The Mongols are such a fierce threat that Jin is forced into new tactics despite the inner conflict; they're smart and capable killers; but with Yuna's help, Jin will gain an upper hand by fighting from the shadows.





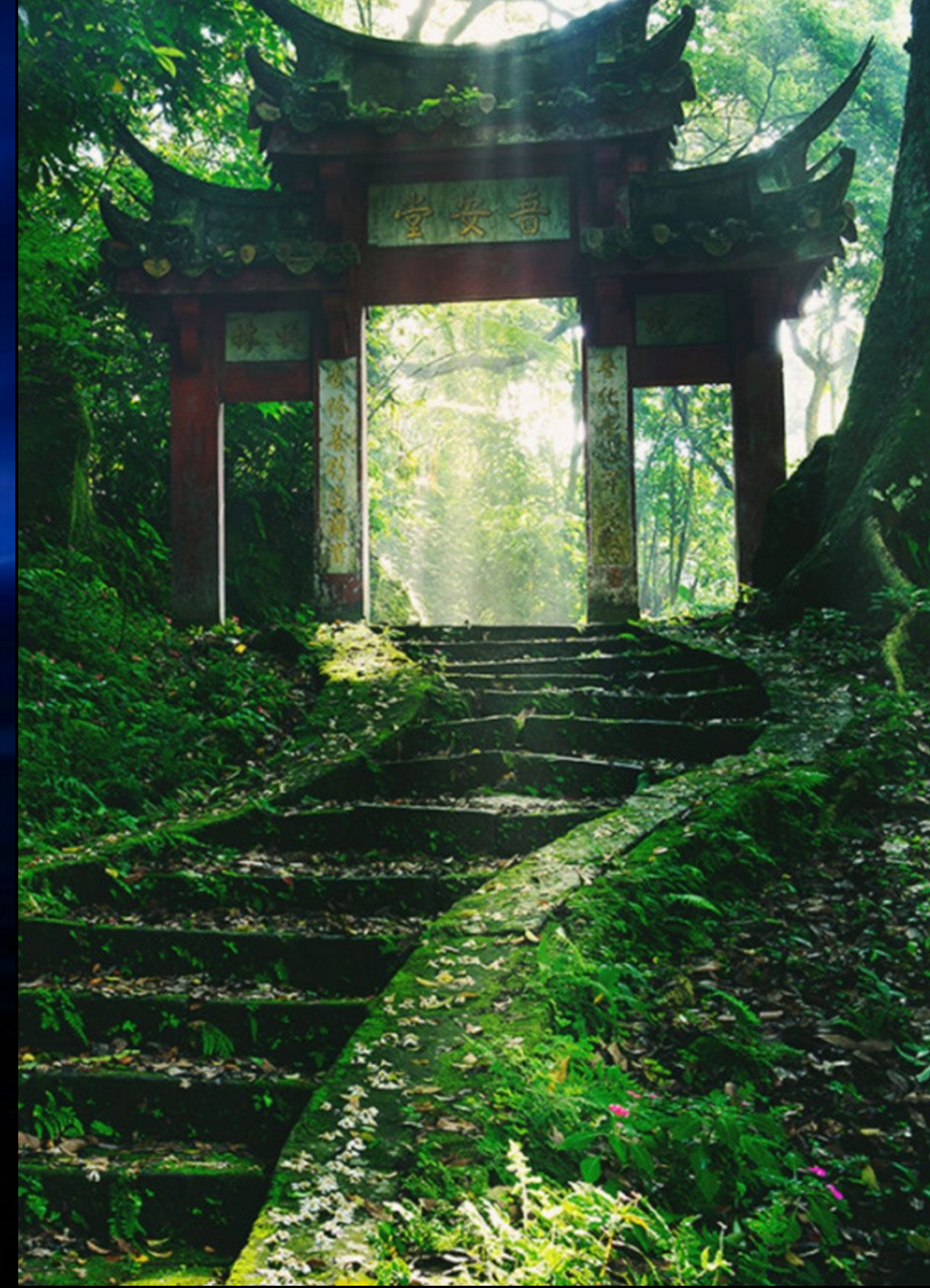
THE WORLD

Tsushima is, outside of Jin, the lead character in this film/game experience. Tsushima is the reason Jin fights. In building out this world, the natural landscape, the culture, and the people must all be brought to life in order to give our audience a sense of what's at stake.

I cannot help but draw a direct line to the 'wake up call' that we all need in present day about our own environment. I'd like to create a world in this film that's worth fighting for—just like our own.

THE MORE REALISTIC OUR WORLD LOOKS AND FEELS, THE BETTER SUITED WE ARE TO CONVEY THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING THIS WORLD; AND THAT IS JIN'S TASK: TO PRESERVE HIS LAND, HIS CULTURE AND HIS PEOPLE.





Tsushima is many worlds unto itself, just like Japan as a whole—the coastline, the sprawling forest, the green pasture and the snowy mountains; there is so much to explore and in this film **I'D LIKE TO SHOW OUR AUDIENCE THE FULL SCALE OF TSUSHIMA'S LANDSCAPE**. Let's depict each of these incredible locations in their best light, incorporating different times of day as well as the natural elements like the wind, snow and rain. I would love to see the maple trees in a beautiful grass field at sunrise, or the light snow falling on an ancient temple in twilight with the moon illuminating the collecting snow on the trees.

Time of day will help us set the mood for each of these scenes and give our viewers an emotional connection to the environment. Though there is nothing 'supernatural' about this world per se, I do think the environment could be imbued by a 'natural spirit' that connects us to all things—the mountains, the sun, the rain, the trees and the wind. After all, who hasn't been hit by the feeling of awe when facing a gorgeous sunset or a beautiful landscape? I love the notion that the wind serves as a 'guide' in this world, and though it's not truly explained, I think it suggests a spiritual aspect of the world that's entirely believable and awe inspiring.



LOOK & FEEL

This game has been designed for the environment to have an equal part in the story as any of the characters, and given how important their world is in our story, I intend to treat it as such. The colors, the vistas, the camera choreography, in short, the cinematography will be in the foreground of our storytelling technique.

Much like a Kurosawa film, the epic battle for Tsushima and the harrowing story of Jin feels cinematic and grand in scope and scale. **STRIVING FOR TOTAL REALISM IN OUR DEPICTION OF THIS WORLD, WE CAN DRAW FROM HIS INCREDIBLE ABILITY TO TELL A STORY THAT IS BOTH EPIC AND INTIMATE ALL AT ONCE.** The violence is tempered with quieter moments of inner turmoil and anguish, and every moment of the film brings the audience to the edge of their seat.

Furthermore, I'd like to use color and lighting as a way to tell the story, just as I'm planning to use violent and calm moments to describe it. For instance, the quieter moments would look, rather feel, calmer, with warmer colors, sun streaking through the forest. And the final battle would be starker, all reds and blacks. Blood, mud and fire.



Forrest scene, **CONCEPT STUDIES**





WE WANT TO TAKE OUR AUDIENCE ON A JOURNEY THAT IS FILLED WITH LOVE AND ANGUISH, AND VISUALLY WE CAN CONVEY THIS DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE KINETIC/VIOLENT ENERGY OF BATTLE AND THE STILLNESS AND SILENCE OF CHARACTER-DRIVEN MOMENTS IN THE STORY.

This is Kurosawa's backyard, and I'm thrilled to create this homage to the master by incorporating the techniques that have long defined samurai cinema.



When considering the more frenetic fight sequences, I think it's worth mentioning the ramping speed style of "300". **THERE ARE MOMENTS OF HIGH INTENSITY FULL-SPEED KILLING THAT QUICKLY RAMP INTO EXTREME SLOW MOTION THAT I THINK COULD BE REALLY EXCITING IN OUR FILM.** For example, the bloody battle in the garden as Jin's attacked from all sides, it would be great to slow down and see these thrilling kill-shots in full slow-motion, and then ramp it up again to continue the action.



GHOST of TSUSHIMA



DIGITAL DOMAIN / 021



AND IN CONSIDERING THE MOMENTS OF STILLNESS AND SILENCE, I WANT TO INCLUDE NATURAL ELEMENTS IN THE FOREGROUND OR BACKGROUND THAT ADD VISUAL CUES TO THE EMOTIONAL WEIGHT OF THE SCENE. For example, when Jin looks up at Yuna in the end of the film, I would love to see the maple tree on fire behind he. Or in an even quieter moment, just a simple snowfall on Jin's body as he walks through the courtyard of the temple. This way we will get a sense glimpse of inner peace inside of Jin that quickly melts away to anger and thoughts of killing.



TRANSITIONS

A quick note about the transitions in the script: I'd like for us to create a balance between MOA cuts that derive from violence/frenetic energy and MOA cuts that incorporate slower, more introspective edits that derive from the natural elements. If we're to cut on fast running feet in one sequence, then **I'D LIKE TO ALSO CONSIDER CUTS THAT USE NATURE OR A NATURAL SETTING TO TRANSITION FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT AS WELL.** For example, we could cut from scene to scene by simply watching a maple leaf break free from the tree and float in the wind; and as the leaf moves to the right, we follow it and transition into the next scene. I'd also like to incorporate the rain into one of the transitions; perhaps we can use horizontal rain to lead us to the next scene, or a reflection in a puddle of mud that transitions as a new foot stops into the puddle and we're in a new location. Kurosawa was masterful in transition, he was ultra creative and dynamic (he edited his own films) and in turn, the story became less predictable as the audience never knew what was about to happen next.



DREAM STATE

A note about Jin's momentary dream state with Shimura. **I WOULD LOVE TO ADD A VISUAL LAYER TO THIS DREAM STATE THAT HELPS SEPARATE IT FROM REALITY WITHOUT IT FEELING 'SUPERNATURAL'.** For example, perhaps we can create a force field that feels similar to the moments in LOTR when Frodo puts on the ring. We get this sense that the outside world still exists but our main character is experiencing a different yet simultaneous reality.

For example, what's outside the dream state could be happening at a glacial pace while inside this dream state/ shrine, Jin and Shimura are conversing in 'real time'. We could also use sound to create this change in reality; for example, the sounds of battle transition into the sounds of a babbling brook in the shrine and conversely, the sounds of battle reemerge when we hear Yuna's voice.





ART DIRECTION

Art direction and wardrobe are an integral part of creating the level of realism that we're striving for in this film. From Jin's transformation from samurai to guerrilla, and eventually to Ghost, as well as the multitude of artifacts and set pieces that harken back to 13th century Japan, we have an opportunity to create a nuanced and unrivaled look and feel to this film. The game's art direction give us the sandbox to play with, and we'll utilize it to the fullest.

IN BUILDING OUT THIS WORLD, WE SHOULD LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED. WITH ART DIRECTION, WE WANT TO CREATE DEPTH, COLOR AND VISUAL INTEREST TO EVERY SCENE. For example, the artifacts being destroyed by the Mongols in the garden could reflect artifacts that we know survived today, and some that were partially destroyed—we could see the moment it was destroyed. Or, the use of gun powder and explosives by the Mongols—the look of these iron bombs with a hemp wick in slow motion before they detonate could be an exciting way to introduce them to the film.

In addition to Jin's wardrobe, there are of course the Mongols, Lord Shimura and Yuna. It's important that we give each of them the attention to detail and also find slight nuances that bring these characters to life. For example, does one of the worst Mongols carry something unique around his neck? A necklace of bones/teeth? For Shimura, does he perhaps have a large gash in his helmet from a brutal war that he never wanted to forget? We can add subtle additions to each character (clothing, weapons, jewelry, or a physical gesture) that add a level of realism that is historically accurate and personal at the same time.



GHOST of TSUSHIMA



DIGITAL DOMAIN / 026



GHOST of TSUSHIMA



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GHOST of TSUSHIMA



DIGITAL DOMAIN / 028



MUSIC

I'm a fan of using ambient sounds and minimalist music on my films, and this would not be an exception. I often joke that life does not come with a sound track, and neither should certain pieces. So I want to be nuanced and clever about the use of music here. I think the combination of Kumi-Daiko (Japanese drum sets), Buddhist chants and natural sounds of battle, as well as peaceful moments, would imbue our film with the right sense of balance to match what I know will be an incredible visual adventure. The music and sound design must transport us to Jin's world and help up live each moment as a visceral one.



GHOST of TSUSHIMA



DIGITAL DOMAIN / 029

The background of the entire page is a dark, moody photograph. In the upper right corner, there are branches with vibrant red and orange autumn leaves. Below these, the lower half of the image shows a dark, still body of water that reflects the light and the colors of the leaves above, creating a symmetrical effect. The overall tone is somber yet beautiful, with a focus on natural elements.

THE STORY

:30 & :60 SECONDS

After careful consideration, and in order to maintain story cohesion between our two main pieces, we'd like to propose creating the :30 and :60 by taking the shorter of the two and creating the :60 as an "extended version" of it, with time for more development of scenes and additional shots. We prefer this option to the creation of a :60 that has scenes not existing on the shorter piece. This way we can tell the same story on both versions equally without any shortcomings.

Storyboards and, more importantly previs, will make the distinctions much more clear. But most important for us is making sure the story comes across clearly in both versions, particularly the :30, since we know that's the one likely to see the most air time. The following pages include the script that describes both versions, as well as some concept frame studies we took the liberty of creating.



A

Komoda Beach, **CONCEPT STUDIES**



B



C

THE STORY :30 & :60 SECONDS

1. EXT. KOMODA BEACH – DAWN

A hot wind blows over fallen warriors, stirring smoke, embers and tattered banners. The battle is over, eerily silent, only the soft moans of the near-dead. The camera trucks along to find...

JIN, a SAMURAI in heavy armor, on his knees amongst the silent carnage. He is in reflection, eyes closed. His back is straight despite the several arrows sticking out of said armor. His helmet under one arm, sword sheathed on his waist.

C.U. on his eyes as he opens them to see... a tiny blue bird, flying overhead. Jin watches it, then follows it—walking turns to running, shedding some of his heavy armor. He runs faster... and faster... The clanging of armor like a beating metal drum.

MATCH ON ACTION, CUT TO:

2. EXT. TEMPLE GARDEN – DAY

Jin BURSTS through the ornate gate of a beautiful temple garden. Destruction and sacking EVERYWHERE. We see Jin's bewilderment—nothing is sacred any longer.

The blue bird flies into the courtyard. Jin follows its flight and sees: TWO MONKS on their knees, bloodied and beaten, pleading with the Mongols—not for their life, but to spare the temple. A Mongol draws his sword to kill the monks and Jin LUNGES.

Jin cuts down one enemy Mongol from behind—his first kill from shadows. Jin pauses, knowing he just committed a dishonorable kill.

Then, he shifts his stance to face the two remaining Mongols in a traditional samurai duel posture.

Monks scurry out of the garden; one of them grabs an ancient urn and runs with it to protect it, Jin's action providing the necessary distraction...

LEAVES flutter to the ground. Ashes leap from smoldering fires. Jin stands ready for blood. An almost silent *standoff*.

A Mongol shouts, "Samurai!" in his native language. Suddenly, a swarm of Mongols emerge, closing in around Jin.

The camera and choreography of the fight goes from slow motion to high speed in a matter of frames, highlighting what can only be described as a dance. Jin makes the first move—he spins and slashes a Mongol creeping behind him. All Mongols attack. Jin cannot kill them all but he must live to fight another day, the stakes being that important. He moves with all his might, slashing, parrying, defending himself, but he's hampered by the heavy armor he is still wearing.

Jin pulls a short sword from his enemy and stabs another Mongol with it. *He keeps the short sword*. Another sign of his *transformation*.

Jin pushes out of the crowd and runs out of the garden. Zoom in on his RUNNING FEET.

MATCH ON ACTION, CUT TO:

THE STORY :30 & :60 SECONDS

3. EXT. DENSE FOREST – TWILIGHT

Jin's RUNNING FEET, pattering through hard, horizontal RAIN. Jin stops beside much smaller sandal-clad feet, standing in the rain.

We pan up to reveal a peasant girl, YUNA, pointing JIN towards a party of MONGOL RAIDERS, with a *cage cart* trailing behind, full of peasant prisoners... Without pause, Jin begins to draw his sword. Frustrated, Yuna pushes his sword back into its saya, points to the tree branches above, and slips into shadows.

Jin hurries to climb the trees, and once in position, draw his bow and fires an ARROW at him. Camera follows the arrow.

MATCH ON ACTION, CUT TO:

Arrow strikes a MONGOL RAIDER. He falls and startles his nearby companions, all on their horses, who get spooked by the action. Wind RATTLES the trees.

BACK to the tree canopy, where JIN, shielding his bow, crouches, while YUNA sneaks behind the horses, both quietly stalking the raiding party. Shadows and their newfound stealth makes them *essentially invisible*.

Jin throws something towards the circle of horses and... A SMOKE/FLASH BOMB explodes in the middle of the circle. A horse rears his front legs, throwing a Mongol Raider to the ground.

In the background, and using the confusion and smoke as a tactical advantage, YUNA begins to free the prisoners while...

SLO-MO as Jin bursts through the smoke in dark robes with his short sword drawn. We ramp into high speed as the Mongol gets up just in time to SWING a heavy two-handed weapon, Jin *rolls to dodge*.

MATCH ON ACTION, CUT TO:

4. EXT. BATTLEFIELD – DAY

Jin rolls to dodge through the SMOKE and FIRE of battle, zig-zagging through the falling volley of FLAMING ARROWS and THUNDER CRASH BOMBS (Mongol hand grenades). The battle rages at the base of a MAJESTIC temple, *on fire*.

A BOMB falls and the EXPLOSION knocks Jin off his feet. He lands flat on his back, ears RINGING. He breathes heavily and stares into the sky.

CUT TO: POV

Gusting smoke begins to circle around Jin, like a force field keeping the battle at bay. *The battle beyond slows down to trickle, becoming nothing more than shadows frozen in mid action.*

The ringing in his ears transitions into the sounds of birdsong. Jin looks up at the leaves dancing on the branches of a maple tree—gently swaying in the breeze. Above him the skies are clear, without the smoke and embers of just moments before, like the *eye of a hurricane*...

MATCH ON ACTION, CUT TO:

THE STORY :30 & :60 SECONDS

5. EXT. PEACEFUL FOREST SHRINE (DREAM STATE, POV) – DAY

Pan down from leaves in a tree to reveal a PRISTINE shrine—as if a drop of blood has never fallen on these ancient stones. Jin’s POV, sitting beneath a maple tree, some falling leaves blowing gently through frame.

LORD SHIMURA approaches, looking over the landscape, seemingly unable to see the battle behind the force field.

SHIMURA: A good day. A good home.

As a gentle breeze blows through white reeds over a small pond, Jin looks up at Shimura: *How can this be? Am I dead?*

SHIMURA: Come, Jin—

Shimura extends his arm to Jin. Jin does not respond. Jin looks beyond the swirling smoke and sees the destruction outside of this dream bubble, the frozen battle being waged just beyond his perception and reach.

SHIMURA: Jin—

The blue bird flies through the force field. Suddenly, the beautiful landscape is devoured by the debris of the battlefield, maple leaves turning back into ash and embers. Yuna’s voice echoes from off screen.

YUNA: Jin!

MATCH ON ACTION, FADE TO:

6. EXT. BATTLEFIELD – DAY

Jin awakens, back on the battlefield, Yuna standing over him, reaching down for his hand. The tree behind her, once alive with fluttering leaves, now burns in massive flames. Yuna pulls Jin to his feet.

The WIND whips at his back as he turns back towards the battle. We see the full scale of this epic battle, hundreds of soldiers looting and killing. Fighting and *dying*. His world in PERIL.

Jin lifts the GHOST MASK to his face and looks at camera with an intensity we haven’t seen before. The transformation is *complete*.

TAGLINE
GHOST OF TSUSHIMA LOGO
GREATNESS AWAITS END CARD

Battle Scene, **CONCEPT STUDIES**





THANK YOU

“Ghost” is an unflinching glimpse into the bloody past of Japanese history. It’s a sensory experience that brings to life the violent siege of invading Mongols on Japan, and through Jin, our viewers are thrust into a brutal world that is beyond their imagination. Jin’s transformation is as complex as it must have been for the last samurai, forced to hide in the shadows and leave their traditions behind. His evolution to becoming a ninja is truly fascinating and to capture that moment in history –the violence of battle, the inner conflict and personal struggle, to humanize the Mongols, to bring 13th century Tsushima to life for our viewers– would be an honor for me as a filmmaker/ storyteller/ mega Kurosawa fan. Through gritty realism, we bring Tsushima to life, and in doing so, we discover that it’s a world worth saving.

Aladino and the entire DD Family.

