The Man in White

This story begins when the main character (Dan, a private detective) is on his way to inspect a large abandoned country estate. He is hired by an overseas investor who wants to know why this property, a very large late Victorian manor in a remote area of the country, has been for sale for so long. In more than three decades no one has ever shown any interest to inspect the place, and by now even its location has almost been forgotten. Locals never venture inside that forsaken place, and no intruder dares to stay beyond the gates after dark. The house is known to be haunted by a ghost dressed in white. Our hero finally arrives at his place of destiny by the end of the day. By then it's too late to look for suitable lodgings, so he has no choice but to stay the night. Will he encounter the Man in White?

For a long time, I wanted to do a Gothic series. I've always been a great fan of this genre, especially the classic stories from the Victorian era. Auteurs like *Edgar Allan Poe (The Fall of the House of Usher), Oscar Wildes (The Picture of Dorian Gray), Bram Stoker (Dracula), Robert Louis Stevenson, (Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)*, etc. So I wanted to create something in this traditional style, where an encounter with the supernatural is combined with horror, romance, and tragedy. This would also give me, as an experiment and for a change, the opportunity to focus a bit more on the development of the characters and the storyline. Of course, it needed to contain all the classical elements from the Gothic genre, like the stranded traveler on a chilly dark winter day, the large abandoned mansion in the middle of nowhere, the dilapidated rooms and corridors, the decaying portraits of stern-looking Victorians on the walls. Their cold eyes gazing down from the canvas, following every step of the lonely intruder. You get the picture...

Creating this series took nearly two months and was published over a period of five weeks. With 136 images and probably 4x as many tests renders. For this project I used three elaborate settings in two different versions, so to be able to illustrate the difference in time and season. I used 14 different characters and for the two protagonists alone I created 250 individual poses. In the end, the whole set of project files amounted to 110 GB on my drive.
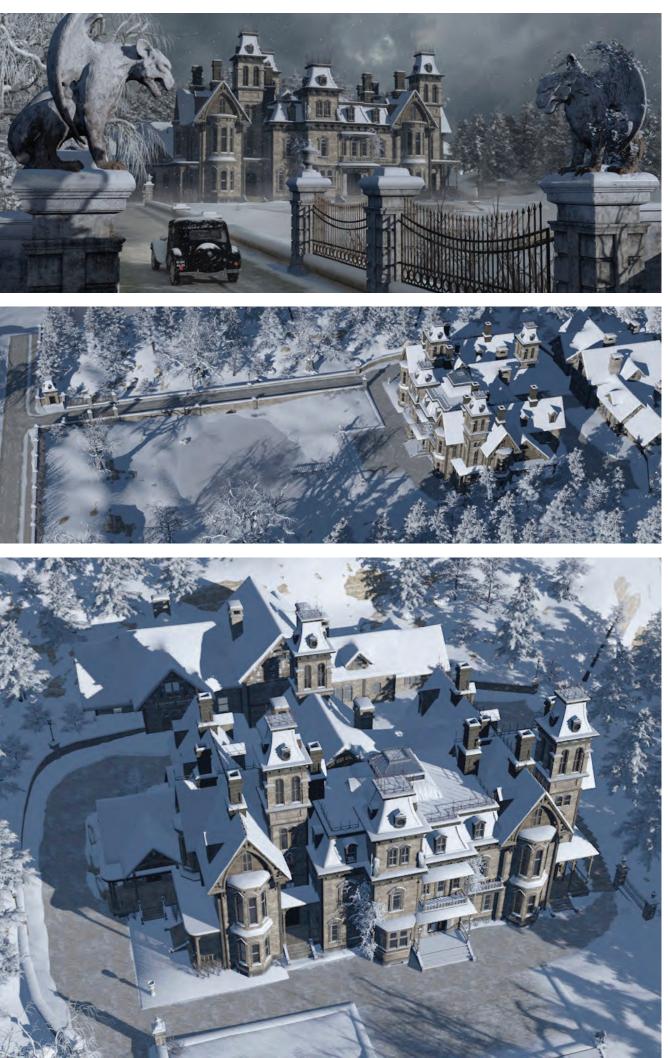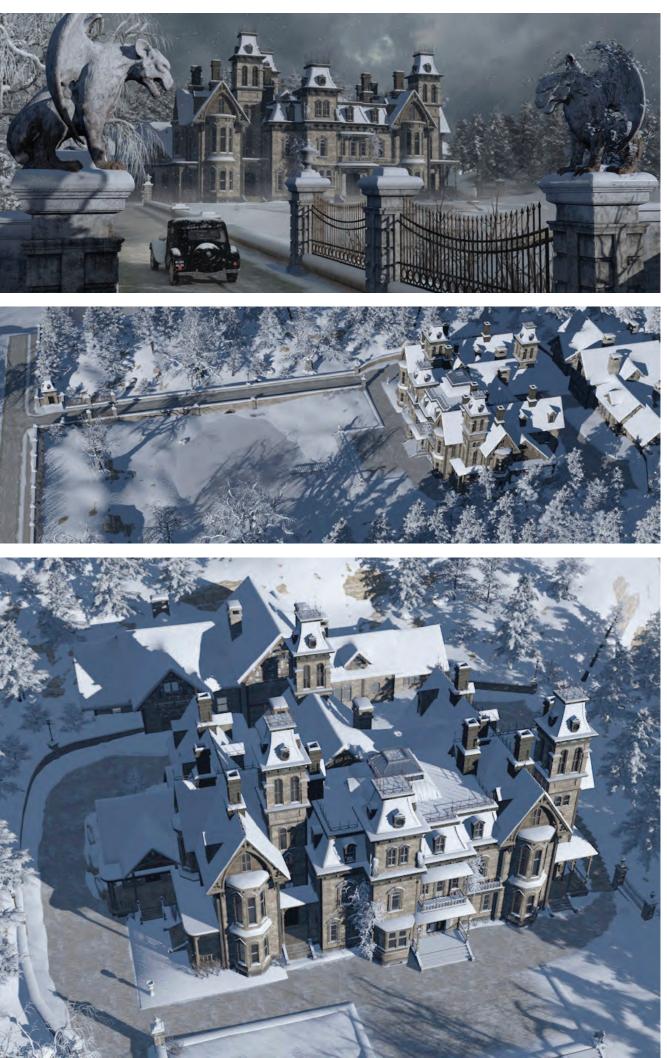
The house

The setting of the main building and its surroundings are a compilation of several models of haunted houses and winter landscapes. The 3 buildings I had for this purpose were a good start, but I wanted something truly massive. Something like the mansion from the movie "*The Haunting*" or the *"Winchester Mystery House"*. A building with lots of wings, towers, bay windows, balconies, skylights, and high pitched roofs, with lots of chimneys and iron ornaments on top. And all that covered in a thick layer of snow. It even looks more impressive and ominous when it rises from a white landscape, surrounded by large and ancient creepy trees, against a dark and foreboding sky. After some chopping and changing of 5 models, the house really seems to fit into one of those classic horror movies.

Easy Environments Winter by Flipmode

Mountain Lodge by Faveral

Shelter by Jack Tomalin

Old Haunted House by Dronnnnn95

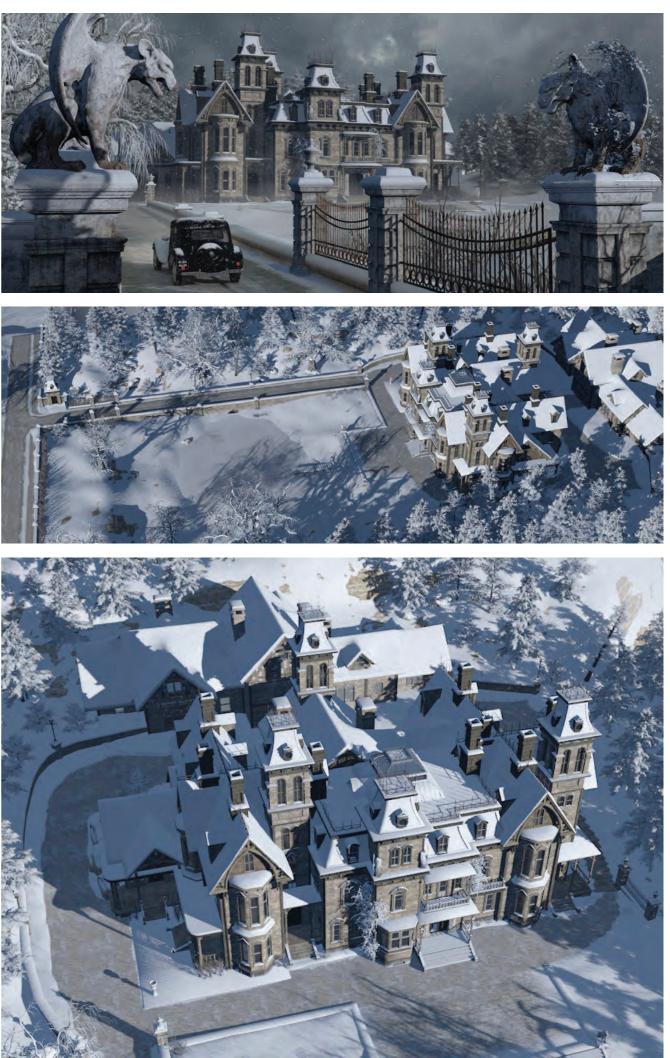

Haunted House Deluxe by Luke Ahearn

The rooms

The main room is the center stage of the series. It's a place where happy memories are trapped in time and ghosts of previous generations haunt the sleeping visitor. This setting is based on a model called *Rural Chateau* by *Jack Tomalin*. It is also available in a rundown version, which is exactly what I needed for this project. The hall and staircase were based on *The Gothic Library* by *Stonemason*, and this also fitted perfectly for what I had in mind for the interior. The rooms are loosely based on what they looked like in the grandiose houses of the early 1900s, with its formal interior design, the paneled walls and high ceilings, its huge doors, and large fireplaces.

Rural Chateau Fallen by Jack Tomalin

The Gothic Library by Stonemason

Rural Chateau by Jack Tomalin

The paintings I used for decoration are by **John Singer Sargent**, the leading portraitist of his generation, who excelled in evocating the Edwardian-era luxury and decadence. The picture of the Man in Whit is based on his portrait of the *Earl of Dalhousie*. He brilliantly depicted (as in so many of his portraits) the breath-taking arrogance of the aloof looking aristocrat.

The cemetery

No Gothic story is complete without a cemetery, a tragic loss, and an elaborate grave monument. So this had to be included as well. Old graveyards are beautiful places to visit, like those I saw in Paris, Prague and especially the one near Genoa. The monumental cemetery of Staglieno is truly one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. It's a very large place, with beautiful memorials and astonishing sculptures. However, one of the most curious tombstones I saw at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. It's the monument for *Victor Noir* (a journalist from the late 19th century), that turned into something of a fertility shrine. By placing flowers and rubbing his crotch the women of Paris are ensured of a husband and a blissful sex life.

Not sure if it'll work for men as well, but some serious rubbing at least gave me the inspiration for the memorial in this story.