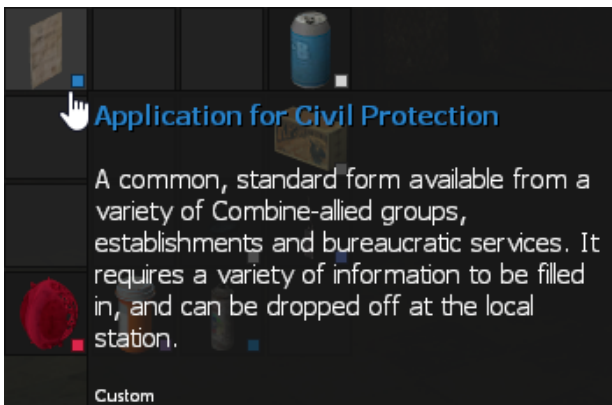
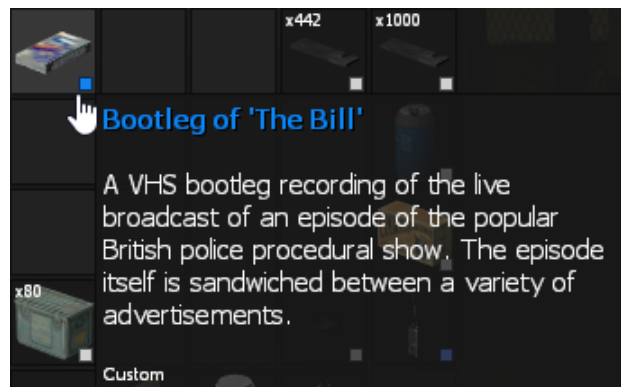
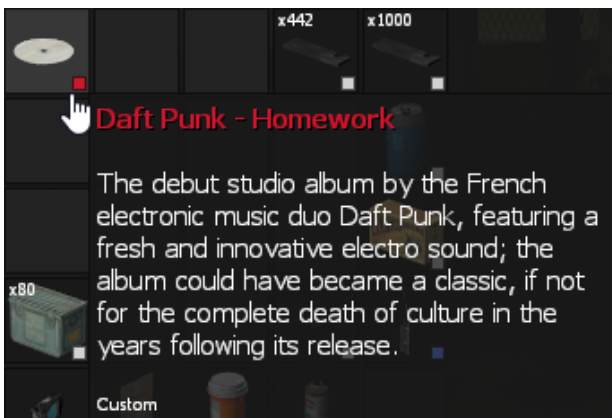
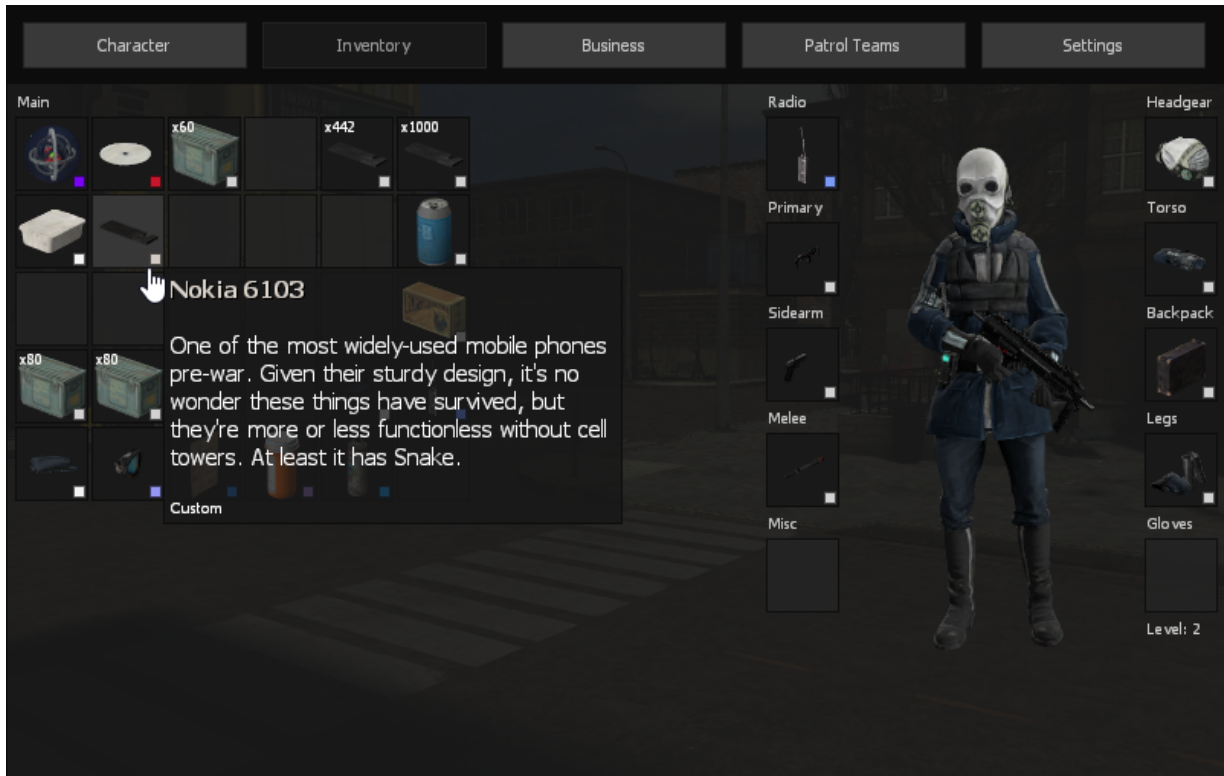


In-Game Items

This is a collection of screenshots taken in-game of items I created to support players' activity; these items could be found out in the world, traded, or used in a variety of ways.



Some items had another layer of interactivity, and were created with the aim of creating memorable storylines - such as this fruit, which when consumed, required the player to roll 3d5 in order to determine the consequences of doing so. Shown here is the in-game item, the roll table, and an example of how it was used between players in a collaborative scene.



	Worms	Effects	Aftermath
1	no worms	no effects	"excremental deluge"
2	no worms	swapping vision	vomiting
3	half a worm	code-switching to other languages around you	hallucinations of the people you did it with
4	a worm	?	sweating
5	lots of worms	you see the Nihlanth	brain lag

Schabe looks over to Galhr with a bit of shock, then in the same language responds with, "I understood you! That's not english." Then the realization hits him again, he's not speaking english either.

Válentina points up at Schabe - she laughs.

Galhr splits their next sentence between Spanish and German - every few words, the vortigaunt code-switches. "The Akyava dissolves the barriers separating us. It allows for...friendlier communication."

Válentina widens her eyes, she rubs her cheeks speaking in a mixture of German and Spanish also "Does it work for other languages, like French- or Japanese?"

Galhr switches entirely to Vortigese, now. "Any language spoken by those around us. The Akyava allows for the...borrowing of Vortal strings."

Schabe brings his fingers to his lips, nodding along, his own words moving between two different tongues, German and Vortigese, "Does this mean we're technically doing magic?"

Galhr shrugs, switching now to Xenian - a language the humans are surely unable to reproduce, but which they can now understand fluently. "If magic is what you call it, then magic, yes."

Civil Protection Day-to-day

This was a short, narrative vignette written for circulation amongst the playerbase; my aim was to offer my own interpretation of how the metropolice players should behave in-game.

They have certain days that they're on-duty. No barracks: they live amongst the citizenry in civil housing - thus creating social tension that keeps people distrustful of one-another. a citizen might be rumoured to work for civil protection, but keep their head down and deny it if questioned. or they might be open about it and use that power to bully or manipulate their neighbours.

Before the start of their shift, they go to a precinct nexus - no human contact, no quartermaster to give them their gear or anything like that - just a locker or dispenser, secured behind a passcode. Maybe a desk sergeant or something to ensure there's no foul play.

In the locker-rooms, there's an unspoken tension. This is a liminal space, where they can be recognised as both CP and citizen. That makes some people uncomfortable, others aggressive - they might lash out in fear of their citizen identity being revealed to their neighbours.

They clock in, and go out into the streets. They have a designated 'patrol region', and when they go beyond it Overwatch prompts them to return, but punishments are rare. They can go anywhere, talk to anyone, do pretty much anything they want: playground bullies with kevlar and a cattle prod.

Overwatch reports "social fracture in Civil Housing Block 15-B, respond please". The directive isn't given to any unit in particular - it's a bulletin to which any unit can respond, like a mercenary. If a unit responds, they send a signal to Overwatch and receive rank points based on how quickly they accepted the assignment. Multiple units can respond, based on the assessment of Overwatch, but when the cap is reached, the bulletin is retracted.

The 'social fracture' incident is a man and woman having a domestic argument. It's up to the unit to settle it - and they try to be diplomatic about it, breaking the two apart and trying to be lenient. Another unit arrives on-scene unexpectedly - Overwatch detected that our protagonist was taking longer than average to resolve the dispute. The second unit beats the male citizen to within an inch of his life, and the dispute is settled.

The units return to the streets. The meaner one wanders off, less concerned with meeting his quotas for the day - his intervention in the previous incident earned him bonus rank points. He'll finally have enough points for a non-mechanical reproduction simulation tonight, and trade them in in favour of a promotion. He's happy without command responsibilities.

Our protagonist goes home tired, picking up take-out after returning their uniform and weapons to the precinct. Because they're down points for the day, they're forced to sign up for a memory replacement session to make up for the deficit. A few days later, they will receive a notice under their door - instructions to attend an appointment at a facility two districts over. They forget their mother's face.

Claw Symbol Revamp

Written as a companion to a visual design project I embarked upon, this is part presentation and part analysis of some iconography of the visual design in Half-Life 2.

So I've had some professional training in graphic design, and for some reason, I've been thinking about the Combine Claw symbol a lot recently - in fact, I've fallen down a bit of a hole.



This is the symbol I'm talking about - as it appears in HL2 in a propaganda poster I'm sure we've all seen. In my opinion it's a *really* strong piece of Combine symbology. Fans have interpreted the emblem in a bunch of different ways over the years but the two main theories are that it symbolises:

1. The suppression field (pincers), surrounding a human egg/embryo (the circle) and therefore bringing humanity to a better future
2. The Combine occupation of Earth - the circle being the planet and the pincers being the Combine.

I'm personally a fan of the latter, and think that it makes the most sense in the context of the ways the symbol was used in Half-Life: Alyx - so clearly some people at Valve think the same way. Presumably in both the interpretations, the negative space between the pincers indicates that humanity has a way to progress: along the narrow route that the Combine have allowed for them. It clearly communicates both the dominance of the Combine and indicates the themes of transhumanism that they represent.

The insignia pops up in a few other places beyond that Dove poster - throughout HL2 as part of the uniform of a few different variants of Combine soldier, and more prominently in HL:A in Combine-branded rations and propaganda. The exact look and meanings subtly change depending on the context, but the general shape is maintained. It can be rotated or mirrored as much as you like, and the symbology is elegantly maintained. The Combine don't seem to care if

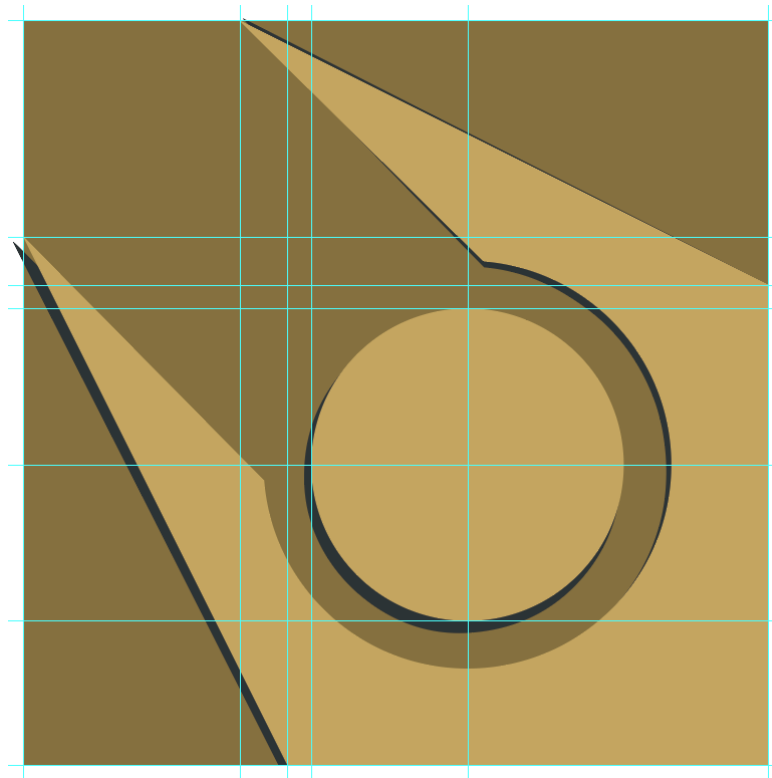
it's presented pointing left, right, up or down - without altering it fundamentally (like, I don't know, replacing the circle with a clown face or something), the citizenry can't use it against them. This befits their status as an inter-dimensional, monolithic empire - they don't mess about with their emblems.

So...this leads me into the hole that I've been digging down into: **all the fan-made vectors I've seen are trash.**

The main one I think we all use is [the one available on the Combine Overwiki](#). The Overwiki version, I'll admit, actually maps really well onto the Dove propaganda poster, and I'm guessing they were going for accuracy to the source material rather than taking any artistic liberties.

But that's crazy to me. Someone at Valve back in the early 2000s presumably slapped this symbol together and never anticipated it being used outside of a couple textures in their game - it didn't need to be perfect. They didn't predict roleplayers to start using it in our logos for our player groups. Or perhaps I'm losing my mind and the vector is just bad. Either way, ever since I started doing HL2RP I keep running into that same vector and it drives me crazy because it's just...it's just awful. I hate it. There are *so many* little ways that it's broken.

So I made a new one.



The above is my new version (gold) overlaid onto the popular fan vector (grey). Here you can see just how shonky the original was. There was no attempt, it seems, to keep everything geometrically-consistent. The sides of the pincers aren't straight - they go off in different directions and one is longer than the other. The circle in the centre is mis-aligned, and the negative space around it cuts into one side of the base of the symbol more than the other. It's hard to explain all the little screw-ups without being able to go through it live and show you, but the above comparison I think gets the point across.

In my version, I made sure to make it all symmetrical and calculated the spacing to be consistent across the whole shape - you can see how I did that with the blue guide-lines. Fundamentally, this symbol is composed of two squares and two circles - it's just a case of getting them to intersect in the right ways.

I thought that was it, for a while - until I realised that there are actually *two* versions of this symbol. I suspect that Valve intended them to be consistent, but if you take a leaf through [the Combine Imagery page on the Combine Overwiki](#), you'll see that the version on the 'Dove' poster isn't the only one. Equally common is a variant that's thinner at the base, and has a larger circle at the centre with a thinner negative space around it. There are more variants, but these are the main two, and here are my 'cleaned up' versions of both of them:



You'll see I labelled the one on the right as the 'Industrial' variant, and I have no real basis for calling it that beyond needing a word to use to distinguish it from the Propaganda version, which definitely seems to appear more often on citizen-facing imagery, such as the ration packets in HL:A, indicating to me that the 'Propaganda' version is the 'true' version (that they bothered to remake for the new game) and that the 'Industrial' one is perhaps an old version that got left in certain HL2 textures.

Either way, I think we can interpret both variants as canon, and I think it's fair for people to have a preference, or to headcanon their differences in their own way.

In-Universe Graphic Design

The following three images overleaf were created to visually support various storytelling efforts; each item was designed in Illustrator and assembled/finished in Photoshop using game assets.

The first item is a cover mock-up of a player-written magazine representing the 'loyalist' faction.

The second item is a fillable form designed by me and used by players to document sightings of unusual alien phenomena (the example shown uses placeholder text); a range of 'grunge' overlays are available.

The third item is a piece of rebel propaganda based on "He's Watching You" by Glenn Grohe - a piece of American propaganda from World War II.

THE C M I O N

MAGAZINE



Issue 282, January 2022

A special report from inside
a sociostability team during a
**JUDGEMENT
WAIVER**

The Rise of **ALLISON EISEN**

*The woman at the top of the
integration powerhouse on caring
for her ailing mother, working two
part-time jobs, and a chance
encounter at a lumber yard...*
*"Carrying the City on our backs is
exhausting, but rewarding."*

SEMIQUANTITATIVE SPECIES DIAGNOSTIC



INFESTATION CONTROL

ATTACH IMAGE HERE



DESIGNATION

vertebraunt

ALTERNATE DESIGNATIONS

servitori, biotic

CASE UNIQUE IDENTIFIER

2304958

TYPE

CLASSIFICATION

XEN SOL OTH

FLORA

FAUNA

FUNGAL

OTHER

HABITAT/LOCATION FOUND

construction site

DESCRIPTION (ADDITIONAL SPACE OVERLEAF)

Quo in excitationem vel blanditiam
Explicabo soluta quis accusamus aut deserunt
aut quam dicta. Ullam cum iure sed.

Eum natus velit ea harum ut. Architecto
qui asperiores qui ut nam harum
quibusdam. Sapiente voluptas quibusdam est.
Molestias enim adipisci aspernatur
necessitatibus veniam ut dolorem. Nostrum
porro consetetur excitationem
repellendus nam voluptatem nostrum ullam.
Veritatis ipsa ut odit.

Neque ipsam aut omnis. Ea voluptatum
facilis nesciunt nemo est culpa asperiores.
Voluptatem ex rerum cum consequatur.
Dolorem aut sed dolor.

Aliquam ipsam sit dolor commodi sed hic
itaque. Neque quas et non totam cumque
ipsa unde. Non voluptatem animi
harum. Etigendi in qui magni
occidit magnam quisquam nostrum.



Date submitted

14/08/2022

CIC station number

S/2082



**THEY'RE
WATCHING
YOU**