



THE FULL WORKFLOW

One Night in Erfurt

How I built an eight-shot Dark Deco anime sequence of my own city — character sheet, stills and animation — using MiniMax Hailuo 3.0 inside Runway.

CREATOR

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MODEL

MiniMax Hailuo 3.0

PLATFORM

Runway

What you are about to build

OVERVIEW

Three stages, in this order. Every stage feeds the next, so an error early on multiplies. Get stage one right and the rest is fast.

STAGE 1

Character sheet. Front, side and three-quarter rear on one board. Everything downstream inherits it.

STAGE 2

Scene stills. The sheet goes in as image 1, your own city photo as image 2. One still per shot.

STAGE 3

Animation. The still goes into Hailuo 3.0. Motion, camera and timing only — no style words.

POST

Posterize Time 12. The single step that turns generated motion into something that reads as drawn.

What you need

- A **Runway** account with image and video generation.
- **Two or three photos of yourself** — full body front, exact side, three-quarter from behind. Neutral clothes, flat even light, plain wall, camera at chest height. It needs your build, not your face.
- **Photos of your own city** at night. Landmarks work best — anything with a recognisable silhouette.
- After Effects, or any editor with a posterize-time effect.

The one rule that matters most. Always feed the character sheet into stage 2 — never a previous scene still. Errors compound otherwise, and by shot four your character has quietly become someone else.

1 The character sheet

RUNWAY · IMAGE

Upload your photos. Set 16:9 and 2K. This is the stage worth iterating on — regenerate until the design is genuinely right, because every later shot inherits it.

The prompt uses your photos for exactly two things: the **skeleton** (height, shoulder-to-hip ratio, limb length, natural stance) and the **lower face** (jaw, chin, mouth, beard). Everything else is described, not referenced.

PASTE THIS

A character design sheet for an original animated feature, drawn in the style of 1930s Art Deco poster art crossed with late-nineties Japanese cel animation.

Use the uploaded photographs strictly as reference for two things. First, the figure's skeleton: total height, shoulder-to-hip ratio, arm and leg length, neck length and natural standing stance — match these proportions exactly. Second, the lower face: the jaw line, the chin, the mouth and the beard, which must match the man in the photographs in shape, length and density, stylised into flat cel shapes rather than copied photographically. Ignore the clothing, the background and the lighting in the photographs entirely.

THE CHARACTER. A masked figure of the 1930s pulp tradition, eight heads tall, broad-shouldered and narrow-waisted, weight settled evenly on both feet. A smooth close-fitting cowl covers the skull, forehead and cheekbones in one unbroken curve, cut away below the cheekbones so the jaw, chin and mouth are bare. A heavy angular brow projects forward over the eyes. The lens openings are flat solid black, the same black as the cowl, reading as pure void — no pupils, no eye anatomy. The crown is perfectly smooth and rounded — no ears, no horns, no crest, no points.

The body is a single unbroken matte-black suit with no visible construction, broken only by three elements: a geometric brass sunburst centred on the chest, a plain wide belt with one stepped brass buckle, and plain gauntlets to mid-forearm. A heavy cape with a perfectly straight horizontal hem falls in two or three large sculptural folds, lined in deep oxblood red visible only where the cloth turns.

LAYOUT. Three full-body figures on one flat field, evenly spaced, identical scale, shared ground line, shared eye level. Front view left, exact side profile centre, three-quarter rear view right — the rear figure shows the BACK of the cowl and cape, with no face and no eyes visible. Arms relaxed, feet shoulder-width apart, no dynamic posing. Camera at chest height, no foreshortening.

RENDERING. Flat cel animation paint: each shape filled with one solid colour, one darker shadow shape with a hard cut edge, and nothing else. No gradients, no airbrush, no rendered volume, no muscle modelling, no texture. Radical simplicity — if a detail would not survive the design being reduced to a solid black shape, remove it. Flat even illumination; this is a reference document, not a lit scene.

CONSTRAINTS. Anatomically correct at eight heads and identical across all three views. No pointed or horned ears, no animal emblem, no yellow anywhere, no scalloped cape hem, no trunks over the legs. No depth of field, no lens flare, no bloom, no 3D sheen. No background elements, no text, no watermark, no border.

2 The scene stills

RUNWAY · IMAGE

The sheet goes in as **image 1**, a real photo of your city as **image 2**. 16:9, 2K, one still per shot. Image 2 supplies only geometry and layout — the prompt restyles it completely.



Erfurt Cathedral and the Severi church, restyled. The massing is real; everything else is invented.

The five blocks every still prompt needs

- **Reference roles.** Say what each attached image is for, and which one wins when they disagree. Without this the model blends them into mush.
- **Composition in fractions.** "Vanishing point at sixty percent of frame width, horizon tilted three degrees." Vague framing produces dead-centre symmetry every time.
- **Value structure.** Name the number of planes and what each one is. "Three planes: the lit pool, the floor inside it, and everything else solid black."
- **Light as a shape.** Describe where light lands, not how bright it is — a cone, a bar, a parallelogram, with cut edges.
- **Constraints.** The exclusions carry as much weight as the description. Repeat the ones that matter.

Reference role block — reuse this verbatim

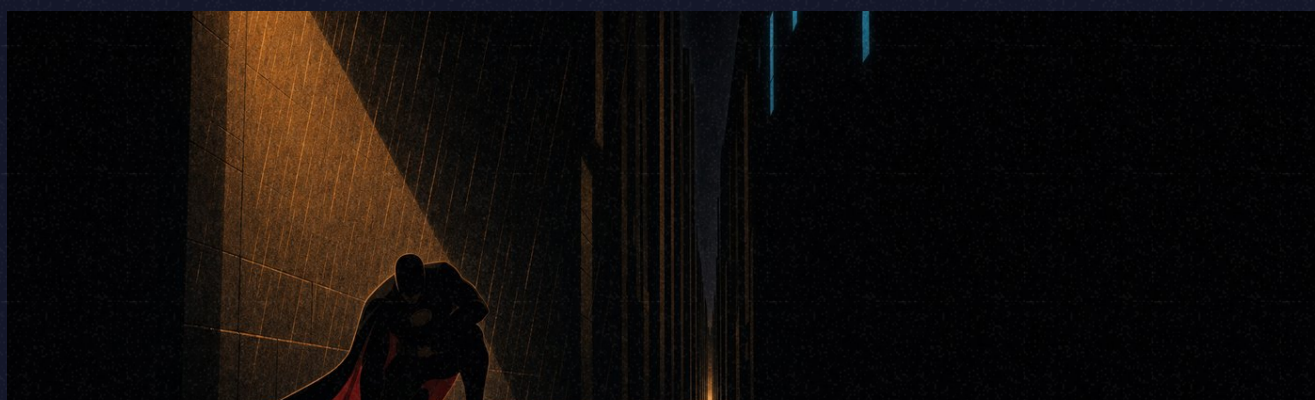
Reference image 1 is the CHARACTER SHEET: use it only for identity — the cowl, bare jaw and beard, blacked-out lenses, brass sunburst, belt, gauntlets, straight cape hem. Ignore its background, lighting and pose. Reference image 2 is the ARCHITECTURAL SOURCE: take only the geometry and layout of the location; restyle it completely and keep none of its colour, lighting or photographic realism. If 1 and 2 disagree about the character, 1 wins.

The look, in six rules

DARK DECO

This is the part most people get wrong. It is not "dark Art Deco" — it is the painted-background language of nineties television animation, and it works on one governing idea.

- **Paint on black, never darken.** The image starts as a solid black surface and light is added onto it. Around seventy percent of the frame carries zero information, and that emptiness is the composition. If your output looks muddy, this is why.
- **Colour is light, not paint.** The sky is burning orange because it is burning. Shadow is blue-violet because shadow is cold. Buildings are black because they are unlit — not because you painted them black.
- **Windows carry the architecture.** No brickwork, no stone texture, no ornament. The only detail on any facade is small hard rectangles of light in cyan, amber and pale rose, in irregular vertical runs, most blocks entirely dark.
- **Soft atmosphere, hard silhouettes.** Skies and fog are airbrushed with visible grain. Every object edge is cut clean with no feathering. That contrast is the whole technique.
- **The figure has almost no detail.** No segmented plates, no rivets, no seams. Flat colour, one hard shadow shape, done. The contrast between flat character and painted room is what sells it.
- **Rain is only visible where it crosses light.** In the black areas it disappears entirely — so rain automatically takes the shape of your light source: a cone in a lamp beam, a wedge in a strip of sky. Never a curtain of streaks across the whole frame.



Rain inside the lamp cone only. Outside it, nothing — and the wet ground mirrors the lamp as a broken vertical smear.

Upload the scene still. Nothing else. A second reference here makes the cowl and cape drift.

No style words in this stage. The style already lives in the image. Pasting your image prompt into the video model makes it re-render the look, and the design, proportions and palette drift. Motion, camera and timing only — plus the locked list, which is the strongest control you have.

HERO SHOT · 15 SECONDS

Subject: the masked figure standing on the rooftop edge, seen from behind. Only cloth moves.

Motion: the cape lifts from rest over the first four seconds, easing in slowly, and unfurls to the left into a full S-curve, the red lining turning toward camera as the cloth rolls over. It holds near full extension for three seconds with small secondary ripples travelling from the shoulder yoke down to the trailing edge. A second, stronger gust arrives at about nine seconds and pushes it further left, with clear drag and follow-through — the trailing edge always lagging behind the leading edge. Over the last three seconds it settles back about halfway, never fully coming to rest.

Locked: the body does not move at all. No weight shift, no head turn, no shoulder rise, no breathing. The cowl stays in exactly the same position and orientation throughout, and no pointed or horned ears ever appear on it. The city below stays completely rigid — no building shimmers, warps, or gains or loses detail, and the lit windows hold their exact positions and brightness.

Camera: one continuous slow dolly-in from behind, about ten percent closer over the full fifteen seconds, with a three-degree drift to the right. Constant speed, no acceleration, no stop, no shake. The frame's slight tilt stays exactly as it is — do not level the horizon.

Lighting: fixed. The broken rim on shoulder, cowl and cape edge stays exactly as strong and in the same direction for the whole shot. No flicker, no exposure change, no moving shadows in the city below.

When a clip drifts

Shorten the prompt — do not add to it. Regenerate from the same still first. If it drifts again, cut the environment lines and keep only **Subject** and **Camera**.

The step that sells it

POST

Generated video is smooth. Classic cel animation is not — it is shot on twos, twelve unique drawings per second, each held for two frames. That held frame is what the eye reads as "drawn". Interpolated smoothness is what it reads as "generated".

After Effects — the whole technique

- Apply **Posterize Time** to the clip and set it to **12**.
- Keep the timeline at **24 fps**. You are holding frames, not slowing the clip.
- Frame blending **off**, nearest neighbour only. Any blending puts the smoothness back.
- Fast action reverted to **ones** in the original cartoons — so if a leap or a run looks too stroboscopic at 12, posterize those two to 16 and leave the rest at 12.
- Do it **before** grading and **before** grain, so the grain does not stutter with the frames.

Two more things that carry the period

- **Film hiss.** Period animation carries a constant low hiss and room tone under everything. Add it in the edit — it does more for the feel than any visual filter.
- **No handheld, ever.** The camera is on a crank, so moves are linear, slow, and stop cleanly. Any float or shake breaks the illusion instantly.

NOW GO BUILD YOUR OWN CITY

Your turn.

Swap my city for yours and my character for yours. The structure holds: one character sheet, one still per shot, one motion prompt each, posterize at the end. That is the entire pipeline.

TRY THE MODEL

MiniMax Hailuo 3.0

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HAILU025

Made by [@by.jadla](#) — Instagram & TikTok.
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