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Mirrodin Environments: Black

Today we take another look behind the scenes of the development of *Mirrodin's* creative development: the black-aligned environments. Don't miss our other looks at *Mirrodin's* [blue](#) and [white](#) environments.

The swampland of Mirrodin, called the Mephidross or "The Dross," is a knee-deep sea of foul water covered over by a scum of black ichor. (The term *Mephidross* comes from combining the word "mephitic," meaning foul-smelling or noxious, with "dross," which is the scum that forms on the surface of molten metal.) Here are some early concept sketches illustrating these metal-world swamps.

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Above: A sketch of the Mephidross by Dana Knutson. This sketch was actually conceived as a junction between the swamps of the Dross and the blue-aligned [Quicksilver Sea](#). Like that Sea, the Dross has spires as well -- but not like the spires constructed by the Vedalken. These are ominous, dark obelisks whose droning hum spreads throughout the Mephidross. In fact the Dross's most immediately striking feature is this constant thrumming sound, suggesting the idea that the swamp may be alive, or perhaps powered by a dark energy.

Left: Another look at the Mephidross spires. These spires are like gunmetal chimneys that radiate a magical energy over all who dwell there (see cards like [Chimney Imp](#) or [Consume Spirit](#)). This energy flows in the form of necrogen, an noxious gas that twists and transforms those it touches (see [Wail of the Nim](#) and especially [Necrogen Mists](#)). The undead-like Nim are one result of the corrupting power of necrogen ([Nim Lasher](#), [Nim Devourer](#)). The human residents of the Dross, the Moriok, are little seen so far in the *Mirrodin* block (just [Moriok Scavenger](#)).

Right: A concept illustration of Ish Sah, the so-called [Vault of Whispers](#) by Mark Tedin, which became black's artifact land. The Vault is a huge metallic structure with architecture reminiscent of metal skeletons. The interior of the Vault is shrouded in mystery, but is said to be the lair of a black-aligned warlord named Geth who commands many Nim. (Geth does not appear on a



Mirrodin card directly, but is referred to in the flavor texts of *Barter in Blood*, *Terror*, and the *Vault* itself.)



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