

Rochester Institute of Technology

RIT Digital Institutional Repository

Theses

5-2018

Face 2 Face

Joseph Hurley
jph1397@rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.rit.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Hurley, Joseph, "Face 2 Face" (2018). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Accessed from

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the RIT Libraries. For more information, please contact repository@rit.edu.

Face 2 Face - Thesis

By Joseph Hurley

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IMAGING ARTS/COMPUTER ANIMATION
SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

May 2018

Peter Murphey
Assistant Professor
School of Film and Animation

Dave Sluberski
Senior Lecturer
School of Film and Animation

Mari Jaye Blanchard
Assistant Professor
School of Film and Animation

- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- Introduction

- Pre-production
 - Early development
 - Story revisions
 - Further revisions during summer and fall

- Concept design
 - Animation style/approach
 - Visual style
 - Visual inspiration
 - Humor inspiration

- Storyboard and Animatic
 - Thumbnails and Boards
 - Animatic

- Main production
 - Animation
 - Sound
 - Music
 - Compositing

- Film screening
 - General screening
 - Feedback

- Conclusion

- Work Cited

- Appendices
 - Appendix A – Original thesis proposal
 - Appendix B – Production stills
 - Appendix C – Script

ABSTRACT

For my final year at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), I worked on my thesis film, “Face 2 Face,” which runs for 6 minutes and 22 seconds. My thesis film tells the story of a young man attending a Comic-Con convention who spends more time taking photos of what he sees in front of him for his social media page rather than living in the moment within his environment. This film was inspired by my experiences at conventions and on vacations, during which I devoted much of my energy to recording footage of unique events or taking photos of an unfamiliar area to the neglect of truly experiencing my environment. “Face 2 Face” is a comedic portrayal of similar experiences and frustrations in a setting with which I am familiar.

I wanted to create a film focusing on a habit I found relatable and use it as the springboard for a comedic story. In terms of the main production, the film relies on hand-drawn animation and appears in full color. The animation was primarily completed in TVPaint with additional visual work done in Adobe After Effects and Adobe Premiere. I also took advantage of outside help for animation and sound during film production, especially with regard to cleanup, coloring, voice acting, sound effects, and music. This paper describes the writing process for the film along with the film’s visual development. I also discuss various obstacles and accomplishments throughout the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several individuals deserve thanks for their contributions to this project. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Peter Murphey, for his help and pointers during the production of my thesis film. We held frequent and consistent meetings, and our corresponding discussions provided valuable feedback that helped me determine how to approach aspects of my film that required revision. Peter offered several ideas to explore as I was writing the film and completing the storyboarding. Even when I was unsure of where my writing was headed, Peter's suggestions helped me consider different scenarios for my story and eventually identify those that suited my vision best. Peter's guidance throughout the development of this film was hugely helpful in crafting the finished version.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee members, Dave Sluberski and Mari Jaye Blanchard, who each assisted in the production of my thesis. Dave provided a great deal of help regarding how I should approach the sound and offered hands-on assistance, including working as the ADR for my voice recording and assisting in mixing the sound effects. Dave also provided substantial help in searching for a sound director for the film. He offered last-minute sound-mixing help and feedback when the sound director and I were nearing the end of production.

Mari offered valuable input into my animation process and provided helpful comments on how to approach certain shots and better understand TVPaint's different tools. In the beginning, she gave me frequent feedback on general character design and pointed out which aspects needed to be refined to be suitable for the animation. Mari also provided assistance with the overall pacing of the film's individual shots, suggesting which shots would benefit from being either cut shorter or extended.

In terms of direct help with my film's production, I would like to thank my additional animators and colorists, Washa Azimi, Chloe Hayes, Kurt Li, Kate McAfee, Ryan Adryandi, and Emily Yurk, for their assistance with extra cleanup and coloring in areas I did not manage to complete. I would also like to thank my music composer, Zazu Pitts of Sour Note Productions, for composing strong and energetic music pieces for the film. I am also grateful for my sound mixer, Mikaela Kaufman, for organizing a diverse array of sound effects and following up on my many notes seeking advice on what to work on next. Lastly, I would like to thank my family for supporting me through the entire production of this film and offering a listening ear whenever I was exhausted from working on the project. Everyone who helped with "Face 2 Face" maintained open lines of communication that enabled me to complete the film successfully!

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, photography intended for social media has made it increasingly difficult for people to live in the moment. Given the ubiquity of and easy access to digital devices and social media, people are prone to devoting much of their time and energy to documenting what they see in front of them. Individuals can compromise otherwise unique experiences when their interest in enjoying the world around them is overshadowed by trying to document various events through photographs and obsessing over how they are responded to online. My thesis explores this pattern by examining what it takes for a person to change when he or she seeks self-gratification through a camera lens rather than experiencing reality first-hand.

When I was initially developing this idea, I chose photography and recreation as a topic because people frequently embrace such activities while vacationing or visiting an unfamiliar place. I later broadened my scope to include social media, which seemed to better fit the theme of the project, the modern world, and my own experience. I am guilty of routinely indulging in social media on recreational vacations or while attending comic conventions. My family members, despite being as committed to recording or photographing family and sporting events as I have been to social media, shared with me a strategy: they deliberately choose not to take as many pictures as they would like so they could spend more energy enjoying the event in person, such as by watching a race with their own eyes instead of through a camera. I began to wonder what enables some people to break free from the allure of cameras and digital devices to immerse themselves in the moment whereas others seemingly cannot. I decided this dilemma would be interesting to explore through my film's main character, Cameron.

I chose comic conventions as the main setting for my story, as I am quite familiar with photography getting in the way of experiencing real life in this environment. I thought the unique attractions, decorations and costumes found at conventions would allow me to showcase my humor and visual style. I have frequently brought photography and video-recording equipment to these events to document their unique activities and atmosphere, which I would later share with my friends. However, I often found myself exhausted from carrying my equipment, unable to fully appreciate the convention experience for what it is.

As I began writing this thesis, I searched for information on photography addiction and how it is tied in with social media. I wanted to refine the motivation for Cameron and seek out ideas that I could implement into the story, visuals and humor with this research. The article *Instagram is Ruining Vacation*, by Mary Pilon, discusses how social media's use of photography can prevent people from fully enjoying recreational trips and the ways that social media will pull people away from life experiences in front of them. Pilon discusses how she attended events in recreational areas where many people opted to take photos of the main attraction and share what they had to social media, with this habit happening among typical tourist groups to large crowds at concerts:

That scene, the fight for the perfect Instagram, is one I've witnessed over and over...In

Thailand, a woman sitting next to me on a beach squealed to her friends about getting her hair just right for a shot destined for her tinder profile. (Pilon, p5).

Through my thesis film, I would have Cameron display this habit of tediously acquiring a desirable photo through his point of view shots, generally having him struggle to get a desirable visual of the subject he's attempting to photograph.

While developing ideas for my thesis that involved Cameron falling prey to the distracting nature of photography and social media, such as when Cameron falls down the stairs into the Cosplay Robot, I searched for examples of the hazards of this process. The article, *More People Have Died From Selfies than Shark Attacks this Year* by Cailey Rizzo, goes over how tourists have frequently fallen victim to the use of selfie sticks, even to the point of meeting their death. Through various vacationing attractions, tourists that engage frequently in photography, will always run the risk of focusing their energy on getting their desired shot, instead of keeping their eye on the trail ahead (Rizzo 2-4). Rizzo also describes how tourist spots have brought awareness to the distracting and dangerous nature of selfies in these areas:

It's not clear if the number of daredevil selfies is increasing, but more and more tourists are making headlines because of their dangerous attempts at a memorable photo. Parks – have had to expressly outlaw selfie-taking, and even Tour de France cyclists are concerned about selfie danger (Rizzo5).

While figuring out how to define Cameron's personal conflict with photography through the story, I looked out for sources that described what specific needs drove people to indulge in this compulsion. In her article, *Photography in Social Media*, Maria Popova describes reconstructionist Susan Sontag's research on the evolution of photography and how the accessibility of smart phones and social media has made snapshot behavior more commonplace.

Throughout history, people have taken great satisfaction capturing the events of their lives through photography. By framing certain moments within a still image, people have found a way to both remember and idealize the past. Sontag (qtd. in Popova 5) describes how this pleasurable compulsion also marks the ephemeral quality of what we see:

Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter...Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.

Popova asserts that the mechanisms behind someone's desire to take photographs and share them on social media is usually driven by their compulsion to express and assert their identity to a body of people online (Popova5).Sontag (qtd. in Popova 8) contends that the increased access to photography can also be seen as aggressive, as most people who take up photography don't intend to utilize a camera in a specific professional manner, it is instead a tool for very personal means:

Images which idealize are no less aggressive than work, which makes a virtue of plainness. There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera.

Another point of information that I wanted to research was how photography affected one's general experience in a new location. The article, *Does Photography Distract you from Enjoying Life? It's Complicated* by Ruby Love, describes how photography impacts the experience of exploring a new place. Love provides an example by Dr. Alix Barasch (NYU Stern 2), a NYU

Stern Professor and social consumption researcher, who held an experiment where tourists who traveled along the location were split into two groups, one who took photos, while the other group didn't (Love 2). After the tour, it was shown that the people who didn't take photos had much more engaging conversations on their experience, while those who took photos had less descriptive conversations in comparison:

Dr. Barasch...found that for those photographers who took pictures mainly with the goal of sharing them on social media, the positive effects of heightened engagement and memory are diminished (Love4).

In *Face 2 Face*, I have Cameron's sense of observation change at the end of the film. The last act finds him back on a convention ride, which he had experienced earlier in the story. He was unable to enjoy his first attempt, as his selfie compulsion caused him to lose his balance. His final ride is a fully satisfying event, because he has finally learned the value of being in the moment.

In the Temple of Geek interview, *Q&A with Cosplay Photographer Kate York* by Monica Duarte, photographer Kate York describes the state of mind she is in when she's seeking unique photos at Comic-Cons and why certain visuals catch her eye, specifically cosplayers. Kate (qtd. in Duarte 15) mentions how much she needs to keep in mind when photographing at a convention, due to the overwhelming amount of people attending:

There is so much going on and there's so many people milling around...I personally found it difficult to get the space I need to take a shot with the equipment I use daily and that's kind of frustrating.

The interview details the workflow of a photographer at a Comic-Con, and what the general mindset is when it comes to searching for unique photos. What attracted Kate (qtd. In Duarte 4) to photographing at comic-cons was the strong visual variety among cosplayers, with each member sporting a unique costume catching her interest at a glance:

Walking around the convention floor, you can see all the love and dedication these people have for the craft and for the characters they wear. The colors and textures and all the different faces make working with cosplayers so rewarding.

The overall interview helped give me an insight on what convention attendees are looking to photograph, which helped me figure out what type of cosplayers and attractions could catch Cameron's eye as he's searching to photograph for social media.

During the summer of 2017, prior to my last semester at Rochester Institute of Technology, I re-familiarized myself with comic-cons to gain a better idea of how to design the general setting of my thesis. For a direct and in person approach, I attended ConnectiCon, a convention in my home state of Connecticut and explored the layout. At ConnectiCon, I took photographs of different rooms, decorations, and attractions to reference for my film's backgrounds. I also took photographs to emulate what Cameron would experience and pay attention to throughout the film. Lastly, I searched for articles regarding Comic-Con culture and

the photographers these conventions attract, in order to examine what might motivate attendees to photograph certain aspects of conventions.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Story Development

I began developing my thesis during the late winter of 2017 throughout most of RIT's thesis prep class. I initially considered creating either a comedy that would rely heavily on character dialogue and animation acting to communicate humor or an action-based film to practice intense animation. I also wanted to apply a looser, rougher animation style, as I had completed a film during the prior semester that used a relatively less flexible approach; I hoped to have the freedom in my upcoming project to explore broader character exaggerations and be more liberal with character design and animation.

When I began conceptualizing ideas in my thesis prep class, I was having a difficult time figuring out the beats of the story, which was further compounded by my exhaustion from a winter internship and an overloaded class schedule. Initially, the story involved the main character, Cameron, using various camera equipment and taking photos and videos while accompanied by two friends, who would symbolize what he was missing at the comic convention. I also used much more dialog, with my secondary characters commenting frequently on Cameron's situation. After my first committee meeting, my advisors recommended that I revise my approach to communicate Cameron's motivation more clearly. The committee also suggested that the story progression might be complicated for outside audiences in its current form.

I began trimming down various elements of my thesis in an attempt to simplify the story and better realize Cameron's motivation. Peter suggested replacing Cameron's camera equipment with a smartphone, which would reduce the number of objects to be animated and better connect the audience to Cameron's motivation. Peter also suggested incorporating social media into Cameron's motivation to present a timelier dilemma of choosing between experience and

documentation. As I continued to refine the story behind the film, I eventually removed the extra characters and reduced the amount of dialogue, which helped shorten the overall runtime. At that point, I was only left with Cameron and the celebrity he admired, who would eventually become Lightning Lyra. I showed my updated film scenario to the second thesis committee. The story was approved, although I was advised to continue reducing the runtime given that more edits could be made.

During the summer, I continued to refine my story and determine how to flesh out other aspects of the film. One story element I struggled to resolve was the interaction between Cameron and Lightning Lyra, which would ultimately motivate Cameron to embrace the real-life experiences in front of him. Earlier drafts included Cameron and Lyra talking or having Lyra engage in an exaggerated interaction, such as energetically giving Cameron an autograph, but I felt those ideas would not be as relatable for a general audience. During a meet-and-greet party during the summer of 2017, I got the idea to have Lyra shake Cameron's hand. I imagined that Cameron's excitement over a simple interaction would offer an accessible joke with a clearer resolution, as most people can relate to being excited at the chance to shake the hand of a person they greatly admire. As the summer went on, I continued refining the story of my thesis and began developing my character designs and art style.

Concept Design

For the film's visual style, I aimed to use rougher and looser designs that would allow for a variety of visuals (either simple or complex as necessary). I felt most comfortable with this style of animation, as I had worked on several animated shorts before that incorporated the same approach but on a smaller scale. With this film, I wanted to see how diverse I could make the character designs and poses, depending on the humor and scenarios in each part of the film. As I

developed my thesis over the summer, I was also working on several freelance videos, which gave me the opportunity to experiment with and develop designs and poses for the characters in my film through humorous sequences. Backgrounds and crowd shot concepts were also designed based on images I found through researching comic cons, such as pictures I took while looking around ConnectiCon.



Fig. 1. Hurley, Joseph. Photographs from ConnectiCon (2017)



Fig. 2. Hurley, Joseph. Photographs from ConnectiCon (2017)

The style I chose allowed for flexibility when designing crowd shots that displayed individual characters with a unique appearance and specific level of detail. Because my film used rougher and imperfect details for animation and art, I designed crowds by giving various members more abstract designs. This approach allowed me to be economic with the amount of time I spent on populated shots while still maintaining fullness in the backgrounds. Characters designed for crowds were based on various costumes I saw at conventions in addition to subtle

homages to different sources of entertainment I enjoy (e.g., characters/actors from television shows and movies). The free-flowing designs I gave characters in crowds also allowed me to create humorous visuals of the designs whenever necessary, usually related to what convention attendees tend to do at a Comic-Con. A part of the film that used humorous visuals throughout a crowd shot was in the convention area from Cameron's point of view, which included images of different characters attending to the games on display and art vendors talking to customers.



Fig 3. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, Background Concept

As I created my characters—Cameron, Lightning Lyra, and the Cosplay Robot—I was tasked with simplifying their designs to ensure each stood out and were simple to animate. I preferred to use shapes and details that reflected their personalities and roles in the story. I gave Cameron rounder shapes to emphasize his excitement and innocence and Lyra a leaner design with complex detail to exemplify her calmness and seriousness. I wanted to show that she was a person who Cameron, and many other fans at the convention, admired. I decided the Cosplay Robot character, who appeared in the background throughout the story and played a critical role in the climax, would have a heavier design to highlight his clumsiness and instability. He was prone to being knocked over easily with his heavy costume and was a cause of great destruction in the film.

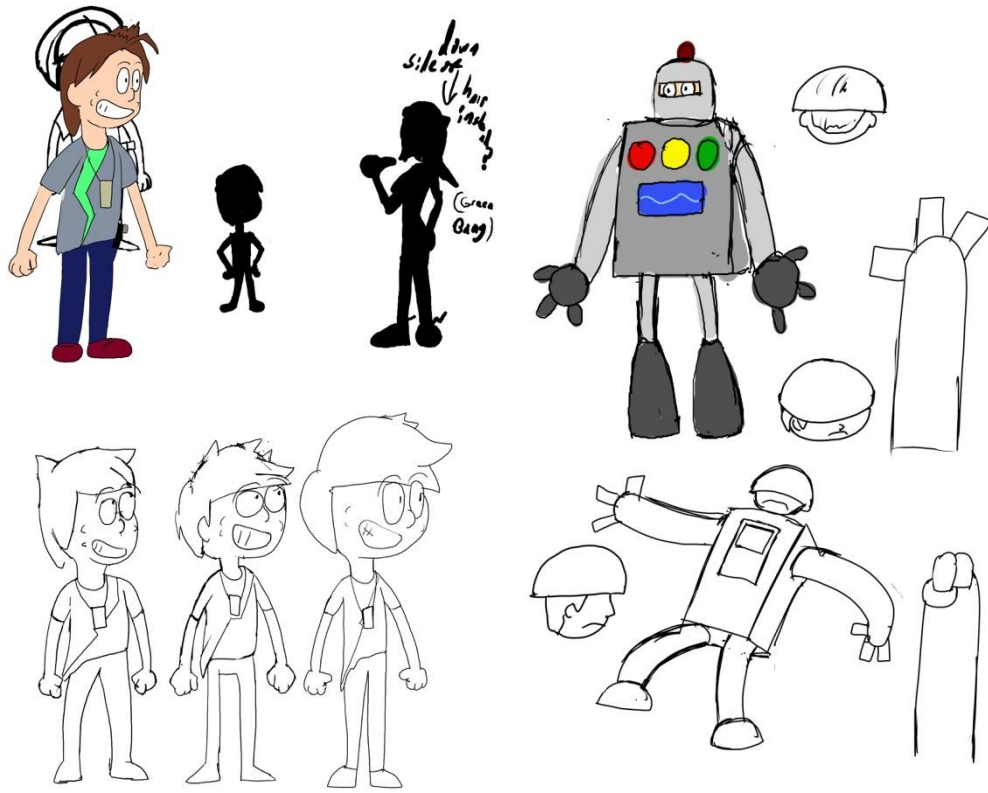


Fig 4. Hurley, Joseph.Face 2 Face, Character Concepts

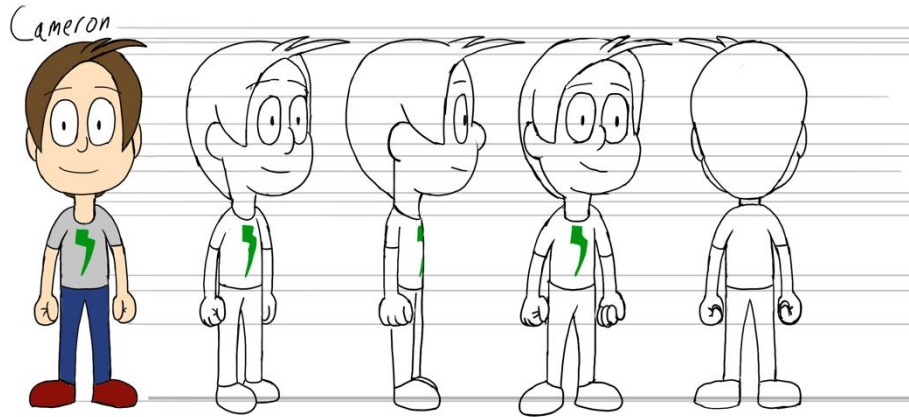


Fig 5. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, Cameron Model Sheet

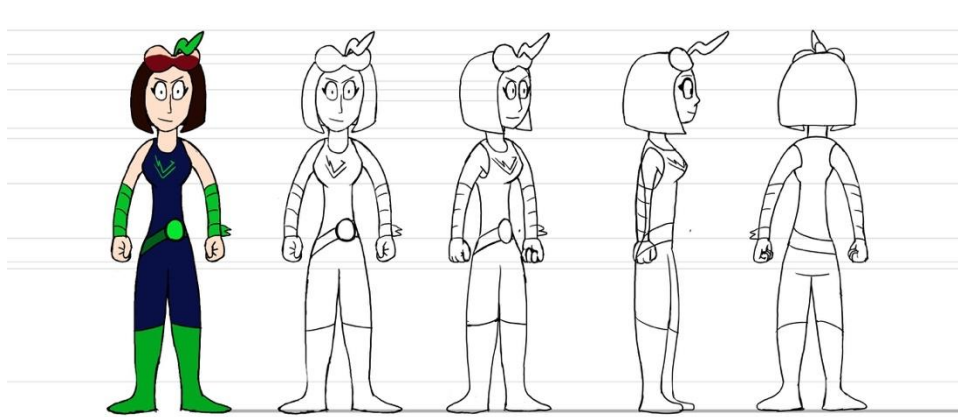


Fig 6. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, Lightning Lyra Model Sheet

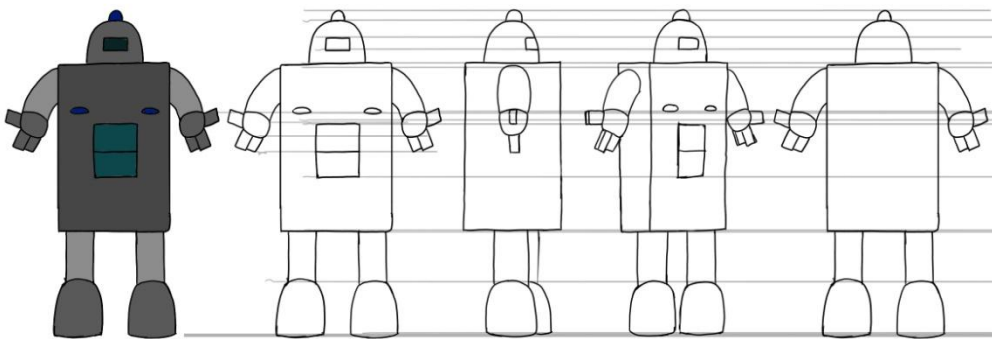


Fig 7. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, Robot Cosplayer Model Sheet

My approach to humor in this film was drawn from animated television shows and shorts I watched frequently in my youth. Visually, I was inspired by series such as *Ed, Edd n Eddy* and *SpongeBobSquarePants*, both of which used simplistic characters whose designs changed in humorous situations. For example, whenever characters were struck in *Ed, Edd n Eddy*, their entire bodies would contort and squish to exaggerate the blowback of the hit and to demonstrate how strong or weak they were. I applied this level of distortion to similar situations in my thesis, such as when Cameron hits a glass door at a high speed and his entire face and body squish against the glass. I also took inspiration from *SpongeBobSquarePants*'s pushing detail with characters. In many reaction shots and close-ups, this technique gave the characters more grotesque features to exemplify how stressed they were feeling or how much pain they were in. I used the same types of exaggerated details in my film to emphasize the frustration or pain of the characters, such as when Cameron escapes from an air vent and his face and mouth expand to highlight his oxygen-deprived state.



Fig. 8. (A) Tibbit,Paul,dir. still frame from“Employee ofthe Month.” *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Nickelodeon, 1999. Television

(B)Hillenburg, Stephen,dir. still frame from“Help Wanted.”*SpongeBob SquarePants*. Nickelodeon, 1999. Television



Fig. 9. (A) Antonucci, Danny,dir. still frame from“One+One=Ed.” *Ed, Edd n Eddy*. Cartoon Network, 1999. Television

(B) Antonucci,Danny,dir. still frame from“Virt-Ed-Go.” *Ed, Edd n Eddy*. Cartoon Network, 1999. Television

I also searched for inspiration for the visual humor in my film to learn different ways to maintain the timing and energy for each joke. One source of insight consisted of various shorts from the French animation school, Gobelins, l'École de l'image, such as *In Between* and *Mortal Breakup Inferno*. These films gave me a sense of how to approach fast-paced comedy by letting a film's visuals, rather than its dialogue, explain the moment and express what the characters were feeling. Throughout *Mortal Breakup Inferno*, several brief shots are coupled with the chaotic movement of the characters to execute the film's intense and humorous moments. During a chase sequence, the boyfriend is running through the woods from his girlfriend; many of the shots last no more than 3 seconds. Through each subsequent shot, the layout of the scenery and character designs become increasingly dynamic to evoke the boyfriend's peril. The quick shots continue until the boyfriend finds himself alone in a much more relaxed setting, with the rest of the film passing at a much slower pace (*Mortal Breakup Inferno*, 1:50–2:05).

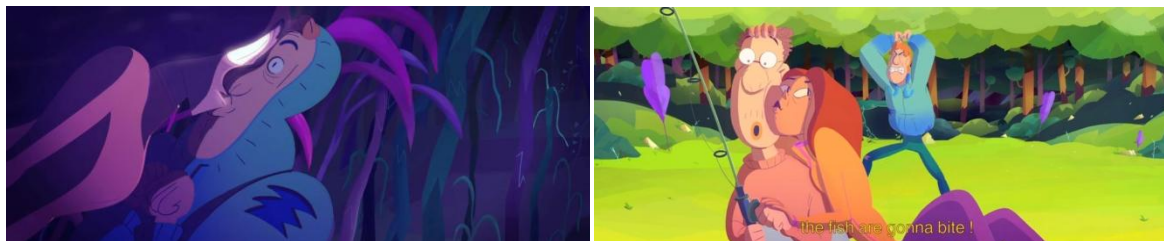


Fig. 10. Delalande, Maxime, dir. still frames from *Mortal Breakup Inferno*. Gobelins, 2014. *YouTube*. Sat, 10 June 2017.

These shorts also inspired me to incorporate several brief shots that would condense longer moments throughout the film and be shown in rapid succession to ensure consistent pacing. A part of *Face 2 Face* that used a similar sequence of shorter shots is when Cameron goes around taking photos at the comic con. I included several visuals of different events during the convention through brief shots during this segment to imply that substantial time had passed.

This pattern helped communicate the humor of Cameron's frequent and unhealthy need to photograph anything that caught his eye. To do this, I started and ended each shot with a camera flash.

In Between also used this type of sequencing by employing a series of several quick shots of a character trying to remove a crocodile, which represented her anxiety, and then repeating the process whenever she returned in each shot of the sequence (*In Between*, 1:11–1:53).



Fig. 11. Bissonnet, DeAlice, dir. still frames from *In Between*. Gobelins, 2012. YouTube. Sat, 10 June 2017.

To time my shots for comedic execution, I also aimed to employ a mixture of slower and fast-paced moments to build up to various jokes and gags. Some of my inspiration for this approach came from various independent animators such as Harry Partridge, Chris O'Neil, and Zach Hadel. These filmmakers have created several animated shorts that rely on a mixture of snappy visual humor as well as a gradual build up to punch lines, with several jokes executed in unexpected and surreal scenarios. Chris O'Neil's *Leo and Satan – Trash Hazard* short includes a character, Leo, who is constantly tormented and injured throughout the plot by a Ouija board. The film ends with Leo being killed, not by the board, but by his friend Satan, who picks him up in relief and accidentally kills Leo with his claws (*Leo and Satan – Trash Hazard*, 2:56–4:00). I applied a similar sense of unexpected execution when characters moved around in unexpected ways during otherwise mundane scenes in my film. One example is when Cameron remembers

his phone is about to be crushed and turns around in horror. To add humor to Cameron's sudden realization, he turns his entire upper body far enough for his spinal column to follow him and be indented through his skin and shirt.



Fig. 12. O'Neill, Chris and Sean Kiely.dir. still frames from *Leo and Satan -Trash Hazard*. Oney Cartoons, 2010, *Newgrounds*. 3 August 2017.

STORYBOARDS AND ANIMATIC

Thumbnails

Once my story was well established around September 2017, I began working on thumbnails to plan the film's layout. The thumbnails allowed me to gain a sense of the timing and the rough shot composition of my film. During each meeting with Peter Murphey, I created different variations of thumbnails, revising sections of the story and experimenting with multiple endings. I pinned up the thumbnails on his office bulletin board and shifted images around depending on what needed to be revised or removed from the story. Sections that were most heavily altered included Cameron and Lightning Lyra's major interaction at the story's climax and the overall ending. Prior thumbnailed versions of Cameron and Lyra's interaction included more dialogue and a longer lead into how Cameron would rescue her from the floor. The changes eventually lead to much shorter timing of this sequence to maintain the pace of the film. I also brought in alternate thumbnails for the film's ending, including an earlier version that concluded with Cameron flying into space and never coming down. Peter suggested I find a way to end the film by showing the audience that Cameron had changed and learned from his experience at the convention. This suggestion led me to the ending I used in the final version of the film, in which Cameron embraced and truly enjoyed one of the rides at the convention rather than photographing himself to post on social media, as he had done earlier in the story.

Animatic

After the thumbnails were completed, I began to work on the film's initial boards for the upcoming animatic showcase on October 8, 2017, where students presented their animatics to other students and faculty for feedback. Between finishing thumbnails and planning for animatic

night, I managed to refine the timing of my thumbnails and get a better sense of staging for my characters. General changes I made to my boards, based on Peter's feedback, included altering the layout of different panels and making minor timing changes to help the audience better understand the action in various shots. The first animatic I created had a runtime of 4 minutes and 45 seconds. After screening my animatic to the audience at the showcase, I was given constructive feedback, which included speeding up the timing of Cameron's decision to save Lyra (when he is forced to choose between her and his phone) and to tie in the mechanical ride at the end of the story more closely to the overall theme of the narrative. Originally, the ride was a mechanical bull that threw Cameron because he was so focused on his phone instead of his grip. I decided to change the bull to a mechanical surfboard, which related more to Lyra's character, an electric surfer hero.

PRODUCTION

Animation

As soon as the animatic revisions were completed by mid-November, animation began for the film, which was the simplest but most taxing part of production. The film was animated in TVPaint Pro 11, which gave me the option to work directly off the animatic and to experiment with different brushes. My priority for animation production was to use as loose a style as possible so I could experiment freely with visuals throughout the film. I also wanted to keep the visual design flexible and not feel overly constrained to stay on model. I was eager to experiment with different brush types and sizes for different scenes to give shots a specific and unique feel. One shot enhanced by a specific brush was Lightning Lyra's descent; I rendered her outline with a texture brush and used a digital paintbrush for the outlines and colors of the moving background behind her.

With this looser animation style, I wanted to make the movements of the characters as fluid and dynamic as possible to allow for moments that involved limited animation for comedic effect. The first shots I began animating occurred in the middle of the film, which gave me the opportunity to test my characters' movements and appearance before I began working on important scenes that required them to stay consistently on model. As soon as I learned how best to animate Cameron, I began working on his more important and complex shots. I was unable to do shots that included Lightning Lyra talking, as I had not yet received the character's lines when animation production began. During the winter break of January 2018, I worked on designing layouts in advance so I could return to animating the specific shots I had prioritized while ensuring I included those requiring heavy crowds. I returned to the animation work at the end of

winter break and was able to work on Lightning Lyra, having received all the audio for her dialogue. By March 2018, the rough animation was completed, and I began cleaning and inking shots in a similar order as the rough animation. The most important and time-consuming shots were finished first. Near the end of the semester, in April 2018, I began finalizing the colors and organized the final composite, such as many of the composited shots that included camera pans and additional effects I could not apply to the footage of different animated shots.

To ensure my animation met the May 1 deadline, I asked for help from six RIT students to assist in cleanup animation, inbetweening, and coloring of shots. Approximately four students worked on cleaning and inbetweening four sequences each, mostly crowd shots, followed by miscellaneous takes of the main characters. I mainly gave crowd shots to my assistants as the individual characters in the crowd did not need to stay on model and were not repeated in other shots. Any animation that included my main characters generally had the keys inked and cleaned up so assistants could fill in the blanks. I had two artists to help with coloring the animation for straightforward shots I felt I would not have enough time to complete right away. Most shots that I colored usually involved more detailed background characters and complex animation layers or outlines. I also trained my assistants to work with certain functions in TVPaint, namely specific lines and coloring techniques with which the artists were relatively unfamiliar but were needed to complete a scene. The assistants worked well on their given scenes and delivered their work to me on time, which was critical to the film being completed by its due date.

Audio

As dialogue added to the runtime of the film and often made shots less concise and sharp, I decided to use it sparingly. I performed the vocals for most characters except for Lightning

Lyra, as I thought a female actress would make her sound more authentic. For that role, I used a voice actress with whom I had worked on previous films, Bindy Coda. I wanted the character to be distinct from the others and felt that Bindy's voice range was a strong fit for the role. When I voiced the characters, I used RIT's voiceover booth (narration room) to act and record my dialogue. Dave Sluberski, SOFA's sound expert, took control of the ADR room to record my dialogue, get different takes from each of my lines, and edit the lines once they were completed.

For sound design, I worked with Mikaela Kaufman, who also edited the sound and provided audio mixing. The search for sound effects began in February 2018, where I created a list of sound effects for each shot to give to Mikaela. I received an update on sound mixing every few weeks and provided Mikaela notes on the amount of footage to address along with potential audio changes. During the last month of production, we held frequent in-person meetings and took a hands-on approach to fine-tuning the audio in the film. We received additional sound mixing assistance from Dave Sluberski, who offered pointers on how to more effectively use the audio in each scene (e.g., which sounds should be louder or quieter and how to effectively transition the ambiance across each shot).

For the musical composition, I reached out to Zazu Pitts, a composer from the Rochester NY based music production studio, Sour Note Productions. The studio has composed for both films and video game based content, and utilizes a variety of styles in their work, such as techno and orchestral. For the general tone of the music, I searched for a mix of techno and orchestral music to evoke an upbeat and quirky atmosphere throughout the film. While producing the animation, I prioritized shots that needed time lock, thus allowing the music to be completed as soon as possible. Music production was simple overall and only required a few retakes for certain tracks; all other edits were completed during the sound-mixing stage.

Compositing

The overall compositing of the film was done in Adobe After Effects and Adobe Premiere. I added in several camera movements in After Effects, such as panning, cross fades, and zooms in and out that TVPaint Pro could not accomplish quickly. When laying out the shots, I made the overall animation stage larger than the usual resolution, with the size depending on the type of camera movement and how dynamic it needed to be. Once the shot was in After Effects, I moved and timed out the animation footage through the stage to create camera movement. If the animation needed to be changed, I re-used the same camera movement parameters. I also applied different filters for camera movements whenever the film was shown from Cameron's perspective through his camera. These shots used a subtle camera shake effect to give the impression that Cameron was holding his camera with his hands. A blur filter was used in the first shot to replicate a camera changing focus, specifically when Cameron was taking a selfie with a cardboard cutout of Lightning Lyra.

Through Adobe Premiere, I finalized the film's overall runtime, edited footage, and added music and credits. I initially used Premiere to edit the film when it was in its animatic stage, mostly to time out the shot sequences. While editing the main footage, I used Premier to time out the music before sending the final version of the track to my sound director. I also added in minor animation effects, primarily flash and fade effects for the camera and other harsh lighting effects. The overall compositing and editing of the film was finalized after sound mixing was completed.

FILM SCREENING

Face 2 Face was finalized on April 30, 2018 and screened at the SOFA graduate animation film showcase in May 2018. Once my film screened, I gave my artist statement, described the production of the film, and shared what the film meant to me. Then, I interacted with the audience and received questions and feedback on the film. Response to the film was generally positive, with many audience members expressing their enjoyment of the energetic visual humor. Many also found Cameron's main dilemma with photography and social media addiction to be highly relatable. Audience members discussed how they enjoyed the pacing and timing of the film's comedic beats, particularly when smaller moments helped to lead up to the punch line of a joke. One noted example was the scene when Cameron climbs up the air vent, creating several dents as the camera follows him, eventually leading to him gasping violently for air when he reaches the top. Audience members also offered a few points of critique regarding the beginning and end of the film, particularly in terms of clarity and general execution. One comment pertained to a scene in which Lightning Lyra passes Cameron, with some audience members stating they were initially unsure whether Cameron realized Lightning Lyra was behind him. The audience suggested that the shot could have more clarity if a crowd were following Lyra to emphasize Cameron's obliviousness. Audience members also felt the film could have ended with Cameron continuing to fly into the sky, as they felt the shot sufficiently demonstrated Cameron's progression. Overall, the audience reception was satisfying and reinforced my confidence in the film.

Currently, I am submitting my film for screening at film festivals. It had its first public screening at, *Bring Your Own Animation (BYOA)*, hosted by SIGGRAPH in New York City. For the BYOA screenings, animators bring in their work for audience feedback, including films and

works in progress. Animators also have the opportunity to network, talk with established industry animators, solicit feedback on their work, and receive information about other film screenings. Before showing the film, each animator discusses who they are as an animator and what the film was about. The audience's response to my film at the event was positive, and although the discussion after the showcase was short, I received commentary similar to that at the RIT screening. After receiving feedback, a SIGGRAPH member approached me and recommended that I submit *Face 2 Face* to the Metrocaf Film festival they organized. This event was helpful in introducing me to potential future film screenings.

CONCLUSION

Through Cameron's actions, I explored how individuals may use an addiction to photography to share their experiences on social media rather than enjoying the events before them. I also sought to portray what it takes for a person to put down the camera and begin to embrace reality for what it is. Throughout my film, Cameron's habit of being unable to put his phone down prevented him from experiencing richer and more worthwhile experiences at a comic convention. His misplaced focus on social media caused him to miss close-up encounters with his hero, Lightning Lyra. The goal of humor in moments showcasing Cameron's dilemma is to bring attention to his flaws and the havoc he causes. In particular, shots where Cameron is oblivious to his surroundings beyond his phone often involve him crashing into objects or encountering danger, such as when he runs into a glass door, falls down the stairs, or bumps into another convention attendee as he is taking pictures. By the film's climax, Cameron has learned how to step away from the superficial self-gratification of social media by enjoying a simple but powerful real-life experience: a handshake with Lightning Lyra.

The development of this film afforded me a better understanding of photography and its interaction with social media. The film has also given me great insight into how to approach a large-scale animation project. Through my research on this topic, I have gained additional perspective on the various motivations that cause people to become addicted to posting photos online. I have also come to understand that diverse individuals may experience similar consequences of this habit.

In terms of overall film production, I realized how to refine my approach to each point of development for a more efficient workflow. I also acquired a thorough understanding of all aspects of the animation pipeline. I had the opportunity to coordinate several other experts to

assist in the production of this film in terms of animation and sound composition, and I learned how to maintain strong communication between members to ensure the film was completed on time. My goal for future films is to apply the same level of understanding of a familiar issue to continue refining my skills as a creator of animated shorts.

Work Cited

Duarte, Monica. "Q&A With Cosplay Photographer: Katie Be Photography." Temple of Geeks, Temple of Geeks, 1 Dec. 2017

"Employee of the Month" *SpongebobSquarepants*. Written by Paul Tibbit and Mr. Lawrence, Directed by Paul Tibbit, Nickelodeon, 1999.

"Help Wanted." *SpongebobSquarepants*. Written by Stephen Hillenburg, Derek Drymon and Tim Hill Directed by Stephen Hillenburg, Nickelodeon, 1999.

In Between. Dir. De Alice Bissonnet, Aloyse Desoubries Binet. Perf. Aude Pepin, Frederic Nagorny, Pierre Zenzius, Gaspard Sumeir. Gobelins, 2012. *Youtube*. 10 June 2017

Leo and Satan -Trash Hazard. Dir. Chris O'Neill and Sean Kiely. Perf Chris O'Neill and Sean Kiely. Oney Cartoons, 2010, *Newgrounds*. 3, August, 2017

Love, Ruby. "Does Photography Distract You From Enjoying Life? It's Complicated." *Fstoppers*, New York Times, Web, 23 Aug. 2017

Mortal Breakup Inferno. Dir. Maxime Delalande. Perf. Nathalie Dessay, Francois Morel, Clement Solignac. Gobelins, 2014. *Youtube*. Sat, 10 June 2017

NYU Stern, "Alixandra Barasch (Biography)." *NYU Stern*, Leonard N. Stern School of Business, 2017, www.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/bio/alixandra-barasch.

"One+One=Ed." *Ed, Edd n Eddy*. Written by Mike Kubat and Danny Antonucci, Directed by Danny Antonucci, Cartoon Network, 1999

Pilon, Mary. "Instagram Is Ruining Vacation." *Wired*, Conde Nast, web, 13 Apr. 2016

Popova, Maria "Aesthetic Consumerism and the Violence Of Photography: What Susan Sontag Teaches Us About Visual Culture and the Social Web" *Brain Picking*, Amazon Services LLC Associates Program. Web

Rizzo, Cailey. "More People Have Died from Selfies than Shark Attacks This Year." *Mashable*, Mashable, Inc, Web, 21 Sept. 2015.

"Virt-Ed-Go." *Ed, Edd n Eddy*. Written by Mike Kubat and Danny Antonucci, Directed by Danny Antonucci, Cartoon Network, 1999

Appendix A – Original thesis proposal

Joseph Hurley

Advisor: Peter Murphey

Medium: 2D

Budget: \$3475

Time: 4:30

Logline: An excitable film fan tries to win his friend's respect while attending a comic book convention, but his obsessive passion gets in the way.

Statement: I chose to focus on the obsession with recording/photographing what we see and are fascinated by during a recreational trip, as I identify with the issue and see comedic potential in revolving a story around this habit. The overall message the film will deliver is, to experience the fun events in front of you in life and not just be a spectator to it. Humor will be used to present the relatable frustration that the main character exhibits with his habit of recording/photographing everything he sees. 2D hand drawn animation will be the film's medium as I feel most comfortable utilizing the medium to be able to emphasize the humor and tone of the film. I also intend to have voice acting in the film in order to emphasize the humorous situation the character's are in through the tone of their voice and as a way to help push the animation acting in the characters. I will use other voice actors as well as myself for the characters.

Story:

Act1

REC'S SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE

The film starts through the perspective of a phone camera, with a boy, Rec Oder, taking pictures of himself in front of a Comic Book Convention poster, making faces at weird distorted angles, with each picture shown being displayed in a social media like format (similar to Facebook and Instagram), receiving "thumbs up" icons underneath the picture (strong/positive, self-empowering feedback).

INTERIOR. COMIC CON CONVENTION HALLWAY ENTRANCE, POSTER WALL

The shot cuts to the boys (ages 13-17), with two of them looking up at a poster promoting a comic-con. The poster features a well-endowed and beautiful actress dressed as a

specific super hero, with text saying “Special guest Riza Bale as Lightning Lyra”, that all three of the boys have a strong appreciation, and attraction to. Two of the older friends argue over who’s going to meet the actress first. Rec then surprises them by taking a group photo of all of them.

REC’S SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE

The picture reveals that Rec is the youngest and shortest of the boys.

INTERIOR. COMIC CON CONVENTION HALLWAY ENTRANCE, POSTER WALL

Rec starts talking to his friends at a super-fast pace, showing them the feedback, he’s received on his recent photos, desperate to impress them. One of the friends interrupts him saying something along the lines of “can you hold that thought until later?” and the two friends begin to run into the convention. Rec is sad and confused by their response.

INTERIOR. COMIC CON CONVENTION HALLWAY

Rec and his friends then head further into the convention. As more people in costume and attractions line up in the hallway, Rec starts to lose his attention to the next entrance and pulls out his phone. He also constantly stops to take photos of the fascinating visuals of the convention and send them to his social media page. He then comes across one group of cosplayers all dressed in mechanical outfits. Greatly excited, Rec runs up in front of them and attempts to take a selfie, but the cosplayers end up toppling over him.

REC’S SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE

The photo shows Rec underneath the rubble of cosplayers, giving a thumbs up.

INTERIOR. MAIN COMIC CON CONVENTION ROOM

Rec joins his friends on a trampoline where the friends are jumping incredibly high up, while Rec is only doing light bounces, and continues to take selfies of his absurd poses in the air. The friends are clearly enjoying the thrill of being up in the air, while Rec looks consumed with how he is holding the camera and what poses he is striking. This is followed up by a series of stills where pictures on Rec’s social media page displaying one of the friend’s accidentally landing on him, and then Rec falling to the ground. The last series of pictures show the friends, with very annoyed faces, propping up a somewhat stunned Rec.

The prior series of pictures then transitions out of Rec's phone and into the next scene where Rec is attempting to show and impress his friends with more photos, though they hold an annoyed expression as he talks. Suddenly, the convention center goes dark. An announcer is heard, saying the Lightning Lyra will shoot free autographed t-shirts to the crowd in the lunch room. The announcement is then followed up by Lyra being flown across the room on invisible wires (with various visual effects that represent her character's power), and once she lands, the lights turn on, but with added color too. Lyra then fires off a large storm of t-shirts around the room from large hand held cannon. The friends try to catch some, but Rec is more interested in photographing the action, and he constantly runs on top of various cosplayers heads and nearby attractions to capture pictures of the exciting event. A t-shirt comes his way, but it bounces off of him. It takes a moment for Rec to register that it's one of the prize shirts, but a random convention attendee swoops by and grabs the shirt before Rec gets a chance to reach it. The event ends and the lighting returns to normal.

Right after Rec misses out on the prize, Rec attempts to show his friends the photos he got, but one of his friends approaches him to say "you were right there! Point blank range! How could you miss out on that?!" This exchange embarrasses Rec as he has not only been unable to get his friends to be happy with his photos, but he has also shown himself to be incompetent and to be a more obvious annoyance to them. Rec then notices that the actress is getting escorted out of the room by security, and that several other attendees are taking photos of Lyra, giving Rec the idea to get a photo with the actress in order to impress his friends.

Act 2

Rec then follows the actress and her bodyguards all the way to the entrance to the entrance of an auditorium. Rec looks into the room that they entered and notices that various microphones are being set up on a stage towards the audience, specifically for convention attendees to ask questions.

He attempts to get to the front of the stage, but the same body guards grab and tosses him to the back of the auditorium, where a line for the questions begins, and is followed by several rows of people .

INTERIOR. MAIN COMIC CON CONVENTION AUDITORIUM

Desperate to avoid the long line, Rec sneaks to the side of the auditorium and notices some wires leading up to platforms above the stage. Rec climbs up and runs to the stage, where Lyra is taking questions, but accidentally lets sand bags loose attached to the ceiling, which end

up knocking over other convention attendees in the line, causing everyone in the line to knock each other over like dominos. With no bodyguards in sight, Rec grabs one of the curtains of the stage, puts his phone between his teeth, and attempts to swing toward Lyra. Rec aims his body toward the beginning of the stage, but as soon as he lands in front of Lyra, a cosplayer in a large robot like costume is knocked over by the people falling behind him, which knocks him over onto Rec and nearly lands on top of Lyra as well.

INTERIOR. MAIN COMIC CON CONVENTION AUDITORIUM – STAGE

Rec pulls himself from underneath the robot and broken floorboards of the stage and brushes himself off. He glances back and notices that Lyra is behind him. He becomes extremely excited and desperately looks for his phone, but can't find it. The robot cosplayer is holding himself up over the stage over the phone, but is losing balance. Rec begins to head for his phone, but begins to hear floorboards cracking and stops. Looking toward the direction of the sound he sees Lyra struggling to move, having her leg caught in some of the dislodged floorboards. Rec's obsessed expression breaks, and his face softens into a look of genuine concern.

He gulps and moves the floor boards to free her. However, when begins to turn around to get his phone, the robot cosplayer lands on top of it, breaking it into several pieces. As Cameron looks to the destruction of his phone, the bodyguards finally arrive and circle her. Cameron notices the security guards surrounding Lyra and turns around. There is a pause, then the wall of bodyguards breaks one more time and Lyra, looking like a goddess, emerges. She thanks Rec by taking a selfie with him with her phone and then slowly gives him a kiss on the cheek. Rec's face displays an overly happy and dreamy expression, and he glides in the air and out of the room in a euphoric state.

Act 3

INTERIOR. MAIN COMIC CON CONVENTION HALLWAY

The two friends are looking at their phones in amazement, but Rec, who's a complete mess, walks by with the same dreamy smile on his face. The friends are happy to see him, but Rec barely notices them. One of the friends says "Unbelievable!" as he looks at his phone. A close up of his phone is shown, which displays Lightning Lyra's social media page, with the selfie that Lyra took with Rec. Rec continues to walk and dance in an overly happy state down the convention hallway, spinning around and high fiving various cosplayers that he passes.

Budget

Voices	\$100x3	\$350
Backgrounds		\$500
Composer/Music		\$150
Adobe Creative Suite	\$20 per month (starting around August)	\$220
Sound Editor&Mixer		\$150
Conventions	Connecticon and Magfest	\$400
Sound Recording Equipment		\$200
Online backup (carbonite) (doesn't break)		\$60
Any additional hard drive		\$100
Animation Tablet (if current breaks)		\$900
Backup Expense- CONTINGENCY	15% of initial total cost (add to total cost later)	\$455
TOTAL		\$3475

Timeline

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Animatic		x	Animatic Night Week 8	x	x					
Story Boards	x	x								
Designs				x	x					
Voices			x							
Music				x	x					
layouts					x	x				
Rough Animation						x	x	x		
Cleanup							x	x	x	
Colors										
Backgrounds						x	x	x	x	
Sound Effects		x		x	x	x	x	x		
Sound Mixing									x	
Title										x
Final Composite/Edit										x

Appendix B – Production Stills

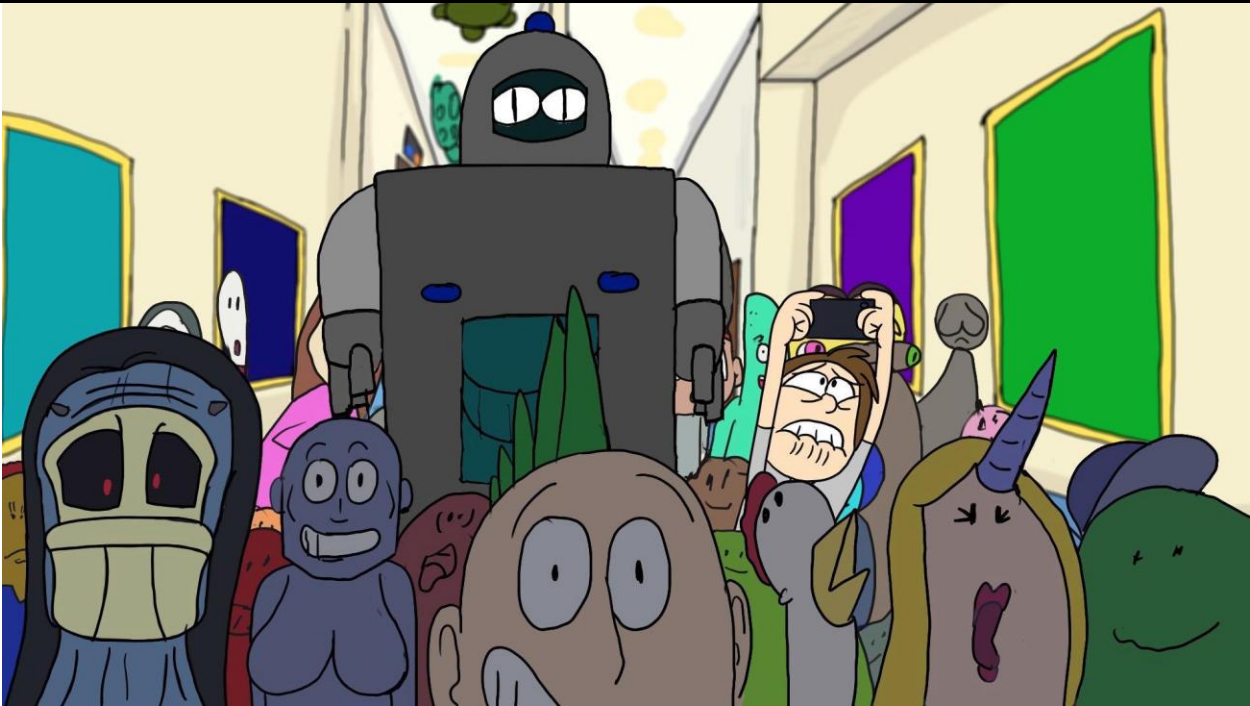


Fig.10. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, still frame



Fig.11. Hurley, Joseph. *Face 2 Face*, still frame

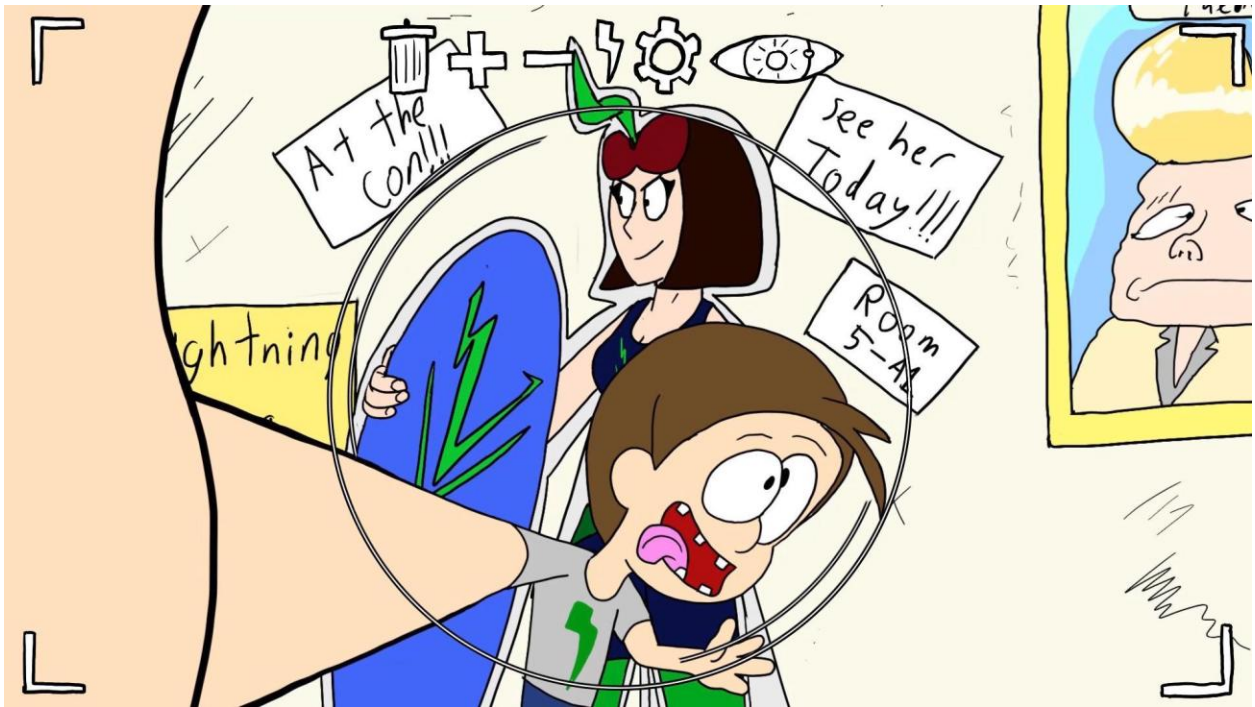


Fig.12.Hurley, Joseph.*Face 2 Face*, still frame



Fig. 13. Hurley, Joseph.*Face 2 Face*, still frame

Appendix C- Script

0:14:02 –

Cameron: Ok, focus in,

0:16:04

Cameron: Oh no wait! Focus out a little bit...

0:19:00

Cameron: Oh yea! Perfect!

0:22:17

Cameron: AAH!

0:31:03

Cameron: Oh wow!

0:32:10

Cameron: So coooooo!

0:40:04

Cameron: Ahh!

0:41:22

Cameron: EEEE!

0:44:05

Cameron: Hmmm?

0:55:14

Cameron: Oof!

0:58:02

Cameron: (gasps)

1:23:11

Cameron: (joyful screaming)

1:32:03

Cameron: (giggles)

1:33:11

Cameron: Ahhhhh

1:34:12

Cameron: ooh, whoa!

1:41:00

Robot Cos-player: Whoa

01:49:10

Robot Cos-player: Huh?

2:01:03

Cameron: (groaning)

2:04:10

Cameron: (heavier groaning)

2:17:14

Cameron: (growling)

2:20:10

Cameron: (groans)

2:26:20

Cameron: Oh!

2:44:08

Cameron: (gasps)

2:46:06

Cameron: (sighs)

2:50:07

Announcer: And now ladies and gentlemen,

2:53:05

Announcer: Introducing, the amazing

2:55:13

Announcer: Lightning... Lyraaaa!

3:16:19

Cameron: (screaming)

3:19:10

Lightning Lyra: Alright Everyone!

3:21:02

Lightning Lyra: Who's ready for the t-shirt cannon?!

3:41:10

Cameron: (screaming)

3:43:13

Cameron: Ahhh

3:53:00

Robot Cos-player: warg! Whoa WhoaWhoaWhoaWhoa,

3:57:00

Robot Cos-player: Whoaaaah!

3:59:22

Cameron: (groans)

4:08:10

Lightning Lyra: (struggling)

4:12:15

Robot Cos-player: (struggling)

4:17:13

Lightning Lyra: (struggling)

4:23:10

Robot Cos-player: (struggling)

4:27:11

Lightning Lyra: (struggling)

4:29:06

Lightning Lyra: Huh?

4:30:14

Cameron: (Struggling)

4:46:03

Cameron: (shutters)

4:49:02

Robot Cos-player: Oof!

4:51:15

Cameron: (shutters)

4:53:11

Cameron: (screams)

4:57:03

Cameron: Huh?

4:58:11

Lightning Lyra: Thanks for the help!

4:59:16

Lightning Lyra: Do you need a hand getting up kid?

5:10:14

Cameron: (gasps)

5:11:10

Cameron: (inhales)

5:13:09

Cameron: Yaaahooo!

5:17:21

Cameron: (Screaming in joy)

5:23:16

Cameron: (Screaming in joy)

5:38:12

Cameron: Yeee-haaa!