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The Dishwasher

By

Kaiyuan Deng

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Film and Animation

School/Department of Film and Animation
College of Art and Design

Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, NY
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Committee Approval:

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Date

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Abstract

The Dishwasher is a 2D animated thesis film that lasts 5 minutes and 27 seconds. This animated short film shows a story of a young man, Kai, who dreams of becoming an artist in the US; however, he has to wash dishes for his living. One day, the dish machine is out of control because of Kai's careless mistake. The manager sees the situation and begins to blame Kai. While the manager yells at him, Kai notices a funny animation loop appearing on the spinning dishes, which makes him laugh. After the manager leaves, Kai looks at his face reflected in the window of the dish machine and it reminds him of the old times when he learned drawing at art school. This coincidental memory sparks Kai's passion for making art on the plates. Then, he starts to dance and decides to treat his job differently.

Acknowledgments

Before describing the process of my thesis film, I would like to thank my thesis adviser, Mari Jaye Blanchard, for always mentoring and pushing me to finish my film successfully. As I lacked basic 2D animation principles and skills, she guided me patiently by demonstrating the keyframes of animation from her laptop to help me clearly understand the body movement of the characters. I also appreciate her help for offering me the opportunity to work with her as a teaching assistant. I have gained skills and built confidence in drawing, and I better understand how to quickly capture poses from a live character. It has been an honor and a pleasure to learn from such an excellent artist and professor. I also would like to thank my thesis committee members, Brian Larson and Mark Reisch for helping me develop my thesis story.

I have improved so much in perspective and skills from their valuable classes. Also, while I studied in the US, my parents have sacrificed a lot to support me in my pursuit of my animation dream. I would like to show my deep appreciation for their infinite love and help.

Last but not least, thanks to my music composer, Tyler Krupicka for creating the amazing original score for my film. His talent and attitude toward making music was a huge contribution to my animated story.

Purpose of Making a 2D thesis as a 3D-Focused Student

I want to address my reason for creating a 2D thesis film after taking most of the 3D courses in RIT before I start to talk about my work process. First of all, I completed two short animation films for the 30-Second Film course and the Animation Workshop; both were 2D digital animation films. At that time, I wanted to build solid drawing skills, so I tried to animate my story by drawing by hand. However, the results were not satisfying, and the animation looked rough. I thought it might be because my drawing skill were not good enough. However, when I took the Advanced 3D Animation class, I remember that I was mainly focused on creating funny actions for the character; I ignored the importance of creating beautiful arcs between poses. Finally, the professor still indicated many problems with the body movements and suggested that I refine them. At that point, I realized that my animation was poor regardless of being 2D or 3D, because I had not figured out the importance of ensuring believable body mechanics in animation. After serious consideration, I

decided that hand-drawn animation would be a better way to solidify my animation fundamentals, and I decided to make a 2D film for my last project in RIT. I hoped to truly improve my skills and expand my knowledge of the principles of animation through hand-drawing practice.

Besides, I love both 2D and 3D animation, but sometimes I was afraid to draw; in other words, I was not very confident with my drawings. I always believed that drawing skills were important fundamentals for both 2D and 3D artists. A solid traditional art perspective and skills can help us make good 3D models, textures, and animation. No matter what career path I choose—3D artist or individual filmmaker—the solid 2D animation experience will be necessary for my professional growth. I also believe that sometimes, we need to jump out of our comfort zones to challenge ourselves and explore our potential.

Last but not least, 2D animation offered relatively more flexibility for the dancing part of my film. I was able to take advantage of hand-drawn animation to exaggerate the movements and expressions of the character. Although my final animation still has room for improvement, I made progress in my drawing skills and 2D animation mechanics.

Introduction

The first 25 years of my life were perfect, without any concern and trouble. Just like many Chinese kids, I always had a lot of support from my family and this support has lasted through the beginning of my journey to pursue my animation dream. The first day when I arrived in Rochester, everything was new but familiar, just like a scene from a TV show. The sky was as pure as the ones in fairy tales, the deer were jumping in the woods, and the beautiful sunset was reflected in Lake Ontario. I was so excited

that my dream was coming to fruition. However, study abroad is never easy for anybody. I was afraid to introduce myself in the first class because of my poor language skills. I was not able to keep up with the professors during class time. Besides the academic aspects, I had to face the truth that each dollar I spent in the market equaled almost 7 yuan (Chinese currency), which was absolutely stressful. Thus, the desire to earn American dollars was my priority at that time. I had read news and articles saying that most American students take on part-time jobs at a very early age. Every time I walked around the campus, I was still surprised by how self-motivated, energetic, independent, and positive my peers were, and soon I started my first part-time job as a dishwasher. The story of *The Dishwasher* is mainly based on my personal experience working in the college dining department. I still believe that nobody really likes to work in the dish room; it is a dirty place with hot steam and loud machine noises. The dishes on the track always ran faster than my frantic hands, and I left every shift with wet clothes and shoes, feeling like I could not bear it anymore. That was my first part-time job experience.

The experience of being a dishwasher in a foreign country had a profound impact on my life, so I chose it as the inspiration to create this film. Additionally, people sometimes live in unexpected circumstances—they might not like the jobs they do. We always encounter difficulty finding the balance between living and dreaming, and I believe that dreams never die in people's hearts. Thus, I connected the dishwasher job with my artistic dream for the character to tell the audience that no matter what miserable situation we face, as long as we never forget why we started, we can eventually live with it in a happier way.

Pre-production: Story Development

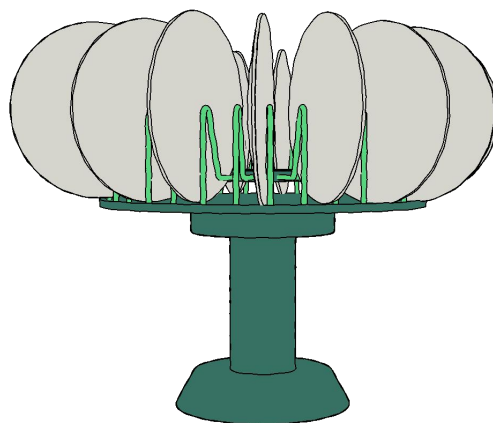
As a filmmaker, the story is a significant foundation step in the production process. I was struggling to come up with an idea during the thesis preparation class because it was the last film that I created before I left college and that put a lot of pressure on it being successful. One night, while I was tossing and turning in bed, I came up with the idea to explore my experiences of studying abroad which was such a unique time in my life. I began to intensively recall my two years living in the US. I have traveled to many places during breaks, such as New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, etc. I was proud to drive along the Historic Route 66 from Chicago to LA to experience the pioneer spirit of American people, and I was fascinated by the absorbing Pacific coast along Highway 1 in California. I wanted to keep exploring the world; I would like to stand on the top of the Empire State Building to look down the city and say, "Hello New York." However, I had to pull myself back from the beautiful memories, because the truth is that I was only a tiny little piece of the crowd on a metropolitan street. Times Square was attractive, but what also left an impression was the tramp who was trying to pick up a cigarette butt. Then I realized that most of the time, I was a student worker with an artistic dream, fighting hundreds of the dishes in the dish room. We can easily live with a happy life; however, can we still be positive living in unexpected situations? Based on this point of view, I decided to tell the story of being a dishwasher in the US.

My initial idea for the story had two parts; the first part was more graphic style, with a narration of my voice introducing my background and my fantasy of living in the US. Then, the shot would expose the audience to the reality that the main character was a dishwasher with a terrible, boring working environment. After my first thesis committee meeting, the professors advised me that there were different ways to

animate with or without narration. If I decided to keep the narration, it would be better to have it throughout the whole film. It would be tricky to combine two different visual styles for one part with narration and another without it. Through deep consideration, I decided to eliminate the narration and let animation tell the story. After cutting the narration, I came up with a new idea to give my character a background in Chinese kung fu and had him fight with the monsters represented by dishes and plates, which might be a funny moment for the audience. Professor Blanchard gave me the option to either follow my original intention to create a small guy with a dream or make a warrior to delight the audience. Eventually, I insisted on my initial urge to address the reality of my own experience and create a poor little dishwasher with an artistic dream.

Developing a story idea is always the most difficult part for me. It makes no sense to simply tell a story describing the daily duties of a dishwasher. So I decided to take time to find inspirations from excellent films. *Inner workings*, an animated short film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios, which I had fortunate to watch on the 18th Animation Show of Shows. I remember the moment that the main character return to his bored job, taping the keyboard like an energetic DJ after enjoying himself on the beach. That scene inspired me remarkably to make the dishwasher dancing with the plates and finish the job positively. Another great film, *Craft*, directed and animated by Professor Blanchard which also left a deep impression on me. The single lady immerses herself in the fantasy world of bringing her crafts to life. Finally, this marvelous moment is interrupted by a sudden doorbell, and the live crafts vanish with several scraps of paper falling in the room. I can still remember that the lady takes a selfie with her live crafts and dances with them, which made me think that I should be more creative to build a relationship between my artistic dream and

dishwashing instead of making my character simply dancing with the dishes. As I constantly struggled to connect the dishwashing to the artistic dream of the character; it was impossible for me to only depend on my imagination. One day, when I was doing research, I got inspired by a funny picture of the cute expressions on a jar and leftovers on a white plate. I felt excited and talked to my thesis adviser, Professor Blanchard. She was happy and suggested expanding our horizon to connect dishes to the principles of zoetrope. This idea settled my desire to intently study the history of this pre-film animation device and better apply it to my story. Through studying the principle and function of zoetrope, I concluded that I could build a round dish rack, and when the rack is spinning inside the dish machine, it would create the illusion of motion which looks like a strip of drawings inside the zoetrope's drum. Also, this idea can be similarly understood as cartoon drawings on a flip-book, where pictures flash before our eyes.



Plates on the dish rack

From this perspective, my character had space to explore the possibilities of applying art to dish washing through a spinning machine that I built specially. With the help of my thesis adviser, I successfully created a bridge between the dishwasher and his artistic dream. Regarding dreams, I believe everybody has a dream and experiences happiness and pain along the way to their destination. My dream is to become an artist in the animation industry, but when I stand in the dish room, I cannot see my dream. From this perspective, I had the character's face, reflected in the glass of the dish machine, flash back to when he was a student in the art school. I began to learn drawing in high school, and it was not necessary to earn money. I was able to simply focus on what I learned and loved, and it was the best period that I will treasure and remember.

My film is not intended only to commemorate my life in Rochester but the experiences of people whose dreams are tangled in unexpected circumstances. I hope they can be tough and positive in their lives.

Storyboard: Directing the Eyes

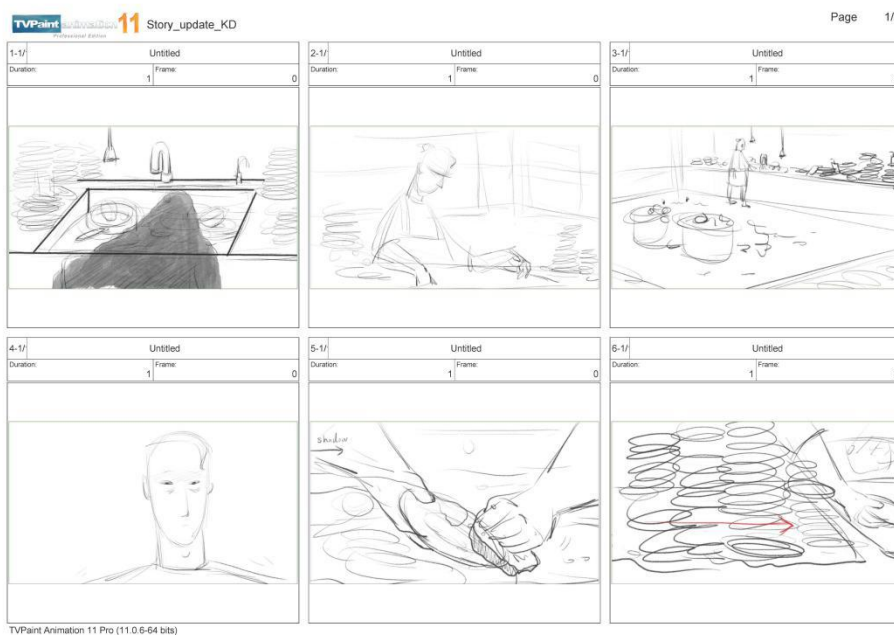
A script is a verbal plan for a story. A storyboard is a plan for the visualization of that story. A storyboard is the inspirational heart, mind and soul of a movie (Glebas 47).

Looking back to when I was struggling to pre-visualize my story through simple line drawings, I realize that this step is necessary training for each filmmaker. I was so fortunate to have the great opportunity to assist Professor Blanchard in the Animation Writing & Visual Storytelling class. When I looked at the storyboards created by other undergraduate students, I saw young talents with excellent imaginations; however, their stories became vague through the demonstration of their visual pieces.

I had to pay much more attention to their verbal descriptions to understand the story. Comparing these to my works, I asked myself whether my storyboard was enough to make people understand the story. Because my verbal skills were insufficient, I needed to focus my efforts on good storytelling.

Initially, I drew too many shots with various camera angles because I thought that changing the camera angle frequently would make the story more vivid, but I was wrong. Professor Blanchard suggested that the camera angle should only change for a reason. If I changed the camera too many times without one, the story would lose continuity and the audience might get confused. She also taught me how to draw the layouts from the correct perspective by using vanishing points.

Perspective is an optical system based on looking at a scene from a single viewpoint. Perspective creates the missing depth from our pictures but it also creates unity in the picture to a single viewpoint, thus directing our eyes (Glebas191).



Storyboards from TVPaint

Animatic Night

The first year I studied in RIT, I learned about the term “animatic” from the Pre-production for Animation class. At that time, I had no idea how it would work for a filmmaker, until the professor showed us a professional animatic of a feature film. From that video, I could clearly understand the story through correct timing of critical actions, primary sound effects, and dialogue, which became an animated storyboard that helped the filmmakers better control the pace of the film. In my first thesis semester, SOFA (School of Film and Animation) provided a valuable event for us to share our animatic videos with each other and receive feedback.

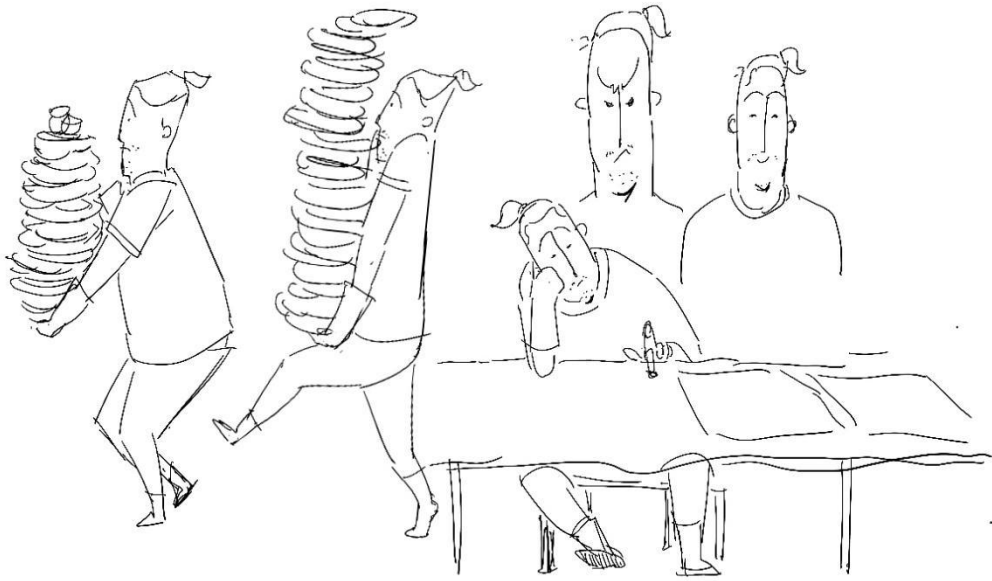
In the beginning, I did not plan to attend the Animatic Night; this event was only required for undergraduate students, and I was afraid to show my work because I thought it was not good enough. However, things always happen unexpectedly in my life. Professor Blanchard required me to join the Animatic Night, and I finally showed my work to other students, which was one of the most fun and unforgettable experiences of my entire life. I was finally able to see whether my story was clear to the audience and what they anticipated in terms of the actions of the characters in the story. An undergraduate student said that he would be excited to see if the dish room could be painted all over by the dishwasher at the end of the film. I considered his idea as another choice for my ending, but eventually I kept my original idea to have the dishwasher finish his job rather than mess up it. Because my goal was to build a connection between the character’s dream and his job, it was important to make him enjoy his job. The Animatic Night was a significant opportunity to review my story before I began to animate.

Remembering that moment, I think I would have regretted not taking that opportunity to share my story. After that day, I told myself that sometimes people might not feel satisfied with their work or struggle to be creative, but we should never deny an opportunity to get inspired by others.

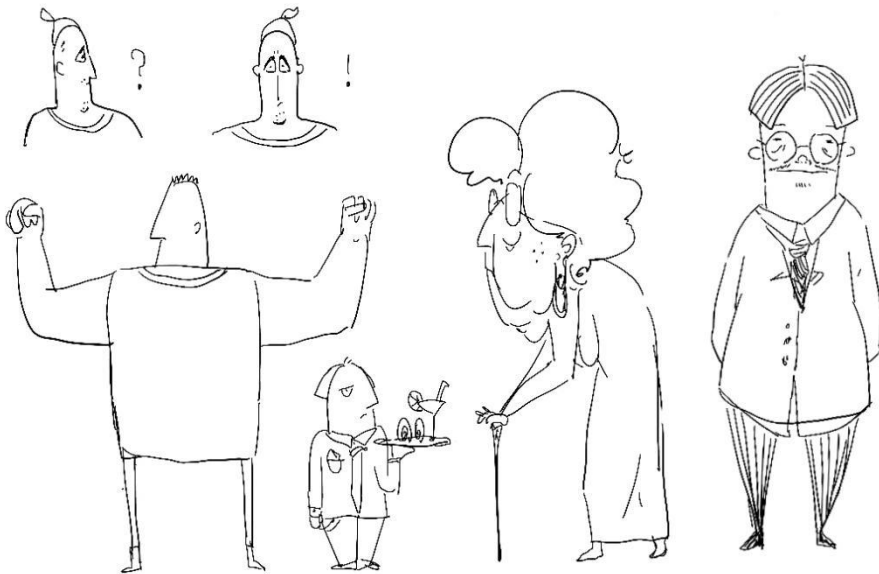
Character Design

Character design is the most fun part of the pre-production stage, especially in making the character-driven animation. As a 3D-focused student, I made a smart choice to take the Concept and Character Design course taught by Professor Brian Larson during my second year at SOFA. One interesting practice I remember was when he provided us a portrait to observe for 30 seconds then let us try to draw it. At the beginning, I tried hard to remember everything about the portrait but failed to transfer my memories to a drawing. Through several practice sessions, I realized the core of this training was to help us quickly catch the silhouette and the unique features of a character. From then on, I applied this training as a warm-up practice before I started to design my characters and found that it was much easier for me to sketch a character's various actions and expressions.

Because my film was based on my own story, I decided to use my appearance as the reference to design the main character. I was not struggling with drawing the character too much, except that I spent more time looking in the mirror than usual those days. At the beginning, I tried to recall my daily routine as a dishwasher with some rough sketches for the actions and expressions of the character.



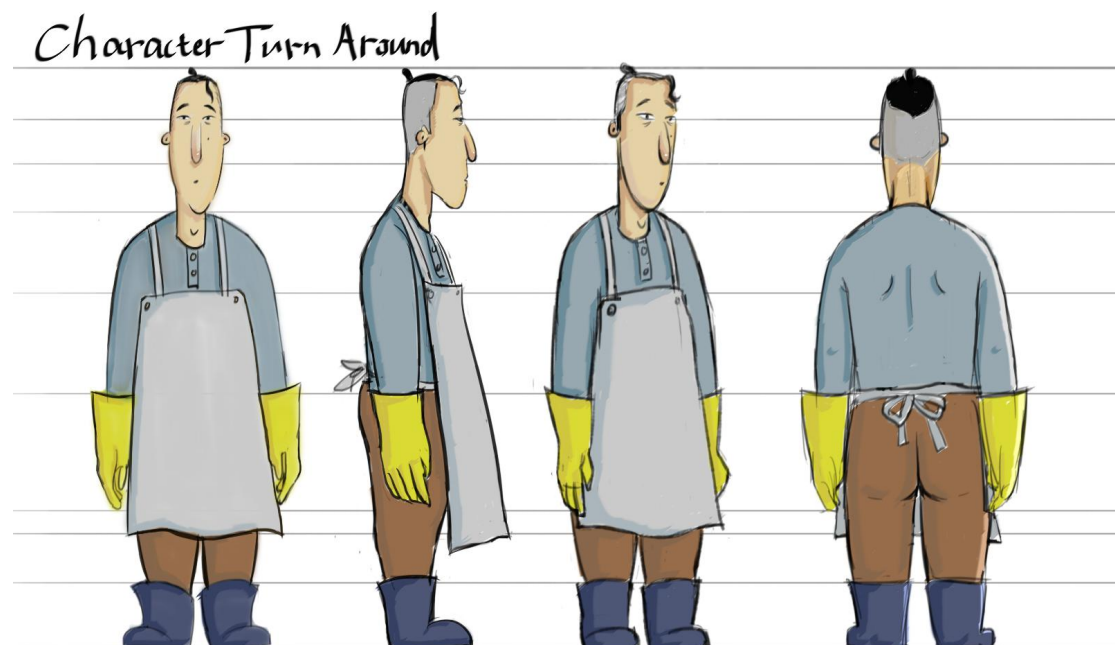
Character Rough Sketches 01



Character Rough Sketches 02

During my spare time, I watched a lot of animation shorts by the students of the Gobelins Animation School. I was attracted by their art style, which was more mature and realistic rather than graphic and cartoonish. Based on this, I designed the main

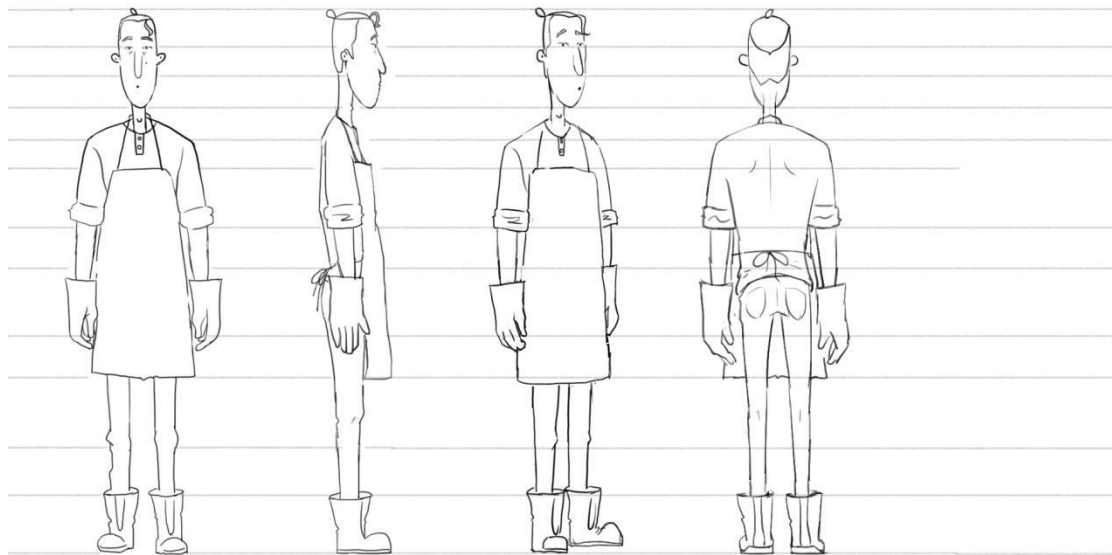
character with a traditionally oriental appearance more acceptable to teenagers and adults. I always keep in mind that no matter what kind of style I would like to pursue, I should draw the basic shapes as simply as I can to make the animating process more effective. However, one thing that concerned me was whether I should put an apron on the character. If I did, I would spend more time animating the apron as secondary animation, which would be a problem for someone lacking sufficient training in 2D animation. Finally, I kept the apron because I wanted to create a believable character. Here was my first version of the main character.



Character Version 01

For my first version, I intended to increase the gravity of the entire feeling of the character by giving him a big head and a short, solid lower body. In a meeting with Professor Blanchard, she said that she liked my style and suggested that I tweak the proportions of the character to make him look more natural and believable. I agreed

with her opinion and made the character taller and thinner, thinking the final version would have more flexibility in animation.



Character Final Version

Environment Design

The story mostly occurred in the dish room, and there was only one scene that took place at the front door of the bar. I set up the bar located on a New York City street. I have been to the world-famous metropolises such as NYC and Toronto and have seen all kinds of people on the street, from successful businessmen and fashionable young adults to poor homeless individuals. The big city might be full of vigor and vitality, but in a small dark street corner, there is a guy who is struggling to make a living. I wanted to build a contrast of atmospheres from the lively bar to the dark, lonely side door of the dish room through my background painting.

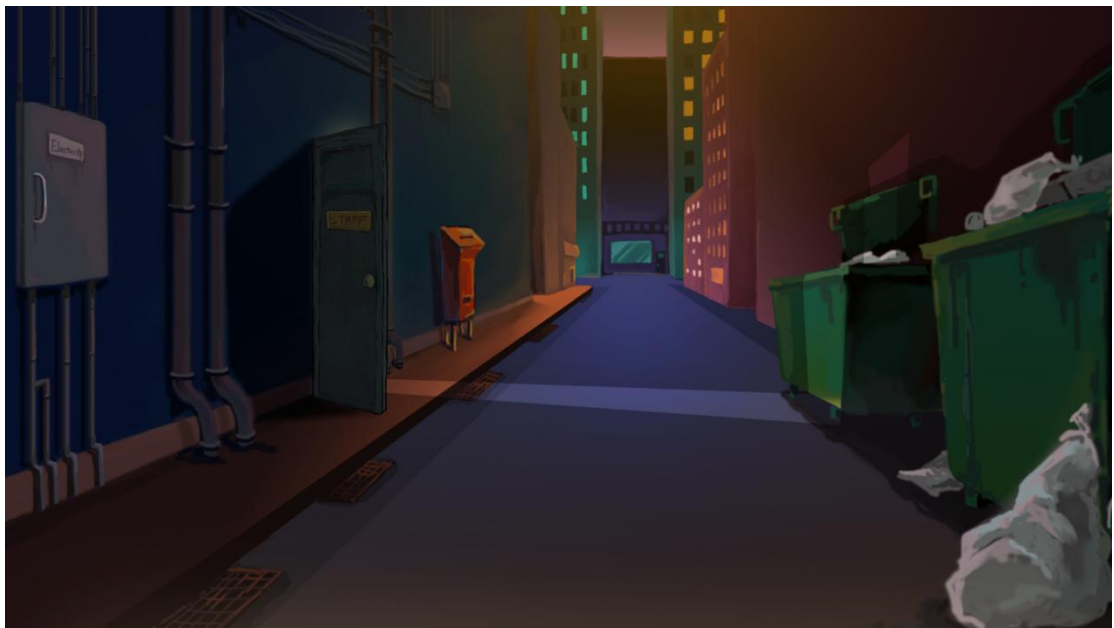
From the perspective of a dishwasher doing an exhausting job at the bottom of society, I designed a bar called The Dream with big neon lights on the front door, which reflected the appealing night in New York City. Conversely, I created a dark, lonely alley beside the bar where the main character begins to appear to the audience. The contrast of these two scenes helped me better emphasize the insignificant character struggling to attain his dream. To finish these two scenes, I searched a lot of photos of New York streets as references to draw from sketches to color and was finally satisfied with the results. The photos below are the reference image and final scene design.



New York street reference (<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/109141990956117450/>)



Final Bar Design



Final Alley Design

For the interior of the dish room, I went back to the place on campus where I worked as a dishwasher and took pictures from various angles as references for rebuilding the dish room of my version. I had decided to show moving pictures on spinning plates, but the plate weren't visible inside the dish machine, originally. Thus, I designed my dish machine with transparent glass on the side face so that people could see the spinning plates inside it. Additionally, I took advantage of my 3D skills in modeling a dish room in Cinema4D to make sure I had the right perspective when drawing the layouts. Although I spent more time building a rough 3D version of the dish room, the final results proved that this method worked pretty well, and I was happy with that.



3D scene in Cinema4D



Dish room final design

Production: Acting is key

Since I was a kid, I have always had a strong passion to act. Before New Year's parties, I usually met with my pals to design a comedy and showed it to the class later during the party. After I grew up, sometimes I felt too shy to express myself in this way, and maybe this is the reason that I cannot be an actor. However, animation offered me a great opportunity to realize my acting dream. When I am looking at a character model sheet or a 3D rig, I still have the urge to play with it and bring the character to life. Prior to actual animating, I asked myself what kind of feelings and emotions I would like to express to the audience. I have to say that when I was a dishwasher, I certainly did not know I would make a film about this job. So based on those points, I put on my yellow rubber gloves and cook apron to recall this experience in front of the camera. When the rock music began, I recorded the entire process of washing dishes at my apartment.



Acting clips

After I was done with the video recording, I watched it again and again to decide which action should be performed more subtly and which ones needed more exaggeration. Due to there being a dancing part in the last minute of my film, I played the demo music designed by my composer and tried to fit the beats of the music with my dancing movements in front of the camera. Recording reference footage is really helpful for animators to better control and analyze the timing and body mechanics of characters.

Animation Pipeline

I animated this short film using TVPaint pro, a powerful and solid software for 2D animators. Since I had never taken the 2D Mechanics course, I even had concerns and problems with drawing a walking cycle. Professor Blanchard showed me tips on animating a character walking. She instructed me to focus on the contact positions of

the feet first, then draw a passing position in the middle, and finally insert the down and push-off positions between each contact and passing position. She emphasized the importance of getting these four key poses correct, which was the priority of animating a good character walk.

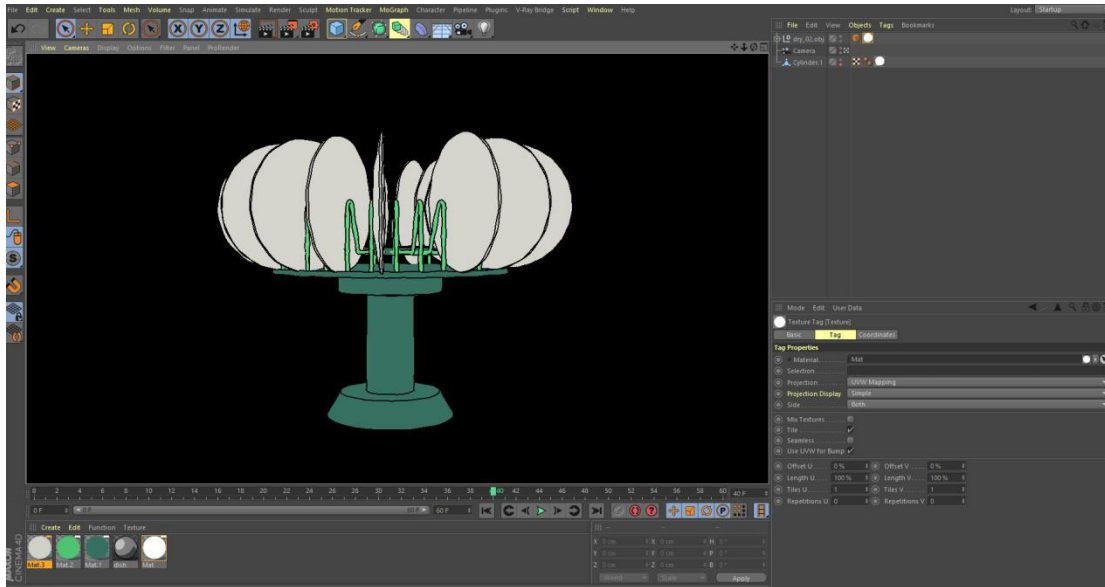
As 3D animators, we usually spend a lot of time looking at graphs and curves in graph editors on Maya and need to keep the characters moving instead of making the characters hold for frames. Thus, I had to start over to understand the frame rate in a 2D animation pipeline. Professor Blanchard showed me the importance of making time charts before animating; she also suggested animating in twos, meaning two exposures per drawing. So putting my drawings on the odd frames would give me 12 drawings per second, which saved me a significant amount of time and produced decent results. After that, for particularly fast or smooth actions, I could insert frames between odds and animate on ones.

Obviously, life is on ones (or whatever speed we film it on), but twos work well for most actions and, of course, it is half as much work as doing it on ones. And half as expensive! Working on ones is twice as much work and expense all the way down the production line. (Williams 78)

A combination of straight ahead and pose-to-pose methods was applied to animate my film. To better manage the timing, I used the stopwatch from my cell phone frequently to record the timing of my actions so I could estimate the time for each shot. I drew rough storytelling poses based on the estimated timing, then added the extremes between them to make sure the overall structure was solid. Thus, I was able to animate straight ahead to fill the gaps. In the early stage of animating the film, I

tried to keep the lines as loose as possible to maintain flexibility for changing or refining. As the time passed incredibly quickly, I found that it was difficult to catch up on my original schedule; first, I spent more time settling my story early in the second thesis semester. Second, lacking 2D animating experience meant I was constantly seeking help from books and the internet during the production process. Based on this situation, I made certain adjustments to improve my efficiency. I did the background painting instead of wasting time when I felt tired of animating. Additionally, I drew more solid and accurate lines on the new shots to reduce the time needed to refine my animation during the inking process.

One tricky part through the entire production process was the spinning plates on the dish rack. Previously, I planned to draw them frame by frame, but there were a lot of perspective changes on the plates, which would become a time-consuming task. I also tried to draw the plates in a way that implied a false spinning movement, but I still did not get a satisfactory result. Coincidentally, one day, I watched a video tutorial demonstrating a very interesting 3D material called Sketch & Toon. This material can achieve a beautiful 2D graphic style with sketch outlines from a 3D rendering, which was an ideal method for my problem of animating the spinning plates. Thus, I modeled a round dish rack in Cinema4D with several plates on it and a cylindrical base under it so that the dish rack could rotate 360 degrees. Then, I applied the Sketch & Toon material to the 3D models, tweaking the parameters to create flat colors and hand-drawn outlines. I animated the dish rack to rotate for 60 frames, which was enough to create animation loops in TVPaint.



Dish rack in Cinema4D

Finally, I rendered the spinning animation sequence in PNG format from Cinema4D; that only took 5 minutes, which saved me a significant amount of production time.

Next, I imported the image sequence to TVPaint and tested the animation; the result worked pretty well.



Dish rack in TVPaint

The coloring work was also completed in TVPaint using the CTG (Color Texture) layer, which was a very efficient coloring system that saved me a plenty of time and energy during the process.

Music

For my first two animation shorts, I had not worked with a composer. I thought the thesis film would be a special one because it was my last opportunity to be an individual filmmaker as a student. Thus, I had the fortune to meet the excellent Tyler Krupicka, who was double majoring as a composer. The first time we met, Tyler showed strong interest in my film, and although we only contacted each other through email during the semester, he always offered me a lot of support based on my needs for the music. Additionally, his working efficiency and musical talent brought my animation to life.

Because of the story needs, the last minute of the animation has lots of dancing, which is strongly supported by the beats of the music. Tyler designed a demo based on my animatic video so that I could put the music into TVPaint and began to animate the dancing actions. For the style of the music, I pursued a light jazz-rock fusion; it has a strong sense of rhythm but is not too noisy, and I had experience playing trumpet, so I wanted to blend this kind of exciting sound element into the music of my story. Tyler was very supportive and effective, and he combined the sounds of piano, drum, bass, trumpet, and trombone to create a happy, positive atmosphere.

This successful collaboration was a precious experience and made me realize how important a composer's contribution can be to a film or animation. I hope to meet more people like Tyler and seek opportunities to work together in the future.

Post Production

When I stepped into this stage, there was not much gas left in the tank in terms of my body or mind. Yet, I knew it was not time to relax, as I was getting close to the destination. The first thing I did was to import the newest version of all my backgrounds, which I painted in Adobe Photoshop, to TVPaint. With all the finished animation frames and backgrounds collected, I exported each shot to a single MOV video file, then combined all the video files in Adobe Premiere. Next, I placed the audio files according to the position of the video files, tweaking back and forth to make sure that the sounds and images worked well with each other. Another important task was to check that the volume of the sound fit the requirement of the film's technical specification. The last step was to watch the film again and again to catch any careless mistakes. Eventually, I hit the render button.

Screening and Critique

The Dishwasher finally screened at the Carlson Auditorium in RIT with all my classmates and professors present. The overall process was pretty positive, and I received many helpful and precious critiques as well as feedback. Professors Murphey and Gasek first expressed appreciation of my story and the animation skills that I had improved through 3 years of training in the SOFA department. Professor Gasek mentioned that he thought he would see a gallery of painted dishes at the end of the film, but the main character finally cleaned the dishes. I previously considered making the character enjoy himself while messing up the room with his artwork. However, for my personal purposes, I wanted to create a tragic character with a comedic ending. I tried to tell the audience that the dishwasher should treat his duty in a positive way. If I could start over, I think having the character ruin his job would add express sadness to the audience, but I believe it would be another good choice.

In addition, Professor Murphey indicated that he had expected more from the artwork made by the dishwasher. I totally agree with his opinion, and I really should have opened my mind and been more creative in designing more exciting elements for the dancing part of my film. The anticipation of the audience is very critical to filmmakers, who have a responsibility to satisfy the people who come to watch the film. Regarding this point, I feel disappointed, because I think I could do better. To the applause of the audience, I came down from the stage and finished my last screening experience in RIT. I was happy that most of the people were able to understand my story through the film, which was the priority, and the parts of the film that did not work well will inspire me to improve myself. I really appreciate the people who gave me supportive feedback during the screening.

Strength and Weakness of the Film

I had not much experience in making an animated film before I came to study at RIT. I am glad that SOFA offered me great opportunities to create three short films, which were valuable practices of being a filmmaker in the future. Comparing to my two previous works, I can see my improvements in applying effective camera shots to make successful storytelling, which accurately reflected my personal story while living in the US. Also, I built high confidence in drawing through this project by completing solid concept designs and animation.

I appreciate my courage to jump out of my comfort zone to make a 2D film as a 3D-focused student, and it took me more time to study the 2D production pipeline as well as basic body mechanics in animation. I clearly know that I still have much room to improve the animating and acting parts of this film, which should be more subtle and detailed. And I feel that the climax of my film was not satisfied the audience and myself because of the arts on the dishes need to be supported with more abundant imagination. I should design more specific actions on how the character enjoys himself at the end of the film.

For the time management of this project, I spent more time tweaking my story, and I was falling behind with my production schedule, which pushed me to rush to finish the works before the deadline. That was the significant point I need to improve to seek the balance between storytelling and animating on my next project.

Conclusion

Like I said in the beginning, *The Dishwasher* is a story based on my own experience. Although being a dishwasher is only a small fragment of my four years of life in Rochester, it reflects much more on the future. As a visitor, I had a lot of brilliant

times in the US. I will remember the beautiful sunset on Santa Monica beach, the little black beetle crawling on the white sands of Arizona, and the beautiful and mysterious aurora spread over the sky of Fairbanks. Those happy moments made my life more complete and wonderful. I also remember my car stuck in the thick snow ditch, forcing me to call for road assistance, staying up in the animation lab with my lovely classmates, and putting on the apron to fight for my dream in the dish room. Those unexpected situations and tough times truly helped me grow up and look forward to the rest of my life positively.

From the perspective of a filmmaker, I have learned a lot from the entire process of making my thesis film. I saw the significance of making a solid structure for the story and how a relatively perfect animatic makes the production process much easier. I also learned that as a director, sometimes I should stand in the shoes of the audience and try to figure out what they really expect to happen in the story. I understand that sharing with others and getting feedback is always more helpful than thinking alone. People like to watch positive stories about seemingly insignificant characters, and I believe the details of the actions and expressions are the keys to touching the audience more deeply. At this point, I understand that my film lacked some details of acting, which I will improve in the future.

From the perspective of an animation student, I appreciate all the skills and knowledge that I gained from each assignment and class in RIT. I am happy to see my improvements and growth from one project to another, and I am thankful that I have had such great professors and classmates through the years. The thesis film may be a destination of my master study; however, I treat it as the fresh start of my career. At the age of thirty, I would like to tell myself to stay hungry, stay young, and always be ready to face the new stories of my life.

Works Cited

Glebas, Francis. *Directing the Story: Professional Storytelling and Storyboarding Techniques for Live Action and Animation*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2010.

Williams, Richard. *The Animators Survival Kit: a Manual of Methodos, Principles and Formulas for Classical, Computer, Games, Stop Motion and Internet Animators*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2009.

Appendix A: Original Proposal

The Dishwasher

(Working Title)

2D Animation

Kaiyuan Deng

Thesis Proposal

For MFA in Film and Animation

School of Film and Animation

Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York

April, 2017

Approved for Submission by:

Mari Blanchard, Thesis Chair

Log line: A dishwasher tries to face his life positively.

Treatment/Story:

Following the narration below, there will be the main character in the middle of the screen with various backgrounds and clothes that are quickly changed. Narration :
“Hello World, I am Kaiyuan Deng, from China. Because I am the only product of my parents, my life was totally carefree without any troubles and difficulties. What a super Dad and Mom! They were like the Swiss army knives that satisfied all the needs of my life. After I grew up, you know, everyone had an American dream! So did I. Before I came to the US, I always thought that my new life was supposed to be like this... (the main character stands on top of the Empire State Building and punches his chest which is like a cute King Kong), and like this...(the main character smokes a cigar and enjoys a strip show at Las Vegas), or at least like this...(the main character gets an A on his paper and cheers with his friends) Oh boy, did I have it wrong! Actually, my life is.....”(this time, the background changes to the dish room)
A dishwasher is washing the dishes very slowly, frowning and exhausted. He sighs a little bit and steers at the clock. It is just six in the evening. He only works five minutes which is like five years. A strong guy just finishes his shift and walks away with a beautiful waitress. “ Let’s go watch Netflix and Chill” The strong guy says. After they walk away, the dishwasher turns his head to his long thin arm. “ Hmmm...” He shakes his head and puts down his arm. Suddenly, his cellphone rings then he opens it and finds a message: “Happy Birthday! From GEICO.” The dishwasher feels very sad to be just a dishwasher on his 30th birthday. He closes his eyes and tightly grasps his cellphone then everything seems to change. He wears a decent suit at a big party with beers and music. All of the people raise him up and push him to the sky. The dishwasher feels happy and moved but when he falls down the people disappear. He looks at himself and finds that actually he collapses at the ground of the dish room. The dishwasher slowly stands up and has to finish his duty. The entire room which full of boring and lifeless with the strong noise from the old machine. He sees his sad face which is reflected from the dirty water and the noise of the dish machine seems to become quiet. A fat black woman walks through the dish room with her huge butt swings left to right that follows the rhythm of a happy song she sings which is the same song in the party. Following this happy song, the dishwasher begins to humming and tries to make beats through the bowls and bottles. At the same time, the

other guys begin to respond to the dishwasher. Someone use spoon to beat the bowl, someone makes beat-box through his mouth and someone uses plates to make the effects of DJ. They become a band and the dish room becomes to a brilliant stage. When everyone is enjoying this beautiful moment, along with the music rhythm, the door is opened. The manager opens the door and shout to them angrily: “What the hell are you doing? Wash your dishes!” After the manager closes the door, everybody stops and looks at each other then they begin to make music again.

In the end, the camera only focus on the main character. He plays with a bowl by his hands like an acrobat then he puts the bowl down to his workbench to end the story after the camera transfer to the upshot. For this shot, I still have a narration: “Life includes happiness and sadness, even if it’s not what you expected, just enjoy it now.”

Bonus Scene:

The manager gets out of the dish room with her angry face but suddenly she begins to dance with the music. After few seconds she stops dancing and checks to make sure that no one sees her then she walks away happily.

Rationale:

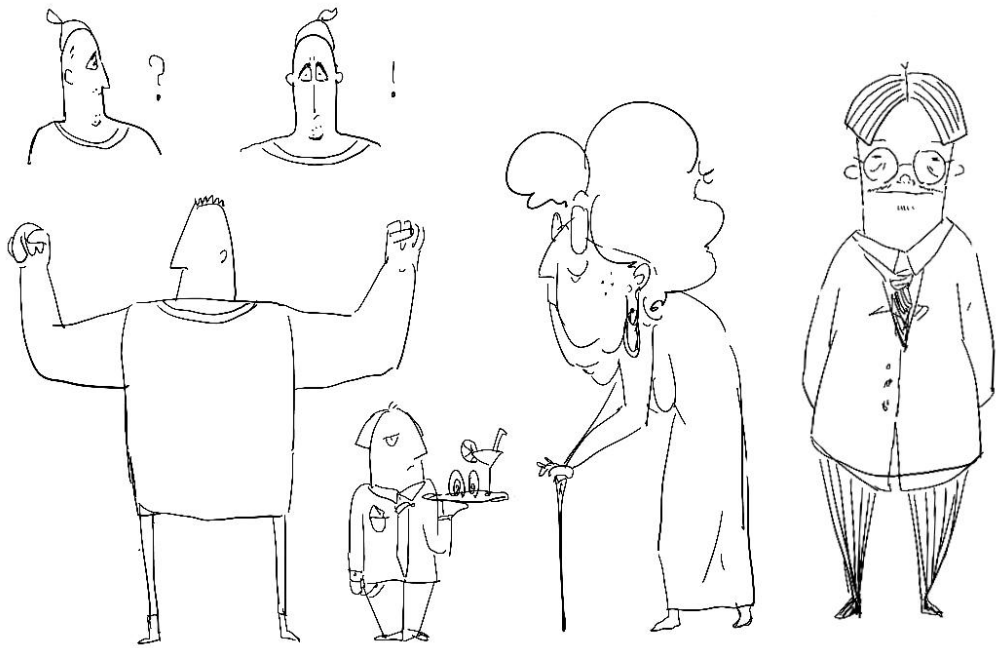
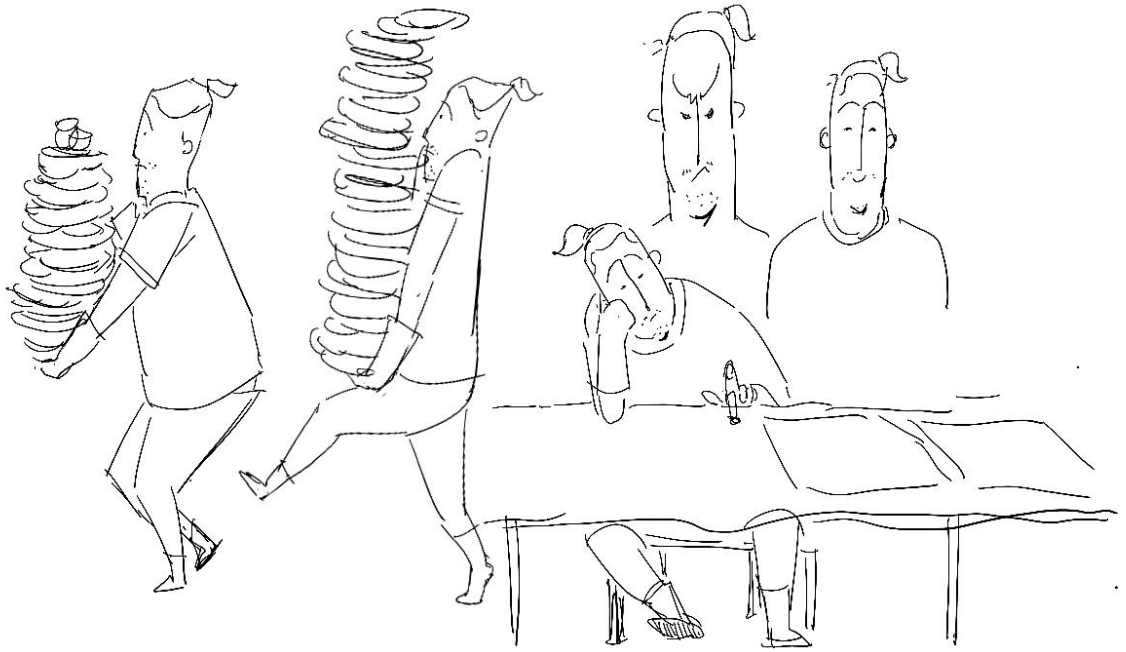
Before I came up with this story idea, I always think that I should create a unique and sophisticated story for my thesis film. After I racked my brains, I got nothing satisfied and did not have strong emotion on what I created because they were not my stories. So I began to watch short films of Disney and Pixar again and again then I realized that the glamour of animation is the way to strengthen a small and simple story. And I told to myself: “ Why not to tell my own story through a unique and stronger way? ” This story is base on my own experience of being a dishwasher on campus. I have done various jobs in the dining area but the one which I cannot forget is the dishwasher. Nobody wants to go to the dish. It’s tough and boring but I learned how to keep positive attitude to my life from this job no matter how hard it was.

I prefer 2D as the way to make this film because 2D has the design potential I am looking for. I think the biggest challenge of making this film is the combination of both animation and music. I still need to figure out how to create the movements tightly fit on the rhythm of the music. But I believe that it would have a lot of fun. In

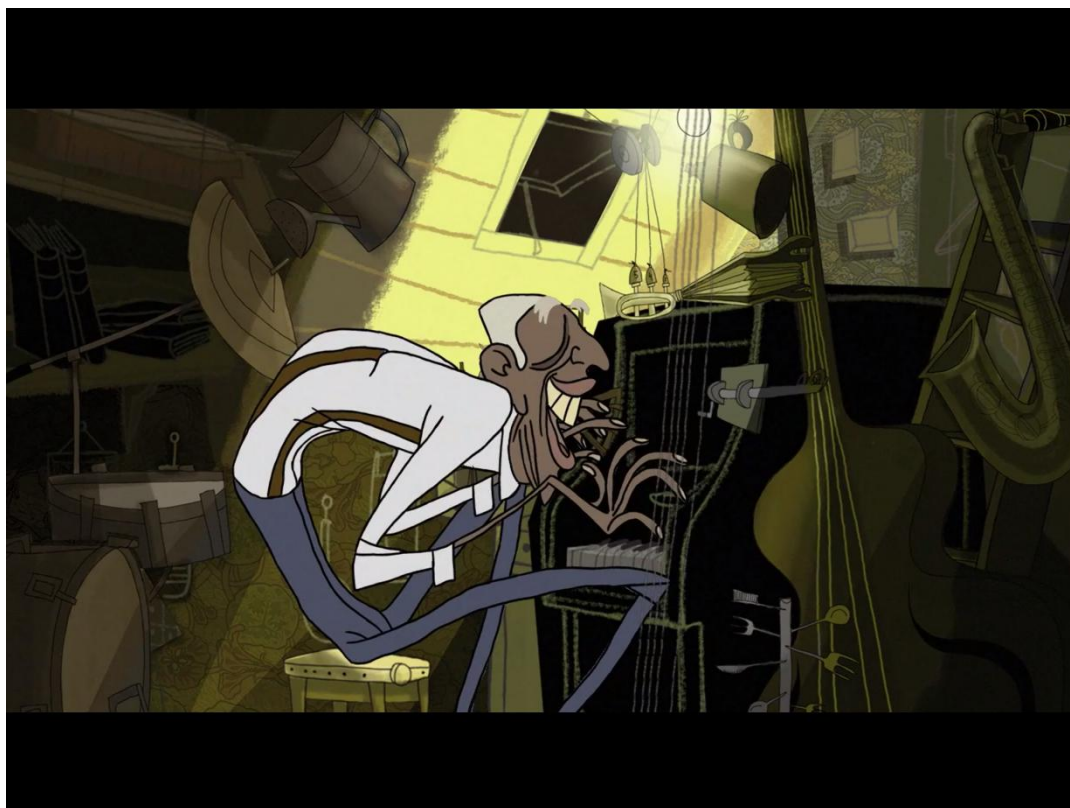
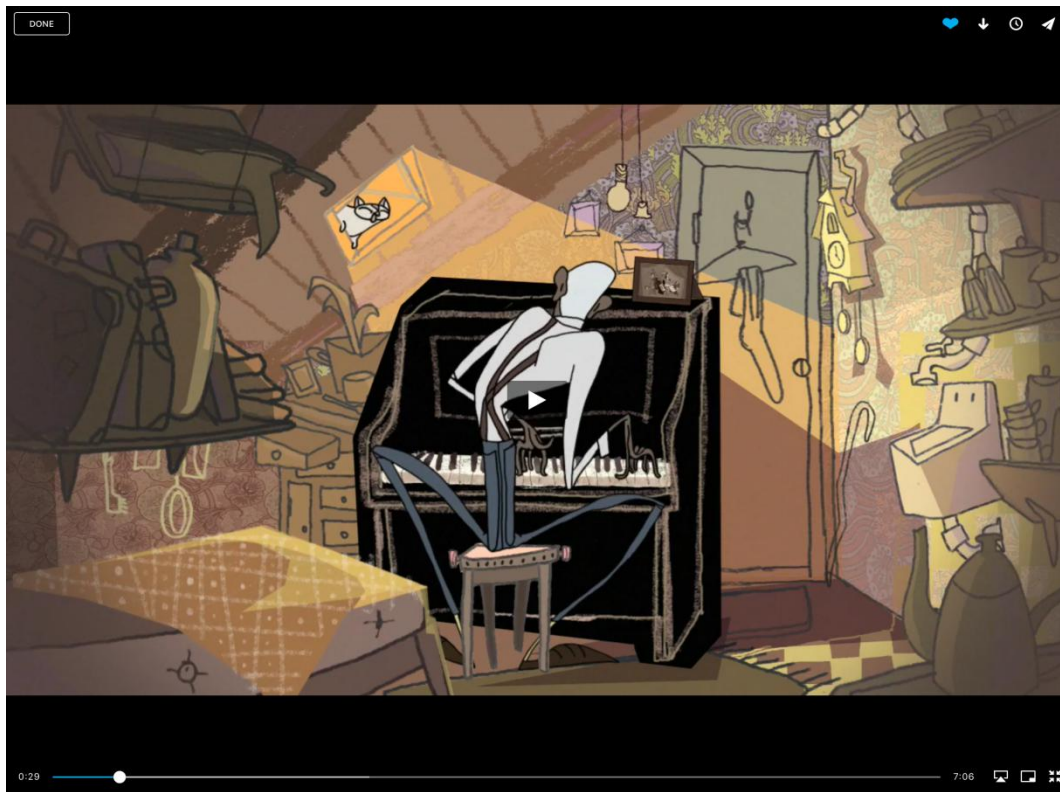
addition, I pursue to move the perspective of the camera in some of my shots which is another challenge for me. And I think this way will make both the animation and the story much stronger.

Visual Sketches:





Visual Reference:



Budget:

| Categories and Items | Cost |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Drawing Supplies | \$200 |
| Device | |
| Wacom Tablet | \$400 |
| Software | |
| TVPaint | \$300 |
| Sound | |
| Sound Effects | \$200 |
| Composer's compensation | \$300 |
| Promotion | |
| Festival fees | \$200 |
| Total | \$1600 |

Time Line:

| | | Apr | May | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pre-production | Character Designs | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Environment Designs | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Storyboard | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Animatic | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Animatic Nights | | | | | | | | | | |
| Production | Keys(Rough) | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Extremes(Rough) | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Inbetweens(Rough) | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Background | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Clean up | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Animation Color | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Background Color | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Special Effects | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sound Design | Narration Demo | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Narration | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Background Music | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sound Effects | | | | | | | | | | |
| Post-production | Composite | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Effects | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Render | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix B: Screen Shots







