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Life is a die

by

Xiangyu Deng

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts Degree in Visual Communication Design

School of Design
College of Art and Design

Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, NY
November 22, 2022

Abstract

Degree: Master of Fine Arts
Program: Visual Communication Design
Authors Name: Xiangyu Deng
Advisors Name: Mike Strobert; Adam Smith
Thesis Title: Life is a die

Life are consist of uncertainty and certainty. The most functional way for people to deal with life is to try their best for certainty and to accept uncertainty. However, due to the consistently changing environment and fast increasing uncertainty, people are more and more unlikely to deal with life and its uncertainty. This project, Life-is-a-die, will express the personal thought to deal with life and release worries and fear through a poetic video. In this video, the designed metaphors, poetic story, sound effects, text, 3d elements, motions, visuals, motion, and textures will play a vital role to help people understand and learn the whole theme.

Keywords

Life, Certainty, Uncertainty, 3D rendering, Poem, 3D motion

Problem Statement and Solution

Technology is developing in a fast way, which brings the consistently changing environment and fast increasing uncertainty of human life.(Ryan 2020) As a result of technological development, on the one hand, people are taking the challenge to deal with the new combination of certainty and uncertainty in life.(Schaefer 2020) On the other hand, algorithm controls our life.(Illing 2018) It is easy to see it at work in the world in a way that shapes outcomes all around us. But most of us have no idea what they are — or how we're being influenced by them.(Illing 2018) What we know is only the uncertainty it brings to us, and we are in big worry and fear of this invisible hand. In this circumstance, it is necessary to help people deal with this increasing uncertainty that the algorithm brings to life.

Due to the worry and fear of invisible uncertainty, the first trend of the solution is to transform the invisible into the visible one. Thus, I would build a virtual space where people can live without algorithms. In this space, most items and behaviors are randomly decided by dice or metaphors of die, with transparency and intuition. People can enjoy real freedom without anxiety. However, this is not a workable space, because it does not match the fact of life. Life does not merely consist of uncertainty. Without certainty, life will go into chaos.(Daniel, 2014) This virtual space would not succeed in the long term. So, it seems that the successful way to deal with life is to know the real fact of it. That means the solution would be to help people learn and reflect on life, and then live clearly and bravely without worry and fear. In this case, an personally expressive video with some reflective opinions would be the best way to achieve the effect of spreading facts of life in the visual communication field.

Method and Evaluation

As the most popular communication method, an expressive video can make it easy to help people learn and understand.(Beautemps and Bresges 2014) When it comes to a video, this project will have two aspects - vision and semantics. Vision is the picture content in a video, which contains the objects, color, texture, format, and motion. It is supposed to be attractive, accurate, and consistent for the content. In the exact project, Life-is-a-die, to achieve those visual purposes, 3D rendering, 3D modeling, 3D motion, and text animation are considerably used. Semantics is the communicative way of the video, which is supposed to be efficient and effective. Thus, poem stories, sound effects, context editing, and metaphors are used as communicative aspects to develop understanding and resonance with people.

Rendering is the most important part of the visuals in this video. Specifically, a transparent, gradient, dreamy, clean, and simple texture is the considered choice to build a relaxing and elegant vibe. In this vibe, people can comfortably absorb and reflect without anxiety. Besides that, blue is used for transparency to increase cleanness; red and green are frequently used together to increase contrast; black and white are used for the background to keep simplicity, and gold is constrainedly used as an emphasized color to increase elegance. Motion is the second significant part, where a relatively gentle rhythm is used to give time to tell the story. Meanwhile, some secondary animations are carefully designed for more attraction and elegance. The motion that appeared in the texture is also a considerable one to make the smooth and understandable. Modeling also has a vital role in visual language. Geometric and individual objects are created for the consistent feature of the die. Text

design is used as a complementary way to help tell the whole story, which is designed not only to match the speed of storytelling but also to emphasize the educational focus.

Metaphors are the first carefully considered design for semantics to increase intelligibility. For example, the letter I (see Figure 1) is used as a metaphor for me or my brain when thinking at the beginning. The repeat use of metaphor can easily connect viewer and the designer, to help build a better resonance. The poem presented by inner monologue in the video is considered as the guideline of the whole video. It is used as the clue to navigate the visual and verbal contents. Last but not least, the sound effect is a complementary consideration for effective expression. The edited sound would make contribution to the transition, vibe, and intelligibility.

As a combination of vision and semantics, this video would be evaluated through the reflection of viewers. After viewing, the degree of understanding and consideration of this opinion of life would be an efficient way to evaluate this video. And in the final thesis exhibition at RIT in the spring of 2022, this video is presented in front of hundreds of visitors, and most of them tend to give an opinion about the certainty and uncertainty of life.

Figure 1

Summary

Life-is-a-die project is a 3d based motion video. It uses inner monologue to present poetic thoughts about the certainty and uncertainty of life. This video attempts to take the consideration of vision and semantics to make the opinion content attractive, accurate, consistent, effective, and efficient. Viewers can have reflection and knowledge about how to deal with life, and it relatively releases their fear and worry.

For the visual design field, this video provides an effective example of an educational video containing metaphors, poems, sound effects, text animation, 3d modeling,3d rendering, 3d motion, and editing. It can be an exact and meaningful reference to works of not only motion design, but also 3D design.

Appendix A - Bibliography

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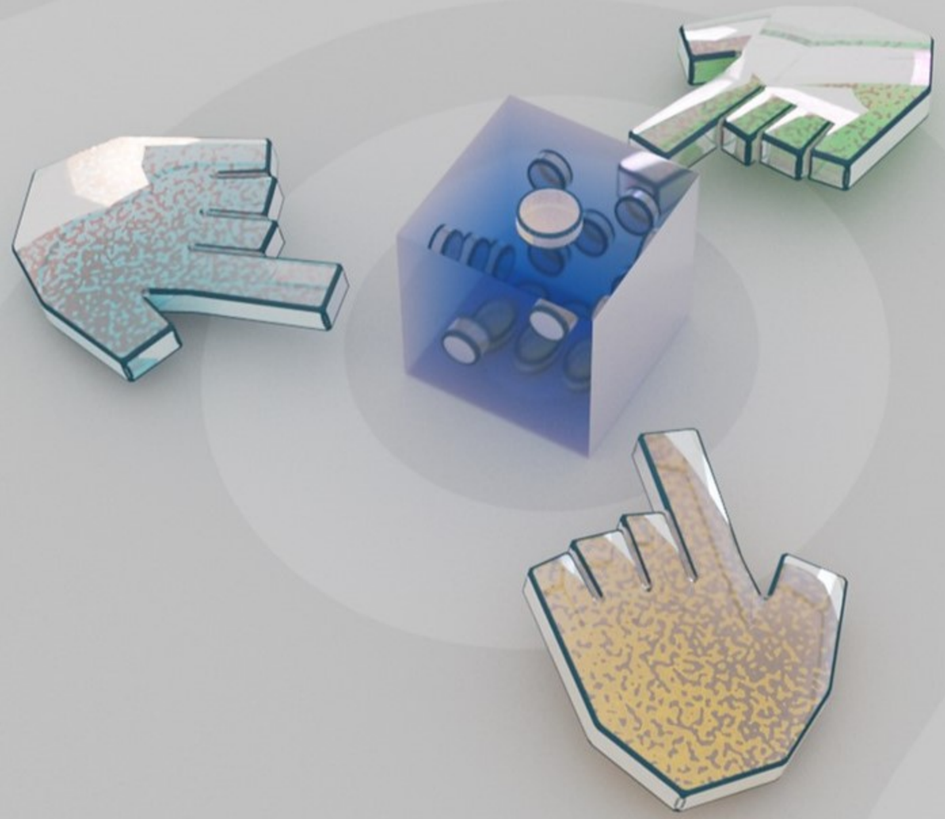
Appendix B - Case Study

Life is A Die



Thesis 2022

Designer: Xiangyu Deng | Committee: Adam Smith,Mike Strobert | Start Time: January 2022

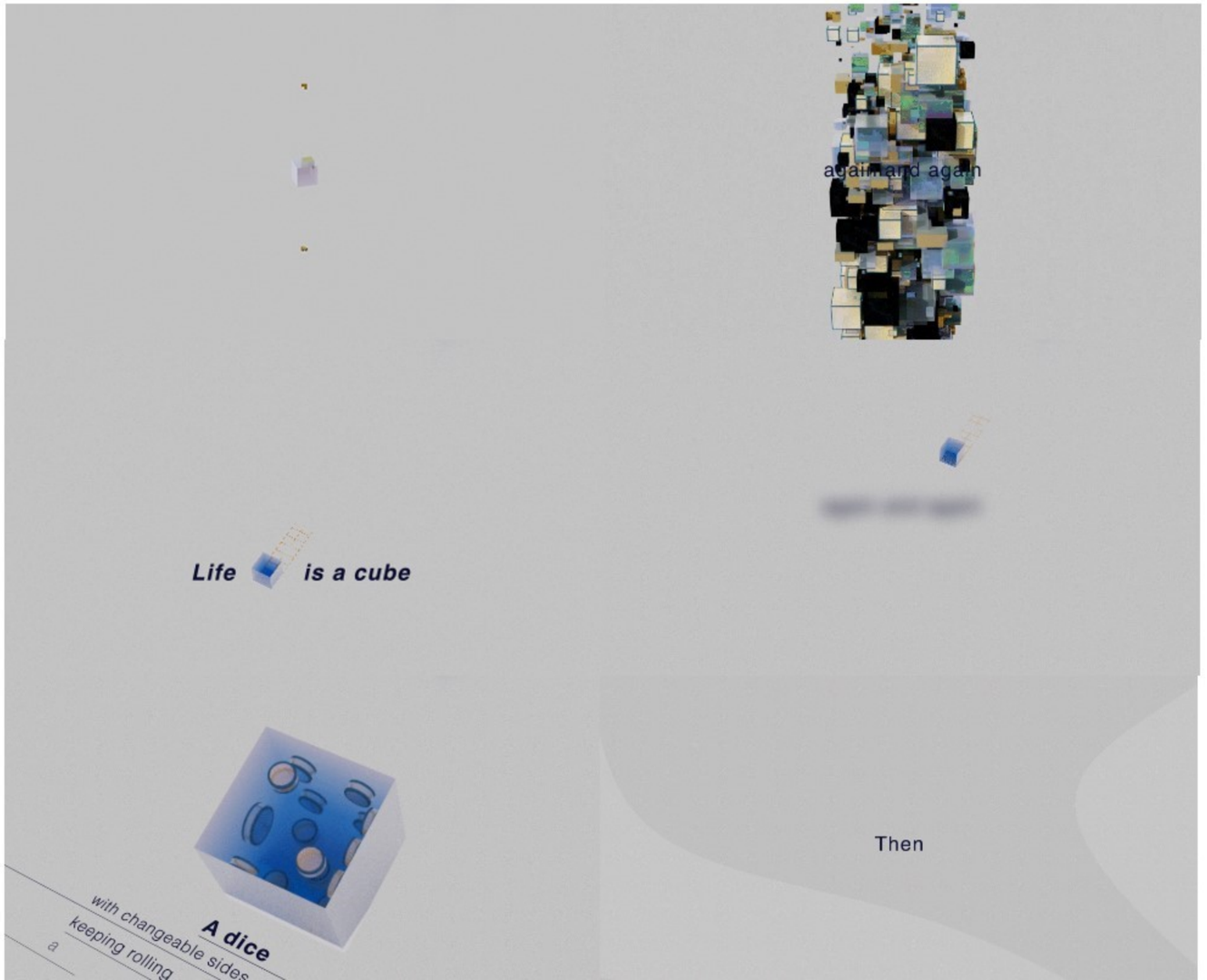
Life is a die

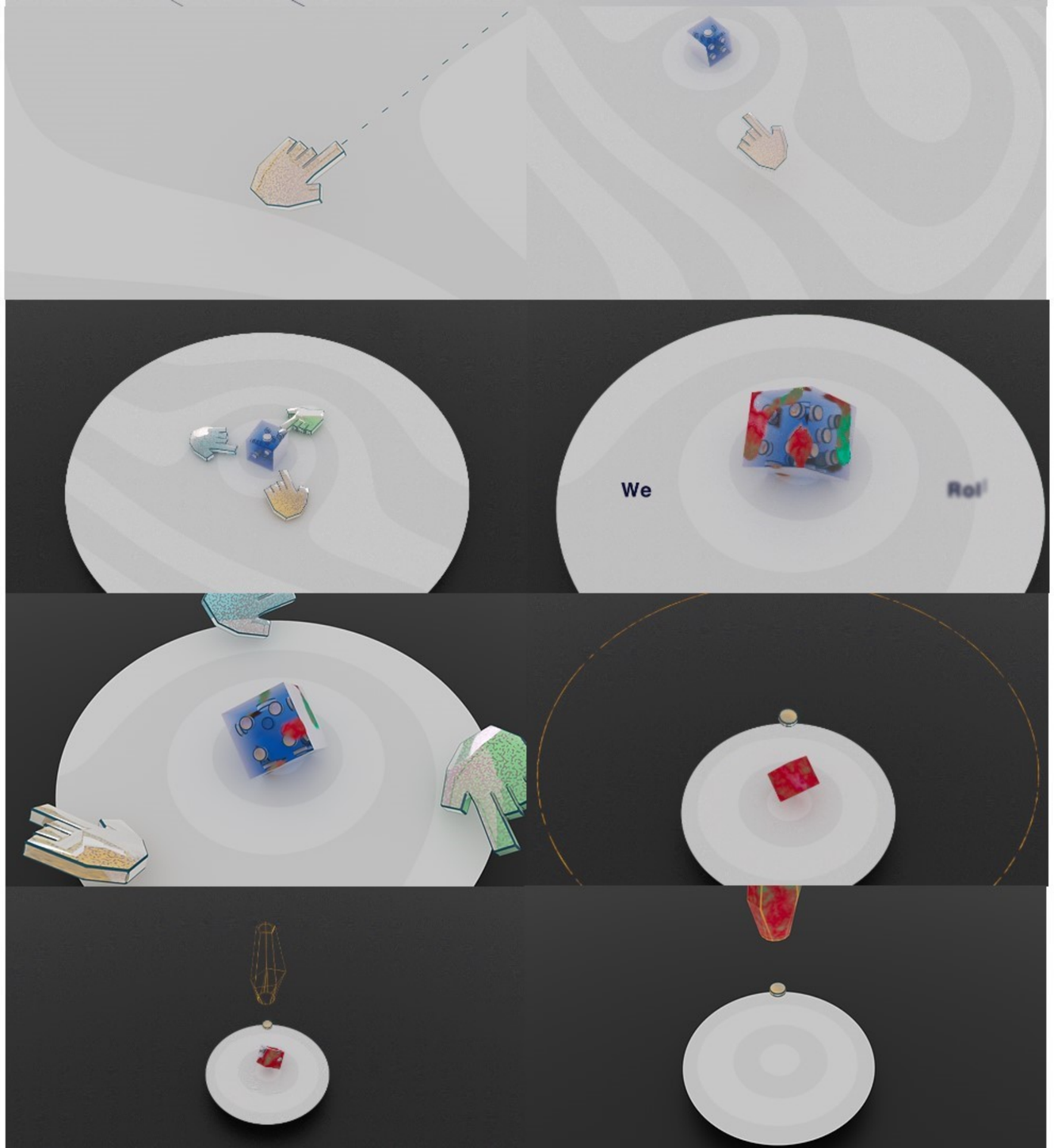
Life Is A Die is a 3d based motion project. It uses inner monologue to present poetic thoughts about the uncertain life on the Internet and in the real life.

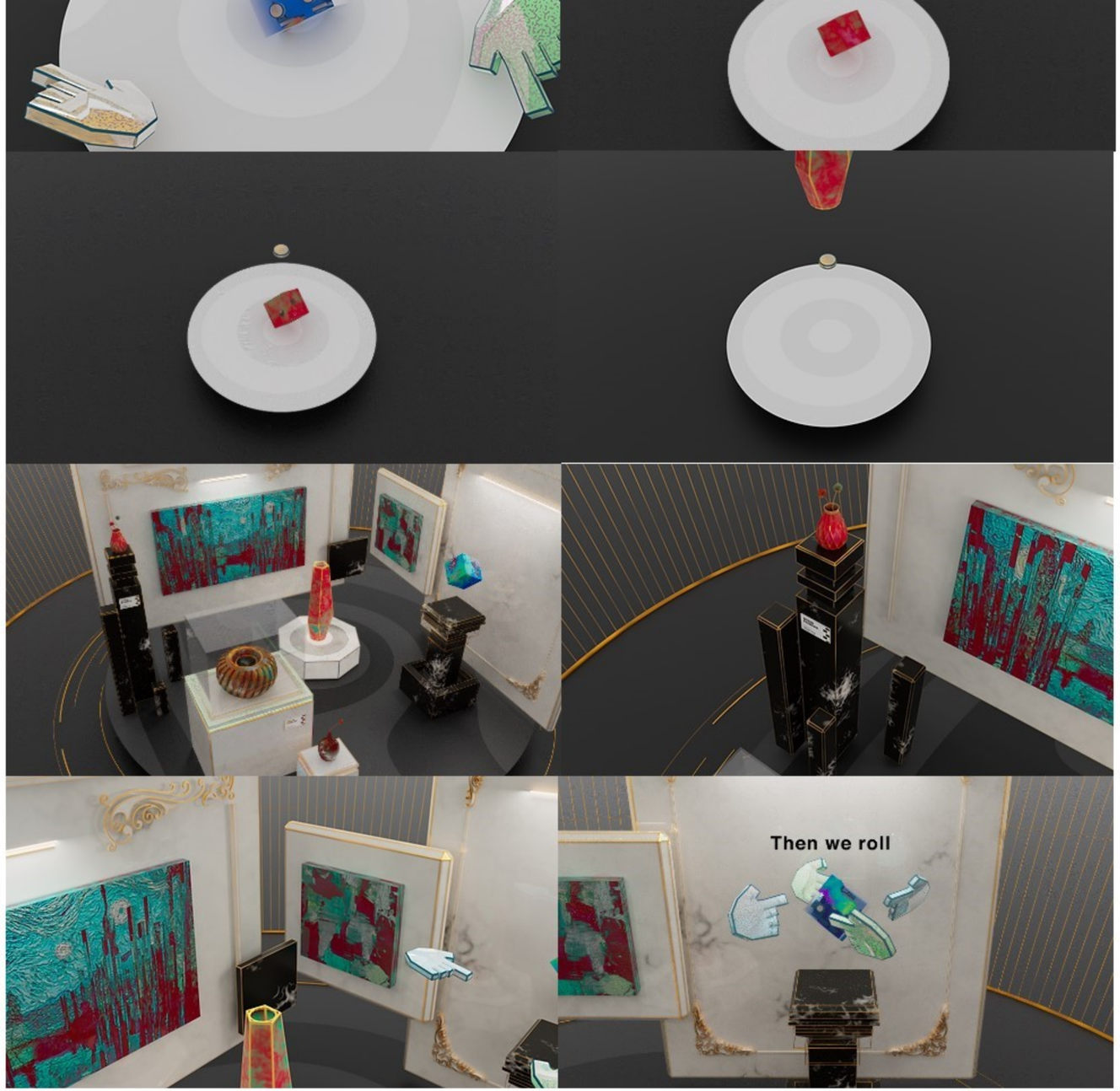
Life are uncertainty and certainty. We act in the certain way and then accept the uncertainty. When we act, we roll a dice. The outcome is already decided by the invisible algorithm. Anyway, change happens. We can learn from it, and we continue to roll.

Visual Hilights

The visual project is 3d rendering using Cinema 4D and Redshift, with 2d text animation using Adobe After Effects.

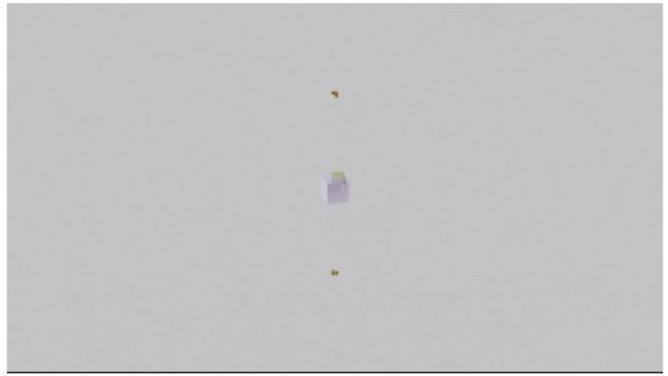


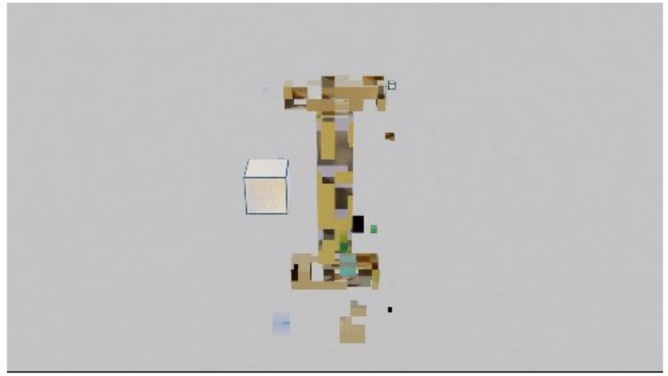

We
Rol


Then we roll

Metaphor 1

Letter I is the metaphor for me or my brain when I am thinking. And the falling and lifting cube is for life or the changeable thinking of the life.

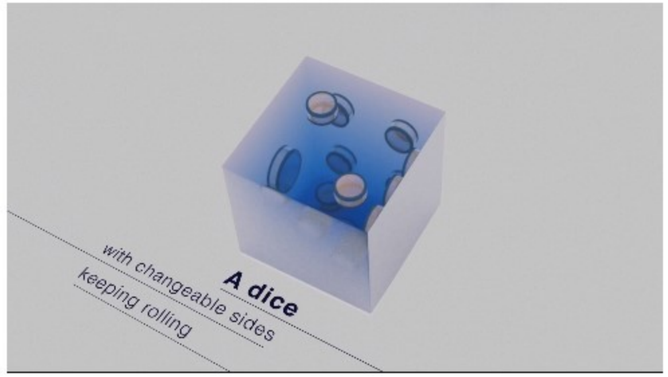


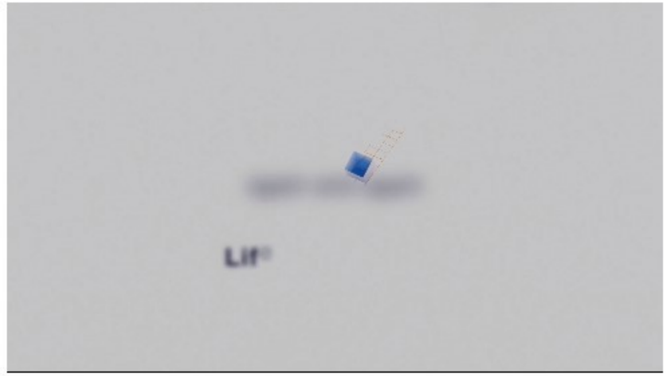


Metaphor 2

Cube and Dice are both metaphors for life. It is a bridge help us to communicate with uncertainty.

Dice is the extension of the cube, with the feature of numbers. These numbers use a more exact way to present the outcome of our actions.

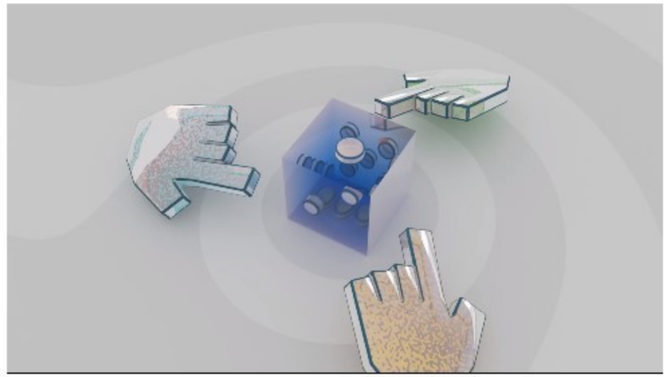




Metaphor 3

The pointer hand is the metaphor for the actor, which refers to us. In this information world, it also refers to a cursor, which connects the behavior on the Internet.

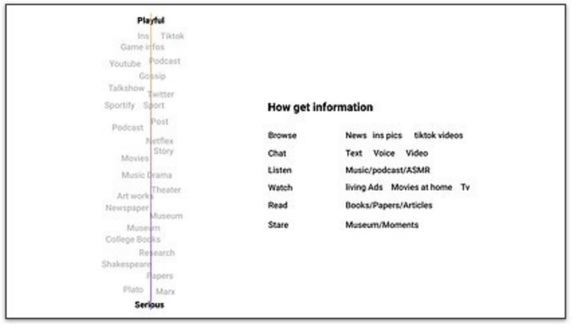
The number of the pointer hand represents "me" and "we". When we work together, we will be more steadfast, regardless of uncertainty.



Background and Process

Problem

Nowadays, algorithm controls our life. Living a life without worries and fear becomes a challenge. How can I help people live a steady life by reducing the influence of the algorithm?



We can get all types of informs through the Internet but under the control of the algorithm.

Solution 1

To build on a virtual space where people can live life with transparency and freedom. In this space, everything is randomly decided, with fewer data and fewer algorithms in this space.

Visual clues: Transparency, dream, clean and simple.

...

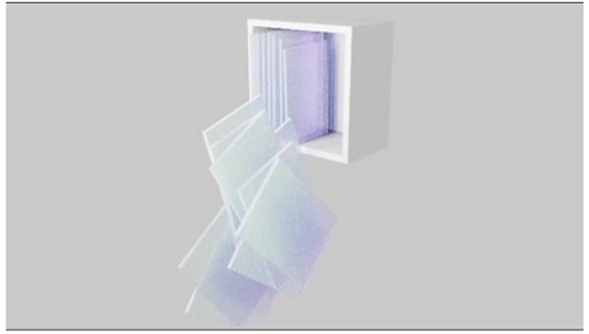
Reaction

Plausible: Life consists of certainty and uncertainty. The uncertainty is not real life.

Solution 2

Life consists of certainty and uncertainty. We should accept the invisible algorithms and do what we can.

Continue to use the 3d transparent texture to make a video to help people release their worries and fear about algorithms.



Poem Contents

A simple poem as text contents to tell a story about life and algorithms to help people understand.

Recently
I am thinking
Again and again
Life is a cube
A dice
with changeable sides
keeping rolling
and shifting
Then, me
I am looking for
I...
We *(we)*
We roll *(we roll)*
And make changes
Changes make changes
Changes make changes
Then we learn
Then we roll *(then we roll)*

Sounds

Edited 1 - We

00:00 / 00:01

Edited 2 - We roll

00:00 / 00:02

Edited 3 - Then we roll

00:00 / 00:02

I use treble added sound track to emphasize the heavy part of this poem reading. The way to implementation is to speak and record three times, and to edit them in AE.

Raw 1 - Then Me

00:00 / 00:07

Raw 2 - A dice with...

00:00 / 00:09

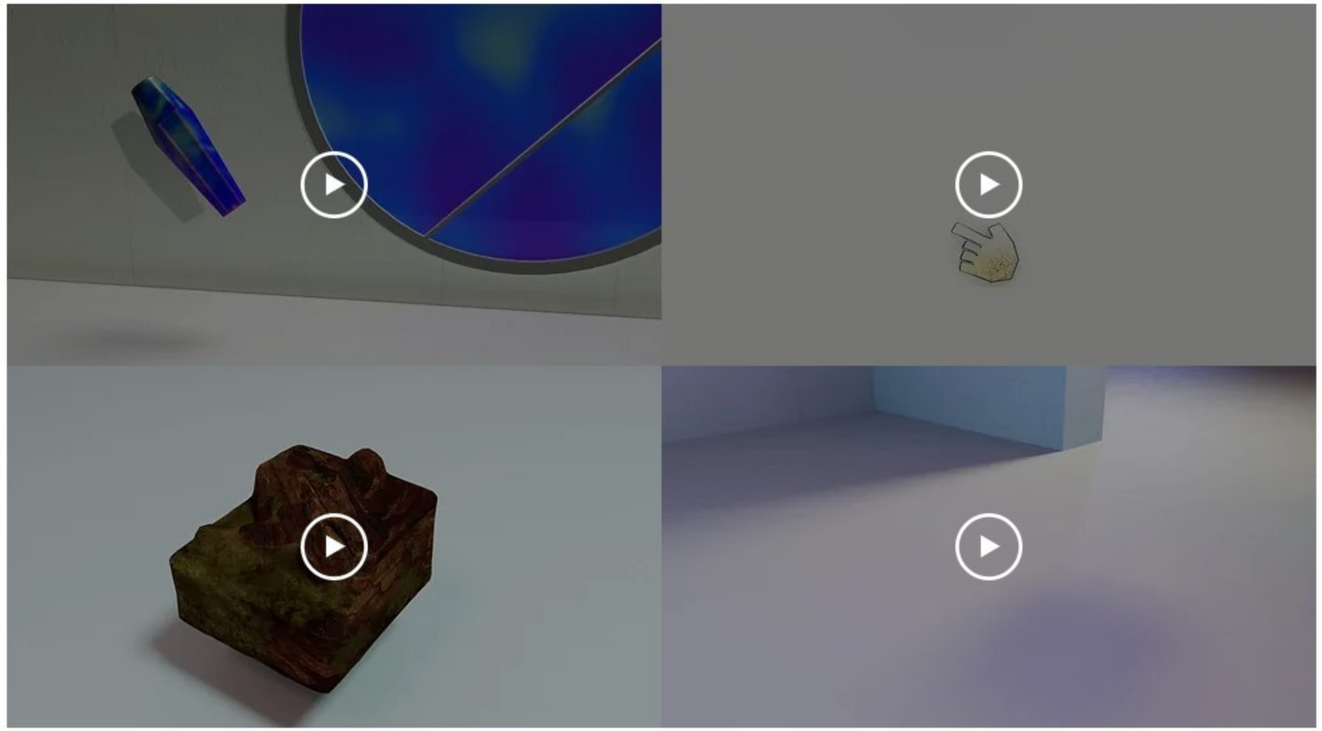
Raw 3 - Full Version

00:00 / 00:50

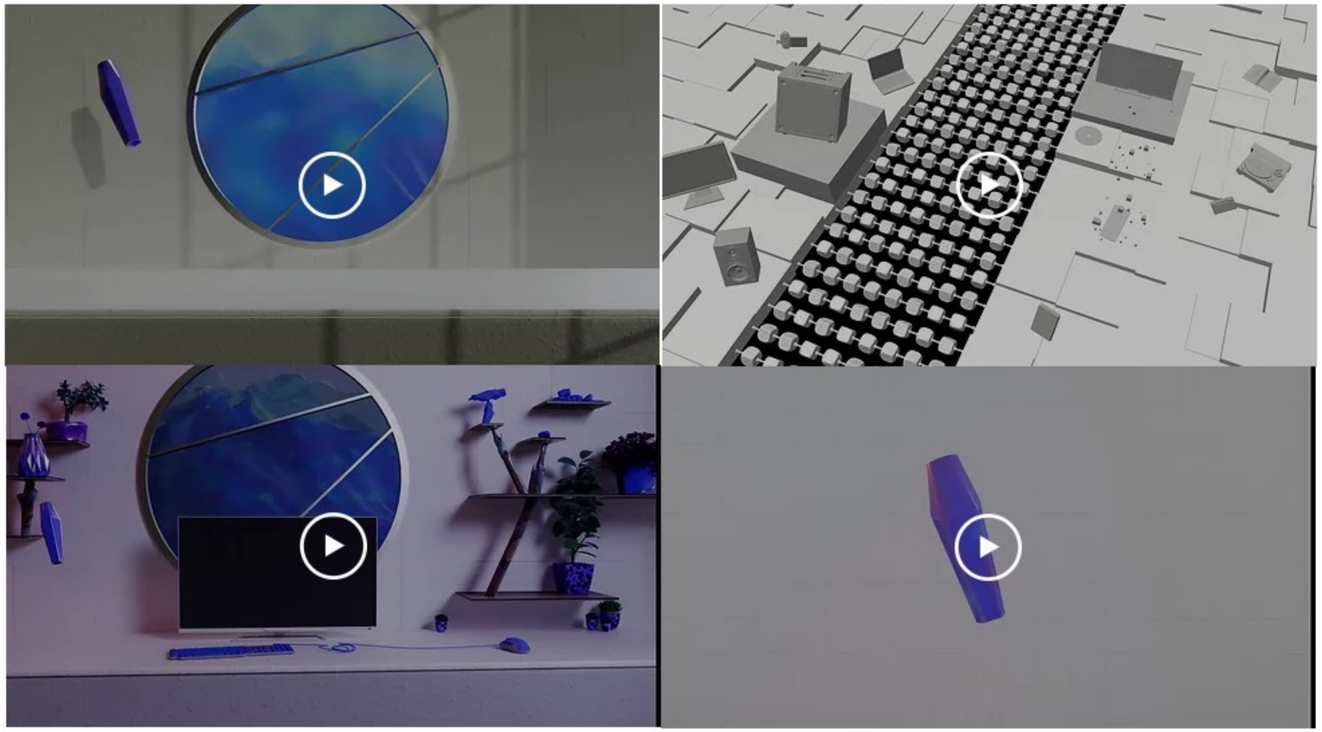
I use the app Voice Memos within the iPhone X to record my speaking voice. For better sound receiving effects, I get a recording studio to record them.

Visual Iterations

Before the final outcome, I pretest a lot of ways for composition, modelling, texture, story and motion



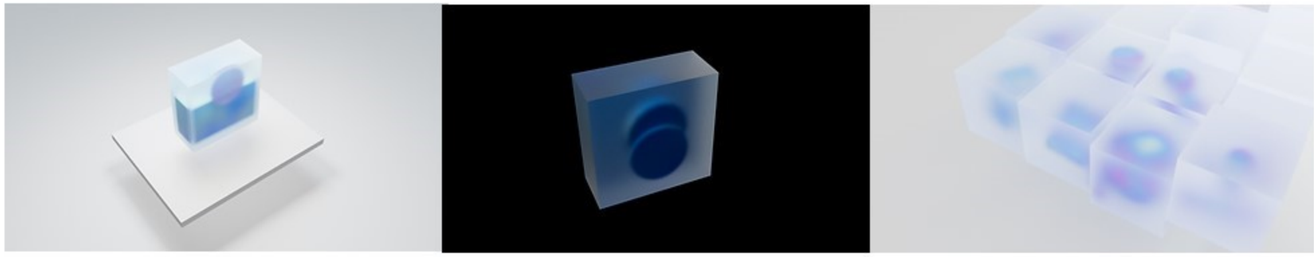
Motion and Texture Tests



Abandoned Motions

Dice Composition and Texture Test

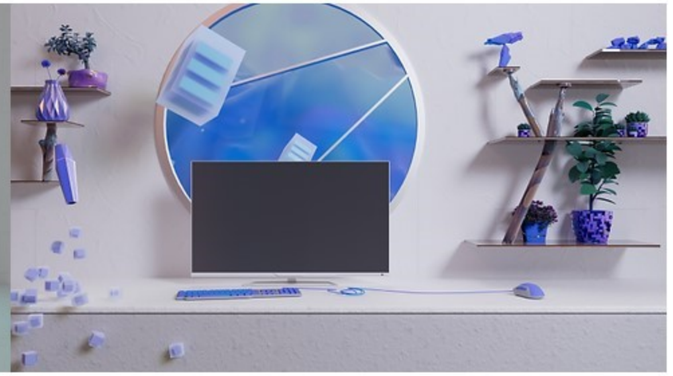
Abandoned Dice Motion



Dice Texture Test

Abandoned Final Scene 5

Abandoned Scene 2



Abandoned Scene 1

Assets and Texture

After that, I make these assets with texture to help make the final video,

Conclusion

Vusial

Attractive, accurate, and consistent.
It includes 3D rendering, 3D modeling, 3D motion, and text animation.

Communication

Efficient and effective.
Poem Story, sound effects, content editing, and metaphors, the thought behind.

Appendix C

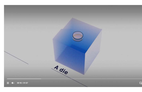
Tonic 2022

Design : Hongyu Zheng Scenology: Jiajie Ainie,Ella Andam Start Time: January 2022

Life is a die

Life is A Die is Hongyu Zheng's graduate thesis. It is a story of a cube that is constantly rolling through life and the influence of various factors on its growth and decay.

Life is a metaphor for everyone's life. There is no one, nobody, and no thing that is unaffected by Chance, luck, or fate. The concept behind Life is A Die is that life is a game of chance. We don't know what is around the corner or what will happen next.



Visual Metaphor

The visual concept is the dividing line among Science,Art and Research, and between Art and Life and Death and Rebirth.

Metaphor 1

Life is a cube,Life is A Die is a metaphor for the Chance and luck and unpredictability of life.

The cube represents a life cycle, with the dividing line between life and death, and the cube's ability to create infinite possibilities.

Metaphor 2

Life is a cube is a metaphor for The Circle of life and life and rebirth,death and rebirth.

The cube represents a life cycle, with the dividing line between life and death, and the cube's ability to create infinite possibilities.

Metaphor 3

The cube represents the metaphor for the pain and suffering that people experience when they are affected by cancer, which can leave the family in a state of pain.

The cube represents the cycle of life and death and rebirth. When you start together, you will inevitably experience a separation.

Background and Process

Process

Life is A Die is a digital film exhibition for the Journey Film Festival. It is a collaborative project with Jiajie Ai, Ella Andam, Hongyu Zheng, Ainie Zhang, Jiajie Ai, Ella Andam and Hongyu Zheng.

Sound Effects
Sound Effects
Sound Effects