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Kikimasu (Listen)

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Imaging Arts/Film

College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

School of Film and Animation

Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester, New York

September 11, 2011

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ABSTRACT

Why do we create art? It is a profound question, and not one I ever intended to explore in the creation of my thesis film. However, coming to a better understanding of what the answer is for me was perhaps the most valuable lesson I learned from the entire project. *Kikimasu* was not a film that followed a linear progression from start to finish. In many ways, its conception was every bit as amorphous as the shifting void in the film. It began as a vastly larger project in scope, with primarily commercial goals in mind. But it ended as something smaller, more abstract, and deeply personal. It was not until the film was finished and screened that I was really able to appreciate the significance of that transformation. I came to realize that a younger artist with one set of goals started this project, but a very different artist finished it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first extend an enormous amount of gratitude to my thesis committee for their patience and wisdom throughout this process. Duane Palyka was my first thesis advisor and a great friend. The conversations we had while exploring the idea of this film, and all the tangents it took us down, were an inspiration and a joy. Skip Battaglia was kind enough to take over as my advisor after Duane retired, and helped me see the film through. Skip's insights into filmmaking, and life in general, are vast. That he can deliver that insight with a laugh and a smile makes him a truly extraordinary person. Howard Lester kept me grounded through all the ups and downs of the project. His candor and critical eye were always a great help to me.

Most importantly, my greatest thanks are reserved for my wife, Karen. After my initial idea for the film proved too much, it was Karen who encouraged me to start again. In all honesty, without her, I never would have finished this film.

1. TUUQAYI

My original concept for this film was vastly larger in scope than the final piece ended up being. The seed for the idea was planted in a conversation I had with Ted Pawlicki, one of my Computer Science professors from the University of Rochester. He was looking to create a proposal to the National Science Foundation for an episodic children's program that would teach the natural sciences. It just so happened that I had recently reread T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, and was thinking about the ways Merlin taught young Arthur. He did not sit Arthur down in a classroom and lecture him for hours on end. He magically transformed him into "every manner of animal, plant, rock, tree and root". In doing so he allowed Arthur to experience the world through different sets of eyes than his own. It seemed to me that an abstraction of this premise could be a compelling one for a children's show, and so we set about creating the NSF proposal. As I was at the point in graduate school where I was beginning to consider my thesis, my intention was to create the pilot episode of the series as my thesis film, hopefully with the benefit of the grant funding.

About this time, Duane Palyka agreed to be my thesis advisor, and we began meeting weekly to further hash out the idea for this project. It was Duane who pointed out that the idea of transforming oneself for the sake of learning was not unique to T. H. White. Other traditions, particularly Native American, explored similar concepts. He encouraged me to explore the work of Carlos Castaneda, such as *The Teachings of Don Juan*. It proved to be an inspiring and thought provoking direction to explore, because indeed many Shamanistic traditions spoke about receiving knowledge from spirit animals, and some went so far as "transforming" their followers into those animals.

With this in mind, the pilot episode of the series began to take shape. I decided the series would be called *Tuuqayi*, which is a Hopi word meaning "to acquire knowledge". Each episode would focus on a particular child or group of children facing a difficult time in their lives. Suddenly one day they would be

transformed by a particular spirit animal whose wisdom they were in need of. The episode would follow them through the process of learning to be that animal, and in doing so, learning more about themselves. When they had finally crossed a certain threshold, the spirit animal would return them to their human form, now equipped with the knowledge they acquired as the animal. The episode would conclude with a situation that illustrated how the child had been changed for the better by the experience.

The pilot episode for *Tuuqayi* would focus on crows. They are an animal that interests me, and there are countless unique aspects of their behavior that seemed interesting to teach. The main characters would be a boy and girl, Peter and Kiana, who both came from broken homes and were fiercely independent. Through their time as crows, they would learn not only what it was to be a bird, but also the importance of their roost, and how crows look out for each other.

Preproduction for the episode began by writing a script and then creating a thumbnail storyboard of the entire episode (an excerpt is included in Appendix B). With this completed I began building models and rigs in Maya for all the characters that would appear in the film (see Appendix C for images of the characters). Once the characters were completed, I decided the next step would be to create a rough 3D animatic of the episode to begin bringing it to life.

It was about this time that a cold dose of reality began to creep into my head. I had learned a little while earlier that the NSF had passed on our grant proposal. In addition, the sheer enormity of what I had undertaken was slowly becoming apparent. I created ten minutes of the animatic, and I could clearly see that the story I had written couldn't be told in twenty-two minutes (the typical length of a children's cartoon). Instead, what I had in my story was something more on the order of a feature length production.

I began to look for ways to salvage the story for the sake of my thesis. I thought there might be a way to divide the script into several episodes instead of one. But on top of that was the understanding that just creating an extremely rough ten minute animatic had required over two months of hard work. Looking ahead at what it would take for me to finish a complete, professional twenty-two minute pilot episode started to feel like an insurmountable challenge. Slowly, my resolve weakened, and eventually the project was put on the shelf.

2. STARTING OVER

Almost two years passed between the time that I abandoned the idea of *Tuuqayi* and began to consider alternatives. It is not in my nature to give up on projects I've started, so admitting *Tuuqayi* could not be done was a difficult and painful decision. I reached a point where I was resolved that I simply would not complete a thesis film. The idea of starting over again was too daunting, and the disappointment of *Tuuqayi* was still too fresh in my mind.

Putting aside my thesis work for the time being, I decided to focus more on my career. I took a position as an Associate Creative Director with a studio in Salt Lake City, and my wife and I moved west. After a year getting settled into my new job, my wife and other friends began urging me to pick up the work on my thesis again. With the passage of time and change of scenery, the idea of beginning again started to feel more appealing. Also, after a year of making nothing but commercial art, the idea of doing a project for myself was enticing.

With the continued encouragement of friends and family, I slowly warmed to the idea of beginning work again. However, I was quickly faced with the sizable dilemma of where to begin. I knew *Tuuqayi* in its current incarnation was impractical to attempt even in an abridged form. Furthermore, the idea of making a TV show pilot no longer seemed as exciting as it once did. But that being said, I had completed a solid amount of production work towards *Tuuqayi*, and ideally I wanted a way to leverage at least some of that towards the new film. Almost immediately I knew that if there was one thing to keep from *Tuuqayi*, it was the crow character I had developed. Also, I still liked many of the themes I had begun exploring with that film, and hoped to find a way to weave them into the new story.

The first new idea I pursued was to be a film on death and rebirth, set to the music of Messiaen's *La Merle Noir*. The film would begin with the crow dropping from the sky and landing on the desert floor,

dead. From there we would watch the decomposition process internally and externally until finally new life, in the form of a plant sprout, grows from the recycled energy of the dead bird. At first, the idea seemed like it had the potential to be very beautiful, but as I thought more about how to execute the film, the less potential I saw in it. So again, I put the idea on the shelf, and several months passed before inspiration struck again.

There is an old saying, "write what you know". It was that thought that finally led me to *Kikimasu*. I began studying Zen Buddhism as an undergrad at the Rochester Zen Center and have continued in one form or another ever since. The practice of Zen has had a significant effect on my life and worldview, so it felt right to tell a Buddhist story in my thesis film. But more importantly, a story of how I had experienced its teachings personally.

When I began my study of Buddhism, I initially approached it from a very logical perspective, as many Westerners do, because it can be quite compelling on that level. But the more I practiced, the more my teachers tried to steer me away from objective analysis toward simply experiencing and being. It took a long time, but gradually the message started to sink in. As a natural extension of this understanding, came the realization that all things we experience cannot help but have something of ourselves projected onto them. It is impossible to separate the observer from the observed. And in this way, we are one with all things, and all things are one with us.

This fundamental revelation is not one I arrived at in a giant epiphany. Instead, it came in the form of many smaller moments of insight that gradually coalesced to form a whole. Eventually it dawned on me that focusing on one of these moments of insight could be a unique and thought provoking film. It could also be something that would continue the spirit of what I started in *Tuuqayi*, but from a slightly different perspective. In addition, it would be a film that would have to focus on the inner, mental journey of its main character, and representing that onscreen was intriguing to me.

For the first time in many years, I felt like I had an idea for a film worth pursuing. It was meaningful personally, and artistically interesting. Duane had since retired, so Skip was kind enough to take over as my thesis advisor. I wrote a treatment (see Appendix D) and began to work with him on preproduction of the film.

3. PREPRODUCTION

The first step in fleshing out the treatment I had written for *Kikimasu* was to create a storyboard animatic. This was a way for me to start nailing down some of the visual ideas I wanted to convey, as well as starting to work out the timing for the film. Each of my storyboard panels were hand drawn on index cards and scanned into the computer (see Appendix E). I would then take those scans and sequence them in After Effects with a scratch soundtrack.

My initial draft of the animatic was over twice as long as the final film ended up being, and it was clear that the story still had a long way to go before it was ready for production. My original concept for the story included a small amount of dialogue between the two main characters in the opening sequences. This was something Skip quickly pointed out as being unnecessary, and he was indeed correct. Just as much was able to be communicated by gestures and expressions as would have been by words.

Another difference was the fact that the second act of the film, where the main character is taking her inner journey, was much longer. There was also a second crow in her mind space which represented the teacher. The more I watched and discussed the animatic with Skip, the more I was able to distill that section down to its most essential elements. After something like twenty-two versions of the animatic, I finally had one that I felt was ready to move on to the next phase of production.

That next phase for *Kikimasu* involved the creation of a 3D previsualization (see Appendix F). At this point I believed the whole film would be created in 3D, so what I wanted to accomplish with the previz included the following: rough set layouts, almost final camera movements, and final shot timing. The actual characters, models, and animation would remain very rough so I could easily add or remove sections without losing too much work.

The previz picked up where the storyboard animatic left off, and allowed me to further refine the edit of the film. In the previz I had actual camera movements to gauge the timing of the shots, as opposed to still images. As with the animatic, I went through many, many revisions until I had a version I felt was ready for production. This previz would serve as the blueprint for the final film. I would use the same timeline, and replace shots with final material as it was completed.

Looking back, the final previz was about eighty percent representative of the finished film. A few shots were revised based on logistical restraints of actual production, but on the whole, most remained largely unchanged. Preproduction proved to be the longest phase in the creation of *Kikimasu*. The careful construction and deconstruction of shots in the many edits was something that required time and thought. But as I had learned, preproduction is the time where a filmmaker has the opportunity, and the obligation really, to explore as much as they can with the potential of the film. When production begins, they should feel confident enough in their film that they can focus primarily on the execution of the vision they established.

4. PRODUCTION

The production of *Kikimasu* was the process of translating the ideas I had established in preproduction into something tangible within the time allowed. With the previz and animatic, I felt I had the tone of the film well enough established. But what I did not yet have fully nailed down was the graphic style of the film, particularly the section that takes place within the main character's head. My inclination from the beginning was to give the whole world a bioluminescent quality, much like one would find in a deep sea environment. I liked this look because light is not being cast on objects but instead coming from them. This seemed appropriate for objects which are really just mental constructions. Also for the look, I knew a certain amount of fluidity would be essential; no objects would have hard edges. As representations of shifting thoughts in the character's mind, I did not want anything to feel solid. With a general idea for the style, I felt the best approach would be to start digging in to one of the shots and explore the aesthetic further in that way.

I chose the opening shot as the first one to tackle because it was representative of visual elements that would appear throughout the rest of the film. The most obvious element being the crow, which acts as the catalyst for steps the character takes in her journey. The CG model and rig of the crow were the most important carryovers from my work on *Tuuqayi*. For that project, I knew I would need a very animate character I could push through a variety of extremes, from flying to walking to perching, and so on. As it turned out in *Kikimasu*, I would still need all those controls for the actions the crow would have to perform. To define the bioluminescent look for the crow, I began by rendering the character with a facing-ratio shader, which places more color on the edges of an object than in its center. This was a good start, but still looked far too computer generated and solid. Back on *Tuuqayi* I had played with the idea of using a Fur system for the feathers of the crow. I felt it could lend additional texture to the color

of the crow's body, so I made the feathers bioluminescent blue and added them in. I felt at this point I had taken the render as far as it could go in Maya, so I brought my footage over to After Effects for additional work there. Within my composite, I was able to take my renders and create a blurry, blown-out base layer, and a sharper, darker layer on top to fill in details. To all that I animated a small amount of distortion as well to give the crow its final ghostly, fluid appearance.

The other technical hurdle to overcome in the first shot was how the objects in the world would form from the void. Simply fading characters in would not be enough, they had to appear as though they were actually being shaped by the gaseous environment around them. To do so, I felt that CG particle systems and fluid dynamics would be the most effective. As an artist who has a computer science background, the technical aspects of digital art have always appealed to me. The prospect of being able to build interesting simulation based visual effects for this film was one that excited me right from the beginning. In this first shot, three dynamic systems were necessary: one to form the crow, one to form the tree branch he sits on, and one to dissolve the opening titles. These elements, combined with the work on the crow, produced an opening shot I was happy with, and established a tone for the rest of the film (see Appendix G for stills from the final film).

With the look of the CG elements established, the next major decision to be made was what to do with the human characters. Originally, I had planned to make everything CG, but the more I thought about it, the more I wondered if live actors might not be more effective. I knew the characters would need to convey subtle emotions through limited action, and I had serious doubts as to whether CG characters could pull that off. Additionally, I felt there needed to be a very strong division between the visual look of the dream world and the real world. I was concerned that going from one CG space to another might not be a big enough change. Finally, there was the question of time. By filming live actors, I could capture in two sessions what might have taken months to animate. Live actors would require green-

screen work and image processing, but these were aspects of production that interested me anyway. In the end, for both logistical and aesthetic reasons, I decided to use live actors for my human characters.

The live action was filmed in two shoots, one on location and one against a green-screen. I shot the green-screen session on a Saturday afternoon in the driveway of a friend's house. I was able to borrow an enormous portable green-screen which stretched from the top of their garage to beneath the character's feet. The green-screen had to cover the ground as well because I needed to key out the entire environment. I decided to shoot outside partially because it was easier and cheaper than renting a studio, but also because I wanted the character's clothes and hair to move naturally in the wind. This decision did end up making some additional work for me in post production, however, because the sun was so bright that it created a large amount of green spill onto the actor. Aside from that, the shoot went very smoothly. I was able to get all the coverage I needed in about four hours with setup time.

The second filming session took place at a park in Salt Lake City which has a beautiful Japanese pavilion. We arrived bright and early to the location so we could get as much filming accomplished before crowds started interrupting our shots. There were less shots to capture in this session, and all were tripod shots, so filming went quickly. We were fortunate to arrive when we did though, because by our last shots of the day, we were chasing other people out of the frame.

For the live action shots that take place in the real world, I found that using a full color palette made for almost too jarring a transition from the look of the CG world I established. It was important that they look different, but still part of the same film. After some experimentation, I found that a bleach bypass filter with crushed levels made the difference I was looking for.

With the green-screen footage of the main character, I had to composite a look for her in the mind world of the film that was consistent with the work I had done on the crow. The biggest challenge I found was striking a balance between making her fluid and ghostly, but still defined enough to preserve

her performance. In the end, the look came down to multiple After Effects layers, some particles, and quite a bit of trial and error.

Of the remaining shots in the film, there were three that presented additional challenges: the mental crisis scene, the scenes where the main character is lost in the void, and the final CG sequence where she opens to the universe. The mental crisis scene represents the moment where doubt creeps into her mind. Doubt, and fear of losing her previous concept of herself. So what begins as doubt evolves into a panic attack, and her response is to tighten up and hold on to what she knows. I felt that a storm was an appropriate metaphor, because mental struggles often feel like storms in the mind. Achieving the look was mostly a matter of layering particle systems, and animating masks on the footage of the main character to give the appearance of her dissolving away.

At the conclusion of the storm, when the main character has pushed away the world around her, I needed a way to represent her different state of being. In many ways, a person who denies the interconnectedness of all things constructs boundaries to define themselves. Boundaries that say this John Doe, and everything outside is not. So "boundaries" became the message I wanted to convey, and to do so I used a filter that turned her shape into a collection of lines. It doesn't make her look solid, but makes her look like nothing but edges. The look is a strong contrast to her fluid, shifting form in the previous sections. This style once again presented the challenge of making something stylized, but not so much so that the performance is lost.

Finally, the main character has her moment of realization, and is able to open up, even if just momentarily, to the entire universe. Whereas before I wanted to show objects forming from her, now I wanted her to exhale and lose herself entirely to the whole world around her. To show this I wanted a whole landscape to unfold from her exhalation. After some research, I opted to build the landscape in 3D out of topographical data freely available on the internet. By building the landscape in 3D, I had the

control to clip parts of it as the camera flew over to simulate the appearance of it being formed in front of us. As with other shots in the film, the look was started in Maya, and finished in After Effects.

The final step of production was finalizing the soundtrack. Fortunately, this proved to be a fairly simple task, as the soundtrack had slowly been evolving since my very first animatic. I had originally placed scratch audio in to help with timing, and over the course of many revisions, it was gradually refined.

Really all that was left for the final mix was filling in some blanks and getting the levels consistent. The final film was completed on May 12, 2011 and was scheduled to be screened at RIT's graduate screening night on Monday, May 16th.

5. RESPONSE

Kikimasu was written as an abstract story. Many Zen teachings are written in the abstract because talking about metaphysical concepts often requires it. When creating abstract art, one must try to strike a balance between being too obscure and too accessible. Too obscure and your audience may fail to find a message in your film. Too accessible and you risk losing the vision and integrity of the film. With *Kikimasu*, I knew I would be focusing on Buddhist concepts that would not be familiar to all viewers. But it was my hope that the notion of finding moments of insight would be something universal that all viewers could latch on to. Insight, like the main character finds, is by no means limited to religious sentiments. It is something that occurs in artistic, academic, or even athletic pursuits. I hoped that this element would be strong enough for viewers from many backgrounds to find meaning in the film.

My first inclination that the final film may have ended up more obscure than I intended came from my conversation with Duane the night before screenings. He expressed his concern that although my intentions were good, he wasn't sure my audience would "get it". He felt that although the visual effects were well executed, the film would have trouble finding a mass audience. He suggested that perhaps this is more of a niche film for people of a similar mindset. In email conversations I had with Howard around the same time, he expressed similar sentiments. He felt the film was visually entertaining, but had trouble finding much meaning in it. Which in many ways confirmed Duane's concerns.

These were difficult words to hear at first, because I think most filmmakers hope (whether they admit it or not) for some kind of mass appeal or recognition. But they were important words none the less, because they started me thinking, even before screenings, about what this film meant to me, and why I made it. When I began my thesis project many years before with *Tuuqayi*, my intent was to create a

piece of work that would establish me professionally. When I returned to the project later with *Kikimasu*, that motive was no longer as strong. In the time between *Tuuqayi* and *Kikimasu*, I had found some measure of professional success and felt secure and satisfied in my current position. As a result, the prospect of making a film primarily for commercial success lacked the appeal it once had. However, a different motive had sprung up in its place. In a digital media studio creating work for clients, an artist's role is to help someone else achieve their vision. While there can be a great deal of satisfaction in this, it does foster a longing to create work that is solely your own; work that is an extension of yourself. I began to realize that *Kikimasu* had become that for me. The story was grounded in personal experiences, and the visual components centered on aspects of film production that interested me. I realized that *Kikimasu* was the film I wanted to make, and at the end of the day, I had really made it for myself. With that in mind, the idea that it may not have mass appeal didn't seem so bad.

The day of screenings I had the opportunity to visit with several other individuals and discuss the realization I had come to after my conversation with Duane the night before. Malcolm Spaul, who was my respondent at screenings, reacted very positively to *Kikimasu*, and shared his own insight into how different people respond to films. He related a story about a black and white French film he saw in school that most of his fellow students dismissed. But something about the film deeply affected him, because for the first time on film he saw the emotion of love captured in the way he knew it to be. He asked me to consider whether it was more satisfying to entertain a mass audience, or to really deeply touch a select few people. He also pointed out that with the internet's democratization of media, it has become much easier to reach that select few.

When I talked with Skip at dinner before screenings, he expanded on the same train of thought. His own work throughout his career has tended toward the abstract, and he said sometimes it takes years

for a film to find its audience. His advice was to make sure the film was available to be seen (put it out on the internet), and let people find it.

Graduate screenings proved to be a very enjoyable experience. There were several other excellent films screened in my block, and the response to *Kikimasu* was a positive one. Perhaps the most thought provoking comment came from Howard, and was later echoed by Alan Topolski, the chair of the UR fine arts department who I studied with as an undergrad. They both inquired as to whether the film might have benefitted from animating the human characters. I shared with them my line of reasoning, which was explained in the previous chapter on Production. Both felt my instincts were good, but still wondered if there might not have been some more effective way to graphically represent the human characters. I have thought quite a bit about this since, and I cannot honestly say I have come to a solid conclusion. I still think that 3D characters would have been too cold and sterile to really convey the emotions I wanted. I have also debated as to whether hand-drawn 2D characters might have worked. My main concern with adding 2D animation is that it would have been too different from the other sections of the film, and they may not have felt connected at all. Regardless, I doubt my abilities as a 2D animator would have been strong enough to carry it off. So I still think given my own abilities and resources, the live actors were the right choice for the film.

Following screenings, I took Skip and Malcolm's advice and created a website for the film:

<http://kikimasufilm.com>. The site also includes several making-of videos for those viewers interested in the production of the film. In sharing the film with friends, colleagues, and the internet community, the response has been much like my thesis committee predicted. Most people seem to be able to appreciate the visual quality of the film, and a smaller group seem genuinely moved or affected by it. That has been an interesting process to observe, and it sometimes surprises me who the film speaks to and who it doesn't.

After I finished the film in May, I had expected that coming to screenings would largely be a formality. But in the end, it proved to be an opportunity to learn one last valuable lesson from my time at RIT. The lesson of why making my own art is important to me at this point in my career, and what that art means to me. It may have taken the full seven years for me to finish my MFA, but had I finished it years earlier, I may not have had the opportunity to gain this understanding. *Kikimasu* is about experiencing moments of insight, and the very act of making the film allowed me to experience one of my own.

APPENDIX A
TUUQAYI ORIGINAL PROPOSAL
Submitted April 2006

TREATMENT

The thematic approach to my film is one firmly grounded both in educational content and story. Current research in educational techniques has indicated overwhelmingly that students are not being engaged by in their learning experience. Marc Prensky and Clark Aldrich write convincingly about the benefits of “learning by doing”. Likewise, Colin Lankshear and Michee Knobel tout the importance of a “performance epistemology” over current antiquated approaches to curriculum (ie. the “Tell-Test” method of teaching). For this reason, many experts feel that video games have great potential to teach because of the way they engage students. James Paul Gee believes that one of video games greatest strengths is the “externalization of identity” they create in their users. In other words, if I am playing a game where my character is a thief, than in order to win the game, I must learn to think and solve problems like a thief. The educational value of such an experience is extremely powerful.

All of these trends in learning are helping to revolutionize today’s educational system. However, the roots of the ideas themselves can be seen centuries ago in European mythology. One of history’s most pervasive myths, the story of King Arthur, features a sage old wizard, Merlin. Merlin’s character is a common archetype seen throughout the mythology of almost every culture. In the case of this story, he is charged with the task of training the young Arthur to become history’s greatest king. According to the most current telling of the myth, T.H. White’s, “The Once and Future King”, Merlin achieved this lofty goal in a unique way. He did not sit Arthur in a room and lecture him for hours and hours. Instead, he used his magical powers to turn Arthur into “every manner of animal, plant, rock, tree and root”. By seeing life from so many perspectives, he learns not only about the world around him, but also about himself.

This powerful concept will serve as the thematic basic for my film. However, we will not be using the actual characters of Merlin and Arthur. These are characters that have existed for centuries and been represented in countless ways by artists and writers. What we will be drawing on here are the archetypes of these characters and situations. Using it as a basis, we will construct our own set of characters with more modern personas. In order to maintain gender balance in the game and video we will include an analog to a female Guinevere character. However, we plan to reject the passive and subordinate depiction of “girl as sidekick” character seen in several popular cartoons in favor of a strong “Guinevere warrior-princess” archetype actively involved in the scientific discovery process and equally sharing star billing. All the characters, of course, will be given modern personas in a contemporary setting. It is not the Camelot aspect that kids will latch on to, but rather the more fundamental "wish fulfillment" aspect of story, and the relationship between main characters.

Each episode of the show will involve the Merlin character turning the Arthur/Guinevere character into something new. A typical story arc would begin with a problem or misconception of the young characters. Upon coming to Merlin with this, Merlin would determine what thing they should be turned into to teach the appropriate lesson. The young explorers are then thrust into the new world where in order to survive he has to fully understand the whatever he has been turned into. This is not to say that they are always alone, frequently Merlin’s talking owl Archimedes, or Merlin himself would accompany them on journeys and provide a certain amount of guidance. Upon learning the lesson, the protagonists would return to the true self and discuss with Merlin what happened and why.

TIMELINE

June 2006 – Project Start

Preproduction (10 weeks)

- Situation Development (1 week)
 - Identification of main characters
 - How to abstract and modernize
- “King Arthur” and “Genera” (learners)
- “Merlin” (mentor)
- Character Development (2 week)
 - Appearance, Voice, Personality traits
 - Initial reviews of concept art with target audience
- Story Development (1 Week)
 - Identification of adventure for plot
 - What educational elements are included
 - Broad outline of Story
- Review of concept Art with target group (1 week)
 - Same time as story development
- Script Writing (3 weeks)
 - Collaboration between writer and content experts
 - Reviews with target group
- Storyboards (1 week)
 - Animator generates story thumbnails from script
 - Specific identification of educational content events
- Voice Recording (1 week)
 - While storyboard is being created, voice talent is finalized and characters are recorded.
- Animatic (2 weeks)
 - Rough film using stand in characters and basic animation to illustrating camera work and pacing. Scratch audio track will be included to indicate musical cues for composers. Voices of characters included
- End of preproduction (Estimated August 2005)

Production (35 weeks)

- Modeling (4 weeks)
 - Create geometry for both characters and scenes
- Texturing (3 weeks)
 - Adding textures to characters and scenes
- Rigging (3 weeks)
 - Adding skeletal system to characters that will fabricate animation
 - Adding facial animation for expressions and lip syncing
- Animation (20 weeks)
 - Scene by scene motion and lip sync
- Lighting (2 weeks)
 - Adding lighting rig to scenes
- Rendering (3 weeks)

- Computer processing 3D information for final quality frames of the film
- End of Production (April 2006)

Post Production (3 weeks)

- Music and Sound (3 weeks *)
 - *Will begin during rendering time
 - Addition of score to film
 - Addition of sound effects to film
- Final Editing (2 weeks)
 - Final compositing
 - Replacing scenes in animatic with final rendered scenes
 - Adjustments for time and pacing
- Reproduction (1 week)
- End of Post Production (May 2006)

Evaluation (4 weeks)

- Screening, gathering feedback (2 weeks)
- Analysis and evaluation of feedback data (1 week)
- Review and recommendations (1 week)

June 2007 – Project Completion

BUDGET

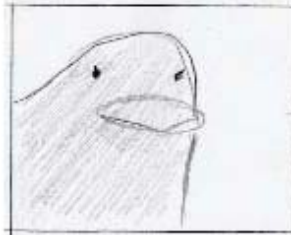
	Fee	Overall Total (Cumulative)
Story		
Story and Script	0.00	0.00
Talent		
Voice Actors	200.00	200.00
Production		
Modeling	0.00	200.00
Texturing	0.00	200.00
Rigging	0.00	200.00
Animation	0.00	200.00
Lighting	0.00	200.00
Rendering	0.00	200.00
Sound and Music		
Composer	200.00	400.00
Post Production		
Editor	0.00	400.00
Effects	0.00	400.00
Contingency		
Contingency	15%	460.00

APPENDIX B
TUUQAYI STORYBOARD EXCERPT

Tuuqayi - Episode One

61

Peter is once again hurt
Kiana's re buff, but tries to
cover it up. He puffs out his
chest and feigns indifference.



Trying to sound tough, Peter
says, "Fantastic, you leave
too. Perfect."

62

Peter looks out into the
distance, confused and scared.

Fade out.

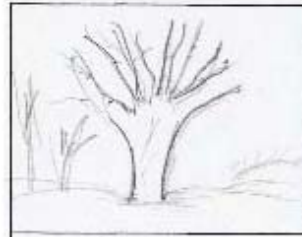


Ambient night sounds, with
the sounds of the roost more
quiet in the background. Fade
down with the visual.

63

Fade in on the next morning.

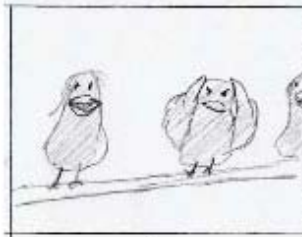
The sun is rising behind the
tree the kids spent the night
in.



Again there is a cacophony of
caws coming from the tree,
significantly louder than the
night before.

64

Cut to Kiana amongst a group
of crows holding her wings
over her ears.

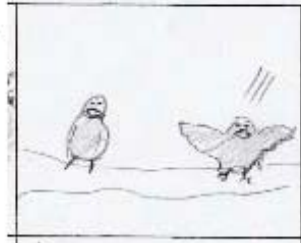


There is a great deal of
background cawing and
particularly loud noises from
the crows on the screen.

Tuuqayi - Episode One

65

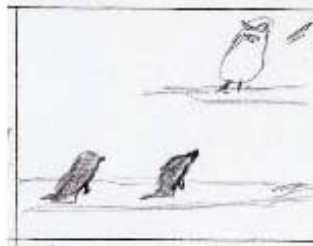
Peter is sitting alone on an empty branch looking off into the distance. Eventually Kiana flies into the frame and lands on the other side of the branch.



“Well look who’s back,” Peter says mockingly.

66

Reverse shot, the crow spirit arrives at the same branch from last night.



“What’s going on?” Peter asks the crow spirit after he lands.

67

CU on the crow spirit.

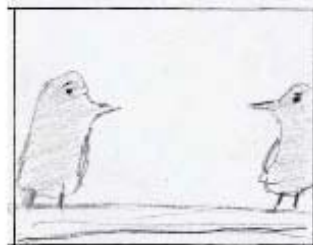


“They are preparing for the day,” says the Spirit, “and so should you.”

The spirit smiles and begins to caw along with the others

68

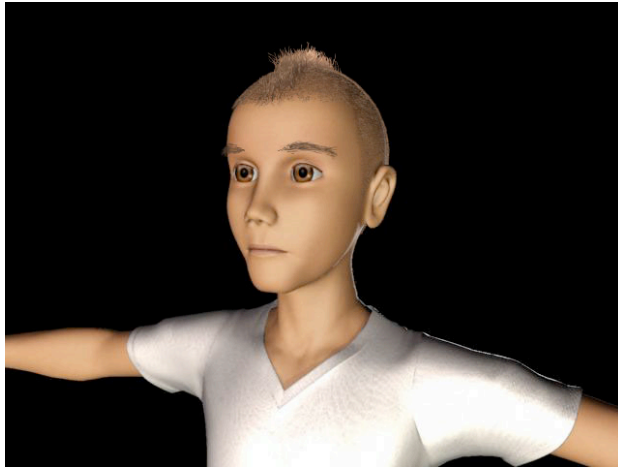
The children look at each incredulously.



The cawing continues around the kids. Begin to hear some flapping of wings indicating that crows are taking off.

Begin playful morning music.

APPENDIX C
SELECTED TUUQAYI CHARACTERS



Peter



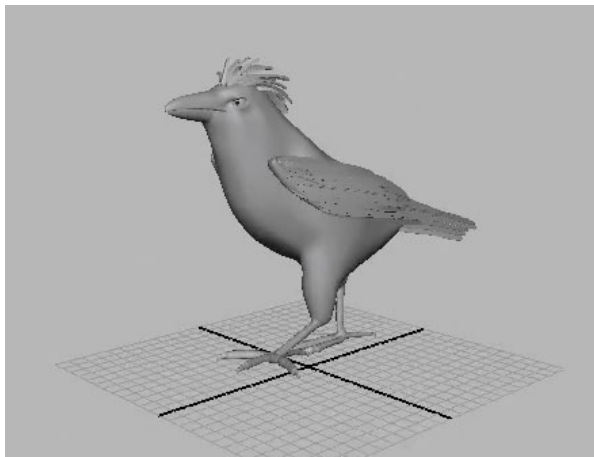
Kiana



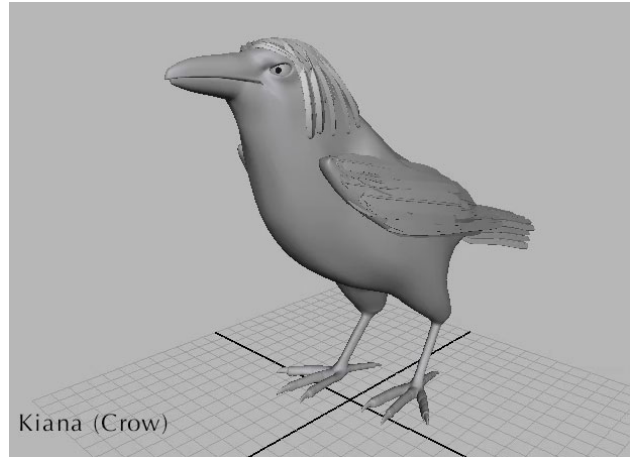
Farmer



Security Guard



Peter in Crow Form



Kiana (Crow)

Kiana in Crow Form

APPENDIX D

KIKIMASU TREATMENT

Open on exterior of traditional Japanese house nestled in the woods. Slowly pan down to a window on the side of the house where Kiana is looking outside longingly. She sighs, and turns around. Cut to house interior where a sage-like grandfather is sitting cross-legged on a tatami mat with a patient, serene look on his face. Kiana trudges back over and slumps down on another mat across from her grandfather. The grandfather's expression changes little as he says, "Things just come in. Do you listen, or do you hear?"

Kiana rolls her eyes and says, "I have no idea." The grandfather proceeds unphased, "When you listen, you are paying attention to something out there, but when you hear, the sounds just come in."

Kiana looks out the window, uninterested. "Okay, I'm hearing now," she says. A crow caws in the distance.

The grandfather utters a low groan. "You are sitting there with your ears open, and the crow calls out. That sound defines you. Once you are defined like that, the cedars can define you, the faraway skunk can define you."

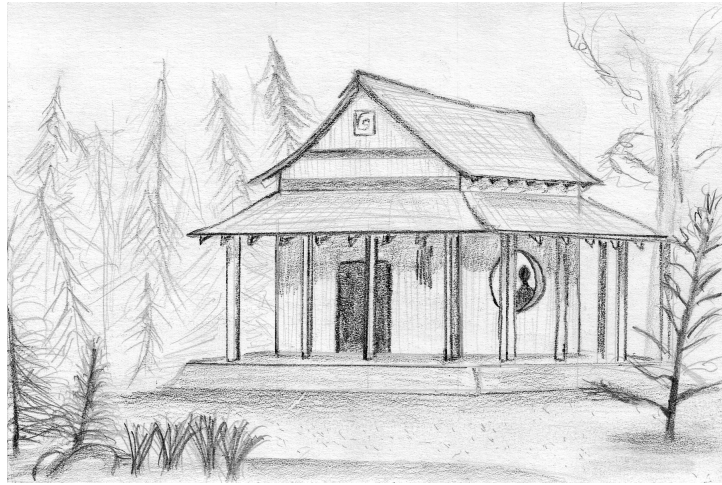
After finishing his sentence, the grandfather settles in and slowly closes his eyes and begins to meditate. Kiana looks on. Begin slowly zooming in and orbiting around her head. She begrudgingly closes her eyes and the screen fades to black.

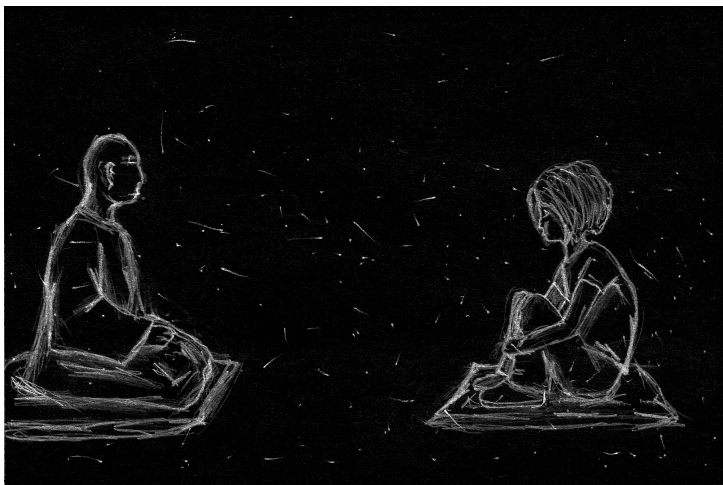
Ambient sounds of the forest continue to play. Suddenly the crow caws again, and a white outline of the crow appears in the distance, but then dissolves away. Ambient sounds continue. A cat meows and suddenly its outline appears, and then dissolves away. The camera pans around in the darkness. Gradually the white outline of Kiana grows from the ground as if made of liquid. Eventually the outline of her grandfather appears also.

The two outlines sit for a moment, until the crow caws once more. Suddenly the grandfather's outline dissolves into the floor and races out to form the shape of the crow. Kiana's outline stands up and runs to the window to see the crow. The camera tracks up to crow outline as the sound of a strong breeze is heard. The outline of the crow dissolves, and blows away into dozens of falling leaves. The leaves fly through the air Kiana's outline runs along below. The leaves gradually begin to form objects in the woods until whole forest around Kiana is outlined. The camera approaches her head as the outline of the forest starts to dissolve and spin around her. The crow's caw echoes all around. Suddenly Kiana understands. Her outline explodes into a massive plume, mixing with the spinning particles around her. The music kicks in again as all the spinning matter reforms into two crows flying through the air. The camera follows with them and the outline of the forest races to be drawn in beneath them. Eventually the whole outlined world dissolves into a spinning vortex once more, which reassembles itself into the shape of Kiana and her grandfather, sitting right where they began.

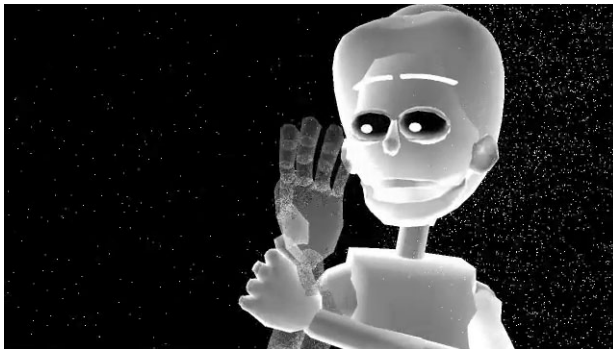
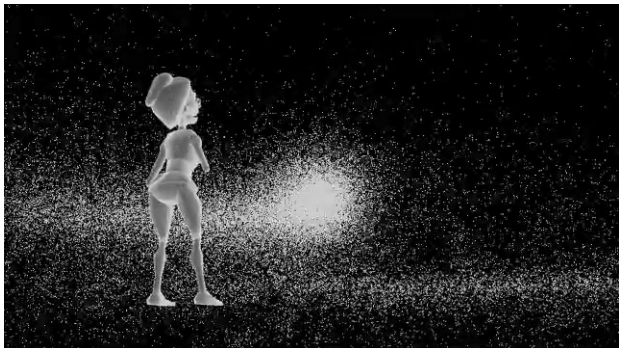
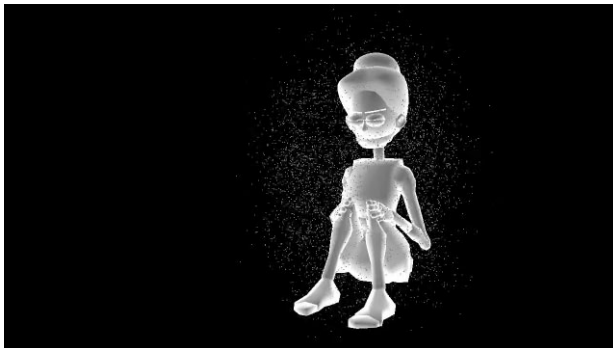
Color begins to creep back into the scene as the world of mind returns to the visual world. Kiana opens her eyes and looks around surprised. Cut to the grandfather, looking back at her with a wide grin. He brings his palms together and bows slowly to Kiana.

APPENDIX E
KIKIMASU STORYBOARD EXCERPT





APPENDIX F
KIKIMASU PREVISUALIZATION EXCERPT



APPENDIX F
KIKIMASU FINAL FILM STILLS

