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The Legend of Hahoe Masks
by
Jung-Mi Yoo

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA Imaging Arts/Computer Animation
SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
May 2003

Stephanie Maxwell, Chair
Associate Professor
School of Film and Animation

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Malcolm Spaul
Professor
School of Film and Animation

Title of Thesis: The Legend of Hahoe Masks

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Date: 10/28/03

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Seth McCaughey
Kyung-Ah Min

My lifesaver composer:

Jong-Hee Kang

My family:

Je-Young Yoo.

All others who helped make this happen. My sincere appreciation to all.

Jung-Mi Yoo

Pre-Production

The concept

In my thesis animation, I wanted to share my interpretation of the Korean Hahoe Masks and the traditional mask dance drama. The Legend of the Hahoe Mask has several different interpretations that have been passed down through many generations. Many Korean people know of the Hahoe Masks and the Mask dance drama. I realized, however, that not many people know much about the legend behind the masks. I thought animation would be the perfect medium to convey the magical qualities of the mask and provide an opportunity to inform people of the story behind the Hahoe Masks. This animation also allowed me to learn more about the Hahoe Masks and to have the chance to share the Hahoe Masks and mask dance drama with other cultures.

I became excited about animating the legend behind the Hahoe Masks because of the unique facial expressions and character of the masks. Each mask has its own unique character, forever captured in the wood from which it is carved. I thought it would be interesting to animate a mask that keeps the same expression and to give the mask a personality by the way I choose to move the mask in the scene. I also thought that it would be interesting to see how the character of each mask changed, depending on the angle from which it was viewed.

Traditionally, the expressions of the masks are portrayed in a dance. I have always been impressed with the amount of expression and character that is in these mask dances. I thought it would be a challenge to get the same kind of expression

and personality out of each mask through animation. In my animation, I envisioned having the masks stand alone and creating each personality only through the mask itself without the help of a dancer. I also felt that seeing faces floating around on their own, yet still interacting with other masks, might add a more magical quality to the mask drama.

I found the ancient quality of the masks to be inspiring. I thought about how long ago they were made and the time period they came from. It is interesting to think about what Korea was like back in the time when these masks were first created centuries ago. The actual history of the masks is left largely to one's imagination. I could see animation being used in a very powerful way to enhance the viewer's understanding of these masks in my story.

I had to research to understand the historical significance of the Hahoe masks and the mask dance. The Korean Hahoe masks originated in the village of Hahoe and have an extensive history and meaning. The Hahoe masks in Korea poked fun at society in many ways. The Hahoe mask dance gave people, in a traditional society, a way to express emotions and viewpoints that they could not express publicly. The mask dance was a means for social protest and built community spirit.

Each mask is a symbol of a specific character stereotype, which represents different levels in the social class system. The lower class people, as a ceremonial ritual and celebration, have performed the Hahoe mask dance since the mid-Koryo Dynasty in the 12th century A.D. The village ritual was intended to please the

local goddess. The village people prayed that the Hahoe mask dance would bring an abundant harvest and peace.

The history of the Hahoe masks goes back so far in time that there is no clear documentation on the creation of the masks. Legends of the Hahoe masks have been passed on through many generations by word of mouth. One of the most popular of the legends is the story of *Ho do-ryong*. In this legend, an unmarried young man who is a very skilled craftsman in the village of Hahoe, one day received a revelation from the village god who directs to devote himself to making a series of wooden masks, without seeing or being seen by anyone until he has finished the fourteen great masks. Despite the Divine order, a beautiful young village girl, who was in love with *Ho do-ryong*, missed him so much that she decided to visit him. *Ho do-ryong* did not answer his door, causing the girl to become very curious about what he was doing. She could not refrain from seeking him out and peeked through a small hole in a paper door. The instant he was seen, *Ho do-ryong* began spitting up blood and quickly died. At the time of his death, he was working on the last mask, *Imae*. The *Imae* mask was never finished, leaving the chin incomplete.

The treatment

I found the legend of *Ho do-ryong* to be very intriguing. I decided to base my animation on the legend. I like the structure of the story and the dramatic tragedy at the end. One thing I was concerned about was that the legend was a bit vague. I therefore decided to add my own interpretations to the story. In the

original legend, *Ho do-ryong's* and the girl's backgrounds and situations were not very clear. I felt the story was missing some key elements. The story did not give the girl a specific reason for going to *Ho do-ryong's* house. The story also did not describe what kind of relationship *Ho do-ryong* had with the girl. I wanted to involve the girl to make the story stronger. My friends and I came up with the idea of a wooden ring given as a present to the girl by the woodcarver to indicate a love connection between *Ho do-ryong* and the girl in the opening scene. The ring element in the story worked well and made the story more dynamic. I also made the masks aware of the girl and even brought her into their world and vice versa. The masks were aware of her and *Ho do-ryong's* fate. They followed the girl as she traveled to *Ho do-ryong's* house.

In the original treatment I was planning to incorporate the Hahoe mask dance elements and background descriptions of each mask. I realized that including all this detail would complicate my animation and take me too far away from the storytelling of the legend. However, my background in film and documentary helped me to add some documentary aspects to the storytelling of the animation.

When I first presented "The Legend of Hahoe Masks" I had a hard time explaining it to the thesis proposal review committee. I found that, because of cultural differences, the committee had a hard time understanding the legend. The legend was told in a structure they were not use to. They kept trying to relate the story to a biblical story. The committee also had a hard time visualizing the style

of my proposed animation and thought my animation was too ambitious. I did a series of drawings to help them visualize the animation better. Through the drawings they could see that I was keeping the style and environment of my animation simple, allowing me to tell a more complex story.

I did not find the proposal process to be productive. It sometimes felt as if the committee got too personal and lead the initial discussion in some inappropriate ways. I left the initial presentation feeling that my animation had not been productively critiqued, but rather my personal abilities had been attacked. I did find, however, that working with a small committee of three people in the production process was much more productive. My committee chair, Stephanie Maxwell, was a tremendous help to me. She gave me confidence and unlimited support in creating this animation. “The Legend of Hahoe Masks” would not have been possible without her commitment and support.

Storyboarding

I think the storyboarding process is extremely important in animation. Without a good plan, it is hard to get a strong story. I had a very clear storyboard to begin with. My first animatic was the same length as the final film. I had a clear picture in my mind of what I wanted my animation to look like. It was difficult to draw and piece together all the different shots in my storyboard. Storyboarding challenged my drawing skills. My closest colleague, Brian Vogt, helped me tremendously in designing the storyboard. To get strong camera angles and perspectives, I used photographs of myself acting out scenes in my animation. I

wrote detailed notes below the drawings for the length of the shot, camera movements, transitions, etc. I also used arrows to describe camera movements and basic character movements. When I needed to modify the storyboard, I looked over each shot and changed the notes. I was lucky enough to get my brother in Korea to send me several videotapes of actual mask dance performances and footage of the process of mask making. The videos were a huge help in visualizing the storyboard. In the beginning of the production of my animation, I followed my storyboard very closely. By the end of the production, I felt that I was not looking at the storyboard enough. I later compared my finished animation to my storyboard and found that the animation was nearly identical to the storyboard.

Production

Character Design

I had the most confidence in the character design process. My goal was to design the main character *Ho do-ryong* as an ordinary Korean working class man, in the age range of 20 to 30 years old. I gave him detailed hands because I had several close up shots of his hands. In designing the girl, I wanted her to have an innocent look so that her actions that caused the woodcarver to lose his life in the end would seem unintended and accidental on her part. I wanted her to be more elegant and of high class. She was to be about the same age as *Ho do-ryong*. I designed their clothing to be from the period of the *Cho-sun Dynasty*, Korean traditional costume.

Traditionally, in Korea, unmarried people and a married couple can be distinguished by their hairstyle. If a person is not married, both male and female wear their hair down and braided. If a couple is married the male rolls his hair up into a ball on the top of his head. The female rolls her hair up in a ball on the back of her head. I wanted to make sure I paid attention to such details. These kinds of traditions were very important in Korea. I decided to give *Ho do-ryong* a headband to make him look more like a working class man.

I enjoyed modeling the nine masks. I spent a large amount of time to create each mask to look identical to the original Hahoe masks. I didn't want the masks to look too realistic, so I found a way to give them a drawn feel.

Environments Design

I wanted the environments within the story be more like theatrical sets. My friend, Charles Bandla, recommended "Screen Play," a stop motion animation done by Barry Purves. I found "Screen Play" to be very inspiring. What makes "Screen Play" so unique is its use of the stage set. I watched the film several times to get the idea for the environments. I was extremely impressed by how the set transforms from one scene to another. The background props move freely and magically into position setting up the next scene. Having each scene built around each character, I was able to make some interesting and successful transitions between the two environments. I was also able to add the dimension of reminding the viewers to know that this is a story being told through animation not an actual experience of the story. I found ways to make the paper doors open to other

scenes. It was a clever way of getting from one place to another without having to show the land between each place. This technique also made the legend seem more magical, since many aspects of the legend involves goddess and supernatural elements.

Most of the environments were made to be very simple. I was careful not to show too much detail since the story was not about the environments. When I did need to show detailed environments, I used still images and made them feel more dynamic by adding 3D camera movements around the image.

I designed *Ho do-ryong's* minimalist workshop with only a single worktable, an oil lamp and carving tools. I arranged Korean antique furniture in *Ho do-ryong's* bedroom for the dream scene. I was able to use the same furniture for the girl's room. I changed the colors and textures on the furniture to make things look different. In the girl's room I added a folding screen and a reading table to signify that she was from a higher class. I designed the paper doors with a different style to distinguish between *Ho do-ryong's* bedroom and the girl's room.

I wanted anything outside *Ho do-ryong's* and the girl's worlds to be a separate style. I made the outside world a mix between reality and a dream. This way I could bring the girl and the masks into a mysterious and magical world as the girl travels toward *Ho do-ryong's* house. I went to the Wallace Library at RIT and found several Asian ink wash art books that contained mostly scenic landscape ink paintings. Brian Vogt and I worked together to create our own ink painted worlds based on the same styles as ancient Korean ink wash paintings. I was very

happy with the way the ink wash world turned out. I was not sure how to handle this part in the beginning stages of my animation. The magical and mysterious environment with the fog and blue tone of lights was the exact style I was looking for.

The Animation

I always looked forward to the animation stage. For me this is when the work comes to life. This being only my third animated work, I wanted to make sure I did the best I could with the animation. I was able to invest much more time in the animation of the work than my earlier projects. In Maya, I used an advanced skeleton that allows me to create better animation in my characters. Other advanced features I was happy to utilize was working with softbodies and deformers. Softbodies and deformers allowed me to have a large amount of secondary detailed movement in the animation.

I was very pleased with how the animation went for both characters. Spending the extra time on setting up the characters eliminated several problems I had experienced in past animations. I set up each scene with the character and environment. I then set up the camera shots to figure out the characters' movements. I used Tom Harp's *Camera Script* to do camera cuts in one scene instead of having several scenes from different shots. This way I was able to save time in the editing stage. I also physically acted out character movements to better understand how the character should move. When I first started a character

movement, I roughly blocked out the key frames. Once I was happy with the camera angles and cuts, I went back and refined the animation.

I made about twelve different facial expressions for each character. I was able to capture all the facial expressions I needed with the combination of different expression sets. I did not want to rely only on the expressions. I was able to animate the masks surrounding the girl and vice versa so that the audience would experience the fear from the girl's point of view. I didn't have to use her expressions or reactions to portray this feeling. I also found that I did not have to make her animation too complex.

Another challenging aspect of my animation was getting the girl to blend in with the black and white ink wash environments. I animated the girl in front of the still image. I brought the still image into the 3D space with the girl. I was able to animate the camera around the girl and the still image, allowing the two to feel as if they were in the same space, based on camera movement.

Post-Production

Sound Design

I consider myself to have talent in the visual world. Unfortunately, my talents in the musical and sound world are still undeveloped. For the sound design, I was able to find the talent necessary to create good sound for my animation. I had an opening narration to describe the story briefly. I was lucky enough to find a Korean friend, Kevin Kil, who had a pleasant and clear voice and

spoke English well. I really wanted to have a Korean narrator to tell the story to help reinforce nationality of the animation.

I planned to use some kind of Korean traditional instruments and rhythm to create the sound track for my animation. The Hahoe masks dance is performed with a specific type of music. This type of music is called *Nong-ak*, the oldest traditional Korean farmers' music. Korean traditional music contains a number of unique features. The tempo of traditional Korean music is based on a certain rhythm. Korean music is different from western music, which alternates between slow and fast rhythms. Korean music normally begins with a slow tempo that gradually speeds up as the piece progresses.

I collected samples of Korean farmer music to get several variations of music. I knew I would need a variety of music that could change with the three different styles and situations within the animation. My composer - I call her "lifesaver" Jong-Hee Kang, agreed with the idea of having a variety of sounds. I let Jong-Hee use her expertise as a composer to build the music to best fit the animation. Unfortunately, I did not meet Jong-Hee until the very end of production. This gave us a very narrow margin of time to work in, especially because she also lived seven hours from me. We did our entire collaboration through the Internet. This gave me a renewed respect for technology. I sent her the final cut of my animation through the Internet and she did her best to quickly create the music. I was tremendously grateful for her help on such short notice. When I received the music, I couldn't believe my ears. The music turned out far

better than I could have ever imagined. The music and the animation were magical together. After the premier of the work in May, 2003 Jong-Hee was able to tweak the music now that she had more time.

Editing and Compositing

For me, the editing and compositing was a long and tedious process. I spent many long and boring hours waiting for my computer to render all my scenes. Watching a computer render is like watching paint dry. The computer requires constant attention because renders can crash or end at any time. To speed up the rendering process, I rendered each scene in layers. I rendered the characters, objects, backgrounds and shadows separately. I had quite a complex system for editing and compositing. I compiled the separate layers in After Effects and added poster production effects. I also cleaned scenes with layer masks. I created an elaborate system of file organization. This way I could keep track of my entire scene files, rendered files, After Effects files and Premiere files. In Premiere, I edited all the finished uncompressed clips I had rendered in After Effects. Editing was not a hard process for me because I had already resolved the editing in the storyboard and animation stage.

Reflection

The Screening

The Legend of Hahoe Masks was premiered on May 19, 2003, in the Carlson Auditorium at RIT. The screening was a big success. There was a big crowd and all my friends and supporters came to see my work. The response from

the audience was very positive. Everyone was impressed and understood my story and complimented me on the drawn style of work. They also enjoyed the unique qualities my animation shared in terms of culture. Several comments were made on how well the music worked with the animation. Hearing such good feedback made me feel that all the hard work in creating this animation was worthwhile.

The Conclusion

Creating The Legend of Hahoe Masks was a valuable experience for me. It will be something I remember for the rest of my life. I value the freedom of being able to make an animation that is entirely mine. I pushed myself to new levels and learned to never give up and just keep pushing. It is an interesting experience to think about the same concept for such a long period of time. Investing so much time made me want to create something with meaning and importance. In many ways I am going to miss working on The Legend of the Hahoe Masks. I owe so much to my loving helpers and supporters. Without my friends, family and professors, I would never have been able to create this animation. I will be forever grateful for this wonderful experience.

Thank you all.

Appendix A

The Legend of Hahoe Masks
by
Jung-Mi Yoo

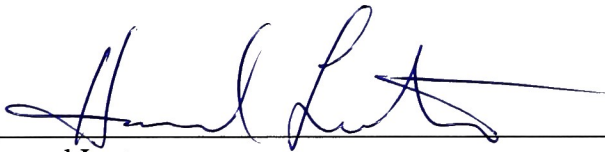
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Treatment

Synopsis

A skilled woodcarver, Ho, is charged by God to secretly create a series of masks. Failing to keep their creation secret, Ho perishes before being able to finish the last mask.

Story

In a series of close ups, Ho slowly and patiently sands a beautifully carved wooden ring. Ho is seen waxing and polishing the ring. Ho places the ring in a thin paper envelope (with a female name written in Korean lettering) and seals it with wax. In a distance house a woman opens his letter and delighted she slips the ring on her finger and then prepare for a journey.

Ho is again working in his workshop. He is cleaning his worktable, arranging his carving tools as he prepares to begin another carving. As he does so, the voice of an old wise man explains that in ancient times there was once a great woodcarver named Ho. The old man's voice continues to state that the village god commanded Ho to carve a series of special masks for the village. To maintain the sacredness of the masks, God commanded that Ho work in absolutely purity and solitude without seeing or being seen by anyone, not even those he loved. A sudden draft of air blows out oil lamp on Ho' table leaving him in darkness.

Ho is now kneeling on the floor before a bowl of water, ceremoniously washing and purifying himself. He finishes and slowly sits upright. The doors

and windows around him begin to shut by themselves. As they close, Ho's silhouette is seen through the thin rice paper of the Asian-style door.

Alone now, Ho prepares his tools and begins to work. He selects a piece of wood and, in the dim light of his oil lamp, begins to carve. He carefully carves and sands until the mask takes shape. He picks up a paintbrush and adds the final details to the mask. He lays the finished mask down on the table beside him and immediately begins working on another.

The sound of traditional mask dance music begins setting a rhythm as a montage (graphic collage style of the masks) starts to fill the screen. The graphics consist of a mixture of rotoscoped dance footage (drawn lines that simulate dancing) and flat graphic shapes of the masks that visually convey the nature of the masks and personify the meanings and stories they each represent. In the foreground a graphic image of a female figure is seen carrying a ring to Ho's house. The masks react to her presence in a threatening way with aggressive attempts to prevent her from continuing her journey. Images of Ho endlessly carving to create masks mingle with the graphic forms of the masks and images of the female traveler. Throughout this montage, images will appear on screen with shifting emphasis, and end with Ho intently laboring on a mask, working expertly and painstakingly, almost caressing the mask as he finishes it. A row of masks stretches out on the table beside him. The wood shavings from his carvings begin to pile up and his supplies of paints dwindle.

Ho starts yet another mask. Beyond him a faint shadow passes across a rice paper door. Unaware of the visitor, Ho continues to work. The shadow is seen again and is in the form of a woman. As the intensity of Ho's work increases, the shadow approaches closely to the door. Through a small crack in the door, an eye appears. Suddenly a crash is heard and Ho's hand is seen, open and limp on the floor. The unfinished mask rocks and then settles beside him.

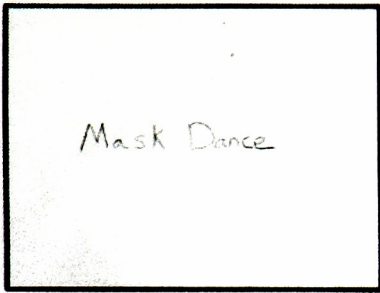
The female figure rushes in through the door, drops beside Ho and cradles his head. On her hand is seen the carved wooden ring.

Live action footage of the masks being used in performances of traditional Korean mask dances will serve as the backdrop to the final credits.

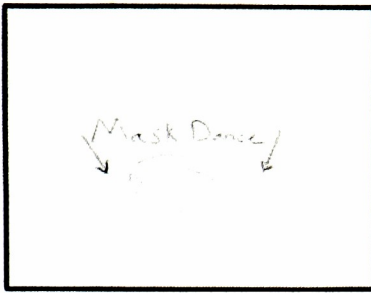
Approach

This film will have a formalist approach with a very soft, minimalist look. The 3D elements consist primarily of very close shots detailing the actions described above. The montage will also be handled in simplistic manners that are described in the drawings attached.

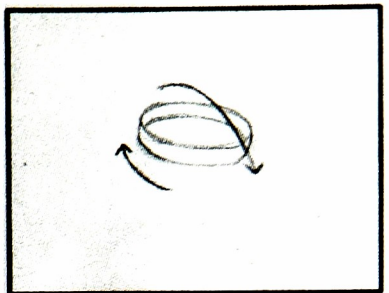
Appendix B



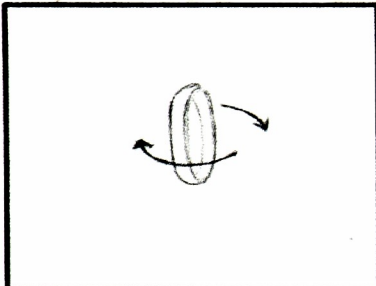
Title morph to ring



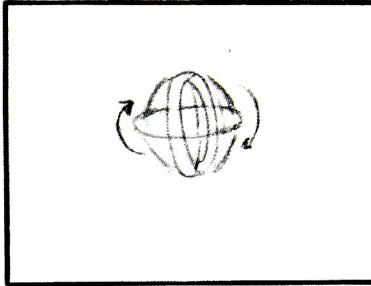
Morph to ring



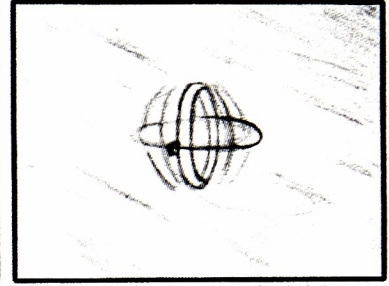
Shape of ring still black & white (Alpha shape)



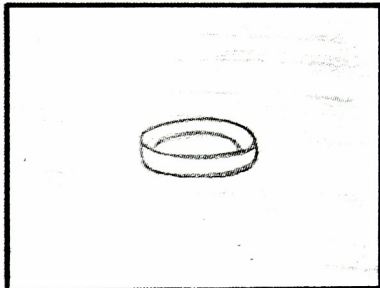
Shape of ring begins to spin as color fills the shape



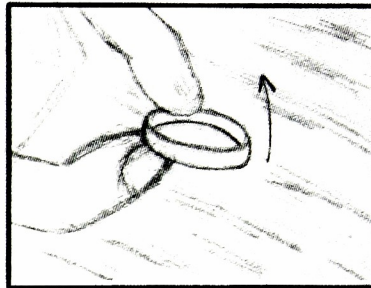
The ring spins faster as color fades in.



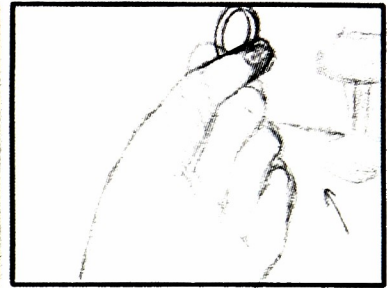
As the ring begins to slow, texture of table fades in. Shadow begins to show on the table.



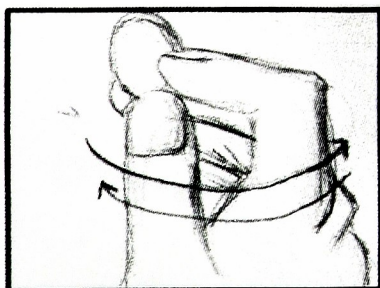
The ring comes to a stop (music stops at the same point) Camera holds on it.



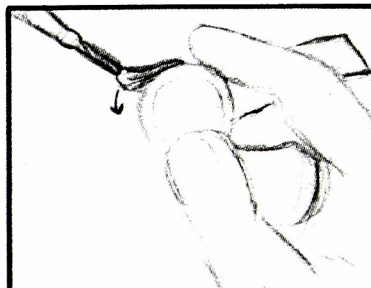
A hand reaches down to pick up the ring. Camera follows hand as it rises.



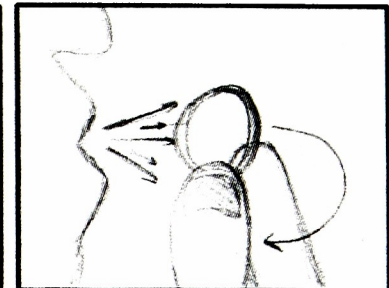
Camera is focus on the ring and background is blurred.



The hand rotates left and right



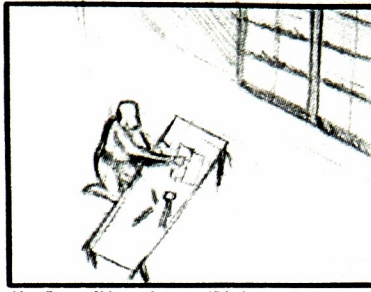
Paint brush brushes on the last coat of varnish.



Ho blows on the ring to dry it quick while still rotating hand.



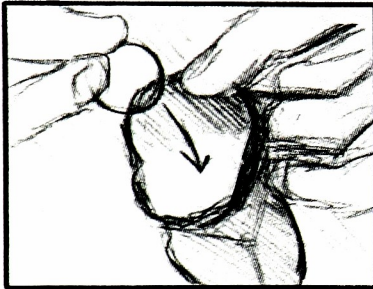
First shot of Ho.
He carefully examines the ring



Ho glimps of his environment (bird's eye shot).
We see Korean style rice door off to the side.



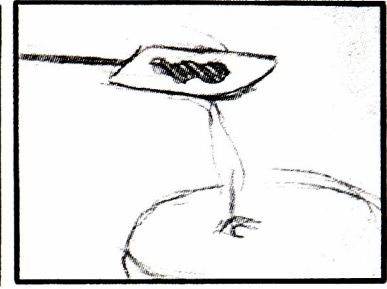
Ho puts the ring into a little bag.
Camera is looking down over him.



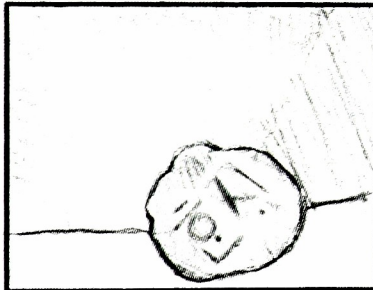
Close ups of the little bag.



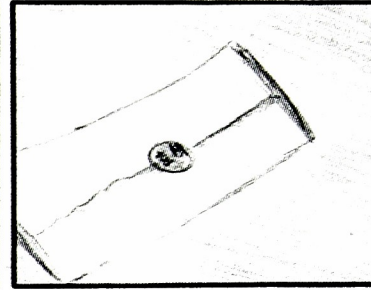
Ho is melting wax on the Korean oil lamp.



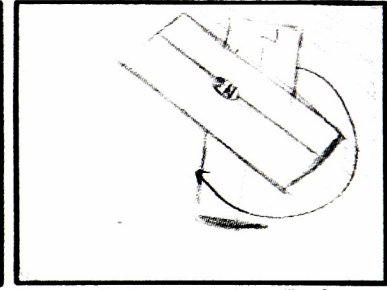
Close ups of candle melting wax.



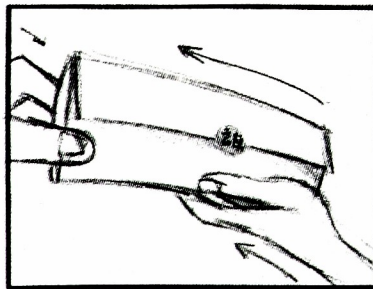
Close ups of wax & symbol.
Envelope begins to pull back.



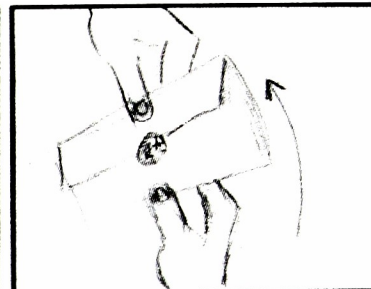
Camera pulls out showing envelope with symbols of
wax on it.



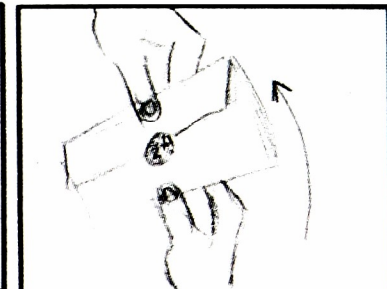
Envelope spins in space, wax stamp still on focus.



Envelope gets passed from one hand to the other.



Envelope keeps passing around.



Show that envelope has been traveled.



Doors close by themselves
Ho prays.



Silhouette of Ho after doors have closed



Ho grabs a block of wood



Ho is carving



Close ups of Ho is working



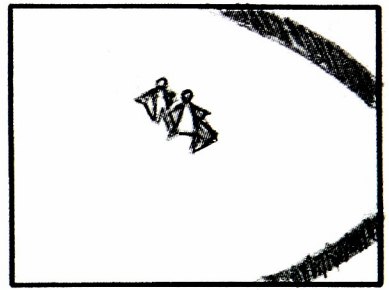
Wood starts looking more like a mask.
Fade in shot to shot show time compression



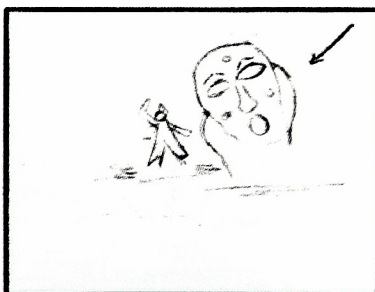
Ho is painting on the mask



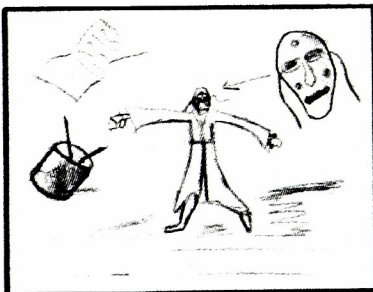
Camera moves into the mask's eye



Inside of the eye, we see rotoscoped of mask dance.



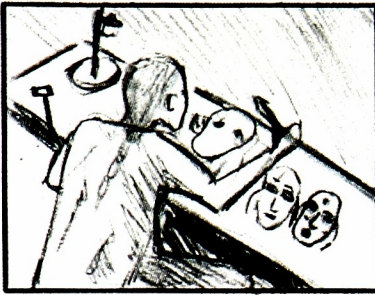
The first mask enters
Dancers are in the background



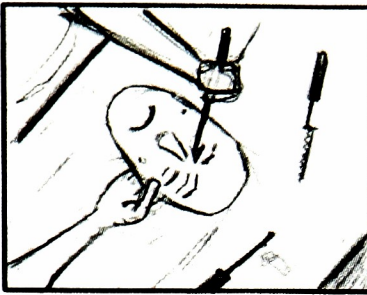
Mask attracts to dancers face and turns into 2D mask



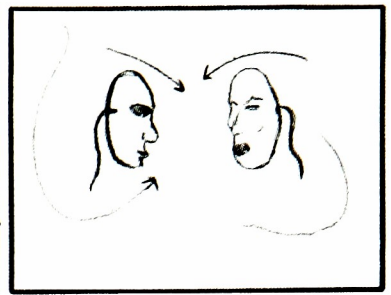
Dancer with mask move into camera



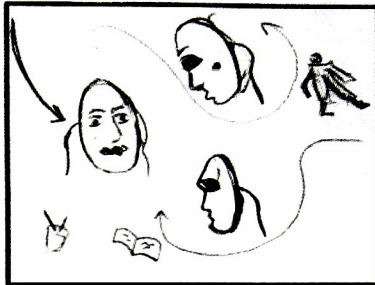
Cut to Ho is working on the third mask. We see other 2 masks on the table completed.



Close ups of Ho is carving



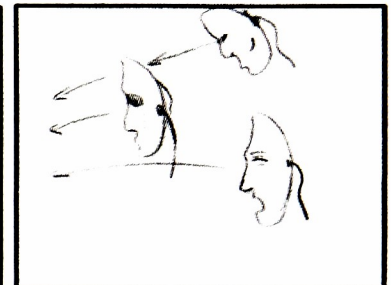
3D masks fly around screen interact each other. Masks has their own animated expression.



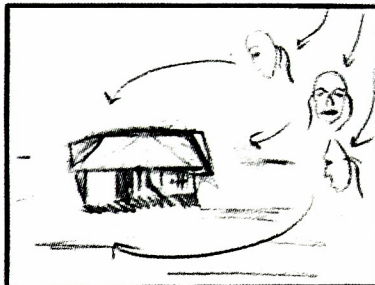
The third mask enters. They interact each other. In the screen we see symbol images of elements of each mask.



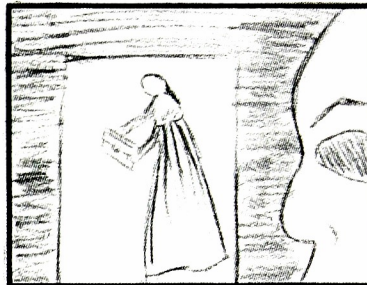
Instruments begin playing



Masks hear sound of laughter. They turn to its direction.



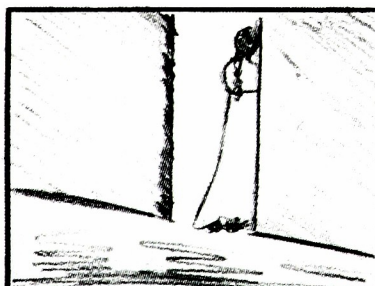
3D masks approach 2D house and begin to fly around it aggressively.



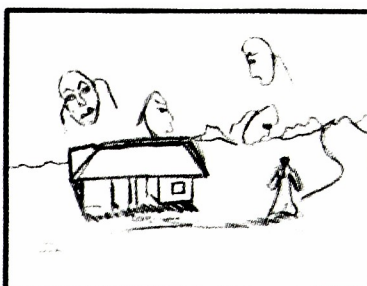
Masks outside of the house watch a girl is opening envelope.



The girl has the ring on her finger.



Girl leaves house to come to Ho.



Girl enters 2D world 3D masks fly around her with anger.



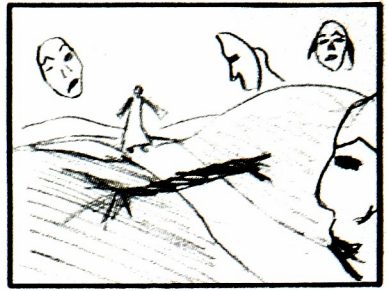
Masks follow the girl.



Cut back to Ho is working on mask.



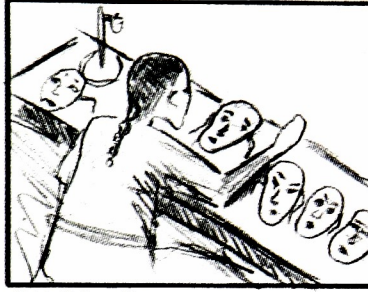
Close ups of mask Ho is carving.



Masks try to stop the girl.
She becomes aware of their tenton.



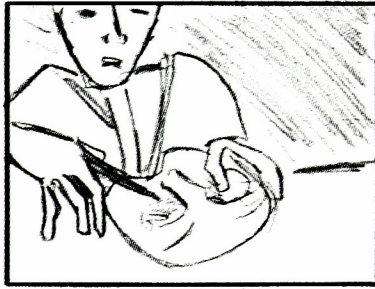
The girl becomes scared and walks faster.



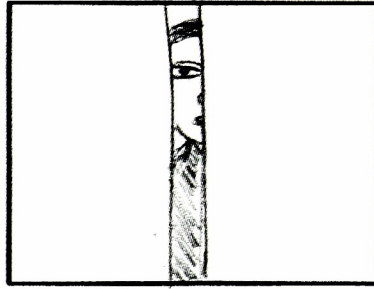
Cut to Ho is working.



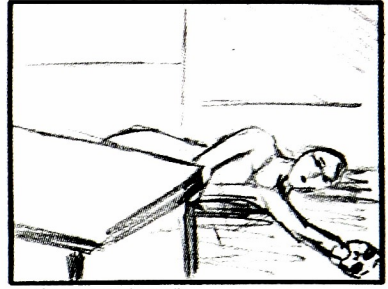
Ho is working on the last mask.



Ho is working faster. He awares of girl presents.



Girl looks into Ho's room.



Ho falls over to his death.



Appendix C

