Animation Arts: Living Voices Unit: Visual Narrative

Title of Unit Assignment: Animation Arts: Living Voices	**Submission Deadline:** June 1st 2023 by 3.00pm (15.00) GMT **Adjusted Assessment Deadline*:** June 15th 2023 by 3.00pm (15.00) GMT	**Submission Method:** Electronic submission via Moodle, maximum 200MB
Submission Queries: If you have any difficulties submitting your Project Brief contact both Jess and Mariana on: j.mountfield@lcc.arts.ac.uk and m.cadimamendesleal@lcc.arts.ac.uk before the deadline.	If you are using additional time please notify us using the following email: Stuart Hilton s.hilton@lcc.arts.ac.uk Admin Team: mida@arts.ac.uk	A single PDF with links to moving image material on myblog

Day 1: Introduction to the Unit, choosing sound & making mouldboards
Brief

Living Voice is a project which will teach you all about lip-synch techniques, character acting, and storytelling in animation. You will end the unit with a polished and creative 10-15 second animated piece to dialogue.

It will involve a 'breakdown' of a recorded dialogue and writing it up accurately before synching the mouth shapes to the speech sounds. You'll then design your characters to complement the audio - you can be as creative as you like using complex character designs, humans, mammals, abstract shapes - whatever you fancy. They just need to have mouths and lips. Be creative with the design of your characters and environment. You will then produce keys of the animation for feedback, considering the 12 principles of animation. You'll be given feedback on these keys, which you will then implement. Next up is in-betweening the animation (again considering the 12 principles), and correctly synching the lips of the character/s to the dialogue. Et voila! A finished animated piece.

For this project you will work through the following six components:
- Mood board and storyboard
- Transcript and sound breakdown
- Character designs
- Animating and acting
- Lip synching
- Responding to feedback

Aims
- Storyboarding
- Mood boards

- Narrative structure
- Character design
- Mouth shapes, lip-synch techniques and x-sheets
- The 12 principles
- Pose to pose animation and keying
- Clean-up and in-betweening
- Colour theory

Submission
- A mood board, storyboard, and x-sheet
- Character and environment designs
- A synchronised 10-15 second lip-synched animation

Introduction to Unit Notes

What is the aim? -- The Living Voices lip synch unit is a project which will teach you all about lip-synch techniques, character acting, and storytelling in animation. You will end the unit with a polished and creative 10-15 second animated piece to dialogue.

What is lip synch? -- When characters speak we get most of the intention behind what they are saying through the way they move. However, synchronisation of dialogue is also important because the audience almost always looks at the facial area of a character. So good lip synch has two parts: the actual mouth shapes, but additionally the movement of the body in correlation to the sounds.

The Body: In animation we break character's movements down into key poses. These are the main points of drama within a scene, where the body language of the character tells us what they're feeling. So step one of animating the body is to note the key moments of emphasis or drama in the dialogue, and then to design poses for the characters that describe and enhance the action.

The Lips: Lip synch itself works by breaking down the key points of emphasis in the talking, and creating mouth shapes that correspond with them. As a rule you should prioritise the loudest or most exaggerated moments first, and then spend the rest of the time working out how to get from one to another convincingly (much the same as with posing the character's body). To help with this we will use what is called an 'x-sheet' that breaks down the individual sounds you hear in each frame, so you know what mouth shape to choose.

What duologue will we use? -- There will be a (virtual) bucket of recordings you can choose from, but you are free to find another audio clip to use from film, TV, podcasts, the news - whatever interests you. If you choose to work with your own clip then you must get it approved first. Remember we are focusing on lip synch and dialogue, so the more emotion, acting, and beats we have to work with the better.

What you have to submit? –
- A mood board, storyboard and x-sheet
- Character and environment designs (environment designs only if relevant)
- A synchronised 10-15 second lip-synched animation

- A 750 word written reflection

Style Research: Mood board -- Moodboards using the work of other artists - what is it about their style that feels relevant to your project? Remember to analyse these images to figure out exactly what it is you like about them. Think about the following:

- Colour
- Line
- Texture
- Lighting
- Shape language
- Composition

Day 2: Introduction To Narrative Structures, Storyboard recap & Scripts

Learn First, Break Later -- It's great learning rules! Mainly so we understand the structures in place and can decide if we want to operate within them or break them for creative effect. You may not use these structure guidelines for this project, but it's great to start thinking about what makes a good narrative (even in a 10-15 second piece).

What is it? -- It's the fundamental framework behind a story. It determines the order and presentation of the plot.

Story refers to the raw materials of dramatic action as they happen in chronological order ('who,' 'what' and 'where')

Plot refers to how the story is told - the form of the storytelling, and the structure that the story follows ('how' and 'when')

Types of Structure –

These are some of the types of narrative structure:
- **Linear** (e.g. most children's books)
- **Non-linear** - outside of traditional chronological sequences and may include flashbacks. Action is a theme rather than a driving force.
- **Fractured** - does not follow chronology, contains uncertainty
- **Collage** - multiple viewpoints, but cohesive due to a common theme or element
- **Braided** - different viewpoints and characters that weave together throughout story

Types of Conflict:
- **Man vs Man** - the main character struggles against another physical character (e.g. wicked witch in Wizard of Oz)
- **Man vs Nature** - the main character struggles against a force of nature - external conflict (e.g. Cast Away, The Red Turtle)
- **Man vs Themself** - the main character struggles with right and wrong / their decisions, etc (e.g. Up)
- **Man vs Society** - the main character struggles against ideas, practices, customs of the people (e.g. Handmaid's Tale)

Other people have proposed 'Man Against Machine' 'Man Against Fate' 'Man Against the Supernatural' 'Man Against God'

Narrative Arc & Three Act Structure

Three-Act Structure

by Philipp Trübiger
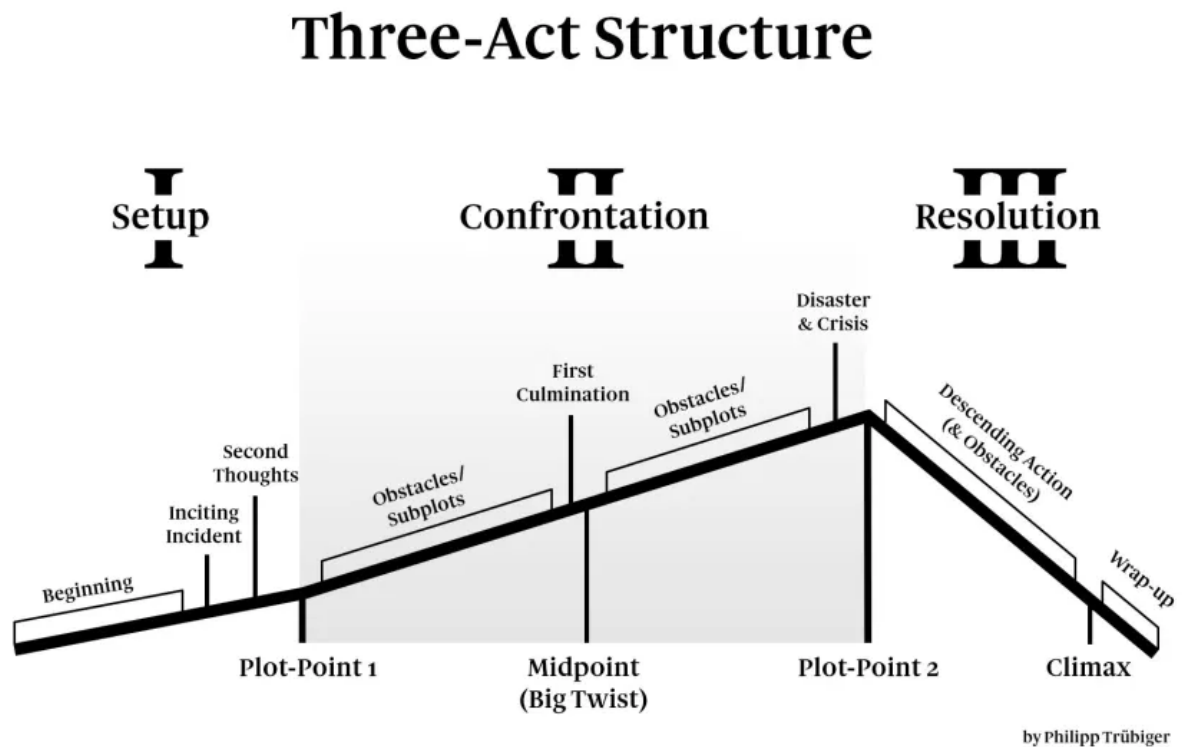
<u>Character Over Camera</u>
Tell your story through your character, not your camera.

This is your sequence to do what you'd like with, but I'd recommend using your storyboard (and this project) to focus more on your character, composition, posing and emotional beats as opposed to complex camera moves.
Note: a story 'beat' is a structural element in the narrative that signifies a shift in tone and moves the narrative forward.

<u>Strong Posing and Beats</u>
Break down the beats of the dialogue/story - what are the key emotional points? Where is the emphasis? Sketch out these poses for your storyboard first.
Ensure your poses are strong. A lot of work should go into your acting and key beats in the storyboarding stage. This is to ensure that your story is working and communicating what it needs to, and helps when it comes to animating.
 Remember to use the silhouette method to check your poses – picture them as a black shape – do they still read well?
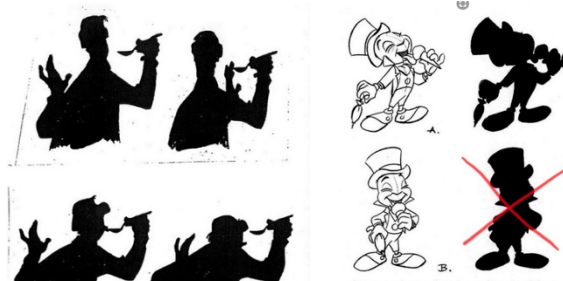
Line of Action and Contrast

It is important to know that this is the line running through a character's pose that visualises the driving force of the action. Use your storyboard to plan out your key moments of contrast in the dialogue: when does a character lean /stretch / squash / exaggerate?
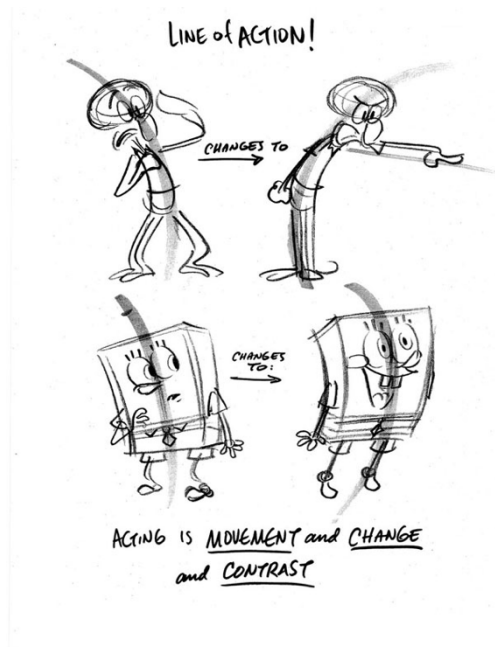

Composition and Negative Space

The rule of thirds will make your framing far more interesting. Negative space is important! How does space around your character change what you're communicating? The character should generally fit well within the frame. Have the negative space in front of a character as opposed to behind them. Experiment with having depth in the scene through use of foreground & BG elementsThe space characters occupy on screen says a lot about their dynamic and emotional journeys.

180 Degree Rule
Consider your scene from above and draw a straight line through the characters.
Usually your camera needs to stay on one side of that line, or the viewer gets disoriented and lost in space. If you absolutely have to cross it, you must cut first, place your camera on the axis, and then cut to the other side.
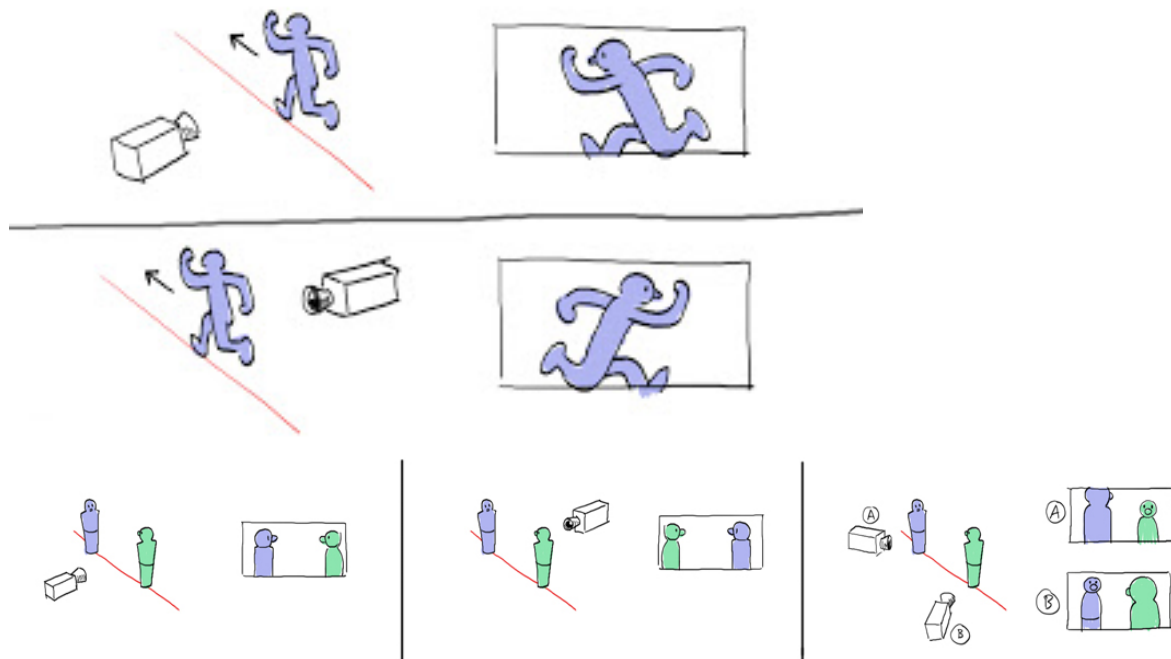
Character Relationships
Usually in narrative pieces we try to avoid straight or profile angles (3Q is your friend). During dialogue, you can experiment with using over the shoulder shots as it shows characters in relation to each other (through space between them).
Generally, get in as close as possible to whatever is the most important thing at that moment, while leaving breathing room and enough room for any actions that might occur in that scene. Break this for emotional / tone reasons e.g. to show someone is isolated.

Creative Staging
Most of the points we've discussed focus on helping you avoid flat staging. Flat staging happens whenever the camera is placed so that the action is either perpendicular or parallel to the camera and where the characters are usually seen straight on or in profile. It results in a feeling of little depth. Comedies use this, and dramatic movies when trying to have a lighter moment. In animation most funny shorts tend to favour this kind of staging to maximize comedic mood. We don't need to follow the rules! Just break them with purpose. Winnie the Pooh also uses flat staging, but in a 'diorama' like way. There are few close-ups or dramatic angles, most things happen at a middle distance away from the viewer. You feel slightly set back and separated from the action.
This affects how we feel when watching. You can't separate how a scene is staged with how you feel about it. It creates the feeling of calmly watching the illustrations in a children's

book. Wes Anderson uses the same technique but in a different way – this gives it a quirky and whimsical feel, which perfectly matches the written story.

It creates a very contained narrative, and a contained world, exactly as the story does (takes place on a island). Wouldn't work for dramatic films like Brave or Tangled.

Scriptwriting
Scripts are a production tool. They have certain formatting rules and they should use clear concise language to communicate the idea to your production team.
The basics of script formatting are as follows:
- 12-point Courier font size
- Each page should have approximately 55 lines
- The dialogue block starts 2.5 inches from the left side of the page
- Character names must have uppercase letters and be positioned starting 3.7 inches from the left side of the page
- Page numbers are positioned in the top right corner. The first page shall not be numbered, and each number is followed by a period.
- Don't forget every scene has a number!

Beat Sheet
Bullet Point Scripts are a list of all the beats or key plot points in your film that help guide the narrative forward. They are a great way to allow yourself to explore the narrative structure before visualising it in a storyboard. This way you can see if the story works before you delve into making it work as an audio-visual experience. Bullet Point Scripts are a useful tool for production keeping the team on the same page. They can also be included in funding applications or pitches to help communicate your idea quickly and efficiently with someone external to the production.

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MEHDI TIME
Beat Sheet
8-16-8

ACT I

  1. JOHN MEHDI completes an algebra lecture at a
     prestigious university. TWO MEN enter the back of the
     room and wait for him to finish.

  2. Outside the building, the TWO MEN approach MEHDI and
     present themselves as writers for The New York Times.
     They are TOM and STEINER.

  3. John meets with the men in his office. They tell him
     they want John to write an article about himself for
     their newspaper. John seems suspicious of their
     motives and exits to attend a fundraiser.

  4. John arrives at an academic fundraiser. He is
     introduced to the out-of-town organizer of the
     fundraiser, MICKEY WHITELY.

  5. THE NEXT DAY. John drops in on the school dean to
     inquire about the TWO MEN. The Dean reassures Daniel
     that they are reporters.
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Day 3: In Depth Look at Character Design

INDUSTRY: Character Designer
Their role: visualise and create the look of individual characters, often working to descriptions given to them by the director and providing multiple initial options. Working in

the style of the production (usually as established through concept art).

Communicate the character's personalities through facial expressions and poses in a way that reflects the narrative.
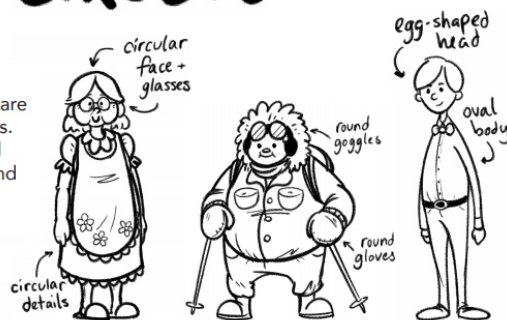
Structure
Shapes and composition
- One of the first steps in creating a character is looking at their structure.
- What basic shapes make up their body and head?
- How we organise these can drastically change the feeling of the character (scary, little, loveable, wise, twisted, cute, strong)
- These can also help us create more interest and intrigue if used unexpectedly - for example a putting a timid character in a towering hulk of a body

CIRCLES

TECHNIQUE: Circles are organic and natural shapes. Round out edges and add curves to evoke a warm and welcoming feeling.
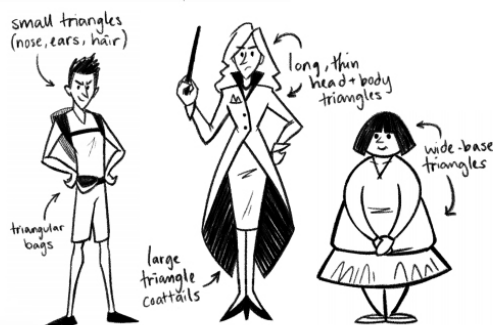
circular face + glasses
round goggles
egg-shaped head
oval body
round gloves
circular details

SQUARES

Big square frame
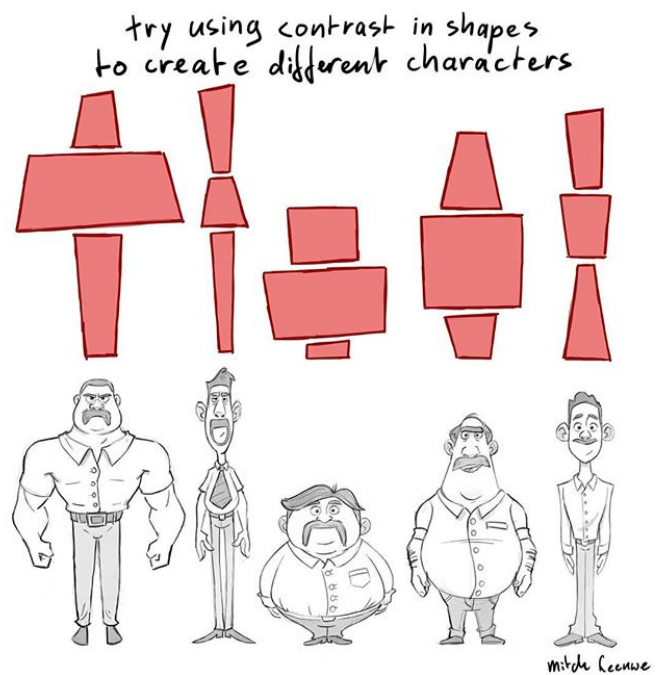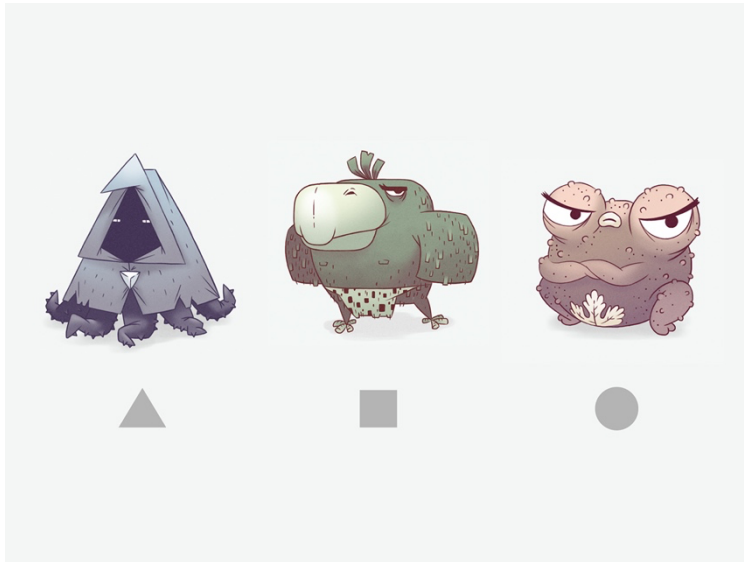squared-off pose
Square jaw + chin
square details

TIP: Square off things like jaws, shoulders, and even hands—they not only feel strong, but can feel difficult to move.

TRIANGLES

TIP: Triangles are sharp. Exaggerating the size and length of these shapes can heighten fear and transform how menacing the character is.

small triangles (nose, ears, hair)
long, thin head + body triangles
wide-base triangles
triangular bags
large triangle coattails

try using contrast in shapes to create different characters

Aesthetics Questions to Consider:

- Line or no line? How does this change the tone?
- Stylised or realistic?
- Lighting or flat colour?
- Natural light or sharp shadows?
- Texture or flat fills?
- Limited colour palette or full range?

You may not know until you experiment, but keep coming back to the WHY of your character - who are they? What story are you telling?

DIVERSITY IN DESIGN

We're talking about diversity in character design for two reasons

- First: we need better on screen representation. The 'will boys watch a TV show about a girl' debate has finally ended, but we've only just seen 'JoJo and Gran Gran' bring us a leading character of colour. This stretches far beyond TV, and there is huge ground that needs to be covered.
  Diversity in character also just makes for better characters. There are so many personalities and people and stories to be told - let's do just that. Your characters

Character over Camera
Tell your story through your character, not your camera.
Strong Posing and Beats
What are the key emotional points of the dialogue? Sketch these out first and ensure your poses are strong.
Line of Action
We gain interest through contrast. Keep pushing your key poses with the line of action.

Composition and Negative Space
The rule of thirds will make your framing far more interesting. Negative space is important! How does space around your character change what you're communicating?

The character should generally fit well within the frame. Have the negative space in front of a character as opposed to behind them.

Experiment with having depth in the scene through use of foreground & BG elements.

Shot Angles
Eye Level
Placing your character at camera eye level will build a sense of empathy with them.
Low Angle
Low Angles make your character's feel powerful and important.
High Angle
High Angles look down on your characters making them feel powerless and insignificant. Often creating a feeling of sympathy for them.
Close-up
Close-ups allow us to study the character's emotional state and get closer to what they are thinking.

Symmetry
Symmetry is achieved through balance in form and line. It is also characterised by an angle of refraction that builds two mirror images. Absolute symmetry is not natural and therefore feels eerie and can easily feel overwhelming too. What can symmetry in shot composition and the progression or break of that symmetry tell us about character relationships and inner states?

Balance

Inside the frame balance is measured through size, scale, value, and colour. Balancing out your frames will make them easy to read as a viewer. Although extreme imbalance can be used to guide the attention of the viewer or allude to the outside of the frame. What can a fight for weight on screen mean? How does the balance in the frame portray character dynamics?

Leading Lines

Leading lines are lines in a shot composition that lead the eye to certain elements in the frame. They can help guide the audience through the actions happening simultaneously on screen without it feeling too overwhelming. Through them we can also bring attention to certain details without having to get close to them.

Day 5: Layout & Background Painting – Introduction

Backgrounds in the industry role -- In animation, background design—which includes both the drawing and painting of the background—sets the stage and atmosphere for a scene, and for everything in that setting. The houses on a street, the trees and plants in a forest, the arrangement of things in a room, and even the lights in a square...

A background designer's work guides the viewer's gaze towards what's important, beyond the contents of the scene and its dialogue. These artists define and apply the colours, shapes, and lights that set the tone of the fictional universe. They often work in fields like film, TV, and video games.

How does this work? -- Their work creates subtextual visual information for viewers so they can immerse themselves in the narrative and experience the world presented to them to the fullest extent.

Background artists work from the animation storyboard and guides from the art director, which they use to create detailed backgrounds that convey the feelings and emotions defined by the script and direction. In addition to colour, shape, and light, they consider texture, movement, contrast, lines, and the rule of thirds.

Industry Role: Layout Artist

Layout artists begin their work at the start of an animation production, after the storyboard and the look of the project have been agreed upon. Layout artists determine the depth and perspective of what is displayed on screen. The way that this is achieved varies depending on the kind of animation being produced.

They help lay out the space to determine how the setting works harmoniously from different camera angles, while maintaining consistency across all shots.

Industry Role: Background Painter

A background painter takes the linework provided by the layout artist and does the background painting - adding tone, colour, light and texture to the scene in line with the art style set out by the art director.

In a small studio or on a small project, the layout and background painting may be done by the same person.

What skills are required? –
- Advanced illustration skills to allow them to create a variety of styles.
- Extreme attention to detail.
- Mastery of colour theory and its related concepts.
- Mastery of light, shape, and texture.
- Understanding of 3D composition, proportion, and stage design.
- Creativity to create and experiment.
- The ability to turn abstract concepts into images and settings.

Colour Theory – Main Principles
Mood
Mood is set by your dominant and secondary colours. Identify the feeling of the core colour in your scene, and then how you can refine this feeling through secondary notes.
Note the effect of saturation and contrast on the scene, and consider the time of day / light sources.
Saturation
Saturation is a measure of how pure a colour is. You can reduce the saturation of a colour by adding grey or a colour on the opposite side of the colour wheel (which essentially kills the colour).
Hue
The term "hue" is often used as a simile for the term colour. Hue generally refers to the dominant wavelength of colour out of the twelve colours on the colour wheel (being the primary, secondary and tertiary colours).
For example, the hue of navy is blue. The hue of burgundy is red. The hue of moss green is green.
Tone
Tone is a widely used term that artists often don't agree on the meaning of (or use incorrectly). Tone is a broad term used to describe a colour which is not a pure hue and is not black or white. In many cases, artists use tone to describe a colour which has been greyed down (de-saturated). It might also be used to describe the 'feeling' or 'mood' of an image.
Value
Value is how light or dark the colour is, on a scale of black to white. Value is widely considered to be one of the most important variables to the success of a painting.
Make a painting or photograph greyscale (B&W) to see the value. It is vital as it sets the structure of your painting and can help guide the eye.
A value scale is below, from the highest value (white) to the lowest value (black). Between is basically a grayscale. You can make a coloured value scale by adding white to increase the value and black to decrease the value. When you take the colour away (de-saturate) the scale should look the same as the B&W value scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

High Keys VS Low Keys
- This refers to the value scale used in the painting.
- **A high key** painting has a high-value scale (light)
- **A low key** painting has a low-value scale (dark)
- These types of paintings often have a very limited value range.

Value Sketches
- Usually paintings balance both lights and darks - the way we balance them to reduce or increase contrast and brightness enables us to change the mood of the image.
- Before you begin a background, create a 3 tone sketch first. Set your background to your key value (e.g. a medium dark grey), and then choose 2 further greyscale colours as secondary colours or highlights.
- Paint your image using these 3 values.
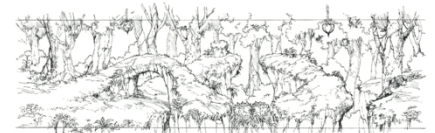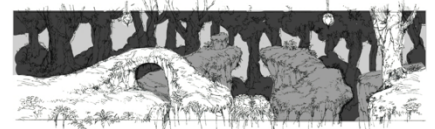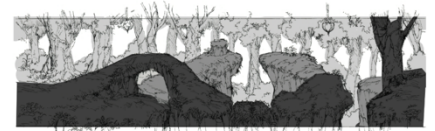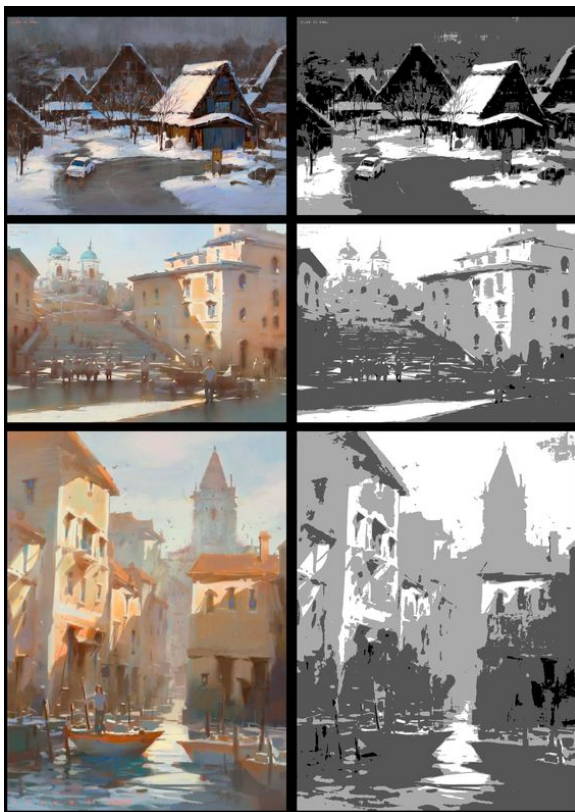
Colour Temperature
- The wheel is split into warm and cool colours.
- Warm colours usually indicate activity and light, and cool colours tend to be used for calm, distance and soothing environments.
- White, black and grey are usually considered neutral colours. Adding them to our colours gives us a wider range of tones.
- You backgrounds will be either cool, warm, or neutral (an even balance of both)
- A colour's temperature is affected by the surrounding colours: a blue can look warm or cool depending on context.

Complimentary
- Opposite each other on the colour wheel.
- They have an extremely strong contrasting, vibrant effect when used together.
- Overuse can create a painting that is uncomfortable to look at.
- Use one as the dominant colour and the other as an accent.

Analogous
- A relaxing combination, created by colours next to each other on the wheel.
- Famously used by impressionists to create harmonious paintings.
- Usually choose one dominant colour, a secondary colour, and an accent colour

Triadic

- Uses three colours which are evenly placed around the colour wheel.
- Results in a vibrant scheme, even with low saturation.
- One colour is usually dominant with the other two as accents. Balance with this colour scheme is key.

Split Complimentary

- Opposite each other on the colour wheel.
- They have an extremely strong contrasting, vibrant effect when used together.
- Overuse can create a painting that is uncomfortable to look at.
- Use one as the dominant colour and the other as an accent.

Shape Language
- Soft VS sharp
- Patterns and repetition in shape language
- Composition and leading lines

Value Painting
Steps to creating backgrounds
1. Establish canvas size **(no pixelated images!! What's your biggest zoom?)**
2. Create your linework
3. Choose a colour palette
4. Value sketch (assess contrast and tone)
5. Colour blocking
6. Paint background **in layers** and with textures (separate elements in separate groups)
7. Highlights & shadows
8. Final adjustments

Refine & Define
Using your moodboard to determine the tone of your film, create a proportional colour palette including your:
o Primary colour/s
o Secondary colour/s
o Accent colour/s

Tips:
Consider the values of your piece (high or low contrast? What is your lightest light and darkest dark?
Consider the saturation and how this influences the feeling of your work
Consider how your characters will stand out from your backgrounds.