Unit: Exploratory Practice: 3D Computer Animation PUOO2399

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Mindmap & Moodboard

Story Exploration!

For this project we have been asked to create something that we would like to specialise in further in our creative careers. With this in mind I would like to focus on character animation as this is the sector of 3D animation I would like to specialise in further in the future.

I would follow a three act structure, demonstrating the introduction of a character and its traits, a dilemma and a plot conclusion. However, with the short space of time we have for this project this may not be realistic and therefore may need to keep the narrative short and sweet, conveying a readable message.

Things I would like to include in my project alike to Paperman:
- Stylalised Characters
- Possibly black and white if it suits the tone of the narrative
- Harsh bright lighting to illuminate the characters
- Sweet and compelling narrative, make the character likeable to the audience

Character Exploration

To the left is a character I found on Gumroad that I have decided to use. This character is fully rigged and therefore saves time in the pre-production phase but is also something I have gained knowledge on within pre-production time in my trail and error phase.

When using my rig I would like to create 1 animation that focuses on character expression and emotion and tell a story through this. The secondary peice fo animtion will focus on actiona and body movement to tell a narrative.
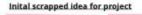
Environment Exploration

These are two types of environment styles I have been considering, one that uses a hyper-realistic style and one a painterly, cartoon like stylisation. Realism is something I feel I could convey using Unreal Engine to generate natural scenes, for instance a lake, a forest, rocky terrain, etc. While ont he other hand, the painterly style has been something I have wanted to test out and experiment with. I could do this by 3D building the scene and panting this in Substance Painter. However, this projects aim is focusing on the specialisation we would like to go into in animation, whihc for me is 3D animation, I still want to play with stylisation of assets and backgrounds.
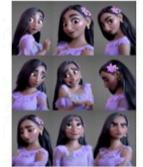
To the right is stylisation of character profiles I would be interesting in mimicking. One of my favourtie artists being Albert Mieglo, his style has become extreemly popular in revent years and provides a very unique approach to the poainterly animation style. Again, a way I could achieve this is to model the character in Maya and or buy a rig online and repaint this skulpt in Substance Painter.

Inital scrapped idea for project

As my last project focused on animal and creature animation I would like to experimient with robot animation.

Having found online a model I would like to use by retexture in the Albert Mieglo style or just more rustic and unique.

To the left is the original idea I had for this project, this being both an animation and stylisation peice. This would surround the narrative of a robot that I planned to texture and rig. However, I decided to go down the human character route instead as this is something that I have not explored as extensively as I would have liked to yet.

After going through alot of trial and error with the robot character I had found, the problems that arouse within rigging were something out of my knowledge to figure out and therefore decided to retry with a new idea. I have however documented all trial and error with this but ultimately decided it wasnt for me. When researching and mind-mapping again I went back through some of my old art inspirations files and rediscovered, 'paperman' a short film I saw as a kid that inspired me to get into animation. I loved the new stylalised disney had come out with at the time that differed form their bigger brand work, one of the first times they had chosen to stylise characters with a more painterly and artistic style.

A lot of this mind map jumps from visual development, environment design and finally 3D character animation. I feel this has a broad range of influences from different styles, films and artists that explore the different regions of the pipeline, demonstrating my understanding of it. Again, this shows evidence of idea generation and understanding of the specialisation I want to focus on. Mind–mapping and mood boarding is an important part of the production process and has allowed me to find what type of animation I want to keep focusing on for the near future.

To the left is the mindmap I created at the start of my project which explored environment designs, different stylisations, character rigs and narrative routes. At first, I had the idea of using an unrigged robot model from online and using this project to demonstrate my skills in rigging, texturing and lighting. Alongside this, I looked at different environment stylisations: realism in unreal engine, painterly styles in substance painter and unconventional lighting techniques. I then also looked at story exploration, being inspired by short films from Pixar and DreamWorks that convey a compelling narrative without using dialogue. This was something that intrigued me as I find that storytelling that purely communicates to its audience through visuals can be the most emotive and effective. However, as this project is about the specialisation of a pipeline I instead chose to go down a 3D character animation route. Therefore, I found a well–structured rig online and chose this for a monologue or pantomime animation. It was later on in production that I found changing the stylisation of the character's UV maps and base colour was less integral to the brand identity I was trying to convey.
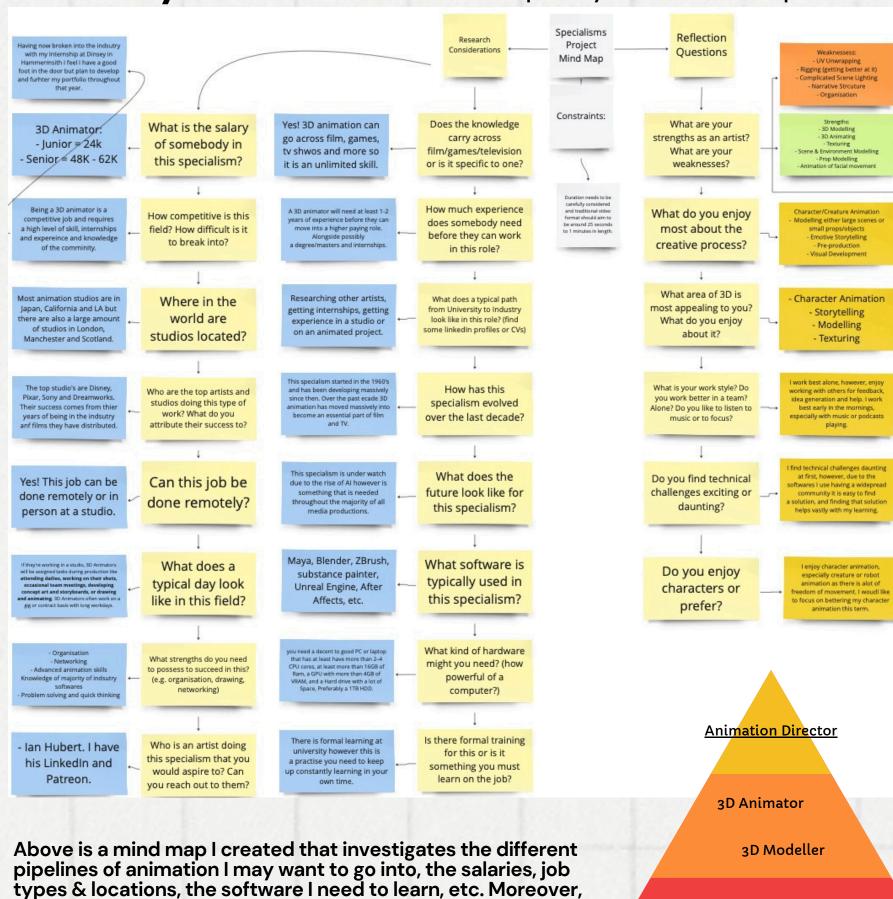
To the left is the mood board I created for inspiration on stylisation. While this was not something that ended up in the final render of the animation it was still educational and useful for me to research the different styles and visual development techniques I could use in the future. The majority of this was inspired by the Spiderverse series, Albert Migelo's work, The Wild Robot, Paperman, etc.

To the right is the mood board I created for inspiration on the types of animation I wanted to convey. Whether this be working on specifically 1's or 3's in keyframes, experimenting with smear frames in 3D animation, animating using a block in or using straight ahead. Much of this experimentation was taken from features such as the new Puss and Boots, Moana, Hotel Transylvania, etc.

Industry Reserach

This page demonstrates my understanding of the pipeline of animation and what specialisms I may want to go into. Alongside films and TV shows that I feel both inspired by and have left an impact on the industry.

Mind Map

- Research Considerations
- Specialisms Project Mind Map
- Reflection Questions
- Constraints:
  - Duration needs to be carefully considered and traditional video format should aim to be around 25 seconds to 1 minutes in length.

- Having now broken into the industry with my internship at Disney in Hammermsmith I feel I have a good foot in the door but plan to develop and further my portfolio throughout that year.

- What is the salary of somebody in this specialism?
  - 3D Animator: - Junior = 24k - Senior = 48K - 62K

- Does the knowledge carry across film/games/television or is it specific to one?
  - Yes! 3D animation can go across film, games, tv shwos and more so it is an unlimited skill.

- Weaknessess: - UV Unwrapping - Rigging (getting better at it) - Complicated Scene Lighting - Narrative Strcuture - Organisation

- What are your strengths as an artist? What are your weaknesses?

- Being a 3D animator is a competitive job and requires a high level of skill, internships and experience and knowledge of the comminity.

- How competitive is this field? How difficult is it to break into?

- How much experience does somebody need before they can work in this role?
  - A 3D animator will need at least 1-2 years of experience before they can move into a higher paying role. Alongside possibly a degree/masters and internships.

- Strengths: - 3D Modelling - 3D Animating - Texturing - Scene & Environment Modelling - Prop Modelling - Animation of facial movement

- What do you enjoy most about the creative process?

- Most animation studios are in Japan, California and LA but there are also a large amount of studios in London, Manchester and Scotland.

- Where in the world are studios located?

- Researching other artists, getting internships, getting experience in a studio or on an animated project.

- What does a typical path from University to Industry look like in this role? (find some linkedin profiles or CVs)

- Character/Creature Animation - Modelling either large scenes or small props/objects - Emotive Storytelling - Pre-production - Visual Development

- What area of 3D is most appealing to you? What do you enjoy about it?

- The top studio's are Disney, Pixar, Sony and Dreamworks. Their success comes from thier years of being in the industry anf films they have distributed.

- Who are the top artists and studios doing this type of work? What do you attribute their success to?

- This specialism started in the 1960's and has been developing massively since then. Over the past ecade 3D animation has moved massively into become an essential part of film and TV.

- How has this specialism evolved over the last decade?

- Character Animation - Storytelling - Modelling - Texturing

- Yes! This job can be done remotely or in person at a studio.

- Can this job be done remotely?

- This specialism is under watch due to the rise of AI however is something that is needed throughout the majority of all media productions.

- What does the future look like for this specialism?

- What is your work style? Do you work better in a team? Alone? Do you like to listen to music or to focus?
  - I work best alone, however, enjoy working with others for feedback, idea generation and feedback. I work best early in the mornings, especially with music or podcasts playing.

- If they're working in a studio, 3D Animators will be assigned tasks during production like attending dailies, working on their shots, occasional team meetings, developing concept art and storyboards, or drawing and animating. 3D Animators often work on a gig or contract basis with long workdays.

- What does a typical day look like in this field?

- Maya, Blender, ZBrush, substance painter, Unreal Engine, After Affects, etc.

- What software is typically used in this specialism?

- Do you find technical challenges exciting or daunting?
  - I find technical challenges daunting at first, however, due to the softwares I use having a widepread community it is easy to find a solution, and finding that solution helps vastly with my learning.

- Organisation - Networking - Advanced animation skills - Knowledge of majority of industry softwares - Problem solving and quick thinking

- What strengths do you need to possess to succeed in this? (e.g. organisation, drawing, networking)

- you need a decent to good PC or laptop that has at least have more than 2-4 CPU cores, at least more than 16GB of Ram, a GPU with more than 4GB of VRAM, and a Hard drive with a lot of Space, Preferably a 1TB HDD.

- What kind of hardware might you need? (how powerful of a computer?)

- Do you enjoy characters or prefer?
  - I enjoy character animation, especially creature or robot animation as there is alot of freedom of movement. I woudl like to focus on bettering my character animation this term.

- Ian Hubert. I have his LinkedIn and Patreon.

- Who is an artist doing this specialism that you would aspire to? Can you reach out to them?

- There is formal learning at university however this is a practise you need to keep up constantly learning in your own time.

- Is there formal training for this or is it something you must learn on the job?

Pyramid

- Animation Director
- 3D Animator
- 3D Modeller
- Texturing Artist
- Rigger

Above is a mind map I created that investigates the different pipelines of animation I may want to go into, the salaries, job types & locations, the software I need to learn, etc. Moreover, I also go into reflective questions about my style of animation, strengths/weaknesses, and what I enjoy about the creative process. This gave me a further understanding of what jobs are available to me and what skills I need to acquire to get to the skills that I can acquire for these jobs.
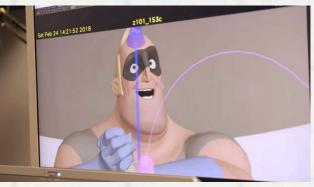

'The Wild Robot', is from the same animators from HTTD and shows a massive amount of promise in its trailer with dynamic and emotive animation movement

Spiderverse has one of the most dynamic, intriguing and highly skilled levels of animation in recent years and implements new forms of animation into it's workflow I would like to attempt

Fluidity and graceful animation are used in 'Paperman', creating characters with massive emotions without using any dialogue

The characters from the 'Incredibles'play with squash and stretch constantly and use the characters as flour bags almost to play with unique animation

The animation from Soul, while similar to other stereotypical Disney performances, shows a grand use of intricate referencing and real–life movement when it comes to their animation

Character animation from The Witness in Love, Death & Robots sets a foundation for creating an imposing and startling animation style

Simon Otto's animation in HTTD: fluidity in character expression and movement + the way he conveys emotions in subtle expressions
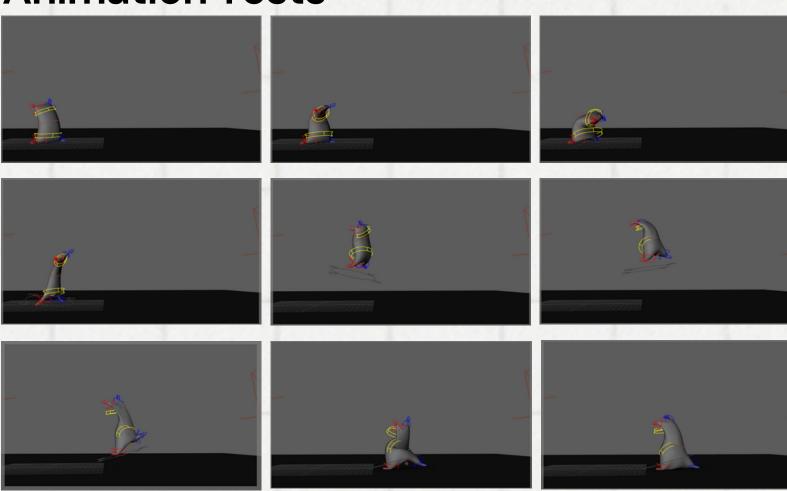

Nina Turtles & Puss in Boots uses grand animation that takes up the screen, Its imposing style feels overwhelming and entrenching to watch using smear frames and dynamic camera movements

The shape language and stylised animation in Michel vs the Machines is something I am inspired by that I would like to implement into my work

Animation Tests

To the left are the flour bag animation tests I completed that my teacher had at the time asked me to create. This showed my understanding of weight, anticipation and timing in animation and got me ready for animating a more complex model. This was useful for me at the time to refresh my mind on rigs and how to professionally import and reference them correctly into the scene. I learnt from this the importance of squash and stretch and how useful this can be and used to my advantage when making an animation look more flexible or 'cartoon-like'. Moreover, this exercise helped me with weight and understanding the gravity of different-sized objects. The jump of a flour bag could also be seen in the same viewpoint as a foot moving off the ground or the twist of the bag could be seen as a head-turning; ultimately, this gave me more insight into how things realistically move and interact. If I were to do this again I would do different weights of the flour bag, one maybe extremely heavy whilst another very light and animate the different weight changes to see how they would differ visually.

Lessons & Pitch Packs

Around this time I made the flour bag tests my teacher in this unit was also giving lessons on treatment/pitch packs. A pitch pack is a presentation that outlines what your show will be about, its central characters and its storyline, the market this show or product is being made for, its demographic and main themes. This was something I learnt a lot from at this point in the course as I hadn't realised this was something you needed when making a show or product. We looked in the pitch pack of 'Aventure Time' a cartoon network kids show and this was a great example of what a pitch pack should look like. This includes strong world-building, detailed character breakdowns and effective designs to tell a narrative. We were then asked to go off into groups to research other pitch packs and evaluate what was good and bad about them; my group chose 'Batman' the animated series and 'Stranger Things'. We found that what makes a good pitch pack is good communication of characters, audience and themes, while a bad pitch pack is extremely long, over-detailed and lacking creativity or meaning. Moreover, we also did lessons on Brand Analysis; for this, we were asked to research an artist or animator's online presence and analyse their brand considering what social media platform they have used. For example, my group looked at 'AlecFBX' a 3D modeller and animator who creates low poly environments that replicate 2000's style.

Focus Points

What I intend to focus on:
- 3D Character Animation
- Movement and expression
- Clean key poses and silhouettes that convey a readable message
- Mouth and facial expression that is readable and coherent with voice-over
- Experiment with exaggreation of bodily movement (squash and stretch)

What I don't intend to focus on:
- I don't want to focus on vis dev as this project is focusing on character animation
- I won't focus on lighting and instead give the animation a basic three-point light set-up
- I won't be focusing on render styles as again this project is focused on the look of the 3d character animation and not anything else

Ultimately, my intended outcome is to create a piece of animation that demonstrates great character expressions and movements. I want to show this skill to demonstrate I have a wider understanding of character movement and how to best use a rig to your advantage to make a believable pice of animation.

By the fourth week of lessons we were asked to create a presentation demonstrating what we had achieved thus far, our brand identities and log lines/summaries of projects. While I did not present mine in person at the time I feel mine went well and I conveyed a strong animation concept to my tutor and my aims of what I wanted to achieve at the end of the project unit.

From these lessons, I learnt much more about how to create a pitch pack/bible and what key factors are included that make a sellable one. alongside a better insight into how to convey myself online that would demonstrate a good brand identity that reflects my work. I later then implemented this into my work by creating my own pitch pack for the animation project I had set out to create.

Ally and Elisha- AlecFBX

Brand Identity

My brand identity will focus on the look and feel of character animation for feature films or TV shows. Making a character feel identifiable and relatable. My target audience will be young children and teenagers, changing between age ranges of 8-12 to 12-14.

I would like my work to be recognisable for fluid and dynamic use of animation that may venture into new types of animation, working on 4s instead of 2s and utilising different methods to create 3D animation, such as 2D drawn smear frames or comic book style renders. Mainly being inspired by Spiderverse animation and how this was created, I would like my brand identity to be reminiscent of that.

My goal is to be a part of an animation team that focuses on the movement of its characters and creatures, creating a narrative through movement. Ideally, towards the senior part of my career, I would love to be a Lead Animator on a feature.

One of my biggest inspirations is Simon Otto who was the head of the animation for the HTTD film franchises and won an Academy Award for technical achievement. In the future, I would like a role in the animation world that is very much like what he achieved.

Another one of my inspirations being Frank E. Abney who worked as a senior animator on the spiderverse films, creating beautiful and groundbreaking work that changed the animation industry.

Alec fbx
https://twitter.com/alecwestworld?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

- 3d animator, modeller
- He creates low poly environments that replicate early 2000s style animation and games.
- Like 3ds pokemon and animal crossing, very simple yet distinct style.
- Bright colours, anime style characters
- Nostalgic style which has wide audience age range due to the cartoon style for children but also for adults cause of nostalgia.
- Refined and very professional and developed cohesive style makes them stand out from the pack. Repetition of the main character throughout his work.
- Three words, nostalgic, vibrant, low poly

Log Line & Summary

Animation 1: Monologue – This animation will focus on the expression of the character, demonstrating an animation that follows a voice–over piece that the character mimics and shows good use of facial expression, and emotion and conveys a realistic and well–thought–out acting piece.

Animation 2: Pantomime – This animation will focus on body movement; expressing a narrative through the use of the rigs action, I would like this to be quite dynamic so will be looking at movie action sequences that are compelling visually for bodily movement.

Animation 1: Monologue
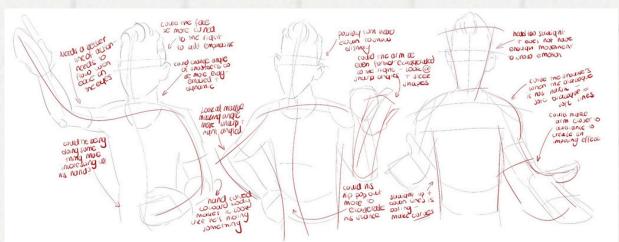
For my first animation, I will focus on creating a monologue piece, something that uses dialogue and tells a narrative. I wanted to keep this quick, simple and comedic and therefore chose a monologue from the comedic show, 'New Girl' by the character Schmidt. The voiceover will be around 15–20 seconds long and follow a range of facial expressions, and arm, neck and shoulder exaggeration to showcase a fluid character animation. In this scene, there are secondary and third characters within this scene but I did not end up using these as I wanted to focus on the one rig.
Log Line: A quirky American man is disgruntled by his lack of ability to buy an exotic fish, confronting a store owner and having a tantrum.

Overall for this project, I want my specialism to focus on 3D character animation, focusing on expression, movement and compelling storytelling through animation acting.

Evaluation of Log Line & Summary

Looking back at my pre-production work, my log line could have been stronger and more interesting in terms of the quality of the final animation. However, I feel my summary of the intended project I wanted to make was communitive, clear and well thought out. Having wanted to create a project that focuses on character animation, I feel this was conveyed successfully. The workflow I used for this was researching other movie or TV log lines and how effective they were then attempting to implement characteristics of these into my own work.

Movement Sketches

To the left are movement sketches I created when thinking about what type of poses I wanted my character to do. I looked at trying to follow a line of action to create flow in the character, this eases the audience's eye and makes the form even simpler to look at. I also looked at how I could exaggerate and over-express these poses to best fit the tone of the character. In the monologue the character is very expressive and quirky, I learnt from this I should use a fair amount of hand movements and signals. Ultimately, I may have benefited from creating more of these to nail down the exact silhouettes I wanted but this was a good start to my pre-production process.

Due to production scheduling and deadline timing of the project, I was unable to complete the pantomime animation and therefore this was a difficulty I faced. This shows a flaw with my workflow and my scheduling times when finding I could not complete the pantomime I then focused solely on the monologue animation. I learnt from this to stick to scheduled timing to have ability to numerous projects.

This animation will focus on character animation, the pipeline I would like to specialise in throughout the future, these will be used for my demo reel. As I have said previously, I planned to do two animations to show my skills in this part of the pipeline but due to scheduling issues this did not happen.

Animation 2: Pantemine

For my secondary animation, while this only got into pre-production, I thought it important to showcase my ideas for this even though they weren't executed. I planned to focus on character movement and creating a narrative with no dialogue. The narrative would have followed: a man walks into a pizza joint and grabs the nearest slice, surprisingly, a seagle snags it from him, taunting the man and eventually taking the entire box leaving him confused.

I was inspired by the Big Hero 6 character animation tests which show each character's personality by the different ways they would interact and sit down on a chair. I would like to create something similar with my rig, adding the use of a pizza prop to add more to the narrative. This will be simple, compelling and comedic.

Concept & Expression Sheets

Above are the original concept and expression sheets that I created before starting my animation. While there is some skill shown in these, looking back the quality of expression and key pose silhouettes are poor. Now having a different perspective, these expression sheets show a vague understanding of facial emotion and movement, conveying only a small amount of what should be shown in each expression. Even more so, the standing silhouettes, show only a simple example of what emotion the character is having and could be pushed much further to emphasise each emotion.

Animatic & Block In
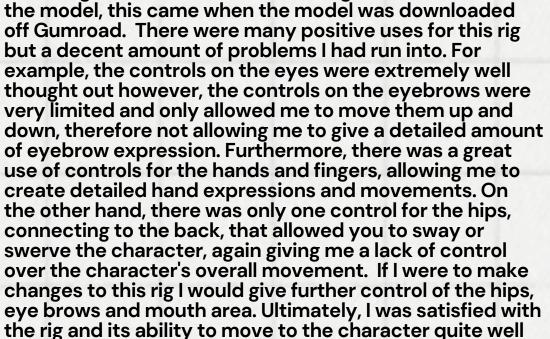
| confusion | disgruntled | shy/happy |
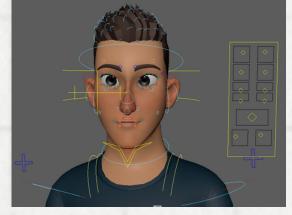
To the left are the improved expression sheets that I feel show I knew my way more around the rig after doing some tests with it. I have tried to portray emotions such as confusion, disgruntled and shy/happy. This was something I got feedback on from my teacher as he asked to go back and re-do these concept sheets to show my improvements.
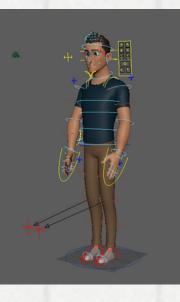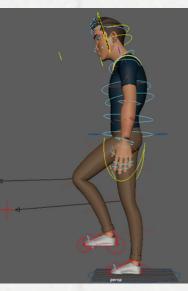
To the left is the block-in video I created to show my pre-production process. I created three different blocks in's to try and refine and create a well-thought-out animation, this applies to also being an animatic as was used to plan out the timing of the voice-over. I keyframed the most significant poses first then went back to add further in-betweens to create a smoother block-in that allowed me to understand the length of the animation. The first block in (part two of the video) is extremely basic and only shows the key poses I wanted the character to convey. This however could have been better as it was extremely simple and more detail could have been added to really demonstrate the emotion the character is trying to portray. If I could go back I would have added more key frames to really show the direction of each movement. Not only this I would have liked to make the key silhouettes much stronger, for example really arching the character's pointed finger or creating deeper leading lines for the viewer. The second block-in was slightly better having had more detail (part one of the video), there was an increase in keyframes and a few in-betweens to show where the next movement of the character will be. However, if I were to do this again I would have added more exaggerated movement in the keyframes and again added more in-betweens to create more animation flow. My aim for this project was obviously to create an animation piece that expressed character and emotion well, therefore, the use of blocking out before going straight into animation was a useful tool for me. The final block-in, shown in part three of the video demonstrates my final attempt at the block-in and shows an accurate amount of timing and spacing for the voice-over. This is the best block-in I achieved for this project and demonstrates my willingness to keep trying to get the best possible quality of pre-production.

Rig Review

To the right are screenshots of the rig that was used on the model, this came when the model was downloaded off Gumroad. There were many positive uses for this rig but a decent amount of problems I had run into. For example, the controls on the eyes were extremely well thought out however, the controls on the eyebrows were very limited and only allowed me to move them up and down, therefore not allowing me to give a detailed amount of eyebrow expression. Furthermore, there was a great use of controls for the hands and fingers, allowing me to create detailed hand expressions and movements. On the other hand, there was only one control for the hips, connecting to the back, that allowed you to sway or swerve the character, again giving me a lack of control over the character's overall movement. If I were to make changes to this rig I would give further control of the hips, eye brows and mouth area. Ultimately, I was satisfied with the rig and its ability to move to the character quite well in a way that fitted with my statement of intent of creating an expressive character animation.

Brand Identity
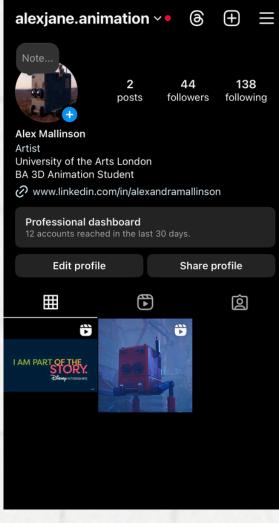
Brand Identity paragraph Week 4

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Simon Otto working on HTTD

Frank E. Abney wokring on Spiderverse

Brand Identity Review

Above is the Brand Identity I created in the fourth week of the unit. I feel this met the needs of the brief but after a closer evaluation now I have finished the project this could have been expanded on much more. I was open and concise about what I wanted my to revolve around (this being 3D character animation) but could have gone into more detail. For example, I could have said 'My brand identity will be about the look and feel of character animation for feature films or TV shows focusing on expression and pushing emotion.' Even more so, I should have gone into more about what form of animation I would like to produce, such as monologues, pantomime or musical animations. Also how I would have done this, by using Maya or Blender or a new type of software for animating I had not tried before. A positive aspect of my first brand identity was identifying the demographic I wanted to make animations for, this helped to understand what age rating of work I could create alongside companies who make similar pieces to the same group. Moreover, I mentioned using smear frames and working possibly in 4's instead of 2's. This was not something that ended up being the final product of the animation but is something I would still be interested in investigating in later projects. I also talked about stylisation that I would like my animation to replicate, this being the 'Spiderverse' style; I feel I should have stuck with just the form of animation I wanted to create instead of delving into stylisation and render styles that ultimately distracted me from my project goal. Furthermore, I included my aims for what type of animation career I would like to take in the future, this being at first a 3D Animator and possibly in my senior career a Lead Animator. Ultimately, I could have added more detail to my brand identity with the exact type of work I would like to create and expand on how I could have done this. Despite this, it was a great first attempt at a brand identity description and outlined what my project goals were.
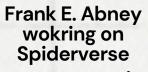

Examples of how I have shown my brand identity online, using Instagram, a website with Wix and Youtubevideos showing my animations.

Personal Brand Analysis

<u>What form has your past work taken?</u>
My past work has taken the form of both 2D and 3D creative pieces. This consists of 3D models, simulations, basic animations and sculpting. My 2D work shows concept art for characters and environments, basic animations and monologues. Most recently my work consists of 3D projects in Maya, using a mixture of 3D modelling and texturing alongside animation.

<u>How recently was it last updated?</u>
My work is updated as much as possible, however not as often in recent months. Therefore, this needs to be improved upon and I plan to take action on refilling my portfolio with more relevant and improved work.

<u>What skills does it showcase and at what level?</u>
I feel my 3D skills are at a medium level, it shows a range of various explorations of 3D such as modelling, sculpting, simulations and animation, however, these could be improved on to make them more refined and professional. I would like to be at a high level of these techniques however in the next two years.

<u>How does it show your development journey?</u>
My work shows a journey of progression from 2D to 3D works and the improvement I made through using a different medium of animation. From starting off with simple sketches and character drawings to short 3D animations I believe it shows my willingness to try different forms of animation and my ability to adapt to new software and hardware.

<u>What three words could define your brand identity so far?</u>
Character, style & movement.

<u>How could this be improved upon?</u>
I would like my portfolio to show a greater range of work, mainly consisting of more monologue and pantomime animations that show a consistency of style, gesture, personality and flow. I would like to work more on the stylisation of characters, meaning experimenting with painterly and comic-like styles rather than the stereotypical character render.

Statement of Intent

For this project, I will aim to achieve a short 20-30-second rendered animation sequence of a voice-over monologue using a rigged character. This animation will focus on expression and body language, showcasing an ability to demonstrate personality and emotion in a character-acting sequence. The theme of the project is to show a piece of animation that focuses on timing, expression, voice-over, acting and character. The voice-over audio chosen is one from a comedic show that uses a lot of expression and emotion and serves as a good starting point for a project such as this.

My interest is to follow the path of a 3D character animator, this being an animator that adds 'nuance and personality through their movements, gestures, facial expressions and how they (characters) interact and react with their environment and other characters' (Google reference). I have selected this as I am extremely interested and invested in the world in which animators can breathe life into characters and create creatures that employ such emotion and attachment to audiences. This project will aid me in exploring this specialism as it will help me practise the 12 principles of animation alongside creating personality within characters. My aim for the end of this project is to have a rendered animation that demonstrates quality animation and skill in character acting.
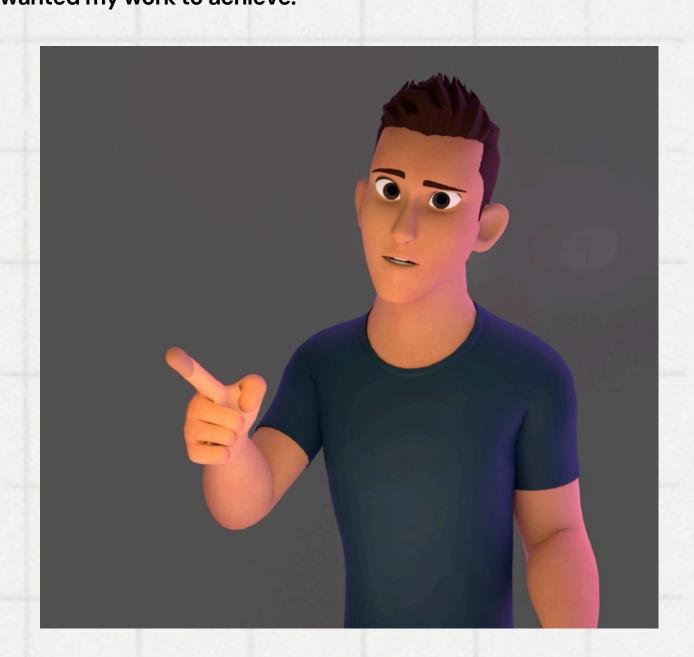
Above is my first Statement of Intent for this project. I think this worked extremely well and was a well-thought-out piece of writing that conveyed what I wanted my animation monologue to be. I included the time I aimed for the animation to be and what I would be using to achieve this. I was concise and clear about what elements I would focus on in my animation, this being 'expression, body language, personality and emotion in character acting'.

Moreover, I went into more detail about what a 3D animator is and how I view this role. I talked about why I enjoy this part of the industry alongside gave reasons as to why I am focusing on this part of the pipeline for my project. However, if I were to do the statement of intent again I would have liked to give examples of works that I could replicate or work from in this project. Such as smear frames used in the new 'Puss in Boots' film or working on 4's instead of 2's in the new Spiderverse films with some characters. Ultimately, I feel this statement of intent was up to a good standard and reflected on what I wanted my work to achieve.

Workflow of Animation

When starting this project I knew I needed to first get a better understanding of the rig and therefore first spent some time getting to know all of its controls. I then created some expression sheets that you will see in this PDF again to better understand the face controls. My next stage was going into blocking pre-production with the voice-over sequence I had chosen; I had made three different iterations of the first block to really understand where my character would be moving and the type of bodily expressions there would be. I had learnt a lot at this stage about the way I like to conduct a block-in, normally I go with the straight-ahead version of animating but instead wanted to try a more traditional approach. This gave me more control of the timing and spacing between dialogue and a better understanding of the scene. Next, I moved into production where I started animating in-betweens. This was my favourite part of the process in which I could tie together the movements and start to make the character come alive. This part of the production took a few weeks but gave me valuable lessons in the time it takes to animate a simple piece. Furthermore, I then moved into creating the facial expressions and moving the mouth in time with the dialogue, again this was something I really enjoyed doing and didn't have too much difficulty with. The workflow I used for this was to use a mirror and mouth the dialogue and replicate this when animating; alongside using numerous reference videos of myself acting out the dialogue and character movements. Finally, I started the polish process where I went into the Graph Editor and made smooth curves from the keyframes to create a fluid and well-timed animation. Lastly, I ensured my camera was in the correct place, added general three-point lighting alongside a backdrop, and then sent the animation into the render farm. As I have said throughout this PDF I wanted to focus on character animation therefore the lighting and rendering part of the pipeline was not something I wanted to focus on in this project. Alongside this, I only used one medium close-up shot as again I wanted to focus on the quality of the animation and not the technical sides of the pipeline. Finally, I uploaded this to Youtube and was able to finish production.
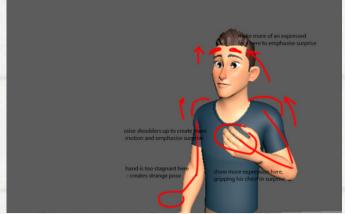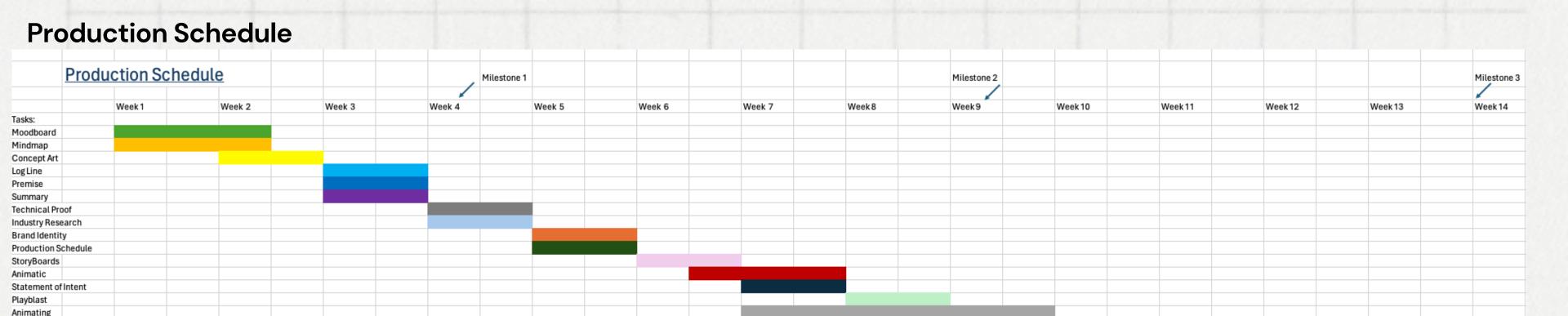
Red lining & Lessons learnt from Production Problems

To the left is the red lining I originally did for some of the shots shown in the animation, however, after feedback from my teacher I found I needed better structure with my anatomy and used full figures instead of gesture drawing. Below are better later versions of my red-lining work.

Lessons & Pitch Packs

By week seven we looked at the possibility of overworking a piece and how this can be changed. Our teacher then introduced us to redlining our work to annotate and reflect on what could have been better. We also looked at 'paint-over' a method that allows you to redefine your work with possibly a new silhouette, texture, light and values to create a new piece. Even more so, we were taught a method called 'photo bashing' that allows you to warp photos and reference sources to reconsider your piece. By week 8 we were looking at render styles and the different possibilities of lighting, styles and shading; we were then asked to research different animations with unique render styles and identify what makes them interesting. I then researched render styles from films like Elemental and Spiderverse to understand contrasting stylisations. Ultimately I learnt from this that all companies have a different way of rendering their projects to fit their chosen demographic, however, there is a majority right now of films that are using the painterly styalised render.

To the left is the improved red-lining I did. This demonstrates I had gone back even further to refine my past mistakes and took in feedback given to me by my teachers. I made sure to include these versions to create more of a sense of anatomy in the sketches, alongside clearer writing for the reader to understand. Ultimately, I am happy with these refinements and believe they helped me change the poses of the final rendered animation.

Production Schedule

Milestone 1   Milestone 2   Milestone 3

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14

Tasks:
Moodboard
Mindmap
Concept Art
Log Line
Premise
Summary
Technical Proof
Industry Research
Brand Identity
Production Schedule
StoryBoards
Animatic
Statement of Intent
Playblast
Animating
Animation Polish
Photobashing
Topolagy & Optimisation
Lighting & Shaders
Transforming Development
Deconstructive Workflows
Redlining
Render Styles
PDF Write up
Critical Appraisal
Final Hand In

Above is the final version of the production schedule I created in pre-production for this project. I sectioned up all parts of the pipeline into separate weeks of the unit using the lesson times provided by the university as a guide. The first week and a half was used for mind mapping and mood board creation, this was a good use of time and allowed me to go through a range of ideas that I have mentioned throughout this PDF. During weeks three and four, I focused on my logline and industry research, this was a useful amount of time to understand what I was aiming for in this unit and the type of project I wanted to produce. The time in week five was used for brand identity writing and production scheduling, this was quite a short use of production time and could have used more time to give an extensive look into my brand identity, this may have helped direct my project more into the right direction. Weeks six and seven moved further into pre-production by creating an animatic and statement of intent, by doing both these side by side allowed me to evaluate what exact type of animation I wanted to produce. This was around the time I started running into production problems, having spent too much time creating block-ins and animatics I could have used more of this time polishing my animation. From weeks eight and twelve I was animating and polishing my work, again this could have used more time on the production schedule and therefore I have learnt for my next project to space out more time for animating. During this time from weeks, eight to twelve was time spent in lessons in which we learnt about red lining, different render styles and transforming the development of the project. This was a useful time for me as it allowed me to refine and redo parts of the animation I wasn't happy with and gave insight into ways I could do this. Lastly, from weeks eleven to fourteen was time blocked out from writing the PDF and critical appraisal, this was a good use of time as allowed me enough space to generate a well-written piece of work that evaluated my project as a whole. Ultimately, the production schedule I created was well thought out and gave me enough to complete tasks, however, if I were to go back I would have given myself more time to animate and less time in pre-production, something I will take into my next project and learnt from.

Critical Apprisal

My 3D animation character project was successful in terms of the level of new skill within animation 3D that I have learnt and confidence with voice-over acting. The strengths I have gained throughout this project are my proficiency in adapting to complicated rigs, creating references for animation, reworking blocks in's for pre-production and creating realistic gesture animation. This animation, while short, was one I had to go back to time and time again to redo or correct parts to ensure a great end product, this took me numerous weeks to get to a point I felt happy with. When first adapting to the rig of the model, there were components I did not fully understand, such as squash and stretch controls, blinking controls and weight controls of the character. After some practice and time, I found it enjoyable to learn new parts of the rig as gave me flexibility when animating. Moreover, in the pre-production phase, I had to create numerous reference videos to imitate and copy for the animation. This allowed me to reference each movement that I wanted my model to do and re-create this in Maya, not only this but I found it a quite fun part of the process when experimenting with ways I would have certain characters move. When in my pre-production phase I needed to re-work and redo my block in animation numerous times, this was done so I could ensure I knew the final movements of the character so as to not get the timing wrong of the voiceover. While this did take some time it was a good experience to rework the way I animate, previously I worked in straight-ahead animation and working with a block out helped me plan out my narrative much easier. The areas that I need to improve on after evaluating this project are my timing and spacing within animation and better mouth movement when working with a voice-over. Looking back on some of the timing between keyframes was a bit rushed or did not fall onto the correct beat and therefore is something I need to improve on when working on future projects. A way I could improve this is to make better key poses when blocking in and stick to these poses in the timeline of the graph editor. Additionally, the mouth movement of the character could have been improved as some syllables came late or were rushed in the animation and needed more time put into this part of the animation to make it that much more realistic. When evaluating my overall performance in this unit I feel I created a well-animated piece of work that met my original log line and goals set at the start of this project. I aimed to create an animation that focused on the expression of character, emotion and dialogue that is fluid and believable, something that tells a narrative and conveys a good level of character animation. I have also reflected upon my understanding of cultural and sustainable methods of procedures in animation by researching companies and brands that value their workers and do not participate in AI artwork that is immorally used or unsuitable. Ways in which we can be culturally and ethically sustainable in animation is to give credit to rightful artists, give liveable wages and provide a sense of involvement and progression in companies. Ultimately when reflecting on my work in this unit I feel I have evolved in my animation style alongside the methods in which I go about animating projects in a manner that fits to a production schedule.