

Character, Place and Simulation

Reflective Document

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GRAP2583 | Max Piantoni

Moving through the city with an empty mind, I look at things and try to comprehend what these objects are, on their own. Without a thought or pre-conceived narrative, my goal is to understand the space and objects around me and find agency within them to build upon and navigate. Character, Place and Simulation has been a tool that has helped me narrow down my focus in my studio inquiry and find my approach to actualizing my idea.

Journaling the progress of short exercises to investigate the idea I wish to explore and scope it down to produce a piece of work that assesses my interest and answers the inquiry.

The method employed, as suggested by the structure of the subject, was to finish a short piece of idea on the weekly theme within the duration of the lecture. It was challenging at first because it pushed me to explore something I wasn't comfortable with, didn't give me enough time to plan or think. But eventually it made perfect sense as this was essentially the very idea of these exercises, to get out of your usual approach and try something playful and see if it can become relevant to your studio practice. I had a hard time narrowing down my particular point of interest for my studio project until recently, hence it was not easy to make something relative to my inquiry in these lectures, however as the exercises progressed I saw a pattern which I was subconsciously following in my studio work as well.

I had been finding ways to give agency to external insensate objects to animate instead of having a pre-conceived narrative. The exercises in the CPS class, now that I reflect upon, show me a clear vision of how have I been thinking and approaching my idea.

The idea (I finalized by week 4 unfortunately) for my studio project is a series of animatics on buildings with unique architecture. The narrative being observing the unique architecture and interpreting the reasoning behind it. It is different from my original idea of personifying them or just bluntly making them alive. I am using Psycho-Geography and Object-Oriented Ontology as my base medium to understand and develop my inquiry and work upon it.

The method I'm undertaking to achieve this is Hybrid animation where I will frame by frame animate live action footage. The footage is taken without any concept in mind so that the agency remains on the circumstances of the video. I hope to achieve a sense of understanding for the city and its own being apart from its use to us, and hopefully convey my message through my work.

Week 1

Theme

Observation.

Method

I spent an uncomfortably long period observing a tree right outside building 7. It is a windy day and a coffee shop next to me is playing loud pop music. The wind is blowing branches and leaves separately.

Context

Interpretation/Extrapolation of object in sight.

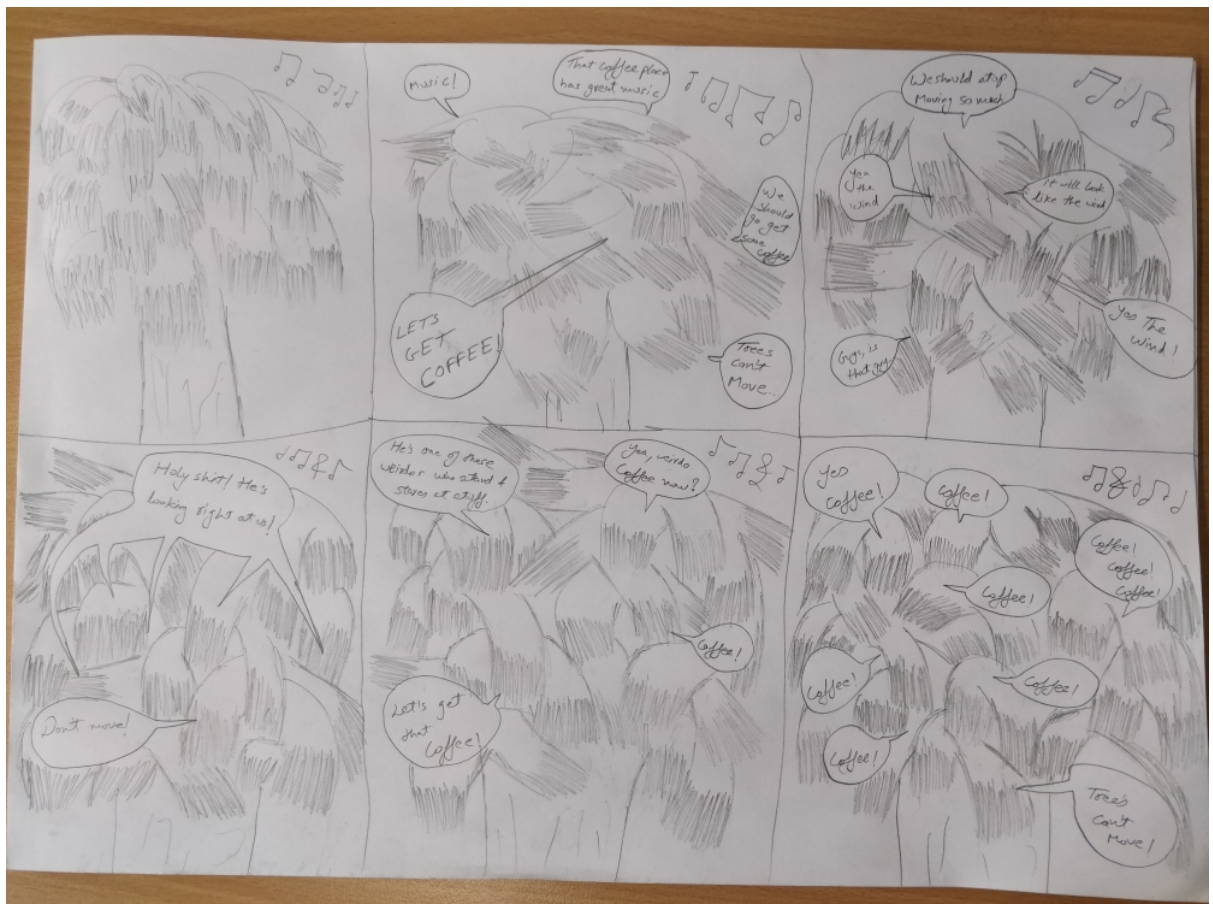
Response

A bunch of rough sketches in a comic format which is a mind woven scenario of the trees conspiring to sneakily get coffee from the coffee shop playing loud music as they notice me noticing.

<http://magistudio.net/work/character-place-and-simulation-week-1>

The very first exercise, something completely unexpected and a bit overwhelming. After running my brain relentlessly and coming up with nothing, I walked out of the building as everyone else was going out to OBSERVE. I had forgotten how important it is to observe instead of just jumping straight onto a computer and make something. This is when I noticed the tree in front of the building, swinging freely in the Melbourne wind, the music coming from the coffee shop right next to it. I observed and my mind just brewed up a story.

So, I just made a storyboard...



Week 2

Theme

Tinkering

Method

I spent time looking up animal pictures caught with expressions and compiled them in photoshop, added a layer of strokes using brushes I have never used, effects I have never used and finally a filter I have never used, to create art I guess...

Context

An article shared by Quartz, taken from "the conversations" tab by Mirjam Guesgen (Postdoctoral Fellow in Animal Welfare, University of Alberta) speaking about getting closer to understanding what animals' facial expressions really mean.

<https://qz.com/1027486/were-getting-closer-to-understanding-what-animals-facial-expressions-really-mean/>

Response

A series of weird outputs which is normally nothing I would make, one of which particularly surprisingly spoke to me, didn't expect that.

<http://magistudio.net/work/character-place-and-simulation-week-2>

This was particularly a tricky one, as simple as the concept was to understand, it was another thing to actually act upon it. This made me realize that I had been so accustomed to jumping on to my familiar tools, that I had almost forgotten to play. I decided to do something completely different from what I was used to. I chose to employ options I had never touched before in photoshop to compile images and see if I could make something out of it. It was no Van gogh, but it was fun to try. I however feel I could have done something more.



I made two variants though...



Week 3

Theme:

Found Objects

Method:

Bring the insensate found object to life using found material.

Context:

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Response:

By combining an orange, paint marker, clip from a ID neck band, and a pinch of my love for action movies, I give you an Orangrenade!

<http://magistudio.net/work/character-place-and-simulation-week-3>

Found Objects! My favourite one. My studio work is all about giving the agency and narrative in the hands of something inanimate. This exercise was a refreshing approach for me to quickly find something around me and make something out of it. Orange was something sitting right in front of me so I just picked it. It was heavy so I wondered if it would hurt if I threw this at someone. That's when a hand grenade came to mind.



Hence, the Orangrenade! It also felt like a metaphor upon reflection.

Week 4

Theme

Place

Method

Animating on top of a live footage of an actual environment.

Context

Hybrid Animation

Response

A sequence of me crossing the street based upon how I perceive the indicator light.

<http://magistudio.net/work/character-place-and-simulation-week-4>

At this point I had a vague idea for what I wanted to do for my studio and had begun my testing. Place is always an interesting thing to give the agency to. I decided to visualize my own interpretation of space on a crossroad and use hybrid animation as a tool to test out. I had been using a GoPro to take POV videos for my studio work so I decided to use that. The output was fairly disappointing but I realized the reason for that and the exercise helped me push ahead and acquire a better approach for my studio work.

Crossing



MORE VIDEOS

0:03 / 0:19

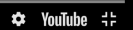


Crossing



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Week 5

Theme

Objects are not Exhausted

Method

Animating on top of an actual object/environment.

Context

Hybrid Animation/ Post-apocalyptic art.

Response

I observed an electricity antenna and imagined its being if there was no human intervention. To assume the identity of an object on its own is a tough balance to make in mind as we are only human. I responded to this situation when I observed a bird sit upon it and made an overlapping animation suggesting the antenna's survival over the course of years, tested but nature and eventually being developed into a habitat for the birds.

<http://magistudio.net/work/character-place-and-simulation-week-5>

Objects again! This was almost like a sign to me that my stuff was going to work out. It was another good opportunity to explore what I wanted to and test out a different method to see if it would work. It was a bit tricky as Max explained it as thinking of object as beings on their own. It was a deeper comprehension of the concept than what I was doing, but this opened up a bigger picture for me. I was particularly thankful for this exercise. I tried a different software and worked with a slightly different narrative.

CPS week 5



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CPS week 5



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What works?

I believe iteration is certainly the key to all the practice. It was only when I actualized what was in my mind and put it on paper/computer, the flaws within the concept, the technological and skillset based limitations came forth.

What doesn't work?

Overthinking it. In my little understanding, sticking to an initial thought and dragging it in an attempt to glorify and make it beautiful only limits the possibilities to other better ideas that comes through moving on. What I gained from these exercises was the impromptu approach towards a theme. It's best to try things and make a decision of moving forward if it doesn't work.

What now?

I have been miserably stuck on trying to juggle between a lot of ideas, thankfully I'm done with that. My scope is narrowed down quite a lot and I am confident that I can make things work better now, I also feel that I can keep the CPS exercises in alignment with my Studio 2 work now. I will try and narrow down my scope even further and hopefully communicate my ideas better.

I am thankful for the patience and support of my lecturer (Max Piantoni) and my peers/friends. Their constant feedback has always been appreciated.

References.

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A bunch of videos on YouTube that I failed to keep a track of (apologies!).