RMIT UNIVERSITY

Cover sheet for submission of work for assessment

SCHOOL: RMIT School of Design

Program name	Master of Animation, Games And Interactive Media	Program code	MC 232	Office use only
Course/unit name	Character, Place and Simulation	Course/unit code		
TAFE National Module Unit of Competency (UOC) name		TAFE National Module Unit of Competency (UOC) ID		School date stamp

Assignment no.	Folio 2	Due date	12/10/2018	Name of lecturer/teacher	Max Piantoni
Campus		Class day/time		Tutor/marker's name	

STUDENT/S

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Character, Place and Simulation | Folio 2
Made by Place.

Homie | S3677522
Master of Animation, Games and Interactive Media

Abstract.

In this reflective document, I will discuss the various exercises done during the Character, Place and Simulation classes. I will talk about the learnings from each theme, how it informed my practice in the studio, if not then what did they inform? It will be a threaded collection of playful exercises sewn together as a collective inquiry that helped me understand the relevance of the weekly themes, enabled me to research the relevant works and find inspiration as I progressed through Studio 2.
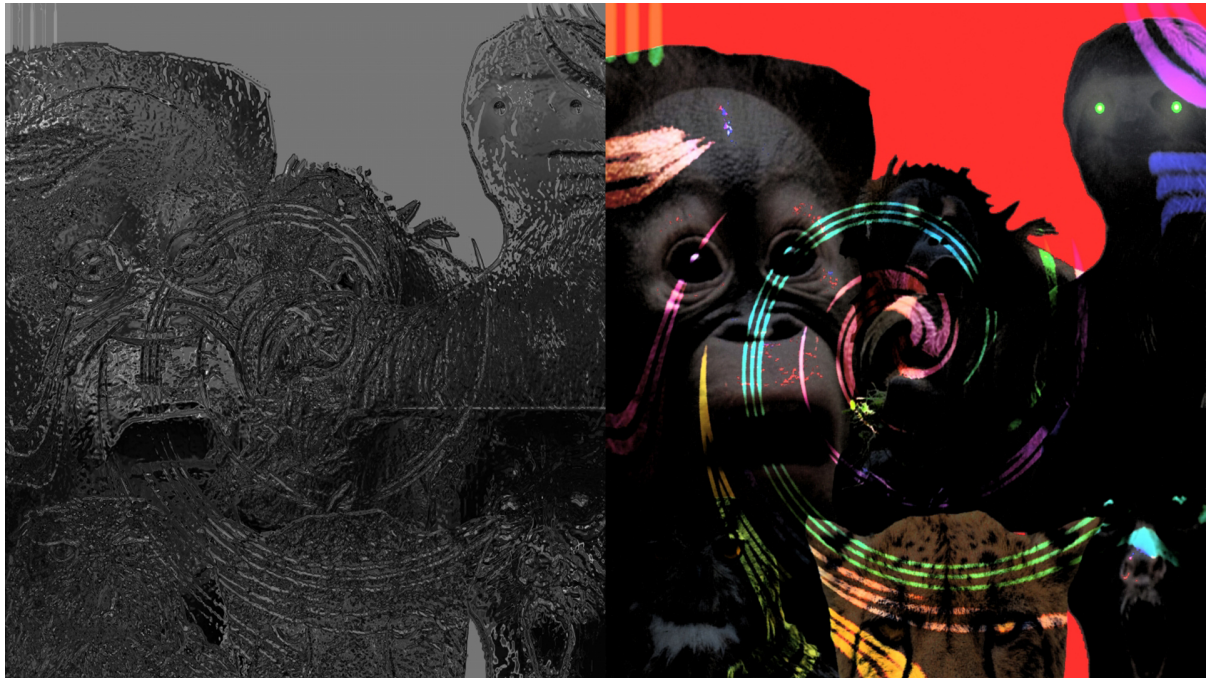
Background.

The context of making something impromptu eluded me for the first few weeks unfortunately as I struggled with finding my goal for the Studio project. The format of the class being finishing the task within the allocated duration was challenging as I am used to extensive planning. On top of that, not having a definite image of my studio project also dulled down the output of my exercises. But it was because of these exercises and the concepts discussed in the classes, I was able to see a pattern emerging in my work flow that eventually evolved into my inquiry and studio project. It was because of these playful attempts at understanding a particular theme, I was getting aware of what I was doing and was able to ideate, reflect and apply all that into my studio work.

I chose to make a website based upon parallax transitions as that was a technique I often employed in my studio work. For this semester, I have been exploring parallax animation in After Effects a lot so I figured that was the best way to convey my submission was to do something complimentary to that. A website in particular because it is a good archival tool in my opinion and it is a one stop spot for all the work done for this subject.

Please visit the archive of my CPS work at

https://s3677522.wixsite.com/cps-v5

Exercises and Learnings.

Week 1 | Observation Practices

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.

At this stage, having no idea for studio work was inconvenient as I had no clue what kind of context I was looking for. However, this was the beginning of the concept that would turn into my studio work. I realized that observing inanimate objects gave me a sense of purpose, drove me to extrapolate a story out of nothing.

Week 2 | Tinkering as Method

This theme was a perfect opportunity to understand the very essence of play, unfortunately back then I was in too much of a rush to see that. I feel as we grow up, we set rules of engagement subconsciously which block us from messing around. As simple as the concept was to understand, it was another thing to actually act upon it. I realized 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. However, feel I could have done something more.

It was fun, and upon further thought I realized I was interested in the idea of random having their own agency and act on their own. At that point, I thought I was may be retracting towards my Studio 1 project which was similar. It dawned upon me much later that I was onto something. I couldn't situate any similar works within this exercise because I was confused and ignorant of the value of putting context.

Things were starting to come along with this one.

Found objects around us are fair game. My consideration for studio work was 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. A friend had given me an orange that morning so I just picked it. I had walked a minute before outside and saw people rock climbing. It was heavy so I wondered if it would hurt if I threw this at someone. I wasn't able to fully understand what it means to give away agency completely and hence came up with a hand grenade idea from a human perspective.

As innocent and simple as this was, it was certainly playful. It was also thought provoking and my concept was brewing fast now. I knew through this, that I wanted to play with inanimate objects and bring them to life through my animation. I quickly started researching about my subjects to work for. I was still not realizing the idea of context till this point, this pattern of ignorance cost me eventually, both in terms of grades and time.

Week 4 | Discussions of Place

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 and its influence on surrounding objects at a crossing. I was already taking some POV footage for my studio work as experiment so that came in handy. I always interpreted the stop lights as beings talking to us in visual and audio cues. 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.

I did this exercise outside of class because I wanted to keep it playful and as much as I love the university classroom, it's quite monotonous. Interesting observation that came out of this exercise was that I realized that environment can drive the narrative completely on its own. Also, that the GoPro footages were too unstable to work with (big studio help). This understanding contributed quite well in one of my animatic in the studio in the latter weeks.

Week 5 | Objects are not exhausted

Objects again! This was almost like a sign to me that this might be the direction that could work. 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 I didn't know how to make it playful. This time it was a deeper comprehension of the concept for me, this opened up a bigger picture for me. I was particularly thankful for this exercise. At this point I was considering working on cityscapes and architecture for my studio work. I broke down my interpretation of simple electricity poles and wiring around them and connected it to different references and had my own understanding of it.

I took inspiration from post-apocalyptic environments. This test helped me try after effects, which turned out to be the primary tool for my studio animation.

At this point, this exercise was helpful enough for me to understand where my work was headed. I had decided to work on architecture and animate buildings. Matt and Max had introduced us to deep concepts like Psycho-Geography and Object-Oriented Ontology. Which ended up becoming my inspiration as well as constraints for my studio work. At this point I was researching works done by other people but was failing to keep a log it. A mistake soon fixed. But at least my concept was in the direction I was liking.

Week 6 | Presentations.

Character, Place and Simulation
Reflective Document

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Master of Animation, Games and Interactive Media

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 asse... my interest and answers the inquiry.

The method employed, as suggested by the structure of the project, was to finish a short piece of idea on the weekly theme with the curation 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 further think. Eventually it made more sense as it was essential to the very idea of the exercises, to do something other your usual approach, to try something playful and see if it can be more relevant to your studio exploration, and hardly me narrowing down my particular point of interest for my studio project until recently, hence it was not easy to make something relevant to the inquiry in these lectures. However as the exercises proceeded I said ... which I was subconsciously following in my studio work as well.

... had been ... 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 on, 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.
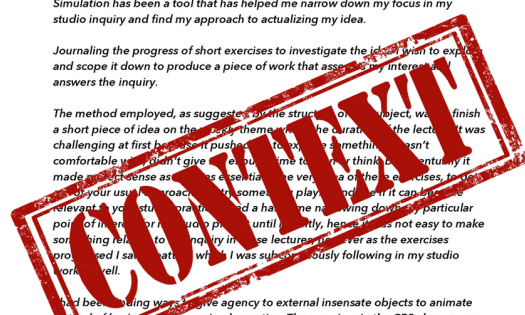
The presentation was a good opportunity to reflect back on and see what was emerging out of the work I had done so far. The feedback from the faculty and observing what others have been doing for their work, how were they connecting the studio project with these exercises. Watching people interpret the same theme in different ways, seeing ways of being playful was a good set of information I needed to proceed further.

There were many flaws to what I had done so far, I was ideating but there was no context to support my investigation. It was an important aspect of showing that we were working and investigating and I had completely missed out on that. I was not freely playing which was one of the core values of this subject. The feedback indicated that narrowing down my scope would help me direct my work towards the studio.

At the same time, I also got the feedback for my studio presentation. I came to a conclusion that the technique I was employing for my studio work wasn't going to cut it. I was not doing justice to my inquiry and process by simply animating on top and personifying the buildings in my own way while calling it an understanding of Object-Oriented Ontology. It was time to change tools and techniques. This decision led to me trying different things in the latter weeks which were very informing. I decided to move ahead with the tools I employed in

week 5 exercise with a much clearer and sharper understanding of the subject and what it was requiring me to do.

Week 7 | Moodboard

This week it was a fresh start with a much better understanding of what I want to do. I had acquired a technique which I was employing for my studio work (Parallax animation on pictures) and decided to carry out the rest of the Character, Place and Simulation exercises using that to hone my skills for it and have the themes inform towards my task.

With Kate taking this class, she had us make a Moodboard to get in touch with our actual interests and narrow down our methodology. This was a great exercise to take a breath and look for relevant work, take inspiration and know the direction which we wanted to take.

I also made me realize the value of context and why was it necessary to find relevant work as it accelerates the work we wish to do while keeping us in check that we aren't going all over the place.

Week 8 | The Public and the Audience

Audience, meaning the one who perceives. I decided to play with the idea of the perceiver and distorted some elements of the gorilla hands I walk past every day. Making it seem animate and awake. I was able to find some interesting and relevant work by some good artists and was able to grasp the concept very clearly. It was only a matter of practice and iteration from this point. The exercise contributed some pointers on my method which helped me with my studio work.

It was also a confirmation for me that this method/tools were more accurate to make to show what I wanted to.

Week 9 | Endless Time

Time has always been an interesting theme as it has so many potential interpretations. For this theme, I decided to work with compiling a few pictures. I thought how time could be relative in different planes. Like how our mind only takes a moment to get to the moon while a rocket would take around 3 days. That we all in mental or cinematic way see time differently. It wasn't exactly a playful thought but I made a child reading a book about anatomy, finding a nude sketch for the first time, feeling the mental rush.

This exercise was very informing as it allowed me to understand the narrative strength time holds and how just by using camera displacement and disrupting elements slightly, so much motion can be achieved. I also played around with perspective more than usual. Playing with all these tools helped me a lot in my studio work. I was also able to find some interesting tutorials to produce my desired output.

Week 10 | Forces
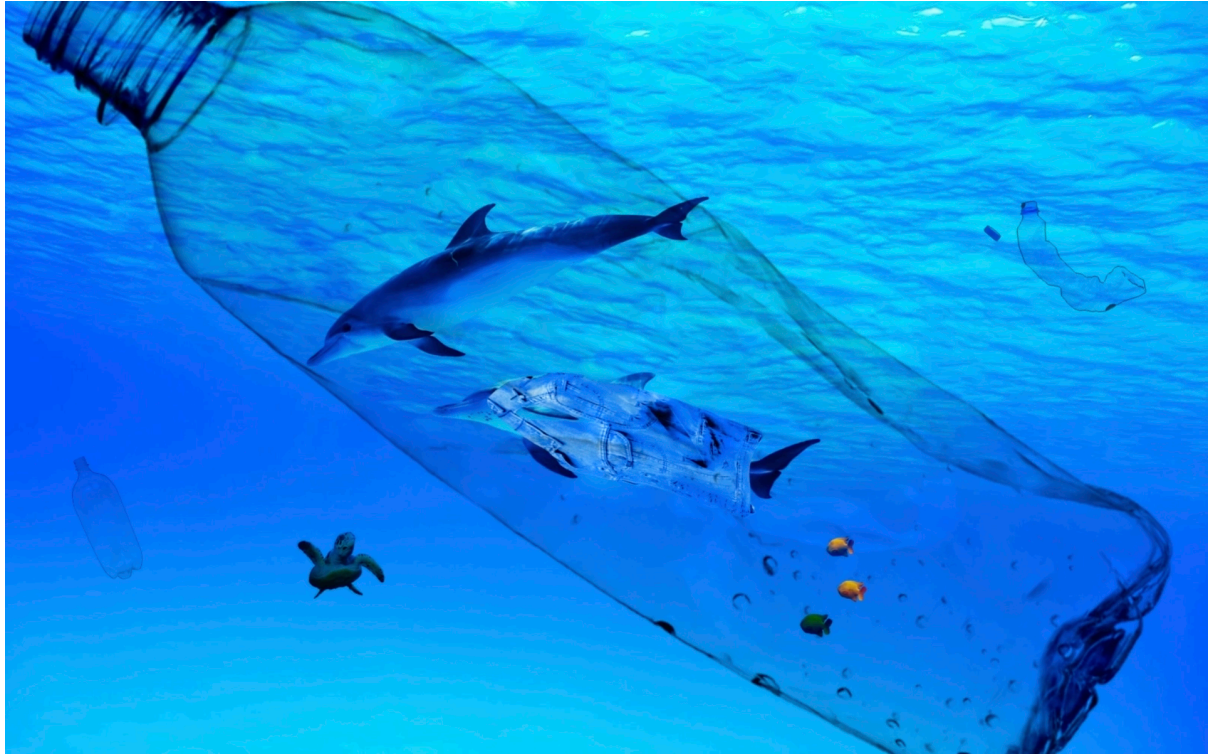
Forces are vivid and subjective. With my work situating around animating pictures, I had chosen to use people (Faculty in particular) as my force. I had a perfect idea of what to make for this theme.

But alas, Max had this crazy (in a good way) to set constraints/rules as the forces for our work this week.

The rules of engagement?

1) Work with items found in nature.

*2) Must wear a denim jacket.*

3) Put it in a bottle.

and of course, had to relate to your studio practice.

Knowing what method to use was not an issue this time, it was working with these uncanny constraints. I decided to keep and open my mind and expand my horizons of working with anything. Thankfully Max Gave us a week to get this done so I had time to have a few good reads, understanding how having constraints aren't necessarily bad. After researching a few different aspects for each theme, I came up with a narrative to thread all the elements together. This itself, was a learning I found very useful.

I created a parallax video about sea creatures moving around in the sea where plastic has been dumped. The dolphin (object found in nature) is wearing a denim jacket (make it wear a denim jacket) as a reference to the sea creatures having garbage stuck on them. The camera then zooms out showing a bottle floating around in the sea close to the camera, it gives the appearance of the fishes being trapped inside the bottle (put it in a bottle). I made this piece in reference to the force being our polluting actions towards the ocean that leads to sea creatures living such a life. The force here as an exercise was also working under random constraints and thinking creatively. I enjoyed this exercise but it became too serious for my taste so I added a completely unnecessary "bitch" in the end to lighten my own mood.

I was however, very happy with my speed with After Effects and ability to think and deform any object in an image upon observation. This was a clear indication of how CPS was being useful for my studio practice.

Week 11 | Stillness. How do things end?
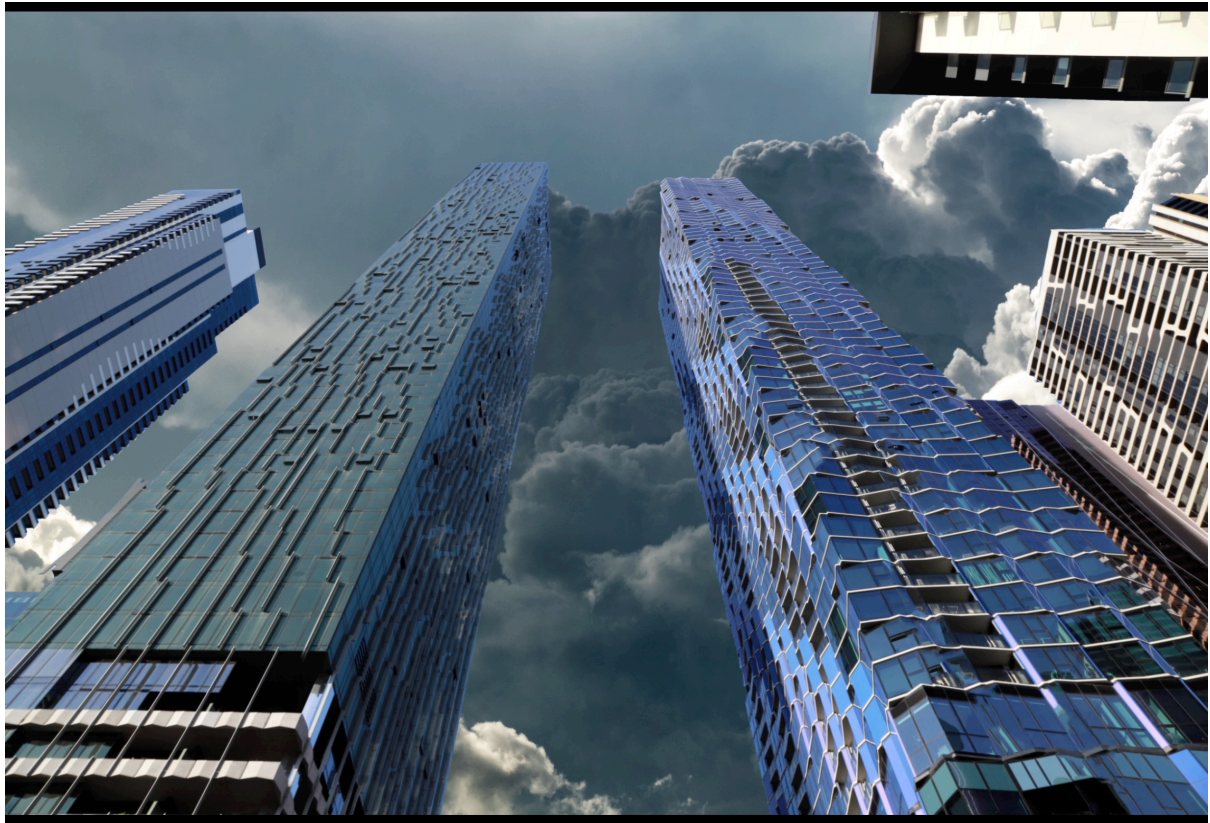
At week 11, my method, technique and cohesion is set. I am done with experiments and am producing work with a much clear focus. I particularly enjoyed this theme because my technique (animating pictures, Parallax) essentially is calm and composed elements moving ever so slightly. I took the subjects from my studio and used them as standing objects while the surroundings and light conditions change, it was a good understanding of stillness for me.

The idea was that when the subject is standing still nothing happens, but upon the change in environment and elements starting to move around, there is motion in stillness. To me this was a good example of how much lurks behind stillness.

I also got an understanding of How do things end in my own way as I tried to make sense out of that. It was a much simpler comprehension that I thought it would be. The idea of how do things end is subjective in my opinion. It was a questionable interpretation that took a while to seep into my brain. Through the exercises in the CPS class, I have gained the eye to find something in everything that I see. So, to me, things would end when one would stop looking. That to me is how things end.

Ultimately, Character, Place and Simulation turned out to be a perfect complimenting subject to inform to my studio project. Not just that, but in my case, it was essentially these exercises that helped me derive a concept, explore the work happening across the industry, choose what I wish to work with and keep it together neatly, understand that tools I must acquire and employ while having the competence to manage all this together and produce some informing outcomes, while being playful.

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