

SCHOOL: RMIT University Australia

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Campus	Melbourne City	Class day/time	Thursday/22:00	Tutor/marker's name	Brendan Harwood

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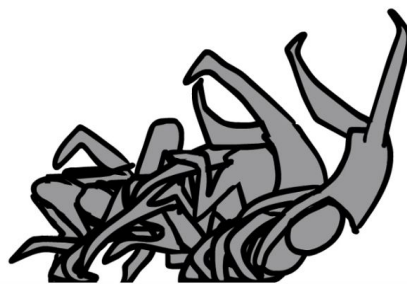
The past 11 weeks of Advanced Play Design helped me discover my way of thinking when it came to expressing myself pertaining to my discipline--animation. What started off as a daunting task to do every week became a fun exercise that I would look forward to do as it guaranteed a discovery of something new about myself that I didn't know prior.

Getting introduced to a theme every week and then creating an artefact and analysis of it helped give rise to methods of creating that I would have previously never even thought of.

I felt that a big reason these exercises helped conjure up new ways of exploration for me was due to the limitation in time. The 'stress' that came with having such a short deadline greatly helped exhilarate the way I approached creative thinking and I would spontaneously come up with ideas I didn't even know I had.

Because my major project for this semester was creating a 2D animation, I made sure that all my artefacts used animation as a way of presenting. The challenge now was to differentiate each exercise so that I could learn something new from each one. That's when the implementation of play, context, theme, and keywords relating to APD was crucial.

Week 7, 8 and 10 helped me explore context outside of my discipline that I managed to adapt to my studio 3 work.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-7-character-events-jh>

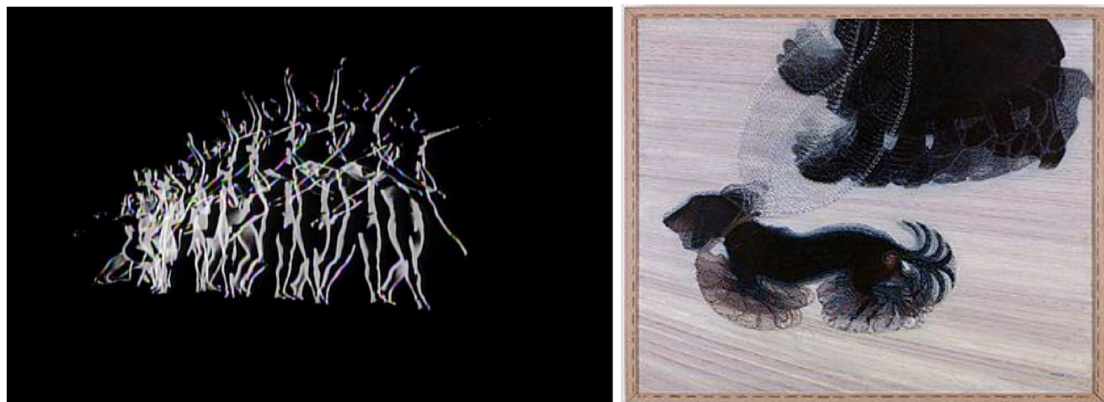


Figure 1: Stills from (a) *Pas de Deux* (b) *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*

For week 7, I chose non-contemporary works. The context that helped spark my idea was Norman McLaren's (1968) *Pas de Deux* video, where he used exposures on motion picture to create sculptures and new visual images. I loved this idea of metaphysics coming into play where visual metaphors are utilized to create a new meaning to a piece rather than regurgitating reality.

I realized the same could be said with animation. Yes, it is possible to create a 2D animation that just mirrors reality. But currently for my studio work, I'm exploring how 2D animation can be taken a step further to portray visual metaphors by utilizing metaphysics instead. The outcome of this would depend on how the creator chooses to tackle their way of thinking and making. So I created a piece that incorporated the same effect as Norman McLaren, but I had to use a different method as Adobe Animate does not offer a good way to render overexposure. Instead, I manually copied each frame into a new layer, but placed it a frame before to create the illusion of the 'ghost effect'. I then created iterations of this effect, such as using the same character, slowly fading him away, and also adding in different colors. I explored this with two animations to see whether or not there was a different effect.

Incidentally, as I tried to incorporate play into this exercise, I ended up relating back to another context we were introduced in class, the *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* painting by Giacomo Balla (1912). This was because throughout the playthrough of my animation, I would occasionally pause the video to see if I could see the motion taking place on screen. Thanks to the ghosting effect, I was able to distinguish the motion and this helped me realize a new effect I could use to explore metaphysics within animation by creating an effect impossible to perceive in the real world.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-8-play-and-time-1-jh>



Figure 2: Still from (a) *Star Guitar*

For week 8, I revolved my context around works that tackled the relationship between music and visual presentation differently. The contexts I chose had a nice back and forth interaction between the music and the video by having the beats sync with the events occurring on screen. I felt that this created an interesting playful environment which was absent from my project. One of my example was The Chemical Brothers' (2002) *Star Guitar*. That is why I wanted to use this exercise to help me learn this technique so I focused on 'innovation' and 'exploration'. I was able to tie this concept into week 8's theme of looping by creating a walk cycle and giving it a new meaning by playing around with its transformative attributes to match the beat of the music. The exercise helped me realize how creating an animation as a byproduct to a music can bring more fun and interactivity to both the viewers and creator. I felt that as a creator, when an animation is created this way, it enlivens the experience.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-10-play-and-stillness-jh>

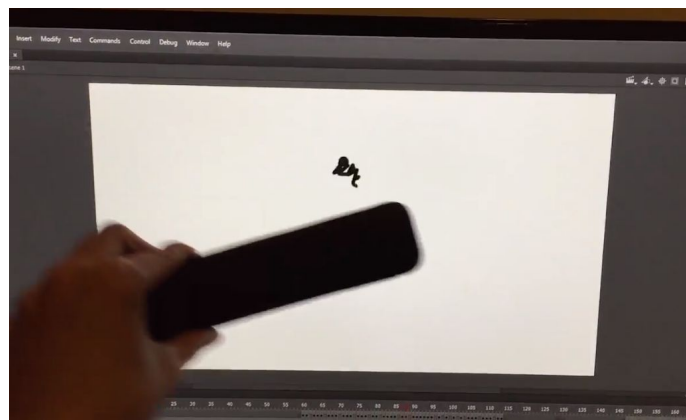


Figure 3: Still from (a) *Mountain Game*

As I chose a painting for week 7 and real life footage for week 8, I decided to focus week 10's context on games to fully encapsulate works from other disciplines to help shape my studio work. For week 10 I chose the *Mountain Game* by David O'Reilly (2014) due to a mechanic in the game where the player can opt to zoom out as much as they please and still play the game. I wanted to incorporate this into the theme of stillness as moving objects from a distance looks to travel slower. I also wanted to take this concept to juxtapose the connotations that come with stillness--serenity and calmness--with adjectives like chaos and anger using the same action. I was able to achieve this scenario by playing with the idea of how viewing certain events from a distance can greatly change the perspective of it.

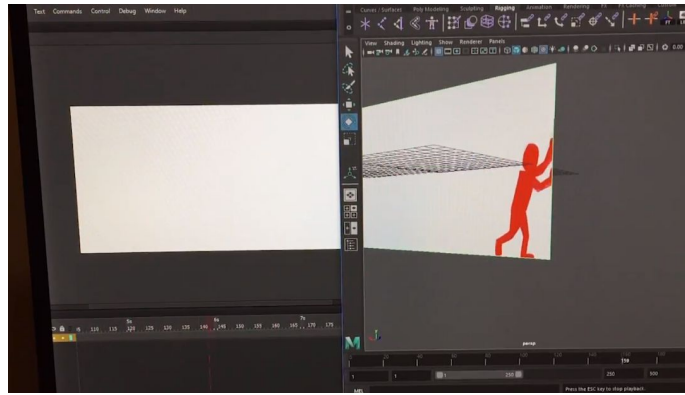
One common attribute across all my exercises that involved a humanoid figure was that I shaded them all to be monotone without any character design. One reasoning for this was to isolate the details and limit myself to only utilize movement to convey my message across. I mentioned how I am studying the significance of 2D animation through its possibility of representing metaphysics using methods that are unique or specifically adapted for 2D animation. For me to funnel my skills to better understand this concept, I felt that it would be best if I negated any attributes that could help me reach this stage and instead focus solely on the principles of animation to elevate my knowledge on this matter. It proved to be effective as it allowed me to discover new animating techniques that distorts reality.

Week 3, 4, and 9 share my attempt at trying to incorporate real world with the digital. This was another example where the exercise coerced me to partake in methods I would normally never approach due to it being out of my comfort zone.



<http://magistudio.net/work/advanced-play-design-week-3-play-and-materiality>

For week 3, I included more play into the animation by having the character in the 2D animation interact with the objects with the real world. I arranged it where I would create a terrain in the real world for the digital character to run on. This meant that I as a creator needed to be present for the animation to make sense, as only I knew exactly where to insert the platform for the character. I felt this exercise got me to be more intimate with my creations and give them more meaning. More importantly, it helped me think of the bigger picture for my future works. Right now I'm just creating a simple 2D animation and I consider this to be perfectly fine to get me started in the business. However, if I want to truly be 'innovative', I should consider including more of these physical vs digital interaction to make my work stand out. This was one of the major concepts we learned for the theme of 'materiality' for week 3.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-4-play-and-place>

For week 4 I created a scenario where a character could break the boundaries of their creation, in this case a 2D character created in Adobe Animate, and have him be able to traverse into 3D Maya. As week 4's theme was about 'place', I thought it was apt to create this scenario that incorporates an idea of play outside of just one platform. I also took the initiative to create an inquiry for this exercise that played around with the idea of, 'What would happen if a 2D character entered a 3D world?'. I was inspired by films such as *Who framed Roger Rabbit* and *Space Jam* where they insert 2D characters into a 3D world. Like week 3, this required me to be physically there to correctly time the start of the 2D and 3D software perfectly for the transition of the character to sync properly. This was my way of relating to both my discipline in 2D and 3D animation. I thought the exercise would be a fun way to collaborate the two. Unfortunately there wasn't much connection to my studio project itself. However, if I had animated the character in a more unconventional way that utilized the liberty of 2D animation, I would have been able to tie that with my current exploration in my work.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-9-play-and-force-jh>

For week 9, I decided to try a mixture of the concepts I picked up from week 3 and 4. I ended up sprinkling in some themes of 'materiality' and 'place' on top of this week's theme of 'force'. However to ensure that 'force' was still the main factor coming into play, I came up with an idea where I would use the force of events happening on a stock footage to dictate the way I animated and moved my character on top of it. This way, I wouldn't be able to predetermine the outcome of the product due to an external force coming into play. I specifically chose a stock footage with the ocean waves as my studio animation involves a lot of interaction with liquid. This exercise helped me observe the motion of naturally occurring waves and it also helped me

practice how to animate a character reacting to the force of it. One regret I had with this exercise was that I could have taken a bit more of a risk that took me out of my comfort zone like the exercise was meant to accomplish. I could have added unconventional methods of animating such as not using an onion skin. This would have helped with the idea of not knowing how the outcome of the product would look like.

My exercises for week 2 and 5 share the concept of focusing on exploring the principles of animation directly. As of now, my research proposal has evolved and moved away from directly approaching the principles of animation. However up until week 6, my research was heavily focused on this concept which is why these exercises mirrored my thinking. I learned quite a few things from this exercise, but due to my slight shift in focus, the exercises themselves have become outdated when it comes to directly affecting my project.

Animating with Extreme
Exaggeration



<http://magistudio.net/work/advanced-play-design-week-2-activity>

For week 2, I used the theme of 'tinkering' to my advantage by having that be the excuse to animate in unrealistic ways. I used 'tinkering' to animate a bouncing ball using different frames per second, using a mouse, and exaggerating certain principles of animation. It was interesting to observe how tinkering the way I approached a simple animation would greatly affect the feeling it evoked to the audience. A heavily exaggerated ball would feel more cartoony and as an audience you expect the rest of the animation to include physics that are completely out of this world. This helps the audience suspend their disbelief for that particular 2D animation. This was a great information to takeaway for my future project where I can exploit the representation of certain techniques to help my narrative in incorporating metaphysics.



<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-week-5-play-and-object-2>

Week 5 was very similar as I used the theme of 'object' to be the subject that allowed me to practice animation techniques. My monochromatic character came especially useful for this exercise as it forced me rely on posture and gesture to portray the character's response to the objects. I wanted to include 'iteration' into this by experimenting with how a character's response may change based on the condition of the object.



<http://magistudio.net/work/advanced-play-design-week-1-activity>

Week 1 may be my worst exercise as I was still inexperienced with the concept of APD and I was unaware of how to properly extract the purpose from the themes. For that reason I felt this had the least connection to any of my other exercises or my practice and therefore stands alone. The theme of week 1 was 'self observation': a way to represent ourselves using our discipline. I decided to animate on top of an image of a keyboard to create an ASCII emoticon showing my emotion. I also tried to animate the boxes to ape the jovial feeling of happiness. I wish I incorporated more play here by actually recording the keyboard I was using and superimposing the boxes on top. I could have also included my hand in the video to interact with the boxes even further. This would have also allowed me to take a head start in week 3's theme of 'materiality' by introducing the concept of physical vs digital world and in return helped me come to my current research endeavor a lot sooner.

In the end, I am happy that I was able to see a growth in my understanding on the fundamentals of animation. I was also happy to see how these exercises helped me reflect and change the course of my project from focusing too much on technicality, to paying more attention on what 2D animation can offer under the right measure in representing metaphysics rather than reality. To do this, I would need to focus on my process of 'thinking' before I jump into 'making'. APD helped me realize how I could use themes during pre-production to shape my processing and in return produce a more unique product.

References

Balla, G 1912, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, painting, accessed October 2018.

Mclaren, N 1968, *Pas de Deux*, video still, accessed October 2018.

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Simons, E, Rowlands, T & Dosen, S 2002, *Star Guitar*, music video still, accessed October 2018.