

Week 1 - Play and Self

For this week's prompt of play and SELF, I decided to reflect inwardly on my own progress and beginnings in artistic play.

I went through drawings that I did when I was a toddler, and saw an opportunity to animate them and transform them in animation. My intention was to explore and reflect on my experiences, learning and skills as an animator through my childhood artefacts.

In the childhood artworks, I had a sense of movement and animation in drawing galloping horses, often in rudimentary, panelless storyboards. I challenged myself to animate the child's drawings into my current, more realistic style of drawing.

I had to find a way to animate these objects as my childhood self would have. The concept of Play comes into this project in that I was playing with my ideas within the mindset of a child. Additionally, transforming these children's pictures and transforming them into my adult style demanded that I consider how my child's self and current self would collaborate artistically. As a result, morphing the horses into different versions of themselves became an experimental and playful exercise in allowing the designs to become fluid and mutable.

It also gave me free reign to explore how I could find creative, fluid and liberating ways to transform images in animation without feeling like everything had to be perfectly polished

Finally, I wanted to incorporate a more overt expression of the Self into my project. I wanted to portray myself in this object in a way that was consistent with the style of this animation. Something that I considered at this stage if animating was how Play in the context of this week's theme was connected to expression of the Self. In having the horses transform into my own self portrait, I found that I've created a snippet of my creative self in physical manifestation for the viewer to appreciate.

Reflection

This week's theme demanded that I reflect on my experiences over the last 23 years of being creative and expressing myself through visual means.

I found in going through objects and artworks that had been saved from my childhood, I was confronted by literally being forced to look at my younger self through the eyes of a trained and experienced artist. My instinct was to become self-critical, especially when I began to animate these childhood drawings in a way that was consistent with its style.

The concept of Play that underlines this class, however, gave me the opportunity to cast aside my need to perfect and polish these artefacts, and consider how I could inhabit the mindset of a child and literally play with the animating process.

On top of this, taking this playful and experimental mindset into transmuting each of the objects in this animation led me finding ways to using my learnings as an artist to try transmuting in a way that I was not experienced or confident in.

Theme

Self

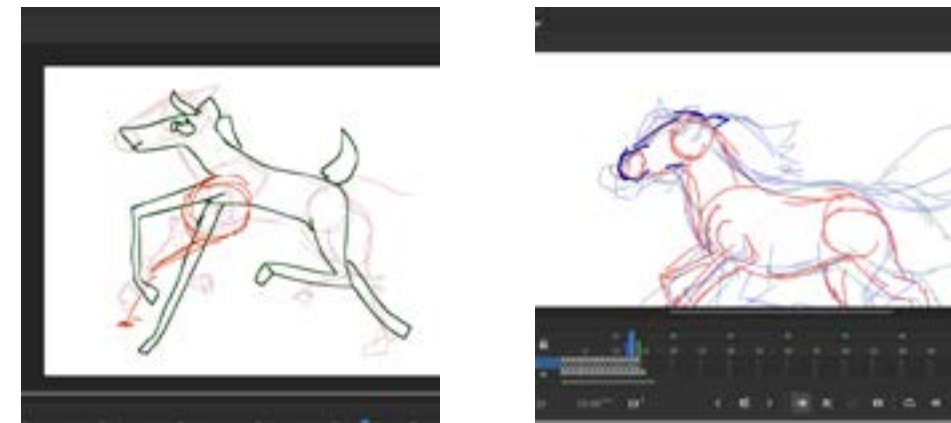
Context

2D animation

Method

Rotoscoping and frame-by-frame-animation

<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-play-and-self>



Process screenshots of the transmutation animation between the child's drawings and the adult's drawings (Adobe Animate)



Process from creating the linework for the self portrait to animating the transition from horse to self portrait (Adobe Photoshop - Adobe Animate)

Week 2 - Play and Time

Theme

Time

Context

2D animation

Method

Developing character animations in Photoshop

Animating in After Effects

Compositing background and character animations in Premiere Pro

<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-play-and-time-with-bearded-dragons>

Using a mindmap technique Matt gave us was really helpful for me in that I didn't feel overwhelmed by the broad scopes of both Play and of Time as themes for this exercise.

I first liked the idea of exploring time through Loops and I was listening to electronic music when I came up with an image of a head or face rolling around. In creating this first experiment inspired by this idea, I learned how to duplicate frames, reverse them and then duplicate layers to create a 'lagging' effect.

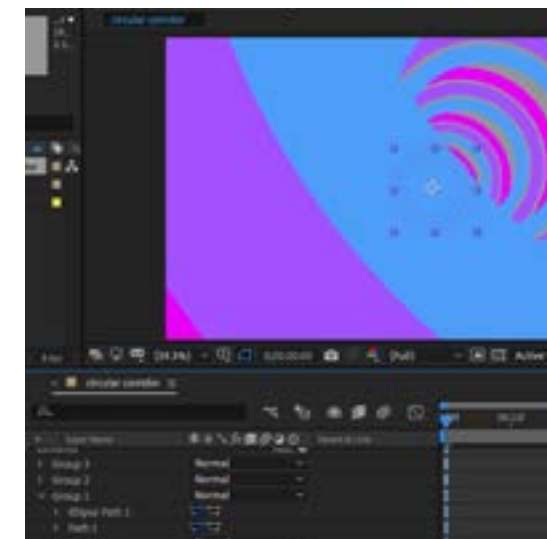
I then moved away from this idea because I was dissatisfied with the result and wanted to explore Time in a more expressive and experimental context. My 2D frame-by-frame animation method is something that I am very comfortable in, and I wanted to use this as an opportunity to experiment and play with new ideas..

Going back to the idea of Loop that I started with, I decided to explore animating an infinite tunnel with 2D methods. I made 3 frame-by-frame animation experiments in creating tunnels, using colours, shading and tweening shapes to convey the sense of movement. I am happy with the progress here, but all three of these experiments are unsuccessful in conveying my intention of a smooth looping tunnel. This is because the limitations in Adobe Animate prevent me from achieving this goal, so I tried using After Effects at my classmates' suggestions. In doing so, through experimentation and tinkering with tutorials, I taught myself how to construct an infinitely looping tunnel in After Effects.

One of my motivating intentions this week in terms of Play has been to consider the idea of 'Wouldn't it be funny if...?' Which is a train of thought that demands me to try thinking unconventionally and acting on it in my art. This contributes to the concept of Play. I then had a thought of 'wouldn't it be funny if I made a bearded dragon ride this tunnel like a slide.' So I created a handful of simple frames in Photoshop of the bearded dragon, tweened them in Animate and then overlaid it on top of the looping tunnel clip I'd made.

This week's theme has been the biggest growth for me technically in that prior to reaching out to my classmates, I had never considered trying to use After Effects for animation. In doing so, however, I not only learned new technical skills, but also found that I had the potential to expand on the frame-by-frame skills that I already have and expand on or enhance the animations that I have already have developed.

Play as exploration, experimentation and discovery has been significant in this week's exercises in that I have taken the opportunity to explore new softwares and technologies that will no doubt be practical and useful in my further studies.



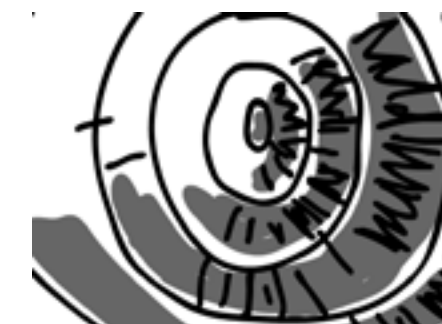
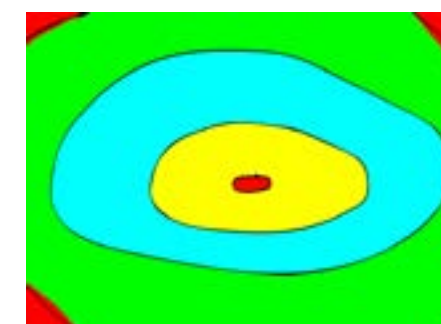
Animating the infinite tunnel loop (Adobe After Effects)



PNG frame of the bearded dragon character animation (Adobe Photoshop)



PNG frame of the first experiment (Adobe Animate)



Frames from the failed frame-by-frame tunnel experiments (Adobe Animate)

Week 3 - Play and Object

Theme

Object

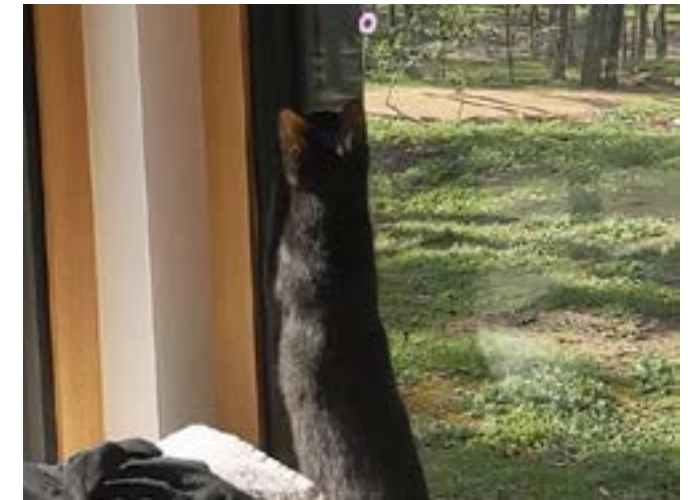
Context

2D animation
Arcade games

Method

Rotoscoping
Animated overlays

<http://magistudio.net/work/apd-play-and-object-wk-3>



Frame from the original video clip

The first inspiration that I had for the theme of Object this week was to look at my immediate surroundings and consider how I could objectify things around me, or recontextualise the existing functions of objects around me. I filmed my cat chasing a fly, which from an outside perspective was frankly hilarious because animals can often sense things better than humans. This makes it look like, in this case cats, can see things that are not there., I wanted to see how I could recontextualise this video's scenario by emphasising the flies my cat was chasing.

I got class feedback and they suggested that I play with colour, and in doing so I wound up rotoscoping my cat. In playing with colours, I was inspired by classic arcade games such as Pacman or Galaga. Games from this generation in the 80s generally have dark backgrounds with brightly coloured environments, sprites and details. This visual language could be translated to my draft animation cohesively and creates a playful aesthetic.

I found in the process of experimenting with this gif that using time remapping had a huge effect on the movement of the cat and the flies. In having some of the motion move every second keyframe and the pounce at 24fps, the fluidity and suddenness of the pounce is stronger and more effective. I applied this to the flies as well, using frenetic framing and drawing them randomly to create more of a 'buzz'

Object was a challenging theme because the broadness of the definition of Object is so huge, and so the scope of what I should explore seemed overwhelming.

I draw much of my artistic inspiration from the natural world, especially from animals. I have noticed thus far in Advanced Play Design that my weekly responses, in some way or another, incorporate animals in some way. Interestingly, as in Week 1 with my animated horses, this tendency to incorporate animals in my works is almost a childlike fascination with them.

In terms of play, considering interactive media as inspiration has been interesting because I am not an interactive media practitioner. Working with other practitioners in this class has been rewarding in that I have had a broader scope of inspiration from my classmates. By considering literal play and games, I have managed to experiment in this week with aesthetic and world building by presenting the perspective of a cat's world as a flurry of video game codes and conventions. The idea of a virtual reality, or alternate realities as expressed through the perspectives of other people and creatures, is something that I am interested in exploring further through my studies.



Process screenshot from rotoscoping and colour styling of the cat subject (Adobe Animate)



Inspiration came from the aesthetic stylings of 80s arcade and video games such as Galaga and Pacman (pictured)

Week 4 - Play and Place

Theme

Place

Context

2D animation

Method

Asset development across softwares

Incl. Adobe AE (fire animation) Photoshop (Interior/Environment frames) Animate (environment transitions)

For play and place, I'm interested in the idea of how communities often build up around a source of fire, like a hearth. I began by animating a fire to be a focal point for my animation. I was inspired by "The Making of Home" by Judith Flanders, and something that I was interested in was the idea of the hearth as the focal point of a home. Furthermore, I was interested in how the hearth of a home being a fireplace shifted from around the 1950s to a television being the hearth.

The transitional frames were really difficult because I am so used to animating people, creatures and characters. These subjects can be animated using organic, curving and mutable lines. I wanted to try to animate with the lines and the planes of each of the locations, but I found that using a combination of curved lines and shapes was the most practical option.

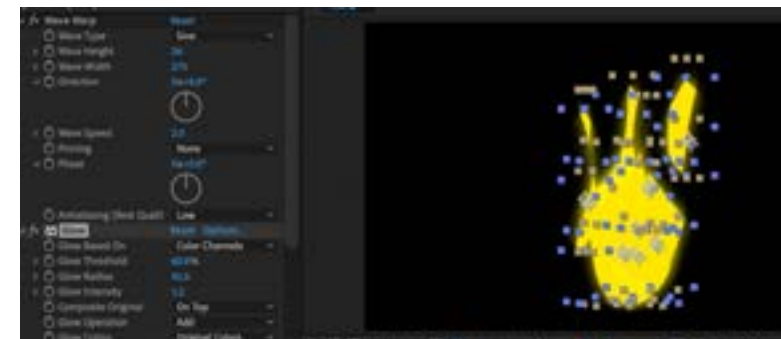
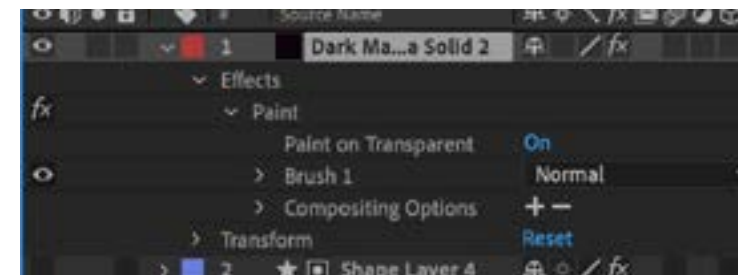
To get the pacing right, I changed the fps from 10 to 15 and then extended the frames of the establishing shots. This made the transformations feel more organic and smooth, and gives the viewer more time to absorb each different location.

In terms of Play for this week's theme, I was interested in experimentation with technical skills. I made 2 separate animations, making the fire After Effects and both Photoshop and also Animate for the morphing interiors.. By consolidating each separate asset of the final object in different softwares, I had to work out how to unify them all separately and then tweak and tinker with them in the final stage of overlays and compositing in Premiere Pro.

A difficulty that I have had in transmuting objects through animation has been lacking confidence in how subjects should look in the halfway transitional frames. Through this class, starting from the transforming horses in Week 1 to this large scale interior transformation, my biggest growth has been exploring the hesitations that I have had in these transitions. Exploring how to use motion smears and experiment with the transformations of lines and shapes has been my strongest improvement through this half of the semester, and I owe it to my willingness to experiment, explore and play in these exercises.

Additionally, learning to create a cohesive object with separately developed assets in this exercise is a showcase of my learnings as a media practitioner. I started this semester with a brand new technology that I had not used before in the Wacom drawing pad. Over the last 4 weeks, I have not only been learning to use this technology, but how to use it for multiple softwares; I have learned how to utilise alpha channels across the Adobe softwares and how to composite these alpha generated layers to create a completed work.

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



Process screenshots from creating the fire animation (Adobe After Effects)



Compositional testing with stand-in fire still and the draft of the interior animations (Adobe Animate)