AGI Studio 2

Project Pitch

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AGI STUDIO 2
Animation about ancient Chinese culture/history/styles

RATIONALE

To visualise and animate the poem 'Mooring at Night by Maple Bridge'

Use animation to tell a half historical, half fictional stories

Storytelling/Script

To personify immaterial objects such as power, characteristics and feelings

Use creative character designs/ behaviours to metaphorise the background story, 'An Lushan Rebellion'

Animation/Interests/Focus

How do 2D characters fit into illustrated background, eg. Watercolour, Ink paint..

Character animation

Animated detail elements in the background

Creating a more persuasive/believable environment

CONTEXT

Studio Ghibli
Hayao Miyazaki

Totoro

Totoro is like the embodiment of the Satsuki and Mei's father, playing with and helping them when they're in trouble

Hawl's Moving Castle

Calcifies, as a personified characters representing Hawl's heart; the moving castle represents his/their power

2D animation techniques

Every character in the background is animated

Overall styles/character designs
-
Bulgy sleeves, thin legs, round fixed outlines

Nice Boat Animation
Jiajia Huai

White Cat Legend

Design of characters' costumes/ style frames

similar background/ period of history

Buddha Studio

Hushuo 狐说

Overall styles/ sketchy ink-painting background designs

METHODS

Production

Background

Procreate or Photoshop

Watercolour/ Ink painting/ colour pencil sketchy style

2D animation

TV Paint

Concept

Through the traditional way of making a 2D animation
-
from preproduction to production

Be more focusing on testing and designing character animation

OUTCOMES

Studio 2 - a MVP with a vertical slice/ finished animatic with confirmed key extremes of character animation + a fully finished scene?
Studio 3- finished 2D animation

Approx. 2 mins Chinese dialogue, English subtitles

- Express creativity through characters and stories
- Use bright/happy visual image o tell a depressed story
- A very Chinese styled animation

Shanghai Animation Film Studio

The Legend of Sealed Book

Realistic brush-painting and Retro-feeling background illustration/ flat-coloured characters/ complicated costumes but simplified design

Rationale

Before entering MAGI, I already had a rough direction of the field I would be working towards —— 2D animation that tells stories under (ancient) Chinese background. I find myself particularly interested in character animation and storyboarding, in terms of animating.

For Studio 2, my initial idea is to animate the poem ‘Night Mooring at Maple Bridge’ written by the ancient Chinese poet Zhang Ji in Tang Dynasty —— to build a story based on the original content.

Since the poem mainly captures the consciousness and emotion of the poet visiting Gusu city at night and does not contain much actual plot. I would be applying my own understanding of the work and imagination of things that existed in the content, to the animation.

A lot of my early inspiration comes from the films by Studio Ghibli, of its attention to details and how everything in each scene is animated. Therefore, I really would like to make an animation, which focuses on animating the details to create a believable living world to the audience.

Inquiry

- Building content/plots/stories on ancient literature?

- To make the visual image recognisable, combing smooth 2D animating techniques + old Chinese animation styles (colours/textures/designs)?

- In terms of history and literature, could the animation bring educational influence to the younger generation across the world?

The moon goes down — the caw of crows fills the frozen sky;

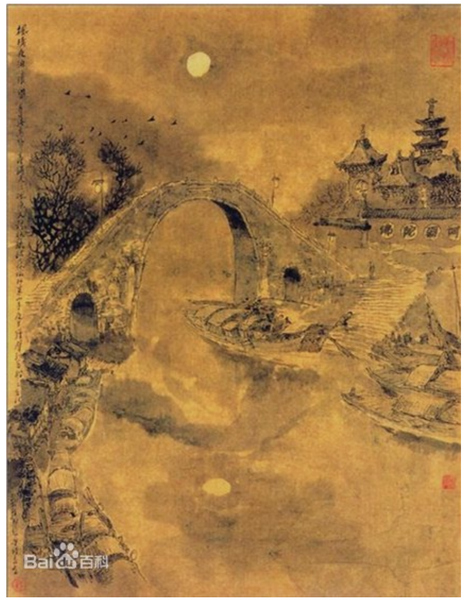
Sleep comes hard with fishing lights among the river trees.

Far beyond the city wall lies Cold Mountain Temple;

I hear its bell at midnight as I lie here in my boat.

——Night Mooring at Maple Bridge (translated), Zhang Ji, Tang Dynasty

Background



From 755 to 763 (mid-point of the Tang dynasty), the general officer of the Tang military system, An lushan, rise a rebellion trying to replace the Tang dynasty with the Yan dynasty, known as the An Lushan Rebellion.

During the time, the poem ‘Night Mooring at Maple Bridge’ was written by Zhang ji on his refuge to the Gusu city, depicting his observation and feeling of the night scene at Maple Bridge; homesick from the long journey, worries of the dynasty, as well as sadness of being homeless during the turbulent time.

Ideas

A poet arrived at the Maple Bridge at Gusu, taking refuge from the rebellion in Chang'an (the capital city of Tang Dynasty). In the afternoon, he caught a fish.

When the night came, the poet woke up in the cabin of his boat, noticing a guy (fish spirit) jumping into the lake. He followed him into the water and took the wonderful journey…

- contrast between the beautiful scenery (positive) and the sad feeling (negative)

- personification of desire and the rebellion

Context

Ponyo / Hawl's Moving Castle (animated film)

Animated background characters and objects, to fulfil the content and create these environments that are more believable and appealing to the audience.

The Legend of Sealed Book (animated film)

Abstract character designs (shapes)/ use of lines to subtly conclude and simplify the complicated ancient Chinese costumes / brush painting background to enhance the retro feeling

Hushuo (animation trailer)

Overall style frame - contrast between warm and cold colours in the background/ background design - sketchy outlines and watercolour painting to create more stylistic visual images

White Cat Legend (animated series)

Background of the story set also in Tang Dynasty/ random characters walking by in the background/ watercolour-painted and textured background design

Methods

- Working via the traditional way of making 2D animation; from preproduction (script, character design, storyboard, style frame etc.) to production.

- Creatively writing the script, using methods like metaphor and personification, making conscious objects real

- Focusing on characters designs/character animation in the scenes (protagonists as well as background characters), looking at each scene as a whole

- Looking at how other animators had done characters' interaction with water, as well as how to animate the movement of water itself

- Making rough background illustrations with different brushes/styles, towards a combination that suit the story the most

Outcomes

- 2D animation, approx. 2mins
- Limited dialogues in Chinese, subtitles in English
- Studio 2 MVP + vertical slice; Studio 3 finished animation

- To bring the audience into a believable, imagined world
- To build a fictional story based on a period of history
- To use happy visual images to tell a hidden sad story