

Statement of Intention

AGI Studio 2

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Rationale

Working as a traditional 2D animator, many of my works are inspired by ancient Chinese culture, including Chinese fairy tales and plays, paintings and fictional stories built upon a historical period. By making character animation frame by frame in 2D, it helps to create a fluent visual movement of the traditional Chinese clothes and hairstyles, which satisfies me as a practitioner.

In Studio 2, I will be making an animation based on the ancient Chinese poem 'Night Mooring at Maple Bridge' (known as 枫桥夜泊), written by Zhang Ji in Tang Dynasty. From 755 to 763AD, the general officer of the Tang military system, An Lushan, raised a rebellion against the Tang dynasty of China, attempting to replace it with the Yan dynasty. The poem 'Night Mooring at Maple Bridge' was written by Zhang Ji, taking refuge in the Gusu city, far away from the rebellion. After seeing the beautiful (peaceful) night scene at Maple Bridge, he then wrote this poem to capture the sadness of him leaving home and worries about the safety of the dynasty.

Most of the context in 'Night Mooring at Maple Bridge' is about the description of the places and environment, which was intended to capture the feeling of depression of the poet and does not contain any narrative storylines. Thus, I will be building a fictional narrative based on my research and knowledge of the historical event and understanding of the message beyond the poem, which subtly connects all those elements in the poem through animation.

In terms of the inquiry, I am thinking about:

- How to animate 'consciousness' through narrative storytelling? / How implied metaphor could be used to transfer the sadness and desolation from ancient Chinese poems into 2D animation?

Context

My motivation mainly came from the animated films by Studio Ghibli, especially **Howl's Moving Castle** and **Kiki's Delivery Service**, in which Hayao Miyazaki has put a lot of effort into designing the background and animating the unimportant characters in the background. By doing this, he created such believable environments that directly bring the audience into

the story at the very beginning. I would like to be focusing on building a believable world in my animation.

Choir of Chinese Poem is a Chinese animation studio that focuses on animating Chinese poems. The overall feelings and styles of its animation inspired me when I was building my stories. The 2D animated film 'Love Seeds' by CCP tells a short story of the hidden love between two childhood sweethearts, the idea of red bean from Wang Wei's poem, Yearning, has been used as the main theme connecting the storyline throughout the animation, as well as the poem itself. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkG1xwl1a-c>>

Another related work that inspired me, **The Legend of the Sealed Book**, has used such abstracted characters on the gouache-painted background, which successfully created an exquisite masterpiece featuring Chinese opera and painting. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gY9k9ulHTKY&t=4491s>>

Methods

Preproduction

- Change of the face/costumes/hairstyles of characters over the progression of the story, to indicate the change of his feelings and enrich the character arcs
- Designing and animating the background characters in detail, to build up a believable environment
- Focusing on refining the animatics and the timing of each shot, in terms of the overall visual fluency
- Looking at how different objects/animals would reflect on the character's feelings
- Exploring the idea of using metaphors to describe depression/ desolation
- Investigating on using delightful images to tell a sad story, through animation/ colour/ storyboard tests

Production

- Character animation (as my main practice)
- The contrast between the use of colours, warm and cold
- How characters fit into the background

Outcomes

The outcome of Studio 2 will be an MVP (animatic with every scene properly timed and finished rough key extremes and rough animation) and a vertical slice (fully polished scene),

which will then be taken into Studio 3 towards a completed 2D animated film. The length of the animation is around 1min30sec to 2mins.

Although there are a lot of animations based on Chinese culture, not many of them relate to poems. The poem itself contains its unique rhythm to build up a specific atmosphere and help the readers to memorise. As a practitioner, I will be looking at how to transfer the rhythm into storytelling and animation, and investigating how the consciousness/emotion of the protagonist has changed gradually during the progression of the story(possibly using metaphors).

In addition, based on the original message beyond the poem, I would like to create a sense of sadness and desolation through delightful image-making. By contrasting the environment in warmth but the protagonist himself standing in cold, the idea of depression from the storyteller's perspective is better conveyed to the audience.