

Exploratory Practice

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Concept Development + Final Logline and Idea

Lucy and I decided to collaborate for the following reasons:

- I found her initial concept of doing a short film about the circus and clowns to be very interesting.
- Sharing the workload of making a film between the two of us made the task of making a short film less daunting.

There was also a lot of overlap in our interests in relation to animation inspiration so we figured collaborating and combining our skillsets would lead to a fruitful outcome.

Summary of the concept development:

The initial story idea I proposed to both Lucy and the tutors was one about a tailor and clown. The tailor character would make costumes for the clown and stay backstage helping her due to a lack of self-confidence.

The 'conflict' in the story would be the fact that the tailor would be forced in some way to step up and take the clown's place.

We were told to do more research since this idea was extremely fragile and came off as generic due to the fact it was not supported by anything substantial. One such example of something pointed out was the question of whether there were any tailors in the circus.

In order to rework the story and make it stronger, I did further research after this feedback was given and ended up using the fairytale Punchinello to construct and inspire the core narrative. It was useful having it as a point of reference to use to create a story more personal to the both of us.

Final Logline: 'An ordinary girl switches places with the most beloved clown in the circus.' (Based on the fairytale Punchinello)

Lucy and I created this Logline together.

The full development and feedback log I kept for the duration of the project can be viewed in these blog entries:

https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01 /progress-log-for-exploratory-practice-part-1/ https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01 /progress-log-for-exploratory-practice-part-2/ https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01 /progress-log-for-exploratory-practice-part-3/ https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01 /progress-log-for-exploratory-practice-part-4/ https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01 /progress-log-for-exploratory-practice-part-5/

Script + Statement of Intent

It is dawn, sunlight is slowly creeping into Meryl's room during this scene. The camera pans down following an admit one ticket to the circus as it floats to the ground. It lands in her room and she finds it. 'I think it would be nice if she noticed the ticket and had to fully make an effort to catch it as a way to signify that her true dreams in hard to get a hold of.

Her room is full of props (filke posters of Trinket and the circus) that indicate that she is a circus fan but at this point in the story she is dressed normally. (Suggestion: Meryl could twirl and change into her clown outfit when she is starting to imagine/fantasise about the performance which she cannot attend) probably use this scene to indicate that she is weighed down by her current life/something is causing her to feel upost.

She can't go to the circus to use the ticket but she imagines the performance (something like the less the below) while she looks at the big top outside of her window in the distance. (Can use this opportunity to add as many circus people as you want.)



A big Meryl looking at the tiny circus to keep the surreal feeling up in this scene (pan out to show this to conclude this scene)

After this, she sees the real trinket outside her window and she goes downstairs to meet her.

A panel could come up with text saying "please dance for me" (like a silent film)

And Trinket will dance

We could use one of those day and night wheel things to show the passage of time, showing that Meryl and Trinkte met up and this happened for a few nights in a row before the next important scene During this bit, trinket has to be shown getting progressively more and more tired the more she dances for Meryl instead of resting.

Diagram just to show that in the day they're in separate locations

The next important event is the scene where Meryl and trinket switch places. My suggestion is that this happens at night, she's so tried and Meryl asks if she is okay (using the same silent filling panel type thing). But Trinket dances anyway and collapses into a heap on the ground. The little guys carried her away and put a quill over her (first appearance of the quill cape she wears in her non stager design) and Meryl gets her new outfit so she can fill Trinket's role while she is recovering.

Can have a split view of what's going on in the ring and what's going on backstage this time to parallel ("as a call back to what the day and night sequence was like maybe. So mery) would be backstage resting and trinket would start off being all okay but soon struggle to keep up with the repairs and such

When Meryl starts struggling, the focus shifts to her though.

End animation: Trinket coming back and they're about to start another performance (I was thinking maybe it would be cool if we had like, a ticket flying away here so it can loop back to the start?)

This is iteration 1 of the script I wrote. Because our film does not have any dialogue, I did not format the script in the traditional way.

We went through multiple iterations, passed the script between each other for constant review before handing it over to Yifei Long

(y.long0320211@arts.ac.uk) in order for her to be able to help us begin the storyboarding process. Lucy and I decided that having one of our peers collaborate with us in this department was a wise decision since storyboarding is not our specialty. (See page 7 for more details on this.)

Full Script with all changes documented can be viewed here:

https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac. uk/2023/06/01/exploratorypractice-full-script-all-edits/ Statement of intent by Jane Lee 18044557 (476 words total, excluding headings and subheadings)

Concept and how I came up with it (350 words):

My role so far has been to construct the narrative and script for the animation. It will be our personal take on the original fairytale of Punchinello the clown. The setting will not be too grounded in reality. We want the visuals to be more experimental, with an emphasis on the incorporation of traditional mediums and textures into our animation.

In our narrative, the general message will be about having the courage to follow your dreams but also acknowledging that there will always be hardships to overcome along with the importance of not overexerting oneself and burning out. I will also be tapping into my experiences with hesitance with choosing my desired career path and that will be reflected in how one of the characters will initially struggle to choose the path that will make them happy.

After much discussion with Lucy, the reason why we chose to use circus imagery in both the clothing design of our characters and fairytale inspiration for the narrative is because she and I grew up being inspired by the 'Superflat' animation style which has roots in fairytales as well as Russian and Czech animation. This in turn links to kawaii culture, an integral part of both mine and Lucy's childhood. Lolita is a fashion subculture which we both admired growing up too. (To this day I still actively partake in it). Due to the origins of this subculture being an act of rebellion against Japan and south east asia's 'if any nails stick out they get hammered down' mentality, it directly links to the universal experience that girls have growing up with many expectations to look and act a certain way. Clown Lolita is a subgenre of Lolita that we decided to utilise as reference in order to link all the themes in our animation together. Much like a clown, artists have the role to create work to entertain an audience but are usually disrespected and underpaid. Even though we will be showing our characters in a positive light, we will also be acknowledging the reality of 'running away to join the circus'.

Technique (147 words):

For sound, the plan is to collaborate with a composer I know who would be willing to lend us his skills in creating music for our animation. There are no plans to use any spoken lines since we plan to display any relevant lines similar to how silent films displayed dialogue. Lucy will be using my script to make a storyboard for us to follow.

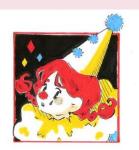
For this specific project we both did character designing together since the plan is to combine our two different art styles together to create a new unique style to use for the final animation. We plan to use ToonBoom to make the majority of the animation together. However since we also want to implement different patterns into the character's clothing, we plan to create textures and assets using traditional mediums and use Premiere Pro to key these in for the final result.

Moodboard



"Look, look, dear Punchinello!" little Beppo cried. "I am no longer lame."— Page 116.















https://padlet.com/jlee1120 1931/exploratory-practiceec2k0836ap14555d

Subject (main inspiration and symbolism roots):

Inucurry is our main inspiration - > Which led us to look deeper into Russian and Czech animation and the moving picture book look/aesthetic -> Which is also one of the origins of where the 'Superflat' style of animation and art came from -> Which in turn links to and is a by-product of kawaii culture (both me and Lucy grew up admiring this) -> Lolita is a fashion subculture which we both admired growing up too (And I actively partake in this as well). Due to the origins of this subculture being an act of rebellion against Japan's 'if any nails stick out they get hammered down' mentality, it directly links to the universal experience that girls have growing up that is the expectations to look a certain way etc and how society hates teenage girls no matter what we do. -> Clown Lolita is a subgenre of Lolita that links back to how we want to create an animation that inspires people who watch it. (This is our thought process of why we chose to use Clown and Lolita and the fairy tale aesthetic in the story we want to tell.)

The above is text I wrote for an interim presentation detailing the reasoning behind out style decisions and inspirations we were looking at during the time we were constructing the mood board. It also details some of the reasoning behind the decisions I made when designing Meryl for the film. (See next slide)









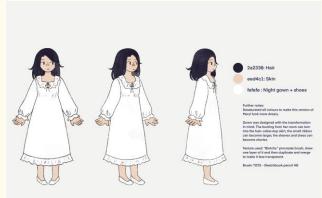
Originally Lucy and I wanted to incorperate two different stage outfits for Meryl to signify her coming out of her shell as the story in the film progressed.



Character designs: Part 1

Eventually, due to the many plot changes we came to the decision to give our two protagonists a stage outfit and a pyjama outfit each to make it clear when they've swapped places with each other in the film visually. I drew inspiration from vintage night gowns when designing Meryl's pyjamas.









The sketches above and on the left were done by me in order to aid Lucy in tweaking her initial design for the final turnaround sheet. We wanted to merge our art styles together for this film to create something unique but easy for both of us to draw.

Lucy's final turnarounds for Trinket the Clown



Trinket the Clown



Character designs: Part 2







I designed the Clown Car used during the scene where Trinket is carried away to safety after falling down.

I based the colour scheme on neopolitan ice cream since I thought it would go well with the pastel colour scheme that is used by the main protagonists.

I replaced the cone on top of the car with a metal wind up key in order to better give a feeling of playfulness in the film combined with giving the viewer a hint that this dream we are presenting them with in the narrative may just be entirely fabricated by Meryl herself.





Colour iterations done for my trio of little circus characters. I stuck to using pastel colours so it stays unified with existing designs.



In order to design a set of 3 bacgrounds characters for the circus crew (we figured three was a good number to get up to activities such as building the tent and carrying Trinket to saftey,), I used Lucy's designs (seen in the upper left corner) as a reference to start brainstorming my own designs for the trio.

I decided to stick to a moon and star theme for the design for the following reasons:

Having one theme unifies them and makes them feel even more like a set.

Continuing the sun and moon imagery in the film in yet another way makes the motif stronger and more easily identifiable by the audience.

Storyboards



Ton Andrew Market Marke

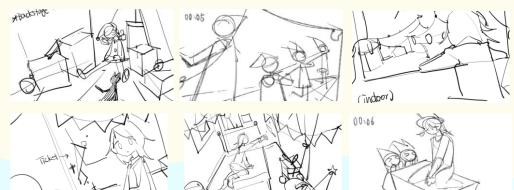
All the boards done on this page were sketched by Yifei Long.

The ones on the pink background were the ones that we ended up using in our animatic. The other six in the bottom right corner are from scenes we decided to cut for the following reasons:

Time contraints

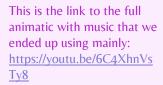
These scenes were less important for telling the core story of the film.

The narrative changed so the film no longer starts in Meryl's bedrooom.



Storyboards + Animatic





You can view this along with several other alterations I made after feedback on my blog here: https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01/animatic-with-music-edits-made-after-feedback/

This page is a selection of boards I worked on, the last two boards in this group are examples of boards me an lucy both drew together.





















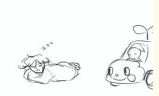




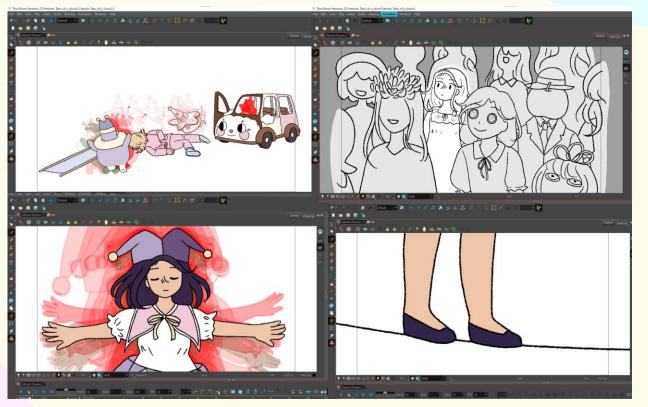








Animating



I learnt a lot more about how to animate using Toonboom Harmony by using it so heavily for this project.

One super useful thing I learnt is how to animate the camera and how to implement camera movements into my sequences. (I used it the most in the car scene.

A particulartly useful bit of feedback I got was to change a full body shot to a close up of Meryl's feet walking the tightrope instead. (Refer to the 4th picture.) This helped to speed up production since I had less to draw, so I think I will try to use more strategic closeups in the future to help speed up production where I can without compromising quality.



Background Design

In order to gain more time to focus on animating, we collaborated with two illustrators to create some of the backgrounds for our film.



I gave this rough mock up and the mood board shown previously to May Su and she produced this long background intended for use in both the Meryl Transformation scene, as well as the Car scene.



She made it in greyscale so that we could place the appropriate colours later so that it matches the rest of the film.

I wanted her to make the background long for the following reasons:

I thought having the ability to pan around, especially up and down was integral to making the end of the transformation scene as I had envisioned it.

Having the bottom half be the circus ring makes it useable for the car scene. By drawing one long background, she has essentially done work that covers two scenes very effectively. The backgrounds depicted below were done by Honor Wilson after being briefed by Lucy.





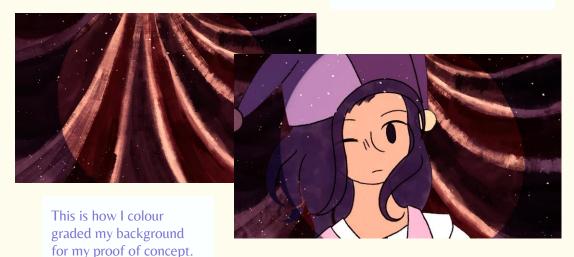


Background Design Part 2



I also drew this one background that was originally used in my proof of concept: (https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.u k/2023/06/01/exploratory-practice-proof-of-concept/) but it has since been repurposed for another scene (Trinket swinging) after more colour adjustments were made by Lucy.







submission.





Stop Motion + Prop Making





In preparation for this, I designed the sun and moon themed wheel that would appear beneath our two main characters for one scene.

After doing a mock up in procreate, I drew the design onto a paper doily and used a scalpel to carefully cut the design out. To the left you can see what the final design looks like.

I wanted the sun to take up more room on the design since any sun imagery is connected to Trinket and the moon is connected to Meryl. Having the sun take up more room but have closed eyes and a more passive expression helps to foreshadow the moon (Meryl) switching places with her. In order to incorporate more of a mixed media look, we both decided it would be a good idea to animate some effects and background elements using the Rostrum cameras at University to do some stop motion.

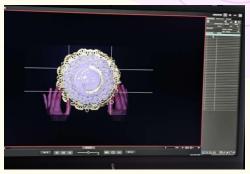
I also had the idea to have a gold doily underneath so that my cut-out design would stand out more.

For other background elements, we used the following materials to animate:

We used tissue paper to animate the cloud of smoke the car leaves behind after it drives away in one scene, as well as for water in a future scene we will implement over summer.

We used sequins and glitter to animate some shiny debris that would go flying as a result of the car speeding away too.

We used a paper lace cut out to animate something that roughly resembles bunting that can be freely used in any scene that needs an extra embellishment.



Quick Conclusion: Making the stop motion elements for the film was fun but a lot of the footage isn't to the standard I would like. For submission we put it in for the time being, but we plan to reshoot much of it during summer.

Next time, lighting definitely needs to improve since we had difficulty setting it up to begin with and it was not ideal throughout which made a lot of the footage impossible to key out properly due to inconsistencies caused by it.

I will reshoot the glitter sequence especially since keying that out was so unsuccessful that there are a horrible number of artefacts in the resulting footage.

All the raw footage for the stop motion we ended up can be viewed here:

https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/01/s top-motion-raw-footage-additionalcommentary/

Final Film



Links to watch the film are here: https://youtu.be/8u1tUcfXq58

https://jleeanim2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/06/ 01/final-film-for-submission/

Critical Appraisal + Reflection

Even though Lucy and I did not complete our film to the length which we originally intended, I think that the outcome that we have for submission is satisfactory considering the amount of time we were allocated for the project.

It was an especially fun and education experience to learn more about how Dragonframe as a software works and the importance of having consistent lighting when creating any stop motion. Shutter speed and actively colour correcting my footage was not something I actively thought much about until we were faced with the obstacles it can cause in the process of making a mixed media animation.

The section of animation (refer to the car scene in the final film) which we added in some of the textures we intended to add to our character's clothing from the very beginning looked very successful at first glance. However, up close it has many artefacts caused by bad colour keying which we now know how to fix in our future work. The same can be said in many of the stop motion elements in our film, which we plan to reshoot due to the quality becoming inadequate due to unsuccessful chroma keying.

We both plan to continue refining the film over the summer to really make it the best it can be in preparation for film festivals and showreels.

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