

'CHIMERA'

Introduction

In the ever-changing world of cinema, when designing larger than life characters that come from the source of a brilliant mind, it also requires a solid foundation of scientific principles. The upcoming film series, 'CHIMERA' introduces a creature that embodies the creative imagination and scientific concepts. Historically, Chimera is a Greek mythical creature that combines various animal parts to create one being. Typically, these parts consist of a lion with the head of a goat on its back, with a tail that has a snake's head.

Within the upcoming film, 'CHIMERA,' the creature is an extraterrestrial that has been living among humans, hidden in plain sight. These creatures can mimic humans, adapt, and mutate whenever they are revealed or trapped. This essay discusses a comprehensive research methodology aimed at providing support for the pre-production development of the creature starring in 'CHIMERA.' The objective is to blend cinematic creativity with scientific concepts that guarantee that the film pushes boundaries that are essential for the developmental stage of the creature and creates an unparalleled visual experience in the world of VFX, Animation and CGI.

In this essay I will be exploring the concept of the Uncanny Valley which was introduced during the 1970's by Masahiro Mori, which explores the human emotion to human-like robots. I will also be looking into the characters of popular movies, more specifically, the antagonists as evil characters ensure great storytelling. From my research, I will be developing a character that embodies the Chimera, but also has the touch of cinema involved. How the character looks, sounds and acts is crucial when it comes to the finished product as it needs to be believable to the audience.

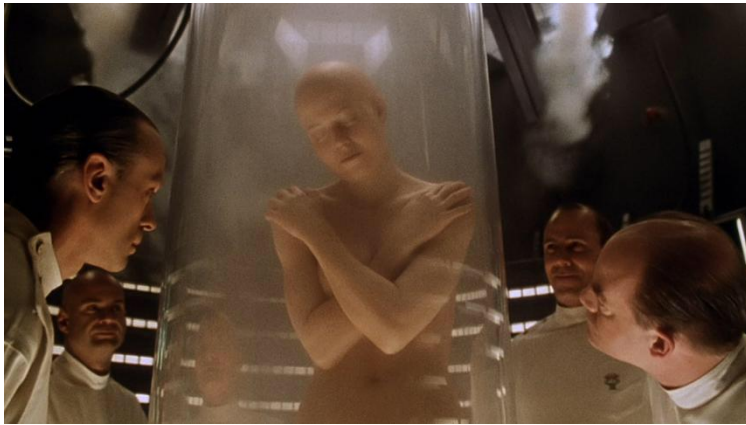
Chimera's Origins

The chimera is a long known Greek Mythology. The Chimera was one of a few children of Typhon and Echidna. Depicted as a fire breathing monster and having a lion's body with a goat's head in the middle and a dragon behind. It was said that Chimera destroyed and devastated Caria and Lycia (two districts of southwestern Asia) until she was slain by Bellerophon, who is known to be a Greek hero. Usually, the Chimera is said to look different, when it comes to art the Chimera is depicted as having a goat's head on its back and the tail ends with a serpent's head. In architecture, chimera means imaginary beast used in decoration. In Greek mythology, the Chimera is more than just a mythical creature. It holds a deep symbolic meaning. The fact that it's made up of different animal parts, like the lion, goat, and serpent, represents the unpredictable and chaotic aspects of the natural world. Each animal brings its own symbolism to the table. The lion represents strength and ferocity, the goat embodies wilderness and untamed nature, and the serpent signifies deceit and danger. It's fascinating how these different elements come together to create such a powerful symbol in Greek mythology.

Chimera-like Creatures in Film

The first part of my research will delve into successful creature designs created in the past by filmmakers. The first film I will be researching is 'Alien: Resurrection.'

Alien: Resurrection is the fourth instalment of the Alien franchise, which is a science fiction horror series. This film is set 200 years after the third film and the plot involves Ellen Ripley (the protagonist) being cloned, with an alien queen being removed from her body. Ripley kills herself in the third film as she was carrying the queen alien embryo inside of her. She is cloned back to life in the fourth, for the purpose of the military extracting the alien queen embryo. This cloning process results in the fusion of genetic material, blurring the lines between human and alien DNA.



The blending of these genetic elements is like the concept of Chimera, connecting both scientific concepts and mythology. Due to having the alien DNA inside her, the clone of Ellen Ripley has enhanced strength, reflexes and acidic blood, Ripley also possessed a hive-mind memory. The storyline within this film fits into the idea of a Chimera character, with the alien living inside of Ripley, even after exiting the body of the host. The Alien franchise is iconic and the design of the aliens themselves remain memorable even to this day, after being introduced back in 1979.



Voldemort in Harry Potter

One of the most iconic villains in the history of cinema is Voldemort. The Harry Potter franchise is based around the connection between Harry Potter (protagonist) and Voldemort (antagonist). From the beginning of the first Harry Potter film Voldemort is written as a powerful character, the other characters within this franchise do not utter his name, instead they refer to him as "he who shall not be named" or "the dark lord." Before we even see him, we know he holds a powerful energy that no one can match. Voldemort was a wizard that turned evil, he began his days at Hogwarts School as Tom Riddle, but he was different from the rest. Over time, his looks would deteriorate with every murder he committed and with each horcrux. A horcrux is parts of a wizard's soul that allows them to live on even after their physical body is no more, the only way to do this is to murder. Once he obtained all six horcruxes, he was unrecognizable. This character is an interesting one as it's almost like he was hiding his true face when he was Tom Riddle and was essentially Lord Voldemort the whole time, just disguised as a normal looking human.



Whilst Voldemort does not directly connect with the Chimera concept, there certainly are some similarities and comparisons. Using the horcruxes, he merges parts of his own soul, giving him a fragmented existence. Voldemort merging various parts of his soul mirrors the idea of Chimera where multiple creatures merge as one to create one being. This connection between the two might not be direct but exploring these parallels allows us to appreciate the complexity of Chimera.

Characters Portraying Human Behaviours

When characters accurately portray emotions and behaviours of humans, it allows the viewers to connect with them on a more intimate level. It can allow us to empathise with their experiences, struggles, and successes. One example of a film that showcases this is Pixar's "Inside Out." The characters in this film, such as Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust, embody various emotions that we all experience in our lives. Through their actions, expressions, and dialogue, they effectively convey the complexities of human emotions, making the audience feel a range of emotions themselves. Another film that showcases realistic human behaviours is "Her." The character of Samantha, an artificial intelligence, is designed to mimic human emotions and behaviours. Through her voice, tone, and conversations with the protagonist, she convincingly portrays emotions like love, curiosity, and vulnerability, challenging our perceptions of what it means to be human. These films demonstrate the power of well-developed characters that accurately mimic human emotions and behaviours. They allow us to explore our own emotions and experiences through their stories, fostering a deeper connection and understanding.

Importance of Design

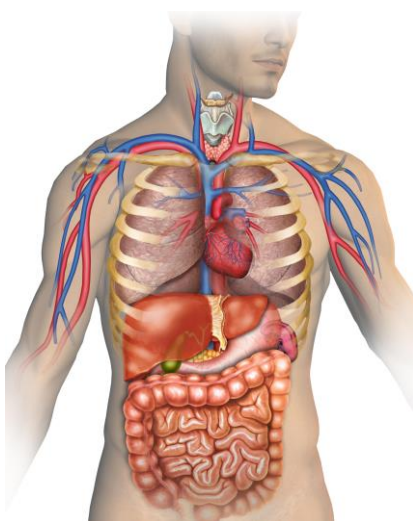
How certain characters are designed within film is very important. If a character has a good design, it will stand the test of time. Like the Alien franchise, which still has a recognisable creature more than 40 years after the release of the first film, I want my character to be recognisable to the 'CHIMERA' film. It needs to be something we haven't seen before and something that is unique to this development. Character design plays a crucial role in creating animated characters, the design is something the audience will see first, and a first impression always leaves a mark. The visual elements that have been designed need to be thought out thoroughly as the appearance and body language of a character contribute to what makes them believable and the impact it has on the audience. As previously stated, a memorable villain design enhances the storytelling and the memorability of the film. Great character design allows the audience to connect with the story and the characters and adds important context to the narrative.

CGI in Cinema

The use of computer-generated imagery dates to the 1960's, but there were some early instances before that. An example of this is Alfred Hitchcock's movie Vertigo in 1958, where 2D animated patterns were used to create certain effects.

The Human Anatomy

For me to create a character that is not human but has believable human-like qualities, it's important to know how the human anatomy works and how this could be manipulated in favour of my creature's transformation. The human anatomy is a complex system that comprises of multiple organs, tissues, muscles, blood vessels and more, all of this sustains the human life. The anatomy of a human is responsible for every movement and every reflex we make, so to blend in the creature must not set off any alarm bells when around humans. It needs to be so slick that it moves like a human, talks like a human, and even blinks like a human, every possibility will need to be considered.



I believe the best way to make my creature blend into humanity is to make it as close as possible to an actual human. For a creature to mimic the human anatomy, it would need to have a deep understanding of human biology. The creature needs to replicate the major

organ systems and their functions. It would need to have a nervous system that controls the bodily functions and processes information and a respiratory system for natural gasses. As this creature can adapt and to mutate, it's safe to assume it can shapeshift which means it can change the size and proportions of its body parts and could even change the functions of its organs.

Linguistic Mimicry

Linguistic mimicry is the act of imitating someone's accent, language patterns or their speech style. It involves mimicking the way someone talks. This ranges from their pronunciation to their vocabulary. This can be done intentionally or unintentionally. When it's done unintentionally it's to create a connection with another person, it creates familiarity.

The Uncanny Valley

The uncanny valley is a concept that was introduced during the 1970's by Masahiro Mori. The uncanny valley is a term he created to describe an observation he made. As robots become more humanlike in their appearance and mannerisms, they tend to become more appealing and give humans a sense of familiarity, but this is only up to a certain point. The uncanny valley represents a threshold at which our perception of humanlike robots becomes unsettling and leaves us with a sense of unease. The uncanny valley leaves humans with an eerie feeling towards robots. The observation of the uncanny valley is fascinating and within this film, it's almost reverse uncanny valley, where instead of a human-like robot being unsettling, it's a non-human creature that is trying to pass off as a human and trick the humans it encounters. Humans might sense that there's something not right about the creature, much like the uncanny valley and have a similar feeling of unease whilst in the presence of it.

Character Development

In keeping with the Chimera theme, the creature I envision will possess a unique combination of features. It will have the torso of a human man, the legs of a goat, and the head of a human man adorned with multiple snakes protruding from its back. This intriguing blend of human and animal attributes adds a touch of mystique to the character. What makes this creature even more captivating is its ability to conceal the snakes and goat legs when in the presence of humans. It possesses the same anatomy as humans, allowing it to seamlessly blend in with us. This ability adds an element of surprise and intrigue to the character's interactions with others. I chose to give the character the upper half of a human because it grants them the unique advantage of possessing a human-like anatomy. This means they have the intelligence and capacity for complex emotions. It opens a world of possibilities for exploring their motivations and inner struggles. The creature will have the trait of malevolence. Characters that possess a malevolent nature often have deeper and more interesting stories. Their evil tendencies create tension and conflict, making for compelling narratives. When this character reveals its true self, with the goat legs and the evil snakes on its back, it becomes the epitome of sinister. Similar to Voldemort, this character strikes fear into the hearts of everyone who crosses their path. The mere presence of this creature evokes a sense of dread and anticipation, adding a thrilling element to the

film. The goal of the character is to evoke the feeling of the uncanny valley amongst the humans. Although the character has everything going for it when it comes to passing as a human, at the end of the day, it's still an alien trying to pass as a human, and I would like to create a deliberate sense of unease around my creature, which I believe makes for a better viewing experience.

Plan For Character

With the idea of my character decided, to bring it to life I will begin by sketching out the design. This will showcase the characters features and all its unique characteristics. There are two versions of this creature, the version when it's not blending in with the humans and the version when it is blending in with the humans. Both designs will be similar, but both designs will serve as the visual guide throughout the process. Once the sketching is complete, I will move onto creating my character in Maya. I will start by creating a basic 3D model of the character, which will focus on the overall shape and proportions of it. I will also be adding distinctive facial features and clothing whilst doing this. Next, I will add texture once the character's model is complete, using Maya's UV mapping tools. This will bring the creature to life and give it a sense of realism. I will then start creating the skeleton within the character by rigging. This will give the character's joints and facial expressions movement. After the rigging is complete, it's time to animate the character using keyframes, this part will give the character personality. I will end by experimenting with various lighting techniques to achieve the desired dark look.

Conclusion

To sum up everything written in this essay, I began by looking into the origins of Chimera and the significance within the Greek culture. In doing so, gave me an understanding of what I will be basing my character off, the Chimera is a fierce creature that is made up of three different animals merged as one. By drawing inspiration from this mythical creature, this film introduces an extraterrestrial creature that is capable of mimicking humans and adapting to its surroundings. films that depict characters mimicking human emotions and behaviours offer a unique and captivating cinematic experience. Through the artful portrayal of relatable characters, such as those seen in films like "Inside Out" and "Her," audiences can connect on a deeper level and explore the complexities of human emotions. These films serve as a reminder of the power of storytelling and its ability to evoke genuine emotional responses. By accurately capturing the intricacies of human behaviour, these films not only entertain but also provide opportunities for self-reflection and empathy. As we continue to explore the boundaries of technology and storytelling, the depiction of characters with human-like emotions and behaviours will undoubtedly continue to be a compelling aspect of the cinematic landscape. The research methodology discussed in this essay aims to support the pre-production development of the creature, ensuring that it pushes boundaries and delivers and unparalleled visual experience through VFX, animation and CGI. By combining the origins of Chimera with cutting edge technology, the character in 'CHIMERA' will captivate the audience and create a memorable character in its cinematic universe. To summarise, I believe that when creating a fictional character, it is important to consider all the elements of design and why the character will be the way that is it.

Bibliography

boards.com. (2023). *Filmmaking 101: What is CGI in Movies and Animation?* | Boords. [online] Available at: https://boards.com/blog/filmmaking-101-what-is-cgi-in-movies-and-animation?fbclid=IwAR35Ai_xsB25F_Js1xpXUcmhCsr9ucQjjucH4dRp2zPKRs-93QpEKkp49Yc [Accessed 5 Dec. 2023].

Caballar, R.D. (2019). *What Is the Uncanny Valley?* [online] IEEE Spectrum. Available at: <https://spectrum.ieee.org/what-is-the-uncanny-valley>.

Kenhub. (n.d.). *Human anatomy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.kenhub.com/en/library/education/the-human-anatomy>.

Ratini, M. (2021). *How the Lungs and Respiratory System Work*. [online] WebMD. Available at: <https://www.webmd.com/lung/how-we-breathe>.

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2007). Chimera | Greek mythology. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chimera-Greek-mythology>.

www.theoi.com. (n.d.). *CHIMERA (Khimaira) - Three-Headed Monster of Greek Mythology*. [online] Available at: https://www.theoi.com/Ther/Khimaira.html?fbclid=IwAR2E02Q1f_0R8ugdV6hT_4QhJPjTtv8z3BQwfSsKrr-wXXYVv8wE11F5Lxo [Accessed 5 Dec. 2023].

www.britannica.com. (n.d.). *Chimera | Description & Story | Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chimera-Greek-mythology?fbclid=IwAR3nt1dY55oPfVjAobQgn4yFPz0FI1FPZFTyX9ji7ez5GVTmyqsrhL-XHwA> [Accessed 5 Dec. 2023].

www.theoi.com. (n.d.). *CHIMERA (Khimaira) - Three-Headed Monster of Greek Mythology*. [online] Available at:

https://www.theoi.com/Ther/Khimaira.html?fbclid=IwAR2E02Q1f_0R8uqdV6hT4QhJPjTtv8z3BQwfSsKrr-wXXYVv8wE11F5Lxo.