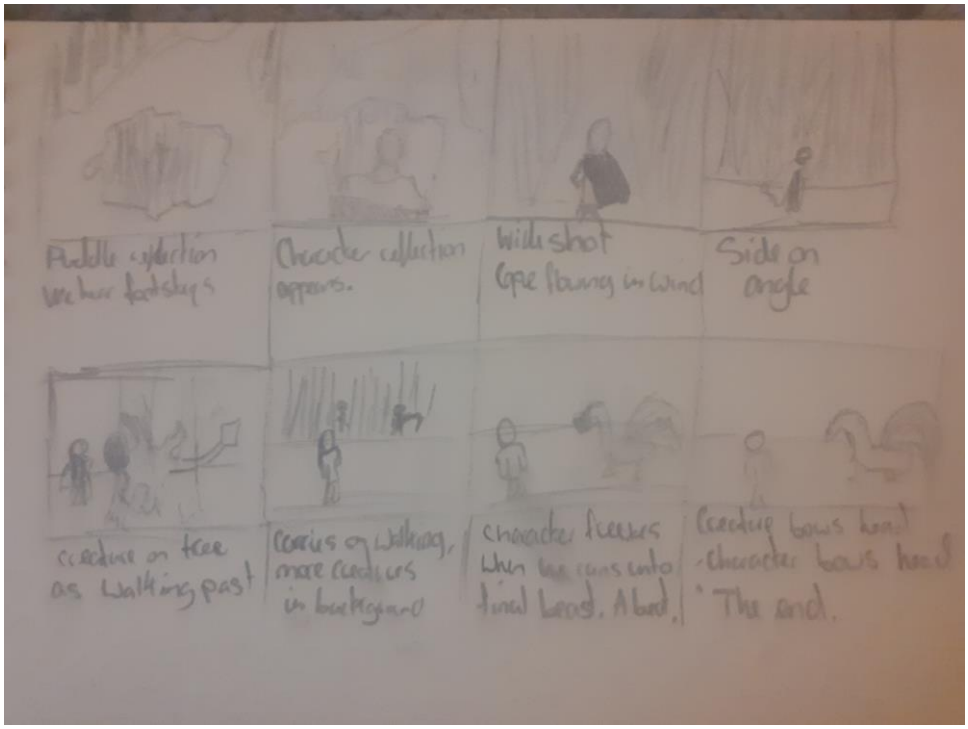
Pre-Production

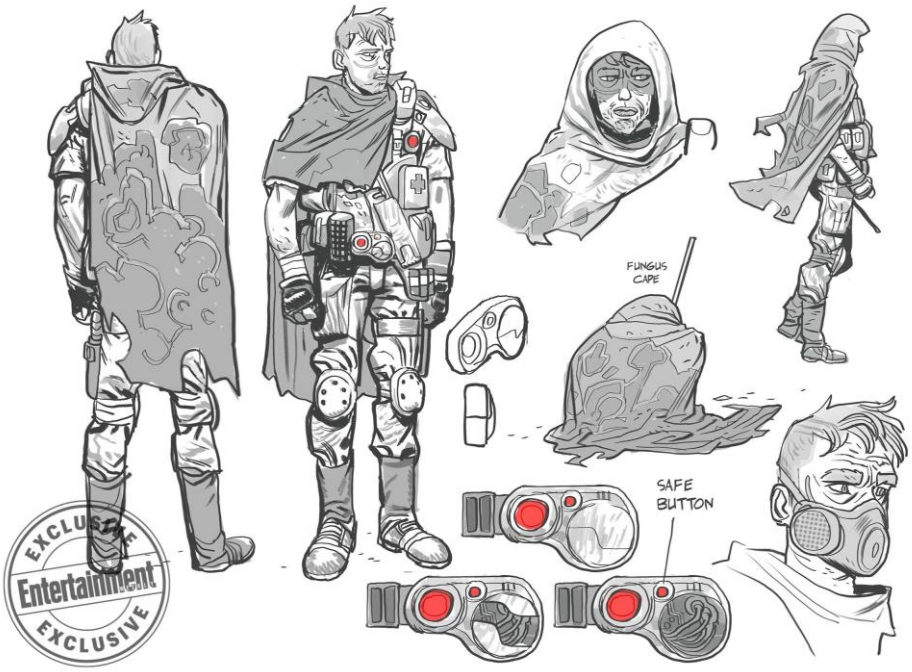
The objective of this assignment is to make a 2d animation that is 30 - 60 seconds long. I will be making the animation within Adobe After Effects utilizing the puppet tool and some stop-frame animations made within Photoshop.

Storyboard



Main Character

I wanted my main character to have a post-apocalyptic/ fantasy vibe to him. Specifically, I wanted him to have a cape or poncho which I could animate to be flowing in the wind by using the puppet tool. I opted to take a character of the internet and manipulate the image instead of drawing a character from scratch. Online I found a design/concept sheet of the main protagonist of a comic book called "oblivion song"[4].



The design sheet has the character drawn from multiple angles allowing me to have multiple angles for the entire animation.

Creature Design

I had an idea where a creature would hang on a tree in the foreground watching our protagonist walking through a woodland environment. This sketch is intended for that shot with it silhouetted in the foreground and could potentially animate the creature to move a bit more with it peering further around the tree.

Story Board

Production

Protagonist Walking Cycle

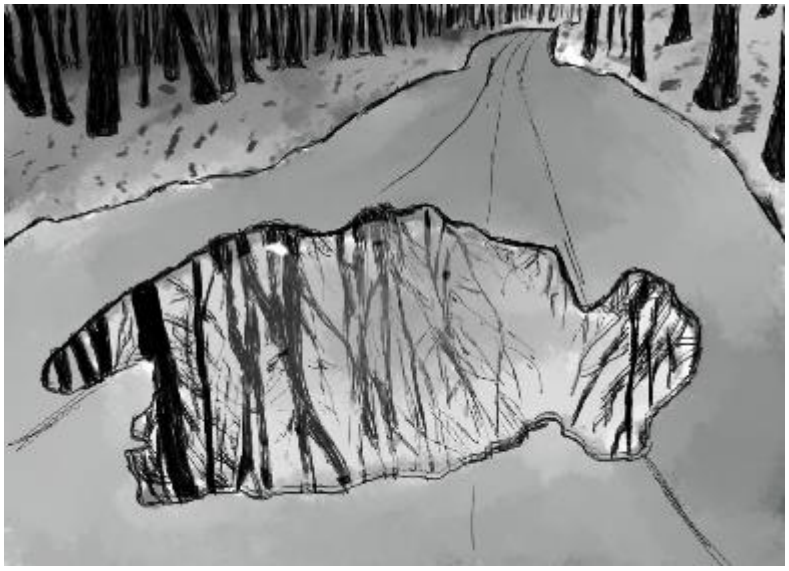
The first step for my protagonist walking cycle was to create an alpha channel. To do this I took the side-on image off the design sheet [4] and cut it out using the quick selection tool from within Photoshop.

I then separated each body part of the character and gave each their own layer. I did this so I could then match the body parts to a Gif of a walking cycle I found online. In order to do this, I opened an animation timeline within Photoshop, gave each frame its own group of body parts, and matched them to every frame of the walking cycle. I then exported the file as a PNG image sequence and imported them into the After effects workspace. Next I put them in order into the timeline, made each image last the amount time I wanted so that the walking was not too quick or slow. Once I had the walking sequence complete, I merged them into a complete pre-composition as too not take up too much space on my workspace. One problem I faced was getting that the positions of the body parts kept moving, this was because I was not creating a new group with every frame leading to the position of the limbs changing for all of them.

To make the motion of the character seem more natural I utilized the puppet tool within After Effects. I placed the pin along the cape and manipulated them over the timeline to mimic movement. I wanted the cape to look like it was being moved by the wind

Opening Shot

My idea for the opening shot was a puddle on the forest ground and as the opening credits roll over the reflection and shadow of our main protagonist make their way into frame. The first step was to draw the environment. I did this drawing digitally from within Photoshop using a graphics tablet and a selection of virtual brushes.



Once this was complete, I had to get another angle of the protagonist for it to come into frame. I took another image of the protagonist from the Oblivion Song comic, turned it black and white and placed it so that it looked like the reflection.[4]

I also added a shadow to make it more realistic and feel more authentic.

Title Shot

For the title I wanted the main character to be walking away from us with a different angle of the forest. I took a different angle from the character design sheet and used the puppet tool to make the cape flow in the wind. The image I took of the internet for the background [9] wasn't wide enough, so I used the spot healing tool and soft eraser brush to make it wide enough.

Background

For the background I used an image I found online.[1]

I found that once I brought it into After effects it was not long enough, so I put it in Photoshop and used a selection of the spot healing tool, soft eraser, and simple duplication to make it longer without having it be messy. The spot healing tool and soft eraser were used to make the blending cleaner and not noticeable.

Creatures

Throughout the animation I wanted different creatures to be visible in the backgrounds and foregrounds. The first one is the one showed earlier of the creature lurking on the tree.

I saved this design as a png and placed into After Effects Infront of the main character. I wanted to add some movement to the creature so I wanted to add a tail that could be moving creepily. Instead of altering the existing png of the creature I decided to draw a tail on its own and then attach it to the creature within aftereffects. Using the positioning technique within Aftereffects I attached the tail to the creature I made it move using the puppet tool. I want the movement to be quite fast and unpredictable, so I manipulated it in real time. One difficulty I faced was matching the movement and positioning of the tail to creature itself but with enough trial and error I managed to get them aligned. I then took the head of the creature and the tail to have another one of these creatures in the background with the head and tail poking out from the tree. I used the same method to again add movement to the tail.

To add more to the animation, I added two more creatures that I found online. One was a werewolf like creature that I placed in the background. I added slight movements to it to mimic breathing and make it more dynamic and interesting. This was also done with the puppet tool. I took into photoshop beforehand to remove the background and made it a Png before placing it into my workspace.[3]

The second creature was used for the ending, and I again found it online. [2]

This creature needed to be more majestic and beautiful than the others, so I decided on this drawing of a Griffin. I animated more elegant movements for this than the other creatures. I wanted the tail to moving softly and the wings to flowing in the wind Aswell. For this I added in the pins in select places and used key frames instead of Real time manipulation to make it smoother than the other creatures. I also needed the Griffin to bow its head for the end of the animation, so I again used key frames for that movement.

Post-production

Sound Design

The three sounds I wanted to have throughout were footsteps of the character walking. Some animal noises for the creatures and sound effects that would emphasize onscreen text. I went with different sounds that I found on Freesound.com.

I used a footsteps sound that was designed with idea of someone walking on mud [5]. A fox's mating call was used to add to the idea that the forest is full of many creatures [6] and finally a “dramatic hit” [6] to emphasize the title and credits. I used another creature noise which sounded like a whistling which I thought worked well with the final creature.[8]

References

Images:

Background - [1]CuteWallpaper.org, *Forest Background Drawing*. 2020.

Griffen - [2]*Mythical Creature Drawing*. 2021.

Werewolf - [3]C. Sekeris, *Werewolf design*. 2017.

Protagonist drawings - [4]L. De Felici, *Oblivion Song Cover*. 2020.

Forest entrance - [9]X. Zervou, *Forest entrance*. 2013.

Sounds:

Fox mating call - [5]*Fox Mating Call*. Bpianoholic, 2020.

Dramatic Hit - [6]*Dramatic Hit*. qubodup, 2014.

Footsteps - [7]*Footsteps, Muddy (Sony) » Footsteps, Light Mud, A.wav*. InspectorJ, 2015.

Griffin noise - [8]*Deep Sound.wav*. vanishedillusion, 2020.

Images, Sounds and Moving Images used: https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/2103261_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/ElMsjf_K--9MqvLwQgjGYrYBBMggdx0Z56KjQ9F1UEXGhg?e=cCb3qE

Animation: https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/2103261_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Eo5dGmD0VHtJohGAzs_iCLMBElVRcDl8c3h6JoEnhNLIGA?e=8lN93A