

Art Direction Julia Bronowska

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Art Direction for the Animated Short

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BA Animation

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Navigating my submission folder

Art Direction Book01.pdf - write up and visual work

Old ideas.pdf - all old ideas and work no longer relevant but part of my process

Draft.mp4 - 2D Animation draft

Animatic.mp4 - 2D Animation, developed version

Chosen idea and Brief

Setting

A large barren world ravaged by a permanent electrical storm that sweeps across an infinite desert. Only vague refinements of history remain, like headstones to a long-lost time destroyed years ago. I want the world to feel sombre and lost and yet somehow peaceful and beautiful in its own right. This will be balanced by the Powerful storm that the protagonist needs to fight through.

Goals and themes

The focuses for this animation will be the following themes; travelling, struggle, desperation and fear

The main premise of this animation is a hero reaching a destination. The journey is perilous and built to challenge the hero to the every limit of their capabilities. But they are compelled to their purpose, for they are the last person left to complete it.

The story of this hero is a lonely one and a desperate one. They are not motivated by heroic moral duty or love for their world, though that can of course be a factor. Their main motivator is the fact that there's nothing left. There's nothing left for them to live for so they may as well die trying to fix their dying world. They feel like they have no choice.

History of the world

Long ago, those of faith would travel to the Last God's resting place, A temple atop the tallest mountain. The god who resided there would offer guidance to those of faith. This goddess was a god of heroes and prosperity known as Eros.

The world was peaceful but very much alive until a new god awoke from the centre of the earth. Tumult, the ultimate being of rage and destruction ate their way out of the nectar of the earth, endangered by the tranquillity above.

They rose up to challenge the Last God, resulting in an earth breaking war. After centuries locked in battle, Eros weakened this ancient evil and trapped it in her temple. However, unable to leave without risking releasing it, she too has been trapped, forced to hold back the creature of chaos all alone.

In the present day, wandering souls seek out the temple of the hero god. Thousands have died on the journey to reach her and yet their faith remained strong. There is very little left in this world to believe in other than her. The flame of hope that she may one day wake up and save them again is a dwindling one. But her shining beacon on the edge of the world is all the abandoned souls have ever known, and all they will ever have. They have no other choice but to believe in her, lest the world fall silent permanently.

Research

Artists and mood board

Once I had a solid idea of what the main themes, characters and story would be I delved into the research part of my project. To help in my design process, I gathered inspirational images for the hero, environment and temple design. I also looked at specific artists as listed in my book.

I also used this as an opportunity to create a colour pallet that would be repeated in the animation. I have decided that the whole animation will be in grayscale except for select items and character futures that will have bright colours. The main character will be in blue robes to make them really stand out against the world. They will also be the only blue thing in the animation to make the audience associate blue with the hero.

For the storm, I decided upon black clouds and purple lighting to drown out the colours of the hero. The darkness will increase the sense of dread as we move closer to the temple and the purple will contradict the sand if I decide to make it yellow. The purple also repeats in the chaos beast's design, linking them to chaotic aspects of the world such as the storm.

Studying existing animations

Rise, league of legends

This animated music video is depicting the climb to the finals in league of legends E-sports

The transitions and gradual incline of the retain was interesting to me and would greatly help in my transition later.

The animation begins with the protagonist trudging through an empty, flat desert. A flair and blur effect is put over the camera to indicate struggle and simulate the heat of the desert.

As the animation continues, the land he travels gradually becomes more of a sharp incline until he is climbing a sheer cliff. This contrast between the flat ground and the mountain

makes the scale of this journey feel all that more intimidatingly, something I aim to replicate in my work.

The transitions between shots are creative and dramatic. Lighting flashes are used as a camera transition and leaping movements of the main character to physically "jump " into the next frame. I made a note of these transitions and developed my own with similar impact.

Kung Fu Panda

The sweeping shot from the temple, down to the bottom of the stairs was perfect for me. I learned the colours were never static and would tilt upwards slightly when showing off the scale of the temple to make it seem bigger. I learned a lot from the timing and speed of which the camera moved and will apply it in my own animation later.

Storyboards

Once I had a basic idea to work from, I began sketching out storyboards. At this stage I was thinking about how I can portray the story and really bring to life that feeling of lonely desperation in the character. I also kept camera work and the effect lighting has on a scene in mind, applying my knowledge where possible.

Script writing

For the script, I decided to have the narrator be The Chaos creature. The audience won't know shoes speaking to them until the creature is shown at the very end and it creates this exciting reveal moment where you realise what has been calling out to the hero this whole time.

The creature's voice will be deep and growly but not in an angry way. The way they speak is animalistic, as if their mouth is not designed to form words but rather snarl. Despite this, they speak calmly with a hint of mischievous malevolence to it.

Though recording the audio was not possible right now, I have a voice actor for the role. I will be collaborating with another student to bring The Chaos beast to life

Concept Art

From early on I knew I wanted to have a very stylized and simple design to the characters, focusing on shape and silhouette. My references from earlier reflect this.

Character Design

What makes a character visually appealing? To answer this question, I have collected some protagonists from games I feel share a similar style that I want to archive for my animation and analysed their designs.

From here I watched multiple videos and researched what makes good character design e.g. shape, expression and learned from it. By using deliberate shapes and line choices to influence the audience's perception of each character.

The Last God

The God looks perfect human except for her glowing eyes and extraordinary strength. Her design consists of mainly round features in her face and eyes, making her seem comforting and approachable, a dramatic contrast to the creature's facial features. She is strong and tall, creating a sense of power but also protection. These reflect her character,

The chaos Creature

Their design was to be a direct contradiction to God's form. They are huge and monstrous, with sharp eyes and imposing sharp features. They are animalistic yet unnatural in nature, their body an amalgamation of unsettling body parts.

The Hero

The hero was designed to be a lovable creature but vague. They have no intense personality or visible goal other than their journey. They are focused on their purpose with no deeper feelings, as if they have lost their very soul to the desert sands. All that's left is their surface emotions and the need to complete their goal.

Title card

After researching various educational videos and artists' processes I learned how to create depth in a scene using grey scale. From the techniques I learned, I painted various scenes depicting the looming temple in the desert. Their setting isn't as accurate as described earlier but I was more concerned with creating a well-balanced and interesting composition for the title card. I kept the style blurry and airbrushed, intended to create a dreamy effect.

The structures are enormous, the size amplified by how small the figure is in the foreground. I intended to create a sense of megalophobia and splendour, making the structures seem unfathomably old and imposing.

Animation Breakdown

The animatic was essential for me to figure out timing and put my ideas for lighting and shot design into practice. Below I have listed the four main sections of the animation, I will talk about their importance and why I staged them the way I did.

The Goal

I wanted the very first shot to be a peaceful pan up towards the temple, gentle clouds brushing past it. This presents the goal right away to the audience, the peaceful, lonely nature of this structure is also a harsh contrast to the next scene.

The Storm

The storm is intent to be terrifying which is why I set up a wide shot of the hero battling through it. This makes the hero seem small and insignificant to the raging winds. This depicts the main theme of struggle and perseverance clearly, as the hero forces their way through the sand.

The climb

This is an important scene as all the swords in the sand suggest, many have tried before the hero, and many have failed. It creates a sense of hopelessness, but the hero continues. They are exhausted but they press on. The quiet and lack of stormy winds here also created a sense of eerily impending doom, like something bad will happen, a lull in the storm.

The Reveal

Finally, the reveal of The God and The Creature in the temple. The lighting in this scene is extremely important. It starts with the God, bathed in light and a symbol of perseverance and faith despite her struggle, she is then drowned out by a shadowy figure slipping out of the darkness as the creature peers out of the darkness. This shows the drastic contrast between the two and presents an impossible challenge to the hero.

Ending it here makes the audience wonder what awaits the hero and what this means to the world. Will the hero slay the creature, or will they release both good and evil back into the world?

Further plans

Using all my prep work, I will be able to work on a rough 3d draft to test out camera movements and physics. Cloth and simulation engine will be a big part of this project. Considering the abundance of sand, wing and cloth. I have already researched these to some extent but in the next half of my project I aim to put this research to practice.

Fully rigged models for all 3 characters will need to be made and the main structures in the animation will need to be modelled. Features such as the electrical storm and glowing eyes can be achieved using After Effects and editing at the end.

Bibliography

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3D Research

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