

Jaymie Im
Art SMP 2015 2016
Flight of Fancy
SMP Mentors: Sue Johnson and Carrie Patterson

Animation is magical. Every time I create a character and make it move, I create a new life. I am awestruck by how I can take a drawing, a simple visual idea in my head, and make it move. As an animator, I choose whether or not something is realistic, scrawny, superhuman, or weird. My goal is to tell an engaging story that moves without words. By gearing my artistic process through the medium of animation, I able to create a body of work that explores ideas of anxiety, depression, time, and finally the world of childhood fantasy.

I looked into ways to express my emotion through my animation. My first animated work was a three-projection piece that animated the emotion of stress and depression in a form of eyes with text playing in the middle. This animation is builds off of one of my works from earlier this year called *Fear Of Judgment*. *Fear of Judgment* expresses my anxiety and fear of people's opinion about my work. I painted red and black words on two canvases without much preconceived planning. I wanted the painting to express my emotions and if I planned the marks it would not be as powerful. This aspect of the painting has been used again in this animation. The words in the middle of the two eyes are words I associated with the two emotions: anxiety and depression. The words and eyes are moving in a way that I thought represented the emotion. The words are chosen in a similar way to *Fear of Judgment* but I used more control in their placement. The three projection loops together into a never ending cycle because for me anxiety and depression come hand in hand. When I get stressed I also become depressed and vice versa.

This led to my animation called *Dreaming*, which is also depicting my feelings and thoughts about anxiety. *Dreaming* is a combination of hand drawn animation and video to create a surreal animated dream. The animation begins with a clock setting a time and place of the

story. Then we see the main character with featureless figure in a space resembling a classroom. Someone hands the figure an exam sheet, which tells the audience that the figure is taking an exam. Everything is normal until the figure looks up at the clock and sees that a significant amount of time passed and it was much closer to the end of the exam period. When the figure looks back at the exam, it changes into gibberish, which concerns the dreamer. Then we hear the class bell ringing which signals the end of class. Then the figure's world starts to change and act strange. He keeps hearing and seeing shadow on the people's laughing face in the corner of his eyes. When he looks straight at them, they look normal. When he walks out of the classroom heading to an unknown destination, he keeps seeing shadowy people laughing at him until he reaches to a glowing exist. However, the light has disappeared, revealing a dark room full of shadowy figures laughing. This causes the dreamer to wakes up in their room and realizing that it was all a dream.

Dreaming is based on stress dreams. From my experience, stress dreams have a standard sequence. It first starts out as a normal dream then certain things start that make no sense, which leads to the point of the dream that wakes you up in your room. The idea came from watching Dali's film collaboration called *Destino*. There were a lot of strange transformations happening and the progression of the animation resembled a dream where time backs up and does something else.

During this semester, I was also thinking about my future and thinking back when the future was not such a concerning concept. This led to me reminiscing on the little things I did in my childhood. One of them is playing pretend and daydreaming about magical adventures. The memories of the past led me to using animation to tell a story about childhood. The goal of the animation is to have people think back to childhood, which may give the viewer a new little

spark of energy and wonder. I hope it ignites the more positive mindset that children generally have. To do this, I wanted to create a story that reminds people of their childhood.

The third animation that I created: *Flight of Fancy*, is a wordless and voiceless animation, which is similar to *Dreaming*. It uses the character's body and facial expression, and the setting to communicate the story. The only sound produced from the animation is the music created by Crosby Cofod (a fellow student of SMCM). The story is based on watching my niece grow and the memory of my own childhood. Both of us, like many children, play a typical game of pretend, which I used as a reference. The way we form a fictional world is by pretending the objects in our environment are something else such as a cat toy being a fishing rod or stairs being a steep mountain ledge. The main character of the animation is a child that likes stories of heroes and their magical companions. I kept the child's gender and race ambiguous and left it to audience interpretation.

The story begins with the child playing with their toys in the backyard. Everything is fine until a gust of wind took the child's hat away from them and flew into the mouth of a tiny dragon. The dragon flies away from the child into the sky, leaving the child behind in the yard. As the child thought about how to get the hat back, the toy swordsman and dragon came to life and grows life size. They offer their assistance, which the child happily accepts. They chase the small dragon through the sky until it flew into a cave in the mountains. They land at a ledge at the entrance of the cave, and walk inside leaving the dragon outside to wait. As the two walk through the cave, they encounter a room with piles of treasure, and then the child sees the hat on top of a pile of treasure. Without being careful, the child walks up closer to the hat when suddenly a barbarian comes from behind the pile to attack the child. Luckily, the swordsman got the child out of the way in time but he is then pulled into a battle with the barbarian. The two

fight until the swordsman knocks the barbarian down with the barbarian's sword flying away. As the swordsman points his sword at the barbarian proudly, the child is climbing up the pile of treasure to take back the hat. As soon as the child touches the hat, everything goes back to normal. A tree replaces the pile of treasure, and the cave they were in is actually a figment of the child's imagination. When the child looks at the hat, it has bite marks and a green stain. From seeing this, the child smiles and puts it back on top of the head.

One of the resources that I employed to make my characters stronger was Jean Piaget's four stages of child development. The first stage is Sensory-motor, which is a time when children at the age of 0 to 2 learn about the world through action. This is why we see babies chewing and grabbing things, and moving everywhere. They are using their sensory and motor to learn about the space around them. The next stage is preoperational, which happen from age 2 to age 7. One trait that appears during this time is the "appearance of the semiotic function, that is the representational, or symbolic function."¹ This includes language, mental imagery, imitation, and drawing. This stage prepares the child for the next stage, Concrete operational. This stage is when children at ages 7 to 11 starts to think more logically but to objects rather than theoretical problems. For example they start to understand mathematical transformation, and classifying objects and placing them in order. What they cannot do to work on hypotheses and to make some relationship between the hypothesis and conclusion. The final stage, Formal Operational, is when children 11 to 15, when they start to create hypotheses and connect them to a conclusion. The stage I am mostly referring in *Flight of Fancy* is preoperational period. I did this by making the story about a young child and centering it on their imaginary adventure. The imaginary adventure is essentially the child playing pretend and imitating what they have observed from

¹ Richard I. Evans. *Jean Piaget: The Man and His Ideas*. Translated by Eleanor Duckworth (New York: E. P. Dutton &, 1973), 23

what they know about the swordsman, dragons, and barbarian. Also when a child pretends an object is something else (for example of a cat toy becoming a fishing rod) is an example of symbolic function.

To become an animator of stories, one has to master a large pool of technical skills as well as drawing acumen. In my SMP I focused on learning many new technical skills in animation that are not taught in courses at St. Mary's College of Maryland. One of the skills that I spent the most time on is understanding movement. Animators need an understanding of how humans and animals move. If they do not know how they move then they need have references or go observe movement. I looked at a lot of references and did a lot observation when drawing movements. One resource I found useful is the two volumes of Muybridge's *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*. Muybridge has made many series of photo stills of people and animals in motion. They vary from simple or to more specific movements such as a woman climbing into a hammock. Along with referencing Muybridge, I also used the Internet for human form references. The Internet has tutorials on how to create certain movements or additional resources. However, both of these resources can only get you so far when it comes to observing movement from different angles. By attending the Historic Swordsmanship club lessons, I was able to observe specific fighting moves and ask for certain poses that would help me understand how to draw people in certain positions. This allowed me to ask for certain movements or to look at them in different angles. They also taught me some of their poses.

In order to apply the new technical skills that I was learning to storytelling, I researched I the following artists: Lynd Ward, Eyvind Earle, and Hayao Miyazaki. These artists helped me understand how to tell a story and gave me ideas of what I could do in my animation. Although

we are from different times and different cultures, I found that as storytellers we have some things in common.

Ward is known for his wordless woodcut graphic novels, which tell an elaborate story. Art Spiegelman said in the introduction of *Lynd Ward*, “communicating was central to Ward’s developing aesthetic.”² The way he communicates with the audience is through a series of black and white prints that depicts a scene. The “black and white allowed Ward to take advantage of the association of darkness and light”³, which allows him to communicate in place of words. For example, in *God’s Man* there is a scene where the main character, the artist, is in despair and looking for salvation in a church. By placing the artist in the bottom left corner and making him small compared to the rest of the church, he created a hopeless and solemn tone. This tone is further supported by the lack of light in the room except for the light from the window. However, the small amount of light also gives a small hint of hope, which alludes to the fact that religion is his last hope in finding his happiness. This is one of the ways Ward tells a story without words.

Ward’s work is similar to my animation in that I am depicting without words or voice.

Ward’s goal in his wordless novel is to:

“...present the necessary amount of information, which would flow evenly on each page so the reader’s imagination could follow the pictures and weave the various aspects of plot, theme, and personal interpretation into a cohesive whole.”⁴

This goal is part of my goal for my animation: *Flight of Fancy*. For example, for the scene when the child sees the dragon catch the hat, I made him look surprised for the initial shock of the event. This is shown through the widening of the eyes and the open mouth. Then the child’s expression changes to a bright smile, which is a sign that something good has happened. This is

² Lynd Ward. *Lynd Ward: God’s Man, Madman’s Drum, Wild Pilgrimage*. Edited by Art Spiegelman (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2010), x

³ David A. Beronä. *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels* (New York: Abrams, 2008), 42

⁴ *ibid*

similar to a part in *God's Man* when the artist paints the portrait of the mysterious man that gave him the paintbrush, which happens from 134-136. In the 134th image we see the artist and the mysterious figure at an isolated space. The readers can see that the artist is very focused on setting up his easel and palette, while the mysterious figure is sitting. The next image, the reader sees that the mysterious figure has finally revealed to the artist his face, which the reader's cannot see and the artist has not yet noticed. It is the 136th image when the readers learn about the face of the mysterious man is shocking or frightening, which shows on the artist facial expression. The artist's face has enlarged darkened eyes, angular features, and more shadows on his face, which makes him look terrifying and grim. However, along with using the character's body and environment, I also use music to tell a story, which is different from Ward's work.

Another trait we both share is our work environment when creating. Our work was done in our respective homes. Ward created his woodcut prints at home with the help of his wife. I just need a working computer, and a drawing tablet. Both of our mediums are accessible to many people and are available as products to a large audience. Wordless graphic novels popularity started after World War I because of the "dynamic period of artistic experimentation in Europe."⁵ Wordless woodcut prints became popular once the woodcut style came back, the introduction to silent film, the mediums of the cartoons, and most importantly when Frans Masereel created his own wordless novel.⁶ Animation is the most popular media in my time. Shows, films, commercial and video games are created with a form of animation such as 3D computer animation or Claymation.

Another artist I researched is Eyvind Earle, who is well known for making backgrounds for Disney such as *Sleeping Beauty*. When he stopped working with Disney, he went back to his

⁵ David A. Beronä. *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels*,13

⁶ Beronä, *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels*, 12

original career in being a painter. He focused on landscape because of his appreciation to the stupendous infinity of nature. His early paintings were realistic, it was not until he looked at artists like Van Gogh, Rockwell, and O'Keeffe that his painting started to look more fanatical and vivid. From looking at his work, I learned how I could use the background to help tell a story, even though that is not what his paintings were meant to do. The composition of the landscape and the use of color created a story for the landscape, which can be seen in his work called *Factory (1986)*. In this etching, the watercolor quality of the atmosphere of the industrial area makes it look cold and abandon except for the two human figures near the left bottom corner. From looking at this image, I created a story for the two human figures. For example, they could be looking for something and they happened to stumble upon an abandoned factory during their search. The appearance and unintentional narrative aspect of Earle's work is something that I looked into for my animation.

My style is similar to Earle's style in that it is simple and brightly colored. The scene of the mountain before the dragon soar into it looks a little similar to *Beneath a Silent Sky*. *Beneath a Silent Sky* is a landscape painting of a desert and the rock formation. This image is similar to my mountain backdrop because of the atmospheric blue sky and the simplistic shape of the mountain. The sky in my mountain background has a similar gradation effect where the sky is lightest when closer to the horizon and the darkest at the top of the image. The mountain is a made up of simple shapes like the rock formation in *Beneath A Silent Sky*. Along with having a similar appearance, the background also has an element of storytelling in my animation. *Flight of Fancy*'s background tells the audience the setting of the story and the tone. However, unlike Earle, most of the storytelling in my animation is told through the characters, rather than the

background. Furthermore the background and the way I have designed it is intentional to help place characters in a specific space.

An artist that I researched that does animation is the Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. He creates films that are based on stories and his interest. He animates because he wants to build “truly unique imaginary world, tossing in characters I like, and then creating a complete drama using them.”⁷ (17) Miyazaki’s animation are aimed at all ages and gender but his goal for his animation is to “send a message of cheer to all those wandering aimlessly through life.”⁸ (51) His work encompasses both Ward and Earle’s ideas that I have mentioned, into a great fantastical animation. It has a similar technique in telling a story through the visual and it has the fantastical background that also help with making the narrative clear.

Miyazaki work is similar to my animation in subject matter and goal. His well-known film *Spirited Away* is closely related to *Flight of Fancy*. *Spirited Away* is about a girl, Chihiro Ogino, who is moving to a new home and a new place to her disapproval. However, their trip to their new home gets interrupted when her father makes a wrong turn into what appears to be an abandoned amusement park. As they looked around, the smell of food from an empty but operational restaurant lures Chihiro’s parents. When Chihiro went off to look around on her own, she found out from a boy, Haku, that they should have never entered this place. Unfortunately, Chihiro was too late; because her parents ate the food that did not belong to them in a greedy manner for which they were turn into pigs and the entrance of the “amusement park” is now across a large body of water that suddenly appeared. The movie centers on Chihiro experience in the spirit world and working in a bathhouse for spirits. This journey changed Chihiro into a more independent strong child with more compassion.

⁷ Hayao Miyazaki. *Starting Point: 1979-1996*. Translated by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt (San Francisco: VIZ Media, LLC, 2009), 17

⁸ Miyazaki, *Starting Point: 1979-1996*, 51

Flight of Fancy and *Spirited Away*'s plot is similar in that they are about a quest. The child in my animation gets lured into his world of imagination in order to find his hat. This is similar to Chihiro's quest to save her family and Haku. By succeeding in their quest, the two different characters finally get to back to the real world. Once they enter the real world, there is a question of whether or not the journey they went on was real. The animations are similar in how the animation appears childish but has a deeper meaning. For my animation, it is about remembering childhood and being back in a world of wonder. *Spirited Away* is about growing up and embracing change without losing your identity. *Flight of Fancy* is about bringing back wonder and the optimism. With wonder and optimism, we can continue life with passion. Miyazaki's stories are more what I want to achieve in my animation because the stories are colorful, and the world and the characters are just as colorful.

I animate because it allows me to put life into my ideas. For the first animation, I imagined my work twitching and crying, so when I saw it come to life I was extremely happy. However, I want to do something more with animation this year, which lead me to the idea of creating stories rather than a simple animation. This thought influenced me to create *Dreaming*. This animation combines my emotions and thoughts of psychology with a story. I then found out that I enjoy telling a story however; I was done with the idea of stress and anxiety, which led me to the creation of *Flight of Fancy*. All the animations I have created this year show my process from conceptual to narrative. After this year, I have come to enjoy storytelling through animation. It allows me to tell a story without words. Writing is not my strong suit and I sometimes find it stressful because it is associated with a lot of anxiety and fears from my childhood. I was horrible at writing when I was young and I had to live a good chunk of my life with tutors, and teachers that gave me a very hard time. Most of the bad memories of childhood

are associated with writing. This is why I find animation so much better because it allows me to tell a story without words.

Teaching myself how to animate has been challenging. My friend, Gigie, gave me a small tutorial on how animations work when I was figuring out the best way to animate. Basically, animation is a series of images that when played in order, the subject of the image moves. The more images the animation has, the smoother it looks but if there are too many images it may look slow. Animating can be done with paper and a light box; however, I learned to animate with Photoshop. Photoshop makes it easier to create an animation because of two functions: layers and the timeline. Layers are literally layers on the canvas in Photoshop. It's useful because I can control the opacity of the layers, which helps draw the next movement. Timeline allows me to preview the movement before rendering the animation into a video. As I kept creating more animations, I slowly learned more techniques in-creating well-planned movements. Professor Billy Friebele gave me another piece of advice in animating, which is to start with the key frames. Key frames are like the beginning, middle and the end of the animation. The best example of this is animating a bouncing ball. The first key frame is the starting frame of the whole animation, which is the ball entering the scene in mid-air. The part where the ball hits the ground is a second key frame. Then the last part of the animation becomes the final keyframe. When you play the keyframes together it looks like a ball bouncing but the movement is not realistic. To achieve realism, the animator starts to add frames. For most of my SMP year, I have been focusing on the technical aspects of animation, making the frames move and appear realistic is one part of the process.

In conclusion, I want to tell a story that my inner child and adult self would enjoy. I want to continue to create stories that move. I would like to become a storyteller like Miyazaki

because he creates unique characters in a beautifully crafted world. Even as an adult, I am still in awe of his mastery of his craft. I want to do the same with my stories and animation.

Annotated Bibliography

Beronä, David A. *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels*. New York: Abrams, 2008.

This book talks about different artist who has created wordless novels. This book allows me to see how stories are told without words in the past. I focused on the section that talks about Lynd Ward and his graphic novels. This gave me information of his well-known stories such as *God's Man* and *Madman's Drum*. Looking at how Ward tells a story, gave me insight on how I should frame scenes in a way that makes the visual story flow.

Loomis, Andrew. *Fun with a Pencil*. New York: Viking Press, 1939.

This is a fun and easy to read book where Loomis gives you many step-by-step process of drawing cartoon-humans. He talks to you as if he is there trying to teach you and he shows me that in a crudely drawn circle can become a fine looking face. I used it as reference for my animation when drawing the characters. It also helped me learn how to draw different angles of the human body despite the cartoon style of the Loomis drawings.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994.

McCloud talks in depth on the mechanics and structure of comics. The book explains how the sequence of the images and the transition can give a story a certain mood or information. It a fun book to read and the comic styles helps me understand his explanation. This information can be applied to my animation to create a more interesting flow in the story.

McGuire, Richard. *Here*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2014.

The book tells a story of a specific space and during different period. It combines the present with the past when telling the readers the past of that specific space. Along with showing a different way of telling a story, it also uses different combinations of color to specify the time period the story is at. These color combination helps me figure out better color combination for the animation to create certain tone and mood.

Muybridge, Eadweard. *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, vol. 1. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

This book depicts the movement of male and female bodies. The introduction talks about Eadweard Muybridge and how he came to be known for his series of photographs. I used this volume for reference with animating a human walking, and running. It also helped me understand how the human body moves.

Muybridge, Eadweard. *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, vol. 3. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

This book depicts the movement of different animals. I mostly looked at series of images of birds in flight. I want to use the images to figure out how the dragon in my animation would move when flying. I used combination of different birds to achieve the movement that I thought worked well.

Spiegelman, Art. *MetaMaus*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011.

MetaMaus is a collection of interviews about his Maus series and himself that was compiled by the author himself. This book gave me information about Spiegelman's reasoning for creating *Maus* and the process. This allows me to look at what he has done in order to create his stories and records of his process. It also sparks inspiration by seeing his sketches of scenes and notes of what he wants to do next.

Ward, Lynd. *Lynd Ward: God's Man, Madman's Drum, Wild Pilgrimage*. Edited by Art Spiegelman. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2010.

This book has three of Ward's wordless novels *God's Man*, *Madman's Drum*, and *Wild Pilgrimage*. There is some information about Ward in Spiegelman's introduction to the three novels. I have read all three stories and decipher each image to understand what is happening. I used Beronā's *Wordless Books: The Original Graphic Novels* to act as an answer key after I finished looking at Ward's novels. This book is used in my comparative paper both for information about Ward and for the novels. I also use it as reference for framing scenes.

Miyazaki, Hayao. *Starting Point: 1979-1996*. Translated by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. San Francisco: VIZ Media, LLC, 2009.

Starting Point is a book that is composed of all written works and notes by Miyazaki and interview transcripts. It also talks about him and where his ideas and interest came from and how they are manifested in his animations. This book showed me his thought process when creating his stories for the animation and how he animates to create emotion. It is an inspirational book, which gave me new ideas for stories and new ways of think about the world around me. It was also gave me a new appreciation for the animator.

Evans, Richard I. *Jean Piaget: The Man and His Ideas*. Translated by Eleanor Duckworth. New York: E. P. Dutton &, 1973.

This book talks about all the theories and studies Jean Piaget has done through a form of an interview. I focused on the chapter that talks about the stages of cognitive development. I gained a better understanding of the four different stages. I used this to further understand on why kids always play pretend.