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ENT 4499
12/18/22

Culmination Reflection

Throughout my culmination project I learned a lot about not only my craft, but also everything that goes into creating and building a project like this from the ground up. The process of my culmination was very stressful but I learned a lot from it and also am happy with what I produced even though it was not what I originally set out to make. My original idea had to be cut down due to time and lack of resources that were needed to create the film I had in mind. All that said, again, I am still happy to have come out of this with the product I ended up with.

The pre production process was originally the most stressful. As someone who does not have a background in scenery and props or design it was hard for me to build the world for a script I had written. My original script to me was more of a concept and message than a well thought out world. Having a designer would have helped speed up the process for sure when it came to pre production, as well as alleviate some of the stress of building the set. That is what I would say took the longest for the sole reason that I am not a designer (again, even though it was for a script I had written). That is probably the first thing I would do differently when attempting this project again.

There were certain things when it came to building the set that I knew I wanted for sure. Since I had made stop motion characters before, I knew I wanted to build the characters. I also had an idea of what I wanted them to look like which helped when it came to building them. In a previous stop motion film, I was unable to make the characters walk by lifting their feet which was something I knew I wanted to try in this film but I wasn't sure how. I decided I would put small magnets on the bottoms of the main characters' feet and make the floor of the set a magnetic white board. This way the main character is able to stand on their own and for some frames balance on one foot which helps when trying to animate them walking. I also knew I wanted to build the set out of foam core white boards because they are light and easy to cut or hot glue together. The issue I ran into with that was warping when I would paint them.

Production only beat pre production in being the most stressful because it felt like it was never getting done. I learned through this project how life gets in the way of filming and will ruin plans; this taught me how to adjust or re-write my schedule to complete a project and meet a deadline. I filmed the first scene with Diane and then had to film the rest by myself due to Covid. This was quicker than waiting the two weeks and then filming together again. When I originally told Professor Ryoya and Professor Nikki filming may have had to get pushed again they informed me I may have to take an incomplete for the class if filming did not at least start that week.

Rather than accept the incomplete I still attempted to get the project done. Filming itself did not take long but only because I had to cut out so much of my script to meet the deadline.

Once I had a new idea in mind it became easier to film by myself. The entire time I was filming I had to keep editing in mind. I didn't create a shot list for this version of the story because part of me had to sort of make it up as I went based on how much time I felt I had to film. When I began editing I would even take note of what pick up shots I needed or what scenes needed to be added in order to make the story make sense. It was important that I had these things because it's a film with no dialogue so the visuals have to tell the story for themselves.

The editing process was my favorite and what I looked forward to the most. I love editing. For this project I chose to edit on Adobe Premiere. I've used Premiere before to edit videos using greenscreen and used it one other time before to edit a stop motion. Because of technical issues I had on my laptop, I went into the labs at school to edit for about five to six hours every day of the week the labs were open. I chose to edit on Premiere instead of Avid because it's what I am more comfortable with and knew I would work a lot quicker with it.

Although I had used this program for the last seven years, I still learned a lot of new things while editing this stop motion like nesting my clips or how to do certain effects. An issue I ran into when keying the green screen was some frames reflected the light on the green screen differently than others so when I would key the green screen for the whole sequence it would mess up on 3 frames. I was able to fix this for a couple of the scenes but in the future I will most likely give each individual picture its own ultra key effect before exporting it as one video. This way I won't run into this issue again.

I was lucky enough to have completed the film before my presentation date which was changed to accommodate the issues I ran into this semester with this project. I am so grateful for that especially. I sent a rough cut to Professor Ryoya, my culmination advisor, and was told I would be able to present! The weekend before my presentation date I got sick which did not matter as much for the presentation itself because it was on zoom but I was self conscious about my energy during the presentation. I was happy to find out the professors enjoyed my film, and even more grateful and happy when finding out my presentation got selected. This is sort of when me being sick started to matter more; selected presentations were happening the same day as the in person poster session and I was unable to be there in person for both. Luckily enough I was not the only person who was unable to attend in person and therefore a zoom meeting was set up for those of us who had to present remotely. This presentation for me went a lot better than the first one even though it was to a larger audience. I watched back my first presentation and realized how slow I spoke so I tried to speed things up for the second presentation.

I'm grateful for everything I have learned at City Tech, all the professors I have met and learned from, as well as all the students I have met, learned from, and made lasting friendships with. It feels as though my time in the Entertainment Technology program has been leading up to culmination and now that it's over not only do I feel a sense of relief but also an emptiness where the university stood in my year to year routine. It's scary to think of what's to come but also exciting.