Sketches of sentience

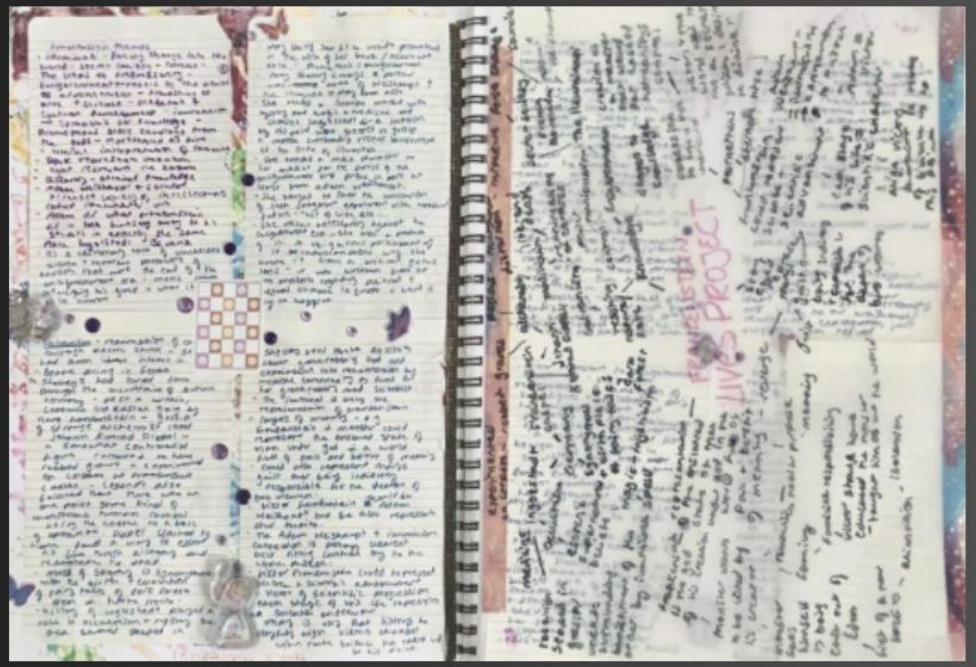
Frankenstein Lives Project
Name: Jessica Boyle
Student ID: 21001902
Email: j.boyle0220221@arts.ac.uk
Date: 25.01.2024
My Blog: Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION – UAL (arts.ac.uk)

DISCLAIMER:

- Any image that is not labeled with a name is created by me. Names labelled by images are by other team members.
- My commentary and critical appraisal are weaved throughout this PDF

Brain storming

Brain dump



Mind-map

To begin our project, I started by jotting down my thoughts in my sketchbook. I used markers and writing to capture all my knowledge of the Frankenstein novel. I was able to identify the key elements in the narrative, such as hybridisation, creation, anxieties related to advancements in technology, and the loss of innocence.

During our discussion, we discovered a fascinating theme - The Illuminati and the French Enlightenment - which Mary Shelley's work reflected. Symbolising the tension in the digital age. To align with the group's vision of the narrative's overall vibe, I created a mood board. Our aim was to reflect Shelley's gothic writing style and the Victorian era in which the novel was written.

Mood-board

- Dark academia
- Gothic
- Victorian
- Rustic
- Cold neutrals
- Obscure shapes
- Surreal

Our storyline

Logline: Written by Gul Rizvi

An inventor with failed prototypes finally comes close to creating the perfect creature- that is just as paranoid of failing and turning out evil as the creator. Explores the creator's uncertainties about bringing the creature to life.

Synopsis: Written by Gul Rizvi

At the stroke of midnight on a curious night, a bizarre creature in the works comes to life while his creator is away. The creature, intelligent and emotional, grabs onto his creators hesitations and fears his own existence. Yet a part of him wishes to experience life and be accepted by his creator. With the return of the creator, the creature turns back into a sketch, but leaves behind a remnant of his sentience- leaving the creator with a revelation.

Key concepts:

- fear of advancements in technology and the future for man-kind
- Ideas being left behind - wasted potential?
- What we create is a reflection of ourselves

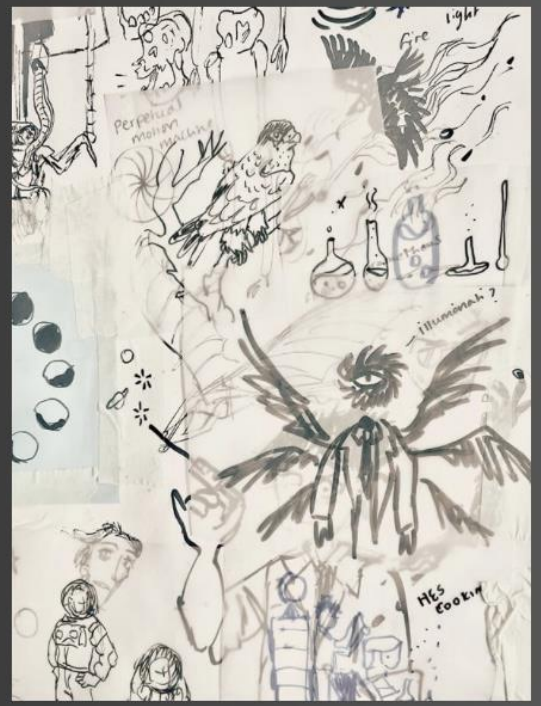
- open with workshop/ desk pan shot. Page of the sketchbook open with the creature. the window cracked open. Burnt out candles, a compass, diagrams of ornithopter and vetruvian man. Feathers. Embryos. All of this has to be set up now for later events so we will keep this scattered around the sketchbook. Also have danger / unapproved signs scattered around, perhaps stamped on like some diagrams. Wind blows and we focus on the sketchbook
- Stroke of midnight. Lightning strikes. Set up for something magical happening,(sound design here for the animatic) candle light turns magical, sparkles and lights and stuff circle around the creature design on the sketchbook and it starts to comes to life.
- Cut to sketchbook side shot, a clawed hand dramatically pops out of the pages. We see a silhouette of it. Cut to wall, large creature with claws and wings in the shadows.
- Cut back to the sketchbook. Small creature standing on top of the pages. We could have a flickering lamp just to give it the spotlight for a second.
- Creature looks around and twists. Like a really big twist. This will be our first way to show it can change shapes. Finds compass and twists back. Crawls to it like a beetle maybe?? And touches the compass glass. Has a lightbulb moment and learns to use its eyes.
- Cut the drawer scene. Too much work too much moving around. Instead we can show off the creatures abilities to a. Either be a buglike thing and crawl around the compass. Like poke the compass with bug legs/antenna. Compass is on the desk next to the sketchbook to prevent movement.
- Discovers its ability to be a compass. Does the eye thing. Light bulb moment. Compass needle spins too fast, gets dizzy and falls over on the sketchbook
- Sees other failed diagrams, discovers its squishiness, tries to make itself into different objects, this can be like a fun little montage I guess. Spend more time on this scene, its having fun with its body and newly discovered abilities. End scene with it rolling around and knocking itself on a jar of embryo like bat embryo or something and next to it is the figure of the vetruvian man. Tries to morph into a humanoid figure.
- As it attempts morphing it sees dead birds and broken beings. Make these creepy and grotesque. Could be hidden behind the jar and as it grows it finds more dangerous things. Alludes to the fact that the world is not all good something something.
- Falls back, tension rises, sees its own shadow, gets more violent and afraid, knocks something off in attempt to escape and make itself as small as possible.
- In its attempt to stop becoming a monstrous humanoid creature, it accidentally starts flying. We set up that the wings weren't so functional before.
- Have a moment of realisation that it's finally flying, like flip wings ONLY ONCE OR TWICE. Right that moment, door opens, lighting strikes, a glimpse of a shadow of the creature flying as the inventor enters.
- Scribbles something. Blows candle. Leaves door closing sound effect here. Creature blinks through the sketchbook as the sparks of the candle leave a little magic behind

Script: Written by Gul Rizvi

Visualisation sketches

I doodled some ideas and determined the features of the creature's final design. Initially, the inventor would experience the creature coming to life through the sketchbook pages. We abandoned the idea to create a greater sense of mystery and missed potential. This momentary glimpse of life before being sucked back into the confines of the book also symbolises hope. Whether the creature will be free to live or only exist in the sketchbook remains a mystery.

Sketchbook pages

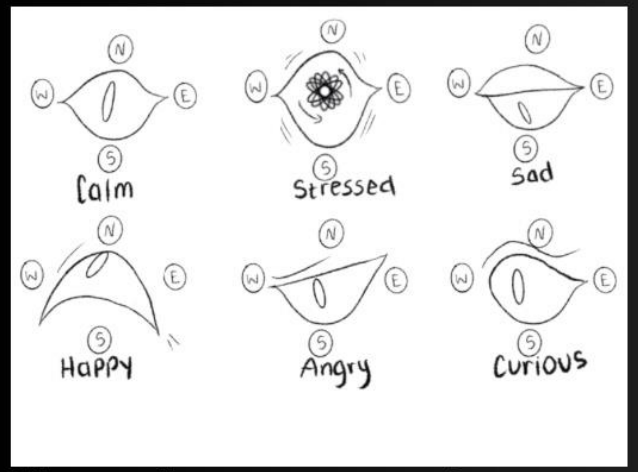


I found the concept of adding wings to the creature to be fascinating, as it reflects the story of Icarus. The tale represents human beings' fascination with discovery and innovation. The tragedy of Icarus also mirrors the inventor's anxiety that his creation will suffer the same fate as his previous prototypes, as well as the apprehension that humanity has about the potential advancements of technology in the future.

Character design development

Character design mood-board

After brainstorming ideas for the appearance of our creature, I created a mood board to capture the inspirations we discussed. This helped us identify the key features we wanted to incorporate in the design. Afterwards, we all sketched our ideas to experiment with different shapes and colours. We agreed that using the compass as the creature's eye was a fitting concept since it symbolises navigation, with the pupil serving as the pointer to indicate different directions displayed around the eye.



How the eye works

My initial creature designs

My concept art for the Inventor

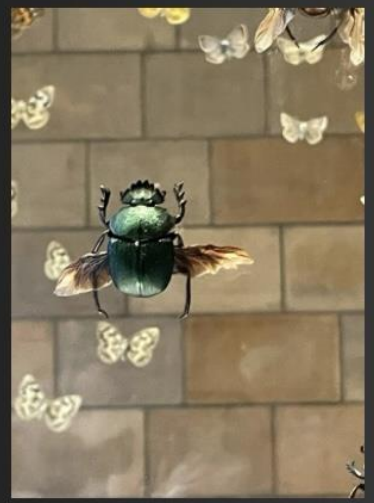
We found inspiration in Leonardo da Vinci's aviation sketchbook work. He created intricate drawings of mechanical bird-winged gliders, driven by his dream of flying.

Bugs inspired us with their unique body formations.

I also created concept art for the inventor, but we cut him out in the last version to create more ambiguity. Only the silhouette of the inventor is shown as he walks in at the end.

Recordings from group trip to the Natural History Museum

To expand our visual knowledge and gain insights into unique species, we paid a visit to The Natural History Museum. We drew inspiration for our creature designs from insects and other flying creatures like bats and birds. During our visit, I sketched various specimens to gain a deeper understanding of their physical attributes and to further explore interesting characteristics that I had not noticed before, such as the structure of bird wings and the delicate formation of bug limbs.



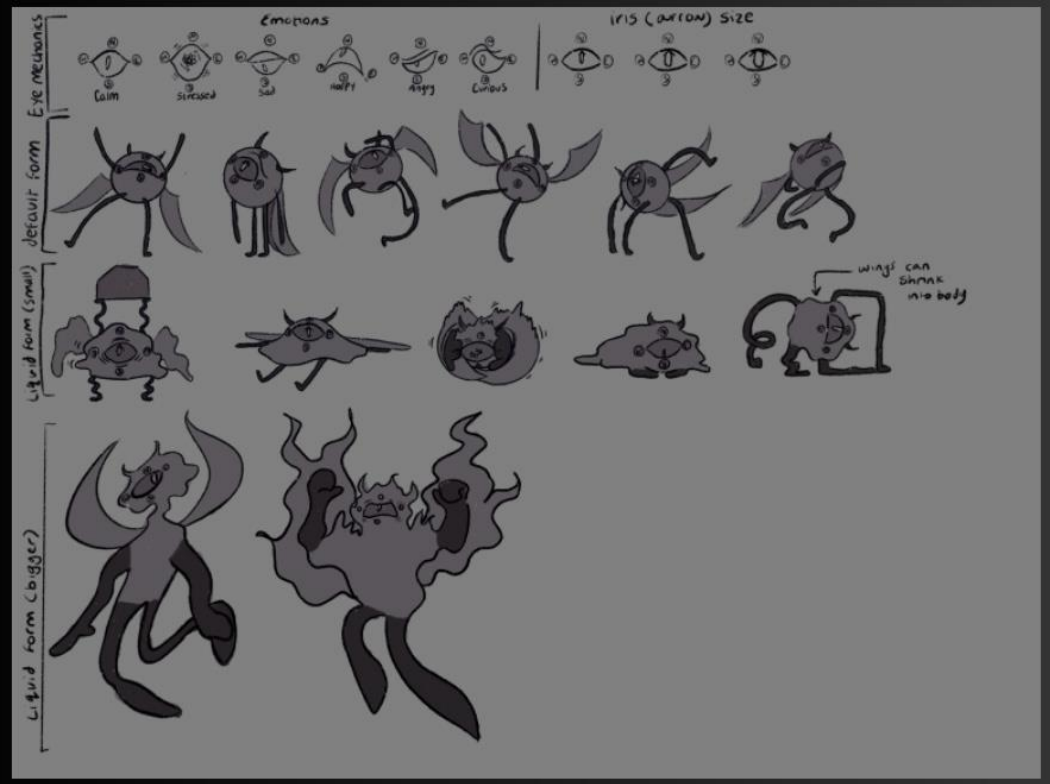
Sketchbook pages of observations

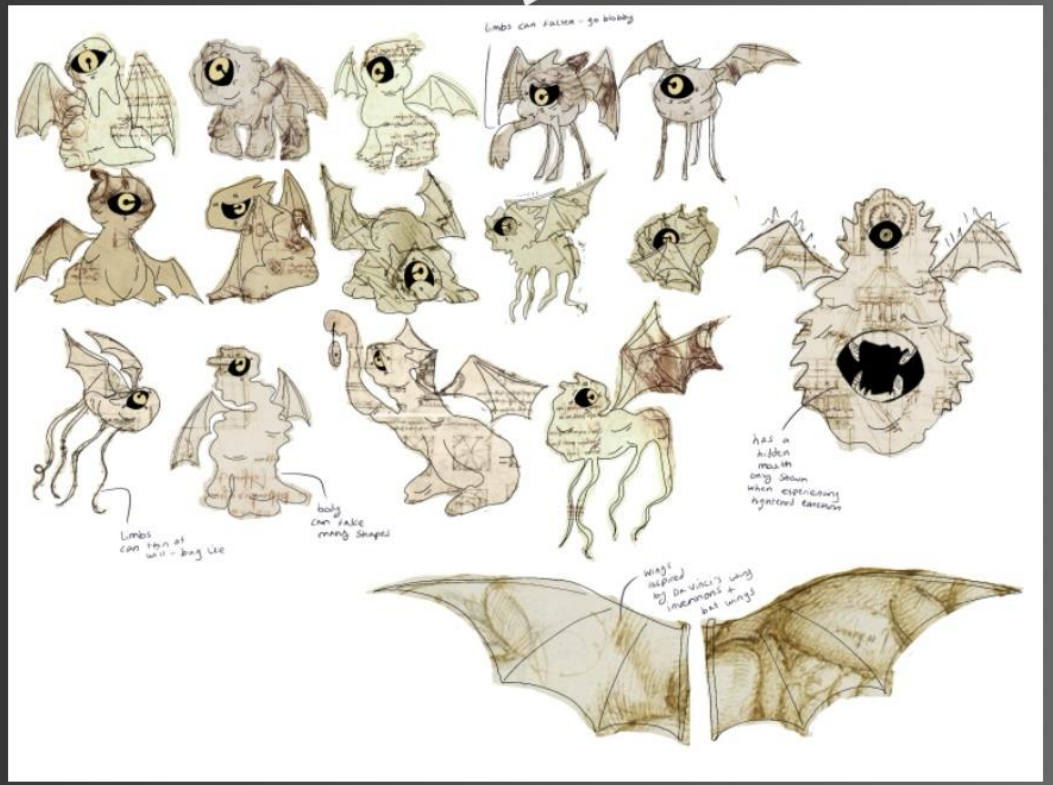
Refinements from feedback

We decided to simplify our designs to better convey our idea and make it easier to animate. To meet the needs of the inventor's invention, we made the creature transform like liquid, adapting to the unpredictable weather of the Arctic. After experimenting with assorted colours, we decided to layer sketches over the character to give it a more sketchbook-like feel and distinguish it has not yet been a part of the world. This helps to differentiate what is real and what is unreal.

Earlier color palette

How the creature morphs

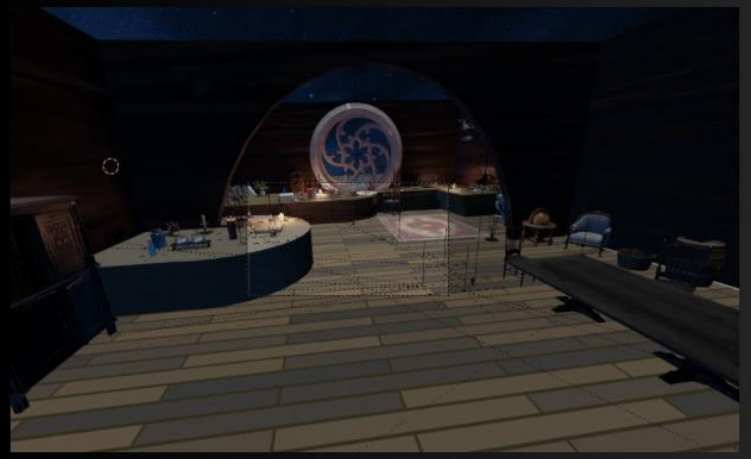




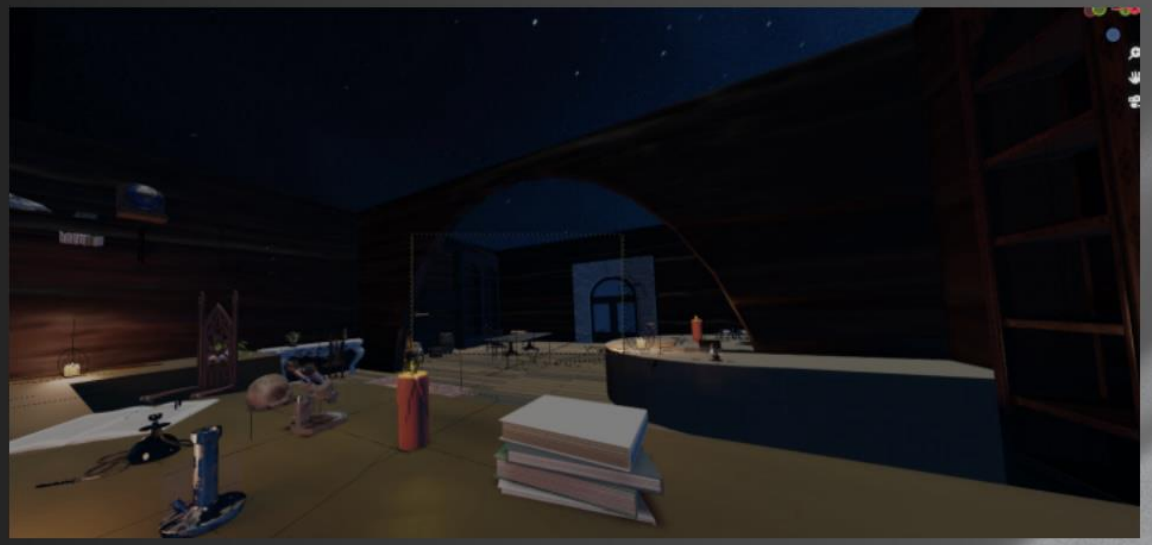
Improved character design of creature

3D model from Toolkit

To ensure consistency in our backgrounds, I chose to create a basic layout of the workshop. This proved to be quite helpful as it allowed us to select more dynamic and interesting camera angles, resulting in the ability to experiment with various camera shots. Additionally, this was an excellent opportunity for me to become more familiar with 3D software, specifically Blender. Using the 3D toolkit also taught me about combining 2D animation with 3D space, thus enabling me to expand my skills in this area.



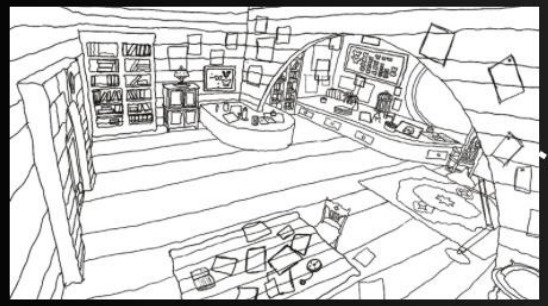
Screenshots of my 3D model



Birds eye view

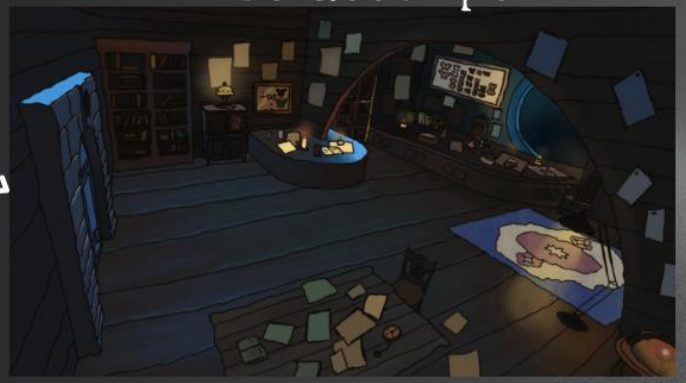
Initial sketch

Refinements from feedback



Lineart

First attempt



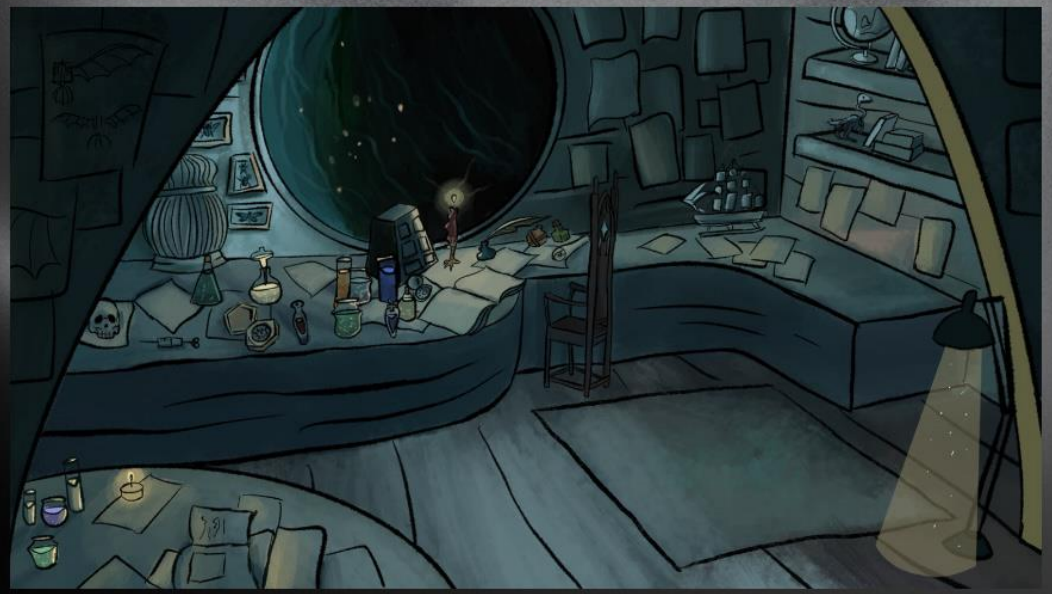
Third attempt

Final design

Using my 3D model, we were able to capture fun camera angles. We struggled to determine the appropriate background style to pair with the animation. After exploring an array of styles, none of them seemed to suit the style we were aiming for. Eventually, I decided to alter the textures to make them more paper-like and gave them a soft blue watercolour effect. This approach gave the animation a more magical and atmospheric feel, complemented by the softness of the candlelight. The colours became more coherent, and the shadows and highlights blended in balance.

We aimed to create a contrast between the character and the background. The background has a 3D look, while the character has a 2D paper-like appearance, to distinguish between the real world and the mind of the inventor.

More backgrounds that I did



Using same line weight, texturised brushes and color palette to keep consistency

Desk plan + Prop design

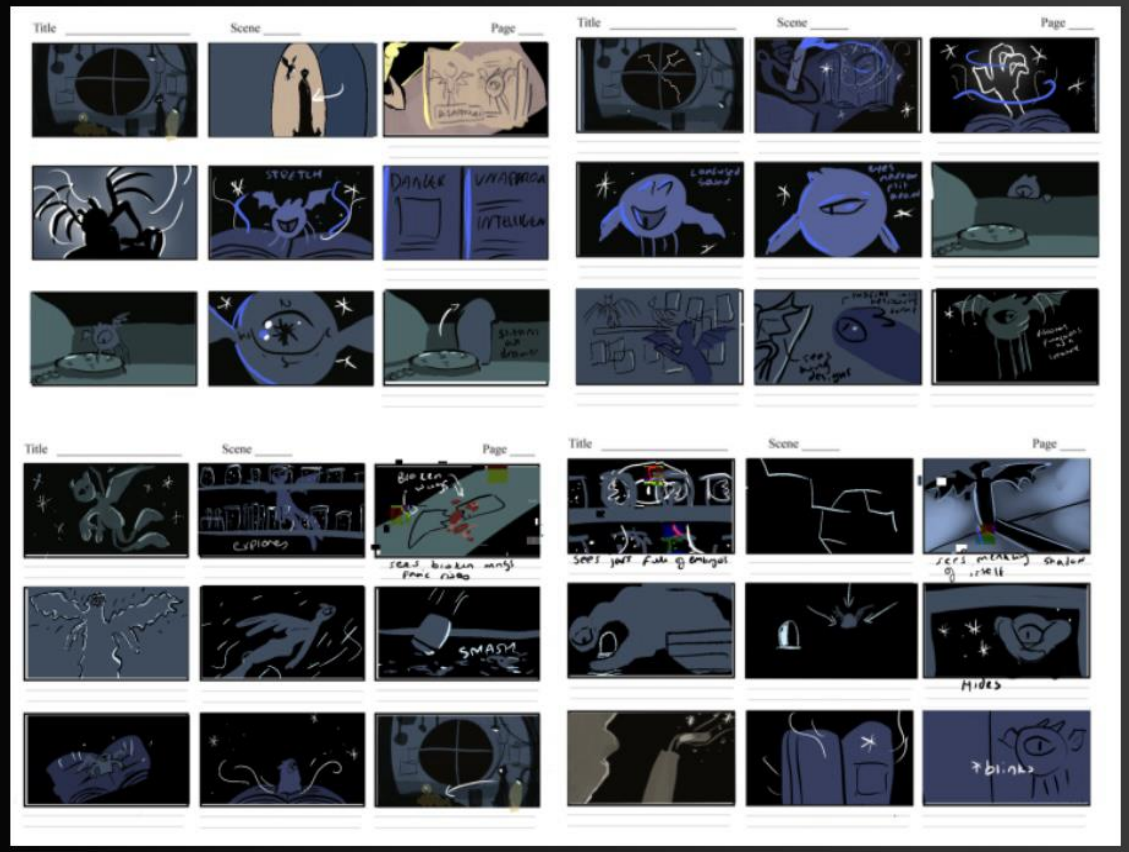
Desk concept art

The desk played a crucial role as it was the primary location where the creature spent most of its time. While designing the desk, we ensured that all the essential elements were placed at a reachable distance for the creature, considering how it would move around the desk to access each area.

Desk plan sketch

Early prop designs

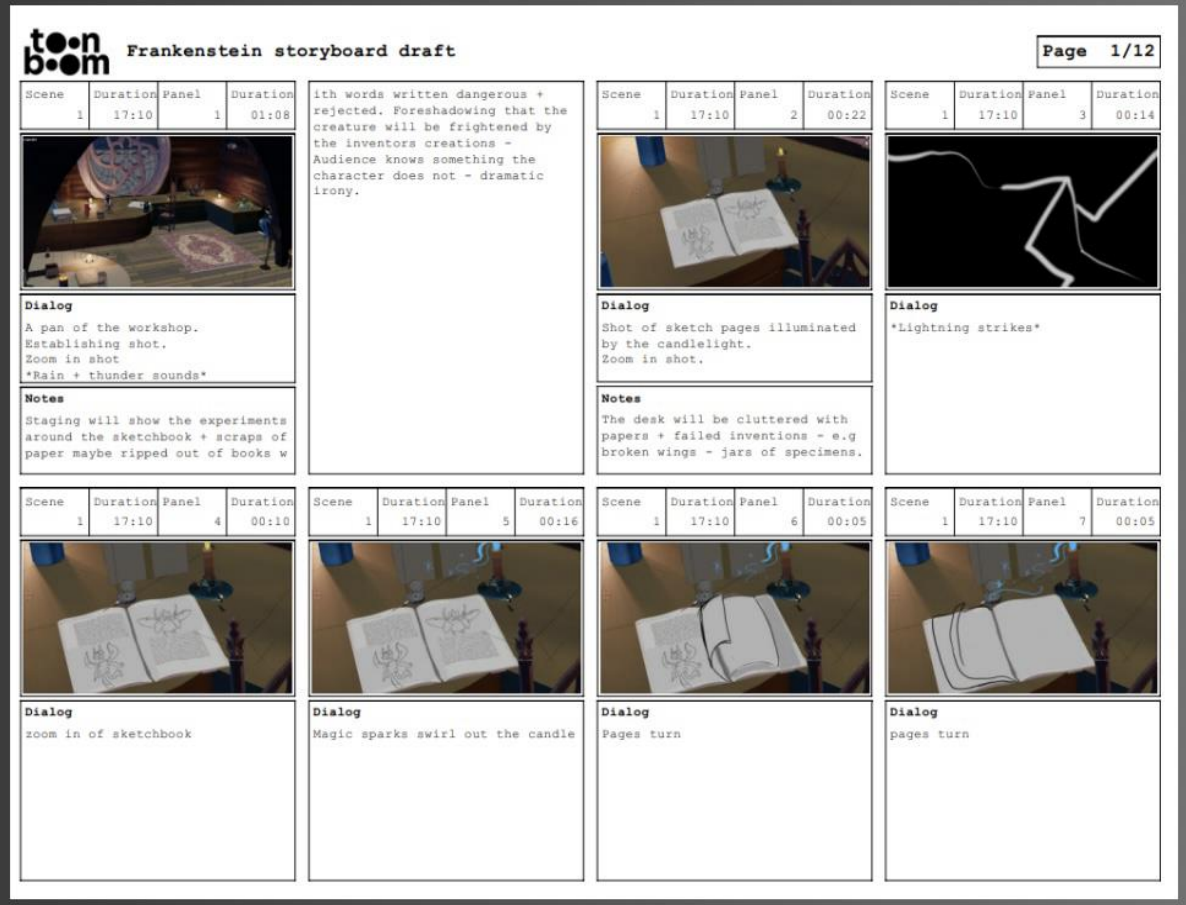
Thumbnails, style frames & storyboard



Thumbnails/style frames of early storyboard

During the initial stages of creating the storyboard, Gul Rizvi drafted the first version while I created the style frames to establish the colour palette and overall mood. Once the storyboard was finalised, I refined it and moved on to Storyboard Pro. I utilised my 3D model as a guide for the backgrounds to determine how many backgrounds were required and distributed the work between the three of us.

A small snippet of the storyboard I worked on



Full storyboard on MyBlog:

[Frankenstein Lives Project – Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION (arts.ac.uk)]

Animatic + sound design

Animatic (Sound design by me, Gul Rizvi & Diogo Da Silva Craviero):

https://youtu.be/ZgjWr0PFZFg?feature=shared

We faced timing challenges creating the animatic and had to make multiple versions before settling on a 50-second pace. Despite this, we persevered, showed patience, and succeeded in creating a successful animatic.

Animation process

Some animatic shots compared to my final shots:

Before animation style change : https://youtu.be/8YWD9O9yYvg?feature=shared

After: https://youtu.be/wkK3WNrwaks?feature=shared

My weakness was attempting to match my teammates' animation style. To set apart the creature from the real world, we all decided to animate on threes (3s) to create a "choppy" effect. Due to our varying styles, I adjusted my animation style to match my other teammates, which helped me create a coherent character animation, letting my animations be looser and sketchier.

Overlay: texturised character with my sketches

Final outcome

Final outcome: Sound by me, Gul Rizvi, Diogo Da Silva Craveiro

Youtube: https://youtu.be/TGDucXabi3o?feature=shared

MyBlog: Frankenstein Lives Project – Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION (arts.ac.uk)

My shots: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSKUwceI5ZJIvg__q1s__jg6Tt322knhX&feature=shared

Conclusion

In conclusion, I was proficient in managing my workload effectively. I made sure to reflect on my progress each week and had regular check-ins with my group to ensure we were on the same page from post-production to filmmaking. I actively listened to feedback and made necessary adjustments to my concept designs to ensure satisfaction for both me and my group. I have convincing evidence of in-depth thinking about character formations, demonstrated through clear diagrams and highlighting my progression through various style experiments. Additionally, I did a great job compositing my shots, creating eye-catching transitions and special effects in After Effects, such as displaying my skills through flickering candle lights and particle effects.

I made use of every workshop and tutorial available to me in order to expand my knowledge and apply what I learned to our project. As an example, I utilized the 3D toolkit to create a model that helped us with the design of our project's background.

There are areas in which I could improve, such as experimenting more with 3D. I enjoyed incorporating it into this project. I did struggle with the animation style used in the film. I am more accustomed to working in twos (2s), so working with a fresh style was a challenge for me. Nonetheless, it helped me expand my skills and become more familiar with different animation styles. We also could have explored the creature's ability to take up more interesting shapes in our final animation. For instance, I designed bigger formations for when it feels intense emotions. We also forgot to add subtitles, which would have been good.

As a team, we collaborate effectively and are receptive to providing and receiving feedback. However, we procrastinated a bit and could have been more organised with our interim presentations. This may have been due to the winter break and the fact that we were all away during the holidays, which caused a setback in our project progress. We did an excellent job of dividing the work and ensuring everyone had the opportunity to contribute their ideas. Moving forward, I plan to prioritise better and establish realistic timelines to ensure we meet our group deadlines.

How I have met learning outcomes:

Knowledge & Enquiry: After working on this project, I have gained a better understanding of animation production. This has helped me to refine a more three-dimensional look in my shots, especially in terms of compositing and layering images.

Realisation: This project enabled me to delve deeply into my work by reflecting on my challenges and confronting them instead of evading them. For instance, I incorporated 3D backgrounds for the first time to enhance our background designs. Additionally, I experimented with animating in 3s, and tried a new animation style.

Process: I have participated in various workshops, and have gained knowledge and skills in using different programs such as Maya Bifrost for creating simulations and Toon Boon learning node view for creating parallax effects. I have also created blog posts to document my progress and learnings.

Communication: I have effectively communicated throughout my blog by reflecting weekly, evidencing challenges I had to overcome. I have also improved my designing of environments and characters. This has helped me be more aware of my practice and keep track of progress.

Bibliography

Allen, S. (2014). *Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' is a Cautionary Tale on the Monstrosity of which Humans are Capable*. [online] Oxford Royale Academy. Available at: https://www.oxford-royale.com/articles/shelley-frankenstein/.

Clemit (n.d.). *Clemit, 'Frankenstein, Mary Shelley's Myth-Making'*. [online] knarf.english.upenn.edu. Available at: https://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Articles/clemit.html.

Di Giacomo, D., Ranieri, J., D'Amico, M., Guerra, F. and Passafiume, D. (2019). Psychological Barriers to Digital Living in Older Adults: Computer Anxiety as Predictive Mechanism for Technophobia. *Behavioral Sciences*, [online] 9(9). doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/bs9090096.

Hernandez, I. (2016). *Meet the Man Who Started the Illuminati*. [online] History. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/history-magazine/article/profile-adam-weishaupt-illuminati-secret-society.

Jakab, P. (2017). *Leonardo da Vinci and Flight*. [online] National Air and Space Museum. Available at: https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/leonardo-da-vinci-and-flight.

King, R. (2023). Frankenstein's warning: the too-familiar hubris of today's technoscience. *The Guardian*. [online] 30 Apr. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/may/01/frankensteins-warning-the-too-familiar-hubris-of-todays-technoscience.

Leonardiano di Vinci, M. (n.d.). *Between dream and invention*. [online] Google Arts & Culture. Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/story/4QVxrK5EBhBRJQ.

Shneiderman, B. (2019). *Leonardo da Vinci showed how art can advance scientific progress*. [online] Quartz. Available at: https://qz.com/quartzy/1595802/leonardo-da-vinci-showed-how-art-can-advance-scientific-progress.

Williams, M.S. (2022). *Dystopian fiction: How likely are 'dark future' scenarios today?* [online] interestingengineering.com. Available at: https://interestingengineering.com/culture/dystopian-fiction-dark-future-scenarios.

www.youtube.com. (2023). *Frankenstein is obsessed with the Illuminati*. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtNiV1jDI1k [Accessed 25 Jan. 2024].

Links:

MyBlog:

Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION – UAL (arts.ac.uk)

Weekly reflections:

Reflections – Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION (arts.ac.uk)

Workshops:

Workshops – Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION (arts.ac.uk)

Toolkits:

Toolkits – Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION (arts.ac.uk)

Storyboard:

Jessica boyle year 2 BA ANIMATION – UAL (arts.ac.uk)

Animatic:

https://youtu.be/ZgjWr0PFZFg?feature=shared

All animation experiments:

Playlist:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSKUwceI5ZJmCpU8eeUydw78WxIpufhqf&feature=shared

Shots I did in the film:

Playlist: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSKUwceI5ZJlvg__q1s__jg6Tt322knhX&feature=shared

Shot 1: https://youtu.be/OM2yB5VRq5g?feature=shared

Shot 2: https://youtu.be/wkK3WNrwaks?feature=shared

Shot 3: (Animation + camera movementby Diogo Da Silva Craveiro, Background by me) https://youtu.be/_HkyUFelPgc?feature=shared

Shot 4: https://youtu.be/IbsC_FbbGJ4?feature=shared

Shot 5: https://youtu.be/m0JvNTczjE4?feature=shared

Shot 6: https://youtu.be/wKktCtoJZIU?feature=shared

Shot 7: https://youtu.be/lcc-kcf1UaM?feature=shared

Thank you !