

## Project Design Lab 1 Final Project Proposal

Student M.S. excerpted sections (“Related Projects”, “My Position”, “Project Overview”):

### Related Projects

2-D and 3-D animation need not be entirely separate; in fact, some of the world’s best animation comes from a combination of both techniques. One of the first full-length films to combine hand-drawn animation with computer-generated graphics is Disney’s 1991 classic *Beauty and the Beast*. Along with stunning traditional animation, several scenes were enhanced with 3-D graphics to create a more dynamic and enthralling moving image. *Beauty and the Beast* and films like it kept moviegoers interested in traditional animation by keeping it up to date with the newest technology. As Roger Ebert stated in his review of the film: “Perhaps it is inevitable, in an age when even younger kids see high-voltage special effects films like *Die Hard* or *Terminator 2*, that animation could no longer be content with jolly and innocuous fairy tales. What a movie like “*Beauty and the Beast*” does, however, is to give respect to its audience.”(rogerebert.com)

The 1988 Japanese film *Akira* played an important part in popularizing Japanese-style animation in America and pushed the boundaries for how mature the subject matter of cartoons is supposed to be. This rated R film not only contained large amounts of gore and violence but also deep and disturbing subject matter including gang violence, scientific experimentation on children, and nuclear holocaust. “There are no handsome princes or yearning princesses, no talking-animal sidekicks or lovable syncopated props in *Akira*. This is the stuff of nightmare, closer in theme and ambition to so-called graphic novels like *Watchmen* than anything that’s ever been drawn for an American screen” remarks Jay Cocks, a reviewer at *Time Magazine*; Americans were so taken aback by the graphic imagery that it was not allowed to be released in theaters.

Hayao Miyazaki, arguably the most popular director of Japanese animated films, created the 1997 hit *Princess Mononoke*. This movie, although consisting mostly of drawn animation, seamlessly included 3-D graphics much like *Beauty and the Beast*. *Princess Mononoke* and Miyazaki’s other films have remained wildly popular despite the waning popularity of hand-drawn animation. Miyazaki seems to take this shift in the animation industry in stride: ““If it is a dying craft we can’t do anything about it. Civilization moves on. Where are all the fresco painters now? Where are the landscape artists? What are they doing now? The world is changing. I have been very fortunate to be able to do the same job for 40 years. That’s rare in any era” (The

Guardian). Though fresco painters and landscape artists are no more today, any art historian would agree that the very best of them will never be forgotten and the same will probably hold true for traditional animators.

### **My Position**

Traditional animation was a big part of my childhood; not a day went by that I did not watch a Disney classic like *Aladdin* or one of the less known non-Disney animated movies like *All Dogs Go to Heaven*. Watching these movies as a child had a big influence on the development of my artistic style and creative skills and designing a project which takes me back to my roots will be very invigorating. It makes me feel old to know that the current generation of children will be growing up without films done in the classic animation styles. Even though traditional animation may be going the way of the fresco painting, such an influential art style should never be forgotten.

Technically, 3-D animation is not entirely 3-D, at least not to the audience. 3-D movies are still shown on a flat screen that only gives viewers the illusion of 3-dimensional mass and volume; so until hologram movies are invented, 3-D animations fail to encroach upon actual 3-D space. Because of these current limitations, 3-D animation still follows the basic rules of traditional animation such as “frame rate and squash and stretch” motion. Even 3-D animation software like Maya uses terms coined by traditional animators. Professor and professional animator Mike Jisa also agrees that learning skills in 2-D animation is essential to being a successful 3-D animator: “The people who are in 3-D animation now, if they don’t get very familiar with 2D animation techniques—proportion stretch, spacing, timing, silhouette, that kind of stuff—they won’t have jobs in five years (...)” (Animated Buzz). Traditional animation skills provide a foundation for successful 3-D animators so when current modeling technology becomes obsolete, they will still be able to learn an entirely different animation technique that much easier.

I believe the best way for both styles of animation to survive is if artists find innovative ways to combine them, to incorporate the hand-drawn, 2-D qualities of traditional work with the sleek, realistic qualities of 3-D graphics. Several animated movies like Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away* and Disney’s *The Emperor’s New Groove*, *Fantasia 2000*, and *Tarzan* have managed to incorporate 3-D graphics seamlessly into an entirely 2-D look and style.

## **Project Overview**

The project I am planning on putting together is an animated short that combines the visual styles and techniques of both traditional and 3-D animation. I am going to use 2-D programs like Photoshop, Illustrator, and/or Flash to make 3-D models animated in Maya look like they were hand-drawn. Following the concepts that movies like *Beauty and the Beast* and *Tarzan* piloted, I will probably use 3-D modeling to render the setting and backdrop, then trace over it and add details frame by frame in Photoshop or Illustrator, effectively creating a 3-D “skeleton” for a 2-D cartoon.

The resulting animation will ideally look traditionally animated, yet with more dynamic camera movements and angles and smoother motion. The video will not exceed 2-3 minutes since I would like to get this done within a year and have a very small animation/production team to help. I'll need to purchase Maya to install onto my laptop. I will also need 1 or 2 people to help with animating and putting the video all together; could use someone proficient in Maya to model and possibly animate the 3-D framework, and someone else who can use video editing programs like Final Cut or AfterEffects to add sound and patch all the cuts together. I would direct the project as a whole and render out the 2-D graphics frame by frame.

## **Works Cited**

1. Animation Arena. “Traditional Animation’ by Shanna Smith. [cited November 25, 2008]. <http://www.animationarena.com/traditional-animation.html>.
2. RogerEbert.com. ‘Beauty and the Beast’ by Roger Ebert. [updated November 22, 1991; cited November 25, 2008]. <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19911122/REVIEWS/111220303/1023>.
3. Time. “A Pulp-Style Pop Epic” by Jay (ocks. (updated February 1, 1993 cited November 25, 2008). <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,977583,00.html>.