



ANIMATION JOURNAL
my worst enemy

a film by
katie hoefer

composer
isabel woodings

music performance
guildhall session orchestra

Logline

In a dark but glowing void space, a girl encounters a veiled, bloody angel standing over a dead body. While the angel toys with and attempts to kill her, the girl must escape or understand what it really means to fight back.

Artist Statement

I have always had a love of flowy dresses, sparkles, and angels. Angels are often portrayed as beautiful, pure beings but I quite enjoy the contrast of this being acting in eerie, wicked ways. I also like to explore the relationship a person has with themselves, as well as their perceptions of what is reality or illusion.

Furthermore, the musical piece "The Poem of Ecstasy (Poème de l'extase)" by Alexander Scriabin, while not used in my film, served as an important key with everything else to fully realize my final idea into animating a dramatic clash between a girl and angel. The swells and quieter passages in the piece evoke the drama of the battle as well as hushed moments of realizations and reflection. I aimed to create a captivating, musically timed animation that has audiences contemplate cycles of self and the emotions that arise from those cycles.



Introduction

Hello! This Animation Journal is an explanation of my process and other things that went into the making my senior thesis; "My Worst Enemy." The core idea for my film has come to fruition despite the different challenges I encountered. Thank you everyone who helped during the making of my film and thank *you* for checking out my journal!

This drawing to the right I drew over the summer before starting my thesis. It was one of the primary inspirations for my film.



Inspirations



Here's some pieces of media and artworks that were sources of inspiration or influence for my thesis:

Alexander Scriabin

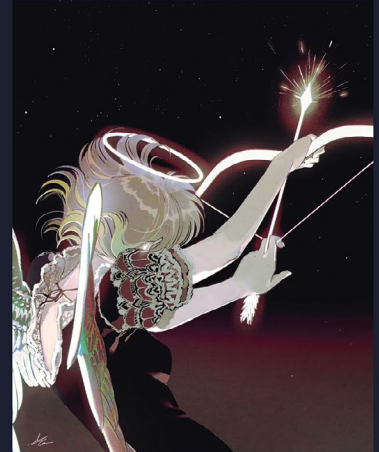
"The Poem of Ecstasy (Poème de l'extase)"



Satoshi Kon
Perfect Blue



Hideaki Anno
Neon Genesis Evangelion



@toktin_zq
Kim Jihyun/ZQ



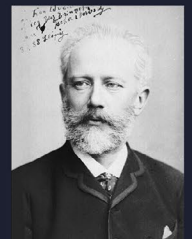
@hulutotoz
葫芦头头子



@trksworks
とらこ/Torako



@nanaco846
YASHIRO Nanaco

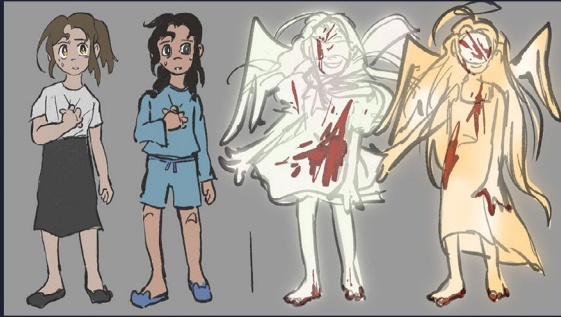


Pyotr Tchaikovsky

"The Nutcracker: Act 1, Tableau 1 - No. 7 The Battle"

Initial Concept Work

When first pitching the idea for my thesis, these were some of my early concept drawings.



For the girl character, I wanted to keep her attire simple. In the second drawing of her in blue, I even put her in pajamas because at the start of the film she wakes up in the void space. For the angel I wanted her to have a limited palette, especially so the blood really stood out. I also wanted her to have flowy elements, like her hair and dress.

In this drawing of the angel, I was thinking about how she would attack the girl. Would she summon a weapon? Arrows seemed to fit. Her pose is noble but also implies that with the movement of her arm, the arrows will fire. The arrows were later scrapped in favor for the spear and sparkle attack.



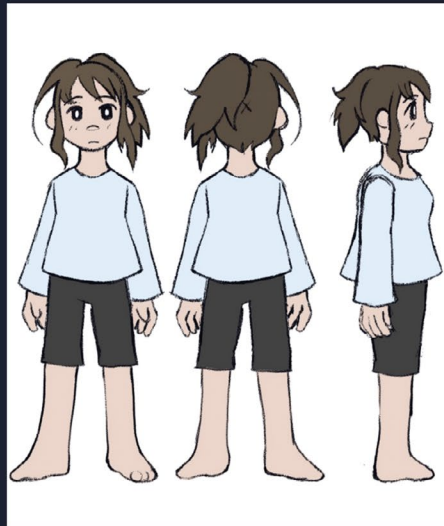
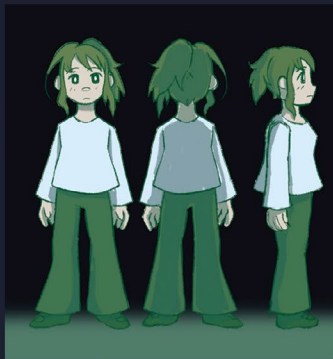
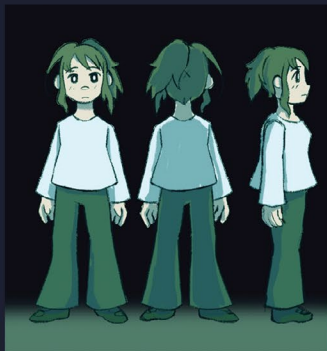
This drawing started the trend in my animatic to put the girl in blue and angel in green. Here I was starting to think about how the girl would fight back. Strangling felt dramatic, especially with the angel is crying and smiling because she knows what is to come. In the final film, the angel is the one strangulating the girl with a forceful expression.

The discovery! Here I have the girl first walking up to the angel and dead body. I wanted both her and the audience to wonder: "What is going on?" This drawing also cemented how I wanted the void environment to look early on.



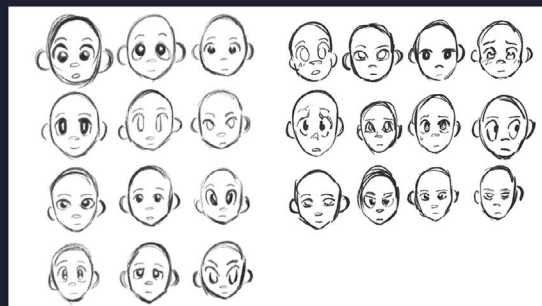
Character Design

GIRL



The above image is the final character turnaround for the girl. The lighting of the void really changed the base colors. The images to the left show different lighting options I considered. You can also see in the final drawing that she is wearing shorts instead of pants because I feel that it made her seem more casual.

I never ended up giving a name to her because it wasn't necessary. My film is meant to be more abstract, and I feel she is more relatable without a name.



Here are some more early sketches. I wanted to try lots of styles even with small changes before landing on the final. Eyes are one of my favorite things to draw, so picking the best one was important to me.

Character Design

ANGEL



Early sketches



And here's the final turnaround for the angel! Instead of being a single color throughout, I decided to make her hair a light green to break up the shapes of the character. Green is my favorite color, and red blood is its complimentary color.



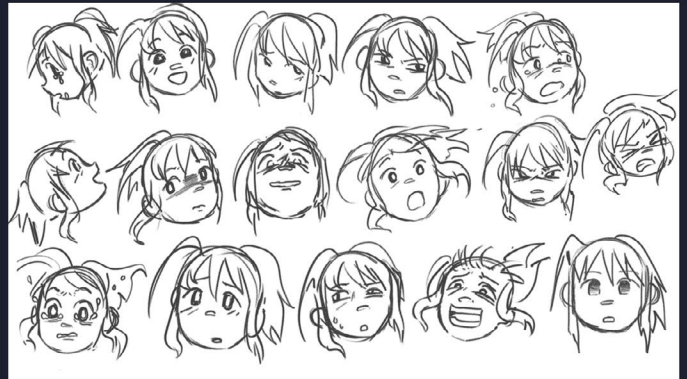
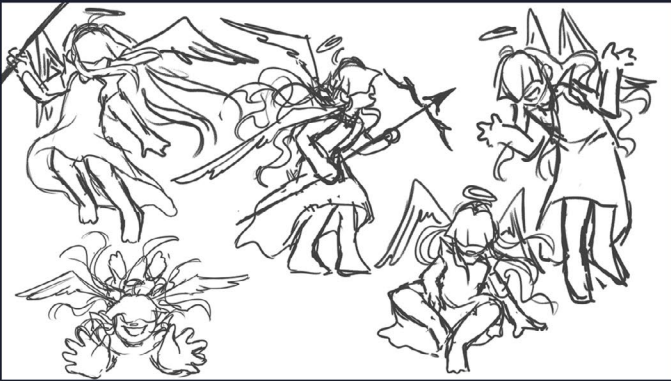
The mask became a veil to add another flowy element and fit her ethereal design. While also hiding her identity, the veil could be untied later in the film to reveal her and be passed on in the transformation sequence.



I'm a big fan of magical girl anime, so that was another influence for the creation of this character. In the design process I needed to consider how the veil, hair, clothes, wings, and halo would transform and appear.

The wings I decided to make thinner to simplify the design but also to help make a clearer silhouette.

More Character Sketches



Lineart Color



Blue nearly black



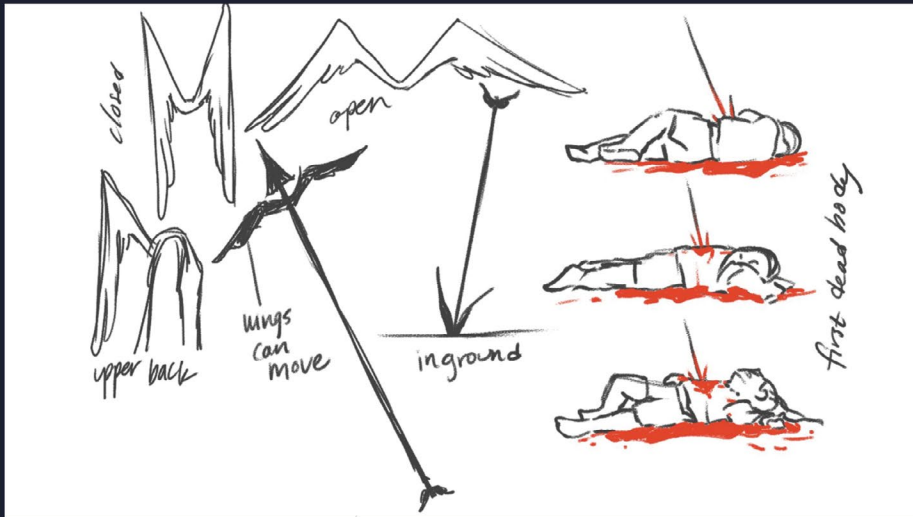
Rich Indigo



Light Brown-ish Gray

I went with rich indigo due to some advice from my mentor along with other factors. The indigo popped out well from the dark void background, added to this unreal space as an unusual color, and fit overall with the entire color scheme.

Other Elements



For the dead body, it is clearly the girl but I didn't want it to be too apparent. So when determining a pose, I went with the one on top to hide her face.

The spear was introduced to be an obvious marker of how the dead person was killed and a dangerous weapon the girl could use later to kill the angel. The added wings were for fun but also to pronounce the spear when it was in the ground.



These sparkle elements were attacks that came from the angel with the spear but also used during the transformation sequence. Again, this was influenced by magical girl transformations but it also filled space nicely in the void environment. It further lended to the contrast I wanted to create with the angel in general: A sparkly, pure being with deadly attacks out to get you.

Title

(I am) My Worst Enemy → my worst enemy

The original title was influenced from the naming conventions used in the Neon Genesis Evangelion Rebuild movies. It was changed due to feedback from peers. The "I am" part is implied inherently to the viewer, so it isn't very necessary.

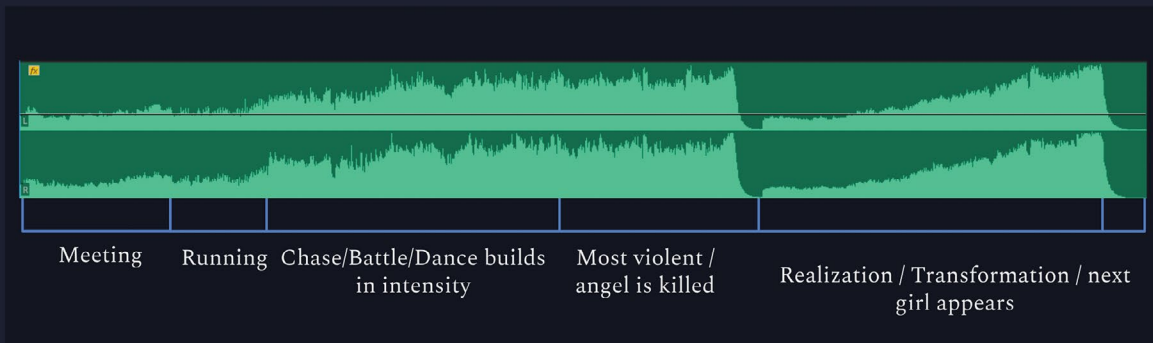
I also got some great advice from a peer in my mentor group to put the title at the end of the film to really punctuate the meaning of the film.
(Thanks Nicole!)



Music and Sound

One of the largest challenges I faced with this project was with the music. I really wanted to use the last 3 1/2 minutes of Scriabin's Symphony No. 4 - 'Le Poème de l'extase', Op. 54. It was important to me to have the music synced with the visuals so I didn't even storyboard, I just went straight into listening to the music and putting shots together into an animatic.

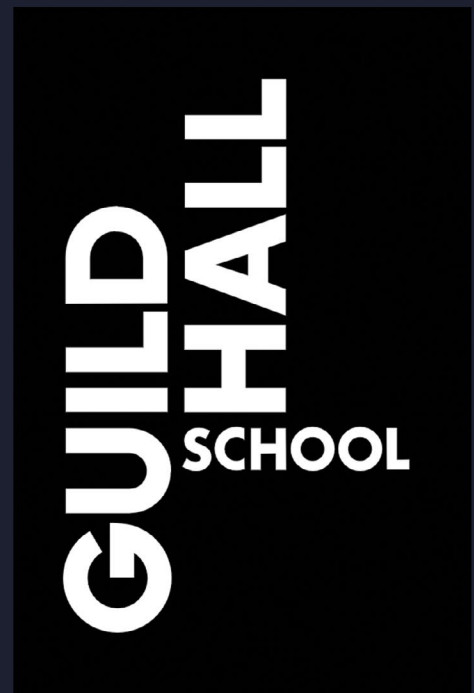
The music was such an integral point to my film that I wanted very minimal sound design. The only sound effects used within the film are the girl breathing and some ambient noise for the void environment.



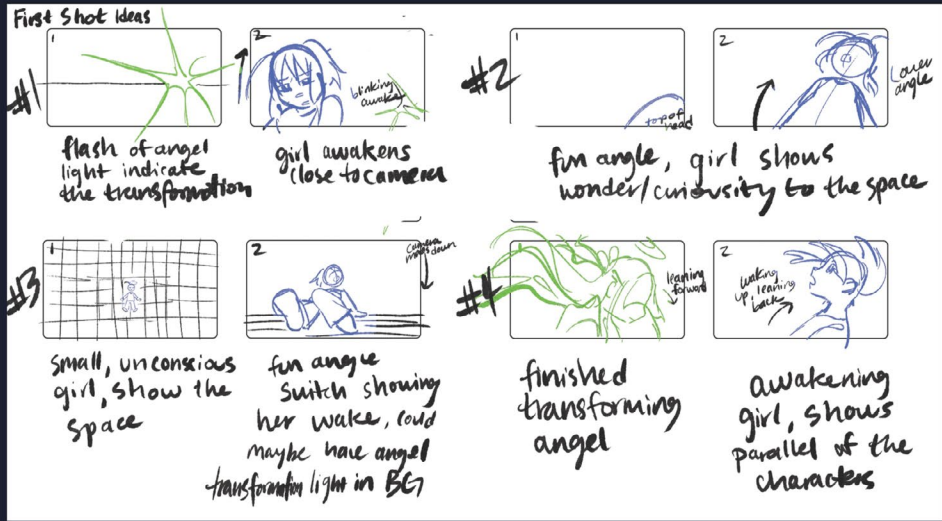
The above image I used in my pitch to show what I planned for each section of music. You can see how the music builds and cuts off suddenly. That cut off is when the girl would be stabbing the angel.

I thought I was in the clear to use the music since it was in the public domain. Since it was released in the early 1900s. Unfortunately, I could not find a recording of the piece that I could use that was not copyrighted. I was able to find the sheet music online, but hiring an orchestra was way out of my budget.

So I pivoted to the next option, working with the Guildhall School in London. This was an option for all thesis students to work with students at Guildhall to compose and have a live orchestra make music for our films! I found a great composer there, Isabel Woodings, who created the final score for my film keeping in mind the vibe from Scriabin's piece.

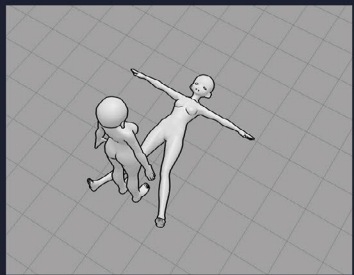


Shot Ideation & List







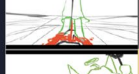

The opening shot of my film went through many reworks. I wanted to show the protagonist and enviroment at the very start. I ended up going with option #1 with some slight tweaking. My film opens with the star sparkle bursting in the sky and falling to the ground. The girl then looks up and walks towards it.

I occasionally used a free website with 3D models to help figure out shot angles for my film. This was helpful in visualing what I had in mind.



Here is just a portion of the shot list I made for my film. I included screenshots from my animatic so it would be clear exactly what shot I was referring to.

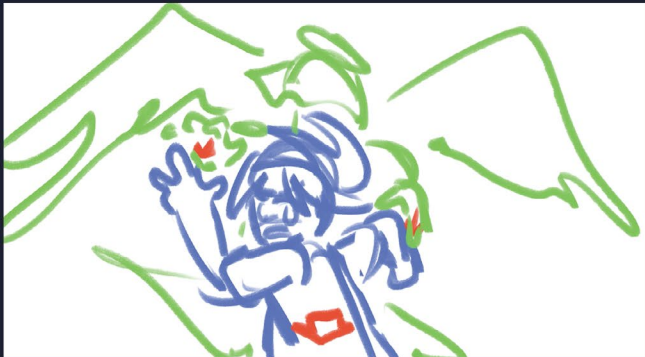
After I realized I no longer would be using Scriabin's music, there was some room for flexibility to change shots before timing lock. My mentor and I went through my whole film determining what was needed. Anything that was confusing or unnecessary was cut, shaving off excess time.

| SHOTS | # | DURATION (APPROX) | NEED ADJUSTING? | COMPLETION (RoughLineCo) |
|---|---|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
| my worst enemy | 1 (Title & Name Card) | 00:00-00:12 (12 sec) length subject to change | Y | scrapped, move to the end |
|  | 2 Bright star, DOLLY to girl waking up | 00:12-00:29 (17 sec) | N | |
|  | 3 Girl walking, maybe pull out camera, show space | 00:29-00:35 (6 sec) | Y | SCRAPPED |
|  | 4 Girl spot thing, move past camera | 00:35-00:39 (4 sec) | N | |
|  | 5 girl walking up to angel, camera moves with her, pan over to angel | 00:39-00:48 (9 sec) | Y | |
|  | 6 angel standing over body exaggerate the angle | 00:48-00:50 (2 sec) | N | SCRAPPED |
|  | 7 | | | |

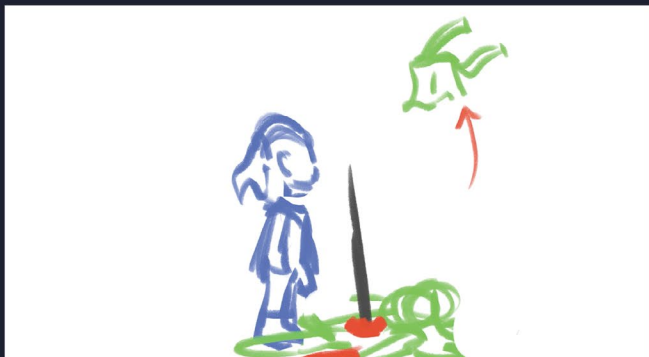
From Rough to Final



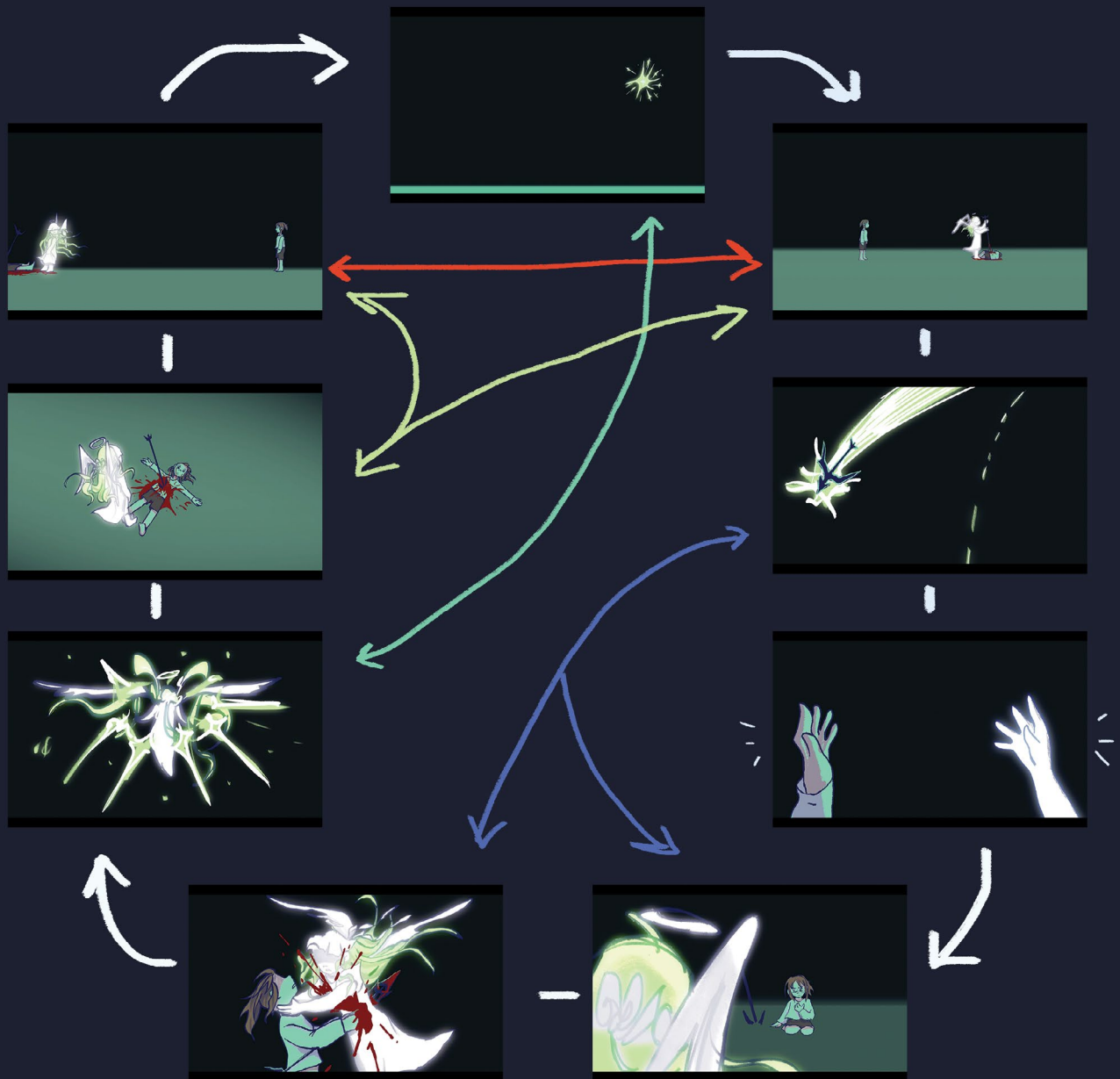
This was one of my favorites!



This shot was used for the Motion Test. I wanted to show a shot with several elements; the girl, angel, and sparkle attack. I put it all together in After Effects which gave me such a hard time, I tried to limit my usage of the program on my computer when I could go forth.



The Cycle

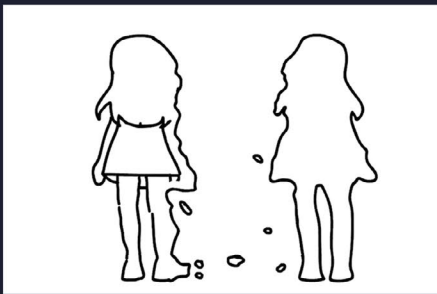


Here I'd like to explain the cycle shown in my film a bit more. The cycle is the girl unknowingly killing herself over and over again. To show this direct parallel with the girl and angel, I mirrored the shot at the start where they first meet with the last shot. The person stabbed in the ground will always end up being herself. The spear thrown at the start is the very weapon used to carry out the act. Lastly, the opening shot with the sparkle is the previous girl transforming into the angel.

These elements were intentionally put together to create the cyclical nature of the film.

Closing Reflection

This film has been the culmination of many interests, inspirations, and past work I've done. In high school, 3 of the short film animations I made held some aspect of inner self reflection. One such film was called "Thoughts Out Loud" where a parallel version of a girl splits apart from her and talks to her. Even during my sophomore year at MICA, I made a film titled, "Shark and Angel vs. Evil," with a protagonist unwilling to fight against an eager assailant. Looking back, it's been amazing to see how far my artistic and storytelling skills have improved.



Thoughts Out Loud, 2020



Shark and Angel vs. Evil, 2021

I did struggle throughout the process of making my thesis, the majority being a lack of motivation and self criticism. Juggling 5 classes in the fall was hard to do with thesis, so when winter break rolled around, I barely did anything. Getting back into the groove but then realizing everything I needed to do was overwhelming. To remedy this, I would often remind myself of all the people who were cheering me on; my family, friends, mentors, and thesis peers. To meet the deadline, some the shots are not up to the quality I would've liked. As you can probably tell by now, a film about a girl being her own worst enemy fits with how I feel I am my own worst enemy as well.

What can't be beat is the reaction I got from first time viewers of my film. Many people said they got the chills, which was most likely them overexaggerating. It's apparent nevertheless that the desired "Wow" effect I wanted people to have after watching my film was achieved, and I am extremely happy with that fact. I also quite enjoyed hearing people's interpretations of the film. I wanted to leave it open, especially at the end, if our girl turned angel will continue the cycle herself, or, the film itself is that very cycle repeating again and what that means.

Artist Bio

Katie Hoefler is an American 2D Digital Animator and Illustrator from the Midwest. She is projected to graduate from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) with a BFA in Animation and minor in Illustration May 2024.

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