First Encounters

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FIRST ENCOUNTERS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

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Susan White
Thesis Mentor

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All requirements for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio have been completed.

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Lynne Lanning
Art, Studio Honors Advisor

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The industry standard for art is becoming more and more digitized, with programs like Adobe Photoshop and Corel Painter taking precedence over traditional mediums such as oil painting. My honors project involved using digital illustration to explore how to make what I thought of as “animated paintings” in order to capture a single moment as completely as I could.

The first task on my hands was to identify a digital art program that could do everything I asked of it. I was able to eliminate many feasible programs immediately because of their cost. I quickly narrowed the possible programs to Adobe Photoshop and Adobe After Effects. They were both very powerful programs with animation capabilities. I toyed briefly with the idea of using both, and After Effects, but I ultimately decided to use Photoshop because it was more accessible, and I was familiar with the software. The second issue I ran into was figuring out how to capture and render one moment that appeared to last forever. I decided early on what moment I wanted to show, in this instance a knight reaching out to an overgrown statue, and then extended that moment by having time appear to move on alongside it (e.g. the rain falling, water dropping off the armor and the statue), even while the knight never moves his arm, never actually touching the face of the statue he’s reaching towards. In this way, I create a single moment and preserve it.

In doing this project I learned the mechanics of how to create an animation in Photoshop. I also learned the principles of animation such as smear frames and action timing. I also pushed my observational skills past simply recreating a still object for instance a drop of water, to learning how that drop of water moves, what it looks like in movement, its weight distribution and how that affects its movement. I also learned that animation requires a very long period of time. Drawing each individual frame takes a lot more time than I anticipated, and then there are revisions to do to make the animation loop correctly. An unexpected learning experience was
understanding how difficult it was to integrate the knight into the background, due to the wild disparity in detail. I plan to take all that I’ve learned during my honors project and push the animated aspects further in my next illustrations, animating the environment with even greater detail.