THE FABRIC OF ANIMATION

by

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With the technology we have today, animation is often computer generated. Traditional 2D hand drawn animation, as well as stop motion animation, is less common. Each animation style has a very distinctive look and style to it. It is easy to tell if an animation was computer generated or not. This project tested how using unaltered, non-digital elements combined with a digital animation program would impact the outcome of a computer generated animation. The overall goal for this project was to see if the viewer could tell the final product was computer generated or if it more resembled a stop motion animation.

My main focus for this project was to use digital and non-digital elements to create an animation. For the non-digital elements, I chose to only use paper to keep the amount of variables to a minimum. I also decided to not alter them in any way in Adobe Photoshop or any other editing software. My first step was to gather information and inspiration for what components to make. I decided to center the animation on an island theme, because that theme’s elements would be easily recognizable. The background contained three separate parts: sky, sand, and a hut. The sky and sand were flat, unaltered pieces of scrapbook paper. For the hut, cut the base shape out of paper and added more layers to give it more depth and texture. For the character, I made individual pieces for each body part. I created a test template out of scrap paper to test the right size for all the pieces. Then I used the template to trace the correct size and shape onto scrapbook paper. I layered some of the pieces to add more detail such as the head, hair, and body. After I cut all the pieces, I tested that all of the joints worked properly. I then scanned all the paper elements separately. I then used Photoshop convert each element into PNG files which would give each file transparent backgrounds. I uploaded each individual file into Adobe After Effects. I chose to animate the character doing a walk cycle back and forth across the screen. This ensured that all of the body parts of the character would be animated, allowing for a suitable amount of animated content for the viewer to decide which animation type was used. The only pieces that were stationary in the animation were the three background elements. The final product was a 22 second animation of a female character doing a walk cycle on an island. In total, it took around 10 hours to create and perfect all of the assets. The rest of the time was spent on animating which took roughly 35-45 hours.

This project yielded a positive result. The end result closely resembled stop motion animation. With this knowledge, I now know that it would be possible to make longer, story driven animations using this technique if I desired a stop motion look and aesthetic. To continue this research in the future, I can add other variables to the non-digital elements aspect of this project, such as using more 3 dimensional materials like fabric, sequins, clay, etc. In addition to more variables, animating both the foreground and background can be another area to explore to see if they yield the same successful results as this project.