Fat Boy Can't Fly

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FAT BOY CAN’T FLY

By

Tianyu Yang

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS IMAGING ARTS/COMPUTER ANIMATION SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION COLLEGE OF IMAGING ARTS AND SCIENCES

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
DECEMBER 2015

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Abstract

“Fat Boy Can’t Fly” is a 3 minutes 52 seconds long animated graduate thesis film. It tells an inspiring story about how a boy whose particular flaw prevents him from flying his sword to the mountaintop along with the others, but turns his weakness in to a strength to finally reach the peak of the mountain.

By combining 2D and 3D techniques, this film creates a relatively unique visual effect with vivid animation. It helps audiences go into the world to understand the characters and story.

This paper outlines the whole film creation process from the very beginning of an idea development stage though to the screening, critique and response. It describes all my inventions, obstacles, failures and successes.
Acknowledgments

Before I started my thesis film, I set a goal that I was going to make a high quality film with extremely vivid animation, unique image looking, and complete story. My hope was for this film to be one of the best animated thesis film in coming screening. With this ambition, I asked Brian Larson, who is known by his rich experience and strictness, to be my thesis advisor. It turns out this is one of the wisest decisions I made at RIT. He set up meeting with me every week to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of my film ranging from story development to postproduction. With his strict timetable and wise advice, I spent less time than I expected to finish my film but still had a more decent story and higher visual quality. I can’t say more thanks to him for his support.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Mark Reisch, and Peter Kiwitt, as my committee members they offered many invaluable suggestions and constructive feedback. I would also like to thanks Wendi Wu for great help with rigging, and Tom Davis who creating a beautiful music for my film.

Last but not the least I would like thanks my family and their support and encouragement. Without them, I never would have had a chance to come to US to pursue my goal and dream.
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1. Inspiration

Since I was a kid I believed that a man should have a dream and do his best to pursue it. I found my dream when I was in college, which is to be a top animator and work for the one of the best animation or game companies in the world. This dream is so attractive that it drove me to leave my motherland and fly over half of the earth to another country where I knew absolutely nobody. And then my three years’ life at RIT started.

Life in US was not easy. I had to endure the pressure of high cost and barrier of conversion with native people. Also, the economy in the US wasn’t doing well. A lot of CG companies bankrupted and caused the competition for jobs to become more brutal. I had to grow as fast as I could to compete with other experienced animators. But even though I thought I was doing my best, the distance between my goal and me seemed further and further. Meanwhile, my friends showed me some demo reels created by talented students who got a big offer from famous studios or companies. These great CG artworks made me self-abased. I always believed I got talent in animation and that could help me grow fast, however, when I put myself in front of these truly talented hard-workers, I only saw an arrogant ordinary who has nothing special at all.

Fortunately, I overcame my negative mood and continued the fight for my dream as an ordinary person. I still didn’t know how far I could go, but I did know I wouldn’t stop. This experience was unforgettable. It made me realized that I was still not strong enough, and I need to prepare for facing more failures. It also made me understand why Jack Ma said he was not clever than young people, but tough enough to accept more failures. I really wanted to create a short story to talk about what I leaned from this experience.
Thus, I created a fat boy to represent ordinary people, or more specifically, to find his way to overcome his weakness and achieve the goal which looks impossible to him. I wanted this film to encourage people, including me, to remind them of their initial goal, to rebuild their confidence, to believe “all roads lead to Roma” and to keep moving forward.
2. Preproduction

2.1 Story Development

After making two animated films in my first two years, I realize it is extremely important and difficult to create a decent story. I’ve seen so many stories either too complicated to describe the idea clearly, or too ordinary to draw audiences’ attention. I’ve made similar mistakes in my past films too. So I set three goals for my story before I went deeper: 1. Somehow incorporate Chinese culture into the film; 2. Establish a clear motivation that drove my character’s behavior and 3. Create a straight storyline.

The first goal I achieved was to find a great Chinese element that fit my story well: Sword Domination. This idea is known from a famous Chinese supernatural fiction named *The Legend of Sword and Fairy*.¹ In this book, the caster can gather energy from nature and store it as Chi in their body by refining it. Then, the caster can use Chi as energy source to control his sword as his wish, even without touching it. Sword Flying is a classic example of the skill. The caster can drive the sword to fly by using Chi and stand on the sword to fly with it.

In most people’s mind, the Sword Domination caster always has a handsome face, good shape body, sword master or genius. But one interesting idea came to my mind: What if the caster is a fat boy?

When I decided to use fat boy as my protagonist, his motivation was easy to find out: he wanted to soar in the sky as the others. If the caster is overweight, and he is not a master with strong and endless Chi, then he can’t fly very high, and can’t fly for a long time either. Based on this assumption, I set a temple on the peak of the

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mountain to be his goal. At the beginning, I set the temple as “Sword Master School that only sword men with high skills can go”. But after discussing with Brian, I realized it’s difficult to describe this setting properly for audiences in short time. In the end, the temple became “a beautiful and joyful place that everybody can go except for our fat boy”. And our fat boy’s goal is to find his own way to the temple.

In the end, I set up a straight story line as below:

• Fat boy see others fly to the temple;
• He tries to follow but fails;
• He’s depressed;
• He’s inspired by a hard-working snail;
• He finds his own way to overcome his weakness and reach the goal.

With story line setup and storyboard completed, I discussed my idea with Brian. We discussed around an hour and made a lot of changes. One big change is we got rid of the narrator. I was planning to use a narrator to describe the story as the boy talking about his own experience. Brian strongly recommended that I use images and
animation to tell the story instead of relying on the voice. I agreed with him and changed the storyboard to maximize the information a shot can bring to the audience. Another big issue was how to sell the idea of Sword Flying. It was a familiar idea in China that most people understood; however it is still new in western culture. It caused confusion easily that the fat boy couldn’t fly weather because his weight or his lack of the skill, because these two factors can all affect the result. Brian suggested I emphasize the overweight part and let the fat boy reach the mountain by converting his weight to his strength. To achieve this goal, I reconsidered the acting choice in animation. Also, in the end of story, I added a shot that he used his sword as a springboard and bounced his heavy body up to his goal.

2.2 Concept Design

There are three main characters in my film: Fat boy, sword and snail.

In my mind, the fat boy should be positive and unsophisticated. With these virtues, he will be more likely to overcome his weakness and achieve his goal. I wanted him to look funny and adorable, so that the audiences would be attracted to him and care about him. I start from the head.

Picture 2. Fat boy head sketches
I showed my design to my friends to ask their opinions. It’s extremely important to do so. You will find people have different opinions or preferences than each other. They helped me to get rid most of the designs either because they didn’t fit the concept or because they lacked appeal. Based on the chosen head, I finished the body quickly. I paid a lot of attention to his clothes. Sword Domination is created by Taoist on Shu Mountain, so I studied a lot of reference of Taoist uniforms. I also made a lot of adjustments to make it looks more interesting and easy to animate. Here’s the final result.

![Fat boy full body concept](image1.png)

Picture 3. Fat boy full body concept

I also created sketches for environments. They were only quick sketches and would be changed later on. But they still helped to decide the style of the visual looks.

![Sketches for environment](image2.png)

Picture 4. Sketches for environment
3. Production

3.1 3D Production

3.1.1 Model

I put a great amount of time on fat boy’s model. It does not only affect the appearance of the character, but also offers a tremendous influence to the outcome of animation performance. To make a proper model, one needs to have a good sense of proportion and art, so that the model can look as the same as the drawing concept, or even better. He also needs the experience of topology because this is the precondition of good rigging and animation.

During the model construction, I adjusted the proportion many times based on the feedback I got.

Picture 5. Fat Boy model

To make sure the topology works properly, I found a book called *The Art of Moving Points* by Brian Tindall. In this book, there’s a theory called ‘the 9 Points Principle’. It means a line can be changed into most shapes properly if it is constructed by at least 9 points. This is an extremely useful conclusion when it is applied to topology, especially for facial topology.

To achieve the best result, it is also important to always converse with the riggers.
They are dealing with polygons and topology every day, so they have so many thoughts to talk when it comes to good or bad topology. My rigger, Wendi Wu, provided many important opinions to help the fat boy grow fast and healthy.

![Topology of Fat Boy](image6.png)

Even though the meshes and points had been set up carefully and properly, it still took Wendi some time to make the Blend Shape look pretty. We also changed the fat boy’s cloth for convenience of rigging and animating. However, all these frustration and suffering are worth it when it comes to animation production.

![Fat Boy with texture and rigging system](image7.png)

3.1.2 Animation

As an animator, animation is the most important thing for me when it comes to animated film. In my opinion, animation is the soul of a model, just like performance is the soul of a character. I was surprised that people in the animation major took so
little time and attention on animation itself. Most of them tried to compress the production time of animation as much as possible under the pressure of an inappropriate schedule. I devoted most of my time and energy to animation process because creating good animation is so important and joyful. Also, I hoped my film could prove to future students that sacrificing animation quality is not the only choice for making a good film in short time.

Before I stared, I did a lot of research for video reference. It was really important to learn from it. For example, in the later part of story, the fat boy would use his sword as a skateboard to go across the valley. To design the animation, I watched a lot of pictures and videos to find some cool movements and observe the body mechanics. I also drew sketches while studying to translate movement from real world to the animated world.

![Research sketches](image)

After gathering enough materials, I began to design skating movement for fat boy. I only used my sketches as reference to avoid the negative influence from real world materials.

This process is referred to as Planning. When I started to learn animation, I never paid enough attention to this process. I was so eager to go into Maya to start working. However, this is the most important process for animation creating because in this
process, animators can get so much knowledge from the real world, and knowledge is the most important weapon for animators. I will never go further before I am satisfied with my planning. It may be changed later, but these changes will be an improvement from previous planning. Without a good planning, the more changes you make, the more mess you will get.

When I started doing animation, I started with the animatic. No matter how great the animation is, if it cannot fit into the film, it will be useless. Thus, the first thing I needed to do was use rough character animations and camera movements to construct the whole film so that I was able to test my idea and planning on the vision of whole film and show people to gather feedback.

![Samples from animatic](image)

In this process, everything was so rough. Rough model, rough animation, rough timing, rough render… However, it showed the pace and rhythm of the whole film. Also, since its roughness, it was easy to add to, cut or revise. Brian and I went through this animatic many times and revised it again and again. It helped to improve the story and avoid critical changes in future production. If one wants to improve efficiency on
film making, a solid animatic can help a lot.

The next step was Blocking. In this process, I created blocking for all the shots. Blocking is like rough sketch of animation. It helps to describe the idea of the animated performance in a shot.

The 4th shot of this film was a really important shot. In this shot, I wanted to tell the audience that the fat boy was able to cast Sword Domination, however, he couldn’t fly as high as the others because of his weight, and the more he forced the sword to fly, the harder it became for him to control.
In the beginning of this shot, the fat boy was excited because he wanted to fly with the others. He played with his sword and everything went pretty well, until he jumped on his sword and plummeted to the ground. Then he used more power to draw his sword up, but in the end he lost control and was shot out of the screen.

As I mentioned above, I tried not to use video reference in this shot. Using reference could help me get accurate and believable poses easily, however it could sometime confine my creativity and force me to follow the reality. So in this time, I watched a lot of cool shot and tried to learn something from them, not copied. Then I let fat boy play in my imagination, and recorded them by drawing quick pose sequences on paper. In the end I chose one that looked the coolest and most reasonable to keep working on.

I slowed the pace and timing at the first part to give a more casual feeling when he played with his sword and sped it up later for the nervous, hurried and chaotic feeling when he lost control.

Even though the animation here was only built by some poses, it clearly showed the composition, process and performance choices of the shot. A qualified animator
can see if the shot is not going to work properly just by taking a look at the blocking. If something doesn’t work for the story, you should change in this process as much as you can. Otherwise, more work will be generated if you change a shot that has been highly polished.

Like creating a painting, I like adding detail through the whole picture instead of part by part. This can help me control the whole picture and avoid a complicated revision. Again we don’t need any single beautiful detail that doesn’t fit the film. Even though the whole film was still rough so far without any single polished shot, I was not harried at all, because I knew the film was going in the right direction. After blocking was accepted, I kept moving to polish my animation.

Polishing is not simply making the animation smooth. Although the blocking has decided the poses and structure, the possibilities are still numerous when it comes to polish. In blocking decide we to use Pose A and Pose B, polishing decides how we go from Pose A to Pose B.
In the above sequence, the poses I chose were in the first picture and the last one. If we just look at these two poses, how many possibilities did it have to go from one to the other? That’s one of the fun parts of polishing. We can choose what we want. In this shot, the fat boy saw the others fly accros the sky, he was excited and wanted to follow them. To show his excitement, I decided to let him jump from Pose A to Pose B. Before he jumped, I made him curl up to prepare for the jump. He also needed to turn to us during the jump, so I let his upper body and arm spin faster to create the rotating force for his lower body. When he finished the jump, I wanted him to face us for a while, so the audience could see his face clearly, then he faced another direction to find a better place to take off.

Another fun part of polishing is that we can decide how we exaggerate the
The sequence above happened when fat boy tried to use his sword as a skateboard to slide across the cliff. In this shot, he fell from the cliff and controlled the sword awkwardly. This was a good shot for me to add squash and stretch because of the fast movement.

“While objects that are not stiff, although retaining overall volume, tend to change shape in an extent that depends on inertia and elasticity of the different parts
of the moving object." As the most important principle of the 12 basic principles of animation, squash and stretch is the key to make a character more vivid. I used a lot in this shot to describe the movement happening really fast. I also made the arm into curves to improve the visual interest. When the animation was played in normal speed, the magic happened.

However, inappropriate shape changing can destroy the shot. If the animation is not fast enough but squash and stretch are added a lot, the character will look really weird like he is made of mud.

3.2 2D Production

No matter how any 3D technique being developed, it can never replace 2D. 2D animations tend to have unique visual effects with beautiful hand drawing. In my film, I applied a flat and graphic style with simple light and shadow to create the world.

I used Photoshop with Intuos 5 tablet to draw all background. I was not good at color, and PS layer system helped me with this tremendously.

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In shot 01, I created large color blocks to define the mood of the scene and distinguished the close view and distant view. Then I added road, trees, clouds and mountains layer by layer. In the end, the light was added to brighten the temple.

It was the same for night scene. In shot 06, I used two different blue blocks to determine the basic color of sky and cliff, then added trees, grass and light. I also added the fat boy into the scene as a reference for composition. One thing I needed to pay attention to is the naming convention. The layers can be messed up if they are not named properly. So it is a good habit to rename a layer whenever you create it.
Not all shots are relatively still. For shots that have greater movement, the background needs to be changed as well.

In shot 07 we looked from the distance to the fat boy’s close-in view. While moving the camera, the shape and length of the background needed to be adjusted.

The same thing happen in shot 14. This is pan shot and the camera was moving...
faster and faster. So I created a long background based on the 3D scene and created a blur effect in where the camera was moving fast.

The background needs to serve the story too. The composition and color choice shouldn’t be done randomly, they need to follow the story line and be united in the same mood.

Shot 37 was the moment when fat boy was falling down in to the abyss. The main color was dark and gray. They represented his fading hope and the golden light represented his goal. It was so close but could never be touched. I also added dark, harsh details on the moutain to show its toughness and ruthlessness.
4. Postproduction

4.1 Composition

I chose After Effect as the composition tool for my film. AE is good at 2D composition and relatively simple to use. Also since I use PS to draw the backgrounds, the layers can directly go into AE without any complexity.

My composition method was really simple. I created one spotlight in Maya, assigned Toon Shader to characters and rendered Color and Light layers for each shot. Then I put them in AE with my background to adjust color, contrast and add 2D animation if necessary.

For example, shot 20 was a dawn scene. I made diffuse color a little darker with pink high light in Maya. Then I put exported image sequence in AE. Using Overlap layer setting could make the high light cast on the character easily. Then I adjusted the color based on the background.

Some times I needed to create 2D animation in AE. In shot 05, the rock cracked into two pieces after the fat boy hit it. I separated the two rock layers and set
animation keys on them.

In shot 15, I needed to animate every single dot to create the firefly.

The snail was created in PS and animated in AE. I animated its body parts one by one first. The glow of its shell needed to be animated separately too. Then I animated the whole snail with the fat boy.
Some 2D animations were created in Maya. In shot 24, the speed line on the ground was actually an animated texture. I assigned the texture on the plan in Maya, then rendered out to composite.

Since everything was planned out and done very carefully in preproduction and production, there was not much trouble in this process. Even though the results were all the same as they should be, it was still very exciting to combine all elements together to see how they worked.

4.2 Music

I didn’t make music by myself, but I still got precious experience from this
process. It was the importance of the proper way to conversation. I was in Canada when I created my film, so I could only contact my composer, Tom Davis, who was an experienced composer at Rochester, by email. At beginning, I sent him a very long email to describe my idea and expectation with some link as reference.

“Hey Tom

Thank you again for your help!

As to the music, here’s something in my mind.

At the opening shot, it’s very peaceful and magnificent feeling. And when the guy flies out, there’s an exciting moment here.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QbQfUmh2l4&list=PLkOEj4sGyclcnAQCIxkzY0iF3KxqDi4Uj&index=9 3’05”--3’20”)

The following scene is funny and happy until the boy fails and fly on the ground.

Then the boy sits alone at night feeling sad and hopeless. But the snail comes out and gives him a little fun. When he sees the whole temple again, the temple is extremely beautiful and magnificent. Here it’s the climax moment. And the boy understand that he really want to go there. I hope the music can go from sad to inspired smoothly and the strongest beat happen when camera cut to wide shot.

Then he starts to try to skate across the valley. This scene is following the climax moment so the music here is exciting and upbeat again. At the slow motion part the music change to slow and then fast again.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLwJxSTJbi8 1:20:40--1:21:10)

When he starts to go upward, the power of the sword is almost gone. So here will be the dangerous and nervous feeling. The music fade out again when he is falling in slow motion, making the feeling like "this is the end" “It’s time to give up”. But then he opens his eye and makes a final shot.
In the last scene, he falls on the ground and tries to see where he is. The music is quiet here to show he is confused and not know what will happen. When he see the temple in such shot distant, the music get climax again to show he succeeds in the end.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvYXoyxLv64 2'40"--end)

All I mentioned here is just the feeling of the music. I don't know if this makes sense to you. You don't have to follow my mind because you are 100 times better than me in music. As long as the music fit the story, everything can be accepted.

Thank you again for your time. If there's anything make you confused please let me know.

Tian”

He worked really fast. A couple of days later, I got the music for the first two shots. However, the style and feeling were far away from what I expected. I sent him a long email again to explain why it didn’t work and how I wanted to change, but the revision was not right either. We spent almost two weeks discussing our thoughts and both sent out a lot of long emails to each other. During this time, Tom finished a completed music for whole film. Unfortunately, it was still not what I wanted. Based on the email, I knew he had done all he could to make the music right, and I tried my best to describe my idea clearly. I felt we were both disappointed and tired from this endless circle.

All of a sudden, I realized that we never met each other from the beginning. All of our conversation was relying on email, which was definitely not the best way. No matter how I wrote the email, I couldn’t make sure I described my thoughts in the right way, and I couldn’t know if he got my points when he was reading it. Also, too
many long emails made us really tired to read and easy to miss information. Thus, I decided to drive back to Rochester to meet him at least one time to discuss our thoughts face to face, and he totally agreed with my proposal. A couple of days later, we saw each other in RIT’s coffee house. I described my thought again. But this time I played all the digital materials I prepared on my laptop when I spoke to him and he recorded all the details on his notebook. I didn’t need to worry about my incapability to talk music in professional way, and he got my points immediately when he saw the reference. After two hours, all of our thoughts were transferred successfully between us. And after a week, the right music arrived.

This experience showed me how important to find a proper way to converse with others. I was trying to save trouble by using email, but in the end, driving across the border to setup a meeting avoided more trouble for both of us.

4.3 Title and Credits

I started to think of the title after all film had been done. There were only two options I was interested in. Fat Boy Can Fly and Fat Boy Can’t Fly. They were really not so much different. For a while I even wanted to flip a coin to choose one from them randomly. But after more consideration I saw a big difference.

I preferred to use Fat Boy Can Fly at the beginning. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted to make an animation film with full of positive energy and inspiration. Using CAN definitely fit my goal. It implied that even a fat boy could fly if he never stopped trying. It also brought a question for audience that how could a fat boy fly, which might arise audience’s curiosity to have a look.

However, when I finished this film, my thoughts changed. First, our little fat boy couldn’t fly at all, even in the end of the story. The reason why he reached the top of
the mountain was because he found another way to overcome his weakness and went for it. In this case, CAN’T described this meaning much better.

Another reason was based on a famous motto, *There are only two animals in the world that can reach the top of the pyramid, one is the eagle, and the other is the snail, eagle can soar in the sky, snail shows his worth in perseverance.* One cruel fact behind it was snail could never become eagle. Even thought the fat boy reached his goal this time, he still needed to take effort to overcome difficulties in the future. It was not like he knew how to fly after consistent effort and all of a sudden his life became easier. The fat boy was a symbol of ordinary people. He was not a genius who can fly, and he would never be. If he wanted to reach his goal, he could only show his perseverance. Compare with CAN, CAN’T showed more realistic significance, which was good. I hoped my film could tell people every dream was possible to be real, but you need to fight for it and it might took long time. Every ordinary person should have some idealism, which is the engine to create miracle, but also he should keep reminding himself he is not an eagle. No matter how successful he is, he still needs to be modest and careful, and take enough effort for his next goal.

Thus, *Fat Boy Can’t Fly* became the name of the film.

Then I chose some backgrounds I really like and put all the participations’ name on that. Since there were only few important helpers, I was able to put each of their names on a single picture to show my respect and gratitude.
Picture 24. Credits
5. Critique Reception

Screening day was a big day for me. It was a precious opportunity to show my film and to talk about my thoughts in front of the all animation students and faculty. The feeling of watching my film on a big screen with a stereo sound environment was totally different from watching it on a computer. It was gorgeous.

Then, I announced my art statement. This statement included how all my real thoughts appeared and changed in three year:

“I'm glad to be here to screen my film because I can finally have a good sleep. Chase you dream; Do what you love; Become the person you want to be; these are very simple and out of fashion ideas. It seems too old to be mentioned again and again. But they are what my film is about, and all my life is about.

When I was a kid my dream was to be a super pig, my super power would be to eat and sleep all the day without being killed by humans. But I was told that to be a super pig, I needed to make a lot of money. So I asked, how can I be a rich guy, they said, go to school and get a high score, and my student career started.

When I was growing up, I realized taking class, doing homework, getting high score in tests couldn’t make me happy, instead, drawing pictures, studying animation, and creating games did. So I was no longer a good student. Meanwhile, I decided be an animator. My dream was changed into being a top-level animator in American industry.

Well, it easy to have dreams, but hard to realize them. When I came to America, everything seemed perfect. I thought after 3 years, I can be a great animator, I can get a job in the big company and I can show off my English to my family. However, things are not that easy. The cost here is huge, the industry is in
a downturn, H1B is a fairy tale and English is like a monster that can't be defeated. Also, when my friend showed me some great art works and told me the artist were just students like us, I felt my hope disappear. And that's when my thesis ideas come out. When you look around, you can always see talented people achieve their dreams and goals easily. When they want to get better points, they fly to it. But me, I'm just a fat boy because I'm getting fat of course, also, I can't fly, I'm just a normal person. It's pretty sad to find out because my goal seems to be unreasonable for me.

I'm glad that one of my good things is stubbornness and that I never give up. In the end, I understand that even though I can't fly, I can still climb. That's when the snail comes out. Right now, I'm still very far from my goal, but when I look back, I see a Chinese student who is sitting in the classroom, preparing the coming physic examination but dreaming about making games in Blizzard when he grows up. Compared to him, at least I made the impossible possible. I know I'm not the only one having a hard time. Some of my friends they have talent and skill, work really hard but can't get a break. I just want to say, don't always look forward, it's Ok to look back sometimes, and you will know it may need a little more time, but you will be fine. You will be super pig one day.

I want to say thanks to my advisor Brian Larson. Without his push, I may show a blocking today. Thanks to my committee member Peter Kiwwit, gives me a lot of great advices and Mark Reisch, Thank you for always helping me and encouraging me. Thanks to my composer Tom Davis for his patience and great music. Thanks to all faculties, I got great time here!

Thanks for staying awake! You can make any comment you want! ”

Most of the time of my critique process was filled by the arguments of the music
and sounds, and to be honest I couldn’t remember most of them. Some people thought the music and sounds could be done more and better to help visual performance, at the meantime, some people thought the music and sounds could even be less to create a more unique style. But I did remember two things: One was Skip made a joke, and my respond was “what?” which made all people laugh. Next thing was everyone enjoyed my animation. They could see the efforts I put on animation and rewarded it by laughter and applause. I was really enjoying the moment. I agreed with the critique that my film was kind of uncompleted without proper animated effect and sounds, but for me, my goal had been already achieved. My story was simply and straight enough that everyone understood; I brought Chinese elements and Sword Domination in my film and nobody felt confused; also the pictures and animation quality was approved by audience. All of these were the best reward for the fat boy, for the snail.
6. Conclusion

In 1947, when Mao Zedong was being challenged within his own party on his plan to basically take China over, Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Chinese held the cities, they had the army, they had the air force, they had everything on their side. And people said, “How can you win? How can you do this? How can you do this against all of the odds against you?” And Mao Zedong said, you know, “You fight your war, and I’ll fight mine.” ³

Everyone has his or her own war to fight. We are facing enemies everyday. Some of them are weak, we can beat them quickly; some of them are strong enough that make their challengers looks stupid. Life makes us clever, that we can estimate our victory chance by just a glance, and choose to give up. However, you can see a lot of true story in the history that people make impossible possible. They defeat the giant. We tend to attribute their success to their talent, interest, opportunities, luck, family background, or even to some books, some tools, some thoughts, etc… These may be true, but we shouldn’t emphasize these factors too much to overcome their courage to challenge, to fight, and keep fighting war in their own way. This can lead to a conclusion that it is not how strong the enemy matters, it is who to fight that matters. Positive and proactive people will always face the difficulties bravely and look for their ways to overcome them; meanwhile negative and passive people tend to find the excuses to explain why others can achieve their goal and why they can’t. They either fly across the mountain or give up to go back to sleep.

In Chinese culture, we think that the true enemy is not other people, other counties, or natural, the true enemy is one himself. So the important thing is clear mind, look

through our heart, find our weaknesses and defeat them. We should never stop improving ourselves in our life, and when we become better, we won’t be afraid of the giant.

In America, the theory is more straightforward: you get what you pay for. You go to the gym, you have a good body; you study animation hard, you get an animator job; you pay laziness and impatience to English, you will gain embarrassment caused by being misunderstood every day… I always encourage people to pursue their dream bravely. You fight, not matter win or lose, at least you gain experience and memory, and they will make you better; you do nothing, you gain nothing.

Making a thesis film is a really great challenge. I’m glad I faced it bravely. I paid so much time and energy in making this film, and I gained improvement of skills, a good film and precious memory. But I could also see my laziness, impatience and unstable status during the process, and these made the film uncompleted. I understood myself better, and I would keep improve myself. That was the most important thing I gained from creating this thesis film.

My student journey is going to the end, and a brand new world is opening to me. No matter what I am going to do, what I am going to be in the future, the memory and experience at RIT won’t be fade and will keep helping push me to be a better person.
Appendix

Storyboard
Background
SYNOPSIS

This is an inspiring story about how a boy whose particular flaw prevents him from flying his sword to the mountaintop along with the others, but turns his weakness into a strength to finally reach the peak of the mountain.

TREATMENT

At the peak of a mysterious mountain there is a beautiful Taoist temple. Only those Taoists who can fly their swords to the peak can be regarded as senior Taoists and pursue advanced skills. It is the dream of all young men to reach this goal. Many try, but few succeed.

One boy watches as several other boys mount their swords and fly them across the valley to the temple. He also watches as some attempts fail, resulting in a painful fall to the valley floor. This boy dreams of reaching the temple, but he is a bit overweight and out of shape, and his sword cannot support him. His attempts at flying are short-lived and awkward. He is only able to get a few feet off the ground and each time he tries to go higher, his sword flies out of control and throws him off. His dreams will not die so easily, so he tries one more time, and falls to the ground, humiliated as usual.

One day, the boy is sitting on the edge of the U-shape valley, looking across to the brightly lit peaks, the beautiful temple, and considers giving up. Through his tears, he notices a tiny snail climbs a column of rocks, slowly but steadily, moving over the rough texture of the stones, until it finally reaches the top. This triumphant act inspires him and he decides to try and find another way to get on the Peak.

After persistent attempts, he learns how to use his sword as a skateboard,
hovering 6-inches off the ground. Slowly at first, but with increasing speed and skill, the boy maneuvers up and down the u-shaped valley, each pass going a little bit higher, taking advantage of the speed his weight gives him. On the final push up the towering cliff, he deftly avoids all of the obstacles on the ground and reaches the peak, landing safely on the temple grounds.

**RATIONALE**

I always believe there are only two kinds of people can achieve success. One is the genius, who has talent in one area and will get to the top very quickly. Another kind is those ordinary people who persevere in their efforts.

I always want to be one of the first class animators in the world. As I keeping improving my animation skill in America, I see a lot of talent artists who can create amazing animations at very young age, and I realize how hard it will be to catch up them. But I won’t give up and I believe I can make my dream come true with continual efforts, just like the little fat boy in the film.

**TECHNIQUE**

This film will be a 3D animation film. The style of vision, story telling and acting will base on Disney style. Most of the film will be done in Maya, Photoshop, Zbrush and Aftereffect.
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