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Posthaste

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Posthaste

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of: Masters of Fine Arts in Film and Animation

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College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
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**Committee Approval:**

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Abstract

Posthaste is a short, stop-motion animated film that follows the narrative of an absent-minded teenage boy who must race to drop a letter in a distant mailbox before the mail truck arrives for its last pickup. This narrative framework is structured to allow for the exploration and experimentation with multiple animation styles. The goal was to not only practice various walk cycles at different speeds, but to also have the character emote broadly, in a more cartoonish style, and with smaller, subtler movements, all while maintaining the believability that these were all expressions of the same individual and were in line with his particular personality.
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-Introduction-

*Posthaste*, my stop motion thesis film, was initially conceived as “a study of walk cycles and depicting character personality through movement with a narrative about a man who keeps forgetting that he needs to mail a letter” (Appendix p. II). The initial story involved an adult character who suddenly realizes he is late to mail his rent check and must race to the mail box up the street before it is too late. As the character makes his way along the several blocks between his house and the mailbox, he becomes hampered by his own tendency towards distraction as well as various other people and obstacles. I chose this narrative structure of racing against a clock combined with a distractible character because I felt it would grant me several good opportunities to play with the pacing of the piece as well as the chance to show my character moving along at various speeds and in different manners.

In an effort to even more fully explore the idea of using short animations and walk cycles to depict a character’s personality, my script also included a large cast of secondary characters with their own motivations and mannerisms including a dog, several children, and a man who was a common sight in downtown Amherst, MA during my undergraduate years, known for wearing a bright blue cape and drumming on a bucket. In the end, Bucket Man did not make it past the first round of edits and reviews. My thesis proposal committee counted as they went through my treatment and pointed out that my story included a total of over fifteen secondary characters that would need to be designed, built, clothed, and animated. The committee was quick to inform me that I was a crazy person and I needed to pare my project down.

My initial plans for the fabrication of the puppets, props, and sets I would be using was also modified after my proposal was reviewed. The main inspiration for my project was taken
from graphic art and design concepts that had a larger focus on detailed line work. I had hoped to evoke a similar feeling in three dimensions by creating background sets made up of larger flat blocks of color with various gauges and colors of wire attached and woven through them to create the detailed line work. These buildings were going to be layered backwards in space to allow me to manually create a multi-plane effect by moving the background elements rather than the camera which would require a much larger stage setup. The puppet design also included the same linear elements. The initial designs called for using small wire shapes for the facial features that could be swapped out and replaced from frame to frame as needed. The members of my committee who were most familiar with stop motion fabrication cautioned me that using the small wire replacement pieces might prove more difficult than anticipated and suggested I run a series of tests to discover the feasibility of creating and then animating with those wire elements before I finalized any character or set designs.

After reviewing my proposal and giving me notes on what aspects of my plan of work needed to be revised and/or altered, my review committee accepted my thesis proposal and I was given clearance to begin my work.


**-Process-**

**PRE-PRODUCTION**

Once my proposal was accepted (with the caveat that the number of characters would be greatly reduced and testing for the design aspects would be done) I began working through various versions of the script, refining and changing the story until I ended up with a stronger narrative concept that wouldn’t present too large of a production challenge. Several elements of the story were changed throughout the scripting process, but the core aspect of the narrative stayed the same. My protagonist, now named Randy, became a teenage boy who must mail an important college letter at the urging of his parents. Changing the age of the main character allowed for more believable distraction on the character’s part as well as adding further incentive (not getting in trouble) to his quest. The later versions of the script also introduced the concept of the mailman in his truck as the environmental antagonist and provided a visual representation of the timer counting down.

The script went through several iterations, each one working to reduce any extraneous events, characters, or shots that didn’t serve to establish the character or move the story forward. The first rounds of revisions saw any human characters being removed from the story if they didn’t interact with my main character. Next, the number of characters who did interact with Randy was reduced to only those that might provide for interesting animation moments and several were swapped out for physical obstacles like a knocked over trash can or an interesting sign in a window. By the time I reached the eighth version of the script, now bearing the title of *Posthaste* instead of *Mail Interest*, I had reduced the number of secondary characters to four, one being the teenage girl who provides the key distraction at the end of the piece that ultimately
prevents Randy from succeeding at the very moment of his apparent victory. To further limit the amount of work required on puppet fabrication, the remaining three characters were assigned to be built over the preliminary test armatures with minimal modifications if needed.

The most significant breakthrough in the scripting phase was the concept of Randy acting out movie-based fantasy sequences as he proceeded through his day. Script six (Appendix p. XIII) saw the first iteration of one of these sequences, having Randy enter into the scene by pretending to kick his own front door open like a police officer in an action flick, sweeping the room with his ‘handgun’. Randy’s tendency to be distracted by his daydreams and more basic desires for recognition, food, and sex, becomes the larger obstacles to his journey compared to the physical challenges he faces. In this way, the narrative of Posthaste parallels the fable of the tortoise and the hare, where the main character’s own personality serves as his undoing. While the hare was challenged by his own arrogance and hubris, Randy is faced with the common teenage challenge of learning to control his own more selfish (child-like) desires and redirect them towards his new adult responsibilities, all while attempting to make sense of an internal thought process that is saturated with chemical imbalances and conflicting impulses. In a word: puberty.

As the scripting, storyboarding, and animatic processes continued, the fantasy sequences were further developed and refined, becoming mixed-media sequences with Randy acting out his part as a physical puppet while the ‘real’ world of the physical sets was replaced by a 2D animated fantasy environment. This technique not only allowed for the viewer to see into Randy’s daydreams and become distracted along with him, but also allowed me to pursue more interesting animation without requiring additional physical sets to be constructed.
Set design and fabrication tests also took up a large portion of my pre-production hours at the beginning of the project. I am most often drawn to styles of art and design that incorporate a great deal of detail and line work, particularly if those details reveal interesting information about the scene or the characters in it that becomes more apparent with each successive viewing. I can trace this interest in detailed line work back to the books and films that I enjoyed the most in my childhood such as Disney’s *Sleeping Beauty* with its angular style and amazing background design by Eyvind Earle (img 1) and the illustrations by Quentin Blake (img 2) that accompanied books by Roald Dahl. Similar styles could be found in children’s stories such as *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish and illustrated by Fritz Siebel (img 3) and *Madeline* by Ludwig Bemelmans (img 4). As I’ve aged I’ve come to appreciate a similar attention to detail in background designs such as in the Hiyao Miyazaki film *Howl’s Moving Castle* (img 5) and the *Triplets of Belleville* by Sylvain Chomet (img 6) to name just two of many.

My original set and puppet designs were based on finding a style that provided both a sense of detail and maintained a level of simplicity that would allow me to work through the project efficiently. In researching similar design styles, I started looking at some of the works done in the ‘I style’ that was developed in the late 1950’s and 60’s by artists such as John Hubley at UPA (Bendazzi 131-133). One film that I found to be very inspiring was *Mr. Magoo’s Christmas Carol* from 1962, particularly the interior background layouts and designs done by Shirley Silvey (img 7). As I searched for more images and information about the style used in *Mr. Magoo’s Christmas Carol* and in the television shorts featuring the same character, I came across a background done by Bob Inman that had been rendered entirely in cut paper and colored pencil which intrigued me (Van Citters p. 11). The use of a combination of cut paper and line work inspired my first series of set designs.
My concept for creating a physical set based on the blocky colors and fine line work of the UPA I-style involved creating layered cutouts for each building and then using colored wire of various thicknesses woven in and out of these cutouts to create the details that the line work provided in the two dimensional works I was drawing from. The facial expressions and clothing detail for the puppets would also use shaped wire. I made mock-ups of the flat color and wire sets and attempted a small series of wire based eye and mouth replacements with a trial puppet head. Using wire for the detailed line work proved to be too difficult to render in a reasonable amount of time while remaining visually interesting and readable for a viewer. Similarly, the planned wire replacement eyes and mouths were too difficult to form and attach in a manner that made it look as if the puppet were actually moving his eyes and mouth. The technique could still prove useful in a future project, but would require a longer time investment beforehand to learn the necessary skills in manipulating the wire on such a small scale to be feasible.

Needing to literally return to the drawing board to determine a new visual style for both the puppets and the sets, I began to look at other cut-paper pieces and illustration styles. Some of my inspiration was drawn from greeting cards I remembered seeing during the time I worked selling stationary and gift products at a bookstore (img 8). Many of them used not just line work and blocks of flat color, but various textures in the color blocks to add to the look of the cards. I also spent some time studying the opening story sequence in Kung Fu Panda 2, directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson, that digitally created very intricate puppets in the cut-paper style and often incorporated semi-transparent layers to give the flat designs a greater sense of depth (img 9). A fellow animator also pointed me towards Flat World, an animated short directed by Daniel Greaves in 1997 (img 10). Flat World used an interesting combination of three dimensional sets, combined with characters who are animated in two dimensions, through the use of cell drawings
and cutout forms. The combination of the mixed media elements of *Flat World* and the highly textured cutouts from *Kung Fu Panda 2*, made me consider a similar approach where I used the texture of cut paper to add detail to my sets, the overlapping pieces creating an implied line work.

The last element that allowed me to connect all these design threads I had floating around in my mind came upon viewing the extremely evocative and textured short *Madame Tutli-Putli* directed by Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski in 2007 (img 11). While the most startling element of Madame Tutli-Putli is the artists’ use of compositing real human eyes onto their puppets, I was also drawn to the fact that the puppet herself had a look as if she were made out of delicately colored paper-maché. Seeing how well the textured look of the puppet incorporated itself into the highly textured environment Lavis and Szczerbowski had created, gave me the idea of covering my own puppet with a paper-maché layer to help it blend in with the background sets that were colored with layers of cut paper.

Another effect I strove to attain with my puppet and set design, came not from fine art or animation, but from my years in marching band at the University of Massachusetts. Because marching band performances are visual as well as auditory, the design of the band uniforms was carefully thought out and considered by our director George Parks. His goal was to make the uniforms recognizable and interesting whether being viewed by someone at the back of the stands or someone who was standing directly in front of a band member. As such, the uniforms had layers of detail that became apparent the closer a person got to them. From a distance a person would only see the black of the pants, the white of the jacket, and the triangular slash of maroon that cut from shoulder to waist. Closer up, details such as the embroidered UMass logo,
the accent seam on the pants, and the brass buttons began to stand out, all the way up to the two small collar pins given to each member before their first performance. I took the same approach with my own set design, where wider angled shots gave an impression of large blocks of color (img 12), that resolved into various layered objects, and detailed window dressings, down to the textured papers making up the spread of pastries in the bakery store window (img 13). My puppet also had similar details; his plain blue jeans reveal stitched pockets up close (img 14), his blue and gray shoes have laces (img 15), and from the front you can see the top of the grey t-shirt he wears underneath his orange and brown RIT-style sweatshirt with its own embroidered patches (img 16).

As is often the case with the production of a short film, there was a long period of overlap between the scripting and designing elements of the pre-production phase and the actual fabrication and production time used to start building the puppets and the sets. Due to the limits of my studio space and the fact that I was animating all the puppet elements on my own, I chose to build my puppets first and then build each set and accompanying props as I animated on them. Once all shots were completed on an individual set, the set would be broken down, stored, and fabrication of the next set would begin. I also found that even with multiple fully built puppets of my protagonist, repeated use in each scene would cause frequent breaks in the joints, requiring a period of repair work to be done on most, if not all, of the Randys while the new set was being fabricated. Often, during these repair periods, I would take the time to alter the design of the puppet to compensate for any issues that weren’t apparent during my initial armature tests and only revealed themselves after a longer period of use.
I knew going into my project that I wanted to work with a solid puppet form rather than using a plasticine-based clay figure such as the ones used in the Gumby television shorts or the Aardman Animation shorts and films like Wallace and Gromit and Creature Comforts. Working with a clay figure can provide options for broader movements and expressions in more cartoon-like style, but that very malleability can also prove to be an added challenge when attempting some of the more subtle gestures I wanted to practice with. Plasticine also can pick up dirt far more easily than a wood, cloth, or silicon figure and can stain the sets it is animated upon.

The first step in the fabrication process for a solid form puppet is designing the armature which acts as a jointed skeleton to give the puppet both structural support and the ability to be posed that mimics the real world anatomy of similar forms. Because my character is a human male, my armature design was based on the human figure with hardened sections to represent the longer bones and wire to serve as the joints. On the professional stop motion scale, these armatures are made from metal with sophisticated joint structure and various specialized pieces that allow for either specific movements or rigging set-ups. Not having the ability or the finances to build or purchase one of these top of the line armatures, or even some of the simpler non-custom variations available online, I chose to design my own basic armature using elements found at my local hardware and art stores.

Having limited experience in building my own puppets previous to this project, I chose to design three armature variations using different materials and configurations to determine what would serve my needs the best for the extended shooting period required for my thesis project.
Each of the designs, which I named Huey, Dewey, and Louie, were based on the size and scale measurements I had worked out when I drew up the character design for Randy (img 17).

Dewey’s materials were based on the methodology I was taught in my puppet building class and also found in *Susannah Shaw’s Stop Motion: Craft Skills for Model Animation.* (Shaw 57-75) The head, torso, pelvis, upper arms, lower arms, upper legs, lower legs, and feet were all carved out of wood to fit within the puppet’s proportions and the joints were made with segments of twisted sixteen-gauge wire (img 18). For the Dewey puppet, I also chose to experiment with a double spine design. I went into the experiment knowing that the dual spine concept wouldn’t likely be useful for what I currently had planned, but I wanted to get a sense for how that structure might work and whether it could be a technique implemented in the future for a different design.

Huey’s design was based on using the middle sections of some metal sleeve anchors I found at the hardware store which provided me with several lengths of hollow tubes to use for the arms and legs while the head, torso, and pelvis remained wooden (img 19). My hope with this design concept was to potentially save myself the time it would take to re-carve and shape the wooden pieces used every time I had the need to replace a puppet’s limb during the project. The gap between the cylindrical sleeve anchor openings and the wire joints, also made with twisted sixteen-gauge armature wire, was filled by molding plumber’s epoxy into the openings and then drilling into the hardened result to glue the wires in (img 20). For the wire joints in the spine and neck, I used untwisted segments of eight-gauge and sixteen-gauge wire respectively to see how the different weights of wire would affect the puppet’s mobility. Continuing the metallic and epoxy theme with Huey’s design, his feet consisted of two stacked hexagonal nuts glued together to provide the tie down hole for a screw at the front of the foot, connected by a twisted
sixteen-gauge wire segment to a molded plumber’s epoxy heel attached to the bottoms of the legs. The stacked nuts were then also surrounded by shaped plumber’s epoxy to create the rounded toe portion of the sneaker.

Louie’s design made use a set of plastic sleeve anchors I had found that were of a cylindrical shape, rather than the typical tapered shape found in most plastic sleeve anchors (img 21). With this third design iteration, I also tested out using only single segments of untwisted eight-gauge armature wire for the central joints to give them added strength and durability, using the twisted sixteen-gauge only for the neck, wrists, ankles, and connection between the heel and ball of the foot. The foot design itself originally consisted of a wooden cube sandwiched between two washers to serve as the front tie down, and a second cube as the heel, with the shoe shape to be provided later by some form of covering. When it came time to actually build the feet, I chose to instead test two different concepts based on the results of my first two designs. The left foot consisted of the same stacked washers used with Huey, without the plumber’s epoxy shaped around it, with a washer on the bottom and a loop attached to the top of the stack that connected back to the heel, also made from two stacked hex nuts with washers on either side. The right foot consisted of a partially shaped wooden front with a washer on the bottom, connected with a wire inserted and glued to the wooden ball that attached back to the wood and washer heel (img 22).

Once the three test armatures were assembled and the J.B. Weld I used to attach the wire joints to the various bone-segments had fully set, I then tested out each armature by shooting a short walk sequence with each of them and comparing how well they performed. As stated in my production blog,

“I had two purposes in doing these armature movement tests. The first and most obvious was a need to test out the various armature designs I came up with. To
take a moment to examine how the different weights of wire worked for each joint and to see which limb structure is both effective and efficient for my needs. The second aspect of these tests is to give me a chance to essentially rough draft my walk cycles for the project.” (Appendix LV)

The first puppet I put through its paces was the wood and wire based Dewey design that also used the known-to-be-problematic double spine. I chose to use the double spine in this test, even though I was told it wouldn’t work because I wanted to see exactly how it wouldn’t work and if it might actually be useful in another context in the future. One possible benefit from the double spine design would be added support and strength for a walk cycle that had a lot of twist and torque in the hip movement. Because of this I tested the puppet with a hippy, sauntering walking, similar to the walk cycle I had planned for the distracting female character at the end of the piece. The double spine did seem to help keep the hip movements smooth along the Y axis of the puppet’s walk (front to back) but became a hindrance when I tried to make the hip pop up and down throughout the steps (img 23). As expected, the spine wasn’t workable for the basic human figure, but could prove to be useful with a character that walks with more of a waddling movement like a heavy character, a duck, or even a robot. The puppet supported its own weight well throughout the walk and the joints were easy to manipulate as I desired. The balance between the wooden bone segments and the twisted sixteen-gauge wire worked well and can provide a good basis for future armature designs. The only real fault that I discovered as I animated with the Dewey design was the single sixteen-gauge segment that attached the ball and heel of the feet. This weight proved to be too weak for a joint that was used as often as it was and would sometimes need to support the whole weight of the puppet for a few frames.

The second test was of a jogging run cycle using the Huey armature design. It was apparent very quickly into the jog cycle that the metal sleeve anchors used in the Huey design were far too heavy to be of use for a final puppet design. The need to use the plumber’s epoxy to
fill the gaps on the ends of the segments only added to the weight problem and the puppet had difficulty supporting its own weight during parts of the jog cycle that made use of only one tie down point and had the other leg stretched out (img 24). The puppet was clumsy to use overall, and didn’t animate well. One of the few parts of the design that did prove to be beneficial was the single piece of eight-gauge wire that was used for the spine. I felt the added stability of using the single, heaver gauge wire provided better support for more extended poses while still being malleable enough to be positioned without difficulty on the part of the animator.

The last test animation used the Louie puppet design and served as a rough test for Randy’s initial entrance in the film where he is dancing to music as he walks down his front hallway. In many ways, the rough hallway test proved to be more successful and less successful than the previous two tests. The cylindrical plastic anchors worked very well, only needing to quickly have the center hole widened with a drill bit before the wire segments could be attached. This was a much quicker fabrication procedure than the previous two designs. Using the heavier eight-gauge wire for most of the joints proved to be a more frustrating design element. The thicker wire was harder to position properly in the extremities and the longer joint sections in the design made it harder to create consistent knees and elbows from step to step. Midway through the test, one of the wire joints pulled completely out of its socket. Because I was using the single strand of the wire which had a completely smooth surface, the J.B. Weld had less area to grip and attach to, causing the two to separate. Re-attaching the joint wasn’t difficult, but it did require me to secure the puppet in its final pose of the day, set the joint back in place with the epoxy, and then wait a full 24 hours for the adhesive to fully dry before the shot could be continued (img 25). Despite some of my difficulties in getting the puppet’s limbs to move how I wanted them to, this final animation test looked much cleaner and I was able to express more of
the character’s personality in it, than I had with the first two. Overall, building and animating the test armatures proved to be useful, not only from a design and fabrication perspective, but also in allowing me to reacquaint myself with puppet animation and get back into the habit of animating straight ahead, rather than working through a sequence using breakdown poses and in-betweens as I had with my previous animation production.

One aspect of the armature design that I experimented with after the animation tests were complete was the various hand designs of the puppets (img 26). Dewey used a design based on thin fingers of twisted twenty-four-gauge wire laid into grooves on the back of a wooden hand toggle. Overall the first design worked decently, but the fingers felt too delicate to hold up and the wooden toggle was too bulky after the wires had been attached. Huey’s hand design was based on previous concepts of using exterior wire in the aesthetics of my sets and puppets and consisted of a polyurethane foam glove attached to an internal wire loop for the palm, and then being wrapped in an exoskeleton of thin gauge wire to force the fingers into the correct positions. This second concept was quickly discarded as the internal loop proved not to be large enough to manipulate easily as a palm and the thin gauge wire didn’t have enough strength to hold the foam in any bent position.

Like most of the Louie armature design, the third hand concept was based on what worked and what didn’t work with the first two designs. The third hand concept used the loop from Huey’s design and the wire fingers from the Dewey design, this time being made of single pieces of sixteen-gauge wire instead of twisted twenty-four-gauge for added strength. The four fingers were attached to the outer edge of the palm loop, and the thumb jutted out to the side from the base of the loop where the wire begins to twist together and then covered with a generous layer of J.B. Weld (img 27). In testing, the sixteen-gauge wires were just too difficult to
bend properly at such a small scale to work as fingers and the various pieces of thicker wire wrapping around the palm loop made the whole hand too thick to be of use.

After looking over all the designs and the results of the animation tests I decided on a final armature design for my main character (img 29). Sticking with the wooden torso and pelvis I used with the Louie puppet which was essentially the torso from Dewey’s design altered to have an angled cut at the shoulders to allow for a greater range of motion in the arms and the general shape of the Huey pelvis without the notches for the legs. I also kept the single piece of eight-gauge wire as the basis for the spine for three of my four armatures, using the twisted sixteen-gauge on the fourth to be set aside for wilder movements that might need the greater flexibility and rigging options. The arms and legs use two different sizes of the plastic sleeve anchors for the bones, each segment actually being lengthened a bit to add to Randy’s overall tall and skinny body shape. The extremities are all attached using twisted sixteen-gauge wire, including the neck and the connector between the heels and balls of the feet (img 28).

The feet consist of four stacks of paired hex nuts on top of a small washer and epoxied together. The heel is attached to the lower legs by epoxying the ankle wire through the central hole in the back hex pairs while the connecting ‘arch’ of the foot is made from a length of twisted sixteen-gauge with a loop at the front to attach to the top of the ball hex stack and wrapped around the ankle joint at the back. The loop and the arch connection were then both covered with a thick coat of the J.B. Weld epoxy to make the joins as strong as possible (img 30).

My final design for the hands consisted of a slightly larger loop of the sixteen-gauge wire with a washer epoxied to it for added strength. Once the ‘palm’ had set, the fingers were attached by wrapping a section of twenty-four-gauge wire around the washer and loop several times and
then twisting together to form the finger spreading outward. Smaller drops of the J.B. Weld along one side of the washer served as an indication of knuckles and prevented any of the finger length from slipping from side to side. A second drop of J.B. Weld was added to the tips of all the fingers so the sharper edges or the wires wouldn’t cut through the cloth sports tape that was used to wrap the hands once all the adhesive had set (img 31).

The use of sixteen-gauge vs eight-gauge wire and twisting vs not twisting is a subject of some debate between different sources in the puppet building sources I have found in print and in online forums. Some animators prefer the twisted sixteen-gauge for its flexibility and the ease of use it provides, while others prefer to use untwisted or heavier weights of wire like the eight-gauge to have a stronger skeleton overall and to minimize the number of breakages that need to be repaired even though it means the joints are harder to manipulate. At the beginning of this thesis project I felt that having a more malleable joint was more important, especially as I was still learning to animate with the puppet and didn’t need any added difficulty by having resistant joints. As the project continued over the course of several years and many (img 32) many (img 33) broken joints and I became more comfortable with my animating abilities, I found that I would often replace a broken segment of sixteen-gauge wire with a single eight-gauge segment, preferring to have to use a little more pressure to manipulate a joint over having to potentially adjust my animation in the middle of a shot to compensate for a weakened or broken joint or to even attempt to extract and replace the whole joint while trying to keep the rest of the puppet and stage as still as possible (img 34). By the end of the project, I had even started experimenting with joints made from three segments of untwisted sixteen-gauge wire instead of the single eight-gauge segment in an attempt to maximize flexibility and durability. Being in the middle of shooting I didn’t have the chance to test the new joint configuration in a controlled setting
against the other joint options, but I do plan to run a series of more empirical tests on that very subject as soon as I have fulfilled by graduation requirements and have finished touching up my final director’s cut of Posthaste to enter into festivals in the coming year.

As soon as I determined the final armature design for the body of my puppet, I began fabricating all the elements needed to construct the three base model puppets and one rig variation. I used longer lengths of wire to serve as both the joint and the connector between the two plastic anchor pieces that made up each ‘bone’ in the limbs, letting each piece set for twelve hours before attaching the next section of wire and being careful not to bend any of the joined sections until they had finished setting for the full twenty-four hours the epoxy needed.

While waiting for the body armature pieces to set, I began gluing the hex nut and washer stacks needed for the feet together, keeping them to the side until after the puppet had been skinned and clothed before they would be attached. The hands were also constructed separately and set aside, to be attached after the skinning and costuming of the puppets were completed. The lack of head, hands, and feet, making it far easier to dress the puppets in the costumes as the sleeves and pant legs weren’t wide enough to accommodate the proportionally large hands and feet used in my design.

The next step in the process of building my puppets was to flesh out the rest of Randy’s physical features over the armature using polyurethane foam and athletic pre-wrap. Polyurethane foam is mostly found as padding in furniture and green blocks of it can be found at most sewing and craft stores. Using rubber cement, I attached pieces of the foam to the arms, legs, and waist or the armatures making them about two or three times the thickness I actually wanted the final figure to be (img 35). I used small sewing scissors to refine the foam shapes a bit, adding
roundness to the sharper edges and trying to make the foam sections blend in with each other better.

Next I took cut sections of the athletic pre-wrap about an inch and a half by twelve inches long and coated one end of it in rubber cement. Athletic pre-wrap is a very thin foam-like bandage that comes on a roll. The pre-wrap will slightly adhere to itself, and in sports medicine is often used as a barrier between someone’s skin and the heavier athletic tape, making removing the tape a lot easier and a lot less painful. In puppet fabrication, I use the pre-wrap to condense and smooth the foam surface over the puppet, creating a firmer flesh texture that still has enough give to accommodate the puppet’s movements without completely folding into a crease that makes the puppet look unrealistic. Using several layers of the pre-wrap and filling in a few smaller sections with more foam, I ended up with four body shapes ready to be given skin and clothing (img 36).

Drawing inspiration from Madam Tutli-Putli and wanting my puppet to look as if he could realistically belong in the same world as the sets I had designed, I decided to use paper-maché to create the visible parts of my character’s skin. The only problem was that any paper flexible enough to create a rounded organic shape, would also tear any time the body part it covered moved too far from its starting position. I used the hands of my test armatures to experiment with different coverings for the hands, from vet-wrap, to a linen based paper, and a cloth-based athletic tape (img 37). The vet wrap proved to have a texture too unlike paper to properly blend with the rest of the puppet and the linen paper still tore when the hands and fingers were manipulated. The cloth athletic tape, however, did an excellent job of moving with the puppet without tearing or pulling, and, when painted, looked close enough like the paper-
maché layers that were going to be used for Randy’s heads to be an ideal material to use for the puppet’s skin texture. The tape was wrapped around the hands, wrists, upper torso, and neck of the foam-covered armatures and then all painted the same color and set to dry (img 38).

Designing the clothing for my protagonist was an arduous task. Because Randy’s proportions are unique and the constant bending of his limbs to try and dress him in pre-existing doll clothes would result in the wire joints being severely weakened or ever broken, I had to design and create his entire wardrobe myself from the first starter pattern to the finished product that would stand in front of the camera. I studied the way actual jeans and sweatshirts were assembled and what the shapes of the individual pieces would look like before they were sewn together. I then repeated these patterns on a smaller scale to try and match them to Randy’s proportions. Once the first test pattern was complete, I continued to refine the original pattern and how the resulting clothing was put together. After over six pairs of template shirts, ten template pants, and many variations on the sweatshirt design, (img 39) I finally managed to create a set of clothing patterns for my main character that looked and moved properly with the puppet (img 40).

I sought out different cloths with varied textures to make each piece of clothing look distinctive from the others and included small details on each section to give the clothes more realism and make them more interesting when viewing in close up shots. I created the look of a t-shirt by cutting fabric from an actual t-shirt and using embroidery floss wrapped around the edge of the neckline to create the look of a collar (img 41). Over the t-shirt, the puppet has an orange sweatshirt with brown details on it. The sweatshirt is made of a cloth that has a texture similar to suede on the outside, giving it a more matte look. The hood proved to be the most difficult part
of the sweatshirt to design and complete. Both the inside and outside of the hood would be visible to the camera at various points, so all the hems and attachments needed to be carefully hidden. Additionally, the hood needed to be animate-able, as it would flap down behind the character or move up and down as he jumped and fell. To achieve this, I carefully glued thin wire along the inside of the hem of the hood and used hidden stitches to force the front-most edge to drape properly where it lays over the character’s shoulder (img 42). The detail work on the sweatshirt included decorative stitches along the edge of the hood, a small line to indicate center of the chest where the hood attaches, cuffs on both sleeves and along the bottom edge that included added texturing with an orange marker, and accents of three brown horizontal lines along the sleeves and a brown paw print on the lower left of the front (img 16).

Randy’s jeans made use of a thin denim material and yellow stitching to create the look of a small pair of jeans. Overlapping layers created false pockets along the seams in the front, along with a center overlap to create the fly. Stitching accents outlined the pockets, the fly, and the waistband, as well as being used to make a small circular ‘button’ where the fly closed. Small pockets were cut out and attached to the back of the jeans just below where the sweatshirt hem ended, each with a gap at the top allowing for them to be functional in a shot where the character stuffs the envelop he is carrying in a back pocket (img14).

Working with fabric on such a small scale, particularly for the details, was often difficult as the weave of the fabric wasn’t intended to be manipulated on that level and would have a tendency to unravel. To help prevent that I applied an age old feminine trick used to stop runs in pantyhose, by applying a layer of clear nail polish to all the edges of the pattern pieces. Once it was absorbed into the fabric and dried, the polish created a seal along the edges of the fabric,
preventing it from pulling apart as it was manipulated while still being permeable enough for a needle to go through wherever it was needed.

The last piece of my character’s ensemble were his sneakers which had to not only look like shoes, but also be removable for when I needed to access the tie downs in my character’s feet. To accomplish this, I carved a cap for the front top tie down, made out of dry floral foam that was fitted to the stack of hex nuts underneath, and shaped to look like the rounded front of a shoe on the outside. Once fitted, the cap was painted with primer, covered with paper-maché to add detail, and then painted blue with a gray rubber sole. This cap was then attached to heel section of the foot with a piece of cloth designed to look like the tongue and laces of the sneaker. This was accomplished by painting the cloth to match the colors of the front of the shoe and then stitching embroidery floss ‘laces’ back and forth across to match an actual sneaker (img 15). The back heel was a solid section, built up with paper-maché which also covered the wires connecting the gray cloth segment used to cover the gap between the heel and toe of the shoe. Because the sneaker needed to be able to bend with the movement of the foot, the middle connecting section was made up of a curved cloth tent which had wires running through its edges. This allowed me to bend and shape the middle of the shoe to either lie flat when the character’s foot was even, or to crumple it to match the bend of the foot when it was flexed (img 43).

I used similar techniques to create the outfit for my secondary character, Babs, the girl whose presence distracts Randy from actually placing his envelope in the mailbox at the very end of the story. The most distinctive piece of her wardrobe is the leather jacket she is wearing. I was able to find a faux leather jacket designed to be worn by a Barbie doll and was able to tear it
apart at the seams and modify it to fit the proportions of my puppet by shorting the length, moving some of the buttons, and adjusting the dimensions along the back (img 44). I also found a satin purple fabric to line the visible parts of the inside of the jacket with, to add a pop of color to her look. Underneath her jacket I gave her a blue patterned halter top with a gauzy top layer and a pair of dark jeans (img 45). The denim fabric I found for Babs’s jeans was not only a darker shade of blue, but had a floral texture sewn into it that added to the character’s overall punk-rock sort of look. To match it with her leather jacket, the seams and detail work on her jeans was sewn with a purple thread (img 46).

The last remaining element of the puppet design and fabrication to figure out was the structure for the puppet’s head. When my initial design concept for using replacement facial features made of wire proved not to viable in testing, I had to develop a different method for changing my puppet’s expressions. My first thought was to emulate the way Laika has used replacement faces in their films *Coraline* and *ParaNorman* where the face and head are separate components and the entire face is split into upper and lower sections that can each be swapped out as needed. I went through each of my shots and sketched out what facial expressions I would need and which ones could be used more than once with minimal adjustment.

My first attempts at building the head and face components mimicked my method in creating the shoe caps. I cut out wooden bases with holes drilled into them for the neck wire to attach to, and then began carving more floral foam into the rough shape of the back of Randy’s head. I quickly found that while the foam was adequate for the simpler shoe caps, I just didn’t possess the carving skills to make the four puppet heads I needed match up well enough to serve as duplicates of one another.
With carving no longer a viable option, I decided to use molds to cast duplicate heads and facial features. I molded an exemplar face with Sculpy, cut off the facial replacement section, and then baked the pieces to set them. Using the clay model as a base, I then created a three-part plaster mold of the back of Randy’s head (img 47). Based on the Sculpy master mold, I knew using regular clay or plaster would be too heavy for the puppet armature to support. I tried three different varieties of lighter clay options before finding one that wouldn’t completely pull apart when I attempted to remove it from the mold. It wasn’t a perfect solution as there was still some deformation of the heads when I removed them, but I was able to compensate for the most part before baking the pieces and made sure to press and bake more than the four heads I needed so I would be able to use the four that resembled each other most closely for my actual puppets. Any further variation between the heads was minimized with judicious carving and layering of the paper-maché (img 48). The shape of the wooden inserts was traced and then cut out of the lighter clay heads, the inserts epoxied in place, and then all the heads were covered with a layer of paper-maché and then painted to look the same (img 49).

Despite my success with the head sections, the lighter clay ended up not hardening enough to be used as a material for the replacement faces. I attempted to use my press mold with various materials without success, so I recast my master face piece using a flexible casting material and began experimenting with materials that could be poured and hardened (img 50). I discovered quickly that using melted candle wax gave me good results that I could easily modify as needed and I began making a series of face molds (img 51). Once all the facial molds were hardened and cleaned I began testing my split replacement face technique.
The faces were attached to the head of the puppet with the use of small magnets embedded in the wooden insert for the head that would attach to thin metal plating glued to the back of each face piece (img 52). I cut several of the wax head molds in half, papered them and drew in the eyes and mouths on each of them. I also prepped several of the uncut faces with different expressions to test which would work best under the camera. Not having the precision of the 3D printed faces used by Laika in their films, I found that the split face design was too variable to make a clean transition between the faces and that digitally erasing the line between the top and bottom halves of the face did little to help (img 53). The expression changes between the full face design moved much more smoothly and so the idea of using a split face technique was abandoned.

Having settled on using full facial replacements, I wanted to eliminate the need for multiple faces to be used for changes in just eye movement. Replacing the full head when the shape of the mouth was supposed to remain still would be impossible with the hand drawn mouths and would make the swapping of the faces too noticeable. To avoid this, I cut small pupils out of oak tag, colored them black with waterproof marker, and then coated each side with the same clear nail polish I used for the clothing. The polish not only gave the pupils a more realistic shine, but allowed the pupils to stick to the paper-maché covering of the face with only a small amount of Vaseline (img 54). The pupils needed to be coated on both sides otherwise the oak tag would slowly absorb the moisture in the Vaseline, causing it to dry out and no longer work as an adhesive.

The lack of a need for replacement faces for the Babs character coupled with the fact that there were no duplicate puppets for her, allowed me to use a simpler method for building her
head and to make use of a more detailed technique for her hair. Her head was molded by hand from a light clay, baked, and then covered with paper-maché. The hole for the neck to attach was drilled directly into the bottom of the skull as was a hole at the back of the head which I used to attach her ponytail. Her head was then painted, facial features added on and her pupils designed the same way as the Randy puppet (img 55).

To create Babs’s curly hair, I painted thin strips of a cloth-like paper black, then sandwiched a wire between two of them to allow her hair to be manipulated and animated as needed, while still giving it a paper quality. Once dried, I wrapped the hair strips around the base of a small paintbrush to create the curls. Several of these curled pieces were bunched together with lengths of wire sticking out of the bottom like a flower bouquet. These were glued together and then epoxied into the hole at the back of the head to create the ponytail. The rest of the strips were trimmed and then glued in folded sections along the rest of the puppet’s skull leading to the ponytail section and creating bangs at the front of the character’s face (img 56).

SET DESIGN AND FABRICATION

The first set I built for my project was the exterior of Randy’s house which was needed for the second scene in the project. I chose to start with this set because it required a multi-level base that would allow me to animate the puppet running out a doorway and then down a short set of steps until he reached the ground. I wanted to make sure that I had the most structurally complicated set done before I started on any of the others, so if something went wrong with the shot, I would have the time I needed to fix the issue and reshoot the scene if necessary.
The design of the house exterior was based on the linear aesthetic I had researched previously based on the UPA I-style designs. As part of that design concept, I included slanted windows and doors as well and angled posts on the front of the deck to make the house look more interesting (img 57). Too add to the flatter appearance of the set overall I reduced the depth of the sets as much as I could while still providing enough space for my puppet to exit the house, step on the porch, and then move forward down the sidewalk realistically. The idea for using a reduced depth of field was inspired by Henry Selick’s Coraline where he used a reduced depth of field for scenes that take place in the ‘real world’ to make the other world Coraline is tempted by seem more expansive in comparison, an effect further enhanced by the use of stereoscopic 3D in the film. To further add to the flatter aesthetic, I used simplified layered shapes to represent the brickwork of the porch, the bushes along the front of the house, and the pattern of the pathway that runs from the front door to the sidewalk (img 58). My original set design also called for using strips of green paper that had been feathered and pasted in rows along the front of the house to represent the grass. This was one of the first design elements which was changed in the name of efficiency when I found a roll of fake grass at the hardware store that would be much faster to install as a front yard for the house set (img 59). As the project continued to move forward I tried to consider any aspects of the fabrication or the animation that could be adjusted or approached differently in order to more forward as efficiently as possible without interfering with the narrative or artistic tone of the film.

Building the exterior of Randy’s house as my first set provided with me important information about how to streamline the process with the subsequent sets and ways in which I could improve upon my technique. The first thing that became apparent over the course of construction was that while using wood as the structural base for the house façade provided more
stability, it simply wasn’t a technique that made sense for a project where the sets served primarily as a backdrop and were only used for a short time period before the main character walked out of frame and into the next set. The amount of time invested in using a wooden structure was also multiplied by the fact that working out of a bedroom in an apartment building precluded setting up any sort of sawing table, resulting in all the individual pieces of the framework needing to be cut by hand.

Another aspect of the first set that needed to be improved upon moving forward was the spacing of the screws that attached the Homasote base to the stage. For the house set, the screw points were spread out evenly across the Homasote base with roughly eighteen inches between them. Once I began animating the puppet moving along the sidewalk in profile to the camera, it became apparent that without having additional screws placed more regularly along the base that the Homasote would actually pull away from the stage wherever the puppet tie down was attached causing an effect where it appeared as if the ground was rising up to meet Randy’s foot as he walked.

Taking what I had learned from the first set, I changed some of my methods when I began building my second set piece which was actually the first set seen in the film, the front hallway of Randy’s house (img 61). Because the only structural part of the set that Randy would be interacting with was the door itself which I was repurposing from the exterior set, I chose to construct the rest of the hallway and props from cardboard and foam board. Using materials that were easier to manipulate and carve allowed me to save time in building the structural elements and focus more on the layering and texturing of the colored papers I was using to add color to the sets.
Initially I had planned to attach these cardboard based walls to a scaffolding structure made of thinner wooden strips that could be quickly cut and screwed together to adapt to the shape of the façades in each scene. Before I began constructing the scaffolding element though, I serendipitously stumbled across a box of K’Nex that my parents had held on to after my brothers and I had all moved out. The modular building toys were the perfect tool for quickly piecing together a solid scaffold for each set and is extremely easy to modify from one set piece to the next. Additionally, because the individual pieces were made of a non-porous plastic, I could attach the cardboard façades directly to the scaffold with a hot glue gun for faster construction and then simply peel the dried glue off the plastic pieces once I was finished (img 60).

Before I started building my second set, I was inspired to begin pushing the angular designs of my sets even further after re-watching Chris Butler’s ParaNorman and seeing how visually interesting that world became with Laika’s use of uneven and slanted forms (img 62). In The Art and Making of Paranorman, one of the designers comments on this aspect of their sets.

“The directors wanted a naturalistic, almost live-action feel to the town, but being true to the setting does not mean being a slave to reality... But look closely and you’ll see that not a single window is a real rectangle; there is no roofline that doesn’t swoop or jag. ‘If one of our characters were to walk into a room and sit next to you, you’d find his proportions grotesque,’ Lowry points out. ‘The huge head, the hands out of proportion, too much neck or no neck at all. They aren’t real in their form. And we have to build rooms where they feel comfortable, like they belong. So the rooms are a little skewed, a little off-kilter.'” (Alger p.86)

My goal in including more uneven design elements was to really take advantage of the benefits of animating with stop motion. The slanted line of the hallway wainscoting and the uneven sides to the small desk (img 63) in the hallway interior give the sets a more handmade and organic look by avoiding the perfectly straight and perpendicular shapes that are so much easier to achieve in computer based projects. These peculiarities help to ground the sets and the puppet in
the physical world, which was all the more important with the more graphical style I was working in.

The hallway interior was a particularly important set for Posthaste because it sets up several expectations for the audience as to Randy’s personality and motivations for mailing his letter. The desk was the primary set piece that tells the story of what’s going on in Randy’s life right now (img 64). The letter that is to be the focus of the character’s quest is held out in front of all the other objects and the rest of the props all seem to point towards it to draw the viewers’ eyes to this key item. The large red circle on the calendar and the notes with arrows and numbers counting down to the deadline for when the letter needs to be mailed sets up what the task is that needs to be accomplished and the fact that it is time sensitive. Among the other mail is a new student packet typically sent to newly accepted students as well as the invitation to an upcoming high school prom (img 65). These items combined with an old SAT prep book let the audience know that the as-yet unmet character is a high school senior. The prominent calendar and plethora of notes and reminders, several of which are second or third reminders, as well as instructions such as a note pointing out where his keys are supposed to go and another sign low to the floor pointing out the waiting mat for shoes to be left on show that this student might be somewhat forgetful in combination with parents who find this personality trait to be a source of anxiety (img 66).

Outside of the detailed props that serve the narrative on this set, the overall set up and structure of the hallway speaks to the combination of 2D and foreshortened 3D aspects that will continue throughout the rest of the film. The floor extends forward for the puppet to walk on, and the desk and the props on it are all three dimensional. However, within that 3D space there is a
plant in the corner that has flat, layered leaves like the bushes out front and an archway leading to a living room that is rendered as an optical illusion, using flat images of a sofa and a bureau that were digitally shaded and textured to make them look like they have more depth than they do (img 67). This combined with false perspective lines and the width of the flooring gradually becoming smaller and curving upwards to continue the illusion makes for an excellent blending of the three dimensional front environment and the flat 2D environment in the deeper background. This same technique of essentially creating theater-like flats to occupy the space further away from the camera and create a false sense of depth will continue to be used to create the interiors of the many storefronts that Randy walks by throughout his journey towards the mailbox.

Once all the shots were completed for the hallway sequence, the first of these storefront sets to be built was the bakery (img 68). Again, as with the interior hallway set, I used more of the slanted lines in the overall design and pushed the fantasy elements more with the cupcake styled door. I also made a conscious choice to try and do something different from what might be expected for a bakery in terms of the color scheme. Bakeries are often associated with warm tones and pastels and when a person thinks of a bakery the colors that come to mind are often browns, pinks, whites, and yellows – similar to the colors seen in the baked goods themselves. I wanted to make this bakery be particularly enticing to my main character, a male with an interest in engineering. I chose to go with a more mechanical/technological color scheme, using brighter, more saturated greens, blues, yellows, and grays, and finding paper textures that used geometric patterns (img 69). I also made use of strong geometric shapes in the design of the display window and incorporated gears into the design scheme as well as using the word ‘byte’ rather than ‘bite’ in the bakery’s name (img 70).
Because Randy passes close to the front of the bakery window and because the window display serves as a trigger for one of Randy’s two-dimensional fantasy sequences (img 71), I took the time to actually build the flat pastry elements out of cut paper and place them on angled shelf features and plates to achieve a more detailed theater flat look for these shots (img 72). In order to make sure the physical 2D elements matched up with the digital ones in the fantasy sequence I first created the 2D versions of the pastries in Adobe Flash and then printed out those outlines on heavier cardstock to use as templates for the physical cut-paper versions. Once the cut paper versions were completed and I knew what paper tones would be used, I went back and used the same color schemes when coloring the Flash versions of the food elements (img 73).

One difficulty that arose with the design of this first storefront set was the scale of the set compared to the puppet. My previous sets were scaled around the concept that the top of the doorframe would be thirteen inches high in order to proportionally match the height of my eleven-inch puppet, based on the idea that Randy is around 5’ 8”. When applying this metric to the bakery set, I failed to take into consideration that the top trim of the doorframe (the header) was slanted. Because I used the lower edge of the header to set the scale for the façade, rather than the middle of the header, the entire set piece ended up being built at a larger scale than it should have been (img 74). By the time I realized this mistake, most of the set had already been build and papered and I did not have the time to redo the set piece. To fix the problem, I removed the sign arch and moved it down until it was closer to the proper height for the set and laid in an extra layer of Homasote along the front of the set to raise the puppet higher up in the frame. I made sure to frame the shots so that the larger door wasn’t fully in frame for the eye level shots, (img 75) and then used a higher overhead angle that initially planned when the puppet exits the scene to disguise the disproportionality of the doorway to the puppet (img 76).
Other set pieces, like the outermost corner of Sleepy Dave’s Mattress Emporium which was built for the background of the final shot in the bakery scene, used many of the same techniques I had developed in building the first three sets (img 77). It was in building the Sleepy Dave’s set that I determined that any sets that filled in the space across the street from where the puppet was located didn’t need to have actual paper cut out flats for the interiors, but could use the same textured and printed method I used to create the illusion of a living room in the deep background. I also experimented with further scaling down the sets in the deep background in order to make them appear further away while keeping the actual stage depth shorter.

Scaling the proportions of the deep background sets proved helpful when building the sets for the final scene of the Posthaste (img 79). The final scene of the film, scene 9, makes use of several wide-angle shots that allow for a full body view of both Randy and Babs, the girl who distracts him from his task at the last minute. It was important to me to keep these wide angle shots in the final scene because it was the one scene with multiple walk cycles that I hadn’t needed to cut in the interest of time. The drawback to using the wide angle shots was that it required a much longer backdrop to be built in order to fill all the space behind the puppets, resulting in a stretch of stage that consisted of four attached storefronts, making it the longest setup in the film (img 78).

I chose to make the collection of storefronts look like an attached building with multiple units in order to avoid having to create the sides of building and the small alleyways between them, which would have involved a skewed horizon line in order to perpetuate the illusion of depth. Making the first three stores appear to be units in a single building also allowed me to use the same color scheme for each exterior, limiting the amount of additional time needed to be
spent designing the architecture and finding the appropriate colored papers (img 80). The three buildings share a detailed wooden design, inspired by some of the buildings and houses I often saw in the year I was living in Pittsburgh, PA. This wooden aesthetic played into the theme of carpentry and home goods that I used for the three storefronts, all of which were references to the members of my thesis committee.

In the center is Murphey’s Chairs, a play on the concept of the Murphy bed, a nod to my committee chair Peter Murphey. When designing the interior of this furniture store I chose to feature a SoFA sale as a reference to the School of Film and Animation (SoFA) itself (img 81). To the left is Reisch Homegoods, named for committee member Mark Reisch and includes window dressings that contains a stand of mixers similar to the one I modeled in his first 3D animation class I took, as well as a small vase of tulips on a table similar to a character in his own thesis project (img 82). To the left if Tom’s Hardware, named for Tom Gasek who was not only a member of my committee, but my puppet fabrication and stop motion teacher who provided me with the ‘tools’ and the basic knowledge which my entire project is based upon (img 83). To the left of all three of those stores in a small ATM vestibule for The Bank of Mom and Dad, a tribute to my parents who were not only supportive of my decision to pursue a graduate degree in the arts, but even purchased for me the camera with which I shot my entire project (img 84).

The façades of the three buildings utilized the layered cardboard and the textured paper methods I had developed earlier to continue the flat colored look that also had a false depth to it. Being further back in space, I was also able to speed up my construction time by not needing to wrap the sides of the cardboard layers with colored paper as I had to with the previous exteriors,
and was able quickly fill them with the more easily manipulated construction paper and then paint them to match the colors of the textured papers on the top layers. This was particularly useful when it came to coloring the thin edges of the large windows along the front of the stores (img 85). The window dressings were all drawn in Flash, using as many symbols and repeated shapes with varied colors as possible to fill the space. These individual images were then layered to look as if they were stored on shelves together, then exported into Photoshop and scaled up to match the size of the windows. They were printed on cardstock, cut out, and mounted on small pieces of foam board to fill the interiors of the buildings.

In front of the stores, I created additional set pieces to further establish the entire environment of the scene. The sidewalk is covered with a layer of wallpaper with a concrete-like texture, with the gaps between the sidewalk blocks created by painting in the lines and then thinning them down with an acetone wash. The curbs were carved from Styrofoam blocks with a wide spread, and then painted with two different shades of gray to create the texture and glued down onto the street itself which was made from overlapping roofing shingles which were cut out and nailed to the stage (img 86). Trees were designed with layered painted trunks and textured paper to create the layers of leaves, similar to the design of the bushes from the first set. I built multiple angled lampposts scaled for both the front sidewalk and a smaller version for the backgrounds, using empty glue stick containers as a base (img 87). By removing the tube that held the glue and filling the base with a circle of Homasote which was glued in place, I was able to screw that small base in place, and then click the top portion of the lamppost on top of it, using the closures already built into the glue stick design (img 88). The rest of the lamppost consisted of layers of foam and cardboard attached to that central base, painted and covered with colored paper and topped with a circular light made from a faux pearl bead (img 89). Not only did these
added set elements bring more depth to the space, but also provided cast shadows that fell across the storefronts and the sidewalk when the scene’s lighting was setup.

The designs for the mail truck posed an interesting challenge as I wanted to make the truck itself be animate-able so that I could make the truck look like it was rumbling when it was idling at the stop light. To achieve this, I designed the truck in two sections, the lower half consisting of a wooden base and the wheels, while the top half included the rest of the body of the truck attached to the bottom frame with stabilized screws (img 90). Four thin wooden strips run behind each wheel, blacked out and carefully measured so that when placed flat, the wheels just brush the ground, allowing for a tie down point that doesn’t change depending on the rotation of the wheels themselves. The connecting screws run up from the bottom base and then through the floor of the top section with a nut placed along the screw rod in between them. I capped the top of the screws where they attached underneath so that when the screws are turned, instead of the rods pulling out away from the base, they remain stationary and the nuts placed in the middle are forced to move up and down along the rod, causing the upper section to rise or lower as needed (img 91). By using four of these attachments, two in front and two in back to the left and right, I was able to creating a left and right rocking motion as well as an up and down movement. This was helpful not only in making the truck rumble, but also for exaggerating the tilt of the truck as it rounded corners. In order to make sure I had access to all four screw rods no matter where the camera was angled, both side doors could be moved as well as the side panels on both sides of the bed of the truck (img 92). The top of the truck could be lifted off and the back opened, the top sections being carefully fitted so that when it was replaced and jittering between frames would be minimal (img 93).
Visually, the truck was a combination of design aspects of both American and European postal trucks. The slanted angle of the top was designed to give the vehicle a more dynamic look which suggested motion even when the model was stable (img 94). I chose to use blue as the base color, rather than the white or red that is typically seen in US and European postal trucks. I felt that changing some of the established colors of things would help make the project more accessible to people from other countries who would have different concepts of what color these items should be. By using colors that weren’t the same as the standard, blue instead of white for trucks, orange instead of red for fire hydrants, red instead of orange for barricade barrels, I hoped to establish that the piece wasn’t necessarily set in any particular part of the world, despite the English lettering on the signs.

The design of the mailbox was also based on a combination of influences, making use of some of the more squared aspects often seen in American mailboxes and rounder post boxes found in parts of Europe (img 95). The color scheme was intentionally matched to that of the mail truck, and the opening at the top double checked to be sure that it could fit the letter Randy brings to mail at the end of the film.

Another important aspect in the visual appearance of the set was the lighting used. Throughout the entire film, the lighting gradually becomes warmer and the shadows more prevalent to indicate the late afternoon time of day consistent with the last mail pickup in the spring (img 96 & 97). Tristan Oliver, the director of photography on ParaNorman spoke about the effectiveness of using colored lighting on a set in establishing the time of day an event takes place in.
“Innately, your mind kind of knows tonally where you are in terms of where the sun is, as you go through the pale gold and the pinks and apricots down to that deep salmon red just before the sun does down behind that mountain. And similarly, your shadows go from a neutral gray, through to a strange lilac hue, and then down to a black. Humans have a clock that works off that spectrum.”

Tristan Oliver DP (Alger p. 99)

Because the time of day is a factor in Randy’s rush to mail the letter, I felt that having the lighting correctly reflect the time of day was important to support the film’s narrative. This was primarily created by setting up diffusion screens made of yellow calico squares and a large cardboard cucoloris (typically a carved wooden board that breaks the path of the lights in order to create patterns such as light passing through leaves on a tree) that add more texture and yellow tones to the outside lighting. By decreasing the intensity of the white light that got through from one scene to the next, the warmer orange tones became more noticeable and contrast of the shadows became darker. When I needed to find some 3D student artists to help me fill in some of the more complex backgrounds with 3D modeled buildings and streets, replicating these lighting effects was one of the more challenging aspects for them to create.

The decision to use 3D models to replace the backgrounds in several of the scenes in my project was one I wrestled with. For most of the shots that used the CGI backgrounds, it was in cases where there were dramatic camera moves such as the fast zoom down the residential street in scene 2 or the skateboarding on a dolly shot where Randy remained in focus and the background flew past him quickly. In both those cases, building the actual sets required for such effects, even if building in miniature, would have been impractical as the details of the paper layers wouldn’t be visible in either case (img 98). Time constraints ended up forcing me to use some of these 3D backgrounds in other shots as well where the backgrounds remained stable and onscreen for a longer period of time. While the 3D artist who eventually completed the texturing and lighting for the 3D scenes did an excellent job of reproducing the lighting and paper textures
on the digital sets, they still lacked some of the weight that can be found when using actual sets. This was particularly noticeable in shots where the foreground consisted of a physical set and the background made use of the digital composite (img 99).

In order to find a group of students to help me model, texture, and light these 3D background elements, I submitted a work proposal to the 3DDG department in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences for what I needed, complete with examples of needed to be built and the style of the physical sets it needed to match. My proposal was chosen by a group of three students who were receiving credit for working on service projects who said they would have no problem building and texturing the model designs I gave them. I already had a few of the assets designed for them to start with and immediately began creating the designs, color schemes, texture scans, area maps, and lighting diagrams to help them match their models to my existing sets.

The process of actually designing all the housing and commercial storefront elements for the 3DDG group took longer than I expected, as did all the things that needed to be done to organize files and communication between myself and the students since I wasn’t actually present on campus to work with them. Delays were a problem on both sides with me not being able to produce the design specs as quickly as I anticipated while still working on the other aspects of the project and with the students setting deadlines for the models to be completely built in the 3D software and then missing them. I also ran into issues a few times where the students wouldn’t check the updated designs I’d sent them or would forget a design point we discussed in our weekly online chats, even with the transcripts available to them. As a result, they would sometimes build the models incorrectly, requiring more delays for revisions. In
several instances I had to simply accept that the models weren’t going to get corrected by the end of the semester and try and get them to complete the other assets that were due (img 100 & 101).

While I understood that part of the learning process with student projects is forcing the students to realize that most production tasks take longer than their initial (inexperienced) estimates, in the end, I was highly disappointed in the rushed final results I received from the three 3DDG students. With three weeks left in the spring semester, the students hadn’t started texturing any of the models yet and had no lighting or camera moves set up. Despite this, they assured me that they could and would get the rest of the work done by the end of the term. Their teacher sent me a form to fill out reviewing their work in this same week even though the final deadline hadn’t been reached so I filled it out, taking the students at their word that they would get the completed work to me as it was an integral part of my own thesis completion.

Unfortunately, as soon as I submitted my review to their teacher the three students stopped responding to my emails and didn’t show up for any of the remaining online chat sessions where I could give them feedback on their work. I was left with a bunch of 3D models with hastily applied textures that in no way matched what I needed, no lighting, and no camera angles to work with (imgs 102, 103, 104, & 105). I continued to try and contact the three students after the semester ended to get them to complete any aspect of the work they’d committed to, but as I had no authority over them or any further influence on their grades, I was simply ignored. It was one of the most frustrating time periods in the production of my film as my own work had fallen much further behind because of the time I spent designing and coordinating the 3DDG student project, and in the end I had no useable materials from it.

In the end I had to turn to my friends who had already graduated from the RIT Film and Animation program to help me solve my 3D background issues. My friend Vijay Kumar MC
offered to help me finish up the modeling and setting up the camera angles, while Tiru Shanmugam redid all of the textures and lit all the sets. In the end, even that process took longer than expected when Vijay discovered that the models the students had built didn’t adhere to standard methods of building 3D assets and it ended up being faster for him to simply rebuild many of the models from the ground up so that any of us could work with them. In the end, both Vijay and Tiru put in several long hours of work in their spare time to help me finish my shots in time for screenings. The entire experience certainly made it clear to me that it is better to work with people with better reputations and professional experience no matter what sort of contract you may have in place. If someone chooses not to fulfill their end of a contract, there is often not much you can do to change that fact other that finding other people to do the work better.

ANIMATION

The actual animation process for *Posthaste* was one of the quicker parts of the project. By the time I had the camera set up and the lights in place, far more hours had been spent on story and fabrication than it would take to actually animate the shots. It took me a few shots to get back into the habit of animating straight ahead with a puppet again. The project I worked on previous to *Posthaste* was a hand-drawn 2D animation called *Colors* where I used the common 2D technique of animating first the key poses of the characters and then going back and doing multiple more detailed passes to fill in the remaining frames. Stop motion animation is a whole different beast because you can’t animate in the broad to detailed style but have to animate each and every frame straight ahead, getting everything from the key poses to the smallest gestures included on the first pass.
The first few shots where I started animating straight ahead were a bit anxious because of this. It required a mental shifting where I had to track multiple lines and arcs of movement simultaneously while also keeping in mind where the puppet needed to end up by the end of the shot. Earlier on, it was not unusual for me to lose track of the motion of an elbow or knee or not notice that the angle of the head wasn’t following the previous motion until after I had moved several frames past the discrepancy. I learned quickly that once a body part starts to wander off on its own, it’s generally best to give into that motion and try and find a way to make it work with where you need to puppet to be next. Trying to force the puppet back on track to where it was before usually caused a far more noticeable jitter or twitch to the motion.

The first scene I animated was scene two, where Randy exits his house and rushes to the sidewalk to see if he has already missed the passing of the mail truck (img 106). In the interest of making better time overall, I didn’t animate any tests for that first scene, something I realized I really should have done once the shots were finished. Overall the scene came out okay. The jump from the front porch works well, and his dash toward the sidewalk looks good until he tries to skid to a stop. The skid ended up looking more like a lunge, and even with editing the timings after the fact, the movement just doesn’t read correctly (img 107). His walk cycle out of frame at the end of the scene also ended up being disappointing. His stride was too long in most places and he came down too heavily on the front foot, making it look like he was walking in lower gravity with heavy shoes (img 108). Because each shot led directly into the next one, however, trying to re-animate his final walk cycle would have been nearly impossible without reshooting the entire sequence of shots once he jumped off the porch, a delay that I just didn’t have the time for. In the end, I chose to simply edit out the end of the walk cycle where the movements became
more unnatural and used a cross-fade to transition him from that scene into the next to indicate a passage of both time and position since he isn’t seen actually exiting the frame.

Conversely to the issues with the skid and the walk cycle, once Randy comes out of the skid/lunge and is standing in place catching his breath, the movement looks terrific. Making it look as if a puppet with a solid chest is inhaling and exhaling heavily can be a very difficult motion to pull off correctly as it requires a lot of smaller and more precise changes from shot to shot. Smaller motions can often be less forgiving than the broader gestures because any deviation from the established arcs becomes very noticeable, whereas broader gestures can more easily hide and compensate for inaccurate positioning. Having had some moments of success in between the moments where the puppet got away from me in the first shot was encouraging to me that I would be able to raise the level of the animation to meet my own standards with more practice.

After animating scene two, I decided that test animations for each subsequent scene would be necessary to work out any issues in the movement ahead of time. In order to be able to do this without putting additional wear on the puppets’ metal wire joints, I purchased a metal armature kit to use as a stand in for the test shots. Roughing out the animation with the armature was very helpful as the project moved forward, and the quality of the animation in the subsequent shots noticeably improved.

Finding ways to reduce the wear on the actual puppets became more and more of an important factor as I was animating. As mentioned in the fabrication section, the joints of the puppets were breaking more often than anticipated and each breakage would require a minimum of twenty-four hours to be fixed, often stretching into two day stretches where animation was at a standstill. As the shots progressed, I became better at working around any breakages that would
occur in the middle of a shot, either by splinting the broken joints where the camera couldn’t see the added materials, using extra rigging to help manipulate joints that couldn’t hold their position on their own (img 109), or changing the planned motion of the puppet to rely less on the broken limb. In the few instances where none of those adjustments were possible I would either try to repair the puppet while it was still holding its pose by adding supports around it as I swapped out the broken sections, or if the movement was broad enough to accommodate a shift, I would swap out the broken Randy for another one of the finished puppets. Throughout the course of the project, I used all three techniques several times. The biggest take away I learned from all the repair work done throughout the project was that the financial investment in getting a better quality, metal armature for your main puppets, pays for itself in time saved on repairs alone.

While I broke down the exterior house set from scene two and began building the pieces for the interior of the house that opened the short, I animated several of the shots where the puppet was going to be interacting with a digitally generated background. The first of these shots I worked was a part of scene five where Randy becomes lost in a daydream inspired by the enticing window display outside of the bakery. Randy’s daydream fantasy sequences involved shooting the puppet on the green screen first and then building the layers of the 2D environment he interacts with to be layered around him. In the bakery fantasy, Randy’s individual movements are fairly simple with him looking around him with his arms out and then making a grab for a floating pastry to shove in his mouth. What complicated the shot was that Randy’s entrance into the frame as he performed these actions involved him rising up from below the camera view on a rotating platform. Instead of attempting to move the camera up and down in a smooth motion, I
chose instead to build a rig that was made up of a rig that lifted the puppet up in the air while being able to rotate at its base.

The rise and rotate rig was based on a similar screw thread concept that I used to create the rumble effect in the mail truck. Two rectangular platforms were built with one nested inside the other and a threaded screw rod connecting them with a hex nut attached to the lower platform (img 110). When the screw rod was rotated it rose up through the stabilized nut, pushing the upper platform up higher as it went. The rectangular design of the outer and inner platforms provided stability to the motion, preventing the upper section from tilting to any one side as it rose up. This entire platform structure was then attached to a lazy-susan turntable bearing which was secured on top of a circular Styrofoam base. The outer edge of the circular base was marked off at even intervals and nails were used to secure the top of the turntable to the base. A wire pointer stretched out from one corner of the platforms to the outer markings, allowing for the movement to be controlled and properly timed out (img 111).

The next shot animated in front of the green screen was a much longer sequence in which Randy lands on a wheeled construction dolly and uses it as a skateboard to catch up to and pass the mail truck. At first I had planned to attempt animating the shot with the puppet attached to a surfboard-like rig that I could tilt from side to side as he tried to maintain his balance. Before I built this rig however, I ran a test shot with the metal armature and discovered that I could create the same effect in a more easily controlled manner with the puppet tied down to stage directly. Having saved myself the time it would have taken to build the additional rig, I was able to take my time a bit more with the actual shot and take the time to account for factors like the weight of the puppet initially landing on the dolly, him tilting backwards as his feet shoot forward faster than the rest of him, as well as various contortions and reactionary motion as he tries to regain
his balance in the scene (img 112). I was also able to include secondary motion of the puppet’s hood flapping behind him as he appeared to be moving forward at a fast past, lending more realism to the idea that he was actually traveling forward in space despite his feet having being tied down in the same spot for the entirety of the shot (img 113).

Once the hallway set for the first scene was built, I was able to use my fabrication test sequence as a rough test shot to work off of and was able to start animating the final sequence very quickly. I chose not to shoot the animation for scene one at the beginning of my animation schedule because Randy’s initial entrance is important to establishing his character’s motivation and personality for the remainder of the short. Randy’s distraction as he is listening to his headphones and dancing down the hall helps to immediately show that he is someone who gets completely caught up his own head, resulting in him not fully taking in his environment. The sheer volume of notes and reminders for Randy on the hallway desk as well as his subsequent panicked entrance and exit back out the front door further adds to the idea that the letter is not only important, but that the character often forgets to complete these sort of tasks (img 114). By pushing back the first scene in the schedule, I was able to approach this shot, which has to impart a lot of information to the viewer, with more confidence and a better idea of how to get the performance I wanted out of the puppet.

Overall, I think the most important thing I learned from the actual animation portion of this project was to go where the puppet takes me. I am not experienced enough yet to perfectly replicate the actions from a piece of reference footage, but I have gotten better at figuring out why one particular movement or motion works better than another. I quickly learned that if I worked with any motions that broke their arc from what I was intending to have the puppet do, I could make the motion look like a natural expression of the character’s own awkward
tendencies. Animating a character who has a general awkwardness built into his personality allowed for these adjustments to the movement more than a confident or more assured character would. This is helpful in that when I notice that an elbow or the puppet’s head has started moving in a different direction than where I want it to, I can find a way to make the movement work for me at that moment and then lead it back to where I need it to go.

In one shot Randy’s arm and leg motions got crossed and he ended up moving the same arm and leg forward on each side of his body, rather than having them balance out with one leg forward and the opposite arm forward as most people do when they walk. The misalignment of the limbs turned into a happy accident as it made the character look more awkward and gangly in a manner that felt more realistic than having him trip or fall more often to express his lack of grace. As I continued forward, I got better at tracking all the movement arcs and matching up with my reference videos. I started having to remind myself to add those deviations back in to the shots to maintain the awkwardness of the character. For a few shots I started intentionally having the puppet swing his arms in tandem with his leg movements, as well as occasionally having him throwing an elbow out in the wrong direction, or over-correct a mis-step.

Throughout the course of creating *Posthaste* and with previous production projects I’ve worked on, my biggest challenge has always been my ability to gauge how long each step of the process will realistically take. It’s an area I know I have difficulty with, and I made a concentrated effort throughout the thesis to track the time I spent on production work as I went along. I spent some time tracking how many hours each task took, shaping wooden pieces or designing a set blueprint on the computer. Overall, however, I found that the best way to get a sense for how much I could reasonably get done in a certain amount of time was to track what I called my production hours each day. These were hours actually spent producing materials, be
they designs or physical objects. Time spent on critiquing the storyboards with friends or planning out the next week’s schedule, keeping in contact with my advisors, shopping for supplies, and general administrative work wasn’t counted. What this revealed to me was that I had been predicting my overall progress based on the idea that I was spending all of my time on these production hours and not realizing how much administrative time was also needed to be accounted for. Determining a more realistic balance between administrative hours and production hours allowed me to bring my estimates of what I could accomplish in a given time period that much closer to reality.

Another factor that adding considerable difficulty to developing my project management skills on this short film were my own health issues. At the end of my first year of course work I started developing symptoms of an inflammatory auto-immune disorder that has been a constant drain on my time and ability to get my work done. The nature of my health issues made planning out a production schedule even more difficult as the condition has a tendency to flare up without warning, causing delays of sometimes days or even weeks in my progress that could not be predicted. As a result of this, tracking how many hours of physical work I did each day not only became a necessity for planning, but also for trying to determine what might trigger these flares in order to mitigate them as much as possible. Unfortunately, the nature of a chronic health condition also meant that I had less time to devote to my project itself, either due to pain and exhaustion or simply because some weeks I was spending fifteen to twenty hours a week simply managing my health with multiple doctors’ appointments, tests, and physical therapy sessions. This is turn forced me to become much better at not only managing my time, but also in finding as many ways as possible to tighten up my overall narrative and to shorten or reframe shots in a way that would reduce the amount of time needing to be spent on each shot.
I quickly learned what shots could be eliminated easily, or which ones could have a different movement or camera angle to make them faster to shoot or easier to animate. Finding ways to express a character’s reaction in one shot instead of two could save me setup time, even if it meant a slightly less ‘artistic’ camera angle. Another method I used was cutting back and forth to the same camera angle in a scene, allowing me to animate several shots in sequence using one camera set up. Shots using a tighter frame on the character meant less of the puppet had to be animated and less sets had to be built to fill the screen. Unfortunately, this also meant that in order to save time, I was forced to cut almost all of the longer walk cycle sequences that had originally been my animation focus for the piece. The extreme wide angles on those various walking and running sequences were both fabrication and animation heavy, and I had to remind myself many times throughout the process that the important goal at this point was completing the project. “Finished is better than perfect,” was a mantra I heard during a panel about the challenges of self-motivated creative work at a convention in Seattle. It is an adage that I have adopted for myself as an incentive to keep me from getting too bogged down in my own desires to push all my creative endeavors to the limits of my abilities.

Another aspect of adhering to the “finished is better than perfect” philosophy was pushing myself to continue forcing my way through the work when things weren’t clicking as easily. Often times when I found myself trying to complete a shot when on the edge of an upcoming flare, I would have a harder time tracking all the elements from frame to frame and my dexterity with the puppet would be lessened. Those shots were difficult to slog through because it often felt more like I was fighting with the puppet to get it to go where I wanted, often resulting in it taking two or three times longer to complete them than the shots where everything was working the way it should be. In the end, even though I might not have liked those shots
quite as much as some of the others, they were still good enough to be used in the final piece and necessary to getting the project done.

The addition of the 2D animated fantasy sequences as transition shots was also helpful in that they helped move elements of the story forward without needing physical sets to be built which saved time, and they helped to enhance the flatter aesthetic of the project. On a physical level, the 2D fantasy sequences helped me to continue making progress on the project when flares prevented me from working on elements that required standing or even sitting for longer periods of time. Because the 2D sections were created digitally in Adobe Flash, I was able to continue working on those sections from a reclined position off of a laptop when necessary. I found the best method for working on the 2D sequences was to use multiple layers in Adobe Flash for each shape involved. This meant the shots were more time consuming to set up, but also meant that adjustments could be made more easily and that in many instances the computer could process the shape transitions for me. The multiple shape layers also made it easier for me to apply uniform textures to the shapes that made up individual elements even if there were other layers placed in between them.

The first 2D sequence in the film, where Randy mentally travels the distance to the mailbox down the street is an excellent example of multiple uses the 2D animated sequences provided (img 115). It allowed me to establish a sense of the length of the journey ahead of my character without having to build extensive miniatures of the town and shoot a complex moving camera shot down the street. There are also several areas where layers belonging to the same object have to accommodate one or more other shape layers in between them to maintain the correct perspectives, and do so without leaving gaps in either the shapes or the textures. Also, because I primarily worked on this first sequence while I was flaring, it allowed me to complete
eleven seconds of my final animation during time periods where I otherwise would not have been able to accomplish any other work.

Not having to build out extensively longer sets was particularly important because a constant factor in my planning of each shot was the limited studio space I was working with throughout the project. Over the course of Posthaste, graduate school and jobs took me and my family between three different states and four different apartments on opposite coasts of the US. In three of my residences I was able to set aside an isolated studio space for myself in one room, but the available space was always a tight fit for my fabrication supplies and my set pieces.

One of the best methods I developed to help me maneuver in the various studio spaces I was working in was my design and construction of a modular adjustable stage (img 116). The design incorporated multiple stage platforms of different sizes that could not only support my sets, but support my own weight for whenever I might need to work from above during the construction of the sets or the setting up of the lights. These modular sections could all be bolted together in various configurations depending on the needs of each scene. Additionally, the legs for these sections were made of U-shaped two-by-fours that could be lengthened or shortened adding more weight and stability to the structure overall. Any platforms or legs that weren’t currently in use for a scene could be stored underneath the stage along with other fabrication supplies which only helped to weigh down the stage even more. This stage design made it physically easier for me to animate as I was able to raise the stage to a level that didn’t require me to bend over to reach the puppet most of the time (img 117). It also allowed me to lower the platform for shots where I needed to get a higher angle with the camera.

Not every shot was completed to a level that I was personally satisfied with in time for my screening in December of 2015. There were also several shots and scenes that either had to
be modified or removed entirely for me to complete the short in time. While these edits were necessary to complete the project, I still hope to find the time, now that screenings has passed, to go back and continue to fill in or reshoot the sequences I wasn’t able to finish properly. My hope in doing so is that I can not only continue to improve on my fabrication and animation skills, but that I can also create a final director’s cut of *Posthaste* that has a tighter narrative and a more consistent quality of animation that would allow me to enter it into a few animation and film festivals moving forward.
The final step in completing my short film for my MFA requirements was to present my final project to the school during screenings in December. Like most students I assume, even though I had presented at screenings before, it was a nerve wracking experience. Even though I had gotten good feedback from my committee on the piece beforehand, I was still nervous about how my project would be received.

The nature of production projects in a creative environment is that there are always more things you can work on to improve a piece right up until its deadline. For me, this primarily meant trying to adjust the last minute foley work I had to cobble together when a miscommunication between myself and the craft track student who had agreed to do my sound work left me with less than twenty-five percent of my project with usable sound effects. The night before the submission deadline at noon I was running off caffeine and adrenaline creating a final foley track and cleaning up some of the compositing layers that connected my physical puppet with some of the 3D modeled backgrounds. An hour before the deadline I started the final export of my project on my laptop while my husband drove us to campus where I could connect with the school’s network and upload my file to the screenings website.

As a backup, I also brought with me an export of the film from the evening before in case my computer wouldn’t connect properly with the school system. In the end, having that backup file was the only reason I was able to screen when I did. Despite the export of the previous evening only taking fifteen minutes to complete, the new export ended up taking over forty minutes leaving me only a twenty-minute window to connect to the screenings site and upload the file. Almost immediately I had issues connecting with the server because I was connecting
with a Windows machine. Having not been physically on campus for almost five years, I remembered that there was an additional step required to connecting to the server from a Windows system, but couldn’t remember the specific domain term I needed to use to make the login successful. Unfortunately, this is also a step that never made it into the online instructions about connecting to the school’s server from a Windows machine and none of the current students working at the screenings table for FVASA knew what the term was either. Thankfully another student who was used to connecting from a PC came to sign up for a screenings slot came up to the table at this point and was able to tell me that in order to sign in you needed to include the term /main/ before entering your student ID and then entering your password to connect. Once connected I logged into the screenings server and entered all the information asked for and started the file upload. With five minutes left before the deadline, the file was still uploading at a snail’s pace and I could see by the estimates that I wouldn’t finish uploading in time. Leaving the laptop out by the cage, I grabbed the drive with my backup file, hopped on the first computer I could find that didn’t have any open files sitting on it. I logged out the user, logged in and managed to transfer the backup file into the screening system and print out my receipt with a time stamp of 11:59 AM. Having just made the noon cutoff by a minute, I was able to sign up for my second-to-last screening slot for the following day.

The screening itself wasn’t nearly as stressful as making the submission deadline, but I was still nervous. A large part of my nervousness was that, because having taken so long to complete the project, none of the students present knew who I was. While the overall atmosphere in the screenings session the next evening was fairly engaged, I was mostly greeted by the blank faces of students who didn’t seem interested in the project of someone they didn’t know. It was a very isolating feeling to see so many blank faces when I read my artist statement to the group
before Posthaste was played. After the credits had rolled I asked if there were any comments or feedback from the audience. The only responses I did get were from a few faculty members in the audience. Some of the issues with the foley track were acknowledged and the main discussion centered around ways in which I could clarify Randy’s motivation in needing to mail that particular letter. Aside from the sound and motivation issues no other areas were mentioned pointing out where things could have either been improved upon or made clearer to the audience.

The fact that people seemed disinterested before the project even screened made it hard to tell if the lack of comments on Posthaste from the students was because the short was underwhelming overall, or if it was simply a result of being one of the last projects to be shown on the first day of screenings. Earlier in the day I had the opportunity to present the screenings cut of the project to my committee and did receive positive feedback on the short. The combination of the two sets of reactions makes me think that Posthaste has a good storyline in general, but could likely benefit from another editorial pass and some clean-up of the sections which were rushed towards the end.

The screenings cut of Posthaste presents an interesting study of the role perception plays in our society. At the most basic level, the cinematography does a fair job of helping to insert the audience into the world Randy inhabits. While many of the shots adhere to the 180-degree rule of film language, others break that hard line and place the viewer in front of or behind the character, creating a more dimensional world that exists in a full 360 degrees, even as the foreshortened set design creates a flatter, more graphic representation of it. By creating a physical environment that appears to have less depth that the 2D environment of Randy’s internal fantasies, I was able to create a world in which the rules of physical space don’t line up with what the audience is used to perceiving. This, combined with the modification of typical
design and color schemes that are established parts of the audience’s own lives, allowed me to quickly establish the sense of another world which my character inhabits, and where the understood language of cinema become for malleable and fantasy-like.

The grounding element in the film is the character of Randy himself. While the world he inhabits is not-quite-our-own, Randy himself displays personality traits and reactions to situations that are in line with what the audience knows in their own lives. Randy is essentially the Rosetta stone of this universe he lives in, an entry point which the audience can empathize with and use as a basis for creating their own understanding of the world of the film. This not only grants the audience a touchstone within the film, but also serves to create a bond between them and the character which allows them to more easily invest themselves in his journey and its outcome.

Bestowing Randy with a personality and reactions that the audience can immediately recognize also allows Posthaste to touch on some interesting concepts about how an individual is perceived by themselves and by others and the dichotomy that creates. Randy is a character right in the middle of a highly variable time in the typical developmental process where he is caught between the habits and tendencies he developed as a child and the patterns of behavior and perception he is creating for himself as he transitions into adulthood. Much of the tension in the piece is created by these opposing forces within the character. He wants to work towards the more adult goals of continuing his education in order to take a contributory place in society and is also motivated by the desire to make his parents proud of him. This can be seen by his reaction when he realizes he has forgotten the important task of mailing the letter. Randy’s entire journey from his home to the mail box at the end is essentially his quest to act in a more responsible manner while being distracted by the baser, and more childlike physical desires that tempt him
along the way. Throughout his trip he becomes distracted by his own fantasies and imagination, much as children do when they are playing. Randy has to continually refocus on his goal of mailing his letter each time something draws his attention away from his responsibilities. In the end, through hard work and determination he manages to use one of his imaginary diversions to motivate himself to reach his end goal and arrives at the mailbox before the oncoming mail truck. In a comedic twist of fate, he is then prevented from completing his task when he is faced with the adult fantasy that appears before him in the form of an attractive girl and is incapable of refocusing himself at the very end.

There is a saying that talks about how a person’s personality is defined which essentially states that every person exists in three forms; how they view themselves, how others view them, and the truth. Posthaste subtly touches on this theme as the viewer is essentially shown these three sides of Randy. The collection of items and notes in his front hallway gives the audience and immediate sense of how Randy is viewed by his parents. The overwhelming number of reminders strewn throughout that one small area of his home easily shows that Randy’s parents don’t feel he can be trusted yet to take full responsibility for running his own life. This is reinforced by the very apparent fact that Randy did in fact forget his responsibilities which results in his frantic dash towards the door. With the 2D fantasy sequences, the audience is allowed inside Randy’s mind and given insight into how he views himself and who he wants to be as a person. Being objective observers, distanced from character through the virtue of not knowing him before he appears on screen, the audience serves, in many ways, as perceivers of the truth as to who this character is, even as the concept of who Randy is continues to develop throughout the duration of the film.
Overall, *Posthaste* was an excellent learning opportunity about producing a completed film. I think the largest and most useful takeaway I have from the experience is a better understanding of how to schedule and predict the time it will take to complete a project. It is a skill that can only be learned through experience and only works when you absolutely must reach a certain deadline. I hope to continue to improve on this skill set by creating other smaller projects over set time periods. I also learned several lessons about the importance of making sure any work you contract out has to have some incentive for the other party to complete on time, otherwise you can often be left in an undesirable situation. Most important of all, is to always have a backup file ready when coming down to a deadline because, “finished is better than perfect.”
## Appendix

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Mail Interest

Carolyn Depp
MFA Thesis Proposal
Stop Motion Animation

Thesis Chair: Bob Deaver
Thesis Advisor: Tom Gasek
Thesis Advisor: Mark Reisch

Approved for Submission:

Date

Carolyn Depp
Graduate Thesis Proposal
Stop Motion Animation
Title: Mail Interest
Duration: approx. 3 minutes
Synopsis:

A study of walk cycles and depicting character personality through movement with a narrative about a man who keeps forgetting that he needs to mail a letter.

Treatment:

The film opens with a shot of our protagonist Randy’s front hallway. We hear whistling as the door to Randy’s apartment swings open and he walks past the camera, his torso the only part of him we can see. As we follow him a short way down the hall, we start to see all sorts of notes and post-it’s on his wall, reminding him that he is supposed to mail the rent check by 5:00 that day. Randy drops his keys on side table right next to the letter and keeps walking by. Suddenly, Randy rushes back over in a panic, seeing all the notes about the letter and grabbing a clock which show’s that it is around 4:30. Randy grabs his keys and runs back out the door. The camera remains in place, focused on the letter, still sitting on the side table and the title Mail Interest fades into the scene. The title vanishes as Randy rushes back in, skids to a stop, grabs the letter, and dashes back out of the apartment.

Secondary credits appear on the screen as Randy bursts out of the front door of his building, spinning hastily to lock the door and then back around again to jump down the steps, leaving his keys swinging in the door lock. This is the first time we actually see Randy’s face.

We now follow Randy as he rushes down the sidewalk, glancing at his wrist and realizing that he’s not wearing a watch. A neighbor waves as he passes by and Randy turns sideways to respond as he continues forward. Because he isn’t facing forward, Randy almost becomes tangled in the leash of a dog that is being walked past him. He deftly manages to avoid falling and then pauses to apologize to the owner as the dog sniffs his leg. He bends to pet the dog and
becomes distracted by it. As he shifts to be in a better position to pet the dog, he suddenly notices the letter in his hand, remembers his errand, and jumps up to continue on his way.

Randy continues to walk at a quick pace as other people pass by on both sides of the street and a car rumbles past. As he walks, his determined gait begins to slow as he starts to notice some of the other people and things around him: a nice flower arrangement by some newspaper boxes, a person engrossed in their cell phone gliding past, and man in a cape banging on a bucket drum, and some children selling lemonade, which he stops to buy. As he stands sipping his lemonade near the children, one of them points to his letter questioningly. He yet again remembers his errand; tosses his cup towards a trash can and dashes off, running back to pick up the cup where it landed on the ground and making sure it gets into the trash can this time.

Randy’s pace is even more frantic now as he jogs down the street, dodging the other, slower, pedestrians. He is so absorbed with moving quickly and ducking around people that he doesn’t notice the large torn up section of the sidewalk in front of him, and nearly falls into the cordoned hole. He waves his arms to restore his balance, starts to jump to the right only to find his way blocked by another person walking past, he twists and spins, dodging a slightly larger group of people, and final executing an impressive twisting spin into the street. He pauses to catch his breath and sigh with relief, only to have a biker swoosh by, the force of his passing causing the letter to blow out of Randy’s hand and fly off ahead of him. Randy immediately chases after the letter as it sails further down the street, fluttering up out of his reach and diving down in front of him just past his fingers as he continues to avoid other sidewalk dwellers and hazards.

As the letter begins to drop downwards again, with one final, triumphant dive, Randy snatches it inches from landing in a puddle on the ground. Having caught the letter, Randy looks
up to see that he is a mere foot from the base of the mailbox that has been his destination. Randy rises, clutching the letter in his hand. He straightens himself up, un-crumpl es the letter, and, with a grand flourish extends it towards the open hatch of the mailbox. At that very moment an attractive girl in a very short skirt sashays past him in the direction he just came from. His hand freezes, the letter an inch from the slot as he stands transfixed. As if drawn by a magnet, Randy’s head swivels to follow as she walks past, and is soon dragging his body behind it. The letter hangs suspended in the air momentarily, before falling to the ground just under the mailbox. The camera stays focused on the mailbox as Randy exits in pursuit of the girl.

As the credits begin to roll, we see a mail truck pull up alongside the box and the mail carrier stepping down from the front. The carrier empties the contents of the mailbox, Randy’s letter still sitting on the ground just on the other side. As the mail carrier straightens and is about to return to the truck, his attention is suddenly drawn to the sidewalk where the letter is sitting. The mail carrier swoops down and triumphantly picks up a quarter that was lying just past the letter on the other side of the box. Whistling happily, the carrier returns to his truck and drives away, leaving the camera focused on the forgotten letter until the scene fades out.

**Technique:**

I plan to create *Mail Interest* using stop motion animation. The set will be constructed in three levels. There will be one layer that consists of the backdrop and the backmost portion of the city skyline, which only move minimally throughout the piece, as well as two layers of background buildings that will shift from right to left at different rates to create a multi-plane effect. The second layer will include the back sidewalk and the storefronts along it, and will have
the tie downs and props for the puppets that will be animated across the back of the scene. The final and foremost layer will consist of the street and the front sidewalk where Randy and the characters he interacts with will be animated. Any characters that can be animated in front of a green screen and then composite into the scene at a later point and time will be shot that way. The sequence where the letter is flying through the air on its own will also be shot in front of a green screen.

I intend to work with flat panel background elements and use thin colored wire to create details such as window and doors to create an aesthetic similar to that of a line drawing. The puppets will similarly have solid bodies, made of either wood, paper maché, or another malleable material. The details of their clothing and props, as well as their facial expressions will be rendered using replaceable wire features.

Jeremy Gemetta has agreed to act as my director of photography and will help me determine the best camera settings and lighting scheme to produce the appropriate atmosphere for my piece. Mail Interest will have no dialogue and minimal foley to further emphasize the concept of expressing character traits and the storyline thought the movement alone.

**Rationale:**

While there is a narrative element to help the piece come together, the main intention of this piece is to serve as a study of how different people move. There will be people of different ages and genders, some interacting with other people, animals, or objects that will affect how they maneuver themselves from point A to point B. I want to strive to create a sense of life and completed character in each of the puppets that moves across the screen. Some character
concepts I have been working with are: an old woman carrying groceries, a college student
headed towards a job interview, a couple out for a stroll, and a mother simultaneously dragging
and being dragged by her small child. I will be relying on reference video and a lot of movement
testing to be sure that I can create as much realism in my characters movements as possible. I
also want to bring out as many different facets of Randy’s character as I can by having him move
in a variety of speeds and styles which all seem to suit his character’s attitude. Every time Randy
forgets his intended errand and must start forward again, I intend to use a new walk cycle for him
without replicating any of the pacing from his earlier moments.

**Budget:**

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Script 2

Scene 1:
Film opens on an empty apartment hallway. Camera beings to pan right slowly.
Door opens into frame on the left, main character Randy enters. Framing shows him from just
below shoulders to just below the hips in profile as he walks left to right.
As the camera and Randy move right, we begin to see various notes indicating a letter on the
table against the back wall that needs to be mailed out today.
Randy, moving faster than the camera pan exits screen right as the camera settles on the letter on
the side table and all the notes saying that it must go out today.
Hold on letter.
Randy skids back into frame from the right and grabs one of the must go out today notes from
the wall.
(Optional close up of the note in Randy’s hand saying the letter must be mailed today, he flips it
over and the words OR ELSE! Are written in scary letters.)
Return to former framing. Randy drops the note and dashes out to the left leaving the apartment.
Camera holds for a moment
(Randy rushes back in, (his body hiding/erasing the title) grabs letter, and runs back out.

Scene 2:
A series of shots of Randy dashing down the stairs, focusing mostly on his feet, and/or his hand
holding the letter as he swings around a newel post to the next level of stairs.

Scene 3:
Exterior of Randy’s apartment over a Barber shop, focusing on lower half of doorway over steps.
Randy opens door from the inside and jumps down from top step
Shot of his feet landing from a higher angle, camera tilts up for the first full character reveal at a
very slight lower angle. (camera level would be pointed at about his neck)
Randy turns to looks to his right (camera left)
Fast zoom and truck forward shot (use miniatures and AE motion blur to create effect) to the
mailbox a few blocks up the street.
Shot of Randy then turning to glance in the other direction
Zoom truck shot of mail truck turning the corner to pull onto the street about 2 blocks behind
Randy.
Randy reacts to the sight of the truck then anticipates charging off toward the mailbox. He takes
one step and trips forward out the bottom of the frame
Scene 4:
Close up of Randy holding his head. Camera zooms out to show him on the ground, a dog’s leash over his back leg, and the dog itself sitting in front of him (very happily) with Randy’s letter in its mouth.
Randy tries to take back the letter, there’s a short tug-of-war between them with the dog barely moving from his spot.
Randy gives up and lets go of the letter. Dog shakes it back and forth then starts to happily prance in a circle with the letter in its mouth while Randy glares.
Randy then has an idea. (mischievous light bulb type of face)
Randy pretends to have a ball in his hand, catching dog’s attention.
Randy throws the fake ball towards camera right. Dog drops letter and goes chasing after it.
Randy snatches up the letter, as he gets up off the sidewalk and continues on his way.
(Optional shot of his legs quickly passing by the dog who is standing on alert straining at the end of his leash apparently looking for the missing ball)

Scene 5:
Long moving shot panning right as Randy continues down the street at a slight jog.
He passes a man standing by the plastic newspaper bins flipping reading a paper.
An old woman jogs past in the background on the opposite side of the street.
A car drives past in the same direction as Randy is moving.
As car exits frame right a female neighbor of Randy’s enters from right heading left with bag of groceries, waves at Randy as she passes.
Randy turns slightly and waves back, slowing down a bit.
As Randy turns back to continue down the street he seems to have forgotten why he’s heading down the street and its urgency and begins to notice things as he passes by. He first looks off to the side of the street towards the camera.
Insert shot of a cat stretching in a window.
Camera moves in closer to Randy as his gaze drifts left noticing a flyer on the telephone pole he passes.
Randy then looks past the pole at movement on the opposite side of the street.
Insert shot of a man in a suit looking walking with determination, as if on his way to a job interview.
Next shot is from a forward angle shoeing Randy turning back to face front, and a look of shock on his face. Camera falls back to a more side angle, as Randy stares openly as he passes a man in a food mascot costume yelling angrily into a cell phone and gesturing violently.

Scene 6
Shaking his head and smiling, Randy comes across a hopscotch grid on the pavement and looks up to see 2 girls playing.
Randy decides to play himself, jumping down the path and then standing in a triumphant
gymnast’s dismount stance.
Cut to a shot of the 2 girls looking up at him looking very un-amused.
Randy’s triumphant pose wilts slightly, and he is suddenly frozen with shock as the mail truck drives by him.

Scene 7:
Randy begins to run down the street to catch up with the mail truck and suddenly finds obstacles in his way.
We see an upcoming shot of a man engrossed in his cell phone, then cut to Randy dodging around him, and then having to avoid a large pot-hole in the sidewalk.
Next he almost stumbles as the dog from before runs by with a broken leash being chased by the cat from before. Once he avoids them, he almost immediately has to get out of the way of a person going by in the opposite direction on a bike.
Randy doges the bike, avoids a skateboard left on the street and catches up to where the mail truck has stopped to allow an injured person on crutches to slowly cross the street.

Scene 8:
Close up of Randy seeing the truck and turning his head as he passes it in relief, only to look front and be surprised/concerned.
Side view of Randy narrowly avoiding a person carrying a stack of boxes that obscures their view by spinning around them to the left (upstage) only to almost immediately run into another person pulling an awkwardly shaped piece of furniture out of the back of a car.
Randy nimbly avoids the person from the car, and has only a moment to looks satisfied with himself before he runs face first into a large screen-filling object.
Cut to a wider shot where we see that he has bounced off the side of a mattress being carried by two people (very running into a pane of glass-gag) who are just as startled as he is.
Sitting up Randy realizes he doesn’t have the letter in his hand and starts searching the ground for it.
Shot from the opposite side of the mattress showing, Randy see the letter on the ground and is just about to grab it when a gust of wind picks it up and sends it flying.
Randy scrambles under the mattress and runs after the letter which is now headed for a large puddle.
Randy runs, then leaps into the air and dives for the letter in slow motion.
We see the long slow motion shot of Randy diving, catching the letter in mid-air, and starting to fall out of frame to the right.

Scene 9:
Time speeds back up as Randy slides to a halt on the ground with the letter clutched firmly in his hand.
Shot from the front of a disheveled Randy looking up, grinning at the letter in his hand and then
looking up further and starting in happy awe.
Side view showing that Randy is now actually lying about a foot away from the mailbox.
Randy spring up into another front angled shot, (now much cleaner), smooths back his hair, and straightens out the crumpled envelop with a quick wave snap of his wrist.
Randy then begins to slide the letter into the slot of the mailbox with a large flourish when he suddenly freezes just as the edge of the letter touches the opening on the side of the mailbox.
Cut to a different angle of the same shot from a wider view, where Randy remains frozen as a sexy- looking woman saunters past him, dropping his jaw.
Randy’s head turns almost involuntarily to follow her progress and then drags the rest of his body along after it, as he follows her out of the frame to the left.
Hold for a second once Randy is completely out of frame and then he see the letter, still poised at the edge of the box’s mail slot, flutter to the ground and land partially under the mailbox.

Cut to black, credits start to roll

(If time to add this into the shooting, cut back to same angle as the last shot, show the mail truck pulling up to the box.
An heavy-set mailman gets out, opens the box, retrieves the letters, puts them in his pouch, and then pauses as he’s about to turn back to his truck noticing the letter on the ground.
The mailman bends down, reaches under the box, and then pulls back up with a big grin holding, not the letter, but a dollar bill in his hand.
The mailman happily pockets the bill, and then whistles as he hops back into his truck, and drives away out of frame. )

Cut to black again, show copyright.

END OF FILM!
Script 6

Scene 1:

Shot 1 - Film opens on an empty apartment hallway. Camera beings to pan right slowly. Door bursts opens into frame on the left, main character Randy enters fingers held up as if he’s a police officer clearing a room. Framing shows him from just below shoulders to just below the hips in profile as he shuffles left to right, covering all angles with his fake pistol. As he shuffles past he leaves his keys swinging in the doorknob and closes the door, a small taped note about it saying, bring in your keys!
As the camera and Randy move right, we begin to see various notes indicating a letter on the table against the back wall that needs to be mailed out today. Randy, moving faster than the camera pan exits screen right as the camera settles on the letter on the side table and all the notes saying that it must go out today.
Series of shots of the letters and notes surrounding it, as well as some other notes that exist on items such as, keys go here! On the dish for the keys, and a calendar on the wall full of reminders of things for Randy to do.
We end back at the same opening framing as Randy skids back into frame from the right and grabs one of the must go out today notes from the wall.

Shot 4(ish) - (Optional ) Close up of the note in Randy’s hand saying the letter must be mailed today, he flips it over and the words OR ELSE! Are written in scary letters.)

Shot 1B - Return to former framing. Randy drops the note and dashes out to the left leaving the apartment.
Camera holds for a moment and then begins a slow push in on the letter still sitting on the table.
Posthaste title fades in.
Randy rushes back in, (his body hiding/erasing the title) grabs letter, and runs back out.

Scene 2:

Shot 1 –

Shot 2 –

Shot 3 –

Shot 4 –

Shot 5 –
Scene 3:

Shot 1 - Exterior of Randy’s apartment over a Barber shop, focusing on lower half of doorway over steps. Randy opens door from the inside and jumps down from top step

Shot 2 – A shot of Randy’s feet landing from a higher angle, camera tilts up for the first full character reveal at a very slight lower angle. (camera level would be pointed at about his neck – hero shot)

Shot 3 – ¾ side view from Randy’s right Randy turns to looks to his right (camera front)

Shot 4 - Fast zoom and truck forward shot (use miniatures and AE motion blur to create effect) to the mailbox two blocks up)

Shot 3B – Randy looks concerned, then turns and looks in the other direction

Shot 5 - Zoom truck shot of mail truck turning the corner to pull onto the street many many blocks behind Randy.

Shot 6 - Randy reacts to the sight of the truck with extreme relief, and then starts to saunter off towards the mailbox.

Shot 7 – Side view of Randy trotting down the street. In his head, Randy lives in a variety of movie scripts. He starts to act as if he’s walking a perilous route to the mailbox, balancing on the edge of the curb as if he’s hundreds of feet off the ground, and then losing his balance, stepping off into the street and back on the sidewalk, where he encounters a child’s truck.

Shot 8 – low angle “movie shot” and Randy approaching the truck with grim determination as if it’s a huge obstacle he must surmount, truck takes up a large portion on the foreground.

Shot 9 - side shot of Randy jumping over the truck and then crossing the street to get to the second block. Once on the second block he walks normally at first, but then starts playing a version of “don’t step on the cracks” and “the floor is lava” which causes him to walk while looking at the ground and moving strangely.

Shot 10 – side view from the left of a swimsuit display in a store window as Randy distractedly comes into frame. We also see there is a dog tied to a post near the corner who looks up with happy interest as Randy enters.

Shot 11- mid shot from the other side of him turning to find a new spot to step and suddenly noticing the swimsuit display in front of him, his jaw drops in a bit of a slack-jawed
expression. He shakes off the slack jaw and then begins to try and be suave with the mannequins, at one point he moves to bow but trips over something and falls out of frame.

**Scene 4:**

Shot 1 - Close up of Randy holding his head. Camera zooms out to show him on the ground, a dog’s leash over his back leg, and the dog itself sitting in front of him (very happily) with Randy’s letter in its mouth.

Randy tries to take back the letter, and the dog pulls back ready to play. Randy lunges for the letter, misses and the dog prances around him. Randy glares at the dog.

Shot 2 – Randy sits back up frowning, then has an idea. (mischievous light bulb type of face)

Shot 1B - Randy pretends to give up and starts to get up to leave when he leaps for the dog and the letter, managing to get a hold of the corner of the letter which leads to a tug-of-war between them. As they pull back and forth the audience can see the bottom of the mail truck pass by. As it does the dog notices it and get so excited he drops the letter causing Randy to fall backwards again, though this time he has the letter in hand.

Shot 3 – Randy sits up triumphantly with the letter in his hand only to notice the dog isn’t paying attention to him.

Shot 4 – from Randy’s POV going from the dog and tilting up to where the mailman is just finishing emptying the mailbox Randy was headed towards. The mailman sees the two of them looking, gives Randy a friendly wave, and then hops back in his truck and drives off.

Shot – 5 Close up as Randy reacts with a silent horrified scream reminiscent of Edvard Munch’s work.

Shot 6 - Randy collapses into a dramatic heap on the ground, the dog scratches an itch, then Randy looks up, crushing the letter in his fist, determined look on his face and looks to his right.

Shot 7- another miniature shot of a second mailbox three blocks down the side street

Shot 8 – Randy looks up to see the mailtruck rounding the next corner up ahead and heading to the right.

Shot 9 – Randy springs up from the sidewalk, dog jumps up too thinking they’re going to play, Randy then dashes off, the dog tries to follow him off screen but gets stopped by the limits of its leash that it strains against.
**Scene 5:**

Shot 1 - Long moving shot panning left as Randy continues down the street at a run. He passes a few shops and street items, a car drives past in the same direction that he’s going. As the car exits the frame, a young boy engrossed in a video game enters from the right heading directly for Randy

Shot 2 – A shot from high in the front, as Randy dodges the kid by moving closer to the buildings

Shot 3 – Shot from Randy’s left side, Randy recovers from his avoiding the kid only to encounter a large broken section of sidewalk. He tries to take the barriers like a hurdler, gets over the first only to crash into the second. He staggers past holding his stomach and continues down the street at a slower speed.

Shot 5 – mid torso moving shot of Randy from the right, his slow speed getting slower as he inexplicably gains a limp, the wounded war hero as he crosses the first block only to notice the mail truck aslo crossing the street one block up which triggers him to ditch the limp and keep going forward quickly. As he hurries past, someone walks by him in other direction which causes him to look at them, the then start looking at other things around him while hurrying. He looks at the shops toward camera and then at a poster on an electric pole on his left, he then turns and stares at something ahead of him on his right, openly staring as a man in a large food mascot costume is standing cheating toward the camera and yelling into a cell phone, completely at odds with the fake happy nature of his outfit, the camera stays mostly focused on the man in costume so Randy begins to move out of frame

Shot 6 – cut before Randy leaves frame, a closer moving shot of his face sort of smiling and shaking his head as he keeps looking to the side as he walks, just as he starts to turn back to face front he slams into a large screen filling object (a mattress)

**Scene 6:**

Shot 1 - Cut to a wider shot where we see that he has bounced off the side of a mattress being carried by two people (very running into a pane of glass-gag) who both look around the side of the mattress as Randy sits up and shakes his head to clear it (hair going from mussed to straight again)

Shot 2 - Shot from the opposite side of the mattress, initially zoomed in, Randy realizes the letter isn’t in his hand and starts to frantically search the ground around him for it. Camera pulls back out to show the letter on the ground on the other side of the mattress.
Shot 2B – Randy then scramble under the mattress for the letter and is just about to grab it when a gust of wind picks it up and sends it flying.

Shot 4 – side shot of Randy scrambling under the mattress after the letter, narrowly avoiding a man carrying a large stack of pillows and a bag from Sleepy Dave’s Bed Emporium and runs out of frame after the letter.

**Scene 7:**

Shot 1A – A series of moving shots of Randy running down the street after the wind carried letter in front of him keeping him centered in the frame.

Shot 2 – A close up his feet jumping over a melted ice cream cone.

Shot 1B - Same long moving shot, ice cream cone almost out of frame behind him, he take a few running steps and then makes a leap for the letter only to have the dog from earlier run through his legs trialing a broken leash so he stumbles and misses it.

Shot 1C –Start with the letter floating ahead of Randy, he follows behind more on the left side of the screen, the letter keeping ahead of him to the right, after a few stores a gust of wind blows the letter up into the branches of a tree above a knocked over trash can and he stops.

Shot 5 – Close up of the trash can with a focus on a very cliché banana peel

Shot 6 – low shot of Randy looking heroic and determined, wind blowing his hair,

Shot 7 – another shot of the trash can, this time with an even greater focus on the banana peel

Shot 6B – Randy squats down ready to run

Shot 8 – another shot of trash and banana peel

Shot 9 – full body shot of Randy beginning his run towards the peel

Shot 10 – trash from the side, peel in focus

Shot 9B – Randy is getting closer

Shot 10B – trash again

Shot 9C – Randy is almost there
Shot 10C – trash, and then Randy’s foot comes down next to the peel

Shot 11 – Shot of Randy’s victorious face

Shot 10D – pulled out from the previous shot, we now see Randy’s other foot catch on the trash can and he falls over it

**Scene 8:**

Shot 1 – Front shot of Randy looking up from the trash can, pulls out so we see the letter above him blowing in the wind and then it get blown free of the branch

Shot 2 – We see a side shot Randy and trash can far to frame right, and Randy look up at where the letter is blowing and down toward the ground where it is heading

Shot 3 – Close up of the puddle on the ground where letter is headed

Shot 4 – close up of Randy looking horrified from the front

Shot 5 – close up of the letter slowly moving toward the ground

Shot 6 – We change to a side angle close up of Randy sprawled on the ground over the can, focusing mostly on the ground where Randy scrambles up to his feet and begins to climb/leap over the fallen trashcan

Shot 6 – the letter continuing to fall slowly shot is now wider

Shot 5B – Randy is up and uses one foot braced on the trash can to launch himself into the air (same angle)

Shot 6B – Letter continues to fall very slowly this time over to the far right of frame in a much wider shot that encompasses the ground as well. Randy enters the frame in mid leap from the left side and makes a long slow motions leap through the air as he dives for the letter

Shot 7 – close up of Randy’s face and he is nearing the end of his dive

Shot 8 – close up of the letter as Randy’s hand grabs it from the air and we suddenly speed back up as Randy and letter fall out of frame

Shot 10 – Close low shot of Randy skidding along the ground, arm with the letter stretched out in front of him, him landing in the puddle, and skidding to a halt with his eyes scrunched shot, he lays there for a moment after he stops moving, the cautiously opens his eyes and looks up

Shot 11 – a glorious back lit shot of the heavenly mailbox in front of him
**Scene 9:**

Shot 1 – side shot, slight wider than scene 8 shot 6B where we see the mailbox was just out of frame the whole time and Randy is staring at it

Shot 2 – Closer shot of the top section of the mailbox from a little in front and to the side, Randy then springs up into view looking a little cleaner, runs a hand through his hair which magically fixes it (yay replacements), and then gives the letter a shake which instantly restores it to crispness

Shot 3 – a wider shot from the side and front as Randy, with a flourish, begins to slide the letter into the open mail slot, only to freeze completely when a curvy girl walks by. Everything but Randy’s head is frozen as it follows her progress out of frame. His head actually dragging the rest of his body with as he staggers after her out of frame practically panting like a tex avery wolf, his shoe untied as he goes. Once he’s out of frame, the forgotten letter which was staying in place this whole time, tilts backwards and flutters to the ground to land underneath the mailbox.

Cut to end credits audio and a moment later, cut to credits themselves.

**Credits:**

Postage stamps accompany rolling end credits

**Scene 10:** (optional)

Shot 1: Close up from the ground level of the letter underneath the mailbox, and the mail truck pulls up along the curb beside it

Shot 2: Wider side shot, letter slightly visible under the mailbox. Mailman gets out of the truck, unlocks the side of the mailbox, stuffs some letters and a large envelope or two in his shoulder bag and closes the box back up. He’s retracing his key back to his belt and starting to turn away when he notices something under the can. He bends down, and reaches underneath without really being able to look so he’s feeling around

Shot 1B – The hand is getting closer to the letter and then lands on it

Shot 2B – The mailman looks triumphant and stands up pulling out his prize, a nice green five dollar bill. He pockets it happily, jumps back into his truck, puts it in gear and drives off out of frame.

Cut to black with the copyright

THE END
Script 9

Posthaste

“*To suffer the penalty of too much haste, which is too little speed.”* Plato

**Scene 1:**

Shot 1 – Establishing shot of the front hallway (interior) of Randy’s house. We can see the front door screen left and some hanging pictures along the walls. Camera is very slowly pushing in on the door (move in post) as we hear the jingle of keys and the doorknob wiggles.

Shot 2 – tight shot, side view by the door (doorknob just above eye level) as it swings open and Randy enters with a bounce to his step, we can see a headphone cord so it is apparent he is listening to music, a backpack is slung over one shoulder. Randy exits right fairly quickly, the door starts to swing back shut, the key still in the lock, a small sign above the knob visible that reads, “*Don’t forget your keys!*”

Shot 3 – same side angle but low along the ground. There is a rack/mat on the ground and a sign pointing to it that reads “*Shoes!*” Randy walks past it and drops his bag there instead.

Shot 4 – same side angle mid-level shot not as close as shot 2 though. Randy bopping down the hall, we see him from the shoulders to the top half of his thighs. He walks past a framed quote and then a small table with various items on it, the focus of which is a letter with a post it note near it saying that it must be mailed today. There is also a framed picture of Randy’s family (keep his face hidden by a reflection or something), some college packets with “Congratulations” across the top, a clock showing that it is just before 4:00, and a calendar on the wall with the current day circled in red and all the days leading up to it checked off. Randy walks right past the table oblivious and the camera holds on the letter (now centered) and very slowly begins to push in.

After a long pause, Randy rushes back in (headphones gone) and skids to a halt in front of the letter, cheated slightly sideways to the camera view. He grabs the letter in his left hand, then uses his right to pull back his sleeve to check the time. There is no watch there (it can be seen on his right wrist). He makes a frustrated gesture and then dashes out of frame screen left.

All we see now is the empty space where the letter was, and the small clock which Randy didn’t notice.

**TITLE** – (either the word post haste will appear as a cut paper animation over the spot where the letter was or we enter an actual title sequence before the next shot – titles have been subcontracted out to Jack Sabbath)
**Scene 2:**

Shot 1 – Front exterior of Randy’s house (shared house condo type situation, 2 mailboxes) focusing on lower half of doorway over steps. Randy opens door from the inside and jumps from top step.

Shot 2 – Full body shot of Randy turns to his right (screen left) with a bit of a dramatic partially crouched pose.

Shot 3 – camera zooms in from shot 2-2 to his face in profile, focus on his temple not his face (I’m thinking after shot 2 is done, get a shot for a post zoom, then try a manual one, then try to match angles a bit going into shot 3 and use some motion blurring in post to try and make it blend).

Shot 4 – digital paper cut out shot of Randy’s internal map.

Shot 4 (shot 2B) – Randy reacts to the sight of the truck with some relief (a sort of “ah not as bad as I thought” reaction), and then starts to trot off towards the mailbox (think a light jog) and exits scene left.

**Scene 3:**

Shot 1 – long shot from the street (Randy’s left) as he crosses a side street and starts passing commercial buildings, still moving at a light jog. He enters from the right and exits left. Passing about 2 storefronts on his way, not really looking around. A chance to see the full body on a light jog run cycle.

Shot 2 – A ¾ front angle mid shot (mid thigh to above head) of Randy now passing a bakery. He sees the display and slows down as he goes by, absent-mindedly licking his lips. He then remembers his errands, shakes off his distraction, and continues down the street. Shot cuts when he first reaches the edge of the frame but before he exits (this is more of a bonus shot, it adds a little to the story as a preliminary distraction, but should be one of the last things animated and lifts out very easily).

**Scene 4:**

Shot 1 – Side view from Randy’s right with some unfocused objects (not very identifiable) in the foreground (we see the stores across the street behind him –something I can redress and use again later) Randy jogs past in from the left and out the right. A pause, then he runs backwards back to the center of the shot, body freezes and his head swivels to face the storefront with an awed look on his face, jaw slightly dropped.

Shot 2 – Shot of the swimsuit display in the window Randy is looking at. The edge of a bench is just visible to the left of the frame. 2D post effects to make the swimsuits seem to sparkle, a glow effect from the center.

Shot 3 – mid shot of mid torso to head. Randy shakes of the awe, crooks and eye brow, giving the swimsuits his “bedroom” eyes and runs his right hand (non-letter) over his hair, then pulls his fingers down over his chin and then gives the display a “how-you-doin’” finger point.

Shot 4 – same angle as shot 2 showing the window display, suddenly the effects turn off and the camera turns sideways to show a college-age girl sitting on the bench next to the window, holding her phone like they are mid-text, and staring up at him likes he’s a crazy person.
Scene 5:

Shot 1 – Mid angle shot from Randy’s front right, he slows to a walk, rubbing the back of his neck still embarrassed eyes lowered toward the ground, just as he starts to remove his hand and looks up in front of him again, he has an even more dramatic reaction to something in front of him.

Shot 2 – Glorious shot of a music store display of amps and guitars. Randy runs in from the right and puts his hands up against the window.

Shot 3 – Randy through the window, hands on the glass, with stars for eyes,

Shot 4 - shot from Randy’s back showing mid-thigh up, Randy pulls back from the window and begins jamming on an air-guitar, he bends forward just as we cut to the next shot

Shot 5 – same angle as 3 but outside the glass, Randy rises from his crouch and does the one legged twirl with the other leg stuck out in front of him, turning counter-clockwise toward the street. Just as he turns so he is facing away from the window completely, we freezes as we see the mail truck drive past at a sedate pace

Shot 6 – 180 degree angle change, Randy in the same pose, looking horrified. He then takes off his air guitar, throws it to the ground, and races off after the mail truck full speed.

Scene 6:

Shot 1 - Long moving shot panning left as Randy continues down the block at a run, we see the full body so we can get the full effect of the run. The beginning of the shot has the mail truck calmly exiting screen left and then Randy runs in from the right, camera starts to pan when he reaches the middle of the frame and keeps him centered. He passes a few shops and street items (newspaper boxes, trash can, utility poles ect – not all at once), a car drives past in the opposite direction that he’s going. He runs the distance of 4 shops (small ones)Towards the end of the shot we see some skater kids lounging outside a store. One of them has his board leaned up against the wall. Another board is lying wheels down in the middle of the sidewalk.

Shot 2 – Front angle shot of the skateboard with Randy out of focus approaching from up the street. Low angle curved street shot so no need for extensive backgrounds.

Shot 3 – Another front angle, this time of Randy’s shoulders and head as he runs forwards and sees the skateboard in front of him. He makes an oh-no! face

Shot 4 – Close up similar to 2 but now from the side as Randy’s foot lands on the boards and he starts rolling

Shot 5 – Side view from Randy’s right so we see the street behind him as he rolls down the street. Probably best to shoot BG and Randy separately and composite the moving BG in behind him. At
first Randy flails to get his balance, he then stabilizes and then looks pleased, a moment later he sails past the mail truck. He twists to look behind him as he passes it and just as he faces front again in victory, he slams into a large solid object (which the next shot shows to be a mattress)

**Scene 7:**

Shot 1 – Low angle shot from next to Randy where he is sitting on the ground. Which shows the mattress he bounced off of. The two people carrying the mattress look around the side of the mattress with concern as Randy sits up and shakes his head to clear it (hair going from mussed to straight again)

Shot 2 – ¾ front left angle of Randy on the ground, he takes his left hand away from where he was holding his head, then looks at it (sans letter) and starts to look around for it on the ground near him, then he looks ahead of him on the ground (out of frame)

Shot 3 - Shot from the opposite side of the mattress showing the letter on the ground on the other side of the mattress from where Randy is sitting on the ground, also visible.

Shot 4 – Side shot as Randy dive’s under the mattress, scrambling for the letter, only to have the wind blow it out of his reach just as he’s about to grab it. Randy then scrambles under the mattress for the letter and is just about to grab it when a gust of wind picks it up and sends it flying off screen right. Randy lays there hand out-stretched and looks forlorn

**Scene 8:**

Shot 1 – A close up of the letter floating prettily on the breeze. As it flutters, we see fingertips reaching into frame from the bottom edge (twice) like someone is jumping and trying to grab the letter.

Shot 2 - A wide side angle showing Randy jumping up as he chases the windblown letter across the screen. A knocked over trashcan is off to screen right, with a bunch of trash lying across the sidewalk in front of it, including a banana peel.

Shot 3 – Close up of the trash can with a focus on a very cliché banana peel

Shot 4 – same angle as shot 2 but we are closer in on Randy and his jumping, the trash can now half out of frame

Shot 5 – same as shot 3 but also closer in, focusing more on the banana peel

Shot 6 – same as 2, but again closer in, Randy running after the letter, hand outstretched

Shot 7 – another shot of trash and banana peel, even closer to the peel this time

Shot 8 – same side angle, but now we see mostly Randy’s shoulder and arm as he gets a little closer to reaching the letter

Shot 9 – trash from the side, peel in focus
Shot 10 – Super close side angle, just the letter and Randy’s hand about to close around it
Shot 11 – trash, same angle – closer, and then Randy’s foot comes down next to the peel
Shot 12 – pull back out to about the zoom level of shot 6 as Randy’s hand closes around the letter and he looks triumphant
Shot 13 – low angle shot of the trash can, similar to shot 3, now we see Randy’s one leg has avoided the banana peel, but his other foot catches on the trash can itself and he starts to fall
Shot 14 – picking right up from 12, Randy’s victorious face turns into an I’m-falling face and he falls out of frame

**Scene 9:**

Shot 1 – Close low shot of Randy skidding along the ground, arm with the letter stretched out in front of him, him landing in the puddle, and skidding to a halt with his eyes scrunched shot, he lays there for a moment after he stops moving, the cautiously opens his eyes and looks up
Shot 2 – a glorious back lit shot of the heavenly mailbox in front of him
Shot 3 – side shot at the same angle as scene 8 shot 2 but shifted right so the trash can is now on the left of the screen and we see the mailbox was just out of sight the entire time, Randy still on the ground, letter arm stretched out in front of him starting at the box
Shot 4 – Closer shot of the top section of the mailbox from a little in front and to the side, Randy then springs up into view looking a little cleaner, runs a hand through his hair which magically fixes it (yay replacements), and then gives the letter a shake which instantly restores it to crispness
Shot 5 – a wider shot from the side and front as Randy, with a flourish, begins to slide the letter into the open mail slot, only to freeze completely when a curvy girl walks by. Everything but Randy’s head is frozen as it follows her progress out of frame. His head actually dragging the rest of his body with as he staggers after her out of frame practically panting like a tex every wolf, his shoe untied as he goes. Once he’s out of frame, the forgotten letter which was staying in place this whole time, tilts backwards and flutters to the ground to land underneath the mailbox.

Cut to end credits audio and a moment later, cut to credits themselves.

**Credits:**

Postage stamps accompany rolling end credits

**Scene 10:** (optional – can also be shown in a series of still images or drawings that match the opening titles so this whole scene doesn’t have to be fully animated)

Shot 1: Close up from the ground level of the letter underneath the mailbox, and the mail truck pulls up along the curb beside it
Shot 2: Wider side shot, letter slightly visible under the mailbox. Mailman gets out of the truck, unlocks the side of the mailbox, stuffs some letters and a large envelope or two in his shoulder bag and closes the box back up. He’s retracing his key back to his belt and starting to turn away when he
notices something under the can. He bends down, and reaches underneath without really being able to look so he’s feeling around

Shot 1B – The hand is getting closer to the letter and then lands on it

Shot 2B – The mailman looks triumphant and stands up pulling out his prize, a nice green five dollar bill. He pockets it happily, jumps back into his truck, puts it in gear and drives off out of frame.

Cut to black with the copyright

THE END

Totals:

53 shots all included

38 shots not counting bonus shots and shots where the camera angle won’t need to be reset (shots that either continue or just zoom in from a previous shot)

6 puppets including Randy and the optional mailman. The mattress carriers and the person on the bench can be the test puppets re-used. So the only new builds will be the final version of Randy, the curvy girl, and the mailman if that scene is used.
Y-axis
Puppet Building 3-Louie: wood, wire, and plastic armature

My main design concept for the third test puppet was to try and find something similar to the sleeve anchors I used with my second puppet Huey, but that wouldn’t end up making the puppet quite so heavy in the end. The real weight to Huey was in the plumber’s epoxy I used to help fuse the metal sleeves with the wire joints, but since I don’t know how to solder and am not yet aware of a better bonding method, finding an alternative limb seemed like a good place to start.

In my wanderings through the aisles of Home Depot I came across this variety set of plastic plug anchors. They’re very similar in nature to the sleeve anchors. They are meant to go into walls, usually plaster, to help prevent the screws from pulling back out through the softer material. These ones in particular caught my eye, because unlike many of the other plastic anchors found in stores, these are not tapered at one end and have a flat cap at the other. The straight rod-like style of these anchors, makes them much more suitable for serving as firm but light weight pieces to act as the bones for my puppet.

Once I knew I wanted to base the test-aspect of my third puppet around these plastic plugs, I drew up my design plans for Louie here.

I used the same basic wooden torso, pelvis, and head as I did with Dewey, my control/wood and wire puppet. The altered pelvis I tried with my second puppet Huey, where I created a t-shape on the front of the pelvis but left the back solid to allow for greater mobility when the puppet lifted its leg hadn’t worked out as well as I could have hoped. I did have increased mobility when lifting the leg forward, but couldn’t match it when the leg was extended backward as you get when the character walks forward. It was noticeable too, that the leg was bending forward and back from a different point along the pelvis, which just looked awkward when the puppet was being animated.
With the second puppet, I used a combination of twisted 16 gauge wire and 8 gauge wire for different joints. With Louie, I decided to try going all out and using almost entirely the 8 gauge wire for all the main joints, using the twisted 16 gauge only on the extremities of the head, wrists, and ankles. The 8 gauge is thicker, and having not been manipulated like the double twist of the 16 gauge, it tends to be a little stronger and firmer when animating with it. For the hands, I also went with a higher gauge wire. I used the loop concept from Huey and the individual finger concept taken from Dewey. In this case, however, the fingers are made of single pieces of 16 gauge wire, whereas before I used a twisted double length of 20 gauge wire.

I also planned for a more basic foot design using 2 squares of wood with a single hole drilled though the center for the heel and toes pieces, with washers glued to the tops and bottoms to add stability, weight, and to help disperse force of the tie down screws so it would be less likely to split the wood. When I did get to building the feet, I improvised and actually swapped out the pieces of wood on one of the feet for a set of hex nuts glued together, similar to the core of the feet in the Huey puppet, but without the plumber’s epoxy around it this time forming the outer shape of the shoe.

I chose which of the plastic plugs to use for the different bones, based on their width. The kit came with four sizes of plug from the smallest (white) to the largest (blue). I ended up using the two middle sizes for the puppet. The red, being the thinner of the 2 in diameter I chose to use for the upper and lower arm bones was well as using it as the plug for a potential replacement head concept. (I’ll have a separate post later about how I’m going to be dealing with the character’s head and facial animations)

For the legs, I used the slightly larger green plugs, though I knew they weren’t long enough for the length of the legs, so if you look closely you can see where I delineated on the plan (3 images up) where the breaks in the bone should go.
I intentionally tried to keep the seams closer to the edge of the bones, so that I could use a longer length of the wire for the joints to help seal the two pieces together.

Before I glued the plastic bone sections together and connected them with the joints, I did a quick test to see what would be the best method of gluing the wire segments into the plugs. If you look down the barrel of one of these plugs you can see that the central hole isn’t perfectly rounded, but is actually star shaped, with thin ridges of plastic jutting out into the center space of the plug.

The concept behind it is that, when used in a wall, the screw will tear through these ridges in various places, and that the plastic will actually settle in between the threads of the screw, creating greater resistance if the screw were to start to pull away from the wall the plug is seated in.

My thought was that a more varied texture on the inside of the plugs would give the epoxy more nooks and crannies as it were to fill into and would help the epoxy maintain a better grip on the plastic surface. I grabbed two extra green plugs and the accompanying sized screw from the kit. I tightened them into the vise and screwed the screw into them about halfway before pulling it back out. This did leave enough space for the wire segment to be glued in and plenty of texture on the interior of the plug to work with.

However, as you can see from the picture above, the stress of the screw going into the plug not only damaged the plastic ridges on the inside of the segment, but also twisted and bent the outside of the rod as well. While the glue adhered well, after seeing the structural damage the screw did to the exterior of the plug, I was worried that it might make the plug more likely to bend under pressure, which is not what I want the bone sections to do with these puppets.
So, once the first glue test dried completely, I added another segment to the end of it, this time pre-drilling a hole with the 9/64" drill bit into the side of both green pieces as was planning to use a single piece of the 8 gauge wire for this section. (the 1/8" drill bit is a good size to use when drilling for the double 16 gauge wire, but is just a little tight when working with the 8 gauge, so I tend to go up a size) As you can see in the above picture, pre-drilling the hole led to a lot less structural damage tho the plug as a whole so I decided to use that method for the actual puppet. We’ll just have to see how the epoxy adheres to the plastic when I get to the test animation.

With Louie I also wanted to test a different method of changing out replacement heads.

I drilled a wider hole where the neck would go and cut down one of the red plugs to fit inside the socket.

I didn’t slide the plug all the way in when testing to be sure the hole was large enough because I wanted to be sure I’d be able to get it back out again so I could get the epoxy in there. You can also see a little of the star shape I mentioned before in this image here.

Because I want the plug to grip the neck firmly but still be able to switch out the replacement heads, I decided to use the screw method I tested for this particular joint. The wooden torso provides the structural stability I need, and the rougher interior grips the twisted 16 gauge quite well without using any kind of glue. I did find in testing that I needed to use needle-nose pliers to take the head section off and put it back in, trying to do it by
hand tended to cause the neck to bend rather than
move in or out of the plug. Once everything had been
 glued together using the JB-weld, I had this view of
the puppet. The masking tape on the legs was how I
kept the separate leg segments together while the
epoxy was setting for 24 hours. Once it was together,
there really wasn’t any need to remove the tape so I
left it on.

For the hands I took a single piece of the 16 gauge
wire, folded it in half, and inserted the two ends into
the barrel of my drill like I showed in my first puppet
building post. Because I was only
using one piece of wire this time
instead of two, it allowed me to grip
the other end with the pliers a short
distance in rather than all the way at
the end, leaving a loop at the end of
the twist for me to work with. I made
two pieces like this, one for each hand.
You can see from the picture that I have a pretty long segment of twisted wire to work with. It’s
always better to have a piece that is too long rather than too short because you can always cut a
piece down, but if it’s too short you just have to start over.

Once the loop was made, I stuck it in
my vise to hold it upright while I
worked on attaching the finger
sections. Each finger is a single piece
of 16 gauge wire that I wrapped
around the loop, the thumb (left) being
the only one I attached further down
on the twisted wire itself.

When I was twisting the bottoms of the
length of wire around the loop, I found
it had a tendency to spin around the
metal and often would be pointing
sideways rather than straight up. This
first finger kept falling forward, away
from me. I adjusted for this, by leaving a longer section hanging down that I could maneuver through to the other side of the loop, this way whenever the finger tried to spin, the lower section would prevent it from moving because the loop was in the way.

The longer stem method worked for the second finger as well, though this time I attached it facing the other way so the hand wouldn’t get too congested with wire on one side. The third finger was less cooperative so I ended up bringing in the masking tape and wrapping it around the palm section of the loop to keep everything in place.

One more piece of wire and another section of tape and I had a five fingered hand. I repeated the process again with the second hand, making sure the thumb was on the other side this time.

Once both hands had been shaped with the wire, I lay them on a piece of scrap paper and applied a liberal amount of the JB-weld epoxy to both of them, carefully peeling away the masking tape before I did. (At that point they were laying flat on the table, and were less inclined to spin) Once the 24 hour setting period had passed, I then flipped the hands over and applied even more of the JB-weld to the other side of the palm, making sure the ends of each piece of wire was thoroughly coated.

Last, but not least I had the two separate foot designs to work with. The left foot (at the back) was made from gluing two hex nuts together for both the toe and the heel. After 12 hours when the glue was partially set, I added the washers to the bottom of both stacks. Usually after 12 hours the pieces that are being epoxied can be carefully moved, but you shouldn’t put any stress on the connection because it’s still weak. Since the washer was just going underneath, it was not problem to add the washers early. Once the full 24 hours went by for the drying of the bases, I took another section of the 16 gauge wire and made another loop like I did for the hands.
I made sure that the loop was large enough to go around the top of the hex nut and not interfere with the hole for the tie downs.

This time I hand twisted the wire rather than using the drill so I could make sure the length was correct for the foot size and so I could leave a longer untwisted segment at the end to connect to the heel. While that was drying, I took another piece of the twisted 16 gauge (just a normal piece this time, no special modifications) and glued into the heel to serve as an ankle joint. To keep the JB-weld from dripping out the bottom and gluing the entire piece to the table, I tilted it on its side to dry. Once both those glues had set I used the remaining length coming from the toe section to twist around the wire of the ankle joint and then curved it around the stack of hex nuts for added security. I glued those together, and then added extra JB-weld to the top and added the extra washer up there to give myself something to grab when manipulating that joint.

For the wooden test foot, I mostly based it on the concept of the first foot design I used on Dewey. The main difference is that I chose not to make the full shape of the foot and just use smaller wooden pieces and used a double twisted piece of the 16 gauge to connect them instead of a single piece. I placed a washer on the bottom of the toe piece to help spread out the force from the tie down. I probably should have put one on the top as well, but I wanted to see if just the bottom one would be helpful.

The next step was to test each one out with a section of the animation from my project. Once each puppet has been animation tested, I’ll have a better sense of what worked well based on the designs and what didn’t. From that, I’ll be able to take what worked best and use that to design the final version of my main character, Randy! Hope these walk-throughs of my process are helpful to anyone who is interested. If you have any questions about any of them, please feel free to ask in the comments section and I’ll do my best to answer if I can.
Puppet Armature Analysis – Putting Huey, Dewey, and Louie through their paces

I had two purposes in doing these armature movement tests. The first and most obvious was a need to test out the various armature designs I came up with. To take a moment to examine how the different weights of wire worked for each joint and to see which limb structure is both effective and efficient for my needs. The second aspect of these tests is to give me a chance to essentially rough draft my walk cycles for the project. While Posthaste does have a basic narrative structure to it of a teenage boy trying to outrun a mail truck to get his letter sent out that day, my real focus for this piece to to stretch my ability to give a walk cycle a sense of a character’s personality as well as then creating various types of walk cycles that can all work together with the personality of the same character.

One of the movies that I recently watched and will be typing up my review for is Laika’s ParaNorman. What really struck me with the movie and what I plan to focus my review on is how they really took the time to individualize each character. They take a moment in the commentary to talk about how they sat down and came up with life stories for each of the cursed zombies and then combined the idea of who they were in life and then how their bodies would have decomposed to come up with a unique walk cycle for each of them. Each character has a distinct and well thought out series of walk cycles and movement cycles. This is essentially what I am trying to accomplish with my one main character, and with my secondary characters in a smaller way. At the end, when the female puppet walks by and distracts my main character, I want the audience to be able to get a sense of exactly who she is as a person just from her one walk from one side of the screen to the other.

In order to accomplish this I need to reacquaint myself with working with puppets. My last production piece for school was a hand drawn 2D piece, Colors (you can see it in its work-in-progress state here) and that was only done after having been on medical leave for a year to try and sort out this whole unknown auto-immune thing I’ve got going on, which I still haven’t quite figured out but I’ve at least found some treatments that are helping me to manage it better. So yeah, to circle back ’round to my point, I am out of practice so rough drafts and test animations of the walk cycles is a very good thing to work my way back into full animating form as it were.

So with those two focus points of structure and movement in place, I present to you my puppet armatures Huey, Dewey, and Louie in their first movement tests!
Dewey was my first test design, using the basic wood and wire structure I first learned in my puppet building class at RIT for creating starter puppets. It is very much based on the simple wire and plasticine puppet design described in *Stop Motion: Craft Skills for Model Animation* by Susannah Shaw, though I do not intend to cover this puppet with plasticine. The main difference from that basic design and pretty much every puppet design you will ever see, is that I tried using a double spine in this case. Generally, you always follow the anatomy or assumed anatomy of whatever type of creature you are building when making the puppet’s skeleton. A double spine is just one of those things you don’t do. My thought process in using a double spine here was to really experience why this is a bad idea. I knew from the start it would cause problems, but I really wanted to experience those issues myself to gain a better understanding of why it doesn’t work. It may seem a little strange, but I think, in some cases, intentionally repeating someone else’s mistake can help you to better understand why certain design concepts evolved. Plus, there’s always that chance that by trying something different you can discover something useful, which I actually did.

I chose to use this particular puppet to test out the walk cycle for the distracting female at the end of the film. Her walk cycle is intended to be very hippy and involve a lot of torque at the waist as she is meant to be very curvaceous and dancing along to her headphones as she walks. I figured, that if this spine design could be of any use, it would be in helping to create that twist in the spine by giving it a little more support. And in one sense it did help. I felt it was a little easier to get a more fluid rotation of the hips from back to front on this character. Where the double spine
was a hindrance in the walk cycle was actually in moving the hip up and down as the character walked. To really get that swaying walk, I needed to have poses where the shoulder was tilting down and the hip was tilting up on the same side of the body. Having the second spine prevented me from creating that movement effectively and took a lot of the intended swagger out of the walk cycle.

However, while the double spine is certainly not the right choice for this particular puppet, I can see some instances where it could be useful. If you have a character that moves in a more waddling fashion, such as a duck or maybe a robot, having that extra section of the spine can add support for the extra twisting you might do, and its rigidity might help you to maintain a stiffer or more mechanical look to the movements.

Overall, the use of the wooden pieces for the limbs worked very well. They were easy to grip, firm so I didn’t have to worry about give, and of course they can be easily shaped into whatever form is needed for the puppet design. The only really drawback to the wooden limbs is the added time it takes to cut and sand each section down to just the right shape.

The use of the twisted 16 gauge wire overall was very useful. I didn’t feel like any of the areas were too weak to hold their position, while simultaneously I had a good range of flexibility so I didn’t feel like I was fighting the puppet when I tried to move it. In the joint between the heel and toe of the feet, I used a single piece of the 16 gauge wire instead of the twisted double I used elsewhere. This did prove problematic, the wire was just too weak and had a tendency to sometimes bend in additional places other than where I wanted it to bend. It also felt very fragile and I was concerned that the constant bending with every step would soon snap the wire in half. Moving forward, I plan to bump that back up to a double twist of the 16 gauge to give it the added stability I need.

For the hands, the twisted 20 gauge wire seemed to hold up well. The only real issue was in bending such small segments to look like properly curled fingers. The lengths are too small to be properly manipulated by hand so needle nose pliers or tweezers would be useful. I also plan to add some epoxy to the finger segments to provide a bit of a finger bone effect so the length of the knuckle segments is more regulated during the actual animation. Also, the connections between the fingers and the flat wooden piece I used for the palm, look chunky after having been put together, making me think that attaching the fingers to a metal loop directly is the better solution.

With the exception of the spine, which I pretty much assumed wouldn’t work going in, this design worked very well. It was strong and stable, didn’t break, and when I held the puppet up horizontally by the ankle it supported its entire weight without bending, which is a great test of the strength to weight assessment of the puppet. If it can’t hold itself up like that, there’s a good chance it will start to wobble or the weight of the upper body will start to bend it out of position in more precarious poses, like if you need the character to balance on one foot.

Overall I think I have a good start with the movement test here. I like the firm placing of the foot with each forward step. Towards the end, I feel like the toe is popping too much from the contact position to the down position so I’ll have to watch that. (Contact position is when the foot that is moving forward first makes contact with the ground, most often with just the heel. The down
position is when that foot is then flat on the ground and the weight has been transferred to it) I think I need to push the bounce in the upper body a bit more before hitting the contact positions since she is supposed to be rocking out to some music on her headphones. I think the arm movement works pretty well, though it can also be pushed a bit further on the back swing and I need to make sure the hands aren’t coming too high up on the forward motion. It works better at shoulder level than up by the jaw. Also, there just needs to be more swaying of the hips back and forth. Some of this was due to the limitations of the puppet, but I also wasn’t pushing the pose as much as I should have.

Overall, I think it’s a good start, but I need to really exaggerate the movements a bit more for them to come across properly. Following live actions movements exactly tends to look too subdued in animation. I think here, I stuck too close to the reference footage, and didn’t push past it as much as I needed to in order for her personality to come across. She’s supposed to be a very bold and confident person who is going to dominate the shot she is in.

Huey

The main assessment I came away with from the Huey puppet is that the plumber’s epoxy was just way too heavy. The puppet just felt very weighted when I was trying to manipulate it, which, I think, added to the more measured performance I ended up with. The legs seemed bulky and the feet felt clunky. Even though the same wire weights in the extremities worked well for Dewey, they felt far too weak for the weight of the limbs for Huey here, especially in the legs.
One thing that did seem to hold up decently was the single 8 gauge wire used for the spine rather than a twisted double section of the 16 gauge.

I did the horizontal body test, holding the puppet by the feet, and the wire in the ankle started to bend almost immediately. I did an overnight test of the puppet standing on one leg with the other leg bent like it was bouncing a soccer ball and both arms fully extended. When I came back to check it the next day, the limbs all drooped, which means that I wouldn’t be able to hold itself in a position overnight if I had the need to break up the shooting of the shot over several days, which is generally what you need to do.

The rounded edges of the limbs also got in the way when trying to bend the elbow so that the wrist was near the shoulder, and even in bringing the arms down along the side of the body. When I tried to sand away some of the extra epoxy to get the limbs closer to where they needed to be, it started to crumble and break off. Nothing detached, but it made me nervous about the longevity of the attachments. Additionally, the cut-in pelvis design I used kept rubbing against the connections at the top of the legs and didn’t work as well as I hoped. While I was able to get a higher step towards the front, the top of the legs kept catching on the back of the pelvis when the leg was fully extended, making it hard to get the pacing of the steps the way I wanted. The added bulk of the epoxy at the connection point, only made the problem worse.

As for the hands and feet. The hands are going to be primary made out of polyurethane foam, which is in the next phase of the designing, so there’s really nothing to talk about with them until I can test them out in action. The feet on the other hand just felt way to clunky. Using the double twisted wire instead of the single strand of the 16 did help, but the rounded shape of the feet made it hard to get the idea of weight across since the foot had a bit of an illusion of floating because the foot curves in at the bottom. The hex nuts were useful as channels for the tie downs and I didn’t have to be concerned about wood splitting like I did with the previous design if I needed to clamp it down tightly.

For the movement test, I definitely stuck too close to the reference footage. I was having difficulty determining what differentiated the jogging cycle from a run cycle, so I followed the reference almost exactly. In the end I was able to determine, that the main way to express the difference between a jog and a run is in holding the upper body section more steady. In a run, the character gets a little lower and focuses more on covering distance horizontally. Because the jog is slower, but not a walk, there’s a lot more vertical movement that essentially eats up the speed. This test doesn’t have much personality too it. I really need to focus next time on the character of the awkward teen running. He also moves just a bit too fast here for what I want in the jog, so I’ll need to re-pace it. Overall, it was valuable in helping me to figure out what I need to do, though the cycle itself isn’t very good. Here’s to doing better next time!
Louie was a weird sort of combination of being the most successful puppet and the least successful at the same time. The big thing I got out of this design concept was the fact that the plastic plugs worked really really well for the limbs. All I had to do was cut and/or glue them to size, drill a hole through the center and I was good to go. For a simple amateur puppet skeleton where you plan to build-up or mold the actual body shape in top of with another material, they are great. The brand I’ve been using are Crown Bolt plugs, which have a cylindrical shape rather than the tapered one you find in most plugs. the only downside is that I’ve only been able to find them in the large variety pack size, so I have a lot of extra plugs and screws in sizes I’m not using. But, in this field, I’ll probably find a use for them at some point.

What didn’t work very well in this design concept was the wire weights I was using. Most of Louie’s joints used the single piece of 8 gauge aluminum wire. I found this to just be too stiff to manipulate the way I want. Some animators who prefer a tighter armature might actually like the 8 gauge. It’s really a matter of taste. For me, I felt like I was fighting with the puppet a little too much to get it where I wanted it. Another thing I discovered, was that because I was only using a single piece of the wire that was smooth, the JB-weld epoxy didn’t hold as well, and one of the arms came loose in its socket. Now having a limb come loose is a common problem, and can sometimes be because the socket and the length of wire weren’t deep enough and there just wasn’t enough surface to grip to each other. In this case, though, I had almost 1/2” of wire in the socket, but it just pulled loose of the epoxy and started to rotate freely. Thankfully the wire didn’t break so it’s an easy enough fix at this stage, I just need to re-glue the socket, but it makes
me feel that the other advantage the twisted double length of the 16 gauge has is that because it’s twisted there are more grooves and divots for the epoxy to fill and grip into, helping to keep the wire more securely attached.

Moving outward to the extremities. The palm design seems to work pretty well for the hands, but again the wire weight is off and the single piece of 16 gauge for each finger is just too thick for such delicate manipulation. I decided to test two different foot design concepts with Louie, adjusting from what I learned with the first two test puppets. His left foot was a variation on the wooden foot from Dewey, using a washer to make the bottom of his foot flatter, and there was supposed to be another washer on top to disperse the force of the tie down and to keep the wood from splitting. I ended up forgetting the top washer before I did the movement test in my haste to get my work done, but I plan to add it in later when I fix his arm and I’ll still be able to get a sense for how well it works when I use him as a secondary character in the project. The second foot design was mostly made from hex nuts and washers, similar to the core of the foot I used with Huey, just without the plumber’s epoxy surrounding it.

Both foot designs seemed to work just fine. I found that with the weight difference between the two not matching, the puppet had a tendency to shift forward when the metal foot was extended and the wooden foot was holding the weight. I’m guessing the issue would have been alleviated if both feet were the same, but it made me more inclined to go with the metal and wire foot for my final design. In my next round of testing when the puppets are covered with the foam layer, I will try and figure out a good capping method to go over the internal foot structure, that doesn’t appear to change too much in between frames if I need to adjust the screw.

The last piece of information that I took away from the movement test with the Louie armature, was that I had left too much joint space in this design. Having the extra wire between the torso and the upper arm, at the elbows, and particularly at the knees made the puppet more unwieldy. Because I had so much extra wire, the knee wouldn’t always bend at the same height, and with the stiffer 8 gauge wire, it was harder to force the bend back where I wanted it. For the next design I tried to be a lot more deliberate in having enough wire to fold the limb back entirely if I need too (like if the puppet were to squat, bending the knees all the way so the upper and lower legs are parallel).

Despite some of my struggles with the wire weights in this puppet design, this movement test actually was the best of the three in my opinion. I tried to distance myself a little more from the reference footage, which I think paid off. In my efforts to create more of the look of an awkward teenager, I tried to add little touches like having the wrists cocked awkwardly to break the line of the arm, and added a sort of forward head bob as he moved, which enhances the idea that he is listening to music. The first few steps have a pretty good amount of bounce in them, I think he starts to dip a little too much the two steps before he spins and the movement starts to look too cartoony. The tempo slows a bit too much on the spin, I need to eliminate a frame of two from the timing to get him back on pace, but overall I really like it. In the next iteration I want to try and put a little more awkwardness in his posture. I plan to have him slouch a little more, which will add some bend to the legs, and have him lead with his head and shoulders more. I also plan to work out a less graceful curve for the arms as they move, to really try and get a sense that this
is a character who has recently gone through a growth spurt, and hasn’t quite figured out how to maneuver his longer limbs.

One good reference point I stumbled across was actually when I was watching *The Big Bang Theory*. Sheldon (the character played by Jim Parsons) always seems more awkward than the other characters. Some of this is due to his long and thin stature, but I noticed in one scene between him and his roommate Leonard (Johnny Galecki) that it is also in how he holds himself. Leonard as the “king of the nerds” is the most confident of the group in relating to the rest of the world, while Sheldon’s character is often shown to be confused and anxious about the prospect of interacting with other people. I noticed in one shot how much that came across just in the way they were standing. Leonard was calm, his arms were just hanging straight down at his sides and he was causally leaning with his weight shifted to one side. Sheldon, on the other hand, just looked anxious even though in the conversation he was actually correcting Leonard about something. (Sheldon likes to tell people they are wrong a lot and then tell them why) Sheldon was standing almost perfectly straight, his weight balanced between both feet and his elbows were bent bringing his hand and shoulders up. There was a tension to his pose like he was instinctually preparing for an attack (Sheldon is always thinking about the worst case scenario) which reminded me a bit of the anxiety of high school when most people are more insecure about themselves, and there’s an inherent nervous tension, as if you are waiting for someone else to notice your faults and judge you for them. So I plan to try and pay more attention to the body postures as I watch future episodes of the show and see if I can glean some more good ideas from it. Thanks Jim Parsons!

**Final analysis**

So, taking everything I learned from my three test puppets, with a thought toward efficiency and economy at the same time, here is the final design for my main character Randy.
Working my way out from the center, the torso and pelvis are essentially the same as the ones used for Louie, the third puppet. This is really a combination of the overall shapes used for the first puppet Dewey, but with the shoulders angled in and the lower section of the pelvis angled more and raised up a bit.

The spine is the only piece of 8 gauge aluminum wire being used, the added stiffness is more useful in that central joint since most of his movements have him upright and there won’t be as much movement there. This allows me to be a little rougher in handing the arms and legs without worrying that it will shift the central position of the character. However, there are a few shots where Randy needs to contort a little more, so I plan to build one copy of him where his spine will be made with the double twisted pieces of the 16 gauge so I can get those poses a little easier.

I’ll continue to use the plastic anchor plugs for the limbs as they’re a lot faster to assemble than the wooden limbs and a lot lighter than the metal and epoxy ones. The joints to the limbs with be connected with the double 16 gauge twist. I’ve expanded the length of the arm and leg segments so I don’t have as much fluidity in where the joints bend.

The feet will be made with the stacked hex nuts with the connecting 16 gauge twist sitting on top of the toes and then wrapped around the ankle joint. The hands are slightly less determined. I know that for a inner skeleton method, using a loop of the 16 gauge and attaching single strands of the 20 gauge wire that will then be doubled back and enhanced with epoxy to create the finger joints. I have one more test to do of a design that actually utilizes something akin to a wire exoskeleton. Once I’ve tested that with the various other coverings I’ll be able to build the hand segments for the final character.

I also have a few more tests to do to determine the best head replacement system before I drill the holes. One thought I had was combining the idea I used with Dewey where I simple use a screw to tighter down on a piece of wire holding the head in a socket, with the plug holder idea I used with Louie. The concern with the plug method is that over time the plug will become torn up and won’t hold the replacement heads as firmly. However, I recently saw a different metal armature design called Stop Mo Tech which uses a combination of metal caps you can epoxy to your wire joints, which then fit into their socket parts which have screws to tighten and clamp them down. It’s an easy method for having replacement parts on hand if something breaks. I plan to try a variation on that technique using some of the excess plastic plug anchors with a loop on one end which can be slotted into the neck of the puppet and then secured in place by drilling a screw through the back of the torso into the loop at the bottom.

Unlike the test armatures, the hands and feet won’t be permanently attached to the final designs until after the foam “flesh” layer is added and the clothing is designed and stitched together. This is simply because it’s easier to get the costumes on the puppet without the hands and feet stuck on the ends. I will get into this more later once I get the clothing done and can show pictures of the whole process.

So there you have it, the final armature design for Randy!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Shot</th>
<th>Time (m:s:f)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:06:20</td>
<td>pan left along wall to door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:03:10</td>
<td>doorknob rattles, lock turns, Randy enters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:29:12</td>
<td>Randy dances by left to right, exits right, hold, Randy re-enters, grabs letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:02:10</td>
<td>Randy exits front door of his house and jumps down the steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>00:05:02</td>
<td>Randy finishes his run from the door and looks to his right poised for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:11:04</td>
<td>mo-graph shows establishing shot of town map into a street view showing the path to the mailbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2b</td>
<td>00:01:00</td>
<td>Randy turns and looks left, posed for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00:04:04</td>
<td>shot of view down the street, mail truck coming into view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2c</td>
<td>00:06:16</td>
<td>Randy is relieved, casually walks out scene left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:01:14</td>
<td>Shot of Randy's legs as he jogs right to left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:04:10</td>
<td>Randy strolls past bakery and notices window display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:12:14</td>
<td>fantasy sequence where Randy dreams of pastries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4b</td>
<td>00:03:16</td>
<td>Truck passes in front wiping fantasy sequence to shocked reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00:03:06</td>
<td>the truck turns the corner (changing the movement from right to left to left to right), and then we see Randy charge up the street after it, and skid around the corner in pursuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:04:02</td>
<td>truck enters right to left, when it hits center screen Randy enters chasing it, camera stays with Randy as truck drives off and he is stopped by closed sidewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>00:02:24</td>
<td>Randy stops running and waves his arm trying to stop the truck, mouth open like yelling, and then slumps down still looking ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:01:06</td>
<td>establishing shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2b</td>
<td>00:01:16</td>
<td>Randy then slumps down still looking ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>00:02:18</td>
<td>tight shot of the traffic light, as the light turns from green to red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2c</td>
<td>00:01:16</td>
<td>Randy looks up interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>00:03:18</td>
<td>truck slows and comes to a rumbling stop at the light (now red)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2d</td>
<td>00:02:10</td>
<td>Randy looks up ahead, then looks hopeful into determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>00:01:00</td>
<td>Randy runs forward and jumps over it (exiting frame mid leap)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00:02:20</td>
<td>fantasy sequence of slow mo jump between buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>00:01:10</td>
<td>Randy lands on the dolly and zips out of frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:15:16</td>
<td>Randy's wavers to gain his balance as he zips by on the dolly, rights himself, passes the truck, leans forward triumphantly as he continues past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00:01:02</td>
<td>dolly hits edge of curb and stops, Randy's feet go flying off</td>
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<td>Randy skids forward out of his landing and lays on the ground, then drags himself up</td>
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<td>1b</td>
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<td>Randy stands, cracks his back, then leans on an object next to him</td>
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<td>Close up, Randy realizes the object is the mailbox</td>
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<td>Randy celebrates, straightens himself and the letter, and starts to place it in the box when he freezes and stares straight ahead</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Babs smiles and winks at Randy as she passes him, he turns his head to look at her as she goes</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Babs saunters out scene left, Randy is still staring after her very Tex-Avery-wolf-like tosses the letter behind him over his head (exits out of frame above him) and he follows after her, after he's out of frame the letter floats back in from the top and flutters to a stop under the mailbox</td>
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### Storyboard Selection

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SELECTION OF FINAL STILLS

Scene 1 shot 1

Scene 1 shot 3
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts degree in the School of Film and Animation.
Rochester Institute of Technology.

Copyright Carolyn Depp 2015
Budget:

Title: Posthaste
Producer: Carolyn Depp
Director: Carolyn Depp

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-BIBLIOGRAPHY-

Works Cited:


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Fantastic Mr. Fox. Dir. Wes Anderson. Perf. George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray, Willem DaFoe, and Owen Wilson. 20th Century Fox, 2009. Film

