Scent of Geranium

Naghmeh Farzaneh
nxf9194@rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
Scent of Geranium

by Naghmeh Farzaneh

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS IMAGING ARTS/COMPUTER ANIMATION

SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION
COLLEGE OF IMAGING ARTS AND SCIENCES

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

AUGUST 2016

Brian Larson, Chair
Associate Professor
School of Film and Animation

Skip Battaglia
Professor
School of Film and Animation

Peter Murphey
Assistant Professor
School of Film and Animation
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page .................................................................................................................. I
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................... II
Abstract ...................................................................................................................... III
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................... IV
Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
Preproduction ............................................................................................................. 2
   Story Development ................................................................................................. 2
   Style Development ................................................................................................. 4
   Concept Design ..................................................................................................... 6
   Script ...................................................................................................................... 10
   Narration, Storyboard and Animatic ...................................................................... 11
Production .................................................................................................................. 12
   Animation ............................................................................................................. 12
   Software ................................................................................................................ 13
   Compositing .......................................................................................................... 15
Sound .......................................................................................................................... 15
   Recording the Narration ....................................................................................... 15
   Recording the Music ............................................................................................. 16
   Sound Mixing ........................................................................................................ 16
Title and Credits ........................................................................................................ 17
Screening of the Film and Receiving Critique ............................................................. 17
Appendix A: Original Proposal ................................................................................ 19
Appendix B: Production Stills ................................................................................... 23
Appendix C: Script ..................................................................................................... 25
ABSTRACT

“Scent of Geranium” is an animated graduate thesis film, with a runtime of 4 minutes and 41 seconds. This film is a completion of an unfinished project from 2011, the year that I immigrated to the United States of America, called “The Whole World Is Watching”. Scent of Geranium is an autobiography about the challenges, fears, unexpected events and adaptation process that I experienced after my immigration. This film captures a series of memories and events that were significant to me and that have affected me in a certain way.

This film is a full color, hand-drawn animation that was produced with combination of digital and traditional techniques. The backgrounds were painted with ink and brush on paper and combined with digital painting techniques in Photoshop. The animation was done in Photoshop, After Effects and TVPaint Animation Software. The narration, music and Foley sound for this film has been designed, composed and performed very elaborately to convey a strong emotional message.

This paper outlines the whole pre-production and production process of this film. It also covers the challenges, failures and successes that I faced in the duration of project.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Brian Larson, my thesis advisor. The door to Brian’s office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my film. He consistently allowed this film to be my own work and voice, but steered me in the right direction whenever he thought I needed it. Brian kindly spent hours to not only discuss my production and artistic procedure to the film, but also took the time to listen to me talking about the challenges that I experienced after my immigration. As a conclusion to these discussions, he helped me to realize the significance of each event that later became a mandatory part of my film.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee, Skip Battaglia and Peter Murphy, who provided valuable advices and comments on this thesis. Although Prof. Skip Battaglia was retired the second half of my film production, he still managed to meet with me on a regular basis to discuss the film and give me his input about the direction that I was moving to with this project. This film would not be completed without the beautiful and sensitive music composed and performed by my brother, Nima Farzaneh. I also would like to thank Lucas Gonzalez who despite the time constrains at the very last weeks of production agreed to come on board as a sound designer.

I would like to thank Laurie O’Brien, for her feedback, Alexander Montoya for recording the narration and music and all my peers whose support was heartwarming throughout the several months of production of this film.

Last but not least I would like to express my gratitude to my family, especially my husband, whose unlimited support always encouraged me to follow my passion in every stage of my life.
INTRODUCTION

The production of “Scent of Geranium” started in Spring 2014, and ended in December 2015 at the final SOFA screenings at Rochester Institute of Technology. This project was executed under the supervision of my thesis committee members Brian Larson, Skip Battaglia, and Peter Murphey. The whole process consisted of preproduction: story development, concept design, writing the narration script and animatic; production: recording narration and music, animation, coloring; postproduction: compositing, visual effects, color correction, credits, sound design and mixing music.

I have always been interested in creating works that are a reflection of my surroundings in a way. How I have experienced life and how I have felt about certain things gives me motivation to create works. Scent of Geranium is an autobiographical film about my immigration and challenges that I faced; a flashback to all my memories, my fears, doubts, homesickness, and all the other feelings that immigration will force one to experience. This project gave me a chance to observe, think, cherish and learn to conquer problems despite of all the hardship.

The original idea of Scent of Geranium came from an unfinished animation project from 2011 called The Whole World Is Watching. This film was also based on my immigration and its process as an Iranian International student. I was mostly trying to use a political event to tell the story, an event that didn’t last very long and was forgotten soon after. What I learned from my unfinished project was that time-specific works need to be finished and presented before the issue is resolved, forgotten or has lost its strength and popularity. This was one of the main points I had in mind when I started “Scent of Geranium”. I was trying to avoid making a film that would be limited to a time phrase or ethnic group. I realized early on that it was important to me to make a film that many people with different life experiences and from different parts of the world would relate to. I wanted to share my experiences and feelings not only with those who have experienced the consequences of immigration but also with those who have never emigrated.
One of the most influential references I used was “Funny in Farsi” by Firouzeh Dumas, an Iranian-American author. I read a Farsi translation of this book for the first time when I was in Iran in 2008. The second time was a year after I moved to the US. This time I had a better appreciation for the book since there was a lot more that I could relate to. I introduced the book to Adam, my husband who was my boyfriend at the time. After finishing the book he told me: “I feel like I understand the complications of your culture more than before and have a better sense of the challenges that you have been facing in the last 3 years”. Although by that time I read the book twice, I could not remember or understand which part of the book helped him to know my culture better and understand my life experiences after immigration. So I read Funny in Farsi for the third, fourth and fifth time but these times in English. The English version of the book felt very different and I understood how some content could get lost in translation; there were many examples of subtle sarcasm towards both Iranian and American culture. Firouzeh Dumas immigrated to the US at the age of 10, thirty years ago right after the Islamic revolution in Iran. The time and political situation made her experiences different from mine, but at the same time they didn’t feel irrelevant to me. We both shared the same cultural roots and we both moved to the same country, which made her challenges and frustrations feel very familiar to me. I enjoyed her sweet and bitter tone and how she would turn a very serious yet emotional situation to something that was funny without jeopardizing the seriousness or emotional weight of that event.

The book consisted of short stories. Some of the stories were arranged in a chronological time frame and some were not. But in all the stories there was a theme that was being shared. Although most of the time she was not the focus of the story – it might have been her dad or her uncle or even a neighbor- but she was the element that connected all the stories together. Hearing and imagining the stories from her point of view made them very connected, although they were not happening in the same place or at the same time. Dumas’ book was a great source
for me to understand how to write about things that were in my mind with a sense of humor, understandable for both American and Iranian cultures.

As part of my research about the cultural differences, I started talking to my Iranian friends and asking about their experiences and insecurities. I also talked to my international friends about their challenges. I asked my American friends about how they felt and what they thought of me when they first met me or if they had a significant memory that stood out to them about their interactions with me.

At first I was trying to have all the events happen in a linear story: an immigrant girl who was experiencing different feelings interacting with people around her. I was planning to have New York City as the location where the film happens and different locations in the city as places where each of my memories happen. For example riding on the subway a girl feels the judgmental look of others staring at the button on her bag that says *Solidarity with Iran*, at the coffee shop reading a Farsi book makes her paranoid about being watched, the insecurity she felt every time she mentioned her nationality to someone that she just met, the suffocating feeling when random people were asking her whether Iran has a nuclear bomb or not. On the other hand, I had lots of memories of American people, who were very nice and supportive of me throughout the time I was facing the challenging phase of immigration. My first roommate, Samantha, invited me to her parents’ house in Tampa for Thanksgiving. Her mom and dad welcomed me to their house with a box of Middle Eastern pastry. Her dad later explained to me that he researched for few days what he could get me in Tampa as a gift that could be a reminder of Iran so I would feel at home in their house. This is a memory I have cherished whenever I have felt discriminated against, and a reminder that not everyone is the same. For this reason, I was very cautious about the impression I was going to make on my audience after watching the film. One of my biggest goals for this project was to share a very honest, intimate and affecting experience about immigration with my audience. The other goal was to make the film relatable to as many people as possible whether they have had the experience of immigration in their life time or not, regardless of their nationality and ethnicity.
Style Development

The pre-production was the most exciting part of my film. As part of my research and idea development I started collecting the visual styles in different animated films, illustrations and paintings that I liked. This selection was not just depictions that I enjoyed, but also were styles that were in some way challenging for me. One of my main goals after a strong story was to push the visual style and animation technique further and create a unique look for my film.
I also did several short animation tests with some of the techniques I liked to see how time consuming or how complicated the production pipeline would be. While trying to solidify the style of my film I was struggling with visualizing the stories I had in mind. I didn’t know how to design my scenes so they carried the same emotional weight as my memories.

The style development and story development happened simultaneously at this stage. I found the story telling techniques in the comic books and cartoons very appropriate and close to what I had in mind. One of the very talented cartoonists who I was very influenced by is an Iranian illustrator and cartoonist, Mana Neyestani. Neyestani’s works have appeared internationally in economic, intellectual, political and cultural magazines. He was the recipient of the Cartoonists Rights Network International Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning in 2010.

His works have a very dark humor that I adore and find very appealing. I observed and studied his cartoons and tried to figure out how he makes such a strong point with just one image using symbolism.

As part of the style development I also did research on autobiographical animated films. Professor Larson introduced me to The Moon and the Son, a film by John Canemaker about the relationship between the director and his father growing up. His film was a great source for me. Both the style and the film language are very simple and make us feel as though we are reading through Mr. Canemaker’s diary while watching videos and pictures from his childhood.
Canemaker only uses colors when needed the transitions are very smooth from one scene to another. There is a lot of symbolism to show feelings like anger, fear, being defeated, loneliness, passion and love. Very strong composition also helps the emotional complexity in each scene, which grabbed my attention and influenced me.

**Concept design**

I started the concept design process as soon as I knew that I wanted to make an autobiographical animated film, though I was still struggling to write a linear story. The harder I tried the less clear and more complicated the idea became. I didn't know where to start and where to end and I was confused about the order of events and their connection with one another. Since I didn't have much development on the story, I decided to start creating drawings and paintings—which falls into my comfort zone—for each of my memories. Coming from a painting background, I found it easier to express my ideas with drawings rather than writing them. I used charcoal and black ink to create these paintings. When I showed the first few concept designs to Professor Larson he suggested that I keep making art pieces based on individual memories I had and not to worry about the story for a while. After a few weeks I had more than 40 concept arts.
I felt I was being watched reading Farsi in public.

I felt being judged.
Iran used to be an empire!

Tehran vs. New York City
In the concept art process, I tried to design each frame based on the visual storytelling techniques I found inspiring in cartooning, such as metamorphosis and symbolism. My intention was to create images that would convey the emotional weight of each memory without any words to explain them. I soon realized that it was much easier to find the connection between each event and I started to
experiment with a different way of ordering events. It was as if I had pieces of a puzzle and I just needed to find the ones that matched best to complete the picture. Most of these drawings and concept designs eventually became the original composition and background for each scene.

**Script**

Regardless of my attempt for not having a voiceover and conveying my message only through imagery and music, I felt the necessity while I was in concept art phase. I realized that telling the story in my own words would create a better sense of intimacy with my audience. After all, this was a personal film and the presence of the artist was an important part of the experience.

I started writing down as many memories as I could think of starting from the first day I arrived at the airport in the United State. Then I selected those which were significant to me in terms of how they affected me emotionally or how I thought they were life-changing experiences. From this point on I was mostly editing, rewording and trying to make a connection between each segment of the story. While I was working on the script I went back to read *Funny in Farsi* many more times to get a better grasp on writing techniques. I learned that some of the memories and their emotional impact were much more important than where and when they happened, so I omitted the time and location from some of the segments. This way I had more room to work on my story’s emotional arc rather than trying to create a chronological sense of time and space.

Writing each memory in a few sentences or a paragraph also gave me a chance to play around with the placement of each section, which I call “puzzle method”. I could create many different combinations with shifting the paragraphs around. I decided to have events in an order that would gradually build up the pressure and intensity, just the way I experienced life after my immigration. At the same time I didn’t want my audience to leave the room after watching the film with a bad impression in mind. For this reason, I used the most touching memory -my first thanksgiving at a friend’s house in Florida- right after the most intense part of the film to create a dramatic mood change.
One of the obstacles I faced was that I could not write an ending for my film since I am still existing and living in a post immigration phase. I tried to come up with a creative way to wrap up the story without having to put an ending point to it. One day as I was watering my geraniums at home I suddenly realized that there has always been a geranium in the house where I live. Growing up my grandmother had many vases of geraniums around her garden and so did my mom and now I keep geraniums in my own house. Asking my Iranian friends and families confirmed that the geranium plant is actually a very nostalgic plant, not just for me but also for many Iranians who grew up in Iran. For this last section, I used geranium to represent an immigrant and propagating as a metaphor for immigration. The symbolism and metamorphosis in this part of script was an essential part for my conclusion in the film. Although I was very happy with the final version of the last segment, which to me was the most emotional part of the whole story, I faced a new challenge. I felt that it was not matching the flow of the rest of story and using it at the end felt out of context and very sudden. So I went back to my puzzle method and tried a few more versions. Finally I came to the conclusion that with splitting the geranium section into two I could create a cycle in the film. It was a poetic end to the immigration chapter.

**Narration, Storyboard and animatic**

One of my inspirations for how a good voiceover in autobiographical film could be was *Rocks in My Pockets* by Signe Bauman. Listening to her narration I realized that a big part of the emotional weight is transferred by the tone of her voice. With that in mind I recorded each section of my script many times until I found the best tone for each section. I practiced the arches nuances of the script to get the perfect impact that I wanted. After recording many takes I put together a soundtrack of my script that was approximately four minutes long. For the next step I recorded a final version of the narration in the sound studio so I could count the seconds and frames. Then I used the final narration track as a storyboard and created an animatic, choosing the best illustration that I had designed for each part.
PRODUCTION

Animation

The animation part was the most lively and experimental part of the entire production phase. For the style treatment I wanted to focus on creating very smooth and fluid movements and using transitions instead of cuts. For this reason, I decided to animate, finish and composite one scene at a time in the order the scenes appeared in the script. Based on the animatic and each section’s illustrations, I decided which parts of the frame were going to be animated, how the transition from each scene to the next was going to happen and how the camera movement would help the smooth transition. I used different styles of animation based on the needs of each scene. Some parts are animated with pose-to-pose approach while some are straight ahead animation. The timing was also a very crucial part in my animation. Every movement had to match the narration perfectly. In other words, I animated everything as if I was animating to music. I had the narration track added as an audio track and were animating to the beats and up and downs of it. After deciding how each transition would work, I counted the exact number of frames that I had to complete the transition. For movements that were happening independently from the narration I created cycles, which I used in different parts of my film while compositing. Something that saved me lot of time in the animation production was that I had already spent lot of time creating strong compositions, which made it possible to have minimal movement in each scene without the scene looking incomplete. Despite the minimal animation style, having a vibrant look was important and I wanted to avoid creating dead scenes. For this reason, even if I had elements in the frame that were standing in the same place without any movement, I drew over each three times and cycled through them to create a shaky look for the film.
Software

In the very early stages of my style development, doing some animation tests was very helpful in finding the software and pipeline that was going to create the painterly look I wanted for my film. After several tests with different software I found the combination of TV Paint and Photoshop Animation Timeline were the closest to my desired style. TV Paint had variation of soft brushes that created a watercolor effect and also solid brushes which looked like charcoal. Also it was very easy to create animated brush in TV Paint and I used this option a lot for creating the shaky look. At the same time I could not customize my brushes as much as I wanted in TV Paint, so I started making more textural watercolor brushes in Photoshop which I could animate using the animation timeline option. Although I was not familiar with either TV Paint or Photoshop Animation tools spending the time to learn them was worth getting the result that I wanted. In my animation pipeline I started animating in TV Paint with the charcoal brush with transparent background in separate layers.

Below is the final pipeline that I followed:

1. Animating each element on a separate layer in TV Paint.
2. Exporting each animated layer as PNG sequence (with transparency)
3. Creating an action for coloring process in Photoshop
4. Running PNG sequences through automate> Batch > customized action*
5. Save in a different folder designated for colored frames
6. Reopen each frame
7. Run customized action 2* which only selected the parts that was already filled with white
8. Fill them manually with black ink using the customized watercolor brush
9. Save

These frames were now ready for being composited in the After Effects file where the whole scene with backgrounds, 3d layers, camera movement and particles was being put together.

* The customized action was designed to open one frame at a time > select the parts of the image that needed to be colored > fill the selected area with white > save as PNG with transparency.
Using the action to batch select inside each drawing to fill them up with color.

Custom action designed for faster selection for coloring frames in Photoshop.

Using the custom watercolor brush to paint each frame individually.
Compositing

As I mentioned earlier, the compositing happened right after finishing animating each scene. I used the 3d layering illusion and the camera movement in After Effects for my film. The combination of the 3d layers and camera movement created a three dimensional illusion that was very helpful to get away from the flat designs approach to create more depth when it was needed. Additionally, moving the camera was a great transitional treatment for the scenes where narrations suggested a certain flow in the storyline. For example, the section in the beginning where the narration says: “My Journey started in 2011 when I moved from Iran to the US to pursue my dream of studying abroad. It was one of the worst times for Iran’s international reputation”. This scene has a continuous camera movement. The scene starts from a city skyline that is Tehran and the camera pans vertically to the New York City skyline. This pan suggests the idea of flying and moving from one place to another. The camera continues moving, pulling back, to reveal the girl sitting in a room with a view of the NYC skyline from the window, reading the news about Iran. Finally, I used After Effects to color correct and add more texture to the overall final look of the film.

SOUND

Recording The Narration

I recorded my final version of the narration as soon as the script was finished and edited. Since my plan was to animate to the voiceover, it was important to have a final version so I would be able to have the exact timing for my film. The narration was recorded in the narration room help of Alex Montoya. Brian Larson, my advisor, helped me the day of recording as well. Alex recorded and Brian counted the number of takes, taking note for each take and directing my narration based on the mood for each section. The result of the recording session was over eight takes for each section. After recording I marked all the takes that were the best, included the pauses that I needed for transitions and put a draft together. Alex later cleaned up the narration based on the draft that I gave him, which I used when I was animating and compositing.
Recording The Music

Deciding on music for this film was not difficult since from the beginning I was sure that I wanted my brother Nima, who is an excellent musician and accordion player, to do it. There were a few reasons I decided to have my brother play the music. First, I wanted the music to have a Persian theme for creating a tighter bond between my culture and my experiences abroad. I knew that Nima has a great understanding of Persian music, which was very important to me. Second, with all the ups and downs and changes of mood in the film I needed an instrument that could be very expressive. The accordion can create a very wide range of sounds. It can achieve from quiet solo music to a very full and loud orchestra like sound. Additionally, having Nima as the composer and performer made a different level of connection between my personal film and me. Years of playing and singing songs together made the communication about this matter much easier. For starting the music, I sent him the animatic along with a long list of notes and examples of the kinds of music I had in mind for each section. Then Nima improvised and recorded many short pieces as a draft version. I selected the pieces I found suitable for different parts of the film and using Adobe Premier made a draft music track to get an overall feeling for how the music and narration would work together. Later in the production process, when I had about 90% of the film animated, we did the final recording for the music in the mix theater at school. This was a 10 hours of recording every section with multiple takes. First we mapped out the timing of each part. Then based on the length of each part and the draft version he recorded previously he would start performing the final version.

Sound Mixing

After finishing the animation and locking the picture, a former graduate student Lucas Gonzales agreed to add the sound FX and mix the audio track together on very short notice. I sent him my film and all the recorded music and narration and explained to him what kind of sound effects I was imagining for each section. The narration had to sit at the forefront of all the other sounds except the sandwich shop scene where I really wanted the narration, music and FX to be as
loud as the narration to add more intensity to the scene. Despite the fact that the sound was rushed I was happy with the result in the end.

**TITLE AND CREDITS**

I didn’t have a title until the very end of the process but once I got to the last stage of my film I was sure that I wanted the title to be associated with geranium. After brain storming for a few days I finally chose Scent of Geranium. I used the geranium plant as a very symbolic and metaphorical icon in my story that connected me to my mother and my roots in Iran. On the other hand, geraniums don’t really have any scent to them and the title was creating a contrast that I found proper for the whole concept of my film. I experienced homesickness in a way that everything can be a reminder of home. Taste of a food, shape of a building, the language, music, smell; anything one can imagine can create a connection with home when one is feeling homesick. For me, even the scent of a scentless plant could remind me of home.

Creating the credits was simple. I had a 40 second music track that was specifically composed for the credits. I reused some of the animation that I had to create a unified look so it would match the rest of the film.

**SCREENING OF THE FILM AND RECEIVING CRITIQUES**

_Scent of Geranium_ was completed and ready for the SOFA screening on December 10th, 2015. As part of the requirement I gave my artist statement about the concept of the film and process of making the film. After that there was a question and answer session with the audience. I was very happy to hear from many of the audience members that they could relate to different parts of the film. It was especially satisfying to hear from other international students that have experienced similar if not the exact same things and that it was an honest reflection on feelings that people have after immigration. As soon as I was done with the film I started sending it to festivals around the world. In the last six months from the day the film was finished, it has been accepted and screened in 15 national and international festivals and has been awarded with the Faculty Award at the School
of Film and Animation, Best Animated Short Film in the Hong Kong Art-house Film Festival, and 2nd place at the 47th ASIFA East in the Student Film Category.

At the ASIFA East award ceremony Bill Plympton told me that he enjoyed the design of the film both in terms of story and style very much. In the same ceremony Signe Bauman remembered me from few months earlier when I talked to her about my film in its very early stages. She told me she also could relate to many of the stories in the film. One of the comments that I received multiple times was the similarity of my film to *Persepolis* by Marjane Setrapi. Even a few people referred to me as “The new Marjane Setrapi”. Despite the fact that I admire her illustrations and films, I did not use her film as a reference at any point for either story or style. In my opinion the comparison between these two films can be done on two terms. In terms of story: *Persepolis* and *Scent of Geranium* are both stories of girls who immigrated from Iran to western countries, 30 years apart, and both girls’ immigration were influenced by the political situation in Iran. In terms of style: I developed a desire to animate in black and white and silhouette from the very beginning of my career as an animator. Also the style for this film was designed after a very long period of researching and sketching and studying the most time beneficial technique.
APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

SYNOPSIS

This animated short film is about the identity and profession that each person tries to find throughout his life. The era we are living in is one of the most competitive that humans have ever experienced. Increasing population, expanding cities, technology, science and war are all increasing the tension in our daily lives. In the face of all of this, we move on and do our best to survive in the best possible way.

RATIONAL

A sense of identity is one of the most important things that we search for throughout our entire lives. We build a sense of identity and self through the deliberate efforts we make in the activities we love to do. In trying to attain this identity, we are continually challenged with both expected and unexpected events. The seemingly randomness of these events is in direct contrast with the planned, non-random events we plan for, and this film hopes to express this dichotomy symbolically.

TREATMENT

The film starts with a young boy sitting behind the piano. His feet barely reach the floor. His body is grey, and he exists as just an outline, no detail. As soon as he pushes the piano’s key, small colored particles start to flow into his fingertips and replace the grey. As he plays, more and more particles flow into his fingers, and then in to the rest of his figure. He looks out the window and sees a crowd of people all moving in the same direction; they are all grey just as he was before. He turns back to play the piano. He starts playing again, this time very basic chords. The camera zooms in on the piano key. What were basic chords are now the complex harmonies of a Chopin Nocturne. The camera zooms out. There is a man sitting behind the piano practicing. It’s the boy grown into a man. His body is full of floating colored particles. He looks out the window and sees a grey crowd moving in the street with some people whose bodies are filled with
colored particles, like the ones that fill him. The people who are filled with the floating particles are moving against the crowd. The pianist grabs his music sheets and walks out of the door. The streets are crowded. He stands in the doorway for a moment looking at the grey crowd. He sees some people in the crowd whose bodies are full of colored particles just like him. The pianist starts walking against the current of the crowd getting jostled and bumped as he trudges along. He tries to steadfastly walk, but the crowd pushes him in all directions. In the background we see other people struggling to walk in the crowd as well. The pianist turns his head and sees someone behind him fall to the ground and notices that this other person, who had also been filled with colored particles, now has those particles falling out of their broken body outline to the ground. The pianist starts walking again and someone bumps into him hard enough to make him lose his balance causing him to trip and fall to the ground just as the person behind him had. As he falls to the ground, his outline breaks open and the colored particles flow out of him through the tear, floating in the air. People pass by him without paying attention. The pianist tried to grab and collect the small particles of color, that now float around him. Suddenly a gust of wind blows and takes away all of the floating pieces. The pianist chases the floating pieces in the wind. The camera follows one of the colored particles up in the sky to where there are millions of different colored particles floating in the sky.

**TECHNIQUE**

The production of this film will start with a collection of sound effects. I believe sound will be critical for visualizing my story. This film will be drawn and painted both on paper and digitally. The figures will be rotoscoped and the colors inside the figures will be very energetic, loose and expressive. The backgrounds will be photographed from New York City and then I will paint them either digitally or traditionally. I want to have a very organic look for my backgrounds, so I might use watercolor with ample free space on the canvas for that purpose. Because the colors themselves carry so much meaning, I am going to make the film with a Sepia color pallet that will contrast with the particles, which will be in a brighter color.
STYLE
Coming from a fine art background, I want to bring painting and drawing back into my animation. Through the use of different mediums, I want to give a natural and organic look to my film that is appealing.

BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stationary</td>
<td>$1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>$1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound designer</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live action</td>
<td>$2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip to NYC</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous expenses</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution (promotional materials, festivals)</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6700</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time line</td>
<td>MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound, Initial storyboard, Shooting live action</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept art and References</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboard Animatic</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Design and Environment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing, Final Storyboard. Animatic with Final sound</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compositing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final sound and credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

22
APPENDIX B: PRODUCTION STILLS
Every spring my mom used to plant boxes of violets and propagate the Geraniums she’s been growing for years in small garden in our balcony in Tehran. I remember her telling me “when you move a plant from one place to another you need to give it some time before it will grow new leaves.”

My Journey started in 2011 when I moved from Iran to the US to pursue my dream of studying abroad. It was one of the worst times for Iran’s international reputation. There was always something bad about Iran in the headlines. It seemed that where I grew up was the biggest mystery to lot of people. Some were surprised that I know how to drive, and that I used to ride a subway to work. That Tehran is a city of 10 million people who live in skyscrapers.

“It’s not the best place to come from these days, is it?”

But I was a proud Iranian tigress: “We were an empire once!”

I tried to use every opportunity to be a representative of real Persian culture. I had statements and arguments ready, I was reading the news every day, I was trying to keep up with everything that was happening around the world, just in case someone asked me something, I knew enough.

But I was asked about things that I never expected.

-Do you have apples in Iran? I wasn’t sure if he was asking about fruit or computers.

The first few months were a lot to take in. instead of speaking English 5 hours a week now it was 15 hours a day. Everything was a challenge: playing games that required language skills felt like re-taking my English competency exam!

How fast can you decide what you want on your sandwich from 32 different ingredients that are listed in front of you, when you barely remember six of their names in English and you keep trying to refer to your brain’s English dictionary to remember what they’re called, while there are at least 12 hungry people standing in the line behind you, all staring at you! I could hear my funny accent, I knew I was making grammatical mistakes, My middle eastern features stood out in the blonde crowd, I avoided reading or writing Farsi in public. After someone called it “weird signs and symbols.” What was going on? Was it all in my head??
I clearly remember my first thanksgiving, when my friend’s dad bought me a box of Baklava. The closest thing he could find to an Iranian pastry in Florida, so the familiar taste would make me feel at home and less homesick.

I keep thinking about my Mom’s geraniums and what she told me: “when you move a plant from one place to another its roots may get damaged, the soil changes. it needs time to get used to its new atmosphere, before it can grow its roots strong again. and then you’ll see, soon it will bloom again.”

End