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Beauty Or Love

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Art in Animation in School of Film and
Animation, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

School of Film and Animation

College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

Rochester Institute of Technology

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Abstract

Mia is a pretty girl who has attracted many men who present her with empty love only because of her beauty. The film starts with an interior of Mia’s room and then transforms into the past; her memories depict what is in an exterior, outside of her house. She’s dancing and surrounded by many guys. She meets a guy with a hat in the crowd and likes him because he doesn’t try to show off to get her attention. Men start fighting over her; during the fighting, they forget about her. She accidentally gets injured in the middle of the fray, an incident that results in an indelible scar on her face as well as in her loss of beauty. As soon as Mia loses her beauty, all her male admirers neglect her. After all, the main reasons why they like her in the first place is her natural beauty. The time transforms into the present where the film started. Mia decides to cover her face with a scarf and discovers the world again. Men appear around her again, yet when the scarf is blown away, they once again ignored her. However, only the man who puts on a hat likes her through and through, regardless of how she looks. Mia was interested in this man from the outset. However, there is something that she doesn’t know about him: he is blind. When she discovers this, she becomes sad and contemplates whether or not to be with him. In her moment of indecision, she ponders about the basic things about herself (dance, music, and joy), including things that have nothing to do with her beauty. Mia then realizes that what this man finds attractive about her is related to things, which are not related to her appearance since he couldn’t see her. So, she decides that she should use the same senses as he did to discover who he is. They both walk away towards her house with the aim of getting to know each other better.
Introduction

It is no secret that we live in a world where many people judge others based on their looks. My film is a reaction to this reality in the social condition. People do make unfair judgments about others based on appearances. In fact, many papers and books have been written about the facial appearance and its effect on society. After reading several novels and watched movies from a variety of countries around the world, I observed that the subject of appearance over personality was in many of them. Thus, I concluded that this fact is a social issue in many countries around the world, and many writers and filmmakers paid attention to it. In addition, there are many examples in history and our everyday life, which proves that this issue exists and has caused many problems in the society. Apparently, people with better appearance and beauty have better positions in the society, and such individuals unfairly get more attention than others who do not possess such charm. The movies and books, which talk about this issue, are very popular. In the abstract, people generally agree with the idea that it is wrong to judge others based on their appearance. Nevertheless, in reality, they still seem to care more about people’s looks over their personality.

This subject is frequently found in animations. In winter 2016, during the process of making my film, I attended the ASIFA-EAST Animation Film Festival in New York City. In this festival, the audiences voted for their favorite films, and the best-voted films were selected as winners. Surprisingly, several films with the subject of the power of beauty and appearance over personality were nominated. And I was more surprised all those films were selected for the final screening as winners. Therefore, I realized that this subject is formidable and popular among people. I wrote the story before attending the festival, yet that experience encouraged me to make the best film that I could since the subject seemed to be compelling and of great interest to many people. I thought this topic would also help make my film competitive in the festival
circuit where many individuals could hear my words and see my point of view. In my opinion, that is the purpose of filmmaking: selecting an issue in society, making a film about it, and sharing it with the public, thus allowing the audience to see the issue from the filmmaker’s point of view.

To support this process, I did a fair amount of reading and research about the effect of appearance and its place in the society. To my surprise, there was lots of material on this topic, from many different perspectives. Some research shows that facial appearance affects people in their decision-making and in how they interact with other people. People choose whom to help, whom to hire, whom to choose as a friend, and whom to go on a date with based on their facial appearance. Although people have always been told not to judge a book based on its cover, research shows that people make decisions on characteristics such as intelligence, trustworthiness, attractiveness, warmth, dominance, based on appearance. Furthermore, sometimes the facial appearance affects important decisions such as criminal justice decisions (Zebrowitz, Montepare, 2010; Zwebner, Rosenfeld, Sellier, Goldenberg, and Mayo, 2017). Therefore, I felt this issue needed to be given maximum attention. To do that, my aim is to explore the subject through filmmaking and to share my movie with as many people as I can.

Moreover, some researchers believe that appearance matters in the society because of commercial models and the use of beauty in advertisements. Using a beautiful woman to infer that a product has good quality affects people’s way of thinking; an ideology that indicates everything that is beautiful has better quality or personality. (Brown and Dittmar, 2005) Therefore, many people do their best to look perfect in the public, such as undergoing many cosmetic surgeries and spending lots of money on getting the best clothes, cars, and make-ups. This article reminds me of Iran, the country that I was born and raised in. It was very normal for people in that country to have plastic surgery. Appearances are important there because of the
religious government, which arrests people who don’t follow Islamic rules. Ironically, this makes people care more about their appearance. It also makes them think obsessively about what they would wear every time they wanted to leave home. This government’s rules have even encouraged women to care more about their face and have beauty surgery in that area. After all, it was the only part of their body they didn’t have to cover in the public space. After a while, beauty surgeries got very popular and guys started engaging in this practice too. When I left the country, the importance of appearance was increasingly alarming. Boys and girls used to hang out only with others who are as beautiful or handsome as them. Girls would usually have to do two or three surgeries to be able to hang out with guys. While I was living in Iran, I was a model. Usually, models have to do many surgeries to look beautiful enough for modeling jobs in that country, and it was unacceptable for them that I didn’t like to do these treatments as a model. Surprisingly, the models with many strange plastic surgeries had more modeling jobs compared to models like me who preferred to look natural. I was very disappointed in this reality.

When I moved to the U.S., I started working professionally as a model; surprisingly, everyone welcomed me in the industry for my natural beauty. I actively made social media accounts and got many followers around the world with different races. Initially, it was very interesting how people liked me and sent me messages full of romantic words every day. However, after a while, I found the routine annoying as I got about two hundred messages per day. Funny enough, some guys asked me for marriage or a serious relationship after meeting me once in a gathering or just seeing my photos online. It was always a question for me that how they were able to trust me without knowing me and making a big commitment like marriage based on only a few of my photos. The story wasn't limited only to online messages, unfortunately. Once I liked a guy and went on a date with him; later on, I realized that some
guys were following me. Obviously, it wasn’t like having a real fire out of my house, yet when I could not move freely and meet people I liked, it gave me the sense of having a fire out of my house and guys who follow me and compete to win my heart based on only a few of my beautiful photos. After observing this seemingly undeserved attention from men, I thought deeply about the reasons why appearance is very important to many people. In some countries, the issue is very common; in other countries, it is less prominent, yet the issue exists around the world.

Since my experiences in real life weren’t related to a specific race or culture and since this issue has existed for many centuries, I made the film not related to any specific time, race, culture, and location.
Review of Research

Several sources influenced this film:

1. Hearing stories

About two years before I started making the film, my aunt who is a Persian writer and storyteller read me one of her poetic stories. The language that she uses in her writings is an old style Persian language, and the style of her stories is related to the ninth century. The story was about a beautiful woman who men liked and fought over. However, after fighting for a while to gain her approval, they forgot about her, yet they continued to fight over other new upcoming subjects. After a while, she decided to leave the place and found her true love, yet no one noticed that she was not there anymore. In the end, she found her true love and soul mate. Also, the audience found that in fact she was a guy who did his makeup like women, and all the brawl that happened was based on lack of knowledge and paying too much attention to appearance and selfishness. The point of the story was that the real love exists when two souls connect harmoniously and are not based on visual appearance.

2. Dance Art

I have a friend who is a professional ballet dancer. I also took some ballet dance courses when I was younger; therefore, it gave me some ideas regarding how to use ballet dancing in the film with poetic visuals. It was very easy to imagine how it worked.

3. Animation Sources

My animation artworks have always been affected by Glen Keane’s classic animations. The Little Mermaid and Disney classic animations have been part of my animation passion since I was a kid. Watching the movies again and again gave me some ideas about animations. I studied some facial expressions and studied some early artworks on the Internet and Instagram.
This knowledge assisted me in making some dynamic facial expressions for the main characters.

4. Digital Artwork Resources

There was a revolution in my background design and digital painting when I got familiar with Samurai Jack show background designs. One day, a customer came to the studio where I was working and showed us a background design on the Internet. This customer then asked us to make the background of his film like those artworks he showed on the Internet. Since I was the one at the studio doing the background designs, I searched for the sample and then found that it was related to the Samurai Jack show.

I searched and studied the artworks and designs of the show. I was impressed by the use of sharp and edgy shapes and sharp colors and shadows with texture on them. I made all the backgrounds for that project to look exactly as the customer wants them. That project helped me to learn many good technics in Photoshop such as using brushes, layers, compositing, filters, and effects. Besides that, I got many useful ideas for my film.

I also did an extensive study of Photoshop and figured out more detailed ways of using the brushes, layers, and effects. I downloaded some free brushes for Photoshop, which gave me the quality of lines and textures that I was looking for. Another approach was using separated layers for each part and using separated filters, effects and settings for each layer in order to obtain visuals that were similar to Jack Samurai’s designs.
Process

Story:

The story was the most challenging part of the film. The first idea was not to have a story at all. The whole process started three years before completing the film. I made some small landscape watercolor and ink paintings; I also colored and textured some papers with some natural materials such as onions, coffee, and tea. The theme of the paintings was dreamy and poetic. After watching some ballet dance shows, I found that the dance was a good match to my paintings. Therefore I decided to make a film by mixing watercolor and ballet dance animation, and Rotoscoping my friend’s dancing and make a music video without any specific story. Yet later on, after the release of Glen Kean’s short film *The Duet* which mixed ballet dance and animation, I decided to add a story so that my film would not seem too imitative.

The next challenge was actually writing a story. I came up with many ideas, yet I was looking for something very meaningful. After hearing my aunt’s story, I got some ideas about fighting based on fake facts and appearance. Furthermore, I got some ideas about making a film that says paying attention to personality is so much better than paying attention to appearance, which is temporary and fades off as people age. Therefore, I made a story based on my aunt’s fable, yet I made some changes to make it more meaningful. I added a part that has the main character losing her beauty because of the men who were fighting over her, yet later on, they rejected her because of what their actions did to her. In addition, I decided to add the blind man to the story with the aim of showing that it’s possible to know other people’s personality without seeing their appearance.

After writing the story and presenting it in the thesis pre-production class, I got some useful and positive feedback from the teacher and classmates. One feedback was using a hat instead of sunglasses for the blind man. The class also helped me to find the right words for
voiceover, which were dropped from the film later on. Happily, they liked the story and the poetic theme. Therefore, I made a script, designed the characters in Photoshop along with watercolor paintings, and submitted a thesis proposal to committee members for review.

After the committee approved the proposal, I started working on storyboards. Nonetheless, unfortunately, because of financial problems, I moved to NYC to work and left the school for one semester. Happily, I got a job offer at Plymptoons Animation Studios, which is run by Bill Plympton, one of the most reputable international animators in the U.S. He was nominated for the U.S. Oscars Academy Awards several times, and his films have won many awards in famous festivals around the world, such as the Annecy film festival in France and the Annie Awards in Hollywood. Also very notable are his paper hand drawn animations and creative metamorphoses along with crazy ideas in his films. He knew many people in the industry and had many connections in animation studios across several states in the U.S. It was a great opportunity for me to work with him and make my future in the animation industry. I had the opportunity to be there for about one and a half years. During that period, I worked on his new feature film, a TV animation series for ESPN, and an episode of The Simpsons, a popular long running animation series on the FOX network. I also had the pleasure of working on an animated commercial for Ford, which got nominated for an Annie Award in 2017. This new position gave me the opportunity to travel to Los Angeles and attend the ceremony where I met many well-known people in the industry. Some of the most interesting and important introductions were with David Silverman, the director of The Simpsons, and Glen Kean who discussed his film *The Duet* with me. In addition, we made a presentation at Walt Disney and DreamWorks Animation Studios where I met many more interesting industry people who I plan to stay in contact with.
**Storyboard and Fixing the Story:**

Working in NYC was a great experience for me. I learned about the combination of Photoshop and hand-drawn animation and how they work together. It was my first work experience in the U.S. and NYC. I made friends there and met other professional filmmakers in the industry in AFIFA East events. I figured out what a good film looks like and what other people do in the industry. Therefore, I got some ideas about how to make a film that is as professional as other films in the industry and festivals. In the spring, I registered for school again and started working on my film. I was able to meet my thesis advisor remotely through Skype, a social-media messaging app that allowed me to stay in NYC and continue to work at Plymptoons Studio.

First, I finished the storyboards and made some sketches of the main character by creating model sheets and facial expressions. I made many changes based on the recent things I had learned in NYC and the feedback I received. I changed some shots that weren’t that effective in my film; I also changed the ending of the film several times with different ideas to make it more meaningful and effective in the end. Apart from showing the characters feelings, everything I did was very impressive according to the audience. Then I edited the storyboard to see how the shots work with one another. However, it wasn’t enough to see how everything works clearly and coherently; therefore, I created a very rough animation for every shot and put them together.

Afterward, I removed many shots at the end of the story, as well as inserting a few new ones; to make it more meaningful and to answer the questions people might have about the story and characters. These questions could be, how the man likes her? Why the girl accepted him so easily? Why the man still likes her when he finds out about her face? And many other stories based questions that I had to show an answer for.
In addition, I had a narration in the film as the character’s voice talking about her feelings, which I had to hire a voice actor for and spend time in RIT’s narration room, which was so far away from me, to do the recording. Later on, my sister wrote a poem for my film based on the subject, and I decided to use it in the beginning of the film instead of the narration. Nevertheless, based on the feedbacks that I received from the poem, many people told me that my content is too much for the film and that they prefer to see all those stuff in visuals instead of reading words. As a result, I dropped the narration and poem from the film.

**Animation:**

I used Adobe Flash for starting the animation. The key frames and animation took the longest part of the process. I didn’t want to use rotoscoping for any part of the film except the blind man’s hands shot. In my opinion, rotoscoping takes away the creativity in animator. Based on my creative imagination and the experience that I got from Bill Plympton’s animation films which were full of metamorphoses and creative motions, drawing the animation over a live action movie was very boring and useless for me. It was like following mathematic formulas with no creativity. In addition, it gives the film a sense of realism, which wouldn’t give me the poetic visuals that I was looking for. Moreover, I believe imitating realistic movement and action does not take advantage of animation as a medium as these effects can be achieved more powerfully and easily with a live action film and miss animation’s unique attributes. However, I like 2D drawn animation better than live action or realistic and 3D animation since I can use metamorphoses to show the feelings and make the film more poetic.

Therefore, I imagined and designed all the dance movements, then drew a rough animation and poses, and then drew the character on the top of rough animation. My experience in ballet and dancing helped me to imagine the movements without watching videos. The key
frames and animating took the whole spring semester, yet there were some shots left for the next semester.

When the second semester started, I still had a lot to do. I had only key frames for ¾ film and nothing in-betweens. I switched my job to two days per week and started working on the film almost full time. I animated the rest of the shots and did in-betweens. Also, I animated some shots in Photoshop, such as fire and other animation effects. For animating, I used my own style of mixing imagination and exaggeration in movements, dancing, and facial expressions. Put simply, I imagined the movement, then drew a rough animation, and in the end drew the character over the rough animations. I was impressed by Disney classic animations since childhood and liked the facial expressions. My favorite part of animating is showing the feelings and emotions of the character through movement and expressions, thus allowing the audience to have more insights into what the character depicts. In my opinion, this makes a film more effective and impressive.

**Coloring:**

For coloring process, I decided to use Photoshop. Thus, I composited the animation in Premier, then took it to Photoshop, and did the coloring on a separated video layer. There were many shots, so I removed part of them during editing. I did that because I felt it was a waste of time if I colored the whole shot. Therefore, I did the coloring after editing the animation.

As for the coloring process in Photoshop, I made an action including selecting the area manually, extended the selection for 2 pixels, refined the edges for 2 pixels, filled the selection with color, and deselect the selection. That way, I was able to color the animation without worrying about closing the lines as it should be in the Adobe Flash. In addition, I was able to add effects and shadows to the color video layer, an action that gave me the visuals that I was looking for.
I chose single color palate for characters since it was faster to do. It was also more poetic and close to the style. Besides, I used digital shadows and texturing on the colors, thus adding more colors to the palate might be too much in visuals.

**Backgrounds:**

I had no ideas about the backgrounds in summer, and I still wanted to use the watercolor backgrounds and revise them in Photoshop. After leaving Plymptons studio in summer, I start working at Attaboy studios, where I learned about animating in Photoshop and using brushes and effects. Therefore, I decided to paint all the backgrounds in Photoshop. I also thought about repainting all the animation in Photoshop frame by frame in order to have a better poetic visual and textures.

During the fall semester, I had to go on another co-op; thus, I left school again and worked at FlickerLab studio. I had several positions at the studio, such as 2D animator, character design, concept and background design and costume design. The experience was very helpful and effective for my film. I learned about design backgrounds in Photoshop, lighting, texturing and other features in digital painting. The variety of the customers and their interests made me learn new styles in concepts and backgrounds. Just as the customer who presented Samurai Jack’s show artwork as a sample of the design that he was looking for, such tasks made me carry out several researches about Samurai Jack’s show and designs in different similar shows. Therefore, I came up with new ideas about backgrounds for my film, such as using textures, Photoshop brushes, highlights and special lightings that helped the compositions and inspiring the feelings to the audience. Those methods worked much better than watercolor paintings. Besides, there was no need to composite a hand drawn painting with a digital animation as it made the process easier and faster. Moreover, the studio gave me free access to
Adobe collection, which was a great help to me. I was able to update the Adobe software and experience fewer bugs and failings too.

**Software:**

My first consideration about the software was Adobe Flash for animating and TV Paint for painting the animation, then using Photoshop for designs and Adobe Premier for composition. However, when I learned about animating in Photoshop and brushes, I decided to use Photoshop instead of TV Paint. Nonetheless, at the end of the process, I learned how to use Adobe Flash original lines for the final film instead of painting on them because there was no time for painting the animation frame by frame.

**Music and Sound Effects:**

Since I started writing the proposal for my film, I had been in touch with my composer who was a student from Eastman School. He made the music and sound effects for my two previous films, and I trusted his work. I was sure that the music he produced was the one that I was looking for. We agreed to use a classical symphony, played and recorded with live instruments such as piano and violins. He started to work on the music when I gave him the animatic. He also sent me a draft after the first semester. I liked the emotional theme and his approach to the classical music. It was very touching and matched to the poetic visuals. He was supposed to finish the music and the sound effects for the film at the end of the second semester. Even though I had only three-weeks left to the submission deadline, he informed me that he would not be able to finish the music or the sound effects for my film. He did introduce me to another composer; however, the person he recommended could not do the sound effects. As a result, I had to find and download them online, which was a lot of extra work for me in last hours of the deadline. Moreover, the sound effects weren’t made specifically for the film, so
they didn’t match too well as I had wanted them to be, and the quality was not as sharp as I had envisaged.

Happily, the new composer was fast and talented. She followed my suggestions and advice and was very easy to work with. She sent me updates of the music almost every other day, and the sense of the music turned out as the same as the draft that my previous composer sent for me. It was emotional and classic. Nonetheless, there was no time to play and record the music with live instruments, yet happily, the final work turned out beautiful.

**Compositing and Texturing:**

It was the final and the most enjoyable part of the film process. After coloring in Photoshop and preparing the backgrounds, I composited the first final video in Premier. Afterward, I traveled to Rochester to work more on it before the submission. The film was complete and seemed perfect, yet the colors looked very plain. I wanted to make it more poetic in visuals, something with shadows and textures. Thus, I decided to take the final composite to Photoshop and add textures to colors. I knew Photoshop very well and knew the brushes and textures were exactly what I was looking for. I had strong computers in animation lab, so I didn’t need to worry about failing in Photoshop exporting. I downloaded some free Photoshop brushes and started the process. I didn’t sleep for 72 hours before submitting the film, but it was worth it to add the textures. In the end, the film turned out more poetic and complete. Afterward, I did the final composition with music and sound effects and exported the film.

**Challenges:**

Challenges are always part of the process of making a film, and my film wasn't an exception. Some of my challenges are as follows:

1. Time
2. The blind man in story
3. Location and financial issues

4. Technical issues

5. Working with the composer

1. Time was one of the big issues for making a five and half minute film. There was a lot of works to do for film; without any additional animators to help me, I had to find simpler ways to handle many of the shots and visuals.

The title was supposed to be designed. I had a specific typography design, and I painted it with Photoshop in my mind, which was able to present the story very well with the same style of the animation and the general designs of the film. There was also an idea to have the title morphs to a hand, which is holding a pen and writing memories. Yet it needed so many animations that I didn’t have time for that. Consequently, I used a simple Photoshop font for the title without any animation.

The traveling in time, which happens twice in the film, was supposed to be done by animating a transition between interior and exterior shots along with zooming the camera and sunlight. Yet, there would be too many animations to get done in a short time. Consequently, I preferred to drop the animations and make the transitions as simple as possible. The characters and animation were supposed to be painted in Photoshop, and the fire was supposed to be animated very realistic with very clean lines just as the test that I did in Photoshop. Yet, I didn’t have much time to make the fire very perfect; thus, I ended up doing all the fire animations in less than three days. I made a rough fire animation based on an animation that I did in the test, and then looked for the best brush for Photoshop that has fire qualities. That procedure gave me the fire looks with few lines and paintings. Fortunately, it worked, and I had a fire animated very fast.
2. One of the most challenging parts of the story was showing that the man was blind in the end without using sunglasses. Using sunglasses made it too obvious that he was blind since the beginning of the film, yet I didn’t want anyone to know that he was blind until the end of the film. I recorded myself grabbing an object with closed eyes. After that, I rotoscope my video. It was the only part that I used rotoscoping for the animation. But much of the feedback I received was still about making it clearer that the man was blind. Thus, I closed his eyes in animations to show that he could not see.

3. Since I had to pay my school fees by myself, I had no other choice than living far away from school and close to my workplace. Therefore, I wasn't able to use school’s equipment such as animation lab and Adobe collection. Therefore, I had to use the old Adobe version that I had, which had too many bugs and too many issues, thus making the process very slow in the beginning. I had some problems with exporting the animation in Flash and importing in Premier too.

4. Importing the file to Photoshop for coloring was a challenging part of the film. It culminated in some glitches, which I found out after finishing the coloring. Since I exported the animation as PNG image sequence and imported into Photoshop as image sequence video, the frame rate in Photoshop is a big deal for video layers. It makes the film slow or fast. I chose a frame rate close to the original video in Premier. It was 23.99fps in Premier. But in Photoshop, the only option was 24fps, so consequently, I chose 24fps. After coloring, I exported the color video layer as PNG image sequence and imported it in Premier, yet the animation and colors didn’t match because of the frame rate, and there was no way to match them. I had to export both the animation and the colors together as PNG image sequence files from Photoshop, a process that took a huge amount of memory and CPU of my computer and made it shut down in the middle of exporting while I had my important hard drive connected. The process made my
computer and hard drive very weak in the end. In addition, I was compelled to copy all my data to a second hard drive after every move to not lose them.

5. One of the issues that I faced during this project was related to the music and working with the composer. The composer asked me a final timed animation with time code on screen to start writing the music; therefore, I had to finalize the shots and the length of the animation as soon as I could, which was impossible since the animation and the key frames took so long to get done. I also ended up dropping some shots, such as long shots of the fight scene, in the last minute since I didn’t have time to complete the animation for those parts.
Evaluation

The feedback that I got from committee members, friends and coworkers were very insightful and useful during the film process. It helped me realize the strengths and weaknesses of the film. Some of the ideas were based on people’s own personal taste and interest, so it was complicated to know which things were important to respond to. My approach was to listen to all the feedback first in order to see which ideas were consistent and which ones might be someone’s personal taste or interest. Afterward, I tried to make changes based on how many changes would make the film and my storytelling clearer. The best feedback that I received was from Tim Callahan. He liked my film and selected it for a small financial grant. It was a great positive review, which gave me the energy and zeal to work on and finish the film.

One of the unexpected problems I faced was discovering how many people there were, who believe only what they see realistically without any sense of imagination. And surprisingly, some of those people were in the faculty of Film and Animation School. I was expecting that scientists might think very realistically, yet I found that artistic people can also think realistically. For example, many people asked me to add a logical reason why the blind man likes Mia, and why Mia likes him when she realized that he is blind. That showed me that many people don’t believe in soul mates and the connections that two people might have without any logical or rational reasons. People usually call it a religious or based on crazy delusions, although this is a highly debatable topic these days.

However, many scientists are working on this idea, such as Brian L. Weiss M.D who has written many books about this topic and its existence like “Only Love Is Real.”, which is a book based on his studies on his patients. In addition, many filmmakers have made films based on scientist’s research, for example “I Origins” by Mike Cahill. When I saw people’s reaction, I decided to add some visual qualities to the two main characters like clean lines, same colors,
and textures unlike other characters in the film. I did that in order to show that the main characters have the same qualities and that they are soul mates, yet it wasn’t acceptable for many students and faculty members. They were still looking for something more logical. Therefore, I figured out it’s better to accept their logical ideas and provide logical reasons to their questions since I wasn’t able to explain a tough topic like soul mates in a five-minutes film without any dialogue.

Much of the reaction I got was about the blind man and how he fits into the story. Some people asked me why I chose a blind man to like her? He might be able to see her but still like her. And some others told me it seems that I was saying that whoever is ugly should find a blind man to like her. I was also asked that if this character was blind, how is he attracted to her? It was suggested that I add some clear attributes or actions to the girl that the blind character could sense and react to, like having her sing while she danced. This was a good idea, yet I decided not to do that since I would have to hire a singer and spend time on the recording. Some other ideas given were about making it clear through the blind man’s actions how he likes her instead of adding a singing part, but this was too much for a five-minutes film.

There was also a lot of reactions to the flower, which the blind man gave to the girl in the film. Some people found this act to be a cliché’, a strategy that has been overused in stories. Yet I decided to use it since I wanted to show that the blind man used something very normal, without being at all creative, to attract the woman’s attention.

Some people didn’t like the film because of the violence in the beginning. It didn’t make sense to them that guys would be fighting over a woman. Some people asked the weirdest questions like, “Is it happening in the country that you are coming from?” Or “Is it part of the culture?” Obviously, the answer was “No.” It is not part of my culture nor a regular event in my home country. I was just trying to show it in visuals how it looks like when many men want to hang
out with a woman and talk about love when they don’t really know that woman and only like her appearance.
Conclusion

The film was effective and successful, and I was very pleased with the results. My coworkers showed a positive reaction to the film after watching it. Professionally, they liked the visuals and the animation very much. Also, my friends and family members liked the idea and found it effective in their personal life. One of my friends who wasn’t successful in her relationships and cared too much about the appearance in her partners started dating a nice guy who wasn’t that perfect in appearance after watching the film. And they are very happy in the relationship now.

In addition, my committee members gave me feedback after watching the final film. Their reaction was very positive, and they encouraged me to submit the film to festivals. Furthermore, I shared some parts of the film and animation on my Facebook and Instagram page and got many good feedbacks and positive comments. This move even led to some new professional jobs and freelance animation orders.

The feedback that I got at the screening was about the color palette, and why I used limited colors for the film. As I mentioned before, I wanted to have it as a style of my film and make it more poetic. Besides, some of the faculty asked me to add some more visual reasons that showed why the girl liked or admire the blind guy.

Making this film taught me the importance of not paying too much attention to the details while making a film. There is always an easier way to make a film by spending less time, yet reaching out the same effects and quality in the visuals. A film doesn’t need to be perfect in every single point of view before it can be accepted by the public as a good film. Besides, audiences don’t see the technical issues that we see in the film professionally. They only care about the subject and the general visuals.
The economic issues that I had during the filmmaking were all related to the school. My tuition fee, which was very expensive, encumbered me from hiring professional animators for help, and paying money for music and sound effects and a singer. Therefore I had very limited time to do all those stuff alone a long with earning money to pay for school, rent and living expenses. On the other hand, I gained more knowledge in the working environment than in school. I believed that if had I not worked while I was working on my thesis, I wouldn’t have known anything about animating in Photoshop, brushes, background designs, lighting, texturing and effects as I learned all those things in the professional industry. Thus, I wouldn’t have learned how to make quality films without such experience. If I make a film again, I will hire people to help me so that my film will have much better quality.

Learning about new methods and software and knowing how they work were very interesting during the process. Every time I learned something new, I was thinking whether or not it is useful for my film. I collected all the useful skills and used them for my thesis, which was very interesting and enjoyable. The animating process and in-betweens were very satisfying too. The process was very slow. But when I saw the results in the end, I was very happy and satisfied with the results. I might consider using only Photoshop for animating next time rather than using Flash and then Photoshop since it has all the textures and brushes and makes the process faster.

I wasn’t successful in showing all my concerns about relationships and soul mates, but I think I was successful in showing the social tension and concern about appearance vs. personality, as well as not making thoughtless decisions such as asking for marriage or hurting others based on lack of knowledge. As a filmmaker, I think my point of making this film was showing my perspective regarding the role of beauty in the society as well as illustrating how people often struggle to evaluate the worth of others without considering their appearance. In
my opinion, a brief animation is a good and an effective way to present people with these types of ideas. Many people are more open and comfortable with animations, and they find it easier to watch challenging ideas in this format.

In sum, many people are willing to watch short animations more than long live action movies, since the latter is brief and interesting and since they have to spend less time watching the film. On the other hand, it was the best way to show my concerns based on my talent and my field of study.
Appendix Pages

Film’s online link: http://sofatube.cias.rit.edu/videos/show/35227

Thesis Proposal

Thesis Proposal

Rochester Institute of Technology
Masters of Film and Animation

Khorvash Khayati

“Beauty Or Love”

2015

Approved for submission by:

Peter Murphey
Logline:
A beautiful young girl looks for her real love. Yet she finally finds it when she loses her beauty.

Treatment
A young girl (Mia, age 20) sits at a desk; there is a mirror in front of her. Her back is to the camera; we do not see her face. The room is dark and the colors are cold. We hear her voice over as she writes in a notebook; “Beauty… Love… Such strange words!”

We see Mia’s hand, holding a pen, and writing memories in a notebook, the voice over continues; “There’s an old saying, which says beautiful women have more men around, so there will be more of a chance for them to find their true love…”

The cold room interior dissolves to a bright ny exterior.

The camera moves forward, close to the ground. It passes through nature and grass. Beautiful, young Mia appears. She dances on the grass with beautiful movements and her long hair blows in the wind. The camera moves along with her movement. Men appear around her, one by one. They each present flowers and gifts to her and kiss her hand. Mia continues to dance until a man with hat and his hair hides half of his face, appears. He presents flowers to her. She smiles at him as she takes the flowers. Suddenly another man appears, and hits the man with hat in his face. More men appear and a fight breaks out. Mia become afraid, and runs to her house and closes the door. She goes to the window, opens it, and watches the men fighting. One man shoots a fire arrow towards another man. The fiery arrow accidently flies into her open window. Mia jumps out of the way, and the arrow hits the wall. She turns to close the window just as a second arrow flies towards her. This arrow looks like it’s about to hit her in the face.

Everything turns to black and silent.

A silhouette of a figure walks around the room in the dark. The figure goes to the door, opens it. Light comes in, and we see it is Mia, from the back. The men are still fighting outside. They
notice her, and look at her. Suddenly one of them runs away, another one scream. Everyone disappear one by one! She is left alone in the dark house.

Dissolve back to the dark room.

Mia appears on the chair, her back is to the camera. She bends her head over her notebook; her long hair covers her face. Close-up of her hand on the notebook, as Mia stops writing. One tear drops on the paper. Her voice over is heard; “So what is beauty? What is love?” The camera cuts to the back of her head, and a mirror is in front of her. She moves her head up. Her face appears in the mirror. In the mirror, the audience will be able to see that half of her face is burnt and scared. Her voice is heard; “Where is real love? A love that does not rely on beauty?” Mia writes on the paper; “I want to find my true love!” Mia looks around and finds a scarf. She uses it to covers her face. Mia runs toward the door. She takes one deep breathe, and opens the door. Light comes in, on her covered face. Wind blows her hair. She jumps on the grass. Her feet touch the grass, running. She begins to dance and move around again. Men appear around her. She stops and looks at them happily. Suddenly, the wind blows away the scarf that covers her face. She tries to catch it, but fails. She looks back towards the men, but no one is there anymore. She feels sad. The camera moves around her and stops on her sad face. The man with hat appears, lands on his knees and presents the flowers. She notices him, turns toward him, smiles. She moves her hand toward him to take the flowers, he tries to find her hand and catch it. She realizes that he is blind. She becomes sad for a moment but then pauses. She takes a breath and faces him. He finds her hand and catches it, then stands up and goes toward her. He touches her face to know more about her. She takes his hand on her face, and goes toward him, takes off his hat and put away his hair of his face. His blind eyes appear. She takes his arm. The camera zooms out. They become a small point on a cup of coffee. The coffee appears in the girl’s hand on a table. They sit next to a table and talk and drink coffee. Mia smiles. Camera stills zoom out. They disappear in a small point, and turn to the title of the film (Beauty or Love).
Rationale:

As a young woman, who has visited in several countries around the world, I have discovered a common within all these different cultures; people often judge others solely by their appearance. People, who have better appearance, attract more people and have better chance to have a higher social status. Also, when they want to choose someone to start a relationship with, they look at the appearance first! However, people with unpleasant appearances might have better personality, but less people are willing to know about them!

Furthermore, I have met many men who pretended that have fallen in love with me, however they didn’t know anything about my personality! When I talked to other beautiful young girls, I have found out that they have the same issues about fake loves around them, which has made it a hard for them to realize which one is a true love and which one is fake!

In addition, love, which is relies on beauty, doesn’t last for a long time, since appearance is changing by passing the time. So I decided to make a poetic animation to show that appearance and beauty are not everything that we can judge people about.

Visuals:

This is going to be a 2D animated film. Very smooth animation, many metamorphoses, with some exaggerations in the movements. The scenes which shows present time are more colorful that the “past time” scenes.

The mood and the environment of the film is very dreamy. The animation part will be done in Flash and TV Paint. Also, the backgrounds are done on paper manually, and will be done in Photoshop. Also, I will use After Effects and Premier for the compositing and visual effects.

Here are some samples of the backgrounds and character design that I have done for the film:
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Storyboards:

1. "Love... Beauty... such strange words..."
   - Credits in black bg with clock
   - Credits turn to a hand
   - A hand on a notebook with clock appears
   - Her face in dark and blur
   - "There’s an old saying that says beautiful women have more men around, so there will be more of a chance for them to..."
   - Stop’s writing
   - (Hearing her last sentence I find their true love..."
   - Moves her head down.

2. She morphs to a sunny exterior
   - Morphing
   - Light
   - Grass appears
   - Camera moves forward close to ground
   - Mia and trees appear in light
   - (Camera moves forward slowly)
   - Mia dancing (camera moves around slowly with the sun moves in bg)
   - Hearing her sound
Mid-shot/Mia dancing

Men appear around her

Offers flowers

Kisses her hand

SHe releases her hand and moves/more men appear

She suddenly stops, a man with hat appears

She likes him and moves toward him (camera turns slowly)

Someone punch him on his face (camera shakes)
The man with hat falls down / other man comes forward.

Other man punches him (camera shake).

Mia scares and escapes.

camera moves with Mia / she opens the door of house and goes inside.

Men still fighting in the back.

door

closes the door (dark area)

leans to the door

Loud sound / camera shakes

She scares

POV / opens the window

Men Fighting
(first light and blurry)

Then Men appear

She scares
Fairy arrow comes toward her / she moves aside.

POV / arrow on the wall burning.

She moves to close the window with fear.

Camera moves slowly / sometimes blurry.

Closing the window.

Suddenly she sees something.

A fiery arrow comes toward her.

Zoom to her face.

Turn to black and silence.

A shadow appears in dark walking.

Mia walks in dark.
POV → light / blurry / then men appear. (camera moves slowly)

She opens the door / light comes in / wind in her hair

Men disappear one by one

POV → light / blurry / then men appear. (camera moves slowly)

Men look at camera for few seconds / then leave one by one

Environment morphs

Fades to the empty space with cold colors

Environment morphs

POV → she looks to the mirror / first blurry / camera moves slowly

She appears in dark

Morphs to the room scene

She moves her head up

Camera zooms

POV → she looks to the mirror

The picture comes clear when the tear drops

(camera moves slowly)

Tear drops on her notebook
"So what is beauty - what is love? Where's real love that doesn't rely on beauty?"

She looks to her notebook (hearing her voice) her hand writes...

I'll find it.

Up her notebook

"I will find it."

She moves around

Catch a piece of canvas

11/15

covers her face

Blurry

turns to camera and moves to camera

moves to camera

Blurry

Black

turns to black

back of her head
she runs

she stops breathless

looks back to her house

Pov/ she looks at the house how far it is/ breathing sounds

moves her feet on grass

starts dancing (camera moves around her slowly)

camera moves slowly with her breathing

pov/ looks at the door breathing/ her hand moves to door slowly

light in her face/ wind in her hair/ she moves forward

her foot on grass

Pov/ she opens the door with a deep breath.
camera moves slowly/ light comes in
(14)
dancing
Zoom in
Collects the energy/environment
Turns to dark
Zoom out
Spread the energy with light
She appears dancing
Men appear around her
She stops/looks around

(15)
She looks around happily
Breathless
Wind blows
Wind takes away the canvas
She tries to catch but can’t
Jumps on ground
Looks sad
Looks back
Men have gone
16

She turns sadly; camera moves around her

Camera stops; the man with hat appears with flowers; he presents flowers and makes noises

She turns toward him:

17

She looks at the flowers

Looks at him; takes off his hat

He smiles at her; he moves forward her

He touches her face

She smiles at him

She takes his arm
She looks happy and goes to him.

She takes the flowers.

He looks for her hands with his hand.

She realizes that the man is blind.

She surprises him.

The man looks for her by his hands.

She looks at his hands.

Door opens, light on portrait.

Hat on wall.

Move to house. This morphs into the hat on wall next to the burnt portrait.

Film by.

Credit.
Screenshots

Beauty Or Love

![Image of a ballet dancer in a field with a backdrop of yellow light, suggesting a serene and artistic atmosphere.](Image of a ballet dancer in a field with a backdrop of yellow light, suggesting a serene and artistic atmosphere.)
Film by Khorvash Khayati (Coline)
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MFA degree in the School of Film and Animation, Rochester Institute of Technology

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1. Yonat Zwebner, Nir Rosenfeld, Anne-Laure Sellier, Jacob Goldenberg, Ruth Mayo (2017). We Look Like Our Names: The Manifestation of Name Stereotypes in Facial Appearance