Amelia: An animated short film about giving and receiving help

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Amelia

An animated short film about giving and receiving help

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Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design

School of Design
College of Art and Design
Rochester Institute of Technology
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Thesis Approval

Amelia - An animated short film about giving and receiving

Thesis Title
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

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Abstract

Amelia is an animated short film that expresses a personal journey of finding the importance of the balance between giving and receiving. “Giving is better than taking” is a common concept people are taught since young age in Asian culture; however, if there is no common ground in giving and receiving the positive notion of helping others can become negative for the giver.1

There are several elements in the film indicate that life is an infinite journey of self-improvement. Amelia starts and ends at the same place, with different quotes, while her mental state changes along with her energy. Sunrise and sunset also alludes to the energy level of the main character.

The film is conveyed solely through visual representation without any narrative scripting to allow it to act as a mirror for the audiences’ own experiences. As Amelia experiences the consequences of her actions, the lack of dialog allows the audience to relate her struggles to their own experiences, bringing the emotional distance between the character and audience closer.2

Aristotle called the balance between excess and deficiency the Golden Mean. Buddha called it The Middle Path. In both cases, these philosophers considered it something to aspire to, not just because it was ethically sound but also because it was challenging. Indeed, many people struggle with such a balance. Some take too much with little reciprocity. Others give until they are exhausted.

In this case, selflessness is the deficiency and Amelia needs to recognize that deficit in order to achieve the balance necessary to survive. The circular concept of the narrative highlights the recursive nature of self-assessment: we become aware of ourselves and the consequences of our actions by engaging in acts that are suboptimal.

Keywords

Autodesk Maya, Animated Short Film, Character Animation, Golden Mean, The Middle Path

**Introduction**

**Problem Statement**

Will an animated short film about finding the balance between giving and receiving intrigue the audience while conveying a deeper understanding of the struggle to achieve balance in taking care of others and taking care of one’s self?

**Situation Analysis**

This short film is inspired by author’s mother and her situation a decade ago. She was in a serious giver burnout which lead to a year-long depression. “Putting others before yourself” is a fundamental concept in Asian Culture. Although the idea of giving is not bad, many people overlook the importance of accepting helps. In my culture, people are supposed to keep feelings and problems within themselves. It is especially true when it comes to family. One never shares family struggle with any outsiders. On top of that, Asian women are expected to devote themselves one hundred percent to their family. Sacrificing everything they have in a sense. Such as friends and personal lives. In other words, the family is all they have left yet they cannot talk about it. There is no outlet for them. They keep pouring their heart out but the social expectations are not set up for them to receive properly.

Married women among all has the worst time but, in general, people has suffered with similar struggles. Sharing one’s issues with others can be deemed as weak or inconsiderate. Taking care of oneself when they have the energy and time to help others can be seen as selfish. These are not explicit rules but it is embedded deeply in Asian culture. Informal interviews the author conducted during the early planning stage has supported with this statement. Although this is not a commonly talked topic, people with a similar background share the same issue one way or the other.

This project is a reflection of the author’s own life experience of finding the balance between giving and receiving. O’Hara argues that one of the best ways to engage the audiences is by telling stories from your own memories and life experiences.1

By creating this short film, the author hopes to fill the gap and raise awareness. At the same time, remind people that one needs to take care of themselves before they can take care of others.2

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Deliverables

Length
3:30

Format
Video—Frame Size: 1920 x 1080 pixel
   Aspect Ratio: 16:9
   Frame Rate: 24 fps
Audio—Channels: Stereo
   Sample Rate: 48 kHz

Software
This short film was mainly produced in Autodesk Maya 2017 with Arnold Renderer. Then, assemble rendered frames in Adobe After Effects.

Music
A composer was hired to create dedicated music for this short film

Sound Effects
Sound effects were created and assembled by the author using Audacity and Adobe Premiere Pro

Figure 0
A still image from the short film
Goals & Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime the audience to reflect on their lives and reconsider how much they give and how much they receive. The film also acts as a reminder that one should take care of themselves in order to continuously helping others.</td>
<td>1. How to convey abstract ideas to a diverse audience—different age groups and ethnic backgrounds?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How to narrow down a complex idea to a single cohesive narrative?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There's no dialogs in the film so that it's easy to share the concept among different spoken language groups. The characters and environments are simplified and in relatively mutual tone—easy to share from kids to elders.</td>
<td>2. Multiple interviews and user surveys were conducted throughout the planning process and in production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audiences do not necessarily need to experience the story the exact same way as the others. Everybody came from different background and lives. The film is aimed to be versatile and each viewer can have their own interpretation that fits their narratives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Design Process

At the early stage, the story was designed based on 2D motion graphics techniques which leans heavily on abstract and surreal elements to carry out the story (Fig. 1). Amelia, the main character, was to have super powers to change her physical sizes easily to get to places, able to talk to animals and creatures, and have the magic to fix almost anything she puts her mind to. Although the final design differed from this early setting, the ideas from this stage was important to lay the foundation of the storyline and the general direction of the final design.
Design Process

Final Story

In the latest version, the storyline was simplified, some detailed elements and scenes were removed to make it more straightforward as a linear narrative (Fig. 2). The simpler the animation is the easier audiences can engage with the story and interpret their own emotions through Amelia’s journey.1

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Design Process

Figure 2
The final version of visual style
Design Process

Story Beats

1. Amelia is selflessly giving
2. She loses parts of her heart as she gives
3. She is not accepting help when she needs it
4. She becomes exhausted and has to walk away
5. People forced her to accept help
6. She learns the lesson and recovers
7. She goes back to the city and start helping again

Story Line

A paper with the quote “Go out into the world and do good until there is too much good in the world” flying down from the sky. Camera tilts down to Amelia who walks through the city gate and picks up the note. She reads it and put the paper in her heart.

Event One

A kid appears to be upset about his broken toy. The mom is taking care of her baby at the same time and did not know what to do. Amelia walks up to them, with the mom’s permission, and fixes the toy with a piece of her heart. The mom wants to thank Amelia with a gift but she refuses and continues her journey.

Event Two

Amelia notices a man sitting on the bench alone and sad. She sits down with him and comforts him. Fixing his heart with her own and refuses to accept gift from him.

Event Three

Amelia collapses on the street and people try to help her. She plays tough and refuses the help from others again and walks away getting more and more drained.

Transition

She walks away from the human habitat. Sun is setting. She goes into the woods and sits down next to a tree. Rests. The scene gets pitch-dark, but still able to see some of the trees through the moonlight. A kid appears and accidentally trips on a rock. Amelia tries to help but she has had no energy left. She falls back to the tree and feeling sad. The kid walks up to her and gives her an apple. Amelia refuses the help again at first but the kid has forced her to accept the gift. Once Amelia accepts the gift her heart grows back half, more importantly, when she lets the kid helping her up, her heart has grown back to full. The kid says bye and skips away while Amelia walks out of the woods.
Design Process

**Story Line (cont.)**

**Ending**

This film is “loop-able”. As Amelia walks close to the city the camera tilt up to the sky. A piece of paper with the quote “As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands—one for helping yourself and the other for helping others” flies down from the sky just as it appeared in the very first scene. Then the camera tilts down, Amelia has confidently received the message and ready to keep helping others with this new lesson in mind.

*The end.*

---

Figure 3
A still image from the animation.
## Design Process

**Target Audience**

The target audience of this short film are people who experience giver burnout. More specifically, this short film is dedicated to Asian females, especially moms, and caretakers in general.

**Empathy Map**

**Says**
- “It’s okay. Thank you!”
- “No Problem!”
- “Don’t worry. I will take care of it.”

**Thinks**
- “I don’t want to be seen as weak.”
- “I don’t want to bother others.”
- “People have their own problems to worry about.”

**Does**
- Take more responsibilities in hope to feel better by doing more
- Reach out to self-help books
- Ignore the problem, do nothing, and swallow the pain

**Feels**
- Overwhelmed
- Unappreciated
- Exhausted
- Alone
- Depressed
Design Process

Persona

**PERSONA ONE**

**FACTS**
- Prepares 3-5 meals a day depending on each family member's schedule
- Does all household chores & picks up kids
- Don't have a lot of friends

**QUOTES**
- I have to try my best and take perfect care of my family.
- I don't have time to do things for myself. Family comes first.

**Persona Image**

Appendix A

**PERSONA TWO**

**FACTS**
- Always been doing pretty well at school
- People feel comfortable complaining to or spilling secrets with her
- Active among classmates but does a lot of things on her own

**QUOTES**
- I don't want to bother others. People have their own problems.
- It seems selfish to take care of myself when I can help others.

**Persona Image**

Appendix B
Character Design

As mentioned in Situation Analysis, in Asian culture people are not expected to show emotions and feeling. Therefore, the characters are designed with limited facial expressions.

The design is also kept in simple forms so that the film is more focused on the storyline and concept. At the same time, it also allows the film to be more versatile for different age and background groups.

Figure 4
A rendered image of some of the characters
Design Process

Set Design

The scene design is a subtle combination of features from eastern and western. That is also how the author identifies herself—a blend of both eastern and western culture. The house structures are European influenced, but the wood and bamboo textures are from the East.

Figure 5
Still images from the animation.
Design Process

Sound Effects

Sound effects were created by the author using both home-recorded and online royalty-free resources. Sound clips were modified in Audacity and assembled in Adobe Premiere Pro.

Figure 6
A screen-shot of the sound effect file in Adobe Premiere Pro
Design Process

Music

Since the animated short film does not have narration and the characters have limited emotional expression, music becomes a key point to carry out the emotional aspect of the film.¹

The music is composed by Ming-Hsueh Lin (Fig. 4). Reference music was created first in aid of communicating with the composer regarding music genre and direction. The reference music was inspired by Yann Tiersen’s Amélie soundtrack. As Amelia aims to create a vibe of accessible and friendly yet emotional and deep in concept, Amélie (2001) has established a similar vibe. Accordion and strings are heavily used in the music soundtrack of Amelia.

User Testing

Questionnaire

To get a better understanding of how the short film connects with its audience, a questionnaire is created on Google Charts. Audience of different age groups, backgrounds, and field of works are invited to fill out the survey. Topics evaluated include overall storyline logistics, visual design, camera work, acting, editing, and character acting. Some questions were answered by rating from strongly agree to strongly disagree while others were short answers. Most responds were received before April 2018. The final film was revised based on this survey.

The questions are listed below:

Storyline
Does the story make sense?
How did you interpret the story? (Describe in your own words)
Was the whole animation too long? Any unnecessary scenes?

Animation
Do the characters movements fit the visual style?
Do the transitions make sense and easy to eyes?
How are the camera movements? (too fast/slow/dizzy/confusing...etc)
The compositions are appealing and well designed (1-5)
The lighting is efficient and appealing (1-5)
Overall timing are natural and smooth (1-5)
Overall scenes are consistent and continuous, no distraction by unnecessary shots (1-5)

Design
The visual style is appealing (1-5)
Visual elements are consistent (1-5)
Color palette is appealing (1-5)
The characters are well designed (1-5)
Scenes, background, and props are well designed (1-5)

Overall
What are your three favorite things in this short film?
What are your three least favorite things you think can be improved?
Any additional comments?

User Testing

Data Analysis
1 of 11

Below graphics are generated from the Google Chart.

1-1 Occupation

![Occupation bar chart]

1-2 Age

![Age pie chart]

1-3 Storyline: Does the story make sense?

![Storyline pie chart]
### User Testing

1-4 Storyline: How did you interpret the story? (Describe in your own words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always giving but not accepting from others can drain you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>人生態度與信念思維的轉變</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main character was always kind giving help to anyone but for some reason was stubborn and would not accept any help back? (too proud to accept maybe?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the end/last part was little confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A positive, feel good story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A girl who was told to do good things to the world, kept helping others but refusing others' help. She didn't know how to, and then got depressed. Until a little boy appeared and insisted on helping the girl, she accepted it then she realized, she should not only help others, but also accept the help from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My understanding is if you are willing to help others even if you have to make sacrifice, you'll be lucky enough to be helped when you are in need of help as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An act of kindness will earn you a lifelong respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's a story about how a girl further understands receiving &amp; offering. At first, she wants to do good; she keeps offering people help but refuses to accept others' help. As time goes by, her body gets weaker and weaker since she is offering too much and does not accept any care in return. Until later, she accepts a little boy's help - a piece of heart &amp; his helping her to get up - and she started to feel better. At the end, she realizes that offering is as important as receiving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parable about giving and taking in one's life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You need to receive as well as give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is this block girl who goes on a quest to bring good and happiness to the world, but she ends up having to sacrifice her own happiness until she has nothing left to give. Then this block kid gives her an apple and makes her happy again so she can go and bring more goodness to the world. In the end she learns she needs to help herself in order to help others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving is an act that depletes us; we need to receive as well in order to give.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No act of kindness ever goes unrewarded, big or small.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia tried to help everyone that she can, but soon became emotionally drained. Despite that, she continued to reject help from others, until a child forced it upon her. She then recovered and restored her emotional well-being and learned that you need to both take care of yourself and the people around you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw it as people should always find the balance between giving and receiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the story was about loving kindness and spreading kindness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>故事的部分，我覺得有一個部分值得討論，就是在施與受的界定。故事中的主角設定是用盡愛心之後才接受別人的愛心，但是這個跟我們對於施與受的定義不太一致，因為我認為施與受是同時發生的，就算不收下物質上的贈禮，精神上的贈禮也在施與受的同時收到了，所以不是單純只是付出的行為，但這是我的定義，如果是動畫中的定義也行~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main character thought helping other means giving but the true relationship should be equal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it forward. How the act of giving perpetuates a cycle of receiving in kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self preservation is key, even if you love helping others! Doing good is the most important thing in life but you have to be well (enough) to be able to do it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
User Testing

1-5 Storyline: Was the whole animation too long? Any unnecessary scenes?

Maybe less walking cycles but music helped a lot

Yes, it was too long. Unnecessarily long walking scenes

Yes.

No

The story is of proper length to keep me focused and not lose interest.

No, it was perfect.

Not too long. It takes enough time to establish the storyline. Not sure if this is unnecessary, but when the girl moves from the town to the forest or when the girl moves back from the forest to the town, these two parts take quite a long time. Not sure if they can be even more concise but still deliver the same effect? As a professional, you probably know it better than me haha

An okay length, maybe trim some of the walking scenes a bit

No. Good length.

No it was a good length

There was a lot of just the character walking. I get that this happens while the background scenery is changing, but felt redundant. Also, the two notes, that showed up, they need to be left on screen for a longer time. I had to rewind for both notes to actually read them from beginning to end.

yes, I wish it was faster

I don’t think it was too long. It flowed.

我覺得樹林的場景需要再討論，為什麼付出完愛心就進入人生的征途或者是黑暗面?是覺得空虛?還是代表什麼?

Yes. The second scene dragged out a bit too long for the story.
### User Testing

1-6 Animation: Do the characters movements fit the visual style?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes a bit slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>跟音樂搭配起來有點不搭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but sometimes I feel the legs bend a little too much when they walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even though there is no facial expression, but the movements are good enough to be able to convey the emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah definitely. The way the characters walk and move, their posture. It's very expressive while being cute and blocky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, although feels like the giant heads get in the way sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I was amazed at their movements and how a walking style or a fall could evoke so much emotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>是</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of. Sometimes the legs lift too high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not as smooth as it could have been, though it did not detract from the message of the story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-7 Animation: The compositions are appealing and well designed

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
User Testing

1-8 Animation: Do the transitions make sense and easy to eyes?

| Yes but could use more transitions and shorter walking scenes. Transitions could help cut down the walking yes |
| Yes for most parts. |
| Yes, I like the fades between scenes. |
| Yes, they do. |
| Yes, it might be good make them a little faster |
| Yes, and the transitions from day to night were smooth. |

1-9 Animation: How are the camera movements? (too fast/slow/dizzy/confusing...etc)

| Nice, unnoticeable |
| дорож не заметно～ |
| Fine |
| They were minimal and fine. Some slow zooming on important scene moments might be a nice addition. no |
| Okay. |
| A little little too slow? |
| The transition when the character went back to the small town seems a little bit not smooth which makes eyes not very comfortable. |
| its good |
| It is difficult to describe and I could be wrong. When the girl moves back from the forest to the town, the camera movements for that section seem a bit overlapped. No issues |
| I think some of the flyover/pan shots are a little fast |
| No, it was really cool. I like the big swooping zooms from up in the sky down to the street. |
| Good but I wish I had more opportunity to invest emotionally in the characters by some little moments |
| I think the pace is just right. |
| There were some places where I felt like the camera pan was not super smooth. Other than that, was good. good in some scenes and too slow in others |
| I am someone who could get dizzy and I did not. I enjoyed the pace. |
| OK |
| It's fine for me. |
| They could be more effective but overall they did not deter from the actual viewing. |
| A bit too slow maybe? |
User Testing

Data Analysis

6 of 11

1-10 Animation: The lighting is efficient and appealing

1-11 Animation: Overall timing are natural and smooth

1-12 Animation: Overall scenes are consistent and continuous, no distraction by unnecessary shots
User Testing

1-13 Design: The visual style is appealing

1-14 Design: Visual elements are consistent

1-15 Design: Color palette is appealing
User Testing

1-16 Design: The characters are well designed

1-17 Design: Scenes, background, and props are well designed
User Testing

1-18 Overall: What are your three favorite things in this short film?

Using the heart as a symbol for giving a piece of yourself. The character is cute, the forest

音樂, character and buildings

Characters, Texture

pirots can get better clear, liked the heart thing

Simplicity. Minimalism. Concept.

Colors, the story, and the concept of heart

The story expressed positive concept. Start and end the story with the letter which is also the gist of the story. I found the sheep so cute!

1. When she fixes kids toy 2. When she gives her piece of heart to the person sitting on bench 3. When the kid gives apple to her and love

always having great camera angels matching characters' movements, color of the overall scenes & characters, background music matching the storyline

All the things
I liked seeing all the little pigs, the quotes, the circular structure of the set


The concept of your heart being used as a meter to measure emotional resource. Interactions between adult and child block people.

Characters, the town

I thought it was amazing that the characters with no mouths were so expressive and that this animation captured kindness and generosity of spirit without words.

不錯喔~ 音樂也很棒~

1. Idea the helping other and ourselves are equally important.

2. The visual way (adding or reducing heart portion) to present the idea.

3. Music

1) The opening scene (message reveal) 2) The ending scene (message reveal) 3) The first scene

Important theme/message; well designed characters; just sweet!!
### User Testing

1-19 Overall: What are your three least favorite things?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character animation is a bit slow, background of the sky and lightning could be more interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>走路動作？中段跌倒時有點音樂緊張但感覺冷淡的反差XD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting, texture and walking movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No lighting (no shadows make walking on the road looks like she is floating), No sky (background), Reason for denying people's help in the first place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apple thing was little confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length: 'Heart-share' animation style, quotation typeface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music can be hanged to fit the story better? (Ups and downs, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transition when character gets back to the town can be made more smoothy. I understand but still kind of surprised that an apple can also fill the heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. facial expression 2. more characters like birds and the interaction with them 3. the camera rides from left to right or vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only find one thing ha: I kinda have a question about the storyline. I wonder why the girl does not like to accept help? Is it because she thinks doing good does not include accepting others' helps? Or is it because of her personality? This part is not stated in the urban on I am kinda confuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sky, lighting (are there shadows?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the pigs and sheep but I was thinking they just look like regular animals, not block-animal? The music is a little cheesey... And I would have gone with more wood-instruments like marimbas and wood flutes or reed instruments to fit the setting more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It feels a little boxy, I would like some more moments or features that allow me to connect with the characters as individuals because they all look quite the same except for the little distinguishing features such as bow, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be a little shorter I guess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The notes. I get that both notes set the scene and cues a change in ideology for the character between the beginning and the end, but you might be able to get it so that those are implied based solely on the actions and interactions in the short. This would be a large effort to change though.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another thing is the music. Sometimes it got really intense, like too intense for my taste, especially with that style of your short. During the intense parts of the music (when the main character was talking alone through the woods or something). I expected the character to start running maybe? Or do something more dynamic to go with the change in dynamic of the music, but she just keep walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>too long, brighter colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the simplicity of the backgrounds because it allowed me to focus on the characters and the emotions and that seemed intentional to me, but perhaps some would prefer more elaboration there? I really enjoyed this so it’s difficult to select something to improve upon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>翻譯 繪染 故事性</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The overall colour tone is a bit too dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The note scene can be longer (adding 0.5-1 sec.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. some movements (ex walking and squat) is a bit unnatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Story gets lost a bit in the second scene story—(the bench). It lost my interest. 2) The movement of the characters—not as fluid as it could be 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background / sky felt too simple, textures on characters felt a bit low quality</td>
</tr>
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User Testing

Data Analysis

11 of 11

1-20 Overall: Additional comments?

Love the concept and the characters and elements. I would play more with the lights for ex on the forest; it would be nice to have light rays thru the trees and I would also play with the focus of camera making the things at far out of focus.

哇啊～～～好漂亮哇～～好厲害～～😍 😊 😘

Great work! Emma you got this!

I'll send an email, too hard to type on phone. It's cool though I like it overall.

This was really cool, can't wait to see more!

You rock Emma congratulations this is awesome!

GREAT JOB! I put in some critical comments up top, but you only give on box to write about what I like. This is super impressive!! and I would have no idea how to do this at all. Feels like magic :P

the messages at the beginning and end are too fast to read. but overall really good, you work a lot and I can see it in the animation, pretty cool!

I was truly amazed at how touching and moving an animation could be considering the characters lacked typical forms of expression, such as facial movements and language.

有機會來討論阿^^

Overall I like this short film! :)xx

The music was appropriate and a nice touch for the story

Genuinely loved it, so proud of you!

Conclusion

According to the survey, the most favored elements in the film are: the symbol of the heart, visual style of the character, storyline/concept, and music. The implied emotions, the quotes, and the environment (buildings, forest, animals) are also well liked.

Things that are commonly agreed that need improvements: the walking movements (a lot of abrupt movements were fixed in the final version), the length especially the walking (entire animation time was shrink to 90%). Walkings are also reduced in the final film), lighting (demo film was rendered in Maya Hardware which does not include shadows and other more realistic lighting elements. The final film was rendered in Arnold Renderer which solved this problem), and sky/background (clouds added).
User Testing

Before/After Comparison

1. Adding more details in texture.

Before

After
User Testing

Before/After Comparison

2. Adding facial expressions

Before

After
User Testing

3. Changing details to make the characters stand out more

Before/After Comparison

Before

After
Conclusion

Because of how the film is set up—without scripts—it opens up opportunities for the audience to interpret the story in any way that fits their life experiences. According to user testing, through both survey and informal interviews, 80% of the audience understood the core concept and mentioned that they can relate to the story, of which the majority were Asian. The rest of 20% who either interpret the story differently or find it confusing were mostly Americans. This is likely due to cultural differences, as the primary story elements are based on common Asian culture elements with a particular focus on the female Asian experience. Western culture thrives in individualism while eastern culture focuses on selfless acts. There is no right or wrong, better or worse. Any of the extremes can be toxic. Everything needs a proper balance.

Considering the goal of the short film, “Prime the audience to reflect on their lives and reconsider how much they give and how much they receive. The film also acts as a reminder that one should take care of themselves in order to continuously helping others” and the reactions from the viewers, I believe this film has achieved its purpose.

This project is by far the largest in scale I’ve ever done alone. It’s a huge lesson for me in disciplines and following the schedule. It’s especially hard while working full-time.

On the technical standpoint, it was also a huge struggle. I was not as familiar with Maya and animation as I would have hoped for to begin with. Although that was the same reason why I wanted to challenge myself. The process was way harder than expected. Maya is so powerful and complicated that despite a ton of tutorials online, when something breaks it is extremely hard to figure out what is going wrong exactly without a person walking you through a specific scenario.

I am also glad that I stood up to the challenge I set up for myself. While developing the story, I learned a lot about why I am who I am and where I come from. Throughout the production, I have learned valuable lessons and critical skills I believe that will help me long term. I do not think I could have learned those skills if I had chosen an easier project.

Technical skills I have learned through the production of Amelia:

- Lighting
- Character Animation (including rigging and weight painting)
- 3D Modeling and shading
- Arnold Render settings
- Render Farm Process
Bibliography


Bibliography


Crook, I., & Beare, P. Motion graphics: Principles and practices from the ground up. Fairchild Books, 2016.


### Appendixes

#### Appendix A

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Appendixes

Appendix B

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