Little star's journey: A Motion graphics work about the value of life

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LITTLE STAR’S JOURNEY
A Motion Graphics Work about The Value of Life

Thesis documentation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences in candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

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June 2012
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Date

Chairperson, School of Design
Peter Byrne, Associate Professor, School of Design

Date

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Date
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0. Abstract

“Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.” ~ Confucius.

Little Star’s Journey is a short animated story expressing my personal explanation of the value of human life. Life is a process of learning through a mix of happiness and suffering. The essential value is to help one to become a better person who can inspire others with wisdom and compassion.

Through Little Star’s adventure from sea to the sky, he meets different kinds of things. Some look good, and some look bad. However, those all are the lessons from which he learns to become a real star lighting up others in the sky.

The project concerns the combination of practicing motion graphics design theories and experimenting current computer graphics integration technologies. The final presentation exhibits a 2.5 minute visual story in an imagined world of my mind’s eye.
1. Introduction

Inspired from numerous current worldwide social phenomena such as debates on abortion, teenage pregnancy, youth suicide and other issues related to life. I believe the more a person understands the meaning of life, the easier it is for one to keep a positive attitude in life when facing the hardships of reality. Therefore, I proposed to create an engaging visual story to convey my thoughts about life and to emit positive energy to the world.

The project reflects my attitude to life, which is mainly cultivated from Confucianism, Buddhism and modern education. Life is a process of learning through a mix of happiness and suffering. The essential value of life is to help one to become a better person who can inspire others with wisdom and compassion.

The project links two primary subjects: motion graphics design and the subject matter of the story about value of a human life. The study includes concreting an idea into a visual presentation, applying design theories to make proper decisions, practicing animation principles to create a visually interesting motion graphics, and experimenting various production methods to attain the best time-quality balanced imagery.
2. Research

The research contains three categories: content, visual and technical. For complete list of reference books and online resources, please refer to appendix 5.4 Bibliography.

2.1 Content Research

What’s the story about?
Since life is an extremely broad concept, I needed to narrow down my thoughts about life into a comprehensible topic to communicate efficiently with viewers. Therefore I started my research by reading some children books and online life education resources for parents and teachers. Those materials taught me how to concentrate one or multiple ideas into a specific situation or event in a controlled amount of time and space.

By analyzing these readings and comparing them with my scope of the project, I defined the central message of my story: “Life is a journey of a mix of happiness and sufferings. The reason we have to come through those is to become a better person and understand the meaning why live is to contribute ourselves to the world and help others.”

With the main statement set up, I began writing the script. “Life is a journey” and “Learning from both good and bad things” was two critical messages in my story, so I decided to have a leading character come through a journey representing one’s life, two secondary characters representing positive and negative faces of life, and a single storyline connecting three senses that represents three aspects of life. The first sense has positive facts in life such as happiness, inspiration, and friendship. The second has the opposite such as sufferings, danger, hardship and so on. The last scene stands for the ultimate goal of life: being a better person to inspire and help others in need.
2.2 Visual Research

Storyboard
I decided to take a class Advanced Storyboards and Layouts in fall so I could learn storyboarding and also prepare my boards for the proposal by the end of the quarter. Starting with simple sketches of key scenes, I gradually revised my boards each week. As the more knowledge I learned from the lessons and books, the more consideration I put on each panel in terms of visual elements such as shapes, lines, deep space, camera movement and so on.

Consequently I finished storyboards and moved on to the animatic to create the sense of flow and get the clear story framework. However, as the project continued, I kept refining shots in terms of motion rhythm and ways to tell the story throughout the entire production.

Style Frame
I started searching for the most proper look and feel for this project at the very early stage. One of my main goals of this animated story is to display a visually pleasing and interesting world and as well my personal artistic creativity. On the other hand, I had to evaluate any potential technical challenges in a workable production timeframe.

My first thought of the look of this story was towards stylized and imaginative type, so I searched some art styles such as Cubism and Surrealism to understand the ways of rebuilding realistic objects into geometric shapes and giving them a familiar but unusual look. Also, I had been always interested in the illustration-style in 3D motion works, so I began studying lots of other designers’ works with similar treatments on their portfolio websites and Vimeo.

http://www.henrirousseau.org/
Henri Rousseau, a French surrealist artist. His paintings such as “The equatorial zone of the original forest”, “Exotic Landscape”, and “The Dream” inspired me intensely in my
environment design. I was looking for a style which can non-realistically represent the scenes of real world in order to link viewers’ memory and emotion of the life world to the created world of the story. Therefore, Henri Rousseau's paintings with the original fairy-tale and fantasy world became my essential references.

**Motion Study**

In the period of laying out the scenes and animating, in order to build a believable world to tell the story, I used numerous kinds of visual reference from stills like photos and paintings to moving images like feature animation films, live footages, etc.

For example, I hoped to create the jungle scene in more accurate perspective in After Effects, so I observed both jungle paintings and photographs to recreate the sense of space of real world. Moreover, I used some time-lapse footage to learn the sky changing from day to night for the last scene when sky turns dark and Little Star starts emitting the light.

Per my committee suggestion, I watched *Finding Nemo* to learn the details of water world such as the colors in different depths of the sea, particles and bubbles movement, how the beams of light look, and so on. I also watched the 2D animated film *Ponyo On The Cliff by The Sea* to learn the way it represents the waves in 2D graphical style and transfer the feeling of movement to my stylized 3D waves animation.

Conclusively, this part research took a certain large percentage of my time in production and no doubts had significantly positive impact on my project.
2.3 Technical Research

Production Workflow
While doing visual research, I also started looking for some making-of from both professional and student projects on the online communities for CG artists like AREA http://area.autodesk.com/, 3D World http://www.3dworldmag.com/ and blogs. Especially those student thesis projects gave me a more clear sense of how a relatively small-scale production could be done creatively and professionally.

By learning from various methodologies for creating a short character animation film, I made my project plan and listed all the tasks such as how many items I need to model in Maya, how many backgrounds I need to create in After Effects, and so on. Therefore, I could had the big picture of my project and also plan out the timeline of production.

Character Rigging
I spent quite an amount of time to design and rig my character Little Star because it was the first time to create a character from zero to ready to be animated. Even the design of Little Star has relatively simple shape but it was still challenging for me. So I began with reading Autodesk Maya 2010: The Modeling and Animation Handbook to review basic joint system and then went more into character rigging. Then I followed the online tutorial Maya Rigging - Cartoon character rigging http://www.youtube.com/user/youmayatutorials to go through the process by steps. These content provided me the foundation knowledge based on which I started experimenting and customizing the setup for Little Star.

Overall my technical research was on an ongoing basis through the entire production. To solve different types of technical problems, I used several kinds of resources including books, tutorials, forums, blogs, films, and online creative communities.
3. Process

This section states the process of Little Star’s Journey, including thesis parameters, design ideation, production and summary sections.

3.1 Thesis Parameters

**Presentation** An Animated Story

**Length** 1.5-2.5 minutes

**Audience** General people

**Format**

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<th>Audio</th>
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<td>Frame Rate: 24 fps</td>
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**Technology**

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<th>Hardware (PC)</th>
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</thead>
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<td>BOXX 4854</td>
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<td>Adobe CS5 Illustrator</td>
<td>Mac OS X (10.6)</td>
<td>Microsoft Windows 7</td>
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<td>Adobe CS5 Photoshop</td>
<td>Intel Core 2 Duo 3.06 GHz</td>
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<td>6 GB DDR3 SDRAM (1333 MHz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Cut Pro 7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>512 MB ATI Radeon HD 4850</td>
<td>1 GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 285</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Storyline**

The story starts from a little star waking up in the bottom of the sea and starting his adventure that represents one’s life. Little Star comes into a big sea world with many busy schools of fish and various sea plants. He meets beautiful Magic Flower, which represents positive side and follows her lights out of the sea. Then Little Star comes into a dangerous jungle and is chased by threatening Beast Plant. The lights of Star in the sky guides Little Star the way and gives him encourage to keep going. Finally Little Star arrives the top of mountains and becomes another bright Star shining in the sky.
3.2 Design Ideation

**Storyboards and Animatic**
I tried to make my storyboards as comprehensive as possible. One reason is for clarifying my thoughts and moving me on to the next step smoothly. The other is for visualizing the story clear enough to be proposed to my committee members. So after sketches were done, I kept improving the boards by playing around the order of the panels and adding description, characters’ action and camera movement. Then I started to make animatic by laying out the time of individual panels with a temporary song. Therefore, I had a clear story structure and pacing of the entire animation.

The animatic is my first guide for animating. I spent a lot of time on refining the idea and experimenting the ways to tell the story. I was hoping the pre-production being done as fully as possible to avoid any possible major changes afterward. So I played different shot progression to see if it would have better expression and create the ideal contrast and affinity of the story. However, as the real visual design evolved, I kept editing and made some necessary changes through the production process.

**Style Frame Development**
After my proposal was approved, I started to design my style frames. My goal was to create a stylized stage for the story and bring the viewers’ memories of real lives into this fantasy world. My direction was pretty clear after the volumes of visual research, so I started building everything in 3D. I listed all the objects needed to create in Maya like sea plants, fishes, trees, leaves, grass, etc. Then I modeled and applied procedure shaders with layered textures on those. Generally I created two to three variations of same objects and located them to build the entire environment of the main scenes. I used Mental Ray to render multiple layers for testing compositing result in Photoshop (see fig. 1).

Then I brought the rendered layers to Photoshop and played different blend modes, trying to get more 2D illustration feelings. Also I set key tone to the each scene because I
hoped to enhance the individual meanings in each scene with the impression of different color schemes. At this point, the overall look and feel of the story was clearly defined and ready to be animated.

*Fig. 1. Style frames Exploration.*
Character Design

Character design is the other crucial part of the visual development. My idea was to use a leading character through three main scenes to connect three primary emotions in real life: positive, negative and final sense of achievement. I chose an anthropomorphic object, Little Star, with simple body shape and facial expression, because the viewers would project their emotions more easily with the simplified humanized object than some kind of hero character with very distinctive characteristics. Based on this idea, I tried several looks of little Star (see fig. 2) and finally acquired the result I wanted (see fig. 3).

It was my first time to design and rig a 3D character. It took me awhile to experiment to get the idea look and control. At the beginning, I tested to animate Little Star’s face with the animated texture to have better 2D hand drawn feeling. However, even the result was ideal but it was difficult to match the body movement and also hard to change if the timing of other elements changed. Therefore, I went back to model and rig the face. I used wire deformer to control the face; FK joints to control the arms and IK handle to control the legs. It was not a complex setup compared to those examples in my research, and there were certain custom settings I made to have the proper control to Little Star.

Fig. 2. Little Star’s look exploration.
For the secondary characters, I hoped them have obvious characteristics to distinguish their positive and negative meanings. Through the visual development, I changed my initial thoughts. I was using a black wolf to chase Little Star in the jungle, but after test animating and rendering, I felt the wolf didn’t really fit into the stylized jungle scene. Thus I changed the negative character design to an abstract object, a plant with sharp teeth, for keeping the consistent art style and displaying the more clear implication of bad things as well (see fig. 5). Also, I changed the positive character from multiple hands to Magic Flower for a better intimation of beauty and bright side of life (see fig. 4).
I set up simple joints and used bend deformer, blend shape and dynamic joints to have more natural movement on the Magic Flower. The similar joint setup was applied to the Beast Plant, and the additional motion path was implemented for its body movement.

*Fig. 4. The Final look of Magic Flower.*

*Fig. 5. The Final look of Beast Plant.*
3.3 Production

Pre Visualization
Using the animatic as a guide, I started playing around with camera and animation in Maya (see fig. 6). It was the way I really start to see the whole story take shape. I edited play blast preview movies in Final Cut Pro to see the overall flow first and went back to Maya to adjust the animation in each shot.

Fig. 6. Pre Visualization in Maya.

Fig. 7. Compositing in After Effects.
Fig. 8. Final render from After Effects.

**Integrating 3D and 2D Elements**

After animation was done in Maya, I rendered targa sequence for animation and still images for backgrounds. I basically had one key light in Maya and rendered with Mental Ray final gathering. Most color correction and visual effects was done mainly in After Effects because of the flexible color control and faster preview. Also I created clouds effects in Maya Fluids as a compositing source.

Then I layered the renders in After Effects 3D space (see fig. 7). Depending on the complexity of camera movement, for most of shots I animated the camera in After Effects so I can have better flexibility of adjustment and preview. Also the way allowed me to create the transition between each scene easier. For some shots with bigger camera movement, I brought Maya’s camera data to After Effects.
**Editing and Audio Mixing**

I rendered the final visuals from After Effects and edited in Final Cut Pro (see fig. 8). This is the final stage to check if everything goes well together and the story is told clearly. I had weekly meeting with my committee members and discussed the editing. Based on their feedback on the whole flow and individual shots, I went back to modify the animation or create additional elements to enhance the visual.

For the final task of audio, I did all the mixing in Final Cut Pro as well. I was hoping to have a composer follow the reference music to create a similar song for the animation, but due to the time and problems of communication, I used only half of the composed song. For the first half part of the film, I used several royalty free songs online and mixed them. Then I moved on to adding sound effects to enhance the emotion on the whole piece.

*Fig. 9. Screenshots of the project.*
3.4 Summary

Problem solving was a reoccurring theme throughout my production. I used mainly online resources and some books as well to find the answers to the most technical questions. For more “look and feel” design issues, I had the opinions of my fellow classmates and professors to help me figure them out. Keeping researching and trying different solutions was definitely the key for me to the complete this project.

The finished presentation is a 2.5 minute long animation for screening. Before I defended my Thesis on November 9, 2011, I had some people watch the animation and asked their reviews. There were some good feedback on the overall design and animation. The story itself leaves quite big space for the audience to interpret their own thoughts. Most people got the positive feeling and enjoyable experience.

In my thesis defense, I was asked to give some advise for other students about how to plan and execute a project on schedule and also to get the ideal result. My suggestion was making a clear to-do list and scheduling the tasks based on the priority, and following the schedule to finish them. For example, sometimes one thing had taken me more time then I expected, but it needed to be reviewed in a coming meeting. Instead of pushing the date, I would rather spend even more time on it those days and tried to keep everything on schedule. This objective-oriented method led me go through each step to the completion.

After the thesis show, I’ve published the project on Vimeo and submitted it to several film festivals. I’ve received quite amount positive reviews from imaging creators’ community. The film is also selected in the 2012 Los Angles Movie Awards, the 2012 California Animation Festival, and the Blue Plum Animation Festival. The image talks for itself. Even there is no such formal questionnaire to evaluate my project. However, from messages from people I know or not, I believe Little Star’s Journey brings a little thoughts and inspiration to the world as I hoped.
4. Conclusion

Little Star’s Journey is my first animation film, and it took about 6 months on preproduction (while still taking some classes) and 3 months on production.

One of the biggest challenges of this project is about visualizing the abstract concept with a motion graphics work and enhancing the visual by applying related aesthetic theories and computer graphics technology. After having explored extensive knowledge of visual design, I learned how to analyze a lot of information and used it in a workable way for my project. In short, the preproduction of concepting and researching for me was the most influential core process to this project. Most importantly, I’ve learned to keep polishing my thought and design through the entire process. While the project evolved, new ideas naturally generated and feedbacks from friends and teachers made the project refreshing for me all the time.

From the technology standpoint, this project encouraged me to experiment with various methods of integrating 2D and 3D visual elements and applications. I practiced several methods in the books, in class or discussed online. Such as bringing Maya camera data in After Effects, using dynamics joints in Maya and so on. Since the examples of methods provided maybe not right suited my situations, I also needed to work around and used the idea to find the best practice for my own purpose. By trial and error, I’ve found some better efficient ways to get the desirable result.

Moreover, I increased the problem-solving ability and gained more in-depth knowledge of CG applications. In terms of techniques, the more familiar with the software, the better I know how to manage the project. In order to keep the production on time and also maintain the ideal quality, I’ve learned to plan out each step for animation. Instead of starting animating straightly in Maya or After Effects, I would think which part had to be modeled and animated in 3D and rendered image sequence, which part could be just
rendered still images and cheated in 2D, or something less important could be tweaked in editing instead of re-rendering. It is the type of knowledge that requires practice to learn, and I believe I’ve gained more experience and better understanding about managing a short 3D animation film by the time spent on this project.

The making of Little Star’s Journey is just like a journey to me. There were some frustrating moments when I spent lots of time on a thing but it turned out not usable. At times I felt excited when figuring out the ways to do the things or having the satisfying results. It is truly a learning process for me to become a better designer with ideas, skills and an open mind to create more beautiful and inspiring things for our world.

*Fig. 10. Screenshots of the project.*
## 5. Appendices

### 5.1 Production Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Key Tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010. 09 - 2010. 11</td>
<td>Concept Development</td>
<td>Content Research&lt;br&gt;Storyboarding &amp; Animatic</td>
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<td>Thesis Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010. 12 - 2011. 05</td>
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<td>Building 3D Assets&lt;br&gt;Style Frame Exploration&lt;br&gt;Pre Visualization</td>
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<td>Summer Internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011. 09 - 2011. 11</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Character Design &amp; Setup&lt;br&gt;Animating, Compositing, Editing&lt;br&gt;Audio Mixing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011. 11. 09</td>
<td>Thesis Defense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011. 11. 10</td>
<td>Thesis Show</td>
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### 5.2 Shot List

**Title:** A Wonderful Journey  
**Current time:** 01m30sec at 24fps  
**Date:** 11/09/10

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SC</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | BK | Fade up on title: A Wonderful Journey.  
Fades to black. | 07:00 |
| 2  | 1-1| A1    | 07:15 |
|    |    | Fade up on FS of baby sleeping peacefully.  
Camera trucks in to CU of baby’s face.  
Baby opens her eyes. |      |
| 3  | 2-1| B1    | 01:20 |
|    |    | Cut to MS of baby seeing around curiously.  
Bubbles enters frame from left and right. |      |
| 4  | 2-2| B1    | 02:10 |
|    |    | Cut to ELS of sea world.  
Baby stands alone in the vast world. |      |
| 5  | 2-3| B1    | 02:15 |
|    |    | Cut to LS of baby looking around.  
Baby starts off swimming forward to camera. |      |
| 6  | 2-3| B2    | 02:19 |
|    |    | Cut to LS of baby swimming, screen left to right.  
Camera follows baby slowly. |      |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>SC.</th>
<th>BG.</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Cut to LS of seaweed slightly glows from a distance. Baby enters screen left, forward to the seaweed.</td>
<td>04:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby getting closer to the seaweed, screen left to right.</td>
<td>02:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Cut to MS of seaweed waving and glowing, from baby’s perspective.</td>
<td>01:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Cut to MS of baby looking at seaweed curiously.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>B5</td>
<td>Cut to FS of seaweed becoming several hands. Hands gracefully stretch out to the camera.</td>
<td>02:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>B6</td>
<td>Cut to MS of baby’s surprised face. Hands enters frame from camera forward to baby. Hands gently touch baby’s face and start hold baby's body up. Baby smiles.</td>
<td>01:00 04:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>B7</td>
<td>Cut to FS high angle of both hands holding baby up. Hands keep going up, get close to the camera, and pass the camera. Camera pans right and tilts up, turning low angle to following their backs.</td>
<td>01:00 00:20 00:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Scene</td>
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<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
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<td>C1</td>
<td>Cut to LS of sea surface starting turbulent.</td>
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<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
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<td>C1</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby out of the sea. Baby surfs strong waves in bad weather.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Cut to MS of baby keeping surfing strong waves.</td>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>C1 Trans to D1</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby keeping surfing. Waves start to transform into a black forest. Background changes from sea to land. Baby turns standing in front of the forest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby’s back and a shining star on the top of the mountain in a very long distance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Cut to FS of baby looking up with hope and courage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Frame" /></td>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>D3</td>
<td>Cut to LS high angle of baby moving slowly left to right, entering carefully the forest.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**LITTLE STAR’S JOURNEY** A Motion Graphics Work about the Value of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Scene</th>
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<th>Scene</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>D4</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to MS of low angle of baby’s face moving toward camera.</td>
<td>01:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>D5</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby running left to right in the forest. Several trees start to merge into a huge wolf.</td>
<td>01:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>D5</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to LS of the transformed wolf threateningly chases after baby in the forest.</td>
<td>02:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>C6</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to LS top view of wolf chasing after baby in the forest, screen bottom to top.</td>
<td>00:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to LS of both coming left to right out of the forest. Camera follows them reaching the foot of a mountain. Baby runs up the mountain. Camera moves up aligning the mountain, leaving baby out of screen. Camera slows down on MS of mountain. Baby enters screen bottom, climbing the mountain vertically.</td>
<td>02:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>E2</td>
<td>SC 45</td>
<td>Cut to FS of baby climbing, screen left to right.</td>
<td>02:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Shot</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-3</td>
<td>Cut to FS of baby’s back climbing slowly the mountain.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Camera slowly zooms out to LS of the mountain, and then shows the shining star in the sky.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>E4</td>
<td>5-4</td>
<td>Cut to MS of top of the mountain. Baby’s one hand reaches the floor from bottom, followed her tired face.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-5</td>
<td>Cut to FS of baby standing up, lifting her head to see the bright star.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Cut to CU of the shining Star.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby’s back, looking up the shining star. Camera dollies in, pans left to show FS of baby’s front.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>Cut to CU of baby’s peaceful face, smiling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>Camera zooms out to MS of baby’s body starting to emit bright lights. At the same time, sky is turning dark. Baby closes her eyes peacefully.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Cut to LS of baby emitting bright lights and getting brighter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>Cut to ELS high angel of baby becoming a light, flying into the shining star, screen left to right.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>SC 3/6</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>Cut to ELS front view of baby becoming a light, flying into the shining star. As the light goes into the star, beautiful sparkles emit.</td>
<td>02'15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>SC 3/6</td>
<td>5-13</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>Cut to MS of beautiful sparkles emitting. Camera zooms in to ECU of the star. Sparkles becomes brighter and brighter.</td>
<td>01'00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>SC 3/6</td>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td>Cross-dissolve to CU of a star with baby’s smiling face.</td>
<td>05'00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>SC 3/6</td>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Camera trucks out to LS of baby star and the mountain. Camera keeps trucking out revealing the forest, and another baby’s back entering the screen. The baby looks at the shining star. Fade to black.</td>
<td>10'00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bk  Roll Credits.
5.3 Thesis Proposal

Chien, Yi-An
Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree
Rochester Institute of Technology
CIAS, School of Design
Computer Graphics Design

Title
A Motion Graphics Work About The Value of Life

Submitted by: Chien, Yi-An
Date: November 17, 2010

Thesis Committee Approval

Chief Advisor
Professor Daniel DeLuna, Computer Graphics Design

Associate Advisor
Professor Shaun Foster, Computer Graphics Design

Associate Advisor
Professor Chris Jackson, Computer Graphics Design

School of Design Chairperson Approval

Chairperson, School of Design
Professor Patti Lachance
Problem Statement

**Keywords:** Motion Graphics, Animation, The Value of Life

I propose to create an animated story about the value of human life. Inspired from numerous current worldwide social phenomena such as debates on abortion, teenage pregnancy, youth suicide and other issues related to life, I believe the more a person understands the meaning of life, the easier it is for one to keep a positive attitude in life when facing the hardships of reality. As Confucius said, “Everything has its beauty, but not every one sees it.” Therefore, as a designer, I hope to bring my thoughts about life with an engaging visual story to emit positive energy to the world.

The project will reflect my personal life philosophy, which is mainly cultivated from a mix of western modern education, Chinese culture, and Buddhism. Life is a process of learning through happiness and suffering. The essential value of it is to become a better person with wisdom and compassion to help others in the world. Birth is the admission ticket to enter the human life, and death is not a destination but a stop on the way to the next journey.

Therefore, in this thesis, I will express my idea about life and bring the beauty of life in my eyes to people. The study includes applying design theories on the practice, creating a visually interesting animation, and concretizing an idea into a visual presentation. Conclusively, this thesis project links with two main subjects: motion graphics design in terms of design practice, and the subject matter about the value of a human life.

Survey of Literature

**Keywords:** Motion Graphics, Animation, The Value of Life

This survey focuses on two relative subjects: motion graphics design and spiritual aspects of a human life.

**Motion Graphics Design**

[1] *Universal principles of design: 125 ways to enhance usability, influence perception, increase appeal, make better design decisions, and teach through design*
This book for me is a tool to explore the principles of design. It also has explanations of design concept with visual example, such as the 80/20 Rule, Framing, Closure, etc. It’s a useful recourse for me to apply those principals to my thesis design.

[2] *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen*
It’s a good introduction providing the coverage of production design, such as storyboarding, editing, staging, and camera angles. It’s a useful recourse to planning my thesis project step by step in terms of film production.

[3] *The animator’s survival kit*
When I was thinking about the visual aspect of my thesis, I found it might be more interesting to have a character. As this book is called the bible of animation, it provides systematically introduction of every aspect of animation, such as walk cycles, dialogue and acting. It is a great handbook for me when considering animation.

It’s a good recourse to begin establishing my thesis in visual aspect. This book explains the methods and techniques of animation preproduction with a focus on story development and character design. It also presents and analyzes positive and negative examples of storyboard and character design to demonstrate successful problem-solving techniques.

This thesis analyzes his final project, “The Soliloquist,” which includes the process of this production: the inspiration, pre-production, applied digital tool, and the storyline and its image. It also consists of the study of key elements of visual design used in animated short films. This is a good reference to evaluate the scale of animation production for the thesis, and to have different faces of design and idea through every process of creation.

This study aimed to analyze the texts and images of printed public service advertisements and to explore the potentiality of the intercommunity on expressing these
advertisements. Based on the findings from data analyses, this study suggests that: 1. We may express a public service advertisement with the first-person narrator and a “tickle” tone. 2. We may compose the images with an equal viewing angle, a given-new information value, a colorful, or tonal contrast objects in a connected framing. 3. While we produce a public service advertisement, the cultural differences and social constructed roles should be taken into consideration.

The Value of Life

This collection I found several talks of Ven. Master Chin Kung related to abortions. Its intended audience is general people in the public, so it’s a good recourse to understand truth of live in Buddhism’s perspective. The Q&A section collects Ven. Master Chin Kung’s insights into live and universe told in an easy-understood way.

[2] How to Live without Fear And Worry
This book is a systematical guide to a happy life. The first part explains why and what people fear and worry about and followed by the ingredients for happiness and techniques for happy and successful living. The theories in this book are based on Buddhism, but concepts are quite universal and can be accepted by general people.

This thesis adopts historical research method, documentary analysis and comparative research to answer three main questions: the origin of life, decision-making rights, and guilty from the theories of Buddhism and Catholicism. It’s a useful study that provides the arguments of anti-abortion from two biggest religions in the world and also makes suggestions for improving life education in the society.

This book offers alternative interpretations of liberalism and feminism, as well as of what it means to be pro-choice and pro-life. All of these arguments do not base on religious viewpoint, so can be accepted directly by all readers. This book provides a good approach to contemporary moral issue and an introduction to bioethics.

[5] The Ethics of abortion: pro-life vs. pro-choice
This book provides contemporary arguments of abortion from the fields of philosophy, theology, psychotherapy, law, medicine, and journalism. It covers both pro-life and pro-choice opinions. It is an informative resource to get the overall idea of various arguments from both sides.

**Design Ideation**

- **Format**: A Motion Graphics Work
- **Audience**: General people
- **Estimated Length**: 01:00-01:30

**Design Concept**

Using a motion graphics work visually tells a story about the values of life. To poetically express the beauty and unlimited possibilities of life, 3D and 2D elements will be integrated into stylized objects and scenes. Color schemes will follow the flow of the storyline turning warm or cold to enhance the visual representations of happiness and the misery of lives.

**Story Line**

A baby star starts her wonderful journey to pursue her goal of life. On her way from sea to top of the mountains, she finds love and friendship, overcomes difficulties, and keeps following the direction of the light from a bigger and brighter star in the sky.
LITTLE STAR'S JOURNEY A Motion Graphics Work about the Value of Life

5/6

6/6
Implication of the Research

This project is concerned with visualizing the abstract concept into a motion graphics work, and as well applying related aesthetic theories about design aspects to enhance the idea. Therefore, I will explore deep extensive knowledge of visual art and put it into practice. In the research of individualized creation, various design components will be studied through the whole process from structuring a story and storyboarding to choosing visual styles, doing layouts, animating and so on in the next step.

From the technology standpoint, this project will encourage me to experiment with the methods of integrating 2D and 3D visual elements and applications. Furthermore, I will increase my problem-solving ability by trial and error, and understand in-depth current CG applications in terms of techniques.

In the process of production, I will have design professionals and design students preview my work and get feedbacks to improve the design components. Final project will be posted on the websites related to computer graphics design such as Motionographer and Behance Network, and also be sent to some groups of life education such as Taiwan Life Education Association and Life Education Learning Center. Besides, I will submit my work to various competitions such as Stuttgart Festival of Animated Film and TBS DigiCon6 Awards.

Budget

- $100  Research and Communication Expenses.
- $300  Production Expenses.
- $200  Promoting Costs (including printing, paper, DVDs, etc)
- $600  Total Expenses
## Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Concept&lt;br&gt;Survey of Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Thesis Proposal Draft&lt;br&gt;Rough Storyboard</td>
<td>1st Committee Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Thesis Proposal Defense&lt;br&gt;Submit Proposal and Website&lt;br&gt;Rough Animatic Completed</td>
<td>11/03/10 or 11/10/10&lt;br&gt;11/17/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Storyboard Revised&lt;br&gt;Style Frame Testing&lt;br&gt;Modeling 50% Completed</td>
<td>Contact Composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Animatic Revised&lt;br&gt;Modeling Completed&lt;br&gt;Start Animating</td>
<td>2nd Committee Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Animaring 50% Completed&lt;br&gt;Start Rendering</td>
<td>Send Animatic to Composer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Animaring Completed&lt;br&gt;Rendering 50% Completed&lt;br&gt;Start Compositing</td>
<td>Rough Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Rendering Completed&lt;br&gt;Compositing Completed&lt;br&gt;Prepare for Defense</td>
<td>3rd Committee Meeting&lt;br&gt;Music Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Editing&lt;br&gt;Thesis Defense&lt;br&gt;Thesis Show</td>
<td>4th Committee Meeting&lt;br&gt;05/11/11&lt;br&gt;05/20/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Final Work Revised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Bibliography

BOOKS


Katz, Steven D. (Steven Douglas). *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen.* Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions in conjunction with Focal Press, c1991


Lidwell, William. *Universal principles of design: 125 ways to enhance usability, influence perception, increase appeal, make better design decisions, and teach through design.* Beverly, Mass.: Rockport Publishers, 2010


K Sri Dhammananda. *How to Live without Fear And Worry.* Taiwan: Amitabha Buddhist Association of New South Wales Inc. 2009


Ma, Kuang Pei. *Creation Descriptions of “ The Soliloquist ” and Study on Visual Design for Animation*. Taiwan: Tainan National College of The Arts, 2009


**ONLINE RESOURCES**


Taiwan Life Education Association. [www.tlea.org.tw](http://www.tlea.org.tw)

Vimeo. [vimeo.com](http://vimeo.com)

AREA. [the-area.com](http://the-area.com)

CG Society. [www.cgsociety.org](http://www.cgsociety.org)

3D World. [www.3dworldmag.com](http://www.3dworldmag.com)

James Thompson Animation. [www.youtube.com/user/youmayatutorials](http://www.youtube.com/user/youmayatutorials)