Seeing *Red*

A Two-Minute, 2-D Animation

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Final Review, Character Animation MFA
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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autobiography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project Synopsis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Proposal at Midpoint</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project Production Breakdown</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project Visuals</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final Project **Synopsis**

*Seeing Red* is a 2-D animation created for my MFA thesis. With this project, I strove to learn character animation, and gain a better understanding of telling stories through moving pictures.

**Abstract**

*Seeing Red* is a story about a man losing his temper at an uncooperative stoplight. He is a kind and understanding man who stays within the socially acceptable boundaries of middle-class America working a middle-management job. On the weekends he takes his classic sports car out for a drive to his beloved golf course where he enjoys a relaxing, fun-filled day with friends. This time though, his expectations are interrupted by events that make him burn with anger, turn sweet with adoration, and bitterly resentful.

**Story Idea**

The idea for this story came to me while sitting at a red light intersection with no cross traffic. My thoughts jumped around from, “What am I waiting for?” to “What would it be like to be wait on this light, but have a very pressing appointment to keep?” That moment became the kernel for *Seeing Red*.

**Project Details**

*Seeing Red* is a 2-D pencil test animation approximately 130 seconds in length. Supporting materials include early and most recent animatics, character designs with multiple views, character expressions, backgrounds, and colored scene shots. The preproduction designs have been created by hand, then digitized for editing using Pixemlator. The production drawings have been created by hand, then digitized for editing in DigiCel Flipbook and Final Cut Express. Sound has been engineered by Todd Narruhn, an undergraduate student in Motion Pictures and Television at the Academy of Art.

**My Motivation**

As a story teller, I wanted to convey a simple, comic observation about a moment to which most people can relate. As a visual artist, I wanted to explore the animator’s and illustrator’s approach to creating a visual story through movement, expression and setting.
Theme and Conflict
The theme for Seeing Red is that life is unpredictable. I’ve chosen to address this in a comic animation where the conflicts of Man vs. Nature and Man vs. Self arise within the main character and are expressed in broad comic action.

Characters and Setting
Randolph, the main character, is an every-man character. He works a forty-hour week as middle management carrying on the daily practices expected by his employer. The world is best understood by this man through order and predictability. I’ve used rounded edges to describe the man, his belongings and vehicle.

The duckling is a youthful, wide-eyed innocent finding wonder in everything about him. He survives on innocent good fortune and cute looks as he explores and fumbles his way forward. Round shapes have been used to describe the duckling.

The setting is the outdoor compliment to the confined, ordered, urban space in which Randolph works. It offers Randolph an escape to safely designed nature where he is surrounded by rolling hills, round tufts of trees, prickly palm trees, water holes, and a serpentine golf course. Combinations of round and angular shapes have been used to described the outdoor environment.
Project Proposal at Midpoint

Proposal Details, July 2007

Seeing Red will be a 2-D animated short approximately 100 to 110 seconds in length. The design and animation will be created by hand, then digitized for coloring and editing using Photoshop, After Effects, and Final Cut Express. It is my hope that the end product will be a quality animation suitable for presentation at animation festivals and online venues.

My Motivation

As a story writer, I want to convey a simple, comic observation about faith-based reasoning prevalent in the current social setting of the United States. As a visual artist, I want to explore the animator's and illustrator's approach to creating a visual story through movement, expression and setting.

Theme and Conflict

The theme for Seeing Red is the unrealistic reasoning of faith. I've chosen to address this in a comic animation where the conflicts of Man vs. Nature and Man vs. Self arises within the main character and are expressed in broad comic action.

Characters and Setting

The main character is to be an every-man character. He works a forty-hour week wearing nondescript clothes, doing nondescript work, carrying on the simple daily practices expected by his employer. The world is confusing and chaotic to this man and he finds order, solace, and connection within his faith. Rounded edges will be used to described the man's character, his belongings and vehicle.

The field-mouse is a rough and weathered realist. He survives on fact and what is tangible. This mouse forages for survival living from one meal to the next understanding the harsh realities of living in nature. A combination of round and angular shapes will be used to describe the mouse.

The setting has been chosen to be a contrast to the refined, urban space from which the main character lives in. The rural landscape will be flat and somewhat wildly grown ranching land. The long horizon will be
broken by angular mountains in the distance, telephone poles and blades of long ditch grasses. Sharp angles will be used to describe the grasses and landscape features.
Final Project Production Breakdown

Project Timeline
July 2007 - May 2009
Pre Production Synopsis

After midpoint review, I assessed my project and determined that there were two goals to achieve during preproduction. I had to update my animation skills to create my project, and the animatic had to be simplified to animate this short in the remaining time of the program.

Taking the following classes helped me to level my animation skills with the basics needed to start my project.

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<thead>
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<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>III2D 688</td>
<td>MS: Traditional Animation 1</td>
<td>2007 Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILL2D 800</td>
<td>MS: Directed Study (Traditional Animation 2)</td>
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</tbody>
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In simplifying the animatic, I adjusted elements of the story and it evolved to include a different location, slightly different props, a different secondary character, and a different level of character interaction. Once the story issues were addressed, I solidified the designs for the environment, props, and secondary character.

Production Synopsis

Production on Seeing Red began in January of 2008. My goals were to strengthen my abilities to soundly draw my characters, and animate my characters according to their motives. The classes I took over the following year supported these goals. My classes included:

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>ANM 800</td>
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<td>ANM 800</td>
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<td>Group DS (Trad Animation)</td>
<td>2008 Fall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attending the Academy workshops also were very helpful in rounding out my skill set. The workshops I attended included Story Development, Acting for Animators, Drawing for Animators, Character Animation and Clothed Figure Drawing.
Production continued into April of 2009 where it overlapped and blended with Post Production.

**Post Production Synopsis**
With a majority of the scenes animated, I began Post Production in March of 2009 while continuing to animate the remaining scenes. During this semester, I chose two classes to continue my growth. The classes were:

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<th>Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANM 800</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANM 900</td>
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Animal Drawing, taught by a Joe Weatherly, a skillful animator and wildlife artist, has proven to be invaluable in understanding structure and locomotion for animation. In just the first four weeks of that class my knowing of animal structure and movement has improved and had a powerful affect on the animation of the duckling for my short.

Interning at Indigo Films in San Rafael as a member of their post production team has also been a great boon for this project. This company creates live-action documentary/education/travel shows carried by channels including The History Channel, We, The Travel Channel, and The Discovery Channel. I chose to intern there to gain an understanding of the post production process. I’ve learned some important lessons about post production and have employed them on my project. I also have more knowledge that I will apply in the preproduction and production phases of my next project based upon my work at Indigo Films.

**Areas of Concern**

Scope of midpoint proposal: After my midpoint review and speaking with my department director, Sherrie H. Sinclair, I realized my proposal of a full-color short was too much to complete. The time and skill required for this would be more than I could handle in the remaining year and a half of this program. With Ms. Sinclair’s approval, I altered the scope of this project to be a pencil test animation with color stills showing the direction this project is to follow for color.

Redeveloping the simple story: My proposal at midpoint had a number of loose ends which I addressed in the extended Preproduction. I chose to redevelop my story to address those loose ends. To do this I attended the Story Development workshops with Martha Wilson, took a One-on-one Directed Study with
David Nethery, and attended Acting for Animators Workshop with Michael Carroll.

**Editing my short:** Not knowing post production software and post production practices, I chose to gather this knowledge in a hands-on environment. I found an internship at Indigo Films, a local TV production studio, where I assisted with the post production of their shows. This has given me a strong understanding of timing when editing, asset management, and practical tools for future projects.

**Plans for Seeing Red**

I plan to continue the development of *Seeing Red* until it is suitable for presentation at festivals. I am researching festivals, and have plans to submit *Seeing Red* to online venues.

**Special Thanks**

My choice to begin, progress through, and complete the Master of Fine Arts program in 2D Character Animation would not have been possible without the incredible support of my family, and the undeniable wisdom and direction of Sherrie H. Sinclair. Thank you.
Final Project **Visuals**

Randolph, 2009
Expressions for Randolph
Expressions for Duckling