



Harry Roberts - MA Communication Design

**ob-SOUL-1337:**

**Exploring Human-Technology  
Relations and Online Identity  
via Animation**

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my course leader and CCS tutor Jon Pengelly for his support and assistance with my project. I also want to thank my specialist tutor Nicola Watson for her assistance and helping me connect with ComDes undergrads via crit sessions. I also want to thank Charlie Hackett, Pawel Kuncewicz and Craig Allan for their feedback and support and my fellow MA cohort for their support and having each other's backs. I want to thank my family and friends for their support and assistance this last year. Finally, I dedicate this paper to my dog Lily who passed away this May after 13 years of love, hugs and stolen grub.

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# AAM204 – Masters Project – Harry Roberts (1801508)

## ob-SOUL-1337: Exploring Human-Technology Relations & Online Identity via Animation

### Introduction

As an animator, I am aware that I have a unique position within Gray's School of Art. While the undergrad Communication Design programme has modules relating to animation and students across disciplines pursue animation projects or animation-adjacent projects, there is no dedicated Animation programme at Gray's in comparison to other schools like ECA or DJCAD. However, Gray's allow freedom for students to experiment with their practice and go outside lines. With creative influences more related to internet culture and what is seen as "low art" as well, it adds to this unique place I am in alongside my undergraduate background being in RGU's School of Computing (On the opposite side of campus). Despite this, the MA project was a chance for me to challenge myself as an animator and creative overall. The project that I have underwent this past year involved independent animation production, making the short film known as ob-SOUL-1337. This paper will be looking at the foundations behind, the progression and evaluation of this film.

### Foundations

The first influence for this short was Matt Groening's animated sc-fi sitcom *Futurama* (1999-present). Episode 5 of Season 3 "The Birdbot of Ice-Catraz" where we see Bender, a foul-mouthed robot, on a planet populated by penguins and reboots due to suffering heavy trauma. When rebooted, his communication settings are calibrated to match penguins compared to his default human/humanoid settings, hence he absorbs up the behaviours and communication methods of whatever species surround them like a sponge. Rewatching this episode back in early 2022, it provoked thoughts about how robots throughout fiction seem to have one consciousness or identity like humans despite robots lacking our mental/biological limits. If Bender can reboot into another identity, why can't Bender have two or more personalities that swap or control the robot's autonomy? This idea would combined with my fascinations surrounding death to generate the base idea of ob-SOUL-1337 where a robot collects souls of the dead.



Figure 1 (Descriptions on pg.34)

The themes surrounding the Internet, our digital footprints, identities and how corporations feed off our data came from reflection on doing my undergraduate studies at the School of Computing at RGU as well as seeing the state of tech within these last few years. The talk and rise of AI, over-monetisation and how technology can bring back the dead has inspired feelings of dread.

## Creative foundations

First key influence for ob-SOUL-1337 was the works of Matt Groening, particularly the aforementioned *Futurama* and his more popular series *The Simpsons* (1989-present)

Matt Groening's work was fundamental as a creative, watching *The Simpsons* from. *The Simpsons* was not only a source of entertainment but also an encyclopedia of Western society and culture used to navigate the world growing up. *Futurama's* appeal was its take on the distant future being an updated version from mid-20th century sci-fi (the show being named after an exhibit at the 1939 Worlds' Fair.) and the times where it was not afraid to be dramatic and emotion with character writing. Its fusion of 3D and 2D was also groundbreaking, though contributed to the show's initial cancellation due to high budgets.

Masaaki Yuasa has been a recent influence. One of his most known and acclaimed projects was the series *The Tatami Galaxy* (2010). The show's vibrant palette and subtle angst stuck with me on first viewing. However, His more overlooked series *Kaiba* (2008) I watched during production but helped with motivation and inspiration in some extents. The show takes place throughout the universe in the future where memories and bodies are separated and commercialized. There are some clear parallels with how *Kaiba* and ob-SOUL-1337's explore the human condition and the monetisation of our minds. It juxtaposes vibrant and playful designs associated with children's cartoons with dark narratives and heavy themes. The third episode Chroniko's Boots tackling themes of poverty, human trafficking and death that culminate in an intense ending.

The character animation throughout his works contains fluidity, expression (more so than most contemporary anime) and is not afraid to look weird compared to most anime where attractiveness seems to be a big factor character designs and animation. Yuasa's philosophy regarding animation is "joyful animation" that strays from realism or polish and looking like animators enjoyed making it. (Vijn 2013).



Figure 2



Figure 3

Cartoon Saloon's *Wolfwalkers* (2020) is another influence where the film utilizes different styles to communicate the locations. Characters in town of Kilkenny (where the studio is based) is depicted through crisp sharp linework whereas in the forest, the lines are loose, drawn with pencil with some frames showing the blocked-in shapes underneath. Walt Disney Animation Studios' *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* is similar with the scratchy look on the linework, though it was a result of the studio switching to Xerography for more efficient and cheaper production. (Yetikyel 2021). Sony Pictures Animation's *Spider-Verse* films were have been a big inspiration for my 3D work.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Web animation has been a source of inspiration as well. In the last 20 years, websites like Newgrounds, YouTube and Vimeo alongside animation software and graphics tablets being affordable and accessible has led to people making films bypassing Hollywood and TV (Hosea 2008). Referred to as 'tv 2.0' by Birigitta Hosea, she noted that as course director of Character Animation at Central Saint Martins at the time of writer, students used blogging as an alternative to sketchbooks alongside uploading their films to YouTube and Vimeo back in 2008. A notable example being David Firth with both his "Salad Fingers" series but also the lo-fi and politically incorrect "Jerri Jackson" series, spoofing the high amount of low-quality amateur work that is seen on these platform. The success of his online work led him to work with BBC and Warner Bros. A contemporary example is Ian Worthington also known as Worthikids. His work not only blends 2D and 3D as seen in his series Bigtop Burger but he also known to imitate stop-motion entirely in Blender with his short Capitan Yajima of particular notice. His filmography can also be seen as tech demos for Blender, showcasing its versatility across many animation styles.





Figure 6

Another name on note is Jonni Phillips, with her loose and exaggerated character animation that does not subscribe to being on-model compared to most animation you see. She enrolled in the prestigious California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) where her student films gained prominence online due to her style as well their runtime and scale being bigger than what is expected for most student films. Phillips' recent feature film *Barber Westchester* (2022) saw her produce a near-majority of the animation alongside voice-acting. Speaking to *Animation Obsessive* (2022), She said the film was inspired by creative burnout and frustrations with the animation industry. Initially the film was pitched to studios but Phillips decided to make the film independently, funding the film through crowdfunding via Patreon and distributing it online. In regard to her style, she noted to being an anti-perfectionist and focuses on emotional expression, noting that animating is more enjoyable when not hung up on realism or technical accuracies (similar philosophy to Yuasa).



Figure 7

Outside of animation, one particular creative inspiration was Gerard Way and his sense of storytelling, whether it be in his band My Chemical Romance or in his various comic endeavors with *The Umbrella Academy* (2008-present) being his most notable. My Chemical Romance's third album *The Black Parade* (2006) see a patient with terminal cancer at the end of his life, reflecting on estranged relationships with his parents and his lover. Despite the gloomy premise, the lead single *Welcome to the Black Parade* and album closer *Famous Last Words* preach optimism in the face of death, which was an inspiration for the film's ending.

## Thematic Foundations

### Human-Tech relations

The Y2K bug and the hysteria surrounding could be seen as the first point in humanity's history that we questioned our dependence on technology. Some saw this threat of Y2K as an opportunity stock up on supplies and have shelters, which was seen as overreaction by most (Smith 2016) Writing this dissertation proves that the world is still spinning despite other challenges in the two decades since. Since then, our dependency on tech and gone deeper with the COVID-19 pandemic making technology the only outlet for people to communicate with others and continue their work. While the world has gotten closer what it was pre-Covid, screen usage has still increased amongst adults in Britain (Clayton, R., et al., 2022.). For some, our relationship with technology feels co-dependent with the rise of AI providing some existential questions alongside anxiety.

### Online Identity/Social Media

A duality exists when it comes to online identity where some people present their most authentic (or even intimate) version of themselves while others play an exaggerated or fictitious character with motives of either attracting clout and social credit or for performing malicious actions. A variable that adds to this is anonymity, where the former may not even show their face, their real name or disclose any identifiable information whereas the latter show off their legal name and face.

The former could describe LGBTQ+ people who may live in areas or households where being queer is taboo at best, hence they flock to online communities (Das and Farber 2020). The latter applies to wannabe influencers with insecurities and motivation gurus who want to scam (Hoffower 2019). This can also apply to how we navigate social media where we cherry pick the normal parts of ourselves for accounts that are for work/family and we vent and lay bare raw emotions and irrational thoughts, some would describe this as going "goblin mode" (Oxford Dictionary's word of 2022) for other accounts (Paul 2022). The short explores this duality with Ray, a trans woman who is closeted in real life but is out online and Gootch, who fakes his image online and in public to hide his age and deterioration.

### Data/Big Tech

People are open about their lives online to varying degrees and we let devices be attached to us 24/7 and in our houses. Companies like Meta (parent company of Facebook/Instagram/WhatsApp) and Alphabet (parent company of Google) have a business model referred to as "You are the product" by offering free services in exchange for users' data being monitored and sold to advertisers (Lancaster 2017). These companies will also be willing your personal information to be used against you with Meta handing over messages between a teenager and her mother about her abortion to police in Nebraska after Roe V. Wade was overturned, leading to the pair being arrested (Collier and Burke 2022). The antagonist of the film is a tech CEO named Abe Gootch who is a less-than-subtle parody of Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, SpaceX and X Corp(formerly known as Twitter, Inc.) His site GootchVille being a parody of Musk's vision of making X (formerly known as Twitter) the "everything app" (Tait 2023). His company's practices of extracting memories from cadavers to convert to data is the "You are the product" model at its most absurd and immoral.

Tech CEO villains are quite contemporary in media as of writing with Edward Norton's role in *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Story* (2023) as an example. This is a newfangled take on the executive villains like Mr. Burns and Lex Luthor with hoodies and graphic tees in substitute of suits and cigars and reminds us how current affairs influence art and culture throughout humanity. Gootch shares Silicon Valley's desires to cheat death with big investments in anti-aging and young blood transfusions (Ward 2023) as well as longtermism and the science fiction dream of mind uploading. An op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* by Jean Guerrero (2022) saw her discuss how here desires of mind uploading died, noting the parallels between transhumanism and eugenics.

### Death/Spirituality

Death is used in the film to approach our relationship with tech. Being born in 2000 where computers started to be a permanent presence in the world (also born after Y2K scare), it is fascinating how one could die in the future and what is left behind online. In 2017, research at Oxford estimated that Facebook would have around 1.4-4.9 billion profiles of users would be deceased by 2100 should the social network still exist by then (Öhman and Watson 2019). This combined with the "You are the Product" model has raised questions in preservation of digital assets and how one's digital footprint is handled posthumously .

Death in many cultures is often personified as a figure who collects one's soul or guides to the afterlife with the Greek god Thanatos and Santa Muerte in Mexican folklore with the most famous personification what many refer to since Grim Reaper, the cloaked skeletal figure who originated in 14th century Europe during the Black Death (McKenna n.d) and has had countless interpretations throughout art, literature and pop culture. In this film, death happens mostly 1-to-1 with our reality but then Grimmi would come in to collect souls of those who are "prematurely deceased" which is primarily victims of murders, disasters and those who have committed suicide or overdosed.

Grimmi is a figure akin to the Grim Reaper but a robot instead of a skeleton being controlled by souls within it like a mecha (name for giant man-controlled robot in anime). The afterlife was something to explore but the conventional choices of heaven and hell were put aside for something akin to purgatory. Purgatory is a form of afterlife that is integral to Catholic faith and is a state in which those who enter have a chance to 'purify' themselves in order can go to heaven (Awaludin and Sorbeto 2019). In this film, this form of afterlife is framed as a piece of software inside the robot. The software is known as purGle and functions similarly to purgatory (the name purGle inspired by mashing purgatory into a website name like Google or Tumblr). purGle does not offer redemption in the conventional fashion. It offers redemption by being an alternative to Gootch's practices.

## Progression

### Portable Animation Studio

The advent of personal computers within the last 40 years is of large significance within animation history. Computers have allowed for more efficient pipelines and eliminated the waste that cel animation.

Personal computers becoming portable through forms of laptops, tablets and phones has also been.

Up until the 21st century, animation studios housed massive departments dedicated to inking and painting cels. Overtime, developments like Xerography, scanners and digital ink and paint. Today, an entire animation studio can be housed within not only a desktop, a laptop but even a tablet and phone to some extent. Platforms like YouTube, Newgrounds, Vimeo and Instagram have allowed for complete independent distribution, meaning animators, filmmakers and artists can put out their work to everyone for free.

In context to my practice, my MacBook and iPad are key devices for my work.

The iPad having big significance with hand-drawn work and the MacBook with 3D, post-production and editing. The app RoughAnimator is a my go-to for 2D alongside Procreate for assets/backgrounds/pre-production work. RoughAnimator's developer Jacob Kafka, is an animator himself and so the app is developed with animators in mind (Kafka 2023). The app's UX (user experience) is straightforward with no prepwork necessary. The app allows me to start animating right away when I open a project.

Some places I've worked on the film include:

- Coffeehouses
- Several train journeys

- During previews at the cinema
- My bed

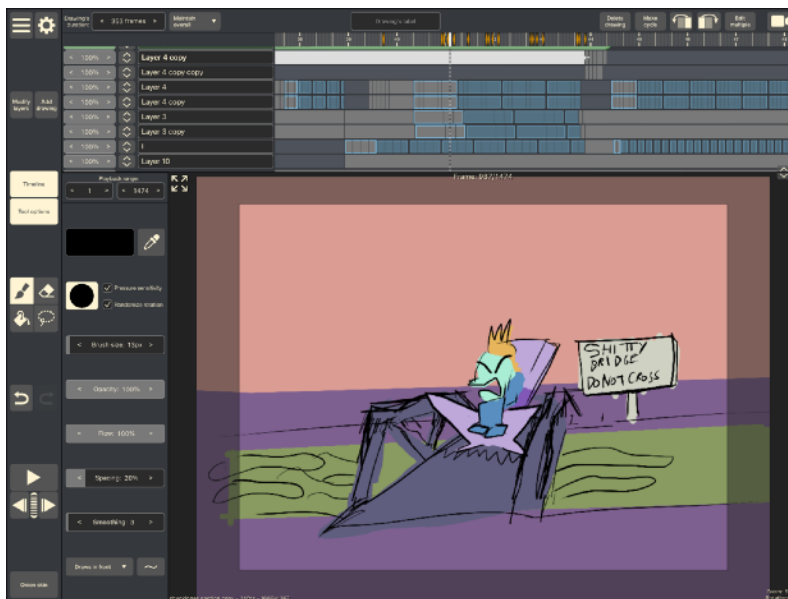


Figure 8

Blender is a free and open source package used primarily for 3D modeling and animation but has wide versatility with it being capable of 2D animation, VFX, video editing and more. Compared to other 3D packages, Blender is more accessible, less resource-heavy and has a community around it providing tutorials and add-ons, making 3D less intimidating to beginners. It was what I used to learn 3D back in undergrad and I have continued to work with it since. The software is light and is able to run on my 2015 MacBook Pro decently. On my laptop is where I tackled the heavy work of modelling and animation. For rendering the final scenes, I used the M1 iMacs in the GHA lab as their newer and superior specs meant faster renders while I could focus on other tasks.

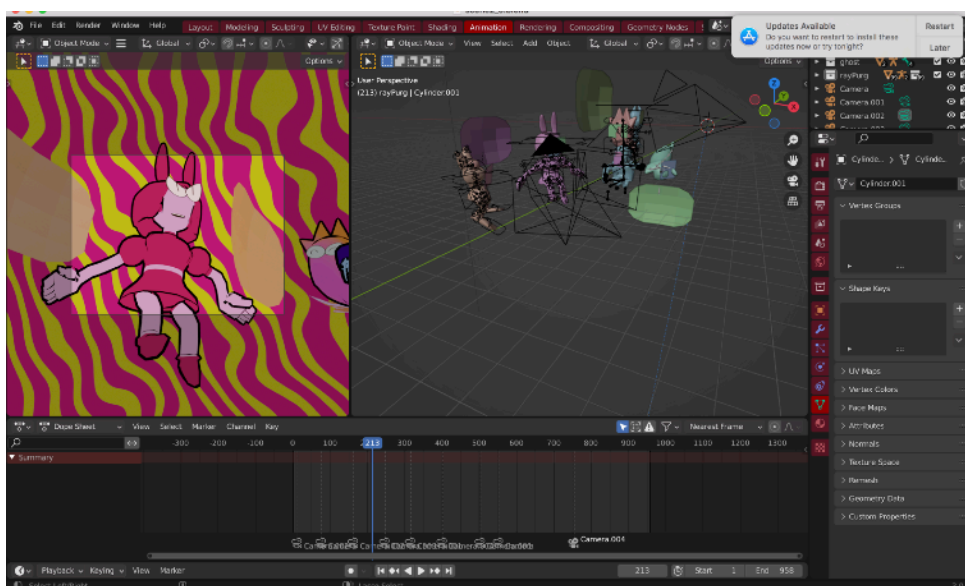


Figure 9

While these technological advancements have made animation production more accessible, budget, manpower and time are still big constraints. As the project has little budget really, the animation will already be miles behind what it is expected out of a production from Disney or Sony. Even some animated shows on [Adult Swim] with crude lo-fi presentation have a corporate backing (Warner Bros. Discovery) with a budget and crew full of writers, producers, storyboard artists, animators and voice actors. For this project, I tackled nearly every aspect of the short myself which meant I had a lot to tackle and take some several shortcuts aswell.

## Story

The narrative takes on a pretty standard protagonist/antagonist conflict between Grimmi and Gootch.

Sections of the film have traces of aforementioned influences. The purGle where the purGsonas are watching TV is akin to The Simpsons, where the centerpiece of the show is the titular family's living room.

A section of the film is inspired by Chuck Jones' work on *Looney Tunes* with slapstick antics akin to Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote. The opening and closing have parallels to Genndy Tartakovsky's *Samurai Jack* (2001) with the cinematic qualities and lack of dialogue. The final scene sees Ray living out one day where she gets to live out her version of paradise akin to the Garden of Eden and indulges in skateboarding, life drawing, marriage. Her final action before her soul fades is her skinny-dipping into the ocean. Her nudity symbolising freedom, inner peace and euphoria compared to her being closeted and dressing as a man in her death.

Regarding the content of the film, the aim is to match the BBFC's 15 rating (BBFC 2023). The most provocative elements in the film would include a couple having sex within the Gootch commercial and nudity in the final scene. However the sex is be framed in a comedic context with no explicit nudity shown. Aside from this, all the nudity in this film is in a nonsexual context. One instance of nudity in the final scene mimics the *Titanic* (1997) (rated PG-13/12A) drawing scene where the erotica is subtle but is put in the reduced as Ray makes funny faces in a Bart Simpson-esque fashion.

## Art Direction

A trademark of my work is that it is scratchy and loose even if I'm working digitally. Programs like Photoshop and Clip Studio Paint gives artist the ability to polish their work and make it look as clean as a germaphobe's bathroom. But imperfections can show humanity and humbleness.

The short sees two settings with the city being grounded and then the virtual space known as purGle which as the name suggests, is a virtual purgatory. In regard to art direction, these two worlds have their own style and medium. The city is inspired by the textures of traditional mediums like watercolour and acrylic and is characterized by griminess. Scenes set in the city are animated using 2D animation hand-drawn digitally while scenes set in purGle are animated in 3D using rigged character models.

The rough linework is complemented with traditional watercolor and acrylic backgrounds. Some backgrounds are conventional locations for helping communicate sense of location to viewers alongside establishing shots. Others are more abstract. An unconventional influence for the backgrounds was the *Saw* films, particularly the grimy warehouse that host the traps and barbaric escape rooms

made by the franchise's key killer Jigsaw. Some paintings and collages were done in the pre-production to find that style.



Figure 10

For purGle, it was inspired by the Y2K era in design and technology Designers Republic as well as Mamoru Hosoda's 3D worlds in his films Belle (2021) as well as developing from my previous work in 3D.

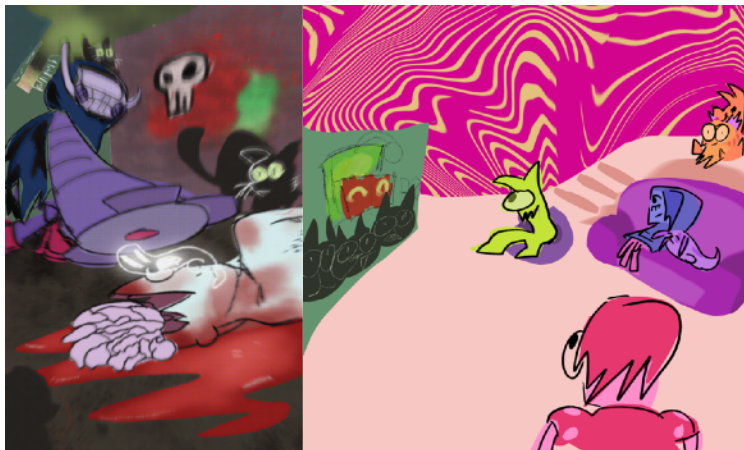


Figure 11

### Character Design

The initial sketches for Grimmi were done in February 2022 while in my final semester of undergrad. I had a brief concept for the short written in my notes but I sketched a robot with a TV/monitor for a head unrelated to that concept. Grimmi is a robot, initially made for Gootch but repurposed itself to salvage souls from Gootch. Canti from the anime miniseries FLCL and Prince Robot IV from the comic series Saga were the main inspirations. Coincidentally, Gray's used the TV for a head concept as the main branding motif for not only the degree shows last year but also branding within both the actual School and Garthdee House Annexe (which houses Communication Design & MA cohort) though it and Grimmi's design are coincidental as it predates Gray's branding. Grimmi's head inspired by 2000s LCD displays.

Grimmi is both the robot and the group of souls within it who inhibit and control it like a mecha in *Mobile Suit Gundam* or *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. The group of souls act as guides and moral support for those enter purGle.

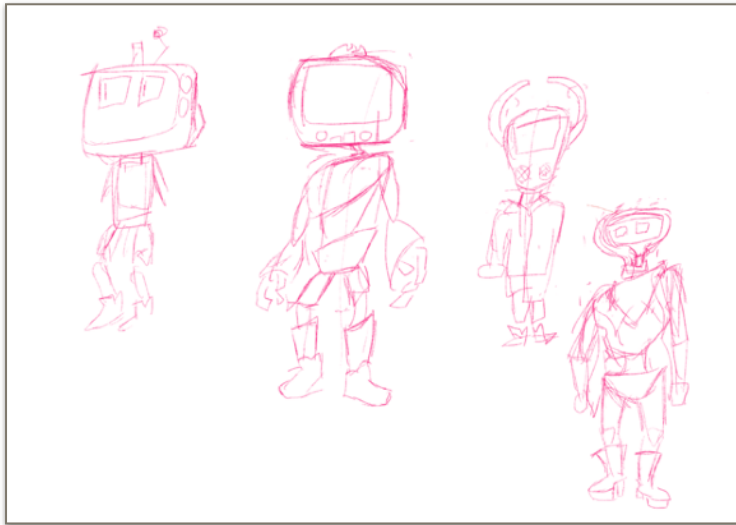


Figure 12

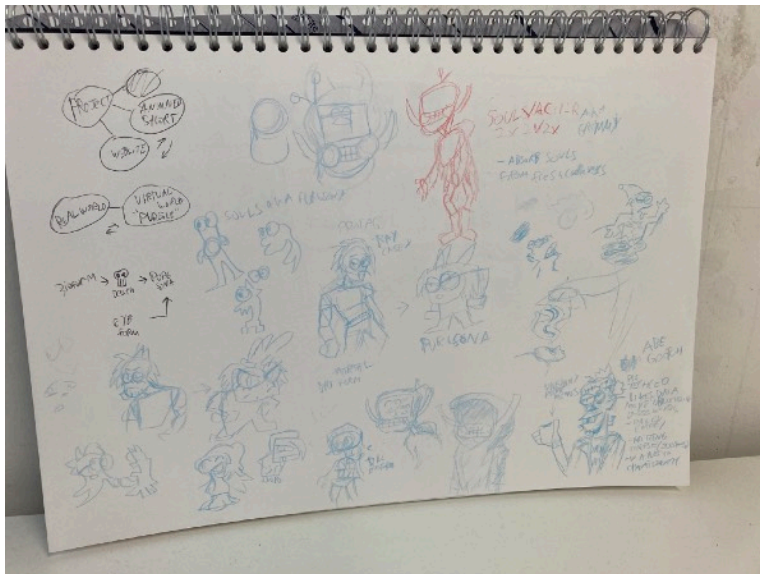


Figure 13



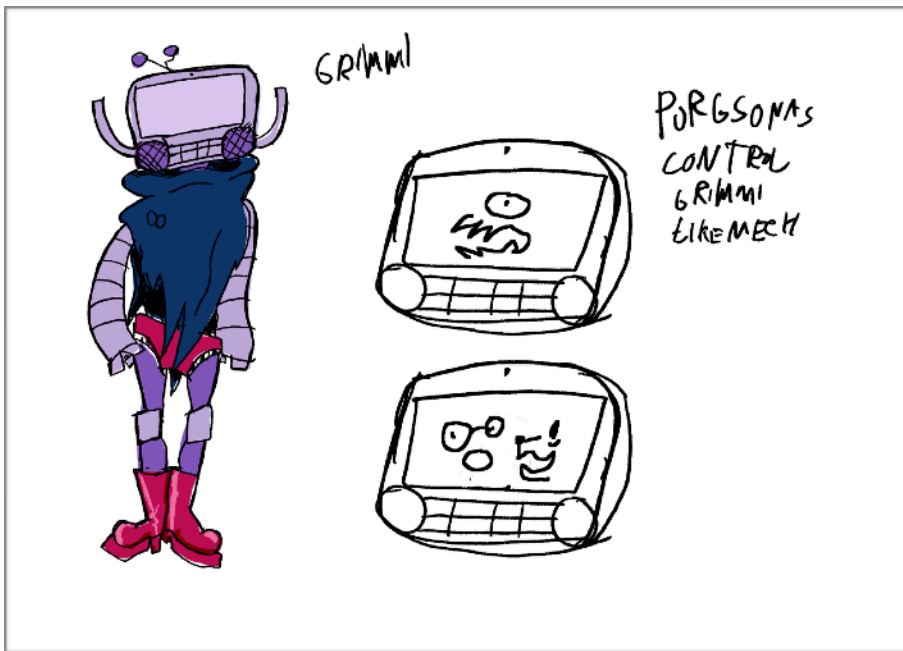


Figure 14

Antagonist Gootch is designed with the themes of online identity as well as Silicon Valley's obsession with cheating death as he presents himself online/in public as youthful yet is a near-corpse behind the scenes.

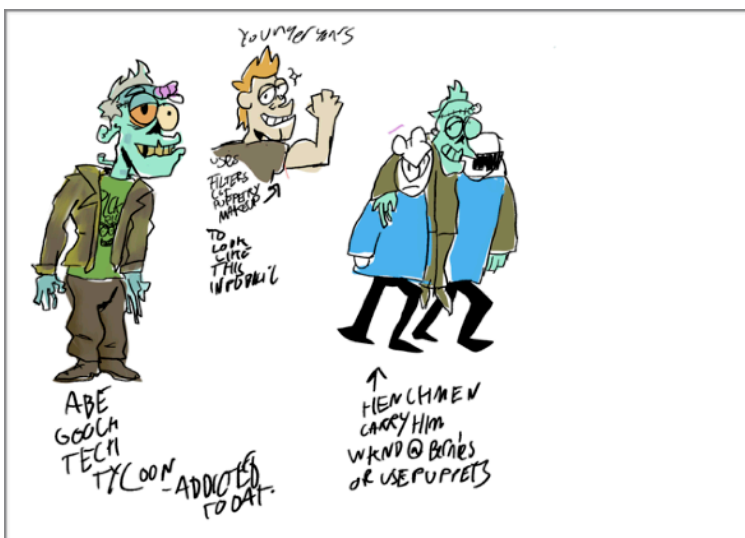


Figure 15

Grimmi's companion and soulmate Wendy in that her flesh/organs were removed except her brain and heart which fundamentally make her still a human. Her abstract yet simple design has been a personal favourite of mine, her design is the definition of post-human. Both Grimmi and Wendy are queer in the word's literal definition but their outcast nature and their strong bond has parallels to queer relationships and chosen family.

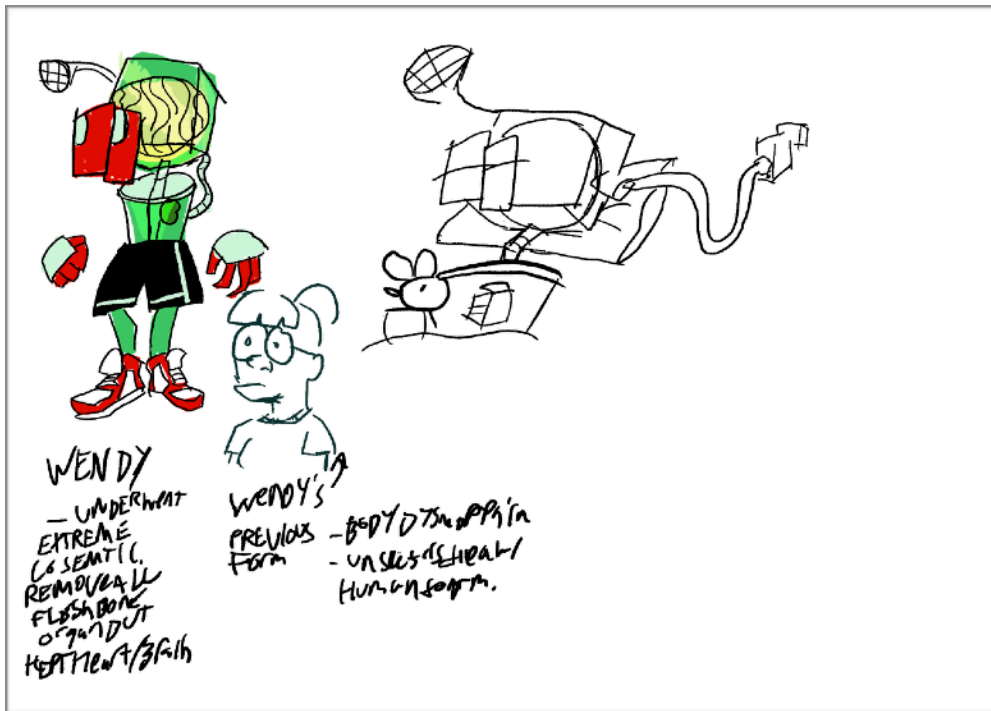


Figure 16

For the purGsonas, they were. Compared to previous projects, I eyeballed the models based on drawings as their designs comprise of primitive shapes. I used modifiers to generate the outline look as well. Rigging the characters was a straightforward for most characters. I used rigify templates for characters with legs but characters with no lower-halves had to be custom rigged.



Figure 17

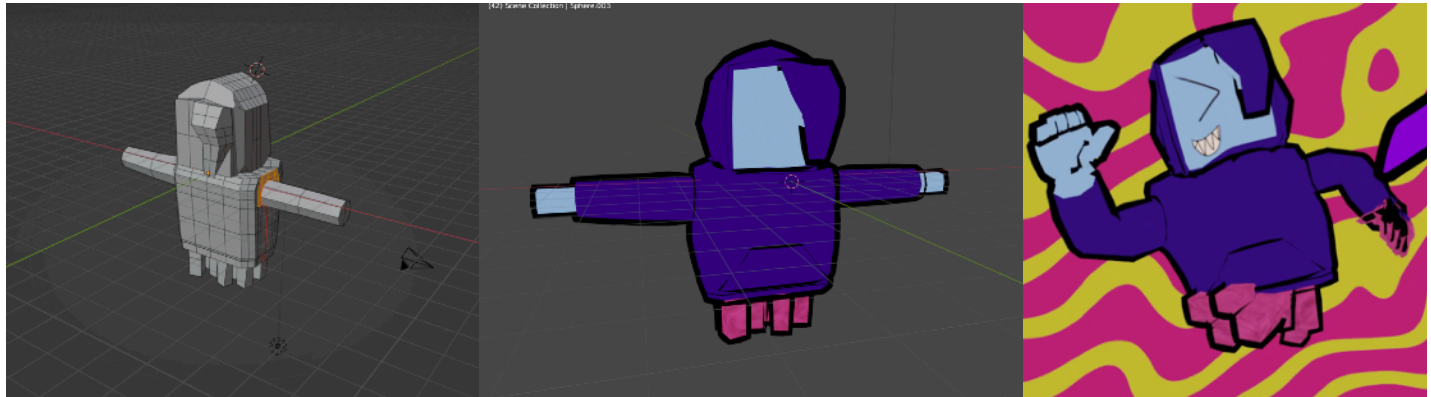


Figure 18

Protagonist Ray was designed with the duality of her being closeted and presenting as a man and her purGsona reflecting her femininity that she only express either online or in-private.



Figure 19

## Animation

The short was storyboarded via my MA sketchbook as a shakeup from previous projects where I used Photoshop/Procreate as I wanted to get back to drawing on paper. Each page would tackle 1-2 scenes and were focused on staging and piecing together the film. The storyboard stage is the best stage to be loose and explore a bit.

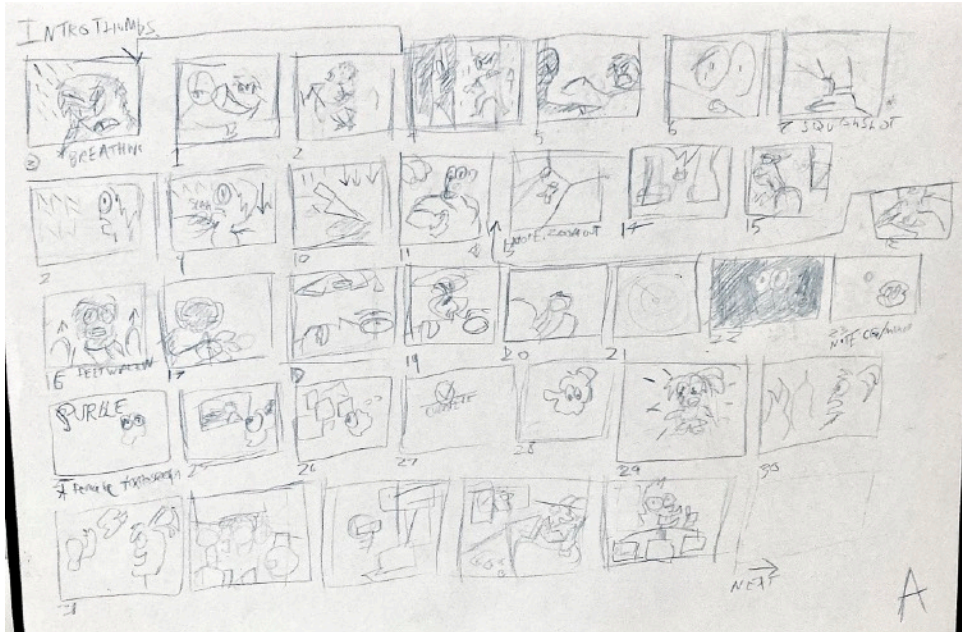


Figure 20

With my 3D work I like to incorporate elements of 2D into my approach with 3D animation such as using cel-shading, modifiers rendering techniques to simulate 2D lighting and line-work while putting hand drawn eyes, mouths and expressions as textures as opposed to conventional face-rigs. Scenes are rendered using Blender's built-in EEVEE engine. Blender also has the Cycles engine but it is more resource-heavy as it is focused photorealism and ray-tracing whereas EEVEE is suited towards with game engines and stylized animation. As nearly everything within a scene can be animated and keyframed, I took advantage of this and played experimented with the environments (and character models in some scenes), using a mix of Blender's shader node and graph editors was how I was able to get psychedelic effects but also communicate disruption and the gold palace within Gootch's brain was the longest scene to render with the reflections and light bounces of the gold material in contrast to the characters' flat colours. The actual character animation done with the rigs was straightforward as it I would take a bone from the rig, manipulate it to my desire and keyframe it and then repeat.

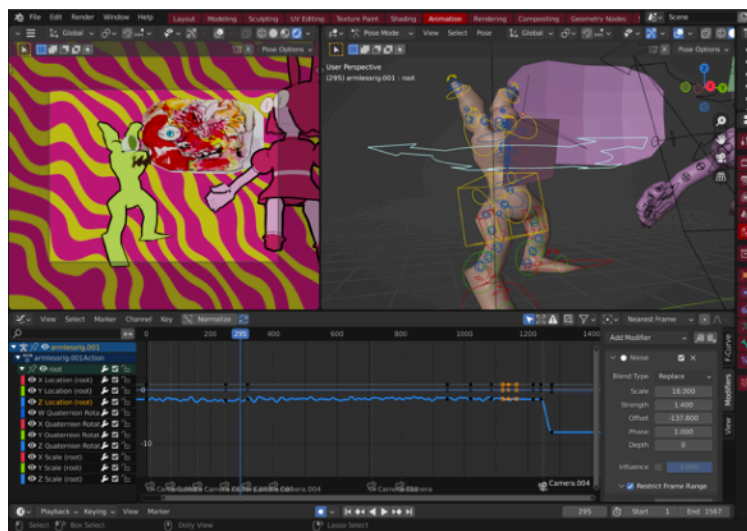
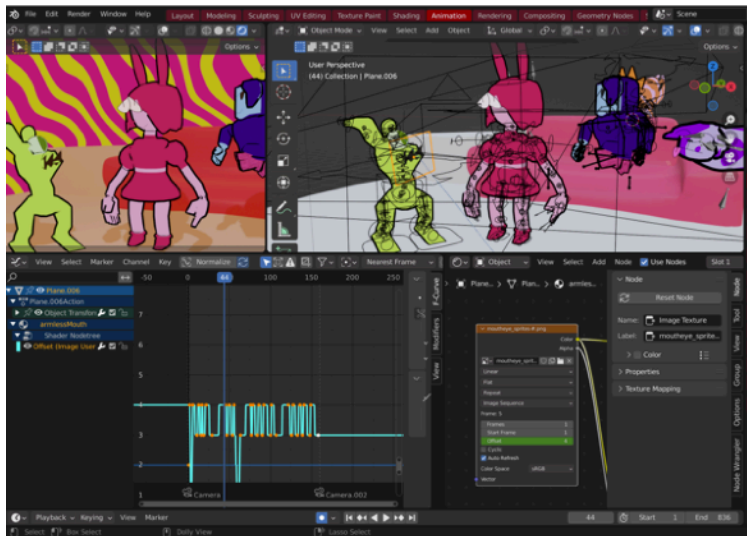


Figure 21

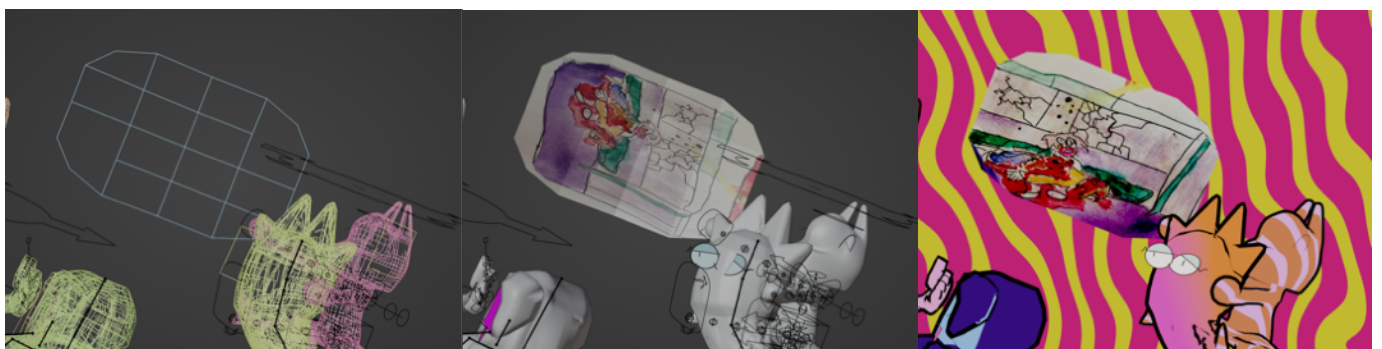


Figure 22

With the 2D portions, it was more direct with using RoughAnimator alongside my characters designed. Using The 12 principles of animation would be beneficial to analyse the animation.

The 12 principles were developed in Walt Disney Animation Studios by Disney's Nine Old Men, who were the core animators from the 1930s to the 1970s. The last two surviving, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston (1982) revealed these principles in their book *The Illusion of Life*. These principles are not concrete rules, but act as tips and recommendations relating to physics, emotion and timing in character animation. When looking at my film, I make use of squash-and-stretch, considered by Thomas and Johnstone as the most fundamental principle. It overlaps with both exaggeration and anticipation.

Most of the film has a pose-to-pose approach but elements like liquids and fire are animated in a straight-ahead fashion. Staging is simple with appeal through the scratchy line-work, colourful palettes and simple designs in 2D and 3D.

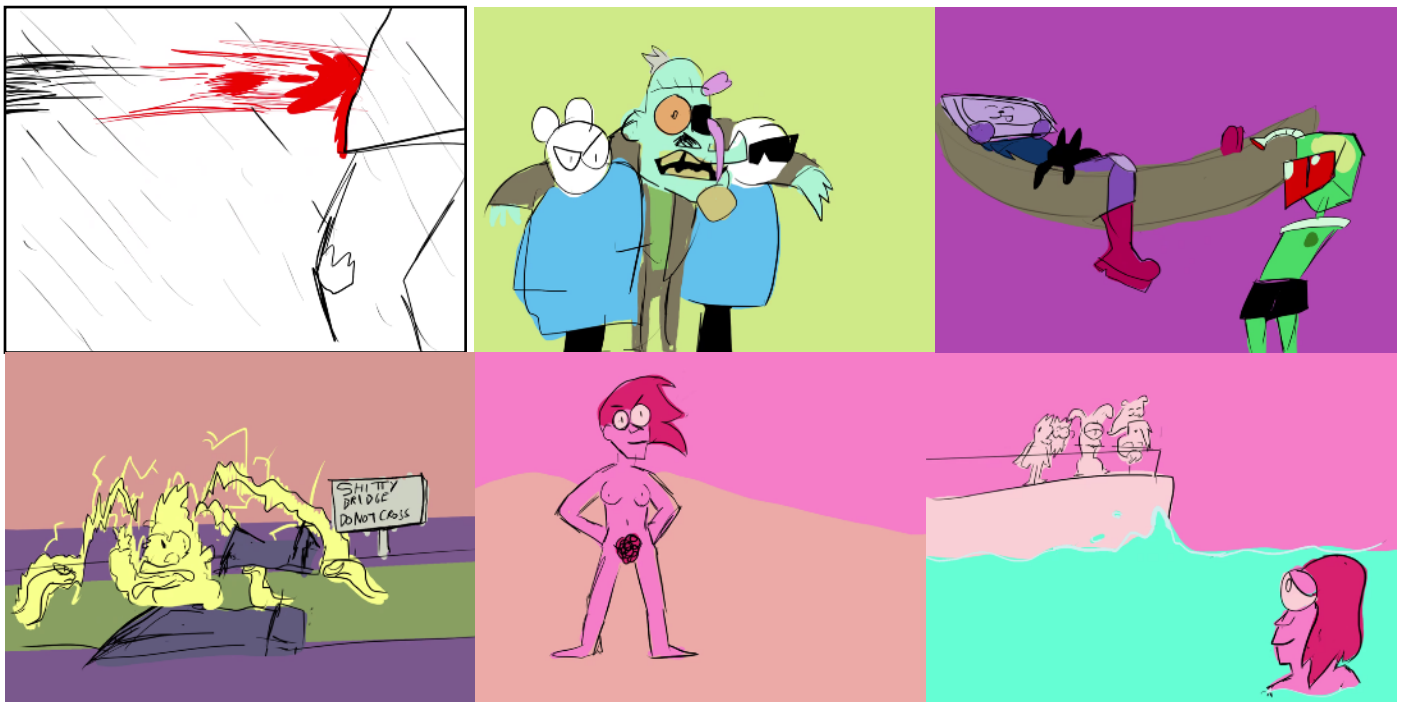


Figure 23

In the 2D scenes, animation cycles are heavily for efficiency to cut down on drawings especially for scenes with dialogue.

Referring back to "goblin mode", it was not necessarily an intentional style choice but that term somewhat fits this film, rejecting the polish you would see in a Hollywood production and embracing qualities that are raw and janky. The 2D portions are scratchy overall and the 3D portions have qualities akin to a low-budget PS2 game. It succeeds in looking like a film you would find on Newgrounds or early YouTube.

## Sound

While my main practice is related to animation and related mediums like films, games and comics, music and sound are also areas that I have an equal amount of enthusiasm for as someone who plays multiple instruments with Music being my best subject back in high school.

For some sound design and some of the score, I used an application called VCV Rack which emulates Eurorack Modular Synths with Ableton Live for conventional composing. Playing with modular synths feels quite liberating compared to playing instruments more akin to abstract painting where you can make something unique every time. Some artists I were inspired by were Merzbow, My Bloody Valentine, Ryoji Kanda and the late SOPHIE with some songs in the style of emo and post-hardcore akin to bands like My Chemical Romance and Refused. Gootch's theme is a atonal piece influenced by Hanna-Barbera cartoons and their quirky soundtracks, made with his pathetic qualities. purGle has a ambient random arpeggio made with VCV and Wendy's theme being in the style of IDM with drum samples synthesized by myself. The end piece was a emo/shoegaze style instrumental made to fit the bittersweet ending with purGle's theme in the start as a motif.

A first for me was voice acting and dialogue. Some characters had their voices done by the built in text-to-speech voices on my MacBook, which there was a variety of voices for different effects and tones. I approached lip-syncing in 2D with how it's done in anime by prioritizing character expressions over syncing to precise syllables but in 3D, I paid more attention to accuracy albeit with a limited range of mouth shapes. GarageBand had a handy feature where you can import a video clip into and play it in the project, which is handy for scoring or foley work. I used this feature to assemble the dialogue for the film.

## Post-Production

Post-production was straightforward as any significant cuts and changes were done after the initial animatic and right before final animation work, with the editing process mostly just putting the film together. DaVinci Resolve is used to edit the film. Compositing mostly consisted of putting flat backgrounds into 2D clips which is easy as those clips had flat backgrounds. It was a mix of using alpha compositing nodes and blending modes in the same fashion as Photoshop.



Figure 24



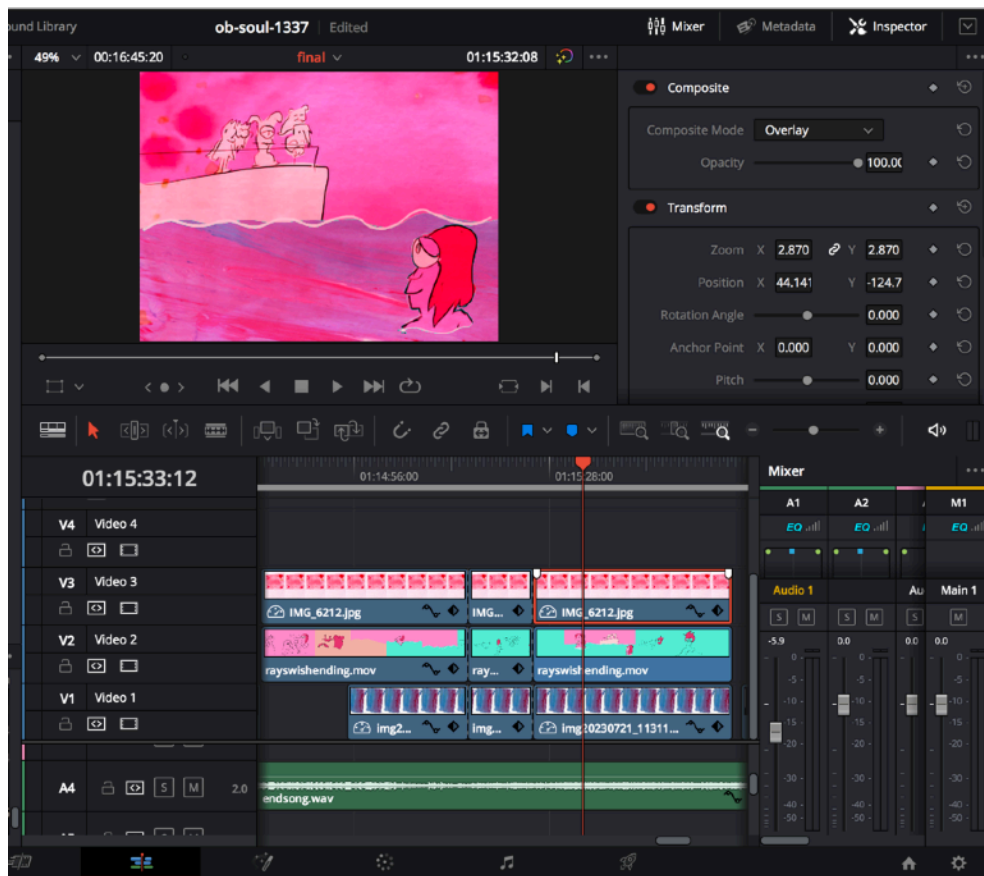


Figure 25

## Marketing/Web

One aspect for this project that was new but necessary for the project was branding and marketing. At the start of the MA, the project was initially going to focus on transmedia storytelling, utilizing web/multimedia. As the year has progressed, the transmedia storytelling has taken a backseat though reevaluated for marketing. There is a weird duality when marketing this film as this film's lo-fi art direction and presentation is the opposite for most animated projects and the themes and some graphic content present in the film put it far away from easy viewing. However, there is an audience for. MTV and Cartoon Network's [adult swim] programming block has aired plenty of animated shows with crude presentation like Aqua Teen Hunger Force, Smiling Friends and Beavis and Butthead. The film's title ob-SOUL-1337 is a play of the word obsolete (primarily used to describe dead or out-of-date technology, adding in the word Soul and 1337, a modified spelling of elite used within hacking and online gaming circles. The title summarises the key themes of death and technology overall. Promotion has consisted of developing prototype websites related to the short ([purgle.neocities.org](http://purgle.neocities.org) and [GootchVille.neocities.org](http://GootchVille.neocities.org)), making flyers on display at the Gray's Degree Show and making a mysterious teaser trailer. purGle's site contains its manifesto which is narrated in the trailer, though GootchVille's site is still rough as making a mock social media site requires a lot of writing and development to look fleshed out. the magenta and yellow waves surrounding are the key motif for the branding of the film, highlighting the psychedelic and surreal qualities of the film. The logo is the film's title in Menlo with no hypens with each part of the title spread out. While minimalistic, it still possess character and commands users to read each part of the title and piece together the meaning of the title.

ob  
SOUL  
1337

Figure 26

will you let your shell  
 and the soul within be  
 harvested for evil?

**purgle**

let yourself be obsolete  
 aug 26 - sep 2  
[purgle.neocities.org](http://purgle.neocities.org)

cherri  
cheese  
dog. 

ob  
SOUL  
1337

**GOOTCHVILLE**

it's a party that  
 everyone's  
 invited!  
 no need to go  
 anywhere else  
 online!  
 absolutely FREE\*

[gootchville.neocities.org](http://gootchville.neocities.org)

cherri  
cheese  
dog. 

\*users will be required to donate their body to GootchCorp for ethical forensic research\*\* after death in exchange for using GootchVille  
 \*\*forensic research at GootchCorp is 100% ethical per GootchCorp internal investigation

ob  
SOUL  
1337

ob  
SOUL  
1337

How will you die surrounded  
 by ones and zeros?

a short animated film by Harry Roberts  
 premiering at the Gray's Masters Show  
 august 26 - september 2



Figure 27



Figure 28

## Conclusion

### Future

In the future, I am looking to submit ob-SOUL-1337 to festivals, awards and events for the remainder of this year and next year to show the film to more audiences alongside going to new places and network with fellow filmmakers and animators. At some point in the future, the short will be public on YouTube/Newgrounds/Vimeo. This film somewhat acts as a pilot/proof of concept as I had envisioned this project originally the form of a miniseries. This film is from the perspective of a someone who goes through purGle whereas a potential series would be more from Grimmi and the crew of souls controlling it. The series would stray away from the tech satire of the film and lean more towards exploring death, existentialism and the human connection. The ever-changing state of tech aswell means that parodies and satire can quickly date. For a potential series, some episodes could be a lighter tone whereas others could tackle serious topics with no humor. With 3D assets already produced, production would be efficient in regard to 3D but 2D would be on the same level.

### Conclusion

This project challenged my stamina in animation as most of my work was under 2 minutes and light as I had to balance other aspects. For the final film to be 16 minutes was a shock. A project of this scale would have not been possible if I underwent a standard animation programme like at DJCAD. The lack of presence of animation within Gray's had some benefits and drawbacks. On our hand, I was able to take advantage of it to stand out in the MA cohort and get away with making what I wanted basically, though it meant that I was the expert in some areas more than my lecturers and having to trust myself. This project is also marks the end of my years of academia. Academia was something I struggled throughout my youth (especially being autistic) but came to enjoy when in the right environment and higher education was when I enjoyed it and the MA was an opportunity to create something on a level that I had not done prior.

Overall, this project was successful. A fast pre-production phase, a portable workflow along a concept that was pre-existing to some extent has helped with the film's development There could have been points where there was more flare with 2D animation though doing everything yourself means some having to take some shortcuts to reach your goals. This project and the MA overall have been beneficial for my confidence as a creative. I am not only more confident in discussing and showing my work, but also I feel more open to take risks when animating and conceptualizing as a result of the weird things within this film.

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## Images

Figure No.	Description/Reference
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2	The Tatami Galaxy. 2010. Episode 10, The 4 <sup>1/2</sup> Tatami Ideologue [television]. Tokyo: Fuji TV. 24 June
3	Kaiba. 2008. Episode 3, Chroniko's Boots [television]. Tokyo: WOWOW. 24 April
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8	Screenshot of RoughAnimator showcasing the UI along a scene in development. July 2023
9	Screenshot of Blender 3.0 showcasing a scene in progress. March 2023
10	Collages/ Paintings. 2022. Acrylic/Paper on Cardboard. November 2022
11	Concept art pieces depicting Grimmi's everyday routine and purGle. Digital illustration. November 2022
12	Initial sketches of Grimmi. Digital illustration. February 2022
13	Initial development sketches of ob-SOUL-1337 characters in MA sketchbook. Pencil and pen on paper. September 2022
14	Character design of Grimmi. Digital illustration. October 2022
15	Character design of Gootch. Digital illustration. October 2022
16	Character design of Grimmi. Digital illustration. October 2022
17	Character design of Grimmi. Digital illustration. October 2022

18	Screenshot showing development of emo purGsona's model to final model in film
19	Character design of Grimmi. Digital illustration. October 2022
20	Storyboards for film's opening scene. Coloured pencil on paper. Edited for clarity. October 2022
21	Screenshots of Blender 3.0 showing graph editor in relation to character movement and lip syncing. July 2023.
22	Screenshot of Blender 3.0 showcasing wireframes to rigs to final render. August 2023
23	Various screencaps from ob-Soul-1337's 2D scenes before any post-production work. July 2023.
24	Pictures showing compositing/blending process of animation clips and watercolor backgrounds/textures in the film. Watercolor on paper. August 2023
25	Screenshot of DaVinci Resolve showing timeline and layering. August 2023.
26	ob-Soul-1337 logo. Digital media. January 2023
27	Promotional flyers made for Gray's Degree Show. Two relating to fictional websites in the short with one promoting the film. Digital images. June 2023
28	ob-Soul-1337 film posters. Digital images. April - July 2023

## Appendices

### Appendix A - Log

#### Semester 1

LOG 16/9

Course induction. Met with most MA students and a good overview of the course.

LOG 19/9

Started a bit of coding for my blog.

LOG 20/9

Sorted my studio space. Today is more of getting used to the new environment  
Worked on Friday's presentation. Made some sketches and wrote part of the proposal as a start for my project. Had a 1-to-1 with Jon talking about my areas of interest, my background and my initial goals. Had a good grasp of what to do for the main project

LOG 21/9

AM. Finished up Powerpoint. Coding HTML. Doing illustrations for presentation as a warmup.

PM. finished the basic foundation of my blog. Drew some thumbnails for the beginning of the short.

LOG 22/9

AM. Done thumbs for intro. Researching for art direction/character design/Setting. making moodboards. Uploaded foundation of site to neocities. got template for weekly posts  
character sketches.

PM. started some concept art. did some sketches/writing. got main character/ antagonist figured out. had tutor session with charlie. he understood my vision by the end and gave some good points to take on.

23/9

AM. first crit session but more of a show and tell. great to see fellow artists show variety of practices and influences. my presentation unfortunately had technical difficulties when it came to showing videos but i still persisted and gave good detail.  
PM.

26/9

AM/PM: uploaded blog. proposal writing and more writing for project

27/9: AM east workshop induction at. more of a good look of the facilities as was as safety clearance. drawing some character designs/thumbnails

PM west workshop induction . workshops reminiscent of high school. more character design/thumbnails.

28/9: AM creative futures lecture character design multitasking. gathered up some research material and started work on my studio.

PM. CHARACTER DESIGN/THUMBNAILS

29/9 AM/PM THUMBNAILS. PROPOSAL WRITING RESEARCHING.USING POST IT NOTES FOR map out DID SOME CONCEPT ART

30/9 AM seminar with dr jenna ashton around social practice art. good insight into ethics/how to measure success of making art based on social issues through participant research

03/10 Proposal writing blog updating/research.

04/10AM concept art/writing

PM storyboards/blender modelling

05/10 AM Storyboards

PM more storyboards. Meeting with nicola specialist tutor where we talked about themes and suggested reading/areas. doing some writing.

06/10 AM submitted proposal went for a walk around the forest surrounding the campus

PM doing character sketches and concept art & some light modelling to break the mundanity from doing boards

07/10 guest at grays with norag myerscough tooks some good notes relating to the practice

10/10 unproductive felt frazzled

11/10 had interruptions throughout the morning but cracked on with boards and did research

12/10 finished storyboards for the film

13/10 doing concept art/

pause reflect: concept sketches modelling

week 4 goals ' sort narrative& concept art/do storyboards/start models/FINISH PROPOSAL

Rest of october - finished characters designs. started animation production primarily 2D work and

November - Working primarily of 2D animation. Assembling together like a puzzle. Undergoing 3D modelling and prep for 3D scene Finished Concept Art. Tackled mixed media collage work as suggestion from charlie.

tutorial notes

29/11 - nicola

meeting saw looking over notes and discussed about looking into audio for the short.

24/11 - charlie

looking over work. suggesting looking at artists about outside of animation

Semester 2

2023 log

9/1

resumed production after holiday break. today have rigged some characters and made some notes towards the sound and some composing work.

16/1

All 3D characters rigged and mostly textured. Production on 2D animation resumed

19/1

2D animation still in progress. Drawn textures for face/eyes. Thesis draft word count:1315

24/1

Got 3D scenes laid out finished texturing the models. continued work on 2D segments.

25/1

Laid out 3D scenes and start work on first 3D scene. Continue work on rough 2D. 26/1 catchup with charlie regarding work. doing camera work for 3D scenes and more rough 2D work

2/2

Been working on 2D scenes and doing first layer of 3D work - laying out and moving characters along the scene. Did some watercolor work for images.

6/2 designed a speech bubble to be used in place of lipsyncing for 3D sections to save time.

7/2 doing some sketches of backgrounds/composing score and working on

8/2 composing and sound design and animation work.

9/2 writing dialogue and sorting text-to-speech voices and more animation work.

13/2. composing work. tracking guitars for intro song

14/2 3D work/2D animation/Watercolour backgrounds/

15/2 meeting with nicola going over progress/ researching papers and such.

researched topics for essay. discussed sound

16/2 2D animation and 3d work alongside watercolors essay

17/2 power cut. couldn't do much work so day off

19/2 composing outro song

20/2 finished setting up practice proposal and writing

21/2 did some writing for essay and reading

22/2 essay writing web dev and animation. illustration crit with craig + maxine went super well and fun to actual talk

23/3 animation work/bg/ guest at grays with david bailey (designers republic/kiosk)

24/2 lengthy crit in relation to mapping prpjct. lengthy introductory talk with pawel about marketing

28/2 meeting with jon relating to essay

2/3 - writing and keyframes from last scene

7/3 - Writing

8/3 - 3D animation with all scenes laid out

9/3 -

Edinburgh trip

24/03 - visited fruitmarket talbot rice gallery and st mary's A+E near haymarket

March -

added color to intro scenes and some animation shots  
3D scenes have been laid with camera work mostly done. working on character animation for some scenes  
painted some backgrounds  
dialogue being written for  
week 10: doing poster mockups. and netflix mockups.  
easter break: did some keyframes for 3D eyes. voice work and essay writing. good to have a lie in.  
10 april -voice work. writing. filling in citations and 3D animating  
11 april render some clips and started work on intermin teaser video  
12 april 2D animation work essay and blog writing  
13 april essay writing and intermin poster editing  
14 meeting with jon about intermin show, writing, poster making

### Semester 3

week 1 - illness  
went into studio on friday and did painting work. did some personal animation work. worked on final scene  
week 2. went in on tuesday. worked on final scene and 3d stuff. lily's passing has led to some days off  
week 3 - starting to get the ball rolling. met with nicola to discuss progress  
week 4 - going into the studio. doing 3D animation  
june - did graphic design assets and 2d cleaning. completed the 3d sections of film (6 minutes complete) continued with 2d  
26/6 finished 3D renders  
3/7 july first week - doing colouring on 2d finished one section  
10/7 second week - continuing 2d coloring. near finished production. starting post production.  
17/7 third. finished 2d animation. post phase underway.  
24/7 final post production continuing visuals done  
august first week 31/7. music made. version 1.0 rendered.  
august second week. finishing thesis

### Appendix B - Blog

Link to the MA blog acting as a diary for Semester 1 & 2: [cherrimablog.neocities.org](http://cherrimablog.neocities.org)  
Progress and promotional posts also on my Instagram page albeit informal:  
[@cherricheesedog](https://www.instagram.com/cherricheesedog)