

Moriah Gurevich Thesis Proposal Final Draft

The concept of this project is to demonstrate and dissect how creatures can be used for a better understanding of the human experience. Specifically, how our fears can be represented by mythical beings and worlds and additionally being able to find the familiar in the unfamiliar. It will explore the concept of life and death (and how that leads to rebirth and perseverance), dreams and nightmares, and demonstrate how nature is a creature in itself. This project will not be linear-narrative focused but will rely on storytelling purely through visual art and one's own interpretation. The non-linear narrative structure of this project will be similar to how dreams do not really make sense most of the time and have a lot of randomness, but they do tend to have an overall deeper meaning, whatever it may be. It will be a 3 projection screened stop motion animated installation following my creature character and his interactions with the environment, ultimately leading to his death which will then be looped. The looping of my animation not only provides an immersive element but also demonstrates how life and death are a consistent cycle. The sound will provide further immersive elements by following the puppet when it moves between each screen.

A stop motion fabricator who has inspired my style is Martyna Koleniec especially, with her creature creations. She is a self-taught stop motion animator and fabrication artist from Poland. Her animation work and puppet fabrication really resonates with my artistic style and direction, specifically the stylistic choices she makes in her puppet fabrication and set designs. She uses a lot of earth tones and inspiration from the environment, mythical and magical forests in particular. Her puppets are little creatures, and they have carved wooden faces made of resin. They are creature-type guardians of these forests, and they visually are a lot like how my creations are aesthetically. The lore she has created for these creatures brings in a lot of

similarities to the individualistic stories my creatures create visually as well. The way she documents her work and photographs her puppets is also very inspiring to me. There is a lot of aesthetic beauty and symbolic significance in her art that highlights nature and the creatures within it. This is something that inspires my artwork on many levels, particularly visually. It is something I will be encompassing more so in my thesis project. I would like to utilize the entities and creatures of the forests as main ideas and themes.

Another artist that has inspired my work, especially for wanting to do installation work is Julia Oldham. Oldham is an artist that resides in Eugene, Oregon. She uses a range of media (varying from animation to graphic storytelling) that explores scientific history and speculative futures. Julia uses animated installations a lot in her work as well. Although her work is 2-D, she uses a lot of similar themes and aesthetics that I will be doing in my thesis.

In the article *Julia Oldham: Filming the human-animal hybrid* from Oregon ArtWatch, Oldham's work is described as "... the embodiment of our seeking, our longing, our looking to figure out our place in both the known and unknown worlds. You can spot a person in love with life because they tend to look to the biggest and the smallest phenomena—from the nature of the cosmos to the qualities of the Least weasel—to find answers about their own humanity". I really enjoyed this description of her work because it resonates a lot with what I try to accomplish with my own work. Specifically, by my use of mystical worlds/creatures for representative qualities of the human experience, as well as to show aspects in nature which often go unnoticed. The goal is to find the familiar in the unfamiliar, to find a place of comfort and understanding in new ways that parallel our own world—how unknown worlds can provide deeper understandings of our own worlds, our own fears and our nightmares. I tend to go on the side of less narrative functions in my work, and, although Julia does have a lot of narrative-based pieces, I believe she

also lets her work speak for itself in terms of interpretation and deeper meaning through non-narrative visual artwork.

The layout of her show titled *DENDROSTALKERS*, which was exhibited at PNCA last Fall, was very interesting to me; not only visually, but in terms of the immersiveness of her animations and how it was set up in 3 separate projections. I have not seen a lot of animated installation work in the past, but I really enjoyed how immersive this piece was, as well as how it touched base on environmental harm in addition to providing other-worldly science fiction elements.

Allison Schulnik is another artist that inspires my current work. She works in paint, sculpture, and animation. Her primary media is Claymation, and it is done in a way that I have not seen often. Claymation is often associated with more ‘innocence’ and a child-like vibe, and the juxtaposition of moods she represents in her animation results in a very visually stunning contrast. She is “known for her uncanny approach to traversing the internal and immaterial terrains of nostalgia, childhood memories, and dreams” (Allison Schulnik - Artists - PPOW (ppowgallery.com)). Her stop motion animations particularly resonate with my work and inspire the surreal aspects I hope to encompass in my thesis project. This is shown through constant morphing and changing the characters in her films undergo, and how the viewer can not really tell exactly what is going on. They are left with hints of meaning scattered throughout her animations in order to decipher it and find the deeper meaning within it all. Morphing and perseverance seems to be a constant in her animations as well, and this ties in with the nightmare and the “loop of death” my thesis will be presenting.

Guillermo del Toro is a major source of inspiration in my art work as well, specifically the use of monsters in his films and how they are portrayed narratively and visually. Pan’s

Labyrinth (2017), is a dark fantasy film by del Toro and it is one of my favorite films from him and in general, specifically due to the plot and the way monsters are depicted visually. A big part of the narrative plot of this film is how “everything springs from the animating source of the Underground Realm, an enchanted font of earth energy that gives rise to all and imbues the world with magic” (Gardner). This plot point ties in very well with the forest elements and world building of my project by providing a sense of uncanny energy that contributes to the madness and death that my character will undergo. Unlike other depictions of hybrid fauns in media and art, the faun character is more monstrous. It’s human and animal traits combine to create an eerie appearance, in combination with its ancient wood-like textures. I have always been a huge fan of this film, and I take a lot of my inspiration from the otherworldly and ancient aesthetics of the film’s set designs and character designs. A quote I really enjoy from del Toro is “monstrosity exists in the human heart, not in appearance.” This is really important because it partially answers one of the main questions on which my thesis is discussing, which is what truly makes a monster? And the answer to that is we do, monsters are only monsters because we make them that way.

I want to base my monster character for this project on my past designs while also tying in some new attributes. The most notable one would be how I am combining characteristics and taking inspiration from the Wendigo. These creatures are mythological; however, they are also used for representations of the human experience (Wendigo’s can come into being when a human is corrupted and sick, cannibalistic urges, etc.). The Wendigo is described as a “gigantic, ancient, mute, unstoppable, ancestral to man, ferocious, supra-human in the sense of being simultaneously godlike and demonic, a repository of all of our worst fears, an incarnation of pure malevolence as conceived by the human mind, as well as reflecting a certain degree of

superstitious awe and veneration” (Gilmore, p.90). Most visual descriptions of this creature rely heavily on native sources, there is also a vast majority of sketches and paintings that give representation of what a Wendigo looks like. Additionally, there are a ton of modern adaptations of this creature, especially in horror movies. The creature is said to have human characteristics and features, specifically two arms and legs in which are deformed and lanky, with claws ranging from 12 or more inches in length. The eyes are huge and yellow, and it has a skeletal facial structure. It is very similar to what a mutated demonic deer would look like.

Monsters and the use of metaphor have been used for exploring humanness for centuries in many cultures. The very word for monster goes back to ancient terms for an “omen,” a “portent,” or a “prediction.” The monster serves to reveal extremely personal anxieties and fears while inspiring us to confront them head-on. The concept of monsters takes us to a place where we can begin to examine our shared humanity and dissect the parts within, such as the shadow. The shadow is an integral part of understanding the monster, it is the process of becoming conscious of our unconscious self. It is a space between our conscious and unconscious mind, and we often see it represented in our dreams in various forms, sometimes in the form of monsters. It is the parts of yourself that you keep hidden from conscious awareness, such as humanistic traits of emotions and thoughts that you do not want to acknowledge, process, or accept. The process of owning and recognizing these monsters has forever been a part of the psychological experience of humanness. The creatures we fear most often times are the creatures that are within each of us, or connected to our shadow in some way. They are powerful facets of our being.

Joseph Campbell said that the artist’s task is “the mythologization of the environment”

My process includes doing research on what forest looks like in our world in addition to how other artists have portrayed forest in fictional worlds, specially in stop motion films. Stop motion animation is a crucial element to this project due to how naturally uncanny stop motion is due to it basically being the movement of real life objects that are fabricated by hand. I start out with very rough sketches of what my composition will look like for my sets, specifically how many trees I will be using, and what the set will look like from a straight ahead angle. Once I get a rough idea on what elements I will be making, I begin making half-scale mock ups of each set for reference out of cardboard. These mock ups help me get a visual 3D reference for my sets, as well as further determine what elements will be important to keep (i.e. how many rocks, mushrooms, plants, etc.). These mockups will also determine what kind of camera angles and composition I will be able to achieve with the final animation. Once those are done, I begin testing with materials to determine what will look best in the final set design. This includes tests of making rocks out of insulation foam, and tests with tree bark making methods from foam clay and paper mache techniques. Once I am satisfied with the textures and sculpts of each piece, I begin painting them in acrylic washes that consist of shades of brown, green, gray, black, and white. Finally I begin fabricating the set, starting with the base of them (the ground of the forests) and then moving on to sculpting the final version of the trees, rocks, and plants. Once these elements are sculpting, I paint and finish them. The process is very similar to my puppet fabrication. I start out with a more refined drawing of the puppet, and then a drawing that shows where the armature will be in the puppet. Then I move on to creating the armature with the sculpted elements on top. Once everything is sculpted, I paint the puppet to my liking with acrylic paint in a similar color palette as my sets, and then move on to the costume elements of the puppet. Whether or not I am creating a narrative piece of animation I still make a storyboard

to get my shots planned out. This is typically done around the same time when I am creating sketches of my sets and puppets. When everything is fabricated, I get my set and puppet ready to start shooting with dragon frame and animate. Finally I use premiere pro to edit my shots as well as audition for the sound design elements. I am still doing research on how to do the projected elements of this piece, and deciding if I want to project on some sort of weather downed cloth or not.

The puppet will be made from an armature wire base of aluminum and floral wire, jointed together by brass square tubes. Over the wire armature, epoxy will be used to make the arm, leg, and body components stable. Cosclay, a type of polymer clay that is flexible after baking, will be used to sculpt the hand and legs, torso, back, and head of the puppet. Once sculpted, the puppet will be backed and then painted with acrylic paint. The costuming of the puppet will include scraps of various materials and fabric I have collected, mostly dark browns and blacks. The eyes of the puppet are going to be translucent black beads with an LED light behind the head which will make the eyes glow. The goal is to be able to turn off and change the lights when needed. Various sizes of black feathers and moss will come out of the back of the puppet for aesthetic reasons, but to also hide the light inside of the head. The horns of the creature will be made out of cosclay, which is a type of polymer clay that is flexible when baked, and attached to the top of the head using magnets. The overall scale of the puppet will be about 8-9 inches tall and 8-9 inches wide (give or take). This is a very similar process to how my puppet in my junior film *The Keeper* was made.

I will be making two sets for this project. One of the sets will have multiple trees, rocks, cliffs, mushrooms, and plants. The other set will have less trees in it overall, but will have a main

tree that is larger and more detailed than the rest in the center of the set in addition to plants and mushrooms as well. Both sets will have background elements that include a painting backdrop of a forest, as well as laser cut outs of wood to form silhouette shapes of trees and hills in the distance. The sets will be about 4 feet by 5 feet with a cloth backdrop for the sky as well as laser cut outs of trees for background elements. Mod podge mixed with coffee grounds and brown acrylic paint will serve as the bottom element of the sets which will create the illusion of a forest floor covered in dirt. Tiny real rocks and bits of grass made out of bristles from cheap paint brushes will be bits of grass on the forest floor. The mushrooms and plant components of the set will be a mixture of preserved plants and sculpted. There will only be a few elements of preserved plants in order to keep the style consistent in each set. The mushrooms will be sculpted using polymer clay, and then painted with acrylic paint and sealed with a matte fixative. The trees will be fabricated from using cardboard tubes as the base with a foam clay sculpted on top in addition to using paper-mache and paper clay for bark texture. Over the clay and paper mache, it will be dry brushed with various shades of brown and then sealed with a matte fixative. Each tree will have preserved moss glued on it as well. The rocks will be sculpted from insulation foam using a hot wire sculpting tool and more foam clay. They then will be painted with brown, gray, and black acrylic paint. The rocks will also have some dirt made of mod podge and coffee grounds mixed together painted over the top of them. Similar to the trees, the rocks will then be sprayed with a matte fixative for sealing and protection purposes during the animation process. Using these various materials to create my sets as well as my puppet will help visually aid the surreal, and whimsical but creepy environmental world building that I aim to accomplish.

The final project will be a 3 screened animated installation that will be looped. Near the projections, I will have my stop motion sets and puppet setup with lighting. The puppet will start

on one screen, move to the middle one, then finish in the last. It will consist of a fully animated puppet inspired by the creature the Wendigo, as well as two to three sets of a forest.

My goals for this project are to better understand how creatures can be a vessel to represent humanistic qualities, such as dreams and nightmares, and more specifically fears of the unknown, death, sickness, and mental illness. This will be demonstrated through the use of my animation, as well as through the character and set designs. I will additionally be creating large scale trees to frame each screen to add another immersive element. I really enjoy creating surreal worlds and creatures that provide familiarity in the unfamiliar. I intend to make this project less narrative and more so focused on viewer interpretation with the help of my installation to guide the process of madness, nightmares, and death. It will provide insight to how monsters are represented in mythical worlds similar to our own and what can it teach us about our natural world and 'humanness', as well as what truly makes a monster a monster, visually and metaphorically.

Mo Gurevich Artist Statement

Moriah Gurevich is a student graduating from Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon this year and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in animation with a minor in stop motion. Her main focuses are set design (specifically natural landscapes), painting, sculpting, and puppet fabrication.

Moriah has always been inspired by the whimsical and surreal aspects of nature. She strives for people to enter a whole other world when they see her artistic creations, while also feeling a sense of familiarity and a deeper connection to their own perception of the natural world. In her set designs she likes to provide aspects that represent elements of nature that often go unnoticed, specifically creating surreal dream-scape worlds that look like our own, but different. She commonly uses materials such as moss, organic forms, and earth tones in her artwork in order to represent specific qualities of the outdoors, as well as to emphasize a comforting, yet surreal presence. She is inspired by myth and legends, specifically those pertaining to monsters and creatures. Her puppets and characters are often reminiscent of her own unique monsters. She takes inspiration from these elements and through it creates mystical worlds through the art of stop motion. The use of handmade natural sets and cryptic based puppets establishes these mystical worlds she creates. Moriah hopes that her stop motion art invites others to find connections to their own perception of the natural world in unique and surrealistic ways.

Through the juxtaposition of the natural with the fantastical, Moriah's work compels the viewer to see her art as a collaborative experience of visual storytelling.

Moriah Gurevich

Animated Arts

Thesis Abstract

Transient Echoes is a 4.5 minute stop motion animated installation piece that demonstrates and dissects how monsters can be used for a better understanding of the human experience and how monsters can be used as a vessel to represent humanistic qualities, such as hunger, growth, fear, and curiosity. It is an embodiment of my own fears and anxieties, specifically in relation to dreams, nightmares, fears of the unknown, death, and sickness.

Outside of a thesis setting, the project is designed to be looped continuously, adding a focus on how death and rebirth are a continuous cycle of repetitive nature. The main story arch, besides the death and repeat element, is inspired by the phenomenon where individuals become transfixed into nature and wander aimlessly into the abyss (think hypnotism, disassociate trance, enchantment, etc...). When I was thinking of what the narrative function would be, I came up with focusing on my creature wandering through the old growth forest and observing different aspects of it, with eventually becoming transfixed and wandering into the death forest. Once it entered the death forest, it would become hypnotized by the red tree and began to eat the surrounding plants that would eventually take over its body and kill it.

Invasiveness additionally plays a huge part of the films narrative functions and is represented by the red plant growing and slowly taking over and transforming all life. Because I am so inspired by the natural world, it was important to also tie my thesis into environmental harm and destruction. Additionally, although there is death in my thesis and that is often viewed as a sad thing, I wanted to represent it in a way that was beautiful and peaceful through my fabrication skills and the sound design.

Transient Echoes is something that I would love to use as a passage into the stop motion industry, specifically with my set fabrication and puppet fabrication skills. I would like to have this project in a gallery setting at some point, as well as submit the film to various festivals.

ANIMATION WITH INSTALLATION DOCUMENTATION: <https://youtu.be/rf8Hj8IjNsc>

Moriah Gurevich

THESIS DEFENSE TRANSIENT ECHOES

Hello all and thank you so much for being here tonight. *Transient Echoes* has been a culmination of everything I have learned here at PNCA over the last 4 years, and it is something I have been working on for about 16 months now. I am extremely excited and proud to share this work with you all tonight. This project has been such a learning experience for me as an artist, as well as an individual. It is something that I poured my heart and soul into, and it has been such a therapeutic and self-actualization experience for me. Normally a project like this has a team with multiple roles, however, I played the part of being a director, producer, fabricator, animator, and editor, which is honestly crazy. *Transient Echoes* demonstrates and dissects how monsters can be used for a better understanding of the human experience and how monsters can be used as a vessel to represent humanistic qualities, such as hunger, growth, fear, and curiosity. It is an embodiment of my own fears and anxieties, specifically in relation to dreams, nightmares, fears of the unknown, death, and sickness.

I have always been inspired by the whimsical and surreal aspects of nature. The goal is to have people enter a whole other world when they see my creations, while also feeling a sense of familiarity to their own perception of natural worlds. I like to provide aspects that represent elements of nature that often go unnoticed, including creating surreal dream-scape worlds that look like our own, but different. I do not really like doing narrative-based work, I like to leave it up to viewer interpretation, as well as the use of metaphors. There are less narrative functions in my work and instead I rely on visual aesthetic and ones own interpretations. The shadow and evil in fairy tales as well is something that often inspires me.

A lot of my research as a stop motion artist is based on experimenting with materials because the possibilities are endless and you can do so many different things with different materials. When I started thinking of this project, I knew right away I wanted to create two different stop motion sets of a forest. One would be an old growth forest that is ancient and full of life, and the other would be a haunted and dying forest. I wanted to create a large enough set that would show my puppet exploring and just existing in it before I transitioned to the other set in the film, so it was really important to get this environment right.

I started out with a rough sketch of the old growth forest, as well as creating mood boards to develop an idea of what the color palette would be for this set. This was mainly to figure out what kind of emotion and vibe I wanted to invoke in this forest, and I ultimately landed on creating a peaceful atmosphere that was reminiscent of wandering through a very green and dreamlike forest. After I created the mood boards, I did some brief mockups made out of cardboard in order to figure out how many elements, such as the trees and rocks, I would need in the set.

I started out with a piece of 3x5 foot plywood that I painted with a mixture of brown and green paint, coffee grounds, and mod podge. This was to create a textured and hard surface that was reminiscent of dirt. For both of my sets I wanted to create multiple trees in a variety of shapes that were laser cut for the background elements. I really enjoy how they filled out the space of the forests as well as the silhouette qualities they create. I created some outlines of trees in Adobe Illustrator and then used the laser cutter to cut out the shape of the trees (thank you Megan for helping me constantly on the laser cutter!). Throughout the process of making these trees, I kept thinking to myself how there is a bit of irony using dead trees to make trees again, that are still technically dead? I ended up with about 8 laser cut trees for the green set, and about

15 for the second set. The cut outs for the old growth set were all painted in various shades of brown and green, and then to add depth I added some tiny bits of moss to the trunks and branches of the trees. They were then stabilized using wooden dowels and L brackets to attach to the set. Trying to minimize waste and reuse materials I already have, I ended up using the scraps from laser cutting the trees to make the little green bushes in the background of the set.

For my past sets, I have used cardboard tubes as the bases of my 3D trees because it is easier to build out a tree from something that is already cylindrical and tall. The tubes I ordered initially were not long enough so I ended up having to glue some together in order to get the height I wanted. I initially planned on using foam clay to create the bark texture, however, after taking Christines stop motion class in the fall of 2024, she suggested using a material called Celluclay. This is a type of paper clay that is similar to a paper mâché pulp. This worked out incredibly well in order to create the texture I wanted and provided an excellent base to creating realistic bark textures. The branches of the 3D trees were made using wire and paper mâché techniques, and then painted and finished with a combination of preserved moss, green poly fibers, and synthetic moss. The rocks and hills in the background of the set were also made in a similar fashion using the Celluclay to create the texture on a base of cardboard and insulation foam hot glued together. Which by the way, it is crazy how much hot glue you use when you are doing a stop motion project. Once all of these elements were dry after quite a few days, I painted them using acrylic paint and then sealed them with a matte finishing spray so it would not be as reflective when animating. Lastly, all of the rocks and the trees were dressed in fake miniature moss tufts and preserved moss in order to blend it into the base of the set.

I made the backdrop of the set last, and I went through many phases trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do for it. Last year when I was planning everything, I wanted to create a

giant forest painting to use as a backdrop. However, after much thought, I decided it would be easier and look better if I did a blue and white paint pour as the backdrop element for the sky. Because the film is uncanny yet peaceful, I thought that it paired well with the emotional aspects I was trying to represent in this set. I started this off by doing a paint pour on a regular 11x17 inch canvas. Once this was done, I scanned the painting and put it in photoshop in order to create a pattern that was not noticeably repetitive. This was then printed out on a large canvas type paper that was about 80x190 inches in size.

Once everything was done, I began assembling the set with LOTS of screws and hot glue. This took quite a few tries due to the room I was animating in and the size of my set to get right. I ended up having to work back to front in terms of installing everything. The lighting was done before I set up the set, with an opportunity to adjust it easily when I was animating. The backdrop had its own lights to create an illuminating effect, with a fill light to shine on the cut outs and rocks, and a key light to light up the front portion of the set.

The 'death forest set' as I've been calling it, was made in a very similar fashion as the old growth set. The purpose of this set was to be more theatrical visually and not have as many elements as the old growth set. This is because I wanted the focus to solely on the big red sick tree, with intricate dry and dead tree silhouettes filling up the forest surrounding the big tree. This set was super important to set the tone as a dark and eerie environment because it is where the chaos and death consume all. It also did not need to be as large as the old growth set because there was a lot less movement in the animation involved.

Similarly to the old growth set, I started with a cardboard mockup and some drawings in order to figure out what kind of vibe I was going for. I wanted something that would be dark, and twisty, as well as intriguing. I did the laser cut trees the same way as the old growth set as well,

and I opted for using a darker color palette in order to create more focus on the large tree and to invoke the creepy forested environment I accomplished.

The large tree was made using Celluclay on a base of paper, tape, and wire (thank you Ed for giving me your tree armature). I bulked out the branches using pipe cleaners that I twisted together to create straggly branch shapes, which were then torched in order to burn and melt the fibers on the pipe cleaners which resulted in a very intricate pattern for the branches. These were then hot glued onto the tree armature. Once it dried, I base painted the tree before adding the lights onto it. This was done by just using some red fairy lights that I had, which were then covered in red moss in order to give the tree an otherworldly effect. I ended up doing a similar background as the old growth set by doing a paint pour and then manipulating it in photoshop as well.

Because this set was more theatrical, I only used two lights to light up the set. One was a spotlight that would represent the moonlight, and the other being a red light to emphasize the glowing red tree.

I am going to be honest, looking back I have no idea how the hell I was able to make both of these sets in my studio space on the section floor, which is probably about a 10x7 foot room. After making everything, I tried to lay it out on my set base to see if it looks right, disassemble it all, bring it up 4 floors in the elevator taking multiple trips, and then reassemble all for animating. The bases of the set barely fit in the elevator at school, and I would have to squeeze my way in there in order to get the base to the studio where I would be animating.

I ended up making my puppet in about a week, which is another thing how I honestly have no idea how I ended up being able to do that. This monster was inspired by a lot of my past

work, specifically puppets and creature busts that are reminiscent of whimsical creatures, cryptids, myths, and real-life animals such as birds, goats, and deer. I wanted my creature to be comforting and cute at the same time, he kind of ended up reminding me of a dog. One of the main inspirations, however, for my puppet was the wendigo. They are described as an incarnation of pure malevolence as conceived by the human mind, as well as reflecting a certain degree of superstitious awe and veneration. They are representative as a cautionary tale against the destructive forces of greed and excess. It symbolizes the consequences of succumbing to the darkest aspects of human nature, particularly the insatiable desire for power and material possessions. I also really enjoy what they look like visually.

The monster I came up in my thesis is representative of a few things in regards to the themes as stated, but mostly discussing fear of unknown, mental illness, and death.

I made a few drawings of what I wanted the puppet to look like and decided to base it off of this drawing. Once that was decided, I began creating the armature, which is what makes the puppet posable and able to be animated. I created it using a variety of steel and aluminum wire so it could hold the weight of the puppet while still being movable. The head of the puppet was created out of cosclay, which is a type of polymer clay that is flexible after baking. The feet of the puppet were also made of cosclay, and I put tie downs in the feet in order to have stability when animating. However, due to timing I ended up using a rig or my arms to hold the puppet in place while animating.

When creating this puppet, I wanted to be able to move the lower jaw, as well as have multiple tongues in order to animate him eating, in addition to having LED lights in its eyes. This was one of the most complicated things to figure out in my thesis project. The head is hollow in the back, in order to allow room for the lights and the wires and to also have the wire

portion of the jaw attached to the back of the head. All of the technical components were then covered by a piece of faux fur fabric I dyed myself.

The teeth and ribs were created with a non-toxic moldable plastic that was attached to the puppet using epoxy and super glue, and then painted with matte acrylic paint. I used bits of black wool throughout the puppets body to give it a decaying and aging appearance, and the skin was made of a high fibrous paper that was hand painted and attached to the puppet's body.

I started fabricating my thesis in May of last year, and finally finished the fabrication of my sets, and my puppet on March 27th.

So why stop motion animation? Apart from my obvious love of fabrication, I enjoy the uncanny elements that come naturally with stop motion as an artistic medium. Stop motion is naturally an uncanny medium specifically because it's the use of real objects and moving them around, when in reality they are not supposed to move around on their own. There is additionally an eerie quality when it comes to creating real 3D worlds out of actual objects in order to represent something else, like how I have used planks of wood in order to represent trees in both of my sets.

This film ended up being roughly 6,480 frames and at 24 fps. For animating, I used a software called Dragon Frame that is industry standard. There was quite a bit of challenges while animating my puppet, and some of the shots I planned on doing were too complicated for what my puppet was limited to do movement wise. The shot where the puppet leans down and investigates the log was a particularly difficult one because my puppet was not able to crouch easily. I ended up having to shoot the shot in two different segments. One with him leaning down, and the other with the log up propped up to the height of the puppet's face in order to

create the illusion that it was bending down and staring into the log. Another difficult shot was the puke and branch growing out of his eye's scene. I shot this scene all in one take and then had to edit half of it in reverse. I started with the branches in the puppet's eyes and slowly cut away at the branches. Then, I animated him bending his head down and puking. The shot in the old growth set where the creature's face turns red was also done practically. This was achieved by slowly moving a red gel near his face frame by frame that was attached to a rig in order to show his face changing red while still keeping the background green. The ending shots with the close ups of the moss were filmed on my phone with the camera lens looking through a crystal ball. While I was doing test shots of this on the old growth set, the window was open and the sunlight was magnified and my set started to smoke (luckily I did not burn down the school.....) When it comes to stop motion, sometimes the puppet can be stubborn and not want to do what you want it to do. Throughout the animating process, I kept saying how he didn't want to die which is why he was being so stubborn.

I have never been a huge fan of drawing, so for creating my animatic, which is basically a story board timed out in a video format, I paid a fellow student, Aphenia, to create one for me. This was a great experience for me in terms of collaboration, and I really enjoyed the final piece that they sent me. It was really helpful to get a fresh perspective on the story I was trying to tell, as well as strong examples to go off of for my shot layouts and narrative pacing.

I also opted to do a collaboration when it came to the sound of my project because of how much work I was already doing and the fact that I really enjoy doing collaborative projects. I knew I wanted music, but not so much that it would take away from the installation but instead emphasized the overall feeling and environment. I collaborated with my friend Tania to create the piano music. For the sound design elements, I ended up posting on my Instagram that I

needed someone to do foley and ambiance for my thesis and luckily D.J. reached out to me. For both of these collaborations, I found some examples online for what I was looking for on youtube and created a google document to share with my collaborators along with a description of what I looking for. This was a really fun experience for me because I have only done one other sound collaboration for my films in the past, and I am incredibly happy with how the sound came to be in the final.

Editing the final piece took quite a bit of organizing and planning because I was technically editing three 4 and a half minute videos. I started off with editing the main video where most of the animation and all of the narrative aspects took place on Premiere Pro. Once that was done, I began to edit and time out the other two videos for the side projections. This part was fairly easy to do because while I was animating, I was careful to make sure that I had enough extra footage and shots for the side projections as well as to make sure I had many variations of different shots of the sets.

Transient Echoes was all about pushing my boundaries and creating something unlike anything I have ever done before, especially choosing to do an installation piece instead of a standard film screening. Julia Oldham is a very important inspiration when it came to deciding to do an installation piece for my thesis. She uses a range of media (varying from animation to graphic storytelling) that explores scientific history and speculative futures. Although her work is 2-D, she uses a lot of similar themes and aesthetics I did in my project.

The layout of her show titled DENDROSTALKERS, which was exhibited at PNCA in the Fall of 2023, was very interesting to me; not only visually, but in terms of immersiveness with her animations and how it was set up in 3 separate projections as well. I have not seen a lot of animated installation work in the past, but I really enjoyed how immersive this piece was, as well

as how it touched base on environmental harm in addition to providing other-worldly science fiction elements. Fun fact this is an image from her website and that's me sitting right there! For my thesis, I wanted the viewer to feel as if they were immersed into the surrounding forest watching the story unfold, and because this piece is supposed to be looped endlessly, there is an important theme that is represented through a constant loop of death and rebirth.

In an article *Julia Oldham: Filming the human-animal hybrid* from Oregon ArtWatch, Oldham's work is described as "... the embodiment of our seeking, our longing, our looking to figure out our place in both the known and unknown worlds. You can spot a person in love with life because they tend to look to the biggest and the smallest phenomena—from the nature of the cosmos to the qualities of the Least weasel—to find answers about their own humanity". I really enjoyed this description of her work because it resonates a lot with what I accomplished with my thesis. The goal was to find the familiar in the unfamiliar, to find a place of comfort and understanding in new ways that parallel our own world; how unknown worlds can provide deeper understandings of our own, our own fears and our own nightmares.

...So what exactly does my thesis mean?

In the fall of 2022, I experienced a major health crisis that could have led to my death. Luckily, I survived. However, this took a huge toll on my mental and physical health. Since then, I have been trying to process my trauma and adapt to what my new normal is, as well as manage my anxiety surrounding death. This experience has been very prevalent in my artwork and the themes of death that are explored, and through art, I have been able to confront and understand

these anxieties that I have. I believe being able to accomplish something this big has been a huge therapeutic experience for me in relation to my health, as well as realizing what I am really capable of. Looking back on all that I have been through, I cannot be more proud of where I am now as an artist and as an individual.

The main story arch, besides the death and repeat element, is also inspired by the phenomenon where individuals become transfixed into nature and wander aimlessly into the abyss. (Think hypnotism, disassociate trance, enchantment, etc.) When I was thinking of what the narrative function would be, I came up with focusing on my creature wandering through the old growth forest and observing different aspects of it, with eventually becoming transfixed and wandering into the death forest. Once it entered the death forest, it would become hypnotized by the red tree and began to eat the surrounding plants that would eventually take over its body and kill it.

Invasiveness additionally plays a huge part of my film and is represented by the red plant growing and slowly taking over and transforming all life. Because I am so inspired by the natural world, it was important to also tie my thesis into environmental harm and destruction. Additionally, although there is death in my thesis and that is often viewed as a sad thing, I wanted to represent it in a way that was beautiful and peaceful through my fabrication skills and the sound design.

Guillermo del Toro is a major source of inspiration in my art work, specifically the use of monsters in his films and how they are portrayed narratively and visually. *Pan's Labyrinth* (2007), is a dark fantasy film by del Toro and it is one of my favorite films from him and in general, specifically due to the plot and the way monsters are depicted visually. I take a lot of my inspiration from the otherworldly and ancient aesthetics of the film's set designs and character

designs. A big part of the narrative plot of this film is how “everything springs from the animating source of the Underground Realm, an enchanted font of earth energy that gives rise to all and imbues the world with magic” (Gardner). This plot point ties in very well with the forest elements and world building of my project by providing a sense of uncanny energy that contributes to the madness and death that my character undergoes. A quote I really enjoy from del Toro is “monstrosity exists in the human heart, not in appearance.” This is really important because it partially answers one of the main questions on which my thesis is discussing, which is what truly makes a monster? And the answer to that is we do, monsters are only monsters because we make them that way, and in my case literally because I ACTUALLY made this guy. I believe monsters are often misunderstood and are not necessarily bad, and I think it is important to touch base on what purpose they serve.

The monster serves to reveal extremely personal anxieties and fears while inspiring us to confront them head-on. I have a lot of my own personal anxieties and fears of death and this project is my own personal embodiment of that, it is a manifestation of my own emotional and physical experiences through the use of my own monster. The concept of monsters takes us to a place where we can begin to examine our shared humanity and dissect the parts within. Monsters and the use of metaphor have been used for exploring humanness for centuries in many cultures. This is not a new thing. The creatures we fear most often times are the creatures that are within each of us, or connected to our shadow in some way. They are powerful facets of our being.

In terms of where I would like to see this project head, I would really like to finalize and revise some aspects of it, but at the same time I am really happy with the completed work I have done. I think it would be really cool to have this piece installed at some galleries in town. I also plan on submitting the main film portion to some festivals. In terms of my career, my goal is to

hopefully end up working at a studio in town as a fabricator while also doing freelance and selling my art at markets and online.

THANK YOU so much for attending tonight. It is really exciting to see this project as a completed work finally, and I have been wanting people to experience this installation for so long now. Although this project was mainly done by myself, it would not of been possible without the many people who helped me throughout the whole process. Bare with me because I have a lot of personal thank yous to get out...

I would like to thank Ben, my mentor, for his wonderful guidance and insight throughout this project. It would not be what it is without you. I would also like to thank my partner, Grizz, for helping me animate when it was crunch time, as well as helping me fabricate and animate. Zoe, for also helping me so much with fabricating and being my personal hype man. Mango, for being a wonderful assistant animator on this project. Ran for helping me not only with the technical aspects of the projection elements and taking the stripped screws out of my set when I messed up (haha), but for also all of his help over my last 4 years at PNCA. My brother, Noah, for helping me set up the lighting as well as transporting my sets and helping with the final project set up. Megan at the make think code lab for always being excited to hear about my project and helping me with the laser cutter as well as helping solder the eyes of my puppet. Kai for helping me paint the moss on my trees and rocks. Christine for her mentorship and material suggestions, as well as helping me keep on track and other fabrication suggestions. Agnes for helping organize and set up my studio when everything was so cluttered when I had both sets in my small studio. Piper and Alyssa for being there for me throughout the semester and giving me feedback and answering my questions when need be. Devon and Lou for helping me with the tree fabrication and painting. Marilyn, for always being interested in my work and making me

feel confident in what I am doing. Tania DJ and Aphenia for your wonderful contributions towards this project. Danny at tech check out for helping with the streaming and audio for the installation. I would also like to thank all of my teachers over my time at PNCA who have pushed me and supported me, especially during my time coming back to school after my health fiasco. And lastly, my wonderful family for always supporting and believing in me and also helping me fund this project (thank you). Thank you all so much again, it has been really fun to share this experience with you all and bring you all into my weird little world.

Before we have the Q & A, I would like to screen my film one more time, so hold on just a second while we get things set up!

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