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# Burning the Earthen Beasts

*The purpose of this project was to investigate the process of creating a pitch bible and its supporting character artwork through the creation of production material for an adult animated tv series which explores themes of ecological impact caused by the wildlife trade.*

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# 1.0 Abstract

## *Central proposition*

The purpose of this project was to investigate the process of creating a pitch bible and its supporting character artwork. Through the creation of production material for an adult animated TV series, this research explores themes of ecological impact caused by the wildlife trade.

## *Abstract*

Over the last decade, animated series have become increasingly popular as a form of entertainment for young adults. Many modern animated shows such as *Arcane* (Linke, C. et al. 2021) and *Rick & Morty* (Crofford, K. et al. 2013) have achieved success and a wide range of viewership, thanks to the advent of streaming services, adult animation is seeing an industry boom. To many aspiring young animators and creators, this is a great time to get into the industry. With many companies seeking to embrace the opportunities of these new animated intellectual properties, it begs a question how companies or individuals go about creating these works of media.

To this end, this research project pursued a goal of investigating the process of creating a pitch bible which is a proposal document presented to a board of executive producers that visually and textually describes an animation license. The final output for the project was a pitch bible, which is supported by a series of character designs. The concept design load for this project focuses on the character design pipeline as a means to cover the widest range of previsualization design work needed for a pitch. This has allowed the research to focus on the centerpiece of narrative development and the area for the greatest range of design.

The narrative for this proposed pitch has developed is centered around a fictional animated TV series. As a way to imitate the requirements of an actual animated television series, the narrative of the series sought to explore themes surrounding the illegal wildlife trade and the role humans play in species extinction both on a personal and societal level.

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## 4.0 Introduction

I have always wanted to tell my own stories. From growing up watching films like *Lords of the Rings* (Jackson, P, 2001; 2002; 2003) and *Star Wars* (Lucas, G. 1977), to write my own narratives at school. I have been fascinated by the art of storytelling, and I was introduced to the idea of pitching while studying animation. Pitching is a process in which a creator presents their idea to a board of executive producers who work for a production company. If I wanted to achieve my dream of producing my own animation for the big screen or television, this was a process I needed to become familiar with.

Behind every successful animated show, there is a long, sometimes grueling production process, which starts with what industry professionals call a “pitch”. A pitch is a presentation a potential creator gives to a board of executive producers from a particular company to persuade them, and by extension the company, to turn the creator’s idea into a fully-fledged show. As the role of an animation executive producer is the large-scale management of people, time and resources on a project, they have a keen insight into production of an animated project. So, if the goal is to pitch something that will be seen as potentially popular enough to be made, what is the major trend in the animation industry currently?

In a 2020 article published on *Cartoon Brew*, Alex Dudok De Wit Written summarizes and extrapolates information from “Second edition White paper”, a document of statistics and trends in the American animation industry. The document is composed by John Evershed, co-founder and former CEO of Mondo Media. The White Paper points out that while adult animation in the past has been relegated to sitcoms and “irreverent comedies”, the genre scope of adult animation in recent years has been expanding. This opens the door to many new possible series and films from a wider range of creative minds.

Many successful series employ a point of interest within the story called a “hook”. The point of a hook is to immediately capture the audience’s attention. For example, dragons and the promise that any character can die is what drew a lot of people into the first few seasons of the *Game of Thrones* (Benioff et al., 2011–2019) adaptation. To tie into the idea of social relevance (The idea that a story should tackle an idea that is important to its audience), I wanted the hook for the series to reflect the pro-environmental sentiments of the project. The narrative purpose of the creatures is that of a primary metaphor for the anti-poaching sentiments of the central narrative.

The creature design for the narrative is focused around the idea of large sympathetic creatures to act as a stand-in or allegory for non-renewable resource management. The purpose of this is to bring forward the environmental and anti-consumerist themes that would give the narrative an important social relevance. Many other animated TV series also have an environmentalist message as it is typically an important issue for their target audiences of kids, teens and young adults. Such shows include *Kipo* (Sechrist R, et al, 2020), *Hilda* (Mueller K, et al, 2018 - 2020) and *The Dragon Prince* (Bhesania D, et al, 2018 -). In particular, the creatures are meant to reference to the poaching of bison by the European settlers of America and the modern hunting of endangered African species such as African Elephants and White Rhinos.

Among the worst factors in the extinction of animal species is the illegal trade of wildlife and the act of killing an animal that has been legally deemed protected (WWF, 2022). While in the past, poaching was a crime more akin to theft, nowadays poached animals usually belong to a species that is endangered or going extinct that is found on government protected land or sanctuaries. According to one study (Lavadinović VM. et al, 2021), while the most well-known endangered animals come from the African continent and the oceans, there are studies looking into species across the globe that face annihilation at the hands of humans. As many of the species facing extermination at our hands are vital parts of their ecosystems, losing these animals could be detrimental to humanity and the planet as a whole.

As a means to bring the themes of animal poaching and extinction into the design side of the project, a large part of the narrative framing for this pitch is aimed at selling characters from a world where giant roaming creatures are being hunted for fuel. The meta-narrative for these creatures is an allegory for poaching, mining of fossil fuels and colonial invasions as well as the consequences of their consumption. The design goal for these creatures would be an animal of unworldly scale that despite the size difference, could still evoke sympathy in an audience.

The most important factor for getting the audience invested in the narrative is character. The driving force behind the developing plot, a story can live or die on how invested the audience gets in the struggle of the main cast of the characters. As a result, what information an audience can confer from looking at a character means a lot as this will influence their opinions of the character and how the audience feels about the plot as it plays out.

This is where the role of the character designer fits in. Particularly in an animation production setting where the character's body itself needs to be designed, modeled and textured. Because the animation team has total control over not only how the characters act, but also how they look, concept artists for animation need to take complete advantage of their ability to tailor a character's fundamental look to suit the purpose/need of the series or movie. Something as simple as giving a character a long, hard rigged nose implies a lot about the character to the audience before they have even spoken a word. For example, according to a study by Kuan-Lin Chen, I-Ping Chen & Chi-Min Hsieh (2020), face aspect ratio, nose length, and distance between the mouth corner and face edge play a big part in making a character look unique and discernible.

## 5.0 Literature review

### 5.1 Animation for Adults

One of the most noticeable trends within the animation industry over the last decade has been the rise of animated media with a target audience of adults. In a review of analytics of the viewership numbers on streaming websites globally between July and August 2021, US company Parrot Analytics made several observations about the industry and the popular shows available during that period. Of the shows listed in the statistics, Rick and Morty, the adult dark comedy show, was shown to have 71 times the demand than an average television show during that same period of time. The two runners up being Attack on Titan (Furukawa, Y & Ishikawa, M. 2013 - 2019) & Invincible (Racioppa, S. 2021) which were listed as 64 times and 34 times more popular than the average television show respectively. Both Rick and Morty (Crofford, K. 2013 - 2021) and Attack on Titan (Furukawa, Y. et al. 2013 - 2021) ranked amongst the top 10 most watched during the July - August statistics window, showing that there is absolutely a large public interest in animated shows with mature themes and imagery.

Some observations made in this statistics article put an emphasis on the reasoning behind the steady rise in adult animation's popularity. One such observation was that the biggest increase in demand for mature animation was during the recent world wide pandemic. Thanks to the nature of animation requiring no on site filming, animation production can be organized around the team members working from home so production could continue uninterrupted after a bit of reorganization. As quoted in the Parrot Analytics article, "Even president of the ViacomCBS group (which owns Comedy Central), noted that cartoons were "almost pandemic proof" (Unknown Author, 2021). Due to the delay in live action film productions, many people instead turned to animation for their entertainment needs.



Invincible (2021)



Attack on Titan (2013 - 2022)

Another factor is the change in attitude towards narrative in animation. While in the past it was expected that western animation is to be aimed solely at children, this trend has begun to change as children who grew up with animated shows become adults. As the audience matures, so must the themes and narrative of the media that the audience consumes. In other words, animation aimed at children are predominantly comedies that operate on a sanitized view of the world and deal with simpler story arcs. Adult animation is generally expected to explore more challenging topics and covers many different genres by comparison.

Alongside its rising popularity, animation has also enjoyed positive influence and reception for multiculturalism and diversity. Thanks to growing up with access to sources of foreign animation, new generations of animation creators draw influences from cultures other than their own. Another recent change is the increase of representation with animated media. Due to rising interest in diversity within society, animation creators are trying to appeal to that sense of inclusivity by incorporating more characters belonging to ethnic groups and LGBTQ communities. (Horst, C. 2020)

Overall the most important points about animation for adults is that due to a rising interest, creating mature animated stories is much more financially feasible as companies seek to profit from the increasing popularity of the format. This change in attitude towards animation has been instigated by the success of adult animation series such as Rick & Morty (Crofford, K. 2013 - 2021), Arcane (Linke, C. et al. 2021) and Attack on Titan (Furukawa, Y. et al. 2013 - 2021) as well the global lockdowns, which hindered live action productions but not animation.



Rick & Morty (2013 - 2021)

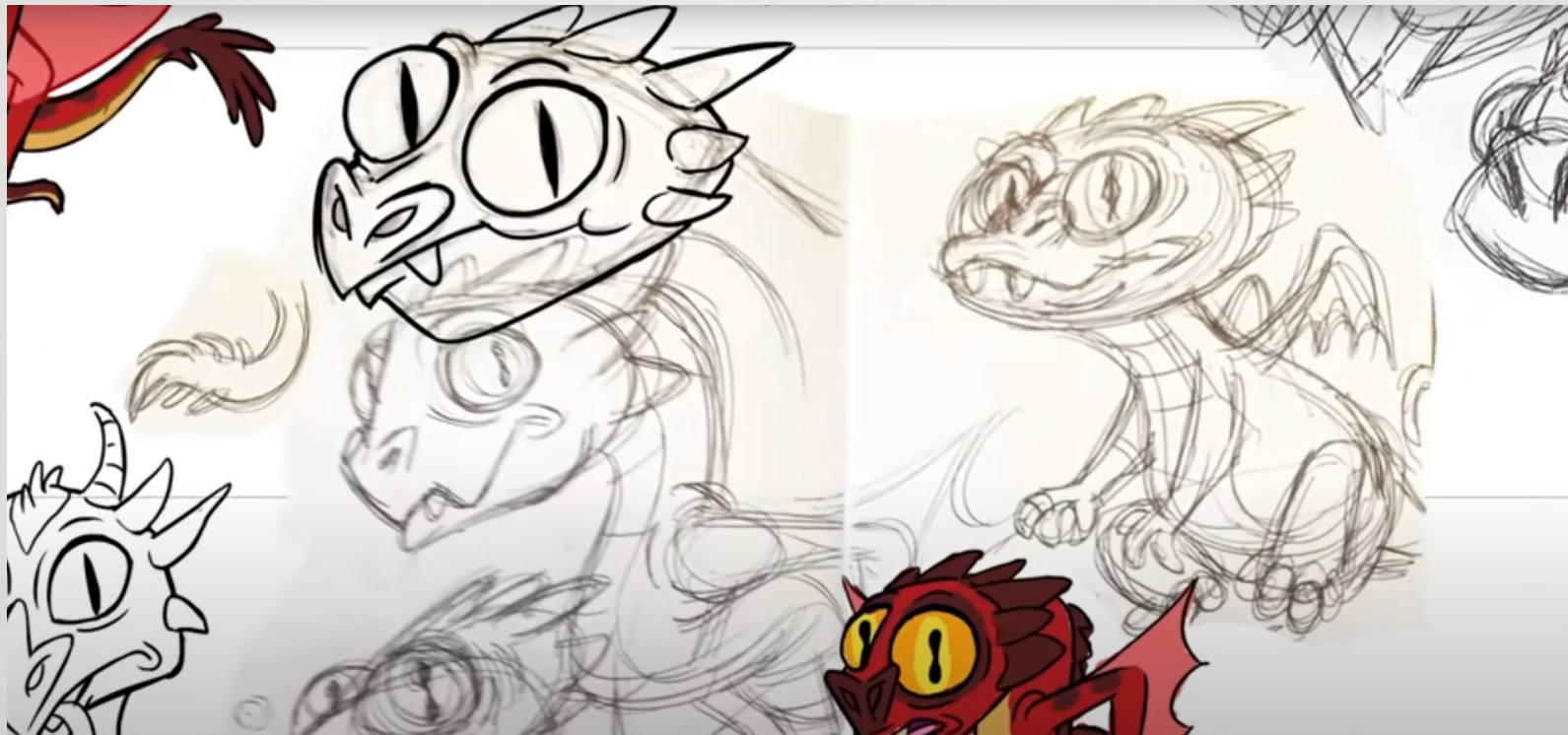


Arcane (2021)

## 5.2 Character Design for Adult Animation

At the cornerstone of any story are the characters, the people that act out the plot of the story and drive the narrative. Among all the things that are important to get right in an animation production, characters are the primary concern. If the characters are unengaging, the audience will likely turn to a different piece of media to fulfill their entertainment needs.

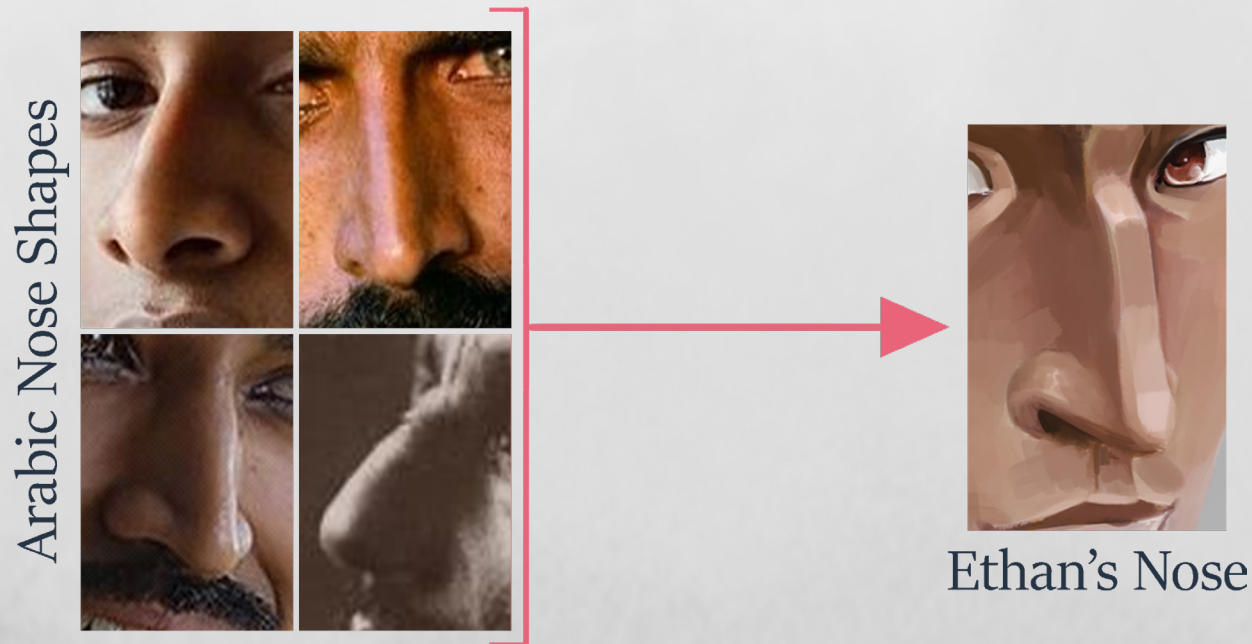
When designing animated characters for an adult audience, it's important to recognize that the viewers are older and more mature than what animation is typically used to. To reflect the increased maturity in animated show themes, there is also an expectation that the art style will be more complex, allowing for more detailed characters. As Ian Friend from the University of Gloucestershire states that in most adult animated shows, "Characters are generally realistically proportioned and lack the overt abstraction that can be evidenced in shows for the younger demographics." (Friend, I. 2019). While in animation aimed at younger audiences, it is usual or even expected to heavily stylize the characters. In children's cartoons, a character can have a head twice the size of their own body and not look out of place within their art style. However adult animation tends to lean more on realism in its styling. The main exception to this rule seems to be 2D comedy shows, as shows like Rick & Morty (Roiland, J. et al. 2013 -2022) and the Bojack Horseman (Arnett, W. et al. 2014 - 2020) are filled with dark adult humor but also use heavy stylization.



Rick and Morty: Character Creation Secrets: Adult swim (2020, May 1)

Another important aspect to consider when designing characters is the idea that the cast should be diverse and easily readable. A common idea is that different characters should be made of different overall shapes. Changing not just how a character's silhouette reads, but also the size and shape of significant facial features allows an animator to imply multiple different things. While in reality, the phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover" is a general piece of wisdom about social interaction, the intention of a character design is for the audience to infer information from how the various characters look. As the freelance character designer, Brookes Eggleston says in his tutorial series about creating characters, "Character design is a tool for storytelling by utilizing shape language. It's as simple as the lines being diagonal and asymmetrical." (Brookes, E. 2015). The information the designer can convey to the audience can include not just their personality and skills but also information about their heritage and background.

An investigative study by professors from the National Chiao Tung University in Taiwan looks into the specific facial features that make faces look different in animation. The features pointed out in their findings include, "...(1) face aspect ratio, (2) nose length, and (3) distance from mouth corner to face edge are three crucial facial features in character design." (Chen, K. Chen, I. Hsieh, C. 2020). This blends into the idea that an audience can gain insight into character personality and traits by their physical design and points out the kind of facial and physical features the audience might notice first. In the case of nose shape, a study from Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States into the genetics that determine nose shapes found the environmental factors that affected a person's genetic ancestry was a deciding factor in the fundamental shape of a person's nose. For example, someone with a flatter nose bridge and wide open nostrils is more likely to have ancestry from a warm tropical region as that genetic variation allows for a greater intake of air, faster in a warm and humid environment (Zaidi AA, Mattern BC, Claes P, McEvoy B, Hughes C, et al. 2018). This means that when designing a character for animation, the potential to build the character from the ground up dictates that the designer should take into consideration the implications of their character design decisions. Not only does something as simple as a character's nose shape imply things about their personality, but also their background and heritage and all the baggage that might contain inside and outside the narrative.



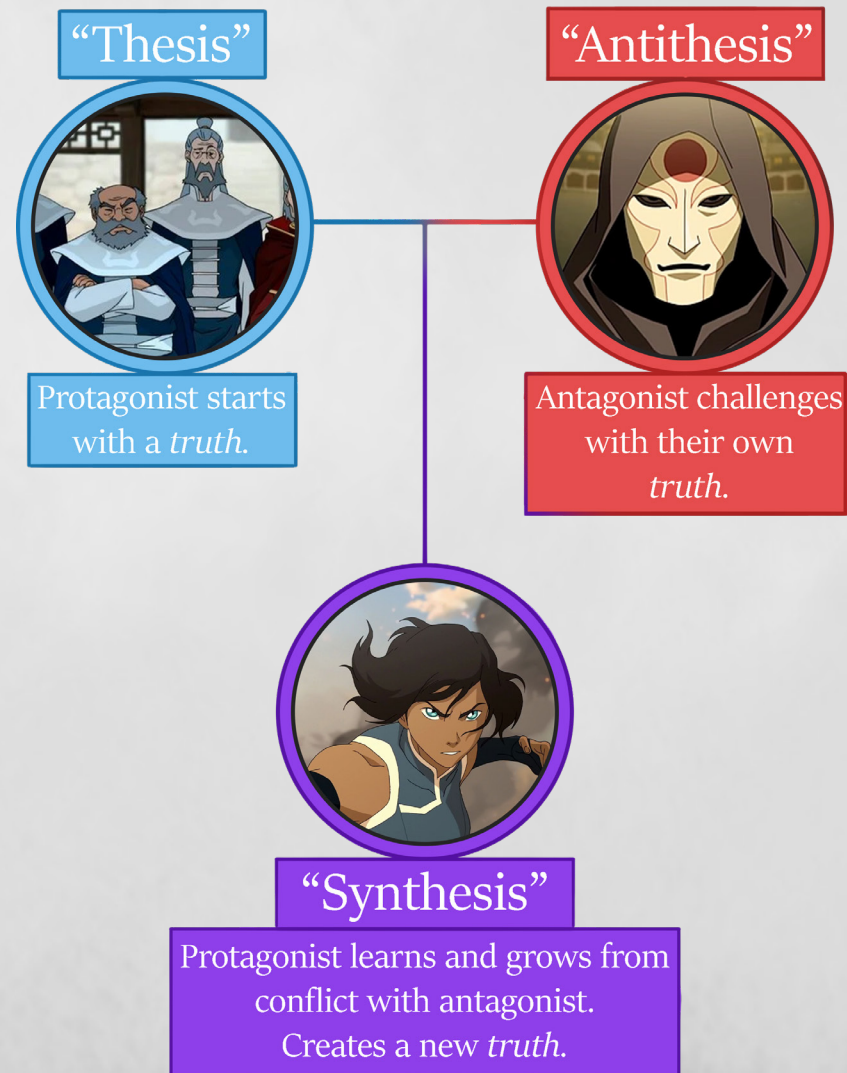
### 5.2.1 Designing for character relationships

One of the more challenging parts of writing characters is making sure their ideas, motives and conflicts somehow end up discussing the moral issues the media wishes to present to the audience. Even most children's shows try to communicate a moral or lesson for its audience, however simple or basic that lesson might seem. As an audience grows, their understanding of the world around grows too, becoming more complex and nuanced. As a result older audiences will seek more diverse stories where right and wrong are up for debate. As I intended to write complex characters as a base for my concept design work, I felt that I should look into how certain shows and ideas are crafted for an older audience.

One of the main character relationships within my design that I explored was the opposing foster father influences of Theo and Alexander on the main character Ethan. The purpose of this character dynamic is to discuss the idea of human interaction with the natural world, where Alexander represents an ideal of living in harmony with the natural world and Theo represents an ideal of domination and conquering the natural world.

#### Hegelian Dialectic

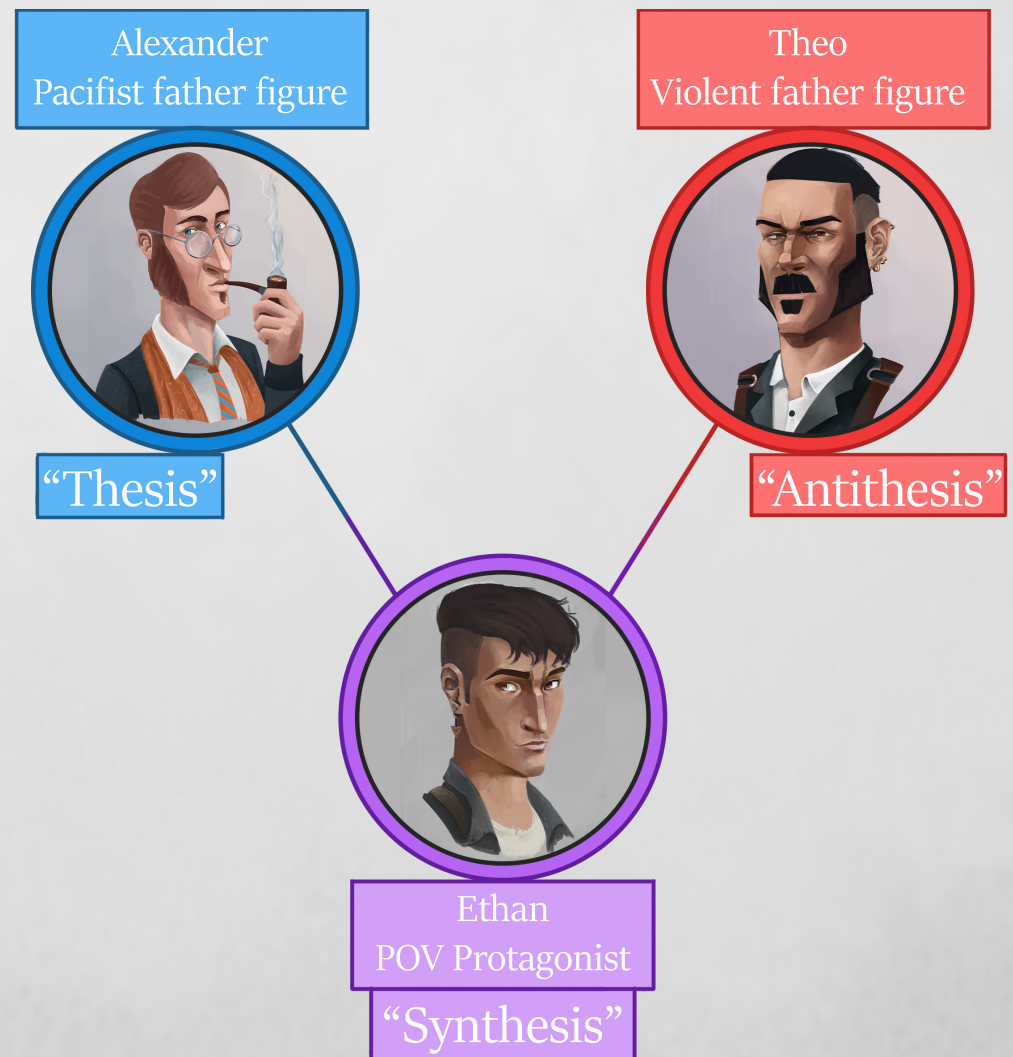
One of the best examples of good character dynamics discussing the moral dilemma of the narrative can be found in the sequel series "Avatar; Legend of Korra" (DiMartino, M. Konietzko, B. 2012 - 2014). In his video essay, "What Writers Should Learn From The Legend Of Korra", Sage Hyden talks about how Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's "Hegelian Dialectic", can be used in storytelling. In Hegelian Dialectic, the goal is to reach the truth by presenting a thesis, then the opposing antithesis, then by examining the thesis against the antithesis you come to the synthesis, the new understanding. But as Hyden points out, in "The Legend of Korra makes sure to give each of its villains some ideological merit." (Just Write, 2016). Almost none of the antagonists are cardboard cuts out just there to be knocked over. There is something to learn from the villains of each session, for the protagonist Korra and the audience. "By embracing a Hegelian world view, the Legend of Korra is able to navigate complex ideas while also making its character more interesting" (Just Write, 2016). If Legend of Korra proves anything, it's that it is far more compelling for the story to be an argument or discussion that gives both sides of the argument their say.



Another example of Hegelian Dialectic is found in popular children's animations such as the collection of 3D animations made by large companies like Disney Pixar. Many characters in these films start with them believing in a truth/thesis about themselves. Over the course of the film, they encounter many other characters or problems that act as antithesis, forcing them to rethink their point of view. One such example is the 2020 3D animated film *Onward* (Scanlon, D. 2020). The main character, Ian Lightfoot, doubts himself and believes that he should be more like the father he never met. It's only through an adventure with his brother, whose encouragement provides the antithesis to Ian's self-doubt, that Ian achieves his desire to become bold (Story Manic, 2021). Other animated films from Disney that use a similar narrative structure include *Lilo & Stitch* (Deblois D & Sanders C. 2002), *Tangled* (Greno N & Howard B. 2010) and *Brave* (Andrews M, Chapman B & Purcell S. 2012). The amount of films that use a Hegelian story formula is proof enough that the method has a lot of merit.

### *Importance of Parental figures*

Another animated show that I found did character writing really well was Riot Games "Arcane". The animated series focuses much of its runtime on themes of family. This is most prevalent in the two foster fathers of the main characters, Vander and Silco. During the series first act/first three episodes, Vander and Silco ideologies work as a Hegelian Dialectic with Vander's selfless father role working as a thesis to Silco's revolutionary standings as the antithesis. Throughout the series, the audience is shown how Vander's philosophy affects Violet and how Silco ideals influence Powder into becoming Jinx. While neither of the father figures are the sister's biological parents, the important factor is the influence they have on the lead characters for the needs of the story's argument about family and identity. As Mike Badger explains it in his video essay, *How Arcane RESPECTS Fathers*, "As Arcane so well shows, Fathers don't have to be biological, they need to be there." (Badger, 2022) This was influential for the project as it got me to think about how I could use two different parental figures to juxtapose each other to convey the narrative moral of the story and how that might influence the concept design for those two characters.



### 5.3: Role and Origin of Creatures

Monsters or Creatures are a fixture of mythology, science fiction and fantasy storytelling. Even in the earliest transcribed myths such as the Ancient Sumeria tale known as The Epic of Gilgamesh (Acocella, J. 2019), unnatural beasts appear that serve as an obstacle for the protagonist on their journey. As a fixture of human storytelling even since our earliest recorded civilizations, it is unsurprising that we often immediately equate the term, Monster, with horrors of imagination and the things that lurk in the darkness. With context to movie monsters of old like Count Orlok from F. W. Murnua's 'Nosferatu' (1922), Molly Pennington states in a 2019 article, "Cinematic monsters often represent society's deepest fears as a way to provide commentary on harrowing cultural events. They represent the worst parts of human instincts." (Pennington, M. 2019). In other words, monsters as a concept were mainly conceived as a narrative device for discussing things that might otherwise be considered taboo, playing into the fears and problems that might otherwise go unaddressed.

Some modern interpretations pose monsters in a far more sympathetic light, playing the part of tragic, misunderstood outcasts. The perspective of the narrative has changed hands. Many films featuring monsters in the 21st century don't look at the creatures from the point of view of the social majority, but through a more personal view. Examples as early and influential as Frankenstein's Monster from Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" is an early and influential example that falls into this category of sympathetic creatures, alongside more recent examples media like "James Sullivan" from Disney Pixar's, "Monsters Inc" (Docter, 2001) and "Toothless" from Dreamworks' "How to train your Dragon"(Sanders & DeBlois, 2010). With the trend towards more sympathetic creatures, it could be considered a missed opportunity to limit their use within animated media to the cute monsters of children's films. As Ciara Wardlow points out in her analysis of the 2016 film "A Monster Calls" - "A Monster Calls reminds us that the fault in "people are frightened by what they don't understand" lies just as much, if not more, with those who are frightened than those who are feared." In other words, films are now more about how society and people react to a creature rather than the horror of the creature itself. This suggests that one of the best uses for a monster in a story is to be an event or object for the characters to react to.



Count Orlok - Nosferatu (1922)



Frankenstein's Monster - Frankenstein (1931)

- Could be replaced with another item without changing narrative
- Has not direct affect on the plot



- MacGuffin -  
The Briefcase: Pulp Fiction

- Not a MacGuffin -  
The One Ring



- Can't be replaced with another item without changing narrative
- Has a direct influence on the plot

In many ways, the use of the creature as a backdrop for the story rather than the focus of the story itself is comparable to the narrative device of a Macguffin. A Macguffin is “A plot device that helps drive the narrative forward but really isn’t that important ultimately to the story.”(Renee, V. 2016). As a rule, if you can change the item/object in question and the story doesn’t change, it’s a Macguffin. However I think creatures ultimately fall outside of the definition of Macguffin because even in the most common place movies creaturesz have autonomy, the ability to act and move without external prompting. This means that even the most basic movie monster such as the classic zombie, can advance the plot of the story without any input from the actual cast of the narrative. For the purposes of this research, having the creature work in a similar way works as it allows the characters to take center stage while keeping the allegory the creatures fulfill working. It’s important that the characters’ actions drive the narrative for this story as the moral of the story is about how human actions affect the environment, but the creatures need a level of autonomy so they force the characters into making choices and so the audience can sympathize with the suffering inflicted upon them throughout the story.

After investigating a lot of both modern and historical, there are numerous decisions I made for the project. The biggest decision was to have the creatures play a back seat to the characters, focusing the bulk of the concept work on the main cast rather than monsters that were just meant to act as a plot device.

## 5.4 The Pitching process

A pitch bible is a document made to present and explain an idea for an Intellectual Property. Usually these are made by individuals or small teams and presented to a board of executive producers in order to propose a new animation..

It is recommended to include the following content within a pitch bible, a summary of story, character and world, social and an explanation of how the product is relevant to the company. For a story summary , the intention is to get all the necessary basic information across as efficiently as possible, whether in relation to the narrative or the characters that drive it. In an internet style interview (Nickelodeon Cartoon Universe, 2020), animation developer Kari Kim describes the three pillars of Nickelodeon as “comedy, kid’s perspective, gender neutral”, pitching an IP to them that is outside that range in not going to be successful. It also helps that the story is relevant to the social, political and cultural issues of the time. Having industry experience is important as it means the pitcher is aware of what goes into making a show. An additional way people get their time to show their ideas is if they have a work history with the company they’re presenting to. Examples of this include Pendalton Ward, the creator of Adventure Time (Ward, P. 2010 - 2018) and Alex Hirsch, Creator of Gravity Falls (Hirsch, A. 2012 - 2016).

In a roundtable style interview run by the Los Angeles Times, Don Hall discusses how when he would bring ideas to Disney Pixar, John Lannister would encourage him to bring more than one story idea to the table (Los Angeles Times, 2014). Rather than “put all your emotional eggs in one basket” as Hall puts it, Disney seems to encourage creators to bring a wide range of ideas instead of just one idea they are attached to. This lines up with another piece of advice from Sr. Director Daniel Wineman, “Think of a pitch as a conversation starter, where you’re introducing a few core traits.” (Nickelodeon Cartoon Universe, 2020).



Alex Hirsch - Creator of Gravity Falls

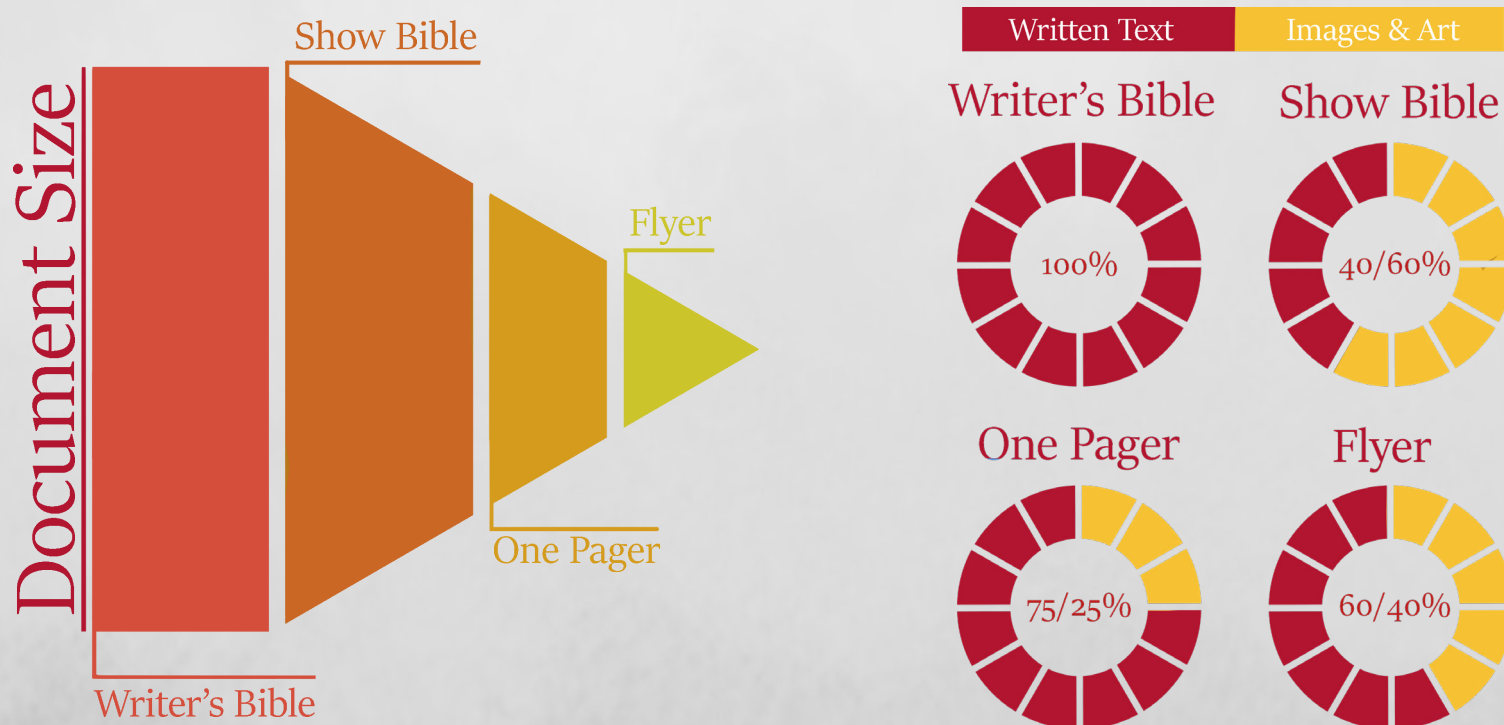


Pendalton Ward - Creator of Adventure time

Antony Gusscott is the Creative director at “Sprinkles on Top” a pre-production assistance company in Seoul, South Korea. His company focuses on assisting creators with the pitching and pre-production process of animated TV series. In his talk on pitching animation, Gusscott explains the idea of different types of pitch documents and their purposes. For example, he notes that a “one pager” or a “Flier” are important documents to get right as they are great for quickly getting your idea across in a short amount of time. A Flier is a single double sided page, consisting of artwork on one side, text and contact details on the other. A one pager is a simple single text document. Condensing the pitch down into a one page document also pulls focus on what is important, what needs to be said and what is subtext and details.

The most important factor within the pitch process was to form an understanding of the company, audience or collective you are presenting to. Most well established companies within the industry have core brand values and are unlikely to want to invest in a venture that actively goes against their brand. Disney is unlikely to produce an animated action series for adults under the Disney brand as they have built their animation reputation on being a kids musical animation film company While there isn't always a way to know what a company has going on behind the scenes, it generally pays to research leaks, rumors and announcements as a company generally wants to avoid making two of the same product.

A big part of the pitching process is proving that the creator can deliver on their commitments. No company will spend time and money on an inexperienced creator who can't handle the production process. As Anthony Gusscott (2021) describes, when you give a pitch, you are also pitching yourself, your vision and their future. To this end, a lot of companies require that the creator pitching a product has experience in the industry.



## 5.5 Case Study Analysis

### 5.5.1 Arcane

Arcane (Linke, C. et al. 2021) is the new Netflix production produced by Riot games and animated with the help of the Fortiche Production studio in France. Arcane primarily follows two sisters, Violet and Powder who are orphans as a result of a violent conflict between the denizens of the undercity, who struggle to make ends meet, and the police force of the “topside” who never want for anything. Over the course of the story, the sisters unwittingly become key players in the growing conflict of their city, Piltover, the city of progress.

Arcane is a 3D animated action adventure series with an R-rating aimed primarily at an 18+ audience. As a case study, Arcane demonstrates how the art style is used to create the characters, stylizing them while keeping a range of emotions and detail. The 3D textures resemble a painting, as if the texture were painted onto the models. Many areas of light and shadow on a character’s face are painted onto the character’s model rather than relying on the 3D lighting set up.

As one of the most successful animated series of the previous year, Arcane has had a massive impact on my research and practice. One of the biggest influences it has is from the art style of the characters. While each of the characters in the series has realistic proportions, the painterly texture of skin, hair and clothes are meant to draw attention to certain features. For example, the scars on Vi’s left eyebrow and left upper lip are made slightly darker and the skin around it is slightly lighter, making it more obvious. It’s a small nod to character aspects that is enhanced by the art style.

Another influence is the narrative structure, pacing and themes Arcane uses to tell its story. With influential themes surrounding found family and pursuit of change, the series targets a mature audience with its use of morally ambiguous characters. This has numerous opportunities for interesting narrative writing, letting the characters fail morally, question their own motives and do hideous things for what they believe is right.



Violet and Powder - Arcane (2021)

## 5.5.2 Love, Death and Robots: Season 2 Episode 5 - The Tall Grass

An episode for the popular Netflix series Love, Death and Robots (Fincher et al., 2019–) by Axis Studios animation, “The Tall Grass” (Otto, S. 2021) is based upon a short story by Joe R. Lansdale. During a train ride at night across a prairie, a man is lured off the train by a mysterious light when the train breaks down in the middle of nowhere. This animation does several interesting things on a technical and stylistic level. Like Arcane, the animation has highly stylized character models with texture maps that mimic painting upon the character models. In addition the animation runs at a lower frame rate than the conventional 25 frames per second. The rough painterly style along with the stylization of the character models with hard angles, corners and features gives the whole look a gritty, lived-in feeling which would appeal to the more serious tone the story is aiming for.

What this short animation does well is the character design and art style enhancing the dark feel of the narrative. Much like Arcane, the texture artists painted certain aspects onto the characters. These features include things like shadows under the eyes, crows feet and laugh lines. The advantage of this is that no matter the light, these features will be easy for the audience to see, allowing for an easier time reading the character’s facial emotion. While the short story only has two characters, the tall and scholarly Laird and the stout and weathered Railman, the two look easily distinct and are easy to tell apart. Laird is skinny and most if not all his features are somewhat thin and long. He is clearly not a physically strong man and his well-pressed suit and tie along with his spectacles reinforces his inquisitive nature. In this way, the character designer can inform the audience about Laird’s natural curiosity, explaining why he ventures into the tall grass to investigate the otherworldly lights. The Railman by contrast is a shorter, stockier man with his slightly hunched position alluding to a life of manual labor. His wrinkled face and gray facial hair denote his age, making his advice to Laird throughout the story seem more wise than if it had come from a clean shaven teenager.



Laird - The Tall Grass: Love, Death & Robots Season 2

What this short animation shows more than anything, is the benefits of playing into tropes stereotypes for character design. When you have a limited screen time to play with, it’s a convenient thing to be able to draw upon the audience’s preconceived notions to quickly fill the blanks. An example of how I did this in my own work was Cecelia, the mechanic character. As a fast method of communicating her occupation to the viewer, I gave her an attire that invokes ideas of Rosie the Riveter and the chipper worker women of America in WW2, which nowadays is a steady stereotype.

### 5.5.3 Okja Case Study

“Okja” is a 2017 satirical action-adventure film by Bong Joon-ho. The film follows Mija, a young girl living in South Korea with her grandfather. Their job for the last ten years has been to look after Okja, one of 26 genetically engineered “super-pigs” created by the Mirando Corporation, a multinational food company. Okja is a film with clear underlying themes of animal cruelty and corporate exploitation. While the film might be somewhat satirical in nature, Jong-Ho is very clearly trying to critique the capitalist world we currently live in. As Mark Kermode, film critic for The Guardian, states in his review of the movie, “Okja uses the trappings of sci-fi fantasy to ask uncomfortably down-to-earth questions about where our food comes from, exposing the savage teeth of consumerism behind the friendly smile of corporate capitalism.” (Kermode, M. 2017)

In relation to my own project, seeing how an established film director deals with the challenge of sympathetic monsters is a great point of reference. The actual design of Okja, the giant genetically engineered super-pig, is pretty simple. While the creature doesn’t exist, it is meant to fit seamlessly into a world almost identical to our own. According to an interview done by the New York based Vulture magazine, Joon-Ho stated that “... It must look familiar, so it needs to have hints of animals we have seen: the pig, the hippo, the manatee.” (Jung, A, 2017). As the emotional heart of the movie, Okja’s look was a centerpiece for the whole film.

If Okja had been unlikeable or unable to provoke feelings of sympathy, the film would not have had the impact that it did. The purpose of the film is to enable the audience to experience the horrors of the mistreatment of animals at the hands of corporations. It is through the same response that we care about pets that allows the audience to get invested in Okja’s fate in the story. If the designers had made the genetically engineered super-pig look like a hideous monster, the film’s moral would not have had impact.

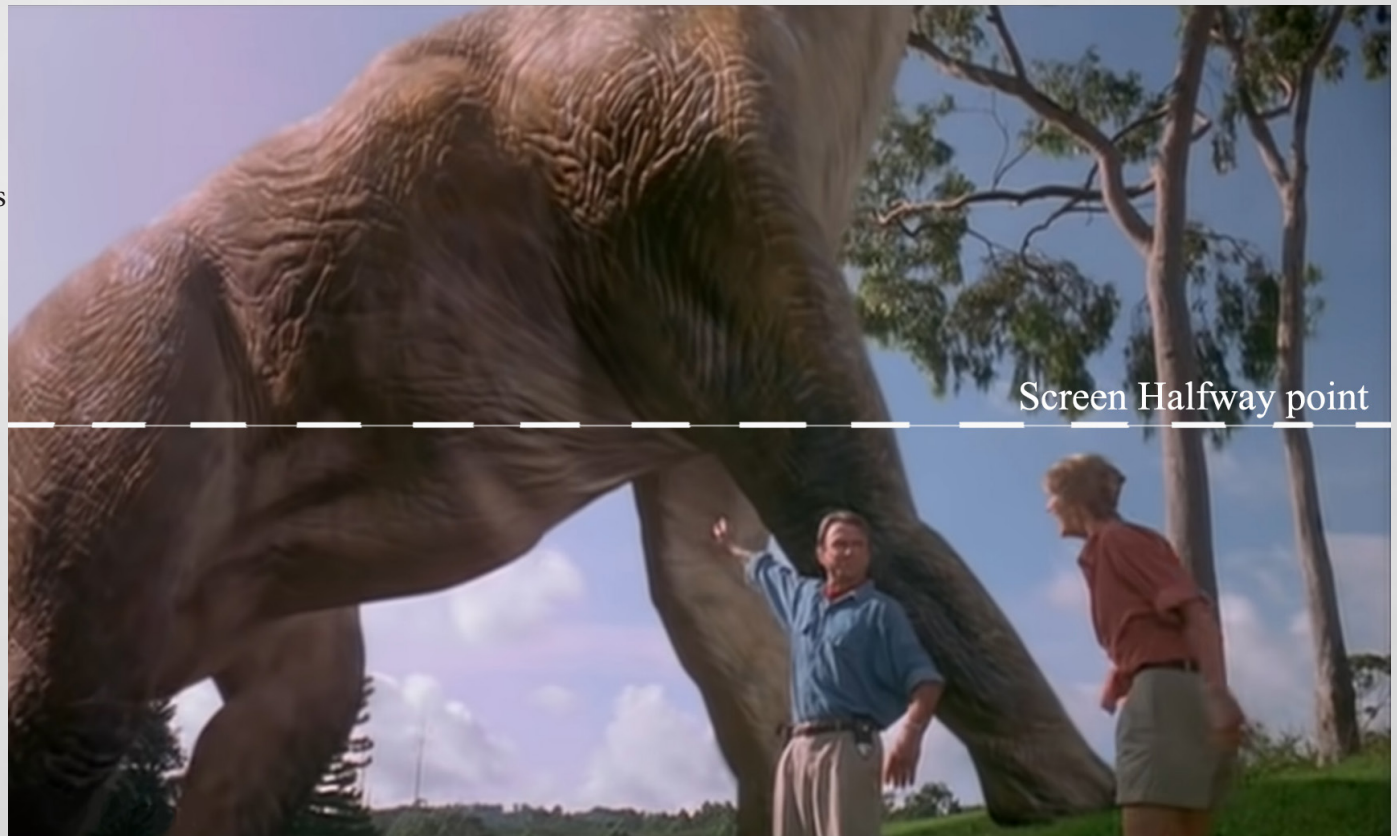


Okja and Mija- Okja (2017)

### 5.5.4 Jurassic Park Case Study

Jurassic Park is the 1993 world renowned blockbuster film from Steven Spielberg based on a novel by Micheal Crichton from 1990. The story centers about a group of people trapped on an island entertainment park where dinosaurs have been brought back to life. The film has been analyzed by academics since its release, particularly for its morality view of playing God and its portrayal of the ancient reptiles that roamed the earth. Jonathon Burdett (Films&Stuff, 2019) discusses how Spielberg uses scale to portray his prehistoric creatures to convey power. Burdett examines how the scale and framing is used to combine characters and creatures in the same shot. One example he gives is the cinematography in the first shot where we actually see the dinosaurs, when John Hammond is introducing Dr. Alan Grant and Dr. Ellie Sattler to the park. In the shot, the Dinosaur towers over the human characters and doesn't even fit in the frame. Often in these types of shots, the human character will occupy only a small part of the lower half of the screen.

Much like the creatures in this project's narrative, the creatures are the hook of Jurassic Park. Many movie goers would have seen the film for the immersive experience of having dinosaurs brought back to life. Spielberg uses his cinematography to draw focus on certain parts of each dinosaur. As with any good hook, it should be the thing people remember most after watching the piece of media. Having the hook feature in the pitch would be a big deal, as it is the cornerstone of how you are trying to sell the IP. With a lot of the predators, focus is often drawn towards eyes, teeth and talons. A useful technique to keep in mind for designing the creatures in this project, what are their primary features, how does that read to an audience and how does the key scene cinematography frame these features?



Alan Grant & Ellie Sattler with Brachiosaurus - Jurassic Park (1993)

### 5.5.5 *Love and Monsters*

A recent example, the 2020 Paramount Picture film, “Love and Monsters” (Matthews, M. 2020) features a multitude of different mutated animals and insects. Two that are of interest for this research are the “Boulder Snail” and the Giant Crab. The Boulder Snail is a massive snail wearing a moss covered boulder for a shell. While the image of a large mucus covered snail might conjure some mild disgust, the shot framing and how the humans characters interact with it suggest more of a powerful but docile beast of burden, harmless as long as it isn’t threatened or startled. That the creature has no large teeth or sharp claws provides a subtle hint to the viewer that the creature has no hostile intentions.

The Giant Crab on the other hand, is designed in such a way that its initial appearance should immediately signal to the audience that it is a hostile predator. With a jagged, spiked carapace and an enormous mouth filled with sharp teeth, in any other film the Crab would undoubtedly be a hostile creature for the protagonists to defeat without a second thought. However, playing into the film’s message of animal treatment, the Giant Crab is being tortured and mistreated, shown by the chains wrapped around its shell. In a call back to the Boulder Snail, the Crab also has large human-like eyes as a visual way of showing the audience the creature’s more sympathetic side.

The influence this case study had on the project is mostly centered around creature design and intent. Thinking about how the audience will interpret the physical features of a creature and use that to inform their understanding of its role within the narrative.



Love & Monsters (2020)

## 6.0 Design and Methodology

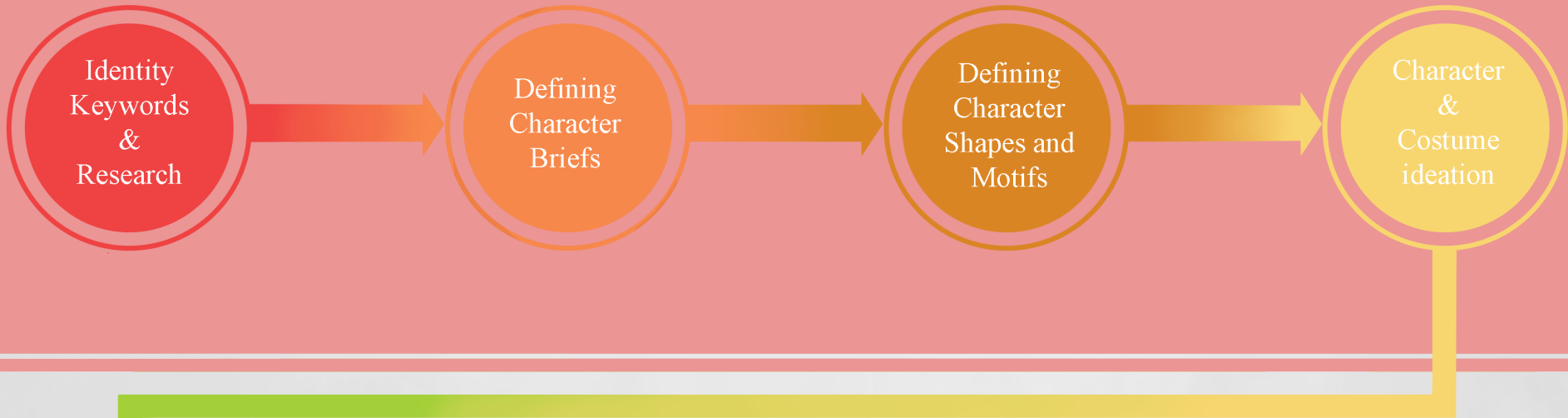
### *6.1: Method Outline*

As the main output goal of the project, I aimed to produce a pitch bible document with a body of supporting character concept art work. The main form I decided to pursue this with is referred to as a “Show bible”. Similar to a “Writer’s Bible”, a comprehensive text document outlining the intent and aims for the writers of a show or movie, a “Show Bible” incorporates artwork as a supporting visual. As a concession, the artwork ends up replacing a portion of the written text that one might expect.

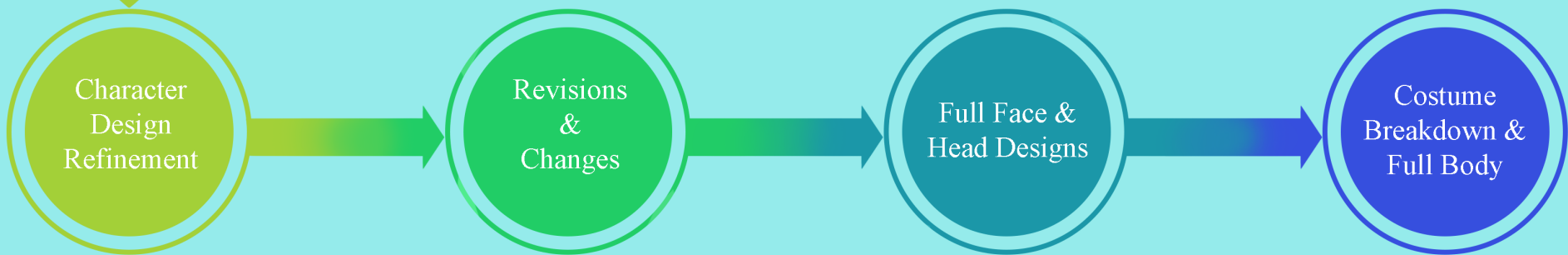
Given my background in 3D animation and 2D concept design I wanted to draw upon my understanding of the full process to realize the concept design workload. This includes both 2D painting and drawing work as well as some 3D modeling and texture work to sell the final product. In general most of the actual design and ideation work will be done as 2D paintings in programs such as Adobe Photoshop. The purpose of taking the final designs into a 3D space is to give the project a sense of final authenticity as the proposed final product of the pitch would be a 3D animated TV series. Having head or full body models of characters and creatures is merely to provide a proof of concept for the designs, showing they work in context.

I produced a pitch bible document as the final design outcome. As supporting work, I designed the main cast of the narrative proposed in the pitch bible. This consists of a cast of characters, 3 male and 3 female characters including the protagonist and the antagonist.

# Research & Ideation



# Refinements & Final Paintings



## *6.2: Narrative Overview*

### ***Logline***

A ragtag band of adventurers are hired by a wealthy industrialist to track down a colossal creature so it can be harvested for the fuel found inside its guts.

### ***First episode Synopsis***

The industry Capital of Shliwyd is struggling with a fuel shortage/energy crisis. The story focuses on Ethan Moore, a young man working to keep his family afloat while attending illegal hoverbike races. After being caught stealing from the marketplace for his family's dinner, Ethan is carted away not to prison but to the office of Adaline Yier, the newest member of the city's ruling body. Looking to solidify her position of power, Adaline plans to solve the fuel crisis. To this end Adaline offers Ethan a job as the pilot for a secret crew tasked with finding a herd of Fumah, Colossal beasts which produce a powerful fuel source in their organs.

### ***Purpose of the Story***

The idea behind the story is to use the characters to drive the plot and play out the moral quandaries, the creatures act as a stand in allegory for the animals in the real world which are hunted to fuel the wildlife trade of the black market, while the setting is meant to mimic a fantastical form of the industrial revolution; the era in which the environmental population caused by humanity began to ramp up to the environmental crisis of the modern era.

## 6.3 Tone and visual style

### *Non-comedic animated TV series*

An interesting insight I found into the animation marketplace was the age of the target audience playing a role in the choice of animation medium. More specifically, unless the show or film is comedic in nature, an adult animated show will usually use 3D CGI (Computer generated image) animation as opposed to 2D animation. While there isn't a lot of concrete research around this subject, this could be because 3D animation allows for more detail. With a greater emphasis on detail, 3D can be a lot closer to realism, giving it more weight when it delves into darker subject matter. This could also be because comedic productions usually run on a smaller budget. With a simpler pipeline and art style, 2D animation tends to be the better choice for animating on a budget.

Generally speaking, the animation industry has been trending slowly towards 3D animation as it has become more accessible and widespread. As such the structure for producing a 3D series is not only more accessible than it has been in the past, but arguable an audience would expect an adult focused action adventure flick to be well detailed in a 3D style as that is almost the modern standard.

### *Stylization of the show*

Probably the biggest challenge or learning curve for this project was finding the stylization. At the outset of the design work, I thought I had a decent handle on how to create a specific look for the animation. However, I later realised that not only was designing a stylization to work with a difficult task, but keeping it consistent over a body of work was going to be a challenge. It wasn't until I had finished ideation work on the first character, "Adaline Yier" that I started to find a sense of stylization that worked for my project.

## *Problem when designing protagonists: Generic handsomeness*

A particular challenge I faced with the main character of the narrative was the feeling of a lack of options due to his position as the main character. During the several iterations I did for lead protagonist Ethan Moore, I found myself struggling to come up with something that was interesting yet fitting the character. This is apparently a common issue with leading characters as they are generally expected to be somewhat handsome or good-looking.

Generally a lead protagonist that isn't attractive or is considered ugly, is breaking the stereotypes and tropes of your typical leading character. A good example of this in an animated film is Quasimodo from the Disney Company's adaptation of the Hunchback of Notre Dame (Trousdale, G & Wise, K. 1996). Quasimodo's deformity and ugly appearance is a defining trait of the character that plays into the film's themes of inwards vs outwards appearances. If a leading character isn't explicitly ugly to serve the narrative, then they are generally expected to be at the very least a bland sort of beautiful. While I found no particular way to fix this issue, I found some interesting ideas by investigating nomadic cultures and genetic factors in facial shapes. A good example I found was having the tip and base of the nose pointing downwards to make a distinct pointed shape along with a somewhat pronounced nose ridge. Not only did this work for the main protagonist, but I found that it was a win for other characters of similar ethnic backgrounds to give them a distinctive look.

Designing for animation

A rather interesting opportunity that I almost didn't realize I had was the chance to design my character from scratch. While this might seem obvious in retrospect, it wasn't until I looked at my classmates' work for peer review that I realised what an advantage I had as a designer by comparison. As I wasn't working under the constraint of live action, I could explore far more radical designs for my character costume and even bodies. On the other hand, this blessing was also a curse. Due to stylization cutting down on the information or detail in a character model, the overall design of the characters had to be more distinct from one another. An important character sharing a body type with another important character could lead to confusion if the other aspects of the design don't create enough difference for an audience to tell them apart.

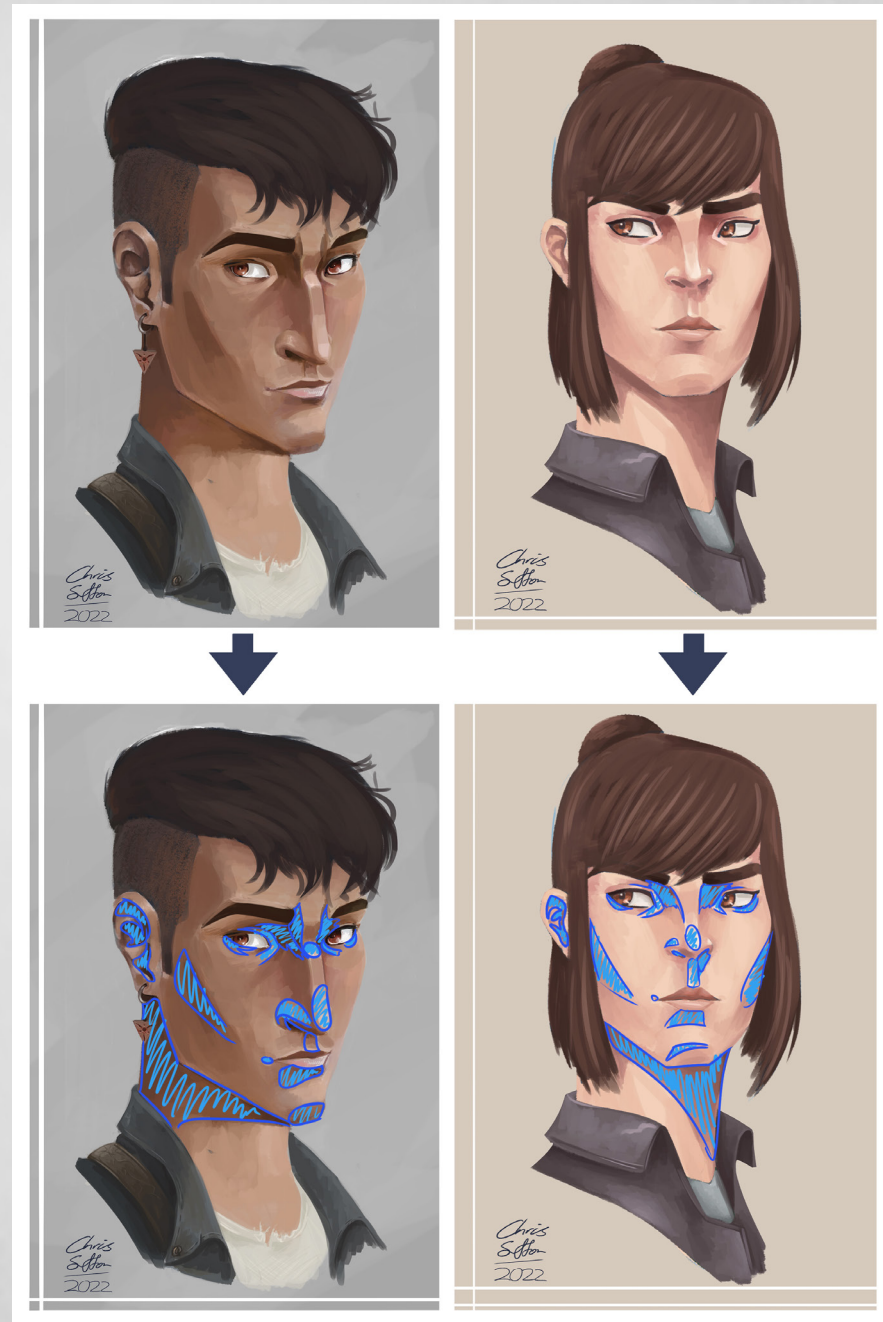
## 6.4: Characters design - Driving the story

As characters are the main driving force of the story, designing not just their look but also their style is an important part of the supporting design work. As the medium of the TV series is 3D animated, there is a decent amount of creative freedom I have as a designer. As such I have employed a stylized design method to create face and body structure. This is a similar process to those outlined by industry character artists such as Matt Rhodes, who spoke about the process in a talk to the Alberta College of Art and Design. Using a set series of shapes language for each character helps to give each one of the main cast a distinctive look so they could be instantly recognized.

One of the biggest issues I faced while working on the first week of design work for the Weta internship was the style of the artwork. With the ability to stylize the characters' looks thanks to the animated medium, doing something interesting to make them stand out was a given. However, in my first round of design I was being far too safe with the design and sticking to realism. It took some pointed feedback from the designer at Weta for me to realise I was wasting a lot of potential. After spending the following weekend researching animated shows and stylized characters, I moved to a design space of exaggerated features and shape language to define my characters and design methodology in an effort to push the envelope.

### 6.4.1 - Shapes Language

As shape language is the basis for a large portion of character design decisions, many companies have documents covering the fundamentals as a way of making sure all their employees are on the same page. For example, in a short five page article "The Walt Disney family Museum" the unnamed author goes into an overview of the most basic shapes used in shapes language, circles, squares and triangles. This gave me a basic area to start with each character, by looking at reference material for each character and identifying what recurring shapes best suited them.



When talking about these methods for character design, the most notorious is the idea of sinister or morally ambiguous characters being made of sharp angles and triangles. Many animated villains and antagonists feature some sort of hard corners or point in their design. Some of the most recognizable characters of this type include many of Disney's 2D animated villains like Judge Claude Frollo from the Hunchback of Notre Dame (Trousdale, G & Wise, K. 1996) and Scar from the Lion King (Allers, I & Minkoff, R. 1994). These characters typically employ the use of a lot of "V" shapes in their design and this isn't by accident. In a study led by Derrick G. Watson, a team of psychologists found that there is a negative response or thought process when viewing inverted triangle shapes (Watson, D. 2012). As such it became common to design sinister characters using inverted triangle shapes because it is an easy way to designate the antagonist that almost any audience will recognize.

The main goal of character design is to tell the basics of the story that can't be easily told through dialogue. While it can be tempting as a concept artist to try to put as much detail as possible into a character design, this is generally regarded to be a poor way of working. The goal is to be economic, to say as much as possible without overcrowding the design. Motifs aren't used as a hard rule but rather a guide as stated by freelance artist Brookes Eggleston, "All of that is being communicated to us without words or prior knowledge of these characters through a language. Characters are made up of more than just one shape but generally a character will have an overall shape motif" (Eggleston, B. 2015). Overall, the best method for using character shape language when designing characters for adult animation is to draw from realistic reference for defining facial features and employing a shape motif for each character to distinguish them from one another.



Judge Claude Frollo: The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), Scar: The Lion King (1994)

## 6.5: Creature design - The Hook

In the narrative, the creatures serve as both an objective for the characters and as a major part of the world building. The Fumah are massive quadruple herbivores at around 52 meters high, with the native Miran population building settlements on their backs. While the focus of this project was the characters, I knew that I would need to address the creatures in some form as they would influence the design of the characters to at least some degree.

For designing the creatures of the story, scale was an important factor. In fact it could be argued that the idea of creatures that tower over the landscape is the all important hook of the narrative and project. As a base reference, I looked into the large endangered animals of today. Either before the time of humanity, most of the largest land based animals are herbivores. As additional reference, I am looking at mammals, reptiles and insects from both the modern day and historic sources. The idea is to get a range of concepts, features and ideas that can assist in making the monsters in the narrative look familiar yet warped or either slightly alien.



The purpose of the creature's overwhelming size is to convey a sense of its importance. In ecology, there is a theory called "Trophic cascade", where the loss of a species at the top of a food chain causes problems for all other species in the given ecosystem (Rosen, 2016). Normally, these "Keystone species" are predators that keep herbivore populations in check. As the focus of the story is the impact of poaching, it made sense to tie their size to the idea they are meant to represent. A large creature will have a large impact on its environment, and so would its sudden disappearance. Unlike the character, there only needs to be one design for the creatures, so there is a lot more time to dedicate to polishing the design and its proof of concept. While it is possible that there will be a chance to create the entire creature in a 3D space, the primary model should be the head. If only the head was made, it would be an interesting exercise to rig and animate the model. This would be more useful than animating the human heads as humans are naturally predisposed to recognize faces, emotions and how they move. If there is the time to create the entire model, it would be likely that I would forgo giving the models a full moving rig and instead focus on using particles and effects to flesh out the design. Due to the creature's size, there should be a decent amount of rumble and environmental clutter on them.

As per the research in the "Jurassic Park" Film, framing the creatures is a matter of selling the idea of their enormous size. For the purposes of showing them in a Key Scene, they should dwarf the human characters in the frame by an order of magnitude.

### *Monster Size*

While it has been relegated to a smaller part of the project, Monsters are still an important part of the story or narrative this project is using to investigate the pitching process. They act as the gimmick or McGuffin of the story, their position as a resource, animals and walking natural disaster driving the characters to make choices and decisions. One thing that stood out to me when looking over the history of monsters in film was how a majority of non-sentient creatures are larger than humans. The other major thing I noticed was the slow shift towards monsters with positive connotations as opposed to the negative depictions from decades past.



## 7.0 Results & Findings

The original goal of the project was to cover a wider range of material, including character, creature, environments and props. While the goal of creating a pitch document was consistent throughout the project, the content of the project changed dramatically. The project became more focused on character, environment was dropped also entirely and the prop and creature work was done as means to compliment the character design work rather than stand on its own. After the initial research, narrative ideation and first round of design work, I decided to focus on the character work as a means of developing the pitch document. This choice was made due to my own interest and skill set around character design and development.

Probably the biggest achievement for the project was a collection of artwork containing ideation for six different characters that needed to feel like they existed within the same narrative while remaining easily recognizable from one another. The first hurdle I encountered with this aspect of the project was getting an universal art style for the project. It was through some research into adult animation series and a lot of drawing practice that I was able to nail down the process. I found that I got the best results by focusing my attention in a few key spots. These areas typically surround the important area features of the face, such as the creases around the eyes and the corners of the mouth. These are areas where the skin folds, bends and creases, defining the overall structure of the face. While important facial features like eyebrows and the mouth will dictate the character expression, because of the art style I went with, the structure of the face is shown through these small details.

There were a number of things that recontextualized my thinking around the project just from the research I did into the subjects of pitching, creatures, poaching and animation stylization. These findings ranged from insights into the animation industry to simple ideas around character shape language and stylization.



## 7.1 Character design

### *Ethan - Roguish Pilot*

*“The main protagonist of the series. Ethan is the eldest son of a native Miran mother and a poor colonist father, Ethan has had a rough upbringing. With his father always at work to support the family, Ethan ended up playing caretaker to his siblings whenever his mother was busy. Hotheaded and thrill-seeking by nature, Ethan would often sneak out after dark for illegal airbike races.”*

Ethan had a few design challenges, mainly the aforementioned “handsome protagonist” syndrome, making his design ideation somewhat dull and repetitive. I found the most success with this character referencing African, Middle Eastern and Native American facial features to create a particular look for Ethan. Many of his design elements can also be carried over to other characters with Miran heritage such as Adaline. Inspired by roguish heroes like “Han Solo” from Star Wars and “Jim Hawkins” from Disney’s Treasure Planet, I focused on using asymmetry for his clothing and angled features for his face.

Overall, I would say I’m content with where I ended up with Ethan’s design. His roguish nature comes through in the asymmetry of the costume and the long triangular shapes in his shape motif.





## Alexander - Quirky Professor

*“The positive father role model for the main character, Alexander is a jovial professor and loving husband. A scholar well versed in the biology of the new continent, all his knowledge came from reading the findings of other scientists. After years of study, the professor was challenged by one of his students to talk about his own experiences with his subject matter. Unable to honestly answer his student, Alexander resolved to prove himself out in the field, despite his aversion to violence and clumsy nature.”*

As his role in the story is that of the bumbling, well learned, well meaning mentor character, I knew that I wanted Alexander to look like someone who was easily approachable but out of his depth outside of the city. To this end, I explored a lot of ideas involving soft, round or wide shapes. In the end I settled on a sort of “drip” or tear drop shape motif, where the outlines of features like his nose and sideburns were done as if they were dripping down his face as a sort of visual metaphor.

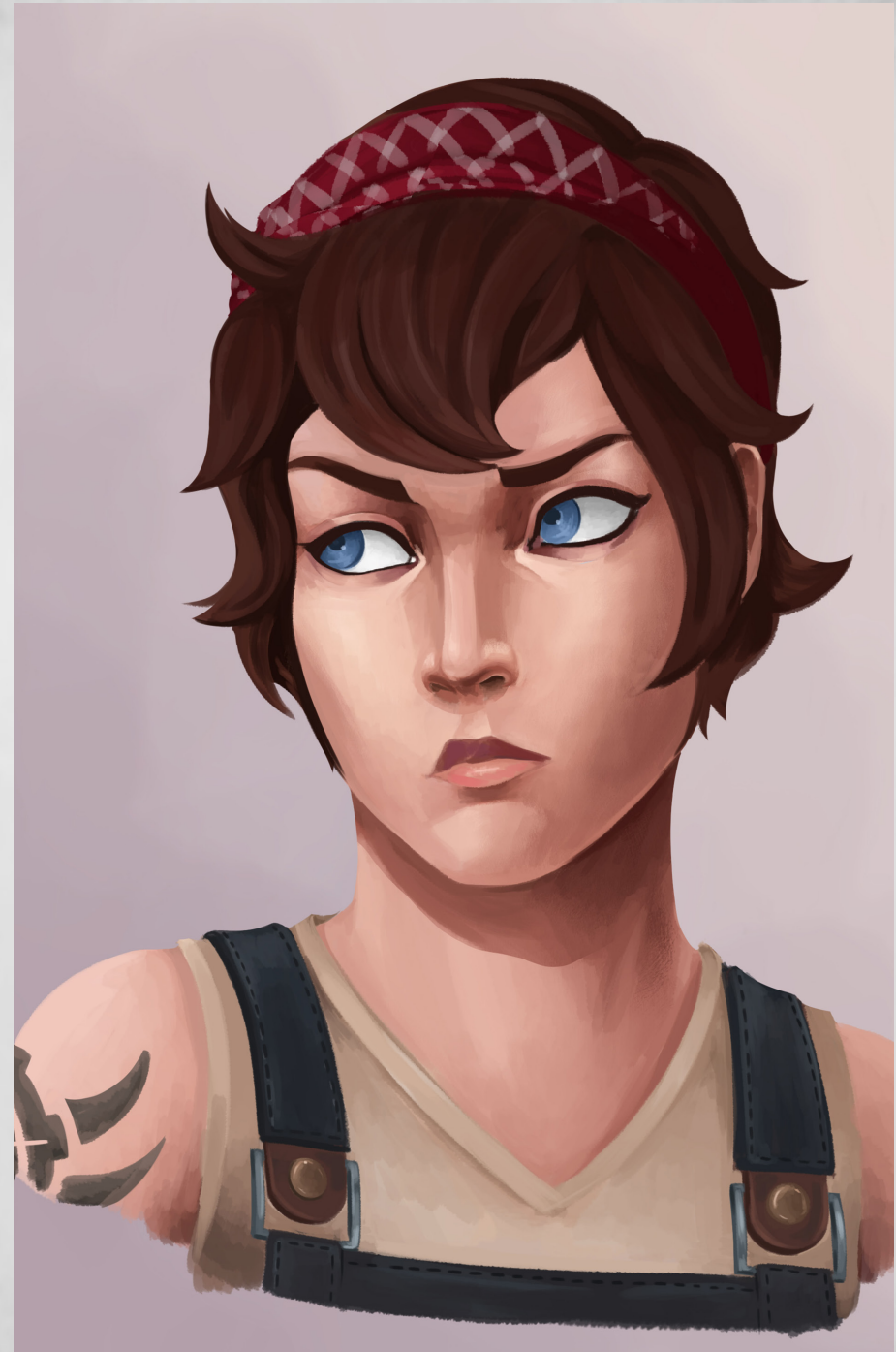
As a character design, while it serves its purpose, I feel that Alexander’s design is possibly the weakest of the six characters. His design feels a bit stuck and the general look of his costume doesn’t invoke any interesting thoughts. On a more positive note, I am happy with how the shape motif of the tear drop worked for his face and head, as well the distinguished color note his bright orange scarf provides.

## Cecelia - Sunny Mechanic

*“The only daughter of a couple of middle class merchants, Cecelia may have been set up for an unremarkable life if it had not been for her endless need to trinket and build. With a talent for making gadgets whirl and engines hum, Cecelia works to save up enough money to one day buy her own shop, selling her inventions to the public. Unfortunately, the recent fuel crisis has caused a recession within the city of Shliwyd. Cecelia knows if she wants to achieve her dream, she needs to come into a lot of money very quickly.”*

The cheerful mechanic of the team, I knew from the start I wanted to lean into a softer character shapes language. The main issues to tackle with this character was making her look the part of her profession while retaining bits of character in the clothing and overall design. I found a good place to start was looking into the iron chipper women from World War 2 as their image is one of the more prolific for women work in the trades in decades past. This is likely due to the popularity of characters like ‘Rosie the Riveter’ used in propaganda during that time. I’ve tried adding several other more personal touches to bring out the character, such as tattoos on the shoulders and the bandanna warped around her hair.

I was pretty happy with how Cecelia turned out. While her shape motif of simple circles or ovals is a bit generic, it works. She definitely invokes the idea of a hard working grease monkey while having a few factors like her bandanna and tattoo which lets her personality shine through.





## *Philippa - Landed Elite Captain*

*“The youngest daughter of a family of landed nobles, Philippa spent her early days watching her family spend their wealth like there was no tomorrow. By the time Philippa was in her adolescence, the family had spent their entire fortune. Striking out on her own, Philippa made a name for herself as a no-nonsense and reliable airship captain, with the price to match. When her parents turned up on her doorstep asking for money, Philippa turned them away, seeing them as the decadent party goers she remembered from her youth.”*

As the leader of the crew, Philippa’s body, face and costume design needed to carry the idea that she is someone who is in her element when in command. I wanted to pull the design away from historical references for this particular character due to the constrained roles women were expected to play. This meant that my choice of historical reference was limited to women who were famous for breaking those stereotypes of the 19th and early 20th century, such as Amelia Earhart and Nancy Wake. The primary shape motif for Philippa was wide, square shapes as a shorthand for her stubborn and serious nature.

Philippa was a surprise success for me. I struggled a bit while I was writing her brief, trying to imagine how I was going to make her an interesting and unique looking character. Indeed my first round of ideation produced very unimpressive results, it wasn’t until my second round of ideation a month later that I started finding aspects and ideas I liked. Overall I would say while Philippa isn’t as embedded in the research or themes as some of the other characters, the success of her design was one of my bigger successes in the design aspect of the project.

## Theo - Great White Hunter

*“After running away from his abusive father at the age of 11, Theo was taken in by an organization of frontier hunters as a ward. Taking to their way of life like a fish to water, Theo became an important member in the community and a paragon of their way of life. Working as an intermediate between the hunters and the powerful trade cities of the colonies, Theo has friends in high places. Theo prides himself on his strength and ability to dominate the world around him.”*

The father figure with negative points of view to share, Theo was a relatively easy character to design as I knew I wanted to play on the trope of the old western outlaw. For his shape motif, I used trapezoids to give him blocky features with sharp points to add a sinister element. Theo presented an interesting design opportunity in the form of his main prop, his hunting rifle. As the negative representation of the human/nature relationship, Theo's weapon was going to always be an important part of his character as it reflects his desire to conquer and destroy. It had to be an object that showed his brutality but also showed his pride as a hunter. I ended up looking at a lot of guns from pre-world war America such as the Winchester model 1873, marketed as the gun that “won the west”.

Overall, I'm pretty happy with where Theo ended up. While he could be considered a bit of a trope, he serves his function within the story and designing his rifle gave him a point of interest. If I could add one thing it would be something slightly more colorful in his attire, something I tried to do with a couple of the characters. This was something I did for Cecelia and Alexander as a way to add points of interest in their costume and I feel that I should have given Theo the same treatment. However, Theo's trapezoid shape motif, rifle prop and overall design do work well as they are currently.





## *Adaline - Ruthless Plutocrat*

*“The newest member of Shliwyd’s ruling body, “The silver council”, Adaline Yier is an extremely wealthy business woman. A self-made woman, Adaline rose from humble beginnings by crushing her competition. Now owning a majority of the smelters and refineries in the city, Adaline is perfectly situated to solve the city’s fuel crisis and solidify her power.”*

Adaline was probably the earliest win I had with character design. Her straight forward shape language of triangles works quite well and easily marks as someone not to trust. One of the more interesting ideas was making sure Adaline and Ethan shared certain facial features as they are meant to have a similar heritage and that was something I wanted a viewer to be able to recognize without prompting. Another point of interest for Adaline’s design was her costume. More than anything, this had to push Adaline away from the other characters as she is meant to be in a class of her own by comparison. Visually it is meant to clue the audience into the idea that Adaline isn’t a fighter or adventurer, but rather someone who pulls the strings using influence and wealth.

Out of the six characters covered in this project, I think Adaline was the most successful. She feels very unique with a decent amount of details to show off her character. Adaline’s shape motif of inverted triangles transitioned well to both her facial features and costume. Probably my biggest disappointment for the character was that I didn’t have time to explore multiple costumes for the different parts of the narrative. On a more positive note, Adaline was one of the most important successes for the project as her look dictated the art style of the project after her ideation.

### *7.3: Results*

More than anything, the advice I heard about pitching on repeat was to research the company and the genre before presenting them with your pitch idea. As mentioned earlier, the most basic consideration is what the company you are selling to products is. Selling a gory adult action film idea to Pixar or Dreamworks is inadvisable as both companies are a target demographic of young children. Additionally, it is a good idea to look at what the company might be producing, your product might fit the bill, but they might already be working on something similar. You also need to know if the IP did get turned into a piece of medium, where it would sit in the market. At the end of the day, you are selling an idea to a company that wants to turn a profit. The last thing that was mentioned repeatedly by multiple sources was that in addition to selling the IP, you are also selling yourself as the professional. A lot of people who pitch IP's are kept on as directors or other leading rollers.

As far as the pitch is concerned, I think it was overall a success but perhaps it was more successful as a character study rather than a true full pitch. Due to time constraints, I had to narrow the scope of the project. What I ended up deciding to do was focus on what I was getting results with, the character, and moving away from environments which I was struggling with. The upside to this is that the characters are well fleshed out, both in narrative and in concept design. The downside was that what bits of world building I could get in was whatever I could incorporate into the character design. However, given that a lot of the research I did into pitching suggested that it shouldn't be presenting a complete final IP, there is an argument to be made that it has achieved what I set out to accomplish.

Probably the biggest change in my professional viewpoint was getting feedback on my work that encouraged me to find my niche skill set and make the most of it. A common pitfall that artists, animators and filmmakers run into is the desire to do everything. Starting out I aimed to cover all aspects of a narrative, character, props, environment etc. This turned out to be unwise, especially in light of the research I did surrounding pitching and how most companies don't want a finalized product. After refocusing the project around my strengths in character design, I started seeing much more positive results.

## 8. Conclusion

Overall, the investigation into the pitching process was an interesting peek into the very beginning stages of the life cycle of an animation production. While there were a lot of design considerations and bits of info, there was a fair amount of information surrounding the presentation itself that was incredibly useful and enlightening. Some of it seems obvious in retrospect, such as making sure the product you are proposing matches the portfolio of the company you are presenting to, a company that makes kids morning TV shows won't pick up a violent superhero flick aimed at adults. Other ideas seem a bit outlandish at first glance, such as the idea of not "overdeveloping" an IP to the point of completion as a company will likely want to make changes so the product fits their brand.

For myself as an animator and concept designer, this paper has forced me to improve in several ways. At a basic level, I learned a lot of small technical tricks that improved my drawing and rendering substantially and got a lot of feedback on my technical abilities that made me reexamine how I approach painting and drawing. As an animator, much of the research has gotten me to think about style as a medium for ideas rather than just a step by step process. Why it might benefit a production to commit to one style rather than another and what that would mean for the concept art and the animation work moving forward. Through a lot of the feedback I got from tutors and peers, I've had to think about what niche I should be looking into as a professional.

My main gain from the research I have done into the pitching process has been a personal gain. As my goal is to create my own series/movies/media one day, this is likely a process I will have to go through to get the funding or job position I would need to make that desire a reality. Knowing what I need to research, what I need to include and what limits I should put on the amount of work put into any presentation documents is a solid foundation to work from in future endeavors.

## 8.1 Glossary

- Pitch: A Presentation or document outlining an idea for product
- 3D animation: A video made using CGI techniques and software
- CGI: Computer Generated Image
- 2D animation: A video made using frame-by-frame drawing techniques or digital drawing software
- Deliverables: A series of work aimed at being the final product of the project
- Shape language: The use of basic shapes (Squares, Circles, Triangles, Etc) to construct/design distinct character/objects/environments
- IP: Intellectual property or an idea/story that legally belongs to an individual or company
- Target audience: The primary group or age range a piece of media is aimed at appealing to
- Medium: The method in which a piece of media is made, EG: Claymation, Live action, Hand drawn 2D animation
- Executive Producer: A role in which creative content is supervised and financial spending is secured and overseen.
- Monster: A non-natural/fictional animal or humanoid, Comes from the Latin “Monstrum” meaning unnatural omen or portent.

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