

CQU: MMST11010 Illustration & Visualisation

Week 10 Tutorial:

Intro

This week we begin with some simple warming up and loosening up exercises and then commence some seriously fun work practicing how to respond to a creative brief through brainstorming, producing thumbnails, evaluating the thumbnails and then, producing concept roughs.

Exercise 10.1: Primitive animals

Objectives:

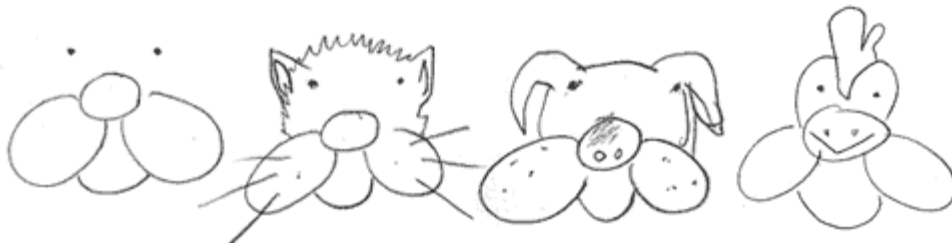
- Develop fluency and loosen up by producing multiples quickly and repetitively.
- Experiment more with shape primitives to produce rounded characters.
- Try to establish some consistency of personal style when drawing different characters.

What you'll need:

- Dozens of sheets of scrap (recycled or butcher's quality) paper
- Soft grade pencil
- Eraser
- Sketch book
- Felt tip drawing pen

Exercise 10.1.1

This is another one of those limbering up exercises. As quickly as you can using a pencil, fill several sheets of paper with animal faces with different expressions. Do not use your eraser for this exercise. Think of successful formula types that you can remember from other cartoons. Make up dogs, cats, rabbits, kangaroos, koalas, whatever. It doesn't really matter. Give them different expressions. Just sketch lots of them and have a bit of fun. Remember to use your whole arm and wrist, not just your fingers, when you draw. Approx time: 10 minutes.



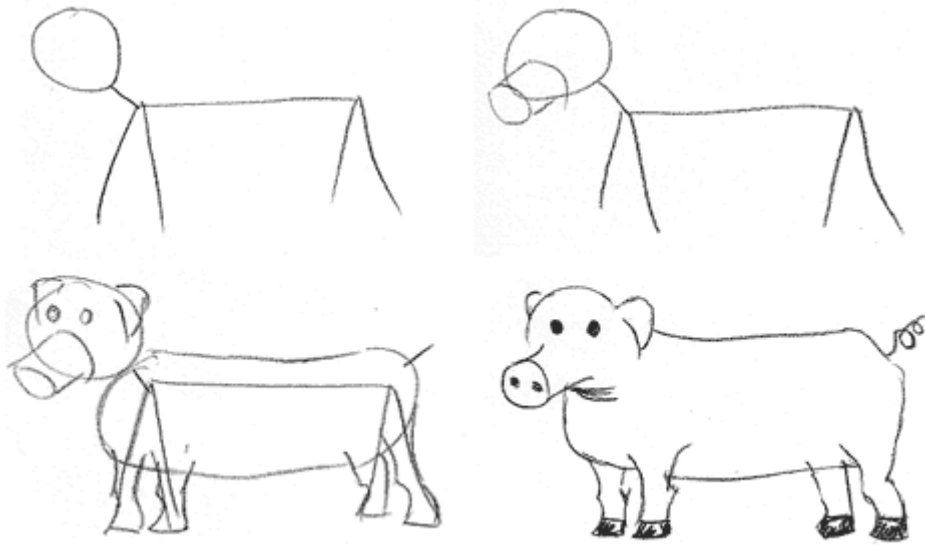
Exercise 10.1.2

Remember the shape primitives from exercise 9.3.1 last week? Continuing with the focus on loosening up, in this exercise you are to draw whole animals. They need not be accurate, but should be recognisable as being a certain kind of animal. Try to pick up on the features and traits that are characteristic of that animal and their typical movements.

Use your sketch book or better quality paper for this exercise, because you may finish your drawings with a pen. It may be helpful to draw the animal in stages in pencil first:

1. start with flat shapes and sticks
2. fill out the body parts with three-dimensional shape primitives
3. add character details, especially in the face, and a maybe a little texture here and there
4. use a felt pen to ink in a final version.

The final version should maintain a sketchy quality and simplicity. When the ink is dry you may like to rub out the pencil lines. Take approx 10 minutes to draw at least 4 different animals.



Exercise 10.2: Simple backgrounds

Objectives:

- Learn to suggest interior and exterior spaces with minimal lines.
- Experiment with using this minimal technique to establish point of view.
- Practice thinking of a cartoon space as a simple stage set or backdrop in which to place a character. Use as few 'stage props' as are necessary to achieve the setting.
- Apply simple perspective where appropriate, e.g. one or two point views.

What you'll need:

- Sketch book
- Soft grade pencil
- An eraser
- A felt tip drawing pen

Exercise 10.2.1

Quickly divide up some pages with rectangular windows. They should be of mixed sizes and proportions. In each window, establish a different scene. Try to choose an appropriate shape of window for the setting that you draw into it. For example, a wide format may be more suitable for a desert landscape, whereas a forest may fit better into a tall format.

Make use of clichés, stereotypes and scenes which may be recognisable to others that you remember from TV shows and popular media.

At first using a pencil and your eraser if you need to, then finishing in pen using line only (no tone or hatching), create a number of different scenes. Do not insert any main characters at this stage. Use the following list if you like or think of your own:

- Bedroom ● Sydney Harbour ● Farm (worm's eye view)
- Office ● Heart of the city ● Forrest (bird's eye view)
- Lounge room ● Rubbish dump ● Beach (sunbaker's view)
- Gymnasium ● Desert road ● Inside a car (driver's POV)

If you are working quickly and simply enough, you should be able to produce 16 views like this in approx 15 minutes. If you finish with time to spare, try inking up your favourite ones.



Exercise 10.3: Concept and story board visualisation

Note: It may be useful to refer back to the Week 3 Lecture entitled What is visualisation? in association with these exercises.

Objectives:

- In response to a specific brief.:
 - a) rehearse the practice of 'brainstorming' a concept;
 - b) rehearse the practice of producing multiples of quick thumbnails during the process of working up a concept idea;
 - c) In producing the thumbnails focus on trying variations of:
 - points-of-view that may be suitable to deal with the topic;
 - appropriate settings and props (theatrical properties);
 - appropriate characterisation options for the main character (- human or animal? - age? - gender?);
 - action and how best to represent it?
- Be able to make a critically-based selection from your own thumbnail options as to which is the most appropriate and be able to justify your choice.
- Drawing from the imagination, and using a cartoon line style, produce a 3-frame story board visual concept rough.
- Learn to annotate a concept rough with notes which will explain any details you may have introduced that were not in the brief and which may not be self-explanatory in your sketches.

What you'll need:

- Sketch book
- Soft grade pencil
- An eraser
- A felt tip drawing pen

The Brief:

As part of a commercial animation project, you have been given the job of brainstorming and producing visualisations for three key frames. The project is at a very early stage. Suggestions that you make for the characterisation of the 'hero' and the setting may be adopted. In this sense the brief is quite broad and requires creative input of ideas. However, the producer is very specific about the narrative

sequence that is required. The idea is this:

after dreaming a fantastic dream in 3 dimensions, the (as yet unspecified) character, who is awoken by an alarm, discovers to their dismay that they are actually quite two-dimensional and flat.

[Note: “dismay” means upset or alarm, and the word has connotations of dread or apprehension]

The three key frame concepts required of you, which will be finished in pen line work, are:

1/ The dream

To be represented by you as one frame only, you are to make useful suggestions for the dream topic, setting, action and any actors that may be involved. In production the dream could be shot as real action or as animation. The main requirement is that it would not be complex and would need to establish itself as a dream in a five second time space. It is up to you whether or not you include the sleeping dreamer in this frame visual. You will quite likely need to support your visual with explanatory notes.

2/ The alarm goes off!

This could be a close-up of a clock. Alternatively, the view could be wider and double up as an establishing shot for the following frame. It could be that the alarm is not a clock. It could be that the alarm is a clock and that the clock is a character in their own right. It is up to you whether the alarm is represented in two or three dimensions (flat or round).

3/ The dreadful realisation

You need to establish a who or what this character is. How much costume, if any, would be required to support the characterisation? You need to decide how much setting, if any, is appropriate. What sort of action would explain the situation visually? Obviously there will be a need to work on facial expression and body language.

Major considerations:

You will need to think about resolving the issue of continuity. How will you convey that it is the same character that has transformed from the round state to the flat state over the three frames?

Don't take the task too seriously. The producer is looking for ideas, not a masterpiece. Have fun.

Exercise 10.3.1: Brainstorming.

On-campus students should work in pairs or small groups. Off-campus students should try to find someone else to brainstorm with. If a real-time chat group for the class has been formed and a meeting time can be arranged then this is a good format to use. Posting to the discussion board is one idea but there is no guarantee that others will be working at the same time as you, and the way a board works is not really quick enough. If you have to work on your own try de Bono's “different hats” method to come at the concept from different angles.

In a group the idea is to bombard the topic with word associations using a very rapid sequence of quick-fire responses that can be as silly or as unconnected as people like to suggest. Each person takes a turn to

responds to the previous suggestion. At this stage we are not drawing but working with words and ideas verbally. Individuals should not be allowed to think at all deeply about their response. All responses should be recorded in brief note form (as a single word or simple phrase). Keep taking turns until the list is about 12 items long. A first round of this activity should only take a couple of minutes. At this point the items on the list are reviewed. Interesting ideas can be used as starting points for new sets of word ideas and the process repeated. However during the quick-fire process itself nobody should actively try to direct the flow of ideas except through their own instantaneous responses.

Different aspects of a concept may be tackled in separate rounds of a brainstorm.

Allow approx 10 minutes for brainstorming

Exercise 10.3.2: Thumbnails

Working at a small scale that you are comfortable with, most commonly around the size of a large postage stamp, work on visual ideas that arise out of the brainstorming session. The first stage thumbnail concepts can be doodles that play with ideas using very much the free-association approach. These can then be reviewed and appraised, sharing this process with others if you wish.

Thumbnails are quick and scribbly. In drawing them you test out many options and start to resolve conceptual issues. Even though you eventually want to end up with three key frames, in the thumbnails you can work with sequences to try things out.

As you progress try to resolve one consideration or aspect of a problem at a time. In one set you might concentrate on dream ideas. One set may be dedicated to trying out different characters for the hero, another to trying out different versions of action, another to body language, another to expression, another to trying out transitions from rounded to flat... and so on.

Allow approx 30 minutes.



Exercise 10.3.3: Evaluate and appraise your thumbnail ideas

After the thumbnail sessions take some time to appraise what is working and what is not in regard to conveying the concept. Make decisions about what the content and composition of your three key frames will be. If possible discuss your ideas and your thumbnails and any difficulties you are having in resolving the concept or deciding which way to go with someone else. You may decide that you need to produce more thumbnails.

Allow approx 10 minutes.

Exercise 10.3.4: Pencil versions of your key frames

Here the size of each frame should be larger. Make each fit on an A4 sheet with plenty of space around it for notes and annotations. Begin by working out a composition for each that enables you to convey what you have decided. There is still plenty of time for modifying your idea at this stage as you sketch things in and work things out. It may take several versions to resolve the key issues. Use a pencil and an eraser if you wish. Keep the compositions simple and the elements that you try to incorporate as minimal as possible. Use as little shading as possible.

Allow approx 20 minutes



The 3rd frame above (labelled "Grim Reality") was revised because the character still looked too 3D and so it was felt that the transformation to 2D was not conveyed very successfully. In the revised version the character is quite flat and the angle of view of the bed has been flattened so as not to have any perspective.

Exercise 10.3.5: Pen versions.

When you are happy that things are as good as they'll get for now then produce an ink version. Remember that these are still preliminary idea sketches and that the finish of these drawings can reflect this. They are not meant to be 'masterpieces'. Don't forget to annotate with notes to explain the idea. The final inking up should only take a few minutes.



Critique of this response to the brief as represented by the above visual

It appears that this character's 3D dream is about waking up. Whilst the idea seems to be to show the transition in the second frame, where it looks like the character can no longer reach the clock on account of being trapped on a comic book page already, this is not altogether clear because the visualiser has not explained the action in written form as was recommended in the instructions at 10.3.5.

The concept could be said to waste a frame because the dream state is not really all that fantastic. In fact the dream is somewhat mundane. Its a dream about sleeping - or rather waking!

However, using the first frame as part of the transition keeps the flow of the concept nice and tight.

The illustrations represent the concept clearly.