

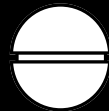


Jane Lee | 18044557 | 12.11.2023



Final Major Project Element 1

Group Members: Lucy Moles (18045074) Keyleigh Macdonald (21001424)



Three by three Pitch

My Original Logline + Synopsis

Synopsis:

The scientist we follow comes from a huge family of scientists, and I thought it would be interesting in the design/story if the alien clearly tries to disguise itself as human but doesn't do a very good job.

The family think the MC's interests are stupid which causes him to start off being determined to prove them wrong. Their obsession with trying to prove them wrong causes him to be blind from both the fact that his friend is an alien, and the fact that this friend has accepted them for who they are since day 1.

One day the scientist reaches the end of their rope because they're working towards a deadline (a science conference) to find some sort of proof that his theory is real. When he's at this breaking point, the friend reveals that their alien nature.

The scientist then gets close to causing a disaster because in revealing his finding to the family, they dismiss him anyway and his friend almost gets taken in for being an alien for actual dangerous experiments.

In trying so desperately to get acceptance from people who don't deserve it, he almost loses the acceptance he had all along.

This was all written for my original Three by Three pitch presentation.

Full presentation can be viewed here:

<https://jleeanim3.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/14/three-by-three-pitch-full-presentation/>

Jane's Logline

A story about a UFO spotting club which is founded by two 'outcasts.'
One is a scientist who wants to be accepted by their family, and the other is secretly an alien.

Main theme for the story:
Acceptance and the different ways you can find it.

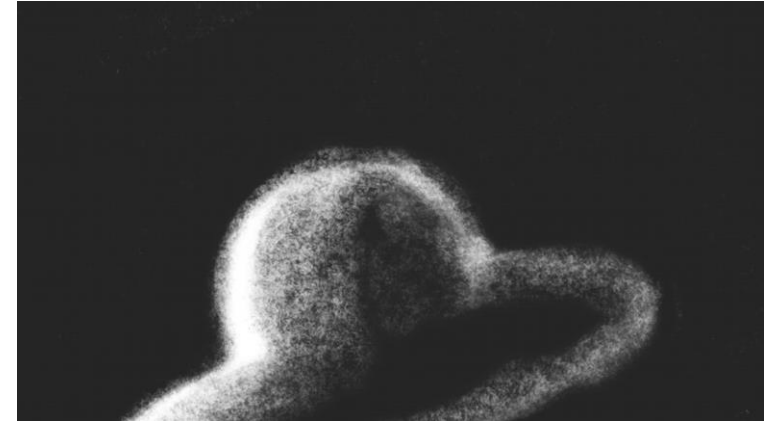
Lucy's Logline

A film about an awkward Autistic girl who is half-robot, emphasised through her two antennae, and seeks a 'life source' in the form of an IV, in order to become fully human and blend in with everybody else (Allistics)

Also utilises the theme of eventual acceptance.

Link to watch the Animation test shown below:

<https://jleeanim3.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/12/three-by-three-pitch-animation-test/>



Several concept sketches I did for my original pitch are shown above.

My UFO spotting club idea then got selected to be merged with Lucy's 'Robot Allegory' idea to form a new film project moving forward. Thus, we became co-directors for the FMP. We both share the opinion that the choice to merge our two existing ideas together was brilliant and we managed to combine them cohesively while maintaining the quirky charm that existed within both.

Based on previous experiences working on animation together, I think that I and Lucy have a solid ability to collaborate effectively. Having Keyleigh in the group alongside us is reassuring since her ability to convey fluid movements in animation quickly will help us immensely in keeping to the production schedule.

Logline + Synopsis after merging ideas

Logline

The story of a Scientist and an Alien as a metaphor for the Autism Spectrum, exploring how it is to be "alienated" and feeling out of place in social situations - before finding acceptance in the ones that matter to you, and discovering there are many like you as well.

After much discussion about the story together, Lucy wrote the Logline and Synopsis which neatly sums up the plot of our short film.

The main themes prevalent in the story are the following:

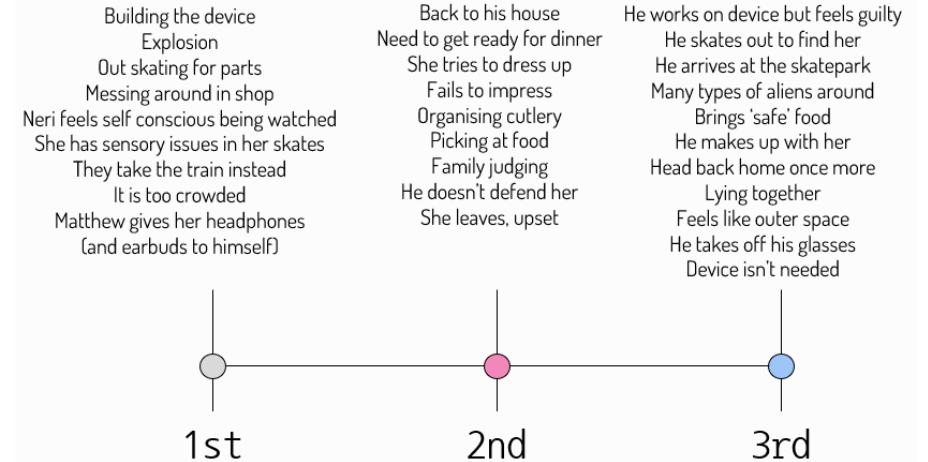
- The presence of an elaborate communications device is not necessary to form and maintain a meaningful relationship.
- Finding comfort in knowing you're not alone.
- Addressing bigoted views and the importance of criticising them.

Synopsis

The Scientist and Alien are working on a 'communication device' that will improve understanding between humans and aliens (neurotypicals and neurodivergence). Currently, only he can understand her strange language. When they go out and about to collect parts, the Alien struggles to be around crowds and is visibly uncomfortable, depicting various struggles that Autistic people go through.

Later, the Scientists' family scrutinises the Alien's 'influence' on him and she leaves, upset. He then goes out to find her, and they convene at a Space Commune where there are humans and aliens of all degrees, representing how you can be low-functioning, or high-functioning. In the end, the Scientist and Alien are together, and he reveals the Alien eyes he conceals under his glasses, showing that they're not so different after all, and that she doesn't need a device to have meaningful connections.

Story in 3 Arcs



After making the rough script together with Lucy, she created this helpful bullet pointed version of all the events and separated them into 3 distinct arcs. This has been used as a reference point by us to assist in keeping track of the journey the two characters go on throughout the narrative and ensuring that each event leads cohesively into the next.

Originally the story was plotted over 2 days, but my suggestion to make it 1 day was implemented for the following reasons:

- I feel that if we can condense it to one day without it feeling too rushed, we should since having a clear one day journey is ideal for a short film.
- In Lucy's words: "it wouldn't be very thoughtful for Matthew to go to sleep without making it up to Neri."

Research and Development: 'Two Billion Light Years of Solitude' Poem + Avoiding Stereotypes

*Human beings on this small orb
sleep, waken and work, and sometimes
wish for friends on Mars.*

*I've no notion
what Martians do on their small orb
(neririing or kiruruing or hararaing)
But sometimes they like to have friends on
Earth.
No doubt about that.*

*Universal gravitation is the power of solitudes
pulling each other.*

*Because the universe is distorted,
we all seek for one another.*

*Because the universe goes on expanding,
we are all uneasy.*

*With the chill of two billion light-years of
solitude,
I suddenly sneezed.*

Makoto Ooka describes Tanigawa, who wrote "Two Billion Light Years of Solitude," as "a boy who deeply sensed the workings of the celestial bodies or the universe before he knew the workings of society, but with a hint of sadness. "Her gaze is solitary yet bright, never clouded by tears." [5]

The work was written on May 1, 1950, according to Tanigawa. The distance of two billion light years refers to the diameter of the universe that was within Tanigawa's knowledge at the time. [11]

The work was used as a learning material in Tokyo Shoseki's textbook "New Comprehensive Japanese Language" [12], and was also used as a learning material in the 2016 NHK high school course "Comprehensive Japanese Language". Instructor Shinichi Watanabe explains that the Martian words "neriri", "kiruru", and "halala" are humorous expressions of imaginary Martians who sleep, wake up, and work like earthlings. Watanabe also explained the theme of this poem as "a feeling of loneliness in the simplest and most fundamental sense," and "a feeling of loneliness that arises from existing in the universe." [13] [14]

In "Writing Poetry: Everyday Life and the Universe," Tanigawa writes that during the period when he was awakening to his sense of self, he had a strong desire to "determine what kind of place I am, my coordinates," and how I felt within society. [15] He said that he became aware of himself in the universe before that

Through my research, I managed to find this poem that I and the rest of my group members feel is very relevant to us since the main themes present within the poem are how we long for connections in our daily lives, and how one can feel lonely and isolated from others. (as well as feelings related to not entirely understanding how the universe works)

We decided that a reading of the poem will be inserted into the film as an overture since we also decided to quote a line from it and make it the proposed title of our film:

'Because the universe is distorted, we all seek for one another.'

In addition to this, I decided upon the name 'Neriri' (or Neri for short) for the alien as a reference to the word 'neriri' in the poem which means something close to sleeping, waking and working in conjunction with 'kiruru' and 'harara'.

The following excerpt was written by Lucy in relation to research she did on the importance of avoiding stereotypes in our film:

We intend to portray various mannerisms throughout the film that, to anyone who is familiar, can recognise as something that autistic people do - stimming, masking, mimicking, food pickiness, playing with or organising things, shyness and missing social cues.

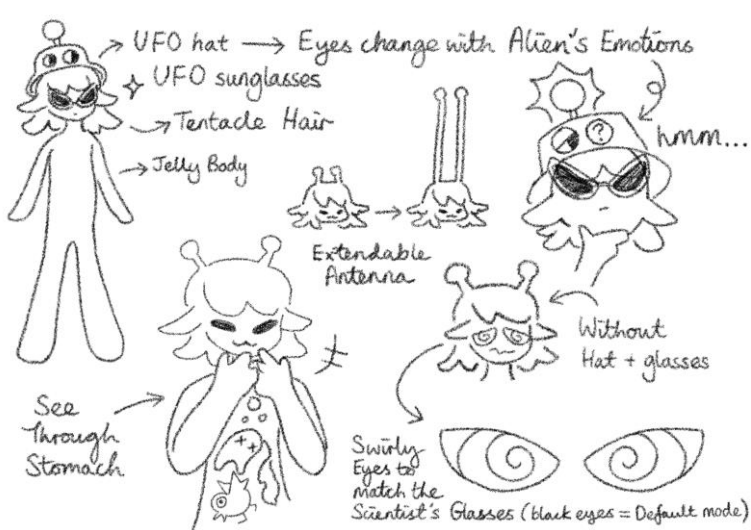
The introduction of various background characters at the skatepark will imply the existence of an 'alien' scale - different levels, half-aliens, some alien appendages, all representing what place one can be at on the spectrum.

Us in the group would like to draw upon and deliver our own experiences, and whilst treading carefully, believe these things should be unabashedly depicted, and don't consider the metaphor of an alien to be harmful to us in any way. I reached out to more autistic friends to see what they think, and no one found the material to be offensive. I also spoke to a colleague who encouraged me, as representation of disability in animation is often scarce and shied away from.

References from this slide:

Blogspot.com. (2023). One Poem / Two Translations. [Online] Available at: <https://blythewoolston.blogspot.com/2010/11/one-poem-two-translations.html> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2023].

Character Exploration: Alien



To begin the design process, I thought about what I knew already about aliens. What features does the stereotypical alien have? (e.g.: green with black eyes, antenna, etc.) I drew the sketches below while keeping these traits in mind, since I wanted to design my own take on an alien while simultaneously ensuring that I pay some homage to these familiar features that people associate with aliens without making this character look forgettable.

Disguises



After positive feedback from the tutors, we have decided to use these outfit designs in the scene before dinner where the Alien will be trying to fit in to appease the Scientist's family.

The 'disguises' (depicted on the right) were a result of me exploring the idea of the Alien trying to blend in with humans, before we changed the plot so that the world the story is set in is one where aliens and humans exist together visually (as part of the autism metaphor.)

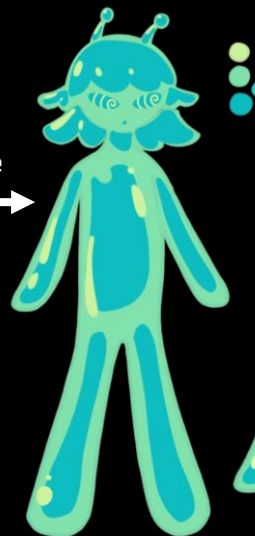
I made them all ill-fitting on purpose to better sell the idea visually that trying to blend in is difficult and unnatural for this character.

I roughly blocked out silhouettes until I landed on the one above which I chose since it met the following criteria:

- Has a round shape language (To establish that the Alien is friendly)
- Has a good combination of uniqueness and familiarity that is necessary for the audience to recognise that this character is indeed an Alien.



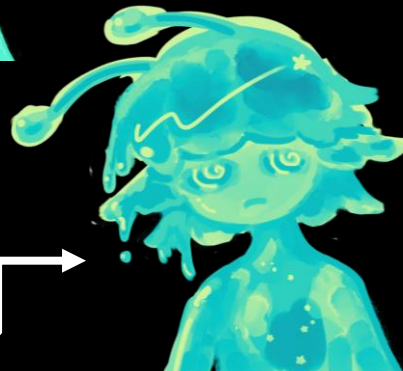
Obviously, the way I painted the appearance of the Alien here is not animator friendly at all (especially since we plan for the film to be hand drawn animation). So the next step I took towards finalising the design was simplifying the way the slime body is depicted, which led me to this version of the design.



I simplified the design so that the Alien's jelly-like body is divided into three main colours. The Base of the body > The 'Core' components > The Highlights



Using a watercolour brush, I then painted my own interpretation of how the alien's form would be rendered. It led to a slime-like appearance which I felt would be fun and expressive to animate.



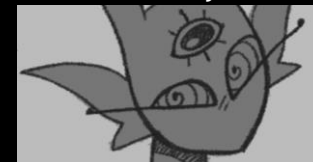
After making several different colour iterations, I settled for this one. I felt that the shade of green paired with turquoise and lime highlights makes the design more memorable.

Tutor feedback and my group members were in agreement with this, believing that it was an effective take on the traditional green alien.

After feedback from both tutors and my group members (especially Keyleigh in this instance), the following changes were made:

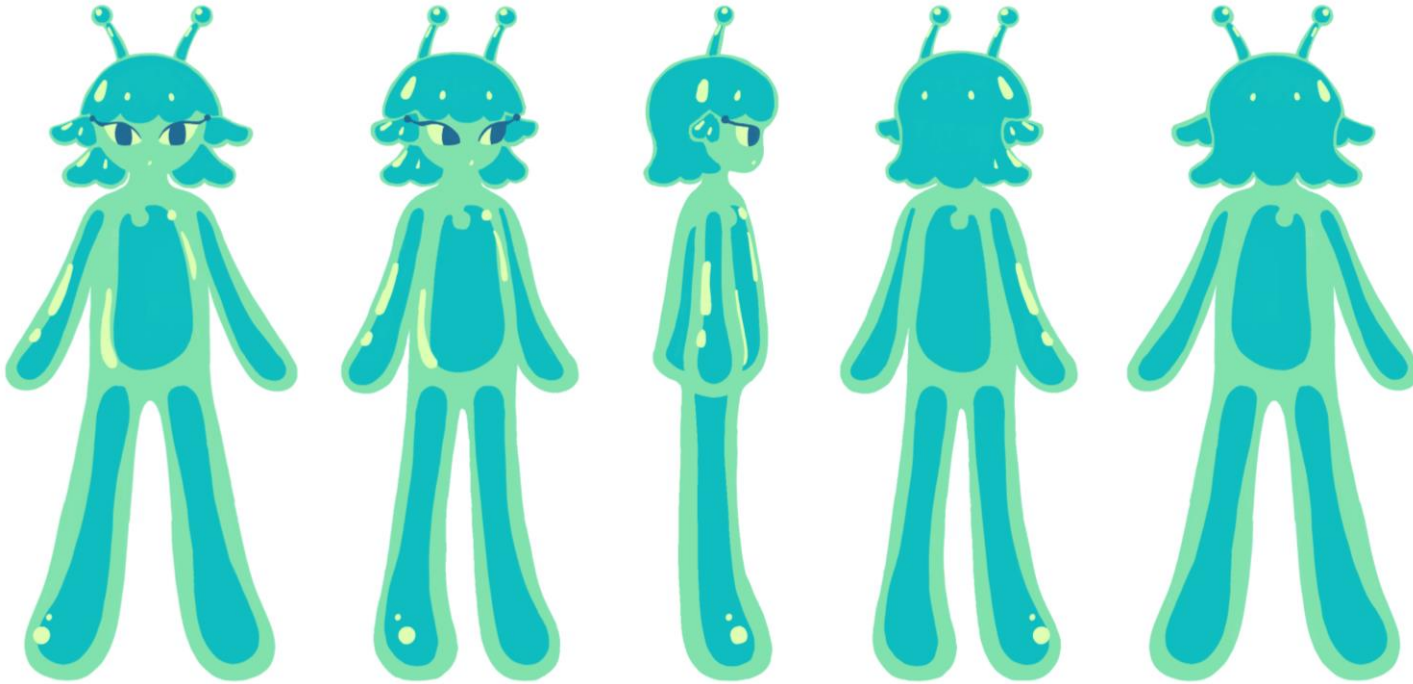
The swirls in the eyes were ditched due to it being interpreted as 'tripping out'

A darker colour for the pupils and eyelashes were implemented to ensure the eyes don't get lost in the rest of the design.



I referenced the lash shape from this drawing of an early alien design Keyleigh made.

Character Turnaround: Alien



DEFFD4
82E2AE
0FBDC0
216A94

This is the final turnaround sheet that depicts the alien character I designed.
As a group, we discussed how we would animate the Alien's behaviour after this sheet was made.

The following text is an excerpt Lucy wrote relating to how we would depict Neriri's mannerisms:

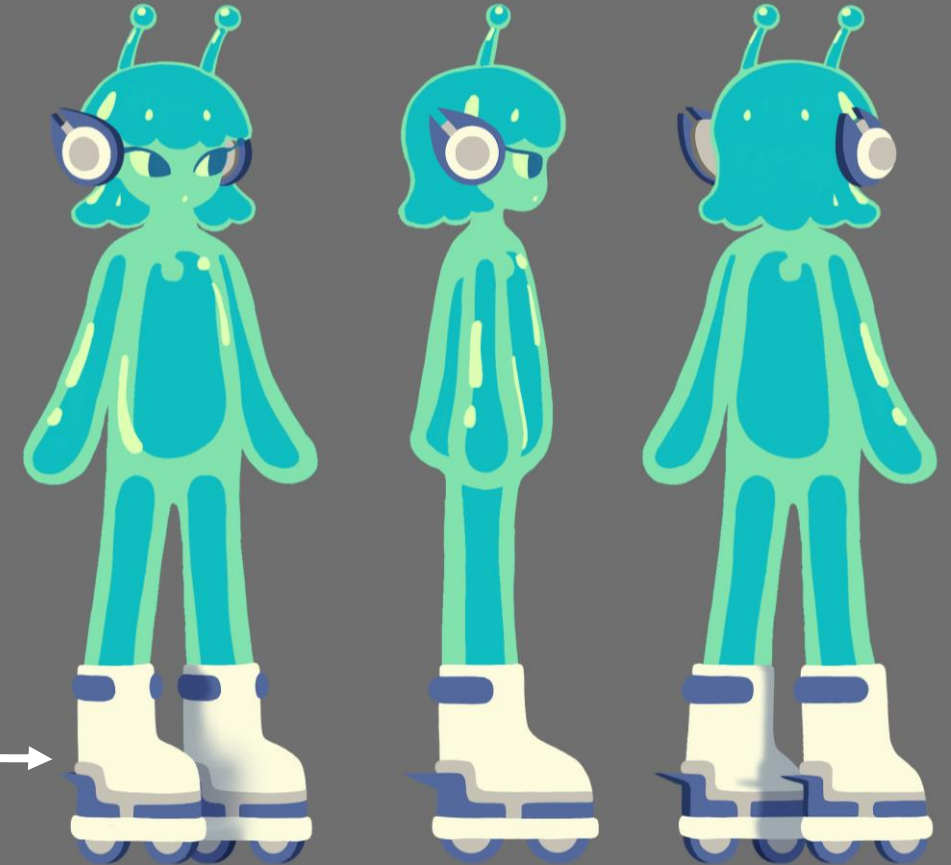
The Alien character will be fully alien, and we'll play into this with effect animation and the way she morphs and behaves. Her antenna are good for secondary action like drooping, swishing, and zapping depending on how she feels. She will also frequently be surrounded by troubling glitches and pixel effects that represent her state of mind.

Due to her lack of eyebrows, I think that the antenna are especially important now for showing her emotions.



Neriri will also use Noise Cancelling headphones, an important item for ensuring that she does not get overwhelmed on public transport during another scene we plan to add to the film.

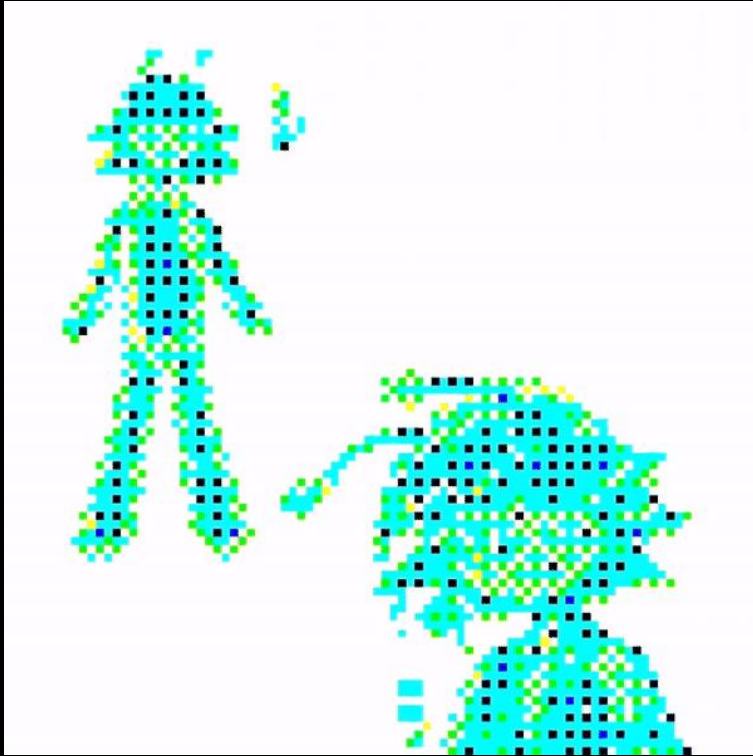
I also designed the roller skates to match.



The roller-skating and skateboard (see Matthew's turnaround on the next slide) idea was implemented since the tutors expressed liking that element of one of Lucy's other ideas from the original Three by Three pitch.

After talking to Lucy about it in more depth, we decided to include it in the film to give the two main characters a fun mode of transport for a world building scene, and to also include a skate park with a strong community at the end of the film as part of a satisfying conclusion that aligns with our core themes.

Animation tests: Alien



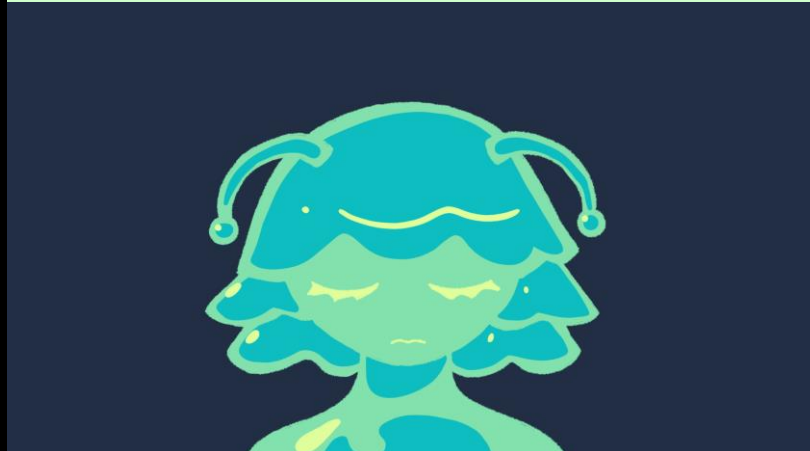
The test on the right I did depicting Neri crying is one that I made for the purpose of experimenting and showing how I imagine her to melt and move her antenna when she is upset.

I will improve the timings when animating the melting next time I animate Neri, since I feel like the movement is still not natural and smooth enough. (Especially the antenna movement when it snaps back into place)



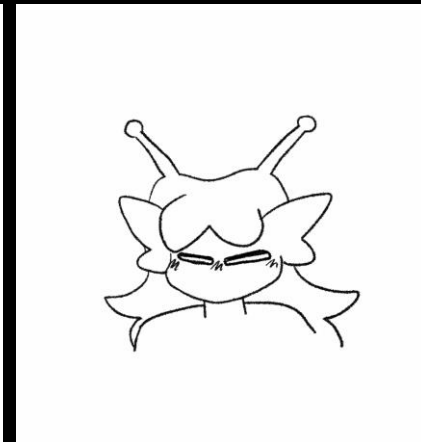
I made these two animation tests by overlaying glitchy effects on After Effects with various adjustment layers such as Multiply and Soft light.

After tutor feedback and more group discussion we decided to use these glitch and pixel effects in the final film to better show when Neri is feeling troubled.



The animation tests below were made by Keyleigh to further experiment with how Neri might move and express herself in the final film.

Her way of animating is much more fluid than mine, so I will ask her how to improve in this area so I can be a better animator. I will make a construction sheet to help her stay on model for this character, since that is the only thing I would say needs implementing on her end going forward.

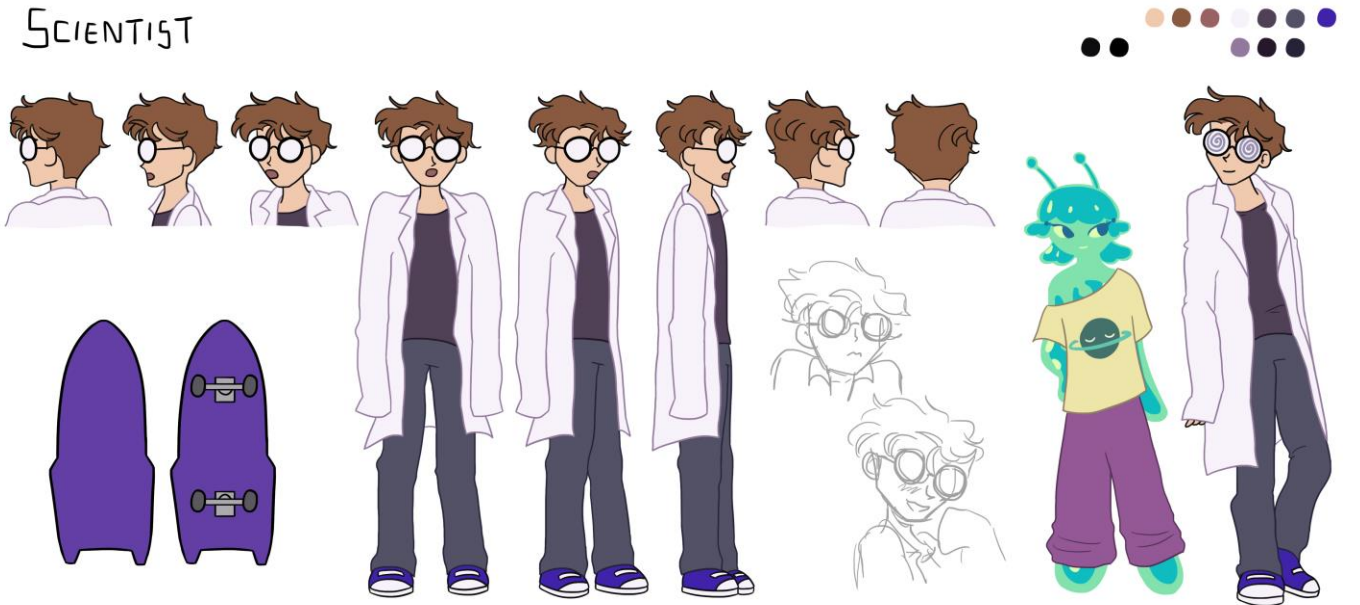


Links to watch the Animation test shown on this slide:
<https://jleeanim3.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/15/alien-animation-tests-by-jane-lee/>

<https://jleeanim3.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/15/alien-animation-tests-by-keyleigh-macdonald/>

Character Design: Scientist Turnaround + Style Matching

SCIENTIST



This turnaround sheet was created by Lucy for the Scientist character, 'Matthew'. To contrast the Alien, Lucy designed him to have more angular shapes and coloured line art.

The swirls in his glasses were something that I initially suggested since that is a symbol used to commonly in cartoons to indicate the presence of thick lenses. However, a tutor pointed out that people might mistake this for 'tripping out' instead.

As a work around, we decided to make the glasses 'electronic'. These are our reasons why:
It makes sense for his character, since he invents stuff.

We decided to hide his eyes for most of the film and give him alien eyes which helps to solidify the idea that he is also on the spectrum visually.

The glasses being electronic function as another way we can visually show Matthew's emotions in the final film, since we cannot use his actual eyes to do that due to the planned eye reveal.

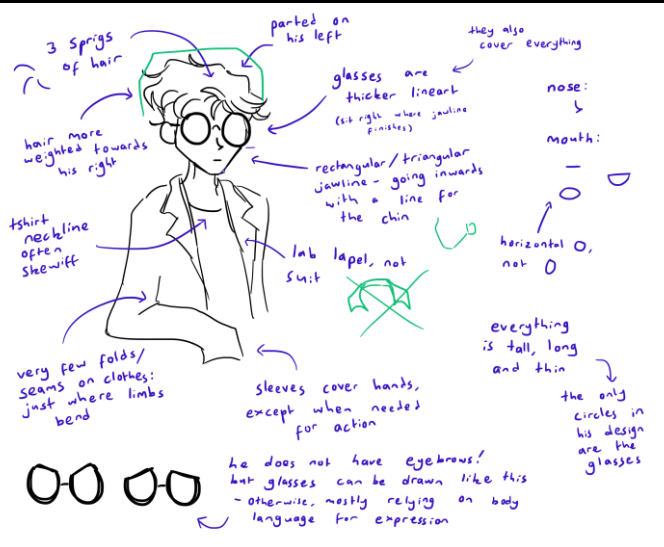
I had the idea that he could play Pong on his glasses, which Lucy then animated to help us visualise this concept better.

<https://lucy2moles2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/15/final-major-project-animation-tests/>



On the left is my first attempt at drawing Matthew after his design was finalised by Lucy. I had trouble staying on model initially since there are many subtle differences in our art styles. (e.g.: I tend to draw things rounder than her)

To combat this, Lucy made a character construction sheet (shown on the right) to help both I and Keyleigh with staying on model for Matthew going forward.



After she made the construction sheet for us to reference, I drew Matthew again in the storyboard. I think I managed to succeed in keeping him on model for the boards and will continue to keep doing so going forward.

Rough Storyboard + Notes

Lucy and I created the rough storyboards together, taking turns to draw scenes we had in mind.



While it was useful to do this together in person, we both feel that we spent too long working on this version of the board. I think this was mainly because it was made while we were also taking the time to figure out details in the final narrative though.

This still served as a useful guide that helped us create the actual storyboard in Storyboard Pro.

Next time we'll just speed this part of the process up by working directly in SB pro to minimise the need to redraw stuff we already have in note form.

Storyboard Highlights

I boarded the following scenes:

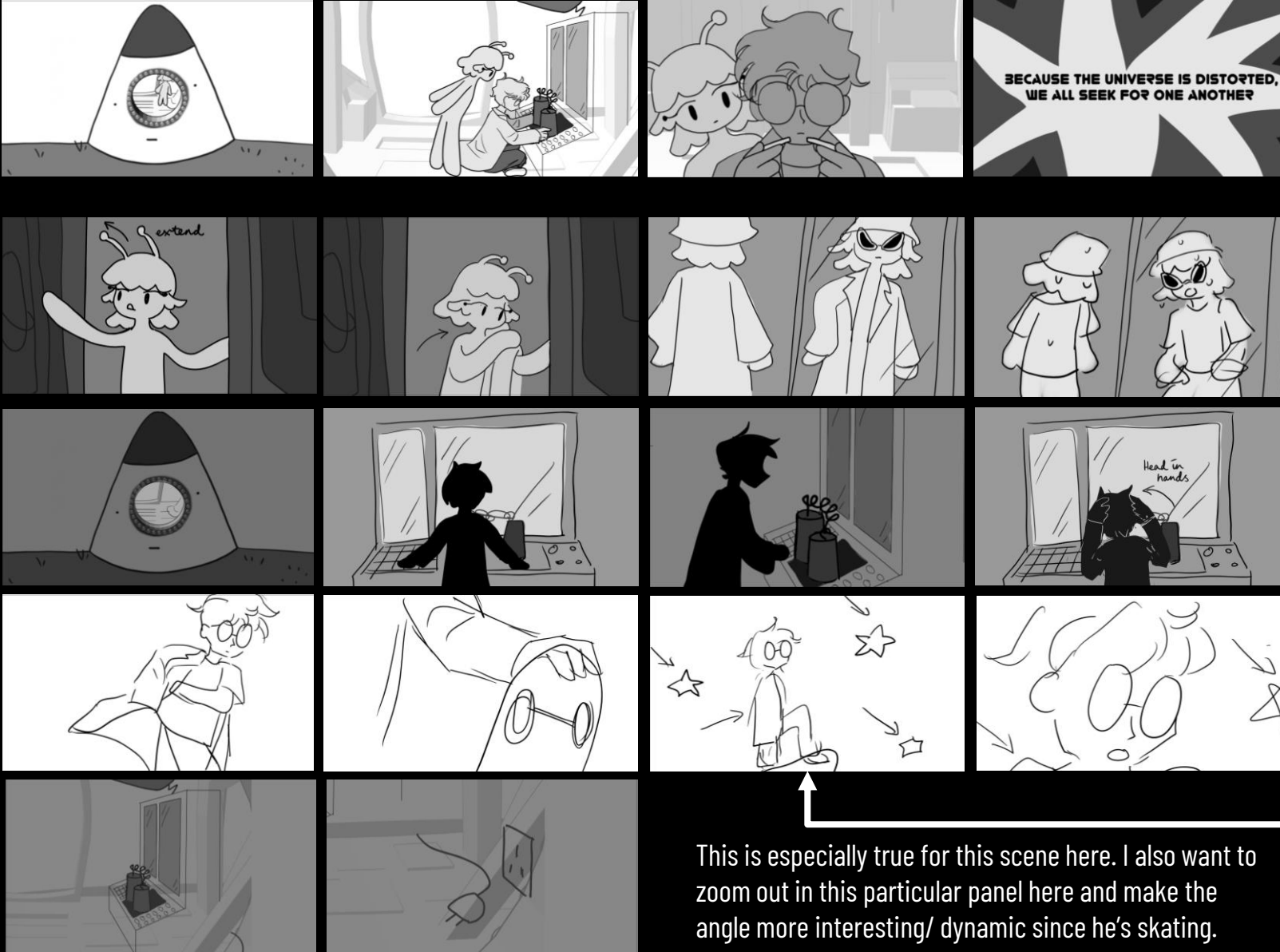
The beginning scene where they work on the coms. device and it short circuits, leading to an explosion with the title card for the film. →

Neri dressing up for dinner and feeling weird/uncomfortable in the outfits. →

Matthew going back to the lab to try working on the device again after Neri storms off after dinner. →

Matthew going to find Neri. →

The reveal that the device was unplugged/not working the entire time. (showing they didn't need it) →



This is especially true for this scene here. I also want to zoom out in this particular panel here and make the angle more interesting/ dynamic since he's skating.

I used Storyboard Pro to draw everything this time to strengthen my ability to use it so that I'm more ready for industry.

Due to time constraints, I felt that my board compositions did not have as much variety as I would've liked. I stuck to mainly using mid shots which is not ideal since it makes things feel flat.

To rectify this, I will revise the boards and animatic with my group members to make them more dynamic where necessary and ensure that there is more shot variety present to prepare us for the final film.

The quality of my drawings drop significantly for some of the shots (e.g.: no shading or perspective lines for depth anymore etc.) so after I revise the boards again this will no longer be an issue.

Animatic



I'm glad that we were in agreement with the tutors that the dinner scene is where the emotions of our film peak, since this is the scene where Matthew must overcome his inner conflict to stand up to his parents and defend Neri.

It was reassuring to know that this important scene got the intended reaction from our audience even at this early stage.

Both our peers and tutors expressed confusion regarding what the communication device is and what its purpose is in the plot. This is understandable since we did not have enough time to continue developing this plot point to be stronger in preparation for the interim due to other more pressing tasks such as completing the POC.

I think that the presence of the device is necessary since to me it is an important part of the communication metaphor (the metaphor for a desire for smooth communication between allistic and autistic people), but if we cannot make this part of the plot work, we're prepared to ditch it.

Link to watch the revised version here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehKi95msqok>

Link to watch the previous version here:
https://youtu.be/KEyNnnu0tA?si=KFAK_G9n1mxSCEvn

Tutor feedback during the interim:

The tutors raised the lack of short variety issue I was already aware of during the interim, so in this version of the animatic, I began to address this issue with Lucy. We revised some existing scenes and added some new ones while consciously considering other shot types more actively. (see Lucy's work on the right regarding this)

Following the final presentation, I added these scenes:

- Receiving a phone call about dinner - gives a more solid and understandable transition from the train to dressing up
- Him standing up for her to his parents, after feeling guilty - it would be out of character for him to not address what they said
- Him bringing some 'safe' food to the park as an apology, mirroring the other bowl - makes it more believable to make up, as it felt a little rushed before



I proposed the addition of the safe food and hug scene to better depict the act of making up to Neri after she did not eat any of the dinner given to her.

They said the music flattened out the entire thing and made the distinct moods of each scene less clear. Even though the placement of the track is a placeholder for now, we will keep this in mind and ensure that we edit the tracks so that this is no longer the case in the final.

We will continue to add more sound effects and refine our usage of them so that the soundscape in our film is the best it can be. To do this, we will definitely 'think carefully about how the world sounds without the music', as one of the tutors said.

Proof of concept with Sound + Backgrounds

Link to watch original rough animatic version of the POC can be found here:

<https://jleeanim3.myblog.arts.ac.uk/2023/11/16/original-rough-animatic-version-of-the-poc-by-keyleigh/>



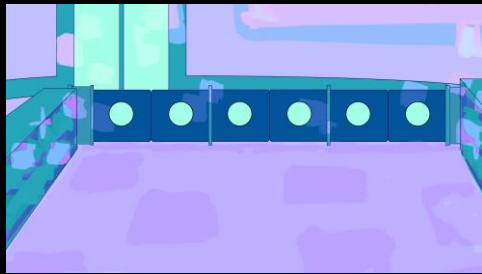
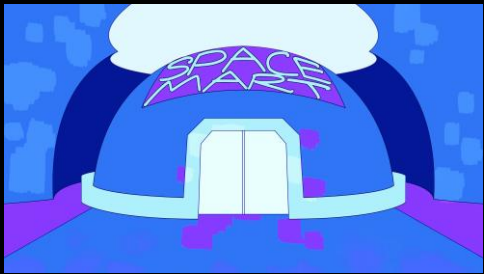
Link to watch proof of concept here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehKi95msqok>

The animatic version of this scene was created by Keyleigh. We then split this scene into several parts between the three of us so that it would be completed faster. I even managed to implement and demonstrate how the glitch effect might look in the final film in the POC, which I'm quite pleased about.

I think we picked a good moment to animate for the POC since it showcases the following:

- The Glitch effect + how Neri shows her emotions through melting (we repurposed the animation test I made effectively)
- A snippet of Neri and Matthew's interactions
- How Neri is perceived by others
- Cool space themed surroundings present in the world of the film



These background were drawn in greyscale by my friend May Su to help us complete the proof of concept. I then completed them using custom gradient maps I made myself. I gave her as much information about our project as possible so she could create an effective result that suited the mood we needed for this scene.

I will expand on my colour work for the film by creating a full colour script after the final board revisions are made.



Production Schedule + Next steps

This table consists of the production schedule that we created together to track progress with every part of the film that needs finishing so we have a visual indicator of what to prioritise.

I colour coded everything and we are currently in the process of dividing up all the scenes between the three of us.

Member colour code	Collaboration tasks	Status						
Lucy ❤️	Lucy + Jane	Finished	* = subject to adjustments					
Jane 💜	Jane + Keyleigh	WIP						
Keyleigh 💙	Keyleigh + Lucy	Not started						
Character designs		Status	Background designs		Status	Preproduction		Status
	Alien Turnaround		Lab / Shed Outside			Script		
	Expression/Pose Sheet		Lab / Shed Inside			Storyboard	*	
	Scientist Turnaround		Street leading to Shop			Animatic	*	
	Expression/Pose Sheet		Shop	*		Proof of concept		
	Background characters		Metro			Colour script		
	Expression/Pose Sheet		Train Exterior			Audio		
			Train interior					
			Scientist's bedroom					
			Dining room					
			Skate Park					
Device designs		Status						
Headphones (Alien)								
Rollerskates (Alien)								
Skateboard (Scientist)								
Air pods (Scientist)								
Coms Device								

We want each member's contribution to the project to be as equal as possible to maintain fairness.

The importance of clearly dividing up roles early on in production has been recognised, and we are currently deciding on who gets what based on several factors. One of which is what we want to animate and showcase in our showreels later.

E.g.: I want to animate the scene where Neri tries on clothes since I want to showcase my design work in the showreel while simultaneously demonstrating my skills in character acting in animation.

Critical Appraisal + Reflection

I think I now understand the benefits and disadvantages of working with friends better.

The benefits include the fact that we all have a good understanding of what we want to achieve with this film, it's easy to find compromises quickly, especially regarding the core ideas present within the project.

However, because they are my friends, I found it difficult at times to express to express my concerns regarding issues such as staying on model, using the correct software and completing work on schedule. I worried about potentially offending them or being too harsh. In the interest of keeping production smooth, we made sure to address these issues quickly so nothing festers.

The creation of the production sheet was my idea since I wanted to ensure that we all had access to a visual guide that informs every member of the group on what to prioritise next as well as provide an indicator for which tasks are expected of them. The fact that we can cover each other's weaknesses is still a strong point that reassures me. I'm glad to see the improvement in communication within the group, especially after the sheet was created.

Credits

Directing - Lucy, Jane

Scriptwriting - Lucy, Jane

Character Design - Lucy, Jane

Storyboard - Lucy, Jane, Keyleigh

Animatic - Lucy, Jane

Animation Tests - Lucy, Jane, Keyleigh

Proof of Concept - Lucy, Jane, Keyleigh

Background Design - May Su, + Lucy, Jane, Keyleigh

Music - Owen Naylor Roll

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ambience-london-underground-station-trains-arrive-depart-people-chat

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zapsplat_foley_gazebo_in_carry_case_on_wheels_heavy_short_roll_on_concrete_001_94645

zapsplat_household_door_slam_shut_14347

zapsplat_multimedia_game_sound_beep_positive_could_be_collect_item_gain_point_etc_78407

zapsplat_sport_skateboard_pass_by_skate_med_fast_001_71658

zapsplat_sport_skateboard_plastic_skate_past_on_concrete_path_002_75741