

Trash Island

By

Diantha Jean McAllister

BA: Media Production, Minor in Music and Theatre
University of Colorado at Boulder

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Thesis Advisor:

Tara Knight, Department of Critical Media Practices

Defense Committee:

Beth Osnes, Department of Theatre & Dance

Patrick Clark, Department of Critical Media Practices

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Abstract

I created the short pilot for an animated series reflecting on the environment called *Trash Island*. The project entails the script, storyboard, directing, and animating every aspect of the process, including audio recording. In this four-minute episode of *Trash Island*, the three main characters accidentally activate a trash monster who they initially thought was dangerous and bad. It turned out that he was a good monster cleaning the smog in the air. This animatic version of the pilot attempts to highlight how humor and satire make the harshness of climate change bearable and addressable to young adults.

Preface

During the summer of 2019 while watching late night cartoons, I came to the revelation how there is nothing on prime time TV that addresses climate change. While in the past there were shows like *Captain Planet*, there are no current primetime animation that covers issues of the environment. The lack of shows and content on the environment aside from the *Planet Channel*, is what fueled my drive to make this project. I wanted a television show that addressed these issues while not following the informational, educational documentary route. It was time to do something different and entertaining.

Making an animation about the environment is essential so that the next generation of adults stay aware but also stimulated with the current issues of climate change. There is too much at cost when we forget the world is bigger than ourselves.

This project resonated with me throughout the fall 2019 and I knew I needed to act upon it. I started by looking for an animation advisor and applying to the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program for materials I did not have. I was a recipient of a \$3,000 UROP grant and bought the needed materials and software to do this project.

Since I was doing this project by myself, I learned every aspect of the pre-production, production and post-production that went into animating. Also, I learned how to use basic functions in Photoshop, Audition, Premiere, and sound; for example the Zoom H5 and recording via Zoom.

I am proud of this project and how far I have made it in this solo production. I am grateful that an idea and a drive for the environment has made my project a reality. I will keep working towards my goals and growing my skill sets, so *Trash Island: The Series* will be complete and released to the public.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all who have contributed or helped in any aspect of this project.

I am grateful for all the people and work that precedes *Trash Island*. Thank you to the creators of the animations and styles that inspired me to incorporate them into this project.

Also, I would like to thank those who helped and guided me towards submitting my Thesis. I'd especially like to thank Tara Knight, Patrick Clark, and Beth Osnes for supporting me. My committee is the foundation of this project, and without you, I would not have been able to grow, learn, and strive for honors.

I want to thank Tara Knight twice for the many hours of work and time invested into me and this project. You believed in my ability to learn and knew I would make it to the completion of the thesis requirements. Your advising and teachings are valuable to me for the rest of my life. The experiences I learned from this project will follow me into my career. I can not thank you enough for this valuable knowledge.

I like to extend the thank you to my family and friends for all the encouragement. They are the reason I want to make an impact in the future. They are my anchor but also my motivation to be the best I can be.

Finally, I would like to thank the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) for believing in *Trash Island* and my ability to create this project. The funding I received for this project successfully got me to the submission of the requirements for my honors thesis. I now have the tools to make other impactful animated work for the next three years of my post-undergraduate career.

CHAPTER 1:

Animation Research

The goal of *Trash Island* was to be satirical and funny while addressing the issues within the environment. I want *Trash Island* to appeal to college students in the same way that other adult animations do. I watched and researched different animations on traits that could help this project succeed and are closely relatable to this generation. Replicating aspects of what makes an animation successful can ensure that *Trash Island* appeals to an ideal audience.

Since *Trash Island's* audience is young adults and adults, television shows like *South Park*, *Rick and Morty*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy* are what inspired the writing in this project. Every one of these shows are well known to this generation and reflect the recent popular trends in American culture due to their humor style. The style is unique because these shows touch on highly controversial topics and are still in the mainstream media. Replicating certain tactics would one day help *Trash Island* to follow the same pathway to become commercially successful.

To start on a process similar to any animation, I knew I needed to break down my project and agree on a result for the thesis deadline. The first video my advisor showed me was an animatic from *The Simpsons Movie*. This one minute and four-second animatic showed keyframe sketches of Homer Simpson mushing sled dogs.¹ This scene put into perspective how necessary animatics are to the animation process. The use of keyframes is a step in production that several large studios complete before they start animating the 24 fps (frames per second). It also makes the storytelling stronger and saves time if something were to change throughout the revision and editing process. Before this video, I wanted to complete a full animation episode, but watching *The Simpsons* animatic it created an understanding of how much time and drawing goes into any animation. From this, I knew that *Trash Island* was going to be condensed storytelling with constant revisions. Animation has various steps that are time consuming and require a large team. I knew that *Trash Island* would be better as an animatic, so when I was changing and developing the story and characters, I would save time and it would better suit my skill set.

Once I had an idea of what the finished project would be, the next step was understanding the process of storytelling and animation. The book *Understanding Comics* taught me different aspects of comic art. While this book focuses on comics, there are parallels and similar properties to animation. For example, McCloud brings up spectrums of cartoon design and how they are visual iconography. He shows in the picture below that cartoons are on a spectrum of icons because our brain connects the shapes with their realistic counterparts.² A stick figure on paper registers as a human or person, even when there is no such thing as a stick figure in reality.

¹*The Simpsons Movie (2007) Animatic Preview Clip (Ice Age 2 BD Ver.) (1080p HD)*. *The Simpsons Movie*. YouTube, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt-xqHD60Xo>.

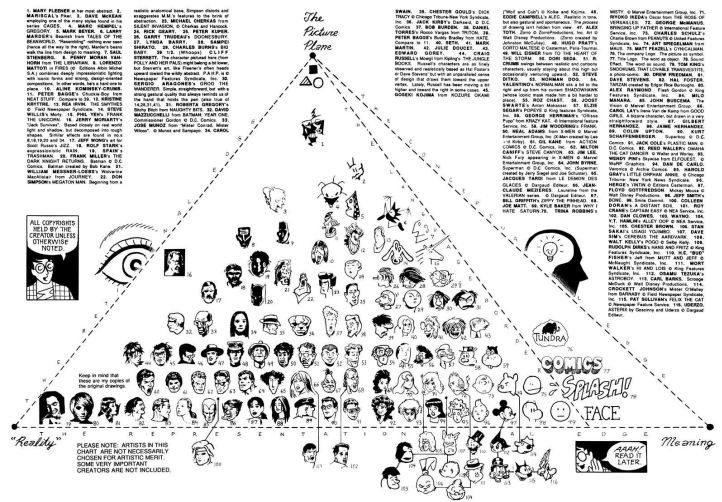
² McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1993.

Also if a drawing is realistic, it is still an icon of sorts and is understood to be styled after the real object. This was reassuring going into character development because I was inexperienced in digital art. I worried that my characters would not look precisely the way I envisioned them. McCloud gave me a new perspective on how I see animations and drawings. When creating a character they do not need to look realistic, they can be as simple as an icon and the audience would still recognize what, or who they are.

Later in *Understanding Comics*, McCloud states how "The mastery of any medium using minimal elements has long been considered a noble aspiration...the art of comics is as subtractive an art as it is additive and finding the balance between too much and too little is crucial..."³ Any medium with a storytelling aspect needs to be as direct and to the point as possible. Condensing stories to their main points helps keep the audience engaged and interested to keep reading or watching. I used this reading to inspire cutting the story and condensing it to three and a half minutes. Before this reading, I never realized how condensed I needed my episodes to be to stay interesting. When I first started writing out the plot what seemed to be two pages on paper was approximately seven minutes long. At first, I thought the longer the episode the more opportunity for tropes and jokes added to the story. Now, it is under three minutes, and it's significantly better than when it was seven minutes. It was true that in the seven minutes there was more to the story, but there was also too much awkward silence, unnatural conversation, and filler that did not progress the story. I learned that when the story is shorter, the progression of the story and the dialogue flows smoother.

In addition to these two influences, this reading also taught me how any artist in any medium follows the six steps to creating art: idea/ purpose, form, idiom, structure, craft, and surface. McCloud said that while starting at form can lead to a world of unknown experiences, starting at purpose will help plant your ideas far and wide, influencing a bigger audience.⁴ This reminded me that I needed to have my purpose for creating *Trash Island* at the forefront of my project.

Once I understood the basics of animation on an in-depth level, it was time to start my script and storyboard. My advisor showed me Trey Parker and Matt Stone's first animation that they made in college. This was the short animation that got *South Park* on television. This episode exemplified successful short storytelling and humor. The short episode follows a quick



³ McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1993.

⁴ McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1993.

story of what happens when you put a hat on a snowman.⁵ While it was only four minutes long, the short exemplified how to do storytelling with a purpose. Each character had meaning in some way to help push the story along successfully. For example, Kenny was meant to die and Stan was meant to be the voice of reason. There was even conflict that was straight to the point with no extra people, props, or locations. Analyzing this episode taught me that everything has to have a purpose in an animation. Otherwise, something without a purpose can become wasted time and energy when the production stage happens. I referenced this episode several times throughout the making of *Trash Island* to solidify my storytelling, humor, and purpose.

Another important quality, I learned from this episode that animation is always being revised. This episode is drastically different from modern *South Park*. I recognize that this was only a step in Parker's and Stone's processes, which helped me envision a final draft of *Trash Island* with character and script development.

Additionally, I looked at this older *South Park* in comparison to Parker's and Stone's newer work in a show called *Sassy Justice*. *Sassy Justice* satirizes deep fakes and Trump in an investigative news style.⁶ The purpose of this comparison was to identify and solidify the type of humor that I wanted to replicate. In this show, there are references to modern events and irony through raunchy jokes. A majority of this skit would be absurdist humor, which presents an unrealistic version of reality. Additionally, I learned how professional animations follow the narrative structure of threes. In this example, they return to a dialysis clinic at least three times throughout the episode. I knew from working with my scripted jokes I needed to try to have them repeat at least three times because each time the repetition adds another layer to the joke.

During the development of a script and the general plots of my story, I envisioned a trash-based monster destroying Los Angeles. Since drawing intricate scenes was still a skill I was developing, I needed to do research on animated monsters. I watched *Akira* to analyze how destruction and rubble could be portrayed, and the different features I could give my trash monster. While watching this movie there were many beautiful illustrations of falling glass and shattering cement.⁷ Each individual brick of material was given their



⁵ *The Very First Southpark Christmas Short 1992 Funny*. YouTube. YouTube, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkmxks20MPk>.

⁶ *Sassy Justice with Fred Sassy (Full Episode) | From Trey Parker, Matt Stone, and Peter Serafinowicz*. YouTube. YouTube, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WfZuNceFDM>.

⁷ *Akira*. Tokyo Movie Shinsha, 1988.

own textures and 3D properties as well as smoke and other indicators of falling rubble. While the animation itself is flat, this technique provides details and shape to each piece of rubble. The intricate detailing and shading also contribute to the feeling of 3D animation. I highly considered the style in *Akira* as a factor in how I could go about the 2D design in *Trash Island*. I wanted to replicate this style of detail and color scheme, however, it would take a large team to do this. Although I did not pursue this style in the final submission, the research was still essential into understanding motion and how to make 2D look more realistic. This also changes the way I see the laws of nature in animation. Some scenes would have materials falling in real time, while others would slow down time and space to move the rubble differently. This is an artistic choice with no rules to abide by. I learned that *Trash Island* can have its own rules that don't follow the realities of physics and time; an example could be a campfire that is burning at the bottom of the ocean.

While I was looking at the rubble, I was also using Tetsuo's transformations as an influence. Throughout the movie, Tetsuo battles against this new power and what he considers right and wrong. At the end of the film he destroys Neo-Tokyo after forming into this glob monster.⁸ Certain aspects I was analyzing was his transition to the monster and certain extensions



his body can do with this “power”. Some of the things he could do was grow exponentially, absorb things around him, spit acidic body fluid, move and duplicate its features like eyes, hands and mouths. When he was transitioning the force would rip his skin back to reveal a pink substance similar to a goop. This was combined with Tetsuo's robotic arm and anything he would consume. Initially this was a good research subject because one of my characters in

early development, Samson, was originally a blob. Watching this scene helped imagine Samsons movement and how his eyes or mouth could be everchanging. Also, when Tetsuo consumes things they become a part of him. This aspect was going to be applied to Trashzilla when he started to destroy Los Angeles. It was originally planned that Trashzilla would eat cars that polluted emissions, eventually growing car-like features in his body form. While both of these aspects were cut from the final product due to production timeline constraints, I still learned and took away how complex movements and shapes form in animation. It was interesting to study the 2D forms and see the evolution of movement as the scene progresses.

While *Akira* was excellent research for Trashzillas movements and extensions of self, I still needed to work on a dying scene. The 2005 *King Kong* was a good start for looking at sympathy techniques to create closeness between the audience and a monster. In *King Kong*, the

⁸ *Akira*. Tokyo Movie Shinsha, 1988.

way the camera cut to his face and then to the woman crying for him is an intimate moment where the audience feels bad for King Kong.⁹ There is also sad music playing and natural pauses of silence to build up to his final breath. Replicating the closeness between the audience and Trashzilla will make viewers feel sad about his efforts to clean the planet. Due to limited time, I will use audio cues and music to help create a similar cinematic atmosphere.

As I was deciding on the animation style I wanted for my short, I felt inspired by the animated sequences in *Monty Python Flying Circus* by Terry Gilliam. In this video, he experimented with collage animation. This collage had photorealistic properties with limited movements. For example, their legs would do a 360 rather than bend at the kneecap.¹⁰ It was interesting to see how he would cut out an arm and have limited movement with it. His work was inspiring to me because modern animation tries to be as lifelike as possible. Replicating Gilliam's style would be different compared to most-watched animations and will give me a challenge of collaging digitally. Also, this was a good option since my design and technology skills were still improving. In the end, *Trash Island's* backgrounds, characters, and some of the limited movements, like Trashzillas flying ability, are inspired by Gilliam's collage work.

Finally, when I was working on sound design, my advisor introduced me to a short animated film called *Moonbird* by the Hubley's. First, this animation used the improvised voices from children playing in the sound booth. Then, the husband-wife team animated a story based on the audio. The Hubley's tell us a story about two boys catching a bird during the night.¹¹ In the audio, there are instances when the children got off track or lost their thoughts. Their voices add to the aesthetic of a real-time conversation and natural loss for words. Before watching *Moonbird*, I worked towards having a typical orthodox animation soundscape, but this film inspired me to try experimental audio while I worked with the actors. This would be a refreshing take on *Trash Island* and resolve some of my dialogue fluidity issues. One difference was that I already had the animation made, but the actors could still use the technique of improv to add to the script. Watching *Moonbird* opened a new possibility in potential sound design, and I played with this idea throughout the sound process.

Software Research

At the start of this project, the only Adobe software I was familiar with was Adobe Premiere. Throughout this project, I have learned to use Photoshop, Audition, and After Effects. In the beginning of my endeavors, my advisor helped with the rudimentary counterparts to Photoshop. I learned how to use the basic features such as erase, draw, and lasso. Also, I was taught how to import and export correctly for each type of project. While this was great to start

⁹ *King Kong*. United Kingdom: Universal Pictures, 2005.

¹⁰ Gilliam, Terry. Whole. *Monty Python Flying Circus*, 1969.

¹¹ *Moonbird (1959 Film)*. YouTube. YouTube, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U-PVZXR7WM>.

with, the constant use of Photoshop led me to experiment with different features such as masks and filters. I eventually became faster and stronger with Photoshop, and now I can confidently say that I can teach an introductory lesson on Photoshop.

In my capstone course, I am working on developing the sound design for this project. Since I did not remember how to use Audition from a course two years previous, my teacher sent me to LinkedIn Learning to look up how to use the software. As I was skipping through a four-hour tutorial, I found a few videos that did help me understand the basic features, such as buttons to record/mute, features of different windows, and slicing sound. While this was good info to start with, I learned more as I practiced recording sound. For my class Introduction to Songwriting, I decided to use Audition for a project, and I thought it would be great practice to record it. As I was using the software, I learned how to use features such as pitch correction, waveform/ multi-track, effects like reverb, and how to change volume in the middle of a track. There are many other features to Audition that I have not yet learned, however, I feel confident in navigating the essentials of this software.

Since After Effects are generally used during post-production, I only recently started to use it. I am learning this technology to add animated smoke, water, and fire for the final product. I have started to practice this software in my Experimental Animation class this semester, and so far, I have learned how to make a loop, abstract shapes/colors, manipulation of speed/size/rotations, and basic green screen cutting. I will be incorporating these elements into *Trash Island* after my defense.

CHAPTER 2:

Why Humor?

As earlier stated, the main inspirations for *Trash Island* came from adult animation such as *Family Guy*, *South Park*, *Rick and Morty*, and *The Simpsons*. The reason why these shows had an impactful presence to *Trash Island* was because these shows provide effective critique of modern culture through humor. Additionally, these shows have a large following and are highly influential to mainstream popular culture. *Trash Island* creates a conversation around the environmental crisis, so more people can learn about contributing factors. The climate issue isn't being addressed in mainstream media. Since popular adult animations have such a large following because of their humor, by using the same tactics *Trash Island's* message can have an impact.

The first show that impacted the adult animation genre was *The Simpsons*. Throughout the series, Matt Groening focuses and satirizes the experience of a blue colored family. Homer has a simple life as a nuclear plant technician with a loving wife, son, daughters, dog and cat. These standards are what the ideal American dream used to be, and what many Americans strived for. The actions of Homer's simplicity in life and hobbies of drinking are seen as ideal, but also realistically funny. *Trash Island's* initial design is to target relatability and make the episodes as extreme but realistic as possible. For example, Sargent and Trashzilla. Sarg was changed from a Marine to an oil rig worker to relate to the working class and Trashzilla shows the extreme reality of air pollution.

At first, people watched *The Simpsons* because it was funny. Then as they gained more popularity the creators started to introduce political and social concepts into the show. This is what made them continuously modern and funny, while never getting "old." By making a show that has political undertones, people globally will relate to it because the United States is an influence to other countries. College students of my generation can all relate to the effects of global warming whether they believe in the science or not. An example would be the weather in the United States within the past year. To name a few, in October of 2020 Colorado had record forest fires, and in February of 2021 Texas was so cold their power was shut down and houses froze. These occurrences happened within four months of each other and are absurd in comparison to the past. However, people choose to ignore the clear signs that this is happening, while many realise a connection. That is why *Trash Island* navigates these occurrences in the show to help connect the dots between global warming, the causes, and the effects relating to the audiences experience.

Other shows followed *The Simpsons* and replicated the critique to real world events. While these shows make fun of situations, people can learn small facts from them. When producing these adult animations, they have a research team of fact checkers to base their humor around. *Family Guy* can teach viewers about modern people and events. While adult animations should not be cited for factual evidence, they are a strong source of researched events and critique of popular culture. As an early teenager, I used to learn various relevant events and

people who they made jokes about. For example, recently when Rush Limbaugh passed away, I connected him to an episode of *Family Guy* I watched when I was 12. While today I still don't stay as updated with political and popular events as I should, from this one episode that I watched 10 years ago, I remembered who Limbaugh was and what he stood for because of *Family Guy*. While this was one out of many instances I learned something new from the show, I want *Trash Island* to have the same effect. The tropes and humor associated with the environment in *Trash Island* makes it easy to remember the issues and problems with the climate issue. For example, I wanted to make a statement about oil being a corrupt business, so I originally named the factory Corruption Oil; however, it was too obvious and I changed it to Sacred Land Oil. This was a critique on the current pipeline battle between a corrupt oil company and native communities. The Dakota Access Pipeline was a battle between human rights and convenience for these companies. This pipeline was a threat against the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's water source and sacred burial grounds. I wanted to honor those affected by the Dakota Access Pipeline while leaving a message of how oil companies are stealing resources from the indigenous. Sacred land oil is an ode to the affected tribes and a message of awareness of the relationship between oil companies and natural native lands. While it is a more hidden critique, people who don't get it immediately can still learn that the oil business and factories are huge in contributing to air pollution.

Some Americans choose to opt-out of current news because it can be stressful and false, especially during 2020 and 2021. In a time where COVID -19 stress, political stress, and social stresses are high, many people are turning to streaming subscriptions to escape. These services offer a large variety of animation which are considerably popular. I created *Trash Island* during a time when people are searching for comforting animation. This population of eager viewers helps provide an audience who would be interested in *Trash Island*. HBO Max and Netflix has its own category of adult animation for people who want to laugh and escape their rough reality. Laughing about an issue breaks down the harshness of the reality behind it and makes it bearable and easy to address.

My intentions for *Trash Island* are for the humor to alleviate the stresses around global warming, making it welcome to discussion. For example, Lenny is a dildo. It is funny that he even exists and is what he is; however, this brings thoughts around thrown out objects having a long second life as a plastic. It makes the audience think about their waste and how long it takes before these plastics fully decompose at about 450 years. Also, there are many people who acknowledge it but forgets that the world is bigger than themselves, so they fall into a mindset of "It's only one bottle, it does not matter." *Trash Island* reminds people along the spectrum that the Earth matters and these issues matter, so: recycle, fund organizations for clean energy/ cleaning up the ocean, be conscious of deforestation, animal extinction, absurd weather, disease and other issues that *Trash Island* will address in other episodes. For this project, I wanted Lenny to start bringing all these issues into the conversation as a vessel of a funny, relatable, dildo.

CHAPTER 3:

In this chapter, I have everything from my very first script, to the actor sound sessions, to the work in progress I am submitting for my Defense. There were a few accomplishments that went into the process that I will state in words, since they are not a link or document. Firstly, while making *Trash Island*, I directed and produced every step of the process. Since I did not have a full team of animators, I did all the pre-production, production, and post-production of *Trash Island*. One thing I did have was an awesome producer figure, Tara Knight, throughout this process to help lead me in the right direction. Having her as this figure, helped me learn the industry techniques and processes when making an animation. Secondly, I also raised \$3,000 for a computer, Wacom Tablet, two hard-drives, professional headphones, and an Adobe Suite Subscription. The funding helped me obtain the needed supplies for personal use, since resources on campus were limited during the summer and during the pandemic.

Script/Story Evolution:

This first link is to a document showing the story arcs for 11 episodes for the series. Each episode is an adventure made up with Sarg and Samson consistently, and is closely tied to one contributing reason for climate change. For example, there are episodes on deforestation, animal extinction, and bee population decline.

Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 1 >under **1a**.

This link leads to the script for episode one. Originally, I wrote the pilot episode, but my advisor thought that the second episode would be more exciting and intriguing.

Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 1 >under **1b**.

The next link is to three edits of the second episode. I am missing a few of my first edits because I replaced what I was writing as I revised each edit. I soon realized that that was a terrible idea for the documentation of my progress.

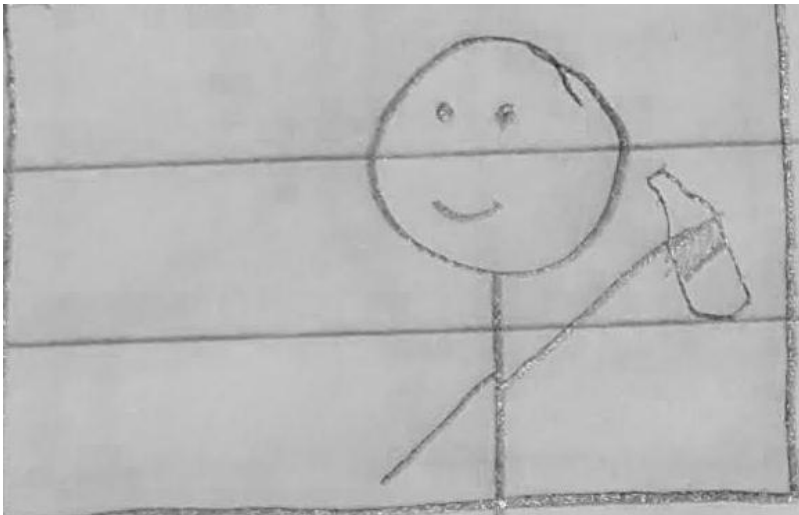
Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 1 > under **1c**.

This is one of the more up-to-date scripts that I gave my actors to read before recording. I do have highlighted areas for structured improv throughout this script.

Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 1 >under **1d**.

Character Evolution:

SARG:



At first, I wanted Sarg to be as masculine as a GI Joe because he was in the military.

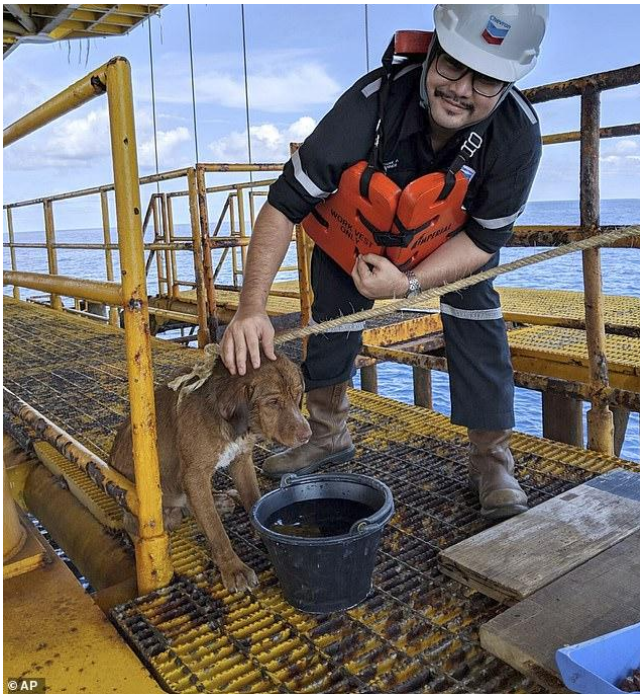


This first design (right), did not seem to fit him as I intended because his form embodies hypermasculinity and “idealistic” body expectations. I did not want to promote toxic masculinity in my animation and felt the need to change the military stereotype. Because two of his personality traits are strength and intelligence, Sarg's looks and background needed to be redesigned.

Throughout the series, Sarg has lost his memory and is trying to regain it. As I was developing him further, I kept this arc but decided to change his purpose. When researching for a background that would place Sarg at sea, I came across oil rig workers. This was a great background for character development because he can relate to the working class and the audience. Additionally, this would connect Sarg to a contributor of the environmental crisis.

In my design research, I found a headline about a dog who was found 135 miles away from the coast of Thailand and his rescue by an oil rig worker named Payalaw.¹² Immediately, I connected

¹² Olarn, Kocha, and Josh Berlinger. “Dog Found Swimming 135 Miles off the <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/16/asia/dog-found-at-sea-thailand-intl>.



This photo (above) was of the man, Payalaw, who saved the dog and adopted him. *Vitisak Payalaw / AP*

the pilot episode idea that Sarg had a dog named Mugi, and I knew that this was what I wanted Sarg’s character to be like.

I liked how Payalaw was from Thailand. When designing my show, I wanted diverse people in it. Sarg identifying as a person of color was a strong point to his development. Since *Trash Island* is based on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch off the coast of California, it makes sense that Sarg should be from a place close to the geographical location of the fictional island. Therefore, I chose Sarg’s identity to be a Latino male from the pacific coast. I chose this background because there needs to be better and stronger representation of BIPOC in the acting and media community. I’d want my show to create opportunity in this field for a diverse casting.

Tanis, the actor who played Sarg, did identify as a Latino male. When working with him, I needed to have the representation be accurate, so there would be no stereotyping or misrepresentation. Tanis told me that his voice was channeling his grandpa and his own accents.

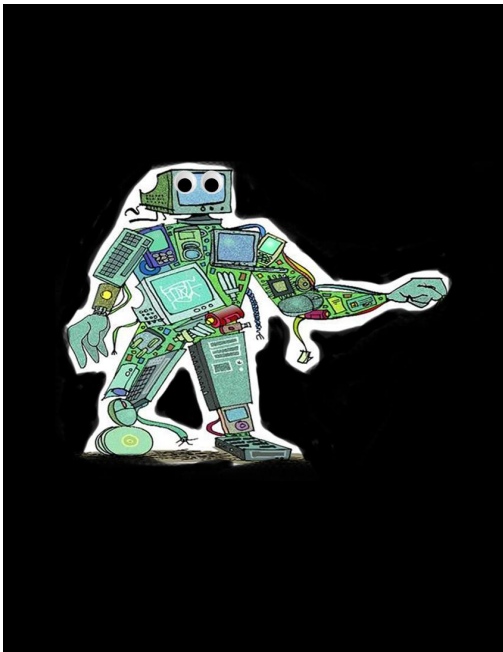
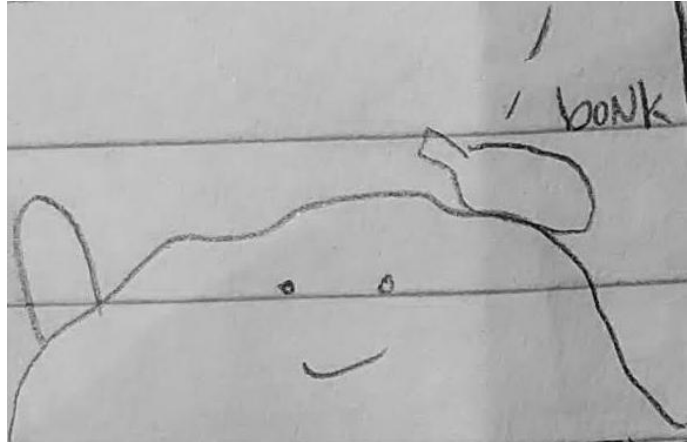
Additionally, Sarg's script was edited to have impactful dialogue, for example “if they kill Trashzilla then they’ll kill us too.” This represents both climate nonbelievers and corporations, and how their denial and lack of action is going to harm the whole planet. It is true that climate denial is endangering the planet. Exxon knew that climate change was happening since the 1970s, but they ignored the science, so they could continue drilling for oil.¹³



¹³ Jerving, Sara, and et al. “What Exxon Knew about the Earth's Melting Arctic.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, 2015. <https://graphics.latimes.com/exxon-arctic/>.

SAMSON:

Samson was originally a blob named Holmes. He consumed random things on the island for later use or comedic effect. Unfortunately, the name was already associated with Sherlock Holmes, and needed to be changed because of the association.



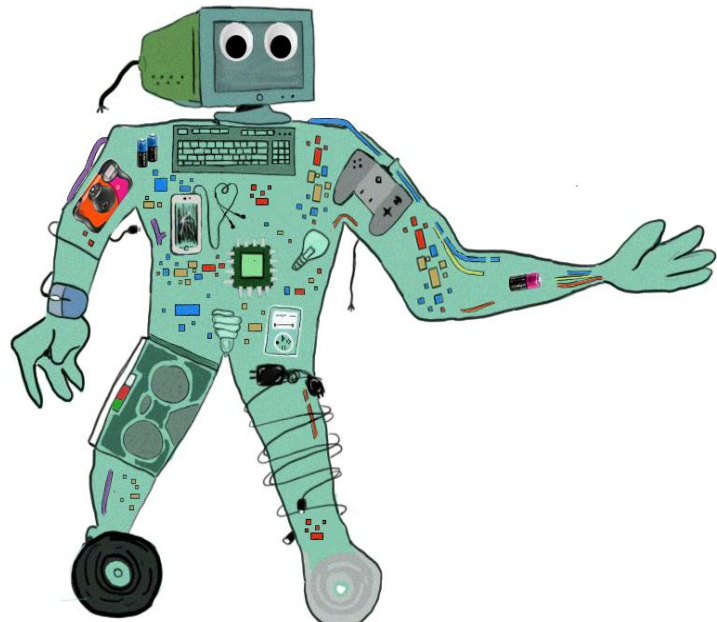
Samson's change came from a need for more specificity and uniqueness. Otherwise, his character traits would be hard to distinguish from other animated blobs.

In *Manufactured Landscapes*, the narrator talks briefly about how 50% of computers go to China to be recycled and their process for getting out the precious metals from these devices. A big problem is these metals are highly toxic and contaminate the water supply¹⁴.

This resonated with me because, in a technology-based society, many people do not consider their old phones or computers post-life after they are recycled.

This inspired me to make Samson E-waste, addressing this issue subliminally early in the show. Later in the series, there is a specific e-waste episode.

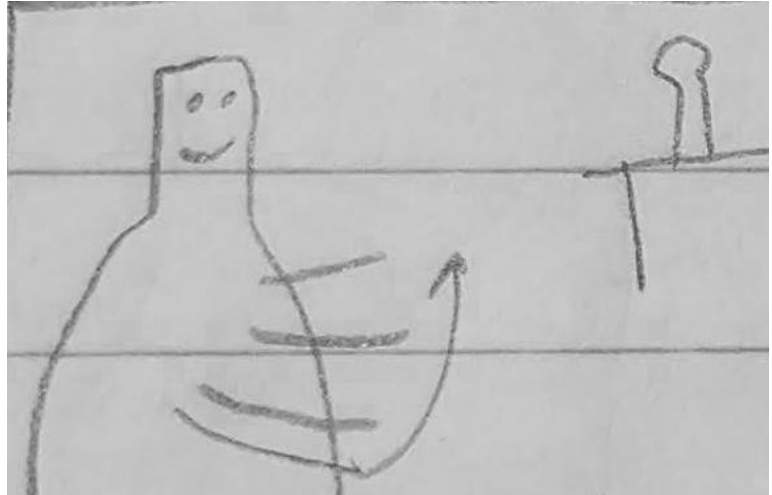
Also his name change was Holmes to Samson because it was a play on the Samsung brands name.



¹⁴ *Manufactured Landscapes - The Art of Edward Burtynsky*. Kanopy, 2006. <https://colorado.kanopy.com/video/manufactured-landscapes-1>.

LENNY:

Lenny was originally a disposable douche to match his personality. Unfortunately, I realized that people may not be familiar with this personal toiletry so I needed a new design. This got me thinking that he needs to be recognizable, fun, and iconic.



This led to the redesigning of Lenny to be a dildo. A dildo makes him a plastic that contributes to the decomposition issue, and he is more fun because dildos come in various colors/styles, and as a phallus, he is recognizable.



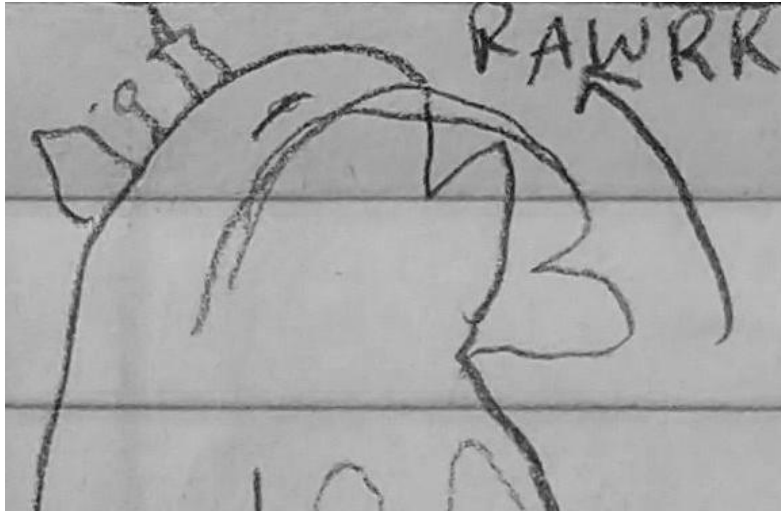
A Wobbling Willy¹⁵ has a customizable face and is a bobble head with a phallus. Perfect inspiration for Lenny's look.

Lenny is my own take on the Wobbling Willy. While in production, I was creating multiple arm poses, and so the third arm was made. It will be incorporated into the series as a mutation from the toxic environment of *Trash Island*.



¹⁵ Wobbling Willy. "Wobbling Willy," 2021. <https://www.wobblingwilly.com/>.

TRASHZILLA:



Trashzilla was brought to life from a Tesla coil. Initially, the idea of the coil came from thinking about new forms of renewable energy. From here I found an article about how a university in the Netherlands started experimenting on Tesla coils to clean smog particles.¹⁶ While the university successfully cleaned a one cubic meter area, I wanted to play on the idea that a coil was powerful enough to clean on a citywide level.

Originally, the coil was to be found on top of Trashzilla's head, but it didn't make sense. If the coil was fixing the smog issue, why did Trashzilla have to suck in smog at the same time? For continuity issues, it made sense that the coil was located in his mouth, and it likewise made sense for the electricity to be coursing from it through his body.

In the early drafts, Trashzilla was able to consume things and make them part of himself. Also, Trashzilla could charge up his electricity and shoot it. In that way, he destroyed the factory and the battleship.



In the final few drafts, I thought it would have more of an impact if Trashzilla did not destroy anything. Preserving his innocence and clear intentions portrays him as a good guy, and his actions are justified and with purpose.

¹⁶ Edwards, Luke. "Tesla Coils to Be Used as a Giant Vacuum Cleaner for Smog in the Air - Pocket-Lint." Pocket-lint. Pocket-lint, October 24, 2013. <https://www.pocket-lint.com/gadgets/news/124636-tesla-coils-to-be-used-as-a-giant-vacuum-cleaner-for-smog-in-the-air>.

Backgrounds:

I have been growing my photoshop skills by collaging different aspects of other photos to make my own pictures and scenes.

This keeps it realistic aesthetically with the hand drawn characters on top. The island (right) is a combination of three different images.



The sea (left) was altered by erasing the ships and extending the borders with the stamp tool. The sky was altered as well.

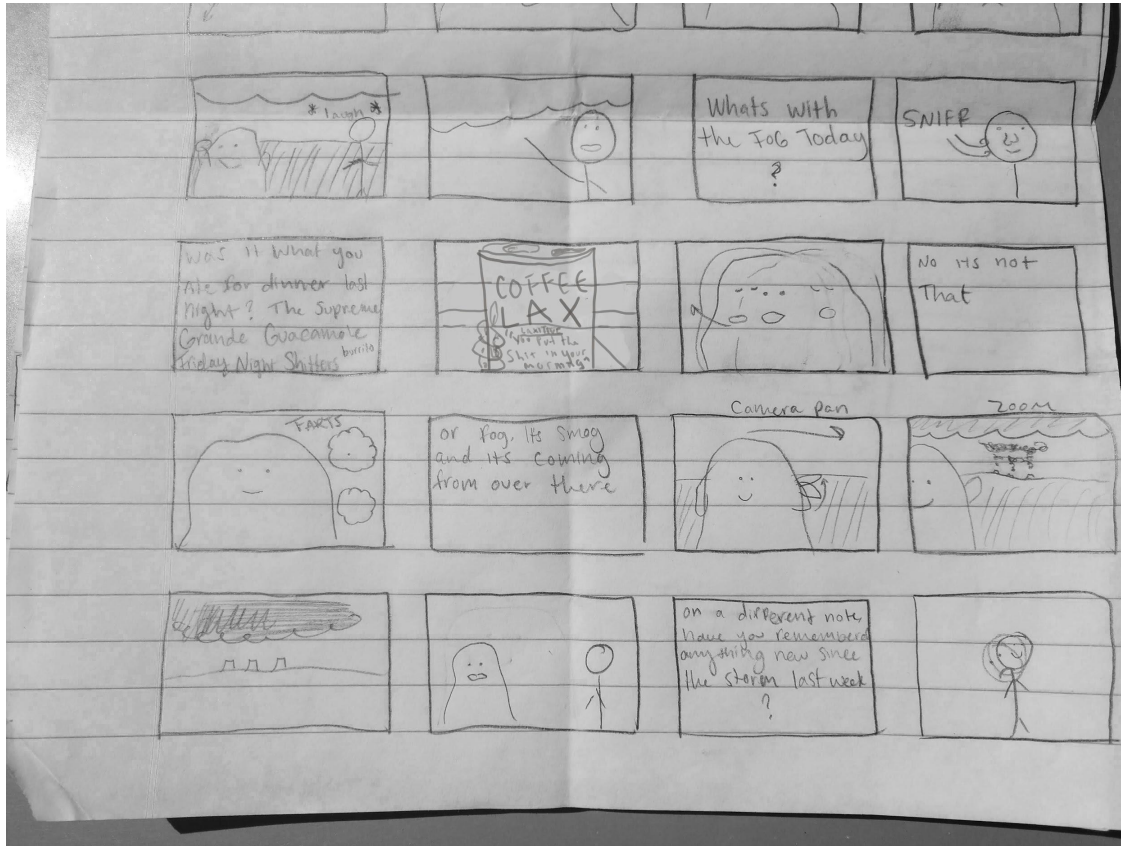
The beach (right) is composed of four separate images. This beach is El Segundo Beach, a random factory, the skyline of LA and clouds.

This factory was inspired by the power plant on El Segundo Beach.

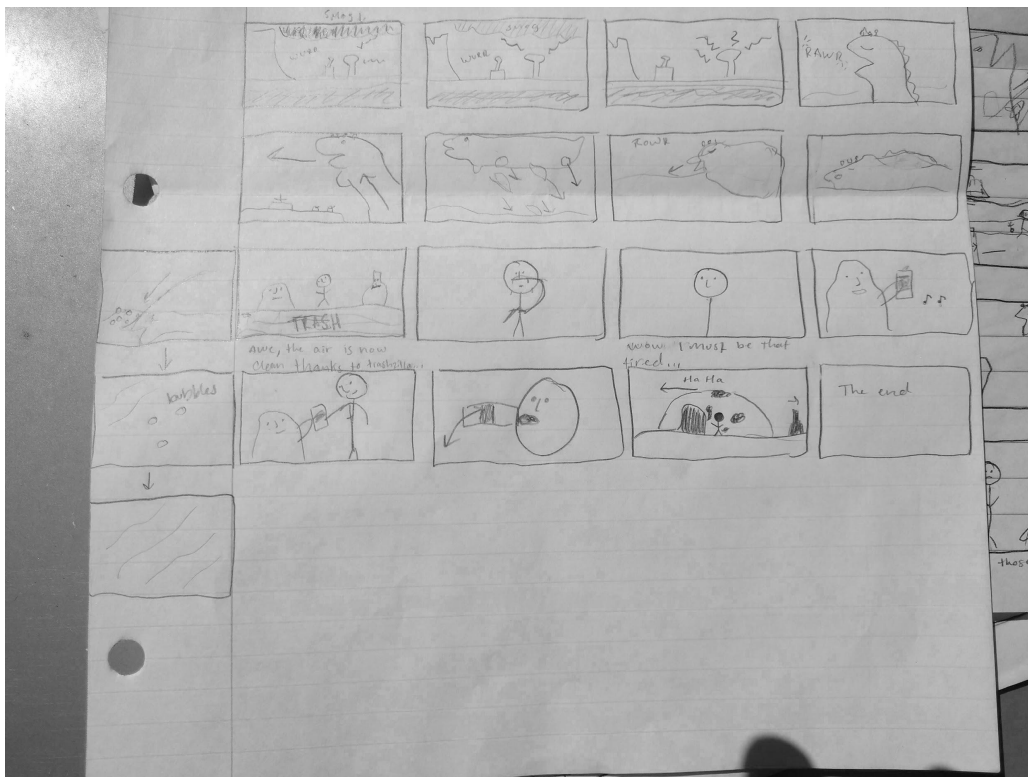


Animatic Evolution:

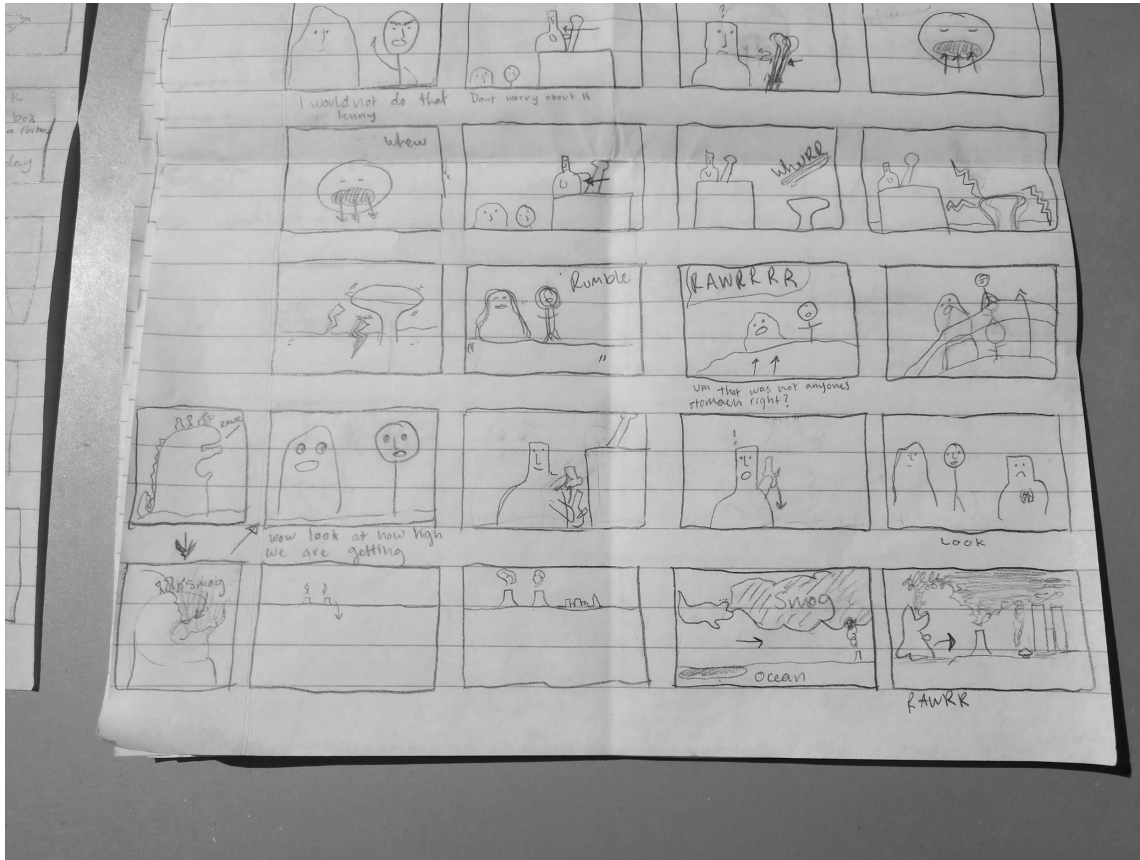
When making the animatic, I first needed to make the storyboard. Below I have included a few images of the story based on the script.



PG 1
Bottom
Half



PG 5
Bottom Half



PG 3 Bottom Half

The next step was to put the storyboard images (from above) into video with a scratch-track. I Photoshopped each frame and placed it in Premiere. This animatic was about six minutes long.

Very First Paper Storyboard with Sound: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 2 >under **2a**.

Tara advised me that there was a lot of unnecessary material in the story and it needed to be cut/condensed. She also said that six minutes is a lot to animate, so I needed to be intentional. The characters were not fully developed yet, so this animatic is similar to the one above, but it is only three minutes.

CUT DOWN paper storyboard: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 2 >under **2b**.

Once I had a storyboard and my characters' designs fleshed out, I replaced the paper drawings for scenes I developed in Photoshop. I still needed to work on scripting because some of the dialogue was straightforward and uninteresting.

TI Storyboard original coil: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 2 >under 2c.

For this animatic, I changed and cut parts that were filler. Also, the actors' conversations are better but are still in progress. There are subtle differences from the animatic before.

TI New Coil: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 2 >under 2d.

In this edit I made the ending sad instead of happy as it had been in previous animatics to add to the message I am trying to send. Also, I reworked jokes to try to follow the rule of threes, and changed the battle scene. I cut more unnecessary filler in the script and got the animatic to under three minutes. This animatic still has a scratch track.

TI Reworked and Cut: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 2 > under 2e

Sound Design:

The original plan was for the sound to be recorded in the CASE sound booths. When I was going through the process to book these booths, I found out that only two people can be in the booth at one time. For one booking, I was allowed to have three 15-minute sessions with 30-minute breaks between them. Additionally, if I wanted to have three people in the booths, the allotted time was minimized to eight-minute sessions. So, if I were to use the sound booths, I would be trading sound quality for acting quality. My advisor thought it would be best to check out four Zoom H5s and deliver one to each actor. I taught myself and then the actors how to use the basic functions of the Zoom H5 and how to set up the SD card. I recorded these sessions over Zoom as a master copy, and the actors would record the white noise, the test sound, and each individual run of script, improv, FX, and score.

This is the recording of the first table read with my actors, second read through.

Actor Tableread: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 3 >under 3a.

Here is the link to a 50-minute Zoom call where I taught the actors how to use and work the Zoom H5 mics.

Zoom H5 Lesson: Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 3 >under 3b.

The master recording of the entire actor session is about two hours and 30 minutes long. Unfortunately, during the main recording session, one of my actors had terrible sound quality,

and we needed to re-do everything. Here is a five-minute behind-the-scenes recording from our redo session.

Griffin Redo Sound- Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 3 >under **3c**.

For the Honors Thesis Defense (work in progress):

<https://vimeo.com/537064231>

Hard copy is in the *Trash Island Documents-Diantha McAllister* folder >folder 4 >under **4a**.

Conclusion

Originally, the ending of *Trash Island* was happy and the resolution complete, but I recently changed it to be more extreme and sad. Happy endings are favored in many mediums, so changing the ending challenges this ideology and makes the audience's discomfort and uneasiness register. Additionally, making the ending unexpected and sad will provoke conversation around the topic. The ending in which the planet becomes hazy is an intentional call to action. *Trashzilla* failing to desmog the world will evoke more emotion and generate a response from those who watch it. If the project ended as I originally intended - happily - then I would be promoting the illusion that the climate crisis, in reality, is not urgent. I do not want the wrong message to get across since this is a huge issue and needs attention. The ending had to change to deepen the impact of the message and evoke conversation.

What I Learned

I can confidently say I have learned an abundance of skills by working on this project. As I mentioned in the first paragraph of Chapter 3, I have been working on the skills that every animation team does in the business. I've learned firsthand how to develop a well-crafted script, a storyboard, a story, characters, and sound design, as well as how to work with actors. Along the way, I learned how to navigate different Adobe software programs better, such as collaging in Photoshop, sound recording in Audition, and I continued to use the skills I already knew for

Premiere. While working through these different learning curves for each aspect of this project, I have learned the professional terms for various processes. An example of a few words and definitions are:

An animatic is the step before fully animating the 24 fps (frames per second) that places the keyframes on a timeline.

A table read is the first read-through of a script with the actors.

ADR stands for additional dialogue recording.

A scratch track is a temporary audio track that replaces the real sound.

Puppet rigging are points in an animation's body that move like bones to help make the animation move naturally.

Key Frames are the beginning and end point of a movement before animating all the individual in between frames.

Additionally, I have successfully applied for a grant for my first time with this project. Learning how to apply for grants is highly beneficial for my future in this field. Applying for funding is a skill many students my age have never developed. Going through this process taught me how to condense what I want to say into a word count, create a budget and meet deadlines. Also there was a skill curve for managing funds and close communication with an advisor.

Next Steps:

Learning these various aspects of the business and how to do animation will help me for the rest of my future career. I have learned that animation is a continual process of revisions. Knowing that animating is a process, I will continue to work and finalize this project post-defense. I will be working closely with Tara, my advisor, throughout the rest of the semester and the summer. Currently, I am learning After Effects, so later I can add 3D animation to my project. I have never used the software before this semester, but I know using this program will add more depth to the layers. I also plan to revisit the script and to work with the actors again. I want to continue my work, so I could make the most impact possible with my project. This process will help me towards my goal to get *Trash Island* on television.

The message of *Trash Island* is something I care about and is the next step in addressing the environmental crisis. I want the themes and messages from my project to be addressed more often in the mainstream media, so it is essential to continue to work till *Trash Island* is finalized and released. Once it is finalized, my goal is to reach out to Steven Seagle, whom I met when he spoke to my CDMP 2500 class. He is the co-creator of *Ben 10 Alien Force* and has expertise in animation and pitching shows to content distributors like Cartoon Network. When I present *Trash Island* to Seagle, he would help provide advice and critique of the show. Also by presenting to Seagle, I will be taking the next step in making connections in the industry.

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