

DEGREE PROJECT

Pankh

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STUDENT : ASHIL SHAJI

PROGRAMME : Bachelor of Design (B. Des)

GUIDE : KAUSHIK CHAKRABORTY

2021

COMMUNICATION DESIGN FACULTY (ANIMATION FILM DESIGN)



राष्ट्रीय डिज़ाइन संस्थान
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN

The Evaluation Jury recommends ASHIL SHAJI for the

Degree of the National Institute of Design

IN COMMUNICATION DESIGN (ANIMATION FILM DESIGN)

herewith, for the project titled "PANKH"

on fulfilling the further requirements by*

Chairman

Members :

Jury Grade : _____

*Subsequent remarks regarding fulfilling the requirements :

This Project has been completed in _____ weeks.

Activity Chairperson, Education _____

Graduation Project Document

Bachelor of Design
Animation Film Design
National Institute of Design,
Ahmedabad, India.

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT ME

Growing up, I spent a lot of time in front of the television. It was my window to the world. I used to watch a lot of movies and "cartoons". My parents were not very fond with the idea of me watching what they considered idiotic and nonsense. So instead of Cartoon Network or Disney Channel, they tried to make my brother and me watch channels like Discovery Channel, National Geographic and Animal Planet. It did increase my appreciation for the animal kingdom but did not take away my love for movies and fantastical narratives.

However, my parents did support my art. In fact it was my father who first taught me how to draw. In his childhood, my father was very fond of painting and wanted to pursue it as a career but my grandfather didn't allow him to do so. When dad realised that I had a knack for drawing, he supported me in every way possible. He sent me to art classes, took me to competitions and would always push me to be better.

Eventually, my school too realised that I have some art skills and so they sent me to as many art competitions as possible. Participating in those many competitions helped me improve my skills a lot. It was around this time that I started reading Marvel and DC comics. This opened a whole new world to me. These comics ignited my passion for world building and storytelling. I would reimagine my friends and myself as superheroes with some really tragic backstories and in some very serious world-ending scenarios.

In 9th grade, one day I was having a conversation with my parents which somehow ended up with them asking me why my best friend is always the topper of the class I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life by saying that this is because he goes to a particular coaching institute. So, as expected, they sent me to the same coaching institute for engineering. I spent one and a half years of my life going to coaching for 8 hours a day over weekends. I would sit at the back of the classroom counting seconds, waiting for the class to get over. Eventually after a lot of stress, frustration and a little push from my friend Vishesh I told my parents that I don't want to pursue engineering. I thought my parents would be a little angry at first but to my surprise, they showed no sign of reluctance and were totally supportive. I eventually realised how much they trust my gut. I told them about NID where I can pursue my passion for visual storytelling through animation. They provided me with every resource possible to get into a place that would eventually be my second home. I joined a lovely art class ran by just 2 people where they prepped me for NID and treated me not just as a student but as their own family member.

In my 12th grade when board exams stress was at peak, while everyone would be solving equations in class, I would be sketching my classmates doing those equations. They would sometimes even pose for me. Weirdly my teachers never minded me doing that during their classes. For me then, my path was always clear regarding what I wanted to do in life and now looking back, I feel like everyone around me could see that too. I consider myself blessed and am thankful to grow up in such a supportive environment.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN, AHMEDABAD

The National Institute of Design is internationally recognised as one of the top design schools in the world. It functions as an autonomous body under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. NID is recognised by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research under Ministry of Science and Technology, government of India, as a scientific and industrial design research organisation.

NID is accorded as "Institute of National Importance" by Act of Parliament, under the National Institute of Design Act, 2014

At the end of the graduate and post-graduate programmes, the student is required to undertake a graduation project, which will demonstrate the skills and sensibilities gained from the due course of design education. The project is preferably undertaken at an external organisation, in which the student will execute the required in a professional environment. This allows him/her to understand their strength and weaknesses and assess their own performance within the limitations of their respective industries.

People from every corner of the country come here to learn and create. In NID, a lot of deconstruction of thoughts and perceptions happened for me. The world really expanded and gradually my overconfident arrogant shell started breaking. I ended up in an environment where I not only always wanted to be but where I needed be more than I realised. I kept on absorbing as much as possible by interacting and working along with others.

ANIMATION FILM DESIGN

Animation Film Design encourages students to come up with creative design solutions for the problems through communication design and moving images. Animation is a powerful medium of communication and expression. Animation at NID encourages students to tell their own stories and celebrates their own individualistic style.

The course at NID builds students' conceptual thinking, with a strong emphasis on the development of stories. There are a variety of courses like Drawing for animation, Science and Liberal Arts, Pre-production techniques, experimental animation, Script Writing and Understanding Narratives.

There are numerous visiting faculty from various fields of expertise who come in to broaden our understanding of storytelling.

GRADUATION PROJECT

As part of the NID curriculum, all the final year students are required to undertake a graduation project, which is a full scale design project in the industry. The graduation project is a complete demonstration of independent client service by the student, and the student is expected to generate a professional design assignment.

The graduation project exposes the student to a real life situation of working in the industry and functioning under the constraints and limitations of an organization. It involves understanding the strength and infrastructure of the organization, its design sensibilities and providing an appropriate solution within the practical parameters of time, economic viability and innovation.

A student undertaking a graduation project imbibes the real life experience to gain understanding of the role of a designer, which is not only restricted to design alone, but also includes time management, communication skills and pushing one's design idea to people's concerned, in the organization.

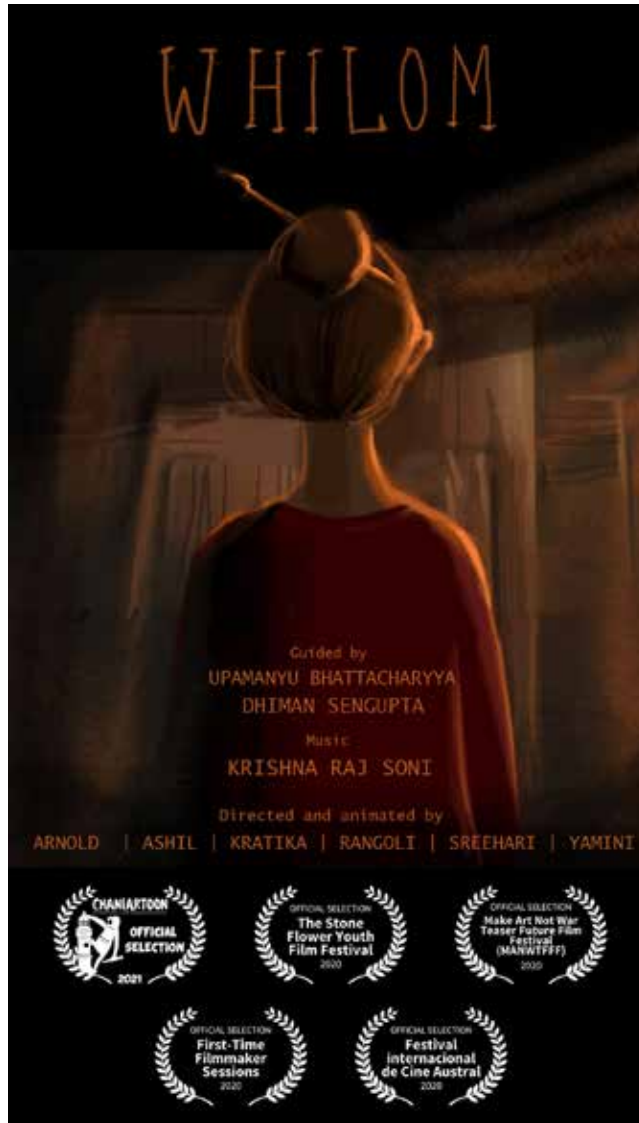
PREFACE

Once the 4th year got over, we packed our bags and came back from NID, and were left to do one small task to get our degrees, i.e., to complete a graduation project. A graduation project is the culmination of everything that we have learnt and experienced in NID. That's what I wanted to reflect through my film. I wanted to do something of my own for this project, so I did not sit for my placements. I wanted to do a self-sponsored project because I wanted to make a full fledged animated film on my own before leaving the college. I love animation but I needed to develop some confidence in myself as a filmmaker so that I pursue this as a career. During the summer before 3rd year, I did an internship and during my 7th semester I did a few freelance projects. So I do know that I have the experience and discipline of working for others under a deadline to bring their vision to life. With this GP I wanted to figure out if I could do the same for myself too.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

Before starting my graduation project I have had the experience and the opportunity to be part of projects that taught me a lot about teamwork, delegation, cooperation and time management. I got to learn about my strengths and weaknesses. I find myself very fortunate that got to meet some very talented people in the industry and luckily even got the chance to work to with them. With every project my love for animation just kept on increasing. Their passion for this artform would always fire me up to better. Over time I also learnt to listen and respect the ideas of people around me. Animation filmmaking is and should be a collaborative process if we want to make something that is worth people's time. Some projects were quite successful and led to incredible result while some just went nowhere. But whatever be the case, there would always be something or the other to learn from each one of them.

DP-1. Whilom



Whilom is a 3 min. long animated short film about a woman who is undergoing an art block and in the end realizes how creative and lively she used to be as a child but has now lost all these virtues with the passage of time.

This was my first venture into animation film making. It was also my first group project as an animation student. A lot of learning took place especially figuring out the whole pipeline, organizing the shots, figuring out everyone's strength and distributing work accordingly to meet the deadline.

We made some discoveries and faced a few setbacks but eventually succeeded in making a film that all of us were satisfied with. It was also successful in getting selected for a few film festivals.

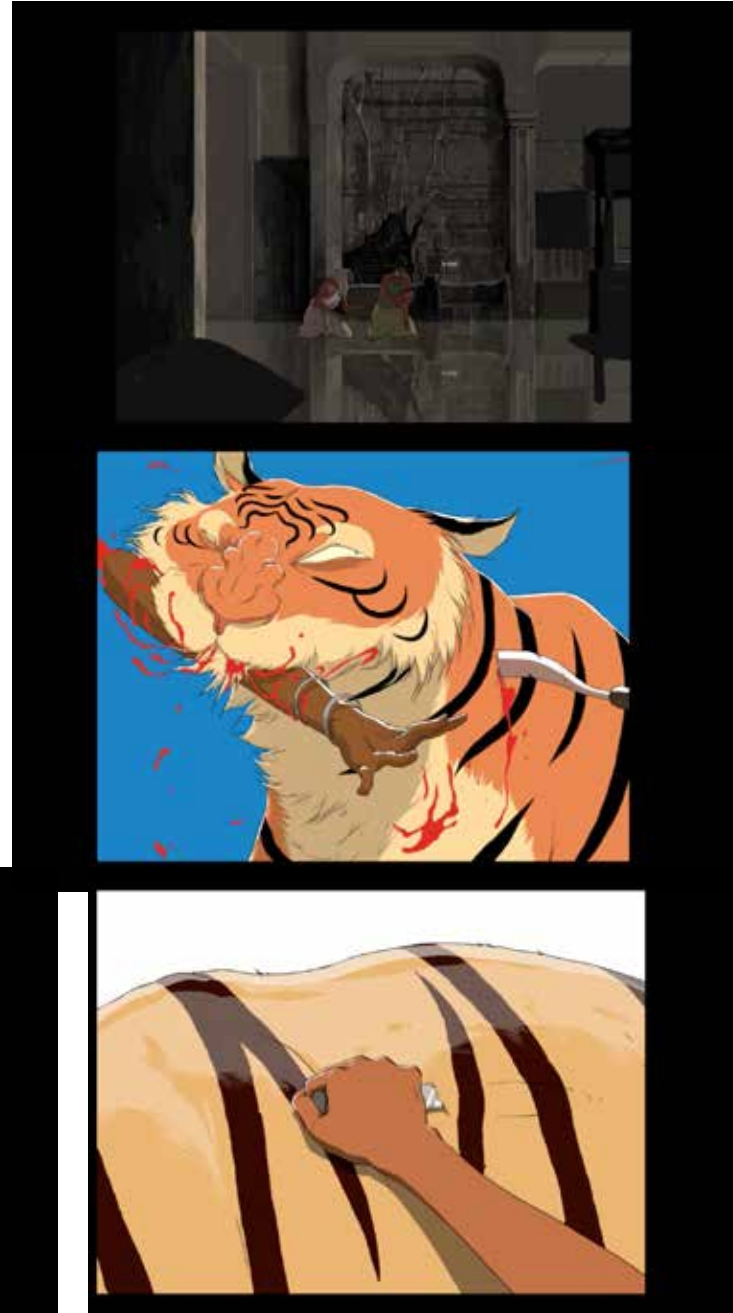


Internship at Ghost

I got an amazing opportunity to do a month long internship at the Ghost Collective. This is an animation studio based in Kolkata comprised of six people - Upamanyu Bhattacharya, Kalp Sanghvi, Shaheen Sheriff, Anwaar Alam, Isha Mangalmurti and Gaurav Wakankar.

At Ghost Collective, I worked on their wonderful award-winning short film "Wade". I gave colour and shadows to the characters and did effects animation on some shots. I got a chance to see how professional animators operate in the real world. I got to see how they divided work among each other, how they would have daily, weekly, monthly and annual goals and they would make sure to meet those goals without compromising their social life. It was a space filled with passion and love for this art form. I got to learn a lot from each one of them.

Stills from some of the shots I coloured for Wade.





Stills from the animation I did for *Mother*.



I also did some animation on their other award-winning short films " Beyond Borders" and "Mother" directed by Isha Mangalmurti and Gaurav Wakankar respectively.

It was a lot of fun working on these shorts as they had two very different styles. Beyond Borders was quite stylistic in its approach to animation while Mother was realistic in its character movements. Both the filmmakers had their own different approach towards animation and it was quite insightful for me.



Stills from the animation I did for *Beyond Borders*.



DP-2. Quit India

My next design project was also a group project- an animated adaptation of a short story "Quit India" by Ishmat Chughtai, one of Urdu's most famous short story writers. I was very excited for it and so was our whole team.

It was a very interesting project as we had to deal with a story that's set during the Partition of our country. So it was a privilege to work on such a project and it was very important to do justice to it while making sure we can complete it within our deadline.

We as a team learnt a lot about our own history while researching on it. We studied the architecture, clothes, administration, bureaucracy etc. of that time period. We watched a lot of period movies and read a lot of books on Partition. It was a very insightful couple of months for us.

We also did a lot of rewriting to make the story executable for an animated short. We redrew the storyboard several times. We reached the animatic stage and even that went through several iterations. Unfortunately the project never saw the light of the day. The problem was that we were overambitious. We were not able realise our limitations. We tried to meet the standards that we thought the story demanded rather than trying to condense the story down to its bare essence.

Still, it was a very fun project and I would love to work on adapting a period piece into an animated film if I ever get another chance.



Some of the early concept arts for the film.

ENSAD

In my 6th semester I got an opportunity to undertake an exchange program to study animation at ENSAD, Paris. It was an amazing experience. ENSAD is one of the top design schools of France. Here, I studied sound design, acting, world building, anatomy study, compositing and animation filmmaking from their perspective. All the courses were taught in French but language never felt like a barrier because of my classmates. The classes were fun and I learnt a lot but never at the expense of my mental health. Unfortunately, my experience at the school came to an halt due to the start of the pandemic. Although we continued with the classes online, it was never the same. Still, it was a memorable experience.

Living in Paris was surreal. I got to experience some of the greatest works of art and architecture in person. My favourite part was always walking down a beautiful unknown streets or alleys which would later turn out be places of historic or artistic significance. I made a lot of friends and met some amazing people who came from different parts of the world. Interacting with them expanded my horizon and helped me see things from different perspectives. They made my whole experience even more memorable for me and the pandemic less unbearable.



ENSAD



Experiencing a Monet at Muse' de Orangerie



Some Urban live sketching



Picnic at Buttes Chaumont

Bad Egg - An animated Short

One of the project that I worked on at ENSAD was an animated short. The final deliverable was supposed to be an animatic no longer than 2 min. I was inspired from mime and theatre acting for the execution of this story.

Initially the story was about a boy who was being raised by birds in a nest and those birds expect him to behave and do everything that a bird can do. The story was later modified. Birds were replaced with harpy-like people. The story became about the boy who cannot grow wings and therefore, can't fly among these people. His father wasn't able to see his son's struggle. It was a cautionary tale of putting unrealistic expectations on one's child.

The idea was to keep the story short and simple so that it could be executed in a short period of time. The character design and the backgrounds were kept rough and simple because of the same reason. There were no dialogues too as I wanted to give a mime-like quality to the film. All of this kept adding to the challenge of communicating the story. I was also limiting myself with the expressions of the characters as their mouth was covered and their eyes were just two tiny dots. So the story relied heavily on the gestures and movement of the body.

It was a fun exercise but I could have made things easier putting less constraints on myself.



A page of exploration

Black screen
[Sound of traffic and people on the balcony in the background. Birds chirping. sound of shaking. Tension. Maybe heartbeat]

Screen turns on .

ON THE ROOFTOP. SURROUNDED BY TALLER BUILDING. SKY NOT VISIBLE. MORNING.
[A boy is standing on the rooftop ledge with on foot almost in the air. His legs are shaking. Just when it seems like he is about to make a jump when he pulls himself back]

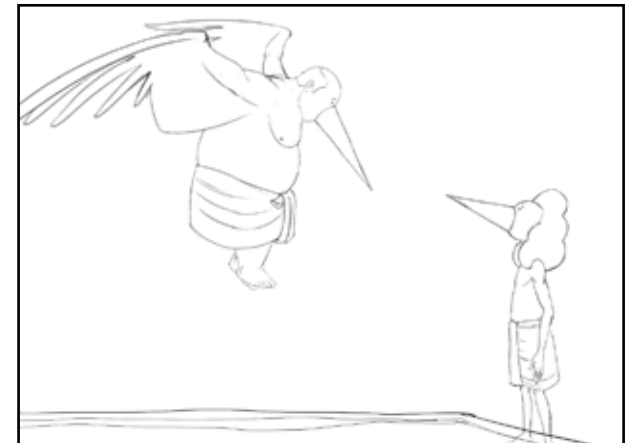
CUT TO:
[Boy looks back at the camera. His face has a hand-made cone like beak on his mouth.]

BOY
I think I am not meant for this.
(Showing the cardboard made wings.)

CUT TO:
[A large round bird spills his food in shock. He was sitting in a half shack and half nest. He look-up in anger. A bit disturbed. He walks strictly towards the boy.]

CUT TO:
[Bird peaks on the boy's head in a scolding way. The bird beats his on head and then flew to the level of boy's head over the edge of roof. He points to the ground as if screaming on the boy that it is so easy and then he lands beside him. Then he tells the boy to jump but the boy refuses. He tells him to jump again but the boy looks down and then looks back at his Dad but refuses again. The Dad then starts to push him but the boy tries to resist and this goes for a while and the father gives up. To make it worse, they saw another bird fly in the air with his son. Father now angry, but more sad, walks back to his shack. The boy looks at his dads back and all the photos of them together. He looks down the roof. He gives a sigh and makes the jump. The father looks back and sees that his son is not here. He runs to the roof. He looks down and there is an expression of horror on his face.]

The script



still from the animatic

DP-4. Mother's Love

After having experienced working with groups for my first and second design project, it was a little bit refreshing to work on my own. I did work on my own at ENSAD but it was my first time at NID. Also it made things a little bit easier as all of my batchmates were working on our DP from home because of the ongoing pandemic.

The idea for the story of the film started from a comic that I created for my graphic narrative course. It's about a mother taking care of her son while having occasional panic attacks which is manifested visually in the form of an octopus wrapping its tentacles around its neck. Also, living through the hustle bustle of Delhi while working as a nurse and being behind the rent payment does not help with her anxiety.

I liked this story a lot as the it was personal and I wished to finish it. I was able to complete the pre-production and was done with the animatic of film. However, I was unable to complete it as I put a lot of time into every little action of the characters in an attempt to make what I consider nuanced performance. I failed to delegate my time properly to different tasks. I would get stuck at one shot and would try to make it as perfect as possible.

I do wish to finish this film at some point once I get done with my graduation project.



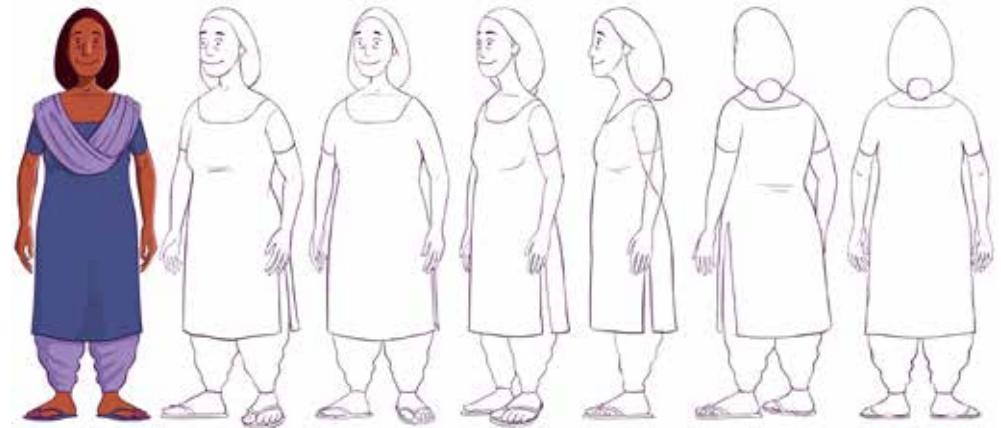
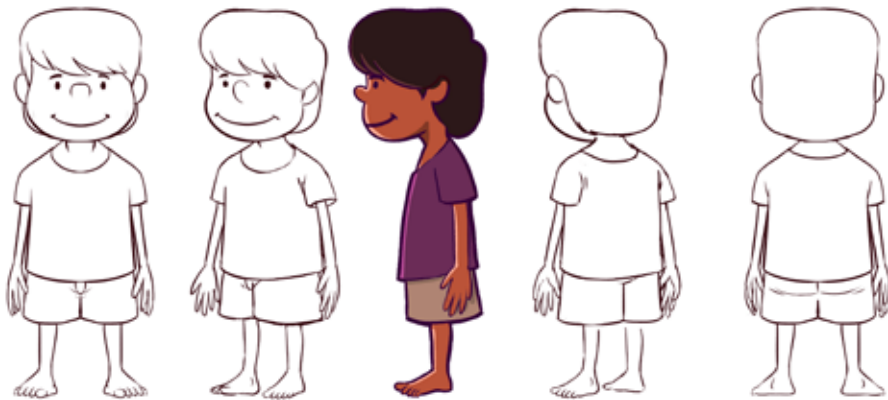
Background



Stills from the test animation



Concept art



Character sheet of the son and mother

MAP- Theory of Change

I was given a wonderful opportunity to do a full animation intro of the Migration and Asylum Project for their website. It was directed by Isha Mangalmurti and Kalp Sanghvi. The colour script and the background was done by Karuna Subbiah.

Started in 2013 by former UN lawyers, the Migration & Asylum Project seeks to fuel systemic change in India's approach towards migration and displacement. Its mission is to end the marginalisation of forcibly displaced and migrant communities by enabling them to access mainstream legal systems.

I loved doing the stylistic animation. It was very different than what I have ever done before. Also it was fun to work once again with Isha and Kalp after interning under them. So it was really a comfortable scenario inspite of the project happening during the pandemic. They both had a very clear vision and were very good at communicating exactly what they want from a shot. Working under such directors makes the task of animators very easy.



Stills from the animation.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Synopsis

It is a story about a father and his son. It is set in a city where bird-like people live. Set in a very metropolitan world, with buildings both tall and dense, the story talks about a father's struggle to raise his son to his & the society's standards and sons struggle to live up to them despite his wings' stunted growth.

The story starts at a ceremony where every child flies for the first time by making a jump from a height but for the protagonist it's going to be a challenge because of his underdeveloped wings. The son would like to fly but is scared to make the jump while his father wants him to do it. Both of them would have to reach an understanding and solve it together.

The duration of the film would be about 3-4 minutes.

Themes

1. Father's expectation vs father's love
2. Son's struggle and wanting to be something he can't
3. Community's influence on our minds and decision making
4. Father's struggle to raise his son all alone and his reference being his own super stoic strict father.
5. Realising that failing at something in life is not the end of the world.
6. At the same time, how important it is for an individual in this scenario get the support of the close ones.

Setting

1. It is set in a very dense city
2. The design would be an amalgamation of a bird's nest and the streets of old Delhi filled with people, food, smoke, street animals and electrical wires.
3. This idea is to make the city alive.
4. The idea of having such a dense background behind our characters is to give a visual load and show the pressure that these characters are dealing with.



Estimated Budget

Particulars	Details	Amount (INR)
Equipments	Softwares and tool costs	40,000
Guide visit	Travelling, staying, meal	25,000
Internet	Wifi, mobile recharge	2,400
Sound design	Renting sound studio and audio equipments	25,000
Research	Travelling, meals, etc.	10,000
Total		1,02,400

Timeline (Tentative)

12th April - 11th Oct (6 months approx.)

Pre-Production	Story Storyboard	12th April - 26th April
	Background research Concept Art	27th April - 10th May
	Colour script Animatic	11th May - 15th May 16th May - 25th May
Production	Rough Animation Refined animation Cleanup Background Colour Shadows & Highlight	26th May - 26th June 27th June - 12th July 13th July - 23th July 24th July - 7th August 8th August - 18th August 19th August - 10th Sept
Post Production	Sound design Compositing Texture	11th Sept - 11th Oct

PRE PRODUCTION

FINAL SYNOPSIS

It is the story about a daughter and her mother as they try to figure out a way to make the former fly. In a world full of flying beings, the protagonist is born with the inability to fly. When she comes to terms with that, she tries to building something for herself that can helps her overcome this challenge. Once she builds a wingsuit for herself, the challenges doesn't stop as she still has to convince her mother that it can work while making sure that she doesn't get eaten by a sea monster.

THE ESSENCE

Every challenge in the world can be dealt it if we have people in our life who are ready to support us no matter what. There occasionally comes a time in our lives when feel less about ourselves, when we don't even like ourselves and sometimes even end up hating ourselves. Even the world around us in these times seem to be in agreement with what we think of ourselves which can lead to anxiety, stress and depression. We end up being scared to be our own selves around people. At times like these things feel a little better when you have someone to share your insecurities with and that person is also ready to accept whatever we say. It's not always about doing something about those problems but just listening to it and saying the right thing in accordance to the context. It will not get us rid of those insecurities but it will at least makes us realise that even if we fall, there will be someone to catch us. Knowing that we have a wall like that behind our backs helps us to push through our struggles and overcomes the challenges we face.

As much as it is important to have people who care about us in our lives, it is equally important to believe in ourselves. There is only so much people around us can do to help us out. Eventually it is our lives and our fight. Whatever we are going through, eventually we have to either get over it or deal with it.

Revision

The film actually builds upon my old project "Bad Egg" which I left at the animatic stage during my exchange semester. I picked it up because I liked the theme of the old short. It was something I could relate to but the story was actually very rough around the edges and treatment was also very rudimentary. I wanted to make a better story that I can be proud of and wanted the audience to have a great experience while watching it.

The earlier version was quite slow and abstract. There was a sense of detachment while watching the characters. It was an interesting take towards storytelling but almost a year had passed and my approach towards animation had changed a lot which I wanted to be reflected in this project.

The story kept on changing and evolving with every passing stages. It was a really fun process. I tried to keep it as flexible as possible so that I can keep make any adjustments if necessary.



SCRIPT

Story Time!

Since the plan was to make a 3 min. long film I tried to limit the pages of my script to just 3 pages as a standard one page of a script translates to a minute of film .

Writing the script is fun because it is just 10% writing and 90% walking back and forth in my room figuring out the story of the film. In fact the major part of script writing is rewriting. It keeps on changing till I reach something cathartic and satisfactory. Also this was the time when all my batchmates were at their pre-production stage and most of us were figuring out our stories. So there was a constant exchange of ideas and thoughts happening.

While writing the script my intention was to keep the story simple and executable since the world that it is set in was very fantastical and vast. At the same time I wanted it to be very personal. The relationship that the parent and the child shares should be felt real so that their struggle also feels real.

Fade In:

INT. HOUSE

Father is flying through the street to his home. People are going about with their daily activities. Kids are flying and playing. Commerce is happening. People are flying from one point to another. He comes with a gift in his hands. He is hiding it in a pouch. He opens the door to enter his house.

INT. HOUSE

Father enters to see his son stretching and whipping his hands. The son looked at him. He can't contain his excitement. The room has a very middle class feel to it. There is a photo of his mother behind his son covered in garland. There are a lot of trophies of his fathers on all over the shelves in this room hinting at how good he is at flying. The father used to be a champion of the races during his prime and his son dreams to be just like him.

EXT. TEMPLE FLOOR - MORNING

There are a lot of people at the back to witness the event. There is a priestess to initiate the event. There is a line of kids with their parents waiting for their turn to make a jump. The boy and the father is standing behind a little girl and her family. The girl moves forward to the edge. The priestess is chanting prayers behind her. Everyone's joined their hands. She makes the jump. She is whipping her hands to release her wings. She does it twice but nothing happens. The girl closes her eye and gives her hand a very strong jerk. The wings comes out! The wind pushes her up and gets a lift. Everyone near the edge looks at it cheers. Her mother cries. The whole crowd is cheering and jumping. The boy and the father smiles at each other and looks down. The girl is amazed. She has howering wings like a hawk. She puts them to test. She flies across and between the streets and the corridors. The boy is looking at it from amazement. The girl flies back towards them and lands. Her parents rushes towards her and gives a hug. Her father pats her on the head. She join hands to the priestess and touches her feet. The priestess gives her blessings. The girl walks back. Now it is the boys turn. He is very excited. He yeets. He whips his hands like the girl did. He does it twice but nothing happens. But he was ready for that. He does it the third time nothing happens. he tries it the fourth and fifth time. Still nothing happens. Now the people at the top are getting worried. The boy is getting a bit worried. He is shaking and moving his hands. He is doing all he can but nothing is happening. He is falling really fast now. He might hit the ground. His father sees that and realises he should do something. He dives down and grabs his son by his feet before it's too late. they land at the roof. They are a bit confused and dissappointed. People are murmuring at the

2.

back. The son looks at them and then he looks back at his father. The father is sad but when he notices that his son is looking at him he smiles and puts his hands on his son's shoulder. They walk back thinking of coming back. They try again next year but the boy fails again. They keep trying every year but fails. Every time he jumps his father would have to dive down and save him. Now he is 20 years old and he is back here with his father. He is looking at these kids who are standing before him who are 7 years old and they are able to jump and be able to fly. He feels embarrassed. He looks at his father who seems to have almost given up. Now it is his chance. He is feeling the pressure. People are murmuring behind him. He looks up at the building that are huge and seems to gang up on him. They transform into his father's trophies. The people's murmurs and cheers are causing tremors, shaking those trophies. They starts to fall on the boy. The boy sees that and runs. He tries to dodge them but eventually falls and all that weight falls on him. The vision causes him to pass out.

INT. HOUSE

The son wakes up the bed. There is a towel on his head. His father is sitting on his left. He looks at his hands and he feels so useless. He starts to cry. His father sees that his son is awake and upset so he tries to console him. The boy hugs his father. the father doesn't know what to do. He looks to the photo of his mother on the wall in front of him.

EXT. ABANDONED SITE_DUSK.

The son is standing at the edge of a collapsed house all alone with tears in his eyes. He is looking down into a pit where there are a lot electric poles with tangled electric wires surrounded by concrete with exposed rebars looking like spikes . It is very narrow space. If someone falls into it then there is no escape. The boy can feel his heart beating faster. He doesn't see any other option left. Then the wind that's coming in his direction starts getting stronger and stronger. It becomes almost destructive. People rushes into their house. People's cloths on the hanger are flying, trees are getting ripped apart. The wind is rushing through the city into the direction of the boy. The boy takes a few step back and he then runs and jumps with all his might into the pit. But before the boy could hurt himself the wind knocks the boy back. The time slows down for him. He is about to hit the ground. For a split second he sees his mother hugging him, as if trying to hold him back. He also sees his father, sitting alone in the house. The time goes back to normal and the boy hits the floor. There are rocks lying around him . He looks down and

3.

contemplates. He sees all this and then laughs at himself, crying.

INT. SON'S ROOM - MORNING.

Time has passed. Light is falling into the sons room. He is smiling and working alongside his father. There is grease on his face. The father looks at him. They smile at each other. The son wipes his face. He sees the watch which his father gave. He points that they are getting late. They get out.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

The father is helping his son to tie the gear around him. He gets ready and stands on the edge. They look at each other and nod. The boy yeets. He balances himself in the air. The father is a bit nervous. The boy whips his hand. Nothing happens in the first two tries but it works the third time. The mechanism opens revealing the wings that they have designed. The boy is screaming out of sheer excitement for he can't believe that HE IS ACTUALLY FLYING. The father sees this and cries. He dives down and joins his son. They both are flying through the streets and the market of the city. The people are looking at them with surprise. They are waving at them. The father and his son waves back. They keep flying and enjoys the calm breeze.

Fade to white.

STORYBOARDS

The story never stops changing!

The storyboard helps to visualise and set the stage for the story. It also helps with figuring out what works and what doesn't in the narrative.

The story evolved a lot at this stage. It wasn't just the redrawing of the board but actual rewriting of the story that happened via visuals. It was about reaching at a stage where I would be satisfied with the narrative. There was a constant back and forth with my guide Kaushik Chakraborty regarding the story. Even my batchmates helped me out a lot. I wanted to get to a narrative that I would believe in so that I won't give up on it while working on it for the next few months.

I was satisfied with where the story reached eventually. There were still some loose threads to be tied but I decided to solve them during the animatic or at a later stage as the deadline was getting nearer.

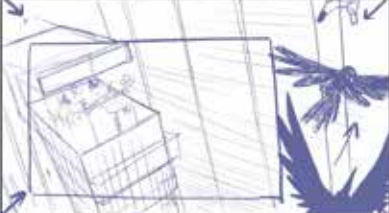
Draft 1

The story in the first draft was very much in line with the story of Bad Egg, the animated short that I was working on during my exchange program. But while the story of Bad Egg ended with the suggestive death of the boy, here it ends with the father accepting his son's weakness.

Here, I also expanded on the father's backstory. Looking at his son hesitation to fly, the father reminisces on his past when his own father pushed him across the edge of the temple so that he could get over his fear and start to fly. Since it worked for him he tries the same thing with his own son but soon realises that he can't raise his child in the same way because the context is different. The son here is not flying just out of hesitation but also because of ill developed wings but his father is not able to see this.

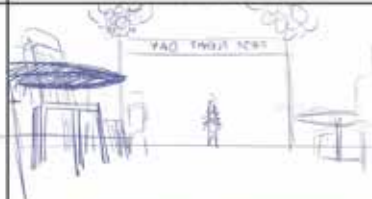
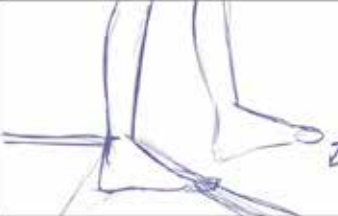
Now why is the father not able to see it was a problem that needed to be solved. I also had to figure out if the audience are able to understand the ailment of the boy since there are no dialogues in the film. In fact making sure that people are able to get how many of the things work in this fictional world was a fun challenge. Adding to it was having more characters in the background complementing the main characters.

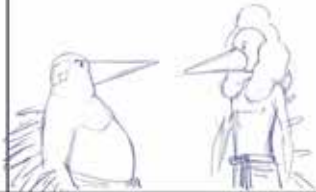
I show more of the world in which the characters live. It is set in a mountainous terrain where the houses are stacked on top of each other. They have bridges but they don't have any railings because there is no fear of death by fall as everyone can fly. It is not a modern world and everyone here is set in there ways. Everything runs on steam. There are no plastic materials. Transportation is not an issue. People write on cloths and papyrus like materials. This world has never discovered artificial flight as there was never a need for it. In fact ones ability to fly and how good they are at it was a matter of great pride. The reason to do so was to complement the internal struggle of the boy with some built in external conflict. It should seem that the world is purposefully designed to make the boy's life miserable (which ironically is what is actually happening).

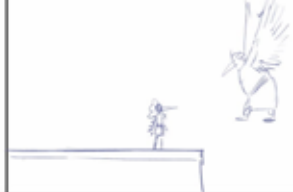
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SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
	WIDE SHOT OF THE CITY ZOOMING IN PEOPLE FLYING PAST (BUILDINGS SURROUNDING THE CHARACTER SHOULD BE A BIG THING.) INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	(FIRST FLIGHT DAY) CAM. CAN PAN UP SLOWLY INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	SUN IS NEAR SETTING INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	LOT OF TIME HAS PASSED. INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
	THIS FAMILY ALSO LEAVES INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	THEY SAY GOODBYE TO THE FATHER. INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	FATHER WANTS THEM TO STOP, BUT COULDN'T INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			
	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT			

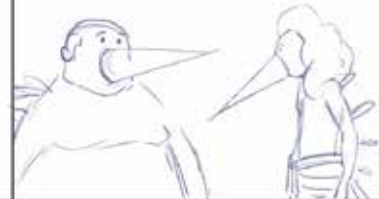
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SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	OUT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		PRIEST APPROACHES THE FATHER.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		GIVES HIM THE CEREMONIAL CROWN.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	OUT
		LOOKING AT HIS SON,		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		THE FATHER REMEMBERS HIS OWN PAST. (LOT OF PEOPLE ARE THERE AND CHEERING.)		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		FATHER, TIRED, FALLS ONTO HIS CHAIR		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO	
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO	
	CAM. PANS FROM L. TO R.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
	FATHER POINTS TO THE GROUND (WANTING HIM TO MAKE THE JUMP)	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		

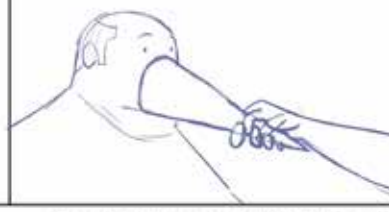
PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	OUT
		THE FATHER INSISTS AGAIN.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		SON, RELUCTANT, MOVES CLOSE TO EDGE		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		CAM ZOOMS UP (FROM TOP VIEW) TO SHOW THE DEPTH.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		(THERE CAN BE A LITTLE BIT OF SWEAT).		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	OUT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		(THE SON NODS IN DISMAY)		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
		FATHER IS NOW VERY FRUSTRATED.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT
				INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WORDS/SCENES - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE CLOSES HIS EYES	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

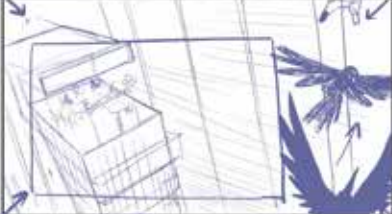
PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WORDS/SCENES - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		BLACK OUT	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE REALISES THAT HE CAN FLY NOW.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE GETS EXCITED.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE DOES SOMERSAULT ARE STUFF.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		(TOP VIEW OF ROOF) PEOPLE ARE CHEERING.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

PAGE	SCENES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
		HE IS VERY HAPPY		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		HE LOOKS AT HIS FATHER		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		FATHER LOOKS DOWN ON HIM DOES NOT GIVE A REACTION.		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		AND WALKS AWAY		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		(PEOPLE STILL CHEERING AT THE BACK.)		
		HE GETS SAD.		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		

PAGE	SCENES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
		CUT TO PRESENT.		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
				
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
				
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		HE PUSHES HIS SON.		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		BUT THE SON HOLDS HIS BEAK.		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	BRAND & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
	FATHER IS REALLY GETTING FRUSTRATED.	INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	BRAND & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
	THE SON TRIES TO FLY ON THE SPOT.	INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY / NIGHT		

PAGE	SCENES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - MINDSCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO.	
		WIDE SHOT OF THE CITY ZOOMING IN PEOPLE FLYING PAST (BUILDINGS SURROUNDING THE CHARACTER SHOULD BE A BIG THING.) INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		(FIRST FLIGHT DAY) CAM. CAN PAN UP SLOWLY INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		SUN IS NEAR SETTING INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		LOT OF TIME HAS PASSED. INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		 INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		

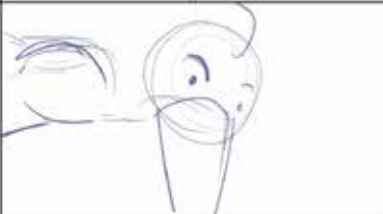
PAGE	SCENES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - MINDSCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO.	
		 INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		THE FATHER JUST GIVES UP. INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		AND LEAVES. INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		 INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		
		THE SON LOOKS AT HIS FATHER INT. EXT. / DAY - NIGHT		

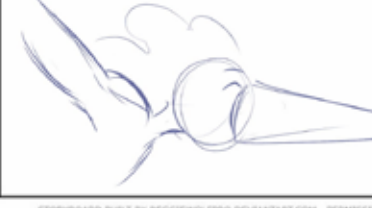
PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	CUT TO	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	REMINISING IN THE PAST.	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		

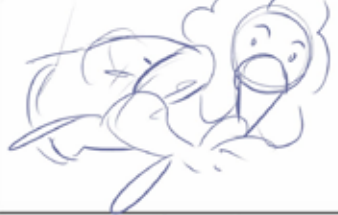
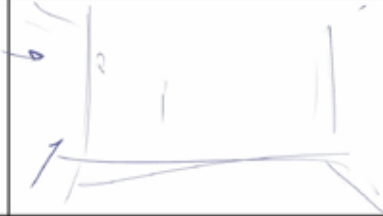
PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	MOM COMES EXCITED	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	LOOKS UP AT . . .	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	THE TROPHIES HE HAS WON	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	AND WISHES HIS SON TO REACH HIS LEVEL OR HIGHER.	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		
	SON IS STILL SITTING AT THE ROOFTOP.	INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		ME LOOKS AT THE SIDE.		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		SEES OTHER KIDS OF HIS AGE FLYING.		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
				
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		
		ME IS LOOKING DOWN		
		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT		

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		THE WINGS! ARE GROWING!	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE ALSO LOOKS AT SIDE.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		WINGS GROW TO FULL.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	ERASE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	IN	
		HE IS FULL ON ABLE TO FLY. (BRIGHT COLOURS NOT NATIONAL UPBREAST MUSIC)	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE STRUGGLES... BUT GETS THE GRIP.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE IS ENJOYING.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		FLYING ALONGSIDE HIS FATHER.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE IS HAPPY.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	BRAND & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO	
		CUT TO: HIS EYES OPEN	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		LOOKS AT HIS HANDS.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		THERE ARE NO WINGS.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE IS JUST FALLING REALLY FAST TO THE GROUND.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		THE GROUND IS APPROACHING FAST!	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	BRAND & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES	NO	
		HE CLOSES HIS EYES	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		BLACK OUT.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		OPENS HIS EYES NOTHING HAS HAPPENED.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
			INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	
		HE IS JUST FLOATING ABOVE THE GROUND.	INT EXT / DAY NIGHT	

PAGE	SEAS / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
	HE GETS UP.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
	CROWD AT THE BACK SEEING THE DRAMA.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	

PAGE	SEAS / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	GRADE & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
	GIVES HIM THAT CEREMONIAL VILLIAN		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
	CROWD AND THE BUILDING VANISHES FROM THE BACK.		INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	
			INT. EXT. / DAY. NIGHT	

PAGE	SERIES / PROJECT	EPISODE TITLE	CODE	BRAND & PLACE LOGO HERE
SCENE	LAYOUT - WIDESCREEN - ASPECT RATIO 16:9	ACTION - DIALOGUE - NOTES		NO
				INT EXT / DAY NIGHT
				INT EXT / DAY NIGHT
				INT EXT / DAY NIGHT
		FADE TO WHITE.		INT EXT / DAY NIGHT
				INT EXT / DAY NIGHT

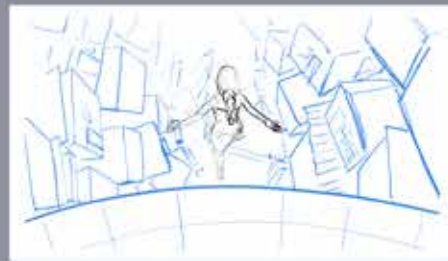
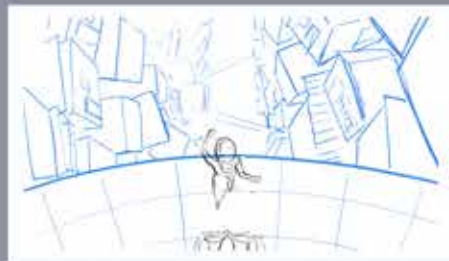
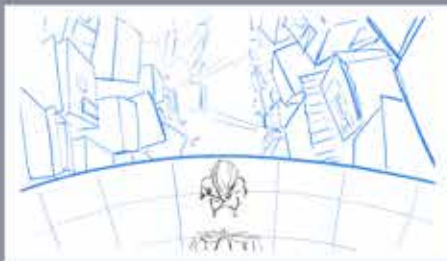
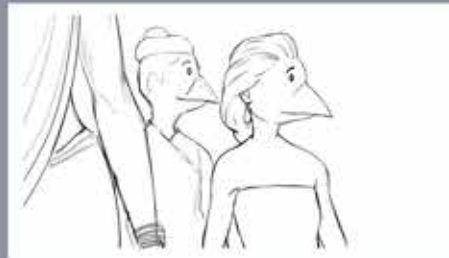
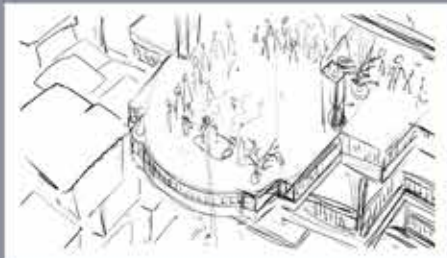
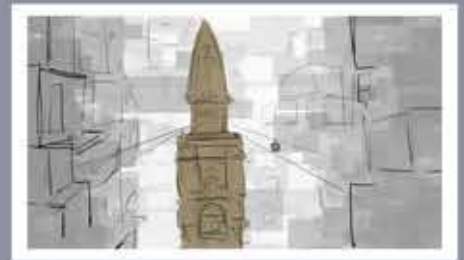
after four drafts of storyboards.....

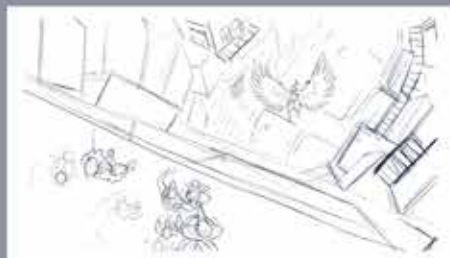
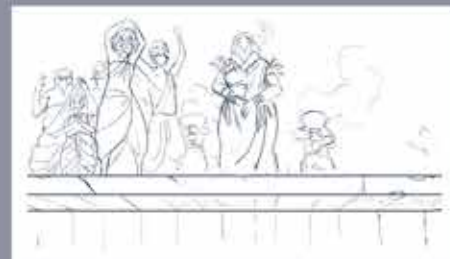
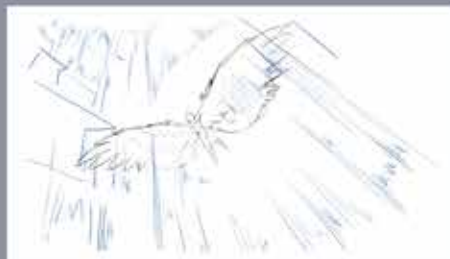
Draft 5

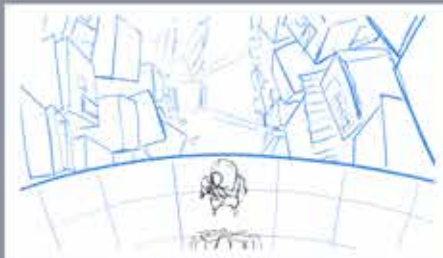
There had been a major overhaul of the story once the storyboard reached its fifth version. It was made keeping in mind the perspective of the audience. The beats of the film and the experience of watching it was given a lot more importance. The earlier look of it was theatrical while this time the shots are more cinematic. The world has been further expanded and visualised better thanks to the background designs and character explorations happening side-by-side.

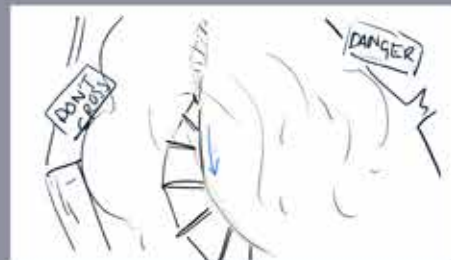
Earlier in the story, the ending was left at a promise that the father and the son will eventually deal with it together. In the 5th draft, the story expands quite a bit. I wanted the story to be a less edgy and more inspirational so that when people come out of watching it, they feel a little good about themselves.

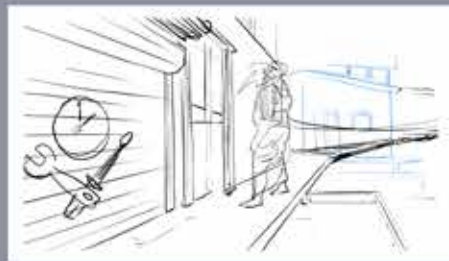
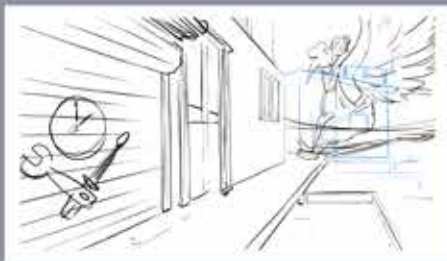
So this time once the boy realises that he really can't fly, he actually tries to do something about it. He builds something for himself that could assist him with the flight. He designs for himself a form of wingsuit that could help him at would let him at least glide if not fly. Sadly his father was against the idea when the boy shares it for the first time with him. That's why the boy builds and researches everything in secrecy for a really long time. When his father finds out about it he gets really furious and tries to destroy the wingsuit. The boy gets heartbroken and runs away. That's when a very strong storm comes and things start breaking apart around them. A broken piece of wood comes and hits the boy over the head, making him fall unconscious down the cliff. Luckily his fall is stopped and he gets stuck at the end of a tree root coming out of cliff a few miles above the water. The situation starts to escalate as a huge hungry sea monster emerges out of dirty water to eat the boy. Fortunately his father comes and assists his son in escaping this dire situation. Eventually time flies and we see both of them working together on a newer version of the wingsuit. The film ends with them enjoying the flight together.

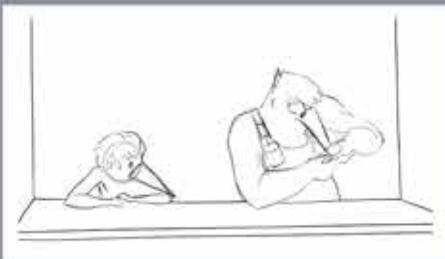
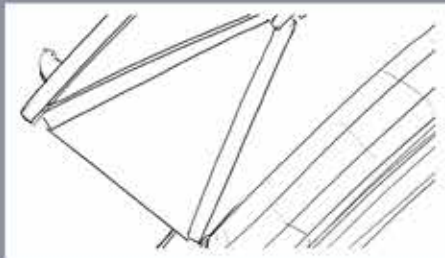


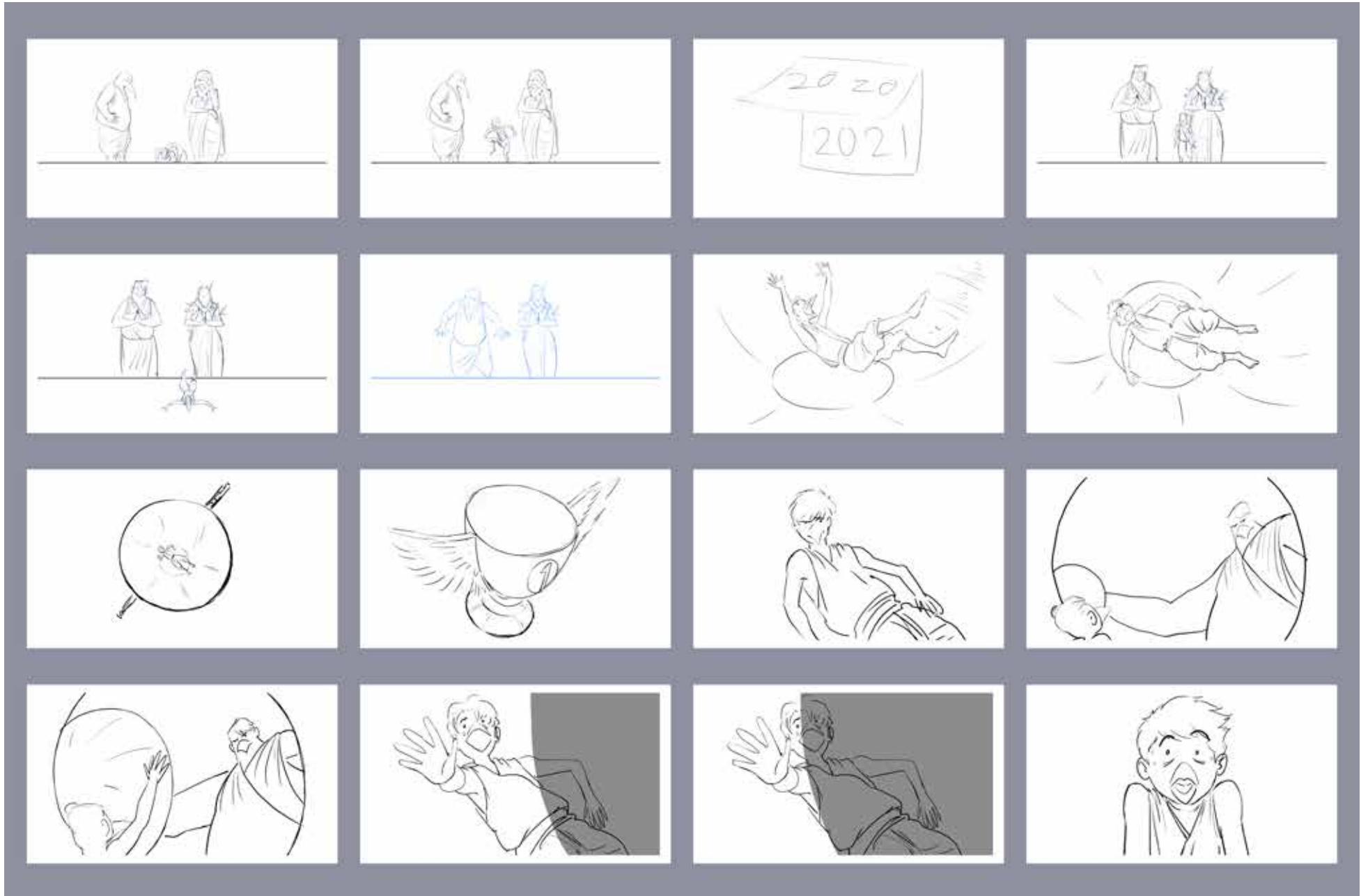


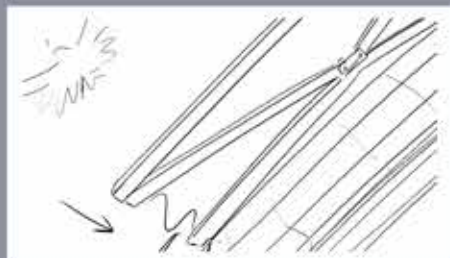
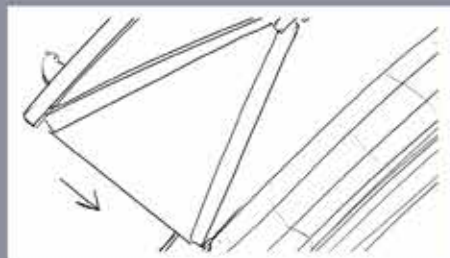




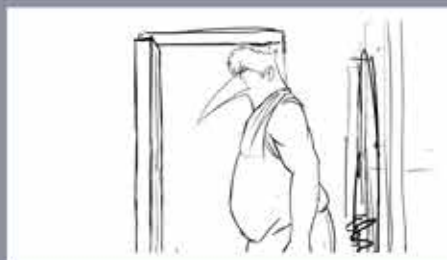


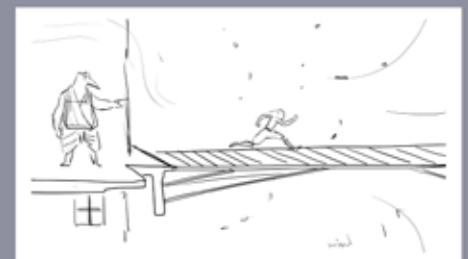
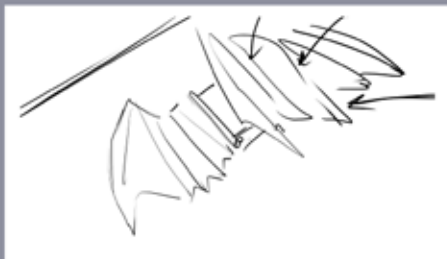
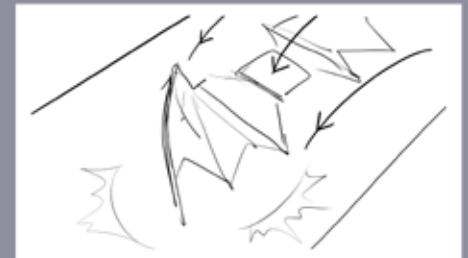


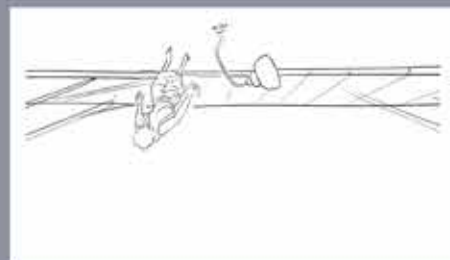
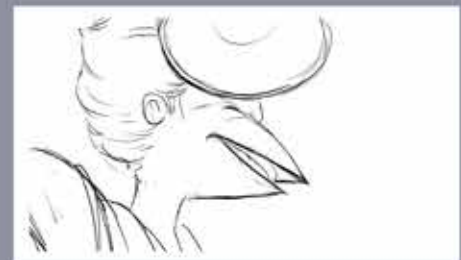
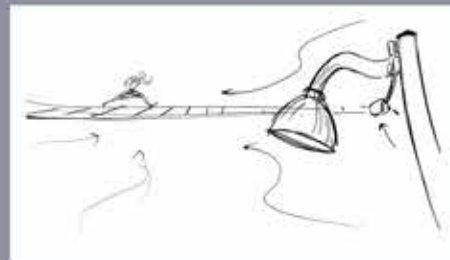


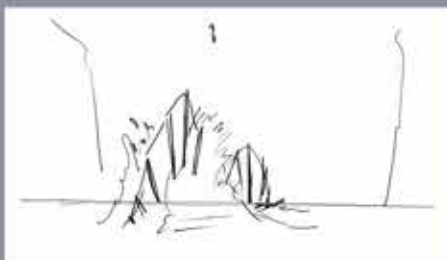
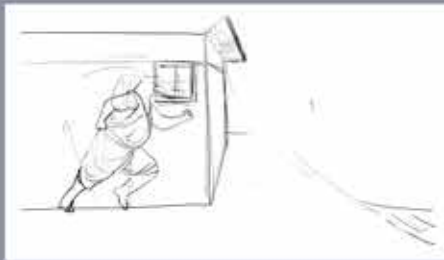


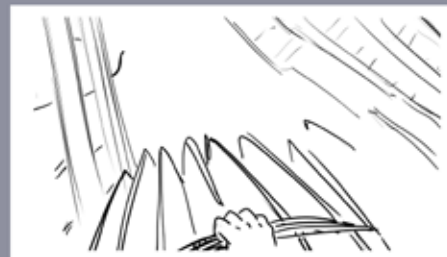


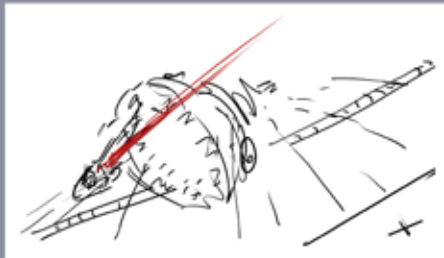


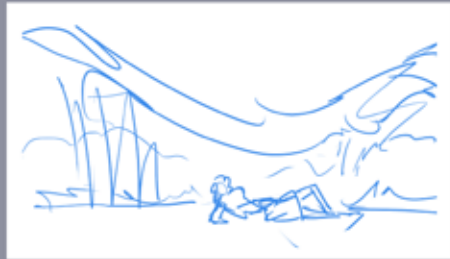


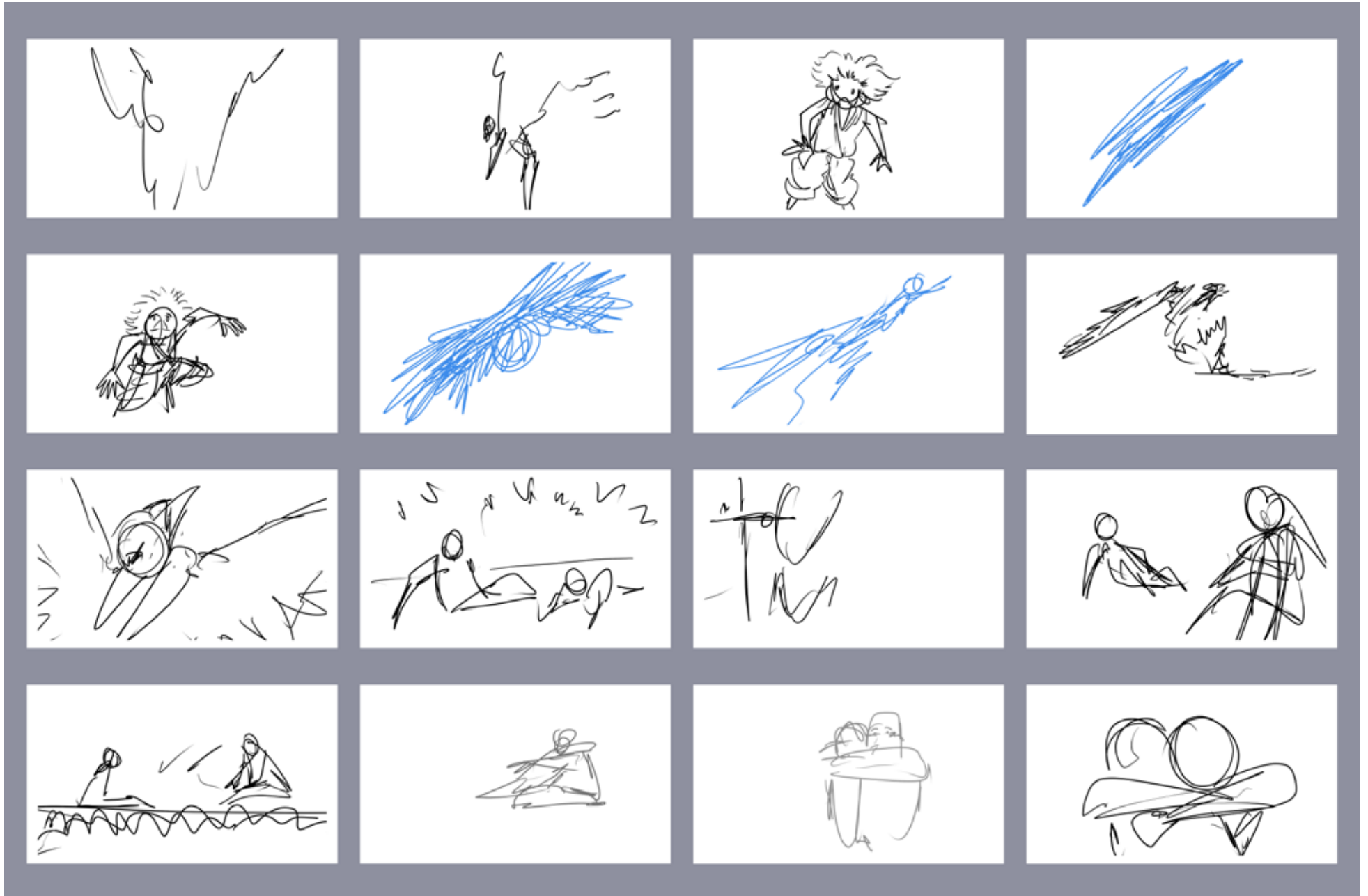


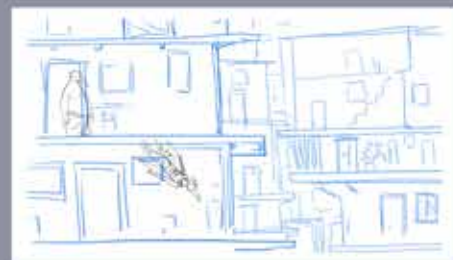
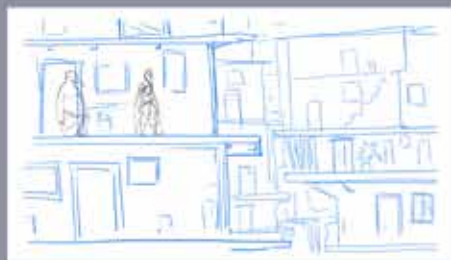
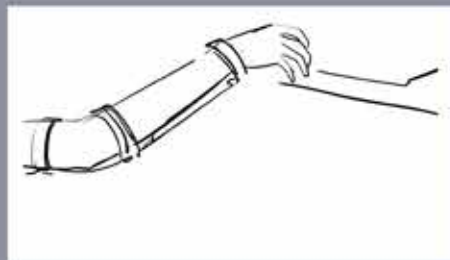


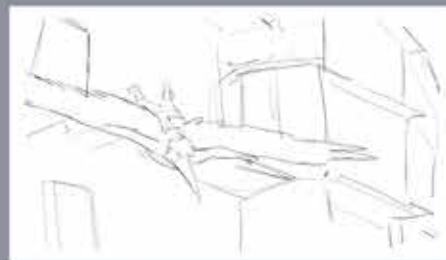
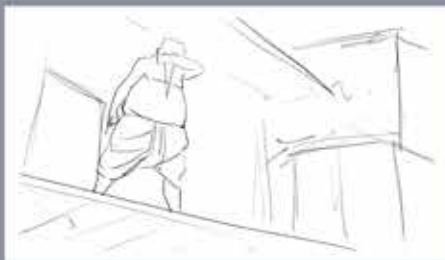
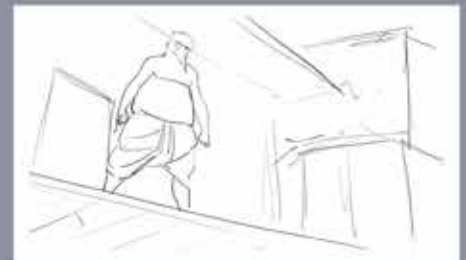
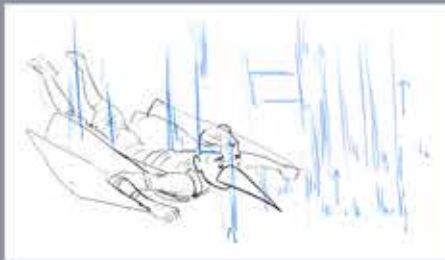












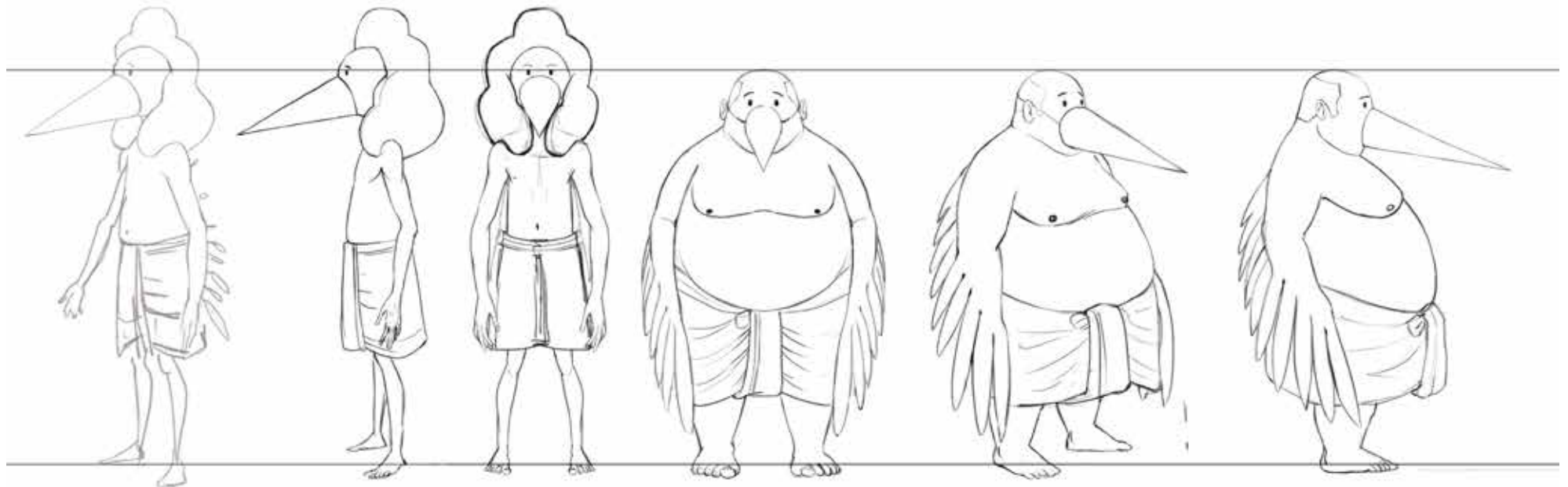
MAIN CHARACTERS

Since there are two main characters, it was important to have a strong contrast between their design and personality. The boy is timid and shy while the father is prideful and strong.

Because of his stunted wings, the son is unsure of himself most of the time in this world that has never seen anyone like him. That's why I wanted his design to be lean and soft.

The father used to be the fastest flyer in his day. People respect him. He is someone who is very proud of his legacy. He loves his son a lot but he does not know what to do about his ailment. He has never come across a situation like this but he wants his son to fly because he thinks that's what the boy wants too.

While designing the characters, there was a constant back and forth on how detailed the designs needed to be. I wanted it to have enough details so that the emotions get communicated but at the same time not so much that animating it becomes cumbersome.



Initial character designs of the son and father .

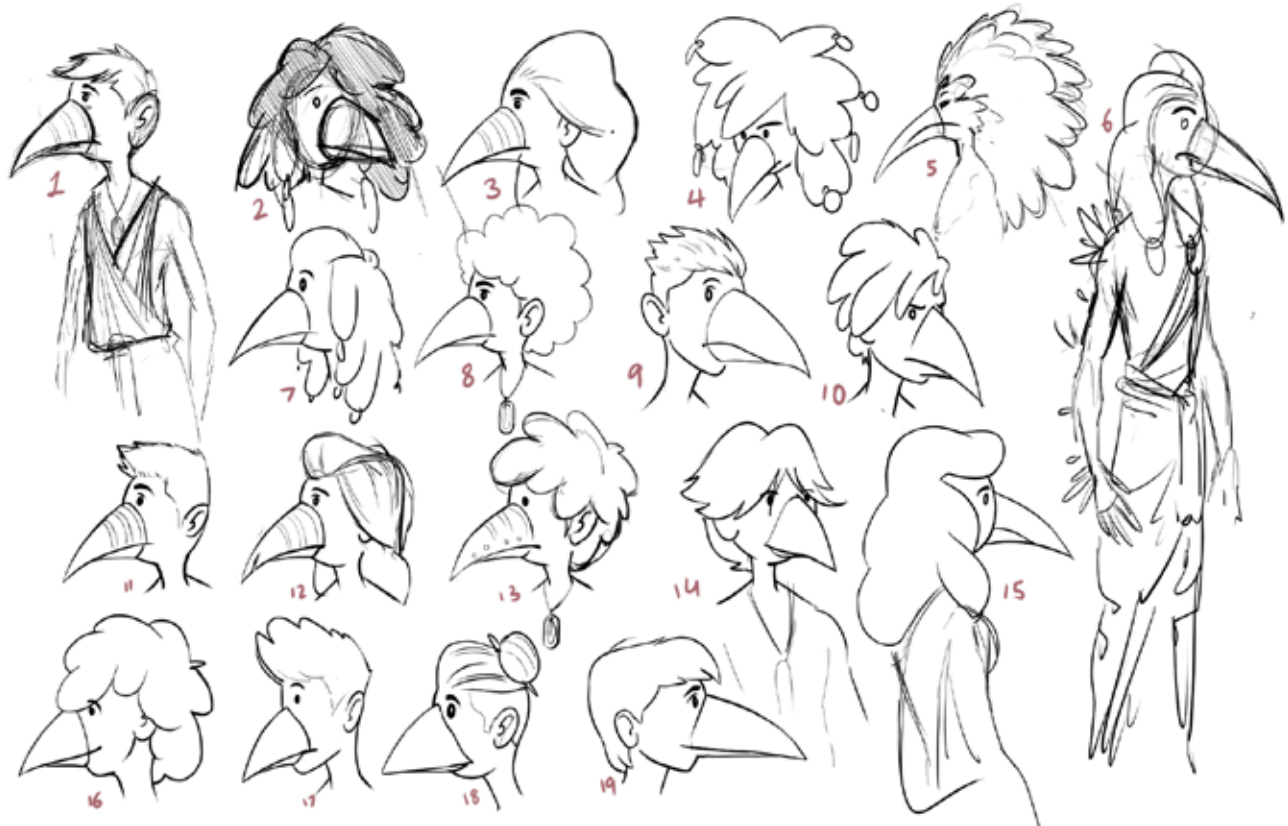
DESIGN EXPLORATION

Son

For both the characters' costume design, I took inspiration from the communities that live in dry mountainous regions, especially those of Buddhist monks who live in Tibet. It was important for me have a design that looks authentic and functional.

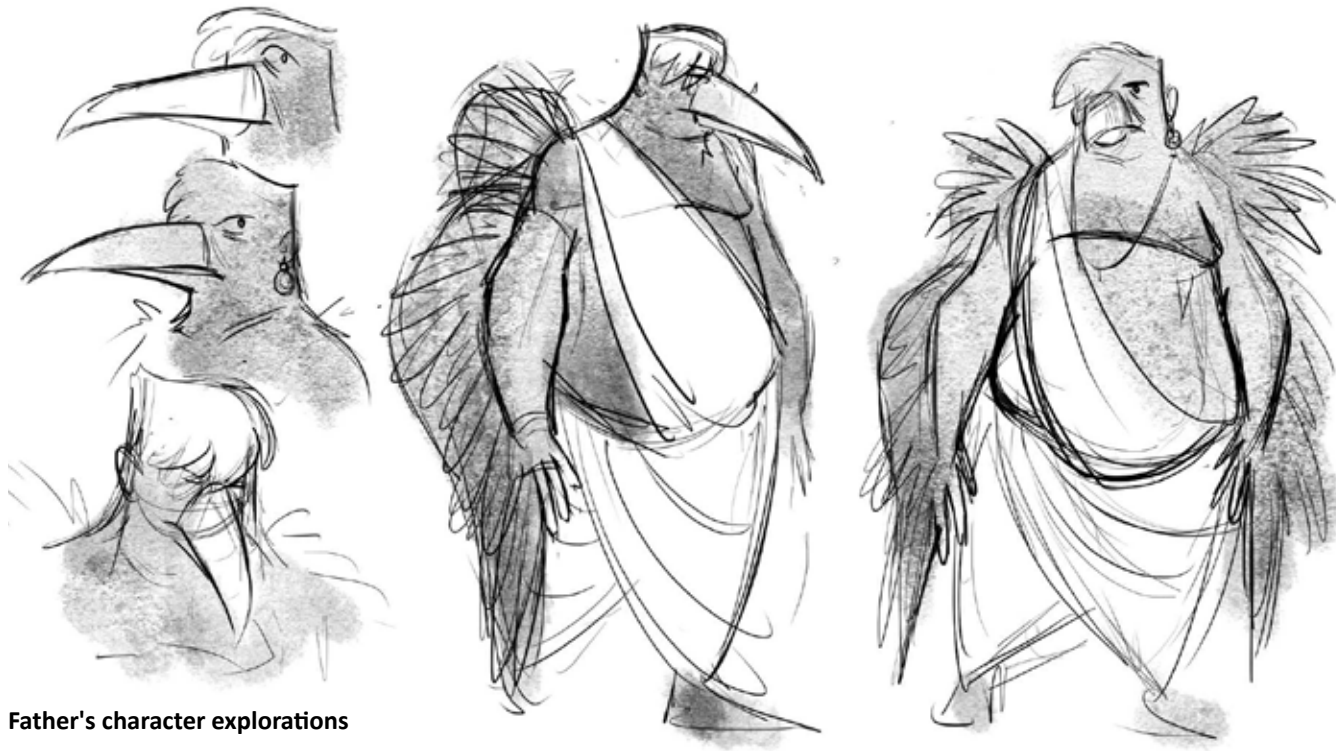


Design of the boy young and a teenager.

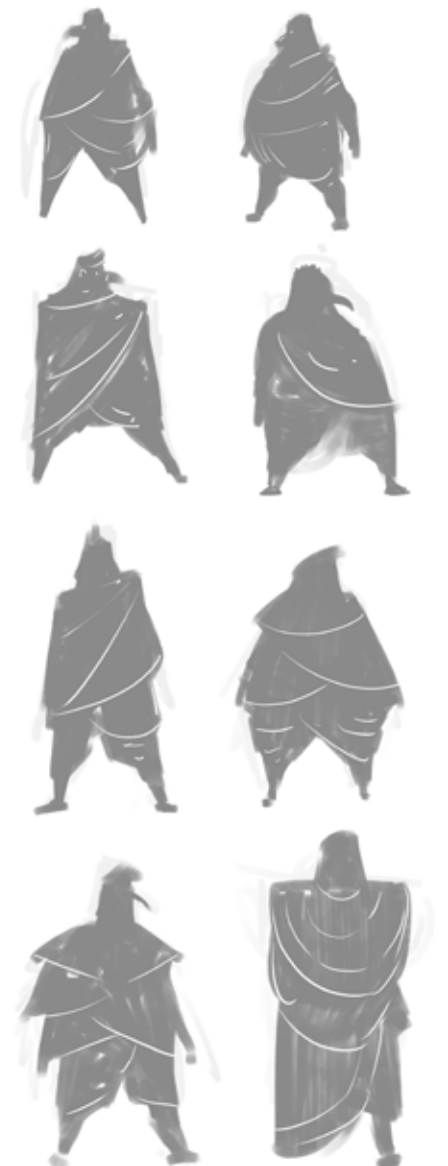


Initial explorations

Father



Father's character explorations



Shape explorations

GENDER SWAP

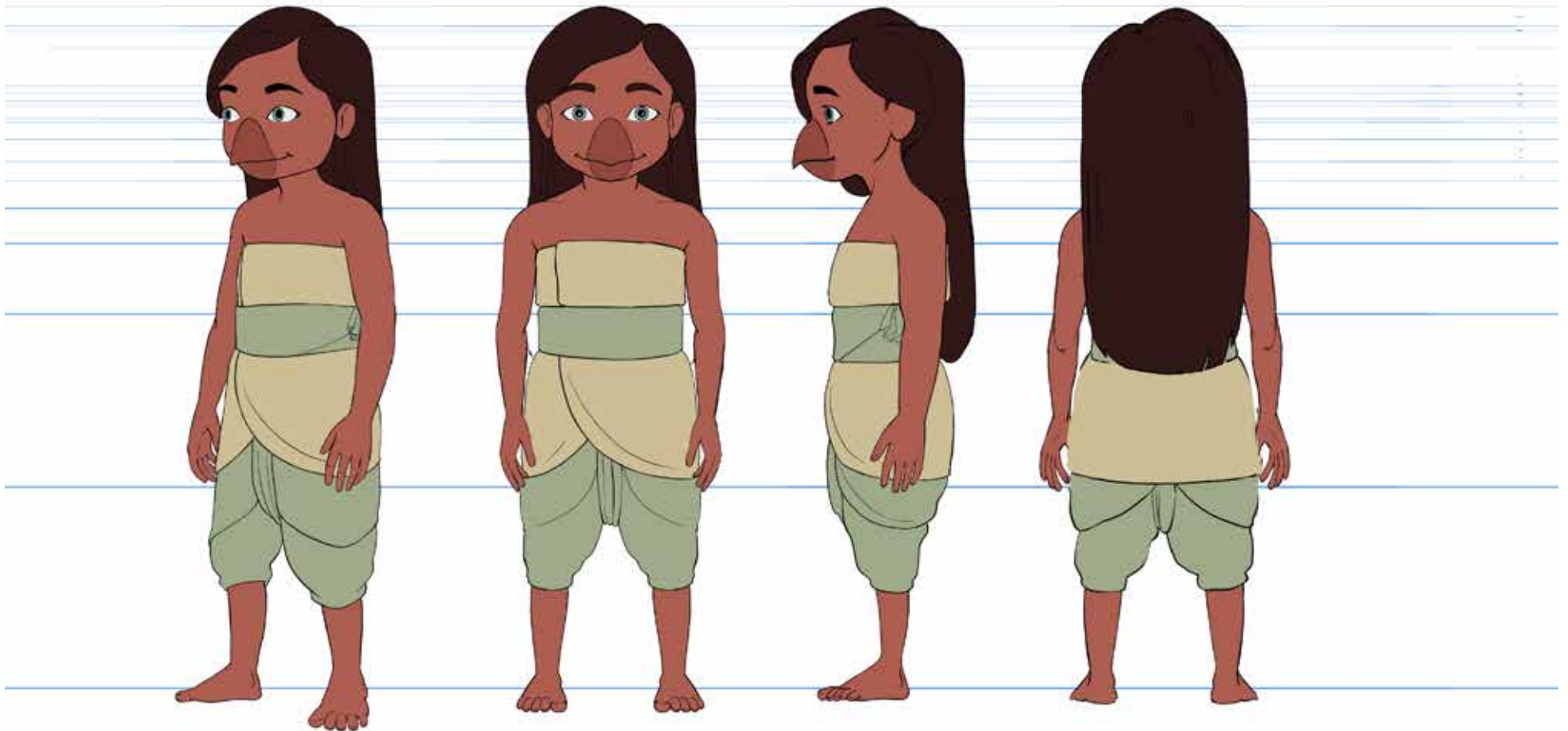
One of the methods of working on my story is discussing it with others and taking notes from them. I was discussing my film with Prakalya and she made me realise that we have a lot of stories already that deal with father and son's bonding issues. So I started thinking about all the parent-child relationships that have been explored and I felt that the mother and daughter duo is the one which we haven't been explored a lot in this particular theme.

So I liked that idea and decided to forward with that change. I did not have to do make too many changes in the story as the theme of struggle and aspiration is something everyone can relate to. Both the protagonists were male for the large portion of the pre-production because partially, subconsciously I was drawing inspiration from my relationship with my father and partially, it was because of what I am used to seeing on film. I realised that I don't need my characters to be male for me to relate to them till the time they are well developed characters and it's a good story.

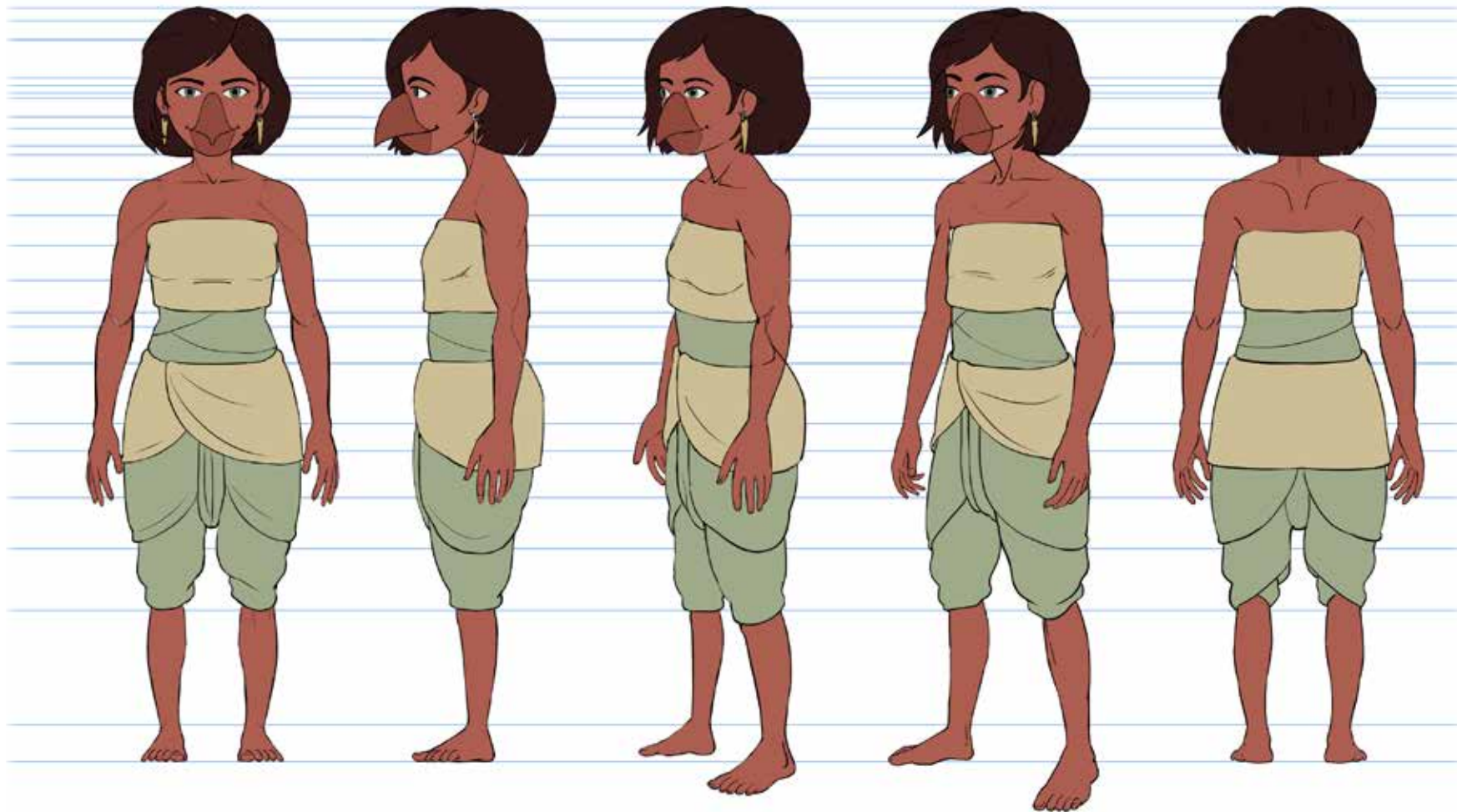


CHARACTER TURNAROUNDS

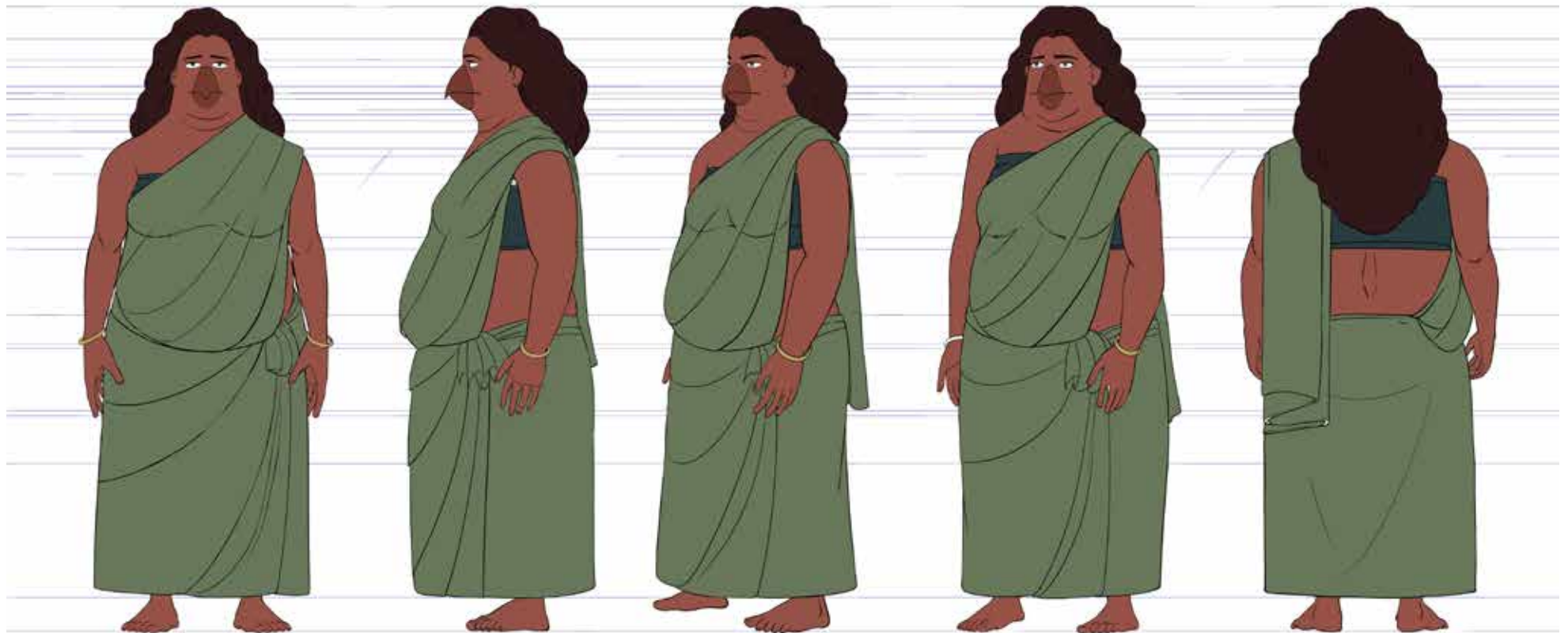
Daughter- Young

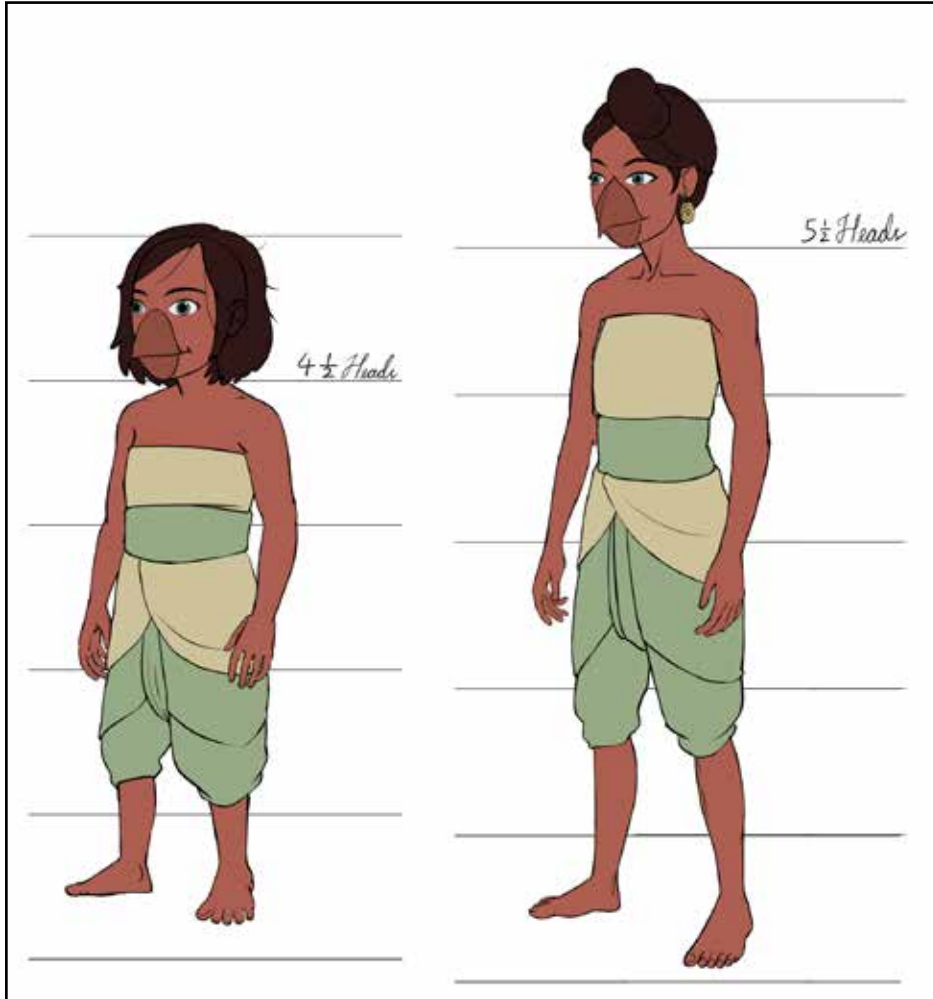


Daughter- Teenager



Mother





Head ratio of daughter



size comparison for different character designs

DYNAMIC POSES

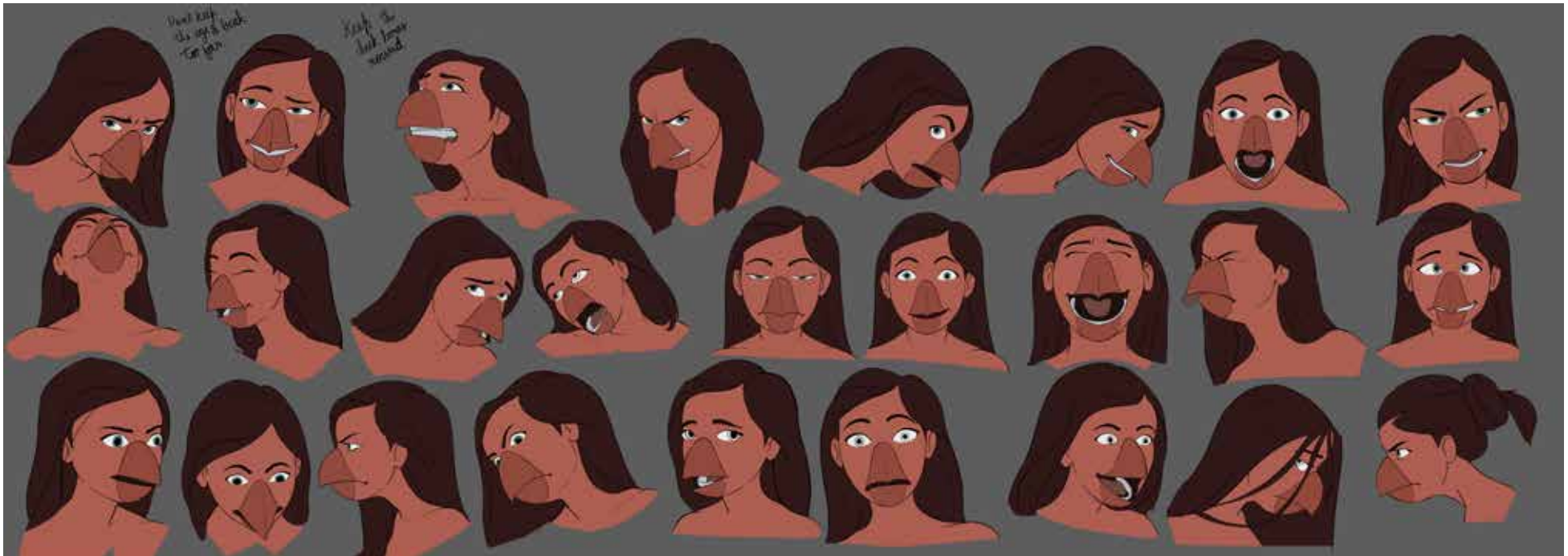
Daughter



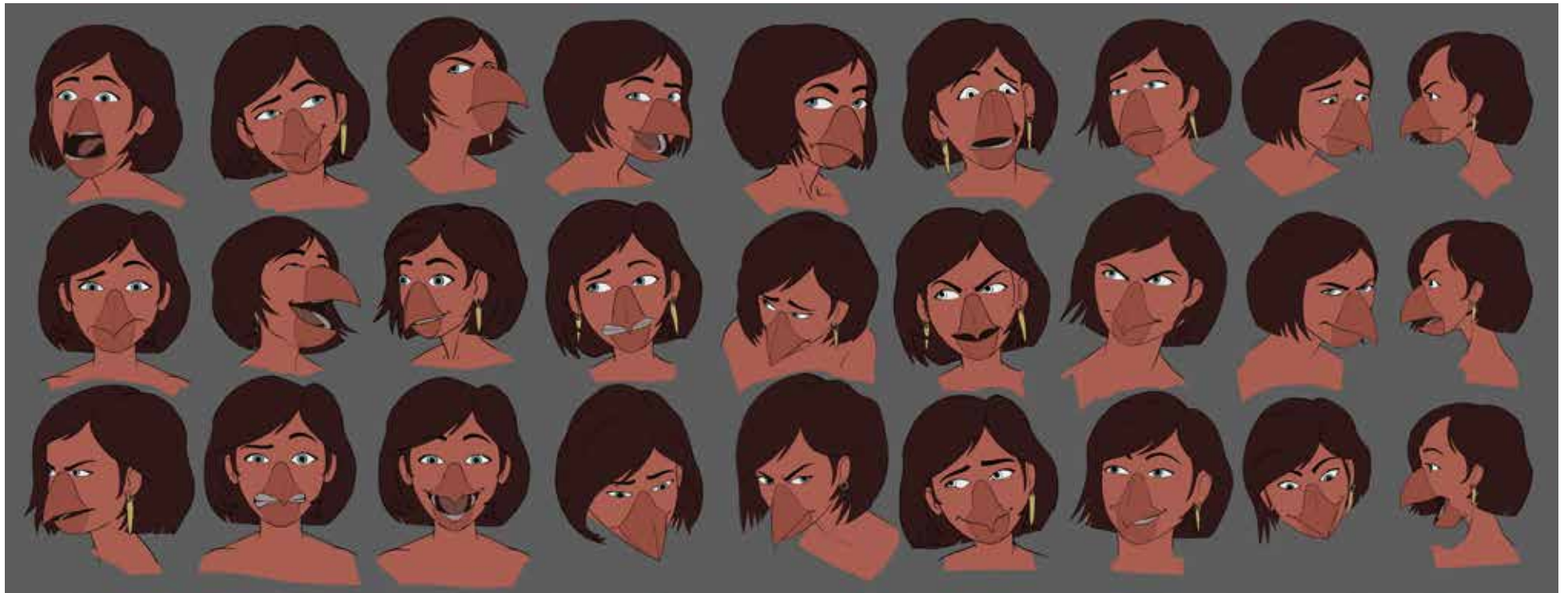
EXPRESSIONS

Daughter- young

For such a detailed character design, it was important for me to do expressions from different angles of the head so that they can be used as references while animating. So I tried keep the designs here on model as much as possible so that it becomes a little bit easier during the production.



Daughter- teenager



Mother



INTERACTIONS

It was important for me to figure out the chemistry between the mother and daughter. Although I am the one creating them, drawing them in different scenarios gives me the idea of kind of vibe they have with each other. It also helped in building upon their personality and backstory. There would be things about the characters that only I as their creator will know and the audience might never get to, but they will feel that the characters are more alive because of that.



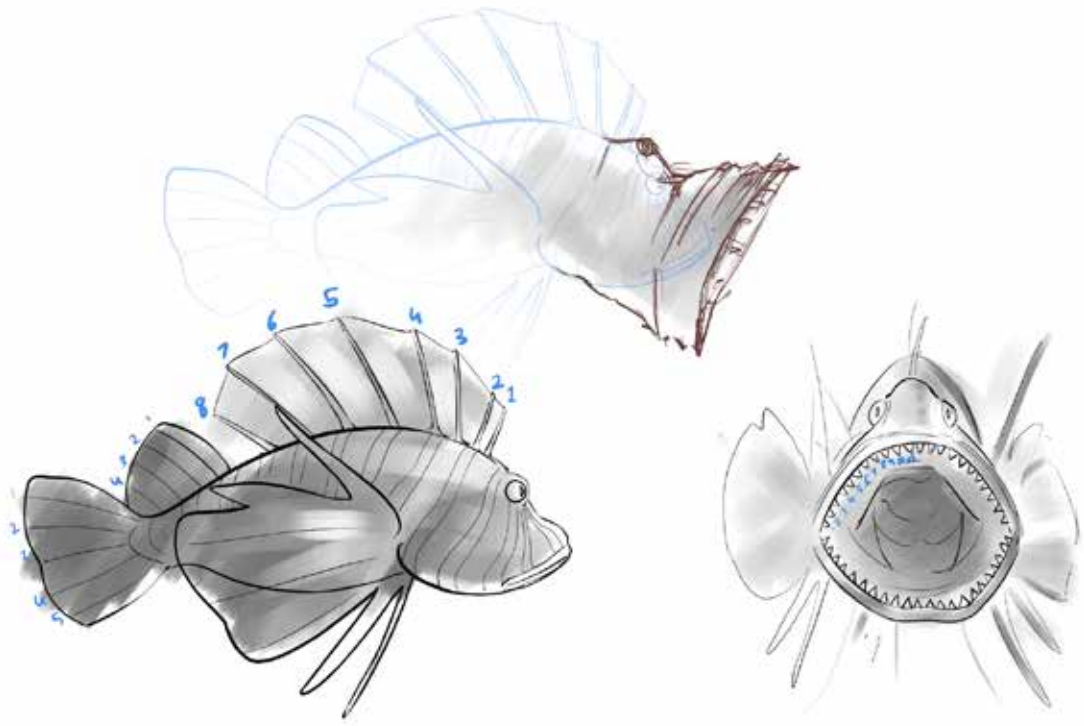


CROWD EXPLORATIONS



RIVER MONSTERS

I wanted to add an extra element to elevate the threat of falling into the water. So I was taking inspiration from different species of fish and reptiles. I narrowed down to salamander and lion fish. Both the final designs were equally detailed. Eventually I decided on the lion fish variant because of the way it hunts down it's prey. So, every time it enters the shot with its mouth open, it covers the entire screen.



Final version of the monster



Alternative design

BIRDS AND THEIR WING SHAPES

There are four general wing shapes that are common in birds: Passive soaring, active soaring, elliptical wings, and high-speed wings.

Passive soaring wings have long primary feathers that spread out, creating "slots" that allow the bird to catch vertical columns of hot air called "thermals" and rise higher in the air. Examples of birds with this wing type include eagles, most hawks, and storks.

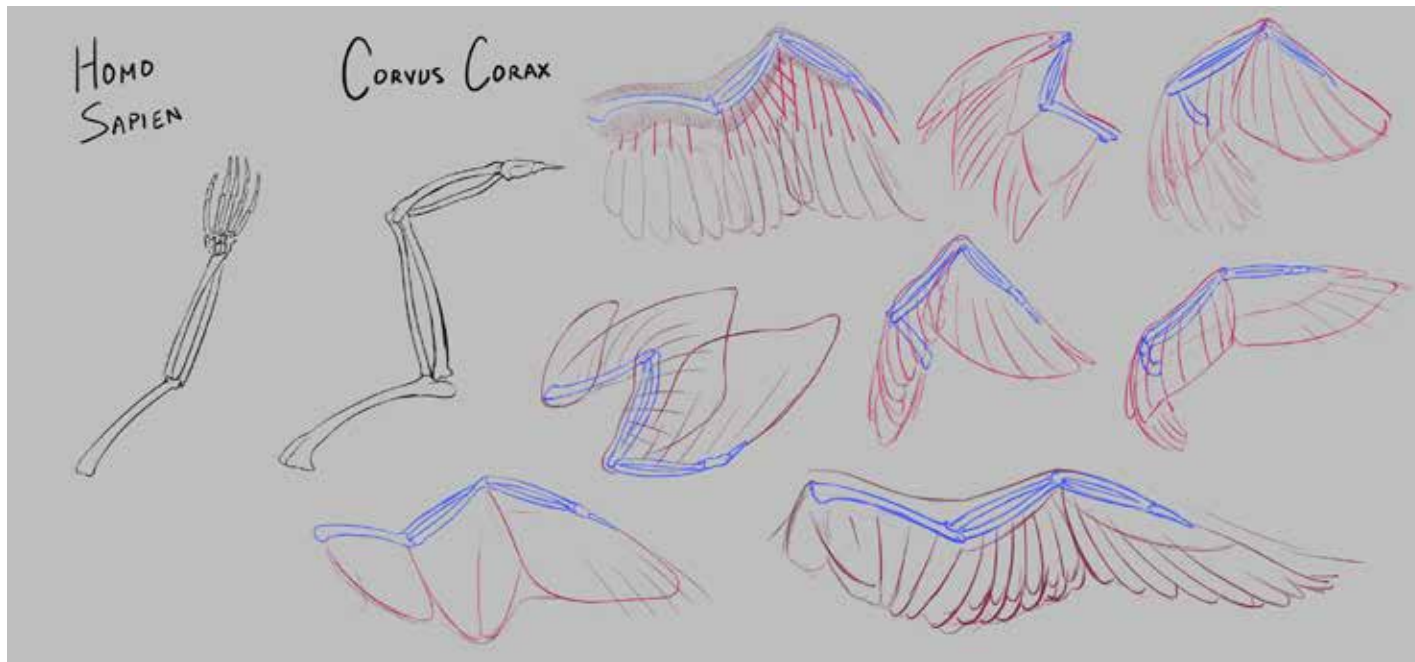
Active soaring wings are long and narrow, allowing birds to soar, or fly without flapping their wings, for a long time. However, these birds are much more dependent on wind currents than passive soaring birds. Examples of birds with this wing type are albatrosses, gulls, and gannets.

Elliptical wings are good for short bursts of high speed. They allow fast take offs and tight maneuvering. While they allow high speed, the speed cannot be maintained. Examples of birds that have this wing type are crows, ravens, blackbirds, sparrows, and thrushes (such as the American Robin).

High-speed wings are long and thin, but not nearly as long as birds with active soaring wings. As the name suggests, birds with this wing type are incredibly fast, but unlike those with elliptical wings, these birds can maintain their speed for a while. Examples of birds that have this wing type are swifts, ducks, falcons, terns, and sandpipers. Notice the slender wing form of the Forster's Tern.

Hovering wings are small and quick. For hovering wings, in addition to the wing shape, the bird's nerves and muscles are specially adapted for incredibly fast movement. ++

I did this research to figure out what kind of bird the protagonist and her mother were going to be. As the environment is dense and crowded, it would be easier to fly with elliptical wings.



crow wing's anatomy study and it's comparison to human skeletal arm.



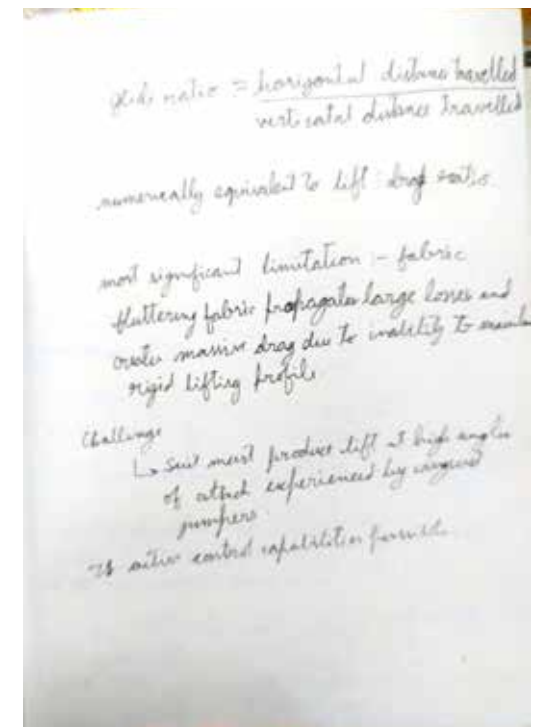
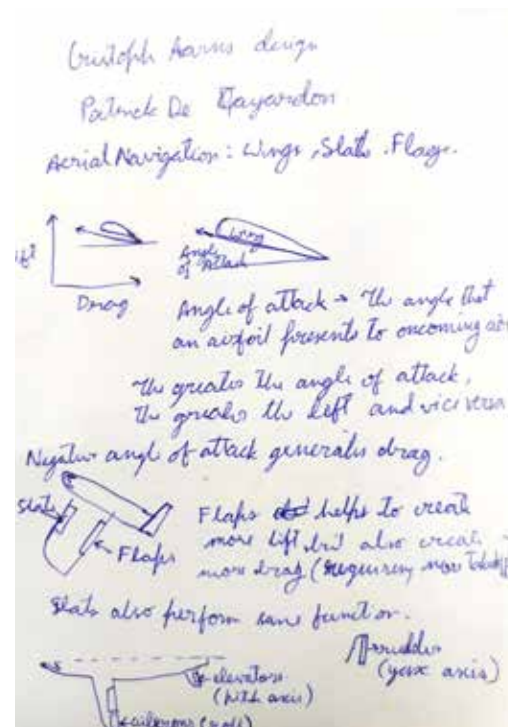
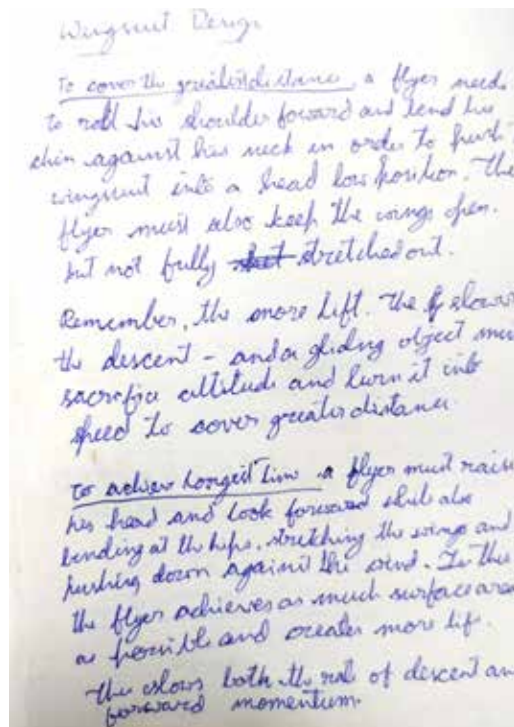
mother's wing design

WINGSUIT

The daughter gets the idea to deal with her inability to fly by artificial means. She does a lot of research, prototyping, redesigning and testing. She comes to the final solution to make a suit that can help her to fly.

I studied a little bit of aerodynamics and the science behind wingsuits to to get it as correct as possible.

There's a concept called the glide ratio which is like the potential to glide in the air. It is the ratio between the horizontal distance travelled vs vertical distance travelled. It is also the numerical equivalent of lift to drag ratio. So more the glide ratio, the longer one can stay in the air. A trained wingsuit glider can achieve a glide ratio of around 1.5 to 2.5. The greatest one can achieve is an impressive 5.

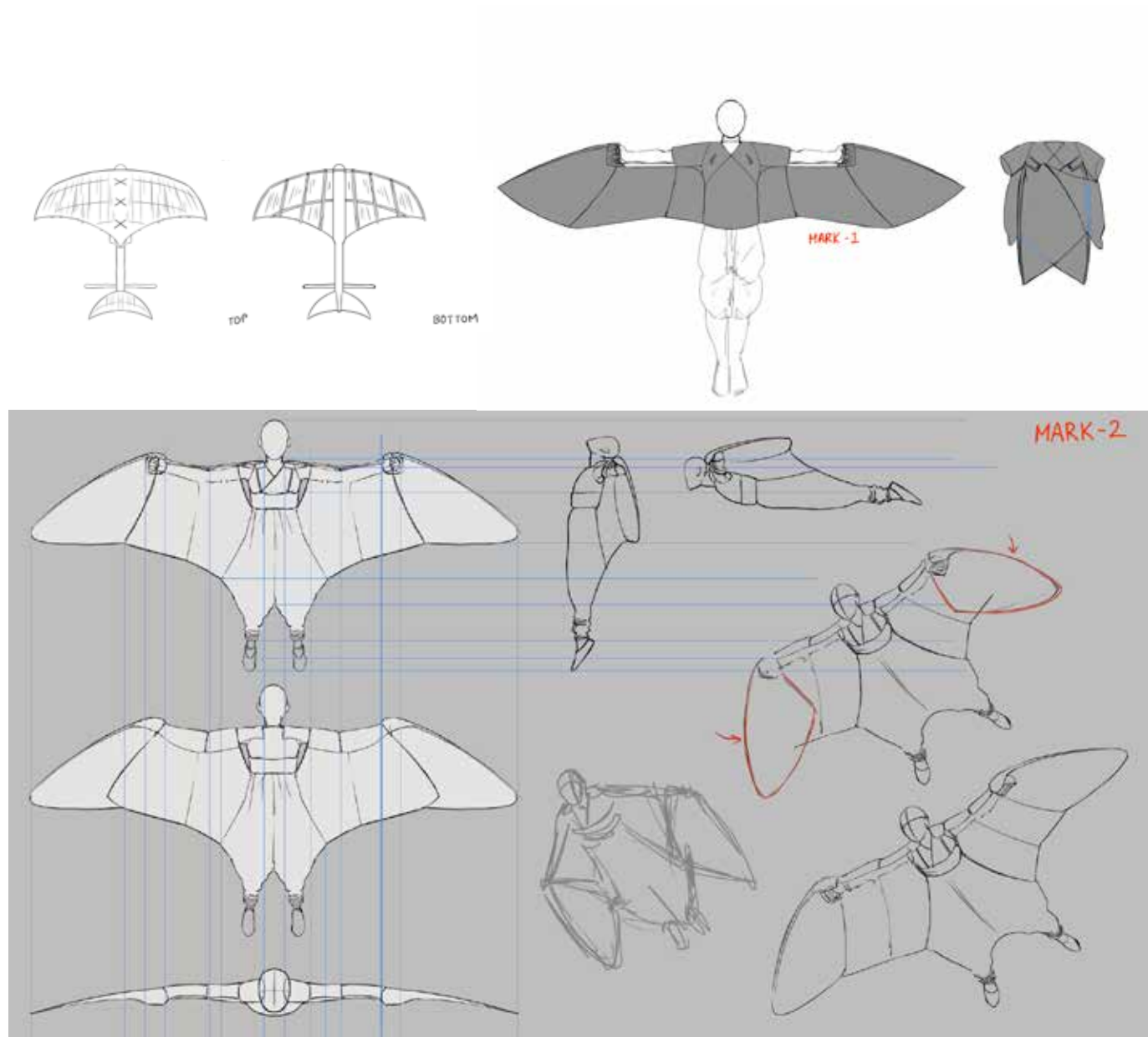


My notes on wingsuit designs.

The prototypes that the daughter designed are made of raw materials like bamboos and fabrics which she gets from the workshop that her mother owns.

Even the final design had a little flaw in it. The moving pair of shafts that she holds in her hand, while it makes it look more wing like, is unnecessary but she doesn't know that. According to her calculations the extensions are supposed to increase the surface area perpendicular to the gravity, giving more lift. But there's no thrust that she can generate as she has no propellor nor can she generate enough strength through her muscles to flap her wings. Also the added surface area in the direction of flight leads to increased drag.

She will solve this problem in the film by a happy "accident".



CONCEPT ART

It was an important stage in figuring out the look and feel of the film. This is arguably the most fun stage of animated filmmaking. At this stage, I get the idea of what the film might look like. I needed the background to be dense and busy. I wanted it to have an urban feel to it. At the same time I wanted the environment to feel mountainous and suitable for beings that are meant to fly.



Inspirations

Delhi

My real inspiration was my home place Delhi. Both my parents are from Kerala but I was born in Delhi and I spent all my childhood here to the point that I thought I would never ever leave this state and would have to spend rest of my life here.

I relate a lot to this place. It's a part of me. It's a place where things move really fast. It is easy to lose your own identity in order to move the giant cogs of the society. I moved around different parts of the Delhi researching and clicking photos for my film's background. I was looking for bustling locations with crowded markets and historical architecture because that's the kind of style I was looking for.

I found this shop in Kalkaji market that sells Bamboo drapes. It was owned by Mahender Bhai who was really sweet. He talked to me about his business and allowed me to take some photos which I later used as references in the film.



Photos taken by me at Mahender Bhai's shop.



Masuleh

I was looking for different types of city landscapes that are on mountains. I looked into the favelas of Brazil and the slums of Dharavi, Mumbai but I wanted something that seemed dense but at the same time open to the skies. I wanted the streets in the film to be designed in such a way that the people are just walking on the streets but then take a turn and jump into the air to fly away.

While searching I came across this beautiful place in Iran called Masuleh.

Masuleh architecture is unique. The architecture of Masuleh is popularly known as “The yard of the building above is the roof of the building below”.

The buildings have been built into the mountain and are interconnected. Courtyards and roofs both serve as pedestrian areas similar to streets. Masuleh does not allow any motor vehicles to enter. It is due to its unique layout. It is the only city in Iran with such a prohibition.

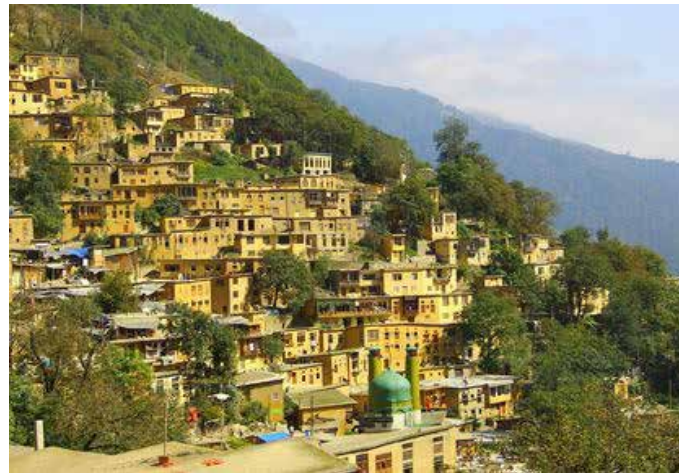


Photo by Amin Rasekhi



Photo by Mohammadreza Momeni

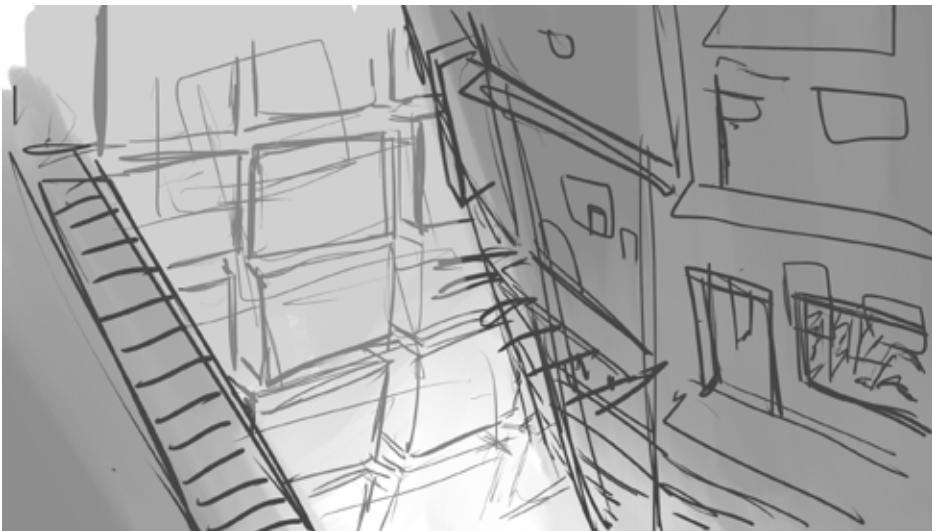
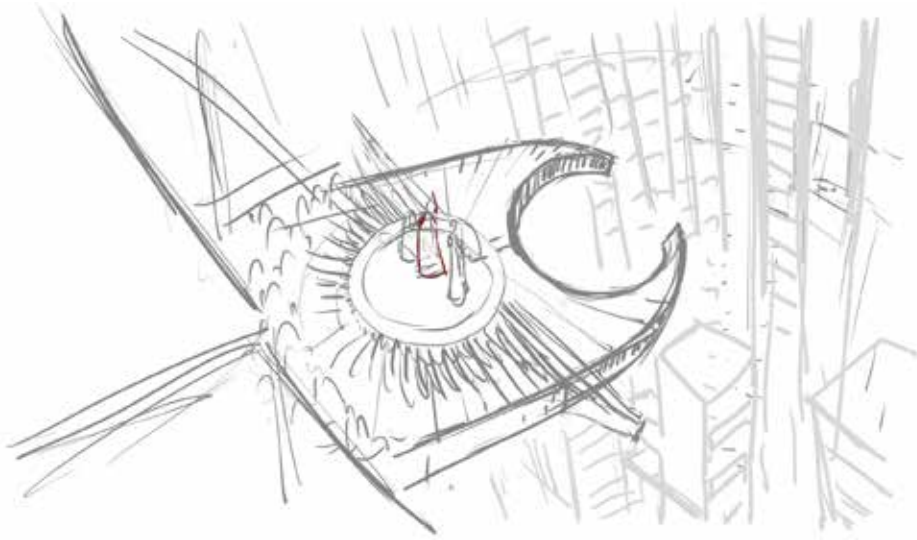
However, the small streets and many stairs simply wouldn't make it possible for vehicles to enter. Buildings are mostly two floor and made of adobe, rods and bole. Yellow clay coats the exterior buildings, allows for better visibility in the fog.

When I found out about it, I stopped my search and kept researching more about this place and tried to incorporate its design into the concept art.



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Masouleh.jpg>

Initial Sketches



Coloured Concepts





Collaborations

While I love to do the concept arts on my own, I don't mind taking the help of people who are better than me at certain stages of film production. Colouring and illustrations are not my forte but I have friends who have mastered it. It also helps me get a lot of different perspectives and a variety of options to choose from which I might not be able to do if I do it on my own. Filmmaking is a team effort. It has always been like that and it should be like that. Otherwise it is a very lonely process.

Krishnabh Baputi

I would give him a few shots and some key words. He would send me some amazing coloured concepts. He used bright saturated colours that I didn't thought would work. It was inspiring. He made the scenes look more rich and atmospheric.



Yamini Sujan

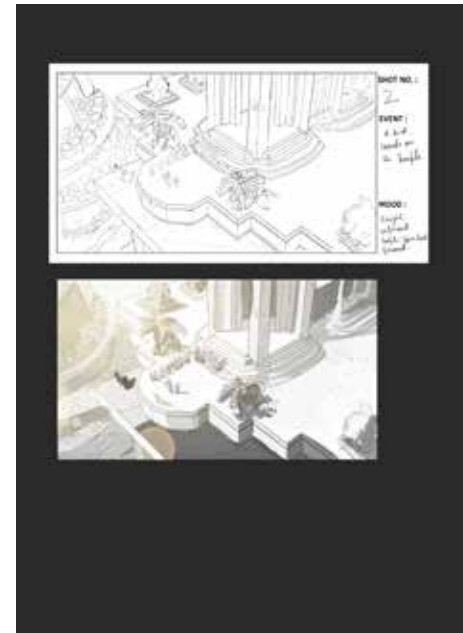
I gave Yamini one frame and gave her a few key words. I wanted to see her rendition of the same shot. I was expecting just one concept art but she gave me four iterations of it. I was blown away. They were some very interesting options. It gave me a lot to think about. They have a weathery and rainy feel to them. The colours seems to vibrate and flow into each other.

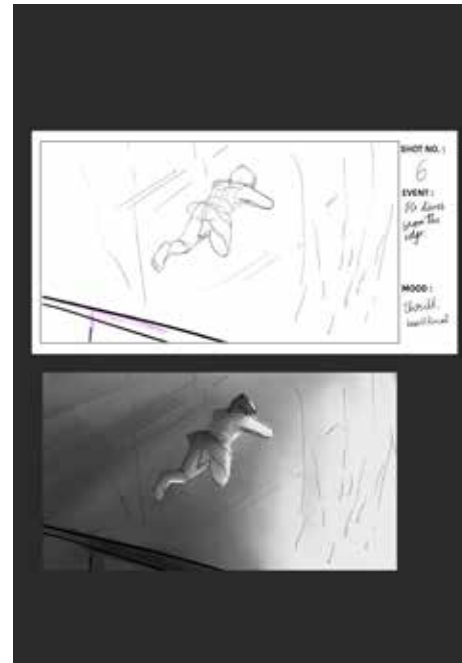
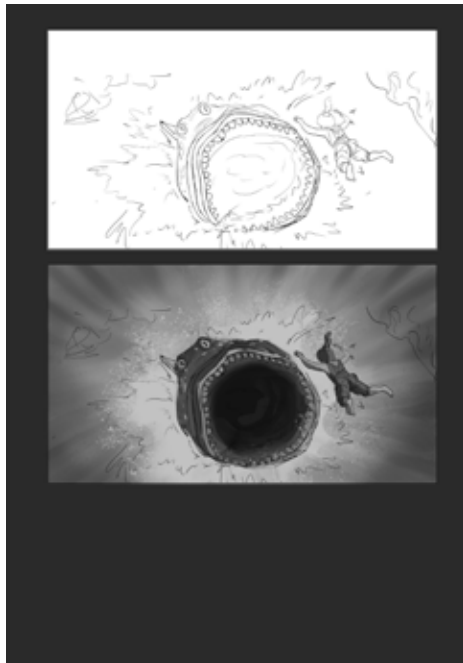


Alende Vishnu - Values and Lighting

I was looking at the type of artworks that Alende was creating at that time and I loved his understanding of lighting and rendering. So I asked him if he could help me in figuring out the values of the scenes. It will help with the tone and emotion of the film. I also wanted to figure out the direction and the intensity of the light source for different scenes.

So just like Krishnabh, I would send him some scenes and some key words to give Alende some direction. He gave me stuff that was much better than I imagined. These renditions would be very helpful during the compositing stage. After giving the characters their base colour, it helps to separate the foreground elements from the background and figuring out the values of the shot beforehand helps with that.



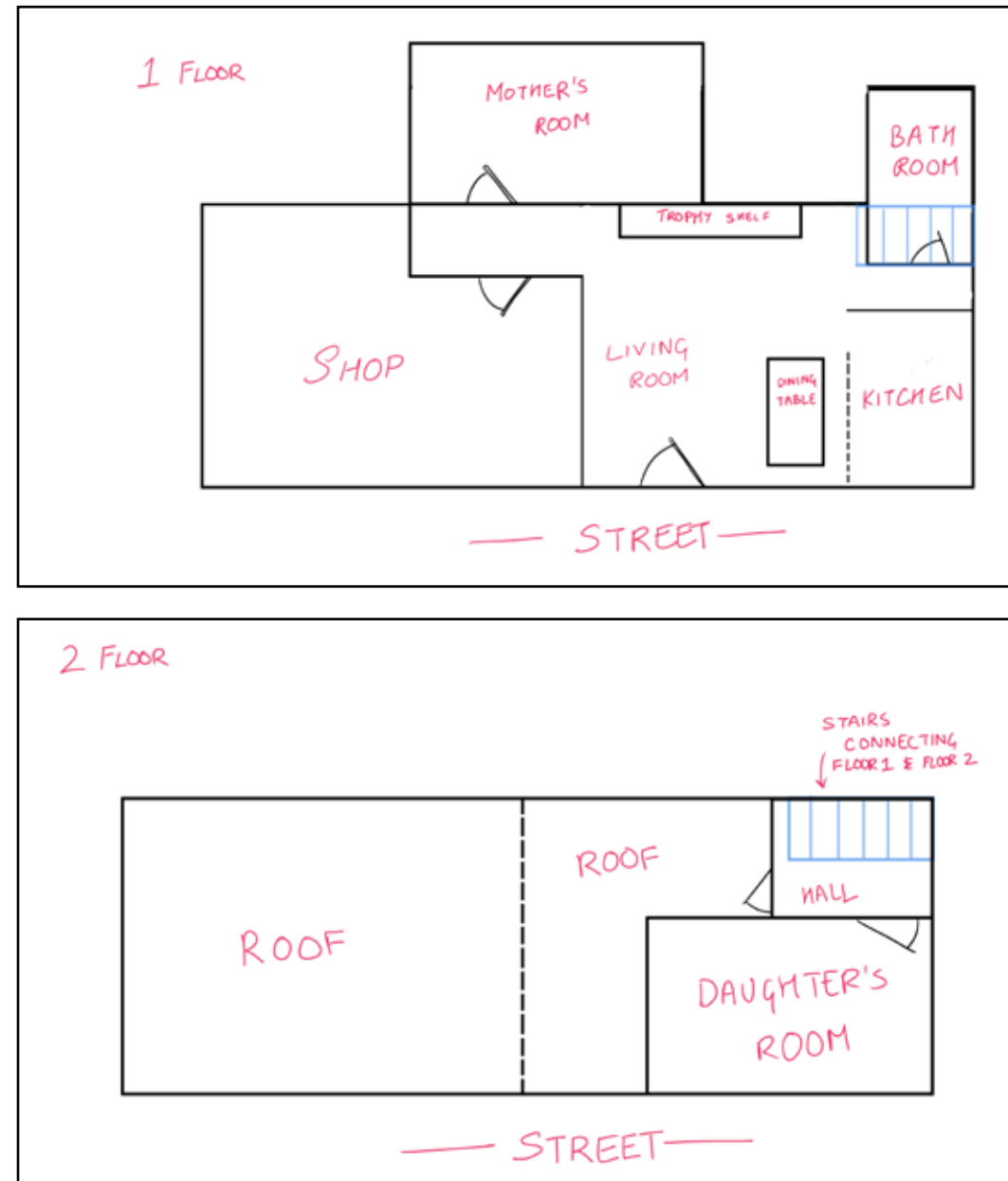


HOUSE LAYOUT

For a place to feel real in animation, I should believe that a place like that actually exists. Figuring out the layout of the house helped me in seeing the place in 3-dimensions. It helps in laying out the camera, staging the characters and setting up the composition.

The house where the protagonist and her mother live is a two storeyed building with the mother's workshop attached to it. There are scenes in the film that very much depend on the architecture of the house. In fact the house is designed in accordance with the story.

The daughter's room is strategically placed in such a way that its balcony is visible from her mother's workshop. Also the daughter's room is on a different floor because I wanted there to be a sense of separation. Also it takes time for someone to reach her room because of the stairs.



PRODUCTION

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

For a very long time I have been looking for a cheaper alternative to TVPaint which I could use on my laptop. At NID, we would be using TVPaint but I did not have any software to work on my animation while I was away from college. I tried some of the free softwares out there but they would be either very buggy or missing some essential features.

At the end of my fifth semester I came across Clip Studio Paint. It is a really amazing software as it combined the tools for both illustration and animation. It took some time to get used to it but once I did I became completely dependent on it. I have been using it for all my projects ever since. It has the ability to use Photoshop brushes and even do simple camera movement. The layer settings are great in it. It can handle large files very smoothly and does not lag. I can go on and on about its features but the point is that it is very reliable and one of the most essential tools for this project.



ACTING FOR ANIMATION

Animation is bringing the characters to life and to do that in the best way possible is by taking references from life itself.

I would take references anytime there was a complicated scene. It might be some complicated action that the character/s might be performing or it could be a camera angle from which I have never drawn before.

Going out and shooting is much easier than trying out different actions through animatics. In fact it might be the better alternative as you are in the 3D space and one can try out different camera angles. Also working on animation, while it might get exhausting, going outside and shooting live with someone you know is always refreshing and fun. There's nothing better than doing something that makes the production faster, efficient and more enjoyable.

While I myself don't like to be on camera (I love to operate it), my younger brother, Algin Shaji, loves to be in front of camera. He is one of the most awesome people in my life. Whenever I needed his help, he would be game. We would go outside to the nearby park, I would shoot him, he would act in accordance to my direction and we would have fun while doing it.



ANIMATION



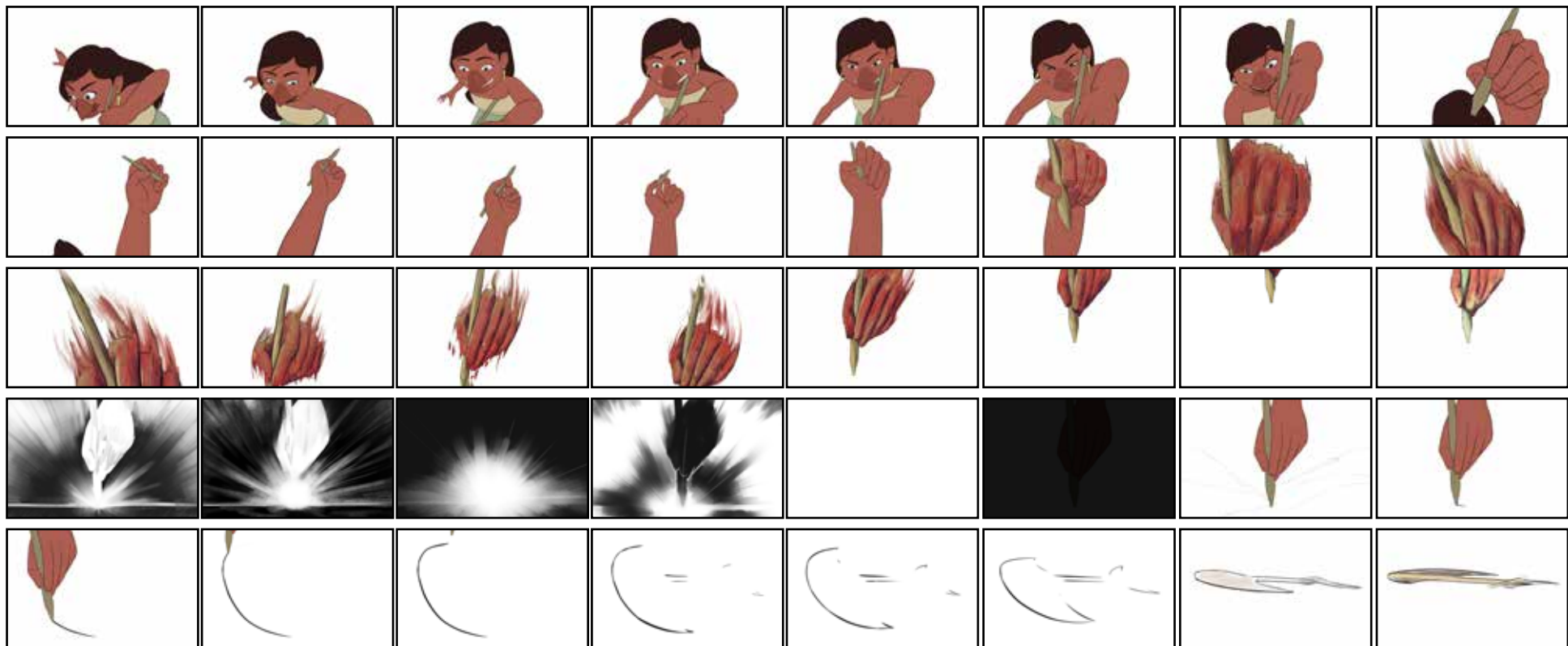
I like to treat animating characters like directing actors and every key frame as an acting beat. For the daughter, I was going for big gestures to make her look lively with big hand movements. Also for a character, most of the time I would keep every element on their person on the same layer unless and until they have some secondary animation on it that has different timing than the main body. I do this in order to make the colouring process easier because every element then would require it's own colour layer. That does gives some flexibility while compositing if one wants to adjust colours later but to save time it's always better to plan these things ahead.

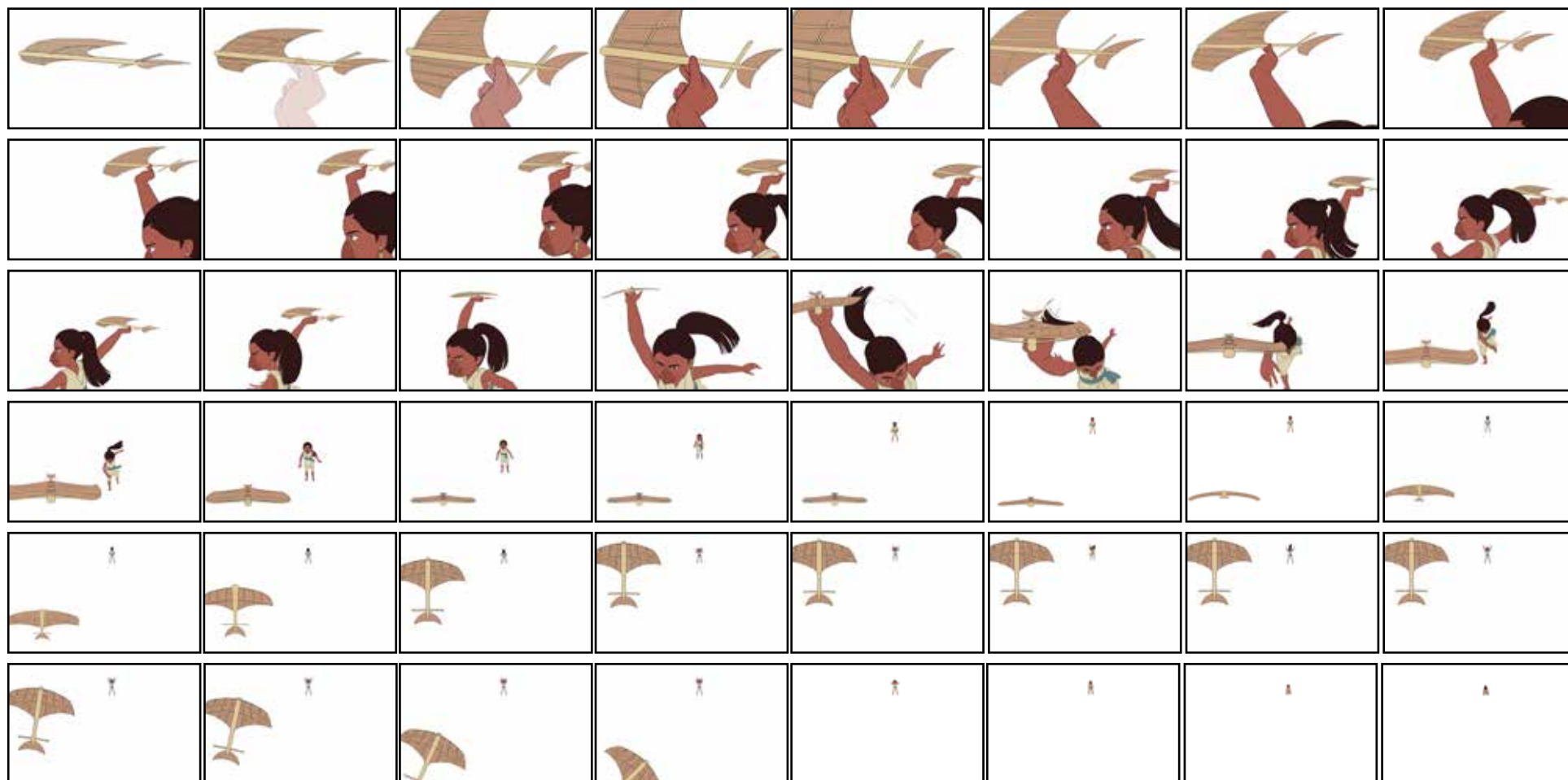


ONER

Oners are long shots with camera moving in the space. It is done for different effects. Steven Spielberg is notorious when it comes to using oners in his films. The film, 1917 and the 2018 video game , God of War are visual narratives that are entirely a oner, which means there are no obvious cuts. There will definitely be hidden cuts. Anime also loves to do oners. Oners give a very strong sense of immersion if done properly.

In animation, oners give animators the opportunity to really go to town on animation with a lot of moving parts. I draw a lot of inspiration from anime for my animation style. Also this particular scene required that level of dynamism as the daughter is taking the actions in her own hands to create her something better for herself.

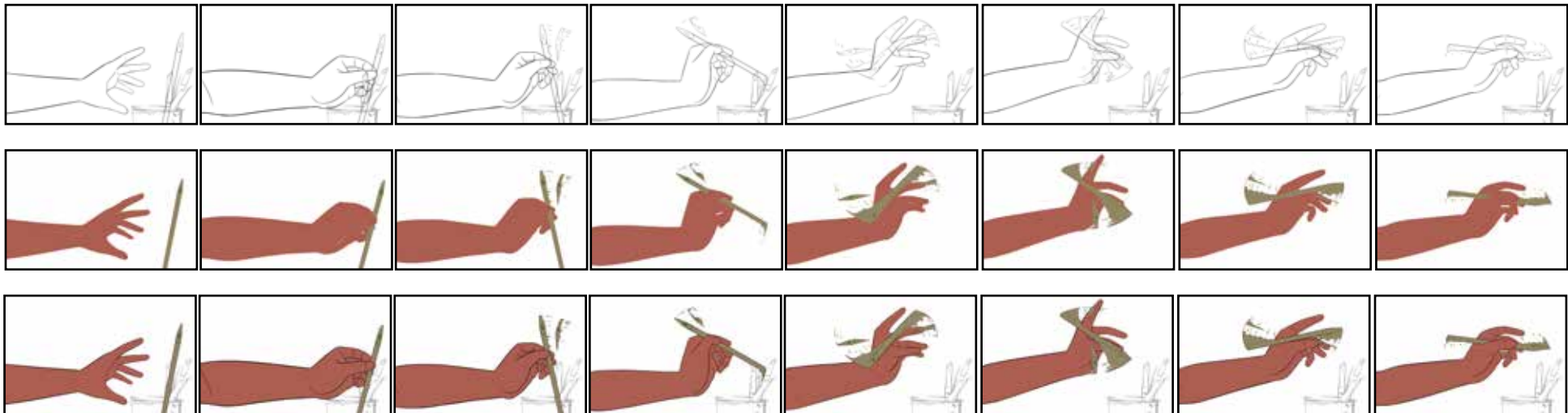




COLOURING

It is an important but the time consuming part of animation. I thought I could save a lot of time by delegating it to my juniors. Luckily Divyanshi Khedekar, Kashish Gupta, Sandhra, Meenakshi Ayyappan, Vanshika Kaila and Prajakta Hardikar came to my aid and they did a great job. They really speeded up the process. The main thing was to figure out a system so that the colouring can be done efficiently. Everyone was working remotely and everyone had different softwares for animation.

So I created a shared folder for everyone. I would send them PNGs of just the line drawing along with some colour and animation reference. I would try to be very clear in my notes regarding the dimensions of the pngs and file managing their exports after colouring. After I get their PNGs, I would open their colour exports in the animation file it belongs to and i would do some touch ups if there are any.

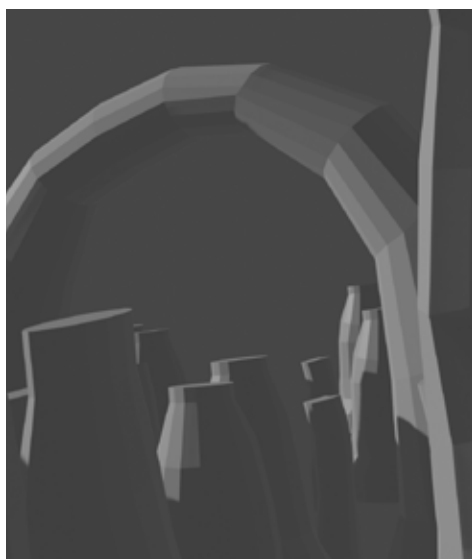
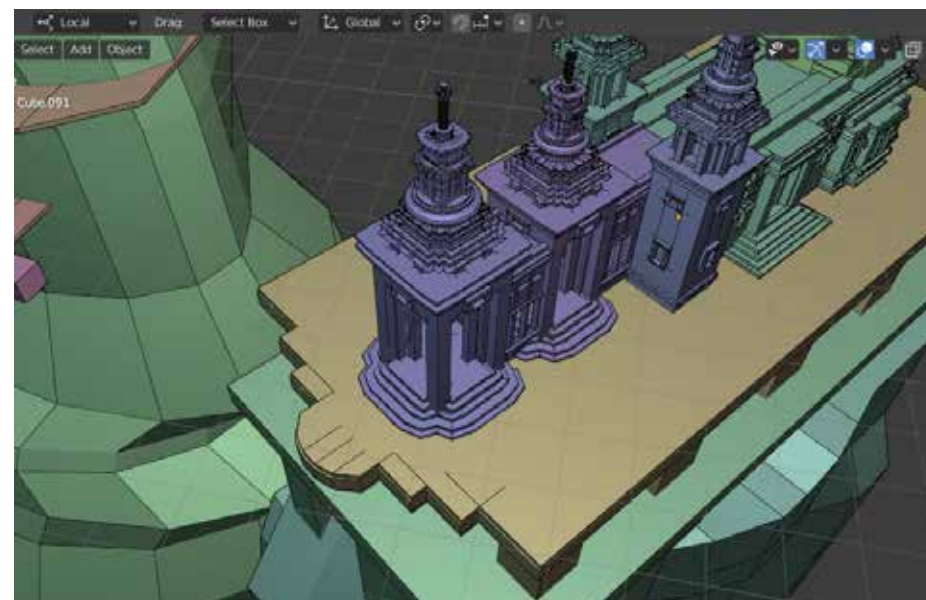


SETTING STAGE USING BLENDER

Initially the idea was to use Blender for a pan shot that would be later rotoscoped but I realised that would be a very difficult and time consuming shot to do. I had to prioritise shots that were necessary for the story. But I had created a few assets for it already.

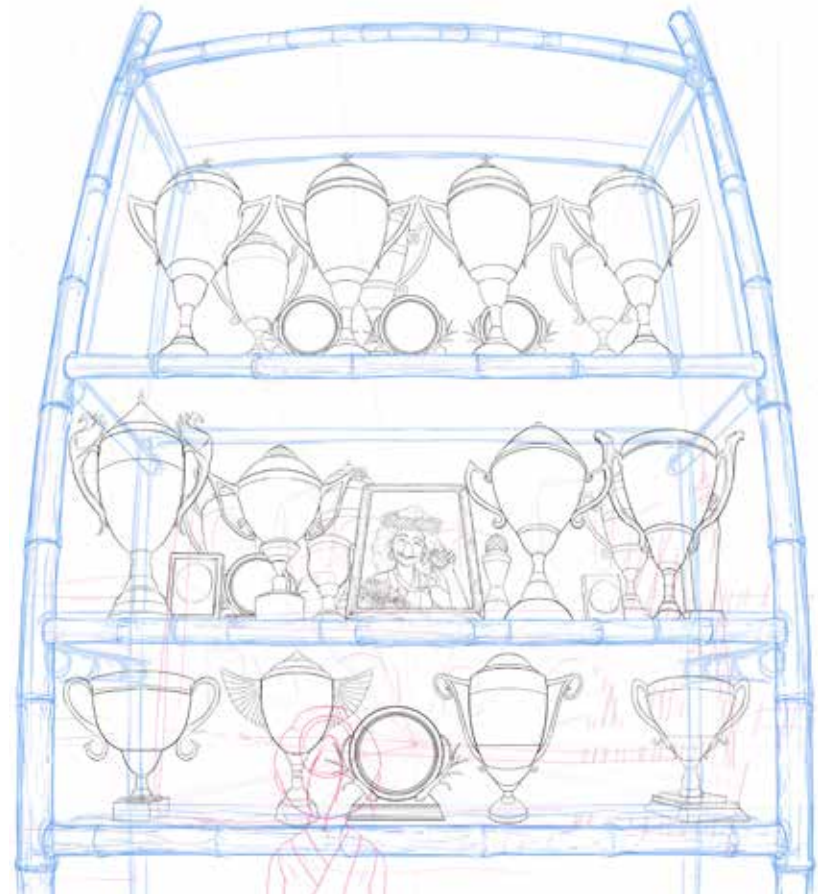
I did use the 3D models later to set rough backgrounds behind the animation. I would compose the elements in blender, set the orientation and then take a screenshot of it.

I would use the same screenshot to create the final layout. While drawing, it saved a lot of time by setting up the perspective. Since the layouts are going to be very detailed. It's necessary to be do whatever is possible to save that one second. In filmmaking, it's making the process efficient that matters.

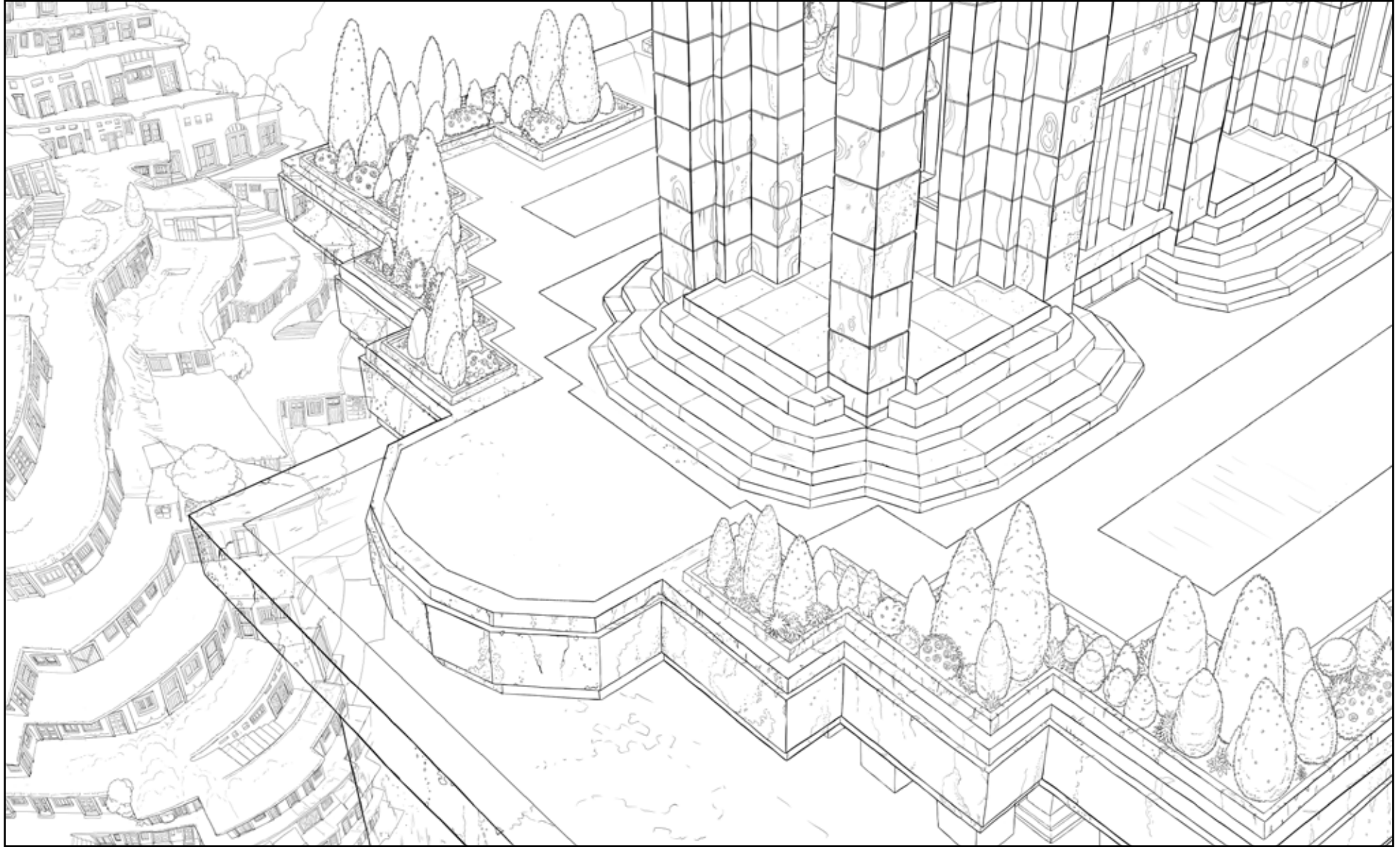


FINAL LAYOUTS

Drawing the background is a really fun process for me. It is very relaxing as I love to take my time and just keep adding details to the layout. I would definitely use photos or 3D models as references. I would even rotoscope the image if I had to because instead of spending hours just to draw the exact same thing, I would just trace it to save some time and spend it on adding details and making the layout better.









POST PRODUCTION

TITLE DESIGN

The title of the film needed to represent the inner desire of the daughter, which was to be able to fly. I wanted to have a calligraphy feel to it but I myself wasn't able to give it a proper form. I took help of my batchmate and good friend Ameen Ali Shanavas for it. He would share his explorations on WhatsApp and I would send back my notes.



It all happened in one day. Initially the design was quite calligraphic but it had an automotive feel to it, especially with the letter p. I wanted it to look more organic. Ameen took the notes and added his own interpretation to it which made it look much better than what I expected. the curves on the p and k feel like the trails of flight of a bird in the sky.

Pankh

Pankh

Pankh

Pankh

Pankh

SOUND EDITING

It was very important for me to get the sound right but the dilemma is that my understanding of sound is not great. So I took help of my friend and batchmate Aaron Chen Lepcha. He is the best I know when it comes to music . I shared the animatic with him, we discussed the story and it's theme.

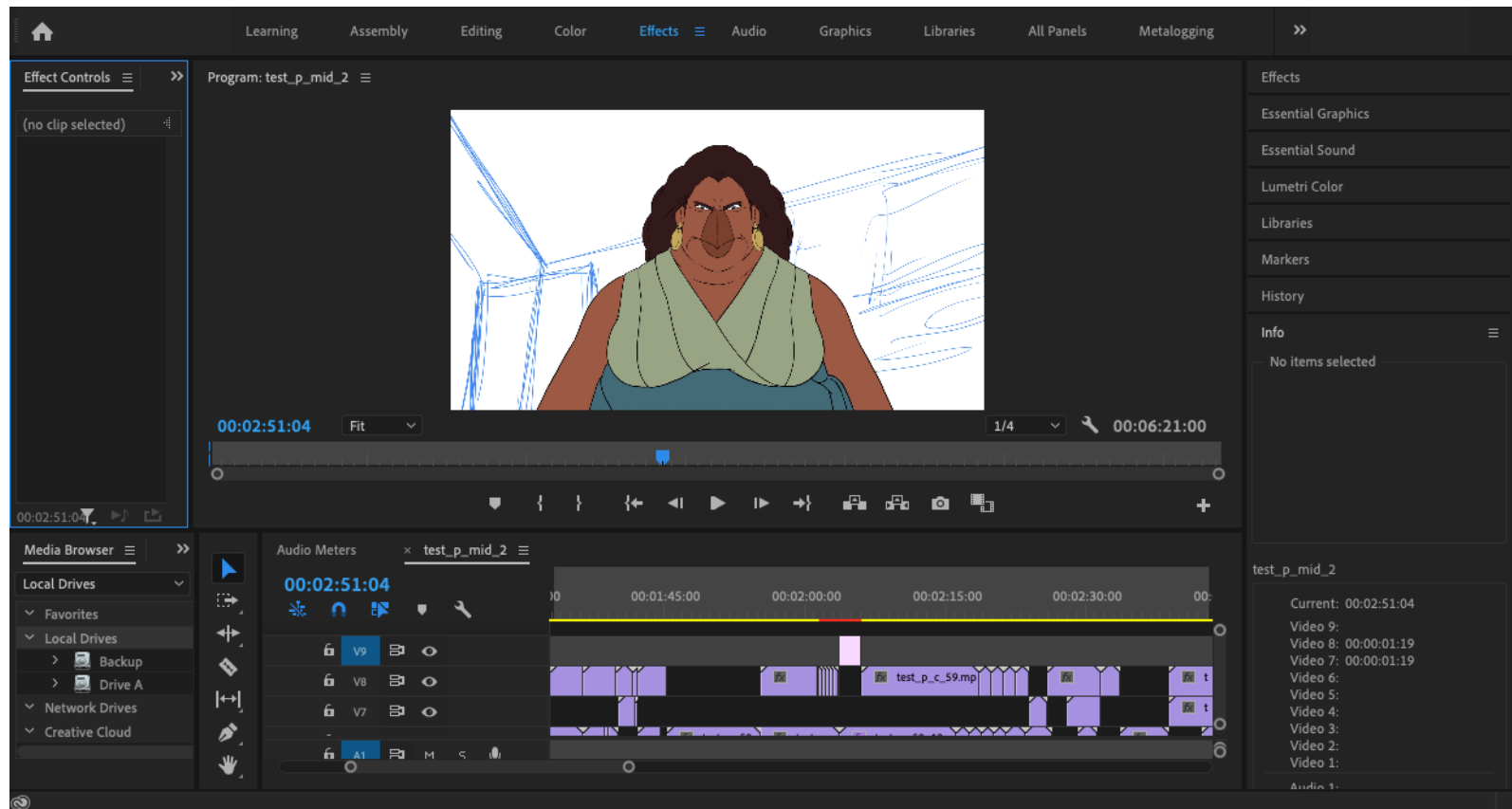
Later I spend some time rewatching the edit and made a chart plotting the ups and downs of the film.I divided it into different acts, gave them titles, divided them futher and described the emotions of each and every shots. I even made a vertical wave graph which kind of represents the tempo of the film.

I believe in giving others some creative leeway while working on my projects but at the same time it is necessary that they believe that I, as a director, know what I am doing and that I have a vision for the film.



COMPOSITING

After doing a decent amount of animation I would put all of them into Adobe Premier Pro and start editing it. I would try to figure out the beat of the movie before hand. The duration of the film can't be figured out till the final cut but it is important to have a rough idea of it before hand. The duration of the shots kept on changing while animating and therefore there's a high chance of the film's duration to increase too. So editing while animating helps to keep it in check.



FILM STILLS













CONCLUSION

This project helped me in understanding what it takes to make a film. It starts with a simple story but it takes a lot of time, effort and hard work to develop it into a visual experience. It was my first time that I worked individually on a short film. Whenever I work on something I always push myself too much to the point that I end up not finishing it eventually. Therefore it was important for me to match my expectations from the film to the limitations that I have on myself. I learned to organise myself as much as possible. It helps with meeting my weekly goals and delegating work when I need to. I earlier used to push my skills but this time I tried to use shortcuts to ease the process a little and save some time during production. In fact it was not about using shortcuts as much as about making the production economical.

I also learned on this journey that there would always be someone who would be better than me at something or the other and if they could help me out with certain part of the film then I should not hesitate in asking them. People say it takes a village to make a film that is true. Even if not a village, it takes more than one person bring these stories to life and that's a great thing about filmmaking. It makes the process fun and finishing it even more rewarding.

Working during the pandemic was a challenge too because films are not supposed to be made in isolation. It takes a toll on both mental and physical health. It was important to take breaks and go for exercise. Many a time, it was when I would be working out, that I would get an idea for a solution to some problem.

I also learned how important it was to do research and collect references. The more I studied about the anatomy of birds and the science behind the wingsuit, the more easy it became for me to integrate them into the story and them feel as real and logical as possible.

In the end, it came down to letting go of my ego. I initially wanted to make the perfect film but if I had kept going down that path, then I would have never been able to finish the film because that perfect film just existed in my head. My skillset and all the resources that I have will never be able to meet that standard. Like Leonardo Da Vinci said, art is never finished, only abandoned. One can always keep on working on one particular film but then no one would be able to see it, which is the whole point of making it.

When I realised I don't have enough time left, I reedited the whole film. I had to throw out a lot of shots that I was really fond of but the story that I eventually got was crisp and had a better beat. So, knowing not only when to stop but also to put constraints on myself so that I can meet my deadline became really important.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The past five years of my life have been quite a journey. There has been a lot of ups and downs but I won't change a thing given the chance. I learnt a lot and I am glad that I got to share this journey with some amazing people that I ever met in my life. They kept on inspiring me and kept me striving to be a better person everyday.

I extend my warm and sincere thank you to my guide; Kaushik Chakraborty, for keeping me on track and believing in me and this film. His words of encouragement relieved me of a lot of stress and anxiety. His constant guidance acted as a beacon for me to get through this project.

To Aaron Chen Lepcha, for giving the film a new depth to the film with an incredible music and sound design.

To Ameen Ali Shanavas, for doing an amazing work on the title design of the film.

To Krishnabh Thengal, for his stunning work on the concept art and colour design on the film.

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To Mouparna Barai, for doing the crowd animations on the film.

To my juniors, Divyanshi Khedekar, Kashish Gupta, Meenakshi Ayyappan, Prajakta Hardikar, Sandhra and Vanshika Kaila for helping me out with the colouring of the shots. I got to know them through this project. They did the colouring with a remarkable pace and accuracy. They took a lot of load off me and freed me of a lot of pressure.

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To the faculty members of NID, who taught us so much. They provided us with all the necessary resources that we needed and guided us in the right path, forging us into who we are today.

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I would like to thank the above mentioned three together for the amount of love, laughter and memories that we shared, not just during pandemic but even during the college life.

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