

Final Year Project Report
Exploring Character Creation, Visual Development, And Sound Integration in an
Animated Short Film

BY

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This Report Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science in Multimedia and Creative Technology

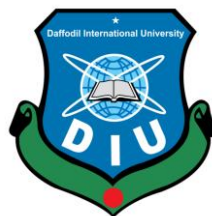
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20 August, 2025

APPROVAL

This Project titled “**Exploring Character Creation, Visual Development, And Sound Integration in an Animated Short Film**” submitted by Md. Imran Hosen to the Department of Multimedia and Creative Technology, Daffodil International University, has been accepted as satisfactory for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of B.Sc. in Multimedia and Creative Technology and approved as to its style and contents. The presentation has been held on 20 August 2025.

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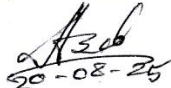
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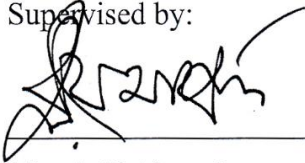
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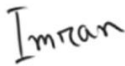
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First, I express my heartiest thanks and gratefulness to Almighty Allah for His divine blessing that made it possible for me to successfully complete my final year project titled “Exploring Character Creation, Visual Development, And Sound Integration in an Animated Short Film.”

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ABSTRACT

Mistakes in the Mist is a short animated film I made. This is how I built it from scratch, from story to visuals, including the idea, character design, storyboard, 3D sculpting, retopology, texturing, and sound. I wanted to play with feelings like guilt, fear, and emotional growth using an artistic style, not aiming for realism. Stylized rendering was key. It gave me visual freedom while keeping the story strong. I used industry-standard tools: ZBrush, Maya, Substance Painter, Photoshop, FL Studio, and Premiere Pro. Characters, like the water monster and the main character, took many tries to get right based on the story's needs. The storyboard and layouts guide the viewer's eye, and the original sound deepens the film's mood. I skipped full animation to focus on the look and sound. Time was short, and there were tough spots, but planning and problem-solving helped. Classmate feedback improved the film and kept everything consistent. This movie shows how stylized rendering and thoughtful design can storytelling and emotional depth in short animated movies, especially when learning the ropes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Stylized rendering is now a goto method for visual storytelling. It lets creators share feelings, set moods, and put their artistic spin on things, going past what you can do with just realism. When it comes to animated short films, this way is super important for showing what characters are like, setting the scene, and keeping people interested. “Mistakes in the Mist” is a project where we check out stylized rendering through a story about characters, mixing how things look, the story itself, and how it all comes together.

This look into how a cool, stylized short film came to be, focusing on designing characters in 3D, sculpting them, getting the shape right, adding textures, lighting, and rendering. I didn't do the animation myself, but I did build the main look of things, like the style and how the story looks, by really getting into the characters and how the world around them is designed.

I used programs like ZBrush, Maya, TopoGun, Substance Painter, and Adobe Photoshop to see how the way things look can change the whole storytelling vibe. Sound design was also part of it, using FL Studio and Adobe Premiere Pro to make the mood and story even stronger.

The film has a dark, mysterious feel, talking about what happens after you make choices. It uses monster designs and symbolic human characters to tell a story that makes you think. This intro gives you the idea behind the project, what it's trying to do, and why it matters in school terms. It gets things ready for a closer look at how stylized rendering can really hit home and stand out in short, animated films.

1.1 Background of the Study

Stylized rendering is a cool way to do animation. Instead of trying to look real, the art is designed to have a unique look. Animators can play with shapes, colors, and light to tell stories that hit you right in the feels and spark your imagination. You see it a lot in fave animated movies and shorts because it helps them pop and really connect with viewers. With fancy 3D software getting better all the time, artists can play around with stylized stuff more easily. Though, you still got to know your design and have some tech skills. Making a stylized animation takes work, like designing characters, building models, sculpting, retopology, and rendering. Our project, “Mistakes in the Mist,” is all about playing with these techniques to make a short film that has a stylized look. We also wanted to see how each tool helps tell the story the way we want to. The project shows that there's a big move toward mixing art with tech, very much in fields like animation, game design, and digital stuff.

1.2 Problem Statement

Stylized rendering is a hit in animation for showing cool ideas and feelings. But, it can be tough for students and newbies to get it right. You can find tons of tutorials for programs like ZBrush, Maya, and Substance Painter, but almost none show you how to link them all together for a stylized short film. Most stuff out there talks about either the tech side or design theories, but they don't mix the two when you're actually trying to make something. So, students usually have a hard time making an animation that looks good and is technically solid. There also aren't many case studies that walk through the whole process, from the first idea to the final sound, using stylized methods. It's hard for people to learn how each step helps make the final cool look. That's why this project, "Mistakes in the Mist," will look at and write down each part of making a stylized animated film. It's all about using tools in fun and smart ways to make a short film that really stands out.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study is all about how we made Mistakes in the Mist, a cool animated short film. We'll walk you through the creative and tech stuff, showing how we mixed different design and animation tricks to get a cool, unique look.

Here's what we're covering:

- A. Come up with fresh concept art and character designs that really show the story's vibe.
- B. Use 3D sculpting and retopology in ZBrush 2022 and TopoGun 2, like the pros do.
- C. Make a cool, unique look by messing with textures, shading, and lighting in Maya 2024 and Substance Painter.
- D. Plan out the animation with storyboards and scene layouts.
- E. Craft a soundscape in FL Studio and Adobe Premiere Pro that matches the story's feels.
- F. Get how storytelling, style, and tech all tie together in animated movies.
- G. Write down the whole production process to help other students and beginner animators get the hang of it.

This study hopes to offer creative ideas and real-world advice for making stylized animated stuff by hitting these targets.

1.4 Research Questions

This study looks at what goes into making a cool, animated short film, both the creative and techy parts. Here are the main questions that helped us during the research and the making of the film:

- How can cool visuals help tell a better story in a cartoon short?
- What are the best software and methods for making awesome characters and backgrounds?
- How can we make sculpting, fixing, and coloring 3D models faster for cartoon movies?
- How can sound and music add to the vibe of a movie with a unique style?
- What problems usually pop up when making a short, stylish film, and what are some fixes?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study matters because it shows how using cool rendering styles and storyboards can really make short films pop and grab people's feelings. Rendering styles let artists go wild with their ideas beyond just making things look real. It helps nail down the vibe, feel, and unique style. By paying attention to these styles, we figure out how they make digital stories better. Storyboarding helps plan things out, making sure the story and visuals flow well before making the film. It turns the script into actual visuals, which makes animating easier and more on target. This research gives helpful advice to students and new artists wanting to get better at this stuff. It shows the steps and problems involved, giving a guide that mixes art with tech. Basically, this study backs up why people are into stylish animation and digital stories. It proves how art and tech can team up to make awesome visual stuff that means something.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This project looks at how we made the short animated film “Mistakes in the Mist,” focusing on the cool visual style and how we planned the story. We'll talk about coming up with the idea, designing the characters, sculpting in 3D, cleaning up the 3D models, adding textures, and doing the sound. We used programs like ZBrush, Maya, Substance Painter, and FL Studio. We didn't get into the nitty-gritty of animation and rigging.

Because we didn't have much time, were students, and our computers weren't that strong, we had to keep things simple. Still, we learned a lot about making cool-looking stories and planning everything out before making a short animated film.

1.7 Structure of the Report

This report has different chapters so you can easily see how we made the Mistakes in the Mist project and what we found out.

- Chapter 1: Intro - This part covers the basics: why we did this, what we wanted to find out, why it matters, and what's covered.
- Chapter 2: What Others Did - Here, we talk about what's already out there on cool rendering styles, animation software, similar films, and where there's room for improvement.
- Chapter 3: How We Did It - This is about our approach, the tools we used, and how we designed everything step-by-step, from the first idea to the final touches on sound and script.
- Chapter 4: Making the Film - A look at making the short film, including the story, characters, art, layouts, and getting the final assets ready.
- Chapter 5: What We Found - This chapter points out the end results, if the rendering styles worked well, and if we reached our goals.
- Chapter 6: Problems and Fixes - Here's where we talk about the problems we ran into with tech, time, and creative stuff, and how we got over them.
- Chapter 7: Wrap-Up - The last chapter sums up what we learned, what the project adds, and what could be done next.

That's it for this part. Head to the next page for Chapter 2: Literature Review, where I will talk more about what I've already told you.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stylized rendering is super important in animation these days, giving a cool alternative to just trying to look real. Lots of people think that style lets artists stress feelings and story instead of just getting the details right. Some studies looked into how viewers react to these styles, mostly in short films where the look has to grab you fast. People have also talked about how programs, like ZBrush and Blender, help make different styles possible. Thing is, most of what's out there is either how-to guides or reviews, so we don't really get the full picture of how a stylized project goes from start to finish. This project tries to fix that by mixing school stuff with what it's like to actually do it. I'll be keeping track of each part like character design and rendering, to show how stylized animation works in the short film "Mistakes in the Mist."

2.1 Stylized Rendering in Animation

Stylized rendering in animation is when you make characters and backgrounds look cool and artistic instead of real. It's all about being creative, playing with shapes, colors, and making things a bit exaggerated to help tell the story and set the mood. It's not about making things look real like in some movies; it's more about the design and emotion. You see this a lot in both 2D and 3D animation, like in movies such as Popeye, Monty Python and the Holy Grail, and Klaus, where the style makes the movie stand out. To get this look, artists use special computer programs, lighting tricks, and editing techniques, as well as cool modeling approaches.

In 3D animation, programs like ZBrush and Maya let artists sculpt characters with special features that fit the art style they're going for. This is really useful for students because it helps them get better at telling stories and creating their own visual style as they learn how to work with these technical tools.

For our project, stylized rendering is super important to how Mistakes in the Mist looks. It shapes the entire feel and vibe of the short film.

2.2 Tools and Techniques in Modern Animation

To make our animated short, we used a bunch of tools. ZBrush helped us sculpt fine details, and Maya along with TopoGun took care of retopology and UV stuff. For textures that pop, we turned to Substance Painter. FL Studio made our sound amazing, and Adobe Premiere Pro pulled everything together in editing. All these programs helped us create a cool, stylized animation that focused more on the story than trying to look real.

Table 2.2.1 Summary of Software Tools and Their Functions in the Project

Tool	Function	Used in This Project
ZBrush	High-resolution sculpting	Y
Maya	Retopology, UV layout	Y
TopoGun	Low-poly mesh creation	Y
Substance Painter	Texturing and material painting	Y
RizomUV	UV unwrapping and layout	Y
FL Studio	Sound effects and composition	Y
Adobe Premiere Pro	Editing, audio syncing, final video	Y

Table 2.2.1 shows the main animation tools and methods used now. Each software has its own job, like sculpting, making models, adding textures, rendering, and sound editing. These tools help artists get the work done and let them create their own unique style.

2.3 Case Studies of Stylized Animated Film

Stylized animation gives stories cool looks. Take Popeye, for example his big muscles and thick lines made him funny. The tests of Montu Miah shared Bangladeshi culture with easy-to-watch drawings. Honeydew Studios' GUS felt cozy because of its soft lights and light colors. Scavengers mixed rough, painted looks with strong shapes to show a broken world. In the Fall used dark shapes to share feelings. These cartoons choose feeling over realness, making them special and stick in your mind.



Figure 2.3.1 Montu miar ovijan cartoon

Take Klaus from 2019, for instance. It mixed old-school 2D animation with cool lighting to get this soft, painted style. They drew these characters by hand but used fancy lighting to make them pop, almost like they're 3D, but still kept that classic 2D vibe.



Figure 2.3.2 Stylized lighting and character rendering in Klaus (2019)

Short films such as The Dam Keeper and Paperman mix 2D and 3D to get a friendly, expressive vibe. These examples show that when artists stylize things, they can focus on the mood, what the story is about, and how it looks, instead of trying to be real.

In Paperman, they put hand-drawn lines on top of 3D animation to make it feel old-fashioned but up-to-date. The Dam Keeper used soft brushstrokes and textures like a painting to show feeling and depth. Both movies show that styling things can make something look cool, make people feel something, and make the story better. These kinds of examples gave us ideas for Mistakes in the Mist.



Figure 2.3.3 Stylization examples from The Dam Keeper and Paperman

These movies shaped how Mistakes in the Mist looks, pushing us to mix design and tech to make a short film that viewers can really feel.

2.4 Gaps in the Existing Research

People play around with animation styles a lot. Think about Popeye, with his crazy moves and simple colors, or *The Adventures of Montu Miah*, which tells stories about culture and society. Even in indie stuff like Honeydew Studios' *GUS* or shorts like *Scavengers* and *In the Fall*, you see how style can set a mood, show off a culture, or make a point way differently than if you were going for real life. Even with all this cool variety, there's not a lot of research or how-to guides about making these kinds of films. Most studies either talk about super-real animation or just art theory in general. They don't get into the nitty-gritty of how to get these non-real looks, especially when you're a small or indie team. Big studios can test out their own fancy tools, but smaller teams have to bend regular programs like ZBrush, Maya, and Substance Painter to get unique visuals. No one really writes about how they do this, so new artists and students are left in the dark. Another thing: how style affects the feels in storytelling. Films like *In the Fall* use color, layout, and abstract stuff to show sadness and memories. *GUS* mixes fun with some darker stuff through its characters. But you don't see much in school books about how these choices like weird shapes, painterly looks, or simple outlines actually make you feel something. Sound is another thing people don't talk about enough. *Scavengers* uses sound to make the vibe stronger, but nobody connects the dots between the tech and creative stuff behind sound and the whole point of the style, especially in projects with little or no talking. So, this study is trying to fill in these blanks. It's about showing a step by step way a small team can make a stylish animated short. It puts together visual and sound ideas to get emotions across without being all about photorealism.

That's it for this part. Head to the next page for Chapter 3: Methodology, where I will talk more about what I've already told you.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To make our stylized animation project, we took a hands-on approach. We made a short film called *Mistakes in the Mist* by going through each step of the animation process. This went from the initial art and storyboards to 3D modeling, fixing the models, adding textures, rendering the images, and creating the sound. We used programs people in the industry use, like ZBrush, Maya, and TopoGun, for each part. We paid attention to both the artistic and technical aspects to get a cool, unique style. Getting feedback from others and checking our own work helped us make the animation look and feel better. This practical way of working gave us experience in handling a full animation project from start to finish.

3.1 Research Approach

For this project, we took a hands-on approach, learning by doing as we created a cool animated short film. We mixed creative exploration with tech skills to figure out how different tools and methods shape visual stories. Instead of just reading about it, we got our knowledge by diving right in. We made *Mistakes in the Mist* using a standard animation pipeline. Every step like character design, concept art, 3D sculpting, retopology, texturing, rendering, and sound design was planned out and done with pro software like ZBrush, Maya, and TopoGun. We kept checking in with ourselves and getting feedback along the way. Throughout the project, we judged our design choices based on how well they fit the story and the animation style. We wrote down any problems we ran into so we could get better at fixing issues and working faster. By doing all this, we wanted to link what you learn in school to how animation actually works. We not only ended up with a creative product, but also got some useful insights into the animation process from a student's point of view.

3.2 Project Workflow Overview

Making *Mistakes in the Mist* was all about having a solid plan for both the creative and tech sides. We started by nailing down the core idea and what the film was trying to say. Next, we designed the characters, focusing on their look to match the film's mood.

Then, we sketched out a storyboard to visualize each scene. With a visual guide in place, we jumped into ZBrush for the 3D sculpting. After that, we cleaned up the mesh in TopoGun. Texturing came next, done in Substance Painter. Then, we moved on to lighting and rendering

in Maya to bring the scenes to life. Finally, we finished up with sound and editing in FL Studio and Adobe Premiere Pro.

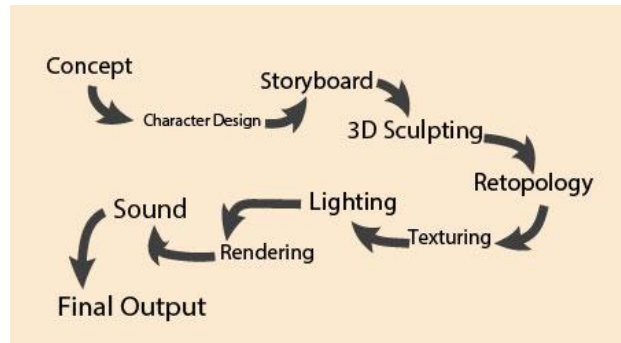


Figure 3.2.1 Production workflow of Mistakes in the Mist from concept to final edit

so this chart shows how we made our short film, from designing characters and storyboarding to sculpting, texturing, rendering, and even the sound. Each of these steps helped shape how the film looks and feels.

3.3 Tools and Software Used

For Mistakes in the Mist, we put together some 3D animation with some common tools. Each program helped in certain ways to keep us fast and deliver good visuals. We built and detailed the characters in ZBrush. It let us scale them up and add personality. Then, we cleaned up the models in TopoGun, so they'd animate without issues. Maya was key for scenes, lighting, and final rendering. It plays well with Arnold Renderer, keeping a consistent look. We used Substance Painter for texturing the characters. It's great for aged looks and different materials. For 2D design and sketches, we went with Adobe Photoshop. We used it for storyboards to plan shots because layering is simple. FL Studio was our pick for all sounds. We mixed sound results, vocals, and music there. Lastly, we compiled it all in Adobe Premiere Pro for editing, timing, and sound sync. Working with all this software helped us make the flick without too many problems. As students, our focus was to get creative but still keep it simple.

Table 3.3.1 Key software tools used in the film production pipeline.

Software	Purpose
ZBrush 2022	3D sculpting and stylized character modeling
TopoGun 2	Retopology and mesh optimization
Autodesk Maya 2024	Scene layout, lighting, and rendering
Substance Painter	Texturing and material detailing
Adobe Photoshop	Concept art and storyboarding
FL Studio	Sound design and audio editing
Adobe Premiere Pro	Final editing and video composition

Here's a list of the main software we used to make Mistakes in the Mist (see Table 3.3.1). Each tool had a job to do, from sculpting and texturing to editing and sound stuff, helping us get that cool, stylized look we were after.

3.4 Design Process Steps

To make Mistakes in the Mist, we used a pretty organized system to make this cool short film. First, we came up with the story, got some ideas together, and gathered images to get the mood right. Next, we designed the characters, making their looks really big to show their feelings and match the story's theme. We drew out a storyboard to plan out all the scenes and camera angles. Then, we used ZBrush 2022 to sculpt everything in 3D and TopoGun 2 to clean up the shapes. After that, we painted the textures in Substance Painter. Finally, we did the shading, lighting, and rendering in Maya 2024. We put the animation together and edited it in Adobe Premiere Pro and added the sound using FL Studio.

3.4.1 Concept Development

“Mistakes in the Mist,” the short animated film, has a really stylized look. Everything you see the characters, backgrounds, and effects was made with a cool, unique style that fits the story's mood. It all started with a solid story. Then, everything was designed to show off the story's feeling. A big part of the story is a monster that lives in the water and its body looks like liquid. The idea for the monster came from checking out lots of old myths and how liquid moves to design it. There were tons of drawings and pictures to try out different shapes and looks. After trying a few versions, the fifth design was the winner because it looked great and meant something. The other main character is a young boy and his concept was also thought throughout. They made two ideas for him. One was a normal-looking kid, but still stylized. The other was like a cartoon character, such as “Popeye,” with a crazy body shape. The Popeye style was chosen because it suited the film's look better and was simpler to make and animate. The basic idea was to tell a story using visuals. Every design choice, like how the characters looked, was made to boost the story and how it made you feel.

3.4.2 Character Design

In Mistakes in the Mist, how the characters look is super important for the story and how it feels. There are two main characters: a person and a water monster that means something. Both were designed really carefully to go with the story's feelings about fear, guilt, and changing. For the main person, they tried out two styles. One was kind of like a normal-looking person,

but a bit stylish. The other was more like a cartoon, with big shapes, kind of like Popeye. They used Photoshop to make both, trying out different shapes and sizes. Eventually, they picked the cartoon one because it was easier and fit the movie's style better. The water monster was harder to design, though. They did a lot of looking around and studying. They got ideas from movies, art websites like ArtStation and DeviantArt, and just stuff online. The aim was for the monster to seem like it was actually made of water—sort of liquid and mysterious. They came up with five versions, each one trying out different shapes and looks. The last one they picked had the best shape and made you feel the most when you looked at it. This monster wasn't just cool to look at; it also showed the main character's inner fears and confusion. In the end, these designs were really important for setting the movie's mood and making the story clear.

3.4.3 Script Writing

The Mistakes in the Mist script was the base for everything visual and emotional in the project. Instead of chatting, the story used mood, vibe, and symbols to get its point across. The writing started with guilt and getting over feelings as the main thing. This became a simple plot about a boy going through a foggy, weird world. Each scene had clear emotional points: the boy entering the mist, meeting the water monster, and finally feeling. The monster stood for the boy's inner issues and past screw-ups. The fog showed confusion, emotional walls, and stuff not known. Scene plans came from the script to get ready for storyboards and rough drafts. They set up the scene, what characters did, camera moves, and changes without talking. No talking made the visuals and sound super important, which we thought about when writing the script. Scenes were short and strong, using quiet and sound to make stress. So, the script for Mistakes in the Mist put feelings and what you see over talking. This made a solid story base for the artsy short film.

3.4.4 Storyboarding

For 'Mistakes in the Mist,' storyboarding was key to figuring out the visuals. Think of it as a picture guide, turning the script into drawings, so everyone could see the story before we made it. We hand-drew each panel, following the script, really focusing on the big emotional and drama bits. We zeroed in on what the main character felt – you know, his guilt, meeting the water monster, and finally feeling free. We only drew the important scenes to keep things simple. Big movements, scene changes, and those tense moments were carefully planned, like when the monster shows up and the movie's end. We added notes about timing and simple directions to guide the animation and editing. Storyboarding helped us spot story problems

early, which saved time later. This made sure the animation flowed well, had meaning, and hit the right emotions.

So, the storyboard was the base for the film's visual storytelling, making sure everything was consistent, well-timed, and emotionally on point all the way through.

3.4.5 3D Sculpting and Retopology

For *Mistakes in the Mist*, we made 3D models from 2D character designs. This made the characters real and set their final appearance, both human and monster. We used ZBrush 2022 to make two human versions and five water monster versions. Each one checked out different anatomy, poses, and expressions for feeling and looks. ZBrush let us add tiny stuff, like face and body shapes. We wanted a cool style but made the characters easy to see from any direction. Smooth areas and big features matched the movie's style. After modeling, we used TopoGun 2 to redo the surface. This turned detailed models into simple shapes for adding textures and making images later. Redoing also made it simpler to create UV maps and make models run better. We kept the sides and shapes right to save the model's details. Modeling and redoing together kept the characters looking good and ready for the rest of the project. This way worked for being creative and quick, so the team could move ahead easily.

3.4.6 Texturing

In *Mistakes in the Mist*, we really focused on textures and shading to make the 3D characters feel real and show their emotions. After polishing the models, we used Autodesk Maya to make sure the textures lined up perfectly without any weird stretching. Most of the textures came from Substance Painter, and we made sure the materials fit the movie's vibe. The human character had pale skin, soft eyes, and clothes that looked a little damp and worn to show how fragile she was. On the other hand, the water monster had bright veins, see-through, wet skin, and colors that were deep blue and green to show its magical with water. Instead of trying to make everything look super real, we went for a painted, stylized look. The shading and colors really set the mood, making sure each character looked like they belonged in the movie's world.

3.4.7 Sound Design and Editing

Sound was super important for making '*Mistakes in the Mist*' feel moody and pull you in. The idea was to make you feel tense, curious, and kind of sad using music and background sounds that went with the story, even without people talking much. I used FL Studio to make all the sounds. It's a computer program that's got tons of ways to mess with audio. Then, I put

everything together with the video in Adobe Premiere Pro, making sure the timing was spot-on. I got ideas from spooky music like the 'Little Nightmares' soundtrack, some dark piano music, and certain playlists. I also checked out short film scores like 'The Maker' to figure out how simple sounds can really make a story better. So, I used things like drawn-out background noises, quiet piano bits, and creepy layers to show what the main character was going through inside. FL Studio has these add-ons like Fruity Reeverb 2 and Parametric EQ that I used a lot to make the sound better, give it space, and balance everything out. This was key for intense scenes, like when the monster shows up or when things got emotional. The sound needed to make things scarier without being too much. The main music stuff was quiet piano and a sweet music box tune, which I picked to show how innocence and fear can clash. These sounds really shaped the dreamy, strange vibe of the movie. In Premiere Pro, I put sounds exactly where they needed to be with characters and scene changes. I messed with the volume, fading sounds in and out to make things flow smoother. Basically, the sound design helped tell the story by adding feelings and making the movie world feel real, sucking people right in.

That's it for this part. Head to the next page for Chapter 4: Project Implementation, where I will talk more about what I've already told you.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

We made Mistakes in the Mist by doing things step by step. First, we came up with the idea, designed the characters, and made a storyboard. We planned each part and did it using tools that people in the business use, like ZBrush, Maya, and Photoshop. We sculpted the 3D models and then made them look good, adding textures and shadows. We also set up the lighting to make it feel misty and a bit scary. Sound design and editing helped give it some feels. We finished the project bit by bit, making sure the style, quality, and story were all good in the animated short film.

4.1 Development of “Mistakes in the Mist”

The idea for Mistakes in the Mist started with the goal of showing inner guilt and emotional problems through a cool story. It's about a young guy who goes into a foggy place and meets a strange water monster that stands for his secret fears and regrets.



Figure 4.1 Official poster of the short film “Mistakes in the Mist”

Before we started, we wrote a basic story, made mood boards, and drew some concept art for the characters and settings. Then, we storyboarded everything to figure out camera angles, emotions, and timing for each scene.

Character development was super important. We tried out a bunch of different looks for the water monster and finally picked Version 5 because it had a great shape and showed the right emotions. The human character was made to look kind of delicate and really expressive to fit the story's vibe. We used ZBrush and Maya to sculpt, redraw, texture, and shade the characters. We also used cool lighting and rendering to give the visuals a soft, dramatic look. Sound was added with FL Studio and Premiere Pro to boost the mood.

Basically, the whole thing grew bit by bit from an idea into a visual narrative that really focused on style, symbolism, and how things felt.

4.2 Character Design Details

To show how the human character felt vulnerable and guilty inside, we made their face soft, body thin, and eyes really expressive. Simple clothes kept the focus where it should be: on what the character was feeling. This simple style fits the movie's overall look.

We really thought about the character design for Mistakes in the Mist to show the story's feelings and what it all means. We made two main characters: a young boy and a strange water monster. Each one has a special look that goes with the movie's feeling and ideas.

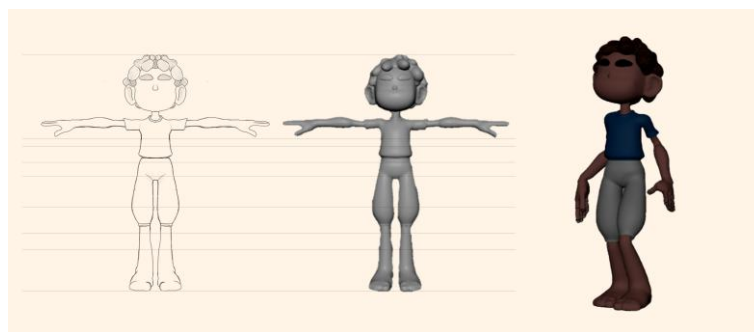


Figure 4.2.1 Human character design

To show the character's vulnerability and guilt, we gave them gentle features, a slender build, and eyes that really show their feelings. Simple clothes and a basic shape keep the focus on what they're feeling inside. This simple look also fits with the movie's style.

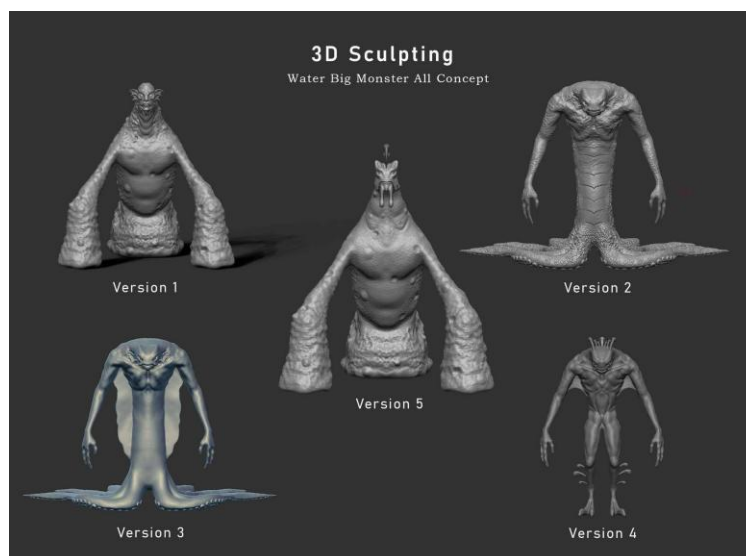


Figure 4.2.2 The monster character all versions with stylized

I used ZBrush to come up with five different looks for the water monster. I messed around with shapes, sizes, and how it made you feel. We picked version 5 because it looked flowy, kind of

like a ghost, and a little sad. It had a see-through body, weird eyes, and long arms to represent the feelings of hidden fears and regrets. I went with simple colors and shapes to show that the monster world is different from the real world. Both of the character design was uniform, so the film looks united. With every design, I wanted to push the story and connect with the audience using cool visuals.

4.3 Story and Script Development

Mistakes in the Mist is a story that looks at guilt and getting better. It's about this kid who ends up in a foggy dream world and has to deal with a weird water monster. This monster stands for all the bad feelings, past screw-ups, and worries he has inside. Going through the mist is like sorting through his feelings to get to a better place. There isn't much talking; the movie tells the story with how it looks. The feels go from being mixed up to scared, and then to understanding and chill. Every part was thought out to show these feeling changes. The fog in the story means being mentally lost and having a hard time with feelings. The monster is like guilt, which the boy needs to face so he can feel better. The end shows him letting go and feeling peaceful, showing he's grown without anyone saying a word. The story was put together piece by piece to keep things moving nicely and keep the focus on the story. Telling the story with symbols and feelings instead of words helps people watching feel something real. This way of doing things gave us a strong story that looks cool and tells something meaningful just by showing it.

4.4 Concept Art and Visual Style

The concept art really shaped the feel and look of Mistakes in the Mist. Initial drawings aimed to make a strange, dreamlike setting with fog, weird trees, and odd shapes. These things were made to show the story's themes of confusion, fear, and inner struggle.

Instead of going for real-looking scenes, they picked a stylized style to boost the emotional feel. Strong lines, soft light, and soft colors helped make a mysterious vibe. Character outlines stood out against the foggy scenes, letting people follow the story without needing words.

The look was based on dark fairy tales and stories, mixing feeling-based symbols with special artistic choices. Every piece of concept art guided the 3D creation, like modeling and texturing. These artworks made sure all choices matched throughout the movie, helping the team keep a strong, shared visual style. Concept art was key in turning ideas into a believable and animated world.

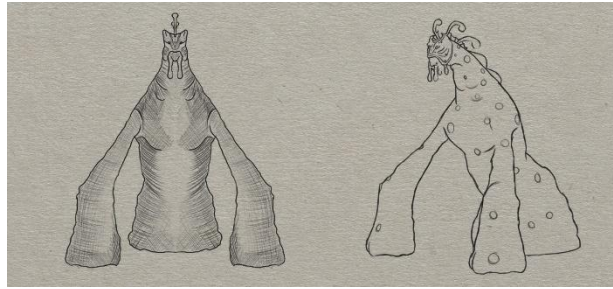


Figure 4.4.1 Concept art showcasing the visual style version 1

The design shows a big, solid creature with huge, messed-up arms that look like waterlogged rocks. It's short and wide, making it look really heavy and scary. Its face is sharp and kind of animalistic, giving you a mean and wild take on a water monster.

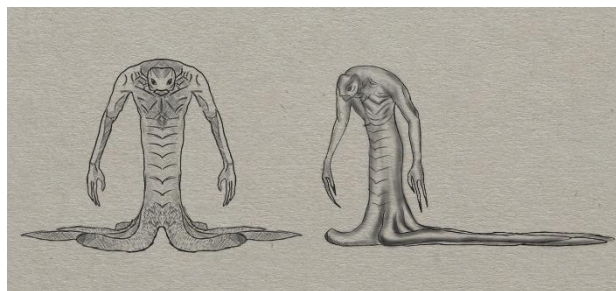


Figure 4.4.2 Concept art showcasing the visual style version 2

This version had a stretched, snake-like body, a long torso, and claw-like hands, which gave it a creepy, ghost vibe. Its odd anatomy made it look unreal and really different from the hero. It seemed skinny and uneven, like it could vanish any minute. It gave the feeling of something quiet and sneaky nearby, before you even saw it. It looked cool, but the strange shape probably would have been hard to animate with feelings or action, so the designers passed on it.

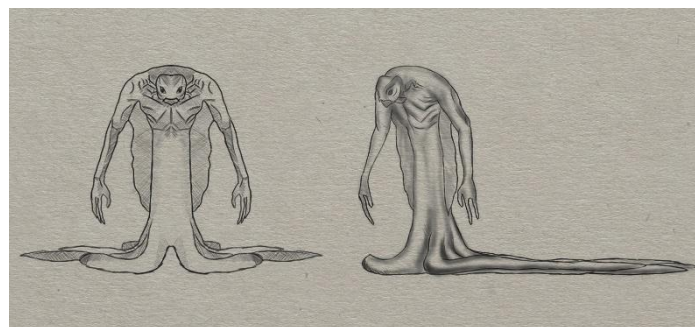


Figure 4.4.3 Concept art showcasing the visual style version 3

Version 3's design has these cool, tentacle-like things that make you think of flowing water. The head's tucked into the shoulders, which makes for a kind of mysterious look. This design shows both beauty and scariness, which seems right for a water spirit or some old mythical thing.

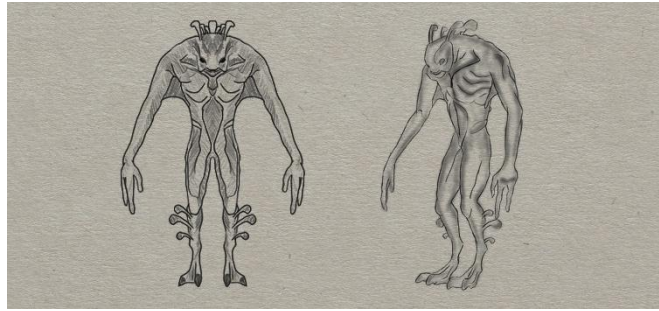


Figure 4.4.4 Concept art showcasing the visual style version 4

So this thing looks kinda like a buff, human-like dude, but it stands up straight. It's got this cool tribal warrior vibe going on. Plus, with the spikes or fins on its head and legs, you get the feeling it's got some water creature in its family tree, even though it mostly looks like a person.

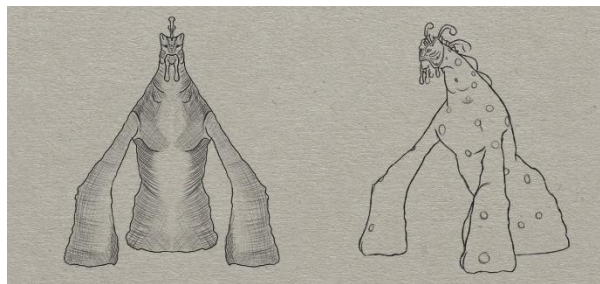


Figure 4.4.5 Concept art showcasing the visual style version 5

The final version we picked shows a big, droopy figure. It's symmetrical and has a face that looks kinda alien. The arms look like they're melting, which adds to the watery vibe. We chose this one because it hits the right emotional spot, feeling both mysterious and sad. It really backs up the story's whole theme of guilt and what scares you inside.



Figure 4.4.6 Final Monster Concept

The final version of the water monster has a mystical look. Think glowing blue colors and a flowy design. Its massive arms and see-through body make it look scary and not quite natural. The horns and face shape give it a memorable look in the fog. The glowing markings all over

its body add to the unreal feeling. It feels like it evokes feelings of fear and sadness at the same time. It's like it's a scary creature but you can sense its sorrow for hidden feelings of guilt.

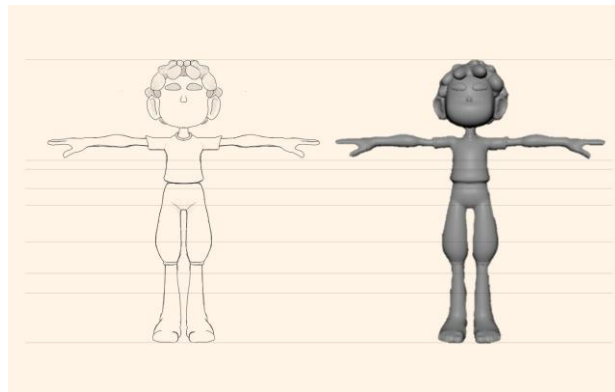


Figure 4.4.7 Concept art showcasing the visual style and emotional tone of the film

The boy is made to look innocent and a bit fragile, with soft lines, a round head, and big expressions. He starts as a quick drawing and ends up as a detailed 3D model with dark skin and a cool style. His clothes are basic and the style is cartoony, so you pay attention to his face and how he moves. He's the heart of the story, showing feelings of guilt, and growth. The way he looks is both stylish and easy to relate to, which fits the movie.

4.5 Story and Script Development

Mistakes in the Mist is all about a kid going through some feels. He ends up in this foggy, dream thing and meets a water monster that stands for his worries and bad choices from before. The plot is more about feelings changing than action or talking. When making it, we split it up into parts: beginning, things getting tense, facing the monster, and letting those feelings out. This helped us write the script and keep things moving. Every scene was made to fit the mood and what it all meant, so you could get what was going on without any speaking.

The fog is like the boy's mixed-up mind, and the monster is like guilt. As things go on, the fog disappears, showing he's getting better. The script was big on showing things and how the feelings moved, which helped with the storyboard and sound later on. Even without words, the movie sends a strong feel. The story and script were super vital to how we made the short flick.

4.6 Scene Layout and Storyboard

The scene layout and storyboard were super important for planning out Mistakes in the Mist. They helped us figure out how the story should go, set the emotional tone, and plan the visuals before we started the 3D part.

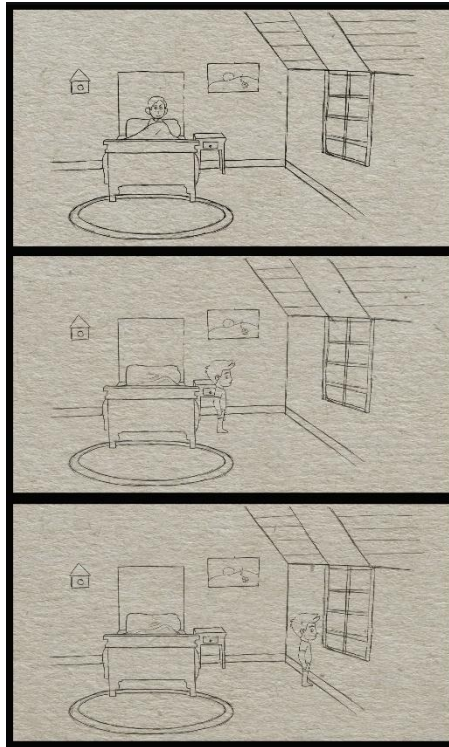


Figure 4.6.1 Storyboard frame showing wide shot of protagonist entering the mist

The storyboard showed the kid's trip, step by step, from when he walked into the mist, fought the strange monster, and finally felt. Each picture used how he stood, what was around him, and how the camera was set up to show feelings instead of using words. It let everyone see how the story would look and feel.

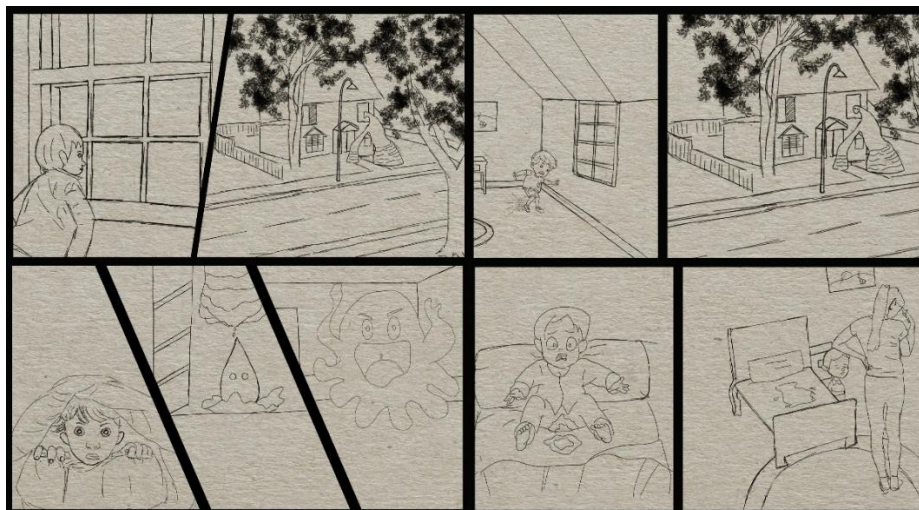


Figure 4.6.2 Storyboard frame showing the confrontation scene with the monster

The scene layouts were like something you'd see in a movie. Wide shots showed how alone the boy was, and close-ups caught his fear and how he changed inside. The hazy backgrounds, bent trees, and dramatic lighting all helped show what each scene meant and kept the movie looking and feeling the same all the way through. Plus, the storyboard helped everyone on the team talk

to each other. It made it clear how scenes changed, where characters were, and what the style looked like. That way, nobody got confused and it saved time when we were making the film. Basically, the scene layout and storyboard made sure the movie stayed focused on emotions and looked good from beginning to end.

4.7 Sculpting, Retopology, and Texturing

To get the stylized characters for “Mistakes in the Mist,” we had to nail the sculpting, retopology, and texturing. We started by sculpting high-res models in ZBrush 2022. I made two versions of the human character and five different monster designs. The goal was to find the sweet spot between realistic details and stylized features that fit the movie's vibe.



Figure 4.7.1 ZBrush sculpt of monster

We picked version 5 of the water monster as the final design for Mistakes in the Mist. It just hit harder emotionally and looked better. This one has uneven horns, long arms, and a big, drippy lower body to show a huge emotional weight. The face shows both sadness and a bit of a mystery, which fits the story's themes of guilt and fear. Things. The cracks, rough skin, and folds give it an old, creepy feel. All this detail gives the monster depth, making it look like it's had a rough time. Its watery shape and unique size make it seem unreal, which is great for the movie's foggy setting. Version 5 shows what's going on inside the main character, so it's the best one.

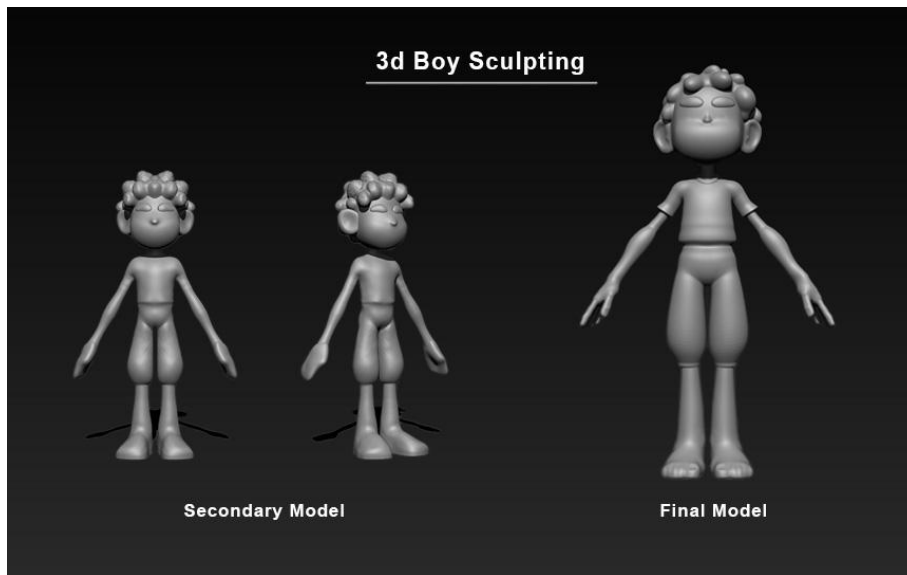


Figure 4.7.2 Boy sculpting secondary to final model

The character is designed to look soft and simple, but still shows a lot of feeling. I wanted to make it seem open and a bit fragile through how it looks and moves.

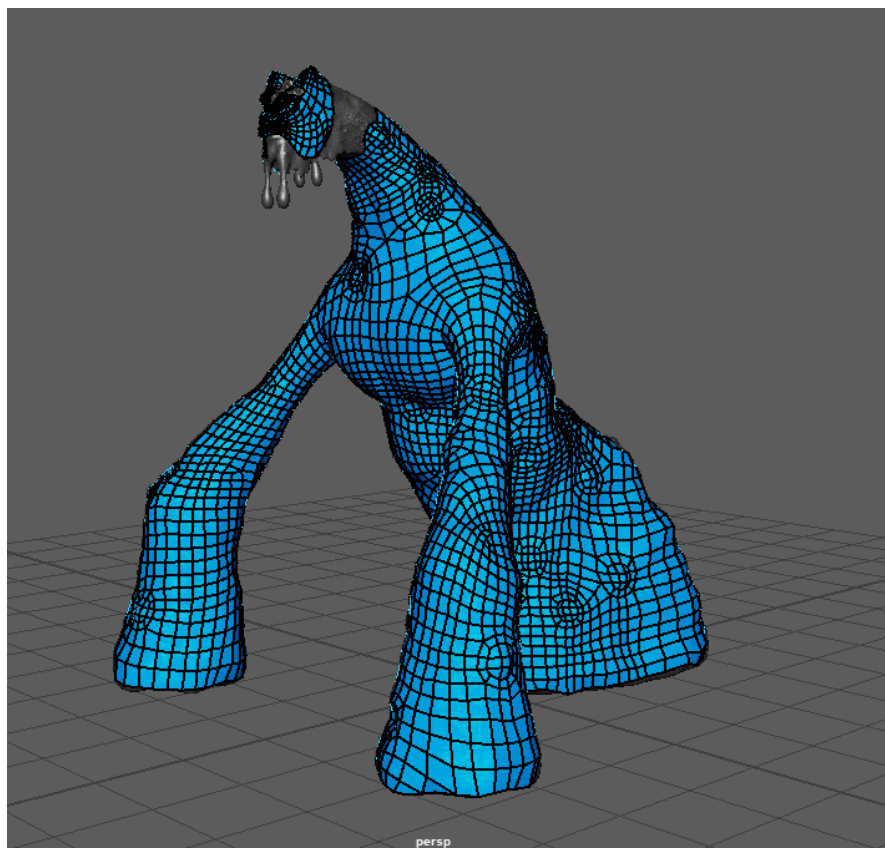


Figure 4.7.3 Final monster retopology

After I finished sculpting, I used TopoGun 2 and Maya to do retopology. This turned the high-poly sculpts into low-poly models that worked well for animation and rendering. I made sure the edge flow around the face and joints was good for deformation and textures. Also, I used Maya for UV unwrapping to get clean, non-stretched texture layouts.

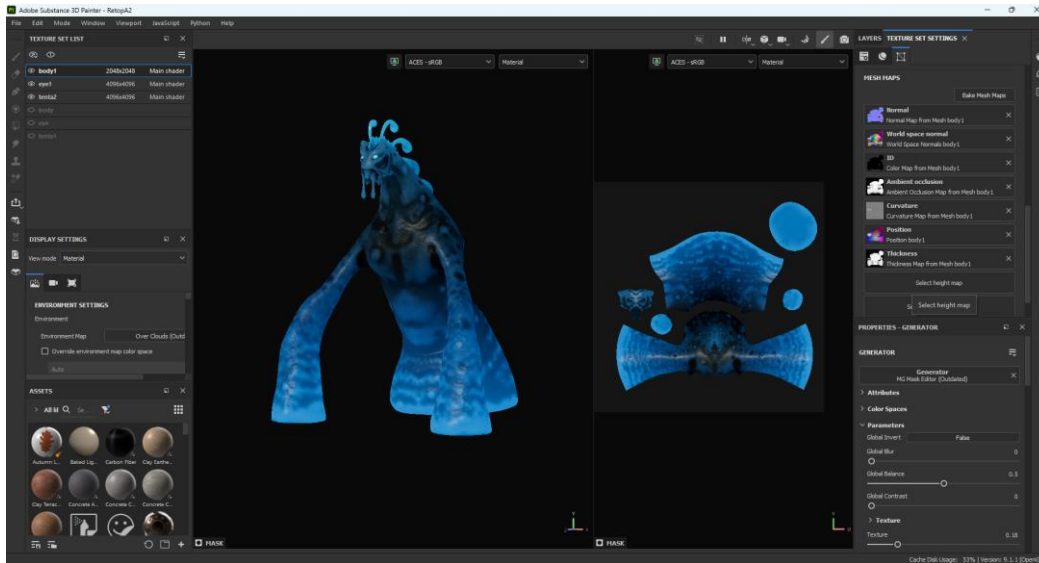


Figure 4.7.4 Textured model of monster

For painting, I used Substance Painter. The monster got a dark, rough paint job with textures mimicking dirt and busted rocks to amp up the fright factor. Light, gentle colors went on the person to show the sadness and fear. I threw in touches like skin marks to boost the realism. I used layers to sneak in unique touches. The monster got dirt and battle scars to look beat-up. I made sure to give the person small things like veins and bruises to sell the emotion. After all the shaping, painting, and detailing, the characters came out looking like they had real feelings, which fits the look of the film great.

4.8 Rendering Outcomes

For our short film Mistakes in the Mist, the final rendering was super important for getting the right look. We prepped all the characters and backgrounds with Substance Painter and then rendered everything in Autodesk Maya.

During rendering, we went for soft lighting, defined shapes, and a painterly look to fit the story's emotional and surreal vibe. We were careful with textures to bring out the small details and colors, especially on the water monster's glow and the human character's expressions. We played with shadows and lighting to make the whole thing feel misty and dreamlike. that's it for this part.

Head to the next page for Figure 4.8.1: Rendered frame showing stylized lighting and fog effects, where I will talk more about what I've already told you.



Figure 4.8.1 Rendered frame showing stylized lighting and fog effects

The final renders nailed the vibe we were going for, mixing dark and soft elements with both realism and a stylized feel. These results really helped show the characters' emotional changes and backed up the movie's general look.

4.9 Audio and Sound Design

Sound design was super important in making Mistakes in the Mist feel emotional and atmospheric. Because the movie was all about mood and setting, the sound guys really put in work to match the visuals and the kind of unusual story they were telling.

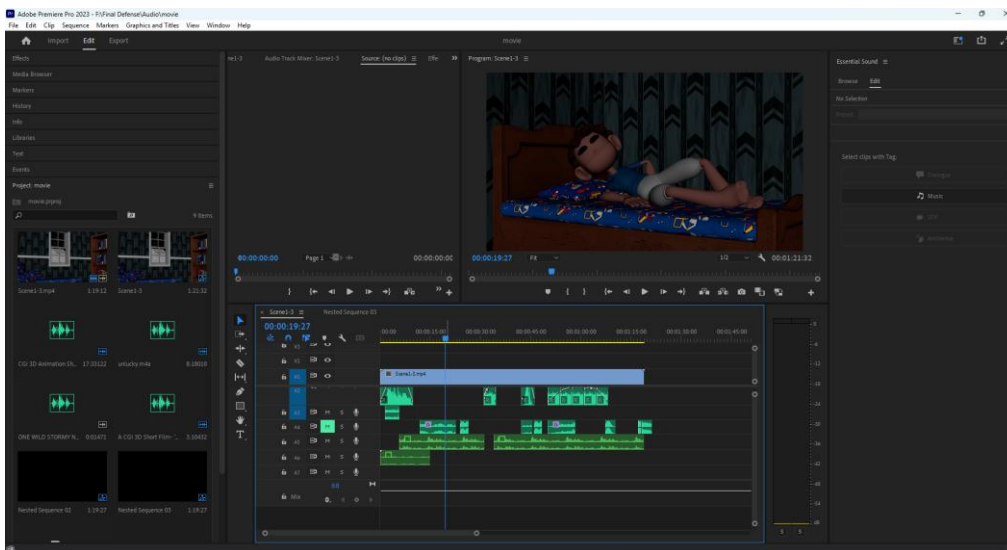


Figure 4.9.1 Sound editing placement in Adobe Premiere Pro

Sound design was super important for making Mistakes in the Mist feel really emotional and atmospheric. The movie depended a lot on its mood, so we made sure the sounds went well

with what you saw and helped tell the story. We did all the sound design in FL Studio, using plugins like Fruity Reeverb 2, Limiter, Soundgoodizer, and Parametric EQ to get the right mood and make everything sound clear. The Multiband Compressor helped balance all the different sound layers. And, the final touches and syncing were done in Adobe Premiere Pro.

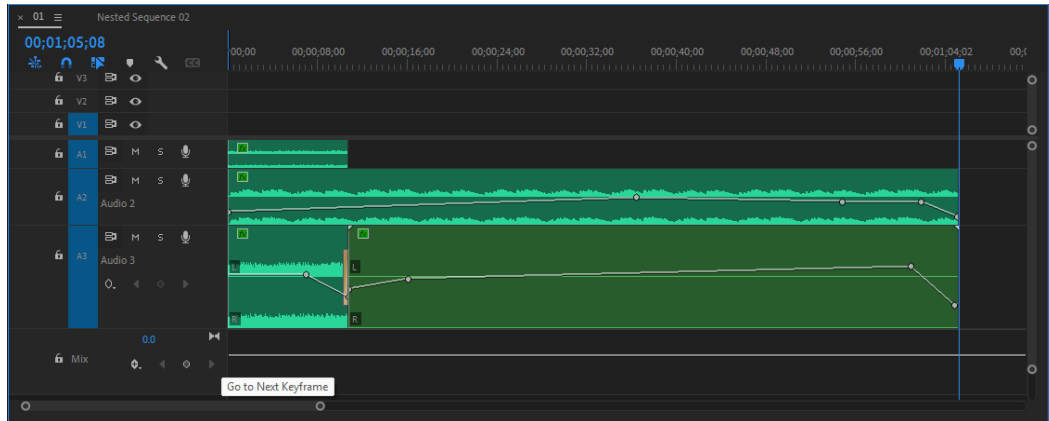


Figure 4.9.2 Sound editing timeline in Adobe Premiere Pro

For the sound, we went with simple but good options. A sad piano and music box sounds were picked to match the story's scary and sad vibe. The sounds make a contrast between being innocent and scared, mainly when the main character meets the strange monster. In Premiere Pro, the final sounds were edited with fades so scenes changed smoothly. Volume changes and layering were used to match audio to what characters did, what happened around them, and special story parts.



Figure 4.9.3 Sound editing timeline in FL Studio

The sound design, with its mix of ambient music, sound effects, and emotional cues, really made the stylized world of Mistakes in the Mist pop and boosted the visual story. It also did a great job of pulling viewers into a surreal, dreamlike experience.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mistakes in the Mist turned out well, hitting our emotional and visual targets with cool art and a good story. We used funny shapes, soft lights, and lots of detail on both the person and the water monster to send a strong message. The monster we picked (Version 5) was great because it showed feelings and meant something special, backing up the story's ideas about feeling bad and being scared inside. The storyboards helped things flow between scary and calm spots, giving the film a movie-like feel. Sound was super important for setting the mood. Sad piano tunes and music box sounds made things emotional and matched what you saw. Even though we had some tough times with old computers and not much time, the project still looked good all the way through. The final look and sound worked together to pull people into a dream. Going for style not only helped tell the story but also kept things doable for a student project. This shows that if you get the art style right and plan things out, you can make a strong short film, even if you do not have much to work with. It also gives us ideas for other projects that look and feel the same way.

5.1 Final Output Overview

Mistakes in the Mist wraps up as a short, artsy film that shows a young boy's feelings as he faces his fears. From start to finish, the whole thing looks cool, with a focus on feelings, symbols, and a dreamlike vibe. The project tells a strong story with great visuals and no talking. Each person in the movie shows a certain feeling. The boy is soft-looking and acts scared, showing he's not safe. The water monster glows, has long arms, and looks spooky, standing for being sorry and afraid. The fog and soft light make the movie feel a certain way. Made with Maya and Substance Painter, the scenes look good and tell the story clearly. The sound, made in FL Studio and edited in Premiere Pro, adds even more feeling. Every scene sounds as good as it looks, making you feel like you're really there.

Even though it's short, the film shows how much thought went into every choice. The art style helps tell the story and shows what students can do when they get creative.

5.2 Evaluation of the Stylized Rendering Techniques

The cool visual style in Mistakes in the Mist was super important for how the film felt and looked. Instead of trying to be super realistic, they made things simpler, went over the top with details, and used artsy textures, which gave it its own vibe. This helped the characters and

places show the feelings in the story, stuff like feeling bad, being scared, and changing as a person. One thing that worked really well was how they designed the water monster. It had glowing textures, soft lines, and weird sizes, so it felt scary but also like it meant something. The lighting and fog also helped make this dreamy feeling, making the mystery and feelings in each scene even stronger. The way the human character looked, with soft textures, helped show how they were open and changing. These visual choices helped viewers feel more and understand what the characters were going through.

In general, the stylized rendering stuff did a good job of mixing art with the story. They thought carefully about everything: shapes, colors, lighting, and materials to help tell the story. So, this shows that using stylized rendering can be a good thing when making a short film, especially when you want to show deep feelings.

5.3 Comparison with Initial Goals

Mistakes in the Mist started out as a way to play with cool rendering styles and tell a story using a short cartoon. The point wasn't to look super real, but to show strong feelings such as fear, guilt, and becoming a better person using design and art. The final product was pretty close to what we had in mind from the start. We got the stylized look we wanted in the characters, backgrounds, lighting, and textures. The monster, with its flowing design and weird shape, really showed what the main character was going through emotionally. The human character's look and expressions also gave off that feeling of struggling inside.

The storyboards, models, and sound all went well with the artistic goals of the project. The visuals and sounds worked together to set the mood in each scene. We didn't get to animate it this time, but the visuals, models, and sound created a strong story and artistic feel anyway.

Time and our computers held us back a bit, but we still got the creative look we were going for. In the end, the project hit its goals and showed how stylized rendering can make emotional stories better, even in a film made by students.

5.4 Feedback and Peer Review

When we were putting together Mistakes in the Mist, getting feedback from others was super helpful. We showed our first ideas to classmates, teachers, and professors to get their thoughts. A lot of the feedback was about making sure the characters' emotions were clear and that the style looked the same all the way through. People really liked the water monster design, especially Version 5. They said it had a lot of feeling and a cool meaning. Other students gave us tips to make the human character look better. They said to keep a good mix of style and

making the character someone people could relate to. So, we made the shapes softer and gave the character big eyes to show how defenseless they were.

We also got comments on the storyboards about how the scenes changed and how fast things were happening. So, we changed a few things to make the story flow better. When we were working on the sound, people told us it was important for it to match what you were seeing. We tweaked the timing and added layers, mainly when the monster showed up and during the parts with the most feeling.

All in all, getting feedback from others really made the film better. They gave us new ideas and pointed out little things that didn't quite fit. It pushed us to think harder about what we were doing and made sure that the movie's feelings and art came through in both the pictures and the sound.

That's it for this part. Head to the next page for Chapter 6: Evaluation, Challenges, and Conclusion, where we'll talk more about what I've already told you.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION, CHALLENGES, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter gives a quick rundown of what we did well on the project, both creatively and technically. I'll talk about the main problems we ran into while we worked. I'll see how well the rendering style worked. I'll talk about how we ran out of time and resources. I'll also share how we got past creative slumps. Plus, I'll go over how the project helped with visual storytelling, suggest ways to make things better next time, and wrap it all up with what we learned in the end.

6.1 Technical Difficulties

Making Mistakes in the Mist wasn't easy! We ran into some snags, mainly with the tech. ZBrush slowed to a crawl with the high-res models, especially when sculpting the monster. We had to be careful with details to keep it from crashing. Retopology was tough too. Getting clean edges while keeping the cool style meant lots of tweaking in TopoGun and Maya. Texturing in Substance Painter ate up memory, so we had to lower the resolution sometimes. Rendering in Maya took ages because we were playing around with the lights to get the right feel. And we had some weird issues with sound plugins in FL Studio that messed with the audio.

Even though it was a pain, we figured things out by tweaking our workflow. We cut down on polygons, fixed the UV layouts, and split the rendering into smaller chunks. It taught us to be ready for anything when working on a project with limited resources.

6.2 Time and Resource Management

Getting Mistakes in the Mist done on time meant we really had to manage our time and what we had. Since it was all students running the show and we didn't have a lot of fancy stuff, we planned everything out super carefully. We made a weekly to-do list, breaking the project into steps like design, making the models, adding textures, and the final render. This kept us on track and let us see how far we'd come. Making the models and rendering took the longest, so we gave ourselves more wiggle room there. We changed deadlines when stuff got tricky, and if something wasn't that important, we made it simpler to stay on schedule. Rendering the scenes in high-res on our own computers was super slow, so we made the files smaller and rendered them in pieces to save time. Sometimes the software crashed or things went wrong, which messed with our timing, but we had backups and saved our work often to avoid losing anything. We also got feedback from each other between steps so we wouldn't have to make

big changes at the last minute. This plan let us finish a short movie that hopefully hits you in the feels, right on schedule, even though we didn't have a lot of stuff or much time.

6.3 Creative Blocks and Solutions

We hit some creative walls during the project, especially when designing the main ideas and characters. It was hard to find a look that was both special and really showed the feelings of the story. Like, at first, the water monster didn't look scary or sad enough.

To fix this, we looked at a lot of pictures and ideas, even taking inspiration from games like Little Nightmares and movies such as The Dam Keeper. This gave us cool ideas for shapes and textures. Another problem was figuring out how to show feelings visually in the storyboards without using words. We drew a bunch of versions of important scenes and got opinions from others, which really helped. Remembering that the main point was about guilt in the mist kept us on track. Choosing music was also tricky. Listening to background music playlists, we found just the right emotional vibe. In the end, breaking things down, getting inspired, and working together really got us past those creative problems.

6.4 Summary of Findings

While making Mistakes in the Mist, we learned a few cool things about stylized animation and how to tell stories visually. First off, stylization gives you the space to be creative since you can bend reality with characters and settings. This made it easier to show things that are hard to pin down, like guilt and emotional pain. When we designed the characters, we found that big shapes and outlines helped get feelings across better. Like, the water monster's long arms and glowing skin brought another level to the story, showing it was really the main guy's inner fear come to life.

The project also proved how crucial sound is in animation. Because there were no lines, music and background sounds were super needed to tell the story. We picked sounds to make people feel certain ways, using stuff like FL Studio and Premiere Pro. Also, it helped a lot to map things out with storyboards and art early on. This let us imagine scenes ahead of time, which saved time making it and kept the art style on point. On the tech side, having Maya, ZBrush, and Substance Painter was a plus.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Work

Mistakes in the Mist' got the visuals right, but there's room to grow. For next time, how about adding some full animation? It would let the characters show more emotion and make the story

clearer. Also, trying out some cooler design software like those that make things look hand-drawn or not-so-real could really boost the art style. Game engines might give more freedom and power for producing too. Another thing to think about is making the backgrounds bigger. More detailed places can make the story better and keep people watching. Little touches, such as lighting or fog, could also boost the strange vibe.

Bottom line: Keep what works, but add animation, interaction, and deeper backgrounds. That way, viewers will be more into it, and 'Mistakes in the Mist' can really take off as a cool short film.

6.6 Conclusion

The short film *Mistakes in the Mist* was all about playing with cool storytelling methods, going through the whole process from start to finish—thinking up the idea, making it look good, and adding sound. The film was about tough feelings like guilt, fear, and getting better, all set in a strange, foggy place. We didn't use much talking. The characters looked unique, the setting was foggy, and things meant more than they seemed. We wanted the audience to feel something. Every step of making the film was planned out. Characters were shaped in ZBrush, cleaned up in TopoGun, and given textures in Substance Painter. When we rendered it in Maya, we made sure the lighting was soft and set the mood. The sound, which we did in FL Studio and Premiere Pro, made things even more emotional with music and sound effects. What's great is that we mixed creative ideas with tech skills. Sure, we didn't have a ton of time or stuff, and the animation wasn't perfect, but we got pretty close to what we wanted visually and emotionally. The way we styled the rendering let us tell the story in a way that really got the feelings and atmosphere across. This project is a good example for students and artists who want to try stylized animation. It proves that if you have a good idea, think things through, and plan well, you can make a film that means something, even if it's not a big production. The project really drove home how strong stylization is in telling stories with pictures.

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APPENDICES

You can find storyboards, concept art, character designs, software workflows, sound bits, and rendering examples in the appendix.

For everything, check out this link:

- Appendices Materials: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SvLd5k2rH4ZlsmTTs0-XHTfuVMTbpb4j?usp=sharing>

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