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March 18, 2022

Changes

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An abstract of  
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences  
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Abstract

Changes

By Justin Kaminuma

This film and photo book are an exploration into themes of change in both the creative process and in personal growth. Furthermore, these two works explore the intersection between photography and video and how these two mediums intersect. These two objects ultimately work together to form a portrait of life in perpetual change and highlight the importance of embracing change, rather than resisting it.

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## Personal Statement

I first discovered my interest in film through video editing; specifically in montaging. Although my passions in filmmaking as an adolescent began with more juvenile endeavors such as editing video game montages to music, I became enamored by this magical artistic process. And once I finally bought my first camera I immediately and obsessively recorded everything that occurred in my life as a way of holding onto memories from my teenage years. I always shot a massive amount of footage handheld in 60 frames per second so in editing I could slow the footage down and find brief moments of beauty that only last half a second in real-time. This process informs the way I create everything even for my work today. A shot in one of my films never lasted longer than ten seconds, and a film of mine never ran longer than four minutes. They always focus on brief moments in time that might otherwise be missed if I was not there to eternalize them. And much like my video game montages, music functions as an invisible yet crucial framework for the overarching structures in these films. Synced with a song this non-narrative collage of moments manifests into a cohesive film with moments cut and paced perfectly to a guitar strum or a vocal swell. These formative years have thus informed my process as an artist today. I intentionally opt out of using a script in exchange for filming diaristically, allowing for a film to come about through the editing process instead. It is a process that often becomes messy and untraditional in comparison to a narrative film. Ideas can change entirely, often in the late stages of a project. I initially questioned whether this improvisational workflow of film-making can coincide with a thesis program which typically requires more structure, meticulous planning, research, and deadlines in order to be completed. Throughout



this personal statement, it becomes apparent that I indeed struggled with this, and much like my short films, the thesis has changed wildly from what I had initially imagined. In retrospect, I have also come to realize that the tensions between the structures and expectations of the thesis program and the deliberate unstructuredness of my workflow brought forth new understandings of who I am and what I am trying to say with this project as a whole. In this thesis, I applied my interest in working within new mediums such as animation, photography, and graphic design which have ultimately influenced the way I interpret my own process and question how I can communicate my ideas through new means. What changes when stills are taken from a film and then turned into a book? How I can move between mediums such as filmmaking and photography without changing my process entirely? This thesis consists of a photo book and short film which grapple with these questions about form on a technical basis between photography and film, while also acting as an overarching portrait of my own change in self, and struggles to adapt to change personally through the past few years. Ultimately these works function together as a piece on embracing change in all forms.

My thesis started with the intention to explore the intersection between photography and cinema through animation techniques and photography. I was primarily focused on rotoscoping and photo animation and I intended to create a short film that explores photography and film through a rotoscoped character who skateboards through a series of scenes in search of a place to call home. This was the project that had existed before anything else. This animated film was initially intended to encompass my entire thesis and function as a cohesive visual which combines everything and every form I know together - handheld super 8 film intercut between stills which are collaged, re-contextualized, and animated into scenes of

my rotoscoped-self skateboarding through a sky of clouds. Initially, I was excited about this project. The use of rotoscoping to turn me into a character was fascinating to me and I was enthusiastic to turn this into a complete project. But despite this, I struggled with the artistic execution of this project progressively in the following months. To start, I only made a fully animated short film once before so I struggled greatly with my technical limitations. An idea in my head oftentimes felt impossible to translate into a short film without a serious amount of time and experimentation. But I also grappled with the direction of this project as time went on. I carried an underlying feeling that I was beginning to add elements into this film to solely satisfy the academic research I had done for the thesis. I was emphasizing the academic exploration between film and photography more while limiting the artistic exploration that I wanted to do. This experience also began to feel like the antithesis to the process I was connected to the most: editing and montaging. In many ways animation has been the most time-intensive form of creation for me in the sense that I have to build scenes from the ground up, frame by frame. If I wanted to create a scene for a certain moment, I would have to dedicate a significant amount of time and effort making that shot and knowing for certain it will work. It was challenging not to be able to use montaging as a way of forming connections. Along with this, I felt as though I needed to create the film with a process closer to a narrative production; complete with a script and storyboard. At the time, I felt like these elements could provide structure to the project and that a narrative would make my project more impactful and immediately understandable. Because of these crossroads, the initial epiphany and excitement I felt with my animated self skateboarding through multiples scenes began to lose its direction through forcefully added elements. Overall, despite finishing over half of my animated film, I

was unhappy with it. The structural deadlines and requirements of the thesis made me feel as though I needed a plan; a script, storyboard, and narrative for this project when it likely never needed one. By the end of the semester, this film no longer felt like my own project and the execution was flawed. These issues became truly apparent to me near the end of winter break when the film was almost completed. But in between the process of making this film, I found myself instinctively diverting from it completely and creating something else entirely.

By November, my frustration and creative block with the animated project began to peak. The lack of direction in that project began to make me lose interest in it entirely, yet I felt it was too late to start something completely new. Nonetheless, I instinctively became drawn back to the process I was always so compelled by the most. While I was searching for footage I have recorded over the past year to use for more photo animations, I began to re-discover shots and brief moments in my year that I would have otherwise ignored. I instinctively decided to montage these into one composition mainly as a way to make it easier for me to refer back to the shots later on. But this very quickly called me back to the process of filmmaking I had known so well and have always loved. Within a few hours, I found a song to play underneath the footage and then began to collage these moments into an entire video. By the end of the weekend, I had finished an entire project that felt like it superseded the animated film I had spent so much time on. This film titled *Moments In Between* is a two-minute non-narrative self-portrait of moments montaged together from throughout my year. *Moments in Between* came together quickly and intuitively and accomplished everything I was attempting to say in my animated project. Isolated figures, deep contrast and shallow depth of field, and empty spaces form the majority of this project. They evoke a sense of quiet calm, but also an

underlying uncertainty and anxiety to everything. No moment is ever really resolved. These feelings are what I have been grappling with this past year and what my animated film was originally supposed to evoke. The film completely changed from nearly all of the animation research and work I had been making but does stay in line with my research on alternative cinema, specifically in the diaristic film work of Jonas Mekas. On a technical level, each frame when paused could also exist as a still photograph. Stylistically, most of these shots lack movement within the frame beyond a handheld shake. Change and movement happen within the frame of the static composition. The stillness of each shot creates a photographic feeling. And the non-narrative structure montaged together evokes a feeling more like flipping through the pages of a photography book. So while this complete diversion in projects initially felt antithetical to what I was supposed to be doing in relation to my research, I realized there were many connections to be made, while also informing the overarching themes of this thesis as a whole. In this case, I saw through an entire project, only for something entirely different to come from it. This sort of constant change is frustrating at times and impossible to plan out with a schedule but also allows me to create things closest to how I truly want them to be. The moment this film began to come together felt liberating. Had I not let myself detach from one thing and embrace something new, this would have never come about. This was my first realization from this thesis about the importance of embracing constant change in personal growth as well as in the creative process, and the necessity to let that change happen when it needs to.

Before the second semester, I started to feel unfulfilled with solely *Moments In Between* as my submission. Despite the footage in that film feeling substantial, spanning over a year's

worth of shooting, I wanted to continue to explore my questions and complete my experiments in other mediums with another piece, and this once again began as an animation project. It initially made sense once again; much of my original research was of course focused on rotoscope animation and the implementation of photo animation still related closely with the questions I wanted to explore. Initially, I also progressed further than my previous project as I brought what I truly liked about the first project into this one while expunging what I knew did not work. This version brought the same silhouetted character from the previous project into a new context. This time it simplifies everything to a visualization of a train using super 8 stills aligned horizontally; essentially how you would see an unraveled roll of super 8. In this short, the animated character now walks into this 'train' and experiences my memories as a passenger on this train as the windows become the super 8 footage passing by. The ideas presented here felt more complete than the previous animated project and my visual style and techniques also matured. They connected better to all my research about animation I had been conducting in the previous semester. It made sense. But despite this improvement, I still felt unsatisfied with what I was creating. Although this iteration was better I was beginning to make my first mistakes again and attempting to inject grandiose themes and meaning into this project believe I wanted something to feel substantial to the requirements of the thesis program. In essence, the video once again felt like a forced creation made more out of academic necessity rather than a project of my own. By this point, I realized I was making the identical mistake I had with the previous animated film. Once again, I had to change.

The culminating project would finally manifest into a photo book titled *How Things Change*. I decided to finally change direction once again and create something which would

encapsulate everything I had been working on in a more honest way. I fully realized by now that the only constant in this entire process up until this point had been change. With this in mind, along with the suggestion of my advisor, I decided to shift to a photo book that can observe exactly that. This could be a way to integrate everything I had worked on up until this point in my thesis. Still frames seconds apart were pulled from *Moments In Between* and then aligned onto adjacent pages. I split my animated silhouette character into individual frames and placed each frame onto a still from that original project. There are shots taken half a decade ago and a month ago in this book. Motion and change are implied on nearly every page. A figure in one frame can disappear six frames later. All of the photographs in this book originally existed as videos. The visual identity in the book was employed in a collaged zine-like aesthetic to bring together all of these different ideas into a single object. Everything finally began to make sense here. I was finally working on this project in an honest way once again.

This process of working in a new medium was difficult to adapt to; specifically in pacing. Unlike a film that decides for a spectator how to pace the video over time, a physical object exists in space but without control of time, or how the spectator sees each page. In the beginning, the book lacked a rhythm to it which made it feel fractured and difficult to follow. To grapple with this in my own way, I attempted to edit the layout of my book like I would edit my short films, or at least translate as much of that process as I could into physical forms. Despite the change in form, I believe re-integrating my usual process helped center my process and allow the ideas in my book to feel more structured. I decided to use music as an underlying framework. I listened to music whose own pacing, mood, and rhythm could help me visualize how each page fits into the structure of the book, like a video. This process helped me engage

with the photobook in a more comfortable way, listening to music on repeat while re-structuring the book's pages. It felt like a natural synthesis of my process of montaging into this new medium. This finally led me to my first important understanding of process: even if form changes completely, it is important to stay true to this individualistic artistic process and not allow external pressures to bleed into it. It is difficult, but ultimately if the work becomes a watered-down version of itself, then it will never feel satisfactory. I learned this twice through the course of my thesis because it can be difficult to identify whether something is truly honest or whether it is simply checking off imaginary boxes. I still grapple with this question whenever I work on a new project. But this also leads to the main realization and overarching theme that this thesis has revealed over the year.

In a way, this book and film feel like two perpetually unfinished objects. They tell an unfinished narrative about life in constant flux; nothing is ever stagnant even if the pages in a book are printed. A moment is never finished. In between twenty-four frames of a video, everything can change. If I was given another semester to work on this I am confident that my process would lead me again in some entirely different direction. But I have also gained newfound confidence in learning to embrace this aspect of my creative process. Instead of constantly attempting to resist truth and honesty in my self-expression, I see this film and book as a display of what I can make if I continue to allow change to happen. This similarly applies to the themes of personal change that exist in this work as both projects grapple with my anxiety stemming from the increasing amount of uncertainty in my life. Similarly, they are a result of myself pivoting from something else I have spent countless hours working on. But they also feel like vastly improved and more honest versions of the work I had scrapped. There is always a

reactionary part within me to resist change because it can be terrifying to abandon something I have held on to for a long time even if you know it is falling apart. But this thesis to me became a representation of the liberation that comes from it. It is a visualization of how things can change over the course of a year or even just twenty-four frames in a second. And it is finally a call to always pay attention to—and finally embrace—change when it is meant to happen.



### **Literature Review**

The following literature review consists of the preliminary research I have conducted during my first semester working on this thesis. Much of this research provided guidance and context for this project throughout its many changes.

By researching different forms of filmmaking including animation, music video, and non-narrative cinema, I explore the different shapes that a film can take beyond a traditional narrative, and finally investigate the various processes individual artists in the respective disciplines engage in. This research for my written thesis will aim to reflect my visual project which aims to draw from these ideas with a personal non-narrative experimental short film project.

#### **Non-Narrative film and Alternative Cinema**

Non-narrative filmmaking has existed in different forms but in the 1960s, Jonas Mekas led a burgeoning revolution in the genre through his multitude of feature-length impressionistic diary films that helped define alternative cinema into what it is today. In *To Free The Cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground*, a series of authors delve into what made Mekas' work so important. These writers recall their first-hand accounts of Mekas', analyze his work, and examine how Mekas' work relates to their personal processes. In the 11th chapter, "Film Diary/Diary Film: Practice and Product" in Walden David E. James details how Mekas proposed a

“utopian cinema” (146) that is free from the capitalist use of film as a highly commodified medium. He notes how there has always been a tension between art and commerce in film especially because of its novelty and dependence on advanced technology. Because of the capitalist use of film, “Autonomous art in this medium has been difficult enough” (146). Mekas always believed in a form of film as a medium that can exist outside of commodification and how there is a form that exists and can proliferate outside of traditional structural rules of a “commercial feature” (146) that we see as the most prevalent interpretation of what a “film” is today. Mekas’ diary films such as *Walden* were simple in construct - they were essentially chronologically edited moments in time with music, poetry, and voice overlaid strategically throughout. There was no overarching narrative or commitment to follow the traditional structure of a film that someone would typically come to expect. These films were never even supposed to be viewed publicly. They were films in the purest sense, made without any intent to commodify or sell something. His diaristic filmmaking style, where the focus would turn inwards onto the creator, rippled even outside of the world of film.

This chapter helps me to create a sense of understanding in terms of learning how filmmaking can function outside of what we traditionally perceive a movie as a commercialized object to be. I have rarely worked on or created narrative films in the traditional commercial sense. Despite this fact, I truly had little knowledge going into my film project and my research about alternative and non-narrative forms of cinema. Because of this, it has been difficult for me to create a mental “place” where a film like the one I am making could fit into. Because of this, I believe Jonas Mekas’ work and influence through his diary films have been an essential place for me to do my research. A lot of my process has centered around this diaristic approach

to creating a film object and it will be crucial for me to understand the contexts and histories of this form of filmmaking, especially through Jonas Mekas' work throughout the past several decades in proliferating the genre of alternative filmmaking.

In Chapter 7 of the same book entitled *How I Think I Made Some of My Films* by Ruby Burckhardt, she details her process in creating alternative films of her own. Her act of filming was the same as how she engaged with photography - filming what she saw in the streets of New York. Only instead of an exhibition or a book, these clips would be edited together in a film that would also be intercut with still photography. Her use of stills interests her. "A still in a film is different from a photo, since it exists in time. It can appear for a fraction of a second, just long enough for the image to register, or it can linger for a while" (Burckhardt 98). This observation is inherently interesting in what I am attempting to investigate through form in my project. Film has the inherent ability to manipulate time by stopping it entirely, so what happens when you insert still photographs into a film and how does the duration an image is perceived affect the way we experience them? Another interesting point she makes is the uncertainty and unease behind seeing a still frame in a video. It feels unnatural, and while you can trust that a print will never change, a still inserted into a film can easily do just that through various techniques of manipulation. She doesn't seek to answer these questions, instead she simply just "likes stills" (Burckhardt 98). But these small observations gave me some questions of my own about how the forms of creation I take, such as photo-animation, rotoscoped animation, super 8 footage, affect the way the film is perceived. What effects do these techniques and aesthetic choices have on a viewer that may make them react in a certain way?

A film that has continuously lingered in the back of my mind is *24 Frames* by Abbas Kiarostami. Godfrey Chesire speaks about this film in a retrospective of Kiarostami's work *In The City of Abbas*. He summarizes the film and what characterizes it - 24 unrelated frames displayed for about four minutes each throughout a feature film's length of runtime. Although this was a "side project" for Kiarostami, it came about over his "wanting to escape the tyranny of story" (Chesire 55). Kiarostami aspired to create an object presented as a traditional feature film in length but to reject the overarching story that is expected of a traditional commercial feature film. He also thought of the traditional crews and requirements associated with commercial feature filmmaking as a hindrance on the film as a form of creative expression - this was a project meant to expel as much of that as possible yet still reach a truthful statement through an hour and a half long film (Chesire 56). Chesire also makes an interesting observation about how Kiarostami's past in alternative forms of filmmaking via techniques such as animation and illustration has also informed his experimentation through CGI and animation techniques in this film. This departure from narrative is quite jarring from what his most notable work would have said about him in terms of form, although upon reading further about Kiarostami in a review of the film by Aaron Cutler, he has been creating these types of films for a long time such as in "Roads of Kiarostami" in 2005 which similarly manipulates photographs in video form (Cutler 56).

I found it intriguing learning how Kiarostami has always felt tension, and almost a repulsion from commercial feature films in terms of narrative, film crews, and sets. It's a similar tension that Mekas seems to have grappled with how, for a long time, he was interested in making narrative feature films about "other men's lives" but because he could not to do

something of that scale at that time he found his form in the “diary film”. There always seems to be this tension because there is that feeling of expectation for film and story to be inseparable from each other. It is also interesting to see what arises when they reject narrative but still create their films under the time lengths of a commercial film. Kiarostami’s decision in doing so felt intentional in that each vignette was meant to last 4 and a half minutes which would culminate in what would likely have been an even longer film had he been alive. Overall, the research on some notable examples of non-narrative and experimental filmmaking from decades ago and recently has helped change the way I originally viewed film through a commercialized feature-length narrative-focused medium. Although it might seem like an obvious observation, it is clear to me that story isn’t what necessarily binds a film together, and a film devoid of a story can still very much be a film.

### **Music Videos & The Importance of Music in Film**

Ever since sound has been incorporated into films, music has always acted as an integral part of film as an overall art form. It can also be an important tool in conveying emotions and ideas that are spoken in a narrative piece, and music can also provide a structural framework for the editing, pacing, and cuts of a film to follow.

Music is especially important concerning my thesis project and the work I do as a whole. Oftentimes it acts as a sonic framework for me to put pieces together. The song also informs the mood and tone I set to achieve and the pacing of the film as a whole. In many ways, the work I make is closely related to music videos. The music video as an art form in film is fairly new but

many of the filmmakers whose work I have been inspired by—such as Spike Jonze or Hiro Murai—have had prolific careers in the music video world first.

In the research paper *We Used To Wait: Music Videos and Creative Literacy* by Rebecca Kinskey, she investigates the changing world of music videos from a commercial product to an established art form and also observes the filmography of Hiro Murai's directorial work in music videos.

Although music videos began as a purely commercial construct, meant to serve solely as artist visual promo, there was a clear artistic shift from the 1990s to the 2000s which symbolized a change in music videos from a focus on the musician, to a focus on the directors. Filmmakers such as Spike Jonze and Michel Gondry transformed the space into a place to experiment and make bold artistic statements with most control going to the filmmakers (Kinskey 13). The form evolved into one of the few places where short-form experiments by young artists could be funded with substantial budgets and a surprising amount of creative control.

As television stopped airing music videos, and they began to exist mainly on the internet, budgets would also go down drastically. But these new characteristics of the budget lo-fi music video became the bedrock for director Hiro Murai to find his first niche in.

Murai's upbringing was one of "informality". Kinskey notes how his early high school classes were unstructured and more focused on allowing "learners to experience process" (Kinskey 44). For Murai growing up, he needed to develop a sense of passion mainly for the process and for constant experimentation while avoiding strict guidelines or rigid boundaries toward how to go about the process. This unrestricted upbringing would clash at USC film

school where he would find difficulty molding himself into a traditional studio-style commercialized filmmaker that they expected of their students. Eventually, his learned skills in video effects would help him find a start and massive success in the more unstructured and experimental world of music videos.

The short-form structure of a music video and lower budgets, although limiting, also help push an artist to find creative ways of expressing emotive ideas and concepts that reflect those 3-4 minute songs. It is one of the few commercial forms where this kind of experimentation and creativity is essentially a requirement to succeed, as there is a set amount of time typically under 5 minutes for you to express what you need to.

This reading is valuable in helping show how music videos as a form - and the limitations that come with them - can cultivate creativity and experimentation during the process of creation.

I wouldn't define my thesis project as a music video, but because of this research, I've come to understand how my process is shared with the way a modern-day low-budget music video is constructed. As I workshop my video, I see how much a song can change the entire tonality and feel of the video, despite the visuals staying identical. I also notice how the song always serves as a framework for me to build my video on. With my thesis project, nothing is fully written except for a concept, so I also notice how there are many more opportunities for experimentation and trial and error. Just like a music video by Hiro Murai, the thesis video I am making lacks rigid narrative boundaries, or even a real script, which allows for a wider opportunity to try new ideas. It is also structurally limited by the length and pace of the song but simultaneously made cohesive by the song too.

*Music/Video: Histories, aesthetics, media* edited by Gina Arnold solidifies these concepts laid out in *We Used To Wait*. She details how music videos were only really used as a promotional tool in the beginning, and were often regarded as low-brow content with a disposable nature to them. Despite this, “the lines were more fluid...An experimental filmmaker like Derek Jarman, who was an early experimenter with video, found himself directing videos for groups like The Smiths” (Arnold 9). She defines the legacy of music videos as “existing on two poles: on one hand as the visual sheen of late capitalism..and on the other hand, as art, looking to a prehistory of avant-garde filmmaking” (Arnold 10). The latter legacy is what intrigues me the most about the role of the music video as an art form. The music video feels like a natural playground for an experimental filmmaker to exist in, but it's undeniable that its ultimate function is to package, promote and sell something else. The commodification of the artwork in many ways feels like the antithesis to the “utopian cinema” that Jonas Mekas dreamed of.

Ultimately, these texts help me understand better how music can provide a framework for a non-narrative film to exist on top of. Also, it has been helpful to understand how there exists a tension between the music video as purely a commodified promotional piece and a grounds for experimental filmmakers. This struggle between creating a film meant to be packaged as a commodity to be consumed to an audience's expectations, and creating a film meant to exist out of a pure form of creative self-expression devoid of commercialization seems to be a throughline throughout all of these filmmakers and forms - and it's also something I constantly take into account as I picture the audience I am creating my thesis project for.



## Animation

Animation is an integral aspect of my film aesthetically, thus research into the history of the form and the different animation techniques that exist has been crucial to me to gain insight into what it means to animate something and how that affects the way the audience responds to the film.

*Animation in Process* by Andrew Selby is an anthology book split into multiple categories of different animation styles and interviews with animators who have created within these styles. The book functions as a series of these vignettes of the animators behind these different varying styles of animating, and what these artists' processes are in making their films. What is most helpful in this book is how it delves into the *process* of making something. Many of these artists, no matter what form they work in, all experience the same “valuable lessons in the pitfalls and difficulties” (Selby 9) in not just animation but the creative process as a whole. The creative process is a major focus in the research of my project, so this book provides a breadth of primary accounts about different artists' processes. Over 20 artists who work in cel, drawn, computer-generated, stop motion, CGI, and experimental forms are interviewed in this book. The interview with Mischa Kamp on her short film *Bloot (Naked)* uses a similar process I am using for my character: Rotoscoping. She notes how she was inspired by the technique used in *Waking Life* and it was chosen because “the original digital footage could be easily appropriated as the basis for creating the work...The process allowed for a separate visual identity, which would not only tie the series together as a set, but also importantly preserve the privacy and the dignity of the film's participants” (Selby 35). This is an important detail about what rotoscoping can do as a technique. Although it is essentially creating an illustrated, traced

version of a live-action scene, it acts as a layer of concealment that transforms and separates the people from that scene into something more abstract. It can also create a layer of surreality that doesn't exist in the live-action frame where a face becomes less familiar or more abstract than it originally was. It is helpful seeing the creative thought process behind why these choices are made and how they affect the film, especially since I also use rotoscoping as a technique throughout my project. *When Darwin Sleeps* by Paul Bush is another film whose process interested me, as his process was organic. The film is essentially a collage of "more than 3,000 insects appear[ing]..each for a single frame...it is as if the genetic program of millions of years is taking place in a few minutes" (Selby 52). The idea came about naturally while he was teaching at a film school and tried one of his assignments himself. It was a year-long project he worked on while traveling. This process "enabled Paul to think about how the material could be edited" (Selby 53). To him, the process was fluid with no expectations or guidelines for himself, much like how Hiro Murai experienced his first film classes. Animation often takes long stretches of time to make, and for him, creating always leads to "other ideas coming out of the process" (Selby 53) on train rides or in airports.

Overall, This book helps inform about all the different styles of animation, and also what drives these dozens of filmmakers to choose and explore specific styles over others as a part of their creative process. A lot of the process of filmmaking is about choosing one thing over another. So learning, for example, what drives an artist to choose rotoscoping as a technique over live-action is an important part of the process of filmmaking I am learning more about.

*Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art* by Robert Russett and Cecile Starr is an anthology book focusing primarily on experimental animators who pioneered the form through

innovative and unique practices. This book was published in 1972, so the majority of animators written about in this anthology use cell and drawn techniques rather than computer generated and CGI methods. It covers artists over a chronological time and focuses more on those “whose styles have a fine arts lineage and are removed from generally accepted entertainment and communications uses of animation” (Russett and Starr 7). At the time of this book’s research, animation, in general, was still a burgeoning world and experimental animators were an even smaller niche in the space.

Among the most interesting animators featured in this book include Lotte Reiniger who was a German filmmaker most known for her silhouette films. Each silhouette is “cut to the size of the animation table” and possesses “that unmistakable quality that comes from the subtle and incisive cutting of a pair of scissors (Russett and Starr 7). What is interesting is how she discovered this style of animation - using only silhouette cutouts as a technique to tell a story. She notes how she “I never had the feeling that my silhouette cutting was an idea...it so happened that I could always do it quite easily” (81). It feels like a common theme in the process of experimentation where the artist draws from something they have naturally been doing previously. Although her cutting out silhouettes for cards as a child may have never come with an intention of going anywhere artistically, she would inevitably draw from those skills and translate it into animated form, creating something completely innovative and new. It is a useful example of how the process of artistic experimentation works for people, often coming out naturally by drawing from old childhood habits.

Jerome Hill is another animator whose work may be valuable to my research. His work combines “live-action cinematography with hand-painted color and animated effects” (Russett

and Starr 147). His mixed media approach is a product of his past as a drawing and painting student at the art academy and his love for the diaristic filmography and experimentation of Jonas Mekas. The process is demanding since he paints over each individual negative with an illustration. It takes over 3 months to create a couple of minutes worth of animation, but the result is an intriguing mix of live-action footage combined with hand-animated effects and coloring. Although today, this can be done easier through digital methods, this merging of live-action and animation was innovative in its own right as they both bring together characteristics of their respective forms. The realism of live-action in a scene is combined with animation of canaries where the “impossibility of reproducing identical brush strokes on successive frames results in the tremblings and flutterings that seem so natural to canaries” (148).

Overall, animation is a key medium in these early stages of my thesis so researching the histories and techniques behind the form was crucial for me to gain a better understanding of it as a whole.

### **Meaning of Home**

Home is a central focus in the film I am making where throughout its duration it includes footage of my own upbringing and ponders how my parents perceive home as they have immigrated to the United States from Japan before I was born.

The research article *Israeli and Japanese Immigrants to Canada: Home, Belonging, and the Territorialization of Identity* written by Ilan N. Magat is an anthropological study that explores the meaning of home through Israeli and Japanese immigrants, but feels applicable to

anybody who seeks to understand the meaning of home. "Creating home" is a question that affects immigrants more deeply and uniquely, as they have to do so as adults, often in completely unfamiliar places. "There is the Little Home-the base for daily activities, and the Big Home-where one belongs, the place of ultimate return. Home is not just where one wants to live; it can also be the place where one wishes to die and be buried" (Magat 120). Magat writes how home functions as a "Center" (Magat 120) where their identity is shaped and always there. The article consists of a series of interviews with Israeli and Japanese immigrants, asking them whether they felt at home or not, and what they equate the idea of home to be. A Japanese interviewee Mr.Tesshi, said "I think home is here. Home is a base for our daily life and I think it is here. If you ask me if culturally I am a Canadian or a Japanese, I am definitely a Japanese. It is something I cannot shake off" (Magat 130). The study revealed that to the Japanese participants, home meant was not tied to a larger meaning of national identity, but to his family and his work. "For Mr.Tesshi, Home is where he lives in the present" (Magat 131). Although the article seeks to compare and contrast how different cultures respond to immigration, what interested me the most were individual accounts such as his, where he reveals what shapes his idea of home for immigrants. By the end of the article, the author concludes that an immigrant may be able to make home in their new country, but that "deep sense of belonging" that we seek when thinking of home is still difficult to navigate and achieve likely for any immigrant (Magat 138).

*In Search of Home* by Aviezer Tucker is a philosophical study of what home is through the philosophy of Vaclav Havel. Home, in this article, is described as a "usually a multi-level structure that combines several single-level homes, such as an emotional home, a geographical

home, a culture” (Tucker 181). This framework can help us define how we perceive home beyond just as a place or birth or an ethnicity. Within this framework, home is defined by multiple levels in a mental structure, each with varying levels of importance to this idea of home. The article argues an important argument about how this idea of home as being tied to ethnicity can be damaging as Tucker states “The assumptions that the land of our birth is for some reason our home, or that our home is determined by our ethnicity, that there is an inevitable and involuntary connection between geography, ethnicity and what we are and where we can be fulfilled, are based at best on a misunderstanding of language, and at worst, on deliberate misuse of it for justification of morally questionable political decisions” (Tucker 186). This is an important question to consider, because I don’t want to mischaracterize and push the notion of home as something inextricably tied to a “homeland” or an “origin country” in my own work, especially since that idea has been used to twist “ the meaning of 'home' to be either the land of birth, or fixed residence, or mostly elsewhere than the place some hold to be their collective, actual territorial home” (Tucker 186).

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