5-2022

My Perception of Reality Expressed through the Arts

Amanda Dunker

"My Perception of Reality Expressed through the Arts"

By Amanda Dunker

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

Bert C. Bach Fine & Performing Arts Scholars Program

Honors College

East Tennessee State University

Amanda Dunker   04/15/22

James Livingston, Thesis Mentor   04/14/22

Todd Emma, Reader   04/14/22

Jessica Dunker, Reader   04/12/22

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis project will focus on the symbolism and artistic interpretation of how I perceive reality. This thesis project uses all artistic skills that I have acquired throughout my lifetime and combines them into one mixed digital media video. This is a mix between the two digital media formats 2D and 3D. Each animation and segment syncs with the music selected manually or technically. The process of creation for each segment and explaining which software I choose to use for each task. It also dives a little further, noting the artistic decisions and why. The symbolism used within the art piece is addressed and explained. Anything not discussed is open to personal interpretation and encourages the viewers to think individually further into the topics. The usage of this art style / art form is discussed and researched on where it can be found in usage outside of the music industry. Also, stating the popularity and accreditation this style receives from casually mass viewing. In summary, the art style of surrealism and abstract shapes in addition to the art form of mixed digital media, consumers indulge this art archetype worldwide. It can be useable within music visuals, ambient relaxation, modern art galleries, video games, and progressive advertising. Thus, making this art viable in multiple parts of the economy and creating consistent trends of revenue uprise. With the consistent growth of technology use , complimentary style to electronic music, and viable formatting for social media this art style is predicted to drastically grow in demand within the next coming years.

My Perception of Reality Expressed Through the Digital Arts

This thesis project consists of a video and a written paper. The art style of the video is mixed digital media in surrealist and abstract form. The goal of the project was to symbolically represent how I perceive reality, and turning thought into visual art. The secondary goal was to synchronize motion graphics with a song, in an attempt to fully engage the viewer and their thoughts. The written paper will explain the creation process using technical terms, the decision process, the interpretation of the art, the relevancy of the art style, and profitability of the art form within multiple industries.

Technical Work

To create this project, I combine the skills of 3D modeling and 2D motion graphics, to create a mixed digital media visual. I use a multitude of software to fit each of these specialties. To create the animations, I did a mix between having the program manually synchronize the motion for me or manually animating settings myself to create motion. Every animation will use the glow effect and tint effect. Also, they will have animations relating to their color, opacity, scale, and translation. Outside resources such as stock footage and AI art, were in use for sections of works.

Software Usage

I use the software: Maya, Blender, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe After Effects, Adobe Audition, and Adobe Premiere. May and Blender in use to create the 3D aspects; Adobe Photoshop and Adobe After Effects in use to create the 2D aspects. Finally, Adobe Audition in use to assist in the precision of the clip's audio responses, and Adobe Premiere in use to create the final composition. While varying software can do the same as the other, one is better known

for that specific usage. For example, Maya and Blender both use 3D modeling, but Maya is better for details of modeling / texturing.

Section Creation

The opening and closing text animation use motion animation in Adobe After Effects. The 'Eras' scene uses the website Night Café that generates AI art from scratch. To create the AI art, use descriptive terms on the landscape, vegetation, and life. Add the style of the art, surrealism, and the extra description of detailed painting. Next, re-render the art piece with a differing number variable / addition in reiterations to increase the quality of the artwork. This made the AI become more vibrant, vivid, sharp, and crisp around the edges. Instruct the website to render out the progress images as well, to download them and bring them into premiere. Add a morph transition in between two of the four, two beats per four. Finally, bring the AI image into Adobe Photoshop, update the levels, contrast, and vibrance; also adding on a gaussian blur. Next, take it into After effects, using the new AI image add the liquify effect having it animate its shape and flow. For the 'Triangles of Nature' scene, use stock footage from the website Videezy; this includes the ocean, desert, and mountains. Create a triangle with the video as its texture and adjust the preset of it to create the swirls. Then, place another larger triangle encompassing the video triangle with the texture of a diamond. Render out a 360 rotation for each triangle in .tiff format. Next, bring the renders into Adobe After Effects and place them onto the original stock footage videos. Lower the contrast / brightness of the video, and opacity of the triangle. Then add program effects into each nature scene with its corresponding relevance. Rainfall for the ocean, sunray for the mountains, and create dust using a mask and fractal noise. Duplicate and adjust the secondary triangles to create more of a visual interest. Next, for the 'Temples' scene, model the temples in Maya and render out a 360 rotation (.tiff) for each. Bring the renders into

Adobe After Effects and place them on top of another liquify background. However, this time animate different settings and create more noise to change the look and feel of it. To make it more detailed in color add a masking drawing that would overlay into the original background. This creates a third color and more complexity to the liquify background. Also, duplicate and adjust the contrast / opacity of the extra temples to create a visual appeal. Next, the 'Mandela' scene, this done by using the mirroring effect. Create two circles and duplicate them around until it is a mandala (overlapping circle lines). Use a mask that directly connects to the Mandela, this creates the change in shape in every ring of the mandala. Duplicate the mandala and change the opacity / scale to create a background mandala. Finally, add a tent and glow effect. Next for the 'Meditation Chakra' scene. Use a meditation figure model with a chrome texture, do this through Maya. Create the chakras using photoshop. The background uses the radio wave effect. Animate them to grow with the chakras. All items in this scene use the glow effect and tent.

Next, the "3D Abstract Animation" scene uses Blender. Create a line of squares and duplicate them until it looks infinite through the camera perspective. Then add emission and chrome texture to each of the blocks, along with a bevel. The black is the base color; the white and gray have the program are randomly generate them onto the squares. Next add rotation to peak the eyes interest. Finally, bring the segment of the song into blender to have the movement sync with the beat of the song; do this by having the keyframe for distortion connect to the audio. Next, for the 'Chaos' scene uses radio waves. However, use different settings and animations to create a fresh look than the prior. Duplicate the original layer and adjust the second layer slightly to create variations. Both layers use the glow effect. The motion will animate through an expression script. Finally, the closing scene is another shot of the mediation figure model and a render of pure light. Created three mini sky domes and have each one encompassing the other; it comes

out with a natural light color gradient. Place those two 3D models onto each other and have the

size of the light orb grow and the scene fade out by turning down opacity.

Purpose and Meaning

By using passion and curiosity, I chose the idea for this project. I chose a thesis project

that I knew I would be passionate about. I did this by choosing a topic that uses the variety of my

skill set and depicts my inner thoughts. My two main challenges were self-teaching and creation

of thought. Having little knowledge of motion graphics, to create this project I was relying on

online resources and the feedback of my mentors. To solve the other challenge, I was relying on

symbolism and natural artistic flow for the depiction of my thoughts; I would start with a general

concept / outline and work up until it became a smooth flow that was appealing to the eye.

Choice of Mixed Digital Media Visuals

I was exposed to mixed media my Junior / Sophomore year, by taking the class entitled

Interdisciplinary Arts. In this class, the task was to group up with our other fellow FPA members

to create a project combining all of our art forms. While participating in these art projects, I

gained a deeper respect for other art forms. It made me question the possibilities of combining

the different specialties within digital media (visualization, animations, visual effects, and game

design). Throughout my life I have taken part in a variety of art forms, often referred to as a jack

of all trades by peers. The arts seemed to come naturally to me (musician, actor, writer, drawer,

digital editor). High school is when I officially discovered digital media, starting with 2D digital

art, photography, and film editing. Later, teaching myself 2D animation. Being a person who

values knowledge, coming into college I decided to follow the 3D side of digital media versus

the 2D / filming side of the program. My goal was to gain more information with the guidance of

experts. For my thesis I wanted to do something that would encompass who I am as an artist.

After exploring, I stumbled upon music festival visuals. They use 3D models, combine it with 2D motion graphics, and have animations that synchronize with the beat of the music. They were turning music into visual art. This was the art style that combines the different specialties of digital media, but also my own personal interest in working with music.

Interpretation of Artwork

The 'AI Art' represents the beginning of time. Showing the growth of each era, and displaying the eras prior to present time, this section shows the evolution of Earth. The 'Triangles of Nature' represent 'Mother Nature.' Mother nature being the ultimate controller of life on this planet. Ranging from controlling natural disasters, evolution of species, and requirements for survival. The 'Triangles of Nature' are also supposed to represent the beauty of mother nature. The variety of terrain that mother nature offers, but also hinting the brain to consider the species that adjust to that climate. The ability to adjust to a switch in climate shows the strength that the species on this planet possess. The temples represent the rise of humanity. With the rise of humanity came the rise of religion. Each temple is from a different ethnicity / cultural group. Each religion has the same core concept, 'be good and be kind.' In the religions Judaism and Christianity, however, quoted from the bible text, Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." ("Bible Gateway Passage: Genesis 1:26-27 - New International Version"). It is also a known consensus across religions and basic knowledge that humanity has fallen from the purity of God. The religions' beliefs begin to vary when presenting solutions to the problem; usually involving worshiping a God under a different name. By creating similar levels of detail in the models / backgrounds, but creating differing colors represent the sameness but differences between religions. The mandala represents harmony. Purposely maintaining the animation within

the second mandala to the first, I create a smooth readable motion graphic to represent the flow

of life. Life seeks to achieve harmony, this is shown through the animal kingdom, the change of

seasons, and the cycle of life. Harmony, or coexisting living is the ultimate goal of life and

humanity. The 'Meditation Chakras' represent the energy within us. To achieve worldwide

harmony individuals must achieve harmony within first. Multiple eastern religions, such as

Buddhism and Hinduism, use the concept of energy flowing through the body. Western culture

slightly touches on it too by encouraging physical activity and healthy eating for better energy /

mood. Red is the root chakra (security and safety). Orange is the sacral chakra (creativity and

knowledge). Yellow is your solar plexus (confidence and growth). Green is the heart chakra

(love and compassion). Blue is the throat chakra (clear thought and communication). Purple is

the third eye chakra (visualization and intuition). Pink is the crown chakra (knowing and

enlightenment). Each of these traits encompass a human. When a human's energy is out of

balance, sections can become under-stimulated or overstimulated. For example, if the heart

chakra is under-stimulated in a person, it might result in the solar plexus to become

overstimulated. This would lead to an excess of ego, and a lack of empathy. The '3D Abstract

Animation' represents 'Yin and Yang.' This is the only scene completely black and white. This

is the simplified concept of energy. As explained earlier, when chakras are out of balance it can

result in negativity. When in balance it results in positivity. These two energy types, positive and

negative, are the embodiments of 'Yin and Yang.' You cannot have one without the other. This

ties back to the idea that all life seeks harmony and balance. If we are both "Made in the Image

of God," but also human. Mistakes and negativity are inevitable. Yin our God within us and

Yang our human within us. It is natural to make mistakes, but the goal should be to balance it

with positive movement. The 'Chaos' represents disharmonious harmony. The 'Yin and Yang' in

us is constantly fluctuating, energy itself is fluctuant. Life can be chaotic and confusing, but that is the beauty of it. All things are constantly changing. Although the motion graphics have differing animations, they still flow together eventually resulting in one. This represents the differences between people; however, at the end of all the differences we still have the same aspects. A longing for security / safety, a yearning to learn / create, a necessity for confidence / growth, a need for love / compassion, a desire for clear thought / communication, an allure to visualization / intuition, and an aim for knowing / enlightenment. Those traits are the core of a human. The variety in background, experiences, culture, occupation, goals, and holding values fizzle away when it ends. The goal of humanity should be to create harmony with all the disharmony between ourselves. It will never be perfect since the balance of energy is never perfect; however, if every individual sets the intentions to find harmony within themselves and strive for the balance of the energy they receive / output. The chaos of humanity might start forming something beautiful just as nature does. Finally, the 'Light Orb' represents God, or a source of light. Specifically making the light orb appear from the 'Meditation Person's' chest says that God is within us. This is what makes the unharmonious harmony concept possible. We have the power of the creator within us. We control our own life's and collectively we are God's entirety. Therefore, collectively we can shape the world in the way we desire.

<div align="center">**Applicability of Art Style**</div>

This project uses a specific art style that is meant to engage the viewer into deep thought, or allow the viewer's eyes to focus in on the art. While now commonly recognizable, abstract art is in use quite frequently. Especially with companies whose audiences are younger. While mostly seen within the entertainment industry, it can also be in use with the marketing industry.

Also, because it is still an art piece, one can often see this style displaying through social media posts and videos.

Industries Using Abstract Visuals

This art style could be in use for an artistic direction or a marketing direction. However, when it is in use for marketing it is artistic, resulting in better engagement from the audience. Examples of companies who use mixed digital media in their marketing tactics are Nike, Apple, and '5 gum.' Another way this can be in use is for video game background visuals. For example, "Overcooked II," "Beat Saber," and "Plasma Pong." It can also be in usage for in-person entertainment, such as installation art galleries. A prime example of a gallery involved in this art style is Artechouse. However, the most common usage is within music visuals, whether that be for a concert or a music video. Examples of artists using mixed digital media visuals for their music are Jaden Smith, Kayzo, and Subtronics. In the specific case of Adult Swim, it can also be in use for television. This can include the animations that they produce, or in the ambient audio / animation series they provide.

Social Media Trends

Another place where you will commonly see these visuals are on social media, such as, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Reddit. On YouTube you will often see 4-hour long videos using these visuals with ambient music, and on other sites you will see short clips. With Tik Tok now in the social media scene, it creates a game changer for artists in different fields. One of those being electronic musicians and abstract visual artists. The party and spiritual lifestyles becoming increasingly popular amongst the younger generation creates a large community for abstract artists. There are videos of mixed digital media that reach up to five hundred thousand likes and thousands of other interactions. One prime example is Brian Lowe

whose account name is "@edmvisuals." He also recently announced he is working with a

popular electronic DJ through the popularity he was achieving through TikTok. The whole point

of the entertainment business is to give the audience what they enjoy. TikTok, having millions of

viewers daily, gives a great insight of what the audience wants to see. In recent cases, popularity

gains on TikTok result in success for business. This also applies to other social media, but at the

moment TikTok the most. Finally, the project is digital media which means it can be in a variety

of formats. In a spatial setting for installation art, 2D for backgrounds and advertisements, and

large screens for concerts. It could also be in use for the now commonly used technology, virtual

reality. For example, the mall stores or theater that allow the consumers to ride a roller coaster

using a virtual reality set up.

<center>**Statistics of Art Style Usage**</center>

To clarify this project is both surrealism / abstract art generated through digital media.

Referencing the comments in the previous paragraph, I will be stating the statistics of what

mixed digital media with a surrealist / abstract style achieved. First, the usage of this art style in

marketing. One of the companies mentioned earlier was '5 Gum.' The brand '5 Gum' is in

ownership of Wrigley Company Gum. Wrigley Company Gum owns thirteen assorted brands of

gum. According to The New York Times, "The third largest brand, behind Wrigley's Orbit and

second-place Trident, is Wrigley's '5 Gum,' which was introduced in 2007" (Newman, 2010).

What made '5 Gum' popular was the art style of its commercials. Each commercial had a surreal

theme with abstract art included. By using this art style, the brand '5 Gum' managed to secure

the number three spot for top selling gums within the Wrigley Company. Next, the usage of this

art style within the gaming industry. Using the example "Beat Saber," according to IFN News,

"'Beat Saber' was launched in Early Access on the Steam platform on May 1, 2018. On May 8,

2018, 'Beat Saber' was listed on the Top 10 of Steam Weekly Bestseller List. Currently, it has

sold more than two million units on the Steam platform, with a positive rate of 95%" (*VR game*

Beat Saber surpasses $100 million in accumulative revenue on Oculus Quest single platform).

This game is known for using electronic music with digital concert visuals. Therefore, this

proves that the consumers enjoy the genre of music, and style of visuals. To further emphasize

the popularity of the electronic music genre, according to Low Tone, "The global economic

value of the EDM Industry is currently estimated at $7.9 Billion…'North America is estimated

to represent around 33 percent of the EDM industry'" (Low Tone, 2019). The same source also

states, "EDM club nights generated $965 million in 2018…160,000,000 EDM festival tickets

were sold annually. – 2018" (Low Tone, 2019). This proves that the electronic dance music

genre is worldwide and loved by people. The genre and the abstract visuals that come along with

the music were growing prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and will continue to grow in popularity.

Finally, the usage of the mixed digital media visuals through social media. According to my own

brief research when you type "ambient music with visuals" into the search bar a multitude of

videos will result. Looking at the views per video most will reach the minimum of half a million,

others exceeding / reaching up to three to five million views. Therefore, viewers enjoy the

unrecognizable / organic visuals with ambient music. The next common place to find original

content of mixed digital media visuals is the app TikTok. According to Cambridge University

Press, "TikTok users are primarily teenagers and young adults with 41% of users between 16 and

24 years old; overall, users spend 52 minutes on average per day on the app (Reference Iqbal,

2020)" (Ma & Hu, 2021). The same source also states, "With revenues of about 176.9 million

USD in 2019 (excluding non-iOS Chinese revenue) and 247.6 million all-time revenues, TikTok

has not yet matured in terms of monetization as it still experiments with various models

(BusinessofApps, 2020)" (Ma & Hu, 2021). Therefore, TikTok is a social media app that reaches out to a billion viewers for at least an hour a day, but it is also a company generating a hefty sum of revenue. Thus, being able to fund their popular content creators.

In conclusion, this thesis project was a personal project of mine that I feel completely encompasses all aspects of my artistry. It also gives insight to the viewer of how I perceive this world and humanity. My goal was to have the viewer dive into deeper thought of how humanity functions, and / or be able to focus in on the video. This project is an art piece that I am passionate about, but also an art form that can obtain profit. Noting that this art is well liked / in use worldwide and in multiple industries. This art form and style creates visuals for aspects that are not physical.

References

Bible gateway passage: Genesis 1:26-27 - new international version. Bible Gateway. (n.d.).

Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A26-27&version=NIV.

iNews. (n.d.). *VR game Beat Saber surpasses $100 million in accumulative revenue on Oculus*

Quest single platform. INF.News. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

https://inf.news/en/digital/b1ee3f4d4a10cd06d202e725503a497d.html.

Low Tone. (2019, July 3). *EDM statistics 2019 - Electronic Dance Music Facts, stats & trends*

2017-2018. Low Tone. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

https://www.lowtone.co/articles/edm-statistics/.

Ma, Y., & Hu, Y. (2021, February 25). *Business Model Innovation and experimentation in*

transforming economies: ByteDance and TikTok: Management and organization review.

Cambridge Core. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/management-and-organization-

review/article/business-model-innovation-and-experimentation-in-transforming-

economies-bytedance-and-tiktok/057C8387EC953C14ED10AA8996F53947.

Newman, A. A. (2010, May 10). *Gum ads that seek longer-lasting chewers*. The New York

Times. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/11/business/media/11adco.html.