FMP ELEMENT 1

Research and Development Portfolio

'BABY VAPER'
Abby Turner and Elisha Assaf

Abby Turner – 21019668

Myblog
Padlet Board

CONTENTS

SUMMER WORK

ELISHA'S SUMMER PRESENTATION

For my summer research, I focused on improving my face and creature animation, as my previous work had mainly focused on body mechanics. I primarily worked through online tutorials to improve my animation skills. In my presentation, I concluded I wanted to merge my two themes to explore complicated family dynamics. I was intrigued by Elisha's presentation as she had a real focus on look dev and script writing which I thought would fit nicely with my focus on animation.

VISUAL INSPIRATION

AN ALMOST CHRISTMAS STORY (2024)

PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH (2022)

THE BAD GUYS (2022)

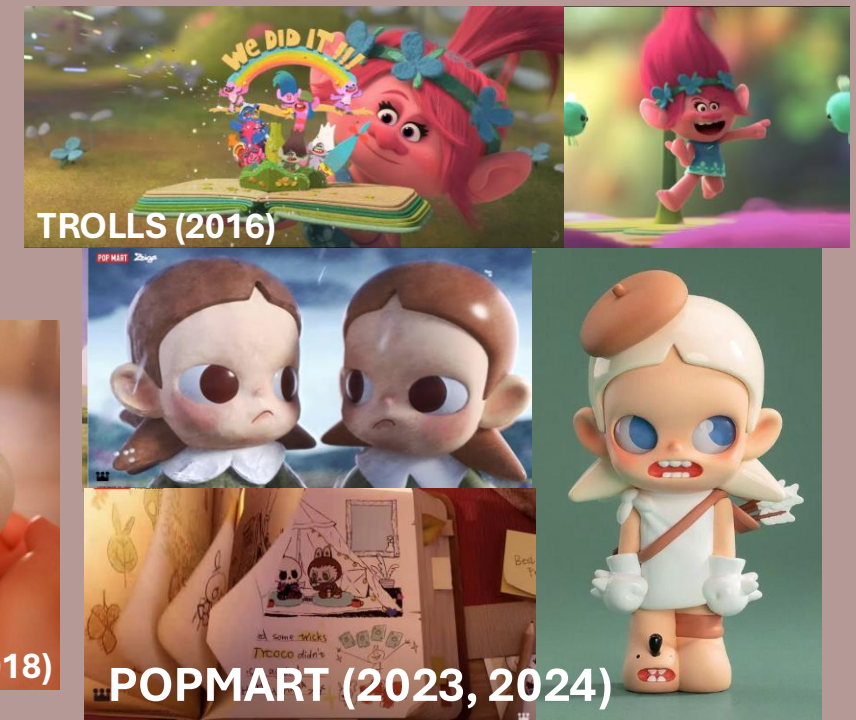**THE MITCHELLS VS. THE MACHINES (2021)**

2D & 3D STYLE

We are both interested in the rising popularity of merging 2D styles with 3D animation. It has been done most successfully in action scenes so in finding this visual inspiration we started brainstorming narratives that would allow this style to excel.

SPRITE FRIGHT (2021)

THE PENUTS MOVIE (2015)

THE WILLOUGHBYS (2020)

DESPICABLE ME (2010)

BAO (2018)
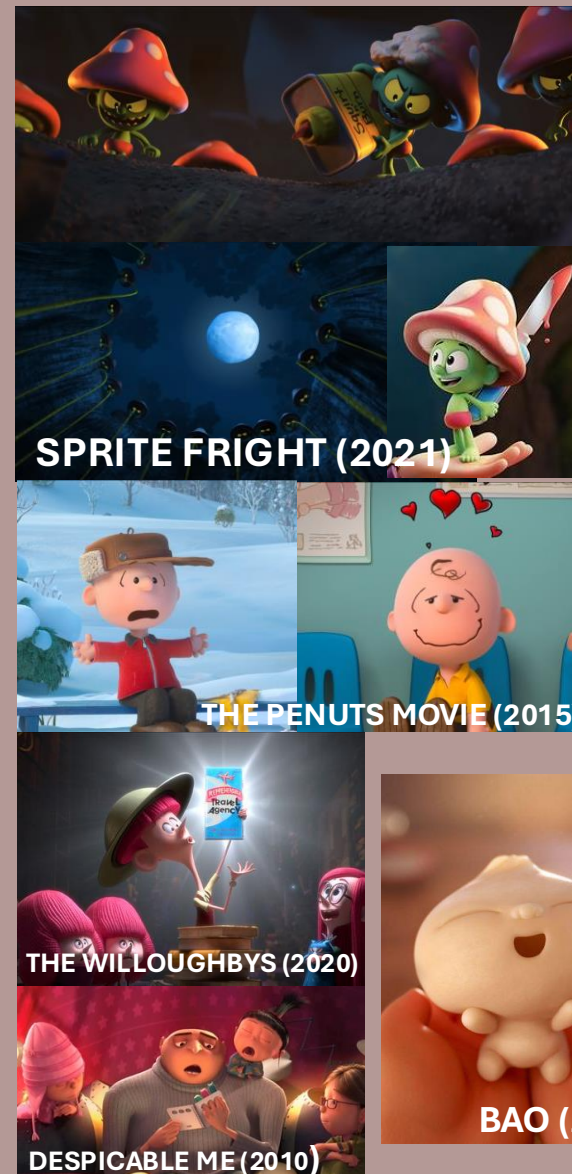
CHARACTER DESIGN

We were both drawn to round character designs. Our main insertion was PopMart dolls, and the adverts made for them. However, through my research, I found other reference points to make our characters unique. I was inspired by the SSS and textures in Boa (2018). Sprite Fright (2021) has a long video explaining their production process that helped me with typography and modeling.

TROLLS (2016)

POPMART (2023, 2024)

NARRATIVE INSPIRATION

COMING-OF-AGE NARRATIVES

GIRLS IN REAL LIFE SITUATIONS (2024)

DERRY GIRLS (2018)

PEN15 (2019)

TURNING RED (2022)

WOMAN OF THE HOUR (2024)

RED ONE (2024)

AMERICAN GANGSTERS (2007)

NATURAL BRN KILLERS (1994)

MY LIFE AS COURGETTE (2016)

THE BONES (2021)

POPEYE THE SAILOR MEETS SINDBAD THE SAILOR (1936)

BAO (2018)

BANG BANG (2019)

NOW YOU SEE ME (2013)

NOW TO HAVE SEX (2023)

MR CROCKET (2024)

AMERICAN BEAUTY (1999)
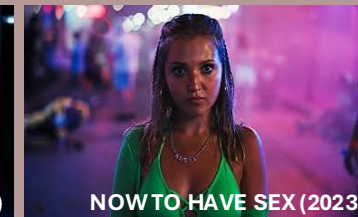
FILM BANK

Film Bank

A collection of notes from films that have inspired me throughout my Final Year

ANIMATED FILMS

My Life As A Courgette

I loved the sound used in this film. It is mainly silent, with a focus on diegetic background sounds and footsteps. The camera angles were exciting as most of the film was shot at a child's eye level. When Courgette is left at the orphanage the policeman has to come down to his eye level to be seen in the camera shot.

At the start of this project, I started focusing on the media I was consuming by making notes on my MyBlog page of films I thought could help our project. I found this approach very successful in giving me wider reference points for our scriptwriting and camera shots. This also made me start watching films with a critical lens and sort after films I wouldn't have normally watched like The Bones. We decided to focus on Coming-of-age films and TV shows as our main inspiration for our script. However, I think we haven't focused enough on English childhoods which could make our narrative lacking in those specific references and language. To combat this, we've started watching more locationally relevant shows like Some Girls (2012), Top Boy (2011), Benidorm (2007), Bad Education (2012), My Mad Fat Diary (2013)...

WORKFLOW

SCHEDULE

JUULES AND MARY MAYA FILES
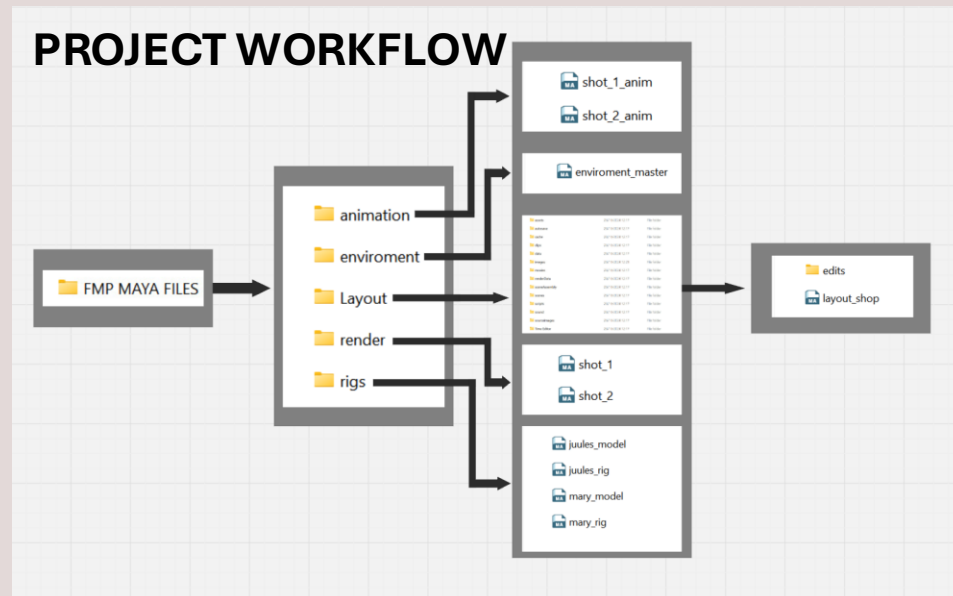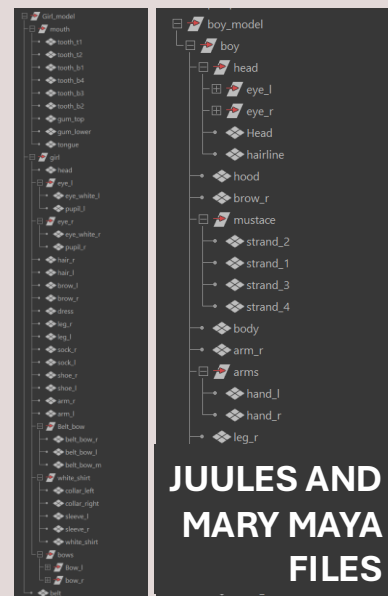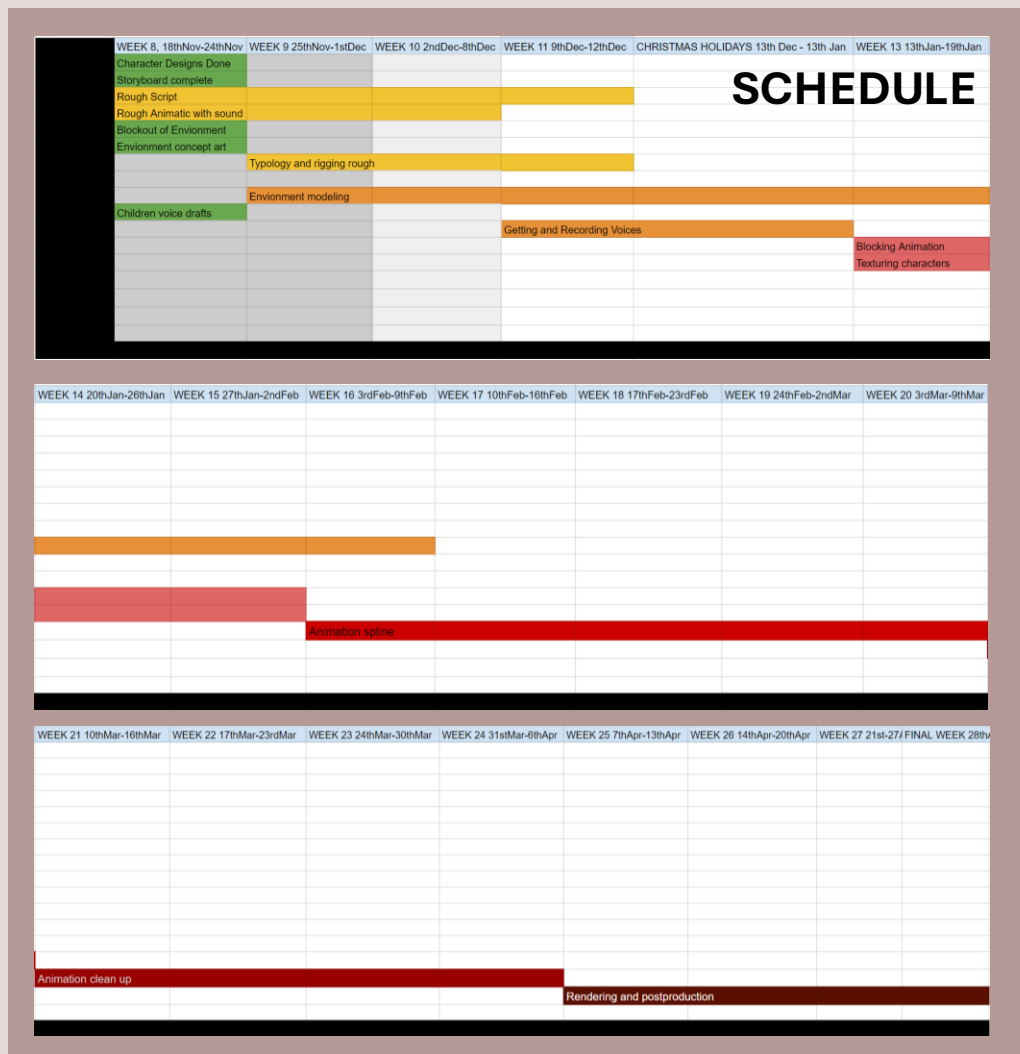
PROJECT WORKFLOW

To have an organized workflow for this project we've already set up our Maya files so we both know exactly where the up-to-date files are kept. This is an improved approach compared to the other projects I've done, as I found not doing this made the rendering stage more complicated than needed. This is especially important when working in a team, especially in deciding to use elements so we can both easily update our scenes. We've also had a focus on correctly naming our objects as we go, however, we could improve this further by grouping objects more to make it clearer for the other person. I also think we should improve our schedule to label whos doing what job and to add a more detailed plan for each stage of production.
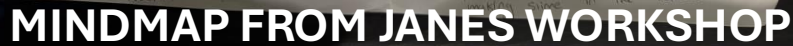
THEMES, SCRIPT, TARGET AUDIENCE

MINDMAP FROM JANES WORKSHOP

Story Summary

Main characters (F/12 and M/12, names maybe Samuel and Jade) spark up the idea to steal something at the mall. They plan out a detailed yet clumsy heist to get past security and successfully nab their desired thing (maybe a gaming console or vape or xbox game or something idk). We see a voice over montage of the heist follow through, with Samuel waiting outside on his teen brothers badly modded (taped on speaker, rough mirror, random stickers, etc) electric scooter and his friend running around sneakily inside the store trying to get out of sight from the security guard. Somehow Jade manages to awkwardly shove the desired object into her giant backpack, after distracting the guard, and sneak her way out of the shop. Jade runs out of the front doors, she had achieved their mission. She jumps onto the back of the scooter, speaker playing comically loud music. Her companion revs the engines, just for the scooter to stay in its place, puffing out a weak cloud of smoke, making some electrically dead noises. After a quick and useless fight about its dead battery, they hear the sliding of the electric doors opening and are quickly silenced by the giant security guard staring down at them telling them off. The two of them look at each other before the scene quickly cuts to the two kids in the security guards office. We watch them get told off by the guard. Jade spots an object on his desk (almost as good as the ps4). Banned from the store they are kicked outside with the doors slamming behind them. They slink outside, low energy and defeated; however she zips open her bag to reveal that, after their failed execution, she managed to steal the security guards fornite plush/figurine.

Second draft

Girl runs out of store, she has achieved the mission (stealing ... item) extremely happy looking for boy on get away vehicle (electric scooter). sees him and jumps on the back shouting "go go go!?!!!?!!"

Their loud music playing from the comically large speaker attached to the electric scooter.

close up of kids hands on handlebars and pressing accelerator. wide profile shot of the kids on the bike, not moving. (music stops abruptly) the scooter sputters and a pathetic puff of smoke spits out of the motor. the girl whips her head down to the back wheel and back up to the friend. they sit in a second of silence before she yells at him

"DID YOU FORGET TO CHARGE THE SCOOTER THIS MORNING?!?!?!"- Girl

He speaks over her "MY BROTHER WAS CHARGING HIS ......!! I THOUGHT IT WOULD LAST!!" - Boy

They hear the slide of the electric doors open and are quickly silenced by the presence of a giant security guard staring them down.

'BABY VAPER' SCRIPT

The main theme of our project is childhood. While exploring this we both were interested in the motive behind kids stealing things. We both remember stealing things for nothing but the ego of taking everything you want and the adrenalin rush. We decided on a vape as it's something the kids couldn't buy even if they wanted to, so it feeds into the *forbidden apple* phenomenon. It's also a relevant topic as kids of their age may never be able to buy one.

The target audience for our film is 18-25, young adults that are old enough get the dark humour of little kids stealing vapes and the nostalgia of their own 'naughty' behaviours in their youth. They're also young enough to get the cultural significance of references like Prime.

LINK TO SCRIPT

STORYBOARD & ANIMATIC

We found a lot of the shots in our first store board to be uninteresting, the most successful shot was the bottom left with the high angles and shadow looming over the characters. In the latest storyboard, I exaggerated this success by adding reaction shots of the characters to the shadow to add to the suspense and fear the characters are feeling. I furthered this uneasy feeling by adding a Dutch angle to the doors opening. We also improved the ending through our workshops with Jane. We both agreed that the store felt like it was dragging out the ending and we wanted to utilise the properties of the vape more. We decided on the characters disappearing into a cloud of smoke which adds some child-like magic to our story. However, I think the start of the storyboard needs some work to paint the vape as an object of desire for Mary and Juules.

LINK TO ANIMATIC

FIRST CHARACTER DESIGN

My first approach to our character design was to just start brainstorming ideas by just drawing my first idea. This wasn't successful as it left my characters with uninteresting silhouettes and basic designs. I realised this when I was doing my character turnarounds. However, making this mistake helped me to focus on planning and creating unique characters.

I also got critiques from peers and Sean to help me realise where I went wrong in my design. The feedback I got was to push my shape language more and focus on contrast between the two characters to create an interesting dynamic.

…AN IMPROVED APPROACH

Monster Mash
Silhouette Design - Form First

Monster Mash
Silhouette Design - Details After

Penny Glum

Front   Back   Right   Left

SLIDES FROM SEAN'S CHARACTER DESIGN PRESENTATION FOR 2ND YEAR

After discussing a better approach to character design, he sent me his presentation on character design which focussed on starting with silhouette. This made the design process a lot faster. I chose the silhouettes that were interesting and fit with our interest in a round visual style. I also decided to have a contrast in the size of the characters, having the girl being taller to subvert gender roles. This also works better for the narrative as Mary acts as the driving force for the action and does the majority of the speaking. I then experimented with three different colour schemes and designs for the silhouette. After asking peers in 2D animation, the consensus was that the middle design was the strongest. They loved how over-developed the short boy was and felt the grey was the most interesting school uniform.

CHARACTER DESIGN

I took further inspiration from the portraits I saw at the National Gallery. I was partially inspired by the odd-looking babies. I loved the large eyes with small noses and mouths. I found out this could be due to the painter wanting people to look and listen more rather than talk. I pushed these proportions in my studies of these artworks to create the exaggerated proportions I want to use in my character design. I was also inspired by the extremely rosy cheeks in some of the paintings.

This is the character design I finalised in 2D. I found I needed to start envisioning the character in a 3D space to push the shapes more. I thought I could push the shape in the girl's character design more and add more details to the clothes.
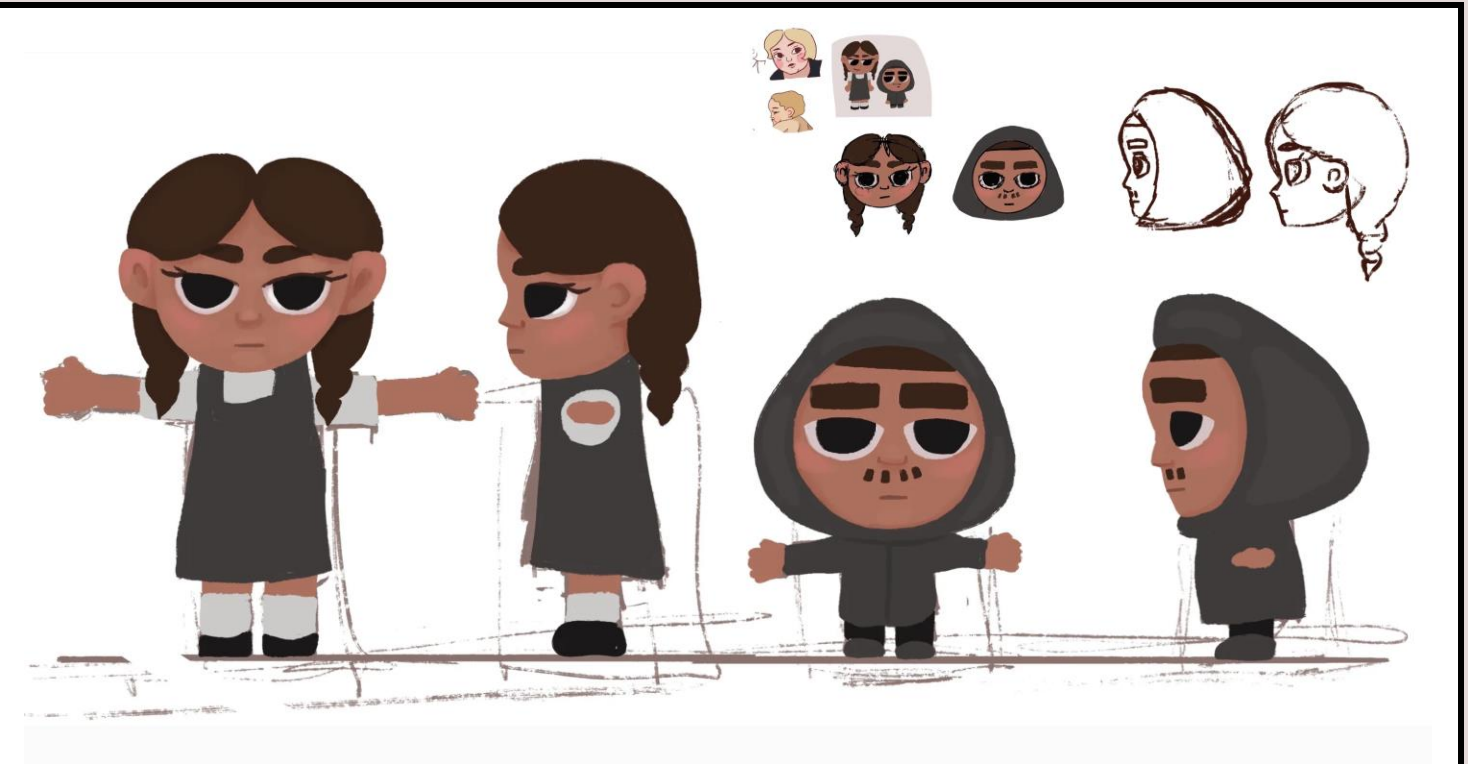
MODELING
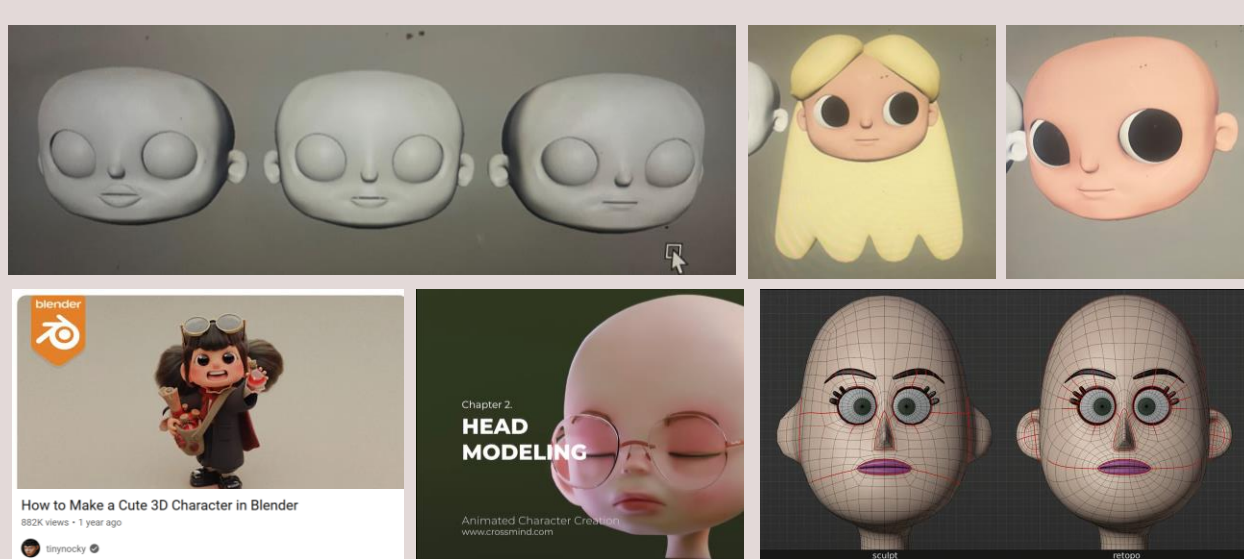
The models above are from my failed first attempts, they came out looking very creepy. However, from this modelling, I learnt that my style of characters looks better without lips and that we wanted a smaller nose to create a cuter look. To improve my modelling approach, I watched a few YouTube tutorials on modelling and typography. I found the tutorials from CrossMind Studios most helpful as they made me focus on modelling from my 2D character design.

I think my next models were more successful as created a good foundation to edit the proportions. I thought the face was too long and I needed to squash the head more to create a more visually appealing character.
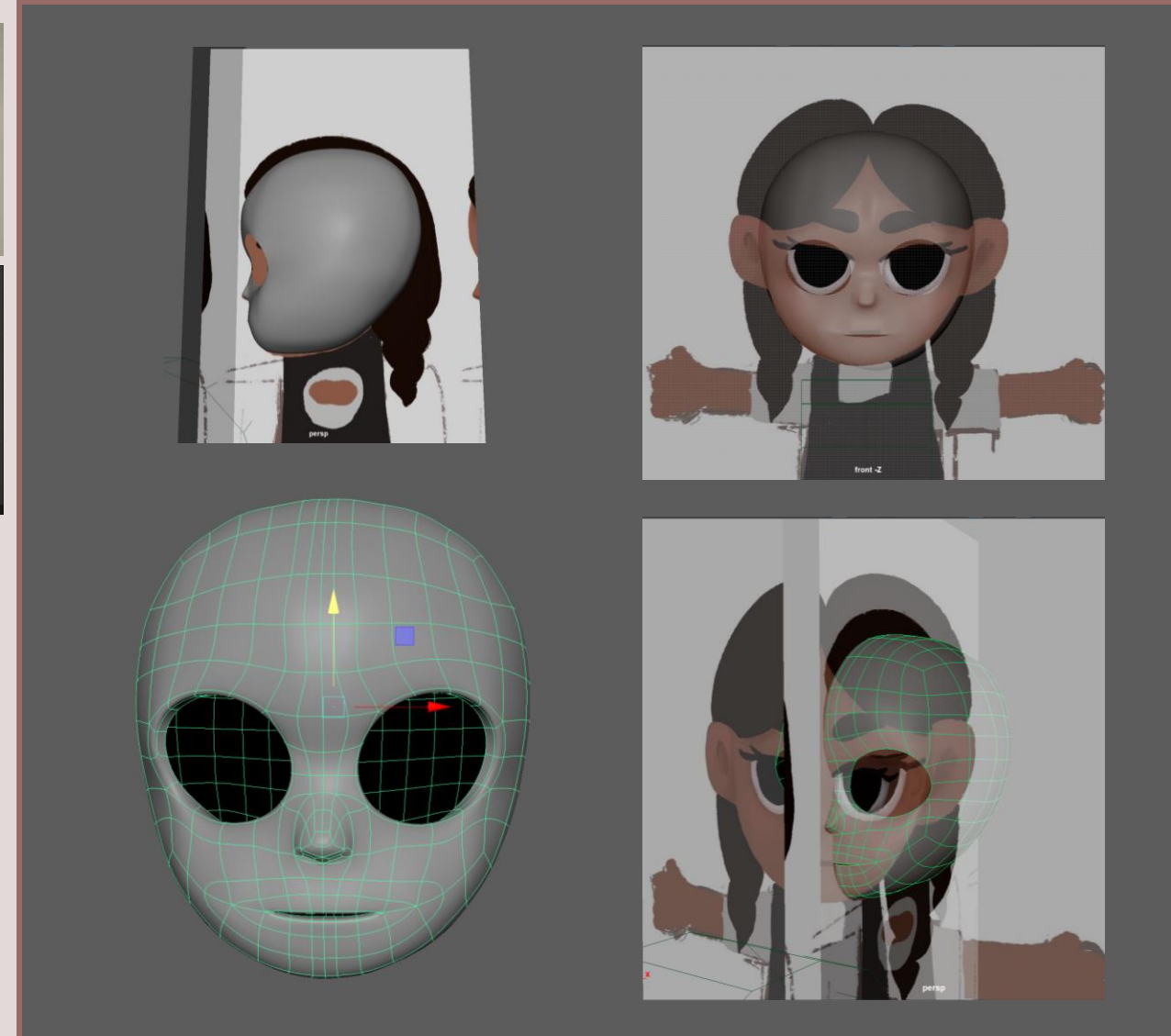
MODELING MARY
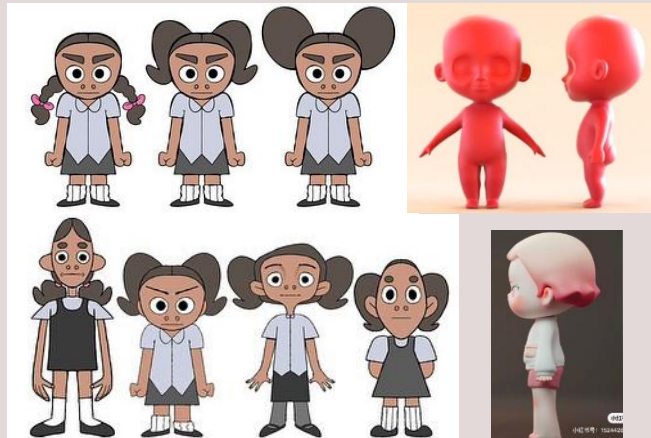
I researched different models to improve the side profile and proportions. We also got character designs from Musa in 2D to get a fresh perspective on Mary

CRITIQUES FROM SEAN:

His main points were that her dress shape was uninteresting and looked like a "weird cowbell." He also thought the facial proportions needed to be fixed. While discussing this, we all thought an interesting way of approaching these changes would be to have her body be round and her head be square which would be the opposite proportions to Juules.

...MODELING MARY
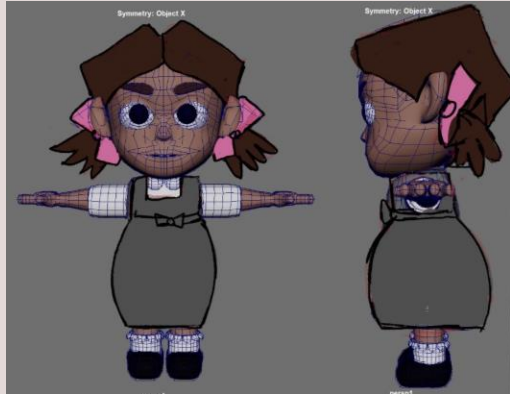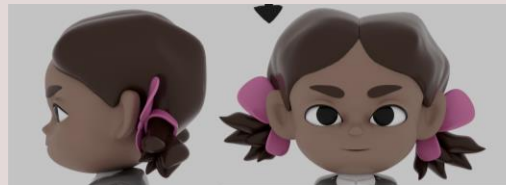
Before editing anything on the model, I took a more considered approach. I consulted peers and Kallista on what qualities they like to see in the model so I could gain a wider appeal. I then drew these portions onto screenshots of the model. This was very successful as it gave me exact references of what the model should look like from multiple angles. I found this process to have a lot of different review stages. After making the main improvements on the face, I showed Mary to some of my friends outside of animation to get an outside perspective. I found this useful as they gave different feedback, like making the hair clumpier. These different perspectives allowed me to achieve my goal of making an appealing model with a 'round and cute' style. I think to improve this model more I could add more accessories and create more asymmetry. It could be interesting to explore different ways to 'mess up' her clothes like kids look at the end of the day.

LINK TO:
MARY
TURNAROUND

MODELING JUULES

CRITIQUES FROM SEAN:

He thought I could push the round shape of the head. We also recognised the facial proportions weren't right and that I needed to experiment with the soft sculpt to find the right balance. The main issues with the model were the lack of eyelids and the undefined side profile.

This is an illustration by Musa in 2D animation which we asked him to do so we could get a new perspective on Juules. We also consulted with other 2D students who suggested we have Juules talk by moving his moustache rather than having a mouth. This would also fix our problem of finding an accurate voice actor for him as now his voice can be muffled.
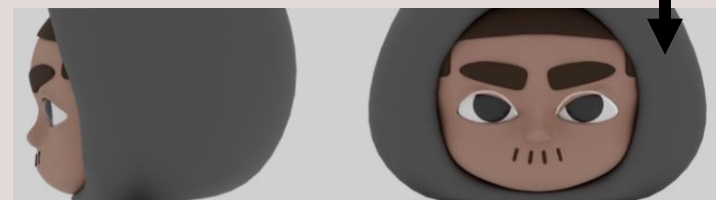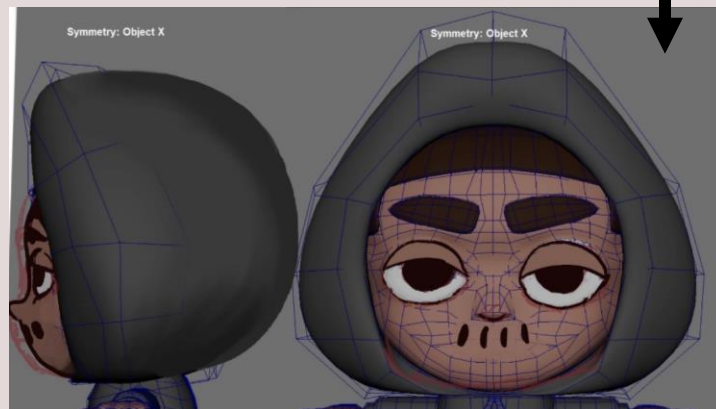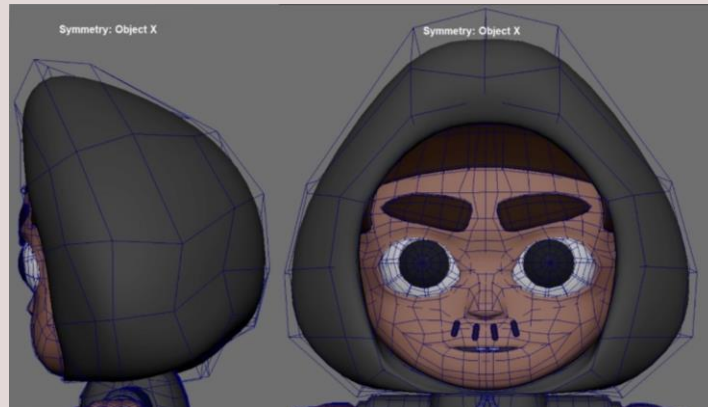
From feedback from peers and tutors, I assessed that Juules needed a lot less change than Mary did. The main weakness of the model was in the face. Due to the success of Mary's model, I took the same approach to this model. I found this had good results and everyone I showed the new model loved it. Sean's main critique was that it would be fun to add a backpack that's too big for him. I thought this would be a really interesting addition to his silhouette and will explore this idea when adding my little accessories to make the more unique.
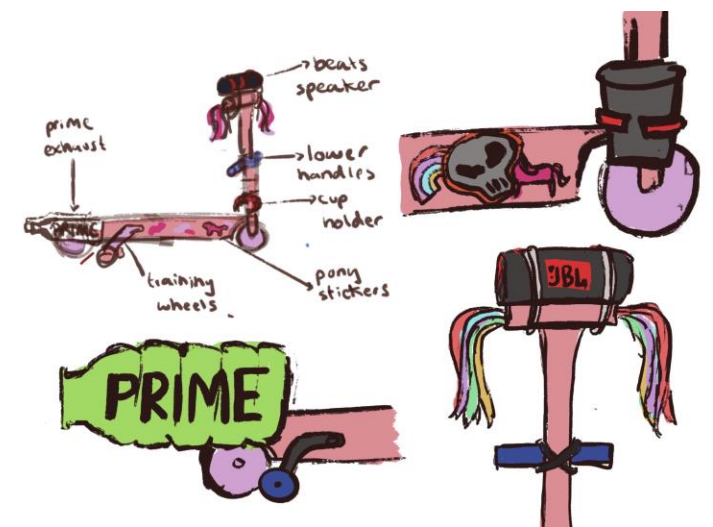
LINK TO:
JUULES TURNAROUND

PROP DESIGN
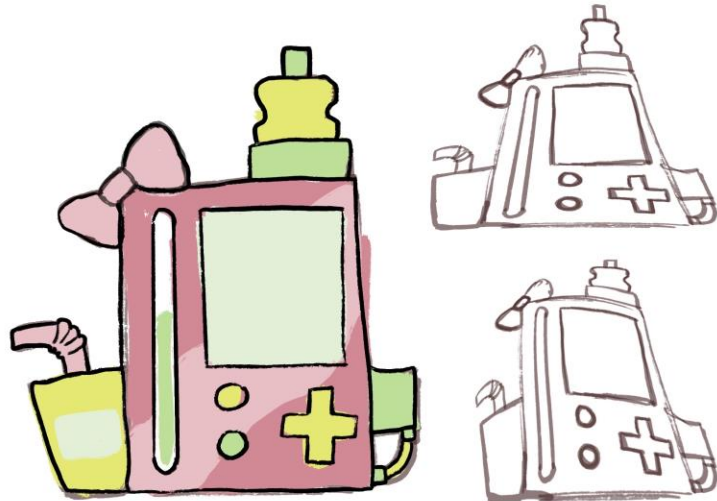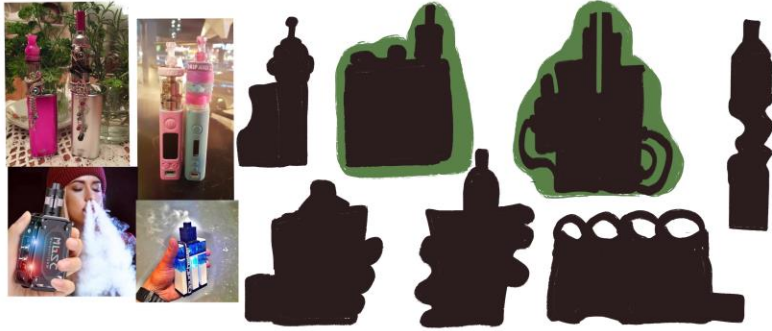
I decided to approach my vape design with silhouettes due to it being successful in my character design. This allowed my design to be more dynamic than it would've been before. I got input from my peers who thought it would be interesting to have the vape look like a kid's toy. This connects the film to the issue of fruity vapes being desirable to kids which would add another layer to the kid's motive for wanting the vape.

For the scooter design, we focussed on the accessories the boy would add to make the scooter his. We thought that this prop was the perfect place to add humour and relevant references. My favourite part of this design is the oversized Prime bottle because of the cultural phenomenon around the object. We were careful in these additions to not add anything we thought would be irrelevant by the time the short film was released.

...PROP DESIGN

LINK TO:
VAPE TURNAROUND

ELSIHAS ILLUSTRATIONS INSPIRED BY HER VAPE(ON THE RIGHT)

When modelling the vape I made sure to copy the initial drawing we both liked. This model is the basic shapes, I need to add more details, and plastic seems like real vapes have. In looking at Elisha's vape, we also realised it will need vents, power on buttons, etc. I think the model is a good base and I need to get some more perspectives like I did on Mary and Juules.
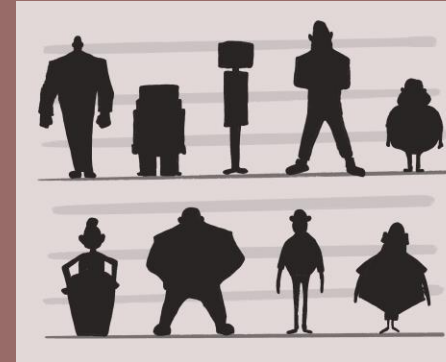
SECURITY GUARD DESIGN

The narrative behind this security guard is that he's the store owner, so I designed him to be less threatening and old. To improve this character, I want to experiment with recreating mixed media in 3D. An Almost Christmas Story first inspired me, but I want to experiment with a felt and clay style, as it could add a more interesting texture.

ENVIROMENT BLOCKING (ELISHA)
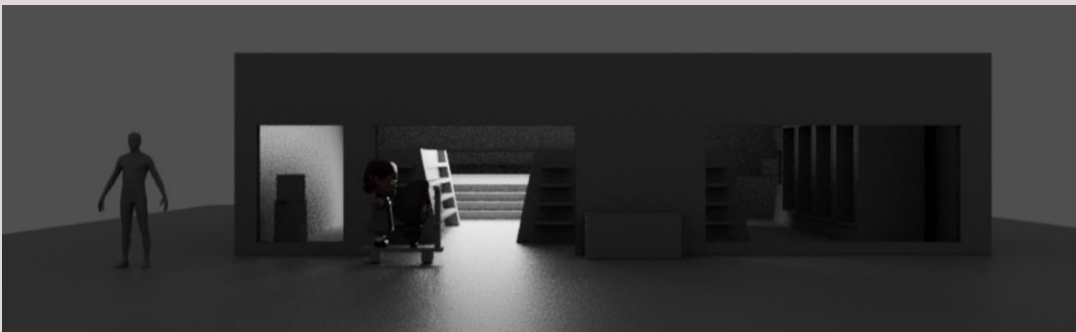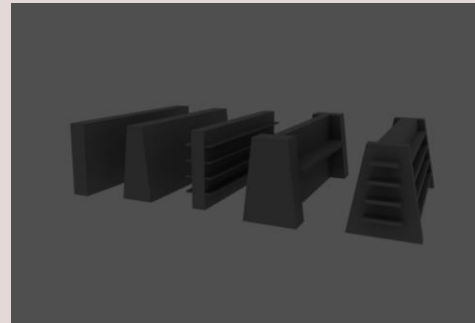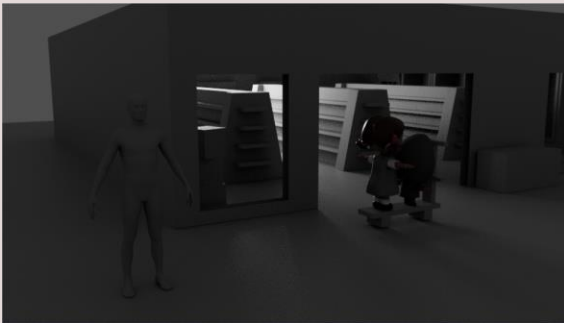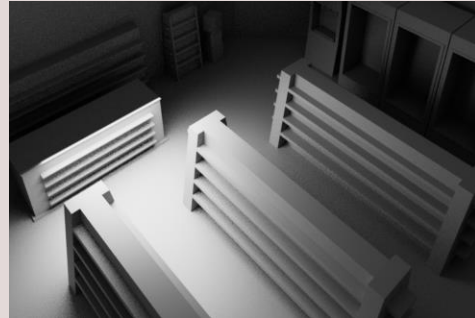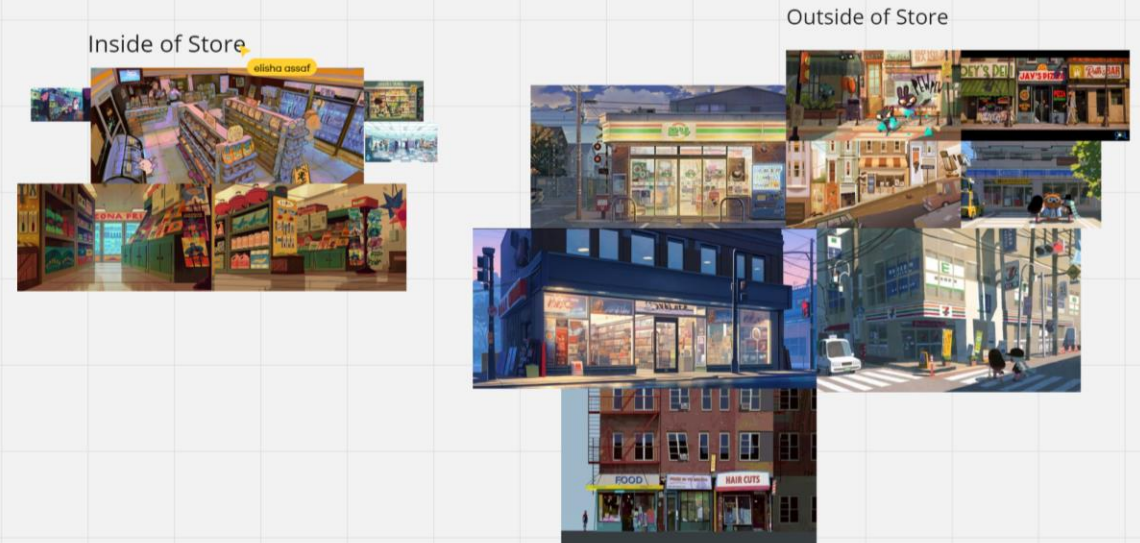
Elisha's role in this project, while I was modeling the characters, was to create the layout environment. She started with her Pinterest and Miro boards of inspiration and then modeled the environment, keeping in mind the shots we wanted to create. Through this process, we updated our establishing shot. We thought the shot of the characters pressed against the shop window looking at a display advertising the vape would convey the vape as an object of desire more successfully.

LIGHTING EXPERIMENTS

For these lighting experiments, I mainly focused on how we could use the lighting to make the vape seem desirable. In my first series of tests, I kept the characters in their default T pose, I thought the most successful shot was with the silhouette looking up at the vape. To further this proof of concept I moved the hands to be reaching out, pressed onto the window. I thought the color experiments on this shot distracted the audience from the focus being on the vape. To improve the test of the shot with the kid's face, I would want them to be pressed up against it to see if I could achieve that range of movement with the rigs.
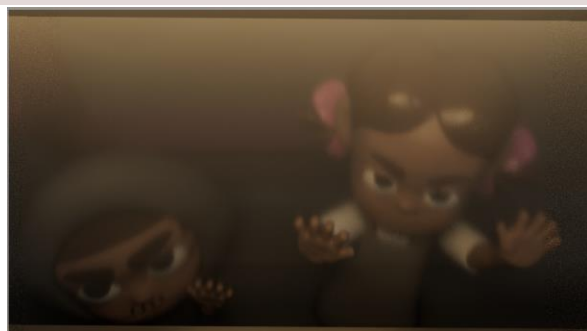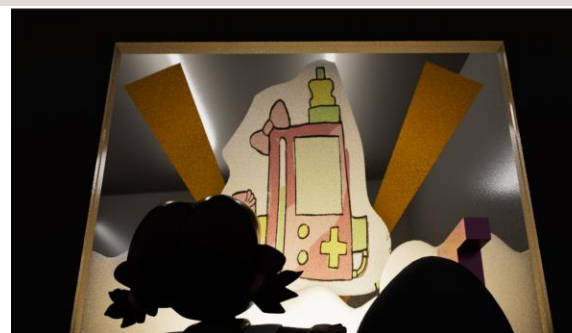
NEXT STEPS...
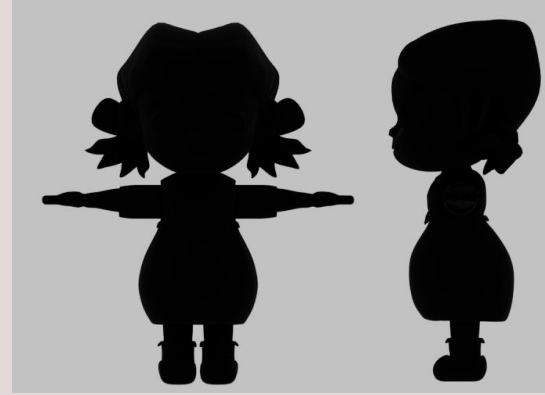
Reflecting on my research for this project, I have found an approach that has been successful in creating my aims for Element 1. One of my strongest outcomes from pre-production has been my models, this is due to me scheduling most of my time into improving these. While modeling, I have improved my knowledge and skills, as these are the first human characters I've modeled. I did this mainly through YouTube tutorials and some support from peers. However, if I were to do this again, I would've asked for more support and research before diving headfirst. This opportunity to improve my modeling skills has given me the confidence to know how long to schedule for modeling in the future. Now approaching rigging, I'm going to use the knowledge I've gained and do in-depth research into the process. To improve these models further, I will focus on adding small details to humanise them and tell the story of what kind of person they are. Where have they been all day? I think this will add depth to the characters that can't be achieved on screen in less than a minute. To research these little imperfections, I will be making notes when I see them in the media I consume. My main way of researching narrative development has been to consume media I find relevant to our story and note down what inspires me from them on my MyBlog. I think this has been successful in compiling different references together. Going forward, I've recognised I need to concentrate on analysing media that reflects the characters I'm representing so I can accurately tell our narrative. I've started this by watching Top Boy and Some Girls. These have elevated our script.

Our main area of improvement would be our narrative, as we still don't have a finalised animatic. As neither of our strengths is in creating them, we decided to focus on getting the characters and environment modeled so we could make a layout animation in Maya. This prioritising helped us break down our workflow more, as finishing both wouldn't have been unrealistic with our schedule. To improve our shots, we need to push our camera angles more. Using Dutch and high angles has a clear positive effect on our story, we need to apply that same thought process to our other shots. This would help successfully convey to the audience our narrative in an engaging way.

When creating the scheduling for animating, I've reflected on past projects and planned for setbacks. I also kept this in mind while creating the animatic. To save time I've added shots of just feet running so I don't need to do multiple full-body animations. Also, my main approach will be to plan before starting animating as my main setback in element 1 has been constantly having to redo the character design. Going into element 2, my main goal is to create a comedic film with good-quality animation to put into my showreel. All my research and pre-production in Element 1 have helped me create a strong foundation that will allow me to focus on animating.

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