Flourishing Sketches:

An artist progression

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# Abstract

The AR story will include multiple aspects including non-diegetic sound, animation, and transparent images. By using image tracking on various pages of a sketchbook, 2D pop-ups appear of an improved version of the same sketch. Adobe products such as Aero and Photoshop are used to augment the sketchbook. The artifact is a personal belonging, aiming to show the progress of a growing artist over the course of a couple years. Using remediation, sensory immersion, and visual design principles, the animated art pieces capture the attention of the viewer. This project is meant to use art as a form to showcase art.

# Context

I’ve been relatively artistic since I was young, thanks to my parents constantly painting in their free time. I always wanted to be creative, and strengthen my creative side to be able to make stunning and cool works in the future. I aim to secure a consistent style that I like visually. I had been drawing on loose sheets of paper, which is why I was compelled to buy my own sketchbook. It is my first and only sketchbook to this day, even while owning it for several years. I started documenting my progress simply by writing the date beside each doodle. Over the course of a few months, I tried expanding my knowledge to different materials and styles. By sifting through previous pages, I can pick the sketches that I am proud of and those that are only kept for the memory. The sketchbook is old with the exterior worn and deteriorating, however not fully finished. Some sketches are in pen, while others are in pencil or marker. I was a shy artist, hesitant to test new methods or abstract mediums. Those that are in pencil are slightly smudged with age, rendering each page a grey-ish colour. It is a relatively large sketchbook, easy to fit many small pieces and doodles or perhaps a landscape. With this sketchbook, I aimed to further my understanding of realism to better personalize my sketches. I spent many hours looking at popular creators on YouTube, explaining tips and tricks of digital art. My ultimate goal was to create digital art, since most (if not all) of my references and favourite works were found online by small modern creators. I loved the emotions expressed and vibrant colours that were easily emulated onto the screen, with no worry of physical destruction. One day, I hear something along the lines of “if you struggle to draw traditionally, don’t expect the results to be different digitally” or “having better/expensive equipment doesn’t make you the better artist”. Upon hearing this, I recognized some truth in these statements, and decided to continue refining my raw skill. Even though my efforts were sporadic, there are some visible improvements.

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## What is AR?

AR in this context nicely augments the sketchbook by incorporating elements that are not originally found in the artifact itself. The first element noticed in the experience is 2.5D pop-up images, which are improved recreations of sketches within the artifact. These images include visual design principles, including contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. Each scene will have a sense of unity, bringing the individual animated or non-animated elements together to complete the scene. The project implements a more narrative approach, displaying each scene as the art progressively improves. Viewers are able to grasp their own interpretations of the scenes as the animations play, incorporating sensory immersion through audiovisual execution. Utilizing multiple senses caters to a ranging audience without needing a “halfway device” (Alkhamisi & Monowar 2013). According to Denis McQuail in *Sociology of Mass Communication*, media and creators share similar features to other fields and are expected to be novel, creative, and unexpected yet are extremely regular. Media takes many forms, while cumulatively building and learning from surrounding areas. When media novelty catches the attention of the users, the design is replicated to be available on multiple platforms, leading to the normalization of the new design. Whether or not the design stays as a learning point is up to media creators and user preference. The benefit of AR is that it opens new doors to creativity, allowing the interested to become creators and for creators to upgrade their skillset. AR is still being researched and explored, lending creators time to experiment. Media types are less likely to be considered a fad, with online trends reappearing often in the form of “throwbacks” or innovated ideas. Ginneken (2003) mentions that even “timid people now dare to be silly and ‘provoke’ their conventional environment by flaunting” their new gadgets (136) regarding fads or even newly introduced ideas. While technology grows, so will media types including AR. Many people use media to escape from their daily lives, using it as a form of entertainment and relief (Bilandzic & Busselle 2011). What AR provides is a narrative to escape to without the dedication of leaving the real world. Video games and Virtual Reality often require a great expenditure of free time to fully grasp all possible features provided for entertainment, consequentially changing a person’s previous lifestyle. Whether the effects are negative or positive is up to the user. AR has been especially useful in practical fields as well, such as the sciences, e-commerce, and visual arts. AR let’s users realistically visualize the narrative in relation to surrounding environments (Dunston et al. 2002), better perceiving characteristics like depth. Having visuals that brains recognize helps users familiarize themselves with the narrative (Pan et al. 2015), inserting memories, desires, and comfort into the medium. Ultimately, AR demonstrates narration through user interaction and active participation, providing a very meaningful experience catered to the user.

# Augmented Reality Prototype

Within the sketchbook, there will be several pages with image markers that the user will have to scan to activate the AR experience. Every time a scene is triggered, the screen dims in brightness to accentuate the digital creation and immerse the viewer by bringing focus to the pop-up. The digital recreation of the sketch is enlarged and improved with added animation and colour. The first scene includes a figure standing in front of a moving circular ring. This figure wearing red complements the yellow light of the spinning ring behind them. The yellow illumination is slightly reflected onto the figure’s shoulders, creating a sense of depth to the scene. A “rolling” sound effect fades in and out to accompany the motion of the ring, seemingly made of glass or metal. The second scene is of a traveling woman standing with her briefcase on the dirt path of a grassy hill to watch the scenery in the distance. The hill covers the view that the woman sees, leaving room for imagination to what might be so captivating. The viewer can see another hill in the background including a deep blue waterfall. In the sky, birds are animated flying through the clouds, as well as the wind creating waves through the tall grass. Chirping birds and slashing water can be heard as diegetic sound. In the third scene, a boy appears as an angel. He stands in front of an enlarged crescent moon, with lines protruding outward as expressive light. The lines are animated to glow, and occasionally a line will shoot out from the crescent moon as though it were a shooting star.

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## Software Development Kit and Assets

A useful application would be Adobe Aero, for creating multiple AR overlays with moving images. Sticking to Adobe products facilitates imports, since they are of the same client. Adobe Aero supports animated scenes, sound effects, and 2D assets which is mostly what the project entails. It also offers interactivity, with the “tap” trigger that modifies a behaviour on scene. The action that will be used with “tap” will be “hide” and “unhide” to switch between two images of a certain overlay. Since Aero does not offer animation or drawing options to create the little animated special effects and coloured images, Adobe Photoshop will be used. While Photoshop is widely known for its ability to edit or illustrate images, its ability to animate creations is not a new feature. Having both in the same program is a bonus. The assets that will be used will be created using Photoshop by hand. They will be traced and enhanced with colours and a transparent background to resemble a 2D pop-up. Animated assets will be created separately, and then concatenated on the same scene of its corresponding art. The creation of each individual asset will be lengthy, so small images with creative licensing can be found on Google. This includes images like little birds or a detailed crescent moon.

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