

## Gluffy

When I was a child, “Happily Ever After” was a basic component of my thought process. I was raised watching Disney movies: beautiful films that wove stories about princesses being saved and villains disappearing in smoke. Around the same time, my mother told me Norwegian fairytales at my bedside. Stories about a troll being tricked to cut open its stomach, or a pair of evil brothers killed off by a rockslide, or a bird that would rip off my tongue if I stuck it out. I didn’t see any difference between these traditional stories my mother shared with me and the ones Disney created. However, as I grew up, I began to search for the origins of Disney’s happy stories and quickly discovered that they were not as cheerful as I believed. In the Brother’s Grimm version of Snow White, the heroine forces the queen to wear burning hot iron shoes and dance until she drops dead. Cinderella’s stepsisters have their eyes pecked out by birds. Little Red Riding Hood is eaten and the huntsman never came. I soon saw the connection between these Brother’s Grimm tales and the stories my mother told me. Many traditional fairy tales don’t end “happily ever after”, but their violent endings were meant to teach children morals through fear. I aspired to create work based around the fact that traditional fairytales had varying levels of evil and violence.

Disney frequently removes the violence in fairytales when recreating the stories for animation. Disney’s more timid versions of the Grimm Tales are seen as appropriate for children, but what if Disney had kept the brutality of the original? Would the general public consider the movies suitable for children? Probably not. Watching violent stories in motion has a stronger impact than listening to a story. As Karl Kroeber states in his

book *Make Believe in Film and Fiction: Visual vs. Verbal Storytelling*, “The novel is less sensational because it enables us not to see the murder but to imagine it... seeing and imagining are entirely distinct” (2). I believe that a person gathers their imagination from their experiences, especially in terms of violence. With my current imagination and the plethora of graphic images I have seen throughout the years, my mother’s stories make me cringe today, but as a child I was unaware. In my work, I embrace the violence of fairytales rather than watering it down for animation. I question the impact the story alone can have versus the graphic images I contribute to the piece.

Similarly, my brothers Geir and Svein also used to tell me bedtime stories when I was little. However, once I began to attend elementary school they moved back to Norway. They continued to tell me stories from while they were across the ocean by writing songs in their band called Yazatas. I always felt closer to them when I listened to their music, but one particular song that always makes me laugh and think of them is called *Glufty/If only if only I had a Baboon*. The fairy tale they weave with their lyrics is about a fat, pimply fairy named Glufty who is obsessed with butter. He is frequently picked on by the other fairies in town, but one day Glufty is given fifteen minutes to seek his revenge on the fairies that made his life hell. For my Integrative Project, I brought their fairytale to life on screen and pursued my own interpretation of their song while placing visual violence within the film. The outcome of the project was a 2D animated music video which explores an audience’s expectations of children’s fairytales and animation.

The song my brothers wrote is delivered in such a charismatic way that the story originally sounds like a comedy. The song begins by describing a “well known fact”.

When a baby claps their hands, a fairy loses their wings. However, on August 2nd 1955 between 5:43pm and 5:58pm, our main character Gluffy reaches the pinnacle of his life. The song continues to describe Gluffy: short, stubby, and not very bright. When Gluffy is first introduced, he greets the audience directly. Gluffy smiles and waves to them, creating an opportunity for the audience to directly bond with the character. Once the viewers have formed a connection to him, Gluffy's situation with the other characters is revealed.



Gluffy waves hello to the audience for the first time.

The audience is shown the presumed “bad guys” when Gluffy is picked on by other fairies for his love of butter. The singer emphasizes certain words for comedic effect as Gluffy stumbles around on screen for the amusement of both the fairies within the story and the audience. I chose bright colors to accompany the quirky lyrics and pudgy Gluffy to create a fun, welcoming atmosphere. The viewers are allowed to bond

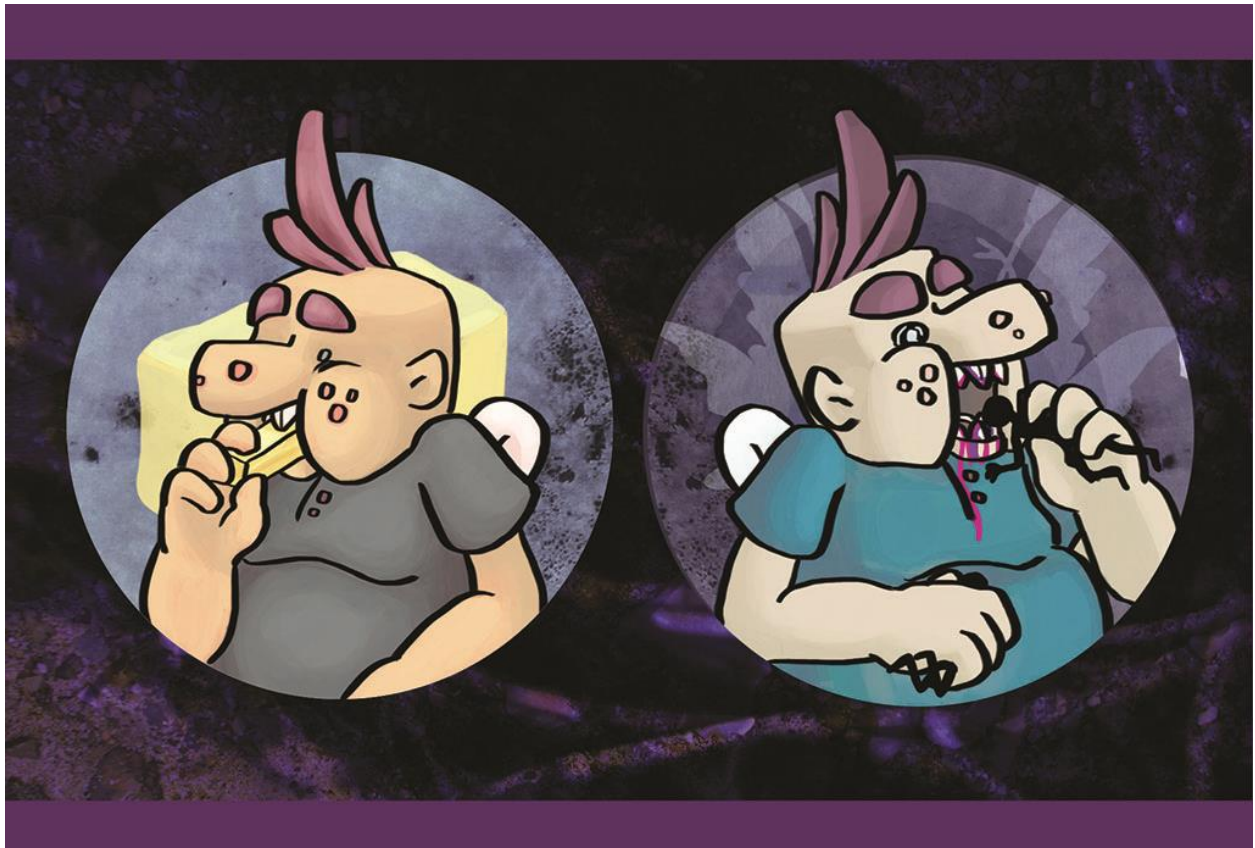
with Glufty and see how he is mistreated, encouraging sympathy within the viewers. However, at the climax of our story Glufty is finally allowed his revenge. When he finds himself to be the only fairy with wings, Glufty has fifteen minutes to do what he wants to the rest of the fairies in town. He takes this opportunity to enact vengeance. He begins to brutally consume the other fairies like the sticks of butter they mocked him for.



Glufty picks his teeth after his meal of fairies.

After following Glufty through the first half of the song and pitying the character, watching Glufty become violent and vengeful creates emotional tension in the audience. They question whether they should have continued to support him or if his actions are inherently wrong. This questioning and reflection play with the audience's expectations of children's literature and animation. As Karl Kroeber states, "There is no *moral* difference between *seeing* a knife penetrating a peach or a woman's body. We, the spectators, add emotional and ethical valences to what we see" (4). Simply seeing

Gluffy consuming butter versus him eating fairies has no ethical distinction, but the audience judges his actions. I intend for the audience to question their part in experiencing Gluffy's song. Who should they have cheered for? Is it still right to feel sympathy for such a violent character? There are no right or wrong answers, just as there is no good or bad side. I want to provide a new way of perceiving animation and addressing the impact visual representation can have on an audience. What sort of responsibility does this then place on the maker and the audience? What I show the viewers cannot control what the audience believes they perceive. I provided violent imagery, but it was the audience's responsibility to place the actions into context.



Gluffy consumes both butter sticks and wingless fairies.

The process of making the animation was mainly done on computers. However, I did utilize pencil and paper to rough out the key frames for the film before I constructed the 2D animation in a program called Flash. To color the images, I used a technique I developed a few years ago which utilizes illustration and photography. By manipulating and overlaying close-up photos of textures and color, I created a gritty and dynamic juxtaposition against the childlike quality of the song.

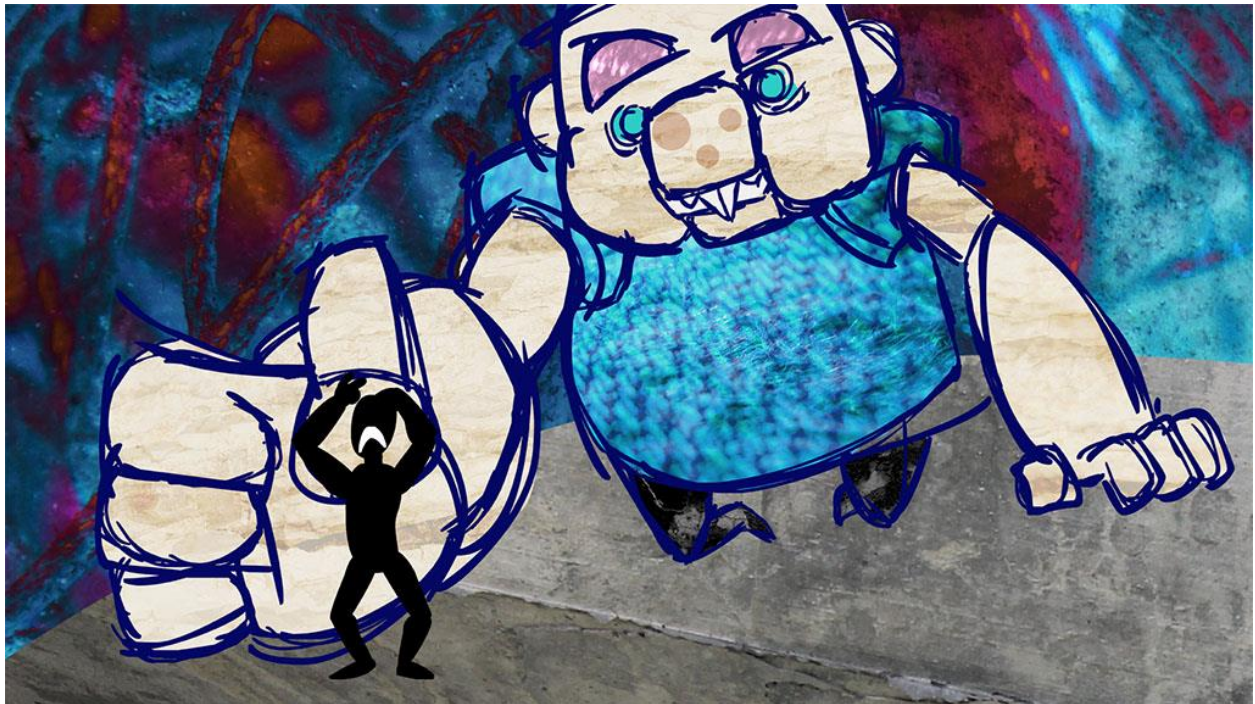


A selection of sketched key frames for the animation.



A sample of the original textures used in the animation.

Our main character is an odd-ball and not exactly the brightest of minds. To emphasize this, I animated Gluffy on thirds, which means that he has eight frames a second rather than the standard twenty four. This causes his motions to jerk around and stand out. His lines are also kept rough, making his form fluctuate. His actions are hesitant and not necessarily thought through, and the sketchy lines enforce this idea. He begins as a color illustration much in the same textured style as the other fairies, however once the song takes a darker turn, Gluffy's figure grows and evolves. His colors suddenly become bold and neon and his textures distort, creating a definitive style change. This raises alarm in the audience when the climax of our narrative appears. The more aggressive colors create doubts about Gluffy's role as either the villain or the victim of our story.



Gluffy in his final form preparing to consume fairies.

Additionally, I animated the environment and fairies utilizing Flash's motion tweening. This process allows artists to create two key frames and the computer automatically creates the in-between frames. This style of animation makes a very smooth transition from one motion to the next and makes the fairies' actions seem majestic, flowing, and superior compared to Gluffy's rougher style. In the course of the song the fairies in town go through a change from with wings to without wings. The former occurs during the more cheerful section of the song, so the colors of the fairies are bright and charming. When the fairies lost their wings, they became black silhouettes; empty of color and suggesting how vile they really are.



A fairy losing their wings and becoming a black silhouette.

Furthermore, in the Warren Robbin's gallery where the work is presented, an old-fashioned living room chair, a wooden bedside table, and a old black television replicate the setting in which I would watch Saturday morning cartoons when I was a kid. The table has an old fashioned lamp along with the felted version of Gluffy, which is soft and



Anna J.M. Brown

malleable. I created the doll so that viewers could be comforted with an interactive version of the main character. My goal is for the viewer to sit down in the living room chair and play with the felted Glufty while the video plays. By first encountering the character in his plush state, the viewer believes Glufty to be friendly. As the animation itself plays and Glufty becomes a cannibal, the doll reminds the viewer of how Glufty was initially portrayed. It allows the viewer to project their opinions on a physical object rather than simply viewing the animation. The comfortable chair and dim lighting welcome viewers to take the time to sit back and relax.



The setup of Glufty in Warren Robbins Gallery.

Animation has a tendency to be seen as “childish” to the general public. When audiences see a plump cartoon character, they tend to expect that character to stay juvenile. Gluffy, on the other hand, does not. Other animators and artists have used childish characters and aesthetics to shock their audiences. “Don’t Hug Me I’m Scared” directed by Becky Sloan and Joseph Pelling is a perfect example of playing with an audience’s expectations. Their video is created with cloth puppets and begins with a chipper song. The upbeat music and muppet reference create a connection to childhood and an atmosphere of trust. Once the characters “get creative” (Sloan) the visuals begin to change. Suddenly these characters the audience was following are now painting with blood, dancing spastically, and playing with internal organs.



Screenshot from “Don’t Hug Me I’m Scared”.

Throughout the first half of the video, the artists foreshadow the disturbing turn by creating uneasiness for the viewer. The title of the video itself indicates that the viewer should be cautious. The audience begins to question the sanity of the video in advance of the actual point of distress. However, these instances are very controlled and immediately lead back into the lively song. If the viewer is unable to see the destructive behavior coming, do they still want to laugh off the experience? As Karl Kroeber states, “confronted with startling violence, our attention (both physiological and psychic) concentrates, excluding everything except the immediate sight” (2). Due to the graphic nature the video produces, the audience is wrapped up in those moments and is no longer concerned with the warnings they received. A cartoon character behaving

violently or sexually is startling whether or not the event is foreshadowed. In my animation, I do not blatantly spell out what is to come for the characters. Instead, I leave



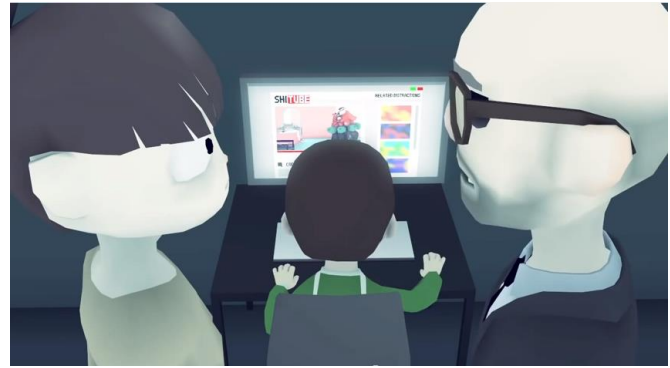
a deliberate hint when Gluffy first consumes a substance. His jaw unhinges to reveal his sharp teeth. Once the camera is pulled back, the audience sees that he is simply eating butter and nothing more.

This introduction to his consumption tendencies foreshadows the cannibalism ahead.

Animator David O'Reilly uses charming, simplistic character designs to convey serious, violent and erotic content. His films have dealt with themes of abuse, death, and he has shown cutesy characters having intercourse. He does not allow the aesthetic of the characters to control the content of the story. One example of this is his film "Please Say Something". The story is about a physically and emotionally abusive relationship between two lovers, and the narrative is represented by a large eyed cat and mouse. Although the characters squeak when they talk, their situation remains serious. In his work "The External World", the events do not follow a linear narrative. Instead, the events are cut together like a string of consciousness. At one point, David O'Reilly sets a scene with a young boy watching Mr. O'Reilly's cartoon on the internet. Behind the son stands his mother and father. When the mother expresses concern for his son and the content he is watching, the father states, "don't worry, it's just animation. It has no real affect on people." (O'Reilly). Once the character announces this line, he is immediately killed off with a flying frisbee. By having his characters watch the video the audience was just observing, the scene take the audience out of the animation and

brings his animation to the “real world”.

This encourages the audience to connect what is being shown on screen to what is said on a daily basis. The change of pace brings consciousness to what the audience is watching. By killing off the father, Mr. O'Reilly is making a point that imagery does affect us. It is naive to think otherwise.



Screenshot from David O'Reilly's "The External World".

By the beginning of this project, I had developed skills in illustration, animation and design during my artistic career. I wanted to challenge my story-telling abilities by interpreting the narrative laid out to me by the lyrics. I did not collaborate with my brothers at any step of the visual development. When approaching this work I believed I could tackle the project on my own. However, as I neared the last few months of the project, I realized the magnitude of my task. I planned for the final film to consist of two minutes and fifty-five second; adding up to a total of one thousand one hundred and forty-four frames from rough animation to final texture and color work. I requested



The tips sheet the coloring team received.

help from a handful of fellow artists to color my animation. The process of gathering a competent team and distributing the work proved to be an enjoyable task. I felt confident

when conversing with my peers about my vision for Glufty and found that running a team came easy to me.

Now that the showing of my Integrative Project is complete, I will continue to develop the animation during the next few months. I am unsure as to whether or not to include my brothers in the creative process now that major deadlines have passed. Perhaps my hesitation to converse with my brothers about the work is due to my admiration for them. They mainly played the role of my muse. Either way, I will continue to flip the expectation of a happily ever after in a children's cartoon by having Glufty's story end in fairy blood.