

Disturbed.

A short animation movie on Fear

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Submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the Degree of Master of Design in Animation.

Industrial Design Centre
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Approval Sheet

The Project II titled “Disturbed” by Sukhada
Rahalkar is approved in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for M. Des Degree in Animation.

Guide:

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Introduction

The theme i chose for my project is 'Fear'.

I always wanted to make a film on a topic or theme I really felt for or I really connected with. I believe the secret of good film making is the story that comes right out of the narrator's heart.

I always identified myself to be a big horror/thriller movie fanatic and I wanted my 1st film to belong to this genre. Naturally the first topic that came to my mind for my project was 'Fear'.

I enjoy these movies and I find fear very exciting. The thrill that comes while watching such movies can be sometimes spine-tingling and very heady. This elating experience is purely the reason why I chose Fear as my project topic.

Through this project I aspire to evoke similar reaction amongst the viewers and learn the subtle characteristics of narrative style, treatment, ideas and reasons behind a successful horror/thriller films in terms of its effectiveness.





About the Film

Keywords:

Horror, Thriller, Drama & Suspense.

“**Disturbed**” is a film about an 11year old boy who has witnessed his parents murder and is now a victim of behaviour disorder. This story tells how the boy is forced to relive again and again the horrors of his past. This story is a direct inspiration of an incident that took place in my neighbourhood a year ago.

Through this film I have tried to open a window on the horrors that exists in the society and its damaging effects on the person who has to go through it.

Instead of using hyper live-action gore and extreme sound variation to create horror, I have tried to deliver the unsettling nightmares experienced by the child through the narrative style and technique that would build long on hard-to-shake creepiness.

As you advance, the research, study of the subject and the development of idea will put some light on the process I applied to achieve my final film.



Study & Research.

Study and research is one of the most important elements in the whole process of film making. It is essential to have a better knowledge and understanding about the subject.

I started my project with a single thought and aim and that was to make a thriller/horror.

Since my topic for the film was clear my first step was to understand the genre itself. The characteristics, its history, how it started, how it is different from other films etc. The next step was to try and find out as much as possible about the concept of 'Fear'. Types of fear, how fear works and how it is perceived by an individual.

Second step was to read about topics that are related to fear, stories and novels that fall in the genre of thriller/horror.

Along with reading I was watching lot of movies and short films both live-action and animation. I started observing and studying the style of narrative used, the visual treatment and the sound effects used in a film.

In this process I came across some very inspiring stories and movies which if not directly, definitely helped me understand the subtlety of crafting a story.



Introduction to Horror Films Genre

Genre refers to the method of film categorization based on similarities in the narrative elements from which films are constructed. Films are usually categorized according to their setting, theme topic, mood, or format.

Horror Films are generally described as films designed to frighten and panic, cause dread and alarm, and to invoke our hidden worst fears, often in a terrifying, shocking finale, while captivating and entertaining us at the same time. Horror films usually centre on the dark side of life, the forbidden, and strange and alarming events. They deal with our most primal nature and its fears: our nightmares, our vulnerability, our alienation, our revulsions, our terror of the unknown, most of all our fear of 'Death'.

Another closely-related genre is thriller films, they are type of films known to promote intense excitement, suspense, a high level of anticipation and expectation, uncertainty, anxiety, and nerve-wracking tension.

Many a times the characteristics of thriller and suspense films are used to build up the story plot in horror film, dread and fear combined with suspense help in heightening the viewing experience.

History of Horror Films Genre

Horror is an ancient art form. Horror films go back as far as the onset of films themselves, over 100 years ago.

Horror films developed out of a number of sources: folktales with devil characters, witchcraft, fables, myths, ghost stories, Grand Guignol melodramas, and Gothic or Victorian novels from Europe and other parts of the world. Every culture, society, religion have their own stories that are related to evil powers usually meant to scare than entertain people.

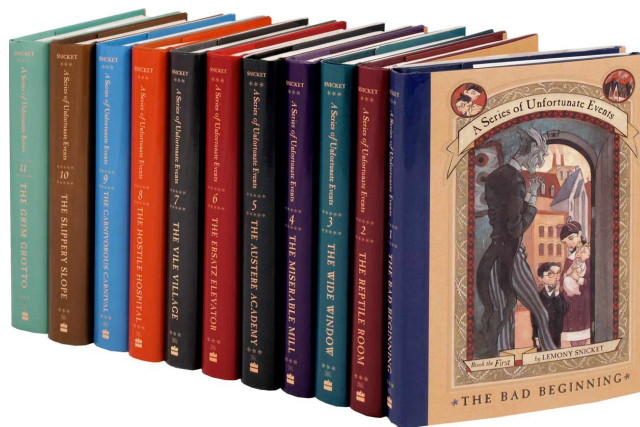
The earliest horror films were usually set in spooky old mansions, castles, or fog-shrouded, dark and shadowy locales.

Their main characters included “unknown,” human, supernatural or creatures ranging from vampires, demented madmen, devils, unfriendly ghosts, monsters, mad scientists, demons, zombies, evil spirits, Satanic villains, the “possessed,” werewolves etc.

Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho changed the face of all horror films ever since. Horror was now to be found in the dark shadows of the human soul itself.

The similar trend was seen in the later films like ‘The Shining’, ‘Hide and Seek’ etc where the horror of the irrational and unknown wasn’t somewhere outside but the horror was within man himself.





Reading & Movies.

Books:

The series of unfortunate events.

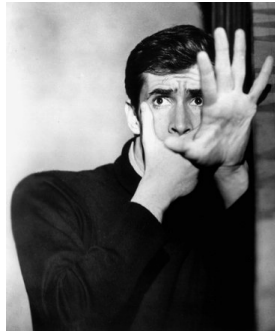
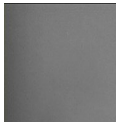
—by Lemony Snicket

Theme: About three kids seeking for a safe and secure home to live in and a caring guardian after the death of their parents. One evil relative who wants to get his hands on the fortune left behind by their parents and will stop at nothing.

Style: Dark humour, sarcasm.

The series have a strong theme of moral relativism and a great dislike to gruesome and horrid elements and also gives off a sense of prudishness in the writing. The stories have lot of dark humour in it.

Though it cannot be purely categorised as a thriller or horror, but the incidents that unfold in the story, the way the writer builds up the suspense, the constant warnings of the bad and unhappy end of the story and the constant trouble the kids fall into creates a certain level of curiosity and a tense atmosphere which is very enjoyable.



Movies:

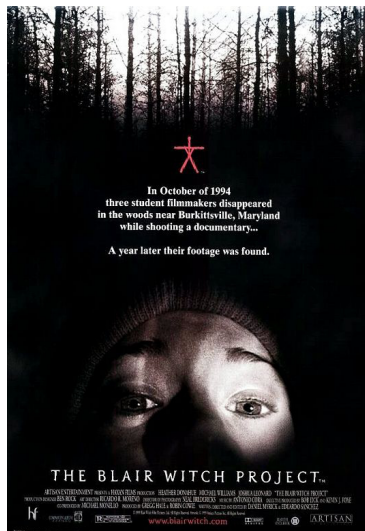
Psycho (1960)

- Alfred Hitchcock

His film changed the face of all horror films ever since. Pure archetypal horror was now to be found in the dark shadows of the human soul itself - in a psychopathic, cross-dressing Bates Motel operator and taxidermist (Anthony Perkins).

From master of mystery Alfred Hitchcock, 'Psycho' is the sort of film that's simply impossible to forget about. According to me it is again a great example of a great horror movie. It is an ultimate spine-tingler and a perfect chiller.

The film has very few instances of violence and whatever that take place has very little actual on-screen violence. In fact, it contains just three big shocks, with the rest of the film time devoted to setting scenes, building suspense and playing with our minds.



Movies:

The Blair witch project (1999)

-by Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez

“The Blair Witch Project” is a Psychological thriller. The film is compelling as a faux documentary. the movie follows three student filmmakers who mysteriously disappear during the filming of a documentary about the mythical Blair witch. Although the three never emerge from the forest, terrifying footage of their experiences is discovered a year later.

The movie dosnt have any gory scenes. Most of the horrifying shots are shot in absolute dark with some images appearing occasionally and terrifying sounds playing in the background.

The dark screen with sound playing as a background leaves the viewer guessing, anticipating, imagining of all the horrifying possibilities thus putting them in a spot where they create their own film, but that happens in their head.



Movies:

The Ring (2002)

-by Gore Verbinski

Remake of ringu 1999

According to me quick editing and visuals used in the film sets it apart from any other horror film. The film is based in an urban surrounding where a suspicious looking tape is being circulated. The person who watches the tape dies in 7 days.

I find the plot itself very creepy and the images and footage that appears in the tape just adds to the creepiness. Initially the images you see do not make sense and leave a very unsettling feeling but as the story advances you realise that everything shown in the video are all there with the intention to give you the chills and have a purpose for being there to further the plot.



STANLEY KUBRICK'S
SHINING



Movies:

The Shining (1980)

-by Stanley Kubrick.

The movie opens with spectacular shots of beautiful landscapes and the the grand hotel that are exact opposite to scary but the soundtrack of the film warns that all is not right here and something bad is about to happen. Cinematography and eerie images slowly builds up the tension in the movie.

With every passing moment the character of Jack seems to grow a little more evil and dangerous. Extreme change in personality, impact of empty space and loneliness on a person is portrayed in a way that will give chills to anyone who is watching this film. Along with human emotions visuals like dead twin girls, suicidal axe-murdering ghosts, hotel cook, and many other weird and wonderful figures, give you a pulse-racing treat throughout the movie.



Fear

What is Fear?

Why do we experience it?

Where does it come from?

Fear is an emotional response to a threat. It is a basic survival mechanism occurring in response to a specific stimulus, such as pain or the threat of danger.

According to some psychologists such as John B. Watson, Robert Plutchik, and Paul Ekman fear is one of a small set of basic or innate emotions. This set also includes such emotions as joy, sadness, and anger.

Fear should be distinguished from the related emotional state of anxiety, which typically occurs without any external threat. Fear is related to the specific behaviors of escape and avoidance, whereas anxiety is the result of threats which are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable.

It was also stated that fear always relates to future events, such as worsening of a situation, or continuation of a situation that is unacceptable.

Fear could also be an instant reaction, to something presently happening.

Description

While looking for sources that will describe and explain the what 'Fear' is I came across this very beautiful description of fear.

-by **Charles Darwin**

The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals

"Fear is often preceded by astonishment, and is so far akin to it, that both lead to the senses of sight and hearing being instantly aroused. In both cases the eyes and mouth are widely opened, and the eyebrows raised. The frightened man at first stands like a statue motionless and breathless, or crouches down as if instinctively to escape observation.

The heart beats quickly and violently, so that it palpitates or knocks against the ribs... That the skin is much affected under the sense of great fear, we see in the marvellous manner in which perspiration immediately exudes from it...

The hairs also on the skin stand erect; and the superficial muscles shiver. In connection with the disturbed action of the heart, the breathing is hurried.

The salivary glands act imperfectly; the mouth becomes dry, and is often opened and shut."



Sources & Types of Fear

There are 3 main types of fear, external, internal and subconscious. The sources of the fear can be determined by identifying the type.

External fear is perhaps the most easily recognisable, a source which is outside you which you are strongly motivated to avoid.

In case of Internal Fear also the source is outside you but instead of it evoking fear in you directly, you experience fear through the means of association. In this case one generally associates it to some strong emotion or memory of pain, stress or trauma previously experienced and the dread of the memory brings out the fear.

Subconscious fear is a belief that has been accepted by your subconscious mind, something not necessarily you experienced but were told about while growing up or something forced on you. Our subconscious fear-based beliefs lurk in the background of our minds, and can be triggered by an incident at any moment in time

Types of fear can also be described in relation to the degree of fear that is experienced.

It varies from mild **caution** to extreme **phobia** and **paranoia**.

Fear is related to a number of additional cognitive and emotional states including **worry, anxiety, terror, horror, panic, and dread**.

Experiences of fear are, by their very nature, impacting and, in this way, can remain in the unconscious mind long after exposure; where they may then manifest as **nightmares**.

Fear may also be experienced within a larger group or social network. In this way, **personal fears** are compounded by social influence to become **mass hysteria**.



Idea & Concept

Initially when I began working on my concept I found myself falling prey to the cliché.

Somehow all my stories would revolve around typical horror plots such as, windy stormy night, empty and lonely streets, haunted house, superstition and night-marish dreams and so on.

I was making the mistake of constructing a story/concept based on the visual that I found interesting and had scope to create images that will scare the viewers.

Development

After many failed attempts my guide helped me understand the mistake i was making and suggested by me to start writing about my own fears, my experiences, incidents, situations I was scared.

This exercise really worked. While listing down my scary experiences I was reminded of a very horrible incident that happened in my neighbourhood.

One morning when I got up, I got the news about the 2 murders that took place in a house very close by from where I live. In just one night a family of 4 members, Father, mother, son and a grandfather was disrupted. Both men were found dead and the mother and child both had to be treated to bring them out of the shock. This incident even had a great impact on me my family and everyone living in our society. The surrounding which I believed to be perfectly safe failed to make me feel secured anymore. For a good length of time there were hardly any people seen around very late in the night. I would not stay out till late nor would I answer the door at odd hours.

So now my theme or plot for the film was ready. All I had to do was to dig some facts about the incident and using it molde it into a story format.

Story Development

Now that I was ready with my plot I need to do some research about the incident. I knew I wanted to make a film about this but wasn't sure which aspect of the incident would be interesting, what point of view to take and what and where to focus on.

I went through a lot of old newspaper articles to get the facts right and to know how it was recounted to the masses.

Another important part was talking to people in my neighbourhood. I wanted to know the impact of this on their lifestyle. Here I got to know that, soon after this incident many families fixed a safety door and would never let any member stay out after 9pm or so.

Development

Personally when I got this news, for a good length of time I would not stay out till late nor did I feel safe to answer the door at odd hours.

Mostly my sources were house wife's living in the vicinity.

Once while talking to one of the neighboring Aunty, I got to know about the difficulties the remaining family (mother & son) were facing. How the mother was emotionally depressed and in pain that she was in no condition to support her 8 years old son. When the killings took place, the kid was there watching it and went into a state of shock and had become complete mute. I was also told that he suffered from constant fits.

After evaluation, it was informed that the child was suffering from post traumatic disorder and was sent to a hospital for supervision and therapy.

After listening to this take of the incident it all became clear to me that I would make a film about the boy. To make a movie that will touch, effect, or move people, I needed a concept, story I strongly felt myself. Throughout my research the only incident that stood out was the boy's pitiful condition and I knew the event will stay with me for the rest of my life.

And so the protagonist of my film came alive.

Story

In my final film I have used 3 separate narratives that proceed through the film simultaneously revealing only parts that do not make much of sense in the beginning but as the film comes close to its end the visuals shown earlier sum up to become one whole story explaining the relevance of the previous visuals.

The 3 narratives go something like this

1. The past:

This segment of the story is about the night the boy witnessed his parent's murder. It also reveals how the boy ends up in a lonely hospital cell where he is being treated for his behaviour disorder.

2. The present:

In this segment the boy is colouring a sheet of paper which is a part of a therapy. He is alone in his hospital room when the lights suddenly flicker for a moment and this triggers a sense of dread and fear within the boy.

The boy starts anticipating a huge bang on the door and when the anticipation becomes unbearable to handle he jerks out of his chair and drops his colours on the floor.

After this moment has passed the boy is relieved to know that he is still safe in his room and there is no one at the door. But his relief is short lived as again while picking up the colours he starts imagining weird things.

3. The hallucination:

This segment is about the images and visuals that are triggered in the boy's head because of some element that reminds him of his past trauma. The boy believes that similar fate is awaiting him and the dark shadowy figure responsible for his parent's death is out to kill him too. The visuals in this segment represent the boy's fears and they are not the actual incidents that are happening to the boy. It's all in the head.

Final Story

In my final story I have kept the plot same as the above incident with very few changes here and there.

The final story is about an 11 year boy who witnesses the killings of his parents and goes under a shock who is now being treated for post-traumatic behaviour disorder.

Presently he is in a children's mental care unit of a government hospital. My film explores on the assumptions of what fear would mean to a victim, how stressful it can get if one has to bear the burden of constant dread and memories of the past.

The film would be about the narration of the horrifying experience of that night, the impact on his mental health and difficulties he is going through while trying to cope up with his trauma.

The change in the point of view, the way of looking at things and how the constant suspicion, dread of fear affects the behaviour and the way one reacts to it.



Storyboard

Before I could start story boarding I started sketching the important elements and backgrounds required in my story like the hospital room, corridor, living room etc.

After finalising on the concept art I took one sequence from the story and started sketching it in various angles and narrative style. Once the camera angle and flow of story with respect to visuals was decided the rest sketches just flowed naturally into place.

I started my story boarding by making rough doodles and simple scribbles. While doing this I came across lot of new ideas and scope of enhancing my story. Since I had a visual reference of my final film hence I was able to make necessary changes and corrections in my story.

My film dealt with 3 narratives happening simultaneously my challenge was to align and overlap the narratives in a way that will not disturb the flow of the movie visually as well as the story should be intact.

Since I wanted suspense element to my film, I had to take care that every time the 3 narratives advances in the story it doesn't reveal too much or say so little that it becomes confusing to understand.

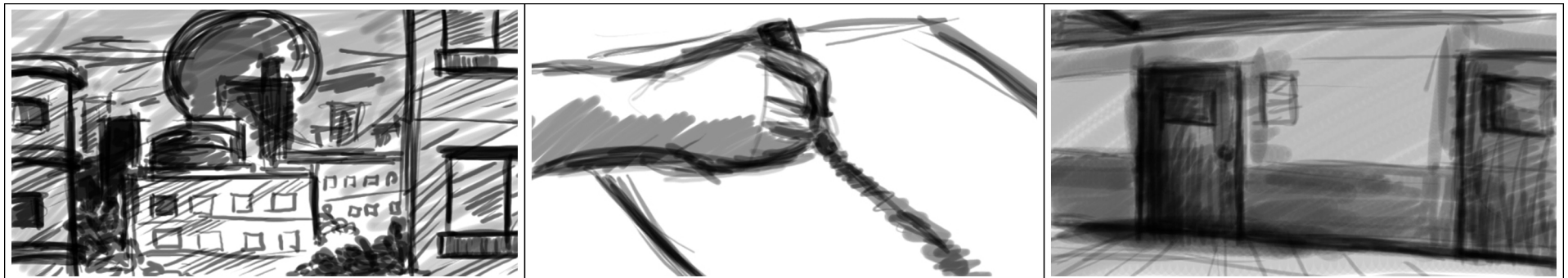
While writing the script I never realised the practical difficulties of stringing these events together to make a complete story. During the process of story boarding I had to re-work in some areas of the story.

Through this stage I learnt never to stay rigid about the story and final script, staying open to new ideas can open a whole new window to possibilities.

Storyboard

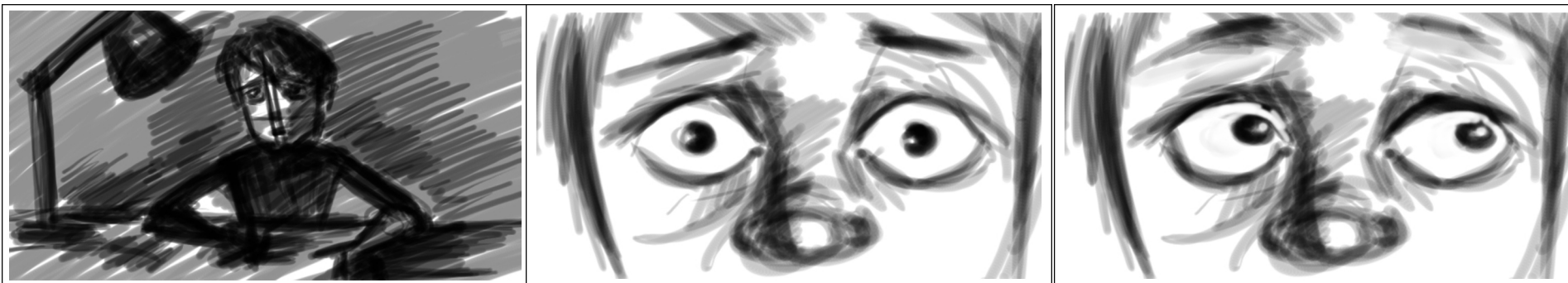


The story starts with close up shot of the protagonist of the film. Lot of flashing lights appear and the camera zooms out revealing the location is a crime scene. It is a living room. The protagonist (boy) who is standing at the door frame is taken away from the scene. and the screen cuts to title.



New scene starts with a pan of city, revealing the surrounding and neighborhood and then it zooms in on a big hospital like building. Scene cuts to extreme close up of someone drawing a line on the paper. Cut to a glum looking corridor where camera zooms in on a door.

Storyboard



The door dissolves to a image of someone drawing on a paper. While doing so the light flickers and the person stops sketching. The camera pans from just the hands to the face revealing the protagonist, the same boy. he is looking very worried and you see the tension building as he slowly and very cautiously starts to looking behind him at the door.

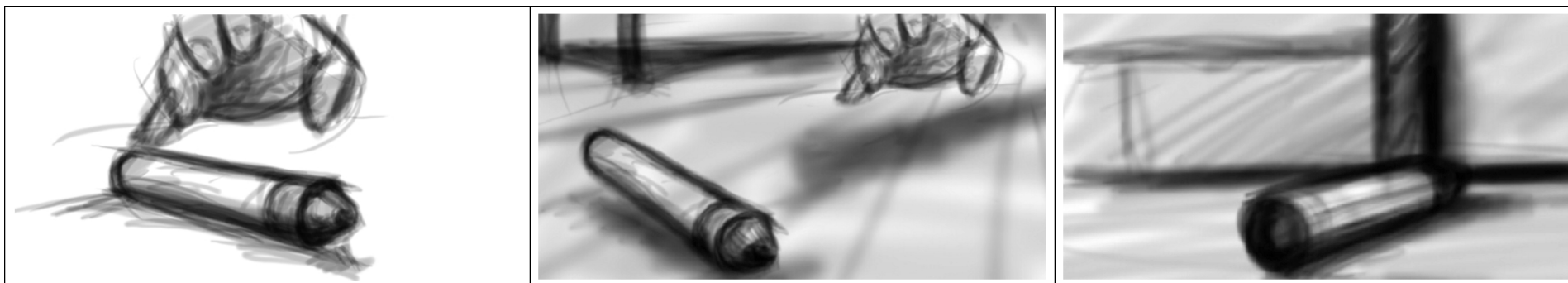


The scene cuts to steps, a suggestion of someone climbing up the stairs, cuts to back shot of boy looking behind and he is practically shivering with fear, shuts to camera zooming in on the door cut to boy almost ready to expect the door flying open, cuts to the camera zooming in on door almost touching it.

Storyboard

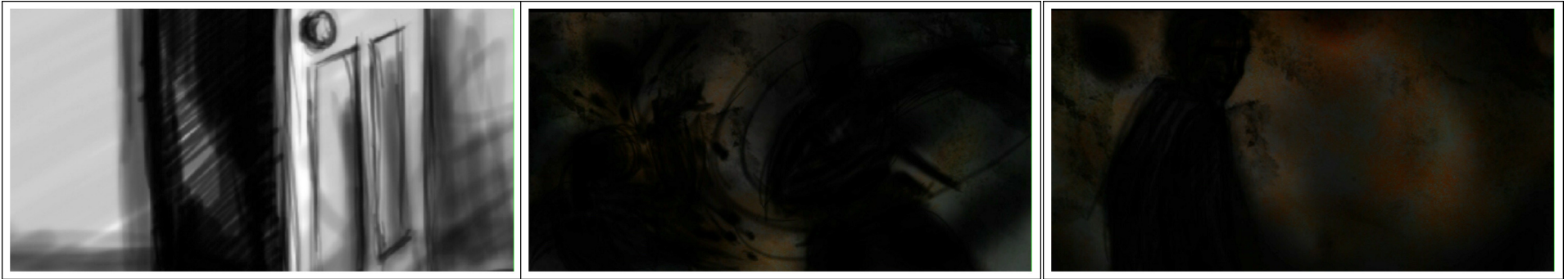


The boy gets so scared that he jerks out the seat in fear but there is no one at the door. Its closed tight just like before. The camera cuts between boy and the door for some time as the boy is taking huge gulps of air to steady him from the shock. As he is doing that he notices one crayon pencil which has fallen and rolled away from his table.

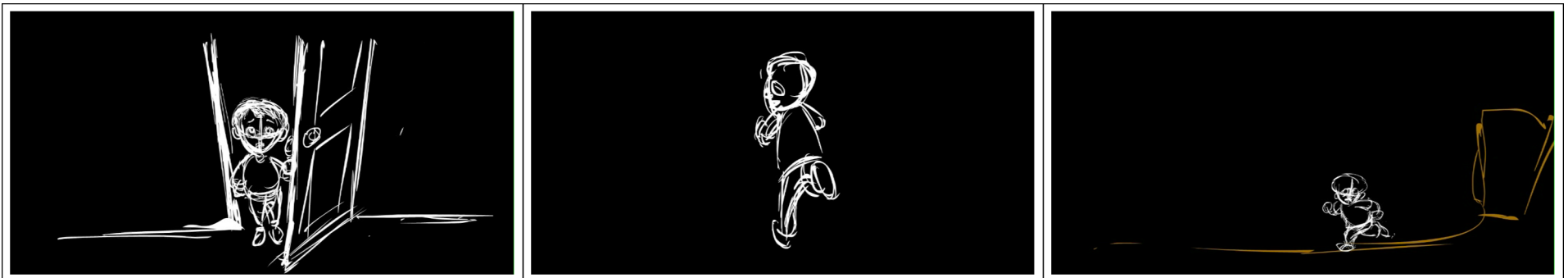


After he is out of the shock he gets down to collect the colors, as he nears to one color pencil furthest from he notices the crayon is moves away as he crawls towards it. The heart rate of the boy starts increasing again. He reaches out to collect it but again it roles away and this time it stops just at the foot of the door. the boy is paralyzed as he thinks this is some scheme to bring him to the door.

Storyboard



at this point the boy is looking with terror at the door. as the shot cuts to the door you see the door knob turn and the door creaks open. the camera zooms to the door there is darkness at the other side of the door. As the screen becomes complete dark, slowly images appear and you see a dark figure slashing with something in the hand and kills people.

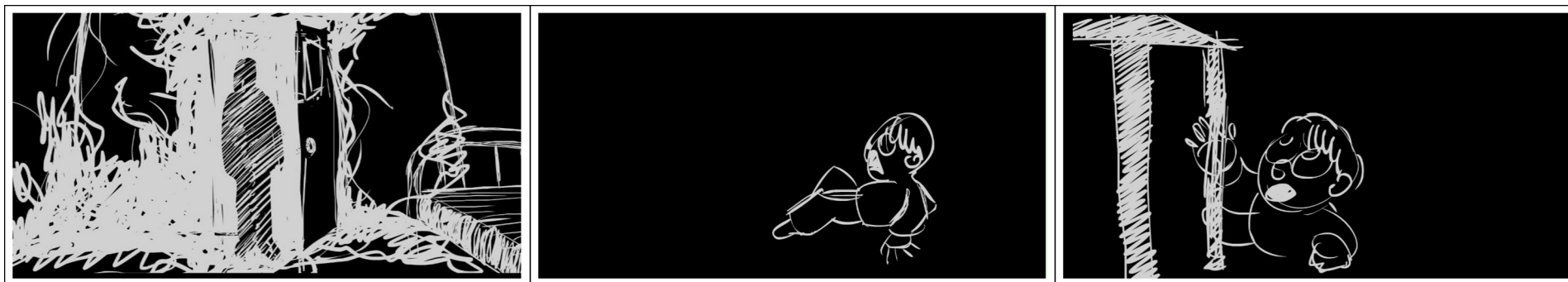


The dark shadow the stops and turns behind. Camera cuts to the boy but he is standing at the doorway. he suddenly jerks and start running in the darkness. as he is running the surround keeps dissolving into darkness. The boy is seen running away from door.

Storyboard



The boy is running away trying to escape, trying to go as far away from the door but suddenly the boy falls down and gets up in the room still on the floor staring at the door. Camera cuts to the door where it opens and huge wave of creepy looking shadow starts to spread all over his room.



The door opens further more and shadowy figure of the man appears at the door frame. The boy zaps out his frozen state and starts crawling back to the other end of the door. Shot again cuts to the door the man standing taughth his neck and starts to moves forward. The boy reaches his table and puts his hand on the table to get up.

Storyboard



As the boy is getting up, the scene cuts to the boy standing at the door (the point where the movie started) a hand appears around his shoulder. From here some shots appear in fast succession which tell the past of the boy. In the next shot the boy is sitting on a chair dull and lifeless.



The camera zooms out, revealing a small room, and as the camera zooms out further, a door shuts hard on the camera, and just as the door shuts, the shot changes to the boy drawing very violently.

Storyboard



The shot cuts to the boys face. The boy looks completely in trance. Cut to his hand, which is violently moving on the paper. Cut to his face, slowly his eyes start getting bigger with fear. The scratching sound in the background stops and he looks up expecting to see something. The scene cuts to the room where the shadowy man is even close and he raises his hand up in the air ready to lash at the boy and zap! His hand moves smoothly attacking the boy.



he shot cuts to the boy standing at the edge of the table where he falls down on the floor scattering all his drawing papers. As the boy falls on the floor camera pans on the drawings the boy has made. the drawings basically has a picture of a house two bodies on floor red color all around a small figure running away and a shadowy man on his chase.

The end is left open ended to add to the mystery of the film. One can interpret it as the boy was dead or one can look it as the past trauma haunting him and his state of panic attacks which ends with unconsciousness due to pressure of the fear he couldn't handle.

Backgrounds & Treatment

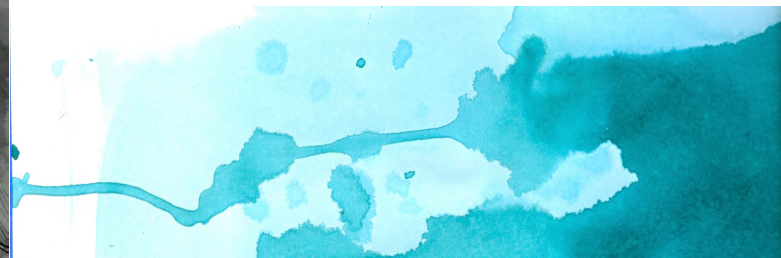
Lot of attention was put in creating style to best suit my story without taking the viewers attention away from the narration.

I wanted a hand drawn raw feel to my film since I wanted to create a disturbed kind of atmosphere. Also i have a shot or two where the boy (protagonist) is drawing in a violent fashion. I thought water-color effect would be the best medium for it.

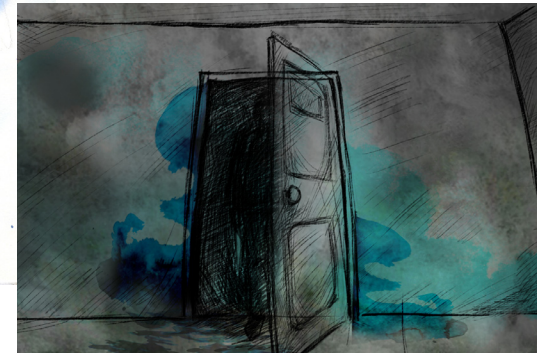
All most all the backgrounds are colored on paper and then composited in Photoshop and color treated for its final film.

I have purposely chosen not to use many color as I was afraid it might steal away the mood. Slight ting of one or two color which is really essential is used in one frame.

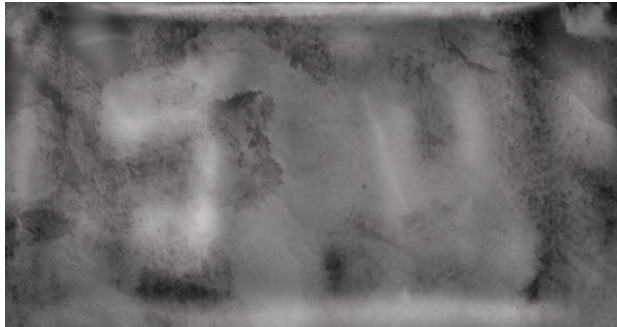
In this film I want the texture to come alive, according to me it directly represents the state of mind of the protagonist.



Some explorations before finalizing the final treatment.



Process & Treatments in creating final visual style.



These were the common paper textures used as the base for all the frames throughout the film. They were placed on top of each other on a separate layer as an overlay.

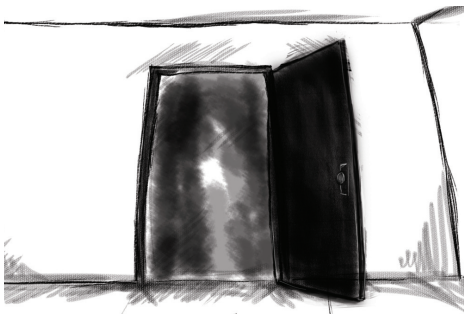


The software I have used in developing the film is Adobe Photoshop CS3. All the color rendering along with animation was done in Photoshop itself. The frames were drawn on separate layers. The tool I used to sketch the frames was a Pen tablet (intuos 3).

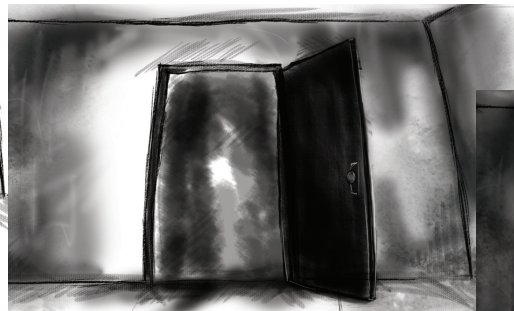
The film wasn't completely computer generated, I have used water colors and some hand made papers to create the background effects.

The images along side display the step by step development in creating the final visual style which is been followed throughout the movie.

1



2



3



4





Character Design

I have only one character in my film.
Rest of the crowd is showed either in shadow or only partially. i.e. only shoulder, feet etc

For my film I chose not to go for much stylized character as I believe it automatically creates a disconnect for some might mistake it as comic or crooked and evil.

Also my backgrounds demanded a character design that will blend with the water color effect.

So i chose to make a close to realistic character design for the boy. The lines used are purposefully left undefined and it has a sketch like feel to it.

This style helps both in accentuate the emotion and mood of the movie and also it blends perfectly with the background.





Sound Design

When I began thinking about the sound in the story, I was at a loss as to what kind of music would suit the film.

One thing was certain that I did not want to use music to make people jump out of their seats by use extreme sound variations.

In fact my first thought was to keep it silent. Since I was planning to use extremely stylized and dark looking visual treatment I did not wish to overdo the mood by using intense and powerful sound effects. During my explorations, my only worry was not to take away the essence or create distractions in the story telling.

After a few exercises I realized how difficult it was getting for me to finalizes or decide upon one style of background score.

As of now I do not wish to use too much of layering and combinations of sound.

My attempt is to make close to silent movie, to use the music in a way that will only increase the level of tension but without its obvious presence.

Conclusion

This was a great learning experience for me. Through this process I got to know about many factors that go in making a film which I could not recognize as a film viewer and appreciator. every step in the preocess was addition to my knowledge, experience and understanding about film and animation medium.

Along with immense research and hard work, making a film needs a lot of patience, faith and equal amount of commitment till the very last minute of the film.

“You have to really love your film for others to love it”

Thankyou!

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