

Final Project Proposal

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1. Project Outlines and Motivation

The main part of the project is a short video series threaded together by one concept, showing several types of food and their stories. There will be three videos in total, each of one-minute's duration. Together with videos there will be a food book served as a thesis.

The reasons why I am doing this? First, since I moved far away from my homeland of China, I feel I have a more objective perspective on my own cultural background, which I have a desire to express in a creative way. Every time people ask me what is the most important part of Chinese culture, I answer FOOD without hesitation. Actually, Chinese culture has grown from the enjoyment of food. There is an old Chinese idiom that "people regard food as sky", which means food is the first and foremost concern for everyone. We pay great attention to food throughout the thousand years of history. So I think food is an interesting viewing point and appropriate medium to show the culture. Secondly, I am fascinated by these ancient poems and legends about food. They are old and beautiful, but almost forgotten by people living in the "New Era", just like all kinds of traditional culture. I think it is meaningful to let people know and appreciate these old cultures. Lastly, the faster pace people lead means they do not have time to enjoy slow food, so they eat junk food or prepared food to feed themselves. But food is not only eatable stuff, it tells stories, shows emotion and represents culture. I hope my project can make viewers rethink their attitude toward diet and traditional culture.

2. Relationship to Previous Practice



Screenshots of "waiting for the bus", "miss", "down the rabbit-hole"

During the last academy year, I practiced different methods of animation, from frame-by-frame drawing to manipulated analogue action, from linear storytelling to non-narrative. I learnt most aspects of knowledge and tried to find my favourite style and technique.

The four-minutes, digital frame-by-frame drawing animated film *Waiting for the Bus* was a project I did in the second trimester of the first year. I started with the goal to improve my storytelling skills and learn how to organize a comprehensive animation project. But I did not have sufficient time to make the film as perfect as I wanted, but to keep it as simple as possible. I was exhausted after this project. I think the reason is firstly drawing animation is 80% production. So independent animators have no choice but to work as a drawing machine. For this film, I have drawn thousands of frames in ten weeks. Secondly, I was strictly following the traditional methodology step by step, from sketch, storyboard, layout drawing to test video, etc. It is great experience learning the scientific assembly line, but once I confirmed the pre-production design, I almost know the final outcome, and start working mechanically on the production and post-production stages. Unfortunately, the results are usually not as good as imagined, because watching the same thing for a long time consumes passion. Therefore, I decided to not do this any more.

In the third trimester, I did *MISS ink experiment* project and *Down the Rabbit Hole* based on *Alice in Wonderland*. Both of them are very short. The

first is one-minute long, the second is thirty seconds. They are also non-narrative, as I want to purely focus on the image. The ink video *MISS* is the most difficult but successful one in the year. Through it, I changed my habitual ways of working and thinking. I got stuck and suffered a lot in the middle, because I get used to planning things carefully. However, keeping the content open leaves more space to explore. And I have surprises beyond the imagination. I like this exact randomness, and want to apply it for my final project. So this time, I will also start from experiments. Let the unknown lead the future.

Technically, I am interested in mixed media, and I did my BA degree thesis on this topic. I would like to use different materials together, such as drawing, photo, live action video, and stop-motion sequences. In this way, I can blend real and fantasy, which is the magic animation brings.

3. Work Plan

I started the final project with brainstorming, reading and proposal writing. Through reading, I learnt a lot about Chinese food and culture I did not know before. I was surprised but also confused that there are so many interesting and meaningful things around food. Following tutors' suggestions and thinking with my hands, I started doing rough tests and sketches. The first part of my experiments is with beans, because I really like the love bean story. After one month of tests, I still did not get the images that can be used in the video, but I know more about this material and working methods. Through those random tests, the general direction to go is much clearer. And the most important thing is, I figured out that the food I choose must have not only cultural symbolic meaning, but also the visual possibility of transformation. I will keep doing experiments until I get useful materials, on the other hand, searching for more food and food stories to complete the

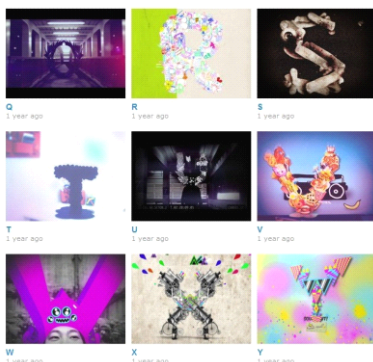
project. Next step is adding digital animation on the footage, and post-production. Finally, the videos will be projected in an exhibition space.

4. Expected Outcomes

I plan to present a short film series, about three videos in total, and each one is nearly one-minute long. The reason why I chose this form is I am afraid that I will get bored in a long-term project. I think it is better to work on different and short videos, so that I can keep passion and freshness. Besides, I can focus more on the image developing while doing shorts. I hope every single second of my video is beautiful and eye-catching, in order to attract viewers to stay still and watch it. Each film can be different in technique and aesthetic. They can stand by themselves. But also make sense and become stronger when they are put together. Therefore, I want to find a reasonable concept to unify them in a wise way.

In terms of the thesis, I will make a nice and unique food book, included general introduction of Chinese food culture from my personal view point, stories I told through the video series, and recipes of the food I used as visual material. Besides, I would like to do some graphic and editorial design on it, to make the thesis interesting, not only a pale paper.

5. Reference



Daniele Manoli made a short film series on twenty-six letters. Each short is about one letter, and the content is a personal definition of the letter. For example, A is for analog, B is for brandead, C is for corpus, D is for Daniele Manoli. He used different techniques and style, so

a-z video series, Daniele Manoli
www.danielemanoli.com

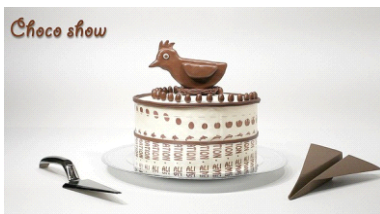
audience will keep watching one by one and never get bored.



Food, Jan Švankmajer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oOLuBxgYHc>

Jan Svankmajer is a Czech filmmaker and artist whose work spans several media. I think this food series and his other food films are mainly focus on eating, the behaviour. The techniques he used in these films are stop-motion and clay animation. The thing I most appreciate is the metaphor, in which he used food to talk about politics and social problems. The way he communicates is very clever and distinct.



Alimation, Alexandrre

vimeo.com/23854203

"Alexandre Dubosc, a young French director and photographer, created several animations for the Annecy Festival. His short film "Alimation" shows a series of ingenious and extremely appetizing animations made with food. He used an old zoetrope technique to create very fresh and lovely result. "Food About You" is another short film by him, a mixture of stop-motion and pixilation, provided an imaginative and funny viewing point on food." [regator.com/whatshot/Alexandre+Dubosc]

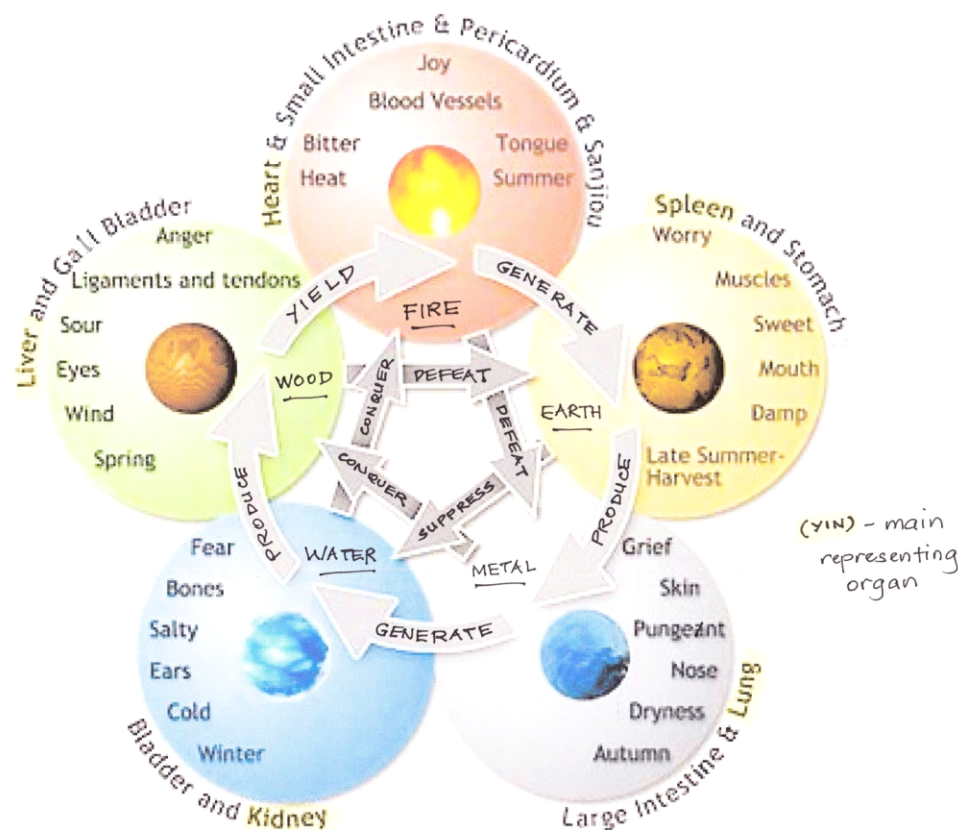
6. Research background

" It is Confucius, however, who regards good cuisine as an enjoyment in life rather than simply a need. I have absolutely no objection that the grains are fine and the pork slices tender and delectable. Chinese cuisine is not a general and vague concept. It attaches great importance to the color, smell

and taste of the food, its myriad regional styles and flavors and its profound cultural underpinning. China, with its vast territory and a long and unbroken history, has given rise to a diverse spectrum of variety of regional flavors and styles. Moreover, there is an endless list of innumerable specialty snacks and refreshments."

(Zishan Chen, Food and Chinese culture: essays on popular cuisine, p19)

I found interesting philosophy about how to keep healthy through a balanced diet, which are Yin-Yang and five elements. Yin and yang are two opposite forces that keep a dynamic balance, and five elements, metal, wood, water, fire and earth are the ingredients of everything. This is one of the core philosophies in Chinese culture, so most Chinese pay attention to balancing the yin and yang food. I do appreciate this theory and did research on it, however I realized it is too difficult to have certain food match the five elements, five colors or five tastes.



In addition, there are many ancient poems about food. My favourite is the poem of red bean. It is well known by most Chinese people, so we use red bean as a symbol of loving and missing. It is also a yang food, usually to be cooked for sweet soup to keep our body warm. Going further, I found the story why people regard red bean as the love bean. The story is about a woman after waiting for her husband fighting in the war for a long time, started weeping and cannot stop, and then her tears became blood and dropped into the soil. Later on, the red bean trees were grown on the soil. So I think the key words of this story are love, war and peace, which can be used to link other food stories.

7. Budget

Food and ingredients	€ 200
Kitchenware	€ 100
Art supplies	€ 100
Printing	€ 300
Material for exhibition	€ 200

8. Bibliography

Books:

- Food and Chinese culture: essays on popular cuisine
Zishan Chen, Long River Press, 2005
- Chinese Food - Introductions to Chinese Culture
Junru Liu, Cambridge University Press, 2011
- 舌尖上的中国 文化名家说中华名吃
(China on the tongue, cultural masters talking about Chinese cuisines)
Ma MingBo, Xiao Yiao, China Youth Press, 2006

- In the Devil's Garden: A Sinful History of Forbidden Food
Stewart Lee Allen, Ballantine Books, 2003

Webpages:

<http://www.knowingfood.com/red/lovebean.html>

<http://legendsguide.com/478/the-red-beans-the-legend-of-the-love-beans>

<http://archive.supermarketguru.com/page.cfm/136>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Švankmajer

<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/五行>

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