

“Rough ideas not polish, animatic communication tools for graphic design students”

Jonathan Hamilton,
Senior Lecturer and Researcher, Graphic Design, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract:

- The current generation of graphic design students appear to be changing, many arriving with significant digital skills, and aversion to risk and experimentation. Students frequently focus on the final polished designs, over idea generation and prototypes.
- A recent annual year 1 animation project, at a large UK BA graphic design course, seeks to address this by demonstrating the importance of developing ideas and communication before starting final production (Gibbs, 1988)
- In contrast to previous years, student groups were asked to put an emphasis on ideation and succinct communication through a range of storyboards and animatics, for animations of between 30 and 60 seconds in length.
- This paper seeks to show that animatics can be effective in engaging contemporary graphic design students with the often-unpopular practice of storyboard. Having wider implications; teaching the importance of Agile Practice (Levi Straus, 1966) for adapting a project quickly, improving ideas and communication (Furniss, 2008)

The current generation of graphic design students appear to be changing, many arriving with significant digital skills, and aversion to risk and experimentation.

- In his article “[De-Schooling Art and Design: Illich Redux](#)” Hardy (2012) references views on risk taking:
- ‘[The only sure way to avoid making mistakes is to have no new ideas](#)’ (Albert Einstein)
- ‘[Creativity is optimising your mistakes](#)’ (Grayson Perry 2010)
- ‘[The need to embrace the scientific model where errors ‘yield the greatest advances’](#)’ (Kathryn Schulz 2010)

The International
Journal of Art & Design
Education

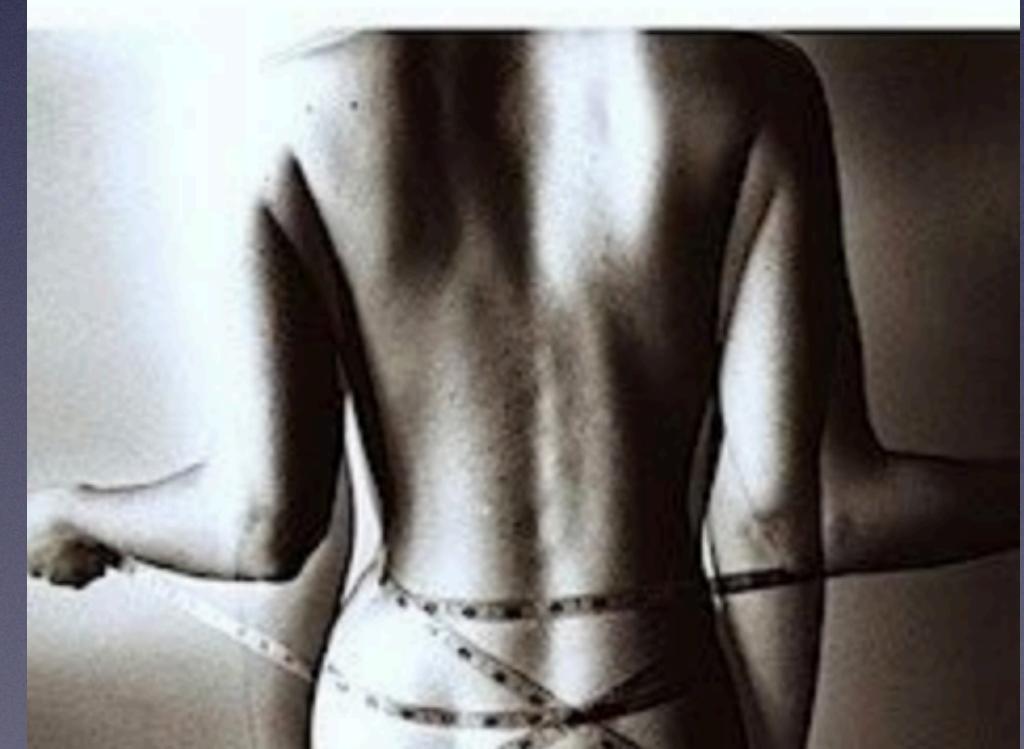


The International
Journal of Art & Design
Education

31.2



Tom Hardy, Emeritus Director of Art and Design at North London Collegiate School, and Art Education Consultant, The Prince's Teaching Institute



Experimentation limited, final outcomes focused, limited idea development effecting the quality of outcomes.

- We have in year 1 of NTU Graphic Design really noticed a shift in students over the last few years
- At times we are setting projects in year 1 with less emphasis on final outcome, asking for ideas and risk taking
- This presentation centres on an annual animation project for year 1 graphic design students taking on board these issues

Project context

- Nottingham Trent University, BA Graphic Design, Course size 150 students in each year group
- 2017/18 Cohort profile, 10 overseas, 140 Home/EU, 33% from A Level, 66% HND/Extended Diploma/ Foundation Art and Design
- Hamilton's Animation project involvement for 9 consecutive years
- The project brief
- Groups, previous years 3 to 4 students per group, in a few cases 5 in a group
- Numbers of films , approximately 30 group films



Gd1

Project title: Whether the weather
Narrative Film & Animation
Names: EW/BF/JH/JP/HM/SS
Dates: MONDAY 16 MARCH - FRIDAY 18 MAY

Aims of the project
To explore methods of working with narrative in moving image through the use of live action, stop frame, hand drawn or digital animation.

Background
The ability to create work around a narrative (a story) is a key skill for a graphic designer or illustrator. The objective of this brief is for you to investigate and explore a range of visual storytelling approaches to communicate a series of words that are connected but may be distinctly different in meaning. Your task is to build a narrative that enables these words to link together. You will be working with other people to achieve this project.
The outcome should be produced using either stop-frame, hand drawn / digital animation or live action approaches. You may work using one approach or a mix of techniques if you wish.

Learning Outcomes
1. Research and analyse relevant sources to inform and generate a variety of ideas.
2. Develop and document a variety of visual communication methods to communicate ideas and thought processes.
3. Show willingness to investigate and explore imaginative responses to design briefs.
4. Explore and investigate a variety of graphic skills, media, materials, techniques and technologies to initiate and develop ideas.
5. Evaluate and select the appropriate media, materials and technologies to realise well-crafted final outcomes.
6. Plan and manage independent and collaborative working practices.

The brief
Working in a pair or a maximum of three in a group, devise a short animation or film that is a minimum of 30 seconds and a maximum of 60 seconds based on **your given words**. You will be given four words that relate to the weather and it is your job to fluidly communicate the personality of each word and the changes in personality that each word brings to create a cohesive piece of work.
You may work with it in any way you like. Use any appropriate animation techniques and media to create your narrative draw, collage, mixed media, 3D objects, photographic prints, found images, typography, continuous motion, green screen, modelling, kinetic type and image, etc.
The final piece you make will be shown at a **showcase** on Friday 25th May.

Week 1 Method of working

- You have a message to communicate in a minimum of 30 seconds and a maximum of 60 seconds. From your given starting point do some initial research on your words. Come up with the narrative - What's the idea? What's the story? Where is it set? Who / what are the main characters / features? Will it have a traditional structure of beginning, middle and end? Or is it more atmospheric or experimental?
- Create both storyboards and mood boards alongside each other, going back and forth between each to establish both a sequence of shots. When considering storyboards begin with the key frames - the most important shots. Use the mood boards to experiment with visual styling, media and materials, technique and media.
- Storyboards should include references for approximately how long each shot will be on screen,

Whether the Weather words

Rainy	Tornado
Windy	Clear
Sunny	Humid
Dry	Arid
Wet	Snowstorm
Cloudy	Breezy
Drizzle	Dismal
Muggy	Freezing
Icy	Torrential
Frosty	Dank
Snowy	Biblical
sleety	Hail
Hot	Stifling
Stormy	Hurricane
Pikels	Swalloking

Project context, and what we did differently this year

- Resources
- Numbers of staff with days per week
- This years' emphasis compared to previous:
- Previous years had made improvements in crafting and professional execution , through staff emphasis, presentations and workshops
- However concept communication in final films had not been strong
- We adjusted project to focus on these issues.....

Whether the Weather

What we did differently this year

- Module leader wanted to try group sizes of 2 in a group to ensure all students participated (all students in group to participate)
- In previous years sometimes the rough work, from an 1st week half day, workshop had better communication and levels of experimentation

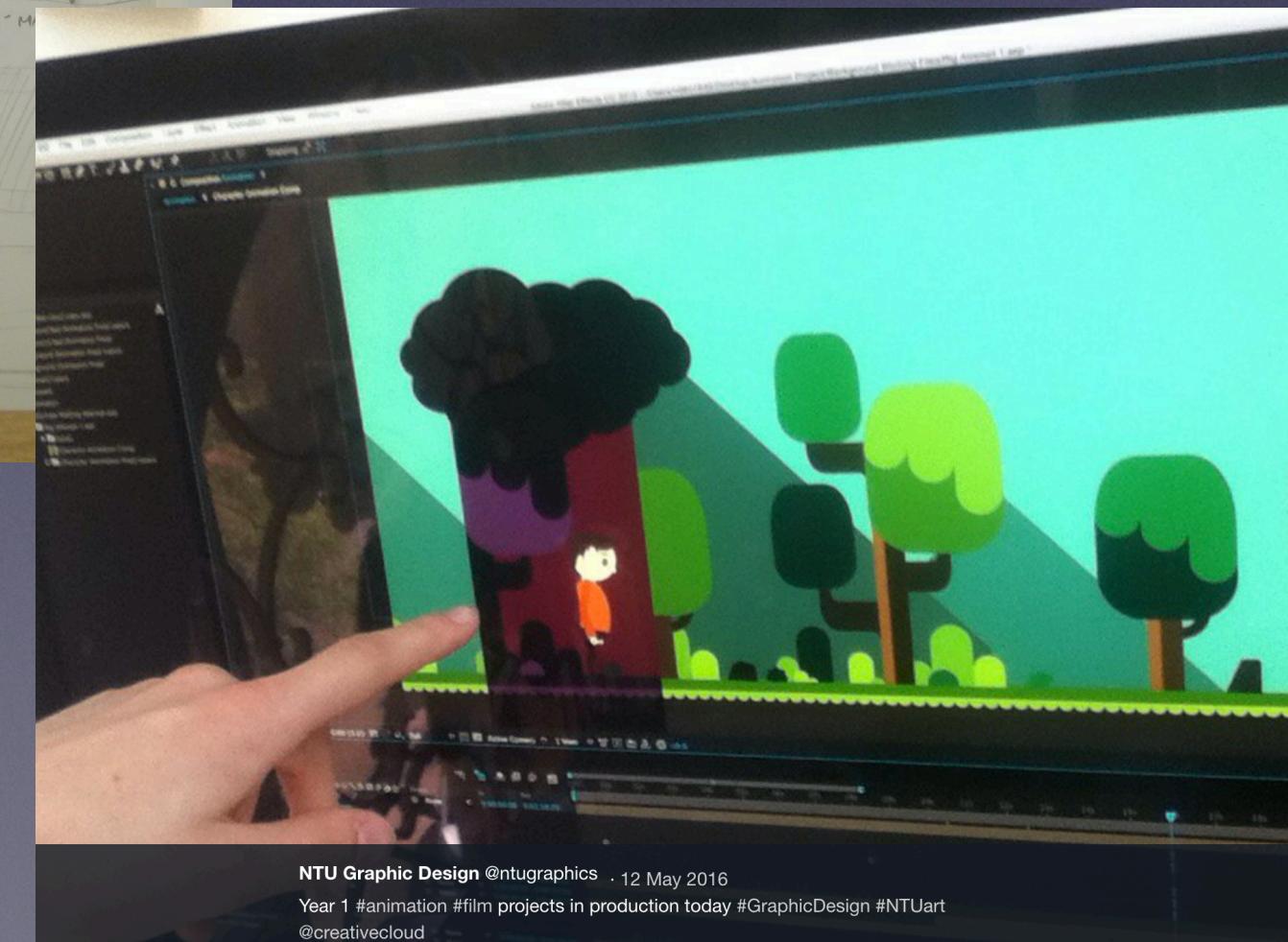


NTU Graphic Design @ntugraphics . 5 May 2016
Even more! from year 1 #GraphicDesign students one day #PostitNotes #animation project #NTUart @3M @3MNewsroom



What we decided to teach them

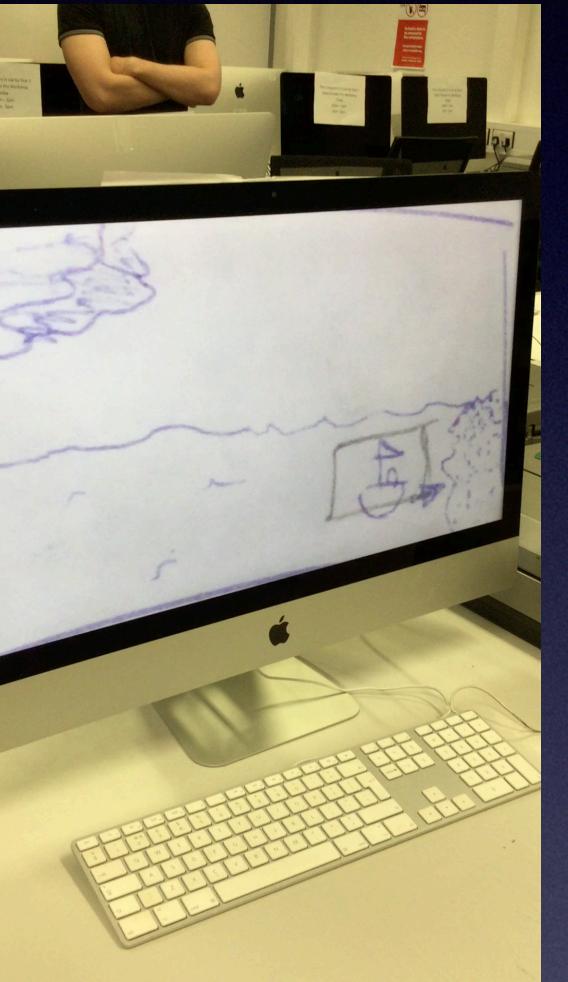
- Aimed this year to improve the idea communication in final films
- Greater emphasis on storyboarding more than in previous years
- Changed deliverables to focus on clear communication with films minim length of 30 seconds and a maximum length of 60 seconds
- Moved to Adobe Premier this year (Final Cut was still available)



Animatic rough production half day workshop

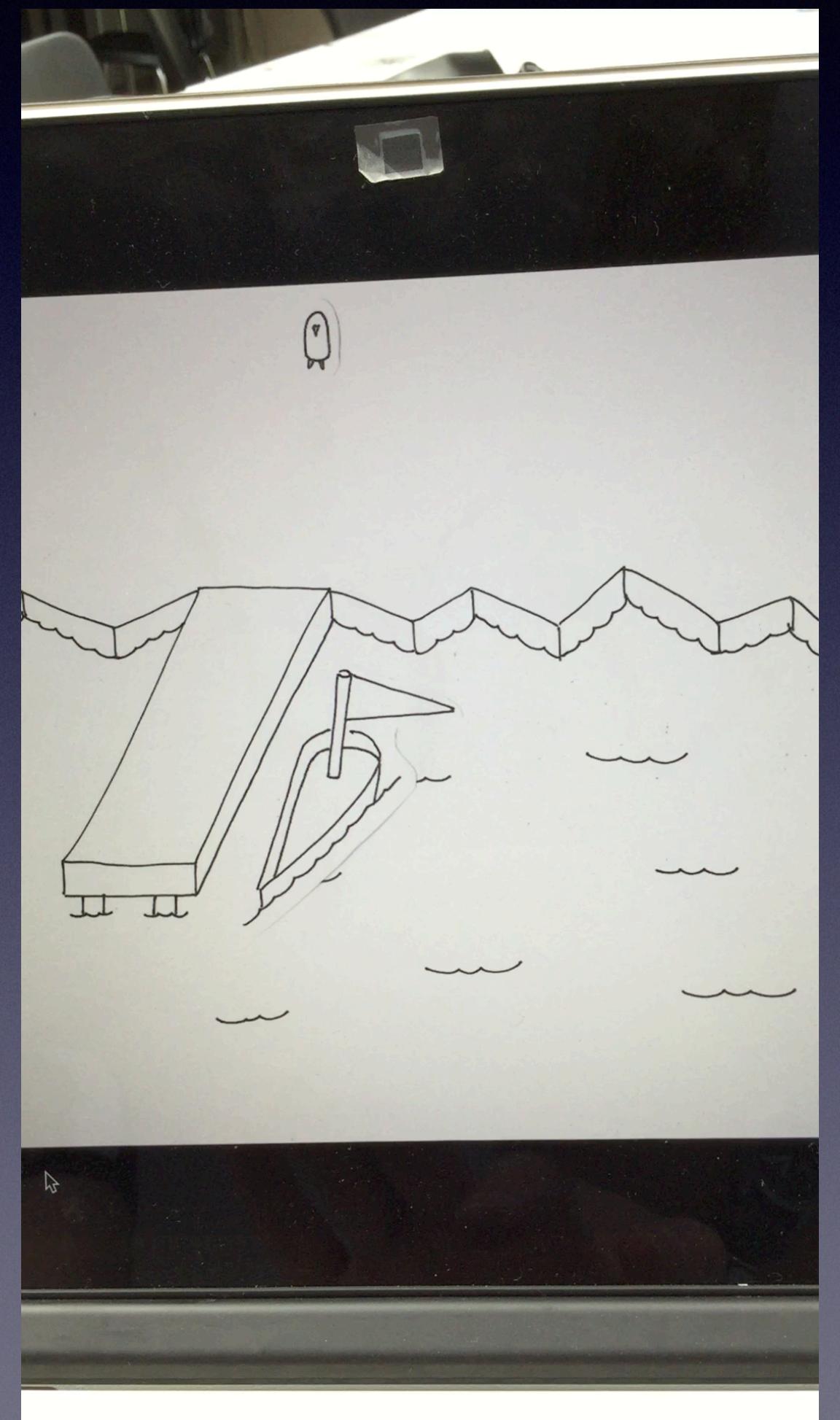
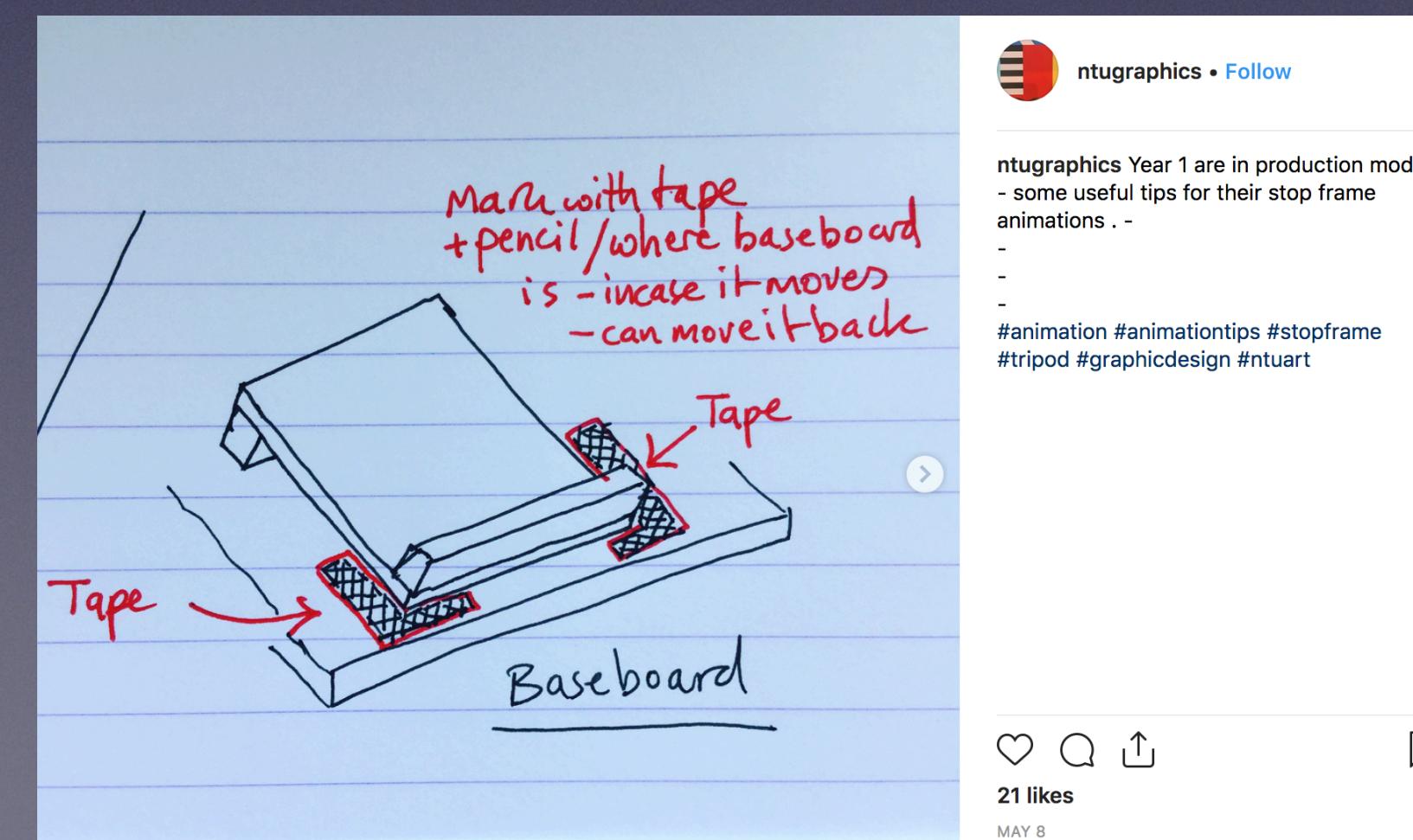
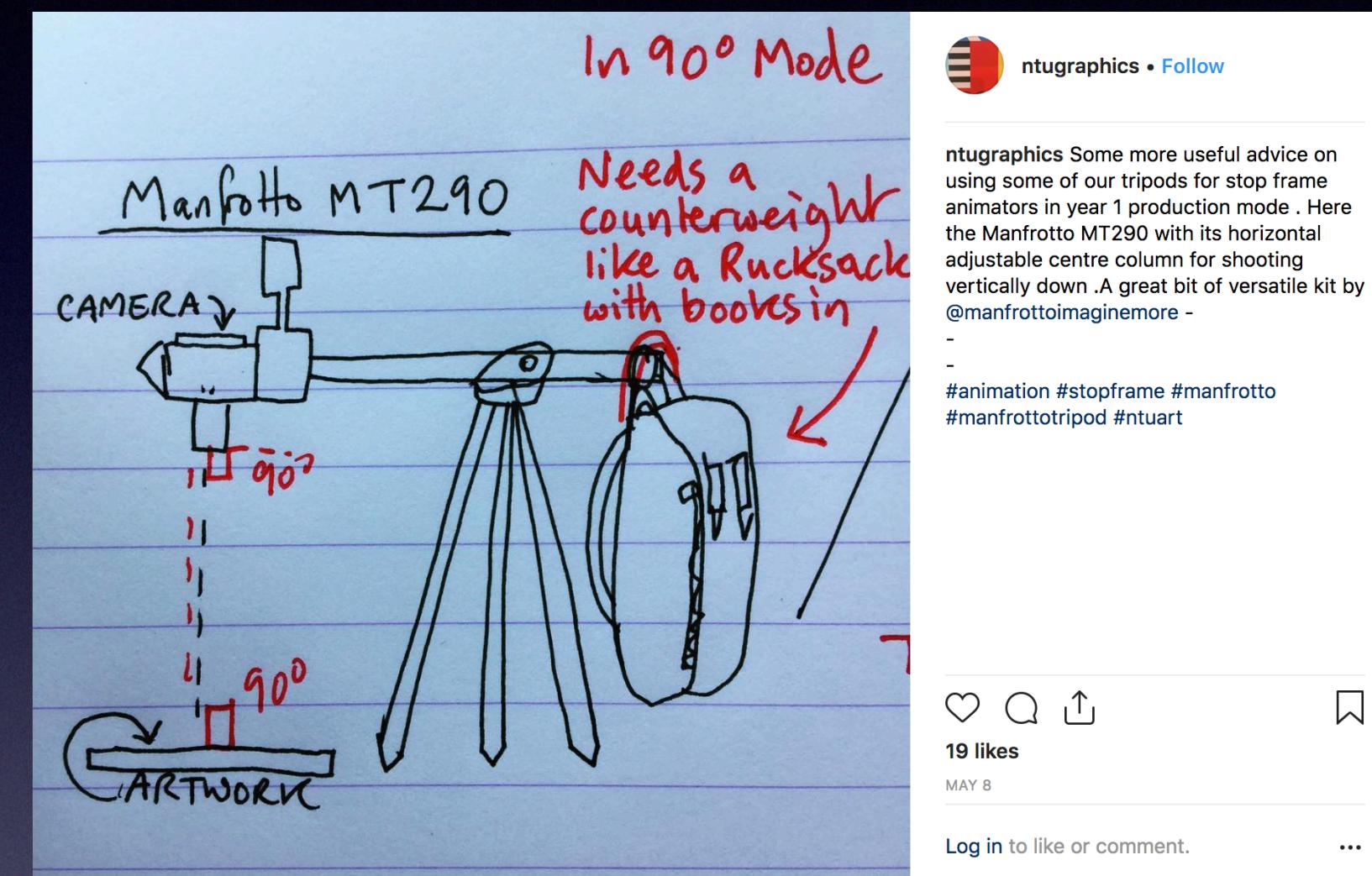


- Story boarding on its own often unpopular with students (and designers?)
- The animatics came about as part of Adobe Premier workshops in the second and third week of the project
- Animatics were a surprise - we did them primarily to teach Premier early on in the project
- Never expected the animatics to be so exciting and effective for students
- Sound effects , BBC sound effects BETA released: extensive collection with strong search facility.

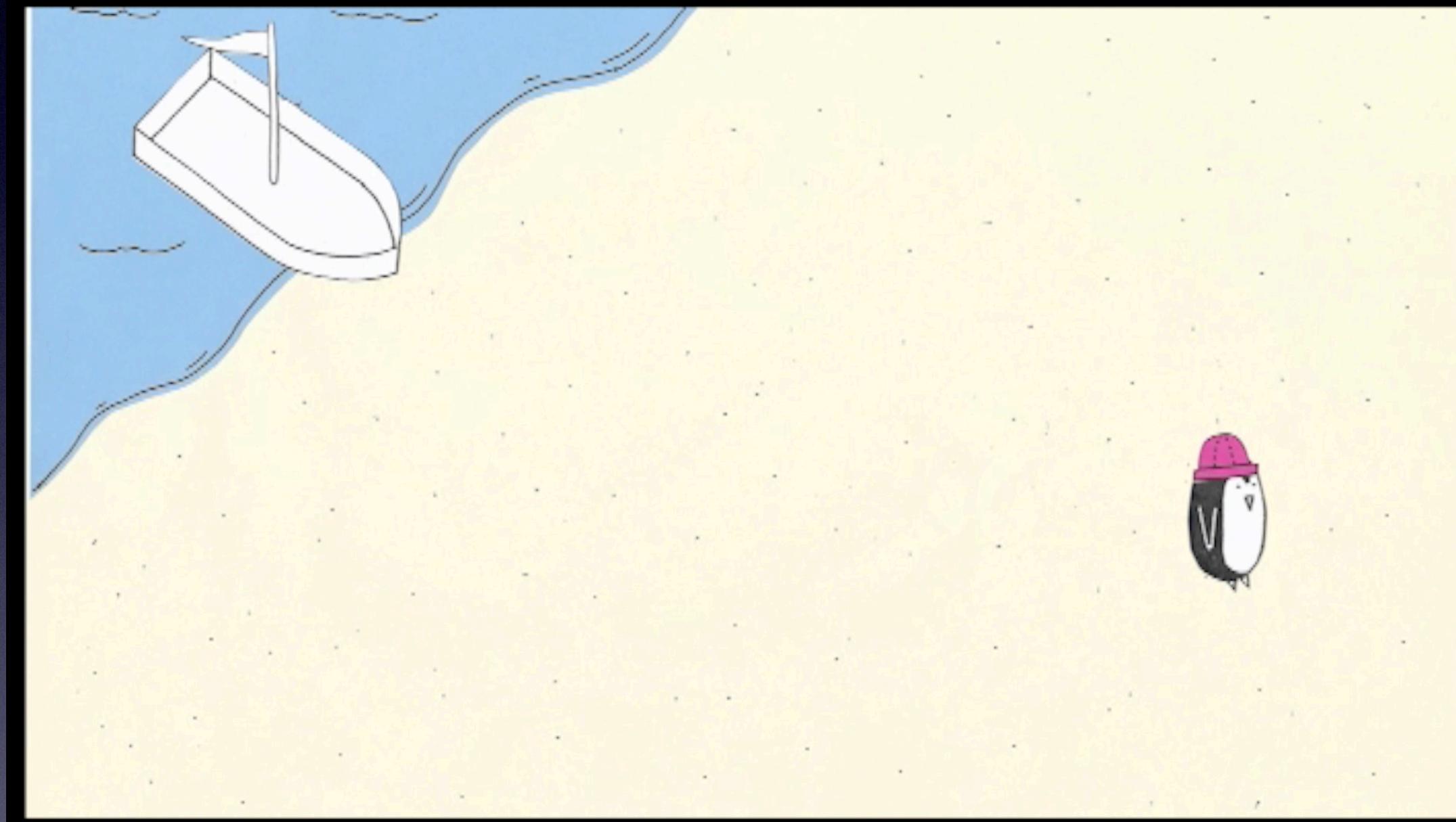


During production of films

- Diagrams on the Now (NTU learning portal) and Instagram and Twitter to support students
- Self governing bookable work spaces.



End of project, end of term Animation screening



Students asked “How did you find producing a 30 second to 1 minute , narrative communication? ”

- “Because it was short, it was harder, we really had to focus on communicating the message in a short sequence”
- “We realised we were focusing on making each frame perfect, but when its moving you realise you cant see the detail in every frame. We started working faster, not being so precious...”

Staff feedback

- “Really surprised how engaging the students found making an animatic from their rough storyboards”
- “They were really excited in the Premier workshop, making animatics”
- “Making the story board move seemed to make it come alive for students”
- Adobe Premier interface is very difficult for students
- Some students still put too much emphasis on final production, sometimes at the expense of storyboarding and idea communication

What do to develop further for 2018/19 and beyond

- Technical spec improve -see samples screen shot ; showed the students at start of screening what had been sent in
- Workshops make compulsory for all students? But how do we make this happen?
-

Here are some screen grabs of what was submitted

The ongoing question:

- How do we get all students to engage with focusing on ideas and experimentation for longer, and not focus (understandably) on professional looking outcomes?

- Thank you
- jonathan.hamilton@ntu.ac.uk
- Twitter / Instagram @jonhamilton19
- www.vimeo.com/jonnathanhamilton
- <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/art-design/jonathan-hamilton>