

DESIGN FOR MOTION

Fundamentals and Techniques of Motion Design

SECOND EDITION

AUSTIN SHAW

Foreword by ERIN SAROFSKY

A Focal Press Book



Design for Motion

Combining art and design principles with creative storytelling and professional savvy, this book covers everything a serious motion designer needs to make their artistic visions a reality and confidently produce compositions for clients.

In this updated second edition of *Design for Motion*, author Austin Shaw explores the principles of motion design, teaching readers how to creatively harness the essential techniques of this diverse and innovative medium to create compelling style frames, design boards, and motion design products. Lessons are augmented by illustrious full-color imagery and practical exercises, allowing you to put the techniques covered into immediate practical context. Industry leaders, pioneers, and rising stars contribute their professional perspectives, share personal stories, and provide visual examples of their work.

This second edition also includes updates on the following:

- Illustration techniques
- Typography
- Compositing
- Visual storytelling

- Incorporating 3D elements
- Social/mobile-first design
- Portfolio and concept development
- How to develop a distinct personal design style, and much more

Plumb the depths of core motion design fundamentals and harness the essential techniques of this diverse and innovative medium. An accompanying Companion Website (www.routledge.com/cw/shaw) features video tutorials, a student showcase, and more.

Austin Shaw is a full-time Professor of Motion Media Design at the Savannah College of Art and Design. He has also taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. For over 15 years, Austin has worked as a motion designer for clients including Target, Ferrari, Fedex, McGraw Hill, Ralph Lauren, and VH1 and as a Creative Director, Designer, and Animator for companies such as Brand New School, Curious Pictures, Digital Kitchen, Perception, Sarofsky, and Superfad.



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Design for Motion

Fundamentals and Techniques of Motion Design

Second Edition

Written by Austin Shaw

Edited by Danielle Shaw

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my daughters Athena Blue and Chloe Shaw, who remind me to be curious.
And to my father Larry Shaw, who always believed in my words.



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Foreword to the 2nd Edition

Erin Sarofsky

In *Back to the Future Part II*, when Marty McFly gets out of his DeLorean in 2015, he stands, aghast at how advertising moves around him. He spins around to take it all in. Everything is in motion, layers and layers of media assaulting him.

We have arrived at a time when motion design is more than animating on type over live-action imagery. It's literally everywhere and in everything we see. Now we are all Marty McFly being barraged by content that is trying to grab our attention with flashy animation.

Like Marty, we're not sitting in front of a TV. We are all out in the world. So, content has to be delivered to us; on our mobile device, in our chosen social media platform, at the venue where we're hanging out, in the elevator on the way to our job, or in the game we're playing. Information moves faster than ever, and we are consuming it as fast as it appears. The happy upside of this phenomenon is this: Opportunities for motion designers are at an all-time high.

Now, most designers have to be more than one-frame thinkers. The art we mastered many years ago in print design has to be reimagined and extrapolated into a narrative. That means designers now have to ask themselves, "What is the story and how does it unfold? How do we capture the attention of a viewer and

take them on a journey?" These questions are just as important for a 6-second Instagram animation or a 60-second main title sequence. This process, exploring design in a narrative, is also what separates amazing motion designers from the pack. How can you not only create a look and a proficient animation, but also take the viewer on a journey of discovery, keeping them engaged and wanting to know more?

* * *

When I started out in this business, motion design had pretty specific uses. In commercials, we animated logos and supers with the offers of the day. Occasionally we would have product demos to "plus up" with bits of motion design to call attention to things. Sometimes, though rarely, we'd get to do completely animated commercials. I'm not talking about traditional cel animation, which could actually be quite sophisticated. I mean traditional motion design, which was anything but.

In entertainment, most VFX were all in-camera or shot as plates for compositing. Even displays and monitors had set designers building practical objects. It was unthinkable to purposefully lean on CG and motion design to sell anything convincingly.

Right as I entered the field, tools started emerging that allowed designers to be able to dig deeper into motion design work and not only produce it more efficiently, but also inspire and influence its development. Designers like me were being tasked with inventing new design-driven looks and narratives for products. To do that, it also meant we had to develop new processes, new ways to present and produce work throughout the production pipeline. This work created demand for better, faster, and more intuitive software and hardware to help designers keep up.

This was a beautiful and treacherous time in motion design. We created imaginative stills and storyboards (works of art in their own right) that we sold to big agencies and clients with promises of bringing them to life (as if we really knew how). The truth is, most of the time, we didn't. We just started making things. Through tireless days, finding work-around after work-around, we made things that were even better than we imagined they could be.

Now, as with all early forms of communication and craft, when you look back at that work, it's a bit primitive. But that's when the industry was invented; so many of those amazing pieces created back then inspired the whole motion design field. This field—once a few people at a few studios—is now a vast industry with artists and animators working across all markets in every aspect of the marketing and development pipeline. That evolution occurred in less than 20 years.

* * *

I met Austin Shaw when the motion graphics industry was in its heyday. There were still very focused studios creating this work. The demand for artists was insatiable. Media was leaning into new looks we were developing because they were so fresh and “unlike anything seen before.”

Because the field was still so new, and we were creating innovative work, pushing the boundaries of the software and

trying to manage client expectations along the way, Austin and I were among many ambitious artists and producers who were developing a new process. Following this process helped to guide both the selling and production of great work.

As the field has grown to accommodate new techniques, mediums, platforms and technologies, that process has become even more important ... because it creates a paradigm for success amongst ourselves and our clients.

Having been both on the professional and the academic sides of this emerging industry from its infancy, Austin has rare insight. He has been able to distill the processes we have created and to serve them up in a way that students of motion design can easily absorb. He's also constructed it to work in layers, offering pieces of knowledge that are like tools in a toolbox. Each tool makes you a stronger artist, communicator, and animator.

The depth of information covered in this book is important because motion design encompasses a range of mediums and a variety of skill-sets. Back in the day, learning one motion tool like After Effects meant you were easily in the game; that's not the case anymore. In addition to that tool, there are both compositing and 3D tools. There are also a variety of techniques like cel animation, motion graphics animation, footage manipulation, photo-real compositing, and many others that should be understood, if not mastered.

This diverse base knowledge is so important because motion designers are needed now in many different capacities:

- Commercials still need animated logos and offers.
- Products are now fully CG, flying around and forming in ways that defy gravity and logic.
- Liquid can magically fly into frame and form objects that would be impossible to achieve practically.
- Motion can be captured and applied to CG objects.
- Interactive video installations.

- Where video archives of deceased performers have been projected at concerts, there are now holograms of the artists.
- AR and VR have become a new reality for motion designers as companies are embracing those technologies in their marketing campaigns.
- Gaming is also evolving to be more design centric, with some games being created entirely by designers and illustrators.
- Web design, social media and all platforms you explore feature motion design elements throughout (just clicking *like*, prompts a lovely heart animation).
- Facebook makes photo albums for you.
- Billboards aren't print; they're LED video panels.
- Even mall and airport kiosks animate and respond.
- And the list goes on. ...

In movies and entertainment across the board, entire sequences are created in CG. More and more motion design elements are integrated into scenes because it elevates the production design and character development. Where would Iron Man be without his famous heads-up display (HUD)?

Motion artists are needed not only to create these things, but also to make pre-visualizations of them so they can be coded and developed for all the various platforms. Pre-visualizations are needed to sell ideas. They are needed to develop what's next, to inspire people into thinking beyond the platform, to help bring

products into present and future, while also inspiring new ways of telling stories.

* * *

Notwithstanding reality, what Justin Cone touched on in the original forward for this book remains spot on: Learning and discovery always meet with the reality of your situation. Sometimes you are short of time, sometimes short of money, sometimes your team is missing a key person, sometimes your software or hardware lets you down, sometimes clients get in the way, and sometimes the assets provided aren't up to snuff.

This book will help you problem-solve through all those situations. Through its illumination, you will fully grasp the process that has been created to allow you to work through every sort of challenge you will face.

What Austin does extremely well in this book is to teach that process and use it to guide you through both the projects you are working on *and your career as a whole*. It will also help you avoid falling deep into one specific trend. Those of us in the trenches of this industry know that once something is hot, it will fall out of favor very soon. If you use this book as a base, and hone in and lean on strong design skills, production skills, and conceptual thinking, you will have the opportunity to make successful work, no matter what medium you are working in or where your work ultimately appears.



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Preface

When I began my career in the field of motion design in the early 2000s, the people who were designers of motion came from a variety of creative backgrounds. Many were like me, having trained as fine artists, illustrators, or graphic designers. Some were film majors in school, while some had studied animation. Still others had no formal training, but they were quick to learn software and had innate artistic ability. During this time, it was common for designers to be hired as freelance talent by production companies and animation studios. These companies had staffs of animators, composers, and directors. Then a shift occurred where a number of small design studios opened. The designers were the core staff of the companies, and the animators and composers were the freelancers.

Today, you can find all kinds of opportunities to work full-time or as a freelancer in the field of motion design. Although it is still defining itself as a discipline, the need for motion designers is growing. As digital media generalists, creative problem-solvers, and visual storytellers, we are employed across a wide range of creative industries. Motion designers work at design boutiques, advertising agencies, media networks, tech companies, and major

corporations. In the academic world, motion design is becoming a recognized major and course of study. The principles and exercises detailed in this book are designed to teach you how to come up with ideas and create design for motion.

Design for Motion originated as a class that I created at the Savannah College of Art and Design. As a Professor of Motion Media Design, I wanted to teach a course that focused primarily on the design side of motion design. I reflected on my years spent as a designer in the industry. My goal was to create a curriculum that emulated real world studio demands and standards. After a period of trial and error, through early iterations of the course, a syllabus emerged. This textbook reflects the syllabus and can be adapted for usage by educators.

Many of the visual examples presented in this text were created in my Design for Motion course. The students range from undergraduate to graduate. Their creative work serves to demonstrate the validity of the principles, theories, techniques, and exercises outlined in this book. Additionally, I have reached out to a number of industry leaders to share their personal perspectives and experiences as designers for motion.



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Introduction: Motion Design

Building on Traditions

Although motion design is a relatively young discipline, it builds upon the foundations of many other creative fields. As a commercial practice, motion design continues the tradition of the *atelier*, or classical workshop. The modern roots of motion design can be traced back to artists like Saul Bass, who translated his poster designs into film title sequences beginning in the 1950s. Other artists like Pablo Ferro and Maurice Binder also laid the foundation with similar work in title sequences. Experimental filmmakers like Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, and Norman McLaren pushed the boundaries for what motion design would become.

For decades, the commercial practice of motion design was bound to the world of post-production. During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, creative industries experienced a digital desktop revolution that allowed motion design to detach from the pipeline of post-production companies and begin a sojourn towards a multiplicity of creative practices. Kyle Cooper, working under the banner of RGA reinvented the art of title design with his work on the film *Se7en* in 1995, inspiring a new generation of motion designers.

As we entered the 2000s the price of hardware, including computers, cameras, and storage devices, decreased while the processing power and capabilities of these machines increased. A new breed of boutique-style motion design studios began to emerge in a few major cities around the

world. This technological revolution made the field of motion design accessible to a wide range of creative types from graphic designers, filmmakers, animators, and visual effects artists, as well as self-taught motion designers. Television titles experienced their own revolution with work like *Six Feet Under*, created by Danny Yount, et al., at Digital Kitchen in 2001. Throughout this decade studios rose, fell, and adapted into hybrid models of design-driven production companies. *Motionographer* was born from Justin Cone's *Tween* and became one of the primary online communities for aspiring motion designers and seasoned veterans of the post-production houses alike.

In the last decade, motion design has expanded beyond television and film screens as the dominant platforms for usage. With screens seeming to never be further than our pockets, motion designers have a crucial place in the *mobile-first* revolution. Social media platforms need a wide variety of motion design projects, from animated GIFs to feed-friendly mobile content. Although the traditional "motion graphic broadcast show package" still exists, moving forward it is difficult to see widespread application beyond specific programming, such as sports, news, and documentary-style content. However, motion design packages for social and streaming networks have arisen and afford a myriad of opportunities for motion designers. Advertising agencies and social first marketing boutiques are utilizing data-driven analytics



Figure 0.1: Style frame for *The Game Awards 2017* title sequence. Created by Peter Clark for The Game Awards.



Figure 0.2: *Good Luck America*: graphics for Snapchat show. Created by Graham Reid, Motion Designer at Snapchat. These frames showcase motion design for vertical platforms.

to create a new level of specificity for motion design at a very granular level.

Platforms that fall under the description of “emerging tech” such as VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) continue to increase the utilization of motion design. In addition to crafting immersive virtual environments for VR or assets that add to our existing world for AR, designers need to consider user experience and agency. Furthermore, the accessibility of high-quality projectors has advanced the art of projection mapping, providing opportunities for motion designers to work across a range of public spaces, including visuals for live music, theatre, retail, and artistic installations.

Although most professional motion design jobs are concentrated in the major cities of the world, opportunities continue to spread to more local venues. As motion design

becomes a more standard need for creative industries and platforms, this trend will continue to grow. The radically enhanced capacity for transferring large amounts of data via the internet has allowed motion designers to work from nearly anywhere. Already it seems, a legion of remote freelancers can be found supplementing the in-house workforces of boutiques and corporations alike. At the same time, corporations are expanding their internal creative teams to meet many of their own creative needs and motion designers play a role here as well.

In the realm of academia, motion design is studied as a major at a number of universities worldwide. Where motion design is not yet offered as a dedicated course of study, elective course options of motion design classes have become standard for many design programs. Outside of traditional brick and mortar institutions, a host of online schools have emerged to offer

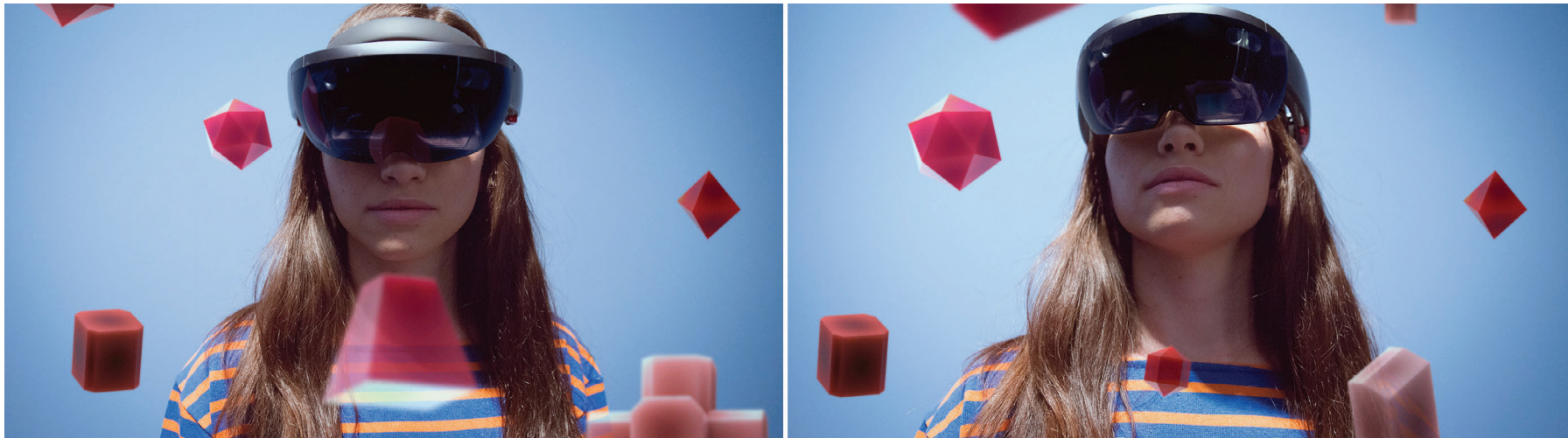


Figure 0.3: *Floating Shapes*: VR animation created by Carlo Vega for Microsoft. “Working closely with the Microsoft creatives and engineers, we adapted one of my animated video art pieces into an augmented reality animation to be exclusively experienced with Microsoft’s HoloLens. The 1-minute animation feels and moves like a virtual sculpture.”¹ —Carlo Vega. Creative Directors, Alanna Macgowan and Stephen Bader.

remote learning opportunities. In the early 2000s, Chris and Trish Meyer’s book *Creating Motion Graphics with After Effects* was the primary source to learn software. Today, video tutorials on nearly any motion design software can be found online. In addition, an abundance of inspirational work awaits anyone who is interested in learning about motion design.

Motion & Graphic

Motion design is a field that combines both motion and graphic media. Motion media includes disciplines such as animation, film, and sound. The defining quality of motion media is change that happens over time—thus we can consider motion design to be a *time-based media*. Graphic media includes disciplines such as graphic design, illustration, photography, and painting. Graphic forms of media do not change over time. They appear static through a defined viewport. Change can happen over the course of a few frames, seconds, minutes, hours, or even days. Interactive motion, installation art, and new media art

may not even have a fixed duration or may possess shifting timelines. Motion offers the opportunity to play with qualities of rhythm and tension. Regardless of a project’s duration, an understanding of how to create interesting contrasts through the framework of a timeline is essential for strong motion design.

Art & Design

There are two different extremes of motion design: motion that is more like fine art and motion that is more like design or commercial art. Motion in the realm of fine art evokes qualities of mystery or ambiguity. Motion in the realm of commercial art aims at communicating certainty. Of course, there is motion design that has aspects of both fine and commercial art. For instance, a commercial may start with art and mystery, but finish with design and certainty. The first 25 seconds of a 30-second commercial takes the viewer on a journey that inspires emotions and ideas. The final 5 seconds invariably ends with a logo animation that

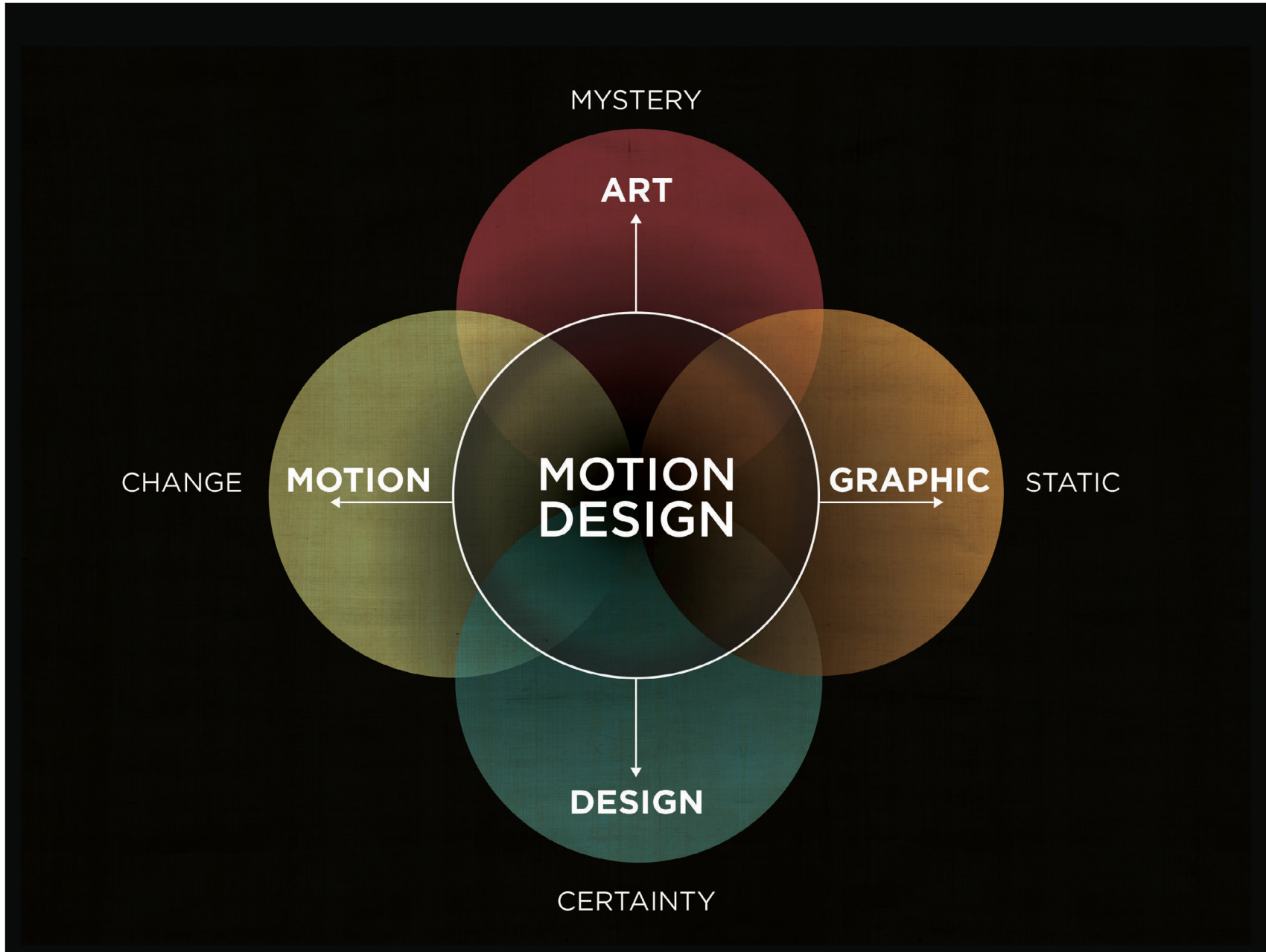


Figure 0.4: This information graphic represents two essential spectrums that compose motion design. The horizontal axis depicts the continuum between motion and graphic, while the vertical axis depicts the continuum between art and design.

leaves the viewer with no uncertainty about who has delivered the message. This combination of art and design is one aspect of what makes motion design appealing for both creators of the media and the audience.

Planning Motion

A still image depicts space, depth, and a focal point. A single frame can represent a moment in time for a motion design project. It also illustrates the visual style. By starting with a single frame, a designer can imagine and plan for animation. Effective compositions are more easily created in graphic form, which can then be translated into motion. Regardless of the style of a graphic image, a strong composition is required to generate interest in a viewer.

Contrast Creates Tension

An overarching theme of this book is the use of contrast to create tension. Tension draws a viewer into a piece. Contrast can be expressed through concept, story, and image composition.

Typically, when we go to the movies, watch a show, listen to music, or read a novel, we hope to be told a story that grips us in some way. We want to be transported and moved emotionally and intellectually. As designers of motion, we need to create tension to produce this experience. Contrast is the key to delivering tension in a piece. Successful design requires variation in composition between positive and negative space, dark and light values, large and small scale, etc. because these qualities help to create visual interest.

Varying Compositions

Effective motion design requires strong compositions that vary across timelines. These changing compositions allow for rising and falling tension, unexpected surprises, and impactful communication. In order to be effective with motion, one must first be effective with composition. This precept is one of the primary principles that links motion and graphics. In addition, a motion designer must learn how to change composition with intention. Compositions can transform with subtle grace or

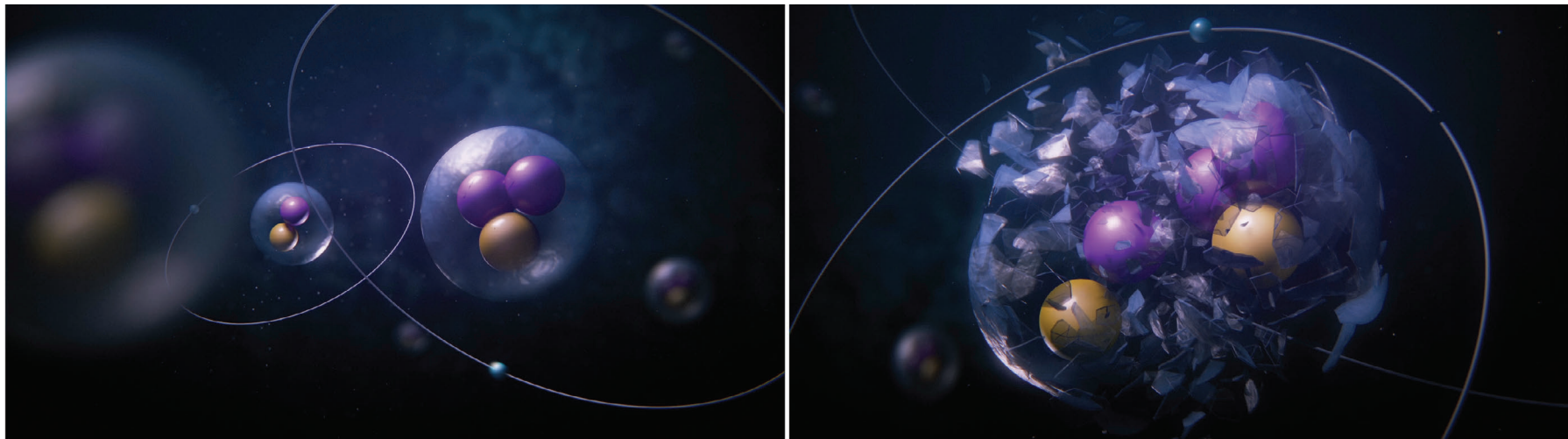


Figure 0.5: Style frames by Sekani Solomon, Freelance Designer. Style frames created at SCAD, Design for Motion class.



Figure 0.6: Style frames by Preston Gibson, Art Director at 90 Degrees West. Style frames created at SCAD, Design for Motion class. This sequence of style frames represents the principle of varying compositions. They illustrate how a motion design piece will change over time.

with shocking abruptness. These types of decisions are at the essence of how motion designers effect a viewer’s experience of a piece.

Design-Driven Production

Design-driven production is a term used to describe a business model that has arisen from motion design. Design-driven production is a hybrid of traditional film production companies and design firms. Some also include qualities of traditional advertising agencies. The entire range of preproduction, production, and post-production can be found in design-driven studios.

Some of the creative roles in design-driven production are designers, animators, editors, art directors, writers, creative directors, and live-action directors. On the production side, there are talent coordinators, producers, and executive producers. There may also be sales representatives, recruiters, or other types of production roles, like production assistants or runners. The combination of creative and production roles at a company or studio comprises a *production team*. Although this text focuses primarily on the design side of motion, anyone working in design-driven production can benefit by learning more about the design process.

Types of Projects

Design-driven production companies service a range of creative industries such as advertising, entertainment, film, digital, and social. Traditional types of motion design projects for advertising include commercials, network branding, show packages, TV promos, news graphics, and sports graphics. Advertising, packaging, and content for entertainment includes film titles, TV titles, event titles, film graphics, and video game cinematics. Motion design projects are also utilized in digital signage, web banners, user experience design, and apps. Further interactive projects that use motion design include AR and VR. With social media, an entirely new avenue for motion design has arisen. Advertisements for social-friendly feeds across multiple platforms has created tremendous opportunity for motion designers. Indeed, social media has become one of the primary industries that employ motion designers. Motion design projects of a less commercial nature include music videos, short films, visual essays, and fine art installations.

What Is Design for Motion?

Design for motion is the combination of image-making and storytelling. It encompasses the initial creative stages of a motion

design project or production. Before we begin to create motion, whether in camera or through animation, a certain amount of planning is helpful. A project needs a strong concept, a visual style, a story or narrative, and specifications for output and delivery.

We begin this process by developing concepts through a variety of techniques that include research, writing, and drawing. As a concept emerges, we create a distinctive look and feel, or style. After we define this visual style, we give our narrative sequence its shape. We depict every scene and key shot in a motion design project, prior to animation, so that both the visual style and the story are easily understood. As a project moves from design into motion, the creative goals and boundaries are clearly mapped out for the production team. This process produces the primary *outcomes*, or *deliverables*, of design for motion. An outcome, or deliverable, is a finished product that is either given to a professor in an academic setting, or delivered to a client in a professional setting.

The Purpose of This Book

The purpose of this book is to teach you about these outcomes and how to make them. They are called *style frames* and *design boards*. Style frames exemplify the image-making aspects of design for motion by conveying the mood or feeling of a piece, whereas design boards represent storytelling by demonstrating a sequence of events in chronological order. Another design for motion deliverable is the “container” that holds style frames and design boards for presentations. In an academic setting, this document is referred to as a *process book*. In a professional or commercial setting, this document is referred to as a *design deck* or *pitch book*. Process books and design decks are delivered to a professor or client. These “books” contain the finished outcomes of a design for motion project, as well as various degrees of process work that helped in developing the concept.

Style frames, design boards, process books, and design decks embody the principle of *pre-visualization*, which is the plan for a project’s visual style and narrative prior to production. The need to arrive at a defined style prior to motion is very important, as motion design can be very tedious and labor intensive. Commercial productions are particularly sensitive to having a defined visual style that a client agrees to before creating motion. For more artistic productions, it is still a great benefit to flesh out the visual style in the graphic stages of a project.

Other Disciplines

This book is for students and aspiring professionals who want to work in design-driven production. Motion design offers tremendous opportunities to those interested in creative careers. Until the early 2000s, screens to display motion design primarily consisted of SD (Standard Definition) televisions, movie theater screens, and computer monitors. Then HD (High Definition) resolution became prevalent, and motion designers could create content for SD and HD aspect ratios.

Apple’s introduction of the iPhone in 2007 and the iPad in 2010 started a whole new revolution for screen content. Since then, other companies have created variations of smart phones and tablet devices. All of these screens need beautifully designed motion. Original motion content is being created solely for digital platforms and regularly delivered in multiple formats such as horizontal, vertical, and square. Additionally, the modern incarnation of *projection mapping*—the projection of digital images onto a real, 3D surface—is expanding our definition of screens by transforming environments and architecture into displays for motion design. As technology makes screens more adaptable, we can expect to use them in more areas of our lives.

Motion design needs strong designers to concept ideas, create unique visual styles, and tell interesting stories. Above all else, motion design needs people who understand how to

effectively communicate. Students or professionals working in Animation, Graphic Design, Visual Effects, Illustration, Advertising, User Experience Design, Film, Editing, Sequential Art, Photography, and Creative Writing can find professional opportunities in motion design.

Animation

Motion design is a form of animation. However, traditional animation tends to focus on character development and literary narrative. Motion design focuses on art direction and uses a wide range of design assets. Also, traditional animation is typically long format, whereas motion design is relatively short. Despite these differences, animators and motion designers work side-by-side in many design-driven production studios. Animators who want to work in a fast-paced environment, and on a variety of projects, do very well in motion design.

Graphic Design

Graphic designers are trained to create effective visual layouts, work with typography, and communicate messages clearly. These are skills that also apply to motion design. I encourage my students to refine their skills with typography, as motion design often requires precise and elegant usage of type. Graphic designers who are interested in making their work move, can translate their skills directly into motion.

Visual Effects

Like animation, visual effects has similarities to motion design. Many of the same tools and principles are applied to both disciplines. The key differences exist in how they fit in the production workflow. Visual effects artists bring an incredible attention to detail and mastery of technical skills. In the film industry, they tend to work on specific shots for a

project over a long period of time. Motion designers tend to work on a lot of projects, and in many different capacities. They may concept and design for one project, then work as an animator or compositor on another. Like animators, visual effects artists and motion designers often work side-by-side in design-driven production studios. Visual effects artists are very valuable in motion design because of their highly specialized skill sets.

Illustration

Illustrators do very well in motion design. They are trained to create strong compositions across a range of visual aesthetics. They are the quintessential image-makers of the creative world. Illustrators who learn the language of design for motion, or how to think sequentially, can play a very creative role in design-driven productions.

Advertising

The advertising industry is one of the primary employers of design-driven production studios. Advertisers work directly with clients to formulate strategies and big picture ideas for marketing campaigns. Advertising uses motion design for everything from prototyping to executing commercial projects. Design for motion and advertising are similar as they both serve the purpose of giving form to creative ideas. An advertising student or professional who wishes to become more hands-on can utilize design for motion in design-driven productions.

User Experience Design

Students and professionals of interactive design and user experience can also utilize motion design. Both disciplines rely on the principle of change. In motion design, change is something witnessed by the *viewer*. With interactive and user experience design, change is something that is initiated by the *user*. Although

there are different considerations in terms of passive and active change, motion design can be used to enhance the experience of interactivity.

Film

Directing and cinematography are also essential to motion design. Although motion designers may rarely direct live talent, they are always directing the movement and expression of visual elements. Some motion designers are quite comfortable directing live-action, and they can move fluidly between live talent and digital media. Cinematographers paint with light and record beautiful compositions through the lens of a camera. These skills translate directly into motion design because an understanding of light and dark help a designer to direct the focal point of a scene. Design for motion draws heavily from the art and language of cinematic storytelling.² Students and professionals of film find motion design to be an accessible and alternative approach to filmmaking.

Editing

Strong film editing skills are essential to motion design. A project must be arranged in a manner that takes the viewer on a journey. Editors understand the rhythm of storytelling and how to create dramatic tension through a viewport. All motion designers can benefit from education and training in editing. Some editors add motion design to their arsenal of skills to be more versatile and valuable in the workforce.

Sequential Art

As creators of comic books, graphic novels, and hand-drawn storyboards, sequential artists already think about images changing over time. They understand storytelling and cinematic changes that make a visual narrative interesting. These skills are essential to design for motion and can be

combined with digital illustration to create style frames and design boards.

Photography

Image-making is rooted in frame composition. Photographers are trained to see and capture strong compositions through the lens of a camera. They understand how to frame a scene through a viewport. They also have a strong foundation in lighting and value, which is essential for any kind of image-making. Compositing live-action or photography with design elements is a common aesthetic direction for many motion design projects. Photographers who are interested in exploring motion will find many opportunities to work with their images.

Creative Writing

Writing is an extremely important part of motion design. Conceptual development and narrative development rely on writing to record ideas. As a time-based media, motion design tells a narrative or story. This process requires the ability to write a script or treatment. For communication purposes, it is essential that a designer is able to write descriptions about his or her work. Many design-driven studios employ writers to help brainstorm projects, prepare presentations, and develop scripts for larger productions.

How to Use This Book

Chapter 1 introduces and defines the primary outcomes of *Design for Motion*—style frames and design boards. They are the building blocks of design-driven storytelling. Style frames give form to a concept, and design boards envision how a story unfolds. This chapter describes the anatomy of both style frames and design boards as well as their practical application in commercial and artistic productions.

Chapter 2 focuses on the creative production process, presenting broad-stroke ideas about how to effectively navigate

a project from “Kick-off to Delivery,” or beginning to end. Strategies for working with creative briefs, project scope, and creative constraints are covered. Additionally, this chapter provides suggestions for when to exercise your imagination versus practicing creative discipline.

Chapter 3 explores a variety of concept development techniques including creative writing, drawing, and searching for inspiration. These exercises help to generate ideas quickly and keep the creative process fresh, fun, and exciting. Creative problem-solving is a vital skill for designers. As technology and platforms of media distribution evolve, the ability to come up with solutions to creative problems is fundamental for professional sustainability.

Chapter 4 looks at both image-making and storytelling. Classic visual principles such as composition, color, value, and contrast are discussed as related to motion design. Narrative tools such as cinematic vocabulary, thumbnail sketches, and hand-drawn storyboards are also introduced.

Chapter 5 examines tools, technology, and techniques. In addition to asset creation, compositing and 3D software for design are covered in depth. Compositing is a skill that allows designers to confidently create a range of visual styles. Competence in 3D software is rapidly becoming a fundamental skill in the designer’s toolkit.

Chapter 6 explores “Social/Mobile-First” thinking for motion design projects. The commercial industry has radically transformed to meet the needs of creating content across multiple platforms. This chapter introduces key terms, concepts, and best practices for creating motion design on digital platforms.

Chapter 7 focuses on presentations and pitches. Documenting and professionally showing your work are vital for both students and professionals alike. This chapter covers best practices for creating process books and design decks.

Chapters 8–15 introduce a number of creative briefs across a range of aesthetics for portfolio development. These exercises can be utilized to practice creating style frames, design boards, and process books. Every chapter features interviews with industry professionals sharing their unique perspectives and personal insights.

Notes

- 1 Vega, Carlo, “Copy for Book.” Message to the author. September 30, 2018. E-mail.
- 2 Van Sijll, Jennifer. *Cinematic Storytelling: The 100 Most Powerful Film Conventions Every Filmmaker Must Know*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2005.

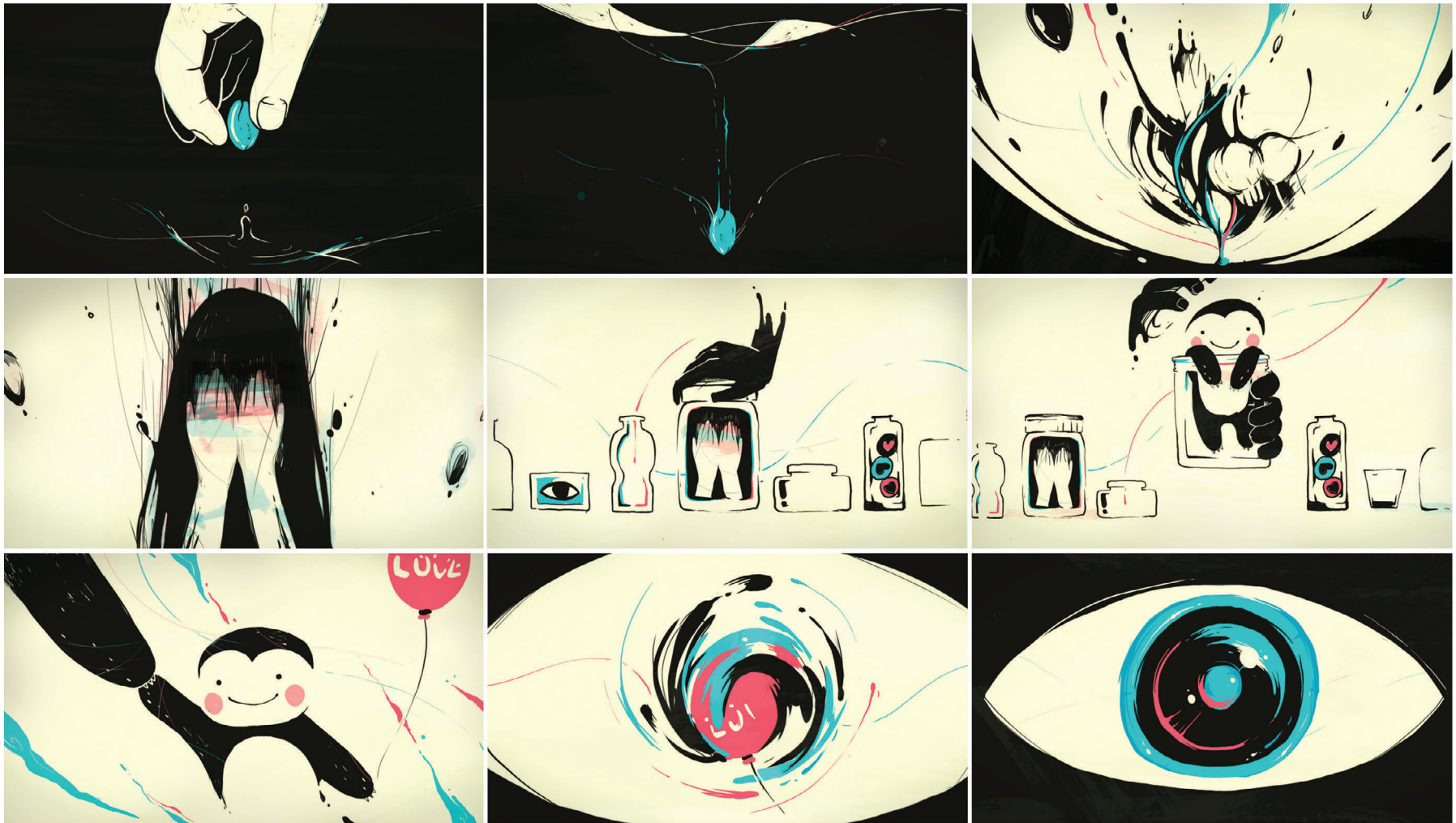


Figure 1.1: Design board by Yeojin Shin, Designer at Buck. Board created at SCAD, Design for Motion class.

Chapter 1:

Design for Motion

Beautiful Motion Begins with Beautiful Design

Motion design is the art of composing change over time. However, before we begin to make things move, it helps to have a plan. We have a much better chance of creating beautiful motion when we begin with beautiful design. A strong visual composition captures a viewer's attention, tells them where to look, communicates ideas and feelings, and often provides a jumping-off point into a narrative. A motion design piece without a strong design plan will have elegant movements at best but will more than likely fail to connect with a viewer.

Figure 1.1 is an excellent example of design for motion. Every frame feels like it belongs in the overall piece because of a unified visual aesthetic. Color palette, contrast in dark and light values, contrast in positive and negative space, and illustrative line qualities all define the constraints of this unique design style. The piece also tells a story and communicates ideas. Cinematic considerations are represented by changes in camera distance. Transitions are clearly designed as well, serving to demonstrate how the visual story moves from scene to scene. Additionally, the concept of memory is explored through various images that inspire a viewer to feel a dramatic range of emotions. Each individual frame is called a *style frame*.

“It’s like the relationship between a songwriter and a singer. Someone who writes a song is creating the

structure of the music, but then a singer takes that and brings it to life in real time—they can’t fully exist without each other. Similarly, to be a designer of motion is like being a music composer writing down notation, but the ultimate form of your work is the performance of that music—for us, that performance is the animation.”¹ — Stephen Kelleher, *Designer*

Style Frames

Style frames are the visual representation of what a motion piece will look like prior to animation. A style frame is a single frame or image that depicts the look and feel of a motion design project. Style frames are one of the primary outcomes of design for motion. From a business perspective, they help to win pitches for commercial projects. One image can be the difference between a studio or designer winning a project or losing to the competition. Because style frames help to win jobs, the designers who create them play an extremely important role in design-driven productions.

Ideally, a style frame is both beautiful and functional. Style frames present the ideas, emotions, and narratives associated with a concept. Although style frames are singular moments of a motion piece, each frame can propel a story forward. It may take a lot of practice to consistently make strong style frames, but if you enjoy image-making and storytelling, embrace the process of

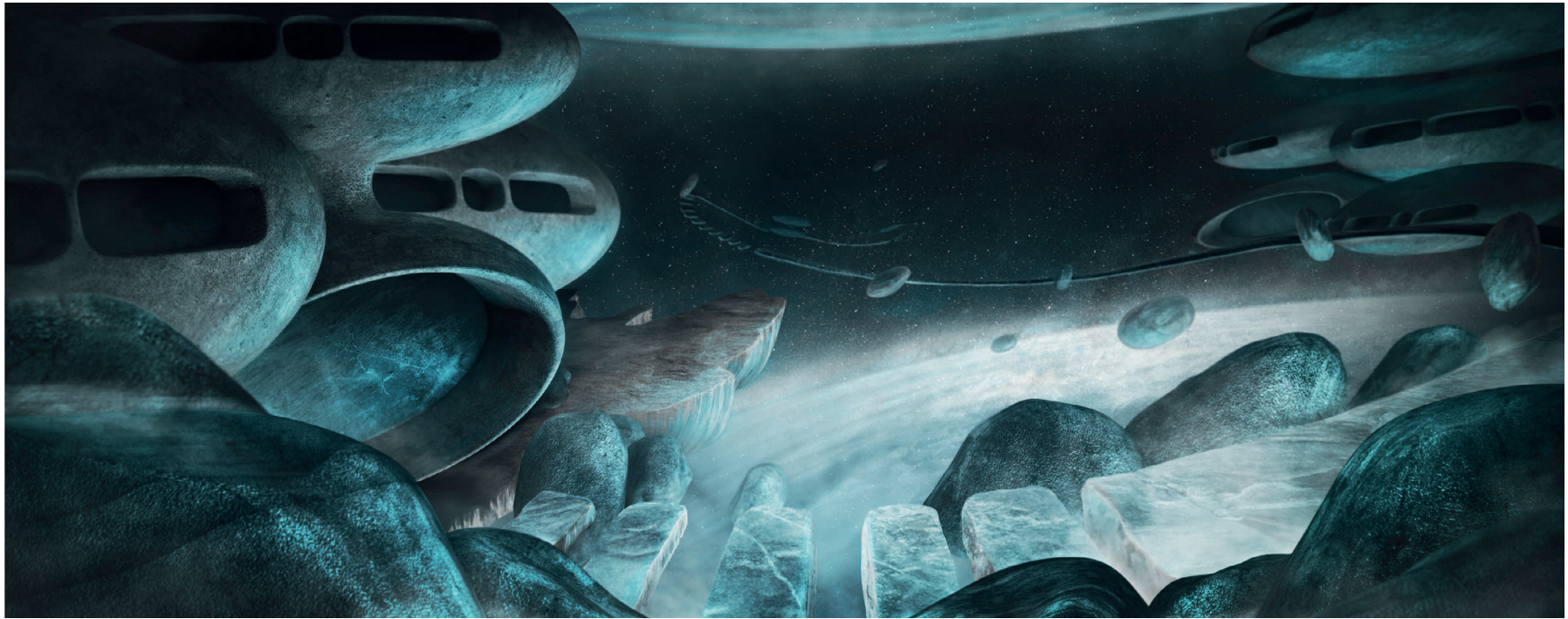


Figure 1.2: Style frame by Peter Clark, Freelance Designer/Director. Style frame created at SCAD, Design for Motion class.



Figure 1.3: Style frame by Chris Finn, Art Director at Gentleman Scholar. Frame created at SCAD, Design for Motion class.

iteration. Grit, determination, and making a lot of style frames will make you a better designer.

Look & Feel

The purpose of a style frame is to establish a unique look and feel that visually holds a motion design project together. Stylistic choices include which method or medium to use, such as 2D, 3D, illustration, collage, etc. Inexperienced motion designers will often rush through this phase of a project or skip it altogether. It is easy to tell when a motion designer has not spent time on style frames. Concepts are not fleshed out, compositions are uninteresting, stories are flat, and transitions are not considered. Conversely, when motion designers invest time and effort into



Figure 1.4: Style frames by Rick Kuan, Freelance Designer. Frames created at SCAD, Design for Motion class. These style frames show a defined and consistent visual pattern through the use of texture, contrast between dark and light values, a limited color palette, variations in opacity, and the treatment of positive and negative space.

style frames, the odds of creating beautiful motion design are greatly increased.

“On a personal level, style frames are about completion of an idea and a concept for yourself. On a professional level, style frames are important because they set the stage for everything. They inspire and inform your team, they give your client confidence in you and your ability to execute. Ultimately, they are your target. They are like a map to a hidden treasure—you can’t find the treasure without drawing your map first.”² —Joshua Harvey, *Designer/Director*

Stylistic Guides

Aside from their financial importance, style frames help to direct a production team’s efforts. They serve as visual guides by establishing the creative boundaries of a project. Style frames provide clear specifications about the use of visual elements

such as color, typography, texture, camera placement, etc. They are especially important when working with large teams of animators, compositors, and 3D artists where everyone needs to be working towards the same visual goal. For large-scale productions, ideally there will be a style frame for every scene or setup within the project to maintain overall cohesion. For smaller productions, or even solo projects, style frames are just as important because taking the time to define a visual aesthetic before going into motion will help create a much stronger project.

Concept Is King

Style frames should be visually striking, but, more importantly, they should express a concept. Even if a style is beautiful, a weak idea will be eye-candy at best. This kind of design falls into the category of *form over function*—an error that occurs when a designer focuses only on making something look great. The design may be flashy, but it lacks an impactful message



Figure 1.5: Style frames by David Conklin, Motion Graphics Designer at Rockstar Games. Frames created at SCAD, Design for Motion class. These style frames demonstrate a compelling concept coupled with a distinct illustrative style. The illustrations suggest interesting ideas and narratives that are open to interpretation. The contrast and limited color palette form a particularly striking and memorable vision.

or purpose. However, a beautiful design coupled with a strong concept is powerful. As Frank Lloyd Wright said, “Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union.”³

Design like a Champ

If you are interested in being a designer for motion, then you will need to build a portfolio of your best work. Design as if you have an infinite budget at your disposal and a roster of insanely talented production artists who will bring your vision to life through motion. In other words, do not dumb-down your style frames or limit your design to *what you think you can animate by yourself*. You can always reduce or modify the scope of your project once you begin to make things move. Chances are your

motion will turn out better than you thought, especially if you begin with strong design.

In design-driven productions, it is common for large teams to work together to create a motion design project. In addition to designers, a creative team can include animators, composers, 3D artists, live-action directors, cinematographers, editors, and producers. It is not realistic to expect a single person to create the same caliber of motion as a full production team. However, you can always *design* like a champ.

Enjoy the Process

Motion design is a serious business that requires a professional attitude, especially in the realm of commercial art where



Figure 1.6: Style frame by Jackie Khanh Doan, Designer at We Are Royale. Style frame created at SCAD, Design for Motion class. This style frame is an example of an aesthetic direction that is very intricate. It combines many layered organic elements and expressive facial features. In production, it would be very time-consuming or technically challenging. However, with a team of experienced animators and composers, it has the potential to be an interesting motion design piece.

design-driven production is fueled by financial budgets, teams of creative artists, and producers. However, this professionalism does not mean that we cannot enjoy the process. We should always do our best and strive for the strongest outcomes, but we will probably create better work

if we are having fun. Additionally, we should not sacrifice our wellbeing to achieve our creative goals. Learning how to pace yourself while retaining the joy of being creative are essential for a sustainable practice.



Figure 1.7: Style frame by Yeojin Shin, Designer at Buck. Frame created at SCAD, Design for Motion class.

Author's Reflection

I have always felt excited about the freedom, exploration, and discovery of making art. There is a magical sense of adventure in the ability to open doors into worlds of the imagination. Often from very young ages, motion designers have expressed our creative interests through drawing and painting. Those of us who have entered creative professions have managed to preserve and develop our curiosity about art and design.

It is important to remember that style frames are fun to make. Often, they are the most open and creative part of a project. Style frames offer the designer opportunities to be creative and expressive. Once a project moves into production, the amount of freedom and flexibility decreases more and more as it moves toward completion. Style frames afford an opportunity to dream big and push the boundaries of your creativity.

Professional Perspectives

Joshua Harvey

Joshua Harvey is a Los Angeles-based freelance Creative Director with a background in Design and Animation. His career started in 2005 after studying at the School of Visual Arts and then being offered a position at Psyop's NY studio. Since then he has been a part of projects and campaigns for clients large and small, in roles that run the gamut of production. As Creative Director at Buck's LA office, he co-led, designed, and animated on projects that garnered several awards. To name a few: the prestigious Clio, Gold at the London International Awards, ADC Designism, and the ADC Gold and Silver Cubes as well as Finalist at the Cannes Lions Festival. He was honored in 2013 with a Young Guns Top 30 under 30 Award at their 11th annual awards show.⁴

What is your art and design background?

I was fortunate to have a father who kind of had his ambitions taken away from him. So, once he saw I was interested in being creative, he basically knocked down all of the obstacles for me and gave me a clear path when I was young. That definitely plays a lot into my character now, the fact that I was encouraged to go after a career that I was passionate about. He got me into an art class with an illustrator who used to do illustrations for the National Wildlife Foundation and NASA. This guy happened to live in my hometown in the middle of nowhere in Indiana. I didn't really understand a lot of what I was being taught, it was very

technical. But I think, later on as the years went by, a lot of those things sunk in and permeated into my process. I had a really good art teacher in high school as well, who pushed me to think more conceptually about what the art is really saying. I went to the School of Visual Arts because I was really interested in doing computer animation.

How have you refined your design aesthetic?

I went to Psyop in New York, so right off the bat I was working with people at the top of their game. The people I was working with went to schools that focused on design, so I was more or less an executor of someone else's ideas. I was doing technical direction, a lot of rigging, coding tools, and fixing problems in the pipeline. There is a lot of creative problem-solving in that, but ultimately, I was being driven by an idea that someone else had. It's not necessarily that I wanted to be in control, but I didn't feel like it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be an artist.

I realized it had been a long time since I had drawn on paper or created images for myself. So, I bought sketchbooks again and started drawing as much as I could, trying to develop my skills. A job came up for Guinness, and because I had expressed that I wanted to get into the creative side of things, I was asked to do some style frames. We ended up winning the job. It was a really great experience because I actually sat down and made digital paintings, and I was excited about doing it. They came out really



Figure 1.8: *Johnnie Walker: Endless Walk* style frames. Designer: Joshua Harvey.

well, and I was surprised that I was able to accomplish things on that level. That project changed my whole perspective and so I started to focus on design.

I started freelancing after the Guinness job. I continued to do my own creative work so I could convince studios to hire me to do that kind of work. I didn't have too much to show, but I put a lot of the drawings I had been doing in my sketchbook on my website. I also had cool technical work from being at Psyop. It was a good way to get into it because I could go to other studios and help them out technically and also get creative participation in the projects,

as well. Slowly, over time, I started to do more creative work, and I was careful to tailor my image via my website.

I was at Buck in New York helping out on the Sherwin Williams jobs, and I was fortunate enough to have some creative participation in as well as to run the job technically. They wanted to hire me as a technical director. But, I was very hard line that I wanted to be on the creative side of things. I was hired as a Creative Director in Buck's LA office, which was kind of crazy because I didn't know if I had the experience or skills as a designer. But now it was my job to be creative and conceptual,