REVENBE THE MOUNTAIN

BACKGROUND

WHEN TRYING TO FIND INSPIRATION FOR THE FOCUS OF MY BFA, I KNEW I WANTED TO ESSENTIALLY FILL SOME KIND OF VOID IN THE FIELD OF ART I WAS CREATING FOR. WHAT VISUAL CONTENT DID I WANT TO SEE THAT DIDN'T ALREADY EXIST? I BEGAN THINKING ABOUT WHAT MEDIA I WOULD HAVE WANTED TO SEE AS A CHILD, AND WHAT WOULD HAVE MADE ME FEEL REPRESENTED AND CONNECTED TO. I BEGAN TO LOOK AT WHERE MY PASSION TO CREATE NATURALLY STEMS FROM, WHICH IS ROOTED IN APPALACHIAN FOLK ART AND HISTORY, AND FINDING THE BEAUTY IN THE RURAL MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES OF WEST VIRGINIA THAT I CALL HOME. THIS CULMINATED INTO FEELING INSPIRED TO REFERENCE ICONOGRAPHY FROM THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN REGION AND COMBINING THAT WITH A BFA FOCUSED ON VISUAL DEVELOPMENT IN ORDER TO CREATE A CONCEPT FOR A CINEMATIC STORY TAKING PLACE IN MY CHILDHOOD HOME.









RESEARCH

AFTER DECIDING TO FOCUS MY RESEARCH ON THE FOLKLORE AND REGIONAL HERITAGE OF APPALACHIA, I REALIZED THAT REPRESENTATION FOR THE REGION IS ENTIRELY VOID FROM THE ANIMATED FILM MARKET. FURTHER RESEARCH INTO HOW APPALACHIA IS REPRESENTED IN MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE MADE ME REALIZE JUST HOW OFTEN THE REGION AND ITS PEOPLE ARE SUBJECTED TO HARMFUL STEREOTYPES SUCH AS BEING IMPOVERISHED, UNEDUCATED, AND VIOLENT. THE MOST FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF THIS BEING THE 1972 FILM DELIVERANCE, AS WELL AS INSTANCES IN HISTORY SUCH AS PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON'S POVERTY TOURS IN 1964 AND ITS EFFECT ON THE ENTIRE COUNTRY'S VIEW OF LIFE IN APPALACHIA. I REALIZED THROUGH THIS SELF REFLECTIVE RESEARCH THAT I GREW UP ASHAMED AND EMBARRASSED OF WHERE I CAME FROM IN FEAR OF BECOMING ASSOCIATED WITH THESE STEREOTYPES. THIS MADE ME QUESTION THAT IF I HAD A PIECE OF VISUAL MEDIA AS A CHILD THAT ACCURATELY AND POSITIVELY DEPICTED LIFE IN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITIES. WOULD I HAVE FELT DIFFERENTLY?







MARKET RESEARCH

TARGET AUDIENCE

CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULTS
ANTHROPOLOGY/HISTORY FANS
RURAL COMMUNITIES



LAIKA PIXAR CARTOON NETWORK

ARTISTIC INSPIRATIONS

CHRIS SASAKI ROBERT KONDO TADAHIRO UESEGI NIK HENDERSON















THESIS STATEMENT

IN OPPOSITION TO THE DEROGATORY AND STEREOTYPICAL VIEW OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN REGION PERPETUATED BY POPULAR CULTURE, MY GOAL FOR MY THESIS IS TO CREATE A VISUAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN ORDER TO CELEBRATE THE RICH HERITAGE OF APPALACHIAN FOLKLORE AND TO REALISTICALLY DEPICT THE LIVES OF THOSE THAT RESIDE IN RURAL, ECONOMICALLY ADVERSE COMMUNITIES IN A WAY THAT SHOWCASES THEIR GENERATIONAL PERSISTENCE OF OVERCOMING ADVERSITY.

STORY



REMEMBER THE MOUNTAIN SONG FOLLOWS THE STORY OF COYOTE, A YOUNG BOY WORKING IN THE COAL MINES OF WEST VIRGINIA IN ORDER TO CARE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS MOTHER AFTER HIS FATHER'S PASSING IN A MINE COLLAPSE. AFTER RETURNING ONE DAY TO FIND A GHOSTLY TRAIN CONDUCTOR IN PLACE OF HIS MISSING MOTHER STATING THAT SHE HAD "PUNCHED HER TICKET" ON THE FABLED OLE BLACK TRAIN TO THE AFTERLIFE, COYOTE BEGINS HIS ADVENTURE THROUGH THE EXPANSE OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN REGION IN ORDER TO BRING HER HOME, ALL WHILE BEING GUIDED BY A MYSTERIOUS, SPIRIT-LIKE CANARY. ON HIS JOURNEY HE MEETS A BAND OF STRANGERS, A ONE EYED SHARPSHOOTER FROM TENNESSEE NAMED MEMPHIS REED, AN OUTLAWED TRAVELING DOCTOR NAMED GINSENG SULLIVAN, AND A FERAL CHILD WITH HIS BLACK BEAR COMPANION NAMED FLATTS AND SCRUGGS, ALL WHO HAVE A BONE TO PICK WITH THE "MAN DOWNSTAIRS" WHO LOOMS AT THE END OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS. WILL COYOTE AND HIS FRIENDS BE ABLE TO CONVINCE THE DEVILISH MINE BOSS TO RELEASE THEIR LOVED ONES, OR WILL THE COUNTLESS MONSTERS AND CREATURES FROM APPALACHIAN FOLKLORE THAT THEY ENCOUNTER ON THEIR PATH GET

TO THEM FIRST?

FOR NANA



FALL SEMESTER CHARACTER DESIGN

COYOTE

COYOTE IS AN 11 YEAR OLD BOY TAKING UP HIS FATHER'S WORK IN THE C&O COAL MINE FOLLOWING HIS PASSING IN ORDER TO CARE FOR HIS SICK MOTHER. WHILE BEING A HARD AND DEDICATED WORKER, COYOTE STILL HOLDS RESENTMENT TOWARDS HIS FATHER FOR THE LOSS OF HIS CHILDHOOD.

WHEN HIS MOTHER DISAPPEARS, HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO GET HER BACK, EVEN IF IT MEANS LEAVING THE ONLY HOME HE'S EVER KNOWN.



GINSENG SULLIVAN

AN OUTLAWED TRAVELING DOCTOR AND HERBALIST, GINSENG SULLIVAN EARNED HIS NICKNAME FOR ACCIDENTALLY KILLING THE MAYOR OF A NEIGHBORING TOWN, YET IS DETERMINED TO BRING BACK THE LIFE HE CUT SHORT DUE TO HIS MALPRACTICE AND PROVE HIMSELF AS A REAL DOCTOR.

WHILE WEARY AT FIRST, THE LOVABLE OAF CARES DEEPLY FOR COYOTE AND BECOMES SOMEWHAT OF A FATHER FIGURE AND

GUARDIAN FOR THE BOY.



MEMPHIS REED

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS SHARPSHOOTING FAMILY IN TENNESSEE, MEMPHIS REED CAN'T HELP BUT ALWAYS FALL SHORT OF FIRST PLACE. AFTER LOSING HER EYE IN A QUICK DRAW BOTTLE SHOOTING CONTEST GONE WRONG, SHE'S DETERMINED TO GET REVENGE ON HER RIVAL AND GET A REMATCH IN ORDER TO FINALLY MAKE HER PARENTS PROUD.





FLATTS BECOMES A FERAL CHILD AT
JUST 2 YEARS OLD AFTER HIS PARENTS
MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEAR DEEP IN THE
WOODS. RAISED BY HIS COMPANION
BLACK BEAR, SCRUGGS, THE TWO
VENTURE WITH COYOTE ACROSS THE
APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN ORDER TO
DISCOVER FLATT'S TRUE IDENTITY
WHILE SCRUGGS TAGS ALONG FOR THE
SNACKS.



THE MAN AT THE END OF THE LINE

SOME MAY CALL HIM THE DEVIL,
BUT HE THINKS HE'S JUST A
MAN DOING BUSINESS. THE MAN
WHO AWAITS AT THE END OF THE
LINE HAS THE POWER TO
RESTORE LIFE TO COYOTE AND
HIS FRIEND'S LOVED ONES, BUT
NOT WITHOUT A PRICE TO PAY.



CHARACTER EXPLORATION

WHILE SOME CHARACTERS CAME TO
MIND INSTANTLY, OTHERS TOOK THE
LENGTH OF A SEMESTER TO FIND.
TRYING TO FIND A VISUAL LANGUAGE IN
WHICH ALL OF THESE CHARACTERS
SHARED WAS CHALLENGING, FROM THE
INTITIAL SILHOUETTE TO THE FINAL
RENDERING. I MADE SURE TO STEER
AWAY FROM CLASSIC STEREOTYPES OF
APPALACHIAN CULTURE WHILE ALSO
KEEPING PIECES OF HUMOR AND
WHIMSY INTACT IN ORDER TO APPEAL
TO A PIECE OF CHILDREN/YOUNG
ADULT'S VISUAL MEDIA.



CHARACTER PROCESS



COYOTE'S CHARACTER EVOLUTION SERVES AS A GENERAL EXAMPLE OF HOW THE PROCESS FOR CHARACTER DESIGN GENERALLY OPERATES. FIRST, NUMEROUS EXPLORATION SKETCHES ARE MADE UNTIL EITHER ONE IS CHOSEN OR MULTIPLE ASPECTS ARE MESHED TOGETHER. THEN, A FIRST PASS USUALLY FOLLOWS. IN THIS CASE, IT WAS DISCUSSED THAT COYOTE'S FACIAL EXPRESSION AND PROPORTIONS WERE NOT PUSHED ENOUGH, THEREFORE, A SECOND PASS WAS MADE, WHICH BECAME THE FINAL DESIGN.





HOME INTEROR

EVEN WITH HIS FATHER'S ABSENCE, COYOTE'S HOME IS BARELY BIG ENOUGH FOR TWO. MY GRANDMOTHER'S STORIES OF GROWING UP WITH 7 SIBLINGS IN A 2 ROOM COAL CAMP CABIN HAVE ALWAYS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF SHOCKING, AND I WANTED TO MIMIC THAT SAME SENSE OF CRAMPED SPACE, WHERE EACH PIECE OF FURNITURE HAS A DUAL PURPOSE OR INCREDIBLE SIGNIFICANCE IN ORDER TO TAKE UP THE LUXURY OF SPACE.

QUILTING

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ART OF CULTING IN APPALACHIA CAN NOT BE UNDERSTATED AS CREATING BEAUTY FROM SCRAPS PERFECTLY ENCAPSULATES THE APPALACHIAN SPIRIT IN COUNTLESS WAYS. THIS QUILL WAS CREATED FROM INDIVIDUALLY PAINTED BLOCKS ON WATERCOLOR PAPER, AND LATER SCANNED I AND ASSEMBLED INTO A TRADITIONAL STAR QUILLT PATTERN. IN APPALACHIAN CULTURE, A STAR QUILLT IS MEANT TO WARN OFF EVIL.







THE BEGINNING

COYOTE ARRIVES HOME TO FIND, IN HIS MOTHER'S ABSENCE, A GOLDEN, GLOWING CANARY AND THE FABLED OLE BLACK TRAIN. COYOTE MAKES THE DECISION TO LEAVE EVERYTHING HE'S EVER KNOWN BEHIND IN ORDER TO FIND HIS MOTHER AS THE CANARY GUIDES HIM ALONG THE TRACKS.







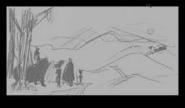




MOUNTAIN SONGS

COYOTE AND HIS NEW FOUND BAND OF MISFIT FRIENDS TRAVERSE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS ALONG THE TRAIN TRACKS, HOWEVER, THE CANARY WARNS THAT JUST OVER THE GEORGIA PEAKS LIES SOMETHING SINISTER.







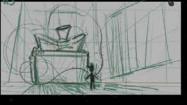




THE END OF THE LINE

COYOTE FINDS HIMSELF IN THE OFFICE
OF THE MAN AT THE END OF THE LINE.
SURROUNDED BY PICTURES OF HIMSELF
AND THE TRAPPED SPIRITS OF
CANARIES, COYOTE FEELS AS THOUGH
THIS MAY BE THE END OF HIS
JOURNEY.











REUNION

PRESENT, THERE'S NO POINT TRYING TO CHANGE THE LAST.

THESE ARE COYOTE'S MOTHER'S FINAL WORDS AS SHE REVEALS HERSELF TO BE THE SPIRIT OF THE CANARY THE ENTIRE TIME.











THANK YOU

ILLUSTRATION CLASS OF 2023

