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Pygmalion & Galatea

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Abstract

Believability and reality are the cornerstones of my research and animation. This paper will address the aspects and issues in and surrounding the development of the animated short, Pygmalion & Galatea, based on the myth translated from Ovid's Metamorphoses. It will present the findings of my research, the steps that were and will be taken in creating the film, the similarities and dissimilarities of other versions of the same myth over the centuries, the importance of reality in film, a short analysis of beauty throughout history, and a short history of Cypriot religion during the time.

Project Description

My project will be an animation based on the Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, with the design based on the 1882 painting of the same name by Jean-Leon Gerome (1824 – 1904). I will be creating this piece with as much accuracy to the painting and location as I can, designing my characters to closely resemble the subjects of the painting, the sculpture's studio modeled similarly to the painting, and the Temple of Aphrodite modeled after the actual temple located in Paleopaphos (Kouklia), Cyprus where the Festival of Aphrodite took place. I will be using sketches of what is believed to have existed at the site of the temple, found in a book sold at the museum of the Temple of Aphrodite. I will also use, as reference, pictures and video taken at the site and try to model the layout of the land similarly to the actual location. In all, I plan on making this as artistically, historically, geologically and mythologically accurate as possible, melding all of these aspects into one cohesive piece of work.

The story of Pygmalion and Galatea takes place in ancient Cyprus. It tells the story of a sculptor, Pygmalion, which has become so disenchanted with women that he decides to sculpt the perfect woman. As he is doing so, and as his sculpture gets closer and closer to completion, he finds himself obsessing over detail and, eventually, falls in love with his creation. Upon its completion, he begins dressing the statue in fine jewelry, bringing it gifts, and even kissing the statue before he leaves and when he comes home.

During the Festival of Aphrodite (some resources refer to her as Venus), Pygmalion goes to the Temple of Aphrodite and prays to her to bring him "one like my ivory statue." However, Aphrodite sees into his heart and knows his true request is to bring his statue to life. So touched is she by his request and his love, and also that the

statue resembles herself so closely, that she grants his request, as represented by the flame of the torch in the temple firing up three times. When he arrives home and kisses the statue, he notices the stone is warm. Each touch turns more of the statue to flesh and finally they embrace in a kiss. My story will be a bit more pared down from the full story of the myth, but at the moment of kiss, the image will "snapshot" to the painting by Gerome hanging on the museum wall.

The tools used in my project may include, but are not limited to, Autodesk Maya for modeling, lighting, texturing, animating and rendering, Adobe Photoshop for creation of textures as well as Maya's own HyperShade utility, Syflex cloth simulator, RealFlow water simulator, Mental Ray for Maya rendering engine for rendering, Final Rig for rigging my character's skeleton and ParticleIllusion for particle effects like fire and smoke. I have been running tests on using Paint Effects in Maya for creation of grasses in an environment. I have also been going through tutorials on RealFlow, Mental Ray for Maya, and Syflex. I will continue to go through additional tutorials on body modeling, realistic facial modeling, technical rigging books like The Art of Rigging, Volumes 1-3 for creating my own rig for my character, and tutorials on how to create realistic animation, focusing on facial expression and emotive acting.

I will begin drawing the character sketches that will ultimately be imported into Maya to be used as reference for modeling the characters. I will also sketch set layouts for every scene and begin compiling Cypriot artifact images, such as lamps and pottery, so that those can be modeled for inclusion in the temple and studio. A fully written script, fleshing out camera angles and movements, and laying down the flow of the animation, will follow this up. I will then draw the storyboards in order to finalize each shot for the

scenes. These images will be compiled together, using After Effects, in an animatic, or animated storyboard, complete with sound. This animatic will then be sent off to my composer, Van Dyke Parks, so that he can score the piece.

After these tasks have been completed, I will begin modeling my characters and sets, adhering as closely as possible to the designs I have laid out for myself. I will also create the cloth models for the tarp that will be covering the uncarved stone, and the tunic that the sculptor will be wearing, experimenting with Syflex in Maya for realistic cloth simulation. I will animate my characters, adhering closely to the storyboard and animatic, create lights for my scenes, essentially finalizing the "look" of the final animation, do test renders and check for problems in textures, shadows and the effects created by the Paint Effects tool in Maya.

Once I am happy with each scene, I will begin final rendering. The editing stage will, hopefully, be as minimal as possible, if all previous steps are followed closely and problems are fixed when they are found. Once this stage is complete, I will move on to integrating sound in my piece, the final part of this process. As my piece is likely to be a "silent film," this final process will be to composite the musical score with the film. I will likely go back to my composer for final adjustments of the score, if it is needed.

Introduction

My thesis will explore the bridging of the multiple genres of art, music, mythology, history, archaeology and technology.

Rarely do so many facets of human culture come together in one work. My goal is to allow the melding of these vastly different fields of study in my animated film. I plan to accomplish this by beginning with the painting Pygmalion and Galatea by Jean-Léon Gérôme and designing my characters and models to resemble the painting as closely as possible.

My first step is researching the story: its location, the history and look of the era, the temple itself as well as its religious artifacts, such as the Aniconic Stone which was their representation of Aphrodite. I have already begun this research.

I will then infuse history and archaeology into the piece by studying the findings that are available to me. Palaepaphos (Kouklia), the site of the Sanctuary of Aphrodite where Pygmalion prays, has been inhabited by many cultures over the centuries. Each culture has added its own influence by building on additions to the temple. By figuring out exactly when the story of the myth takes place, I can take the sketches of the archaeological digs at the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and eliminate those portions of the temple that had not been built yet. This will give my piece an environment of utmost accuracy.

In addition, I will add to that environment using mosaic designs and reconstructing models of pottery, lamps, etc. that were found at the site of the archaeological dig. All of these, combined with the implementation of the Aniconic

Stone, their symbol and focus of worship for Aphrodite, will ultimately transport the viewer into a historically accurate world that few have imagined.

Lastly, I will attempt to bring life to the subject through animation, acting and a good story. Without this vital aspect, no amount of realism in environment or background research will make the viewer believe in the characters.

I feel it is my duty as an animator to create a world for my viewer to believe in. And, having chosen a topic for my film as culturally rich as this, I feel I have no choice but to bring it to life in as accurate a way as possible. In doing so, not only will I give the viewer an enjoyable experience in watching my piece, but also they will walk away from my work with a sense of understanding of the life that once was.

Historical, Theoretical and Cultural Context

The main focus of my research has been on the archaeology and the history of Cyprus, especially the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and its surrounding area. Since my main desire in creating this animation is creating a realistic depiction of this classic story, I've studied many aspects of the archaeology of Cyprus, including lamps, pottery, religious symbols, excavation drawings, mosaics and objects of worship.

One such object is the great black Aniconic Stone found near the temple in Kouklia in 1888. This stone, also known as a baetyl, is a "sacred stone containing a deity," in this case, Aphrodite.[1] It is also described as an omphalos, or "a small phallus of the belly (om) or of the womb." [2] This pyramid-like representation of the "most 'Goddess-like' portion of the female anatomy" completely fits the description of Aphrodite as the

1. Ancient Worlds
    Aniconic Stone

goddess of love, beauty and procreation, the latter that she associated "with desire, pleasure, love and joy, feelings that were absent in Heaven and Earth's copulation that was solely directed by sex." [3, 4]

2. Ancient Worlds
   Roman Coin

This central point of worship, the Aniconic Stone, has made its way into the "art world" as well. Even as far as Rome, it can be found on coins that represent "the Sanctuary of the Paphian Aphrodite."[5]

The story of Pygmalion and Galatea has been told and retold throughout history. It is taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses, the original known occurrence of the story, which he wrote circa 9 A.D. Since then, like the

statue itself, the story has taken on a life of its own. In effect, this story of a creator's

ultimate love for his creation has had an incredible impact in paintings, sculpture, opera,

literature, plays and film throughout centuries.

3. Honoré Daumier Pygmalion	4. Francois Boucher Pygmalion and Galatea

In 2-dimensional imagery, we go from Honoré Daumier's 1842 Lithographic print

Pygmalion, a humorous illustration depicting a rail-thin, ragged Pygmalion and a far-

from stunning Galatea (image 3), to Francois Boucher's 1767 masterpiece Pygmalion and

Galatea depicting Pygmalion kneeling before his creation, who is surrounded by

cherubim and other beautiful characters (image 4).

5. Ernest Normand Pygmalion and Galatea	6. Paul Delvaux Pygmalion

There's the traditional representation in Ernest Normand's Pygmalion and Galatea of the male sculptor and female creation (image 5), versus the female sculptor and male creation depicted in Paul Delvaux's 1939 surreal Pygmalion (image 6). Thomas Rowlandson's pornographic 1813 illustration Modern Pygmalion (image 7) showing the lovers on the verge of copulation contradicts the modern 3D rendition of Tobin James Mueller's 1999 creation Finding Galatea: A Self-Portrait which, although filled with all the symbolism of an ancient work, it exudes very little feelings of intimacy (image 8).
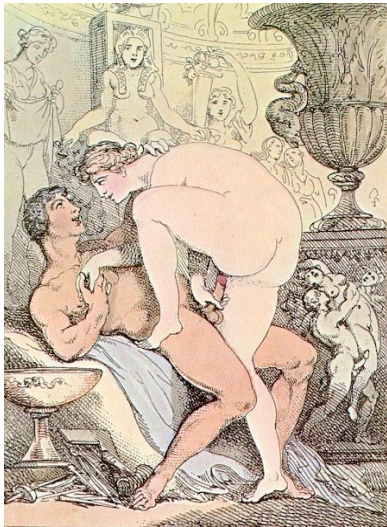
7. Thomas Rowlandson
Modern Pygmalion

8. Tobin James Mueller
Finding Galatea: A Self Portrait

In true 3D, Étienne Maurice Falconet sculpted Pygmalion and Galateé in 1763, which shows Galatea's bottom half in a standard sculpture's pose while the top half takes on a more life-like stance, capturing the color fade from stone to flesh found in most paintings in an all-stone medium(image 9). Auguste Rodin's Pygmalion and Galatea, a more coarse creation typical of Rodin's work, followed this in 1889 (image 10).

9. Étienne Maurice Falconet
Pygmalion and Galateé

10. Auguste Rodin
Pygmalion and Galatea

In story form, we begin, obviously, with Ovid's Metamorphoses. From there, we have Gaetano Donizetti's opera Il Pigmalione (1816), W. S. Gilbert's play Pygmalion and Galatea (1871), and George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion (1912). This lead to his production of My Fair Lady (1956) which later led to the 1964 film of the same name, in which he did not live to participate.

In short subject, John Updike's Pygmalion, found in the short story collection Trust Me (1987), was first published in *The Atlantic* in July 1981. It tells a quick story of a husband, Pygmalion, and second wife, Gwen, on their wedding night. Her continual mimicry of their friends after parties consistently threw him into fits of laughter. He lived through a woman's description of the outside world, his first wife also a mimic, even though he was a part of it. "He could not know the world, was his fear, unless a woman

translated it for him[6]." She eventually became "perfect for him," as was Galatea for Ovid's Pygmalion[6]. Updike also alludes to the transformation of Galatea at the sculptors touch from hard stone to pliable flesh when the husband, unknowingly doomed to repeat history, massages his wife to sleep night after night, as he did his first wife.

And to view a more modern approach, we would turn to Richard Powers and his 1995 novel, Galatea 2.2. The author, and main character in this story, takes up residency at his alma mater and hooks up with a scientific crowd arguing over cognitive thinking. The "mad-scientist" of the bunch, Philip Lentz, places a wager that in ten month's time he and Richard could program a machine to read and test on a list of literary classics and score higher than a human. The following events lead the team to eventually utilize the University's supercomputer so that their program can continue to expand its abilities and understanding of simple concepts, i.e. metaphors. The program eventually is able to test and learn from itself, asking questions about what sex it is, what race, etc., until, at Implementation H, Richard names it Helen. Ultimately able to read on its own, using digital cameras as its eyes, Lentz decides he wants to investigate this "cognition" and take her apart to see what programming is making this possible. Richard fights for "her" right to "live," as, in his eyes, their creation has become self-aware. Richard cares for "her," having spent the better part of ten months teaching and molding this program to life[7].

Other films following the same theme include 1948's One Touch of Venus, Educating Rita in 1983, Weird Science in 1985 and Overboard in 1987. 1987 also saw the remake of One Touch of Venus with Michael Gottlieb's Mannequin, 1990 brought us

the blockbuster Pretty Woman and Woody Allen put his spin on the subject in 1995 with

Mighty Aphrodite.

Interestingly enough, this last work is the closest of all of these stories to the true

definition of a Greek tragedy. Following the guidelines of the Greek tragedy, the story

opens with a Prologue produced in song-speak by a Chorus. This Chorus plays as the

moral angel-on-the-shoulder to the protagonist, Lenny (Woody Allen), constantly

popping up to lend advice in the most inopportune times.

Lenny finds the mother of his adopted son, who turns out to be a prostitute, adult

film star and general dimwit. Against his better judgment, and to the dismay of the

chorus, Lenny attempts to transform the mother of his child into a respectable citizen.

This, of course, places the perpetually nervous Lenny in some very uncomfortable

situations. And, not to give anything away, the film ends with an exodus from the

Chorus, again staying true to tragic tradition.

None of these stories described have had as much impact on an audience as

Shaw's Pygmalion and My Fair Lady. Shaw had an ability to draw in an audience

through unexpected humor and wit, as well as the occasional poke at English society,

making the audience grow fond of the characters. This, in turn, allowed the audience to

grow with the characters. Henry Higgins' obvious lack of understanding for the human

spirit makes him believe that, just because Eliza Doolittle is a destitute flower girl, she is

less than human and, therefore, has no feelings whatsoever:

> PICKERING: [in good-humored remonstrance] Does it
>
> occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS: [looking critically at her] Oh no, I don't think

so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [Cheerily]

Have you, Eliza?

LIZA: I got my feelings same as anyone else.[8]

Higgins also has no thought about what should become of Eliza once she has been taught

to speak like a lady. After all, a poor girl that speaks well is still poor. What he comes to

realize is that this homeless girl has more passion and conviction than many society folk.

In My Fair Lady, Higgins ultimately falls in love with Eliza. Although this coincides with

the Pygmalion myth, it does not coincide with the Pygmalion play where Eliza goes off to

marry Freddy, a young man that meets her first as a flower girl, and then later as a lady-

in-training, though he doesn't recognize her.

Higgins' ultimate desire in transforming Eliza is to make her into a person

acceptable, née beautiful, to society. The definition of beauty in society throughout

history has changed dramatically from decade to decade and region to region. However,

in recent times, the idea of beauty has taken on a sort of double meaning. The term

"beautiful people" refers, not to physical attractiveness alone, but to "wealthy or famous

people, often members of the jet set, who mingle in glamorous social circles and who,

because of their celebrity, often establish trends or fashions."[9] The people who usually

follow these trends do so to "fit in" or to gain a rise in social status, similar to Eliza

Doolittle's quest for "proper speech." These people place themselves in the public eye, to

be looked upon and revered – placed on a pedestal. They thrust themselves into "**the

gaze**."

The **gaze** deals with how an audience views other people. In the framework of feminist theory, this concept deals with how men look at women, how women look at themselves and other women, and the effects surrounding this. Male gaze, specifically, is defined as when a male imposes an unwanted gaze upon the female. However, the "beautiful people," as well as models, beauty pageant participants and, more recently, web-cam exhibitionists, seem to welcome the male gaze.

The fact that the male gaze exists brings up the question of whether there also exists a female gaze. Laura Mulvey, originator of the phrase "male gaze," states that "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification."[10] However, the fact that male models, male pageants and male exhibitionists exist support the "hypothesis" that female voyeurs exist, and thus exists the female gaze.

An art exhibition, *The Female Gaze: Women Look at Men*, argues against the view that men are reluctant to be gazed upon. This exhibit showcased female artists that studied the male form. One such artist, Cinthea Fiss of Florida, turned cat-callers into models by asking them to come up to her New York City studio (her home at the time) for a photo shoot. Therese Mulligan, photography curator at the George Eastman House, said with regard to these men, "[t]o get these men who had leered at her on the street to strike these poses was amazing. And you could tell that they loved being looked at by her. These guys aren't attractive, but they sure think they are." [11]

Analysis and Synthesis

Upon reflection of my research into this subject, I feel I have gleaned an understanding of ancient cultures in general. My curiosity for these cultures has expanded tremendously as a result and I find myself wanting more than ever to bring our primitive building blocks of modern-day living forward in a way that immerses the viewer in that era. My hope is that my audience walks away from this film wondering, having had a seed of knowledge planted that fosters a desire to dig deeper into the subject.

Ancient cultures and societies, like Cyprus and Greece, can be easily understood if they are presented in an entertaining and fun way. Retelling this story in its original context, in its original setting, brings different areas of study, archaeology, religion, history, and geography to name a few, together in a unique way. Add in mythology to the mix, and not only do you get magical events, interesting creatures and adventure, but also a glimpse into how people lived, fought, loved, and worshipped.

Stories like these are a major influence on the art world, as made obvious by the above examples. The beauty, the drama, and the passion of these ancient works serves as inspiration to all kinds of art form. From sculpture, to painting, to poetry, to literature, to music, to theater, to film; these myths and legends continue to entertain and draw major audiences over 2000 years from their time of conception.

I believe that my research has given me a great opportunity and a purpose. It has made me realize that, in order to make a good animated short film, you need to give it true life. Each character has to take on its own personality, whether it be an ornery Henry Higgins or a diamond-in-the-rough Eliza Doolittle. Throughout all the different versions of this ancient story, the one that stood out the most was the one with the most character.

An animation could have all of the historical and physical accuracies, but without a good story and good acting, it's just not real. Inversely, if your film has great character depth and acting, the models and sets could be nothing more than a few cubes and it would still make a better film. I hope to infuse that type of realism into my animation, and still have the aforementioned accuracies, the best of both worlds.

Conclusion

Of all of the iterations of this story, I have yet to find one that places the scenes in a true representation of the period. This can be said for many stories. However, I've noticed that, as technology advances, the desire for films to be made as accurately as possible seems to grow. Believability has become a major factor in filmmaking. With all-digital sets, green screen effects and digital characters, the possibilities seem endless. However, the only way to accomplish this is to research all aspects of your subject. Explore every angle. It's not enough to throw a costume on a character and suddenly you're in some foreign land. Study architecture, landscape, the history of the time period, religion, society. True plausibility is very hard to accomplish.

I'm reminded of James Cameron's Titanic. The research that went into that film, the rigging for the lifeboats created by the original manufacturers, the song that the musicians played as the ship went down, the nursery rhyme told by an Irish mother to her kids, an old couple huddled together in bed – reportedly representing the originators of the Macy's department store, Ida and Isador Strauss, all these little details that people take for granted add to the story to suck the viewer into the film and make them a part of it[12].

I believe it is my duty as an animator, to create, not just a believable story, but also a believable world. Somewhere to get lost in, become a part of. Every aspect of my research has been a direct result of that belief.

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