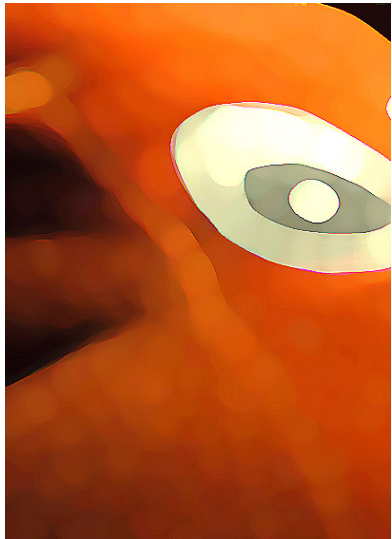




Project 3: Recreating the experience of a dream
'Cotton dreams' an animation
Guided by: Prof. Shilpa Ranade
Project by: Poonam Athalye
vc2005, IDC, IIT Bombay

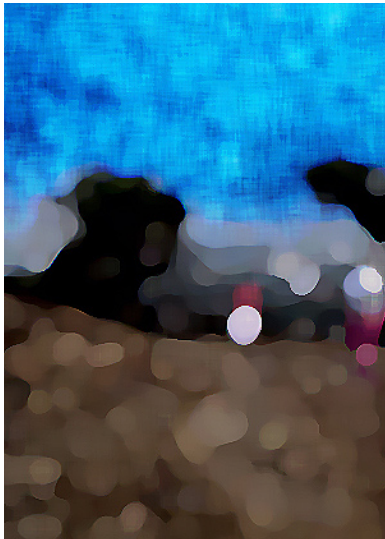
4



Introduction

Nature of dreams 04
Surrealist movement 07
Dreams as narratives 08
Why animate dreams? 10
The inferences 12

13



Observations

Dreams recorded 13
Peculiar features 15
Approach 16

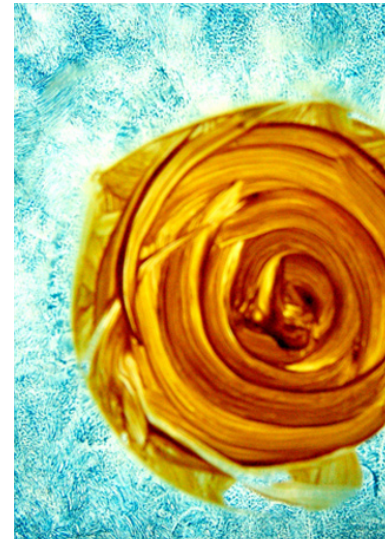
17



First attempt

Chosen dream 17
First 30 seconds 19

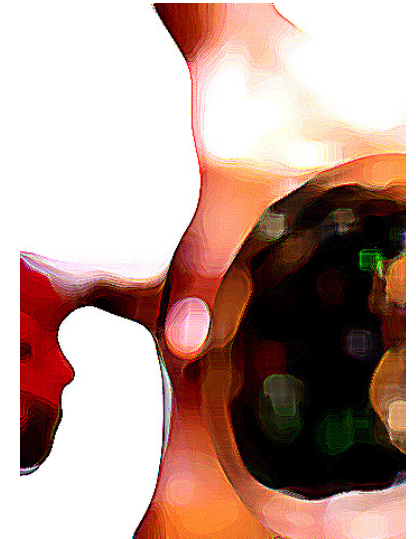
20



Bridging the gap

Visualization 20
Her feedback 21
The change of approach 22
New ideas to get closer 23

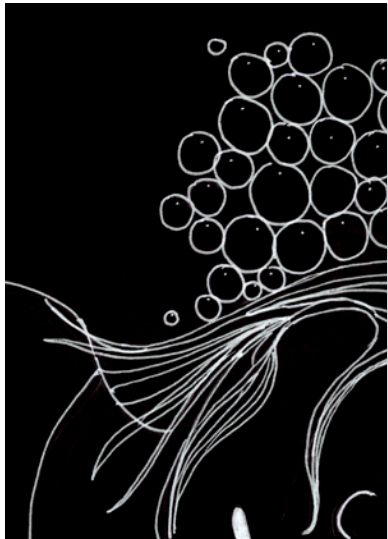
24



Changed approach

Change in narrative, point of view and sound treatment 24

25



Story board and sound

The narration 25
Colours and textures 28

29



Pixilation

Live-action shots 29
Photoshop effects 30
Some of the frames 31

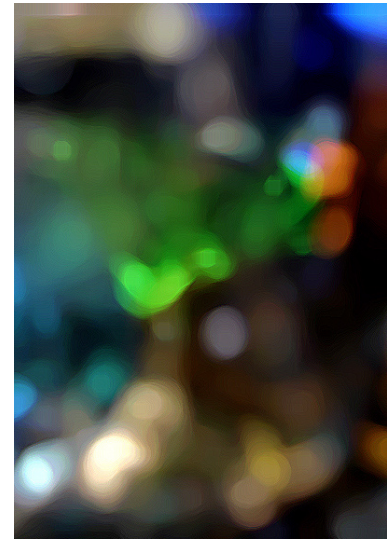
32



Oil paint on light-box

The technique 32
Making the lightbox 34
Shooting paint on glass 35
Some of the frames 37

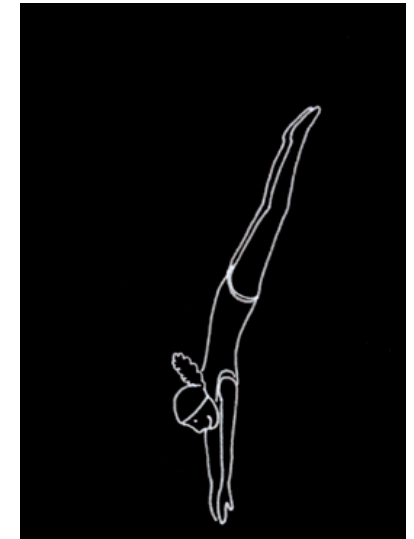
38



The animation

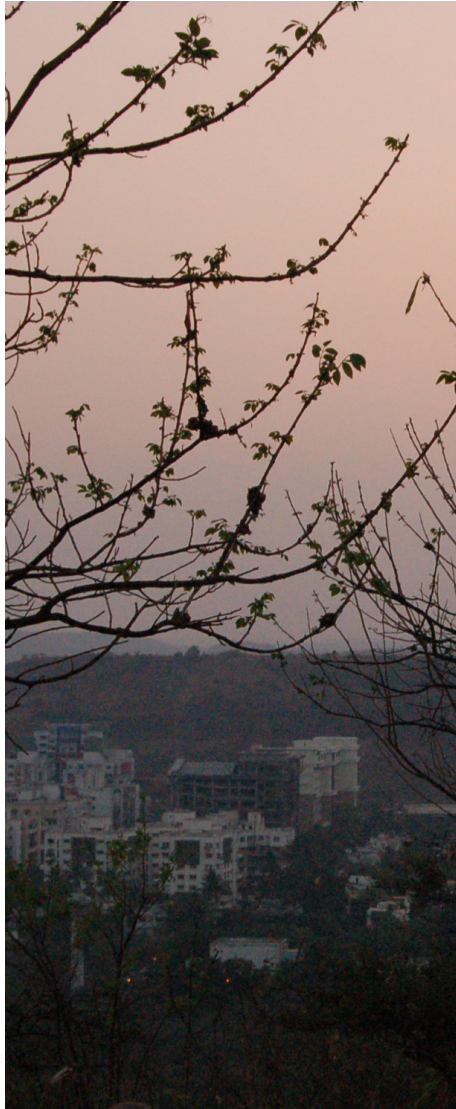
After the linetests 38
New narrative 39
The final outcome 40
Summary of the process 41

42



References

Bibliography 42
Acknowledgements 43



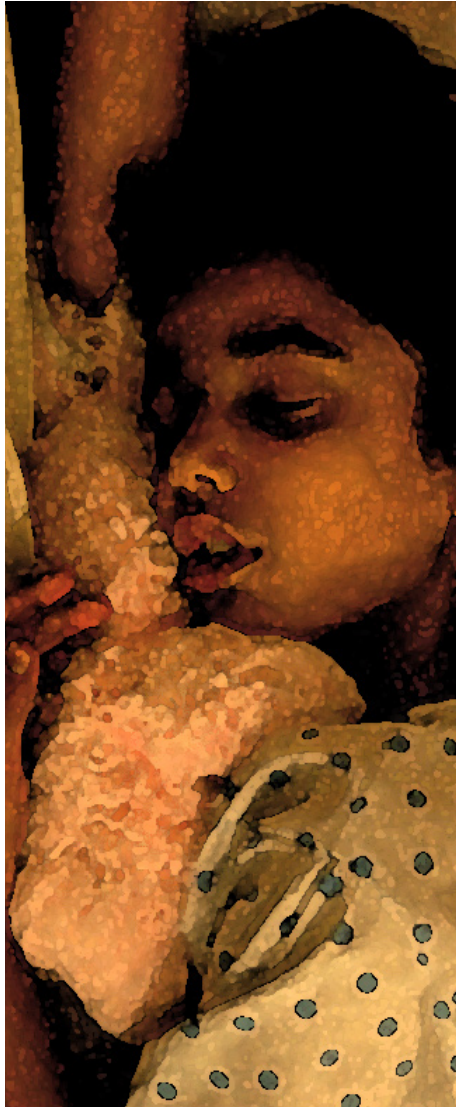
Introduction Nature of Dreams

During a typical life span, a human spends a total of about six years dreaming which is about 2 hours each night. It is unknown where in the brain dreams originate if there is such a single location or why dreams occur at all.

“I had a horrible nightmare that there were sick kittens all around me, hungry and sick. One of them, a small black kitten, jumped up on my lap and to my horror, split in half and the top half jumped off my lap, leaving the bottom half. I screamed and woke up”

Dreams are expressed in the form of sensory metaphors. Some say that dreams are metaphorical translations of waking expectations.

From the point of view of the dreaming state of mind, dreams are real events in real environments. Based on this notion, one can re-enter the landscape of a dream and flash back to the images, whether it is a memory from waking life or from dreaming. One enters a hypnagogic state, then, through the process of questioning, images are explored through the perspective of feelings and sensations manifested in the body, enabling new awareness to develop.



Introduction Nature of Dreams

Dream experiences are indistinguishable from 'real' events from the viewpoint of the dreamer, and so no objective basis exists for determining whether one is dreaming or awake at any given instant. Therefore, one accepts the reality of the waking world on the basis on faith.

Both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung identify dreams as an interaction between the unconscious and the conscious. They also assert together that the unconscious is the dominant force of the dream, and in dreams it conveys its own mental activity to the perceptive faculty.

Freud felt that there was an active censorship against the unconscious even during sleep.

Jung argued that the dream's bizarre quality is an efficient language, comparable to poetry and uniquely capable of revealing the underlying meaning. He also believed that dreams help us compensate for the parts in our 'total personality' that are underdeveloped in our waking life.



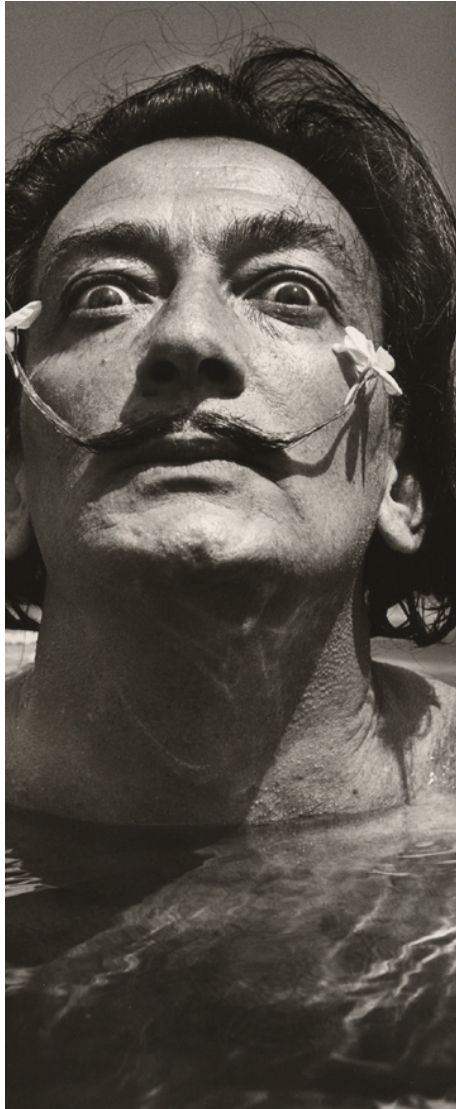
Introduction Nature of Dreams

Fritz Perls presented his theory of dreams following the holistic nature of gestalt therapy. Dreams are seen as being projections of parts of oneself. Often these parts that have been ignored, rejected or even suppressed. One aim of gestalt dreams analysis is to accept and reintegrate these. According to Perls, the dream needs to be accepted in its own right, not broken down and analyzed out of existence.

The theory of déjà vu dealing with dreams indicates that the feeling of having previously seen or experienced something could be attributed to having dreamed about a similar situation or place, and forgetting about it until one seems to be mysteriously reminded of the situation or place while awake.

While some also say that dreams are simply a made up story that have no purpose, physiologically or psychologically. Simply because humans have the propensity to think does not mean that all our thoughts have functions. Dreams are neurological waste products.





Introduction Surrealist movement

A great example of a cultural movement highly influenced by dreams and the unconscious is the surrealist movement. This movement took place in the mid 1920s.

“Surrealism is a movement stating that the liberation of our mind, and subsequently the liberation of the individual self and society, can be achieved by exercising the imaginative faculties of the ‘unconscious mind’ to the attainment of a dream-like state different from, or ultimately ‘truer’ than, everyday reality.”

Surrealists believe that this more truthful reality can bring about personal, cultural, and social revolution, and a life of freedom, poetry and uninhibited sexuality.

Surrealism as a visual movement had found a method to expose psychological truth by stripping ordinary objects of their normal significance, in order to create a compelling image that was beyond ordinary formal organization, in order to evoke empathy from the viewer. The characteristics of this style: a combination of the depictive, the abstract, and the psychological, came to stand for the alienation which many people felt in the modern period, combined with the sense of reaching more deeply into the psyche, to be ‘made whole with ones individuality’.



Introduction Dreams as narratives

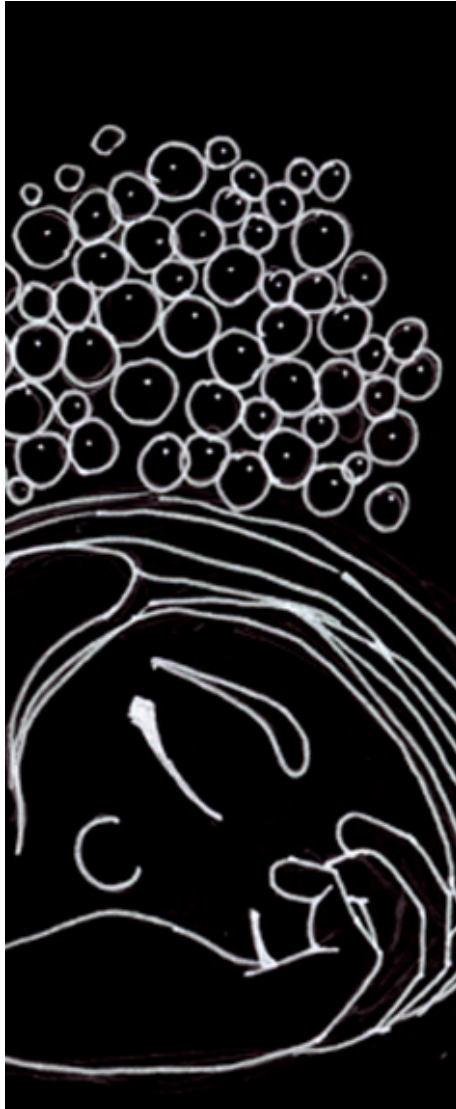
'Frankenstein' was conceived in the dreams of Mary Shelley.

"When I placed my head upon my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. I saw with shut eyes, but acute mental vision I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect on any human endeavor to mock the stupendous Creator of the world. I opened my eyes in terror. The idea so possessed my mind that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around. I thought what terrified me will terrify; and I need only describe the specter which had haunted my midnight pillow. On the morrow I announced that I had thought of a story. I began that day with the words, 'It was on a dreary night of November', making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream."



Introduction Dreams as narratives

'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' was conceived in the dreams of Robert Louis Stevenson. He described dreams as occurring in 'that small theater of the brain which we keep brightly light all night long'. Stevenson wrote extensively about how his passion for writing interacted with his remarkable dreams and said that, from an early age, his dreams were so vivid and moving that they were more entertaining to him personally than any literature. He learned early in his life that he could dream complete stories and that he could even go back to the same dreams on succeeding nights to give them a different ending. Later he trained himself to remember his dreams and to dream plots for his books.



Introduction Why animate dreams?

I find my dreams very interesting. The best part being that I rarely realise the difference between the so called 'reality' and a dream state. A dream therefore appears to be like something that you are a part of and it is not an external experience.

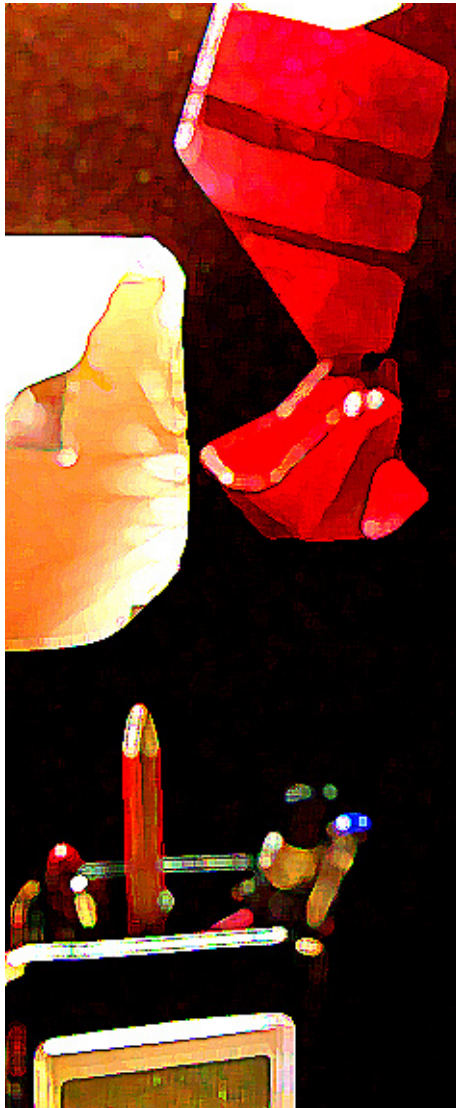
I also get dreams in which I am aware of the fact that I am dreaming and I can control the happenings around me to some extent. These are really rare experiences and I usually get very disturbed and feel the need to step out as I get uncomfortable.

But I guess what I like the most about my dreams is the lack of assumptions and the surprises it has. Nothing is predictable or coherent. Yet it leaves a great deal of impact on me. Some of my dreams during childhood have been so dramatic that I still remember bits and parts of them, visually.

I also feel that the strong emotions and feelings, the awareness of being extremely conscious of one's existence in a dream for a comparatively short period of time, makes a dream a distinct experience than reality.

The narrative in a dream is very fluid. Since dreams are most often not controlled by the dreamer, they can be thought of as involuntary form of story writing. So it feels like the writer is writing a story without having any presumptions, prejudices. He is completely rid of the notions of right and wrong.

I guess more than anything else it is a personal choice I made to choose this as a subject for this animation, since I thought it was an exciting idea to animate dreams.



Introduction Why animate dreams?

Dreams break the barriers of all realistic visual constraints. There is an abrupt change of scene which even changes the dreamers' emotional reaction. One moment is extremely happy while the following one can be Eerie. Sometimes both at the same time. Dreams are mostly visual metaphors, where various symbols have strong innate meanings. These occur in a manner irrational to a human being living in reality. I felt that this foreground provided by the unconscious, forms a great canvas for animation.

I guess more than anything else it is a personal choice I made to choose this as a subject for this animation, since I thought it was an exciting idea to animate dreams.



Introduction

Inferences

What I gained from this study was a better idea of how I could approach this animation. Especially going through the paintings of the surrealist movement made me realise the amount of freedom that I need to give myself while imagining in the making of this film. It was important to let go of all my inhibitions and logical constraints while visualizing this animation.

Observation Dreamers recorded?

I began this project by sharing my experiences of dreams with my friends. As I continued I realised that a number of them had equally or more exciting dreams. Then I moved on to talking to strangers about their dreams. I also recorded my conversations with these people.

The ages of the dreamers varied from kids to old people. This exercise helped me to understand the general nature of dreams and the commonalities between them. I also began to visit various dreamer's blogs where people put up their dreams.

One of the most striking observations were that old people and adults barely recollected their dreams and small children on discovering that there is a camera recording them, lied about their dreams and made up stories.

Helplessness, fear, anxiety, extreme happiness or sadness are a common feature of most of their dreams. Though sometimes the visual content did not have much to do with the kind of emotions they were experiencing which was a very strange phenomenon.

Introduction Why animate dreams?

I find my dreams very interesting. The best part being that I rarely realise the difference between the so called 'reality' and a dream state. A dream therefore appears to be like something that you are a part of and it is not an external experience.

I also get dreams in which I am aware of the fact that I am dreaming and I can control the happenings around me to some extent. These are really rare experiences and I usually get very disturbed and feel the need to step out as I get uncomfortable.

But I guess what I like the most about my dreams is the lack of assumptions and the surprises it has. Nothing is predictable or coherent. Yet it leaves a great deal of impact on me. Some of my dreams during childhood have been so dramatic that I still remember bits and parts of them, visually.

I also feel that the strong emotions and feelings, the awareness of being extremely conscious of one's existence in a dream for a comparatively short period of time, makes a dream a distinct experience than reality.

The narrative in a dream is very fluid. Since dreams are most often not controlled by the dreamer, they can be thought of as involuntary form of story writing. So it feels like the writer is writing a story without having any presumptions, prejudices. He is completely rid of the notions of right and wrong.

I guess more than anything else it is a personal choice I made to choose this as a subject for this animation, since I thought it was an exciting idea to animate dreams.

Observations Peculiar features

In almost all cases when the dreamer was involved in narrating the dream to me, he/she re-entered the landscape of dreams and tried to inflict a structure onto the dream. This I thought was because the dream is extremely incoherent and does not make sense wholistically.

Absurdity was explained in words or through visual representations. Any such literal application made them less absurd.

Through the process of questioning, images were explored thought the perspective of feelings and sensations manifested in the body while dreaming.

Ordinary objects did not have normal significance, the images were very compelling and beyond ordinary formal organization.

They were partly real, partly abstract and partly psychological always difficult to parse. In some cases the visuals and the feelings were completely disjointed as I mentioned before.

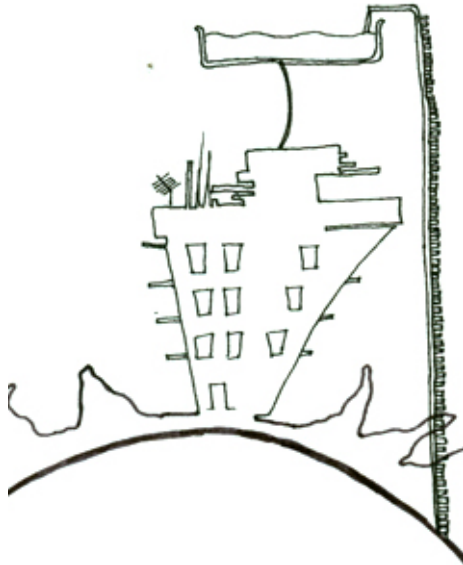
Most dreams began with some inexplicable assumptions in the dreamers' minds. The dream went back and forth and was never linear.

It was impossible to focus on anything. If one tried to focus on a particular object, the object would usually blur out or disappear. In most cases other than the visible part of the visual everything else was blurred out.

There were sudden blankness during the dream and an extreme change of scenario. The series of events almost felt fluid in nature within themselves, without any hindrances. egs: "I was flying in the sky, through the buildings, walls, trees etc without feeling them".

Thus the events seem fluid within themselves but the change in scenarios are sudden cuts. When things start making sense and when one feels like he/she seems to understand the situation, the scene changes radically.

Observations The Approach



After conversing with people and after understanding their experiences, I thought it would be a good idea to animate my own dream. I began working on this idea for a while but soon felt disinterested.

As an after thought, I realised why it happened. The reason probably was that I had to recreate my experience of dreaming for myself. It was like seeing a film and try to represent it by going back. I realised that it was not at all fun. My dreams that I considered interesting started to appear boring. It felt like I was taking something pure and trying to adulterate it.

This is when I decided my approach towards the animation. I decided to animate someone else's dream. Till that point I had not come across any dream that was particularly interesting for me. So I kept chatting with people about their dreams.

Luckily I happened to chat with my sister's friend who is a ten year old girl. I just initiated the topic on dreams and I realised that they had a lot to tell. They were completely unaware of my project and were having a natural conversation. Without telling them I started to record their conversation. And this is when I got the dream I found truly interesting. The best part being that the girl narrating it was almost describing it in the same absurd manner that it had appeared to her. She probably put no structure on it, and she was extremely naive and enthusiastic while describing it. It was a great experience, and I realised that this is the dream I would like to animate.

First attempt The Chosen dream



To explain Shriya's dream in my words will be very difficult. But I would like to describe the features of the dream to give a brief idea. The dream basically starts with a strange assumption of she not talking to her best friends and being angry with them, which now in reality has come true. She sees them sitting on the swing with her like always but she was feeling unhappy about it. Strange things take place between them during the dream and she feels very hurt because of it. She sees her grandfather handing over some gifts to her. She is carrying these gifts to the sun, where the sun and the earth are joined by plates. Below, earth and sun, Saturn and moon are also joined with plates. All these planets are filled only with people. There are no animals, plants, trees left but only people. The people are talking, walking. She sees her friends and her going to a swimming pool on the sun, floating in the sky on a building. She and her friends start swimming but as they jump they discover that instead of water there is cotton in the pool. Also the pool is filled with orange juice since her best friend likes orange juice. Again they are carrying their heavy gifts on the plates, and the plates have gotten thinner and more fragile. As she walks on them, the plate suddenly breaks and she starts falling down. And as she is falling down her mother wakes her up...

I guess while describing this dream in words I might have put my own structure on it to make it sound coherent. I guess the animation would be a better language to describe it, since I have tried very hard to make it appear like the dream I think she must have experienced.

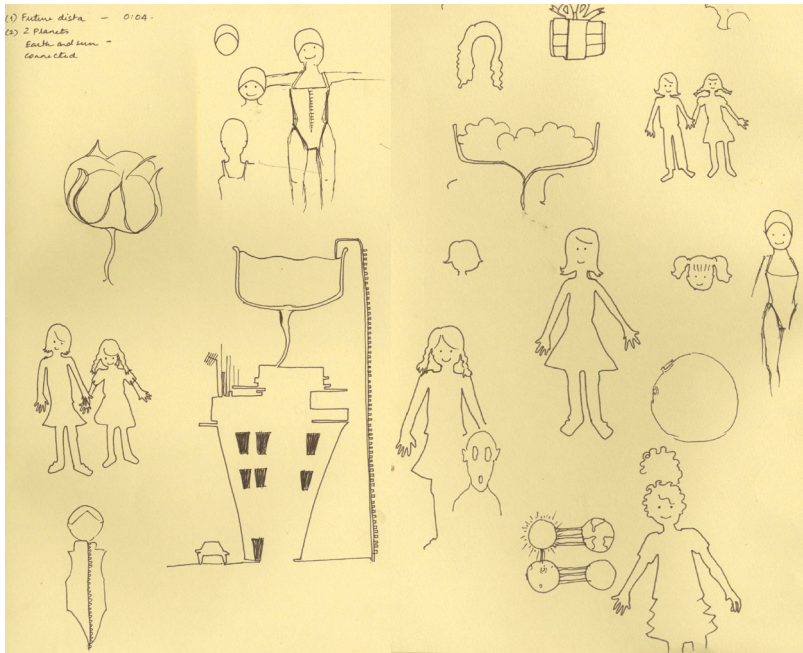
First attempt **The Chosen dream**

The dream is very spontaneously narrated by Shriya since she was having a chat with my younger sister, who is also 10. I had realised that if children are asked to narrate their dreaming experiences most of them started to make things up. Since she was completely unaware of me recording the dream she did not try to speak deliberately.

Because of recording in this manner, she also revealed a few details about her friends and other things. She kept branching out into various subjects while narrating the dream.

So she kept going back and forth between reality and her dreaming experience while she was narrating it. This added another dimension to the entire concept.

From the 15 minutes that I recorded, I have made two versions of the dream in its original sequence. I feel both of them are equally good and relevant. The recordings have been used based on the two different approaches of the animation.



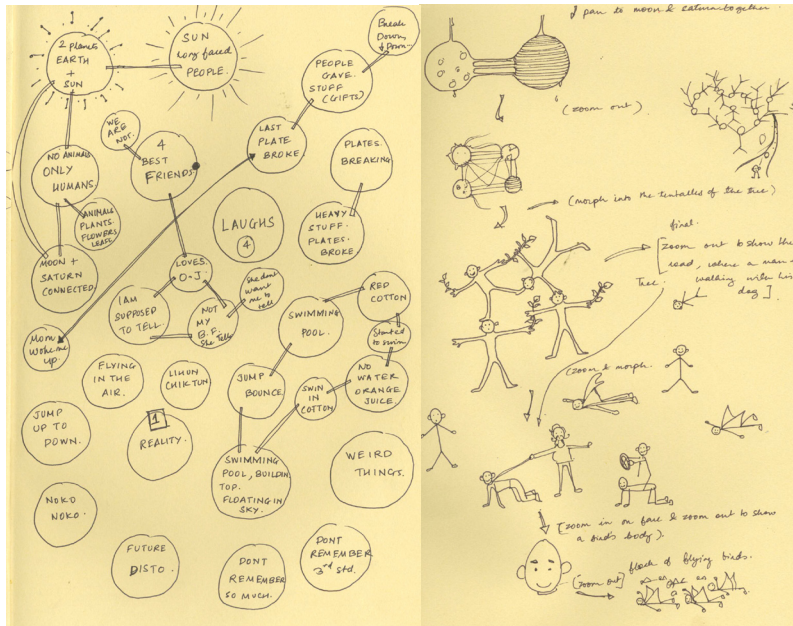
First attempt First 30 seconds

Animating the first 30 seconds of the dream was the next thing I did. I began by editing the sound track. I chose a relevant music track which I thought would enhance the dream well. I selected 30 seconds from her narration of the dream and began to animate.

To get an idea of how things looked like in her dream, Shriya drew some of things from her dream, like the people, the swimming pool on the top of the building and earth and sun joined together.

The animation comprised of simple pen and ink drawings drawn frame by frame by hand on a lightbox. I drew her and her three friends inspired by their characters in real life.

I named this animation 'Cotton dreams' since I discovered later while chatting with her, that shriya was learning to swim at the time. She was having a difficult time, and was taking time to learn. I think her fear of the water and the wish that the water was cotton led to her dream with the swimming pool in which she is floating and jumping in red cotton. This was a very interesting aspect in her dream, and that is why I thought that the name 'Cotton dreams' would be appropriate.



Bridging the gap Visualization



The animation was from my point of view of visualization. She was one of the characters. By doing this I made my task simple. Since it is her dream I can represent it any whatever way I find interesting. The challenge then was restricted to the treatment given to the film and its overall appearance. It was like me seeing her dream for myself. It just seemed like an obvious choice.

The visual representations of the people, buildings etc were entirely personal. The editing was like a film would be edited. The drawings were stylized showing my skills of illustration using my aesthetic sensibilities. The animation was extremely linear in nature where one event was followed by the other one after the other.

I went back to Shriya to find out what she felt about the animation. And as I had imagined she said it was nothing like the dream she saw. At that point I had to make a choice again, if I wanted to represent the dream in a way I see it or I want to try to get as close as possible to her experience of the dream, being completely aware that it is impossible to actually do so. I felt like there was a lack of purpose in doing this project. It was disappointing to know that I had created something that had nothing to do with her experience of the dream.

Bridging the gap **Her feedback**



When I showed Shriya the animation, these were the mistakes that she pointed out to me:

- (1) The dream was not like a cartoon. It was not black and white, instead it was colour and looked like normal reality.
- (2) It had real life and real people in it and not stick figures in it.
- (3) Everything did not take place one after the other, in a linear format like in the animation. There were abrupt cuts and blackouts. It kept going back and forth.
- (4) She could not see anything so clearly. Except for one or two things at a time everything else was almost blurred out.
- (5) Whatever she focusses on in her dreams appears to change shape and identity. Or sometimes it disappears. Nothing can be focussed on.
- (6) The human beings appeared like one of the illustrations she made.
- (7) It did not have music in the background. She does not remember any sound in the background.
- (8) More than sounds or visuals, it was just strong feelings that dominated the dream largely.

Bridging the gap The change of approach



The other mistakes I made were as follows:

(1) I tried to take literal clues from her drawings, not realizing that her drawings are highly inadequate. They depend entirely on her drawing skills, and since she is only ten, she will not be able to draw her mental imagery. Basic scale and volume is all that her drawings can provide.

(2) There are a number of filters between the original dream and the animated dream, which reduce the information.

original dream → her recollection → her description → my understanding
→ my representation

At every stage there is a substantial loss of information.

(3) It is impossible for me to recreate her experience of the dream exactly, but my attempt is to come as close as possible to it. The challenge lies in making the animation recreate the experience of a dream.

At this point thus I changed my approach to recreating the experience of a dream. I could do this only by truly understanding the nature of my own dreams. Thus I decided to connect with her unconscious through the understanding of my unconscious. I started to meditate after having a dream and made very concentrated attempts of recollecting my own dreams and understanding the patterns, nature that was reoccurring, that could help me imagine her dream better.

In the end, I know there is no way to find out if the animation is close to the dream she saw, but, I feel to try to come close to it is a great challenge in itself.

Bridging the gap New ideas to get closer



Shriya's illustration of the people on the sun

Along with observing and contemplating on my own dreams to get closer I have to unlearn various things. This involved trying to unlearn my sense of aesthetics, proportion, illustration, visualization etc that I have developed over the years consciously or sub consciously. Also getting rid of all my assumptions about story telling was necessary.

I had to curb my urge to bring sense and order into the animation. I had to be a good listener and truly try to empathize with her experience of the dream. Only with these changes could I give space to new possibilities of imagination. I had to accept the possibility of coming up with something that I cant perceive at the time.

I would have to rely largely on my intuition in places where I would feel stuck since logic would not lead me to the right outcome, probably because there was nothing that could be compared to as the right.



Changed approach **Change in narrative**

In the first attempt I made at making the animation I used the original sound track and ran it back and forth such that it became comparatively linear. Since the narrative of a dream is never linear I decided to keep the original sound track just the way it is. The raw sound track came closest to the dream.

Besides, the sound track is the verbal description of her dream, which was obviously absent in the dream when she was experiencing it. Thus I took the key parts of the sound track. I used words, sounds that would give the sensation of the dream rather than describe it word to word. This technique I felt was best suited to the approach I had chosen. It just enhanced the experience of the dream in the animation.

Also what changed from the first animation and the final one is the change of point of view. This animation was made from the dreamer's point of view in which anyone who views the animation becomes the dreamer. Thus it is a first person narrative.

The abrupt changes, change in emotional responses and all the characteristics of her dream that I had gathered, I tried to keep them intact. I tried to incorporate the features that I had observed in my own dreams.

I used a mild musical sound track which just enhances the fact that the dream is of a small girl. I think it just contributes subtly to the overall experience.



Storyboard and sound **Dream like editing**

Based on my decisions I drew the storyboard. I decided to use morphs for transitions within a scenario to maintain the unreal fluidity of a dream. One more advantage of using morphs was that I could create a few situations like they appear in a dream. For example, when one focuses on a particular object the object changes into something else. Morphing between these two objects helped me in visualizing interpreting such a phenomenon.

When the animation appeared like it is making sense, the story board cut to another drastically different frame. This included sudden change in lighting (day time, night time) using colours and textures of various kinds.

Unlike in a normal form of story telling, the storyboard would just give an idea of the progress of the animation and not the connection.

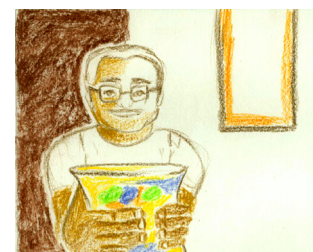
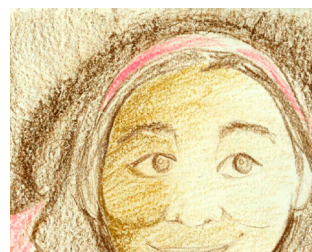
Design of the sound was as follows;

The first layer is that of the narration. I have kept it as raw as possible since it was perfect the way it was. I only had to delete bits and pieces to make it of an appropriate length. While doing so I avoided trimming the interesting bits from her narration.

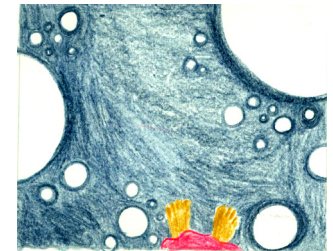
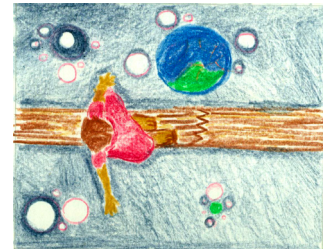
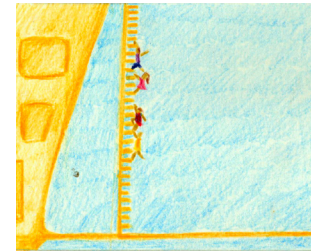
Other sounds were also put in place like the ambients sounds.

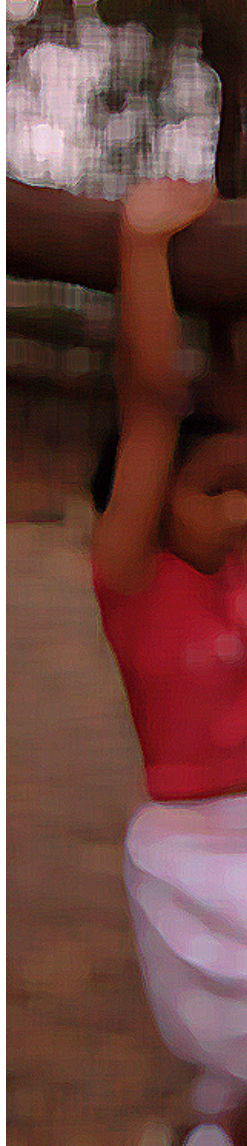
A scratch sound was made using bits of music found appropriate for the animation.

Storyboard and sound **Storyboard**



Storyboard and sound **Storyboard**





Changed approach Colours and textures

In her description of the dream there are striking references to colour, for example “red cotton, orange juice, blue sky”. It helped me in realizing that her dream was largely colourful.

I also realized that it is best to use a lot of colours in making this animation as even in the corrections that she mentioned to me in the first animation, she mentioned that the dream was colourful and not black and white the way I had made it.

Since the animation has been shot partly in paint on glass and partly in rotoscoping there is a consistent change in the textures it produces. In the paint on glass technique I used a multi layered lightbox which shows a difference in depth. This has given rise to textures varying between smooth and sharp.



Pixilation **Live-action shots**

Almost the entire animation has been shot in live action first. Only the shots that are unreal have been done with paint on glass. This was done to keeping in mind the 'suddenly blurred to suddenly clear' nature of dreams.

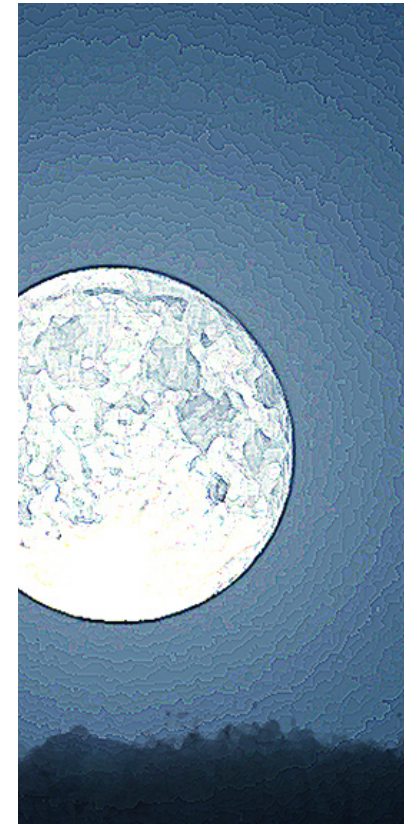
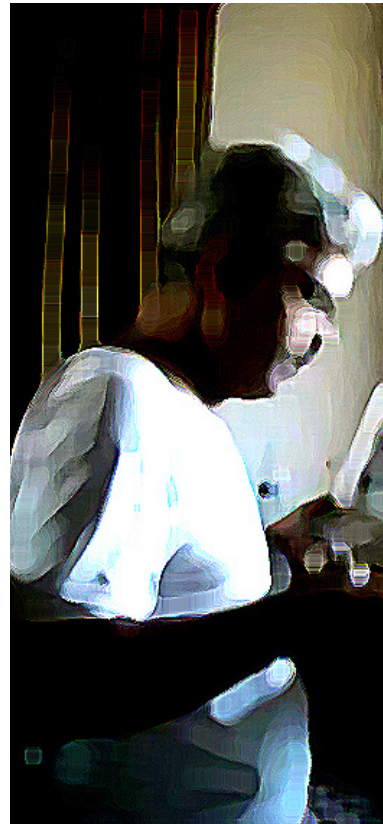
These frames have been shot on a digital camera, then exported as a jpeg sequence in final cut pro. This enabled me to delete some in between frames to make it look largely disjointed. I think dreams are also never smooth in appearance when broken down to individual movements. Thus a 'stop motion' effect worked well in depicting the dream.



Pixilation **Photoshop effects**

After being exported as a jpeg sequence, each and every individual frame shot in live action has been treated in Photoshop. Filters have been used to create the desired effect and in some sequences, paint on glass backgrounds have been merged with rotoscopy.

Pixilation Some of the frames



Oil paint on light box The technique

The reasons behind choosing this technique are many;

(1)The animation looks superbly fluid and there is no chance of it appearing any other way since every frame drawn here is a carry forward of the frame before.

(2)It is very smooth in appearance and it rarely looks sharp. It is perfect for flawless and organic morphs.

(3)It is very easy to show blurs in this technique. It is one of the effects for which this technique can be chosen.

(4)Since I chose to use back light technique of animation, the animation looks very colourful and bright as I had desired.

I decided to use oil paints and linseed oil since it gives a lot of lustre to the animation. Besides oil paints don't dry up easily and with linseed oil can stay wet for more than 3 days.

I also made a lightbox to suit my requirements while shooting.

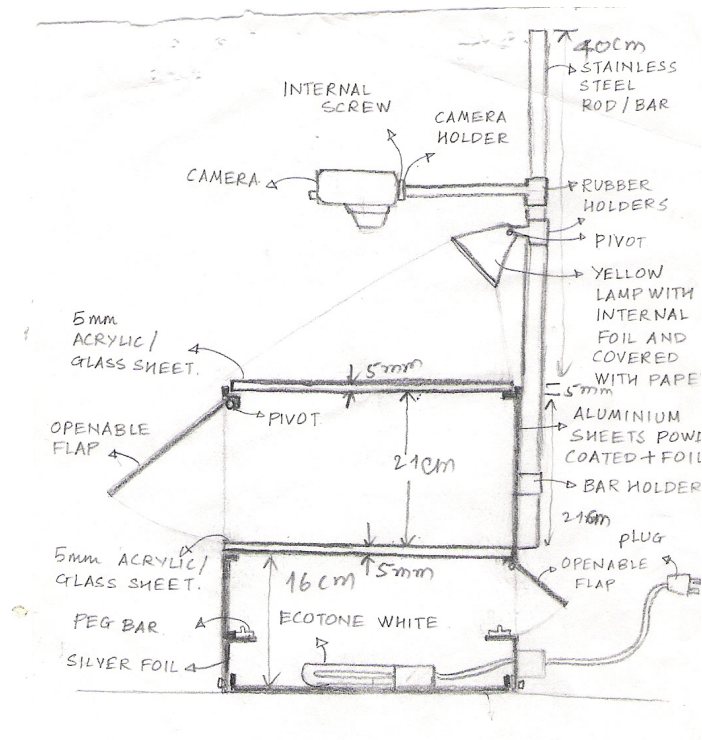
Oil paint on light box The technique

As per the experts in paint on glass animation, these are the things to remember;

- (1) Limit your palette. Too many colors quickly turn to mud.
- (2) Top or bottom lighting? Top lighting will give your colors more brilliance while bottom lighting will mute them. If you choose bottom light, I would recommend color-balanced, non-flickering fluorescent tubes. Incandescent bulbs are too hot.
- (3) Use milky Plexiglas or opal glass. Add and subtract paint with brushes, fingers, Q-tips (cotton buds), small sticks, strong tissue. Textures can be created with sponges, lace or rubber gloves with patterned grips.
- (4) Small field sizes (i.e. 5 to 7) are more manageable than big ones unless you are moving only parts of a larger tableau.
- (5) Paint on glass is very forgiving. In other words, if where you start and where you are going is clear, you can get away with a lot of fudging in between.
- (6) Don't treat each frame as though it's your last.
- (7) Never destroy your last frame until you've sketched in the next.
- (8) Paint on glass is ideal for metamorphosing, animated scene transitions, dream sequences and fish.

-Wendy Tillby, animator

Oil paint on light box Making the lightbox



After reading all the material that I could about paint on glass animation and making of a lightbox, I began by making sketches for the lightbox. I considered various materials from sheet metal to wood for the lightbox. Finally after a lot of trial and error I came to a final design for the lightbox.

It has a wooden enclosure and instead of glass, I have used acrylic. Acrylic gives the same effect while animating as glass only it is not breakable. I used white light and back light the lightbox. In some cases I also provided light from the top.

Oil paint on light box Shooting paint of glass

After adjusting the lightbox to a comfortable height to work on, I placed a tripod behind it. The camera was placed on the top.

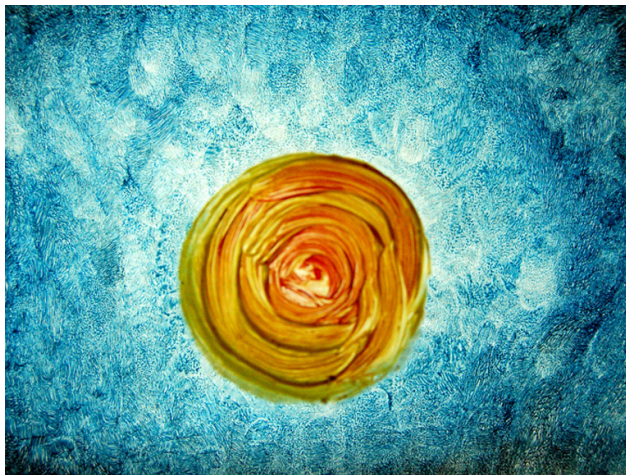
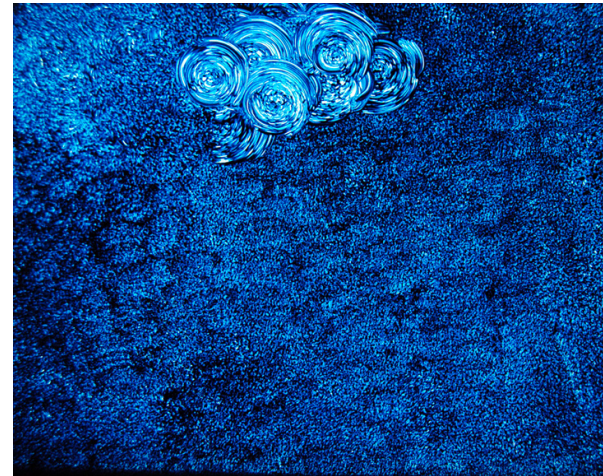
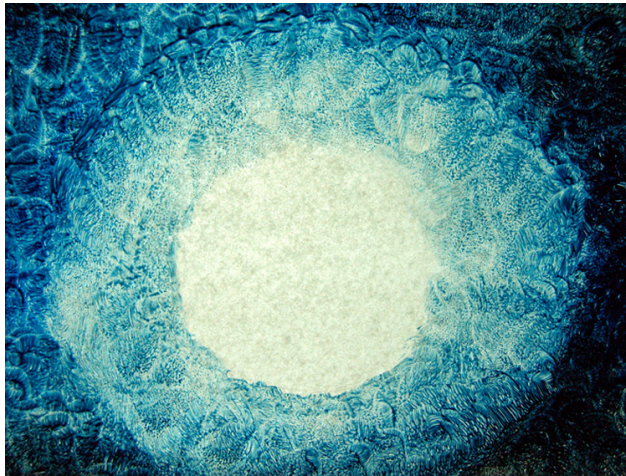
I started with huge lumps of paint, added linseed oil to give easy movement. Each frame was manipulated from the previous frame and the paintings were made one after the other on the same acrylic. Morphs were also shot in the same manner by adding and subtracting colours gradually.

Oil paint on light box **Shooting paint of glass**

After adjusting the lightbox to a comfortable height to work on, I placed a tripod behind it. The camera was placed on the top.

I started with huge lumps of paint, added linseed oil to give easy movement. Each frame was manipulated from the previous frame and the paintings were made one after the other on the same acrylic. Morphs were also shot in the same manner by adding and subtracting colours gradually.

Oil paint on light box Some of the frames



The animation **After the line tests**

As I had planned earlier I tried placing two layers made in two different techniques in the animation. I merged the stop motion frames with the paint on glass frames and I realised that some of the results were not as I had expected. I tried something similar with the hand drawn frames.

After experimenting with all the three technique of animating, I felt like it would be unfair to abandon any one of them because one doesn't merge with the other. Some of the aspects of the dream could be well explained in Paint on glass, some in pixilation and some in hand drawn animation.

Therefore, I concluded that to do justice to all the three techniques, I would have to use them all together but as different parts of the same dream. The task in front of me was that of tying all these three together to the same sound track. I felt the need to come up with a new narrative.

The animation **New narrative**

I decided to tie up the dream around the same sound track. I also decided to involve the idea of different interpretations of the same dream.

When a dreamer is narrating a dream to a group of people, all of them have different ways of interpreting the same dream depending on their visual vocabularies and point of views.

I decided to involve four characters in the animation including the 10 year old narrator. These characters are of a similar age group listening to the dreamer narrating the dream.

The three different forms of animation then form the three different visualizations of the same dream. The four characters are established through a voice over.

The transitions between the three animated sequences is a blank screen with only the audio playing in the background.

I avoided the idea showing the characters in illustration or other because it would mean including a fourth style of animation. I thought this would add to the visual noise and so I decided to connect the animation only through audio.

The animation **Animation 1**

This animation tries to come as close as possible to a 'dreaming experience'. It has the qualities that I experience during dreaming. This version is a combination of stop motion 'pixilation' and some other effects. Her description of the dream could only be seen through my dreams. This version of the animation depicts the idea of seeing her unconscious through mine.

Animation 2

This animation is a little less realistic as it is hand drawn. There is a tinge of humour with addition of some details in visualization which are not mentioned in the narration.

Animation 3

This animation reveals the surrealist's approach to visualization. This is done using the medium of paint on glass and it gives the liberty of creating abstract imagery, which is one more way of depicting a dream.

The last sequence of the animation combine all the three techniques frame by frame, one after the other to conclude the narration of the dreamer.

The sound

The sound consists of three layers; the original sound track of the girl's narration and her friends that she is chatting with, the second of the ambient sound and the third of a scratch sound which has bits and pieces of music.

The animation **Summary of the process**

I began with recording the dreams of various people with idea to recreate or reproduce one particular dream that I found interesting in the best manner possible. As things progressed I felt interested both in interpreting the dream in my visual language and also in coming as close as possible to the dreamer's experience of the dream. What also struck me was the variation in everyone's visualization of a dream. The project expanded beyond my pre determined limits. I experimented quite a bit with paint on glass animation and tried to use it effectively.

To draw the animation frame by frame was again an interesting experience. I gave myself full freedom while visualizing this animation with the morphs and dissolves between the frames. This animation has almost no cuts between the shots.

The stop motion was another experience in which I tried to incorporate the visual details that I experienced during the dream.

At the end of this project, I feel like it has been a great visualization exercise. Especially because the imagery I was referring to was of the unconscious. It has also made me aware and taught me a lot in the three techniques of animation that I have used; pixilation, paint on glass animation and conventional hand drawn animation.

References and readings **Bibliography**

Books:

Experimental Animation, origins of a new art
Russett, Robert and Starr, Cecile
Da Capo Press, New York
1976

Animation Now
Wiedemann, Julius
Taschen publications

Websites:

wikipedia.org/wiki/Paint-on-glass_animation
wikipedia.org/wiki/dreams
www.awn.com/mag/issue3.2/3.2pages/3.2student.html
www.waxscreen.com/
www.answers.com/topic/paint-on-glass-animation
www.google.co.in

References and readings Acknowledgements

Thanks to Prof.Shilpa Ranade, my guide for this project, for providing valuable guidance at every stage.

Thanks to Prof.Kirti Trivedi for his guidance throughout the project.

Thanks to Prof.Nina Sabnani for guiding me with experimenting in paint on glass and other guiding me about various other things.

Thanks to Shriya for her providing me with a great dream to animate. Also for her time and patience in describing her experience to me.

Thanks to my sister Nupur and her friends Gayatri, Bakul and Hiral for their help and support in shooting the film.

Thanks to my father for his help and support in shooting the film.

Approval Sheet **The visual communication project titled:**
RECREATING THE EXPERIENCE OF A DREAM
'Cotton dreams' an animation
Guided by Prof.Shilpa Ranade
Submitted by Poonam Athalye
Roll no: 05625006,

is approved in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Masters in Design
degree in Visual Communication

Guide:

Chairperson:

Internal Examiner:

External Examiner: