



sinapsis

*DigiPen Institute of Technology Europe Bilbao presents
a film by Sara Nikté Berrozpe music by Jorge Fernandez*

sinapsis

is a structure that permits a neuron to pass an electrical or chemical signal to another neuron.

is the solo 3D short film created during the Junior year at Digipen.

STORY

"A man with no memories is a man without past... but a man unable to daydream is a man deprived of a future." -Albert Camus

We keep memories of the highlights of our lives, whether they are good or bad and sometimes, we look back at them, since they make us grow, learn, understand. For Acula, there is nothing else but his memories. He spends his time wandering around them, constantly living in the past and not really living. Until suddenly he sees his memories in an inevitable situation, he starts forgetting, and he has to choose between losing all his memories or the chance of making new ones.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

This project was created from scratch, meaning that I had to go through the different tasks of the pipeline of the creation of a project, with the advice and feedback of different teachers. Half a year before fully starting pre-production, I began thinking about the story. From the first moment I knew I wanted it to have a message, not just a gag or something similar. This led me to different problems but let's go little by little. As I said, I started with the script as I had clearer that I wanted to talk about the fragility of the mind and the memories, being the main reason for that my grandpa diagnosed with dementia. While designing the character and background I realized that I needed a place to represent our memory, and the way we remember things.

Background

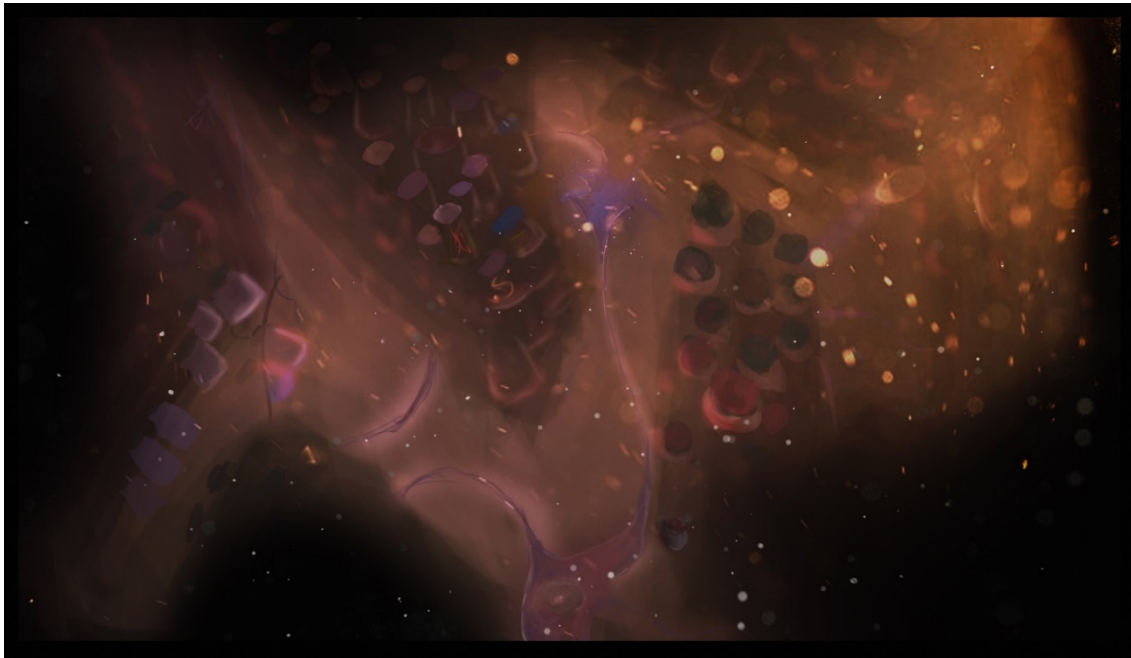
After dismissing several options such as books, I went for jars. The memories are stored in jars. The jars are stored in shelves. The shelves are not important, let's get rid of them. The only important thing are the jars. Okay, let's keep the jars, there is nothing else there. But we need to know that we are in the brain, that the place that the memories are placed is alive. This was the first big problem I encountered. I wanted to create a magical place, not telling exactly what was where. This made me able to place the camera in very various interesting places, because the record between cuts was going to be kept by the animation.

I really had a good time building the background up, because I tried able to experiment a lot, with the textures and lights, specially. I took 'A Monster calls' movie as reference. I did want the short film not look exactly 3D, I tried to make it more flat. I wanted the light to help the silhouettes to put up, so we could see the things not because they are lighted, but because they have light at the back or a rim light.

Here you can see the main reference I took for that.



Here you can see one of the first concepts for the background.



For the neurons and the movement they have I tried to work as far as I could during production, but in the end, I resolved them during the post-production.

Character

For the main character, Acula, I tried to give him personality in the way he moved, and not in the way he dresses or his skin tone. That's the reason for him being naked and a mixture of several colors. Neither I did want it to look realistic, so I gave him exaggerated proportions. My main

inspiration for was Egon Schiele, the way he twisted and bended the limbs of his characters, the sketchy texture and how he let the feeling of the brush remain.

In the middle, Acula. Both sides, Schiele's artwork.



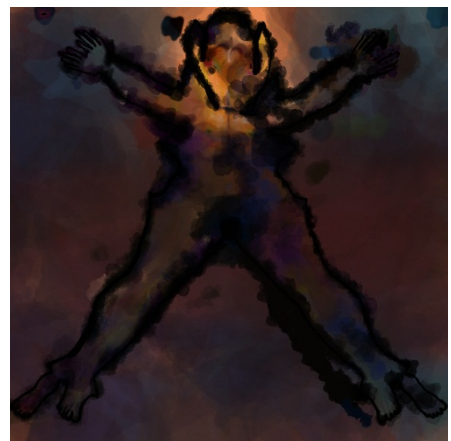
Acula has an elongated body, big head and slim Neck. His fingers are long and thin, spiderlike. As he walks through the corridors, he constantly touches the jars, making the animation for this a little bit tricky.

As I mentioned before, I wanted the textures of Acula to not look like skin at all, and knowing more about animating materials and textures could have been very interesting, but I couldn't really manage it. I tried to get as close to that, so I painted the light and shadows in the texture, in order to make it look much more interesting. Even so, I'm quite happy with the result.

Here you can see the UVWs.

Animation

We had less than 5 months to animate the whole story, and due to being the first time we did a project like this on our own, I faced with different problems, specially having to animate several difficult scenes at the same time and not being able to fix and animate them as well as I wish. This lead to having several scenes that needed animation, and the stress this gave me.

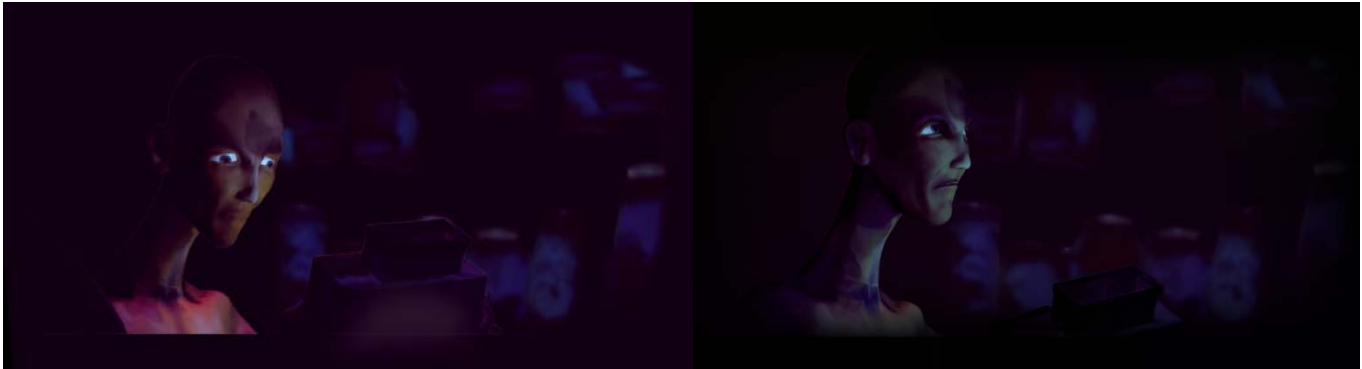


Render and postproduction

When rendering, I had a lot of passes for each scene because I wanted to be able to change things during post production, which lead into having a lot of archives. Sometimes this could be really frustrating, because I needed to keep track of everything and know exactly what was in each folder.

Because of that reason, when putting everything in post-production was a little bit of a mess, although naming everything correctly saved me. I had still to give the film a consistent final look, put some light in some areas and fix any problem that it could be there.

Before pre-production and after



CONCLUSION

I could never have learned as much as I did this year without doing this project. Mainly, you learn to work with and by yourself. This may sound stupid but I really mean it. You can always ask your classmates about things, problems or doubts that you may encounter, but you are the person that needs to fix them all. You need to commit with yourself and the deadlines, that you work alone doesn't mean that the deadlines are susceptible of change.

Write. Everything. Down. Specially feedback. Don't trust your memory, you are going to need to keep a lot of things in mind. I used to keep everything written down in my notebooks and I completed several of them, with memos, dates, feedback... Search for a way that is useful to you and keep track of everything you do, this is very important when you start animating and rendering, you need to know exactly what is going on with every scene and you're going to have too many to remember all of them. We were required to use Trello, and it works perfectly. I personally like it a lot, and I still use it.

If I could change anything of this project, I probably erase everything and start from almost scratch again. This is because I have learn a lot thanks to this project, and it is special because of that reason, it has not exactly the final look that I could have desired but it has given the knowledge to be able to say that. One thing that I really would change is have a little more time for experimentation and being able to try new things, fail and continue, having such as little time gives you almost no time for failure.