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Research Thesis Project Reflection Statement

The two essential elements of this thesis as a whole were the concept and the learning process. Earlier last year, I began to develop a fascination with the old western aesthetic and its revival in recent popular culture and general consumer content. This acted as the catalyzation for character and environment visualization in the beginning stages of this project and furthermore prompted questions about recurring themes surrounding the human experience in those types of media. Ideas of vulnerability and the degrees of belonging from the research and critical thinking then informed how I saw this concept and shaped the narrative into an expression of openness, trauma, and acceptance. To support and elevate the odd independence and aloneness of the canyon desert terrain, I decided to introduce the main character as a robot reminiscent of the human form. Not only is the robot an embodiment of these ideas but also a means to provide visual and conceptual contrast to its character counterpart, the unconditionally loving cat. Soon afterward, the environment evolved into an emulation of sci-fi western design and thus the core of this thesis formed.

A large motive for undertaking such an extensive project, however, was primarily to more thoroughly examine and experience each part of the 3D animation pipeline. With a full school year of streamlined learning and creation, more time is spent in order to better build upon the existing knowledge from previous classes. More precisely, this was an effort to ensure my capability to execute future concepts at a skill level that allows for maximum creativity. Not only did this project allow me to continue these technical exercises, but it also allowed me to learn new practices that will contribute to the enrichment of my artmaking. I learned a range of universal techniques from UV mapping to rigging as well as gained familiarity with softwares such as Substance Painter and Nuke. Through independently exploring each part of the making, I also discovered which processes granted more personal gratification. The outcome I'm ultimately proud of isn't limited to the end product but extends to the value of more freely navigating the 3D space.