



Moving Studio

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Abstract

This collection of essays chronicles my journey through the MFA program at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), exploring the concept of a “moving studio” and its influence on my creative process. From the fluidity of morning routines to the comfort found in Sunday pancake traditions, the essays delve into the intersections of personal experiences, artistic inspiration, and technological innovation. Through reflections on animation projects like “Wakey Wakey” and “Mr. Fragile,” I examine the transformative power of storytelling and the emotional connections fostered through my work. The essays also explore the evolution of perspectives, from initial resistance to embracing technologies like live location sharing, and the profound impact of community and mentorship at RISD. As I bid farewell to this chapter of my life, I express gratitude for the invaluable lessons learned and the connections forged, poised to embark on the next phase of my artistic journey with newfound inspiration and perspective.

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Introduction

Moving Studio

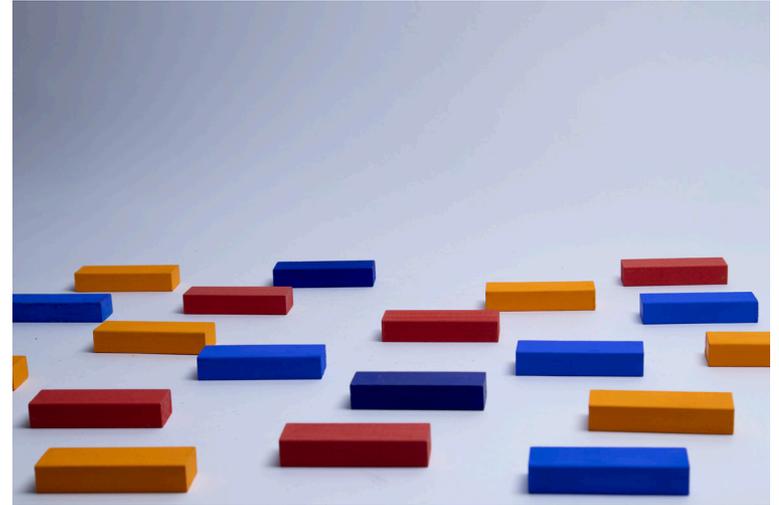


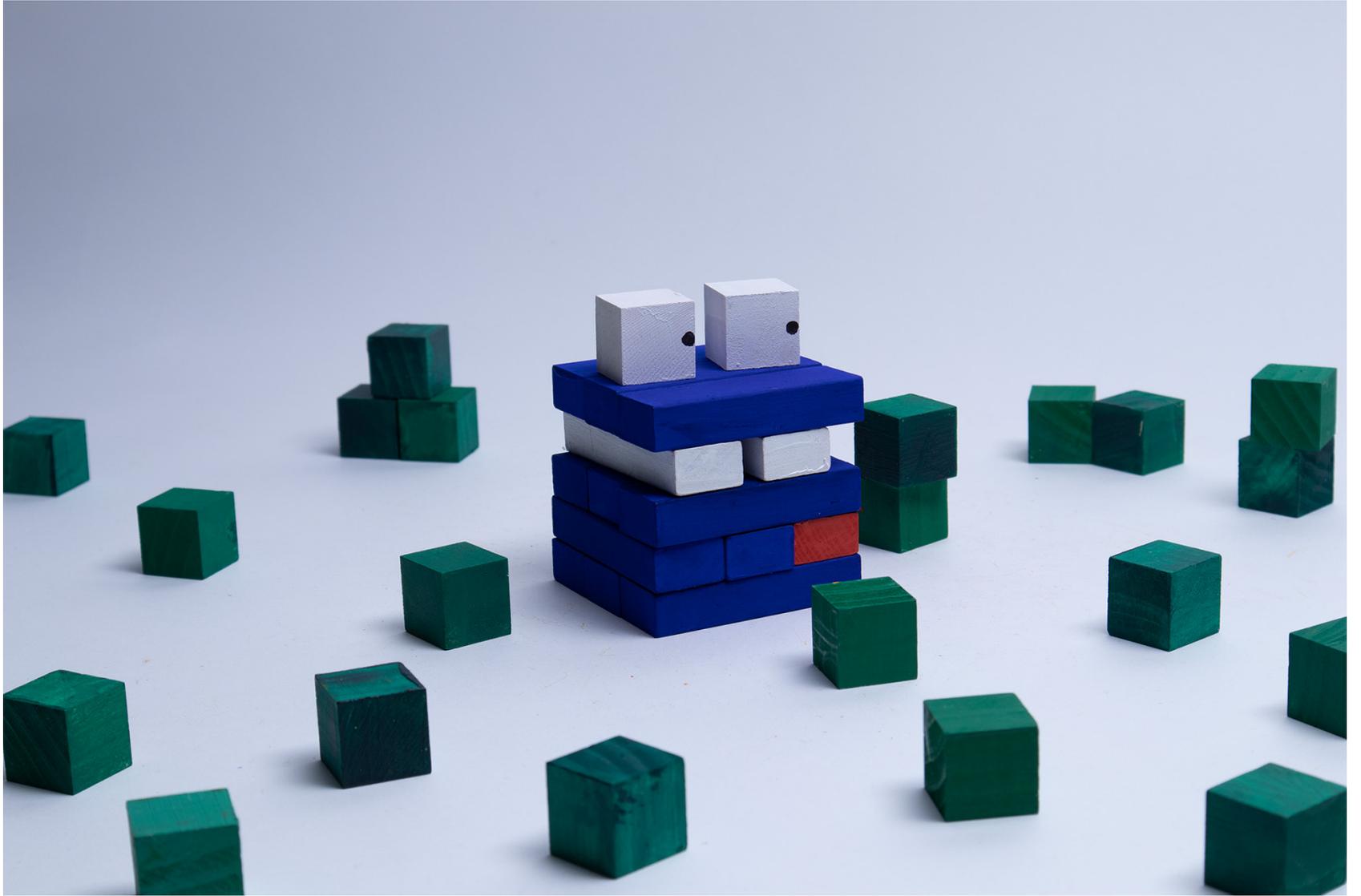
In my life, I move constantly. I came to RISD from Poland to do my Fulbright exchange. Before that, I lived in Mexico, Spain, and Wales. In my daily life, I also don't have one permanent place where I work or study. I am always in between places. I work from time to time at my studio, but you can also find me in coffee shops, going for walks to think, or at the Brown RISD Catholic Center, where the coffee is always filled with Lavazza beans and the garden is too pretty. I have my own moving studio. I can't seem to stop. I have to move, so the images I create have to move as well. This is why my favorite medium to tell a story is animation. Places, people, and things fill my inspirations. I draw from daily life, imagining the stories people have. There are thousands of characters living in my head, having a big dance party. I love movement, but it's when I stop and observe that I come up with ideas. You never know when or because of what something can pop into your head. Having a "moving studio" is the best for that.

This is exactly what happened in my first semester. I sat down near the river and saw a bird that looked like a plastic bag, or maybe it was the other way around? I loved the idea of something that looks like one thing and then we are tricked into thinking it's another. After that walk, I took my sketchbook and sketched an idea for a children's book about a plastic bag that longed to be much more than a bag. One day, it flew away and explored what it could be. I loved the concept that an inanimate object can evoke feelings.

In my second semester, I pushed this thought even further. I also discovered the magic of sound. I learned how sound can bring inanimate objects to life. With just simple movement and sound, anything can be alive. I found it fascinating how by moving blocks, doing simple stop motion, and adding the sounds of traffic, I converted simple blocks into cars. I didn't have to draw them for people to understand my animations. That is how Mr. Fragile was born, a stop-motion animation about a creature made of wooden blocks. One day, he loses his tooth and decides to go to the dentist.

In the animation he can see how with sound, color and simple movement. We can imagine what those blocks truly are: cars, trees or beating heart.





For my thesis, I knew I wanted to combine the two experiences I had at RISD: The observation element – where something is one thing and then it's not. Using sound to give life to abstract elements. This is how my animation "Warm Days" was born. It's an animation that plays with a dot, which with sound becomes an annoying mosquito. In my animation, the mosquito camouflages (just like the plastic bag in my first project). It can be hair in an armpit, polka dots on a dress, anything. I created a huge number of sketches with instances. I took some of them and, by playing with sound and rhythm, I created an animation.

Sketches of the instances, where we see first the mosquito hidden and then it reveals itself.





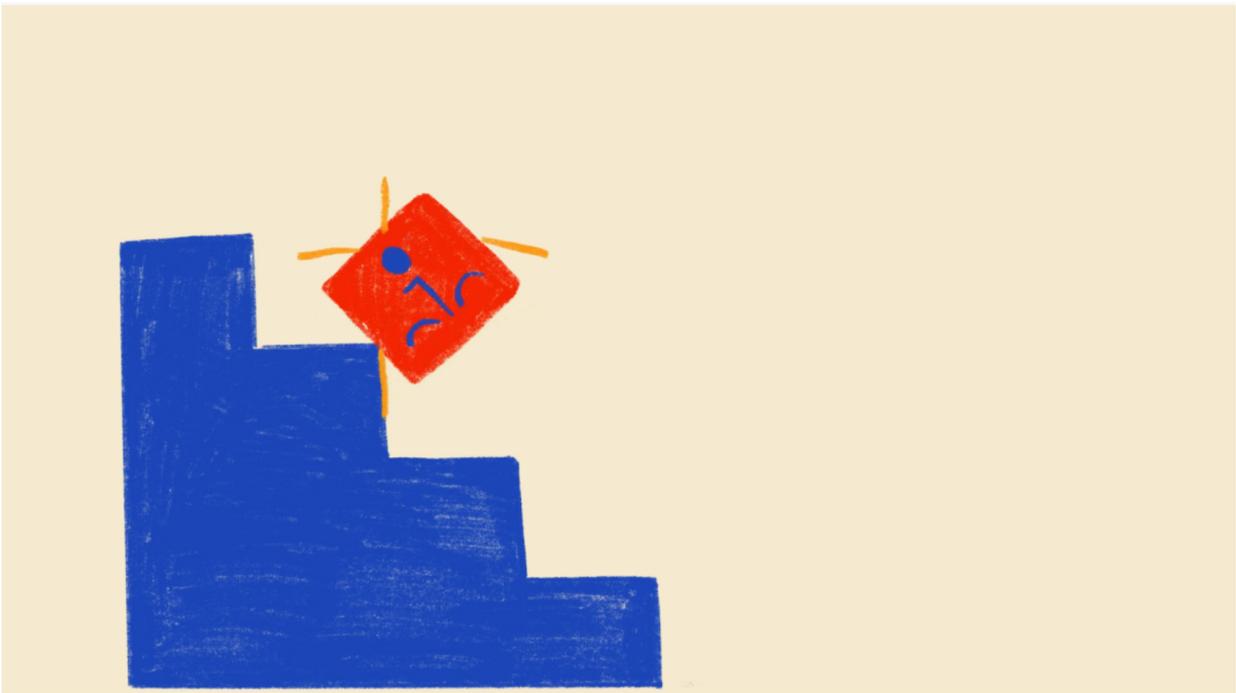
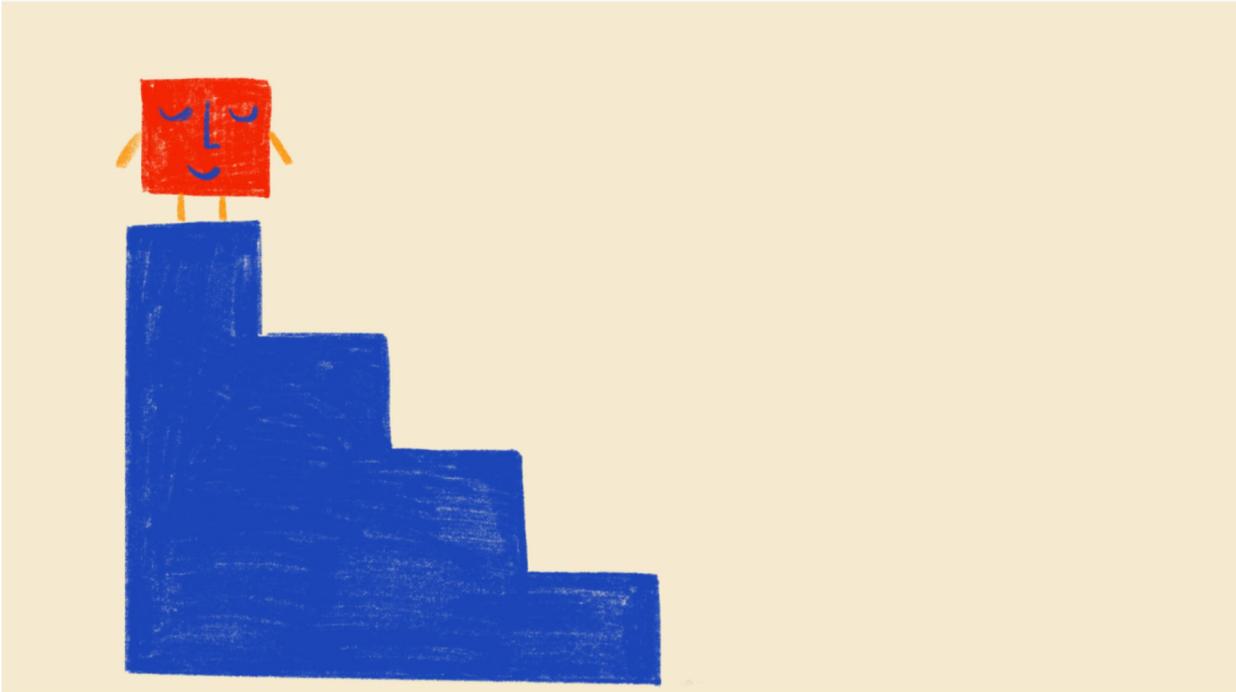
Eyebrows become a pinball game

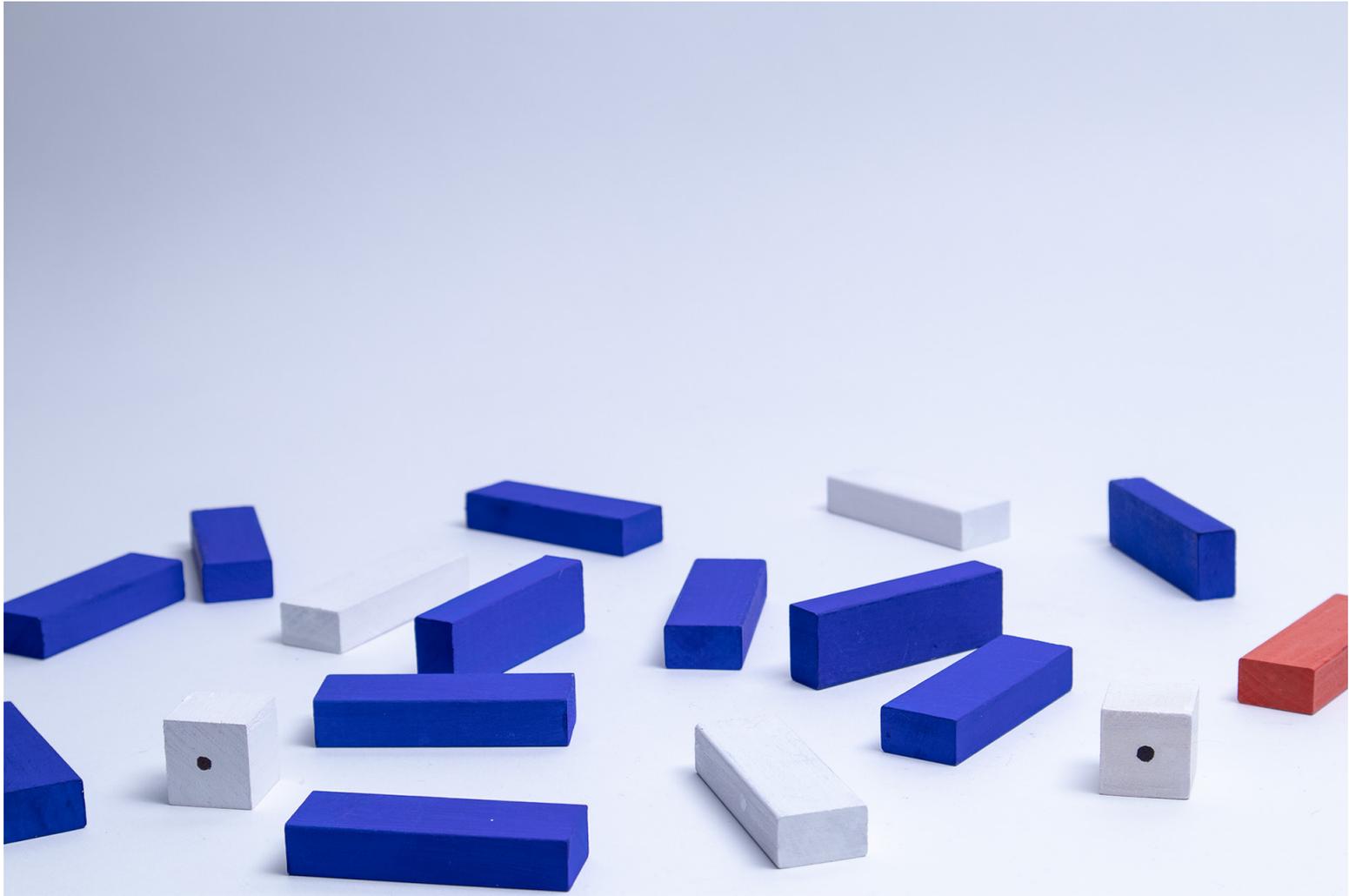


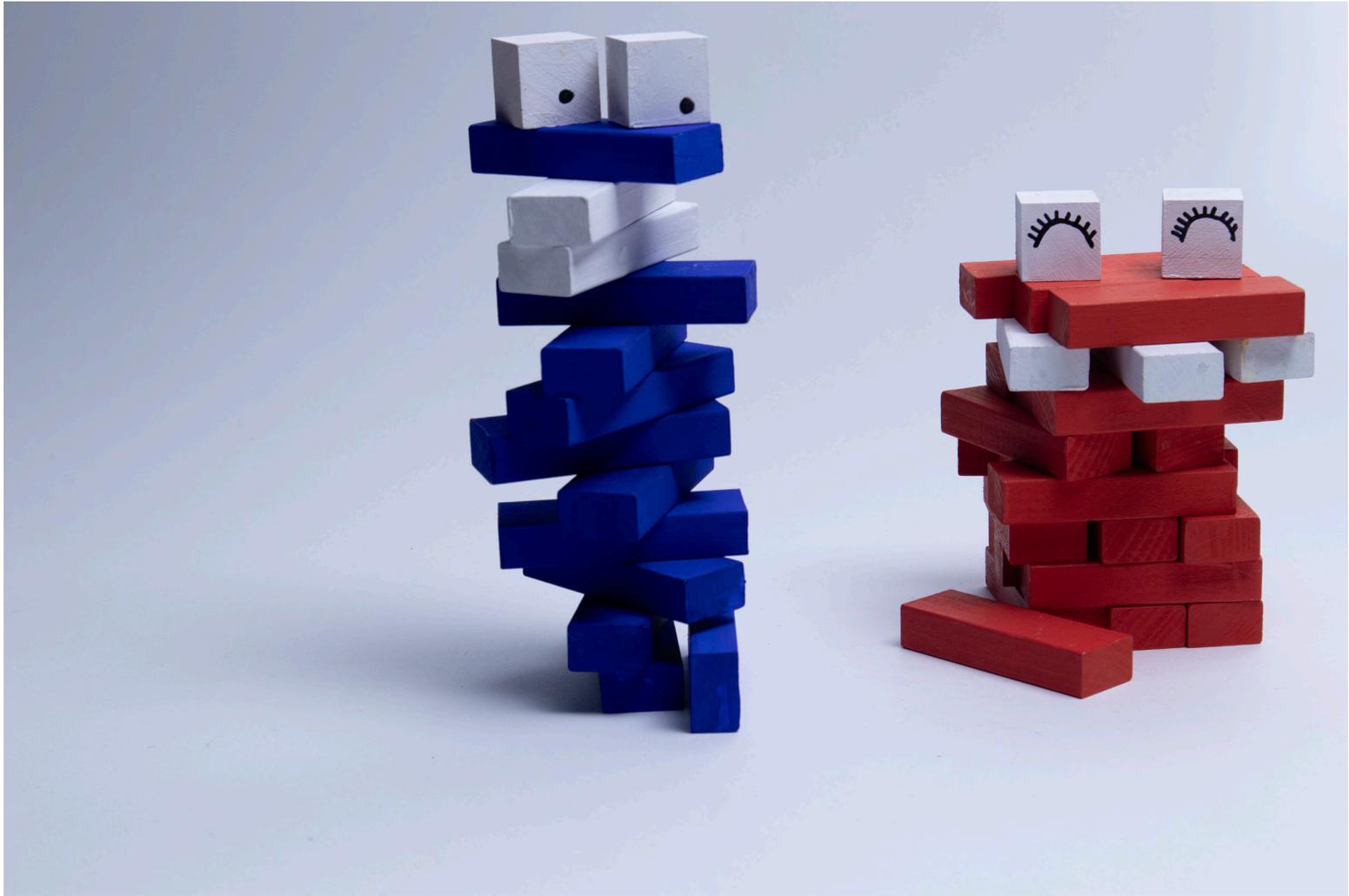
Is it a mouth or a mosquito?

My practice is based on observation and humor. I wouldn't be able to observe or create stories if my studio wasn't movable. Providence was the perfect place for such a studio to have. I could be myself, dance on the streets, talk to squirrels, and stop and look around. Hence, my animations are also very humorous. It comes from me; it is who I am. For a very long time, I wasn't able to consider myself an artist because of this humor, because I couldn't create in a traditional art studio. Yet at RISD, I learned it's okay to let it go. I also understood that I do express myself through those animations. Every animation shows a struggle, the ups and downs, just like my life at RISD, which involved a lot of falling apart and rebuilding myself. Ironically, by observing the outside world in my moving studio, my struggle resonated in my animations as well.

In the next sections of this thesis I want to open a bit the doors of this studio, my experience here, the ups and downs. Essays you will read tell a bit of my story here, how spaces and people influenced my work and life at RISD.







1st Piece of the Moving Studio

The Morning Routines

Everyone has a different morning routine. I am an early bird, yet most people at RISD are night owls, working late into the night. Hence, it's sometimes difficult to synchronize our schedules. Each of us has our own sense of time, how we organize it, and how we prepare to start the day. I can't imagine my mornings here in Providence without birds singing to me while I'm still in bed. Then, I go to Blackstone Park to greet all the dogs for a walk, or I do yoga, or I simply spend time looking at squirrels through my window while enjoying my coffee. I can't handle rushed mornings. Yet, I feel guilty seeing how my time passes in the morning. I'm the first one to wake up in the house but the last one to leave it. My roommate's morning routine is rushed. She pops into the kitchen, has a 5-minute breakfast, and then leaves the house while I'm still sipping my cup of coffee. That's when I ask myself: what am I doing wrong? Why can't I leave the house like this? Why can't I control the flow of time in the morning? Why can't I be like a clock that just leaves and starts the day? Well, we all have different senses of time. It's subjective and flies differently for each of us. I learned all about our internal timing in my first animation studio at RISD.

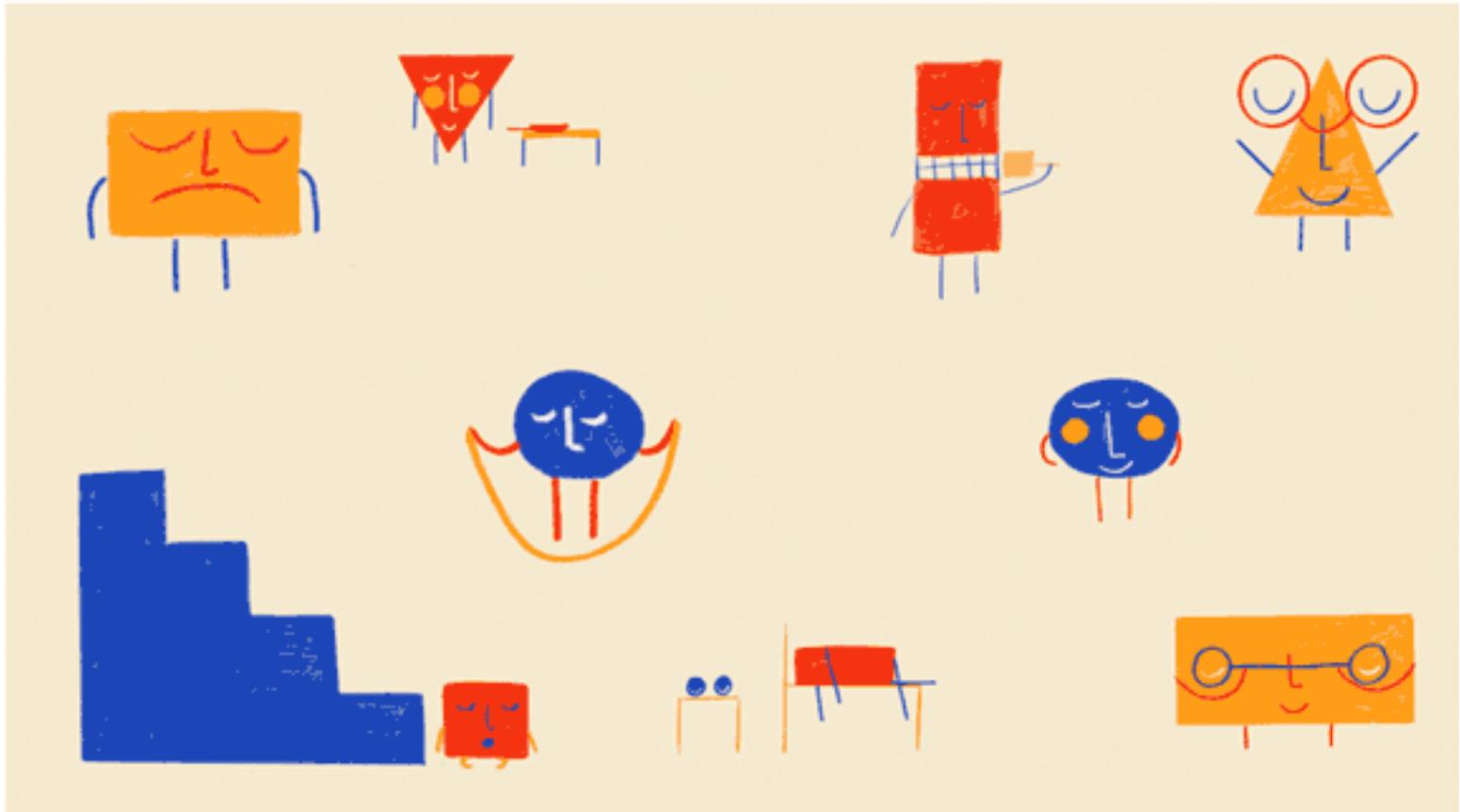
“Intermediate Animation” with Amy Kravitz changed my perspective not only on animation but also on how we perceive

time. How we can treat it as modeling clay? Every class was a unique experience, where we played with “time”, and the perception of it. In one class, Amy gave us 500 pages and said: “You have 40 minutes, fill all of them without losing the main focus of what you want to do”. Initially, I was slower, and more precise. Yet when Amy told us that half of the time had passed and I was still at the beginning of my stack, I had to change tactics. Time started to speed up every minute. That's when I realized I don't have to fill each page with a mark, or draw something; I can fill them up with time, and treat every sheet as a portion of a second. This sped up my process, and I managed to finish my goal on time. This class taught us how the “passage of time” can sneak up on us, and take over. With deadlines, we sometimes must change our tactics. We should befriend the passage of time in animation and think about how to make it work with the time we have left. Ironically, a few classes after this experience, Amy decided to “torture” us again. This time she gave us only one piece of paper. We again had 40 minutes, but our task now was to draw one line. The assignment also surprised me. Initially, I was really focused on drawing a straight line, but every breath made my line shaky. It was almost impossible to be still. Then, I somehow zoned out, and my head was somewhere else. When I got my focus back, I saw that my line

wasn't straight anymore; during this time, it somehow turned and now was going to the other edge of the paper. This assignment is meant to teach us stillness, that even though nothing is happening in animation, there is always something happening. We give the audience time to grasp what is happening, they can start having their thoughts like I started during the exercise. We can build the atmosphere of the animation by simply stopping/slowing the time. We again are befriending another part of Time, stillness. Those two exercises represent ways how people wake up every morning, their morning routines. The rush and stillness. I wake up with the stillness inside me, but when it is time to leave the house, I am suddenly in a rush. My roommate is fully "the rush". Yet, in the end, we are in control of our "time". Like we are in animations.

In Kravitz's class, I started to look at time as this plasticine. I can create perfect timing but also wrong timing. Which is how my first animation, "Wakey Wakey" was born. It started with the exercise about wrong timing. I am creating an animation where the flow of time is not natural. My interpretation of wrong timing is connected to gravity, the movement. Where something doesn't move the way it should, wrong timing can surprise us. I feel like I am constantly living with the wrong timing, starting with relaxing way too much during mornings "Wakey Wakey". animation explores morning routines, giving a sneak peek into my sense of time, my timing, and my world full of shaped characters.

Click this [link](#) to watch the animation.



2nd Piece of the Moving Studio

I want a Sunday Kind of Love

My family has always made pancakes every Sunday. It was my mom's specialty. Sometimes I would help, but I wasn't responsible for making them. After coming to RISD, I missed those Sunday mornings. I missed sitting together to enjoy fresh pancakes, coffee, and each other's company, taking a moment to be together, and taking a breath. I felt homesick. That is how Sunday Morning Pancakes at Emilia's house began.

Every Sunday, you can expect fresh pancakes, a pot of coffee, and Etta James singing "I Want a Sunday Kind of Love". I feel incomplete when a Sunday goes by without pancakes. It became a habit. For me, it is a form of relaxation and meditation. I wake up, put on my favorite dress and an apron, play French café music in the background, and start making pancakes. There is something relaxing about mixing the batter and checking the consistency. If you mix too fast, they will lose their fluffiness, hence why the choice of music is so important. After that, the mentioned song "I want a Sunday Kind of Love" has to play while I serve the pancakes. Coffee is served in my Polish ceramic mugs, and we all get to enjoy each other's company. I appreciate all the moments happening at the table. I get to see

how my roommate Tina, who is like a sister to me, stuffs her mouth with pancakes, smiles, and says, "Sooo good, Emilia." I witnessed how her boyfriend, who never stayed for them, slowly got won over and now always expects them to be served. We became friends. Now he is just Ian. My close friend Ananya, who doesn't live with us but is like a family knows that if she needs some "Sunday kind of love" the doors to the house are always open. Also from time to time, I open the house to guests, "the chosen ones" :). The pancake tradition made us indeed closer; we are a family.

So if you need to feel at home, and win over your roommates, feel free to steal the recipe (it's on the back). With time I modified my mom's recipe, and I surpassed her (her words), which is why I feel comfortable calling them my own. Hopefully, the recipe will serve you the same way it served me. Enjoy!



Emilia's Pancakes

2 cups of flour	1 cup of milk
2 teaspoons of baking powder	1 cup of yougurt/greek yougurt
1/2 teaspoon of salt	2 spoons of melted butter
2 eggs	2 teaspoons of honey

First mix dry ingredients together (flour, baking powder and salt). After that add the rest of the ingredients. Mix it with a whisk by hand, slowly don't mix it too quickly. Look at you whisk if the batter is sliding to quickly add more flour, if it is too thick add more milk. It should slowly drip. Warm the pan, add butter, and when ready add some batter, I usually add tiny bit more, after the first one. Turn a bit down the heat and after few minutes turn the heat up. When you see the bubbles popping it means it is time to flip it. After that wait for a moment. Repeat. In order for pancakes to be warm when serving I put them in a preheated oven.

I recommend French cafe playlist on spotify while mixing the batter

3rd Piece of the Moving Studio

The Bunker



Since I was little, I could spot faces in everyday objects. One of my first art projects was an owl with CDs for eyes, and I made at the same age a smiley face from a jewelry box by simply adding a sticker of googly eyes. It always came naturally to me, without much thought. It became something I would do for fun. When Facebook and then Instagram were created, it became even easier to take a picture, add googly eyes if necessary, and post it. It was a little fun project on the side. However, when I came to RISD, I felt tired of just creating faces. I knew there had to be a way to push it further and see how far I could go with it.

In my first semester, I played with shapes, creating characters with googly eyes that eventually turned into an animation: “Wakey, Wakey” (described in the essay “Morning Routines”). Yet, I felt that what was magical about my “faces” was the space, the three-dimensional aspect. So, when a friend suggested that my characters could easily be turned into 3D, I decided to give it a try.



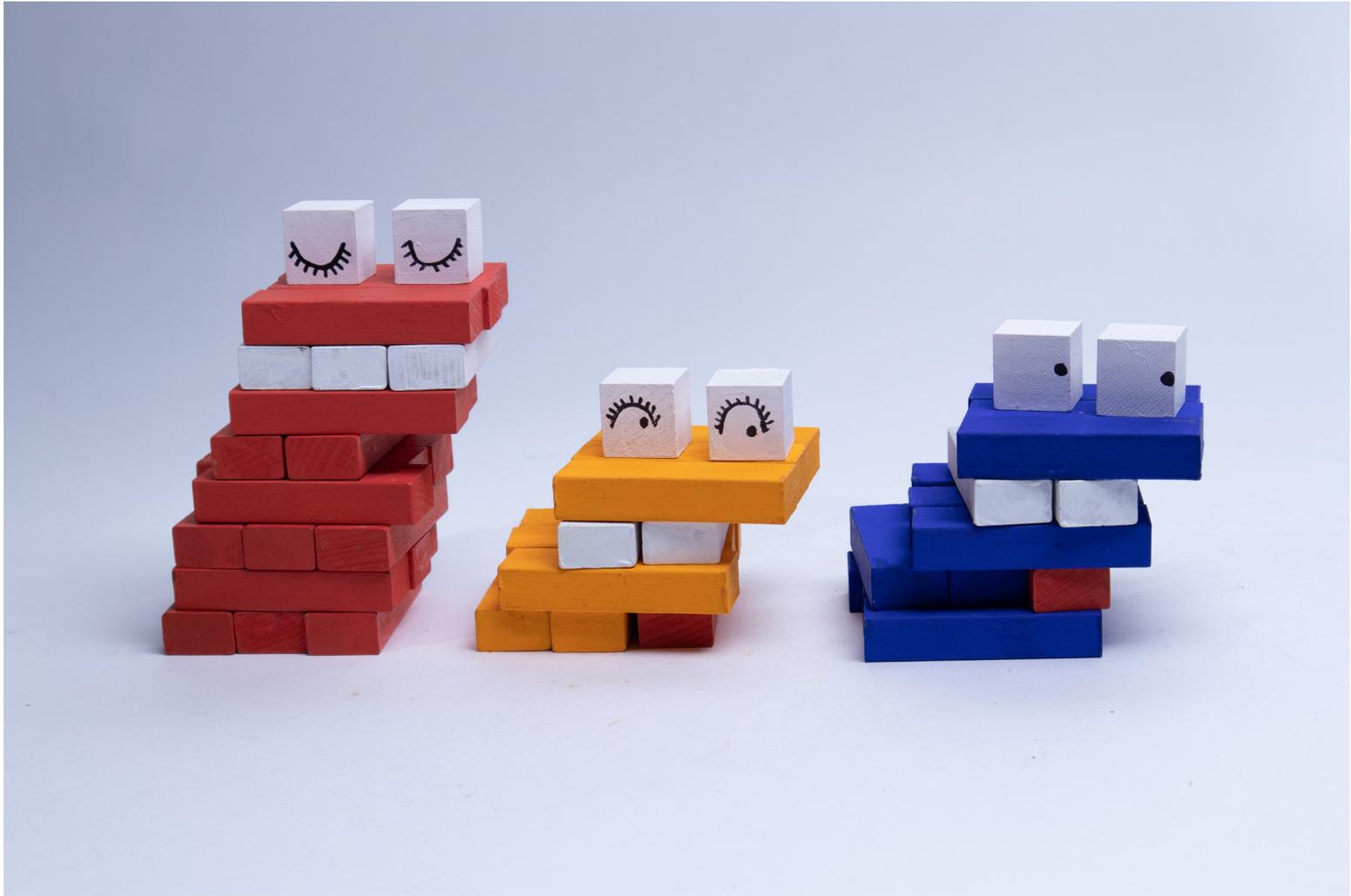
It all started in the second semester of Intermediate Animation. After the first semester with the spectacular Professor Amy Kravitz, I decided to take the second segment with the Oscar-nominated Professor Max Porter. It was one of the best decisions I made. He challenged me and helped me elevate my passion for creating faces.

Mr. Fragile, my second animation, was born during an exercise called “Unconventional Storyboarding,” where we had to present a storyboard not as drawings but as something “unconventional.” I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to explore my characters. I knew I wanted to create something interactive so that people could play with it. Hence, I decided on Jenga blocks. I created an interactive story about a character, Mr. Fragile, falling in love with another Jenga block character. He was a giver, so he was giving out his pieces, his heart. The audience was the one taking pieces of him and giving them to another character. The result was incredible. So many metaphors started to arise. One person decided to take his eyes out because he was blindly in love. Another decided to give the eyes back to him so he could see how toxic this relationship was. This activity brought forth many ideas and challenged me to see the potential of playing with my concept and working it out with other people.

I was intimidated to push the project further, having almost no knowledge about stop-motion. Yet, our Professor Max Porter said to me: “I feel you want to do it but need a push. I will push you. Here are the keys to the stop-motion studio. I know you

can do it.” And that’s how my love-hate relationship with stop motion started. Everyone knew where to find me during my 1st year spring semester, in my “bunker”, a black room in Film and Animation Department dedicated for stop motion animation.

I would never have guessed how liberating stop-motion could be, how spontaneous it is, and how it can lead to unexpected results. I stayed in my bunker for more than a month, just manipulating the blocks. It was one of my best times at RISD. It was new, exciting, and addicting. “Mr. Fragile” is a four-minute-long animation that encapsulates my love for faces, visual metaphors, and the result of the unconventional storyboard. I even made sounds out of Jenga blocks. I hope you enjoy it. Scan the QR Code and help Mr. Fragile find his tooth.





4th Piece of the Moving Studio

The Stalker

I love my dad. He is a Professor of Mathematics, yet he is the goofiest person I know. We can make weird faces at each other for hours. My friends, after meeting him, always say, “Now I know from whom you get this silly side.” Yet there was always one thing we looked at differently: sharing live locations on Google. I never understood his obsession with this technology, the magic of sharing the location, tracking us. “Stalker Dad,” that’s what I used to call him. You should see his face when he tracks the airplane we are flying in. When my brother’s airplane disappeared for a few minutes, he almost had a heart attack.

He tried to convince me to share my location with him for years. He is not the controlling type, yet I felt with this request he would be invading my space. It wasn’t about him seeing where I go, but I wanted to be independent. It was like this until I got accepted into the Fulbright Scholar Program, and I moved to the USA to pursue my MFA in Illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). I decided to finally say yes to his request to share live locations. His favorite daughter (the only one) was moving across the ocean; how could I say no? If this brings him joy, why not? I didn’t know that this was going to be a piece of technology that would change my life this past year. I didn’t change my perspective immediately after sharing the

location with my dad. It was a process. I acknowledged it as a good tool for safety reasons, yet I forgot about its existence the minute I shared the location with him. It wasn’t until my roommate, who started to become more like a sister to me, decided to go alone to a concert out of town. We shared our location for safety reasons, just to make sure she was okay. Yet this night, when I was checking where she was, I finally understood my dad’s obsession with it. It was the night I became “the stalker,” the nickname I teased my dad with for years.

I discovered the magic of it while looking at her icon at the concert venue in “Find My’ App. It wasn’t just the icon I was seeing; in my head, I was imagining her dancing, jumping with the crowd, and listening to her favorite band. I smiled so much. It was like her sharing the location with me opened the doors to having a glimpse of her “life” journey. Not in a stalking, intrusive way like I used to think. It opened the doors to imagining the stories my family and friends might have in the places they are in. I like to imagine what they are up to. As a visual storyteller, my head thinks this way. I see stories everywhere I go. I draw from daily observations. If I see one of my friends at the beach nearby, I not only see her location. I see a funny image of her with a thousand layers of clothes on (it is pretty cold). She

is probably collecting samples at the bay and singing to herself. There is a whole movie happening in my head. They say books are a great door for imagination; for me, live sharing location is. Adding to that, there is this sort of comfort, and warm feeling seeing what my friends and family are up to. I smile when they travel and suddenly the icons are all over the globe. I feel connected to them although they are so far away. I am happy for them, but I can't wait to meet them and hear their stories. I have to admit also that sharing location can be a very convenient tool. Now I can spot my roommate in the grocery store when I need something. I just pretend that it is a coincidence, although we both know it is not the case. Yet it is another example of how this piece of technology has made an impact on my life. Now I have my fridge full all the time.

So yes, I have become "a stalker" like my dad. That is how my friends tease me. I can't blame them. That is how I used to see it also. Yet it gives me too much joy to care about it. I smile at my phone now the same way my dad does. Maybe he is smiling right now also? Maybe he saw that I'm at Coffee Exchange (my favorite coffee shop) where I always write. In this case, he probably is asking himself if I am finally writing my thesis. That would be spot on.

So I guess at the end of the day, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I'm becoming more like my dad every year. Like father, like daughter. Even in terms of the obsession with sharing the live location. It indeed has had a bigger impact on my life this year than I'd like to admit.

5th Piece of the Moving Studio

Coffee Exchange

I love coffee. Not only the taste of it but the whole ritual around it. I find pleasure in making morning coffee for myself and also for my friends. I serve it in my favorite ceramic mugs from Poland, and we just have this moment of silence while sipping the coffee. Coffee connects people. A perfect example in Providence is the local community coffee shop: Coffee Exchange. It is filled with people of all ages. There, people are not afraid to talk to strangers or each other. I have personally spoken to a man who tried to avoid being stationed in Vietnam during the war or a retired glassmaker who finally can make glass again after abandoning it. It is the power of this place. It is why probably it's called Coffee Exchange, because you exchange stories. And Coffee Exchange is full of stories. Hence why I find it a perfect place to write.

The inspiration just flows here. When you are blocked, go there. That is what I did when I had to write a short story for my creative writing class. I didn't know what to write about. I was experiencing serious writer's block. So I sat there and looked at

the blank page while listening to jazz (they have great taste in music) and observing people. Suddenly, I found myself writing about this writing crisis, how I had an hour to write this story and it wasn't happening. How I came to Coffee Exchange for this magical flow of inspiration and found nothing. This eventually led me to write 5 pages about people in Coffee Exchange. After that, it led me to write two more stories where the main protagonists meet at Coffee Exchange. That is the magic of Coffee Exchange.

I can't imagine RISD without this place. It is as much a part of my life as my studio at Weybosset. It is my studio when I need to write. I hope you will enjoy reading my stories as much as I enjoyed writing them in Coffee Exchange.

Click this [link](#) to read my stories.

Moving Forward

Acknowledgment

Everything has a beginning and an ending. In this case, it is time for me to look for another space for my moving studio. As an illustrator and animator, I have the gift of being able to share my work with others all over the world, whether through the internet or animation festivals. Yet it feels like the work I have done here is already living its own life, apart from me. It is not only mine now; I have given it to the audience. It is their imagination and interpretation that keep my characters alive. Thanks to them, one of my animations, Mr. Fragile, went to Italy, Spain, and now to Switzerland. My Wakey Wakey characters got to dance at the American Illustrators Party in New York. I am moving between places, and so is my work. Recently, it even gets to travel more than I do.

However, now, finishing my MFA at RISD, I know it is also time for me to move forward and be like my characters, conquering the world. Being an illustrator and animator allows me to work from anywhere. I can have my movable studio wherever I go, which I always considered a plus. Yet, it will be difficult to move away from this place, RISD—a place that gave me space to move and grow. I might have been moving through the streets

of Providence every day these past two years, changing places to work, yet what was constant was Providence itself—the community, friends. Providence was my studio. I want to thank everyone for being my home here, my constant in my movable studio.

My illustration professors Calef Brown, Susan Doyle, and Robert Brinkerhoff, for inviting me to be part of the RISD Illustration Family.

My animation professors Amy Kravitz, Max Porter, and Gina Kamentsky, for adopting me into the Film and Animation Department. Your way of teaching has shaped my way of thinking about animation and made me fall in love with it even deeper.

I also want to thank my professor Kim de Marco, with whom I had the pleasure of working. Being your Teaching Assistant for the last three semesters was an honor. I always looked forward to our time spent together, and I was lucky to learn from you how to give insight to students and bring us coffee for our 8 am classes.

I want to thank Ru Kuwahata for accepting me under her wings and being my Thesis Advisor. This semester was a journey, and I couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for pushing the "German system" into my "Latin style" of working. Learning from you was an honor. I always looked forward to our Thursday meetings.

To my cohort, we did it! First Grad Illustration at RISD. Thank you for making this history with me. You are wonderful, and I can't wait to see what's next for everyone.

Thank you to all my RISD friends from all departments for being so talented, great, and caring.

To my beloved friends Ananya, Tina, Tanmayee, and Renata. I wouldn't have been able to do it without you. You were my rock. Your support and love kept me going.

Additionally, I want to thank Tina for being a wonderful roommate these past two years. I am so lucky to be able to call you a sister rather than just a roommate. You made our house a home I was always happy to come back to. Thank you for not getting mad at my messiness, my grumpy side, mood swings, and how hectic I was at the end of my thesis. Thank you for feeding me, being my personal fashion assistant and just being you. I love you so much!

Lastly, I want to thank all the dogs I dogsat for the past two years: Yoda, Sasha, Leo, and Cosmo. Thank you for brightening my time here at RISD and for keeping me sane. You all have a special place in my heart.

