

RABBITISM

By

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ABSTRACT

My work is based primarily on Buddhist philosophy. I create a symbolic or iconic form of image-making called “Rabbitism” that represents the human condition. By creating my own illustrations, I hope to depict the messages of Buddhism in a highly personal and unique way. I aim to convey to the viewer that beneath the doctrine and complicated practices of this world religion, there is a simple way to understand Buddhism within both life and art.

I combine the media of hand painting and with digital printing in my work. Graphic design has long been my focus for my art, and remains my strong suit. To push myself beyond my comfort zone of graphic design alone, I have embraced the realms of painting with animation, thereby expanding my aesthetic to serve my ideas and to engage in contemporary art practices that are no longer fixed in traditional or single media use. I have tried to step away from traditional art materials, as I feel that they would constrain my perceptions of Buddhism.

My work is most notably flat, bold and colorful. My pieces are each filled with a message from Buddha, especially a sense of simplicity and joy. Regarding my embrace of and definition of Rabbitism, I find inspiration for my work from my perspective as a Asian and a practicing Buddhist. The myth of the rabbit in Buddhism has grown for many years in my conscious and unconscious mind. The rabbit is a symbol of delusion and ignorance for the Buddhist. Whenever one allows delusion to take control of the soul, he or she has allowed the animal nature of the human to dominate or, in other words, to be possessed by Rabbitist desire.

My artwork is intended to encourage the audience to be adventurous in their own perceptions. I have created a body of work that evolves from my own personal experiences in meditation and that gives people the freedom to develop opinions not connected to themselves and to seek the message of Buddha indirectly in the form of metaphor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project deals with issues of Buddhist doctrine and the multifaceted aspects of Buddhism conveyed by means of layering conceptual content and symbolism through several techniques. My work relates to historical and current art styles including Modern Art, Pop Art, Conceptual Art and Digital Art. Every aspect of the creation of this project was undertaken to engage cognitive, psychological, emotional, and visual senses on the part of viewers.

My objective for this project is to give the audience a new perspective on Buddhism. My intent is to create a new look that differs from traditional Asian and specifically Thai Buddhist styles. Buddhism as a world religion has maintained its solidly established traditions; people still adhere to these practices and aesthetics, allowing the figure of Buddha to be easily recognizable in statues and figures of monks. However, my work seeks to go beyond the appearance of Buddha to question and update the aesthetics of Buddhism. As a practicing Buddhist myself as well as a contemporary artist, I have aimed to revise some of the traditional symbols and images.

One main concept in my work is the notion of possession, or, in other words, a practice that brings the Buddhist into a state of delusion or ignorance. Possession, according to Buddha, is merely in your mind; it is not reality. We are tempted by what is beautiful in life but, as Buddha warns, this is only a trap. The real enemies, according to Buddha, are caused by our own ignorance. Feelings arise through our senses as we come in contact with the world. We experience a feeling, or sensation, in contact with one of

our senses. The most powerful is arguably sensed through the eyes. People are easily possessed and thus fooled by the visual; the feeling born from eye contact is one of the lessons that Buddhists learn to be aware of. It is accompanied by a quality of pleasure or pain. My body of work emphasizes such eye contact between the object and the viewer. I use this mode to reveal that the eye is the first gate through which to trap a soul, according to Buddhist beliefs. My work engages the viewers according to my own perception, which leaves the process of possession and entrapment for viewers to sift through. I want them to contemplate this entrapment by the eyes, even while they experience the pleasure of looking at my work. These tensions between a possession that seems pleasurable and its resulting traps for the viewer form the core of my art.

My work draws heavily on the aesthetics and subject matter of the Pop Art movement. During the 1960s and 1970s in New York, Pop Art originated as a rebellion against existing forms of fine art. Pop artists returned art to everyday life and brought every life into the world of art. The person most often associated with Pop Art is Andy Warhol (1928-1987), who designed brightly colored, almost cartoon-like renderings of iconic people and things, which he either painted by hand or reproduced using mass-production techniques such as screen printing. He borrowed images from the mass media, such as the face of blonde bombshell Marilyn Monroe (Figure 1.1) to create his work. His practice that at times mimics a manufacturer has inspired me to accept broader definitions of subjects that are appropriate for art. My work focuses on the rabbit as an instantly recognizable animal and icon. In Buddhism, the rabbit is an iconic image that refers to humans through symbolism about life and chance.

A contemporary Asian artist who also draws on the legacy of Warhol and Pop Art is Japanese multi-media artist Takashi Murakami. He similarly blends the boundaries between commercial art and fine art, but for his 21st-century audiences, and like many earlier Pop Artists, he succeeds in bringing popular culture into the realm of high art. His style, called “Super flat,” refers most directly to various flattened forms in Japanese graphic art and animation—especially manga and anime—but it also references the “shallow emptiness of Japanese consumer culture.”¹ Murakami’s works inspire me in the way he creates his own style from his culture and experience, while he includes some social critique and philosophical inquiry. For example, Murakami designed his own personal icon, *Mr. DOB* (Figure 1.2). This figure embodies an alter ego for the artist, a sort of self-portrait, but one that is deeply thought out and designed in ways that have a unique authenticity and a broad appeal, especially for his Japanese audiences. My rabbit imagery is influenced from manga and anime as well as from the Mr. DOB concept. I started watching Japanese animation when I was young. At that time, the “cuteness” and seeming innocence of these Japanese designs shaped me to see the world happily and with optimism. My rabbit character continues to remind me of my own childhood and how I see myself stuck in a trap of naiveté. In many ways, my rabbit figures are self-portraits that capture my own desire to stay forever young.

For me, studying Pop Art has been important for the development of my thesis. I began my career as an art student with the study of graphic design. I have always been interested in flat forms, animation, and computer-generated motion. But since coming to graduate school, I have expanded my studies to include painting. I follow Warhol here in

¹ Yumi Yamagushi, *Warriors of Art: A Guide to Contemporary Japanese Artists* (Tokyo: Kondansha International, 2007), 8.

using paint on canvas in addition to imagery on screens, a practice that has allowed me to explore tangible form and color in new ways. Warhol blended hand-made objects with mass-reproduced forms, and I do the same in my work. I am drawn to the aesthetics of 2d forms seen against a ground without much depth or linear perspective, just as Warhol was. To be sure, his works seemed to look forward to our screen-oriented computer age, where the majority of the imagery we see day-to-day is now flattened and framed by our digital technology on machines.

I was born in the year of the rabbit according to the Chinese zodiac. One of my uncles is of Chinese descent and I have always been attracted to and interested in this aspect of my identity. The Chinese zodiac reflects how the Chinese believe that each zodiac sign based on the year of one's birth can describe or shape a person's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. Since I was a child, I have always had good memories about rabbits not only because of knowing their connection to the year I was born, but also from my attraction to the animal itself and its mythology in Buddhist beliefs. Some Buddhists believe that Buddha was born as a rabbit. The key story was called "The Hare's Sacrifice."² In this story, the Buddha decided to offer himself up as food to a hungry stranger. It was a day for observing the commandments. He thought that if someone had come as a guest, he will not kill any other life but instead would jump into a fire himself as an offering. He shook off the fleas in his fur to spare their lives and readied himself to die. However, it turns out that stranger was the King of Gods, Shakra, who was testing the Buddha, and Buddha passed the test with his willingness to make

² Rafe Martin, *The hungry tigress: Buddhist myths, legends, and Jataka tales* (Cambridge, Ma.: Yellow Moon Press, 1999).

such a sacrifice. This story is one of hope for me. I take a lesson from Buddha here to keep putting others above yourself, to focus on the good, and to not give up no matter who we are. For me, the rabbit stands for a fighter inside a soft body, which represents the contrasts between an illusionary exterior appearance and a hidden deeper reality. One can be trapped by the apparent softness of the rabbit and never look deeper, remaining ignorant to its strength. The rabbit represents a reminder for me that I have to avoid life's traps and look deeply to find my own path.

Following Pop Artists and specifically the style of Warhol, I use repetition of a cartoon-like, brightly colored rabbit to create my own symbolic language about the philosophical and spiritual concepts that are most authentic to me. I have coined a term for my practice: "Rabbitism." Rabbitism is not just my symbol for the traps of delusion and ignorance in life, but also the ever-entrapping flatness of our day-to-day life in the digital age, where computer techniques create icons, like my rabbit, in flat disembodied forms, which point again to the notion of ignorance versus true depth and knowledge in Buddhism.

My life as an international student, raised first in Thailand, has also shaped my perspective and style. I used to live in remote areas of Thailand, largely isolated from people and the modern city. Rather than being inundated by the pleasures of worldly things, I was protected by the heart of nature. The Buddha himself was supposedly born in the forest and then later enlightened in nature beneath a famous tree. He taught his practices outside the city and he passed away in the forest. A forest, with its thick trees and the dominance of nature rather than people, is the best dwelling place where one can purify one's mind of all defilement. I was born in Khon Kaen, which is located in the

northeast of Thailand, where famous areas of Thai forests are located and where the branch of Theravada Buddhism thrived. Theravada means “the doctrine of the elder,” implying a strict adherence to the Buddha’s original teachings and rules for monastic discipline. People who practice this form of Buddhism hold to an original monastic code laid down by the Buddha in AD 43.

Joyfulness and fun are major themes in my work. These themes represent the physical and emotional pleasure that humans experience in their lives, but which can also result in them being trapped. In all of my pieces, I have used vivid colors, such as bold reds, bright yellows, glowing blues and greens. My colorful pieces are meant to draw my viewers in a way that distracts and deludes them. Positive feelings can lead us to happy moments or pleasurable things instead of sadness. However, there are two sides of life. Even though we enjoy beautiful things and ignore the other side of darkness, this will never fully protect us from delusion. In contrast, learning from joyfulness and fun can also be a reminder of what we are deluded by. According to Pha Ajaan Dune Atulo, “No matter how much you think, you won’t know. Only when you stop thinking will you know. But still, you have to depend on thinking so as to know.”³ Thinking of something before we have reached enlightenment can still be important for understanding, yet we are trapped in a delusion of understanding and must not try to specify an idea or feeling fully. In this case, joyfulness and fun are not always good things, but may be a delusional trap.

My work utilizes several processes, including drawing by hand, drawing on a computer, and painting. First of all, my process of drawing and sketching allows me to

³ Thanisaro Bhikku, trans. *Gifts He Left Behind: The Dhamma Legacy of Phra Ajaan Dune Atulo*, 2005, <http://www.e4thai.com/e4e/images/pdf/GiftsHeLeftBehind-Eng.pdf>.

use my hands in a traditional way as an artist, while I also see my work on the computer as drawing or sketching. This step of sketching out my ideas is very important. It is here that I work through my ideas, building the layers of obvious surface and hidden depth that are key to my work. The combination of sketching on paper and working with a computer can produce alternative results, both of which are valuable to me.

Second, my process of painting intentionally makes my work look more alive than when I use machine reproduction, whether screen printing, like Andy Warhol, or digital printing. I find that hand painting serves better to express my innermost feelings. I used to study calligraphy and drawing with ink in the Asian style. I learned to control a brush inspired by Chinese techniques called “ink and wash” painting. This process allowed me to get the various tonalities, shading, and colors just in one stroke (Figure 1.3). My project applied this technique by using acrylic color for variations in vivid hues, tonality, and thick texture to describe the emotional part of my pieces.

In sum, my work employs a variety of traditional and contemporary media—from Chinese calligraphic brush strokes to digital design—in order to explore aspects of Buddhism as they are relevant in my life and in our postmodern century. I combine iconic, simple imagery rendered in bright, almost child-like, color with profound if hidden meanings in ways that reflect important tensions between surface pleasure and true knowledge.



Figure 1.1. Andy Warhol, *Untitled [From Marilyn Monroe]*, drawing and print, 1967.

91.5 x 91.5 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

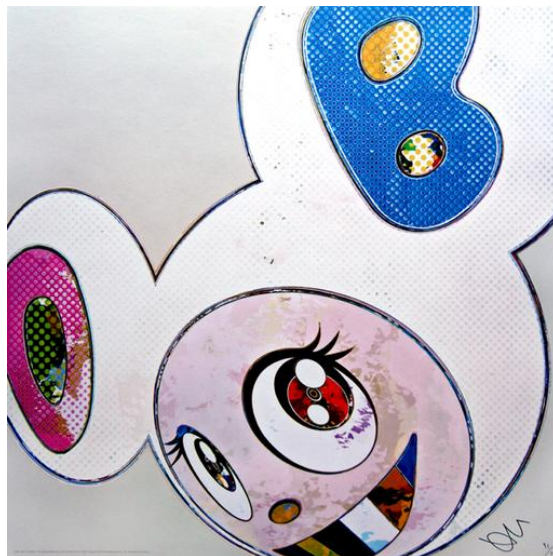


Figure 1.2. Takashi Murakami, *Mr. DOB [The Superflat Method: Pink and Blue Ears]*,

offset lithograph, 2013. 50 x 50 cm.



Figure 1.3. Chinese Character with much abstraction,
Tchouki, ground ink on paper, 15 x 20 cm

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

My works draws on a variety of art historical influences, including the Buddhist art of Thailand, Pop art, Contemporary art and Chinese art.

1. Buddhist arts

Buddhist arts have been influential in Thailand since the 3rd century B.C. Thai art mainly deals with Buddhist religious themes, which form an important national ideal and conception of life for Thai people.⁴ The prototype of early Buddhist art in Thailand come from Indian art adopted with other concepts and elements of the other nations on the Indo –Chinese peninsula of South- East Asia until the arts of the Bangkok period (or Ratanakosin period) started in the late 1700s and continued to the early 1900s. The former Bangkok Classical style of the beginning had been absent.⁵ During this period many contacts were made with foreign countries and the artist tried to humanize the Buddha image as much as possible.⁶ So there are many techniques mixed with older traditions. An example of this style can be seen in a mural at the temple Wat Si Khom Kham in the Phayao province of Thailand, which was a great source of inspiration for me. This mural was produced by Thai artist Achan Angkarn Kalayanapong, and features the Buddha beneath a famous tree (Figure 2.1). He includes the Lanna style, which is a

⁴ Charuwan Chareonla, The Introduction and Origin of Buddhist Art in Thailand. In *Buddhist Arts of Thailand* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform), p.25.

⁵ Charuwan Chareonla, Art of Bangkok Period or Ratanakosin Period. In *Buddhist Arts of Thailand* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform), p.192.

⁶ Charuwan Chareonla, Art of Bangkok Period or Ratanakosin Period. In *Buddhist Arts of Thailand* (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform), p.197.

traditional style from the north of Thailand, but he also blends this with some contemporary features (Figure 2.2). However, the figure of Buddha still appears in the painting which likely the old classical style. Kalayanapong's work is devoted to the Theravada sect of Buddhism, which teaches that salvation can be earned only through individual efforts. Although on his work the fairy lands and beautiful creature are the influenced from Indian' art but techniques of bright and childlike color are influenced from being educated by western style. The western painting had their effect on Thai artist since the 18th century. Kalayanapong was a student of Silpa Bhirasri, an Italian man, one of the greatest contemporary Thai artist who also the founder of Silpakorn University – The university of Fine Arts in 1943. Many Thai arts expanded in many color and always have gold leaf applied on the painting in this period. Kalayanapong was a rebellious student who was sent to draw a Thai mural out of school because his skills are so amazing. He creates a new looks of Thai mural same as his talent as a famous poet who establish the mythopoeics by the poets of revolution and the poets of reform. His work becoming a contemporary Thai poetry since his ideas and language broke free of traditional pattern. Both painting and poet always interpret the philosophy of idealism, Buddhism and Thinness inside of its inspire me a lot.

My work draws on this blend of traditional Thai themes and contemporary aspects as same Kalayanapong. To me the sense of beauty, color choices of gold with some bright colors and drawing of Thai style on the mural combine old and new in one piece are astonishing. Space on the mural also reminded me of imagination of heaven in Buddhism which make me feel claim although the color of the background is vivid red. it does not oppose my feeling. My work also plays with vivid color and let the audiences

experience the contrast between the message of darkness and beautiful visual. Deeper than that the collaboration of 3d Buddha and 2d screen on the mural is new from the old style where the artist usually draws figure of Buddha on the mural behind the figure. His white clear drawing line also represent Thainess in his personality from being obsessed in the beauty of Thai language and Buddhism philosophy. Moreover, it is obviously that I can see a master of Thai craftsman inside of him as he was Thai painting major in Fine Art school by looked at his mural and see the delicate details which make him unique. From Kanlayanapong's inspiration, I developed my work of art by combining my strong point of being graphic designer with my personality and my obsession in rabbit into my art create the unique point where its not just contemporary art but also describe my perspective in life of being a Rabbitism.

My animation, for instance, displays slow movement and solid color subtract abstraction part on the background to capture a sense of Theravada ideals. It also makes the viewer practice meditation from watching. To keep the link between Thai and Buddhist art, my choice of imagery is to choose some elements from early old Thai style and redesign shapes and forms. One of the most important Buddhist symbols I chose is gear wheel (Figure 2.3) refer to the endless cycle of rebirth, the wheel was a common symbol in early Buddhist art, before the introduction of Buddha.⁷, a Kanok pattern (Figure 2.4) is a basic shape of Thai painting, one of identity of Thai art inspired by nature. This example of Kanok's shape imitate flame. Moreover, Buddhist clouds (Figure 2.5) a figure part of landscape founded in many Thai painting. The example of this mural show the aesthetic of plain gold background creates a mental space rather than physical

⁷ "Wheel in Buddhist Symbolism" last modified October 27, 2015, <http://www.religionfacts.com/buddhism/wheel>

space. It shows the characteristic and technique of Thai painting that has no perspective/vanishing point, even the figures are drawn with an even flowing contour filled in with flat color like India art, which relates to my work and my own world of childlike, abstract. As Thai artist, I carry on creating images to convey the idea of the Buddha in a unique style beyond the mere appearance of Buddha.

2. Pop Art

Pop art originated as a rebellion against total abstraction in art and against art being disassociated from everyday life. It brought back into the realm of high art aspects of mass culture such as news, comic books, and advertising. During the 1960s and 1970s in England and America, art began to step out from the canvas and participate with everyday life and with objects making it seem more in tune with contemporary living. Like Pop artists, I have drawn on images from everyday life, such as an animated rabbit. This rabbit is relatable for my viewers, who are reminded of their childhood. And like many Pop artists, I produce my images as 2d icons, and design them as moveable forms on a screen.

According to Wu Hung's investigation on *the Double Screen*, the screen can be an object, a painting medium, a pictorial representation, or all three. In other words, a screen (as an architectonic form) occupies a three dimensional space and divides space ; a screen (as an art medium) provides an ideal surface for painting and a screen (as a pictorial representation) is one of the favorite images in Chinese painting.⁸ These investigation on

⁸ Wu Hung, "Introduction," in *The double screen: Medium and representation in Chinese painting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.9.

screen shows me the possibility to create my own screen which also metaphor and also interact with audiences.

According to Anna Friedberg on *The virtual window*. Her point of view about how virtual imagery is very interesting. Friedberg is exploring the frame as a continuous theme and leading metaphor⁹. She also interpreted how human memorized by the first scene of motion and delude by hypnotic of iconic which is often flat on screen. My art also links all of my imagery as continuous theme by keep the audience on track while watching main character. I want to expand beyond a traditional still life painting through moving screen imagery. This idea also follows my perspective as a practicing Buddhist who tries not to cling to material objects as they are ephemeral, or cling to the past as it is already impossible to retrieve. Moreover, the animation technique helps me creates a moving images allow the viewer to recognized my Rabbit iconic and fall into a trapped by recognized them by their own mind and their own eyes which that easily to possessed by visual result in the core of my art that want to possess the audience by beware of delusion and leave question for the audience to ask themselves. Moreover, compare to the similarity of Warhol, his work on the surface leave a questions for the viewer to think and critique what it's real, mask or delicate work. My project also wants the viewer to rethink about Buddhism. At least interpret them from uncomfortable zone.

3. Contemporary Art

Murakami's series *Ego* reminded me of how I interpret my rabbit figure that originated from my own perspective, ego. According to Vernon Hyde Minor, Sigmund

⁹ James Elkins, "The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft" by Anne Friedberg, accessed October 29, 2015, http://www.researchgate.net/publication/250210934_James_Elkins._Review_of_The_Virtual_Window_From_Alberti_to_Microsoft_by_Anne_Friedberg

Freud (1856-1939) was a psychiatrist who formulated a model of the human mind that includes the id, ego, and super ego. The id contains everything that is inherited or present at birth, while the ego evolves with life experiences. The super ego controls morals, ethics, and the civilized center or ego ideal.¹⁰ Murakami created his own character through his life experiences (his “ego”) and interpreted Mr. DOB (Figure 1.2) from culture (the super ego). I have drawn from the same process with my rabbit icon (Figure 2.6), which is my own alter-ego. It refers to me personally, through my birth year in the Chinese zodiac, but also refers to humans more broadly through its Buddhist symbolism about life and chance. This rabbit icon has been preoccupying my imagination for a long time and its final form came from deep within my consciousness. The ego is driven by desire whether consciousness or unconsciousness, but it is also controlled by the super ego, which relates to the Buddhist notion of a pure soul that every human has from the beginning before that soul becomes trapped by delusion. Moreover, the choices of bright color of rabbit icon also related to the Thai mural technique in the Ratanakosin period which filled in with bright flat colors.

Murakami merges a childlike sensibility with darker themes. My intention with this project is also to offer deeper, more serious messages hidden within bright childlike subjects and styles. Buddha’s doctrines remind viewers about the opposite side of childhood innocence, and how beauty can act as a trap for our unenlightened soul. My project contains animation, digital prints, and my art in merchandise such as digital scarves, T-shirt, Mug, Magnet, Tote Bag, etc. I follow Murakami regarding how to expand art into other realms beyond its intension for galleries or art collectors. I believe

¹⁰ Vernon Hyde Minor, “Psychoanalysis and Art History,” In *Art history’s history*, ed. 2nd of Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), p.194.

that art can have an uplifting and enlightening message, especially if it is included within mass produced merchandise available to a wide audience. My scarves offer viewers a way to wear my rabbit image and to explore its message daily.

4. Chinese Art

In addition to screenic media, I also use processes of painting to make my work look more interesting by add some textures on my work. I'm comfortable with the medium of ink in the Asian style, so I chose to create abstractions in paint by using the Chinese technique "ink and wash" painting. This technique also allowed me to get the various tonalities, shadings, and colors I desired. I have been influenced by Chan and Zen Buddhism¹¹ practiced by Chinese and Japanese monks as a mental and meditative process. The characteristic of ink and wash painting is focused on essentials rather than details, which matches my idea of creating abstract backgrounds that express my emotions rather than render objects literally. One stroke, simple and executed in one gesture, can depict a single but highly meaningful idea.

Acrylic is man-made color containing plastic and other synthetic materials. Artists began using acrylic paint only in the mid-twentieth century. It's easy to use and I consider acrylic as a relatively new art medium. I use acrylic instead of ink to get my colorful colors. One of the aesthetic characteristics I value most is to accept imperfections. The point of using the ink and wash painting technique is to have my own personal and individual style through which to express my emotions and my inner consciousness. This adds a personal side and message to the work.

¹¹ "The Essential Aesthetic Principle of Chinese Ink and Wash Painting" last modified October 27,2015, <http://www.asianbrushpainter.com/blog/knowledgebase/the-aesthetics-of-ink-and-wash-painting/>

According to Wu Hung in *The Double Screen*, the purpose of painting is either to illustrate provided models or to warn viewers against misconduct.¹² Metaphors or symbols enrich one's understanding of art and literature. Having a Chinese bloodline, I'm familiar with interpreting moral stories from Chinese movies, poems, and even operas. Drawing on Wu Hung's discussion of Asian painting, I created work with hidden messages from Buddha to warn viewers against misconduct by let an audiences enjoy a dreamlike of my work without reveal the real message and keep the animation in silent. Make them meditate while watching without forcing to understand. Also metaphor in Chinese painting reflects the way Asian people think and communicate with one another in an indirect way. I believe it is the artist's moral duty to interpret inner and outer world ideas first, and then to develop pictorial images on paintings or screens. A scholar with his portrait (Figure 2.7) is an example of how the artist seem to leave the question to the viewer's imagination. "The setting of the scene is entirely arbitrary; it is even hard to figure out if the scholar is indoor or outdoors", said Wu.¹³ Moreover, there are conversation and relationship between each image on painted screen. The scholar is looking at the servant and smiling while a third human image that appears on a scroll hanging above probably his self-portrait looks down at his model in differ expression, he not smiles and no longer look kind. It appears as an echo between image within image. The illusion tricked the audiences by drawn into self-portrait of scholar. The focus is no longer the man, but the landscape in his vision. This work creates mental space of what is

¹² Wu Hung, "Inner and Outer Worlds," in *The double screen: Medium and representation in Chinese painting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1996), p.134.

¹³ Wu Hung, "Emperor's Choice," in *The double screen: Medium and representation in Chinese painting*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1996), p.231.

real perhaps in the mind of scholar. Somehow this indirect symbolic also refer to the different personality, political message as metaphorical or philosophical piece.

The landscape is also really important part of my screen. Chinese artists believe that nature was given a traditional role which mean respect the nature, nature will also respect and teach us. If such a thing as virtue and wisdom existed, they had to be comprehended through private meditation and inner thought. Nature is a core component of Buddhism Buddha leave the palace to find the way out of suffering. He started from the learning by understand nature and embraces the nature by let one self into the its. As a result, he discovers the enlightenment beyond it in nature so my work also includes landscape imagery, such as trees, skies, and night scenes.



Figure 2.1 Mural at Wat Si Khom Kham, Phayao province, Thailand.

By Artist Achan Angkarn Kalayaanapong.



Figure 2.2 Mural at Wat Si Khom Kham, Phayao province, Thailand.

By Artist Achan Angkarn Kalayaanapong.



Figure 2.3 Gear Wheel



Figure 2.4 Kanok



Figure 2.5 Cloud shape, Mural
at Pra Maha That Chedi Pukdee Prakard, Thailand.



Figure 2.6 Rabbit Icon, Digital print.



Figure 2.7 A Scholar with his Portrait, early Ming, Album leaf, ink and color on silk.

National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

CHAPTER 3

TECHNIQUE AND PROCESSES

My work is both handmade and machine-made. I combine hand drawing and sketching with painting and then I complete my designs using the computer.

Drawing and Sketching

My pieces all begin with basic sketches and drawings on paper. I use mix media papers which is white and thick papers. It works best for me to start with basic rough sketches and drawings before shifting to produce my final computer designs. Working with my hands allows me to take more direct control of the shapes and lines. The process is more tangible and tactile. It incorporates my body along with my mind, and allows me to use gesture and motion more fluidly than with a computer mouse. Moreover, the drawing process is more soothing than the digital process, as the light from the computer screen affects me strongly when I work for long hours. Drawing on paper feels more natural and more comfortable and this step makes my work stronger and more effective (Figure 3.1). Once I finish my hand-drawn design, I transform them to a digital version that I can view on a screen. I use pencil or graphite for the sketching process and then I redesign them by tracing over the pencil with sharpie marker or black ink to get a clean edge and a strong contour outline. One important thing during this sketching and drawing step is to make sure the paper I use is large enough. The minimum size of paper should be at least 8.5 x 11 as standard typing paper size for a scanner. By the time I

create a PNG or JPG file, I need to be working from a large size sketch so that I avoid any problems in the motion process.

Painting by Wash painting

In addition to the figures in my rough sketches and drawings, I also use another technique: wash painting. This process is intended to create an abstraction in my designs that presents my emotional aspects within each piece (Figure 3.2). The media that I use for this wash process is acrylic color. I painted the washes on pieces of paper (Figure 3.3). Calling upon my emotions, I try to work rapidly and with immediacy. The result of this process comes out like a small model of my emotional outlook.

Computer Design by Scanning Process

Once I choose my finalized design, the next process is to scan them into a JPG file. This process is essentially using a machine to make a copy but I also see it as a translation into a new medium with which I can transform my drawing into a CMYK or RGB range of colors. I realize these colors are being controlled by the tool on Adobe Photoshop program, but I embrace that step and recognize that the lack of control here adds something to my design (Figure 3.4).

Transform Image trace

To create an object by itself without the background of paper after I have scanned the image, I have make sure my outline leaves out the space behind the form completely. Then to bring out my outline and to create a clear edge on the computer, I use Adobe

Illustrator. First I have to place images on the screen and go to Image trace on menu bar. This allows me to create an outline of my design in black and white (Figure 3.5). After that I have to isolate all of my figures and create another new file on each of them as a PNG file.

Choose color

After I have an JPG images in black and white, my next process is to fill color into each figure and make sure the mood and tone are right for my context. I choose vivid colors in order to attract and delude the viewers and then I fill in my wash painting in some parts to create volume in my work. (Figure 3.6)

Design

The final design contains both color and wash painting together (Figure 3.7). Its format will be a PNG file converted to a specific album for the next process. Each of the figures, elements and parts of the background will in save on each folder and ready to use for next step.

Categorizing each element

I keep copies of all steps of my digital designs in different file formats such as JPG, PNG, Original file, and Abstract wash file album (Figure 3.8). This step helps me to work faster. I can go back and forth between the files if any mistakes happen or if I need the original file to change a design. There are 5 animations in my projects, which means I have to have 20 albums prepared for the animation process. This process of layering also

similar to meditation. I have go back and forth so many time and rethink either my work is satisfied or not. Once I comfortable of layering so many time it's also changed the view of how I use to worry and scare when I encounter complex techniques.

Animations

Making many animations at the same time can be complicated because the many files are moveable and interact with the screen every second. Although the computer allows me to save my work, multitasking and jumping into other albums of files can introduce mistakes and confusion. Once files are missing, I have to go back and start to work it again from the first step. I use Adobe After Effect as the program for my animation. First of all, I create a background by clicking the composition function on menu bar to create a new composition (Figure 3.9). Also required are time setting, frame rate, background color, and resolution. Second, I drag all PNG files into the project panel on the left hand. This is where all imported and created assets will live including but not limited to compositions, video, audio, and graphics. Finally, I have my designs follow a storyboard. I drag my PNG files into layers at the panel on the bottom of the program. The top layer always is the top part of screen. There is an effect tool in each PNG file such as position, rotation, scale, opacity, effects, blend mode, and masks on the bottom of each PNG file. There is a composition window displaying the current frame content for the selected composition and timeline panel, which shows the lengths of layers along with all keyframe data for those layers of PNG files next to the layers panel. To get the nice and smooth rhythm on my animation, I have to replay and make sure each second is

in the right position. Once satisfied with my design, I will save and render all of my frames together in one piece of work at the end of process.

Converted to Quick Time

Quick Time is a program for multimedia technology for handling video, sound, animation, graphic, text, interactivity and music. I prefer to carry my animation files with QuickTime because it can deliver content on Mac OS and Windows computers. At the end of this process I will save them in my flash drive.

Prints

After all animation is ready, I create a still life based on my animation by picking scenes that affect me the most and making them into digital prints in frames. I use Adobe Illustrator program to recreate the same scene on my animation but use higher resolution in the case of printing large images (Figure 3.10).

Merchandise

I also expand my digital prints into merchandise. This final step brings me even closer to the level of reproduction used by Murakami and Andy Warhol's. I use the technology of Screen print by computer on Scarves (Figure 3.11), T-shirt (Figure 3.12), Tote Bag, Magnet, Pin and Mug by design a logo and choose some elements of my work and let the machine screen them on each items.

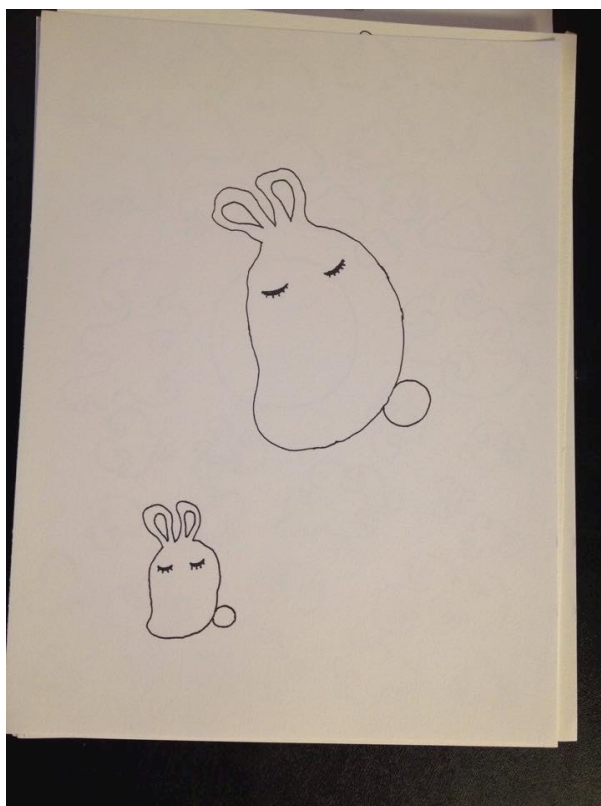


Figure 3.1 Sketching on paper, Sharpies on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm.

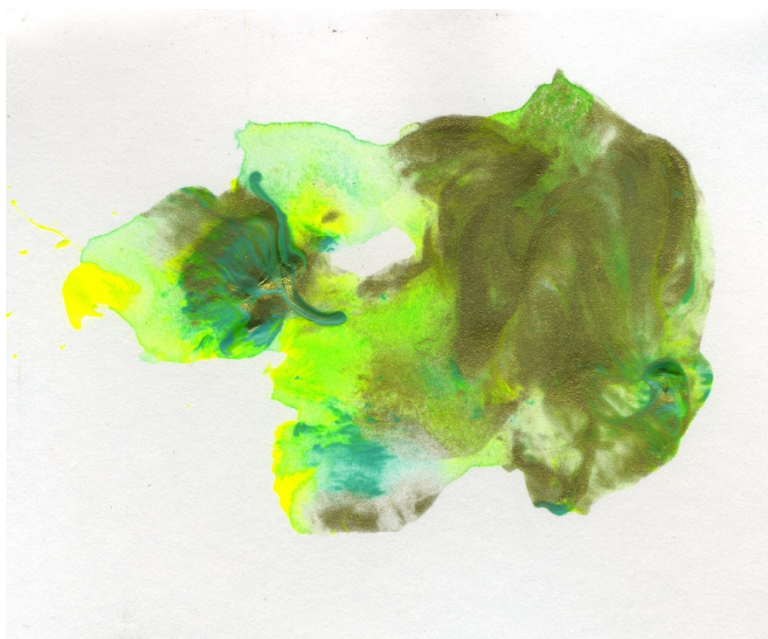


Figure 3.2 Wash painting, Acrylic on paper, 15.24 x 11.68 cm.



Figure 3.3 Scanning process



Figure 3.4 Wash Painting

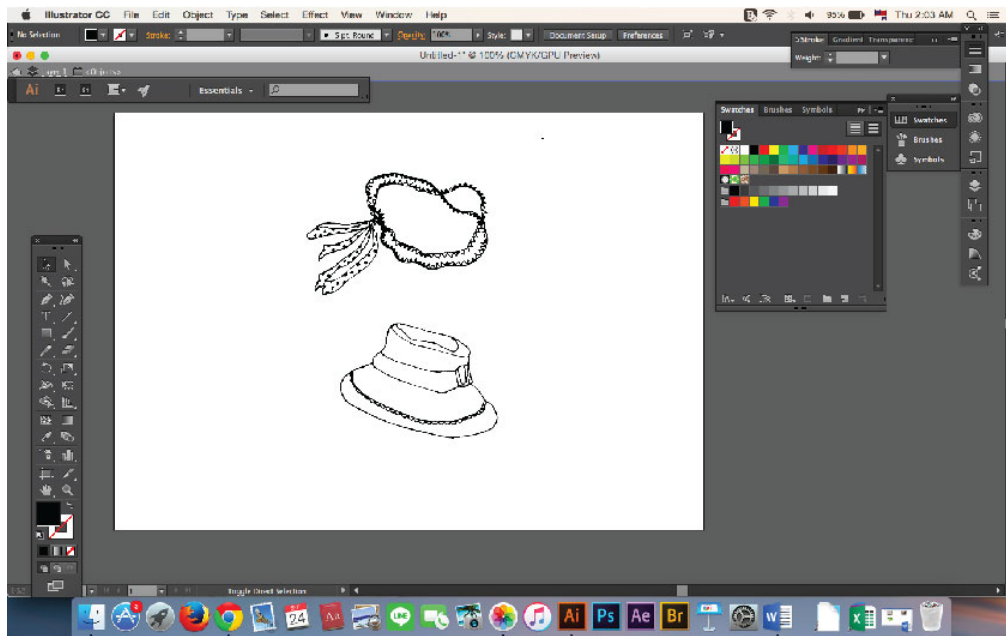


Figure 3.5 Image Trace, Black and White outline, PNG file.

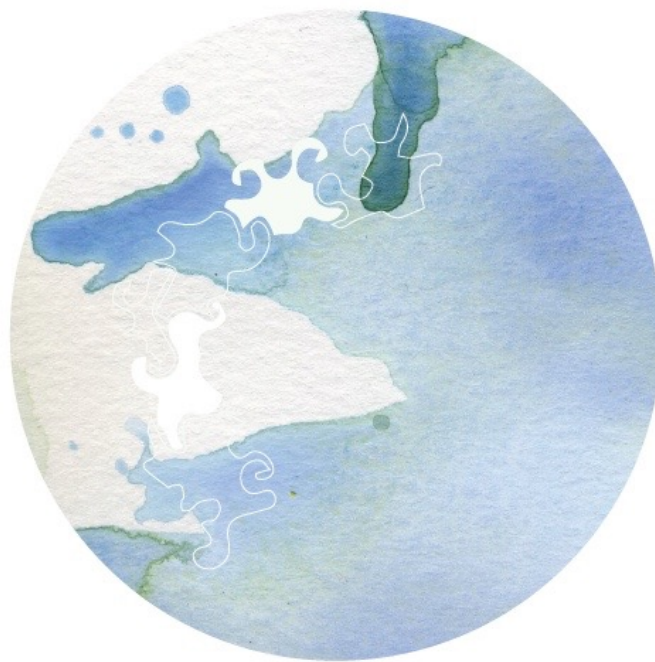


Figure 3.6 Wash painting fill in circle figure, RGB color, PNG file, 19.05 x 19.05 cm.

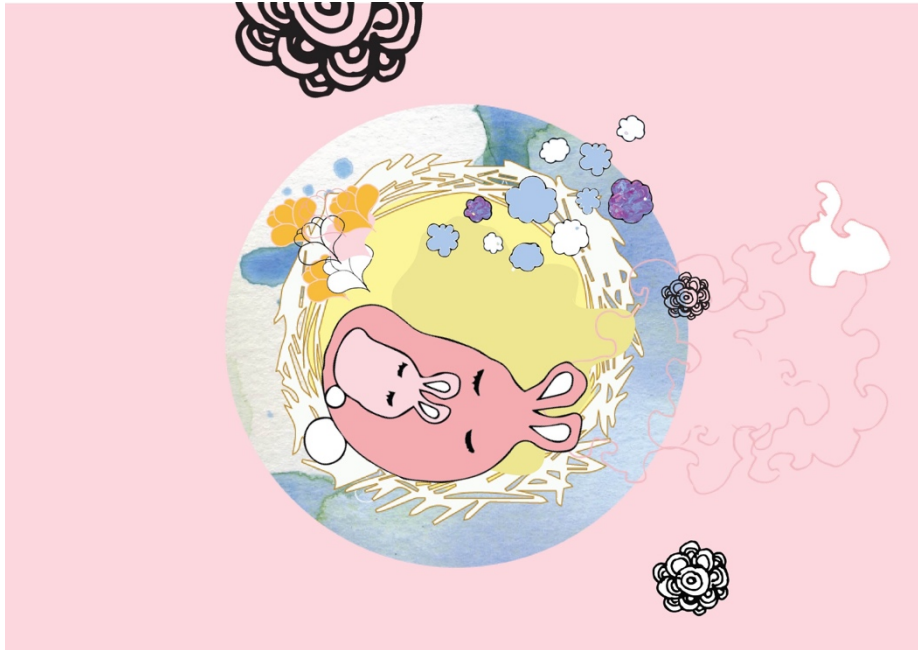


Figure 3.7 Illustration and wash painting, PNG file, 21 x 29.7 cm.

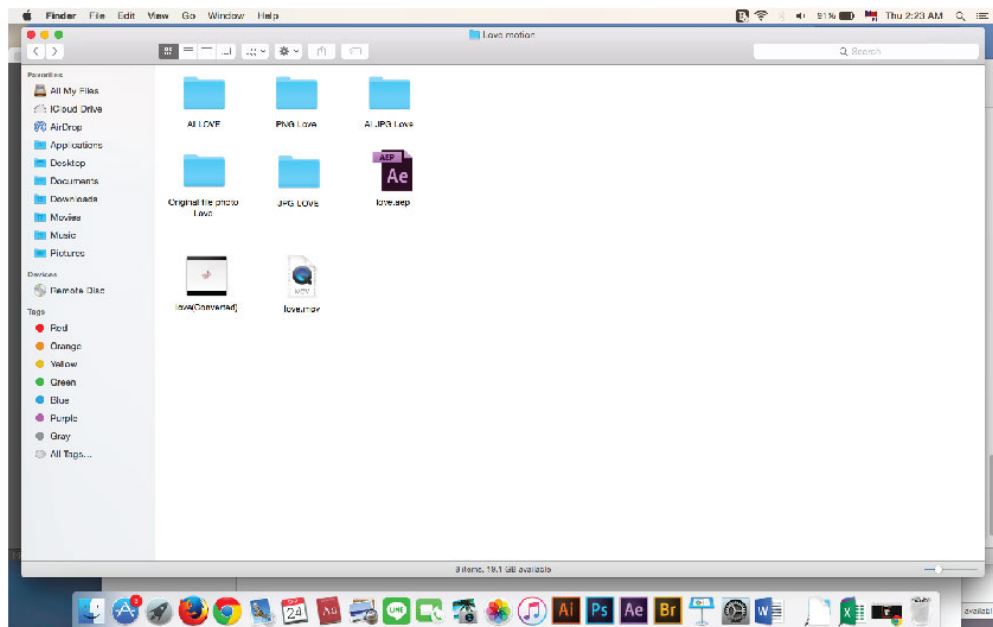


Figure 3.8 Albums each type of files such as JPG, PNG, AI and AE.

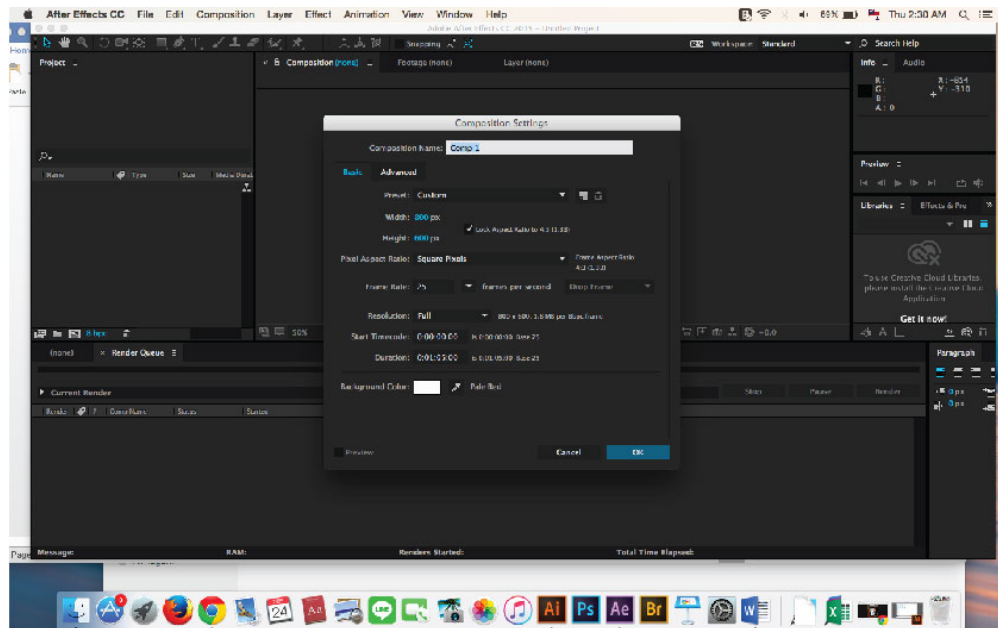


Figure 3.9 Adobe After Effects program, New composition.



Figure 3.10 Digital print



Figure 3.11 Scarf, Japanese Chiffon, 50 x 130 cm.



Figure 3.12 T-shirt, Screen Print, Cotton 100%.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT

“With Dhamma in mind,” writes Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. “we may actually find true happiness while working but no one is interested in this kind of happiness because everyone is only keen in seeking pleasures of a delusive kind, and exchanging for it with labor and sweat all time.”¹⁴ For me, this statement speaks of the happiness I achieve from my work as an artist when I see my work as serving a greater good and reaching out to other people.

My main concept in my work is the notion of possession, or, in other words, a practice that brings the Buddhist into state of delusion or ignorance. In working through my project, my work had involved a kind of self possession. I feel an experience of love, lust, anger, and greed while I am working. However, my process also helps me accept more about how humans naturally and instinctually are. The process of rendering animation takes a long time and requires a lot of patience. As with meditation, I have to conquer myself, be patient, keep focusing and keep calm. I realize that sometimes mistakes come not from my mind but from my technical tools. The movement of my animation records how I feel, such as being in love, having lust, or being angry and greedy. Every aspect of motion has been anticipated from the outline of my storyboards, but these aspects are not always readily visible to the viewer without careful consideration. The understanding of what life is and why we attach to certain feelings

¹⁴ Buddhadasa Bhikku, *A Consigned Legacy*, (Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture Thailand, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010), p.35.

often takes time. I believe that learning from the various experiences in life as much as I can will bring me into the state of enlightenment someday.

Mental obstacles such as love, greed, angry and lust arise from the mind. My animation includes four stories featuring these emotions and one story that seeks to interpret what we mean by the soul.

Love: Animation (Plates 1-5) refers to one basic feeling of humans since birth, namely love. It is universal. One of the universal truths of the Buddha is that everything is continuously changing. Sometimes it flows slowly and sometimes swiftly. As soon as we think we are safe, something unexpected happens. Nothing is ever truly permanent. My work presents the love felt between a mother and child in a the symbolic form of a rabbit. As a Buddhist, I believe that love is a beneficial emotion. However, to follow the Buddhist path, I must accept the final result that nothing is permanent. I begin my story with a representation of the universe through a circular form in which (Figure 4.1) one life begins as a mother and one life begins as a child. To me, the love of a mother is unconditional love. It spreads out like a drop of water leading to many related roles, such as protector, giver, and nurturer. This drop of water metaphor is shown through the forms that look like splashes in my designs. On the screen of my first animation series, I have also created a nest that embodies the notion of home in commonly understood sense to communicate the feeling of being protected (Figure 4.2). At the end of my animation, a baby rabbit fades out of the frame and leave nothing on screen (Figure 4.3). I want my viewers to think about how the process of birth itself is suffering; both the mother's pain and the baby's shock of exiting the protected womb into the harsher world beyond the mother's body. Suffering is one of the four noble truths of Buddhism. Buddhists see it as

a warning. During the transition from the beginning to the end of this animation, I use a pink color to express love, yellow to show warmth, and I leave white space to reminded the viewer of the emptiness and distance between one life and other. The movement of this animation focuses on objects spinning around from the center of the mother rabbit, which represents how humans cling onto love.

Greed: Animation (Plates 6-10) focuses on desire in society. I create a character called “Greedy Rabbit” who has a long nose inspired from the animated character of Pinocchio and a long arm inspired from “hungry ghost.” Which is one type of goss that Buddhist people believe once human who have a lot of greed in their life die his soul still be trap by needed and hungry of everything. Today, we are in high competition with one another and we reach out for money and everything that has monetary value in the eyes of society. People move to big cities looking for opportunities, which results in overcrowding and pollution. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu summarizes this tension:

Each time that the mind is filled with craving or desire, ‘Paticcasamuppada’ or the law of dependent Origination associating with the originating of suffering, will surface to work with mind. When the contact and the feelings are born out of ignorance, the mind too becomes ignorant or silly until it becomes dominated by craving and other mental defilements. Therefore, be careful whenever there is any one contact (between external objects and the sense organs) taking place, leading to the arising of the Dependent Origination of suffering.¹⁵

¹⁵ Buddhadasa Bhikku, *A Consigned Legacy*, (Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture Thailand, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010), p.28.

My greedy rabbit represents these warnings and actions. In the first scene, I create a cloud inspired by poison gases carrying all those greedy rabbits together into the center of the screen (Figure 4.4). Once overcome by the feeling of desire, they grab everything they want. (Figure 4.5) At the end, these greedy desiring rabbits fall down from the sky (Figure 4.6).

Angry: Animation (Plates 11-15) focus on the result of anger being a kind of hell. Because anger is violently emotion. Its also harm yourself and sometime take cause of risk to people's life. Being unable to control anger means you already live in unpresant world like hell where people receive pain. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are things which must be properly controlled. In this animation, I present a rabbit in a form of a soul attached to the emotion of anger. Its form is made in earth tones that twirl in a cone shape like a tornado. The act of twirl remind me of how anger leads to somethings for destroy. They are hard to control, a disaster that stems from nature like our soul (Figure 4.7). The rabbits cling to their own anger, trapped by their own mind like a prisoner, and idea I convey through the use of vertical lines like prison bars. (Figure 4.8) It is only when we are able to restrain the birth of such unwholesome states of mind that will we then able to extinguish our suffering. Anger is dangerous not only to the possessor of this emotion, but often for other people as well, when someone harms other people leading to the situations of murder or violence. The movement of this animation is particularly unstable and unpredictable, reflected in the action of the rabbit. Sometime it goes fast and sometimes slow. Also during the creation of this animation, I have myself experienced anger, a feeling I have allowed to influence my designs here.

Lust: animation (Plates 16-20) focus on materialism. People cling to material objects showing a kind of attraction or addiction like a magnet. Lust is considered one of Buddhism's five hindrances. Obsessions for beautiful material goods can strongly entrap humans. The *Discourses of the Buddha* states, "The pleasure and joy that arise in dependence on the eye: this is the gratification in the eye. That the eye is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change: this is the danger in the eye. The removal and abandonment of desire and lust from the eye: this is the escape from the eye."¹⁶ I create many objects floating on the screen to draw the eyes of the viewer. (Figure 4.9) The enjoyment of seeing them floating operates as a kind of trap:

The more progressive the world is, the madder it becomes as it moves along with the trend of materialism that drags everything along with its advancing pace: and people take it to be a sign of progress. Little do they realize that it is like running into thicket of difficult problems created by own ourselves who do not seem to have understood the meaning of humanity.¹⁷

This observation by Bhikkhu points to a theme I am tracing in my work. My objects, such as a purse, a pair of shoes, or a tube of lipstick follow the rabbit around on the scene representing the intentions of the media and the advertising that we see today. However, it's the audience's duty to be aware of this destructive attraction. The movement of this animation is slow and takes time for the viewer to see all the detail in the material objects, which encourages them to fall into the trap I want them to recognize (Figure

¹⁶ "Is Lust Only Natural?" last modified October 1, 2015, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Judaism/2002/08/Is-Lust-Only-Natural.aspx>

⁴ Buddhadasa Bhikku, *A Consigned Legacy*, (Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture Thailand, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010), p.47.

4.10) This animation has a symbol of a gear wheel in a blue color on the center and left side (Figure 4.11) There is a phrase--“See the gear wheel is a lotus”—that I have heard repeatedly since I was a child. It means to mistake evil or the other word “believe that evil is angle in their eyes.” so I designed a gear wheel behind and in front of the material objects to hint at this message.

Mind: Animation (Plates 21-25) focuses on the meaning of the mind as part of nature. In Buddhism there is a doctrine that states, “[everyone] inside his heart keeps the seed of Buddha.” I believe that that the beginning of every heart has a pure soul.

According to the book of “Karma A new look at Buddhist concept of cause and effect” state, “Buddhism suggest that if we look carefully, we will see that the thing we call ‘me’ is our mind.”¹⁸ The nature of the mind in Buddhism is teaching people to detach from everything. The mind is an element from nature but also part of nature. I created my first scene to show the viewer a picture of nature and living animals all around (Figure 4.12). Daytime and nighttime pass by on the screen (Figure 4.13). I use the metaphor of the balloon to represent the delusion of the mind. It is sensitive and fragile (Figure 4.14) once it is attached to ignorance. The enlightenment of the mind should be nature not the balloon on the screen. The movement of this animation tends to be calm and slow combined with fast movements in some parts.

¹⁸ Phra Bhasakorn Bhavilai and David Freyer, *Mental Equilibrium: Karma A new look at Buddhist concept of cause and effect*, ed.3rd, (Amarin Printing and Publishing Public, Ltd., Bangkok, Thailand, 2012), p.89.



Figure 4.1 *Love*, Time at 00:00:04 min., 2015

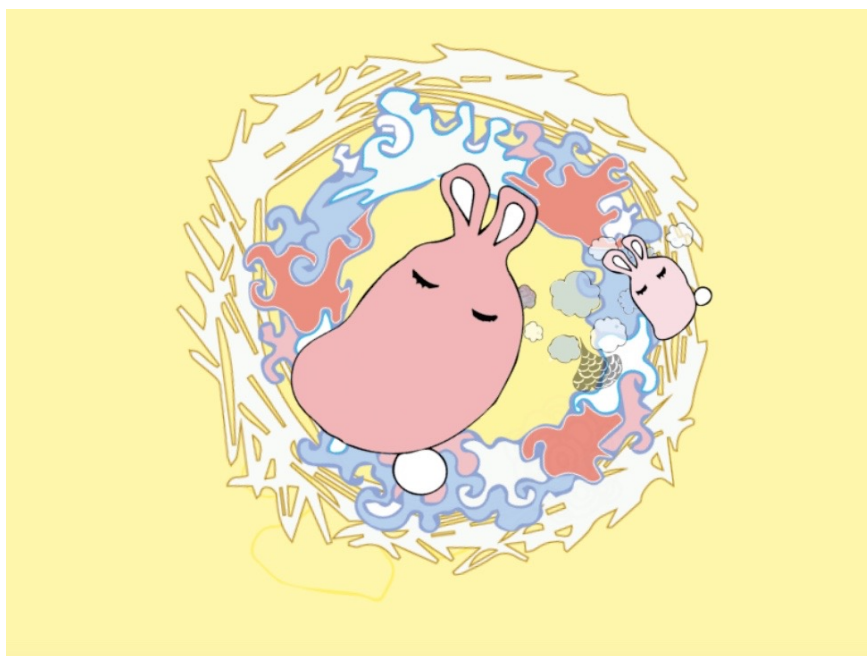


Figure 4.2 *Love*, Time at 00:00:28 min., 2015



Figure 4.3 *Love*, Time at 00:00:54 min., 2015

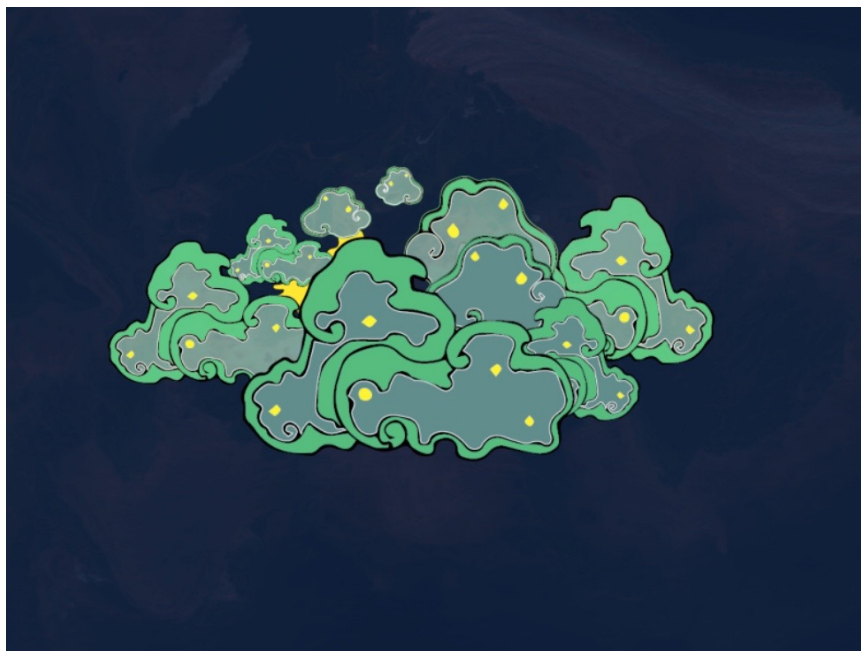


Figure 4.4 *Greed*, Time at 00:00:11 min., 2015



Figure 4.5 *Greed*, Time at 00:00:30 min., 2015



Figure 4.6 *Greed*, Time at 00:00:54 min., 2015



Figure 4.7 *Angry*, Time at 00:00:08 min., 2015



Figure 4.8 *Angry*, Time at 00:00:48 min., 2015



Figure 4.9 *Lust*, Time at 00:00:22 min., 2015



Figure 4.10 *Lust*, Time at 00:00:32 min., 2015



Figure 4.11 *Lust*, Time at 00:00:56 min., 2015



Figure 4.12 *Mind*, Time at 00:00:10 min., 2015

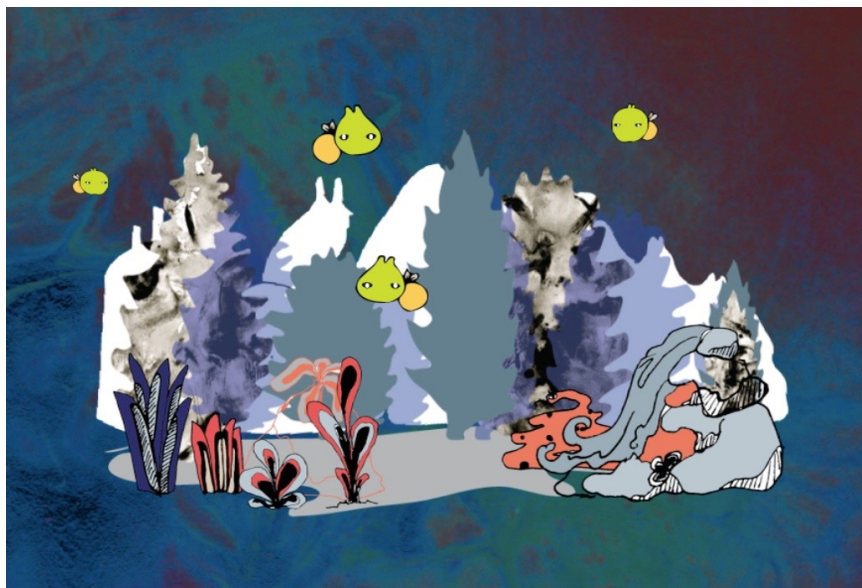


Figure 4.13 *Mind*, Time at 00:00:21 min., 2015



Figure 4.14 *Mind*, Time at 00:00:37 min., 2015

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

My works aims to reminded viewers that we are all travelers on a long journey through the universe and we are free to choose our direction. First of all, we need to understand ourselves. The mind is the key. It creates and affects our world and our future. My work intends to make people think deeply and understand both the internal and external worlds of our own minds made present through art. To me, Dhamma is the system of right practice in every stage of human development, beginning with birth and ending with death. Letting viewers experience with their own eyes is more impactful than just using words to describe something. Moreover, watching my animations is comparable to me speaking to my viewers through dynamic visuals. My work evokes the rule of Nature of things as they come and go through the fluxuations of life. I am interested in how I can exert control over their eyes. It is each person's own duty to find their own answers. We are all free to decide and free to walk away. The expansion of machinery and technology are playing a powerful role in society. My work repeats what we face every moment of every day and shows us how complex each of our own minds can be. Since everything has its own limited period of time, I hope my works can function as a part of time that illuminates what people should pay more attention to in life and I hope my viewers realize the process of perception is itself recorded as new data in the mind, processing what they have seen from my animation which ultimate manifests as the warning message of Buddha.

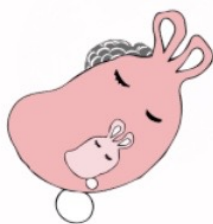


Plate 1 *Love*, Animation, Time at 00:00:09 min., 2015

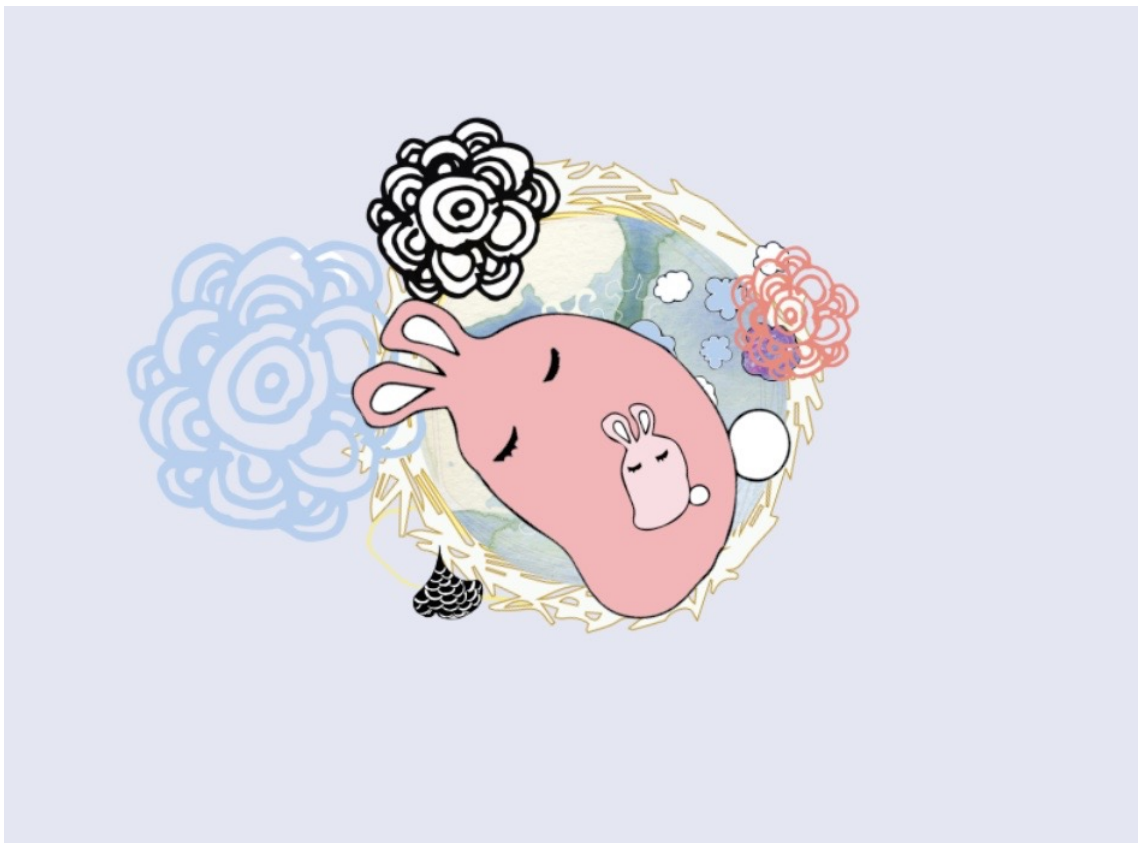


Plate 2 *Love*, Animation, Time at 00:00:16 min., 2015

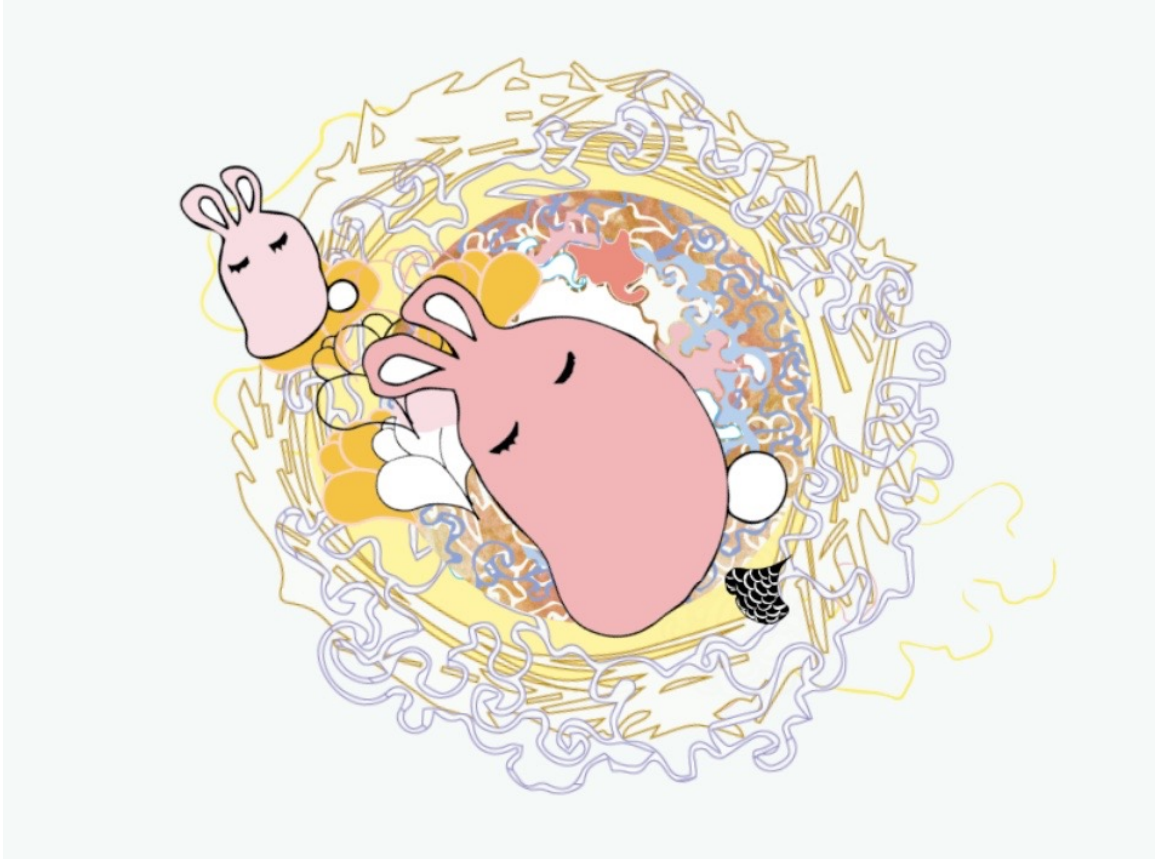


Plate 3 *Love*, Animation, Time at 00:00:36 min., 2015

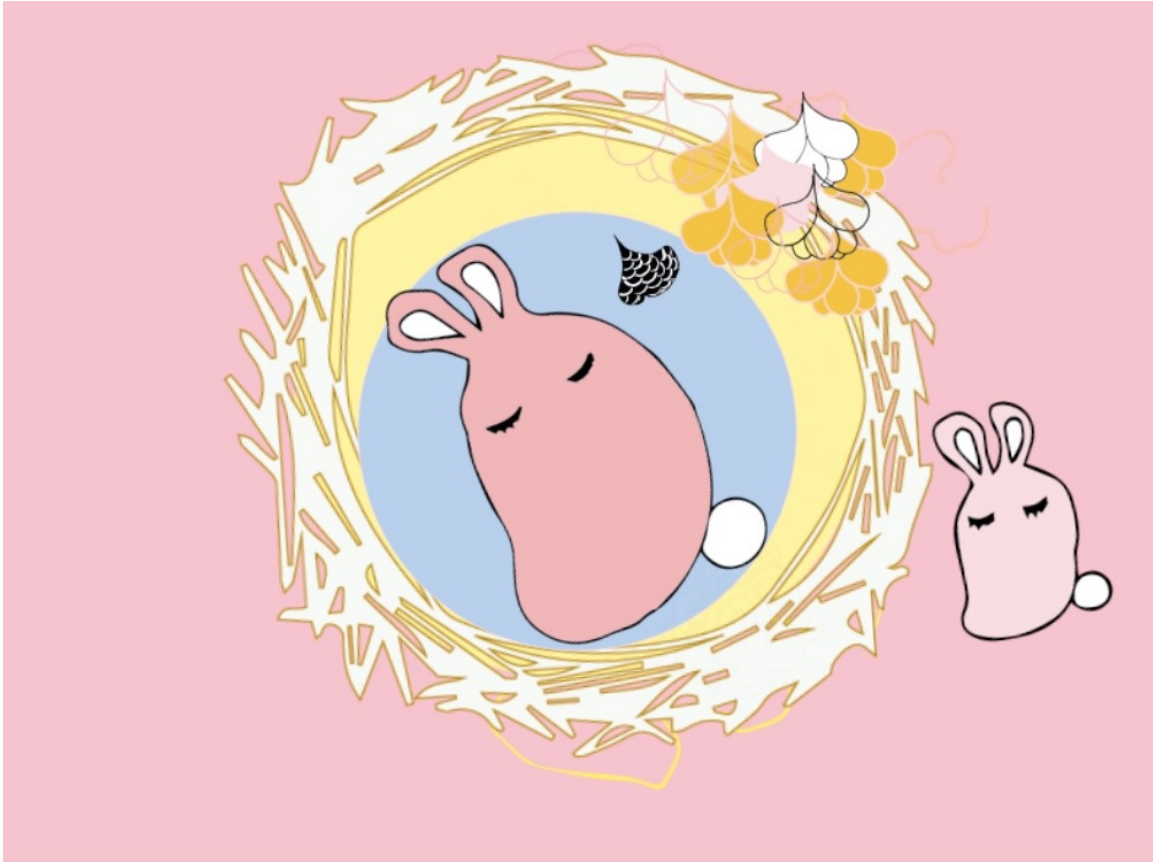


Plate 4 *Love*, Animation, Time at 00:00:47 min., 2015



Plate 5 *Love*, Animation, Time at 00:00:55 min., 2015

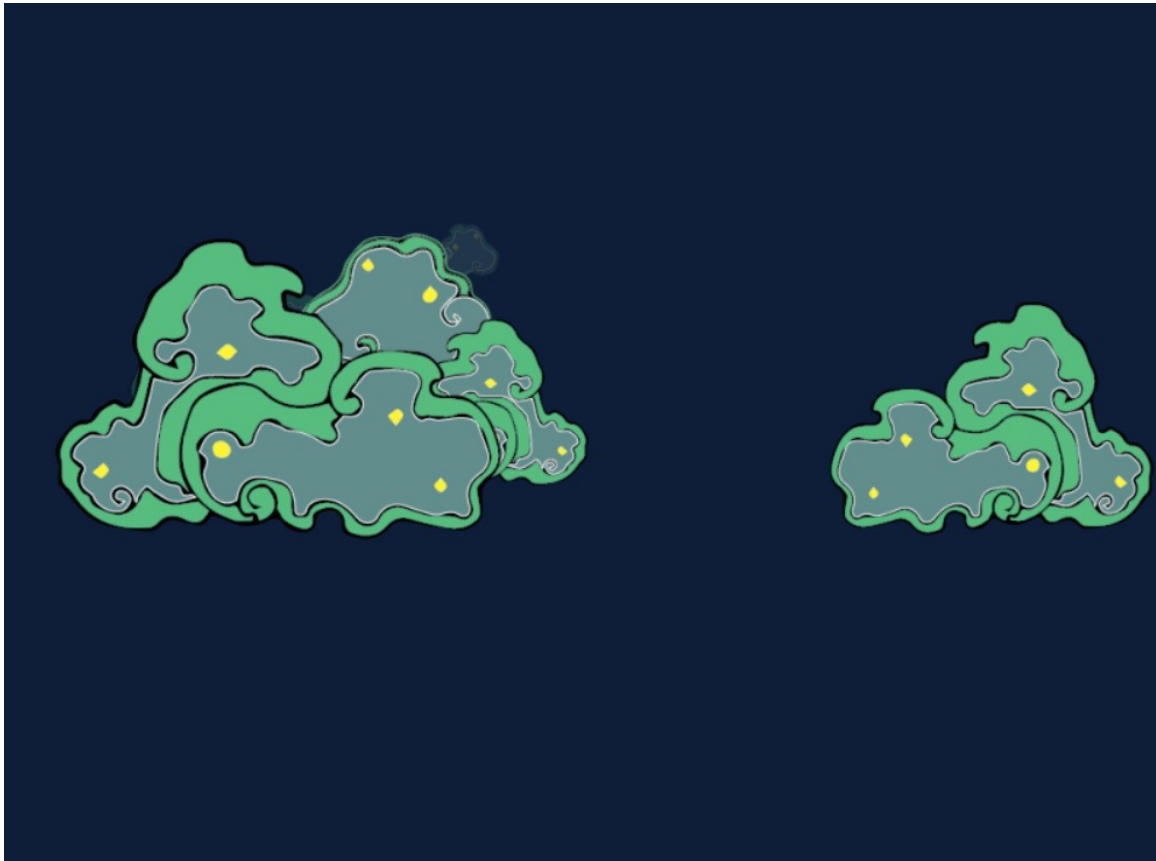


Plate 6 *Greed*, Animation, Time at 00:00:04 min., 2015



Plate 7 *Greed*, Animation, Time at 00:00:21 min., 2015

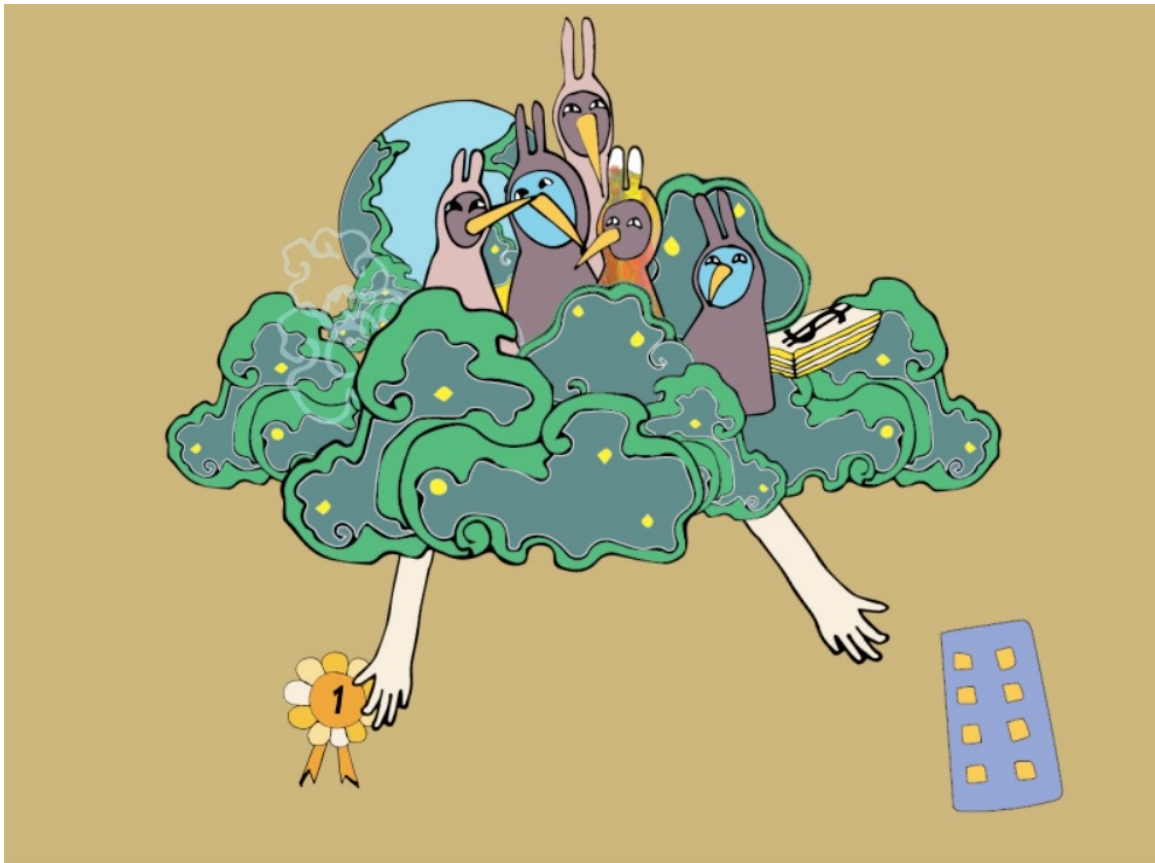


Plate 8 *Greed*, Animation, Time at 00:00:36 min., 2015



Plate 9 *Greed*, Animation, Time at 00:00:48 min., 2015



Plate 10 *Greed*, Animation, Time at 00:00:53 min., 2015



Plate 11 *Angry*, Animation, Time at 00:00:08 min., 2015



Plate 12 *Angry*, Animation, Time at 00:00:20 min., 2015

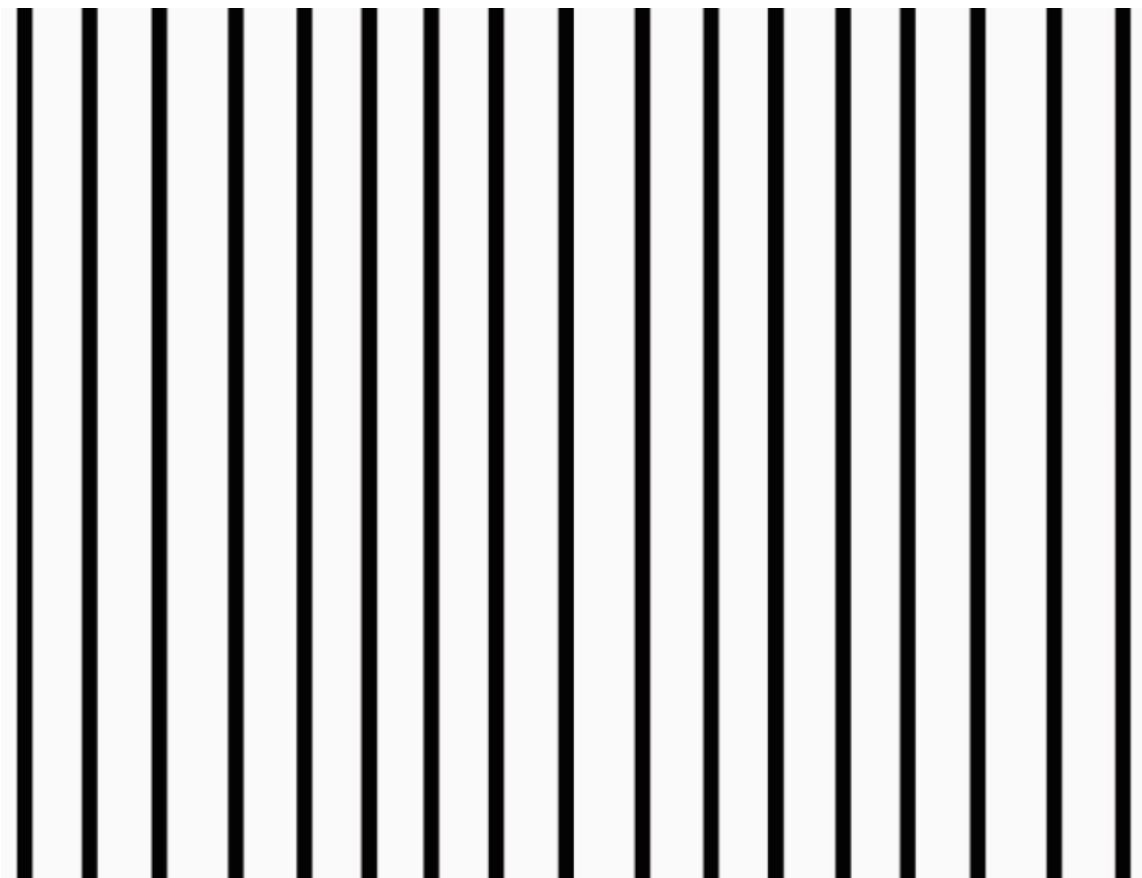


Plate 13 *Angry*, Animation, Time at 00:00:39 min., 2015



Plate 14 *Angry*, Animation, Time at 00:00:51 min., 2015



Plate 15 *Angry*, Animation, Time at 00:00:58 min., 2015



Plate 17 *Lust*, Animation, Time at 00:00:32 min., 2015



Plate 18 *Lust*, Animation, Time at 00:00:48 min., 2015



Plate 20 *Lust*, Animation, Time at 00:01:02 min., 2015



Plate 21 *Mind*, Animation, Time at 00:00:10 min., 2015



Plate 22 *Mind*, Animation, Time at 00:00:21 min., 2015



Plate 23 *Mind*, Animation, Time at 00:00:37 min., 2015



Plate 24 *Mind*, Animation, Time at 00:00:39 min., 2015

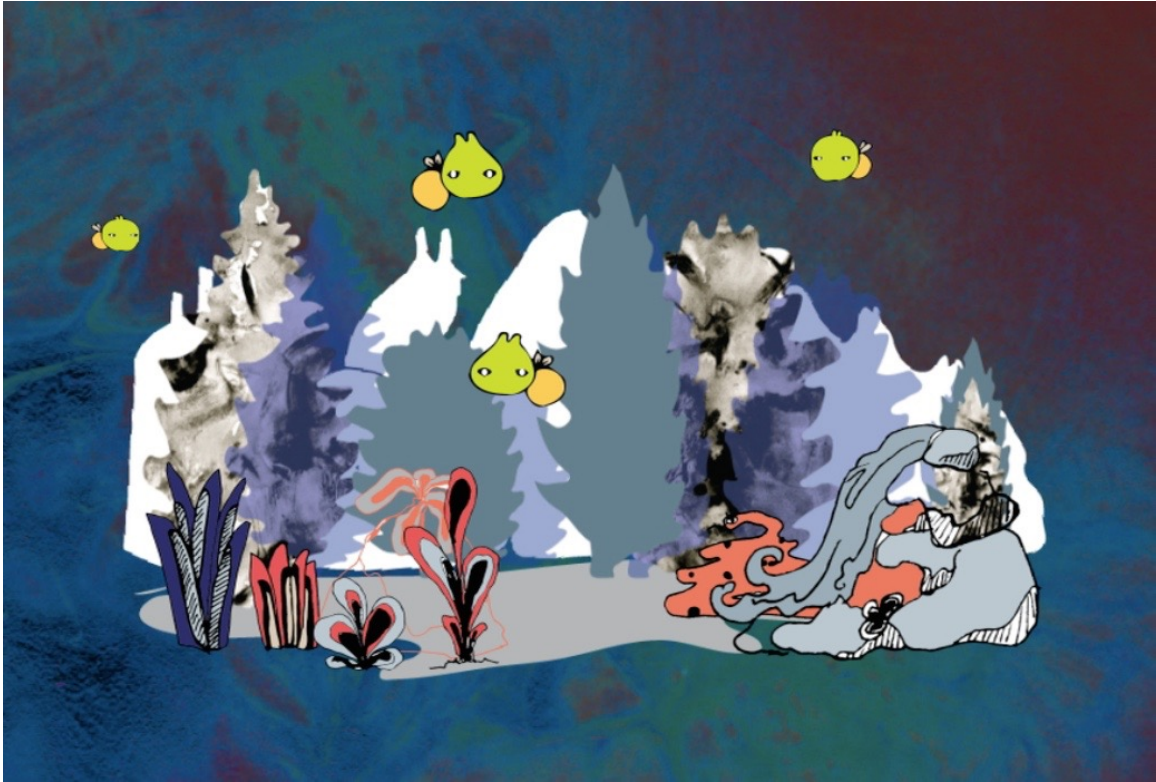


Plate 25 *Mind*, Animation, Time at 00:00:46 min., 2015

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