

PERSONAL PROJECT

The Last Thylacine comic

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INTRODUCTION

Personal project is something we have been thinking about since the beginning of MYP, because we knew, that one day will be our turn to do one. At the beginning, I was scared of it because I had trouble choosing the topic. The teachers always told us, to choose a topic which will be interesting for us, so we won't have trouble dealing with it for the next half year. I definitely chose my topic when we went to Final Fair organized by the previous MYP 5, where I saw students making art based projects like photo books or comics. This really inspired me because I was 100% sure I was going to do an art based Personal Project, because art is something I know I am good at and I love creating it. It took me a while to decide what I actually wanted to do. I somehow wanted my project to be drawn digitally because I love digital art, and I think there were not many art projects done digitally in the past. It also seemed to me like an original idea and I already had some skills and experience with digital programs so why not?

MY GOAL

At the end I decided that my goal will be a comic with animal characters because I can't draw people and I think animal comics can be as good as those with human characters. The hardest thing was to decide the story, because I needed something that would be interesting, original and had some sort of a message portrayed in it. I wanted my comic to have some kind of a meaning, and I also wanted people who will read it, to stop and think at least a bit about the problem I was trying to show. I decided my comic will be shorter, no more than 25 pages and at the end I will maybe print it out and make a few copies depending on the price. I wanted to reach my goal by studying and reading tutorials on how to draw better comics, for example: the position of bubbles, the speed of events and the design of comic characters, and by reading different comics made by other artists.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

As a global context I chose Globalization and Sustainability. Choosing a global context was difficult and took me more time than expected because they were introduced to us this year for the first time and we had no previous experiences with them. At first I had no idea which global context to choose, because I had the feeling that none of them suited my topic. They all seemed very different from what I wanted to do so I had to take some time to think about it. At the end I chose Globalization and Sustainability because this context includes the connection between humans and the environment in general and about the impact of decision and this is partially what my comic is about.

PROCESS

PLANNING

I began planning my project on the end of April. I figured out I wanted to do a digital comic because I think the final result may look nicer in a digital form. As I said, I wanted my comic to have some kind of purpose. At first I decided to make a comic about how global warming affects polar animals but in the end I found global warming very unoriginal since it's used very frequently and I wanted to come up with something new. It took a while to come up with the right theme, but at the end I randomly discovered it. I saw someone share a video about a creature called a thylacine/Tasmanian tiger which became extinct about 80 years ago. I did a research and immediately made that animal the main character of the story. I decided that the whole comic will be about 15-25 pages long, depending on how long will each page take me to finish. My plan was to also make one page per week (approximately), so I made a schedule that I will draw every day until I finish a page, and then I will take a break for one day. I also plan to put it on a website call deviantart, which is a website for submitting art. I am a part of this website for over three years and I am very interested how my watchers will respond to the comic.

RESEARCH

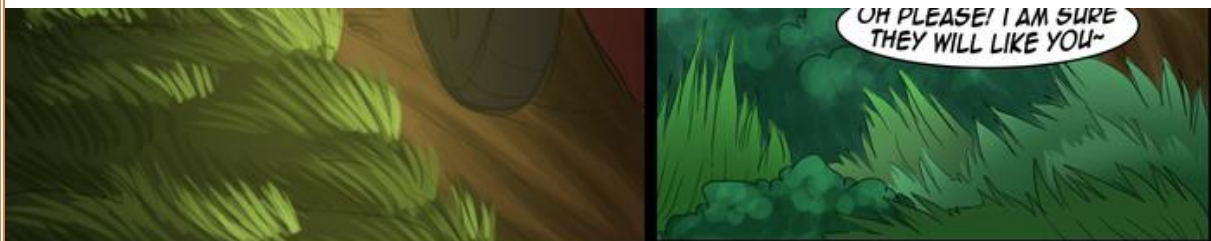
I found the thylacine very interesting because it wasn't something known by a lot of people so I did a lot of research and found out that the story of this animal could be a great theme for my comic, because it was hunted to death by humanity. And that's when the idea was born. The story of thylacines had a meaning because it pointed out that by the ruthless actions of people a real species was eradicated and forgotten. I researched the thylacines for a month since 28. April. I even found them in books at my art class so I was able to practice their anatomy the whole class. I was even starting to develop a comic style for my character. While further researching the thylacines I came upon a thylacine called Benjamin, who was most probably the last living thylacine on the planet. He was held in captivity in a zoo in Tasmania and somehow I got an idea, that I can name the main character after him, and focus the story on his life.

On 6th of June I started to focus more on the research of other characters appearing in the comic and the environment. I tried to find out about the nature of Tasmania, since that is the country where thylacines lived. I had to find out how the environment looks, whether there are forests, grasslands or plains which are suitable for the story and if I can see it happening. I started thinking about what will be the second main character of the story and I came up with an idea that she could be a fox. I did also a research on foxes and found out that they are also being threatened because of an eradication program which could actually fit into the story. I also searched up other mammals and birds which are commonly found in the Tasmanian environment because I wanted also other animals to interact with the main characters in a way.

TAKING ACTION

My work began by the development of characters. On the 8th of June I created reference sheets for my two main characters-Benjamin and Tasha. I first started drawing a realistic fox and a thylacine and then slowly I changed them into a more cartoon form which I wanted to keep on drawing for the rest of my comic. I was sure I was going to name the thylacine Benjamin, but I didn't know how to name the fox, so I uploaded her picture on deviantart, and asked my friends to choose a name for her. On my surprise, a lot of people commented on my drawing, but still I couldn't somehow find the right name to match her, so I decided to combine two of my favorite from the comments (Tori and Sasha) and finally named her Tasha. About a month later, I had the story figured out so I created a list of pages and wrote a small description next to them about the plot I would like to create for each of the pages.

On 19th of July, I finished the first page of my comic which I decided to name "The Last Thylacine". It took me about a week and for the first time I felt very unsure about my comic style, mainly the backgrounds. I had to reckon on the fact that my drawing style will develop and hopefully, I will get better. For the first page I had to search how the cars in 1930's looked because I had to draw one more than twice. For the next month I finished three more pages and I must say, I managed to somehow develop my style during that time. I created a new way of drawing grass—from sketchy and spiky to more clean and gradient. The third page was probably hardest to make from these because I drew Ben and Tasha running through a forest and I had to focus on both: Tasmanian flora and fauna. I searched up some images of Tasmanian plants and some small mammals and tried to draw them in the background. There was one thing I had problems with and I was unsure of: every time I drew my two main characters, I had a feeling that they always looked different, but I guess that was because I wasn't still 100% used to drawing them and I had to wait some time until I learn their anatomy and features properly.



Before

After

During September and October I managed to finish the next 4 pages. My favorite page was probably the fourth because I got to add more characters and develop Tasha's family. I loved designing another 7 foxes and creating names for them because I was happy I was able to make another bunch of characters that would later somehow stir up the story. These pages were even more challenging because I had to deal with the change of environment from forests to grasslands. Drawing the grasslands was even more difficult because I had to research what types of flora are found in them and I had to somehow draw the sandy soil which was difficult. One of the more difficult things was drawing a wedge-tailed eagle attacking the characters. Since I never really drew eagles really seriously, I had to use a lot of references based on their anatomy and movement. The scenes where Ben was being

attacked were probably the hardest to draw since I had to draw a perfect movement of an attacking bird. It was hard but I know I learned a lot from it.

During November and December I got to finish the next 5 pages and I finally got to page 13. I felt very good because I finally got even further than the middle of the story. I really improved in drawing the characters and background thanks to a large diversity of backgrounds I focused on the pages. I also got to draw animals such as kangaroos, bandicoots and wombats. Probably the most difficult was page 12, because I had 14 panels there, and I had to really focus on the perspective and draw the characters from different angles. This page has also the biggest amount of text so far. Text seems like a very easy part of a page, but it took me at least an hour to formulate all the dialogues into bubbles, and write them in a way so they would make sense.

The next two pages were a big challenge for me, because for the first time in my comic, I had to draw a human! I am really not skilled at drawing people so It took me a lot of time and nerves to draw him. I also had to search up some human expressions to draw his face, and he still looks more like a pig than a man. I had to look up some examples of hands and hand movement since I had to draw him holding a gun, swinging it, walking and so on...and references of old huntsman clothing and guns, since I wanted the comic to be accurate.

In January I finally finished the last three pages and officially ended the comic. Getting to the end of the comic, these pages were still more and more challenging. The last three pages were very difficult because the whole 15th page was taking place in a cage. I had to find a way how to draw more realistic cage "walls", how to shape them and so on. The worst was probably the 16th page because the main characters are in a zoo and I had to draw something like an enclosure. I used a fence like texture⁽¹⁾ to make the walls and made everything else was drawn as always, however the backgrounds look more like a normal environment rather than zoo. What I liked drawing on this page were other two thylacine characters: Margo and Rufus. I had fun creating their designs and personality and it's a pity that they only appear on this one page.

FINISHING

I finished the last TLT page on 28th January and I must say this was one of the most special pages because it was happening after a time skip of a few years. This page had a lower amount of panels so I used all my time to focus on drawing the characters and I tried to draw them as precisely and detailed as I could. It is probably my most favorite page and it's very emotional for the characters as well as for me because it is the very last page.

I submitted the last page on deviantart and kindly asked my watchers to leave me a feedback so I will know if they liked my comic. On my surprise, TLT had a huge success on deviantart. Currently I have more than 970 views, 85 favorites and 75 comments on the last page and a lot of people left a very positive feedback. I was very happy how my watchers reacted because I didn't think they would like it so much. The best feeling was probably when they called the story creative and original because a good comic would never be good without a good plot.

Analysis

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Before I started drawing the pages I tried creating a plan where I would decide how much I would do from the comic per month. My goal was to start during the summer holidays and make at least four pages so I would have to do a bit less during the school year. However I only managed to make two pages during the summer so I had less time to do the rest. I tried to finish up to 3-4 pages per month (one page per week) and it usually worked but sometimes I was away the whole weekend or during the holidays and I was unable to work on it so I had some delay but I was able to catch up. I ended up finishing in a fairly good time and I finished the deadline, but only with the digital form of the comic. I decided to print it out later so I can bring it on final fair.

Before beginning my comic I did a lot of research. I focused also on finding older information in books and surprisingly I found a lot of them. I think I did a good job on researching the environment of the story however I could focus more on researching for example the development of characters like model sheets because I missed those.

ANALYSIS OF PROCESS

The process of drawing each page was very difficult. Even though it doesn't seem like it, one page took me approximately 20 hours all together. Drawing one page takes a lot of time because there are many things you have to do: sketch, lineart, panel lineart, coloring, shading, backgrounds, texts etc. I worked on each page every day after I came from school and I must say sometimes it was very exhausting and I felt depressed very often because of the little time I had when we also got homework and other things. It was really hard to organize my time but I am happy I was able to handle it. The easiest part of the process was probably the lineart and surprisingly the longest was coloring. I was happy I already had some Photoshop skills; otherwise I would never be able to finish the comic on time.

ANALYSIS OF FINAL PRODUCT

Overall I am very satisfied with how my comic came out. I really put much effort into all of the pages and it was all worth the hard work. The best feeling was probably putting it on deviantart and seeing all the positive comments because it inspired me to keep drawing more and more of the comic. At the end I finished with 18 pages altogether with the cover even though I wanted to make about 25 at the beginning. If I had more time I would definitely make more but as I said already, it takes a lot of time and nerves to make one page. At the end, I found some grammatical mistakes in the speech bubbles so I had to go through the whole comic and rewrite all the typos. I even noticed I numbered some pages with wrong numbers so I did an overall check of all the pages and corrected them. I currently took my comic on a usb key for the printout so I can't analyze the final product in the book form only digitally.

Conclusion

Even though I was scared at the beginning and overall from the thought of having to do Personal Project, I am happy I had this kind of experience. I never worked on a project for so long but I am glad I was able to do it. From this project I learned a lot about everything my theme was connected into. I learned a lot about thylacines since I never really payed much attention to them and now I know how amazing they were. I also learned a lot about Tasmania as a country and I would like to visit it someday. What I am thankful for is that I gained even more experiences in drawing comics. The fact that I had to research character development and design gave many useful information which will help me in the future since I draw quite a lot. I can't wait until I get my ordered printout of the comic since I want to show it to my family and friends, and I also want to bring it to final fair so people don't have to read the digital version.