The process of designing animation and motion graphics as a visual response to surveyed opinions on hyperreality, reality, and film

THESIS

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Allison Marie Biesboer

Graduate Program in Design

The Ohio State University

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Master’s Examination Committee:

Maria Palazzi, Advisor

Ryan Friedman

Alan Price
Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to outline and document the making of the short motion graphics and animated film *Diversa*. The purpose of making the film *Diversa* is to work with animation, movement and the creation of visual imagery and auditory dialog exploring the surveyed opinions on the subject of “reality.” This paper details the design questions and problems to be solved and the process for making the film. Background research is described in relationship to *Diversa* including establishing concepts, selected history and current examples of hyperreality in film, and films as inspiration. Concept development for the work evolved based on a variety of responses from online participants to questions of how people define and experience reality and how cinema might be changing reality and influencing perceptions of reality. The details of the filmmaking process provide insight into the designer’s translation of survey answers into a working script that guides the visual development of *Diversa*. The process is based upon the notion that reality is experienced differently by every individual. The paper concludes with a reflection on the project results and a summary of next steps for the researcher.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my supervising faculty, colleagues, friends, and family, as well as my dog, Ruby. All have given me unflattering support throughout my time at The Ohio State University.
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Vita

2006 ........................................ Minnetonka Senior High School

2007 to 2011 ................................ Graphic Designer, Photographer, University of Wisconsin Athletic Department

2009 ........................................ Design Tech Intern, Liz Claiborne Inc.

2010 ........................................ B.F.A. in Graphic Design,

B.A. in Spanish (Honors), The University of Wisconsin – Madison

2011 ........................................ Nonsek Intern, Planet Propaganda

2011 to 2012 .............................. Freelance Designer and Illustrator,

Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine

2011 to 2012 .............................. Scoreboard Graphics Animator, The Ohio State University Athletics Department

2011 to 2013 .............................. Graduate Research Associate, Department of Design, The Ohio State University

2013 to 2014 .............................. Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Design, The Ohio State University
Fields of Study

Major Field: Design
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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to explore animation, movement and the creation of visual and auditory dialog through the philosophical meaning of “reality,” “hyperreality,” and film. I have chosen the medium of animated film because its inherent qualities make it the ideal means for which to comment on reality. Moving images have served to capture reality and portray it in a variety of ways since the inception of the technology used to make it. Early movie cameras captured live-action footage and imprinted each frame onto celluloid film as an exact imprint of the camera’s subject. Soon after, mattes, rephotography, and other camera tricks were used to create more elaborate manipulations of film, and an altered depiction of reality viewed on screen. After the advent of computers, computer graphics were integrated with live-action film. As computer processing power has increased, so has the ability for graphics generated by computers to create visual photorealism. The increasing ability to create photorealism has led many filmmakers to create films and animations that combine the real with the imaginary – spawning what is called “hyperreality.” Using digital tools and knowledge of film and graphics allows a filmmaker to manipulate reality. The resulting moving image can be a powerful mechanism which can alter the way reality is experienced by an audience.
Creating the animated film *Diversa*, which is the Latin word for “different,” or “diverse,” serves the purpose of depicting and experimenting with different forms of visual reality, which could bring the broad subject of reality and the ways in which it is being experienced by audiences to light, while serving to explore the motion design, animation, and filmmaking process. In my findings, I encounter the notion that reality is perceived and experienced by everyone differently. Consensus reality is based on a consensus view of many people; this film experiments with and comments on this narrow viewpoint. Consensus reality postulates that since humans do not fully understand or agree upon the nature of knowledge (epistemology) or the nature of existence or reality (ontology), it is not possible to be certain beyond a doubt what is real, or that “there can be no objectively correct description of reality from a God’s eye point of view” (Lakoff, 259). Thus, in consensus reality, one agreed-upon concept of reality based on common experience prevails. It is my differing viewpoint that the only way humans can try to define and justify reality is through expressing their differing perceptions of it, without forming one, overarching consensus.

Thus I captured anonymous survey-taker’s opinions of reality – how they may perceive it and what it means to them – and constructed *Diversa*, a film which uses visual hyperrealism as well as non-photoreal 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional imagery to reflect my interpretation of the ideas about reality I collected and hyperreality as it pertains to computer graphics and current cinema. In order to clearly capture the modes in which reality is experienced, I designed varying forms of visuals to present the varying
forms of reality. Since Diversa is about how everyone perceives reality differently, the film has three sections in which I experiment with various different visual styles, and thus different modes of reality.

Since the film explores many competing viewpoints on reality, the visual styles are designed to vary in accordance with the idea that reality is viewed differently by everyone. Thus the film is narrated from the vantage point of several entities, or “everyday” people experiencing the world, and their thoughts act as a script or spoken, “collective interior monologue” helping to drive the film and its visuals. “Collective interior monologue” is a term used to describe the inner thoughts of several people or voices combined. Thus the script plays out as it expresses many ideas in rapid succession and is organized into a collection of thoughts that vary and sometimes overlap.

Throughout this paper, I expand on the research question, “How can I explore animation through the expression of hyperreality that has been projected into the plots and themes of films?” I also examine, “How can I explore hyperreality and perceptions of reality through the expression of animation?”

I surmise that technology shapes the way we live and alters our perceptions of reality. This conclusion applies to the technology used to create film. With the conversion of film from a celluloid process involving exact photochemical imprints through chemical to completely digital processes using computers, the images we watch are being altered and
enhanced with greater and greater photorealistic accuracy. This might be shaping audiences’ preferences in films (e.g. preferring animated to live-action films), as well as audiences’ expectations about technology and how it may enter their own lives in the future. For instance, touch-screen and video conferencing capabilities (think Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*) were technologies initially predicted by films. Films can represent the imaginary; feats that are ordinarily impossible in everyday life. Films have the unique ability to visually present the imaginary in a way that is believably real. Many of the technologies that were previously imaginary in films of the past are now possible. Perhaps the yearning for the future and the technologies we dream about are reflected in films, as they can illustrate visually and almost tangibly artifacts of the impossible. Whenever society reaches a certain point of technological capability, the technologies previously dreamt about become fulfilled. The films of the past begin to appear less spectacular over time because they portray technologies that we already can physically use and interact with in our own lives. Films of the past also portray technologies that although may be currently possible, were never feasible or useful and never became popularized (think of absurd farfetched spy technology portrayed in films from the 1960s, such as James Bond’s ejection seat and lasers used as weapons from 1964’s *Goldfinger*). In fictional stories as well as everyday life, humans may be constantly searching for a new gadget or new digital device that might help facilitate every process of our lives. We come to expect a greater piece of technology that makes our lives easier, while, at the same time, building a digital framework that is infinitely more complex. Advanced computer systems, cell phone networks, and elaborate
networks of cables create a technologically complex era. Our lives have been simplified with the aid of smartphones, computerized banking, and information stored in the cloud, yet the digital structure it builds behind the scenes is infinitely expanding in intricacy and pushing the limits of possibility. This is also what we come to expect in the cinema of science fiction and action; a spectacle, a technological marvel that ever-increases in visual complexity and portrays some futuristic phenomenon that makes renders what was previously impossible as artifacts of everyday life.

In this paper I expand on the research question, “Is there a way to comment on how hyperreality and reality are perceived through utilizing different visual approaches?” By exploring a concept that is relevant to the concept of hyperreality, or the combination of the real and the imagined, it is important to use several visual styles of representation within my piece. Varying visual styles are important considering the subject matter is regarding different opinions on reality, and by using a variety of visual styles it connotes the differences in opinion. The film is broken into 3 Parts, and each part represents a different form of animation - Part One utilizes mostly motion graphics, Part Two utilizes 2D animation, live action footage, and some 3D animation, and Part Three utilizes animation that comes close to photorealism mixed with some motion graphics.

Also, “How can a designer/filmmaker construe different individual’s interpretations and perceptions of reality?” These questions allow me to explore philosophical concepts as it
pertains to film, as well as the technical concepts (which include visual effects and compositing) necessary for making visual realism and visual hyperreality.

**Design Problems to be Solved**

In contemporary cinema, themes of hyperreality and reality are being explored, possibly as animation makes photorealistic visuals possible. One trend in current cinema is the depiction of hyperreality not only in the visuals, but also as a theme in the story. I seek to explore this idea not through the eyes of Hollywood Cinema, as it has been explored recently in films like *The Matrix*, *Tron*, and *Inception*, but through the everyday individual. By seeking the thoughts and opinions on the subject of reality and reality in film from various individuals, I hope to better explain and explore this trend. Most importantly this approach will guide me as filmmaker, artist, animator, and designer, in order to create the film and explore the topic of animation.

Because the subject matter of the film is highly philosophical, and because some of the concepts explored are abstract ideas, structuring the dialog as a soundtrack/voiced narration and organizing the film into a logical and engaging narrative poses great challenges. Another great challenge is how to derive images from the philosophical narrative and to interpret them in a way that is, in at least a smaller sequence of the film, photorealistic. Creating a composite that matches the lighting, colors, textures, and visual style of something that looks realistic is a challenge in the field of animation.
Another challenge posed is how to create smooth transitions between each spoken opinion by the voice actors in the film. Organizing the script as a collective dialog rather than a single narration will be a large challenge. The organization of the film and its transitions will be a lengthy task, considering that the visuals I create will be generated from several programs before being composited. The visuals will, likewise, need to be synched perfectly with the audio and the appropriate timing. Keeping an appropriate pace to each shot of the film will also be a challenge.

The skills and expertise to be utilized in my film include animation, motion graphics, compositing, editing film, timing, Autodesk Maya® Dynamics, structure, and creating meaningful and stylistically fluid visual transitions. These are skills that I already possess and have explored in prior thesis tests and projects. New concepts and techniques I will need to be familiar with will include: Maya® nCloth dynamics for creating shattered glass, motion graphics techniques for animation in Adobe After Effects, realistic liquid splatter effects, fog, fire, trees, creating joints, particles, and other paint effects and special effects in Maya®, as well as a slit-scan effect in After Effects such as the one in 2001: A Space Odyssey (2001: A Space Odyssey). These types of techniques will largely be utilized in the last 2/3 of the film, as this portion will largely consist of 3D animation (the first portion consists of motion graphics with some artifacts of 3D which progressively build up).
What Each Chapter Contains

The Background covers research and observations as pertaining to hyperreality in film, references to philosophical ideas which feed into film examples of hyperreality in film, and how the film examples pertain to *Diversa*. The Concept Development section is a summary of how I arrived at the concept for *Diversa*. I describe the devices that enabled investigation of research problems and questions and I provide examples of other works which lead to the making of *Diversa*. The Process section is a discussion of changes from preliminary concepts to final design choices. I also include a short synopsis as well is a long synopsis in the Synopses section. The Reflection of the Creative Research and Project Result section is where the creative research questions and problems are restated and the section also contains a reflection on the completed project and process development, effectiveness of the outcome, as well as peer reception.
Background

Establishing Concepts

The film’s concept is based on research findings that there is no consensus for the definition of reality by scholars, social theorists, and philosophers, and people in general. Throughout philosophical writings regarding the subject of reality and postmodern theory, a common theme that occurs in the rationalization of reality is that reality is perceived. The concept of perception is widely written about by philosophers and empiricists such as Plato, Heraclitus, Democritus, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke - although there is a multitude of ways to define reality apart from the concept of perception (Wolfe, Chapter 1.1). *Sensation & Perception* illustrates one of the earliest connections between reality and the senses that perceive it:

“The Matrix was inspired by ‘The Allegory of the Cave’ in Plato’s *Republic*, written in about 380 BCE.[…] Plato compares our ordinary sense of reality to that of prisoners in a cave. He describes prisoners tethered together since childhood, able to see only the wall in front of them. […] All the prisoners ever see are shadows on the wall in front of them. This is the prisoners’ complete reality. Plato paints this imaginary picture to emphasize how critically our conception of reality depends on what we can learn about the world through our senses,” (Wolfe, Chapter 1.1).
This thesis film explores how reality is perceived differently by every individual, and cannot be fit into one consensus view of reality. I believe the opinions expressed in the film are different enough to delineate the notion that each individual survey-taker experiences and perceives reality differently and there is not one general consensus reality, but a plethora of individual realities. However, the film is constructed to maintain a general continuity that arrives at a conclusion for the sake of creating one continuous work. One conclusion expresses that what is depicted in films help to create a shared emotional connection and experience. It borrows inspiration from philosophy and film, and visually references key technologies from films that explore the ideas of reality and hyperreality.

It is my hypothesis that CG technology in film may be changing the human perspective of reality. New cinema features explosive special effects and elaborate “embellished” realities known as hyperreality. Hyperreality is the inability to distinguish between what is real and what is fantasy and is a trend that may be on the rise due to the improving CG technologies for producing it. Tiffin and Terashima define hyperreality as “nothing more than the technological capability to intermix virtual reality (VR) with physical reality (PR) and artificial intelligence (AI) with human intelligence (HI) in a way that appears seamless and allows interaction” (Tiffin & Terashima, 4). This definition concentrates on the physical, technological aspects of hyperreality and is less concerned with the abstract and philosophical nature characteristic of Jean Baudrillard’s ideas (the author of this neologism, “hyperreality”). It is exemplified in films using “3D images that can be part of
a physically real setting in such a way that physically real things can interact synchronously with virtually real things. It allows people not present at an actual activity to observe and engage in the activity as though they were actually present” (Tiffin & Terashima, 4-5). Objects and life forms that are both real and hypothetical can interact with each other in a common space with the time-based media of film. This interaction can be accomplished by recording or photographing real objects or life forms and then compositing them with animated or virtually created objects and life forms. This definition differs from the philosophical definition; as it primarily focuses on the technology harnessed in allowing interaction in a virtual space; however this concept can be applied to the medium of film. In films, objects can seemingly interact in a virtual space and communicate a cohesive idea and picture to an audience, which may in turn, alter audience perceptions of the reality they are witnessing. This may, in turn, alter perspectives on how reality is perceived in everyday life. Audiences may have come to replace their notion of film and of their own daily lives with fantasy from hyperrealistic films: stories that combine live-action film and special effects that masquerade as photorealistic. As CG technology makes photorealism possible, the concept of hyperreal worlds is being projected into the actual themes and plots of films as well. Films like The Matrix (1999), Tron (1982) and Tron: Legacy (2010), Inception (2010), Minority Report (2002), Avatar (2009), and many others utilize the concept of hyperreal worlds within worlds. These movies establish a primary world, and within it, one or more embedded worlds. This second world combines the reality of the primary or establishing world as we know it, with the objects of fantasy. These secondary, hyperreal worlds may be
referred to as “otherworlds.” The concept of an otherworld is similar to Tiffin and Terashima’s idea of a HyperWorld, a hypothetical space in which real and unreal objects will be placed to form an environment and coaction field, a common plane of activity where real and virtual life forms can work and interact together (Tiffin & Terashima, 5). However, the concept of otherworlds implies that the HyperWorlds are nested within the realm of the real world, a world that is often established using live-action film devices and exists apart from the otherworld. Many of my thesis test-pieces and shots in my thesis film have fundamental influences from films that feature otherworlds. One such example is Tron, a movie from the 1982, which featured cutting-edge computer graphics for its time; glowing textures and circuit board traces that were hand-drawn into the frames of the film. This film also features the idea of converting real characters (Jeff Bridges) into data, so that he ends up in a hyperreal game world within a supercomputer, which exists in the mainframe of a software company called Encom. This hyperreal worlds-within-worlds concept can be reflected in the visual hyperrealism of the thesis film, by utilizing film devices and visual references to films that harness this concept, as well as with transitional elements that feature infinite zooms and motion from visual plane to visual plane between scenes. For instance, films such as The Matrix are directly referenced in the voiceover of Diversa, the depiction of a version of “Morpheus” with his famous oval glasses, as well as a camera device which harnesses “Bullet Time,” as a camera uses a motion path to travel around a suspended bullet. This bullet travels in reverse motion, after a glass human figure (which appeared earlier in the film), filled with a “thick cherry kool-aid” substance implodes on impact in direct reference to the
superlative cinematic blood spatter, along with the voiceover to Quentin Tarantino films. It is ironic that in response to how people might perceive reality, a survey respondent quotes a fictional movie character to help him or her define reality. This quote, when presented in the form of a short film, is both ironic and self-referential. A short film is thus communicating ideas of a personal experience of reality through the lens of a movie character. Another reference occurs at the finale of the film with a slit-scan effect to reference 2001: A Space Odyssey, a pre-digital era film that was pioneering for its use of visual hyperrealism (Diversa utilizes a digital variant of this effect). Shot-to-shot infinite zooms also allude to the worlds-within-worlds concept. At the beginning of Part II, Inception is referenced in the warping of the camera lens, a simplified version of the CG warping of building façades within Diversa. The camera zooms into the center of a very small component which exists on a multi-cellular organism, a blinking eye’s pupil, and the scenery transforms into an infinitely vast space featuring a backdrop of space and stars. A plane of reality segues again between the glass figures (which alludes to Janus, a two-headed Greek God who symbolically looks to the past and the future), cross-fading to Morpheus. Morpheus maintains a similar shape as a simplified humanoid figure yet exists on a separate reality plane with different blue and red lighting and texturing. Another infinite zoom then occurs into Morpheus’s glass, which then segues into the next scene; that features neurons of the brain with firing synapses. The final shot of the film features an infinite zoom, seeking to capture an impossible sense of reality, and references the slit-scan effect before transitioning to black to signal the end of the film.
A selected history and current examples of hyperreality in film, films as inspiration, and relation to Diversa

The history of hyperreality in visual terms is largely an account of the rise of CGI or computer-generated images; however, films have toyed with hyperreality (in its bare-bones definition of reality mixed with elements of fantasy), since the invention of the medium of film itself. Camera tricks such as re-photography and mattes which are a form of early compositing, gave rise to experimental films that created their own hermetically sealed worlds which play by their own physical rules. One example includes Maya Deren’s film, Meshes of the Afternoon from 1943. This film is considered Surrealist, yet uses tricks and repeated symbolic visuals as well as plot twists and arcs which are not unlike the cinematic camera tricks we see in Inception. Another from the very beginning of film includes Georges Méliès’ film, A Trip to the Moon, from 1902. Actors appear in the film before intricate sets and painted backgrounds seemingly forming an enchanted and imaginary idea of what the moon’s landscape might be like. This film stems from the tradition of stage magic and simple illusions, but offers something more as it mixes human actors with imaginary sets. This early film is referenced in the technologically advanced film, Hugo from 2011, which uses visual hyperreality, composite shots including live action and animation and shots that are impossibly long and could not be produced with dollies and camera rigs, in combination with stereoscopic technology to explore the meaning and history of the medium of film and how far it has advanced. Like Hugo, Diversa uses a futuristic medium of digital live-action and animated film to look
back on key moments in film history. Unlike Hugo, Diversa explores a much smaller sample of key films which explore the subject of hyperreality, either in the visual devices or plots and themes.

I have chosen to reference key films that feature hyperreality in current and groundbreaking ways or feature new technologies that serve to enhance reality such as Bullet time™ throughout Diversa. A few of these technologies include extensive digital compositing, the concept of Bullet Time™ from The Matrix, a warping of time and space which can be seen in Inception, the visual tropes and mixing of different animated styles that are featured in Quentin Tarantino’s Kill Bill series, and the slit scan technology of 2001: A Space Odyssey. Layers of composited animation as well as other visual effects such as custom shaders, digital and physical lighting, shadow-matching, shatter dynamics, fire, and fog etc. also appear in Diversa. Other technological mechanisms and film techniques used for creating hyperreality include stereoscopic technology and green and blue screens, which were not necessary for use in Diversa, as it is not a big-budget blockbuster requiring 3D glasses and its subject matter does not include live-action characters as many other films that cover this topic use.

A common technology that is integral to the visual effects industry in general is the art of image finaling or digital compositing, which was also a necessary ingredient to the process of creating Diversa. Digital compositing is used in film, games, television, animation, and 2D design and is the act of combining rendered elements from multiple
sources to cohesively create a final lifelike illusion or to add visual effects to moving pictures (The Foundry). The industry standard for creating 2D and specifically for more difficult 3D layer-compositing with more advanced compositing pipelines is NUKE software, a node-based compositing solution for creating visual effects work. Software with similar capabilities, After Effects, has been used in *Diversa*. Although not entirely node-based, After Effects has many of the same capabilities as NUKE and was used extensively in the creation of *Diversa*. The process of compositing is vital to creating images that are believably photorealistic in film and is the digital mechanism which helps an artist to add visual effects to moving pictures.

Among these common practices used in the creation of hyperreality in film, *Bullet Time™* was a pioneering visual technology which was first popularized by a groundbreaking film on the topic of reality and hyperreality and which commented on the effects of living in a technologically advanced society. This film represented a turning point in the integration of CG technology and featured new and improved cinematography that had never previously been devised – *Bullet Time™*. *Bullet Time™*, a phrase trademarked by Warner Brothers, features circular sets with hundreds of still cameras rigged in a circular formation to capture an object or subject at 360 degrees either all at the same time or sequentially, depending on the desired effect (Tilley). The effect creates slowed events which are normally imperceptible, such as bullets travelling throughout space. The camera appears then to move throughout the scene at a normal pace, yet the events within the scene are slowed or stopped completely. The warping of
time and space achieved with the pioneering technical effect of Bullet Time™ thus communicated hyperreality in a new way. This effect occurs through an analog event or camera trick. In this sense, the hyperreality that is formed using Bullet Time™ is simply the visual effects definition; not the philosophical definition as noted by Baudrillard. *Diversa* explores hyperreality as defined by the philosophical definition by referencing philosophers and mixing artifacts of the real and the imaginary, but it also references hyperreality as defined by the visual effects definition. This definition can simply imply reality visually manipulated by a warping of time or space. Therefore this effect was chosen to be referenced in *Diversa*.

This visual effect played into the conceptual plot devices of *The Matrix*. The actual world within the film is a futuristic dystopian world that replaces the human experience with a fully computerized world; seemingly “better” dream world devoid of all the problems of reality. However, the hyperreal world offers new challenges and proves to be dangerous in a myriad of ways: the system is controlling, flawed, and meant to prevent people from thinking for themselves— blissfully unaware that they are living in a simulated world where they are not hooked up to machines. Neo’s skills must be put to the test, to fight the system of complete simulated reality on behalf of the human race and their right to their own realities and choices. This feeds into Baudrillard’s definition of a hyperreality, as a world in which signs, symbols, and simulations have come to replace the artifacts of physical reality. The presence of such hyperreal worlds may play into the escapism for which postmodern society yearns – the escapism away from modernity and
into a new technological realm. However, films such as *the Terminator* and *the Matrix* offer the viewer a grim possibility in which society’s yearning for escapism into technologically advanced worlds backfires and it begins to control people; they reflect western culture’s tendency to value freedom and choice. Films may feature these hyperreal worlds with quests, challenges, and goals as a means to promote the idea that the “grass is greener on the other side,” the idea that the future will offer better technology but with it, present new challenges, as humans are faced to accept alternate realities. This trend may reflect the ability for western culture to create and use advanced technology both in the filmmaking process (CG technology has advanced) as well as in the gadgets and systems that people use on a daily basis. It may also play into the expectations people have about technology – how they expect it to advance, and as a result, feeling entitled to use new technology and systems. For example, twenty years ago, people did not upgrade to a new cell phone every six months because the technology needed to do so simply did not exist. Perhaps they feel now as though they are entitled to buy the latest iPod and cell phone since the technology to help create a media-rich life is so prevalent. The escape into these new technologies presents a different kind of reality altogether – a cybernetic reality where people can have online selves and be everywhere at once. Instances in films may have fueled this expectation and fulfilled it. Technology featured in certain films of the last several decades have become prophecies and transferred over to reality, as well as provide anxiety and philosophical concerns about technology’s total integration and perhaps control over society. Although *Bullet Time™*
 hasn’t been integrated into accessible technology per say, augmented reality smartphone and iPhone applications have become commonplace and accessible to the general public.

![Hyperreality example](Image)

Figure 1. Keanu Reeves and Bullet Time™ in The Matrix (Tilley)

Hyperreality can be created with visual effects in film, and can feature infinite or altered space that is not like what we know of the reality that we experience with our own eyes on earth. It can achieve impossible or elaborate lighting setups; a warping of time or space using camera effects such as the spinning dream world scene in a hotel in Inception. The creation of hyperreality due to visual effects in film is defined by the bare-bones definition of hyperreality that is the inability to distinguish the real from the imaginary, in visual form.
Figure 2. *Inception*’s 360-degree corridor and camera - built and designed for rotation, requiring three weeks and 500 crew members to shoot. This “impossible” camera angle
creates a hyperreality by warping of time and space; a cinematography/mechanical trick which doesn’t require special effects (Signals Media Arts Centre). Hyperreality can be visually presented with or without digital methods (in this case, it is analog).

Figure 3. Inception’s iconic building scene. In the scene, buildings appear to fold over on top of each other, achieved with visual effects and compositing (Dunlop).

Camera effects can capture communicate an idea of an impossible phenomenon, such as objects that defy gravity or physics. Certain visual elements such as the backgrounds and negative space may look as though they could be achieved with sets but are actually blue or green-screened and replaced wholly or partially with graphics. Movement can be achieved using harnesses; human figures in the scene may be enhanced or replaced with graphics. In Tron: Legacy, a specialized HMC, or Head-Mounted-Camera captured actor Jeff Bridges’ face in real-time and a digital 3D rig recreated his face as his younger 30-something-year old self. This allowed Bridges to act in real time and space within a
scene but his character would seamlessly appear younger when the face was superimposed into the scene in post-production.

Figure 4. Jeff Bridges with a head-mounted camera and motion-tracking markers (Seymour).

Since objects in 3D space can now be simulated so accurately with graphics created from computers, elements can be superimposed into live-action scenery without the audience ever knowing it was simulated. For example, The Lord of the Rings films used a program called MASSIVE to generate CG crowds over wide expanses of land. Matte-painted or CG backgrounds are achieved within many movies, especially in the depiction of aerial
shots or panoramas of the futuristic otherworlds. Worlds are visually transformed into these otherworlds where sometimes the normal rules of physics and physical properties no longer apply, or are unknowingly enhanced without the viewer’s awareness. *Diversa* employs a variety of these techniques throughout the film. Altered physical space exists in the first scene of Part III which features a digital version of *Bullet Time™*. A warping of physical space occurs in Part II when live-action scenery of cars driving through the street appears to warp inward, a trick achieved digitally with focal length; a process which can be described as opposite of the fisheye lens effect. This references a scene in *Inception*, when buildings appear to collapse on top of one another. Likewise this scene also features a matte background, as well as digitally edited elements throughout the scene – neon street lights blinking, a glowing blue car appearing out of nowhere and disappearing quickly, a tree growing rapidly.

As a designer and filmmaker I am exploring animation through the expression of hyperreality that has been projected into the plots and themes of films. I am also exploring the theme of hyperreality and perceptions of reality through the expression of animation. Broadly speaking, I am concerned with the philosophical ideas that occur in current films, perhaps as a result of technology being capable of producing visual hyperreality, and in particular the films that allude to philosophical concepts and contain hyperreal otherworlds. More technically speaking, I am concerned with special effects that also form hyperreality in visual ways. I use digital camera, compositing, and animation devices to reference films that allude to these concepts and explore them
visually with realistic and non-realistic stylistic approaches to depict the varying degrees of reality we see intermixed in contemporary film. I am also concerned with finding a way to comment on how the different forms of hyperreality and reality are perceived through utilizing different visual approaches – a self-reflexive practice which further drives across the main ideas of the film. There are countless films which explore this segue into distinct and separate forms of visual style, such as the cartoonlike anime sequence that is present in Quentin Tarantino’s live action film, *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*. By creating transitional elements that evoke separate visual styles, it is possible to convey and toy with the notion that there are distinct variations of reality within the film, thus feeding into the main idea of the varying forms of reality experienced by several voices. My film will have similarities with that of an animated documentary with a voiceover, but does not revolve around one narrator and one true-to-life subject for the purpose of maintaining a nonfiction historical record, but for recording the opinions of anonymous survey takers for the purposes of artistic expression. Michel Gondry’s documentary, *Is the Man Who is Tall Happy?* is an example of a film utilizing transitions into different visual styles – it often segues between live action and animation, all the while maintaining a voiced narration which illustrates and drives the point of the narrated interview with Noam Chomsky. This is reflected in my film by not one, but several narrators. In the beginning of Gondry’s film, the narrator (Gondry himself) explains:

“Film and video are both by their nature manipulative. The editor/director proposes an assemblage of carefully selected segments that he/she has in mind. In other words, the context becomes more important than the content. And, as a
result, the voice that appears to come from the subject is actually coming from the filmmaker. And that is why I find the process manipulative.

The human brain forgets the cuts—a faculty specifically human, that, as I will learn, Noam calls psychic continuity. The brain absorbs a constructed continuity as a reality and consequently gets convinces to witness a fair representation of the subject. On the other hand, animation that I decided to use for this film is clearly the interpretation of its author. If messages, or even propaganda, can be delivered, the audience is constantly reminded that they are not watching reality. So it’s up to them to decide if they are convinced or not” (Gondry).

Gondry explains that film and video are mediums that can manipulate the depiction of real people and objects. In documentaries, real people are the subjects. The editing of interviews, context, and order of words and soundbites by the director can skew the perception of the subject. Thus, the main character becomes the filmmaker and not the actual subject of the film, as the subject’s own opinions and visage can be manipulated as such. He defines reality as a “constructed continuity” that convinces viewers of a fair representation of the subject. He reminds the audience that it is up to them to be convinced. Interloping and looping between shots of live-action interviews with Chomsky, his animations serve to remind viewers that they are not watching reality, but a representation. It is up to the audience to decide if it is a convincing representation.

The aforementioned considerations are similar to mine in my role as director, editor, and animator in *Diversa*, in that the visual depictions the viewer sees and their corresponding
voiced opinions do not reflect reality, but they are manipulations, visual renderings or creations from my own mind of what other’s written opinions dictate. Their opinions are voiced by actors, again separating the subject from its original form. The original reality which prompted the survey-takers to express their opinion is somewhat removed from the final output. Reality and life experiences dictated the survey-takers observations, before they transcribed their thoughts into essay answers. The original thoughts have been completely revamped and re-contextualized as well as visually imagined by myself, the director. The individual opinions have been combed through, combined, edited in length to fit within the format of a short film, organized into separate sections and re-ordered to flow together in a logical sense, and spoken by voice actors who bear no semblance with the original survey-takers, yet act as vessels to carry the ideas of the film. The imagery and visuals have been imagined in the context of philosophy and contemporary cinema and have been created from my preexisting body of knowledge as a designer and animator (in addition to some new insight afforded by technical approaches and research), and combined in a video format with a soundtrack and audio voiceover. The final output is thus greatly removed from the original context in which individuals recorded their observations in essay format.

_Diversa_ also has the same main character as in Gondry’s film – the main character is the filmmaker, as I have created constructed a series of opinions and crafted them with narration, visuals, and transitions. Because the film is so far removed from the original written survey answers and the film has been transformed into a completely new medium
and context, the main character of the film has become the filmmaker, who is also the manipulator. There is no one character that appears in the piece and is followed throughout. Sometimes humanoid figures appear, but only to reference ideas either from contemporary cinema or to correspond with the descriptions in the voiceover. As in Gondry’s film, the original essay answers/subject has been manipulated by the filmmaker to an extent that it has formed a constructed continuity, or rapid flow of ideas which form a new reality. It is then up to the viewer to accept this new reality as a feasible or believable one.

_Diversa_ can be compared with Gondry’s film, as both are films that traverse between visual mediums e.g. live-action and animation in Gondry’s, and motion graphics, live-action, and animation in _Diversa_. In both films, the main character can be considered the narrator due to the narrator’s ability to edit and manipulate the final form. More specifically, _Diversa_ may fall under the niche category of an animated essay film, as opposed to documentary film (Gondry’s film). Timothy Corrigan defines the essay film as a flexible genre that exists under the broad category of the documentary film, nonfiction and fiction in _The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker_. Essay films can often encompass experimental filmmaking and cover the topics of philosophy and existentialism. An essay film, “describes the many-layered activities of a personal point of view as a public experience” (Corrigan, 13). Corrigan explains:

“Since [Michel de] Montaigne, the essay has appeared in numerous permutations, inhabiting virtually every discourse and material expression available. Most often,
the essayistic is associated with the literary essays whose historical prominence extends from Montaigne to Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in the eighteenth century to contemporary writers like James Baldwin, Susan Sontag, George Louis Borges, and Umberto Eco. From its literary foundation, the essayistic also moves through the nineteenth century in less-obvious practices, such as drawings and sketches, and by the twentieth century, it appears even in musical forms, such as Samuel Barber’s *Essay for Orchestra* (1938). Through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the essayistic has increasingly taken the shape of photo-essays, essay films, and the electronic essays that permeate the Internet as blogs and other exchanges within a public electronic circuitry” (Corrigan, 13-14).

Corrigan administers a history of the genre, yet his argument might be applied to all films because his definition of the genre is broad and associates all films as essayistic. Most films can arguably be considered nonfiction, fiction, or provide insight from a personal vantage point that becomes public once screened for an audience. Thus related to documentary film, *Diversa* may exist as an experimental animated essay film. *Diversa* and essay films explore one or various topics from a personal vantage point but not for the sole purpose of methodically capturing and presenting a topic for historical record which is more typical of documentary works. Documentary films generally are live-action, non-fiction, and serve to capture and record some aspect of reality. Essay films can capture and explore some aspect of reality as well, but can be more literary explorations that are nonfiction or fiction, exploring a topic but not necessarily for
historical instruction or record. They can be more personal or fragmentary reflections of the subject of the film.

*The Animatrix* is another example of a body of animated pieces that uses separate stylistic approaches, although it is a collection of shorts that explore the philosophical concepts of *The Matrix*. Styles range from motion graphics to 2D character animation to almost photorealistic, lifelike 3D animation. An anthology of short films, the set can be considered as an amalgamation of stories told by different perspectives using different visual styles. Most utilize some form of voiceover narration. *Diversa* can be considered similar to the film collection as a whole; however it combines its distinct approaches into one short film.

Perhaps most similarly in organizational structure, “Reincarnation,” the last episode in the sixth season of *Futurama* is a triptych episode, exploring three different visual styles that pertain to several historical styles of animation, rendering it self-reflexive. The first style is black-and-white and is reminiscent of Fleischer Studios and Walter Lantz, the second style is that of a low-resolution 8-bit video game, and the third is similar to anime cartoon styles from the 1980s. My film uses a similar organizational structure, containing three disparate parts with differing visuals, each of which pertains to three essay answers gathered by anonymous survey-takers. However, my film builds from 2D motion graphics, to integration of 3D imagery and live action, to fully 3D animation with shots that attempt visual hyperrealism – an approach that is meant to explore visually the
rise of computer graphics technology from film, from a chemical-rich celluloid process to a completely digital and believably almost photorealistic 3D virtual construct. The film is meant to reproduce separate visual styles simply to illustrate the fact that the different opinions of reality can be expressed using different visual styles. A work that closely resembles the postmodern “mix” of mediums is the music video for the song “Peppermint” by Julio Bashmore, directed by Noah Harris. This film starts with motion graphics and uses a mix of visual techniques throughout – graphic design, 2D animation, “stop frame” or stop-motion animation with real objects (some objects that are 3D printed) and paper, and all of these components are composited together to create a hyperrealistic 3D space that would never have a place in reality. The music video is a visual feast, as it uses high-resolution real object and careful compositing to create artful compositions. The objects themselves make the subject matter surreal, as they are symbolic – such as hot coals, baby figurines, animated hands clapping, statues singing the lyrics “I’m hot for you.” This video is reminiscent of the Quay Brothers films, which feature hermetically sealed surrealistic worlds using found objects for the characters and sets. The objects move and interact in impossible ways in order to tell stories. While my film does not feature stop-motion animation, the postmodernist comingling of styles, mediums, and appropriation of references to popular culture and recycling of film techniques and elements into new, digital art forms are characteristic of my film. Specifically, the verbal and visual references to Morpheus from The Matrix in Part II of the film, Quentin Tarantino and the excess amount of blood spatter that appears in the first shot of Part III, and the direct visual reference to the slit-scan cinematographic
effect, or infinite zoom achieved with a traditional film camera that appears in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* during the stargate sequence.

*Diversa* utilizes a similar process to Frank Mouris’s Academy Award winning short film, *Frank Film* from 1973, a film with more abstracted collaged imagery. This short film features two soundtracks – one is an autobiography, and another is a list of words that begin with the letter “f.” The link between these two soundtracks is the animated visual collage comprised of photos collected from magazines which seek to illustrate both the autobiography and the spoken words. His film, similar to my film process, uses narration synced up with visuals that seek to explain the voiceover. Words like “nothing” and “stopped” correspond to black frames and images of skulls. Phrases like “international film festivals” evoke numerous tiny images of flags, and “transformations” trigger a quick buildup of images. Mouris uses a collage technique, which I have interpreted into the first third of my film, yet the images in his film are called upon screen with simple animation (images are just layered and stacked up on one another rapidly – a stop-motion animation process that is more easily achieved with traditional filmmaking). In his autobiographical account, he explains he similarly started out in graphic design, and made the conversion to animation and filmmaking in graduate school. This approach may also explain the similar creative process from the perspective of first and foremost a designer, transcribing images from the voiced narration, and the intentional divergence from a classic narrative structure with a clear-cut exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution in both *Frank Film* and *Diversa.*
Throughout the filmmaking process, as the maker I must assume the role as Director, Interviewer, Artist, Graphic Designer, Motion Artist, Producer, Animator, Compositor, Writer, Researcher, and Storyteller. As a designer and filmmaker it is my role to look into the narratives of everyday young people who are immersed in hyperreal imagery, and express their opinions visually in an informed manner. I am reinterpreting their thoughts as imagined through my own form of visual reality as informed by current motion graphics and film history and techniques. While generally a film production utilizes separate people for these roles, as the amount of work required for a feature length and/or a short film requires an entire crew, this film is a student production. I must assume all roles, just as many independent artists and animators, like Chris Sullivan do. His independent film production, *Consuming Spirits*, utilizes virtually every form of traditional animation technique. His feature-length film has assigned him to the roles as Director, Producer, Art Director, Animator, Filmmaker, Voice Actor, and Artist to tell his story. Likewise *Diversa* employs the same kind of film production; experimenting with different forms and styles of animation. However, unlike *Consuming Spirits*, *Diversa* mainly features digital techniques (as opposed to traditional film techniques) without any delegation of work to other people.
Concept Development

The concept for *Diversa* evolved from my interest in the changing landscape of film, and how new technology has brought about the ability to create photorealistic hyperrealities. What struck me as a viewer was the ability for graphics to present visual impossibilities as seemingly real events. The evolution of film as a medium into the digital era has mixed visual effects and animation with live-action filmmaking, rendering most films partially or almost fully animated. The medium of film itself has become almost completely removed from filmmaking of the past. The post-digital era has transformed the meaning of the word “film” from a photochemical process to a completely digital process using pixels and computer data instead of strips of film. I noticed that the themes of films have tilted also towards philosophical ideas regarding hyperreal worlds and often mix the illusory with live-action components. It is my hypothesis that the repeated theme of hyperreality in visuals and the themes of films may have arisen due to the increased capacity for technology in graphics and computing power. It is my opinion that it may broadly also represent concerns of the increased emphasis for technological integration into society. These ideas are relevant to current cinema, as the digital era is a relatively recent event that has produced significant increases in quality of computer graphics and capabilities for films to present visual ideas in an increasing complexity.
I have a background in graphic design and much of any design process is comprised of creating representational imagery or symbols to communicate meaning. Therefore I have naturally approached the process of filmmaking with heightened attention to semiotics. In semiotics, or the study of meaning-making, signs and symbols shape imagery that can communicate meaning. This is very important in graphic design or visual communication design. Daniel Chandler defines semiotics in a broad sense, explaining:

“Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic ‘sign-systems’ (such as medium or genre). They study how meanings are made and how reality is represented” (Chandler, 2).

Semiotics is integral to the idea of reality, because “sign systems (language and other media) play a major part in the ‘social construction of reality’ and realities cannot be separated from the sign-systems in which they are experienced” (Chandler, xvii). *Diversa* does not cover the conceptual topics of semiotics in depth, but does harness signs and symbols in its visual process, sometimes using symbolic imagery in lieu of more literal depictions. A specific example occurs in Part III of the film, where question marks and exclamation points reference abstract concepts of emotion and experience.

I sought methods of transcribing the meaning gleaned from ideas of reality, hyperreality, and film through the lenses that were most relevant. These lenses were specifically;
semiotics, philosophy, sociology and psychology, film history, as well as experimental filmmaking. Again, these subjects are not the main focus of the film, but are visually and sometimes verbally or conceptually referenced throughout the film. I chose to explore animation through the process of experimental filmmaking as opposed to traditional filmmaking because of my background in graphic design or visual communication design. Graphic design does not always call for linear narrative stories, and places increased importance on quality and composition of images, meaning, and communication of ideas. These artifacts become more important than traditional storytelling.

An initial online pilot study survey testing in a previous course, which served to introduce graduate students to the planning, development and evaluation of design research in the design department. For the pilot study, I conducted an inconclusive in-person survey which allowed me to collect answers after screening film clips and survey-taker’s reactions and opinions about films. Three survey-takers participated, and they were not from the targeted demographic as they were graduate students in design: they knew too much information about film and, thus, their opinions were more informed than the “average” person. I was looking for a wide array of opinions from young audiences. The initial online pilot study survey was more successful, as it garnered almost 60 survey takers to respond to questions about CGI and animation in film. The online pilot study initially sparked interest in creating a longer project, as the subject was one that many young survey-takers formed a strong opinion about. After conducting this initial research,
the survey web site the data was stored on (Kwiksurvey) changed web addresses and
removed old survey answers from its servers. However, documentation still contained
information collected from the pilot study survey:

Figure 5. Pilot study survey outcome data

A year later, the survey was conducted again with questions tailored for a discussion
specifically on the meaning of reality and graphics technology used in film. I collected
this new survey data before deciding to create a film from the compiled information.
After evaluating the essay answers, it was clear the information was rich in description
and covered a wide array of topics that were exciting and interesting enough in order to
create a script – philosophy, film, and opinions about CGI technology in current film. I
set a constraint of 800 to 900 words in order to be able to complete the animation in the
one-year time of production for the project. The three questions poised in the survey became the three sections of the film. The scripted words served as a framework for the animation and as a guide for the narration of the film. A storyboard was created from visualizing the script, which would serve as the pictorial guide for the animation. Between conducting the first and final surveys, I explored the topic of hyperreality and the depiction of reality in film in the graduate courses I was enrolled in. Below I recount early pre-thesis explorations which lead me to decide on a final thesis survey and script idea. These explorations inform the final thesis work, Diversa, either in theme or in visual style.

**Untitled** Motion Graphics Style Test

**Untitled** is a ten-second test film that I created in early 2012 which explores the mixing of computer-generated and painted styles. This style test is an early study directed towards the development of a personal style which mixes visually realistic imagery with a hand-created component (such as painted textures or possibly a 3D graphic element added to realistically rendered imagery) as a way of integrating the historical aspect of creating animation into the current manner of creating animation in filmmaking with computer-generated imagery with mixed-media postmodern elements. The concept for this short test was based on my observation that art and design is viewed, created, and interpreted differently by different individuals. Each viewer, creator, and interpreter of art has their own set of “lenses” and ways of experiencing. A previous BFA project painting that is untitled (untitled allowing the viewer to interpret the image through their own lens)
portrays a semi-surrealistic depiction of a scene with sunglasses (a hypothetical lens) and other elements of reality. By recreating this painting with a mixture of 3D animation, painted textures, and realistic video, it can capture in more detail a hyperrealist environment and convey greater movement throughout time (as opposed to a more surrealist visual style in the painting). The painting was meant to insinuate the rapid decay that occurs amidst a lifestyle of instant gratification, as goals can get lost among the frivolous nature of a fast-paced, disorganized way of living. The fast-paced film industry, and the chaotic, desire-driven lives of celebrities insinuated this state of mind, and the presence of stylized film and other indicators such as palm trees denotes the mind state. The hyperreality that technology creates all around us is also reflected in this piece. The test was purely a pre-thesis test focusing on visual style rather than a coherent plot or developed concept. Although the hand-painted, hand-crafted element or intervention was not used in the final thesis film, the style test allowed for early experimentation in this technique. The final piece does utilize some motion graphics that are created using painterly textures that are digital rather than hand-crafted interventions. The surreal nature of this motion painting as well as some of the postmodern ideas behind the painting are reflected in the final thesis film. Symbolic elements such as the circuit board plane and sunglasses appear in the final thesis film. The circuit board plane represents the almost infinite digital landscape of postmodern society, and the sunglasses represent the hypothetical lens through which each viewer observes and perceives their own version of reality.
Figure 6. *Untitled* style test

Circuitboard City - A collapse of the technological hyperreality

*Circuitboard City – A collapse of the technological hyperreality* is another early exploration on the concept of hyperreality. This project portrays an interactive world that comments on the devices of interaction in modern-day hyperreality. This 3D environment was created in the gaming engine Unity, whereby the user can interact with a virtual “circuit board” inspired city. The virtual city I created is made of the very fabric of modern technology - circuits, transistors, metal chips, traces, etc. The virtual environment is explored via first-person controller, allowing the user to experience perceived reality firsthand. The user is obligated to traverse through the realm and interact, as a timer counts down from 60 seconds; forcing the user to search the world and find (sometimes
hidden) timer plates that allot more time or remove time from their timer. When the time counts down to ten seconds or less, the virtual world begins to shake in anticipation of imminent doom. When the timer finally reaches zero seconds, the virtual city collapses through the floor, an effect achieved by using a simple procedurally programmed animation. This conclusion signifies the collapse of the virtual world. The lack of interaction has led to the destruction of the virtual world. The nature of the interaction with the piece functions as an allegory to the perceived hyperreality that is achieved through interaction with technology in everyday life. When the interaction has ceased to exist, the virtual world collapses and leaves the user alone in desolation, or in a technological purgatory devoid of interaction. Thus, an entirely new reality has been formed, a world that is one step closer to physical reality because it no longer features the framework of modern virtual devices.

The interactive piece features a high resolution (4 thousand pixels) transparent vertex-lit texture created with Illustrator that features lines and a pattern that repeats in the style of circuit board traces on the ground plane of the virtual realm. The traces glow and cycle through different bright neon colors; in reference to films like Tron and the Matrix, which feature technological hyperrealities in a similar sense. This work helped me to form ideas about technology, interaction, and the virtual world, especially in relation to Baudrillard’s sometimes negative viewpoint on hyperreality. He believed that everyday life was replaced entirely by signs and symbols, byproducts of the media and technology. The intricate circuit board texture is an element that has been recycled and used for the final
thesis film because of its detail and reference to the virtual world and Tiffin & Terashima’s idea of the “coaction field.” This work is unique as it is the only interactive work I have created in a gaming engine to explore these concepts. The interactive element has been removed from the final thesis work because the focus became more centered on the idea of how ideas of reality and hyperreality are portrayed in current cinema. Thus the medium of digital film became a more appropriate means to present my final thesis work.

Figure 7. *Circuitboard City – A collapse of the technological hyperreality*
Lighting studies

Several lighting studies contributed to my explorations on reality and hyperreality. This technical exploration allowed me to learn ways of creating which could simulate realistic scenes more closely – without extensive work with textures or models, but with strategically placed digital lighting setups. Two studies captured different times of day; night-time, day-time, and a third which allowed us to be creative. I chose a Tron-inspired theme with blue glowing textures, as well as a complementary color scheme. This technical exploration influenced my design process from later projects, as well as my thesis exploration. The quantity, textures, colors, and other properties such as decay, cone angle, penumbra angle, dropoff, shadows, and specular or diffuse emission applied to the lights in a scene add levels of complexity and thus an increased level of reality that cannot be achieved without this attention. By formulating works and studies which focus on one component of 3D digital design (specifically the quality of light here), I attained skills which have ultimately lead me to create imagery that has can more closely achieve realistic qualities, as well as photorealism (although this digital exploration does not fully achieve that photorealism yet). The final thesis work has lighting and shadow which attempt visual hyperreality more closely.
Figure 8. Lighting Study, Night-time
Figure 9. Lighting study, Daytime
Dan Flavin Lighting Explorations

This lighting study, as part of a digital and physical lighting project helped to inform my later thesis work. For the digital component of this project, I created digital lighting installations in a gallery setting within a virtual space. In reference to Dan Flavin, who severely limited his materials to standard sizes of fluorescent lights, my digital installations were created using a limited set of long and short colored fluorescent lights in five colors – blue, pink, yellow, green, and white. I first devised a set of fluorescent lights using geometry in the shape of a fluorescent light with special shaders applied to it.
to simulate the look of a colored fluorescent light (layered cylinders, the inside cylinder with incandescence and a ramp shader, and the outside one with glow effects and transparency to simulate glass). Flavin’s work belonged to minimalism, an artistic movement founded in the reductive aspects of modernism, an aesthetic whereby “less is more.” Flavin favored fluorescent lights in place of showy neon lights. With the limited color palette and standardized sizes, he could experiment with the properties and limitations of light. Inspired by Flavin’s design process, I created rules in this manner and experimented with different geometric setups and patterns.

This lighting study, like the aforementioned studies, allowed me to further experiment with lighting within the context of simulating actual lighting design. The fluorescent lighting setups mimic those that could occur in reality, but occur within a digital space, thus balancing along the line of reality and illusion and formulating a hyperreality within a digital gallery setting. Using “realistic” project pieces such as the standardized digital “fluorescent” lights has an influence on the final thesis project. In the final portion of my Diversa, letters carved into neon light shapes form the word “real,” along a gallery wall as the narrator speaks of special effects such as fire, rain, and fog, which enter the frame, again producing a scenario which looks realistic but could not actually occur in reality, forming a version of hyperreality. The neon letters as part of a digital gallery installation, realize the concept of “the real” as a symbol. The lighting installation is a visual stand-in for the concept of reality as an abstract concept.
Figure 11. Dan Flavin Lighting Exploration 1 – Digital Installation

Figure 12. Dan Flavin Lighting Exploration 2 – Digital Installation
Genre through Lighting and Color – Film Noir

This project focuses on the simulation of selected film genre types, specifically Crime Drama (and further diversified from this, Film Noir), by applying the fundamental principles and elements of virtual lighting and virtual camera to a simple scene of virtual objects. Properties of light that are explored are intensity, direction, shape, color, filtering, and quality. Properties of camera that are explored are framing and lens. To accomplish the essence of Film Noir, scenes were rendered with high contrast and the lens was changed to accommodate for wide angle lenses used in long shots, low angle, and Dutch Angles (skewed perspective) shots, to demonstrate the dark and distorted frame of mind of the character – elements that are characteristic of Film Noir. Film noir
is a genre based out of German Expressionism, an aesthetic mode that aims to exteriorize inner states, often distorting reality to evoke an emotional response or idea.

To create this project, I rendered images with color and tweaked in Photoshop for desaturation and exposure. I used few lights for scenes and I created a foggy, murky atmosphere to simulate the double-exposure and high contrast characteristic of Film Noir. I implemented a light with a texture was also added to the scene to create the hint of a figure’s shadow – which adds an element of mystery that is distinctly Film Noir. I tweaked the settings on lights in order to cast elongated shadows from a window and from the rungs of a ladder to account for the long shadows with repeating shapes and lines that occur as visual tropes in Film Noir. This project influenced my thesis process, as the influence of film and film genres on my digital works started with this project, and continued on into my thesis.

This project also represents my first exploration of compositing, and highlighted its importance in my future processes. In order to capture the double-exposure effect and the color and grayscale versions of the images, I was able to create separate render layers with different properties, layering them with filters, in order to boost or detract certain image qualities in a more precise manner. The precision with which I was able to layer and separate objects within the scene in a post-production composite (after rendering the image layers in Maya) forever changed my way of thinking and became a key component in my design process. With a background in graphic design, the quality of the image
became increasingly important to my 3D digital work. The utilization of render layers, and utilizing each layer’s appropriate settings in compositing was instrumental in the way I planned out animations and post-production. Compositing is an important emphasis in the final thesis film.

Figure 14. Genre through Lighting and Color – Film Noir, Black and White Composite 1
Figure 15. Genre through Lighting and Color – Film Noir, Color Composite 1

Figure 16. Genre through Lighting and Color – Film Noir, Black and White Composite 2
Figure 17. Genre through Lighting and Color – Film Noir, Color Composite 2

Chronicles of Narnia Passage with Projection Mapping

This project uses a literary passage from C.S. Lewis's writings from the Chronicles of Narnia. The live performance is a collaborative project with MFA students from the department of theatre at OSU who specialize in theatrical lighting as well as those from Digital Animation and Interactive Media (including myself). The project utilizes projection mapping – graphics and animations are made with Photoshop, Maya, and After Effects. There is also an actor/narrator and the performance takes place in a studio theatre. It is timed to a theatrical lighting setup and soundtrack and features moments of digital light only, physical light only, and combined digital and physical light. The actor interacts with the set and is choreographed to the “pop art” style graphics that move and
change color on the set, as “pop art” was an art movement from the time the passage itself was written. The live performance aspect of this project is unique to other works. The use of After Effects, compositing and timing was instrumental to this project and informed the final thesis work. A large portion of the animation was created in Photoshop and in post-production and the only 3D elements are graphic assets that are featured in the piece. The process for this project as a group effort, using projection mapping and a different pipeline than traditional 3D animation informed my thesis work, as the notion of the traditional 3D pipeline was rearranged. Scenes in the final thesis work feature assets created with a combination of techniques and Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects, Premiere, and Maya were used in various orders, not always following the traditional order of a 3D animation pipeline.

This approach rearranged my thinking from of the animation process as a tried-and-true formula used in animated movie studios to a collection of procedures that may occur at various times in different orders and may harness a variety of techniques that are unique to production. The order and technique of a project is unique to each project and smaller independent projects can vary from the traditional 3D studio pipeline based on the unique constraints of the project.
Figure 18. Chronicles of Narnia Projection Mapping Still

Crimetown 9,000

This project was created by compositing live-action characters with 3D backgrounds. The video features characters filmed with a green-screen and then composited to rendered backgrounds using mattes in post-production. The premise for the video is detectives in a
crime-lab in the future, who solve crimes using GUIs and satellite tracking, much like a futuristic version of Garcia, an FBI agent on the television show *Criminal Minds*.

Intended to be a spoof of television series which are not true-to-life representations of crime labs and the judicial system, the video is a comedic skit in which the characters interact with GUIs – graphical user interfaces that display a video chat between coworkers in other areas of the futuristic lab, as well as buttons and elements with which they interact as they would a touch screen. This project represents a form of filmmaking which is common in contemporary cinema, especially science fiction and action films that feature a mixture of live-action film and visual effects. A hyperreality is created as real people seemingly interact in an imagined space, using imaginary hovering holographic touch-screens, a technology that does not yet exist. Although the final thesis film does not include live-action characters, the final film includes scenes with live-action video that has been composited with graphics – forming a hyperreality in a similar manner. The final film features live-action elements such as a human eye and a city scene which are composited with imaginary effects and elements.
Figure 19. *Crimetown 9,000* Background Render with Global Illumination

Figure 20. *Crimetown 9,000* Still
Aerial Machines Above (Title Ten: co-existing and flying)

This short animation was a collaborative project and features an imaginary floating world where a fantastical ecosystem exists atop a floating rock made from recycled components. Upbeat music plays as this imaginary world traverses through the air above a grim dystopian landscape below. The piece is meant to represent a hyperrealistic world (thematically) and emphasize the positive relationships between technology and the environment. The animated film utilizes composited elements in new ways, such as a matte background that harnessed matte-tracking in post-production, particle emitters which puffed clouds of steam, and a texture for the rocky world which was created in Mudbox and exported into Maya. The concept for this film experiments with the idea of the hyperreal mixing of worlds – imaginary worlds that coexist within one another and also feature hand-crafted elements, such as the watercolor backgrounds. The comingling of worlds is a common theme in my final thesis film, as the intermingling of media and transitional elements from scene to scene help communicate further the mixing of realities.
Rendering with Photorealism & Compositing CG Primitives

This exploration in compositing expands upon my previous thesis research thread of understanding the design and production of hyperrealistic imagery, and the tools and techniques needed to generating and composite CG objects into realistic environments. First I created several still-life tests in which I explored technical approaches for creating photorealistic imagery that combines live action photography and computer-generated graphics. The purpose of this test was to learn how to create live-action and CG film composites. This approach allowed me to combine real images with CG images, and to tailor the CG content, lighting, shaders, render layers, ambient occlusion, and tweaking in compositing to match and create a believably real scene. By tweaking camera angles to
match an illusory ground plane, isolating each render layer, and later combining them, I was able to further understand the process by which image finaling artists achieve realistic composites. This exploration also allowed me to gauge an understanding of the time necessary and detailed the intricate process of compositing that goes into the making of photorealistic images. For the second portion of the project, using simple Maya primitives with cement textures worked well to achieve a sense that the objects blend into the environment (a photograph of a city sidewalk). The greatest challenge was the achievement of realistic shadows that matched the direction of light, color, and light quality of the background image. Creating shadows and lighting to match the scene perfectly proved the most tedious and required the most adjustment. The pyramid was the most difficult shape and post-production shadows and extra ambient occlusion had to be added to create the sense that this object’s qualities matched the others. This project helped to develop technical skills needed to establish a visual style for some portion of my thesis animation. It is important, when addressing the subject of hyperreality, to create visual hyperreality in at least some form within the thesis film.
Figure 22. Rendering with Photorealism (from www.digitaltutors.com)
Figure 23. *Compositing CG Primitives*: Process

Figure 24. *Compositing CG Primitives*: Before and After
Reality, Defined

*Reality, Defined* is a short motion graphics video serving as an introduction to my thesis area of study. It provides a crash course on several forms of reality such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and hyperreality. The video borrows a visual style of the *Everything is a Remix* series on Vimeo, using several forms of media such as vector graphics, video, and free stock photos. At the time of the production of this video, preliminary background research into the varying definitions and forms of reality comprised the majority of my pre-thesis writing, and thus it was important to establish distinction between the varying definitions and forms of reality. An integral component of this project is a voiceover/narrative that serves as a main structural component. The voiceover shapes how the graphics match and transition between one another. This is a process that has been mirrored in the final thesis film. This pre-thesis exploration thematically matches with the final thesis film and also mixes several visual styles such as 2D animation, motion graphics, and live-action footage; such mixing is also prevalent in the final thesis film.
What Does Reality Mean to You?

*What does Reality Mean to You?* is a short piece that I created as a precursor to my thesis and serves as an example that is very close in process to the final work. In this piece, I use various styles of graphics in two dimensions and three dimensions to showcase answers to the survey question, “What Does Reality Mean to You?” For this animation, I collected 25 anonymous participants' written responses to a six-question survey I created and distributed online. The survey was the same as the one I used in the final thesis film, but I left out most of the survey answers so as not to repeat them. For this piece, I focus on the answer to the first question “What does reality mean to you? Define the word 'reality' – what it means to you in simple terms,” and encouraged survey takers to respond.
with an explanation of any length. I devised a short script from the responses to this question and created images to accompany it and sought help from several other ACCAD graduate students for voice acting.

The final thesis film covers a broader scope of essay answers from the survey and likewise more opinions about reality, reality as it pertains to current films and changing expectations and general perceptions of reality. This coverage is important because graphics have improved so much that films can now create alternative forms of believable reality, and enhanced realities or "hyperrealities," possibly changing viewers’ perceptions on what reality means and what technologies can do for us. In this pre-thesis film, I use a modeling style that is simple, low-poly, and geometric, which is similar to the modeling style in a motion graphics video called “Let’s Talk about Soil” produced by the designer and animator Uli Henrik Streckenbach for the First Global Soil Week in 2012. This modeling style allowed me to create simple forms and to keep the project achievable, given the half semester time frame. Although I used a different modeling style in Diversa, I used the same conceptual process of creating a voiceover. As a takeaway, I would like the viewer to understand reality as a subject with no agreed-upon definition by any one person. This video, as well as the final thesis film is meant to explore the idea that every person perceives reality differently.
Figure 26. *What Does Reality Mean to You?* Screenshot Image of Compositing Process

Figure 27. *What Does Reality Mean to You?* Still Image
Process

Changes from preliminary concepts to final design choices

I have a background in graphic design; and was interested in the digital capabilities of computer graphics and computer animation on a theoretical and visual level when approaching this thesis work. The topic of hyperreality provided an interesting dichotomy between photorealism (what looks and appears to be real) and graphic artifacts that are created in a virtual space, combining to form a visual hyperreality that supersedes what is possible in the real world. For instance, objects, scenes, or characters might fit into a hyperreal world together in a film and appear visually realistic, believable, yet objects defy physics or camera movements create impossible angles that we could not replicate with the human eye or movement. The medium of animation is now a powerful tool that can create enhanced worlds and characters in a virtual space that can be composited together with a live action space and characters and become believable to the human eye. Photorealism, particularly in film, has become the standard above all else in the post-digital era. Audiences have come to expect increasingly complex visual effects. I sought to find a way to combine 2D digital design techniques in regards to the field of graphic design with the medium of 3D digital design techniques in regards to the field of animation. This is a new process to myself as a designer, but is not new to the field of computer animation. Thus the combination of these mediums to illustrate the topic of
hyperreality, and the development of a visual style to illustrate the different modes of reality that can be simulated and composited in a virtual space became crucial in the design process. As a designer learning the media of animation, this process became a more natural approach.

Development of style tests, research exploration into the philosophical underpinnings of reality and hyperreality, and exploration of films that investigate these topics and exhibit visual hyperreality were fundamental to the process of formulating survey questions and collecting data, and the process of ideation during the storyboarding process. I approached the survey with no direct plan for transcription of the answers into a film. I performed a precursory survey one year prior to the final thesis survey for a class research assignment, and had lost the data due to failure to back up the information, and the domain of the survey site had changed and eradicated the data from their servers as well but found that the answers I posed created room for quite a long discourse on a topic that young people are concerned with – I received fifty-seven complete responses.

After a year, I shortened the survey, sculpted the questions to fit with my thesis research questions and to acquire a sense of what group of people I was approaching with several short demographic questions. The three questions I used were open-ended, because I wanted to get an unbiased account of how ordinary young people view their own sense of reality, as well as the hyperreality they see in current films. I believed that my own perspective was skewed by academic influence (too informed with knowledge of cinema,
design, and technology in regards to computer-generated imagery and hyperreality), thus rendering my opinion invalid to the study. I wanted the raw observations other young people who may not have been as well-versed on the technical intricacies of the subject, so as to give an answer that was more philosophical in nature, or “bigger picture” answers. The three questions essay questions were stated as follows:

1. How are some ways in which people perceive reality in the present day (This can be influenced by technology and circumstance, for example)?
   *(open ended)*

2. What does reality mean to you? Define the word “reality” – what it means to you in simple terms.
   *(open ended)*

3. Describe the reality you see or do not see in current films. Do you see any trends towards realism or are films moving away from it? Explain. (You can use your own definition of “reality” here or a new one).
   *(open ended)*

The questions were simplified later for the thesis film format:

1. How do people perceive reality in the present day?
2. Define reality in simple terms – what does it mean to you?
3. How is reality explored and depicted in contemporary film?
Some answers were short and simple, such as “Reality can be perceived through all of our human senses” and “Reality is simply what is rather than what we think is- perhaps this is beyond what most of us experience.” Other answers delved into long descriptions which detail their observations and reasoning for their observations, some quoting and referencing films, and some even attempting to explain the meaning of life. A complete transcript of the responses can be found in Appendix B, and their adaptation to a condensed film script of 895 words can be found in Appendix C.

I compiled the first twenty-five answers into a script, which I then used to create a dialogue for a precursory, pre-thesis animation. This animated film only used the answers to question #5, “What does reality mean to you? Define the word “reality”-what it means to you in simple terms (open ended) and is represented as a two-and-a-half minute animation called What Does Reality Mean to You? to introduce the lengthier thesis film. This film’s description and analysis can be found earlier in the Concept Development section of this paper, and a film still is represented by Figure ___.

The thesis film features various excerpts from all three essay answers, compiled into a script that was designed to be approximately 900 words in order to keep the film at an appropriate length for completion within the given time frame. The survey answers were gleaned for key words that evoke descriptive content or explore philosophical concepts in regards to reality and hyperreality in current cinema, and reduced in length, while other answers that were common or repeated were combined in their most engaging form. This
is a contextualization and manipulation of the previous context, just as Gondry explained: the director formulates the first re-interpretation of what the viewer will see and hear in the voiceover. The thesis questions and answers served as a structure for the film’s script and visuals, with an overarching narrator that introduces the three questions, and three clear, distinct sections of animation voiced by a plethora of different actors.

As a graphic artist fluent in visual communication design, I approach the narrative process differently than the majority of animators. A traditional narrative story has a plot structure with a clear introduction/exposition, rising action, a climax, falling action, and resolution. Typically an animated work follows the storyline of one or several characters. My film diverges from this traditional story emphasis, in that it uses the internal thoughts of many, or “collective interior monologue,” and instead of one story or narrative, it is a collection of many. My film does not use the traditional narrative structure as the framework for crafting the dialogue, timing, and story. Instead, Diversa uses a similar structure to Frank Mouris’ Frank Film. Frank Film and Diversa both conjure images that correspond to spoken dialog, not necessarily in the form of a clear story, or using a main character to carry out a story with the traditional narrative structure. My dialog, timing and story are based completely off of the essay answers of the aforementioned anonymous individuals, which have been abbreviated into a shortened passage which was then voiced by actors. The voiceover became a script for the visual artist.
The script (see Appendix C for the Script) serves as the driving force behind the framework for the timing, visuals and theme for the film, although it may not produce an overarching story in the traditional plot structure sensibility. Rather, it uses the opinions from many essayists to convey an overall collection of thoughts in the fashion of an essay film. In visual communication design, delivering a message as clearly and effectively as possible using visuals is the main goal – and this is how I approached the film. Imagining and transcribing the visuals from the script was a large part of the planning process, the storyboarding process in particular. The first step in the pre-production process and planning stages was comprised of using the script as a framework for imagining the corresponding visuals into thumbnail drawings for a storyboard, and second, using digital tools to fully realize these storyboarded visuals:
Figure 28. Thesis Film, *Diversa*, Storyboard
Figure 28 continued

Shot-by-shot analysis

Part I

Storyboard Slides 1-3

Script:

“Reality is a constant state of being. Perception of reality is experienced by the mind and body and furthered by many layers of influences...”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

The concept for this passage, like all of the shots in this film, feature an informed visual interpretation from the script, which was edited to subject matter from the survey answers which provide rich visual description. Since this script alludes to reality as “a constant state of being” I chose to keep the motion of objects always constant, for this scene and for the rest of the film. The first visual style for this section was largely dictated by 2D
motion graphics, and, though it is digital, it utilizes a painterly style to gradually build up to the conceptually rich 3D portion at the end. The imagery used is of human brains and body outlines, to refer to “the mind and body.” Likewise three pages unfurl to reveal collaged imagery of brains, collaged imagery of body parts—such as fingers, eyes, and mouths that refer to the organs we use to sense with—, and collaged imagery of devices such as cell phones and televisions. The brains make reference to the idea of perception as they are organs that control and analyze sensory information. The sensory organs and body parts make reference to the organs we use to sense with. These sensory organs are the means for which humans can perceive the environment and the reality around them. The devices and televisions allude to the postmodernist idea of hyperreality. With the current cultural zeitgeist and availability of modern technology, imagery and media is constantly and incessantly bombarding humans. We now live in a world that is enhanced and has somewhat surpassed what only exists in the physical world. This hyperreality is a mixture of our physical world as well as the one humans have fabricated with media and culture.

**Storyboard Slides 4-6**

**Script:**

“People perceive reality very differently. It may include virtual/computer generated reality, desired reality, nostalgia or realities from the past, remembering dreams as reality.”
Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

The pages which unfurl begin to fade out, as a computer monitor fades onto the screen overtop of this, as if we are looking at the composition through a digital means, such as a computer or television screen when the narrator “says virtual/computer generated reality.” This again alludes to the concept of hyperreality bombarding society with media through modern technological devices. Eventually the monitor that frames the imagery in the background fades out to reveal a digital landscape. This image is comprised of a stretched plane with a circuit board texture on it, to indicate a vast unending virtual space, with stars that begin to move. The movement of the starts simulates the passage of time as well as maintains constant movement throughout the piece as the narrator says “desired reality, nostalgia or realities from the past.” This passage also references a time of day, night-time, when dreams are most likely to occur. The narrator finally says “remembering dreams as reality,” as a stylized human figure fades in and out, horizontally across the landscape as if it were sleeping. The philosophical meaning of reality and the answers that the survey takers responded with reference the concept of dreams. The state of dreaming while asleep is a psychological aspect of the subconsciousness that some believe is not part of reality, while others disagree. This particular opinion conjectures that the act of remembering dreams is a way people might perceive reality.
Storyboard Slides 7-8

Script:

“Some would say dreams are reality. Some would say our conscious, physical existence is reality and dreams are not.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This is a separate opinion from the last one, although explores a related theme. The narration in this passage only features one survey-taker’s opinion, but is split using two voice actors due to the natural break in sentence structure and the juxtaposition of the observer stating opposite ideas in this opinion. While “some would say dreams are reality” is stated, the previous scene with the dreaming figure lying horizontally across a virtual landscape begins to fade out as a physical landscape replaces it. The imagery features a parallax of elements to insinuate depth: grassy hills enter, stretch and expand on different planes, as realistic, animated trees grow rapidly out of the new ground planes. This passage is meant to illustrate the opinion that physical existence is reality and dreams are not, as the virtual landscape with the circuit board ground plane and dreaming human figure is completely replaced by a physical space, as represented by a recognizable natural landscape with trees, grass and hills. Likewise the moving stars in the background – a digital effect emulating sped-up long-exposure footage of a starry night sky, fade from multicolored to white. This choice also supports the idea of the conversion of a dreamscape to a landscape that exists in physical reality.
Storyboard Slides 9-10

Script:

“We perceive reality, or some notion of it, both directly and indirectly through not only our senses, but through documentation of those experiences, such as photos, video, sound, technology, books, art, film, and more.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This passage references the physical artifacts that deliver information to us: news, media, and entertainment. Photos, video, sound, technology, books, art, and film are just some of the mechanisms that deliver our current understanding of the world around us. On a philosophical level, the abundance of media also plays into Baudrillard’s ideas of hyperreality in society, and the somewhat negative viewpoint that society is being bombarded with media and technological stimuli and it is engorging them and disengaging them from physical life. The imagery includes objects that move slowly into frame. The objects represent each of these mediums, old and new. Polaroid photographs containing images of sense organs (a mouth and eyes) references the senses we use to perceive this media, a cassette tape, books, and a film strip containing frames from other parts of the film slowly travel into the frame, as well as nuanced music notes which move and ripple into the frame near the end of this shot.
Storyboard Slides 11-12

Script:

“We live in a time where almost the sum total of human knowledge is available at or fingertips, but in the same environment exists the most fearsome distractions, tempered through a sort of Darwinian survival of the fittest. For our generation, information is so available - and contradicting viewpoints in particular - that we approach new ideas warily, and with a varying degree of skepticism.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

In this shot, an abstracted collaged computer is seen with hand silhouettes typing at the keyboard. This visually interprets the passage, “we live in a time where almost the sum of human knowledge is available at our fingertips.” This statement represents Baudrillard’s ideas of cybernetic control systems in *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard conjectures that the internet is a “cybernetic control system” that governs society in the era of simulations. These control systems allow for information to be widely available. The control system dictates and influences how people behave and perceive the world around them. The era of simulations is his term for contemporary society, in which information and signs are constantly bombarding people and thus they are interpreting these constant signs and information as a new form of reality; a hyperreality – one that is perhaps more real than the real. Hyperreality, according to Baudrillard, is the point at which illusion and reality implodes and becomes more than just reality. The signs and signifiers of everyday things come to replace everyday life and
the model or manual of the ideal becomes “the real.” When the narrator says
“information is so available - and contradicting viewpoints in particular - that we
approach new ideas warily, and with a varying degree of skepticism” 1’s and 0’s rain
begin to rain down into the shot, which signify the technologically-driven cybernetic
control systems governed by the era of simulations. The word “information appears” as
well, indicating that information is at the forefront and is readily available. Nuanced
words, derived from the script and transcribed from the reality Wordle (See Appendix A)
also appears in the shot, also indicating this “bombardment” of media and availability of
information, and it also serves to reference the survey itself.

Storyboard Slide 13

Script:
“Our perspectives can become narrow through cherry-picking what we prefer and what
we already believe, or self-verification theory.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:
This scene features a pair of glasses, indicating the metaphorical lenses through which we
view and experience our realities. The original text essay answer that was written stated
“our perspectives can become narrow through cherry picking what we prefer and what
we already believe. Is that self-reassurance theory? Something like that. I don't know I
forget.” Thus the script was corrected to include self-verification theory, a psychological
theory which states that people want to be understood through their beliefs and feelings
about themselves. This shot features a wall-plane in the background, which appears to be
moving inward; the illusion here references the “Hitchcock Zoom,” or “Dolly Zoom,” a camera effect wherein the angle of view is adjusted while a camera dollies toward or a way from a subject, keeping the main subject the same size and distorting the perspective of the area around the subject. This shot was derived from an earlier pre-thesis experiment with the dolly zoom, in my ten-second piece, the *untitled* motion painting style test (which also features sunglasses in the foreground). The shot in the final thesis film does not use this technical effect, but references it. The narrowing or inward motion of the wall planes is an interpretation of the word “narrow” in the passage, while 3D animated cherries spin in the lenses, and a grid of cherries moves through the background in reference to the phrase “cherry picking.” The lenses then change to include the words “prefer” and “believe” directly referencing the script when the narrator says “what we prefer or already believe.” I created this typeface to fit within the lenses, as if the lens we use to view the world around is skewed by our own beliefs and preferences; again the reference here is self-verification theory.

**Storyboard Slides 14-16**

**Script:**

“Reality is happening in a much more fragmented way, attention-wise. Because of the abundance of media, people tend to have a much more scattered attention and are more likely to be bouncing from distraction to distraction.”
Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

As the shot with the sunglasses and wall-planes transitions to this final shot sequence in Part I, digital glass created with Maya overlays the frame, and shatters on the word “fragmented.” The scene then transitions with a camera angle. The sunglasses disappear and the camera angle shifts to a new perspective, facing one side of the wall plane so that the background appears to be comprised of only the wall texture. The camera then appears to travel from left to right across the background/wall texture as objects that reference different media that provide distractions enter and exit the frame. These objects are symbols that refer to technology and media that were referenced in essay answers as providing the most distractions in current society. The objects included are a laptop, a television, a smartphone, a set of headphones, a football, and a video game controller. Laptops and computers provide the distraction of the internet, where time is wasted on social media and other means of communication. Television is known for providing hours of distractions, where many spend time watching reality TV shows. Smartphones and i-devices also provide a lot of distraction, as email and internet are now available on-the-go and at all times, thus tethering of people to their technology (i.e. to Baudrillard’s “cybernetic control systems”). The headphones signify the constant connection between people and music. Many people can be seen walking the street wearing headphones and listening to music, as perhaps a distraction or escape to experiencing life without always being plugged-in. The football perhaps does not match up with the objects of technology,
because it could refer to a physical activity, but is included because many people look to spectator sports to pass time, often losing sight of the physical reality that they might be living in everyday life. In a discussion with visiting independent film artist Chris Sullivan, he mentioned this concept to me after viewing the storyboard for this thesis film. I had not included the football icon in the original storyboard (an updated storyboard is shown above in Figure 28), but he commented on how people waste their free time watching spectator sports such as football and watching reality television, instead of being productive or creative. Perhaps his opinion is due to the fact that over the course of a decade, Sullivan created a full-feature independent film (*Consuming Spirits*) entirely in his spare time. The video game controller refers to video gaming, which, for most people, is considered a distraction and time-consuming activity. There have been reports in current news of gamers being so addicted to video games that they have neglected their own health and went on day-long binges without leaving their video game, and end up dying in the process. The end of this shot fades to blacks signaling the final shot of Part I.

**Part II**

**Storyboard Slides 17-18**

**Script:**

“Reality is what you live and experience every day. Each person perceives their own reality and chooses what is important and real to them.”
Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This shot features the first live-action sequence in the film. The scene is a sped-up aerial shot of a busy city street with cars and pedestrians traversing the frame, a visual depiction of people in everyday life. The shot is color-corrected and includes a background matte in the sky to refer to the digital painterly style of Part I. The footage is enhanced with visual tricks to create a visual hyperreality. *Diversa* blends various visual styles, including motion graphics, live action, and animation to depict and experiment with the different concepts of reality it is interpreting. More specifically, this shot references the live-action filmmaking in current cinema that is enhanced with compositing and computer-generated elements to create visual hyperreality. The light posts glow in different colors to the beat of the music composition, and a computer-generated tree grows on the left side of the frame; hyperreal elements that have been added in post-production. In the middle of the shot, a glowing car appears in the frame, travels a stretch of street, and then instantly disappears, an illusion created in compositing which adds to the hyper-realistic qualities of the shot.

Storyboard Slides 19-22

Script:

“Reality is existence. We cannot truly know anything other than what our senses can reveal to us, but that does not mean that this universe is all there is. It is my opinion that there are realms, beings, and other forces beyond our perception.”
Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This shot combines live-action footage of my eye blinking, along with many other tiny blinking eyes arranged around it, all blinking at different times. This image alludes to the organs that capture the senses when the narrator says, “reality is existence. We cannot truly know anything other than what our senses can reveal to us.” The word “reveal” also insinuates that something is being unveiled or suddenly made visible, so the eye was the only sense organ chosen for this shot (as opposed to also using other body parts which refer to sensory organs such as fingers, mouths, etc.). When the narration segues into the more existential train of thought, “but that does not mean that this universe is all there is. It is my opinion that there are realms beings, and other forces beyond our perception,” the eye suddenly opens to reveal the entire black pupil, and the camera zooms into the eye, suddenly revealing a starscape. The disparity between the infinitely small pupil and the interminably vast expanse of space adds interest, depth, and existential meaning to this narration. It suddenly becomes more spiritual as the narrator exclaims “it is my opinion that there are realms, beings, and other forces beyond our perception.” Swirling clouds and a human figure appears as the camera zooms into space as if to provide a visual metaphor for the “beings” that the narrator mentions, and perhaps makes a spiritual connection to the idea of creation or the presence of an omniscient being that may be connected to the existence of humans.
Storyboard Slides 23-25

Script:
“Reality is whatever we make it to be. Our physical existence is what most people believe in solely, but it is also our dreams - both literal and figurative, it is history, it is the future, it is existence.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:
The last sequence with the figure that appears in space transitions with a cross-dissolve and corresponding animation to a close-up shot of another figure; this time made of a more realistic glass-like material, situated among clouds with a clear blue sky as a background. This head-in-the-cloud provides a visual allusion to the philosophical, especially ancient Greek philosophy; whereby statues and busts of Greek Gods and figures of Greek mythology were often positioned on mountaintops, to be closer to the heavens (thus the clouds). The figures are comprised of glass to foreshadow sequences which happen later (See Storyboard Slides 31-32), and to also insinuate physical transparency, the idea that “reality is whatever we make it to be. Our physical existence is what most people believe in solely, but it is also our dreams – both literal and figurative.”

Literal, physical existence is referenced with the outline of the glass figure, but the figure is also semi-transparent, rendering the humanoid figure ambiguous; as if we are also comprised of figurative reality – one that might only exist in dreams. The figure turns to face the left side of the frame as the narrator says “it is history.” Another figure appears suddenly facing the right side of the frame as the narrator says “it is the future.” This symbolizes Janus, from ancient Roman mythology, a God with two heads; one which
always looks; both symbolically and literally, to the past and one to the future. Much of the material of this film references philosophical ideas, and this shot in particular conjures imagery based on classical understanding of philosophy and mythology.

Storyboard Slides 26-30

Script:

“As Morpheus said, “What is real? How do you define real? If you’re talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. However, are we not simply bioelectric systems? In the most skeptical scenario, ‘we’ are at least confined to these bioelectric systems for the time being, and ipso facto, our ‘reality’ is defined through this lens. That being said, is not the spectrum of human awareness staggering? Our endogenous systems are capable of producing extraordinarily profound experiences. Perhaps this is the purpose of our being.

Perhaps reality can be absolute, or beyond what most of us experience.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This voiceover cues another cross dissolve as one of the heads of Janus disappears, and one turns again to face the front, changing from glass to a dark-beige skin tone, this time wearing small, ovular eyeglasses. The scenery is now comprised of bright, abstracted square and rectangular shapes, the left side glowing red and the right glowing blue, referencing a famous extreme close-up shot in *The Matrix*, in which Morpheus asks Neo if he wants to take the red or the blue pill, offering him two choices. He is offered a
choice between living within the confines of the Matrix (or a theoretical computer world
in which the humans experience reality but their physical beings exist in vats of sticky
biological fluid), or living in reality free of the Matrix. Choosing the second option, he
assumes his own physical body aboard the Nebuchadnezzar and challenges the existence
of the Matrix. The world apart from the Matrix is controlled by machines and offers a
grim dystopian scenario. In the film, infinite amounts of vats filled with fluid suspend
human bodies, allowing the Matrix to be powered using humans’ very own bioelectric
energy, which is also harnessed for the machines’ own malevolent purposes. The
narrator’s dialogue here is almost directly quoted from Morpheus’s philosophical
interpretation in The Matrix. He reasons that although the world that surrounds us might
be an illusion, as long as humans can sense the world around them as if they were real,
that is good enough. Thus, our reality can be reduced to the electrical signals in our brains
that communicate sensation. Instead of a reflection in Morpheus’s glasses in The Matrix,
the surface of the glasses project imagery from the next scene, neuron cells with firing
synapses. This image presents an impossible form of reality; no camera can traverse on
such a level within our brains with such detail. The narrator exclaims his own opinion
stating, “However, are we not simply bioelectric systems? In the most skeptical scenario,
‘we’ are at least confined to these bioelectric systems for the time being, and ipso facto,
our ‘reality’ is defined through this lens.” The theoretical lens in this scene is the lens of
Morpheus, and the idea of bioelectric systems is expressed through the depiction of firing
synapses. This serves to again, reduce human biology to the presence of bio-electricity at
an atomic level; in connection to Morpheus’s reasoning. The scene then fades to black,
and again, another electrical phenomenon is alluded to in the visuals with an aurora-borealis abstraction. The narrator asks and then conjectures, “that being said is not the spectrum of human awareness staggering? Our endogenous systems are capable of producing extraordinarily profound experiences. Perhaps this is the purpose of our being.” The word “spectrum” conjures up various colorful and slowly moving abstracted imagery that fades into the frame over another starscape. The narrator attempts to define the meaning of life with the sentence, “Perhaps this is the purpose of our being.” As the final sentence of Part II is spoken, “perhaps reality can be absolute, or beyond what most of us experience,” the aurora borealis abstracted shapes disappear and the stars fade to black. The completely black frame serves to symbolize the word “beyond,” as the shapes symbolize the spectrum of human awareness and the extraordinarily profound experiences humans, as conscious beings, are capable of having. Since no one can know what is contained in the beyond, or “beyond [what most of us experience]”, thus the frame becomes devoid of light and imagery, and the shot fades to black for a few seconds in the same manner that the other sections end.

**Part III**

**Storyboard Slides 31-32**

**Script:**

“In films, reality has such a diverse meaning and interpretation. Look at Quentin Tarantino. He gives the impression that humans are filled with thick cherry Kool-Aid and
will explode upon being shot with a pistol. Real? No-- it's simulating reality but exaggerating it to make it interesting and entertaining.”

**Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:**

Postmodern contemporary cinema often replicates or references film genres and tropes from the same or different film genres; a reflexive reference that also appears in this film. Quentin Tarantino is one of the directors (this is apparent in the *Kill Bill* series, which often references Hong Kong Action Cinema and Martial arts movies from the Jackie Chan era) who often inserts references to film genres. To demonstrate the manipulation of reality that we can achieve with timing in film, the shot progresses in reverse, in accordance with the syntax of the phrase explaining that Quentin Tarantino “gives the impression that humans are filled with thick cherry Kool-Aid and will explode upon being shot with a pistol.” Thus the same glass humanoid figure that appears in earlier scenes in the film explodes in reverse, or implodes using dynamics, as glass shards collect to form a human figure. Dynamics are also used to create a cherry-red splash of liquid imploding into the figure. The camera follows the bullet in reverse as it moves away from the glass figure and returns back into the gun. In this shot, a gun, suspended in mid-air, is depicted by a camera on a circular motion track – thus digitally emulating *Bullet Time™* (the camera effect by which an object is photographed in rapid succession by a set of cameras placed in a 360-degree array around the object as first introduced by *The Matrix*). The bullet and the gun also reference this cinematic effect that was a revolutionary technical invention for its time – one that sought to achieve the depiction of reality in a completely new way.
Storyboard Slide 33

Script:

“The thrill of the movies is that they create an enhanced world that is more exciting than life as we experience it ourselves.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This shot is the first shot which directly references the cinema. A digital camera dollies over a set of chairs in an empty theatre towards a screen, revealing a spinning globe that expresses the word “world” in visual form. This earth is “enhanced” as it has no shadow from the sun and its colors are saturated. In addition, it spins on its axis at a rapid rate that would not occur in real-time. It also has a solar flare, a digitally enhanced artifact used excessively in sci-fi films such as the Star Trek series by J.J. Abrams. The camera dollies to the screen as it replaces the theatre scene and suddenly the audience is taken inside of the film being shown on screen (the earth suspended in space). This transition signifies the transition from one form of reality to another. The audience is taken from their physical surroundings in the theatre to inside the film and, thus, replaces their notions of the physical world with the reality they see on-screen. This enhanced world is how audiences seek to experience life, as an exciting escape that may be shaping what they expect in their own lives or setting up a preconceived notion of what they may expect to see in future films. The quality of the graphics or the technological inventions they see on-screen might be what they believe is possible in their own lives, or perhaps it sets a bar for what they expect to see in the future of cinema.
Storyboard Slide 34

Script:

“Reality cannot be expressed in black and white because reality is complex. Characters and situations must lie in the grey area to retain complexities.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

As the earth continues to rotate on its axis, the earth fades to grayscale. This change references the phrase, “characters and situations must lie in the grey area to retain complexities.” The narrator’s opinion here is that reality is experienced by characters in film narratives or in nonfiction stories in the sense that it is not a predictable formula with only one outcome. It is not like math with one prescribed answer or conclusion, but can pose infinite questions or conclusions. Analysis of films and stories can be approached from multiple angles. The reality that humans experience is a complex one – and thus black-and-white thinking does not capture the complexity of the human experience in life and in cinema. While a film might follow a linear narrative with the same outcome, there might be infinite ways to interpret characters and their motivations, and all the emotional complexities that the characters experience within the story. Likewise, the opinion expresses that there is always a grey area for any person or situation; it is impossible to fully understand the entire life including motivations, emotional state, and choices, of another individual.
Storyboard Slides 35-36

Script:

“Contemporary film and television want to be consumed as if they were reality; no more asides or breaking the fourth wall. In this sense, films trend toward closer approximation of reality, but as Baudrillard would say, this is only the hyperreal overwriting what is left of the real.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

In this passage, the narrator expresses the idea that contemporary film has moved away from trying to exist completely apart from reality, or that films seek to convince audiences that what they are seeing actually is reality. Thus films don’t have to rely on devices that break “the fourth wall” – or directly address the viewer because the viewer can accept that the film is expressing a realistic representation. Most films also do not have to use devices seen in live-performance theatre such as asides; they just use cuts from scene to scene to represent reality happening in a different place or time and the audience has accepted this as standard fare. To express this idea, this scene features a wrecking ball suspended sideways in midair – as might appear in the previous shot with Bullet Time. The scene then builds anticipation as the wrecking ball swings towards four walls – the fourth containing a lighting installation, or neon lights which form the word “REAL.” This event is captured three times, from different angles, in imminent anticipation of destruction of the fourth wall as expressed by the narrator. However, to depict the manipulation of real time that can occur with film once again, the wall never
breaks. It cuts to a different moment in time where the lighting installation appears with a straight-on camera angle in its most visually discernable and unbroken form.

Philosopher and social theorist, Jean Baudrillard believes in a world in which semiotics—or signs and signifiers are overwriting the physical ideas of objects and places and superseding them to form a reality which is greater than the physical reality, creating a hyperreality. For example, Disney World is not a real physical place and tourist attraction but is a magical realm evoking infinite youth and fairytale. Instead, Disney World is a place that exists apart of the physical space and within the mind of the American psyche as a source of nostalgia and childhood dreams. Thus, the lighting installation which forms the word “REAL” is a physical object; a sign made of photorealistic-looking glass and metal material that signifies the real but cannot actually be reality. Further, in this film it is created in digital form to emulate a physical object, yet stands for a completely conceptual term. This illustrates Baudrillard’s ideas that physical objects have been overridden completely by conceptual notions. The neon sign also glows but the electrical plug dangling from it is not connected to an outlet. This image further tugs at the suggestion that a digitally-created “physical” object could not behave this way in actual physical space. The sign is a signifier for the real.
Storyboard Slides 37-38

Script:

“Computer-generated effects are not real, but rather depictions of things that are actually real - at least in cases where what's being depicted actually exists--such as fire, rain, and fog.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:

This opinion is expressed with the same camera position as the last scene – focused on the lighting installation. As the narrator continues, explaining that computer effects are just depictions of what is actually real, digital effects act as interventions which come into the frame. Digital flames traverse into frame from the bottom, then digital rain appears from the top of the frame, eradicating the digital flames and turning ultimately to foggy steam to correspond with the narrator’s words “fire, rain, and fog.” It is important in this shot to maintain a digitally-generated quality to the effects. Using a composite of live-action footage here would defeat the purpose of expressing this individual’s opinion that computer-generated effects are just depictions of the real. Using computer-generated means of creating the effects further drives the point home.

Storyboard Slides 39-40

Script:

“In the end, capturing reality doesn’t matter per say, rather that movies trigger emotions and responses from the audience because they present universal themes. Escapism? Then
movies aren't real. For the audience to be able to understand someone else's struggle or difficulty? Then it's real.”

**Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:**

In this part of the narration, the scene cuts back to the previous location in the movie theatre. However, this time the theatre is not empty – there are glass humanoid figures in the audience. The screen no longer contains the earth, but a thought bubble containing an explanation point and then a question mark. These marks indicate the audience is triggering emotions and responding to the film that they are seeing and experiencing together; or universally experiencing. The marks are also somewhat universal (to those that use the Latin alphabet) and cloudlike trails of the thought bubble lead from the heads of the viewers to the screen, creating a bridge from the audience to the film and representing the escapism they are experiencing while watching the film. For the time that they are immersed in viewing the film, they are escaping from the physical world and entertaining a conceptual world within the film. However, the opinion expresses that escapism does not make a film “real” in the sense that it mocks life. In this narrated opinion, the film is only relatable to reality if a person can feel empathy for another person or character’s struggle or difficulty by watching a film. Thus, in the view of this narrator, a film that differs too far from depicting reality is an escape from reality and does not help the viewer to understand the human condition. Again, the camera dollies across the theatre to the screen and the scene then segues into an abstraction of line, color, and form. The abstract shapes represent a graph of the linear narrative format as the narrative traverses into the subject of story and storytelling. In this scene, the visuals
depicted seek to represent the meaning of the narrated opinion at first. The images then differ from the narrated opinion because it begins to depict what the opinion does not consider as “real” – an escape into abstracted forms that does not necessarily allow for understanding of the human condition.

**Storyboard Slides 39-40**

**Script:**

“It is the small twist to reality that keeps us interested-- it's the story. The small pieces of reality we believe in and attach to make the base of a story, added by a true storyteller make it worth watching.”

**Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:**

As this part of the narration is spoken, the shot again features a camera that zooms into the movie screen. The camera then follows an abstracted line as it appears twisted then straightens out, and then is shown from the side, rising up with a peak in the same manner that a linear narrative arc is comprised. The circles stand in checkpoints along the way. These abstracted lines are an indirect way of representing a story and a base of a story; as opposed to an overt physical sign or symbol like a book, which felt like a literal choice.
Storyboard Slides 41-44

Script:
“A film is a step outside of reality, no matter how close the plot, the set, or the action of the film is to something that actually occurred in life. We do not enjoy movies because we physically enter them and experience what the characters experience; we enjoy movies because they take us inside our own heads - our thoughts, our imaginations, our dreams, our own real experiences - and take us away from this world, if only for a brief period of time.”

Conceptual and visual realization of this script passage:
This visual transcription usually takes form in the creation of visual assets, whether they are two-dimensional in Photoshop or three-dimensional in Autodesk Maya, compositing the assets and either animating some element of the assets in post-production using After Effects, Maya, or a combination of both. Most shots within the first 2/3 of the film utilize an animated 2.5-Dimensional background that has been composited in post-production. Relief images of a texture created and sculpted with Mudbox and rendered with Maya are composited with various color schemes and a moving cellular animation overlaid. Some scenes utilize assets created with a traditional 3D pipeline in mind; modeling, animating, texturing, lighting, and rendering, and then composited in post. Then each After Effects “shot” sequence is matched up in Premiere, a video editing tool to correspond with the narration. The transitions were treated with high importance: the main subject in the foreground in many cases is matched up and the shots are cross-dissolved. This effect highlights the importance of the relationship of the objects from shot-to-shot and provides
the viewer with a visual path to follow. Some of the transitions utilize infinite zoom-ins and zoom-outs, simple movement of objects off of and on the frame, and fades-outs to black after the end of each section of the film.

To illustrate the importance of the combination of visual styles that is intrinsic to the ideas regarding hyperreality and the medium of digital design and digital animation, I formulated a visual style that is unique yet expands in complexity and builds upon itself for each of the three sections of the film. The first section illustrates 2D motion graphics and design fundamentals as characteristic of a more abstracted virtual space, with small artifacts of 3D animation composited within some of the shots. The second section features a combination of 2D, 3D, and live action elements to gradually build upon the first section. The third and final section of the animation will have built upon itself to become fully animated in 3D with some artifacts in certain scenes of 2D motion graphics, and some scenes that feature visual hyperrealistic qualities, or photorealism with animated objects that might defy the conventions and behaviors of the reality we experience apart from film. This meshing of visual styles and mediums can illustrate the elasticity of digital design and animation capabilities within a virtual space and forming an intermingling of realities while exploring the collective opinions of reality.

Design choices made throughout the film relate directly to research problems stated in the introduction, such as “how can I explore animation through the expression of hyperreality that has been projected into the plots and themes of films and how can I explore hyperreality and perceptions of reality through the expression of animation?” as
well as the research question “is there a way to comment on how the different forms of hyperreality and reality are perceived through utilizing different visual approaches?”

A specific design choice that directly relates to research problems/questions of exploring the expression of hyperreality projected into the plots and themes of films is using the very devices that are used to create visual hyperreality in current films. By using a variety of completely digital media such as 2D animation, digital film, and digital animation created in a virtual 3D space/computer program, and compositing these together, I can replicate on a much smaller scale, industry filmmaking techniques that large studios utilize to create hyperreal environments. Most of the live-action sequences of films contain composited elements and oftentimes the viewer might not even be aware of the amount of digital compositing that appears in just one shot of a full-length feature film.

To exemplify how the film portrays the separate visual forms of reality, when the film traverses through the subject of reality as experienced in day-to-day life, a first person viewpoint using live-action footage might visually explain how a person may experience reality. Or, a more 2-dimensional abstracted and digital rendering of imagery may seek to explain how a person experiences reality when using virtual devices such as computers, since this is the medium typically generated by computers.
Figure 29. Selected shots from final thesis film, *Diversa*
Production unique to the work

The film’s main framework or narrative has been formed from the gathering of survey answers from ordinary people about how they perceive reality. The survey also briefly asks how cinema might be changing reality. This approach illuminates the thoughts and reflections of ordinary people on reality in the present day. The survey answers have been categorized, organized, and reduced to a single narrative. The film is narrated using several voices, or a collective interior monologue using 19 of the responses from approximately 39 anonymous survey takers – using 15 voices that stand for many people. This collective voice produces an alternative manner in which to communicate, as if the viewer is “inside” the head of more than one person. The collective voice in itself creates an impossible version of reality – a reality that lives inside the mind of many people as a collection of thoughts from many experienced in rapid succession or almost
simultaneously. Collective thoughts communicated through one person or medium physically cannot happen, when understanding the world as we know it. The combined interior thoughts of many cannot be interpreted as one viewpoint through one person’s thoughts. In itself, the film experiments with impossible forms of reality in this manner. By combining the thoughts of many into a story, it seeks to further define reality, without the use of a dictionary but by pinpointing and organizing personal thoughts and opinions of many young people. This combination gives the film a unique quality – examples of similar works do not rely on the same idea of a collective interior monologue in relation to consensus reality using animation and motion graphics as the mode of exploration.

Comparison with prior works

Style tests were the first endeavor after the initial thesis concept had been developed. Experimentation with 2D painterly styles and mixing them with virtual styles were the first precursors of my thesis. My untitled motion painting is based off of an untitled painting that recreates the hyperreality of the Hollywood lifestyle. This ten-second style test created a zone of experimentation for further tests. My previous works have never been this ambitious, nor have they used such high resolution of graphics – this is the first time working with an HD resolution of 1920 x 1080. Prior works are much shorter and more visually simple 2D motion graphics, or combinations of motion graphics and animation. Reality, Defined, and What Does Reality Mean to You? Are short thesis explorations that took 5 weeks each to complete.
**Assistants/Collaborators**

The main assistance I have received on my thesis film is from the composer, Russell Nagy, and the theater department, specifically the undergraduate voice actors and their coordinator. Fifteen actors lent their voices to the film, with the coordination help of Megan Chamberlain, a graduate student and actress in the theater department, along with one fellow animator in the DAIM program, Tom Heban as the main narrator who introduces the film and the questions throughout. I used his voice on other short pieces and continued to do so here because he was accessible to record. The composer has provided preliminary stand-in tracks with a similar sound to samples I found and sent him halfway through the project and has collaborated through every step in the final process as timing has changed and become more finalized. He has been instrumental in the process. For each part of the film that I would complete, I sent him sample tracks from royalty-free and other music I found on the internet, and he built a score based off of the samples I found. He also aided me with the recording of the main narrator.

**Choices based on time and labor**

Certain sacrifices and design choices have been made due to time and labor. The preliminary use of 2D animation and motion graphics is a quicker process than the time-intensive 3D modeling, animating, texturing, lighting, and rendering process that occurs before compositing with a 3D animation pipeline. This use of 2D-assets has been mainly used in the first 1/3 of the film, as well as reused in small form throughout, especially in the creation of the backgrounds for many of the scenes in Part II. This saves a significant
amount of time and labor. In Part II, snippets of live-action film are also utilized and the
duration of the process generally is shorter than creating animated versions of the same
visuals. This is harnessed both to illustrate the different modes of reality and hyperreality
that can be formed, as well as to save time and labor.

The modeling and animation aspects of the 3D-graphics pipeline have also been
sacrificed in place of greater emphasis on the shaders, texturing, and composition. Mostly
simple models have been created and animated with only simple motion (for instance the
generic human/glass figure which reappears as a symbol for a human and for Morpheus).
On the contrary, detail has been ascribed to the shading/texturing and lighting of the
models, as well as the compositing for the project. The utilization of compositing objects
and assets with background mattes and animations is akin to the process in real-industry
production and allows for greater control of the visuals. Layers-upon layers of imagery
are composited for use with films that feature hyperreality. The compositing process
typically combines live-action components or characters and precisely matches them up
with computer-generated components or characters. In my film, the “coaction field” as
defined by Tiffin & Terashima, where real and unreal objects come mingle and interact is an
important and recurring theme (Tiffin & Terashima, 9). Digital space is the place where
several types of animation and live-action film combine and interact to create a cohesive
work.

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Synopses

Short Synopses

*Diversa* is a visual exploration of distinct modes of hyperreal imagery and motion graphics as a way of expressing that reality is experienced differently by every individual. Borrowing influences from philosophy and contemporary cinema to develop a unique amalgamated visual style, the film’s design process combines 2D motion graphic techniques with 3D animation to correspond with a narration constructed from opinions of everyday people.

Long Synopses

The purpose of making *Diversa* is to work with animation, movement and the creation of visual imagery and auditory dialog exploring the philosophical meaning of “reality.” I have chosen this medium because its inherent qualities make it the ideal means for which to comment on reality.

Moving images have served to capture reality and portray it in a variety of ways since the inception of the technology used to make it. Early movie cameras captured live-action footage and imprinted each frame onto celluloid film as an exact imprint of the camera’s subject. Soon after, mattes, rephotography, and other camera tricks were used to create more elaborate manipulations of film, and an altered depiction of reality viewed on
screen. After the advent of computers, computer graphics were experimented with as a means to be integrated in with film. As computer processing power has increased, so has the ability for graphics generated by computers to create visual photorealism. The increasing ability to create photorealism has led many filmmakers to create films and animations that combine the real with the imaginary – spawning what is called “hyperreality.” Using digital tools and knowledge of film and graphics allows a filmmaker to manipulate reality and the resulting moving image can alter the way reality is experienced by an audience.

_Diversa_ is based upon the notion that reality is experienced differently by every individual and cannot fit into one consensus view. The film’s script is derived from a variety of responses from online participants to questions of how people define and experience reality, and how cinema might be changing reality and influencing perceptions of reality. The film narration is constructed as a collective interior monologue using 19 of the responses from approximately 39 anonymous survey takers – using 15 voices that stand for many people. This collective voice produces an alternative mode of communication, as if the viewer is “inside” the head of more than one person. This in itself creates an impossible version of reality – a reality that lives inside the mind of many people as a collection of thoughts from many experienced simultaneously.

Deriving images from the philosophical narrative was a design challenge in creating the film. Development of style tests, research exploration into the philosophical
underpinnings of reality and hyperreality, and exploration of films that investigate these topics and exhibit visual hyperreality were fundamental to the process of formulating survey questions and collecting data, and the process of ideation during the storyboarding.

In creating *Diversa* I utilize visual hyperrealism as well as non-photoreal 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional imagery to reflect an understanding of reality and hyperreality as it pertains to computer graphics and current cinema. In order to clearly capture the modes in which reality is experienced and perceived, varying forms of visuals present the varying forms of reality.

To illustrate the importance of the combination of visual styles that is intrinsic to the ideas regarding hyperreality and the medium of digital design and digital animation, I formulated a visual style that is unique yet expands in complexity and builds upon itself for each of the three sections of the film. The first section illustrates 2D motion graphics and design fundamentals as characteristic of a more abstracted virtual space, with small artifacts of 3D animation composited within some of the shots. The second section features a combination of 2D, 3D, and live action elements to gradually build upon the first section. The 3rd and final section of the animation will have built upon itself to become fully animated in 3D with some artifacts in certain scenes of 2D motion graphics, and some scenes that feature visual hyperrealistic qualities, or photorealism with animated objects that might defy the conventions and behaviors of the reality we
experience apart from film. This meshing of visual styles and mediums can illustrate the 
elasticity of digital design and animation capabilities within a virtual space and forming 
an intermingling of realities while exploring the collective opinions of reality.
Reflection on the Creative Research and Project Result

Throughout this paper, I have expanded on the research question, “How can I explore animation through the expression of hyperreality that has been projected into the themes of films?” I have approached the exploration of animation through the lens of a graphic or visual communication designer. Visual style, composition, transitional elements, and the clear communication of meaning (semiotics) were increasingly important in the exploration and are also related to visual communication design. The increased emphasis on compositing of visual layers, both 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional also played a large role in this exploration of animation, in order to communicate the aforementioned instrumental devices of design as well as attempt to approach photorealism. Compositing was a process that was enjoyable, and I would like to continue to build my compositing expertise in the future. Compositing in this film has inspired me to think more in-depth about scene transitions, because the digital space where the real and the imaginary interact establishes visual planes, or worlds of an accepted place and time. After compositing each scene, I realized each of the scenes establishes its own composition and visual world. The goal of creating interesting transitions where objects line up and travel between scenes is to bring the viewer on a journey between these visual planes or worlds, allowing the viewer to see the separate realities that exist on different opinion trajectories. A successful transition occurs near the end of Part I, where sunglasses hover in the center.
of the composition, depicting the words “prefer” and “believe.” Glass shatters across the foreground, and the camera changes the perspective of the shot from facing the corner of a wall (this corner symbolizing how “perspectives can become narrow”) to a flatter, more 2D surface and travels across it in the next scene, while conjuring up symbolic imagery that induce distractions. In areas where these transitions fail to match up smoothly and coherently from scene-to-scene, I utilized cross-dissolves. I overused this technique where I could not think of a better transition. I believe that more successful methods of planning transitions and matching up every scene would allow Diversa to more coherently guide the viewer from visual plane to visual plane, and more effectively guide the viewer through the discussion of differing opinions of reality.

The increased visual acuity or clarity of images and image quality was important in the process of communicating the thoughts and opinions of the survey-takers in narrative format, and I believe this was in part, made possible due to the increased emphasis on compositing. I did not establish one visual style and work from a linear narrative format with a team of hundreds of people which is common to traditional full-feature animated films. Instead, I devised a non-linear narrative and worked as an independent experimental filmmaker, conducting all disciplines of production and post-production along the pipeline. I also did not use just one visual style, and instead used mixed media to communicate my ideas. I felt that this was important in citing different visual tropes found in contemporary cinema, and it was also important in representing the different forms which reality can be expressed, as reality can be expressed 2-dimensionally, 3-
dimensionally, with signs and symbols, or with photorealistic animation. I believe that
there is a cohesive visual thread throughout the film as a unit, but styles of each scene
differ individually due to the fact that I experimented with different forms of digital
media (motion graphics, animation, live-action).

Other ways of exploring animation I may want to experiment with in the future include
using a musical song for the framework of the animation (creating an animated music
video). In this scenario, emphasis might be placed on other qualities not as closely tied to
visual communication design, such as framing the subject or musician and careful
attention to timing. Communicating meaning may not be as important in this sense, as
music videos serve mainly for entertainment purposes. The synchronization with musical
sound using just one visual style or playful theme may be more critical in the creation of
a music video. In the future I may also want to explore animation through the
establishment of a narrative story or structure. This mode of storytelling may or may not
require a voiceover, but a script or screenplay may dictate the structure for the film. This
structure would not be derived from the essay answers from several people as in Diversa,
but would be devised through my own writing or created as collaboration with a writer
(and may or may not include any spoken dialog). This form of filmmaking may also
necessitate the institution of one visual style, so as to keep the viewer interested or
convinced in the laws of the story universe that is established.
I also expanded on the research question, “How can I explore hyperreality and perceptions of reality through the expression of animation?” The thesis film, at its core, is an exploration of animation which communicates concepts of reality through the voices of everyday people. Contemporary film, film history, philosophy, sociology, and the medium of computer generated imagery itself have influenced the creation of the work and the transcription of the visuals from script, to storyboard, to a final thesis work. Working from a script as a way of generating visual ideas was the primary mode for which I conducted my expression of animation. Using the script as a framework for the film provided structure in the design process and helped to organize the film so it was not stream-of-consciousness. This manner of using a voiceover as framework to generate visual ideas is a manner that is common to the field of motion graphics, and further exploration of motion graphics in my career is likely. As a graphic designer, I found this process of approaching animation to be rather intrinsic. Citing references from philosophy and films of the past and present both visually and in the narration of the film were also modes for conveying the exploration of hyperreality and perceptions of reality through animation. Carefully choosing visual symbols or compositions that cite key events vital to the concepts of reality and hyperreality was also a mode for which I approached the making of *Diversa*. Further examination of animation following the themes of philosophy, film history, and the medium of film itself might be investigations for future endeavors.
In this paper I have also expanded on the research question, “Is there a way to comment on how the different forms of hyperreality and reality are perceived through utilizing different visual approaches?” I have implemented several visual styles of representation in my piece to further illustrate the concept of hyperreality, or the combination of the real and the imagined. The film is broken into 3 Parts, and each part represents a different form of animation - Part one utilizes mostly motion graphics, Part two utilizes 2D animation, live action footage, and some 3D animation, and Part three utilizes animation that approaches photorealism mixed with some motion graphics. Background research was conducted, exploring the processes by which film is created in Hollywood and how film illustrates hyperreality, both in visuals and in theme through film technology. It was increasingly important to emphasize the distinct modes for which reality can be portrayed through film using mixed media. Diversa features 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional imagery and live action film, and transitions between the scenes oftentimes reflect the traversing through the different coactions fields or planes of reality. Through the conducting of my research, I have encountered few examples of methods of creating hyperreality. The topic of hyperreality in film and the expression of reality are very open-ended discussions that can be approached from many angles. The viewpoint from which I approached this topic is myopic. There are countless films which blend the real and the imaginary, and I have chosen only a few examples from films and film technology as influences. I believe only the tip of the iceberg of the topic I have chosen for this work has been breached. I could also approach and explore these concepts from a more scholarly perspective and delve into the philosophical research and works of the likes of
Baudrillard and Umberto Eco and filmmakers such as Godard. I could also explore the subject of reality in a more abstract way, as a more straightforward linear story based off of these concepts, or even an interactive way, and instead of making a film I could create a video game.

Diversa also ascertains the question, “How can a designer/filmmaker construe different individual’s interpretations and perceptions of reality?” Through this question I have explored concepts of hyperreality and reality as they pertain to film, as well as the technical concepts (which include motion graphics, visual effects and compositing) necessary for making various forms of imagery that represent varying forms of reality. Increased emphasis on new technical approaches made this film possible. The outcome is a short film which derives images from the philosophical narrative and interprets them through the lens of the designer. Thus the film has a main character, the director/designer. Just as the main character in Gondry’s work, Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy? is the director, Diversa’s director is the main character. The director acts as the main character due to the fact that the director has the ultimate power to shape the visuals and choose narration of the subject matter. In Diversa, the voiced narrations guide the animation but the director/filmmaker has created all the visuals for the film and I have edited and ordered the narrations to fit the form of a cohesive unit. I believe my imprint on the film is greater than that of the input of the essay answers which are voiced in the narrations. The film is tailored, edited, produced, and visually designed by myself, the director. In
this way, I am considered the main character because I guide the ideas of reality with my own manipulations.

The film is successful in its attempt to explain reality by depicting various opinions or perceptions of reality through different visual styles. The film explores various visual styles and parts of the film appear as motion graphics, live-action, fully animated, and a mixture of all or some of these media. This was the intent and all of these forms of media appear throughout the film. I believe that Part I maintains a greater stylistic continuity because textures and imagery were more consistently repeated throughout this section. From there, the film builds upon itself, consistently mixing and integrating more and more 3-dimensional assets. Mixing these forms of media was the intent of the film. The film is successful in its exploration into the concepts of reality and hyperreality and maintains visual and narrative references to examples in current cinema. Examples from films by The Wachowskis, Quentin Tarantino, and Stanley Kubrick are visually referenced throughout the film in Part II and Part III. These sections begin to traverse the subject of film and film technology more apparently due to the nature of the questions. In addition to exploration of the subject of reality and hyperreality by using different media, symbolic and literal imagery and objects help to create a hyperreality within digital space. No scene or part of the film completely adheres to the laws of everyday life. Perceived representation of physical space is warped or enhanced with added interventions to create hyperrealities. There is no one sequence of live action or animation that is fully representational of real life occurrences. Objects float within compositions, rain from the
sky, and special effects occur in unexpected places and combined in unexpected or uncanny ways. Symbols signify abstract concepts, such as signs or words created with neon glass shapes. Humanoid figures made of glass symbolically represent an ephemeral human presence or existence, and at one point reference Roman mythology (Janus), as the ancient Romans and Greeks were some of the first purveyors of philosophy that heavily influenced Western thought. Scenes were planned to include some element of reality, whether it be the surroundings or the representation of the objects, with some fantastical intervention either in physical movement or visual quality of the object. For instance, in Part III, a true-to-life movie theatre serve as the backdrop for multiple scenes, but the audience is comprised of glass figures and the imagery that appears on the screen is either abstract or fantastical. The film’s soundtrack is also successful but increased help from an audio professional with voice actor recording would have improved the voiceover. I did not work with a professional voice coach for most of the narrators because I did not anticipate the amount of noise and other feedback that using the available handheld microphones would create. The main narrator was recorded with a handheld voice recorder twice unsuccessfully before the composer for the project aided with the voice recording using professional software. I was not aware that the composer also coached professional audio recording until after I had recorded the majority of the narrators. The composer improved the sound quality, volume, and reduced noise in the recording. He also coached the narrator, allowing the narrator to add emphasis in his speech where necessary. Using a professional for the voice recording within a noise-proofed studio space for all of the voice actors throughout the film would have eradicated
the microphone feedback and further added emphasis to the actor’s narration. It would have reduced time as well, considering I had to work with the sound to edit out and remove the unwanted noise and microphone feedback. The composition/soundtrack work for the film is very successful and the composer was punctual and easy to work with. Peer reception has generally been positive and I hope to enter the film in various film festivals.

Due to the constraint of being an independent work, the film approaches photorealism in some form in the final section of the film but does not achieve it completely. In the sections with animation intended to be photoreal, the film seems to only approach photorealistic imagery. I believe that the achievement of photorealism by means of animation necessitates a much longer amount of time than one year for one artist, or a larger production with more artists. Big-budget blockbuster films achieve photorealism through similar methods as *Diversa*, but *Diversa* would require more labor to achieve a much more detailed photorealistic hyperreality in the shots which attempted this form of visuals. To achieve this goal, I believe enlisting even the help of one or more other animators could improve the visuals greatly. In the future I hope to work on more collaborative endeavors in addition to my own smaller pieces. Qualities which achieve photorealism include quality of light, quality of texture, quality of modeling, quality of movement, and extreme detail – as convincing as a photograph or video footage. I believe you can achieve hyperreality conceptually without achieving photorealism, because hyperreality is a combination of the real and imaginary. However, initially I believed that...
utilizing photorealism was a necessity in demonstrating the concepts of hyperreality. In my exploration, I have realized that hyperreality can be explored without necessitating photorealistic visuals. Animation rendered in a more non-representational fashion (such as 2D cartoons) could arguably be considered hyperreal as long as the subject is semi-representational of true-to-life elements. Visual effects often mix live-action and computer-generated processes to deliver a convincingly photoreal image. Hyperreality can be achieved with visual effects (both digital and non-digital) by warping time or space or using other impossible interventions. Diversa mixes these film production elements, but does not deliver a photorealistic result. It was not intended to do so for the majority of the film. In the last 1/3 of the film, it was intended to in some capacity deliver photorealistic hyperreality. However, it only approaches this concept of photorealism (for instance in the first scene of Part III). To create convincing photorealism, I believe it would take a larger amount of people given the one-year completion of the project. I might also add that if an artist had no other responsibilities, a more photorealistic vision may have been achievable in the time frame. I had completed the project in the course of a year, but also had been working part-time as well as writing a paper on the project. Perhaps also it would necessitate greater integration of live action material and attention to the aforementioned qualities of light, texture, modeling, movement and detail which is more achievable with more artists on a production. As an artist new to the medium of animation, my expertise is not yet advanced. I had little experience in the making of photorealistic imagery. Most of the knowledge I have of creating such imagery came in the form of actually attempting this form of animation, and was learned during the
process of making this film. In the end I have deduced that creating photorealistic imagery should not be the goal of a film, especially because live-action filmmaking is best suited for that method and is easier to achieve. Delivering a message should be the most important part of filmmaking, whether photorealistic or not. Diversa delivers messages and ideas of hyperreality, but is not photorealistic or an illustration of hyperreality. It was not intended to fully be photorealistic either, but in some final scenes it was intended to feature photorealism. In the end, it does not feature photorealism, but I have concluded that it doesn’t need to feature this style of visual in order to be successful in demonstrating ideas about hyperreality and reality. Films can be animated with stylized characters and still present complex concepts and convey a message in a provocative and captivating manner. *Diversa* happens to deliver its messages in a more illustrative visual fashion, from the perspective of a graphic designer. *Waking Life* and *A Scanner Darkly* are examples which explore similar themes of reality in a non-photorealistic way and are successful in captivating interest and expressing messages. *Diversa* only scratches at the surface in regards to ideas about reality. It does not propose an entirely new concept or claim some new provocative truth about reality or hyperreality in film. It is an exploration, early in my career, of animation with the subject of reality and hyperreality as influences. I believe that there are a myriad of other ways that one may approach the subject of reality or hyperreality, such as through scholarly influence, through a linear storyline, live-action documentary or other film, through interactive works, installation, or through other means of animation. This is just one outlet for exploration of animation. I believe the concept of consensus reality, and the differing
perspectives of how young people perceive reality was one of the most interesting approaches to take in creating a film about reality. During the process of conducting the survey, I noticed that it was a subject that many people found meaningful and pertinent to their own lives. I believed that a film that recorded and transcribed the thoughts and experiences on reality and film technology and how it has affected the lives of young people was one of the most compelling directions for which to take the process of filmmaking.

This work has allowed me as a designer and filmmaker to gain more confidence in my process and in approaching strategies for technical achievement in visuals. Throughout my process, I planned for visuals, strategized, and learned how to create the visuals later through practice. I also achieved a sense of which processes along the animation pipeline became more important and interesting to me. Approaching filmmaking with a background in graphic design allowed me to place greater emphasis on the quality of the visuals. I emphasized the composition of the shots, motion graphics and 2D layers, textures, lighting, illustration, layers of compositing, and some visual effects/Maya dynamics, and transitional elements. It has allowed me to plan animations in regards to layers. Before creating a shot, I have to decide which assets will be created in 3D and which will be created in 2D and how the compositions will come together. This planning, or thinking in layers became very important with the pipeline that I have chosen to use in this film. I believe that using a pipeline that relies on compositing allows for greater experimentation of depth and illusion of space, as well as increases the detail
of images rendered out of 3D programs with render layers. Compositing also allows for
greater control of timing in addition to the image. Time can be reversed, stretched longer
or shorter, as well as frozen. Motion graphic artists rely heavily on compositing, and it
makes sense that I would approach filmmaking from a graphic design perspective with
greater emphasis on this technique. Likewise, I gave less time to previs, modeling,
complex animation of movement, rigging, character animation, and other practices within
the field of animation. The project also introduced increased interest in utilizing a mixed-
media approach to filmmaking. I enjoy experimenting with a variety of visual styles and
mediums as opposed to one cohesive, repetitive method of creating visual style. This
experience might lead me to finding occupational roles in motion design, which typically
allows the filmmaker or designer to work on smaller projects with a wider array of visual
styles and methods, as opposed to a role in a large film studio with only one specialized
task. Since this film also did not use a typical narrative plot arc structure in its storyline,
experimenting with short pieces that delve into concepts of reality and hyperreality with a
linear storyline may also be attempted in the future. I hope that by creating this work, it
may inspire others to open a dialog about reality and the implications of film technology
in our lives. It may inspire me also to continue along this provocative theme relative to
contemporary film.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Survey Questions and Description
In this project, I have collected survey data from viewers based on these questions:

4. Please choose your age group
   * Under 18
   * 18-23
   * 24-29
   * 30-35
   * 36-41
   * 42+

5. What best describes your occupation or field of study? (open ended)

6. How often do you watch movies?
   * Extremely often - Every day
   * Very often - Multiple times a week
   * Often - Weekly
   * Slightly often - Monthly
   * Not at all often - Less than monthly

7. How are some ways in which people perceive reality in the present day (This can be influenced by technology and circumstance, for example)?
   *(open ended)*

8. What does reality mean to you? Define the word “reality” – what it means to you in simple terms.
   *(open ended)*
9. Describe the reality you see or do not see in current films. Do you see any trends towards realism or are films moving away from it? Explain. (You can use your own definition of “reality” here or a new one).

*(open ended)*

The first three demographic questions are included in order to gather a sense of the audience surveyed, while the other three are open-ended questions about reality. The first 25 survey answers are compiled as a Wordle chart below.

Figure 30. Reality wordle chart from survey answers

The size of the words is symbolic of the representation or repetition of the words within the answers. The first 25 answers were compiled into a script which is used to create a dialog for a precursory animation. This animated film only used the answers to question #5, “What does reality mean to you? Define the word “reality”—what it means to you in
simple terms (open ended) and is represented as a $2^{\frac{1}{2}}$ minute animation called *What Does Reality Mean to You?* to introduce the lengthier thesis film. The thesis film features various excerpts from all three essay answers, compiled into a script that was designed to be around 900 words in order to keep the film at an appropriate length for completion.
Appendix B: Raw Thesis Survey Data
Please choose your age group:

Figure 31. Age group survey data
What best describes your occupation or field of study?

design
9/8/2013 9:23 PM

arts education
9/4/2013 11:58 AM

Student, Pre-Design Major
9/3/2013 10:42 PM

Full time student/Visual Communication Major
9/3/2013 9:02 PM

Design Research
9/3/2013 7:52 PM

Interior Design
9/3/2013 6:55 PM

Visual Communications Design
9/3/2013 6:02 PM

Interior Design
9/3/2013 5:41 PM

design research
9/3/2013 4:09 PM

Sales
5/31/2013 3:19 PM

Writer
5/28/2013 2:30 PM

Social Media Consultant
5/16/2013 2:39 PM

Rhetoric/Media/Marketing
4/6/2013 4:36 PM

Education
4/6/2013 9:01 AM

Business Finance/Accounting --(I graduated, so I'm not a student, but I'm still job searching)-- Unemployed
4/6/2013 5:22 AM

English Major, Web Designer, Production Assistant
3/1/2013 2:03 PM

English teacher
2/26/2013 7:25 AM

Student
2/25/2013 1:56 PM

Animation
2/25/2013 1:09 PM

web design and development, digital media design
2/25/2013 12:42 PM

Attorney
2/25/2013 11:53 AM

public accountant
2/23/2013 8:28 PM

design
2/22/2013 4:57 PM

computer graphics and interaction
2/22/2013 10:36 AM

counselor
2/22/2013 1:39 AM

job hunting is my job
2/21/2013 11:35 PM
teacher
2/21/2013 11:04 PM

Sales
2/21/2013 9:15 PM

IT
2/21/2013 9:11 PM

Human Resources
2/21/2013 8:53 PM

Design Instructor
2/21/2013 7:28 PM

Graphic design
2/21/2013 5:49 PM

marketing
2/21/2013 5:10 PM

Internet Troll
2/21/2013 4:19 PM

Occupation: Admission Officer for a non-profit educational institution. Field of study: Anthropology. A bit of a disconnect.
2/21/2013 3:44 PM

Student in Mechanical engineering
2/21/2013 3:37 PM

Finance
2/21/2013 3:28 PM

Accounting
2/21/2013 3:24 PM

Student- Art and Technology
2/21/2013 3:20 PM
How often do you watch movies?

Figure 32. Frequency of movie consumption survey data
How are some ways in which people perceive reality in the present day (This can be influenced by technology and circumstance, for example)?

I think people have an idea in their mind what they think reality is.
9/8/2013 9:23 PM

This is a constant state of being-- perception of reality- influences by mind and body experience and furthered by many layers of influences...
9/4/2013 11:58 AM

People perceive reality as the experiences endured and the interactions with people they have from the time they wake up to the time they go to sleep.
9/3/2013 10:42 PM

N/A
9/3/2013 9:02 PM

People perceive reality very differently. It may include virtual/computer generated reality, desired reality, nostalgia/or realities from the past, remembering dreams as reality, pessimistic or optimistic, things can be sensed, energies, etc.
9/3/2013 7:52 PM

I believe people perceive reality as a form of torture. They decide that it is more comfortable to be at home, away from the actual troubles of everyday life. They choose to be free in any place where they can find serenity, and can be away from their duties, and every day jobs.
9/3/2013 6:55 PM

Not sure if you are asking how people perceive reality or how people perceive reality to be. We perceive reality through our senses. What we perceive reality to be is a much more difficult question. Some people would say our conscious, physical existence (so dreams are not reality). Some would say our physical existence is merely a "virtual
"reality" in which our souls can experience individuality and life in order to grow and better themselves in the existence beyond this world (dreams are reality). I also think social media and the internet play a confusing role here. Clearly these things exist or else we would not be able to use them. But to me, its not reality. The things we "perceive" to be happening when we use a computer are not the things that really happen ("liking" something on facebook isn't as easy as point and click - its really a bunch of electricity and numbers and crazy things that I don't understand that are happening). Something I struggle with social media over is that people treat their profiles as an extension of themselves. You can filter your thoughts and emotions and make people think differently about you than they may if you had a conversation in person. Or people will say "like my photo" as if they need some superficial acknowledgement from you, that your actual words don't mean anything. Facebook is real to them, but to me its not. So if so many people are of this mindset, and I am opposite, whose definition of reality is true? We will always have the physical world (for the foreseeable future) we were born into, but if we lose electricity worldwide, we will have no more internet and thus facebook. So i feel that the internet cannot be a part of true reality.

9/3/2013 6:02 PM

by computers and phones and may other technological ways.

9/3/2013 5:41 PM

Living our lives each day in reality. To me, watching movies or doing things in virtual reality is not really reality. As a side note, reality TV is not reality to me. It is contrived, determined by others before it happens. This is not realistic in the ways that we would typically live our lives.

9/3/2013 4:09 PM

Reality can be perceived through all of our human senses.

5/31/2013 3:19 PM

We experience reality directly through our senses: taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. (However, this does not necessarily mean that if we can "sense" something, it's real.) We perceive reality, or some notion of reality, both directly and indirectly through not only our senses, but through technology, books, art, film, and more. In the latter case, we are still using our senses to perceive either reality or a notion of reality, but there is an added "layer" of interpretation before that which is real (or presented as real) reaches our perception.

5/28/2013 2:30 PM

Media...unfortunately. I try to tune and and see what is in my immediate surroundings.

5/16/2013 2:39 PM

The five senses! Presently, those senses are often connected to various media sources - for better or worse. We live in a time where almost the sum total of human knowledge is
available at or fingertips, but in the same environment exist the most fearsome distractions, tempered through a sort of Darwinian survival of the fittest apps. This probably also defines the most prominent characteristic of the generation gap. For our generation, information is so available - and contradicting viewpoints in particular - that we approach new ideas warily, and with a varying degree of skepticism. Whereas my parents and their parents still believe what they see on Fox News, or hear from their friends, or read in a chain email.

the reality shows put a different spin on what people think reality is

Well, one time I know I felt reality couldn't be true that many people can probably relate to is in middle school when my teacher turned on the news and the World Trade Centers were collapsing (I've never seen them, and I've never been to the area before/since, all contributing to the fake feeling). The only time I can really say that a family member's death felt real immediately was when we took our first dog to the vet and they put him down (watching him die in our laps, it was very clear what was happening). Age is another factor; my Grampa died when my cousin was 3 and during the wake she kept looking at him in the casket and asking me, "Is Grampa sleeping?" and I would respond, "No, Grampa's dead." and she would walk around saying, "Grampa's dead." to a couple older relatives before returning to my side and asking me the same question (our Grammy is one of the relatives she said that to, and I don't know how she held back the tears long enough to respond, "Yes, Grampa's dead." and walk away). Huh, this is turning out pretty morbid. Out of all my cousins that have gotten married, I only instinctively think of 7 of them as married (I was at those 7 weddings, the only dance experience I have, starting in middle school), I need to remind myself that the others happened, just too far away to think of attending. I have always been an avid reader (Mom was always reading to us from the moment we were born, and being the oldest, I benefited the most) with an active imagination -- when I was a kid I always imagined another version of the books I was reading with me there keeping the disasters from happening -- the only thing that would ever make a book feel fake is when I'd find a misspelling or mismatched statements (ex: "my first day of finals is a half day; I have Calculus & History" on pg 111, then "it felt good to have my last finals, Calculus & History, done" on pg 117). As a kid, I always loved to feel like a movie really was real, and I hated any comments others would make about the actors or lousy special effects -- now I'm ok with actor talk, how I feel about special effects complaints depends on how much I like the movie, but I still tend to prefer viewing movies as real, just using actors and special effects to tell it like a history/biography of the truth (your video description of hyperreality fits this best).

On the one hand, technology has increased the surface area of our influences. On the other hand, there is so much information we are exposed to, that a given individual is forced to choose which realities to expose him or herself to. And assuming that many
take the paths of least resistance, our perspectives can become narrow through cherry picking what we prefer and what we already believe. Is that self-reassurance theory? Something like that. I don't know I forget.

Influenced by what they see on television.

People perceive reality through personal experiences and also documentation of those experiences - such as photos, video, sound, etc.

When I am in a environment in which there's nothing familiar to me, I feel like I am not living in the real world, and vise versa. Stress is real to me. When I am pressured, I feel like I am in the real world and other people are too high even though my cognition knows they are more normal than I am.

I'm not exactly sure what this question is asking but here is an answer to what I think it is asking... People perceive reality via their 5 senses as well as their education and upbringing but they also are more and more perceiving reality via technological aids such as television and the internet.

These days, many young adults perceive reality through technology. Through twitter, facebook and other social media, many adults live in a virtual reality. Reality is no longer the things we see that actually exist in front of us every day but it now includes what our friends, family and random strangers are doing thousands of miles away.

What they physically feel plus how things are processed within (different people perceive facts/reality differently) - culture background, context, etc. affects how we interpret reality and what is happening. Oftentimes the more information someone has of a situation or an object, the more "accurate" that person would be able to perceive reality.

Interaction with your surroundings and individuals, objects, etc.

Many people perceive reality these days through consumer or amateur video. It's quite common to watch current events (such as the recent meteor in Russia) on YouTube. More and more news content is coming from folks with video cameras who happen to be in the right place at the right time. Perhaps more interestingly, there are people who like to take
advantage of this by creating fake elements in videos and getting away with it because of the poor quality of the video.

2/22/2013 10:36 AM

reality can be perceived through computer communication, what they see with their own eyes, and what they hear by communication.

2/22/2013 1:39 AM

Just by living their lives. By reading the screen in front of me, having a conversation, eating cake, etc. Reality could be falsified by technology.

2/21/2013 11:35 PM

people are influenced by what they see on tv or internet and/or by what is popular by their peers at the time.

2/21/2013 11:04 PM

By keeping up on current events and socializing

2/21/2013 9:15 PM

In a much more fragmented way, attention-wise. That is, rather than training their attention on something for an extended period of time (like when reading a book), people tend to have much more scattered attention and are more likely to be bouncing from distraction to distraction.

2/21/2013 9:11 PM

News, world events, T.V

2/21/2013 8:53 PM

Not sure...perhaps warped by media. Reality

2/21/2013 7:28 PM

Reality television, news, books, magazines, newspaper, the Internet, interacting with real people

2/21/2013 5:49 PM

social media (facebook, twitter, linkedin, etc), media (magazines, television, newspapers, etc.)

2/21/2013 5:10 PM

We live in a transitional period in which people making augmented reality the majority leaving perceived reality, the minority. (Unless you're poor. *laughs at poor people*)

2/21/2013 4:19 PM
Technology is a huge factor in most people's reality. Right now my boyfriend and roommate is gone for 6.5 weeks. I interact more with him and other people through the phone and computer than I do face to face, and this has become in some ways my new reality. I don't sit down and have dinner with him at the end of the day, I write him an e-mail. The harsher reality of these circumstances is that technology can't always reach him (he's in the remote backcountry of Patagonia) so I've been more focused on documentaries I watch on Netflix than other human beings. This means when I actually hang out with my friends and say, go out to dinner, the thing I have to talk about is what's happened in MY reality-- meaning the information I've gathered about a new health movement or a movie I watched. This leaves a disconnect between us because we didn't share that reality.

2/21/2013 3:44 PM

The environment they live/grow up in and the media they allow themselves to be be influenced by. That media mostly being excluded to tv

2/21/2013 3:37 PM

I have no clue what this question is asking

2/21/2013 3:28 PM

What we watch on movies and TV is what happens in our daily life. It could be death, drama, action or comedy.

2/21/2013 3:24 PM

Reality can be perceived through reality television that supposedly imitates an accurate depiction of real life.

2/21/2013 3:20 PM
What does reality mean to you? 
Define the word "reality" - what it means to you in simple terms.

What is currently happening around me in my day to day life
9/8/2013 9:23 PM

Reality is simply what is rather than what we think is- perhaps this is beyond what most of us experience,
9/4/2013 11:58 AM

Reality is the daily events that occur and the relationships had with people during a day that make sense and fit within the accepted way of the world.
9/3/2013 10:42 PM

Reality is what is perceived to go on around you in the world. Reality consists of actual time - whether it's past, present, or future. Some people are not a part of reality when, for example, they think everyone loves them when really they are hated by those around them. People live in their own reality. What is "real" and what is not depends on your perspective.
9/3/2013 9:02 PM

Moments in my life before my emotions or thoughts change my perception of those moments.
9/3/2013 7:52 PM

Reality to me is a separate life where we have certain limitations to being creative. There are a lot of restrictions by which we must live that in the end it makes every day mundane and boring.
9/3/2013 6:55 PM

To me, reality is existence. We cannot truly know anything other than what our senses can show us, but that does not mean that this universe is all there is. It is my personal opinion that there are realms, beings, and other forces beyond our perception. To many people, just because they cannot see them means they don't exist, and would not fit into
their definition of reality. I feel that our physical existence is one facet of a larger existence/reality that our souls are cut off from during our time here. I think the consumer lifestyle many people live today has them so focused on this world that they don't truly think about why we exist. While I most certainly do not refute it, I think that there is no chance that the universe came into being on a whim - that the earth was perfectly placed in the solar system and so many things happened "by chance" for us to come into existence. This does not mean I believe in a traditional god or anything, all I am saying is there has to be something beyond this world, beyond this universe. So to wrap up this most likely overly prolonged and off topic answer, reality is whatever we make it to be. I think that our physical existence is what most people believe in solely, but it is also our dreams (literal and figurative), its is history, it is the future, it is existence.

9/3/2013 6:02 PM

reality means that something is not a joke it is real.
9/3/2013 5:41 PM

Reality to me can be what is happening in the moment. It can be thinking about things that happened in the past. It can also be thinking about or making plans for the future. We make realistic predictions of what we want to do or what others might do based on our past experiences in reality. This sums up reality for me.
9/3/2013 4:09 PM

Reality is our mind's perception of the world around us.
5/31/2013 3:19 PM

That which is real--not APPARENTLY real, but ACTUALLY real.
5/28/2013 2:30 PM

Not a simple question. I believe everything is real. Except ghosts.
5/16/2013 2:39 PM

Our experience in and relative to the Cosmos. Truth, and its pursuit. As Morpheus said, "What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain." However, are we not simply bioelectric systems? In the most skeptical scenario, 'we' are at least confined to these bioelectric systems for the time being, and ipso facto, our 'reality' is defined through this lens. That being said, is not the spectrum of human awareness staggering? Even without relying on the array of consciousness expanding substances available to us through nature, our endogenous systems are capable of producing extraordinarily profound experiences; perhaps this, the appreciation of the Cosmos, is the purpose of our being. Of course, all of the above has been worked over endlessly in the human cultural phenomenon, Philosophy.
4/6/2013 4:36 PM
reality means how real life is it is not fictional
4/6/2013 9:01 AM

Hmm, I suppose I'd start with something like, "it needs to exist, to be true, actual, etc" and being a perfectionist, math lover, and logics person I'd say "anything measureable/quantifiable/testable is a part of reality," but as a lover of cartoons, The Twilight Saga (& team Edward!), The Inheritance Cycle (Eragon, Eldest, Brisingr, Inheritance), and the Harry Potter series, who can't completely deny the existence of Santa nor God, I also need to include "things people strongly believe or feel" (since they are based at least somewhat on real things and are quite real to them), although this makes my definition a little like adding some of your video's hyperreality definition to its reality definition...
4/6/2013 5:22 AM

Reality is the holes through which I experience the world (eye sockets, ear holes, nostrils, etc). I'd say it's nerve endings, but I think holes are more identifiable.
3/1/2013 2:03 PM

How we live and what we go through on a daily basis.
2/26/2013 7:25 AM

Reality to me means something is actual, concrete, and believed by one or more people
2/25/2013 1:56 PM

Reality means things that hurt people. Knife can make people feel pain. Anger scares people. Happiness is a real thing but it does not make me feel real.
2/25/2013 1:09 PM

existence and happenings that directly affect all things (primarily from the physical world) as explained by science and physics. (not at all relating to perception by any living being)
2/25/2013 12:42 PM

Reality is what an individual experiences in a given day. It can be virtual or real. I think each person perceives their own reality and choose what is important and real to them.
2/25/2013 11:53 AM

In the physical sense, reality is being able to touch and feel something. In the situation sense, reality is what is physically happening and not imagined.
2/23/2013 8:28 PM

What I perceive in the moment. It has much to do with emotion and experience. I would experience a moment differently than the person next to me in the same time and space.
2/22/2013 4:57 PM
Reality often refers to a set of ground truth observations about our environment that the majority of people agree on. If you start talking crazy, others around you will try to get you to engage with "reality", but what reality is can only be validated by taking an average of the way everyone else around you sees the world. I guess what I'm saying is that reality could be defined as a societal construct.

2/22/2013 10:36 AM

reality is the daily tasks that I perform and what I see with my own eyes
2/22/2013 1:39 AM

Reality is what is perceived by one's senses. It can be touched, tasted, smelled, seen, or heard. It's factual, in a sense.
2/21/2013 11:35 PM

reality means what is really happening. the truth. something you can't change
2/21/2013 11:04 PM

Reality is whatever is in the present. Anything that is tangible and that the human mind can process and comprehend.
2/21/2013 9:15 PM

I guess I'd say the external world, as it actually is. Keeping in mind implications from quantum mechanics and relativity and all that.
2/21/2013 9:11 PM

To me reality is what you live everyday.
2/21/2013 8:53 PM

What is actually happening...vs. what you'd like or wish for
2/21/2013 7:28 PM

The real parts of our surroundings. What we feel based on interactions with real things - air, emotions, names, places, actions, etc.
2/21/2013 5:49 PM

what actually exists
2/21/2013 5:10 PM

Depends on how much serotonin my brain is giving off. Not enough serotonin: Reality sucks. People suck. I'd rather be in bed. My brain on MDMA: Everything is awesome! This upholstery feels great! Best blowjob ever! (which ultimately brings us back to "not enough serotonin").
2/21/2013 4:19 PM
Reality is what we repeatedly do. It's what we see, feel, touch, eat, breathe, and love on a regular basis. It's where we pour our energy. If we don't believe that something will benefit or apply to our reality, we don't put effort into it. This can be muddled and confused easily, though, so our reality is constantly shifting. Human beings are resilient. We adjust to genocide, depravity, violence, peace, babies, puppies, jobs, etc, and all of them can be considered reality if we experience them often enough.

Reality encompasses everything an individual experiences and perceives in their world at the present time. Reality is what we chose to believe and be influenced by.

Reality is the present day and time I live and work in.

Reality means real. A true story.

Reality is the life that I am living through my eyes. What I see and what I do, how I interact with my environment is reality to me. What I experience through my senses, thoughts and feelings is my reality.
Describe the reality you see or do not see in current films. Do you see any trends towards realism or are films moving away from it? Explain. (You can use your own definition of "reality" here or a new one).

I do not see films that display a normal lifestyle.
9/8/2013 9:23 PM

This is a vague question... as genre plays a crucial role in subject/concept development-for example Sci-Fi vs Comedy vs Drama and then equally in sub-category identifiers. Each, however, have the potential for presenting a perception of reality in each context-none, however, is real... including documentaries- they are abstractions (in varying degrees) designed by (or consequences of) the process decisions occurring from start to finish. Trends, too, are biased by conditions- conditions beyond the inspired goals, concepts and subject-- such a money- thus furthering the likelihood for genre based trends.
9/4/2013 11:58 AM

The most popular films of today stray away from reality. Such as the superhero movies, Avatar, and Transformers. The thrill of the movies is that they create an enhanced world that is more exciting than some realities.
9/3/2013 10:42 PM

It can go either way with current films. They either try to seem as realistic as possible - the life of an average male/female (love story) - or they make a movie that is based around fantasy/dreams (like inception).
9/3/2013 9:02 PM

Some films are close to real life experiences (could be considered realistic), but others are idealistic and don't relate to most people's lives. Reality cannot be expressed in black and
white because reality is complex. To be realistic, characters and situations must lie in the grey area and retain complexities. I don't see any general trends toward or away from realism, but certain writers/directors may be moving toward realism.

9/3/2013 7:52 PM

Films tend to be away from realism because I believe they try to pull the audience away from their everyday lives and into a world that can only exist in their dreams. Movies tend to lead the audience to expand their creativity and interpret the movie in ways that no one else can. Hence the wide range apart from realism.

9/3/2013 6:55 PM

To me movies are a tricky subject as well. I would say that movies are 1) entertainment, 2) reflections of one particular individual's perception of reality (documentary, non fiction, historical - all have bias), 3) (most importantly) reflections of one particular individual's perception of what reality could be (fantasy, non fiction, cartoon). To me, reality doesn't exist in films. A film is a step outside of reality, no matter how close the plot (or effects, action, set, etc.) is to something that actually occurred in real life. We do not enjoy movies because we physically enter them and experience what the characters (not actors) experience; we enjoy movies because they take us inside our own heads - our thoughts, our imaginations, our dreams, our own real experiences - and take us away from this world, if only for a brief period of time. So it is sort of like the internet, sure the dvd itself exists in our hands. But the film exists solely to convey an experience, something that is not possible without a tv, a dvd player, electricity, etc. Therefore I cannot say any film portrays reality. Films aim to make us forget our own reality and experience (and relish in) the fact that there could exist something outside of the reality we know.

9/3/2013 6:02 PM

Real things seem to happen less and less in movies then in real life.

9/3/2013 5:41 PM

I think that there are a variety of things happening here. I think that there are so many options out there, people doing different things, that it is hard to spot a trend in it all.

9/3/2013 4:09 PM

Not sure how to answer this...

5/31/2013 3:19 PM

When getting into a potentially philosophical discussion of "reality," it's important to discern "real" from "accurate." In the context of defining "reality" from one individual to the next, the question of whether films are moving toward "realism" is ambiguous. In films, literature, etc., the word "realism" refers to the subject matter being treated in a way that accurately depicts or reflects real life. In this case, I do not see a trend towards or away from realism in films--at least, not any more than we're currently seeing. Many
films will value and focus on realism, but many others will place more value on mass appeal and profits. In the latter case, what's popular often is not the same as what's realistic. I don't see this trend changing any time soon. If the question is whether or not what we "see" or perceive through movies is "real," then the answer is even more complicated. A film is initially made up of real things—as in actors, props, animals, settings, etc. A film can be based on "real" events that actually happened or people who actually lived. But what we are looking at and hearing when we see a film is not actually real. The science of it is real (the sound waves that are produced from our television, for example, are real, actual sound waves), but the idea that we're being presented with via the film is not actually real. Take computer-generated special effects, for example. Computer-generated effects are not real, but rather depictions of things that are actually real (at least in cases where what's being depicted actually exists—such as fire, rain, fog, etc). This is perhaps a good representation of how I view the film itself. A film was initially made using things that are real, and when I experience it, my brain perceives what I see on screen as being real. However, what I'm seeing is simply a depiction or representation of something that's real, but it is NOT actually real. In this increasingly digital age, it's incredibly important to be able to subconsciously discern what's real from what's not.

Films can be inspiring to help create your reality. I see a trend towards end of the world films. A good film convinces you that something could be real.

Film has moved beyond portraying reality, though many critics and philosophers would argue that film by its nature was never capable of bringing us closer to reality. In a few of my college courses, we discussed Jean Baudrillard's concept of the "Hyperreality," and it is through his ideas that I find my own. As an example, our children are often informed about much of the world through media. For instance, when a child is introduced to the concept of a "Lion," it is often through television - and hopefully something mildly accurate/educational such as National Geographic. However, in their reality, the concept of a "Lion" exists first, only through sight and sound - in HD with a wide angle zoom lens. When this child has her first field-trip to a zoo and finally sees a real lion (though completely removed from its context), she may be disappointed; it is far away, small, and hardly moves or makes a sound. This is the hyperreal overwriting the real. Baudrillard's concept (called Simulacra and Simulation - also alluded to in The Matrix) can be extrapolated to music, with the onset of autotune, with sex and pornography, with food, video games, and so on. Whereas film used to give a nod to its theatrical roots, and contained elements that stressed it was simply a story (such as the Transatlantic accent/American Theater Standard or the theatrical set design of Wizard of Oz), contemporary film chooses to blur that line as much as possible. We get caught up with our technological ability, and assume advances made it possible to film something like 300 (or the new Wizard of Oz movie for that matter...) in a way that more closely approximated reality, but the fact is that this change is more stylistic than a natural
organic progression (such as the shift from analogue to digital media). Contemporary film and television wants to be consumed as if it were reality; no more asides or breaking the fourth wall. In this sense, the trend is a closer approximation of reality, but as Baudrillard would say, this is only the hyperreal overwriting what is left of the real. Who does this serve? Generally the producers; those with the means to produce and market products, media or otherwise. What kind of car does the hero drive, what kind of cigarette does he light after killing the bad guy? Who is the bad guy? When our media so closely approximates reality as to smother it, what was once storytelling may now amount to brainwashing. This is where Guy Debord's The Society of the Spectacle comes in.

4/6/2013 4:36 PM

its always based off of a true story but then spun in a different directions

4/6/2013 9:01 AM

Using the definition of reality in your video, I suppose I'd say the trend is away from realism as animation/special effects advances and movies that use less of it seem to be less popular than those using more. Most old movies are being redone (ie: B&W to color, image sharpening, 2D to 3D, etc) for the younger generation so they can sell more tickets and have more profits. Personally, I've never liked B&W films because I can never tell what color things are, and I like most Sci-Fi films (differences between books and their movies drive me crazy, so I like how the advances are making it easier for movies to stay true to their books).

4/6/2013 5:22 AM

Mumblecore is some interesting shit, let me tell you (and here I'm referring to films focused on character dramas with tight shots and long takes). I think it really wants to make viewers experience scenic moments as it they are really there. Tight shots and long takes do this. A majority of the moments in are day are not long shots. They are close ups, focused activity over given items or tasks. And long takes - life is really boring. It's a lot of waiting. It's a lot of patience. Mumblecore also loves ambiguity, which there is plenty of in reality as well. In other words, Mumblecore is a genre that really wants the viewer to think that all those things he or she finds unusual (unusual because they don't normally occur in mainstream cinema) is in some part bringing him or her closer to reality. And yet, despite all of this, I usually feel like I'm in a dreamlike state when I watch these movies - which could be thought of as the opposite of reality. After all, it's really weird when you don't really know where you are or what's going on. If you haven't, go see Sun Don't Shine and The Comedy (beware, The Comedy might be offensive in certain circles).

3/1/2013 2:03 PM

A fantastic and contorted way of life.

2/26/2013 7:25 AM
Film is used to construct reality for the viewers - whether the content is fact or fiction, the goal of a film is to convince the viewer that what they are seeing is real. Reality in film depends on whether the audience believes what they are seeing. The Visual Effects industry is an aspect of film that works towards blurring the audience's notions of what is real and what isn't - by creating things creatures like dragons or robots that look believable and life-like or by simulating real phenomena such as fire or smoke.

This is controversy. When the films are going towards reality, they are also moving away from it. Some films make the audience believe the environment is real while it is not real. Avatar is one example. The planet is not real but the filmmakers used advanced 3D technology to make us jump into the story and temporarily believe it is real.

I think film continues to strive toward great story-telling. I think films are about 50/50 in terms of reality based films and non-reality based films (sci-fi/fantasy). I think more sci-fi fantasy films are emerging as our technology advances and our imaginations continue to thrive off the possibilities of our newer technologies and where they may lead. I think our increased societal pace and increase in consumption of information, ideas, and media are fueling a desire in us to consume more, which is pushing sci-fi/fantasy film-makers to create even more fantastical and elaborate and detailed stories.

I think there is a trend towards and against realism. There is a trend towards more realism in that audiences want to be able to relate to a movie theme or character. There is less of a trend towards the extreme and more towards getting characters to connect to audiences. There is a need to get the audience to "root" for the main character. there is also a trend away from realism to give audiences an escape. With a tough economy, some movies are made to let audiences escape pressures and problems of real life and enter a fantasy world with super heroes or exaggerated fictional characters.

In the commercial sense, films in general are moving away from reality. There were the superhero hype a few years ago, still going strong. But then again, commercial films in general incorporates many "made up" factors - such as happy endings, stereotypical characters (one-dimensional). Things are glamorized in films, but then again, if films only, solely portrayed reality, no one would watch them, as that'd be too boring, and for most people watching movie is a form of escapism, not a form of educating themselves about history or the sciences, etc. With that being said, even though some aspects of movies are made to be surreal, in general, movies are based on realism, otherwise no one would watch them because then people cannot relate to the characters & situations in movies. What I mean is, while movies may involve people with super-human strength, or people put in bizarre situations (for ex: the hangover), in the end, many movies present universal themes, real things, that people can relate to - such as friendship, love (in one
form or another), perseverance, and overcoming one's struggles. Reality does not need to be presented with real characters or real things. A blanket assumption could say that all movies are fake and not real, because they aren't. Movies are made of fictional people, actors and actresses, fake sets, made up situations, even though some movies could be based on "true stories." (I mean really, the term "based on a true story" is pretty vague). However, it is how the audience reacts to movies that is real (to the audience). And like in any situation, we choose to perceive things as reality or as fake based on our own decisions. Silver Linings Playbook could be perceived as by someone as a romantic comedy (ha) between two really messed up people with a happy ending - thus at least a little fake, or, it could be interpreted as a movie about broken people trying hard, everyday, to get better - thus relating, in a universal sense - to all of us that are broken in one shape or form. Beasts of the Southern Wild could be perceived as a bizarre movie with ancient extinct mythic creature running around a fictional Louisiana community (thus imagined), or it could be perceived as a simple movie portraying the struggling relationship between a girl and her father. So, I think, in the end, it doesn't matter that the things/situations in movies are "real," per se, many movies, in one form another, trigger real emotions and responses from the audience because they present universal themes. However, again, it depends on how the audience perceives movies, and their purpose of watching movies. Escapism? Then movies aren't real. To feel they belong somewhere, to be able to understand someone else's struggle or difficulty? Then it's real.

I think there are examples of both types that are very good.

One recent film that comes to mind is "Children of Men" -- great pains were taken in the making of this film to make it seem real. Even though the story was very much out of the ordinary, the film makers tried very hard to ground the story in a plausible reality. One way that they did this was to increase the duration of camera shots during certain action sequences. Without all the jump cutting typical of action or science fiction films, it was easier to feel like you were actually living out the story portrayed in the film and not some sort of omnipresent being able to observe the story from any point of view at any time.

I believe in documentaries you see someones reality, and how they reprieve things to be. Dramas could be a different persons reality, but not my own. Action movies I believe are not reality, most of the graphics and explosions do not happen that way in my "real life".

I see a lot of movies that "stray" from reality. Movies like Hot Tub Time Machine (I hate myself for thinking of that movie... haha) or Looper - where the director has made it look like it could be reality, but the situations aren't events we come across in the lives we lead. Then, there are movies like Lincoln or Argo or Silver Linings Playbook - where the
events did (Lincoln and Argo) or could likely (SLP) exist as we speak. There is no sense of fantasy or impossibility.

2/21/2013 11:35 PM

i think they are making a lot of movies based on actual events such as argo, lincoln, and zero dark thirty. When its put into a movie form people are more interested. i think a lot of movies are being based on things that people find interesting and that can keep peoples attention and in order to do that there has to be some realism to them, at least for adults, if you don't believe it can actually happen it becomes less interesting

2/21/2013 11:04 PM

Films to me are never very real. You never see someone stumble over their words or make a meaningless mistake. Everything in film means something and has something to do with the plotline. Actors are dressed and made-up by professionals. I see some films trending towards reality, but I don't think any can really create a genuine "real" experience.

2/21/2013 9:15 PM

No, I think movies are becoming much more ridiculously unrealistic (I mean, Bruce Willis takes down a fighter jet with his bare hands in Live Free or Die Hard). That said, I bet most people understand that it's not realistic, or supposed to be.

2/21/2013 9:11 PM

I think that films that depict actual events show realism, some that come to mind are Argo, American Gangster, and The Iron Lady.

2/21/2013 8:53 PM

Reality seems often skewed or warped...as in things don't really always work out perfectly, align, or are that horrible, or conversely, that wonderful. Sometimes the reality is not exciting or pretty or thrilling. Reality is really just what is happening now.

2/21/2013 7:28 PM

I think the movies take us to a different reality. People want to escape because life is hard especially with todays economy. There are some movies that hit home but that is based on each and every viewer. The movie closest to my reality today is silver linings playbook.

2/21/2013 5:49 PM

I think films are very sensationalized, as they take a part of reality and blow it out. Films are meant to be a form of escaping reality, so if it was a realistic film, it could be deemed boring. The problem is though, some think movies are reality and expect things like that to happen to them.

2/21/2013 5:10 PM
Films comprehensively speak reality through the eyes of the director (unless he/she suck and the editors do it). All films are ultimately fiction in the end, even if it's based off a true story. Interjecting exaggerations to keep everyone interested, mostly. On an off note, a good film about perspective is "Fight Club". You're following the mundane life of Jack until it escalates to madness. Only in the end do you see that the film is through the eyes of a mentally ill man that suffers from schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder. Not experiencing these disorders first hand makes it hard to comprehend what it's like until someone brings it to life and executes it on the big screen like so. Jack doesn't know. You don't know. Tyler's words coming out of my mouth.

2/21/2013 4:19 PM

In films, reality has such a diverse meaning and interpretation, it could be considered present everywhere. Romantic comedies-- most would claim are unrealistic. Men don't behave that way, women don't see things that way, etc. But some would argue it's accurate based on their experiences-- maybe a teenage girl. But we go watch it because it's entertaining-- it's a break from reality. But look at a Quentin Tarantino movie-- during the epic massacre scene at the end of Django, he gives the impression that humans are filled with thick cherry Kool-Aid and will literally explode upon being shot with a pistol. Real? No-- it's simulating reality but exaggerating it to make it interesting or entertaining. I think if every film we watched was realistic, we'd grow weary of our own realities. I personally wouldn't want to watch my own reality in a film-- the charade of work and social gatherings and highs and lows. I want to watch something more entertaining and inspiring than that. We are drawn to the unusual, to the things we never thought possible. This may be a very few's reality, but most humans live small, simple lives that most filmmakers would not choose to remake and play back to us. It is the small twist to reality that keeps us interested-- it's the story. The small pieces of reality we believe in and attach to make the base of a story, but the small tweaks done by a true story teller make it worth watching.

2/21/2013 3:44 PM

Films themselves are real but I believe very few of them he ever perceived what I see as reality. The situations, interactions and actions those in movies have are often outside of what I believe to be possible and perceive as something that could possibly happen in by works as define by my experiences and knowledge

2/21/2013 3:37 PM

Some films are and some aren't. Obviously movies about witches, vampires, and ghosts are not realistic. Things like romantic comedies or dramas tend to be a lot more realistic

2/21/2013 3:28 PM

The reality I see is violence. What I don't see in current films is the word of God. I've been seeing trends towards realism. The recent movies that are out, are becoming more real. What they're playing in movies is what is playing in someones life.

2/21/2013 3:24 PM
In animation, I feel as though they are moving toward realism by implementing motion capture and real life movement in their characters.

2/21/2013 3:20 PM
Appendix C: Thesis Script
This is the script for the narration of the film, voiced by 15 voice actors from the Department of Theatre at Ohio State University and ACCAD. The script was reduced to approximately 900 words from the 3 essay answers of the 39 anonymous survey-takers seen above in Appendix B, as to fit within a short film format that would be approximately 6 minutes in length. Each sentence or paragraph interrupted by a space represents a different opinion, excerpted from the survey data. Part I is excerpted from answers to the survey question, “How are some ways in which people perceive reality in the present day (This can be influenced by technology and circumstance, for example)”? Part II is excerpted from answers to the survey question, “What does reality mean to you? Define the word “reality” – what it means to you in simple terms.” Part III is excerpted from answers to the survey question, “Describe the reality you see or do not see in current films. Do you see any trends towards realism or are films moving away from it? Explain. (You can use your own definition of “reality” here or a new one).”

Script:

This film is based on the opinions of ordinary people.

Anonymous participants responded to three questions:*  

4. How do people perceive reality in the present day?  
5. Define reality in simple terms – what does it mean to you?  
6. How is reality explored and depicted in contemporary film?  

We all perceive our own unique version of reality, from life and from the films we watch. A distinct, different version of reality, which cannot be experienced by anyone else…
1. **How do people perceive reality in the present day?**

Reality is a constant state of being. Perception of reality is experienced by the mind and body and furthered by many layers of influences...

People perceive reality very differently. It may include virtual/computer generated reality, desired reality, nostalgia or realities from the past, remembering dreams as reality.

Some would say dreams are reality. Some would say our conscious, physical existence is reality and dreams are not.

We perceive reality, or some notion of it, both directly and indirectly through not only our senses, but through documentation of those experiences, such as photos, video, sound, technology, books, art, film, and more.

We live in a time where almost the sum total of human knowledge is available at or fingertips, but in the same environment exists the most fearsome distractions, tempered through a sort of Darwinian survival of the fittest. For our generation, information is so available - and contradicting viewpoints in particular - that we approach new ideas warily, and with a varying degree of skepticism.

Our perspectives can become narrow through cherry-picking what we prefer and what we already believe, or self-verification theory.

Reality is happening in a much more fragmented way, attention-wise. Because of the abundance of media, people tend to have a much more scattered attention and are more likely to be bouncing from distraction to distraction.

2. **Define reality in simple terms – what does it mean to you?**

Reality is what you live and experience every day. Each person perceives their own reality and chooses what is important and real to them.

Reality is existence. We cannot truly know anything other than what our senses can reveal to us, but that does not mean that this universe is all there is. It is my opinion that there are realms, beings, and other forces beyond our perception.

Reality is whatever we make it to be. Our physical existence is what most people believe in solely, but it is also our dreams - both literal and figurative, it is history, it is the future, it is existence.
As Morpheus said, "What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain." However, are we not simply bioelectric systems? In the most skeptical scenario, 'we' are at least confined to these bioelectric systems for the time being, and ipso facto, our 'reality' is defined through this lens. That being said, is not the spectrum of human awareness staggering? Our endogenous systems are capable of producing extraordinarily profound experiences. Perhaps this is the purpose of our being.

Perhaps reality can be absolute, or beyond what most of us experience.

3. **How is reality explored and depicted in contemporary film?**

In films, reality has such a diverse meaning and interpretation. Look at Quentin Tarantino. He gives the impression that humans are filled with thick cherry Kool-Aid and will explode upon being shot with a pistol. Real? No--it's simulating reality but exaggerating it to make it interesting and entertaining.

The thrill of the movies is that they create an enhanced world that is more exciting than life as we experience it ourselves.

Reality cannot be expressed in black and white because reality is complex. Characters and situations must lie in the grey area to retain complexities.

Contemporary film and television want to be consumed as if they were reality; no more asides or breaking the fourth wall. In this sense, films trend toward closer approximation of reality, but as Baudrillard would say, this is only the hyperreal overwriting what is left of the real.

Computer-generated effects are not real, but rather depictions of things that are actually real - at least in cases where what's being depicted actually exists--such as fire, rain, and fog.

In the end, capturing reality doesn’t matter per say, rather that movies trigger emotions and responses from the audience because they present universal themes. Escapism? Then movies aren't real. For the audience to be able to understand someone else's struggle or difficulty? Then it's real.

It is the small twist to reality that keeps us interested--it's the story. The small pieces of reality we believe in and attach to make the base of a story, added by a true storyteller make it worth watching.
A film is a step outside of reality, no matter how close the plot, the set, or the action of the film is to something that actually occurred in life. We do not enjoy movies because we physically enter them and experience what the characters experience; we enjoy movies because they take us inside our own heads - our thoughts, our imaginations, our dreams, our own real experiences - and take us away from this world, if only for a brief period of time.

*Questions were shortened and altered slightly for clarity and simplicity and to distinguish the film and spoken/verbal format from the written survey.*