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Progress webpage: http://www.hummm.net/altstadtmythos/update_11_15_07.html

Project Title:

How Dreadlocks Brought Phones to the City

Description:

This stop frame animated short is the second of a series of vignettes featuring the myths of Dreadlocks along with other deities and creatures dwelling in Old Town. The set, puppets, and props are all hand made elements that are lit, photographed, animated and edited into a video approximately six minutes in length. The sound design will include dialog, music and effects.

Plot synopsis:

Jav' approaches the sacred pub on a scooter wearing a helmet with wings. It is slow going because he has a large stone in his basket. He is a messenger (communication god).

Dreadi (the trickster), Mahogany Woman (fertility goddess) and Thera (supreme deity) are sitting around a table in a mythic pub. In poetic verse, Mahogany is lamenting the slow communication between her and her lover, Walnut Man, as she awaits hearing from him. Dreadi chides her for her promiscuity and questions whether her infatuation is genuine. Thera mediates on behalf of Mahogany and reminds Dreadi of proper behavior in the sacred hall. Dreadi fires back at Thera that she lives outside the rules.

Jav' enters the pub carrying a large runic stone. Dreadi trips Jav', the stone falls on the table and shatters, and that destroys Mahogany's long awaited message from her lover.

Thera demands that Dreadi makes it right – the goddesses won't forgive her until the problem is resolved. Dreadi wants Mahogany's necklace as ransom for the necessary technology and takes it with her.

Dreadi goes to Gong, one of the Inventors, and requests the tools necessary to satisfy the deities in exchange for the necklace. Bell shows Dreadi a phone, but says it is not working yet. He needs the magic from the sea. Dreadi walks to the river. She dives off the bridge in Old Town and changes herself into a salmon. She journeys to the sea and follows the song of the Humpback. Dreadi finds Humpback and discovers the beautiful song is generated by a conch shell on her blowhole. Dreadi distracts Humpback by offering Mahogany's necklace and snatches the shell.

Dreadi as salmon swims back toward the river without relinquishing the necklace. Humpback is in hot pursuit. Salmon withers away as she reaches the bridge and changes back to Dreadi's form (this is why salmon die when they return to spawn), and she makes it back. She takes the conch to Gong. He holds the conch up to his ear and notes that it indeed allows remote hearing. Gong shakes it and out falls a SIM chip, the necessary part to complete his phone. Dreadi burns him of the necklace, too, and runs off with the phone.

The goddesses are once again sitting around the table in the sacred pub. However, this time everyone is on her cell phone talking at once. Dreadi sits with her hands covering her ears. A close up of a sign says, "Please refrain from using your cell phone while visiting this establishment."

A Word document containing the dialogue verse is available on my documentation webpage for download.

Work completed to date:

As per my project outline, I've been busy making the puppets and the set for the interior scene at the inn. In addition, I've enlisted a sound designer/mixer, Glen Nagy, to work with me in order to record voices for the puppets. Nagy gathered a pool of talent for initial readings of the script from which I selected the characters. Next, Nagy recorded them as I provided direction in the studio. Samples of the voices accompany the shot-by-shot storyboard available for download on my documentation webpage.

The storyboard is a Quicktime movie. I made it in order to think through the shot angles and experiment with lighting. The timing is set to the dialog, but there will be some changes due to the animated action. In particular, as Jav' the messenger enters the Inn and later when he is tripped, resulting in the shattering of the rune stone. Additionally, the establishing shot(s) prior to the dialog will be extended.



Thera is the supreme deity. In her role, she sits at the end of the table, and aside from speaking, she has two basic gestures: one with her palm extended as an empath and the other wagging her finger in annoyance. The construction of her armature and limbs reflect her actions. It consists of aluminum wire, brass tubing, and unfinished walnut.



Thera is stuffed with foam rubber and her dress is sewn from tie-dyed cotton. Her dreads are made from felted New Zealand roving wool.



Mahogany Woman is a fertility goddess. Aside from speaking, her gestures include waving her arms with passion, walking a few steps in the room, and a few additional arm movements.



Mahogany Woman's hair is donated from fellow MFA student Catherine Matos. Mahogany's pearl necklace is integral to the plot.



Jav's movements are more intricate. He'll need to ride a scooter, carry the rune stone, and trip. The ball and socket armature will allow precise movements. His head and limbs are carved Monterey Cypress.



Jav's winged bike helmet is carved out of basswood and painted with metallic latex paints. He'll get a spandex racing bike outfit and some high top sneakers to round out his costume.



Each puppet has six replacement mouths which match certain vowels and consonants:



Thera



Mahogany Woman



Jav'

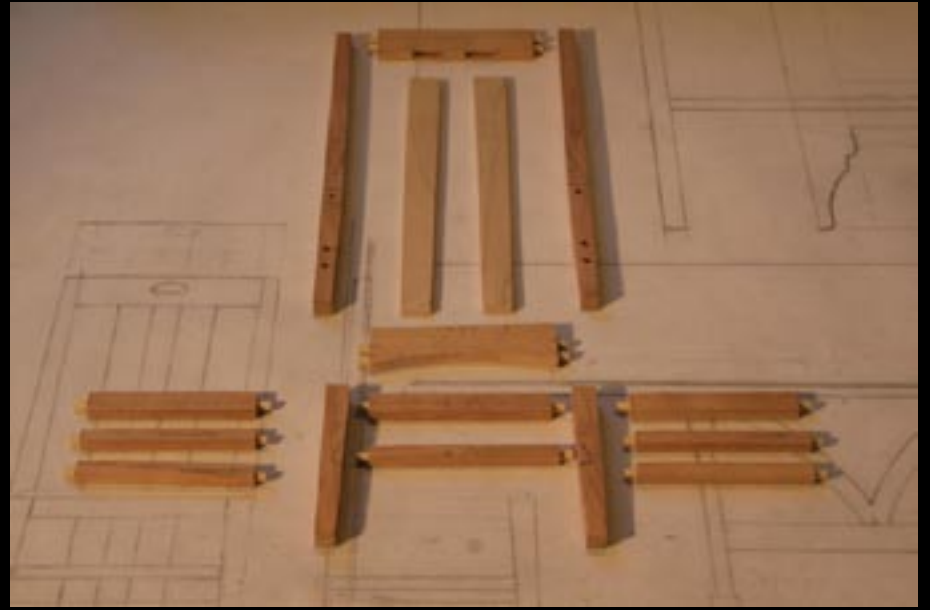


Dreadlocks gets a new head with replacement mouths. Her fans needn't be disappointed, she has a the same 'do with some new embellishments. She will have the same body and outfit as in her debut film:

How Dreadlocks Brought Electric Lights to the City

The interior of the inn requires a bit of woodwork. So far I've made the cherry banquet table, chairs and the door. The floor is vertical grain fir and the walls are baltic birch plywood, which will be wallpapered, paneled and trimmed.





I made custom jigs to drill holes for 1/8" dowels in the tiny parts.



The resulting sturdy little chairs are ready for upholstery.



The banquet set is worthy for use by the gods and goddesses.

The door is made using the same techniques. The jambs will be trimmed in the same material, creating a warm, rich environment.



This concludes the documentation of work completed on the project to date. Links to a Quicktime video storyboard and a script in Word format are available on the website.