BEHIND THE INKWELL

Dedicated To

Abdallah Toutoungi, Dayna Toutoungi,
Yvette Loubriel, Felix Torres, Carlos Ortiz,
and all the friends and family that made this
journey possible.

And to all the artists that doubt their own art:

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

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Adam Toutoungi

AND L ADELINE

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Andy Ortiz

AND ADELINE

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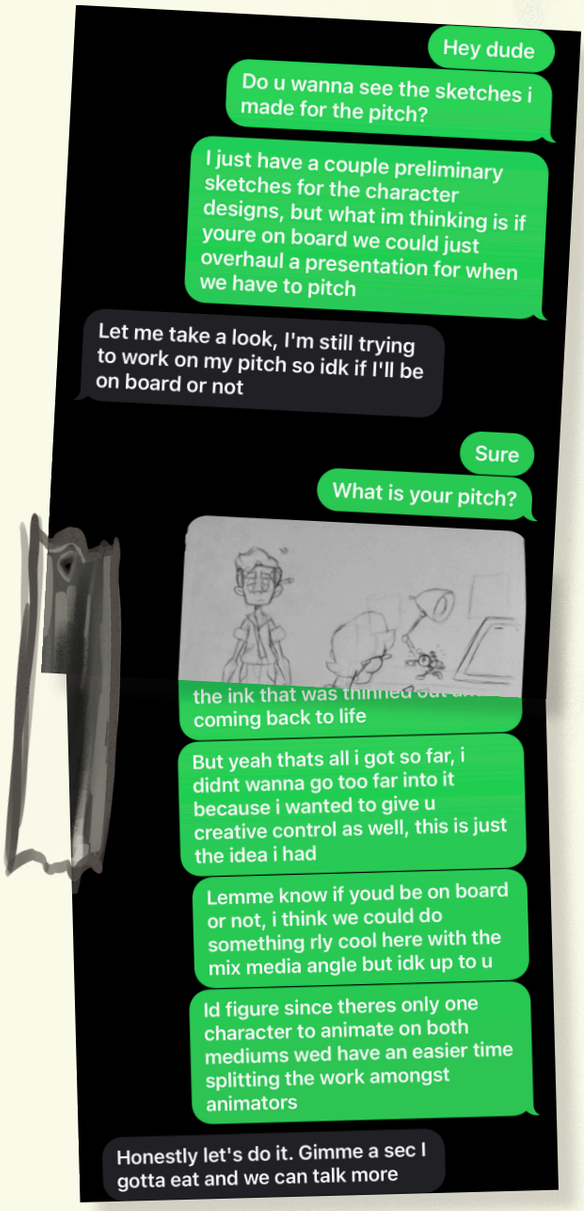
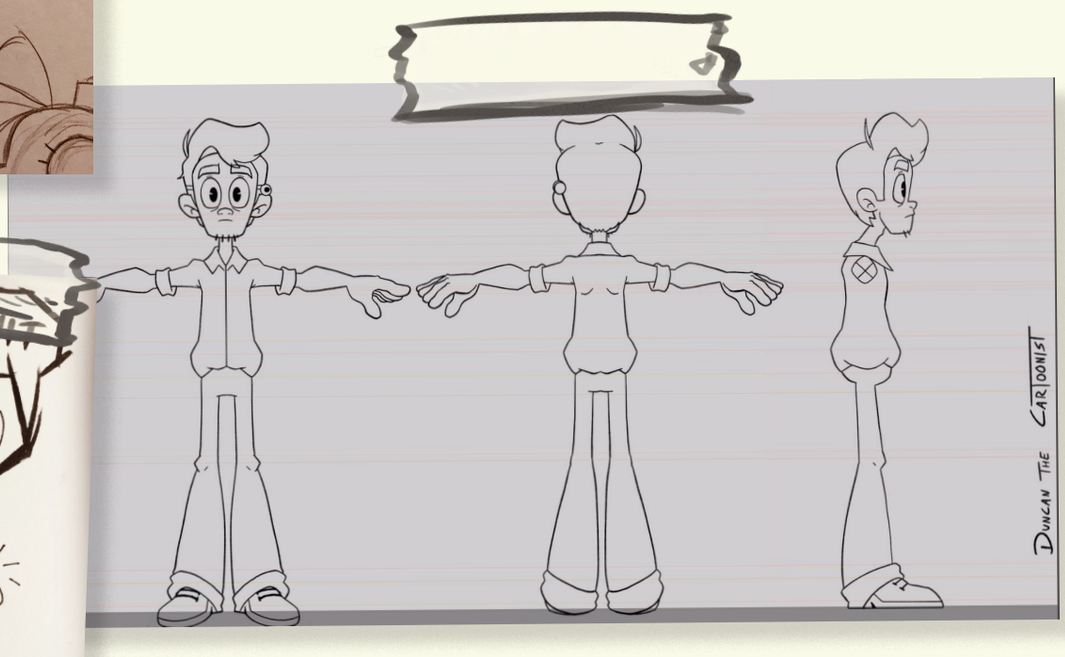
The Pitch

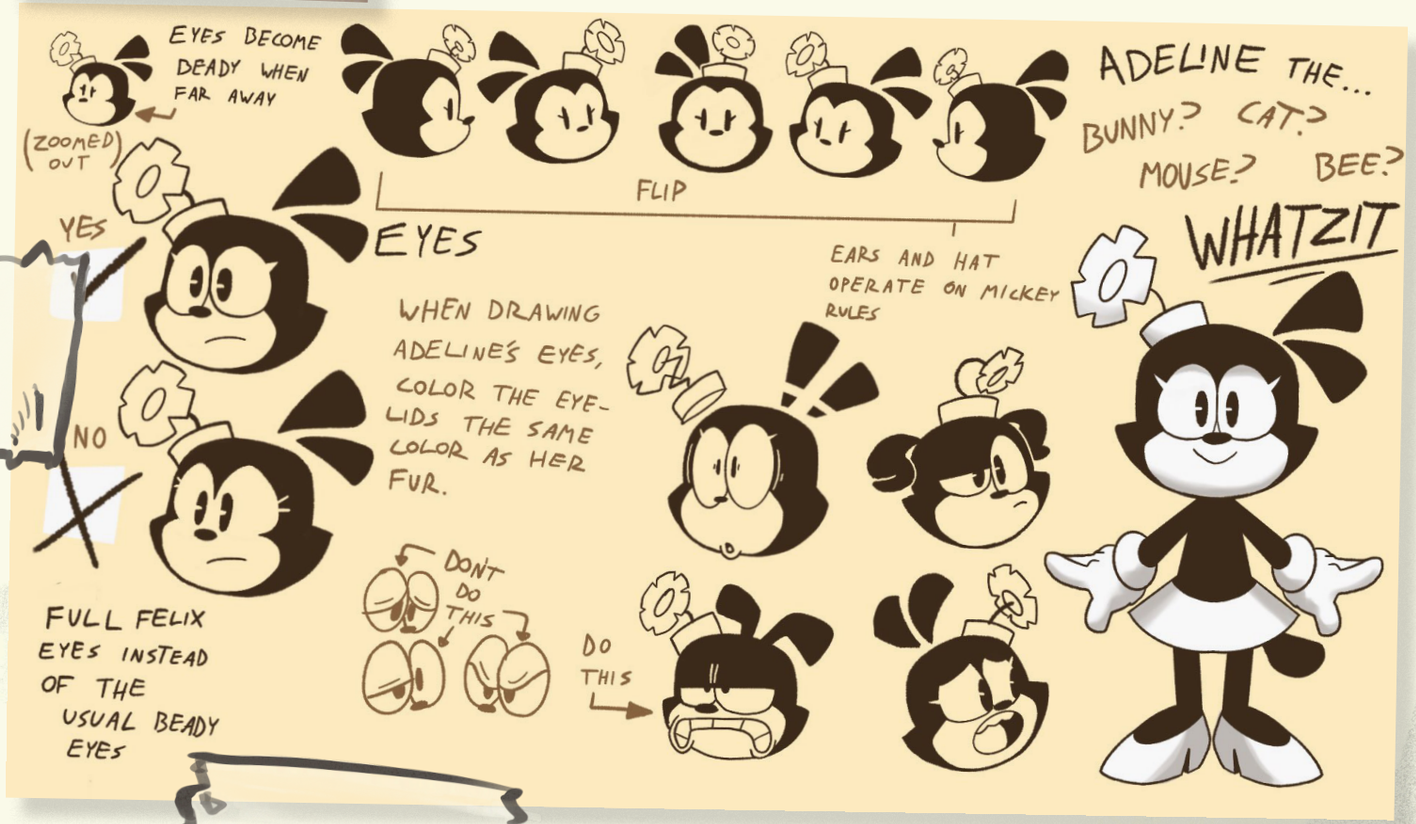
In 2017, Andy and I moved into the Garden building at the Hive dorms at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). It wasn't long until we started shooting hypotheticals and spitballing ideas for the dreaded senior thesis. We came to the decision that if we ever were to work on a thesis together, it would be a hybrid film. Our thought process for the story was something along the lines of, "The animation coming to life trope has been done a million times. Why don't we just do that but better?".

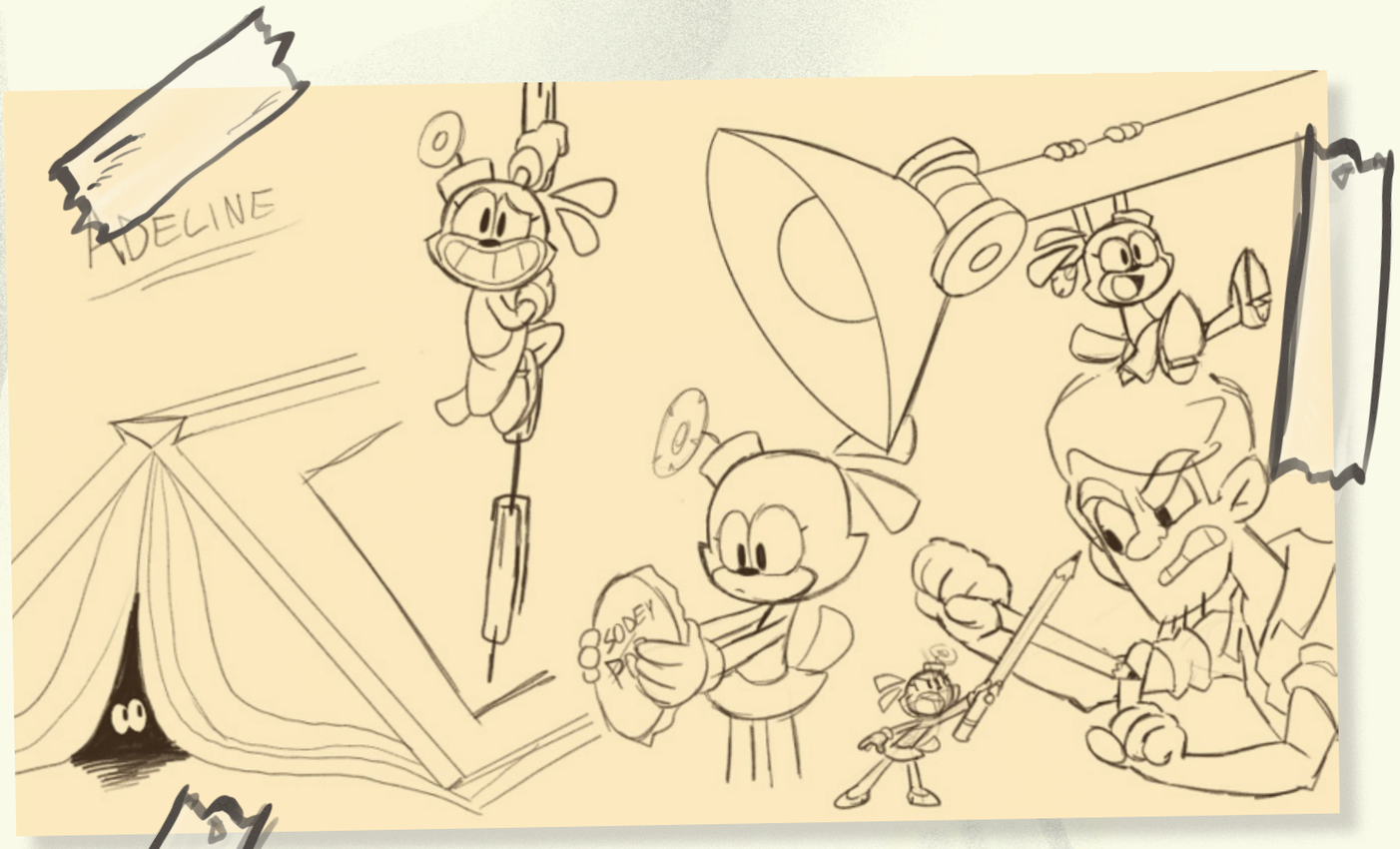


And that's exactly what we did.

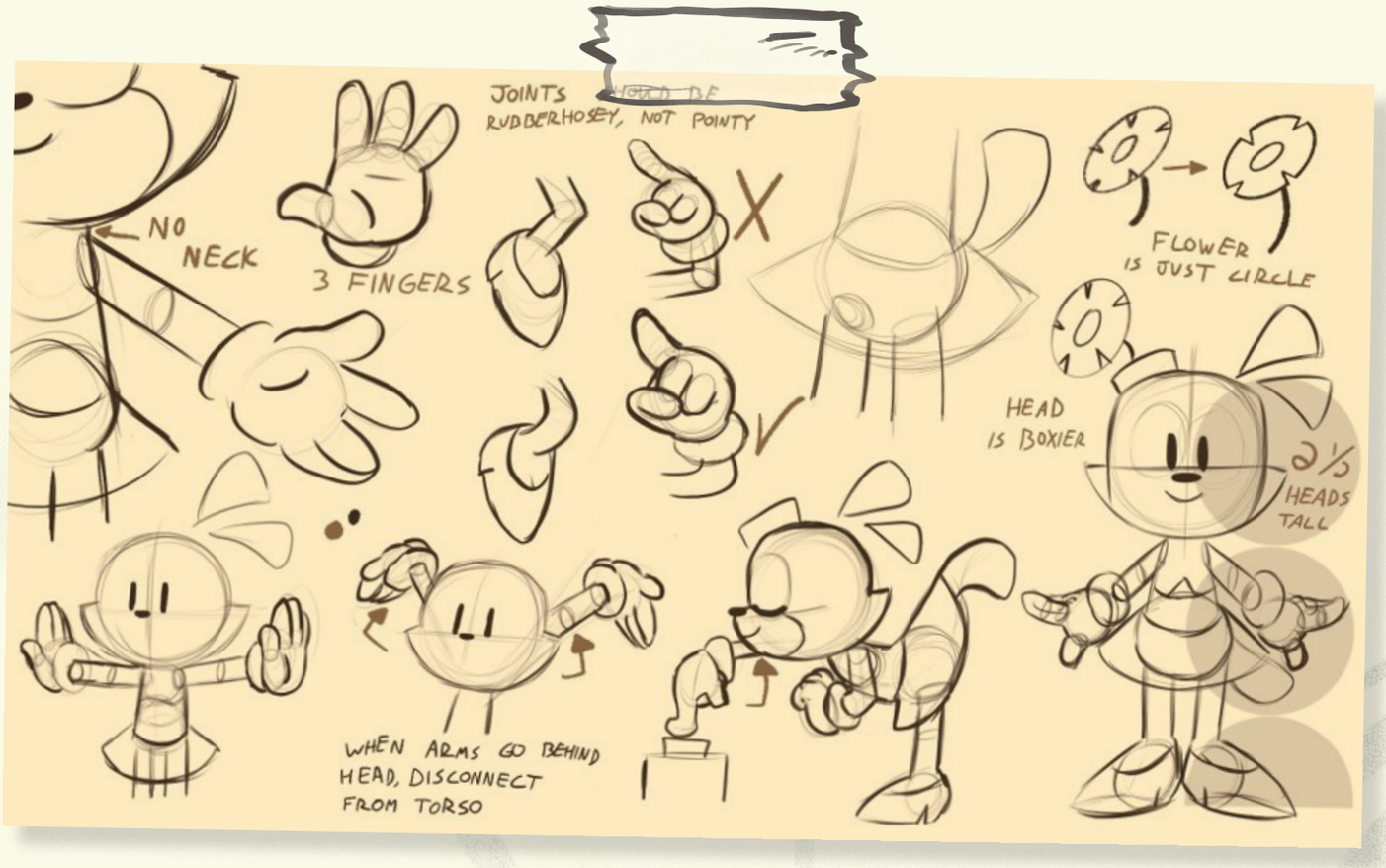
In just under two weeks we put together an extremely vague story, some really rough character mock-ups, and a general idea of what the film would look like. That and a killer pitch video got the film greenlit.



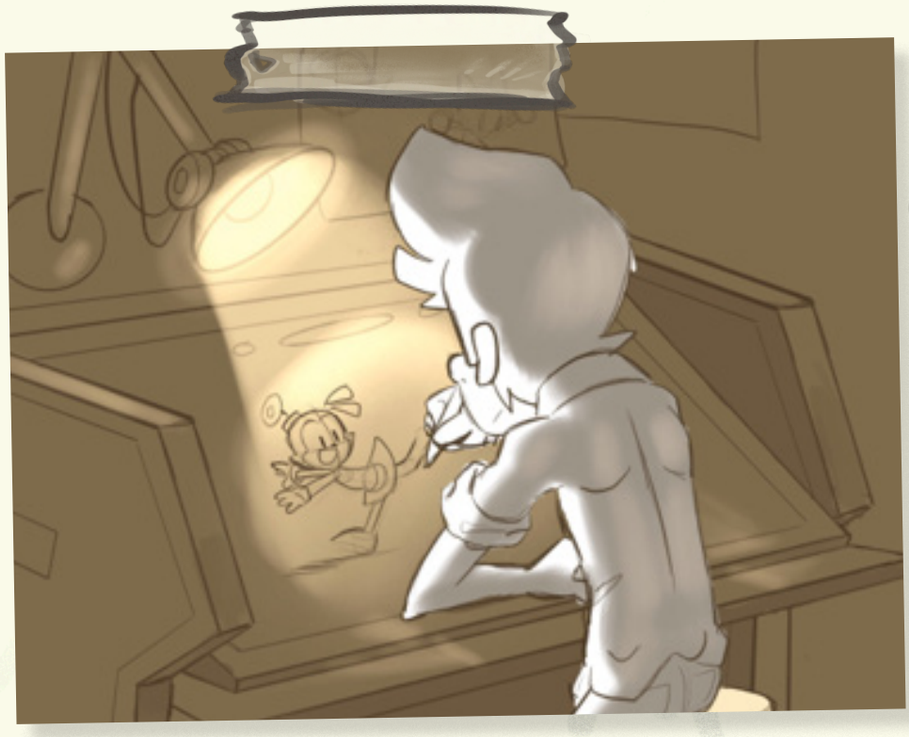


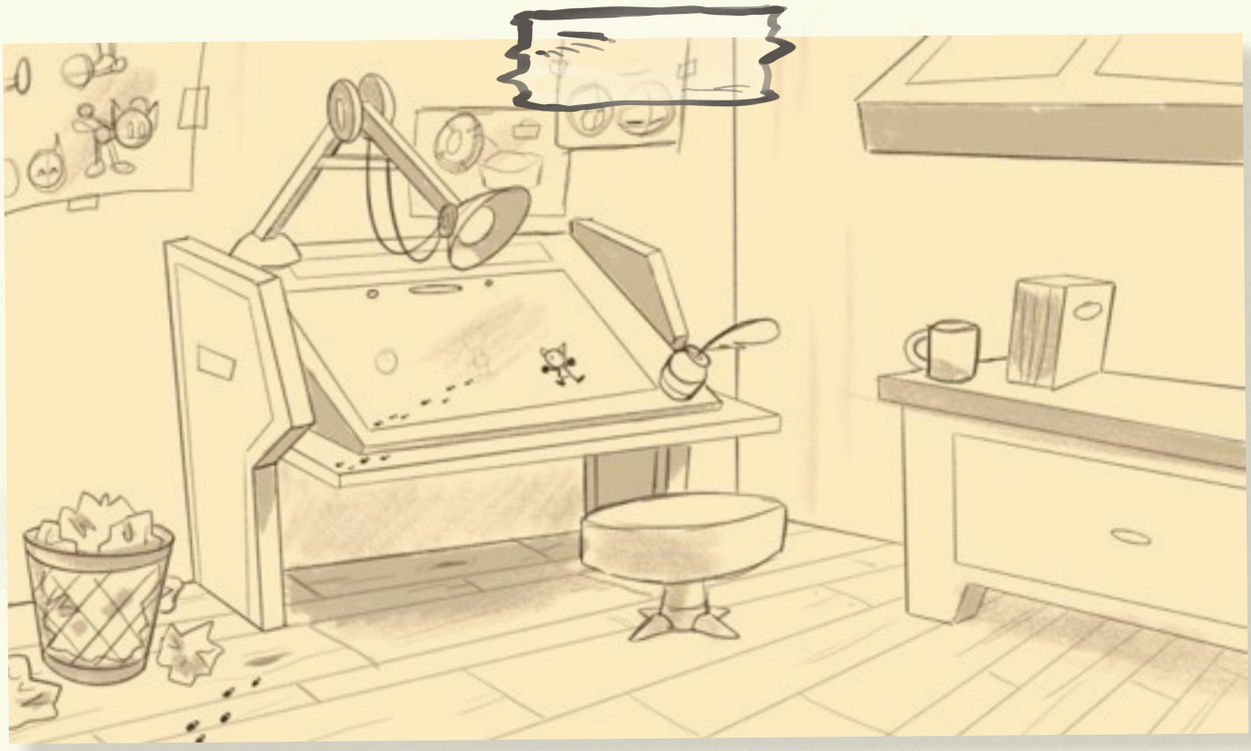


When coming up with the pitch, we decided early on that Addie's hijinks are more of a result of her playfulness instead of any deep seeded malice. The mindset we had going in was that Adeleine is more of a little kid than a typical cartoon trickster, and the conflict derives more from the miscommunication between the characters.

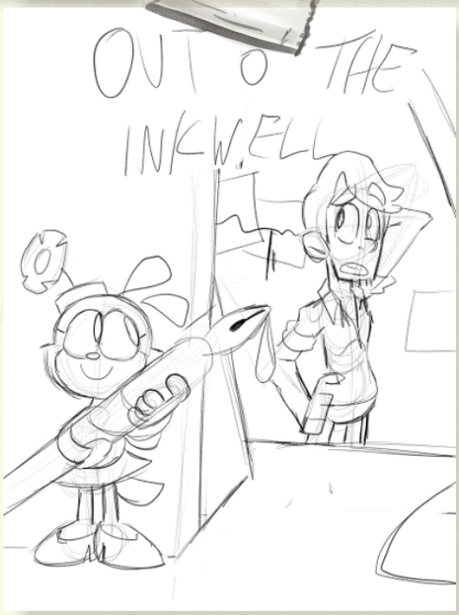


These early drawings served as the foundation for the production. However, as work goes along, things seldom stay the same all the way through. Multiple iterations, perspectives, and redos flesh out a production and help elevate the initial idea into something greater.

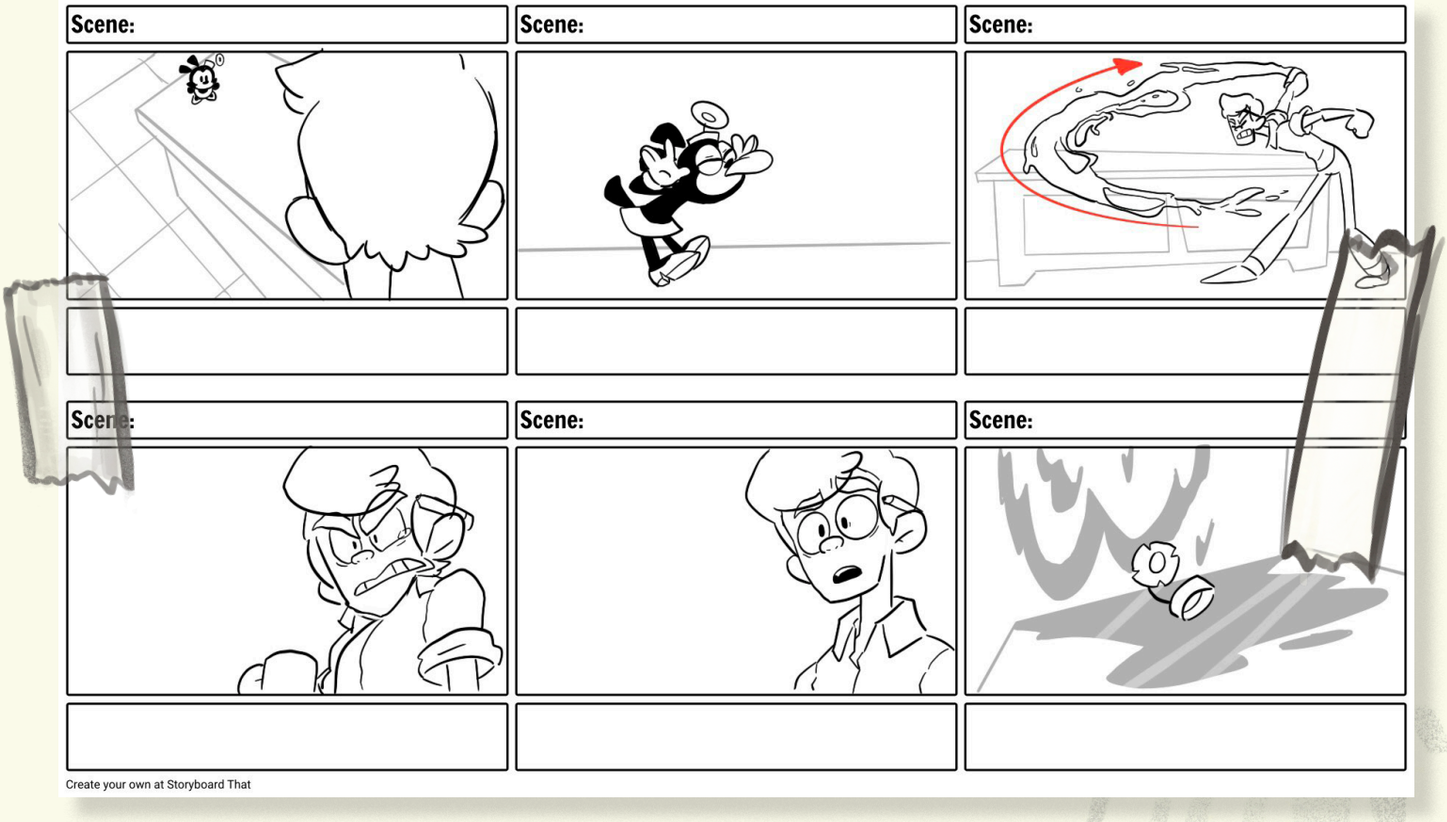




With the assets we essentially showcased the most barebones way we'd go about designing and modelling everything. However, these in no way reflect the final designs we'd end up going with. Remember how this animation desk looks now, as later on you'll see how designs can be overhauled from concept to completion.



When you submit an idea for approval, be it a show, movie, commercial, or short film, everything must be taken into account. In addition to the concepts and assets we made, we also made moodboards, possible posters, and specific story beats we wanted to touch upon for the idea going in. In animation, preparation and planning are key, so setting things up beforehand helps a lot in the long run.



Script & Storyboarding

DUNCAN

Wait, what?

e flips through the pages before him but freezes a
otices a trail of destruction beginning at his desk
eading to the other side of the room.

DUNCAN

What the f-

iny inky footsteps lead to ADELINE, dancing about as sh
raws on the wall with some crayons. ADELINE turns to
UNCAN's noise and nonchalantly/innocently turns back,
ontinuing to draw.

DUNCAN

Oh no. No this is not happening. I don't have time for this.

Ie points at the papers on his desk.

DUNCAN

Get back in the paper.

ADELINE rolls her eyes and continues to draw.

DUNCAN

HEY!

They lock eyes for several beats. Adeline flinch-check
DUNCAN.

DUNCAN (taken aback)

WhAT?

DUNCAN bolts for ADELINE.

DUNCAN

Come here you little shit

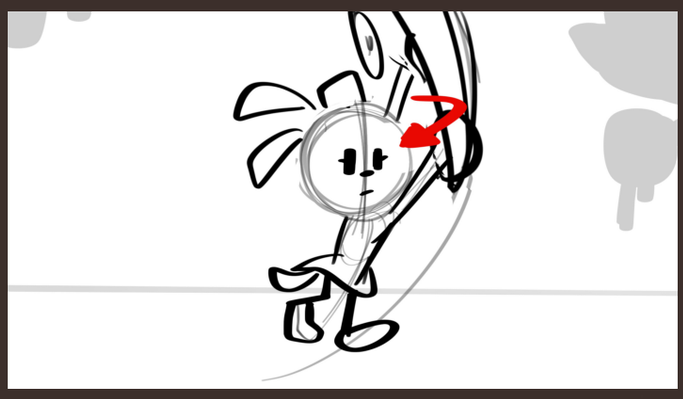
She immediately jumps onto his head as he dives towards her and bounces up to the SHELVES above him where, as she runs, she knocks books down. DUNCAN yelps as he tries to catch the books, Peter Parker style. As the books stack up, Adeline sees an opportunity to jump on them across

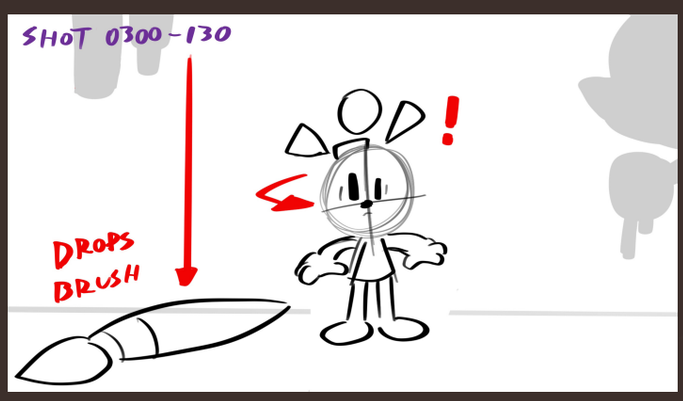
Once the film was green-lit, we started working immediately. With only the summer to get ready for pre-production, we began brainstorming a more concise storyline and polishing up our ideas.

At this point we began working with our crewmates to get feedback and make sure we are all on the same page. In an early Covid-19 world this was difficult but manageable. We realized how lucky we were to be working in an industry that allowed for virtual and remote work.

With everyone's input fresh in my mind, I wrote up a polished script and Andy and I spent 3 days storyboarding the film, shot for shot. Later on, I spent a long while editing the storyboards into an animatic with temporary sound to give us an idea of how long the film will be, how well it flows and if the story makes sense.

Storyboards are basically a shorthand way to illustrate how a sequence of events is going to play out in a film. This is the phase where the script is interpreted into visual form and serves as the backbone for the rest of production.



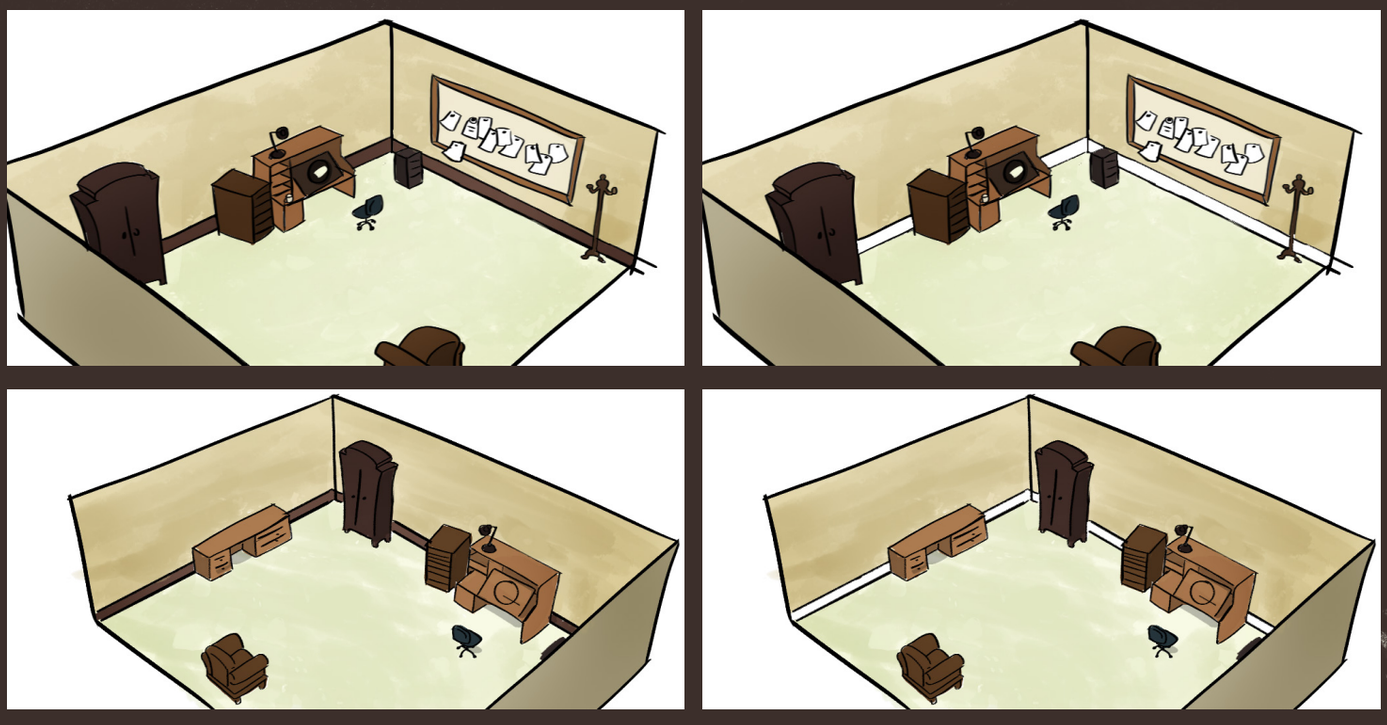


Storyboards are used for both animation AND live action films. While there are some differences in what they require, the process of script to board to screen is a large part of many production pipelines. In our case, we didn't have much dialogue, so our short is a lot more board-driven.

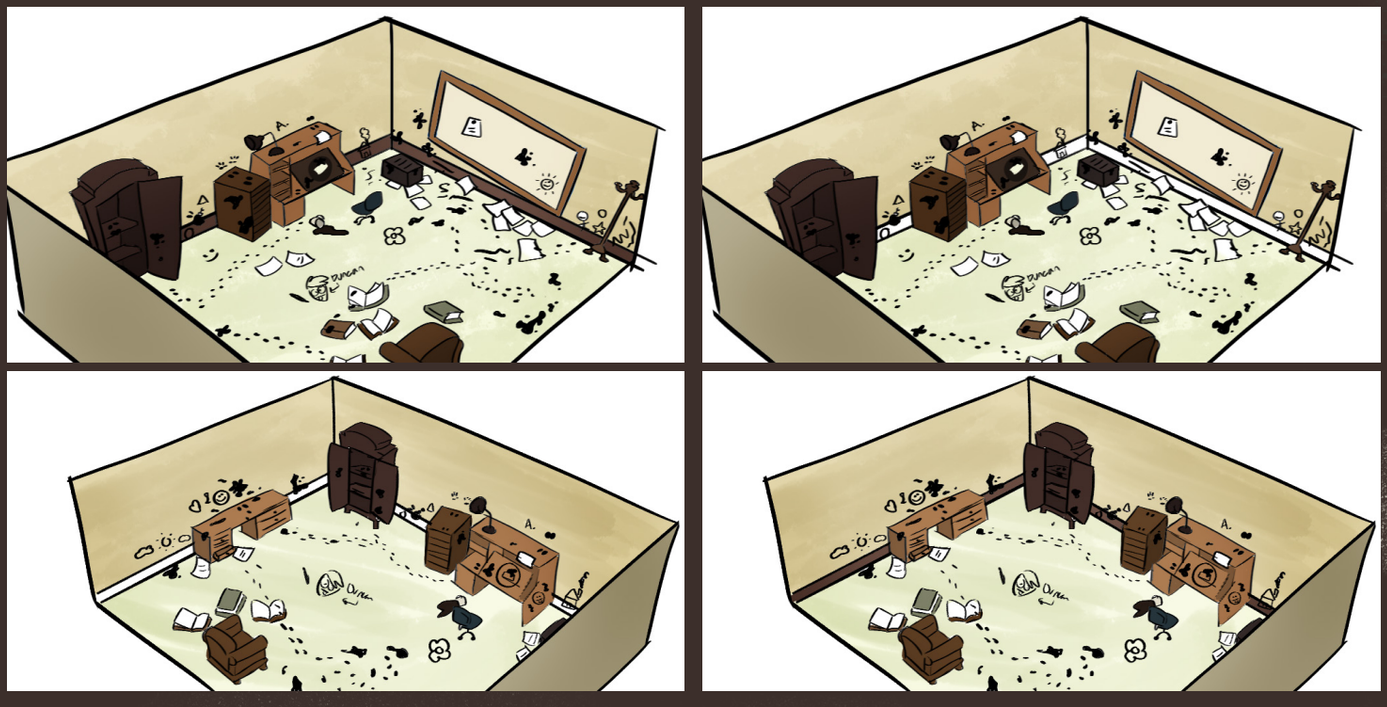
Color Script & Palette

Using the mood board we developed for the pitch, we furthered the visual language of the script. The muddied beige and browns were a necessity to give the film the timeless yet vintage feeling that it has.

We pulled a lot of inspiration from real animator's offices from the golden age of animation to make sure we nailed the colors.

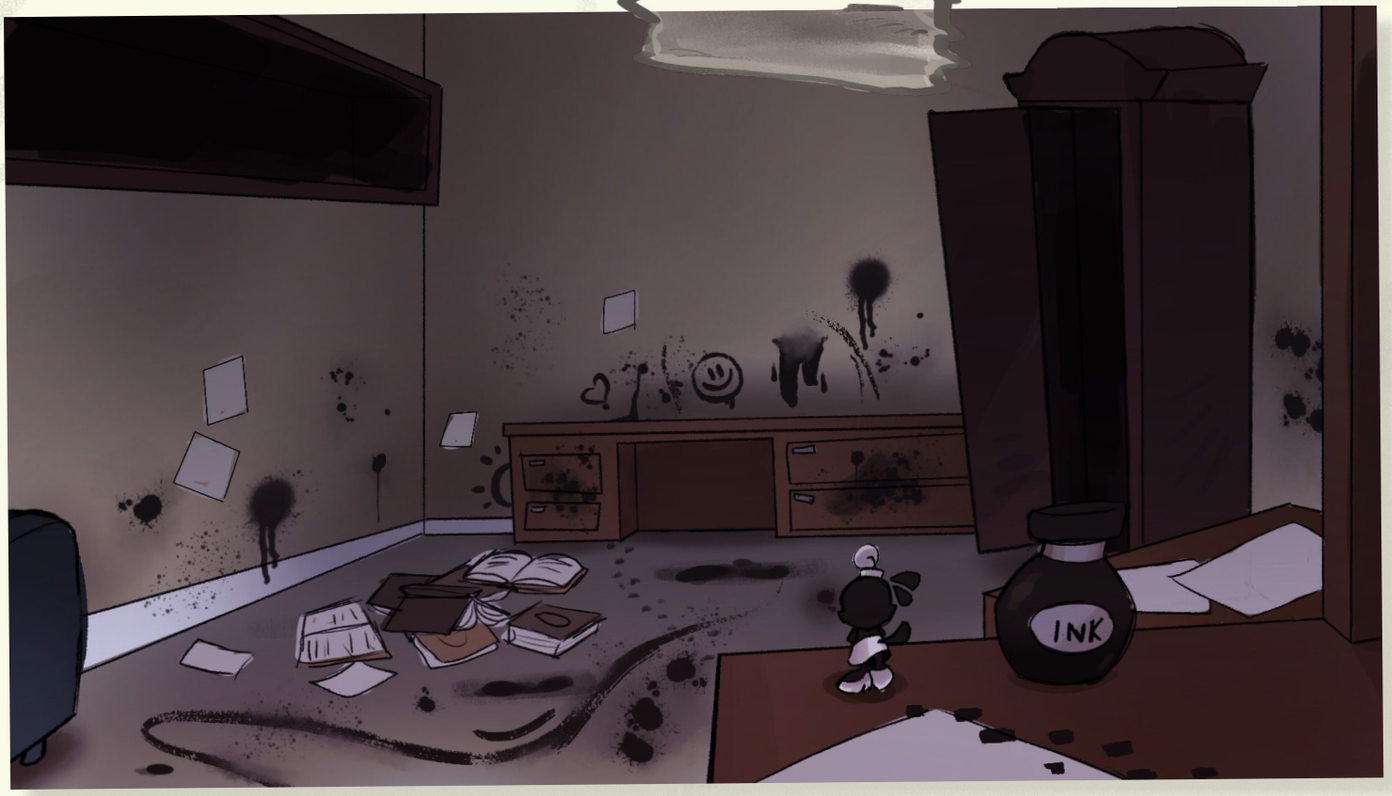


Deciding the color palette for the room was important. Since we knew going in Addie would wreck the place, we needed a setting that would look good cleaned and cluttered, while also having the room populated enough so that the backgrounds don't seem barren. With this in mind, we decided the off-white would be best, as it ties everything under the "pseudo-sepia-tone" we were going for.



Style Frames

Style Frames are conceptual pieces used to figure out a film's overall aesthetic and color script as the film progresses. Certain key storyboards are taken and rendered out fully so that they can be used as a guide for the production going in.



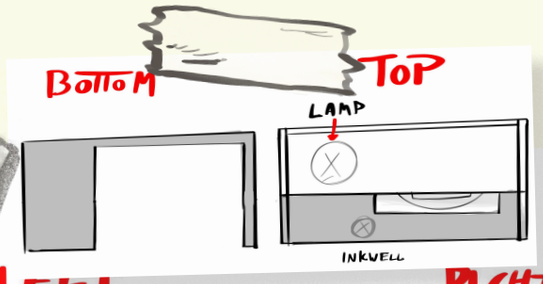
In a medium where every last detailed is controlled, color scripts help keep the vision cohesive, and keeps the team on track. Every frame is a painting!

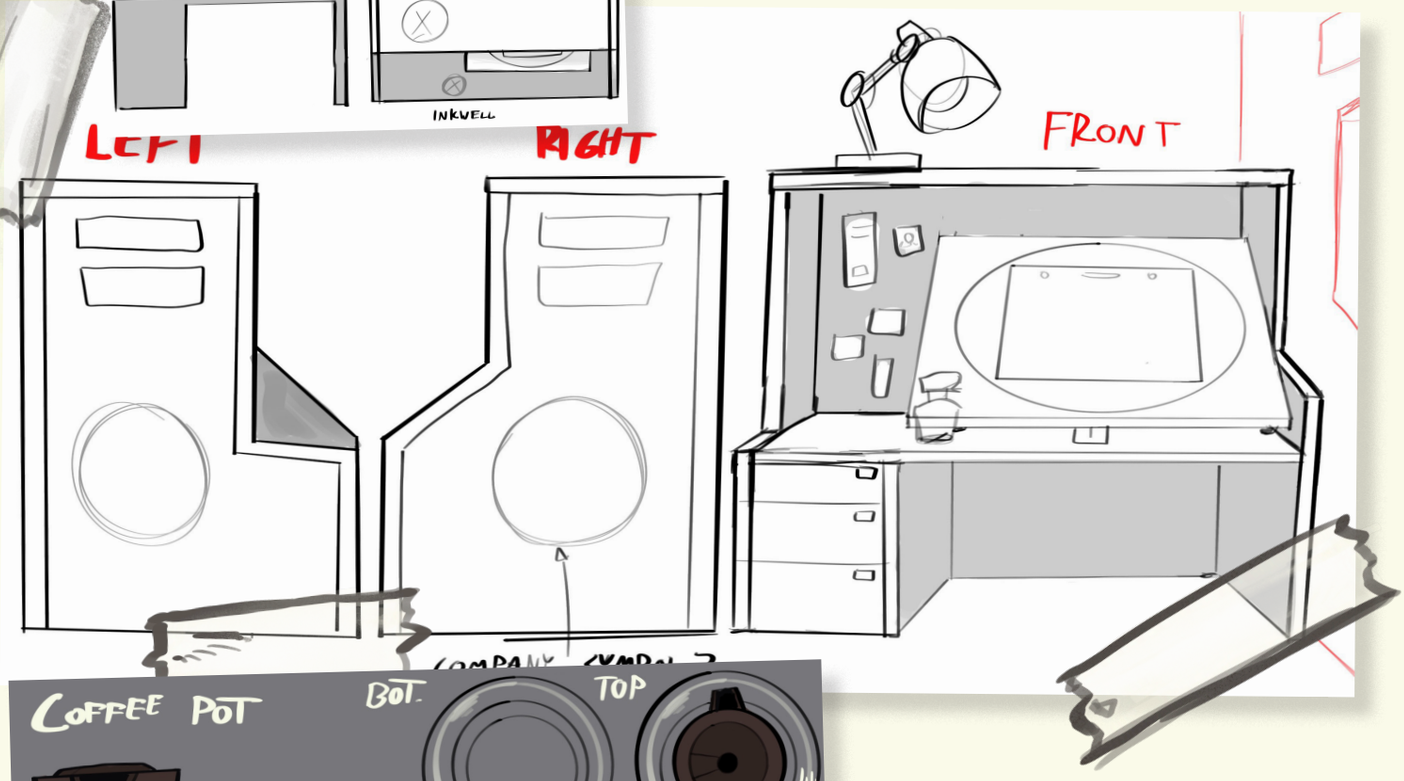
Props

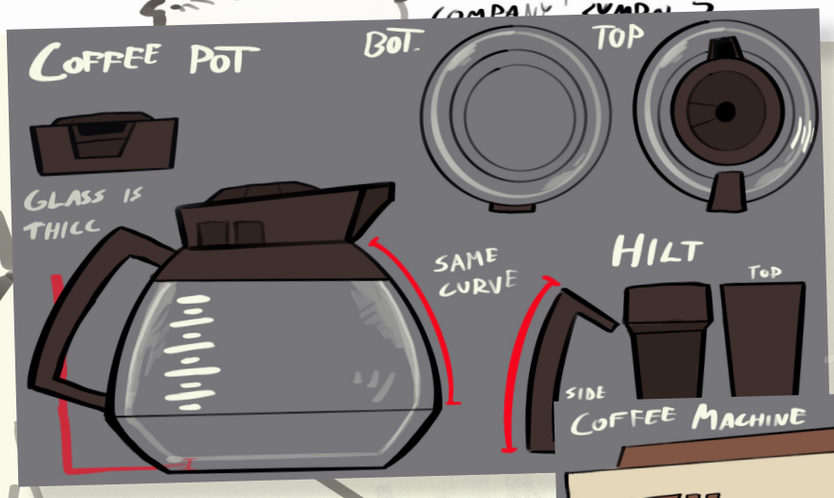
The desk sure looks different now, huh? Once we got the look of the room settled, we turned our sights on designing the appropriate furniture.

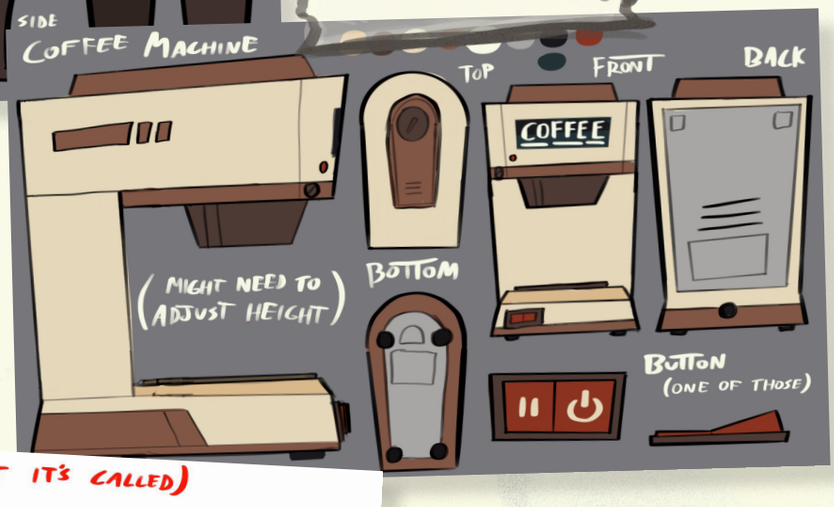
I drew up a blueprint for the office and got started on getting some concept art done for all of the individual props and furniture that would be needed throughout the film.

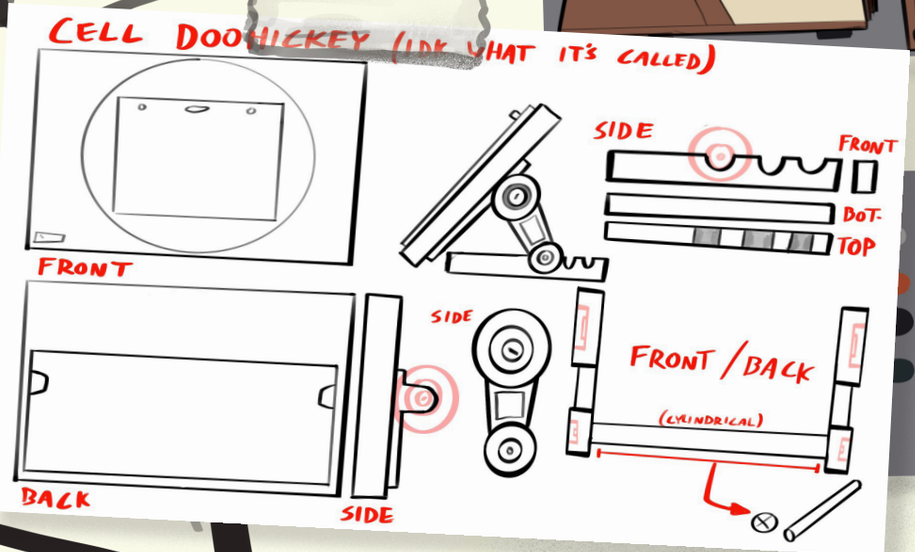
The concept art would be drawn from the front, back, 3/4, and any other view that we needed so the modelers could get as accurate of a portrayal as possible. We also had color palettes drawn up for each prop as well.


BOTTOM
TOP
LAMP
INKWELL


LEFT
RIGHT
FRONT


COFFEE POT
BOT.
TOP
GLASS IS THICC
SAME CURVE
HILT
TOP
SIDE

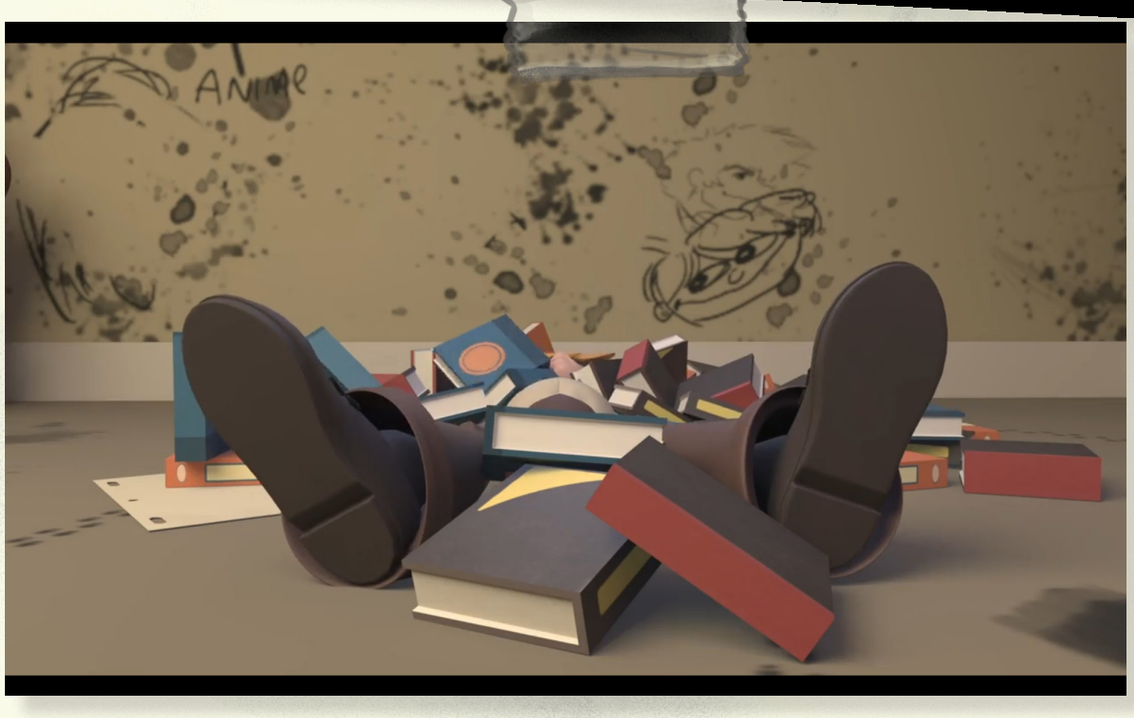

COFFEE MACHINE
TOP
FRONT
BACK
COFFEE
(MIGHT NEED TO ADJUST HEIGHT)
BOTTOM
BUTTON
(ONE OF THOSE)

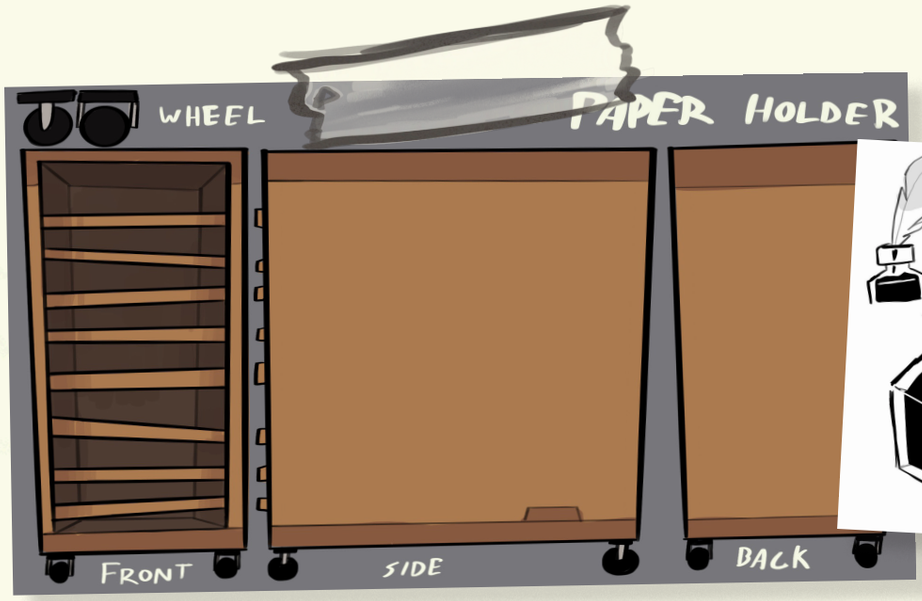

CELL DOOHICKEY (IDK WHAT IT'S CALLED)
SIDE
FRONT
BOT.
TOP
FRONT
SIDE
FRONT / BACK
(CYLINDRICAL)
BACK
SIDE

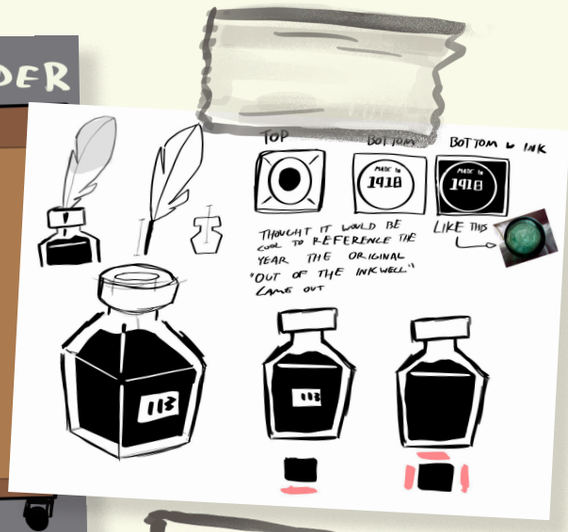
FRONT
SIDE
BACK
TOP
PEN
BOTTOM

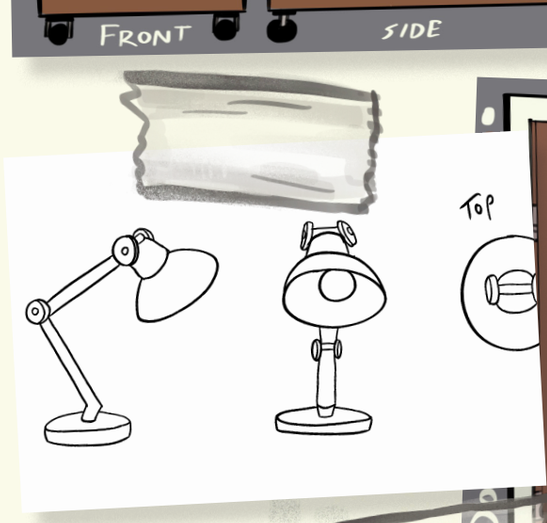
MAY
APRIL

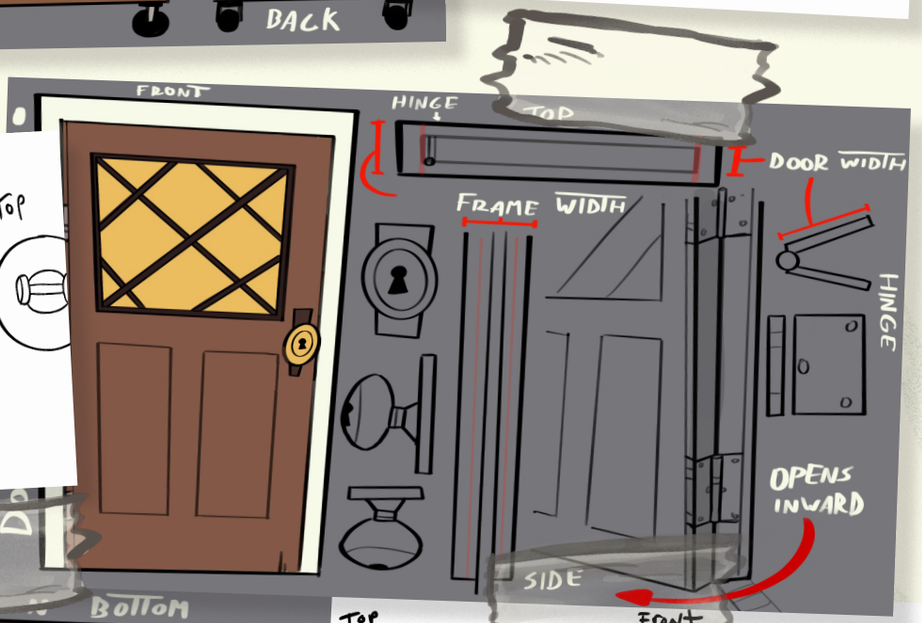
Anime


Anime

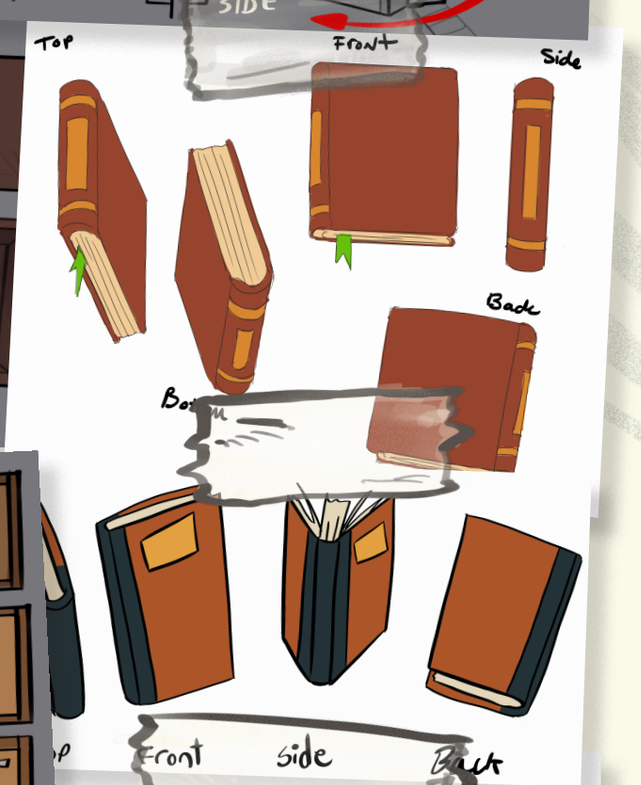

WHEEL
PAPER HOLDER
FRONT
SIDE
BACK

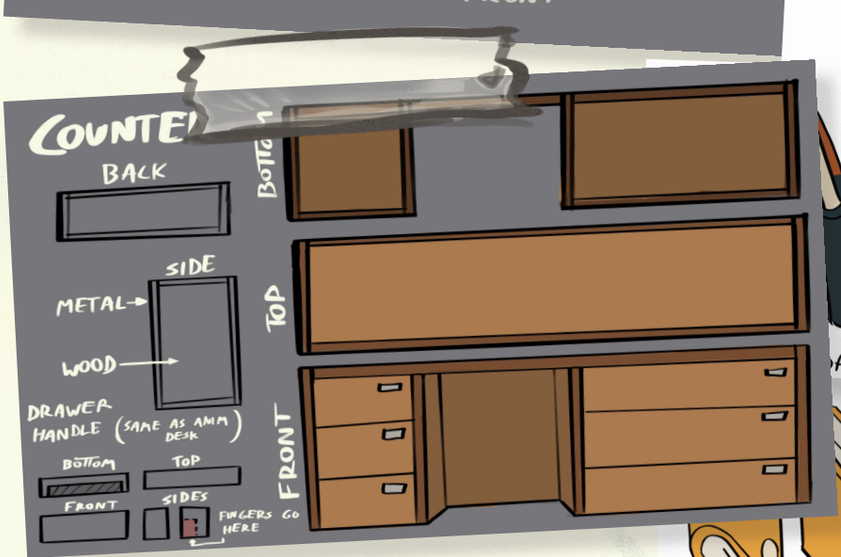

TOP
BOTTOM
BOTTOM W INK
MADE IN 1918
MADE IN 1918
THOUGHT IT WOULD BE COOL TO REFERENCE THE YEAR THE ORIGINAL "OUT OF THE INKWELL" CAME OUT
LIKE THIS

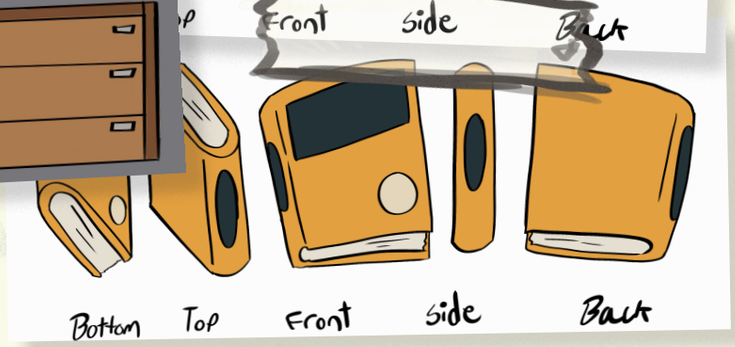

TOP


FRONT
HINGE
TOP
DOOR WIDTH
FRAME WIDTH
HINGE
OPENS INWARD
SIDE

BOOKSHELF
TOP
BOTTOM
LEAVE SPACE HERE
BOOK
SIDE
FRONT

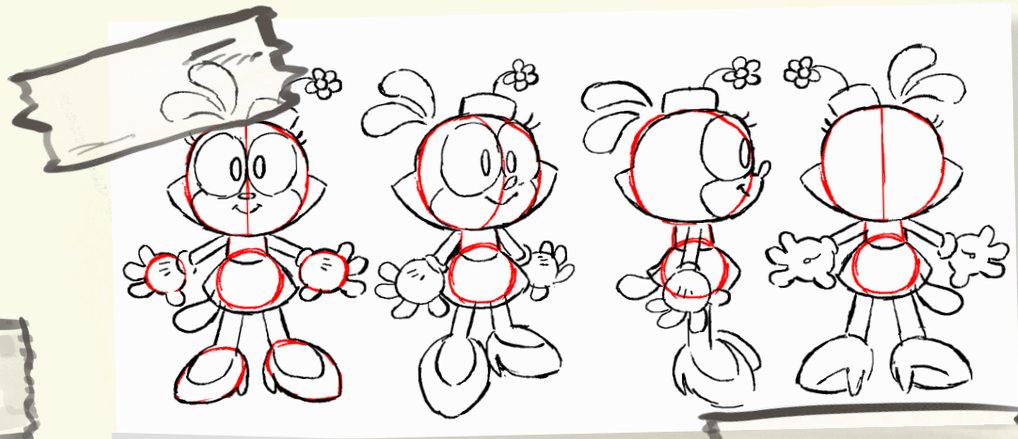

TOP
FRONT
SIDE
BACK
Front
Side
Back

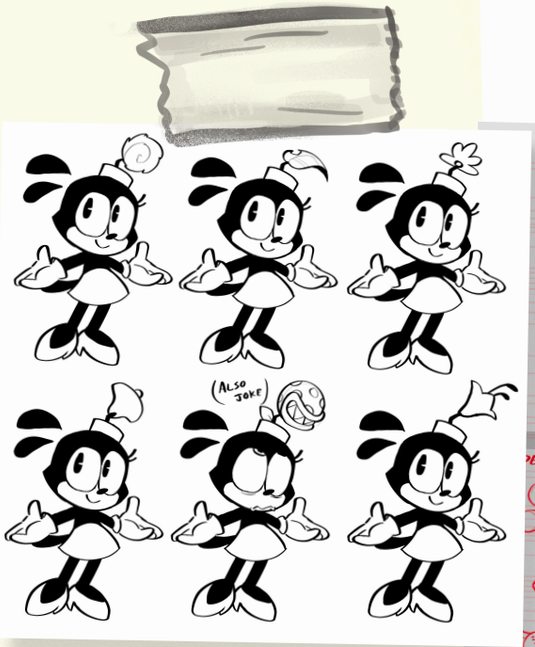

COUNTER
BACK
SIDE
METAL
WOOD
DRAWER HANDLE (SAME AS AMM DESK)
BOTTOM
TOP
FRONT
SIDES
FINGERS GO HERE
TOP
FRONT

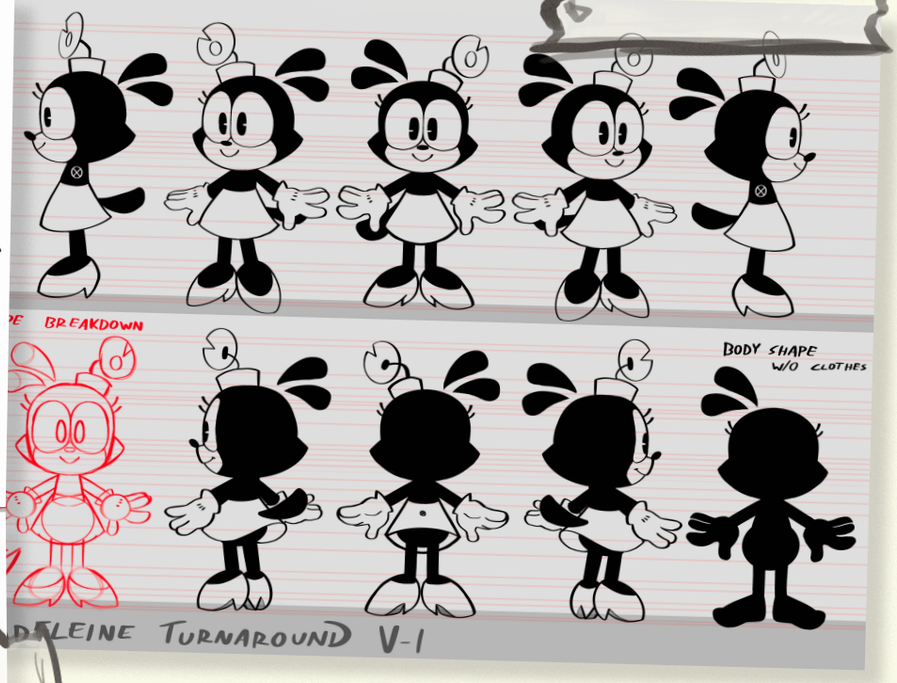

Front
Side
Back
Bottom
Top
Front
Side
Back

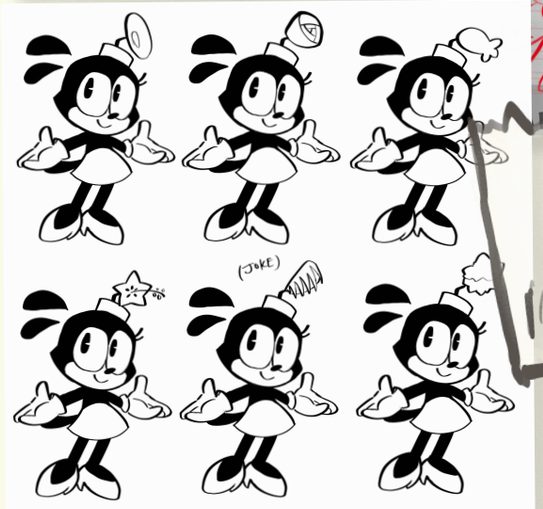
2D Animation Workflow

With production in full throttle, we worked on making the Adeline model into something more animation friendly.
In addition to simplifying her shapes, we also tweaked the design here and there so that our animators could have a better time... animating.



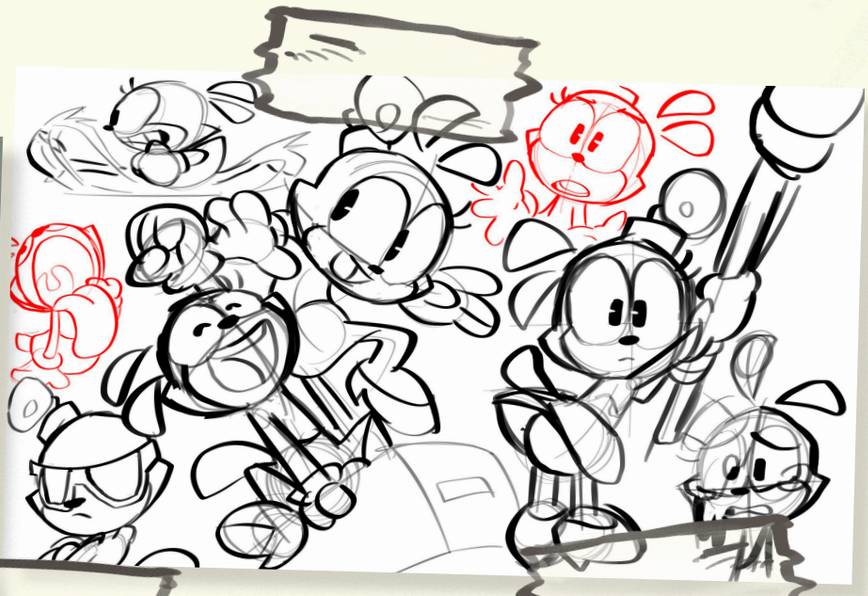


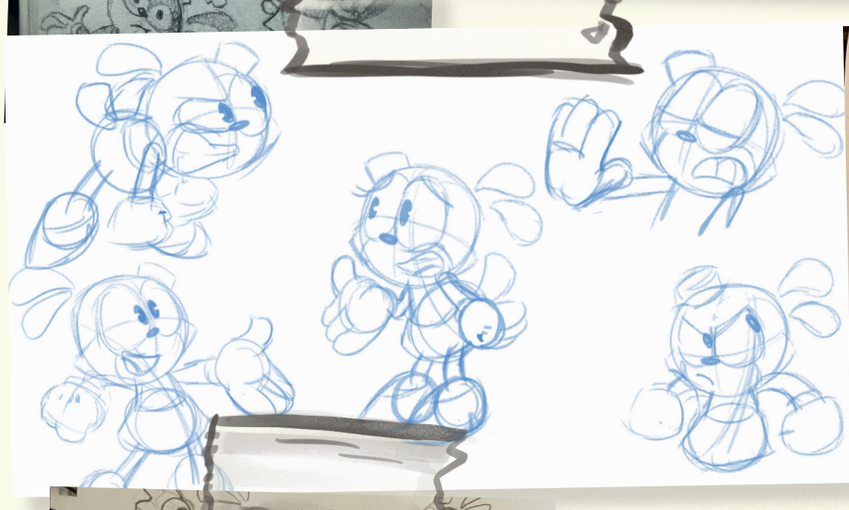


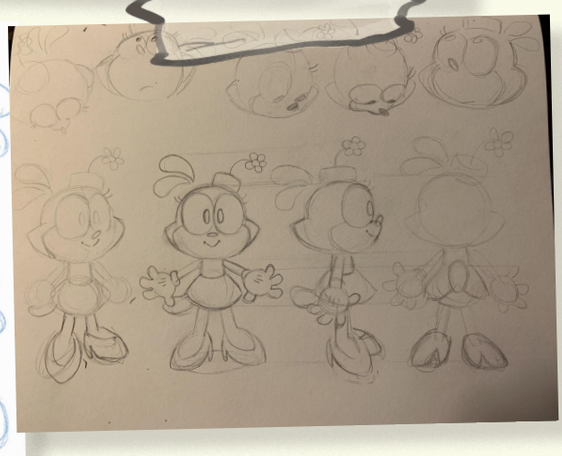


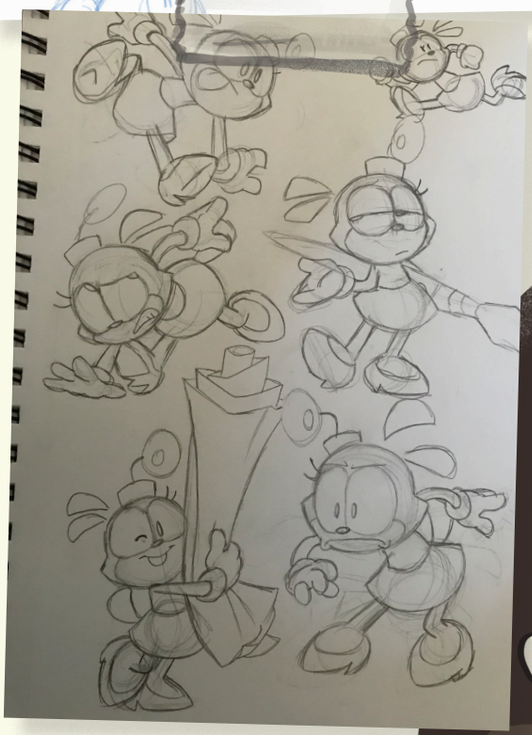
Sometimes it takes more than one head to nail a character. Critiques and feedback can turn a cool design into a great one! It never hurts to ask for help!

After the new Adeline turnaround was established, our 2D animators began pumping out daily drawings to get used to drawing her on model. We made sure to keep this going for as long as possible before starting animation to maintain a somewhat consistent Adeline that remained the same throughout the entire film.



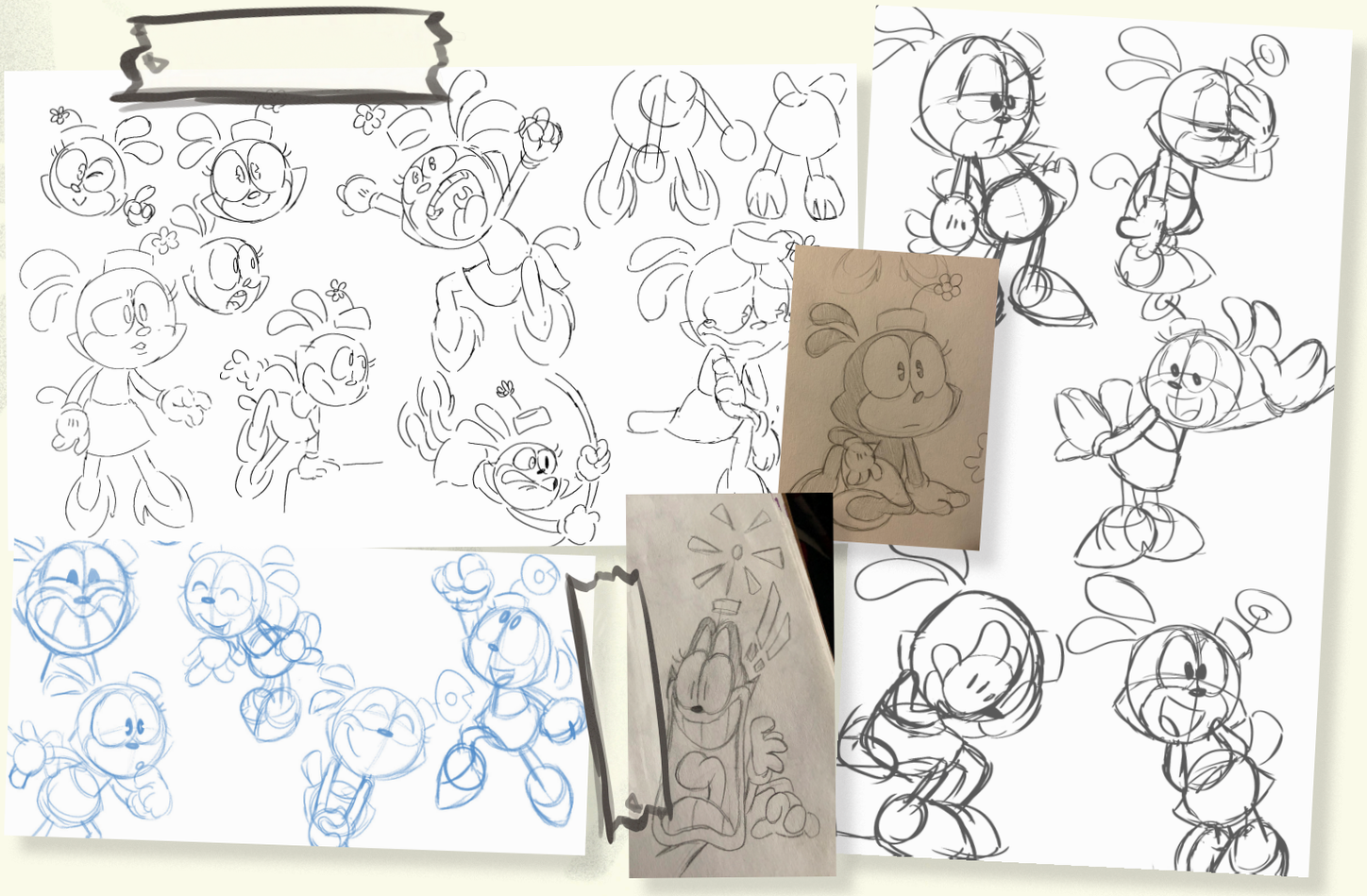




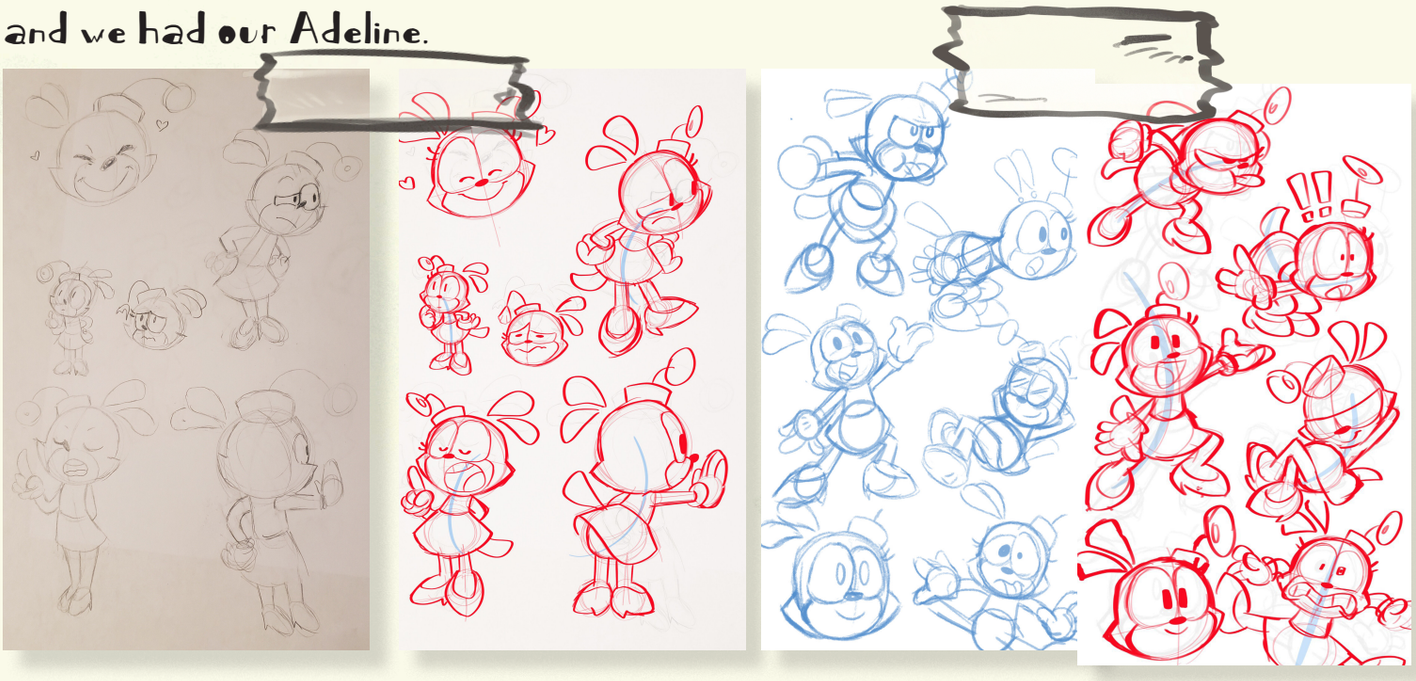


Warmup

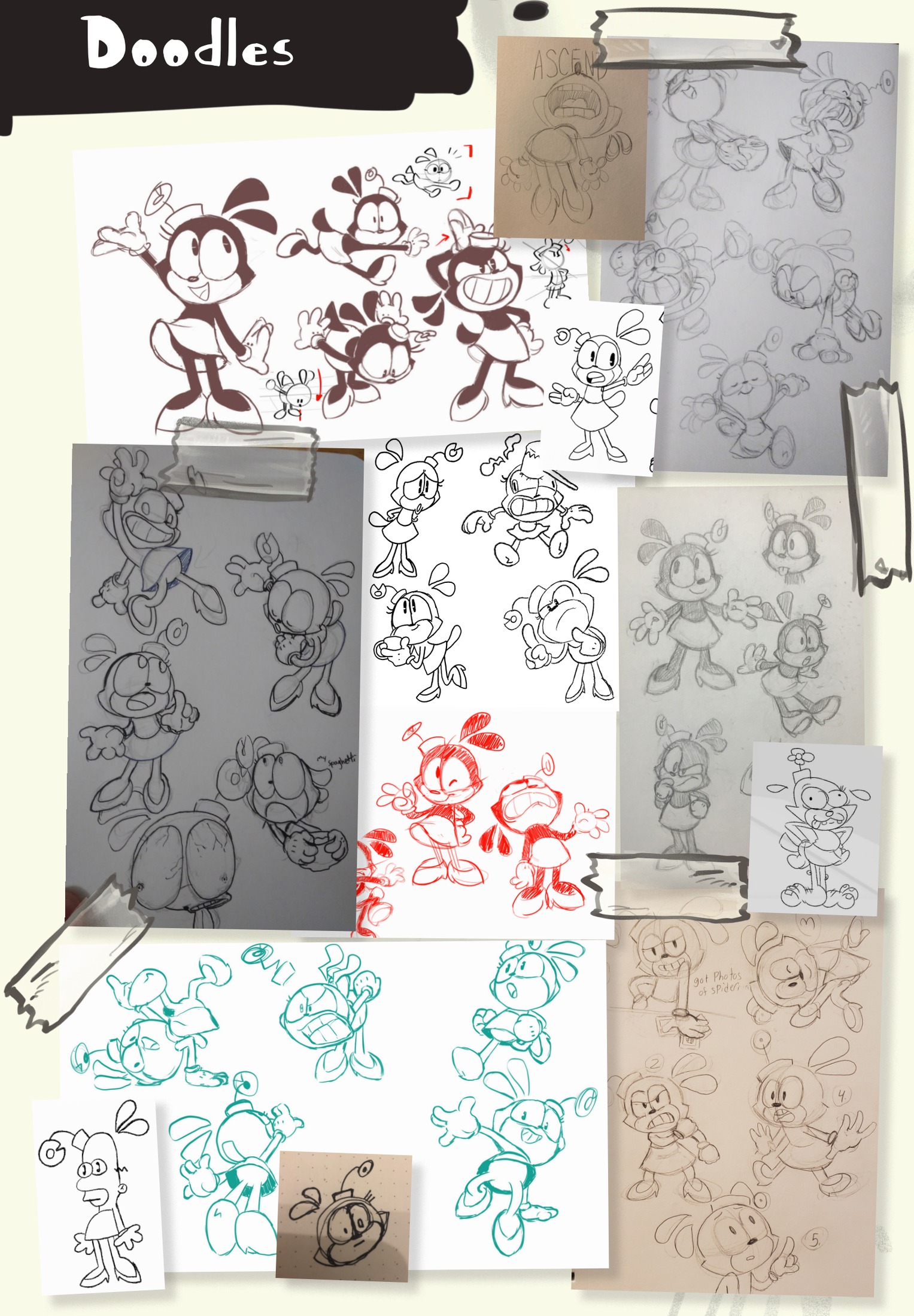
We drew a lot of Adelines before getting into the animation as a sort of training exercise. The focus was getting as many rough poses as possible to develop the animator's muscle memory and keep them all on model.



Andy did frequent draw overs of everyone's sketches to better explain what they got right and what they had to change. Ultimately, the crew got into the groove, and we had our Adeline.

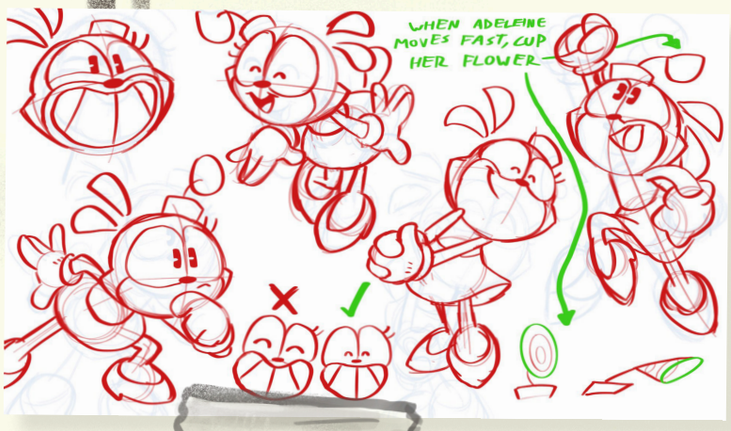


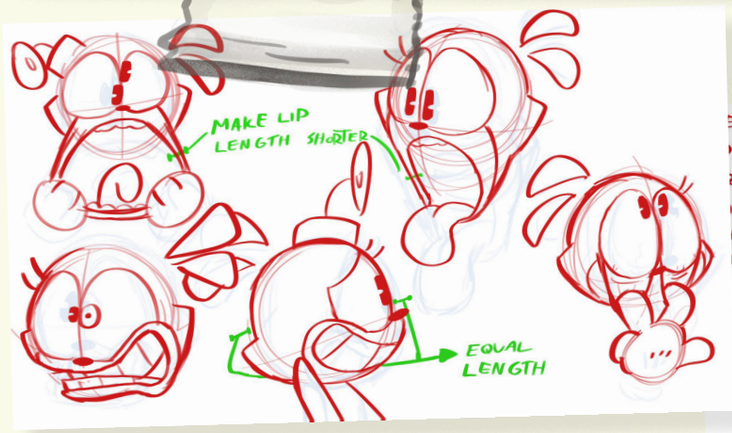
Doodles

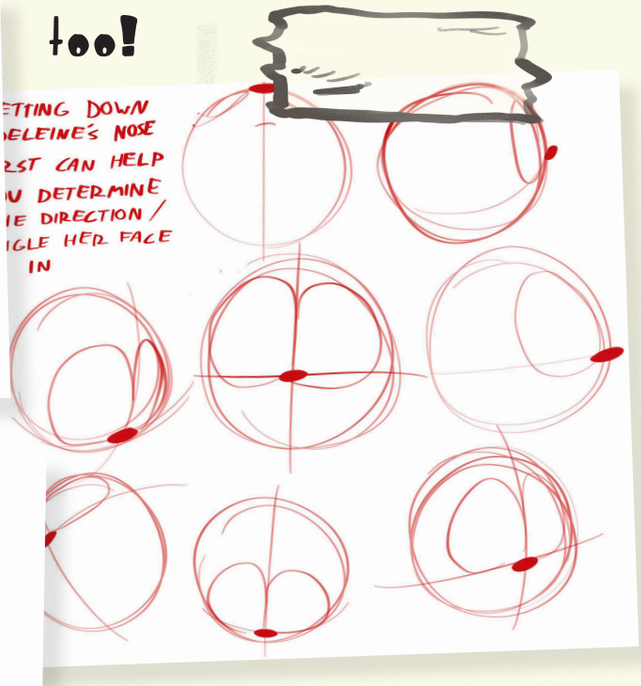


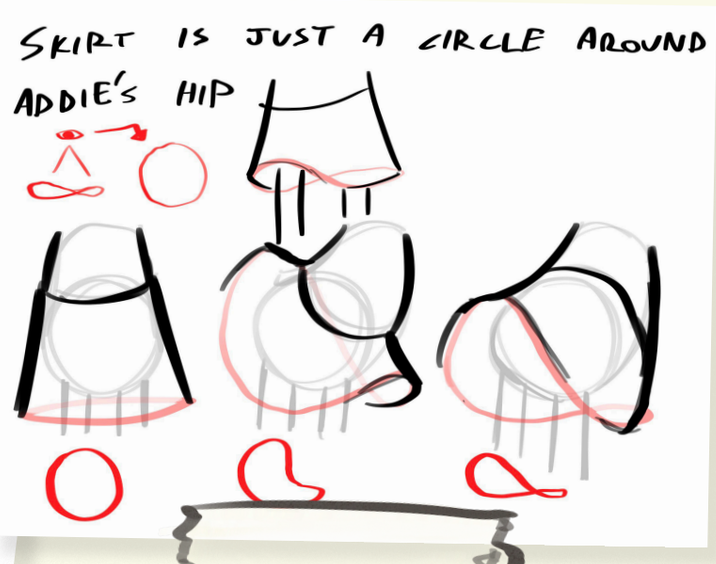
2D Animation Notes

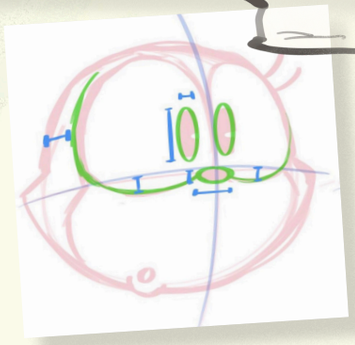
Animated characters need more than just a turnaround if people are going to animate them. Every character needs some sort of breakdown if everyone is to be on the same page. Over the course of the production, Andy kept drawing up guides with specific notes and details that the team used to better their models. Maybe you could use these notes, too!

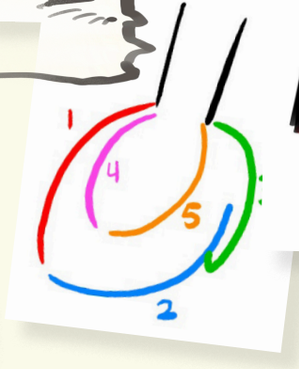


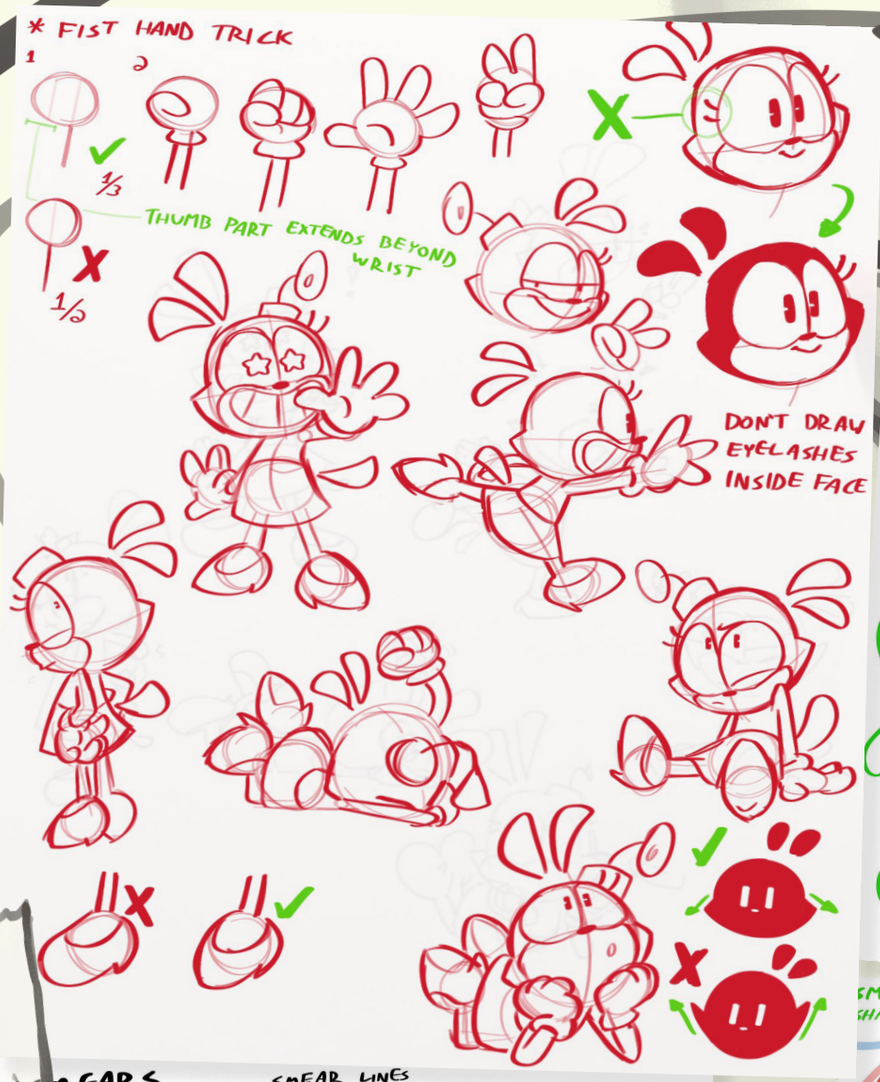


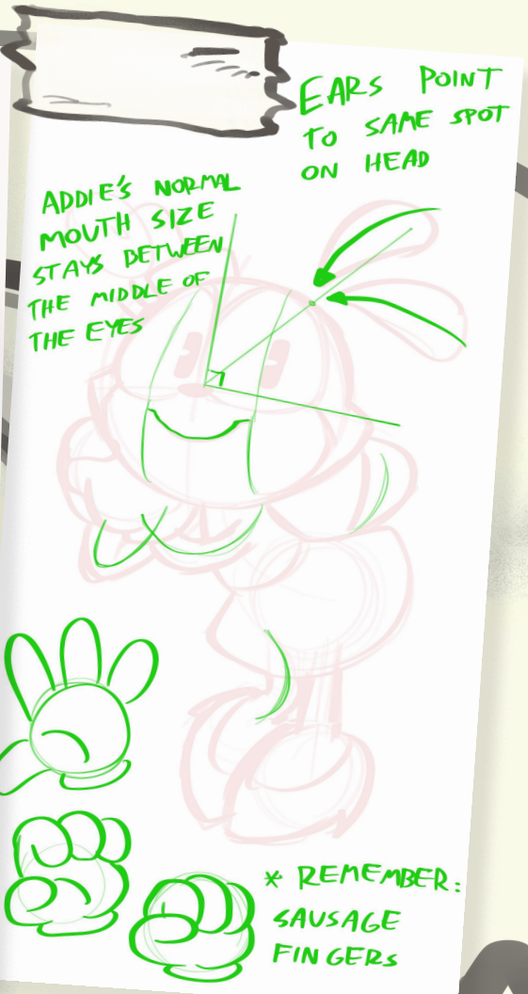


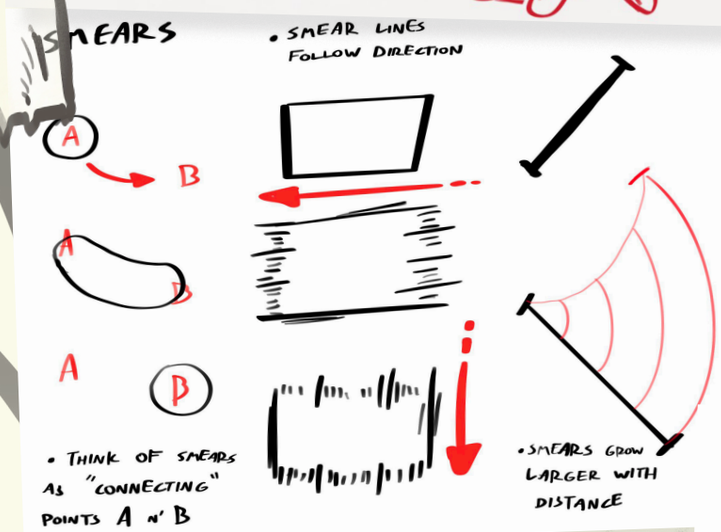


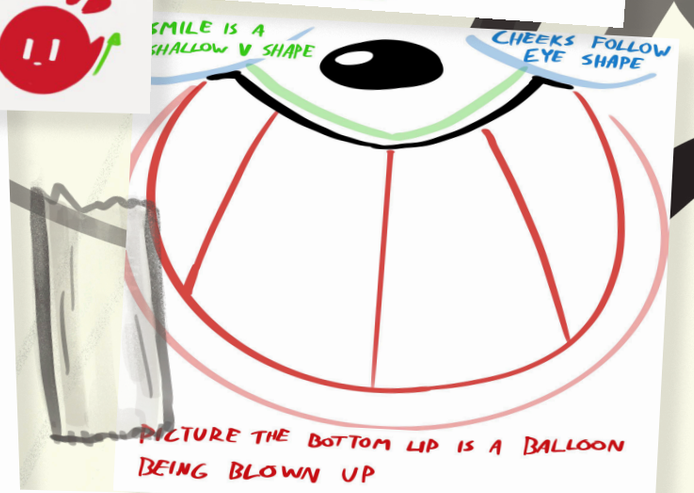


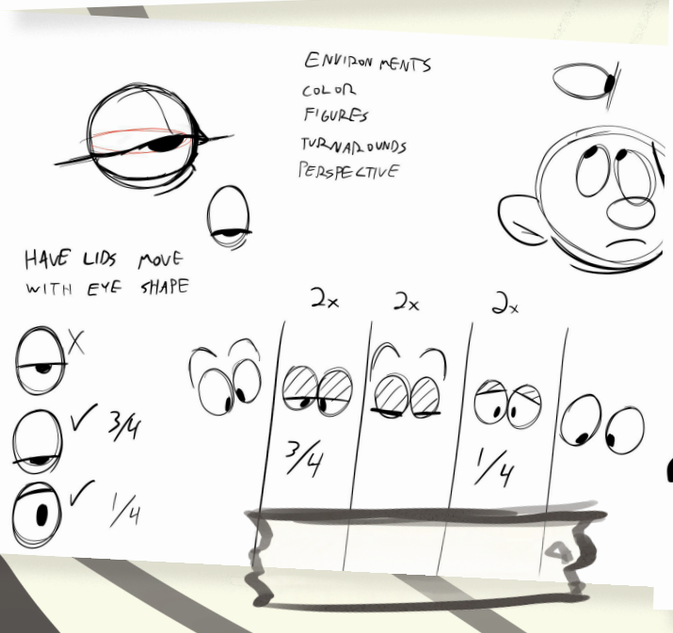


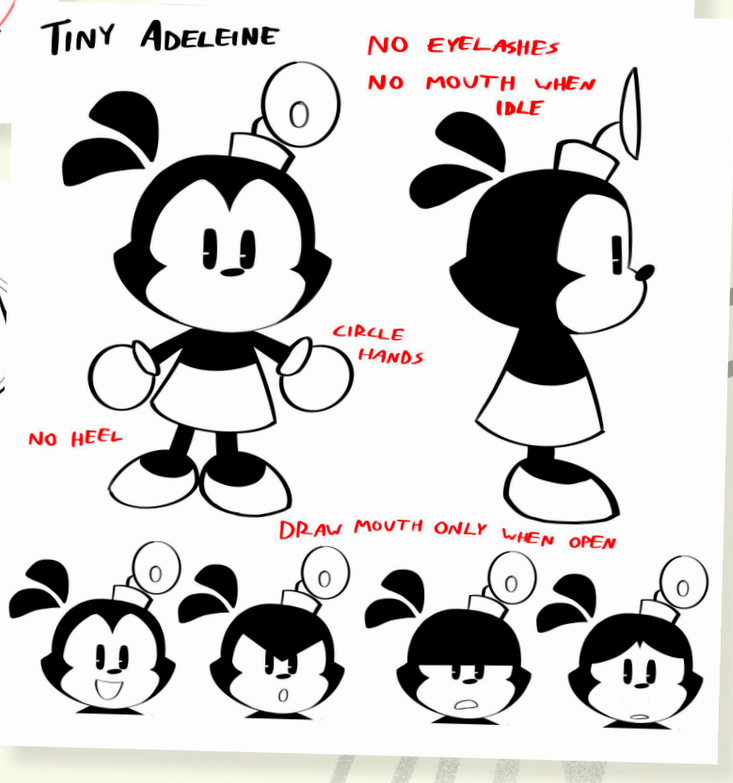

* FIST HAND TRICK
1
2
1/3
THUMB PART EXTENDS BEYOND WRIST
1/2
DONT DRAW EYELASHES INSIDE FACE


EARS POINT TO SAME SPOT ON HEAD
ADDIE'S NORMAL MOUTH SIZE STAYS BETWEEN THE MIDDLE OF THE EYES
* REMEMBER: SAUSAGE FINGERS


SMEARS
• SMEAR LINES FOLLOW DIRECTION
A
B
• THINK OF SMEARS AS "CONNECTING" POINTS A n' B
• SMEARS GROW LARGER WITH DISTANCE

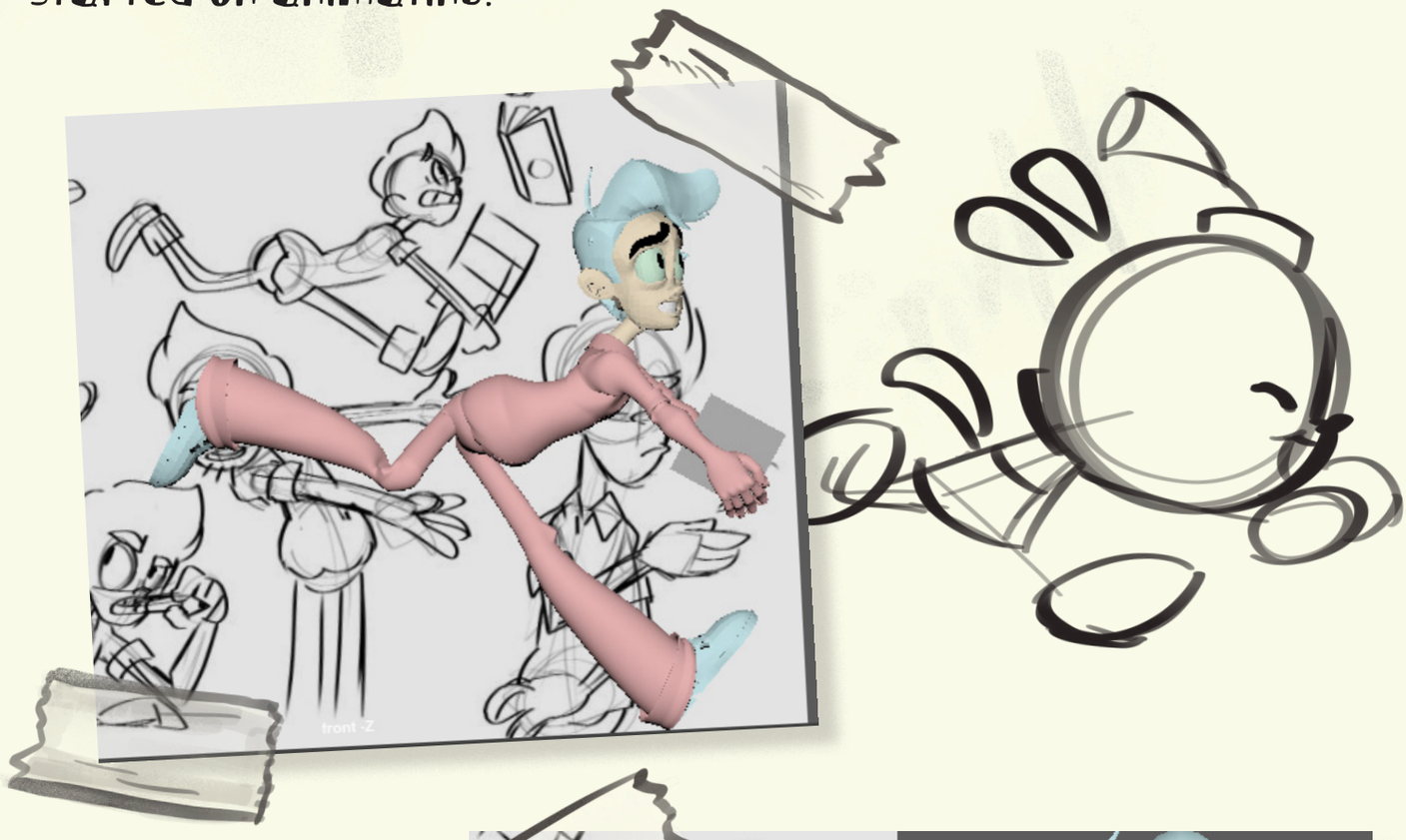

SMILE IS A SHALLOW V SHAPE
CHEEKS FOLLOW EYE SHAPE
PICTURE THE BOTTOM LIP IS A BALLOON BEING BLOWN UP

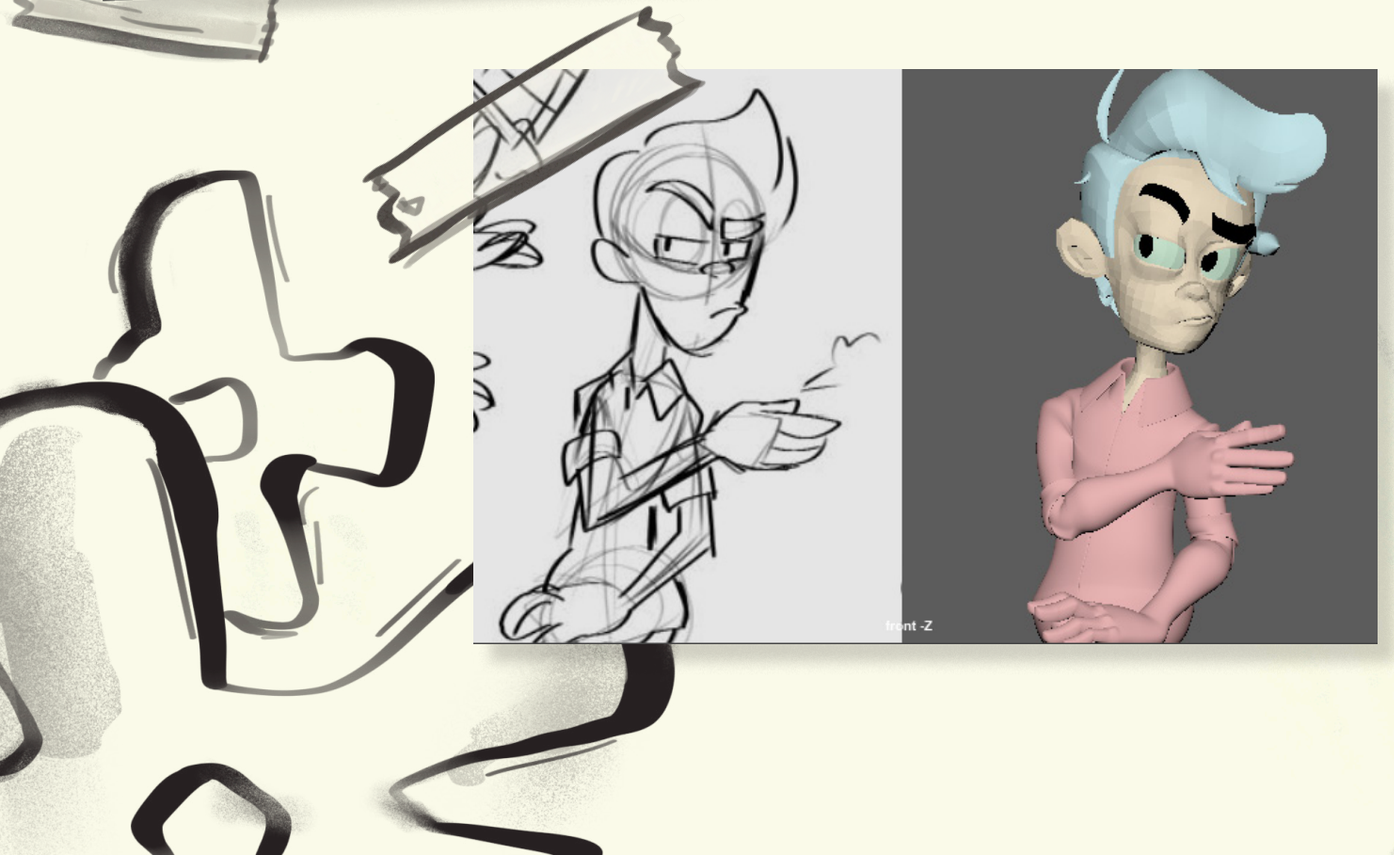

ENVIRONMENTS
COLOR
FIGURES
TURNAROUNDS
PERSPECTIVE
HAVE LIDS MOVE WITH EYE SHAPE
X
3/4
1/4
2x
2x
2x
3/4
1/4

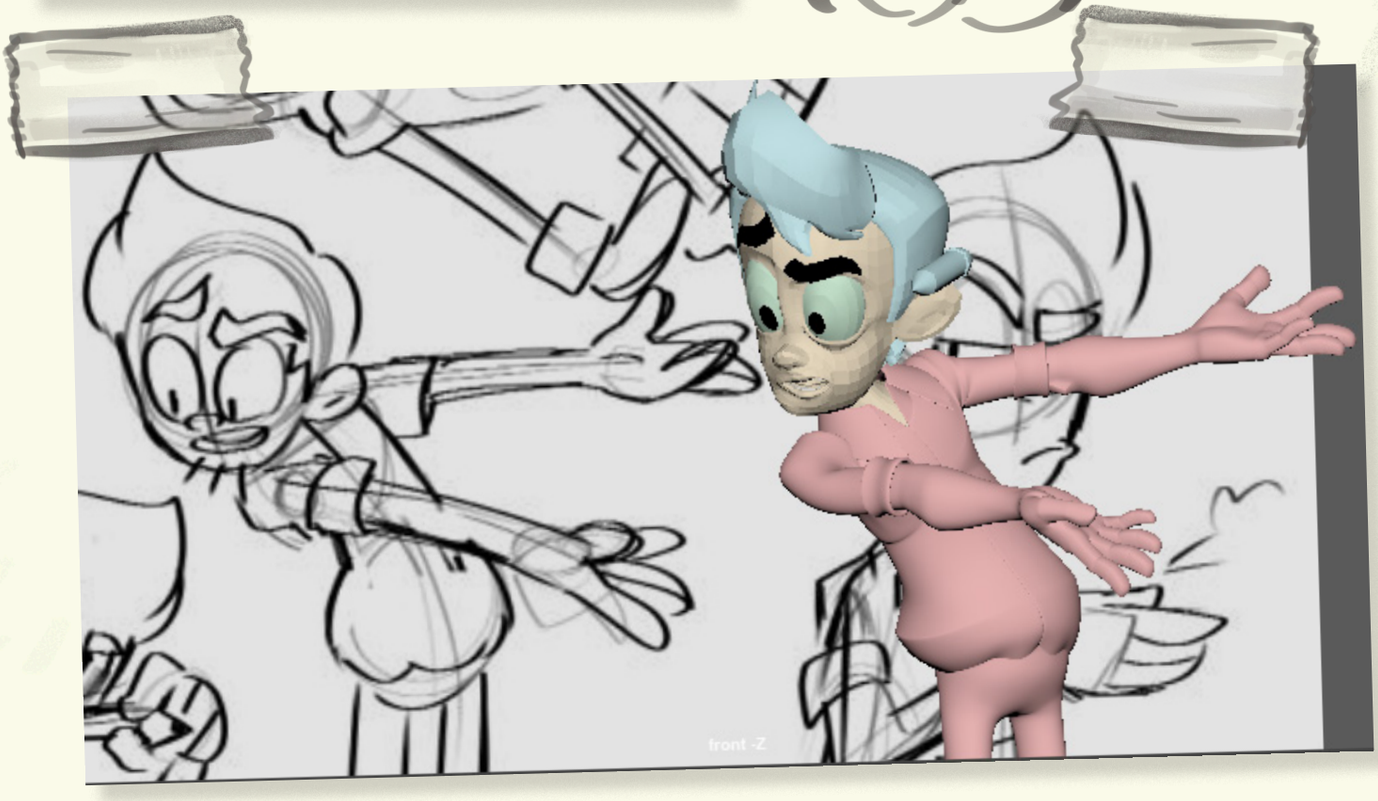

TINY ADELEINE
NO EYELASHES
NO MOUTH WHEN IDLE
CIRCLE HANDS
NO HEEL
DRAW MOUTH ONLY WHEN OPEN

3D Animation Workflow

Our animation workflow was straightforward. Once the first Duncan rig and the temporary office were put together, we had some posing practice to familiarize ourselves with the rig and got started on animating.

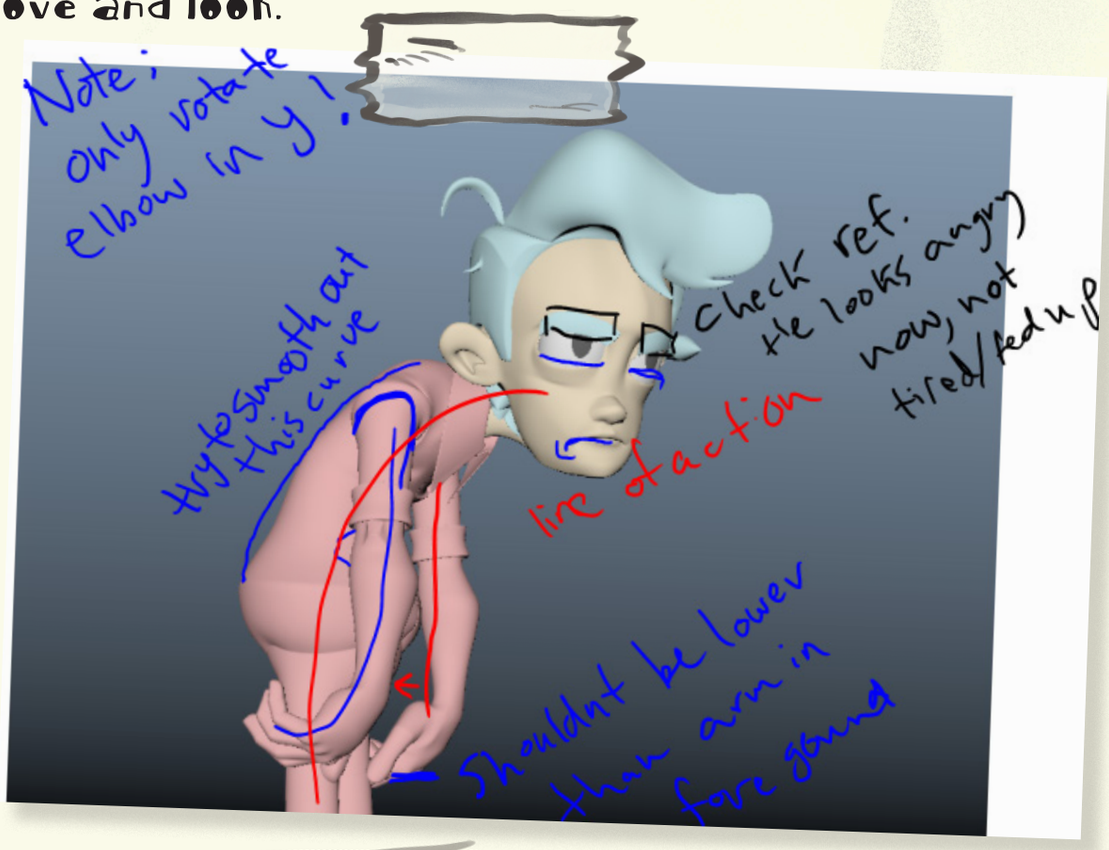


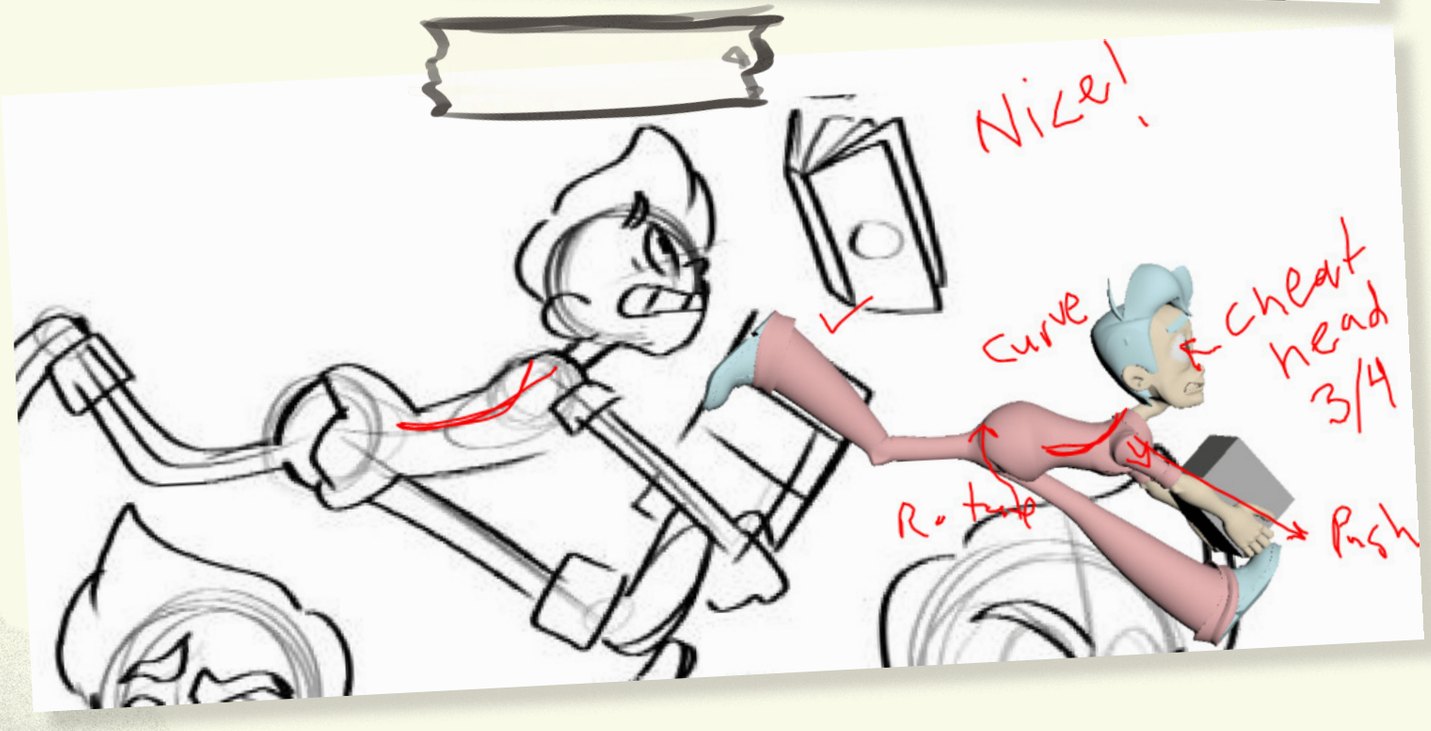



front -Z

3D Animation Notes

Just as Andy worked with the 2D crew to make sure Adeline kept looking consistent, I did draw overs of the test poses to better help everyone understand the specifics of how Duncan was supposed to move and look.





check arm angles
Bottom eyelid
Push nose up
offset
offset finger
rotate
PHEW
FK
move shoulders
twist
IK
offset hips
weight
interaction = IK

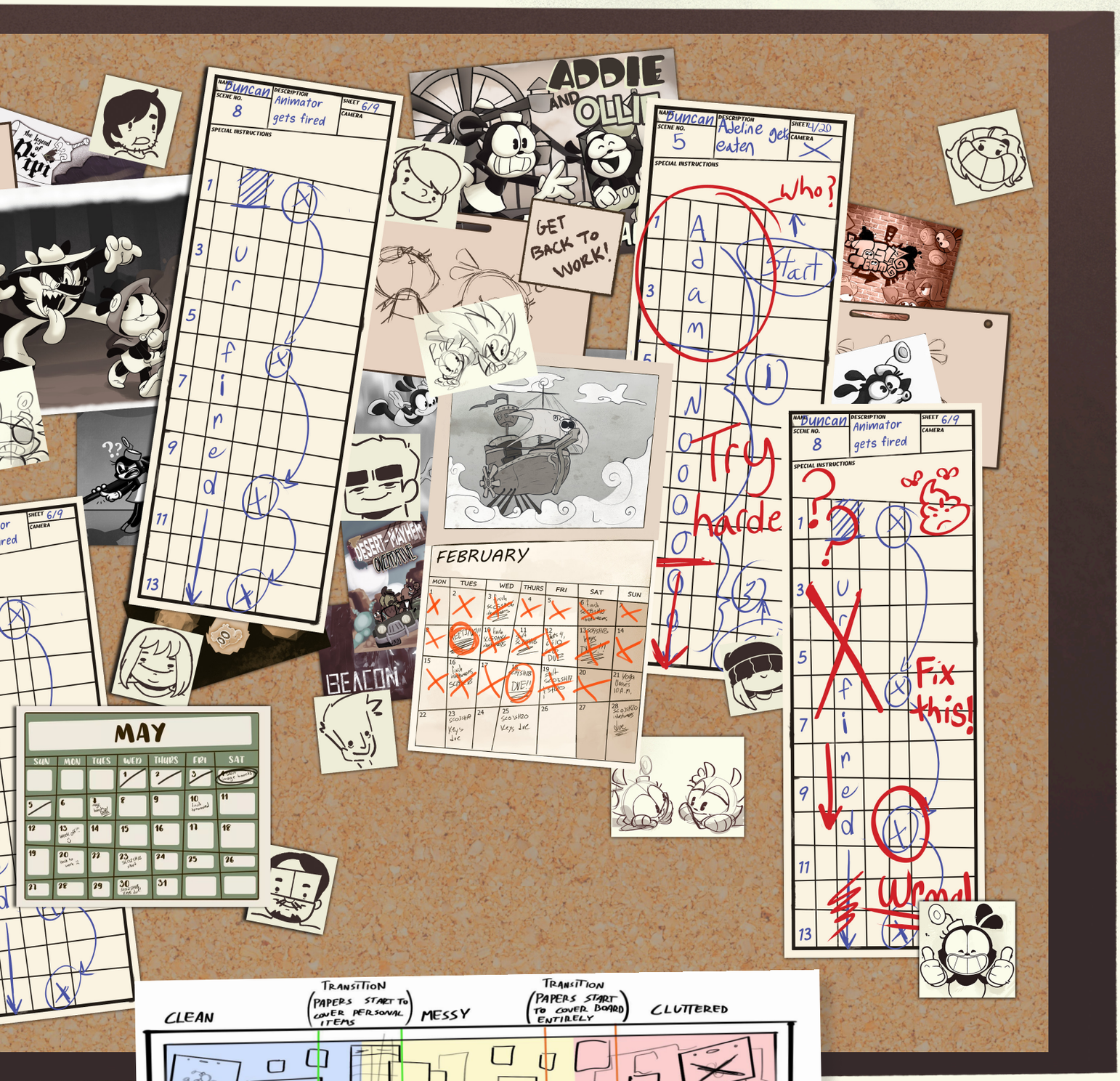
Bringing Adeleine to Life

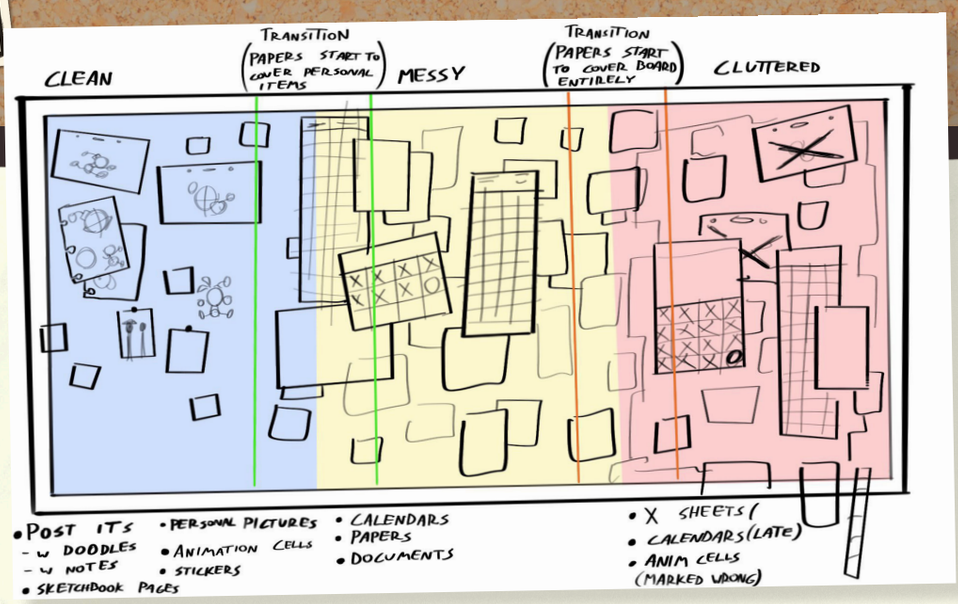
Once a 2D shot is done, we send it down the line to be composited with the 3D shot to make sure Adeline remains seamless in the 3D world. It's not enough to just animate a character, sometimes extra care has to be taken to ensure all elements of a shot mesh together.

With the 2D finalized, our lead compositor was in charge of editing it onto the final 3D renders and sending it off to the final cut where any color correction or additional edits (like film grain) would be added to push the connection between the characters and highlight their differences. In animation, it's the little details that sell the shot.

The Corkboard

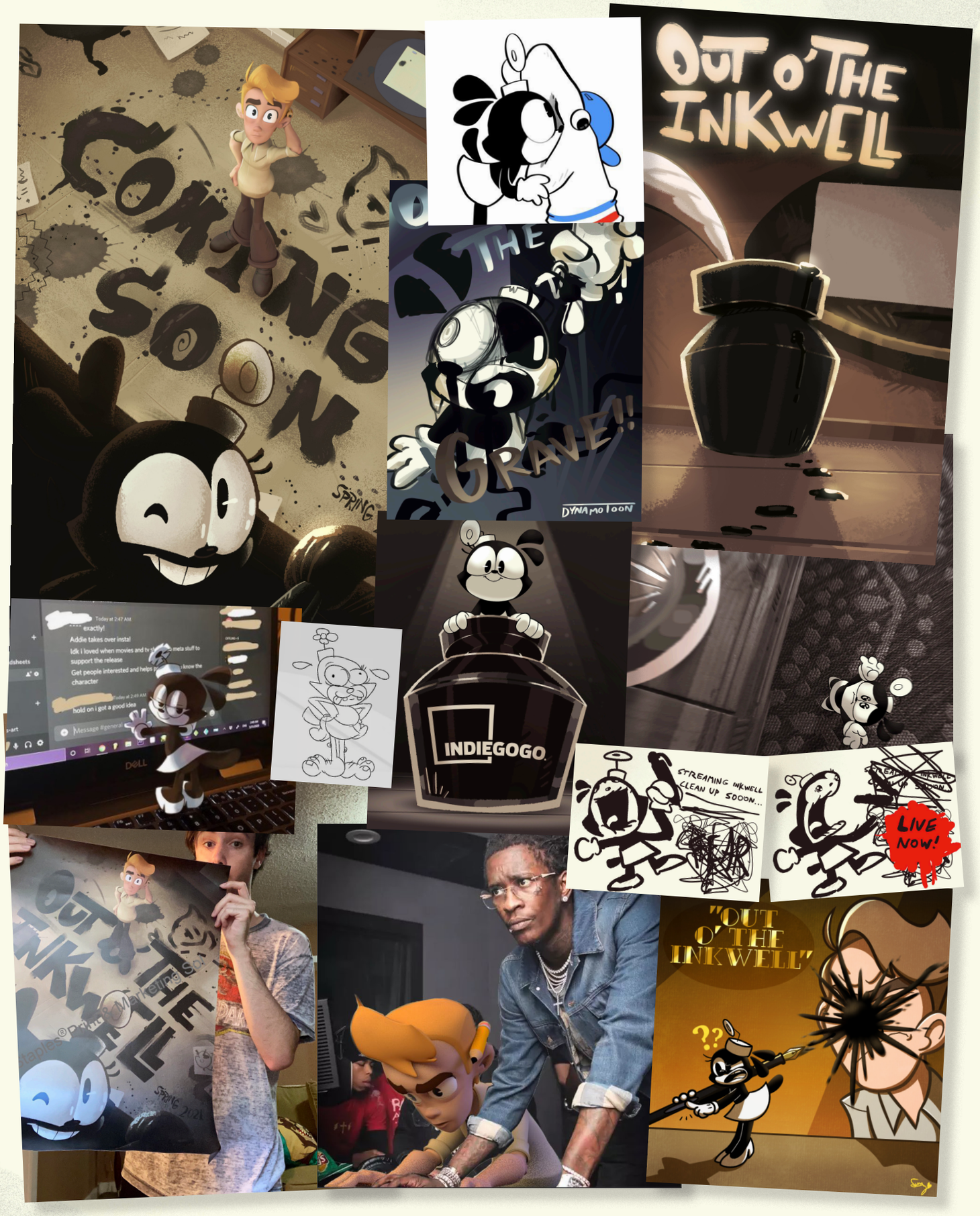
When designing the corkboard, we had organized it based around the panning shot at the beginning of the film. The purpose of this was to illustrate Duncan's career path to the audience. As is the case for a lot of animators, his career starts off smooth and slowly declines into a mess of deadlines, stress, and displeasement with his own talents.





We also took the opportunity to hide some easter eggs for other short films we worked alongside, and some others coming soon! See if you can find 'em all!

Over production we made a bunch of these posts for social media as a way to keep people engaged with the project, and we also got some killer fanart! We had a lot of fun interacting with everybody, and we still can't thank everyone enough for being along for the ride!



Promo n' Stuff

Crew Credits

Created and Directed by
Andy Ortiz and Adam Toutoungi

Produced by
Adam Toutoungi

Visual Development & Storyboarding
Andy Ortiz
Adam Toutoungi
Tengmiao Yu

Animation (2D)
Noah Cheruk
Cameron Greco
Will Kuate
Darian McCollough
Andy Ortiz
Maxwell Pasqualis
Luis Perez
Dominic Seoane
Nate Wisniewski

Clean-up Artists
Kennedy Freeman
Braden Wolf

Animation (3D)
Madison Austin
Amanda Castillo
Flint Cole
Everett Delaney
Brandon Kolaczewski
Mari Machado
Rian Morgan
Thinh Nguyen
Adam Toutoungi

Look Development
David Gelfland
Van Vu Dat Nguyen
Adam Toutoungi
Kayley Westin
Shannon Widjaja

Modellers
Flint Cole
Van Vu Dat Nguyen
Adam Toutoungi

Rigging
Roman Karoly
Brandon Kolaczewski

Lighting
Hailey Akre
David Gelfland
Adam Toutoungi

Sound Effects Editor
Sander Houtman

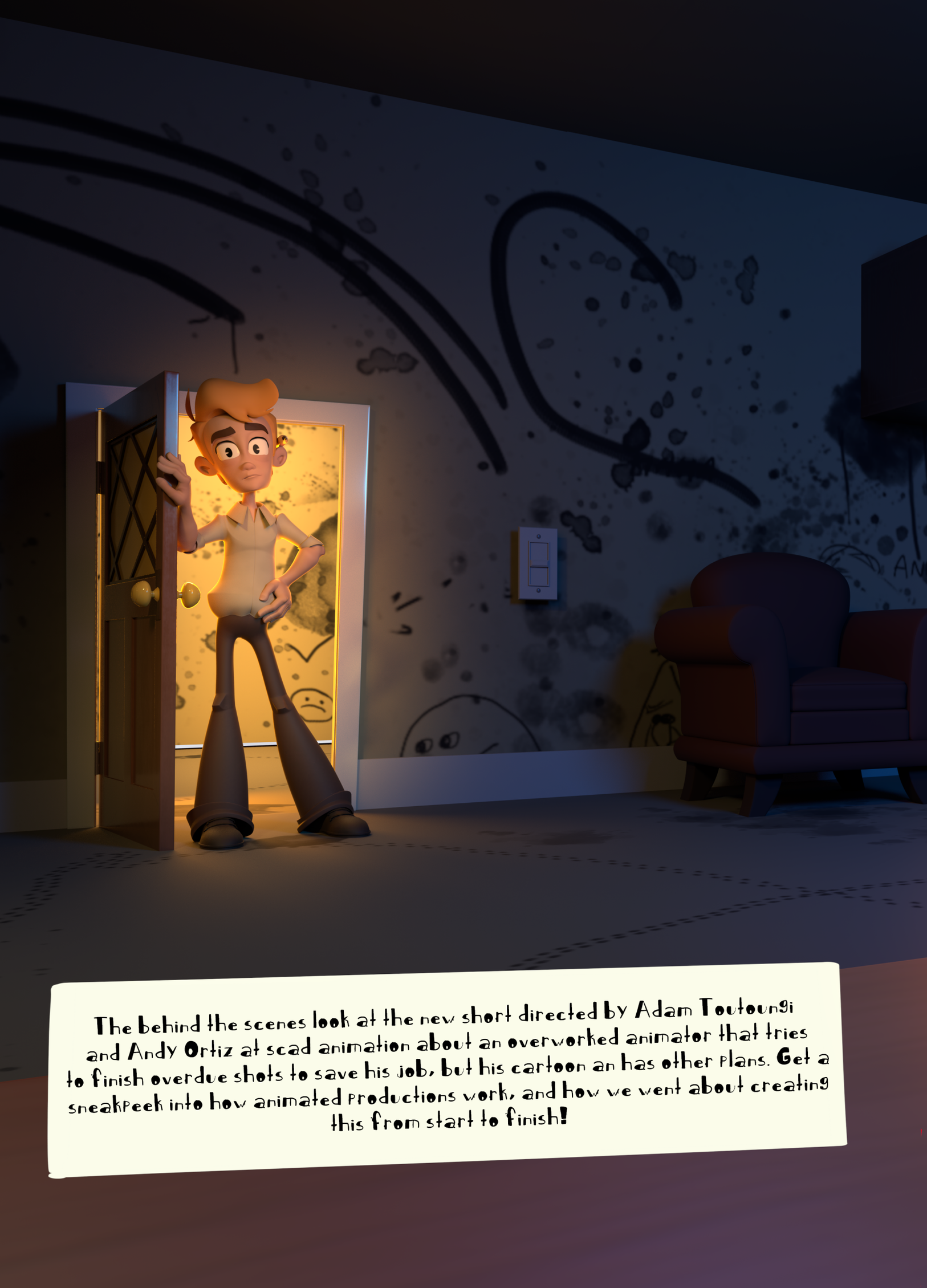
Sound Designer
Sander Houtman

Original Score
Danielle Merlis
Jordan Smith

Compositing / Editing
Adam Toutoungi
Nate Wisniewski

Special Thanks to
Gregory Araya, Zachary Rich, Mason Rose, Nouhad Kalmouni, Abdallah Toutoungi, and all the friends and family that helped us along the way.

'TIL NEXT TIME...



The behind the scenes look at the new short directed by Adam Toutoungi and Andy Ortiz at scad animation about an overworked animator that tries to finish overdue shots to save his job, but his cartoon an has other plans. Get a sneakpeek into how animated productions work, and how we went about creating this from start to finish!