Monotony 07

An Honors Thesis

By

Michael Clinger

Thesis Advisor

Lien Fan Shan

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

Spring Semester, 2007

Expected Date of Graduation
May 5, 2007
Acknowledgements

• I would like to thank Professor Shen for advising me throughout this project. She was very helpful in conceptualizing the project and writing the artist statement.

• I would also like to thank Aimee Howard, who offered constant support and suggestions, and proofread my writing.

• And finally I would like to thank the online computer graphics community for helping with the technical side of this project. Without them I would still be trying to figure out how to uv map.
Abstract

My thesis project is a computer animation depicting the lonely life of someone who spends all of his time at the computer. Of course making the animation required me to do just that. Four cameras set up around my apartment show the three months it took me, sitting alone at my computer, to take the animation from conception to completion. The result is a very repetitive, monotonous animation which is in stark contrast to the normal explosions and fight scenes seen in most computer graphics.
Conceptually my animation is very simple: I wanted to show the lonely existence of someone who spends all of his time in front of the computer. The ironic thing is that that is exactly what making this animation required me to do. Before beginning the project I researched techniques and methods on the internet. While making the animation I worked entirely on the computer, in Maya and Photoshop. And finally, the animation was put together in another computer program, After Effects. Pre-production, production, and post-production were all completed on the computer. The lonely individual in front of the monitor turned out to be me.

I used a lot of repetition in this animation to really emphasize the monotony of this person’s life. The character rises every day at 8 AM and works until midnight every night. He is very precise with his schedule and only breaks to eat and go to the bathroom, which he does at the same times every day. He is very slow and methodical in his movements, and performs the same actions day after day. In fact, if it weren’t for the camera date display, it would be almost impossible to tell one day from the next.

I chose to attempt a realistic look for this animation. In the past my animations have been much more cartoony, but I felt the subject matter for this piece called for a much more realistic style. Since the animation is supposed to illustrate the idea of monotony I used a fairly drab palette to create the textures. There are a few brighter areas, such as the blanket on the recliner, but in general there isn’t anything to stimulate the viewer’s eye. The camera uses a simulated depth of field which keeps the chair in focus, but not much else. This forces the viewer to keep their eyes on the figure at the desk.

By simulating a surveillance camera setup I have turned the viewer into a voyeur. I did this to again push the idea of monotony. When someone watches video-tape footage they do it with expectations of something happening. In this animation, nothing does. There is no sound or anything else to stimulate the viewer: all they can do is stare at the monitor. It’s twenty-two minutes (spanning three months) of the same routine over and over. Watching the entire thing will begin to induce the same mind-numbing effect the figure in the animation experienced while working at the computer for fourteen hours a day.