ABSTRACT

THESIS: Life Socks: A Methodology for Analyzing Empathy Created for Inanimate, Non-Humanoid Characters in Digital Video Storytelling

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For as long as animation itself has existed, the use of characters both similar to ourselves and otherwise have been used to tell stories. A particular topic within the animation field has little to no development; how empathy is created for characters that are inspired by non-humanoid, inanimate objects. Characters such as the magic carpet from Alladin, or Luxo, the lamp from Pixar’s logo animation have become iconic not only in the animation field but film itself. These types of characters have become prevalent in animated films that annually profit studios hundreds of millions of dollars, prompting a study of their impact within a narrative.

To aid in the research in this area, a short film featuring sock puppet characters will be created, analyzed and released for additional study. Sock puppets were chosen because of their non-humanoid form and their lack of a significant connotation associated with their intended use. The story explored by these characters was developed with a human cast in mind in hopes of creating empathy for the characters’ goals and struggles, rather than their form. This film could be used for future tests when analyzing empathy in filmmaking, and specifically, empathy for certain character types.