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CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO DE LISBOA

**ESCOLA DE COMUNICAÇÃO, ARQUITETURA, ARTES E TECNOLOGIAS
DA INFORMAÇÃO**

MESTRADO EM ARTES DA ANIMAÇÃO

MY SUPERPOWER: DOCUMENTARY ANIMATION

Dissertação apresentada a provas públicas para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Arte da Animação, orientada pelo Professor Doutor Paulo Renato Da Silva Gil Viveiros

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VERSÃO FINAL

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ABSTRACT:

This report aims to explore the process of creating a documentary animation *My Superpower*. The animation film is based on interviews with three women from different cultural backgrounds, focusing on gender stereotypes in contemporary society. It explores the creative process from the beginning, such as explaining the theme selection and determining the interviewees' age range and sociocultural background, followed by the development of pertinent questions for the interview and the process of frame-by-frame animation. Additionally, it addresses various researches on female representation in animation and documentary animation in general by Gabriela Sá (2023), Skoller J. (2011), and others, sources of inspiration from *Persepolis* (2007) to *What is a Woman?* (2022) & *Woman* (2009), methodologies and tools utilized throughout the project, how women have been portrayed in animation in the past, and how it has been evolving.

Key Words: Documentary animation, interviews, women, multicultural.

RESUMO:

Este relatório tem como objetivo explorar o processo de criação da animação documental *My Superpower*. O filme de animação fundamenta-se em entrevistas com três mulheres de diferentes contextos culturais, com foco em estereótipos de gênero na sociedade contemporânea. Examina-se o processo criativo desde o início, incluindo a explicação dos critérios para escolha do tema e a definição da faixa etária e do perfil sociocultural das entrevistadas, seguida pela elaboração de perguntas pertinentes às entrevistas e pelo desenvolvimento da animação imagem por imagem. Além disso, são discutidas diversas pesquisas sobre a representação feminina na animação e sobre a animação documental em geral, com base em estudos de Gabriela Sá (2023), Skoller J. (2011) e outros, bem como as principais fontes de inspiração — desde *Persepolis* (2007) até *What is a Woman?* (2022) e *Woman* (2009) —, as metodologias e ferramentas empregadas ao longo do projeto, a forma como as mulheres vêm sendo retratadas na animação ao longo da história e as mudanças que vêm ocorrendo nesse cenário.

Palavras-chave: animação documental, entrevistas, mulheres, multicultural.

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INTRODUCTION

The *My Superpower* documentary animation film was inspired by gender inequality in contemporary society where, even though we have achieved some progress, the Global Gender Gap Report 2024¹ shows that at the current rate of progress, it will take 134 years to reach full parity (i.e. in 2158).

In a patriarchal society, female voices and opinions tend to stay in the background, not be taken seriously or bluntly ignored, especially the voices of women of color, from less developed countries, and ethnic minorities. By undertaking this project, I wanted to provide an opportunity for diverse voices to be heard, multicultural backgrounds to be seen, and non-conventional stories to be told. The project seeks to not only reflect on social asymmetries but also to build a bridge between different countries and cultures.

This work aims to present the research that took place during its development at both theoretical and practical levels. The first part of the thesis explores sources of inspiration within film and other forms of art, whilst the second part of the work exposes the development process from conceptual development and conducting interviews with women to artistic research and production while conceptualizing motivation, exposing the challenges encountered, and providing possible approaches to overcome them.

¹ Global Gender Gap Report 2024. Consulted on 10/12/2024.

PART 1 - THE ANCHORING POINT

CHAPTER 1 - INSPIRATION WITHIN FILM

This chapter is dedicated to inspiration sources within the film realm. It is divided into two sections; the first section presents sources within animation films and the second section analyses sources within live-action films.

1.1. — Animation films



Image #1 — Screenshots from Never Like the First Time! (2006)

Never Like the First Time! (2006) is a short documentary animation film by Swedish filmmaker Jonas Odell (Image #1). This documentary is based on interviews with individuals on their first sexual experiences, using an episodic structure with a clear separation between stories and integrating the recorded interviews as narration throughout the film. Each of the stories has a unique visual style that symbolizes the individuality of each experience and is adapted to fit the emotional tone of the story to represent a spectrum of emotions from awkwardness to pain. Some visual styles illustrate emotions in a metaphorical way, demonstrating the abilities of documentary animation to capture psychological states of mind and interpretations of reality. Switches in the visual styles, the main emotion of the stories, and even the length of each of the stories let Odell create a rhythm in animation to engage with the audience and avoid monotony.

Odell's approach to conducting «interviews with individuals questioned on specific issues such as sex, lies, and terrorism» (Martinelli, 2022, p.158) and integrating these audio files into the final films inspired me to follow this method in my own project.



Image #2 — Screenshots from «Mama Has a Mustache» (2021)

Mama Has a Mustache (2021) is a short documentary animation about gender and family seen through children's eyes by American film director Sally Rubin (Image #2).

As well as Odell's documentary, Rubin used audio interviews as a foundation for her film. In her case, she interviews children aged 5-10 and then combines audio files with mixed media animation. As Rubin says on the film website², the idea of gender as a social construct rather than a biological trait is not new. In the 20th century,



Image #3 — Screenshot from 30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone (2013)

we have a numerous amount of terms to describe gender identities outside of the binary system. Therefore, the perception of gender identities is complicated and more nuanced than ever. She explores and uncovers children's perceptions of their identities and their parents' gender identities with humor and playfulness.

² www.mamahasmustache.com

Award-winning documentary *30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* (2013) talks about Minority Leader Bernadette Lahai and feminist activist Barbara Bangura in Sierra Leone (Image #3). Activists there have been fighting for over a decade for 30% female representation in the Sierra Leonean legislature, which is reflected in the title of the film.

«Consequently, gender equity is fundamentally about voice, place, and space. In patriarchal societies, women are placed behind, under, after, spaced small, and muted. The expectation in Sierra Leone, as in many places around the world, is that women should remain in the kitchen and not in politics as if politics is as tangible as a physical kitchen. When women enter politics, they become large, before, in front of, and on top of, in the eyes of those invested in male domination and gender based hegemony. They become a threat to society as ordered.» (Jackson, 2014, p.2)



Image #4 — Screenshots from *Persepolis* (2007)

Persepolis (2007) is an adult animated biographical drama based on an autobiographical series of French comics by Marjane Satrapi (Image #4). Satrapi collaborated with Vincent Paronaud, both as a screenwriter and director. Marjane's animation falls into the documentary animation category because it is based on her own experience of growing up in Iran during the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war, told by her in the comics and later in animation. «Persepolis (...) have their creators consciously crafting their own images and identities, reenacting various traumas through the medium of animation to process the memories for the filmmaker and the audience» (Ristola, 2016, p.8).

In one of the interviews, Marjane mentioned that «[Persepolis is] certainly not a documentary about my life, and it's certainly a subjective point of view» (MovieWeb 2010). But as Nichols writes, “the diversity of the films that make up the documentary tradition also contributes to its fluidity. (...) If we define documentaries as “address[ing]

the world in which we live rather than a world imagined by the filmmaker” (2010:11, p.20). Therefore, *Persepolis*, a unique and authentic animation because of its theme, visual style, country of origin, etc., pushes the boundaries of documentary further than ever before. Along with that, *Persepolis* explores oppression and personal freedom through Marjane's defiance of societal expectations, such as listening to Western music, as well as her refusal to follow prescribed roles of femininity, such as wearing the veil. Marjane's grandmother presents as a wise old woman and women as a group, are pictured collectively resisting oppression in some parts of the film.

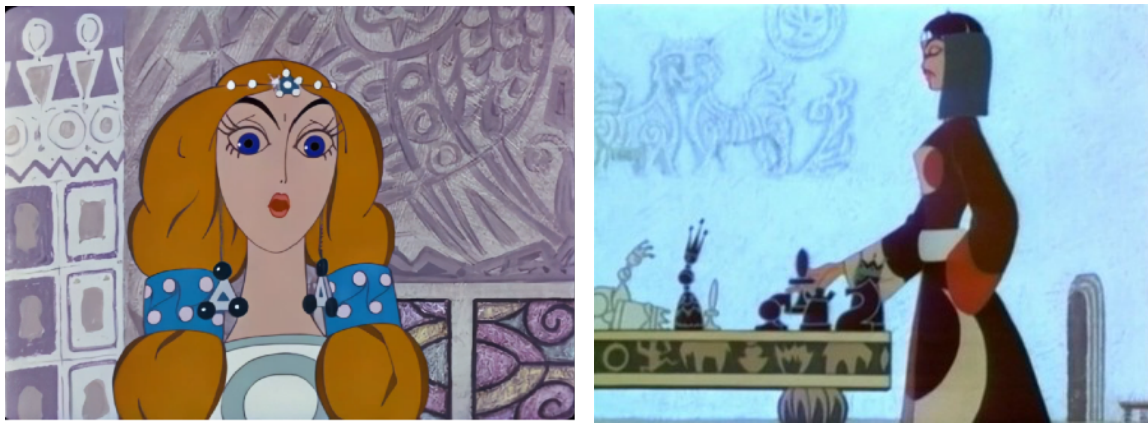


Image #5 — Screenshots from animation *Vasilisa Mikulishna* (1975)

In the animated film *Vasilisa Mikulishna* (1975) by soviet animation director Roman Davydov, based on ancient Russian bylinas³, the portrayal of the main character, Vasilisa, embodies strength, wisdom, and independence (Image #5). Vasilisa breaks the stereotype of weak female characters by taking the initiative to help her husband when he is in danger.

She solves complex problems through her intelligence rather than force and, at the same time, embodies care and loyalty. Her love for her husband and ability to self-sacrifice for the sake of her loved one portrays Vasilisa as a multi-dimensional character with a mix of softness and strength that coexist together. Although ancient stories inspired the animated film, Vasilisa's character can be seen as a representation of feminist ideas with her independence, strength, and ability to be in parity with men, who question traditional gender roles. Vasilisa combines the ability to love deeply with

³ Bylina — is a type of Old Russian epic poem

heroism and courage and illustrates the idea of a woman being a supportive figure in the background and a proactive, strong leader who stands by her beliefs.



Image #6 — Screenshots from animation The Bremen Town Musicians (1969)

Atamansha (female chieftain, Image #6) from *The Bremen Town Musicians* (1969) by soviet animation director Inessa Kovalevskaya is a vivid female character with a mix of charisma, strength, and humoristic elements. She is a clear leader of the group of male bandits with her authority and self-confidence. Even though being an antagonist in the story, she is portrayed with grotesque humor, bold physical appearance, and memorable style. She creates a playful atmosphere that impacts her character's role as less threatening and more of being charming. Being an antagonist herself, she wasn't portrayed as a villain in the stereotypical approach. The combination of charisma and easy-going attitude, combined with her focus on her own goals and interests, represents a female character that breaks out of the traditional roles in Soviet animation and makes her stand out as a memorable antagonist.



Image #7 — Screenshots from the animation The Snow Queen (1957)

In the soviet animation *The Snow Queen* (1957) by Lev Atamanov, the female side character, a robber girl, is a memorable character with a strong personality (Image #7 on the left). She is wayward, drastic, decisive, brave, rebellious, and, simultaneously, a bit naive with a warm heart. Her robber appearance hides her kind heart. Despite being in a band of brigands, she helps Gerda (the main character on the right in image #7), making her character appear multi-layered with a personal story, motivation, and development within the film.



Image #8 — Screenshot from the animation *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984)

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind (1984) (Image #8) and *Princess Mononoke* (1997) (Image #9) are both animations with lead female characters by Hayao Miyazaki — a famous Japanese animation film director.

In general, female characters created by Hayao Miyazaki represent a wide range of characters, from child witches to young girls to warriors. He creates a whole new concept of female heroines who aren't sexualized, are self-driven, have detailed storylines and strong characters with opinions they stand for.

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind (1984) «has been hailed as a benchmark for feminism in cinema. The film revolves around a strong-willed princess of a tribe who struggles to maintain a balance between her tribe, invaders, and mutated insects in a post-apocalyptic setting» (Price, 2020, p.3)

The main idea by Miyazaki of a creative lead character for his *Princess Mononoke* (1997) animation film was to create a protagonist who ‘understands, or accepts.’ (McCarthy, H.; 2019, p. 98), someone who can negotiate instead of fighting. From his point of view, it could only be a female character. In Miyazaki’s eyes, leading male characters would require a villain to defend, which would change the main idea of the whole animation film — the idea of a connection between human beings and nature. Therefore, Miyazaki presents to the audience «the young female hero - a girl as capable in action and intellect as any male, but with the ability to embrace and promote reconciliation and coexistence.» (McCarthy, H.; 2019, p. 98)



Image #9 — Screenshot from Princess Mononoke (1997)

Both San’s (the main female character in *Princess Mononoke*) and Nausicaä’s journeys are examples of going through their quests to find a balance between aggression and nurturing, leadership and empathy, masculinity and femininity within themselves. They resonate with nature, mysticism, and empowerment. Both heroines embody nature, acting as mediators between humanity and nature. They can be seen as complex, independent, and multi-dimensional characters, powerful sources of inspiration, and role models. «Miyazaki’s women more than handle themselves and are often solving others’ problems as well. It breaks modern story tropes by having female characters save the day and be more heroic and noble than their male counterparts.» (Price, 2020, p.5)

Yan (Image #10) — the main character of *Good Hunting* from the animated series *Love, Death & Robots* (2019) — evolves from a haunting spirit to reclaim her power in the world. «Good Hunting implies the transformation of woman's identity <...> in today's society.» (Peng & Tao, 2023, p.11) and represents contemporary beliefs on female identity. In «Good Hunting of *Love Death & Robots* (2019), it can be seen that the stigmatization of “evil woman” or *hulijing* is gradually broken and the re-characterization of *hulijing* is closely related to woman's body in a new cultural context.» (Peng & Tao, 2023, p.15)



Image #10 — Screenshot from *Love, Death & Robots* (2019 - present)

1.2. — Live-action films



Image #11 — Screenshot from Miss Representation (2011)

The documentary live-action film *Miss Representation* (2011) by Jennifer Siebel Newsom talks about the under-representation of women in positions of power in America (Image #11). This movie

«traces the role of the media in shaping the body image of girls and women in ways which severely constrain their participation in political and social life. It is argued that objectification of women in the media encourages women to see themselves as object, such self-objectification making them less likely to engage in leadership practice.» (Bell & Sinclair, 2016, p.7).

Newsom highlights some key statistics in her film, such as only 16% of protagonists in films are female.



Image #12 — Screenshots from Woman (2019)

Woman (2019) directed by Anastasia Mikova and Yann Arthus-Bertrand, displays interviews with 2,000 women from 50 different countries and addresses diverse themes such as motherhood, education, menstruation, and sexuality (Image #12).

«Woman was born of a desire to see the world through a woman's eyes. Then the questions started to flow. What are the stages marking a woman's passage from a little girl to an 80-year-old grandma? What are her dreams and hopes as well as her greatest fears and scars? What does she expect of life, society, and men? What is a woman's relationship to her body and to seduction? What part do appearances and beauty play in her life? How does motherhood change her life? What do we know of female desire, and why do certain cultures find it so frightening?» («Woman» 2019, a film by Yann Arthus-Bertrand & Anastasia Mikova)



Image #13 — Poster of Woman (2019)

This documentary «claims visual insights and narratives about virtually anyone, anywhere, suggesting that in the end we are all the same.» (La Barre, 2019, p.277). This is also suggested in the title of the film in the original language (French) — «Femme(s)», where the plural form of the word «woman» is in brackets. In the English version poster, this idea found its shape in the unique shape letter between the letters «wom» and «n,» which looks like an «a» and «e» at the same time (Image #13).



Image #14 — Screenshots from What is a Woman? (2022)

What is a Woman? (2022) is a documentary film presented by Matt Walsh, directed by Justin Folk, and produced by The Daily Wire (Image #14). In the documentary, Walsh travels around the US to find an answer to the question ‘*What is a Woman?*’. He asked this question to a variety of people, from sex-reassignment surgeons to random people on the streets. «Centring around gender and transgender issues, the documentary touches upon issues related to gender dysphoria, misgendering and gender pronouns, phalloplasty and vaginoplasty as well as controversial issues such as transwomen in sports, puberty blockers, sex-reassignment in children and the use of female toilets and locker rooms by transwomen.» (Abdellatif, 2023, p. 846). During the film, Walsh's behavior forced some participants to stop the interview.

The visuals and editing approach promote the underlying idea of transphobia. It already starts with the beginning of the movie with pictures of genitals combined with Walsh's questions about nature. Already from this «introduction, it became clear that the documentary puts forward an essentialist view of gender, conflating gender identity with biological ‘reality’ rooted in the binary division between male and female sexes.» (Abdellatif, A.; 2024, p. 846).

In the first chapter, I analyzed various animation and live-action films. Some of them as *Snow Queen* (1957), *The Bremen Town Musicians* (1969), *Vasilisa Mikulishna* (1975), *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997) are my favorite animation films from my childhood and teenagehood. The female characters from these animations, even when they are just supporting characters in the stories, influenced and inspired me at the same time.

The other animation films mentioned in this chapter are inspired by film structure (*Never Like the First Time!* (2006)), by female roles in politics (*30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* (2013)), by contemporary views on gender («*Mama Has a Mustache*» (2021)), by strong female character (*Love, Death & Robots* (2019 - present & *Persepolis* (2007))).

Discovering *Miss Representation* (2011), *Woman* (2019), and *What is a Woman?* (2022) during my research provided me with a sense of inspiration and curiosity and with the context of the popularity of the theme and following methodology such as interviews.

CHAPTER 2 - INSPIRATION WITHIN OTHER FORMS OF VISUAL ART

This chapter will explore inspiration sources for my documentary animation film within other forms of visual arts. The inspiration sources in this chapter represent my personal preferences and display examples that affect me the most during my life. This chapter is divided into two sub-chapters. In the first sub-chapter, I investigate inspiration within paintings and drawings. The second — is within other forms of visual art such as mixed media, collage, and photo manipulation.

2.1. — Paintings and Drawings



Image #15 — Various illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley

Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) is an English illustrator famous for his black-ink illustrations. His way of portraying women (Image #15) challenged the societal norms of Victorian England. In 19th century England, «the roles of women changed dramatically during the latter half of the century, with women beginning to make inroads towards gender equality and sexual liberation; Beardsley explores these issues in his illustrations.» (Highsmith S., 1992, p.56) «Although middle and upper class women were able to enjoy a level of independence at the university and in the workplace, the sexual freedom that had always been accessible to men remained out of their reach» (Highsmith S., 1992, p.58)

In his illustrations, Beardsley portrays women as independent, powerful, and sexual — in a contrast to societal norms to picture women as weak and submissive. «In

The Climax, the illustration of the left (Image #15) Beardsley presents Salome holding the head of the man whose death she has caused—this is the ultimate example of a strong woman emasculating a man.»(Highsmith S., 1992, p.60)



Image #16 — Artwork «Facebook», 2017,
by Joe Hesketh



Image #17 — Artwork «Baby wipes», 2017,
by Joe Hesketh

Joe Hesketh portrays women in all shapes and forms and questions gender norms (Images #16 & #17). Her artworks «included dynamic verbal expressions about the human condition and about her experience as a woman in the male-dominated art world.» (Rani S. et al., 2021, p.6) She says about her inspiration and motivation that

«the whole world is very male-dominated, yes, I am a feminist, I don't understand women who aren't. Women naturally support each other, or at least I'd like to think so, and in this male-dominated world, we need to stick together and use humor to highlight the ridiculousness that this is still going on in this day and age so, the impact on my work is huge.» (Joe Hesketh, Artist | Contemporary Art for Sale | Rise Art, n.d.)

Roxana Halls is a British feminist artist known for the series of oil paintings *Laughing While* portrays laughing women while they're engaged in daily activities such as working, walking, and eating (Images #18 & #19). «She makes visual the many tropes and traits imposed on women in the Western world. This includes diagnosing women with hysteria as a consequence of displaying emotion, or subsequent assumptions of insatiable libidos if a woman's mouth is open. By creating a series of

paintings in which women are documented laughing irrationally at otherwise humourless situations, Halls satirically subverts characteristics of femininity to disparage the confines of gender.» (Feldman D., 2021, p.17)



Image #18 — Artwork «Laughing While Crashing», 2019, by Roxana Halls



Image #19 — Artwork «Laughing While Eating Salad», 2013, by Roxana Halls

2.2. — Other forms of Visual Art



Image #20 — Poster «Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into the Met. Museum?» by Guerilla Girls, 1989, via Tate, London

Guerilla Girls is a group of anonymous activists formed in 1985 in New York. They tried to define «what the possibilities and manifestations of third wave feminism can be. They incorporate aspects of current feminist focus such as the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, as well as a desire to use new tactics to reach a wider

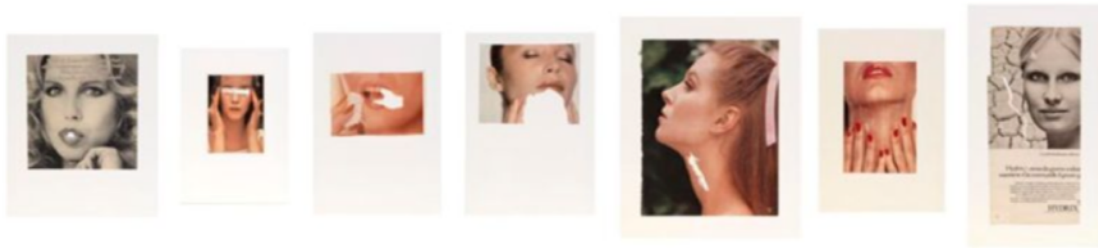
audience through social media, television, and art.» (Harrison, 2023, p.2). The poster *Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into the Met. Museum?* (Image #20) was designed for the Public Art Fund's request to create something that would resonate with a wider audience. «The poster is confidently striking back at the face of male artists and male art curators on their taste of selecting art that majorly consists of women's nude portraits.» (Paul, 2020, p.4)



Image #21 — Poster Only 4 Commercial Galleries In NY Show Black Women, 1986, TATE, UK

Guerrilla Girls produced numerous posters with bold, all-caps text that implied female problems and struggles at the time. Continuing with the theme of the underrepresentation of women of color (and women in general as well) in museums, they created the poster (Image #21) *Only 4 Commercial Galleries In NY Show Black Women* featuring statistics for this work as they did for *Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get Into the Met. Museum?*. By featuring these strong numbers, the work speaks for itself and provides a catchy and memorable message.

Sanja Iveković is a Croatian artist who addresses feminism, gender equality, and the presentation of women in mass media in her artworks.



*Image #22 — Series Paper Women by Sanja Iveković,
MACBA COLLECTION. MACBA FOUNDATION*

In her series *Paper Women 1976-77* (Image #22), Iveković used photos of women from magazines and adjusted these images by scratching them and removing pieces of paper. «The works from this period accentuate the socio-political discourse of imagery of women, especially with regards to two institutions specializing in visual politics: the press and television.» (Web: MACBA). By creating these artworks, she exposed her opinion on the representation of women in mass media and fashion. Her rage found its place in her way of adjusting these pictures by tearing them up.

PART II - PROCESS

Chapter 3 — THE GROUND AND THE ROOTS

This chapter seeks a contextualization of the origins of the *My Superpower* project and is divided into two sections. The first section presents the previous documentary animation that had been created during the first year of this master's course that led to this project. The second part seeks to represent the motivations and intentions behind the development of this project. This part provides an understanding of the background, the reasons underlying the research, and what I aimed to achieve.

3.1. The roots: precious investigations in documentary animation

Discovering documentary animations amazed me from the beginning. However, there is an ongoing discussion on what we should consider documentary animation and if this genre even exists. Back in 1926, John Grierson defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality.” (Grieson, 1966, p.13) Nowadays, we have numerous definitions of what documentary animation is; for the previous project that I present in this sub-chapter and for my final project, I rely on the position of Annabelle Honess Roe, which echoes my personal feelings on this. In her book *Animated Documentary*, she claims that animation is a suitable tool for documentaries because it is capable of representing actual storytelling based on actual facts. She explores these thoughts further to recognize that «animated documentaries offer us an enhanced perspective on reality by presenting the world in a breadth and depth that live action alone cannot.» (Roe H., 2011, p.229)

With her exploration of documentary animation, Honess Roe does not close the discussion about it. She mentions that documentary animation as a genre «constantly challenges our preconceptions of what animation and documentary are meant to be.» (Danta, 2014, p.1)

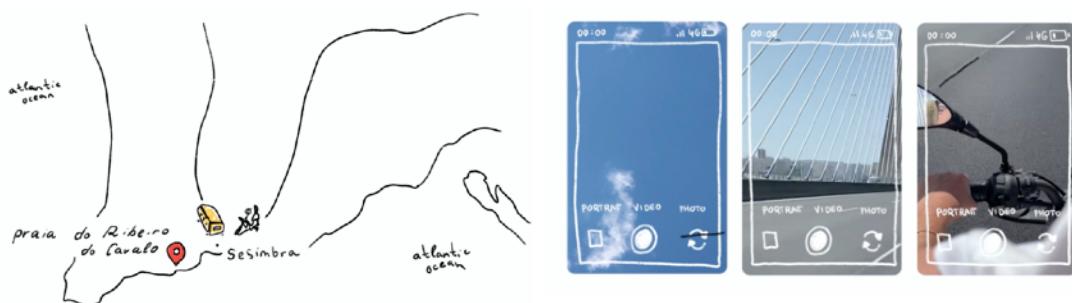


Image #23 — Screenshots from *I've Never Seen Shooting Stars* (2023)

Inspired by these projects, my first attempt at documentary animations led to the creation of my first short film of the genre: *I've Never Seen Shooting Stars* (2023)⁴, a story personal to me about a weekend in August 2021 with a group of my friends, when we went to see shooting stars in Sesimbra, Portugal (Images #23 & #24). The narrator's voice belongs to one of my friends from the story. This project created a bittersweet nostalgic feeling of experiencing memorable moments, creating core memories, connecting with people for a short time, and going separate ways afterwards.

This film integrates footage captured during the trip with frame-by-frame digital animation, exploring the evolution of video formats. While animation and traditional cinematography typically use a landscape orientation, the rise of social media has popularized the use of portrait-oriented video for personal content. This work investigates artistic methods for merging diverse digital formats and explores the mixing of video footage and digital animation into a single project.

I developed this animation film during the second semester of the first year of my Master's Degree at Lusofona University. Although I used a story from my own life for this project, I decided to focus on conveying a feeling of nostalgia as the main focus of the animation rather than focusing on particular characters and their motivations or putting myself in the film. For that same reason, I chose a friend for the role of narrator.

A significant part of the developing process was doing a small interview with my friend, whose voice eventually became the narration voice. This was my first experience leading the interviewing process for any of my projects. Her expressions were clear, catchy, and rich — letting me focus on the editing part later with ease.

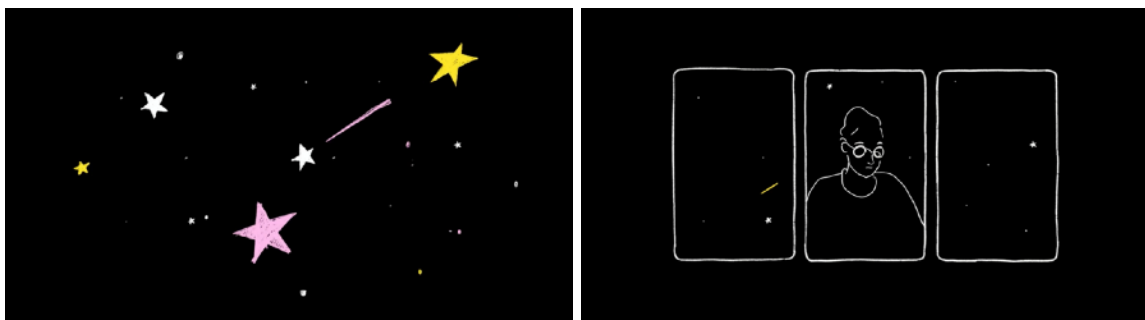


Image #24 — Screenshots from *I've Never Seen Shooting Stars* (2023)

⁴ [Link to the film](#)

Even though I did not represent myself in my animation in a straightforward way, I put myself in my work by making director choices such as: firstly, cutting the interview in a particular way, pointing out important moments for my initial idea, and keeping some moments that were important for my friend; secondly, by choosing a visual style of digital animation, inspired by travel sketching journals and using digital brushes that imitate pencil strokes, thirdly, I used the videos that were filmed during that trip to bring authenticity and a personal touch to the story.

Recognizing the significant role of my personal experience in documentary animation along with artistic research, the working process on *My Superpower* was started. The theoretical classes of the second semester in my first year of my Master helped me gain knowledge in academic works that were written about documentary animations and created a basis for research that I did prior to this work.

3.2. — The ground: context, motivation, and intentions

Currently, in contemporary society, the topic of gender equality is a provoking discussion topic. Coming from an Eastern European background in a country with strong traditional roles and societal norms, the feminist movement drastically changed my view of gender roles growing up.

However, culturally, I witnessed how the majority of people follow gender roles in Russia; I remember that pretty early in life, I had a feeling that these paths were too strict and lacked reasoning. Watching Disney's animations as a teenager, I could not understand why Ariel gave up her voice for a prince she did not even know. Or why Belle accepted her life as a prisoner of the Beast and fell in love with him in «Beauty and the Beast.» Even as a kid, I remember adults telling me that I would have to learn how to cook and clean properly. Otherwise, no man would want to marry me.

Studies show that “repeated viewing leads children to retrieve, rehearse, solidify, and expand existing scripts, resulting in cumulative long-term effects. Children who identify with media characters and who consider television a realistic reflection of the world are especially likely to incorporate and act on its messages” (Anderson, et al., 2001, 66 (1)). Considering this, I could not deny the effect of mass media, including animation, on my perception of gender roles.

«The lack of women on screen reflects the absence of women behind it, since production teams of animated content are still very much male-dominated.» (Sa, et al., 2023, p.94). However, there is an increase of women in the film industry which happened recently, “women are still underrepresented in the workforce, in senior positions and among the ranks of directors.” (Heller, 2018, p. 241)

The lack of women in leadership positions in the film industry also affected the majority of Disney animation that I and the women I interviewed for my project watched when we were kids.

Going to a school that was focused on science, I kept hearing how boys are always better in math, chemistry, and science in general and how we, as girls, would never undertake them in these fields.

Moving forward to my experience in university, studying Graphic Design with 95% percent of female university colleagues, we had almost all male teachers and in leadership roles in an art university in general. While studying at the university, I participated in a paid design workshop led by famous Art Directors in design studios in Moscow. One of the speakers included in his speech the gender differentiation between the audience and the speakers, which was almost identical to the differentiation I mentioned before at my university. He said that we, as women in the audience, will never be good in leadership positions in art and design because we just naturally do not have certain personality traits that men usually have.

Experiencing and witnessing all these situations always left me with a deep feeling of life being unfair to women as a gender. My feelings about gender roles have been reflected in contemporary feminist movements, such as the #metoo movement, protests against the potential abortion ban in the US, and massively reduced women's rights in Afghanistan in terms of work, education, visibility, healthcare, etc.

I explored gender stereotypes through animation because the evolution of gender roles is directly reflected in art, including cinema and animation. Exploring this topic of gender equality, my intentions were to make diverse voices be heard, multicultural backgrounds to be seen, and non-conventional stories to be told. I aimed to achieve authenticity in my research and instructed all the participants of the interviews to give the most honest opinions possible about the topic.

Based on this information, I aim to create a documentary animation that captures diverse female perspectives on gender stereotypes. Due to the limitation of time and format, this particular project covers three interviews with three different perspectives.

The central question that became a base and guideline for my project is the same as the first question that I asked during the interviews: «*What does 'being a woman' mean to you?*»

Considering previous research that influenced the theoretical and practical parts of the thesis, with my work, I intended to spark conversations, raise awareness, and participate in bringing us, as a society, closer to gender equality.

Chapter 4 — THE PROCESS

With the context and motivation explored previously, the next chapter is dedicated to pre-production and production processes. This part is split into four sub-parts: conceptual development, pre-production, visual studies, and production. The first part — Conceptual development — conceptualizes the context, motivation, and intentions previously investigated in Chapter 3. Second part — Pre-production talks about the interviewing process in detail, from choosing the target audience, formulating interview questions, and going through the interviewing process itself. The third part — Visual studies — explores the visual development of the film, starting from sketches I drafted during the interviews and continuing with the development of three visually different styles of the three parts. The fourth part — Production — is divided into three subparts: Characters and Environment, Storyboard and Animatic, and Animation technique, this part walks us through the development process from the animation structure, presenting characters, and challenges I faced while developing the storyboard and animatic, and explores the animation technique of the animation film.

4.1. — Conceptual development

After investigating context, motivation, and intentions, I continued my research with conceptual development. In this part, inspired by previous pages, I focused on the evolution process of how the wider theme of gender stereotypes became a documentary animation.

Before diving into the process of conceptual development itself, I explored studies and research about gender representation in animation, which reflected my gut feelings and the personal experience I talked about in the previous sub-chapter.

Studies⁵ define three waves of feminism: the first wave (19th century - early 20th), which was focused on women's rights to vote, access to education, and the right to own property associated with Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. The second wave in the 1960s-1980s focused on reproductive rights, work equality, and the fight against domestic abuse, the key roles in these waves belong to Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. The third wave (1990-2010s) — emphasizing

⁵ Humm, Maggie (1990) *The dictionary of feminist theory* & Rebecca, Walker (1992) *Becoming the Third Wave*

diversity and intersectionality. One of the main figures of this wave, Rebecca Walker in her essay *Becoming the Third Wave*:

«focused on continued efforts for workplace rights for all women, work–life balance policies, elimination of rape culture, and the reduction of violence against women; equality within institutions such as religious institutions and the military; resistance to the objectification of women in the media and popular culture; racial justice; and LGBTQ rights.» (Launius, 2022, p.16)

Looking back with appreciation and gratitude, I, as a woman, still see a long way to go to achieve gender equality. Therefore, the key moment of consideration for the theme for my project was to create a women-featuring animation film.

With a focus on this thesis on animation, I discovered the research by Gabriela Sá analyzing lead characters in 260 animated movies and producing statistics «looking at the gender of the protagonists of each movie, we concluded that 201 movies have male protagonists (77.3%), 54 movies have female protagonists (20.8%), and 6 movies have more than one main character of both genders (1.9%) (Sá, 2023, p.99). Her research supported my feelings on the underrepresentation of women as lead characters in animation in general.

The Bechdel Test was created to measure the representation of women in cinema. To pass the test, a film (or animation) has to include at least two female characters and a conversation between them on something else besides men. In the same research, Sá provides info that only around 30% of animations passed the test.

For the purpose of this work, I define *feminist animation* as animation that focuses on female-related issues that could be directed by any (male, female, non-binary) person. However, we, as a society, have shown some progress in female rights, but we still need to fight for the same issues as the previous generations of women were fighting for, such as abortion rights, equal pay, respect for differentiated protection such as maternity leave, sexual harassment, etc.

Even when women are shown in cinema, they tend to be shown in problematic ways. Such as, «women in movies are more likely than men to be thin, show nudity, wear revealing clothes, be conventionally attractive (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1) In addition to the focus on appearance, many women as shown in traditionally-gendered roles as parents or spousal units.» (Felt, 2009, p. 4)

Gutiérrez in her research *Breaking the Glass Slipper: Analyzing Female Figures' Roles in Disney Animated Cinema from 1950-2013* analyzed in total 24 female characters. She noticed a significant shift in the representation of female characters in early Disney animation (1950-1970) such as «Cinderella, Lady, Aurora, and Duchess are Disney female icons of the past. (...) They are beautiful, dependent on male figures, and engage in heterosexual relationship as part of their 'happily ever after.'» (Gutiérrez, 2017, p.149) to «Walt Disney's influence is crucial to the traditional female figure image. Most of the "princesses" of the 1990s-2010s reflect changes brought about by feminist activist efforts of the 1960s-1970s, attempting to incorporate multicultural and feminist ideals in their representations of heroines.» (Gutiérrez, 2017, p.5)

Earlier in my research on the inspiration sources, I presented two animations by Miyazaki: *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* and *Princess Mononoke*, with strong, bold, and multi-dimensional female characters. «On the contrast with female characters in Disney animation, «it has been observed that female characters in Miyazaki's films were presented to the audience in different ways as children, young women, and old women.» (Taskin, 2023, p.72)

Due to larger popularity, early Disney animations were broadcasted all around the world in my childhood as well as in the childhood of women that I interviewed and kept distributing the ideas of traditional female roles decades after these films were produced.

The process of conceptualizing my feelings and ideas into a solid project has started with defining the tool that I will use to express them visually. Three main ideas were animation, documentary animation, or hybrid animation projects. Coming from a fine arts and design background, my initial idea was to use hybridization as a creative approach to develop my project. However, after a quick brainstorm of my options and ideas, I realized that I not only lacked solid experience in hybridization but also faced physical limitations such as space, development process, and mind limitations: I have more experience in how to convey my ideas on metaphorical level thought illustration and drawing rather than through hybrid animation. Therefore, I decided to choose animation as my main tool.

I decided to conceptualize my idea through documentary animation in particular because documentary animation as a medium is a «powerful characteristic in animation: a preoccupation with reality and human nature, and its creators' availability to record and comment on real events.» (Serrazina, 2016, p. 53) «Animated design practice operates can penetrate deep into the sensorial subjective realities, which is evocative and impactful.» (Majeed T., 2023, p.128) Consequently, documentary animation could connect with the public on a deep, metaphorical level through symbolism, stylistic choices, grotesque, and litotes. Documentary animations «creates images, that the camera cannot – literally drawing in that which cannot be seen» (Skoller J., 2011, p.212) and, because of this, I was able to convey concepts and past events (such as childhood memories) that had no video or photo pieces of evidence of happening in my work.

I seek to connect with the audience through authentic and intimate stories. Thus, I decided, instead of creating a fictional animated film, to work with a documentary film format. A significant part of my motivation is based on my personal experiences. Therefore, I seek to hear personal stories from participants in my interviews to present these stories in my film.

The motive of the animation is to answer the question about being a woman. Since the main idea of the animation is a connection, even though the animation is split into three parts — they merge into each other without noticeable breaks.

The fundamental idea that inspired the whole project was the idea of connection, cooperation, sisterhood, and building bridges instead of burning them. The concept of connection not only inside of one gender but between genders as well, and also between cultural and ethical backgrounds. This idea comes from acknowledging inequality in modern society.

The vision behind *My Superpower* was to create an emotional connection with the audience on a deeper level than live-action films allow. I believe that the visual ability of animation lets it capture the essence of the problem of gender equality and fighting gender stereotypes. My goal is to inspire the audience, provoke thought, and convey the feeling of connection between all people no matter what their gender,

cultural background, or skin tone. Therefore, *My Superpower* aims to create a space to spark conversations, raise awareness, and resonate with viewers on multiple levels.

4.2 — Pre-production

I started the pre-production phase after defining my motivation and intentions and completing the conceptual development. This phase began with an interview process from scratch that shaped the essence of the film. The book *Drawn from Life* (Murray and Ehrlich ed., 2018) talks about creative challenges in the production of documentary animations. «Some animated documentaries (...) provide evidentiary documentation in the form of a documentary audio track. The use of animation in documentary assumes that the viewer does not require photographic evidence, and the animation does not attempt to use the image to represent reality.» (p.221)

The first step of this process was figuring out the interview's target audience and formulating the interview questions. Recognizing the impracticality of interviewing women across all age groups and diverse backgrounds, narrowing the potential pool of interviewees was necessary. To achieve this, I established the following three criteria for selecting interview participants:

1. Ages from 25 to 30 years old (to target people between two generations: Millennials and Generation Z);
2. Diverse background — make sure to keep diversity and focus on women from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds;
3. Immigrants or expats.

I began considering how to merge the issues I was interested in into a set of clear and straightforward questions to ask during interviews. Following a brainstorming session with my tutor, research on effective interview techniques, and an analysis of interviews on similar topics, I developed the following four questions:

1. What does «being a woman» mean to you?
2. Have you felt touched by gender discrimination?
3. If yes, how do you feel these experiences impacted your life?
4. How do you think representation of women in cinema and animation affected your life?

The first question is the film's central question: *What does «being a woman» mean to you?* — In essence, the entire animation revolves around uncovering the answer to this question by diving into the reflections and perspectives of my interviewees.

The second question: *Have you felt touched by gender discrimination?* — was formulated based on my prior research on gender inequality conducted during the conceptual development of the documentary animation. Even though we have a lot of research that includes various numbers in various aspects of life, in a lot of cases, gender discrimination is subtle, almost unnoticeable, blended into everyday situations, and rugged to catch. Through this question, I aimed for my interviewees to share their personal experiences, both significant and minor, that they have encountered.

The third question: *If yes, how do you feel these experiences impacted your life?* — I was determined to let interviewees reflect on these experiences and come to a conclusion on their impact. This approach allowed me to create a bridge between numbers in statistics research on inequality and make it more humanized by showing an actual impact on individuals' lives.

The fourth question: *How do you think representation of women in cinema and animation affected your life?* — bringing us back to the contextualization of my work and connecting mass media, cinematography (and, actually, the other forms of arts that I'm not talking about in this particular research), and their impact on our mindsets and significant connection between the society we live in and its impact on our believes.

Considering these criteria, I began the selection process and encountered my first challenge. Despite the anonymity provided by documentary animation, including options for voice alteration and maintaining anonymity in film credits, three out of six women declined to participate in the interviews. While none of the women who chose not to participate explicitly explained their reasons, I noticed a clear pattern: all of them withdrew their proposal to join after hearing the interview questions, even though they were excited at the beginning of the general idea of the movie. I interpreted this response as an indication that the film addresses sensitive and significant issues within contemporary society that must be discussed and explored. This challenge was solved by scheduling more interviews and hoping that more participants would be comfortable talking about their thoughts and opinions.

Moving forward, three out of the initial six potential interviews were successful and provided essential material for my project. Considering the challenges faced during the interviewing process, I still managed to achieve one my initial goal of including interviews with women from diverse countries and backgrounds. Given the project timeline and the constraints of a short animated film, I decided to limit the number of interviews to three. The audio from these interviews was added to the animation. Appendix A includes the interview with C., Appendix B contains the interview with K., and Appendix C features the interview with S.

During and shortly after each interview, I sketched each participant to capture the overall essence and to create characters inspired by them. Creating characters required a couple of steps, such as figuring out which features are essential to keep and which ones I can let go of, what would be the final visual style for each of the stories, and how could I apply each particular style to each of the characters. This part of the work will be explored in the following part of this thesis — Visual studies.

The final challenge after completing the interviewing process was to cut it and make a choice of pieces that would find a place in the final audio for my documentary animation. Each interview was around 10-20 minutes long, and considering my ideal animation film length to be around 3-4 minutes, the final length of each interview had to be around one minute long. I provide more details on this process in the Production part of the thesis.

While choosing the final parts of the interviews, I considered the parts of stories that strongly showed the interviewee's opinions.

4.3. Visual studies

The visual research began with the intention of developing a unique visual style for each of the three stories. The main challenge was to define each style distinctly enough from the other while still maintaining the feeling of one continuous animation film instead of three films at once. The second challenge was creating each style to convey the story's authenticity, keep the character's individuality, and simultaneously expose my feelings as a director about each narrative.

As part of the creative process, during the interviews or immediately afterward, I sketched the women I interviewed to convey the first impression of them. Inspired by the idea of «everything relating to the film should go into the sketchbook» (Scott-Hawkins, 2018, p. 10) I brought my sketchbook to the interviews. These sketches became the foundation for the visual development. For the final characters, I highlighted the features of the women that stood out to me as an animation film director and those that could better express the psychological aspects of each character, aiming to create a unique and memorable set of characters. Documentary animation in terms of visuals «has one superpower that can greatly help to deliver a strong message - the medium's ability to amplify through simplification. In other words, animation is a cinematic tool that can provide clarity and focus.» (Mitkus, 2011, p.382)



Image #25 — Initial sketch of C.

Here is the initial sketch of C. (Image #25), the protagonist of the first story. C. moved to Milan, Italy, to study at a university and become a doctor. My first impression of C. was that she was responsible, motivated, goal-oriented, and serious; however, her look looked soft, romantic, and feminine. Therefore, her initial sketch is done in watercolor using a smooth technique.



Image #26 — First character concept of C.

Based on the initial sketch, I developed the first concept of the character (Image #26), which closely resembled C.'s appearance. In this sketch, her character wears a feminine outfit, her skin color matches her natural skin tone, and her face has features similar to her actual face. However, I liked this style and approach; I realized this approach would not work for my project.

First, this style needed to be simplified for animation, and it needed to be more practical to use. Second, this concept was too closely tied to the actual person and did not convey my feelings and interpretations of her stories and thoughts. The most significant change at this stage of character development was altering the skin color: I intentionally decided to use pink skin color for C. to convey emotional nuances within the documentary animation. Pink, in psychology, is usually associated with femininity and empathy. By applying a pink skin tone to C., I emphasized her nurturing qualities

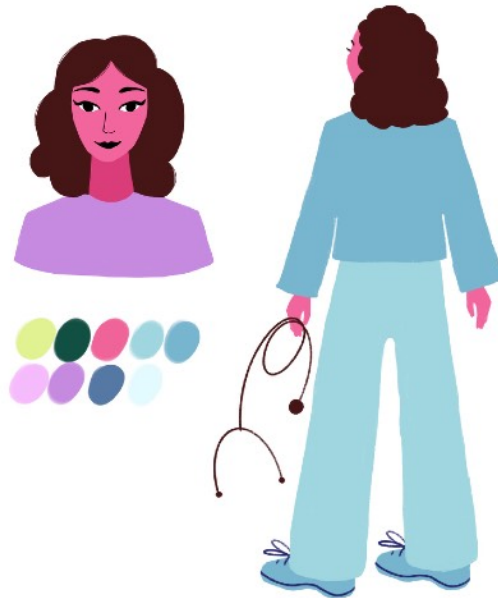


Image #27 — Final character concept of C.

and lifelong dream of becoming a doctor. Unconventional skin color allowed a departure from literal representation; by making this choice, I let the audience engage with the character on a symbolic level.

In the first story, besides the main character, I also show her family: mother, father, and brother — all of them have pink skin color to maintain consistency and visually convey that they are all related.

The second concept of the character ultimately became the final concept (Image #27). I retained the brown hair as C.'s natural hair colour, along with the pink skin



Image #28 — Initial sketch of K.

color and soft, feminine, but bold facial features for this character. Based on the visual style of the main character, I created concepts for her family members, environment, font for the phrase in the beginning, and so on. The overall style of this part maintains a soft, gentle aesthetic by utilizing primarily warm and bright colors, soft textured brushes, and rounded corners and shapes.

For the second part, I also started my visual research with a sketch of K. during our interview (Image #28). Even in the initial sketch, I deliberately introduced a high contrast between skin tone and hair & eye color for this character.

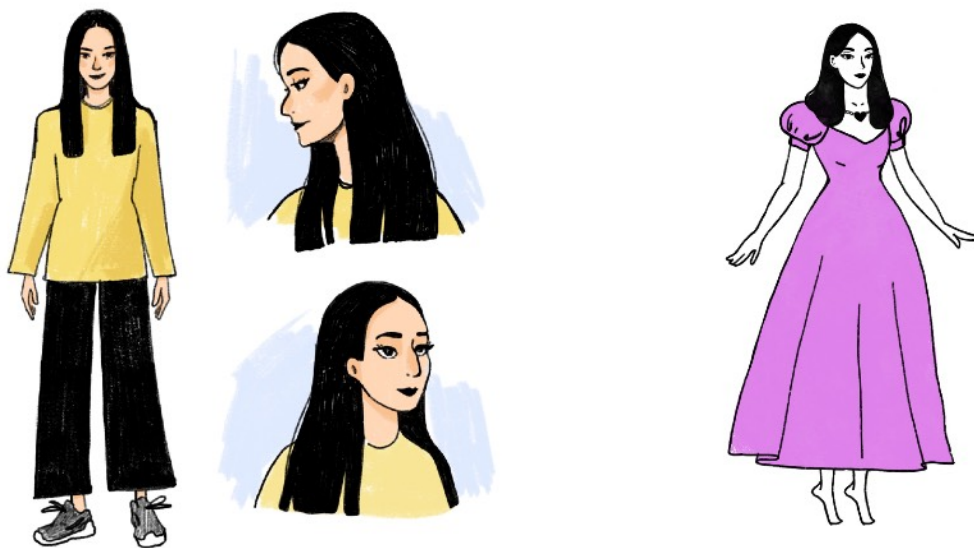


Image #29 — First concept of K. character

Image #30 — Final concept of K. character

The first sketch was, again, close to the original person. I translated into digital art the look of K. in real life — long dark brown hair, simple clothes, and a high-contrast face (Image #29). However, this approach did not work for the same reasons as before. Using this attempt as a starting point, I continued my research.

I first limited the color scheme to pink, white, and black in the next attempt. I also decided to keep the outfit, simply adjusting the colors and adding a face mask since the narration implies a connection to superheroes. This approach worked better. However, it still felt like something needed to be added. At this stage of visual development, I faced a conceptual problem: I needed a broader, more comprehensive theme to connect all the pieces of this story.

By brainstorming various ideas and interpretations, I devised the princess-themed concept to convert this story into a fairytale from girls' books (Image #30). Therefore, the main character's outfit was changed to a princess dress, and the setting around her was changed to a castle in a dreamy environment. For the second part, the style environment, male character, and visual style overall drew inspiration from the concept of the story's protagonist.



Image #31 — Initial sketch of S.

For the third part, keeping in mind critical learnings from the developing process of the previous two parts, such as analyzing the heroine first and basing the visual style on that analysis instead of relying on realism or my typical style of illustration, I've attempted to establish the visual style for the last part of the film.

After drawing inspiration from the initial sketch of S. (Image #31), which proved to be the best practice in conveying the essence of the heroines, I began the visual development of the digital style for this part. Fortunately, the first attempt was successful. I developed a bold and bright visual style with color accents and soft and feminine shapes. The color palette is filled with tropical-inspired colors to highlight the country of origin of the main character — Madagascar. (Image #32)

The main heroine has a warm, deep red tone for her skin color to convey her original skin color and exaggerate it slightly. The challenge I faced while developing a secondary character in this part — a female doctor, was to visually distinguish this

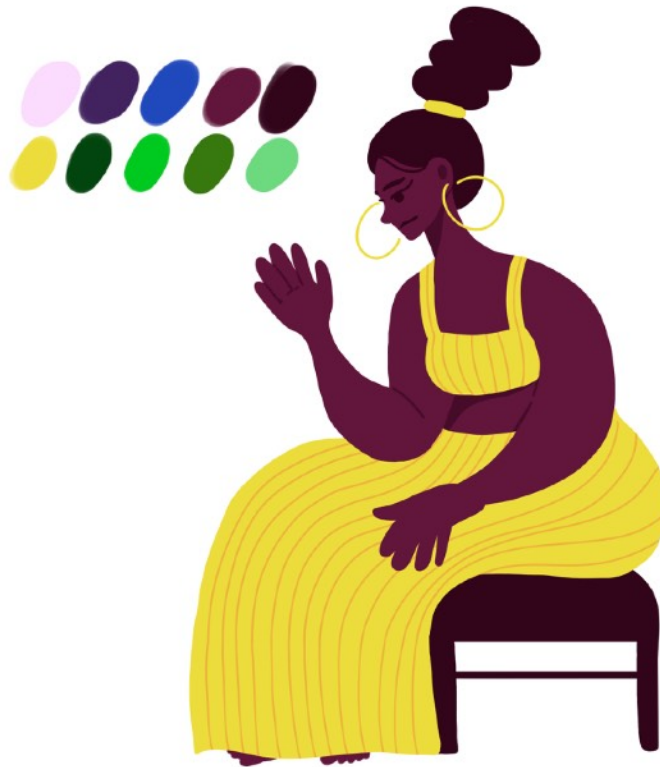


Image #32 — Final concept of S. character

character from the main heroine of the first story — a nurse who works in the hospital. What helped me to solve this challenge was that a female doctor in the third part is a secondary character. Therefore, I could portray her as I wanted, almost without limitations. I decided to make her as visually different from the main heroine of the first story as possible. The female doctor in the third part has curly pink hair and dark violet skin — in contrast to the nurse in the first story, who has brown hair and pink skin. The choice of violet skin color was intentional as well. My idea was to keep the skin color similar to the main heroine but add my feelings about this doctor. Therefore, I added some cold tones in her skin tone to emphasize her cold reason and gaslighting in the story that the main heroine tells in the animation.

In general, in the third story, we have two contrasting environments: natural and urban. I chose pink and white for the brick wall, which represents the urban environment. This choice was made to connect this part with the second part of the film, where these colors form the basis of the color palette and simultaneously to visually express how plain the urban environment is compared to nature. I chose saturated, bright, high-hue colors for the natural environment, mainly because the film ends with

nature taking over the space. My idea was to make this part as colorful and memorable as possible while maintaining the general visual style of this part.

We can observe visual differentiation between the stories by comparing all the color palettes. By intentionally creating similarities between the first and third color palettes, I aimed to convey a feeling of continuity. Additionally, by inserting a visually distinct story in the middle, I separated this story not only in terms of meaning but also through visual style. For the brick wall, which represents the urban environment, I chose pink and white colors to connect this part with the second part of the film, where these colors form the basis of the color palette and simultaneously visually express how plain the urban environment is compared to nature. For the depiction of nature, I selected saturated, bright, high-hue colors, especially since the film concludes with nature reclaiming the surrounding space. I intended to make this part as colorful and memorable as possible while maintaining the general visual style of the segment.

4.4. Production

The first challenge in the production process was establishing the structure of the animated film. Before I started the interviewing process, I assumed that I would find significant similarities that would allow me to base a cohesive narrative on them rather than presenting stories as separate segments.

However, in practice, one of the interviews was completely different from the other two. While two of the interviews featured women recounting comparable life experiences, one interviewee expressed a traditional, patriarchal perspective on life, relationships, and the experience of being a woman.

I needed to determine whether to include this story at all or there was a necessity to conduct additional interviews to maintain the consistency of opinions in my animation. From the researcher's point of view, controlling interviews after encountering unexpected responses felt disingenuous. I believed it would compromise the authenticity of my research. Keeping in mind the idea of promoting connection and representing different opinions, I kept the three successful interviews as they were. Instead of pursuing additional interviews that would match my own perspective more closely.

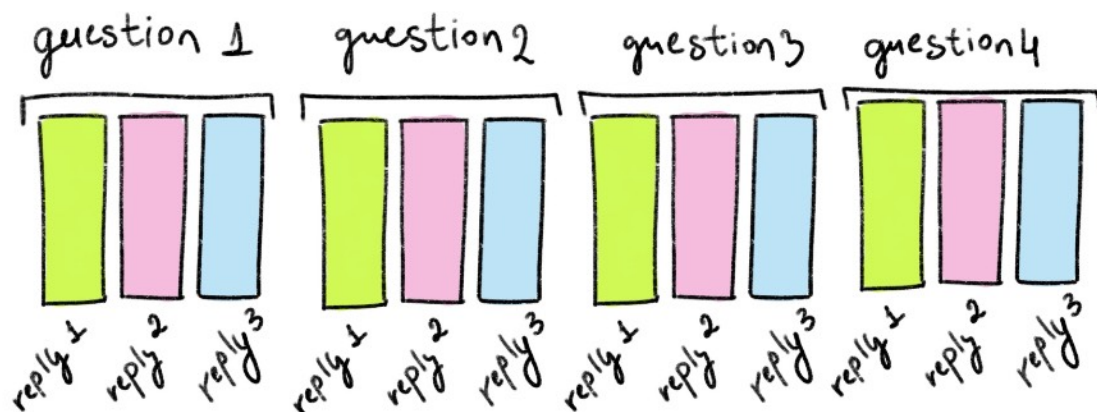


Image #33 — Scheme of potential structure

After finishing the interview selection, I moved to the next step: establishing the film structure (Image #33). Given that the stories did not align in the interviews, I abandoned the idea of organizing the film by presenting answers one by one and then moving to the next question. Additionally, the parts of the stories that resonated with me the most were part of the answers to different questions. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that structuring my film with questions and mixing stories together would not work.

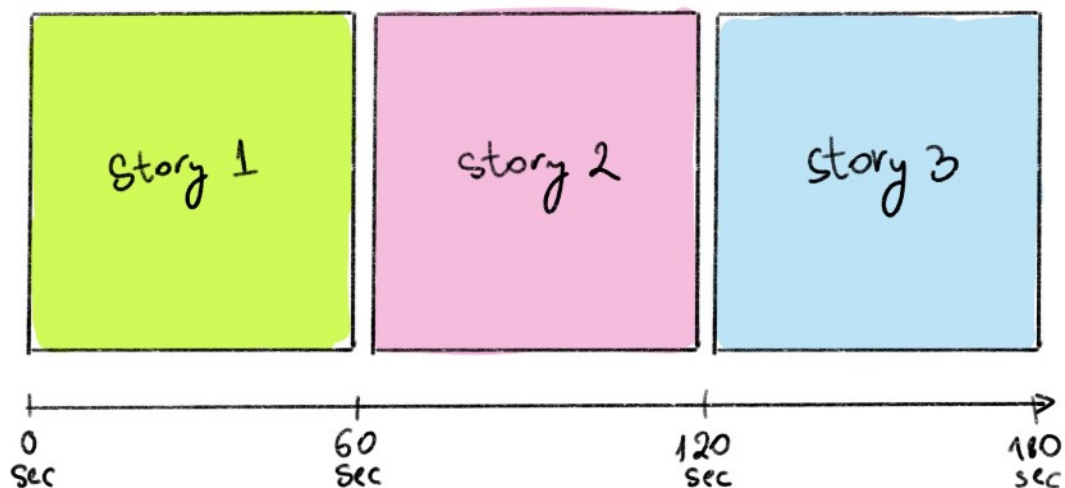


Image #34 — Scheme of final structure

Ultimately, I decided to present stories one by one (Image #34), which led me to the next challenge: what is the best order of the stories? My first idea was to put the least related story to me first, follow with the moderately related story, and end with the

story that resonated most with me. However, this approach had an issue from the viewer's perspective. An audience unfamiliar with me or the focus of my animated documentary might assume that all the stories would be similar to the first and potentially stop watching before reaching the end. I did not want the initial impression of my film to be the story least aligned with my perspective. I didn't want the first impression of my film to be the least related to my point of view of all.

Therefore, I put the first story as one of the stories I could relate to, the second story as the least relatable one, and finished again with one related to my opinion and values. This approach also influenced the flow of my animated film, considering the story in the middle turned out to be the least intense one. By putting a bold story at the beginning, having a light, less intense story in the middle, and finishing with an intense story again, my film gained a change of intensity, let viewers pause in the middle, and finished with a strong message at the same time. Another reason to put the second story in the middle was that this point of view in the present times might trigger the public with its outdated point of view on patriarchy and social roles.

After establishing the structure of the animation film, I needed to decide how to represent the second story, given that it was only loosely related to my personal views and beliefs. My initial approach was to differentiate this story visually — depicting it in black and white, with a sad and dark atmosphere — in contrast to the positive tone of the woman narrating the story. However, after finalizing one scene using this visual style, I realized that this interpretation added no necessary meaning of disconnection. The visual differentiation was too pronounced, conflicting with my overarching theme of connection.

The second attempt at establishing a visual distinction was successful and ultimately became the final decision. Instead of making that story dark, I did the opposite; I made it pinkish and princess-like. In this story, the woman reflects on her childhood dreams, envisioning herself as a princess waiting for a prince. I drew inspiration from her narrative and presented her character as a princess in a pink dress, waiting for her prince in a secluded castle. This choice not only aligned with her story but also kept the necessary feeling of the connection since I put this story into an almost

parallel universe to the rest of the film and let this story cohesively mix with the first and the third stories, promoting the feeling of welcoming of all opinions and views.

Making this story look like a fairytale conveyed my personal reflection on this story as a film director. Even though, to me, her beliefs and ideas sounded unrelated, they still found their place in my film in the shape of the story from the book. The characters of this story look almost like they are made of paper — white with pencil strokes. To make my idea as straightforward as possible, I finish this chapter of the film by zooming out and exposing the actual book. This is the moment for viewers to realize that the story keeps her place in the imaginary world, and now it is time to come back to reality again with the upcoming story.

After finalizing the film's structure, I continued the production process with characters and environment development.

4.4.1. Characters and Environment

In my documentary animation film, there are three main characters: K., C., and S. These characters are based on real women whom I interviewed. In this section, I provide a detailed description of each character and the environment of each part of the animation.

Character 1 - C. — 28 years old, from Brazil, lives in Milan. C. moved to Italy around 7 years ago to get an education at University and become a doctor as she had dreamed of since she was a child. She is above average height, with dark-brown hair & eyes and medium-toned skin. C. moved to a big and busy city — Milan and you can tell

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by the way she moves that she has a lot of responsibilities and appointments to make, she wanted to be the best of herself to not disappoint people around her and herself as well.

For the part of the story, the background is abstract. Since my work is documentary animation, I imagine the environment to be more of a clean space to make the story stand out. Instead of illustrating the said stories, I decided to illustrate mixed

feelings, shapes, and unspoken words, as an environment to let them breathe and leave the space for pause, imagination, awakened feelings, and observation of spoken words.

Character 2 - K. — 27 years old, from Ukraine, lives in Lisbon. K. is a bit shorter than average and has straight, long, and dark-brown hair, dark-brown eyes, and pale skin. She works as a graphic designer and prefers to wear clothes in classic style in muted colors. She used to live in China for several years and always liked Asian culture. She is extremely motivated, focused on her career, and at the same time has a very cheerful and full-of-life personality.

All stories start with abstract backgrounds to give a space to the public to absorb the said words, separate stories, and highlight the answer to the main question of the film: «What does being a woman mean to you?». The second story presents the fairytale, dreamy, naïve perception of the world. Therefore, the pink color is a dominant color for this part of the film. This applies to both the abstract background of the first part and the countryside environment with a castle of the second part of the story.

Character 3 - S. — 26 years old, from Madagascar, lives in Lisbon. She studied animation in Madagascar before moving to Lisbon 5 years ago. Her thesis was about female characters in Disney animation films. At this moment, she is in the process of finding herself again. She plans to move back to Madagascar after living abroad for a long period. She has brown skin, black hair, and smooth facial features.

As said before, at the beginning of the story, the environment gives space to the text and voiceover. At the same time, the natural font with leaves gives a glimpse of the nature-focused atmosphere of the story. In the middle of the story, the cabinet in the hospital represents the environment. And again, it's not a friendly and welcoming space. It is a closed, tiny, brick-walled, small room, which makes you want to escape it as soon as possible.

The end of this story is the end of the whole film. It shows the deep connection between people and nature. It is a calming, friendly, loving environment that celebrates equality and connection with yourself and with others. In the end, everything comes to the calming feeling that proposes to stop and hear each other to create a better world for everyone.

4.4.2. - Storyboard and Animatic



Image #35 — Initial storyboard

After the development of the film's structure, visual style exploration, character design, and environmental settings, I continued the production process by working on the storyboard (Image #35). The initial storyboard iteration was more straightforward and literal compared to the finalized version. Nevertheless, the sequence of the stories and the internal structure of each segment were finalized at this stage.

spending more time working on the animation and reviewing the film, it became clear that this structured division could not convey the sense of connection and fluidity I intended to achieve. Given that I had already developed distinct visual styles for each part, the film began to resemble three separate animation pieces rather than a cohesive work. Therefore, I decided to remove these frames and look for another solution that would make the transition from one story into the next, preserving the unity of the film.

All of the stories have changed from the first ideas highlighted in the initial storyboard. Moving forward, I present changes from this version of the storyboard to the final version part by part.

The first story (Image #36), as all of three stories, starts with the answer to the question: *what does being a woman mean to you?* the phrase “You have to be strong from day one” is displayed in a soft Grotesk font with varied colors. It features the most powerful and significant parts of the answers displayed as text on the screen, emphasizing their permanence. I aimed to use the text on the screen as an anchor to create an internal visual and thematic rhythm throughout the film. Additionally, each segment's text is shown in distinct fonts to emphasize the unique visual style of that part.

This stylistic choice of the text in the first story arouses the aesthetic of children's toys and books, aligning with the narration that focuses on the heroine's childhood experiences and their impact on her womanhood as an adult. To further increase this effect, I implemented a zoom-in effect, directing the camera into the letters to symbolize immersion into childhood memories.

At the end of the first story, I included a frame featuring six portraits of women from diverse cultural backgrounds, accompanied by the narrative voice stating, “We (women) can be different.” which did not exist in the first iteration of the storyboard. At that project stage, I was still determining how to convey the narrative of diversity in visuals. Only in one of the latest iterations did I develop this concept. Throughout the first part of the animation film, I used a lot of morphing as an animation technique to change frames or transform objects. In the scene before, we see the legs & shoes of the heroine of the first part and grass around the hospital. Her character and outdoor nature transform into these six portraits. However, the morphing technique appears early in the



Image #37 — Second part of final storyboard

animation on this part. At the beginning of the story, the mother and the father of the protagonist of this part transform into her. Later, the heroine transforms into her brother. Therefore, morphing is a significant part of the first story of the documentary. I used this approach to highlight the importance of ties between everything and everyone.

After the transformation and blending sequence, I chose to leave the pink color as the background, which became the background for the entire second story. The intention behind this was to use this transformation to highlight a single color, symbolizing one specific story across countless potential variations and the millions of

colors that could represent these stories. This approach was meant to emphasize the uniqueness of each narrative while acknowledging that it is part of a broader tapestry of experiences and perspectives.

Returning to the discussion about the overall structure, for the first part of the story, I maintained the overall structure and the majority of the original frames, focusing mainly on adjusting minor details. These included removing the text at the end of the story, changing the illustration of the hospital, and incorporating additional frames to increase the level of detail within the storyboard.

In the second story (Image #37), the phrase “*the best thing that happened to me*” appears in a cursive font to emphasize the aesthetic inspired by books about princesses. The animation simulates handwriting, creating the impression that the text is being written in real time. Following this, the heroine of this segment appears and erases the text, symbolizing an internal conflict within her thoughts in the narrative. It sounded confusing and illogical to me that she followed that statement with reflections on how being a woman only makes sense when it’s connected to a man. Therefore, I made a choice of the heroine erasing this inspiring phrase that represents the complexity of her identity.

The entirety of the second story is presented as a fairytale narrative from a book, but viewers will only realize this at the end when a book appears and closes in the final moments. These frames serve two purposes: they reveal the director's perspective of the story as a fairytale-like one while simultaneously finishing the second story. I put an illustration of the trees on the back cover of the book. Within a few seconds, these trees begin to grow beyond the illustration's frame and eventually extend beyond the book itself. Through this metaphor, I aimed to convey the idea of breaking through established limits and embracing new perspectives and ways of thinking rather than staying in a traditional mindset. This illustration of the tree is the first scene of the third story. The story is about a heroine who deeply connects with nature rather than societal norms. By breaking through the book and, in a way, bringing back the paper that this book is made of to its original beginning — a tree, I tried to expose my personal sympathy to the mindset of the heroine of the last story.

Part two was the part that changed the most from the initial approach to the final version. Initially, instead of literally illustrating the part of the narrative about

superheroes, comparing heterosexual relationships to two co-pilots leading the same airplane, I changed it to a more abstract and metaphorical approach.

I completely removed all parts about pilots. Instead of pilots, I illustrated the protagonist of this story as a princess waiting for her prince in her castle. Although this could be considered a spoiler, since the narration talks about the heroine's dreams of being a princess only by the end of this part. I intentionally provided a hint of my personal feelings about the story from the beginning and, simultaneously, did not explain it enough, aiming at maintaining the audience's interest until the end.

In the third part (Image #38), the response "*being a human, a person*" given by the third heroine is displayed in letters composed of tree branches and leaves. This visual style directly reflects her answers, which emphasize a connection to nature rather than societal constructs. I employed this approach to symbolize and reinforce the thematic link between her identity and the natural world, illustrating how her perspective is rooted in harmony with nature.

The last story also mainly remained the same as the original ideas of the first story. The main update was that I replaced falling rocks with falling bricks. By making this change, I aimed to highlight the contrast between nature (rocks falling to letters made of branches and leaves) and society — bricks. Eventually, bricks form the wall, the scene zooms out, and we see the protagonist of this part trapped in the doctor's office. This part switches back and forth between nature and «society» settings.

I kept the dialogue between the story's protagonist and the doctor in the middle segment, just as it was in the first iteration of the storyboard. To me, it was essential to keep this part as it is — without metaphors — because it shows the experience of many women every day: how they are misunderstood or not taken seriously. Being misunderstood by another woman, especially a woman in a slightly higher position, hurts even more.

Finally, I faced the main challenge at this production stage — how to end the film. I kept this story as the last one so that the idea conveyed in it would stand out the most because it resonates with me the most. This story is about reconnecting with nature and leaving behind societal norms, living in a world without strict responsibilities assigned to each gender. In this world, you can be whoever you want to be.

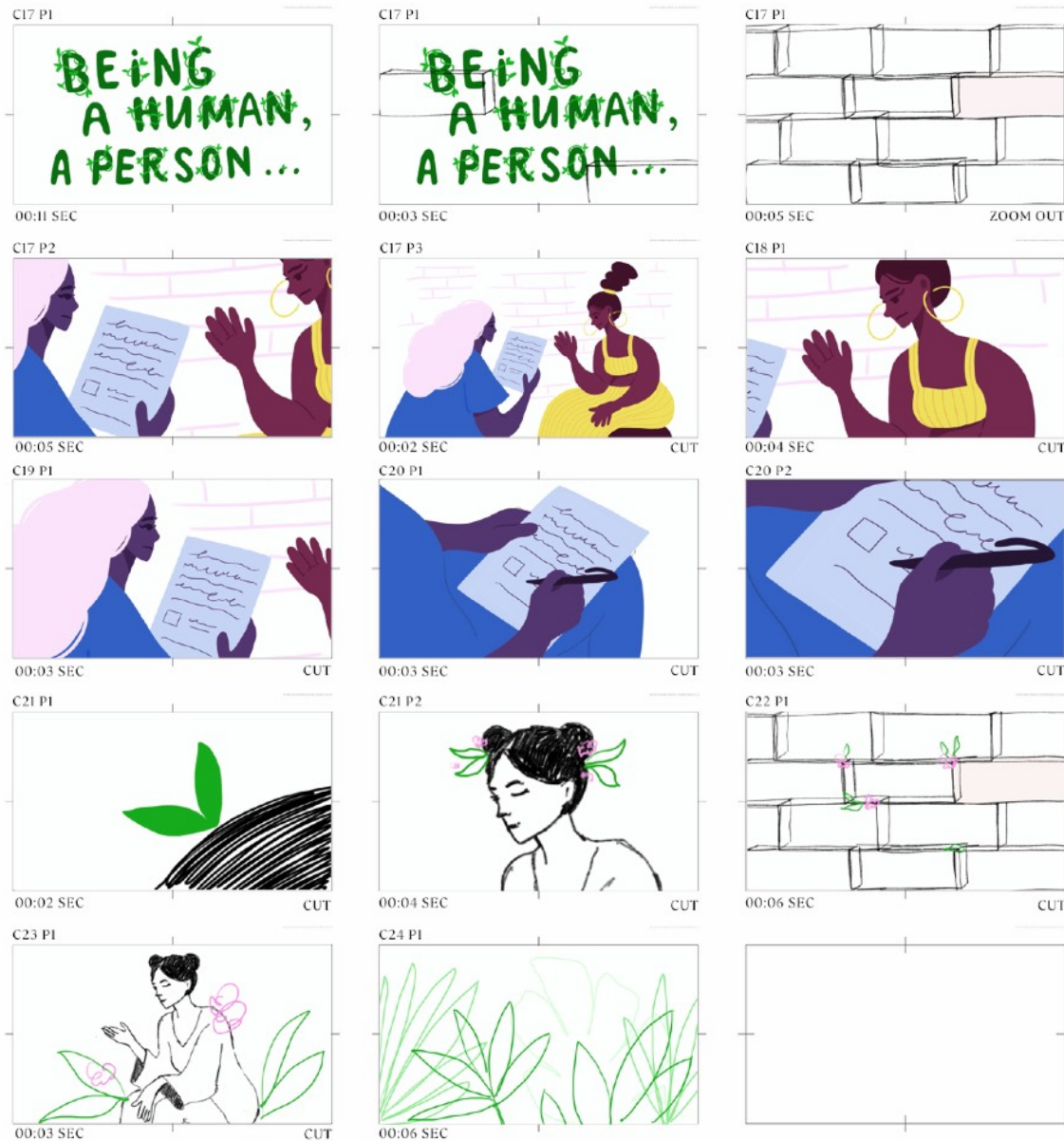


Image #38 — Third part of final storyboard

Visually, I conveyed this point by focusing on the heroine of this story first. She accepts her experience at the moment and manages to return to her true self — “being a human, a person,” as she says at the beginning of the story. While doing so, a flower from Madagascar (the native country of the main character) appears in her hair. Then slowly, frame by frame, flower by flower, we observe how everything around her starts to blossom, including the wall from the castle in the second story—which, in this case, is an abandoned house—and the hospital from the first story. By connecting all the stories, I promote and celebrate the ideas of connection and womanhood, support, acceptance, and appreciation.

By combining every part into the animatic at every stage of storyboard development, I managed to see the dynamics of frames and stories, adjusting the timing, shots, and overall feeling of my animation. I worked simultaneously on the storyboard and animatic; therefore, the majority of adjustments I mentioned earlier were a combination of impressions from both the storyboards and animatics during the development stage.

By comparing the earlier animatic⁶, the intermediate version, and the latest film, it becomes evident that all the work was conducted simultaneously. By working this way, I allowed myself to switch between stories back and forth, became inspired by all the heroines simultaneously, and solved the challenges across the stories during the production process.

4.4.3. - Animation Technique

The technique I employed for my project is frame-by-frame digital animation. Digital animation's flexibility — such as the opportunity to experiment, quickly test ideas, and make adjustments and implement changes without restarting from scratch influenced my decision to choose it.

Procreate Dreams (Image #39) is a new application from the developers of Procreate, which has excellent synchronization with Procreate, which I'm already familiar with. This compatibility makes the workflow easier and faster. Procreate Dream has a comprehensive set of tools, efficiency, and creative freedom to make the animation process as easy as possible, which I took for consideration on selecting this tool over others.

To differentiate the three stories in my animation, I've crafted a unique graphic style for each of the three parts. A diverse amount of digital brushes let me imitate the watercolor brush effect for the layouts of the second story, add texture for the layouts of the first story, and create hand-drawn unique shapes and silhouettes for the layouts of the third story. The inspiration source for each style is based on the impressions of women who participated in my project. I've aligned visual elements such as style,

⁶ [Link to the first animatic](#)

colors, and technique with my impression of them, their personalities, and their stories to highlight each character's authenticity and the essence of their stories.

I applied different animation techniques to each part to differentiate the stories further. Morphing was a significant part of the visual technique of the first story. At the story's beginning, a mother transforms into her daughter (the main heroine), who morphs into her brother, symbolizing her long standing jealousy of his upbringing. This part also ends with morphing — the main character morphs into six portraits of six women, and then these portraits merge at the end of the story. To me, morphing represents endless transformation and influence, which aligns with the theme of this story.

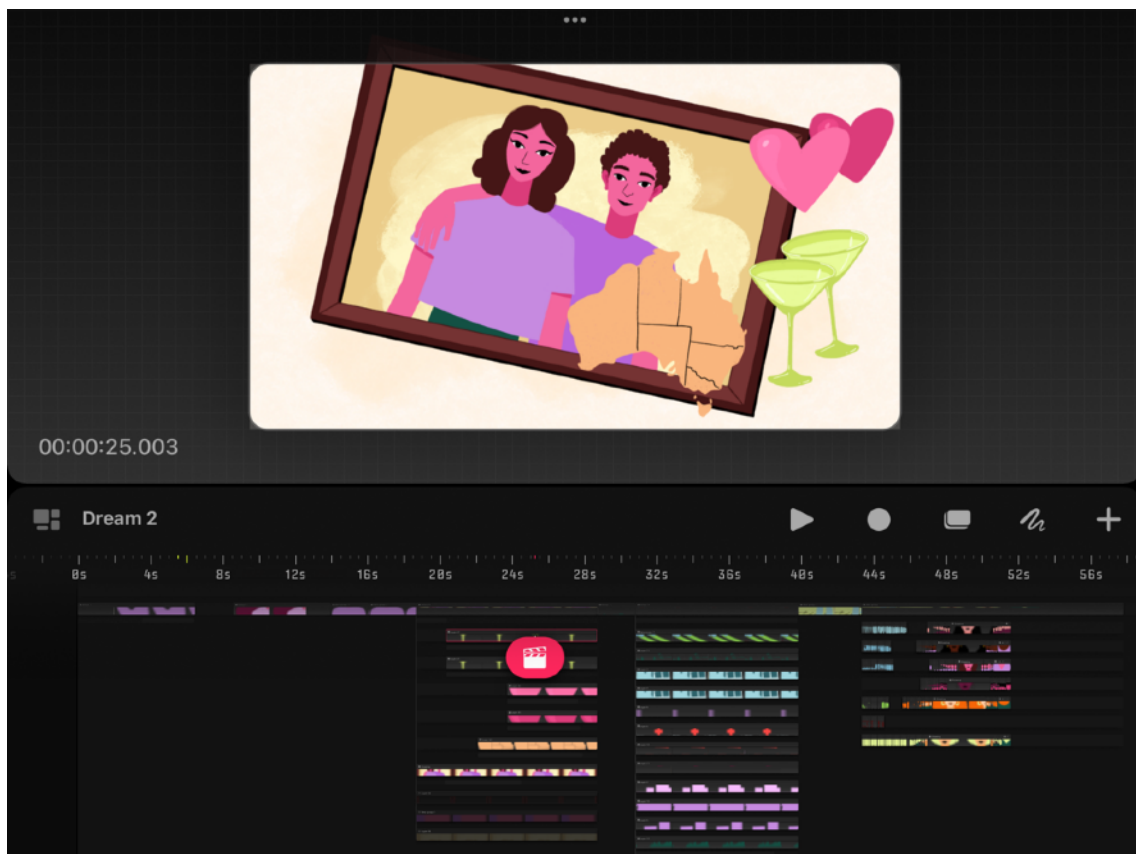


Image #39 — Screenshot from Procreate Dreams

In the second part, I kept the animation simple. The main character almost always remains still and doesn't move. This was an intentional decision to highlight the connection with book illustrations.

At the beginning of this part, I introduced a transition from nature at the beginning to the doctor's room. Transition is made by zooming out the scene, with falling bricks in the background forming the wall simultaneously. Through this transition, I convey into visual narration a voice which says «...weight on you put by society». In this context, the brick wall is a metaphor for this «societal pressure».

CHAPTER 5 - POST-PRODUCTION AND PROMOTION

5.1. Post-production

After finalizing the production process, I began the post-production part of development (Image #40). Having recorded interviews on my phone, I cut and rearranged parts of the audio in Adobe Premiere Pro⁷, which was part of the pre-production process and simultaneously created a foundation for the post-production work.

The main frames for animation were created in Procreate⁸ and later adjusted and animated in Procreate Dreams⁹. I exported the final animations of each part from Procreate Dreams in MP4 format and imported them to Adobe Premier Pro, where I continued the editing process by adjusting and matching video parts with audio parts. During this process, I had to edit the audio part to keep the animation flowing with pauses and parts where the audio provided essential information.

As the post-production process evolved, the sound work approached a new stage, where there was a demand for creating an atmosphere for the interviewees' voices. Opting for more realistic foley sounds, there was a thorough research, experimentation, and editing process. I gave an aural existence to objects, actions, and environments: from a moving car to flipping pages.

The final export was completed in Adobe Premiere Pro MP4 full HD format.

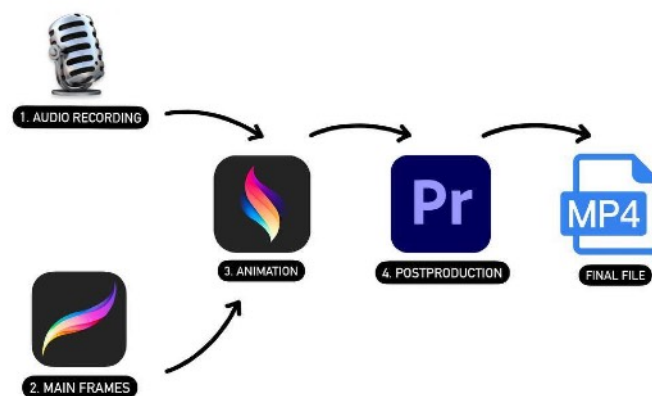


Image #40— Scheme of Production process

⁷ Adobe Premiere Pro — professional video editing software, part of Adobe Creative Cloud.

⁸ Procreate — software for digital painting for iOS by Savage Interactive.

⁹ Procreate Dreams — software for digital animation for iOS Savage Interactive.

5.2. Promotion

Promoting short documentary animation can be challenging due to inherent limitations of the format, such as brief length and limited screening opportunities. Keeping these limitations in mind, the promotion strategy for my documentary film includes:

- Social media promotion.
- Participating in like-minded exhibitions and short-film festivals.
- Engaging with niche communities.

The first part of the promotion, already undertaken during production, involved participating in the *Over & Out 2024* exhibition in July 2024 at Lusofona University. My project was part of a hybrid animation group exhibition aiming to combine several animation projects and highlight the most critical aspects of each one of them through hybridization.



Image #41 — Photos of group hybrid animation project Sensory Cafe

Our group project was titled «Sensory Cafe»¹⁰ and was a combination of two animation films: mine and the animation called «The Cafe» by Mafalda Cruz. Mafalda's animation is about a typical Portuguese cafe that connects her to the time she spent going to cafes with her family when she was a child (Image #41). Her contribution to

¹⁰ [Link to video](#)

the project was to recreate the overall environment of the cafe with sounds, smells, tables, and so on.

My part of the project was to convey the meaning of my film — the idea of connection and shared experiences — through the cafe environment that Mafalda created. I achieved this by putting small speakers into coffee cups at one of the tables in our exhibition. The speakers were covered by the painting of the coffee in the cups and represented the stories that were left in the cups of coffee. The intimate stories you share with your friends in warm and welcoming cafe environments that were metaphorically left in the cups of coffee after people left, and now visitors to the exhibition could listen.

The speakers' volume was kept low because all the stories were playing on continuous loops. To avoid overlapping the sounds of the speakers and avoiding overlapping with the sound of the cafe's environment, I made the sounds as low as possible. To hear the sound, the visitors would need to put a cup near their ears, and only then could they discover the story.

The technical part of the project was done using Max¹¹ and Loopback¹² applications. I used these applications to separate the sound from my laptop to go in three speakers — one speaker per story — and keep stories looping continuously. I explain more about the project and its technical part in this paper¹³

The next step in my promotional strategy would be to submit my animation film to festivals that support independent animation films. Such as Monstra, Paris International Animation Film Festival, Animatic: International Animation Film Festival, Lanterna Magica - International Animation Festival, Tricky Women Realities International Animation Film Festival, British Animation Awards, etc.

The following step of the promotion strategy would involve engaging with niche communities, which could be divided into online and offline. Online activities would include participating in online forums, Facebook groups, and Reddit communities

¹¹ Max — a visual programming language for music and multimedia by Cycling '74

¹² Loopback — is an application to routing of electronic signals.

¹³ [Link to paper about the hybrid space project](#)

related to animation, documentary animation, gender equality, feminism, and indie animation films.

Offline would be joining local film discussions & watching clubs. For example, in Lisbon, it would be *shorfilmssundays*, which takes place in 1399room every Sunday with monthly Animation Film editions.

Social Media promotion strategy will take place after submitting the thesis and receiving its grade and after submitting the film to festivals. However, most of the festivals have the requirement of not publishing animation films online before the festival itself, the process of submitting and potential screening would be translated into social media, and the audience from festivals could be potential followers on social media. Since my primary audience is zillennials¹⁴, the leading platforms on social media for promotion will be Instagram, YouTube, and Vimeo.

The strategy would vary from platform to platform. For instance, on Vimeo, there is only the possibility of posting the final video. Still, on YouTube, there's a possibility to post shorts (short videos) to show behind the scenes, interviews with an author, the author's explanation of the idea, walking through the process of creating the animation film and answering audience questions.

The process of submitting and potential screening would be translated into social media platforms such as Instagram, and the audience from festivals could be potential followers on social media. The general principle is to engage the audience organically by creating authentic, eye-catching, memorable content and connecting with the audience.

¹⁴ Zillennials — people born between 1992 to 2002 years (approximately).

CONCLUSION

The research explored the production process of the documentary animation film *My Superpower*. The theoretical part featured animations, documentary animations, live-action documentary films, and artworks that significantly influenced the creation and idealization of the project.

The theoretical research of this thesis has limitations and is based on my personal preferences and selection of the specific projects that influenced and inspired me as an author. Therefore, it opens a space for deeper research not only on each of the categories of visual arts listed before but also on wider topics to continue exploring, such as the representation of women in visual arts, feminist-themed animations, documentary animations, female body representation in animation, etc.

While researching similar projects, I discovered a project with a similar idea — a live-action documentary film *What is a woman?* (2022) — of interviewing people about gender, but with a different, even opposite, main concept of oversimplifying gender as a concept to biological differences only, which opened a space in the documentary world for discussions, conversations, and debates. Finding the project with the opposite notion inspired me even more to produce my film and, therefore, to contribute to a representation of different opinions in the documentary animation field.

The practical part of the research started with a pre-production process, focused on formulating interview questions and conducting interviews. However, the interviewing process involved a limited amount of participants (three) due to the limited timeline of the academic course and the upcoming need to keep the time for production and post-production. It opens the potential continuation of the project with more interviews involved as one possible option. The other possible option could be to define other requirements for interviews, such as different age ranges, focus on one region or nationality, or include in the research non-binary individuals and their views on gender.

The small number of interviewees lets me create a project that switches the focus from global statistics numbers to personal stories that let the public connect with each featured person on a deeper level. At the same time, I purposely did not include the

information about interviewees in the documentary film itself, highlighting the fact that those stories and experiences could be universal experiences.

While working on the practical part of the project, I faced new challenges and overcame them, such as the difficulties in finding interviewees for documentary animations, crafting interview questions to stay neutral during the interviews, and not influencing the interviewees' answers by carefully brainstorming questions, dealing with rejections in participating in interviews, reconsidering back and forth film structure, crafting three visually distinguishable styles within one film, and presenting an opinion in the film that does not resonate with my views on the subject and personal values. Surmounting these challenges, let me reiterate how deeply documentary animation films connect with the public on a metaphoric and symbolic level.

[Link to «My Superpower» \(2024\) with English subtitles](#)

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Appendix A - Transcription of Interview with C.

(0:02) So, for me, being a woman means that you have to be strong from day one to face the world. (0:10) I think it starts from parents wanting the child to be a boy, (0:16) because it's just easier, we'll carry the name of the family. They see (0:25) that having a girl, not in all cultures, but in some is seen as a sign of weakness.

(0:34) And this, I think, comes from history. (0:40) But I think as well as women, we can experience life in a deeper way. I think spiritual and (0:49) physical, for example.

Women, obviously I'm generalizing here, but we tend to be more (0:56) in touch with our emotions, whereas I feel men avoid that. (1:06) So, continuing what I said, (1:10) the women are usually more in contact with their emotions and men avoid them. So, I think, (1:16) in a way, we got humanity right, because I feel like we're here on the earth to experience (1:25) emotions and get in contact with our bodies.

So, women, in general, are more aware towards that. (1:32) And men, usually, are driven by greed. It's very difficult to find men (1:40) that want to experience their spirituality, understand their feelings, (1:50) accept the body that they have.

So, I think this is something very special about women. (2:00) And also, what we can do, what we can experience, we can experience life (2:05) in a much more, I think, truthful way. (2:16) So, if I ever felt touched by gender discrimination, I did.

I think it started from (2:21) school, because, for example, I remember, I'm from Brazil and here we have this idea that (2:30) usually the men are the ones that grill. And perhaps my dad taught me how to grill meat and (2:36) do barbecues. And my friends were like, no way, you're a girl, we're not going to touch the grill.

(2:42) But still, you don't understand, you think it's funny until you get aware of it and you grow up (2:50) and you think, okay, that was not okay. So, I think it started from there. And also, from your (2:56) parents already, it starts in a way that, for example, I

have a brother, so I could feel that more (3:04) deeply. He could go out alone. I couldn't, because I was a girl. He could move to Australia.

(3:11) I couldn't, because I was a girl, it would be dangerous for me. I should be more in a conservative (3:15) country, a more safer country. Or he could bring girls home, it's okay, but I could never bring (3:24) boys home.

I think gender discrimination starts from the family. It's very rare to find families (3:29) that are very prone to equality among children. But also, this comes from culture.

A lot in culture (3:37) is very man-centered, I feel. So, in South America in general, and Italy, which I'm (3:46) currently living now, I can feel the same way. (3:54) Afterwards, now that I'm starting to be a doctor, I tell people that I'm about to be a doctor, (4:02) and they tell me, but you're a girl and you're Brazilian, so that couldn't be right.

(4:11) So, for me, it also weights the nationality, because Brazilians are always seen as sexualized, (4:17) and especially for a woman, like you're the stereotypical Latina girl, they love samba and (4:22) dances, and it's easy. So, in Italy, I feel the stereotype, it's very strong. (4:35) So, and also in the hospital, just for being a woman, they, not that they disrespect you, (4:42) but they disregard you, and I don't think it's, it's not fair.

I think the impact of my life, (4:50) the way that I know that I'm always going to have to work harder, and there'll be limitations just (4:55) because I am a woman, and I can use my life to work towards changing that. For example, as a (5:05) doctor, I want to be more inclusive towards women's health. I will gather as much information (5:11) that I can.

I empower my friends. So, I think this helped me to be stronger, if I will say, (5:19) from like the silver lining of all of that, but at the same time, (5:28) it's complicated to have a voice in being a woman, because all the rights are too bossy, or (5:38) you know, they're like, oh, she's just in her period, she's hungry. They always excuse us, (5:43) and

I've seen this with people around me, and I don't accept when they say this, and I think (5:52) this type of situation has made me stronger and made me more aware of the society we live in, (5:59) and I hope that I'll be able also to help women in the same situation.

So, (6:04) it gave me the drive for it, let's say. I think it depends. When we were kids, (6:10) obviously, we're more exposed to princess movies.

You always get rescued by the prince charming, (6:17) and you kind of believe that it's okay that the man is better than you, (6:23) but as much as you're growing up, you can see (6:28) different types of movies, especially made by women, where they reinforce their power, (6:36) and I think it depends also the kind of society you're exposed, and the kind of content you (6:42) consume. I feel like when you're kids, you're more exposed to romance, and there will be a guy, (6:51) they'll be coming to save you. Your rom comes when you're a teenager, they romanticize (6:56) the whole relationship, but then when you get to real life, you see the (7:02) I mean, you're more exposed to different kinds of movies and situations, (7:09) and you can understand, for example, there are couples going through divorce.

I remember I (7:15) watched the, what's it called, the name, the Life in a Marriage, I think, with Jessica Chastain, (7:23) and the struggle of a marriage, like there is also the female part, and the male part, (7:28) and I felt like it was kind of towards equal, was like their problem, you know, so you can see, (7:33) oh, I can have a voice in my marriage, or sometimes there are documentaries as well, (7:39) of real cases of women getting beaten by their husband, or scammed by men, (7:46) and I think also the cinema now can make women more aware, or even like (7:56) lately with the Barbie movie, a lot of women got touched by it, (8:02) most of them are like, oh, Barbie was just so sentimental, but they don't understand (8:07) how important it's for us to be seen, and we can be different, we have different tastes and (8:15) hobbies, and this diversity in women, it's something that men don't accept, (8:23) or even their women, they're like, oh, the lady should be dressed in a certain way, (8:28) behave in a certain way, so I

think usually men support men in a way, oh, let's be men, (8:37) and then women don't, and I think the cinema right now is trying to (8:45) get women closer to say we're fighting for the same cause, so yeah, that's it.

Appendix B - Transcription of Interview with K.

(0:00) Okay, so hi K. Hi Tati. Yeah, I would like to ask you what does being a woman mean to you? (0:12) It's a very complicated question for me.

I think being a woman is the most, (0:22) the best thing that ever happened to me in my life, but at the same time I understand that (0:27) being a woman can be hard and it can be unbearable and painful, and (0:37) being a woman is like a superpower, because you are able to give life, (0:47) and this is something that a man cannot do, but at the same time I understand that (0:57) being a woman is connected to a man, so because we are, if there is no man there is no sense (1:07) in being a woman, so as a woman, being a woman for me is, (1:17) and it's a lot of fun, and I can, I think I'm lucky to be born in 21st century, and (1:30) I can do whatever I want, I can become whoever I want. I'm not forced to wear skirts, but I can (1:39) wear skirts, and I like myself wearing a dress, putting the makeup, and as a woman I can be (1:48) emotional, and I can, I just, I like sometimes that I can be like this and that, and I'm not (2:09) limited to anything. I know that I'm not forced to follow a certain pattern, (2:20) but if I want I can, I have the opportunity, and from another side I understand that being a woman (2:30) is senseless without a man in my life, so for example if we put 100 men on a desert island (2:44) in 100 years you will see the bones, but if we put 100 men and 100 women (2:54) and on the desert islands and take a look in 100 years most probably we will see the hospitals, (3:03) the schools, the roads, the shops, the anything, so being a woman is to impact in society, (3:15) so being like the founder of society, like co-founder, let's say so, (3:24) so at the same time being a woman is to be a daughter, to be a mother, to be a wife, (3:35) and to take care of the people that you love, and to be (3:44) to be some kind of a wise person who can support, who can support the kids, (3:52) who can support the parents, who can support the husband, and at the same time, at the same time (4:01) I have my flaws as a woman, and sometimes I talk shit, and my man is okay with that, (4:10) you know, because I understand that like sometimes I act as a female, you know, sometimes I want (4:19) I want to get in a fight, and like it's much more fun to do with a man than with a woman, (4:36) yeah, and I was never told that I have to, that I have to, (4:46) like that my purpose is to give kids, you know, that I have to be a wife, (4:53) or I

have to be a house, housewife, I can do whatever I want nowadays, and I have all the (5:04) rights, and but I have a choice, and yeah, being a woman is cool. I love it, I'm like literally (5:16) having goosebumps while you're talking, yeah, so I love it a lot, so thank you so much for (5:26) giving me an interview, yeah, so the second question that I have if I'm gonna ask you, (5:33) have you felt touched by gender stereotypes?

Honestly, not really, maybe in society where I grew (5:44) up, it was never a problem, it was, yeah, it was a patriarchal society, and where a woman has a role, (5:56) and a man has a role, it's not about the competition, it's about group work, so it's (6:04) like, it was always about, you know, the families in the society, and it's not that I was treated (6:16) differently, I never faced that at work, it's not that I'm paid less at my work, it's not that I (6:25) like, I couldn't attend the certain activities. I was touched once with this gender stuff, (6:35) I was 16, and I was on my first year of university, and I entered the, like, I didn't want to do the (6:44) physical exercises, we had a class about physical exercises, and our coach, our teacher said that (6:54) you can avoid that, but you have to join some sports, and I wanted to do karate, you know, (7:00) because I grew up on Jackie Chan movies, and I was like, you know, karate and kung fu, but (7:07) our teacher was an ex-wrestler, and he said, like, freestyle wrestler, and his ears were like (7:16) dumplings, you know, and he said, why do you need, like, all these martial arts, let's go do (7:24) the wrestling. So I found the activity in my hometown, and there was a club for freestyle (7:34) wrestlers, and I went there, and I don't think it was surprising for me, it was mostly boys, (7:44) and it was really rare and uncommon to see a girl.

There were, like, for 100% of people, (7:52) there were, like, 90%, 95% of men, and 5% of girls, and of course, I was treated, I was treated, (8:05) like, in some way, like, other boys would, or would ignore me, or would look at me, you know, like, (8:15) like they, some kind of arrogant, I would say, so, because they thought that (8:25) it's, the wrestling is not a female sport, because, well, historically, it was only for men, (8:34) then, after some time, it was open for women, and, yeah, I think it was the only place where I (8:43) was touched by this gender stuff, but overall, like, I mean, I was mad at them, because, like, (8:52) I thought, anyone can do wrestling, and this is true, but how common it is in the society, (8:59) because we're biologically different, you know, I

always thought that, in my life, (9:06) and as I see myself, like, I'm a flower, I'm a tender flower, and right now, I think it was (9:14) a very harsh atmosphere there, it was a very harsh environment for me, because they were (9:21) taught to be rude, they were taught to kick, not to kick each other, but to throw each other, (9:26) they were taught to physically fight, kind of fight, and I was not made for fighting, (9:38) I was not made for, you know, like, I cannot hit people, I can, I'm a very soft person, (9:45) and it was not the best place for me, but I was a teenager, and I thought, like, I can do that. (9:50) And now, I think, well, since then, I was not touched at all, like, wherever I went, (10:00) I know that some people, like, some women, they talk to men, and they ignore them, you know, (10:07) they ignore their opinion, they ignore, like, what they want, what they think, but, well, (10:15) I'm not surround, I'm not surrounding myself with this kind of, this kind of people, that's why (10:21) I was not touched, mostly, yeah, so, yeah, something like that. Yeah, cool, I think you, (10:30) like, really lucky about it.

Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think I'm lucky, because I grew up, (10:38) I went around the world, and, is it mine? Yeah. So, I grew up, I went, you know, here and there, (10:49) mostly, I see the West, the Europe, and United States, they have this problem, you know, (11:00) in the world where I'm from, there was no such problem, no one questioned, you know, like, (11:06) the rights, the roles, yeah, and then I grew up and understood, oh, there is a problem. (11:16) Yeah, I remember, I talked to my friend about that, she lives in Canada right now, and she said, (11:23) yes, it's a big problem, and we just never knew that.

Yeah, wow, so, I guess, like, if I ask you (11:34) how, like, this particular experience affected your life, what would you say? I would say that (11:45) since then, I had this idea of feminism, I had this idea that we have to fight, you know, (11:52) for our lives, for us, for who we are, but then, I think, the female, sometimes, (12:05) when they want to fight, maybe it's because they don't feel loved. I think the person who is not (12:14) happy wants to fight. Yeah.

If the person is happy, he has no sense, he has no willing to (12:24) fight with others, he

has no willing to hurt someone else. That's why, I think, I met my (12:32) boyfriend, and I remember we were fighting, like, several months, we were fighting like hell, (12:40) and then, we came to a conclusion and understood that the fight was all in my head, (12:46) and he said, it's not about fighting, it's not, it's, no one wants to limit you, no one wants (12:53) to tell you what to do, no one wants to force you to do something you don't want to, it's just (13:00) that men and women, we're built, we're different, we're built differently, and we have different (13:09) roles, and we're like, like, like a driver, and, you know, another, like, two drivers, you know, (13:20) two pilots, you know, one is settling the course, and another one drives, so we are a team, we are (13:28) not competitors, because if we compete, it means, like, there is not something that we can build, (13:37) we can build only if we are, you know, just coexisting peacefully and understanding what (13:43) each of us has to do, what each of us has to bring to the table, so if I want a man to provide, (13:52) I, I, from my part, I take a responsibility to take care of him, of kids, and we are just (14:03) agreeing on the roles, on the responsibilities, yeah, and I understand that those, those kids, (14:10) they were just stupid, I mean, they were, because after that, you grew up, and you understand that (14:18) it has no meaning, yeah, something like that, I feel the same, they were just, like, stupid (14:25) teenager boys, yeah, who didn't know how to handle having a teenager girl around them, yeah, I think (14:33) they're, they were just insecure, yeah, definitely, so, yeah, and, like, the last question that I'm (14:42) gonna ask is, how do you think, like, representation of women in cinema and animation affected you and (14:49) your life? I grew up on cartoons, the Disney cartoons, yeah, where, and now I see the cartoons (15:01) somewhat differently, because of the society and stuff, but when I was a kid, I loved dreaming (15:09) myself like a princess, and I loved those stories when female are rescued, female are, you know, (15:19) they were feeling miserable, and after that, they met their dream guys, and lived happily ever after, (15:27) and I loved that, and when I grew up, I've been told, no, you got it all wrong, Cinderella is a woman (15:36) who waits for someone to save her, she waits for her man to come rescue and give her, like, the money (15:46) and love, like, but no, woman has to go and do everything herself, like, the mermaid, I was told (15:56) that she, you got it all wrong, that she came to the, like, she became a human, and she was, (16:09) like, she depended

on her man, yeah, and, like, you know, for example, Beauty and the Beast, yeah, and (16:17) it's, like, it's all about the cruel father and the sick relationship between her and the man, (16:26) the monster, yeah, I don't, like, everyone perceives the cartoons in their own way, yeah, and I feel, like, (16:37) you see the things how you want them to see, of course, woman capable of do anything, (16:45) woman is capable to do 1000 things at a time, you know, work, take care of kids, cook, you know, (16:54) go there, you know, drive there, like, of course, woman can do everything by herself, but why? (17:03) So, the, I think there is a lot of movies and cartoons, they are putting the characters, (17:13) the, like, the male and female, like, like, someone is depend on someone else, (17:20) someone is competing with someone else, sorry, but it's not that, for me, for me, it's, well, (17:32) I don't agree with that, I don't agree with, like, I, every time I watch a cartoon or a movie, (17:40) I analyze it, I think what I can get from it, with what I cannot agree, and I think the, (17:53) the most, the basic thing about the cartoons and the movies for me is that (18:02) a woman can be happy with a man, you know, and a man can be happy with a woman, (18:11) and my, my core (18:16) goal, like, my core point there is the happiness as the result, you know, (18:23) so I don't look at suffers, I don't look at pain, at the pain, hardships, I know there are a lot, (18:31) a lot, but I, I like seeing it as the happiness that comes at the same time, so it's not only, (18:42) only bad things, there are good things, yeah, so I love those stories, I love those fairy tales, (18:50) because they give you the hope, they give you the, and hope is something important, (18:57) something important that we always have to carry, (19:00) that's, like, maybe not today, today was a bad day, but tomorrow it's gonna be better, and (19:10) yeah, something like this. I love it, okay, thank you so much. Thank you too.

Appendix C - Transcription of Interview with S.

(0:00) it and like whatever you know like if you do like I don't know you feel you (0:04) wanna use like different words you can use it because I mean I'm just gonna cut (0:09) it and yeah so it's like not a not problem at all okay just express (0:16) yourself okay and just yeah just like be like all this like unique puzzle that (0:21) you are I'll be myself fully then yeah okay so the first question what does (0:26) being a woman mean to you it's a complicated question but I think it (0:42) means the same as being a man in the sense that I feel that as a woman my (0:50) life is different because of the of the of the things that have been put on me (0:57) but otherwise in term of how I look at being a woman it's the same as being a (1:06) man it's being a human a person and then after the difference that come with being (1:12) a woman that's put on you by society but in term of like what is it to be a (1:19) woman is to be human I feel like and the second question is have you felt (1:29) touched by gender discrimination yes for sure so I so all of my siblings I mean (1:42) my so before but three two of my siblings and I we lived with my mom and (1:48) she was a single mother so I think that definitely before even I was touched by (1:55) gender-based discrimination I already saw it by the result of me being raised (2:04) by a single mother I felt the judgment of people like the way people could (2:08) assume certain things because my mom was a single mom so already from there (2:12) without even understanding what was gender you know I already knew that okay (2:18) my family is a bit different because my mom is a single mom and the way people (2:23) perceive her or our family dynamic and then sadly as you grow up you have a more (2:33) like for example as a young girl I was raised differently than my brother so we (2:39) three girls and one boy so we fought and we were raised differently than my (2:45) brother in the sense of we had the same love and the same attention but we were (2:51) required to do different things like we were more raised to be you know how to (3:00) clean or to cook in this gender-based role where you know my brother were (3:08) required other things and I think that either for him or for us I think also (3:14) this I think in a weird way it was also impacted by by that by the fact that he (3:20) had to he was raised to be a man in a sense and we were raised to be woman so (3:25) I think that yeah I've always felt like gender was always a thing as soon as I (3:33) were able to understand like okay like even like now that I'm a certain age I (3:40) can't even

go to the beach without you know a little bra even though there's (3:44) nothing there it's like the same you're too little spot but now suddenly because (3:48) I'm a bit older I have to wear like this piece on top that makes no sense but it's (3:55) just to you know not create a certain reaction so yeah I think that I've always (4:03) been impacted by what about your adult life mm-hmm oh yeah I mean funny I'm (4:14) thinking about that because I'm believing that right now but like also (4:18) like in relationship maybe like you like I don't know like so many questions of (4:36) like oh but like when are you getting married when are you going to do that or (4:42) because you know you're a certain age so maybe this and that so I think I'll (4:46) serve in my adult life it's always also surrounding this thing of like okay so (4:56) you are this age you've been with that meant for a certain time so what does (5:00) that imply that that implies marriage does that imply babies you know so then (5:05) you can feel a bit pressure in that sense but like sorry I'm thinking about (5:14) gender violence but it's not violence right it's discrimination so so when you (5:24) mean discrimination is how like I mean more like you know for example yeah as (5:32) you said that you had like a partner for like a certain time and like you feel a (5:35) pressure of like getting married and get a baby but he doesn't feel the same you (5:39) know or it's something like I don't know if you like get a job and you know like (5:48) you know like oh you get like underpaid because you like a woman you expect it (5:53) to get it like babies again and you expect it to get like maternity leave you (5:56) know so that people don't trust you also they don't want to hire you for example (6:00) in a certain age because they don't want to pay for your maternity leave like (6:04) potential so I mean something like that okay so I feel like also sometimes it's (6:11) even in the simplest interaction with people before like what we were talking (6:16) about earlier before people know my age or they assume thing because I'm a woman (6:21) they're gonna speak down to me or like often or so I've realized like when I (6:27) talk about animation or certain things with let's say men or whatnot there's (6:32) always a bit this thing of like oh yeah but you know I know this better than you (6:36) or you know well this and that or don't you know this and like trying to talk (6:39) down to me to be like well this is how things are and I'm like I know that's (6:45) why I brought the subject and that's what we're talking about it so I feel (6:48) like often it's more than having big moment or like oh my god in my face it's

(6:54) more subtle it's very subtle in the sense of like like microaggression in (6:59) that sense like always having to like defend yourself so what why you feel a (7:05) certain way why you think a certain way or like when you have very interesting (7:11) when you have an experience about your womanhood and then you're trying to (7:15) express that to let's say a man or someone that I've never lived that (7:19) there's this thing of this doesn't exist this is not true so even before being (7:24) able to be like okay so this is an issue that I have with or that's something (7:29) that I've encountered in my life it's like was that really something that I (7:32) encounter in my life because I feel like there's so much gaslighting but you're (7:36) not even sure to realize the discrimination that you live so even (7:42) right now I'm trying to think about it I'm like there's so many micro (7:47) aggression all the time that you kind of push on the side and be like oh well (7:53) it's happening all the time so is that discrimination but yeah I think also for (8:11) sure there's a lot of more even than in the moment of like leaving that (8:17) discrimination is trying to explain that discrimination to people I feel (8:21) like it's like I feel like trying to explain racism to someone that I've (8:27) never lived racism that don't have any friends that have lived racism so then (8:32) it's such a foreign experience from them that I feel like sadly I've met a lot of (8:38) people that I would think oh they're super open and super cool and then as (8:42) soon as I talk about certain struggle that's not real that's just you that's (8:46) just your experience but what are you talking about like that's maybe in your (8:49) head or what not so yeah yeah I definitely can't relate about it and how (8:57) do you think like those experiences impacted your life make me more cautious (9:06) of people yeah more cautious and also like I have this thing when someone (9:19) tells me like I can't do something or I can't like get somewhere that really (9:24) fuels me in the sense of like well like in the sense like when someone tells me (9:29) like you can't do that because you're a woman or you can't get there because (9:32) you're a woman or you being a woman you don't understand what it is you know (9:38) mm-hmm then I feel like that's what you know impact me the most in the sense of (9:50) like oh sorry I lost my train of thought what was the question again how like (9:58) experiences gender discrimination discrimination impacted your life it (10:06) it was something about like when someone is saying you cannot do it something yes (10:10) thank you so I'm gonna say the

positive and the negative I think that in (10:16) everything in life there's always silver lining and in the positive it gives me a (10:21) lot of strength so when someone like a man particularly or even a woman that (10:27) tells me I can't do something because I'm a woman because that's the thing (10:30) also it's not just men telling that it's like women also it's a thing so it's (10:35) like this thing of no I can do it I can do it not even better but I can do it as (10:39) well maybe better you know so that's something that I've took in positively (10:43) from those interestingly I've always been struggling with my period so my period (10:52) or not on time the late and since I can remember I've always had a very very (10:59) painful period so sometimes even I wouldn't need to go to the hospitals I (11:02) wouldn't need to get someone to come to like give me an IV or stuff like that you (11:07) know so that I could bear the pain and one time I had to go to the to the (11:13) hospital and he was doing COVID so of course it was a time already that was (11:18) very hard for hospital and things like that at that time but I remember that (11:25) the doctor I went to speak to her and I was like I have issue with my period like (11:30) I was such in pain I couldn't feel my legs I couldn't feel my arms like (11:35) everything was numb and I knew exactly what it was because I've lived that all (11:39) my life so I know what it is but that doctor didn't believe me she was like (11:44) this is not true this is not what's happening and she really really really (11:49) tried to push me to do certain exam that had nothing to do with my condition and (11:53) she was trying to push the idea that what I had was an appendicitis and I was like (11:57) I know my appendicitis didn't burst because I know this what this is this is not the (12:02) first time I've lived it this is a reality of my life but still she didn't (12:07) believe me and even at the end I was like I know this is my period she didn't want (12:10) to do anything about it she was like if you don't want to do the test for the (12:14) appendicitis then we can't do anything for you and you leave so it was kind of this (12:17) thing also in like in the more than just like this thing in your mind when you (12:22) like you know like if you have a if you have a certain opinion or whatnot that (12:27) you like oh you know it's in my head or whatnot like this is a physical thing (12:31) that you feel and that you know is real but then you're gonna be of a doctor (12:35) that's someone that you trust and you know what you're feeling is not real so (12:40) your reality is not real so what you leave is not real and I think that was (12:44)

really shocking to me and I just left because I knew what I was there for and (12:50) I went home and I was still feeling shit and I was still feeling bad and the (12:55) doctor like they gave me some pain medicine but they didn't really help me (13:00) with my condition and then my period passed and it was okay I didn't you know (13:04) nothing happened but just you know but it was a bit crazy to to realize that (13:11) yeah like often as a woman we try to make you feel that what you're feeling is (13:17) not real. Yeah, I definitely had the same experience with my period, but with my ex-boyfriend, like I didn't need to go to hospital but he just didn't believe me it was that bad. (13:31) Sometimes our conversation when there's men being like yeah well I feel like you know it's worse to get hit in the balls.

(13:38) Like no, you cannot imagine. (13:41) Try to bleed for like five days, like what are you talking about? (13:48) And I was also like super mad at him because he's like do you really need to take medicine? (13:53) It's like yeah. (13:55) Oh my, oh my.

(13:57) No, no, no. (13:58) That really gave me heat. (13:59) Like this topic I feel like because I've lived a lot of period pain.

(14:04) I'm like yeah period pain is no joke. (14:07) Because of it like I know like the daily limit of like paracetamol, ibuprofen because I had to check how many pills you're allowed to get in a day. (14:16) Because it was like you know in the moment when you're like should I get like they're like she's fine.

(14:21) I feel you, yeah that's the thing. (14:25) Yeah and like when someone is like no you're not sucking your head like is it in my head? (14:30) It's in my body. (14:31) Yay. (14:34) Yeah, cool. (14:35) Yeah, I love it. (14:37) And we can go to like the last question.

(14:40) It's about like representation, women in cinema and animation. (14:44) And how do you think it affected your life? (14:49) So I told you that I did an essay on animation

and women in representation of women in animation. (14:57) And for me a subject that I found really interesting is witches and that representation that they have.

(15:03) Because often witches also have this weird relation with mothers. (15:07) For example if you look at Cinderella, the evil stepmother. (15:16) She's not a witch but she is this evil stepmother.

(15:20) She's this mother figures that is representing evil. (15:23) And I feel like we often see that. (15:27) There's no really like I mean maybe with animation nowadays it's a bit more like representation has changed.

(15:35) But the animation that I grew up with for example. (15:37) Like the character that were like you know really cool or had a really cool story were boys. (15:45) Generally like girls had more like either were to be saved or they were evil.

(15:49) There was no like you know I mean you have Mulan and stuff like that. (15:53) Or Pocahontas a lot different right. (15:55) But she still had like generally for a lot of time like the woman like the young woman beautiful woman.

(16:04) But she's so beautiful but she can't do anything on her own like you know.

(16:07) She's the main character. (16:08) She's the principal character.

(16:10) But still she can't do anything on her own you know. (16:13) And not in the sense of like oh she needs friends and she needs things. (16:16) No it's like she can't do anything on her own because she's a woman kind of.

(16:21) Or it's like she's a very powerful woman. (16:25) She has strength. (16:25) She has power.

(16:26) She's a boss lady. (16:27) But she's ugly and she's mean as fuck you know.

(16:31) And it's like so if you are a boss lady. (16:35) If you're strong. (16:36) If you

know what you want. (16:37) You're powerful. (16:38) You have to be an evil character. (16:40) You can't be a powerful like strong like you know woman. (16:44) You would have to be either the fragile little petite woman that is saved. (16:49) Or the horrible evil woman that is the evil character you know. (16:53) So yeah I think. (16:56) I mean it changed now.

(16:58) Thank God for that. (16:59) But I think that for a while it was a bit like yeah this idea that a woman can either be saved. (17:12) And if she's strong then it's not to be saved. (17:15) But it's to be kind of a villain you know. (17:17) She's like villainized in a sense. (17:19) So yeah that's how I feel. (17:21) I mean like I said there's things I've changed a lot and now there's more representation. (17:27) But oh but there's one representation that I love. (17:31) That I've always take a big place.

(17:33) And my art about women is like in Studio Ghibli's movies. (17:36) Like all of the characters like the female characters are so strong. (17:40) And I've always loved that so much. (17:42) And they're not sexualized you know. (17:46) They're strong, powerful, they're brave. (17:48) But they also have you know a bad thing about them you know.

(17:51) Like they could be maybe capricious or they could have like fear or you know. (17:56) There's something that makes them more deep than just a bad or a good. (18:00) Like there's this mix you know that I really like about the characters of Studio Ghibli.

(18:06) Ayumi Azuki and stuff. (18:07) I really like them. (18:08) Yeah me too. (18:08) Yeah but I also feel like it's changed now. (18:14) But like it's still like the fact that it's changed now. (18:17) It doesn't change the fact that I when I was younger. (18:20) Like I didn't know first of all it was going to change. (18:23) And second of all it was like the only one reality that I knew. (18:26) Like I didn't like when I was younger I didn't know like oh when I'm going to grow up.

(18:30) They're going to represent me. (18:32) Now women are going to be different you know. (18:34) Yeah for sure. (18:35) Like I think also that's something that I'm struggling now with. (18:38) Like trying to break those kind of ideas that I grew up with because of society. (18:43) Because of how I was raised or what not.

(18:47) And it's just like you know. (18:51) I don't know. (18:55) Sorry I'm thinking about a lot of things at the same time. (18:58) No problem. (19:00) But. (19:01) Sorry what were we talking about? (19:03) I said like when we were like younger we didn't know it's going to change.

(19:10) So it was like the only one reality that we knew. (19:13) And it was like you know. (19:14) At least how I felt. (19:16) I felt it's going to be like forever. (19:17) Like this representation. (19:18) And for me that was true. (19:20) And it was like the real representation. (19:22) And you were saying how like now you're trying to break the stereotype that you grew up with. (19:26) Like that idea of like.

(19:28) Like I still have a bit of a fantasy of the idea of a man rescuing me. (19:31) And I hate it. (19:32) Because I know that's something that I don't want. (19:36) But I can't help it. (19:37) But sometimes I have still this fantasy in my head. (19:39) You know.

(19:40) I know that I'm a strong woman. (19:41) And I know that I want to do certain things. (19:44) But I still have that fantasy that maybe my problem can be solved by the love of a man. (19:49) Which is not possible. (19:51) Let's be real. (19:53) But it's just like.

(19:55) It's such an ingrained thing. (19:57) It's so put into you. (19:59) That now trying to break that. (20:02) I mean at least I think I'm aware of it. (20:04) But it's always like such a thing to always think about. (20:06) Nope.

(20:07) You know. (20:08) Like. (20:09) This is not necessarily the solution. (20:12) You know. (20:12) Yeah. (20:12) I think I have the same. (20:13) It's like piss me off so

much. (20:16) I feel you. (20:17) Yeah. (20:18) So. (20:19) Yeah. (20:20) Great. (20:21) So yeah. (20:21) I think I don't have any more questions. (20:23) Thank you so much. (20:24) Yeah. (20:24) Okay cool. (20:24) That was my pleasure. (20:25) That was cool. (20:26) Alright.