Principles of Animation: NHS Prostate Cancer Project

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https://alexhillyear2.myblog.arts.ac.uk/category/principles-of-animation/nhs-project/
Myblog link.

Concept intro: To respect the anonymity of the audio recordings given to us for this brief, initially, the imagery in our film included objects, environment and interior to represent the speakers symbolically. We decided this would allow for relatability, as it does not focus too heavily on the speakers' experiences as unique and individual. As well as allow our personal art styles to come through. We wanted to take an abstract approach. Throughout development, however, we wanted to make sure the film progressed towards a hopeful outlook. As you become familiar with the voices and stories of the speakers, the environment evolves to be fuller, more colourful, and more human.

The last scene shows a father and son, together in their kitchen, a stark contrast to the opening scene, a colourless, empty support group room.

Olivia and I developed a pinterest board to generate and share ideas. Particularly on medium, texture, and styling. We continued to add to this throughout the project to keep the ideas stream strong.
https://www.pinterest.co.uk/ohyavi/nhs-prostate-cancer/

MEDIUM IDEAS

Beginning scene of chairs: mini chair sculptures to film. Maybe made of clay or plasticine. The chairs are basically stationary so we can just film them

maybe medium idea: oil paint animation. Easy to mould. Stop motion.
(Ref: loving vincent)

MOODBOARD

Textures and simplistic character

Kenneth Blom

Character outlines and mood

Sticking with the theme of anonymity, our character designs will not have detailed faces, instead representing people as outlined figures.

Perspective

Here are some initial moodboards.
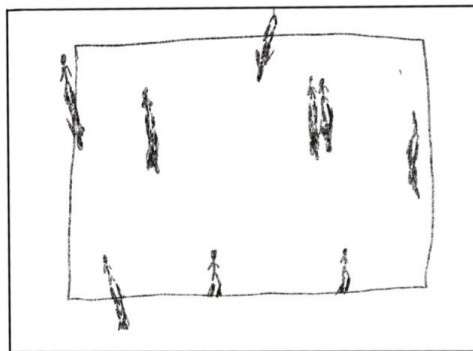
Here is the storyboard olivia did as an outline.
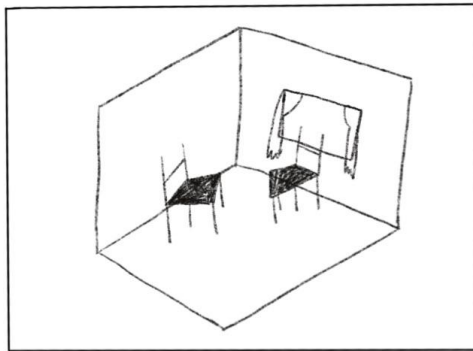
start off with hand-drawn medium. e.g gouache, would automatically create a wobble from the textures which matches the tone that we want for the beginning of the song.
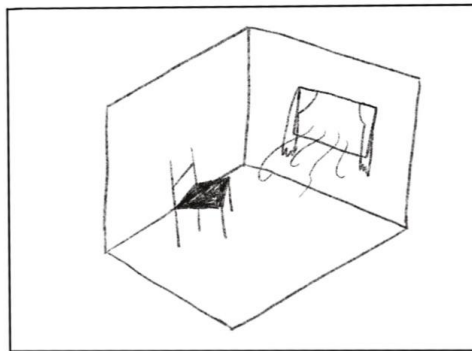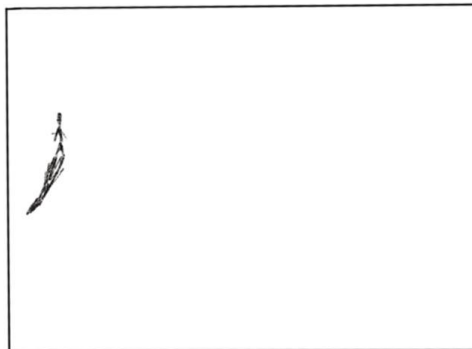
"we pretend it doesn't exist, that's probably the worst thing to do"
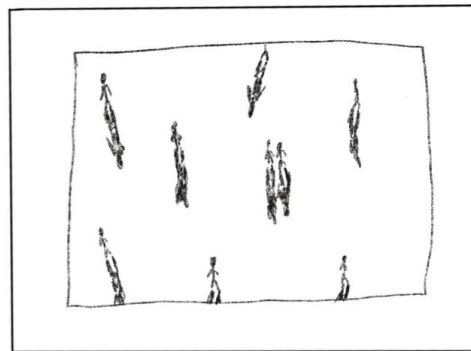
STATISTIC: 1 IN 4 BLACK MEN WILL GET PROSTATE CANCER.
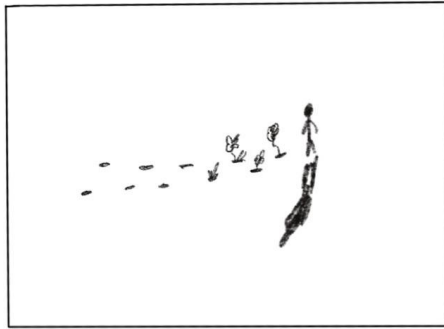
CROWD LEAVING THE SCREEN. "THEY JUST DISAPPEAR"
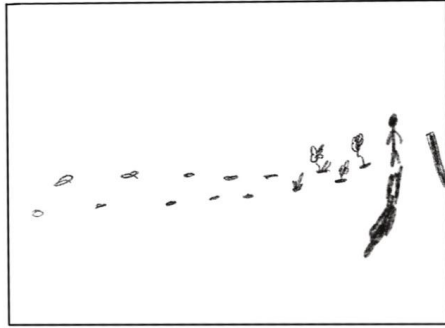
ONLY ONE PERSON FROM THE CROWD STAYS ON SCREEN.
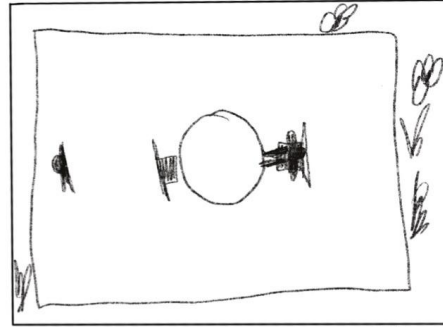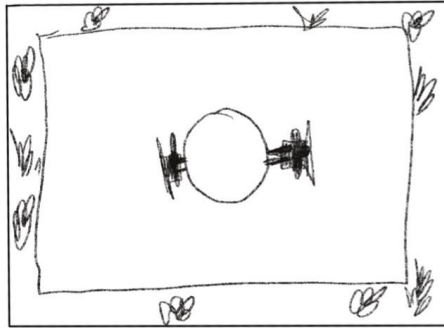
WALKING FORWARD LEAVING FOOTPRINTS.

Panel 1: VEGETATION STARTS TO GROW ON THE FOOTSTEPS LEFT BEHIND.
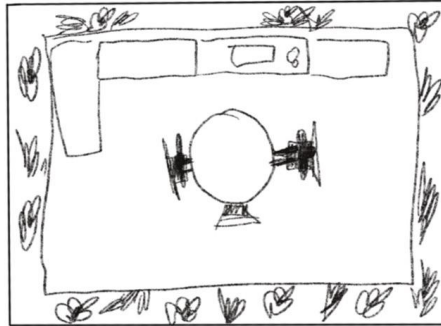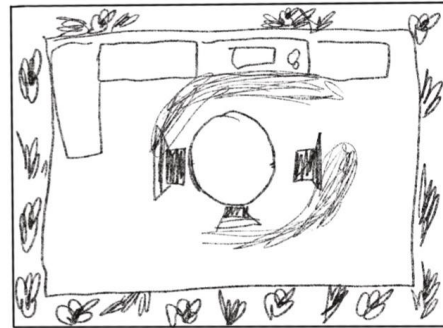
Panel 2: OPENS DOOR

Panel 3: ENTERS AN EMPTY ROOM WITH 2 CHAIRS, TABLE AND FAMILY MEMBER SITTING. VEGETATION STARTS TO GROW AS BORDER.

Panel 4: SITS DOWN WITH THE PERSON AND STARTS TO TALK

Panel 5: AS THEY TALK, THE ROOM STARTS TO FILL UP WITH FURNITURE AND CLUTTER.

Panel 6: SHOWS TIME LAPSE OF THE FAMILY.

We received feedback during the interims that the last scene seems like ghosts. What it is trying to demonstrate however, is a long exposure effect we wanted to try in our stop motion scene. The script says "my father was diagnosed with prostate cancer and he lived for another 30 years". We wanted to emphasise that last line with a timelapse to visualise those 30 years. In the end we found difficulties replicating a long exposure effect in stop motion so revised the idea. I will go into detail on that in later pages.

Olivia and I both love chairs, from an aesthetic and design point of view. It was one of the reasons why we decided to work together, after discussing how much a chair can represent.

I wanted to make sure the chairs that were going to be in the opening scene were the right ones. I created this mind map and then some chair sketches to find the appropriate chair.
Unrelated to this project, I have been photographing chairs i find on the street for almost a year now, so i found i had a useful backlog of images to reference.

Basic, recognisable chair designs.
-strong iconography

The monobloc chair:

- "Often described as the world most common plastic chair."
- uniformity, stackable
- "Social theorist Ethan Zuckerman, have described the chair as having achieved a cultural global ubiquity."

Common support group

What do we want

doctors chair

Comfort:
Therapy room, doctor's room

two chairs, facing each other

chairs that are connected to certain cultures

I sketched out a variety of chairs to see which one I would be comfortable drawing a lot, and which one would look recognisable in silhouette

In the end, I settled on support group foldable chair. As the audio clips are from a support group, it works well that the opening scene is in a support group room. It is simple and direct and will help the viewer understand the film's premise. From the image above, i created an animation of the chair spinning around by lining up and overlapping the different chair angles. Here is the link to the videos:
https://youtu.be/9Lx0kmbTVGU
https://youtube.com/shorts/wZXccp_gChw
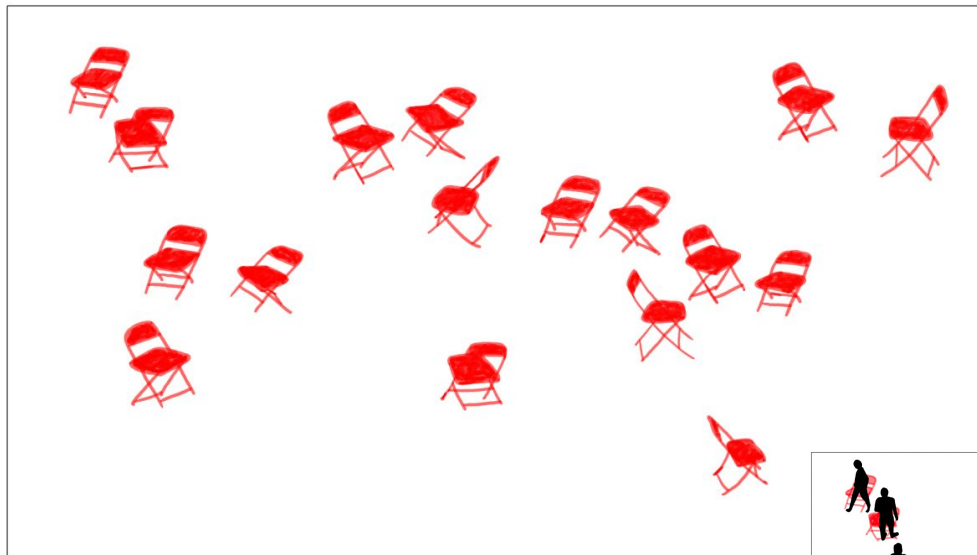
I littered the scene with foldable chairs, like this, to emphasise the feeling of isolation and fear. The audio for this scene goes "Some men hide away. The most common thing we do when we're shocked by- we pretend it doesn't exist"

The chairs then transform into silhouettes, to begin the process of gradually humanising our imagery, moving away from darker themes.


I looked at overhead crowd shots, and sketched some people from these images, and then imported the sketches into Toonboom to trace over. I found this helped me retain the form of my figures through my animation. I did however, struggle with keeping their forms for the scene where they walk out of shot. As I was animating each figure's walk cycle, their bodies would morph slightly. This was also an extremely laborious task as it was difficult to work out leg positions from all the different angles i wanted the figures to head towards. I had only ever done side facing walk cycles previously, and while it was a useful exercise, if i were to do this again, i would not attempt something so new in such little time.
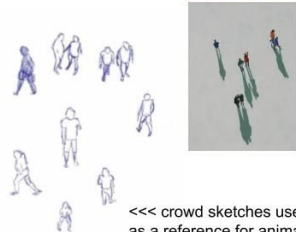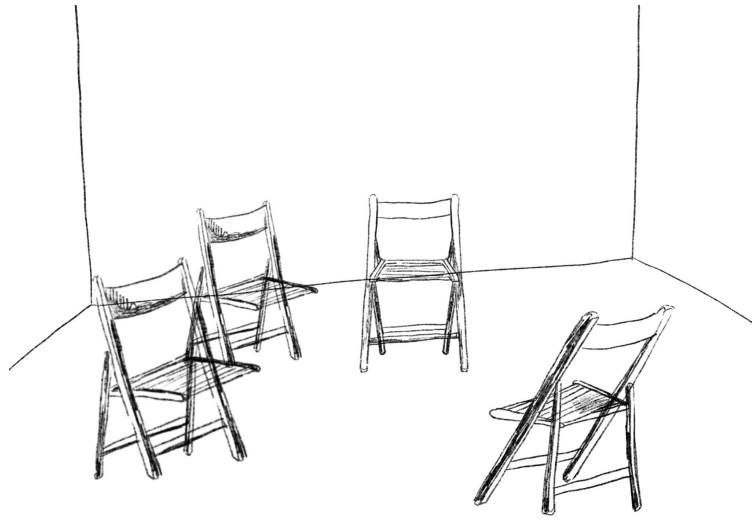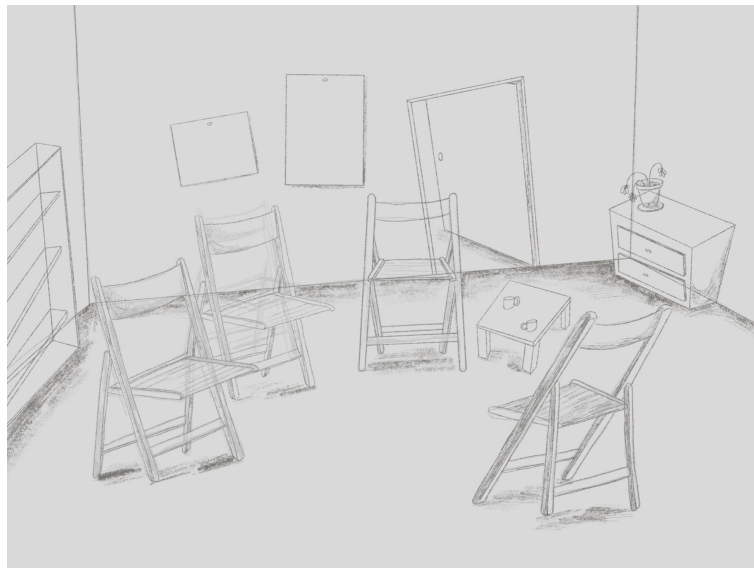

<<< crowd sketches used as a reference for animatic
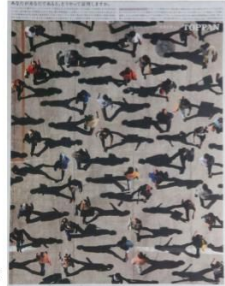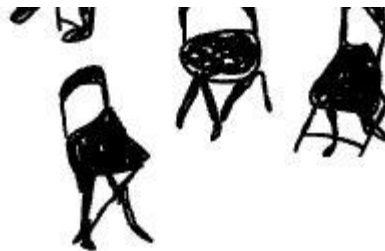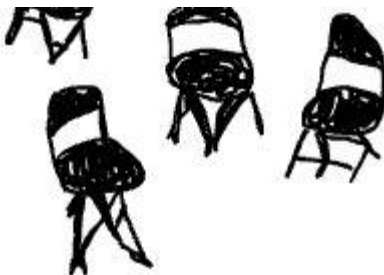
Chair to human morph sequence thumbnails. I did scene two and three on toonboom. They are still far from what i would like them to look like. I will continue to work on them for the client submission but am proud of what they are now.

Scene one development: These are olivia's initial sketches of the support group room where we are using the foldable chairs. I liked the sketchy, drawn style this was in. Olivia carried this style into the final scene.

We discussed that we should work on including more mixed media as we initially planned to. I made this chair model out of plasticine and wire. Olivia made the brown chair out of air dry clay.
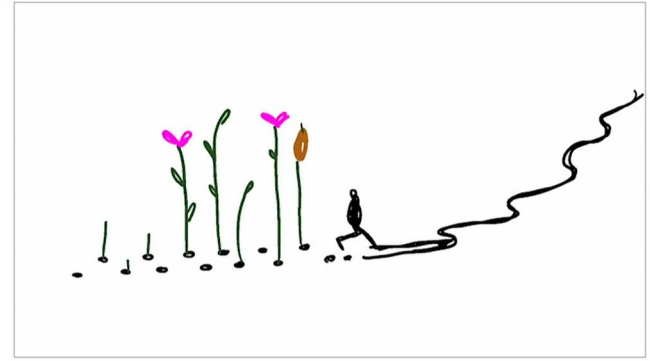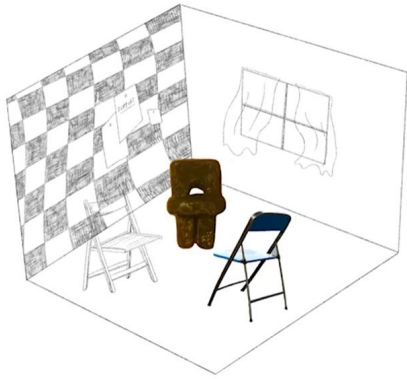
I then created a short boil to demonstrate what the scene would look like with mixed media elements. Although i liked this animation, again it was just a test and we both preferred the sketchy, drawn style. We did, however, keep the floating cube room imagery.
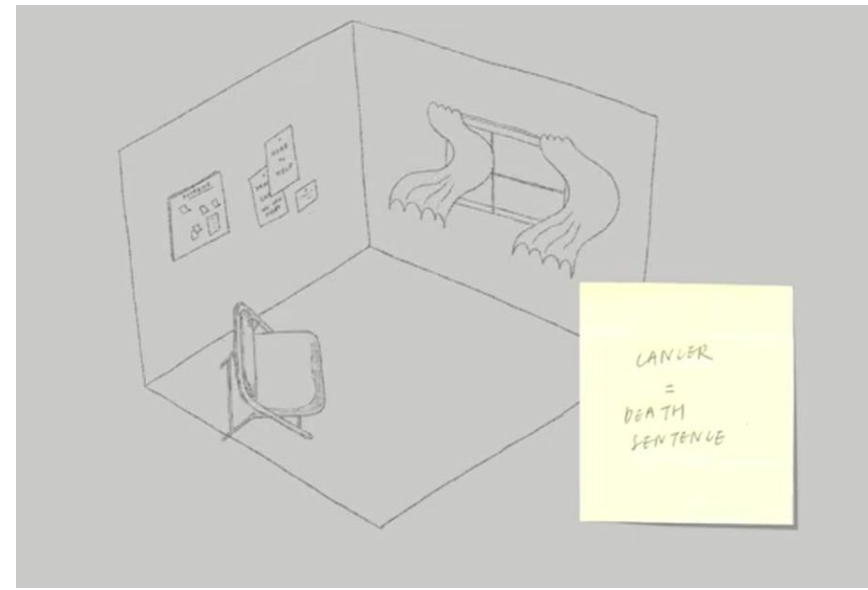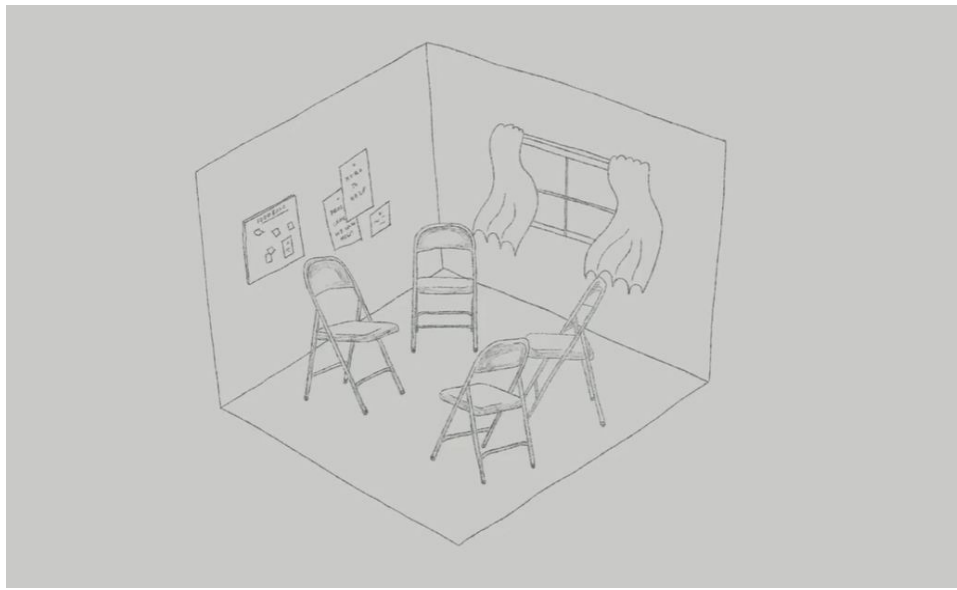
Here is the link to see the video: https://youtu.be/LEy3g9qgEXg

These are scenes from our animatic. See full film in link. https://youtu.be/a_SW89XNCt8
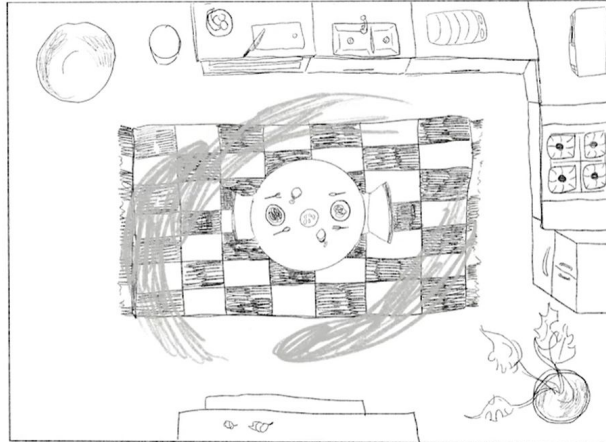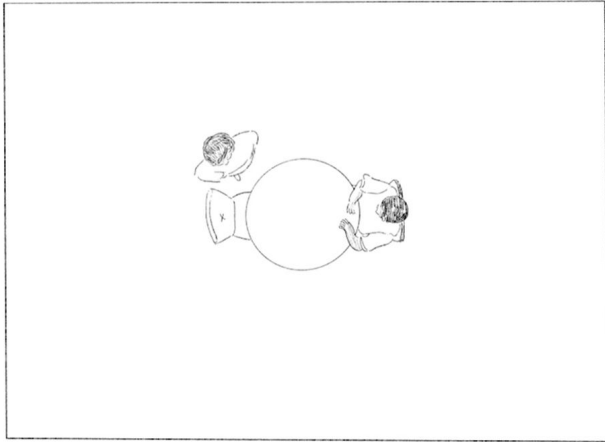
This is a final scene from our animation. Olivia made this on procreate, using stills from a Sketchfab foldable chair. The chair floats away from the scene as if being blown away like a dandelion seed. She rotated the 3d model in sketchfab of the chair and then traced it in procreate to keep its form. I love this scene and think it works really well to portray fragility and sadness upon diagnoses. She also demonstrates mixed media, using post it note scans. I would like to continue to add traditional drawings, scanned into the digital scenes, for the client submission date as it will tie together all the different styles we used.
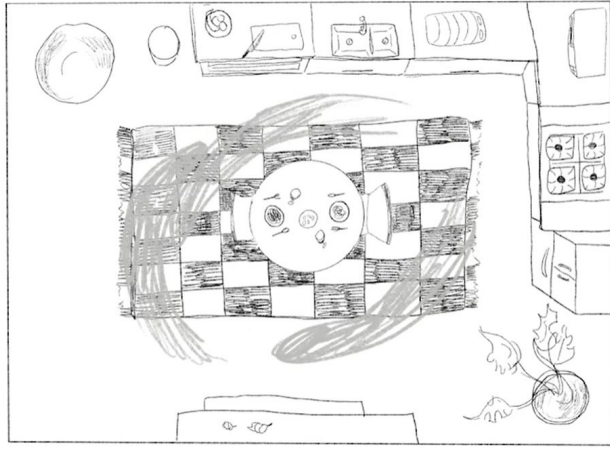
Prop modelling: We looked through our pinterest board for inspo and pulled this image out. We both liked the checkered pattern as it made the rest of the room pop. I made the carpet out of fabric and acrylic paint. It was also part of olivia's initial house design.

Pictured top and bottom left are Olivia's plasticine prop pieces. She made little sponges and plates etc for the puppets to interact with and liven the scene.

I made these chairs out of air drying clay. I was initially going to paint tem but after they featured in the test stop motion, we decided that they looked nice plain and added to the homemade feel.
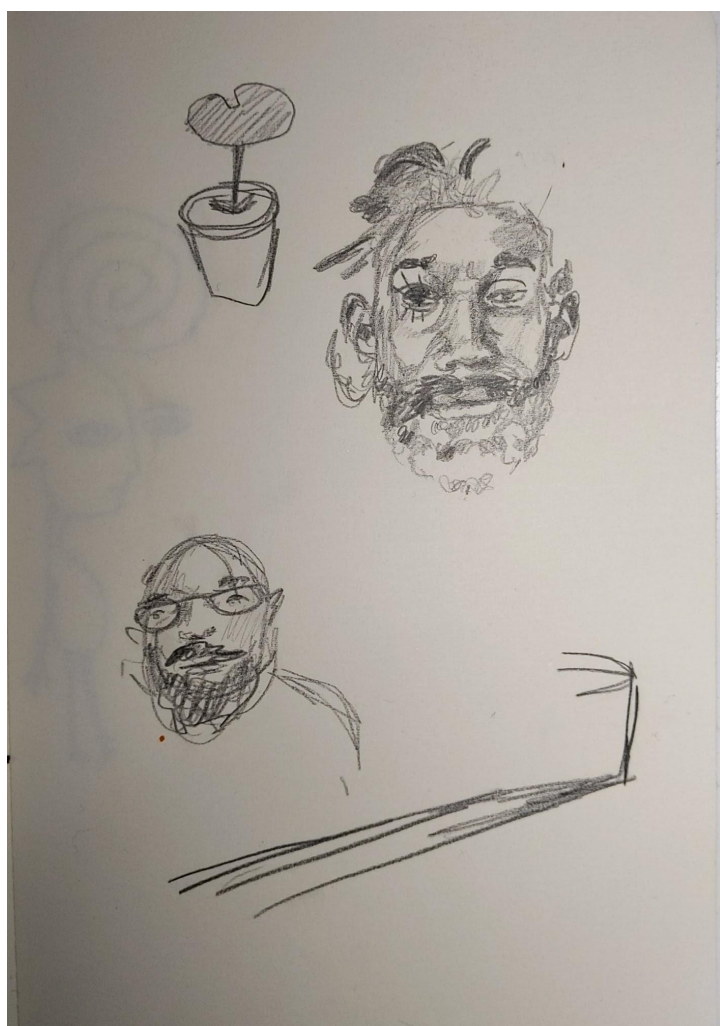
Puppet reference imagery. I sketched some faces to make sure i was familiar with their face shapes for modeling. I didn't do as much planning with clothing or body size, which i will do next time, but i think the outcomes turned out well as i let my ideas flow more naturally.

The puppets were not complete at this point but we did a test run to present for the final client interim. It turned out to be very useful as we laid down scene ideas in a more practical, hands on approach. It allowed us to gage how long the final capture would take and we became more comfortable using dragonframe, under less pressure.

Here is the link to the film we presented in the final interim (not finished product) : https://youtu.be/lXypo8U0g8o

Puppet creation

I created these wire armatures in the stop motion workshop. I found attending this workshop to be very useful. I had never approached puppet making before and knew i had to for our stop motion segment. The workshop taught me how to create a structure and different ways to make a body. The recommendation was foam, but i ended up sewing and stuffing a bodice with scrap fabric (as seen on far right image.) i will definitely explore further workshops in the future.
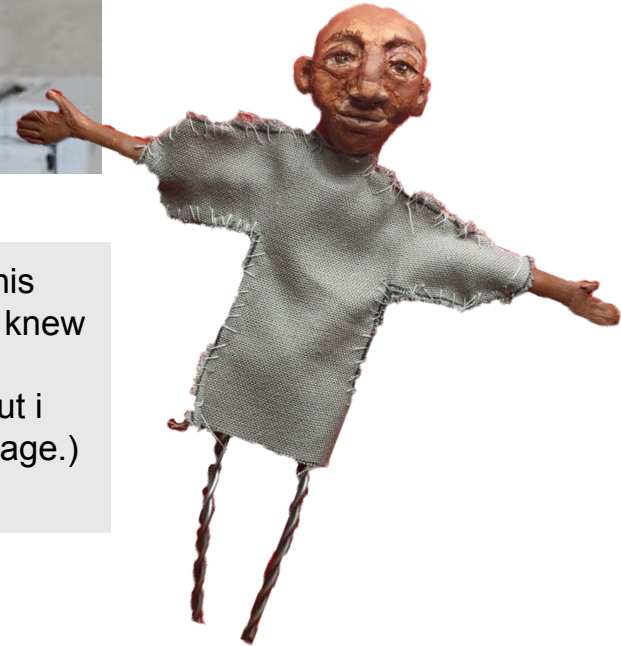
I modeled the heads out of plasticine. As you can see, I ran out of clear white modeling clay. But i found that the head before I painted a base colour over to be quite interesting, and in itself could be a separate character.

This was my first puppet making experience. When i do this again, i will make sure to shorten the clay arms to ensure more mobility. I found when positioning the characters during the making of the stop motion, they were less opposable because the arms are quite long. Next time i will just model hands and such. I would also like to experiment with lip synch, maybe using non drying plasticine to create mouth shapes.

These are the finished dolls. I painted their faces with acrylic, using real faces as references for both the modeling and painting. I made their clothes out of old socks, hand stitching them. For the son, i hot glued embroidery thread onto his scalp, painting in grey roots to ensure he looked age appropriate for the target audience. I used stuffing for the dad's hair, to recreate wispy white old man hair. I am worried, however, that they look too far apart in age.
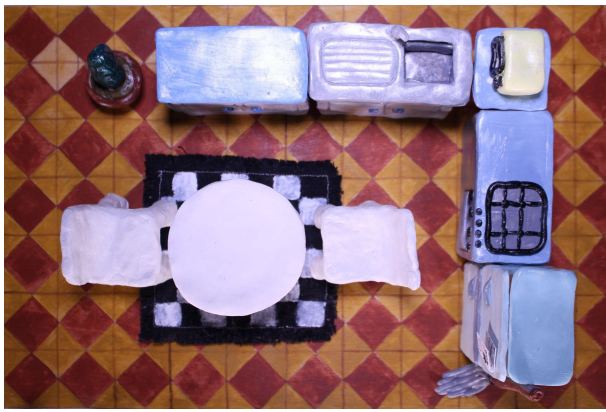
This is the finished set. Olivia adjusted the lighting to revise our earlier stop motion test as it turned out too dark last time. The overhead lighting is the strongest to replicate classic white kitchen lighting.

Final animation:
https://youtu.be/m9OADzHAZZY

Captured on Dragonframe at school. We both would direct a puppet each and discuss positioning of objects around the scene to ensure true collaboration. I think we worked very well as a team and finished the scene in 6 hours.

The test run stop motion definitely aided us and ensured the process wasn't so daunting.

As mentioned before, we did not end up doing the long exposure timelapse idea, as it did not work practically. Instead we did short segments of action or "slices of life" to show time passing.