Ruffled: Examining Feminism & Femininity Through Animation

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RUFFLED
EXAMINING FEMINISM & FEMININITY THROUGH ANIMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The animated short film *Ruffled* confronts the subjects of Feminism and Femininity through the after-hour musings of a young seamstress. Sewing to patterns and working from their papered paradigms she discovers her unique voice that is both referential of the past while remaining distinctly modern. The struggle twenty-first century Feminists may encounter when determining their place within a history rich with prejudice, confrontation, and triumph is metaphorically represented in each of the character’s attempts at garment creation. Within the film, not only does this clothing harken back to vintage apparel but whimsically transforms her surroundings to reflect three visually distinct decades important to twentieth century Feminist theory. Finding herself in microcosms of the past she comes to realize they must be both integrated and expanded upon in order to fashion a future anew. Only in pulling elements from each vintage outfit, adding a few stitches of her own, and creating something altogether original is she satisfied and ready to leave the shop. *Ruffled* is a hybrid animation that utilizes both 2D and 3D techniques to contrast design aesthetics and symbolically divide the past and present. 2D planar props dress each dated era like that of a stage set and play into the notion of performative femininity; the juxtaposition between each perceived experience and the 3D physical realm are thus emphasized. *Ruffled* uses the medium of animation to address the notion that ingenuity and self-exploration are strengthened and made clear through examination of the past.

To access the film visit: savannahberryart.com/ruffled
For my mother, forever.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*Ruffled*, as a name, references the sewing term *ruffle*, of which one would find a garment adorned, and the emotional response of having one’s feathers *ruffled*, or to become unsettled. The animated short film *Ruffled* plays on the dual nature of this homonym highlighting the struggles of a young seamstress finding her unique voice. The film directly addresses the concepts of identity and voice while making secondary parallels to the Feminist Movement and the importance of establishing yourself within a rich and turbulent history.

Feminism is a movement so critical and omnipresent to and within society that there are limitations when examining it from a single perspective. True understanding can only be derived by synthesizing social conditions of the time and then applying current theory to determine relevance. The animated short film, *Ruffled*, presents the viewer with small tableaus reminiscent of the first three waves of the Feminist movement that coincide with three periods of fashion from the 20th century in the United States. To understand the significance of each animated sequence the Waves of Feminism and its evolution are needed to discern the nuance of emotion that the main character experiences.

Feminism and Identity can both inform and conflict with the other. The United States, since its founding, is a patriarchally driven society; the male gaze catered to and masculinity lauded. Much of 20th century Feminism focused upon equality and subverting societal norms, etiquette, and expectations. The theme of identity challenges everyone to question how their values, biases, and actions affect and are affected by their interactions with the world. *Ruffled* confronts femininity as it relates to one's identity and depicts it visually via vintage fashion.
*Ruffled* makes use of the animated medium to metaphorically transport the viewer to a place where garments whimsically come to life and a mirror’s magic allows for finite time travel. In creating the short film, it was important to me, a young woman entering the field of animation, to solely design, create, and be involved in every element of the process. Women in animation, both animators and those depicted on the screen, have faced decades of discrimination and stereotyping that has only seen progress made in parallel to society.

The notion of performative femininity and its relation to society situates it as a concept that subserves the masculine and places unrealistic standards on what it means to present femininely. There is strength in embodying tenderness and sensitivity, however issues arise when those qualities are used to demean and discriminate. Each of the mirror sequences takes place on two-dimensional planar stage sets to emphasize the performative aspect that limits and casts femininity negatively.

Fashion has long existed as a means of self-expression and exploration. Fashion has been used to signify changes in societal expectations and bend to the needs of a community. Vintage fashion and the label it has for glamorizing the past has only recently seen a divide between wearing period attire and upholding the attitudes of the time. This latest shift has been coined, “Vintage Fashion, Not Vintage Values,” amongst more liberal leaning, cosmopolitan social influencers (Racklin, 2020). *Ruffled*, in short, aims to similarly advocate for the critical examination of social context surrounding the garments one wears.

The making of *Ruffled* closely focuses upon the relationship design and color play in the understanding and evolution of the central theme. Set design is crucial in facilitating an audience’s awareness of time and space. Iconic shape motifs and textile imagery of the time indicate to viewers related historical conditions. Three unique color profiles are assigned to each
decade and only at the end, in the present day, do they come together in harmony to reaffirm the importance of synthesizing the past to herald a better tomorrow.

Taking place in both the past and present, *Ruffled* uses hybrid animation to signify both a literal change in environment and a metaphorical change in the main character’s perspective. The past, largely consisting of flat two-dimensional elements, is reflective of the limitations that arise when following outdated information or an antiquated approach to a modern question. The present day created using three-dimensional software, more closely resembles reality. As time bends so too does the narrative, the design, the methodology and the movement.
CHAPTER TWO: FEMINIST HISTORY; A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Feminist Movement is one that is known universally for its endeavor to bring equality to all. Acknowledging the framework that makes up its timeline serves to underscore the depictions of the past as shown in the animated short film *Ruffled*. The history of the movement within the United States contains a substantial amount of contention, activism and triumph that demands a nuanced conversation on the voices included and omitted. Feminism has always and will always exist; where there are women working to better their lives against a society that subjugates their existence there will be Feminism. Understanding the origin and advancements of the movement enables its scholars to create a future that benefits everyone including not only themselves but apprehensive allies and deafening contenders.

The history of Feminism can be broken down into three identifiable time periods that are referred to as the “waves” of Feminism with the fourth wave being the present day and future advocacy. In Martha Rampton’s 2008 “Four Waves of Feminism” for Pacific Magazine she begins by stating the importance of noting voices that often predate the established First Wave such as Sappho, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Jane Austen “as foremothers of the modern women’s movement. All of these people advocated for the dignity, intelligence, and basic human potential of the female sex” (Rampton, 2008). She goes on to elaborate that these voices serve as an initial stepping stone for the larger, organized movement that would form during the latter half of the nineteenth century and subsequent former half of the twentieth (Rampton 2008). The focus of the First Wave of Feminism is that of women’s suffrage, or a woman’s right to vote. Women’s suffrage not only was a clear act that affirmed a woman’s choice and voice but was a symbol of hope for a more equitable future for these women. After years of speaking, planning, rallying and
fighting, in 1920 the 19th amendment was ratified and expanded voting rights to white women in the United States (National Archives, n.d.). This marked a singular great advancement while simultaneously highlighting the lack of minority inclusion, most notably women of color, who were integral to the amendments passing. When examining the past, it is important to acknowledge the injustice that falls silent to the celebration of achievement.

The Second Wave, at its peak throughout the 1960s, brought forth large scale societal change as pressure from progressively liberal philosophy swept the nation. Second Wave Feminism expanded upon the reach of First Wave Feminism to stake claim to the power of a woman’s place in society, politics, and the world at large. If the First Wave promised women an opinion, the Second Wave promised security and ownership. Rampton asserts “The New Left was on the rise and the voice of the second wave was increasingly radical” (Rampton, 2008). The Second Wave encapsulates a period of time that demanded great change and widespread equality. The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 expanded voter rights to outlaw “the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War,” as listed by the National Archives, meaning the last sex based discriminatory obstacle was outlawed. (National Archives, n.d.). Black women in the U.S. could finally welcome suffrage forty years after the first woman cast her vote. In addition to greater racial equality women's reproductive rights and issues of the patriarchy were at the forefront of the Feminist Movement. At the start of 1970, the Equal Rights Amendment [hereinafter as ERA] was in full motion, lobbying to guarantee fair and equal process in U.S. judicial courts for matters such as “divorce, property, [and] employment,” as defined by the National Archives. (National Archives, n.d.). While the ERA was never ratified it has resurfaced and remained a key element of modern Feminism. The wins for greater racial equality, bodily autonomy, discussions on workplace inequality, and a
woman’s right to an equal and fair court mark important strides but continue to sideline the voices of many minority women, including women of color and LGBT women. The Second Wave, much like the First, expanded the borders of what was possible for women, sought legislative action as a means of securing their rights, and continued to herald white voices and experiences to the detriment of minority voices and the movement as a whole.

The late eighties and early nineties ushered in the Third Wave of Feminism. The issue of multi-faceted, layered oppression was addressed and the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw “as a way to help explain the oppression of African American women,” in her 1989 paper titled “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” for the University of Chicago Legal Forum (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw’s keen analysis on the lack of black voices in the Feminist Movement created a call to action and a recognition of the compounded discrimination black women faced. At the hands of both white women and black men via Feminism and the Civil Rights Movement respectively, black women were excluded from not only gender-based discussion but race based as well. With new rhetoric to describe the unique experience of individuals previously silenced, the patriarchy was challenged like none other before. The foundation for resistance and legislative intervention had been set in the previous two waves and the sheer number of people could now mobilize on a significantly larger scale reflecting the progress of society, technology, and intelligence. The Third Wave of Feminism is the first instance where examination of the past and conscientious choice to enact a more equitable range of reform was taken to better the lives of all women.

Understanding the waves of Feminism is imperative to understanding the central theme of *Ruffled*. Fostering ingenuity through examination of the past, I believe, is the future of Feminism and that action is literally reflected back into the mind and heart of the main character.
A young seamstress working late after hours finds herself warped through the reflection of a mirror upon wearing clothing she has sewn of garment patterns from one of three distinct decades in American history. The First Wave and first mirror sequence depict a gilded, art deco style raised stage that harkens back to the notorious Ziegfeld follies of the 1920s. A ballot box sits atop the platform beckoning the young woman to come forward and realize the very power she possesses in the choices she makes, much like the power First Wave Feminists had when casting their first vote. The Second Wave and second mirror sequence is set in the 1960’s on a brightly lit, rounded stage surrounded by tiered arches that encapsulate iconic ‘60’s television set design made for quick stage turn overs and flashy, Hollywood facades. The main character is initially uncomfortable in the limelight but quickly finds her confidence and uses her voice, behind the microphone, to break the illusion. Second Wave Feminists similarly made their voices heard through their demands for equality and security. Finally, the Third Wave and third mirror sequence are vibrant and loud. The 1980’s neon infused club scene makes her final act of assuredness more difficult in that voices could easily be lost in the cacophony of the scene, much like those of women whose experiences were omitted from the forces of previous movements. The young woman finds that after assessing her surroundings she begins to dance to the beat of her own drum, taking control of her movement and autonomy and symbolically jumping back into the present. It is important to note that the main character is a young white woman whose voice would not have been pushed aside throughout the history of the Feminist movement. The metaphorical parallels drawn between the three decades serve to emphasize the latter half of the film’s theme that ingenuity and self-exploration are made stronger through examination of the past.
CHAPTER THREE: FEMINISM AND IDENTITY

Feminism and Identity often go hand in hand for many young people learning how to better the world around them. As two separate ideologies, Feminism and Identity vary in their relationship with society. The former outlines injustices and bigotry, how to challenge longstanding institutions such as the patriarchy and how to fight against these ingrained structures of double standards. The latter focuses inward, moving from the whole to the individual. Identity challenges each person to find their authentic truth, identify their beliefs, and how the foundations of their humanity shape how they interact with the world. When analyzed as a pair, Feminism and Identity inform one another. Expanding one’s knowledge of Feminism spurs greater empathy towards others whose lives look different to one’s own. When establishing a deeper connection to one’s sense of self, confidence emerges, and one is better able to advocate for not only their needs but for others.

Identity, as defined by Ellie Anderson in her revision of Diana Meyers “Feminist Perspectives on the Self,” asserts that the Feminist perspective of self is informed by “personal identity, the body, society, and [one’s] agency,” and “the self is not only a metaphysical issue for philosophy, but one that is also ethical, epistemological, social, and political” (Anderson, 2021). Perception is an element that has a history of prejudice where minority voices are excluded and the white, cisgender, heterosexual, affluent male are affirmed in canon. The former voices are omitted while the latter are disproportionately lauded; a patriarchal pillar Anderson and Meyers liken as “the valorization of the masculine and the stigmatization of the feminine” (Anderson, 2021). Due to the unique nature of one’s self-perception being shaped by not only the external influence of expectation but also one’s lived experience, a sense of self must inherently exist...
beyond what a single ideology can outline. As explored in the previous chapter, Feminism, with equality at its core, is not innocent in its discriminatory past. Such exclusivity is alienating and damaging to who can and how one identifies with a movement.

The Feminine Self is posited as a status to be reclaimed in Anderson’s article. Positioning this reclamation not as the rejection of the masculine in favor of the feminine, but as an integration of both contributes to modern Feminism’s call for individual and purposeful autonomy and empowerment. Additionally, as defined earlier by Crenshaw, the nuance of intersectionality is key in identifying how experience shapes one’s sense of self. The multiple layers that differ from individual-to-individual influence the way they may interact with the world around them. The process of reflecting on not only one’s perception of self but how society has impacted them can impart a knowledge of how they may interact with the future. In the examination of one’s own past one may glean insight into how to shape their relationship with their own future. Figure 1, depicts a crucial moment within Ruffled where the main character has the choice to shy away from the limelight or use her voice.

Figure 1: Hesitation Behind the Microphone
The central plot line of *Ruffled* both physically and emotionally explores the very connection between Feminism and Identity. As mentioned previously, the three distinct waves of Feminism are represented through a series of altered mirror realities. This challenges the main character to confront her own insecurities and inevitably cause her to realize that only she possesses the power to craft a garment, and metaphorically a future, that she is both proud of and comfortable in. In the above image, Figure 1, it is clear that she is uncomfortable standing behind a microphone that symbolically provokes her to use her voice. The constant transition between present and past realities push the young seamstress to reflect on why none of the outfits she creates fit her or rather why none of the past waves of Feminism can singularly impact the present. As a young professional, the identity she develops is one of confidence in her abilities and strength in her own voice. Identity acts as a symbol for modern feminists' endeavors to impart the importance of analyzing history, for both its successes and failures, to impact how one engages with their current life.
CHAPTER FOUR: A HISTORY OF WOMEN IN ANIMATION

Women have long existed in the world of animation. They often were the unsung heroes whose work went uncredited and underpaid. From their days in Walt Disney Animation’s Ink & Paint department to becoming studio executives, women have long fought for opportunity, credit, pay, and respect. Only recently have these roles grown to reflect the demands of a changing society. After having covered the importance of Feminist History and Identity in the previous two chapters it is imperative to address how this movement and how these women navigated the perils of and shaped the animation industry.

The animation industry and animated media, like many rising ideologies and artistic movements, are reflective of the time period in which they were created. As seen in Chapter Two, the Feminist Movement has only recently grown to include intersectional theory and as such recognizes its shortcomings in bringing forth equality for all. The field of animation too has taken time to remedy its own past of harm. “A Brief History of Women in Animation” written by Hannah Chusid for Untitled Magazine in 2016 examines the discrimination and unsavory working conditions women have faced in a number of animation studios. An incident both insulting and poignant comes in the form of a rejection letter sent to a young woman applying for animation training with Walt Disney Animation that states “Women do not do any of the creative work in connection with preparing the cartoons for the screen, as that work is performed entirely by young men. For this reason, girls are not considered for the training school” (Cleave, 1938). This dismissal is unequivocally sexist. Young women were denied training and work due to their gender alone. As a result, young women were pushed into the inking department where their precision and dedication to their work went thankless and their pay significantly less than male
animators who took on a similar workload (Chusid, 2016). This collection of women have had a hand in nearly every animated film produced and the recognition they deserved came only years later. They were unaware of the path they were paving but in their constancy they have made it possible for anyone to pursue a career in animation.

Women continue to occupy less space in the field of animation than men to this day. A 2018 article written by Jenny Brewer begins with the question “Where are all the women?” and reports via the advocacy group Women in Animation that “60% of animation students in the US and Europe are women, but the drop off rate as they move into the industry is staggering, with only 20%-40% of professional roles held by women” (Brewer, 2018). This statistic is an illuminating testament to the reach of the patriarchy. When an environment is dominated by a single demographic, a demographic that has a history of abuse and control, it is clear that the established practices are actively working against diversity. Twenty-first century digital media platforms that have the power to amplify an individual on a global scale make the demand for reform possible. Only now is the gap beginning to slowly close between gender inequality and wage disparities with women holding positions at every level of production.

The creation of Ruffled is both a testament to the women before me and a deeply personal endeavor to see every aspect of the filmmaking process through to completion by my own hand. In furthering my education and pursuing my Master of Fine Arts degree I sought to hone the skills I learned previously in the Character Animation Track for my undergraduate degree at the University of Central Florida [hereinafter as UCF] and specialize in both Art Direction and Set Design. This MFA program presents a powerful opportunity to its students to direct an animated short of their own design; the limits are confined to the bounds of the students' own endeavors and capabilities. Aside from independent filmmaking, the animation industry is collaborative and
a single film can reflect the input of hundreds. The pride I now have in claiming ownership of
*Ruffled* and the skills I have developed are unmatched. The progress I have made in areas of the
animation pipeline I previously had limited knowledge of is a boon to both my self-confidence
and portfolio. Combining both the subject of Feminism and the medium of animation, I have
personally sought to parallel a principal element of my own film; I have used my voice and skills
to contribute to a greater narrative in the hopes of shaping the future. In Figure 2 below, the
opening shot shows the seamstress at her station working long after hours once the shop has
closed. The dedication she has to her craft is a direct correlation to the dedication I have put into
creating this film.

*Figure 2: Working Late After Hours Render*
CHAPTER FIVE: PERFORMATIVE FEMININITY & THE STAGE

The idea of performative femininity is not lost in the nuance of *Ruffled*. The stage design in the render below, Figure 3, is a direct representation of this sentiment.

![Figure 3: Render of 1960s Environment & Fashions](image)

Performative femininity, or rather gendered performance, is defined by Judith Butler in their 1988 piece “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” as an “identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body…and enactments of various kinds [that] constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). This same sentiment is reflected in the physicality of the main character of *Ruffled*. Upon entering each of the mirrored two-dimensional environments her movements become more constrained and “doll-like” to emphasize the degree of separation that is created when she is using the paper patterns designed by others. These patterns exist as a physical
representation of both the expectations and limitations placed upon women in society. The expectation to dress a certain way, to perform, is inherently a limitation imposed by a society that forces the performer into an impossible scenario. When women dress to subvert societal standards, it yields scorn and disgust, their well-being jeopardized by hate. When a woman dresses in a fashion that upholds societal standards they can be seen as submissively complacent, rendering them invisible and their well-being jeopardized by exploitation.

Expanding further upon Butler’s analysis on gender and performance, it should be noted Butler asserts a division where “the personal is expanded to include political structures, so there is a theatrically-based and, indeed, less individually-oriented view of acts” that situates a person’s actions as inherently subservient to the orders of the patriarchy (Butler, 1988, p. 525). Ruffled aims to illustrate this performance in the divide between the two established realities, the 3D present and the 2D past. The main character learns from the oppression of the past and inevitably becomes more comfortable and confident in using her voice to make her own mark upon the world outlined for her in the present. In essence she embodies the power that comes with rejecting societal norms, the garment patterns, and subsequently uses that power to create an altogether new design, a new future.

Performative femininity in its name, much like the title of the film, can act as a homonym to reveal another layer of context rich metaphor. From a design standpoint, each of the mirror environments the unknowing seamstress crosses into is markedly different from the three-dimensional tailor shop. These past visions are created using two-dimensional elements placed in a circular expansion from a central camera to emulate stage sets in theaters, television shows, and platformed performances. The sewing shop takes inspiration from real world objects modeled both to scale and purposefully placed to aesthetically ground the character in reality and
reinforce the realism of the present. The fantastical elements reflected back to her in the 2D spaces, as exemplified in Figure 3 are vibrant, planar, and invite little interaction comparatively. The nature of these backdrops relies upon the facade and dramaturgy of the “act,” or what Butler would categorize as “gender which is an ‘act,’ broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority” (Butler, 1988, p. 528). The comparison of the two dimensions in *Ruffled* emphasizes the differences in both the inner and outer representations of the character’s sense of self. The main character’s identity is made stronger through the existence and exploration of all animated sets. The farther from reality she gets the less real her movements and actions become. In Figure 4, below, the 3D sewing shop on the left and more 2D planar 1960’s environment on the right have been drawn over to highlight these differences— the red color denoting 3D and the blue 2D. *Performative Femininity and the Metaphor of the Stage* represent both literal and intangible instances within the film that ultimately inform the narrative. The performance found in every aspect of both historical and modern societies reflect the expectations and values of that time; how one interacts and exists is both a direct result of their aforementioned relationship with the self and pressures to conform from an oppressive majority.

*Figure 4: Draw Over of Sets to Illustrate the Difference Between 2D and 3D Elements*
CHAPTER SIX: VINTAGE FASHION & MODERN IMPLICATIONS

Clothing so often acts as a secondary, visual extension of one’s self. Clothing ironically conceals and reveals elements of the wearer, the former in its covering of the body and latter in hinting at elements of one’s personality. When it comes to vintage fashion there is the issue of impact and the conversation around upholding vintage values. Vintage fashion and its historical role in society is integral to the understanding of *Ruffled*. Within this film's context, fashion serves as a form of rebellion; it is a means of echoing empowered, progressive sentiments of the past.

Wearing vintage fashion is a style trend that predates the conversation surrounding modern implications. The hashtag “#VintageStyleNotVintageValues” gained popularity via bandleader and style activist Dandy Wellington in an effort to separate the love for and aesthetics of an outfit with the reality of the social oppression of the time period in which said look was popular (Racklin, 2020). Establishing this division is important because of the nuance it brings to the short film *Ruffled*. The main character of my film finds strength in the present only after reckoning with the uncomfortable tableaus of the past. She is able to physically sew a new garment that metaphorically represents paving the wave for a better tomorrow. In the film’s resolution she embodies “#VintageStyleNotVintageValues.” One of the subjects of *Ruffled* is Feminism and its imperfections so when approaching the element of clothing during the phase of character design it was crucial to research period fashion that portrayed subversion to sexist rhetoric of the time.

As discussed in the second chapter of this paper, 20th century Feminism can be broken into three distinct waves. The dates of these waves closely align with three visually contrasting, major fashion and design trends- the gilded 1920s Art Deco, the vibrant and Mod 1960s, and the
pattern clashing, explosion of color in the decadent 1980s. While this film primarily focuses on the social impact of Feminism and how one finds their place in a rich and varied history Ruffled also joyfully explores vintage fashion and the technique for creating such outfits in the medium of animation. In each of the four environments of the film there are numerous outfits placed around the scene in an effort to visually showcase the research explored for each era and additionally embellish the sets. The image below, Figure 5, shows a lineup of all the 3D modeled garments created to accompany the transformative mirror scenes. The main character may not end up wearing these clothes, but they are important additions that expand upon her passion for the craft of sewing.

![Image: Line Up of Fashion Used as Set Dressing](image)

**Figure 5: Line Up of Fashion Used as Set Dressing**

In the Fall 2019 Glamour Edition of Bitch Magazine an article titled “Retrofitted; The Community Preserving Vintage Style, Not Vintage Values,” by Meghan Racklin details the split in attitudes that exists within the vintage wearing community. She asserts that while many who seek out these thrifted garments endeavor to make them both accessible and foster community, their traditionalist counterparts “have regressive views on race and gender,” that are harmful to the very lives of the former (Racklin, 2020). She astutely continues her argument with the fact that fashionable women of all backgrounds have existed throughout history and reinforces the importance of representation. Media has long prioritized affluent, cisgender, “thin, white, able-bodied women,” and as a result has created an environment in the fashion industry that, like the
Feminist Movement, has only recently begun to broaden inclusivity and examine how their past actions have harmed large communities of women.

Racklin affirms that “dressing in a vintage style is a way of expanding the mainstream narrative about what life was like in previous decades” (Racklin, 2020). Statements like this are part of the central narrative that Ruffled conveys. Like Feminism, where women inhabit so too does their courage, intelligence and inevitably their style. An analysis of the past needs nuance that neither entirely glamorizes nor demonizes; learning about history and actively working to make amends and create space for oppressed voices enables us to make a better, more inclusive, future for everyone.

![Figure 6: Line Up of the Five Outfits Created for the Main Character](image)

The image above, Figure 6, shows the five outfits the main character wears throughout the film. The fifth outfit is the most modern and incorporates influences of each prior decade’s color scheme and styling.
CHAPTER SEVEN: STORYTELLING & INTENT

At its core *Ruffled* is an animated short that metaphorically examines the vital role that analyzing history has on impacting our future through sewn attempts at fashion design. The image below, Figure 7, depicts the moment the main character realizes the perfect solution to her series of failed iterative attempts.

*Figure 7: The Moment the Main Character Realizes the Perfect Solution*

Using the narrative arc outlined by Kathy Edens for ProWritingAid, the story “set up,” begins as the last of the main character’s coworkers leaves the tailoring shop (Edens, n.d.). Working after hours allows her to experiment and freely use the sewing machine outside of the daily demands her job entails. Eager to get started, a montage sequence shows the young woman bouncing from each side of the shop gathering paper sewing patterns, fabrics, and other ephemera needed when creating dazzlingly distinct garments. As she finishes the first outfit she is dripping in golden tones, stars, and her makeup is dark with a beauty mark drawn upon her lip.
She effortlessly makes her way to the tri-fold mirror to admire her work and quickly realizes that all is not what it seems. The shop dissolves around her reflection and a glittering, raised stage flanked by towering columns comes into view.

Shock and awe overtake her senses as the camera pushes in and the audience no longer knows the boundaries of the mirror. Making her way towards the staircase a podium beckons her upward. At the top she finds a ballot box and smattering of pencils that suggests she must cast a vote. The correlation to the First Wave of Feminism is illustrated to the audience as voting ballots fall across the screen acting as a transitional edit that sends the heroine back to the sewing shop. Taking a moment to realize what has just occurred she is both skeptical and curious as she makes her way back to her desk. The first narrative storytelling element is complete as the “inciting incident,” pushes her back to the metaphorical drawing board, her sewing station.

Casting aside the used garment packet, she grabs for the pink hued 1960s variant. Shots detailing the process follow suit and reinforce the effort she takes in completing such a large sum of work. With her hair styled in a beehive updo, her long sleeved collared shirt beneath a pink and gold minidress, and wearing her knee high, shiny, white go-go boots she hops up and returns to the magic mirror. In her anticipation of another reflection to reveal itself she is wowed by the resulting illuminated set. As the lowlights flicker to life and she makes her way into the limelight, a golden microphone sits at center stage. Unsure of where to go from here she taps the mic and both she and the audience are met with shrill microphone interference. Immediately ill at ease and shrinking away she takes a deep breath and is then determined to use her voice. This decision aligns with the rallied efforts of Second Wave feminists as they demanded equality from a government that would silence them in favor of the patriarchy. Assuredly grabbing the mic she swings in a motion that moves across her body, mouth wide as
she begins to yell and in a match cut is back in the shop. The “rising action,” of the story reaches its end as she does a double take in front of the mirror.

Knowing that she has one sewing pattern left she begins work on what she believes to be the final garment. The young seamstress zips up a color-blocked, ribbon tied shoe and stands expectantly in front of the mirror waiting for its transformation. A quick push in over the shoulder leaves her in a loud, overbearing, night club in the 1980s. A flashing, paneled dance floor lights her in a collection of blue, pink, and yellow lights from below and she looks to her surroundings for guidance. In the previous two decades her role was clear however now she finds herself in a place where she cannot see an identifiable way out. The Third Wave of Feminism called for intersectionality and the acknowledgement of layered oppression; the uplifting of women unlike the majority was imperative to extending equality. The young woman begins to dance to the beat of her own drum in support of and amidst the music that represents those who have been previously omitted from the movement. A final exuberant jump lands the main character back in the sewing shop as a cacophony of fabric bolts fall, buttons roll from tables, and the “climax,” of the film is reached.

![Figure 8: The Moment All of the Fabric Crashes to the Ground](image)
Only in looking down upon the mess she has made, as shown in Figure 8, does she realize how the three fabrics, the three outfits, the three environments, and the three experiences can come together to inform an entirely modern design. Using the fallen fabric and sketching her own original design she incorporates scraps of the past in a new and meaningful way. The “falling action,” of the film follows her successful final attempt at garment creation. She is comfortable in her clothes and in her skin, she strikes a pose and leaves the shop through the front door. Locking the door and walking to a location off screen she passes by the store’s display window where images of the past heartily and optimistically cheer her on. The camera then, as the “resolution,” zooms in to reveal the name of both the shop and the film, *Ruffled.*

![Figure 9: Visual Representation of the Narrative Story Beats](image)

Figure 9 visually demonstrates the narrative beats as they correlate to segments of the traditional story arc.
CHAPTER EIGHT: DESIGN & COLOR

In the creation of *Ruffled* the design of every person, garment, and object, including its shape, color, texture, and relationship to the environment surrounding it was designed to be thematically and historically cohesive. The character has to be able to exist in a space uniquely her own, the sewing shop, while simultaneously moving through time periods altogether foreign to her. These transitional periods are made clear through costume changes and a color script that demonstrate an evolution of hue and silhouette. Art Direction and Design are areas of the animation production pipeline that I hope to find employment in so the process of creating *Ruffled* has been a project aimed at actualizing this goal.

**Color Theory**

Color plays a key role in the layered storytelling of *Ruffled*. When creating the color script to accompany early storyboards it was clear that each era would be associated with an overarching, predominant color. The 1920s are a golden yellow, the 1960s a pop of pink, and the 1980s electric blue. A quick glance at a shot conveys the specified era due the hue and saturation associated with it. The image below, Figure 10, portrays a series of close ups of the main character posed in each era with its corresponding color profile. What may not be immediately clear but serves to reinforce the theme is the growing color story that happens as the story progresses. The main character starts her journey in the 1920s bathed in gold and shimmering in a glitter covered drop waist gown. As the story continues the minidress worn in the 1960s is made of a pink fabric whose pattern has swatches of yellow that harken back to the ‘20s which she has recently departed. Each subsequent garment follows this compounding theory where color builds upon itself and by the end are all integrated to suggest the influence of history. This
pattern of subtle color infusion that links the past with the present reinforces the theme and creates identifiable hue associations.

\[\text{Figure 10: A Series of Close Ups that Align with Specific Color Profiles}\]

**Character Design**

The opportunity to create my own short film without limitations from a studio executive nor a client’s set of parameters meant that the leading lady could be modeled after myself and represent my own experience with vintage fashion and its connection to my understanding of the history of feminism. The design of the main character in *Ruffled* was modeled after how I envisioned a highly stylized, cartoon-esque version of myself would appear with classic elements of appeal incorporated throughout. After modeling my character to have large, rounded doe-like eyes, a tapered waistline, and a tall, lithe stature I knew she had evolved from a self-portrait of me to that of an animated doll. Olga Khazan’s article for The Atlantic analyzes the features predominately possessed by woman characters in animation to include “enlarged eyes, tiny chins, and short noses…[creating] an air of innocence and vulnerability,” two traits of which would immediately establish my character as the hesitant newcomer eager to learn and prove herself (Khazan, 2013).
In animation the farther from reality a character travels the more stylized they become. To emphasize the difference between the real three-dimensional world and that of the stylized two-dimensional, historical tableaus it was important that her acting shift between realms. As mentioned in Chapter Five: Performative Femininity & the Stage, in the 3D space she moves as a human would naturally, caring also to highlight the principles of animation; while in the 2D world she is more limited in motion and her movement suggests a style like that of a paper doll bending at its bracketed hinges. With each outfit change so too does her silhouette. Silhouettes are critical in both easily identifying a character and subliminally informing audiences of intent or personalization. For example, the more round a silhouette the gentler and softer their character comes across. In *Ruffled*, stylized silhouettes easily separate each era and comment on the rigidity of the time. The seamstress is able to move around more easily as time progresses and metaphorically each wave of Feminism breaks barriers.

Each outfit worn by the main character had to be researched to reflect fashion trends associated with either the 1920s, 1960s, 1980s, or present day. The outfits she creates using patterns represent iconic colors and silhouettes from each respective decade. Each sewn attempt harmoniously assimilates elements from past looks into the current garment and by the end of the film she is in an ensemble that has scraps and notions from every era and symbolically represents the central theme.

Set Dressing

The set designs, as previously established in Chapter Five, are designed to visually contrast one another. This style is not only achieved through their markedly distinct color profiles but through their set dressing, lighting, and layout. It is important to note, when
describing the mirror environments, they are listed as 2D environments in comparison to the sole 3D sewing shop. In the field of animation these environments would be listed as hybrid environments because of their integration of 2D and 3D elements however hereinafter their large number of 2D assets will signify them as 2D settings for this paper. Additionally, each environment set in the past adheres to the color palette as set forth by the garment color profiles while the design of the present resembles reality. The juxtaposition between the vintage and modern environment designs serve to clearly delineate each type of space the seamstress interacts with and subsequently how her actions change with the introduction of each history’s unique set of expectations.

When entering into this master’s program I knew my greatest strengths were in color theory and design so in assigning a rigid color script to each decade the fashion and set designs thus came easily. The process of designing three exceedingly different environments that cohesively flow hinged on the research of stage design and how those sets too have evolved with time. In creating the 2D sets, working from a point of view that relied on a singularly facing camera made dressing the backdrops easier than dressing the multidimensional sewing shop. The 2D set scenes could be built facing in one direction with disregard for the back faces of the props; the 3D set scenes had to take all angles into account should the camera rotate around a 360 degree pivot.

*Figure 11: Row of Environments*
The different approaches to filling these locations with assets aided in contrasting their artistry; the 2D assets focused on color and silhouette while the 3D focused on atmosphere and form. In Figure 11 the four main environments are shown in a row starting with the 3D and moving in chronological order through the 2D. In the animated short film *Ruffled*, creating individualized locations where the main character could act and confront adversity had to also match the style of the sewn costume. When dressed in each vintage look the main character dramatically stands out from the sewing shop and conveys to the audience that the garment and metaphorically the ideals do not belong to the present. As she enters through the mirror and homogenously blends into the past, she must navigate the perils and emerge triumphant in order to advance the story. Figure 12 depicts an example of the cohesion created to integrate the combination of character and environment designs.

*Figure 12: Sewing Shop and Preliminary Outfit*
CHAPTER NINE: THE PROCESS; HYBRID ANIMATION

Hybrid animation is the technique by which two or more animation styles are combined to create a new, blended animated form of media. The notion of hybrid animation not only lends itself well to the design of Ruffled but the meaning of the film as well. 2D animation has long predated 3D animation within the history of animation and as such is reflected in its representation in the short. As mentioned in Chapter Seven: Storytelling & Intent and Chapter Eight: Design & Color, the elements of design and narrative have been meticulously curated to evoke feelings of nostalgia and comment on the importance of analyzing history. The juxtaposition of 2D and 3D elements visually separate the environments and symbolically emphasize the divide between the past and present. Through my desire to author every step of the production pipeline, the creation of Ruffled demanded thorough planning and an incredible amount of learning. The following outline of the production pipeline details the process by which Ruffled came to fruition.

Pre-Production

The foundation to every animated film is established in the Pre-Production phase. Pre-Production, as listed via the company Business of Animation in their post “13 Steps in Making An Animation Production Pipeline,” requires filmmakers to draft storyboards of their films, conduct research into history, style, and visual cues, layout animation through rough “key animation,” and create a timeline that optimizes workflow (Business of Animation, n.d.).

A key component when applying for the Master of Fine Arts; Animation & Visual Effects program is the story pitch. I entered my first year of graduate school with the foundation of Ruffled written and was pushed to see how I could adapt the story better for animation. It was
clear the first draft could be completed via a live action film and that a magical element was needed to distinguish my film and establish it in the canon of animated media. I struggled in designing an element that could both logically exist in the world of *Ruffled* and simultaneously fulfill this otherworldly requirement. After testing a few iterations of the films in storyboard format the clear design choice was to have fabric and accessories that magically spring to life to assist the main character as she attempts to replicate each sewing pattern. This choice was inspired by Disney’s 1950 Cinderella where the mice inhabit her gown and dance around her attic space (Disney’s Cinderella, 1950). The following steps in the pipeline, project management, character design, color scripts, and layout camera work came much more easily and fortified my pre-existing skills.

In order to successfully complete a production by its proposed deadline it is imperative that a timeline of events be scheduled. As listed by TeamGantt, a Gantt chart is “a bar chart used in project management to visually represent a project plan over time” (TeamGantt, n.d.). Using the Gantt chart method for waterfalling tasks, I tailored a studio sized production pipeline to conform for my individualized needs. The undertaking of *Ruffled* was a tremendous amount of work considering it has 4 costume changes and 3 environment shifts that all needed to be fully stylized and rendered. *Ruffled* had to be meticulously outlined in order to accomplish the level of detail I envisioned for the final render. When completing tasks, I found that the overlapping nature of the 3D animation process was efficiently covered and flowed easily when the timetable could be viewed graphically over both a large-scale period of time and broken-down semester by semester of my time in the Master’s program. The program is a 3-year terminal degree program that I was on track to finish in the spring of 2022 however an unexpected vehicle accident left me both physically injured and without mental clarity that persisted for months. Through
rehabilitation and an understanding thesis committee I made the decision to delay my graduation by a year and my film as such has benefitted. The planning phase of my film could not anticipate the life experiences I incurred with time and as such *Ruffled* extended beyond the timeline proposed.

The initial story pitch of *Ruffled* remained the same throughout the production however the entire setting shifted from the young woman’s bedroom to a sewing shop. This pivotal change in environment adds nuance to the main character’s motivation for sewing. She previously saw sewing as a hobby in her down time while now she is an established seamstress whose after hour adventures add a layer of urgency and importance to her work. A large portion of the preproduction phase was spent drawing and modeling 3D assets to populate the sewing shop with. The shop was designed to emulate the maximalist aesthetic and kept real to life scale in mind. When it came to set design and asset creation for the mirror environments, I needed to implement an alternative process than the strictly 3D method used for the shop interior. In order to create the three additional stage sets I used flat 2D planar images that act as scenography like those found placed in theater performances.

The effort made in the Pre-Production phase of an animated film often maps out and underscores the work completed during production. Pre-Production is critical to embarking on any project regardless of scale.

**Production**

The Production phase of the animation pipeline outlines an entirely different skill set than those discussed in Pre-Production. Design had been set and implementing those choices into functioning and animatable character models and rigs, and renderable, dynamically lit sets were
processes I previously had limited knowledge of. I knew from my previous experiences in the undergraduate program the areas where I would need to not only spend a large portion of time researching but also troubleshooting pitfalls.

*Ruffled* focuses on and relies heavily upon the actions of the young seamstress. As discussed earlier the character was first designed to resemble myself and evolved to become more doll like as elements of appeal were considered. Modeling a character for 3D animation was something I had tried only once before and was apprehensive to attempt again. I spent weeks nudging vertices and delicately sculpting the young woman’s facial features until she reached the final stage seen at present. The seamstress’s body was modeled with my proportions in mind and was tapered inward to emulate standard mannequin forms seen in storefronts to reinforce the performativity she exhibits later in the film. The collection of diverse character hair forms, or wigs as I called them, were modeled to convey the silhouetted shape of iconic hairstyles of the past using tubes and cylindrical geometry to draw the viewer’s eye upward and in swooping hair strand like motion. Once combined the character could be used in t-pose for layout animation to position her around scenes and better retime the film. Character modeling required gentle finessing and alternating program correspondence between ZBrush and Autodesk Maya.

The task of modeling clothing for the main character to wear is a channel I had initially thought would follow the same procedure as the aforementioned character body and hairstyle geometries. However, through the master’s program, I was introduced to a 3D software called Marvelous Designer that streamlined the 3D garment creation method. Primarily referencing tutorials created by Lori Griffiths for her YouTube channel titled, “Fearless Makers; Empowering you to do-it-yourself,” I learned the preliminary steps for drafting sewing patterns that could then be simulated to adhere to the geometry of my character model. Essentially,
Marvelous Designer emulates real life sewing techniques and translates them into the digital sphere of 3D animation. As it relates to a minor subject of *Ruffled*, Marvelous Designer connected me directly to the plight of the main character. The young seamstress and I, a student of animation, both struggled and persevered in creating a set of outfits, growing throughout the process in both our skill and confidence. After placing and finessing the clothing within the Marvelous Designer software I then exported the geometry for Autodesk Maya to be textured and implemented into the character rig. Figure 13 shows snapshots in developing the character model’s body, hair, and clothing geometry.

![Figure 13: Snapshot of Character Geometry Development](image)

Final models meant that UVing and texturing would come next. The process of UVing a model is much like cutting and sewing seams in garment patterns for optimal pattern display, or in this case texture display. Flat planar images are mapped in 3D onto the geometry to achieve the color translation in space. The final, far right iteration in image in Figure 13 shows how the geometry appears with the textures correctly applied and ready for animation and rendering for the final edit.
Creating a dynamic character rig that could be reused five times over, each allotted to an outfit change, was a process I spent a large amount of time devoted to understanding. The technical side of 3D animation comes far less naturally to me than the artistic. Prior to rigging the main character of *Ruffled* I had only felt comfortable rigging small scale props that characters interact with. Following Cheryl Brigg’s book, “An Essential Guide to Maya Character Rigging,” I was able to build my first biped rig that both brought life to my character and firmly established the foundational elements of rigging to my resume (Briggs, 2021). Not without its own set of limitations, my first bipedal rig has a more rigid range of mobility than the fluidity of a rig more advanced due to my own technical troubles. However, lending well to the doll like allusions in *Ruffled*, the challenges of my rig worked thematically with the film. From creating joints to painting skin weights I now know I am capable of rigging my own character should the future demand it.

The animation involved in completing *Ruffled* required far more compensational, follow through adjustments than I had initially planned for. As mentioned in the prior paragraph, my first attempt at rigging a bipedal character was a demanding obstacle that ultimately solidified my greater foundational knowledge of rigging. Upon reaching a point where the 5 character rigs could be used in animation it was clear that the hinged joints, such as elbows and knees, had the most notable interpenetration of geometry and subsequently distracted audiences. The animation too had a snapping quality that works well in the mirrored past but falls short of translating real world movements as she moves through the sewing shop. Endeavoring to progress and complete the film, more time was spent correcting shots in the tailor shop location over shots taking place in the past. Her limited movement became a signifier of performative femininity and only in the final sequences of the film does she move with more autonomous motivation.
The effect lighting can have on the impact of a scene are immense. Having found both joy and a knack for environment design and set dressing it was instantly clear to me that lighting too would be a rewarding phase of production. Not only does each setting need a specific set of lights, similar to the notion that lighting changes from room to room, but each character needs a specific set of lights to properly illuminate their faces and notable attributes. With five separate outfits and four environment changes I needed at least nine lighting groups to properly light *Ruffled*. Rounding out the research of vintage stage designs I extensively researched common lighting practices within each decade and subtly skewed the white light to align with each era’s assigned color profiles. The golden tones of the 1920s, when applied to theatre lights, bathed the scene in a sepia glow. The 1960s, with a subtly infused pink hue forced the main character’s white leather boots to pop and shine against the colorful backdrop. The 1980s, while set in a dimly lit nightclub, has a light paneled floor that surrounds the club in an electric blue. *Ruffled* uses dynamic and changeable lighting to emphasize the distinction between time and space.

The production process occupied the largest portion of the waterfalling gantt chart crafted at the start. The fluidity of the phases of production meant that, instead of focusing on a phase by phase basis, the film was best completed by elevating elements simultaneously.

**Post-Production**

Post-Production, while demanding the smallest amount of time during the production of *Ruffled*, played a significant role in conveying the magic and beauty of the film. *Ruffled* relies heavily upon its visual elements and the final steps of the production pipeline see these images come to life and forced me to address the integration of special effects, chroma keying and musicality.
As soon as the animation was completed per shot during the production phase, rendering could begin. Using Arnold Renderer in Autodesk Maya I rendered each shot at 1920 pixels by 1080 pixels at 300 resolution for optimal image sequencing size. To aid in limiting file sizes I too created smaller sets, sliced from the whole, in order to delete unused geometry and decrease render times to sub 15 minutes a frame. Once a scene had been optimized there were the final checks for shot to shot consistency and render passes to be decided. In addition to what is called a beauty pass, I rendered diffuse, specular, and cryptomatte aov’s, or “arbitrary output variables” according to Arnold Renderer, for an increased level of editability during compositing (Autodesk, n.d.). The greater amount of data that is rendered increases overall render output times however the greater amount of information collected from said data allows for an increased range of editing. When rendering Ruffled I knew that the greater the amount of visual export I had to work with the better the final version of the film would be.

Localized to shot numbered folders, exported imagery and render details could be taken into either Nuke or Adobe After Effects for compositing and special effects. Every sequence of image frames underwent a process of color correcting to attain a unified, cohesion between cuts. In addition to not only minor color fixes, large effects such as the animated sparkles and the chroma keyed mirror were created and added during the compositing phase. The presets available in Adobe After Effects minimized troubleshooting in Autodesk Maya and meant that work could be done simultaneously thanks to the divide in software use. Cutting down on render times was not only crucial to graduating per the revised schedule but was also made easier through the clean up done in in post. The luxury of not having to re-render too many shots enabled Ruffled to come to fruition.
While editing is listed as a feature of post-production in that that is when the final edit occurs; editing is both a tool and a skill that is used throughout the entire production cycle to ensure the story maintains its efficacy. The initial edit of *Ruffled* resulted in a runtime 05:35 and with thoughtful cutting and quickened animation the final version ended at 01:53. As each shot advanced in its stage within the production they could be slotted into the working film file to elevate the entire project concurrently.

The final piece to solidify the production of *Ruffled* included sound design. Music and sound are pivotal to one’s enjoyment of a dialogue-less animation. The score of *Ruffled*, like much of the research that went into developing the nuance of the film, adds layered signifiers and symbolism to the piece. Licensing music clips from Epidemic Sound that were evocative of each mirrored time period and pairing them with crescendo-ing string instruments in the store, amplified the film’s impact. The use of string instruments metaphorically represents the sewing shop and acts as the thread that runs between each era tying them together and uniting in the present. Smaller sound effects that occur more naturally in the world, called foley, were then inserted to ground the character and breathe life into the environment. Ambient white noise, small breaths, sewing machine whirring, and button clicks are among the list of foley used in *Ruffled* to situate viewers in a believable space where they readily embark on the journey that is the narrative of the film.

Post-Production polished the work created during the production phase and solidified the theme of the film through its synthesis and integration of disparate elements. Post-Production, while taking the least amount of time on *Ruffled*, sparked the magic and bolstered the subject and themes of the film.
CHAPTER TEN: SYMBOLS

The narrative symbols within *Ruffled* are numerous in their design so as best to indicate setting and time period. The more stationary and constant symbols act to further justify the story’s theme and force the narrative along. In Mark Collington’s “Animation in Context” he establishes the contrasting elements of the Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Dimensions. The Syntagmatic Dimension addresses the “collective arrangement of individual objects or signifiers…that when put together with related objects…creates a collective meaning.” (Collington, p.17). The Paradigmatic Dimension describes the interchangeable relationship that these indicators have that defines the “overarching context.” *Ruffled* presents a series of stage designs whose props inform the syntagmatic dimension and when combined relay to audiences the aesthetics of the intended era. Each of these dated environment designs are accessed through the combination of two key symbols within the film; paper sewing patterns that then inform garment design and subsequent mirror reflection.

**Paper Sewing Patterns: A Symbolic Catalyst**

The paper sewing patterns are introduced to the audience early on and visually reappear later in the film to reinforce their importance. The main character uses these patterns at face value and follows their instructions like blueprints. The patterns act as individual syntagms that dynamically inform both the garment design and the set dressing visually reflected in the mirror. These paper patterns serve as the catalyst for the increasing contention of the film, the continuous cycle of returning to the past. Only once the seamstress realizes the importance of fashioning her own design is the cycle broken and she can confidently leave the shop and return to the real world.
At their introduction it is not immediately clear that the patterns possess a magical essence but as she continues to sew fabric jumps to life, shoes dance around her desk, and golden sparkles envelope each shot. The resulting outfit is composed of a series of identifiable syntagms that inform what decade she is replicating. The 1920s outfit is a golden drop waist dress worn with an accompanying celestial diadem, the 1960s is a minidress paired with white patent leather go-go boots, and the 1980s a denim jacket layered overtop various other pattern clashing, vibrant articles of clothing. In Figure 14 the three paper patterns follow their assigned color profiles and foreshadow the inevitable outfit that will be sewn. When the seamstress is dressed in each of her period outfits she stands out from the normalcy of the shop interior. She appears to be in costume attire that juxtaposes the established meaning created by the shops’ syntagms and is only “in place” when transported through the mirror.

![Figure 14: Sewing Packet Line Up](image)

Each of the paper sewing patterns symbolically represents the expectations society placed upon women of each of their respective time periods. In following their instructions and donning these looks the seamstress invokes the past and never feels entirely at ease. The paper patterns limit the seamstress and reflect strife combat by feminists of the past. As a form of social commentary, the actions taken by the seamstress to find her voice amidst an ever changing landscape to create her own future reinforce the theme of the film.
Mirrors; Transformation & Reflection

In animation, a common symbol used to drive the narrative is the magic mirror. In *Ruffled*, the mirror represents the main character’s inward reflection of the self and acts as a transportive device. In each shot the mirror exists it initially serves as a standard reflection of the fashion worn by the seamstress. Upon further glance she finds that her surroundings have been transformed and she is no longer in the sewing shop but a snapshot of the past. The mirror acts as a vessel for the paradigmatic dimension in that its reflection changes when the garment syntagm changes. This directly links the magic of the mirror with the changing variable of the sewing patterns. Figure 15 shows the alcove in the tailor shop where the mirror resides nestled behind curtained dressing rooms and beneath a bejeweled chandelier.

*Figure 15: Mirror without Textures*

The mirror metaphorically symbolizes the inward evolution of the self. Her reflection literally morphs in front of her and the historied lessons of the past empower her to find confidence in herself and her craft. In Yeo Reum, Lee’s article “Symbolism of Mirrors as the
First Step of Individualism and Self-Awareness,” they assert that “[by] consciously reflecting on ourselves and finding the balance between our inner and outer worlds, we come to be able to take care of both worlds.” (Lee, 2018, p. 59). Yeo Reum, Lee’s analysis directly aligns with the theme of Ruffled. Mirrors exist as an unassuming portal to the past and immediate reckoning with the present staring back at you. The action of both learning from the past and looking inwardly on the self, make handling the future and developing one's identity all the stronger. Symbols serve as the tangible translation of Ruffled’s theme for the seamstress herself.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSION

The animated short film *Ruffled* uses the medium of animation to examine the subjects of Feminism and Femininity. The film imparts the message that through analysis of the past an informed and more equal future can be created. Every element of the production was designed to reinforce the theme as the narrative grew. *Ruffled* is a visual exploration of the waves of Feminism and how an individual may position themselves within a movement whose history long predates their own. *Ruffled* affirms that as one seeks greater education, their perception of not only themselves but the world around them changes. The social relevancy of my film not only establishes it firmly in the history of Feminism but has proven to be as necessary to the Feminist movement now as it was at the film’s conception. In the time since drafting my first storyboard and finalizing the script treatment, since roughly August of 2019, marginalized groups in the United States of America have been targeted and stripped of their rights. The current climate would do well to analyze how oppressing large groups of individuals in the past has resulted in both revolution and a widespread demand for change.

Moving beyond the scope of *Ruffled*, I plan to continue independent filmmaking and hope to create compelling stories that showcase my passion for art direction, and character and environment design. *Ruffled* provided the invaluable opportunity to hone my skills and grow in confidence. Much like the main character, I too have found my niche and discovered how I fit into the rich history of not only Feminism but animation. I endeavor to create beauty through digital media that challenges, celebrates, and reflects the world around me and will exist long after.
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