Production Process:
This document is written in order to familiarize you with our typical production process in creating an animated film or visual essay and will describe to you the major phases of production and explain what we do in each and what is expected of you, the client, in each phase.

Script:
The script is the first stage of making a film or visual essay. Often a script will contain the spoken voiceover or the text to be seen on-screen and may also describe certain other visual elements and actions that you think are important to conveying the message of your film. Once we have your script and it is fully approved, we can move on to giving you an estimate for the project.

Pre-Production:
Please share any logos, brand colors or guidelines and pre-existing elements with us as early as possible – and preferably before we begin the storyboard process. It will help us to know what we will need to include in the film from a client perspective to meet any brand guidelines and stylistic expectations. If you’d like to share any other visual reference or mood images that you think may be helpful in inspiring us - great, now’s the time to send along your favorite pieces and mention how you think they will fit in with the brief for the film.

Estimate:
We will analyze the script and creative brief in order to determine the duration of the completed film and the scope of the entire project. These factors are the major elements in preparing an estimate for the schedule and budget we will need in order to complete the job. We’ll send this estimate to you for approval, and once it’s signed off on and the job is awarded we can move on to creating the storyboard.

Storyboard:
The storyboard phase is a rough pencil drawing of the action of the major story elements in sequential frames alongside the corresponding script. Notes on action and movement along with arrows describing camera choreography and animation may also be included. The main purpose of the storyboard is to show the visual components of each scene during each sentence of the script, ensuring that the story is being presented in a clear and cohesive manner and contains all the important elements of the script. Any feedback during the storyboard phase should be limited to content and sequence of the elements. Final visual design and styling will be addressed in the design phase.

Design:
In the design phase we will explore the visual look of the film, taking into account any branding guidelines and working to create a unique and memorable visual style. We will then present style frames of the final lockup for each section. The transitions / morphing from object to object will be figured out in the animation phase. Designs must be locked and final-approved before we move forward into the animation phase. Once we are in animation, designs cannot be revised.
Animatic:
Using the style-frames we will compile an animatic for timing purposes. This edit will be style-frames / still cards cut together to create an overall timing outline of the film. In this phase we will work out the overall pacing of the film as well as how much time should be spent on each scene and the end logo or lock-up, in order to allow enough time for smoothly animated transitions. We will need to lock this timing before we move forward into the animation phase. In the animation phase we will have the freedom to slip timing by a few frames, if we find that we need a little more or less time for transitions, but general timing needs to be locked. Major timing changes beyond the animatic phase may result in schedule extensions and / or overage charges. During this phase, we can use a scratch voiceover to lay out the general timing of the film.

Animation:
Once we have the general timing, we will begin the animation phase. Each scene will be animated, as well as any transition between scenes. We will share work-in-progress postings of our animation progress periodically. These postings may be in various stages of completion, a mixture of finished animation, work-in-progress animation, and the boardomatic used as a placeholder for any portions to be completed. We will present these WIP postings and will be looking for notes on the completed sections. We will then present the entire completed piece for final approval and picture lock.

General Notes on Process:
Delaying any of the above phases could result in schedule extensions and or cost overages. All of these phases are length and time specific. We cannot extend one phase without potentially affecting the others, and each phases must be completed in order. If one phase is extended there could be cost implications for holding or extending teams for the other phases.

Feedback:
We fully expect that there will be notes and revisions from you during each phase. This is a collaborative effort between the client and the producer of the film, and we look forward to your feedback. Feedback is required within 24 hours of a posting (but earlier is always welcome). We are always happy to get on the phone to discuss feedback, however it is helpful to receive consolidated notes via email as well. Also, it’s quite helpful to receive notes and feedback from one designated point person on your team.

Delivery:
Delivery of the completed film will be an uncompressed Quicktime file combining final picture and mixed audio via FTP or Dropbox. Compressed preview versions (H.264 or .m4v) will be made available at the same time for viewing and approval purposes. Any other compressed file formats or versions for delivery will need to be specified in the bid before production commences.

Payment:
All deliverables are released upon delivery of final payment. Terms are 50% due at least two working days prior to beginning contracted work, 50% due upon receipt of final invoice.

That’s it!
Thanks for reading this document! Hopefully we made our process more clear and understandable. If any section isn’t clear or you have any concerns over the production process, please email or call and we can discuss the issue.

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