

wherever I am there I'll be

documentation



a film by JACK ROBERTS

Contents Page

● Initial Research	1-4
● Storyboards	5-12
● Animatic	13-14
● Process + Experimentation	15
● File Organisation	16
● Character Design	17-19
● Animating	20
● Production Schedule	21
● Reflection	22

Interviewee Kris Webb

I first met Kris at the pub I work at, *The Rose and Crown*, which is a gay venue in Greenwich. Kris hosts a drag bingo night there as Miss Isles. Kris is the eldest of six children and has always lived in London. He's lived in many different parts of London and doesn't really think of one place as 'home'.

I decided to interview him for this project because his personality is dynamic, engaging and intriguing. I was curious to know how he maintained such high levels of confidence and positivity.

I began with asking Kris about his feelings around home, he told me:

"My home means to me somewhere that I feel safe, somewhere that I feel secure, and somewhere that I know I can be myself. And that's not just when people are around, that's like when I'm by myself, as well. ... The body I'm in is a home. I'm nearly forty. Its only in the last the five or six years that I really feel like I know who I am. And this security that I get from my body, from being in this body, is enough. That keeps me very grounded, it keeps me very safe. I don't need to be at home to feel that."

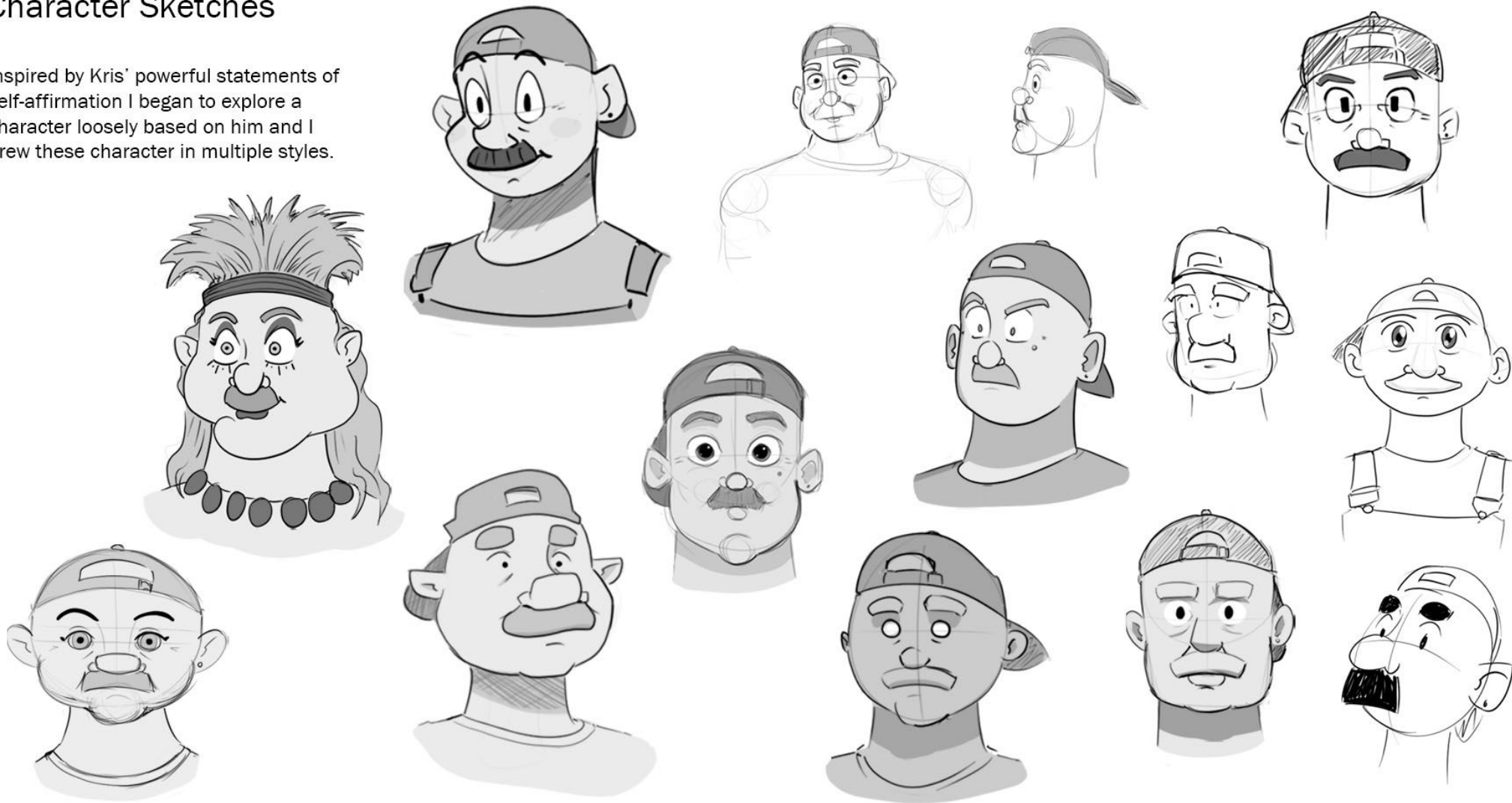
Although he started speaking about his home he went on to explained he didn't always feel at home in his body and has felt the stress of social pressure relating to body image. This further increased my curiosity in how he remained so consistently positive.

"I've been on a journey with my body. Like. Massive... massively big, overweight, and then massively, massively skinny... when you're younger the projections that you put onto your body, or the projections you feel like society is putting onto your body, ... they just feel insurmountable sometimes and oppressive. And then the older you get you realise "I'm just one spec of this massive thing that is happening, which is 'Life'." And only you can really do what is best for you at any time. And acceptance of who you are and the situation you're in whether that be ... if I live in flat, if I live in a house, if I live in a ferry lodge, the dream place, if a live in house by a pool or by the sea, ultimately where I am there I'll be. It doesn't matter where I am in the world... this is home (*hand over chest*). I am home, wherever I am."



Character Sketches

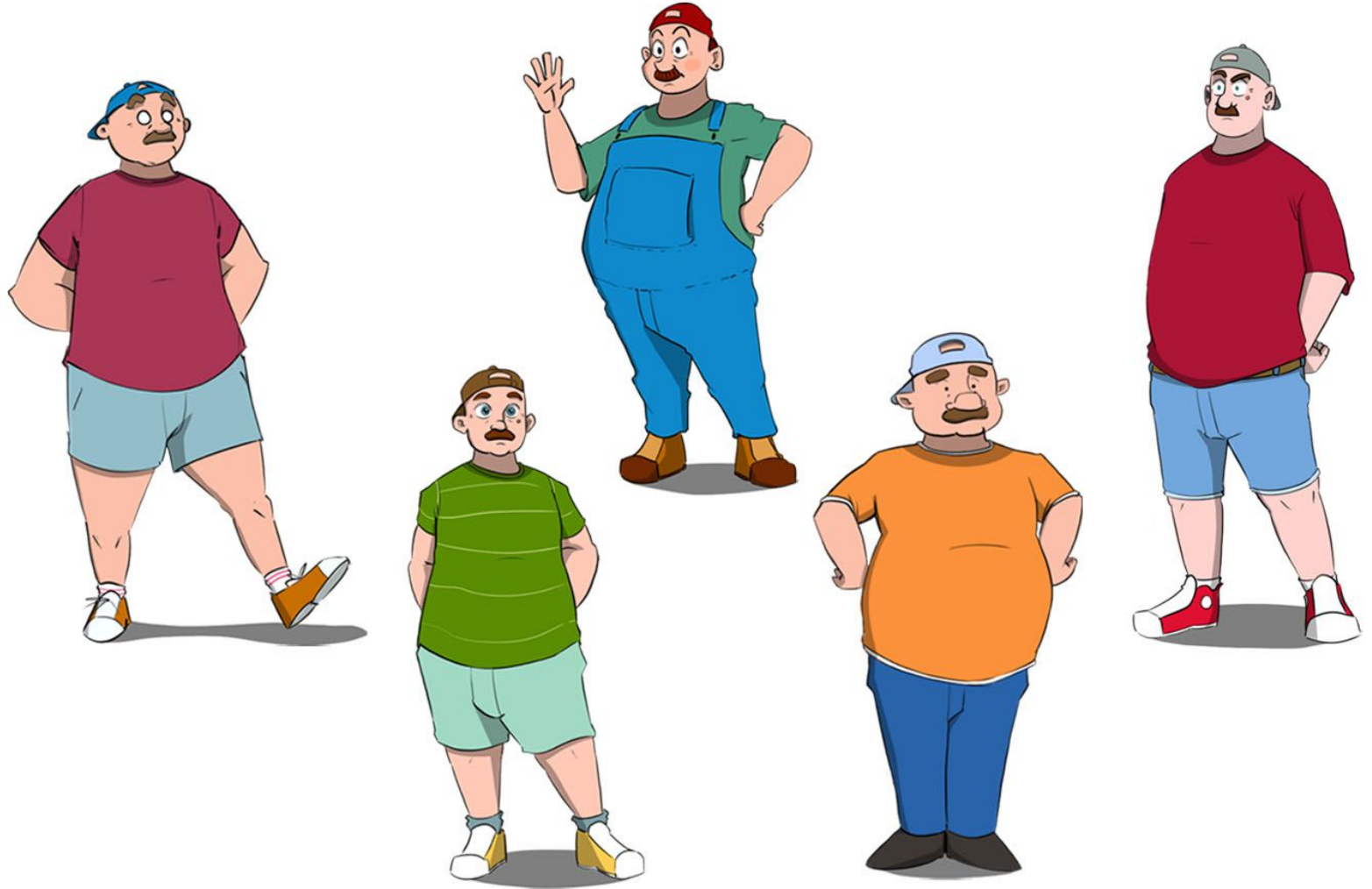
Inspired by Kris' powerful statements of self-affirmation I began to explore a character loosely based on him and I drew these character in multiple styles.



First Character Concept

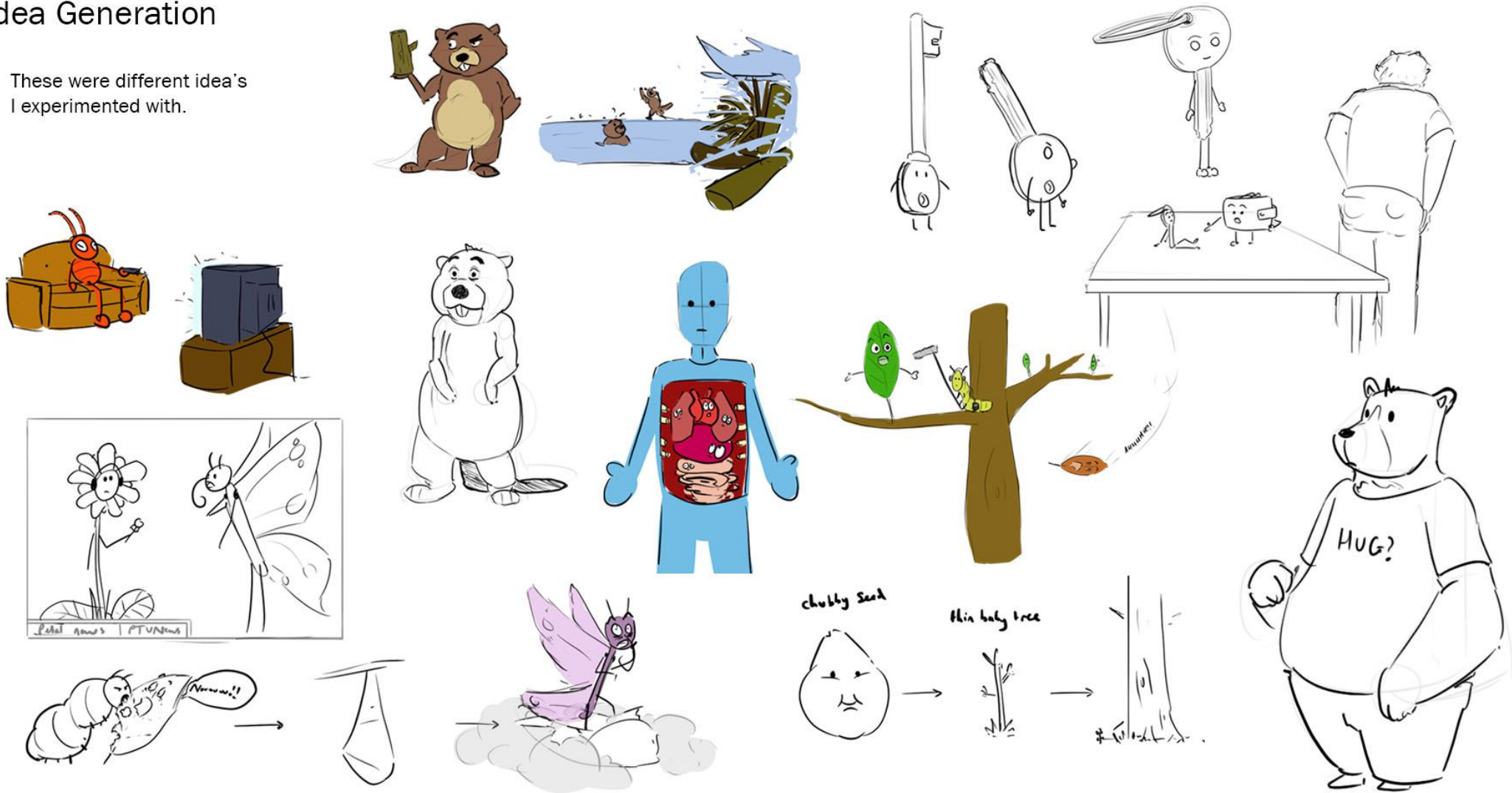
From the styles I liked most I drew full body designs of those characters.

The feedback I was given for these character designs identified their similarity in appearance and that developing the story idea would enable me to experiment more with the character design later.



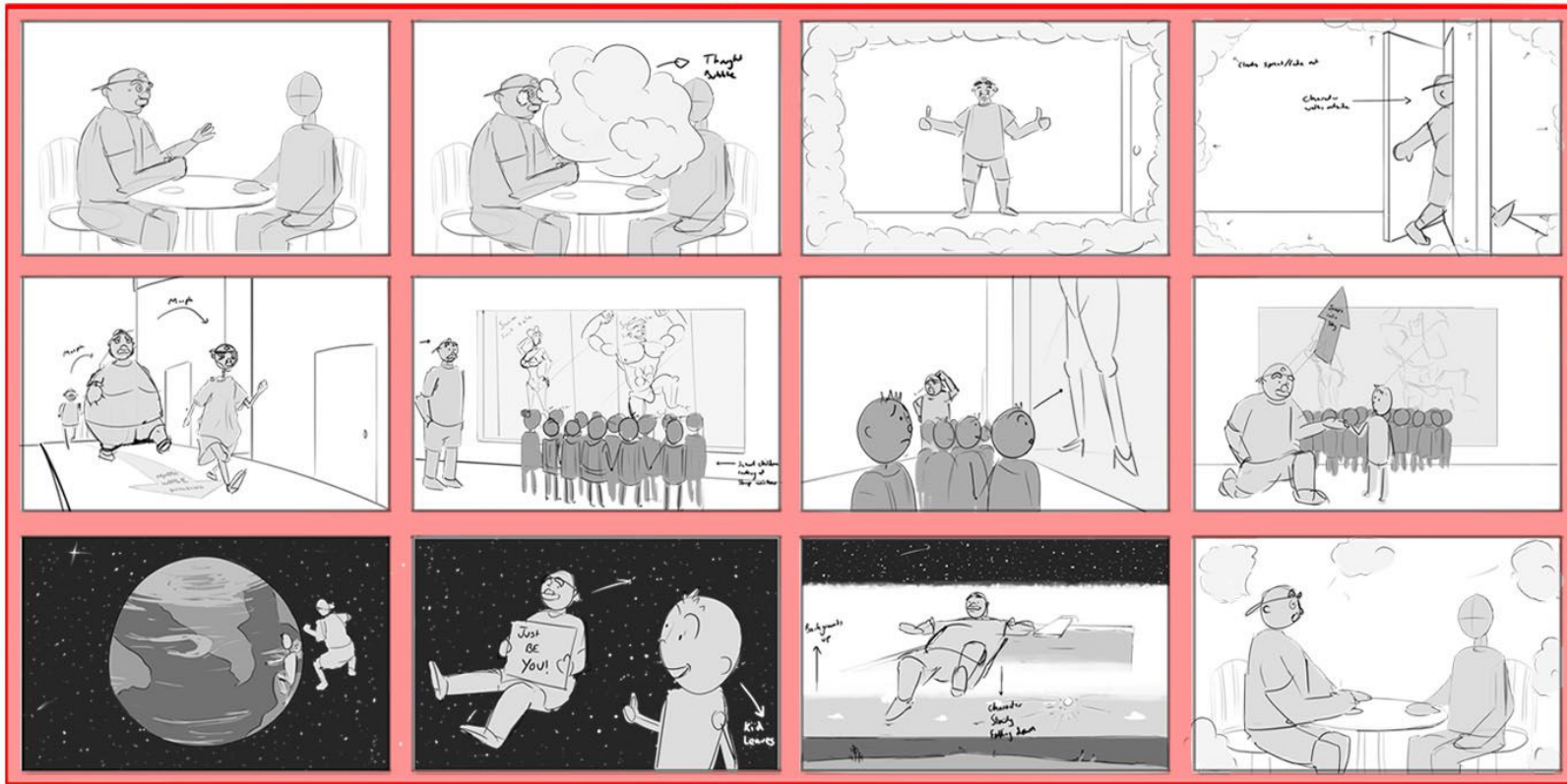
Idea Generation

These were different idea's
I experimented with.



Storyboarding

Storyboard One



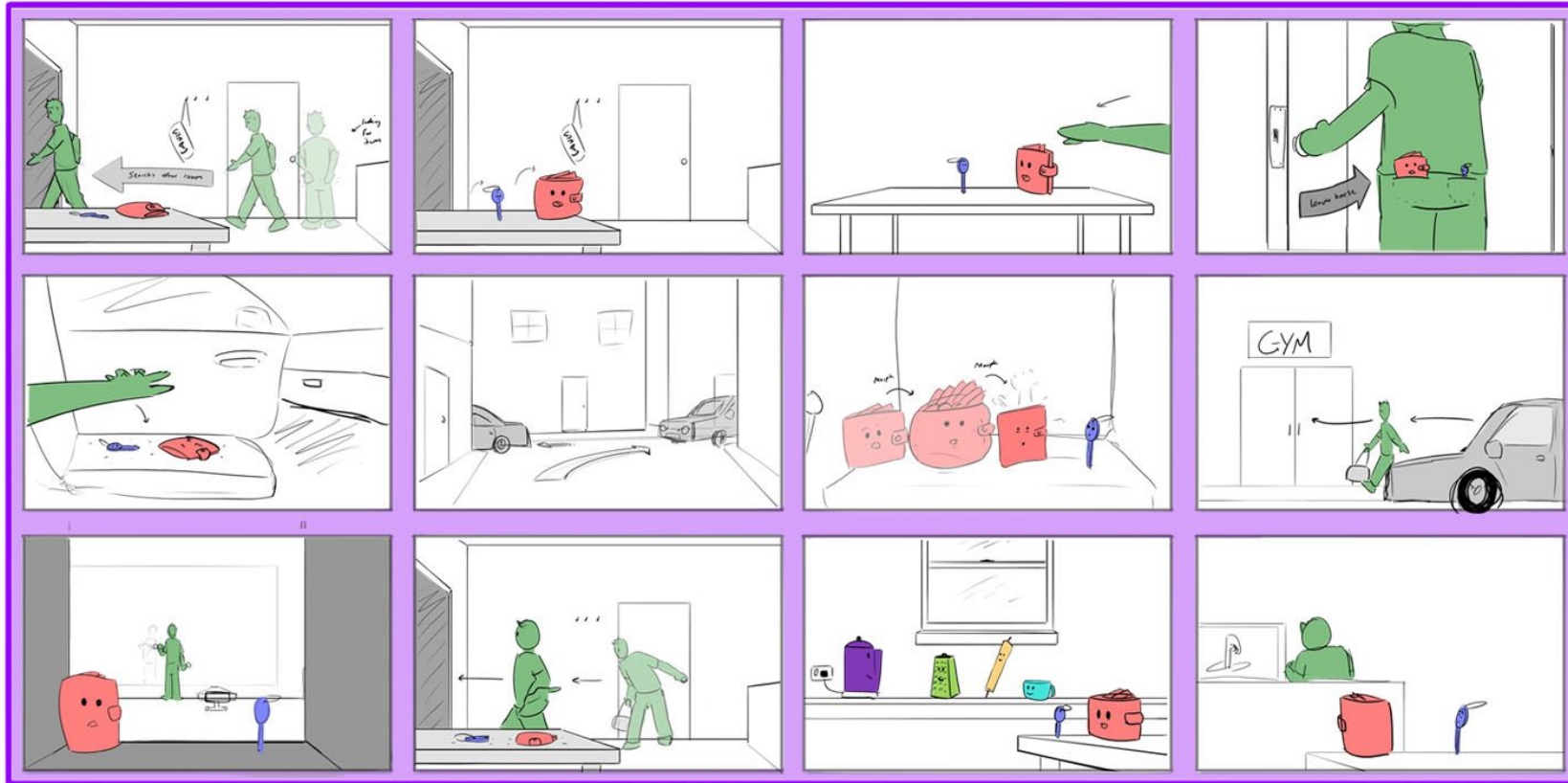
The first storyboard I developed depicted two friends having a drink at a café and discussing body image. I envisioned using the audio from Kris' interview for character dialogue, lip-synched to the animation of this first panel. In panel five I want to animate a morph sequence and have the character walking down the street while his body shape changed from fat to thin.

"... my weight has yoayed for the last four five years."

The feedback given for this storyboard was that I was relying too heavily on the audio to tell the story and that the visuals were too literal and cliché.

Storyboarding

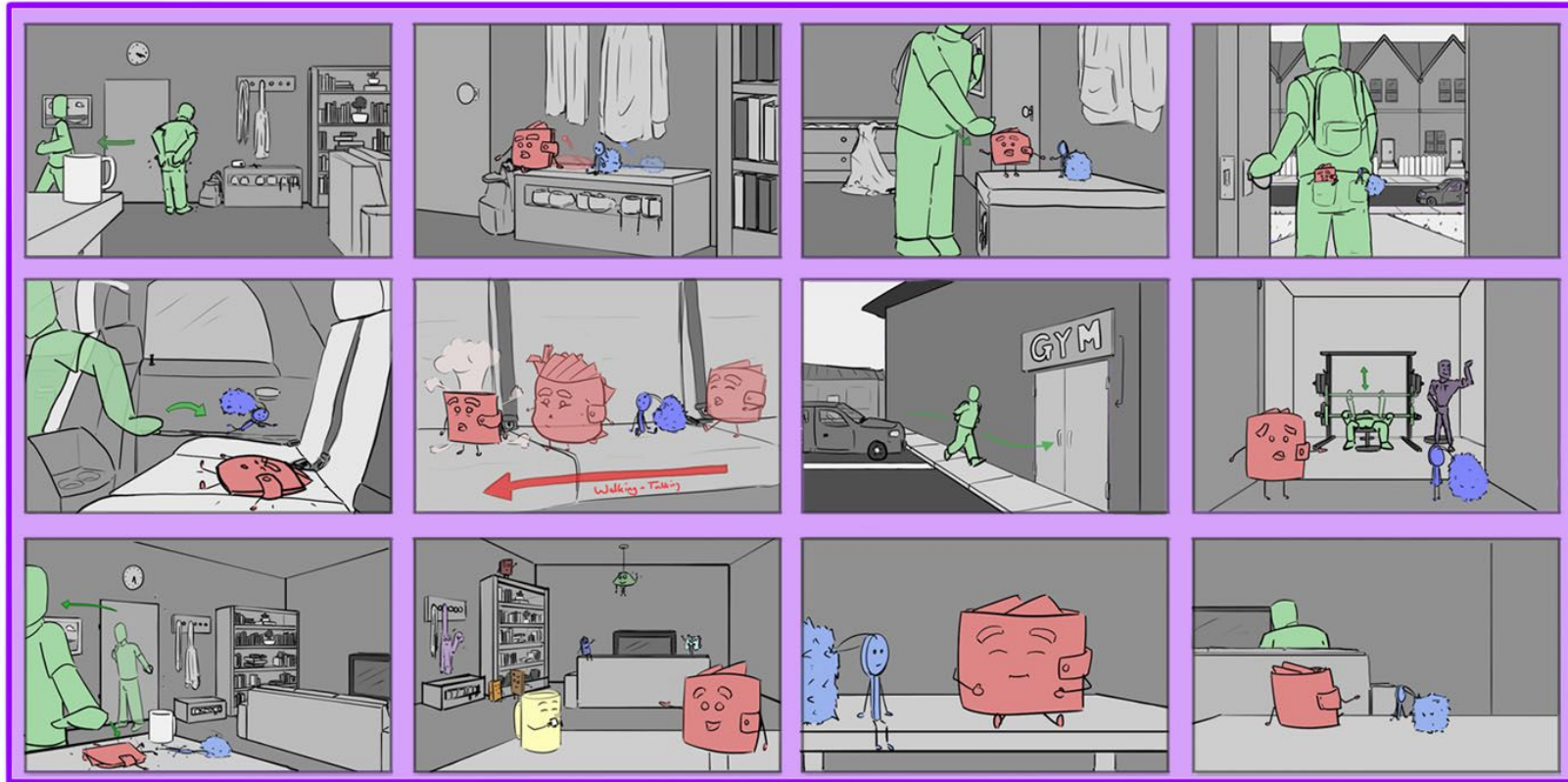
Storyboard Two



The second storyboard I did told the story of item's have a discussion while their owner went on a physical journey to the gym. I chose a wallet and keys as the characters for this story. I wanted to use the dialogue Kris gave about his weight yoioing and create morph sequence where the wallet became fat or thin relating to the money it contained.

Storyboarding

Storyboard Two - refined

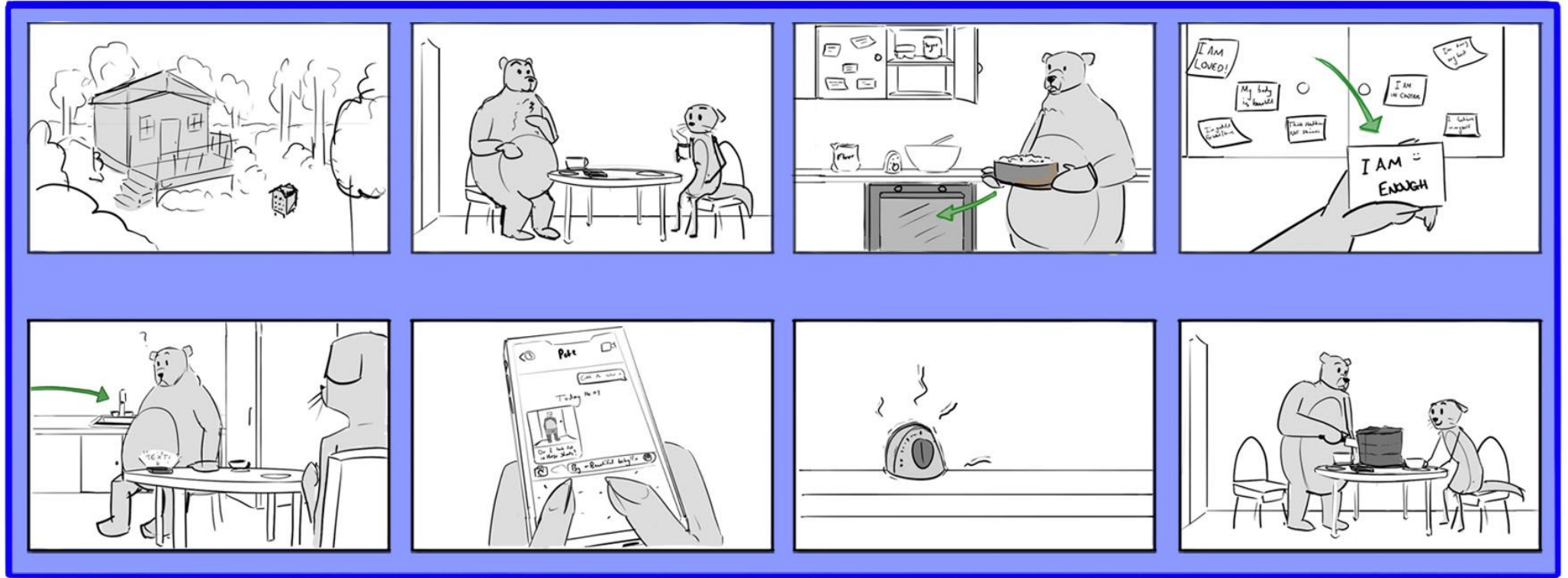


At the time of developing this storyboard, in our professional practice class we discussed how to improve our storyboards by repeated redrawing. I decided to redraw this storyboard to improve it further.

Feedback on this storyboard helped me understand that the introduction of the metaphor of money and personification of the characters as inanimate objects would distract the audience from Kris' message of self-acceptance and positive body affirmation. The feedback clarified my intention should be to visually enhance Kris' words in order to celebrate all body images.

Storyboarding

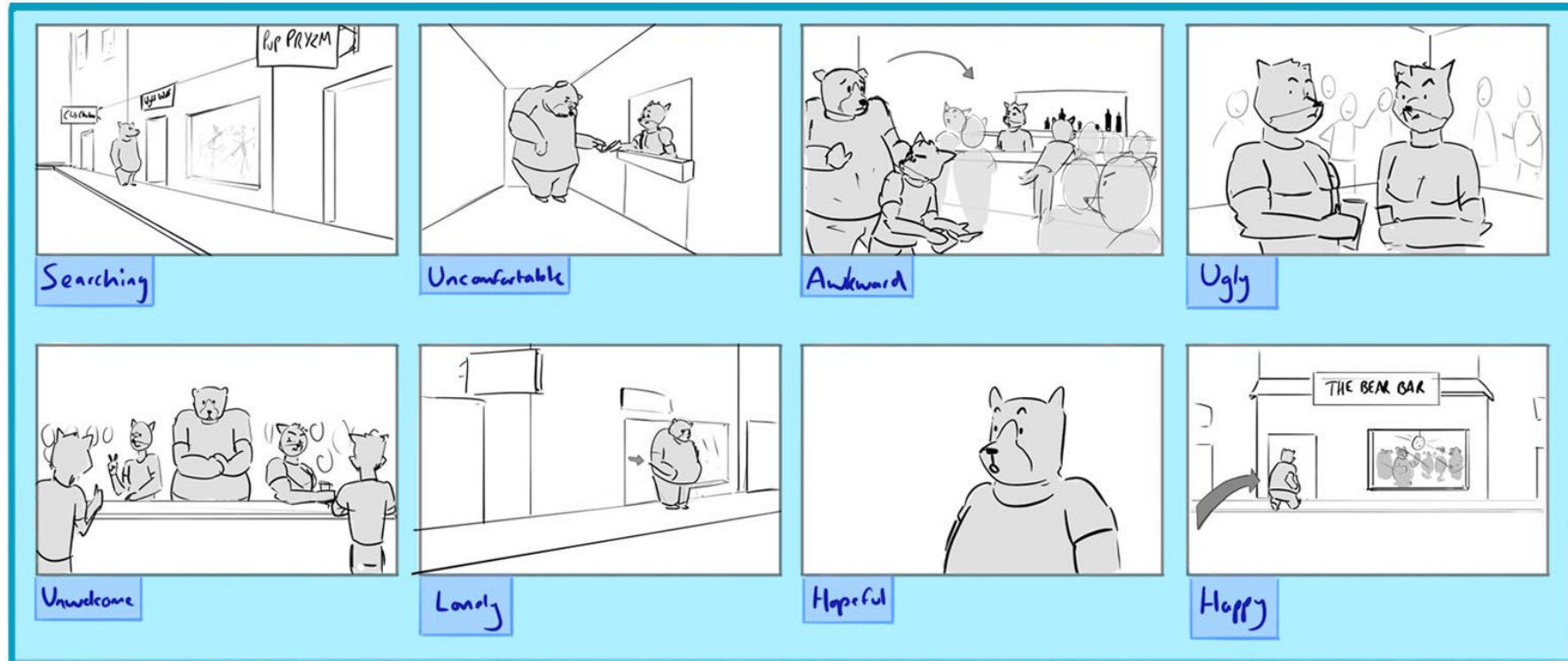
Storyboard Three



To aid myself in creating a better storyboard I reduced the number of panels I was using. Taking all the feedback I had been given onboard I decided the story would be around a character not being ashamed of their body. This led me to draw an anthropomorphic bear character having a conversation with a friend while baking a cake. Around the house were notes of positive affirmation that the bear would read. While this idea felt closer to what Kris was saying, I was not satisfied that it would be completely successful.

Storyboarding

Storyboard Four

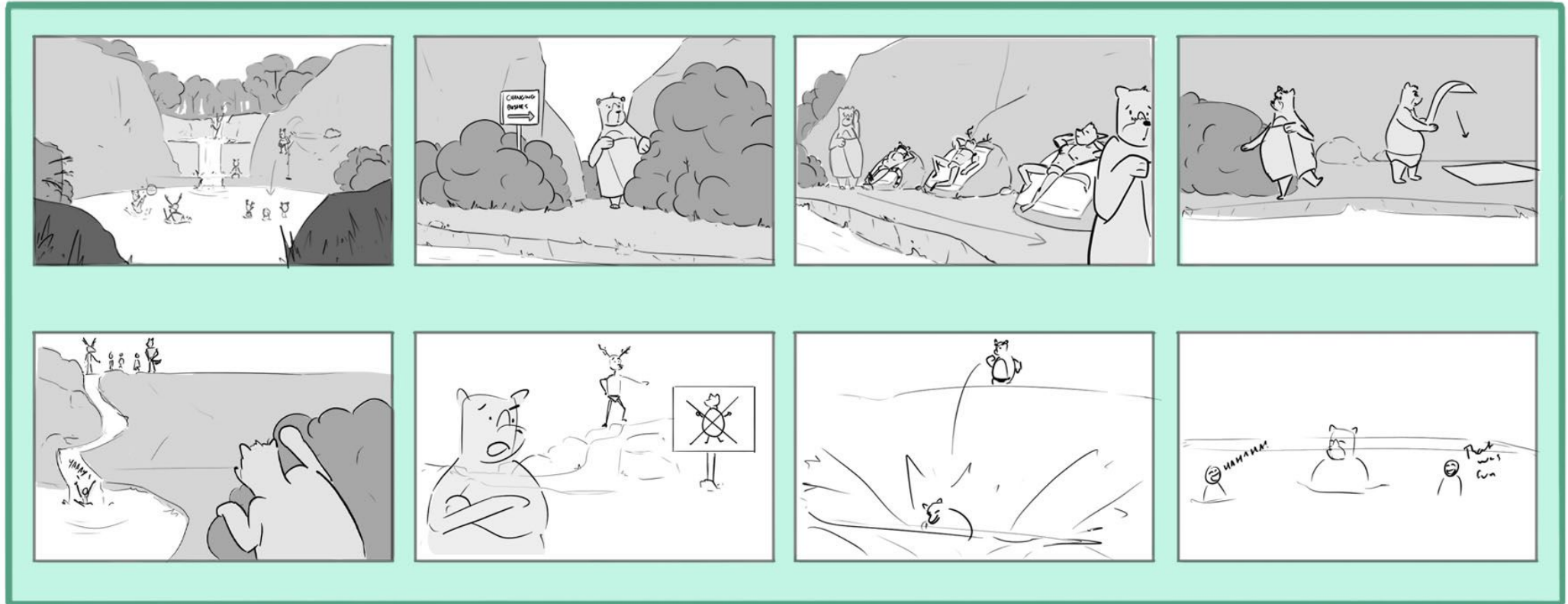


For the next storyboard I stuck with the anthropomorphic bear character, but this time based in mine and friends lived experience of going out to gay venues. In the queer community men are assigned animal titles depending on their body image, e.g., Bear, Wolf, Fox, Otter, etc. Using these established stereotypes led me to this story where the bear character went into a club, was rejected by other animals because the bear was bigger than them, so the bear decided to leave and go to a bear club.

This idea felt like the closest I had gotten to representing Kris's story, but I didn't feel particularly original using the pre-existing stereotypes assigned to male body types. It felt as though it reinforced the negative connotations that were created around body image and the segregation that already exists within the separate communities. I labelled each panel to define the emotional focus I was trying to create for the audience.

Storyboarding

Storyboard Five

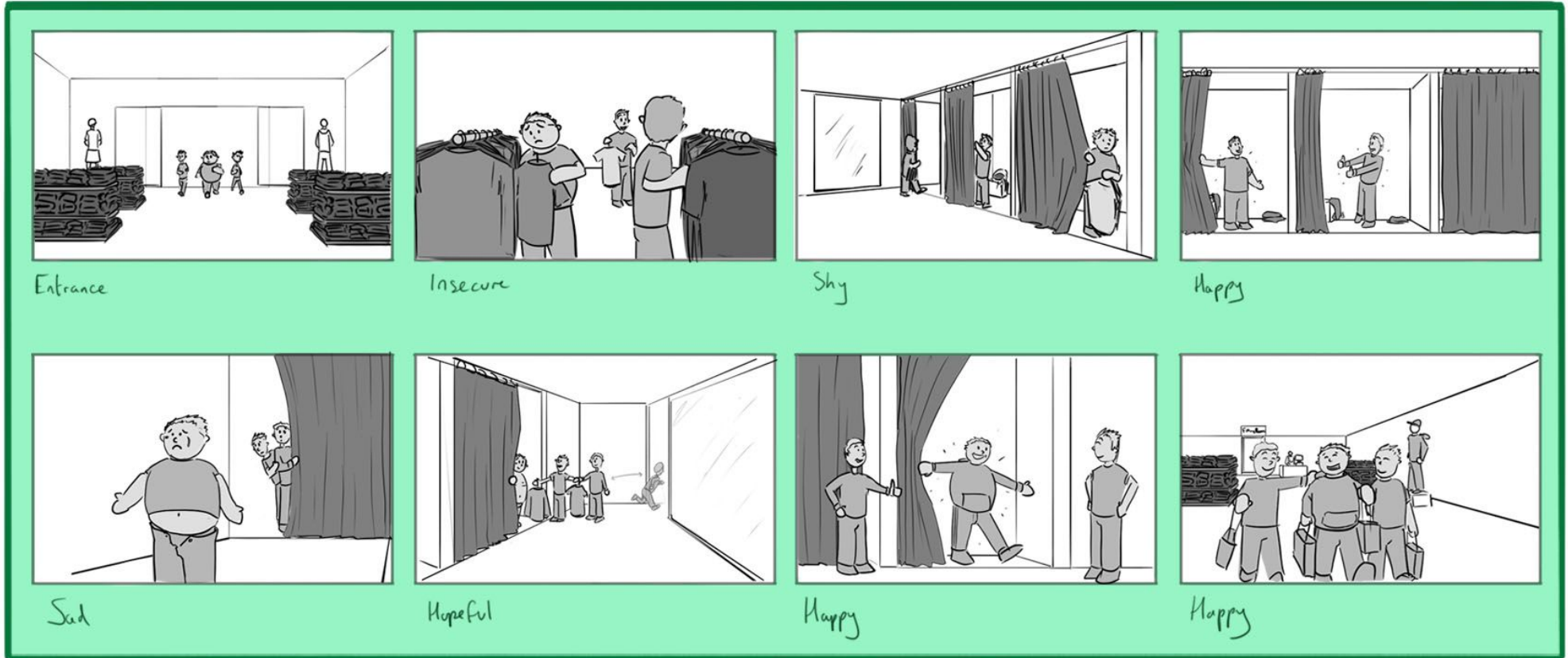


I had another attempt at seeing if I could make the anthropomorphic bear character work. This story revolved around the character feeling insecure about their body at a swimming pool.

I abandoned this idea in favour of the concept realised in the following storyboard.

Storyboarding

Storyboard Six



The core of this attempt was the desire to abandon anthropomorphic representation. This story was about three children going shopping for clothes. One child did not fit into any of the clothes he picked, and the other children helped him find clothes that would fit.

The feedback received on this storyboard pointed out this attempt lost focus on the key idea independent self-acceptance, and the characters being young did not provide the element of mature self-reflection.

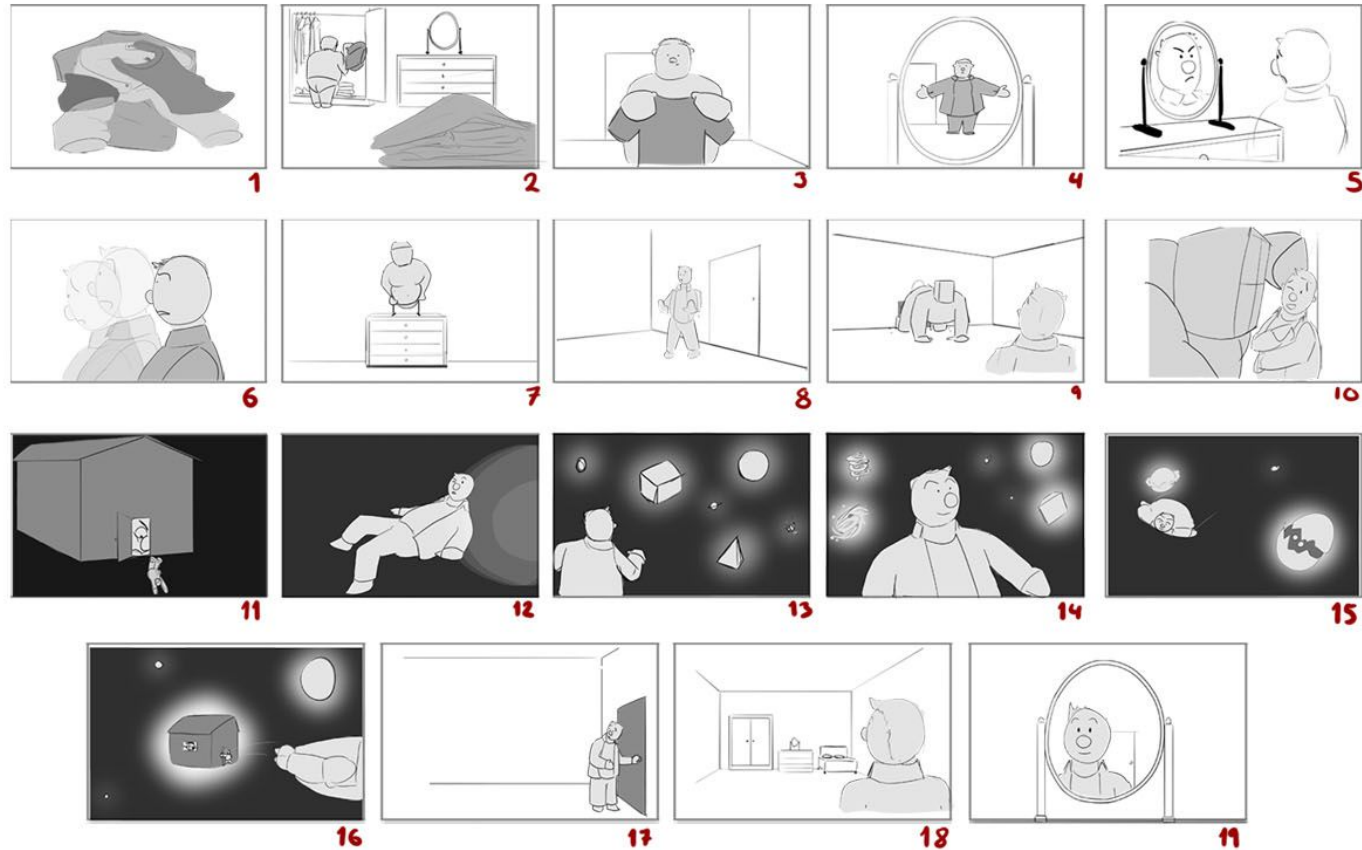
Storyboarding

Storyboard Seven



This storyboard revolved around a more mature person getting dressed in front of a mirror. His reflection comes to life and bullies the character for the way they look. Seeing the character in tears the reflection decides to comfort him and help him chose and outfit they're happy with. This story was the idea I decided to develop further for the animation because it matched Kris' story of self-acceptance and resisting negative self-perception.

Stills from Animatic



I created an animatic from the final storyboard to experiment with shot angles and the setting of the animation.

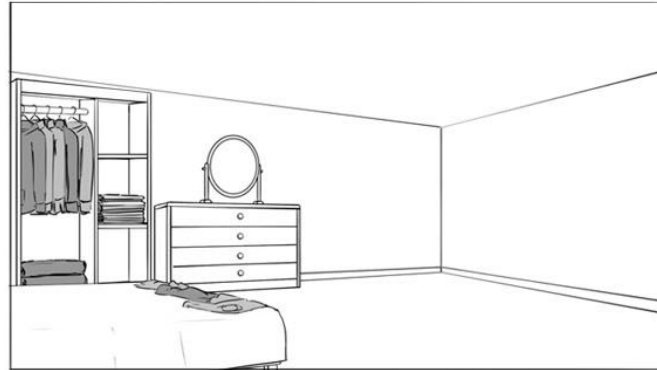
I altered elements of the storyboard. Where the reflection morphed into the pig and bullied the character, this became the reflection coming towards the character and the character falling out of the house.

The reflection forces the character to out of his house into a mental landscape where he realises there is more to life than momentary negative perception of self-worth.

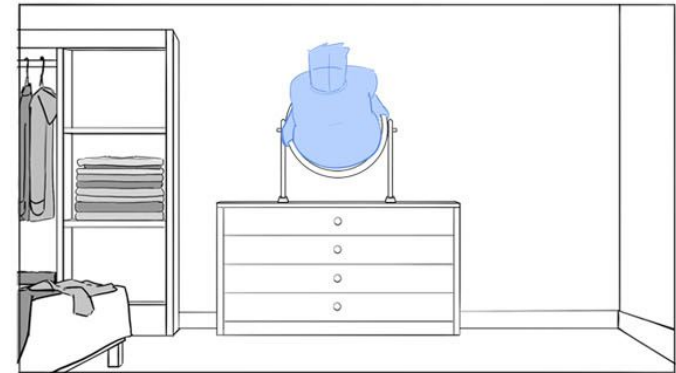
The character returns home concluding the abstract journey with a new perspective.

Background line art

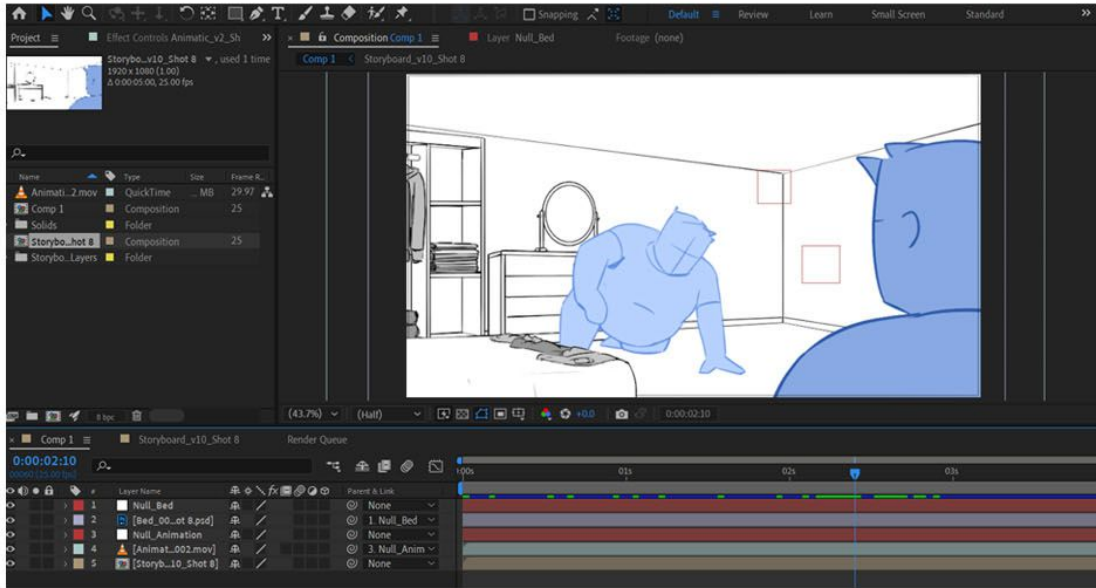
Once the shots in the animatic were finalised, I started by re-doing the backgrounds in more detail.



Then I began animating the character's keyframes in rough, as the final character design had not yet been decided. All drawings were completed in photoshop at this stage and saved in a folder titled 'Photoshop'.

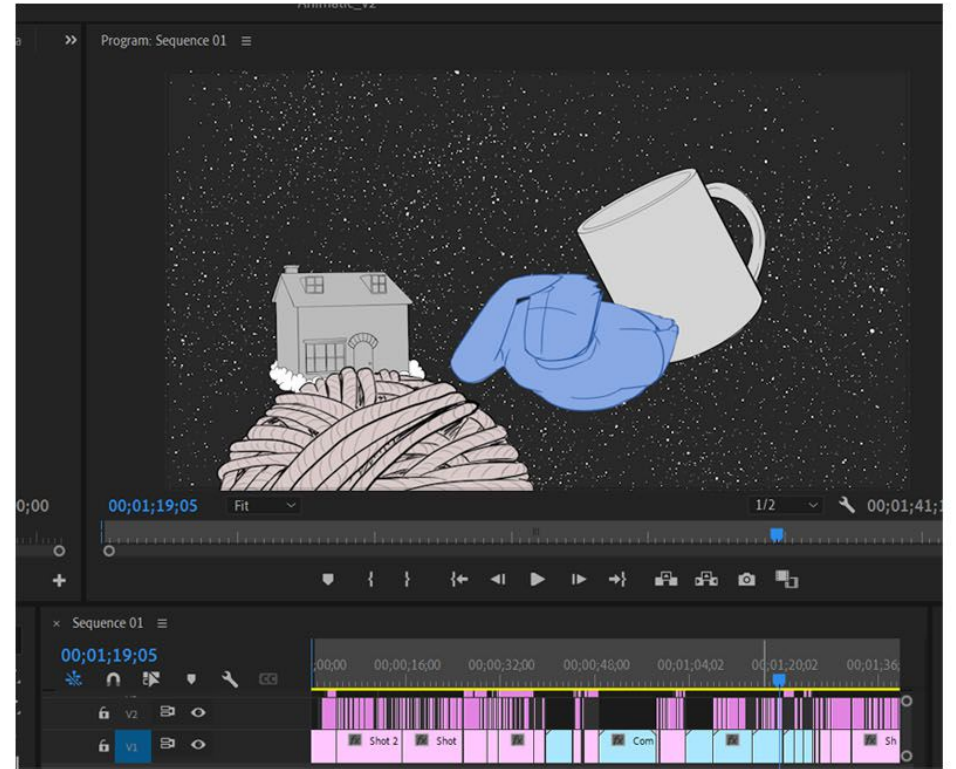


After Effects + Premiere Pro

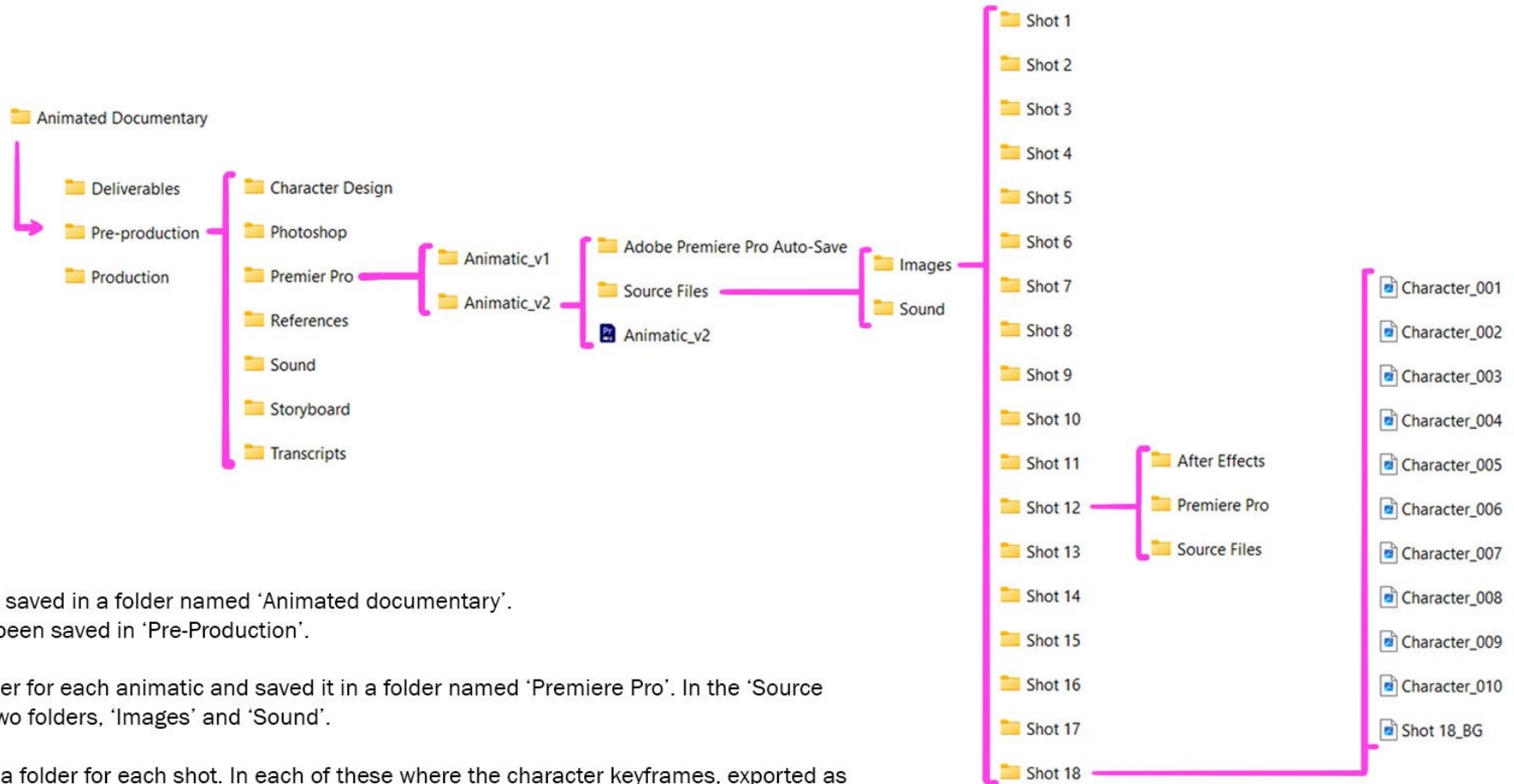


I explored and played in aftereffects to use different camera effects for different shots. This intensified the sense of threat when the reflection came to life in shot 8 and it enhanced the movement of the character as he was flying through space.

I first created the animation in photoshop, then exported the layers into premiere pro. I exported the video from premiere pro with a transparent layer and imported it into aftereffect.



File Organisation



All documents were saved in a folder named 'Animated documentary'.

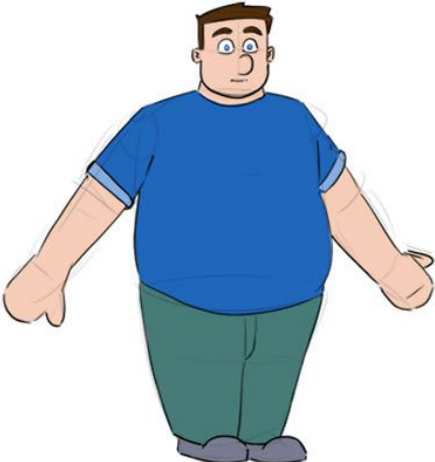
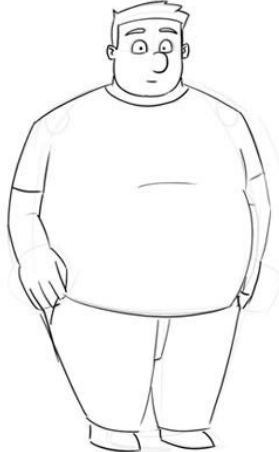
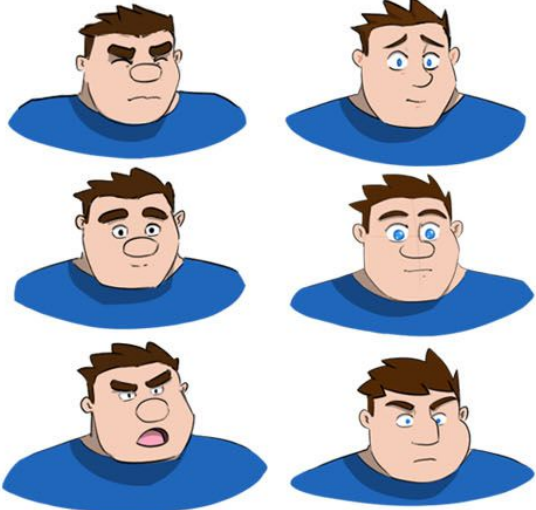
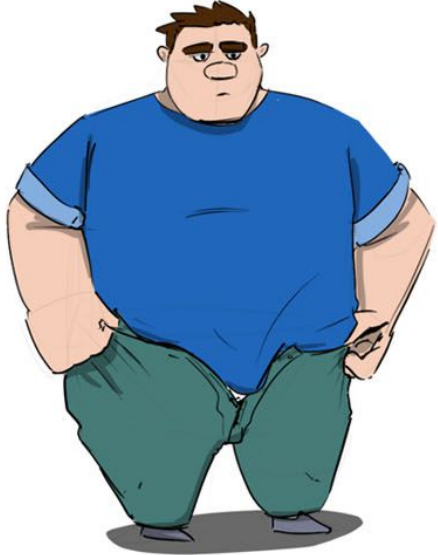
All work so far had been saved in 'Pre-Production'.

I created a new folder for each animatic and saved it in a folder named 'Premiere Pro'. In the 'Source Files' folder, I had two folders, 'Images' and 'Sound'.

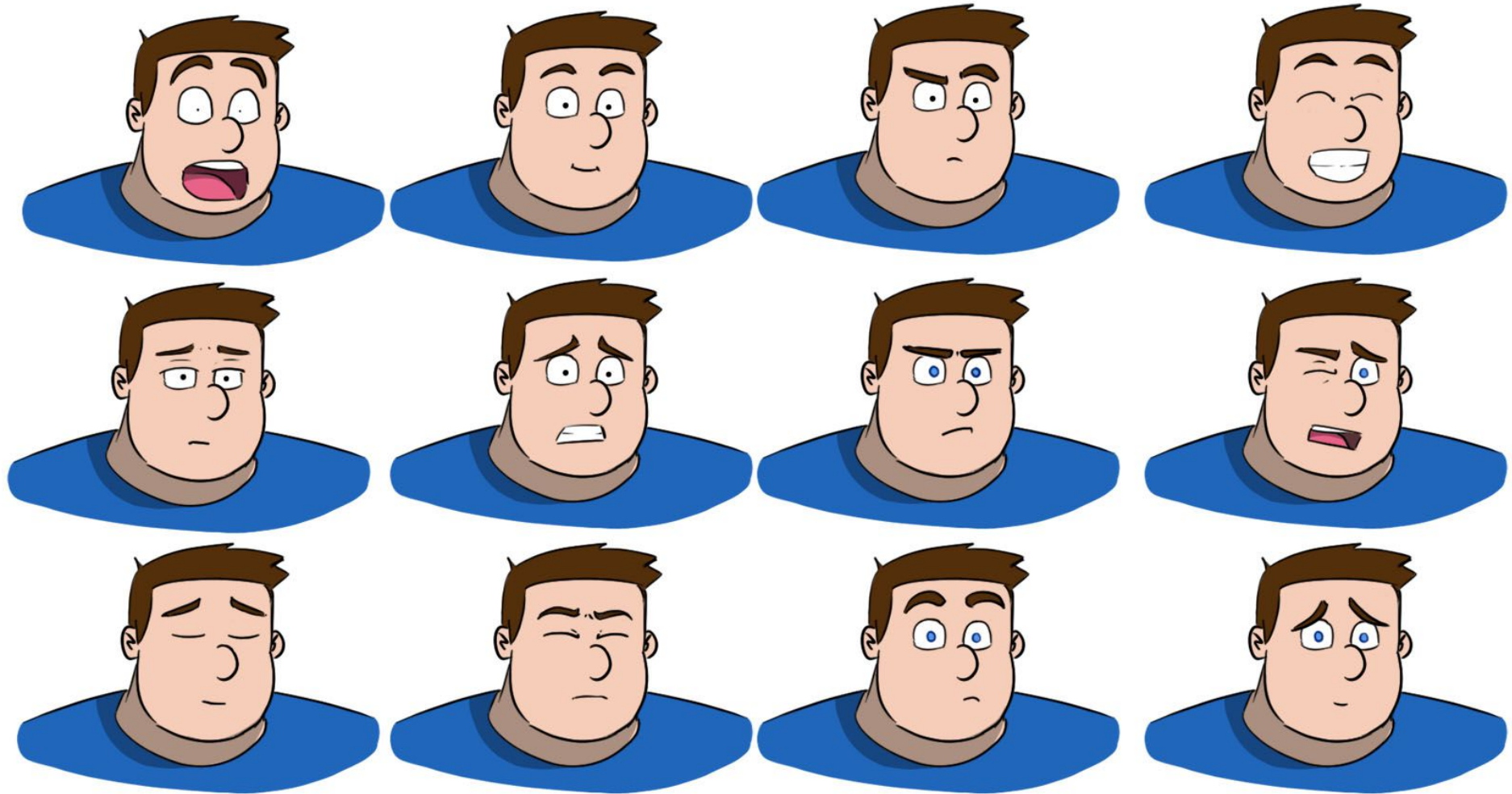
In 'Images' I added a folder for each shot. In each of these where the character keyframes, exported as PNG files, and the backgrounds exported as JPEG files.

In the shots which required multiple adobe programs I added folders labelled accordingly.

Charcter Design



Charcter Design

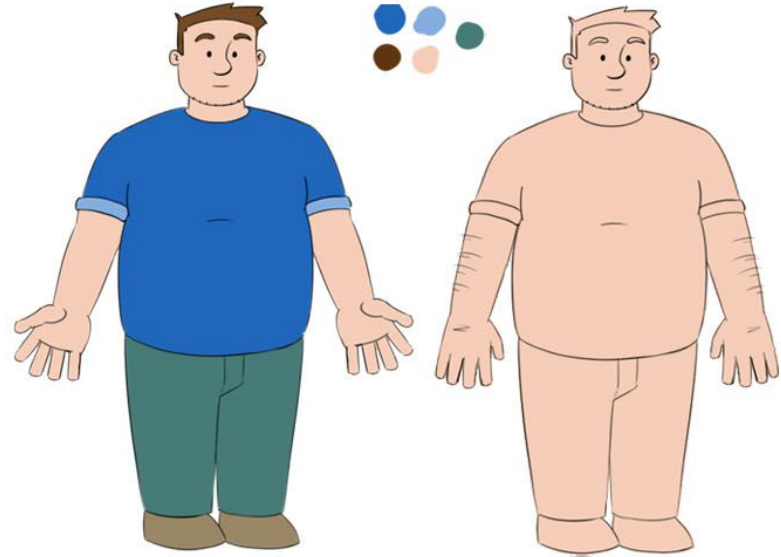
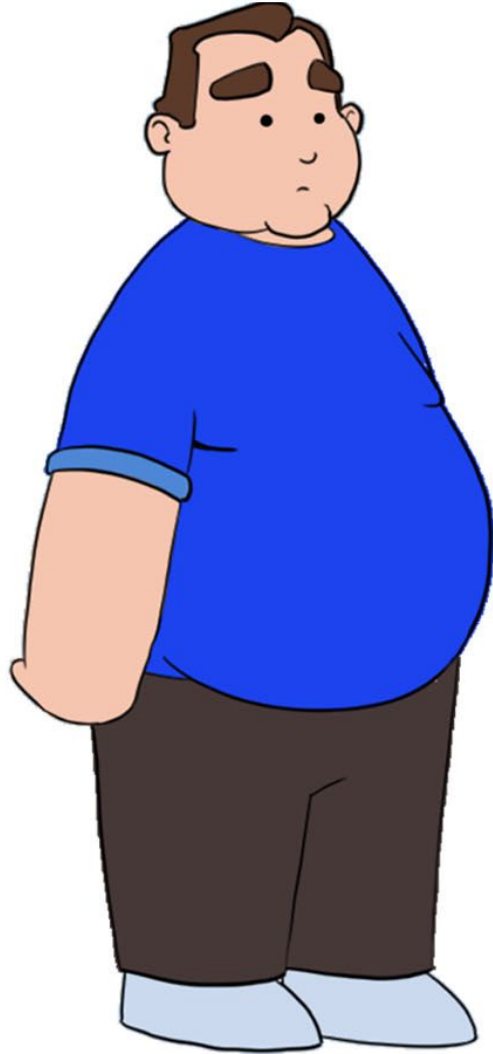


Charcter Design

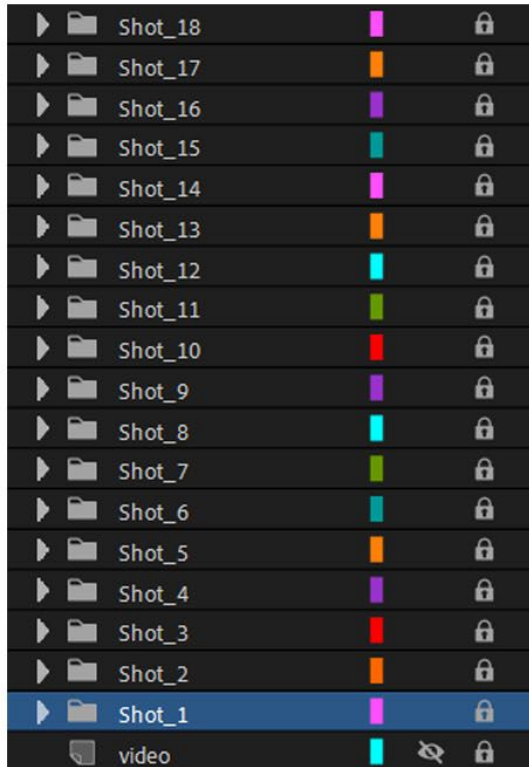
Once I had completed the animatic, I redesigned the character taking elements from the original character concepts.

I was advised that the character was still quite young and thin looking.

I decided to round out the character's physique and this was the character's final designed. I decided to maintain simplistic facial features to help with the animating process.



Animation



All new files from this point were saved in the 'Production' folder.

I created a new folder for animate files.

I imported the video file of my final animatic into an animate file.

I created folders for each shot and traced over the keyframes while adding in-betweens in rough drawings.

Once the animation was complete, I added a new layer for clean-up (final lines).

Production Schedule

	August	September	October	November	December
Pre-Production					
Sound + Recording	15th - 15th				
Transcripts		3rd - 4th			
Idea Generation	16th		10th		
Storyboarding		27th	11th		
Animatic			11th - 27th		
Character Design	16th			1st	
Production					
Animation				2nd	5th
Editing					5th - 7th

Key

Red - Started

Green - Completed

As I was given the brief for this project at the end of the last academic year, I completed some tasks before this term had started (interview, sound and recording, transcripts, character conception).

For this project I was confident I could complete the work for the deadline, so I did not follow a production schedule. This record shows the dates I started and completed each task. For my next project I will use this as a template to create a production schedule.

Reflection

My idea generation and story development process could be refined by staying focused on the key elements of the source material.

The timeframe it took me to create an animatic could be shortened by improving my drawings skills and creative decisiveness.

It would have been beneficial to finalise the character design before starting the animatic. Despite my indecision regarding the character's look, I was able to develop the basic animation for the character and improve my understanding of film language and shot transition.

In hindsight it would have been easier to achieve the desired effects for this project by investing more time in becoming proficient in Animate rather than working across three separate software programs.

On my next project I will need to be aware of making Animate files easily accessible, particularly if the project involves working with others in a team. I can improve my workflow and time management by separating each shot into individual Animate files rather than all of them existing on one raw file.

