

VIAJE

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Viaje is a 3D animated short that follows three jibaro children from rural Puerto Rico on a journey to San Juan after the devastation of Hurricane Maria to paint a mural. A *jibaro* is known as a Puerto Rican living in the countryside working as farmers. They are historically portrayed in many pieces of Puerto Rican art as a symbol of the working class and tradition that contrasts with American colonial ideals. Complementing the animation, 3D prints of the characters, rendered stills from the film and pre-production storyboards, sketches, and a physical version of the mural . United by their passion for art, the trio seeks to rebuild their world by painting a mural that symbolizes resilience, cultural identity, and the healing power of community. This short explores themes of rebuilding, hope, and the journey one must take for one's own self-discovery. The journey represents both the physical and emotional quest, as the children search for a way to heal and find strength in the aftermath of loss. Through their belief in the power of art, hope emerges as a force that fuels their determination to rebuild not just their surroundings, but also their sense of identity and community. While exploring these themes, the short would also emphasize the significant role that public art has in minority communities. This tradition of public art emphasizes creativity as something accessible to all, where communities are not merely spectators, but active participants. The mural becomes a symbol of both personal and communal resilience, reflecting the enduring spirit of the Puerto Rican people.

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Introduction

Every story is a journey. Every human being that has been on this Earth has a story to tell and those stories are how we begin to understand the world. Whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, the idea of the journey is the vague yet relatable concept that every single human has gone through at least one either voluntarily or not. The concept of, “the journey,” serves as both the driving force of the narrative and a deeper metaphor for the challenges faced by individuals and communities in times of hardship. My 3D animated short film graduate thesis *Viaje* aims to explore this very idea as, thematically, it dwells into the personal and collective journeys we embark on in the face of adversity.

Viaje is set in post-Hurricane Maria. The island has been devastated by the category 5 hurricane as its destruction was cataclysmic. The short follows three *jibaro* (country people) children as they embark on a journey from their rural homes to the urban landscapes of San Juan. In the wake of the Category 5 hurricane, the island has been devastated with many people’s lives scarred in the aftermath of this natural disaster. The hurricane has not only left physical damage but has also shaken the foundations of identity and community for many Puerto Ricans. The three jibaro children’s journey to San Juan is not only just a physical trip across the island but a symbolic quest to restore a sense of belonging and pride that feels fractured by the storm. Their goal is simple yet profound: to paint a mural that reflects their community’s resilience and reconnects them to their roots amongst the chaos. As the children travel across the island, *Viaje* explores the landscapes that shape Puerto Rican identity; from lush mountains and fields; to the jungle of El Yunque; to the historical Viejo San Juan.

The children's journey is filled with moments of discovery, evoking the importance of nature, community, and shared cultural symbols in shaping a sense of belonging. In *Viaje*, each of the children symbolizes a different aspect of Puerto Rican identity, from their *jibaro* heritage to their dreams for a better future. Their bond formed by friendship, shared experiences, and a common purpose reflects the way community and solidarity become essential during times of crisis. Their journey becomes a rite of passage, reinforcing the strength and adaptability that define Puerto Rican identity in the face of adversity. The mural that the children aim to paint represents more than an artistic expression; it becomes a beacon of hope and unity. Amid the devastation left by the hurricane, art becomes their means of healing and reclaiming identity. Through the mural, the children express a narrative that both honors the past and envisions a future full of hope. In depicting the mural's creation, *Viaje* reflects the way Puerto Ricans and Latinos have long used art, storytelling, and shared rituals as a tool for preserving cultural memory. The children's journey mirrors the communal journey of an island seeking to rebuild itself, using the power of creativity and heritage to forge a path forward.

The concept of the journey in *Viaje* is the central theme of the film. *Viaje* strives to honor the journey of Puerto Ricans as they navigate the complexities of identity, heritage, and self-preservation in a world marked by uncertainty and change. *Viaje* also reflects my own journey of self-discovery as much as it captures the resilience of Puerto Rico. Growing up, I struggled to fully embrace my heritage, often feeling disconnected from my roots and uncertain of how to honor them. As I pursued my path in the arts, I realized that this medium was a way to bridge that disconnect, and allow me to find that

“ricannection,” with the parts of myself that felt distant. The hurricane in the film represents this dark moment of isolation, and the mural symbolizes the me when I discovered the beauty that is my heritage. Through the process of creating the film, I have come to understand that art is a language that connects me to my culture, to my ancestors, and to the stories that have shaped me.

Viaje is the endurance of culture and the power of creativity to rebuild what has been lost. It is a testament of the Puerto Rican spirit which persists despite the challenges imposed by history and nature. *Viaje* reminds us that even in the aftermath of disaster, there is enduring strength that comes from understanding our roots and reclaiming our story. Through art, community, and the journey itself Puerto Ricans continue to build a future ground in identity, pride, and resilience.

Influences and Context

If I were to pinpoint exactly where my fascination with my culture came from, I would have to say it was after I had a one-on-one talk with Dr. Alejandro Anreus, former art history professor at William Paterson University. I was uncertain of what I wanted to explore. I had no real direction with my art and the more I thought about it, the more depressed I became. For a while, I had a very right-leaning way of viewing art. To me a painting was just a painting, nothing more. Utilitarian art was what I preferred. Watching cartoons at an old age was childish, and modern and contemporary art was, at the time, garbage. This very mindset had to do with the environment I grew up in.

Newton, New Jersey is not exactly known for having a diverse population. Another child named Charles, and I were the only minority students attending a dominantly white Catholic elementary school. Being a kid, I never thought I was different from anyone else. I liked to play, watch cartoons, and play video games like every other child, but somehow, I was viewed differently. It was not until I was in fifth grade, when in history class, we watched the inauguration of former President Barack Obama. My teacher approached me and Charles out of all the children in the classroom and said to both of us, "You two should be paying attention to this the most," and walked away. What did she mean by that? Shouldn't she be telling other students this? Was I fooling around? I felt like Adam and Eve when they tasted the forbidden fruit, a sudden knowledge of awareness and the obliteration of a previous worldview. I started realizing what separated me and the other kids. They listened to bands like Green Day and Linkin Park at home while I listened to Marc Anthony and La India at home. They ate cheeseburgers and French fries, while I would eat arroz con pollo y habichuelas.

What did not help with this realization was the constant bullying I would receive from the other kids. I tried not to speak Spanish as it made me a target. Kids at the school would mock me whenever I did, and I would be bombarded with names such as, “Dora,” or “Taco.” Over time I started believing that their rejection of my culture was justified, and I began to distance myself from it hoping to escape the ridicule. I stopped speaking Spanish in public because I was tired of the laughs and the taunts. I avoided mentioning my heritage during conversation because I didn’t want to be labeled as different. I tried to adopt the mannerisms and habits of those around me thinking I could be more liked by them if I did. Family gatherings became a source of internal conflict. While my relatives celebrated our culture with joy, I felt a growing sense of shame. The desire to be like everyone else came at a cost. My name sounded too foreign. My skin was too tan. My family spoke too loudly. I grew resentful of the very things that made me unique because I saw them more as obstacles to fitting in.

I did not see myself as a Puerto Rican. I was an American.

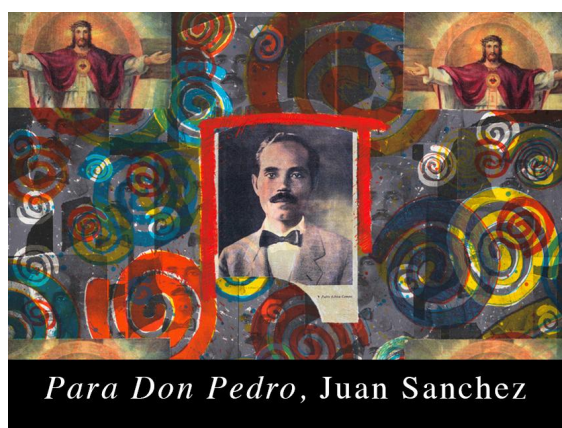
I carried this right-wing American first ideology into college. I think coming to William Paterson University helped with dismantling that ideology, though I still distanced myself from the community. Everything changed though in the fall semester of 2017 as a massive event happened that made me see things differently.

On September 12, 2017, the island of Puerto Rico was hit by a category 5 hurricane named Maria. The storm obliterated the livelihoods of many of its citizens as, “there has been somewhere between 800 to 8500 excess deaths related to the hurricane...” (Karen Feldscher, “*Uncovering Hurricane Maria’s True Toll*”). Maria brought

sustained winds of over 150 mph and an onslaught of torrential rain that led to widespread flooding, landslides, and the near-total destruction of the island's power grid. Communities were left isolated as roads became impassable, homes were reduced to rubble, and essential services were obliterated. The immediate aftermath saw Puerto Ricans struggling for survival as many lacked the necessary supplies. Maria's impact went beyond the physical destruction as it also exposed deep systemic issues when it came to how the United States truly felt about the island. Watching how Trump handled the crisis was a wakeup call. How can someone saying, "America first" be so dismissive to the cries of natural born US citizens. His dismissive attitude and the lack of meaningful aid exposed the harsh reality of how little our lives seemed to matter to those in power. It forced me to confront how my beliefs blinded me to the systemic neglect of my people and the ways I had ignored my own roots in pursuit of fitting into a system that didn't value us.

By the beginning of the fall 2019 semester, I became more inter professor Dr. Alejandro Anreus. He gave me suggestions on where to begin this rediscovering of culture and that mostly came from reading books. *Open Veins from Latin America*, *War Against All Puerto Ricans*, *Fantasy Island*, and *When I Was Puerto Rican* were books that I started with, and they gave me a better understanding of everything that has to do with my heritage. Through my artwork I was able to find that reconnection to a history that was once forgotten. Seeing family whenever I could help me to get that spark. I asked my aunts and uncles stories about my grandparent's life in Puerto Rico and their journey coming to the United States to live. This is what made me fascinated with Latino/Puerto Rican history.

The inspiration for *Viaje* came when Hurricane Fiona struck Puerto Rico. As the storm battered the landscape I had come to love, I felt an overwhelming sense of urgency and responsibility to respond through art. At the time when pre-planning *Viaje*, the Whitney had an exhibit entitled, *no existe un mundo post huracán: Puerto Rican Art in the Wake of Hurricane Maria*. The exhibition itself showed how art was created as a response to the tragedy left by the hurricane. It served as a poignant and visceral expression of collective grief. These creations offer a platform for survivors to share their experience. As Dr. Anreus describes it, “That poignant mixture of beauty and grief is what makes *no existe un mundo poshuracan* such a special and important show,” (Anreus 3). The art contributes to raising awareness of the enduring impact of US colonization and natural disasters. In essence, the significance of this art lies in its ability to transform tragedy into a dialogue for healing and rebuilding.



Para Don Pedro, Juan Sanchez

When it comes to my influences, I have been very open about my admiration for the artist Juan Sánchez. Sánchez's work reflects the area he grew up in and the complex dynamics of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Art historian Julia P. Herzberg describes it as, “Juan Sánchez's artistic voice embraces that

hybridity. Son of a Puerto Rican family in New York, he knows the dual reality of living in a country that has long enjoyed its own independence while denying the choice for autonomy to one of its territories. Sánchez's work explores the complexity of the Latino experience in the United States, integrating the issues of race, ethnicity, political power,

and religion.” (Julia P. Herzberg, "Conversations in the Studio," *Printed Convictions: Prints and Related works on Paper, Curated by Alejandro Anreus*). His approach to mixed media allows him to compose layered works that convey the intricacies of Puerto Rican identity and cultural memory. Each detail within his work serves a purpose. All of Sánchez's works are unapologetically political, addressing the issues of social justice, colonialism, and racism. His art deeply affects how I approach my culture in my work. His pieces use layers, religious icons, and symbolic colors to create stories that speak to me about the typical Puerto Rican experience. This layered style serves as a narrative device, as each layer builds upon the last to create a cohesive story about the power of resistance, pride, and memory. His artistry emphasizes a commitment to preserving cultural memory and identity. In *Viaje*, this influence is evident in the way I created the mural to transition fluidly from one narrative to another, presenting a cohesive yet intricate visual story.

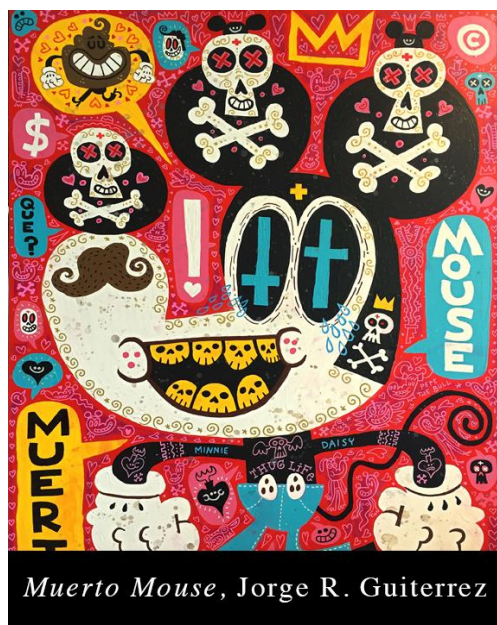
Another artist that I am influenced by is Gloria Rodríguez Calero, often known as Roca. She is a Puerto Rican artist known for her distinct style of work that explores themes of identity and spirituality through her unique “acrollages.” Her pieces are multi layered portraits that bring attention to the layered identities of many marginalized individuals. She is influenced by old Byzantine/Medieval art as many of her pieces and often incorporate Catholic iconography and textures. Adding these religious symbols makes the individuals look like modern-day saints. Calero says, “The evocation of Byzantine icons and religious art in my Acrollage paintings was not deliberate, but



Crowned with Thorns, Rodríguez Calero

unintentionally intuitive through my fascination, as a young person, by the rituals of the church. The saints, painted images, altars, vestments, sacraments and ceremony captivated me. This extended my pictorial interests to religious paintings and Russian icons,” (Rodríguez Calero, “Urban Martyrs and Latter Day Santos,” 2015). Her figures captivate the audience as many of her pieces present bold contrasting colors that reflect both beauty and intensity of the diaspora experience.

The influence of Roca is particularly evident in how the *jibaro* kids approach their mural. Just as Roca uses fragmented pieces to tell a cohesive story, the kids’ mural becomes a tapestry of their heritage that blends personal expression with cultural memory. They piece together symbols of the island’s history and spirituality by layering them to create a visual language that feels alive. This is also reflected in the diorama aspect of *Viaje*, where each scene carries a handcrafted feel, much like Roca’s pieces. Her ability to turn fragments into something whole inspired the way the kids in *Viaje* assemble their mural from the pieces of their lives and the environment.



As for animation, I am highly influenced and inspired by the works of Jorge R. Guiterrez. He is the creator for three major film/television properties *E!* *Tigre: The Many*



Adventures of Manny Rivera, *Book of Life*, and *Maya and the Three*. I remember watching his show *El Tigre* and it was one of the only programs made by a Hispanic cartoonist at the time. His style is influenced by both traditional Mexican folk art and 1930s rubber house animation. Gutierrez's celebration of culture as both universal and personal truly inspires me. He was one the first Latino creators to portray his culture proudly to a wide audience despite the many times he was told by producers, "nobody is interested in this subject matter, nobody is into Latino content. There's no audience for this." (Gutierrez R. Jorge. "Every picture tells a story," *TED*, Nov. 6, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aip5J55xbIQ>). Despite being told that, he was determined to continue representing his culture through the art of animation.

My last influence for the film *Viaje* is independent animator Ralph Bakshi. I was introduced to his work late one night when I was scrolling through Netflix. The first film of his that I watched was *Heavy Traffic*, and I thought that the movie was absolutely terrible. What I was not aware of was that I had just watched a film by one of the most influential animators/filmmakers. Bakshi, a polarizing figure in the world of animation, is known for his adult oriented productions that broke away from the traditional family friendly Disney flicks at the time. His films are reflective of the attitude many people had in 1970s New York and are often gritty as they explore complex themes. I re-watched a lot of films in my college days, and now, knowing the context, he is one of my favorite filmmakers. His films have a very honest reality. His willingness to confront difficult truths through animation encouraged me to tackle the themes of colonization and cultural survival in *Viaje*. His work often incorporates urban landscapes and social commentary which influenced the portrayal of Puerto Rican history as both beautiful and

tumultuous in *Viaje*. I used Bakshi's experimental rotoscoping in the mural sequence of my film to add a sense of realism to it. This ensures that *Viaje* does not shy away from the complexities of history but instead embraces them.

THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES

My artistic journey started back when I wanted to explore the realm of 3D animation/modeling. Animation as a medium is a journey within itself as it requires a lot of time, research, technique, and patience. The ball started rolling back in 2023 when I started storyboarding the film. Coming up with a concept for *Viaje* was the first step in this journey. I wanted to create a narrative that bridges the past and the present.

The tone, design, and overall feel of the film was inspired by my personal favorite Latin American art movement: Magic Realism. The style is often confused with fantasy; however, they are completely different. Fantasy is often set in a world that is different from our own with its own lore and rules, whereas Magic Realism incorporates fantasy elements into the real world. Magical Realism follows only four tropes. It must be set in a realistic setting, uses magical elements, critique of a social construct, and uses a unique plot structure. Like every artistic venture, it all starts with a few sketches. The whole creative process started with a trip to the island in 2023 staying at mi tia's house in Aguadilla. The early concept art focused on capturing the island's lush landscapes and the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Maria. I wanted to balance realism with stylization to make the world feel both authentic and visually compelling. My initial sketches were loose, emphasizing energy and emotion rather than fine details. These were later refined into more structured character sheets and environment designs to guide the next stages of production.

When storyboarding the film, my focus was capturing the emotional progression of the film. I wanted the mood to shift gradually from gloom and sadness to hope and renewal, mirroring the children's journey. The early scenes were framed with heavy

shadows and cool tones to convey the weight of loss and destruction from the hurricane. As the story unfolds and the children approach San Juan, the tone begins to shift, and wide shots are used to showcase the city's beauty. The shift from darkness to light was integral to the production design as it underscores the film's overall theme of rebuilding after loss. When I was storyboarding, I knew there was one important thing that is the heart and soul of the entire short film: the music. Fortunately, I was friends with two independent Puerto Rican musicians who were more than happy to help with the project: Kimberly Santiago, my lyricists, and Camilo Rafael Sierra, my musician.

Once the visual foundation was in place I moved into 3D modeling. I leaned into creating organic forms with intricate surface details inspired by Puerto Rican culture. The characters' designs evolved through multiple iterations to refine their proportions and expressions while maintaining a strong emotional connection with the audience. The environments were built with a layered approach to capture the rich textures of rural Puerto Rico and the stark contrast of urban San Juan. I also began crafting the animated mural, making sure its design flowed seamlessly from one historical moment to the next. I chose 3D animation for *Viaje* because it offered the perfect medium to provide the depth and attention to detail that traditional 2D cannot do. With 3D, I was able to create an immersive world where the characters could move and interact with their environments in a realistic yet stylized way. I wanted to capture the lush environments of Puerto Rico's countryside and cities. The island's beautiful landscape, "of 28,000 acres, nourishes over fifty species of orchids, as well as giant tree ferns, sierra plants, bamboo thickets, heliconia, ginger and 225 native tree species, all thriving in an explosion of color and natural beauty." (Denis, *War Against All Puerto Ricans*). It

also allowed me to try more dynamic camera movements that were noticeably lacking in my first animated short film, *Zemis Part 1*. This would allow me to seamlessly blend the digital and physical worlds as I plan on incorporating 3D printed figures into my thesis show.

The characters in *Viaje* were directly inspired by my cousin's kids Lucas and Mateo when I spent a week in mi Tia's home in Aguadilla. Their playful energy, curiosity, and determination shaped how I approached their design. Creating the characters involved trying to find a balance between somewhat realistic proportions and a stylized approach. Their proportions were slightly exaggerated to emphasize their youth. However, their clothing was rooted in the aesthetics of traditional *jibaro* attire and the design of the Grito de Lares Flag. I drew inspiration from looking at old family photos from the island and incorporating other *jibaro* elements such as straw hats and simple guayabera shirts. When it came to the backgrounds, I ended up reusing some old models from my previous film which had an extensive amount of tropical foliage, hills, and mountains. The backgrounds were designed to reflect Puerto Rican impressionist Francisco Oller. I felt close to Oller, because he also went through the same creative process as I did. The Brooklyn Museum's catalog mentions, "While European Romanticism, Realism, and Impressionism formed a critical jumping-off point for Oller's aesthetic, his most important source of inspiration was Puerto Rico," (*Impressionism and the Caribbean: Francisco Oller and His Transatlantic World, Brooklyn Museum*). When the characters were finally rigged and ready to go it was time to start animating.

Their rigs were designed to allow a wide range of expression and gestures, capturing everything from their cautious determination to their personality. When

approaching the animation, I had to revert to what it was like to be a child. I wanted to make these characters incredibly expressive so the audience can know exactly what the characters are thinking and that each one of their personalities stands out on their own. I paid close attention to their body language and facial expressions, something that is very integral to character animation. The environments in *Viaje* were equally crucial in bringing the narrative to life. The island is almost a character in the story, and I wanted it to feel as dynamic as the children. Animating the smaller details like leaves blowing in the wind gives the film a little more sense of realism. Lighting played a critical role in shaping the mood and guiding the audience's emotional response. In the earliest parts of the film, I used dim, cool tones to create the feeling of despair. Shadows are projected in many tones of blue but as the children start traveling more towards San Juan, the colors in the lighting start changing to a hopeful and warm yellow and orange. They change throughout the day to show the progress of how long their entire journey has taken.

During the climax of the film *Viaje*, we take a break from a mostly 3D short film and transition into a 2-minute 2D motion graphic animation. The entire film is building up to this final moment, the audience is hooked in, and their curiosity is through the roof. What could it be that the three *jibaro* children are doing? Why did they walk so many miles from the countryside to the city? To paint a mural. The mural is the core of the entire story. Creating the animated mural in *Viaje* has been deeply personal for me. The idea for the mural was inspired by an animated sequence in the 1969 film *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*. In one scene, the character Schroeder enchants the audience by playing Beethoven's *Piano Sonata no. 3*. While the animated sequence has no significance to

the plot, it allows the audience to take a break from the story and enjoy wonderful music while also being entranced by some wonderful animation. The animation transforms the scene into vibrant colors, dynamic shapes, and rhythmic movement to mirror Beethoven's compositions. The audience witnesses moving still images of flowers, candles, churches, cemeteries, German sculptures, and Beethoven. It almost feels like a visual symphony that celebrates both Schoeder's passion for Beethoven and the power of classical music to inspire imagination. When I first saw this movie as a child, I remember that I didn't like this scene, but I also remember my mother being amazed by this sequence. My mother was not a big fan of animation however I felt the moving images combined with the music got her attention. Seeing anything resembling the Catholic faith in an animated sequence is quite rare and I feel that's why my mother found such an appreciation for the art. Animation paired with classical music is nothing new as in Disney's *Fantasia*, but this sequence stuck with me as I matured as an artist. Even now watching it as an adult, there's something almost incredibly artistic about this scene. As an adult, I find myself watching this sequence more and more just to experience such emotion through its artistry. Seeing Schroeder's deep connection to Beethoven emphasizes how personal and powerful an artistic connection can be. It highlights how art can evoke emotions that are difficult to put into words, expressing passion, identity, and tradition through pure visuals. In the animated mural sequence, the story of Puerto Rico's history and spirit unfolds in a continuous, living canvas. The mural is laid out to mimic books in the Bible that share the same themes found in Puerto Rican history. Genesis: the Taíno civilization, and the Spanish arrival. Exodus: La Rogativa procession, El Grito del Lares, the Spanish-American War. New Testament:

the Puerto Rican Nationalist Movement, and Revelations: with Hurricane Maria and a new hope. Each segment is infused with distinct colors to evoke the mood and significance of these eras. The mural begins with the ethereal figure of Atabey in cosmic blue, embodying calm and creation. Her form emerges fluidly, almost as if she were born of the galaxy and stars, encapsulating the spiritual essence of Puerto Rico. This scene invites the viewer to enter a timeless space, where Atabey's presence symbolizes the primal forces that nurture and protect the island. She welcomes the audience with a smile, and she is shown holding the planet. We zoom in and the color transitions into a warm tropical sunrise orange showing the genesis of the island's pre-Columbian roots. Different landscapes are shown, starting at the ocean, to the valleys, to then the native Taino. This balance is disrupted by the arrival of the Spanish, marked by the forceful intrusion of blood red into the mural. The smooth transitions of blue and orange now give way to abrupt, jagged strokes of red, symbolizing the violence and upheaval of conquest. The mural communicates this rupture with a sense of immediacy and chaos, amplifying the impact of colonial conflict. In the final scene, the mural transitions into La Rogativa, where the blood red shifts back to calming night blue. Through this continuous flow of animated color and form, *Viaje* becomes a visual narrative that not only recounts historical events but also embodies the resilience of Puerto Rican heritage. The mural serves as both a tribute to the past and a testament to the enduring spirit of the island and its people. Each segment builds upon the last, culminating in a piece that encapsulates the cycles of loss and renewal in Puerto Rico's story.

When showing my film in a gallery, I will add another dimension by displaying a painted version of the mural and surrounding it with four 3D printed figurines of the

characters. The mural is inspired by the traditions of the Mexican muralists like Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco as their pieces were, “Inspired by the idealism of the Revolution, the artists created epic, politically charged public murals that stressed Mexico’s pre-colonial history and culture and that depicted peasants, workers, and people of mixed Indian-European heritage as the heroes who would forge its future.” (Mexican Muralism, *Museum of Modern Art*, www.moma.org/collection/terms/mexican-muralism, Accessed 15 November 2024). The gallery installation is more than an exhibit as it is an extension of the film’s story and message.

CONCLUSION

As one chapter ends, another chapter begins. As I near the completion of my

MFA, I find myself reflecting on how much I have grown both as an artist and as an individual. The process of creating *Viaje* and exploring the rich history of Puerto Rico has not only shaped my artistic practice but also deepened my understanding of my cultural identity. Yet despite reaching this milestone, I know that this is not the end of my artistic journey. The work I have done for my thesis is a foundation but it's only the start of what I hope will be a lifelong exploration of storytelling and expression. As I step away from the academic environment, I feel more inspired than ever to continue to experiment with the medium of animation and digital sculpture. Art has always been a way for me to connect with my roots and share a piece of experience with others. Along this journey, I have been blessed to come across other men and women blazing the trail for their own destiny. These are the people that I will remember the most in my life. My time with them was short but it felt like I had known them for a lifetime. *Mis abuelos* took a chance and immigrated to the United States uncertain of the future, and together they were able to start a family and live out the American Dream until their passing. Like them, I am uncertain of what the future brings, but I cannot deny that my journey is uncertain but as it says in the Holy Bible, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...(*New International Bible*, Psalm 23:4). The journey may be shifting, but the story of my art is just beginning to unfold.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Lighting Render Test



Mural Montage:Genesis-Atabey



Scene 16



Scene 3



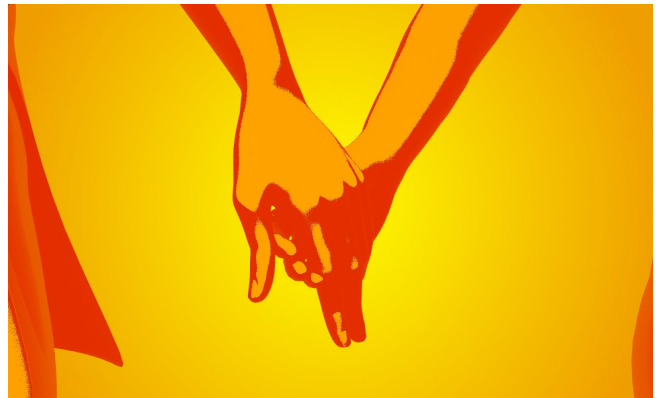
Scene 20



Scene 19



Mural Montage:Genesis-The Arrival of the Spanish



Mural Montage:Genesis-Adam and Eve



Scene 22

