JOURNEY OF LIFE
3D Digital Art

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INTRODUCTION

Three Dimensional (3D) digital art, adds one more aesthetic dimension to the versatility of the computer. 3D has created new ways of fulfilling our need for novelty and quality. From film to video games, architecture to automobiles, all have been influenced by it. 3D has definitely opened up a plethora of varied and highly effective approaches for an educated, enlightened, and progressive society.

My thesis is centered on the artistic use of 3D digital media. It expresses ideas that arose within me and took shape through 3Ds Max®, the computer software I use for my creations. Of the two aspects of 3D digital computer art, i.e., animation and still image creation, I have created three digital “paintings” or still images for my final exhibition. In each picture, the railroad tracks represent the path that life takes. They pass through different routes to reach a destination and continue on and on. The cityscapes represent the busy claustrophobic nature of life filled with surprises, the bridges represent the relationships, and the stations represent the many stages of life we reach and pass over.

Tracks - Path
The tracks pass through several stations, the stages of life—the beginning, the pauses, the destination, and further.

The first painting, Morning, indicates the start and the beginning of the journey of life. Mid-day, the second painting, indicates the several middle stages of life, where we might need a place to take a break, with the sharp bright sun representing a heavy load or burden caused by life’s demanding conditions. The third painting, Evening, represents the later stages of the events or conditions in life with the approaching darkness denoting the closing stages of all those events and conditions.

These time periods signify different conditions and situations to different people. If a sincere effort is made to achieve something, the very effort toward achievement will have a desirable and salutary effect on the nature of the person, who will experience joy, excitement, and an ultimate sense of fulfillment.

It is true that the travails of travel create tensions and sadness occasionally. But still, there is always a propelling hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Surely, awareness of progress and proximity to destination is a delightful and redeeming factor. Seclusion and loneliness will at last be justified when one reaches one’s destination.

Lonely bench
3 Dimensional art derives its roots from a basic curiosity to see where the computer can take the artist. It is essentially an outcome of inquisitive interest and creative intrigue. Basically, it appears to have its roots in painting and sculpture; some people might start with traditional media such as drawing and painting. Some people might even start from creative writing of prose or poetry.

**TECHNIQUE**

The computer has several applications that are available exclusively for the creation of 3D art, software that acts as what we might call the painter’s tools. The plethora of appropriate tools available in these software applications could be equated to the brushes, palette, and the media of a painter.

The components within the three paintings were initially drawn from the primitive shapes of boxes, spheres, cylinders and lines. The images in my pieces began as a set of houses set near railway tracks, which were central to the idea. A few non-copyrighted photographs, which I downloaded, served as reference images. The dimensions of many textures, and also the file format of the renders were influenced by these images. Next, the surrounding environment fillers were considered, i.e., stones, trees, grass etc.

They were then refined with modeling tweaks and several trials with different textures. They had to be tweaked several times. I used Adobe Photoshop to create the textures. The models were textured individually in their separate space according to the location and the time of the day. Further, to enhance the aspect of realism, a technique
called ‘chamfering’ was used to give a curvilinear look rather than projecting sharp edges. Even though chamfering increases the render time, the models tend to appear more realistic.

Proper lighting of the scene was the next big effort. Each image had its separate source of lights. Photometric lights created daylight and sunlight systems in different settings of the software with technical settings for realism. The angle and the brightness of the light sources needed to be meticulously adjusted. They needed to be placed appropriately, so they would cast shadows according to the scene’s intended time of day. Spotlights were used for highlighting certain areas, whereas Omni lights spread light throughout evenly. All these had their separate settings and were placed appropriately according to the view of the image, taken care of by the camera. There were several cameras in each scene, each having a different location and specific fields of view.

Rendering, which is the final technical aspect, involved a judicious choice of image resolution and file format, as the final output was to be rendered for print and not displayed on a digital monitor or by projection. The settings involved anti-aliasing, for softening the jagged edges of all renderable objects, and image filters, which mainly affected the rendered image’s quality in sharpness and brightness.

A lot of experimentation was done with them too, until the most appropriate output was obtained, which could have the "potential" of being tweaked further in Photoshop. The primary highlight and, in fact, the crux of the theme is "Loneliness". It was conceived the first time when the theme “Journey of Life” was envisioned. From a
single person's perspective, they were finally brought into being, once the final camera angle was positioned for the desired view.

CONCLUSION

It is quite evident that in order to specifically express an idea in the form of a 3D digital computer art piece, a thorough understanding of computer software is paramount. This can only be gained through adequate training and sustained practice and patience. As an idea is conceived, it is always a good practice to project it on paper by means of a drawing or a narrative plan. This part becomes essential in order to be able to incorporate a probable change to a considerable extent at a later stage. Otherwise, it becomes difficult once the actual software process is well under way.

In order to elegantly portray through 3D models the veritable theme of loneliness, a very balanced approach needed to be adopted in mapping, texturing, and lighting. When at last, the final rendering was completed, when the depth of the theme and the subtlety of the connection between the images captivate the viewers, the 3D manifestation of the idea will be effective. Ultimately, the effort in putting up with loneliness on inanimate computer software proved fully rewarding for me. The following are the three images paintings.
Journey of Life, Morning

Journey of Life, Mid-day

Journey of Life, Evening
ENDNOTES:

The following books were referenced for explanations in this document.


