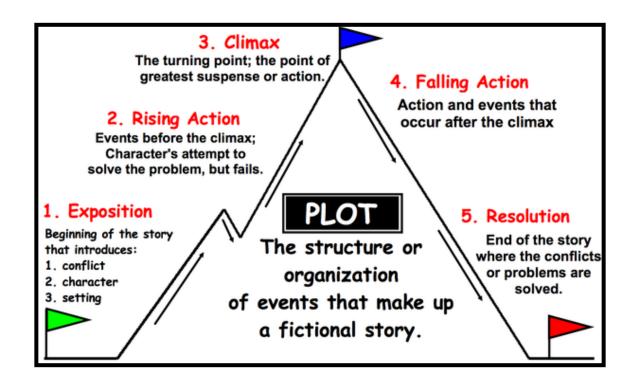
Techniques for Physical Storytelling

Sarah Kushner
Final Oral Exam
Department of Computer Science
University of Toronto

What is a Physical Story & why do we tell them?

What is a Story?

What is a Story?



What is a Physical Story?





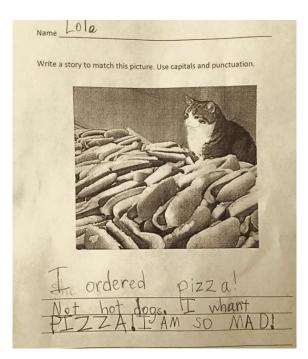
What is a Physical Story?





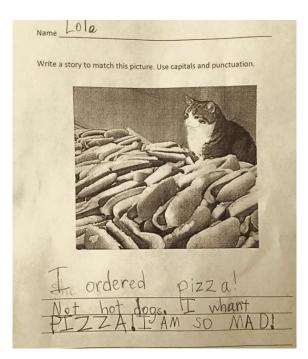
Karine Giboulo's exhibit (Housewarming, 2022) Gardiner Museum in Toronto, ON, Canada.

Stories in still images



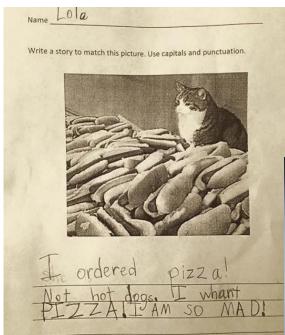
photo, story by Lola

Stories in still images

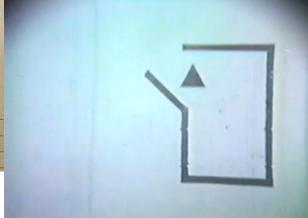


photo, story by Lola

Stories in moving images

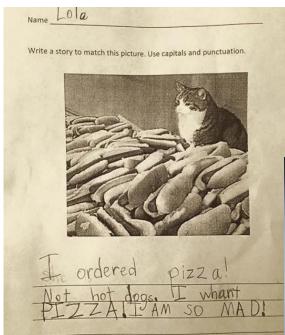


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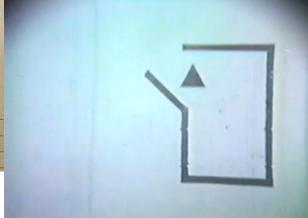


Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)

Stories in moving images

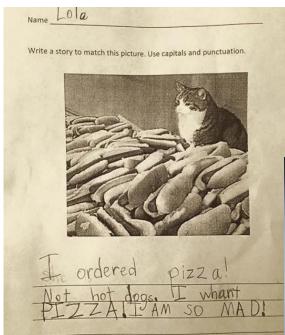


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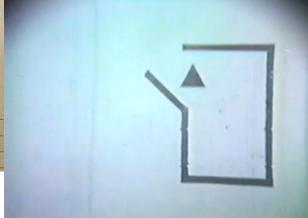


Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)

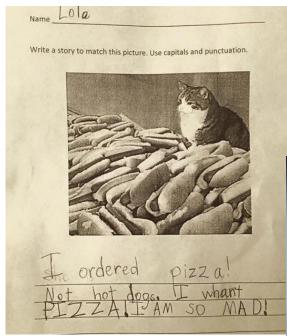
Stories in moving images



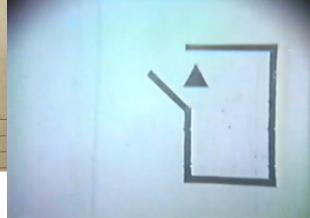
photo, story by Lola



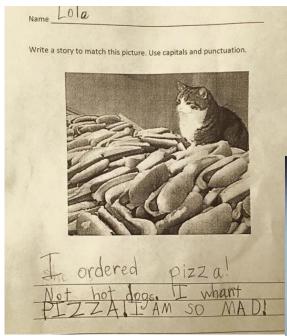
Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)



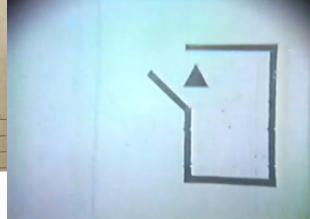
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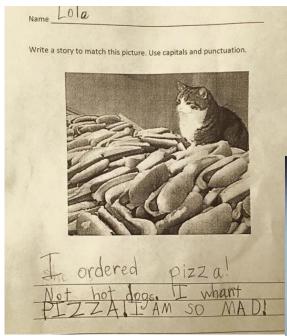
Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)



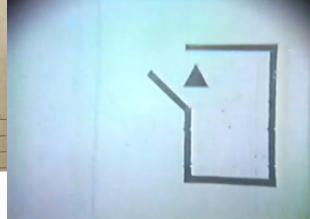
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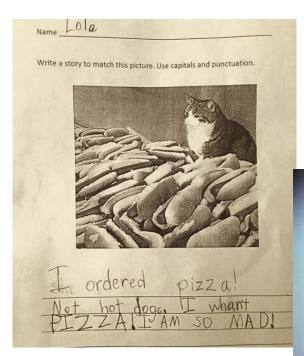
Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)



photo, story by Lola



Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)



photo, story by Lola



Amusement park ride (Symbolica, Efteling, 2017)

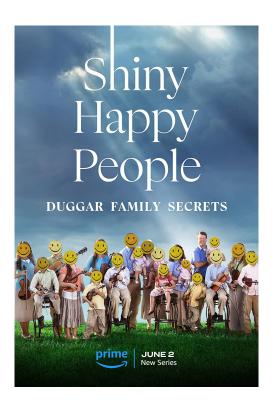
Abstract Film (Heider-Simmel Animation, 1944)



Paul teaching Grade 6 students about animatronics



Paul teaching Grade 6 students about animatronics



Documentary film (Shiny Happy People, 2023)



Stand up comedy (Sabrina Wu on Verified Stand-up, 2023)



Stand up comedy (Sabrina Wu on Verified Stand-up, 2023)



My friend Sarah excited to meet Stitch at Disney World



CBC show about a non-binary character (Sort Of, 2021)



CBC show about a non-binary character (Sort Of, 2021)



Grade 6 student showing her Grade 2 friend the story she wrote

Why do we tell physical stories?



Pirates of the Caribbean, Disney World

Why do we tell physical stories?



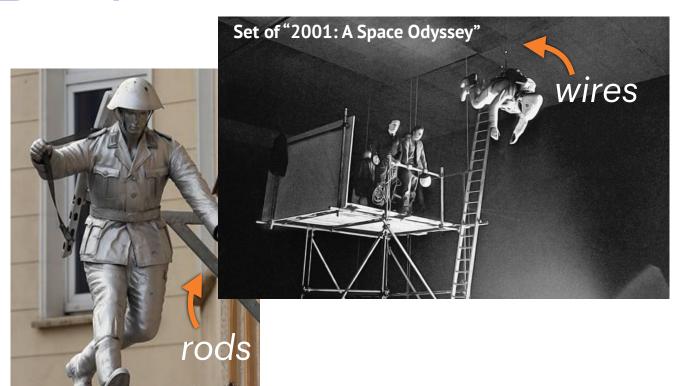
Pirates of the Caribbean, Disney World

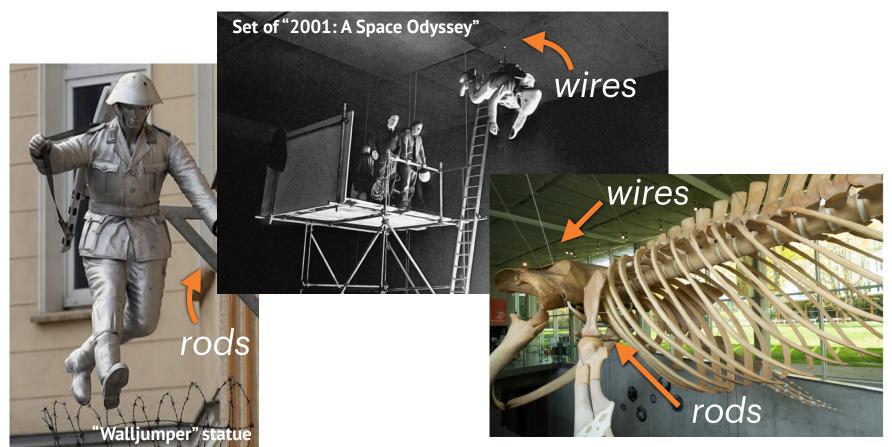
How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing floating sculptures, zoetropes, and animatronics?

How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing floating sculptures?

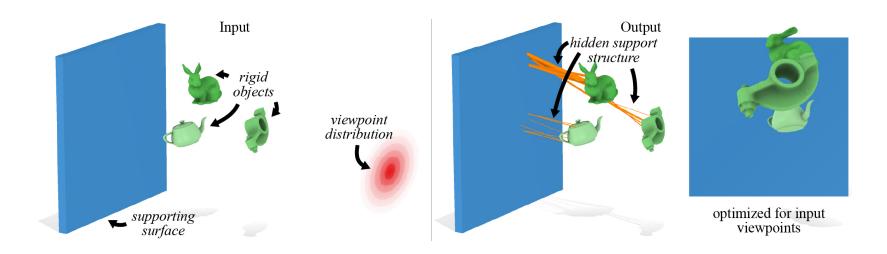








This isn't so easy.



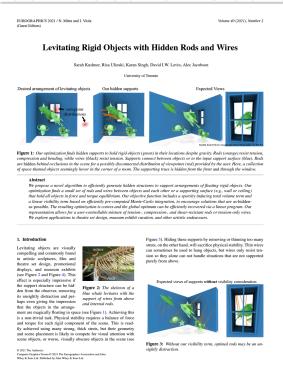




1. Provide a method of generating supports hidden from the viewer so that unsightly supports don't distract from the story which also satisfy force and torque balance constraints

- 1. Provide a method of generating supports hidden from the viewer so that unsightly supports don't distract from the story which also satisfy force and torque balance constraints
- 2. Validate our method via constructing examples of wire and rod structures in real life

- 1. Provide a method of general unsightly supports don't and torque balance cons
- 2. Validate our method via structures in real life



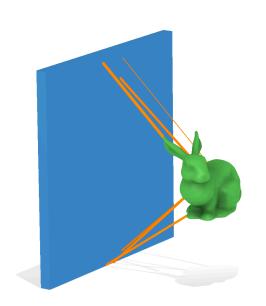
from the viewer so that hich also satisfy force

f wire and rod

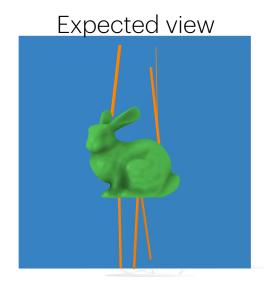
Levitating Rigid Objects with Hidden Rods and Wires Kushner, Ulinski, Singh, Levin, Jacobson Eurographics 2021

What we want:

- 1. Hold rigid objects in place under a force (usually gravity)
- 2. Hide supporting rods from viewpoints





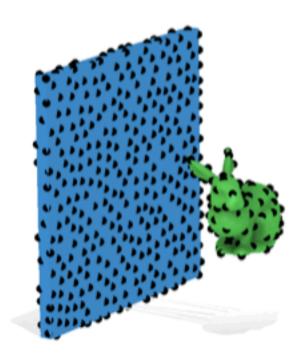


How?

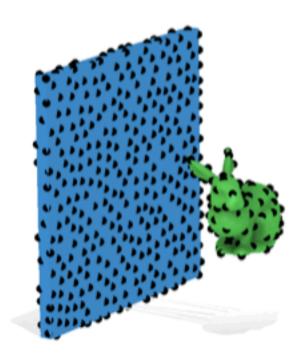
1. Hold rigid objects in place under a force



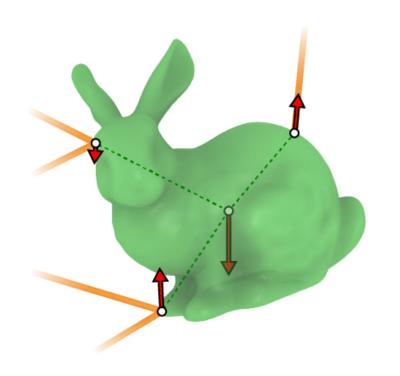
Select edges from graph to become rods



Select edges from graph to become rods



Are the rods structurally sound?

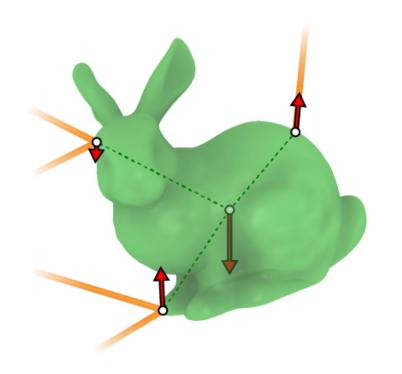


Minimize the total rod volume:

$$\min \sum \ell_i a_i$$

Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

Are the rods structurally sound?



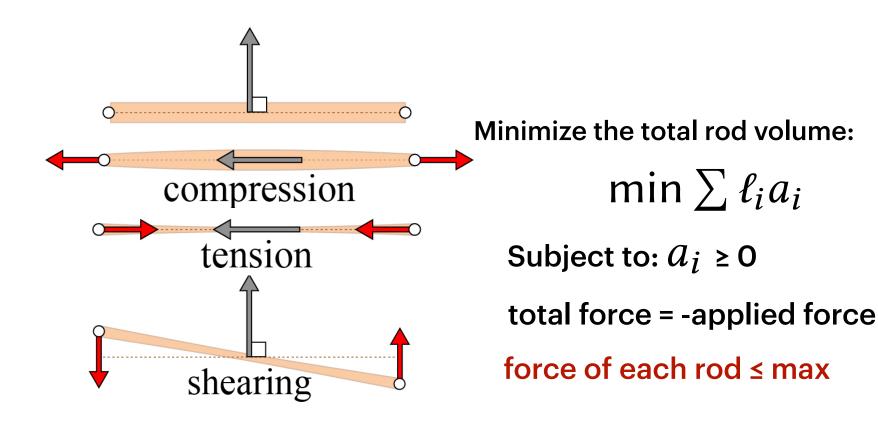
Minimize the total rod volume:

 $\min \sum \ell_i a_i$

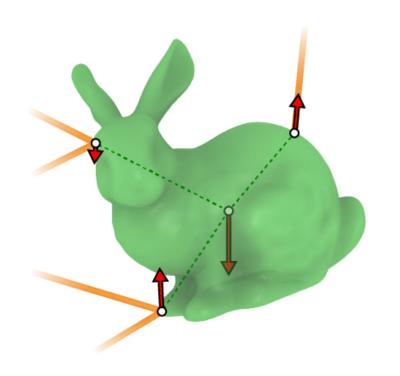
Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

total force = -applied force

The rods must not break



We need force + torque balance



Minimize the total rod volume:

 $\min \sum \ell_i a_i$

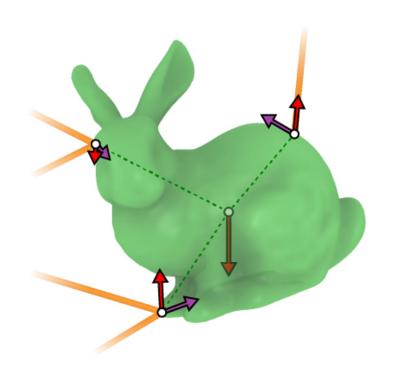
Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

total force = -applied force

force of each rod ≤ max

internal torque = 0

We need force + torque balance



Minimize the total rod volume:

 $\min \sum \ell_i a_i$

Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

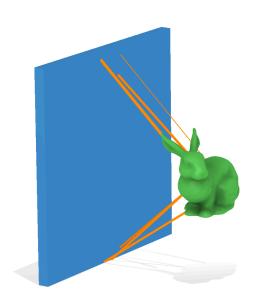
total force = -applied force

force of each rod ≤ max

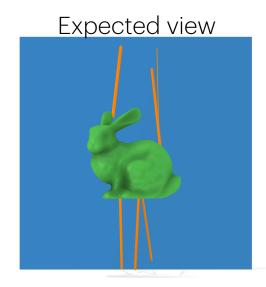
internal torque = 0

Physical constraints work, but the supports are visible

1. Hold rigid objects in place





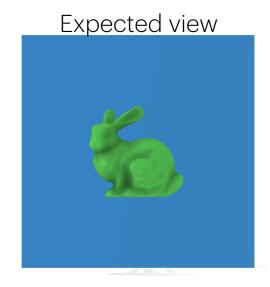


We want invisible supports

- 1. Hold rigid objects in place
- 2. Hide supporting rods from viewpoints







Our formulation



Minimize the total rod volume and visibility:

$$\min \sum \ell_i a_i + \text{vis}_i$$

Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

total force = -applied force

force of each rod ≤ max

internal torque = 0

Our formulation



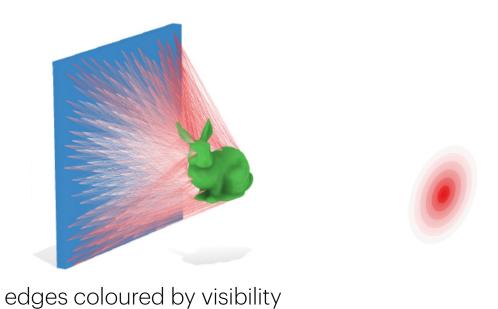
Minimize the total rod volume and visibility:

$$\min \sum \ell_i a_i + (vis_i)$$

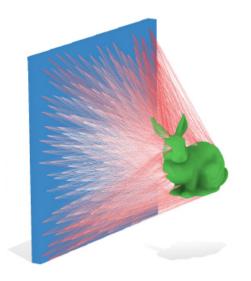
Subject to: $a_i \ge 0$

total force = -applied force force of each rod ≤ max internal torque = 0

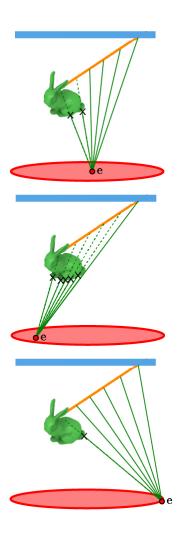
Visibility term computation



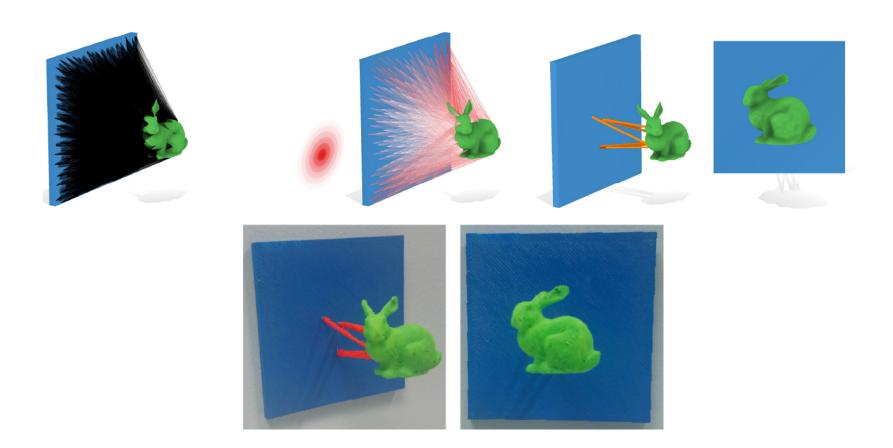
Visibility term computation



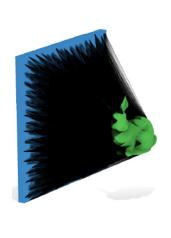


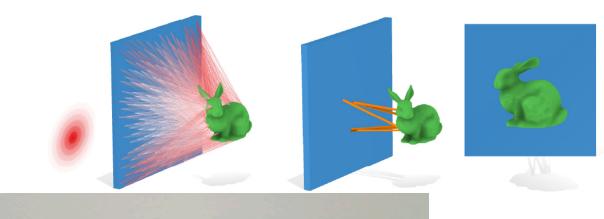


Visibility term achieves our main goals



Visibility term achieves our main goals

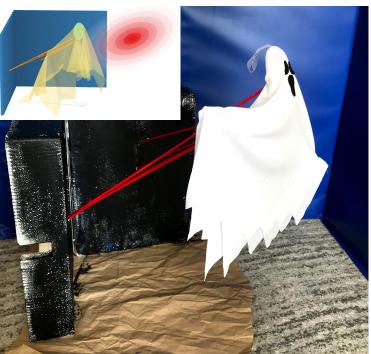






Assembled Spooky Decoration





Assembled Spooky Decoration



Assembled Spooky Decoration



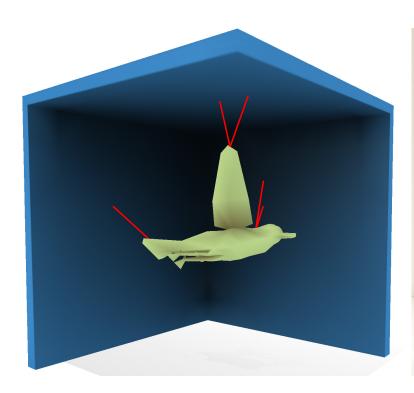
Rocket Ship Room Decoration



Rocket Ship Room Decoration

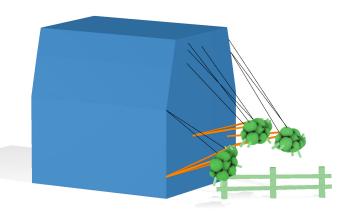


Seagull - Wires only





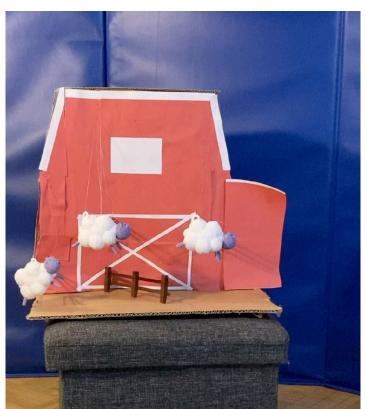
Counting Sheep





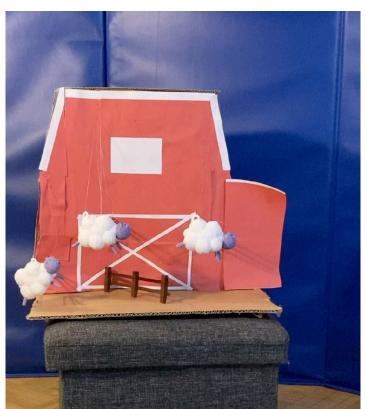
Assembled Wires + Rods



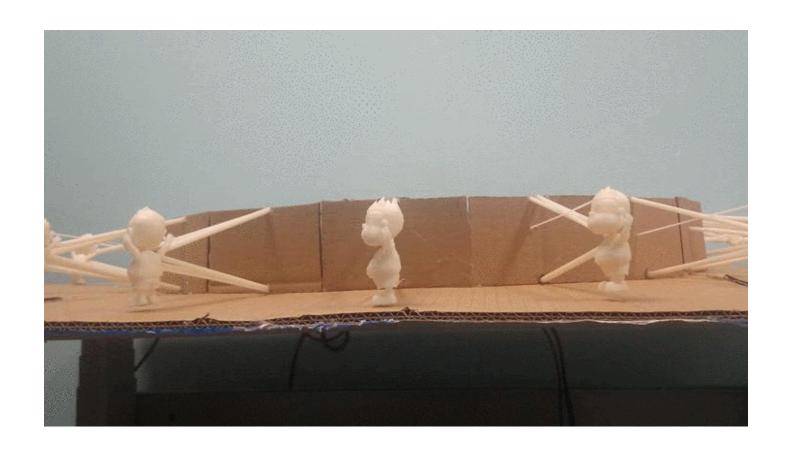


Assembled Wires + Rods

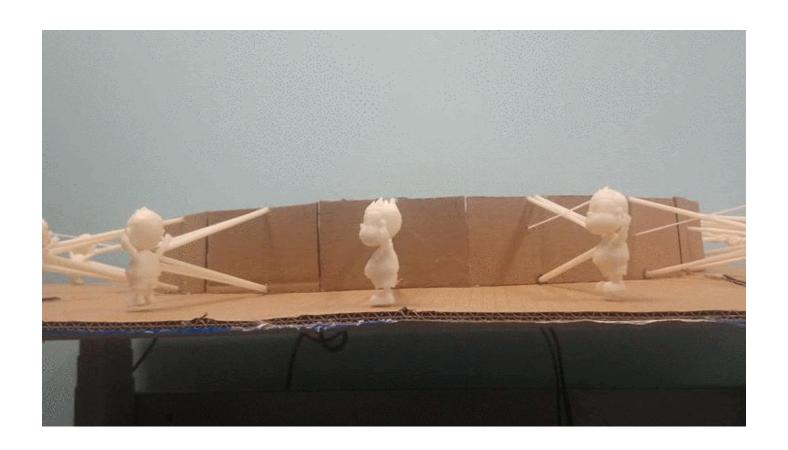




Zoetrope Example



Zoetrope Example



Enhanced physical stories that have floating components by preserving the illusion of levitation by:

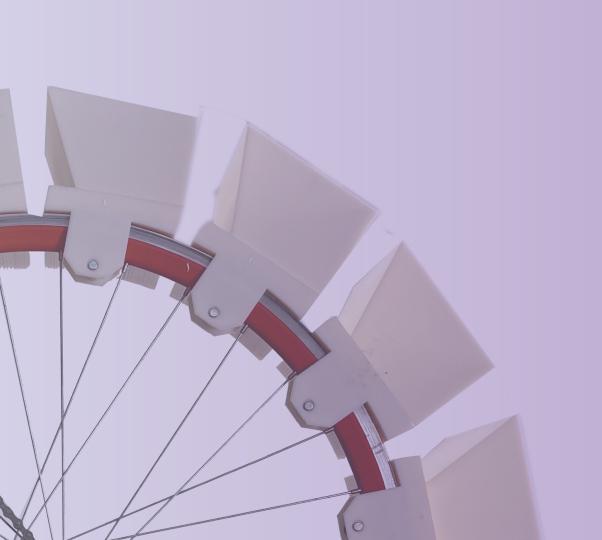
Enhanced physical stories that have floating components by preserving the illusion of levitation by:

1. Devising a concise and efficient linear program that extracts a set of supporting rods and wires to hold up objects

Enhanced physical stories that have floating components by preserving the illusion of levitation by:

- 1. Devising a concise and efficient linear program that extracts a set of supporting rods and wires to hold up objects
- 2. Demonstrating that the optimization directly translates to real world examples, validating this method through fabrication

How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing floating sculptures, zoetropes, and animatronics? How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing zoetropes?



Zoetropes





MakeAGIF.com

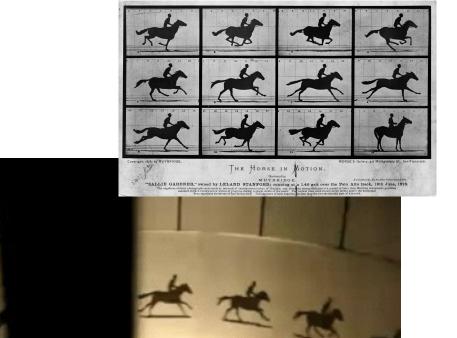




MakeAGIF.com

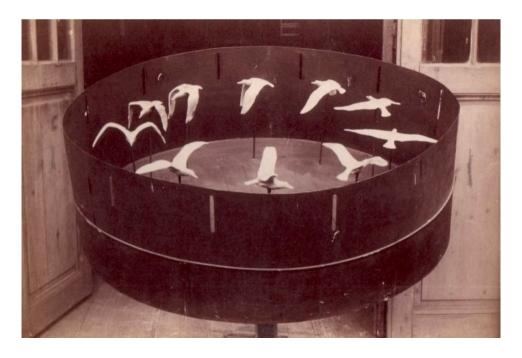






MakeAGIF.com

3D zoetropes are not new, this one was made in 1887! 💥



3D Zoetrope (Étienne-Jules Marey, 1887)

Zoetropes now use strobe lights to create apparent motion.



Feral Fount (Gregory Barsamian, 1996)

Zoetropes now use strobe lights to create apparent motion.



Feral Fount (Gregory Barsamian, 1996)

1. Stories in this format are short and periodic, constrained by the physical nature of a zoetrope



- 1. Stories in this format are short and periodic, constrained by the physical nature of a zoetrope
- 2. Watching a zoetrope is a passive storytelling experience

- 1. Stories in this format are short and periodic nature of a zoetrope
- 2. Watching a zoetrope is a passive storytellin

Interactive 3D Zoetrope with a Strobing Flashlight

Sarah Kushner University of Toronto Toronto, Canada sak@cs.toronto.edu

Paul H. Dietz University of Toronto Toronto, Canada dietz@cs.toronto.edu

Alec Jacobson University of Toronto Toronto, Canada iacobson@cs.toronto.edu



stepper motor an timing belt





Figure 1: Users can interactively view our bike wheel zoetrope by shining a synced strobe flashlight into the animation ACM Reference Format

We propose a 3D printed zoetrope mounted on a bike wheel where users can watch the 3D figures come to life in front of their eyes. Each frame of our animation is a 9 by 16 cm 3D fabricated diorama containing a small scene. A strobed flashlight synced with the spinning of the wheel shows the viewer each frame at just the right time creating the illusion of 3D motion. The viewer can hold and shine the flashlight into the scene, illuminating each frame from their own point of view. Our zoetrope is modular and can have different 16 frame animations substituted in and out for fast prototyping of many cinematography, fabrication, and strobe lighting techniques. Our interactive truly 3D movie experience will push the zoetrope format to tell more complex stories and better engage viewers.

KEYWORDS

animation, 3D printing, zoetrope, fabrication

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Sarah Kushner, Paul H. Dietz, and Alec Jacobson. 2022. Interactive 3D Zoetrope with a Strobing Flashlight. In The Adjunct Publication of the 35th Annual ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology (UIST '22 Adjunct). October 29-November 2, 2022. Bend. OR. USA, ACM, New York. NY, USA, 3 pages. https://doi.org/10.1145/3526114.3558663

Zoetropes are an old but powerful animation device defined by a sequence of images or figures around a spinning cylinder. They can be seen as not only a precursor to traditional film, but also as an equally effective, however limited, storytelling medium.

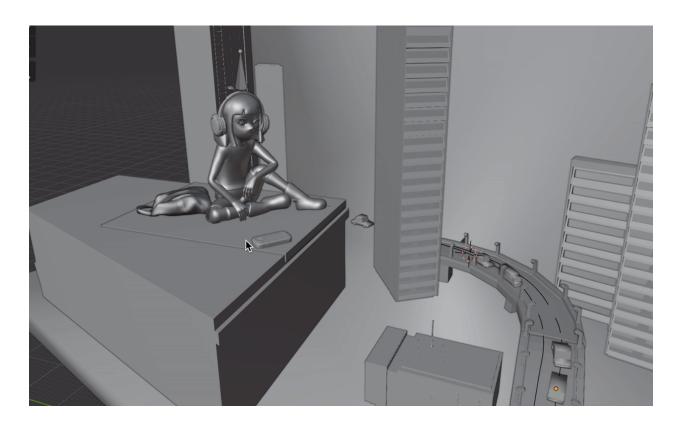
In the late 19th century, the photographer Eadweard Muybridge popularized the zoetrope and brought it to public audiences in what might be the first ever movie "theatres," where viewers could nay to see a short periodic animation of animal locomotion. The limitations of this format are that it is 1) non-interactive and it 2) only allows for short repetitive looping stories. In this demo, we approach problem 1) by introducing a novel interactive element.

Zoetropes have already been exhibited in the graphics and HCI communities [Koutaki 2019], [Yokota and Hashida 2018], [Smoot et al. 2010], [Miyashita et al. 2016]. Typically zoetropes are a passive experience, analagous to regular movie watching. Our zoetrope installation lets users take a more active role in consuming this new media by providing them with the power to light the scenes how

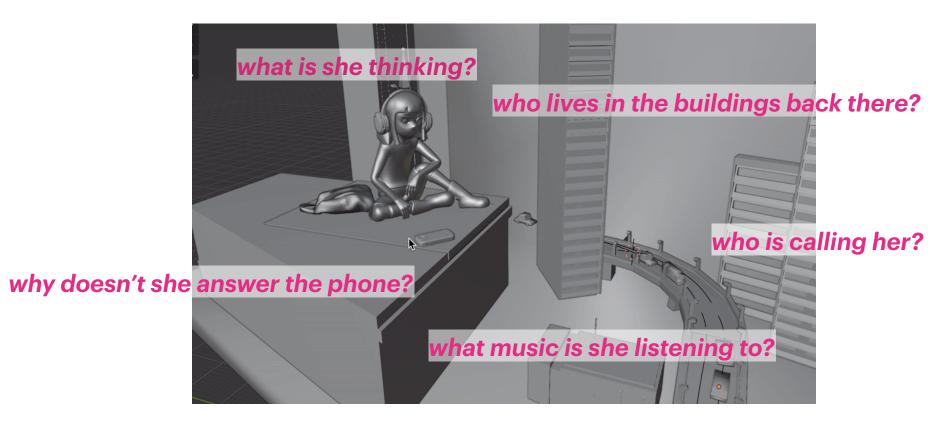
Interactive 3D Zoetrope with a Strobing Flashlight Kushner, Dietz, Jacobson UIST Demos 2022

- 1. Stories in this format are short and periodic, constrained by the physical nature of a zoetrope
- 2. Watching a zoetrope is a passive storytelling experience

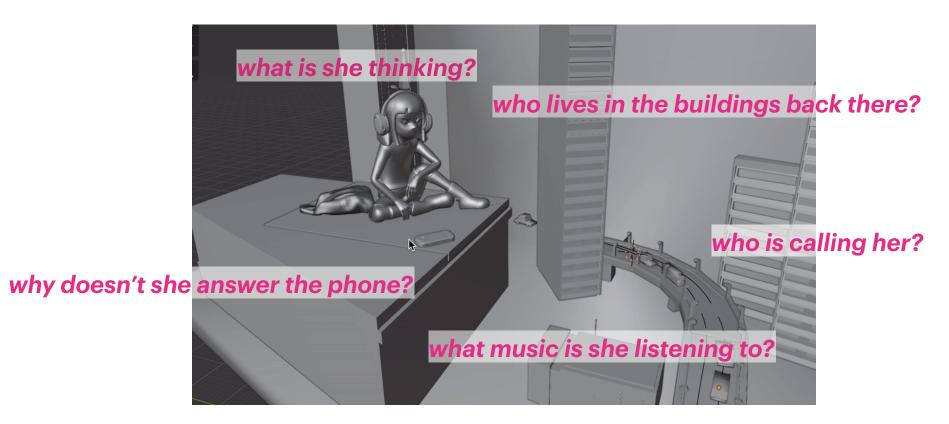
How can we create a more compelling story?



How can we create a more compelling story?

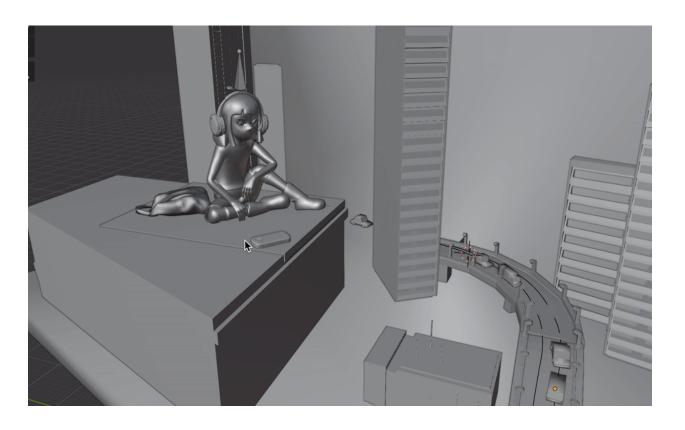


How can we create a more compelling story?

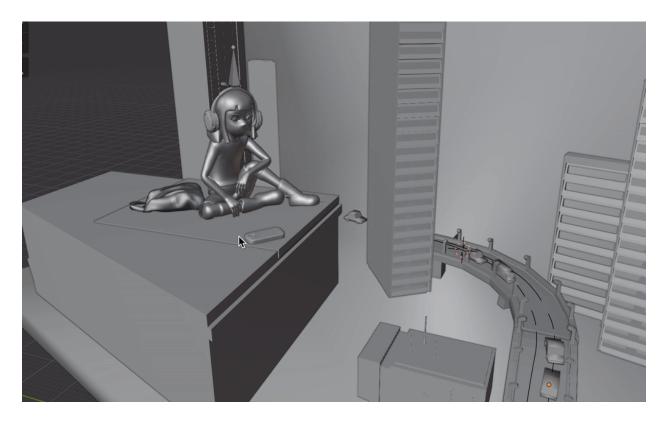


Who is this girl and what is her life like in this moment?

Who is this girl and what is her life like in this moment?



Who is this girl and what is her life like in this moment?



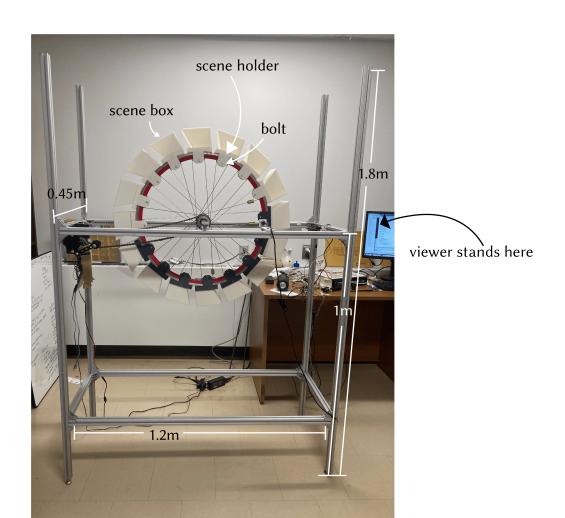
Can we answer those questions using audio?

1. Augment zoetropes so that more complex stories can be told

- 1. Augment zoetropes so that more complex stories can be told
- 2. Reveal hidden elements in a scene to engage the viewer in a more immersive experience...

- 1. Augment zoetropes so that more complex stories can be told
- 2. Reveal hidden elements in a scene to engage the viewer in a more immersive experience...
 - using interactive audio components

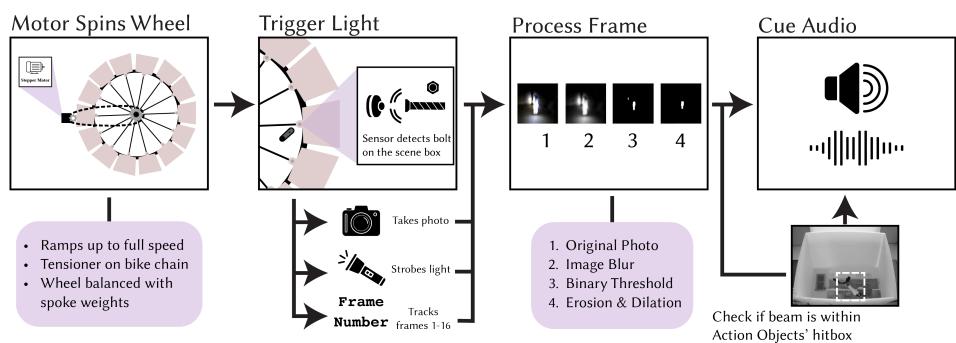
How?

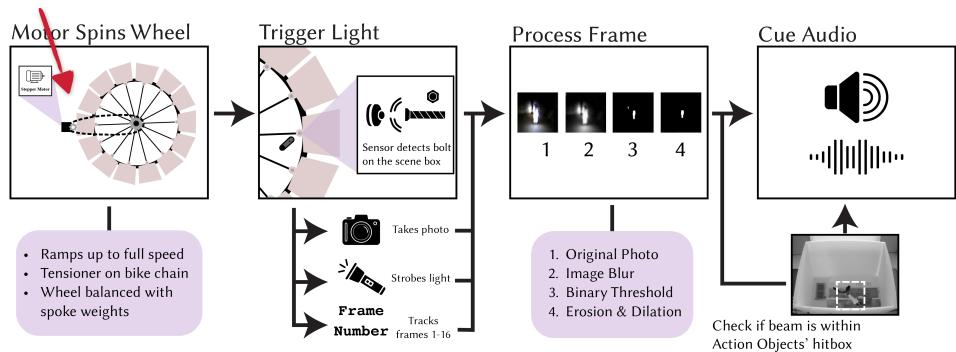


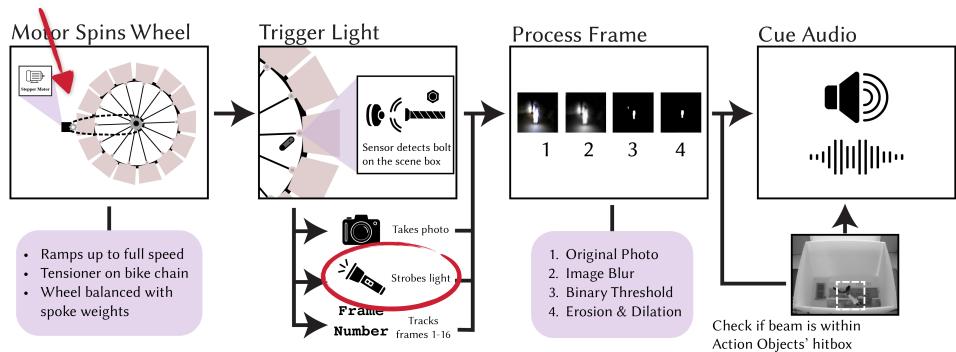
How?

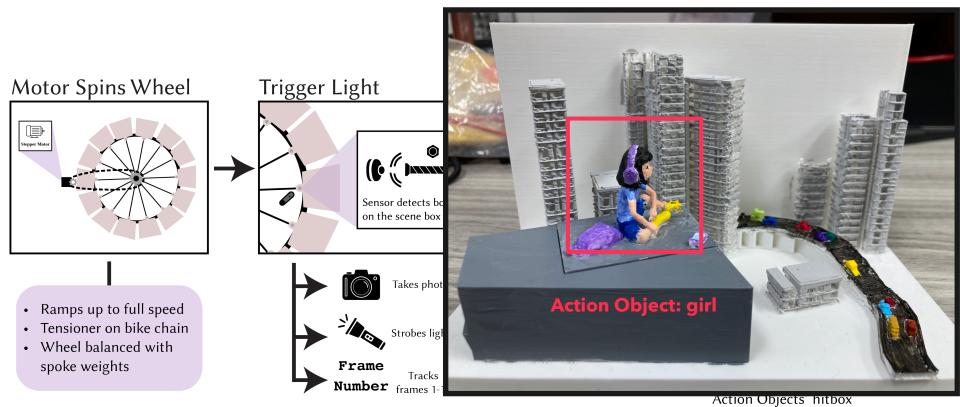


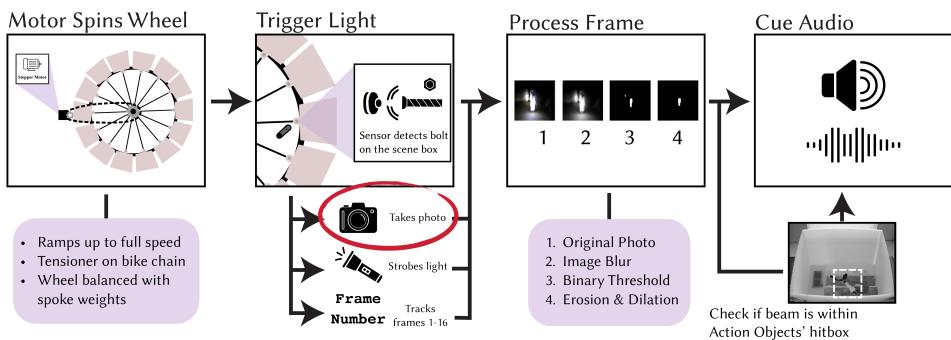
viewer stands here

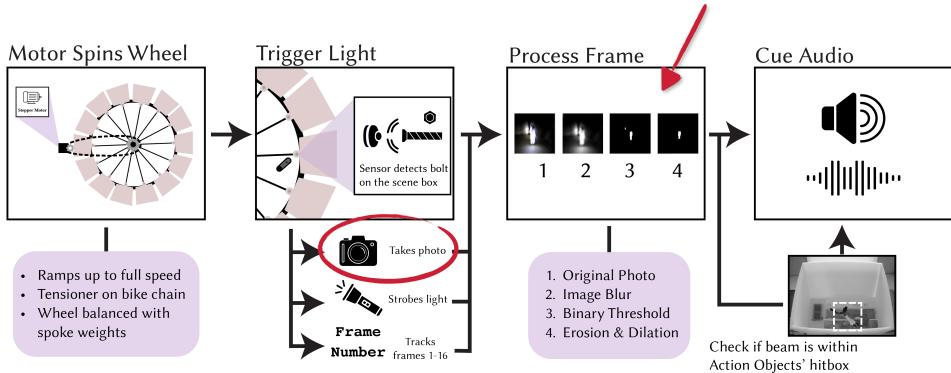


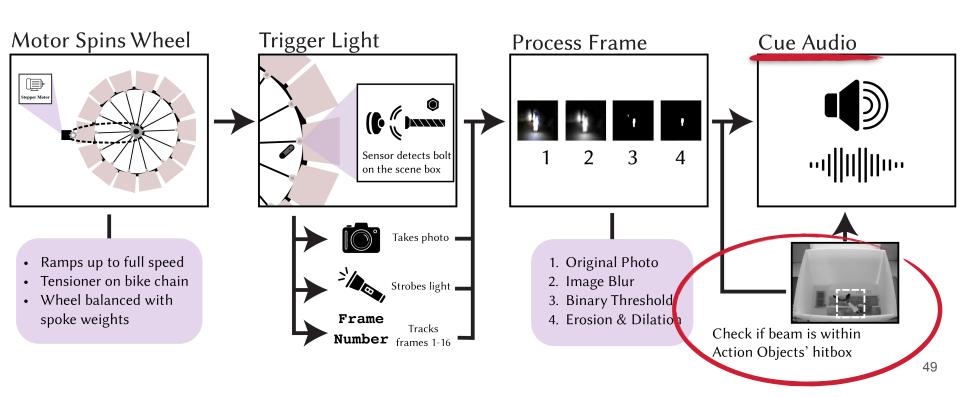


















Action Object: cars















We designed a device and method that enriches zoetrope stories by:

We designed a device and method that enriches zoetrope stories by:

1. Letting the viewer explore the scene with a strobing flashlight

We designed a device and method that enriches zoetrope stories by:

- 1. Letting the viewer explore the scene with a strobing flashlight
- 2. Triggering audio when the viewer looks at action objects

We designed a device and method that enriches zoetrope stories by:

- 1. Letting the viewer explore the scene with a strobing flashlight
- 2. Triggering audio when the viewer looks at action objects
- 3. Allowing multiple versions of the story to be told

How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing floating sculptures, zoetropes, and animatronics? How can physical storytelling be improved by enhancing animatronics?



What are animatronics?



Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln, 1964



Chuck E. Cheese



Jordan's Furniture Store



Pirates of the Caribbean, Disney World

What are animatronics?



Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln, 1964



Chuck E. Cheese



Jordan's Furniture Store



Pirates of the Caribbean, Disney World

What are animatronics?



Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln, 1964





Jordan's Furniture Store

Papertronic Puppets: Teaching STEM and Storytelling Through Creative Construction

Sarah Kushner, John Kanji, Paul H. Dietz, Daniel Wigdor Dynamic Graphics Project Lab, Dept. of Computer Science University of Toronto Toronto, ON Canada {sak.jkanji,dietz,daniel}@dgp.toronto.edu

telling through animatronics can offer a combination of creativity and engineering in order to engage students in an inquirybased approach to STEM learning. Animatronics is the art and science of bringing a story to life through robotic puppetry. Typically reserved for trained engineers with ample resources, animatronics can be an expressive yet inaccessible medium. We aim to allow students to write, create, and perform an mimatronic story, learning valuable technical skills along the way. Our study, which took place over the course of eight weeks, investigates the use of our Paper Animatronics Kit in a Grade creative writing, animatronic building, and mentoring processes. We present results of our qualitative analysis of student and

eacher interviews and group discussions.

Index Terms—K12, Creativity, Communication skills, Problem solving, Student experience

I. INTRODUCTION

Stories are the medium by which we decode the human experience. Storytelling has been discussed in the context of education as a way of cultivating imagination, empathy, and reflection of the world [1]. Through writing and performing, students build a literacy of storytelling which lays the foundation for deeper, more complex engagement with the world. Animatronics is the art and science of building physical

robotic puppets to bring a story to life with sound and motion. Animatronic shows have become a fun and popular attraction in theme parks, restaurants, and museums, ever since one of the first presentations to the public, Walt Disney's life-size animated Abe Lincoln at the 1964 New York World's Fair. This expressive practice is a unique combination of creativity and robotics.

abilities and socioeconomic status, we introduce an affordable yet versatile Paper Animatronics Kit for K-6 students to create of STEM, STEAM aims to address the creativity gap by papercraft puppet shows. The design of our kit is informed integrating the Arts into STEM education, emphasizing cre such as Ratto and Garnet to describe the process of creating But this approach has been problematized by some, such as

Abstract—This innovative practice full paper finds that story- artifacts to explore and understand social and cultural issues, blending engineering, design, art, and social sciences [2], as well as Resnick's idea of "tinkerability," which he defines as "a playful, exploratory, iterative style of engaging with a problem or project" [3]. Critical making and tinkerability are not focused on the product of the making but the process of getting there which acts as a way for the maker to explore the world. By centring storytelling and the creative process, and allowing open-ended exploration with the technology, we aim to empower student agency and voice. Our kit thus uses an inquiry-based approach that taps into students' genuine curiosity about the world to solve problems, scaffolding the technical elements while allowing them to tinker and inject their creativity and identity.

Our contributions are as follows

- · A Paper Animatronics Kit for K-6 students
- . An in-classroom user study with Grade 2 and 6 students to evaluate the suitability of our kit . Qualitative analysis of teacher and student interviews and
- group discussions

In this paper we describe the components of our kit in more detail, present the findings of our study, and end with key implications of using our animatronics kit in elementary

II RELATED WORK

A. STE(A)M, and the Creativity Gap

Of central importance to us is the so-called "creativity gan," defined as "an incongruity between the ostensible value and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), which educators place on creativity and its absence in schools" makes it a useful tool to engage students in both storytelling [4]. The creativity (or creative participation) gap manifests in education in a variety of ways: the removal of creativity However, this expressivity comes with a high barrier to from "academic" subjects and its partitioning into separate entry, and the medium is typically accessible only to trained arts programs, and the chronic underfunding of said programs engineers with ample resources. To help lower this barrier [5], but also inequity of access to experience, skills, and tools and make animatronics accessible to a wide range of ages, required to flourish creatively in an era of digital media [6]. Emerging as an augmentation to the interdisciplinary field

by the "critical making" movement established by thinkers ative and design thinking as well as problem solving [7].

Papertronic Puppets: Teaching STEM and Storytelling Through Creative Construction Kushner, Kanji, Dietz, Wigdor IEEE Frontiers in Education 2024

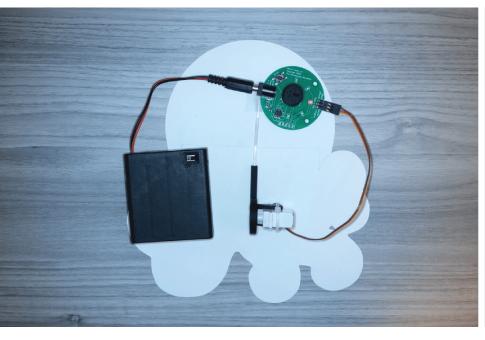
Make the art and science of animatronics more accessible to non-experts such as children and teachers with no technical experience by:

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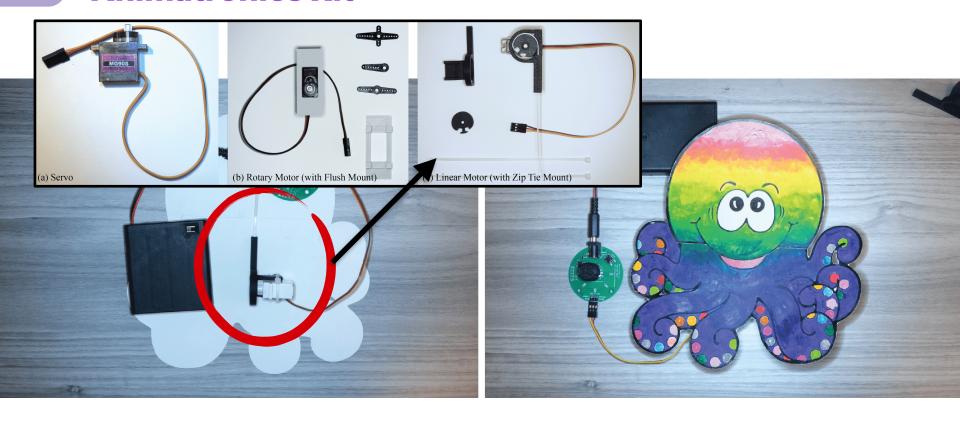
1. Creating an affordable yet versatile animatronics kit

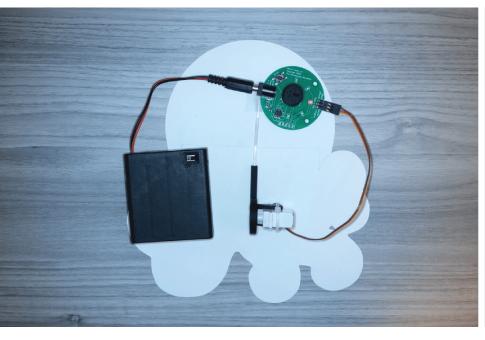
Make the art and science of animatronics more accessible to non-experts such as children and teachers with no technical experience by:

- 1. Creating an affordable yet versatile animatronics kit
- 2. Running workshops that teach K-12 students STEM skills while doing creative tasks

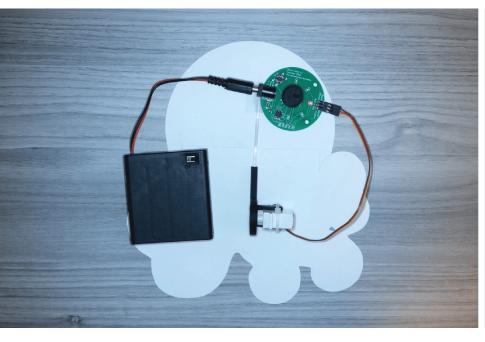


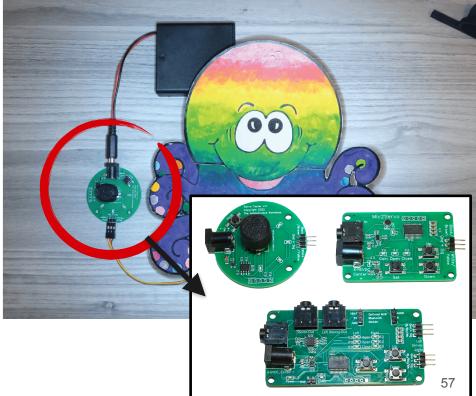




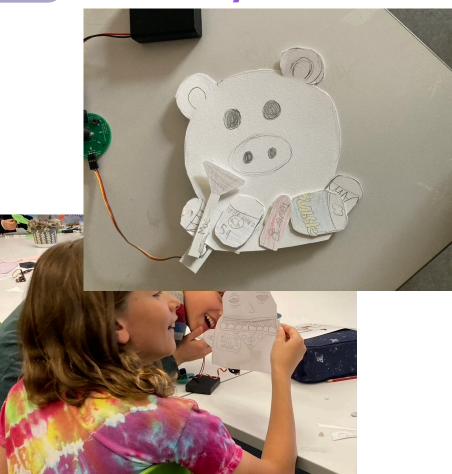




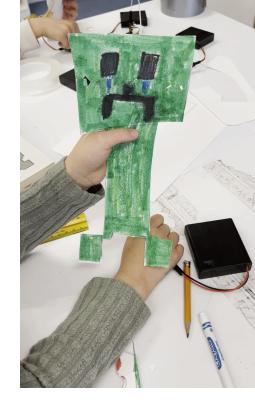


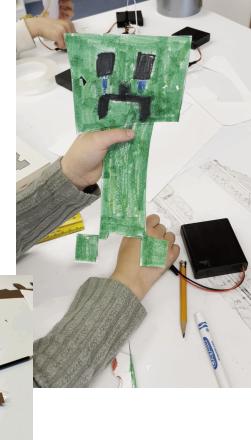






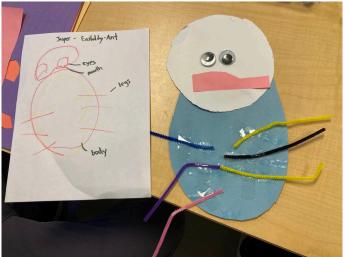


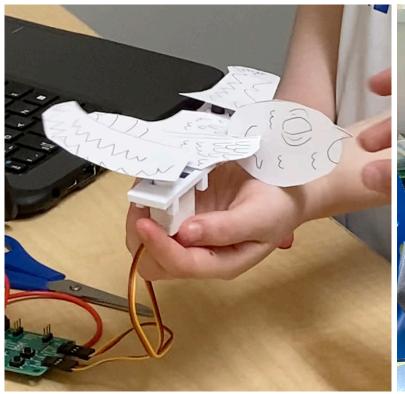




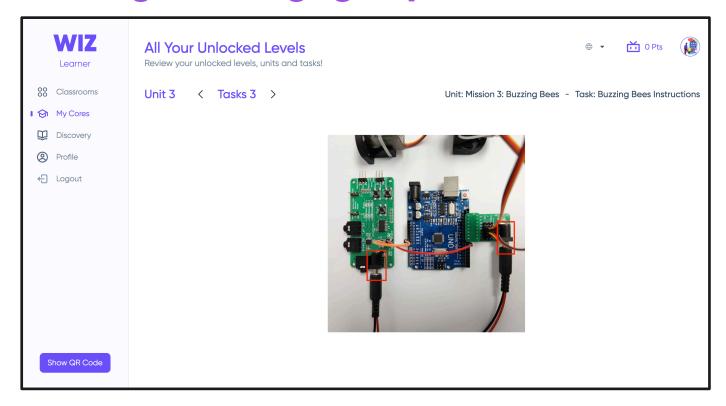








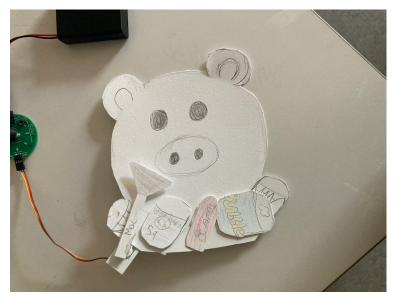




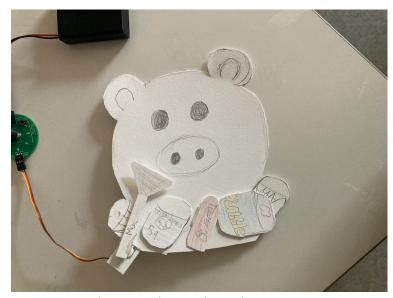








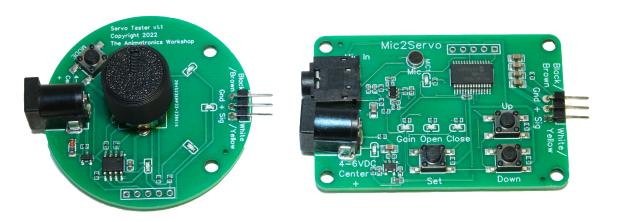
Grade 2 makeup brush swinging

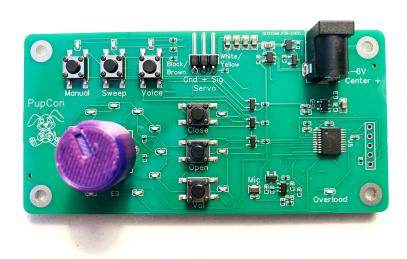


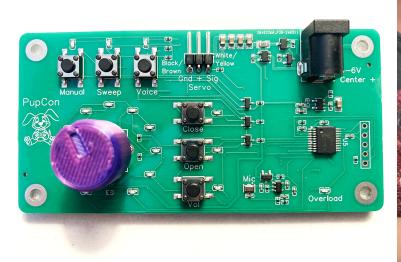
Grade 2 makeup brush swinging



Grade 6 axe swinging









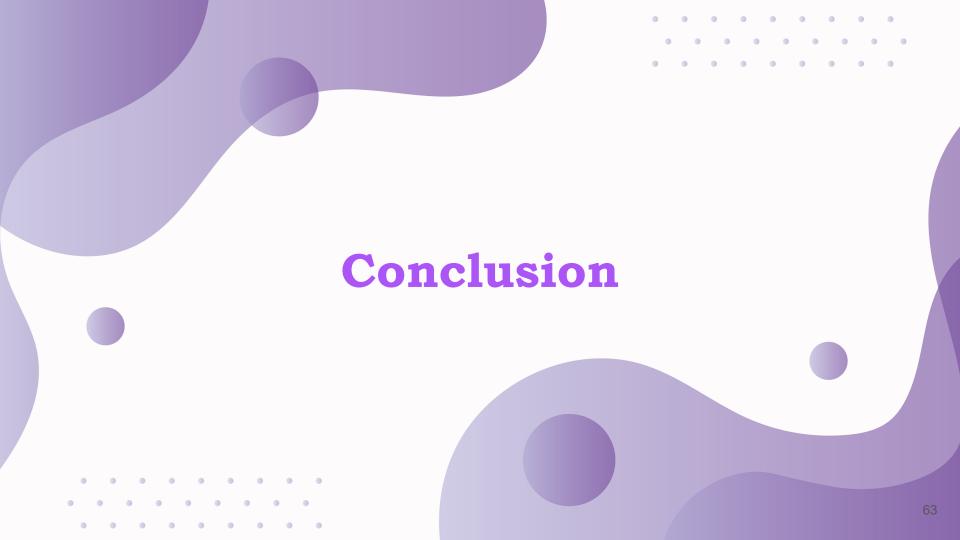
We introduced a paper animatronics kit and I tested it in a variety of classroom settings, leading us to several findings:

1. Combining STEM with creative tasks engages students

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- 2. Tradeoff between difficulty and teacher's constraints

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- 3. Mentoring in animatronics tasks benefits mentors and mentees

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- 2. Tradeoff between difficulty and teacher's constraints
- 3. Mentoring in animatronics tasks benefits mentors and mentees
- 4. Kit allowed students to create paper animatronic puppets and can be improved

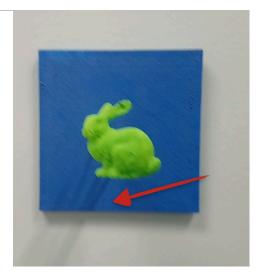




Floating Sculptures



Floating Sculptures



Floating Sculptures



Floating Sculptures



Zoetropes



Floating Sculptures



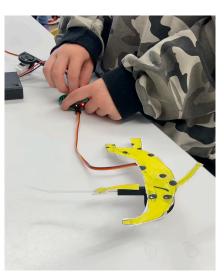
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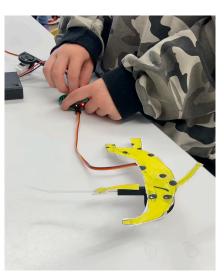
Animatronics



Floating Sculptures



Zoetropes



Animatronics

Techniques for Physical Storytelling

Sarah Kushner
Internal Defense
Department of Computer Science
University of Toronto