

Olive You

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December 14, 2016
Major Studio: Final Paper
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As a response to the stream of noise and distraction constantly churning out from mainstream media, I have started developing an animated television series called *Olive You*. In my perception, mainstream media is one of the biggest issues that is plaguing our society and our minds today. Journalism has been on the decline for some time now, with fake news becoming more and more prevalent in the media. When news outlets become more interested in creating news for pure entertainment rather than for the purpose of spreading factual information, society falls victim to be swayed by those who can shout the loudest. Though that is one issue that we are dealing with, it is not the only issue. Many television series and blockbuster movies fall into a habit of stereotyping their characters. This becomes an issue in that people get wrapped up in what they see, skewing their perspectives on those around us and our society. So, how do we as designers and storytellers create content that is both meaningful and attractive to viewers?

By combining humor and storytelling, I want to create stories that will be educational to the general population and spread awareness about issues that we are facing in our society. My goal is to utilize *Olive You* to populate mainstream media with content that serves a purpose. *Olive You* is an animated television series that takes the audience through the daily life of the main character, Olive, an average 19-year-old who is trying to balance her school and work life. However, before *Olive You* can be a real television series, I first need to pitch the idea to television networks, which is usually done with a two-page pitch treatment. My project is in the form of an illustrated comic book which will serve as supplemental content to the pitch treatment. The show's target audience is primarily children, however, the comic is intended for television networks giving them an insight into the tone of its voice, and visual style.

Olive You is about the life of Olive, which give the viewer an insight into her personal relationships with her father, their father-daughter struggles, but also her relationships with her friends. It also touches upon issues such as, equality (gender and race), sexuality, technological growth, abuse, and so on. It is a social commentary on how heavily reliant on technology people have become by over exaggerating their incompetence without it. Olive's position at the ice cream shop, combined with the ever growing concern surrounding food, gives the comic the perfect opportunity to hone in its

focus on food production. By focusing the comics plot line on one issue, this will give the readers a concise understanding of the overall tone and voice of *Olive You*. Although food production is the primary topic of the comic, the viewer will also get a taste of the abuse that Olive faces at her job, both from her employer and the patrons. By taking this approach, the comic will give the television networks an idea of how *Olive You* will criticize other issues and how it intends to do its part in raising awareness on social issues.

In the comic, Olive finds an underground terrarium called The Subterrarium. This is a farm that was built beneath the ice cream shop at which Olive is employed, housing a variety of multi-colored cows whose purpose is to produce the milk used to make the ice cream. Though the cows that live on The Subterrarium are treated with kindness and love, my goal is to shine a light on the mistreatment of animals, in this case, cows, on factory farms. In order to produce milk, factory farm cows are subjected to artificial insemination once a year, with a gestation period lasting nine months. This process may lead the cows to develop mastitis, a bacterial infection that causes the udders to swell. According to ASPCA's *A Closer Look at Animals on Factory Farms*, "[t]oday's dairy cows each produce about 100 pounds of milk per day, which is 10 times more than cows living just a few decades ago. This is due to bovine growth hormones, unnatural diets and being bred selectively for massive milk production." Though, there are organizations and laws that are working towards better living conditions for factory farm animals, there is still more that could be done.¹ Unlike factory farm cows, The Subterrarium cows live in blissful comfort. There are many different types of cows that produce different flavors of milk. Each cows' color indicates the flavor of milk that she will produce for the ice cream, and having multiples of the cows ensures that each cow will not be worked past its limits. The barn also signals the cows when their flavor is ordered, so that the cows are not over milked and the product is not being wasted.

On The Subterrarium, there are also greenhouses that grow the crops that feed the cows. Each flavored cows has a specific diet, chocolate cows eat chocolate, strawberry cows eat strawberries and so on. By keeping the cows on this diet, they

¹ ASPCA (2016) *A Closer Look at Animals on Factory Farms*

produce the most flavorful milk for the richest ice creams. The owner, Boss, of Big Corporate Ice Cream wants to monitor every aspect of his business. By growing everything in-house, he is certain that his product is also getting the best product. With the greenhouses, Boss is able to genetically modify his crops, producing the best and healthiest crops for his cows by isolating desired properties from the plants, and cross breeding them. There are some concerns in regards to genetically modified organisms (GMO's). Genetic modification may lead to herbicide resistant crops in following seasons, or insects may become resistant to insecticides made in genetically modified crops. This can also lead to contamination in the soil biota, harming the nutrient cycle. Though genetically modified organisms have their downfall, one of the benefits in genetically modified crops is that it can be modified to produce vitamins that might otherwise be absent in the crops², therefore keeping the cows healthy and strong.

There are many animated TV shows, and films that I look to for inspiration, but two in particular in the delivery of my commentary for the issues that I have touched upon, *Adventure Time* and *Steven Universe*. I cannot say that these two solely have shaped my style and voice, but they have had the biggest impact on my development. These TV shows differ tremendously, but they have both produced supplemental comic books to the series. For these shows, the comic books are alternative forms of storytelling for stories that did not make it to the digital format. Of all the animated shows and films out there, these stand out for me not only because of their characters, voice, and writing, but also the content. Although their target audience is children, they often carry deep and heavy messages.

Adventure Time is a popular animated TV series created by Pendleton Ward, on Cartoon Network. The show is about the last human boy, Finn, who lives in a post-apocalyptic Earth after the Great Mushroom War. Finn is the last human being living amongst creatures that have been affected in one way or another by radiation from the Great Mushroom War. Though *Adventure Time* can be nonsensical and silly, the creators have put a lot of efforts in creating meaningful content with educational values for their viewers. In the episode "Bonnie and Neddy", Finn asks Princess Bubblegum

² Nancy Millis (2006) Genetically Modified Organisms

why her brother, Neddy, is the way he is. Even though Princess Bubblegum and Neddy are siblings, Neddy looks very different from Princess Bubblegum, which Finn cannot fathom why. In response to Finn's questions, Princess Bubblegum said "people get built different. We don't need to figure it out. We just need to respect it."³ Even with subtlety, this line can have a significant impact upon younger viewers, teaching them to not be judgmental of others based on their appearances.

Acceptance is a popular theme in many modern animated TV shows. Aside from *Adventure Time*, the popular Cartoon Network series created by Rebecca Sugar, *Steven Universe*, features a gay character as one of the lead characters. These cartoons also have a political voice of their own. In the *Adventure Time* episode "Ocarina", Finn and his best friend, Jake the Dog, get arrested for trespassing. Finn does not understand why their house was taken from them, to which Jake responds "man, don't you know? The laws ain't made to help Earthy cats like us [...] that's when they made the laws you see? Once the strong guys got it how they liked it, they said 'this is fair now. This is the law.' Once they were winning they changed the rules up".⁴ *Steven Universe* starts off their debut with a strong stance on capitalism when one of the characters, Peedee, says "you pick a job to buy a house or to raise kids or to impress your dad. You work away your life and what does it get you? You get cash. Cash that can't buy back what the job takes."⁵ Both of these shows, although they are for children, have a satirical undertone. The messages can be deep and mature, but it does not take away from the adorable factor that they both possess.

Without coming off to strong, *Steven Universe* and *Adventure Time* are able to use their voice to educate their viewers and imbue in them important life lessons and values. By looking at these works, I am inspired to create a story that employs silly and charismatic characters to inform viewers of all ages about social issues. *Olive You's* storyline follows Olive as she navigates her way through her world. Like many people in their early 20's, Olive is just trying to maneuver her way through society and find her

³ *Adventure Time*, "Bonnie and Neddy", 2015.

⁴ *Adventure Time*, "Ocarina", 2014

⁵ *Steven Universe*, "Frybo", 2013

purpose in life. Without the financial support of her father, Olive finds herself in a predicament where she has to pay her own way through college. Olive and her father have always had their differences, never really being able to connect with one another, and with her decision to choose a computer technician program over following in his entrepreneurial footsteps, their relationship became more strained than ever. Olive and her father rarely see eye-to-eye on things, but she refuses to take over the company because she dislikes what Big Corporate Ice Cream has done to him and their relationship. Growing up, Olive felt like Boss was negligent towards her, spending all of his time taking care of the company and not enough time on her. However, Boss did this to secure Olive's future. Olive thinks that the ice cream shop went through the "Digital Takeover" so that her father can make a bigger profit, but he did it for two reasons. One is to secure Olive's future, so that if Olive is ever unable to find a job working with computers, she will always have Big Corporate Ice Cream as backup, second is for money.

On The Subterrarium, are a variety of multi-colored cows, a barn, greenhouses, and Olive's long time friend, Vic. Upon finding Vic, he explains to Olive the reasons why Big Corporate Ice Cream went through the "Digital Takeover". Boss changed The Ice Cream Shop to Big Corporate Ice Cream because he realized that he was losing his business to the newer, hipper ice cream shops. So, in order to save his family's ice cream shop, he needed to change the way that he ran his business. When the "Digital Takeover" happened, Boss replaced all the people employees at the shop with computers in order to save money. These replacements also allowed the company to save revenue on cost of goods. By getting rid of the human aspect, every single portion is exact, saving product by cutting out over-serving and also reducing waste production. In the comic, Olive discovers this news and is perplexed. She never knew the exact reasons for Boss replacing all his employees with computers. By shining a light on this aspect of his business practice, Olive begins to question her feelings and misconceptions about her father.

The goal for *Olive You* is to develop and refine it enough to one day pitch the idea to a television network. My final project for Major Studio 1 will be a combination of characters that I have been working on from *Olive You* and a rough episode idea within

the plot to create an illustrated comic book that will accompany a pitch treatment for *Olive You*. In creating *Olive You*, I want to know if I can successfully create content that is both attractive to younger audiences as well as adults, like the precedents I have listed above. Though that is one obstacle I am aiming to overcome, I also want to know if the content I am producing will be successful in reaching out to audiences in the manner I am hoping: to be able to populate mainstream media with meaningful content, and to educate its viewers about the social issues that are plaguing our society. Is it enough to just educate the future generation of thinkers, or is it our jobs as storytellers to try and reach out to the masses? These are questions that remain to be answered, and it is unlikely that I will have answers for them any time soon. As for *Olive You*, the next step is to take it to the digital realm, to bring Olive to life.

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