

Millie Young

2.) Disciplines Integration:

Elephant, Elephant, Elephant!

We love, admire and are in awe of elephants. We deem them gods, yet push them into demeaning acts that anthropomorphize for our entertainment; we accept the 4000+ years of servitude where they have fought our wars, carried our loads, and broken down the very forest their ancestors helped create. Their natural habitat eroded, their tusks, their tails, their very skin commodified to fit our agendas, our desires. We have left them with no way out.

The Elephant, Elephant, Elephant! 7 min 30 immersive animation experience plays with this anthropomorphism, delighting the audience with the elefunks – appealing cartoon elephants. The narrative captivates us as they replicate the familiar scenario of circus acrobats, trapeze, ropes, hoops, unicycles and even a flying elefunk cannonball – until it becomes overwhelming, teetering on the absurd to the distorted rift of the ‘Chang, Chang, Chang’ song. This 1 minute extract joins as the elefunks transform into ‘real’ elephants, whose stereotypical actions appear like they are dancing and greeting each other. The fantasy breaks, and signals the beginning of their escape. We start to see them for what they really are: sentient beings, too large to see fully, mysterious, secretive, beautiful in their natural form, yet in such close proximity that we feel claustrophobic but we can’t escape as we are fixed to the virtual spot; they leave us, alone with only our shadow to contemplate the dark empty space which they once inhabited.

Made in hand drawn traditional animation developing sequences and loops that act as players in the 360° space the narrative has been developed through experiments with conscious application of theoretical narrative strategies to create a poetic space for the audience to contemplate our relationship with elephants at this juncture in time.

Initiated as a PhD research case study this is the culmination of four years’ work through various iterations, including the Lost and Found: The elephant in the room installation in Neilson Hays Library in 2019 to the current 360° VR/Hand held device format. It challenges the aesthetics of VR with a hand crafted consciously hand drawn aesthetic to offer a more poetic viewer experience. It has challenged the role of the sole auteur animator, traditionally creating in the realm of the animation short story, into this new creative space to share new creative imaginations.

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