

The process of creating short film works using hybrid animation techniques

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Received: 12/01/2025	Revised: 21/01/2025	Accepted: 25/01/2025
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Abstract. The animated short film *Finding a Dream* highlights the artist's emotional relationship with his father through dream symbolism, using hybrid animation techniques that combine 2D and 3D elements to create a dynamic and aesthetic visual narrative. The creation process is carried out through three main stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. In the pre-production stage, story ideas are explored based on personal experiences, followed by creating storyboards and character designs. The production stage includes experiments combining 2D and 3D animation elements through key-posing, in between, modeling, and rendering techniques. Post-production involves refining visual and audio elements to ensure a cohesive narrative. As a result, this film successfully combines visual and audio elements harmoniously, showing aesthetic interactions between 2D characters and 3D environments. The hybrid animation technique provides creative flexibility in expressing complex symbolism while creating relevant visual innovation amidst the competitive global animation industry. Apart from being a personal expression of the creator, this work is also an important contribution to the development of hybrid animation in Indonesia, offering an inspiring creative alternative for further exploration in the future.

Keywords: hybrid animation, dreams, symbolism, creative process, animation industry

Introduction

The film "Finding a Dream" is a short-animated work of art that aims to express the artist's emotional relationship with his father through a dream narrative. Dreams are a primary medium for reflecting complex inner experiences, creating a symbolic space for expressing emotional conflicts and the search for meaning (Meyer, 2021; Scarpelli et al., 2019). In art studies, personal experience often forms a strong foundation in the creative process, especially in works that emphasize the exploration of emotion and symbolism (Magiolino et al., 2023; Moroz et al., 2021; Tao, 2023). Therefore, this film uses the theme of dreams to represent the author's longing and connect personal elements with a universal narrative.

The visual approach in "Finding a Dream" uses hybrid animation techniques, namely combining 2D and 3D animation elements to create a dynamic and aesthetic visual experience. This technique provides flexibility in expressing more complex symbolism, allowing 2D characters to interact with 3D environments organically. In recent research, hybrid animation techniques are considered relevant to the needs of modern creative industries because of their ability to produce innovative and engaging visualizations (Asraf & Idrus, 2020; Kivistö, 2019; Voci, 2023). This technique also reflects the development of animation technology in Indonesia, which is still dominated by conventional 3D animation approaches. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the current growth of animation in Indonesia is marked by the prevalence of 3D animation, as evidenced by the increasing number of local animated characters

featured on various digital platforms and television. Popular examples include the Indonesian animated series *Nussa* and *Adit & Sopo Jarwo*, which have become widely recognized among children (Kemenparekraf, 2024). Studies show that a hybrid approach can be a solution to maintain the relevance of 2D animation amidst increasingly competitive global competition (Ghani et al., 2023).

This film not only functions as a medium for personal expression but also as a means to introduce hybrid animation techniques as a creative alternative in the animation industry. In the narrative context, dreams in this film become a symbolic space to explore the relationship between memory, longing, and emotional reconciliation. Rich symbolism in visuals and narratives has long been recognized as a tool for connecting personal experiences with collective emotions, as Ahmed (2024) and Hetmański (2020) emphasized in their studies on the role of symbols in visual art and animation. These works explore how symbols bridge individual subjectivity and universal sentiments, particularly in the context of psychological phenomena such as dreams. However, this study diverges from existing research by integrating narrative and visual symbolism within hybrid animation to explore dreams as both psychological and aesthetic phenomena. Unlike prior works that often isolate symbolism as a narrative or visual element, this approach examines their interplay, using hybrid animation not merely as a technical innovation but as a medium to amplify symbolic resonance. Furthermore, while previous studies on hybrid animation, such as those by Pan et al. (2022) and Roberts et al. (2019), focus primarily on the technical synergy of combining 2D and 3D styles, this study leverages hybrid techniques to deepen emotional and psychological engagement, offering a novel perspective on how animation can evoke and represent the complex dimensions of dreams.

This article focuses on the creation process of "Finding a Dream," with special attention to creative management and exploring hybrid animation techniques. This process includes the contemplation stage to design the story concept, experimentation in integrating 2D and 3D visual elements, and the final formation through a post-production process that holistically unites all elements. This approach aligns with the principles of contemporary animation creation, which prioritize a balance between narrative, symbolism, and visual aesthetics (Nehme & Obaid, 2022; Wibowo et al., 2024).

Methods

The process of creating "Finding a Dream" was carried out over a certain period, which included various stages, from pre-production to post-production. This work uses a qualitative approach with a focus on artistic exploration, hybrid animation techniques, and structured project management. The method involves three main stages: contemplation, experimentation, and shaping, all of which contribute to creating a hybrid animated short film with high visual and narrative quality.

In the pre-production stage, the creator begins with deep reflection. This stage lasts for the first few months and includes exploring ideas and story concepts based on the creator's experiences. The dream theme was chosen to depict the emotional relationship with his father, which is translated through visual symbolism and narrative. The brainstorming process was carried out to produce a story concept that had strong aesthetic appeal and emotional value (Sylvester, 2021). In addition, research on literary references, dream psychology studies, and analysis of similar animated works were carried out to enrich the narrative concept. At this stage, the creator also designs storyboards, character designs, and scenarios as the visual and narrative foundation of the film.

The production stage is an experimental phase involving an intensive creative process combining 2D and 3D animation elements. Production began with creating 2D elements, such as the main character design and movement animation, using key pose and in-between techniques. On the other hand, 3D environmental elements are designed through modeling, texturing, and rendering to create a setting that supports the story atmosphere. This stage took several months and involved many iterations to ensure harmony between 2D and 3D elements. Lighting adjustments (Wisessing et al., 2020), color (Block, 2020), and character movement were made to create realistic and dramatic visuals. The experiment also included testing slow-motion techniques that emphasize stories' symbolic and emotional aspects (Stańczyk, 2019; Stuppy et al., 2024).

In the post-production stage, a work is created by integrating visual and audio elements to produce a complete film. Editing techniques structure the narrative cohesively and ensure continuity between scenes. Adding visual effects, such as fog and sand, was done to strengthen the dreamlike feel of the film (Hibberd & Beugnet, 2022). Poetic narration in the form of voice-over was chosen as the primary audio element to replace dialogue. This narrative aims to subtly and symbolically convey emotional messages, creating a harmonious relationship between sound and visual elements (Spreadborough, 2022).

The entire creation process is managed through a project management approach that includes timelines and production pipelines. The creator uses a structured workflow to ensure efficiency and achieve quality targets at each stage. This management includes coordination between creative teams, production scheduling, and close supervision of work results. These stages take approximately one year, with each phase given a specific duration according to its level of complexity. This method focuses on the final result and explores the creative process, thus providing room for innovation in hybrid animation techniques. With this approach, the work "Finding a Dream" not only succeeded in representing the artist's expression but also significantly contributed to developing hybrid animation techniques in the creative industry. This method emphasizes the importance of harmony between creative exploration and an efficient management structure to produce work that is aesthetically and technically relevant (Asraf & Idrus, 2020; Ghani et al., 2023; Kivistö, 2019; O'Hailey, 2012).

Result and Discussion

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the process of creating the work "Finding a Dream", which involves three main stages: contemplation, experimentation, and formation. Each stage ensures that visual, narrative, and technical elements can harmonize the work. The explanation in this chapter focuses on how the creator processes personal experiences into works of art with aesthetic and emotional value.

The reflection process explores story concepts and ideas, building a strong narrative basis with a symbolic approach. Production experiments describe the implementation of hybrid animation techniques through combining 2D and 3D elements while shaping in post-production ensures a final result that conveys the story's message effectively. Each stage is discussed in detail to show the complexity and innovation involved in making this film. Through this discussion, it is hoped that readers can understand how "Finding a Dream" is not only the creator's expression but also a contribution to the development of hybrid animation techniques in the Indonesian creative industry. This chapter also highlights the technical and artistic challenges faced by the creator and the creative solutions implemented to produce an authentic and innovative work of art.



Contemplation (Pre-Production)

The contemplation stage is foundational in creating the short-animated film "Finding a Dream." This stage involves an immersive exploration of ideas rooted in the creator's personal experiences, particularly concerning their emotional relationship with their late father. The concept stems from the creator's reflections on dreams, which are a natural part of the subconscious during sleep and act as a profound symbolic medium to convey complex emotions and messages. Dreams are seen as a bridge between suppressed desires and conscious expression, aligning with psychological theories like those of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, emphasizing dreams as reflections of personal and universal experiences (Shukla, 2021).

The creator delved into literature on dream interpretation, symbolism, and psychological frameworks to develop a strong narrative foundation. References from works such as *Ko* (2018) and *Sand* (1999) provided insights into the symbolic meanings of dream elements incorporated into the film's storyline. These references enriched the narrative with depth and context, ensuring that the symbolism within the dream sequences resonated emotionally and intellectually with the audience.

Determining Diandra's visual design in "Finding a Dream" (see Figure 1) is a distinct creative effort heavily rooted in the creator's emotional experiences. Diandra's character design reflects the creator's anxieties and longing for her late father, emphasizing personal connection and universal themes of emotional reconciliation. The design process was iterative and deliberate, focusing on subtle details like facial expressions, posture, and gestures to mirror her inner journey. Diandra's evolving appearance—highlighted by delicate colors and textures—illustrates her emotional growth throughout the narrative. This intricate character design symbolizes the creator's introspection and visually represents the longing and unresolved emotions tied to her father.

In contrast, the storyboard and setting elements described in the companion document delineate the film's structural and narrative foundations. Storyboards meticulously map the scenes' compositional aspects, camera angles, and lighting, ensuring visual consistency. The settings were designed as 3D environments that blend seamlessly with 2D character animations, using visual motifs like mist and vibrant backdrops to support the film's dreamlike quality. Together, they establish the narrative's spatial and emotional atmosphere without focusing solely on Diandra's psychological depiction (see Figure 2). This separation underscores the project's dual focus: crafting an emotionally resonant character while developing a visually cohesive and symbolically rich animated world. This balance highlights the integration of personal and universal storytelling in hybrid animation.



Figure. 1 Diandra character design

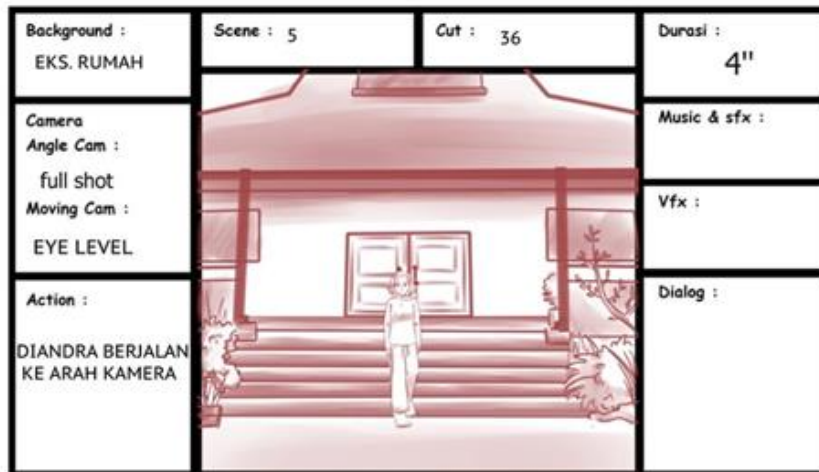


Figure. 2 Storyboard Diandra walks in front of the house

The visual blueprint for the film was developed through detailed storyboards and scenarios, providing a structured outline for both the storyline and the corresponding visuals (see Figure 2). The storyboard meticulously mapped out each scene, highlighting the compositional settings, camera angles, lighting, and character movements. It served as a visual roadmap that guided the animation team in maintaining consistency and clarity throughout the production process. The scenario complemented the storyboard by weaving a cohesive narrative that underscored the symbolic and emotional depth of the film. Key elements such as the eagle, representing freedom and paternal guidance, and the blirik cup, symbolizing cherished memories, were embedded within the story to amplify its emotional resonance.

At this stage, significant attention was also given to the visual elements that would define the film's atmosphere. The choice of colors, lighting, and environmental attributes was deliberate and aligned with the dreamlike quality of the narrative. Soft, ethereal tones dominated the dream sequences to evoke a surreal and introspective mood, while more vibrant and realistic colors characterized scenes grounded in reality. Lighting was carefully manipulated to enhance the emotional weight of each moment, with warm, diffused lighting used in dream sequences and sharper contrasts in real-world settings. The environmental design, inspired by both personal memories and culturally significant locations, added authenticity and depth to the film's visual landscape.

This meticulous planning and contemplation ensured that every aspect of "Finding a Dream" not only conveyed a compelling story but also resonated deeply with the audience through its symbolic and emotional layers. By merging personal experiences with artistic innovation, the creator laid a robust foundation for the film's subsequent production stages.

Experiment (Production)

The "Finding a Dream" production stage involved extensive experimentation and innovation in integrating 2D and 3D animation techniques, setting a foundation for the unique hybrid animation style. The process began with meticulous efforts in 2D animation production, focusing on developing key poses and in-between animation techniques to achieve seamless and expressive character movements. Each key pose was carefully crafted using a combination of real-life observation, drawing references, and iterative feedback to capture the character's emotional nuances and physical gestures accurately. Drawing figures and video recordings as gesture references played a crucial role in ensuring the authenticity and relatability of the movements.

The team undertook numerous tests, including pencil tests and digital mockups, to evaluate the effectiveness of transitions between poses and refine the subtleties of each motion. For example, Diandra's posture and hand movements were repeatedly adjusted to authentically reflect her emotional journey. At the same time, incorporating symbolic elements, such as the eagle's graceful flight, added depth to the gestures.

In addition, the creators meticulously aligned the 2D character animations with the immersive 3D environments by using advanced compositing techniques. This included color grading, texture matching, and lighting adjustments to seamlessly integrate the characters and their gestures into the dreamlike settings. Through these rigorous and thoughtful processes, the animation achieved a visual fluidity and emotional resonance that underscored the narrative themes. The holistic approach to blending 2D character animations with 3D backgrounds established a signature aesthetic for the hybrid animation style in "Finding a Dream."

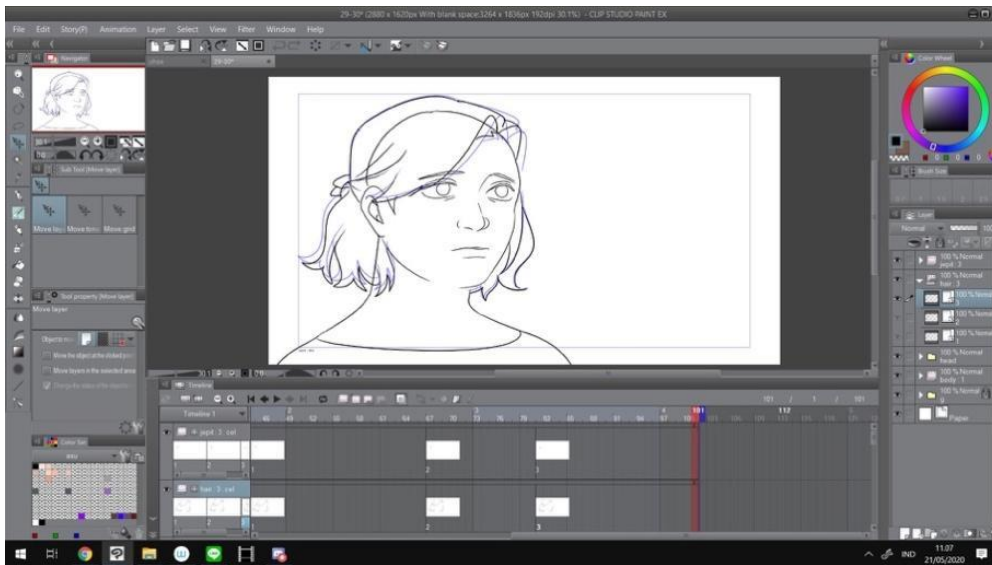


Figure. 3 Diandra's key pose

For the 3D elements, the production team focused on crafting detailed and immersive environments that reflected the film's dreamlike journey. The backgrounds—featuring hills, lakes, forests, and other symbolic landscapes—were integral to Diandra's journey of self-discovery. Advanced modeling, texturing, and rendering techniques were utilized to create these environments with high fidelity. For instance, the hills were designed with layers of mist to evoke mystery, while the lake surfaces captured intricate light reflections, symbolizing clarity amidst introspection (see Figure 4). Attention to lighting was paramount; dramatic light effects, such as the interplay of shadows and soft glows, were used to enhance the ethereal quality of the dream sequences. These visual elements transport the audience into the protagonist's subconscious world. The creators also undertook extensive experimentation in the integration of 2D and 3D elements through compositing techniques. This critical process involved merging the distinct visual components—2D characters and 3D environments—into cohesive and harmonious frames. Specialized animation software was employed to align the elements in terms of color grading, texture matching, and lighting balance. For instance, the 2D character of Diandra was meticulously blended into the 3D background, ensuring that her movements and shading complemented the environmental details, such as fog and ambient lighting. This integration not only preserved the individuality of each animation style but also created a visually unified aesthetic (see Figure 5).



Figure. 4 Diandra walked on Bukit Cempuhan

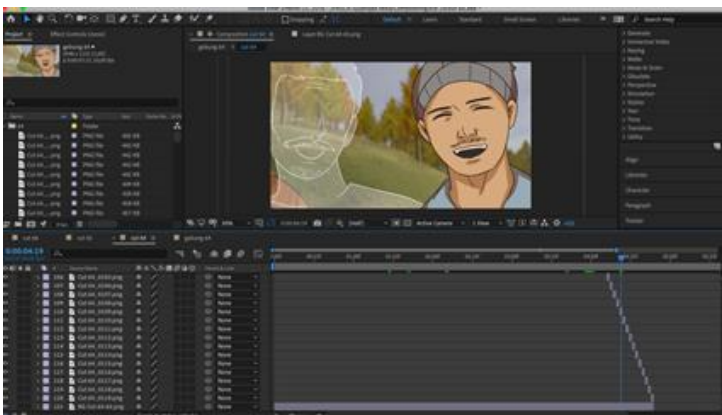


Figure. 5 Compositing process of Father and Andre's scene

Beyond the visual elements, audio design also took center stage during this phase. Background music and sound effects were carefully selected to support the film's introspective and dreamy atmosphere. Instrumental music played a crucial role in setting the emotional tone, with tracks like The Beatles' "The Long and Winding Road" serving as a poignant backdrop. This piece was chosen for its melancholic yet hopeful undertones, perfectly mirroring Diandra's emotional journey. Sound effects, such as rustling leaves, water ripples, and footsteps, were meticulously layered to enhance the realism of the scenes while maintaining the dreamlike quality. Together, the visual and auditory components synergized to create an immersive and emotionally resonant experience for the audience. By balancing experimental techniques with precise execution, the production stage of "Finding a Dream" exemplified the artistic and technical innovation required to bring the hybrid animation vision to life.

Formation (Post-Production)

The post-production stage is the final phase in the creation of "Finding a Dream," focusing on refining and perfecting the visual and audio elements developed during the production stage. This stage is pivotal in ensuring the artistic vision is cohesively translated into a polished short film. The editing process plays a central role in this phase, meticulously arranging scenes to form a coherent and emotionally compelling storyline that is easy for the audience to follow. Each scene undergoes detailed polishing to ensure visual consistency, narrative flow, and emotional continuity, enhancing the audience's engagement and understanding of the film's themes (see Figure 6).



A hallmark of the editing process is the extensive use of slow-motion techniques strategically applied to emphasize the film's most dramatic and poignant moments. These techniques draw attention to key scenes and imbue them with a heightened sense of gravity and emotion (Paliwal & Kalantari, 2020). For instance, slow motion is used during Diandra's pivotal moments of introspection and interaction with symbolic elements, such as the eagle and the blink cup, to accentuate their significance within the narrative.

In addition to editing, visual effects are integrated to enrich the film's dreamlike atmosphere. Effects like fog and sand were meticulously designed using advanced graphics software to create textures and intensities that align with the story's tone and context. For example, fog enveloping the hills creates an air of mystery and introspection, symbolizing the uncertainty in Diandra's journey. Meanwhile, sand in the desert scenes provides a transitional quality, signifying the protagonist's movement through different emotional and psychological states (see Figure 7). Each effect is carefully tailored to enhance the film's dreamlike quality, bridging the gap between realism and surrealism.

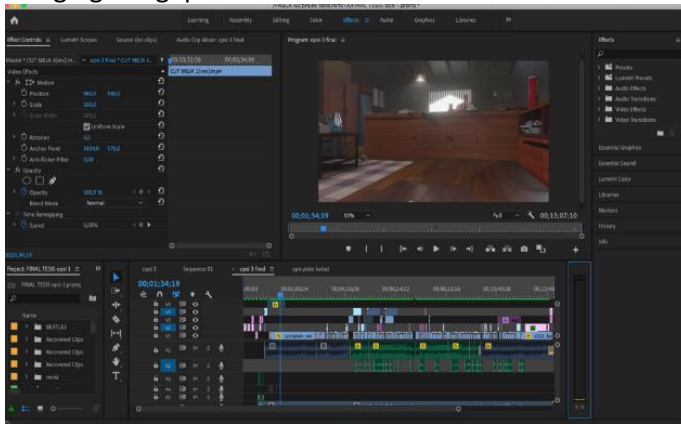


Figure. 6 Final editing process



Figure. 7 Diandra walks in the Desert

The audio design also takes precedence in post-production, with careful attention to blending sound elements seamlessly into the visual narrative. A voice-over narration was chosen as an alternative to traditional dialogue, providing an intimate window into Diandra's inner thoughts and emotions. This technique complements the film's introspective nature, allowing the audience to connect with the protagonist on a deeper, more personal level. The narration was crafted with a poetic tone to align with the film's symbolic and emotional depth.

Additionally, sound effects such as footsteps, birdsong, and ambient environmental sounds were layered to enhance the realism and immersion of each scene. For instance, the soft

rustling of leaves in forest scenes and the faint echo of footsteps in desert landscapes bring the visuals to life, drawing the audience deeper into the dreamlike world of the story. The background music further enriches the audio landscape with instrumental pieces, including "The Long and Winding Road" by The Beatles, carefully selected to underscore the film's melancholic and hopeful tones. The music was arranged to flow seamlessly with the narrative, amplifying the emotional impact of key moments (see Figure 8)



Figure. 8 Process audio arrangement and mixing

The culmination of the post-production process is a short film that harmoniously integrates visual, audio, and narrative elements. "Finding a Dream" stands out for its visual innovation, achieved through the hybrid animation techniques, and its profound emotional resonance. Combining 2D and 3D animation, symbolic storytelling, and carefully curated audio design results in a film that captures the audience's imagination and heart. By leveraging hybrid animation, the film also highlights the untapped potential of Indonesia's animation industry, paving the way for further exploration and innovation within this medium.

Achieving such a cohesive and impactful result required a meticulously planned approach that balanced artistic creativity with practical execution. The project adhered to a clearly defined timeline, strategically segmented into pre-production, production, and post-production phases. Each phase was allocated specific durations based on the complexity and requirements of tasks such as storyboard development, animation synchronization, and final compositing. This structured timeline facilitated efficient task management, minimized delays, and allowed the creative team to focus on delivering high-quality work. Team coordination was supported by regular communication sessions, task-tracking tools, and collaborative platforms, ensuring that all contributors worked cohesively toward shared creative objectives while maintaining technical precision.

To ensure the seamless integration of creative and technical elements, the project followed a clearly defined timeline and was strategically segmented into pre-production, production, and post-production phases. Each phase was allocated specific durations based on the complexity and requirements of the tasks, such as storyboard development, animation synchronization, and final compositing. This structured timeline allowed for efficient task management and avoided bottlenecks in the creative process. The coordination among team members was facilitated through regular communication sessions, task-tracking tools, and collaborative platforms, ensuring that all contributors were aligned on creative objectives and technical execution.

Following the completion of post-production, rigorous quality control processes were undertaken to guarantee that the final product met the desired artistic and technical standards. This included detailed visual effects reviews, audio synchronization, and narrative flow. Special attention was given to ensuring continuity across scenes, maintaining the symbolic resonance of the hybrid animation, and enhancing the film's emotional impact. Feedback from internal test screenings was utilized to identify areas requiring improvement, such as refining the integration of 2D and 3D elements or adjusting audio levels for clarity and immersion. These measures underscore the importance of balancing artistic innovation with systematic project management, resulting in a film that reflects the creator's vision and contributes meaningfully to advancing hybrid animation techniques in the Indonesian creative industry.

Conclusion

The animated short film "Finding a Dream" reflects the creator's creative efforts in presenting a strong emotional narrative through hybrid animation techniques. By using the theme of dreams as a symbolic medium, this work is not only a reflection of the artist's relationship with his father. However, it is also an artistic expression that bridges personal elements with universal messages about memory, longing, and emotional reconciliation. This work is divided into three main stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. In the pre-production stage, the creator carries out an in-depth exploration of story ideas based on personal experience. This stage involves researching dream symbolism literature, drafting scenarios, and character and storyboard designs to build a solid visual and narrative foundation. The dream theme can depict emotional complexity with rich symbolism, providing space for reflection for both the creator and the audience.

The production stage is a crucial moment in experimenting with hybrid animation techniques. Combining 2D animation elements for characters with 3D elements for the environment creates harmonious and dynamic visual interactions. This process involves modeling, texturing, and rendering techniques for 3D elements and key-posing and in-between for 2D elements. Careful adjustments to color, lighting, and character movement were made to ensure visual continuity between the two elements. This experiment shows that a hybrid approach provides creative flexibility in expressing complex symbolism while delivering a stunning visual experience. The post-production stage focuses on perfecting the visual and audio narrative. The editing process ensures the continuity of the story, while additional visual effects, such as fog and sand, enhance the dreamlike feel of the film. Using voice-over narration as the primary audio element provides a subtle emotional dimension, effectively replacing dialogue. Instrumental music and sound effects are added to increase the audience's immersion in the story.

The creation of "Finding a Dream" cannot be separated from structured project management. Creators can align creative exploration with a systematic approach that includes production timelines, team coordination, and quality control at every stage. This emphasizes balancing artistic innovation and management efficiency in creating quality animated works. Overall, this work not only represents the artist's expression but is also a significant contribution to developing hybrid animation techniques in Indonesia. This film shows that a hybrid approach can be a relevant creative alternative in facing global competition in the animation industry. Through this work, the creator combined visual, narrative and symbolic elements in an aesthetic and emotional work of art. With innovative hybrid animation techniques, "Finding a Dream" provides new inspiration for animation development in Indonesia and opens up opportunities for further exploration in the future.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Prof. Dr. Pande Made Sukerta, S. Kar., M. Si., as the final assignment supervisor who assisted the creator, who is also the author of this article, in providing direction, criticism, suggestions, and input in the work and writing. The final assignment examiner is Dr. R. B. Armantono, M. Sn., and Dr. Sugeng Nugroho, M. Sn., who have provided input, criticism, and suggestions so that the work "Finding a Dream" can be realized into a better work of art.

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