1. CREATIVE BACKGROUND

In recent years, the animation industry has become increasingly interested in telling stories that pull visual elements from other storytelling mediums. One such example is the film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018), which adapts stories from various *Spider Man* comics. As a result, the film integrates comic book elements such as halftone textures, comic panels and text boxes in its visuals. This shows an increasing interest within the animation industry in experimenting with visuals that are borrowed from other mediums.

One medium that has the potential to be bridged with animated filmmaking is the medium of video games. This medium has an existing visual language built around interactivity and user interface (UI) design. The author proposes that UI visualizations that are traditionally designed for player interaction within video games can be reinterpreted as narrative tools within a non-interactive medium.

Game UI visualizations are meant to relay important information to users quickly and efficiently. Through repeated exposure to common game UI visualizations such as health bars and inventory items, users build a mental library of visual cues that can be tapped into for quick and efficient communication. This familiarity makes game UI a useful visual language that can be adapted beyond interactive media.

The author specifically chooses to focus on storyboards because of how storyboards serve as a blueprint for the entirety of a film. Choices such as timing, framing, composition, and the distribution of visual information are oftentimes determined during the storyboard stage. The storyboard also plays a large role in constructing the narrative of a film, as it determines how information is revealed to the audience and guides the audience's attention from shot to shot. Therefore, the author believes that a more comprehensive analysis on the application of game UI visualizations in film can be done through the analysis of the storyboard stage of filmmaking.

This paper is written based on the author's role as the director and storyboard artist of the animated short film *Patching Up*, which tells the story of a teenage girl and her fixation on a video game she played in her childhood. In *Patching Up,* there are two scenes in which fight sequences occur. The shot design in these scenes aims to make use of game UI visualizations such as HP bars and inventory items to visually communicate the progression of conflict. By outlining the design choices involved, this paper aims to contribute new insight to the field of animation by bridging game visualizations with traditional cinematography.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCOPE

Through the background outlined in the previous section, the author of this paper raises the following question: How can game UI visualizations communicate narrative information in the storyboard of *Patching Up?* This will serve as the research question for this paper.

To focus the scope of this paper, the author chose to limit the topic of discussion to a qualitative analysis of how different game UI visualizations can be portrayed in film. This will be analyzed through how the UI visualizations are expressed and used as a tool for communication, as well as the shot design used when game UI visualizations are present. Analysis of shot design will also be focused on shot sizes. Discussion will be limited to scene 5 of *Patching Up*, the climax of the film where Lena battles the Gloop in a pixel game world.

1.2. CREATIVE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research paper is to outline the shot design process in the animated short film *Patching Up* as it pertains to its references to video game UIs. Through reading this research paper, one would be able to identify the influences of video game UIs present in *Patching Up* and understand how these influences help to push the narrative forward. Furthermore, other animators and filmmakers

may find inspiration on how to implement video game UI influences into their own animated films.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. GAME USER INTERFACE

A game's User Interface (UI) appears on a game screen to present essential information that guides players, allowing them to navigate the game, progress, and achieve objectives (Kang & Choi, 2022). Because game UIs are designed to communicate information quickly and efficiently during gameplay, they often rely on repeated visualizations and familiar symbols that can be immediately recognized by players. Through repeated exposure across different games, audiences gradually form strong associations between certain UI visualizations and the information they communicate. The types of information that can be communicated and the ways this information is visualized varies greatly. In a paper by Masár & Kriglstein (2024) which proposes a taxonomy for in-game UI visualizations, said visualizations are separated into 4 categories: Heads-up display (HUD), loading screen, cutscenes, and game menu.