

A YEAR LATER, FREEDOM STILL RINGS

Almost 8,000 Acadiana citizens gathered at Cajun Field for “United We Stand: 9/11 Remembered,” a solemn ceremony on the one-year anniversary of the attack on America.

UL Lafayette’s marching band performed patriotic music, including a medley of songs associated with each branch of the U.S. military.



More than 3,000 people were killed when terrorists slammed two commercial jetliners into the World Trade Center in New York City and another into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Thanks to the heroic intervention of passengers, a fourth jetliner commandeered by terrorists plowed into an empty field in Pennsylvania instead of the nation’s capital.

Among the dead was Robert Hymel, a 1969 USL graduate who was working in the Pentagon as a civilian management analyst.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette will erect a permanent memorial on campus – constructed from a piece of the Pentagon wreckage – to honor Hymel and all the other victims of the terrorist assault.

“We are very honored to have this memorial on campus. It will represent not only those lost on September 11, but also the freedom this country holds so dear,” said UL Lafayette President Ray Authement.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP GOULD





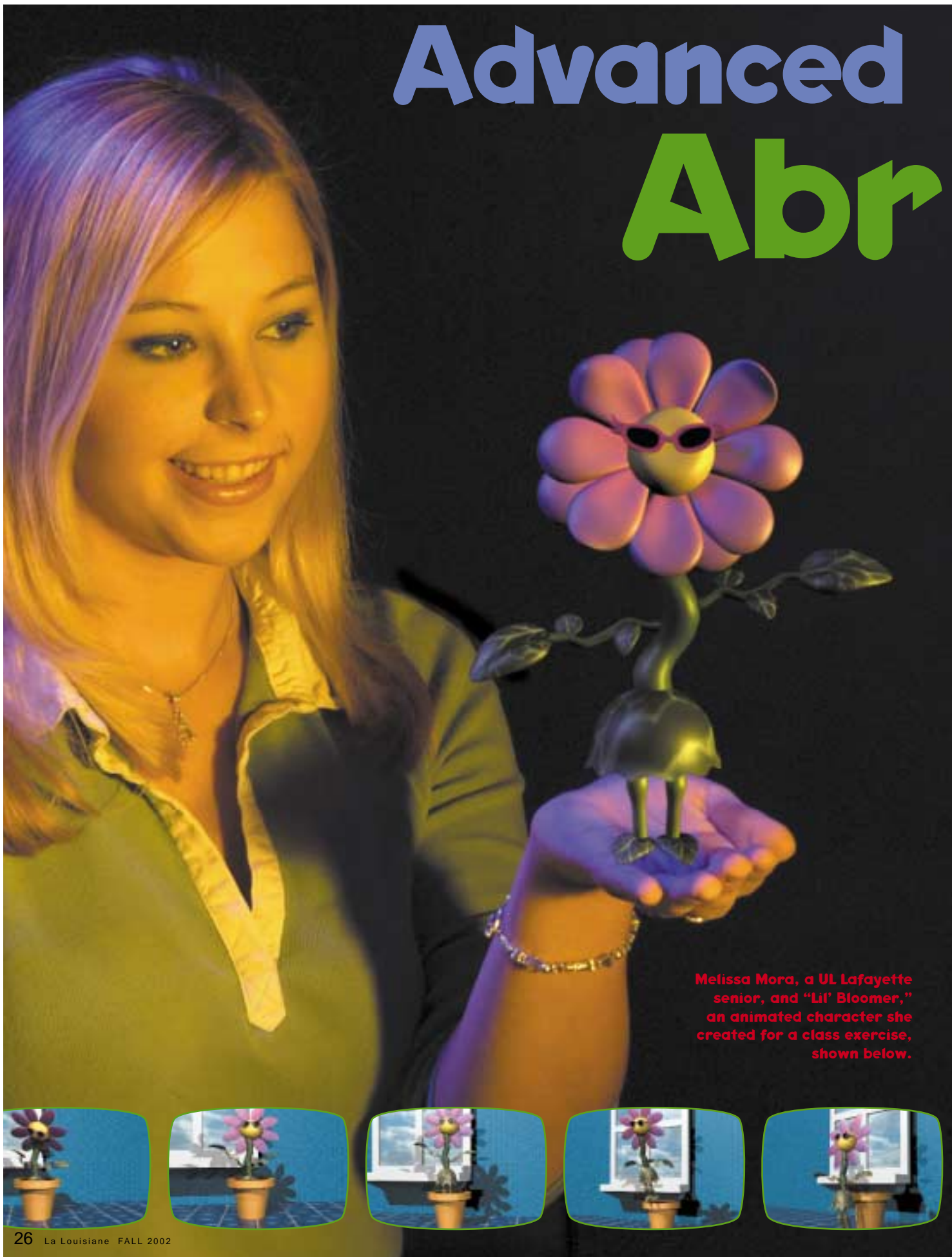
Lester Guidry, left, traveled to the Pentagon to make a personal appeal for material for memorials in Louisiana.



A fragment of limestone from the damaged face of the Pentagon was obtained for the university by Lester J. Guidry of Lafayette, a Korean War veteran who is commander of Stanley Martin-Felix Ducrest American Legion Post 69 in Lafayette. He also acquired parts of the damaged building for memorials in Parc Sans Souci in downtown Lafayette, American Legion Post 69 headquarters on Surrey Street and the city of Lake Charles. ■



Advanced Abr



Melissa Mora, a UL Lafayette senior, and "Li' Bloomer," an animated character she created for a class exercise, shown below.



acadabra

By Kathleen Thames

Large silver letters on a computer screen spell USL. Suddenly, a flaming, red pepper zips in front of them. Poof! The letter S burns to a crisp in its wake, leaving a pile of smoldering ashes. The pepper then shoves the U and L close together. It disappears from the screen for a moment, then reappears, pushing the word “Lafayette” to add to UL.

• In less than 15 seconds, this computer animated video has conveyed the university’s recent name change, and introduced an element of its spicy Ragin’ Cajuns® athletic logo, in a way that words cannot. • It was created by UL Lafayette senior Laura Kelley, using sophisticated computer animation software. Computer animation, for anyone who has been living in a cave for the past decade or so, is a high-tech term that means “magic.” • And UL Lafayette is where students learn how to become magicians.

Photography by Travis Gauthier



The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is the only university in the state that offers a bachelor's degree with a specialization in computer graphics and animation.

"Ours is much like a work environment. Students put together movies," said Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts.

But first, they must gain a broad perspective, by learning about traditional visual arts, such as painting, sculpture and design; by studying art history; and by absorbing fundamental design principles. They spend their last few semesters mastering "Maya," the world's leading 3-D computer animation software. It was used to produce such recent box office hits as *Ice Age*, *Shrek* and *Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.



Gordon Brooks, dean of the College of the Arts, hopes to someday establish a Center for Digital Moving Images.

"An animator is like a movie maker and making a movie is a collaborative effort. No one person does it," Brooks said. "Nonetheless, we teach our students, as artists, how to be independent. They do nearly everything." That includes 3-D modeling, texture mapping, lighting, backgrounds and sound.

Melissa Mora's favorite animated movie, "Fantasia," was created

almost four decades before she was born. As a child, the UL Lafayette senior was captivated by the timeless 1940 Walt Disney film, which combines two-dimensional animation with classical music.

Her fascination with the art form shaped her future. A New Orleans native, Mora chose to attend UL Lafayette because she wanted to earn a bachelor of fine arts degree with a specialization in computer animation.

To earn that degree, a senior must make a three-minute animated film that is judged worthy

by a panel composed of three faculty members in the Visual Arts Department of the College of the Arts.

"This doesn't sound like much, but when you consider the complexity of making every decision related to all components and making every, and I mean every, movement of a character and cameras, it's a lot," Brooks said. One second of animation, for example, is filled with at least 24 frames of an image.

Mora spends three to five hours a day working on her senior project. Sitting in front of a computer screen for so long, day after day, influenced what she chose to animate.

"It makes you forget what it feels like to experience nature like I did when I was a kid, when I spent most of my time outside of the house, playing until dusk," she explained. "To reconnect to that time, I want to create a personal dimension of nature through dreams and fantasy, mystery, magic, chaos and suspense." Her movie tells the tale of a tiny, shimmering fairy trapped briefly in a young girl's room one night as she sleeps.



Katherine Harmon created an animated sequence entitled "Solar System," shown above.

Right: "All Ruffled Up" by Johnathon Champagne



Yeon Choi, an assistant professor, teaches computer animation courses at UL Lafayette.

What do she and other faculty panelists look for when they review a senior project?

“First, whether the idea is fresh. What kind of message did they deliver with their work?” she replied. Although a student’s film is only three minutes in length, it must have a message to keep the viewer engaged.

“Of course, I’m an animator. I have to see the movement, especially when they use a character,” Choi continued. “I have to see whether the character moves naturally. Or, if there’s a leaf falling from a tree, I have to see whether it falls naturally.”

The panel looks for many other elements, as well, including lighting and transitions between scenes.

Choi holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in painting from Ewha University in Seoul, Korea, but went on to earn a master’s degree in computer arts from the University of Massachusetts. That



Yeon Choi and Nathan Champagne concentrate on an animated sequence, awash in light from a computer monitor. Choi teaches students how to use “Maya,” a popular 3-D computer animation software program.

move. The more I learned, the more interested I became. It was so fascinating. I was not only dealing with color and space, but also motion and sound at the same time.”

Brooks said many students in UL Lafayette’s College of the Arts have an opposite experience. “Now, the majority of our freshman students declare themselves interested in graphic design, animation, elec-



“Perpetual” by Julie Lanclos

leap from such a traditional art form was unexpected, she said.

In the late Nineties, she was teaching young students to paint. “They played video games a lot and when they came to the studio, they would talk about them. I thought I should learn how computer graphics worked.”

At first, she said, “I wanted to make my paintings

tronic art or video. That doesn’t mean they all stay that way. . . They ‘discover’ sculpture, they ‘discover’ painting. They ‘discover’ other forms they are attracted to,” he said. “It is ‘art’ that interests them and computer animation is another medium – like photography, painting or sculpture – for self expression.”

Mora’s interest in computer animation was not





Above: "Echo of Youth" by Cort Chatagnier



Auman Landry fine-tunes the image of a jellyfish, using sophisticated computer animation software.

diverted. But she is grateful for the breadth of courses she was required to take.

"I'm glad I came to UL Lafayette because I've learned so much about fine art. To have an overall background, to learn about sculpture, ceramics and painting, gives you the whole 3-D perspective," she said.

Computer animation was first embraced by scientists, who used it to illustrate concepts that may be difficult for some people to visualize, such as molecular structures or weather systems. But its potential for advertising and entertainment quickly became apparent.

"Now it's the artists, as well as the scientists, who work with computer animation and the entertainment industry drives it," Brooks noted.

An entire industry was created with the marriage of computer science and art: video games.

"Pong," introduced by Atari in 1972, was one of the first home video games to capture the public's imagination, although it consisted of little more than the image of a ball bouncing back and forth across a television screen.

Some UL Lafayette students initially plan to major in computer science because they want to learn how to make video games. "But games are produced by gamers, not computer scientists," Brooks said. Other students seek art majors for the same reason, "but they don't know how to write code. Computer scientists must take an animator's model and strip it to a smaller size."

He envisions a place in Lafayette where artists and scientists can collaborate, a Center for Digital Moving Images.

UL Lafayette and Acadiana "are uniquely positioned, geographically, collaboratively, technologically, and culturally to provide leadership in the application of existing technologies and the development of new digital moving image technologies. . ." he states in a proposal for the pilot project.

The center's primary goal would be to support the development of entertainment and information technology, which are two of the nine industry clusters identified in "Vision 2020," Louisiana's long-term master plan for economic development. The center would create an online digital image archive and a digital moving image studio. Also, it would promote scientific research into data mining, digital imagery and streaming video technology.

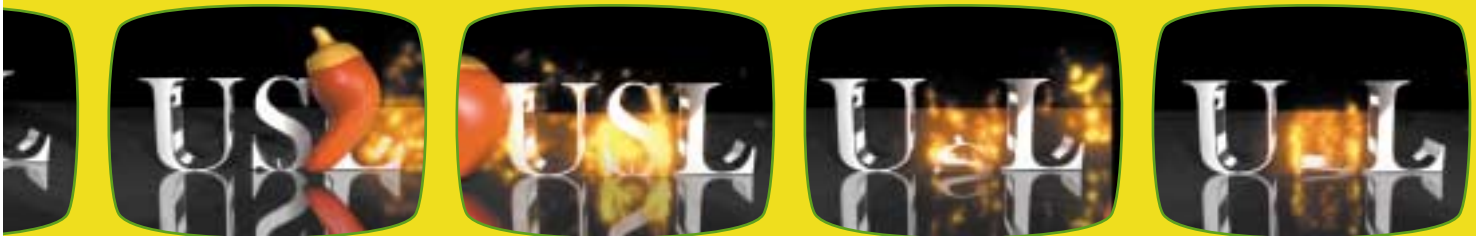
Brooks is exploring financing options to establish such a facility.

UL Lafayette senior Laura Kelley recalls how her father mentioned one day that he had seen a trailer for *Shrek*, an animated movie.

"That must have taken someone a long time to make," he observed.

"No, Dad, it took a couple of *hundred* people several *years* to make it," she corrected.

The number of people required to produce





computer animated feature films is impressive. For example, more than 450 people are listed as artists, cast and crew for *Monsters, Inc.*, including 49 animators. That's good news for anyone who wants to work in the computer animation industry.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the demand for multimedia artists and animators is expected to increase 75 percent during this decade.

Pixar, one of the nation's leading computer animation companies, has an FAQ website for human resources information. It notes that the company "does not judge potential candidates on the basis of the school they attended (or didn't) and therefore we do not recommend any particular school (s) . . ."

But it does offer some advice: "In choosing an animation-related school, look for one that focuses on

traditional skills, drawing, painting, sculpture, cinematography. Ask the school how they will help you build an effective portfolio of your work; not merely a collection of your assignments, but a well developed presentation of your unique point of view, and your technical skills."

According to Brooks, employment opportunities are one reason students seek training in computer animation. "They know they will get real jobs, with something that is more commercial than traditional visual arts. They see it as new commercial art."

David Ryan Paul, a 1996 graduate of UL Lafayette's computer animation program, landed his dream job three years ago. He's a senior artist at LucasArts Entertainment Company, a leading developer of video games founded by Star Wars creator George Lucas.

Paul's primary responsibility is to create digital character models for the company's games. "However, during a project, I will be asked to create any number of art assets, including drawings, props, vehicles, environments and various marketing artwork. I also teach other artists new, or current techniques with the software we use to author our artwork," he said during a recent interview.

The training he received at UL Lafayette has paid off in a big way.

"Even though I do most of my job using a computer, the lessons I learned in the fine arts curriculum are still with me today. The classes that had the most impact on me as an artist were figure drawing, design, and various computer and media courses offered by the Art Department. The tools of the trade are constantly changing and evolving, so it is important to get traditional art training," he said.

Paul said the most satisfying part of his job is working with other creative people. "An artist cannot grow without the influence and collaboration of others. LucasArts has provided me with a wonderful learning and creative environment."

In other words, it's the perfect place to work a little magic. ■



Laura Kelley and "Sheepish," a character she created for her senior project. Below, her animated sequence illustrates UL Lafayette's name change and introduces a component of its new athletic logo.

