

Personal Statement: Independent Filmmaking, 3D, and A.I.

By Scott Boswell

Background & Context

My goal as a writer and director has always been to create work that is engaging, and hopefully meaningful, within the limited resources available to me. To date, my work has primarily comprised live-action coming-of-age stories focused on the formation of queer identity within a conservative world. I have completed numerous shorts and two features (with a third currently in progress) exploring this theme. Over the course of my filmmaking career, I have found what it means to create work independently has shifted dramatically.

During my college years, I relished the golden era of independent filmmaking that flourished in the 1990s. As a young film student, I was especially influenced by New Queer Cinema and early digital movements such as Dogme '95. Although that era has long since passed, its influence persists, and more films are now created annually than ever before. I cannot claim to know exactly where independent filmmaking stands in today's landscape of corporate streaming services and superhero blockbusters. What I do know is that filmmaking has never been more accessible, nor has the potential for reaching audiences ever been greater. Personally, I intend to continue making independent films for as long as I am able.

Currently, I am working on a feature-length 3D animation project, something that would have seemed impossible only a few years ago. Like millions of others, the COVID-19 pandemic and the experience of quarantine prompted me to reevaluate aspects of my creative practice. I began exploring alternative approaches to media-making in relative isolation, which ultimately led me to 3D animation. The subsequent proliferation of artificial intelligence has only deepened that exploration and continues to shape it.

Current Project: *Bloodroot*

Growing up, I was fascinated by vampires. As a young person, I did not yet understand the long-established tradition linking queerness with vampirism, in which the vampire often functions as a metaphor for forbidden desire and transgression. Nevertheless, vampires resonated with me, and I suspect I was far from alone in that experience. More recently, the rise of social injustice and political backlash in the United States has further fueled my creative drive, and the story of *Bloodroot* began to take shape.

Bloodroot is set in a world where vampires live covertly while their survival is threatened by rogue militias and corporate power. Vigilante vampire hunters seek to eradicate them in the name of righteousness, while a powerful underground assassination network aims to enslave vampires and exploit their abilities for profit. In this version of the mythology, vampires are not soulless killing machines. Although they rely on blood for survival and strength, they remain governed by the same moral complexities as mortal humans, creating the foundation for a range of ethical dilemmas.

At its core, *Bloodroot* is both a vampire origin story and a hero origin story centered on a queer protagonist — something that would have seemed implausible until relatively recently and still remains uncommon in major Hollywood films. Over the years, I have often contemplated how such a hero might be realized onscreen, and this project represents, in part, an effort to bring that vision into existence.

Relationship to A.I.

In recent years, I have increasingly explored the role of A.I. in independent media creation. While A.I. presents exciting new opportunities for filmmakers, it also raises significant creative and ethical questions. *Bloodroot* combines my longstanding focus on queer fiction filmmaking with emerging technologies that support — rather than replace — human-generated creative work. My goal is to remain engaged with these rapidly evolving tools in anticipation of how A.I. will influence both the film industry and the Cinema program at SFSU. Through the development of *Bloodroot*, we have already discovered a substantial amount, though much work remains ahead.

As a filmmaker, I remain committed to avoiding the use of generative A.I. as a substitute for creative authorship. Too often, its use reflects a lack of ethical consideration and produces work that feels artistically hollow. At this stage, I remain convinced that successful filmmaking depends upon human collaboration and intuition; A.I. simply cannot replace inspired creativity or artistic insight. At the same time, I have found that certain A.I.-assisted tools can help filmmakers realize creative visions in ways that were previously inaccessible — for example, by accelerating aspects of animation production or improving audio cleanup. My hope is that independent filmmakers will play an important role in advocating for responsible and sustainable integration of A.I. into creative practice. As an instructor, I have begun asking students to confront these questions in the classroom.