

# You Must Alter Your Relationship With Time

Award-Winning  
Filmmaker  
BRONWYN  
MALONEY '09  
on the Illusion  
of Time and  
Hand-Drawn  
Animation



ANIMATOR AND FILMMAKER Bronwyn Maloney '09 is at work right now on an animated sci-fi film about a young woman who's being repeatedly cloned, and therefore her life cannot progress past a certain point. She's reborn again and again at the age of 11.

"What is interesting to me about it are the ways in which a person's perception of time would be distorted if you were removed from the timeline that everyone else was living in. That is so interesting to try and portray in animation because to animate, you must alter your relationship with time."

For an artist asking these futuristic questions of her art and actively bending an unbendable construct, the process through which she explores is a long, tedious, detail-oriented, precise, and entirely by hand—you must alter your relationship with time in order to animate because it takes years to create seconds worth of time in the work itself.

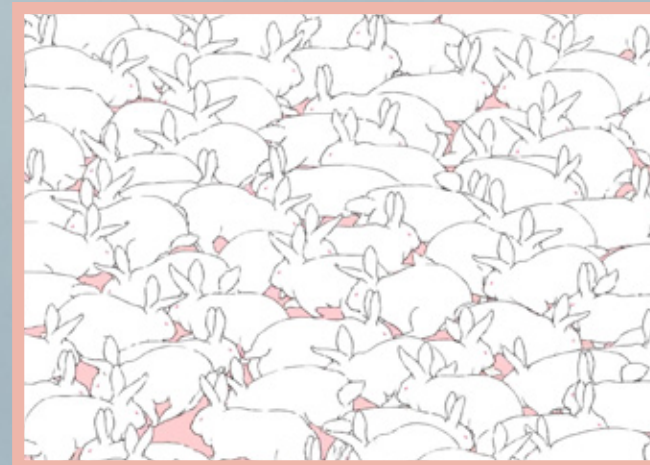
MALONEY GREW UP in Manhattan, seeking out corners of space and quiet and time in a frantic, restless city. For her, Putney was a refuge. Space and time were abundant. The woods surrounding her cabin were quiet. Simple tasks, like barn chores and splitting kindling, were part of her daily routine. Weaving taught her to relish a project that was a large commitment. It was at Putney that she began to realize her calling as an artist connected with this pleasure in repetitive work.

She came slowly, thoughtfully, through a stint in theater, to hand-drawn animation. What she creates now others have described as "poetic film." She calls it "experimental animation."

That being said, she no longer spends too much time trying to nail down what to call what she makes.

"I went to Putney and then Bennington College. Both schools have a lot in common, and I was taught at both schools

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Still frame from the animated film, *Serpentine*, in which Maloney created, by hand and one frame at a time, morphing images that will delight and haunt you.

that, whatever your interests are, they're probably more connected than you consciously think."

At Bennington, the process was even more explicit. Majors are self-designed, and reflection on their various connected parts was ongoing.

But, says Maloney, a lesson she walked away with was perhaps counterintuitive to the educational design: Sometimes you are drawn in two directions, and you don't have to name the connection. In fact, many of her films and projects have two seemingly unrelated ideas at play. As an artist, she says, "I have to practice having trust in those connections."

HER FIRST FILM, *Serpentine*, went to festivals all over the world. It won the Helen Hill Animation Award at the New Orleans Film Festival in 2018.

"As soon as I was finished with it and had to start something else, I was terrified again, because I had to either

replicate it or preferably do something different and better," she said.

One area of complication for Maloney is narrative.

"I don't make explicitly narrative work. However, I've seen so much narrative work in my life that my brain always wants that element. It feels unsafe without it. But I get frustrated when I try to include it."

She does not work from a script or, even, recognizable characters. *Serpentine's* themes were about aloneness and introspection, sex and self-identity. She knows from having screened it all over the world that many viewers understand the themes precisely without the efforts of explicit narrative.

MALONEY IS NOT a luddite. She relies on technology to create her work. She draws each frame in Photoshop. At the same time, it is essentially the original, analog process of inking cells,

painting cells, layering cells, and photographing them one by one.

The variability in technology gives her apprehension.

"My perspective on technology and art is still developing," she said. "It will probably continue to change my whole life, because things are going to change."

She has also seen really interesting work come from an artist's exploration of software. Another filmmaker she knows, Ted Wiggin, designs software as part of his artistic practice, makes a film with it, and ultimately releases the software for other artists to work with.

"Software simply isn't trustworthy," said Maloney. "It changes so frequently."

Ultimately the question about art and technology is a question, like animation itself, about time.

See Bronwyn's work at [bronwynmaloney.com](http://bronwynmaloney.com).