

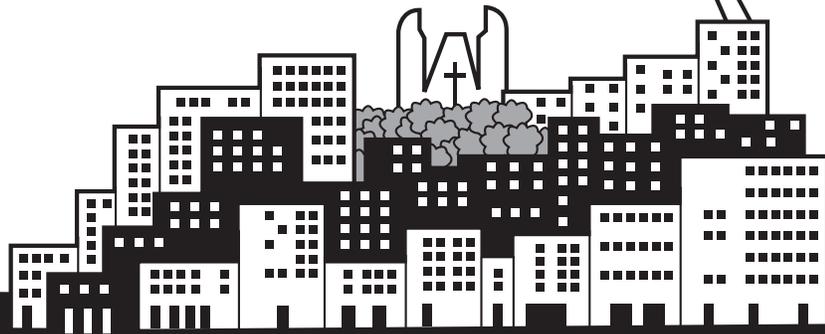
This story is about the city of the south

Titans:

analogies on a city



CIUDA del SUR



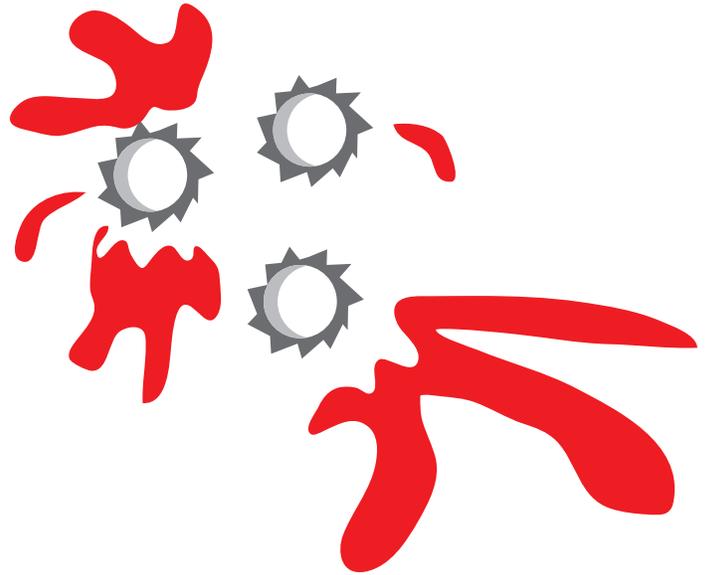
an animation by Francisco Ortega-Grimaldo

for more details visit fog-site.com/titans | © 2011

Synopsis.



“Titans” is the story about the City of the South and a series of events that transformed this beautiful metropolis into chaos. Within 13 minutes of animated film, Francisco Ortega-Grimaldo summarizes a decade of history and uses an analogy to explain the situation of his beloved Ciudad Juárez. Each one of the characters (the Fatties in the Sky, the Mosquitoes, the Leader, the Forces of Order, and the Citizens) shares the guilt in this narration that makes no effort of embellishing the current situation.



Technical Info.

Credits: Created by Francisco Ortega-Grimaldo

Country: México / USA

Date: August 5, 2012

Length: 13 minutes

Technique: Vectors and digital images

Software: Illustrator, Photoshop, Anime Studio Pro,
Final Cut Pro, and GarageBand



About Titans.

Concept.

I got the idea for Titans late in 2010, after knowing the details of a massacre during a youth party in Ciudad Juárez. At first I felt the need to write an article based on newspapers and online comments to summarize the tragedy. Later I thought of creating a short story around those terrible true facts; but then it quickly transformed into this kind of analogy, where parasites live off people in what I called “the city of the south.”

When I finally placed the ideas on paper I felt that a written story would not be enough to describe what I wanted to convey. On one hand I was thinking about this concept in a very graphic way, on the other hand I wanted to disseminate the project in a format that could get proper attention from different audiences.

To begin the story, the first creature that came to mind was the “mosquito” because it is an insect that requires blood to breed and survive; so far that these drug-wars in Ciudad Juárez had cost plenty of blood and it was an important element to represent. The mosquito is also called “moyote” in the north of México; this particular name helps to set the region that I am talking about in the story, because in the south of México the same insect is known as “zancudo.”

Everything in the animation is a summary or synopsis of a bigger concept. The characters, for example, represent certain groups, organizations, or institutions. Complicated and diverse territories are represented by two simple words: north and south. The 13 minute-animation compile almost 10 years of tragic events.

Once I established how every element was going to work, I wrote the script as a narrative, as if somebody was talking. Based on that I started the production.

Production.

Originally I wanted to do a stop-motion animation and started doing some tests using Photoshop. Considering the amount of objects that I needed to move simultaneously, I knew this process would take more time than the expected. I spent almost three months of work and got less than 2 minutes of film. I needed to find a better way. Then I decided to speed up with the help of a software program called Anime Studio Pro and by late April I already had 5 minutes of a first draft.

Before continuing with production, I wanted to put those 5 minutes to the test. The comments I received were not very favorable. The first draft was silent; it explained the story using gestures instead of dialog so the audience could create their own conclusions. With the collaboration of my brother we develop a soundtrack to improve the rhythm of the story. I was excited and satisfied with the result, but then I realized the audience was not reacting to the story the way I expected.

After reviewing the silent draft I understood I was creating a long introduction for the characters, many unnecessary details; those details were slowing the story. Besides, this first version was in color. There was something wrong with the use of color; it gave the story an inappropriate atmosphere. Given the circumstances, I decided to throw it all away and start from scratch.

By late May I redesigned the characters and made them a bit more stylized. Instead of scanning detailed pictures, I decided to sketch and trace them in Adobe Illustrator. Since Anime Studio works better with vector images, this process helped me create scenes faster and easier. I also reworked the storyboard to include dialogs and make the story move smoother.

Between the failure of the first attempt and the new storyboard, I searched for inspiration in the work of two artists. I decided to make my film in black and white based on the work of British animator Phil Mulloy. Adam Elliot's films also inspired me in the use of dialog. This Australian animator employs a tranquil, distant voice over moving, emotional stories.

For this new version, I decided to make all the preparations before even thinking about animating, so during the month of June I made all the drawings needed. I discovered that once the animation process starts, it is terribly exhausting having to go back and sketch something that is missing. That is why it is highly recommended to finish all the preparations in advanced; even then, there is always a small reason to go back and fix or work on some detail. I used every single available moment from July through August to work in the animation process.

Postproduction.

My deadline was August 5, 2011, same deadline set for a contest I wanted to participate. The postproduction process lasted 48 hours. Editing was not complicated; as a matter of fact I enjoyed it very much, but working with sound without the right equipment or environment can make things difficult. I used GarageBand because it provides a number of useful audio tools, although I had to create many of the audio effects using my voice; the software helped me distort it and place it accordingly in the sequence. Recording the narration was the most difficult part because despite the amount of tests I made, I could not remove the background noise, that part turned out to be a challenge. Regardless, I finished the final product on time. Now I am working on the most crucial and important step: promotion.

As a Conclusion.

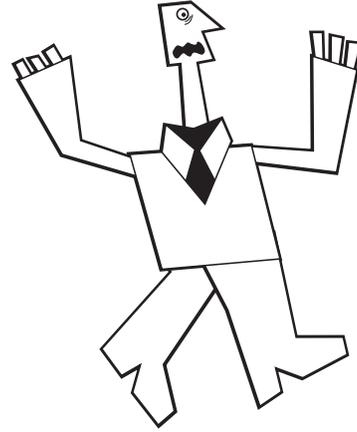
Having finished a project like this is a very satisfying experience. Lots of hours spent in creating a story that at first only I could visualize. Externalizing the story through animation feels like a magic trick. Static objects become alive by movement and acquire personality.

To me, "Titans" is an accomplished goal that has given me confidence to keep working and developing more animations. From this process I learned a number of techniques that theory does not teach. Although anyone can create an animation, to finish a project the key requirements are real love for what you are doing and almost a pathological obsession. The idea of quitting crossed my mind a few times; sometimes it is frustrating because the process is very slow, but Titans was a film that I really wanted to see and I felt as an obligation to make it happen.

I hope you have the opportunity to see it sometime.

**Francisco Ortega Grimaldo,
September 2011.**





About Francisco.

He was born in Chihuahua, México and grew up in Ciudad Juárez. Later on, he received a B.A. degree in Graphic Arts and Psychology at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Professional.

Currently he works as an Assistant Professor in Communication Design at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, Texas). Some of the subjects he teaches are Symbols, Publishing Design, Web Media Design, and Motion Graphics.

Education.

He received a M.A. in Graphic Arts from the University of Texas in El Paso in 2002. His thesis was on the subjects of book history, evolution, and new technologies and cross-cultural perceptions on the border.

In 2008, he obtained a PhD in Critical Studies and Artistic Practices from Texas Tech. His dissertation was titled “Games as cultural practice: Postcolonial Imaginations” (more information at ludoztli.com).

About his experience in animated films.

Francisco is not a full time animator and his knowledge on the subject has been self-taught. During the course of his career, he has done a number of short animated films projects for clients, mainly using Macromedia Flash and Maya. Since 2008, he had the chance to teach some animation classes using Stop-Motion as well as some typography projects using Flash.

In 2010 he started studying intensely the history, theory, and techniques of animation as well as the work done by contemporary artists. He also learned how to use Anime Studio Pro and developed Titans using this software.

You can contact Francisco at:

pako@ludoztli.com and/or
francisco.ortega@ttu.edu