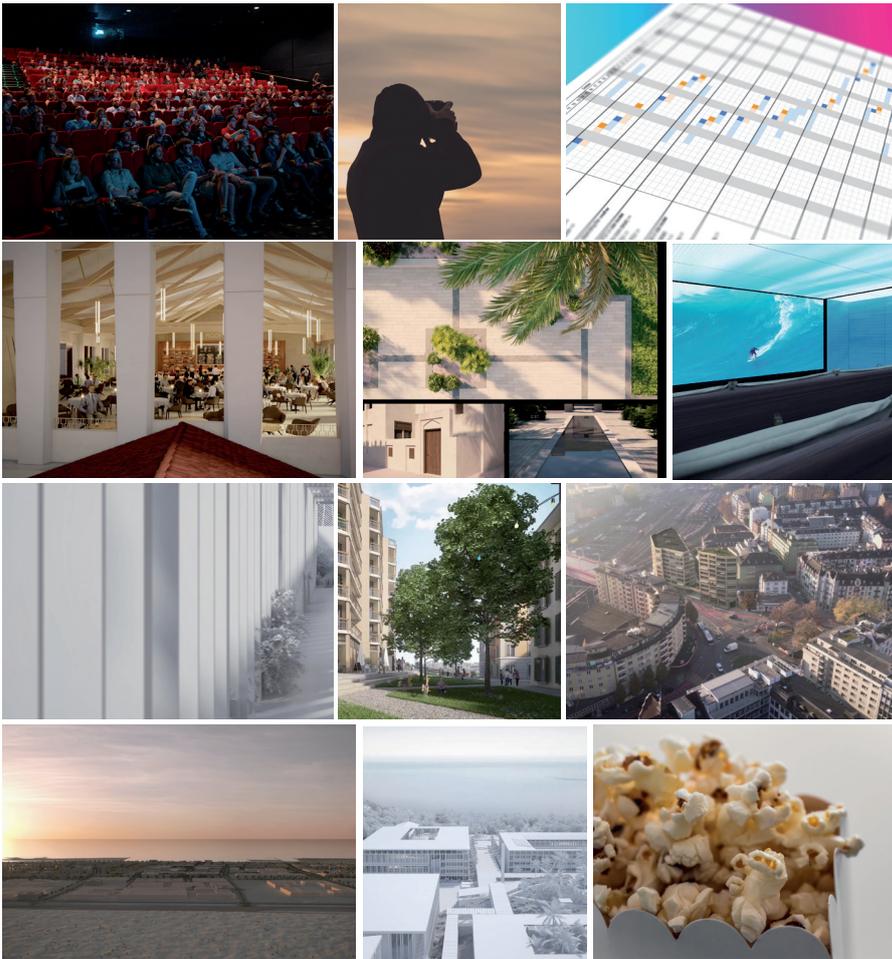
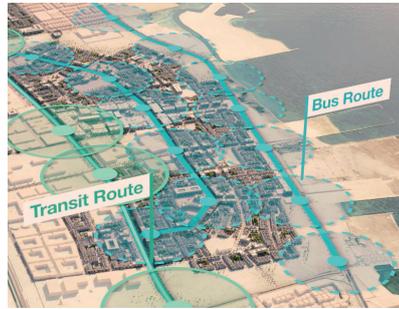
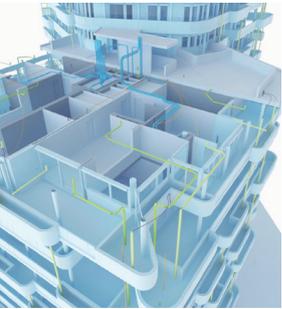




## Visual Workflow for Animations



Step-by-step description of the Nightnurse Images production process for quality assurance and a successful cooperation



Animation projects are the outstanding medium when it comes to attracting a critical audience, conveying ideas or presenting time sequences. They dominate social media and manage to inspire us in times of short attention spans. They are real heavyweights of communication.

They are also heavyweights when it comes to commissioning them. Commissioning an animation project can be a challenge even for experienced project managers. Being commissioned with an animation project is always an expression of trust, which we have come to appreciate significantly over the last ten years of experience.

We are talking about a creative process where hard requirements and innovative ideas have to be transformed into a film project, often only a few minutes long. Of course, there is potential for tension when taking responsibility for projects of this size. Usually, these come from uncertainty about the process itself.

Can we, as producers, expect our clients to understand what we need from them? What do I, as a client, have to do to help the project succeed? How often can I make corrections? What if I don't like the look?

These are all "frequently asked questions" as we know them from our experience.

We have often gone through this process and have made it our business to try to square the circle with this practical guide:

Even though every animation project is unique, we believe we have found a method to standardize the process. This step-by-step manual makes the whole process clearer, easier to understand and better for everyone involved.

This document shows the required information for every step and what influence our customers have at what point in time when creating an animation project with us.

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Like all complex tasks, animations become controllable and ultimately successful through proper planning.

For us, one of the most critical tools in planning an animation project is a thorough clarification of expectations and goals - and the creation of the appropriate schedule.

The steps in this phase are:

- Kickoff meeting to clarify general conditions
- Setting the common goals of the project
- Scheduling in the form of a Gantt chart
  - Which actions follow each other?
  - How much time does each step take?
  - Up to which dates does Nightnurse produce which intermediate result?
  - How much time does the customer have to give feedback?
  - Which feedback does Nightnurse need to continue?

The results of this first step will be a document containing the kickoff meeting minutes and a Gantt chart, laying out all deadlines up to project completion.

To be able to continue with the work, we need at this point.

- Confirmation or feedback on minutes and schedule

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We assign a visualizer to each project during the planning phase. For larger projects, this can be a team of several visualizers and a project manager.

In addition to the team working on it, each project is assigned a "Creative Director". This role helps to control intermediate stages and to recognize creative possibilities to continuously improve the quality of our work

To be able to start work, we need drawings or models of the project. We are happy to receive these via our project platform Basecamp as a data package at the agreed date. At best, this package contains all project-relevant documents. If a 3D model of the project is not yet available, we will create one based on this data.

To be able to start, we need:

- Relevant plans (as .dwg and for control as .pdf)
  - Views
  - Floor plans
  - Sections
- For outdoor pictures: a situation or landscape plan
- Relevant detailed plans
- If already known: approximate viewpoints, marked in a floor plan
- If available: Conceptual sketches or first image ideas.
  
- If available: 3D model
  - please note the [guide for 3D models](#)
  - We reserve the right to create new 3D models ourselves if the quality of the 3D models provided makes further processing of the project difficult or impossible.
  
- If available: Photos,
  - please follow the [guidelines for photography on site](#)
  - We reserve the right to re-take supplied photos of the surroundings which are of a quality that makes good further processing of the project difficult or impossible (resolution too low, inadequate exposure, images blurred or out of focus, focus area insufficiently represented or obscured by objects).

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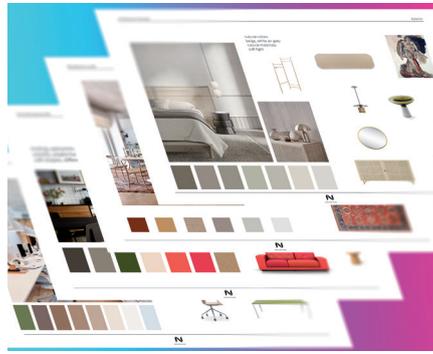
08. First Cut  
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In this step, we collect reference images and films with which our animation should correspond.

Reference material can indicate:

- the type of presentation
  - will it be a descriptive animation
  - will we mainly try to arouse emotions
  - does it aim to depict realism in its materiality
  - are we showing a technical procedure
- Selection of camera settings (focal lengths, eye heights)
- Colour scheme (desaturated or brilliant)
- Atmospheric qualities
  - Daylight or artificial light
  - Choice of time of day
  - soft or hard shadows
  - Light colour

Often there are many different references for the various aspects of a film. For example, one reference image may be right for the colour scheme and another for a type of presentation.

To be able to continue with the editing at this point, we need:

- Confirmation or feedback on the mood board

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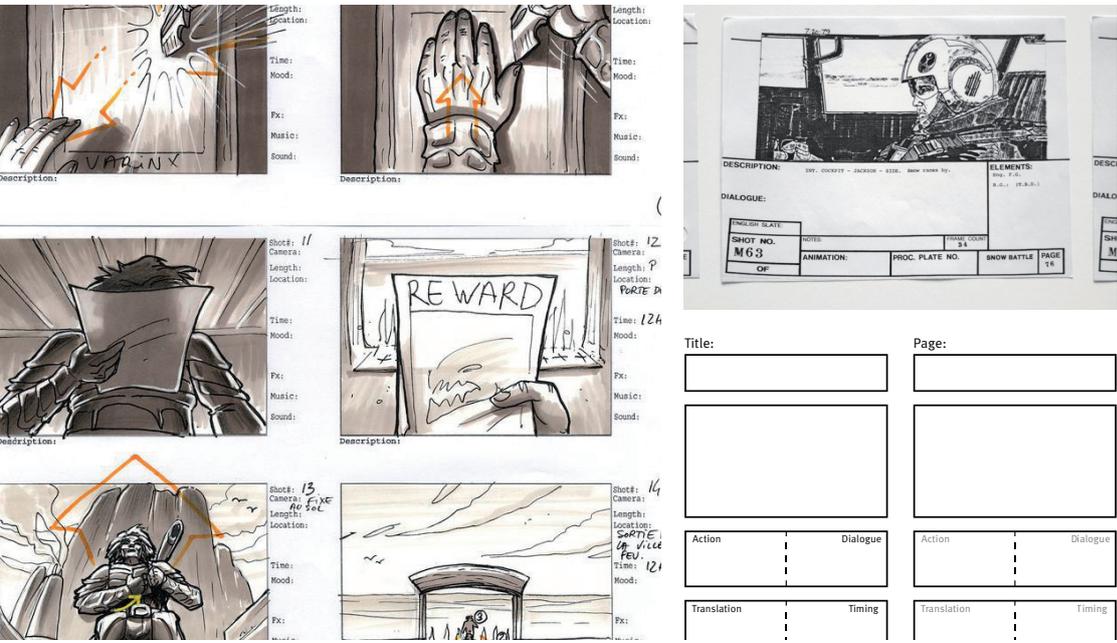
08. First Cut  
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In this step, we transform the information on the film project into a coherent Story for the first time. We do this through a series of sketches - hand-drawn or 3D - and place them in chronological order.

The result is the well-known storyboard - a still representation of the scenes of the animation, much like a comic-book. Each frame has a field of information next to it, that describes its characteristics.

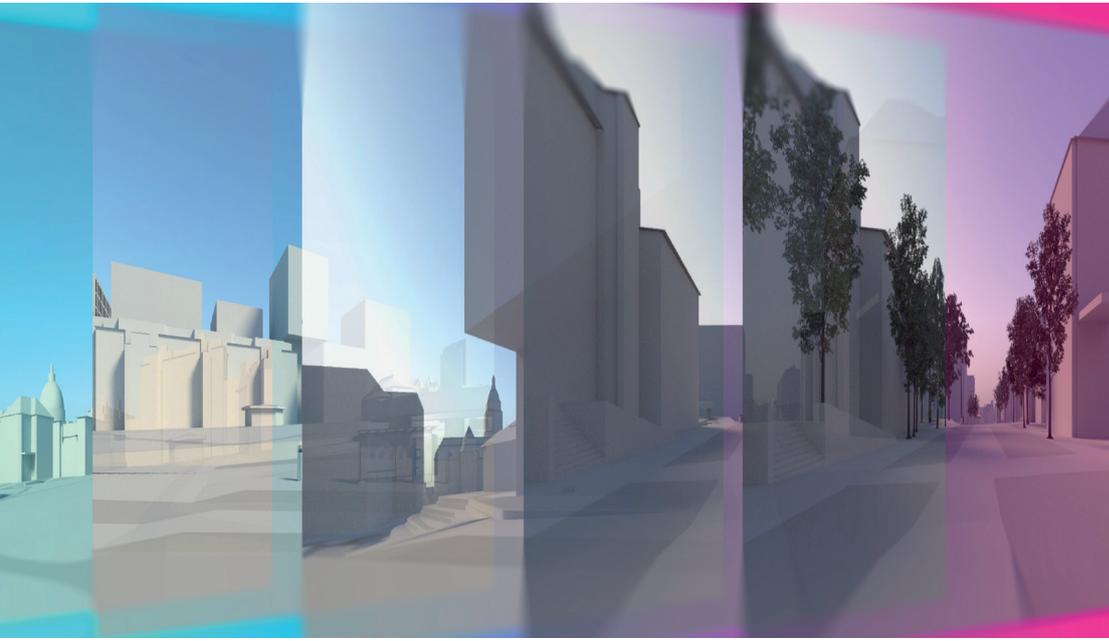
These can include:

- camera movement (direction, motion, speed)
- camera settings (zoom, depth of field)
- lighting
- time of day
- weather
- mood description
- movement of people or objects in the scene
- a first guess at the duration of scenes

The storyboard is usually in pencil or black and white, the sketches represent the intention of the stage.

To be able to continue at this point, we need:

- feedback on the mood board



In this step, we take the feedback on the sketched version of the storyboard and transform the story into moving images for the first time.

We model the camera movements following the storyboard descriptions and show the scenes as viewport renderings. These scenes are recorded and loosely chained together, also as outlined in the storyboard. The result is the first animated version of the story.

This step is useful to check on the assumptions made in the still storyboard, and in particular, the following:

- camera movements and speed in real-time
- camera settings such as zoom
- the spatial impression of scenes

The scenes are usually not textured, and without lighting setup, so this step will not yet give much information about lighting and exposure, for example.

To carry on to the next step, we will need:

- feedback or confirmation for the storyboard

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This step may not always be necessary, depending on the type or location of the project - but if it is within reach and outdoor shots are to be part of the final result, it is often worth taking photos on location.

We own proper photo equipment and several drones and can provide all kinds of film, photo and aerial shots for the project. In the case of particular shooting requirements, we also have a network of other professionals that we can call on. We also have some experience with taking aerial photos from helicopters.

If possible, we always take the street-level shots at the time of day described in the storyboard.

We can take this step in several phases of the production process. We will submit the material for approval, but can usually continue working on the animation while it is still pending.

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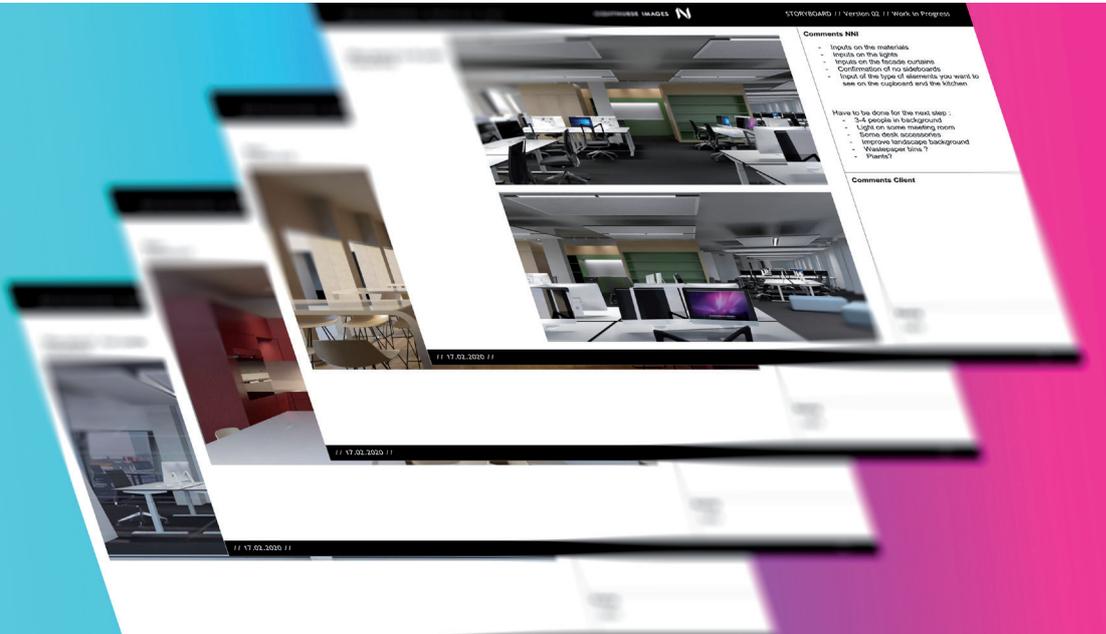
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In this step, we work through the 3D content of the scenes and apply texturing and lighting. This is a time-intensive step and usually takes some time.

As a result, we create a document showing the first and last frame of each fully textured, lit and rendered sequence. This document serves as a means of controlling and approving the appearance of spaces and objects. It also gives the first comprehensive impression of the "Look and Feel" of the project.

To continue, we need:

- The approval for the appearance of the scenes and objects.

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When we have received the approval for all first and last frames of each scene from the previous step, we start rendering the complete scenes and merge them into the master sequence of the movie.

In this step, we create a first rough cut of the whole project, probably with a placeholder here and there, but usually, you can see from it:

- The length of the master sequence and the duration of each scene
- The first version of titles and moving graphics
- The entire content of the scenes (not only opening and closing frames)
- Additional objects, such as trees, cars, people, furniture
- The cut, i.e. the transitions between the scenes
- The whole story

To continue, we need

- Comments on the first cut.

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Once we have received the input for the first cut, we expect correction requests that relate to the entire length of the animation.

Since the scenes are already rich in assets and textures, it is essential at this point to keep the amount of work under control while at the same time fulfilling all high-priority change requests. We report to our clients at this stage, what the desired change would mean in terms of effort, cost and impact. This feedback gives all parties involved an excellent understanding of how to control the production budget at this critical point in the process.

The result of this step is another static document that represents the first and last images of all scenes. This provides an effective means of checking that all the individual points have been completed to everyone's satisfaction before we start the "Big Rendering".

To proceed to the next step, we need

- Confirmation of all corrections in all scenes

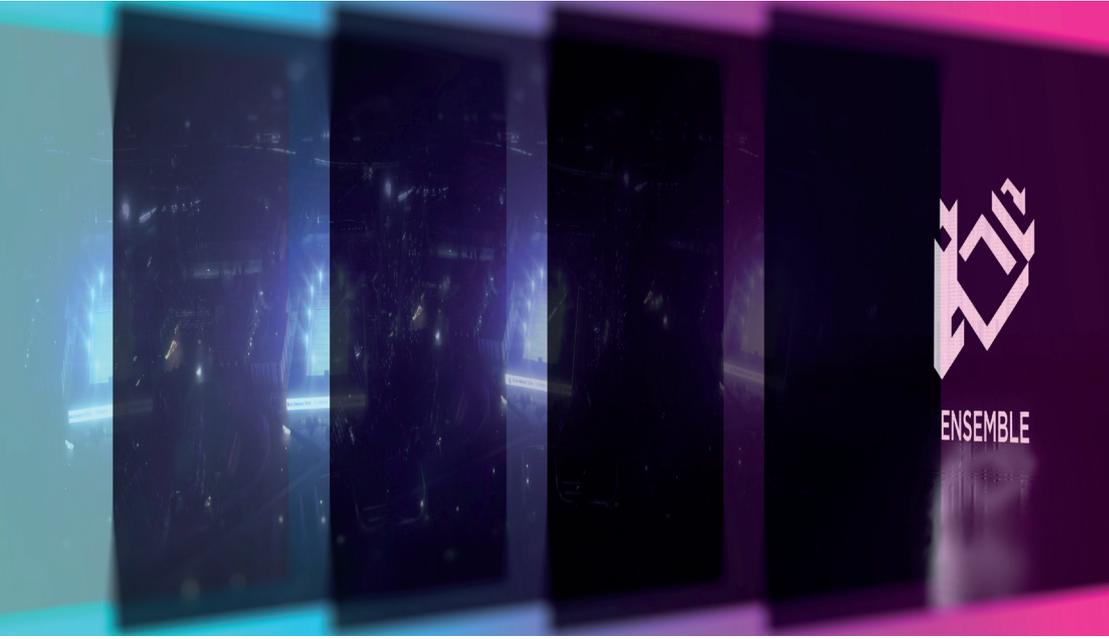
We will repeat this step until we can confidently state that it is safe to proceed into the next phase.

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At this point, we produce a full length and full quality film to pass on to post-production in the next step.

The possible types of corrections at this stage mainly concern the shortening of scenes and all kinds of comments on titles and motion graphics.

To proceed to the next step, we need confirmation on:

- Length of all individual scenes
- The total length of the film

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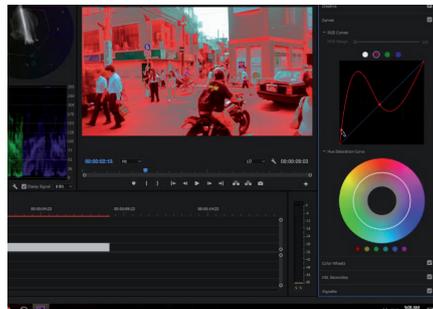
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In this step, the entire master sequence, the film, is transferred to post-production. This part of the process can include adding sounds and music (very different things), colour corrections, motion graphics and visual effects.

We can provide all this internally or externally. We are proud to have built a network of specialized partners to whom we can outsource particularly demanding steps.

To synchronize film and music, slight shifts in the cut of the animation may occur during this phase.

The result is the final film - open for a final round of commentary, which should focus on post-production.

To continue, we need

- Confirmation for everything visible and audible, so basically for the complete film.

We will then apply the finishing touches and continue with the next step, which is:

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The final film.

This is it. The movie. The result of a journey that sometimes took several months to complete.

We try to hand over the finished project with a presentation on a big screen as often as possible - but the harsh reality of our clients' everyday lives is that sometimes we can only hand over the files. These files are "ready to run" and are then often put to work immediately to make a presentation shine, to excite a particular audience or to give a newly launched website a centre of gravity.

At the time of writing this text, we have produced 29 films (and look forward to many more). The moment when these projects are handed over to clients is always a special moment for us. This applies to all our visualization projects. But filmmaking is still something exceptional.

If you are reading this, you are possibly about to go on a filmmaking journey with us. Or you are considering us for a project. Or you are merely interested. Whatever your situation, this guide is for you. We have gone through this process many times - and can recommend it. And of course, we hope to see you soon on the client-side.

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