

Leslie Martin

My MFA body of work is focused on the importance of perception and the idea of being correct. To explore this concept, I am going to create a giant screen production about dinosaurs, as well as a project about imagination that I have yet to flesh out. I want to also include the Tree of Light as a demonstration of perception of the world. The statement the Tree of Light will make is that you can perceive the poverty in the world as depressing, or you can look at it and see what people are doing to help, and perceive the hope instead.

I grew up watching 72-foot screen of the Linder theater in Cincinnati Ohio, and ever since I decided to go into making animations I have wanted to see my work on an omnimax dome. I will be attending the Giant Screen Cinema Association Filmmaker's Symposium in March to learn more about formatting and producing for this format.

My production is going to be about the way we see dinosaurs in our minds is by no means fixed, but the vision is relatively standard. The giant scaly beasts have recently changed to giant feathered beasts, but the texture of their skin is still largely unknown. Anatomical construction is educated guesswork based on bone structures that we have uncovered and how modern animals bones are set up. The scientific community has altered its views of skeletal construction for the Diplodocus as from a supposed iguana-like leg stance to a more upright stance, all based on speculation of weight and the idea that it would have to have a trench to drag its body through. Musculature reconstruction is largely based on guesswork as well, but an area that is often overlooked in general has more to do with the outer structure of anatomy that has no preserved remains: soft tissue.

Without soft tissue and cartilaginous forms, bunny rabbits would have no ears. Elephants would have no trunks. Everyday animals would be largely unrecognizable. To illustrate our lack of knowledge, I want to reconstruct a modern quadruped animal in the way that paleontologists have reconstructed dinosaurs. First, the skeletal structure will be incorrect, and I will put muscles on it and make it move. Modifications will be made to the setup until it is anatomically correct in skeletal structure and musculature, but it will still ignore soft tissues. The creature will have no ear or nose structures and have skin shrink-wrapped onto the moving form as it rears up and swipes with its forelegs among other motions. The animation will then fade into an animation showing that you've been watching a kitten play around. The point I want to impart is that we don't know what dinosaurs looked like, and there is no way to know for certain. It is okay to not know the truth of the matter, but it is imperative that we acknowledge that is the state of our understanding and don't perceive or impart our reconstructions as fact.

Next semester I will be developing my imagination piece conceptually and beginning production on my Giant Screen animation.