Mohawk students Type cast

Team helps create The Joy of Books, a charming video that's gone viral

Close to a million eyes were glued to the work of Mohawk College students Wednesday.

A group of the school’s creative advertising students had a hand in producing a unique stop-motion video that's gone viral online. Since it was uploaded to YouTube Monday, The Joy of Books has been viewed more than 430,000 times.

“It turned out to be a great opportunity,” said Stefi Raike. “To see all of the planning that has to go into a stop-motion was a really good experience.”

Raike, 25, was one of a dozen Mohawk students invited to take part in the project by Sean Ohlenkamp, an associate creative director at Toronto-based advertising agency Lowe Roche. The video, a clever and artfully shot piece, was filmed over four nights at Toronto's Type Books in November.

The Joy of Books evolved out of a short stop-motion film Ohlenkamp created last year by organizing a bookcase in his house. The project, inspired by his love for books and the Queen Street West bookstore, builds considerably on his initial undertaking.

“After doing a single bookcase, I had a pretty good idea what I was getting into,” Ohlenkamp said. “But I don’t think any of my volunteers did. We got in there at 6 p.m. when the store closed with my small army of volunteers, and we worked until 10 a.m. the next day, shelving, reshelving, moving, animating dancing books all night long.”

The video, which shows books reading each other and rhythmically rearranging themselves on the shelves, offers an imagined take on what happens after the bookstore closes. It took about 1,200 frames of film to compose the nearly two-minute piece, which was created on a purely pro bono basis. “It really opened my eyes,” said second-year student Ruth Ann Cacher. “It was so cool to be behind the scenes and see how (stop-motion) actually works. You appreciate it more.”

The 26-year-old was even recruited with classmate Justin Turco to choreograph a sequence featuring two books dancing—a exceptional opportunity for someone trying to break into the highly competitive field.

“His trusted us,” Cacher said of Ohlenkamp. “I felt like I was in a work environment, rather than just some kid who was helping him, which was nice.”

“We weren’t just lackeys,” added Turco, 23. Creative advertising instructor Jef Petrossi said the shoot was a unique and valuable opportunity for his students.

“We always want them to get as much exposure to the industry as possible,” he said. “What I love about it is, conceptually, they were able to contribute, rather than just move books around. They weren’t just doers.”

The video's staggering popularity shocked the students and their teacher.

“I didn't expect it,” Cacher said. “It was a privilege to be part of this.”

We worked until 10 a.m ... shelving, reshelving, moving, animating dancing books all night long.

SEAN OHLENKAMP
ASSOCIATE CREATIVE DIRECTOR

See The Joy of Books, a video for Type Books of Toronto, at thespec.com