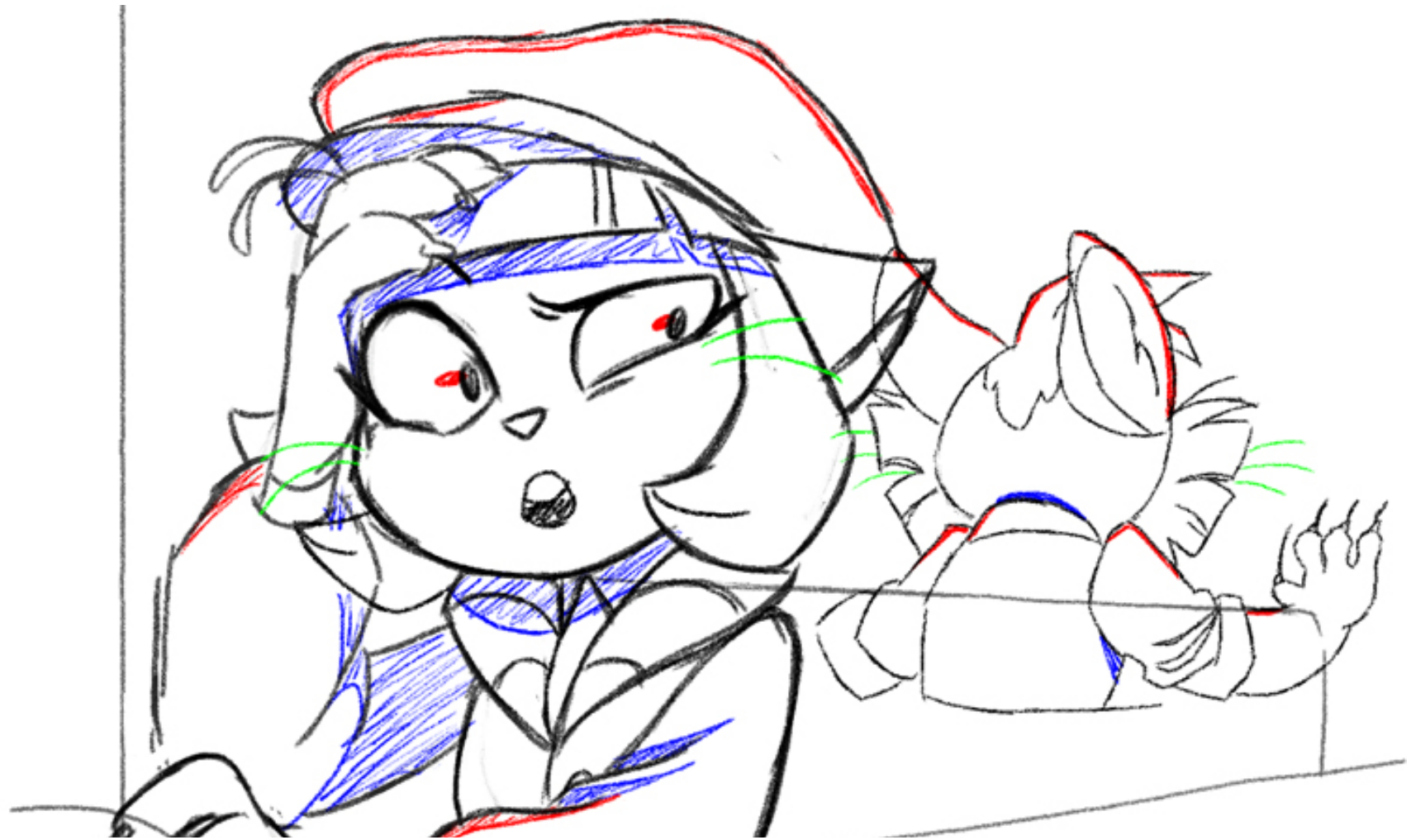


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DRAWING HER OWN PATH

KAYLA STITH '19 BRINGS CAREER IN ANIMATION TO LIFE IN YOUTUBE SERIES.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | February 14, 2022*Above: A drawing from Stith's short film "Lackadaisy" (image courtesy Kayla Stith)**Read time: about 2 min*

You don't have to visit a museum to see or appreciate art; just look around, encourages alumna Kayla Stith. "Everything we see, everything we touch, every design on every billboard you pass, someone had to make that," she says. "That is art. Visible, yet invisible at times. It's everywhere. Thankfully, none of us will ever have to imagine a world without it."

Although Stith can't remember a world or time when art wasn't part of her life, she admits that when she started at Christopher Newport she wasn't sure if her passion was practical. Yes, she loved art and animation, but it never occurred to her that it could also be her occupation.



Kayla Stith

"Thanks to Christopher Newport, I figured out how to navigate a path to becoming an animator."

Christopher Newport's [art program](#) exposed her to opportunities and specialties she didn't know existed in the art

world. “For a time, I thought of art only in a linear fashion, something that you do with pen and paper, maybe a paint brush now and then. But there are many opportunities and different types of jobs that are tailored to specific artistic needs. Take animation – you have visual development, character design, storyboard artists, editors/compositors, composers, rough animators, clean-up animators, colorists – and that’s really just the tip of the iceberg. Everyone has a job, a purpose, and that brings it all together.”

Stith spent countless hours practicing and developing her craft, and graduated with an impressive portfolio that landed her work shortly after graduation on *Lackadaisy*, a series of short films based on the webcomic of the same name created by Tracy Butler. Stith says the YouTube series, which has over three million views, is about “Anthropomorphic cats running a speakeasy set in the 1920s prohibition era.”

Stith’s mentor isn’t surprised Kayla has found success doing what she loves. “When Kayla was a student, I would always find her working in the digital arts lab at all hours,” said Alan Skees, associate professor of fine art. “She constantly pushed herself to produce illustrations and to hone her craft. I think she is one of the most talented and disciplined students I’ve had the pleasure to work with in quite a while. It takes an immense work ethic to create a portfolio of animation work of any quality and Kayla has shown she definitely has a place in that field. I’m very excited to see where her career goes.”

As for other students who might be worried about the practicality of pursuing an art degree, Stith offered this straightforward advice. “I wouldn’t tell someone to monetize their hobbies or dreams. That would end up being more damaging than beneficial. But if you’re serious about pursuing a creative career, research the specific field you want to get into. And know that art is very competitive, so you’ll need to be diligent. But if you are, amazing opportunities will open up for you.”
