

## The application of visual metaphor in designing environment for short animation *Lost Steps*

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### Abstract:

Animation as an art medium comprises many important elements, including the environment. The environment is used to visualize the condition, background, time, location, culture, mood, and atmosphere of certain aspects of animation. Environment design is crucial in creating 'realistic' animation; realistic in terms that it is believable through the viewer's perspective. This article aims to explain the design process of environmental aspects in the "Lost Steps" short animation. "Lost Steps" tells the story of Rahel, a grieving young woman, who lost her steps in the painting world because of her grandmother's death. This movie focuses on how Rahel goes through her grief to release the emotional baggage that's eating into her life. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the importance of good interior environment design in order to convey emotions through visuals. In order to explain all of these, the writer decided to use an embodied visual metaphor. This paper uses qualitative analysis techniques in its writing to discuss the environmental aspects of the movie. The result achieved through this paper is that visual metaphor is used in terms of creating layers of meaning, while mise-en-scène is applied through the use of property set, asset design, color, and lighting to visualize these layers of meaning.

## Introduction

The environment design in animation production plays an important role, as it helps to drive the story and the actions of the characters. From an animation perspective, an environment can show the conditions, time, and place, culture, location, mood, and atmosphere (Ghertner, 2010). An environment in the animation film can communicate a lot of background or story without needing dialogue or characters. Through a well-designed environment, audiences can understand the basic references and foundations of the animated universe based on the time, location, and culture portrayed.

The importance of designing environments that can visually express emotional context is a key part of the short animation "Lost Steps". "Lost Steps" is a 2D short animation that tells the story of Rahel, a young woman who is constantly reminded of Popo, her grandmother, who has passed away. Rahel can't continue her painting as she is trapped in her sadness, which affects her daily life. As Rahel goes through the process of accepting her grandmother's absence, her emotions change throughout different scenes. These emotional changes are shown through the environment design that reflects those feelings.

Designing an environment in an animation film requires careful research. If the environment is not designed well, the meaning or story that we try to convey may not come across clearly. During the research or early concept phase, visual metaphors can be combined with the mise-en-scène in the film to express specific emotions in a certain shot. Elements like composition, lighting, asset and property

design, space, and blocking are very important for creating an environment that effectively communicates emotional context to the audience.

In line with visual metaphor, conceptual metaphor is the interpretation of everything around humans that depends on their attentiveness in seeing, feeling, and understanding something, related to the perceptual and motor sensory systems they possess (Gardy, 1997). Based on this, humans have concepts for interpreting reality according to their individual understanding. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in Fahlenbrach (2016), state that metaphor is one of the important tools for interpreting everything around us, consisting of thought and action, as a derivative form of language. Uno (2019) and Xu (2021), in their article, highlight that the study of visual metaphor is rising in the visual context. It also then encouraged research about visual metaphors; how humans recognize and comprehend visuals, through fashion, ads, film, and animations.

Specifically, in the context of animated films, visual metaphors can be applied in environment design to influence the layers of meaning and the audience's perception. Sethio, G., & Hakim, S. (2021) state that "the physiological and sociological aspects of a character can be represented through the use of visual metaphors in set and property design" in their research. This can be achieved through the arrangement of various elements within the environment. Elements of the environment that can be part of visual metaphors include color, perspective, the use of space and distance, the placement of props, and so on.

The application of visual metaphors in animated films can be illustrated through the design of a room within the environment. A room depicted as narrow, dark, and cluttered can create a perception of anxiety and claustrophobia for the audience. Conversely, the design of a spacious and empty room can also evoke a similar feeling of anxiety, where the audiences feel 'small' and powerless. Thus, visual metaphors can be used to convey perceptions in the form of specific messages or meanings to the audience through the design of informational sources. This concept is also used in "Lost Steps" to depict the sense of loss, by using a spacious room that's limited in range by all the clustered things that are left all over the room to give a sense of 'anxiety', 'loneliness', and 'anger'.

In animation production, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is applied through the mise-en-scène; visual style presented within the content of a frame and the way it is organized (Gibbs, 2002). There are several important elements of mise-en-scène that can be arranged in a scene to create a specific visual effect: lighting, colors, props, costumes, decor, action, and performance. Related to the environment aspect, these elements play a crucial role in creating compositions and content that can be interpreted through a film scene.

The application of CMT in mise-en-scène impacts lighting and colors in the film, which provide the audience with emotional experiences related to the intended mood. Magrin-Chagnolleau (2021) mentions that the use of color in film varies greatly according to the aesthetics and meanings the director wishes to convey. Finlay, in Magrin-Chagnolleau (2021), explains that different light components in each color produce different energies, so each color carries varied 'meanings.' An example of applying mise-en-scène in the concept of environmental design is the selection of colors associated with the interpretation of certain emotions. For instance, dark colors are commonly associated with negative emotions, while light colors are linked with positive emotions. Similarly, dark lighting is associated with a sad or lonely atmosphere, whereas bright lighting is associated with a happy atmosphere.

Based on a previous study conducted by Magrin-Chagnolleau (2021), when combined with lighting arrangements, the use of color can create a mood that aligns with the intended meaning. According to this, lighting and colour in "Lost Steps" are designed to reflect certain emotions that the main character, Rahel, is feeling at the moment. One of the main differences between the previous study and this one is that the use of 'dark' and 'bright' lighting is a bit altered to fit the general theme of "Lost Steps". The creators of "Lost Steps" want to use the contrasting lighting to depict the reality and irony that the world will keep moving forward, even though Rahel has lost the most important person in her life; hence, the use of bright lighting is still prevalent, although the general mood of this



movie is conveyed as ‘loneliness’. Audiences can interpret meaning in a film through the continuity of several key elements that evoke certain effects or emotions. Environmental design must align with the narrative context or emotion intended to be conveyed to prevent misunderstandings. Therefore, the use of mise-en-scène concepts is closely related to visual metaphors in shaping the perception of meaning in film.

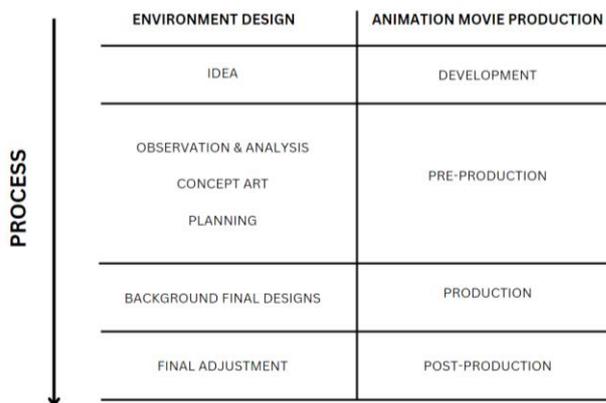
This article tries to explain the process of designing interior environments in the 2D animated film “Lost Steps” using visual metaphor as an approach. This paper is expected to provide benefits to the field of animation, especially in the use of environment design to illustrate the development of emotional value stages in animation, using the visual metaphor. The article highlights those visual metaphors can be used to support the conceptual process and environment design in animation. Thus, the paper will contribute to the literature enrichment by providing further explanation regarding visual metaphors and their use in visual design aspects in animation. This paper will be using a case study from an interior environment which is designed using a visual metaphor approach; Rahel’s Drawing Room in the context of the time before and after the death of Popo.

## Methods

### Pre-production

#### Ideation

This research uses a qualitative method by employing the stages of environment design in film production to bring the animation short comes to life from the preparation stage, processing the execution of concept, to the production and post-production stage. Wille (2015) explained that film in general usually has three or four production phases: pre-production, production, post-production, and a preliminary phase for screenplay development. As seen in Figure 1, the first stage in making “Lost Steps” is the pre-production stage. This stage consists of several steps, including ideation, reference studies, and design and technical experimentation. The concept is gathered through brainstorming and is confirmed through references, observations, and some literature. When the outlined concept is fully accomplished, the next step is to implement it in the production stage.



**Figure 1.** Stages Of Environment and Animated Film Production

Source: Writer documentation

In producing the environment, this research uses the visual metaphors approach in creating the Mise-en-scène for proper visual arrangements. In the paradigm of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), there are two branches of variation in metaphor studies. Forceville (2016), in his book *Visual and Multimodal Metaphor in Film: Charting the Field*, explains that the first branch studies and discusses how metaphorical gestures and their interactions function in audio communication, while

the other branch focuses on how metaphors are used in visual media. Visual metaphors, or Embodied Visual Metaphors, are divided into two types: monomodal and multimodal metaphors. Kryukova, N., Aleksandrova, E., & Isakova, E. (2021) mentioned that these modalities are categorized based on the sources of information they use.

In the context of film, Gambier (2013) classifies the modalities of visual metaphor according to semiotic codes. As seen in Table 1, the elements within these modalities of visual metaphor can be equated with the elements that form semiotic codes in film. The codes that emerge in this classification can be applied to aspects of film shots, such as color, perspective, space and time, and even subtitle fonts.

Table 1 Classification Table of Visual Metaphors in Semiotic Codes in Films.

	Audio Channel	Visual Channel
<b>Verbal elements (signs)</b>	Linguistic code Paralinguistic code Literary and theatre codes	Graphic code
<b>Non-verbal elements (signs)</b>	Sound arrangement code 1. Musical code Paralinguistic code <i>a.</i>	Iconographic code Photographic code Scenographic code Film code Kinesic code Proxemic code Dress code

Source: Y. Gambier. (2013). The position of audiovisual translation studies, *The Routledge handbook of translation studies*, 45–59.

This visual metaphor approach is used by determining which code (signs) will exist throughout the movie first, as not all code necessarily needs to be used. The author chooses iconographic, photographic, scenographic, and proxemic codes to convey the layers of meaning through environmental design. The other code, like dress code, for example, is mostly used by character designer to convey their own meanings into the character design, and as such, it will not be explained in this paper.

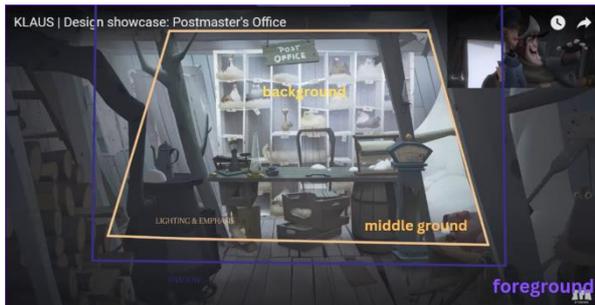
The author chooses to convey the layers of meaning through the comparison of ‘The Drawing Room’ before and after Popo’s death. How the author determines each layer of meaning is by determining which elements of *mise-en-scène* relate to each sign (code). For example, iconographic code represents icons, indices, and symbols in translation (Chaume, 2004), which can be used to talk about properties in the *mise-en-scène* theory to explain how each element (property) has its own uses. Chaume (2004) also mentions that photographic code carries out translation in changes of lighting, perspectives, or use of colour (intentional uses/meanings of certain colours). Based on this explanation, the creator of “Lost Steps” chose to use the meaning of ‘bright’ and ‘dark’ lighting to convey different meanings in the character’s feelings.

While proxemic code talks about proximity, so the distance between the character/properties. By determining what aspects relate to each code (signs), we can reverse the process of breaking down each shot (in this case, each environment design), to make sure we can create layers of meaning in each aspect of visual design. The result of this process will be explained with a figure in the Results and Discussion below.

## Reference Studies



The next step is to explore and finalize various location ideas and main references to be used in the design process, by doing reference studies both in visuals and literature. In this process, the purpose of selecting the references for the environment design is carefully considered to aid the visualization of the narrative. Observation and analysis of references were conducted using the film Klaus (2019) by The Spa Studios, Spirited Away (2010) by Hayao Miyazaki, and the film series A Series of Unfortunate Events (2017). The author focuses on environment design, especially regarding symbolism and the arrangement of props, colors, and values created by the lighting used in the films. These film references are analyzed from the concept art stage to the final outcome in the form of the film's shots.



**Figure 2.** Analysis of the visual background style in the animated film Klaus (2019)  
Source: Writer documentation

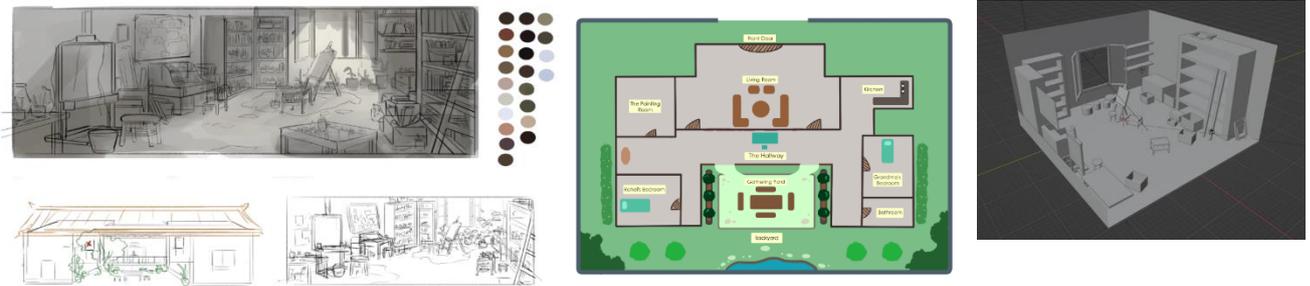
The consideration in selecting visual metaphors and mise-en-scène as the basis of literature is their applicability to film aspects that facilitate the design process. In general, the visual metaphor proposed by Forceville can be used to analyze shots in films. The classification table by Gambier serves as a foundation to break down shots and its implementation as a basis study for the environment design. Mise-en-scène references are used to help explain various modal aspects within visual metaphor.

### Design and Technical Experimentation



**Figure 3.** The Painting Room Reference Board  
Source: Writer documentation

The experimental process of designing the environment for the film “Lost Steps” went through brainstorming stages to ensure the final design could convey the intended meaning. Before determining the visual metaphor to be applied, the author conducted a reference search tailored to the time period and location context of the environment design. The author also sought various images representing rooms for painting. After deciding on the list of assets to be depicted in ‘The Painting Room,’ the author searched for the necessary image references.



**Figure 4.** The Painting Room Early Concept and Technical Design Process  
Source: Writer documentation

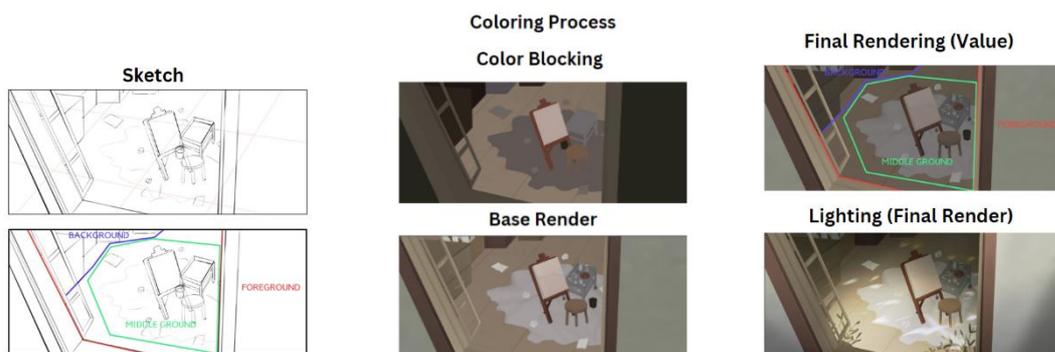
After determining the floor plan and each room, the author also created the rooms in 3D to serve as a basic perspective concept for environment design. This was done to simplify the sketching process and ensure that the background perspective was accurately depicted. It also served as a form of experimentation with form and technical aspects, where the author ensured that every piece of furniture placement carried its own meaning



**Figure 5.** The Painting Room Final Artwork  
Source: Writer documentation

After refining the overall form and technical details of the room, the author created one of the backgrounds to be used in the animated film as a basic reference. This was done to visualize the film’s final result and ensure that the use of color and lighting could convey the mood of the film’s shots. In this process, the author made sure each shot in the film uses visual metaphor to convey certain layers of meaning. The technique employed was rendering the environment by depicting all details for the aesthetics of the “Lost Steps” animated film.

### Production and Post-Production



**Figure 6.** The Production Process for Creating One Background  
Source: Writer documentation

The production process of backgrounds for each film shot involved several stages, techniques, and applications according to their respective uses. First, the author used Blender to create 3D models of the room, which were then used as basic references for sketches in each background of the animated film. The background creation process started with sketching, following the shot designs in the storyboard.

The sketching process was done using Photoshop. During the sketching stage, the author ensured that the aspects of the foreground, middle ground, and background of each environment were clearly visible. The author also ensured that the perspective, asset design, and placement of each object were in accordance with the room concept. After confirming the placement of each layer, the author proceeded to the next stage: coloring.

The coloring process was also carried out in Photoshop. The author rendered the colors according to the predetermined environment design. The first step in the coloring process was to create the base color for each element in the background to facilitate the rendering process later on. Once the base color for each property was completed, the author performed rendering to illustrate the details of each object in the background. The result was a base render of the background.

After the base rendering process, the author continued to the final rendering stage to enhance the background's value. Shadows were added, and the intensity of each asset's color in every layer of the background was adjusted. In the case of the background used in the shot, the foreground appears brighter due to being directly hit by a light source. Meanwhile, color emphasis was directed toward the middle ground, which is where the animated character would later be placed. The background in this shot has the darkest color because it is farthest from the light source. The author also added lighting in accordance with the mood intended to be conveyed in the film shot. This lighting setup was initially done in Photoshop, but would be continued in After Effects during compositing for the finalization of the shot.

Post-production was carried out in After Effects, where the author adjusted lighting and the positioning of each asset to create a parallax effect in the animated film. At this stage, the author also added effects such as blurriness and distortion to harmonize the characters and environment.

## Result and Discussion

### Concept and Supporting Ideation Behind the Work

The concept of "Lost Steps" tells the story of Rahel, who loses her way after losing Popo, the only family she has. This is visualized through the environment concept in the film, which portrays a sense of loneliness within grief. This depiction is brought through the use of visual metaphors and mise-en-scène by arranging cluttered props and sets to signify mourning and grief.

"Lost Steps" uses a conceptual metaphor to convey the narrative of loss and grief through the environmental design of the animated short. The story is set during Indonesia's late 1990s to early 2000s. Karacali (2022) mentioned that architecture is often used for narrative purposes in terms to explain culture since its built represent stories that are relevant in the real world. Since the creators of "Lost Steps" want to show cultural symbolism to the audience, the basic concept of the environment is inspired by the Gambiran House in Parakan, a Chinese-Indonesian heritage building located in Parakan, a small city near Temanggung, Middle Java, Indonesia. The entire film takes place inside Rahel's house. 'The Painting Room' is one of the spaces that most significantly reflects the emotional changes in the story, and is visualized through the depiction of the room before and after Popo departs. Various interior designs and props in the film draw inspiration from Chinese-Indonesian culture.

Narrative in animation is often visualized as connotation in terms of language (Kusumawardhani et.al, 2023). In relation to the narrative context "Lost Steps", Popo was the one who always tidied up the room and the tools after Rahel and Popo finished painting. After Popo's departure, Rahel, who is

unable to accept the truth, leaves the room dark and messy with the painting tools all over the room. This feeling of depression is visualized through the messy state of the room, symbolizing Popo's absence and Rahel's emotional attachment to Popo.

The emotion of loneliness is depicted through a relatively small room filled with scattered objects. This design is carefully crafted to evoke Rahel's anxious feelings within the audience's mind. The background's aspect ratio is 21:9. Given the setting where Rahel has recently lost Popo, this aspect ratio is used to enhance the sense of emptiness and loneliness experienced by the character. The contrast between the wide aspect ratio and Rahel, who is always alone, is employed to convey this feeling of loneliness more deeply.

The colors in the environment design use a slightly desaturated and neutral palette. The depiction of the environment begins with desaturated colors, then gradually becomes more saturated and a bit more colorful. "Lost Steps" features several types of lighting designs to express various emotions in each shot. One example is the lighting, where the sunlight outside is very bright, yet the room is filled with dark shadows, indicating the emptiness felt by Rahel. The contrast between the brightly lit outside world and the dark room illustrates Rahel's feelings—that even though the most important person in her life is gone, the world is still continuously spinning.

### Analysis and Discussion of The Work

The following table (Table 2) contains the results of the environment design for 'The Drawing Room' in the animated film "Lost Steps". The environment was designed using knowledge of visual metaphor theory combined with the theory of *mise-en-scène*. The table below shows the differences in the environment design before and after the character Popo's death. It also explains the elements in the monomodal and multimodal transcription, which are grouped into two main categories: verbal and non-verbal elements. The classifications in the table describe the various components that form the semiotic codes of the film's shots.

Table 2 Monomodal and Multimodal Analysis of Visual Metaphor Elements

Visual Channel	
The Drawing Room (Before Popo's Death)	The Drawing Room (After Popo's Death)
	
<b>Verbal Elements</b> Graphic Code	
<b>Non-verbal Elements</b> Iconographic Code	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Open canvas</li> <li>● Neatly arranged props</li> <li>● Living flowers</li> <li>● Neatly arranged papers</li> <li>● Normal canvas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Canvas covered with cloth</li> <li>● Messy props</li> <li>● Dead flowers</li> <li>● Scattered paper trash</li> <li>● Torn canvas paper</li> </ul>

	Photographic Code	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Warm lighting mood</li> <li>● Bright sunlight as the light source</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dim, gloomy lighting</li> <li>● Very intense sunlight as the light source</li> </ul>
	Scenographic Code	
A room and props that appear neat and organized		A messy and cramped-looking room and props
	Film Code	
-		-
	Kinesic Code	
-		-
	Proxemic Code	
The distance and position between two adjacent easels		The distance and position between two distant easel
	Dress Code	
-		-

Source: Writer Documentation.

The environment in the animated film “Lost Steps” uses knowledge of visual metaphor combined with mise-en-scène theory to convey specific meanings. One use of this visual metaphor appears in the design to differentiate the emotions conveyed within the same room but at different times. Based on explanations in Table 2 and the overall design, the arrangement and choices of each element play a very important role in portraying the sense of loss experienced by the character Rahel.

Several design assets in the Painting Room also use visual metaphors to depict the backgrounds of the two characters. For example, some furniture pieces symbolize certain colors and shapes in their design. The discussion about these design assets falls under the iconography code, explaining the use of visual metaphors in designing assets that carry particular symbolism. Thus, the analysis not only elaborates on changes in mood and time context but also on the design process that employs visual metaphors.

Proxemic Code

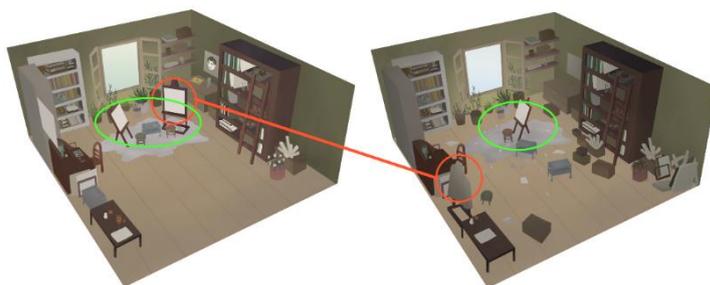
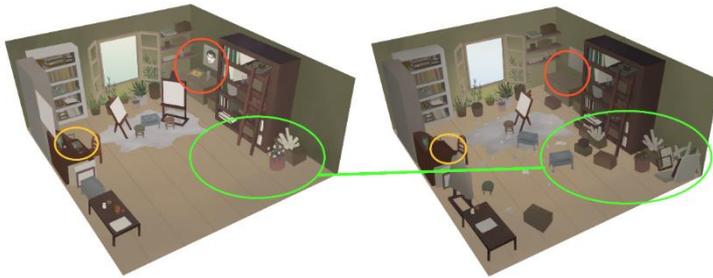


Figure 7. Visual Channel and Meaning of Proxemic Code  
Source: Writer documentation

Various pieces of furniture, tools, and artworks featured in the design of The Drawing Room carry layered meanings in their placement. As seen in Figure 7, the placement of Rahel’s and Popo’s easels represents the relationship between the two of them. Ortiz (2010) explains that the relationship between things with intervening factors like perspective, orientation, and distance (alignment) may or may not be metaphorical. The distance between the two objects reflects Rahel’s feeling of wanting to

distance herself, as she does not want to be reminded of her grandmother's suffering or death. After Popo's passing, the canvas she used was covered with cloth and placed far from where Rahel paints. Rahel associates painting with memories of her grandmother, as in the narrative, she always painted with her. The distance that appears signifies Rahel's desire to distance herself from all memories of her grandmother. In the context of the story, this relates to the memories of Popo's final days, when she was suffering from a severe illness before she passed away. Popo's easel being moved away reflects Rahel's feelings of wanting to escape and avoid remembering that painful period in her grandmother's life.

### Scenographic Code

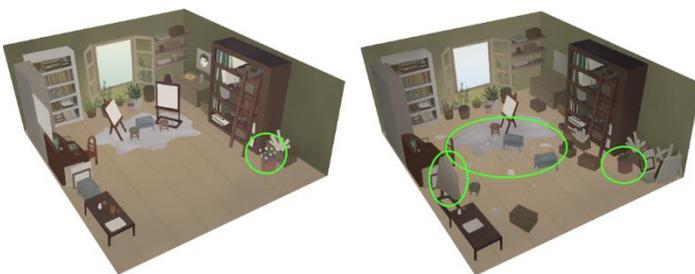


**Figure 8.** Visual Channel and Meaning of Scenographic Code  
Source: Writer documentation

In Figure 8, the messy props in the room symbolize Rahel's feelings of abandonment and lack of direction after being left by her grandmother. Before Popo's departure, the room appeared neat and orderly, with all tools and artworks placed in their designated spots. This sharply contrasts with the state of the room after Popo's passing, where it appears extremely messy, and some objects seem to have disappeared from their original places. The organized room in Figure 8 represents Rahel's structured life, where she could see her path clearly and without distraction. Popo's presence brought a sense of calm and stability to Rahel's life. Without Popo, that stability vanished, leaving Rahel feeling lost.

In the context of the story, the placement of messy props symbolizes Rahel's sense of losing direction in the world of painting after Popo's death. In environmental design, space can represent freedom, fear, happiness, atmosphere, or a certain mood. The lack of space caused by scattered props symbolizes Rahel's inability to move forward, both from the memories of her grandmother and in her journey as an artist.

### Iconographic Code



**Figure 9.** Visual Channel and Meaning of Iconographic Code  
Source: Writer documentation

In the iconographic code of visual metaphor, there are several important symbolisms that determine meaning in the room design, as shown in Figure 9. First, the canvas covered with cloth signifies Rahel's inability to accept her grandmother's passing. This symbolism reflects two sides: one where Rahel feels hurt whenever she sees the canvas because it reminds her of Popo, and the other where Rahel's affection is shown through her desire to protect Popo's canvas from dust. In the narrative context, the cloth used to cover the canvas protects Popo's last unfinished painting. This symbolism also visually represents Popo as a precious figure who is no longer present in Rahel's life.

Second, the wilting daisy flower shown in the image on the right of Figure 9 symbolizes the fading of Rahel's hope in life without Popo. The daisy flower carries a symbolism of happiness, and its wilting represents Rahel's inability to feel happy without Popo's presence in her life. The third symbolism is the scattered paper scraps near Rahel's canvas. This visualizes Rahel's emotions of being unable to paint anything because she always associates painting with memories of Popo. The depiction of mixed frustration and sadness is evident in the torn and discarded canvas papers.



**Figure 10.** Visual metaphor in the design of the easel asset  
Source: Writer documentation

Several design assets in *The Painting Room* also use visual metaphors to convey the characters' backgrounds. For example, the easels in Figure 10 belonging to Popo and Rahel differ in shape and reference furniture styles from different eras. Popo's easel has a more antique design, while Rahel's easel features a modern and simple design. This difference in asset design reflects the significant generational gap between Popo and Rahel.

Besides illustrating the age difference, this design choice symbolizes the distinct personalities of the two characters. Popo's easel, which is boxy, upright, and rigid, symbolizes the traditional aspects of her character. Although old, the easel still appears functional and undamaged, reflecting Popo's carefulness in maintaining her belongings. In contrast, Rahel's easel looks modern, more organic, and flexible, representing Rahel's youthful character. The use of contrasting colors also emphasizes the differences between the two characters. The purplish-brown (puce) color of Popo's easel represents calmness, stability, and authority, while the reddish-brown color of Rahel's easel reflects her enthusiasm and passion for painting.



**Meja Popo**

**Figure 11.** Visual metaphor in the design of Popo's working table  
Source: Writer documentation

The work desk belonging to the character Popo in Figure 11 is inspired by Chinese-Indonesian cultural acculturation in its design. Broadly speaking, its shape is inspired by antique Chinese furniture, which typically features many drawers and is made from strong wood. The author chose to depict this work desk using teak wood (*kayu jati*) to incorporate an Indonesian cultural aspect. This choice is because many pieces of furniture in Indonesia use teak wood as their primary material. The use of this wood is evident in the desk's final color finish, which is a dark reddish-brown.

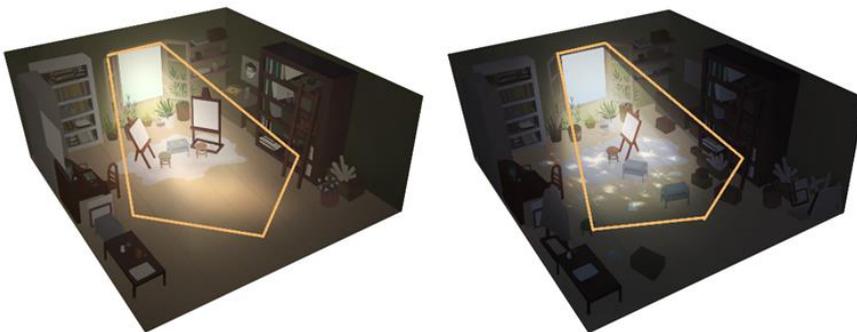


**Figure 12.** Visual metaphor in the design of Popo's painting  
Source: Writer documentation

In the narrative context, the canvas covered by cloth in Figure 12 holds Popo's last unfinished painting. This painting becomes a design asset with significant symbolism. Popo's unfinished painting depicts a landscape of the house belonging to Popo and Rahel. Visual metaphor is used to symbolize various meanings behind the painting, which Rahel completes. The unfinished painting by Popo represents that she still had something she couldn't let go of—*Rahel*.

The painting, completed by Rahel, symbolizes Popo returning home to reunite with their departed family. It signifies Popo's 'return' to meet their deceased loved ones. Besides symbolizing that Rahel has come to terms with Popo's passing, it also depicts Rahel's courage to start her life's journey anew in the world of painting.

### Photographic Code



**Figure 8.** Visual Channel and Meaning of Photographic Code  
Source: Writer documentation

Warmer lighting and softer shadows are seen in the room before Popo's passing. This contrasts with the very harsh lighting and shadows in the room after Popo's death. The warmer colors and lighting represent Popo's presence, which brought warmth to Rahel's life. Although both lighting

designs use bright light, there is a difference in the moods they convey. The harsher lighting makes the props in the room appear more neutral in color, visually representing the loss of warmth in Rahel's life. The use of very intense sunlight creates very dark shadows inside the room. The lighting condition inside reflects Rahel's feelings, while the lighting outside represents the world that keeps moving forward. The harsh sunlight outside starkly contrasts with Rahel's gloomy feelings, highlighting the irony of a world continuing as usual despite Rahel's deep depression over losing the most important person in her life.

## Conclusion

In the context of film, visual metaphor is similar to semiotic codes, where its use is applied in the shot breakdown process to explain the layers of meaning that appear in the film. In the design process, this can be reversed to create an environment design that conveys various layers of meaning. Whereas detailed meanings are usually obtained through shot breakdowns, this principle is inverted so that the meaning in the environment is designed first and illustrated through visual details. This principle is used in the environmental design of the animated film "Lost Steps", where the environment employs visual metaphors that are visualized through the arrangement of mise-en-scène in each layer of meaning.

The environment of The Painting Room in "Lost Steps" uses visual metaphors to portray the loneliness of mourning and the contrasting emotions experienced by the character. This is visualized through the differences in the environment before and after Popo's passing. In its delivery, visual metaphors are used to explain detailed layers of meaning, while these meanings are visualized using the arrangement of props, asset design, color, and lighting.

A small example of this is the depiction of Rahel's loneliness through the arrangement of props and lighting. The props in the environment have specific placements, where the distance between the character and the set props is arranged to illustrate the desire to distance herself from the reality of Popo's death. The contrasting lighting depicts the reality and irony that the world will keep moving forward, even though Rahel has lost the most important person in her life. These various layers of meaning can be explained and utilized thanks to the help of visual metaphors and the arrangement of mise-en-scène in environmental design. Based on this, this study has discussed how visual metaphors are used in the environment of the animated film "Lost Steps".

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