

Submission 1

Retirement homes, robots and the Cyberpunk future we're getting into.

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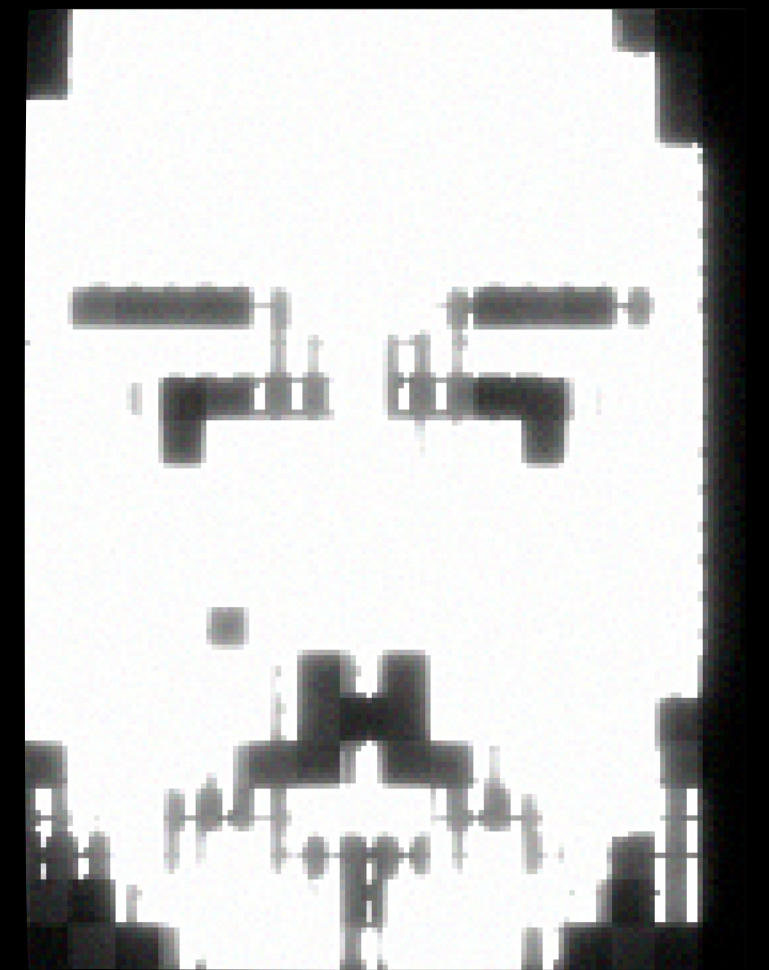
Introduction

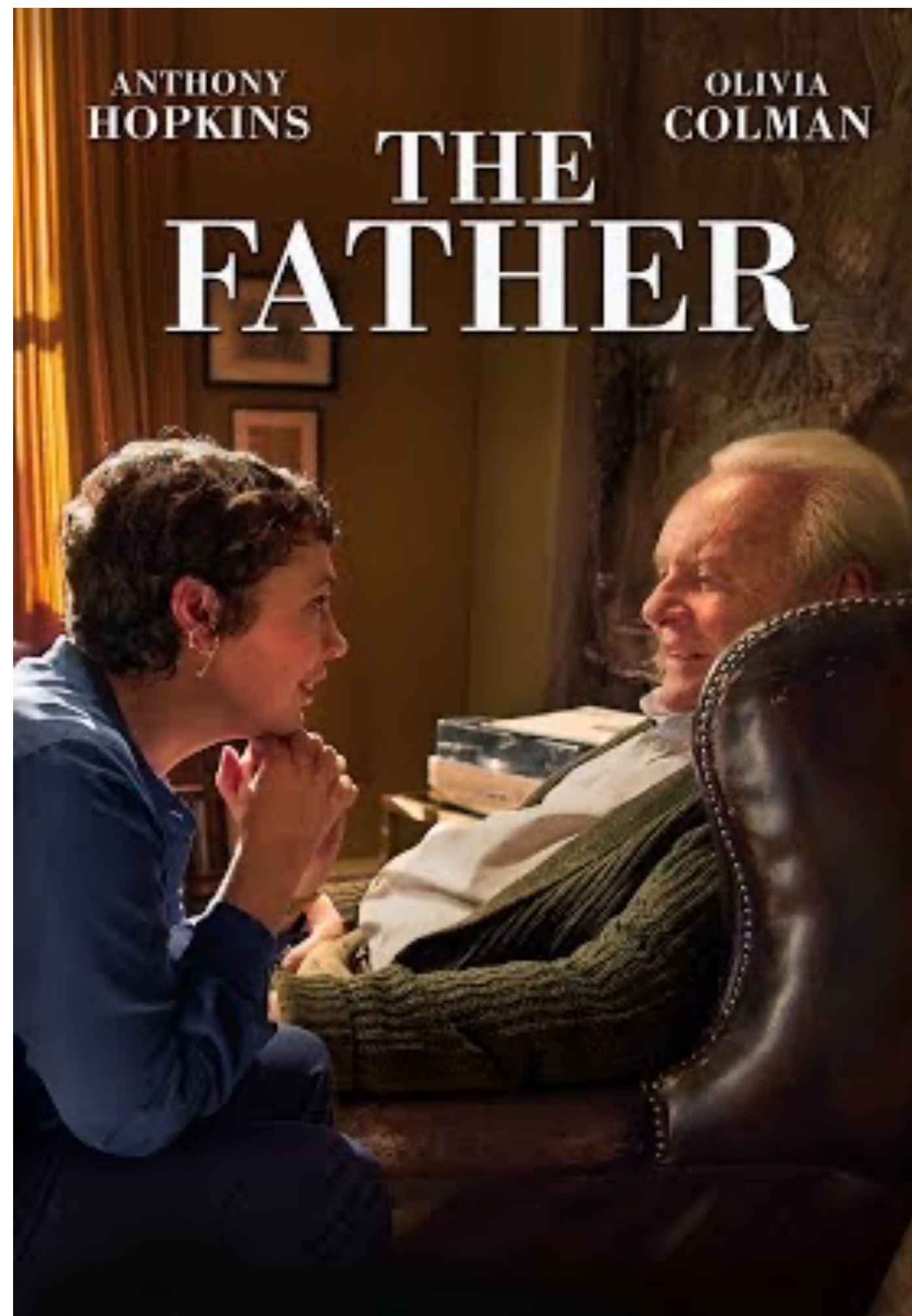
Introduction

When I started this project, I knew I wanted to create an animation, use VR and learn 3d. Before this, I've never opened up any other 3d software for more than 5 minutes.

At first I was overwhelmed by being responsible of the whole thing (besides a general Cyberpunk theme). Looking back, I'm glad that I became responsible for telling a story about retirement homes, robots and the Cyberpunk future we're getting into.

**A lot of
scrapped ideas**





Before drafting a script, I wanted to tell a story about memory loss and fragmented data. Inspired by 2021's movie "The Father", the concept of dementia and memory loss stuck with me all these years probably because I'm a forgetful person (The Father, 2021).

Being forgetful helps explain my second inspiration: my wedding film. I loved my wedding so much that I want to remember every single detail forever. Last month, I got a feeling of dread when I received what I feel is a very mediocre short film. That was a time of my life that I felt was lost forever. I asked for the videographer to send me all the raw footage and he happily agreed, but that event made me feel that I should spread this message of recording more for ourselves.





So my idea was to write a cyberpunk story with an old detective, a robot with memory issues, and together they will solve something and learn the value of recording. My first idea was to make it a film noir to contrast the characters and create a new take on cyberpunk. But on my script I couldn't figure out how to write a compelling short film mystery and thought having that style on 3D will be hard on beginners. By this time I grew attached to the idea of having two characters regardless of the story, one old guy and one a robot.

**Back in track,
thanks to cyberpunk
and reality-check**



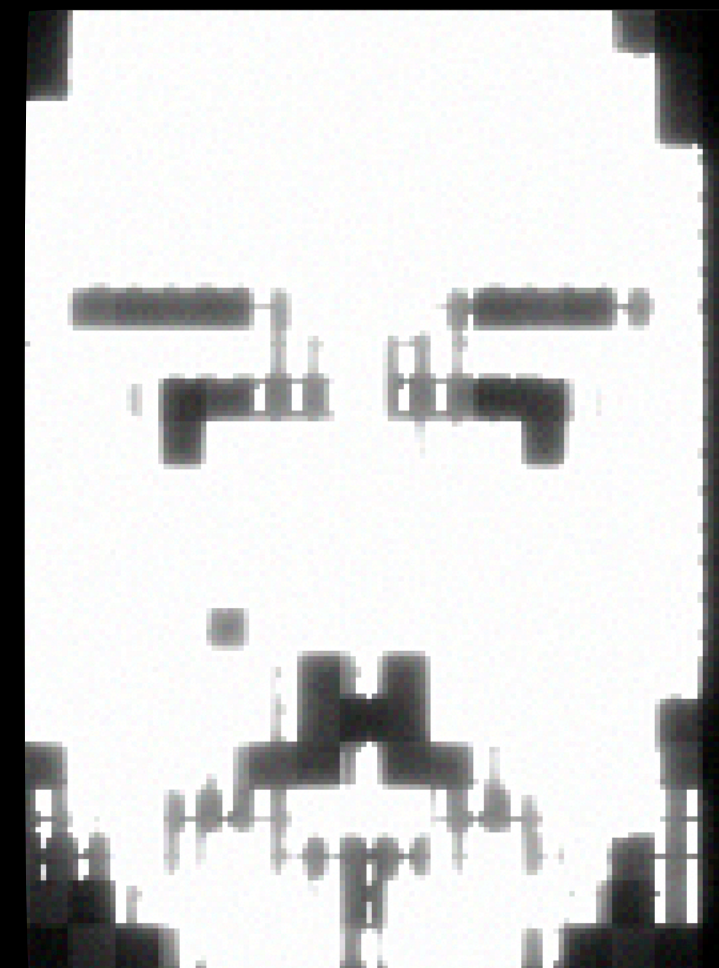
I went back to the drafting stage and put the Cyberpunk theme back on the center. I wondered how is our future actually going to look like by looking at news and articles about nursing homes and age trends.



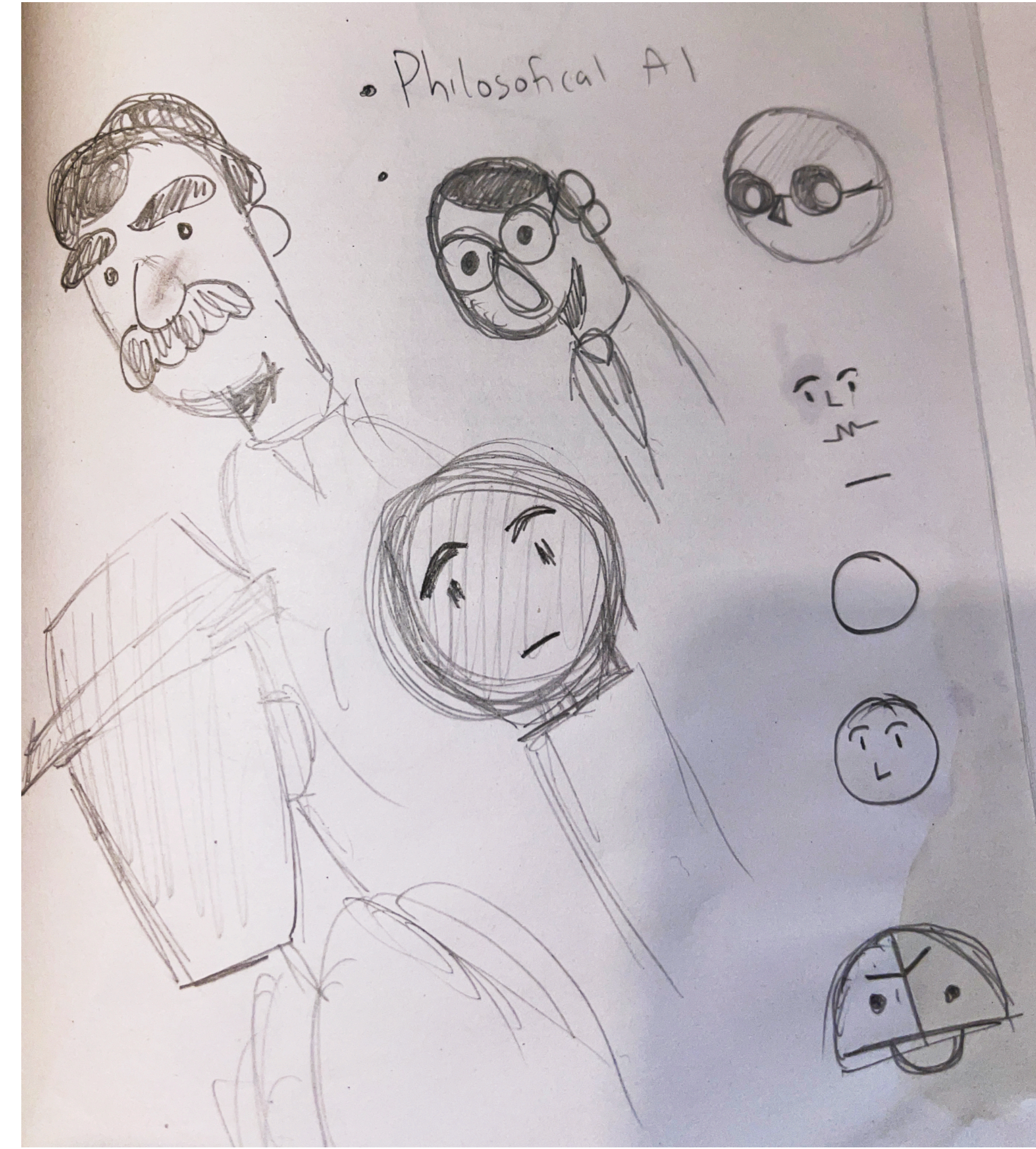


According to the World Health Organization, we will have a great demographic shift in every country in the world .Around 16% people in the world will be 60 years or over by 2030 and around 22% by 2050 (World Health Organization, 2022). With such numbers, I thought that a very dystopian thing to do would be to send them to space and basically (purposely or not) cut off communications with them. Then I learned that a lot of people are already quitting their jobs related to senior care (Moe, 2022). Which, sadly, supports the idea of leaving everything to the robots. In fact, there are a lot of studies of robot-senior interactions already. Including one about how the “residents are more positive about robots than staff, and participants prefer a silver robot of 1.25 m height, with wheels and a screen on the body.” which was later vital to the robot’s design (Broadbent et al., 2009).

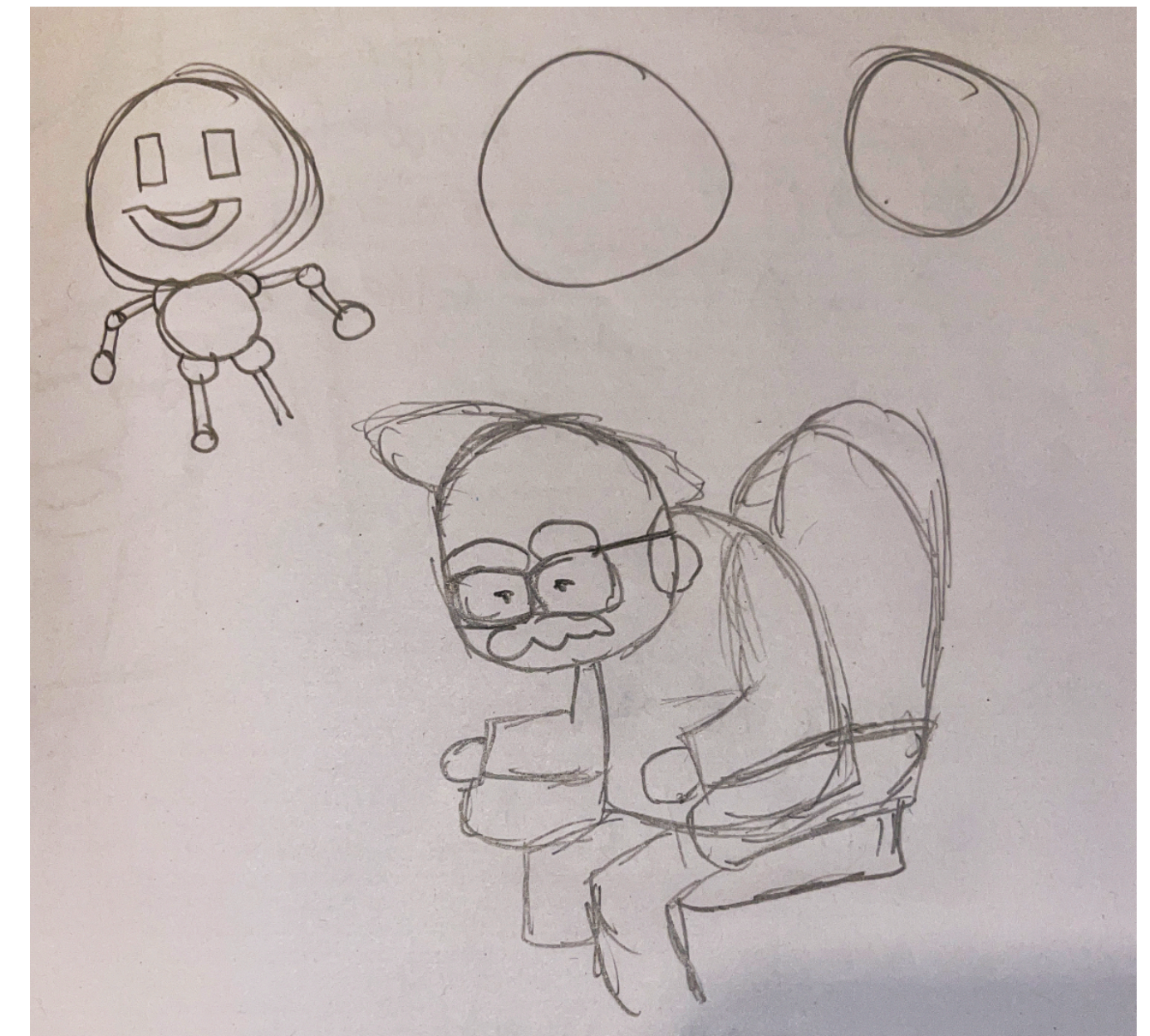
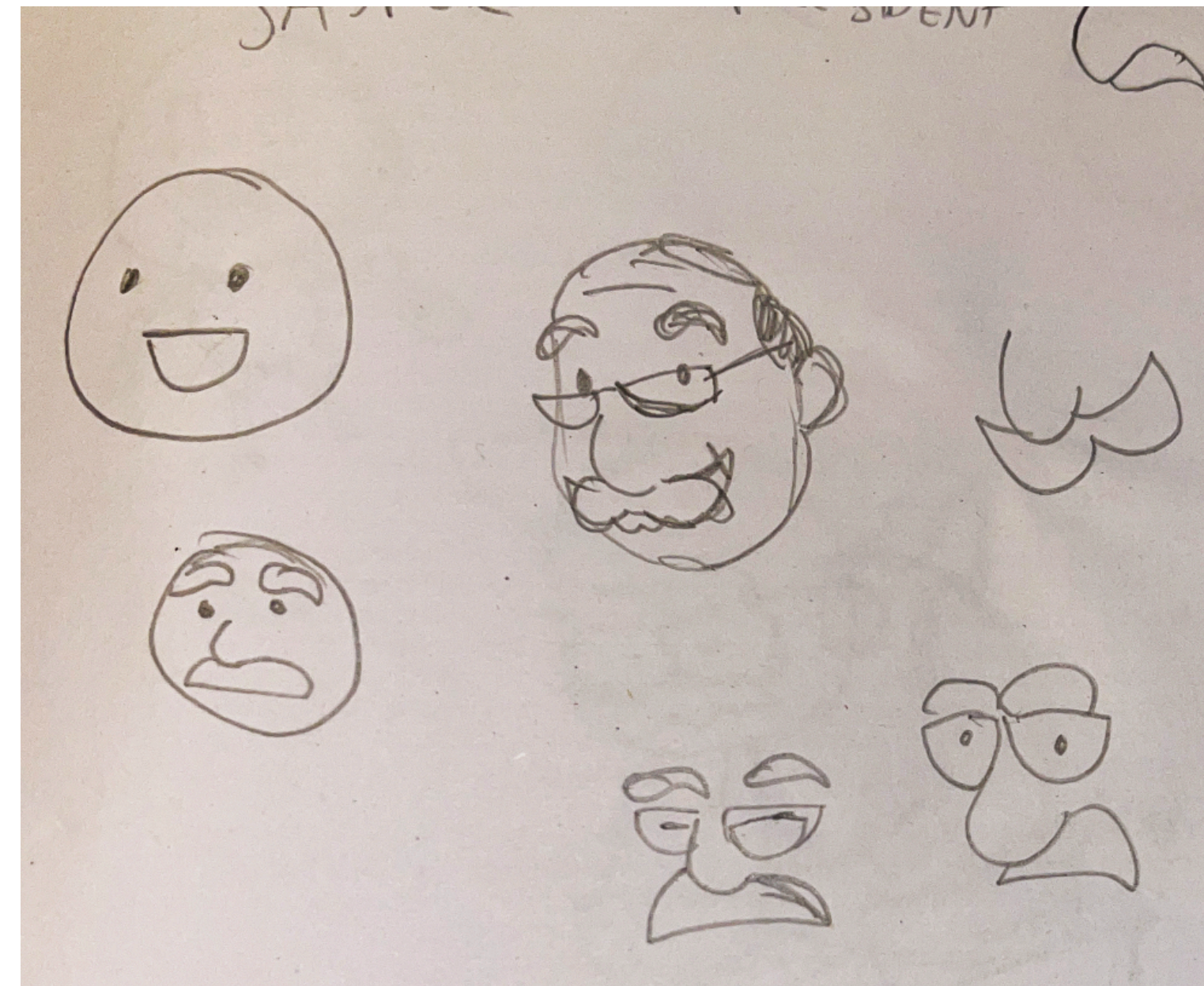
Quick Sketches and starting out in Cinema4D

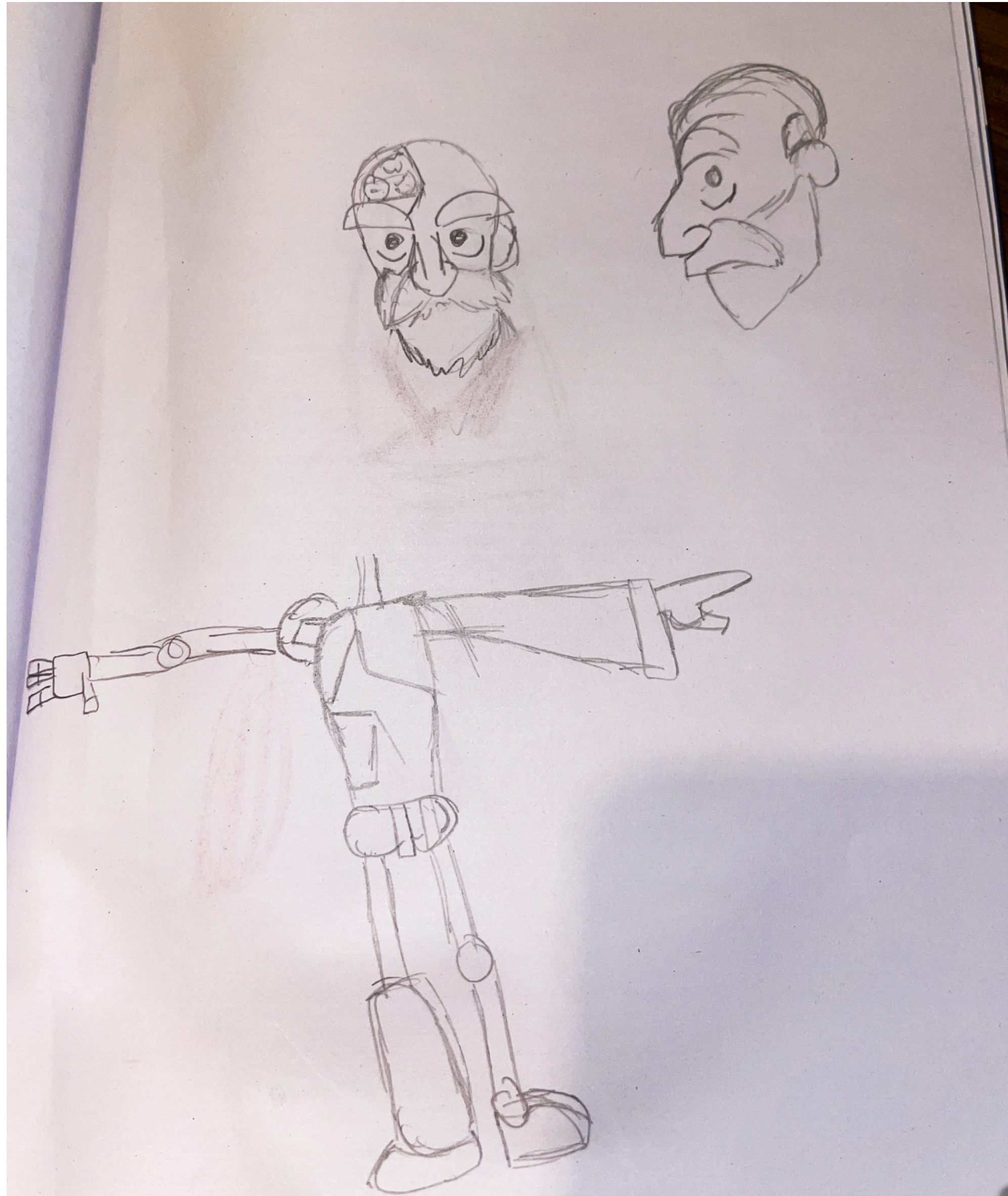


After I got a better sense of the story on the second draft, I wasn't fully satisfied but time was running short and I was ok with the setting and the characters, so I started sketching them. In this script, inspired by ChatGPT and how it waits for a prompt to create a sentence, I came up with a new theme of how AI needs us to survive too.



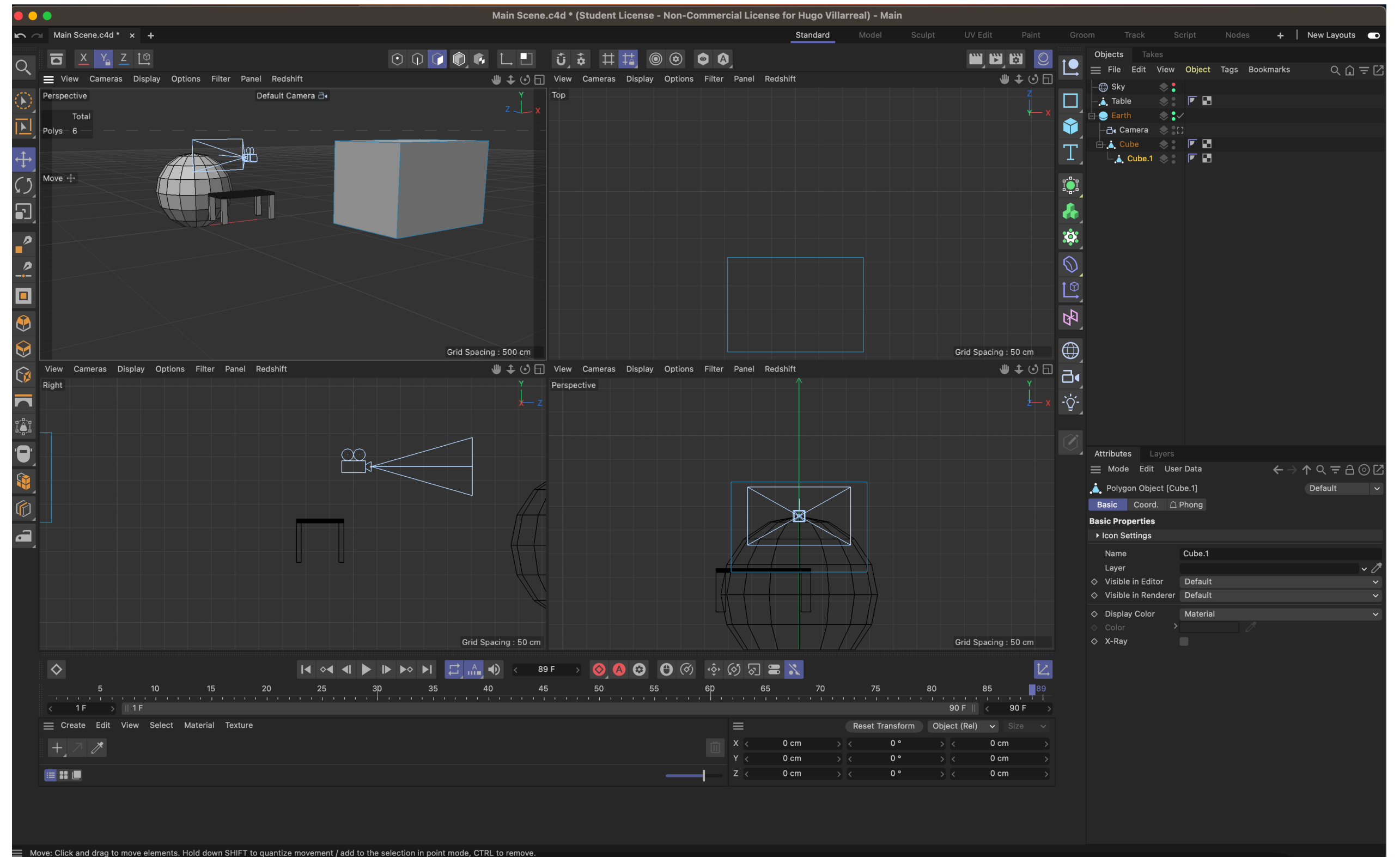
For the character designs, the idea was always to have a very simple design for the robot, maybe with LED-lit emoji face and an old guy with a mustache.

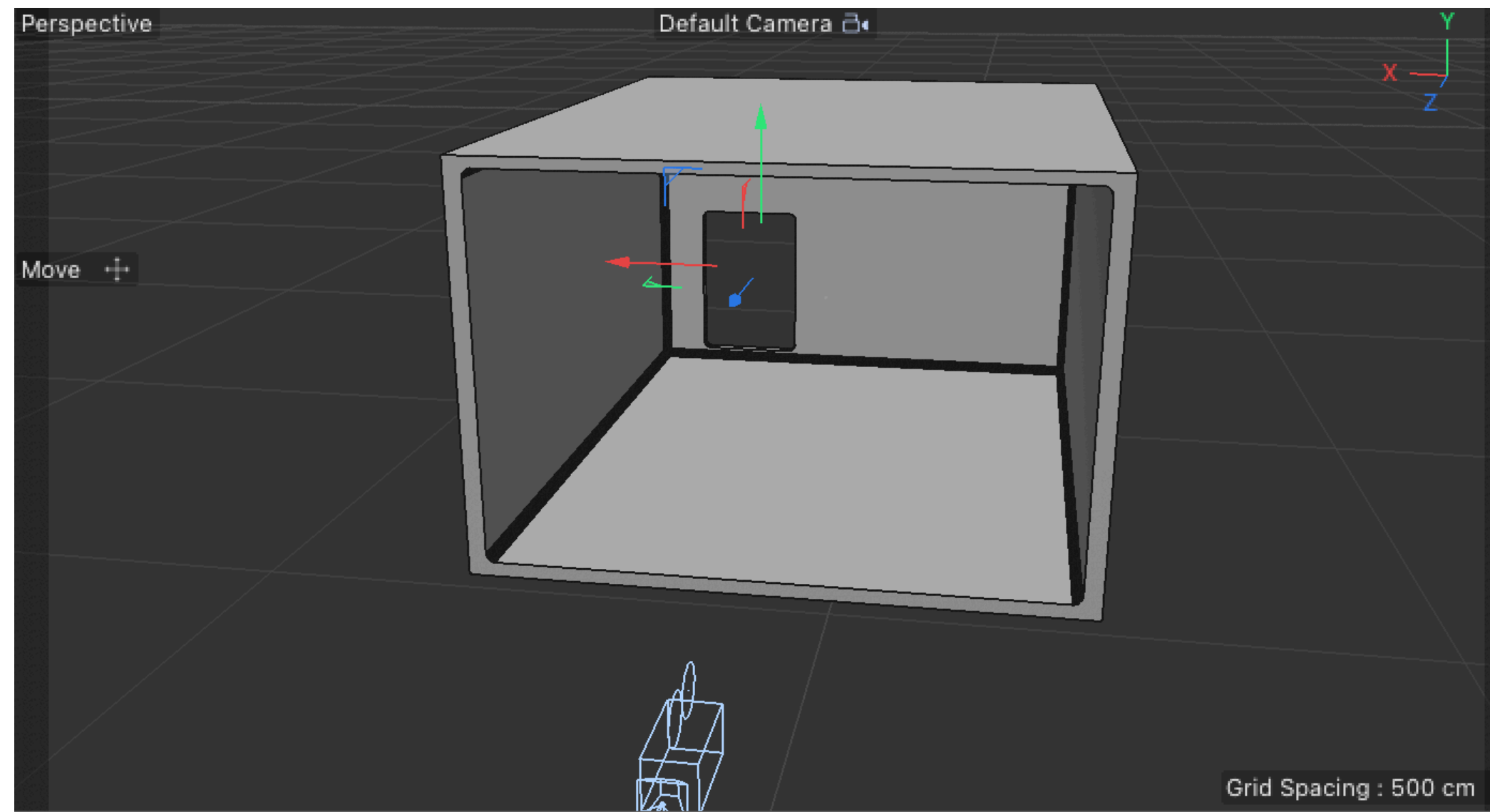
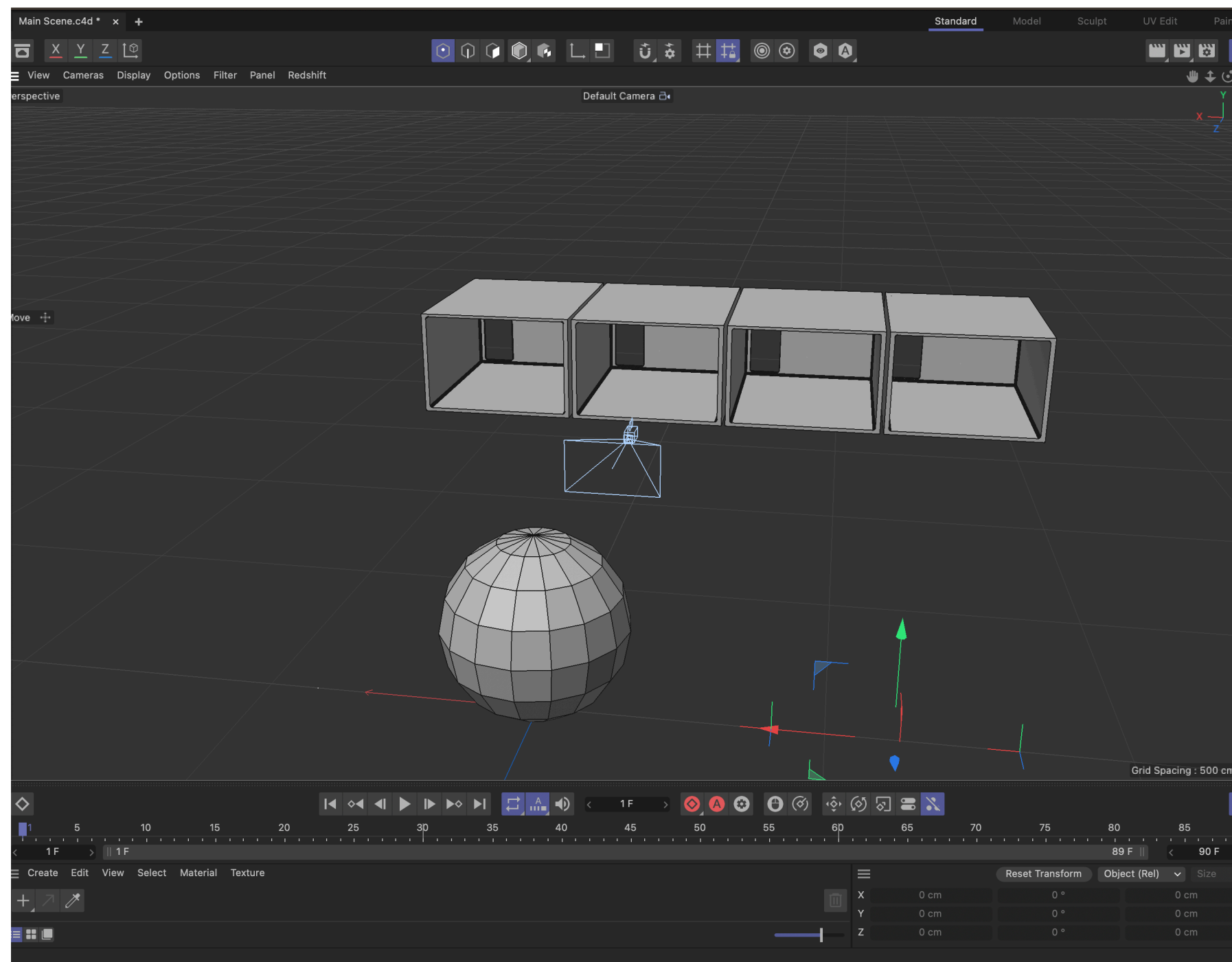
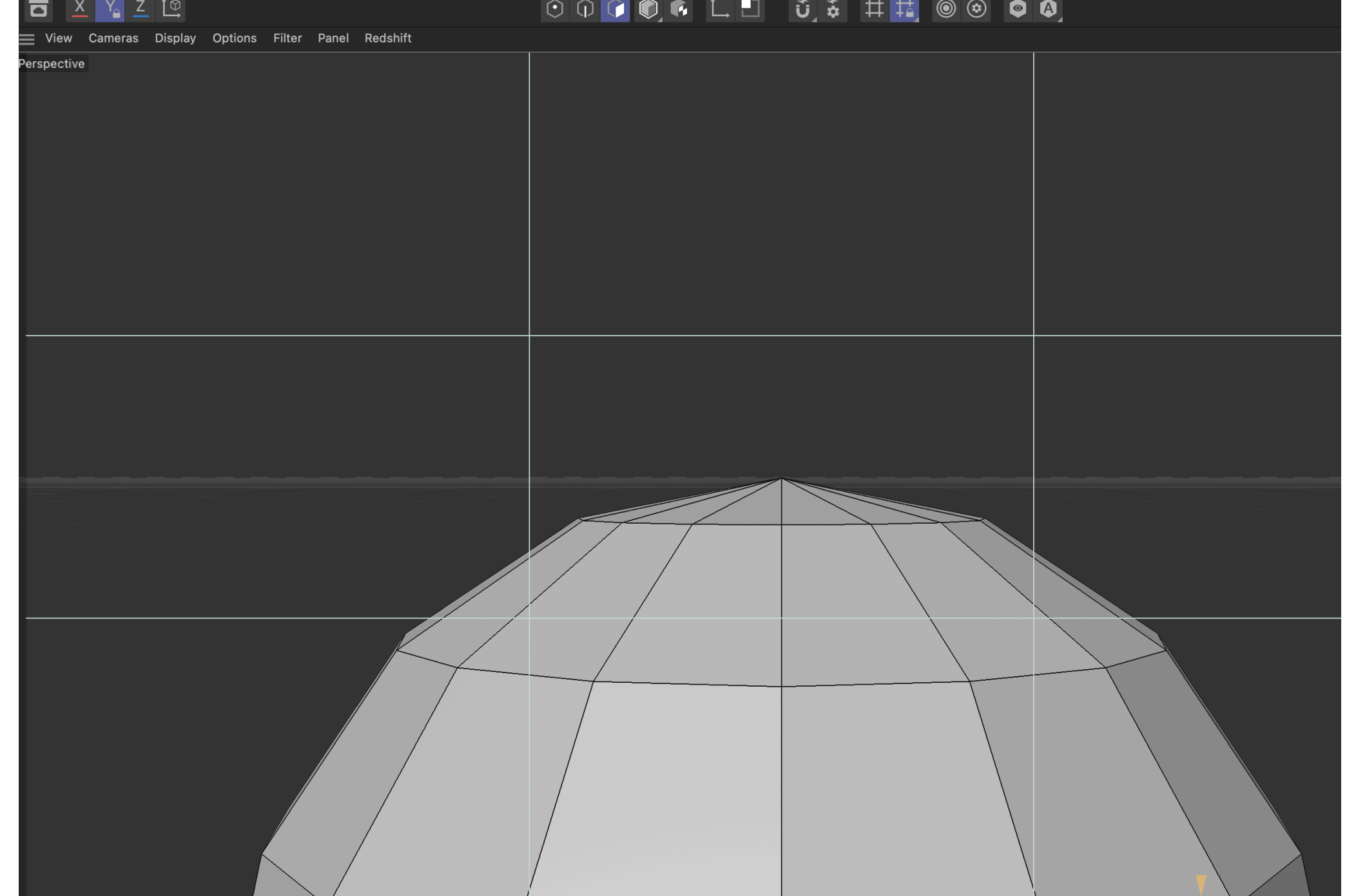
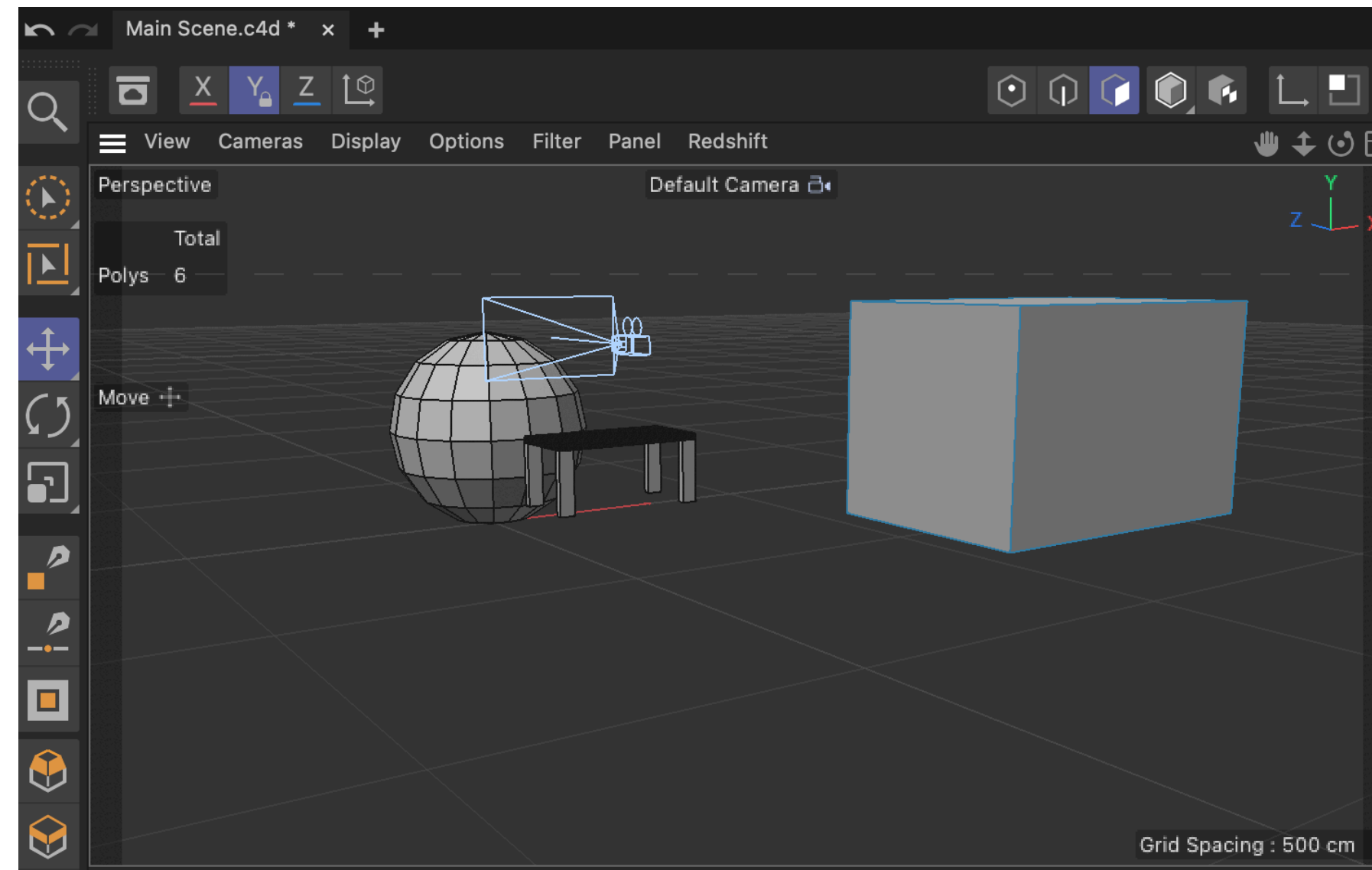




I was happy enough with the design of an old man that was also a cyborg (it would be a plot twist too), so I figured that I should start learning 3D. At first I was unsure to start learning Blender or Cinema4D.

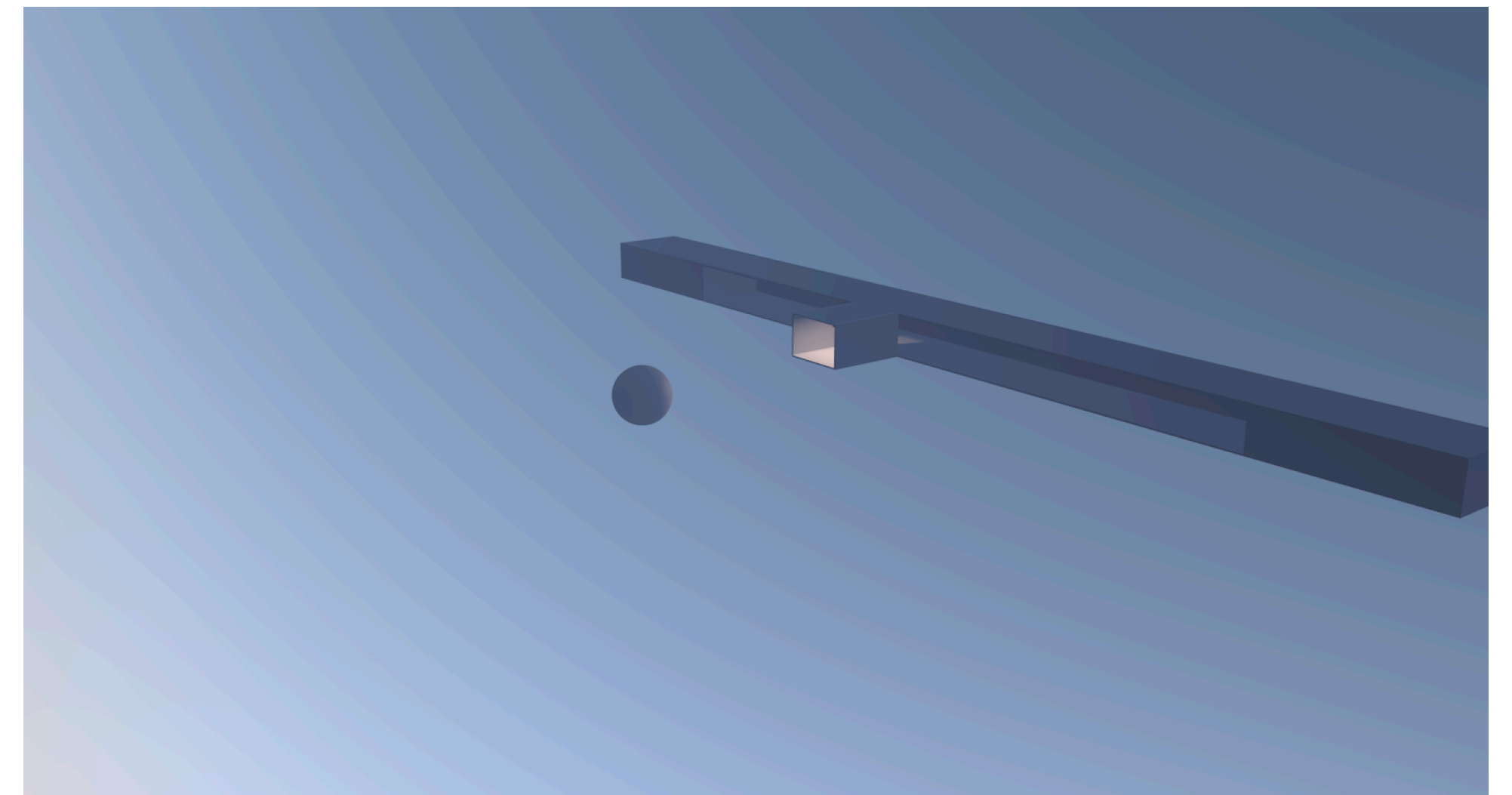
I opened the apps one last time and tried to do some simple tasks without any prior knowledge before deciding which program to invest my time in. I figured if I couldn't move around easily and move objects on either one, then the learning curve will be big and I probably I couldn't finish on time.

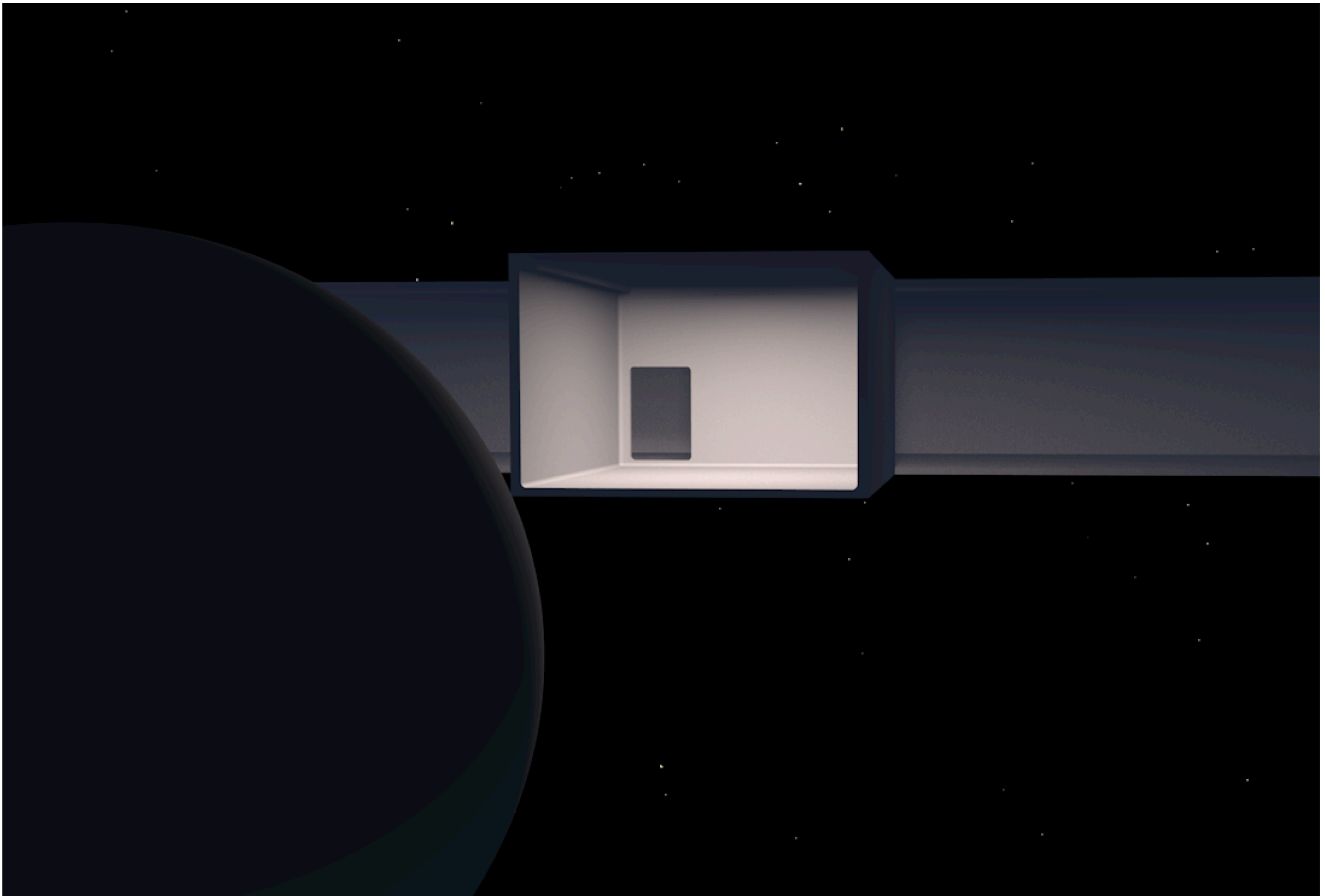
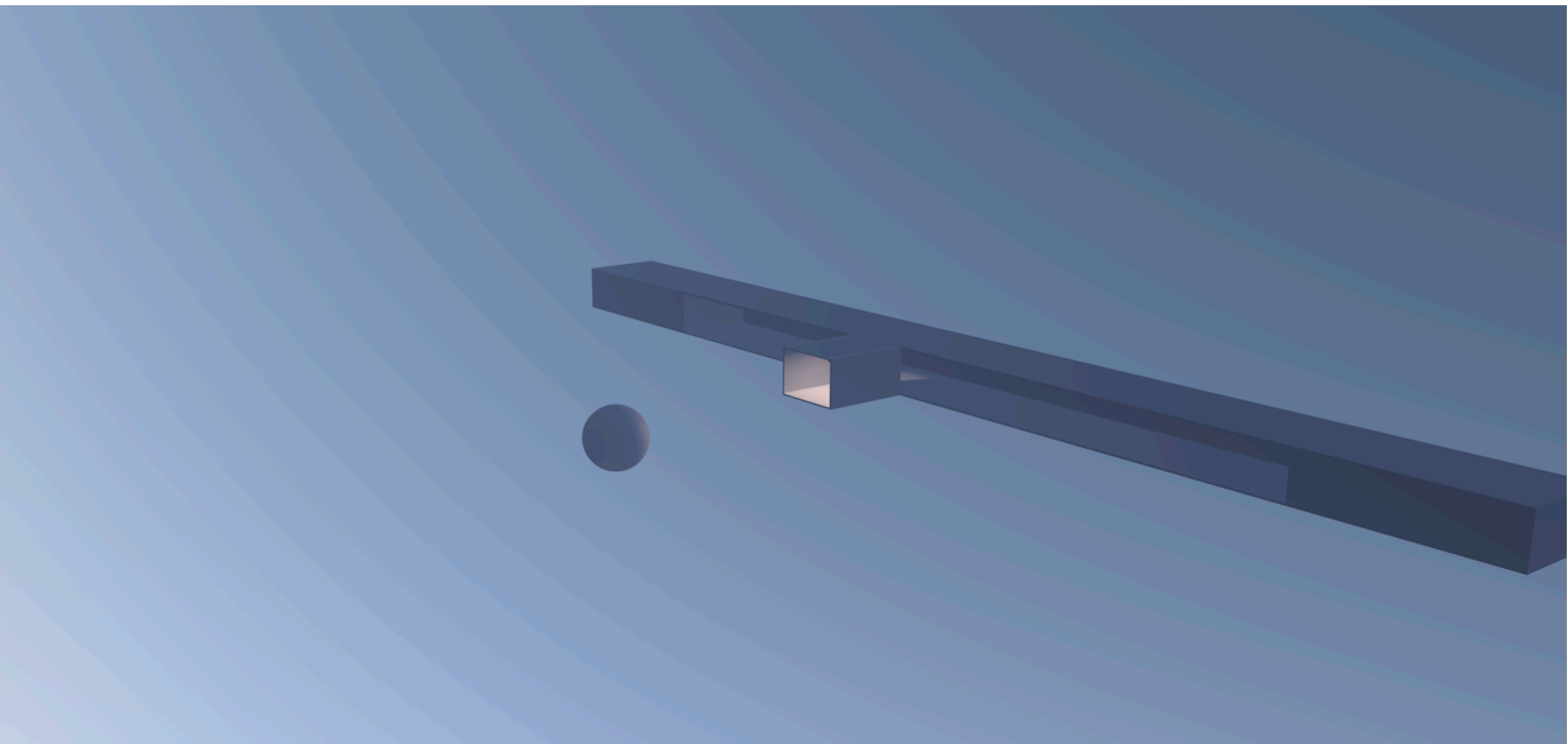
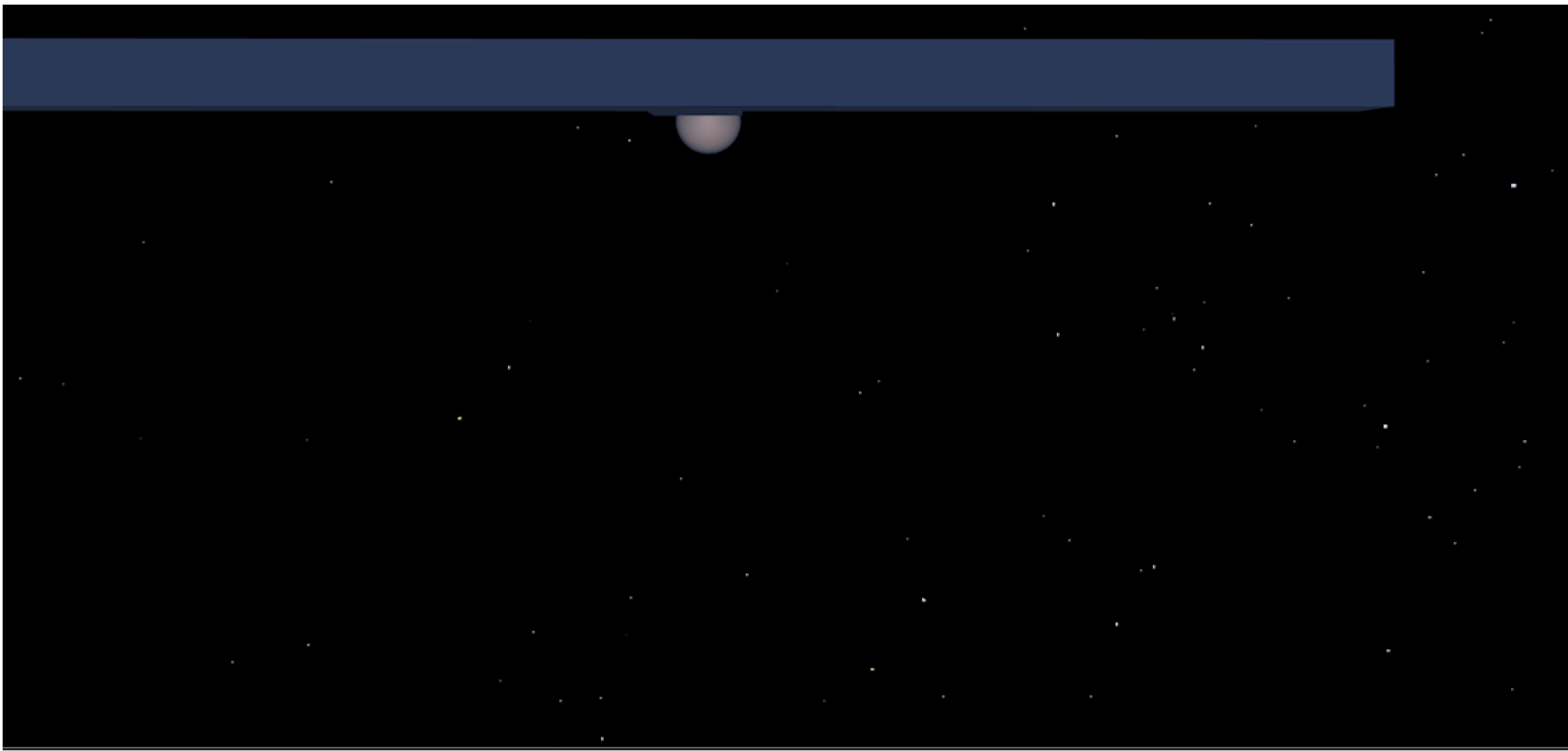
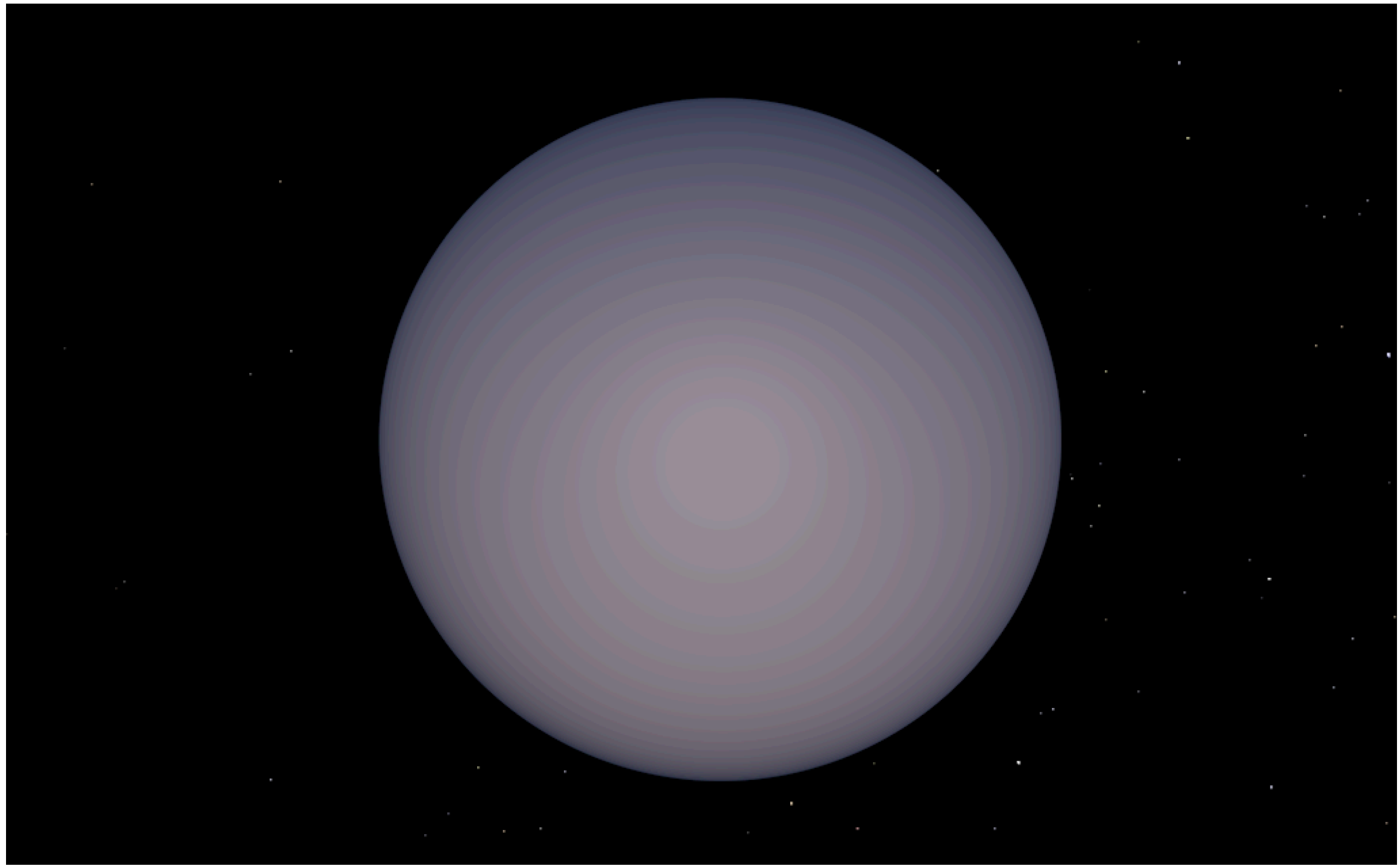


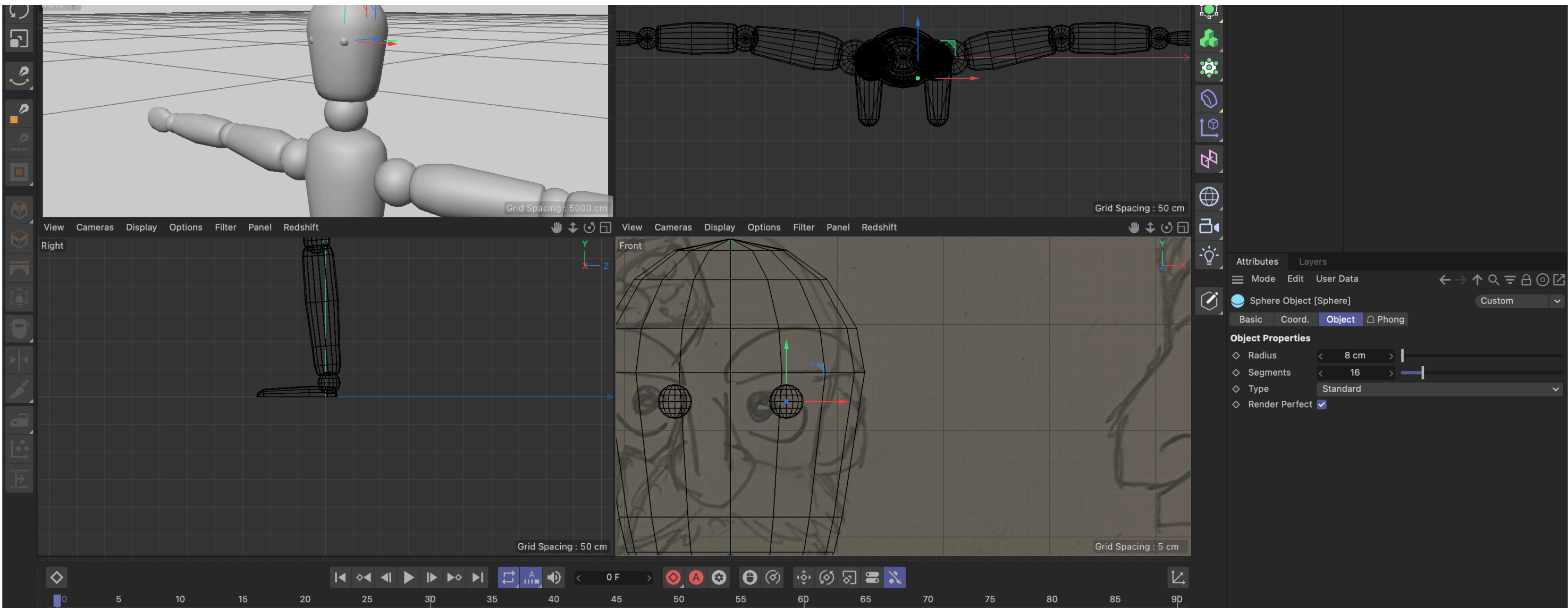
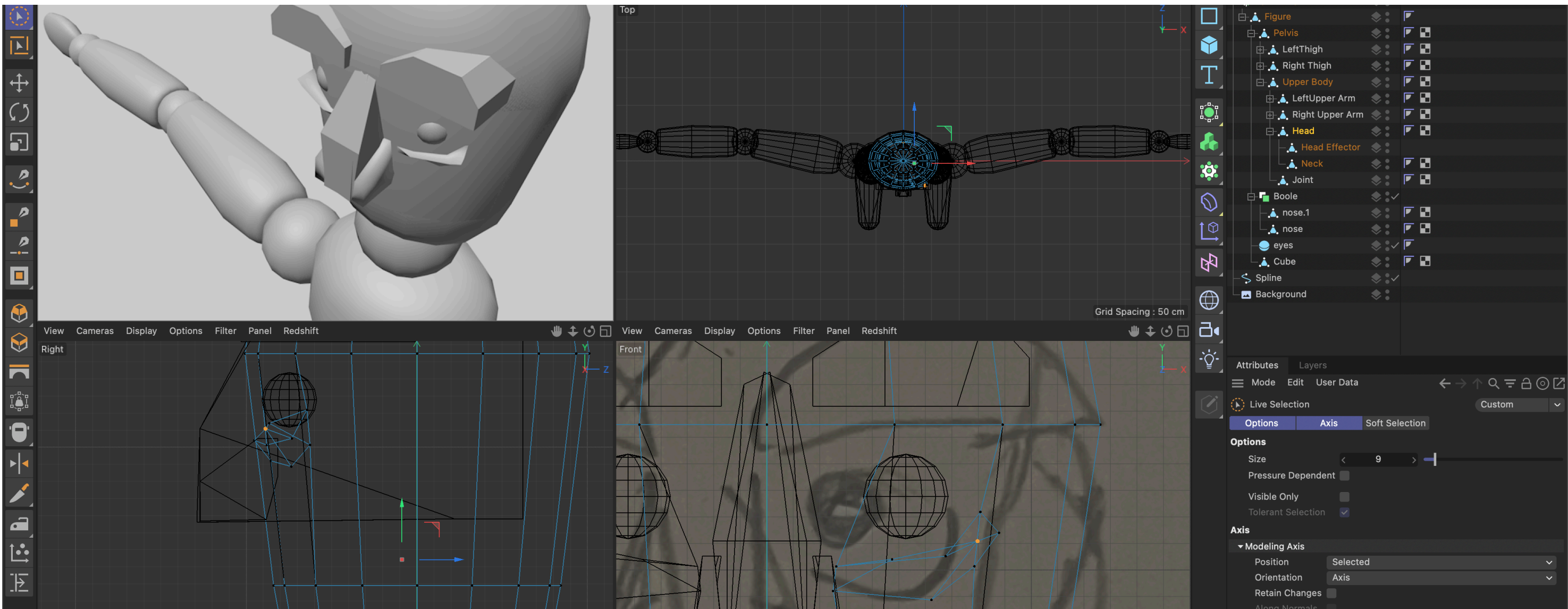


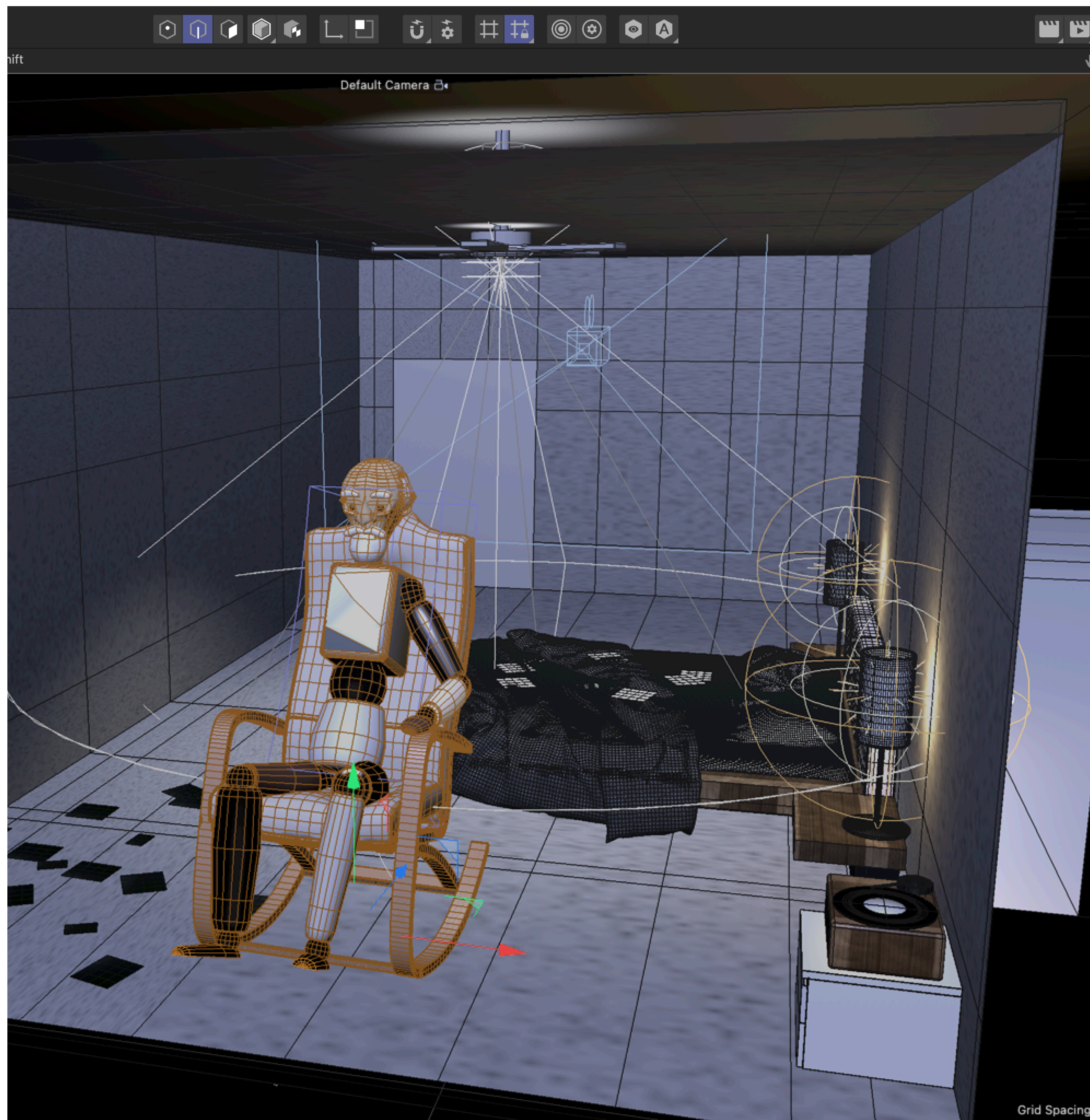
After that, I decided on Cinema4D and started to watch an online course I bought a while back to get the hang of the program (Gorgun, O. (2021). In the span of the few days I got the hang of some of the tools and was relieved I could get much of what I wanted to do done without many hiccups.

The idea of having earth as a view on the window felt right, it was a way to symbolize being reminded quite heavily that they are out of reach, stranded and forgotten. I used some other tutorials along the way (deWitt. B., 2019)

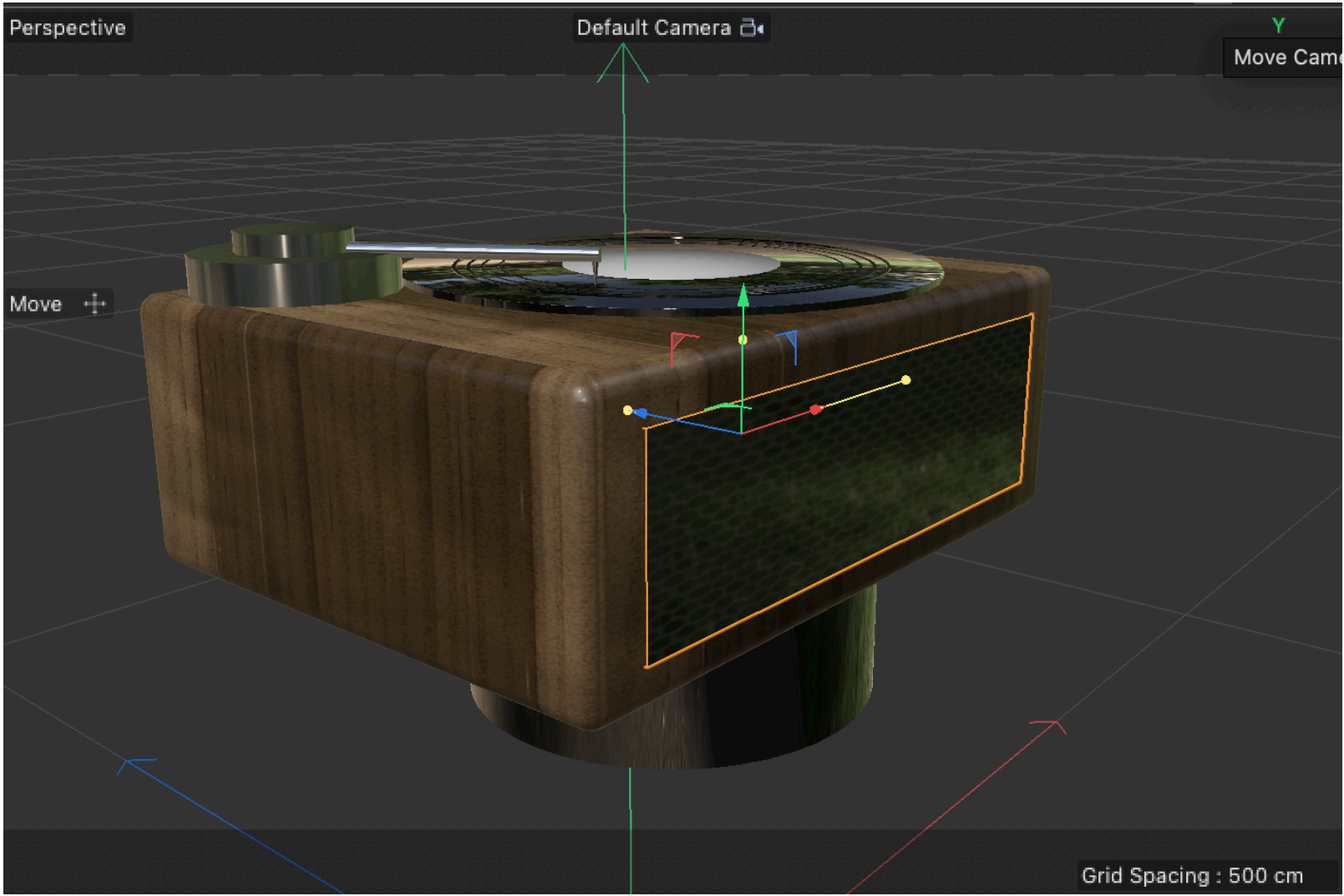
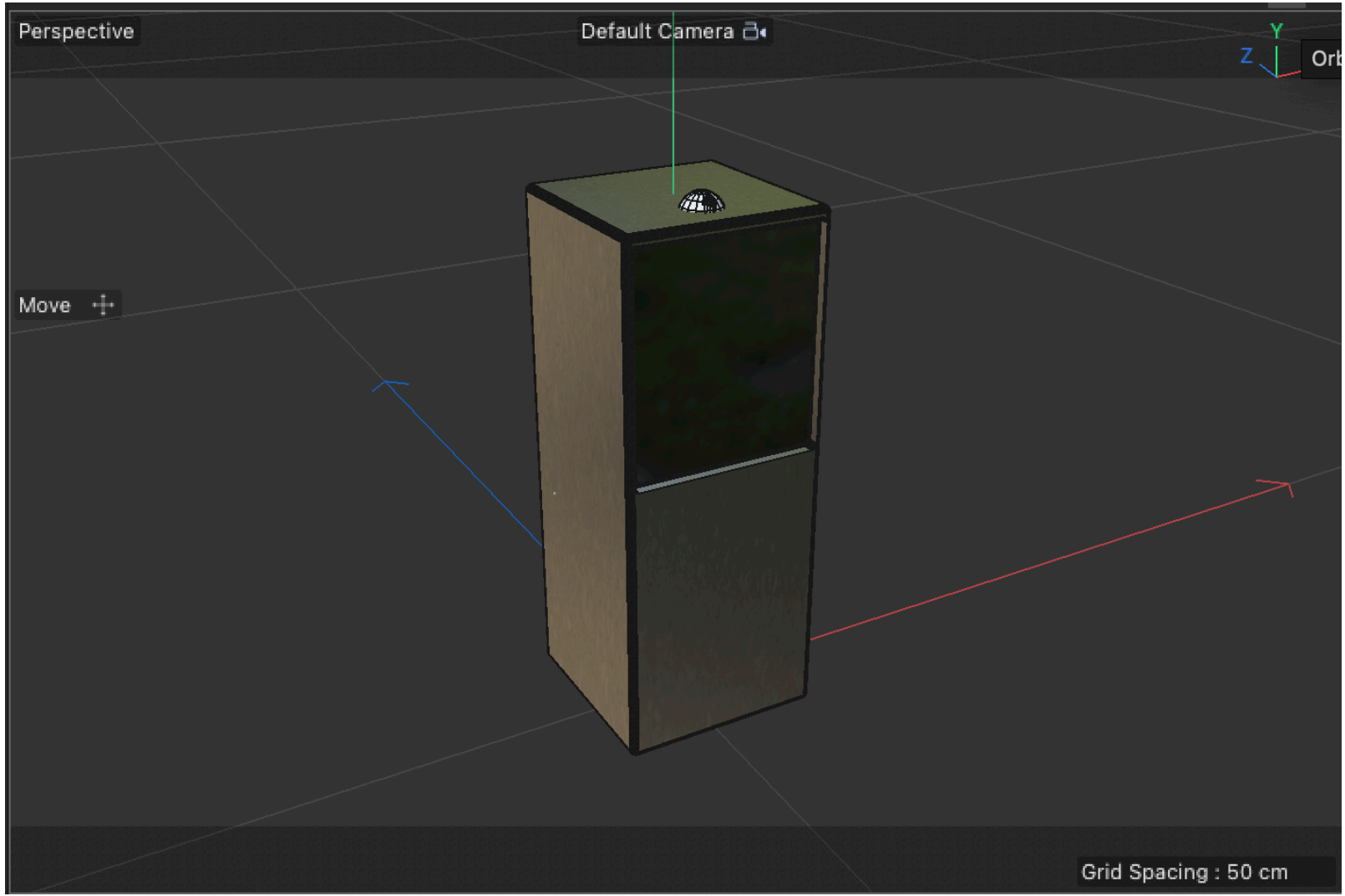
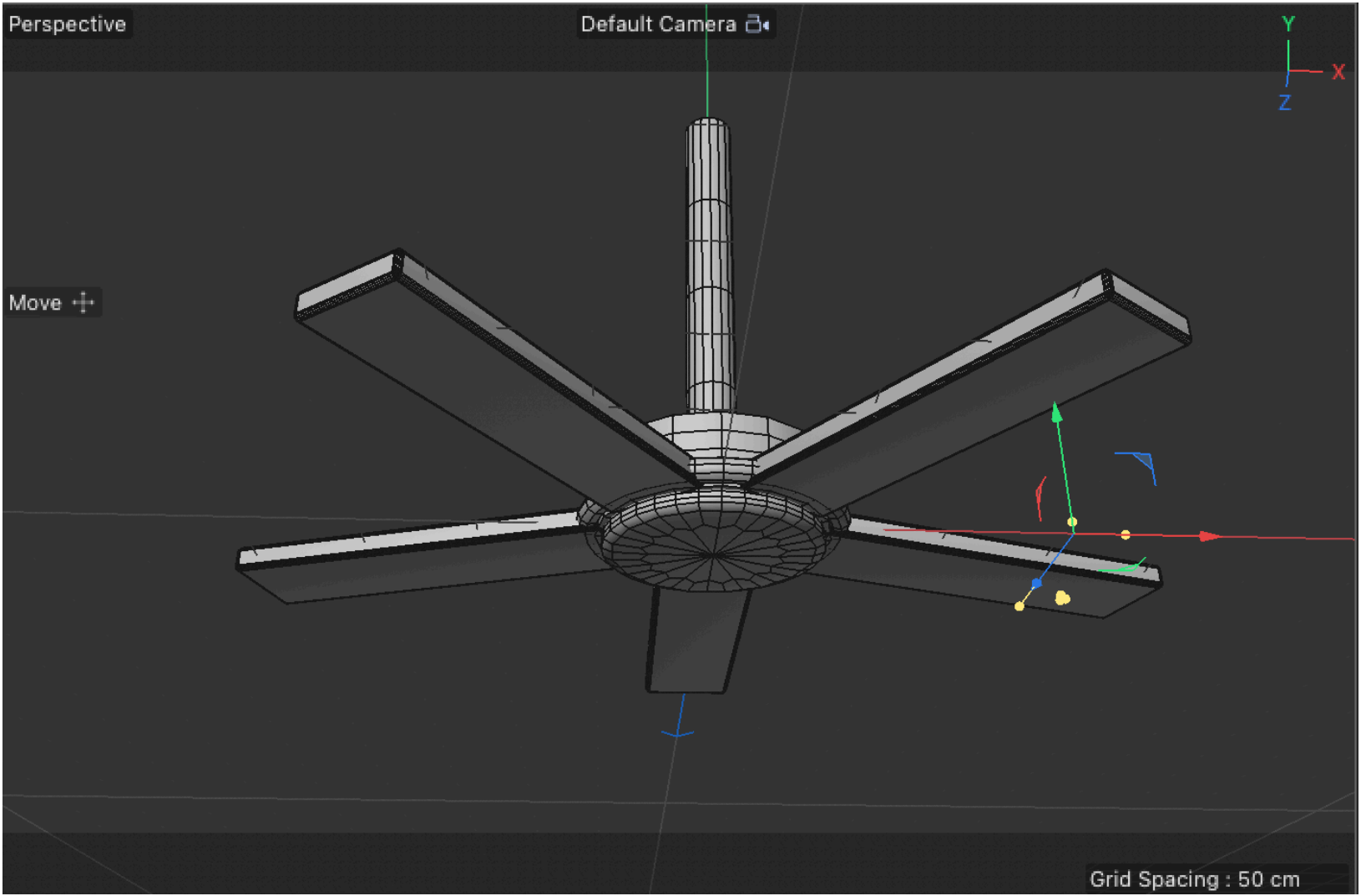




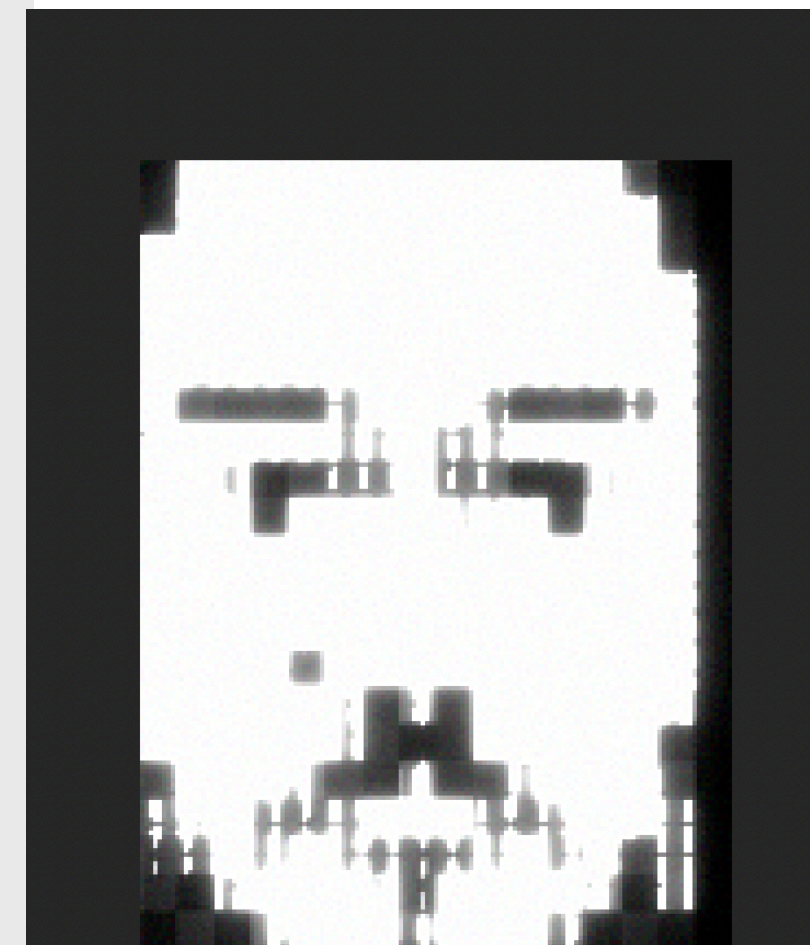
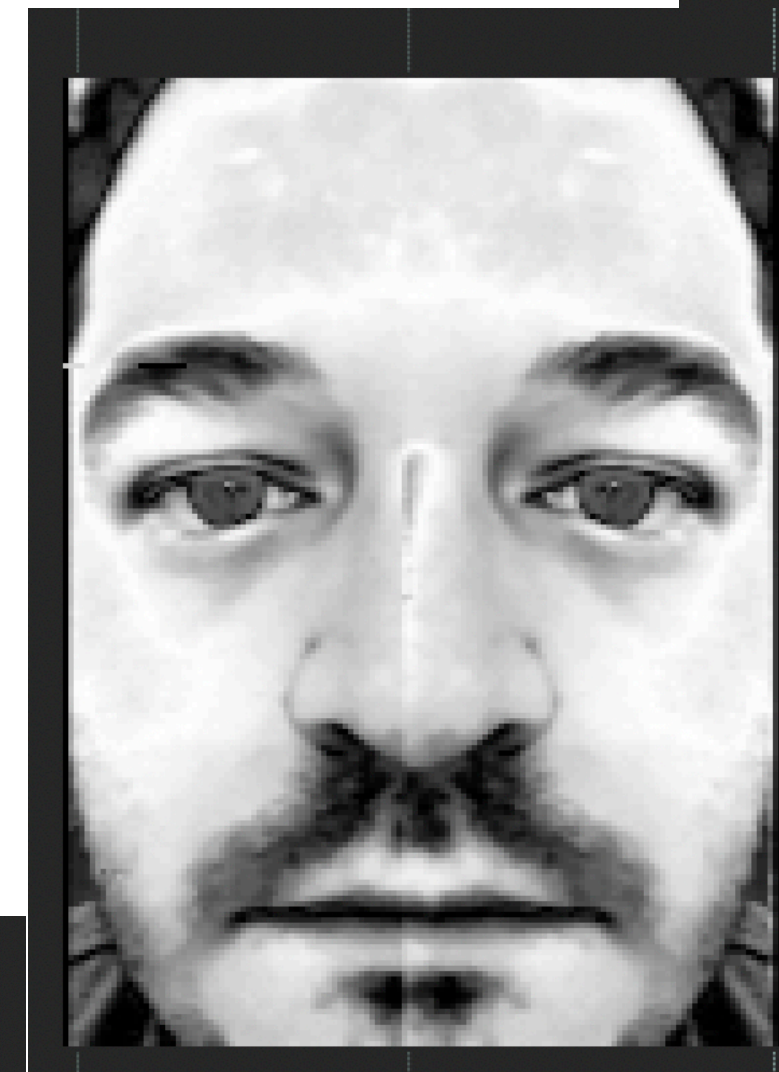


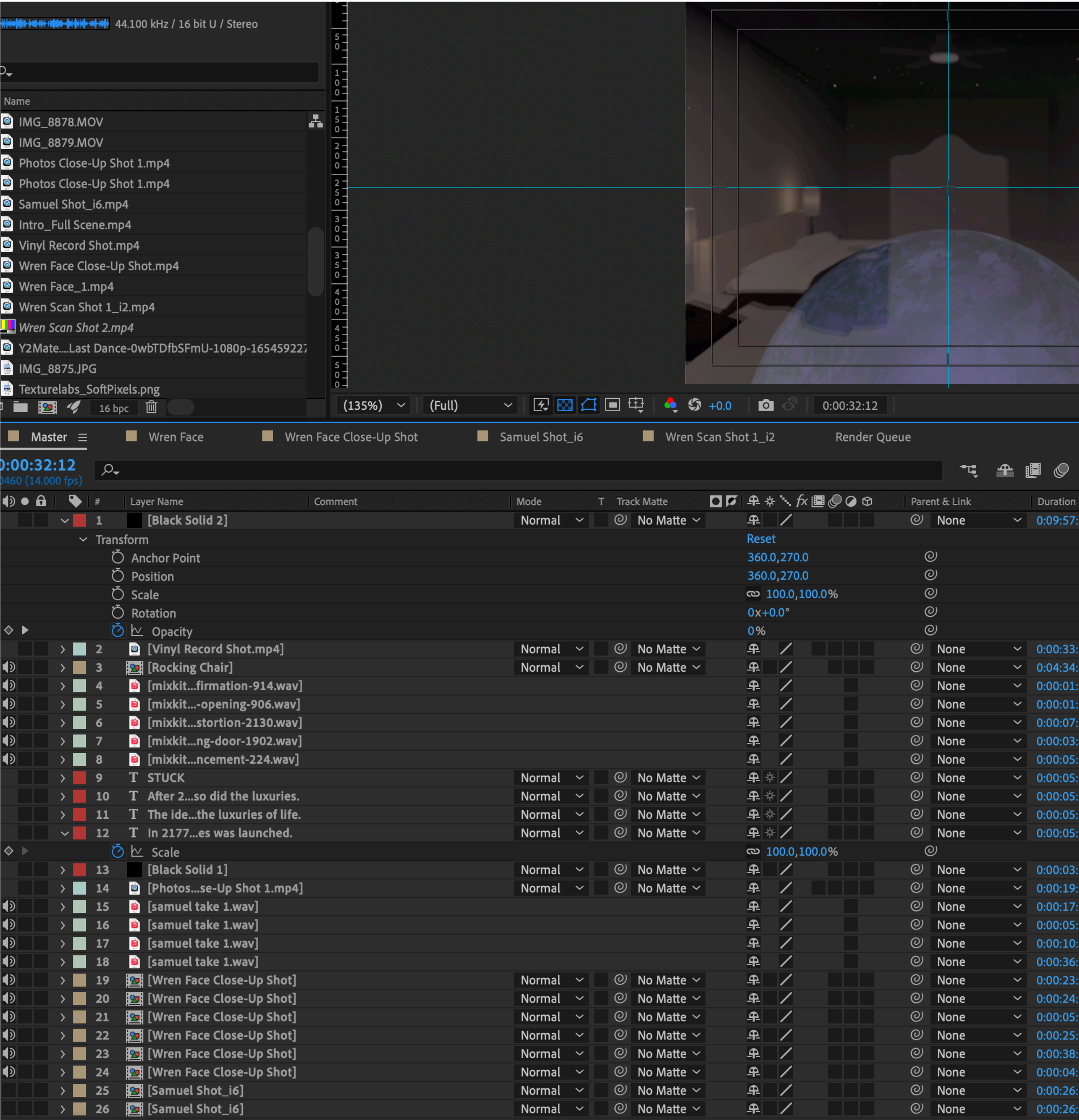


Looking for materials to add to the scene, I noticed there was a Asset Browser with not only a lot of pre-downloaded materials but objects too. I looked around and found some good objects I could add to the room. I added a modern bed, lamps and a cabinet and a rocking chair. I couldn't find a ceiling fan or a phonograph so I decided to create simple objects for these items.



For the robot facial animation, I found an awesome tutorial that exactly what I was looking for (something that would transform my face into emoji like features, so that the character would have a lot of expression if needed) and recorded myself to do the lines (Texturelabs, 2023).



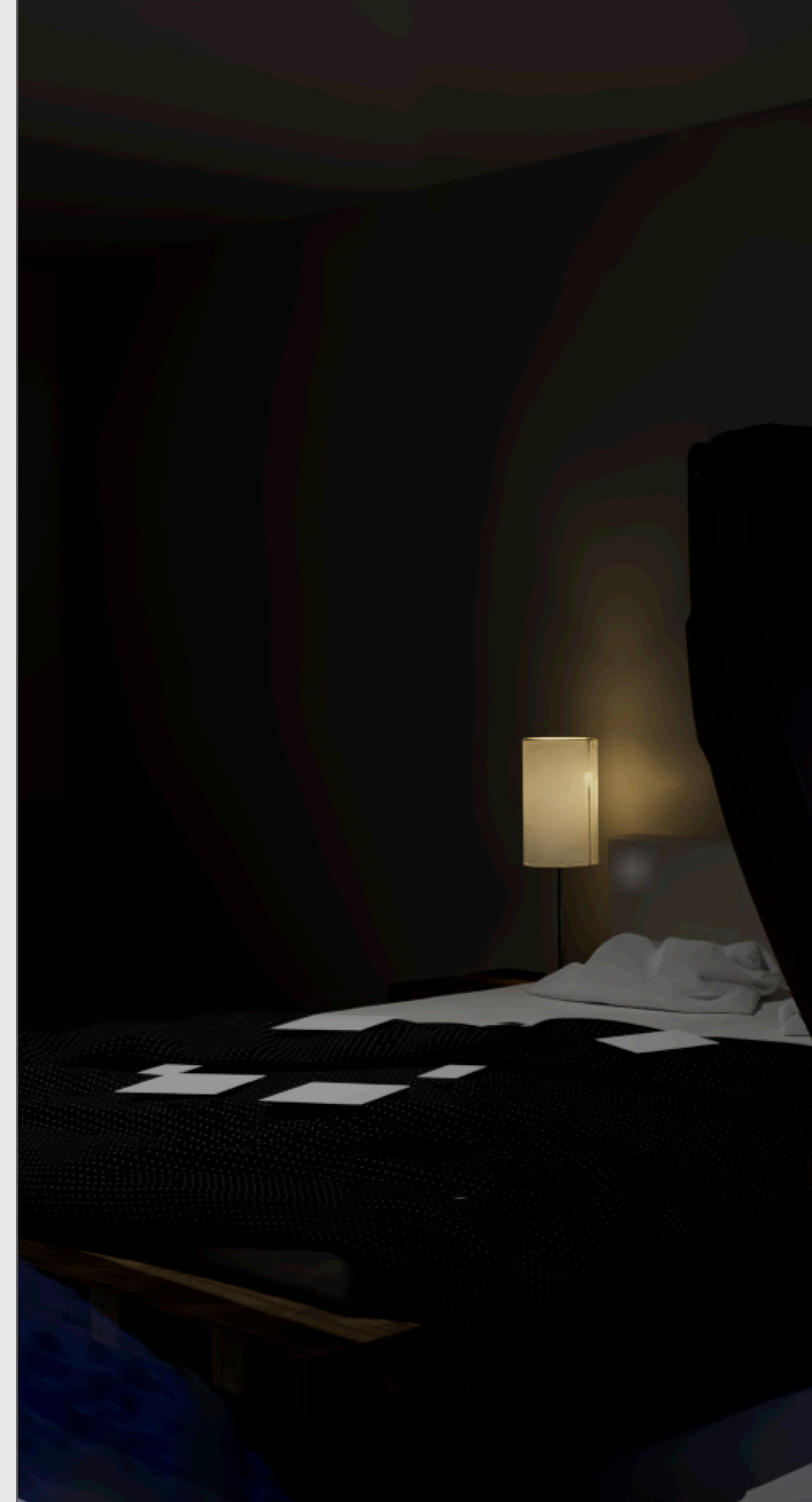


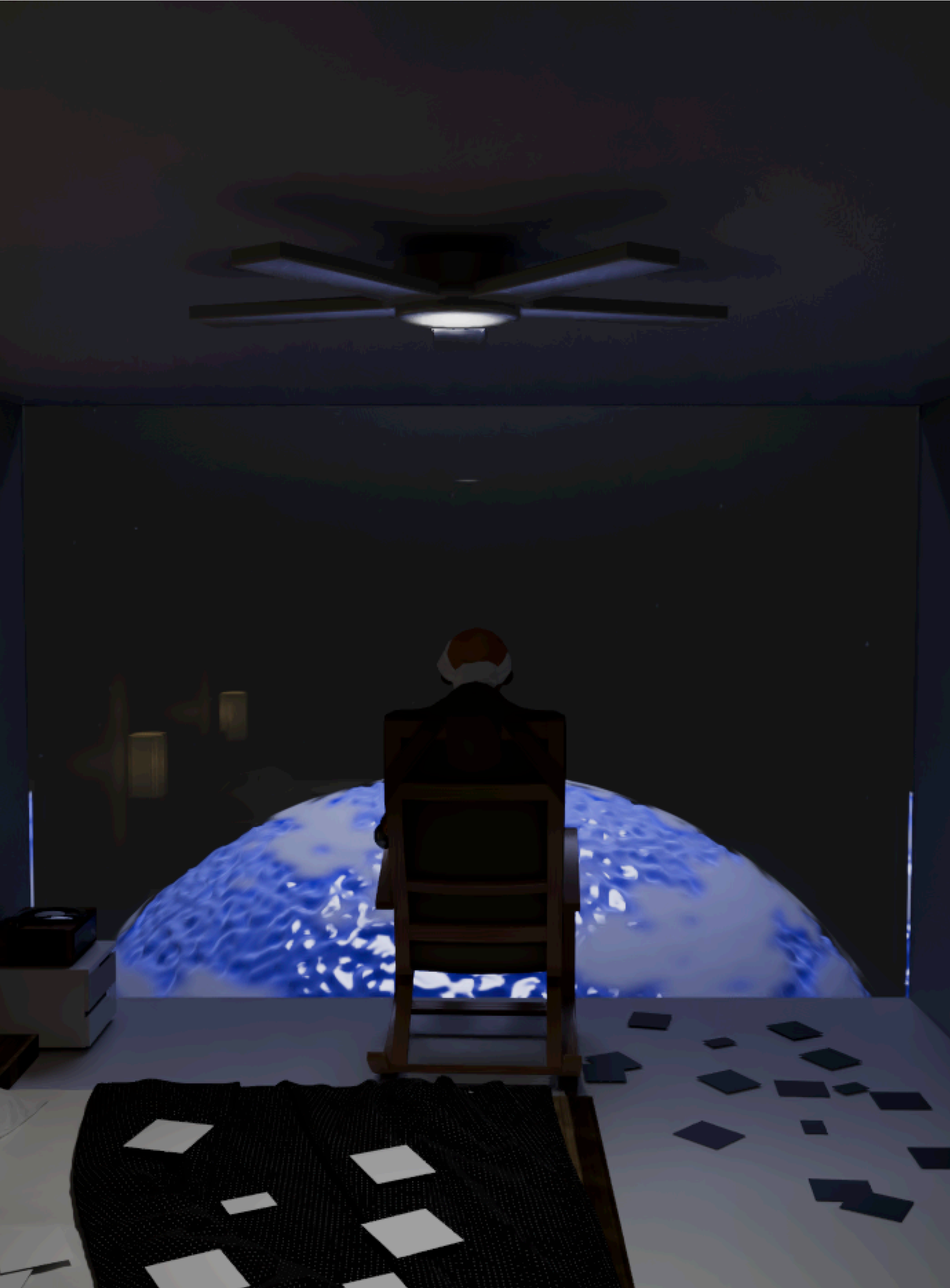
Back in Cinema4D, I decided to make each scene into a different file to not get confused and also to use as backups. After that, I created a simple camera setup for each scene, rendered everything, recorded the lines on Adobe Audition and put it together in After Effects.

Feedback and next steps



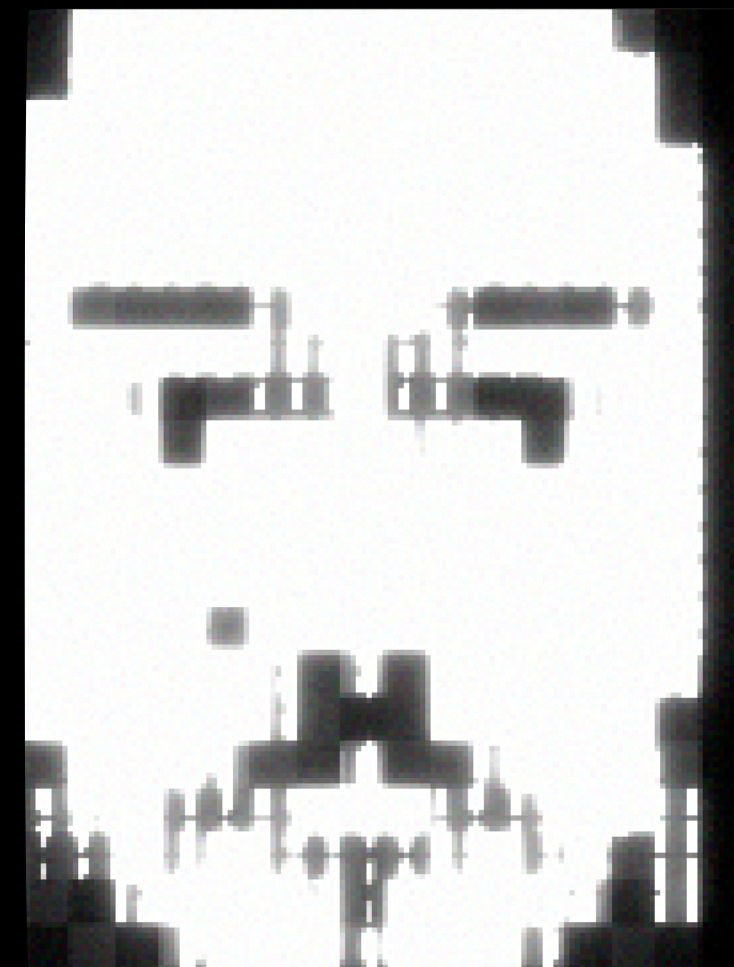
I sent the video to quite a few of my friends and peers and they all gave me great honest feedback. Even before getting feedback, I felt I need to polish the story and dialogue further. I think I wanted to tackle a lot of storylines in few minutes and it isn't working. The story threads so far are the missing memory, being in space, the cyborg plot-twist (which was never revealed so far because of time) and the robot's dependency on the human. I also need to improve the visuals and remove the copyrighted song, I thought it maybe was public domain but I found out I was mistaken.





The most common feedback I got was the pacing. To solve this, I thought about adding new camera angles or having different places show up and setup the scene further. However, one key feedback changed my perspective on this. This is basically a two-hander play. Based on this, I want for the next submission to reimagine the scene, work on it like the two characters are actors and set up the room differently to work more like a set. Right now the placement is off because the viewer can't see the door, the earth, and the characters in one camera. I'll probably learn how to use Maxon's free Moves app to record facial and body movement data, merge everything in one take / file and have a 360 virtual camera inside the room so the viewer can use a VR equipment to watch the short play. Despite having a rough animatic, I'm pretty happy because now everything is a little more clear.

Bibliography, References & Assets.



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Courses & Tutorials

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Bob deWitt. (2019, April 8). *C4D Symmetry tutorial* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHKluHB5Rjo>

Texturelabs. (2023, February 3). *Advanced After Effects // Analogue Retro-Futuristic Monitor* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8eDk8aCJIY>

Other Assets Used

Images

Vergnet, A. (2020) *Photo of the night sky in Cévennes, France*. Taken with a Lumix FZ-82. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cévennes_France_night_sky_with_stars_02.jpg

Astro_Alex (2018) *Wind, Wellen and Wolken. Wind, waves and clouds*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wind,_waves_and_clouds.jpg

Sound effects

Stevelalonde (2009) *RockingChair4.aif*
<https://freesound.org/people/stevelalonde/sounds/80476/>

Mixkit (2023) *mixkit-cupboard-sliding-door-1902*
<https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects>

Mixkit (2023) *mixkit-elegant-door-announcement-224*
<https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects>

Mixkit (2023) *mixkit-futuristic-door-opening-906*
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Mixkit (2023) *mixkit-sci-fi-confirmation-914*
<https://mixkit.co/free-sound-effects>

Mixkit (2023) *mixkit-coarse-tone-mic-distortion-2130*
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Thank you.

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