



CHOBANI

The Giving Tree

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The world of *The Giving Tree* is one of compassion, sharing and kindness.

It's also a world where small ideas and actions can lead to incredible transformations and delightful surprises; it's a place where a child's imagination can grow a tree to feed the world and her generous heart wants to share that gift with everyone.

This story is perfect to help celebrate Chobani's 10th anniversary – the story of *The Giving Tree* is Chobani. Through initiatives such as outreach and hiring of refugees, profit sharing with employees, locally-sourced all-natural ingredients, a commitment to animal welfare and the many community-based Foundation projects, Chobani sets the corporate standard for social responsibility. Your plan to give away a cup of Chobani to every woman, man and child is a direct expression of that core spirit of sharing and *The Giving Tree* project matches that same ethos of bold thinking and giving back.

Choosing Aitch to design the world of *The Giving Tree* feels just right for the concept. The folksy charm and richness of her work create the ideal world to tell the story. But there's also something magical and pleasingly off-kilter about her art that has inspired us to take a very unique approach to the storytelling and animation. *The Giving Tree* must be heartfelt but it also needs a few surprises up its sleeve to capture a certain sense of play and childhood imagination, which we'll achieve by breathing life in to Aitch's illustrations with an innovative animation approach.





She starts off walking through a lush “garden of Eden,” happily eating her Chobani when she notices a clearing in the foliage. She looks at her cup of yogurt for a beat thinking about how much she loves Chobani.

Story

Our successful telling of *The Giving Tree’s* narrative hinges on seeing through the perspective of our young girl hero. It’s not enough to just see her travel through the story and grow the tree that she shares with the world – we need to know how she feels and have a window into what she’s thinking as the story unfolds.



An idea occurs to her, “Why not share Chobani with everyone?” She reaches in her pocket and pulls out a seed, but not just any seed – it’s the “mother seed” with swirls of color running through it that make it unlike any other. The girl looks at the seed thoughtfully; she’s saved it for a special occasion and **now** is the time.

She crouches to plant the seed and after a brief pause, it bursts from the ground.





As she watches it grow and stretch out its branches, the Giving Tree quickly dwarfs her.





Mesmerized, she excitedly eats her Chobani almost as fast as the tree grows. Her excitement turns to wonder, then to awe as blossoms explode into a cornucopia of colorful fruits. The girl can't quite believe what she's set in motion and neither can we as the camera travels around the tree capturing dramatic, low angle shots from her point of view.



Cut to a wide shot as people are drawn from the edges of the garden to get a look at the full-grown Giving Tree. The girl waves them over, encouraging them to come and taste the fruit; she can't wait to share her creation. We see the hands of the crowd reach for their favorite fruits and then cut back to the girl looking up longingly at a peach, far out of reach.







Peach is her favorite fruit and she looks a bit wistful as it hangs high in the boughs. Suddenly the branch shakes and the peach drops. The camera tracks with it as it lands in the girl's cup of yogurt and transitions seamlessly to the end card. It all ends happily as the tree gives back to the girl with its gift of the peach.



[Click to watch the test.](#)

Animation Technique

We took a very unique approach to animation that fits the concept of the spot and pushes the look into an unexpected and whimsical realm. Aitch's art has the richness and charm of folk art mixed with a medieval tapestry style of perspective and layout, and we're honoring her aesthetic while opening up cinematic opportunities and dimensionalizing her imagery in a new way. Our technique is akin to digitally animated paper dolls that have no visible hinges and have a subtle amount of dimension like a bas-relief. The characters will have the ability to move fluidly but in a slightly restrained, two-dimensional way similar to the *Wildwood Chronicles* trailer. We'll employ the same approach with the set, extruding the lush foliage of Aitch's designs to make a more compelling environment with the ability to add life and movement to the plants—and, of course, animating the growth of *The Giving Tree* in all its magical realist glory.

In our test we pushed the dimension of the world even further—and with a bit of a twist. We start out with a very flat (isometric) perspective then, as we push in on the girl, we drop the camera angle so the horizon falls away and the plants and objects stack in depth. It's a little like a pop-up book or a "magic eye" effect where a piece of flat art suddenly has depth. It's a hard technique to describe, but the effect is that the set and dimension of the world grow simultaneously. As the girl and the tree animate to gain dimension over time as well, they start out paper-thin and grow in depth as the camera pushes in. This expanding

dimensional quality isn't just a visual gimmick; it's an expression of the theme of growth in the story—taking something very simple and nurturing it into something much bigger and deeper.



In the test we took great care to build animatable assets directly from Aitch's illustrations, avoiding interpretation wherever possible. Even pieces modeled in CG were extruded directly from her art, her paintings then mapped over the models to maintain the integrity of her hand.

We approached depth and composition by layering and stacking the art in perspective and using depth of field to imply a fuller space. Aitch's style of letting objects float in limbo is so signature to her look that we embraced it as a visual rule in building the environment. This 2.5 dimensional world is a captivating and unique approach to animating Aitch's designs that could easily be extended into practical assets such as POS pop-ups broken out into quasi-dimensional layers, with some of the layered elements designed for ambient movement.

Our approach to *The Giving Tree* TVC will also be carried over to the web spots to provide the campaign cohesion in terms of the feeling of the animation and style of movement. For the sake of speed and flexibility, we do plan on animating the web pieces in a simpler "2d" style that will look cohesive with *The Giving Tree* spot but will be quicker to produce especially if we have unique concepts and designs for the various pieces. As we build these assets we will keep in mind the different ratios of various social media sites and make them accommodate all the different formats.



Music & Sound Design

The music for *The Giving Tree* feels like it wants to go one of two ways: folksy and upbeat (Lumineers, Bon Iver) or something unexpected and poppy (Arcade Fire, Group Love, The Features). The folk direction makes the spot more earnest and sincere, but runs the risk of being a bit precious and predictable. On the flip side, the unexpected alt-pop direction makes the spot more current but could be challenging to match with the tone of the voiceover.

We've put together a mini compilation of both types:

Folksy – Blitzen Trapper, Jack and the Weathermen, Mikhael Paskalev



Alt Pop – Ages & Ages, Dantesville



Given Aitch's sensibilities and our animation approach, it suits the project to have a playful, upbeat track that's relatively simple and small in terms of instrumentation. In reality the VO script drives the story and the music will primarily be a bed for it, but we certainly have time at the beginning and end of the story for the music to be the focus. We'll experiment with temp tracks during our animatic to see what feels best with the story and the VO performance, and will be happy to share our exploration with your music supervisor.

Sound design wants to be very spare. Once we have music and VO, sound design will only be noticeable to accent key story moments like the girl's enjoyment of her yogurt, the sound of the tree pushing up through the ground and the plop of the peach as it drops into the girl's cup. There will, of course, be a full soundscape for the world—low in the mix but present enough to create a sonic richness.

VO Casting

At the outset, we'll work closely with your team to establish the balance of sincerity vs whimsy and a good idea of the musical direction to help convey the overall tone and energy, making the performance much easier to nail.

When casting the female VO narrator, is her voice that of the girl, the girl's mother, her grandmother, or an omniscient narrator (voice of the goddess) type? As scripted, we can go in any of these directions and as the lines are succinct, the actor can certainly stretch out the performance, play with pace or add a bit of playfulness to the delivery.

Gillian Anderson did a wonderful job with this type of sweet, playful delivery in the short *Room on the Broom*. It's worth a watch to hear how she captures a real sense of kindness in her voice acting. Someone like Amy Adams would be a great inspiration for her incredibly likable earnestness along with her "forever young" voice, which could work nicely. Elizabeth Moss also has that sense of compassion and kindness, but also a bit of youthful energy and sense of fun.





The Giving Tree is a truly special project that we recognize has tremendous meaning to Chobani. At HouseSpecial, we are uniquely skilled at adapting and working with notable designers such as Aitch, weaving nuanced character and fantastical worlds into our dedication of great storytelling. We're thrilled at the possibility that *The Giving Tree* offers and are up for the creative challenge of finding just the right tonal balance to embody the Chobani spirit.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Sorenson".

