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Rubber Hose Animation: The Exploration towards the History and Understanding of Animation Industry.

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Abstract

This article focuses on the history of rubber hose animation and how the style is inspired by many of the animator or animation production in terms of design. It is involving research on the development of this animation style in the Western's animation industry in the 1920s until today. This study also involving in research on how the rubber hose animation get influenced in the art movement that been developed in those years. Initially, this style has been unknown to many people as it is rarely used in the animation nowadays, especially in the Malaysian's animation industry. However, this style is getting the recognition it deserves many of the young audiences today enjoyed watching an animated series with a unique character design. This study will show how the rubber hose animation had been inspired many western animations in term design before but also shows the importance of the style in animation to improve the animation in term of design or the animation itself. Although animation industry in Malaysia did not fond with the usage of rubber hose animation because of the budget and time consumption, the history need to be learned for understanding the evolution in animation techniques.

Keywords: Rubber Hose Animation, Art Movement, History of Animation, 2-D Animation, Malaysia Animation

Introduction and Reviews of Literature

Rubber hose style animation has been long used by the earliest in the animation industry. This style is named as such due to the way the limbs of the characters move and how the arms and the leg has been created that resembles a rubber hose. It has been said that "Rubber hose animation cartoons exist in a plastic world, both literally and figuratively" (Shurtz, 2011). This means that the style can be everything in this world that has the potential to mould or shape into something else, but not always perceived. Shurtz stated, "rubber hose style animation is named such due to the way the limbs of the characters move. Their arms and legs resemble a rubber hose in that they are uniform in width throughout and bend as a curve, rather than a joint." This means that the cartoon is created in a world where there is flexibility and potential to shape into something else.

The rubber hose animation is not only applied in the hand-drawn animation, but even stop-motion animated film also used the rubber-hose style for the references of the characters. This style can be seen from the series of shorts called Puppertoons by George Pal, where they used the replacement puppets that very basic: heads and hand tended to be wooden balls, bodies were blocks of wood, and limbs were made of bendable covered wire (Maselli, 2018). The animators only apply the rubber-hose aspect to their animation project to create an exaggeration for flexibility movements.

Although these aspects help to make the animation bouncier, the sound effect or music also play the part to make the movement more acceptable to the audiences. Barrier (1999) stated that “Disney had understood that sound could make what was on the screen seem more real. That stronger sense of reality was now opening up a tantalizing new possibility: that cartoon makers need not rely on rapid-fire gags but could instead tell stories that held an audience’s attention at least as firmly as the average two-reel comedy did”. From this statement, it shows that music or sound that been applied with the rubber hose animation can make the animation more enjoyable or fun to watch because, in the animation, the animator apply a silly sound effect to the rubbery-hose movement that sounds believable or acceptable to the audiences’.

Conceptual Framework

The initial draft of the framework through earlier observations as shown in figure 1.0.

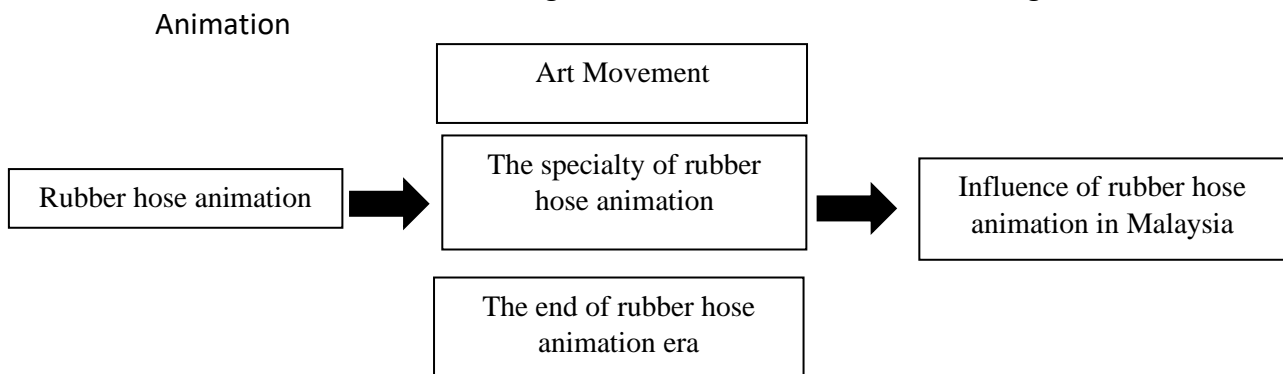


Figure 1.0 Rubber Hose

Anything is possible in animation but still there will be a little problem that will coming up like dealing with other animators with different design and stroke. Animators must come up with a way for them to create an animation without changing the style or the line art. However, as the needs of a professional production operation required (i.e., enabling a whole number of different artists to work in the same style with little trouble), simple, rounded cartoon characters were developed (Disney, 2006). According to White, these characters held little respect for the restrictions of the real world. The “rubber hose characters” help the animators to keep the line art’s stroke and style stable.

According to Maurice Horn (as cited in Collignon, n. d.) animated cartoon are literally cartoons that are animated, and a cartoon, a print cartoon is a caricature. From this argument, it shows that the history of animation is starting from creating a caricature. Then throughout the years, the animation have advanced to the rubber hose animation style in the 1920s and 1930s. A characteristics of 19th century caricature include amplified line drawing, large heads, glove hands, exaggeration, anthropomorphic creature, shadows moving on their own, state of consciousness materialised around the head of the figurines, etc (Stéphane, n.d.). That is why

you can see some significant of caricature from the rubber hose animation style. Furthermore, Walt Disney have also approached the rubber hose method before focusing more into creating more realistic animation. For example, Mickey Mouse, who is the unruly rubber hose character of *Steamboat Willie* (1928) who has his torso pulled out onto the deck like a long sausage by Pete and stuffs it back into his pants; who force-feeds straws to a cow with a pitchfork. (Forgacs, n.d.)

Furthermore, the art movement of expressionism and surrealism has been well known and has inspired many people in the 1920s not only in the art society but also in animation industry. The expressionism has been spread to in the Europe since 1950s until 1920s while surrealism begin in 1920s by Andre Breton in Paris. These art movements are the in their prime in those years. Many artists have at that moment has inspired to creates a lot of masterpieces based on the art movement. On top of that, many people that involve in the animation industry are artist and a cartoonist. As a result, all these people also influenced in either of those two movements. Henceforth, rubber hose animation seems to be enjoyed watching among the audiences or spectators at the moments. Rubber hose animation has been applied in animation cartoon in the early 1920s before it becomes a trend in the animation industry. The main evolution of this rubbery hose style was found with Felix the Cat that started in 1919. The rubbery hose style has been refined with Felix the Cat, especially in a redesign of Felix carried out by William (Bill) Nolan. He drew Felix from 1922 to 1924 and in that time, he created Felix with a rounded out his shape in part to make Felix's movements seem more natural and also to make the act of drawing the character easier and faster (Shurtz, 2011). Collignon (n.d.) stated that Walt Disney has improved the quality of the animation by introduced distortion and exaggeration and fully established the rubber hose animation. But in the late 1930s, Disney made a concerted effort to shift toward realism and full animation. This has influenced a lot of animation company to goes full animation and replacing the rubber hose animation.

Rubber hose animation was heavily inspired by the caricatures or "print cartoons". Caricatures are basically the origin of press cartoons and comic strips, where it is the basis of lightning sketch drawing style. The style of animation where is adapt a comic strip in animation and creating a gesture that appropriates for the animation. Collignon (n. d.) stated that caricature creating a drawing that looks like a real thing than a realistic depiction. Like a rubber hose animation, caricature also hold on the plastic characteristic where the artist tries to create efficient representation. However, rubber hose animation creates a simple design to ease up the work of the animator to draw efficiently. Rubber hose animation is basically an animation where the caricature was meant to move. The rubbery style of animation holds a significant design that can be recognized as the earliest 1920s designs. This style will always be reminisced by the people nowadays as it gave out the feel of nostalgia.

The rubber hose animation held its own aesthetic of the early 1920s. Other than the animation movements and characteristics, sound, and music also play an important role to create a lively animated series. The sound designed to adapt the quirky movement of the animated character. Animator Dick Huemer stated that "Without sound, animated cartoons, in my estimation, would have gone the way of the dinosaur or a trolley car". Cmrečak (2018, pp. 6-9) described that this statement shows the significance of sound usage, which authorized the medium of animated shorts to further the progress.

Nowadays, when reminisces the rubber hose style animation, the music plays an important role. This is because the music used in rubber hose animation in the early 1920s were made to as bouncy as the animation style. The quirkiness is not only be seen in the animation style

but also in the sound and music. Plus, the instrument used in designing the sound and the music were the same as the one used for opera, which is why the style held an aesthetic feels of a classic.

Even after the evolution of the animation style, the animators still consider applying the rubber hose style in their animation especially when designing them. This helped them to create an animation as they can see the flow of the characters move to avoid an error in the character's movement. Besides that, Disney (2006) also stated that "much of the contemporary animation conforms to the same old stereotypes". This means that the problem that acquired from the early 20th century is the same as the animators acquired today, such as to gain the number of artists to get in the same style with little trouble. Thus, the rubbery, simple, rounded cartoon was developed to help the artists follow the same style so that the character style does not change when it moves.

In the past, the rubber hose helps the artist to follow the simple style to create an animated cartoon, but in today's animation, especially in Cartoon Network animated series, the rubbery hose style became a unique style to the animation. The animator has adapted the rubbery hose to their character design to make the design quirker and easier to deliver jokes. One of the animation creators that adapted the rubber hose animation is Pendleton Ward, the creator of Adventure Time (2010-2018) and Bravest Warriors (2012). His animation style has discernible rubbery hose style in his works. The design of his character was so simple with the rubbery hose limbs and legs yet still managed to represent the characters and the story itself and grab the audience's attention through the touches of humour. Furthermore, in Disney recent animated series, there is an animation that applied the rubber hose style in their animation such as, Gravity Falls created by Alex Hirsch, Star vs. The Forces of Evil created by Daron Nefcy, and many more.

Method

This research will be conducted to find out that the relevancy in materials as a reference to research about the rubber hose animation. Throughout the research, we have used the qualitative method to find out how the rubber hose animation can be relevant to be applied in today's advanced animation based on observation of the measurement of the variable. Additional data collection such as researching the secondary written and textual is used to support point in this research.

References using information from internet sources are also used to collect data from previous research as much as possible in softcopy data, articles, and reference material. We also conducted an observation through watching some of the animation in YouTube series that related to this study. This research helps to answer for the understanding of the early use of rubber hose animation and its speciality.

This observation is made to answer the relevancy of rubber hose animation in the Malaysian animation industry. Based on our research observation Malaysian animation does not influence by the rubber hose animation, a Western's earliest animation style as the Malaysian animator are more influenced by the Japanese animation or Anime. (Rosli et al., 2018)

Result

Animation in Malaysia

Animation in Malaysia has been well received by the Malaysian either kids or adults nowadays. The acceptance of animation among the adult audiences is remarkable and this maybe happen as the generation nowadays has been growing up watch the animation ever

since childhood. Animated feature films are very exorbitant to create and costing some studios hundreds of millions of dollars. Rosli, Yoon and Manaf (2018) state that, "it is critical that every detail is perfect on a large-scale production, so it does the production does not have to face any loss. Malaysian animation industry had already seen many of the failed products in the market. Oh, La La (2015) is one prime example of the industry's failed product. These films are Malaysia first musical animated film that has spent almost RM 4 million for its production but failed miserably to attract local audiences' curiosity. Interestingly, the entire film was visually not up to industry standards and one of the reasons behind it is the lack of quality in design aesthetic". However, Malaysia's animation industry has been developed to increase the quality of the animation either in 2D animation or 3D animation and has shown the result of animation industry endeavour that can be seen from the born of successfulness and well-received of local animation like Upin & Ipin (2007); Boboiboy (2011); Ejen Ali (2016); and The Amazing Awang Khenit (2014)

According to the director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein, he referred to this style of animation as plasmatic, which is a being that representing in a drawing that does not possessed a 'stable' form but capable to changing form or skipping along the rung of the evolutionary ladder, adhere itself to any and all forms if animal existence (Shurtz, 2011). Rubbery movement was what stuck Eisenstein as 'plasmatic' in Disney (Tai, 2013). The word plasmatic derived from both "plasma" and "plastic," both of which come from the Greek word "plassein" meaning "to mould". This show that like the animation is created to make a flexible movement that something does not abide the laws of physics. Thus, the rubber hose style normally delivers a joke better in animation especially a slapstick joke. Eisenstein (as cited in Shurtz, 2011, p.41) has stated that "it became[s] a comical embodiment of that which occurs as a sensuous process in the cited metaphors". Even in the musical type of animation, the rubber hose animation style compliment with the background music as the rubbery movement sync with the rhythms of the background music. Furthermore, the mixture of rubber hose with anticipation helps the animation movement to be smoother and bouncier. Humour has been a tendency that always associated with human emotion and experiences. People has been used humour by referencing some experiences through joke that can be related with majority of society. On the other hand, rubber hose animation is great with delivery humour. The freedom of the animated action that can defies the rule of physic is like giving a chance to the animator to explore a unique and more exaggeration kind of gesture. According to Rosli et al. (2018); Mughal (2019), the animation is a part of the entertainment that has been recognized and accepted as a media content that influences in any society. He emphasized that character design has an indirect impact on the emotion of the audiences. A character design that well animated is comparable to a successful actor that has a popularity to be used for selling products, concept, information etc. An animated character that is created to hold a simple graphic as representation become instantaneous remembrance by the audiences, appealing, emotionally accessible and engaging by the audiences. This shows that animated characters also can gain popularity and get well-known by society to be exploited to serves as an ambassador to promote products or sharing information.

Conclusion

Rubber hose animation may have forgotten in the animation industry today. But the industry has been evolved throughout the year and improving the qualities of today animations. Some of the animation company in Malaysia are involved in with Western animation company in an animation project. Many people in this industry today are exposed to a different type of

animation either through academic learning or internet accesses. When the world is on your fingertips, it is easy to gain information with the advanced technologies nowadays. The rubber hose aspect has been applied in the animation since the 1920s. However, in the late 1930s, this style of animation seldomly used in the animation industry. According to Shurtz, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) was the end for rubber hose style. Throughout this study, we have found out that rubber hose animation is not commonly known as it is bygone to the world industry and Malaysian industry. The animation industry has been evolved to create a more realistic style of animation. Thus, the style has been unknown to people nowadays.

The design of Malaysia animated character resembled a little bit from Japanese manga comic character because Anime has a very large influence in Malaysia. Rosli et al. (2018) has mentioned in his writing that "the local animation studios have brought in the anime-style to the productions they worked on in the early of 1990s. At the time, animators have not been exposed to various style of animation of other countries and they also do not get the proper training in art and design. However, as time goes by, many of the animators realize the importance of the originality of local design aesthetics in their works and started to explore their own root." Today, more local animation company has developed an animation series that present their own uniqueness and appealing animation characters.

Throughout this research, we have analysed that from the audience's perspective, the rubber hose animation concept is still relevant as a watchable series even though it is an old animation style. However, from the perspective of animator, this animation style is consumed a lot of energy, time, and budget to create even a single shot of animation. Thus, the Malaysian animation is influenced by Japanese animation than western animation. These explain the lack of knowledge or exposure to the rubber hose animation among Malaysian animation. This research also is important to help people to understand rubber hose style animation. This is one of the design styles in 2D animation that not many people know about the term of this style. Some people just call this style with a made-up word like 'noodle-like hand' character design. The cartoon we watch in childhood like Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphony is using rubber hose animation style. It is the earliest animation style in the history of modernizing animation ever that at some point may or may not be an irrelevance to be applied in the today animation industry in Malaysia still it will be the evolution in animation industry.

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