

How does the American
retro-abstract painting
style reflect a satire of
social reality?

Reporter: Eva

•what it is?

- United Productions of America UPA



American retro
abstract painting
style animation is
a kind of
animation
expression that
combines the
classic American
cultural elements
and abstract art
style

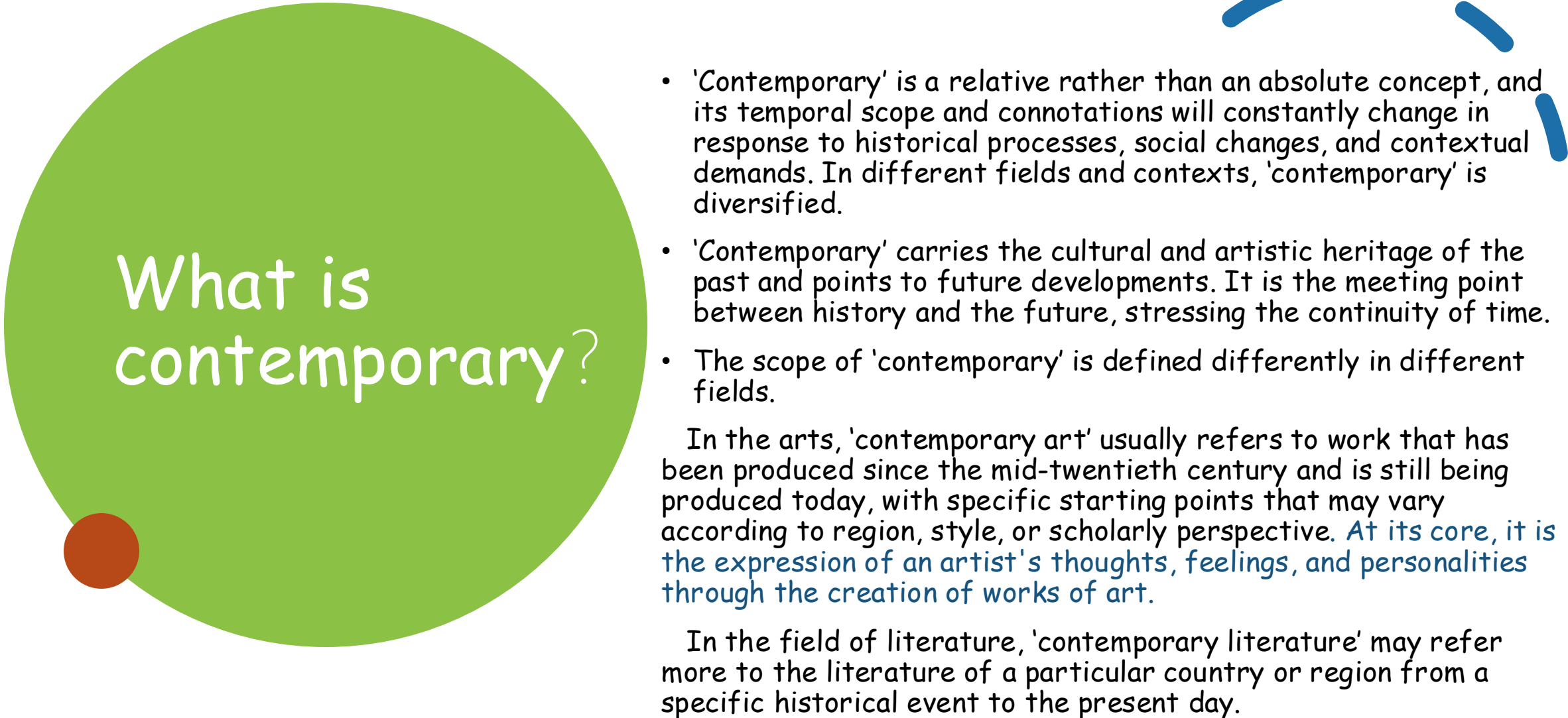
Often retro colours are used, such as soft beige, olive green, brick red and blue-green.

The figures, objects and backgrounds are highly simplified or geometric forms. For example, triangles, squares, etc.

Themes or emotions are expressed in animation through exaggerated shape shifting, color blocking and non-linear movement

History of development and representative works

Category	Timeline	Characteristics	Examples
Origins	1940s - Early 1950s	Influenced by modern art schools such as Cubism and Abstraction, the design was gradually simplified. Departure from Disney's realism	UPA Studios pioneered the style with <i>Gerald McBoing-Boing</i> (1950), which won an Academy Award.
Golden Age	1950s - 1960s	Widely used in television and advertising. The overall design is expressed through simple geometry and flat colours.	<i>The Mr. Magoo Show</i> (1957) introduced geometric characters.
Transition & Decline	1970s - 1980s	The overall trend is towards a more realistic style, while the rise of Japanese anime has weakened the influence of the retro-abstract style. The style is more often seen in experimental and independent animation works.	Norman McLaren's experimental works carried forward the abstract spirit.
Revival	1990s - Present	Nostalgia has contributed to the style's resurgence in popularity. The perfect blend of retro elements and modern visuals. Widely used in games, adverts and music videos.	<i>The Powerpuff Girls</i> (1998) embraced retro-inspired minimalism. <i>Cuphead</i> (2017) became a landmark in the revival of retro-abstract animation.



What is contemporary?

- 'Contemporary' is a relative rather than an absolute concept, and its temporal scope and connotations will constantly change in response to historical processes, social changes, and contextual demands. In different fields and contexts, 'contemporary' is diversified.
- 'Contemporary' carries the cultural and artistic heritage of the past and points to future developments. It is the meeting point between history and the future, stressing the continuity of time.
- The scope of 'contemporary' is defined differently in different fields.

In the arts, 'contemporary art' usually refers to work that has been produced since the mid-twentieth century and is still being produced today, with specific starting points that may vary according to region, style, or scholarly perspective. *At its core, it is the expression of an artist's thoughts, feelings, and personalities through the creation of works of art.*

In the field of literature, 'contemporary literature' may refer more to the literature of a particular country or region from a specific historical event to the present day.



Contemporary values

- The value of American retro abstract style in contemporary times is reflected in its integration, continuity and diversity.
- American Retro Abstract Style closely combines history and modernity, which makes people pay more attention to the classic art genres in history (such as Pop Art), and at the same time pushes artists to carry out modern exploration on the basis of the classics, realising the inheritance and re-creation of tradition.
- American Retro Abstract Style expresses humorous or ironic expressions of contemporary social phenomena through the use of bold colours, exaggeration and distortion of visual language. Contemporary social phenomena (such as gender inequality, racial issues, etc.) are presented in a visual form to stimulate the audience's reflection.

Case Studies

The design of the Three Sisters is completely devoid of the traditional 'feminine figure' (e.g. curvy or tall). Their large heads, small bodies, and short arms and legs broke with the media's emphasis on 'female physical beauty' and presented a purely heroic image that had nothing to do with physical appearance.

Traditionally, female characters were family members, supporting roles, or objects to be protected, but The Powerpuff Girls made girls the protagonists who saved the day.

While the adult males of Jump Town, including the mayor, are often shown to be helpless, the three sisters win with their abilities, suggesting that women are fully capable of taking on leadership and protective roles in society.

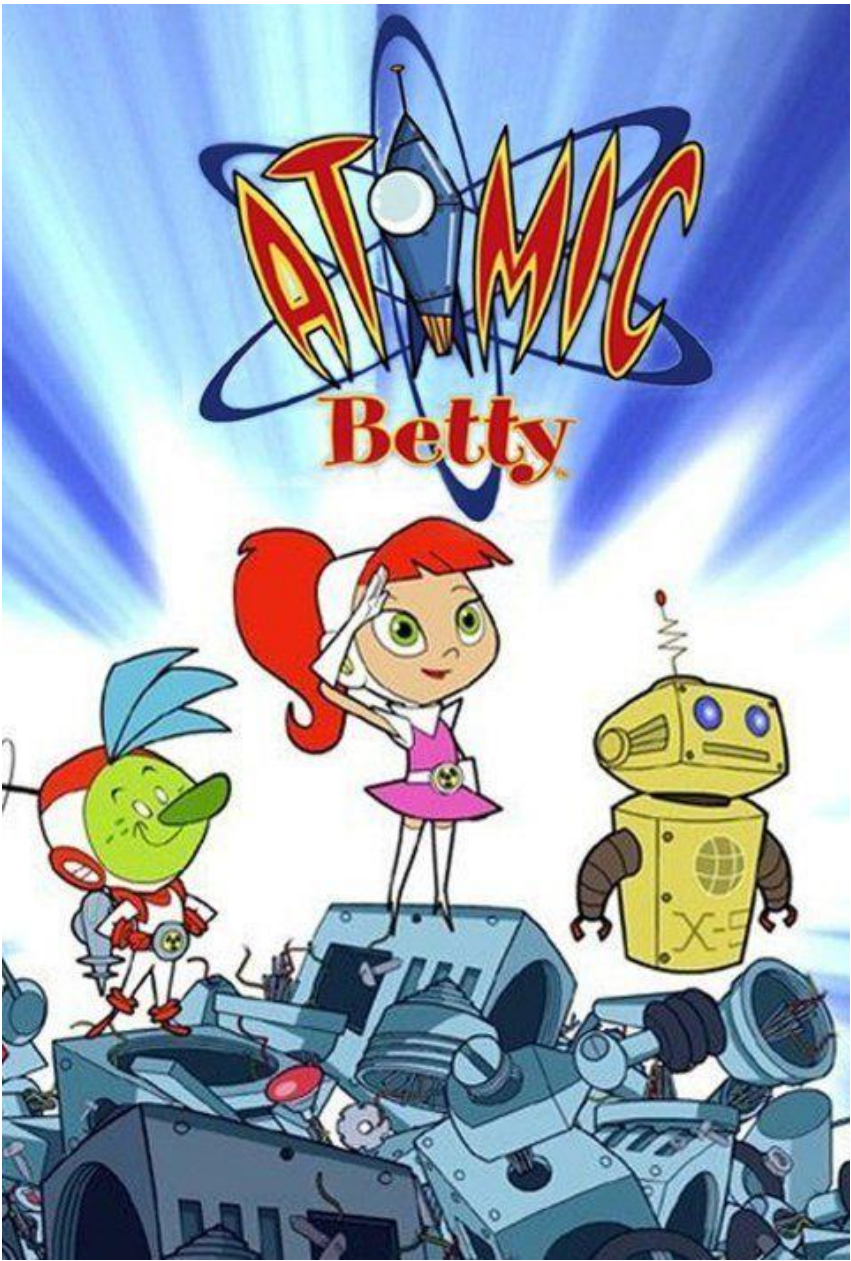


The Impact of Media on Women's Body Image and Status in the Powerpuff Girls Era

- Breaking down long-held prejudices about the roles of men and women in society, girls are responsible for all household chores
- The animation does not deal with aesthetic standards of body image, but focuses on the girl's ability, intelligence and courage. It conveys to the viewer that a woman's worth does not depend on appearances, but on inner strength and action. While the media has consistently portrayed men as the primary targets of superheroes, The Powerpuff Girls challenges this monolithic characterisation through the narrative of female superheroes.
- The success of the anime not only opened the way for the media to explore 'female heroes,' but also inspired similar narrative models for subsequent productions such as Wonder Woman and Frozen.

Based on the social environment in the United States, the late 1990s and contemporary representations of the unequal status of men and women on screen

Era	Late 1990s	Contemporary
Social Context	The rise of feminist ideas in the late 1990s brought gender equality issues to the forefront. Traditional gender roles still dominated many areas, especially in the workplace and at home.	Gender equality has become a widely discussed social issue, Public reflection on and action regarding gender inequality have deepened.
Representation	The unequal status of men and women is often presented in the form of gender stereotypes, etc., with women's roles mostly being traditional roles such as housewife and office secretary. Men are mostly portrayed as career successes.	The issue of unequal status between men and women is being presented more directly, with female leadership and challenging roles for women in the workplace becoming more prevalent in TV shows and films.
Satirical Depiction in Animation	<i>The Simpsons</i> showcased stereotypical gender roles, satirizing male authority and female dependency.	Animations like <i>Futurama</i> used exaggerated plots to satire gender inequality, with character designs that break gender norms, showcasing differences in gendered societal roles.
	Absurd storylines reversed gender roles to deliver implicit critique.	Reflecting on the expectations placed on both men and women in social roles, these animations exposed the subtle mechanisms of gender inequality,

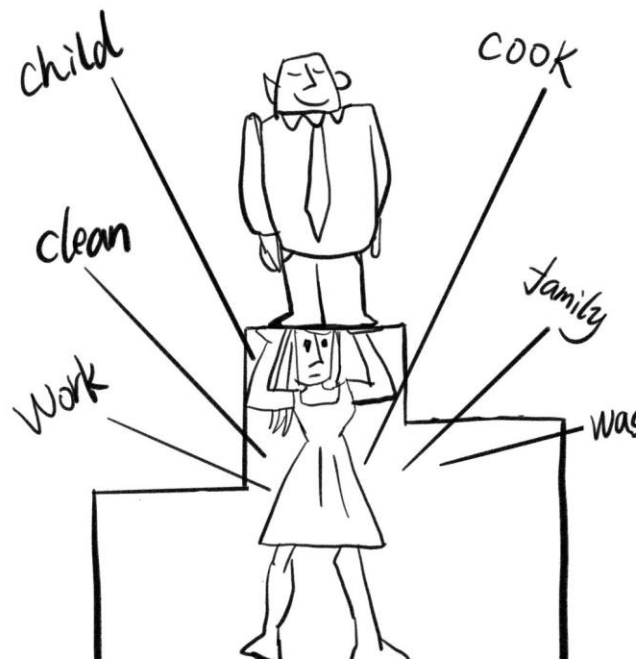


What the American retro style has brought to my perception of the

- Blending retro nostalgia and abstract modern art techniques, it has given me a fuller understanding of the historical evolution of culture and its reflection on social phenomena (e.g. gender inequality). More attention is paid to how art can be a tool for social critique.
- By expressing complex social phenomena through geometric shapes, contrasting colours and simplified forms, American Retro Abstract Style allows for a more direct interpretation of the metaphorical meanings in visual symbols and develops insight into the deeper meanings of art.
- American Retro Abstract Style emphasises the combination of visual aesthetics and social critique, which not only focuses on the formal beauty of the work, but also understands its cultural connotations from the perspective of social reality.

summaries

- Through an in-depth analysis of the American retro-abstract style, its use of bold deformation, reconstruction of symbols, and contrast of colours and compositions intuitively reveals the absurdity and injustice of social phenomena. It is not only a review and reexamination of the past history, but also a profound reflection and satire on the current social phenomena, revealing that the meaning of art works is not only fixed, but constructed and reconstructed with the social and cultural background and the audience's interpretation.
- Through the American retro-abstract style, the artist not only conveys a critique of social phenomena, but also promotes the audience's profound reflection on self, society and history. It stimulates a wider social discussion and cognitive renewal.





Thanks
for
watching

