

Research in Practice. Dissertation Proposal. Animation, Caricatures, & Fanart

**Has provocative fan art of young anime characters that
have been 'aged up' fed into paedophilia and has maybe
even normalised it**

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Introduction

This essay will explore three keywords that at least three artists and images will accompany. Research is needed to find a connection among these keywords and eventually form a question out of it. The question will be based on how close an artist's redesign can be to the original and if they should profit from it; is it in a way considered "cheating". I will be looking into the starting's of artists Ronald Kuang (Animation), Patsy Clare (Caricatures), and Hanavbara (Fanart), how they obtained their popularity and delving deep into the positives and negatives of their practice.

Animation

"Animation is arguably the most important creative form of the twenty-first century."
(Wells, 2019, p. 1)

The first-ever animated sequence on film was recorded to be in the year 1900. Titled The Enchanted Drawing, J. Stuart Blackton, "who some call the father of animation" (Jamie, 2018), drew a man on a canvas and used basic stop motion photography to change the character's expressions. Blackton's second animation was then produced on standard picture film in 1906, and instead of a canvas, he used a blackboard and chalk. However, french Caricaturist Emile Cohl would be considered to have produced the first example of "traditional animation". (Jamie, 2018) In 1914, "Earl Hurd invents the process of cell animation, which would revolutionise and dominate the industry for much of the 20th century." (Nusair, 2019) In 1919, "Felix the Cat makes his debut and becomes the first famous animated cartoon character." (Nusair, 2019) Felix grew in popularity for not only fun design but for his personality. This leads into the discussion on the impact animation has made on society; how people have built a connection with animated characters from

childhood to adulthood. "Animation has the power to hold children spellbound – and that power does not fade in most adults." (Sliced Bread Animation, 2021) People create an emotional connection to these animated characters, which they either hold on tight to or store in the back of their mind. Hence, artists nowadays have created short animations, also known as Gifs, of iconic characters that most people have grown up watching. These gifs perform well with audiences since it inhibits a sense of nostalgia; "Its meaning expanded from indicating homesickness to a general longing for the past and rather than an awful disease, it began to be seen as a poignant and pleasant experience." (Routledge, 2016)



Figure 1



Figure 2

Kuang, R. (2021)

Bathhouse

Ronald Kuang is an Illustrator and Animator who designs prints that are sold on his website. He creates both original character designs and redesigns of iconic anime characters. Ronald promotes these pieces by posting animated versions, or gifs, to his Instagram account 'seerlight'. Figure 1 and 2 are prints of the bathhouse from the widely popular Studio Ghibli

film, *Spirited Away*. Figure 1 depicts the bathhouse during the day time, while figure 2 at the night time, with the addition of the guests entering the bathhouse. The animated version switches between the two illustration, acting like a loop or a repeating time lapse. By making his work into short animations accompanied by music from the original show, he brings the prints to life and triggering a stronger sense of nostalgia, which will persuade the audience to purchase his illustrations. Artists understand the power nostalgia holds and create animations of people's favourite characters, either putting them in real-life scenarios or simply have them smiling at the viewer. It makes the characters seem more human and relatable, strengthening the audience's connection to said character. "When advertisers use nostalgia, consumers are taken back to a simpler time and see products/services through this tinted lens. Even with a modern product, this form of marketing links the product to a former, familiar moment in time." (Trapica, 2021)

As more research is conducted into animation as a keyword, a sense of morality and authenticity is skewed. On the one hand, animations in the form of TV shows and movies are the sources of entertainment and learning of all ages; on the other hand, animations that depict redesigns of existing characters and are posted on social media might start to reveal some foul play. Although these animations bring happiness and comfort to the audience, the question of 'is it fair to profit off of someone else's design and hard work?' has been brought to the table. Some sub-genre words to be considered for reaching a conclusive question are nostalgia, profit, social media, and character design.

Caricatures

"It's defined as a picture, description or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated (larger or smaller) in order to create a comic effect." (Hall, 2020)

Like animation, I wanted to look into the origins of caricature and Mark Hall (2020) was a valuable source of information. During the 16th-century in Bologna, Italy, brothers Annibale and Agostino Carracci were considered the founding brothers of the art form. From this, a game was created by students and would attempt to draw visitors. Caricature art rose in popularity in the 1800s, to the point that people of high status were having their portraits made in this art form. Nowadays, people can find caricature artists providing their service in theme parks, events, or local parks. These artists can also be found on social media, promoting their work on platforms such as Instagram or LinkedIn. "Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms to connect with your audience to build your brand, increase sales, and drive website traffic." (Buffer, 2021) The question of 'why would people want to purchase these portraits?' 'why would they want one of a celebrity or politicians instead of themselves?' "It's a way to Enhance the basic essence of a person creating an interesting version of them with a touch of humour. This brings friends and family together for a happy engaging experience." (Hall, 2020). Sometimes it's nice to splurge on a purchase that will bring a smile to anyone's face. Caricatures are also included in political cartoons "made for the purpose of conveying editorial commentary on politics, politicians, and current events." (Knieper, 2018). It is a unique and fun way to present journalism and news reporting, contrasting from the conventional form of communication, states Ellwood Atfield (2021). Political cartoons continue to grow in popularity since the artists behind the work

are brave enough to speak out and say what everyone else thinks but are too afraid to voice themselves.



Figure 3

Clare, P. (2019)

Sandra Oh

Patsy Clare is a professional caricature artist specialising in bespoke and celebrity caricatures and political figures. Her art aims to make people happy and doesn't include any form of negativity or pushes her political standpoint. She uses her Instagram account 'patsyclarecaricatures' to get her work out into the world, where she then guides her clients to her website, where they can commission a portrait of any one person or group. She also sells the celebrity portraits she designs and even allows requests for more celebrities to draw. Figure 3 is a portrait Patsy has drawn of Canadian American actress Sandra Oh at the Golden Globe awards. This piece can be found and purchased on Patsy's website. Numerous celebrities have built quite the following throughout their careers and are bound to have

super fans that will want to buy anything and everything that has to do with their favourite idols. Caricature artists see this and cater to these crazed fans by drawing as many of the most famous faces as possible. Sandra Oh has been a part of many popular shows such as Grey's Anatomy and Killing Eve; it would not be a surprise to find that Patsy was able to sell hundreds of copies of her portrait of Sandra. Just as stated with animation, it can be assumed that these artists could be taking advantage of the love fans have, and it is an easy way to make money fast.

Through the investigation of caricatures, sub-genre words such as celebrity, commissions, and fandoms have emerged.

Fanart

The discussion of nostalgia and authenticity with the previous keywords has brought to mind the third keyword, Fanart; "artwork based on popular works of fiction (such as books, movies, etc.) that is created by fans." (Merriam-Webster, 2021) Star Wars, Star Trek, and Lord of the Rings fans were the first to produce fan art in the '60s and '70s. "Early fan art was largely pen-and-ink based, simple line art because that was the easiest to reproduce before modern Xerox machines became readily available for consumer use" (sockii, 2015).

These works of art were traded and sold to other fans of similar interest and have continued to grow with time and are now found on all social media platforms such as DevianArt, Tumblr, and Instagram. More and more fan art was being produced, spreading awareness to the movies and tv shows in question, which then built an immense fandom and the demand for merchandise arose. One genre of entertainment that has benefited substantially from

this is Anime, "a style of animation originating in Japan that is characterised by stark colourful graphics depicting vibrant characters in action-filled plots often with fantastic or futuristic themes" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Kids and young teens use to be bullied and shunned for having an interest in Anime; however, fans are building their confidence and posting the redesigns of their favourite characters, and people are starting to see how entertaining Anime can be. The genre has inspired people in many ways, one being that fans have started drawing characters from western cartoons, live actions, and even celebrities in a similar Anime style.



Figure 4

hanavbara (2020)

Six fan art challenge

Hanavbara is an artist that has taken style inspiration from the widely popular Anime Sailor Moon. She creates Fanart of an assortment of Anime and video game characters, cartoons,

singers, and actors. Figure 4 is an art challenge Hana posted on her Instagram where she has redesigned iconic characters such as Howl from Howl's Moving Castle, Bloom for Winx, Isabelle from Animal Crossing, Tiana from Princess and the Frog, Harley Quinn from Birds of Prey, and Sesshomaru from Inuyasha. She has a website where her audience can request commissions from her, which needs to be closed from time to time since there is an abundance of requests.

When exploring more into fan art, we must acknowledge the dark side of fan art; 18+ content. Fans are creating lewd versions of popular characters to the point where the concern is being raised. Some characters are minors, and it is disturbing to see how many people do not see these works as an issue. More than fewer people believe that it is ok to visualise these young characters in a pornographic manner since the artists are "ageing them up". "Anime porn is infused with the same messages and values as live-action porn. It's all about the degradation and objectification of women for the masturbatory pleasure of men." (Fradd, 2015). Provocative fan art can be found with a simple google search of the character of choice's name, followed by 'Rule 34', which means that there is porn of it if it exists. Young audiences see people defend this art form and are being conditioned to believe that it is normal. "Exposure to pornography harms children and youth by normalising sexual violence, creating unrealistic expectations for intimate partners and relationships, and increasing the risk of addiction." (Baxter, 2014) The only way to legally sell fan art is by receiving "permission and a license agreement from the IP owner" (Storey, 2020). The majority of artists on social media have not obtained this, especially from Japanese studios. Companies such as Studio Ghibli are serious about copyright and will not

hesitate to take down fan art. Despite this factor, artists are still profiting from these pieces of work.

Through further exploration of the keyword, Fanart has led to the potential discussions of sub-genre words Anime, cartoons, pornography, and paedophilia, all of which can be taken into account for the question of this proposal.

Concluding my dissertation proposal, I have looked into the origins of three different art forms that can be used for the same purpose. I have learned how artists nowadays promote and sell their work; how there may be disingenuous intentions when creating redesigns of iconic characters and celebrities. I then delved deeper into the darker side of fan art and how concerning this form of artwork could potentially be, especially to young impressionable audiences.

Whilst exploring the three keywords, multiple sub-genre words have been curated that can be related to a potential question of this proposal. Animation, Caricatures, and Fanart can be seen as having a close connection. The working research question of 'Has provocative fan art of young anime characters that have been 'aged up' fed into paedophilia and has maybe even normalised it?' is the proposed question for the independent research made in the third year. A few sub-questions have been tossed around whilst writing this proposal and would benefit from being explored further in-depth such as, 'Is it wrong to profit off of drawing celebrities or redesigns of iconic characters?', 'Are redesigns considered stealing?', 'Are artists using nostalgia as a means to build a more extensive following?', 'What kind of effect will mature content have on young audiences?', 'Should we be concerned about the

amount of sexualisation of fictional characters? The notions of gifs, street art, growing artists, commissions, profit, stealing, plagiarism, celebrities, likeness, Anime, cartoons, pornography, doujinshi, paedophilia, minors, and fetishes have been noted down to help write the independent research document for the upcoming third year.

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