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Introduction

In this research document I will be examining the words History, Storytelling, Creativity within the context of animation. Within my discipline Graphic Design I am interested in learning how animations are created and what process underlies their production. These key words will be explored using the works of key thinkers Christiann Huygens, David Epston and Joy Paul Guilford and theories of animation. Creativity and storytelling appear to be the basis of creating animations and with the addition of history theses should provide an in-depth enquiry into the nature of animation. It is my aim, following my research into the three key words listed above, to form a question for my Independent Project.

History

The Cambridge dictionary defines history as “something that has been done or experienced by a particular person or thing repeatedly over a long period” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). The word ‘History’ was originally invented by the ancient Greeks and meant ‘to know’, stated in the Oxford Dictionary by Philip Durkin (Steinmetz, 2017). History is the study of the past, people trying to understand the events and problems that created human societies. The word *historia* by the Greeks originally meant to see an act of knowledge as well as to know the results.



Fig 1: old man of the mountain

History is the study of the past and can also be an accurate record of developments within a particular field, determining the origins and process that has taken place. This definition of history will be specific to understanding the history and origins of animation. The development of animation has in part been a narrative for the development and changes that have occurred within society. Early animation has displayed scenes of sexual assault and onset racism which at the time of production were not considered wrong. In a 1933 Betty Boop episode (since been banned), Betty Boop has her clothes ripped off by an elderly man who lives on a mountain. Later productions of Fantasia in the 1940s depicted young black ladies, where the characters are drawn with the make-up of ‘black face’ like features and Tom and Jerry in which both animals are chased by a faceless/ headless black woman in an apron. Disney produced Aladdin in 1992 which further portrayed offensive middle eastern stereotypes (Penske Business Corporation, 2021). As animation has progressed in its process and technicality so have the themes it can portray and depict, with animation becoming a window for the changes in society.

During the mid 1950s-80s 'the dark age of animation' was in place as cartoons were no longer getting the funds they required to produce professional animations. Due to this, animation would be cheap and quickly made with lots of errors. With these extreme budget cuts the number of animated shows and movies were drastically reduced. Animation during this time would be known as *limited animation*, a style that would include as few frames as possible resulting in choppy and very simple character motions (Crrlstaff, 2018).



Fig 2 magic lantern

Animation began in Victorian times where the item magic-lantern was created for shows and entertainment. This enabled stories to be told in a visual manner (Magic Lantern Society, 2022). The magic lantern was invented in the 1600's by Dutch scientist Christiann Huygens. It was the earliest form of a slide projector, whereby lanterns were illuminated by a candle to project images on to a wall (America Comes Alive, 2022). The magic lantern would project the image by the light of the candle using a concave mirror to help the light to focus and intensify the image; a lens then projected the image on a glass slide on to the wall. When the lantern was first invented it was only used for one image to be shown at a time but it wasn't long before the realisation that images shown in quick succession could trick the eyes to believe that the image was moving. This is when motion animation first started to appear in history, after others would start to create their own inventions due to inspirations from the magic lantern.

Then in 1834 William George Horner who was a British mathematician who was the inventor of the Zoetrope. The zoetrope like the magic lantern helps creating the illusion of movement by viewing different images through narrow slits in a rotating cylinder. When images are placed around the walls in a drum container are then turned in a fast circular fashion the illustrations will start to create the movement. One of the most famous zoetrope was called the galloping horse (Britannica,2022).

Storytelling

A story is "a description of events and people that the writer or speaker has invented in order to entertain people" (Oxford Learner Dictionary, 2022) and storytelling is therein defined as "the activity of writing, telling or reading stories" (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022). An account of past events or of how something has developed, the act of storytelling

is a method of sharing narratives with others and as “something ...individuals use to create meaning in their own lives” (Encyclopedia of Communication Theory, 2022). Storytelling can be understood as a method of communication enabling people to make sense of individual experiences as well as shared (Encyclopedia of Communication Theory, 2022). A method of dialogue, this process requires interaction between the two parties, the listener and the storyteller and it is through the immediacy of this interaction that the storytelling becomes effective (National Storytelling Network, 2022). This process can be understood as a form of narrative, a method of “representation and world building” (Coste, 2017) and a way of sharing and understanding human experience.

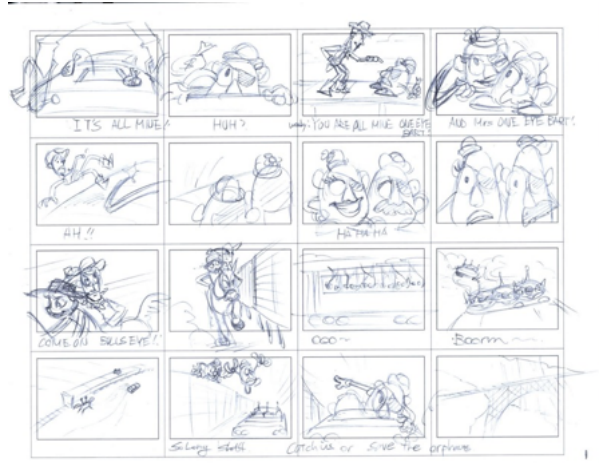


Fig.3: *Toy Story 3 Storyboard*

Storytelling can be understood fully through the use of narrative theory, originally developed as a therapeutic theory by David Epston and Michael White (APA, 2022). Narrative theory is founded on the belief that people have many narratives that interact creating their sense of self; this can be further translated into the study of “how stories help people make sense of the world while also studying how people make sense of stories” (APA, 2022). Having a narrative can also help show accounts of what happened to particular people in certain circumstances (APA, 2022). Narrative theory and storytelling are commonplace theories used to underpin the creation of animation. “Pixar’s emphasis on storytelling is historically quite significant given that it leads the industry in what Alla Gadassik refers to as the ‘story defense’ of animation” (Herhuth, 2017, p.22). This defense is a response to the propensity for computer animation, and its commentators, to eclipse the embodied artistic practices of animators by focusing on technical labor, automation, and simulation (Herhuth, 2017). Storytelling within animation is first utilised through storyboarding.

Storyboards are a way for stories to be told through the use of graphics and illustrations. Standardised boxes are used to create the board and usually show the chronological sense of the story with images of what will take place in each, maybe with some added notes (see figure 3). With times changing there are now two methods that can be used to create a storyboard, traditional sketching or storyboard software. A storyboard can be the most effective method to show organisation through visuals and to present ideas. Being able to see the sense and sequence of the work is very effective and the best way to be able to see and look back or even change your work (Boicheva, 2021).

After creating a great idea it then gets turned into a script, a storyboard is then guided with a series of sketches by the scripts; this is to keep on track and used as a visual guide for the animation production. There are three main steps when creating a storyboard in animation: planning, production and revision. During the storyboard planning the specifics of the storyboard are weighted against the resources available (Adib and Naghdi, 2022). Animation therein becomes a method of storytelling through narrative theory and the practical application of storyboarding. The interaction between the character creation and the animated worlds can be seen to designate a new cinematic tradition of storytelling (Herhuth, 2017).

To examine storytelling through animation I will be reviewing the theories of narrative theory by David Epstein and Michael White, storyboarding within animation examining the work of Eric Herhuth in Pixar and the Aesthetic Imagination and Storytelling as a method of communication.

Creativity

In the Cambridge dictionary the word creativity means the ability to produce original and unusual ideas, or to make something new or imaginative (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022) and originates from Latin *creare*: to make and the Greek *Krainein*: to fulfil. Creativity involves the process of transformation whether creating something new or changing an already existing item into something better. For a creative individual it is the “actualising of our potential...the expression of ourselves in becoming” (Young, 1985). Creativity is a process that involves new ideas, concepts or can be new ways of changing existing ideas. Creativity is a substantiation product that includes novelty and originality. George Keller, Professor at University of Pennsylvania defines creativity as “*consist[ing] largely of re-arranging what we know in order to find out what we do not know*” (New World Encyclopedia, 2022). Creativity in these terms becomes an area of exploration into the unknown and a process arguably of evolution; Apple creator Steve Jobs called creativity a way of “connecting things” (The Economic Times, 2015).

In 1956 Joy Paul Guilford divided thinking into two categories: divergent and convergent. Creativity is a form of divergent thinking whereby exploring the most solutions in a spontaneous, non-linear way (Hasa, 2021). Difficulties with this lie with the time it takes to direct creative thoughts and whether this can be increased through speeding up the cognitive process. Psychologists and scientists believe that relaxing the filter in the brain otherwise known as letting your mind wander can make it easier to come up with new ideas but doing this may also mean they might be off topic and not useful (Beaty, 2020). Creativity and mental health have a pattern of being hand in hand which is why being creative can be a positive outlet for people who suffer with mental distress. Many therapists use art therapy to help their patients as it provides an expressive outlet away from their problems, that enable them to release their emotions helping them deal with past events, in turn improving their mental well-being (Nittle, 2021).

When it comes to thinking creatively the brain is divided in two halves which have different purposes. The two halves look similar but there's a big difference in the way they process information. The brain theory is that people are either left brained or right brained, with one side of their brain more dominant. If people tend to think more analytically and

methodically then that person will be left brained and if someone is more creative and artistic then that person will be right brained. The brain theory was founded by psychologist and noble prize winner Roger W. Sperry (Pietrangelo, 2022).

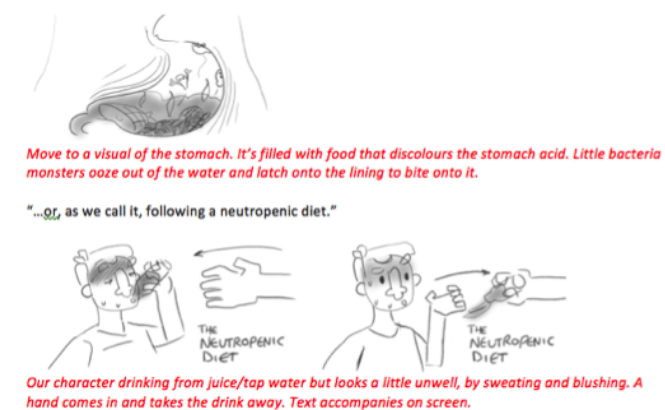


Fig 4: the creative process of animation

Methods of creative thinking vary dependent on the person and how their brain works. One way is to approach things with curiosity; being curious about items and things can help a person develop a new way of thinking with a creative outlook. Having an open mind and practising to have an open mind enables familiar situations to be approached with a greater understanding with new ideas (Indeed 2021). Creativity is the starting point for the production and development of animation. The creative process in animation begins with creative ideas being sketched and written out which is known as the creative process. The sketches start off simple to help the creators be able to see their ideas. Next the drawings start to come in with more details to help gain a better understanding, followed by words and sentences known as thumb nails (see figure 2). This is the process of taking those words and being able to translate them into visual ideas. The next stage is mood boards whereby the drawings are developed further through the introduction of information from research. After that it goes on to storyboards which is where everything from the last couple of steps are added together and turned into a small video for rough animation.

Conclusion

In conclusion after considering the three key words and the definitions to help find a better understanding of the words, all three key words have a very different meaning, but all have a way to link into animation. Looking at the word history I first examined the definition followed by where the word comes from and what the word means. History is a study of the past and can also be an accurate record of developments within a particular field; within this enquiry I have specifically examined the history of animation beginning with where it started and how it has progressed since then to the animation we all know and love today. Animation has historically reflected the events that have taken place within society depicting sensitive topics some of which have been banned today such as race and the now sexually inoffensive Betty Boop episode. Ingrained within the creation and development of animation is the ability to tell stories linking to the next key word storytelling. Through defining this and our understanding of the word immediate links can be made to history as storytelling can be an account of past events or of how something has developed though stories. Within animation storyboards are a visual way to create the initial story behind the animation, with visual methods of storytelling being in existence since the magic lantern in

the 1600s and the zoetrope in 1834. Underlying the nature of storytelling is creativity which was the last key word to be examined. Creativity can be defined as the process of transformation whether creating something new or changing an already existing item into something better. Multiple methods of explaining creativity are in existence with Joy Paul Guilford discussing divergent and convergent thinking and Roger W. Sperry investigating the concept of two sides of the brain, one side for analytical thinking and the other for creativity. Creativity is an essential component to storytelling and in turn animation. Considering the three key words history, storytelling and creativity will help develop a leading area of next year's work, looking in more depth into the way animation works and how it has changed from when it started to how we use it now.

Question

The question I will be exploring within my Independent Inquiry is how have creativity and storytelling been influential within the historical development of animation?

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Figure 3: Pixar (2017) *Toy Story 3 Storyboard* [pencil sketch]. Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/the-pixar-storytelling-formula-an-inside-look/> (Accessed: 12 April 2022).

Figure 4: stones throw media (2022) the creative process of animation} Available at: <https://www.stmedia.co.uk/faqs/the-animation-process/> (Accessed: 12 April 2022).