

Sustaining Malay Comic Design: Transformation From Paper To Digital

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Abstract In Malaysia, cartoon and comic arts is a branch of art that reflects the identity and the culture of this nation. The golden age of local cartoon and comic arts that occurred between the late 1970s and early 1990s has prompted the emergence of range of genres, local cartoon and comic styles from diverse generations of comic artist. Some of the well-known figures from this field are Allahyarham Rejabhad, Ibrahim Md. Nor (Ujang), Jaafar Taib, Saadon Ishak (Don), A. Mahmud, Sabariah Jais (Cabai) etc. However, as most of the cartoon and comic series from around that year do not get printed, it leads to the existence of the comic's artists as well as their works become virtually lesser known by several new generation of young people. The rapidity of information technology has strengthened the application of new media technology in dominating the communication of information among the society, particularly on the new generation. Hence, the exploitation of the new media technology such as internet, website, video and digital animation is seen to be able to help in introducing the art of Malaysia's cartoon and comic arts globally. This research is conducted as an initiative towards the conservation of Malaysia's cartoon and comic arts in order to ensure its sustainability through the transformation of these arts into digital documentation form. Early research has solely focused on the redesign of characters' traits from several works of *Gila-Gila* Malay humor magazine cartoon and comic between the late 70s and early 90s that was conducted through the utilization of 3D remodeling digital application.

Keywords sustaining, comic, cartoon, Malay, comic character design, new media, 3D modeling, digital documentation

1. Introduction

What is comic art? According to Robinson (2011), summarily put, the comics are a form necessarily definition including the following elements: a narrative told by way of a sequence of pictures, a continuing cast of characters from one sequence to the next, and the inclusion of dialogue and or text within the picture. Other definition comic is a narrative form containing text and pictures arranged in sequential order (usually chronological). Name derived from the first examples of the form, which were all of a humorous nature; it has since become a misnomer, since the comics now encompass narratives that are not primarily comical, but involve suspense, adventure, human interest, etc. The term "comics" applied to the form has also proved unwieldy, as it does not easily lend itself to grammatical derivatives (e.g., "cinematic").

Malay comic design in Malaysia is look closely on understanding its theme, culture, drawing style. Malay comic is more to show communicate the Malaysian culture and identity to the readers through visual language. The golden age of local cartoon and comic arts that occurred between the late 1970s and early 1990s has prompted the emergence of range of genres, local cartoon and comic styles from diverse generations of comic artist. The well-known figures from this field are Allahyarham Rejabhad, Ibrahim Md. Nor (Ujang), Jaafar Taib, Saadon Ishak (Don), A. Mahmud, Sabariah Jais (Cabai) etc. Most of Malay comic artists convey narrative and jokes through images

and text. The images are presented either directly, metaphorically, symbolically through scenes of daily life that comprise human figures, objects, animals, and caricatures. The Malays aesthetic values that are expressed can be evaluated in relation with the principles of Malay aesthetics outlined by Zakaria Ali (1989), and that consist of six points, namely refined, useful, united, contrasted, symbolic, and meaningful. Our comic artists generally represent the ethnic variety of the country, awareness of the various racial and cultural in Malaysia. The depiction of multi-racial characters also clearly reflects the unique features of Malaysian society that values moderation, politeness, civility, tolerance, respect, understanding, and racial harmony. As comic artists, deeply aware of issues as current developments, national identity, as well as cultural and traditional variety in a multi-racial country. Our comic artist also creating works revolving around local issues and stories, reminding readers of their cultural roots. Through a variety of comic genres, unique elements that form the core and symbolize the essence of Malaysian society, a multi-racial society living in racial harmony and unity, who values compromise, understanding, respect, and moderation. According to Mulyadi (2007), the essential traditional values of Malay society that upholds Islam as the core of its identity through works with social or personal themes that depict elements o a life revolving around society, customs, culture, traditions, respect, cooperation, family values, and social relationships. Here, his readers

reminds about their roots, their current situation, and their future. He also mentioned about Lat's has given birth to a form cartoon and comic with a strong Malaysian identity. In the context of identity crisis experienced by comics that are strongly influenced by Japonism, Lat has managed to stay on and succeed; he has found a Malaysian form and identity since his early artistic involvement. He has become an inspiration for many cartoonist and comic artists in the country.

1.1 The Role of New Media Digital

The use of new media technology especially animation is increasingly common in new media teaching, learning and digital documentation. Animations are assumed to increase interest and motivation, to direct attention, to illustrate procedures, and to explain how things work. Despite the recent development in the field of new media digital such as animation and 3D modeling, through the use of re-modeling comic character design remains a challenge. The main key to create expressive styles of character is held within the minds of sophisticated animators. Normally, the animators create convincing characters by specifying how actions are spaced according to the personality, characteristics, and mannerisms of a character with the physics of movement as well as the aesthetic aspect of the comic character design to 3D modeling character design and animation. From the different angles and views during construction to the character development, animators express strong design control by modeling elements. However, the understanding in creation and developing 3D modeling character is a labor-intensive part of an animation production.

The use of new media in the cultural heritage is a fast growing field, known variously as digital heritage documentation. Kalay (2008) states that a technology-driven alternative to preserving cultural has emerged through the new, digital media. Therefore, we need the new media technology such as 3D modeling to attract the younger generations to know our culture. For instance, redesign Malay comic design has the potential to create state-of-the-art preservation in digital form.

According to Pieraccini (2008), 3D modeling is also used in a wide range of applications in the fields of cinematography and commercial videos, together with computer-based animation techniques. In particular, the field of culture can greatly benefit from high accuracy of 3D digital imaging for conversation, study and restoration of work. Laboratories at several countries have recently developed and tested systems for this application and pioneered projects for the digitalization of culture and heritage works. Digital archive and documentation are durable and unalterable, thus can be used as reference for degradation monitoring and restoration of works.

2. Problem Statement and Aims

Malay culture is an anchor that helps to retain the sense of identity and instill a sense of pride in one's community and ancestry. The Malay culture has an important role to contribute and enrich that multi-cultural tapestry, value character animation. The significant by documenting our culture, provide our generation with continuity from our past, relevance to the present and inspiration for the future. However, maintaining this role is increasingly becoming a

challenge today. Globalization, the pervasive influence of the Internet and rapid advancement of the technology is changing the way we interact and communication with one another and the speed with which information can be transferred from one to another. We need to capture and documented to provide valuable inputs and reference to engage and inspire the next generation. Digital documentation efforts will come in various forms in new media digital and the heritage practiced or context in the past, the present are still relevant and can provide inspiration for further evolution in the future. Digital documentation especially in 3D modeling is one of the new media form will inspire reflections; deepen our understanding and appreciation of our heritage, especially among the present and new generations. However, as most of the Malay comic series from around that year do not get printed, it leads to the existence of the comic's artists as well as their works become virtually lesser known by several new generation of young people. This research also aims allow emerging talents or animators from our generation to interpret our heritage and keep engagement between the old and the new heritage in new media technology. This research is conducted as an initiative towards the conservation of Malaysia's cartoon and comic arts in order to ensure its sustainability through the transformation of these arts into digital documentation form. Early research has solely focused on the redesign of characters' traits from several works of *Gila-Gila* Malay humor magazine cartoon and comic between the late 70s and early 90s that was conducted through the utilization of 3D remodeling digital application.

3. Methodology

The growth of new media technology in everyday life, educational settings, and in the workplace, the ability to document or to communicate information through animation is increasing. As information technology has grown, 3D documentation tools, from electronic surveying instruments to laser scanners, photogrammetric cameras and even CAD modelers, has brought more and more cultural and heritage data into the digital domain. Main purpose of this research to conducted as an initiative towards the conservation of Malaysia's cartoon and comic arts in order to ensure its sustainability through the transformation of these arts into digital documentation form. Early research has solely focused on the redesign of characters' traits from several works of *Gila-Gila* Malay humor magazine cartoon and comic between the late 70s and early 90s that was conducted through the utilization of 3D remodeling digital application. Digital devices have enabled us to document and record at new levels of detail and precision.

3.1 Research Design

Data Collection and Analysis

With the flood of digital data made possible by new input devices have come tools for everything from data collection Malay comic books to analysis, modeling to animation, and animation to authoring. A complete collection of data on Malay comic characters must be produced prior to the modeling process to aid the 3D modeler in complete listing of data.



Figure 1: Original Malay comic by Rejabhad

Redesign to 3D modeling

Designing 3D modeling for the Malay comic character design, Autodesk Maya is modeling software that has special features to be suitably used as an effective tool for comic character design in 3D modeling and animation. Maya is compatible with Linux, Windows and Mac. It is a high caliber animation software and popular among designers due to its diverse designing capabilities. Once the data collection on Malay comic are complete, the modeler proceeds to analyze and evaluate the costumes, props and the accessories of all Malay comic characters involved. The costumes and accessories for Malay comic characters vary from one character to the other. The most challenging part is to accurately design costumes and matching accessories for each Malay comic character.

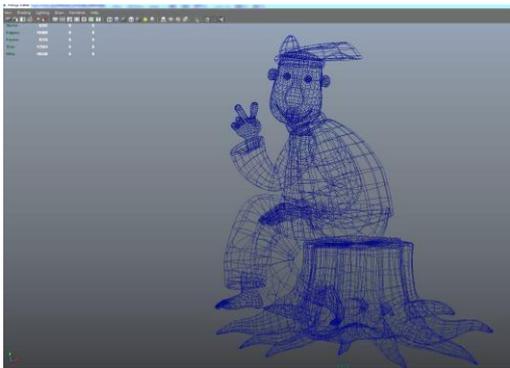


Figure 2: Comic Character Design in Wireframe Mode

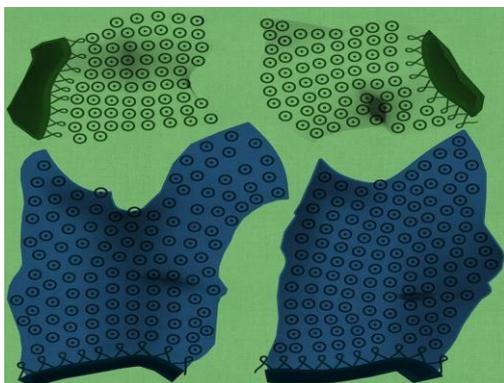


Figure 3: Comic Character design in Texture Mapping Progress

To design and modeling the comic character with their costume, the modeler uses its UV layout on planar mapping. By sculpting the costume would be too time-consuming. The Syflex plug-in is used when modeling for the texture costumes design. With Syflex, attribute pre-sets are used to determine a starting point for the simulation but the configuration may be tweaked to the desired results at different character design. For example, the body of the character is determines as a collision object to simulate further details to produce a pair of cloths or pants on the each comic character. The most difficult part is capturing details of the cloth and pant textures. Generally, the simulation process hence involves paying great attention to details, as there are lots of patterns and textures to be simulated. However, some simple technique using paintFX through ready-made brush in Maya software can be used for this purpose.



Figure 4: Malay Comic Design in 3D modeling

The techniques of 3D modeling of the costume and the character depend on the taste particular to a 3D modeler or designer. The styles of modeling on the application or the exploration on the software itself can be manipulated according to the modeler’s creativity.

4. Discussion

For the procedural Malay comic design character in 3D modeling and animation design, a main limitation is that the realism of the generated animation, to some degree, depends on the appropriate design of animation procedures, which may not be easily accumulated. Nevertheless, because of their reusability and the ability to adapt to the environment, a well-designed procedure can generate a similar and adaptive character development and design with ease. The 3D modeling comic character can be greatly improved, especially for next steps in animation that possess in texture mapping and patterns. However, some modeling characters still require detailing design by certain modeling in texture mapping procedures. The construction on 3D modeling for comic character design need flexible specification mapping for comic characters is also under experimentation development. For the example of the certain Malay comic character design in this research, although the current modeling need to adjust the motion repository is adequate for composition of a Malay comic character design on a flat ground, certain character is required to represent the full range of adjustment motion. Generating 3D modeling in character design will present and develop another interesting and challenging animation planning that deserves further study.

5. Conclusions

The growth of new media technology in everyday life, educational settings, and in the workplace, the ability to document or to communicate information through animation is increasing. The creation and remodeling of expressive comic character design such as Malay comics have usually been difficult and time-consuming task because of the lack of exploration tools in texture mapping to provide detail level in modeling procedure. Digital documentation by redesign Malay comic through 3D modeling and animation bring new affordances to the practice of preservation and communication of cultural society.

This research is, therefore, to improve the way educational animations especially in 3d modeling are designed and used within a variety of sustaining Malay comic design in digital documentations. The practice of preservation and communication is not only assisted, but it changed through the influence of the new media technologies. The technology is connected to an image of practice. This image is comprised of collection of methods, habits, organizations, knowledge, and culture of preservation. We also need to understand the implicit embodiment of the values associated with the practice in tools they use, and their reciprocal influence on each other, in terms of shaping new cultural digital documentation. It offers enormous possibilities for the enhancement and enrichment of cultural experience, interpretation and documentation to make best use of new media in ways. In this regard, Malay comic design stands to benefit from sustainability endeavours, tourism, cultural awareness and public art education.

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