

Section 9. Study of art and cultural studies

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THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL ANIMATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY MEDIA LANDSCAPE: ARTISTIC VALUE, CULTURAL RELEVANCE, AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

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Abstract

This article examines how traditional animation continues to exist and develop in the modern media world. The main goal of the study is to understand the current role of traditional techniques and to analyze their artistic and aesthetic value in today's visual culture. The paper gives a short historical overview of puppet, clay, hand-drawn, cutout animation and explains how these methods have been preserved, so renewed through time. Using comparative and analytical methods, the study explores how traditional animation interacts with digital technology, creating hybrid forms that combine manual creativity with modern innovation. The research also considers both European and Uzbek experiences, showing how different cultural backgrounds influence artistic style and storytelling. The findings suggest that traditional animation remains an important artistic form that connects human emotion, craft, and authenticity with the possibilities of new technology, making it relevant and meaningful even in the digital era.

Keywords: *traditional animation, artistic value, aesthetics of stop motion, cultural heritage, hybrid animation, visual art.*

Introduction

Stop-motion animation is a cinematographic technique in which physical objects, such as puppets or clay figures, are photographed frame by frame to create the illusion of movement. Each pose is adjusted by hand, and when the sequence of images is played back, the objects appear to come to life. This process gives the art form a distinctive sense of materiality and emotional depth

that separates it from computer-generated animation. As Maselli notes, the true power of stop-motion lies in the direct, tactile connection between the artist and the material – an “illusion of life” created through careful craftsmanship rather than digital programming (Maselli, 2018). The combination of precision and imperfection in this technique forms its unique artistic and aesthetic identity. The origins of traditional animation trace back to

the early 20th century, when pioneers such as Émile Cohl in France, J. Stuart Blackton in the United States, and Ladislav Starevich in Russia experimented with the illusion of movement through hand-drawn and stop-motion techniques. Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (1908) and Starevich's *The Cameraman's Revenge* (1912) established the foundations of animation as both a technical and artistic form, blending craftsmanship with imaginative storytelling. By the 1930s, Walt Disney Studios in the United States industrialized animation production, while European and Soviet artists continued to value individuality and artistic experimentation. During the 1960s–1980s, puppet, clay, and cutout animation reached a peak of creativity in Europe, Russia, and Japan. Today, these traditional methods coexist with digital technology, as seen in Laika Studios' *Coraline* (2009), *Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016), and Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* (2005), which preserve the emotional sincerity of handmade motion. In Uzbekistan, the art of animation emerged in the mid-1960s with the establishment of the "Animation Workshop" under "Uzbekfilm" (1964–1965). The pioneering film "*In the 6x6 Square*" (*6x6 kvadratida*, 1965) by D. Salimov and Yu. Petrov laid the foundation of the national animation tradition (Khaydarova, 2022). Since then, numerous Uzbek animators have created works using clay, puppet, and cutout techniques inspired by national folklore and poetic imagery. However, in recent years, traditional animation has been overshadowed by computer-generated production. While digital tools offer efficiency, they often lack the tactile depth and emotional warmth of handmade animation. Reviving traditional methods in contemporary practice is therefore essential not as nostalgia, but as a way to preserve artistic diversity and sustain the unique aesthetic culture of Uzbekistan within the global animation landscape.

Method

This research applies a qualitative and comparative analytical method to explore the evolution of traditional stop-motion animation and its current transformation within Uzbekistan's artistic environment. The study relies on academic publications, archival documents, and visual analysis of selected films representing both international and national

animation schools. By comparing these sources, the research identifies aesthetic, technological, and cultural principles that characterize handcrafted animation and distinguish it from computer-generated imagery.

Discussion

Despite rapid technological advancement, stop-motion animation has not disappeared. Its continued relevance lies in its aesthetic and emotional qualities rather than in technical innovation. The materiality of real objects, the visible traces of craftsmanship, and the tactile imperfection of movement give stop motion a unique expressive power that digital animation often lacks. As Henry Selick, director of *Coraline* (2009), noted in an interview: "Coming from the 2D world, I think what drew me to stop motion was the fact that you actually see this miniature world in front of you... It's one of the greatest appeals of stop motion: this feeling of real objects coming to life. I love the tactile realness of the miniature world. It's something you can never get with hand-drawn or computer animation (Lawrence, 1999)." As Langan explains, this statement captures why stop-motion continues to evolve: its materiality is not a limitation but an aesthetic language in itself (Langan, 2023). Films such as *Coraline* (2009), *The Little Prince* (2015) and *Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016) demonstrate that handmade textures and tangible worlds create emotional depth and authenticity unmatched by computer-generated imagery. Thus, stop motion endures as a form of art that unites traditional craftsmanship with modern storytelling an evolving bridge between technology and the human imagination. A similar dedication to handcrafted animation can be observed in the work of Aardman Animations, the British studio behind *Wallace and Gromit* and *Shaun the Sheep*. Unlike many contemporary studios that have fully transitioned to CGI, Aardman continues to rely on clay- technically, Plasticine- as its primary medium. This choice is not due to technological limitation but to the studio's artistic philosophy. As highlighted in the *Variety* article *At 40, Aardman Animations Stays Stubbornly Eccentric* (2016), "Working with clay- technically, Plasticine – has since become Aardman's trademark, being the medium in which Morph (their earliest stop-frame char-

acter) and later daffy inventor Wallace and his pet dog Gromit were sculpted. ‘Audiences love that sense of tangibility, the sense that it isn’t perfect, the fact that you can see the fingerprints,’ Sproxton says” (Debruge, 2016). This statement perfectly encapsulates the enduring appeal of stop-motion animation: its imperfections become its identity. Aardman’s commitment to material authenticity demonstrates how traditional techniques can coexist with modern storytelling while preserving cultural individuality. The studio’s films succeed precisely because they retain visible traces of human labor – fingerprints, smudges, and textures – which create a sense of warmth and sincerity that resonates with audiences globally. In an era dominated by digital perfection, Aardman’s Plasticine world stands as a celebration of craftsmanship, humor, and human touch. Their success confirms that the longevity of stop-motion lies not in resisting technology, but in reasserting the emotional power of the handmade image.

The historical roots of Uzbek traditional animation are closely connected with the Russian animation school, in which the name of Vladislav Starevich holds a central place. V. Starevich was one of the earliest pioneers of puppet animation, and his renowned film “The Cameraman’s Revenge” (1912) is considered a vivid example of the synthesis between technical experimentation and artistic expression. By using puppets and miniature sets, he created emotionally expressive characters and elevated animation from mechanical motion to the level of poetic storytelling. During the Soviet period, V. Starevich’s ideas and aesthetic principles had a strong influence on various animation studios across the Union, including those in Central Asia. The establishment of the “Animation Workshop” under the “Uzbekfilm” studio in 1964 was, in many ways, a continuation of this creative legacy. The first puppet animation film produced there “In the 6x6 Square” (6x6 kvadratida, 1965), directed by D. Salimov and artist Yu. Petrov reflected the artistic traditions of the Starevich school while developing a distinctly national approach to transforming simple materials into meaningful visual symbols. (Khaydarova, 2022). Following “In the 6x6 Square” (6x6 kvadratida, 1965), D. Salimov and Yu. Petrov continued to deepen their exploration of traditional techniques

and created the puppet film “*The Magic Chest*” (*Sehrli sandiq*, 1966). As Khaydarova notes, this film is based on an Uzbek folk tale and tells the story of a hardworking and kind-hearted girl and her stepmother. Through the contrast between positive and negative characters, the film reveals the eternal struggle between good and evil. The central moral idea that goodness always triumphs over wickedness, is expressed through vivid imagery and traditional narrative motifs. In *The Magic Chest*, the filmmakers successfully combined expressive puppet movement with richly textured miniature decorations to visualize moral and emotional contrasts (Khaydarova, 2019). The hand-crafted aesthetic and symbolic imagery bright costumes, tangible material environments, and ornamental details continue the artistic traditions shaped within the national cultural context of Uzbek animation. This film not only reinforced the national storytelling tradition but also established stop-motion animation in Uzbekistan as an important means of moral and aesthetic education.

With the advent of independence, Uzbek animation entered a new artistic stage. During this period, the thematic scope of films expanded, the range of characters and genres diversified, and new stylistic directions began to emerge. As Maksura Mirzamukhamedova notes in her monograph “*Uzbek Animation*”, “By the time of independence, the thematic range of Uzbek animation had expanded, and the field became enriched with new stylistic trends. The most significant creative experiments of the industry were reinterpreted in accordance with the spirit of the new era, and many new tendencies were introduced (Mirzamukhamedova, 2014).” Indeed, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, Uzbek animators began to reinterpret national values, humanistic ideas, and moral themes through a renewed artistic lens. One of the most remarkable examples is Mavzur Makhmudov’s “Nightingale” (*Bulbul*, 1999), a cut-out animation film distinguished by its refined color palette and poetic narrative. Drawing on folk motifs, the film conveys the themes of kindness and harmony in a contemporary visual style. Another notable work of the period is S. Chufarnov’s “Strike, mallet!” (*Ur, to‘qmoq*, 2006), based on Uzbek folk tales. The film employs elements of satire and humor to depict traditional

wisdom and diligence as enduring national virtues. Both films rely on handcrafted animation techniques – cut-out figures, textured materials, and rhythmic montage – to revive the distinctive aesthetics of Uzbek folklore on screen. Although the post-independence animation industry in Uzbekistan lacked the large-scale resources of Soviet studios, local artists succeeded in expressing complex ideas through symbolic and visually rich imagery. Consequently, contemporary Uzbek animation emphasizes not technical perfection, but artistic vision, national identity, and emotional sincerity, ensuring that the stop-motion and handcrafted traditions continue to evolve within the modern cultural context.

Results

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that traditional stop-motion technology holds a significant place in Uzbek animation. Its importance goes beyond technical aspects, it serves as a means of preserving national aesthetics, moral values, and artistic authenticity. In the era of digital technology, these handcrafted techniques remain relevant, as they embody cultural memory and creative individuality. Therefore, continuing and supporting traditional animation methods is essential not only for artistic innovation but also for maintaining the spiritual and cultural identity of Uzbek animation.

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