

Siamese Cats

- Analysis of Six Thai Independent Animators

- I. Introduction
- II. Case Study: Deadline 2015 6 mins 30 secs Indy T La' Frame
- III. Case Study: Deadline 2015 Happiness 1min 22 sec directed by Punya Pasukkovitsiri
- IV. Case Study: Deadline 2015 Clock 1min 50secs Chanon Treenet
- V. Case Study: Deadline 2015 Lifeless Lifeline 1 min 10 sec Kraiset Bhokasawat
- VI. Case Study: Deadline 2015 Ghost Writer 1 min 20 sec Pop Twatpong
- VII. Case Study: 'Nine' 2014 directed by Mai Wanichaya Phraejunya & Tom Chawalit Kaewmanee
- VIII. Conclusion

Millie YOUNG

초 록

나는 태국 방콕에 소재한 Mahidol 대학교 국제학부에서 애니메이션 교육자로서 지난 8년동안 태국의 신 세대 애니메이터의 작은 집단을 교육하는 특권을 지닌 위치에 있었다. 태국은 태국 고유의 애니메이션 실험적용이 그 동안 거의 없었으며, 그런 다양성에 접근도 인터넷 이전 시대에는 제한이 있었다. 이런 이유로 나의 연구 배경이 되는 특히 영국과 유럽의 풍요로운 애니메이션 역사를 강의실로 가져와 소개하려는 시도를 해왔다. 특히, 내가 가르치는 데 있어서 둔 목적은 초기의 (또한 현재의) 실험적/독립 애니메이터들이 탐구했던 매체, 양식과 텍스트 네러티브 (서사) 선택에 관한 다양한 가능성을 소개하는 것이었다.

최초의 장편 상업 영화 “Khun Kluiay”가 2006년에 출시된 이래로, 태국의 애니메이션 산업은 그간 외국에서 훈련 받고 일하고 돌아온 숙련된 인력을 형성하면서 상업적인 부문에서 여러 기록을 경어왔다. 현재는 독립 애니메이션이 출현하기 시작하는 확실한 증거가 보인다. 태국 애니메이션에 관한 나의 연구의 연장으로, 본 논문은 선정된 독립작품에 대해서 그 주제를 비롯해 사용된 양식과 테크놀로지를 탐구하면서 세밀하게 분석하고자 한다. 그러나 동시에 해석에 대한 오류의 가능성도 인정할 수 밖에 없을 것이다. 나의 문화적 언어와 해석은 아웃사이드의 관점이기 때문에 본래 크리에이터의 경험을 초월할 수도 있고 대안적인 해석을 추가할 수도 있을 것이다. 본 논문은 작품의 내용과 아이디어와 문화적인 관점을 맥락화하고, 더 많은 태국의 작품들이 애니메이션 연구 학계에 시선을 모을 수 있는 것을 목적으로 한다.

주제어: 태국, 애니메이션, 독립 애니메이터, 내러티브 전략

Introduction

This research was initiated from the question ‘What Makes a Good Idea Great?’³⁴⁾ The question was very subjective and open ended, on purpose, as it was posed to a small formative group of independent Thai animators and aimed to begin a discussion that offered them as artists, animators and creatives to reflect on what their motives and inspirations are to produce their personal works. The aim was to be discursive and not definitive of what makes a good idea great. The outcome from the five speakers and nine exhibitors offered insights onto the spectrum of styles, techniques, processes and practices that are being explored by Thai independents. In this paper the aim is to concentrate analysis on more specific work of six animators in two projects exploring their themes, style, narrative structure and strategies:

2015 Deadline³⁵⁾ produced by Indy T La’ Frame: Happiness directed by Punya Pasukkovitsiri; Clock directed by Chanon Treenet; Lifeless Lifeline by Kraisit Bhokasawat; Ghost Writer directed by Pop Twatpong Tangsajjapoj.

And 2014 ‘Nine’³⁶⁾ produced by the Monk Studios directed by Mai Wanichaya Phraejunya & Tom Chawalit Kaewmanee

I posed further questions to the animators to explore the influences and inspirations each director had for their films. I received four responses back as follows:

34) What makes a Good Idea, Great? ASIFA Thailand in 2015 Seminar, French Thai Rendezvous, Bangkok Nov 2015 <https://vimeo.com/169506168>

35) Deadline <https://vimeo.com/141625386>

36) W Phraejunya & C Kaewmanee Nine
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcNtTl-nsqc> 2014

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| | Lifeless Lifeline Kraiset Bhokasawat | Clock Chanon Treenet | Ghost Writer Pop Twatpong | 'Nine' Mai Wanichaya Phraejunya |
| Which animations and directors are your personal influences? | -/ | Yuri Norstein - Tale of Tales Isao Takahata Dardenne Bothers Wong Kar Wai Johnnie To Kei Fung Zhang Yimou Paul Thomas Anderson Terrence Malik | Michael Dudok De Wit Kunio Kato Paul Dreissen Koji Yamamura Early Disney UPA Jan Svankmayer Norman McLaren Michel Gondry Aardman +++ | There are many, but one that is most influential is 'Genius Beyond Party' by Studio 4c. It is a combination of directors. All have their own styles and are charming in their own different way |
| What visual artists have influenced your work? | Kazuo Ohno Francis Bacon Egon Schiele Rene Magritte | Monet Manet Renoir Thawan Duchanee Preecha Thaothong | UPA - Mary Blair Tadahiro Uesugi Osamu Tezuka Semple' including some works of wood cut/ collage/ mixed media | Nine is inspired by the artbook 'Nine Lives' by Songsin Tiewsomboon. Some of the art is inspired by the book as well as many Japanese artists such as Hiroshi Yoshida |
| What medium do you develop your ideas in - sketchbook /photoshop; pencil, charcoal, pen, ink, watercolour etc | Pencil Water colour sketchbook and then develop in Photoshop. | I draw my idea with whatever I can find on my table. It might be my sketch book or a post it - and draw with any pen or pencil. | Pencil and ink sketch and some colour tests in photoshop | Mostly sketching with a pencil alongside the computer |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>What was the main mood / feeling you were exploring in this film?</p> | <p>Mysterious Depression Preoccupied</p> | <p>Intense Horror</p> | <p>Mild Horror and comedy</p> | <p>The main theme talks about losing oneself in exchange for something thought to be more significant. Not knowing that life without identity is actually a bigger loss, the movie pushes you through an extreme contrast of emotions from happiness while being obsessed in illusions to anger, and sadness after realizing what is lost</p> |
| <p>Does your film reflect Thai culture /style?</p> | <p>No, I think my work focusses on self exploration</p> | <p>I'm not sure, it might reflect the working life of new generation which is full of stress and pressures</p> | <p>I didn't actually think of that but my protagonist might have a personality that reflects it.</p> | |

The answers give some background into the variety of influences, which is then apparent in their outputs. I think it is noteworthy to mention that Mai works at and has been trained and nurtured by the Monk Studio who produced the short as part of an in-house career development inspired by founder P' Juck, who was trained and work abroad for many years before returning to Thailand to set up the studio; Kraiser has come from a fine art background into animation;

Pop and Chanon have both studied and worked abroad which has broadened their influences as seen in their answers.

It is important to acknowledge the possibility of (my) mis-interpretation and that recognizing my view is coming from the perspective of, to paraphrase Pierre Floquet from his Es-sense of Animation, “an outsider whose cultural language and interpretation may transcend the creators’ given experiences and add alternative interpretation.”³⁷⁾ I have some Thai language skills, but it is a complex language that leads to much that is lost in translation. Thai animation is still in it’s formative history, and as a practitioner and educator in animation teaching in Thailand since 2007 I have seen huge changes in the education, production and access to animation, especially regarding the international influences. So I will be speaking from my British context, and am likely, despite great efforts to gain insight through interviews and personal contacts, to get completely lost in translation! The secondary goal therefore is to inspire Thai bi-linguists, such as my students to further the analysis in the future.

The aim is to contextualize the content, ideas and perspective through theories presented by Animation academia and offer some cultural perspective to bring the Thai works into the gaze of animation studies scholars.

Paritosh Singh³⁸⁾ asked the question “ What defines

37) P Floquet, ‘The Es-sense of Movement - Keynote’ SAS Cosmos in Animation Conference, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore 2016
<http://sas2016.adm.ntu.edu.sg/pierre-floquet/>

38) P. Singh, Animating Indian-ness: A Study of Assimilating Indian Images in a Western Narrative
http://sas2016.adm.ntu.edu.sg/downloads/SAS2016_catalogue.pdf page 146

animation identity?” and suggested this list: Visual Images; Story; Narrative Structure; Technique; Modes: Resources for communication/ meaning making; Movement; Visuals; Technology; Modality that defines status, authority and reliability of message. This gives some starting points which will be addressed in part for each film. However, to discuss all of these in depth within the confines of this presentation would be distracting from the purpose of introducing the works, therefore the topics of modes and modality which warrant deeper discussion will not be addressed in depth, and my emphasis will be more on the ideas and quality of communication through narrative strategies and structures in the visual images, story and techniques employed. To focus on narratives structures and strategies I will be applying theories presented by Paul Wells in *Understanding Animation*³⁹⁾ to break down the films.

In the following table I have suggested the dominant narrative strategies each of the films use in terms I have indicated the usage by ✓ or for more dominant use ✓✓ and would argue that most have two tandem strategies to emphasis their story.

| Narrative Strategies | Metamorphosis | Condensation | Synecdoche | Symbolism and Metaphor | Fabrication | Associative Relations | Sound (Dietic Non Dietic) | Acting and performance | Choreography | Penetration |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Deadline Happiness | ✓✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓ |

2016

39) P. Wells, 'Understanding Animation'. Abingdon: Routledge UK 1998

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|----|--|----|--|----|----|---|---|----|
| Deadline Clock | ✓ | ✓✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓✓ | | | ✓ |
| Deadline Lifelife Lifeline | ✓ | | | | | ✓✓ | ✓ | | | ✓✓ |
| Deadline Ghost Writer | | ✓ | | ✓✓ | | | ✓✓ | | | |
| Nine | ✓✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓✓ |

This is a simplistic overview to give an initial structure to the analysis. I am aware that film and animation theoretical analysis has developed further and that each of these films deserve further deeper discussion, but a boundary must be set in order to initiate the possibility for such further discourse. I hope this will encourage others to do so.

Case Study: Deadline 2015 6 mins 30 secs Indy T La’ Frame^{e40)}

“Work and work and work. And work. And work.”

Produced under Indy T La’ Frame who set up in 2009 to develop independent work experimenting in the art of animation utilizing various techniques in 2D and 3D, flash and Motion Graphics. At the heart of their work lies the concept of Frame by Frame: “T La’ Frame” deriving from the Thai word ที่ละเฟรม meaning ‘frame by frame’. For this

40) <http://www.tlaframe.com/homeNew41.html>

project they specifically chose to work in 2D. Deadline visuals vary according to each animator from Punya's manga influence style to Chanon's water colour technique that mixes the impressionist painterly style with a digital cut out technique; and from Kraisit's surrealist fine art style to Pop's simple UPA influenced style. The whole production is made cohesive by the theme of 'Deadline' and each section is introduced by the central horizontal red line on a blackened background symbolic of a lifeline on a heart monitor.

This film is in four parts, each directed by a different animator to the theme of Deadline and was created as a showcase of their skills and styles and the deadline theme is approached in a variety of ways which will be discussed in each case study.

Case Study: Deadline 2015 Happiness 1min 22 sec directed by Punya Pasukkovitsiri

Happiness: An animator is working to death to finish his job. Punya choosing a dark black comedy approach in Happiness. He explores the experience of an animator's drive to create at all costs. The graphic novel style of his comic art lends itself to the narrative which exposes the raw adrenalin fueled experience. The structure builds in a crescendo to the macabre finale, offering a poignant critique of the money that drives the industry but cares little for the soul of the artist.

In response to the question, 'What makes a good idea great?'⁴¹⁾,Punya talked about the core idea:

41) What Makes a Good Idea, Great? ASIFA Thailand 2016
<https://vimeo.com/169506168>

“When I have a chance to do it, I always set the very first “core idea” about the character that I create. What does he/she want in the end or how does he/she want to live? Even when I made short films or comics, I will always keep this “core idea” as the foundation. Recently, I just noticed that I have this “core idea” maybe because I always questioned myself. What did I live for? Why did I do this? ... As we have been asked many times, “why do you make animation, what it’ s for? To make you richer? Make you suffer? Animation is not what people appreciate. Well, I just want to show that I draw cartoons because it makes me happy. Even if this happiness makes me suffer or die, I would be happy to do it. This happiness can be transferred from me to someone else. I am not so sure if that person would be happy or sad, but I assume they will be happy.”

This dilemma sets the premise for ‘Happiness’ . It sets the stage, seen literally as a theatrical stage complete with steampunk organ pipes set in the centre of the screen, for his exploration of the animators’ agony. The red dead line dissolves through a zoom into the animator at his desk. The animator appears at his light box where there are screwed up papers all around. He starts to work under the digital clock counting down to the deadline from 18:02:20, as his pencil hits the paper in a flowing arc, the music beat subtly increases and we begin to see sweat dripping from his gradually frowning face. The time starts to decrease rapidly and the nib of the pencil breaks, causing the animator to cough up blood...The sound becomes an intensifying electrical buzz adding to the pressurized feeling which mount. The animator plugs in an intravenous

supply of dreams directly into his head. The intensity is palpable and sets the audience (both real and on screen) on edge of their seats as the animator's sleepless adrenaline driven eyes widen. He draws out a simple character construction, reminiscent of an early Osamu Tezuka characters. The extreme distortions of the animator are in sharp contrast to the simple forms he has created. Giving the underscore that many animators feel they have to justify to lay people who mistakenly believe that "it all looks so simple" to make. The pressure increases more with his blood and guts spewing over the desk and hits a crescendo with the digital alarm beeping as the animator's ecstatic face collapses on the lightbox his brains burst all over the paper. The POV pulls back to reveal a Master of Ceremony leading the audience's applause. On screen the two simple characters jump up and down in a childish manner to the claps of the expressionless blank-eyed audience, the money-bag-head applauds in a slow hand clap while the animators grinning exploded head is motionless under the boing-boing of the animation track. One child in the audience is zoomed in on... and as she fills the screen her eyes suddenly blink into life... and a red glow which becomes the heart line again on the screen taking us full circle. This ending is the pay off, for the artist and audience. Despite his brains being shot to pieces, his work lives on, inspires another to step out of the zombie like state of just absorbing media.

The narrative strategy of penetration is employed effectively to immerse the audience into this experiential adrenaline fueled moment in the life of the animator pressurized by the money men to produce on time. The

stylistic design uses Punya's manga background to capitulate the audience into the dark graphic content juxtaposed against the innocent child-like characters that are created. It is a hard hitting juxtaposition that sets the deep psychology of what makes animators (or most artists) put themselves through this stress of creativity. The design plays with the cuteness and cruelty seamlessly existing alongside each other. This juxtaposition could suggest a potential trait that could be attributed as part of the national characteristic to identity in Thai animation.

Case Study: Deadline 2015 Clock 1min 50secs Chanon Treenet

“Every time it is about to end, everything starts over.”

Clock: Every time it is about to end, everything starts over. Chanon explores a notion of the work deadline linking to the internet/email technology and the universal fear factor involved with the invisibility of computer and virtual technology where we cannot physically ‘see’ for sure that something has truly been ‘sent’. The Story plays with a circular narrative which emphasizes the nightmarish fears that new technology creates in this pressurized world of deadlines.

Chanon is a modest soft spoken man who has been developing a technique of animation that has a painterly water colour style inspired by impressionist painting. In Clock he creates a tense narrative building on a continuous repetitive loop. The narrative structure is circular and repetitive which effectively creates condensation of time as

its main narrative strategy. The pattern is quickly established using metronome rhythmic beats to establish the pattern and offers an idea that the task is routine, perhaps even a bit boring and mundane - but once the routine is broken it effectively sets the key emotional factor into the story.

The opening begins from the red deadline which then chops to metronome like beats to take us into the protagonists extreme close up face. The eyes appear concerned as they gradually widen to stare back at us. Then turning from the face to the clock 5.40, to the hands tapping fast on the computer to the calendar back to the eyes which now squint. On return to the clock it has moved 10 minutes forward and ominously the door behind the clock shuts. Back to the computer the page is filling rapidly and the calendar still shows a month of empty days before the deadline. On return to the eyes this time the iris and pupil start to shrink dramatically and this inspires a sense of fear. The clock now shows that it's nearly 6 o'clock and we rapidly return to the hands on the computer typing fast. We see 'SAVE' appear quickly followed by SEND and a sense of relief as this flies off. But we are returned to the calendar to see the whole month scratched off, the deadline is met...but the marking off the days suddenly disappears, we turn back to the squinting eyes which now are straining. Back to the clock, which now has the secondhand showing 6 'clock has passed. We return to the computer again and it appears as if the protagonist's eyes (our eyes as now we are in his POV) are closing. Here the film strategy emphasis the penetration to develop the fear factor experienced with an approaching deadline. We are caught inside the head of the protagonist

who sits at a computer working in a nightmare-like scenario. The audience is now both observer of his eyes and observer inside his head. In the strategy of penetration Paul Wells' suggests it:

“is particularly effective for film-makers seeking to align the condition of the experience with the condition of the animated film itself. That is to say, those film-makers who wish to make a film which illustrates an experience of life led in a distinctive and potentially unknowable way to others seek the most direct creative method by which this condition can be expressed.” 42)

Chanon moves the deadline experience from a series of repetitive expectations into the uncontrollable frenetic rhythm of off beats and disorientation. The eyes appear to open but now the page is empty again, the calendar is blank, the eyes widen, the clock shows 5.40, his, hands are pausing and shifting before typing, the calendar is still blank, the eyes widen further, it' s already moved on 10 minutes and the door closes again. The page is filling. The eyes widen more. The clock nears 6. We see he saves and sends... but the page goes blank again as we turn to the blank calendar, back to the eyes widening further, the clock is again at 5.40, the page is filling the calendar is blank, the eyes are widening. It' s almost like ground hog day but we never move forward.

In a minor detail, in the picture frame next to the screen, Snow White appears, each time we return to the frame the image has changed. Sometime she is coy, then attentive, subliminally watching over the work. Then the wicked Queen starts to appear in the frame. The clock appears again and

42) P. Wells, 'Understanding Animation'. Abingdon: Routledge UK 1998 p 122

it shows six then jumps back to 5.40 and back to six and then 5.40 again. Now the face of Snow White flips with the Queen disguised as the old hag. This signals a turning in the fortune, for the writer. On return to the computer the screen fills with writing then blanks and fills and blanks, the calendar is now fully marked off. The face appears with widening eyes morphing into a skull like horror mask, the clock jiggles irritatingly at 1 minute to six, then six then back again. The typing only gets one line out then blanks and types the line again. The pace has increased now to almost a strobe effect. The calendar blanks and fills and we return to the face which morphs now to appear like Edvard Munch' s Scream. This use of a universally recognized visual association to the fear factor finalizes the experience. We return finally to the red deadline unsure whether the email was ever sent. Unlike Punya' s Happiness, there is a more nihilistic end, the writer loses himself to the pressure but does not receive the pay off.

Case Study: Deadline 2015 Lifeless Lifeline 1 min 10 sec Kraiset Bhokasawat

Lifeless Lifeline: The story is about a relationship that crosses the line. They lose something forever. Kraiset, whose work is the most abstract, shows a more surreal cerebral exploration of the interconnectivity and interdependency of love, in particular the unrequited love and losing one' s self in the other as the demonstration of deadline. The piece is poetic and leaves the audience with a lingering idea that this is a circular never ending story.

“Whenever I look for an idea suddenly the [other old] work

lighted up. There was a hidden fun that could ... happen. [The] film is talking about the sense of loss. The attempt to revive [when] some feelings come up. And it's result makes the story revolve back and forth without end. The idea of making Lifeless came from the thinking back on memories and old dreams. When I discover deeper those pictures often have popped out. I then led them to compose again." Kraiset Bhokasawat⁴³⁾

Kraiset's work is surreal and very stylistic. It is poetic offering itself up for multiple interpretations. The film starts with the title, Lifeless Lifeline appearing over the red deadline. An enigmatic word choice it sets a change in mood from the frenetic clock ticking beat to one of a hopeless solitude. The theme explores a notion of a love that has outlived it's time; of unrequited love and the end cycle of a bad relationship. The sound starts as a continuous oscillating note suggestive of distant cicadas in the early morning half-light. The image fades through red to two empty chairs on separated floors created by lines leading to two opposing vanishing points suggestive there are two empty rooms with an overlap. Light flickers and dances to a few simple chords on a piano. On a chord change a white faced character appears in close up and turns away blinking and the mouth opens slightly. The figure is not seated and is out of the room and out of the comfort zone. The drawn animation technique creates a slight pulsing of the image accentuating the dream like quality. In each of the previous films penetration is a device to tell the experiential tale, but it is here in Lifeless Lifeline we

43) K Bhokasawat In the exhibition "What makes a Good Idea, Great?" ASIFA Thailand in 2015 Seminar, French Thai Rendezvous, Bangkok Nov 2015

are thrown into truly unknown imaginings. The image cuts to a pulsating mass of twisted guts which reveal themselves to be inside a form of similar silhouette to the first character. Ghost like they both fade in and out of focus, the first character holds her (for the purpose of this description I will say her but it could easily be his) hand to her mouth puzzled or disturbed by the other and tries to reach out then retracting it to scratch open her chest. Out from this gash a dark black beak emerges and out fly strange beaked flying creatures who cover the other to the cawing sound of crows. Metaphorical of the dark imaginings of a jealous lover they latch on to the other. The image is disturbing and yet reminiscent of nursing puppies, their eating is not frenzied or gory, more like suckling, eating away at the essence. On a bright note of a chime they disappear revealing the other now no longer appearing dismembered but looking much like the first had done with a white face, big sad eyes and a black body suit. The former however is now pale and covered in dark gashes. She blinks and we cut to see them both sat perched, against the red line that has been continuously present. They sit but not on the chairs, the chairs float in rooms with no walls. The empty chairs still hang in the rooms.

The first creature is now white and textured, no longer fully apparent, almost a ghost of her former self. The other blinks slowly and reaches slowly to his chest, perhaps to scratch it open too, but it dissolves to the red line on black, the cycle of tearing each other apart continuous. The images are haunting, yet familiar. The actions suggest a sense of offering up hope in this strangely desolate place, perhaps the void between life and death, the deadline. The

characters seemingly cannot both exist together nor can they depart. There is both a deep sadness and a longing that exists here in a detachment and separation, a suspension of life. Their expressions are a deep sadness with no comfort or compassion, just a void. Like a metaphysical poem the metaphors are oblique and open to wide interpretation, but the message is clear: Love is lost. The fine art influence is very apparent in Kraiset's work, is an unusual element in Thai animation context. The hope is that it will inspire future animators to be more experimental.

Case Study: Deadline 2015 Ghost Writer 1 min 20 sec Pop Twatpong

Ghost writer: A young writer finally meets his mystery ghost writer. Pop plays a humorous literary gag in his tale of a scriptwriter and his mysterious co-writer who is a real ghost writer. Parodying the structure of the thriller genre condensed into a short animation he plays the theme of deadline in a double pun.

The last short in this collection would not have worked if it had followed Chanon's Clock where the typing played a key role in the narrative. The mood change created by Lifeless lifeline allows this final piece to open with a fresh energy. Here Pop is playing with the thriller genre in his comedic interpretation of deadline. In particular where a thriller is defined as

'a character restlessly pursues a single-minded goal - to provide thrills and keep the audience cliff-hanging at the 'edge of their seats' as the plot builds towards a climax. The tension usually arises when the main character(s) is placed in a menacing situation or mystery, or an escape or dangerous

mission from which escape seems impossible. Life itself is threatened, usually because the principal character is unsuspecting or unknowingly involved in a dangerous or potentially deadly situation..’ 44)

When the thriller genre is transferred into a short animation piece the narrative has to establish the audience expectations and condense the material into quickly and easily interpreted ideas.

In this case Pop employs the sound and editing to offer the suggested genre. The red line shakes as the title is typed in a classic typewriter font reminiscent of Murder Mysteries and Detective scenarios with the tap tapping of the typewriter. On an ominous ‘Clang’ the red line metamorphoses to a red centered spot as the note resonates and cut to character sat at a computer with a portrait of a severe looking man overlooking him. Then a cut to a family portrait, the man from the painting appears as a ghost figure behind our protagonist. On a further ‘Clang’ we close-up on the protagonist sweating at the computer, the ghost behind him reaches forward and puts a hand on his shoulder. The music changes to an upbeat Oum-Pah-Pah and the screen’s colour changes from reds to blues, a wide eyed character looks nervously on at a bearded man who we can see is reading a manuscript. The script gets the thumbs up and the writer is dismissed. This neat colour change sets up a convention we can easily understand: red is the story, blues is the reality. To reinforce this the magazine where the story appears is also red. It cuts now to the writer in his office, flicking through his tablet, idling his time, a

44) T Dirks Definition of Thriller genre
<http://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html>

calendar dominates center screen with a deadline highlighted. Quick cut to the calendar and back to the writer who puts down what he is reading. An ominous long held chord is played and in a purple outside shot we see the writer sneaking upstairs in the moonlight a light tap-tapping can be heard as he picks up the script from under the door. He shoves an envelope under the door, where we see there are a pile of unopened envelopes, some with money in.

A quick montage, in blue of the calendar months passing, the writer seen running along, posting envelopes, picking up scripts, all suggesting he is busy keeping up with all the passing deadlines. November arrives, and the deadline line is a Friday 13th. Our writer however seems relaxed eating, reading and unconcerned, cut to the outside shot and he is seen on his regular route bouncing up the stairs. The moon is red, and this warns the audience that something isn't going right. He arrives, but this time there is no script outside the door. In his puzzlement he leans against the door falling through into the pinky-red inside. He sidles across the room, through the piles of envelopes to the typewriter, where the script flies up to his face. The scripts read: Broken Slow Forest/ Revenge of the.../The Furious Spirit. The last page he sees a signatory: Story นายป {Mr Poe} [1889 -1969]

The comedy timing here is brilliant, the character's destiny set. He clutches the script and heavy legged turns to leave the haunted room - the door slams shut in his face, he is trapped and the typewriter starts up to the shrill discordant chord - the image dissolves to the red dead line. Pop's careful colour scripting playing from the red and

blue and gradually melding them together in the purples and pinks is a great device for condensing the material and making it easily readable. The comedy doesn't distract from the suspense and by using familiar signifiers like the typewriter, the Friday 13th, the discordant clangs the narrative flows parodying the thriller genre and adding to our expectation. All together the Deadline films speak of strife: be it the struggle of the animator with his creative passion; the writers struggle with time, reality and technology; the lover's struggle with a loveless emptiness; and the 'ghost' writer struggling to get recognition. Deadline being a metaphor for the eternal struggle to maintain life against the finite time we have.

Case Study: 'Nine' ⁴⁵⁾2014 directed by Mai Wanichaya Phraejunya & Tom Chawalit Kaewmanee

The Monk Studios short film Nine is loosely based on the award-winning Thai graphic novel called "Nine Lives" by Songsin Tiewsomboon, an illustrated book featuring four short stories with cats as main characters.

"The comic book is very popular here in Thailand. So I decided to approach the author who was really happy for us to turn it into a short film. We ended up just using the general structure of the comic book and redesigning everything else from scratch. We really wanted to put our mark on it in terms of the look and feel of the film."

Juck Somsaman⁴⁶⁾

45) Nine exclusive clip article,
<http://www.awn.com/news/watch-exclusive-clip-nine>
Nine Behind the Scenes <https://vimeo.com/102496374>

46) P. Younghusband "Watch and Exclusive clip for nine"
AWN June 4 2014

The redesign for animation explains Mai,
 “explores a new perspective of the original story. I wanted to capture the unique setting and feel of the world the author created but make it come to life through animation. Combining the charm of 2D with the best elements of 3D animation, I hope this film will excite people who love cats and dark fantasy.”

Wanichaya Phraejunya⁴⁷⁾

The result is an extraordinary sensory exposition. In the following table the story is broken down into the linear Todorov three act structure:

| Equilibrium Exposition: Protagonist is introduced and dramatic situation. Disruption Turning point: Protagonist forms a goal. | Complicating Action: Protagonist faces obstacles in pursuit of goal Development: Incidents create action, suspense, delay | Climax and Resolution: Goal is achieved (or not) |
|--|--|--|
| 0:00-0:40 Introduction of the grey cat chasing butterfly. All the colours are harmonious and bright. 0:40 - 0:47 Cat enters the darkened grey area. 0:48-1:28 Introduction of the warthogs. Cat is still playing with the butterfly. Then the wart hogs chase the cat. The cat runs | 2:55 -3:29 The cat awakens back in the colourful spotlight, apparently back in time surrounded by the warthogs snorting around a sacrificial like pile of fruit and bones. The cat reels with fear and shock as the snorting hogs with their blank yellow eyes. One of the hogs comes forward, menacingly. Suddenly it collapses and the warm glowing light appears from its now stricken body. It explodes with fountains of milk. The cat looks on quizzically. The other hogs swarm the cat, but are | 6:11-6:20 The baubles fly off, revealing the carnage of carcasses in a dark twisted forest. The cat suddenly sees it' s razor claws covered in blood. A moment of realization occurs. 6:21 - The blue butterfly appears and the now |

47) Filmmaker' s note Brooklyn Film Festival 2017
<http://www.brooklynfilmfestival.org/films/detail.asp?fid=1495>

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>in fear of it' s life.</p> <p>Bright Colours still dominate but as the threat gets greater the darkness increases. The cat escapes onto a red bridge, the warthogs stop their pursuit and appear to run off in fear.</p> <p>Turning Point :1:39 - 2:54 Dark blues and red. The cat is beaten up and nearly dead. The butterfly still flutters near it.</p> <p>Introduce the masked spirit. Who' s gesture beckons the cat with a ball of spirited light. The cat is mesmerized. The gaping mask gestures in encouragement. The cat reaches for the light and is immediately captured in the bubble of blue light, it' s eyes blanked yellow, it' s body suspended. The light fills the cat and a warm glowing light from within the cat emerges. The butterfly catches this and takes it to the gaping mouthed masked spirit and the butterfly disappears.</p> <p>The spirit absorbs the light. The cat' s</p> | <p>repelled in an explosion. With a glint in it' s eyes the cat suddenly realizes new powers.</p> <p>Now the cat is chasing the hogs.</p> <p>3:30 - 3:54</p> <p>In a magical moment the cat leaps - the medium changes from 3D into a mixture of 2D effects and 3D. A montage of surreal colourful patterns and gory skewering of hogs plays out.</p> <p>3:55 - 4:30</p> <p>The imagery goes super surreal as a Chinese style ceremonial fish leaps up from the warthog that had landed on the cats giant tongue. The cat now is riding the fish in a backdrop of saturated pastel colours</p> <p>With warthogs being capitulated all around in a sea of turquoise beingpursued by the gargantuan chomping fish. It leaps though the air flying through a cacophony of fireworks, the cat is seen chuckling, when suddenly the fish starts gagging...spits out a warthog and falls limply to the ground. The hog runs off and the colours fade to a darkened grey.</p> <p>4:31-5:00</p> <p>The cat is seen washing on the corse of the half eaten fish. Through the clearing fog the now red eyes of the hogs appear. The cat looks up greedy for more. It is surrounded now by strangely masked beasts: hogs, bears, stags, wolves. The cat takes the challenge and screeches. There is a moment' s pause, then the encircling beasts roar as one and rush in. The camera zooms in to the eye of the cat who is crouched ready. Black.</p> <p>5:01- 6:10</p> <p>The scene now becomes graphic 2D</p> | <p>demon cat is seen standing back on the red bridge it turns following the bright butterfly and baubles which are all converging into the claw of the gaping masked spirit.</p> <p>They face each other and now we see they are almost mirror images. The cat processes the realization in a quick monotone flashback, in a flash of white it hits and the cat screeches a gargling roar of anguish. It stumbles toward the spirit who now unmask revealing a catlike distorted face.</p> <p>As the cat grasps the air the spirit explodes in light pulling all colour from the surrounding scene into a vortex. The mask drops on the bridge. The shadow of the cat, echoing the spirit' s shadow casts over the mask. It starts to snow.</p> <p>Cuts to black. Then with an ominous</p> |
|---|---|--|

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>lifeless form is uprighted, his face in shock... the scene rapidly disrupts into a chaos as the bridge descends into a whirlpool of darkness.</p> | <p>stylized slashing and scratchy silhouettes of all the animals flaying and flying around in red, black and white with the bright blue glow of violent slashes across the screen. Only the eyes of the cat, in yellow and green focus the action until all are slayed. The cacophony of squeals and grunts settles and the cat's eyes are now ice blue as it tears the beasts apart smashing their masks. The warm baubles of light emerge from the carcasses... The now giant demon-like cat follows their rise as it morphs back into 3D.</p> | <p>chime reveals the claws of the cat demon in the place of the spirit casting a magic blue butterfly off into the distant coloured glade showing in the far distance of the forest</p> |
|--|--|---|

The design utilizes the cute and cruel and in Nine's synopsis they touch on this concept:

“Nine is a haunting tale of innocence lost as the Grey Cat, afraid of losing his final life, makes a deal with the devil and gets much more than he bargained for, and loses even more along the way.” 48)

In the first teaser of "Nine", the carefully observed and constructed kitten is seen innocently chasing the butterfly. It demonstrates the amazing attention to detail that the studio put in to the work. The film is a great showcase for the technical sophistication that the studio offers. But it does more than this. The fluidity in the cat and the playful gestures are a considered narrative choice. The story is a dark fantasy, but for the darkness to work it needs the juxtaposition against the innocence. The design is saccharine sweet, pushing the big eyed cute appeal. The opening scene utilizes this, with an homage parody of

48) Synopsis Brooklyn Film Festival 2017

<http://www.brooklynfilmfestival.org/films/detail.asp?fid=1495>

Disney's Bambi opening. The butterfly flitting into the shot and taking us deep into the woods where the kitten starts to chase. It's super sweet and in complete contrast to the bloated ballooning wart hogs with the featureless yellow eyes. This contrast is just the start, the imagery pushes more and more surreal as the cat becomes infected by the desire, and the butchery scene is horrific - despite the restrained use of the red for the bloody slashing.

The film's narrative plays out initially as a conventional 3 act, but as the surrealism sets in it employs the strategy of choreography of movement first in the attack on the hogs, then into the dreamlike flying fish. It is unexpected from the start, each modal change takes the visuals into a deeper surrealist mayhem and propels the audience into the violence of the cat's furious blood lust. The climactic scene where the kitten finally metamorphoses into the monster, is a furious textural piece of pure 2D graphics. The stark contrasting shapes and colour create a shocking sequence of lines, movement and apparent carnage. This is so far now from the soft edged hyper-realism we were first presented with for the cat. We are no longer melting at the visual cuteness but are raw and embroiled in the emotion of the killer. The flipped narrative from observer is now fully immersed the audience penetrating into the mind of the demon cat. The narrative plays with the idea that we all have a dark side. The cat's awaking to it's new form sits alongside ours. The 3D returns resetting an equilibrium but now we have been inside it's mind. The narrative ends offering a circular possibility, never ending cycle. The protagonist has got what it wanted, and so have we, but now a new need is apparent, a new role, new beginnings, in the

never ending story.

Conclusion

These two (or five) films are just a sample from the ever increasing Thai Independent animation works. So it would be hard in such a small sample to draw too many conclusions. There are suggestions of elements in the story structures and design that could be researched further to see if there is a dominant national characteristic or trend. To explore if there is indeed a prevalence of the circular narrative, and moreover to argue that this could be influenced by the Buddhist philosophy where there is no need for resolution in the film, the karmic cycle of life must continue. In Chandon's answers, he puts forward The Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne Brothers as an influence, and their work is notable for qualities akin to

“a morality play that uses a simple premise to dig deeply into questions of fairness, altruism, and civic-versus-personal responsibility.” Nick Schager⁴⁹⁾

And there appears to be some preference for this more contemplative, life sharing quality to the narrative choices over the linear heroes' journey. With such a small sample this cannot be conclusive, but it parallels a preference I have witnessed over the last decade with my seniors' animation student's narrative choices. Which suggests there is room for some research exploration. There is also a keen use of the cute and the cruel and again this could be an area of inquiry to pursue further. In Psychology this is referred to as the “cute aggression”⁵⁰⁾ and in animation

49) N Schager 'After Two Days, One Night, Which Movies by the Dardenne Brothers Should You Watch?' The Vulture December 30, 2014

there are a myriad of examples especially in Thailand. This is enhanced in 'Nine' and 'Happiness' by a controlled cacophony of colour, sound and motion that produces digressive exhilarating experiences that harness the saccharine sweet into the vivid imagery and violent action. In contrast Kraiset's work shows clear visual and philosophical links to the fine artists and performance artist Kazuo Ohno that he mentions and it will be interesting to see him develop further creative works in this unique and compelling surrealism of dreams. His work is a digression from the mainstream animation being produced and may inspire future explorations into the dark recesses of the more surrealistic Thai minds.

The examples chosen do show that the level of sophistication in animation shorts is developing rapidly. There are works worthy of inclusion in academic study and offering broader insights into the language and application of the animated short story. The industry is still youthful, only emerging in the last 20 years, and a further area that could be explored is the transcultural influence on the story telling. Many of the more mature animators were trained abroad, in the US and the UK. Pop, Juck and Chanon all studied and worked abroad, and some of this international experience can be seen in the selected animators and artists they have been exposed to. A trait that is very common is all have brought back home to Thailand some of the cultural and creative ideas from that international experience. They are inventing or reimagining

50) R Dyer Dimorphous Expressions of Positive Emotion Yale University Displays of Both Care and Aggression in Response to Cute Stimuli <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/01/27/0956797614561044.abstrac>
t

a history that has never happened here before for Thailand's new generation of animators. Exploring the experimental textural past with modern technology tools. Developing narratives that suit their own cultural briefs but using the learnings and leanings from their cross cultural experience. In this ever shrinking virtual global world where information and access to such a broad range of influences are available instantaneously, the shortfall in direct personal or national cultural history can be perhaps be overcome in the fast track immersion. More and more I am being impressed by my students work. When I began teaching animation in Thailand the trend was strongly biased toward technology. Now the industry is craving creative minds, storytellers and a wider spectrum of techniques. There are more people wanting to explore the artistry of the medium and its applications. So there it may be time to throw down the mantle for more creative works to be made, and for academics to seek more from the Thai animators.

Bibliography

What makes a Good Idea, Great? ASIFA Thailand in 2015 Seminar,
French Thai Rendezvous, Bangkok Nov 2015

<https://vimeo.com/169506168>

Deadline <https://vimeo.com/141625386>.

W Phraejunya & C Kaewmanee Nine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcNtT1-nsqc> 2014

P Flouquet, 'The Es-sense of Movement - Keynote' SAS Cosmos in
Animation Conference, Nanyang Technological University,
Singapore 2016 <http://sas2016.adm.ntu.edu.sg/pierre-floquet/>

- P. Singh, Animating Indian-ness: A Study of Assimilating Indian Images in a Western Narrative
http://sas2016.adm.ntu.edu.sg/downloads/SAS2016_catalogue.pdf
 page 146 2016
- P. Wells, 'Understanding Animation'. Abingdon: Routledge UK 1998
<http://www.tlaframe.com/homeNew41.html>
- What Makes a Good Idea, Great? ASIFA Thailand 2016
<https://vimeo.com/169506168>
- P. Wells, 'Understanding Animation'. Abingdon: Routledge UK 1998 p
 122 -156
- K Bhokasawat In the exhibition "What makes a Good Idea, Great?"
 ASIFA Thailand in 2015 Seminar, French Thai Rendezvous,
 Bangkok Nov 2015T Dirks Definition of Thriller genre
<http://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html>
- Nine exclusive clip article
<http://www.awn.com/news/watch-exclusive-clip-nine>
- Nine Behind the Scenes <https://vimeo.com/102496374>
- P. Younghusband "Watch and Exclusive clip for nine" AWN June 4
 2014
- Filmmaker's note Brooklyn Film Festival 2017
<http://www.brooklynfilmfestival.org/films/detail.asp?fid=1495>
- Synopsis Brooklyn Film Festival 2017
<http://www.brooklynfilmfestival.org/films/detail.asp?fid=1495>
- N Schager 'After Two Days, One Night, Which Movies by the
 Dardenne Brothers Should You Watch?' The Vulture December
 30, 2014
- R Dyer Dimorphous Expressions of Positive Emotion Yale University
 Displays of Both Care and Aggression in Response to Cute
 Stimuli
[http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/01/27/0956797614561044.ab
 stract](http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/01/27/0956797614561044.abstract)

ABSTRACT

Siamese Cats - Analysis of Six Thai Independent Animators

Millie YOUNG

As an animation educator at Mahidol University International College, Bangkok, for eight years I have been in a privileged position to be educating a small section of a new generation of Thai animators. Thailand has had little animation experimentation of their own and pre-internet had limited access to such diversity so I have attempted to bring some of the wealth of animation history, in particular British and European, as this is my background, into the classroom. In particular my teaching aim has been to introduce various possibilities to the choices of medium, styles and textual narratives that early (and current) experimental and independent animators have explored.

Since the release of the first commercial feature film, Khun Kluay 2006, the Thai animation industry has gone through various highs and lows in the commercial sector, building a skilled workforce, many of whom trained and worked abroad then returned. Now there is strong evidence of an independent animation starting to emerge. In a continuation to my research on Thai Animation this paper will analyze selected independent works in more detail, exploring the themes, style and technology used. Whilst also acknowledging the possible mis-interpretation as that this is coming from the perspective of an outsider whose cultural language and interpretation may transcend the creators' given experiences and add alternative interpretation. The aim will be to contextualize the content, ideas and cultural perspective and bring more Thai works into the gaze of animation studies academics.

Millie YOUNG

태국 마히돌 대학교

millicent.you@mahidol.ac.th

논문투고일 : 2016.11.01.

심사종료일 : 2016.12.01.

게재확정일 : 2016.12.01.