

Relation between landscape preferences and perception in animations

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Abstract

“Anima”, the word root of animation, means mediator body between soul and physical body in Latin. Similar to its meaning, the animation technique - with its current form- created by showing images fast in series depicts the bridge between individual and digital reality. It is possible to catch details to which we show instinctive tendency in the visuals that we fictionalize.

In the studies in this field where techniques such as 3D, 2D, stop motion and cut out are used, ambient similarities are observed to emerge. Considering from a psychological and biological perspective, we see that landscape preferences are influential in the determination of our reactions towards the images that we watch. Traces from the way of living of first humans can be observed in the roots of the idea that determines the positive and negative effects on an individual by a completely fictional image. Environmental tendencies and preferences of an individual are shaped with respect to his/her actions experienced formerly. Establishment of aesthetical judgements is associated with this fact. It is seen that the animation movies, commercials and TV shows are produced based on the scene preferences that are thought to affect the individual in a positive way. In this study, relation of environmental tendencies created in animations with past experiences, and effect of this experience on individual are discussed. Elements located in the scenes are in harmony with each other. In order to reinforce the visual communication and to create an effective communication channel, this harmony should be taken into account. Effects of certain approaches between personality and scene preferences on our perception and subsequent similarities between our aesthetical judgements are investigated. It is seen that an effective communication channel can be created by emphasizing these tendencies that play an important role in the determination of our emotional preferences.

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1. Introduction

“If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite.” says William Blake, poet and painter (Huxley, 2014). We perceive the universe we live through our senses. We become aware of our environment through sensual knowledge. Our environmental preferences are created by the information we interpret. Our early experiences show us that our preferences are formed upon our needs.

According to Kaplan, we see our preferences as an expression that underlies the human needs (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). On the other hand, Lazarus says: “Cognition and emotion are usually fused in nature”, and he emphasizes the relation between perception and choice (Lazarus, 1980).

It is seen that our early period tendencies are about the meadows, plain fields, uniform trees, a simple view rather than complexity and environments close to water resources. The main reason of this can be related with the instinct of survival (Balling & Falkin, 1982). Plain field is a precaution against any possible threat of attack and it gives the opportunity to interfere. Appleton focuses on this issue in his “Prospect-Refuge Theory”. Early human form has left the rain forests and moved to Savannas due to adaptive reasons (Home, Bauer & Hunziker, 2010). These regions are closer to water resources and main requirements for food and water are met, so they are more advantageous when compared with other environments (Bourassa, 1990).

2. Landscapes in Animation

It can be said that today we carry our tendencies from the past into the places where we live. Many parks, golf courses and shelters are constructed as a reflection of these preferences (Balling, 1982). Our preferences do not only appear with architectural and landscape design, but also in many fields of visual arts. When we consider the film industry, the choices of scenes used in 3D movies and animations are remarkable. Natural texture has an interconnected vision with the utopic elements.

In Avatar, for instance, “The oversized bioluminescent plants glow in the dark like fiber-optic fake for you often see as decoration in Thai restaurants”, as Emerson says, are outstanding (Emerson, 2009). The reason of this is the feeling of a perfectionism and distressful alienation when the individual, who is used to mid-distant depiction of nature, confronts with the scenes where natural objects are pictured too close or very remote (Huxley, 2014). On the other hand, it can be said that the types of scene we are used to see are helpful for the audience to easily adapt into the situation.



Figure 1. "Avatar", James Cameron, 2009

The creation of scenery at an animation movie is an important factor which could effect the issue fully. In a three second long sequence, the first scene that takes place in our memory is usually about the scenery where the scene is stimulated.

We consider the natural patterns more aesthetic when compared with unnatural ones. This is related with the claim that fractal patterns are more aesthetical than the non fractal ones due to their nature (Graham & Redies, 2010). We usually see meadows, coniferous trees and plain fields in the landscapes. For instance, the landscape in "The Lion King" which is produced in 1994 by Walt Disney Pictures has the view of African savannas. The site named "Pride Rock" has been created by Disney illustrators, modeling several regions in Kenya (Real life locations,2013).



Figure 2. (a) Example of The African Savanna The Lion King, Walt Disney Pictures, 1994; (b), Kenya, Masai Mara. (<http://ani-shah.com>)

In the movie named “UP” (2009), produced by the Pixar Animation Studios, whenever the character Carl Fredricksen misses the peaceful and joyful old days, the appearing background contains the elements we have considered. Just like “The Shire”, those are samples away from complexity, covered by grass and stray trees; therefore representing the feeling of peace and trust (Figure:3).

It is seen that whenever the animation movies want to transfer the feeling of peace and trust, these sites are preferred. On the other hand, it is also a reflection of the longing for green fields which diminish by urban life. Natural environment is a gripping, charming and sympathized resource (Kaplan, & Kaplan, 1989). Therefore, it is seen that we carry the texture we miss into the designed scenery. It is witnessed that the tendency to Savanna-like sceneries is strong as a child, and decreases as we grow older (Balling & Falkin, 1982).



Figure 3. (a) Up, Pixar Animation Studios, 2009. (b) “The Shire”, [The Lord of the Rings](#), 2001.

During the determination of our aesthetical values, the elements that threatened us in our past lives or provided us to survive, are essentially effective and these tendencies have reached us through our ancestors (Orians, 2014). The most important theoretical research in landscape aesthetics is emphasized on the biological root of aesthetical experience (Bourassa, 1990).

The undeniable natural cover which is a necessity for spiritual health has become an occupation people have specially interested in throughout the history. Private gardens established as an indicator of nobility and wealth, and the usage of plants in rural life have been inspiration for many cultures (Kaplan, 1983). As in history, today we also face with this case in several circumstances.

3. Conclusion

The landscape views we build in animation movies do carry the trails of our past experiences. These elements we carry into the spaces built in movies are transferred to the people through visuality.

The feeling that is wanted to be transferred in animation movies reach to audience through scenery. It is easier for us to perceive the spiritual mood of the character. Although such a feature is not possible in real life, it gives us the opportunity to establish a visual communication in the universe we build. On the other hand, urban people who live together with streets, is able to reach this life via fictional scenes.

It is known that being under the effect of natural world decreases stress and it is possible for us to say that it has an enhancing role for health and creative thinking (Orians, 2014). The established

landscape arrangements have several stimuli in sensual sense. The reaction of individual to these stimuli reveals his relation with the past. These choices are implemented with visual arts and they constitute a totality with the effect of fiction on individual and on perception. In other words, perception and preferences are closely related. When we consider the usage of landscape preferences in visual communication relying on the examples and observations we have mentioned; most of the samples we will remember are nature-based. As a result, we transfer our past experiences into the circumstances we live or build today. We can say that this is the result of the request we have towards our habits we have moved away from. Nature has always been a part of our lives and it is witnessed that we try to carry out this into the virtual universe.

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