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ANIMATED DOCUMENTARIES IN MODERN CINEMATIC ART: SPECIFICS OF PRODUCTION

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyze the peculiarities of animated documentary films' production in the modern film process. It also aims to investigate the specifics of the combination of real facts and events with the animation of the storyline sequence in films, reveal modern animation techniques and the specifics of their combination with footage, determine their impact on the viewer, and identify the peculiarities of using storyboards for organizational and filming processes. **Research methodology.** It consists in applying of the following methods: theoretical-comparative – comparison of foreign animation-documentary films of the last century with modern ones; practical – disclosure of the peculiarities of work on “animadocs” and plagiarism in author's and studio projects; analysis – the influence of audiovisual means of expression on the audience's perception of animation style, sound accompaniment, and counterpoint in animated documentary cinema. **Scientific novelty.** For the first time the influence of stylistic features of animated documentaries on the viewers' perception of the depicted events has been analyzed, the importance of using storyboards during the organizational and shooting process in Ukraine has been systematized, the main aspects of working with film dramaturgy have been revealed and the problems of using non-linear dramaturgy in animated films have been considered, the differences in story presentation between feature films and animated documentaries have been revealed. **Conclusions.** The peculiarities of animated documentary film production in the modern film process have been analyzed, the peculiarities of combining real facts and events with animation of the sequence of storylines in films have been investigated, and modern animation techniques and the peculiarities of their combination with film frames have been revealed, the specifics of film production and their impact on the viewer through audiovisual means of expression have been determined.

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Problem statement

In today's world, there are a lot of various events and tragedies that society hears about from the news. They affect the lives of unknown people, families, and entire countries. People are used to the fact that in the 21st century, everything gets into the mass media through eyewitness phone recordings or news reports by journalists. Some events manage to be filmed by documentary filmmakers who had the opportunity to see with their own eyes what happened on the Maidan, forest fires in Australia, or, for example, life in North Korea, which is closed from the outside world. However, now, during the war, it is impossible to capture the objective reality of the captured Mariupol, as well as the escape of a child from Afghanistan, the event that took place in the last century. To solve the problem with the footage, the directors began to turn to unusual techniques of film production, which helped not only to solve the problem with the film image, but also to add new meanings to the audiovisual work, and to strengthen the previously laid idea. A separate genre was formed, which was given the name "animadoc".

Present-day realities make this topic relevant, so it is essential to understand what animated documentary films, the process of their creation, and the specifics of combining filmed material with animation stand for. Conducting such a study can help aspiring directors or representatives of the media sphere with the creation of "animadoc", or deepen knowledge in understanding the creation of animated films.

Recent research and publications analysis

Giuseppe Cristiano (2005; 2011) described the theoretical basis of creating storyboards, and their influence on the organizational and shooting process in film production.

The importance of using the storyboard as a production document has been highlighted by Fionnula Halligan (2015).

Journalist Bage Adams (2009) analyzed the problems in the creation of documentary films that led to the appearance of "animadocs", describing the process of their creation and their impact on the viewer.

Manuel Betancourt (2016) described the main features of animated documentary films using the example of the interaction of color and image stylization.

The combination of animation and documentary was highlighted by Bona Bones (2015), defining their plane of interaction between the fictional and the real.

Documentary cinema in contemporary screen discourse was studied by I. Gavran and M. Botvyn (2020).

The dramaturgical foundations of animated films and their differences from feature films are outlined in a collective work edited by John Canemaker (1988).

The issue of staged reality in documentary cinema was discussed by S. Honcharuk and O. Provorovskyi (2020).

Peculiarities of the implementation specificity of the director's idea in the screenwork were investigated by R. Shyman and D. Syz (2020).

Non-linear dramaturgy in animated films and peculiarities in the work on it was described by Liz Blaser (2019).

Storytelling and character creation in Pixar films were analyzed by Gregory Singer (2007). The study's purpose is to analyze the production features of animated documentary films in the modern filmmaking process and to examine the mix of evident facts and events with the animation of the sequence of storylines in films. It aims to reveal modern animation techniques and the specifics of their combination with footage, determine their impact on the viewer, and investigate the specifics of using the storyboard for the organizational and shooting process.

The purpose of the article. The article aims to analyze the process of creating animated documentaries in modern filmmaking. It will explore how real facts and events are combined with animation to create a sequence of storylines in films. Additionally, it will uncover modern animation techniques and how they are used in combination with voice-over text to impact the viewer. The article will also identify the specific ways storyboards are used in organizing and filming processes.

Main research material

The preparatory stage of any film is always a complex and time-consuming process. It is essential not only to plan the sequence of shooting scenes but also to ensure that organizational processes do not interfere with the work of other departments. It is also crucial to understand how much time is spent on organizational and technical tasks. To simplify these processes, the profession of storyboard artist was created, which draws all the shooting objects and camera angles long before the start of the shooting process. Let's

consider the specifics of the "storyboard artist" profession and why it has become a mandatory element of film production.

Giuseppe Cristiano (2011, p.10), a storyboard artist with more than twenty years of experience, in his book *Storyboard Artist: A Guide to Freelancing in Film, TV, and Advertising* believes that "A storyboard freelancer is one who is capable of resolving problems and finding solutions while working on a script with other creative types such as art directors, copywriters, and movie directors. The storyboard profession entails much more than just possessing the ability to draw". The author emphasizes that storyboarders must see the film through the director's eyes and be able to correctly visualize his ideas and the ideas of the entire creative team, as well as see the problematic moments of the story and find ways to solve them. Cristiano (2011, p.11) emphasizes: "camera work would benefit from a well-planned storyboard". The director of photography relies primarily on storyboarding in his work. Giuseppe Cristiano draws attention to the fact that it is not enough to be able to draw well. It is necessary to have a good understanding of the technical process of film production, to know the functions and duties of the director of photography, and to be able to imagine and visualize the scenery in which the scenes of the film will be shot. The work of the storyboard artist is perhaps the most important in understanding what the final work will be, "Screen International" Fiona Halligan (2015, p.11) in the book *The Art of Movie Storyboards: Visualising the Action of the World's Greatest Films* explains the importance of the storyboard as follows: "Apart from helping directors clarify what they want to achieve, storyboards work across all departments to allow the heads to conceive and devel-

op what is required for everything from camera and lighting set-ups to stunts, prosthetics, CGI, and even set dressing”.

Balanced organization of the shooting process helps the creative team to save time directly during the shooting of the film and helps in the understanding of all departments involved during the production. Giuseppe Cristiano (2011, p.2) also writes that “The storyboard provides the director with the opportunity to fine-tune a script before the shooting starts. This is advantageous to any director for preventing mistakes and wasted time”.

Storyboarding also has the advantage of helping producers budget for a film. With its help, you can analyze the expenses for the needs of the picture, as well as plan the time spent on filming. The storyboard also helps in choosing locations, casting actors, using special effects, and, undoubtedly, organizing the filming process. It gives a full understanding of how expensive a film can be to make.

However, the question of creating a documentary film without the possibility of shooting certain material made many filmmakers think. Journalist Beige Adams (2009) in his article “When Documentaries Get Graphic: Animation Meets Actuality” writes about the inability of some filmmakers to shoot old locations or, if the story needs visualization, the inability to capture events without which their film will not have the characteristics of a documentary: “Faced with a deficit of materials with which to reconstruct an event or illustrate the written word, the trend among documentarists has been to animate a short sequence within a feature”. Some authors could not afford to film the reconstruction of events, either because of high costs or because of dislike for artificially reproduced events. That is why the directors used various animation techniques,

such as drawn frames, puppet animation, or the use of 3D techniques. This creative decision helped, on the one hand, to determine the uniqueness of the audiovisual work, and on the other hand, it gave the audience an understanding of the events that took place, having a stronger impact on the emotional state thanks to the unlimited creative possibilities of the authors.

Bona Bones (2015, p.2) in the publication “The Uses and Functionality of Animation in Documentary Filmmaking” complements these ideas and notes that “animated documentaries tend to have half firmly planted in reality, while the other half exists in a far more malleable state which allows for creative expression and exploration...”. Fictional elements can exist with actual ones in the same space and still be fact. This provides both a reproduction of reality and a critique of reality at the same time.

In the animated documentary film *Tower* (2016, directed by Keith Maitland), the events took place in 1966. A sniper from the 27th floor of the University of Texas Tower opened fire on people below. The events in the film are shown almost in “real-time”, and the animation component helps the viewer to be directly in the center of the events.

The author of the article “The Power of Animation in Documentaries” Manuel Betancourt (2016) draws attention to a specific aspect of the work that helps it look realistic: “The images are in grayscale, with some color accents, rendered using rotoscoping so that what we’re watching looks like an accurate (lifelike, even) facsimile of the events during that hot late summer day ...”. But, despite all the realism, the author still maintains a certain stylistic distance, so that the events and the violent images caused by them do not cause discomfort to the audience.

Roman Shyrman (2008, p.289), recalling the work on his documentary film about Sergei Parajanov "The Dangerously Free Man" in the book *The Alchemy of Directing*, indicates why he decided to add animated inserts to the film: "Animated stories appeared in the film with a certain periodicity, giving it a peculiar rhythm and style". That is, in this example, we see that animation can exist together with archival footage, acting as a kind of separation of parts of films.

An integral component of any audiovisual work is sound. Sound accompaniment seems familiar now, which should be present in every film or cartoon. However, in 1928, when Walt Disney released *Steamboat Willie* with the first usage of synchronized sound technology, it seemed incredible and innovative. Giannalberto Bendazzi (2020, p.206) in his book *The World History of Animation. Book One: From the Beginning to the Golden Age*, which describes the path of creation of animated films, points to the imperfection of the film itself: "Superficial in the portrayal of the personality of the character, the lack of a dramatic climax, a weak ending – in all respects a model of mediocrity". However, it was thanks to the advent of synchronized sound that *Steamboat Willie* was able to go down in history as a groundbreaking film and top the list of box office receipts in theaters at the time. People were in awe of Walt Disney's use of sound. As the steamer moves, we hear a locomotive pulling a heavy load. When Mickey hits the cow's teeth, a xylophone sounds, and when he pulls his tail or presses other characters, we hear different instruments that merge into a whole concert. Bendazzi (2020, p.206) notes: "That is, there was a certain discrepancy between what the viewer saw and what he heard. Nowadays, this is not a miracle at all, but for the cinematographic language

of 1928, it was simply an amazing breakthrough".

The Sound also plays an essential role in working with "animadocs". In most animated documentaries, audio from recorded interviews is superimposed alongside drawn characters or scenes, emphasizing the factuality of the events and story. Bona Bones (2015, p.2) in the aforementioned publication explains it as follows: "In the instance where the visuals depart from "factual images" (or images that support the documentary guarantee), the sound becomes the primary factor in establishing a sense of reality". That is, the sense of authenticity is reinforced by dialogue, interview narration, or other sounds based on reality. At the same time, it asks about the visual perception of what is real.

An animation picture is a unique audiovisual art, which can combine chimeric and ordinary images simultaneously. Its stories are built in such a way that the visual component is complemented by a dramatic one, unlike feature films, even though the structure of the narrative is similar.

This trend started during the time of the Walt Disney studio. He started a separate department, which was engaged in the construction of drama for the animated works of the director. As author Leo Salkin points out in the collective work *Storytelling in Animation: The Art of the Animated Image*, edited by John Canemaker (1988, p.11), at the same time, Disney brought writers together with storyboarders to see if certain aspects of the story worked on screen, so that the image is not lost in history and vice versa.

In the late 1920s, the drama began to change, and the clear rules of scriptwriting began to disappear. However, peculiarities in working with animation remained.

Take into consideration how this drama is separated from other literary works.

Baruch College drama teacher Thelma Schenkel (1988) writes in the aforementioned collective work that "Storytelling operates in the realm of feeling and imagination. There are no objective criteria that, if met, invariably result in a great story. The rich and varied possibilities of storytelling can be glimpsed in storytellers' descriptions of their art".

Each person perceives the same story differently, based on their own life experience. It is worth agreeing with her beliefs and stating that it is not necessary to lead the viewer by the hand. He must be allowed to choose for himself what he wants to see. In animated films, it is more difficult for screenwriters to tell stories, because directors mostly rely on the visual component, supplementing the image with metaphorical images.

Dialogues are an equally important aspect of drama. Animation specialist Charles Solomon (1988, p.93) in the aforementioned collective work describes it in the example of television animation: "Talk is cheap: it's easier to have the voice track describe the villain as nasty than to devise movements that demonstrate his nastiness. The dialogue often duplicates the action (much the way it did in nineteenth-century dime novels) instead of providing a complement or counterpoint to visuals".

In the book *Live Cinema and its Techniques*, Oscar-winning director Francis Ford Coppola shares his personal experiences working on his film projects. He recalls a time when he encountered a problem with a television appearance during a candidate's election campaign and how he sought an original solution for it:

"As always, I complicated the whole project to the point of impossibility, wanting to endow live television with

the ability not only to illustrate Jerry's speech with appropriate images but also to artificially enhance the effect of the positive changes he will talk about with the displayed images and give the event a generally optimistic mood". (2021, p.81)

That is, like Charles Solomon when talking about television animation, Coppola pays attention to emphasizing and strengthening the audience's perception of visual images, as well as counterpoints, which was mentioned above.

This trend has moved on from television to big-budget movies. In *The Black Cauldron* (dir. T. Berman, R. Rich 1985) by Disney Studio, everyone talks about how the cauldron has terrible powers and can summon deadly warriors. However, the viewer sees only a small part of all the above. Charles Solomon (1988, p.94) cites Yuri Norstein's cartoon *The Tale of Tales* (1979): "No words are needed to convey the nostalgic dreams of the lonely little house spirit".

In the article "The Secret of Pixar Storytelling", audio-visual art specialist Gregory Singer (2007) focuses on another aspect of drama: "When creating characters, you are giving birth to the illusion of this full person with complexities". Let's consider the example of the characters from the animated film directed by Brad Bird *Incredibles* (2004). The main characters are a family of superheroes who hide their powers from other people. Father works for an insurance company that tries to make a profit from people's pain. He goes against the system and helps people get their paychecks, which gets him fired. His wife is an ordinary housewife, she tries to forget about past achievements and live the life of an ordinary person. Their daughter craves the attention of a boy she likes but is afraid

to talk to him because of her inner fears, while her brother tries to get her parents' attention by using his powers to feel independent. Let's pay attention to the fact that these characters are filled with the experiences and problems of ordinary people in unusual circumstances for the audience. This helps the latter to associate themselves with the heroes and empathize with them on their way, and the extraordinary circumstances that are possible only in animation make this story more interesting.

It is crucial to analyze non-linear dramaturgy in animated films. Most often, this applies to the author's works. Liz Blazer (2019) in her book *Animated Storytelling* describes this concept as follows: "Non-linear films are not sequential, chronological, or straightforward. They follow their own set of rules, very often seem whimsical, moody, or symbolic, and use pacing in unorthodox ways". Such films rely on achieving emotional resonance without a clear plot, which is rarely captured in linear stories. Directors do this not to go against the principle. They express their idea, according to Liz Blazer (2019), in a more symbolic way that does not focus on "what happens next".

Nonlinear drama offers a way to express more poetic and abstract narratives. Examples of such works can be depicted in music videos or advertising, where the narrative also influences the viewer. Despite all the freedom and seemingly chaotic nature of nonlinear dramaturgy, Blazer (2019) warns: "Though nonlinear storytelling may appear whimsical, it requires just as much planning and attention to detail as linear storytelling". The main idea should be clear from the first frames. It can be problematic for the viewer to watch a chaotic visualization, which carries a lot of meaning, but cannot be seen.

When analyzing one of the main aspects of modern film production – the storyboard, it needs to be pointed out that it is impossible to imagine the production of a film with a large budget without this crucial document. Its creation helps the film crew to work better on the tasks set for them. For example, the cinematographer sees a specific shot that he needs to reproduce, the art department has a clear understanding of what definite sets need to be built or found, and the costume designers help in creating clothes for the characters. All this speeds up the pre-production stage and saves time directly on the set. At the same time, the storyboard gives insight to the producer when creating an estimate for the project, based on the document about the scale of the scenery and possible difficulties during construction, the complexity and number of frames from the use of computer graphics, as well as to plan the time required for filming a particular scene.

A study of the "animadoc" genre has shown that it is one of the most ambitious art forms. It affects the viewer on several levels at once, using filmed materials on a level with animated scenes that help recreate what could not be filmed. Such a creative solution emphasizes not only the uniqueness of an audiovisual work but also has a forceful emotional impact on the viewer, thanks to the various animation styles. The sound accompaniment helps to reflect the documentary's reality as well. It is based on the use of audio from recorded interviews, dialogues, or other sounds based on reality, which is superimposed in parallel with the drawn episodes, which emphasizes the factuality of the events and the story. So, how can we conclude that the creative possibilities that are reflected in the freedom of self-expression in "anima-

docs" are greater than in ordinary documentary cinema, where you have to work with already existing material? Freedom that in recent years has dramatically increased the number of directors trying their hand at this path.

Drama is also an essential aspect of animated films. The construction of the story in them, according to the analysis of information sources, differs from a typical film product, as the directors mostly rely on the visual component, supplementing the images with metaphorical images. However, some examples from audiovisual works show the opposite. The television trend of talking more than showing has not escaped animated films either. Thus, the article gives an example from the film *The Black Cauldron* (dir. T. Berman, R. Rich, 1985), in which the characters talk a lot about the extraordinary powers of this cauldron, but the viewer, in turn, sees only a small part of its power. This film is also contrasted with another picture *Tale of Fairy Tales* by Yury Norshtein (1979), in which its visual component does not need additional sound accompaniment to reveal the hero. As for non-linear dramaturgy in animated films, it relies on achieving emotional resonance without a clear plot. In linear stories, this aspect is rarely captured. Thus, the directors express their ideas more symbolically and do not focus on further events. Non-linear drama solves the problems of the visual component at the expense of poetic and abstract narratives. Music videos and commercials demonstrate this statement in the best possible way, affecting the viewer on an

emotional level. However, the main idea must be understood from the very beginning of the viewing because it can be difficult to consume such an audiovisual product, in which there is a chaotic visualization with a lot of meaning. Despite everything, non-linear drama can convey much more meaning to the viewer than any other type of literary creativity. So, a thorough combination of the boundless visual component with dramaturgy with the right approach to it gives infinite freedom in the expression of ideas.

Conclusions

Summarizing the above, it needs to be pointed out that animated documentary film creation is a complex task that requires careful preparation from the authors. Understanding the peculiarities of dramaturgy, animation stylistic differences and the ability to organize the shooting process is an integral part of the production of "animadocs". Uncertain possession of the material can lead to a distortion of the reflected documentary reality, which threatens the true telling of the story, and therefore the professionalism of the team.

However, a high-quality storyboard and knowledge of the specifics of production are guaranteed to facilitate the creation of animated documentaries. Taking into account the modern possibilities for telling a story and demonstrating documentary reality in various visual styles, we can confidently say that an audiovisual work will be able to draw attention to the issues depicted in the film.

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Анімаційно-документальні фільми в сучасному кіномистецтві: специфіка виробництва

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Анотація

Мета статті – проаналізувати особливості виробництва анімаційно-документальних фільмів у сучасному кінопроцесі; дослідити специфіку поєднання реальних фактів і подій з анімуванням послідовності сюжетних ліній у фільмах; окреслити сучасні техніки анімації та специфіку їх комбінування з відзнятим матеріалом, означити їхній вплив на глядача; розкрити особливості використання розкадровки під час організаційного та знімального процесів. **Методи дослідження.** У процесі дослідження використано такі методи: теоретично-порівняльний – зіставлення зарубіжних анімаційно-документальних фільмів минулого століття з сучасними; практичний – розкриття особливостей роботи над «анімадоками» та розкадровками в авторських і студійних проєктах; аналіз – визначення впливу аудіовізуальних засобів виразності на сприйняття глядачами анімаційної стилістики, звукового супроводу та контрапункту в анімаційно-документальному кіно. **Наукова новизна.** Уперше проаналізовано вплив стилістичних особливостей анімаційно-документальних фільмів на сприйняття глядачами відображених подій, систематизовано важливість використання розкадровки під час організаційного та знімального процесів в Україні, визначено основні аспекти в роботі із драматургією фільму та розглянуто проблематику використання нелінійної драматургії в анімаційних фільмах, розкрито відмінності у викладенні сюжету між художніми та анімаційно-документальними фільмами. **Висновки.** У статті проаналізовано особливості виробництва анімаційно-документальних фільмів у сучасному кінопроцесі, досліджено специфіку поєднання реальних фактів і подій з анімуванням послідовності сюжетних ліній у фільмах, визначено сучасні техніки анімації та особливості їх комбінування з відзнятим матеріалом, означено специфіку кіновиробництва та її вплив на глядача аудіовізуальними засобами виразності.

Ключові слова: анімадок; анімація; розкадровка; документалістика; ротоскопія; драматургія; сторібордист

