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A VISUAL ANALYSIS: 3D COMPUTER GRAPHIC WITH NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF ADHAN RECITATION

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Abstract

In recent years, a number of researchers have reported that there has been an increasing interest in incorporating three dimensional computer graphics (3D CG) features in various applications from different areas. In the broadcasting industry, the growing demand to produce a TV content which integrates the 3D CG elements leads to a further improvement of the product. Designers need to identify creative approaches to present the content creatively and meaningfully. Narrative structured content that uses 3D CG as the visual signs are expected to be acceptable by the audience due to its characteristics that able to engage them emotionally and encourage their perceptive abilities. However, the narrative structure should be able to represent the designated content effectively in order to offer novel experience to the viewers. This study seeks to find the relations of visual signs that use 3D CG with the narrative structured designed for the adhan recitation on TV network. Qualitative interpretative approach is used to find the latent meaning of the visual signs. Since the adhan recitation in local TV networks has never been created using entirely 3D CG features, most likely it will acquire significant reaction by the viewers both emotionally and perceptively.

Author Keywords: 3D computer graphics; Television programs; Islamic content; Narrative

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of software technologies and methods of delivering art and image effectively leads to further improvement of 3D computer graphics products and fuels the creative imagination among the artists or designers [1] New potentials broaden the boundaries of 3D graphic applications that are widely applied in many areas, such as gaming, marketing, movie industry and even architecture and education. The prospects are apparently enormous. Designers are driven to keep creating new methods of 3D content in order to boost the market growth.

Recent year's research found that the 3D graphics were tremendously utilized in the web environment, parallel with the rise of the WebGL technology which allowed the rendering of 3D graphics on compatible browser without using any plug-in [2]. Today, despite of its increasing reception on the web, 3D graphics content has been receiving more attention as a result of its widely application on the television broadcast such as commercials, news, opening titles and montage. With high-definition television (HDTV) being extensively available now; the production companies and distributors, and the industries have been discovering the next step that will improve the television experience [3].

3D computer graphics content has the ability to display unconventional looks that is identified as an innovative way to enhance communication in such fields as product design, architecture and e-commerce [4]. In the broadcasting industry, the use of 3D computer graphics provides creative opportunities for incorporating the delivery of information and entertainment. They are able to graphically simplify complex concepts or inter-relationships that are hard to visualize. The visuals can be viewed from different angle with the extra depth. 3D graphics are reliable at capturing attention with greater accuracy, especially when displayed as moving images and able to keep the viewer's attention for a longer time. 3D computer graphics are also capable to re-create actions, event or environment

which are too costly, unsafe and not accessible to the maker. And yet, they are still believable. Their flexibility earns great demand in the industry, consequently leads to extensive research on the content development, mainly for TV viewers. One of the many ways to implement this is by offering a narrative experience to the visuals [5]. Visually, the narrative structures are composed to communicate meanings that stimulate the audience emotions and thoughts. Both visuals and narrative elements, when are weaved together, they are capable to accentuate the beauty and the fluidity of the artworks. The audience would easily get attracted and able to express their appreciation as the work of art adhered to a very intricate details to form expressive visuals.

Narrative in 3D Computer Graphics Content

The development of the 3D computer graphic systems is primarily influenced by the urge of the 3D graphics enthusiast to create alternative visuals that display realistic features [6]. As the counterpoint to the agenda, broad researches were conducted to explore the different values that 3D graphics could offer. One of the possible values is to have more expressive features that arouse the emotions of the viewers, despite assisting their understanding towards the meaning of the visuals. Narrative or story structure consists of connected events that are conveyed using words, voice over or sequence of images. In order to deliver narrative content in the 3D computer graphics modality effectively, not only the selection of 3D models are essential, elements of naturalistic such as singe-point perspective and photo-realistic rendering could also accentuate the expressive potential of the visuals [6].

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of the visuals created using 3D CG elements which are incorporated with the narrative structures. It is also to discover new knowledge of the user experience with 3D computer graphics mainly for television content which the viewer has never experienced before. The process includes analyzing the relation of visual sign to the designed narrative structured content. The visuals are analyzed with specific regard to expressive communication and indication for emotional engagement. The television content selected is the Adhan slot that is aired on Malaysia television network.

In Malaysia, adhan or the Islamic call to prayer has been broadcasted five times a day in most of the local channels on the television network. The adhan recitation on the television is accompanied by the voice of the person who recites it and visuals comprising either still images or video footages or both. Since adhan is an integral part of the Muslim faith, the visuals usually portray real objects or human activities associated with the lifestyle of a Muslim.

In 2014, beginning of the month of Ramadhan, ASTRO, a Malaysian direct broadcast satellite paid television service provider produced a totally 3D computer graphics version of Adhan. The verses depicted on the television comprise of the Arabic verses including four other translations; English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. The adhan was aired on the OASIS channel (Channel 106) for one year, five times every day at prescribed times. Hence, this study will explore the visual signs and their latent meaning in relation to the verses of the Adhan recitation.

METHODS

Qualitative approach is selected to study the message conveyed in the adhan video that comprises 3D visual representations which empower the audience's creative imagination while viewing them. In view of the semiotics of Roland Barthes [7], a visual narrative is a reading of the imagination that aims to form the perception of the audience. Visual perception built in the mind of the audience can be established through the narrative structures that represent the reality. The visual signs are analysed using the semiotic analysis model originated by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1966 which focuses on the sign as the objects of study and how to interpret the meaning behind it. Barthes (1968) in Elements of Semiology developed the sign classification as signifier and signified. The signifier constitutes the substance or the subject, while the signified is the meaning or expression. Hence, this study explores the relation between the signifier and the signified in the overall narrative structure of the adhan.

Before the study could be carried out, the visuals had to be parted according to the verses of the adhan into a table that consist of three columns; Verse, Signifier and Signified. The column of Verse consist the verse of the adhan recitation, the column of Signifier contains the signs (visuals) and the column of Signified describes our interpretation of the Signifier. Some interpretations are supported by translations of the verses from the Quran to describe their meaning in the perspective of Islam.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Versi	Signifier	Signified
Allah The Almighty (recited 2 times)		The images show a tremendous visual effect of an explosion which then reveals the earth, the sun and the moon.
		Interpretation: The visuals portray the Greatness of Allah S.W.T as the Creator of all
		things (Qur'an 39:62). The Quran states that Allah S.W.T created the sun, the moon, and the planets, each with their own individu-
		al courses or orbits. "It is He Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; all (the celestial bodies) swim along,
		each in its rounded course" (Qur'an 21:33).
		, , ,

Allah The Almighty (recited 2 times)





In this verse, closed-up images of dew covered on the palm of leaves and a butterfly with vibrant coloured patterns.

Interpretation:

Allah S.W.T is all wise that He possess all knowledge even in the creation of little things. Every creation disposed in a perfect order and reasons. They are dependent on the biodiversity. They are created from different stages of life, where each stage has their own benefits and purpose.

"And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darkness's of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record," (Qur'an, 6:59

I bear witness that there's no God worthy of worship except Allah (recited 2 times)





The image shows that the butterfly is flapping its wings.

Interpretation:

To retain the continuity of the scenes, this scene works as the transition to the next scene.

The camera tilts upward revealing the garden of blooming flowers at the foreground, and the cloudy skies, the ray of sunlight and the rainbow at the background.

Interpretation:

The purposeful camera movement gives the majestic feeling of the objects in the scene. It suggests the symbiotic relationships between the objects in the scene indicating that there are detailed and purposeful creations among us. The bright light illuminates the meaning of the positive vibes that feed one's soul, just like how the lights are beneficial to all living things.



The camera moves closer to a growing flower bud which has not yet bloomed.

Interpretation:

The purpose of this scene is to create anticipation to the viewer of what is going to happen in the next scene. The camera zoomed in slightly to register the excitement. It symbolises the process of life carried out by the living things where each process shall determine the outcome of life. Be it good or bad, small or big, beautiful or ugly and others.

I bear witness that Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.



The camera slowly pans as the flower bud started to bloom. It shows an image of a huge red hibiscus. Butterflies are seen to fly off the frame.

Interpretation:

The royal look of the blooming hibiscus accentuate the feeling of beauty and perfection of Allah S.W.T creation.

It expresses the glory of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) that was sent as a blessing to the mankind. In addition, the type of hibiscus shown in this image is also a symbol of national flower for Malaysia. Fuelling the sense of gratefulness living in a peaceful and harmony country like Malaysia.



The scene changes to an image of growing green coloured fern leaves while preserving the previous background.

Interpretation:

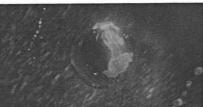
The message and the mood of this image continue as the visual styles and the camera movement work similarly like the previous scene.

Let us perform the solah (recited 2 times)











There are many folklores that are associated to the fern plants. The securely curled fronds of young ferns are deceiving and it is impossible to wonder what it would look like when it is fully grown. Similarly to the human, exemplified to the life of a fern, we shall grow and flourish if we unfold toward light of truth. As we loosen, soften and surrender, the tendrils of our true nature will emerge. Thus, people around us shall absorb the positive vibes we are spreading making us a stronger person.

This verse continues from the previous scene where it takes the viewer to the next scene where an image of the minaret appears followed by flock of birds flying off the frame.

The scene then cuts to different frame showing a close up view of an ant crawling while the camera moves forward passing by the ant and takes the viewer to the scene where dew droplets are forming.

The camera then moves closer to one of the droplet that becomes the transition to the next frame. The droplet gradually turns into a beaming jellyfish.

Interpretation:

Minaret is known as a tall and slander tower of a masjid where the muezzin (the person) calls the Muslims for prayers. It shows the significant roles of masjid which is not only a place to perform prayer but also an institution to develop the ummah.

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided (Qur'an 9:18)

The visuals of the creatures can be interpreted as; not only the human worships Allah S.W.T through solah and ibadah, but all of His creations; that lives in the air, earth, water or everywhere in the universe are worshipping Him in their own ways which are incomprehensible by the human being. Allah S.W.T is the most Beneficent.

"Allah has created every [living] creature from water. And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent" (Qur'an, 24:45).

Let us follow the path to success (recited 2 times)





In this verse, the scene changes to an image of neurons which are energized with electrical effects while moving in a consistent beat. Followed by a close-up view of a chromosome growing progressively as the camera moves.

Interpretations:

Neurons are the core components of the brain and the spinal cord of the central nervous system. They process information through electrical and chemical signals.

Chromosomes are made of DNA which passed by the parents to their offspring. They are responsible to make each type of living creatures exclusive.

These are very few evident of how delicate and magnificent of Allah S.W.T creations, particularly in human. There are a lot more. They are invented with purpose so that the human has the ability to use them wisely, and keep exploring the blessings that Allah S.W.T has provided to us and becoming an obedient and successful Muslim.



In the same verse, the scene then change to the image of Baitul Haram, sparkling with particle effects come out from the Kaabah (the House of God) while the camera rotating in 360 degrees.

Interpretations:

It is a once - in a - lifetime obligation to every Muslim to perform the Hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca as it is the fifth pillar in Islam.

It is a journey of purification of one's soul. Hence, it is like a true destination to every Muslim to be in the Holy land.

It is the birth place of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and Islam. It is a place of sanctity to all Muslim.

Allah the Almighty (recited 2 times)



This scene portrays the formation of "Allah" in Arabic augmented with spectacular shimmering light effects.

Interpretations:

This scene appears at almost the end of the verses. We can interpret it as a confession that Allah S.W.T is a true reliance.

"Allah (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us)" (Qur'an, 3:73)



There is no God worthy of worship except Allah.



This scene continues from the first verse where the earth glows brightly in the centre of the universe.

Interpretations:

Allah S.W.T ordered us to learn and belief His existence and oneness through His attributes and names and by witnessing His infinite creations around us. It is a sign of a true believer.

"Indeed, within the heavens and earth are signs for the believers" (Quran, 45:3).

This project has never been attempted before on any of the local television networks. The aims are to provide new experience and knowledge to the viewers regardless of their religion, although the content is mainly dedicated to the Muslim audience. Their interpretations could be based on personal or cultural experience. In this context, the visuals in the adhan video were totally made using computer graphics software which integrating mostly 3D elements and supported by 2D visual effects. Thus, it opens to various opportunities to the designer to create boundless kind of visual content and explore them from different perspective. In this case, the designer produced visuals that are imaginative using photo-realistic rendering to maintain the naturalistic of the content. The reason is to ensure that the images are able represent the concept of greatness and beneficence. The pictorial depiction of each of the verses encourages active engagement to the viewer's attention and emotions. For the Muslim viewer's, the visuals stimulate their imaginations to pondering Allah S.W.T creations while listening to the recitation. As for the non-Muslim audience, they could appreciate the aesthetic values portrayed in the visuals. In the same time, they are able to understand the meaning of the verses through the provided translations. Eventually, it is also a form of da'wah. It is intended to bring to the mind of every believer and non-believer the substance of Islamic beliefs, or its spiritual ideology [8].

CONCLUSION

Realistic feeling and amusiveness are usually regarded as the criteria for designing 3D computer graphics content for TV programs. It is a challenging task for the designer to incorporate these criteria in 3D elements with a narrative structure. They need to explore more suitable content to implement the idea. For instance the adhan recitation on television is a successful experiment of integrating 3D graphics content with narrative structure. Not only the audiences are attracted to the 3D visuals, they are also fascinated at how the video touched their emotions and perception towards the meaning behind them. The power of visual signs to deliver message is undeniable, as long as they keep providing new experience and are able to produce novel content that is comprehensible for the audience to interpret.

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