

Panel F3

Sala Emiciclo

Animation, Time and Identity

Dan Torre

Revolving and Evolving: Cycles, Persistence and Time in Animation



This paper will consider animation in terms of time, progression and process through a discussion of one of its most important arrangements, the animated cycle. The cycle is one of the most significant and perhaps one of the oldest structures within the animated form. The animated cycle originated long before the advent of cinema and constitutes the structural basis of many pre-cinematic devices (such as the zoetrope and the phenakistiscope). It quickly made the transition into cinematic animation and became one of the defining (but rather under-appreciated) distinctions between animation and traditional live-action. The cycle flourished in the cel-animation era and has continued to thrive and evolve in the digital era.

The animated cycle is a configuration, a formal structure, of sequential images that are repeated, at least once, in a consistent order. A cycle may involve the repetition of an entire scene, or simply the repetition of a single element, such as the footsteps of a character as it walks across the screen. Perhaps the most prevalent reasons behind the use of the cycle in cinematic animation has been for reasons of economy – the fewer new drawings or movements that the animator needed to complete in a sequence the less time and money would be required. However, there are many other motivations for its use, including: narrative structuring, informational emphasis, humorous effect, rhythm, clarification of complex systems, and even as an expression of specific emotional states.

In considering the cycle, this paper will also reflect upon animation's theoretical and philosophical relationship to time and progression. This paper will argue that although the cycle may be considered to be a repetition of movement, in fact, it is a form that is continuously progressive, always moving forward through time, and forever accumulating additional meaning and context upon each iteration.

Biography

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Dr Dan Torre is a lecturer in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of a number of forthcoming books, including: *Animation - Process, Cognition and Actuality* (Bloomsbury Academic, August 2017), *Cactus* (Reaktion Books, April 2017), and the co-written book, *Australian Animation – An International History* (Palgrave 2018). He has also worked in the animation industry, including on the animated feature film, *South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut* (1999).