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CHARACTER DESIGN IN ANIMATION – EVOLUTION AND MODERNITY

Animation has come a long way since its inception in the early 1900s. From hand-drawn sketches to today's digital animation, the evolution of animation has changed the way we perceive motion, emotions, and stories. One of the significant aspects of animation is the creation of characters. Over the years, character design has gone through numerous transformations, from simple stick figures to complex, life-like characters that can rival their human counterparts. In this article, we will explore the evolution of design in animation characters.

The earliest animations were simple and primarily consisted of hand-drawn sketches. One of the earliest animation characters was Felix the Cat, created by Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer in 1919. Felix the Cat was a black and white cartoon character with a simplistic design that had limited movements. Another popular character from the era was Mickey Mouse, created by Walt Disney in 1928. Mickey Mouse was also a black and white character, but with a more detailed design that allowed for more fluid movement (Andrew Selby, 2019).

As animation evolved, animators started using real people as references for character design. Disney was one of the pioneers in this field, and many of the characters from their early films were based on real actors (Min Zong, 2020). For example, Snow White from the 1937 film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was modeled after Marge Champion, a famous dancer and actress at the time. The movements and expressions of the character were based on Marge's performances, giving Snow White a more realistic and human-like quality.

As animation continued to evolve, animators started using famous actors as prototypes for their characters. This technique allowed for more complex and nuanced performances, as the characters could mimic the facial expressions and body language of the actors. One of the most famous examples of this is the character of Genie from Disney's 1992 film Aladdin. Genie was directly inspired by Robin Williams, who eventually voiced the character in the movie. The character's movements and personality were mostly improvised by Williams, and the animators portrayed that brilliantly (Dan Booth, 2004).

With the advent of modern technology, animators have been able to create more realistic characters than ever before. One of the most significant advancements in animation technology is motion capture. This technique involves actors wearing motion-capture suits that record their movements, which are then translated into the movements of the animated character (Rose Woodcock, 2015). One of the most famous examples of motion capture is Gollum from "the Lord of the Rings" trilogy. The character was created using motion capture technology, with actor Andy Serkis providing the performance for the character.

In conclusion, the evolution of design in animation characters has been an exciting journey. From the simplistic designs of the early days to the complex and realistic characters of today, animation has come a long way. The use of real people, famous actors, and modern technology has allowed animators to create characters that can evoke emotions, tell stories, and capture our imaginations in ways that were once thought impossible.

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