

Anymation Manifesto

The age of digital expression is upon us. Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) of some form or another has been around nearly as long as the computer itself, and over the years more and more genres of digital expression emerge into the public sphere, develop their own specialists and communities of specialists, and garner their own enthusiasts. The lines of distinction between these genres very often come down to which tools are used to create the CGI. For example, still imagery might be generated by Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro, two-dimensional animation by Flash or Moho, three-dimensional animation by Maya or Blender, real-time 3d animation (machinima) by iClone or a game like Half-Life 2, and so on.

What, then, is Anymation? And where does it fit into this multi-faceted world of Computer Generated Imagery?

Quite simply, Anymation is the embracing of any and all available tools in order to create a digital expression. The spirit of Anymation is not a rejection of any one of the tool-centric genres, nor is it a desire to reform them. Rather, Anymation is a conscious decision to be LESS CONSCIOUS of the barriers typically seen between the different types of digital expression, coupled with a "renaissance man" kind of willingness to harness ANY available tool or method to create that expression.

Most of the traditional and emerging genres of CGI tend to fall into a similar pattern: work and think within the boundaries and capabilities of a particular tool or environment. Stretch that environment as much as possible, but ultimately the idea behind the expression is made subservient to the limitations of that environment, for very practical reasons.

Anymation consists of a wider embrace, a broader palette, recognizing that all parts (or footage) are ultimately united in a two-dimensional digital image of some kind, and what is needed to craft that image is, frankly, irrelevant. The idea behind the expression is made subservient to NO particular tool; on the contrary, in a work of Anymation, all tools are innately made secondary to the idea itself, and the boundaries typically seen between those tools are ignored in order to create the exact digital expression that is desired. In short, the idea and its expression come first, and any tools needed are employed.

It is important to understand that Anymation is not necessarily a new genre of creation, but rather it is a name for something which has already existed for some time without a name. It involves the blended utility of many different types of software, each of which might only specialize in one particular task... and bringing those specialists together to work toward one vision, one expression, without regard to traditional boundaries and definitions of genres. More and more, independent software developers are focusing less on trying to make one program which can do everything, and instead focusing on making programs which are very good at one particular task, and then building that software with a "social awareness" of both its own limitations as well as the common formats for data exchange which make an Anymation hybrid possible.

Anymation is an exciting concept, because its adoption could forge new lines of communication and collaboration between its different children: machinima, digital puppetry, digital comics and graphic novels, stop-motion photography, digital painting, traditional CGI, and so on. These children of Anymation need not lose their identities or obliterate their own definitions. Indeed, Anymation functions best with a very heterogeneous collective of crafts and tools, each with their own identity, and each with the potential to contribute to making an Anymation idea a reality.

- **Tom Jantol**