

PART II DRAMA / CHOREOGRAPHY

1. SCENOGRAPHIC IDEA AND CONCEPT IN CONTEMPORARY THEATER OF ANIMATION, FROM TRADITION TO ARTISTIC EXPERIMENT

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Abstract: *In the era of accelerated digitization of all societal activities, artistic fields are also significantly affected by new technologies, which have a positive or negative influence on education as well. Visual arts have known surprising transformations and are increasingly faced with detachment and even delimitation from tradition. Puppetry, nowadays called theater of animation, has been favorable since ancient times to the constant mixtures specific to the language of visual arts, music and dance, since it relies on both tradition and modernity, on syncretism and functionality. The versatility of the language specific to the theater of animation largely appeals to the intellect of its audience, from the simple to the complex. The current superficiality of the artistic act is a consequence of the speed triggered by the alert rhythm of the search for new means of expression of the artist's ideas and concepts, and also by people's expectations. The transition from tradition to modernity can only be achieved through practice and experimentation. Unlike drama, the art of animation no longer preserves many constraints, this being a case-specific process. Various scenographers, puppeteers or companies, actors full of courage and vision such as Serghei Obrazțov, Yves Joly, Michael Meschke, Margareta Niculescu, Cristina and Cristian Pepino etc. made puppetry history for the new generations of artists passionate about puppetry. From scenographic idea to concept, the essential tool of the final perception's shaping the message may be the actor's stage improvisation, the scenographer's spontaneous vision and the director's openness to the present. The novelties brought about by numerous experiences contribute to the regeneration of the means, to the verticality of the evolution and the crystallization of the autonomy of the field.*

Key words: *theatre, scenography, animation, visual arts, tradition, experiment*

1. Introduction

The scenographic idea and concept have undergone changes in approach both from the perspective of the director and the scenographer, as well as from the viewpoint of the audience. Due to technological advancements, the contemporary audience relates differently to tradition and artistic experimentation. We cannot exclude the vision of the screenwriter either, who is also influenced by the onslaught of information as a result of digitalisation. In the digital era, we often encounter new effects of the surprising impact of new technologies on the process of artistic creation. However, their selection can be problematic due to considerations related to the compliance with certain strategies.

If we take into account the principles of diversity, authenticity, originality and copyright protection, we will achieve compatibility in terms of specialised information, under the personal touch of a common denominator given by the initial idea. By harmoniously interweaving the canons derived from tradition and the inventions obtained through experimentation, we establish a rhythm in the evolution of the concrete results of the creative process. In this way, we can ultimately develop a visually meaningful concept from a semantic point of view.

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2. The Impact of New Technologies on Animation Theatre

Digitalisation brings new possibilities for working with computer technologies to the forefront of debate and implementation. Photo-video image processing provides better organisation and archiving of promotional materials in the field of arts. Some benefits are evolving at an astonishing speed. Documentation on a given subject has become very accessible due to the rapid access to the vast amount of digitally stored data uploaded to various platforms. The systematic use of the knowledge accumulated by humanity from the sphere of electronically processed information, either through the use of computers or through laptops, tablets, or phones, has become an increasingly well-fulfilled and accessible rule in all social environments.

However, in all this amalgamation of huge quantities of information there is a risk of qualitative losses. Superficiality, as a result of the overturning of values, has indirectly led to “the loss of our collective sensitivity, of that vibration of society”¹⁶⁴ that has come with the development of artificial intelligence. An interesting example, presented by Alessandro Baricco in *The Game. A Digital Turning Point* is the case of cinematography and its transition to the digital language since the years 2000-2002.

3. Rigour and Syncretism

The attitudes and sensations generated in the field of visual arts and animation theatre share a common point, namely the language of expression applied within a syncretic, transdisciplinary vision. “The art of animation theatre is a form of visual art subordinated to epic art, and from the perspective of expression, the art of animation theatre is a form of dramatic art subordinated to visual art and rhythmic art.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the sensibility and the tenderness achieved with the help of puppets or marionettes can also be conveyed through the means of other arts that have the visual side as their objective, but certainly also through the support of musical sounds.

Artists recreate reality according to their own principles, their own specific reasoning, beyond their outward appearance. By metamorphosing aspects of reality and expanding their meanings through works of art, artists have conquered new semantic horizons. By transforming the “invisible into visible”, artists have acquired the ability to transpose the spirit into the absolute, as Schelling put it. Many aestheticians, philosophers and essayists are among those who have reflected on human creativity and the shaping of artistic images.

Kant asserted that through art it is possible to establish “a relationship between the universe and the human spirit”. Today, when tradition is increasingly preserved more from a documentary perspective and less in terms of its practical application, the field of scenography still can and must capitalise on the successful experiences of the past.

From the initial idea to the scenographic concept, the indispensable tool of the final perception for the shaping of the message can be the scenic improvisation

¹⁶⁴ Alessandro Baricco, *The Game: Jocul civilizației digitale*, translated from Italian by Anamaria Gebăilă, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2023, p.137

¹⁶⁵ Raluca Bujoreanu-Huțanu, *Autonomia limbajului păpușăresc*, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2008, pp. 28-29

performed by the actor, the spontaneity of the scenographer's vision and the director's openness to the present, a process that will lead to innovation. The novelty through which many experiences accumulate contributes to the regeneration of the means, to the verticality of evolution and to the crystallisation of the autonomy of the field. Scenography in contemporary animation theatre becomes all the more fascinating, considering that the field represents the foundation for the development of the story or the proposed scenario.

“The 20th century marked the transition from illustrative scenography to creative scenography, which aimed to convey ideas through plastic forms”¹⁶⁶. Adolph Appia was a precursor to scenography reforms in the pre-video era advocating for an emphasis on the emotional states of characters, a concept that was promoted in parallel with the diversification of technical means cultivated in the Bauhaus art school in the early decades of the 20th century. The visual framework in which tradition meets artistic experimentation is cultivated and developed with much more expressiveness through the effort of the scenographer.

The scenographic idea and concept are closely related to the traditions and origins of animation theatre. The connection between the plays of the puppet and marionette theatre and the cultural and folkloric traditions is well known. “The art of puppetry was discovered as making efforts to identify the lifeless matter of the puppet with human reality, as a younger relative of the art of the actor”¹⁶⁷. The context of the appreciations made by art specialists stimulated the evolution of puppetry into modernity.

After several centuries of extensive exploration, animation theatre has found its own direction of stylistic development. As early as 1927, Oskar Schlemmer initiated a discussion about its evolution towards the ideal concept of a *total theatre*, owing to the multitude of its defining components and its specific impact. Today, the art of animation theatre has the configurations of a specific language, with an intrinsic value rooted in the syncretic convergence of visual arts with music, literature, dance, design, and more recently, lighting design, alongside photo-video projections.

In animation theatre, multiple components come into play – actors, masks, puppets or marionettes, costumes, stage sets, manipulation systems, lights, and music. The harmonious blending and interaction between objects and performers, between working tools and stage technique, will undoubtedly lead to significant artistic achievements. The coexistence of tradition and experimentation is possible and even imperative in animation theatre. Tradition and modernity can only be reconciled through experimentation.

In the artistic field, we are currently witnessing a fast pace in the quest for new means of expression, a desire to always be in the spotlight. Scenography can draw inspiration from traditional elements to preserve and transmit a cultural legacy. The use of specific elements from folklore, traditional costumes or stage sets inspired by mythology can help create an authentic atmosphere.

The statements of some animation directors (S. Z. Soare, A. I. Maican, V. I.

¹⁶⁶ Daniel Stanciu, *Interferențe multimedia în spectacolul de animație*, Publishing House: Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 2022, p. 28 – 29

¹⁶⁷ Ciprian Huțanu, *Teatrul de animație: tradiție, modernitate, kitsch*, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2012, p. 75

Popa, I. Sava) and scenographers (Traian Cornescu, V. Feodorov, G. Löwendal, Th. Kiriacoff), such as: "[...] the theatrical performance, like any artistic work, has a structure, it is carried out in a rigorous, expressive composition, and corresponds to the director's concept, it has dramatic effect, but it can only materialise in the scenic space available to the theatre"¹⁶⁸, are marked by a classical vision regarding the strictly delimited scenic space within the dimensions of the stage.

It has been concluded that a vast space is needed, which is essential for the background actors, for the atmosphere and special effects of the performance, and especially for the inertia of the stage sets. Experiments in unconventional spaces have proven that it is possible. "The relationship between the director, scenographer, musician, and actor is the only key that can lead to a performance characterized by stylistic unity."¹⁶⁹ This must function cohesively for each of them.

4. From Tradition to Modernity

Scenography in contemporary animation theatre represents the essential element for creating a unique and captivating experience for the audience. The evolution of scenography in this field can be analysed through the lens of the transition from tradition to artistic experimentation. Here is an approach to scenographic ideas and concepts in contemporary animation theatre:

- Respecting tradition with all known and validated elaboration principles.
- Using classical elements (such as elaborate stage sets and detailed costumes) by borrowing them from traditional theatre. These elements can contribute to establishing a familiar framework for the audience.
- Maintaining the traditional narrative by creating spaces that facilitate the understanding of the story and the interaction of the animated characters.
- Incorporating technology through the use of video projections and mapping; integrating video projections and mapping techniques onto stage sets can add an additional level of depth and dynamism to scenography. This approach can also provide a means to communicate subtler messages or rapidly change the atmosphere.
- Utilizing augmented reality technology, which can be integrated into the costumes and stage sets of the performance, creating an interactive and engaging experience for the audience.
- Experimenting with materials of different qualities at varying sizes.
- Using unconventional or recyclable materials in scenography can contribute to sustainability and innovation in the construction of objects used in animation theatre.
- Playing with dimensions, proportions, and sizes through experimentation can bring a captivating visual aspect. For example, creating a stage set that distorts reality can enhance the effect of fairy tale and magic.
- Exploring contemporary themes on subjects that appeal to the audience.

¹⁶⁸ Ion Cazaban, *Scenografia românească în secolul XX (Decorul)*, Cheiron Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, p. 112

¹⁶⁹ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *Teatrul de animație - între magie și artă*, Princeps Edit Publishing House, Iași, 2006, p. 143

5. Expressiveness and Functionality

From tradition to modernity, the specific language of animation theatre enjoys an incredible versatility through which this form of art becomes a reflection of the feelings of the human spirit at any age. “The classical art (of the fairy tale) needed experimentation (hence modern animation) to strengthen and refine its own forms of expression”¹⁷⁰. The scenography of the performance is based on a harmonious ensemble of consonant forms.

After a thorough study of fundamental concepts, elements, and language tools, as well as stylistic elements, artistic experimentation is a first step towards the progressive renewal and evolution of the arts. At the same time, contemporary animation theatre encourages experimentation and innovation on the part of the artists participating in the proposed creative act. Scenography can serve as a fertile ground for the exploration of new technologies, unconventional materials, and innovative approaches. If we were to refer to a specific period, we can agree with the idea that “the materials used are inexpensive – paper, textiles, and wood waste, and the imposed construction technique is that of papier-mâché.”¹⁷¹

However, the development of industrial technologies for obtaining materials with highly useful properties in this field has required first the experimental approach and then the adoption of materials specific to present-day industries. Some of these materials are quite costly, but the passion and efforts towards achieving qualitative results know no bounds. The use of projections, digital animations, advanced lighting techniques, or unconventional materials can transform scenography into a modern and captivating artistic experience. “Scenography represents an artistic synthesis, where multiple arts converge and collaborate to create a syncretic product, the performance”¹⁷².

The interaction of the actor with puppets and animated objects is a fundamental condition for the art of animation. In animation theatre, puppets and animated objects play a central role. “Oversized or of ordinary dimensions, animated in open spaces or on indoor stages, puppets have impressed with their plastic simplicity in relation to the messages conveyed through their *subversiveness*.”¹⁷³ Scenography should facilitate effective interaction between actors and puppets. The scenographic concept must consider how the scenographic space allows for the manipulation of the puppets and the creation of the illusion of animation.

Space and time are two crucial coordinates for both visual arts and theatre. Animation theatre is not confined solely to the stage, unconventional spaces having been explored through experimentation. Some of these spaces may already have a well-defined identity and stimulate the creativity of the troupe or the actor who constructs the characters within the script’s guidelines. Scenography can integrate the audience in innovative ways or use unusual spaces to provide a captivating theatrical experience. This approach can bring an additional dimension of interactivity and immersion.

Colours and symbols play a significant role in scenography. They can be used to convey emotions, emphasise themes, or create a specific atmosphere. A special

¹⁷⁰ Ciprian Huțanu, *op. cit.* p. 129

¹⁷¹ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *op. cit.* p. 144

¹⁷² Ion Truică, *Teoria scenografiei*, Junimea Publishing House, Iași, 2003, p.100

¹⁷³ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *op. cit.* p. 144

attention given to the colour palette and symbols employed can contribute to deepening the understanding of the performance. Lights and shadows hold a crucial position right from the beginning of the theatrical act, both for the classical stage settings and unconventional spaces, where they even have a *sine qua non* functional importance.

The experimentation that reproduces and interprets reality can progressively captivate the spectators' attention. The fantasy world can transport them into another dimension through immersive experiences, into imaginary environments that are either dreamlike or real. Often bizarre, the interpreted reality can represent archetypes and symbols with uplifting purposes.

Scenography in contemporary animation theatre is a crucial element that contributes to the creation of a unique and captivating artistic experience for the audience. "In the art of animation, the puppet is no longer a decorative element, but the central one".¹⁷⁴ A well-constructed puppet will lead to easier animation for the actor and a better audience reception. The evolution of this aspect in animation theatre can be explored within a context that highlights the transition from tradition to artistic experimentation.

6. From Tradition and Innovation to Experimentation and Language Autonomy

Relevant ideas and concepts for the process of structuring the performance include:

1. Traditional scenography oriented towards representational, classical puppet aesthetics is inspired by traditional puppetry. Scenography retains specific elements, such as marionettes and hand puppets, paying homage to cultural traditions.
2. Traditional stage sets and scenic elements that are specific to a particular genre or period contribute to the constant perpetuation of the values obtained from generation to generation, and to the establishment of the connection with the roots and history of animation theatre.
3. The use of harmonized and balanced lighting effects, with a specific focus on traditional puppet theatre, adds depth and atmosphere.
4. In contemporary scenography, innovation and experimentation rely on interaction with technology. The integration of modern technology, such as interactive projections, 3D mapping or even virtual reality, brings a new and exciting dimension to the scenic experience – the multimedia experience.
5. Abstract and nonconformist design, which involves abandoning conventional forms and exploring abstract artistic concepts with multiple interpretations, stimulates the imagination of the audience.
6. The use of unconventional and innovative materials, created by experimenting with new methods of making props (stage sets, costumes, puppets, marionettes), contributes to a unique and contemporary aesthetic.
7. The narrative and symbolism are present through the integration of symbolic elements in stage sets and costumes, their main role being that of conveying profound messages and themes to a diverse audience.
8. The use of unconventional narrative structures by exploring alternative narrative

¹⁷⁴ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *op. cit.* p. 143

forms, such as nonlinear or interactive narratives, aims to engage the audience more deeply in the theatrical experience and allow them to identify common experiences and emotions that may be similar to those of the character.

9. Interdisciplinary collaboration during the construction of the performance can lead to the formation of a diverse creative team through the cooperation of scenographers, directors, visual artists, sound designers, and other professionals. This approach brings multiple perspectives and innovative ideas to the production.

10. The creation of a scenographic space characterised by freedom of improvisation and adaptability encourages direct interaction with the audience.

Through its scenographic elements, contemporary animation theatre can provide a complex and dynamic experience, bringing together tradition and experimentation as a result of harmonizing these two categories of elements. Thus, from the perspective of an exigent specialist, the performance can become memorable, delightful, and even provocative, with the potential to trigger strong reactions and attitudes among the audience.

In animation theatre, the dramatic text becomes a “score for sounds, shapes, colours, and movements”¹⁷⁵, entrusted by the playwright to a conductor (the director). The director is the one who harmonizes the language elements and “compatibilises the modes of representation of successive readings made by actors, scenographers, musicians, or light designers, (where) all will have a particular approach to imagining the abstractions promoted by the ideas of the transposed text”¹⁷⁶. Tradition and innovation are the foundations for building new experiments and acquiring a solid autonomy of language.

7. Resounding Names in Contemporary Animation Theatre

Over the years, a whole series of directors, actors, scenographers, puppeteers and companies have distinguished themselves in the art of animation. Bold and visionary actors such as Serghei Obrazțov, Yves Joly, Michael Meschke, Margareta Niculescu, Cristina and Cristian Pepino, among others, have written history for the new generations of puppeteers. “Peter Schumann's art meant more than a series of theatrical experiments because, through his performances, he demonstrated the puppet's ability to address major themes: political events, interpersonal relationships, the history of humanity, etc.”¹⁷⁷

When it comes to these names representing the field of puppet and animation theatre, each has contributed in their own way to the development and promotion of this genre of performance. Here are just a few pieces of information about each of these artists:

1. Sergei Obraztsov: (1901-1992) was a renowned Russian puppet theatre director who founded the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre in Moscow in 1931 and played a crucial role in the development of this form of art in the Soviet Union. His contribution lies in bringing puppet theatre into a modern era by combining traditional techniques with innovations, such as string puppet animation and articulated puppets.

2. Yves Joly is a French theatre director known for his contributions to the field of

¹⁷⁵ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *Texte și pretexte scenice*, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2010, p. 64

¹⁷⁶ Idem, p. 65

¹⁷⁷ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *Teatrul de animație - între magie și artă...*, ed. cit. p. 144

puppetry and animation. He was one of the founders of Théâtre de l'Unité in France, which focused on artistic and social expression through puppeteers and puppetry, having a significant impact on the French art scene.

3. Michael Meschke (1928-2009) was a German-Swedish puppet theatre director and founder of the Marionette Theatre in Stockholm. Meschke's outstanding achievements include his innovative role in puppet theatre, making significant contributions worldwide through techniques such as string puppet animation and articulated puppets.

4. Margareta Niculescu (1923-2016) was a Romanian puppet theatre director known for her influence on Romanian animation theatre. Throughout her entire career, her contribution was particularly notable in promoting puppet theatre as an educational and entertaining medium for young audiences, holding an exceptional role in directing puppet shows for children.

5. Cristina and Cristian Pepino are directors at the *Țândărică* Animation Theatre in Bucharest, being renowned for their directorial and scenographic artistic creations in numerous performances and their contribution to the development of animation theatre in Romania.

The decisive contributions of these artists were innovations in animation theatre, tackling contemporary themes and experimenting with various techniques and styles. They had a significant impact on the world of animation theatre, whether by innovating techniques, exploring social themes or contributing to the development and promotion of this captivating artistic genre.

8. The Impact of Technology and Creativity on the Formation of a Modern Artistic Language

From a technological point of view, an experience is all the more immersive when it stands out through:

-visual quality (quantity and quality of pixels, resolution, colour accuracy, light and contrast);

-sound quality (high-resolution sound, clarity and precision);

-intuitive interactions (user-friendly and intuitive interfaces, accuracy, realism, along with contextual interactions – intelligent and personalised).

Successful experimentations rely on immersion and technology applied to the artistic fields, too. Nowadays, artistic immersion in photo-video art is most commonly experienced through technology. Examples of immersive experiences can be seen in live broadcasts of concerts or sports competitions, video games, video conferences, or cognitive and intuitive interfaces of certain applications. The best immersive experiences are those created through Extended Reality – XR. Its most well-known forms are Virtual Reality – VR and Augmented Reality – AR. By means of dedicated VR devices and equipment, these forms of reality can stimulate all our senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, kinaesthetic, and even gustatory).

The new forms of technology essentially involve the ability to create realistic experiences and make us feel like we are entering another dimension, even though we physically remain in the same place. It is worth mentioning that total immersion in virtual reality can only be achieved under special laboratory conditions with dedicated equipment. Extended Reality is considered one of the five trends that will

shape the future of humanity and will be referred to as the *end of distance*. Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality are thus becoming the latest innovations that remove the boundaries of distance by connecting people, information, and experiences.

9. Language Transformations, Stylistic Approaches and Concepts in Puppet Theatre and Animation Art

A clear distinction needs to be made between the art of animation and the art of puppetry. The origins of animation film can be found in the tradition of puppet theatre, with the manipulation of props on a small stage, following a simplified script. The work is equally coordinated by a director and a scenographer. But the rapid evolution of these forms of art has meant that influences and borrowings in terms of means of artistic expression have crossed the *boundaries* between their languages.

At the same time, the crucial roles that music, visual arts and dance are playing in this process should not be ignored – without them, the language of puppetry would not even exist. The aesthetic-syncretic interferences and the transformations in the representation and perception of form in relation to substance, which have been undergoing an astonishing dynamic in recent years, justify us in considering yet another redefinition of the means of language. These two concepts will always seek their identity due to excessive experimentation and their visible departure from tradition.

We may question whether tradition itself has nevertheless meant perpetual artificiality, a frequent search for identity. The impact of the constantly progressive interferences of influences, such as those related to “current events inserted into the traditional framework”¹⁷⁸, has an important effect on the receiving audience through a series of modifications.

As a result of events that were reported in the press of the time, such as the appearance of a comet, an eclipse, the launch of satellites, or the disastrous decisions of world leaders (Saddam Hussein, George Bush, or Vladimir Putin) that resulted in the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people, new characters appeared in puppet theatre, making use of satire and mocking these events. All this led to modifications at the level of both the text and the initial actions, generating reactions and associations of ideas. As a consequence of political influences on the subjects addressed in animation theatre, some disputes also led to censorship.

In the traditional Romanian archaic shows, which are characterised by carnivalesque features, we can observe echoes of the events that inspired them – for example, the mask show from northern Moldavia, which sparked a whole scandal regarding its humorous/propagandistic nature – “Putin, in a satirical representation, riding a decorated tractor, made to look like a tank, delivering bellicose speeches.”¹⁷⁹

Experiments resulting from interactions with audiences from different cultural backgrounds have led to language antinomies reflected in the construction of props. “Modernity and postmodernity generate new ways of finding the magic

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Stanciu, *Teatrul tradițional și teatrul cult de animație: origini și influențe*, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova, 2023, p. 52

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*

recipe that can transform a performance into an event; the daily rush forces both the creator and the receiver to resort to synthesis and selection”¹⁸⁰. The form and characteristics of the objects constructed by the animation theatre scenographer have been given new plastic meanings. The assembly and stylistic harmonization of new materials, different in texture, colours and shades, reflection, hardness (elasticity or malleability), flexibility, and the use of adhesives with reduced drying and solidification times have implied new opportunities to test ideas for a successful expression of concepts and for the completion of a unified construction of the performance.

The revival of traditional European puppet theatre within international festivals has emphasized the importance of tradition and national specificity not only from Italy, Indonesia, Turkey, Vietnam, Africa, China, or Russia but also from Romania and Hungary. We are all familiar with famous characters from traditional puppet theatre, such as *Pulcinella* from Italy, *Punch* and *Judy* from England, *Petrushka* from Russia, *Kasperle* from Germany or the Czech Republic, *Vasilache* and *Mărioara* from Romania or *Paprika Jancsi* from Hungary. They have been promoted in successful projects at international festivals organised by Stefano Giunchi or Kovacs Ildiko (see the “Purgateatrum”¹⁸¹ performance).

The scenographers have thus had to constantly renew their means and forms of expression in order to capture the audience's attention and make them understand the characters, meanings, and nature of the performance. Puppet and marionette theatre, now referred to as animation theatre, “cannot live by its traditions alone” says London professor George Speaight¹⁸².

We should also address other related areas from this particular point of view. The transition from tradition to modernity in the field of animation film represents a fascinating process. It is necessary to specify from the outset that the art of animation involves at least two different concepts. A first concept would be that in which we find props manipulated by actors from classical puppet theatre. In this case, objects built from various materials by scenographers or plastic artists are used, especially marionettes or puppets. In other cases, these objects can then be used in the making of animation films by specialists in photo-video arts or design.

Creativity and technology converge in order to redefine and reimagine the visual experience. Here are a few highlights of this evolution:

1. Tradition in classical animation: animation by drawing, where each frame is drawn manually. Notable examples include early Disney films.
2. Stop motion: another traditional technique that involves the use of puppets or animated objects in frame-by-frame motion, creating the illusion of life. This is an old technique that was popularised by creations such as *Wallace & Gromit*.
3. Undoubtedly, the advent of technology has propelled modernization in video animation. Applications and programs have seen incredible advancements. Video animation has transitioned towards the use of computers to generate images and movements. Pixar and DreamWorks are pioneers in this direction.
4. Virtual reality (VR) and 3D animation are produced in accordance with the

¹⁸⁰ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *Texte și pretexte scenice...*, ed. cit., p. 71

¹⁸¹ Daniel Stanciu, *Teatrul tradițional și teatrul cult de animație: origini și influențe...*, p. 59 – 60

¹⁸² U.N.I.M.A. *Teatrul de păpuși în lume – Jocul de păpuși contemporan*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1966

environment and the use of new technology brings a new dimension, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in captivating virtual worlds.

5. In experimental animation, artists can express their creativity through a variety of unconventional techniques and styles, bringing new perspectives and sensibilities to the world of animation.

6. The convergence with other forms of interactive art has led to interactive animation, which allows spectators to influence the story or explore animated worlds in a more active manner.

7. Through collaborations with the musical field, with emphasis on the sound and rhythms it provides, the artistic event acquires new qualitative values. Animation can be integrated into live concerts or music videos, creating innovative audio-visual experiences.

8. By exploring profound themes, contemporary animation often focuses on communicating social and political messages through creative and accessible visual means, such as the films produced by Studio Ghibli.

9. Modern animation is increasingly concerned with representing cultural and social diversity, offering varied voices and stories.

10. Strategies in the Process of Artistic Translation from Idea to Scenographic Concept

Among the strategies in the process of artistic translation from the idea to the scenographic concept in animation theatre, we will focus on a series of working stages that combine two defining aspects in an organized way – creativity and functionality. Creative freedom becomes an integral part of this process, along with the originality of the theme. The generation of the idea can stem from a variety of sources of inspirations, such as a story, a concept, a theme or even an emotion that the creators want to communicate to the audience.

Creative collaboration involves a consensus of ideas between scenographers, directors, writers and other team members. The thorough analysis of the script or concept is also important in defining the content. The scenographer begins by analysing the script or the basic concept, identifying key elements that can be highlighted in the set design. He or she may conduct research to better understand the time period, place or style addressed in the production by synchronizing the theme and context in which the creation will be set, and may also explore various design approaches, by considering aspects such as colour, shape, texture and lighting. By elaborating sketches and visual concepts through drawings of the set, costumes and lighting designs, the scenographer communicates preliminary ideas in a visual manner.

For the scenographer, another stage implies experimenting with different materials and textures to get a clearer idea of how his or her visions will work in practice. Subsequently, the scenographer presents his concept to the production team, including the director and other key members, and gets feedback to make adjustments to his concept in accordance with the suggestions received. Once the overall concept is established, the actual work begins, with a focus on details such as precise dimensions, specific materials, and construction or manufacturing plans. At this point, the scenographer collaborates closely with the production and

construction teams to implement the concept according to the predetermined plans.

The final step, during which the set is brought onto the stage, frequently involves some adjustments during the set and costume rehearsals organised prior to the production. Once the performance is complete, the scenographer and crew can evaluate the impact of the scenography on the production and glean insights for forthcoming projects. Therefore, communication between the director and other members of the team and their active interaction are crucial ways to understand the overall vision and aesthetic direction of the show.

11. Space and Time in Animation Theatre

Space and time in animation theatre are essential elements that contribute to building a unique and engaging stage experience. “Scenography for animation theatre is subject to distinct laws, some different from those of dramatic theatre, because the characters are puppets and not actors, with a different way of reporting in terms of proportions”¹⁸³. In this case, scenography is structured according to performance and expressiveness, from miniatures to oversized objects, depending on the proportions of the puppets.

These aspects are carefully approached, as they are meant to communicate stories and provoke emotional and intellectual responses in the audience. “The scenographic conception anchors the scenic creation not only in spatial coordinates but also in temporal coordinates”¹⁸⁴. When discussing dance and pantomime with marionettes, we will observe that puppeteers can redefine their performance space, an *empty space*, by means of dance steps, reactions and gaze, with everything that is involved in that particular comedic conflict.

Anca Ciobotaru gives us the convincing example of the Russian dance called *trepak* where “the suggestions offered by the music determine the placement of the characters in a spatio-temporal matrix, while also providing a good premise for the choice of costume elements and their stylization direction; shapes and chromatics claim their identity.”¹⁸⁵

From a spatial perspective, suggesting the continuity of the performance venue beyond the physical boundaries of the stage can vary in size and format. Depending on the dimensions of the physical space, scenographers have the possibility to create varied sets for the different parts of a story and also to adapt them to the specific technique of the stage. For these reasons, it is important to design and model elements to scale. The space must be structured in such a way that actors, puppets and animated objects can interact effectively in their environment, with the stage sets contributing to realism and coherence within the narrative framework of the action.

From a temporal perspective, puppets and animated objects are often utilised to create the illusion of time, of fleeting moments, and of motion. Through movement and manipulation, through metamorphosis and metaphor, animators can convey the passage of time in a fascinating and captivating manner. Animation theatre offers the opportunity to explore flashbacks and time leaps in a creative way,

¹⁸³ Aurelian Bălăiță, *Incursiune în teatrul de animație*, vol. I, Artes Publishing House, Iași, 2007, p. 38

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem

¹⁸⁵ Anca Doina Ciobotaru, *În căutarea marionetei*, ed. cit., pp. 124-125

blending tradition with experimentation. Puppets and stage sets can be used to change the stylistic context and provide the audience with glimpses into the past or future and opportunities to make comparisons and observe character models and principles of life. Maintaining the audience's engagement through rhythm and visual stimuli is of crucial importance.

Animation theatre can also explore other themes related to the passage of time, such as ageing, social changes or character development. The temporal elements of storytelling can also be expressed through the space of the stage. By means of the careful representation and suggestion of space and time and the use of visual metaphors, animation theatre offers the possibility to create spectacular and innovative experiences, challenging the audience to engage in imaginary worlds and explore profound and complex themes.

12. Conclusions

The scenographic idea and concept in contemporary animation theatre imply a balanced approach between tradition and artistic innovation. By exploring and integrating traditional elements in a modern context and experimenting with new technologies, scenography becomes an essential component in creating a unique and memorable theatrical experience.

The process of artistically translating the idea into the scenographic concept involves a complex combination of creativity, collaboration, and technical expertise to bring the vision of the director and production team to life. The transition from traditional to modern animation is a dynamic process, where technology and innovation combine with artistic heritage in order to create captivating and relevant works for the contemporary world.

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