

# **How 3D Animated Films Integrate Eastern and Western Cultures: A Case Study of "BIG HERO 6"**

## **Abstract**

This essay explores the classic East-meets-West 3D animated film The BIG HERO 6 as an example of the hybridisation of two different cultures, the American and the Japanese. Important factors such as visual elements and thematic values may affect the audience's core feelings and cultural identity, and may make this kind of multicultural film face challenges in the market. Therefore, this paper further discusses how 3D animated films can better integrate the cultural elements of the East and the West.

## **Keywords**

3D Animation Film,Cultural Fusion,Heroism ,Sci-Fi Future ,Intercultural Communication

## **Introduction**

The technological development of 3D animation has become an irreversible trend. When 3D animation technology is integrated into the field of film, new art forms and different cultural concepts are created. This includes the dissemination and intermingling of different cultures through 3D animated films as a vehicle. However, the mechanisms and effects of 3D animation in cultural intermingling and change are subtly affecting people's lives. For example, Jiao and Pan (2012) claimed that the unique characteristics of the film create an experience beyond our everyday experience, which is not only perceivable in real life, but also enhances the power of communication. In this paper, we will use BIG HERO 6 as an example to explore how 3D animated films integrate Eastern and Western cultures. In the process of analysing existing examples of 3D films, we will delve into the wide range of opportunities and potentials that 3D animated films offer in terms of cultural innovation and creativity.

## **Literature Review**

Whether 3D animated films can truly achieve cultural integration, especially how to define this cross-cultural form of film language, film is not only a widely disseminated media and art form, but also a unique cultural industry, whose cultural connotations are bound to be different. (Tu, 2018)

Different attitudes are held towards the definition of cross-cultural film language forms. New media is not just a tool, but also a medium, a cultural

interface that connects humans, technology and culture (Manovich, 2002), but Manovich (2007) goes on to suggest in different books the observation of a wider process of change, a shift in the visual language used by many forms of moving image beyond narrative cinema, that has not been received attention from critical analyses. This may mean that modern researchers have lacked in-depth study and reflection on the changes in visual language and the meanings behind them in these different film forms. The lack of critical analytical attention to this concept makes it difficult to assign a coherent position that can be universally accepted and involves a multitude of complexities and different perspectives. However, in Huang's (2012) journal a new understanding and interpretation of film language across cultures is presented: the natural attributes of body language make film performance cross-culturally universal. Regardless of the cultural differences between the East and the West, body language in film performance can convey the commonality of human society. Therefore, when a film enters the international market, it is only the linguistic part that needs to be translated, whereas body language has a global commonality that does not need to be translated.

One of the most controversial issues is about what factors can influence the intermingling of different cultures, Baumgarten (2003) mentions in his book that integration which implies that the implicit or indirect communication of characters on screen must be explicit as the audience needs to be able to decode and interpret the discourse in the overall context of the film. In this way,

it is emphasised that the characters' lines are subject to refinement and deep examination, which may be effective in reducing cultural conflict. As Kovacevic (2003) argues, culture clashes are often based on the fact that they 'steal' each other's heritage, but they do not necessarily do so in order to absorb what is foreign, but rather in order to change what constitutes the self, which includes a collection of national, ethnic, racial, or gender identities. Therefore, cross-cultural communication of cultural products, including animated films, should be based on the convergence of world cultural values and cultural empathy, and should be conducted in the context of modern values. (Yu and Zhou,2022). In addition to this, Liu (2017) colours in films are usually associated with a specific spatial and temporal context and have a cross-cultural indication function. Colour itself carries universally perceived cross-cultural meanings. Taking the cultural differences between the East and the West as an example, colours can reflect both cultural differences and cognitive commonalities. However, if not handled properly, it can lead to cultural conflict and misunderstanding.

Although there are a number of factors mentioned above that may bring about serious cultural conflicts if not handled properly, the importance of globalised cultural exchange for the 3D animation industry cannot be ignored. As stated by Aririguzoh (2022), globalisation has made it necessary for people from different cultures and countries to interact and cooperate with each other. Effective intercultural communication aims to change the way information is

packaged and sent to people from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication skills make it essential to appreciate and respect the obvious cultural differences between the sender and receiver of a message, especially in light of the United Nations (UN) view of culture as an enabler of sustainable development. The importance of intercultural communication competence has increased as societies and the globe have become more connected. To support this view, Matthews 2012 suggests that global organisations must acquire the skills to communicate with employees and customers from different cultures. This ability not only helps to achieve the organisation's mission, but also creates greater value for stakeholders. In this context, the effectiveness of intercultural communication becomes an important factor for business success and needs to be optimised and improved in practice. For example, especially when examining the interactions between the US and Japanese animation industries, in addition to import/export and long-term outsourcing relationships, the influence of anime on US animation styles has become increasingly significant in recent years. This influence is evident not only in so-called anime-inspired manga and American animation, but also in live-action remakes of Japanese intellectual property (IP). These phenomena reflect the interactive integration of the animation industries of the two countries in terms of style and content, providing a wealth of cases and data for further research. (Daliot-Bul, 2020) Therefore, under this series of influences, an excellent 3d animation needs to effectively coordinate the preservation and inheritance of

local culture, and needs to avoid problems such as cultural homogenisation and cultural conflict to some extent. There are three aspects worth thinking about and learning from: firstly, the visual design and stylistic texture of the scenes; secondly, the themes and values of different cultures; and lastly, the challenges and shortcomings that a 3d animation film will face in integrating eastern and western cultures. This paper will use the example of BIG HERO 6 to expand this discussion.

## **Main discussion**

### **Visual Design Aesthetics in the East-West Cultural Convergence**

The story of BIG HERO 6 is based on a virtual imaginary city that combines the cities of Tokyo in Japan and San Francisco in the United States and gives it a humorous name: San Fransokyo. In traditional Japanese 3D animation, the graphics often retain the texture and feel of hand-drawn animation, with a lot of added texture in the anime brushstrokes, based on Elias (2012) states that Japan is an exporter of anime and its industrial strength is unquestionable. However, this film breaks the traditional constraints by not only incorporating 3D animation effects but also combining traditional objects in a design that has many new East-West design elements. For example, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco is a landmark in the United States, but in this film the bridge incorporates the roof styles of traditional Japanese shrines and towers, as well as some traditional Japanese patterns and carvings, which fully reflects the collision and fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. In support of this Su and Liu say: "The cityscape design of BIG HERO 6 is a fusion of the characteristics of Tokyo and San Francisco with a high-tech futuristic look. Through the detailed portrayal of buildings, roads, and types of business and economy, the film succeeds in achieving a harmonious coexistence of science fiction elements and American and Japanese cultural elements. This novel visual

design approach brings many unexpected surprises and enriches the visual elements in the 3D scenes, which further proves the aesthetic potential of 3D animated films inspired by the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures.

### **Different Themes and Values under the Interaction of Eastern and Western Cultures**

The film explores two main cultural themes, individual heroism in the United States and collectivism and family in Japan. In traditional Japanese culture, the concept of "family" (i.e. the totality of the family and social organisation) emphasises the priority of collective interests over individual interests, and this sense of collective priority is a distinctive feature of Japanese culture. The film cleverly integrates individual heroism (a cultural concept that emphasises individual achievement and independent action) into this strong notion of collectivity, creating a unique emotional resonance: when Hiro, the protagonist, is unable to resist the villain, he gathers his companions together, and each of them contributes their unique talents to overcome the villain's obstacles with all their might. The key role of collectivist co-operation and the notion of heroic combat within each individual is exemplified in this episode. Through this fusion, the film successfully demonstrates the complementary nature of Eastern and Western cultures, enabling the audience to deeply empathise with the courage and sentiments of the characters. The film has thus become a



typical example of cross-cultural communication, enriching and providing valuable reference materials for multicultural interaction in the context of globalisation.

## **What are the challenges and shortcomings that a 3D animated film will face in blending East and West?**

This is a Hollywood adaptation of a 3D animated film has significant differences from the original anime script, and its commercial attributes are extremely obvious. A capitalistic approach that puts too much emphasis on profitability in commercial operations may cause some problems. As Liu (2015) describes in his journal article, one of the core narrative features of Disney films is the deep expression of American family-friendly culture, usually characterised by reunions and happy endings. However, such endings have been too common in many previous Disney films, and this film continues to follow a similar ending, resulting in a lack of surprises and inevitably making the audience feel cheesy.

Baymax's original form was white with a soft and rounded texture, a design that was widely loved by audiences. However, when he enters the battle mode, his form is designed to be a giant red Kong, an intuitive and hard look that is very different from the "softness" emphasised in Eastern cultures. This classic American steel look may seem strange to the audience. When designing the characters, it is important to consider the diversity and acceptance of the audience.

In addition to this, the film lacks a deep understanding of the cultural and educational backgrounds of the characters, offering only a superficial integration with little exploration of the underlying cultural context. For example,

there is a significant difference between Hiro's initial performance in the robot fighting arena and his later entry into the university lab where Tadashi works. The underground culture of the robot fighting arena contrasts with the formal research environment of the university lab, reflecting conflicting conceptions of education and academia in different cultures. The more individualistic and adventurous nature of the underground arena and the emphasis on teamwork and innovation in the university laboratory represent, in part, the difference in educational philosophies between the East and the West and ignore the complexities of different cultures.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has explored how a 3D animated film, exemplified by BIG HERO 6, is a blend of Eastern and Western cultures. Then, through a comprehensive analysis of the visual aesthetics and traditional values embodied in the film, it discusses how an excellent East-meets-West film enhances the audience's viewing experience. Moreover, this paper also explores the challenges and shortcomings that 3D animated films may face when facing the intersection of different cultures. Specifically, the visual aesthetics of the film include the fusion of cultural elements in terms of urban design, character modelling and technological displays, while the traditional values cover the combination of individual heroism and collectivism. These analyses reveal that a successful 3D film that blends Eastern and Western cultures not only requires extreme

polish and meticulous production, but also needs to build bridges of cultural communication rather than simply stacking different cultural elements to avoid appearing stiff and unnatural. It can be seen that achieving silky smooth integration and innovation in the context of huge cultural differences remains a problem that has not yet been fully researched and solved. Through case studies, this paper attempts to provide some insights and directions for research in this area.(2059 words)

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