Implementation of Retro-Futurism Style in Architectural Building Design for 3D Animation

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ABSTRACT

When we heard Retro design, people will think about the fashion, music, poster, style and trend of the 1940s to1980s. The trend retro-futurism, however, is entirely different. It is a trend that was created by writers, artists and film directors in the past and is closely related to science fiction. This research concentrates on investigating the characteristics of retro-futurism and how it can be used to incorporate its features into building design for 3D animation. An exploratory method was used to analyse the architectural design of the past. The gathered information could give some insights and understanding of what retro-futurism is and the reason behind why the architectural design in the previous era was created that way. The process and challenges of implementing retro-futurism visual style are also discussed. As the result of the collected data, developing a design with the aesthetic of retro-futurism become more accessible and well-planned.

Keyword: Animation, Retro-futurism, 3D modelling, Art movement, Art period, Exploratory method

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INTRODUCTION

Building unique and creative structures is an artistic process. In looking for examples from real life, one can draw inspiration from the remarkable view of Shanghai's Pudong district (Whitworth, 2013) and the colossal Dubai's Burj Khalifa (Pamglobe, 2015). These buildings are usually based on artists' vision of the future. Despite the buildings look futuristic, a sense of nostalgia may arise when these magnificent structures are observed because these structures encapsulate significant cultural identity in their design. These experiences can be attributed to the application of retro-futuristic style in the architectural design of those buildings. Retro-futurism is a trend of design and closely related to science and technology, the future as portrayed by the artists, writers and filmmaker of the past. Common depictions of the retro-futuristic world are flying cars, a robot as a butler or an assistant and the architecture design become massive and tall connected by road hanging between the buildings. Although the name is 'retro', it is not firmly dichotomised in a certain era of our history because retro-futurism does not even have a specific timeline. Therefore, the retro-futurism is also associated with the alternate timeline, meaning a world that is different than what we see today.

In the literature, retro-futurism is discussed as the 'past visions of the future' (Coyle & Mesker, 2013) or 'utopian nostalgia' (Grönholm, 2015). Utopian nostalgia is thought as both reflective and restorative in which the feeling of "personal sensation of loss and longing towards a certain place or time" (Boym, 1996; Grönholm, 2015, p. 375). For instance, this form of retro-futuristic style is commonly seen in the steampunk design concept. The steampunk concept ala Victorian science fiction is commonly regarded as a form or branch of retro-futurism (Guffey, 2014). According to Guffey (2014), steampunk is inspired from the industrial steam engine era with a twenty-first-century twist. Therefore, Guffey (2014) prefers to define retro-futurism as "half-nostalgic, half-sentimental memorialising of popular futurism" (p. 254).

One can draw the exemplars of retro-futurism from several animations such as Thunderbirds, Futurama, and The Jetsons (Anderson, 1964; Groening, 1999; Hanna & Barbera, 1962) with The Fifth Element, Metropolis, Blade Runner, and The Matrix (Besson, 1997; Lang, 1927; Scott, 1982; Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999). In these science fiction animation and films, the visual imagery portrayed are of mechanised and robotised society in which people are dependent on automation for leisure and work. The use of digital screens, neon lights, UFO-like skyscrapers, ray guns, and jetpacks as backdrops are quite familiar in these films (Graham, 2016; Sharp, 2011). To add, Syd Mead, the concept artist for the film Blade Runner, drew inspiration from cities like New York City and Chicago with futuristic grid- and linear-like public transportation (Sisson, 2015). The Jetsons (1962) can be viewed as a retro-futuristic themed cartoon, combining space-age era and domestic life, that is imagined from the 1960s