



Dystopia Animation: Created Visualization of Chiang Mai in the Future

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This article concludes the main ideas from the research work entitled ‘The Creation of Animation Presents the Imagery of Chiang Mai in The Future World.’ The outcomes from this project included the discovery of the process of designing animation works to visualize the dystopian future of the city whereby photographs of important places of the current city can be used together with images from imaginations created by the computer with the ‘Collage’ technique that can show the separation, difference, and collapse or fall of a conventional urban. In addition, as for the projection of the animation, a new screen with curves and divided sub-screens was used to project motion pictures in two different styles simultaneously, which could be the creation of aestheticism from the viewing in unique styles. The creativity of the screens created in this project has been successful as a tool to promote the occurrence of an open-ended process for creating and viewing animation works designed with a computer.

Keywords: *Dystopia, Animation, Installation, Chiang Mai, Media Arts*

OBJECTIVES

1. To experiment with the use of an open-ended process to create animation and space for viewing the animation of dystopia in the future; and
2. To present installation animation work in the art exhibition of the visualization from the image of Chiang Mai in the future.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research and solution to problems in this article have been the analysis with qualitative research methods with the five main issues as follows:

- (1) The study on and the analysis of the current status of Chiang Mai to conclude the synthesis of animation work showing the visualization of Chiang Mai City in the future.
- (2) The study on the storytelling of dystopia.
- (3) The study on Japanese animations that tell stories of the world's dark future or the apocalypse.
- (4) The search for a new method to present animation through the open-ended process with referencing and synthesis of the 'Animetism' approach by Thomas Lamarre.
- (5) The study of works by other artists who project motion pictures on specially designed screens.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction to problems and solutions

The world is facing severe crises. There have been shocking anticipation that within the year 2050, the world population will rise to nine thousand million and reach ten thousand million in 2100 (Marks, 2015). However, a demographer, Danny Dorling, has given the positive point that humanity will keep living although the population is as outstanding as ten thousand million. Likewise, as an economist on the criticism of the public policy, Jeffrey Sachs has viewed that even though overpopulation poses a difficulty to management, they are manageable and are considered a significant challenge to humanity. Furthermore, Dorling has projected the visualization of the severe problem in the future that the actual situation from overpopulation is that the globe will be the place of "Inequality," which will cause more cases of immigration from rural areas to urban areas (Barcus & Halfacree, 2018).

At the same time, the United Nations has reported since 2007 that more than half of the world's population has chosen to stay in big cities. Thus, in the future, each town will be overpopulated. There is an old saying, "You set out into the wide world to seek your fortune," but people now head to cities for better living. Within 2030, most of the highly populated cities in the world will be in Asia (Al-Khalili, 2018).



Chiang Mai is the second most important city in Thailand. Thailand's northern region has been the hub of development in all respects, and many people flow into Chiang Mai for better living (Chareonmuang, 2000). The overpopulation has quickly posed problems in all regards to Chiang Mai, such as the problem of the overwhelming population that has been more and more severe. People from outside, including laborers and tourists, have caused the never-ending population flow to Chiang Mai. The expansion of department stores, convenience stores, and housing estates around Chiang Mai shows that Capitalism is invading Chiang Mai (Kongtaweesak, 2020).

In this research project, animation media in the theme of Science Fiction presented the problematic issues. The pattern of the creation and development of media relied on the idea of Fredric Jameson, a post-modern philosopher, and literary critic, who mentioned the specific nature of science fiction that they are no stories to present reality in the future. Still, they must “defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own present” (Bolton, Ronay & Tatsumi, 2007). Thus, top science fictions are no stories that tell the imagination of the world in the future. Instead, they visualize the future to create awareness that will lead to checking specific problematic issues currently (Al-Khalili, 2018).

1.2 Change in Chiang Mai

The urban status of Chiang Mai concurred with the concept of Edwin Eames and Judith Goode, who mentioned the urbanization process from the immigration of people from non-urban areas to an urban area. This change has led to the settlement of urban communities. The overpopulation has led Chiang Mai to become crowded. Some formerly green zones have become zones for construction in response to business needs (Prakasvuthisarn, 2009).

The study on the changes that have happened to Chiang Mai City has led to the knowledge of Spatial Change which is the occurrence of spaces of people with different statuses with ‘inequality’. With the economic situation more prosperous than other provinces in the same region, people of various classes have migrated to Chiang Mai, causing the city to have two kinds of areas: beautiful and decadent.

1.3 Dystopian tale of the collapsing world

In literature and tales, when there must be the visualization of the future, two types of images will be imagined, namely, better than and worse than the current world because if the imagined future is like the contemporary world, readers or audiences would not be able to aware of the differences with the present world between the world depicted in the story and



the real world. The word 'Dystopia' has a root that came from two Greek words "dus" meaning to be bad or no good, and "topos" meaning a place. Therefore, the word 'Dystopia' means the wrong place. This word appeared for the first time in the middle of the 18th Century but was not widely used until the beginning of the 20th Century. When the word 'Dystopia' is mentioned, it is necessary to discuss the antonym or 'Utopia' which happened in the 16th Century by Sir Thomas More, who used the word 'Utopia' in the kinds of literature means ideal society or imagined society that is better than the real world (Claeys, 2005).

If viewed outside the context of the works of literature, the question is whether the current and the future world can be perfect, like the ideal society or Utopia. Jameson has shared his idea that the optimist view of Utopia has been obsolete because it has been the belief in the advancement by capitalists who have had optimism that human beings have the potential to solve big problems. This view has not concurred with the truth. Jameson has also warned that the survival of human beings in the future is an uncertain issue, and there might be immediate devastation, or there might be just the destruction of the ecological system and the society in the gradual manner in which human beings can still live. However, no matter the actual situation, there will be nowhere in the world where such threats are experienced with sufficient resources (Gordin, Tilley & Prakash, 2010).

Most Dystopian literature is like a warning of the collapse of this world by describing the imagination of a lousy society in the future. Ruth Levitas, a sociology professor from Bristol University, said, "Dystopian implies fearful futures where chaos and ruin prevail." The contents of most dystopian literature are the prediction of the crises in the future that human beings fear to happen (Claeys, 2005).

Studying the meaning and pattern of dystopian works of literature has led to understanding the essence of the visualization of the world of the imagination with a dark future that the cities and society in dystopian stories must be opposite to the hope of people nowadays. The environs of cities are very important because they make the audience compare the conditions in the stories with reality. The comparison between the two worlds enables the author to present both utopian and dystopian Worlds in parallel to show that even though human beings can create a Utopian society, such a society is so fragile that it can promptly collapse anytime.

1.4 Presentation of the apocalyptic world in Akira

Concerning the world's dark future, the word "Apocalypse" is always used to describe the collapse of the world. The term has been adapted from the Greek origin or 'apokalypsis', meaning revelation or uncovering of situations that may occur at the end of the world. Thus, the Apocalypse is the revelation of how and why the world should end) (Napier, 2005).

“Akira” is a science fiction (Sci-Fi) animation that is a significant example of a spirit that has depicted state-of-the-art technologies beyond imagination. The modern images shown in the animation ‘represent’ the nightmares from the misuse of technologies. ‘Akira’ was first released in 1988, presenting the evilness in human hearts in the setting of technologies in the future which has been visualized to be Tokyo City in 2019, after the Third World War when Japan built Neo-Tokyo around Gulf of Tokyo to replace the old Tokyo that has been devastated with atomic bombs (Bolton, Ronay & Tasuml, 2007).

The Neo-Tokyo is shown in panoramic perspective taken with Low Angle Shot to look up at clumps of skyscrapers. If considered well, the buildings will be divided into groups. The first group is the group of front buildings which are smaller. The other group consists of far buildings taller than the actual buildings of Tokyo City. The grouping of buildings like this depicts the symbolic image of the society in the storyline where inequality among social classes is prominent, for example, the scene of violent fights between motorcycle gangs and the scene of soldiers chasing after people that happen in the front area. Thus, the front area is the decadent area for people with low social statuses to fight one another for resources. The far area, on the contrary, represents state-of-the-art technologies, authority, and military troops; the division of the two settings is the symbol of differences between ‘marginality’ and ‘overwhelming dominance’.



Figure 1 Neo- Tokyo in Akira

1.5 Animation and open-ended creation process

Alistair Swale, a culturalist from the University of Waikato, New Zealand, has reviewed the concept of arts by R. G. Collingwood, an English philosopher. Collingwood has defined that an artwork can be good or bad based on ‘Art Proper’. A top artist must start creating a work without clearly knowing the work’s final look. The creation process must be open-ended, meaning that the results will not be known until the expression of the art operation comes to specific spots (Swale, 2015).

Swale has tried to identify the open-ended process of the creation of animation with the comparison with the concept of Thomas Lamarre, who has defined Japanese ‘Anime’ as ‘Animetism’ that an artist is free to create the movement of characters, objects, and settings by changing the positions of the overlapping celluloid films and the positions of multiplanar images to create dimension, depth, and movement without relying on space or being limited with reality as in the movie (Lamarre, 2009).

A uniqueness of the ‘Animetism Image’ is that the dimension of depth and the feeling of movement will not be realistic as the ‘Cinematism Image’ because, in the technical process, the cameras cannot be moved in the deep direction like in the Cinema. A director of an animation uses multi-layers that are overlaid on one another to create imitated depth. The imitated depth in each scene has been created as the director desires.

The limitation concerning the reality of depth allows Japanese artists to use open-ended processes to create depth and movements. However, the uniqueness of animatic images does not mean that ‘Animetism’ cannot be made in Cinema. For instance, in a 2014 movie entitled ‘Grand Budapest Hotel’, Wes Anderson, an American Animation and Movie Director, created his unique work by avoiding images with realistic 3D depth and presenting 2D images instead by using a camera that has been moved from left to right. For example, in the introduction scene of the Grand Budapest Hotel, the camera has gradually been moved from left to right, from the scenery outside the hotel to the front. While the camera was being moved from left to right, Anderson had set some minor components to movements in different directions, such as the elevator that goes upstairs from downstairs and the snow with 3D movement toward the camera. The use of all the movements mentioned above is included in the open-ended process. The director has set the movements to be free instead of realistic as the movements taken by the cinematic camera (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Introduction of The Grand Budapest Hotel



From the view that an artwork must be produced with an open-ended process where the artist should not know the results of the work before the production process ends (Swale, 2015), the creation of the animation in this project aims at the addition of the technique of multiple screen projection to allow the projection of ‘Animetism’ and ‘Cinematism’ images simultaneously. Therefore, the multi-screen projection has transformed the exhibition place into an ‘experimental atelier’ where space has been created to develop creativity in simultaneously presenting animations in many styles. The audience need not wait to view images edited into several scenes on only a single screen but can view various scenes simultaneously on the divided screens, with the sense from the viewing of the animation being extended to become turmoil and chaotic in a way that can present the characteristics of Chiang Mai in the future.

1.6 Works by artists with special projection techniques

Jaye Rhee, a Korean video installation artist whose works have been in various styles, has created work in an exciting style by projecting the video on three screens simultaneously is the work in the project entitled ‘Once Called Future’ (Figure 3). In the beginning, it tells the story of an older man’s love that he has had from a young age to old age. Touching words have affected his awareness from young to old age. Some parts of the work have featured photos of the Saturn V rocket and Futuro House abandoned in outskirts areas of the State of Texas, representing technologies that were once expected to be the blueprints of the future but are now just the forgotten pasts.

The author is interested in some parts of the work on three screens of Jaye Rhee where the screens on the left and the right show scenery view without focus, but the screen in the center shows the focal thing at the center of the screen. The three screens draw attention to the center, the main component, while the left and right screens are complementary.



Figure 3 Once Called Future

Marianne Strapatsakis, a Greek video installation artist, has created the work in the project entitled 'Invisible Places / The Vast White', most of the contents of which are shown on the screen in the center, which show images of a lady in a white dress in several moods such as pain from labor, happiness, anger, and suffering. Meanwhile, the left and right screens show images linked to moods on the central screen, such as the life cycles of animals and plants and natural phenomena. However, in some parts of the work, the three screens will show a single big image to attract the audience with an extensive image that occupies all the space of the exhibition (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Invisible Places / The Vast White



The synchronization of the three screens in the work by Jaye Rhee and the switching between the projection of three images and one image on three screens in Marianne Strapatsakis's work has given the author an idea to project animation in three screens. Animation short film projects are on the central screen, while panoramic city images are on the left and right screens. This projection method will draw the focus to the central screen. In addition, to make the work more interesting, at the beginning and end of the presentation, extensive images will be projected on the three screens to fully express the power and mood of the work on the entire exhibition space for the key scenes.

2. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This animation creation project has been for the solo exhibition between 23rd and 28th December 2022 on Floor 1 of Chiang Mai University Art Center, Thailand. This exhibition has displayed the 'Installation Animation Artwork' entitled "The Triumph of Selfishness," the essences of which can be analyzed as follows.

2.1 Analysis of the animation

2.1.1 Analysis of the visualization of normal world in the future and dystopian world in the future

The animation entitled "The Triumph of Selfishness" presents the imagination of Chiang Mai in the future in two ways, as follows.

(1) The imagination of the normal world in the future: This visualization is based on the normal and optimistic view that the world in the future is still where human beings typically dwell. There might be problems concerning crowding constructions in modern shapes and forms to replace traditional ones. The animation showing the visualization of the normal world in the future is projected on the central screen.

(2) The imagination of a Dystopian world in the future: This visualization depicts the world's future in critical status in which everything is terrible, and human beings will have to evacuate from this decadent world soon. This decadent world is from the imagination that reflects the incapability of human beings to control problems concerning the change in the environs caused by the way of life of human beings. The Dystopian world in the future is projected on the left and right screens (Figure 5).

However, only at the beginning and the end of the presentation the images of the dystopian world in the future are fully projected on the three screens to fully express the power and

mood of the work to warn the audience of the possible decadence of the world if the society is still full of disputes and fights depicted in the contents of the animation.



Figure 5 The Triumph of Selfishness: The normal world in the future is projected in the center, and the dystopian world in the future is projected on the left and right screens

As for an ordinary movie or animation projected on a single screen, the projection of different scenes relies on the edition. Since only a single screen is used, the editor must present only one location at a time. On the contrary, this project's unique screen allows the storytelling to show multiple locations simultaneously. Ordinary movies traditionally begin with a utopian world that goes wrong until it becomes dystopian. However, "The Triumph of Selfishness" simultaneously shows dystopian and utopian worlds to manifestation, reflecting that a utopian society is an ideal that humans will never reach because perfection cannot last for a long time but a short period waiting to change or collapse.

2.1.2 Analysis of positioning of important places of Chiang Mai in animation

The image of the future world in the animation "The Triumph of Selfishness" brings famous landmarks or memorable pictures of Chiang Mai to be placed in unimportant places or the not vital position. In addition, modern buildings are also built to surround those famous landmarks in a "blocking frame" manner, closing the area to create a sense of separation between the old culture and the new civilization (Figure 6).

The positioning of currently important places as non-focal spots in images emphasizes the situation in the future where the ancient city will be gradually changed without anybody's attention because these places will no longer be considered significant in the world in the future that focuses on materialist and technological advancement. From the images in the animation, Chiang Mai is changed from a city with few tall buildings into a great metropolis.

The animation also depicts Utopian Chiang Mai in the future with the sarcastic intention of showing the city with overwhelming material advancements and discordance among people until the city is away from being the ideal city. People have forgotten traditional environs and way of life. The high buildings in the animation are divided into two zones, i.e., the zone of front buildings that are not so tall and the zone of far buildings that are too tall to be true. The division of buildings symbolizes the inequality among social classes. The front area is space for forgotten marginal people, while the far area represents modern technologies and powerful people.



Figure 6 The Triumph of Selfishness: Important places in ancient city encompassed with modern civilization

2.2 Analysis of the screen

2.2.1 The screen with special curves

The animation is projected on the big screen and divided into three (sub) screens. The screen at the center shows the animation short film “The Triumph of Selfishness” which is 14 minutes long. Meanwhile, the left and right screens show a 30-second animation clip depicting images of Chiang Mai in the future.

So that the animations projected on the three screens do not contradict one another, the movements of the cameras have systematically synchronized with one another. The camera for the central screen moves in depth or the Z Line as the 3D shooting camera in animation; this is Cinematism. As for the animation projected on the left and right screen, the camera moves along X Line; This is Animetism. The camera for the left screen moves from left to right, and the right screen moves from right to left (Figure 7).

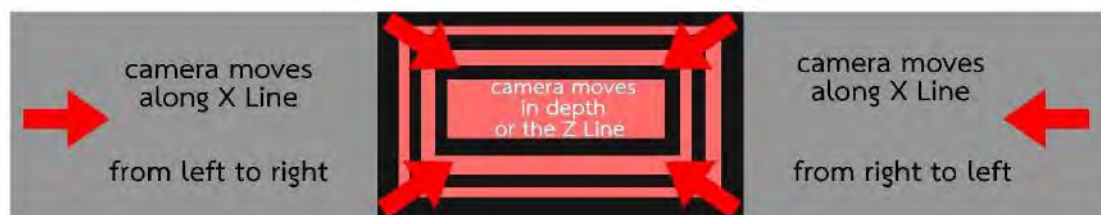


Figure 7 The Triumph of Selfishness: Projection of animations on three screens

The animation shown on the central screen has been an animation short film, but the ones projected on the left and right screens are animations of the imagined Chiang Mai City in the future. The animations projected on the two side screens differ significantly from those on the central screen. The animations on the left and right screen show the city in the future where the environment is in critical status, and buildings are in highly decadent conditions like the city is going to face the doom day of the world when human beings can no longer live in the world. As for the projection of the left and right screens, the animations projected on them are four clips projected continuously in an endless loop, lest too many images will draw the audience’s attention from the main screen (Figure 8).



Figure 8 The Triumph of Selfishness: Example of the animations projected on left and right screens.

Presentation of animation on three screens, resulting in the separation of animation images. The center screen shows a picture of Chiang Mai; according to the story, in the present time, the image is projected onto a flat surface, making the picture look normal image appearance. On the other hand, the images projected on the left and right screens show Chiang Mai from the imagination of a dystopian future more critically than the image on the central screen. The vision of this dystopian city is projected on the curves of the big screen (side screens), which has caused the images to be distorted to Screen Design (Figure 9).

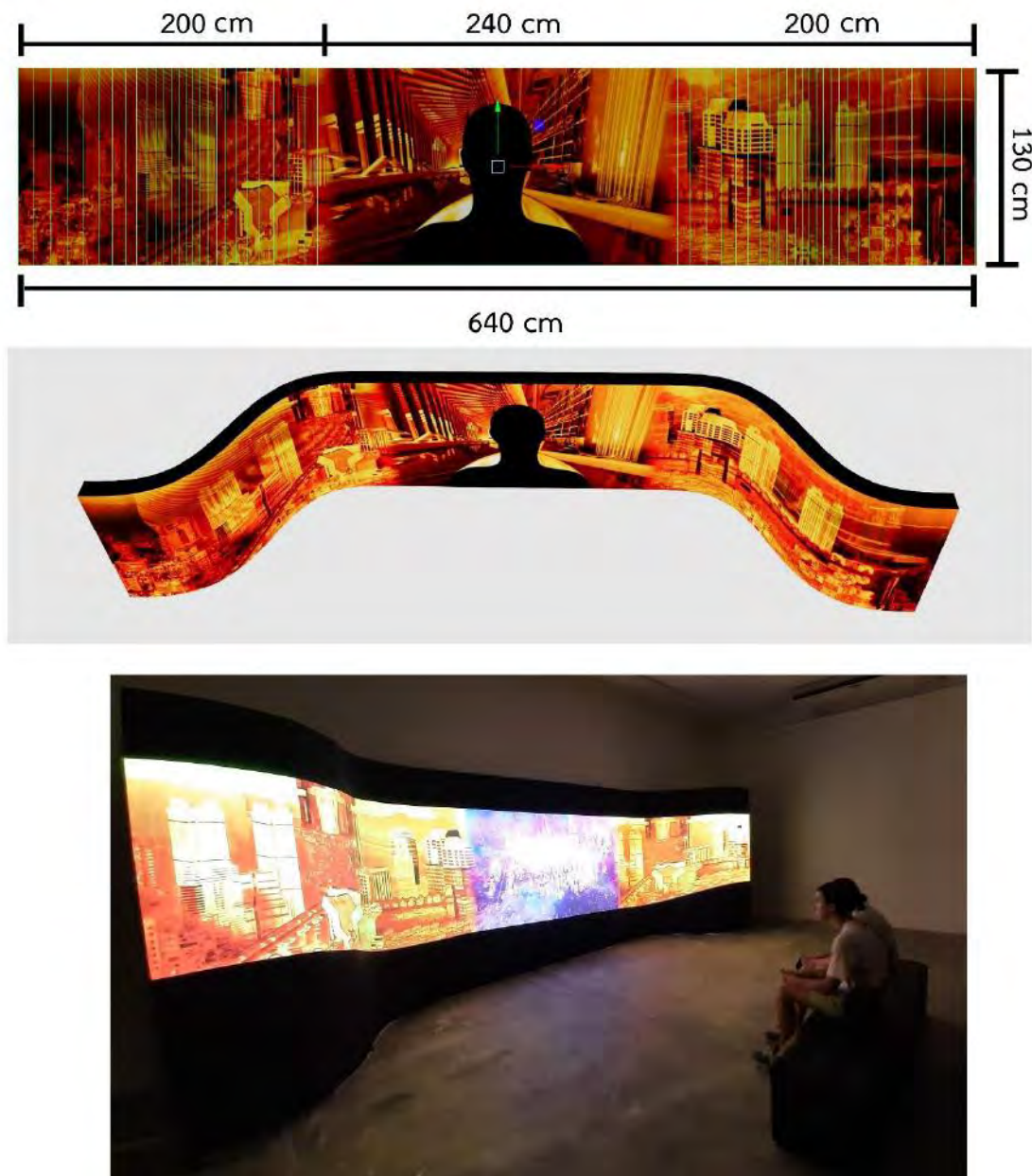


Figure 9 The Triumph of Selfishness: Curves distort projected images

2.2.2 Distance between audience and screen

The big bent screen is 6.4 meters, and the audience has to sit around 3 meters from the screen. Thus, each audience cannot view the images from the three (sub) screens from a direct perspective. To view images on the left or right curved part of the big screen (the left or right

screen), the audience has to turn their face to the spot they want to see. Thus, the audience will see the images shown on a curve if they really want to. Audiences can choose whether to see the images in 3D perspective at the center or turn left or right to see the side images that are distorted with the curves of the screens (Figure 10).

With the aforementioned special features, viewing “The Triumph of Selfishness” is a different animation viewing experience because two styles of motion pictures or animations are shown simultaneously.

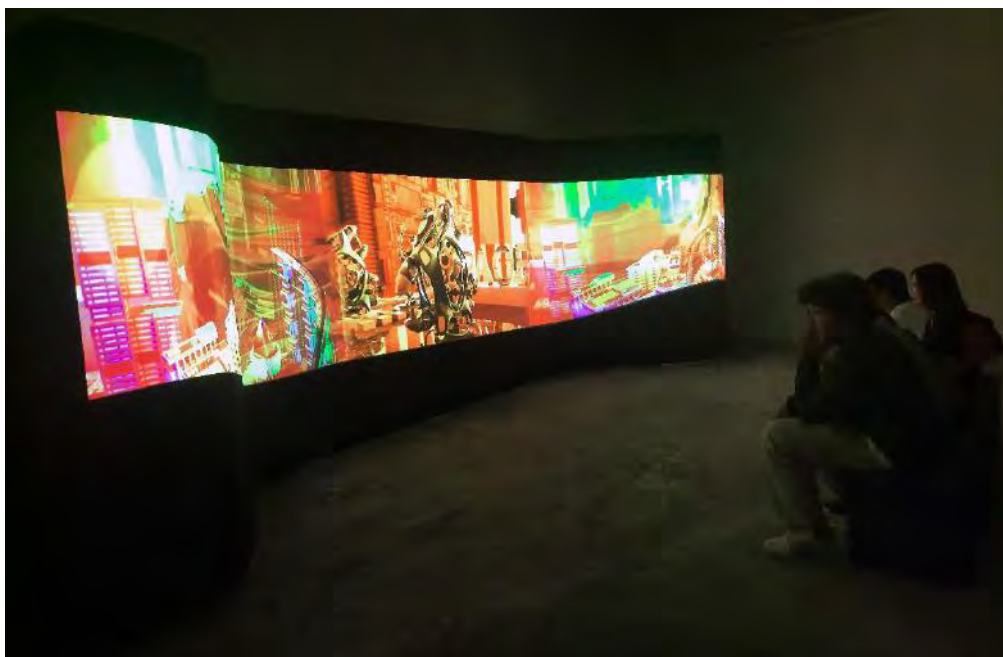


Figure 10 The Triumph of Selfishness: audience took a glimpse
at the image on the left themselves

2.3 Conclusion of the findings from the analysis of the created work

2.3.1 The findings concerning the use of real pictures to create the images of the imagined world

In the imagination of the future in “The Triumph of Selfishness” animation, imagined Chiang Mai in the future has been created based on authentic landscape images of current Chiang Mai by borrowing Low Angle Shot images of Chiang Mai City as the bases for

creating a new city plan like the city plan in the opening scene of ‘Akira’ Animation (Figures 11-12). Using authentic images as the bases and adding with imagination has been a technique that has always been used. An example is ‘Spirited Away’, in which the director, Hayao Miyazaki told the story in the actual natural and architectural contexts, which have been added with the complication of layers to emphasize aestheticism and our attention to even the finest details (Figure 13). This has been the idea to create images from natural things and added with beautiful touches and the new designs of beams and pillars in Accord with imagination, making the settings have realistic details while building the moods and good feelings to artful values (Cavallaro, 2006).

However, even though “The Triumph of Selfishness” animation uses images of real places to create the scenes like many other animations, some unique features have been added to give a unique idea of the animation that shows the society in the future where people have forgotten culture and traditional way of life by using the collage technique to add imagines to the images of real places to build different moods. The newly created images do not show the harmony’s beauty but reflect discordance that can lead to the collapse of the old city (Figure 14).

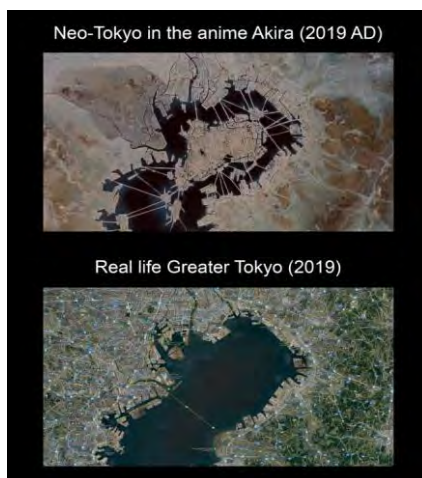


Figure 11: Neo- Tokyo in Akira and Real-Life Greater Tokyo



Figure 12: The Triumph of Selfishness: Imagined Scene Created
from Real Landscape Image



Figure 13 Spirited Away: The Bathhouse



Figure 14 The Triumph of Selfishness: Scenes with borrowed images of real place.

2.3.2 The findings concerning the projection of animations on a special big screen divided into three (sub) screens

The projection of images (animations) on a big screen divided into three (sub) screens is a technique many artists have used to show images connected to one another. Most of the time, an artist will display the image's most prominent part or a focal point on the central screen, while the left and right screens are complementary. In addition, this projection technique allows the display of panoramic images or images that are wider than usual, making the audience feel that they are directly encompassed with content because they are affected by gigantic images displayed fully in the space. Examples of works using the same techniques are 'Once Called Future' by Jaye Rhee (Figure 3) and 'Invisible Places/ the Vast White' by Marianne Strapatsakis (Figure 4).

The animation entitled "The Triumph of Selfishness" uses the projection technique of images on three screens like the works by the aforementioned other artists, with additional special features being the curves at the side screens. In contrast, the central screen is flat as usual. This new design of the screens helps make the images on the central screen more prominent and more efficient than traditional screens because the left and right screens will distort the images with their curves. Thus, images on the left and right screens are shown as moving textures. The viewing is more like the exploration of the overall image than the

identification of crucial or focal points. Thus, the left and right screens show supportive content for the content on the main screen (Figure 15).

The specially designed screens created a breakthrough that is liberating the creation of movement in animation, creating an open-ended process that even the artist cannot control or specify because the images shown on curved screens will have distorted shapes and movements in unpredictable rhythms, which are unique images that are suitable to be used for reflecting imaginations or the expectations because the images are distorted in the way that cannot be fixed like the images in one's dream or the reflection of the moving water. As for the images shown in this project, the fall of Chiang Mai in the future.

In addition, the importance of the projection of animations on the two curved screens is to create motion pictures in two different styles simultaneously to increase the aestheticism from the viewing of special and unique animations from screens. Thus, the creation of the space for the exhibition of the works in this project has been successful as a tool to promote the open-ended process for creating and viewing the animation that shows the in-depth perspective that the animations show distorted images on the surface. This concept can be further developed to set the theme and storyline of the presentation to use the screen more interestingly.



Figure 15 The Triumph of Selfishness: Special screen adds aestheticism from the viewing of images different from the viewing of normal screen

3. CONCLUSION

This “The Triumph of Selfishness” project has succeeded in conveying content and moods concerning the awareness of the crises that may take place in a big city in the future world. Even though the works cannot lead to any change in the future, the visualization of the doomed future and selfishness of human beings in the future should cause the audience to question the importance of city management and the way of life of people nowadays whether they will cause the premature fall of humanity or not. The following key conclusions can be made from the exhibition of the works in this project.

3.1 The presentation of the animations on the unique screen

The specially designed (big) screen has created a viewing experience different from the normal screen, like the space that imitates the future world that nobody is accustomed to (Figure 16). Also, the movements in the animations are unique because the audience can view the 3D movement from the animation projected on the central (sub) screen and the 2D movements from the animations on the left and right (sub) screens at the same time.



Figure 16 The Triumph of Selfishness: The specially designed screen.

3.2 Exchange of experience with audience

During the exhibition of the works, the audience was found to pay a great deal of attention to the screen, which has been seen from the event that while viewing the results, many audiences took photos of the animation and the screen because of the form and style have been unique (Figure 17). As for the experience concerning the overall viewing concerning the recognition of the characters, moods, and hot ambiance from the light of 3 projectors that project the image of the collapsing city in the entire display space, the feedback was the attention that the audience have paid to the animation. This has emphasized that the presentation of the animation of the big screen divided into multiple (sub) screens has fit objectives because it has added more aesthetics, from the expression of mood better than the projection on a single screen (Figure 18).



Figure 17 The Triumph of Selfishness: With interest, some audiences took photos of the animation and the screen.



Figure 18 The Triumph of Selfishness: Mood and ambiance heated up by the light of the three projectors

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