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Being an animator in South Korea

Findings based on an interview with Yi Yong-sŏn

Být animátorem v Jižní Koreji

Objevy založené na rozhovoru s I Jong-sŏnem

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Abstract

Title: Being an animator in South Korea: Findings based on an interview with Yi Yong-sŏn

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This bachelor thesis focuses on the question of what makes the job of an animator attractive for many South Koreans and what the challenges are when pursuing this creative career. Based on an interview, but also on other sources, the thesis evaluates self-declared reasons why South Koreans choose this creative job, the perceived positive and negative sides of this occupation from the view of animators themselves and their assessment of the future that awaits them.

The theoretical part will clarify terminology and unpack the history of animation in the world and especially in East Asia and finally map the evolution of the animation industry in South Korea.

In the practical part, which is based on an interview conducted by me with the animator Yi Yong-sŏn, I will evaluate and interpret his statements about his experience with working in the animation industry with other interviews of South Korean animators published on the internet.

Anotace

Název práce: Být animátorem v Jižní Koreji: Objevy založené na rozhovoru s I Jong-sŏnem

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Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na otázku, co činí pro mnohé Korejce práci animátora atraktivní, a na to, jaké výzvy tato kreativní práce přináší. Na základě interview, taktéž dalších zdrojů, zkoumá tato práce mnou navržené důvody, proč si Korejci vybírají toto kreativní zaměstnání, subjektivní kladné a negativní stránky tohoto povolání z pohledu animátorů a jejich pohledy na budoucnost, která je čeká v tomto odvětví.

Teoretická část vysvětlí používanou terminologii, poodhalí historii animace ve světě, s důrazem na animaci ve východní Asii, a nakonec zmapuje vývoj animačního průmyslu v Jižní Koreji. V praktické části založené na základě rozhovoru s animátorem I Jong-sŏnem budu interpretovat a srovnám jeho postřehy o zkušenostech s prací v animačním průmyslu s rozhovory s dalšími korejskými animátory publikovanými na internetu.

Na tomto místě bych ráda poděkovala svému vedoucímu práce Dr. Andreasi Schirmerovi za ochotu, cenné rady a čas, který mi věnoval. Velké díky patří panu I Jong-sŏnovi za jeho čas a ochotu spolupracovat na rozhovoru, který posloužil pro praktickou část této práce. Také bych chtěla poděkovat své rodině a blízkým, kteří mi byli po celou dobu studia oporou a motivovali mě.

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All of the pictures have been provided by Yi Yong-sŏn from his personal archive.

Transcription

Korean is transcribed into the Latin alphabet following the McCune-Reischauer Romanization System as stated in the *Romanization and Word Division guide* created by the Library of Congress, with the usual exceptions. The titles of artworks are written in the established form, and an English title is used when available. The names of Korean individuals are written in the form of last name and given name, following the Korean convention. The names of artworks are rendered in Italics.

1 Introduction

The South Korean creative industry is currently experiencing a consecutive success while riding on the so called Hallyu wave which includes a wide spectrum of all things K — K-pop, K-drama, but also K-food and other aspects specific to South Korea (referred to as ‘Korea’ in the following text). With that, a wide base of audience all over the world searches for Korean cinematic pieces from films to series and dramas. Platforms like Viki, Netflix, Disney+ and others offer a bountiful variety of content to stream for international demand and the popularity of such content is rising year by year.

But apart from films and series, the Korean motion picture industry has one more powerful kind of content to offer. That is the Korean animation, which, if we put aside kids’ animation, is still waiting for its time to shine on the international market next to the Korean films and dramas that are experiencing the peak of its popularity. Of course, that might change in the upcoming years given many circumstances that will be explained later.

To briefly explain the difference between the kids’ and adult animation, kids’ animation is created mainly to catch the children’s attention, therefore animators use bright colours, simple shapes, and characters that children will most likely know, like animals, food or characters that are children themselves (Rafiee 2023). On the contrary, the adult animation created for adults and adolescents can feature more explicit and dark themes with more complex story, sometimes even violence or nudity, however, it is important to bear in mind that adult animation is not solely about pornography like the Japanese hentai, and it provides a variety of genres from comedy to horror (Henerson 2024).

Talking about the reason why I have chosen animation as the topic of this thesis, animation has been present in my life since early age, and it has had a great influence on me. While considering the career of an animator during my previous studies, especially Korean animation has been a source of inspiration for me, and it still is a great source of motivation to this day. Another reason for choosing this topic is that I have been in contact with an animator from Korea, Mr. Yi Yong-sŏn, whose feature film has won a major award at the Anifilm festival in the Czech Republic in 2018, and I wanted to get to know more about this topic from the point of view of a person who is a part of the animation community. Therefore, we have arranged an interview which will be used in the practical part of this thesis to carry out a comparative analysis of the interview with other animators’ interviews shared publicly in media.

1.1 Research questions and techniques

This thesis' main goals are to find out the reasons why Koreans want to work as animators, their subjective positive and negative points of this occupation, and their opinions on the future of the animation industry and themselves as animators.

In the theoretical part of the thesis, the term animator will be defined alongside an introduction to the history of world animation, history of animation in East Asia, then there will be an overview of the situation of the creative industry in Korea, and finally, the history and present of animation in Korea will be explained. This will bring us to a better understanding of the topics mentioned in the practical part.

The practical part will provide an overview of the most important parts of the interview with Mr. Yi Yong-sŏn, a Korean animator, whose feature film *Pando e sarŏriratta [I'll Just Live in Bando]* has been screened at festivals all around the world and has won a prize in the category Feature Film for Grown-Ups at a Czech festival of animated films Anifilm in 2018. Most of the interview took place in Korea in August 2023 with a few additional questions and changes to the interview added in 2024 via e-mail communication. After the overview, the answers of Mr. Yi will be compared to answers from selected interviews released in media online.

1.2 Definition of the job of an animator

As the word animator is ambiguous, it is important to define which type of animator this thesis will be focused on. In a very simplified term by Hooks (2017), an animator can be thought of as “an actor with a pencil” (24). A more detailed definition from Cavalier (2011) says that an animator is a creator of “single-frame images viewed in rapid succession by some form of mechanism, to create some illusion of a movement” (35).

But it is necessary to realize that being an animator includes many roles that are present in different stages of the process of making an animation. Thanks to the modern technologies, the creation of an animated film does not take as long as in the previous decades, however it is very time-consuming to create animation from the start to the end alone. Therefore, there are usually many animators working on a single film together to save time and for each of them to do what they are the best at.

1.3 History of the world animation

As this thesis contains the separate history of East Asian animation as well as the Korean animation, the term world animation in this chapter does not include the history of these countries.

People have been expressing movement in drawings since the prehistoric times, for example by drawing four pairs of legs to portray a running boar (Williams 2009, 11). However, the history of animation in the whole world according to the definition can be dated back to AD 180 when a Chinese inventor named Ting Huan constructed devices which could be taken as prototypes of what has become a „zoetrope“ some centuries later (Cavalier 2011, 35). Another example of such prototype could be a remarkable device named „laterna magica“, created by the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, which caught the attention of audiences by screening animated drawings onto the wall (Dutka 2014, 9).

The zoetrope, also called “the wheel of life”, is a complex system creating an illusion of movement by inserting a set of images inside a cylinder and looking at them through slits in the cylinder (Williams 2009, 14). Originally named „daedalum“, “the wheel of the devil”, by its inventor William Horner in the 1834, the zoetrope was patented in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1860’s and with that became widely known by the public (Cavalier 2011, 35). Many inventions with the same principle followed in the next decades because of the industrialization, including the „praxinoscope“ (like the zoetrope, but it included mirrors), the „flipper book“, artistic experiments with photography and other methods.

The time when animation began to develop into an art form and an industry was the end of the nineteenth century, a time of significant changes in many aspects (Furniss 2016, 13). From the technological side, there was a push towards mass production and modernization because of the Industrial Revolution, and there were also many political changes at that time (ibid., 13). One of the most remarkable inventions of that time was the successor of praxinoscope, Émile Reynaud’s „théâtre optique (optical theatre)“, a manual prototype of today’s cinema projectors (Bendazzi 2016, 16). Not so long after this invention, the Lumière brothers’ screenings outshone Reynaud, and inspired by them, Georges Méliès created a film called *Le Voyage Dans la Lune [A Trip to the Moon]* in 1902 featuring the infamous scene of a rocket crashing into the eye of a man in the moon (Cavalier 2011, 42). However, it is important to mention that until the turn of the nineteenth century, it was difficult to separate the history of animation and the film history into two categories (ibid., 45).

The motion picture industry of the early twentieth century was developing via trial-and-error experiments that formed principles that are used in the present as well (Bendazzi 2016, 30). The prevalent animation styles of early cinema were hand drawn animation and stop-motion, which was also used for visual effects in live-action productions (Furniss 2016, 29). The World War I had a large impact on the animation world in the sense that the centre of the industry moved from France to the United States (ibid., 50). However, the point from which animation and live action films became two distinct entities is in 1908 when the French artist Émile Cohl created *Fantasmagorie*, a two-minute-long hand drawn frame-by-frame film (Bendazzi 2016, 31). It is mainly because it was a non-narrative animation, which was something entirely new at that time (Furniss 2016, 40).

A game-changing technique was patented by Earl Hurd and John Randolph Bray in 1915 in the United States (Cavalier 2011, 62). According to Furniss (2016), the principle of the technique is “drawing moving parts on clear celluloid sheets that are stacked over a background” (46). „Cel animation“ not only enabled the artist to re-draw a moving part of a character without having to repaint the background, but it was also a big aid when it came to labour forces as it required less time and people to create an animated film (Furniss 2016, 46). Another relevant invention came from an employee of Bray, Max Fleischer, who patented the invention of a rotoscope, a device that projects each frame individually onto the artist’s light table and allows tracing or drawing over the characters in a live-action film (Cavalier 2011, 66). Rotoscope is also used in today’s animation because it ensures smoother transitions between the frames. There was also the „slash system“ and „perforation of drawing paper“, which was introduced by Raoul Barré (Bendazzi 2016, 39).

When it comes to animated films, there is usually a character which serves as a mascot of the whole narrative to the public. One of them is Otto Messmer’s *Felix the Cat*, an international star born in the United States who was popular mainly in the 1910’s and early 1920’s (Furniss 2016, 45). *Felix the Cat* was an eye-catching series of the time as *Felix* was a character with a naughty personality and the ability to transform into any form, and the series often addressed social issues of those days (Furniss 2016, 54–55). Another character that made a buzz in the animation world in 1914 was Winsor McCay’s *Gertie the Dinosaur*, a character with a personality interacting with the animator himself on stage as if it were a living entity (Cavalier 2011, 62).

In the mid-1920's, the appearance of „sound-on-film technology“ and advances in film sound allowed creative minds to grow and experiment while making their films (Furniss 2016, 52). Most screenings had a sort of background music and some even sound effects until the discovery of this technology (ibid., 57). But the adaptation was delayed due to the start of the Great Depression, and in Japan, it was due to the popularity of *benshi* voice actors (ibid., 57).

At that time, many creators either began as comic strip artists, or they were animators and comic strip creators at the same time (Bendazzi 2016, 38). There was also a successful distributor named Margaret J. Winkler who represented the biggest American animation studios at that time, including those of Pat Sullivan, Max and Dave Fleischer, and most importantly Walt Disney (Furniss 2016, 59). Walt Disney's determination led him to becoming the world leader of the animation industry (Cavalier 2011, 76). The film that marked his breakthrough was *Alice's Wonderland* thanks to its success with the distributor Margaret J. Winkler (Bendazzi 2016, 51). It was a film featuring a live actress in an animated world — the opposite of the other animated films that mostly had male protagonists and featured animated characters on the background of a video captured in reality. After this success, Disney created a character named *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*, but the producer Charles Mintz, who was the husband of M. J. Winkler, pulled most of Disney's animators to the Universal Pictures, and therefore Disney decided to return to the starting position and create another original character (Cavalier 2011, 77). That character was *Mickey Mouse* (drawn by Ub Iwerks) who debuted in *Steamboat Willie* in 1928 and possessed some of *Oswald's* elements (ibid., 77). Known by not only children, but also adults all around the world, *Mickey Mouse* is the most successful animated character of all time until this day. As Cavalier (2011) says, the animations featuring *Mickey Mouse* were “cleverly designed to appeal to a child's mind and to ›the child in all of us‹” (77).

The style in which characters were created in the 1920's was unfortunately leaving only little space for original content as many characters shared similar traits and even appearance (Furniss 2016, 65). It can be clearly seen in the *Krazy Kat shorts*, where the character *Krazy Kat* obviously imitated *Mickey Mouse* (Bendazzi 2016, 113). This was a prevailing trend during the old days of animation, when animators tried to “recycle” their characters as much as possible to save time and production costs of their films. Taking into consideration the time and energy it took to create a 2D animated film without a computer, one cannot blame the animators of those days at all. As for *Mickey Mouse*, there were quite many attempts to copy the character

because either everybody wanted a little bit of the fame for themselves, or the characters were created as a tribute to the legendary character and its creator Walt Disney.

The whole film industry was in bloom during the so-called Golden Age (1928–1951) (Bendazzi 2016, 95). That means the appearance of new iconic characters. First introduced in *Dizzy Dishes* with her half-humanoid dog *Bimbo*, Max Fleischer's *Betty Boop* made her debut in the 1930's as a party girl, a "flapper", and the first vamp, in other words an attractive and popular young woman (Cavalier 2011, 100) Even though *Betty Boop* was created to appeal to the adult audience with her provocative attitude and revealing clothes, it was very soon put to a stop in the 1934 with the enforcement of the *Code of Motion Picture Production*, also called the *Hays Code*, that banned suggestive themes in films, and it unfortunately meant that *Betty Boop*'s popularity started decreasing (Bendazzi 2016, 116). Max's brother Dave Fleischer was also a creator of characters successful amongst the audience, one of them being *Popeye the Sailor* that made an appearance in the *Betty Boop* series (Cavalier 2011, 106). *Popeye the Sailor* beat *Mickey Mouse* in a popularity survey conducted in the 1930's (Dutka 2004, 21).

An interesting element can be seen in the division of genres in animated films, with two major prevailing genres, where Walt Disney accounts for fairytales, and grotesque is represented by the rest of the animation industry (Dutka 2004, 24). At that time, The Walt Disney Studios belonged to the biggest studios in the United States with more than 1,600 employees (ibid., 22). And the biggest blockbuster of the Golden Age was the musical *Snow White* (1937), an animated colour feature film that cost Walt Disney almost 1,500,000 American dollars in total and brought him close to bankruptcy (Bendazzi 2016, 102). Another success came with the production of *Dumbo* (1941) which earned Disney the most out of his 1940's films (Cavalier 2011, 135).

Walt Disney continued with anthropomorphizing of the characters, in other words making non-human characters look and act humanly, e.g. *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961), *The Jungle Book* (1967), until his last film *Mary Poppins* (1964), which was re-issued in the 1966 when Walt Disney passed away (Dutka 2004, 26). To avoid any confusion, *The Jungle Book* was released after his death, but it was the last film that was originally produced by Walt Disney himself. During his fruitful career, his works received thirty Oscars, his merchandising, involving entertainment facilities like *Disneyland* and *Disneyworld*, almost has no competition, and most importantly, he invented the *storyboard*, the animator's equivalent of a script with the addition of an image of the actual scene (Dutka 2004, 26–27).

Other big names of the American animation industry worth mentioning include Walter Lantz with his characters *Woody Woodpecker* (1940) and *Andy Panda*, Hugh Herman, and Rudolph Ising, even Columbia Pictures, and Warner Bros. with *Porky Pig*, *Daffy Duck* and *Bugs Bunny* (ibid., 22).

As for Europe, one of the most influential animators of the 1930's was Russian Ladislav Vladimir Starewicz and his *Le Roman de Renard [The Tale of the Fox]* (1930, produced in France) a stop-motion anthropomorphic animation featuring a typical sly fox story (Cavalier 2011, 102). There was also Alexandre Alexeïeff, an avantgarde animator, who was the inventor of the „pinscreen animation method“, that created very unique effects later used by other animators as well (Dutka 2004, 33). And finally, one of the influential European animators was a woman, German Lotte Reiniger with *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed [The Adventures of Prince Achmed]* (1926), the first animated feature film in the world (Dutka 2004, 36–37). It is an adaptation of a story from Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, the first English translation of the Middle Eastern and Asian fairy tales and folklore (Cavalier 2011, 88). Apparently, it was the first film that used the multiplane camera, giving the two-dimensional film an illusion of depth. (ibid.)

At the end of the World War II, the tables had turned and what was a time of prosperity for the United States meant a loss for the animation studios that could not afford to improve the production of feature and short animated films because of the skyrocketing production costs (Bendazzi 2016, 105). Following the death of Walt Disney, the fame of The Walt Disney Productions was not revived earlier than in the 1980's by a new wave of animators (Bendazzi 2016, 105). Another sad fall happened to the Fleischer Studios that went bankrupt after the release of *Mr. Bug Goes to Town* (1941) (Dutka 2004, 21).

Following the political and economic influences, the animation industry experienced multiple changes. The arrival of the *slapstick comedy* meant that the connection between the animation and comic strips eventually loosened, which led to the change of character design, now catered exclusively to the purposes of animation (Bendazzi 2016, 109). Many animation companies then followed the trend of building multiple departments and bringing a system into the creation of animated films (ibid.). While in the United States the animation industry became a tool of politics, the Eastern countries of Europe were experiencing a big boom after the World War II, mainly thanks to the arrival of television (Dutka 2004, 48).

Returning back to the United States, one of the most remarkable studios was the United Productions of America (UPA), consisting of John Hubley, Bill Hurtz, director

Bob Cannon, and Steve Bosustow who cancelled the automatization of the production and gave the artists artistic and intellectual freedom (Dutka 2004, 50). Many films started focusing on the adult audience, like *Mr. Magoo* in *Ragtime Bear* (1949), *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1951) which won an Oscar, and *Rooty Toot Toot* (1952) which is about a murder story from various perspectives (Dutka 2004, 51; Cavalier 2011, 156). However, with the beginning of the 1950's, the fame of the studio was slowly diminishing and some of the artists left while some were blacklisted (Dutka 2004, 52). Overall, the studio's films had an influence not only on the United States, but actually the whole world (ibid., 53). Let me mention the outstanding artists involved with the studio, Tex Avery, and Chuck Jones, who created the character *Bugs Bunny* (1938) at M-G-M which was the exact opposite of Walt Disney's works (ibid., 54). Tex Avery was somehow a darker version of Disney, with films like *King-Size Canary* (1947) or *The Cat that Hated People* (1949), which both had very unconventional storylines (ibid.). Chuck Jones' fame arrived a little bit later with the Oscar winning *Dot and Line* (1965) (ibid., 55).

In 1957, there was a new studio founded by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera which was in the middle of the 1960's able to create 7.5 kilometres of hand-drawn animation a week to satisfy the demands of television that has caused the short animated films' disappearance from the cinemas for good since the 1950's (ibid.).

A little bit on the side from the mainstream were abstract and avant-garde films that however influenced the evolution of UPA, for example Mary Ellen Bute's three-dimensional films with ping-pong balls, Douglas Crockett's animated oil paint films, or rather surrealistic Teru Murakami's *The Insects* where a human fights against a herd of ants (ibid., 56–7).

Another artist worth-mentioning who could be taken as an example of the new wave of American animation is Ralf Bakshi with his *Fritz the Cat* (1971) which was one of the most successful independent animation films of all time and the first X-rated animated film in the United States (Cavalier 2011, 218–219).

The last remarkable approach to animation in the United States that I would like to mention was conducted by the youngest representative named John Lasseter, who is both a pioneer in 3D computer animation and a master, with an Oscar-winning debut film *Luxo jr.* (1986) about a table lamp raising another tiny table lamp, followed by *Tin Toy* (1988), and the worldwide blockbusters *Toy Story* (first film released in 1995—fifth film in production as of 2024), *A Bug's Life* (1998), the *Cars* trilogy (2006–2017), and many more (Dutka 2004, 61). He was a part of the famous Pixar Animation Studios where they also sold the „Pixar

Image Computer“ used to colour animated films which even Disney bought from them (Cavalier 2011, 264). The holy grail of computer animation, *Toy Story* was a collaboration of Pixar and Disney on a full computer animated film (Cavalier 2011, 298).

The neighbouring country Canada had a strong animation studio The National Film Board of Canada that was offering artists a fixed wage which is something that could be called a miracle in the world of animation (Dutka 2004, 62) Artists from all over the world came to Canada on a short-term contract to produce their films, including Czech Břetislav Pojar (*Potkali se u Kolína [They Met Near Kolin]*, *Pojďte pane, budeme si hrát [Hey Mister, Let's Play!]*) or Netherland's Paul Driessen (*Ei om Zeep [The Killing of an Egg]*, *Yellow Submarine*) (ibid., 63). The founder of the studio, John Grierson, invited his colleague Norman McLaren from the United Kingdom who then created an air mail commercial on a raw film, a technique invented by his colleague Len Lye (ibid.). McLaren's portfolio mostly includes animations based on musical works and ballet performances, but his Oscar-winning animation was the *Neighbours* (1952), an allegory of the political situation of that time, created by a new technique, *pixilation*, which is an animation of the movement of a real actor, and *Canon* (1964) is said to be his most perfect and interesting creation (ibid., 64–65). Strangely, the former film was submitted and won in the documentary section of Oscars (Cavalier 2011, 159).

There were also remarkable women animators in the studio, one of them was Janet Perelman with *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin* (1981), and Caroline Leaf, who became world-famous through her sand animations on glass like *The Owl Who Married a Goose* (1974) or Kafka's *The Metamorphosis of Mr. Samsa* (1977), and an oil paint animation with Picasso's aura called *Street* (1976) (Dutka 2004, 68–69).

The animation industry in Europe experienced its greatest boom after the World War II, with the United Kingdom being no exception where the most remarkable animators were John Halas, George Dunning, Richard (Dick) Williams and Bob Godfrey, and the brothers Stephen and Timothy Quay, whose *Street of Crocodiles* (1986) was a hit (ibid., 73–81). Amongst the women representatives that are known around the world, it is worth mentioning Alison De Vere, whose second film *Mr. Pascal* (1979) won at the Annecy festival (ibid., 80).

Halas was from Hungary, and besides founding the country's famous biggest animation studio called Halas and Batchelor with his wife Joy Batchelor, he was the head of the ASIFA Organisation, and his animated creations include *Players* (1982) that were made with computer animation with the help of a Czech artist and director Petr Šis, George Orwell's

classic *Animal Farm* (1953), many TV series for the BBC channel, and the studio also took care of the production of *Popeeye* animation in the 1960's (ibid., 74–75). The *Animal Farm* is a step from the cuteness used in other animations as it delivers an allegory of the political situation, but with a happy ending, a contrary to Orwell's original (Cavalier 2011, 162).

The age of television inevitably pushed out cinemas from its leading position and animators also had to adapt to the faster and cheaper production for the television, except for the well-paid commercial creations, which unfortunately also meant a decline in quality for the next thirty years of animated production (ibid., 169). George Dunning had started his career at McLaren's division at the NFB, was shortly a part of the UPA, and in the end he created his own company for TV series production (Dutka 2004, 75). His animations contain the typical British humour, for example *The Flying Man* (1962) or *The Apple* (1959), and there is also the feature-film *Yellow Submarine* (1967), a mix of pop-art and hippies' vibe, which was made in collaboration with the German artist Heinz Edelman (ibid., 76).

Richard Williams had started his career in Dunning's studio in Montreal and after moving to the Great Britain, he created his first film *The Little Island* (1958) with money from TV commercials, with the help of Walt Disney's animators he created an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, followed by *Who Framed Rogger Rabbit* (1988), and then he also animated subtitles for the *Return of the Pink Panther* (1975) and *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976) (ibid., 76–77). In contrast, Bob Godfrey was one of the creators of the free cinema, whose animations like misogynist *Polygamous Polonius* (1960), *Alf, Bill and Fred* (1964) and Oscar-nominated *Kama Sutra Rides Again* (1971) combined sex and absurdity (ibid., 78).

The evolution of the British animation can also be seen in the fact that in the 1950's, there were only two bigger animation studios, while in the middle of the 1980's, there were over forty studios (ibid., 79). Almost all the animators' works mentioned used two-dimensional animation drawn on paper, cut-out animation or stop-motion, but there is also another method that plays a big role in the world animation. That is the „clay animation“, represented for example by Will Vinton who had a talent for realistic/hyperrealistic portrayals of people (ibid., 60). The probably most famous studio is the Aardman's Studio, founded by Peter Lord and David Sproxton in 1972 in Bristol, that rose to its fame thanks to the concept of recording interviews on a magnetophonon and then creating an animation with clay that included gestures, lip-sync and even lisp of the speakers (ibid., 82–83). Shortly called „claymation“, this technique is a kind of stop-motion animation using a substance that can be transformed easily like clay or

plasticine (Cavalier 2011, 259). Another colleague from Aardman's Studio, Nick Park, later inspired by their work created an amazing series of interviews where he assigned the speech to ZOO animals and called it *Creatures Comfort* (1990), which also won him an Oscar award (Dutka 2004, 83–84). Another of his Oscar winning films, *The Wrong Trousers* (1993) then gave birth to the beloved Wallace and Gromit series about a cheese lover and his dog (Dutka 2004, 84).

In France, the animators' approach to the medium was quite different in the era between the two World Wars and one of the reasons might be that the United States built their production studio branch in Paris to have an advantage on the European animation market (ibid., 86–87). When it comes to „cut-out animation“, Jean-François Laguionie and Michel Ocelot were ones of the most significant animators that exhibited the elegant and at the same time lively style of the French animation (ibid., 90–92). Besides these French animators, there was also Paul Grimault, whose career was full of trial and fail projects after which he finally rose to worldwide fame with his *The King and the Mockingbird* (1980), a film based on a part of the former unfinished film that was rewritten and reshot by Jacques Prévert (ibid., 88).

A different approach and topics can be seen in Polish animated films until the middle of 1960's, where the historic and political background formed an array of somehow pessimistic animated works which are called experimental (ibid., 100). The cities of production of the Polish animated films were Warsaw, Łódź and Kraków, while the only one focused on children's animation was in Bialsko-Biala near the border with Czechia (ibid., 107). An interesting technique can be seen in Witold Giersz's *The Little Western* (1960) where he animated watercolour paintings instead of linear characters, or in Zbigniew Rybczyński's film *Tango* (1981) containing countless film tricks (ibid., 106–107).

The South European Italy's Golden Age came in the middle of the 1950's, again with the introduction of television, and continued until the middle of the 1970's (ibid., 120). A fascinating play with a simple line was created by Osvaldo Cavandoli in *La Linea* at the end of the 1960's, from which he made four TV series and two comic books (ibid., 121). A little bit extraordinary case amongst all animators mentioned is Bruno Bozetto, who was from a well-situated family, and he received his own animation studio as a present when he became an adult (ibid., 122). His *Mr. Rozzi* was a popular character of the 1960's and his *Allegro Non Troppo* (1977), inspired by Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, was a combination of animation and live actors (ibid., 124).

If we return to the Russian animation, the boom of its animation industry arrived after the re-establishment of Soyuzmultfilm in the 1970's and 1980's, with Yuri Norstein's *Heron and Crane* (1974) and *Tale of Tales* (1979), which is said to be the one of the best animated films of all time, or Vyacheslav Kotyonochkin's *Well, Just You Wait!* (1969) which is a legendary cartoon about a wolf chasing a sly rabbit, known not only by the generation of my parents but also the following ones. (ibid., 133–139).

At the end of the 1980's, the animation industry welcomed the Digital Era that is still ongoing. That ultimately opened the door to computer animation and Computer-Generated Imagery, shortly CGI, which was surprisingly partly faked in Steven Lisberger's *Tron* (1982) by creating hand-drawn dupes rather than creating the CGI on a computer (Cavalier 2011, 248). The grand opening of the abilities to create computer animation at home was possible with the computer *Commodore 64* in 1983 (ibid., 255). When it comes to the leading software for 3D CGI animation, *Maya* software and *Softimage*, later acquitted by Autodesk, can be given as examples (ibid.). The beginnings of CGI animation happened in 1976 with the sci-fi film *Futureworld* by Ed Catmull, who later became affiliated with Pixar and Disney Studios (ibid., 238). The icon of CGI animation live-action films is one and only *Matrix* series made by the Wachowskis in the years 1999–2021 as they created an unbelievable imagery by combining camera tricks and CGI animation (ibid., 318).

In this era, Matt Groening created a series loved by many generations, *The Simpsons*, which is a sitcom with the longest running period and the first animated series in the last twenty years to be played on television during the prime time (ibid., 284). Cavalier (2011) says that it is appealing to both children and adults (284), but I agree only partially, as most of the episodes include scenes and jokes that are more suitable for adolescent and adult viewers.

An exclusively adult animation to put in contrast is Matt Stone and Trey Parker's cruder version of *The Simpsons* called *South Park* (1997) which is about children that experience surreal things, use a lot of foul language and are animated in a simplified style and have become one of the first virals on the internet (Cavalier 2011, 309).

Thanks to the mentioned inventions, animators had more freedom to experiment, one of them being “the king of horror/scary films” and a producer of an exceptional quality Tim Burton who received a fund from Disney to create *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) with Henry Selick who later created *Coraline* (2009) (Cavalier 2011, 290). Another master of disturbing imagery is Czech Jan Švankmajer whose *Možnosti dialogu*

[*Dimensions of Dialogue*] (1982) and *Něco z Alenky [Alice]* (1988) show his creepy style that eventually made him famous. (Cavalier 2011, 252).

The end of the 1990's registered the rising interest to produce online content, which was possible with the invention of *Flash*, an animation program that reduced the size of animations and allowed faster and easier downloading (ibid., 311). One of the new animation studios was The DreamWorks SKG, established in 1994 by Steven Spielberg, David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg, which has been producing films aiming both at children and adult audiences (ibid. 2011, 312).

The rivalry between animation studios can be clearly seen in the release of films *Antz* (1998) by DreamWorks Animation / Pacific Data Image and *A Bug's Life* (1998) by Pixar/Disney, which are both about ants and advocate for freedom and fighting against tyrants (ibid., 315). Disney/Pixar was the first to call out the similarities between the films, as Katzenberg was a former employee at the time of early talks about *A Bug's Life*, but he swiftly denied these allegations as the mastermind behind *Antz* was Tim Johnson and not Katzenberg (ibid.).

With the new millennium, the animation improved in the sense that textures were more detailed, and everything therefore looked more real, e.g. the fur of *James P. Sullivan* or *Shrek's* clothes, which can be seen in Pixar's *Monsters, Inc.* (2001) and DreamWork's anti-fairytale *Shrek* (2001) (ibid., 328–329). Hand in hand came the rise of the video game industry, the technique of *motion capture*, capturing the motion of a real person and mapping it onto a computer-made model, was used more frequently and slowly mastered into perfection as can be seen in *Grand Theft Auto 3* (2001) (ibid., 334). In the film industry, it is said that *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002) was one of the most successful incorporations of this method with the character of *Gollum*, which was mapped simultaneously with its actor (ibid.). The first CGI animated film with humans as the protagonists was *The Incredibles* (2004), featuring a middle-class family composed of former superhero parents and their children all possessing some superpowers that try to live an ordinary life (ibid., 348–349).

The animation industry keeps growing in the 21st century and faces many challenges caused either by the different habits of viewers, or the new technologies like the artificial intelligence. Many brilliant animated films have been released since *The Incredibles*, but in order to limit the scope of this thesis, this overview over the history of world animation (with East Asian and Korean animation included in separate chapters) will not include the most recent developments and achievements.

1.4 Animation industry in East Asia

Japan

Undoubtedly one of the leading countries in the animation industry is Japan. The peculiar Japanese anime style was unfortunately overlooked for some time, and some Western population still does not recognize it as a proper form of art (Okuha 2023). In the following only those works of Japanese animators will be mentioned that can be considered as sources of inspiration for Korean animation – because it is sadly impossible to do justice to all the masterminds of the Japanese animation industry in this thesis.

One of them is Osamu Tezuka and his legendary *Astro Boy (Tetsuwan Atomu Astro Boy)* (1963) which is to this day appearing from time to time in the Czech television broadcast as well (Dutka 2004, 144). Cavalier (2011) says that it could be taken as a work that demonstrates the anime style (190). I would suggest that it might have been a sort of an inspiration for Korea's *Robot T'aekwŏn V*, a work that will be mentioned in the next chapter.

The „king of Japanese animation“ is Hayao Miyazaki with his classics like *Porco Rosso (Kurenai No Buta)* (1982), *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze No Tani No Naushika)* (1984), emotional *My Neighbour Totoro (Tonari no Totoro)* (1988), *Princess Mononoke (Mononoke Hime)* (1997) and *Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi)* (2001), with many allegories of the modern times, that has rightfully won an Oscar award. A film that Korean audiences might sympathise with is Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies (Hotaru no Haka)* (1988) which tells a story about two siblings trying to survive amid the World War II in Japan. He later established the Studio Ghibli in 1985 with Hayao Miyazaki (Cavalier 2011, 208). The attention of the West appeared to happen in 1997 when they used computer animation for *Princess Mononoke (Mononoke Hime)* (Cavalier 2011, 241). Miyazaki lost his trust in Western distribution for a while because of the English version of *Nausicaä* that left out a part of the movie and added a horrible dubbing to it (Cavalier 2011, 257).

The start of the contemporary Japanese animation could be marked with Taiji Yabushita's *Legend of the White Snake, aka the Tale of the White Serpent (Hakuja Den)* (1958), first coloured feature film in Japan, setting the roots of today's anime (Cavalier 2011, 176). Another remarkable animated work is *Sazae-san* (1969), the world's longest-running animation series based on a manga created by Machiko Hasegawa (Cavalier 2011, 212). Anime fans' all-time favourite *Akira* (1988) was unique in the way that its animator Katsuhiro Otomo chose to record the sound before he made the film, which was not common in Japanese anime (Cavalier 2011, 278). Following Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1988), Mamoru Oshii's

Ghost in the Shell (Koukaku Kidou Tai) (1995) contains a cyberpunk concept combining two-dimensional animation with three-dimensional CGI animation (Cavalier 2011, 306).

Although many animated films portray positive themes, *Pica-don* (1972) of Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita depicts nuclear bombing of Hiroshima with no censor, showing the dying characters in the cruelest way possible (Cavalier 2011, 221). A continuation of the “brutal reality” can be found in the interesting turn of *Perfect Blue* (1998) by Satoshi Kon, which is sweeping away the borders of illusion and reality, bringing more disturbing topics into the animated works (Cavalier 2011, 317).

Regarding the animation studios in Japan, the first leaders amongst them were Toei Dōga and Mushi Productions in the 1960’s (Ristola 2016, 85). With an effect that is still visible in the present, it was mainly Toei’s labour policy that paved the way for the trend of preferring freelance animators over full time employees, but also late 1990’s Prime Minister Hashimoto supported this concept by issuing some changes to working possibilities (Ristola 2016, 85). Contrastingly, Osamu Tezuka of Mushi Productions paid his employees well, however, it took a toll on the quality and time management of the animation production (Ristola 2016, 86). It is quite a surprise to me that animators in general continue to work in these horrible working conditions because they either enjoy the character of this occupation, or they simply need to earn money for a living (ibid., 88). There is a visible discrepancy between the workload and the financial compensation animators receive, which was also criticised by Hayao Miyazaki in the past (ibid., 90). And a slightly unbelievable fact is that being hospitalized from overworking yourself is a badge of honor amongst Japanese animators (Dooley & Hida 2023). Another interesting point of the Japanese animation industry is that the foreign market takes only around ten percent of Japanese animation industry’s sales while domestic animation prevails (Yamamoto 2014, 46).

In other fields, animation was also incorporated, the first being Nintendo that created a video game *Donkey Kong* (1981) and later the character of *Super Mario* in the legendary *Super Mario 64* game (1996) (Cavalier 2011, 245).

China

The Chinese animation is represented by the Wan brothers and their *Princess Iron Fan (Tie Shan Gong Zhu)* (1941) with the depiction of a monk, priest, monkey king and a pig, the latter two as half-animal half-humanoid characters typical for Asian animation, searching for Buddhist texts (Cavalier 2011, 137). It was probably popular due to the theme where people

unite to defeat a despot (ibid.). Following that, the last major animated film before the Cultural Revolution was *Havoc in Heaven (Da Nao Tian Gong)* (1961), showing how the visual and story of the film are different compared to the Western films of that time (ibid., 194). The first part of the film was completed in 1961, the second in 1964 (Lent 2001, 10). The Cultural Revolution was a tragic period for the animation industry as the Shanghai studio had to be closed and the animators were sent to the countryside (ibid., 13).

The best era for the Chinese animators came during the communist party Mao Zedong's *Hundred Flowers Campaign* in the years 1957–1966, when the Shanghai Animation Film Studio gained the status of the state ›Studio‹ (ibid., 10). Representing the traditional art, *Where is Mama* (1960) by Te Wei and Qian Jajun used brush strokes of the traditional Chinese paintings (ibid., 11). Another creative artistic approach can be seen in Yu Zhenguang's folded paper animation specific to the Chinese animators called *A Clever Duckling* (1960) (ibid., 11). Te Wei's *Buffalo Boy and the Flute (Mu Di)* (1963) was released right before the Cultural Revolution, but it was unfortunately denied the chance to be screened as the regime criticised the content of the film (ibid., 14–15).

The period after the Cultural Revolution is often referred to as the Second Golden Age. During this period, the animator A Da released his *The Three Monks (San Ge Heshang)* (1980) which is a fusion of traditional Chinese painting and thinking with Western methods of creating characters and freedom in experimenting (ibid., 19). Thanks to him the Chinese animation became known overseas, and he also initiated the Chinese and American animators' collaboration on the experimental *Academy Leader Variations* (1987) (ibid., 20). Another remarkable film is *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King (Nezha Nao Hai)* (1979), created by A Da, Wang Shuchen and Yan Dingxian and is said to be the first Chinese wide-screen feature film (ibid., 22).

Interestingly, the Shanghai Animation Studio was on a set budget provided by the regime that also dictated the maximum length of films that can be distributed yearly (ibid., 24). However, with the arrival of strong rivals from Japan and the United States, the national animated films kept falling behind and animators started leaving their workplaces to work for the studios from the West and Japan that outsourced their films in Asia thanks to the cheaper labour (ibid.). It led to the establishment of the Jade Animation studio in 1985 that was a joint company of the Hongkong broadcast group and Japanese studios that needed cheap workforce for their animated films (ibid., 25). An interesting fact is pointed out by Zou Qin who talks about the animators focusing on the quantity of created material to earn as much money as

possible and about a higher wage for animators working for the foreign animation studios (ibid., 26).

Taiwan

When searching for other East Asian countries' animation history, there was either very little about the country, or it did not have any significant successful films. That is thankfully not the case of Taiwan with its Wang Film Production Co., Ltd. also known as the Cuckoo's Nest which is given credit on worldwide animated series like *Scooby Doo*, *Garfield*, *Smurfs*, *The Flintstones*, and many others (Lent 2001, 125). With rising prices of labour in Taiwan, Wang decided to build branches in countries like China and Thailand to prevent going over the budget (ibid.). What might come as a surprise based on the previous statement is that Wang explicitly acknowledges and appreciates the hard-working nature of his workers and mentions that it is caused by the influence of Confucianism (ibid., 126).

2 Korean animation

2.1 History of K-Animation

2.1.1 Roots

It is said that the first Korean animation ever made was an advertisement for *Lucky Toothpaste* (1956) created by Mun Tal-bu (Lent 2001, 89). Later, it was discovered that the very first animated film in Korea was actually screened in cinemas, and it was a commercial for *OB sinalk'o*, an alcohol-free beer. This commercial was also made by Mun Tal-bu two months before the *Lucky Toothpaste* (Choo 2014, 147). I have also found an article claiming that the first animated film in Korea was *Kae kkum [Dog Dreams]* (Kim 2023). Kim (2023) however mentions that the film was cancelled during the production (34).

Lent (2001) claims that between the years 1958–1994, the Korean animation industry placed 3rd behind the United States and Japan in the production of animated films with a thousand of animated films yearly (Lent 2001, 89). However, most of them were subcontract animations created for the overseas market (ibid.). Korea's first animated feature film was *Hong Kil-tong* (1967) by Sin Dong-hŏn, a domestically successful animated film that started the domestic production of other animated films, which was created six years after a military coup that resulted in state restrictions of cinema (Cavalier 2011, 203). The production was done in a very improvised way as the desired equipment was not available and they reused surveillance films thrown away by the American military forces (Lent 2001, 90–91). Overall,

the films were not doing well because of the lack of professional equipment and the skills of animators. (ibid., 97).

The animation industry in the 1960's/70's suffered from people's prejudice that animation is only for the child audience and therefore something of low intellectual quality (Lent 2001, 91). It was the era of science fiction films influenced by Japanese anime series. *Pŏngae Atŏm [Lightning Atom]* (1971) was similar to *Tetsuwan Atomu [Astro Boy]* and because the latter was much more popular, the Korean film was re-released as the *Toraon Pŏngae Atŏm [Return of Lightning Atom]* in 1975 (Choo 2014, 150). Probably the most popular animated science fiction film is *Robot T'aekwŏn V* (1975) animated by Kim Ch'ŏng-gi. Although the robot era was later dismissed, there are now a few theme parks that were built in honor of this iconic genre of Korean animation (Choo 2014, 159).

In 1980, the government had proceeded with the Children's Protection Policy, which was against this type of animation, and also, since the end of the 1960's, it listed animated films as "the six evils of Korean society" (Lent 2001, 91–92). The feature animation was slowly disappearing as television series gained more popularity, the reasons varying from absence of financial support from the government to lack of attention from the adult audience (Lent 2001, 92). Same as in the other parts of the world, the television stations with KBS in lead helped the industry as they demanded animation that they could air (Lent 2001, 96). Yet, Lent (2001) says that most of the screened animated films were still from overseas productions (96).

After the robot era came animations with a deeper story like Yi To-hu's *Mŏtŏl tosa* (1989) that told the story about a monk that has supernatural powers, or *Narara syup'ŏbodŭ [The Flying Superboard/Fly! Superboard!]* (1990) which was one of the first series in Korea that was renewed for multiple seasons (Kalbi 2017). A groundbreaking moment for the Korean animation came with *Lot'i ũi mohŏm [Lotti's Adventure]* (1990), an animated feature film that was the first Korean animated film to be screened in IMAX cinema with the technology of Dolby Surround sound (Kim 2013, 51).

The government realized the importance and impact of animation on Korea's visual export and supported the first Sŏul International Cartoon and Animation Festival (SICAF) that was held in August 1995 with the help of animator Pak Se-hyŏng (Lent 2001, 92). There was also issued a 20 percent tax break to boost the domestic animation market (ibid.). After that, the animation industry saw a multiple releases with *Hong Kil-tong Returned* (1995), *Red Hawk* (1995) and *Hungry Best 5* (1995). All the films mentioned above were criticised because it was

done in partnership with Japanese studios (Lent 2001, 95). The previous year, *Pŭllu sigŏl [Blue Seagull]* (1994) was released as the first animated feature film for the adult audience with great success (ibid.). However, Choo (2014) compares it to Japanese *City Hunter* (1987–88) as an example of Korean animators being inspired by Japanese animated works (158). In this era, the first animation departments were opened in Korea, with the Kongju National University being the very first (Kim 2013, 38).

Right after the failed feature films came *Agigongnyong Tulli [Dooly the Little Dinosaur/ Baby Dinosaur Dooly – Adventure of Ice Planet]* (1996) by Kim Sujŏng, a feature film that registered a big success and built a strong fanbase amongst Koreans (Lent 2011, 95–96). Also, Korea was the second in the world to produce a full CGI movie, *Ch'ŏrin Sach'ŏnwang [The Steel Force]* (1999) (Kim 2013, 53).

Soon, an improvement in the industry could be seen thanks to the establishment of Sŏul Animation Center (1998), Korea Film Council (1999) and Korea Creative Contents Agency (KOCCA) (2001) and 2003 revised Broadcasting Act (ibid., 20–21).

2.1.2 Characteristics of the industry

The animation industry in Korea underwent quite a lot of changes in its history and therefore it is relatively difficult to give an accurate image of the industry as of now because it keeps on progressing. However, there are some characteristics that have been seen to be repeating in the past years.

In an article published by Kwŏn (2005), almost a half of the Korean animators work as freelancers, with their working hours exceeding sixty hours per week, more than the average in Korea. Average monthly pay for Korean animators is said to be 164 million Korean wŏn which is roughly eighty percent of the Korean average (Kwŏn 2005). In contrast to the case of Japan, in Korea, the sales from overseas roughly cover a half of Korean animation industry's total sales (Yamamoto 2014, 49). Over half of the animation studios in Korea are very small companies that have up to four employees, followed by studios that have between ten to forty-nine employees (Yi 2014, 157). That reflects the trend of Korean animation industry's "cottage industry" when people work from home, simply put an alternative of home office.

2.1.3 Japanese influence

As well as in the other countries, Korean animation has been influenced by the Japanese anime, manga and other cultural aspect. Even nowadays, the otaku culture is very strong in Korea with

Sanrio characters like Kuromi and Hello Kitty on every possible product that you can find in the store.

When it comes to animation, Japanese animated artworks had been distributed illegally before the restriction was cancelled for good in the 1998 by the government (Taiki 2015, 159). With the influence of Japanese works, animators started creating science fiction animations in the 1970's and the industry experienced the first boom of domestic animated films (Lent 2001, 91). With that, many Japanese animated works were mistakenly recognized as Korean because the credits and other specific features were removed before airing on the Korean television (Lent 2001, 98). An important point in the history of both countries' animation industries was when Jeil Donghwa (Jeil Moving Pictures) and Samsung Mulsan (Samsung Group) joined forces and became subcontractors for Japanese Toei Dōga (Choo 2014, 147). From that point in the history until now, there have been both tendencies to purify the animation of Japanese elements, and animations inspired by Japanese animation.

2.2 Modern K-Animation

At the beginning of the new millennium, Korea was the leader of on-line animation like *Tchajangsonyō Ppukka [Pucca]* (2000), a story about a girl chasing a boy that she loves one-sidedly (Ng 2002, 32). In 2008, there was a series released by Disney XD, formerly Jetix, that made *Pucca* even more famous around the world (Kim 2013, 18). Another worldwide famous Korean animation is *Paekkom*, also known as *Bernard*, about a clumsy but stubborn polar bear (Kim 2013, 96–97). As the graph presented by Yi (2011) shows, Korean animation exports reached its record high right in the beginning of the new millennium (130). It could be mainly thanks to the success of *Pporongpporong Ppororo [Pororo the Little Penguin]* (2003) that had a well-prepared marketing strategy on the kids audience (Kim 2013, 15). Last year marked the 20th anniversary of the creation of the character popular amongst children all over the world. There was also a partnership with North Korean animators on the *Keūrūn koyangi Tingga [Lazy Cat Dinga]* (2001) (Kim 2013, 60). Other popular Korean animations include *Larva*, *Robok'a P'olli [Robocar Poli]* and *K'ok'omong [Cocomong]*.

Apart from kids' animation, there is also a market targeting the adult animation. However, before we get to the list of successful works, let me mention a feature film that experienced a horrible downfall. *Wonderful Days* (2003) was historically the most expensive animated film which used a wide variety of animation techniques, yet it sadly failed to meet the expectations of the audiences (Martin 2018, 94). Martin (2018) hints that *Wonderful Days* and other cases

with a similar scenario may have failed due to the inability to “reflect a Korean identity” (94). After that many new Korean films followed, yet they failed to impress the audiences mainly interested in family films (Kim 2013, 58). One of the exceptions was Yi Sŏng-kang’s *My Mari iyagi [Beautiful Girl, Mari]* (2002) which Cavalier (2011) mentions as an internationally successful feature film with a strong cultural identity (341).

Nowadays, the environment for animation is changing in the way that animators have new opportunities to release their works on various platforms and streaming services (Kwak 2023). The greatest current challenge is to compete against Japanese animation studios to produce animation based on popular webtoons created in Korea (Kwak 2003). And even smaller companies and freelancers now have the opportunity to bring their ideas to life. Besides the financial support of the government, that was a big starting engine for the whole industry, the KOCCA selects around twenty animated works yearly and provides up to 100 million Korean wŏn per project to boost the creation of new animations (Yi 2011, 153).

After a pause came an array of success after success in various genres of Korean animation. One of the first was *Madang ūl naon amt’ak [Leafie, a Hen into the Wild]* (2011) directed by Oh Sŏng-yun, based on a novel by Hwang Sŏn-mi. It is referencing *sinp’a*, a sort of a melodrama used to express dissatisfaction with a political or social situation (Martin 2018, 95;). An inter-polar to the previous was *Toeji ūi wang [The King of Pigs]* (2011) by Yŏn Sang-ho, that particularly caught the attention at the Pusan International Film Festival (BIFF) as a representant of the Korean indie film scene (Kim 2013, 59). Not as successful as the previous, but worthy of mentioning is the *Sŏlyŏk [Sŏul Station]* (2016), a prequel to the blockbuster *Pusan-haeng [Train to Pusan]* (2016), directed as well by Yŏn Sang-ho. A surprising situation happened in the case of *Underdog* (2018) by O Sŏng-yun and the co-director Yi Chun-paek, which featured K-pop group EXO’s D.O. as a voice actor which caused that the film’s screenings sold-out in minutes (Martin 2018, 95).

Now we will get to the most recent releases that rose to fame. In 2019, Locus Animation Studios directed the *Redŭ Syujŭ [Red Shoes and the Seven Dwarfs]* which is a new rendition of the classic Snow-White story with a modern twist, in my opinion strongly influenced by the Korean beauty standards. It was heavily criticised for the pre-release campaign in 2017 which used a banner of a skinny Snow White wearing her “slimming heels” besides her true chubby form saying: “What if Snow White was no longer beautiful and the 7 Dwarfs not so short?” (Amidi 2017). These days, the studio is collaborating with animator Kim Tong-chŏl on

Exorcism Chronicles: The Beginning which is based on Yi U-hyök's best-seller *T'oemarak* (Animation Magazine 2024).

Korean animation's footprint is also visible on the K-pop scene with animated music videos for 2NE1 or the 2013 animated series of the girl group KARA, *KARA the Animation*, and K-drama scene with *Chang-kŭm's Dream* (1st series 2005– 2nd series 2007) (Kim 72–73). At the same time, it is tightly linked with the video game industry, besides video games featuring popular characters like *Pororo*, *Pucca*, *Larva* and *Tayo the Little Bus*, a worldwide favourite is Nexon online game's *Maple Story* which even I remember playing in my childhood in its older version (Kim 2013, 88–89). However, Nexon and other giants with Kakao recently faced a backlash mainly from the male community due to a derogatory feminist gesture used by a character in the *Maple Story* game (Paek 2023).

Currently, the streaming giant Netflix expressed a desire to partner with Korean animators and thanks to this step, there are many exciting projects in progress, such as the first Korean animation project for Netflix called *I pyöl e p'iryohan [Lost in Starlight]* (Yi 2023), and Adi Shankar and Studio Mir's work on Capcom's *Devil May Cry* animated series (Romano 2023). The announcement of CJ ENM and Saudi Arabia's Manga Productions partnership on the production and distribution of animated projects might bring exciting new opportunities to shine on the worldwide market (Brzeski 2023). Netflix also released the Korean animated series *Oemojisangjuüi [Lookism]* in 2022, an adaptation of Pak T'ae-chun's webtoon of the same title, which is produced by Studio Mir and features a song made by the worldwide popular K-pop group ATEEZ (Yeo 2022).

2.3 Remarkable achievements worldwide

An important animator for Korea's animation industry is Nelson Shin, who has worked on *The Simpsons*, many Marvel series' films, is called the father of *Transformers* and also animated the lightsaber for the *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) (Kim 2013, 62–63).

Now, the third generation of Korean animators is paving the way in Hollywood by participating in the production of worldwide hits like Yi Sang-chun and his work on *Men in Black II*, *Hulk* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and Sung Chi-yon's work on *Epic* (2013) (Kim 2013, 74–75). The American DreamWorks animation studio is nowadays the home to many ethnic Korean animators (Kim 2013, 77).

When talking about the achievements of recent animated films, it could be thanks to the film's original imagery that *My Beautiful Girl, Mari* won the Grand Prix for Best Feature Film

at the 2002 Annecy International Animated Film Festival in France (Kim 2013, 57). Sung Paek-yöp's *Oseam* (2003) also won this award in 2004 (ibid., 69).

The first Academy Award nomination for a Korean national came in 2005 with the Oscar nomination of Pak Se-chong's *Birthday Boy* (Kim 2013, 70). To conclude this chapter, I would like to mention the most recent worldwide successes of Korean animators at the Annecy Festival, the first one being Hong Chun-p'yo's *T'aeiri [Chun Tae-il: A Flame That Lives On]* about a Korean workers' rights activist, and the second one Mun Su-jin's *Kakchil [Persona]* which won the main prize in the Graduation Short section (The Korea Times 2022).

3 Interview with Mr. Yi Yong-sŏn

3.1 About the artist

Yi Yong-sŏn is a Korean freelance animator born in 1986, currently living in Inch'ŏn with his wife Mrs. Cho Yesŭl, who is also an animator. His alma mater is the The Chungkang College of Cultural Industries in Ich'ŏn where he studied at the department of animation from 2005, and after graduation taught students programming in After Effects and TV Paint. Yi's journey to becoming an animator was not always easy. Yet, even if he had thought about leaving the animation industry, he never gave up and has proved that he is a professional in the right place. He is also a member of the Korean Independent Animation Filmmakers Association. When it comes to the influences in his career, he is a fan of the Japanese Ghibli studio, and he has a rich collection of Japanese manga comics.

His first animated short film was *ALONE* (2010) which was created in the third year of his studies, and during the fourth year, he produced another one called *Kiŏkharyŏhada [Trying to Remember]* (2011). Mr. Yi has been teaching about animation at Chungkang for many years while working on his next animated films, *Kŏdaehan t'aeyangi tagaonda [The Giant Sun Approaches]*, *Hwajangsil k'ongk'ul [Toilet Concours]* (2015) and the feature film *Pando e sarŏriratta [I'll Just Live in Bando]* (2018). Toilet Concours was very successful, winning him the Audience Award, the Audience Jury Prize and the Independent Walk Award at the Sŏul Indie-AniFest in the same year that the film was released (Korean Film Biz Zone 2023). Mr. Yi's role model is Yŏn Sang-ho whom he has known since his studies at Chungkang where the production of Yŏn was proceeded. Currently, Mr. Yi's short film *Hwasŏng ijugyehoek [Mars Colony Plan]* is set to be screened at the 2024 Anifilm festival in Liberec and will be competing against other short films. He is also working on his new feature film *Chikchangin ch'eyuk*

taehoe [*Office Workers' Sports Festival*] combining reality and fantasy while telling a story about office workers taking a part in a sports festival.

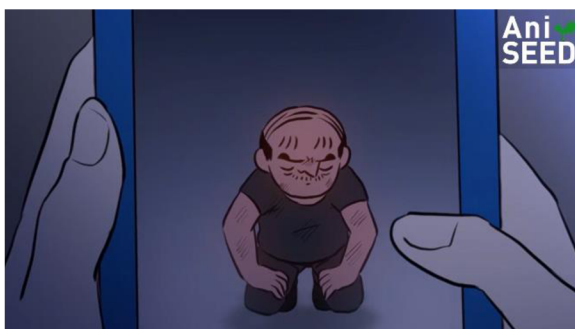


Picture 1 – A still from Toilet Concours



Picture 2 – The first poster for the Office Workers' Sports Festival

I have first met Mr. Yi in 2018 during Anifilm, the Czech festival of animated films, at that time held in Třeboň in Czechia, where Yi's *I'll Just Live in Bando* won the Best Feature Film for Grown-Ups award. Not knowing any Korean at that time, I was dependent on the English subtitles, yet the fascinating story and visuals of the film still remain engraved in my memory. Mr. Yi's film was also one of the first impulses for me to start learning the Korean language and get to know Korea better.



Picture 3 – A still from *I'll Just Live in Bando*



Picture 4 – A still from *I'll Just Live in Bando*

3.2 About the interview

The main interview took place in Korea in the summer of 2023. Since it was my first visit to Korea at that time and I have not seen Mr. Yi in person since 2018, it has left many impressions on me. I was also able to see Mr. Yi's home studio where most of his work is being created at

the moment and get to know more about his career and life. I was also able to meet his friends and colleagues who are creating animations as well and I have seen the latest Korean animation at the Söul Indie-AniFest's regular screening in August 2023.

The first version of the interview contained a lot of information that would not be suitable for the purpose of this thesis, therefore Mr. Yi helped me to shorten it to a more acceptable summary and has agreed with me using the interview in this thesis. The last few questions of the interview were added during the first half of 2024 via an e-mail communication with the animator based on the remarks of Dr. Schirmer.

3.3 The interview

The full version of the interview can be seen at the end of the thesis in the list of appendices. For the purpose of the thesis, I will be mentioning only the parts of the interview that are needed for the analysis, therefore I encourage the readers to read the whole interview in case of any confusion, or if you want to get to know more.

3.3.1 The reasons for becoming an animator

The thought of becoming an animator/a creator of animated films, came when Mr. Yi finished his military training. After joining an online comic book competition, Mr. Yi said he knew that he wanted to do either comics, film, or animation, and after thinking it through, he has decided to start preparing to become a creator of animated films since the second year of his university studies. He has also mentioned the desire to create works that have a value, and he enjoys watching the reactions of the audiences.

3.3.2 Reaction of the family

According to Mr. Yi, he was not a very good student in junior high and high school, therefore his parents did not have high expectations when it came to his future. They just wanted him to be able to live a normal life. Yet, they were very pleased, in Mr. Yi's words excited, to hear that he was teaching courses at his alma mater. His parents are not animation enthusiasts, but they do not reject the genre either. Therefore, I would conclude, that Mr. Yi's parents are quite proud of their son who is working as a freelance animator.

3.3.3 Studies abroad

Concerning Mr. Yi's studies abroad, I was surprised to find out that he has never studied abroad. He was satisfied with the education he was receiving and since the Korean films that have influenced him the most like Park Ch'an-uk's *Oldboy* (2003), Pong Chun-ho's *Memories of Murder* (*Sarin ūi Ch'uŏk*) (2003) and Chang Chun-hwan's *Save the Green Planet!* (*Chigu rŭl Chik'yŏra*) (2003) were in his opinion better than their foreign counterparts, he thought he could create film that would be good enough by properly studying in Korea.

3.3.4 The good points about the job

Talking about the positives of being an animator, Mr. Yi says that he enjoys the screenwriting process because it helps him to achieve all sorts of understanding even though the writing process it is a very hard part. He also cherishes the moments when the audience enjoys watching his work and gives him positive feedback.

3.3.5 Hardships of the job

Mr. Yi mentions the inability to enjoy the process of making animation because in Korea, they have to create it much faster compared to other countries. He also points out the fact that the team with which he was creating *I'll Just Live in Bando* did not enjoy the process of creation. In my opinion, the reason might be that the creation process was very stressful and difficult, and Mr. Yi also mentions that the approach has to be different from what would be done in a company. And there also must be trust and communication between the creators. In another part of the interview, Mr. Yi also mentions the lack of financial support from organisations and the fact that animation companies prefer animations based on manga and novels over original animation.

3.3.6 Future ambitions

A very interesting activity that Mr. Yi would like to do in the future is something related to animation, specifically making a video game. As I have mentioned in the short introduction of Mr. Yi, he is currently working on a feature-film called *Officeworkers' Sports Festival* through which he would like to reflect some social issues. He is trying to show the conflict between generations in a way that is understanding and caring at the same time. As for the future of the Korean animation industry, he seems overall very enthusiastic because Korean animation is

slowly getting the well-deserved recognition. However, he also talked about the lack of sufficient financial support in the animation field and the problems that it causes.

4 Interviews with other animators

The interviews I have chosen for this thesis were published online from 2018 to 2024, two of them originally in Korean, the rest in English. Firstly, I will sort the interviews out by the name of the artist with whom the interview was done, summarize the context of the interview and assign them a letter for a better readability in the comparing part. The individual interviews do not always mention all of the points I would like to use for the comparison; therefore they will be used as a group consisting of interviews A to E.

Kim Chae-hyŏng (A)

Formerly a doctor, Mr. Kim has decided to pursue the career of an animator in his 30's, and he flew all the way to the United States to start his studies in animation (Kim 2021). A few years later, he was offered an internship at the Pixar Animation Studios and later became a regular employee (ibid.). His specialization is character animation which he also used in Pixar's fantasy comedy drama *Soul* (2020), where he created the protagonist who belongs to the African American society (ibid.). In the interview, he also mentions his feelings about his footprint in the films he worked on (ibid.).

Kim Hye-suk (B)

While doing my research, I have found two interviews with Mrs. Kim, and because both of them are suitable for the purposes of this thesis, I will think of them as of one interview, but always quoting the corresponding one.

In the first interview for The Korea Times, Mrs. Kim mentions her beginnings with animation and shares her feelings about moving abroad and what it gave her in return (Yi 2023). She particularly mentions the cultural “shock” of working in an overseas animation studio where communication and a good working environment are a very pleasant experience compared to the Korean one (ibid.). She also expresses her hopes for the future (ibid.).

In the second interview, she comments on how it is not important to have the right background in order to become an animator, but to have a good portfolio (Yi 2023). She then talks about her dissatisfaction with the works she has created (ibid.).

Yim Yōng-gyu (C)

Mr. Yim was formerly a professor at the Sejong University and now teaches classes for advanced students at Anibugs (Sōul School of Animation 2018). After a short introduction, Mr. Yim shares his thoughts on the animation industry as a whole, the reasons why he became an animator, his experience in the American animation studios and at the end, he gives a motivational speech aimed at future animation artists (ibid.).

Pae Ki-yong (D)

Mr. Pae is a founding member of Studio Mir and currently the CEO of Red Dog Culture House animation studio that is mainly gaining popularity through its work on Netflix's *Love, Death + Robots* and many others (Yi 2023). In the interview, he embarks on why he became an animator, talks about his experiences with the American and Japanese production environments, mentions , one of the recent films the studio has worked on and after talking about the series *Love, Death + Robots*, he concludes the interview with his remarks on the criticism of Korean original animation (ibid.).

Kim Sang-chin (Jin Kim) (E)

Mr. Kim belongs to the group of animators who have experience with working in a foreign animation studio, as he had worked in the Walt Disney studios for around twenty years (Kim 2019). He is also the art director of *Red Shoes and the Seven Dwarfs*, which is mentioned in the chapter 2.2 of this thesis. When talking about the film, he mentions that the film would have been more successful if it had sufficient funds like Disney (ibid.). He also comments on the different skill sets of animators and equipment that he has worked with so far (ibid.).

5 A comparison of the interviews

5.1 Similarities

When it comes to the points that are similar with Mr. Yi's comments, there is an evident similarity in the fact that Mrs. Kim (B) was also a fan of comics and with her passion applied for a study programme on animation (Yi 2023). Overall, all the interviewees showed a strong passion for animation and invested a lot of time to master the art of animation. On top of that, there is a parallel in changing the field that they would like to focus on. Originally, Mr. Yim's (C) major was advertising and visual design with minoring in film directing, but he soon found out that the most suitable field for him is animation (Sōul School of Animation 2018). As I have

mentioned, Mr. Yi was formerly passionate about comics and wanted to become a creator of comics at some point in his life. Another change of career path can be seen in the case of Mr. Kim (A), who was formerly a doctor (Kim 2021). And Mr. Kim (Jin Kim) (E) majored in economics (Kim 2019).

Regarding studying overseas, Mrs. Kim (B), Mr. Yim (C), Mr. Pae (D) and Mr. Kim (Jin Kim) (E) all studied animation in Korea, same as Mr. Yi. However, it is important to note that they all have experience with working in a foreign animation studio, which as far as I am concerned, is not the case of Mr. Yi yet.

About the good points of being an animator, I think Mr. Kim (A) shares the same mindset when it comes to providing the audience with a film that would invoke positive feelings, be it either happiness or relating to the story and characters of the animation (Kim 2021).

Hardships of the job were very similar for all the animators, as they mentioned some sort of dissatisfaction with the works they have worked on and criticism of the funding policy in the Korean industry and working conditions for animators in Korea.

The last part of the comparison about the future ambitions of the animators and also their thoughts on the future of Korean animation share similarities in hoping that Korean animation will be more a more successful and get the recognition it deserves. They all plan to continue working in the animation field and want to show new concepts to the audiences.

5.2 Differences

Regarding the differences between the compared interviews, Mr. Pae (D) had a slightly different experience in entering the animation industry as he lived in Ch'unch'ŏn which is said to be the city of animation and according to him, it had an influence on him choosing this field (Yi 2023).

The most obvious difference can be seen in experience with studying in a foreign country. While Mr. Yi did not consider it better than obtaining all of the knowledge in Korea, Mr Kim (A) actually went to study in the United States, and all of the interviewees have experienced working in or with a foreign animation studio, mainly in the United States.

5.3 Limitations

The most limiting aspect of this comparison was unfortunately the small volume of interviews published on the internet and also the content as they rather concentrated on the animated films than the animators and their career. At the same time, there were no mentions of the opinions

of the animators' family members (especially parents) and close people on the fact that they have chosen the occupation of an animator in the other interviews. Therefore, I think it would be beneficial to hold multiple interviews in the future with the same question set to get the best results.

Another point that might have had some influence on all of the interviews is in my opinion the fact that the animators might have been holding back when pointing out the negative aspects of the animation industry in Korea. Also, there was only one woman amongst the long list of men that have given an interview published online which is not enough to form an objective representation of the female animators in the industry. It would also be interesting to analyse their opinions in my next research.

6 Conclusion

The Korean animation has a relatively short history compared to the United States or Europe; however, it has a very important role as a former subcontractor for the United States, Japan and other countries' animated films. It has experienced multiple rises and falls, yet it has proven to be a strong part of Korea's entertainment industry.

The current situation of the Korean animation industry as well as the reasons why I have chosen this topic for my bachelor thesis are explained in the first chapter, followed by an introduction to the research questions and techniques used in this thesis, definition of the job of an animator, history of animation in the world and a review of the animation industry in East Asia.

The second chapter is devoted to the Korean animation, its roots, characteristics of the industry and the Japanese influences on Korea. There is also a mention of the modern Korean animation and remarkable achievements worldwide.

The third chapter offers a short biography of Mr. Yi Yong-sŏn and the contents of the interview used in this thesis.

The interviews with other Korean animators are introduced in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter shows the comparison of the obtained information with Mr. Yi's interview.

The main aim of this thesis was to introduce the world of animated films to the reader and based on an interview with Mr. Yi Yong-sŏn, compare his views and experience in Korean animation industry with other Korean animators that have given an interview available for reading on the internet. I have used a variety of sources from books to articles published on the internet to give an objective view of the analysed topics and allow the readers to form their own

opinion on it. There were sometimes discrepancies regarding the history of animation and the years in which the films were released but, in the end, I was able to find the right information by comparing multiple sources.

The most important aspects that I wanted to analyse were the reasons why the animators chose this creative job, the positive and negative points of the occupation and the animators' thoughts on their future in the field and the predictions for the animation industry in Korea. To my surprise, there were more points in which the animators agreed than those opposing to the other.

Through the comparison, I have found out that there might be a correlation between passion for comics and becoming an animator and that animators want their films to have a positive influence on the audiences that watch them. The animators are also overall positive about the future of the Korean animation industry and enthusiastic in continuing their career as animators. All of them surprisingly show a sort of dissatisfaction with their works as they always see the opportunities to improve. That is a very surprising result for me as I did not expect such degree of self-awareness. It shows that Koreans are more than aware of the fact that nobody is perfect and I respect this ability of theirs. Regarding the differences, there was a visible contrast in the individual animators' study background as some have studied in the United States and some, with Mr. Yi, accepted the Korean education as adequate enough compared to studying overseas.

While working on this thesis, I was able to deepen my knowledge about the animation field, get to know Mr. Yi and the inspiring journey of his career in animation and appreciate the work of animators more as they are in most cases working in conditions that are far from being acceptable in today's society. I have also had to leave out some sources that I originally wanted to mention in this thesis as they proved to be not suitable for the purposes of my thesis.

I have been interested in animation for many years and hope that my thesis will raise interest in this fascinating field and hopefully bring more academic works focused on specifically Korean animation in the future. The Korean animation industry is one of the most interesting cases that I have been able to get to know and I hope that it will see more successes in the near future.

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Appendix – An interview with Yi Yong-sŏn

선생님께서 어렸을 때부터 만화 영화 제작자가 되고 싶으셨습니까?

Have you wanted to become an animator since you were little?

중학생때는 일본 애니메이션, 고등학생때는 미국 애니메이션을 좋아했지만 애니메이션 제작자가 되겠다고 마음먹은 건 군대에 다녀온 직후입니다.

I liked Japanese animation when I was in middle school, American animation in high school, but I made my mind about becoming an animator/filmmaker after coming back from the military training.

저는 수많은 입시에 실패했었습니다. 애니메이션 고등학교 입시에 실패와 함께 총 9 개의 학교에서 입시를 실패했습니다. 10 번째로 붙은 대학교가 제가 졸업한 청강문화산업대학교입니다.

I had failed numerous entrance exams. In the entrance exam for the animation high school, I have failed the entrance exams for a total of nine animation schools [these are then rather animation studies programs colleges or universities]. The Chungkang College of Cultural Industries from which I graduated was the tenth college I have taken an entrance exam for.

많은 한국 남성이 대학교 1 학년 과정을 마친 후 군대에 입대합니다. 군대는 끔찍한 곳이었지만 한편으로는 공부하기에 꽤나 좋은 장소입니다. 군대에서 많은 연출공부를 했던 기억이 있습니다. 군대를 전역한 이후 처음으로 도전했던 건 온라인 만화 공모전입니다. 친구와 함께 지원했는데 친구는 대상을 탔고 저는 아무 상도 타지 못했습니다. 많이 좌절했지만 만화, 영화, 애니메이션 셋 중에 하나는 꼭 하고 싶었기 때문에 대학교 2 학년 때부터 애니메이션 제작자에 대한 준비를 본격적으로 시작했습니다.

Many Korean men join the army after completing their first year of university. The army is a terrible place, but on the other hand, it's a pretty good place to study. I remember studying a lot of directing in the army. The first thing I tried after leaving the army was an online comics competition. I applied with a friend, and he won the grand prize, and I did not win anything. I was very frustrated, but I knew I wanted to do one of three things: comics, film, or animation, so I started preparing to be a creator of animated films in earnest in my second year of university.

만화 영화 제작자가 말고 무슨 직업을 하고 싶으셨습니까?

What other occupation did you want to do except being an animator?

애니메이션 제작자 외에는 만화가, 영화감독이 되는 게 목표였습니다. 언젠가는 해보고 싶다고 생각합니다.

I wanted to be a cartoonist and a film director, which I think I would like to do someday.

모든 시험에 떨어졌을 때 아마 다른 직업을 하고 싶다는 생각은 없었어요?

Given that you have failed all of the exams, did you not think about doing something else?

많은 좌절을 했지만 크게 다른 길로 가야겠다고는 생각하지 않았습니니다. 개인적으로 시험장 공포증 같은 것도 있었기 때문에 내 실력을 아직 보여주지 못한 것이라고 스스로를 위로 했던 것 같습니다. 다른 한편으로는 아직 제대로 된 공부를 하지 않아서 그렇다고 생각했습니다. 주변에 도움에 의지하지 않고 스스로 공부하게 되는 계기가 되었습니다.

I was very frustrated, but I did not really think about going down a different path. I think I had some kind of test-taking phobia, so I told myself that I had not shown my ability yet. On the other hand, I also thought that it was because I had not studied properly yet. It was an incentive for me to study on my own and not rely on others for help.

대학생 생활은 어땠습니까? 외국에서도 공부하셨습니까?

How was your student life? Have you studied abroad as well?

외국에서는 공부하지 않았습니니다. 동생과 사촌 동생들이 모두 해외 대학을 다녔기 때문에 저도 도전했다면 가능했겠지만 저는 한국에서 공부하는 것이 충분하다고 생각했습니다. 그 이유로 제가 한창 공부하던 시기에 한국에서 좋은 영화들이 많이 나왔습니니다. 특별하게 영향을 준 작품은 2003 년에 개봉한 박찬욱 감독의 ‘올드보이’, 봉준호 감독의 ‘살인의 추억’, 장준환 감독의 ‘지구를 지켜라’가 있습니다. 해당 영화들이 외국 영화들보다 뛰어나다고 생각했기 때문에 한국에서 제대로 공부하면 충분히 좋은 작품을 만들 수 있다고 생각했습니다.

I did not study abroad. My brother and my cousins all went to university abroad, so it would have been possible if I had challenged myself, but I thought that studying in Korea was enough for me. For that reason, there were a lot of good films coming out of Korea during the time I was studying. The films that particularly influenced me were *Oldboy* by Pak Ch’an-uk, *Memories of Murder* by Pong Chun-ho, and *Protect the Earth* by Chang Chun-hwan, all

released in 2003. I thought those films were better than their foreign counterparts, so I thought that if I studied properly in Korea, I could make something good enough.

대학교에서의 1 학년은 엉터리였습니다. 도무지 공부는 하지 않았고 놀았던 기억뿐입니다. 낙제 학점을 3~4 개의 수업에서 받았습니다. 군대에서 전역하고 복학한 후에는 꽤나 성실한 학생이었습니다. 한 학기는 장학금을 받기도 했습니다.

My first year at university was a disaster. I do not remember studying at all, just hanging out. I got failing grades in three or four classes. After I got out of the army and went back to school, I was a pretty conscientious student. I even got a scholarship for one semester.

2 학년때부터 애니메이션 제작 준비를 했지만 사실은 퇴학을 생각하기도 했습니다. 그 당시 청강문화산업대학교는 그다지 좋은 대학이 아니었고 수업의 질도 높지 않다고 생각했습니다. 하지만 애니메이션은 혼자 만들기 매우 힘든 작업이고 외부에서 작업실을 차려서 만드는 것 보다 대학 내에서 친구들과 만드는 게 훨씬 싸고 효율적이라는 사실을 깨닫고 친구들을 모아 본격적으로 애니메이션 제작에 들어갔습니다.

In my second year, I started preparing to make animations, but I actually thought about dropping out. At that time, I thought that Chungkang University of Culture and Industry was not a very good university, and the quality of the classes was not high. However, I realised that animation is a very difficult thing to make alone, and it is much cheaper and more efficient to make it with friends in the university than to set up a workroom outside, so I gathered some friends and started making animations in earnest.

그렇게 3 학년 과정에서 만든 작품이 제 첫작품 ‘ALONE’ 입니다. 연이어 4 학년 과정에서 ‘기억하려하다(trying to remember)’라는 작품을 만들고 졸업했습니다.

In my third year, my first film *ALONE* was made. I followed it up with a film called *Trying to Remember* in my fourth year and graduated.

졸업한 다음 해부터 청강문화산업대학에 상주하면서 학생들을 가르쳤습니다. 수업을 맡을 수 있었던 이유는 애니메이션 프로그램에 능숙했기 때문이었던 것으로 기억합니다. 교수는 아니었고 강사직이었습니다. 청강문화산업대학에 상주했던 이유는 개인 작품도 병행하기 위해서입니다. 수업과 보조적인 행정업무 이외에는 자유롭게 애니메이션을 만들어도 된다는 조건이 있었기 때문입니다.

The year after I graduated, I was a resident at Chungkang University of Culture and Industry, teaching students. I think the reason I was allowed to teach was because I was proficient in the animation programme. I was not a professor, just a lecturer. The reason I stayed at Chungkang

University of Culture and Industry was to work on my personal work. I was given the freedom to create animations outside of teaching and the related administrative duties.

졸업 후 약 5 년 간 중편 애니메이션 ‘거대한 태양이 다가온다’, ‘화장실 콩쿨(toilet concours)’, 장편 애니메이션 ‘반도에 살어리랏다(i’ll live in Pando)’를 만들었습니다.

In the five years since I graduated, I’ve made two medium-length animations, *The Giant Sun Approaches* and *Toilet Concours*, and a feature-length animation, *I’ll Just Live in Bando*.

한국에서 애니메이션을 공부할 기회가 많습니까?

Are there many opportunities to study animation in Korea?

다른 나라에 비해 많은지 적은지는 잘 모르겠습니다. 한국은 80~90 년대에 일본과 미국에서 넘어온 애니메이션 하청 일들이 꽤 많았고 덕분에 1997 년 부터 애니메이션 대학교들이 세워졌습니다. 2000 년도에는 최초로 애니메이션 고등학교도 설립됩니다. 제가 그곳에 지원했다가 떨어진 것이고요. 그런 애니메이션에 대한 투자가 2000 년대 초반까지는 그래도 적극적으로 이루어진 것으로 알고 있습니다. 하지만 제대로된 창작 애니메이션이 만들어지지 않았고 애니메이션 극장 개봉이 연이어 실패하며 투자가 상당히 위축된 것으로 알고 있습니다. 최근 한국의 인구감소 문제로 애니메이션 관련 학과들도 통폐합 과정을 거치고 있어서 앞으로는 현재보다 줄어들 것으로 예상합니다. 이와는 별개로 인터넷 강의나 오프라인 학원은 꽤 있는 편입니다. 덕분에 대학과정 없이도 애니메이션 관련 일이나 직장에 취업하는 사례는 늘고 있습니다.

I do not know if there are more or less than in other countries. Korea had quite a few animation subcontracting jobs from Japan and the US in the 80’s and 90’s, so animation universities have been established since 1997. In 2000, the first animation high school was also established. I applied there and was rejected, and I know that there was still a lot of investment in animation until the early 2000’s. However, I understand that the investment has dwindled considerably since then, with no proper original animation being produced and a series of failed animated theatrical releases. Recently, due to the declining population in Korea, animation-related majors are also undergoing a process of consolidation, so I expect the number of animation majors to decrease in the future. On the other hand, there are quite a few online courses and offline schools. Thanks to this, more and more people are getting into animation-related jobs or careers without having majored in it.

선생님의 부모님께서 이 직업에 대해 어떻게 생각하십니까?

What do your parents think about this occupation?

부모님은 제가 어떤 일을 하던 평범하게 잘 살면 된다고 생각하고 계시는 것 같습니다. 중학생, 고등학생 시절 저는 공부를 잘하는 학생이 전혀 아니었기 때문에 큰 기대감은 없으신 것 같습니다. 다만 제가 대학교 강의를 나간다고 했을 때 좋아하셨던 기억이 있습니다. 평소 애니메이션을 관심있게 보시지는 않지만 거부감도 없으십니다.

My parents seem to think that whatever I do, I should be able to live a normal life. I was never a very good student in junior high and high school, so I do not think they have high expectations. However, I do remember that they were excited when I told them that I was going to teach a university course. They do not usually watch animation, but they do not reject it either.

선생님께서 회사에서 일하시거나 자영업자세요? 한국에서 애니메이션에 관한 직업을 쉽게 찾을 수 있습니까?

Are you working in a company or are you self-employed? Can you find a job related to animation easily?

저는 현재 1인 회사를 운영하고 있습니다. 상황에서 따라서 곧 법인회사를 차릴 계획이고요. 회사를 운영하고 싶은 생각은 별로 없지만 현재 진행중인 장편 애니메이션의 프로덕션 과정을 위해서는 법인회사가 필요합니다.

I am currently running a one-person company. I do not really want to run a company, but I need a company for the production process of the feature animation I am currently working on.

현재 한국에서 애니메이션 회사에 취업하는 것은 어렵지 않다고 알고 있습니다. 일거리에 비해 인력이 꽤나 부족한 상황이거든요. 다만 한국 애니메이션 회사의 대부분은 규모가 크지 않습니다. 그리고 평균 임금이 낮아서 그렇게 선호되지는 않습니다. 또한 한국의 애니메이션 회사의 대부분은 키즈 애니메이션을 만들고 있기 때문에 자신이 어떤 취향의 애니메이션을 만들던지간에 회사에 입사하게 되면 키즈 애니메이션을 제작해야 합니다. 이 부분은 최근 애니메이션 시장 산업에도 문제가 되고 있습니다. OTT 플랫폼(넷플릭스)이 등장하며 성인 애니메이션(15세 이상 애니메이션)에 대한 수요와 시장 가치가 생겼음에도 회사들이 전혀 대응하지 못했기 때문입니다. 성인 애니메이션은 기술적으로 키즈 애니메이션보다 만들기 어렵습니다. 한국이 드라마와 영화로 OTT 시장에 성공적인 진출을 한 것과는 별개로 애니메이션은 단 한 작품도 제대로 진출시키지 못했습니다. 2023년 이 문제를 개선하기 위한 국회토론도 있었습니다.

I understand that it is not difficult to get a job at an animation company in Korea. However, most of the animation companies in Korea are not very big, and the average wage is low, so it is not very desirable. Also, most of the animation companies in Korea make animations for children, so no matter what kind of animation you like, if you join a company, you will have to make kids' animations. This is these days also a problem for the animation market industry. With the rise of OTT platforms (Netflix), there has been a demand and market value for adult animation (animation for ages 15 and up), but companies have not been able to respond at all. Adult animation is technically harder to make than kids animation. While South Korea has successfully entered the OTT market with dramas and films, it has not done so with animation. There was even a parliamentary debate in 2023 to improve this issue.

제 생각에 OTT 에 진출하지 못하는 가장 큰 이유는 애니메이션 시나리오 작가의 부재입니다. 제 경험상 어느 대학에서도 애니메이션 시나리오를 제대로 가르치지 않습니다. 대학 외의 전문적인 교육기관도 매우 적습니다. 결국 OTT 에 진출하려는 많은 회사들이 다른 매체에서 원작을 사서 만드는 방식을 택하고 있습니다. 그마저도 아직은 뚜렷한 성과를 내지 못하고 있습니다.

In my opinion, the biggest reason for the lack of OTT is the lack of animation screenwriters. In my experience, no university teaches animation screenwriting properly, and there are very few specialised institutions outside of universities. As a result, many companies that want to enter OTT are buying original works from other mediums and adapt them, which has not really worked out yet.

만화 영화를 만들 때 무엇을 제일 좋아하세요?

What do you like the most while making an animation?

제가 가장 중요하게 생각하는 과정은 시나리오 제작 과정입니다. 가장 즐겁기도 합니다. 시나리오를 제작하는 과정은 세상을 이해하고 스스로를 이해하는 과정을 기반으로 합니다. 매우 힘든 과정이지만 그만큼 인간으로서 성장한다고 느끼기 때문에 보람도 큼니다.

The most important process for me is the screenwriting process. It's also the most enjoyable. The process of creating a screenplay is based on understanding the world and understanding yourself. It's a very hard process, but it's also very rewarding because you feel like you're growing as a person.

사실 한국은 세계 어느 나라보다도 애니메이션을 빨리 만들어야 되는 나라입니다. 때문에 직업이 되었을 때 과정을 즐기기가 쉽진 않습니다.

In Korea, we have to make animation faster than any other country in the world, so it's not easy to enjoy the process when it becomes a profession.

제작자의 일에 대해 무엇을 제일 좋아하세요? 만화 영화 제작자의 직업에 대해 무엇이 제일 힘들니까?

What do you like the most about the job of a filmmaker? What is the hardest?

작품을 관객들에게 공개하고 내가 의도한 연출에 즐거움을 느꼈을 때 가장 기쁜 것 같습니다. 보통 작품제작이 끝날때쯤 되면 너무 힘들어서 그만두겠다고 결심하게 되지만 관객들이 작품을 재미있어하고 괜찮은 작품이라는 평가를 듣게 되면 힘든 것을 잊고 새로운 작품을 시작하게 됩니다.

I think the best part is when I show my work to the audience, and they enjoy what I'm trying to do. Usually by the time I'm done making a film, I'm so tired that I decide to quit, but when they enjoy it and tell me that it's a good film, I forget about the hard work and start a new one.

작품을 만드는 것은 매우 힘든 일이고 대부분 그 상황도 즐기려고 해야 하지만 '반도에 살어리랏다'를 만들고 나서 매우 힘들었던 것이 있었습니다. 팀원들이 제작과정을 즐기지 못했다는 사실입니다. '반도에 살어리랏다'는 대학생들과 함께 만들었는데요. 작품을 함께 했던 팀원 대부분 애니메이션이 너무 힘들다고 생각해서 졸업 후 진로를 다른 방향으로 선택했습니다. 이 사실로 저는 큰 충격을 받고 실제로 잠시(3년간) 애니메이션을 그만 뒀습니다. 지금 새로운 작품을 시작하면서 가장 신경쓰고 있는 부분도 팀원들이 즐겁게 애니메이션을 제작할 수 있게 하는 것입니다. 이전에 팀원들이 제작과정을 즐기지 못했던 이유는 여러가지가 있었겠지만 대표적으로는 제가 너무 사무적으로 애니메이션을 제작했다는 데 있다고 생각합니다. 예를 들자면 우리는 시간외 근무를 거의 하지 않았습니다. 하루 하루 정해진 분량이 명확하게 있었고 그 분량만 하면 되는 시스템이었습니다. 저는 이 과정이 더 합리적이라고 생각했었습니다. 하지만 실패했습니다. 창작활동을 한다는 건 회사를 다니는 것과는 조금 다른 접근이 필요합니다. 애니메이션 스토리에 들어가는 희노애락이 애니메이션 제작과정에도 필요하다는 사실을 깨달았습니다. 좀 더 많이 소통해야 하고 어느날은 열정적으로 작업하고 어느날은 완전히 실패해서 패배자처럼 있어야 합니다. 애니메이션 제작에 대한 노력 외에도 인간관계에 대한 신뢰와 즐거움이 있어야 합니다. 최근 우리 제작팀은 같이 게임도 하고 놀러도 갑니다. 더 열정적으로 밤 늦게까지 작업하고 그러다 피곤하면 하루 이틀 푹 쉽니다. 아직은 도전 중이지만 새로운 작품이 완성되었을 때 제작 과정도 성공했길 기대합니다.

It's very hard work to make a film and most of the time you have to enjoy the situation, but there was something that was very difficult for me after making *I'll Just Live in Bando* — the fact that the team did not enjoy the process. Most of the people I worked with on the film thought animation was too hard and chose to pursue a different career path after graduation. This hit me hard, and I quit animation for a while (three years). Now that I'm starting a new project, I'm most concerned about making sure my team members enjoy the animation process. There are many reasons why the team did not enjoy the process before, but I think the main one is that I was animating in a very bureaucratic way. For example, we rarely worked overtime, and we had a clear set amount of work for each day, and that was it. I thought this made more sense, but it did not work. Being a creative requires a slightly different approach than working in a company. I realised that the ups and downs that go into an animated story are also needed in the animation process — you must communicate more, you have to work hard some days and be a complete failure and a loser some days. Beyond the hard work of animation, there must be trust and enjoyment in the relationship. Recently, our production team has been playing games and going out together. We work late into the night with more enthusiasm and then take a day or two off when we're tired. It's still a challenge, but I hope that when the new film is finished, the production process has been successful.

선생님께서서의 꿈이 무엇입니까? 경력 목적이 무엇입니까?

What is your dream? What is your career goal?

첫 번째 목표는 제가 존경하는 분들처럼 가치 있는 작품을 만드는 것입니다. 그런 과정을 경험하며 더 나은 인간이 되면 좋겠습니다. 두 번째 목표는 함께하는 작업자들 역시 좋은 감독으로 성장하는 것을 돕는 것입니다. 저는 애니메이션을 제작하는 일 외에 애니메이션 교육일을 하고 있습니다. 지금은 대학교 강의 일은 하지 않습니다. 대신 소수의 작가들의 작품제작을 가르치고 돕는 일을 하고 있습니다. 그들이 의미 있는 연출을 해내고 작가로서 데뷔하는 것을 지켜보는 것이 매우 즐겁습니다. 단순히 데뷔에서 그치는 것이 아닌 그들과 함께 협력하여 더 좋은 작품을 만들어내는 과정을 돕는 것에 보람을 느끼고 있습니다.

My first goal is to create works of value like those I admire. I hope to become a better human being by experiencing that process. My second goal is to help the people I work with grow into good directors as well. In addition to making animation, I also teach animation. I do not teach at a university anymore, but instead I teach and help a small group of writers make their films.

It's very rewarding to see them make meaningful directorial debuts, and not just debut, but to work with them and help them make better films.

스톱 모션 애니메이션이나 컴퓨터 애니메이션을 더 좋아하세요?

Which one do you prefer: stop motion or computer animation?

스톱 모션 애니메이션에는 특별한 관심은 없습니다. 컴퓨터 애니메이션은 빨리 만들 수 있기 때문에 많이 활용합니다. 손으로 그리는 아날로그 작업에 비해 뭐가 더 좋다고 생각하지는 않습니다. 제가 의도한 연출을 잘 표현할 수 있다면 방법은 상관없다고 생각합니다. 다만 빨리 만들어야 하기 때문에 컴퓨터 애니메이션 이외의 방법은 생각하기 힘듭니다.

I do not have a particular interest in stop motion animation, but I use computer animation a lot because it can be made quickly. I do not think it's better than hand-drawn analogue work. I do not think it matters how I do it, as long as I can get the look I'm going for, but it's hard to think of anything other than computer animation because it has to be done quickly.

미래에 하고 싶은 일이 있으세요?

Is there something you would like to do in the future?

애니메이션과 연관된 일이긴 한데요. 제가 만약 금전적인 여유가 생기고 몇 년 정도 자유롭게 취미활동을 할 시간이 생긴다면 컴퓨터 게임을 만들고 싶습니다. 몇 년 전에 우연히 어린이용 코딩프로그램으로 게임을 만들었던 적이 있습니다. 호기심에 접근했었는데 일주일 동안 정신없이 만들었던 기억이 있습니다. 다른 일을 아무것도 못 하게 될까 봐 억지로 관둬야 할 정도였습니다. 언젠가는 제대로 만들어보고 싶네요.

Something related to animation, if I ever have the money and a few years of free time to pursue my hobbies, I would like to make computer games. A few years ago, I accidentally made a game with a coding programme for children. I approached it out of curiosity, and I remember working on it for a week straight. I had to force myself to quit because I was afraid I would not be able to do anything else. I'd love to make a proper game one day.

한국에서 만화 영화를 만들 때 제작자는 기금을 (펀드) 받을 수 있습니까?

Can you receive a fund when you are working on an animation?

창작 애니메이션을 지원해 주는 정부기관들이 있습니다. 특히 창작자들이 접근하기 좋은 기관은 크게 3 군데가 있습니다. 한국콘텐츠진흥원(KOCCA), 영화진흥위원회(KOFIC), 서울애니메이션센터(SBA). 슬프게도 2022년 SBA의 지원이

매우 축소되었습니다. 그리고 2023년 KOFIC의 애니메이션 지원사업 전부가 사라지고 KOCCA로 이관되었습니다. 이는 창작 애니메이션 업계에 큰 충격이었습니다. KOCCA의 지원사업 방향이 창작자보다는 기업에 친화적이기 때문입니다. 우리는 감독들을 모아 항의도 하고 성명서도 냈습니다. 하지만 성과를 거두지는 못했습니다. 당연히 기업도 창작 애니메이션을 합니다만 기업의 창작 애니메이션은 키즈 애니메이션에 제한됩니다. 또한 오리지널 애니메이션이 아닌 만화와 소설 원작의 애니메이션만을 제작하려고 합니다. 그들은 상업적인 성공을 위해서라고 이야기하지만 정작 중요한 극장개봉 애니메이션의 경우 항상 실패하고 있습니다. 저는 이 모든 현상이 한국 애니메이션의 미래를 더 암울하게 만든다고 생각하고 있습니다. 결국 창작자를 키워내는 시스템이 축소된 것이니까요.

There are government organisations that support creative animation. There are three main organisations that are particularly good for creators to approach. Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), Korea Film Council (KOFIC), and Seoul Animation Centre (SBA). Sadly, in 2022, SBA's support was severely reduced, and in 2023, KOFIC's entire animation support programme disappeared and was transferred to KOCCA, which was a huge shock to the creative animation industry. We gathered directors to protest and made a statement, but it did not work. Of course, companies also do creative animation, but their creative animation is limited to kids' animation. They only want to produce animations based on manga and novels, not original animation. They say it's for commercial success, but they always fail when it comes to important theatrical releases. I think all of this makes the future of Korean animation bleaker, because it means that the system for nurturing creators has shrunk.

이 외의 기업의 투자는 거의 이루어지지 않고 있습니다.

Outside of that, there is very little investment from companies.

코로나바이러스 시대 이후에 한국 만화 영화 산업이 어떻게 변화했습니까?

How has the Korean animation industry changed after the coronavirus pandemic?

코로나 시기 한국영화산업은 매우 큰 타격을 입었습니다. 한국 극장산업은 세계적으로도 매우 큰 규모인데 코로나 시기 극장산업이 크게 위축되었습니다. 때문에 제작자금과 규모에도 매우 큰 타격을 받았습니다. 하지만 애니메이션에 피해는 상대적으로 적었습니다. 애초에 극장에서 성공시킬만한 작품과 기대가 없었기 때문입니다. 오히려 인터넷, OTT용 애니메이션 일이 늘어났습니다. 다만 좋은 보수의 일이 많이 늘어나진 않았습니다.

The Korean film industry has been hit very hard during the coronavirus. The Korean cinema industry is one of the largest in the world, and the cinema industry has shrunk significantly during the pandemic, so production funding and scale have been hit very hard. However, animation has been relatively unaffected. This is because there was no expectation of success in the cinema in the first place, so animation work for the internet and OTT has increased. However, there has not been a lot of good-paying work.

한국 사람들이 일반적으로 만화 영화에 관심이 있습니까? 극장에서 한국 만화 영화를 자주 볼 수 있습니까?

Do Korean people in general have interest in animation? Can you see Korean animation in cinemas often?

한국 장편애니메이션은 키즈 애니메이션을 포함하더라도 1년에 2~3편 정도를 볼 수 있거나 그보다 덜 합니다.

Korean feature animations, even including kids' animations, can be seen in the cinema about 2 to 3 times a year, or even less.

한국 사람들이 갖는 한국 극장 애니메이션에 대한 기대는 매우 낮습니다. 그들은 극장에서 한국 애니메이션을 만족스럽게 관람한 경험이 매우 적습니다. 한국은 미국과 일본 애니메이션 문화 사이에서 그들의 영향을 강하게 받았습니다. 3D로 만들면 미국을 따라하고 2D로 만들면 일본을 따라하게 됩니다. 특히 최근에는 미국 보다 일본 애니메이션의 영향이 젊은 층을 대상으로 매우 커지고 있습니다.

Korean people have very low expectations of Korean cinema animation, and they have very few satisfactory experiences of watching Korean animation in the cinema. Korea has been strongly influenced by both American and Japanese animation cultures: if you make it in 3D, you copy America, and if you make it in 2D, you copy Japan. Japanese animation is much more influential than American, especially among young people.

한국 애니메이션 업계는 역사적으로 미국과 일본의 인건비 부담으로 넘어온 하청 일을 하며 성장해 왔습니다. 미국과 일본을 보며 그들처럼 만들고 싶다는 생각을 오랜 기간 해왔습니다. 여기서 문제는 그들과 비슷한 수준의 이미지를 만들어 내기만 하면 비슷한 수준의 작품을 만들 수 있다고 착각한 것에 있습니다. 80~90 년대에 나온 많은 TV 시리즈들이 일본식 그림과 영터리 스토리로 제작되었습니다. 초기 장편애니메이션의 경우 일본의 설정을 그대로 카피해 만들기도 했습니다. 지금도 여전히 미국과 일본에 높은 퀄리티의 이미지 수준을 따라가려고 적은 제작비로도 노력하고 있습니다. 하지만 그렇게 만들어진 몇몇 장편 애니메이션들이 극장 개봉을

했을 때 관객들은 매우 실망했습니다. 이미지는 그럴싸하지만 재미가 없었기 때문입니다. 이런 과정을 반복하며 현재까지도 한국은 재미있는 극장 애니메이션 만들기에 실패하며 실수를 반복하고 있습니다.

The Korean animation industry has historically grown by subcontracting work that has been passed on to the US and Japan for labour costs, and for a long time, people have looked at the US and Japan and thought that they want to be like them. The problem with this is that they think that if they can produce images that are similar to theirs, then they can produce work of a similar quality. Many TV series that came out in the 80's and 90's were made with Japanese-style drawings and crappy stories. Early feature-length animations were often copied from Japanese settings, and even now we still try to keep up with the high quality of imagery in the US and Japan at a fraction of the cost. However, when some of these feature animations were released in cinemas, audiences were very disappointed because the images were convincing but not interesting. This process has continued to this day, and Korea is still repeating the same mistakes, failing to make interesting cinema animations.

이런 상황에 창작지원금은 그 형태가 바뀌거나 적어지고 있습니다. 최근은 매우 암울한 상황이라고 볼 수도 있습니다. 하지만 디지털 애니메이션 기술의 발전으로 작은 규모의 스튜디오에서도 좋은 작품을 만들 수 있는 여건이 갖춰지고 있고 최근 성인 애니메이션(15 세 이상)이 필요하다는 사실을 인지하고 제작해 나가려는 시도도 늘어나고 있습니다. 실제로 최초로 OTT에서 지원하는 한국 장편 애니메이션이 최근 제작에 들어갔고 장편애니메이션에 대한 기획 시도도 점차 늘어가고 있습니다. 단편 애니메이션도 세대가 바뀌며 2015 년 이후로 세계 영화제에서 성과를 내는 작품이 많아지고 있는 상황입니다.

In this situation, creative subsidies are changing or decreasing. It could be said that the situation is very bleak. However, with the advancement of digital animation technology, even small studios are able to create good works, and recently, there have been more attempts to recognise the need for adult animation (15+). In fact, the first OTT-supported Korean feature-length animation recently began production, and there are more and more attempts to plan feature-length animations. Short animation is also undergoing a generational change, and since 2015, there have been more and more works that have performed well at world film festivals.

Questions added in spring 2024

선생님의 만화 영화는, '반도에 살어리랏다' 이탈리아, 체코, 영국, 캐나다, 프랑스에서 개봉했습니다. 외국인 청중들의 인상은 어땠습니까? 한국인 청중의 인상과 달랐습니까?

Your film *I'll Just Live in Bando* was screened in Italy, Czechia, The Great Britain, Canada and France. What were the reactions of the foreign audience? Were they different from the impressions of the Korean audience?

작품의 질적 퀄리티와는 별개로 제 개인적인 인상으로는 한국보다 해외에서 더 반응이 좋았습니다. 해외에서 더 편견없이 작품을 봤던 것 같습니다. 한국에서 10대 후반 20대 초반 관객은 보는 것을 꽤 힘들어 했습니다. 너무 끔찍한 사건을 애니메이션에서 다뤘다고 생각한 것 같습니다. 30대 이상의 한국 관객들은 상대적으로 좋은 평가를 내렸던 것으로 기억합니다.

My personal impression, apart from the quality of the film, was that it was better received abroad than in Korea. I think they saw the film more unbiasedly. In Korea, audiences in their late teens and early 20's found it quite difficult to watch — I think they thought the film dealt with too horrific an event. I remember Korean audiences in their 30's and older gave it a relatively good review.

한국에서 극장개봉을 했을 때 장르적 한계를 느꼈습니다. 당시 한국은 블랙 코미디 장르에 익숙하지 않았습니다. 개인적으로 미국과 영국식 블랙 코미디 장르를 매우 좋아합니다. 그래서 작품 안에도 그런 표현을 많이 넣으려고 노력했는데 한국 관객들에게는 애니메이션에서 그런 표현을 보는 게 꽤나 생소했던 것 같습니다.

I personally love American and British black comedies, so I tried to include a lot of that in the film, but I think it was quite new for Korean audiences to see that in an animation.

그럼에도 평론가와 관객의 평가는 괜찮은 것들이 많았습니다. 제가 특히 좋아하는 평가는 '불만한 성인 애니메이션'이라는 평가입니다.

Nevertheless, the reviews from critics and audiences have been good, and one of my favourite reviews ranked it worth seeing as an animation "for adults".

프랑스 안시에서 상영했을 당시 관객들의 질문이 한국과 거의 비슷해서 놀랐던 기억이 있습니다. 한국보다 훨씬 자유로운 창작환경을 가진 프랑스에서 키즈 애니메이션 중심의 산업구조와 사회적 문제, 장르의 편향성에 대한 고민을 한국과 비슷한 관점에서 하고 있다는 사실이 재미있었습니다.

When we screened the film in Annecy, France, I remember being surprised that the audience's questions were almost the same as in Korea. It was interesting to see that France, which has a

much freer creative environment than Korea, had similar concerns about the industry structure, social issues, and genre bias centred on kids' animation.

캐나다에서는 관객들과 소통하는 시간은 적었지만 상영관에서 관객들이 많이 웃었던 게 기억납니다. 저는 작품 안에서 코미디를 표현하고 싶었기 때문에 그들이 즐겁게 웃으며 관람할 때 많은 감동을 받았습니다.

In Canada, I had less time to interact with the audience, but I remember the audience laughing a lot at the screening. I wanted to express comedy in the film, so it was very touching to see them laughing and enjoying the film.

체코에서의 기억은 아직도 잊을 수 없습니다. 그들은 저에게 삶의 의미를 부여해 준 것과 다름없습니다. 꼭 가치 있는 차기 작품을 만들어 다시 한번 체코에서 상영하고 싶습니다.

My memories of the Czechia are still unforgettable, and they have given me the meaning of life. I would definitely like to make a worthy next film and screen it in the Czechia once again.

반도에 살어리랏다' 영화로 무슨 메시지를 표현하고 싶으셨습니까?

What message did you want to express through *I'll Just Live in Bando*?

제가 이해하기로 한국은 많은 사람이 자신의 직업에 만족하지 못하고 사는 나라 중 하나입니다. 현실적 여건과 여러 책임감들 때문에 삶에 대부분의 시간을 차지하는 직업이 만족스럽지 않더라도 그만두거나 바꾸지 못한 채 살아가고 있다고 생각합니다. 자신의 꿈과 현실의 성공사이에서 고민하는 주인공의 상황을 보여줌으로써 관객들에게 삶의 위로를 전달하고 싶었습니다.

As I understand it, Korea is one of the countries where many people are not satisfied with their jobs. Due to the [unforgiving] conditions of the real world and various responsibilities, I think many people are unable to quit or change the job that takes up most of their time, even if they are not satisfied with it. By showing the situation of the protagonist who is struggling between his dreams and success in reality, I wanted to convey consolation.

지금 새로운 만화 영화를 만든다고 말씀하셨습니다. 이 영화에 대해 좀 말씀하실 수 있습니까?

You have said that you are working on a new animation film. Could you tell me a little bit more about it?

이번 작품의 큰 틀은 '버라이어티 퇴사 스토리'입니다. 멋지게 회사를 관두는 스토리는 언제나 재미있다고 생각합니다. 그 안에 제가 생각하는 사회적 문제를 몇 가지 넣어보려고 했습니다. 세대 간의 갈등을 이해와 배려하는 모습으로 풀어보려고 하고

있고 부도덕한 부동산 투기 과열 문제를 휴머니즘으로 넘어서는 모습도 보여주려고 하고 있습니다. 특히 회사 스토리이니만큼 불화가 있는 팀원들이 화합하는 모습에서 쾌감을 주려고 하고 있습니다. 이 모든 것들은 ‘반도에 살어리랏다’보다는 훨씬 유쾌하고 재미있게 풀어내려고 노력하고 있습니다.

The film is loosely based on the idea of *various quitting stories*. I think it's always fun to tell a story about quitting a company in style, and I tried to incorporate some social issues that I think are important. I'm trying to show the conflict between generations in a way that is understanding and caring, I'm trying to show the unscrupulous property speculation frenzy in a way that is humanistic, and I'm trying to give people a sense of joy in seeing feuding team members come together, especially since it's a company story. We're trying to do all of that in a way that's a lot more playful and entertaining than *I'll Just Live in Bando*.

어떤 사람들은 창작자의 수준으로 발전하는 반면, 다른 사람들은 *비창작* 작업의 수준에 머물고 있습니다. *애니메이터가 되는 것은*, 대부분의 경우, 지원적이고 낮은 임금을 받는 역할로 전락한다는 것을 의미합니다. 그렇지 않다고 말하셨습니다. 이것에 대하여 어떻게 생각하십니까? 이 승자독식제 시스템과 동의하십니까?

It is said that some people progress to the level of creators, while others are stuck at the level of *non-creative work*. *Being an animator*, in most cases, means being lowered to a supportive, low-paid role, does it not? What do you think about this? Do you agree with this winner-take-all system?

비창작 수준에 머물고 있다는 의미가 동화 작화가(in between animator) 같은 애니메이션 제작에 있어서의 보조적 역할을 하는 사람인 것으로 이해하고 답변 드리겠습니다.

Let me answer this with the understanding that by non-creative you mean someone who plays a supportive role in the production of animation, such as an in between animator.

제가 힘쓰고 있는 일 중 하나가 상당기간 *비창작* 수준에 머물러 있는 신인 감독들을 창작자수준으로 끌어올리는 일입니다. 저는 기본적인 연출적 문법만 배우면 개인이 가지고 있는 그림 스타일과는 관계없이 누구든 관객을 만족시킬 수 있을 만한 작품을 만들 수 있다고 생각합니다. 하지만 모두가 창작자 수준으로 발전할 수도 없고 창작자가 있다면 비창작자에 머무는 사람은 더 많아지는 게 현실이겠지요. 이런 상황을 개선하는 것은 전반적인 시장이 발전하고 제도를 다듬는 것이 현실적이라고 생각합니다. 이를테면 최저 임금에 대한 기준을 개선하고 노동시간에 대한 제한을 두는 것입니다. 진부한 이야기지만 사회적 제도 개선 외의 방법은 크게 없다고 생각합니다. 제가 속해

있는 한국독립애니메이션협회(Korean Independent Animation Filmmakers Association)에서도 이런 일들을 개선하려고 노력하고 있습니다.

One of my endeavours is to bring new directors up to the level of creators who have been stuck at the 'non-creative' level for quite some time. I believe that by learning basic directorial grammar, anyone can create a work that can satisfy audiences, regardless of the individual's artistic style. However, not everyone can advance to the level of creator, and if there are creators, there will be more people who remain non-creators. I believe that the only way to improve this situation is to improve the overall market and refine the system, such as improving the minimum wage and setting limits on working hours. It's a cliché, but I do not think there's much that can be done other than improving the social system, and the Korean Independent Animation Filmmakers Association, of which I am a member, is trying to improve these things.

다만 상업시스템 안에서 비창작자에 머무르는 사람들과는 별개로 창작자를 희망하지만 비창작자 수준에 머무르는 사람들을 위해서는 두 가지 사회적 요점이 필요하다고 생각합니다.

However, apart from those who remain non-creators in the commercial system, I think two social points are necessary for those who want to become creators but remain at the non-creator level.

첫 번째는 '실패를 수용 가능한 사회'입니다. 좋은 작품을 만들기 위한 가장 좋은 경험은 실패라고 생각합니다. 하지만 한국 사회는 여전히, 혹은 이전보다 더 실패를 두려워할 수밖에 없는 시스템으로 되어가고 있습니다. 실패를 인내할 수 있는 사회적 관용이 없다면 창작자가 탄생하기는 더 어려워질 것입니다.

The first is a society that is accepting of failure. I think the best experience for creating good work is failure, but Korean society is still, or has become more than before, a system that makes us afraid of failure. If there is no social tolerance for failure, it will be harder for creators to be born.

한편으론 이러한 사회현상 때문에 자발적 비창작자들이 늘어나고 있다는 사실이 매우 안타깝습니다. 앞서 설명했듯이 한국은 미국과 일본의 하청 일로 애니메이션 산업이 탄생했습니다. 그 산업은 지금까지도 이어져 오고 있으며 이제는 그 문화 안에서도 새로운 세대가 탄생하고 있습니다. 20 대 초반에 젊은 애니메이터들이 뛰어난 애니메이션 스킬을 바탕으로 새로운 하청 산업을 받아들이고 있는 것입니다. 하청 산업이 잘못되었다고 말하는 것은 아닙니다. 다만 그들은 하청작업만으로 많게는 직장인 평균임금에 3~4 배를 벌어들입니다. 그들이 하고 있는 것은 단순 카피에 가깝지만 그들은 그 어느 창작자보다도 많은 돈을 벌기 시작했습니다. 이 현상은 한국 애니메이션

산업의 과거를 떠올리게 합니다. 과거 한국은 하청 산업으로 소수의 인원이 큰 돈을 벌기 시작했고 이를 지켜보던 기업이 투자를 시작했습니다. 정부에선 애니메이션 관련 교육기관을 만들기 시작했습니다. 표면적으로론 건강한 시장 생태계라고 느껴지겠지만 여기엔 창작이 결여되어 있었습니다. 멋진 일러스트를 보여주면 내용의 질과는 관계없이 정부의 지원과 기업의 투자가 이루어졌습니다. 처음에는 관객들도 기대했지만 실제로 영화가 극장에 상영되었을 때 관객은 크게 실망했습니다. 결국 관객을 만족시키지 못한 기업의 투자는 물거품이 되어 사라졌고 정부는 학과를 통폐합하고 없애기 시작했습니다. 건강한 시장 경제가 형성되려면 애니메이션 산업으로 벌어들인 자금의 일부가 창작 애니메이션 제작에 투자되어야 된다고 생각합니다. 그들이 단기적인 시장논리에 매몰되어 다시 한번 역사가 반복되지 않길 바랍니다.

On the one hand, it is very unfortunate that this social phenomenon is leading to a growing number of voluntary non-creators. As I explained earlier, Korea's animation industry was born as a result of subcontracting work from the US and Japan, and it has continued to this day, and now a new generation is being born within that culture. Young animators in their early 20's are embracing the new subcontracting industry with their excellent animation skills. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with the subcontracting industry, but they're making three to four times the average salary of an employee just by doing subcontracting work. What they're doing is more like simple copying, but they're starting to make more money than any of the creators. This phenomenon reminds me of the past of the Korean animation industry, where a small group of people started to make a lot of money from the subcontracting industry, and the companies that were watching started to invest. The government started to create animation-related educational institutions. On the surface, it looks like a healthy market ecosystem, but there was a lack of creativity. Initially, the audience was excited, but when the films were shown in cinemas, the audience was greatly disappointed. Eventually, the investments of companies that did not satisfy the audience were wiped out, and the government began to consolidate and eliminate departments. I think that in order for a healthy market economy to be formed, some of the money earned from the animation industry should be invested in the production of creative animation. I hope that history will not repeat itself once again because they are mired in short-term market logic.

두 번째는 '다양성에 대한 존중'입니다. 폭 넓게 다양한 스타일을 탐구하고 시도할 수 있어야 합니다. 그 다양성 중 하나가 다음 시대를 이끌 장르적 스타일이 될 수 있기 때문입니다. 하지만 한국 사회는 세계 어느 나라보다 유행에 민감한 사회입니다. 누군가가 한 가지의 장르나 형식을 만들어 내면 매우 많은 사람들이 따라하기 급합니다.

심지어 다른 가치를 배척하는 문화를 만들어 내기도 합니다. 아마도 학창시절부터 경험하게 되는 심한 경쟁문화가 이런 사회현상을 만들어 낸다고 생각합니다. 이런 부분에 대한 개선이 필요하다고 생각합니다. 다양성에 대해서는 조금 오해가 있을 수도 있습니다. 새롭기만 하다고 다양한 것은 아니기 때문입니다. 창작자는 창작자 나름의 노력과 이해가 필요합니다. 스스로를 이해하기 위한 노력과 사회 속 자신의 존재를 이해하기 위한 노력이 동시에 필요합니다. 개인주의적 성향을 강하게 드러내며 이해가 결여된 작품에 과도한 가치를 부여하는 것은 오히려 다양성을 위축시킬 수도 있습니다. The second is 'respect for diversity'. It's important to be able to explore and try out a wide range of different styles, because one of them could be the genre style that will lead the next era. However, Korean society is more fashion-conscious than any other country in the world. When someone creates a genre or format, a very large number of people rush to follow it. It even creates a culture that rejects other values. I think this social phenomenon is caused by the intense competition culture that we experience from the time we are in school. I think this needs to be improved. There may be some misunderstanding about diversity. Creators need to make their own efforts and understanding to create something new. They need to understand themselves, and they need to understand their place in society. Giving excessive value to works that show strong individualistic tendencies and lack of understanding may actually stifle diversity.

위에 두 가지는 사회 전반에 대한 문제라고 생각합니다. 개선을 바라는 것도 이상적인 생각이겠지요. 저는 소설가 밀란 쿤데라(Milan Kundera)를 매우 존경합니다. 체코 출신이어서가 아니라 실제로 가장 존경하는 소설가입니다. 밀란 쿤데라는 소설이 인권신장에 직접적인 역할을 한다고 했습니다. 그 말에 동의합니다. 소설과 영상을 포함한 창작적 가치가 있는 문화산업은 인간의 삶에 질에 매우 직접적인 영향을 미칩니다. 작가는 가치있는 작품을 만들기 위해 노력하고 사회는 작가의 역할을 이해하고 보호해줄 때 우리는 삶에 의미에 한 걸음 다가갈 수 있다고 생각합니다. 정답은 없겠지만요.

I think the above two are problems for society as a whole, and it would be ideal to hope for improvement. I have a great deal of respect for the novelist Milan Kundera. Not because he is from Czechia, but he's actually my favourite novelist. Milan Kundera once said that fiction plays a direct role in the promotion of human rights, and I agree with him. Cultural industries with creative value, including fiction and film, have a very direct impact on the quality of human life. I believe that when writers strive to create valuable works and society understands and

protects the role of writers, we are one step closer to bringing meaning to our lives. I do not think there is a right answer.

인터뷰를 마치며

최대한 평소 가지고 있는 생각을 정리하려고 했지만 즉흥적인 의견도 많이 담겨 있는 것 같습니다. 한국어를 이제 배우고 있는 학생 수준에서 해석하기 힘든 단어도 많이 쓴 것 같아 조금 미안하기도 합니다. 또한 글을 쓰는 데 익숙하지 않아 오타가 꽤 있을 것이라고 생각합니다. 그 부분에 도움이 필요하면 질문 주셔도 좋습니다.

아직 스스로 매우 젊은 나이라고 생각하고 있고 살아가면서 가치관도 많이 바뀔 것이라고 생각합니다. 시간이 지난 후에 다시 이 인터뷰를 찾아봤을 때 스스로도 흥미로워할 것 같아 기대됩니다.

여러므로 재미있는 시간이었습니다.

감사합니다.

Closing the interview

I tried to organise my thoughts as much as possible, but I think there are a lot of off-the-cuff comments in there. I'm also a bit apologetic because I think I used a lot of words that are hard to interpret at the level of a student who is just learning Korean. I am also not used to writing, so I am sure there will be quite a few typos, so please feel free to ask me questions if you need help with that.

I still consider myself to be very young and I am sure my values will change a lot as I go through life, so I am looking forward to finding this interview again in the future and seeing how entertaining it will be to me.

It was my pleasure to be a part of this interview.

Thank you.