Roxlee's *The Great Smoke*, 1985 (Photo courtesy of Roxlee)

ANIMATION

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An **animation film** is a film that makes photographed drawings or inanimate images come to life. The essence of animation is to give the illusion of lifelike movement through single-frame photography. To achieve movement, a series of drawings arranged in succession, each one slightly changed from the one before it, are photographed frame by frame at an average of three frames or more per photo, depending on the desired rhythm. When these series of shots are run on 18 or 24 frames per second in the movie projector, an illusion of lifelike movement is created. This is due to the principle of "persistence of vision," where the eye retains the impression of an image for about one-tenth of a second after the image has been removed.

Types of Animation

There are two types of animation: **drawn animation** and **stop-motion animation**. Drawn animation employs drawings to make an image move. The medium may be cel or acetate animation using acrylic colors. On each separate sheet of cel, every single movement requires the drawing of a new image. The animated cartoons of Walt Disney shown in the Philippines, such as *Pinocchio*, 1940, and *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959, are the best examples of this type.

The stop-motion animation technique refers to the use of any physical object or being whose movements are shot frame by frame in front of or under a camera. This includes cutout animation, which utilizes flat characters, props, and backgrounds cut out from any material such as paper, cardboard, photo, or fabric; pixillation, which involves live actors; model animation, which requires three-dimensional figures or puppets using wire, cloth, wood, or rubber latex; and clay animation, which primarily uses modeling clay. An example of this is the short satire of brothers Mike and Juan Alcazaren entitled *Hari* (King), 1982, which revolves around the power struggle of several characters fighting over the ownership of a crow.

In mainstream cinema, animation is used for special effects, as seen in films like *Ibong Adarna* (Adarna Bird), 1941, or *Ang Panday* (The Blacksmith), 1980.

History of Animation in the Philippines

Animation came to the Philippines a few months before World War II as a special-effects support to the film *Ibong Adarna* in 1941. It was not until the arrival of television and its first telecast in the country in 1953 that animation was used to advertise consumer products. It was also in the same year that *komiks* illustrator and cartoonist Lauro "Larry" Alcala did a short black-and-white exercise on 8mm film of a girl jumping rope and a boy playing with a yo-yo. In 1955, Jose Zaballa Santos and Francisco Reyes made *Juan Tamad* (Lazy Juan), a six-minute ad for Purico cooking oil, based on the famous Philippine folklore character. Other cartoonists who are also considered animation pioneers include Jeremias Elizalde Navarro and Vicente Peñetrante, but most prolific and notable among them is Severino "Nonoy" Marcelo. He did a seven-minute animated clip for the film *Annie Batungbakal* in 1974 and the pilot episode of *Tadhana* (Destiny), which was initially conceptualized as a TV series that sought to teach the nation's history from the perspective of the Marcos administration. The 48-minute feature was aired over RPN 9 in 1978 and was considered the very first feature-length cel animation in the Philippines. During this period, animation was also largely used as a political tool. Marcelo was commissioned to do animation projects for the Green Revolution education series, with episodes like tilapia raising and bee farming, and for the national youth organization Kabataang Barangay (Youth League) headed by Marcos's eldest child, Imee. Later, Marcelo did a 60-minute feature, *Biag ni Lam-ang* (Life of Lam-ang), 1979, recounting the adventures and misadventures of the Ilocano epic hero.

In 1986, Gerardo A. Garcia (aka Geirry Garcia) established GAGAVEP and produced the very first animated TV series *Ang Panday*, based on the komiks serial of Carlo J. Caparas. It lasted for six months after

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its first broadcast on RPN 9. Another work that utilized the traditional animation technique was *Sa Paligid-ligid* (Everywhere), a two-hour animation special on environmental awareness and conservation, produced by the company behind the popular children's TV show *Batibot* (Little Tots) and aired over IBC 13 in 1989.

Many more works that applied different animation techniques were produced in the 1980s. Most were animated shorts, like the Alcazaren brothers' *Huling Trip* (Last Trip), 1983, a forward look into the radioactive age when survival comes down to eating one another; *Headset*, 1983, a comical tale of a man with a headset that produces rock music; and *Pagpula* (Becoming Red), 1984, which serves as a social and political commentary; Joey and Roby Agbayani's *The Eye in the Sky*, 1984, a science-fiction short featuring a boy who looks into a microscope to discover a new world of strange living creatures, without him knowing that a bigger eye watches over him from the sky; Nonoy Dadivas, Fruto Corre, Pablo Biglang-awa Jr, and Alfonso Ponce's *The Criminal*, 1984, which tells the story of a fugitive who cannot escape from himself; Monlee and Roxlee's *The Great Smoke*, 1985, a satirical approach to the effects of nuclear war on the human race; and Roxlee, Benjie Lontoc Jr, Yeye Calderon, and At Maculangan's *Spit/Words and Outtakes/Optik*, 1989, which features a character who spits then transforms into different personas and interacts with various illustrations.

In 1995, Gerardo Garcia collaborated with Mike Relon Makiling in directing *Isko: Adventures in Animasia*, which is a live-action film with a 30-minute animation sequence, produced by OctoArts International. Garcia later did his first full-length animated feature, *Adarna: The Mythical Bird*, which was produced by Guiding Light Production and FLT Films International, and was an entry in the 1997 Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF). In 1996, the traditional animation technique was also utilized in the short film *Vexations* by Juan Alcazaren.

The advent of digital technology has seen the rise of using computer equipment and software in making **2D** and **3D animations**, which greatly reduces the cost and time of animation production. Animation enhancement technologies, such as stereoscopic 3D and motion capture or "mo-cap," have also been developed to create more fluid movements and photorealistic animation in high detail. In 2002, ArtFarm Asia Animation produced the trilogy *Kuwentong Kayumanggi* (Stories from the Malay Race), which is based on myths and legends from each of the country's major island groups. In 2008, two full-length animated features were released: namely, *Urduja*, which employs the traditional animation technique and follows the story of the legendary warrior princess; and *Dayo: Sa Mundo ng Elementalia* (*The Wanderer in the Land of Elementalia*), which combines 2D and 3D computer animation techniques and is regarded as the

Robert Quilao's *Dayo: Sa Mundo ng Elementalia*, 2008 (Photo courtesy of Robert Quilao)

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country's first fully digital animated film. It premiered in the 2008 MMFF and follows the adventure of young Bubuy into the underworld to save his grandparents. In 2010, another milestone in Philippine animation was made when Ambient Media, Thaumatrope Animation, and Star Cinema produced the country's first full-length 3D animated film *RPG Metanoia*. It opened in the 2010 MMFF and presents the story of 11-year-old Nico as he searches for his true strength in the online and offline worlds and discovers the hero within him.

Over the years, **digital animation** has become more accessible and paved the way for several independent animation professionals and production groups to produce their original animated content. For example, Nelson "Blog" Caliguia Jr published a comic strip called *Inday Wanda* in 2004 and turned this into a nine-minute film in 2007. Later, TV5 and Unitel Productions adapted the prizewinning work for a live-action TV series, which premiered on 6 Sep 2010. Caliguia did another award-winning animated short using traditional method but rendered digitally called *Mutya* (Princess) in 2009. The independent group Tuldok Animation Studios Inc produced the 40-minute *Pasintabi* (Excuse), 2010, which mixes Flash and 3D computer animation techniques. Other acclaimed short works include Niko Salazar's *Marianing*, 2012; Omar Aguilar's *Ang Lalong ni Kulakog* (Kulakog's Rooster), 2013; and Arnold Arre's *Milky Boy*, 2013, and *Lakas ng Lahi* (*Blood Compact*), 2014.

The Animation Industry

The growth of animation as an industry in the Philippines started when the Marcos regime used subcontracting work and cheap labor as a way of attracting foreign businesses to the country. Burbank Animation Inc from Australia was the first to set up an offshore studio in 1983. The following year, Filipino filmmaker Chito Roño established Optifex International, which later became AsianAnimation. Artist poaching between these two companies soon led to their demise in 1988. Hanna-Barbera arrived in the Philippines in 1986 and hired a studio to service its animation requirements in the United States, but it eventually put up a subsidiary under the name Fil-Cartoons in 1988. The country's unstable economic situation ultimately ended its operations toward the mid-1990s. Some of the bigger animation companies that remain to be major players in the industry are Toei Animation Philippines Inc, a 100 percent subsidiary of Toei Animation Co. Ltd. from Japan, which was formed through a partnership agreement with the construction company Engineering Equipment Inc in 1986; Philippine Animation Studio Inc, the animation arm of Astro All Asia Networks from Malaysia since 1991; and Toon City Animation Inc, which began as the traditional animation service provider of Walt Disney Television Animation in 1993.

During these booming years, the Board of Investments classified the animation sector under the petroleum industry because of the oil-based paint used in traditional animation. The industry classification was necessary because it provided tax breaks to companies that needed to import animation materials. These incentives also encouraged the businesses to stay and entice more of them to invest in the industry to propel its development. Even if many small and medium animation enterprises that mostly provide animation services to other countries continued to flourish, it was not until the late 1990s, when the business process outsourcing (now information technology and business process management [IT-BPM])

Luis Suarez's
RPG Metanoia, 2010
(Photo courtesy of
Luis Suarez)

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Arnold Arre's *Milky Boy*, 2013 (Photo courtesy of Arnold Arre)

industry in the Philippines expanded to cover a wide range of sectors, that animation has formally been regarded as part of the non-voice IT-BPM sector, with the tax holidays still on offer. Even then, piracy of human resource was rampant and an unresolved issue. Efforts were made to unify the local industry and prevent labor cannibalization, such as the establishment of the Animation Producers' Association of the Philippines (Animatia Philippines) in 1989. However, it only existed for several months due to lack of funds and commitment from the studio representatives. Exactly 11 years later, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) initiated another attempt to organize the animation sector. It finally bore fruit when the Animation Council of the Philippines Inc (ACPI) was officially founded as an association in 2000, which aimed to develop and promote the local animation industry in the global arena. Also, the sector later became part of the creative industry following the definition set by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 2008.

Right from the beginning, programs from both government and nongovernment sectors played important roles in the progress of the country's animation industry. The initiative started with the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines holding an annual short film festival in 1982. The University of the Philippines Film Center followed by introducing an animation category in its 3rd Manila Short Film Festival in 1983. The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) did the same when it organized the Gawad CCP para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Video (CCP Independent Film and Video Competition) in 1988. Soon enough, animation proceeded from being a category in film competitions to having its own festival. The Alternatibong Samahan ng mga Animator sa Pilipinas (Alternative Society of Animators in the Philippines), in cooperation with the Mowelfund Film Institute, spearheaded the first all-Filipino, noncompetitive animation festival called Animagination, where 49 original works were screened at the CCP in 1995. The festival had its second and last run in 1997. On the other hand, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, DTI's export promotion arm, sponsored Animazing Shorts, an annual competition among budding animation artists during the e-Services Philippines: IT Outsourcing Conference and Exhibition from 2003 to 2008. However, ACPI saw the need to have a more sustainable project that would discover and recognize new talents in animation through original content creation. Hence, ACPI launched its annual flagship project Animahenasyon Philippine Animation Festival in 2007 with the following components: competition for amateur and professional divisions, special screening, and conference. In 2013, the MMFF, in collaboration with ACPI, added the animation category to the New Wave section of its festival with the hope of reaching a wider audience. ✺

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