A Study of Mixed Media Creative Artwork Designed with Computer Software

Ruili Lin
Department of Commercial Design, Chienkuo Technology University, No. 1, Chieh Shou N. Rd., Changhua City 500, Taiwan
email: linrl@ctu.edu.tw

Keywords: Mixed media, Designed with computer software, Creative artwork

Abstract
A case study was conducted to explore the mixed media creative artwork, a picture book hand-drawn by an 8-year old child. First, the documentary analysis of materials related to children's picture books was conducted to understand the features of materials and the essence of stories. After rounds of discussion teaching, the parents guided the author to create a story, characters, items, and sets, and to arrange colors. This process took 6 months. 14 hand-drawn works were completed. Then those drawings were scanned with Photoshop and the layout was arranged with Adobe Illustrator. Finally, discussions of the problems encountered during the process of creation were conducted and suggestions were proposed.

Introduction
Paper, a ruler, paint brushes, an eraser, and colors are required for the creative artwork of a picture book. Choices of paper include sketch paper, bristol board, and dandi paper. Paper used for covers should be of higher pounds. Choices of coloring media include pencils, marking pens, color pens, crayons, colored pencils, watercolors, and poster colors. When composing a picture, before the shape is formed, pencils are useful and efficient. Unless necessary, pencil nibs should be rubbed to obtuse angles instead of made too sharp so lead can attach to paper more easily [1]. Picture books are unique as they’re the combination of text and pictures. They are works of art with literature and art. Media, techniques, and styles used may influence expression of stories. Highlighting themes increases meanings of visual arts. Different media create different styles, which are still all related to themes of works. Telling stories a key ability which children must learn. They must participate in the process of thinking and improve their ability to tell stories. A good story’s conception is complete, theme is clear, and content is rich with creativity. Telling stories is not only an ability to narrate, but expression of creativity. It’s not easy to make up a creative story. Children without enough creativity and imagination to support often encounter problems to continue developing their stories [2].

Literature Review
Paper is made of plant fibers with water as medium, through pulping, adding glue and fillers, drying, coating, and calendaring. The general definition of "paper" in graphic creative artwork is thin materials with tenacity which is suitable for sketching, such as (1) sketch paper, which is light, white, and with good color manifestation, (2) bristol board, which is solid, heavy, proper for printing, good for finished works, and usually used for covers, and (3) dandi paper, which is commonly used in art, with minute texture, and suitable for drawing. Drawing materials mean materials used for drawing, which can be categorized into colors, dyestuffs, and coating by their purposes. Examples include (1) pencils, which are mixtures of lead powder and clay, produced under high temperature. There are also color pencils
with mixtures of colors, dyestuffs, talc, and resin. Their are easy to use with bright colors, (2) poster colors, which are water-based and powdery paste made of organic/inorganic colors, water, and Acacia gum with dry-proof and mold-proof materials. Their covering ability is strong, which is good for flat coloring. They are water-based, easy to dry out, and durable, and (3) watercolors, which include transparent watercolors and gouaches. The later are like poster colors. The former are with small particles, water. Their colors are bright and liquidity is good for mixing colors [3].

Media for picture books: themes, layouts, and visual styles. Graphics may guide children to read messages from picture books through visual elements such as composition, perspective, divided views, lightening, lines, colors, ratios, quality, shapes, and motions, story structures, images, and overall layouts [9]. This study chose the category of children’s picture books defined by Tsai [5], interpersonal relationship, as the theme of the artwork for it is very common in children’s life experiences. Wang [8] found in his study of friendships in children’s books that the metaphors of friendships in stories include: problems and conflicts, functions of friends, ways to interact, and individual differences. A 5-year-old kid can understand specified friendships, but not abstract ones. An 11 or 12-year-old kid can understand the former and a little bit of the later. Plots for picture books should include: story background, formation of a conflict, overcoming of it or the lead’s self-awareness and realization, and a perfect ending. Xiao [6] believed that parents and teachers should communicate with each other more to develop children’s creativity. They should accompany children to read to bring out their ability to create and think. Children’s expression of their creativity, especially picture books, should be preserved with their originality and innocence. And children should be encouraged and supported.

Research Methods

Research Structure
Documentary analysis was applied in this study to explore literature related to drawing materials and picture books as the theoretical base of this article with a case study of a picture book created by an 8-year-old child. Discussion teaching method was also applied with diversified guidance from the parents to choosing the theme, making up the content, setting up the characters, drawing the draft, and changing the items and sets, to inspire children to show their creativity. With the help from the parents, pictures were processed with Photoshop, a popular professional package designers love to use when processing images; and layouts of story contents were done with Illustrator, a graphic package based on vectors developed by Adobe. The research structure is shown in figure 1.

![Figure 1 Research structure](image)

Documentary Analysis Method
Documentary analysis is a research method used to collect historical information, review historical records, and subjectively analyze and evaluate these data. Thus, another name for it is documentary historical method. After collecting, verifying, and analyzing historical data, through understanding and
rebuilding past, researchers will be able to explain current social phenomenon statuses and predict future developments [10].

**Case Study**

Case study is a method to systematically organize information obtained by observing real-life activities in the society, with features being: (1) focusing on certain fact or situation to study a phenomenon, (2) conducting an in-depth research on the case, (3) studying a phenomenon in a natural environment, and (4) studying inherent viewpoints of case participants [7].

**Discussion Teaching Method**

Discussion teaching method allows participants to be involved in a process to learn to (1) express opinions clearly, (2) listen to and analyze others’ opinions, (3) avoid personal preference misleading judgments, (4) abide by procedures and rules to make statements, and (5) objectively conducting analysis to find proof. Instructors should provide teaching materials suitable for learners’ abilities, arrange a proper learning environment, and use experiences to build links to real lives [4].

**Artwork Achievements**

“Friendship” is the theme of the children’s picture book in this study with hand drawings as the interpretation of friends. Graphic software was used for layout with the variety of drawing materials.

**Content of the Picture Book**

The author set the lead as a rabbit she loves, expressing the importance of friends’ company with personification. Her cousins were brought into the story while dialogs and sets inspired by daily activities and the stores near her home change according to the plot with proper colors being applied (figure 2).
Zi Rong was in the middle of a dancing class and could not go out to play with her!

Zi Xin was very upset. She ran out of the classroom and started to cry in the staircase.

Little fish was with her father on their way to play table tennis. They bumped into Zi Xin and invited her to come along.

Zi Xin was very happy and said “Sure! Sure!”

The table tennis room.

Zi Xin wanted to participate in the table tennis game on 5/27 with Little fish, so she decided to take the practice seriously.

Zi Xin finally found a good friend to play with her. It was a very happy day for her.

Issues Discovered
This study found that (1) children are different from adults in getting alone with friends therefore words must be chosen according to children’s needs instead of adults’ subjective judgments, (2) the content of the book is simple and clear with characters increasing visual delights and with positive thoughts such as a happy ending, (3) artwork elements which may influence how pictures look like, such as lines, shapes, quality, and space, should not influence how story is presented while layout can still shows aesthetic feelings. And the artwork in this study is above this standard, (4) hand-drawing methods, such as drafting with pencils, drawing edges with marking pens, and coloring with colored pencils with crayons, increase aesthetic feelings, and (5) the rhythm of the storyboard is good. But the links between scenes need improvements. For example, there should be a sentence between the scene where Zi Xin felt lonely (p.4) and the scene where Zi Yi showed up (p.5). The sentence in italic type (p.4) was added by the researcher.

Discussions and Suggestions
In the process of the creation, the author had wanted to give up several times, but a thought had always kept her going: to give her very first picture book to the teacher who loved her the most as a gift. Thus, after 6 months, 14 A4-sized pictures were completed. The parents who participated in this study even brought her to the real stores for observation and explained related things to her. The information of things around her was also provided to her as materials to inspire her. The content of the story had been modified through several discussions.

Discussions
(1) The title of the picture book: The title “How Come No One Can Play with Me?” was a little bit hard to pronounce in Chinese. But the parents suggested respecting the author’s idea.
(2) The character settings: The rabbit personified into the lead is the avatar of the author herself. Her cousins play the roles required in different scenes, showing the links between the story and real life.
(3) The story: The story had been revised over and over with some parts being added and some being removed to obtain the best result.

(4) The drafts: If the drafts had been perfect, time required for refinement could have been reduced. However, the author had not been patient and had always wanted to refine the drawings as early as possible, resulting in the links between scenes being unsmooth. And the problem of wanting to give up requires more attention.

(5) The items and sets: The author knew how to use elements such as colors, lines, and brightness for various designs, which is worth to be praised.

Suggestions
(1) The title of the picture book: The title can be changed to “No One Can Play with Me” which is simpler and more powerful for clearly expressing the theme of this artwork.

(2) The character settings: In the future, other friends can be brought into the book. More touching stories can be created with richer imagination.

(3) The story: 14 pictures are not sufficient. In the future, the goal can be set to 30~40 pages to enrich the story.

(4) The drafts: The author needs to be more patient when drawing drafts. And the parents need to provide more encouragement and supports.

(5) The items and sets: The author should pay more attention to her style of drawing shapes, which helps to make the whole artwork look more delicate.

References


