Voice of Reallusion Education

Theme： Original Cartoon Animation Production in Taiwan
Interviewee: LIU Mingkun, Professor of Shih Hsin University, Senior Cartoonist in Taiwan

ASAKU was produced by LIU Mingkun, a senior cartoonist in Taiwan, in 1989. The cooperation between LIU Mingkun and SETTV in this year set a precedent for cooperation between Taiwan TV stations and domestic cartoonists. "Taiwan I See You" is an original children's program of SETTV where in every 3-minute animation, of each episode, the cartoon characters ASAKU and Fox Boy travel with audiences to acquaint themselves with Taiwan.

Since different cartoon contents, characters and settings are required in this weekly program, LIU Mingkun is under tremendous pressure with limited time, manpower and resources. Therefore, selecting appropriate animation software and materials has always been a crucial aspect.

Mix & Match Animation Software to Produce Vivid Cartoons
The main characters ASAKU and Fox Boy are both 3D characters. Autodesk's 3ds Max is the main tool to produce models and materials, while the iClone and its motion capture (mocap) plug-in are used to capture motions to produce 3D animation. With the help of mocap, the main part of motion performance is completed, which will then be put into iClone for fine tuning and adjustment. The enormous built-in motion selection and combinations, enable Prof. LIU to process large performances swiftly, thus saving a lot of time. Additionally, the real time physical simulation of iClone 6 make the character more natural and vivid looking. Prof. LIU adopted some special techniques for lip- and expression-syncing: CrazyTalk, which can quickly animate lips and character expressions can then be added to 3D models, making the characters produced through 3D modeling, more like cartoon characters, suitable for cartoon performances. 2D characters are also produced with the 2D animation software CrazyTalk Animator, and then mixed into iClone.

iClone is actually a game engine?
The Digital Multimedia Design program consists of animation groups and game groups. Prof. LIU teaches the game group. The 3D animation software he uses are Autodesk 3ds Max and iClone. Since the students would have to produce model materials according to the specifications used in game art animation, then they would have no time and energy to produce game animations to complete the main part of the game. Therefore, Prof. LIU chooses iClone as their animation production software so as to save their time and enable them to make use of ready-made materials. "iClone is actually a game engine by nature allowing for compatibility of its formats with game engines, which has no need for format conversion. The real time feature of iClone enables students to produce animation rapidly." With this said, it is easy to see that Prof.

LIU is open-minded during software selection for both personal creation and teaching. He is able to make full use of the advantages of each software to accomplish his work. The students from the game group already have hands-on experience with 3ds Max, Unity and game animation art. And unlike the before-mentioned software, iClone only takes about four weeks for students to master.

The Image Processing of Prof. Liu is a complete 2D course, which mainly teaches the usage of Photoshop. At the end of the course, CrazyTalk and CrazyTalk Animator are introduced to make the static characters alive, which is also an opportunity for students to learn dubbing. Since the two software are easy to learn, it takes only 6 hours within 2 weeks for students to master them and have fun!

▲ The poster of ASAKU 1989-2015 Comic by LIU Mingkun