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Budding visions

Thai animation short takes top prize at the Asia Digital Art Award 2012

STORY: **SASIWIMON BOONRUANG**

Humans always want more. The more we get, the more we want, and to get what we want we exploit natural resources to satisfy our endless demands. This is the message of *Never Ending*, a Thai animation short that took the top prize at the Asia Digital Art Award 2012 (ADAA), a major competition recently held in Fukuoka, Japan.

Never Ending was made by Peerapong Amronkundet from the Visual Communication Design Department, Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University. The film, made on Maya software, is a satirical story exposing human greed, and it took the top spot while six other animated films by Thai students were among the finalists in the contest that drew over a hundred contestants.

Peerapong traces the hierarchy of human needs from ancient times, when we were still barbarians and required only food. The escalation of what we need, or want, to sustain our physical and emotional self is shown when, after forests are felled to build villages, towns and cities, a tribal chief becomes a sheriff, a prime minister and then the president. Industrial factories, cars, modern appliances — all of these mean more consumption of resources. An electricity plant is not enough, and it becomes a nuclear power plant. The never-ending demand leads to disaster.

Other finalists offered their own visions that harnessed animation technology to tell stories through art.

Chanon Puttaprasartporn, another Silpakorn student, made *The Missing Wheel*, which tells the story of a boy whose bicycle is damaged and his attempt to find a spare one at a junkyard, along with discovering what he really wants to do. Chanon crafted the story on his own experience and his passion for cycling.

"I would like to share my experience. It's a simple story and it shows the idea of how we can be happy if we do what we love," said the budding animator, who took four months to complete the movie for his graduation thesis. Viewers who see *Moon Struck* may have different interpretations. However, the message that Saratta Chuengsatiansup would like to get across is simple: A dream is just a dream though in reality, it's another story.

Saratta, a 4th year Communication Arts student at Chulalongkorn University's Department of Film and Still Photography, has liked to tell stories through comic drawings since he was in high school. He learned the technique of animation by himself and joined the Thailand Animation Contest (TAC) a couple of years ago.

"Animation is complementary to my study

The Missing Wheel was named one of the finalists.

of film. Knowledge of film provides a broader perspective to animation, as we can see the narration, and transform ideas into actions,'' said Saratta, adding that he believed that animation is not just for children.

Duanghathai Sotthisaowaphakand and Tanasorn Boonluefrom, from the Faculty of Media Art, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, presented *Rabbit Cycle*, an animated fantasy about rabbits who live on the moon. The duo imagined white-furred, red-eyed rabbits, and the cycle of clouds, vapour and rain created by the tufts of cotton from the rabbits. The two students also won a drawing contest in the comic category at last year's Seven Book Awards.

Khanomthai Animation (*Thai Dessert Animation*), by Siripong Soongklang, a 4th year student of Multimedia Technology and Animation at Mae Fah Luang University's Faculty of Information Technology, presented a fantastic battle between Thai desserts and chocolate.

While Siripong likes Thai desserts, he said most young Thais prefer chocolate, a Western import, so he created characters as Thai desserts such as *thong-yip, khaotom-mad* and *foythong* who are locked in combat with chocolate.

Khanomthai Animation was created using Maya and Blender programs, but for Siripong, coming up with the story was the most challenging part.

Chayanit Kiatchokechaikul, from Silpakorn University, made *The Forest*, a story about a boy and his father who venture into the woods where they learn about the lives of its dwellers. Chayanit, a member of the winning team at TAC 2011, is now studying animation in Japan.

The Asia Digital Art Award 2012 was supported by Allianz Ayudhaya. Patchara Tavee-chaiwattana, Allianz Ayudhaya's chief officer of market management and corporate affairs, said that TAC was initiated to boost the animation potential of Thai youths and increasing numbers of students from high schools and universities have participated in the contest.

The company teamed up with the National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre (Nectec) to hold the Talent Development Programme for the International Animation Contest (TIC) to enhance the technical skills of budding animators to enable them to compete in international competitions. The best talents from the TAC have been recruited to join the training scheme and receive support to submit their work to the ADAA.

"We have taken part in the ADAA for two years and won the grand prize in the second year," said Patchara. "We hope that more Thai students will join and gain recognition on the international stage."