

Drawing My Dreams: A Comic Dream-Come-True for a Fine Arts Gifted Class Student

Drawing My
Dreams : A Comic
Dream-Come-True
for a Fine Arts
Gifted Class
Student

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This Case study focuses on a young Taiwanese student, 61Chi1, who graduated from elementary, junior, and senior high school's fine arts talented classes and later on majored in art in university. The study aimed to explore the development course of the case of 61Chi and her success of choosing cartoonist as her profession. We applied case study research on the relevance between the development course, comic drawing style, and the impact of the school arts education. Hopefully, the story of her success will illuminate future research and provide suggestions for Arts educators.

The findings are summarized as below: First, the background of fine arts talented class laid a solid foundation, giving the case much space and advantages to innovation in her comic style. Second, the significant others in life, such as parents, teachers, classmates, and seniors support and inspire the case in comic creation. Third, persistence, perfectionism, courage to accept challenge, and clearly-set plans and goals for each stage, bring her from the beginning of exploratory stage to, finally, professional capacity. Forth, the superb computer graphics techniques allows her analog hand-painted media texture, which responding to traditional realist style and Surrealist aesthetic Standard, perfectly combine with computer graphics, to create visual effects that purely hand painting cannot achieve. The

¹ 61Chi is Case Liu, Yi-Chi's pseudonym.

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consistent presentation of innovative creation and creative effects, are important factors being unique and stand out of young comic creators.

**Key words: Comic art, Fine arts gifted class, Career development,
Art education**

I. Foreword

"My dream is to be a comic artist," 61Chi, who was invited to the Angoulême International Comics Festival in 2012, tells herself. Having studied arts throughout her academic career and worked in the anime and manga field for more than five years, 61Chi was not only invited to the Angoulême International Comics Festival, but also had her picture book "Emit" nominated for the Golden Butterfly Award at the Taipei International Book Exhibition this year. Her many achievements at such a young age have opened a window to the world for comic art in Taiwan, and prove that comic artist is a viable choice of career in Taiwan's arts field.

This rising star is one of the author's best friends, with whom she shared a lot of experiences in art and in life throughout high school and university. Having had the same arts education, the author is curious about 61Chi's progress from a student of traditional arts to becoming a professional comic artist. What is the appeal of her creative style? How did her years of academic arts education influence her and how was it applied to her comic creations? There is an expectation that her journey to realize her dreams was also a journey of self-exploration, while at the same time inspiring many comic art fans to exercise their own creativity.



Figure 1 61Chi was invited to the Angoulême International Comics Festival (Source: Liberty Times and online coverage)¹

¹ Source: Yahoo News - Liberty Times January 17, 2012
<http://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E5%8F%B0%E5%B8%AB%E5%A4%A7%E7%A2%A9%E5%A3%AB%E7%94%9F-%E7%8D%B2%E9%81%B8%E5%8F%83%E5%8A%A0%E5%AE%89%E5%8F%A4%E8%98%AD%E6%BC%AB%E7%95%AB%E7%AF%80-202430354.html>

II. Literature review

The literature review contains an investigation into the origin of comic art, followed by an in-depth exploration of the definition of comic art from the perspectives of eastern and western cultures, comic artists and critics, characteristics of different categories of drawing arts, communication, themes, composition and forms. The development of Taiwanese comic art and difficulties that face the genre here are subsequently described briefly in order to highlight the need to place emphasis on the creation of comic art and related studies in Taiwan. However, the development of comic art depends on a solid arts education environment. Therefore, the section "A study of comic art and arts education" necessitates a summary of previous studies. Finally, because this study focuses on the case study of a comic artist, the comic artist's creative expression cannot be discussed without considering the influence of education and training, character, and creative environment, "A Study of the Career Development of a Talented and Creative Individual" represents another direction in the search for literature.

1. Comic art

(1) Origins of comic art

Jay Berkowitz & Todd Packer (2001) traced the origin of comic art and proposed that 15,000 years ago men, in order to hide from storms and beasts, hid in caves and made cave paintings with charcoal, which could be considered the oldest comic art. Between 3,000 and 4,000 B.C., ancient Mesopotamia and Egyptian Dynasties were already making "line drawings" to depict two-dimensional space and describe life at the time as well as the imagined afterworld, which is considered a predecessor of comic art (Estren, 1993).

(2) Name and definition of comic art

In his summary of the names for comic art in the East and in the West, Zhi-Ren Shi (2008) mentioned that in the West, the term "cartoon" refers collectively to animation and comic art, caricature refers to satirical cartoons,

and comics refers to humorous cartoons and standalone comic strips. Cartoons first appeared in China in the work of Jin Nong, an artist who lived in the early Qing dynasty, in the form of a bird known as a spoonbill. The word *manga* first appeared in Japanese literature in the "Manga Journal" by Kango Suzuki in 1875. "Comic art" today has become a word that refers to various forms of cartoons around the world. (Chan Li, 1998)

With respect to a definition from a comic artist or critic's perspective, Hong Kong comic art critic Cheng Fang considers that the humor and satirical elements in comic art has established comic art as an independent form of art separate from drawings (1993). Thomas E. Wartenberg shared similar views in that comic art combines text and graphics and the form of presentation allows it to be discussed independently apart from other forms of arts. The story creation elements in comic art, through the combination of text and graphics, offers viewers more satisfying interaction. (Meskin, Cook, & Ellis, 2011).

Taiwanese manga critic Chan Li describes comic art in his analysis as "a form of drawing that uses unique and exaggerated styles with implicit humor or satire that express views, send messages, or release emotions for the purpose of entertainment, education, promotion, or criticism." (Chan Li, 1998, p.15) Communications researcher Hsiang-Wen Hsiao (2002) describes comic art from a communication perspective as a combination of simple or complex graphic lines that may convey or communicate meanings and purposes.

Teh-Ling Hung (1999) describes comic art in terms of presentation as "playful drawings with satirical, humorous, or educational significance. They employ simple strokes and freestyle drawing on various topics. Characters are portrayed by certain features and presented in an exaggerated or twisted way. Early comic art focused on fun and humor. Now there is quite a few that aim to tell vivid stories of exciting adventures, different aspects of everyday life, religious tales, and historical fiction" (p. 45).

Scott McCloud(1994) defined the composition and art form of comic art in terms of format as: "a series of carefully arranged drawings and graphics

with the purpose to convey information or trigger artistic response in a viewer." This definition combines the descriptive continuity of comic art emphasized by Will Eisner and the communication and artistic functions of cartoons (p. 9). Meanwhile, John Holbo thinks that "comic art" has developed into a graphic concept and is closely related to its own historical origins (Meskin et al. 2011).

Zhi-Ren Shi (2008) collected theories on the origin of comic art in relevant publications and literature and summarized the core essences and presentation styles of comic art, including the original core of comic art content being satire; styles of comic art presentation encompassing simplified, exaggerated, and morphed forms; format of descriptive comic art often being a combination of text and graphics with a graphic continuity. However, the development of comic art has reached a point where exaggerated styles, humor, and satire are no longer sufficient to interpret the more complex, diversified graphic presentations, and the scope of comic art is expanding to encompass a large artistic field.

(3) Comic art development in Taiwan

The development of comic art in Taiwan can be said to have begun in the Japanese colonial period (Teh-Ling Hung, 2000). "Chicken Cage Life Comic Series" by comic artist Bing-Huang Chen in 1935 was the first comic art collection published by a Taiwanese comic artist. During the golden age, the 1950s, there were numerous teenage magazines that published long serial comics, such as "Good Companion", "Young Companion", "Eastern Youth", "Comic Weekly", and "Comic King". The works of Hung-Chia Yeh and Hsing-Ching Liu took the nation by storm. The style of comic art during this period was bright and well defined with original stories and characters (Teh-Ling Hung, 1994).

The Ministry of Education announced the Guidelines for Comic Strip Publication and Review by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation in 1967, which had a devastating impact on comic art. Many comics faced unwarranted obstacles during the review process, and so the

golden age of comic art in Taiwan came to a halt. The practice fueled the distribution of pirated Japanese manga and comic stores in the 1970s were completely dominated by Japanese comics. While the promulgation of the Copyright Act in the 1980s and the popularity of the Wulong Temple comic series, published in the China Times in 1983, were a confidence boost to Taiwanese comics and managed to slow the tide of recession, it was already too late (Chun-Huang Cheng, 1999).

The aftermath left Taiwanese comics with even less room for development and drove Taiwanese comics to mimic Japanese styles. Up to the 1990s, publishers had been opening comics studios and organizing new comic artist awards in an attempt to discover local creative talents but the styles could not shake off Japanese influence and the print run was only one-tenth that of Japanese comics (Jia-Xin Xu, 2001). Therefore, paying attention to the creation of Taiwanese manga and conducting related studies is important and significant. A discussion on incorporating comic art into arts education can be found under the "Studies of comic art and arts education" section; an exploration from the perspective of creative comic talent is summarized under the "Studies of the career development of talented and creative individuals".

2. A study of comic art and arts education

The following is a discussion on the relationship between comic art and arts education for students as described in the literature in Taiwan and overseas. It includes the influence of comic art over students' arts learning at school and the influence of comic art on students' artistic creation outside the school environment.

Popular culture, compared to fine art, is more friendly and can match with a student's life and work more easily. Toku & Willson (2003) pointed out that the reasons for the relatively less severe decline in interest and motivation to create in Japan were: fan merchandise clubs offer young people opportunities to survive years of creative suppression and continue to

learn different visual presentation techniques through popular culture during school or after graduation.

In terms of a student's learning process outside of school the study, *Revealing the secret of the treasure map: Research on the art learning process of Dojinshi in school and outside of school*, by Yi-Wen Lin (2003) summarized different background in arts education from four perspectives; inspiration arising from art learning processes in and outside of school, influence on creative techniques, influence on creative process and aesthetic judgment, and identification with comic art works and degree of support.

Creative expression in comic art cannot ignore the interaction between a complex variety of elements such as the cultivation of creative talent and personality traits. A summary is described in the section "A study of the career development of a talented and creative individual" below.

3. A study of the career development of a talented and creative individual

The personality traits, life experience, creative process, and career development of any talented and creative individual are closely related. A number of studies of highly creative and talented individuals are explored as follows:

(1) Family environment

Mansfield & Busse (1981) collected studies of highly creative child scientists and concluded that parents who adopted positive, open and warm attitudes during their children's development and maintained friendly parent-child relationships would have a positive influence on the development of creativity in these children. Bloom (1985) also pointed out that parents who were high achievers would possess the trait of being more aware of encouraging their children to develop to their potential and paying more attention to their children's interests. In addition, parental expectations and support would have a direct impact on creativity in their work (Chao-Yi Chen, 1991).

(2) Personality traits

Chao-Yi Chen (1991) studied creative individuals in Taiwan and summarized the personality traits of creative high achievers in arts-related fields, which included obsessed, focused, passionate, intuitive, sensitive, versatile, and imaginative. Kerr (1994) studied 33 outstanding women and discovered that they shared personality traits such as strong curiosity, detached social relationships, passion and focus for lifetime interests, deviation from female stereotypes.

(3) Work process

Herzberg (1987) summarized the key points of the ability of creative professionals to create innovative achievements, which included continuous acquisition of expert knowledge and skills, persistent professional conviction, tolerance for the unknown while taking the opportunity to learn new things, comparison against own achievements, and control over anxiety. Chao-Yi Chen (2004) summarized the thought process and work habits of artists and listed common features among artists to be a forward-looking and long-term thought process, self imposed challenges, long-term investment of hard work, and incorporation of life values into work values.

Bloom (1985) in a study of 125 outstanding individuals in different fields found that while the early development stage for a special skill could be seen as a trial stage for a hobby, persistent instruction and learning to improve over ten years or more would lead to a certain degree of achievement in the respective field.

(4) Education and role models

Kerr (1994) points out that many talented individuals had mentors or other supporters who guided them in childhood. The role of a teacher develops from a liking in the first stage, respect in the second stage, to sharing in the third stage. (Sosniak, 1997) Shu-Rong Zeng and Pei-Zhen Zhuang (1995) studied 327 talented females in different fields and showed that the teaching style of a teacher was a key factor in an academic career

for the reason that a teacher has the ability to inspire ideas, encourage potential, and enable a student to develop in a free environment.

III. Research methods

This study adopts the qualitative method of "single exploratory case study" and is conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews and documents and files. The documents in this study include the works (including picture books, comic art, pure art works, and doodles) of the subject, 61Chi, related reviews, and self-descriptions of the works. The works and interviews are cross-referenced and verified. In addition to aiding the author in planning an interview overview, the documents are also checked against the analysis of study results. The picture books and comic art works of 61Chi are summarized for visual elements such as creative style, form, and technique with stylistic analysis.

1. Interviews

This study is conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews. 14 interview questions (Table 1) matching three study objectives were constructed prior to the interviews. Relevant questions were added for further clarification. Each interview took approximately two hours, and there were three interviews for a total of six hours.

Table 1 Comparison of Objectives of the Study and Interview Questions

Objectives of the Study	Interview Questions
1. Subject's journey to becoming a professional comic artist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your attitude towards art? Were your parents supportive? How did you do in art classes as a child? 2. Please briefly describe your school years. What lessons were included in your art education at school? Did you have any special experiences? How did you feel about the art education at school? How did it influence your subsequent development? 3. How was your experience of learning to draw? What were the experiences that particularly had an impact on you? 4. What was the reason that made you decide to enroll in the gifted student fine art class? Did you encounter any difficulties?

	5. How did you discover your interest in comic art? Can you give some examples of cartoons or comics that you came in contact with at different ages? What were their influence on you?
2. Stylistic characteristics of subject's comic art	6. Please describe the comic art, cartoons, comic artists, and illustrators that influenced you at different stages. Why did they appeal to you? In what ways did they influence your work? 7. What influences did you receive from your art education in high school? How did you start working in computer graphics? 8. Please talk about your ideas, inspirations, and process of comic art creation. 9. Did attending Comic World Taiwan (CWT) and Petit Fancy (PF) inspire or change you in any way? Was there any significant change (ideas/styles/presentation/inspiration by others/creativity) in your work published before graduation between 2007 and 2011? Did you meet any artist's block? Or is there any issue that you still have not overcome? 10. Has your style or philosophy changed in anyway since you won a prize at the Angoulême International Comics Festival? 11. Which piece would you say is your best work so far? Why?
3. Influence and relevance of specialized art education at school on subject's comic art works	12. Did the drawing techniques or specialized education in high school have any influence on your comic art works? How would you describe these influences? What are your views on such influences? 13. Did attending the Department of Design of National Taiwan Normal University influence your progress in comic art creation? Please describe in detail any positive or negative impact. 14. What would you say differentiates your work from others people's work (style/storyline/aesthetic judgment)? Is it the result of having had a specialized art education?

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2. Credibility and validity

In order to ensure validity of the study, the interviewees include family members who are familiar with the subject's learning experience and creative development. Triangulation was employed to cross-validate the documents (creative works, related reviews, autobiography of the works, and biography of subject), interviews with the subject, and interviews with the

subject's family. The recordings from the interviews were transcribed into text and assigned appropriate reference numbers.

IV. Study results and analysis

1. 61Chi's creative development

(1) A student of a gifted student fine art class - Building a solid arts foundation

61Chi liked doodling when she was a child and started taking private art classes in kindergarten. She passed the examination and enrolled in the gifted student fine art class at Ping-Shan Elementary School in Kaohsiung under her father's encouragement, and came in contact with a wide variety of lessons offered by an elementary art education, including creative media such as printmaking, poster design, craft, watercolor, sketching, and 3D creations. The influences on 61Chi from this stage, in addition to broadening her creative horizons, included enabling her to develop familiarity and application skills through trying different materials.

Outside of school, 61Chi, like many children, enjoyed Japanese anime and manga, such as Cardcaptor Sakura, Kamikaze Kaitou Jeanne, Kodocha, Naruto, and One Piece; and American cartoons, such as the Disney Channel and the Powerpuff Girls, on television at the time. Her interest sparked a desire to learn and imitate and her passion for cartoons and animation drove her to draw various comic characters and improve her drawing techniques and skillfulness.

Having decided to continue the pursuit of her dreams, 61Chi became a pupil of Pao-Chien Huang in fifth grade in preparation for the sketching and watercolor still life painting required for the high school entrance examination. She considered Huang's flexible attitude towards artistic creativity and more realistic, vivid techniques that broke away from examination-oriented conventions to be a strong influence on her independence in her work and style.

“Teacher Huang is more untamed and has a more free and open teaching style. Back then he emphasized reflection and ambient color, which allowed freestyle expression while preserving an artistic air. He did not always paint still life for the examinations. For example, sometimes I used crayons, ink wash painting, calligraphy, and charcoal” (Interview with 61Chi, 2012/12/01).

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When 61Chi graduated from high school, she had the grades to attend Kaohsiung Municipal Girls' Senior High School. However, determined to pursue a career in the arts, 61Chi chose to enroll in the fine art stream at National Feng Hsin Senior High School. In addition to her already outstanding skills in still life sketching, her familiarity and presentation skills with media such as Chinese painting, calligraphy, and creative expression placed her at the top of the class. A familiar face on the podium in competitions in and outside of school, 61Chi also won first prize in the watercolor category at the Kaohsiung New Artist Award in 2005 with the piece "A Cocoon's Birth". As the youngest winner ever, the prize was a boost to her confidence and encouraged her to take a step further to consider the issues of actually being productive in society and choosing a career.

(2) From comic art to computer graphics - Developing interest into professional expertise

61Chi liked to draw cartoon characters when she was a child. Most of them were doodles in sketchbooks or textbooks that grew over time. Under the influence of her peers and senior students, 61Chi started to learn computer graphics in her first year of high school and use software to practice drawing human bodies and comics. She also created a personal showcase platform on Yahoo! Family to share and compete with family members. For 61Chi, the artistic standards in the academic system gave her a unique training in aesthetics and realism, while computer graphics guided her to exercise her imagination and creativity in creating her own characters.

The result of combining these two sparks was to be better able to present her concepts and requirements for aesthetic arrangements.

“I think that I saw comic art and fine art as separate entities back in high school. Comic art was nothing but doodles and I would not add it to my academic work. I only started adding fine art to my work because I had to add colors and I stopped painting fine art and only worked in comic art after I went to university” (Interview with 61Chi, 2012/12/01).

Meanwhile, based on the practical consideration of the shortage of art teacher positions available in Taiwan, she thinks that it is necessary to raise her skills in computer graphics and 3D animation to a professional level on top of her art training in order to break through the obstacles faced by an art student seeking a professional career. This approach is not only a response to trends, but is also another career option for herself on the path to becoming a comic artist.

61Chi, with a solid skill set, was top of the entrance list at three universities with her excellent examination results. In the summer after she was accepted into university, 61Chi's pursuit of a comic art career led to her first publication, "CHI'S WORLD" as a result of a fortunate encounter at a fan merchandise club. She went on to create eight publications between her freshman and senior years. Always holding herself to high standards, 61Chi kept herself busy by releasing new works at the NTU hosted CWT or PF every year while exchanging tips with classmates who are also comic fans or comic artists whom she has met through online forums. Furthermore, being active in different anime and manga events has helped her undertake 19 commercial commissions such as "Deadly Deaths" and "Ghost Stories 01-07".

It is the author's belief that a comprehensive, well-developed body of knowledge and drawing skills, self-discipline, learning from people with common interests and broadening her horizons, building a social network

and participating in commercial publication activities are the key elements to 61Chi's self-development at this stage.

2012 can be said to have been a year of great rewards for 61Chi. In addition to being invited to the Angoulême International Comics Festival in France as a comic artist of the Taiwan Pavilion and attending the Taoyuan ACG Fair 2012, 61Chi's graduation project "Emit" was nominated for the graphics category of the Golden Butterfly Award 2012 and the children's books and teenagers' graphic books categories of the 36th Golden Tripod Award. However, the seemingly smooth road to success ended when 61Chi, Taiwan born and strongly influenced by Japanese manga, experienced a massive shock during her trip to France. When she walked out of the Taiwan Pavilion, the diverse works by exceptional comic artists from all over the world inspired both surprise and shock in her. "I never thought comic art could be done this way!" She described herself as a country mouse visiting the big city for the first time. She had thought that her work was different from those who followed the Japanese style, but European comic art inspired her to be free and open in storyboarding and use carefully considered and fresh lines while aiming for unique storylines that were not confined to narrative but paid attention to the message and self-image of the creator. Despite facing her most difficult creative block so far, 61Chi was grateful for the opportunity to re-evaluate her creative style and professional position. She hopes to develop a style more aligned with her creative characteristics and explore works that stand apart from Japanese manga.









“Actually I never had any real creative block before the trip to the Angoulême International Comics Festival. I was successful in everything I did and my work was recognized (by parents, teachers, and the community in general). Prior to the Angoulême, I had thought that my style was different from Japanese manga and different from other people in Taiwan. Then I got there and realized that I was just like them. I spent a whole year trapped in a creative cul de sac last year” (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).












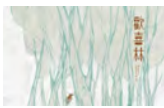



Broadening your horizons in order to enhance creativity is essential and extremely beneficial to an artist. Ming-Hsiung Wu, Chung-Yi Chang, and Dar-Chin Rau(2008)considered "acquiring a variety of knowledge and experience" and "observing others' work and performance to enhance creativity" to be important processes for an artist and proposed that regardless of whether creativity is an innate talent or not, working hard to acquire knowledge and experience is the only way to demonstrate artistic expertise.

2. 61Chi's works

In 2007, 61Chi's skillful drawing style quickly gained a reputation among comic fans after her first individual publication. The scope of this study is based on 61Chi's comic works and picture books. A list of works and descriptions can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 List of 61Chi's works included in this study

Title	Subject	Cover	A random page
《CHI'S WORLD》2007 24p / Black and white + color / 21 x 29.7 cm	Death Note Fanfiction (Light & L)/Lead in original single-frame illustration		
《ENDLESS》2008 40p / Black and white / 14.8 x 21 cm	Death Note Fanfiction (Light & L)		
《風に舞う二粒の砂》 2009 40p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm	Gintama Fanfiction		
《浮雲 Flowin'》2009 24p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm	Natsume's Book of Friends Fanfiction		

<p>《évoquer 憶起》2009 24p / Color / 20 x 20 cm</p>	<p>APH France/England Fanfiction</p>	<p>[évoquer/.....]</p>	
<p>《Trois Drei Tres 333 》 2009 88p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm</p>	<p>APH Bad Friends Fanfiction Collection</p>		
<p>《Je Crois 我相信》2010 60p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm</p>	<p>APH Joan of Arc Fanfiction Collection</p>		
<p>《Tomate Con Queso. 蕃 茄起司塔》2010 78p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm</p>	<p>APH Spain/France Fanfiction Collection</p>		
<p>《623km》2011 100p / Black and white / 18.2 x 25.7 cm</p>	<p>APH Spain/France Fanfiction Collection</p>		
<p>《伊米特 Emit》2011 24p / Color / 25.7 x 18.2 cm</p>	<p>Original picture book: In a town where time was abandoned, the residents wasted their time and the sprite Emit tried to find people who valued time.</p>		
<p>《Happy Forest》2012 32p / Color / 22 x 18.2 cm</p>	<p>Original picture book: It describes the journey of a bird that was blinded by vanity and superficiality and then found light and changed for the better.</p>		
<p>《THE MOOD》2012 24p / Dual color / 18.2 x 25.7 cm</p>	<p>Original illustration collection</p>		

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3. Exploration of 61Chi's comic art style

This study analyzes the subject's style and characteristics in terms of creative background and forms of presentation, then explores the visual elements presented in the work, and finally describes the influence and relevance of formal education on the creative process.

(1) Style and characteristics

Realism combined with surrealism and expressionism

Realism believes that the perception and understanding of objects in human awareness is consistent with the actual presence of objects independent of our minds. With respect to art, the term refers to the concept of making precise, detailed descriptions of nature or contemporary life and careful observation of an object's appearance without idealized imagination.

Surrealism gained popularity among European artists in the 1920s. It emphasizes intuition and the subconscious and utilizes special creative techniques such as frottage, collage, and automatism. In order to represent the distortion or contradictions in reality, sophisticated, super-realistic styles are often employed to express a surreal world with sometimes humorous results.

Expressionism is the way in which an artist focuses on expressing inner emotions, often embodied by twisted reality and abstraction, especially expressions of fear. The essential characteristic of expressionism is vivid colors and twisted forms. The techniques are casual, one dimensional, lack perspective, and are based on feelings instead of reason.

Most of the subjects in 61Chi's works are created by taking characters out of Japanese anime and manga and matching them for fan-fiction use through interchange of characteristics before inserting them into plots based on personal preferences. The basic setting for a lead character is a human from the real world, sometimes possessing supernatural powers or surreal characteristics based on original settings in Japanese anime and manga. These characters generally live in a normal world in 61Chi's works. The earlier works, such as "CHI'S WORLD", "ENDLESS", and "Gintama Fan

Book 01", stacked layers of colors to imitate realistic body texture and focused on the three dimensional effect created by blocks of colors instead of lines to separate blocks. The distinction between block borders is more definite compared to later works. The earlier works, compared to the later single-frame original works and illustrations, focus more on seemingly realistic expressions and added decoration that was a product of the imagination and deviated from the original scenario, such as masks and ribbons, in order to make the works more complete.

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Figure 2 61Chi, example of realist works, 2005-2008

From "Flowin" in 2009 to "Trois Drei Tres 333 " in 2009, some of the covers and color pages still retain realistic features and stay in a virtual 3D reality while the focus of character presentation slowly shifts from blocks to lines. As the grayscale created by stacking strokes to imitate muscles eased, the style during this period appears relatively fresh and colorful, though still in a realistic form. Space presentation in the color cover of "Je Crois" in 2010 was a major break from the two dimensional features and vivid color of expressionism and highlights the automatism technique and mosaic effects of surrealism in combination with realistic characters.



Figure 3 61Chi, example 2 of realist works, 2005-2008

The style of expressionist artist Egon Schiele is emphasized in a piece of later work, "THE MOOD". The simple, coordinated tints and presentation of people and limbs focuses on lines depicting structures with occasional, scattered strokes that appear casual and whimsical but actually are part of a carefully constructed structure.

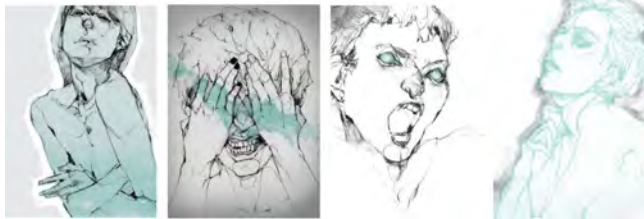


Figure 4 61Chi, example of expressionist works, 2012

As a whole, style, storyboarding, and appearance of the works have changed dramatically since 2007. Under close observation, each piece of work contained breakthroughs in various aspects. 61Chi also says that she subconsciously preferred diversity over fixed viewpoints. In spite of the occasional envy for highly identifiable styles, she would rather not be typecast so young in pursuit of a personal style. She holds the view that her work needs to keep evolving and advancing like waves.

“The change in style and storyboarding since 2007 has been dramatic. I subconsciously prefer diversity and cannot stick to a style for style's sake. It would be terrible to be typecast so early. I think that works need to keep advancing or undergo differentiation or evolution. I think a wave like format would be better. In any case, I just don't like things to be always the same” (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).

Breaking through the previously romantic style, "Emit" in 2012 is a colorful yet elegant presentation with much more clearly defined block borders. The characters are portrayed with quarter mosaics in a fairy tale style, which employs special patterns and textures for richer layers. While

the story speaks of a land where time is lost, the vivid color scheme creates a strong feeling of warmth.

“The story in Emit has a fairy tale feeling to it because of the material. I thought I'd use European designs. It is a picture book, so the style is different. I always think style and material should work with each other and change accordingly.” (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22)

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Figure 5 61Chi, a page from "Emit", 2011

Meanwhile, in preparation for the Angoulême International Comics Festival, 61Chi had hoped that her work would be accepted by an international audience and so she set aside her usual style, closer to Japanese manga, and created a more serious, realistic story, "Happy Forest". Interestingly, her earlier signature tints of strokes and chromatic colors reappeared in the new piece after the completely different presentation in "Emit". However, the same strokes and textures can still be seen on closer inspection. The colored borders retain the block method, but are bolder and break through the limits of line drawing. The result is a brand new style that is a combination of two earlier styles.

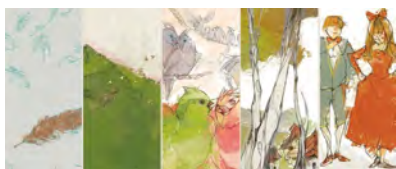


Figure 6 61Chi, a page from "Happy Forest", 2012

Influence of Japanese anime and manga

Japanese anime and manga had a strong influence on 61Chi as a child. In particular, the refreshing and dream-like style of Japanese cartoonist and

illustrator Sumomo Yumeka was one of the key sources of guidance for 61Chi. Her doodles and other works in high school clearly reflected an attempt to imitate characters and styles from Japanese anime and manga. Furthermore, 61Chi's comic art has created fan-fiction by mixing and matching favorite characters from Japanese anime. The fact that all of the fan merchandise clubs of which she is a member, such as CWT, follow Japanese manga reflects the strong Japanese influence in 61Chi's works published during her university years.

I started reading Naruto in high school and doodled a lot even during classes. I thought Sumomo Yumeka's style was beautiful and I bought a lot of her works to practice by imitating. I am still learning to extract the essence of masters' works and incorporate them into my own style. This is the way I learn at the moment. I actually tend to draw in the same way without thinking about it when I have seen a lot of works that I like (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).

The following is an analysis in terms of characters' outfits, proportion and expressions, view frames, picture frame, onomatopoeic words, and backgrounds:

Character style

The average body to head ratio of eight male and female characters out of 12 comic and picture books created by 61Chi is 7.08, indicating that the subject is used to drawing characters with bodies approximately seven times the size of heads and slightly thinner than average, similar to normal body shapes in reality.

The characters' outfits are primarily simple and loose with most styles tailored to match the appropriate backgrounds with historical or European designs. In terms of the overall style, the subject does not place too much of an emphasis on details in the characters' outfits and accessories as folds in the clothing are often presented in light and dark blocks instead of lines.

Outfits sometimes merge with backgrounds, movements, or onomatopoeic words.



Figure 7 Illustration of character proportions and outfits

With respect to facial features, the characters have faces that are slender with slightly pointy chins and relatively large and narrow eyes. The subject tends to emphasize the shape of the eyes with overlapping hand-drawn lines, which create space and depth. The shape of eyebrows and the degree to which the eyelids cover the eyeballs are employed to show expressions such as happiness, anger, shyness, and loneliness. See Figure 8.



Figure 8 Illustration of facial features and expressions.

View frame

It can be divided into five modes according to the order of reading:

- A. The page is divided into two sections, top and bottom, which are not divided into left and right or into two or more frames from right to left. The reading order is from right to left at the top to right to left at the bottom or from top to bottom as shown in Figure 9.
- B. The page is divided into three sections, top, middle and bottom, which are not divided into left and right or into two or more frames from right to left. The reading order is from right to left at the top to right to left at the bottom or from top to bottom as shown in Figure 10.
- C. The page is divided into two sections, left and right, which are not divided into left and right or into two or more frames from top to bottom. The

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reading order is from top to bottom at the right to top to bottom at the left or from right to left as shown in Figure 11.

D. The page is divided into three sections, left, middle and right, which are not divided into left and right or into two or more frames from top to bottom. The reading order is from top to bottom at the right, top to bottom in the middle, to top to bottom at the left or from right to left as shown in Figure 12.

E. The page is not divided by any frame. Frame lines do not affect the reading order or characters exceed the boundary created by the frame lines as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Speech bubbles

Speech bubbles for normal expressions are in elongated oval shapes or irregular circles as shown in Figure 14-1, whereas those for strong expressions such as anger are in sharp, explosive shapes or adopt multiple lines as shown in Figure 14-2. Monologue or plot description is often presented in text with squares or no frames as shown in Figure 14-3.



Figure 14-1



Figure 14-2



Figure 14-3

Onomatopoeic symbols, words and images

In comics, effects beyond the original meanings of the images are often used to convey the otherwise invisible emotions and actions of comic

characters. (Johnson-Woods, Toni, 2010) An analysis of the subject's works shows that onomatopoeic punctuation marks, such as exclamation and question marks, are used to convey surprise and questioning as shown in Figure 15-1; examples of sounds made by characters or animals such as “ah”, “eh”, and “oh” are shown in Figure 15-2; and examples of sounds made by objects hitting each other or falling such as “crash”, “squeak”, and “bang” are shown in Figure 15-3. The symbols and words described above aim to match the circumstances in combination with different shapes of frames or to repeat or exaggerate the strength of emotions. Meanwhile, the author often adds humorous frameless text that is unrelated to the plot and serves only to interact with the reader or make fun of the characters, as shown in Figure 15-4.

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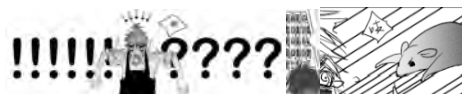


Figure 15-1



Figure 15-2

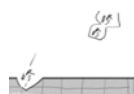


Figure 15-3

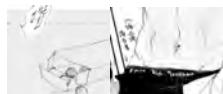






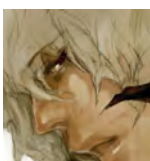







Figure 15-4

3. Innovative breakthrough in pursuit of the combination of hand-drawn textures and computer graphics

In her creative process, 61Chi always insists on drawing a sketch by hand before scanning it into the computer in order to achieve a unique hand-drawn style. Coloring the scanned image with computer graphics software follows the same techniques as used in fine art, including the atmosphere of ink wash painting, the dyed patterns unique to watercolors, illustrative pencil lines, and automated techniques such as spraying and dripping. Sometimes digital graphics are employed to mimic the hand-drawn texture.

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Table 3 List of hand-drawn examples

	Example drawing		
Hand-drawn sketches	 《Je Crois》	 《伊米特 Emit》	 《Trois Drei Tres 333 》
Pencil effect	 《ENDLESS》	 《風に舞う二粒の砂》	 《THE MOOD》
Dye effect	 《évoquer》	 《évoquer》	 《évoquer》
Spray and drip effects	 《Je Crois》	 《623km》	 《Tomate Con Queso》

It can be seen in a further analysis of the link between computer graphics and artistic creation and related studies that since 1984, the scientization of art has driven designers and artists to adopt computer graphics in their works (Shih-Pin Chen, 2005). Computer graphics software has the advantage of speed and precision and is able to create realistic space and material texture while mimicking the styles and idealized color presentation of various conventional hand-drawn media in a precise manner. Computer graphics are also easy to modify and experiment with, boosting an author's capabilities in terms of interpretation and expression, while achieving more detailed and complete effects. An artist does not have to worry about accidentally mixing colors or damaging the paper when making the finishing touches. Mixing and matching of photographs and textures is another effective way to enhance virtual reality and express the imagination.

Save/copy/paste functions offer advantages that conventional hand-drawn art cannot.

However, the combination of computer graphics with art tends to be two dimensional and less artistic, a point often discussed and disputed. Famous American computer graphics artist Mike Daarken Lim stresses that digital art should be treated as a tool and basic hand-drawing skills are still necessary in any creation (Yong-Quan Zhao, 2010). Andrew Jones, an illustrator who uses computer graphics, thinks that on top of improving computer graphics skills, an artist needs to keep exploring and coming up with new ideas to develop a unique style (Yong-Quan Zhao, 2010). This shows that well-known artists who have achieved a certain status and fame in the field of computer graphics still pay great attention to hand-drawing skills and expression of techniques and styles.

According to Jun-Hua Fon (2004), the application of computer graphics and hand drawing blends cultural elements with technology in order to double artistic graphic effects. It can be seen in 61Chi's philosophy for making comic art that her skills with hand drawing and computer graphic techniques help elevate her work to a new level. She possesses sufficient skill in the use of computer graphics to enable the simulation of realistic hand-drawing textures. This reflects her constant efforts to break through the restrictions of computer graphics tools and "cold" technology in her pursuit of creating the same warmth and virtually identical visual effects of hand drawings through a media that is completely different. The concept can be compared to the innovative breakthrough achieved by Renaissance artists by using two dimensional media to simulate three dimensional virtual space and realistic artistic effects, something which sent shockwaves through the art world and set a new milestone in the history of art.

Being a student of fine art, I think of comic art as art and so I tend to think "that is the way to draw" and pay attention to every detail (composition, lines, colors, light and shadows, depth, texture, and aesthetics). The texture of computer graphics is just too lifeless and too cold (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).

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In terms of the values and standards of aesthetics, the progress of the visual arts has been intertwined with the history of man and does not stray from the rules and principles of artistic expression. It can be seen in the philosophies and works of well known contemporary computer graphic artists and the subject 61Chi that they are able to not only simulate hand-drawing textures with computer graphics in response to conventional views of aesthetics but also incorporate computer graphics to present visual effects that hand drawing cannot achieve. They challenge and break through the restrictions of traditional tools, demonstrating the philosophy that computer graphics are a media tool, and the works are still judged by the same criteria, including creativity and cleverness and effort reflected in innovation and breakthroughs. It is their belief that enables them to break from the confines of computer technology, such as tool properties and brushes and other special effects or limitations and blind spots of computers, and avoid any loss of uniqueness or originality by continuing to create innovative, breakthrough, creative effects.

(2) Influence and relevance of academic education on comic art works

According to Yi-Wen Lin (2002), most artists consider there is a positive correlation between academic education and comic art techniques in terms of influence on creative techniques. A look at the creative background of the subject 61Chi shows that she attended fine art classes since childhood, which cultivated her skills in basic drawing media and trained her to consider and interpret expressions. She has brought the coloring techniques of a watercolor artist to computer graphics. It can be observed in her insistence on drawing sketches in pencil before scanning them into digital format to be colored that the training from a formal fine arts education has given her hand-drawing skills and a strong preference for their application. It may be that the subject excels in these forms of expression and is used to them, and her creative background has contributed to her personal style and strengths.

Having majored in design at university, the subject is able to apply graphics software, including Photoshop, Illustrator, Corel Painter, and CorelDRAW, to the creative media that she uses. She is skilled in the use of

brushes, color matching, typesetting, and font design. It can be observed in the way in which she handles the process from creation to print that the subject has a large degree of control over the publication of her works. Being skilled in tools and media gives her the advantage of being able to get closer to the ideal presentation in her mind and to keep creating new ideas in order to challenge her passion for change.

It helps a lot when the production of the comic includes publication. In terms of print design, only you yourself know what kind of atmosphere it needs and what kind of style is better to match it, such as title font or typesetting. Even the frame for speech bubbles in an image may be part of the typesetting process (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).

The subject has been immersed in art education since a young age. This has helped her develop a sensitivity to aesthetic judgment and creative ideas and also influenced the artistic standards to which she holds her work. Jing-Zi Guo, Mei-He Lin, Jing-Qing Zhang, Bao-Yu Hu, Wei-Jun Jian, Jia-Nan Xie, and Pei-Rong Zhou(2009) all think that "art education for the gifted not only provides gifted female students with specialized knowledge and skills, but also has a lot to offer in terms of a higher level of aesthetic judgment, appreciation, or emotional experience" (p. 97).

I think my work is definitely different from the work of someone who never had an art education. For example, colors have to match and there has to be depth or a flow of lines. I pay a lot of attention to things like balance, composition, and texture (Interview with 61Chi, 2013/1/22).

The author thinks that the main cause of the visual shock and reflection on her own artistic creations she underwent in France is because the focus of specialized art education is on artistic creativity and innovation, which is why the subject works hard to shake off the influence of Japanese manga and start again to find her own style. This reaction can be seen not only as

an artist demonstrating her ability to see the value of creativity, but also as the subject being confident about overcoming the challenge presented.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Conclusions

The origin of 61Chi's progress as a comic artist can be found in her background as a member of a gifted student fine art class, which helped her establish her drawing skills. An outstanding student throughout her time as an art student, 61Chi is able to apply her hand-drawing skills to recreate computer graphics beyond the restrictions of cold, hard machines. Important people in her life also have had a strong influence on her. For example, her parents have been supportive of her artistic pursuits and started providing the necessary resources from her childhood. Mr. Huang, her teacher who believed in self-discipline and flexibility, inspired her and guided her to develop an interest in a wide range of artistic forms. She and her classmates encouraged each other and her seniors were excellent role models. All of these people have contributed to inspire her and make her a better cartoonist.

Being a focused person who pursues perfection, 61Chi tried drawing comics as a hobby and improved her skills under tutelage and a progressive learning process until she turned a hobby into a field of expertise, achieving a finished state today after six years in the field of comic art. In spite of encountering bottlenecks trying to create new ways to present comic art in the process, 61Chi demonstrated her strength of character by continuing to enhance her expert knowledge and skills while constantly challenging herself.

An analysis of 61Chi's comic art style shows a form of artistic expression that is achieved by using exceptional computer graphic skills to simulate hand-drawing textures and reflect conventional preferences for realism and surrealism. The lessons learnt as a design major in university enable 61Chi to ensure that her work is as close to the ideal representation of what she

sees in her mind's eye as possible and that she can exert a large degree of control over the publication of her works. She is able to seamlessly incorporate the mix and match, and copy and paste functions afforded by computer graphics that hand drawings can never achieve in order to attempt visual effects such as perspective, color layers, and computer-generated images. By breaking out of the restrictions of traditional tools and continuing to create innovative, breakthrough, creative effects, she can attract the viewers' attention. Meanwhile, the styles of her characters, view frames and speech bubbles, and presentation of onomatopoeic symbols are deeply influenced by Japanese manga, which appeals to an audience who are very familiar with the genre. In addition, her devotion to hand-drawing techniques in combination with her fine art background enables her to display a unique style in terms of creative process as well as aesthetic judgment, which helps her stand out among young comic artists.

Finally, the author thinks that the subject 61Chi's holds herself to high standards, always trying to improve herself and face new challenges. Seeking exposure and exchange through different channels, setting definite plans and targets in different stages, and staying committed to her passion for drawing for more than a decade have been the keys to her success.

2. Suggestions

(1) Continuing study of the history of comic art in Taiwan

Looking back on the history of comic art in Taiwan, the government promulgated the Guidelines for Comic Strip Publication and Review and other regulatory review systems, which imposed severe restrictions on the development of comic art. Comic artists gave up and cases of literary inquisition were not unheard of. Comic art creation almost came to a complete stop under such circumstances and sales tanked.

Animation and comic art exhibits have been taking place at major art galleries and museums in recent years and have come to be seen as commercial art and gained popularity accordingly. Many works have been adapted into films and become even more popular. The business

opportunities and discussions triggered by the so called "otaku" (geek) economy cannot be ignored. Fans of animation and comic art in Taiwan are keen consumers, who have been reported in the media not only in Taiwan and overseas, but also in anime headquarters, Japan. Many young comic artists who publish personal fan-fiction and original picture books have been establishing their own presence on the global stage. The comic art market in Taiwan is showing signs of becoming a rising star of local industry. As the environment and the support system becomes more favorable for the development of comic art and the public is paying more attention to the importance of visual arts education through visual cultural experiences, professional comic artists may just rise to the top and become the next star of the arts and culture scene.

However, bias in previous government policies and public opinion is deeply rooted and, as a result, comic art is treated as a subculture and not preserved or studied either in the world of literature or academia. There are still very few studies on comic art and related topics in Taiwan. There is even a lack of contemporary comic art works, artists, and established systems post-1990. Methods of appreciation and analysis are also quite limited. It is recommended that studies in the future, in addition to combing through the history of comic art in both vertical and horizontal aspects, combine qualitative interviews in order to recreate the essence of comic art culture.

(2) Training of comic artists

Taiwan has been under the influence of Japanese anime and manga for years. The public's perception of comic art can be said to be the perception of manga. For many children, such visual images are not only childhood memories, but also the model by which they align their drawings, aesthetic judgment and logic in plot development. Studies of 61Chi have revealed that stimulants in the field of comic art in Taiwan are not diversified enough and are too homogeneous, not sufficiently exciting for talented children with a passion for comic art. Enriching visual frames of reference and models remains one of the key issues. Meanwhile, school education should abandon the persistent bias against comic art and start making plans to cultivate

comic art talent in order to develop a uniquely Taiwanese style separate from Japan. The aim should be to restore the golden age of comic art in Taiwan with well-defined characters and original works.

For individuals with a talent in fine art, comic art is a new career option. The training of artistic talent in Taiwan focuses on the tradition of realistic techniques and as a result, everyone is skilled in drawing. However, as the subject 61Chi, who is from the same background, graduates with a fine arts education she faces a difficult job market. Training in secondary skills to meet the market demand may be a good direction for the fine arts education system to take. 61Chi's achievements in the field of comic art by combining skillful realistic techniques and computer graphics could be a good example for the field of art education.

(3) Establish studies on the theory of emerging art forms

The scope of studies on the link between fine arts education and popular culture not only focuses on investigating the influence of popular culture on fine arts education from a broader perspective, but also points out that teachers should have a more open attitude and allow non-mainstream popular culture to enter the world of formal fine arts education. Meanwhile, the influence of fine art on popular culture or any combination of the two such as the innovative expression of computer graphics mixed with realistic techniques or the revolution and breakthroughs brought about by digital creation remain to be studied and discussed. Theories and methods of appreciation can be established through integration in the field and advance towards different possibilities and styles in creative expression in the visual arts.

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