

## VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN IN ANIMATION PRODUCTIONS: EXAMPLE OF THE BATMAN SERIES (1992-1995)

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<i>Atf</i>	Karashinoğlu, Ş. & Dönmez, A. (2024). Visual Identity Design in Animation Productions: Example of The Batman Series (1992-1995). The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication, 14 (2), 479-492.
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### ABSTRACT

Animated series for television have a long history. The first animation experiments began with short cartoons produced for the cinema in the 1920s and 1930s. However, it took a little longer for animation to become widespread and popular in the television environment. The 1950s and 1960s were the periods when animation became widespread on the television platform as television entered homes. During this period, Walt Disney, Warner Bros. Studios such as Hanna-Barbera and Hanna-Barbera began to present various animated series to television audiences; Especially the series produced by the Hanna-Barbera studio attracted great attention from television viewers, and many classic productions appeared during this period. It is also seen that the first visual identity designs for animation series were produced during this process. Visual identity has the power to leave a lasting impact on popular culture and is thought to play a key role in the success of animated series. From this perspective, research constitutes an important issue. Within the scope of the limitations of the study, only milestone animation series produced in the United States were discussed, and the aim was to analyze samples and convey expert opinions within the framework of the descriptive analysis method. Batman: The Animated Series (1992-1995), which constitutes the sample of the research, was examined in terms of visual identity elements such as logo, typography, episode covers, and color palette. It has been concluded that visual identity elements are also important in the branding process of animation series, in addition to technical details such as story, scenario, fiction and graphics; In addition, it is aimed to create a Turkish resource for relevant stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *Animation, Animation Series, Visual Identity, Graphic Design.*

## ANİMASYON YAPIMLARDA GÖRSEL KİMLİK TASARIMI: BATMAN SERİSİ ÖRNEĞİ (1992-1995)

### ÖZ

Televizyona yönelik animasyon serilerinin geçmişi oldukça uzun bir tarihe sahiptir. İlk animasyon denemeleri, 1920'lerde ve 1930'larda, sinema için üretilen kısa çizgi filmlerle başlamıştır. Ancak televizyon ortamında animasyonun yaygınlaşması ve popülerlik kazanması biraz daha zaman almıştır.

1950'ler ve 1960'lar, televizyonun evlere girmesiyle birlikte animasyonun televizyon platformunda da yaygınlaştığı dönemler olmuştur. Walt Disney, Warner Bros. ve Hanna-Barbera gibi stüdyolar, çeşitli animasyon serilerini televizyon izleyicilerine sunmaya başlamış; özellikle Hanna-Barbera stüdyosunun ürettiği seriler, televizyon izleyicilerinin büyük ilgisini çekmiş ve birçok klasikleşmiş yapım bu dönemde ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu süreçte animasyon serileri için ilk görsel kimlik tasarımlarının üretildiği de görülmektedir. Görsel kimlik, popüler kültürde kalıcı bir etki bırakma gücüne sahiptir ve animasyon serilerinin başarısında önemli bir rol oynadığı düşünülmektedir. Çalışmanın sınırlılıkları kapsamında yalnızca Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde üretilmiş kilometre taşı sayılabilecek animasyon serileri ele alınmış, betimsel analiz yöntemi çerçevesinde örnek incelemesi ve uzman görüşlerinin aktarılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturan Batman: Animasyon Serisi (1992-1995) logo, tipografi, bölüm kapakları, renk paleti gibi görsel kimlik elemanları açısından irdelenmiştir. Animasyon serilerinin markalaşma sürecinde öykü, senaryo, kurgu, grafik benzeri teknik detayların yanında görsel kimlik unsurlarının da önemli olduğu sonucuna varılmış; bunlara ek olarak konuyla ilgili paydaşlara bir Türkçe kaynak oluşturulması hedeflenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Animasyon, Animasyon Serileri, Görsel Kimlik, Grafik Tasarım.*

## INTRODUCTION

Animated series are one of the television productions that have the potential to create a unique world and draw the audience into an impressive experience. It can be said that the success of these series depends on the characters and the created world being visually striking, familiar and unforgettable. In the visual identity designs used in these series, many design elements are used, from the physical features of the characters to the atmosphere around them, thus, contributing to the deepening of the story. Color palettes, character designs, logo-like design products, different drawing styles and backgrounds constitute the art elements that determine the originality and recognizability of an animation series. The totality of these visual identity designs facilitates the emotional connection of the audience and can play a critical role in the success of the animation. For this reason, the creative teams of animated series carefully consider other visual elements in the design of their visual identity, skillfully combining various elements to create an unforgettable work for the audience. From all these perspectives, it is seen how important the visual identity design in animation series is.

Based on 24 frames of hand-drawn drawings rather than photographs, the historical roots of traditional animation are naturally closely related to the art of painting. Evolutionarily, animation can be considered as the predecessor of cinema. Because of this interaction, cinema, painting and photography are directly related to the aesthetics of animation. There are also different techniques of animation such as puppet, model, stop motion. Animation, which emerged as an art form in the USA, is a series of sequentially positioned drawing frames to give movement to inanimate drawings of people, objects or animal figures (Blair, 2018: 9). In parallel with the developing technology, animations are now prepared in a computer-aided digital environment. Thus, the possibilities of expression have expanded, production has accelerated and it has become widespread.

According to many film historians, Émile Cohl was the pioneer of animated film in its current sense. Cohl made dozens of films for the Gaumont and Pathé film companies (Barrier, 1999: 11). In the early 1900s, there were many studios for animation production, especially in the USA and France. Animated films, which have developed rapidly, have become an important part of Hollywood studios. Many movies and characters produced during this period have gone down in history as important products of popular culture. Many films and characters produced during this period have gone down in history as important products of popular culture. Especially the productions of Walt Disney Studios, which still continues its activities, have an important place in the history of animated films. The Disney Company, founded by Walter Elias Disney, is one of the pioneers and most important in the American animation industry. His productions have won Academy Awards many times.

The emergence of the first TV channels after the commercial production of television (TV) brought along the broadcasting of content for children. Initially, short animations prepared for movie screenings, which attracted great interest, were shown on television channels, but over time, the process evolved into the regular broadcasting of animated series. In the following period, productions that could appeal to children as well as young and adult audiences emerged. The expansion of the audience it addresses has led to increased investments in this field and further growth of the sector.

In the 1950s, there were six million televisions in the United States (Bendazzi, 2015: 23). This means that approximately twenty-six million people watched it. This figure indicates a very large audience for that period. Thanks to new programs and formats designed and produced on TV, the entertainment industry is undergoing major changes (Bendazzi, 2015: 23). New and interesting content needs to be produced for the increasing number of viewers every day. Animation productions stand out as an important candidate among these contents. The structure and evolution of television animation in America is inextricably linked to its predecessor, cinema animation. In turn, cinema animation has been greatly influenced by the artistic endeavours that preceded and influenced it. For this reason, the aesthetic perception inherited by animation artists positively reflected on the development of cinema and later television animation (Perlmutter, 2014: 9). There are artists trained in cinema animation who can contribute to the field. Thus, the development of animation in terms of television has been fully opened.

In the early years of the process, television channels needed a lot of content to be broadcast and the use of animations was welcomed in this process. However, due to the extremely low budgets of television shows, films shown in cinemas in order to fill the broadcast time cheaply were found more suitable for broadcasting short animations waiting to rot in studio vaults (Furniss, 2016: 220). Early children's television shows, developed to fill the morning and afternoon time slots, were generally relatively cheap and easy to produce. Puppets often appeared alongside the programme presenter in these shows. In the following period, animated series became an indispensable element of children's programmes due to the interest they attracted. Thus, the production of animated films exclusively for television began to be considered. The fact that television increased its production of animation in the 1950s enabled it to transfer many talented and trained artists with the power of the developing economy. The fact that animations for television were more commercially successful led to the closure of studios producing cartoons for cinema in the 1960s (Moritz, 2008: 317). Thus, the whole animation method evolved into a more limited animation technique. The main reason for this is that production for television can be consumed more quickly and therefore can be made more easily (Sevindi, 2022: 25).



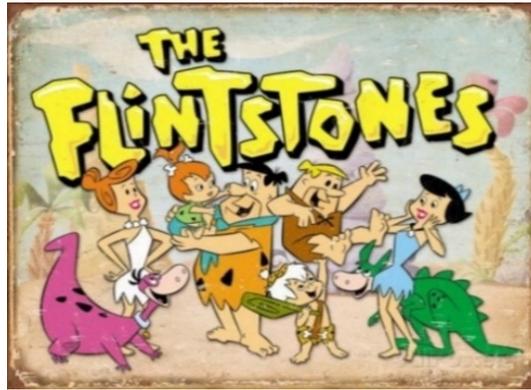
**Figure 1.** The opening and closing scenes and logo images of the animated series The Crusader Rabbit (Anderson & Ward, 1949) (Youtube, 2024).

The first animated series for television was called Crusader Rabbit and was broadcast in the United States (Gitlin & Wos, 2018: 110). Crusader Rabbit was the first major television animation product to

be seen as a weekly or daily series. It is considered to be the first animated series due to its continuing characters, plot lines and being part of a regular broadcast programme (Perlmutter, 2014: 35). The concept of the series was produced by Alexander Anderson, the nephew of the famous animator Paul Terry, who worked as an animator at Terrytoons, and his friend Jay Ward, who received an MBA degree from Harvard University. The duo opened a company called Television Arts Productions and together produced *The Wandering Hare*, which was broadcast on NBC stations (1949-55) (Furniss, 2016: 222). The character of the Travelling Rabbit was inspired by figures such as Don Quixote and the Knights of the Round Table who were “strong”, “honourable” and fought for “justice”, and was designed as a hero who fought against injustice in America and, when necessary, abroad (Gitlin and Wos, 2018: 110). It is also seen that the series frequently uses humorous elements along with the heroic theme. It is difficult to say that the logo, which is the most important visual identity element of the series, has been carefully designed (Figure 1). On the opening cover and throughout the series, a hand-drawn logo design evoking western typographic elements is used, while the closing cover uses the Balloon typeface designed by Max R. Kaufmann for American Type Founders in 1939.

It can be said that animation series developed from the success of animated films in the first half of the 20th century. The perspective on animation changed significantly in the thirty-year period starting with the widespread use of television after World War II. In this period, which is regarded as the golden age of animation, studios gave up big-budget short animations and started to produce animations for television.

The 1960s and 1970s are an important period in the historical process of animated series for television. During this period, animation became widespread on the television platform and began to appeal to a large audience. In the early 1960s, animated series began to attract the attention of television viewers, especially the productions produced by the Hanna-Barbera Studio attracted the attention of television viewers. *The Flintstones* has achieved great success by combining modern American family life with the Stone Age period and presenting it in a humorous way (Furniss, 2016: 226). There have been changes in the visual identity of the series in the process. In the first two seasons of the series, a rounded logo was used, and then it evolved towards a logo with more up-to-date and sharp lines according to its period (Figure 2). Then, *The Jetsons* series, this time about a family in the space age, dealt with fantasy and science fiction themes. Both series have created a large fan base with their entertaining content for children and adults. The power and influence of Hanna-Barbera Studios grew with these successful productions. The productions were shown in many countries due to the interest they attracted.



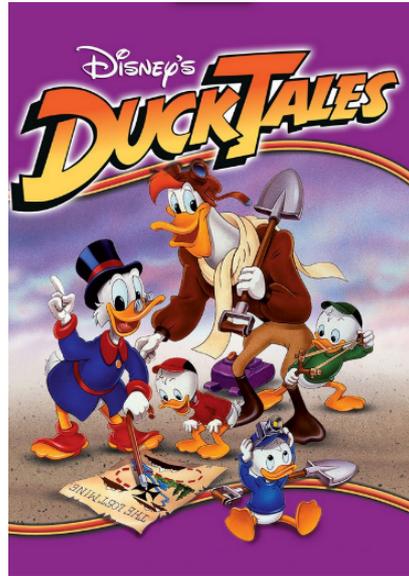
**Figure 2.** The current logo and character set image of the *The Flintstones* animation series (Measimer, 2022).

In the same period, superhero-themed animated series started to gain popularity, and series based on Marvel characters such as *Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* gained the admiration of children and adults (Perlmutter, 2014: 164). In addition, youth drama-themed productions such as *The Archie Show* also attracted the attention of television viewers. In the 1970s, animated series became more diversified, and

Hanna-Barbera Studio's Scooby-Doo, Where Are You! series was a popular production for young viewers with its themes of horror and mystery. In addition, music-themed series such as Josie and the Pussycats were among the successful productions released during this period (Perlmutter, 2014: 152-153).

In the 1980s and 1990s, animation underwent a major evolution with a variety of genres and more complex storylines to appeal to a wider audience. In the 1980s, cartoon series were met with a great deal of interest, especially in animation produced to promote sales of toys and spinoffs. For example, series such as Transformers and G. I. Joe: A Real American Hero were produced in close connection with the toy industry and at the same time attracted a significant audience on television. In addition, playing cards and various textiles associated with the productions began to appear. These series attracted the attention of children and young people with their simple action-packed stories, superficial but colorful characters and exciting battle/fight scenes (Furniss, 2016: 230).

Around the same time, animated series began to incorporate fantasy themes. He-Man and the Masters of the Universe told the story of a powerful hero fighting against evil with his friends, while the ThunderCats series told the adventures of anthropomorphic cats. The productions have built a huge fan base with their impressive visual effects, action-packed scenes and memorable characters. The DuckTales series produced by Disney Studios in the late eighties was also highly acclaimed and gained a dedicated following. The adventures of Scrooge McDuck and his nephews in the hunt for treasure and the pursuit of money were of great interest. From an ideological perspective, the production, which is a celebration of capitalism, has been scrutinized by critics with the implication that it has a different agenda. The production had the chance to be broadcast in many countries globally and attracted attention. The logo of the series emulates the Indiana Jones series, one of the popular films of the period with a similar theme (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Poster and logo image of DuckTales animation series (IMDb, n.d.).

The 1990s was a period of further diversification and expansion of animated series. In this period, animated series appealing to young people and adults gained importance. For example, Batman: The Animated Series attracted mostly young and adult audiences with its dark atmosphere and chaotic stories. In the same period, The Simpsons became a phenomenon in television history with its critical and humorous take on American daily life and family life. The logo used in the first seasons of The Simpsons series has undergone some changes and is still used today. The classic animated series of the nineties have created a nostalgic atmosphere and have been a part of the childhood of a generation. The

Pokemon animated series, which we can count among the main ones, has gained a large fan base by successfully dealing with the themes of friendship and adventure, as well as entertaining the audience with its colorful world and fun characters. The X-Men series is a successful adaptation of the comic book world into the animated format, drawing superhero fans to the screen. SpongeBob SquarePants, with its undersea adventures, funny characters and humorous elements, has fascinated both children and adults, and remains popular to this day. The 1980s and 1990s are remembered as a period when animated series for television diversified and expanded their audience. The classics produced during this period are still considered an important part of the animation world.

### Visual Identity

Visual identity can be considered as a part of brand identity that covers more graphic design discipline. It encompasses many of the visual elements that represent an organization, a production, a commercial venture. From this point of view, brand identity refers to more “internal aspects” such as brand personality, mission and brand voice, while visual identity covers “external or physical” aspects such as logo, logotype designs, typography and brand colors. According to Slade, visual identity can be summarized as the sum of the brand’s visual aesthetics, logo, logotype, symbol, colors, etc. (2016: 156). Visual identity consists of graphic components that together provide a system for identifying and representing a brand. The basic elements of a brand’s visual identity can be logotype, symbols, colors, fonts (Allen and Simmons, 2003: 113). Thus, the identity elements of a brand can be created and the meaning that the visual identity wants to create can be revealed by analyzing these elements. On the other hand, visual identity can be summarized as a collection of visual elements that serve to differentiate and represent a brand. More specifically, it refers to visible components such as logos, logotypes, typefaces or brand colors that help customers recognize a brand. These elements enhance brand recognition by blending each brand asset into an appropriate aesthetic (Benzeray, 2021). Brand awareness and recognition is facilitated by a visual identity that is simple to remember and immediately recognizable. Visual identity triggers brand perception and unlocks associations. More than any other sense, vision provides information about the world (Wheeler, 2018: 24).

Visual identity can be defined as the part of a brand that leaves a lasting impression and creates an impact on perception. This part is considered important for several reasons: **Differentiation:** Creating a distinctive and unique visual identity makes brands unique and promotes differentiation. **Relatability:** If your target audience finds your brand interesting and easy to understand, they will easily connect with it. **Consistency:** Consistency is critical in all aspects of branding, but when it comes to your visual identity, it’s even more important. Having a consistent visual identity will contribute to a reliable customer experience, ultimately leading to increased brand loyalty. Even if your visual identity evolves over time and undergoes minor changes, having a solid infrastructure creates recognition and creates the power to prevent confusion in customers. **Loyalty:** A strong, well-defined visual identity makes it easier for consumers to stick with a brand. The more consumers recognize the product or service and feel close to it, the stronger their bond with it becomes (Benzeray, 2021).

The visual identity of an organization or company requires a comprehensive design plan. After the visual identity is designed, it is aimed to establish mandatory standards with visual identity manuals. The aim here is to ensure coordination between all design elements and to create a positive and memorable impression of the organization (Becer, 2013: 199). Visual identity, which has an important role in recognizing a business and keeping the brand in the consumer’s memory effectively, is seen as an important part of corporate identity (Özodaşık, 2018: 218). A well-thought-out visual identity work increases memorability and distinctiveness as well as creating a positive impression about the institution, brand and business.

Visual identity now stands out as one of the important elements in motion pictures and animated productions. The design and production processes of all graphic elements used in animated films (credits/introductory texts, typography, color palettes and elements, etc.) require a subtle work in harmony with the overall aesthetic structure of the film. Thus, the aesthetic integrity of the films is ensured.

### **Critical Approaches to Animation Productions**

Today, there is an even wider range of animated series for television. Appealing to different genres and target audiences, they continue to impress audiences with their original stories, visual effects and in-depth characters. The boundaries of animation have expanded with technological advances, offering greater potential for creativity and quality in television. However, its effects as a means of communication and a transmitter of culture have also been discussed for a long time. Productions produced by developed countries, especially American films and animations, are broadcast globally in many countries of the world. This situation has made animation productions stand out as an important cultural transmitter and disseminator like other mass media. It is obvious that these productions, whose primary purpose is commercial in nature, cannot be independent of ideology. Because no artistic or cultural creation can be independent of ideology. However, there may be a more intense production in terms of ideological content. According to Herbert Schiller's view, especially American productions are exported to relatively less developed countries to promote and spread American cultural values, lifestyle, brands and industrial products (cited in Yaylagül, 2006: 140). Societies in other countries that are culturally exposed to the influence will be less resistant to products they have just been introduced to.

America's free market economy, with its doctrine of "free flow of information", penetrates and dominates the economies and cultures of the weaker countries than the powerful American economy and imposes the American lifestyle and value system on these fragile societies. This situation, which Schiller explains with the concept of cultural imperialism, occurs as a result of the one-way flow of material and cultural goods from industrialized countries to underdeveloped countries. (Yaylagül, 2018: 140)

Thus, the market dominance of imperialist cultures over the world is growing and strengthening. Many productions in different genres spread like a network with their intense ideological content. One of the most important examples of ideological influence is the character of Donald Duck, one of Disney's most well-known characters. "How to Read Donald Duck?, Imperialist Ideology in The Disney Comic", co-authored by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, analyzes in detail, from a Marxist perspective, the distinct ideological content carried and disseminated by Disney comics (1991). Such productions are powerful tools for the dissemination of dominant life practices. In the case of Uncle Donald Duck, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart have presented strong arguments on how American ideals and lifestyle are imposed on less developed countries. It is possible to evaluate that the validity of this claim will be quite high in animations with similar content. It is possible to analyze many animations with similar content and features such as The Jetsons, The Flintstones, The Simpsons, G. I. Joe: A Real American Hero, etc. in this context.

Technically, the production stages of animated films often involve long processes requiring different specializations. The stages, which are similar to film production, also differ in some ways. In animation productions, there are many technical steps such as script, character design, concept design, storyboard, cinematography, voice-over and video editing. In addition, visual identity design now stands out as one of the important elements.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on the assumption that visual identity design in animated productions is as important as other production elements of the film such as script, editing, cinematography, etc. Within the scope of the limitations of the study, animation series made in the United States of America, which constitute

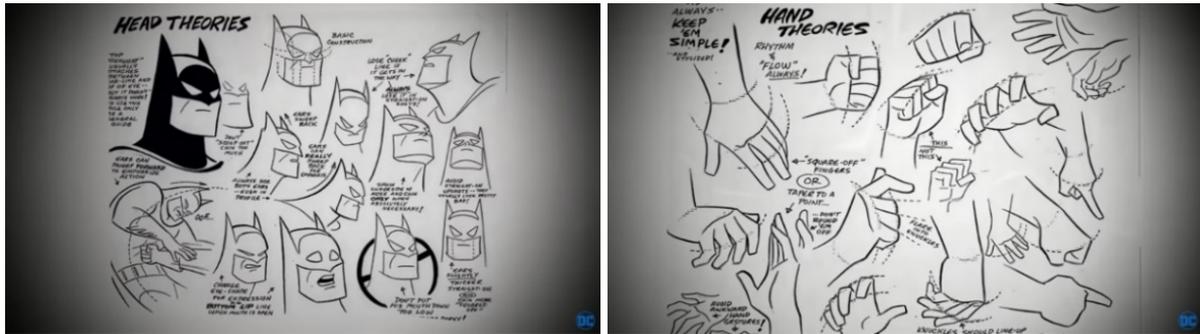
an important place in the history of animation, were discussed and prominent animated films in the literature were reviewed. Some visuals obtained from digital sources as a result of the scanning are presented in the study for a better perception of the development. Historically, the development process of animation series is presented, and a framework for theoretical approaches is drawn by including critical ideas on the subject. In line with the limitations of the study, Batman: The Animated Series (1992-1995) was selected within the framework of purposive sampling and analyzed within the framework of descriptive analysis method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Purposive sampling is based on the principle of selecting the sample that is thought to represent the universe within the research universe (Güler et al., 2013: 92). Descriptive analysis includes the sources of information obtained from the formal characteristics of the work with an interpretive approach. However, in descriptive analysis, information obtained from external sources of information in terms of socio-cultural, historical and biographical context is also utilized (Barret, 2014: 89). Thus, it becomes easier to understand the phenomena by revealing the relationships between the works. The visual elements in the film were analyzed and described within the framework of the form, context and related concepts of the work, again within the framework of purposive sampling. In addition, the production was also technically evaluated in terms of visual identity elements such as logo, typography, chapter covers and color palette. The findings were interpreted and the contribution of visual identity design to narrative and cinematography in animated films was evaluated. The lack of studies on this subject in the literature increases the importance of the subject and is thought to contribute to stakeholders in future studies.

### **Batman: Animated Series Visual Identity Analysis (1992-1995)**

Batman is one of the most well-known superhero characters in the comic book world. The creators of the character and the story series are Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger. Starting in 1939 as a comic book, the series was adapted many times to television in the 1960s and then to the movie screen (White, 2019: 2). The basic design of the story reveals that Batman is the son of a wealthy family living in Gotham City. Witnessing the murder of his family in his childhood, young Bruce Wayne devoted himself to justice and the fight against crime. Thus, Batman, the alter ego of Bruce Wayne, emerged. Batman, who identifies himself with the “bat”, has prepared a design similar to the bat as a costume. Just like a bat, he fights criminals mostly at night on the streets of Gotham City. Batman is a relatively more realistic character than other superheroes. He does not possess any supernatural powers. His greatest talents are observation, research and athletic skills. Due to his vast financial means, he has developed unique devices and technological equipment. Through this equipment, he defeats his enemies/criminals and ensures justice in his own way. The stories take place in Gotham, a dark and uncanny fictional city with gothic design elements. The cultural and social structure of Gotham, where Batman, an American hero, lives, is copied from the developed cities of America. The fact that the primary target audience of the plot and the character is the American public makes this choice logical in terms of the consistency of the production. However, it has been observed that American productions of Batman and similar superhero mythos have rapidly spread globally. This situation enabled the dominant cultural structure to spread and be adopted globally over time.

It is noteworthy that the visual identity designs of Batman: The Animated Series are the result of detailed work and utmost attention to detail. This series has a unique visual identity that subtly reflects the atmosphere of the dark and unsettling Gotham City and the iconic character of Batman and his unique characteristics. Renowned illustrator-animator Bruce Timm, one of the Co-Creators of the series, used hard and sharp lines in the character modeling of Batman, giving him a strong and muscular build (Gray, 2018). This design is a unique style of simplification that makes the Batman character look strong, powerful and solid. In addition, the designs of other characters such as Joker, Catwoman, Two-Face, Harley Quinn, Poison Ivy and others are enriched with details that reflect their personalities. These details visually convey the mood and complexity of the characters and provide the audience with a deeper connection. Bruce Timm produced various line theories for the simplification of the characters, and these theories were used throughout the entire production process of the animation (Gray, 2018).

Thanks to these theories, a consistent and unique visual identity was created for all characters in the series (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Images of character design theories generated by Bruce Timm, one of the co-creators of *Batman: The Animated Series* (Gray, 2018).

The series has also created a visually impressive atmosphere in its space and background designs. Gotham City is depicted in a dark, gloomy setting, while narrow streets, tall buildings, distorted perspectives and nighttime atmospheres reinforce the dark and unsettling tone of the series. In addition, the various locations are presented in a striking and focus-enhancing visual style with carefully crafted light and shadow plays. The backgrounds drawn by Eric Radomski, another co-creator of the series, made references to art deco aesthetics and film noir movements, and the final result was reached after the first sketches were designed on black cardboards (Figure 5). The series was inspired by the light and shadow plays and stage designs of classic films such as *Citizen Kane*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Metropolis* (Gray, 2018). Especially in the cinematography of the animated series, the aesthetic characteristics of German Expressionist films stand out. Distorted perspective designs and camera angles, high-contrast lighting values, pessimistic, uncanny, unsettling spaces and subjects feature prominently in the animated series. All these elements determine the dark and chaotic visual structure of the series.

One of the important influences in establishing the aesthetic structure, space designs and visual identity of animation is the *Batman* movie directed by Tim Burton in 1989. The movie directed by Burton was criticized as a movie not suitable for children due to its violence, extremely dark atmosphere, cynicism and sadism (Freeman, 2014: 44). However, despite these criticisms, the movie received a great deal of attention. Tim Burton's unique gothic, dark, suspenseful, surreal and at times disturbing visual style played a major role in its success. The intense audience interest led to the production of another movie, *Batman Returns*, in 1992. The high success of the first movie brought Tim Burton back on board as director. The director's successful and distinctive visual aesthetic in the two films influenced the visual style of the animated series. The similarities in the dark and gothic style in the overall structure of the animation are striking. On the other hand, it can be said that Fleischer Studios' *Superman* series is still seen as the cornerstone of superhero adaptations. As one of the most popular superheroes, Superman represents a reactionary expression of humanity's weakness in the face of big business and industrial machines after the industrial revolution. The *Man of Steel*'s distinctive strong aesthetic style, which emerged in the 1930s and became more influential in the 1940s, had a major impact on *Batman: The Animated Series* in the 1990s, as it did on other productions (Cavalier, 2011: 136). It is possible to see the character's muscular, strong and rigid lines and the Art Deco style of architecture in both productions. This situation strengthens the association of *Batman: The Animated Series* with other productions and contributes to the creation of the aesthetic identity, comprehensibility and memorability of the animation (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Images of background designs produced by Eric Radomski, one of the co-creators of *Batman: The Animated Series* (Gray, 2018).

The colors and typography used in the visual identity designs also reinforce the atmosphere of the series, generally using dark tones and cold colors to emphasize the threatening and mysterious atmosphere of Gotham City. At the same time, some scenes are contrasted with positive and negative spaces to create interesting moments. On the other hand, special title covers were prepared for each episode in a way that is not common in most animation series, and in these designs, graphical layouts and typographic approaches with Art Deco and retro styles were introduced to contribute to the visual identity (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Cover images of episode titles in *Batman: The Animated Series* (Gray, 2018).

The Batman logo used in the visual identity design of *Batman: The Animated Series* is one of the memorable and iconic elements of the series. The logo features a stylized black bat figure on a yellow background. The contrast in colors significantly supports the attractiveness. The logo depicts the most recognizable symbol of the character, the bat figure, in an elegant and powerful way. This iconic logo, which occupies an important place in the memories of *Batman* viewers, is one of the details that distinguish the *Batman Animated Series* from other *Batman* productions and make it memorable (Figure 7). On the other hand, the closing cover coincides with the dark mood of the series, with the dark-toned *Batman* figure wrapped in his cape in front of a red full moon, creating a graphic poster atmosphere (Figure 7). At the same time, the visual elements on the closing cover are also used in the official poster of the series, and typefaces that refer to the Art Deco graphic design style are chosen in the typography of the poster design. All these details made significant contributions to the visual identity design of the series and contributed to its originality by differentiating it from other productions to a certain extent.



**Figure 7.** Opening and closing cover images used in Batman: The Animated Series. Batman: The Animated Series, Season 01 Episode 01, Fox Kids.

The color palette used in the visual identity designs of Batman: The Animated Series stands out as an element that significantly supports the atmosphere of the series. In general, dark tones, cold colors and intense shadows constitute the main color palette. Colors such as dark blue, purple, black and gray emphasize the dark, uncanny and threatening atmosphere of Gotham City, and these colors also support the gothic elements of the series and the mysterious identities of the characters. Cool color tones make it easier to feel the dramatic and sad scenes in the series and emphasize the depth of the story. The vibrant colors used in some scenes in the series create dynamic moments, while at the same time creating contrast and determining the focus of the viewer (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Scene images in Batman: The Animated Series that set the focus with vibrant colors. Batman: The Animated Series, Season 01 Episode 09, Fox Kids.

The carefully selected details in the color palette emphasize an important visual identity element that differentiates Batman: The Animated Series from other animated productions and at the same time creates a dark, mysterious and uncanny atmosphere. Throughout the series, it is observed that a highly memorable and iconic visual identity design has emerged by adhering to the color palette as well as other design theories. These visual identity elements are considered to have contributed to the overall success of the series.

## CONCLUSION

It is possible to trace the origins of animated films, which have a long history, back to the simple screening machines that emerged in the 19th century. With the advancement of technology, animations first appeared in cinemas and then started to appear on TVs. The ever-expanding audience does not only consist of children, but also attracts the attention of young people and adults. This situation has led to the commercial growth of animated films. As in every field, rapid development and growth has led to the emergence of aesthetically better productions. Especially, the studios originating from the USA have become globally influential actors with their commercial success. The best known of these actors are

big studios such as Walt Disney, Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera. On the other hand, it has been observed that animated productions, just like motion pictures, are ideologically important communication tools, culture carriers and disseminators.

Batman, the subject of the study, is one of the most well-known superhero characters in the world, created in the late 1930s. The series, which started as a comic book, has been the subject of many movies, TV series, digital games and animations. While he has influenced many productions, he has also been influenced by other productions in terms of form and content. The visual aesthetics of Batman: The Animated Series, which was made in the 1990s, is influenced by director Tim Burton's Batman Films and cult productions such as Metropolis, Citizen Kane, and The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. The atmosphere created based on this facilitates the association of the production with other texts.

Visual identity, which is the focus of the study, has a great impact and importance in animated series made for television. The visual identity of an animated series can enable viewers to recognize the series, distinguish it from others, connect with it and make it memorable. Visual aesthetic elements such as the logo, episode covers, color palette, character design, backgrounds and locations can strengthen the atmosphere of the series, facilitating audience identification and drawing them in. At the same time, visual identity can also play a critical role in the industrial branding of a series. A recognizable logo or unique character design can become a distinguishing feature of a series. In summary, it can be said that visual identity is very important for animated series in order to attract and influence the target audience in the right way. A good visual identity contributes to the success of an animated series at least as much as story, script, editing and cinematography and contributes to providing a memorable experience to the audience.

It is possible to say that a very unique, relatable and consistent visual identity design was created in Batman: The Animated Series. It is thought that the well-planned and designed details in the visual identity designs of the series place the series among the memorable classics. The simplified designs of the characters with sharp lines in keeping with the comic book aesthetics, the atmospheric textures of the locations, the choice of color palette according to the locations, and the references to other productions that have left their mark on the visual culture make it easier for the viewers to get involved in this dark, uncanny and iconic world and stay loyal to it. The details, every step of which is meticulously calculated and planned, strengthen the visual identity of the series, helping it to become one of the most important animated series in the history of television. As a result, it is considered that paying due attention to visual identity in animated series for television can be beneficial for the correct positioning of the brand and the and its related productions.

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