

Adapting Comics to Storyboard Language

Richardo Mirades

Federal University of Santa Catarina
Brazil

Hiltton Luiz Vorn

Federal University of Santa Catarina
Brazil

&

Carolina Gasar

Universidad de Chile
Chile

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the practical differences between the language of comics and the storyboard, in adapting a format to the other. The result of this adjustment will be applied in an animation. Graphics solutions used in each of these languages, the expression of their contents, were compared descriptively. Features such as the horizontal format, the vignette, audio, kinetic figures, visual metaphors and subtitles, when placed side by side, highlight the differences and similarities between the two methods. Thus, it was used as an object of analysis the transposition of a comic page to the storyboard format. The result of this implementation will be used as a storyboard animation.

Keywords: animation, comics, storyboard, movies, media.

Introduction

The similarities between storyboarding and comics are evident, as both methods use illustrations or vignettes arranged in sequence to tell a story. In the analysis of these two methods, it is possible to observe particularities in the solutions found for the transmission of its contents. The differences between them are also identified in both graphic and media formats: analog and vertical on paper and horizontal on video. The drawn image is the basic element of comics. It presents itself as a sequence of pictures that bring a message to the reader, usually a narrative, whether fictional (a fairy tale, a children's story, the adventure of a superhero, etc.) or real (the report/Facts or events, the biography of an illustrious person, etc.). Your smallest narrative unit will be the comic or vignette. In the Western world, the succession of vignettes will be organized in the sense of reading the written text, that is, from top to bottom and from left to right (in Asian countries, this representation will occur from right to left, following the reading of

the Written Japanese and Chinese, for example) which will allow the understanding of the message. Moya defines that the approximation between cinema and comics is inevitable, since both arose from the concern of representing and giving the sensation of movement.

Comics, as the name implies, are a set of images in sequence. What makes the block of images a series is the fact that each frame makes sense after seeing the previous one; the continuous action establishes the connection between the different figures, the author adds. The origin of the term storyboard is English and comes from the junction of the words story and board, which respectively mean story and panel, defining in a direct way the format of this tool — a panel where the story is narrated visually from the written script. The Storyboard is a preview tool that displays frame by frame and in sequence designs adapted from the script of an animation or a movie. These are conceptual illustrations that help to clarify and strengthen the narrative of the script. The goal is to make it easy for the production team to do the organizational work required by the script in a scene. The Storyboard must necessarily be created before the recordings start, so that the end result of the scene is as close as possible to what the screen player expects. It is then evidenced the difference that the comic is the final product, while the storyboard is a preview of a product that will still be realized in the form of animation. In the storyboard, the drawing does not have to be completely finished, which is another difference in relation to the comics, in which the author must have an art-finished drawing.

The quality of the final drawing is only a sketch of the flow of the story, presenting the characters, an idea of the frames, camera movements and points of view, as defined by Cesconetto, which is not the case presented in this article, Where the storyboard is built from a comic book with its original files already finalized. Using a digital page file the album Gothic Girl, by Ricardo Manhães, originally published in France, by Éditions Jungle, in 2007. The fact of having a finished file basis allows, depending on the quality of the images, to go beyond quality usually presented in storyboards. We can therefore classify this research as being of a basic nature of qualitative approach, since it contains analyzes not generalizable by statistics. Its objectives are exploratory and descriptive, since they analyze the expression tools used by the language of the comics, as well as those used by the language of the storyboard presenting an adaptation of the visual resources, from one language to the other. The steps for this research were three:

- (1) review of the literature on tools for creating comics and storyboard;
- (2) correlation between the language of the comics and that of the storyboard, in a comparative way, with regard to the graphic solutions found by both in the expression of the same scene. In this stage were defined the adjustments, planes and angles of vision, necessary for the content of the storyboard page, made from the comic page, obtained the result closest to the original source;
- (3) creation of a storyboard adapted from a page extracted from the album Gothic Girl.

Comics versus storyboard

Like any artistic language, comics and storyboard have visual mechanisms that aid in the expression of their narrative content. Because they are methods that are expressed through images, they can sometimes have some similarity in their way of solving certain scenes and situations. In this article we will analyze, in a descriptive and comparative way, both tools and their functions. The analysis begins, firstly, by its formats and dimensions, passing also by the resources used in both languages in the expression of sounds, movements, planes and viewing angles as well as the use of the resource called legend.

Format and dimensions

In the comics

For a definition of comics or vignettes, we can cite: The comic or vignette is the representation, by means of a fixed image, of a specific instant or an interconnected sequence of instants, which are essential for the understanding of a certain action or event. That is to say, therefore, that a comic differs from a photograph, which captures only an instant, an instant of a second in which the diaphragm of the camera was opened. Thus, within a single comic may be expressed several moments, which, taken together, give the idea of a specific action. In comics that reflect fighting, common in adventure stories, one can portray, in the same frame, both the moment of the impact of the punch that one character gives in another as the moments that precede this action or happen as a result of this act: Threatening words of the aggressor, the cry of the victim and the beginning of his fall, after the aggression suffered.

The comic page is intended for printing on paper, whether in a magazine, in a book or even in a newspaper. Most of the publications have A4 (297×210mm) or A5 (210×148mm) print sizes. In addition to these two main formats, there is the strip format, defined by the Houaiss Dictionary of the Portuguese Language as “segment or fragment of comic strip, usually with three pictures, and presented in newspapers and magazines in a single horizontal band”. See examples of these formats in Figure 1. It is worth noting that even when accessed via digital platforms such as tablets, smartphones or through computer monitors known as desktops, comics tend to maintain that page format already familiar with readers. Even the strip format remains current in digital reading.

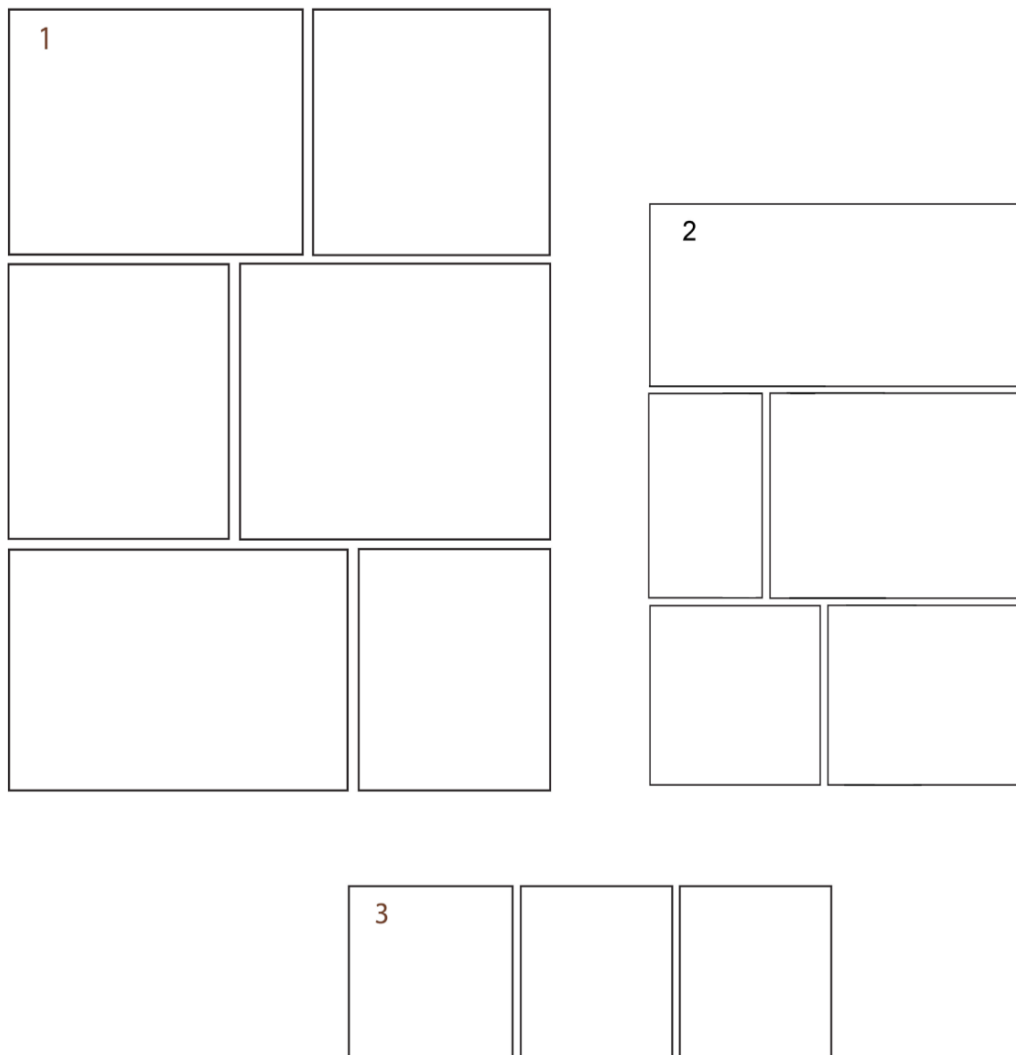


Figure 1. Examples of the three formats. Clockwise: A4, A5 and strip
Source: author's collection 2.2.

In the storyboard

“Storyboards have multiple dimensions. Most use 215mm×290mm pages and have black-and-white drawings that focus on the camera angle and image composition, which can be one-by-one or even four-by-page” [1]. Just like in comics, the pictures or vignettes on the storyboard show the sequence of a scene, but unlike them, the storyboard must present a final movie or television screen format. “The formats are as follows: the TV format at 1.33:1, the standard 16mm format at 1.66 : 1, the flat screen format at 16/9 1.78: 1 associated with HDTV format 1920×1080 pixels”. See the example in Figure 2.

Expressing the audio

In the comics

Another obvious distinction between comics and storyboard lies in the expression of sounds. In comics, when it is not human speech, they are expressed, mostly through the onomatopoeia. Inserted within the pictures or vignettes, which tell the story, we can, among many definitions, use its etymology. “It comes from the Greek Onomatopoeia (action of imitating a word by imitation of sounds — or word creation), by the Latin Onomatopoeia, by semi-erudite way. Other names were suggested: ecstasy (Jespersen) and phonesthetic function (Firth)” According to Lucena Júnior, Walt Disney was a pioneer in the introduction of sound in cinema and immediately realized the impact that this would provide. He followed the technical development of some systems and had the acumen to choose the most appropriate. Thus, the sound is already predicted in the design of a storyboard.

Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....
Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....
Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....	Plano:..... Audio1:..... Audio2:..... audio3:.....

Figure 2. Example of the most common storyboard page format

Source: author’s collection

Stated outside the balloons, the onomatopoeia is represented originating near the sound source they represent. They are also interesting graphing tools. “In manga, for example, onomatopoeias are integrated into the design in such a way that their translation and replacement can break the harmony of the visual set”. Another form of audio representation well known and used in comics is the balloon. It is a blank space, generally oval in shape, hence the balloon name, into which the characters’ dialogues

are inserted. Balloons are usually arranged from left to right, following the order of the dialogues. “[...] especially through the balloon, comics become a true hybrid of image and text. The balloon is the intersection between image and word”, and can be represented in several ways. For example, when expressing a thought, balloons are drawn in the form of a cloud. When they express the sound from a radio or a television, or any other electronic device, they are drawn with several sharp points in the line that delimits their dimension. To express a cry, for example, the letters are drawn in large size and with thicker strokes. And to express a whisper, you can draw the edges of the balloon in dashed lines.

In the storyboard

The audio is a soundtrack, a dialog or foleys (ambient sound like steps or beating of doors), it is indicated in boxes of text below the image. The order, in the case of dialogues, is indicated by the numbering of each dialog. In this case, unlike comics, there is no graphic limit on the insertion of sounds for each frame or vignette since the sound in the storyboard does not have to be expressed graphically in the final drawing.

The use of kinetic figures as a representation of movement

In the comics

To solve the understanding of the notion of movement and speed in the comic narrative, lines of action are used, which become kinetic figures that express movement. “Some researchers argue that these lines are directly linked to the trace generated by the visual system when we follow an object with our eyes.” We can say that, as a visual expression feature used in contemporary comics, Long ones that start from the moving object) are usually inserted harmoniously within the scene, starting in the opposite direction of the moving object, thus indicating the direction of the same. These kinetic figures, like any element existing within a frame or vignette, Can be used to aesthetically complement the illustration.

In the storyboard

In the storyboard, the movement is expressed by arrows. These arrows, which can be inserted in the image itself or positioned externally to the frames or vignettes (laterally, below and above), are associated with them by proximity, making explicit the camera movements and characters of a given scene.

Camera position and angle

The viewing angles can be understood as the visual or graphic expression from the point of view of viewers through the camera during a scene. Plans express the extent or apparent area. Thus, the width, height, inclination and other positions relative to the approach or distance from the point of view of the reader or viewer to the characters participating in a scene from the planes and angles of vision, fundamental elements for Define continuity and lend drama and dynamism to the scenes.

On both, comics and storyboard

According to Vergueiro, in the comics and in the storyboard the plans receive the same denomination derived from the cinema. For this important fact, that of having the same denominations and also the same appearance in the final result, in these two languages, the planes and angles of vision dialogue perfectly. It is considerable that there is no need (speaking only of the planes and angles of vision), of a visual/graphic order of language when transposing from one to the other. Therefore, the denominations for the plans are: general plane, set plane, medium plane, American plane, foreground and detail plane or close-up. For viewing angles: average viewing angle, upper viewing angle and lower viewing angle. Since the plans and the angles of vision of comics derive in their denominations from the cinema, it is concluded that the same visual solutions, as regards the expression of the scenes, are also used in their adaptation to the storyboard format.

The subtitles**In the comics**

For Vergueiro, the legend represents the omniscient voice of the storyteller. It is used to place the reader in time and space, being placed in the upper part of the comic.

In the storyboard

It can be considered as the voice of the narrator. It also serves to situate the viewer in time and space.

Final conclusions

Considering that there are two languages — comics and storyboard — whose objective is the communication of visual contents, this research proposes the migration of comic pages to storyboard format, promoting their use in an animation. During the comparative research, we were able to highlight differences between the two formats, defining two of them as the most significant: the final format of the frames or vignettes and the mode of expression of the audio. In comics, as we saw before, the pictures or vignettes can have different dimensions according to the need and the will of the author. We can say that comics are used, for example, a vertical frames or vignettes in order to evidence the height and grandeur of a certain scenario or action. The same feature may also help to evidence the speed of a movement in a given scene. This creative freedom of comics makes it much easier to achieve dynamism in the final result of the scene. However, this feature cannot be generally used in the storyboard language, since its final result must conform to the format of the television or movie screen. This fact obliges the author, in one way or another, to an adaptation of the scene, not by means of the size or format of pictures or vignettes, but rather by changing the planes and viewing angles of the scene. If in the comic this scene is represented, in all its action, in a single vertical frame, in the storyboard the same scene must be decomposed into several frames or vignettes with different viewing angles. The other difference concerns audio, discussed in section 3 of this article.

In comics, onomatopoeias can be used as a resource for the expression of the noises of a scene. In this case, the spelling of sounds can be considered an important element in visual representation. In comics, onomatopoeia, besides having the function of sound expression, is also a graphic element of aesthetic importance with regard to the affirmation of the style of drawing and the dynamics of the expressed sound. The fact that the storyboard language does not rely on onomatopoeia can be a challenge when adapting a comic page to the storyboard. Where previously there was a graphic element that enhances the expression of scene and sound, there is now a space that can be used to change the angle of view or to complement a certain moment of the scene. The resulting adaptation of this research generated a storyboard for animation based on a comic page of the character Gothic Girl (Figure 3). The storyboard obtained during the research (Figure 4) will serve as the basis for creating an animation of this character.

Surpresa gótica



Figure 3. Gothic Girl comic page in the original format

Source: author's collection



Figure 4. Result of the adaptation in storyboard format of the original page of Gothic Girl
Source: author's collection

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