

Discovering *ART*

Animation

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Introduction

What Is the Art of Animation?

Animation professor Vibeke Sorensen writes, “Animation is the art of motion, and art in motion.”¹ Animators use pens, ink, paint, clay, computers, and other tools to create artistic characters that exaggerate reality in every possible way. Animals talk and make jokes, people travel through time or visit distant planets, and characters walk away from falls, explosions, car crashes, and otherwise deadly incidents. When done successfully, audiences tend to overlook such absurd situations and accept characters as believable personalities with human emotions.

Words in Context

suspension of disbelief

The willingness of a viewer or reader to overlook implausible situations in a film or book and accept the premise of a story—even if it involves talking animals.

The world’s most famous cartoon producer, Walt Disney, owed his success to the authentic characters he created. As animation expert John Canemaker writes, Disney believed moviegoers “would so deeply relate to the characters’ personalities that they would laugh *with* them (not *at* them), fear for their safety, and weep at their demise. Such a major suspension of disbelief required storytelling and animation skills (or magic) never seen before.”²

Brilliant animation skills are only the first step in the long, complex process of creating animated films. Since the late 1930s, when Disney began making full-length animated features such

as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, animated characters were enlisted to tell complex, believable stories with many twists and turns. The tales played out in front of magnificent scenes and backdrops with colors more vivid than those found in real life.

Art in Motion

Animators are artists, and many have studied animal and human anatomy. In the 1930s and 1940s, Disney required his animators to watch live-action films of acrobats, dancers, wrestlers, and even reptiles and barnyard animals. One of those animators, Hamilton Luske, was famous for closely observing movements of various objects even in social situations. Luske would comment on the way his tie fluttered in the wind while he was on a sailboat or the way his friend's body twisted when hitting a golf ball. These motions

Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, released in 1937, sought to create a graceful and believable animated female character in Snow White. Disney also gave each of the dwarfs a memorable and recognizable personality.



For Further Research

Books

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Helen McCarthy and Katsuhiko Otomo, *The Art of Osamu Tezuka: God of Manga*. Lewes, UK: Ilex, 2013.

Hayao Miyazaki, *Art of Princess Mononoke*. San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2014.

Charles Solomon, *The Toy Story Films: An Animated Journey*. New York: Disney Editions, 2012.

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Websites

Aardman Animations (www.aardman.com). This site is home to the British animation studio that produced numerous animated and stop-motion movies, TV shows, and commercials, including *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!* and *Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. The site features many photos and

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