

III. The Age of Creation

In the Age of Creation, which starts about 1885 and goes to about 1925, individuals begin to look beyond the parlour tricks and experiments and are beginning to think about what they are going to DO with the technology. The public is no longer satisfied with watching a horse walk in moving pictures, now they want to see images that entertain and instruct.

To get those images, the new art of animation is developed with its own rules and systems. It can't be emphasized enough how difficult this process was. Animators had to be artists with good drawing skills, writers had to know how to write a script that entertained, actors had to understand how to convey action and emotion to an audience, and at the same time technicians had to understand the physics of optics and motion.

In 1895, Louis and Augustine Lumière issued a patent* (= un brevet) for a device called a cinematograph that was capable of projecting moving pictures. Auguste and Louis Lumière project their film, "WORKERS LEAVING THE LUMIERE FACTORY IN LYON-MONTPLAISIR" (see video 3) at the Hotel Scribe in Paris, on December 28th. This is the first public screening of a motion picture and is regarded as the "birth of film."



The first American comic strip, "Hogan's Alley" is published. "The Yellow Kid" was the lead character.

Comic strips are the source of many characters and heavily influence animation style. They also foreshadow* the technique of making storyboards and sequential art.

Foreshadow = announce*

In 1899, the first magnetic recording of sound is created.

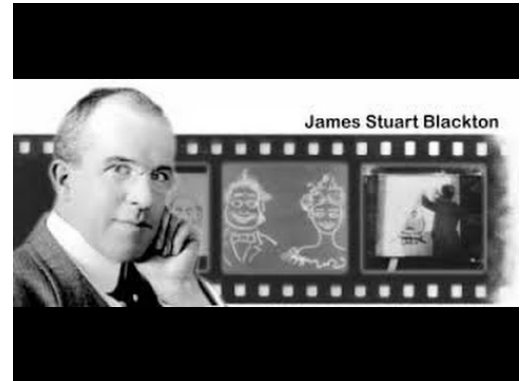
In 1900 in France, a live action film of Cinderella used animation techniques as the first use of special effects in live action.



In 1906, James Stuart Blackton made the first animated film he called "HUMOROUS PHASES OF FUNNY FACES". (see video 4)

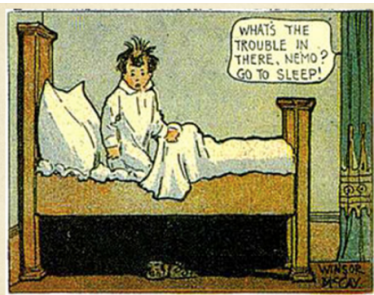


Blackton's method was to draw comical faces on a blackboard and film them. He would stop the film, erase one face to draw another, and then film the newly drawn face.



The 'stop-motion' provided an illusion of motion as the facial expressions changed before the viewer's eyes. This film is the first known animation the way we think of animation, which is a drawn sequence of frame-by-frame drawings. It is considered the first truly animated film. There was no sound.

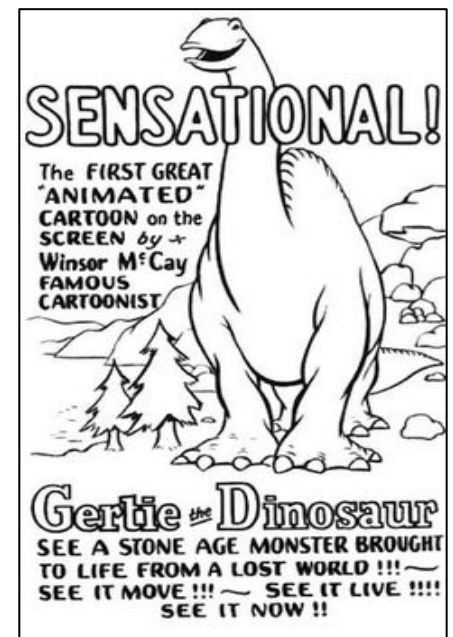
In 1907, the first Japanese animation was produced (between 1907-1911) as a private project. The identity of the creator is unknown. This strip of film was discovered very recently at a flea market.



In 1911, Winsor McCay produced a short animation using his comic strip character, "LITTLE NEMO (see video 5). McCay developed many animation techniques and his animations hold up in technical quality to anything produced today.

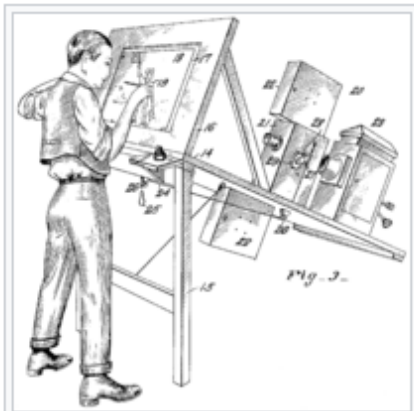
1912: Cinema as a public entertainment medium explodes in popularity worldwide. About 5 million people attend the cinema in the U.S. every day. London has 400 cinemas.

1914, Winsor McCay produced a "GERTIE THE DINOSAUR" cartoon, which is comprised of 10,000 drawings (see video 6). McCay does not use transparencies or layers and draws each complete cell by hand. This film was the first animation to show a character with personality and was a major hit of its day.



A Canadian, Raoul Barre, starts his own animation studio and was probably the first person to produce animation for advertising and commercials. The U.S. animation industry was centered in New York until the late 1920s and early 1930s. New York was the center of American theater, music, vaudeville and the new movie industry. Animators used all of these arts in their work.

In 1915, Max Fleischer, an immigrant from Austria, and his brother Dave Fleischer, patented the Rotoscope process, which traces drawings over live action film (see video 7).



Patent drawing for Fleischer's original rotoscope. The artist is drawing on a transparent easel, onto which the movie projector at the right is beaming an image of a single movie frame.



When the war ended the United States had the strongest animation industry in the World. WWI decimated European animation production. In the U.S., animation production continued at full *throttle* (= speed) because the U.S. animation industry was allowed to grow and develop *unhindered* (= freely). Its huge *backlog* (= unprocessed items) of animated films was available for international distribution as soon as the war was over. The same situation happened at the end of WW2 and is the reason the U.S. animation industry was dominant worldwide for so long.

In 1918, Winsor McCay finishes an animation about the SINKING OF THE LUSITATANIA (see video 8). It is animated with cells, washes, and paintings in a very striking and realistic style. This was the first propaganda film done in animation. Unfortunately, the Lusitania sank in 1915 and WWI ended in 1918, so its use as a propaganda tool was doubtful and points up the problem of doing topical events in animation.

In 1919, Goldwyn Bray creates the first color animation "THE DEBUT OF THOMAS CAT." The process was deemed (= judged) too expensive for commercial use.

"FELIX THE CAT" (created by Otto Messmer) becomes the most popular character and series of this period. The merchandising of the cat's image for dolls, watches, etc. was very successful and paved the way for the later merchandising of animated characters.



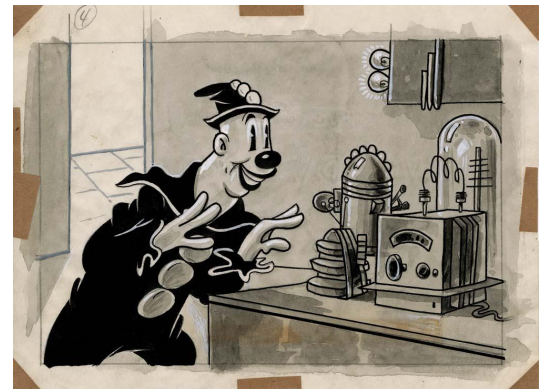
In 1920, 19-year-old Walter Elias Disney begins learning about animation and starts his first company, the Kansas City Slide Company. His partner is his friend Ub Iwerks, who later becomes one of the greatest animation artists of all time.



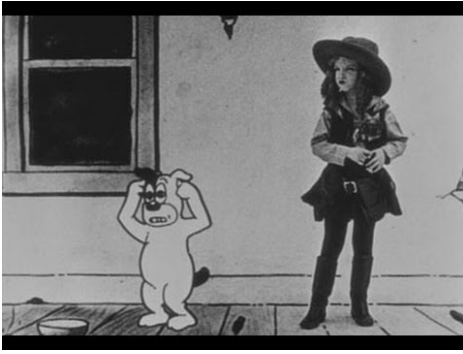
In 1921, Several European artists start exploring abstract animation. There will always be a subset of fine artists who produce non-commercial, experimental animation. Often these artists are from countries with no animation industry and are individual attempts to learn the craft and start a business. At this time, none make money.

In 1923, Walt Disney's studio in Kansas goes bankrupt. Disney follows the movie industry and relocates to Los Angeles, California and opens a new studio in his uncle's garage in Silverlake, CA.

In 1924, The "FELIX THE CAT" and "KO-KO THE CLOWN" series were the most popular and well-made shorts of this period. In May 1924, Fleischer invented the "follow the bouncing ball" technique for his Song Car-Tunes series of animated sing-a-long shorts.



In fact, some people in the theatrical and movie industry had written animation off, claiming the audience boomed when animation came on the screen.



Disney creates a semi-animated series of a young girl, "THE ALICE SERIES" (see video 9). The animators who did this series were originally from Kansas City. They included Ub Iwerks, Hugh Harman, Rudolf Ising, and Friz Freleng.

In 1925, "THE LOST WORLD," Willis O'Brien's 3D stop motion that animated prehistoric dinosaurs and other creatures, is released. This film, along with McCay's Gertie character, crystalized how people thought of dinosaurs. It took a long time to get their unscientific depictions of dinosaur movement, skin color, etc. out of people's heads. Moviemakers learn that the audience can think of animation and special effects as real.



"THE GOLD RUSH" by Charlie Chaplin is released, which was the first live-action feature comedy. Chaplin's images begin to show up in animation soon after.

YOUR MISSION

1. The third age of animation is called:
2. It started in _____ and ended in _____.
3. Say whether these statements are true or false and justify your answers.
 - a. The public starts being more demanding.
 - b. The art of animation was easy to invent.
 - c. The CINEMATOGRAPH was at the origin of the projection of films.
4. List the different skills needed to make ANIMATION
 - Animators had to
 - Writers had to
 - Actors had to
 - Technicians had to
5. Who is the "yellow kid"?

6. When was the 'stop-motion' technique created? Who created it? (see video 4)
7. Can you explain how it functions in your own words
8. What do we know about the first Japanese animation?
9. What does the year 1912 correspond to?
10. Explain Winsor Mc Cay's technique.
11. Why was "Gertie the Dinosaur" famous at that time (see video 6) ?
12. Why town was the center of animation movies?
13. Explain the ROTOSCOPE process.
14. Who invented it? When?
15. Explain in your own words the reason why the US had the strongest animation industry during WWI and WW2.
16. Name the first propaganda film done in animation:
17. In 1919, what changed in the art of animation?
18. What was the limit of this new technique.
19. "Felix the cat" marks the beginning of _____
20. The year 1920, marks the emergence of two _____

21. In the 20's, was ANIMATION a profitable business?
22. What happened to Walt Disney's studio in 1923?
23. In 1924, the FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL technique was introduced. Can you explain this technique?
24. The first 3D stop motion animated movie was called _____ and was _____ in 1925.