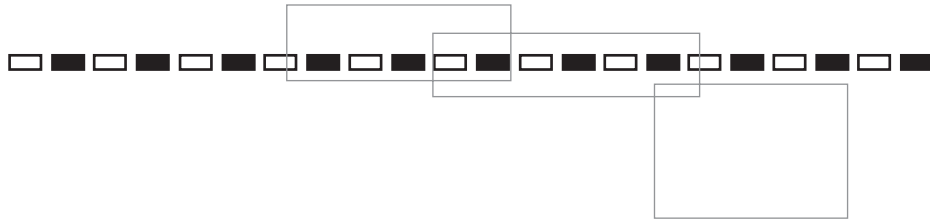


The Art of the Storyboard



The Art of the Storyboard

A Filmmaker's Introduction

John Hart



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Focal Press is an imprint of Elsevier



Acquisitions Editor: Georgia Kennedy
Publishing Services Manager: George Morrison
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Marketing Manager: Marcel Koppes
Cover Design: Alan Studholme

Focal Press is an imprint of Elsevier
30 Corporate Drive, Suite 400, Burlington, MA 01803, USA
Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford OX2 8DP, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Application submitted

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-0-240-80960-1

For information on all Focal Press publications
visit our website at www.books.elsevier.com

07 08 09 10 11 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

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To my dear friend, Mary Ann Maurer, whose professionalism, humor and positive outlook made writing this book such a pleasant task.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my late friend Lanny Foster, who is represented in this book.

A particular mention goes to Georgia Kennedy from Focal Press and Beth Millett, development editor, for their help and encouragement.

A majority of the artwork was drawn by me, unless otherwise noted for guest artists.

Introduction

“What goes around comes around” couldn’t be more applicable than to the recent announcement from Ed Catmull, president of Pixar and Disney Animation Studios, and John Lasseter, the chief creative officer, that they are once again returning to hand-drawn animation for their film projects. Hooray!

After the success of their computer-animated project *Toy Story* in 1995, they closed their hand-drawing facility in 2004. They have now decided, rightly, that the charm, linear attributes and added depth of hand-drawn animation still have a strong role to play in the future of animation. We wish them well – and the same to all of us artists who draw by hand!

While I was studying art in high school, I thought the greatest place to get a job as an artist would be the Walt Disney Studios. Enthralled by the stunning visuals of Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, followed by *Fantasia*, *Dumbo*, *Bambi*, and then the delightful *Song of the South* (the first to combine live action actors with cartoons), I very much wanted to be a part of Walt’s creative force. Instead I got a fellowship and went for my Master’s Degree in Fine Arts. I eventually got to New York rather than California and became a successful commercial artist/photographer/lecturer and author. Still, I wonder what would have happened had I been accepted in Walt’s workshops.

I later learned that most of the artists on Walt’s creative team simply worked at coloring the hundreds of thousands of cels (acetate sheets) that comprise a full-length cartoon. Those cel painters, called “in betweeners,” actually went on strike a couple of times for more money. Now, if one had the talent to get a job in animation as an idea person, a concept sketch artist, a production design artist, a storyboard artist, or a character design person, that would have been a different story and a more creative one. As a matter of fact, concept artists are still in demand at Dreamworks and Pixar, as well as all the major film producers. With film production being a collaborative art, it’s nice to see storyboard artists now getting acknowledged in the credits rolls on most major motion picture releases.

Your drawing talents must be developed thoroughly in both rendering live-action images realistically and in interpreting images as called for in animated films or videos. To be a storyboard artist is to illustrate the individual frames that make up

the shots in a shooting script for animated feature films, industrial films or multimedia projects, and educational films. All these genres use storyboards in one form or another. You are part of the preproduction team and will work with producers, production designers, directors of photography and the special effects teams, but most of your storyboard work will be done with the director, whose vision of the project will guide the entire production team.

The Art of the Storyboard II seeks to help you in the following ways:

- To summarize the history and development of the storyboard and to clarify its adaptation and function as a viable visual tool for the creative team that produces live-action feature length films, animation films, cartoons, multimedia/industrial films, videos and documentaries.
- To provide basic exercises and illustrations to help you develop the drawing, drafting and design skills essential to creating an artist's style that will satisfy the needs of the director.
- To increase the appreciation of the storyboard as a preproduction tool for producers, directors, cinematographers, art directors, etc. in any media who are not familiar with its processes and purposes.
- To help the student of storyboarding or film techniques whose time or funds restrict participation in organized classes.
- To serve as a standard text or a supplementary text for established art or film studies at a secondary or college level or in film schools.

Stills from historically important films – from silent to sound – will be used throughout the text to illustrate their design qualities and “stopped action.” These are actually parts of a storyboard, called “shots” or “stills” from key frames. Each of the chosen renderings, from almost 200 entertainment projects, will serve three basic functions:

- To place the film in its historical context in the evolution of film styles, particularly those nominated for or awarded Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Production Design/Art Direction or Best Special Effects.
- To clarify each film's unique compositional qualities, such as its use of framing in the context of reproducing a three-dimensional reality on the screen.
- To delineate the dynamic placement of figures, use of camera angles (the point of view of a character often dictates the camera angle used), and the director of photography's or cinematographer's “painting with light” and the striking visuals created by light and shade (chiaroscuro).

The stills or shots that have been analyzed and interpreted serve as illustrated frames that make up the visual narrative that is the sequential action of the storyboard. These key frames – when filmed as individual shots then projected on a screen at

30 frames per second – induce a *persistence of vision* on the human retina, thus creating a “cinematic motion” in the viewer’s perception.

The basic drawing techniques illustrated in this book will be applicable to any creative work the storyboard artist is assigned to do in the world of feature films, whether it involves the use of computer generated images, special effects and compositing or not.

The repeated emphasis of this book is that drawing the story concept is the storyboard artist’s first responsibility and that even rudimentary drawing techniques can convey the narrative flow of a given film project. I hope that the extra emphasis given here will refine those techniques and add a professional polish to the artistic output of the future storyboard artist.



PERSISTENCE OF VISION:
Retention of an image on the human retina causing the illusion of motion in films.