

Early Animators and the History of Animation

Assignment: Working in groups of 2 you will research a given topic (see groups/topic below) and present your research to the class.

Topics:

1. Zoetrope/Praxinoscope/Mutoscope/Kinetoscope/Vitascope and Thomas Edison's role in the early days of the film (and animation) industry. **(Danny, David)**
 - a. What were these devices?
 - b. What kind of images were designed and how were the images assembled?
 - c. Was technology driving early moving images, or was the art driving the technology?
 - d. What kind of audiences were viewing the content from these devices?
 - e. Why would Thomas Edison have been interested in animation, why do you think he made friends with the early animators of the day?
 - f. Who was Eadweard Muybridge? What role did he play in the early days of animation and film? Did he come into contact with Edison?
 - g. Comparing the relationship of engineer to artist, or technology to content, what contemporary industries do you see that require the relationship of engineer to artist?
2. James Blackton and Emile Cohn were early animators. Cohn was from France, and Blackton, originally from England, emigrated to the United States. **(Chris, Teddy)**
 - a. Who was Blackton, what work did he do, why is he important in animation? Show his famous work.
 - b. Who was Cohn? Did he have another career? How did he end up working with animation?
 - c. What was Blackton's relationship to Edison?
 - d. Compare/contrast Blackton to Cohn. Do they have similar origins? How are they different?
 - e. Was Blackton more a businessman or artist?
 - f. Who, in contemporary times, is similar to either one of these early innovators?
3. Lotte Reiniger **(Marianne, Christine, Ethan)**
 - a. Who was she? When did she live? Where was she from?
 - b. Name and show 3 significant works.
 - c. She did 2 significant things before Disney, what were they?

- d. What was her process for making animation?
 - e. Compare/contrast Lotte Reiniger's work to that of Tim Burton. Show still frames from a work of Reiniger and of Burton.
 - f. What was her inspiration for story?
 - g. What was the historical setting in Germany at the time she was making animation? Do you see any influences of the historical setting in her work?
4. Ub Iwerks (**Kimberly, Priyanka**)
- a. Who was Ub Iwerks? (Was that his real name?)
 - b. Name and show 3 significant works.
 - c. What was the significant technology he developed?
 - d. What process of animation did he use?
 - e. Who is his most important character he developed?
 - f. Which Japanese manga and anime artists did he influence? Find two pieces to compare contrast, one from Iwerks, one Manga artist.
 - g. Why would he be considered a renaissance man?
 - h. Who are the current 'renaissance' people?
5. Winsor McCay (**Ryan, Sam**)
- a. Who is he? Where is he from?
 - b. Name and show his most significant work?
 - c. What set his work apart from other work at the time?
 - d. Discuss McCay's work in terms of audience appeal?
 - e. Was he always an animator? What else did he do?
 - f. Critique his animation and 'other' work in class.
 - g. Who did he influence?

Questions for the class after presentations:

1. Why are these animator/artists/technologists considered important to the history of animation?
2. What was the world stage like during the time these people were creating their work? Discuss your knowledge of history of the time in relationship to the work of these artists.
3. How might they have been impacted by world events in the early 1900s?
4. Do they use their work to comment on the status of world events? Why? Why not?
5. How important was the concept of 'story' at the time these artists were working?