

## Poster session

Vincenzo Maselli

### Design movement in stop-motion animation cinema: from manipulation of objects to the perception of illusion



The aim of the paper is to analyse the relationship between puppets and movement in stop-motion animation cinema.

The concept of movement is an important “node” in this technique of animation. Stop-motion animation, in fact, is based on create an illusion of continuous movement using a sequence of frames that, due to the phenomenon called ‘persistence of vision’, are linked in a fluid succession of images (B. Purves, 18). Any animation technique is based on the attitude of our brain to link images and movement built between frames, but we need to help our brain with a correct construction of increments of puppet’s movement and variations of puppets’ position. However in stop motion animation the movement is clear from the stiffness and strictness of the final pose and, although manipulation has to be meticulous and puppets’ positions clear, the animator has a certain degree of freedom to interpret the action. Therefore the real strength of this kind of animation is more the human manual skill than the strong connection between screenplay and animation, as occurs in other types of animations. In other words, stop motion animation is a very physical medium and enjoying movement it helps to enjoy stop-motion (B. Purves, 198).

It's not all. In stop motion animation the movement is something real and we call it physical manipulation of the object. This movement is nothing more than a changing, and is generated by constantly breaking the static balance of the object that we ‘are moving’, and allowing us to photograph it when it found a new balance.

Describing movement in stop motion animation we can notice that this term has different meanings and roles in puppets animation process, according to the terms it meets, and the contexts where it is placed.

Among the various relationships that the movement has with the concepts of stasis, time, and manipulation, I will analyse movement as act of moving puppets. "To move" a puppet is not merely to take an action on it (to manipulate it), but also to make sure that it reacts by creating the illusion of movement. Movement, in fact, is something the animator makes to the puppet (he moves it) and something perceived by the audience. Movement, therefore, is manipulation and perception.

Thus in my speech I will investigate a double meaning of movement: movement as manipulation and movement as perception. The first is the tangible movement which takes place between frames and not on the frames, and which is given by manipulating the puppet, that becomes the object of the action. The second is the movement tricked by puppet and perceived by the audience, and is nothing more than a succession of static poses “not that significant by themselves, but immensely significant in context of entire work”. (K. A. Priebe, 205).

To better analyse this difference I will consider a case study, the short animated film produced by the Italian Director Dario Imbrogno in 2016, *Ossa*. This example, not surprisingly, plays on the border between staging of making off and final result of manipulation, showing the animation technique and the construction details of the puppet that we see moving. However, the staging of animation technique is not a casual element, but the element around which the narration itself is built (S. Price, July 2016).

I will redefine, therefore, the term illusion, and I will distinguish it from the term simulation, because the two terms often overlap and merge.

I will define illusion of movement in stop-motion animation as the purpose of the final result, and not a quality of the animation technique. The illusion is perceived. During the phase of perception, the puppet pretends movement. The object actually moves, but in another moment and with different times from those that the viewer perceives. What the viewer sees is the succession of static poses of the object. Here is the illusion. In a stop motion animated film we do not see the puppet moving, but the time doing it, so the time becomes thing that, moving, makes intelligible object's movement (F. Piperno, 1).

I will define the simulation of movement, however, replication, or representation, of the actions that we see naturally taking place in nature (D. Hayes, 2). Simulation of movement, therefore, occurs during the manipulation of the puppet, and consists in attempting to imitate reality and represent puppet's mood through movement, so that the illusion is believable.

## Biography

[vincenzo.maselli89@gmail.com](mailto:vincenzo.maselli89@gmail.com)

Vincenzo Maselli was born in Modugno, a town near Bari, in June 1989. In March 2014 he finished his master's degree in Visual and Communication Design at *Sapienza University of Rome*. His thesis concerned a reasoning about the ability of plasticine to communicate narrative meanings in clay animation cinema, because of the physical and chemical features of the material. Starting from this thought he realized a short movie in *claymation* entitled "feeling factory", that won, in February 2015, the silver prize in category "animation" at the eighth edition of the IDA international competition. In December 2015 he published an illustrated book edited by *Edicolors* and based on his short movie as an illustrated transposition of that. This book won Jury prize in October 2016 at the competition "la Fiabastrocca 2016".

In November 2014 Vincenzo started a PhD Programme in design in the department of "Planning, Design and Technology of Architecture" at the Sapienza university of Rome. His research stems from the same theoretical thought developed during his master's degree thesis and aims to demonstrate how materials and puppets' building techniques can communicate narrative meanings in stop motion animation cinema. In order to achieve this goal, he analysed materials, building techniques, and animation process and applied a methodology of *haptic visuality* in order to select relevant examples in which the technique is tangible.

During the PhD he also carried out activities and collaborations. In February 2016 he took part as speaker at the national conference *fare ricerca in design* at IUAV university of Venice with a paper entitled "dall'errore all'errare: una soluzione estetica". Again at IUAV, in December 2016 he presented a paper during the conference *la ricerca che cambia*, entitled "Puppets e animazione. Design e criticità di un oggetto che simula la vita".

In 2015 and 2016 he collaborated with the magazine "Arte e Critica" with three articles published on numbers 84, 85, and 86.

In July 2016 Vincenzo attended the international course "stop-motion animation" organized by the Spanish school *Barreira Arte y Diseno* in Valencia, in collaboration with the Spanish animation company *Clay Animation*, and led by the Spanish animators Ivan Sarrión Soria and Sergio Lara. The following October he attended the workshop "Puppets for film animation" in Prague, led by the Czech puppet maker Mirek Trejtnar.

In October 2016 he moved in London, and there he is continuing his research as visiting student at Middlesex university of London, supervised by the professor of aesthetic of animation Suzanne Buchan.