



PART FOUR **YOUNG**
ARAB ANIMATORS
AT BALTIC



FLYING FRAMES: ANIMATION EXCHANGE

Introduction

Flying Frames Animation Exchange

The final stage of the Arab Artists in Residence Programme took place between December 2010 and March 2011. Samar Maakaron returned to BALTIC to facilitate a project, which encouraged British and Middle Eastern young people to communicate via animation. Young people from City International School Beirut, Lebanon worked to create 3 animations which represented their everyday lives. The animations were sent to Baltic where young people from St Thomas More and Ryton Comprehensive School responded by creating further films for exchange. The young people from both countries were able to take part in peer to peer dialogue via a social networking site that was set up to discuss the project.

About the Artwork

Flying Frames is a collaborative artwork, which sees young people from Beirut and Gateshead presenting information about their lives and culture. Elements of style, city-life and cuisine feature in the work, which identifies similarities and celebrates variation. The film moves seamlessly from the UK to Lebanon and back again. Several forms of stop-frame animation were used in the making of the film, which playfully develops motifs and themes, which young people can identify with universally.

► [CLICK HERE](#) to watch Flying Frames by City International School, Beirut and Ryton Comprehensive, Gateshead

► [CLICK HERE](#) to watch Flying Frames by City International School, Beirut and St Thomas Moore School, Gateshead

About the Resource

This resource presents the process, techniques and tips learned during the production of Flying Frames. It is designed to support teachers who wish to make a simple stop frame animation with secondary school pupils. Many forms of simple-to use animation software are available to use with compatible still or video cameras. This resource is not designed to support use of the software – but to suggest a design process and tips for best practice for young artists wishing to create an animation.

The resource contains 3 elements:

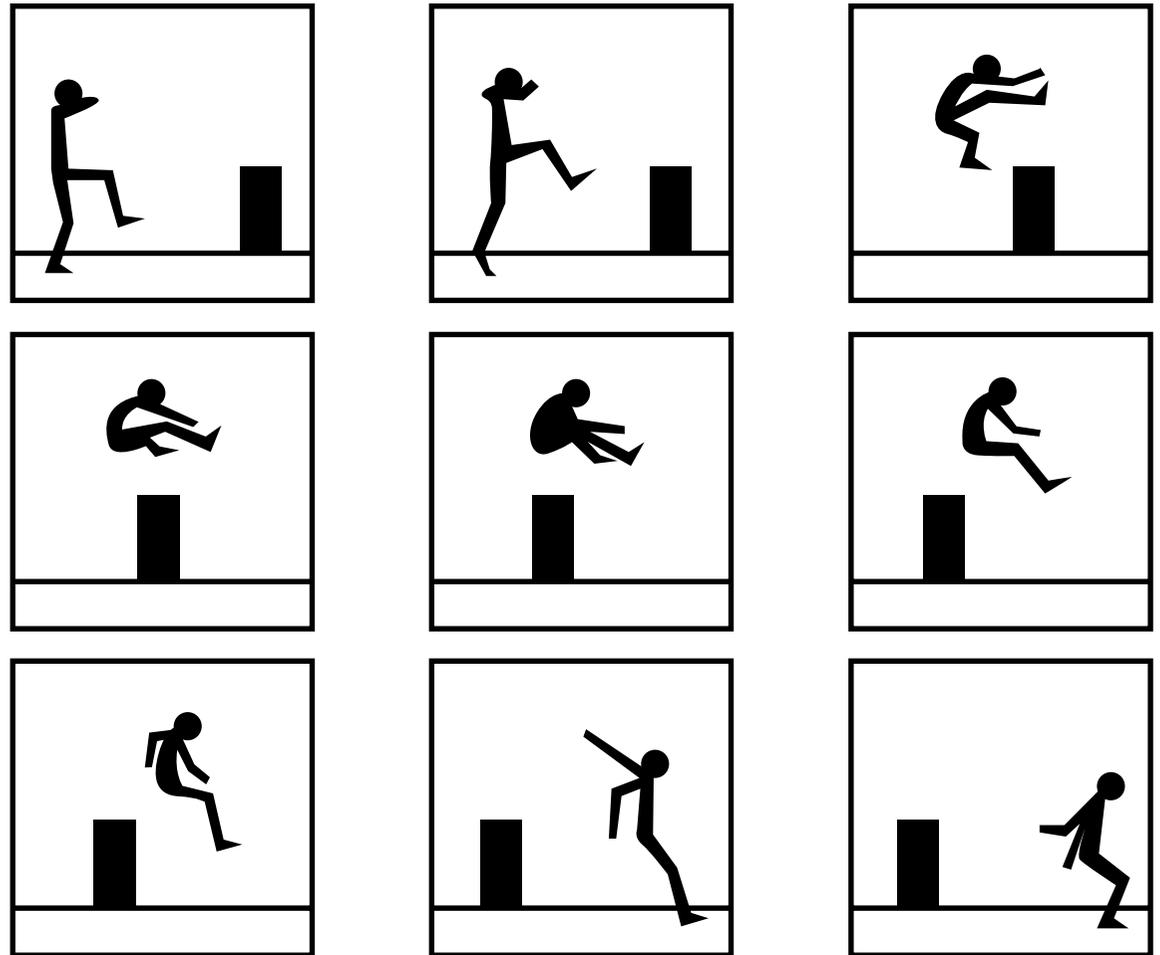
Nuts and Bolts: The basics you need to know about animation creation.

Have a Shot: Simple, practical exercises that can guide a young person through the design process

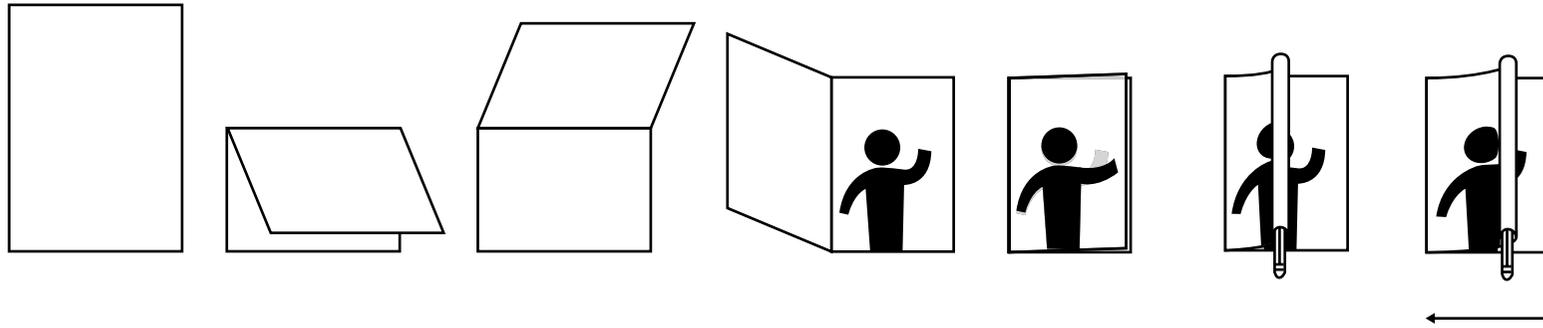
Secrets to Success: Handy tips for a professional outcome.

NUTS AND BOLTS: THE BASIC PRINCIPLE

An animation is made by creating movement via a sequence of still images. The images plot a gradual change in position of a character or object. They are then shown in quick succession, most commonly in the form of a film. The rapid evolution of images creates an optical illusion tricking the brain and eye into seeing smooth movement.



HAVE A SHOT: MOVE IT!



This simple activity allows you to create movement using 2 images or 'frames'.

You will need:

- 1 sheet of white A4 printer paper
- 1 pencil

- Align your paper in the portrait format.
- Fold it so the top edge meets the bottom, like a greetings card.
- Decide on a simple movement you would like to animate. We drew:
 - A boy waving
 - A volcano erupting
 - A face smiling
 - A skateboard rocking.
- Open the card and draw the chosen character or object in its starting position. This will be your first frame.

- Close the card. You should be able to see a faint outline of the image drawn through the paper. Using it as a guideline draw your second image. Where does the object, limb, feature or person end up?
- Take the pencil and place it horizontally at the base of the top sheet. Roll the top layer of paper around the pencil tightly until it meets the fold in the card.
- To activate the animation move the pencil and the top sheet of paper swiftly up and down over the first drawing to create convincing movement.

NUTS AND BOLTS: WHAT'S THE STORY?



Plan the storyline for your animation before you begin. It is really important that you understand the ins and outs of the story before you begin animating, it will help you understand how you can go about making your animation effectively and efficiently.

HAVE A SHOT: SCARY STORY!

This collaborative storytelling exercise may help limber up young minds for the task in hand. The story is handed from person to person using the phrase “And I cannot remember what happened next!”

How to play:

- Everybody stands in a circle.
- The first person begins the story (e.g. “It was a cold and foggy night in deep November. I had been out at a friends’ house doing some homework. I decided to take the short cut home through the graveyard. As I passed one of the gravestones I became aware of a presence..... And I cannot remember what happened next!”)
- The next person then takes up the story and uses their imagination to develop it into a more and more frightening tale. Yikes!
- Each person takes turns improvise a section of the story until the entire group has contributed.



AND I CANNOT REMEMBER
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT....

HAVE A SHOT: STARTING POINTS, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Now that you are sitting comfortably it is time to begin... but how?

If you have no ideas for your animation at all, why not take our lead? Use an existing film frame as a starting point.

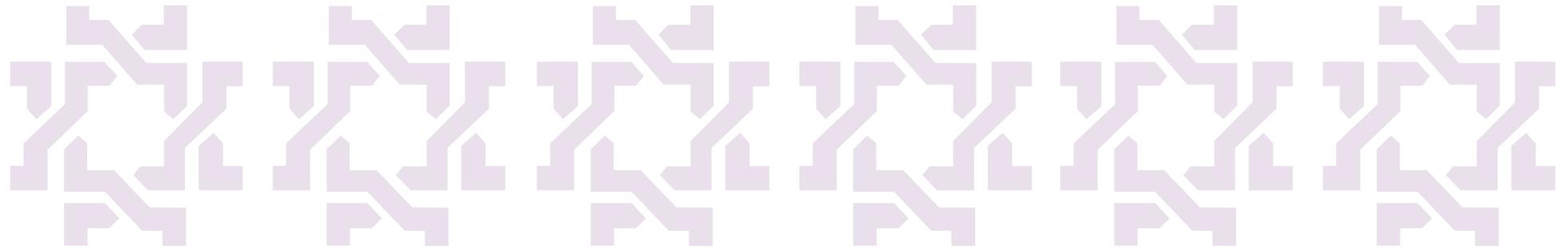
Here are some images from BALTIC exhibitions.

What could occur next and just how would it happen?

You can use our teaching resources to find out about exhibitions and artists currently on display at BALTIC as well as past exhibitions. Visit www.balticmill.com/resources to view images and information.



HAVE A SHOT: CHANCE A PLOT



Still at a loss? This exercise may help with confidence and ideas:

Ask each group or individual to imagine 3 characters, props or objects and 3 locations.

Write the characters, props and locations on slips of paper, fold them so they cannot be read and put them into 3 hats.

Each individual or group chooses one character, object and place to build their story around.

HAVE A SHOT: THOUGHT SHOWER

A smart way to develop a story is to gather any ideas you have and think about them carefully. This thought shower exercise will guide you, you could repeat the process with a new sheet and a new idea. Use the worksheet on the next page to note down your ideas.

- Who will be in your animation?
- Where are they?
- Think of something unusual that might happen next?
- What will be the prominent emotion in your animation?
- If you had to describe your animation to somebody who has not seen it which 3 words would you use? Draw extra raindrops on your thought shower if you can think of more words that are helpful.
- Share your idea with some one else. Do they understand it? Have they got anything to add or contribute?





SECRETS TO SUCCESS: STORYBOARD

Filmmakers create a storyboard in order to transform their written ideas into pictures and to plan the action to occur in an animation. A storyboard is like a cartoon strip, which identifies essential events in the order they will occur in the animation.

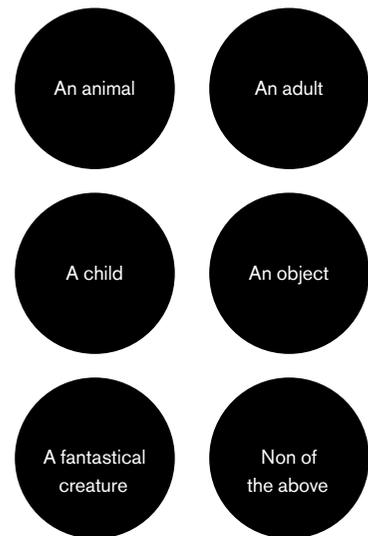
Using the template below draw the main storyline for your film.

The storyboard template consists of 14 empty rounded rectangular frames arranged in three rows. The top row has two frames, the middle row has three frames, and the bottom row has three frames. All frames are light purple with rounded corners and are intended for drawing the main storyline of a film.

HAVE A SHOT: CREATE A CHARACTER

Coming up with a character to star in your animation can also be a helpful in developing your plot.

Is your character...



What characteristics does the star of your animation have?



How does your character look?



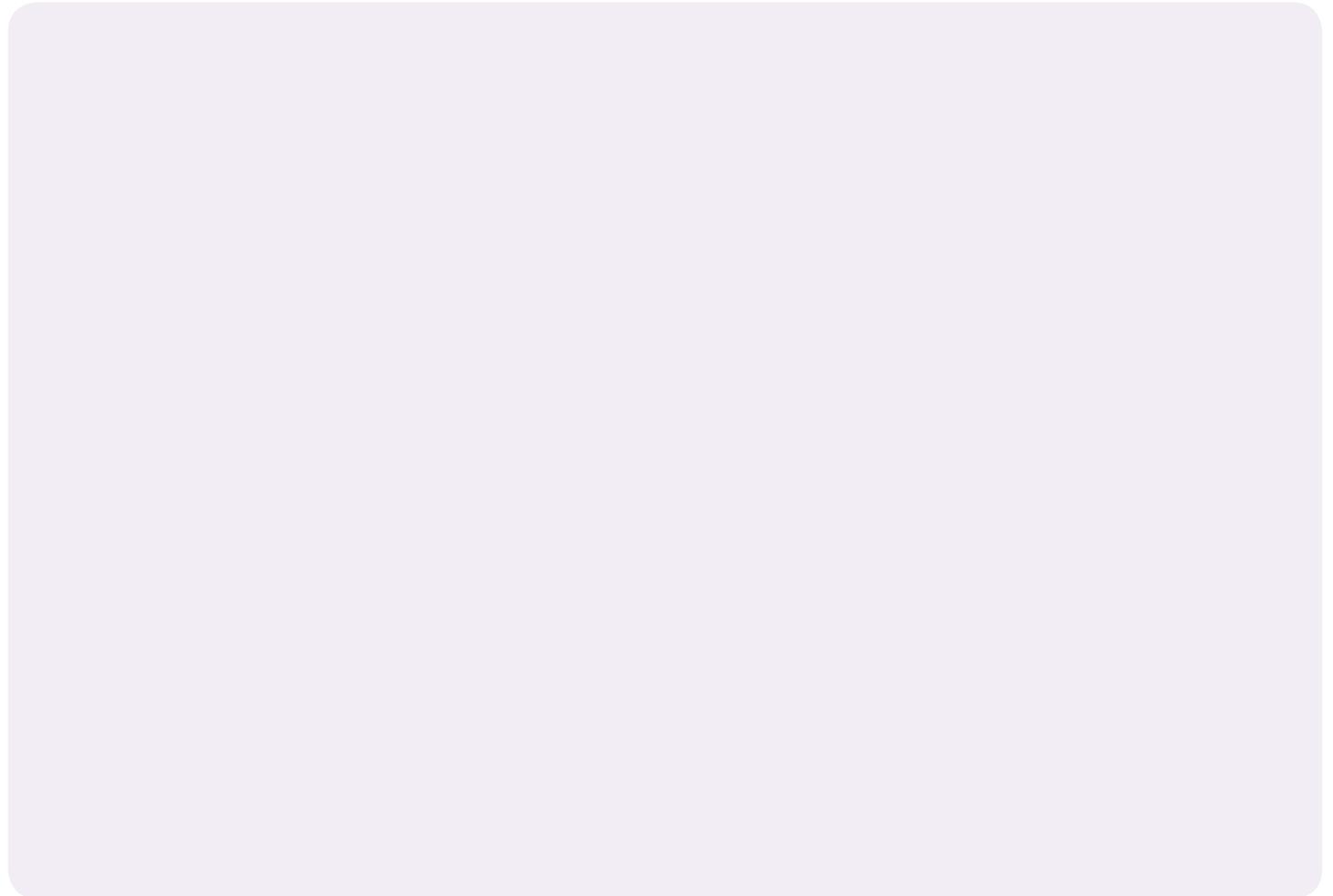
SECRETS TO SUCCESS: EXAGGERATION

Animators often enlarge or shrink physical features to give a character a distinctive appearance.

Look at characters from popular animations. How have the artists exaggerated their features?

Considering appearance, emotion, characteristics, colour and exaggeration draw the star of your animation here:

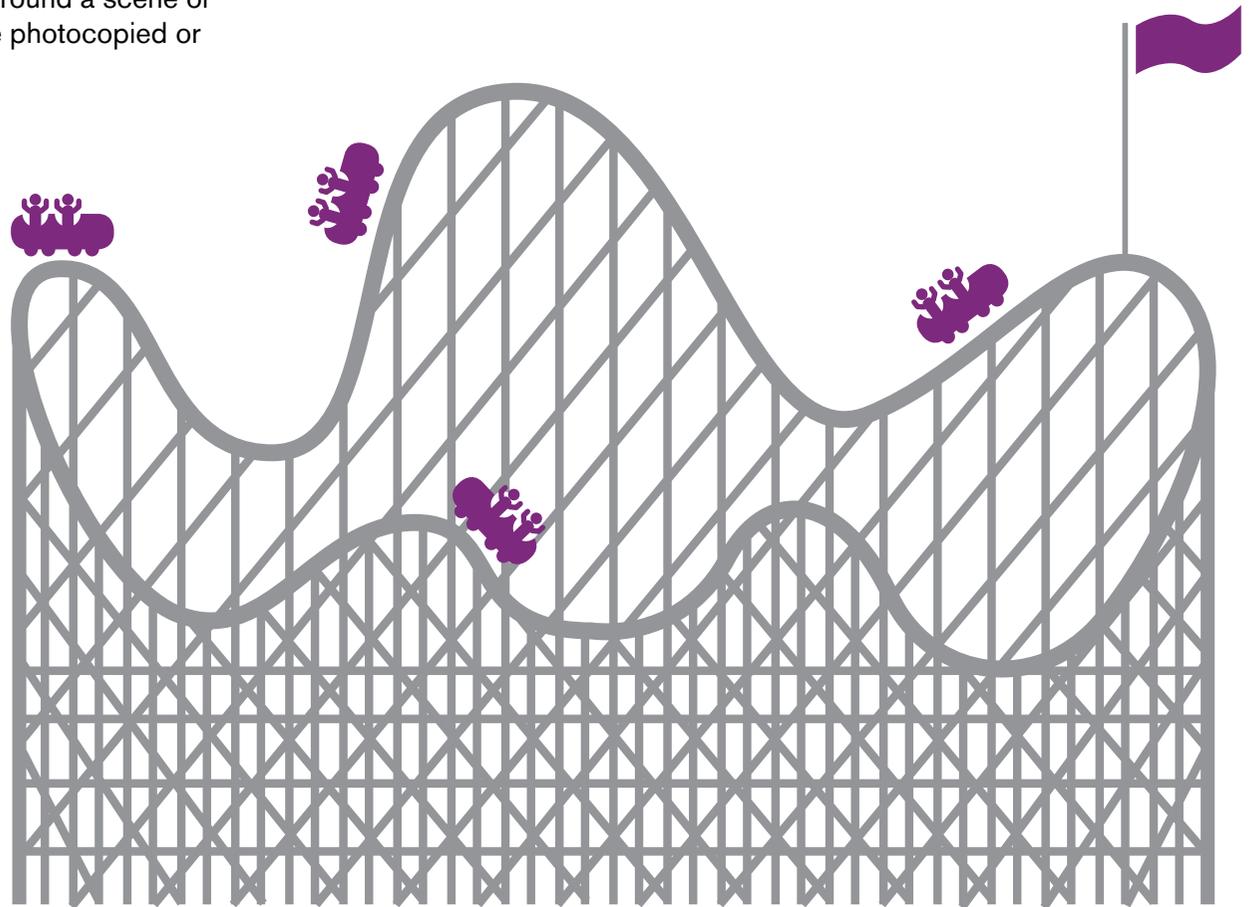
What is his or her name?



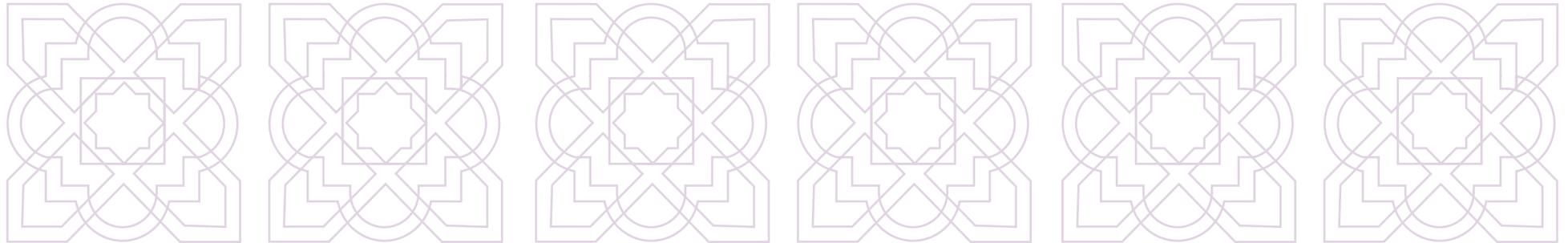
NUTS AND BOLTS: WHERE ARE YOU?

You will need a background for your character to “exist” in.

Choosing to create an animation which has a static background can be an effective way of creating movement over a distance, or around a scene or landscape. To save time and effort a background can be photocopied or traced many times, for speed.



NUTS AND BOLTS: A VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES



4 forms of stop motion animation are:

Hand Drawn

In this form of animation an artist hand draws frames.

Collage

Using 2d surfaces and objects.

Modelled

3 dimensional clay figures or readymade objects are used as characters and they move around a set.

Live Action

Real people are filmed moving in stages, frame by frame.

▼ **CLICK BELOW** to see examples of our work

► Flying Frames by City International School, Beirut and St. Thomas Moore School, Gateshead

► Flying Frames by City International School, Beirut and Ryton Comprehensive, Gateshead

NUTS AND BOLTS: ANIMATE WITH SOFTWARE

To create a stop-frame animation rig you will need:

- A tripod
- Lighting
- Animation software on installed on a computer
- A compatible camera

Software

- We used iMovie on a Mac

Most animation software allows you to “photograph” frames and transfer them to your computer. The frames are presented on screen as stills in a chronological sequence with a play option. This means you can check for details and mistakes, editing as you go along. Some animation software offers a feature called onion skinning, where a previous frame as well as the live video feed can be viewed on screen simultaneously. This offers a guideline to work to. So if the camera or characters are accidentally moved it is easy to find original positions, and the animator can gauge where and how far a character should move next.

Cameras

- We used simple hand held video cameras

Animations can be made with video or stills cameras. Video cameras are compatible with onion skinning technology but will need to be attached to a computer at all times. Stills cameras can be used independently and the frames downloaded to the software later. This means more than one group can animate with one computer and software set-up.

Tripods

- We used a standard camera tripod

A tripod is crucial in order to animate smoothly. Traditional tripods work well, but gorilla pods are also popular having a low centre of gravity and flexibility of movement and web cams are also available with built in adjustable stands.

SECRETS FOR SUCCESS: SNEAKY TRICKS



Suggest Time

Time may need to pass more rapidly than it would in reality during your animation. For example if a character is waiting for someone, or he/she is working intensively to build something. To do this you can:

- Animate a clock face with minutes or hours zooming by.
- Count 10 down to 1 using numbers written on Post-Its.
- Speed up the movement of your characters so that it is much faster than real-time action.

Vary Angles

Although working with one camera angle can create impressive results, you may like to experiment with other shots too:

- It may be clearer to see movement around a location from a distance, or from a birds-eye view (see backgrounds).
- Facial expressions may become clearer if a close up shot is used.
- The camera can be used to pan up and down, or in or out of a scene or character to create atmosphere or focus the eye on action.

Details

Animating small details can add hugely to the success of an animation. Here are a few easy additions, using flat cut-outs that may enhance your work:

- Clouds moving across the sky in outdoor scenes.
- Bees or butterflies flying around garden scenes.
- Irises and eyebrows moving up and down in close up expression shots.
- Make hair move naturally when a character moves vigorously.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS: STAYING SLICK

Animating requires a steady hand and patience and attention to detail is crucial. We found that the slightest flaw in our films were noticeable. Learn from our mistakes! Here are some young peoples' tips for creating a smart, professional finish:

For Drawn and Modelled Animations:

- Alter the position of limbs or objects with small movements. Large movements will create a jolt in the film and a disjointed effect.
- Check, check and check again registration. (Registration is the precise overlaying of static items in one frame over those in the next.)
- Ensure the camera and models are kept completely still between shots. Use animation software which offers onion skinning for ease and accuracy.
- Stick down backgrounds firmly so you cannot accidentally alter their position. Also, ensure frames do not include the table behind your scene.
- Keep hands and fingers out of shots. Even one frame with a hand or finger in it stands out.
- Keep animators' shadows out of shot as this will create a dappled or flickering effect.
- Ensure there is enough light. Use a lamp or work near a window. Try to keep the light as consistant as possible.

For Live Action Animations:

- Actors must move slowly and smoothly
- Keeping eyes still by looking at a fixed point will give your animated person a realistic appearance. Allowing movement of the eyes will give the impression that the person's eyes are rolling around their head!
- Experiment with the number of shots you take. Too few and your animation will look like a slide show, too many and it will just be a live action film.
- To create some magic in your film add elements which could only be animated.

NUTS AND BOLTS: FINISHING TOUCHES

Congratulations, your filming is complete!

Edit

Finalizing the animation will require a period of editing the raw footage. If movement is too rapid existing frames can be repeated, this is usually achieved with a copy and pasting command. Existing chunks of animation can also be repeated in order to extend action and the order of events altered.

Sound

A suitable soundtrack can bring your animation to life. Some music is available to download on copyright-free sites. Alternatively sound effects can be generated using materials and equipment such as crisp packets, bubble wrap, cheese graters, musical instruments, hands, feet and voices!

Title

Think of a snappy title for you animation and write it on the clapperboard

Credits

Give yourselves a round of applause! Or better still create some credits for the end of your animation to thank everyone involved. WELL DONE!



FURTHER INFORMATION

www.oscars.org
www.filmeducation.org
www.aardman.com
www.e4.com/estings/2009finalists.html
www.channel4.com/programmes/tags/animation
www.balticmill.com/flyingframes

Image credits:

A Duck for Mr Darwin, Marcus Coates: Blue Footed Booby (Performance Still from "Human Report"). Credit: photo: Elke Hartmann. Courtesy of the artist and Workplace Gallery. © the artist.

Bram Stoker's Chair II, Sam Taylor-Wood. Credit: Courtesy Jay Jopling/ White Cube (London). © The artist

14 Billions (working title), installation shot (02), Tomas Saraceno. Credit: Camilo Brau. © Tomas Sarac

Untitled 07 from the series *Blackout*. Dan Holdsworth. Credit: the artist and Patricia Low Contemporary. © the artist

It has to be this way², 2010 Lindsay Seers. Photo: Colin Davison. Co-commissioned by Mead Gallery and National Gallery of Denmark. © and courtesy the artist, Matt's Gallery, London and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead