
Walt Stanchfield 22

Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Drawing Principles"

by Walt Stanchfield

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DRAWING

Would it be plausible to try to liken drawing to the science of cause and effect? Let's say the principles of drawing are the cause of a good drawing and when those principles are used, the resultant effect is a good drawing. Often you can get a good effect by simply searching around, or be accident, but when you're after a specific effect, the principles are the shortest distance between the two points.

I'm not saying that using the principles of good drawing is going to take the place of creative thinking--those are two separate things which are dependent on each other. You may be able to identify every muscle in the body, be able to expound at length on the principles of drawing, but without that undergirding of creativity (of which acting is a big part) you'll probably rarely come up with a good effect. On the other hand if you're real creative you'll need some of that other stuff to back you up. You'll probably come closer to a good effect with a heavy emphasis on creativity--but you will then have to have an extra good cleanup person to put the finishing touches to it.

So technical knowledge and creative thinking are your two big guns Stay with their development until they are part of you, and can be called up at will-when needed.

Drawing is a lot like mathematics in that there are certain rules or principles that need to be followed. A simple rule gives you the answer to 2×4 , and the same rule gives you the answer to $24759 \times 684393867540027485$. The rules are quite simple, but if a person who's work is dependent on them ignores them or misuses them, his effects are going to be pretty dreary. Learning how to apply the principles of drawing is a little more complex because there is a wider scope of problems to apply the principles to. We are often faced with a problem (perhaps it doesn't seem like a problem at the time--someone else has to see it and point it out to us) and we blunder on in the name of free expression forgetting that it requires one of those principles to properly put over the point. For instance, stretch. Stretch is not just used in extreme cartoony stretches. There are probably stretches in every drawing you'll ever make--subtle ones. Every time something (an arm, a mouth, the whole side of the body) is extended beyond its normal length--that is a stretch. And should be thought of and treated like one. Every drawing you'll ever make will have an eye level and consequently a vanishing point, and all the other elements of the principles of perspective. No matter how imaginative your drawing assignment is, you have to rely on a communicable use of the principles of good drawing.

When in the class someone draws an arm with a nice sleeve and nice wrinkles in the cloth and nicely rendered fingernails--I have to say, "Hey, you've drawn an arm--what you should have drawn is a stretch." The thing is with mathematics, if you don't use the rules, your books won't balance or your bridge will fall or your building will topple. In drawing, you'll just have a drawing that somehow doesn't look right. It'll carry the scene (just barely) but no one's going to ooh and ahhh at it.

Some years ago, for the school of animation at the old studio, I did some papers on animation, one of which I present here for you, in case you don't have a copy. It kinda suggests that a hell of a lot of thinking and planning goes into a drawing. I listed 28 principles, most of which apply to still drawing also--such as those made from a model. It an may seem mind boggling-something like trying to corral a dozen frightened deer. But once you get the knack, its really quit a lot of fun.

28 PRINCIPLES OF ANIMATION

There are some principles of animation that can be consciously used in any scene. We should familiarize ourselves with them for both animation and animation cleanup. To illustrate these principles, I have chosen a supposedly simple scene. When the scene is analyzed, it is apparent how far one may go in using these principles. The action in this scene is quite broad, making the principles easy to find, but they should be applied to subtle scenes (actions) also. Rarely in a picture does a character do nothing--absolutely nothing. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty spend some time in complete inactivity, but even then certain of these principles are present. The use of held drawings and moving holds can be very effective, but only if they contain the vitality of an action drawing. Again, the use of these principles makes that possible.



The purpose of studying and analyzing a scene like this is to acquaint oneself with the possibilities in the use of the principles of animation. I have listed 28 principles, though there well may be more. At first these will have to be used consciously, then hopefully in time will become second nature. These are the tools of animation and should be incorporated whenever possible. Some of them are accidentally stumbled upon while animating in an emotional spurt, but when the emotions are lax, knowing these principles will enable the artist to animate his scene intellectually, logically and artistically as well as emotionally.



“Drawing Principles“

Here is a list of the principles that appear in these drawings, most of which should appear in all scenes, for they comprise the basis for full animation.

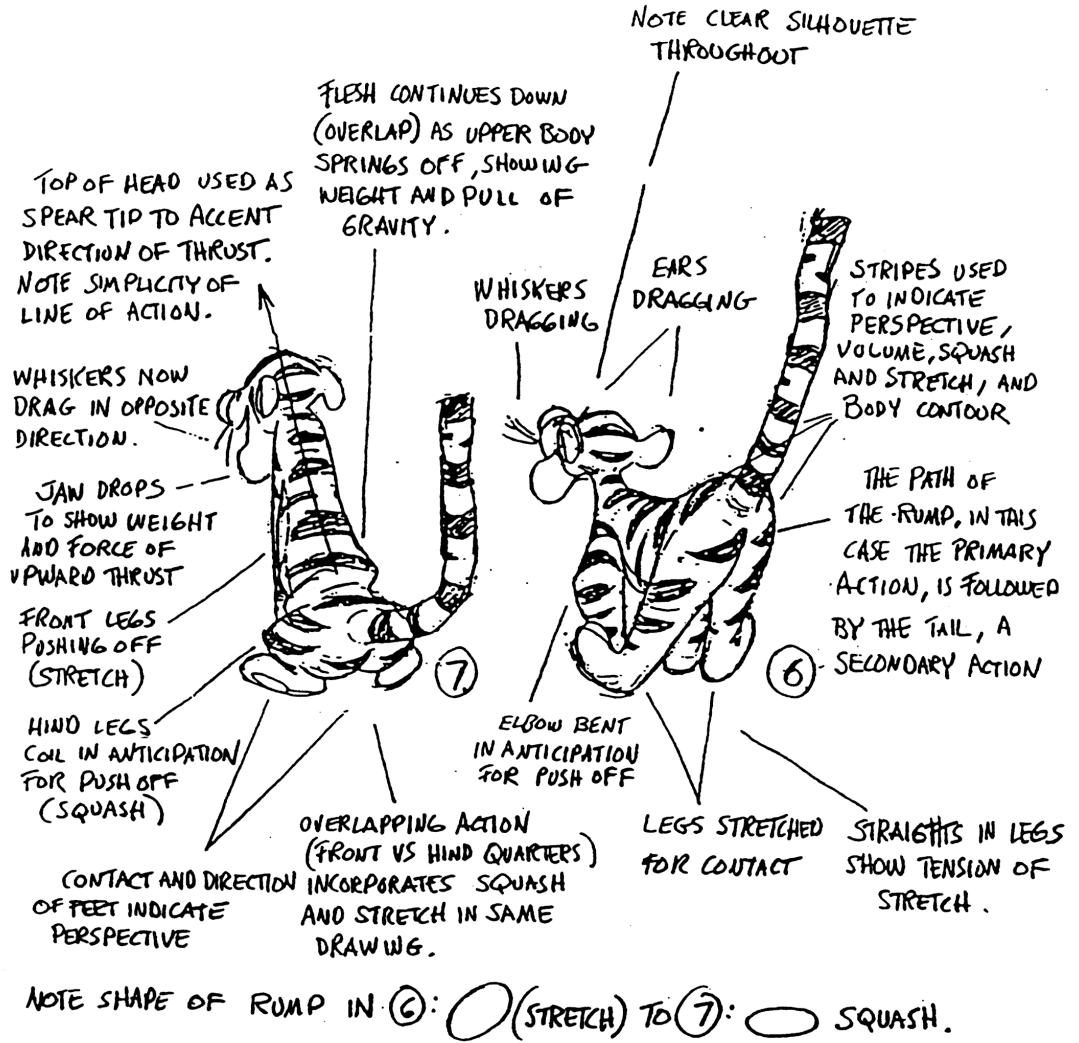
pose and mood
shape and form
anatomy
model or character
weight
line and silhouette
action and reaction
perspective
direction
tension to extreme

planes
solidity
arcs
squash and stretch
beat and rhythm
depth and volume
overlap and follow thru
timing
working from extreme
positive & negative shapes

straights and curves
primary and secondary
action
staging and composition
anticipation
caricature
details
texture
simplification



Here's an example. of the observations that might be made by flipping and studying just these two drawings. By shifting your eyes from one drawing to the other you can see these things happening. Watch the negative shapes change also. (drawings on next page)

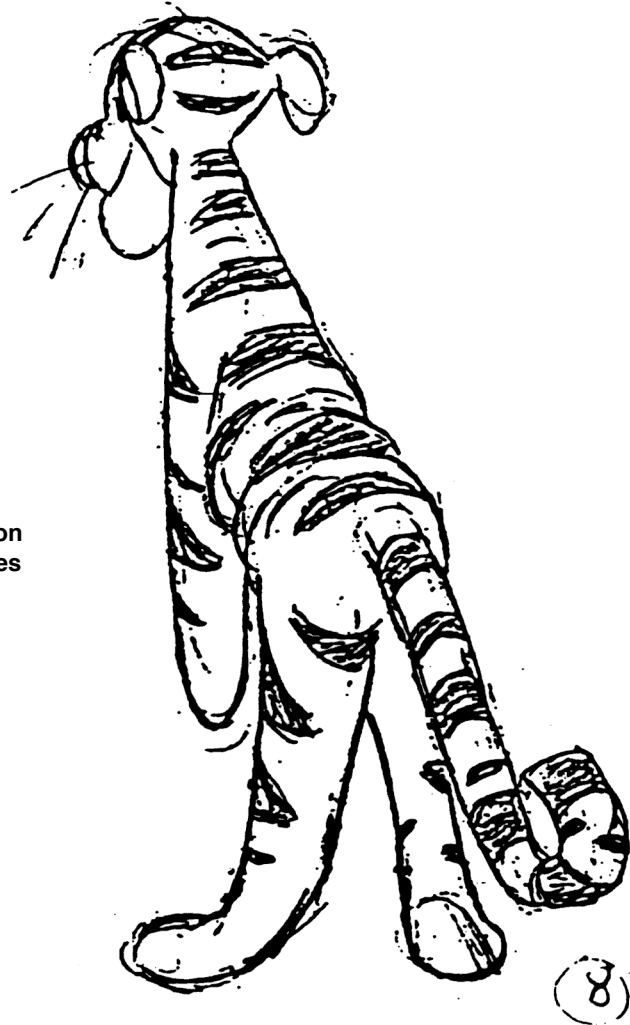


To continue along this line of investigation, this drawing would be called a “push off”. Note that every line and shape on the drawing helps the upward thrust. Even the tail, (which is still following the path set up for it by its primary force, the rump) helps by way of contrast and follow thru. Pick any shape on the figure and compare it to drawing 6. on the preceding page. Note how each shape changes to enhance the overall shape of the action--the neck, the chest, the legs the back, etc. Even though this is just one drawing, there is no doubt about the action that is taking place in this part of the scene. This should be true of any drawing in any scene. (for that matter any drawing done from the model)

“Drawing Principles“

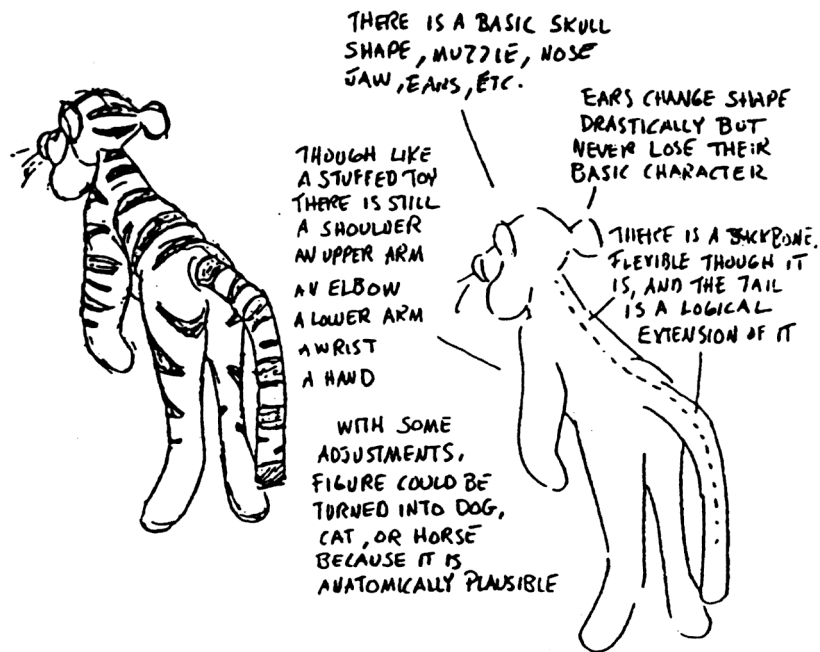
In this one drawing you will find most of the principles of good animation drawing:

pose and mood
shape and form
anatomy
model and character
weight
line and silhouette
perspective
direction
tension
planes
solidity
depth and volume
squash and stretch
overlap and follow thru
straights and curves
primary and secondary action
negative and positive shapes
texture
caricature
simplification
details



“Drawing Principles“

Consider anatomy alone. Aside from its purpose in the scene each drawing can be analyzed for different aspects of drawing. The whole body is a caricature of an animal, but all the parts of a real animal are present, i.e., head, neck, back, tail, etc., and each of them work in a plausible way.



Anatomy, of course is essential to any drawing whether it has a direct reference to nature or is completely imaginary. Though a character and/or its action may be greatly exaggerated or caricatured, anatomy in a real sense remains fairly constant, an elbow is an elbow and only bends in a certain way, and has its limitations. Liberties may be taken but the “reality” of even a cartoon must be kept or it will lose credibility. It is not an easy thing to convert one’s knowledge of structural anatomy to the cartoon medium.

“Drawing Principles“

It has been said that the location of a joint is more important than the joint itself. For instance if an arm shape has been established, it cannot have an elbow bend in an improbable place, no matter how well the elbow is drawn. Compare Tigger's arm to that of a real tiger:



Consider weight. The pull of gravity is one of the most important principles to deal with in animation. Everything has a certain amount of weight and will act and react accordingly. One easy way to lose the attention of an audience is to have feathers falling like bricks or bricks falling like feathers.

A certain humor can be gotten by bending the rules but should only be used where humor or special effect is called for. In shorts cartoons defying the laws of gravity, weight, speed, squash and stretch, etc., is the rule of thumb. In Disney feature cartoons such flamboyance must be handled with an abundance of good judgement.

