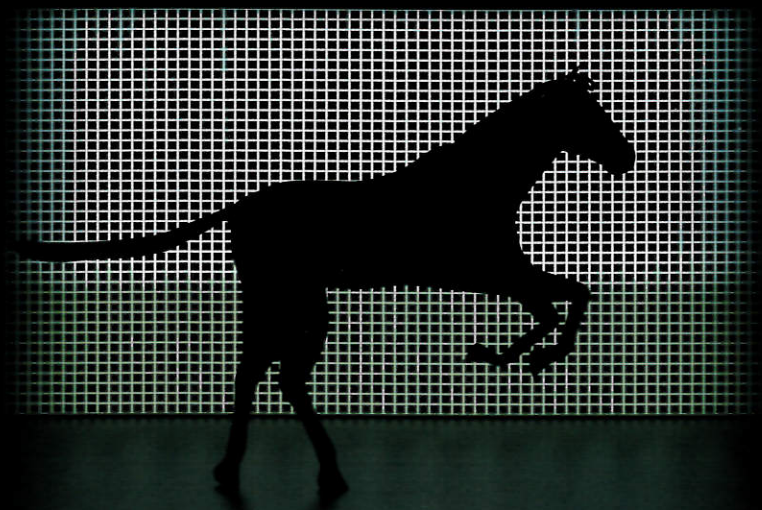


Animating History at the OSU Museum of Art

By Bianca Martucci-Fink



Avedon Frontier, Image Caption & Credit Line LaTurbo Avedon, Frontier Study, 2018, single-channel projection installation with audio. © LaTurbo Avedon, courtesy of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation, animation still by TRANSFER Gallery.

What do we think of when we hear the words *animation*, *video games*, or *Disney*? These words may often carry nostalgic perceptions and personal recollections—and not necessarily interactions with museum displays. However, the newest show at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art in Stillwater is sharing with audiences the history of animation in the context of an art museum. From comic strips, to movies, to video games, this exhibition explores the creative processes of popular animation and its relationship to well-known contemporary animation artists.

Under the direction of its curator Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd, Ph.D, three undergraduate students and I (a graduate research assistant for the OSUMA) worked to create an encompassing exhibition that focused on three key components. Dr. Beauchamp-Byrd's first

objective was to provide a visual history of the one hundred years of global animation art. Using Windsor McKay's *Little Nemo* as the foundational work (one of the earliest examples of animation that first premiered in the United States in 1911), our team then constructed a timeline that highlights key moments in animated innovation—ending with the 2018 feature film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. In the exhibition space, a detailed timeline presents familiar photographs, movie posters, DVD boxes, and video game covers—illuminating viewers on how these animated works have influenced popular culture, as well as technological advancements in the arts.

Secondly, Beauchamp-Byrd focused on addressing how the *process* of creating different forms of animation has been executed

differently over time, while also presenting the means by which contemporary artists employ those past technologies to create works today. She worked with several of the featured artists to acquire what she calls “process items.” For example, Lyndon J. Barrois and Gabrielle Tesfaye are both contemporary animation artists who create artworks through the process of stop-motion. While their means of moving images are similar, Barrois molds gum wrappers to create models while Tesfaye uses paper puppets. These “process items” of paper and wrappers are on display in the gallery next to their respective artist's completed animated project. Each process viewed throughout the gallery is part of the curator's desire to convey how a completely still artwork, (whether it be gum wrappers, puppets, or hand-painted cels) has been tediously manipulated by the artist to create spectacular narratives and moving



From left to right: Bianca Martucci-Fink, Project Coordinator (OSU Museum of Art Graduate Research Assistant); Syd Hammond (Video Game Design/History Assistant); Kayla Andrus (Curatorial Assistant); Hope Bailey (Exhibition Design Assistant), and Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd, Ph.D (exhibition curator).

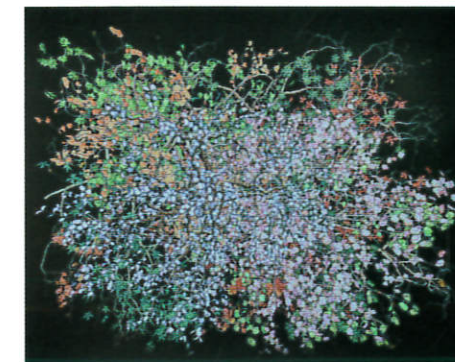
images. According to Beauchamp-Byrd, these “process items” are essential to “how the magic is made.”

The third and final component realized in this exhibition is the impact of animation on contemporary art and visual culture. A variety of interactive contemporary works from LaTurbo Avedon, Daniel Canogar, Daniel Rozin, and Jennifer Steinkamp are also on view—creating an immersive and engaging space that exemplifies the endless possibilities of animation art. After moving with, looking at, and listening to these works, museum guests can move to the ArtLab to play videos games discussed in the show and further interact with these technologies.

Working on this project has been a rewarding and enlightening experience which has allowed me to learn from the diverse history of animation, and bring light to some of its forgotten or ignored contributors. The curator consistently placed diversity and inclusion at the forefront of our research—asking the student team to represent films, games, and figures from all backgrounds and all areas of the animation process. When I finally walked through the completed space, I realized how often we take popular animation for

granted. I hope that when audiences visit the exhibition, they learn not only about who worked on these famed stories, but also come to understand the implications of where they come from and how global perceptions influence the creation of artworks. The incredible work of Dr. Beauchamp-Byrd and the OSU Museum of Art Staff has brought these important stories to the forefront of our experience with this show, one unlike we have seen before at this museum.

The show is on view for free at the OSUMA until December 19th, 2019. Dr. Mora J. Beauchamp-Byrd will be hosting a public talk on the history of animation and the implications of Mickey Mouse at Stillwater's LexiCon Comic Con festival on Saturday, September 14th. Featured artist Lyndon J. Barrois will be joining the curator for a panel discussion on Thursday, September 26th at 6:00pm, and an opening reception for the exhibition will be held at the museum on September 27th from 4:30 to 7:00pm. Following the reception, a Final Friday Art Crawl will take place in the Downtown Stillwater area with local food, drinks, and gallery openings.



Steinkamp Bouquet, Jennifer Steinkamp, Bouquet 1, 2013, computer-generated animation. © Jennifer Steinkamp, courtesy of the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation, photo by Joseph Rynkiewicz.

For additional information on *Little Nemo's Progress*, museum programming, and art events in Stillwater, visit museum.okstate.edu and follow the museum's social media @osumuseumofart. ■

Bianca Martucci-Fink recently completed the art history graduate program at Oklahoma State University and is an independent curator working in Oklahoma City.