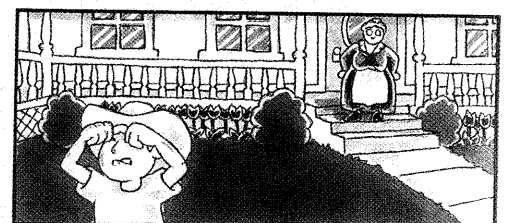
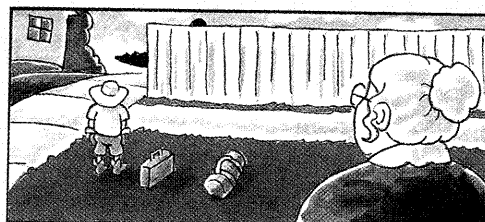
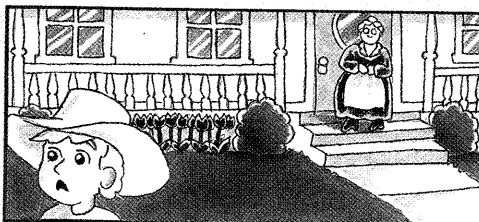
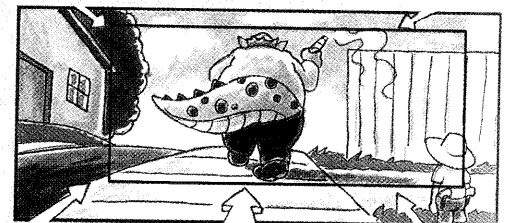
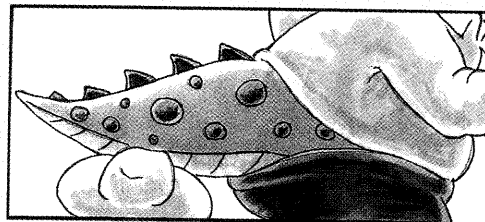
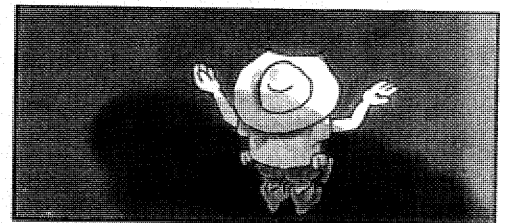
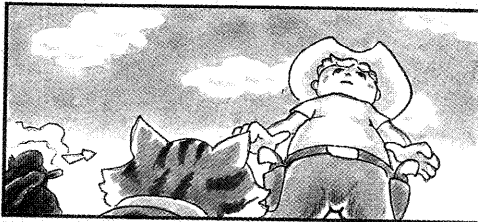
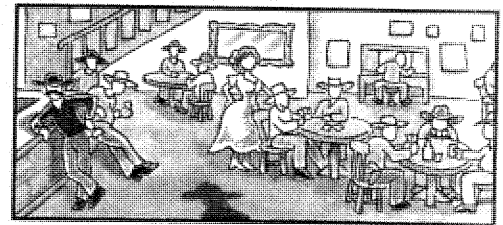
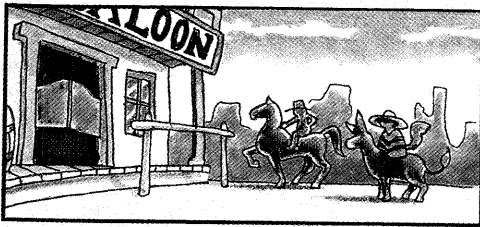


THOMSON
DELMAR LEARNING

e x p l o r i n g

STORYBOARDING



An In-Depth Guide to the Art and Techniques
of Contemporary Storyboarding

Wendy Tumminello

DESIGN
EXPLORATION
SERIES

objectives

Learn how visual stories are told

Understand the elements of a story

Explore industries that use storyboards

introduction

We are constantly confronted with visuals in our daily lives, from the most obvious (television, movies, the Internet) to books, magazines, newspapers, and comics. They are found in our living rooms, schools, public transportation systems, our dreams, and even in our skies.

Each visual tells us a story, whether it is a message to buy something or to entertain us. Visuals can make us feel happy, agitated, skeptical, and influence our decisions. For example, an image of pearly white teeth in an advertisement may lead us to buy a new brand of toothpaste, or a child playing in a sandbox may bring a smile to our face.

The storyboard is the visual version of the script. It consists of a number of panels that show the visual action of a sequence in a logical narrative. But whereas stories entertain, the storyboard is used as a tool for production or to assist in the selling of ideas to clients. The next several pages will provide an overview of the scripting process and the use of storyboards within different industries.

VISUAL STORYTELLING

Storyboarding the visual flow of a narrative is a relatively new concept, but visual storytelling is not. In fact, telling visual stories has been around for thousands of years. Early rock paintings were used as a form of communication before speech was even developed. It is believed that these visual paintings told stories about friends, animal attacks, how they hunted, and so forth.

Over the last century, visual storytelling has been taken to new heights with the emergence of photography, television, film, and computers. Graphic illustrations such as photographs, comics, and magazines communicate their message without motion. Figure 1-1 of a pool shark leaning against a pool table raises several questions. Who is the man? Where is he playing pool? Who is he playing against? Is he playing for money? The image conveys the intended message through staging the character and props, establishing the background, and portraying the action.

figure 1-1

Visual storytelling.

© Jean-Christophe Hyacinthe

Movies and animation are linear forms of visual storytelling where the audience listens and watches passively. Games and multimedia applications, on the other hand, are interactive programs where the user both actively views and manipulates the program. A user of a game doesn't just sit back with a bucket of popcorn and watch the story unfold, but interacts with the message whether it's plotting a murder, looking for clues, or dodging a hailstorm of punches from an opponent.



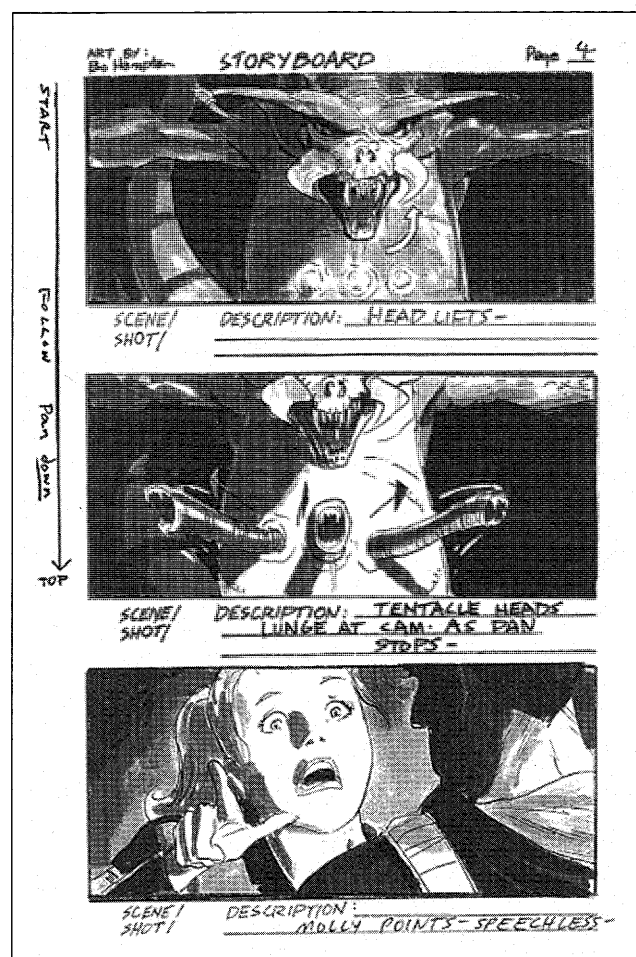


figure 1-2

Shrike storyboard.

© Bo Hampton

Although the means and the methods of storytelling may have changed over time, the storyteller's purpose has pretty much stayed the same—to communicate a message to an audience. A storyteller's effectiveness is based on drawing an audience into the story and capturing their attention. This is often accomplished by the message that the story and the visuals deliver.

VISUALS VERSUS THE STORY

Show me. Don't tell me. This is a phrase I often communicate to my students. It also happens to be the basis of writing visual content. If you *tell* a story, you try to entice the audience into imagining its content. However, if you are going to *show* the audience, you must rely less on telling and more on showing. Think of it this way: when you *show* a story, you are molding the message into visual imagery. Let's look at an example of telling versus showing.

Telling Example

Jake, who was considered the bully of the neighborhood, stood on the corner of Tenth and Main in his blue jeans, black T-shirt, and a cigarette pack rolled up in his sleeve. The rest of the kids avoided the corner where Jake stood. They were intimidated by the high school dropout who derived pleasure from flicking the burning embers of his cigarette into the hair of any kid who crossed his path.

The above example *tells* the viewer what Jake's demeanor and personality is like. It is up to the audience to imagine the expression and actions of both Jake and the children.

Showing Example

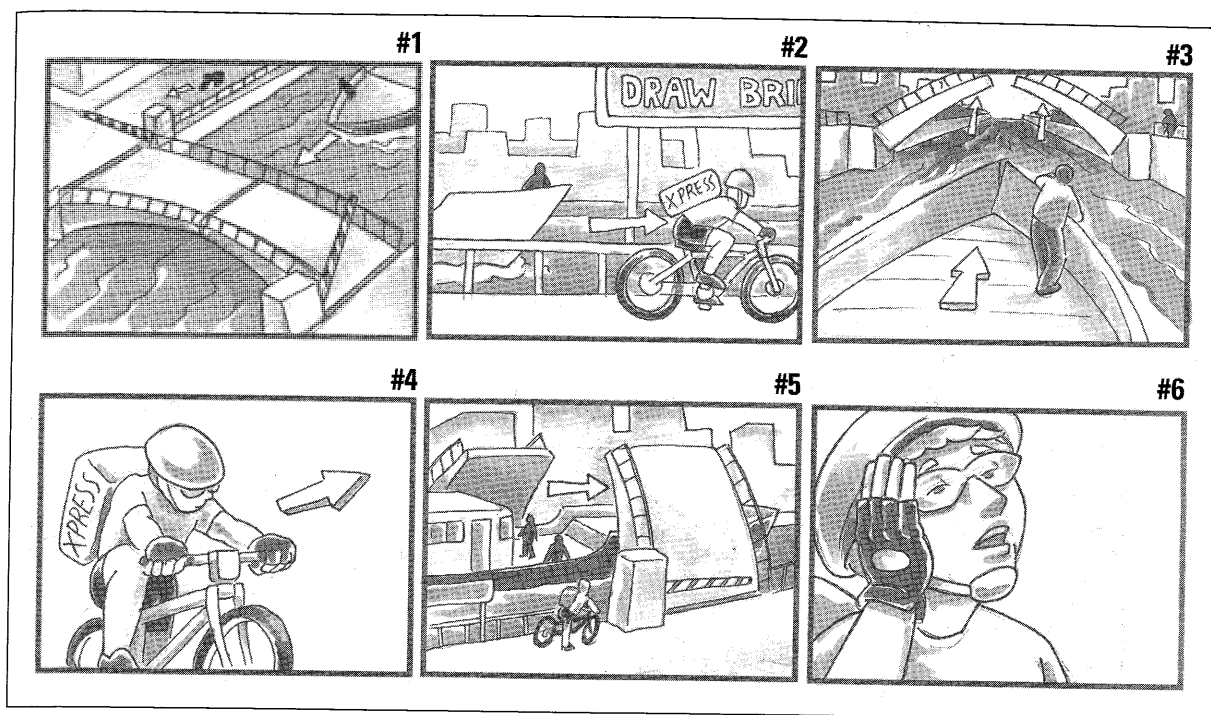
Jake, a burly teen with pock marks on his cheeks and skull tattoo scrawled across his bicep, kicks a scuffed military boot in the dirt. The dust circles his feet as he pulls a cigarette from behind his ear and slips it between his lips. His eyes dart to several school children scurrying single file down a dirt path. He settles his gaze on a pint-sized boy with a Space Rangers backpack slung over his small shoulders. Jake smirks as he takes a long drag from his cigarette and quickly steps forward toward the boy.

Now that's more like it. The audience is able to *see* Jake kick the dirt up as he pulls a cigarette from behind his ear. When writing visual content, you want to *show* the actions of the characters, the aesthetics of locations, and how the characters feel.

ELEMENTS OF A STORY

Most stories start out as an idea without structure. For instance, think about your dreams. Usually they are nothing more than fragments of images strung together. This is how ideas usually germinate. They often begin as abstract images that take form over time, as structure and order are later added to the mix. Let's take a look at a very simple example. There are three images: *bridge*, *boat* and *bicyclist*. Alone they are no more than words without meaning or interest to an audience. But what if you gave those words meaning through structure. Stories need to be about something. Therefore, we could take our *bicyclist* and put him in a situation where he had to get across the *bridge* to deliver a package within the hour. We are now beginning to structure our story with an action or goal on the part of the bicyclist. But wait. All good stories need conflict. What if the *bridge* goes up to let a *boat* pass, making it difficult for the bicyclist, to reach his goal in time? Using a time element, or *ticking clock*, raises the stakes for our *bicyclist*, as in figure 1-3.

Questions that the story raises are: Will the bicyclist make it in time? What will happen if he doesn't? The author must have these questions answered by the end of the story if the audience is to walk away satisfied. Once the problem is solved—and the package is delivered in time (or not)—the story is resolved.



Dramatic structure is usually defined as the beginning, middle, and end, or if it is a screenplay, act one, act two, and act three. No matter what you call it, the purpose is the same, which is to structure the flow of a story to give it meaning.

figure 1-3

Elements of a story.

Courtesy of J. Allen McFadden

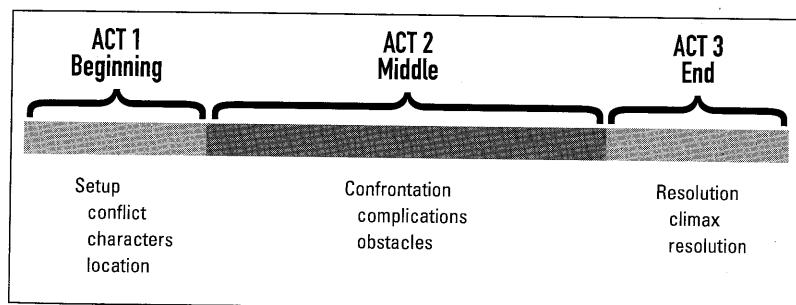


figure 1-4

Three-act story structure.

The Hero's Journey

In a galaxy far, far away, Luke Skywalker began a journey that took him from his home to new worlds in which he encountered both charming and peculiar characters. We have heard similar stories, from recent motion pictures to great works of literature.

The hero must take many steps to fulfill her journey. These steps begin with describing the hero's ordinary world to the point where the hero

takes on the problem and enters the extraordinary world. This is the beginning of the story, or act one. As a story unravels, there are many obstacles and complications that the hero must face. During this part of the journey, the hero comes across both foes and friends alike, which is the middle of the story, or act two. Finally, the hero reaches the point where all seems lost, before the final climax and resolution.

figure 1-5

The basic elements of the hero's journey.



The Hero's Journey

The hero's journey can be traced back to Greek mythology and great works of literature. The hero's journey is still followed today from major motion films to games and animation. The following is the basic steps included in the hero's journey.

The Calling:

Sometimes the calling is a traumatic event. This may include having something taken away and the quest by the hero to regain it. The calling, however, doesn't always have to be agonizing, but instead may creep up on the hero. This may include discontentment with the way the hero lives her life, and the quest to find what is missing.

Threshold

The threshold is the point where the hero takes action, or passes from the ordinary world into the extraordinary world, which is filled with danger and challenges. It is at this stage that the hero will meet people who may block her path. The hero may also meet a mentor at this stage, or helpers, that provide stability to the hero.

Initiation

It is during this stage that the hero faces both challenges and obstacles on her journey. In the beginning of the journey the challenges may seem relatively easy, but as the story progresses, the hero will face much more difficult tasks, which forces the hero to change and grow. It is also at this stage that the hero may meet foes that are disguised as friends. It is up to the hero to use her judgment to recognize friend from foe.

The Abyss

This is the point where the hero must face her greatest fears. Sometimes the challenges become too great. It is here that the hero must either surrender to the fear or retreat.

Transformation

When the hero conquers the abyss, transformation occurs. Part of this process includes revelation, or a dramatic change in the way the hero views life.

The Return

The return is the final stage of the journey. This is the point where the hero returns to her ordinary life, but not without growing as a person. The hero may become stronger, wiser, or may become enlightened.

Understanding how stories are put together, which includes the hero's journey, is an integral part to creating storyboards. Let's take a brief look at each phase of the visual storytelling process from beginning, to middle, to end.

Wendy

An effective "to" guide to a r types, including of the storyboard understanding readers visuali

Look inside

- A hands-on and art dire
- Interviews y should kno
- Practical ex character p
- The import key termin
- Templates

About the

Wendy Tummi of 1997 in AV V film, "Women University Film

Also Avail

- Exploring D
- Exploring T
- Exploring III
- Exploring T

THOMSON
DELMAR LEA

The Beginning

The beginning, or act one, in film, television, and animation, is where the storyteller sets up the characters, location, and conflict of the story. Several questions that need to be answered include: Who are the characters? Where are they? When does the story take place (the future, past, or present)? Why are the characters there?

Dynamic stories may begin with a hook that grabs the audience's attention, such as a murder or kidnapping. Action sequences make great hooks, although they are not the only types of scenes that keep the audience watching. For example, the hook in a story may be a couple breaking up or it may be as simple as a character receiving an eviction notice. The hook should leave the audience asking questions. For instance, why did the woman get evicted from her apartment? Who kidnapped the girl? What caused the couple to split apart? If the audience is hooked, they will undoubtedly want to know what happens next and keep watching.



figure 1-6

Storyboard panel from the film *AKA*.

© Invision Films

Artist: Adrian Bryant

Visuals are extremely important to hook the audience and to set up the hero's journey. In the movie *Fight Club*, the first image we see of Jack, the film's protagonist, is with a gun barrel in his mouth before a struggle ensues. As we watch the film, we want to know who Jack is, and how he got himself into such a predicament.

The beginning also defines the hero's goal. Is it to save the kidnapped princess, get a job, save the world, or defeat the town's evil mayor? In the animated film *Chicken Run*, the protagonist's goal is one of survival and to escape the chicken coup, which resembles a Nazi occupation camp. In the video game *Sim City 2000*, the goal of the player is to build and manage a city. In *Legally Blonde 2*, Elle Wood's goal is to get an anti-animal testing bill passed in Washington DC, a city notorious for behind your back deals and disillusionment.

The Middle

The middle, or act two, is where the hero faces many complications and obstacles in his search to reach the goal or solve a problem. The middle contains many twists and turns, and keeps raising the stakes to keep the story interesting and the tension building. In *Gladiator*, for example, we witness Maximus go from General to slave. His family murdered, Maximus loses both his position and his name as he battles many opponents in the Gladiator ring. The stakes for Maximus become even higher as he is forced to reveal his identity to Commodus, the evil ruler of Rome, who wants nothing more than to see him dead.

The hero often faces a turning point in act two, which takes the story in a different direction. In an episode of *The Simpsons*, Homer's mission changes from trying to find a job to lobbying for a stop sign at a dangerous intersection.

By the end of act two, all seems lost for the hero. In *Legally Blonde*, Elle quits law school and her job as an intern on a murder trial, because she cannot seem to escape the "dumb blonde" stereotype. In *Gladiator*, Maximus's faithful servant is murdered, and Commodus imprisons Maximus.

The End

The end, or act three, is where the climax and resolution of the problem occurs: the hero's goal is attained, the problem is solved, etc. Many endings include a showdown, or final confrontation, which is often between the protagonist and antagonist. The action becomes most intense near the end as the hero makes a last stand. This is where the guy gets the girl, the soldier saves the princess, the good guy captures the thief, or the slave defeats the enemy before ultimately succumbing to his wounds.

Great endings sometimes include a *ticking clock*, which is the race against time in order to reach the goal. A classic ending is three seconds on the clock with one down left as the football team makes the winning touchdown.

TIP

As a guideline when writing a screenplay, act two should be twice as long as act one.

**? DID YOU
KNOW**

One screenplay page is equivalent to one minute of screen time.

Wendy

An effective c
"o" guide to a
types, includin
of the storybo
understanding
readers visual

Look inside

- A hands-on and art direction
- Interviews should know
- Practical ex character p
- The import key termin
- Templates

About the

Wendy Tummi
of 1997 in AV
film, "Women
University Film

Also Avail

- Exploring D
- Exploring T
- Exploring III
- Exploring T

THOMAS

ELMAR LEA

WHY FORMAT THE STORY?

The script is the blueprint for a production. It provides the writer with a means of communication that is intended for the project's director and crewmembers. It is the screenwriter's job to tell the story, not plan the shots. This is the director's job.

Formatting a screenplay helps with the rhythm of a story through the choice of camera positions, narration, dialogue, and the juxtaposition of scenes. The format guides the producer or director with visualizing the writer's concepts and ideas. The script is also formatted because it is much easier for the director of a production to have it broken down into numbered scenes, schedules, and prop lists. In most situations, the script will be formatted in either a standard screenplay format or as a two-column script.

Standard Screenplay Format

Screenplays are not intended for audiences to read as they would a novel. Rather, they are used as a production tool for the director and crewmembers in the development of a film, game, or animation. The screenplay has become the Hollywood standard, which includes several elements such as the slug line, scene description, and dialogue.

Slug Lines

Each new scene needs slug lines—scene headings that describe the location of a scene, the time of the scene, and whether it takes place inside (interior) or outside (exterior). Slug lines should be short and to the point, such as:

- EXT. BASKETBALL COURT—DAY
- INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL—
NIGHT

figure 1-7

Standard screenplay format.

INT. POLICE AREA — NIGHT

A sea of BLUE UNIFORMS swamp metal desks. The EXPLOSION of typewriters fire off from several areas as suspects are being questioned.

Detective Frank makes his way to a utilitarian desk piled high with police reports. He pulls up two metal chairs and motions for the girls to sit down. Detective Frank pushes aside a box of chocolate donuts and coffee mug. He sits on the edge of the desk close to the girls.

FRANK

Sergeant Roscoe tells me you two have a murder to report.

LILY

We're not exactly sure if he's dead.

FRANK

And who is this possible dead person?

LILY

The Mayor.

FRANK

Mayor Beasley?

LILY

That's the one.

FRANK

Why do you think the Mayor's dead? Did you see something?

LILY

Well, not exactly.

FRANK

How then?

Lily scowls at Jessie whose gaze is transfixed on the box of donuts. Lily looks back at Detective Frank.

LILY

I dreamt it.

Description

The description within a screenplay includes where the action takes place and the elements of a scene, such as the characters and objects. When writing a story, it is sometimes better to show the audience than reveal information through dialogue. The description should communicate images that disclose details the audience needs to see. For example, images of a mother absently touching frayed toys in a child's room is much richer than explaining that the child no longer lives at home.

Dialogue

An important rule is to *show* it rather than *say* it. However, that does not mean there is no reason for dialogue. On the contrary. You should use dialogue when you want to express a character's emotions, explore the interactions between characters and the environment, and to move the story forward.

EXAMPLE TWO-COLUMN SCRIPT FORMAT

Partial Cereal Script
: 30 sec.

VIDEO	AUDIO
MS of boy eating cereal at kitchen table	MUSIC FADES UP AND UNDER
TWO SHOT of brother licking his lips	
Cut to CU of brother's face	BROTHER: Can I have some?
Cut to MS of boy merrily eating a heaping spoonful of cereal	
Cut to two shot of brothers at table. Brother pulls out a miniature toy car, jacks, and bubble gum	BROTHER: I'll trade you my jeep, three jacks and a piece of bubble gum?
Cut to ECU of boy's eyes shifting down at toys then back up. Pull out to the two brothers.	BOY: Nope.

Two-Column Script

The two-column script is frequently used for corporate videos, documentaries, multimedia, and news. The script is broken into two columns—for video and audio. The left column contains video information, with audio on the right. Every visual and audio element is specified in the appropriate column. For example, information about camera framing and movement is usually described in the video column, and information about dialogue and music in the audio column.

Many video and news people use the two-column script format because the visuals are easily synchronized to the audio.

figure 1-8

Two-column script format.



Wendy

An effective "to" guide to a r types, including of the storyboa understanding readers visualiz

Look inside

- A hands-on and art dire
- Interviews v should kno
- Practical ex character p
- The importa key termin
- Templates f

About the

Wendy Tummi of 1997 in AV V film, "Women i University Film

Also Avail

- Exploring D
- Exploring Th
- Exploring Ill
- Exploring Th

THOMS

DELMAR LEA

STORYBOARDS

Storyboards are a series of sketches that are used as a planning tool to visually show how the action of a story unfolds. The closest visual relation to the storyboard is the comic strip minus the dialogue balloons. But whereas comic strips entertain, the storyboard is a tool that facilitates production.

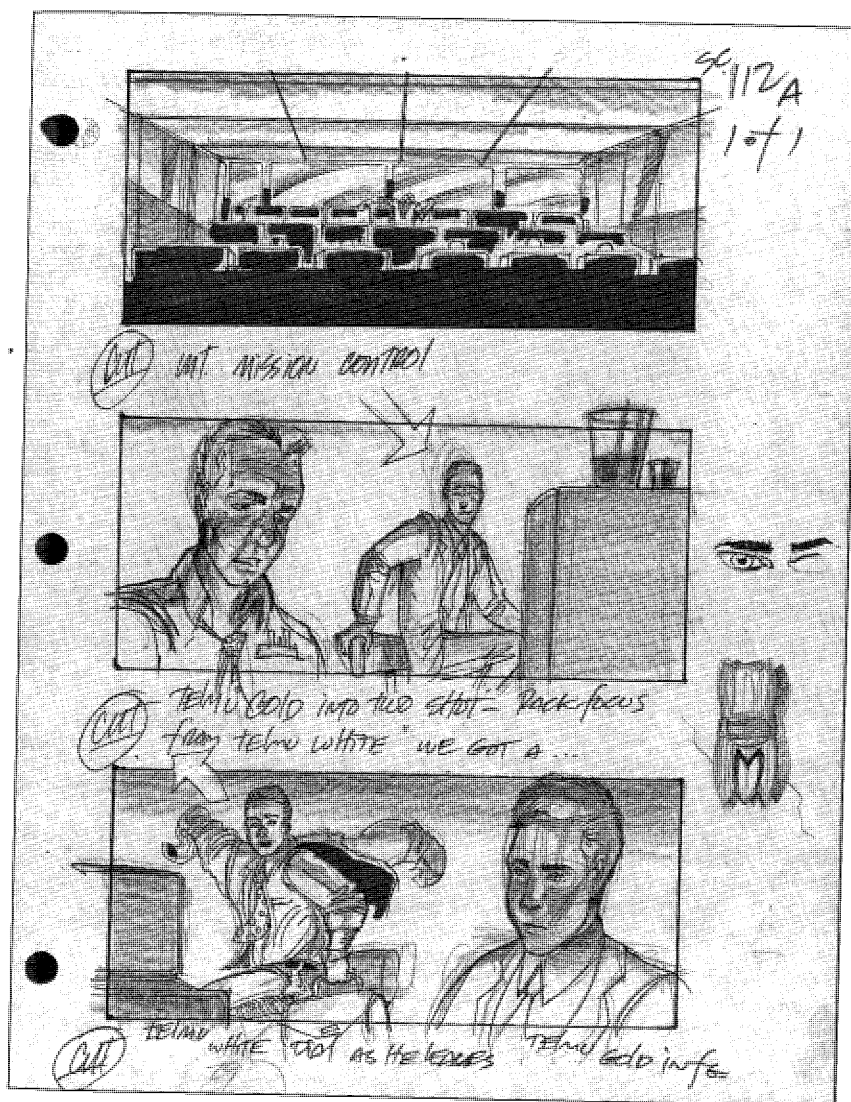


figure 1-9

Storyboard from the film *Apollo 13*.
Courtesy of Universal Studios

The main purpose of the storyboard is to clearly convey the narrative flow of a story by defining the challenges and problems of a project. Therefore, understanding the elements of the storytelling process is of utmost importance for the storyboard artist to do her job.

Storyboards also assist in the timing of a sequence, experimenting with camera angles, movement, and continuity amongst the elements within the frame.

Storyboards are revised and adjusted to accommodate the industry for which they are being used. The most commonly used are the production storyboard and the presentation storyboard.

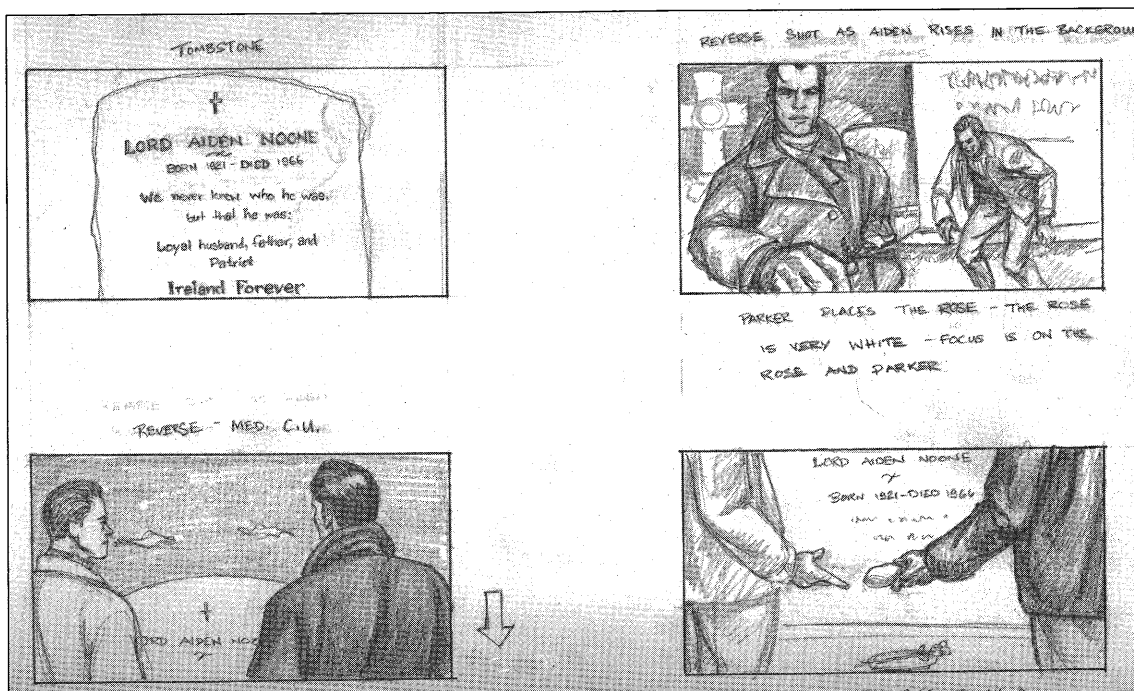


figure 1-10

Production storyboard.

© Invision Films

Artist: Adrian Bryant

The production storyboard is also referred to as the shooting board or editorial storyboard. It is used to assist crewmembers during production for framing, blocking, and composing a shot. A presentation storyboard, on the other hand, is used to sell ideas to clients or to evaluate existing campaigns. Both types of storyboards are discussed at length in later chapters.

WHO USES STORYBOARDS?

Storyboard use may vary within each industry, but the purpose is the same and that is to visually communicate project ideas and objectives. Storyboards are incorporated into many industries including industrial, advertising, and interactive design. The following is a partial list of the different uses for storyboards; several will be discussed in depth in later chapters.

Advertising Campaigns

Advertising agencies use presentation storyboards to sell campaign strategies to clients or for use in focus groups. Storyboards that reflect campaign ideas are highly detailed and include key frames only.

Video Games

Video games take a lot of preplanning, including brainstorming the game concepts and user interaction. Once the story lines are developed, the game designer creates the storyboards for each scene of the game, including the cinematic, or full-motion video sequences, that introduce a story and act as the user's reward for excelling in game play.

Television Series

Usually when working in television, the director will storyboard only complex sequences. Some television shows that use storyboards include *CSI*, *The West Wing*, *ER*, *Babylon 5*, and *Witchblade*.

Multimedia

CD-ROMs for education, training, or "how-to" programs can be extremely complex, requiring extensive interactivity. Storyboards usually contain a sketch of each screen, along with notes about the content of particular images, the function of specific buttons, and how video and sound is to be presented.

Web Design

Storyboards are useful to the development team for Web design, in defining and grouping elements such as graphics, animation, video, and illustrations. Storyboards assist the team in understanding the structure of a site, and how that information is presented.

Industrial and Governmental Videos

Storyboards are an indispensable tool for presenting ideas to clients when creating industrial and/or governmental videos. Storyboards promote effective decision-making, and help to set strategies, and solve problems.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Visual storytelling has been taken to new heights with the emergence of television, film, computers, and animation. Most stories begin in our imagination and are then given structure. Stories with structure have a beginning, middle, and end that explore the hero's journey. The journey begins with the hook, which grabs the viewer's attention. However, every good story needs conflict. If there is no conflict, there is no story. Formatting a script is very important, as it helps organize the story elements for both the director and the producer of a production.

Storyboards are sketches that are used to visually show how a story unfolds. The storyboard is similar to the comic strip, but rather than entertain, it is used as a planning tool to visualize the director's ideas. Storyboards are used in various industries, including advertising, film, Web design, and multimedia.



Wendy

An effective c
to" guide to a
types, includin
of the storybo
understanding
readers visual

Look insi

- A hands-o
and art dir
- Interviews
should kno
- Practical e
character p
- The impor
key termin
- Templates

About the

Wendy Tumm
of 1997 in AV
ilm, "Women
University Filr

Also Avail

- Exploring D
- Exploring T
- Exploring Il
- Exploring T

THOMAS
ELMAR LEA

in review

1. What is visual storytelling?
2. How does visual storytelling differ from film and animation to interactive games?
3. What are two ways to format a story?
4. What is the difference between showing and telling?
5. What are elements of the hero's journey?
6. What is the hook of a story?
7. What is a slug line?
8. What are storyboards? How are they similar to the comic strip?
9. What industries use storyboards?

exercises

1. Write a short scene that illustrates the principles of showing versus telling.
2. Research companies that use storyboard artists. What type of storyboards do these companies create? What is the role of the storyboard artist in these fields?

objectives

Draw the human figure in proportion

Illustrate quick sketches according to the line of action

Render the human figure in perspective

Draw the human figure in motion

introduction

Most films and animation revolve around the interaction of characters to tell a story.

It is the storyboard artist's job to visually interpret the action of characters from the script; this includes how characters move and how they are framed. For example, an artist may be asked to draw a character about to take the final shot in a tied basketball game. Not only does the artist have to know how to draw the proportions of the basketball player, but he must also capture the tension and movement of that character.

When it comes to materials, each artist has their preference, whether it is using photo-blue pencils or markers. Jack Johnson, illustrator of such films as *Independence Day* and *The Perfect Storm*, for example, sketches out production sets in pencil or charcoal and then paints the final designs in watercolors, oils, or gouache.

This chapter covers the basic techniques for drawing the human form, drawing characters in proportion and perspective, and drawing characters in motion. The chapter also covers materials used for creating storyboards.

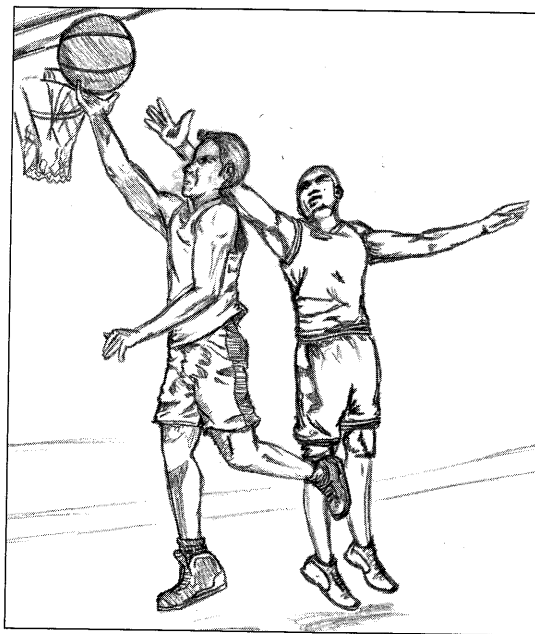


figure 13-1

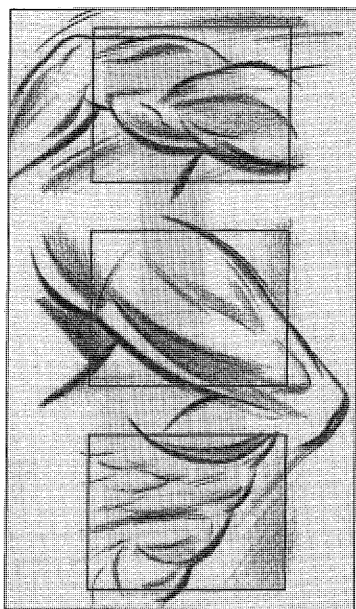
The storyboard artist interprets how characters move within a frame.

Courtesy of Luis Alfaro

figure 13-2

Drawing the human form.

© Matt Karol



TIP

Start a scrapbook of images from fashion and sports magazines, comics, photos, and anything else you might find of interest.

VISUAL REFERENCE

Where do you begin if you have little or no drawing experience, or just need to brush up on your skills? A good place to start is your local library. There are numerous “how to” books, such as *Keys to Drawing* and *Human Anatomy Made Amazingly Easy*, which are devoted to understanding the human figure and how to better illustrate it in your drawings. Another great reference to study is comic books, which have thousands of action poses of characters in all shapes and sizes.

If you have access to a DVD player, you can study movies such as *Monsters, Inc.*, *The Matrix*, and *Terminator 2*, which all contain a supplemental section on storyboards. There are also illustration books that highlight storyboarding art, including *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, *The Art of Mulan*, *The Matrix*, and *Gladiator*.

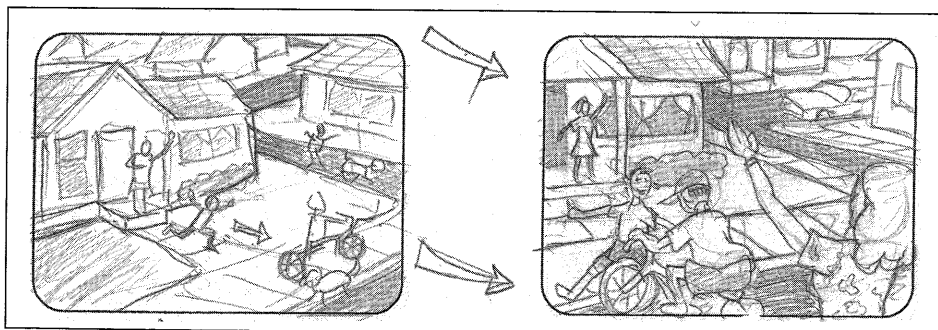
SIMPLIFYING THE HUMAN FORM

Remember those stick figures that you used to draw as a kid? Sometimes the head was too big or the arms were too long. Sometimes you may have dressed the figure in a skirt or a pair of pants. Drawing stick figures is not all that uncommon when creating roughs or thumbnail storyboards. In fact, many directors draw out their ideas using stick figures before the work gets assigned to the storyboard artist.

When drawing thumbnails or roughs, you may choose to begin with the stick figure because of its simplicity. Drawing stick figures allows you to compose a frame quickly before moving on to more complicated forms. They are also useful for drawing within a smaller space, like the storyboard frame, allowing you to draw figures of any size confidently before adding detail.

figure 13-3

Thumbnail drawings.



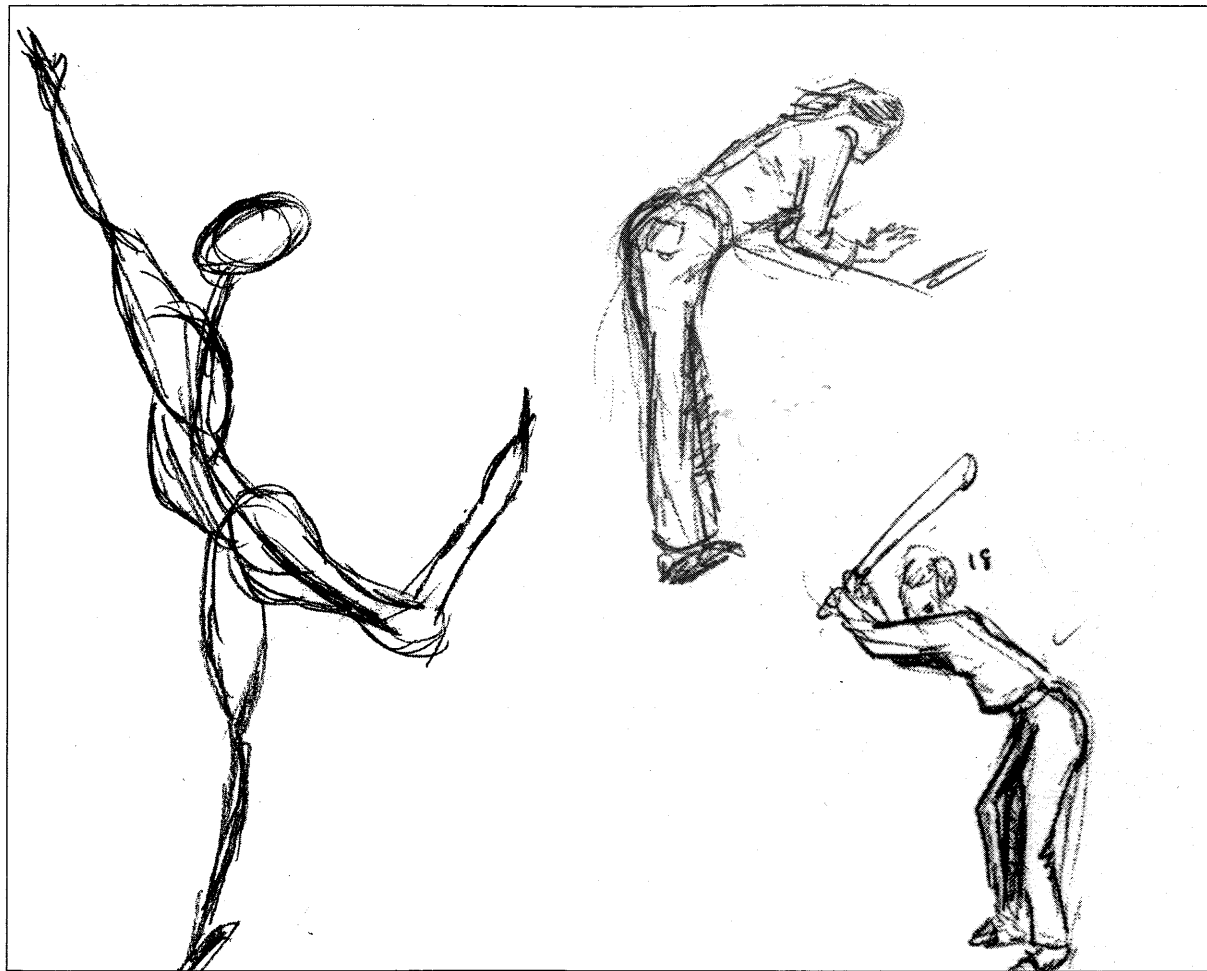
GESTURE DRAWING

Action, movement, attitude, and rhythm: these are qualities that you should convey in your drawings. It doesn't matter if you studied fine art, or cartooning, as long as you can express the action of a figure.

Observing characters in real life will assist you in creating realistic drawings. That is why it is always a good idea to carry a sketchbook with you. Don't worry about creating complete drawings. It is more important to get the gesture down, which is the first step toward drawing figures.

TIP

Just like practicing music scales, gesture sketching can be used as a warm-up exercise. You may warm up by drawing fast circles, ovals, and lines before beginning your drawings.



When starting a figure drawing, you should always begin with the line of action, which is an imaginary line that extends through the main action of a figure.

figure 13-4

Quick gesture drawings.

Gesture lines are drawn quickly and freely to establish the mood and movement of the figure. The line of action helps accentuate the overall flow of a pose, and should be drawn in one stroke, keeping it loose rather than stiff and formal.

If you look at a skater, for example, you would follow the curve of the body from the head down to the leg that holds the skater's weight. For the skater, there would be two lines of action—one that runs through the body and one that goes through the arms. By adding the second line through the arms, the fluidity of the pose is increased, making it more pleasing to the eye.



figure 13-5

Follow the curve of the skater's body.

Gesture drawings are extremely helpful to the storyboard artist, whose ultimate goal is to render dozens, if not hundreds, of panels in a short period of time. J. Todd Anderson, for example, rendered over 600 rough pencil sketches in a matter of six weeks for *Fargo*. Artists for the animated series *The Simpsons* render over 800 in a two- to three-week period. To reach these levels, you must practice every day for several hours a day. The goal is not to create a great piece of art, but rather to get ideas down in a quick and cost-effective way.

THE HUMAN FIGURE IN PROPORTION

When drawing the human figure, many artists commonly use the head as a measuring tool. This is extremely helpful when first learning figure proportion.

The average human figure, from the top of the head down to the bottom of the feet, is about eight heads tall, although an action hero may average nine heads.

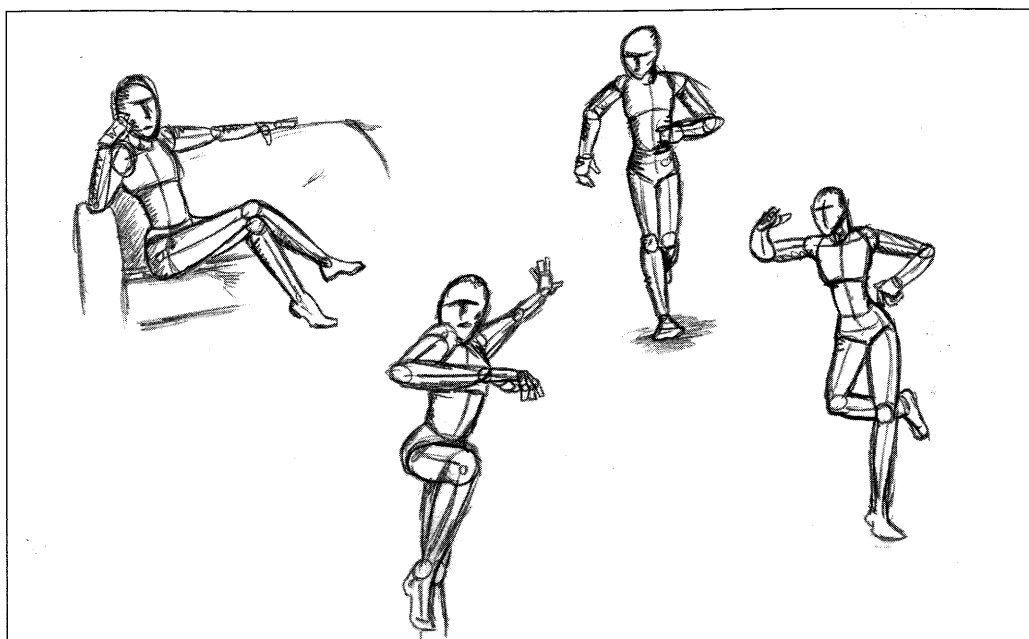


figure 13-6

Practice drawings of the human figure in proportion.

Let's take a look at the average human figure that is eight heads high:

- The distance from the head to the top of the chest is about two heads.
- The distance from the chest to the top of the thighs is about two heads.
- The distance from the top of the thighs to the knee is about two heads.
- The distance from the knees to the feet is about two heads.

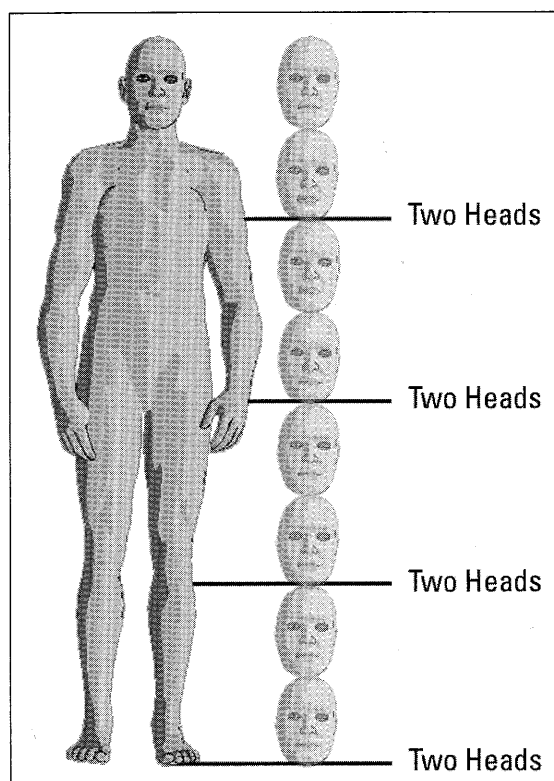


figure 13-7

Average height is between 7 1/2 and 8 heads high.

The Head

What is the first thing you notice about a person? Is it the eyes? Perhaps it is the smile. When we look at someone, we do not necessarily notice the shape of someone's head. As an artist, you must look beyond the aesthetics to learn the basic techniques for drawing a well-proportioned head.

Some of the most common problems when drawing facial features include eyes that are too close together, a mouth that is adjacent to the chin, and noses that are either extremely long or short. There are numerous techniques to create well-proportioned facial features. One technique is to draw three horizontal lines within the construction of the head. These horizontal lines represent the eyes, mouth, and nose. You can create a triangle from the eye line to the mouth line. The triangle is a useful facial diagram that will assist you in arranging features in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

As a storyboard artist, you will need to draw the human head in many positions. For example, if a character's head is tipped forward, facial features will gather toward the chin. When tipped backwards, facial features move toward the forehead.



figure | 13-8 |

The human head tipped forward and back.

Hands

Hands are one of the hardest parts of the body to draw accurately. In animation, many artists create a simplified hand having only three fingers and a thumb, which is much easier to draw. Mickey Mouse and Bart Simpson, for example, have only four fingers.

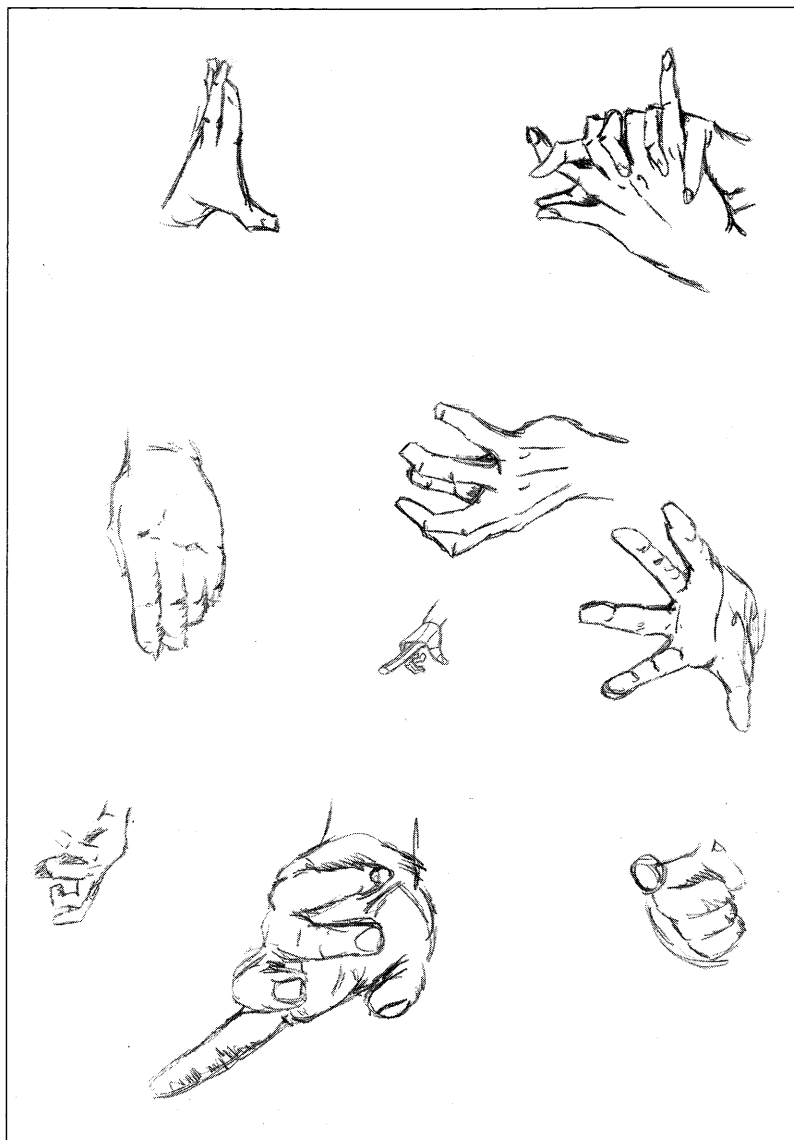


figure 13-9

Hands in various positions.

TIP

Use your own hand as a model when drawing the hand in various positions. It also helps to draw the hand and fingers as cube forms with the shape of the fingertips as slightly triangular.

There are three main parts of the hand: the fingers, palm, and thumb. The palm of the hand is somewhat thicker near the wrist and is larger on the thumb side.

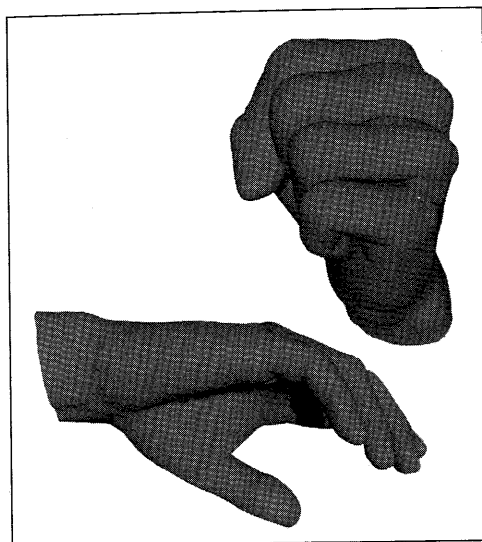


figure | 13-10 |

Three parts of the hand: fingers, palm, and thumb.

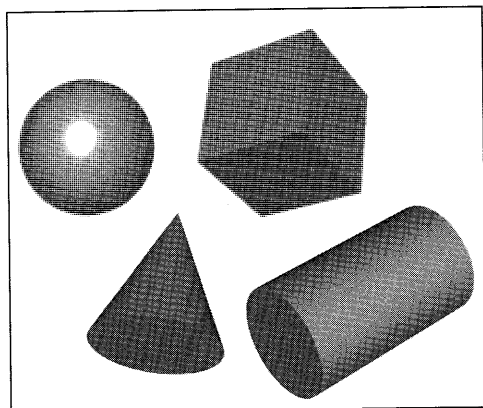


figure | 13-11 |

Geometric shapes.

There will be many occasions as a storyboard artist when you will need to draw the hand in numerous positions: clenched fist, gripping hands, a hand holding a glass, and so forth.

GEOMETRIC SHAPES

The human figure is three-dimensional; therefore, your drawings should reflect the volume and weight of the human figure. After drawing gesture lines, you can simplify the figure into a few basic shapes, including spheres, cylinders, and cubes. These shapes not only make it easier to draw a character, but geometric forms add the illusion of depth to the two-dimensional surface of drawing paper.

An arm, for example, is made up of cylinders. The fingers are made up of cubes. By applying solid shapes to the figure, you can establish the height, width, and three-dimensional roundness to a character.

As a storyboard artist, you should always be looking for ways to break down an object, or person, into geometric shapes. Using an artist mannequin is an extremely useful tool since its three-dimensional shape is made up of cylinders and spheres. Joints are moveable so that the mannequin may be positioned in a variety of movements. Once you are able to draw the proper shapes, the details should come easily.

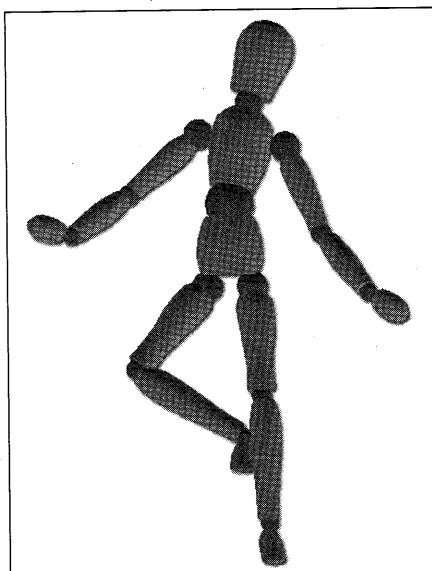


figure | 13-12 |

Artist mannequin.

figure | 13-13 |

Begin with the line of action.



THE FIGURE IN MOTION

You want your storyboards to show the action and attitude of a figure. For example, pay attention to how a woman walks. Does she stride gracefully? Is her walk determined? How does she hold her head? The more knowledge you have of how a person moves, the easier it will become to render figures in motion.

Begin your action poses with the action line, which assists in placing the various parts of the figure in the proper position, before adding detail.

Many directors require storyboard artists to draw the figure in action. If a figure is walking, for example, you want to start shifting the weight from one foot to the other side of the body in your figure drawing. Alternately, as the right leg swings forward, the right arm swings back. The longer a stride a figure makes, the more pronounced the arms swing. The motion of a runner follows the same principles, but the movement is much more pronounced. The body is thrust forward, and the motion of the body is exaggerated.

figure | 13-14 |

Figure in motion.

Courtesy of Matt Karol

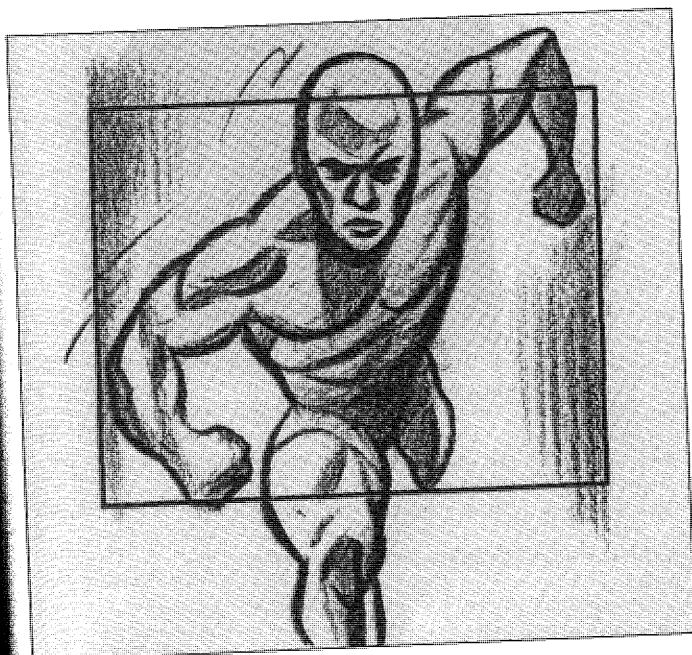
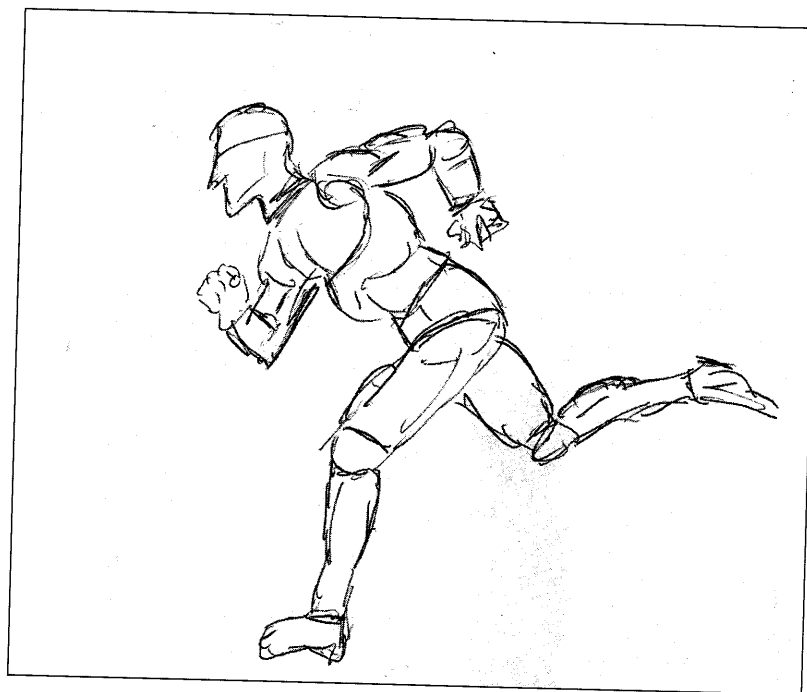


figure | 13-15 |

Rule of threes.

TIP

Remember the rule of threes when sketching the human figure: the chest, waist, and hip; upper arms, lower arm, and hand; upper leg, lower leg, and foot.



THE HUMAN FIGURE IN PERSPECTIVE

One of the fundamental challenges facing the storyboard artist is to represent three-dimensional figures on a flat two-dimensional surface. As discussed in Chapter 6, there are a number of techniques to establish depth. The technique covered in this chapter is called size perspective, which refers to the apparent reduction in size of an object as it moves into the distance. To illustrate size perspective, you must first understand how the horizon line and the vanishing point contribute to the illusion of depth. The horizon line is an imaginary line that is always at eye level, and vanishing point is when two lines converge at some distant point on the horizon.

Taking these two concepts into consideration, distant figures will appear smaller, but have the same shape and proportion as they would close up. Now, characters standing together are the same height; this is our point of reference. But if character *B* dashes toward us, about fifty feet away from character *A*, he will appear larger, and so on.

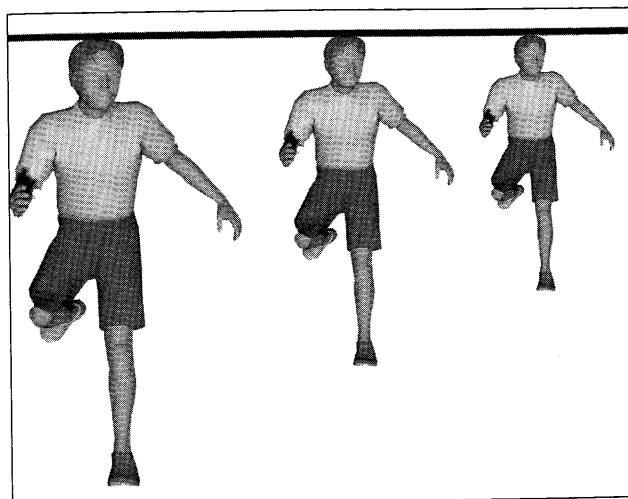


figure 13-16

Three runners in perspective.

Applying perspective to your figures will also assist you in creating dynamic camera angles and depth of field. For example, an overhead shot of a person in perspective will appear diminished compared to a character drawn from a low angle.

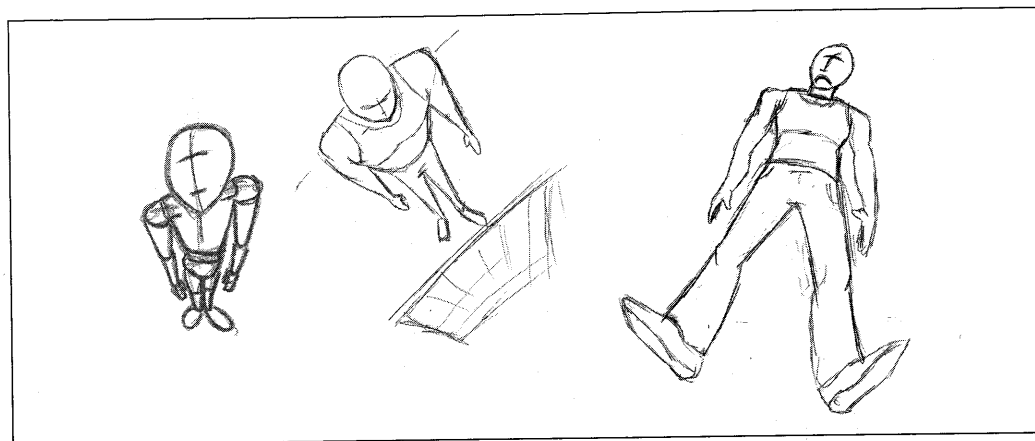


figure 13-17

High- and low-angle drawings of characters.

WRAPPING IT UP

Characters come in all shapes and sizes, therefore, as a storyboard artist you should be able to draw many different types of figures—from an old woman to a 16th-century warrior. It is important not just how they look, but how they move or stand, and their relative size compared to their environment. Another consideration is clothing. You should have a basic knowledge of fabric and how it pulls or compresses. This is especially noticeable at the joints, such as the elbows, wrist, and knees. For example, fabric usually gathers up at the waistline, which causes tightly compressed folds.

The most important thing to remember when drawing clothing is the figure beneath the fabric. Clothing should reveal the figure's shape first, before moving into the detail of dress.