

Character Acting:

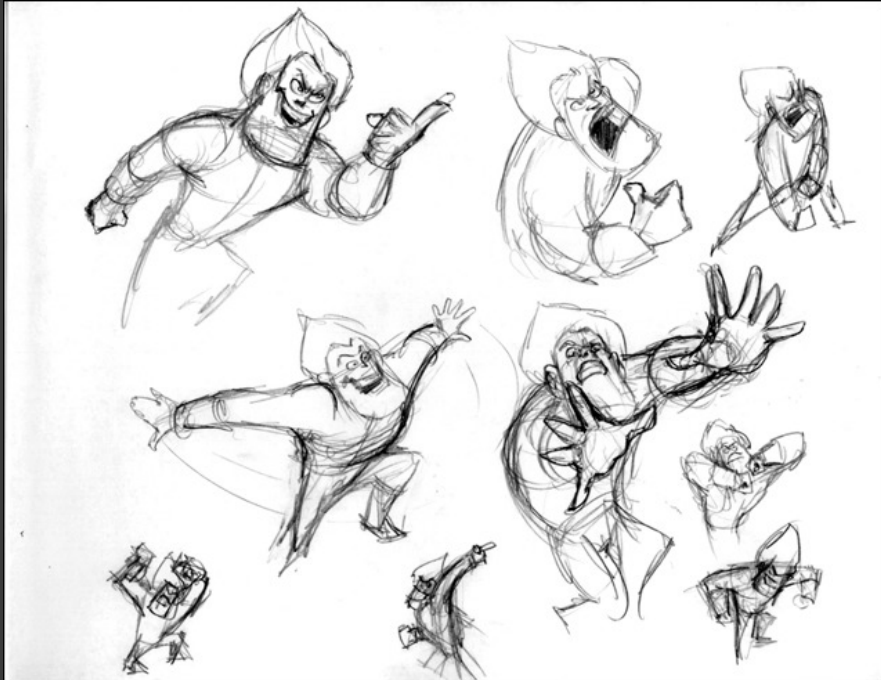
A Case for Better Animation Reference

Jason Kennedy

Lecturer in 3D Animation

Auckland University of Technology

Reference? What's that?

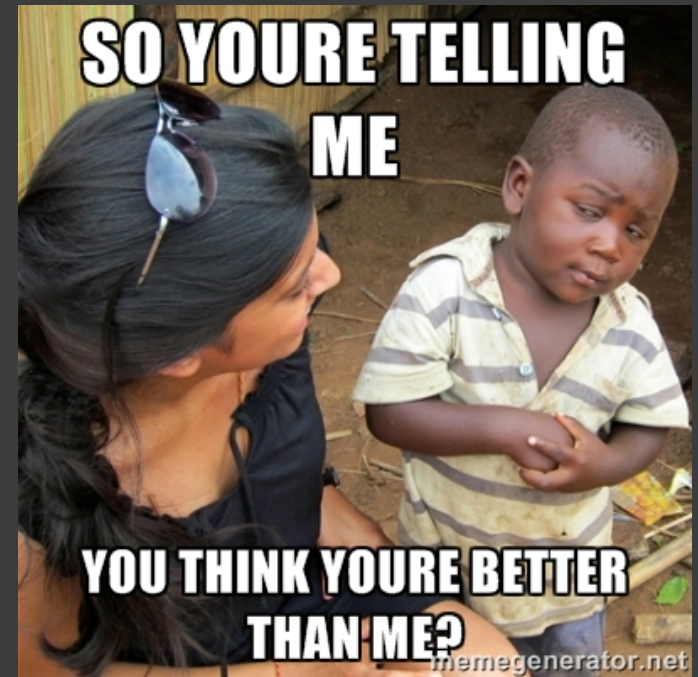


(Navone, 2004)

- Some animators simply sit down and start drawing (or posing)
 - Works well for quickly getting ideas on paper
 - But... susceptible to cliché, repetition of ideas, and incorrect assumptions about movement and emotions
- Gathering reference involves:
 - Studying/drawing from life
 - Sifting through relevant visual material
 - Recording someone acting out your character's performance

You really think you know better?

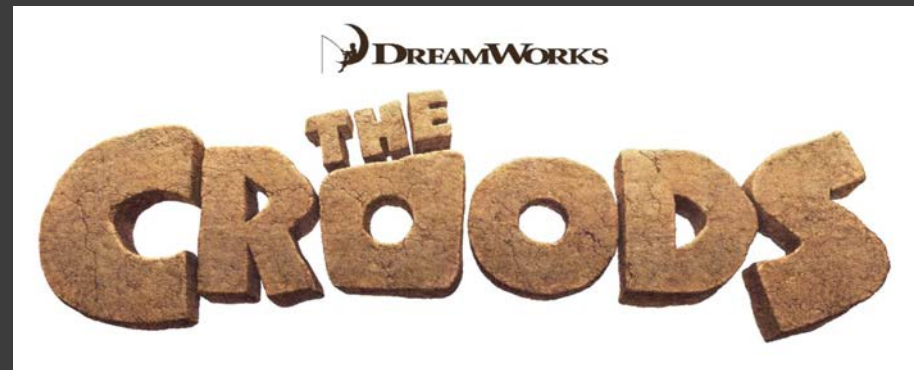
- *Buddy, you've got some nerve. Just look at all the quality animation that's out there. We've been doing this for years and I think we've worked it out pretty damned well.*
- Perhaps, but consider this:
 - Most animators are not trained actors
 - Animators act out their own reference
 - Most animation lacks emotionally-connected performances.
 - Emotional acting is difficult even for trained actors



Video Reference

- A loose blueprint of acting choices used to provide additional inspiration a guidance to physically and emotionally complex movements.





Acting for Live-Action vs Animation

- Actor

- Performance flows naturally
- Actor is own instrument
- Creates a performance on its own
- Does not focus on specific gestures
- Spontaneity
- Organic interactions with a cast (natural chemistry)
- Immediate feedback

- Animated Character

- Animator injects performance
- Functionally useless by itself
- Specifically crafted gestures to tell story
- Illusion of spontaneity
- Each performance constructed separately by animator
- Delayed feedback

Appropriateness of Method

- Emotionally-connected reference would best serve an animation that necessarily involves a large emotional range.



- Many animations do not have such requirements and can subsist off of superficial acting
- Character-driven stories are also good candidates

Acting “Methods”

- Stanislavski “method acting” most common among animators with some acting training
 - Too often leads to recall of emotions rather than active engagement with emotions
 - Actor can lose awareness of personal reality while trying to operate within a specific method technique
- Morris’ *BEING* technique provides a better foundation for creating emotionally-centred reference for animation
 - Dynamic engagement with emotions
 - Active and unpredictable, just like life