**Sixth Week – Stop Motion: Objects and Puppets/Models**

1. *Le Garde-Meuble/The Automatic Moving Company* (Romeo Bosetti, 1912, Pathé) Furniture seems to move into a new home by itself. An example of the “haunted hotel” genre of trick films (named for the 1907 J. S. Blackton object animation film that spawned it), though the scene is neither set in a hotel nor haunted; it’s the same idea, though. It looks forward to the modern age when electricity will make everything easier for humans (though will it also deprive some – movers, say, and secretaries – of their jobs. Bosetti (1879-1948) was a director, writer, and actor not otherwise known for animation; it is not clear who was responsible for the animation here. The furniture seems to be full-sized, not models.
2. *Shorelines* (Al Jarnow, 1977) Animated seashells. Besides simply manipulating the seashells under the camera, Jarnow uses substitution to make them appear to increase or decrease in size or change colors.
3. *Bead Game* (Ishu Patel, 1977, NFBC) Beads manipulated to form constantly metamorphosing figures. Evolution, metamorphosis, and two sides battling and/or consuming one another are common motifs among the works of animators working outside Hollywood. Unlike in the cases of sand animation or paint-on-glass, the viewer remains acutely aware of the presence and the nature of the beads themselves as well as of the images they are manipulated to form.
4. *A Town Called Panic*: episode *Cake* (Stephane Aubier and Vincent Patar, 2002) An episode from a Belgian TV series; a feature film with the same title as the series appeared in 2009. Cowboy, Indian, and Horse all live in the same house, with Horse more or less the boss. Here Horse bakes a cake, but neither Cowboy nor Indian can wait until the morning to sample it; meanwhile an irate bear lurks outside. What appear to be plastic figures from a wild west set move about as they would with six-year-olds playing with them. The figures themselves do not seem to have much flexibility. When they change positions, they also can be seen to be holding different weapons or tools as would be the case if they came from a toy set. All the episodes and the feature film are pretty surreal and fast-paced.
5. *The Lost World* [clip] (dir. Harry Hoyt, 1925, First National Pictures) The first film adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle’s 1912 novel. Willis O’Brien, Hollywood’s stop-motion masters, crafted the dinosaurs here with special bladders inside their torsos that could be inflated and deflated to make it appear that they were actually breathing, thereby heightening the illusion that they were real. The human actors here do not appear in the same shots as the dinosaurs. In model animation, the goal is to present a figure that looks and moves like a real animal or that is fantastic but moves like one might expect it to if it were real. Generally this sort of three-dimensional animation occurs in films with live human actors.
6. *The Puppetoon Movie* preview (dir. Arnold Leibovit, 1987) Includes clips from the short films of stop-motion master George Pal as well as some historical/biographical information about Pal. The clay animation characters you see here were not made by Pal. His puppets were made of wood; their features and shapes changed by substituting parts of the puppets. Dozens of variations of faces could be used on a single puppet. Pal later produced and supervised special effects for live-action features such as *War of the Worlds* (1953) and *The Time Machine* (1960), which he also directed.
7. *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* [clip] (dir. Nathan Juran, 1958, Columbia) A horned, satyr-legged Cyclops attacks Sinbad and his crew. His movements do not quite seem natural since there is no “judder” or blur when he moves quickly, unlike the case with the human actors. He moves at precisely at 24 fps whereas the humans do not. Ray Harryhausen, who had worked under Willis O’Brien, became Hollywood’s third stop-motion expert.
8. *Jason and the Argonauts* [clip] (dir. Don Chaffey, 1963, Columbia) Skeletons with swords attack Jason and his men. The skeletons move in a more convincing way than the Cyclops because we do not see any musculature on them; they are almost machine-like so their movements do not look unconvincing if they fall short of the smoothness of human movements.
9. *Next: The Infinite Variety Show* (Barry Purves, 1990, Aardman Animations) Part of Aardman’s *Lip* Synch series. Will Shakespeare performs emblematic presentations of all his plays in an audition for, seemingly, director Peter Hall, but it is really St. Peter and Will is auditioning for Heaven. The puppets here are not clay but do look like real humans with expressive faces. Purves went on to make longer theatre-oriented puppet films.
10. *Ruka/The Hand* (Jiri Trnka, 1965) A grim tale of artistic freedom and oppression depicting a little sculptor/potter confronted by a giant hand demanding he make a monument in its image. Resisting to the end, the artist dies and then, ironically, is memorialized by the hand. The communist Czech government banned *Ruka* for two decades. Coincidentally, Trnka’s last film. He was the foremost Czech animator and made the first Czech animated feature, *The Czech Year* (1947). His came from a puppet theatre background, and his puppets all had the look of marionettes, with wooden heads with unmoving features, though they could be altered by replacement, lighting, and possibly make-up. Trnka was adept at conveying the emotions of his figures through their gestures. Trnka’s influence still looms large over puppet animators in Eastern Europe and around the world. [‘Jiŕí Trnka’ is pronounced ‘Yershy Trinka’.]

*The Bead Game* can be found on the National Film Board of Canada web site. Everything else can be found on YouTube. If you look at George Pal’s short films, you’ll see that most of them could not be shown on TV today because of their presentation of various racial and ethnic stereotypes.