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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING MICKEY.

BY

PAUL MC BRIDE

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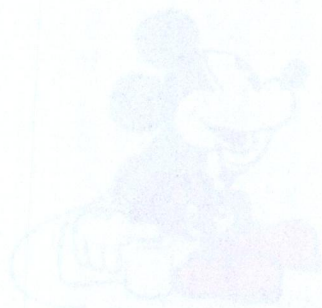
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Preface: *what is out there?*

The problem in writing about animation or its characters is the paucity of criticism or theoretical examination of the medium. It is usually seen as film's illegitimate son because of its supposedly child-like content, and the unreal nature of animation in that it is not a realistic representation of life. How can something which started its life as a form of adult cinema, dealing with sex, violence, politics, and war-under the well applied varnish of comedy - be relegated to the realms of children's entertainment? Although embedded in all our childhoods', it was not aimed directly at children; many of the jokes and socio-historical references contained within would be beyond any child.

With the exception of Norman M. Klein's 7 Minutes, The life and death of the American animated cartoon, Eric Smoodin's Disney Discourse and Animating Culture and of course, Dorfmann and Mattelart's ground breaking How to read Donald Duck, there is little to guide the deciphering of animation. These books, coupled with a smattering of articles, is all there is in the line of specialist readings of American classic animators and their work and all of these paint a picture with a very wide brush. Klein's book is nonetheless an excellent introduction to and history of American animation which brings up a number of interesting details and observations on all the major animators and their creations, from Windsor Mc Cay to U.P.A. and firmly establishes animation as an extension of vaudeville.

Smoodin has collected and edited a number of essays, Disney Discourse, which are well researched and written, concentrating solely on Disney, (the entrepreneur and the current Disney Corporation), with essays and articles from the thirties right up to present day, it gives a clear and precise historical picture. His Animating Culture is probably the first book to examine animation in any fine detail, arguing their wide appeal and their political relevance. Along with Klein, Smoodin is the only other authority on the subject; Dorfman and Mattelart, deal solely with Disney comic books circulated in South America which are full of supposedly U.S. imperialist propoganda and are, therefore, irrelevant to this discussion.

Apart from that there is very little left, but for the reams and reams of what can only be considered as animation merchandising books, which are light on written content and obese on illustrations and movie stills, with the exception



Project: what is out there?

The problem in writing about animation or its character is the paucity of criticism to theoretical examination of the medium. It is usually seen as film's illegitimate son because of its supposedly childlike content, and the unusual nature of animation in that it is not a realistic representation of life. How can something which started its life as a form of adult cinema, dealing with sex, violence, politics, and war, under the well applied veil of comedy - be relegated to the realm of children's entertainment? Although embedded in all our childhoods, it was not aimed directly at children; many of the jokes and socio-historical references contained within would be beyond any child.

With the exception of Norman McKeon's *7 Minutes, The Rise and Decline of the American Animated Cartoon*, the *Smoodin's Disney Discourse and Animating Culture* and of course, Dohman and Mattfeld's ground breaking *How to Read Disney's Jack*, there is little to guide the beginning of animation. These books, coupled with a smattering of articles, is all there is in the line of specialist reading of American classic animation and their work and all of these paint a picture with a very wide brush. Klein's book is nonetheless an excellent introduction to and history of western animation which brings up a number of interesting details and other versions on all the major animators and their creators, from Winsor McCay to U. S. A. and finally establishes animation as an extension of audiovisual.

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of Christopher Finche's The Art of Walt Disney, from Mickey Mouse to the Magic Kingdom which is the definitive study of the now mythic Disney success story. There is in addition, an exceptional number of books dealing strictly with Disney as a business. Ron Grover's The Disney Touch, How a Daring Management Team Revived an Entertainment Empire, throws some light on the severe financial pressures Disney had and to a certain extent still has, in what is one of the most expensive businesses in which to succeed. There are, of course, complementary texts related to philosophy, natural history, animism and popular culture that have to be consulted to form a well rounded argument and analysis. Stephan Jay Gould's *Histoire de neoteny* The Panda's Thumb, Umberto Eco's Travels in Hyper Reality, C.G Jung's Man and his Symbols and Steve Baker's Picturing the Beast, are important in this regard.

Most of the aforementioned deal with Disney in isolation from all other major studios and talents, like Warners, MGM, or Walter Lantz; although the most important, as regards quality, influence, and longievity, the others are significant as they played off the Disney product and provided an alternative approach to American animation, in both style and political content. If the Disney commentary is poor, only a bad Warners cartoon encyclopædia and an interesting, but casual homage to Tex Avery, exist.

More specifically, the mouse, who deserves the title of premier character in global animation, has gone critically unnoticed for the last sixty years, with the notable exception of Klein and Smoodin. Few would disagree about Mickey's popularity or symbolic status, but his bibliographical body would come nowhere near that of any important figure in film, politics or art this century, from Chaplin to Kennedy, many have commanded numerous studies and analysis as cultural icons. So why not Mickey?



of Chomsky's theory of the syntax-semantics interface. In the 1970s, Chomsky's theory of the syntax-semantics interface was the dominant paradigm in the field of generative grammar. However, in the 1980s, the rise of the minimalist program led to a re-evaluation of the syntax-semantics interface. This led to a new paradigm in the field of generative grammar, the minimalist program. The minimalist program is a theory of the syntax-semantics interface that is based on the idea of a computation system. The computation system is a system of operations that is used to derive the syntax of a sentence. The operations are Merge, Move, and Erase. Merge is the operation that adds a new element to the syntax. Move is the operation that moves an element from one position in the syntax to another. Erase is the operation that removes an element from the syntax. The minimalist program is a theory of the syntax-semantics interface that is based on the idea of a computation system. The computation system is a system of operations that is used to derive the syntax of a sentence. The operations are Merge, Move, and Erase.

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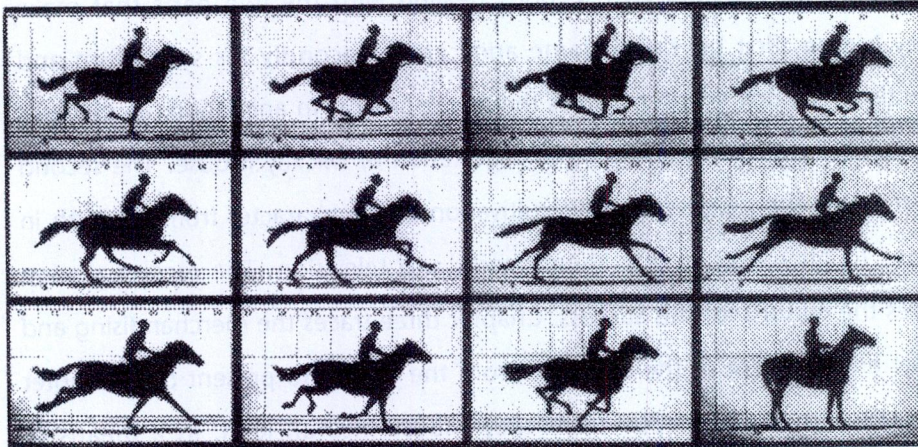


Introduction

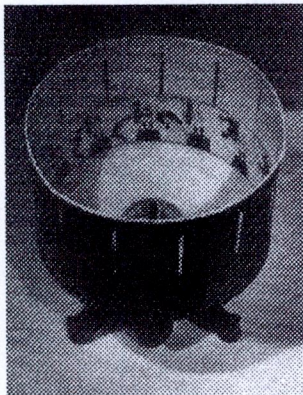
The name Mickey Mouse is significant because it conjures up a multitude of meanings other than just its animated self. The intention of this study is the analysis of this mouse, an experiment - a dissection of sorts. The aim is to establish the importance of Mickey Mouse by examining in detail the construction, connotations and complexities of what has become a globally renowned icon.

This study is divided into two sections dealing with the two parts that make Mickey Mouse, first his rise to fame and career, secondly his symbolism and abstraction. The first chapter follows the developments in animation, its pioneers and characters, up to the creation and gestation of Mickey Mouse. The second chapter traces the progression and cultivation of the character from his birth in cartoons to his transition into theme parks and television. The second section explores the reasons for this success. Chapter three traces the merchandising and product endorsement of the character from the thirties to present day. Chapter four deals with the evolution of Mickey Mouse into an icon, as a means of explaining his enduring success and significance in popular culture. Finally, the last chapter explores what Mickey means today, his abstraction under the modern Disney Company. Its policies on the continuing success of of this famous rodent, by means of copyright protection, architecture and expansion.

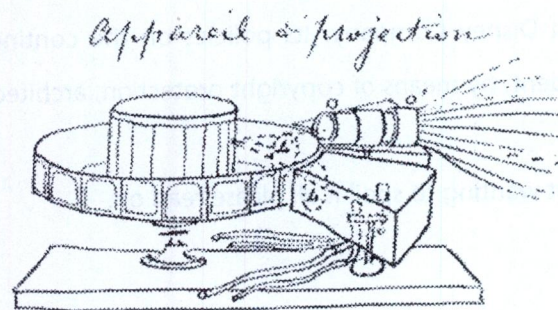
Not wanting to spoil it all please read on.



(Fig.1) One of Muybridge's photographic experiments.



(Fig.1a) A zoetrope.



(Fig.1b) A sketch of Reynaud's praxinoscope for projecting drawings onto a wall in an animated sequence giving the illusion of movement.



The story so far...

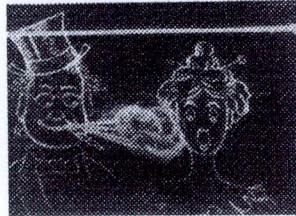
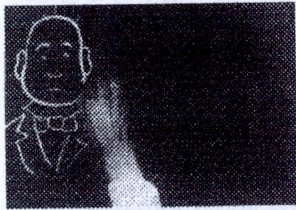
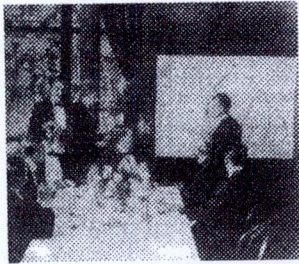
In order to place Mickey in context it is important to examine what preceded him, and the nature of the medium in which he worked. The history of animation is, of course, inextricably linked with that of cinema. The basis of all animation is in the creation of the illusion of movement via the persistence of vision.

The creation of movement, by way of drawing, predates the motion picture, and the invention of the zoetrope in the nineteenth century, for example, could be seen as the forerunner of the animated picture. The zoetrope consisted of a cylinder that was spun on a central axis, inside the open cylinder was a strip of drawings each one slightly different to the preceding one. The cylinder had narrow strips placed at intervals through which the eye could look once the cylinder was rotated. The human eye, thus holding one image until the next appeared, gave the impression that the drawing was actually moving. This was the foundation stone on which animation was built. Throughout the nineteenth century scientists and inventors created several versions of such machines. The work of Dr. Simon Ritter Von Stampfer, Dr. Joseph Antoine Plateau, along with Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies, Reynaud's praxinoscope and Thomas Edison's kinetoscope, could be seen as the first steps towards animation.

Animation was not just a culmination of science and technology, but a particular blend of the nineteenth century traditions of illustration and vaudeville. The previous century was heavily reliant on the printed word, as Marshall McLuhan would say, still within the 'Gutenberg galaxy'. Illustration was therefore the most visual medium of the times. Its importance in communicating meanings should not be understated, especially to the uneducated and the illiterate.

Animation used the same graphic narrative as used by the 'funnies' in newspapers and illustrated story books. This frame by frame, left to right process helped the audience to understand the transition from newspaper to film. This was supported by the fact that a lot of early animated shorts were also successful newspaper comic strips, like the 'Katzenjammer Kids', 'Little Nemo' (1896 - 1916) and 'Krazy Kat' (1916 - 1936). It was also a lot cheaper keeping backgrounds to a minimum and emphasising the black and white line drawings for easier reading of characters and actions.

If animation got its early style from comic strips, vaudeville, as a variant of the English music halls of the time (consisting of a variety show featuring acts



WINSOR McCAY

(By permission of the Hearst Newspapers)

Creator of Little Nemo, Dreams
of a Rarebit Fiend and Other
Newspaper Cartoons

AND HIS WONDERFUL TRAINED DINOSAUR

ACCORDING TO SCIENCE THIS MONSTER ONCE WALKED THIS PLANET... SKELETONS NOW BEING UNearthED MEASURING FROM 1500 TO 1600 FT. IN LENGTH... AN ELEPHANT SHOULD BE A PRIZE BESIDE GERTIE

GERTIE SHE'S A SCREAM

SHE EATS, DRINKS AND BREATHES! SHE LAUGHS AND CRIES! SHE SINGS THE SONGS, ANSWERS QUESTIONS AND OBEYS EVERY COMMAND!... YET SHE LIVED MILLIONS OF YEARS BEFORE MAN INHABITED THE EARTH AND HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN SINCE!!

THE GREATEST ANIMAL ACT IN THE WORLD !!!

Top left: (Fig.2) Winsor Mc Cay entertains some friends with his animated dinosaur Gertie.

Left: (Fig.2a) Walter Lantz with his cartoon star Dinky Doodle.

Bottom left: (Fig.2b) Blackton's animated chalk drawings in *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*, 1906

Top right: (Fig.2c) A poster for Mc Cay's Gertie the Dinosaur act.

Bottom right: (Fig.2d) J.R. Bray who developed the use of cel in cartoon animation.



of singing, dancing, drama, and comedy) gave it content. Many cartoonists and first generation animators attended these shows and were influenced by what they saw. Indeed, animation could be seen as a melting pot of old traditions into a modern new form of entertainment.

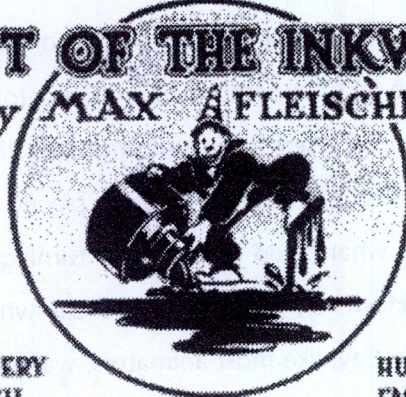
It was ultimately the work of three men who brought animation to its recognisable form. In 1909, Stuart Blackton produced what could be considered the first piece of real animation, produced with the aid of Edison's recent technological advances in the area. The result was little more than letters and faces drawn by an unseen hand which was integrated into his vaudeville act, but it was more a film than anything else. It was a Frenchman, Emile Cohl and an American Winsor Mc Cay who laid the path for future animators. Cohl, took his lead from Blackton, but produced a series of comic vignettes that were not just technical showcases, but well thought out and amusing pieces. His 'Drame Chez les Fantoches' (1908) showed what could be done, by turning this new invention towards entertainment. However, it is Winsor Mc Cay who is granted the title of father of animation. Mc Cay, like most animators, was a comic strip artist before turning his hand to animation. His hugely popular comic strip, 'Little Nemo', was animated in 1911; as a result of his interest in his child's 'flick books' and he decided to use the same concepts to animate his own creation. It was not until 'Gertie the Dinosaur' in 1914 that Mc Cay achieved real success, where he interacted with his animated film by commanding or feeding his cartoon dinosaur as a stage act. Gertie is generally regarded as the first cartoon star, having a well developed character with sympathetic traits, and was a huge influence on animators to follow. It was the first real frame-by-frame animation consisting of 14,000 drawings producing with Mc Cay's skill and mastery, a fluid five minute cartoon - a technological achievement in itself.

During the early part of the century several companies came and went in the developing field of animation. Most notably Barrés, Brays, and Hearst International. All of whom contributed in some way to the streamlining of the business, especially in labour saving. Brays developed cel, the translucent paper on which could be placed static backgrounds to facilitate characters movements, thus speeding up the process (by not having to draw the background in each

EXHIBITORS !
The spice of YOUR program

A SINGLE REEL COMEDY
 THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT IN PEN-
 AND-INK PRODUCTION FOR THE SCREEN

OUT OF THE INKWELL
 By **MAX FLEISCHER**



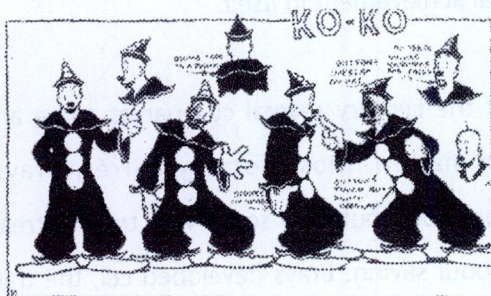
ONE EVERY MONTH HUMOROUS FASCINATING

FOR STATE RIGHTS ADDRESS OUT OF THE INKWELL COMEDIES 220 WEST 42ND ST NEW YORK, N.Y.	FOR BOOKINGS IN NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY ADDRESS WARNERS EXCHANGE, 1600 BROADWAY, N.Y.
FOR BOOKINGS IN CALIFORNIA, NEVADA & ARIZONA ADDRESS S. L. WARNER SUNSET BLVD. LOS ANGELES, CAL.	FOR BOOKINGS IN WISCONSIN, ILLINOIS & INDIANA ADDRESS CELEBRATED PLAYERS FILM CORP. 1817 So. WABASH AVE. CHICAGO.

(Fig.3) A trade advertisement poster for the *Out of the Inkwell* series.



(Fig.3a) Max Fleischer.



(Fig.3b) KoKo the Clowns style sheet.



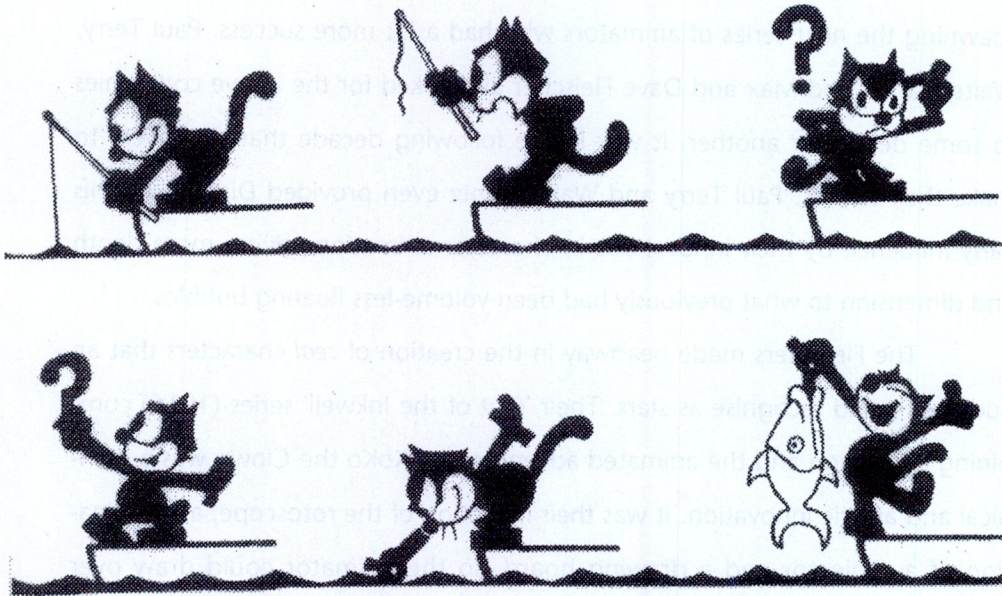
(Fig.3c) Dave Fleischer dressed as KoKo before filming to be used on the rotoscope.

frame). This along with Barrés invention of registration pegs to align each drawing perfectly, added to the fluidity of the picture. These were huge achievements in the realm of animation. Unfortunately these companies collapsed due to a number of reasons: their cartoon's were produced under pressure in one week schedules by a minimal staff; they amounted to little more than what critics at the time called 'artists sketches'; and the rocky uncharted ground of animation and shaky distribution deals were constant stumbling blocks for animation in its infancy.

It is important to note, however, that these companies were essential in spawning the next series of animators who had a lot more success. Paul Terry, Walter Lantz, and Max and Dave Fleischer all worked for the above companies to some degree or another. It was in the following decade that they were to make their names. Paul Terry and Walter Lantz even provided Disney with his early influence by their innovations in character animation, giving more depth and dimension to what previously had been volume-less floating bubbles.



The Fleischers made headway in the creation of *real* characters that an audience could recognise as stars. Their 'Out of the Inkwell' series (1916) combining live action and the animated adventures of KoKo the Clown was a technical and artistic innovation. It was their invention of the rotoscope, a combination of a projector and a drawing board, so the animator could draw over live/real footage that gave their characters, like KoKo, a sense of natural movement and real grace, as well as aiding and teaching the animator. Thus KoKo was a huge success with his acrobatic actions as Max Fleischer brings him to life and interacts with him on film - a logical and stylistic development of Mc Cay's dinosaur vaudeville-esque shows. Both Disney and Lantz produced variants on this blend of live action/animation, with the 'Alice' (1924) and 'Dinky Doodle' (1925) series respectively.

However, it was in 1920 that the first super star of cartoons was created. 'Felix the Cat' caught the hearts and minds of the American public. Felix was created by Pat Sullivan and was drawn by Otto Messmer. Sullivan was like Disney in many ways. He created the characters, while other animators drew them. He also reaped the benefits of merchandising Felix, in financing and in advertising his cartoons, which were as popular in England, as in America.



(Fig.4) Felix uses his head in catching the fish. (example of ideogram)

The Five Senses as Interpreted by "FELIX"

SEEING	HEARING	SMELLING	TASTING	FEELING
				

SINGLE REEL NOVELTY
 Animated by
FAT SULLIVAN

WORLDS RIGHTS
M. J. WINKLER
 238 West 42nd Street, New York

(Fig.4a) An example of the pre-censored Felix's activities.



(Fig.4b) Pat Sullivan
 Felix's creator.



Unlike Disney, the proceeds were not pumped into expanding the production and development of the cartoon series and as a result Felix suffered.

The Felix cartoons, like most of the animation at the time, was based on the graphic narrative of comic strips. The emphasis was on visual and typographical puns and to an extent Felix was like an ideogram, turning thoughts into a question mark so that he could fish (Fig.4). His success lay in his unique and inventive way of communicating clearly in the pre-sound era, and his cartoons have a refreshing and playful feel that stands out even today. Although Felix's simple line drawing and his everyman attitude ensured his success in the 1920s, he, like many of his contemporaries, were to suffer on two counts post 1930: sound and censorship.

These characters were never built for sound and as a result, like many Hollywood actors of the time, did not progress well into the *talkies*. Pat Sullivan was even sceptical of sound, and kept Felix silent to his own detriment. Secondly, the introduction of the Hays Censorship Code in 1933 stopped Felix from drinking, spitting, and smoking (which would also apply to Mickey). Betty Boop's (another Fleischer creation, 1930) dresses were lowered and the innuendo toned down. This was all in an effort to curtail influential images of sex and violence on the screen, and appease strong reform movements at the time who were worried about the effects of cinema on the public, especially children. After this cartoon cleansing, characters lost their bite and more importantly the public's interest. It is here that Disney steps in.

Development

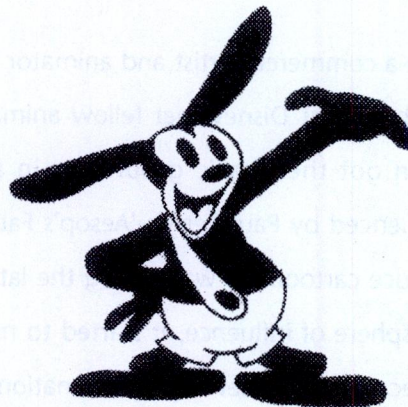
Walt Disney had been a commercial artist and animator for the Kansas City Film Ad company. It was here that Disney met fellow animator and future partner Ub Iwerks. Both men got their basic grounding in animation here before Disney, who was influenced by Paul Terry's 'Aesop's Fables', decided to go out on his own and produce cartoons. It was during the late 1920s that animation began to change its sphere of influence, it started to move from print towards film as the cinema became more developed. Animation had grown and developed in New York but Disney headed for the centre of the film industry, Hollywood. This according to Maltin, along with Walter Lantz's establishment in California, meant the gradual migration from New York to the west, as well as finally tip-



(Fig.5) The Laugh-O-Grams for whom Disney worked .



(Fig.5a) A poster for the 'Alice in Wonderland' series Disney's first production.



(Fig.5b) Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, as drawn by Disney, was his first real success.

ping the recruitment balance away from the world of newspapers and towards that of cinema. (Maltin, p.27 The Silent Era.)

Disney set up shop in his uncle's garage with the help of his brother Roy, the money man in this spawning company. After realising the amount of work involved in the production of cartoons he contacted his old friend Ub Iwerks and they employed a small staff, including future directors, Hugh Harman and Rudy Ising.¹ It was with this small band of young hopefuls that Disney produced his first cartoons under license to Newman Laugh-O-Grams in 1922.

These cartoons were nothing special, Disney needed some kind of gimmick. So reversing the idea of Fleischers' 'Out of the Inkwell' he created 'Alice in Wonderland', where he drew a fantasy world in which he deposited a *real life* Alice. These were produced once every two weeks, but there were limits to what they could do, both creatively and financially. Sometimes Alice did not even appear due to economic restraints.

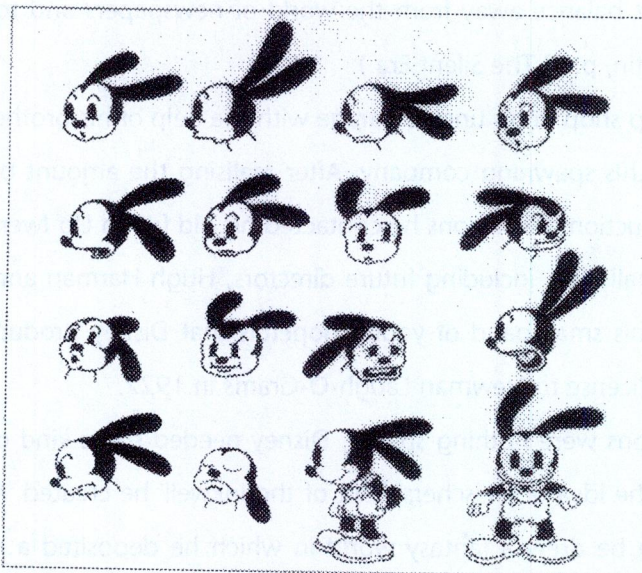
The series was produced from 1924 with moderate success until 1927 when Alice had run her course and Disney was encouraged by his distributor to start a new series.² 'Oswald the Lucky Rabbit' was Disney's animated solution; the noted increase in the quality of animation produced by his team marked the Rabbit's debut. Oswald's resemblance was quite similar to that of Felix, his main competition. The Disney animators relieved of the constraint with the live action animation merger of Alice, took full advantage to experiment and display their skill in Oswald.

Oswald was an instant success. Disney's new distributor Charles Mintz released the series through Universal and it was duely seen by more people. To expand on this success and develop it, Disney travelled to New York to ask Mintz for more money to improve the series. Previous to this M.J.Winkler, Mintz's partner, had been paying regular visits to the Disney studio which was not unusual for a producer to do, yet it was not until Mintz refused to give Disney any more money, offering him less than normal to produce the series, that Disney understood what had happened.

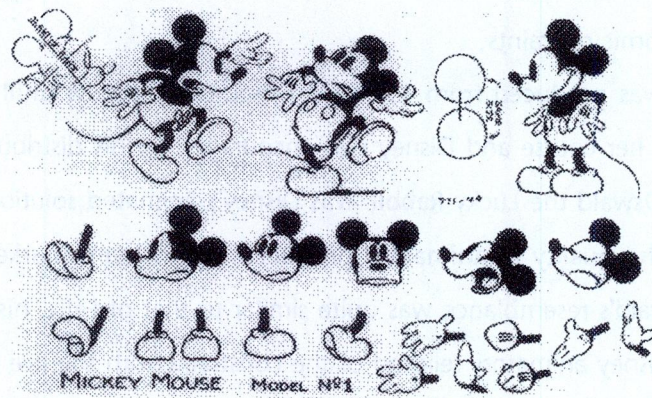
As Mintz owned the copyright to Oswald (standard procedure), Disney had no real rights. This along with what Winkler was actually up to in the studio; poaching Disney's animators to produce the series if Disney refused - called an

1. In 1929 Harman & Ising went on to work as independant directors, producing the 'Bosko' series for Warners (Bosko looks incredibly like Mickey minus the ears). In 1930 moved to MGM and after a brief spell in their own studio in 1939 returned to MGM.

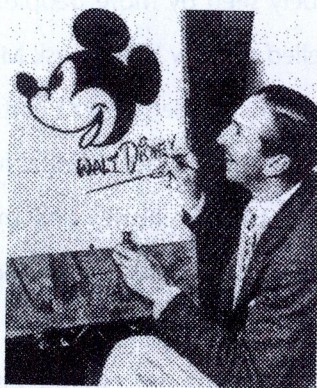
2. A bankrupt distributor forced the closure of Laugh-O-Gram studios, laying off the entire staff. Disney, with financial support from his brother finished the sample reel of 'Alice' and received \$1500 to produce a series from M.J.Winkler. Winkler later joined forces with Charles Mintz, when Mintz married his sister.



(Fig.6) Oswald's style sheet, note the similarities between him and Mickey.



(Fig.6a) An early Mickey Mouse style sheet which shows the circular construction of Mickey as well as his distinct personality.



(Fig.6b) Walt Disney, the creator of Mickey Mouse.



(Fig.6c) Ub Iwerks, who drew the first Mickey Mouse cartoons.

end to Disney's production of Oswald. Only Ub Iwerks had remained loyal to Disney. It was this sole incident that emphasised Disney's need to own and control his own characters if he was going to be successful.

It was at his most desperate that Mickey Mouse came to Walt Disney. He was conceived, as legend would have it, when Disney and his wife were travelling back to California from his meeting with Mintz. On the train the idea of a mouse came to him and he drew a quick sketch which he called Mortimer. It was Mrs. Disney who suggested Mickey as his name, citing the former as too 'pompous' for a mouse. This is one of the many variations of the mouse's birth, which has, over the years, become shrouded in what can be only deemed as mythic circumstances.

There is another the story, that Mickey is based on a mouse Disney trained as a pet back in the old Kansas Film Ad company, called Mortimer. It has also been suggested that the name change had more to do with their new distributor's wishes, and not the whim of Disney's wife. As with all legendary happenings, there is also the conspiracy theory that Ub Iwerks actually created Mickey and Disney took the credit. This is more than likely untrue as Disney created all the other characters, and besides, Iwerks would have gone out on his own with Mickey. Nevertheless Iwerks is recognised as having drawn the archetypal Mickey Mouse, so anything is possible.

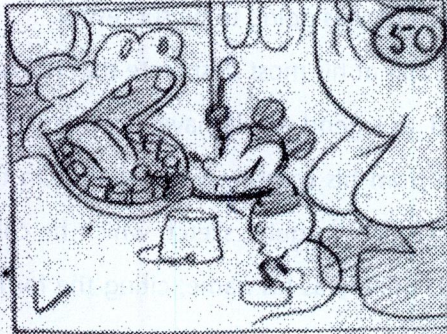
Just like a child born out of wedlock/distribution, Mickey's creation was kept a secret from the other animators for fear that Mintz would take control of the new charge (they were now working for Mintz finishing the Disney contract). So while the other animators finished Oswald³, Disney and Iwerks worked by night setting up the first Mickey Mouse short and finding the necessary finance to support the venture. At this stage it must be said that Ub Iwerks is owed a considerable debt in the creation and development of Mickey Mouse. It was he alone who animated Mickey's first picture 'Plane Crazy', and in two and a half weeks, which is testimony to his skill and speed as an animator.

Mickey, who bears a striking resemblance to his forerunner Oswald (just swap the ears!) was however, new in many ways from the likes of Felix and company. Iwerks mastery of line and volume make themselves evident in the new character whose construction was brought down to its very essence for maximum ease of animation and legibility. Iwerks also learnt from the mistakes on Oswald, like his

3. The Oswald series was taken over by fellow animator Walter Lantz, who produced the series for Charles Mintz. Lantz brought Oswald into sound, and continued with the series from 1929-1938.

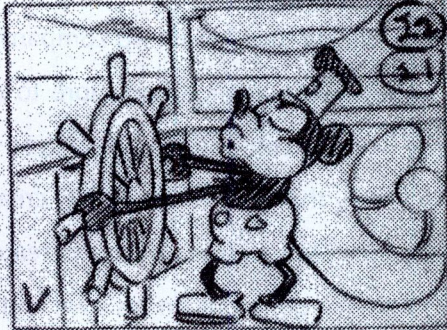
Scene / 30.

S.O. of Mickey drawing on board
 Old woman head sticking in left side
 of scene...she is chewing in time
 to music...she reaches over and
 licks Mickey's face with her long
 tongue...then smiles / shows teeth /
 shows some teeth...opens her mouth
 wide and hammers on her teeth like
 playing xylophone...plays in time to
 music...runs up and down scale, etc.
 Just as he is about to finish her
 large foot! the Captain / walk into
 right side of scene and stop...Mickey
 finishes piece with 'da-da-da-da-da...
 on cow horns...pulls out her tongue
 and strums 'um - dum...' on it...and
 turns around to girl with smile...He
 sees foot...looks up slowly...when he
 sees the Captain he gets surprised...

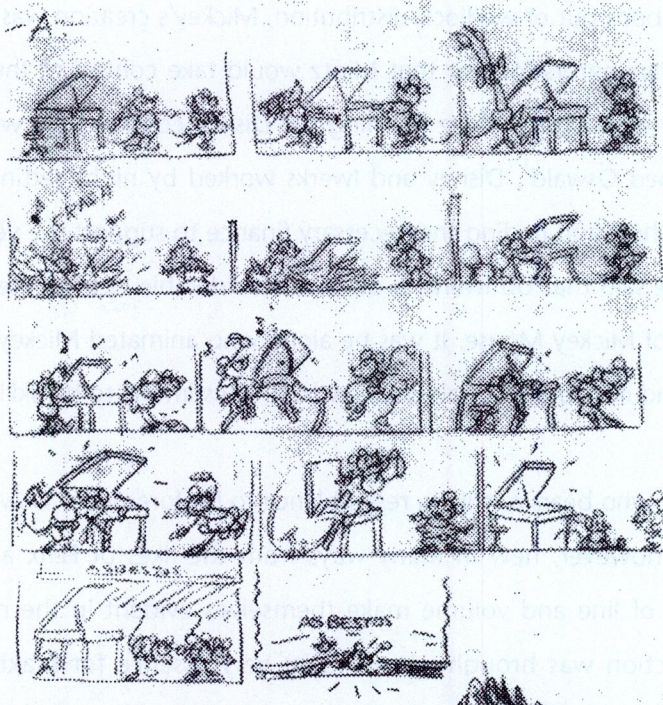


Scene / 2.

Close up of Mickey in cabin of
 wheel'house, keeping time to last
 two measures of verse of ' steam-
 boat bill '. with gesture he starts
 whistling the chorus in perfect
 time to music...his body keeping
 time with every other beat while
 his shoulders and feet keep time
 with each beat. At the end of every
 two measures he twists wheel which
 makes a ratcha sound as it spins.
 He takes in breath at proper time
 according to music. When he finishes
 last measure he reaches up and pulls
 on whistle cord above his head.
 (Use 'TTS' to imitate his whistle)



(Fig.7) A script and a storyboard were used for the first time in animation on *Steamboat Willie*.



(Fig.7a) A quick rough for a Mickey Mouse cartoon. This shows just how legible and easy to draw Mickey's construction made him.

ear's that flapped to indicate his movement but only added a visual distraction. With all this in mind Mickey was...

...constructed from two large circles, one for the trunk and one for the head, to which were appended two smaller circles, representing ears, and rubber hose arms and legs which terminated in plump hands and feet that gave him stability. He was also equipped with a long, skinny tail and short pants decorated with buttons fore and aft. The circular head was made expressive by the addition of a mischievous snout, a plum shaped nose, and button eyes.

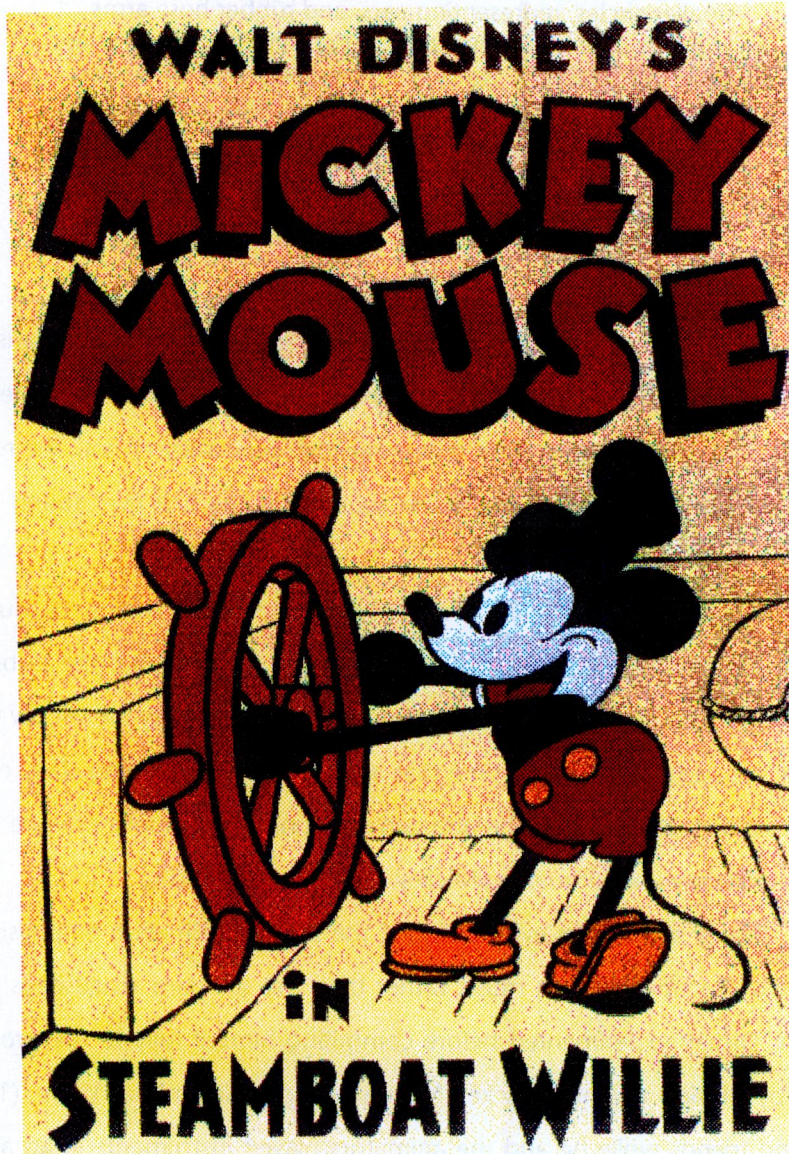
(Finch, 1974, p.50)

Mickey may have had personality, even in his silent days, but both 'Plane Crazy' and 'Gallop in' Gaucho' were completed and screened with little initial response. After all he was just another silent cartoon animal, personality or not. The release in 1927 of the Warner's film 'The Jazz Singer' which was the first ever sound picture, changed everything.

All the major studios and theatres were divided over the use of sound. The financial implications were massive. But one thing was definite, the public were fully behind the *talkies*. Disney saw this as a perfect opportunity for Mickey to make his mark. He had felt for a long time that animation was becoming stale, retracing the same old steps, but with the addition of sound the possibilities were endless. He immediately set about making Mickey ready for the jump to sound.

Disney and Iwerks even changed the style of animation emphasising the action and syncopation with music rather than the standard visual gags in silent cartoons. Disney experimented before committing himself fully to the prospect of sound, by playing the new Mickey Mouse cartoon, 'Steamboat Willie' (1928) to wives and friends while he and the animators played instruments in an adjoining room hooked up by speakers. They synchronised the music by the use of timed flashes on the screen, perfectly paired to the beat of a metronome. Although far from perfect in timing, the effect was as Ub Iwerks put it "nothing less than electric." (Lenburg, 1991, p.96).

Disney had considerable trouble harnessing sound to his brainchild and realised that it was not something he could approach casually, if it was going to succeed. He first had to have a complete score composed and then find sound equipment on which to record, an expensive task by any means. At this stage the



(Fig.8) Cinema poster for *Steamboat Willie*, 1928.

only sound equipment was owned by R.C.A and Western Electric, who both deemed the Disney product less than worthy, but at a price they would take it away and see what they could do. As Disney wanted to oversee the sound recording, understanding its importance in future productions, he found Pat Powers, owner of a renegade sound system, most understanding in complying with his wishes and worries about the process. Power's Cinephone was Disney's best offer, at the right price and allowing Disney peace of mind in overseeing the sound recording of his film.

After a great deal of trouble with various musical directors and the financial burden on Roy Disney⁴, a soundtrack for 'Steamboat Willie' was ready. While still in New York, Disney negotiated Powers as his distributor on a States Rights Basis⁵ and got Mickey a two week run in Manhattan's Colony theatre which led to a run in the Roxy theatre. The owner of these two cinemas, an old press agent, ensured that Mickey got good coverage. "It was a resounding success, two weeks after its formal opening, it moved to the prestigious Roxy where audiences stood in line to hear a squeaky mouse speaking in Disney's own falsetto." (Heide, 1979, p.59)

Sound, the press coverage and the States Rights Basis system of distribution guaranteed Mickey's widespread success. Not only had Disney produced something fresh and new in Mickey Mouse, he had also ensured his own independence as an animator, championing animation and setting a lead for other animators to follow. Unlike the film studios, who had their own animation units but paid less attention to it, Disney could ensure a quality product and Mickey was it.

Disney, not one to rest on his rodent, immediately started putting sound to the two previous Mickey shorts, 'Gallop in' Gaucho' and 'Plane Crazy'. He also put another two cartoons into production - 'The Barn Dance' (1928) and 'The Opry House' (1929). Mickey, after along gestation was finally delivered, and with sound.

Disney's creation was obviously something new and more ambitious in the cartoon sphere, and soon it became fashionable to say that the American cinema had produced only two great men of genius... Chaplin and Disney.

(Jenkins, 1978, p.204)

4. Disney hired Carl Edouwards, a Broadway composer to conduct the piece but Edouwards refused to have his tempo adhere to this crude flashing on the screen, so Disney employed a bouncing ball effect for Edouwards to follow. They started with a seventeen piece orchestra at ten dollars an hour. Fewer were used in later sessions, luckily for Roy Disney.

5. An old system of distribution that allowed the independent director to bypass the control of the major studios on the theatres.

The Three Mouse Careers: *cartoons, television, and theme parks.*

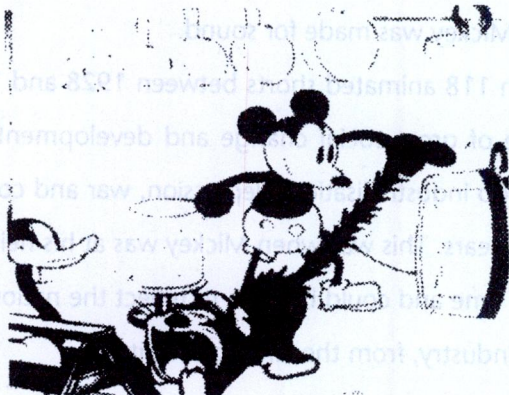
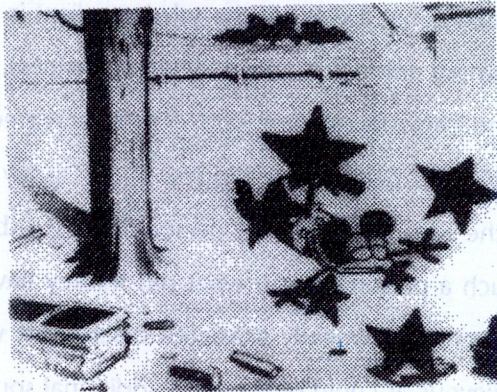
A new chapter had started in animation history. Disney had succeeded in kick-starting animation out of its repetitious doldrums with a scream. By the mid thirties other studios had sprung up, with their own cartoon stars, while Disney also added new characters, such as Goofy and Donald to his repertoire. Warner's very own animation studio produced Porky Pig (1936), Daffy Duck (1938) and Bugs Bunny (1940). MGM studios, following Warner's lead, created Tom and Jerry (1940) and Droopy (1943) and Walter Lantz produced Woody Woodpecker (1941). Sound had killed off most of the old stars and studios, clearing the ground for new competition but it was not the sole ingredient in rekindling public interest in cartoons turning animation into a lucrative business. As Chuck Jones, Warner's animator and cartoon director said, "Disney created a climate that enabled us all to exist ...and perhaps the biggest thing Disney contributed was that he established the idea of individual personality." (Lenburg, 1991, p.5) Mickey Mouse was such a personality. So what did Mickey have that, say, Felix did not? Both characters were similarly animated black spots with large heads, both extremely mischievous. It could only be the additional sound effects added to the personality, along with the initial novelty of sound that made one succeed and the other fade. Mickey was made for sound.

He starred in 118 animated shorts between 1928 and 1953. This period is notable as a time of great social change and development in America. The nation was to undergo industrialisation, depression, war and consumerism in the space of twenty five years. This was when Mickey was at his height. His character changed also in this time and could be seen to reflect the nation's transformation from agriculture to industry, from the land to the city.

Popular culture is usually said to reflect the sociological, political, and economic factors of a society, but during periods of upheaval and crisis it has also existed as a catalyst that reacting against predominant social conventions or taboos, presents itself as a whole new counterpoint in relation to the whole.

(Heide, 1979, p9)

Mickey Mouse was, to an extent such a catalyst. An integral part of popular cul-



(Fig.10) Stills from *Plane Crazy* and *Steamboat Willie* which show Mickey as a black caricature, as well as some of his less known character traits. (1928)

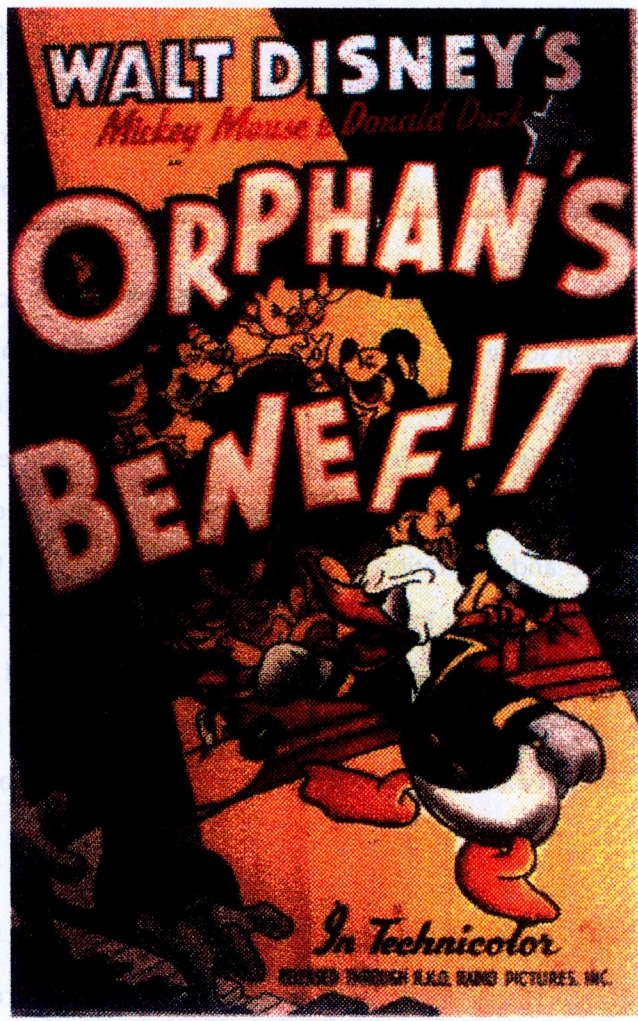
Mickey Mouse was, to an extent such a catalyst. An integral part of popular cul-

ture, from the optimistic, cheeky, cheery mouse in the early pictures during the depression, to the everyman in his suburban consumerist world of the fifties. Mickey seemed to be a sign of the nations varying prosperity. A hardy tough little character who becomes a star and takes on all the trappings that go with it, he is an American success story. Certainly Disney's own company followed suit, a perfect example, like his creation, of how to beat 'old man depression' in the thirties. Disney had always seen Mickey as more than just a drawing, after all he was the foundation and façade of the Disney empire. As Disney, himself often said, "We must never forget that it was all built by a mouse." Even the present Disney corporation, see Mickey as "not a mouse but a person." (Smoodin, 1994, p.28)

In order to understand the little big mouse, it is necessary to examine his actual career to gain some sort of perspective and grounding in what is true and false, to highlight the multi-faceted and even at times, contradictory character traits. In early films, like 'Plane Crazy' and 'Gallop in' Gaucho' Mickey started out with definite touches of black caricature, so popular in nineteenth century American literature and illustration. Torn pants, bare hands and feet, and big black saucer eyes support the image which has since been abstracted. Even the introduction of the famous white gloves has a black minstrel feel about them. Was Mickey a 'Jim' character like in 'Huckleberry Finn', a naïve, troublesome, black character with whom audiences of the time would have related to as the standard comical format ?

Norman Klein believes that these traits were not labelled as black, but that they were part of the "generic vaudeville costume." (Klein, 1991, p.192) However, this generic costume would have its roots in nineteenth century history and the literature of that time, so Mickey although possibly an abstraction of the traditional parody of black people, is originally, if not essentially, black. Nevertheless, this does change in the following years.

Mickey's actions are sometimes quite contrary to what one would expect of the most famous cartoon star. Early pictures like 'Steamboat Willie' show on one



(Fig.11) The 1941 poster for the Mickey and Donald cartoon *Orphan's Benefit*, in which Donald's comic value and presence are highlighted and Mickey peers from the shadow as he takes on a more objective, passive role during this period.



hand a childish character who indulges in petty acts of cruelty and violence, like yanking the cat's tail for musical effect while on the other hand very adult in his sexual advances towards Minnie Mouse, which we would find unusual for a cartoon today. He even displays sharp rodentile teeth as he laughs heartily at a parrot he has just hit with a potato. Mickey was to undergo a serious make-over.

As his repertoire broadened with cartoons like 'The Jazz Fool', 'Karnival Kid', and 'Minnie's Choo-Choo' all in 1929, Mickey became slightly more civilised attaining gloves, shoes and a more endearing manner. The soundtracks and animation also followed suit, and in 1932 Disney won an academy award for his creation of Mickey.

Mickey the star was everywhere, not only on film but in cinemas in the form of Saturday morning clubs for children. Disney began to realise the mouse potential and negotiated a series of merchandising deals, he even had a hit song with 'Minnies Yoo Hoo'⁶ in 1930. In a short space of time America was gripped by mouse-mania, people just could not get enough.

Despite his popularity Mickey's character had to be toned down. Unlike Betty Boop, Felix and new comer Porky Pig, who had their social characteristics altered by the Hays code of 1933, Mickey's orders came strangely not from here, although he was subject to it, but from the public. Disney, during the thirties, would get hundreds of letters, telling him that Mickey should or would not do this in such and such a cartoon. As Disney said...

He's such a institution that we're limited in what we can do with him. If we have Mickey kicking someone in the pants, we get a million letters scolding us for giving kids the wrong idea.

(Brockway, 1989, p.29)

Ironically, responsibility was thrust on our mischeivous little rodent. Disney's solution to this obstacle was to produce Donald Duck, who inherited all of Mickey's unsavoury traits as well as the addition of a foul temper and a lisp. They became the perfect double act, Mickey becoming the straight man, the foil to Donald's hysterics, "the duck can blow his top and commit mayhem." (Smoodin, 1994, p.53)

*'Minnies Yoo Hoo' was written by Carl Stalling, Disney's musical director.

Congratulations Mickey on your Seventh Birthday!



ON September 28th, 1935, Mickey Mouse will be exactly seven years old. Already this event is receiving unlimited enthusiastic publicity in newspapers and magazines; famous band-leaders are broadcasting Walt Disney tunes over the air; manufacturers of all types of Mickey Mouse merchandise are giving Mickey thousands of window displays. International broadcasts will encircle the globe with London, New York, Paris and Hollywood joining the celebration.

Smart showmen have already jumped on the band wagon by scheduling "Walt Disney Revues" for their theatres. Other exhibitors anxious to capitalize on the tremendous public interest being aroused, are booking every available Silly Symphony and Mickey Mouse subject.

Don't be left out in the cold. Visit your United Artists Exchange today and get your share of prosperity.

**SEPTEMBER 28th to OCTOBER 4th
7th Anniversary Week!**

(Fig.12) Another poster that emphasises Mickey's changing role away from barnyard Mouse towards civility and the starring showman.

This is in keeping in Norman Klein's theory that all successful cartoon characters fit into one of three categories: nuisance, over-reactor, and controller. Mickey unusually fits all three as his career progressed. He moved from *nuisance* ('Steamboat Willie' 1928), to *over-reactor* ('The Band Concert' 1935), to *controller* ('Clock Cleaners' 1937). As Goofy was introduced into the equation, Donald becomes the over-reactor, while Goofy or any chipmunk or ironing board becomes Donald's nuisance. The late thirties saw Mickey upstaged by the other two for sheer slapstick comedy as he took on a sort of parental role.

With Mickey's new streamlined persona he loses his early anarchic sense which, to a certain extent, could be seen to reflect American post-depression contentment. His reaction to Minnie also loses its frenzy, as his sexuality becomes taboo. He even becomes a little fatter as he begins to act out the role of a professional star. Mickey's grooming as Hollywood star was already underway in pictures like, 'Mickey's Gala Premiere' (1932), where the human stars of the day (in animated form) paid tribute to the little mouse.

He had now become a real entertainer, whose role was not only confined to the screen. If Mickey was giving 'kids the wrong idea' with his violent acts in early cartoons, he was also affecting the company's image as its main representative. As animation became a serious business, Mickey became synonymous with the Disney company. It was at this stage that Disney issued in-house instructions in the controlling and regulating of character's personalities, Mickey's especially. Ted Sears and Fred Moore, Mickey's animators at the time, produced a booklet for other animators on how Mickey was to be viewed.

Mickey is not a clown, neither is he silly or dumb. His comedy depends entirely on the situation he is placed in. His age varies with the situation, sometime his character is that of a young boy, and at times, as in an adventure picture he appears quite grown up. Mickey is not amusing when he is in a serious predicament trying to accomplish some purposes under difficult circumstances...

(Finch, 1983, p128)

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(Finch, 1983, p.28)

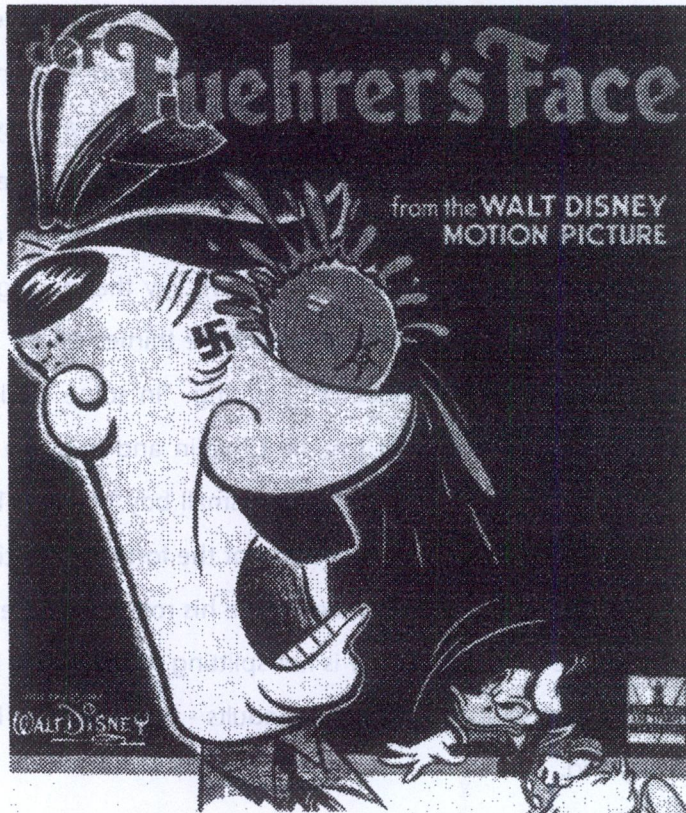
Something is definitely being proven here, that is, that Mickey is the archetypal American. It reads like a boy scout manual. He becomes more human, either as a boy or a *grown up* and even more white, as he later takes on a pinky hue in the late forties, becoming middle class, moving out from the farm to the small town where he is "clean living, fun loving, bashful around girls, polite and clever." (Finch, 1983, p.128) A mouse as a role model, Mickey the ideology, from the "force of nature, puckishly undidactic" mouse of the thirties (Klein, 1993, p.43) to the contents of any Norman Rockwell painting. "In some stories he has a touch of Fred Astaire, in others of Charlie Chaplin and in some of Douglas Fairbanks, but in all of these there should be a small boy." (Finch, 1983, p.128) However, Mickey does grow up in his cartoons of the forties and fifties, his character reflecting the adult stars of the time, where his role is becomes more controlled. Here it can be seen that Disney is not splitting the audience but catering for the adult in children and the children in adults - his maxim for his later features and Disneyland.

Mickey was higher on the evolutionary scale than the [Cisco] kid in signifying just what it means to be American, or, more precisely an American man...indicating Mickey's growing importance as an aesthetic object rather than the mouse-next-door, by the late 1930s he came to represent high class entertainment, the unique rather than the typical.

(Smoodin, 1993, p.66)

The level of Mickey's popularity can be seen in the fact that in 1935 the League of Nations voted their approval of Mickey as an ambassador of peace and goodwill. His face was on nearly every product, and by the start of the Second World War he was known internationally, from Topolino in Italy and Mik-ki Ma-u-su in Japan.

Mickey gave the seal of approval to all Disney productions. When Disney embarked on a new series of cartoons based heavily on their musical accompaniment, as well as experimenting with the animation, theatre owners were nervous to touch something without a cartoon star. Disney presented them



Words and Music by
OLIVER WALLACE

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PUBLICATIONS CO., INC.
MEMPHIS, TENN.



(Fig.13) Sheet music cover and a still from *Der Fuehrer's Face*, in which Donald is Disney's and America's political propaganda tool. (1942)

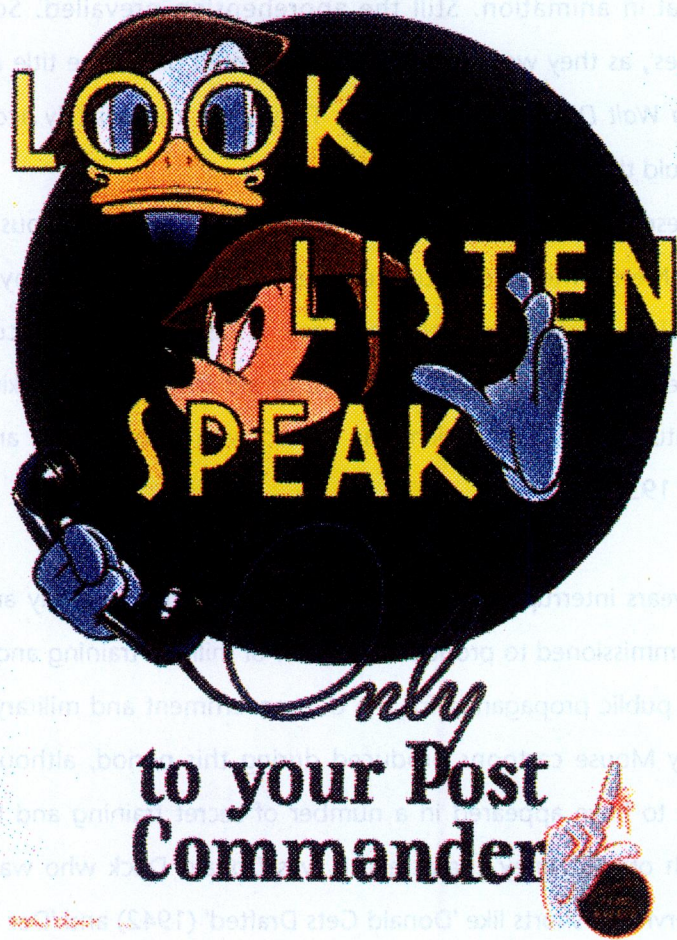
in *Technicolor*, which was only being developed when he struck a unique deal, for its trial in animation. Still the apprehension prevailed. So these 'Silly Symphonies', as they were known, were presented under the title *Mickey Mouse presents, a Walt Disney Silly Symphony*. They were immediately accepted as the public would think Mickey was in them.

Despite this they were a huge success, spawning numerous imitators like Warner's 'Merrie Melodies', 'Looney Toons' and MGM's 'Happy Harmonies'. These musical shorts, 'The Skeleton dance' (1929) and the first colour cartoon 'The Flowers and the Trees' (1932) were to aid Disney's undertaking of the full length feature animation, which was started with 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' in 1938.

The war years interrupted Disney's progression, both financially and politically, he was commissioned to produce a number of military training and health films, as well as public propaganda for the U.S. government and military. There were no Mickey Mouse cartoons produced during this period, although Mickey is rumoured to have appeared in a number of secret training and health shorts, along with other Disney characters. It was Donald Duck who was sent up for military service in shorts like 'Donald Gets Drafted' (1942) and 'Der Führer's Face' (1943). The political intention in these cartoons was to bring the American public around to the need for rightful U.S. intervention in Europe.

So why Donald? Probably because Disney used him as the everyman, and his reactions, however exaggerated, were more realistic and a lot funnier than the authority figure Mickey had come to be and would therefore seem less condescending. It also could be because Mickey was visually equated with all things Disney, and Walt did not want him tainted by propaganda usage. Donald in the years to follow came to symbolise Disney's political tool, especially in films like 'The New Spirit' (1942) informing the public about new tax laws and how to comply with them. This coupled with the imperialist overtones when Donald travelled to South America in 'The Three Cabelleros'⁷ (1945) marked Donald as a government agent. Also Disney's affinity with his alter-ego Mickey Mouse, for

7. This was a result of the Disney-Rockefeller trip to Latin America as part of the the governments Good Neighbour policy of inter-relations, educating both sides of the border about one another. As well as more sinister reasons, like business expansion and worker exploitation, the film was later criticised as part of an imperialist strategy of the U.S. government while representing Latin America in a stereo typical manner. (Dorfman and Mattelart)



Above: (Fig.14) Mickey and Donald take to the streets in this wartime propaganda poster.

Left: (Fig.14a) Some of the many badges and emblems Disney designed for the U.S. armed forces during World War II.



whom he supplied the voice, would mean his involvement directly in government propaganda.

Mickey's wartime service revealed a dual identity. As well as performing like many other characters as emblems and mascots on tanks and planes for the American army, for which Disney sanctioned several different designs. Mickey played the same role for a Luftwaffe squadron in Germany and a Condor legion fighting in the Spanish civil war, although not with the same authorisation. *Mickey Maus* was hugely popular in pre-war Germany until America's entrance into the war, when he was banned and attacked as "an idealisation of a lowly animal, carrier of bacteria... and an affront [musically] to the great German classical composers." Despite this ban the Nazi's used him as a curtain raiser for the newsreels supposedly demonstrating "the foul corruption of the American way of life" (Glaister, 1991, p.20). The upper echelons of the party structure continued private screenings and an entry into Goebbels' diary indicates the Führer's delight in receiving a Christmas gift of some Mickey Mouse films in 1937. The level of Mickey's popularity and symbolism at the time is evident also in the code name for the D-Day landings in June 1944 which was M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E.

The post-war years were detrimental for Mickey and Co. with Disney concentrating on full length features. The fact was it was becoming more and more difficult for Disney to find stories for his stars. Besides it was practically impossible to make the seven minute cartoons, in which they starred, pay for themselves. Mickey and all the others were not broad enough characters to carry a full length feature. They were specifically designed for shorts and their stories were becoming a little stale. This was the deathknell for Mickey's cartoon career. Although Disney's love for the Mouse confirmed itself when Mickey starred in Disney's full length masterpiece, 'Fantasia' in 1940.

'Fantasia' was what Disney had always been working towards. It consisted of several animated sequences interpreting set pieces of classical music (not altogether unlike today's music videos). Mickey appears twice in the film, at the start shaking the hand of the composer for the feature, Leopold Stokowski and in his



(Fig.15) Mickey shakes the composer Stokowski's hand at the start of the film *Fantasia*, 1940.



(Fig.15a) Mickey, as he appears in his own section of *Fantasia*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

own piece called, 'The Sorcerers Apprentice'. This was the marriage of what was considered low art, as represented by animation, and high art as represented by classical music. Mickey's handshake with Stokowski was a symbol of this union and once again emphasised the importance of Mickey as a symbol of popular culture.

By the mid sixties the golden age of animation had come to its end. The arrival of television challenged the cinema for entertainment. Studios and theatre owners found it increasingly more difficult to compete. The financial losses brought the studio system to its knees and ended block booking⁸ in cinemas. It was not only Disney who was finding short animation tough, both Warners and MGM shut down their animation units in the sixties. The recent idealistic U.P.A. and Famous studios went bust in the gloom that followed. Animation transformed itself for television where it was relegated to the Saturday morning children's schedule; where it lost its bite with bad plots and poor quality animation. This, along with the crippling t.v. budgets drained the life from the likes of Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker.

Disney, although enthused by the development of television, did not deploy his characters off to the small screen. He was in the middle of planning something big and revolutionary in entertainment. As part of his 'imagineering' ethos (where engineering meets imagination) Disney embarked on the creation of his new theme park in Anaheim, California. In it, his imaginary world collided with the real world. Disneyland opened in July 1955 and Mickey became the host of this 'wonderland'. The showman/mouse had now jumped from celluloid to a tangible live size mouse in what Umberto Eco called the meeting of "the reality of trade with the play of fiction" (Eco, 1986, p.43) to produce the absolute reproduction of the 'real thing', ironically which is fake.

Disney's eventual progression towards television was almost by happy coincidence. One of the main financial backers of Disneyland was A.B.C.⁹, the television network and part of their stipulation for investment was that Disney produce a one hour show on A.B.C.. Disney recycled the old

8. The system of billing in theatres, starting with the travelogue, the newsreel, the cartoon followed by the feature film. (Smoodin, 1993, p.45)

9. When the banks refused to loan Disney the money to build Disney world, A.B.C. stepped in and footed some of the bill. Walt had to set up a separate company (W.E.D.) to carry out his plan, as Roy Disney and other members of the company refused to finance the theme park. (Ron Grover, 1993)



(Fig.16) A French telephone card advertising Euro Disney.



(Fig.16a) Scenes from the fifties Mickey Mouse Club television show.



(Fig.16b) Family entertainment as Walt's world comes to life in Disneyland.



(Fig.16c) Mickey and Co. have become living and breathing realities in the various Disneylands around the globe.

theatre Mickey Mouse Clubs for television. The series was so successful that it ran from 1954 - 1978 before it changed network to N.B.C. and ran for a further twelve years. It put Mickey's face in every home in the nation, making Mickey another generation's representation of childhood. It also provided cheap prime time advertising for Disney products and most importantly, Disneyland.

With the development of Disneyworld in 1971, Tokyo Disney in 1984, and Euro Disney in 1992, Mickey became a global host. He is Disney's ambassador in these countries, which to an extent could be seen as an American ambassador. However, with this expansion into other countries the Mouse has finally come up against harsh criticism for Americanising foreign cultures. What works and is an integral part of American culture does not hold the same sway in Europe or Japan. The problem has been most hotly contested in Euro Disney or 'Euro dismal', as it has been nicknamed. It appears the company saw little difference between the U.S. frame of mind and that of the European in establishing the same kind of entertainment in the parks. Disneyfying the French revolution or the architecture of a European city, has been seen as trivialising that nation's culture, even the use of the land by Disney has caused virulent demonstrations by French farmers. Ultimately, this expansion of the theme parks holds its own question of American cultural imperialism, an entertainment annexation¹⁰ with General Mickey at the vanguard. The pros and cons of the Disneyworlds, is however another story, although it indicates the complexities attached to Mickey as a cultural icon and his reception in other countries.

So there it is Mickey's all encompassing career from cartoons to television, from theme park to product, from seven minutes to sixty six years, Mickey could possibly be seen as the first real multi-media device and he seems far from retiring.

10. The battle of cultures continues in Paris, between the Disney park and France's own Asterix park (opened 1989), as to who takes in the most revenue and who will be there in the next ten years, with Euro Disney suffering reduced attendance in 1993 / 94.



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10. The article in question is 'Disney in Paris: Disneyworld and France's own Mickey Club' by Robert M. Levine, in the book 'Disneyworld: The American Dream in Paris' (1997) by Robert M. Levine. It is also available in the book 'Disneyworld: The American Dream in Paris' (1997) by Robert M. Levine.

Marketing Mickey

Much of Mickey's enduring popularity is based upon the fact that he was the first character to be marketed on such a wide scale. Mickey was never just, "the biggest unpaid moviestar.", (Klein, p.53, 1989) he was also a graphic symbol, Walt Disney's alter-ego and the seed from which the empire blossomed, and thus was Disney's visual representation. The Mouse unexpectedly created a whole new branch of industry for Disney as his career started to spread away from the screen.

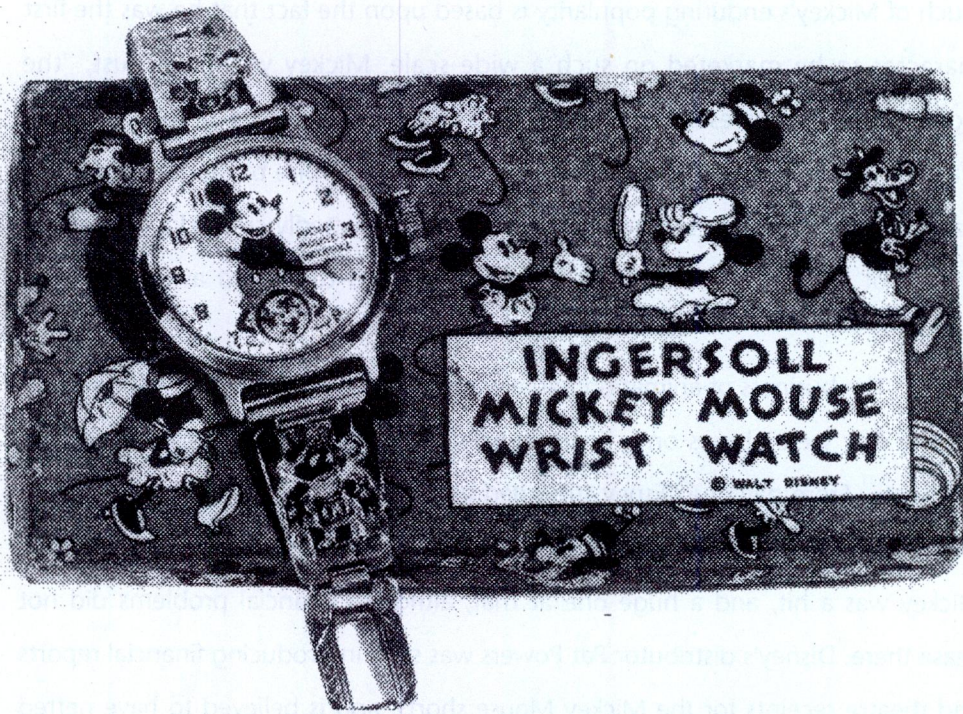
The business of animation had always been a precarious one. Walt and his brother Roy were always on a financial tightrope that seemed fit to snap at any moment.¹¹ From day one Disney struggled to make cartoons on minimal budgets. The soaring costs of producing 'Steamboat Willie' nearly broke them, but luckily, Mickey was a hit, and a huge one at that, although financial problems did not cease there. Disney's distributor Pat Powers was slow in producing financial reports and theatre receipts for the Mickey Mouse shorts, and is believed to have netted from 85% - 90% of the sales and rentals.

Disney, protecting the rights of his characters and in an effort to get rid of the embezzling Powers, got Columbia pictures to buy him off as their distributor. Disney paid dearly for this, as Powers lured Iwerks, Disney's friend and partner, away to establish his own studio, and Iwerks had to be compensated for his share of the company on leaving. The deal with Columbia also had its hidden thorn, leaving Disney heavily in debt, with them having the right to rent his pictures out cheaply for years afterwards. It was not until 1931 that United Artists underwrote Disney's debts, that there seemed to be any financial relief¹², "Throughout the thirties Disney was endlessly in debt - often three films in arrears - waiting for box office receipts which always lagged behind interest payments." (Klein, 1993, p.53) To make matters worse cartoon shorts were always rented phenomenally less than feature films.

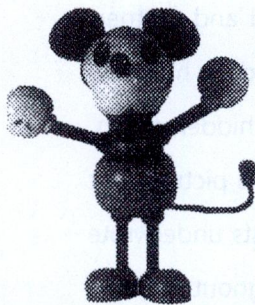
Fortunately their recent creation was a cash cow, ...or mouse. In 1929 Disney, almost without realising the potential, licensed Mickey's image for reproduction on school tablets. He received \$300 instantly on this initial endorsement which

11. It was not until the opening and success of Disneyland in 1955 were the brothers in any way financially safe.

12. Disney finally settled with RKO in 1936 before setting up his own distribution company Buena Vista in 1953. (Ed. Smodin, 1994, p.72)



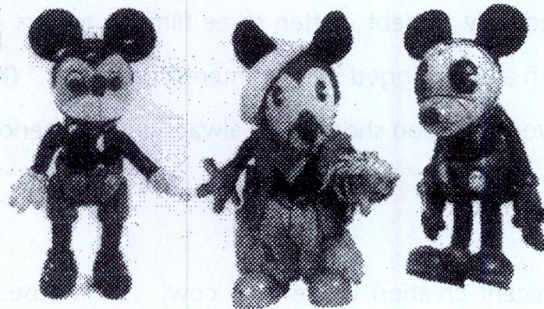
(Fig.17) The first Mickey Mouse Ingersoll watch (with a chrome plated wristband) made in 1935.



(Fig.17a) The first Mickey Mouse toy, a wood jointed doll made by George Borgfeldt Co. in 1930.



(Fig.17b) Painted Bisque toothbrush holder with Pluto the pup, made by Borgfeldt Co. in 1935.



(Fig.17c)

Left: Mickey Mouse doll in celluloid c. 1933.

Middle: *Mickey the Cowboy* stuffed doll made by Knickerbocker Toy Co. Inc., 1936.

Right: Hard-rubber Mickey Mouse made by Seiberling Latex Co., circa 1935.

immediately made him aware of the financial implications of Mickey's selling power. The start of Mickey's merchandising can be traced back to two sources. In 1930 Charlotte Clarke, who was producing Mickey Mouse dolls, was given a house in which to work by Disney, and in the same year he signed his first legitimate merchandising contract with the Borgfeldt company, who produced small bisque figures of Mickey Mouse and Pluto. By 1932 Disney was inundated by companies wishing to use Mickey to sell their product.

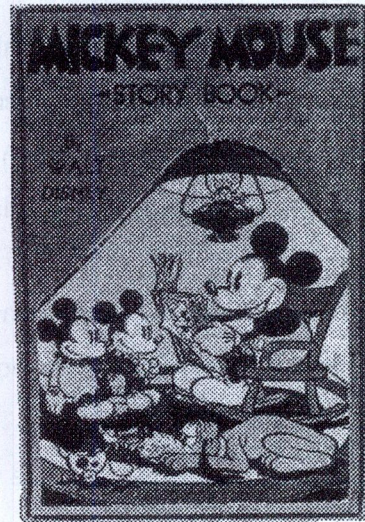
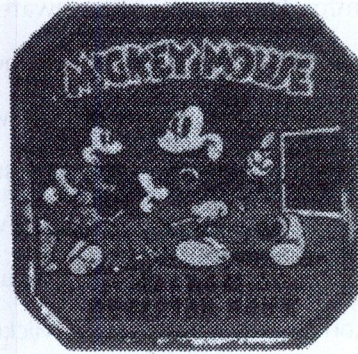
Indeed, he also saved several companies from bankruptcy - Ingersoll watches¹³ (the manufacturer of the famous Mickey Mouse watches) and the Lionel Corporation were both saved after using the Mouse's image.

Not being able to oversee the marketing of Mickey as well as the animation, Disney hired Kay Kamen, previously a promotional man in advertising, to oversee what was now becoming a merchandising division. This boom in the marketing of Mickey was not only financially rewarding but also created publicity..."The sale of a doll to any member of a household is a daily advertisement in that household for our cartoons and keeps them all 'Mickey Mouse minded'." (Smoodin, 1993, p.205)

These activities were two pronged, linking the movie theatres to the department stores, with the creation of the Mickey Mouse clubs, in the early thirties. These clubs were held in cinemas on Saturday mornings where the children would come with their individual membership cards, distributed by the local department store. They would see a Mickey Mouse cartoon; sing the club song, recite the club creed (usually the singing of 'America'), there would then be a competition giving away some of the department store's Mickey dolls, and then they would see the feature of the day.

These clubs were not new at the time, others included the 'Our Gang Club' and the 'Do the Right Thing Club'. These were organised by the film studios, in order to consolidate the next generation's use of the cinema. But the Mickey Mouse clubs were far shrewder, even manipulative, in embedding the little mouse and the Disney product at the heart of a community. The clubs formed a network of tie-ins with local businesses who would sponsor each local club, while receiving

13. The most famous use of the character was on these watches. They were originally made from WWI army-surplus watches. Macy's sold over 11,000 on the first day at \$1.89 each. Between June 1933 and June 1935 over two and half million were sold. (Heide, 1979, p.67)



Various Mickey Mouse products and endorsements.

Top right: (Fig.18) A five cent Mickey Mouse chocolate bar made by Wibur-Suchard of Philadelphia in 1930.

Top left: (Fig.18a) Dime register banks, piggy banks given away by the banks for Mickey Mouse club members.

Middle right: (Fig.18b) A selection of *Big Little Books* Made by Whitman publishing Co. during the thirties.

Middle left: (Fig.18c) Another Mickey Mouse story book, published by David Mc Cay Co., 1931.

Bottom Right: (Fig.18d) Mickey Mouse shop window poster for Bread, c. 1934.

free publicity and hopefully the patronage of the children who attended both then and in the future. Nearly every business jumped at the chance of gaining some credibility with children by cashing in on Mickey's popularity, producing...

Local bakeries that offered cakes to youngsters on their birthdays, dairies that gave away free ice cream, florists who sent bouquets to sick club members, department stores delivered cheap paper Mickey Mouse masks to encourage the buying of more expensive children's items, and banks gave out small, metal dime savings banks that had a Mickey color lithos on the front.
(Heide, 1979, p.64)

By the end of 1930 there were 150 theatres across the States with Mickey Mouse clubs, by 1932 there was a supposed 200,000 club members. Even in England, where the craze had spread, there were 160 clubs. Mickey was the ultimate babysitter, becoming nothing short of a juvenile political movement, with its foundations firmly cemented in the good old tradition of American consumerism. As deCordova says, "The membership approximated that of the boy scout movement with the girl scouts combined." (Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.208) Mickey had thus rooted himself within the community, with the establishment supporting him all the way.

There was some resistance to the mass saturation of the Mickey Mouse ethos by certain reform groups of the 1920s and 1930s. These groups denounced cinema's influence on children, calling for a return to more traditional recreation. But the audience instigated image clean-up coupled with the business communities' support for the clubs helped to make Mickey acceptable. His role as babysitter and educator, with the release of a series of educational Mickey Mouse toys, set the Mouse up as an institution where "the cultural interests of children, the business interests of the film industry and the political and cultural interests of reformers seemingly merged." (Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.203)

So Mickey was no longer confined to the screen. His face was everywhere from watches to chocolate bars, and from medicine to boot polish; even Cartier designed a Mickey Mouse diamond bracelet. He was a master salesman who could sell anything.



(Fig.19) Michael Eisner, made Chief executive officer of Walt Disney (Company renamed in Walts honour) in 1984.

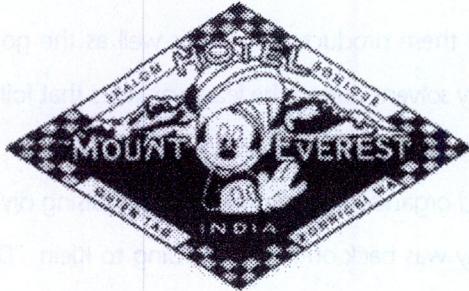
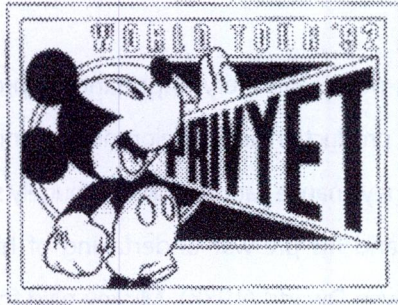
Although there were certain exceptions, like cigarettes and alcohol, which were not in keeping with the new rodent role of responsibility. It is a possibility that this saturation marketing helped Mickey get his consumerist label of the fifties.

Mickey's merchandising power was very important for providing a major source of income for Walt Disney's production and development of animation. The revenue acted as a float and helped Disney finance cartoons like the hugely successful 'Three Little Pigs', the 'Silly Symphonies' and his pre-war undertaking of his first full length feature, 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' (1938). Mickey paid for it all. Other studios were slow to catch on, or the characters were not as popular for such large scale selling. The money produced in these product spin-offs as well as the government contracts, also helped Disney to stay solvent during the lean war years that followed.

After the death of Kay Kamen in an airplane crash in 1949, it took Disney two years to regroup and organise the licensing/merchandising division of the company. By the mid fifties Disney was back on line. According to Klein, "Disney endorsements had sold \$750 million of products, some 3000 different items." (Klein, 1993, p.53), in fact Disney was now working as an informal conglomerate, its fingers were in so many pies.

By 1955 Disneyland was well under way to becoming another marketing dream, selling Disney merchandising in the grounds. With the opening of the theme parks (Disneyworld followed in 1971) profits were divided into three sections: films, licensing and parks. Unfortunately, bad management and a changing film industry during the late seventies saw a fall off of interest in all things Disney, as Mickey's gleam began to fade; film rentals, the basis of all the other extensions, created only 15% income, with television, parks and merchandising making up the deficit. This would eventually carry down the line and effect all areas.

It was not until the appointment of Michael Eisner as Disney's Chief Executive Officer in 1984 and the successful restructuring of the company that merchandising returned to its former fifties glory. The new Disney meant business and used the merchandising to generate income for film production just like Walt. The Disney men raided the character cupboard and used its assets to the hilt as Disney's strongest foundation. They could play



(Fig.20) Some of the graphics as part of the Mickey's World Tour: 1001 hellos merchandising campaign which Disney would send out to its licensees.

off four generations of Americans with Disney's reputation and long history while capitalising on the nostalgia it created. "Disney is stamping products with its imprimatur, a signature that says 'Isn't this fun?' in the same way as Chanel says 'Isn't this chic?'" (Jacobs, 1991, p.45)

The tactics in selling Mickey were hard hitting and aggressive, as they needed to be in the highly competitive market of the eighties. People like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg had taken a leaf out of the old Disney saturation marketing to advertise films like 'Star Wars' and 'E.T.' and had created new childhood symbols, with play figures, tee shirts, hats, and cups.

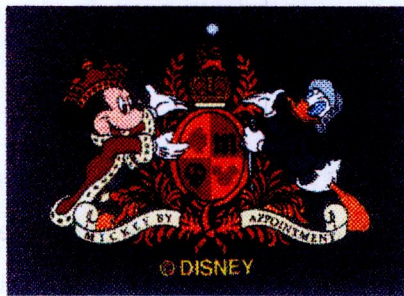
From Warner's Communications to Lucasfilm, the Disney style of marketing has been adapted to numerous film characters. What is the color of childhood nostalgia? Bright amber of Pinocchio. The metallic gleam of R2D2 and C3PO from Star Wars had a similar resonance for a while.

(Klein, 1993, p.56)

It was essential for Disney to re-establish Mickey's right of place in the American public's hearts and minds. They opened up new lines and levels of Mickey for each different generation. Their 1991 licensee package (Jacobs, 1991, p.48) breaks Mickey down into three levels:

- *Hip*, for young people, incorporating trendy graphics on sports wear and trainers, for example.
- *Contemporary*, the standard Mickey image for the babyboomers, children of the fifties and sixties, used on ties, waistcoats, under wear.
- *Nostalgic*, the classic lwerks Mickey, that strikes an historical resonance, the golden age of Hollywood. Used on tee shirts, posters, toys and stationery.

Mickey now can be seen on Lycra® cycling shorts in the 'Gruppo sportivo' range, tennis racquets and clothes for children, and Warhol-esque bed spreads. Once again, the old Disney proverb of catering for the adult in children and the children in adults, holds true. They are producing an 'everymouse, Mickey everything for everybody' (Jacobs, 1991,



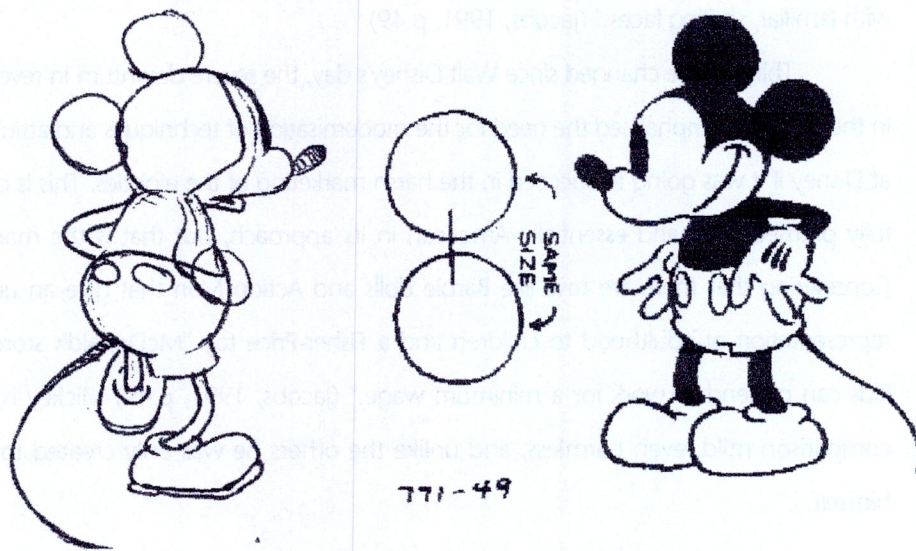
Above: (Fig.21) Campaign poster for the Disney Babies range marketed to pregnant women, 1991.

Right: (Fig.21a) Disney clothes label on waistcoats and ties, as part of Disney's new merchandising strategy, 1994.

p.46). It is all very specific: target audiences, markets and standard graphic packages to suit each licensee so that the company remains in control.

The most calculating phenomenon of Mickey's foothold in the market is the new 'Disney Babies' line of products. While emphasising that they are only repackaging and reselling what they know the public loves, this series targets new parents, especially expectant mothers. Capitalising on the fact new parents would remember *Uncle Walt's* appearances on t.v. as a sort of surrogate father of their own childhoods', they can now trust these Disney products - toys, rattles, even baby clothes - as coming from this purveyor of quality and tradition. They are ultimately selling on emotion... "share something magical with your baby... because theres nothing nicer than growing up with familiar, smiling faces." (Jacobs, 1991, p.49)

Things have changed since Walt Disney's day, the severe downturn in revenue in the seventies emphasised the need for the modernisation of techniques and attitudes at Disney if it was going to succeed in the harsh marketing of the eighties. This is carefully premeditated and essentially American in its approach, but that is the market. Considering that there are toys like Barbie dolls and Action Man that give an unfair representation of adulthood to children and a Fisher-Price toy "McDonald's store so kids can pretend to work for a minimum wage." (Jacobs, 1991, p.49) Mickey is, by comparison mild, even harmless, and unlike the others he was only created to sell himself.



(Fig.22) Sketches of Mickey Mouse that reveal his circular construction.

Symbol and Icon

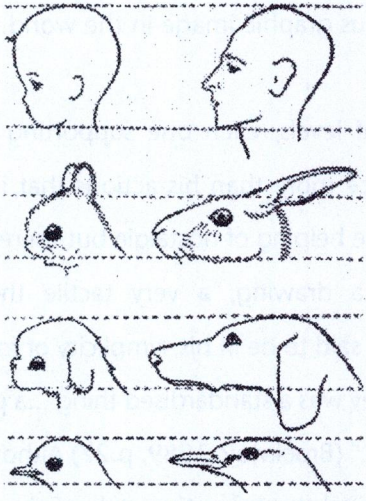
So far, in gauging the distance travelled by Mickey, we have learnt about his cartoon career, his predecessors and the technical achievements that followed, the merchandising and theme parks that support the whole star structure, the Disney ethos and Mickey's popularity. But there is also a need to look closer - past the funny films, the social representation and the consumerist goods that surround Mickey Mouse - to the most famous graphic image in the world.

Mickey's popularity, works on a number of levels, each one supporting the other. Essentially it is his physical appearance more than his actions that is so attractive, but why? Agreeably there is a large helping of nostalgia but there are other explanations. Mickey is ultimately a drawing, a very tactile thing. Consisting of circles and curves, his appeal is said to be in his simplicity of form; as Ub Iwerks, his first animator puts it, "Mickey was a standardised thing ...a pear shaped body, ball on top, couple of thin legs." (Brockway, 1989, p.27) Although overtly simplified and modest, Iwerks improved the animating style of the day by streamlining Disney's creation for ease in animation and readability, unique in its day. Early reviews and articles in the *Motion Picture Daily* accredited Mickey with, "a bigger screen following than nine tenths of the stars in Hollywood", and about other cartoons, "When you say it is up to the Disney Mickey Mouse standard, there is nothing left to be said." (Maltin, 1987, p.37)

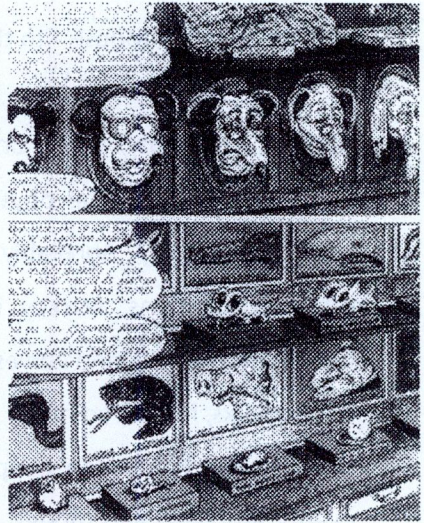
When Mickey is broken down to bare essentials, his structural blue print, he consists of seven circles. According to C.G Jung's archetypal theory, the circle is a symbolic shape, rooted throughout history in rituals, paintings, and religious artefacts in both pagan and religious cultures. The silhouetted three circles of Mickey's head and ears, is instantly recognisable as a trinity of circles as if referencing the christian concept of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, like the cross and the shamrock. Indeed Klein reveals that Time Magazine in 1952 disclosed that "african witch doctors were seen dressed as Mickey Mouse, as though his face had the religious power of an icon. (Klein, 1993, p.55) Although these are far fetched analogies, Mickey does have a positive effect on people, especially



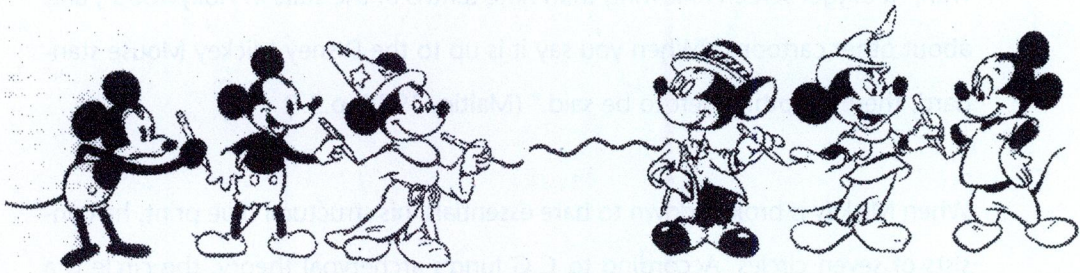
to be in getting the ideas (travelled by Mickey we have seen about the
 common center, the first center and the technical achievement that follows.
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 and farther than the the transformation and the common code that



(Fig.23) An illustration showing the difference between neotenised (left) and non-neotenised (right) beings.



(Fig.23a) A humorous french cartoon about Gould's theory, on the opinion that neoteny it has less to do with biology and more to do with common sense.



(Fig.23b) A Disney illustration tracing Mickey's development from 1930 to 1950, which highlights Gould's theory that Mickey in fact grows younger.

judges that and that is usually regarded as a form of the lead. It may
 from the center, center of gravity, for and Holy Child, like the crowd
 the human, which then looks like Time Magazine in 1952, which that
 these illustrations were drawn by Mickey Mouse, to through his face
 and the low power of an act. (Dyer, 1991, p.22) which they are for
 method analysis, which does have a positive effect on people, especially



children.

Circles, as shapes are harmless, unlike squares or triangles they have no pointed edges or sharp points, and therefore cannot hurt anyone. They are ergonomically designed, just like Mickey. Circles being round have a sense of fun, and could be seen to remind us of happy things like babies, breasts, spinning tops, bouncing balls in a sort of childhood regression. Mickey falls into this category, a user friendly character. Maybe it is this subconscious appreciation of shape that led to the downfall of the rather angular cartoon outline of Felix the Cat, leaving Mickey as the shape of things to come.

This links quite nicely to natural history and Stephen Jay Gould's theory of neoteny. Gould spent some time studying the changing shape of cartoon characters especially that of Mickey Mouse as it (among others) underlined his own argument on neoteny. He concluded that Mickey has grown younger in appearance through the years and this progressive juvenilization is part of an evolutionary phenomenon called neoteny. According to Gould, over the years Mickey has become more well rounded, his head has gotten larger, his eyes bigger, his forehead larger and more sloping, and his chin smaller. His ears have also moved slightly back when viewed in profile, and his cheeks have bulged. Disney artists were aware of making such changes to the character without understanding exactly why, giving him baggier trousers to cover up those thin legs and a wider snout to make him look less mean and more friendly. Thus Mickey has become more baby-like and cuter, and this is a major reason for our attraction to him. "Humans are fooled by an evolved response to their own babies... Mickey, by growing younger, preserved the maternal in those who watched his antics." (Bedford, 1979)

Secondly, Mickey's continuing journey towards eternal youth is, according to Gould, a repetition of our own evolutionary story, "For Humans are neotenic. We have evolved retaining to adulthood the originally juvenile features of our ancestors." (Gould, 1980, p.91) Unlike primates, for example, who grow to produce a 'strikingly different' form in adulthood, we remain quite similar to our child-



The first part of the book is a history of the theory of evolution, from Darwin's original ideas to the modern synthesis. Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium is a key part of this history. Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium is a key part of this history. Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium is a key part of this history.

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hood features. Our primordial ancestors had 'projecting jaws and low vaulted craniums' just like Mickey in 'Steamboat Willie'. "We, like Mickey never grow up, although we do grow old." (Gould, 1980, p.91)

It is not only Mickey's physical appearance that is of importance, he also performs several roles. According to Albert W. Brockman, Professor of religion, whose studies include myths and mythic motives in popular culture, Mickey can be associated with the Jungian theory of the trickster, "Mickey is a trickster, the anarchic and universally encountered god." (Brockway, 1989, p.32) Delving deeper into Jung's trickster theory reveals that it is a "...theme that has immense symbolic importance and recurs throughout history." (Jung, 1959, p.112) The four cycles of the 'evolution of the hero myth', as identified by Jung, are applicable to our small mouse, and reflect his career with an eerie precision. It is necessary to outline this myth in order to contextualize and validate Mickey, as an icon that has repeated itself throughout history.

The first level introduces the 'trickster' in the least developed period of life. Here the hero has the mentality of a child, and assumes the role of an animal spending his time passing from, "one mischievous exploit to another." (Jung, 1959, p.113) He is, "lacking any purpose beyond the gratification of his primary needs. He is cruel and cynical." (Jung, 1959, p.113) This mirrors Mickey's role in early cartoons like 'Steamboat Willie', where he is unrepenting, taking joy in his violence against the other animals on the boat, just to produce a song, for example, playing the cow's teeth like a xylophone and pulling the cat's tail. Mickey at this stage is very much in the role of an animal, but this changes as his career progresses and as seen he becomes more civil.

The second level is that of 'Hare' in which the 'trickster' first appears in animal form (In Mickey's case a mouse). The Indians (Native Americans) saw him as a coyote. He becomes 'the founder of human culture' by giving the Indians the 'medicine rite', thus becoming their saviour by curing their sicknesses. This myth was so powerful that the Winnebago Indians refused to accept christianity

completely and moulded the two saviours together. The 'trickster' now becomes socialised, a cultural hero correcting the infantile behaviour of his previous incarnation. This could be seen as the pre-war transformation of Mickey to the gracious, gloved character by the public pressure put on Disney. His embedding in the culture could be seen as his successful funny cartoons and his product endorsement.

The third level is that of the 'Red Horn' where the 'trickster' becomes human, but an ambiguous character who must prove himself in competition and battle, "With Red Horn we have reached the world of man, through the archaic world, in which the aid of super human powers...ensure man's victory over the evil forces that beset him." (Jung, 1959, p.114) Mickey has through the war years become more of a man than a mouse, taking on his pink hue and wearing a suit, and even for a brief time displaying three dimensional, concave ears, as if making him appear *more* real. It might also represent the world war two propaganda, although he only played a minor role in the war. In the fifties as his cartoon career begins to fade (the ambiguous starting role), the aforementioned battles might be applied to his fight to sustain himself in the entertainment world, through television and the theme parks. He wins by proving himself to be the only cartoon character to have any other role outside television and his global fame is assured.

The last level is that of the 'Twins', where the 'trickster' splits into two characters who have nothing left to conquer and are eventually destroyed. Luckily Mickey has not fulfilled this role yet but the importance of this myth cannot be disregarded, as it is recurrent throughout ancient and modern history, and popular culture. It is an essential part of story telling and could be seen as an intrinsic part of the Hollywood narrative. Variants of the story fit different cultures and societies, from the Norwegian god Loki to Prometheus and from Frankenstein to Citizen Kane. By misadventure or design, Mickey's complexities fit into this mould extremely well. As Jung says, "It represents our efforts to deal with the problem of growing up, aided by the illusion of eternal fiction." (Jung, 1959, p.115)



(Fig.24) A excerpt from one of the Mickey Mouse comic strips, drawn by Floyd Gottfredson, that shows that Mickey and Minnie were more human than rodent.

Fairytales and legends also hold the same idea and help us, especially for children to understand life and its logic or illogic. This is the basis of Bruno Bettelheim's study of children's literature, fairytale and cinema. According to Bettelheim, Disney's pride and joy, his full length feature adaptations of fairytales like 'Sleeping Beauty' (1959) and more recently, 'The Little Mermaid' (1989), are useless in fulfilling the main role of their initial creation. *Disneyfication* of such tales leads to a sweetening of the story or the complete reversal of the ending as in 'The Little Mermaid' (Disney's Ariel gets her man and her voice back where as in the original story, she loses both as a moral). Disney's first creation, rather ironically, fits the role when his whole career is taken into consideration, like in Jung's theory of the trickster. Mickey's characteristics and physical appearance fit this fairytale formula quite well. He is animalistic, in that he is not a mouse, but a human as a mouse and also a totemistic character whose actions and reactions we can relate to.

The callous attitude displayed by Mickey and Minnie toward other animals made it quite clear that, although not human, these were no ordinary mice. They were creatures invested with special powers. They wore clothing that parodied the habits of men and women... *they belonged to tradition that goes back as far as Aesop and Aristophanes.*

(Finch, p.64, 1983) [my italics]

An alternative reading would suggest the interest and fascination lies deep within the make-up of childhood. The importance of animals for children includes having a teddy bear, being enthralled by the zoo, and tormenting parents for a pet. As Steve Baker says, "to identify with animals is essentially a childhood phenomenon, or, as it might often be more condescendingly expressed, a childish thing." (Baker, 1991, p.123) But at the turn of the century animal representation was exceptionally important in influencing the development of children. "The animalization of the juvenile world arguably had a very specific and powerful function in relation to the changing construction of childhood in the nineteenth and twentieth century." (Smoodin, 1993, p211)

As previously mentioned, social and cultural reform groups called for film studios to be responsible for the actions of their characters/actors and the products associated with them as an influence on people. The main point of these movements were, as today, to tackle the influence that this new form of entertainment had on children. In his essay, The Mickey in Macy's Window, Richard de Cordova examines such initiatives and their role in protecting children from the excesses of cinema. "The traditional differences between child and adult had to be asserted if the nations youth was not to be corrupted by cinema." (Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.212) This led to the romantic notion that the child and nature should be linked as a way of maintaining children's innocence. One way of doing this was by asserting the traditional role of animals in childhood.

This was developed by G.Stanley Hall who contextualised this theory through paleopsychiatrics which he developed in his 'Child Studies Movement' in America during this time. He believed that the child was closer to animals/nature than to the adult world, and if this was denied it would prove detrimental to their adult life. "If the child did not fully live out its savage impulses... [it] would be scarred in its development and therefore be unable to function properly as an adult in the modern world." (Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.212)

Thus the paleopsychiatric movement, along with the prescriptions of cinema reformers, gave animals a very special place in the consideration of childhood entertainment. So children were urged away from the adult content of cinema and allowed revel in this animalism under the proper parental and educational guidance as part of a necessary phase of maturation. Mickey's popularity at the time was under threat until his character traits were cleaned up. The mouse was only deemed traditional because he was represented as a mouse. Ironically he was the antithesis to their traditional thinking in the way that he was an 'agressively modern' new character. Additionally, as toys played a large role in traditional children's entertainment and because of Mickey's obvious links with toys through his own merchandising, he was guaranteed his place in their endorsed version of childhood. Mickey was safe family entertainment and has stayed that way ever since.

As previously mentioned, social and cultural reform groups called for the student to be responsible for the actions of their characters, actors, and the products associated with them as an influence on people. The main goal of their movements were, at that time, to make the influence that the new form of entertainment had on children. In the essay, "The Mickey in Mickey," Winchell Richardson (1994) examines both influences and their role in protecting children from the excesses of cinema. "The traditional differences between child and adult had to be changed if the child's youth was not to be corrupted by cinema" (Richardson, 1994, p. 213). This led to the movement toward the child and nature would be linked as a way of maintaining children's innocence. One way of doing this was by asserting the traditional role of animals in childhood.

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Thus, the pedagogical movement, along with the protection of children's reform, gave a more specific place in the construction of child development. As children were used away from the adult content of cinema and showed levels of animal under the proper parental and educational guidance as part of a necessary phase of maturation. Mickey's popularity at the time was understood with the character traits were changed. The mouse was now deemed traditional because he was represented as a nature, naturally, he was the antithesis to the traditional thinking in the way that he was an aggressively neutral, new character. Additionally, as this played a role in traditional children's entertainment and because of his way of connecting with toys through his own characteristics, he was guaranteed his place in their important version of childhood. Mickey was the family tradition and that persisted that way ever since.

Modern Mickey; latter day meanings.

In the thirties he was the mischievous mouse, full of childlike humour and anger. The forties brought a gracious mouse forward, who took to stardom like a duck to water (unfortunately for Donald!). The cheery optimism that made him so popular in the depression continued through the war until the fifties when Mickey became the everyman, with a job, a house and all the comforts that came with it, from poor 'black' barnyard mouse to successful wealthy 'white' mouse. Mickey was the ultimate American success story, with a theme park and television show under his belt.

The fifties Mickey is a consumer mytheme, the picturesque at the shopping malls or at Disney. He has come to mean tourism for children, a place shared by Peanuts characters, Ronald Mc Donald and others. Above all, he is the index of a child living comfortable in a broad acre suburb.

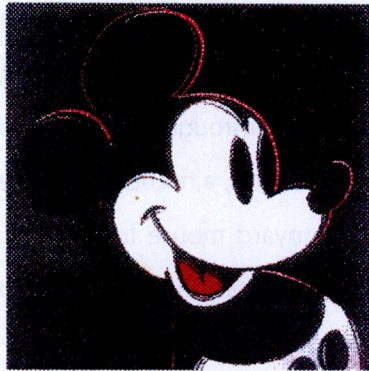
(Klein, 1993, p.56)

He is a different symbol for each generation, an iconographic surface, Depression-Mickey™ of the 1930s to Consumer-Mickey™ of the 1950s. The children of the fifties and sixties just saw the Disneyland Mickey, the ultimate consumer. What in 1928 was an anarchic little mouse in torn pants tormenting his fellow animals was now a capitalist pillar of the establishment. As these children came to adulthood they addressed this constructed symbol of America, Mickey Mouse.

As icons, however, works of art often take on a political connotation unintended by the original artist... people in other countries see our fine art and popular art images as icons, that is, as images that reveal how we live and who we are.

(Pelfrey, 1985, p.212)

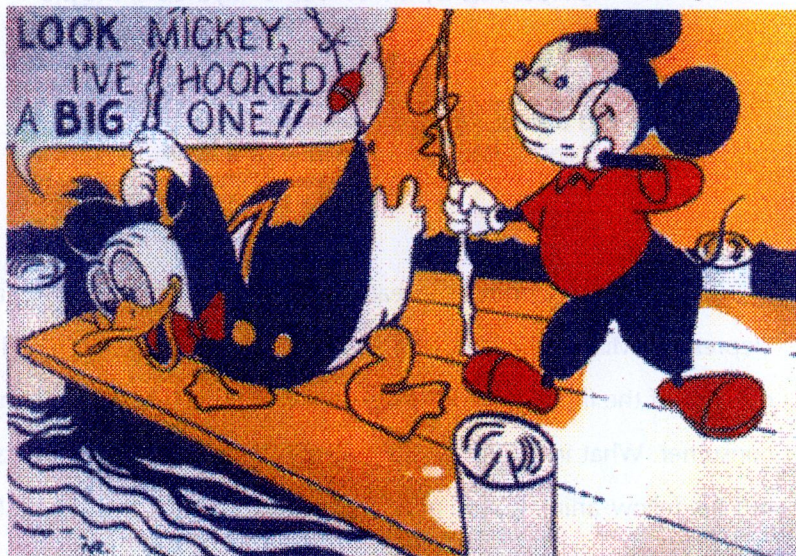
Mickey was duely held up for inspection, praise and ridicule as an American symbol, and the first entity to ascend the ranks of popular culture to icon status. Artists like Lichtenstein and Warhol have used Mickey's image in their work



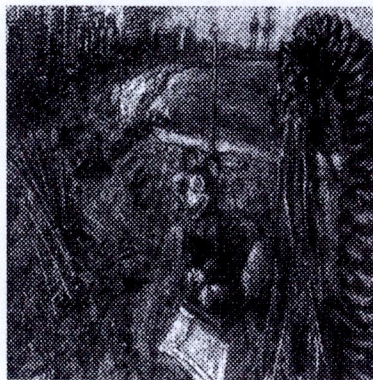
(Fig.25) Warhol's Mickey Mouse from the *Myths* portfolio, 1981.



(Fig.25a) Rick Griffins drugged-up Mickey in *The Family Dog* comic



(Fig.25b) Lichtenstein's pop classic *Look Mickey*, 1961



(Fig.25c) Detail from John Keane's *Mickey Mouse at the front*, 1992.



(Fig.25d) Keith Haring's *Andy Mouse* from the *Andy Mouse* portfolio, 1986.

as one of the main representations of pop culture. Younger artists like Rick Griffin and Keith Haring have also depicted the mouse, either as a drug crazed reflection of American youth in Griffin's underground work of the sixties, or Haring's projection of Mickey onto Warhol as the mouse with the midas touch. The artists were fascinated by the simplicity of the character while playing on his symbolic subtleties.¹⁴

There was even something of an unnamed movement between 1960-80, what Klein calls 'Anti-Mickeys', where Walt and his characters were held up as cold war imperialists at home and abroad, "These were comic attacks on the growing influence of global mass culture, as much as Walt's conservative politics." (Klein, 1993, p.250) Although Dorfmann and Mattelart's 'How to read Donald Duck' attacked Disney's comics, circulating Latin America during the fifties and sixties, as imperialist American propaganda. There was an anti-Vietnam War comic, where Mickey gets killed ('Uncle Walt', 1967), as well as various underground comics on the west coast which continued their subversive adventures right up to 1980 with 'Mickey Rat'. Even as recently as the Gulf War Mickey rears his head, in the work of British war artist John Keane - 'Mickey Mouse at the Front', (1992) which comments on American involvement in the war. All of which highlight how far Mickey Mouse and Walt Disney had permeated American life and culture, home and away.

Disney did protect its interests and filed numerous law suits stopping many unsavoury versions of these subversive works. Comics like 'Air Pirates' in which Mickey was depicted as a recovered alcoholic, forced by studio politics to lie about his natural children, calling them his nephews, were banned. Paradoxically, this anarchic edge refreshed interest in Disney and Mickey.

At this stage of the century Mickey is such a globally recognised symbol that he does not even have to fully appear. His head or even his ears are recognised as the character, and all he stands for. He is after all part mouse, part graphic design. His ears alone adorn hats, fish bowls, a Mariscal designed

14. Both Warhol and Haring were fascinated by Disney and his creation and to a point could be seen to emulate his production line process and marketing skills, Warhol creating his own American icon with the Campbells soup cans and Haring with his 1989 Radiant child merchandising.



(Fig.26) All that is needed is the ears and boots to understand this is Mickey Mouse in this Javier Mariscal designed chair.



(Fig.26a) This Mickey head profile shows the ears are the only thing that remains constant.



(Fig.26b) Again the ears give away who the character is in this Florida sign post.



(Fig.26c) The ears, as used by these animal rights protestors, emphasize the complex nature of Disney imagery, in that a pair of black circles can represent a mouse.

chair and the water tower at Disneyworld. Even Madonna wore a pair on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, to evoke a sense of innocence and the style of the golden age of Hollywood. Such abstractions whittle Mickey down to his essence, two black circles.¹⁵

Ultimately, Mickey is a symbol of Walt Disney himself, his creation, his voice, his company. He was Walt's alter-ego, indeed Disney admitted "there's a lot of Mickey in me" (Brockway, 1989, p.29). Their roles are interchangeable: the optimist, the capitalist, the cartoon character, the entertainer and the legend. But the creation outlived the creator, as Walt died in 1966, and Mickey has gone on. Despite the criticisms of commercialism, among other things, Mickey still remains, especially in a child's eyes, the quintessential symbol of fun and childhood. "The first universal icon that expressed any sense of fun, the mouse symbolised nothing so much as his creator's talent." (Whittle, 1981, p.132)

15. In the 1950's Disney animators toyed with the idea of three dimensional concave ears and even used it in a number of cartoons until it was decided that they complicated the characters simplicity and they returned to the old ones.

Corporate Mickey

The trail finally leads to the present day, where Mickey Mouse is big business, not only through the selling of merchandise, but in what he now represents. The mouse has now transcended another level of visual communication by becoming the mast-head, the main corporate symbol of the present day Disney empire. This modern successful corporation, the realm of modern Mickey, did not happen overnight, but had a difficult delivery into the modern business world.

After Walt Disney's death in November 1966, the company was thrown into chaos. Walt had no direct family heir and the mixture of bad business decisions and personal family feuding split the company into two factions, Walt men and Roy men. The difference was established when Roy and the rest of the Disney board refused to give Disney the money to build Disneyland, and Walt went elsewhere and set up his own company, W.E.D. (Walter Elias Disney) to finance the park. The divisions were thus set between the creative and the financial which were to continue right up into the eighties, bringing the company and its products to their comparative knees.

Ron Miller, Walt Disney's son-in-law, took control of the company as Walt's named successor, after Roy Disney's death in 1971. Roy's son, Roy Disney Jr.¹⁶ was disregarded, and isolated by loyal Walt men while still being on the company's board until he finally resigned in 1977. The company was to hit disaster after disaster during the seventies, as Miller could not match the perfect business partnership of Walt and Roy in their heyday. Miller, spurred on by recent blockbuster movies like 'Jaws' (1975) and 'Star Wars' (1977), concentrated on live action films, neglecting the theme parks and the animation department. As a result there was a walk-out strike in 1979 of two hundred animators led by head animator, Don Bluth¹⁷, who refused to come back to Disney under these conditions.

After two moderate hit movies, 'Herbie Rides Again' (1974) and 'Castaway Cowboy' (1975), Miller and Disney were out-manoeuvred by the new Hollywood, as reflected by Lucas and Spielberg, who cornered the market on entertaining movies that appealed to adults as well as children, which had been

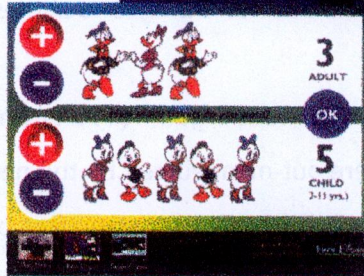
16. Walt used to unfairly refer to Roy Disney as his 'Idiot nephew', something he would later prove wrong in saving the company. An example of some of the petty bickering is the fact Roy quit over an argument (among other things) with Miller over his car park space.

17. Don Bluth later set up his own animation unit in Dublin, producing hits like 'An American Tale', which were very much in the mould of the Disney style of animation.



Left: (Fig.27) Signpost and information stand with the Mickey Mouse mast-head, part of the new corporate identity system at Euro Disney.

Below: (Fig.27a) Cover of Graphis magazine, the issue about this new corporate identity scheme, shows the modern european Mickey, an abstraction of his former self.



Above and left: (Fig.27b) Computer touch-screen graphics on information posts incorporating the Disney characters in Euro Disney.

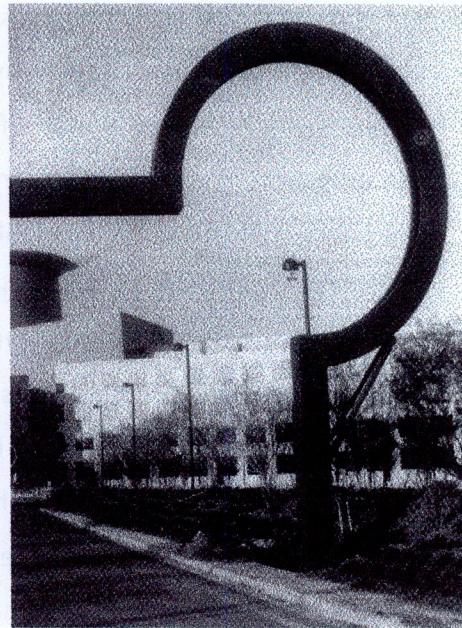
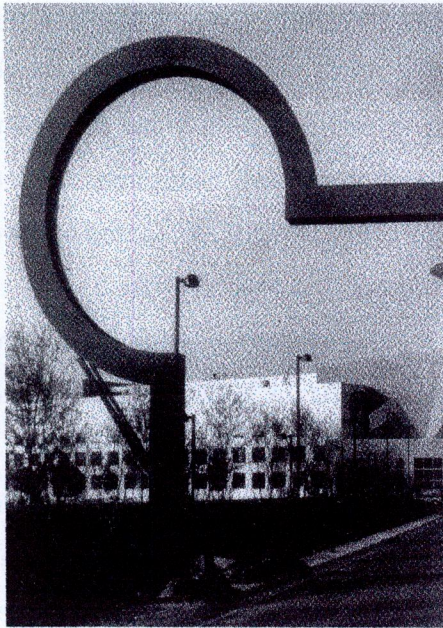
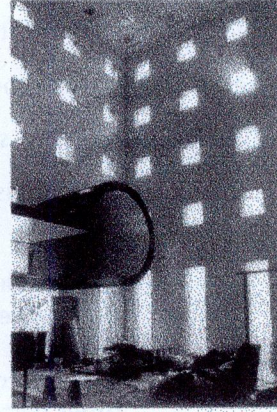
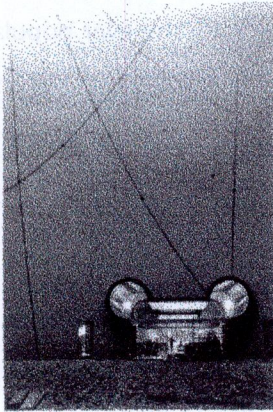
Disney's hallmark. Miller tried to compete with 'The Black Hole' (1979), 'Condorman' (1981) and even the hugely expensive computer/animation generated 'Tron' (1982), but they all failed to make an impact. Even the ever popular theme parks were experiencing a drop in attendance, and N.B.C. dropped the Sunday night Disney show - previously the Mickey Mouse club show - after a couple of seasons of disastrous ratings. As Douglas Gomery states,

The movie division was now a major profit drag; the new cable and home ventures were losing in start-up costs; the theme parks - with bad demographics and a painful recession - could not continue to subsidize the other parts of the enterprises Walt and Roy had so carefully crafted a generation earlier.

(Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.78)

By 1983, as the 'Reagan go-go economy' was heating up, rumours began to fly about a corporate takeover at Disney; notorious corporate raiders like Saul Steinberg were paid by Disney to stay away, according to Ron Grover's The Disney Touch. Luckily for Disney, Roy Disney Jr. had bided his time and seeing his opportunity he moved in with a friendly investor, Sid Bass, to aid him financially in reclaiming the company under the family name. Bass's input placed Disney once more on a sure financial footing. They immediately looked for two experienced movie men to guide Disney through the tough competition back to former glory. Michael Eisner, one of the men responsible for Paramount Pictures rise to the top during the seventies, and Frank Wells, an experienced Warner's money man, were taken on board.

Both Eisner and Wells brought a rich base of experience to the deflated Disney and immediately began to restore the Disney name and to turn Disney into a successful corporation for its shareholders. They took a hard look at what made Disney great, and unlike Miller saw animation as the cornerstone of all their empire. First, they utilized the extensive Disney library of films and characters through classic video re-releases and merchandising. This was carried out with more aggression and sophistication in marketing techniques than ever before.



Top: (Fig.28) Views from the interior of the Arata Isozaki & Associates Walt Disney World / Team Disney Building in Orlando, Florida, 1990. The building uses Mickey as symbolised by his ears as an integral part of the design and as the key visual representa-

tive of Disney, in its construction. The basis for all new Disney architecture is to supposedly give the observer an inter-active role when in the park, the buildings have function as well as fantasy in-built and the visitor can jump between these worlds.



Secondly, unlike Miller who had stopped growth, and tried to capitalise on what was already there, the new Disney went for the old maxim of 'speculate to accumulate' and began expanding the theme parks in California and Florida, as well as the opening of Tokyo Disney in 1984 and Euro Disney in 1992.

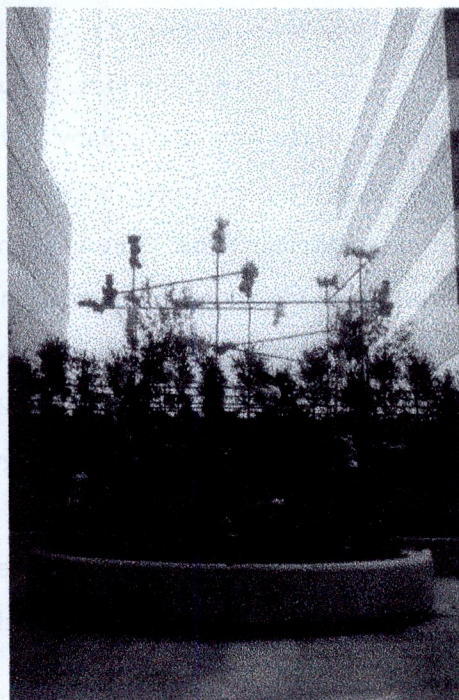
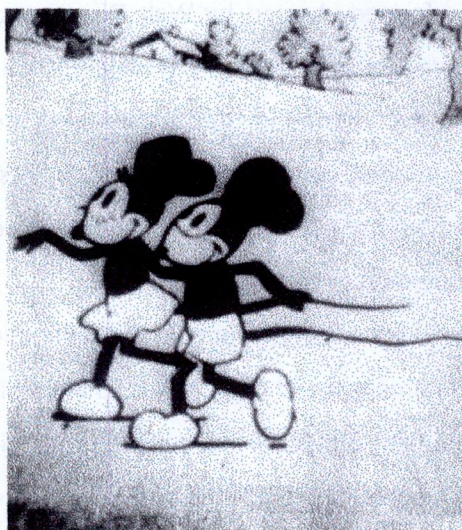
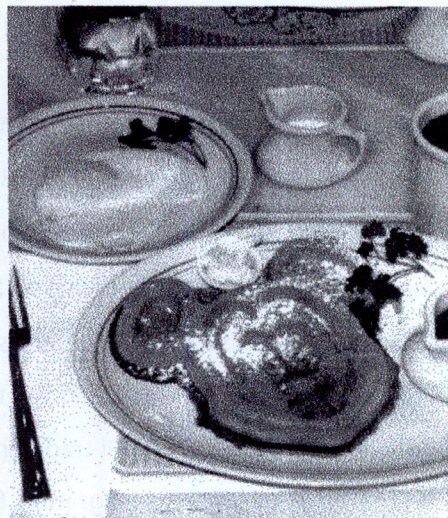
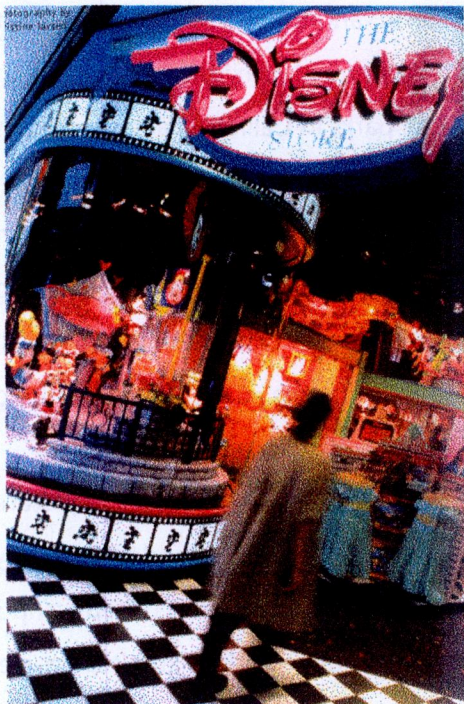
Their best move was the appointment of Jeffrey Katzenberg, who was put in charge of the Disney film division. The new team understood that in order to return to its former success, it was necessary to produce new classic animated films. If Disney was going to compete in the harsh movie markets of the late eighties and early nineties it might as well trade on what it does best - cartoons.

Katzenberg also upgraded film production¹⁸ and created two picture companies under the Disney umbrella, Touchstone and Hollywood pictures. By exploiting down-on-their luck and T.V. actors,¹⁹ and well written concept scripts he produced some of the most popular movies of the eighties, 'Ruthless People' (1986), 'Three men and a Baby' (1987) and 'Pretty Woman' (1990). Katzenberg also revived the old Disney television show formerly hosted by Walt Disney and inserted Michael Eisner to perform the *uncle* role. The Disney (pay) channel was developed for the lucrative cable market; the animation unit modernised the style of animation for the competitive film market; and successful actor's voices, like Robin Williams in 'Aladdin' (1992) and Jeremy Irons in the recent box office hit 'The Lion King' (1994), added a new dimension to the Disney product.

So, in the space of five years, Disney became a fully functioning profitable organisation and a contender in the entertainment world once more. So where is Mickey in the new Disney? Eisner's reinstatement of Mickey was reinforced by his image being etched in stone. He has become part of the architecture in Disneyworld, Florida, where buildings like the Disney theme building, designed by Arata Isozaki and Associates, takes on the shape of the famous mouse as an integral part of the design and structure. In fact, some of the most critically acclaimed architectural structures of the last few years have been built at Disney, by architects like Michael Graves (Swan Hotel) and Robert A. Stern (Yacht club). All of this patronage reflects well upon the new Disney managers who were accused of

18. The necessary monies were not in abundance during the fledgling years for the new Disney to financially support movies, so Eisner and Katzenburg organised *Silver Screen Partners*, a group of professional people (lawyers, dentists and doctors) who wanted to get into movies and did so by fronting the necessary finance. This was seen as an investment to the group who would make their money back if the film was a hit and they were part of the wheels of the movie industry. Films like 'The Little Mermaid' and 'Pretty Woman' were produced and the partnership is still going.

19. Dreyfuss and Midler, both careers were slumping (Dreyfuss in drugs, and Midler in alcohol) before Disney came into the picture. Although they were offered considerably less than their normal fees, they accepted and have since returned to the spotlight, but Disney have earned themselves a bad reputation for such acts. (Ed. Smoodin, 1994, p.95/96)



Top left: (Fig.29) The next generation in the merchandising war, one of the many Disney shops around the world selling all manner of Disney memorabilia, toys, stills and videos.

Bottom left: (Fig.29a) The Paul Terry/Van Bueran Mickey and Minnie look-a-likes that Walt Disney took action over.

Top right: (Fig.29b) Mickey transcends to another level in the form of a breakfast waffle in the restaurant of Michael Graves's Swan hotel in the Florida Disneyworld.

Bottom right: (Fig.29c) The Dennis Oppenheim sculpture *Virus*, 1991, featuring Mickey and Donald.

rifling the Disney back catalogues and producing little themselves. Mickey has also expanded his sphere of influence with the development of the global Disney shops. These shops sell all manner of Disney merchandise, supporting the current film projects, as well as past film glories. On top of this, Disney has developed a number of Mickey Mouse restaurants, serving traditional, 'wholesome' American fast food, just like the owner.

Corporate Mickey also shows the hard edge as the new Disney realises its strengths are in its stockpile of successful characters, Mickey being its most famous, which they must protect. Despite Disney's friendly image, it is renowned for its harsh reactions when its tough copyright laws have been infringed. Even as far back as 1931 Walt Disney got an injunction on a Paul Terry cartoon 'Close Call' in which two characters look very like Mickey and Minnie. Disney did not ask for any damages, but established his right to his characters, as the decree issued prohibited the Paul Terry and Van Beuran studio from, "employing or using or displaying the pictorial representation of Mickey Mouse or any variation thereof so nearly similar as to be calculated to be mistaken for or confused with said pictorial representation of Mickey Mouse." (Maltin, 1987, p.201)

The new Disney has followed suit but is far more brutal in defending their charges. In a recent case, a Dennis Oppenheim sculpture called 'Virus' (1991) was ordered initially to be destroyed by law. The piece consists a series of poles forming a metal grid, it has plastic 'made in China' dolls of both Mickey and Donald stuck at the end of each pole. The piece had travelled all around the world on exhibition and it was not until it settled outside a Los Angeles office block did Disney take any action, accusing the artist of unlawful copyright. In the end Disney settled for the removal of the piece rather than its destruction, stating, "our position is that this is a blatant infringement of our rights... we have an obligation to our shareholders and to licensees, who pay large sums to use our characters, to fight against unauthorised use." (Cembalest, 1993, p.35) Despite this rather unusual case, Disney regularly gives permission for the use of their characters, as long as a relatively small fee is paid and that the image is used in

the 'appropriate way'. Thus Disney retains its control and individual style, as well as its corporate façade and a considerable financial remuneration.

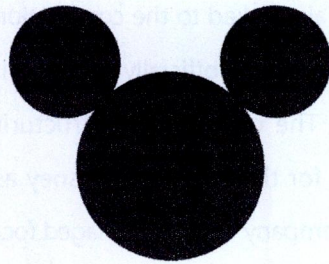
Mickey's latest transition is also linked to the corporation. A symbol for the company throughout the years, he has now officially become its logo, a corporate monolith, the business mouse. The creation and structuring of the company's visual identity was as important for the success of Disney as its continuing production. During the seventies, the company was mismanaged focusing on the wrong priorities, as Wally Olins states,

When companies lose sight of their individuality, their real purposes and strengths, they get deflected - often through peer pressure into making mistakes. They make inappropriate acquisitions, diversify in to blind alleys and make inferior copies of other companies products.

(Olins, 1989, p.9)

Eisner and Wells tackled this immediately and just as the company's activities and structuring improved on the inside, it was simultaneously and necessarily reproduced on the outside. Their main aim was to turn the Disney into a modern corporation. It was essential to project this via a strong working visual identity.

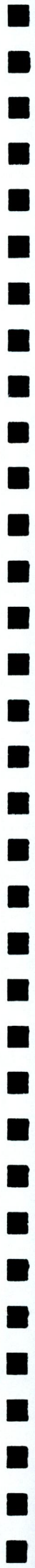
Mickey's image has fronted Disney for decades, even as far back as the thirties, "...in neon above his office, with no other sign needed, was the most recognisable face in the world, Mickey Mouse." (Klein, 1993, p.10) Today he emphasises its strong sense of history just like the neon sign over the first studio. Mickey is part of a very rare, corporate structure as regards visual identity, using him as the head of a triple logo-type. The mouse is simplified down to his purest form, the trinity of black circles, polished and refined in true nineties corporate style. The logo, three solid black circles present strength, unity and wholeness that reflects the company both inside and out. The sleek symbol marks a professional company to the public and more importantly smooths over any visible cracks within the company's structure. "Behind the closed board-room doors, behind the high-sounding phrases, behind the icons of power there is a seething mass of



Disney's



(Fig.30) The Disney house style.
Top: Mickey Mouse Head. (Walt Disney Company)
Middle: Disney signature. (Film Production)
Bottom: Disneyland castle. (Buena Vista Film Distribution)



conflict, doubt and suspicion." (Olins, 1989, p.132) and it is the logo's (visual identity) job to act as the umbrella protecting the inhabitants while putting out a strong front to the outside elements.

Mickey as the figure-head fulfills this cloaking device as part of a very rare corporate structure as regards visual identity. He now works hand-in-hand with two other icons, Walt Disney's signature and the silhouetted Disneyland castle. All three work together to present Disney as a traditional, trustworthy, quality product. The signature adds something personal, Disney's own signed approval, he puts his name to his product and stands behind it. The castle reminds us of Disney's other ventures in theme parks and film production while also emphasising a sense of history and strength. The Mickey figurehead brings the other two together in a very distinct way - the head, hand and home of Disney.

So Mickey has become an abstraction of his former self and still retains the title of best known graphic image in the world, known "more than any other image with the possible exceptions of the crucifix and Buddha" (Whittle, 1981, p.132) What is left for this universal icon? Will he fade as 'the depression' generation of the thirties begin to disappear, or has he found a renewed interest in a fresh audience? As Mickey has become dislodged from his original intention as a comic character, the only real way forward, with the exception of the above corporate application - is to make new cartoon shorts.

There is the slight possibility of an afterlife for Mickey. Recent successful films have shown the popularity of animation. Films like 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit' and 'The Mask' use cartoon characters or cartoon effects in a new way while paying homage to the likes of Walt Disney, Chuck Jones and Tex Avery. Animation certainly plays an integral role in the manufacturing of special effects and that is not only confined to these films. These believable special effects owe a lot to animation and the directors /'imagineers', like Disney and his contemporaries.



(Fig. 31)
Top: Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog vs. Felix the Cat.

Bottom: Nintendo's Mario vs. Mickey Mouse.

Note the similarity in shape and construction between

these two pairs. The angular Sonic and Felix, and the rounded Mario and Mickey. Even Mario's clothes are quite close to that of Mickey's. Also the two newcomers appear to adhere to Gould's theory of neoteny.

Apart from that, Mickey has made the transition to the extremely popular and lucrative world of computer games. Disney has ventured into the fray, with a Mickey Mouse game developed for Sega computer systems. Classic animation has shown its influence in this area, with scrolling screens like the graphic narrative in cartoons, exaggerated effects and characters that would not look out of place in cartoons, some of which have even made the leap to television cartoons. Two of the most important computer characters, which children today would know more about than the mouse dissected here, bear more than just a passing resemblance to Mickey and Felix - in Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog. Both companies, Nintendo and Sega, and their respective characters, have definitely taken a leaf out of the Disney history book. These characters, like Mickey before them, front their companies and their heavy merchandising makes even the current Disney strategies seem mild.

There does seem to be a glimmer of hope or at least the possibility of a second coming for Mickey. The expense of producing animation shorts has been considerably reduced with the technological advances of the last twenty years, especially the introduction of computers into the production line of animation. Whether Mickey's personality²⁰ is up to the expectations of a completely new generation will have to be seen. The recent news that Warners are to reopen their animation unit in Los Angeles and Dublin in 1996 might coax Disney, by competition, to revive its productions. So maybe there is celluloid life left in Mickey yet.

20. Although there is an argument that Mickey like one of his influences, Chaplin, is not as funny as he once was, but his importance, like Chaplin, lies in the fact of his originality, the virtuosity of his movement and the ingenious problem solving in the stories which fascinate the viewer and not their hilarious antics.

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- Storyboard
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- Animation Technologies & Engineering
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We're Drawing On Something Big

A Time Warner Entertainment Co., L.P. TM & © 1994 Warner Bros.

(Fig.32) The Irish Times advertisement for Warner Brothers, Friday, August 5, 1994.



(Fig. 32) The first time advertisement for 'White Brother'
Tobacco, August 2, 1944.

Conclusion.

This study emphasises the complex nature of Mickey Mouse, a multi-faceted, iconographic character who has taken on a life of his own. Cartoons, merchandise, theme parks and the representation of childhood are all part and parcel of Mickey Mouse. He has embedded himself in American culture adding historical validation and success to its ranks. He has also been exported extremely well.

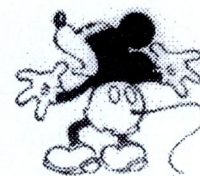
However, Mickey is essentially a drawing that is inextricably linked with Walt Disney and to a large extent the Disney Company. This is the central problem in studying animation, that in order to explain a character's life span and success, it is necessary to examine at length the company's own adventures; after all animation is one third artistry, two thirds industry. The study needs by its very nature is not exhaustive it would take considerably more space to explain the business and the massive financial implications of one of the most expensive, labour and time intensive industries.

The extent to which this study has deconstructed the rodent and highlighted his, as well as animation's importance, reveals a transformation of a country hick to a cartoon character whose rights are worth in excess of a billion dollars - not bad for a mouse that started life on paper.

So as Mickey Mouse's animated compatriot, Porky Pig would say "That's all folks!"

Mouse Facts

- ♥ President Roosevelt always screened Mickey Mouse cartoons before films at the White House.
- ♥ Queen Mary of England refused to leave a film performance until she had seen a Mickey Mouse cartoon.
- ♥ Emperor Hirohito collected Mickey Mouse memorabilia and even wore a Mickey Mouse watch.
- ♥ Charles De Gaulle was also an avid collector of Mickey Mouse merchandising.
- ♥ George V decreed that there had to be a Mickey Mouse cartoon at all the film performances he attended.
- ♥ Mickey's fiftieth birthday was celebrated by national festivities including a black tie party at the Liberty of Congress attended by the President of the United States.
- ♥ In 1935 the Queen and Duchess of York selected Mickey Mouse chinaware as gifts for six hundred children.
- ♥ In 1971 Mickey was banned from Yugoslavia because he represented an attractive revolutionary figure.
- ♥ In 1987 Mickey Mouse & Donald Duck comics were banned in Beijing, China for not being politically or socially in line with the ideas of the communist leadership and on their return the following year they managed to produce the most popular television show in China 'The Mickey and Donald show'.
- ♥ Mickey has hosted his own fitness programme *Mouercise* on the Disney channel during the late eighties.
- ♥ He has shaken hands with Leopold Stokowski, Sergei Eisenstein, Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon.
- ♥ He is listed in the Who's Who, the Encyclopaedia Britannica and the Oxford English dictionary defines a Mickey Mouse as an *n.* (sl.) Electrical distributor releasing bombs from aircraft. [f. mouselike character in Disney's cartoons.]
- ♥ In 1984 a Mickey Mouse tin train went for \$45,500 at auction at Sothebys.
- ♥ In the Seventies the rights to Mickey Mouse were set at \$750 million, which is supposedly to be doubled in the nineties.
- ♥ Finally, in 1939, the Mickey Mouse watch had become such a part of popular American mythology that one was permanently sealed in a *time capsule* at the New York World Fair.



Filmography.

1928

PLANE CRAZY – May 15
 STEAMBOAT WILLIE – July 1929
 GALLOPIN' GAUCHO – August 7
 THE BARN DANCE – November 15

1929

THE OPRY HOUSE – March 20
 WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY – May 3
 THE PLOW BOY – June 28
 THE BARNYARD BATTLE – July 2
 THE CARNIVAL KID – July 31
 MICKEY'S FOLLIES – August 28
 MICKEY'S CHOO-CHOO – September 7
 THE JAZZ FOOL – October 15
 JUNGLE RHYTHM – November 15
 THE HAUNTED HOUSE – December 2
 WILD WAVES – December 21

1930

JUST MICKEY – March 6
 THE BARNYARD CONCERT – April 5
 THE CACTUS KID – May 10
 THE FIRE FIGHTERS – June 10
 THE SHINDIG – July 11
 THE CHAIN GANG – August 18
 THE GORILLA MYSTERY – September 22
 THE PICNIC – October 9
 PIONEER DAYS – November 20

1931

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY – January 2
 TRAFFIC TROUBLES – March 7
 THE CASTAWAY – March 27
 THE MOOSE HUNT – April 30
 THE DELIVERY BOY – June 6
 MICKEY STEPS OUT – July 10
 BLUE RHYTHM – August 7
 FISHIN' AROUND – September 1
 THE BARNYARD BROADCAST – September 1
 THE BEACH PARTY – October 28
 MICKEY CUTS UP – November 25
 MICKEY'S ORPHANS – December 5

1932

THE DUCK HUNT – January 21
 THE GROCERY BOY – February 8
 THE MAD DOG – February 27
 BARNYARD OLYMPICS – April 13
 MICKEY'S REVUE – May 12
 MUSICAL FARMER – June 18
 MICKEY IN ARABIA – July 11
 MICKEY'S NIGHTMARE – August 13
 TRADER MICKEY – August 20
 THE WHOOPEE PARTY – September 17
 TOUCHDOWN MICKEY – October 15
 THE WAYWARD CANARY – November 12
 THE KLONDIKE KID – November 12
 MICKEY'S GOOD DEED – December 17

1933

BUILDING A BUILDING – January 7
 THE MAD DOCTOR – January 21
 MICKEY'S PAL PLUTO – February 18
 MICKEY'S MELLERDRAMMER – March 18
 YE GOLDEN DAYS – April 8
 THE MAIL PILOT – May 13

MICKEY'S MECHANICAL MAN – June 17
 MICKEY'S GALA PREMIERE – July 1
 PUPPY LOVE – September 2
 THE STEEPLE CHASE – September 30
 THE PET STORE – October 28
 GIANT LAND – November 25

1934

SHANGHIED – January 13
 CAMPING OUT – February 17
 PLAYFUL PLUTO – March 3
 GULLIVER MICKEY – May 19
 MICKEY'S STEAMROLLER – June 16
 ORPHAN'S BENEFIT – August 11
 MICKEY PLAYS PAPA – September 29
 THE DOG NAPPER – November 17
 TWO-GUN MICKEY – December 15

1935

MICKEY'S MAN FRIDAY – January 19
 THE BAND CONCERT – February 23*
 MICKEY'S SERVICE STATION – March 16
 MICKEY'S KANGAROO – April 13•
 MICKEY'S GARDEN – July 13
 MICKEY'S FIRE BRIGADE – August 3
 PLUTO'S JUDGEMENT DAY – August 31
 ON ICE – September 28

1936

MICKEY'S POLO TEAM – January 4
 ORPHAN'S PICNIC – February 15
 MICKEY'S GRAND OPERA – March 7
 THRU THE MIRROR – May 30
 MICKEY'S RIVAL – June 20
 MOVING DAY – June 20
 ALPINE CHAMBERS – July 25
 MICKEY'S CIRCUS – August 1
 DONALD AND PLUTO – September 12
 MICKEY'S ELEPHANT – October 10

1937

THE WORM TURNS – January 2
 MAGICIAN MICKEY – February 6
 MOOSE HUNTERS – February 20
 MICKEY'S AMATEURS – April 17
 CLOCK CLEANERS – Oct 15
 LONESOME GHOSTS – December 24

1938

BOAT BUILDERS – February 25
 MICKEY'S TRAILER – May 6
 THE WHALERS – August 19
 MICKEY'S PARROT – September 9
 THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR – September 23 †

1939

SOCIETY DOG SHOW – February 3

1940

THE POINTER – July 21 †
 TUGBOAT MICKEY – April 26
 MR. MOUSE TAKES A TRIP – November 1

1941

THE LITTLE WHIRLWIND – February 14
 THE NIFTY NINETIES – June 20
 ORPHAN'S BENEFIT – August 22
 LEND A PAW – October 3 †

1942

MICKEY'S BIRTHDAY PARTY – February 7
 SYMPHONY HOUR – March 20

1947

MICKEY'S DELAYED DATE – October 3

1948

MICKEY DOWN UNDER – March 19
 PLUTO'S PURCHASE – July 9
 MICKEY AND THE SEAL – December 3 †

1949

PUEBLO PLUTO – January 14

1951

PLUTOPIA – May 18
 R'COON DAWG – August 10

1953

THE SIMPLE THINGS – April 18

1980

MICKEY MOUSE DISCO – Compilation

1981

ONCE UPON A MOUSE – Compilation

1983

MICKEY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL – Special

Features

FANTASIA – THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE (1940)

* First colour Mickey Mouse short.

• Last black/white Mickey Mouse short.

† Oscar nomination.

‡ Oscar winning animate short.



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