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“ THE THIRD DIMENSION”

**A Thesis discussing Film, Advertising and Graphics
from a Three Dimensional Perspective**

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INTRODUCTION:

This thesis proposes to discuss the work of Nick Park, animator, filmmaker, artist and advertiser. *A Grand Day Out*, *The Wrong Trousers*, *Creature Comforts* and more recently *A Close Shave* are the films that he worked on under Aardman Animations Studios in Bristol. Contrasts in style and subject shall be compared between Tim Burton's *Nightmare before Christmas* artistically directed by Henry Selick a renowned animator who has worked with MTV, Sesame Street and Disney. The Scottish artist, designer and illustrator Douglas Watson will be discussed. Watson's still photographic work relates stylistically to the work of Park and Selick, and is applied to the field of advertising in a manner that manages to revitalise the use of image. The visual impact these artists/designers are having on today's media and how they are influencing the development of a new style of art will be discussed.

The first chapter will trace broadly the cinematic development of movement. The origins of three-dimensional animation, an art that is intertwined with the Theatre and Eastern culture will be researched. The development of European Animation appears to reflect the changes in society, heavily influenced by art movements such as the Bauhaus, Kinetic art and the Futurist artists. Animators such as Jiri Trnka, Jan Svankmajer and the Quay Brothers all played key roles in the development and progression of three dimensional animation as a highly specialised field of art. The historical past and development of three-dimensional animation and its contemporary use in communication arts and design will be followed.

Chapter two introduces the animator Nick Park. His work while he was a student and then how Aardman Studios nurtured and developed his talents will be discussed. The importance of sound, and how it affects and enhances their work will be analysed. Wallace and Gromit have evolved under the guidance of Park to becoming Oscar winning actors. The style of Park's work and the nuances that he has developed so distinctively and so separately from other artists in this field will be reviewed. The film *The Wrong Trousers* as well as other work done by Aardman and Nick Park will be reviewed. Their progression into the world of television advertising will be noted. The importance of the materials he uses will be considered. The difference in Park's work, and the elements that make it so unique within the field of animation, and why it is so popular, in a society that is otherwise visually overcrowded will be discussed.

In chapter three the film *Nightmare before Christmas*, acclaimed to be the most highly developed and sophisticated three-dimensional animation production to date will be

reviewed. Tim Burton developed the idea behind the film *Nightmare before Christmas*, but it was the creative insight and talent of Henry Selick that allowed it to become, technically, a groundbreaking film. The influences and artistic past of Henry Selick, a creative history that evidently led to his present success will be discussed. *Nightmare before Christmas* was artistically directed by Henry Selick, scored by Danny Elfman, and financially sponsored by Disney. The technical advancements and its revolutionising repercussions will be taken into account, while also taking a broad look at its production and character development. *Nightmare before Christmas* has all the essentials of becoming a groundbreaking piece of work, raising the reputation of three-dimensional stop motion animation in the field of the arts, an art that until recently has been dormant and awaiting discovery.

In chapter four the illustrator, designer and artist Douglas Watson who is based in Edinburgh will be discussed. He uses three dimensional illustrations with text and manages to combine constructional elements and a whole range of three-dimensional objects to produce some of the most dramatic and intricate pieces of graphic design. His style is very "particular", and the reasons for this individuality will be examined. The question will be asked why this work is applicable to the world of communications and design. Teaching part-time, Douglas Watson seems to find a whole wealth of inspiration and originality to construct these sculptural works which he then appropriately applies to a design brief. Through his work Watson manages to capture the life and motion of objects as still photographs.

Park, Selick, and Watson, artists whose animation and art has filtered into a world of visual communications film, advertising and graphics, this progression from art to design will be examined. These elements manage to generate a specialised genre of design and communication. An understanding of the importance and popularity of this type of work in design and communication today will be discussed. Since 1912, animation has been used as an advertising tool. Why is it now under-going a form of revival, bringing with it new ideas, creating different perspectives and using more diverse media? Both Nick Park and Henry Selick used the same animation technique in their film yet certain qualities are missing from the widely acclaimed *Nightmare before Christmas*, qualities that are so evident in Nick Park's work. Why are Watson's graphic images in effect, so similar to Park's animation?

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THREE DIMENSIONAL ANIMATION:

This chapter places three-dimensional stop motion animation within its historical context, tracing broadly the development of animation. The history of the animated film has passed through four main phases:

"1. The initial period of trick work and magic; 2. The period of the establishment of the cartoon as a sideline to commercial entertainment (1920's); 3. The period of technical experiment and of the development of animation in the form of full length feature entertainment (1930's/'40s); 4. The contemporary period during which we are seeing a considerable expansion of the animated film into every kind of use, from the television commercial to the highly specialised instructional film" (Technique of Film Animation).

At a time when cinema was first developing it was the puppet artists' work that first came to life. Some of the first movements on a screen were those of the silhouette puppets of China, Java and Turkey. These techniques were then imported to Europe as '*ombres chinoises*', because of their black and white visual qualities resembling the '*chiaroscuro*'. These two techniques of production, one being a hand made picture the other a chemical reproduction, represent two separate visual developments. Even before the cinema had come into existence advanced forms of magic lantern projections had developed basic fundamental forms and principles of movement and animation. The zoetrope invented in 1834 by W. G. Horner, a watchmaker of Bristol. This was basically a revolving drum with slits. Emile Reynaud in 1882 had succeeded in developing longer films with the pictures painted with strips of celluloid. Edward Muybridge, in 1885 was the first person to take a series of still photographs of humans and animals in motion. Emile Cohl and George Meliès completed their experimental work between 1904 and 1914, Cohl in matchstick, Meliès in fantasies, performed through live action. Between the years of 1908 and 1918 Cohl made nearly 200 cartoons *Transfiguration*, *Metamorphoses*, *Castro in New York*, *Round the world in eighty minutes*, (Fig. 1:1) and *Flambeau the Lost Dog*; these are but a few. Walt Disney was born in Chicago. It's a rare phenomenon that Disney has dominated the world of animation for so long. It was really the talent of Ub Iwerks, Disney's life long partner that established Disney cartoons as the institution that we are familiar with today. Disney along with Halas and Batchelor has had the largest and most effective impact on

the shape of animation, yet Disney has never quite mastered the art of three-dimensional animation.

The history of three-dimensional and puppet film lies deeply embedded in the history and culture of Eastern countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia and Germany, countries where there is a peasant tradition of craftsmanship in the carving and designing of puppet dolls. These countries were mainly concerned with developing animation as a medium for subjects derived from folklore. The graphic form they took was traditional and representational in character, and the subjects favoured were usually old tales and legends. There were certain pioneers of this puppet, three-dimensional animated film. By 1912, Ladislav Starevitch was creating films in his native Russia and developed his style further after departing for France (Fig. 1:2). In Starevitch's films the figures were "entirely clothed and only the faces are revealed to be made of wood" (Technique of Film Animation). As a film making medium and commercial medium three dimensional animation was popularised in 1907 with the release of J. Stuart Blackton's landmark short *The Haunted Hotel*. Stop motion as an effect's technique was pioneered and brought to new heights by Willis O' Brien, who used latex-covered armature puppets to create an amazing array of credible dinosaur action for the 1925 silent film *The Lost World*. In 1933 he used similar techniques in the classic film *King Kong*. Ray Harryhausen, the film maker used the same principles in *Jason and the Argonauts* and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad*. In 1934, Ptushko made *The new Gulliver* and Starevitch, working in France, '*The mascot*'. Meanwhile the Hungarian George Pal started his famous puppet advertising films in Holland in the same year. After the War, the most renowned practitioner in motion pictures, Jiri Trnka, had his own studio in Prague, under state sponsorship. Hungarian born George Pal made his first *Puppetoon* short in Paris in 1938. Three years later he made a deal with Paramount to produce *Puppetoons* on a regular basis. George Pal also used his animation in numerous feature films both to create characters and special effects (1947). In the early films of George Pal, the dolls sometimes had wooden heads and a certain proportion of accessories for their bodies made of cloth (Fig:1:3). This was also the case with Trnka's puppets. Stop-motion animation underwent a revival in the 1950s with the introduction of Art Clokey's graphic character *Gumby* who was the star of his own show in *Howdy Doody*. Also in the 1950's, Micheal Myerberg's production of *Hansel and Gretel* (1954) became the first full length feature film in the USA using three-dimensional animation. At the same period in England, Lou Bunin's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) combined a live-action Alice with a three-dimensional animated world. In 1977, The arrival of *Star Wars* created a new era for the collaboration of three-dimensional animation with special effects. Will Vinton

regenerated the interest in plastic three-dimensional animation in 1985 in his film *The Adventures of Mark Twain*. Recently three-dimensional animation, has experienced popularity and acclaim in the media world. This success is indebted to the work talented artists and studios, also as a result of the sponsorship and support from television networks such as Channel Four and BBC.

Europe during the post-war period (World War 1) was going through a meditative as opposed to a productive phase. In general, film makers were concerned with reshaping the ways of the cinema, searching for new and innovative ways to improve and advance the visual arts. Europe wanted to emphasise the importance of ideas, concepts, using the arts for mental aesthetics as opposed to technical advancements.

"The sweeping influence of the abstract art movement; the separation of realist and impressionist cinema; the discovery of montage; the uses of superimposition and dissolves and the trend towards non-symmetrical composition all had an immense influence on the visual arts, including the production of animated film." (The Documents of 20th Century Art. Functions of Paintings).

The 1920s brought with it the realisation of the potential of animation, movement and film. Suddenly art could move, something art had strived for in the past yet inevitably failed to achieve. Artists, influenced by the mechanics of motion and the futurist and kinetic movements, used bursts of colour, quick and ecstatic brushstrokes, powerfully capturing, freezing and isolating movement.

"These illusions of motion are caused by physiological characteristics of the human visual system. Optical Art is almost always abstract, since other dimensions of meaning tend to distract from the perception of pure sensation" (Principles of Visual Perception)

Dottori, Leger, Fischinger, Richter, Ruttmann and Duchamp, the innovators of motion dynamics and the Futurist movement during the first part of this century, packed so powerfull an allusion of motion onto their canvasses that they virtually exploded with energy and life. Both Leger and Duchamp have managed to use the canvas, stage, and film as a means of expressing this desire to give life. "Fundamental works of the graphic cinema from the 1920's, made without animation are Ferdinand Leger's "Le Ballet Mechanique" and Marcel Duchamp's "Anaemic Cinema" (The Documents of 20th Century Art. Functions of Paintings). *Le Ballet Mechanique* was one of the first films to employ the rapid inter-cutting of static scenes to give the impression of motion. Animation exists essentially for its use of movement and the mechanics of motion. However, it takes a step beyond this

representation of reality; through its highly creative and imaginative potential it can also 'express' as a poet or an artist would.

"An epoch alive with exploration, risk, which perhaps is ended now. It continues through animation, which has limitless possibilities for giving scope to our imagination and humour. It has the last word" *Ferdand Leger* (The Documents of 20th Century Art. Functions of Paintings).

It's my opinion the pioneers and the masters of this field of animation would have to be Jiri Trnka, Jan Svankmajer and The Quay brothers. Jiri Trnka was born in Pisek, Czechoslovakia, in 1912, and was a graduate of the Prague School of Arts and Craft. He trained as a sculptor and painter and then later studied graphics and lithography. He was drawn towards the theatre, becoming an apprentice for the puppet-master Josef Skupa who became a significant influence on his work. Trnka became, as his tutor was, a true master of puppetry. Using this ability as a stepping stone he progressed to the skilful manipulation of these puppet characters using the medium of motion pictures. His forte was in the art of story telling (Fig 1.4 ; Fig 1.5). His characters were simple, graphic and easily understood (Fig 1.6). His subtle and restrained humour, his sense of patriotism and longing for freedom and justice appealed to the public of that time (post war period). Although Jiri Trnka provided inspiration for today's artists with his mould breaking three-dimensional animation, success was a very slow story for the Czech-born animator. At home, his critics found it difficult to accept comedy, drama and tragedy portrayed by moving puppets. Abroad, the Czech language was unable to cross European borders. His first international success was with *The Emperor's Nightingale* in 1948, *Prince Bayaya* in 1950 and *The Old Czech Legend* in 1953 (Fig 1.7) . When he made a *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1959 he came under heavy criticism for attempting Shakespearean poetry and was " criticised mainly for his subtlety's of character and the theatrical spectacle." (Sight and Sound No. 4 Dec. pg. 26-29, Creative Review) When he later produced *The Good Soldier Schweik* series in 1954 and *The Hand* in 1965, he finally gained recognition as the true artist that he was. In these last productions he made an imaginative plea for the freedom of the creative artist who defied the authority of the state. "The central character, a sculptor carving a warning hand out of the stone could easily be identified as Trnka and the things he stood for throughout his life" (Creative Review Vol. 15). In the past puppets for films have been made mostly of wood on which both their features and clothes are directly painted. The problem with all puppets is how to animate them. As a solid, the nature of wood as a material has always placed a certain restrictive quality and certain boundaries within the filming of three-dimensional models.

fig 1.8 ?

"Jiri Trnka used to speak about the resistance of materials, the material of which a puppet is built for example or of which her dresses are made"(Art in Movement. New directions in animation.).

Trnka studios have begun creating with plasticene which is a much more manageable substance, allowing the artist a greater freedom of movement.

Jan Svankmajer, aged 58, is a Czechoslovakian animator who has influenced students all over the world including the widely acclaimed Quay Brothers. Svankmajer is probably the most important animator to have evolved from a culture and a history that prides itself in its theatrical arts and puppetry. In 1964 Svankmajer made his first short animated film *The Last Tric*. This film succeeded in changing the former perception of Czech animation, "formerly characterised by a rather isolationist kind of surreal humour" (Creative Review Vol. 15). This film and its influence managed to attract international audiences and help shape the Czech New Wave of the '60s. However, Svankmajer managed to remain detached from any cinematic movement nor did he subscribe to any recognisable style of animation. He remains an individual, always conscious of his identity as an artist. Originally he was a theatre director with a history in marionette and mask productions. His early film experiences evolved as a direct result of experiments with the mixed media work of the Lanterna Magika Theatre in Prague. A recognisable trademark of his work is his involvement with sculpture and collage, with a highly developed sense of physical texture. All of these elements create a world which bridges the division between illusion and reality; live action and animation; theatre and life. Svankmajer's films, such as *Don Juan*, *Alice* (1988), *Punch and Judy* and more recently *Faust* have a certain 'disturbing' element (Fig 1:8; Fig. 1:9).

"The subversive quality of my work comes from the fact that the audience sees ordinary objects which behave strangely, so their relationship to them is called into question. That is the difference between Surrealism and the art of the fantastic" (Sight and Sound No.4 p. 20-23)

Svankmajer's reputation lies not only with the Avant Gardists but is also built upon his appeal to commercial directors and others in the creative media field. The reasons for his success in the commercial world probably lie in the fact that his films are essentially miniature "episodic commentaries upon a theme rather than sustained narratives"(Creative Review Vol. 15). The 'humanity' of his films reaches above and beyond the technicalities of today's computer generated world. The success of his animation lies in his truth, his vision,

style and persistence to remain true to his own idiosyncrasies, called "One of cinema's rarest phenomena" (Theories of Mass Communication). Jan Svankmajer, with a certain quirk on the world, and graced with a vision that manages to change people's perceptions, has lived true to his art still creating a form which has remained undiluted after a thirty year career.

Born in Philadelphia, the Quay Brothers (Stephen and Timothy) came to Britain in the late '60s. They studied illustration in the Royal College of Art, there they met their producer, Keith Griffiths, who set up their first BFI (British Film Institute) project *Nocturna Artificialia*, in 1979. Working with him they set up the production company Konick Studios in South London. The brothers admit that their affinities lie with Eastern Europe.

"Their masters are names like Starewycz and Trnka; Yuri Norstein, the Russian maker of *Tale of Tales*; Walerian Borowczyk, who before his career as an artporn auteur successfully moved from animation to live action with *Gotto, island of love* (1968). (Creative Review Vol 15).

Yet one of the most recognisable influences in their work would have to be that of Jan Svankmajer. They paid homage to this artist in their 1982 film *The Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer*, exploring the style and technique of Czech animation. In their work they deal mainly with themes reflecting a distressed society physically and spiritually, always maintaining a sense of vanished time and space. They tend to have a very surreal almost fairytale approach to their work using textured media. They have worked in a variety of media, theatre, advertising, film and music videos. Currently they are working on a set for the National Theatre production of Moliere's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. They designed sets for Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa*, Feydeau's *A Flea in her Ear* at the Old Vic, and Prokofiev's *A Love for Three Oranges* at the ENO. They have also worked extensively in the field of advertising for Honeywell Computers, Walkers Crisps and ICI Woodcare, and recently they made three idents for BBC2. The Quays have also ventured into the field of music-video. The first was while working on Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer*, with animators from Aardman including Nick Park. The second, suiting their style more, *Stille Nacht 2* was commissioned by a record company in London (Fig 1:10). They have worked on idents for BBC2 entitled *Sleepwalkers of Daylight* and *Unstable Worlds* (Fig 1:11). Its subject is the German master of the literary fantastic, E.T.A. Hoffmann, working along side the composers Anton Bruckner and Hugo Wolf. It appears to me that The Quay Brothers are feeding a need within the media and the arts world. Working in a very subtle subversive



manner they provide an alternative to the normal overtly 'cute look' that is sometimes associated with animation. In my opinion, having said this they are somewhat acolytes of the Czechs, mainly Svankmajer, as they seem to have assimilated his style, form and sense of the three-dimensional and use it to suit their own needs. Originality is not a strength in their work yet they have influenced the look and development of a whole genre of animation..

These artists have taken from the past and created for the future using tradition, history and culture. They managed to pursue an art which never forgets the human, the emotion and the passion. Dealing with and investigating on a philosophical level the shortcomings of our society they offer their own sharp, critical comment on what they observe. They represent the past and the future of three-dimensional animation, looking to push the medium forward, not under the shadow of film making, but as a separate field of the arts.

CHAPTER 2: NICK PARK, A CONNECTION OF HUMAN AND PLASTICENE:

Chapter two will introduce one of the leading and innovative animators and animation studios in the world, Nick Park and Aardman Animation Studios. Nick Park was born in Preston, Lancashire in 1958. He became interested in animation at an early age, experimenting with his father's film camera. Park pressed the button and it opened up a whole new world. He began his filming career using a standard 8 in 1973, and attempted basic animation. Using felt cut outs, he adventurously, proceeded to shoot them in direct sunlight (Fig 2:1). His early experimental efforts of frame by frame illustrations were quickly replaced and translated into three-dimensional plasticene movement. One of his earliest works entitled *Archie's Concrete Nightmare* was shown on BBC television in 1975. Park completed a BA degree in Communication Arts at Sheffield Art School in 1980 and in the same year went on to study animation at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield. While at the film school, in 1983, Park began work on *A Grand Day Out*. In February 1985 Park, was asked to join Aardman animation's and it was here, 6 years later, part-time that he completed "*A Grand Day Out*" in 1989 (Fig 2:2). The film won the Bafta award for *Best Short Animated Film* in 1990 and was nominated for an Academy Award in the same year. During his time at Aardman, Park has worked as Director and Animator on many projects, including music videos, title sequences, and inserts for children's programmes. In 1989, Park made *Creature Comforts* for Channel Four Television. This film received much critical acclaim at all the major film festivals, as well as picking up an Oscar for *the Best Short Animated Film of 1990* (Fig. 2:3) *Creature Comforts* has generated a whole palette of inspiration for various advertisements, including the infamous Electricity Association adverts. *The Wrong Trousers* features the continuing adventures of *Wallace and Gromit*, the stars of *A Grand Day Out* and won an Oscar for *Best Short Animated Film* from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in March 1994. "Park's achievement is to bring to the form hitherto unseen nuances of expression, body language and wit, and hence, too, of narrative and imaginative scope" (Campaign Magazine, Aardman extends its rare talents). Recently he released another thirty minute feature film called *A Close Shave*, a romantic comedy thriller which involves wool, rustling and a lot of porridge.

David Sproxton and Peter Lord, the founders of Aardman Animations in 1972, began their animating partnership at school. They moved to Bristol in 1976. Their legendary *Morph* made his television debut in the same year. The *Amazing Adventures of*

legendary *Morph* made his television debut in the same year. The *Amazing Adventures of Morph* began to accumulate the largest audience for its BBC viewing slot at 5:35 pm. However, Aardman wanted to capture a different audience. Their goals lay in developing a genre of animation that mainly appealed to the adult sector. *Conversation Pieces*, commissioned by Channel Four Television in 1982, enabled the company to develop this goal by animating characters to real life conversations. The incentive behind this project had originated from an earlier project with BBC Bristol in 1978. In the five by five minutes *Conversation Pieces*, plasticene personalities enact scenarios suggested by documentary-style recorded dialogue. *Early Bird*, *Late Edition*, *Sales Pitch*, *On Probation* and *Palmy Days* cover topics ranging from breakfast shows to the world of journalism. *Creature Comforts* managed to secure itself an Oscar as a result of this project. They demonstrated with insight, humour and sensitivity how animals' lives could be compared with human's (Figs 2:4; 2:5). "Handling these films as a series rather than fillers, Channel Four contributed to the overwhelming enthusiastic response of the viewing public" (Washington Post 25/03/95). In 1986 Aardman collaborated with Stephen Johnson and the Brothers Quay to produce Peter Gabriel's music video *Sledgehammer*, a video which took six days to film, but which went on to reclaim almost every music and video award that year (Figs 2:6; 2:7). The same qualities of design were harnessed for the visual accompaniment to Nina Simone's *My Baby just Care's For Me* (Fig 2:8). Aardman, with an unparalleled reputation for the creation of commercials, has led to commissions for an international list of clients. Lurpark, The Electricity Association, Mita Copiers and Cadbury's are just a few clients that demonstrate their strength and talent in the advertising world. Recently Guinness have worked with Aardman to create a Christmas Reindeer to replace the character of actor Joe McKinnon. Aardman Animations Studios provides a haven for nurturing and developing the talents and creative skills of the world's leading animators. Richard Goleszowski, Jeff Newitt, Steve Box, Dave Osmond and of course Nick Park are all part of the "Cottage Industry....It's a factory in the nicest possible sense".

Park uses plasticene as a medium for creating his characters. Plasticene as a material immediately frees the creativity of the artist, as opposed to the early wood puppet works of the past (e.g. Jiri Trnka or Svankmajer). The free manipulation of a three-dimensional object, can be seen to create another extension of animation's interpretation of reality. A slight paradox appears to exist at the centre of Nick Park's success, in that plasticene initially a cold and inauspicious material is used to create scenes of security, homeliness and warmth. "The seeming contradiction between matter and content turns out to be a strength" (The London Times, 2/4/94). Park argues that it is possible that the

"material's place in our infant days give's it some sublime advantage"(The London Times, 2/4/94).

"The test of any actor's talent is surely his ability to communicate the illusory indefinable state of 'bemusement'. That an animated blob of clay manages to bring it off is a vindication of Park." (The London Times, 3/3/94)

Park and Aardman place a huge emphasis on sound. Firstly to create characterisation they use the recordings of real people. The voice exists before the character; it's real people talking about their experiences. The tapes are then edited down to short stories: "Voice first, character second. This is what gives Creature Comforts and the Electricity Association ads their hook" (Campaign Magazine, Vol. 19, pg 14). A key facet often overlooked in a visual style is the importance of sound. The sound tracks are assimilated by Aardman. Once the track has been broken down into phonetics by a sound editor and written out on 24 frame per second working sheets. This allows the animator to determine the amount of sound required for each frame. For *Creature Comforts* they didn't write a script but they went out, and asked people questions that would somehow get the kind of answer that would reflect and parallel the answers that animals would give had they the ability to be interviewed, "anthropomorphised animals somehow made more human than humans through the cosy overdubs of chat" (The London Times, 02/04/94.). Peter Sallis, developed the character of Grommit. More recently Anne Reid, of Cornation Street (1971) supplied the polite, rather posh voice over of Wendolene in *A Close Shave*.

Nick Park in an interview, *Inside the Wrong Trousers*, with BBC 2 spoke of the technique and progression of his work. He describes Wallace and Gromit, the heroes of *The Wrong trousers*, *A Grand Day Out* and more recently *A Close Shave* (Figs 2:9; 2:10). Wallace is the more "stupid, insensitive, happy go lucky character" whereas Gromit tends to be the "sensitive, loyal, questioning everything character". Both "two halves of one character"(*Inside the Wrong Trousers*), which he admits is, an extension of his own identity. He claims that they have evolved into living elements, Nick acting as the creator, God, the initiator of their existence. He claims that he now "meets them as opposed to creating them" and any idea or movement has to be in "agreement with them". Gromit originally existed "as a cat" and Wallace as an "Ecky Thump Northerner" but as the characters stepped from two-dimensional sketchbook form into the three dimensional characterisations, they evolved in form and in personality (Fig 2:11).

Nick claims that Wallace and Grommit gave him his style. "They were the first characters that he developed a relationship with". Their form and style of character serve as a template for the rest of his animated characters. Typical traits are the eyes close together, a

wide mouth, capable of wide, exaggerated expressions and expressive eyes, as a means for viewing the windows to the soul. Wallace's expressions have been described as "The most expressive instruments since Valentino sizzled on the silent screen" (The New York Times, 22/03/95) (Fig 2:12). In *The Wrong Trousers* Wallace is the only character who speaks, Gromit and the Penguin remain silently expressive. It's the simplicity of Nick Park's work that makes it a success. Most animation is violent, over active, over stylised, "There are huge things going on" (Campaign Magazine, Vol. 19, 23/06/93). On the other hand, Park's genre of work tends to take a step back, almost in retreat of this calamitous screen. It's the quietness, the tiny observations that make Nick Park's work unusual, someone scratches his nose, looks at his nails, swallows with fear. Typically it's the quiet gestures of the tortoise claiming that he loves to "cuddle up in his own home" in the Electricity Association adverts (Fig 2:13). "It is a very human animation, it is about people" (Paul Cardwell, Electricity Association). It's Nick Park's attention to detail, quality, sound, colour and timing all composed and condensed to create a quirky type of world, which makes him unique. The restrictions Park imposes upon his work, creates a more precise, dynamic and condensed film; thus appealing to an audience on a more professional and commercial level. He seems to have denied himself the animation licence, which is that anything is possible. This potential of animation can sometimes be the very reason for its failure, over exposure, over indulgence

"What originally enchanted me- animation's potentially limitless freedom of action and narrative- is just what I find so tiring and frustrating. When everything is possible nothing is meaningful" (The London Times, 03/03/94).

By its very nature animation can sometimes be inhibited by its right to do anything it pleases. Gilbert Adair claims that the success of Aardman and of Nick Park lies "in their refusal to take advantage of the potential liberty at their disposal" (The London Times, 03/03/94)

Wallace and Gromit managed to scoop up an Oscar for their performance in *The Wrong Trousers*, "a delirious parody of such Hitchcockian suspense staples as the mysterious lodger and climatic train chase" (Daily Telegraph, 31/12/94). As a film, it had existed in many forms in sketches and ideas before it ever reached the filming stage. The train chase through the kitchen was the first germ of the film (Fig 2:14). The idea of having a lodger was then created. For the trousers Park had numerous ideas and sketches. Firstly, they existed as a robot but then eventually evolved into moving trousers, hence the idea for the film. Wallace and Gromit "inhabit a wonderfully realised world marooned in the early sixties, a

world of string vests, tobacconists and Austin cars" (Washington Post, 25/03/95) In *The Wrong Trousers* Wallace and Gromit are going about the normal activity of breakfast. The added dimension is that Wallace abruptly enters the breakfast table scene via the roof suspended and dressed in motion. Breakfast is served by a whole series of gadgets and buttons climaxing with the flight pattern of a blob of jam coming to a crash landing on his toast. "Cracking Toast Gromit" is the kind reply to the sudden, aerodynamic serving of breakfast (Fig 2:15; 2:16). But today differs from the rest for it's Gromit's birthday! As a gift he receives a pair of "X-NASA trousers" that will enable him to go "walkies" in the park. Due to the expense of "this valuable addition to our modern day lifestyle" a lodger is taken in for financial reasons because "there is no use in prevaricating around the bush". The lodger, a penguin, who is silent but deadly immediately introduces an air of suspense and curiosity (Fig 2:16). The plot thickens as the penguin, the paying guest embarks upon a coup, eventually forcing Gromit to leave his humble abode (Fig 2:17). Desolate and alone he searches for new lodgings, while the penguin plans to seize control of Wallace's robotic trousers for a scheme that he has devised. The following morning all seems normal until Wallace realises that he has been lowered into the "Wrong Trouser's". Frenzy set's in as the penguin continues to instruct the movements of the trousers from a safe and concealed location. It's only Gromit now who can come to Wallace's rescue, as he reveals the penguins plot. After much commotion and a spectacular train chase through the kitchen Gromit saves the day (Fig 2:18). Normality is reclaimed by the bravery of Gromit as Wallace cries for "more cheese! not forgetting the crackers".

The films *A Grand Day Out*, *Wrong Trousers*, *Creature Comforts* and now *A Close Shave* has provided the impetuosity for Park to work in the commercial advertising world. From these short films he and Aardman have managed to influence, what seems to be a new genre of commercial advertising, one that is in popular demand. Guinness is just one of those corporations that dealt with Aardman. It was Dave Osmond who animated the three minute dance of a reindeer, the one that managed to replace actor Joe Mckinny for the festive Christmas season. Having had discussions with Angela Farrell of Guinness advertising, who claimed that there was a very positive reaction to their use of three-dimensional animation as a means of advertising. She believes that, even though the filming took a period of two weeks, it was a cost effective. As advertisers she commented that it is "always a risk using animation in advertising, but done well it can achieve nothing but success"(Angela Farrell, Guinness Advertising). She praised the studio for its efficiency and application. Guinness supplied Aardman with a basic storyboard. The outline was all Aardman needed as their animators and artists needed creative control and space, not to be

too restricted by the demands of the client. This process, she said, was the reason that Aardman's product always maintained the quirky vision that they sought, a vision which other studios have failed to achieve. She commented that the agency had the "feel of a hospital or a factory, yet in the best possible sense". Aardman is succeeding in the commercial world because of its creative talents managing to maintain that expressive "off beat, quirkiness". As an advertiser she was impressed by their meticulousness and attention to detail, and said that Guinness would look forward to working with Aardman in the future. The Electrical Association series of adverts, spawned as a direct result of *Creature Comforts* was a phenomenal success. The adverts dealt with interviewing animals in their suburbanite homes. A homely Tortoise, an athlete, claims that the heaters should be "easily turn on and offable"; the West-Brit cat enjoys a hot bath after she has been out all night dancing;(Fig 2:19) the African Parrot protests of his sensitivity to the climate; the Scottish Pandas are set on impressing their neighbours with their new dish washer, "if you've got it flaunt it"; the penguins are rejoicing about their "efishent" cooker hobs; (Fig 2:21; 2:22) the Pigs are saving money with the new electric showers,(Fig 2:23) and the Monkeys are able to provide clean clothes for their fashion conscious children (Fig 2:24). These adverts have made a contribution to contemporary advertising. They manage to introduce a homely, human atmosphere back into a world that is sometimes otherwise indifferent.

When Nick Park developed a relationship between plasticene and human he created not only another dimension of reality but a form of communication that rejoiced and redeemed the 'human'. It's the small and humble gestures, the natural and innocent moves of a three dimensional plasticene model that endears and reminds us of who we are. Suddenly, from the fury of our television screens comes a small voice with captivating eyes and gestures that you see reflected in the mirror here lies the Nick Park niche the 'human' element. The support and commissioning of Channel Four and BBC have also managed to sustain and develop this art, nurturing not only the talents of Nick Park but other creative artists in this field.

CHAPTER 3: HENRY SELICK, A TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT :

Chapter three introduces Tim Burton's film *Nightmare before Christmas*, a film "that provides depth, detail and a grace of movement never approached in stop-motion animation before" (New York Newsday, 13/10/93). Tim Burton, a trainee and assistant animator in 1979, first conceived this project in the studios of Disney. "In 1982, he wrote a three-page send-up of Clement Clarke Moore's classic holiday poem (New York Post, 13/10/93), this he named *Nightmare before Christmas* providing the inspiration for the film. Directed by Henry Selick, it was through his style and creativity that the film "achieved new depth and vividness" (New York Post, *Fright Christmas*). The screenplay was written by Caroline Thompson, and the film was musically directed by Danny Elfman.

Tim Burton's inspiration was responsible for the existence of the film, yet it was Henry Selick, the director, infamous for his "attention to detail and creative vision" (Tim Burton's *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*) that was mainly responsible for the execution of such groundbreaking work. An early influence on his artistic style was the 1926 German silent animated film by Lotte Reiniger *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* along with Ray Harryhausen's *The seven Voyages of Sinbad*. He studied science for a year at Rutgers University, then realising his talents lay in the arts, he transferred to Syracuse University where he studied art. This was followed by a semester at London's St. Martin's School of Art, embarking on a path that led him towards animation. He then enrolled at CalArts, where he became involved in a Disney character animation program. During this time in collaboration with Jules Engel he made two award-winning student films, *Phases* and *Tube Tale*. After graduating from CalArts in 1977 he spent some time working in Disney. In 1979 he won awards with his own personal film "Seepage", where he combined cel animation with three-dimensional. In 1981 he began work in Florida initially working on *Twice Upon a Time* with John Korty. On finishing this project he collaborated with Will Vinton in the clay-mation of *Return to Oz*. He later worked with the special effects team on Carroll Ballard's adaptation of the *Nutcracker*, *The Motion Picture*. In 1986 he founded his studio, Selick Projects, where he began working on station idents and 'top of the hour' segments for MTV. During this time working for MTV he became involved in animation on a commercial level, creating the series of Pillsbury Doughboy Adverts and a range of Ritz Cracker adverts. In 1990 concentrating on his work and sponsored by MTV he undertook an ambitious project called *Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions*. This film went on to win many awards and persuaded Tim Burton,

impressed by the style and innovative techniques of *Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions* to hire Selick as the ideal Creative Director on *Nightmare before Christmas*.

At an expense of 2 million dollars and a production time scale of two years, "Nightmare before Christmas has broken all boundaries in the conventions of three-dimensional animation"(Tim Burtons *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*). It managed to weave elements of traditional animation with the realism of three-dimensional sets built and lit as in live action. A 40,000 square foot vacant studio space in the heart of San Francisco was transformed into Skellington Productions. Over a time scale of two years more than 120 animators, artists, camera operators and technicians worked on the film. At the height of production 20 individual stages were simultaneously used for filming purposes. Selick introduced many technical innovations into the film that he had developed as a result of his own work. Normally in three-dimensional animation the cameras are in a fixed position; the characters would move but not the camera.

"For 'nightmare' four elaborate rigs were built to allow the widest possible range of camera moves. Another six cameras were hooked up to computers so that pans, tilts and tracking shots could be programmed in a repeatable manner"(Tim Burtons *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*)

An example of some of these camera sweeps is on the opening shot and in the graveyard scene, (Fig 3:1) adding a greater fluidity and natural sense of movement. This film also reached heights in the area of special effects. Animation has never ventured into using atmospheric elements like fire, water, smoke and fog (Fig 3:2). "Here, in most cases they were created in-camera on the original negative by using a double-exposure technique"(Tim Burtons *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*). Using technology and assistance from Disney, Buena Vista Visual Effects, Harry Walton and Micheal Hinton, the special effects in this film are the most advanced to date. "Another way in which computer technology proved useful on this film was in preparing the dialogue scenes"(Tim Burtons *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*). Jack's 400 heads with their individual mouth positions were photographed and then "digitalized into a computer" (Tim Burtons, *Nightmare before Christmas*, *Production Information*) (Fig3:3). This managed to free the constraints of the animator so that he was able to concentrate more on the fluidity of movement and body language of the characters. *The Nightmare before Christmas* broke new grounds in animation because of its strong lighting design, adding to the mood of the story and obscuring the characters by use of shadow when necessary. It has also established

new ground in the wide range of camera angles and lenses used to enhance the dramatics of the film.

During production over 227 animated characters with complex armatures, ensuring a free sense of movement, were created. A production team dealt with the disposition and presence of the character and another team of experts worked on the internal structure and design of the puppets (Fig 3:4).

"Nightmare required some very unconventional armature building techniques, the form and function of the armature had to follow the design "(Cinefex, No. 56) .

The main characters are Jack Skellington, "the king of the pumpkintown"; Sally, the neighbourly rag doll; Santy Claus, a Mayor; an evil scientist; a robust Oogie Boogie man and a whole community of Ghoolish characters. Jack resembling a slightly gaunt version of Fred Astaire, had his entire head replaced for each frame of film in which he makes some expressive gesture. Sally had 10 different facial expressions, each individually painted and repainted as necessary (Fig 3:5). In the case of the Mayor, his eyeballs and mouth were detachable magnetic sections, exchangeable to reflect the attitude needed (Fig 3:6). Oogie Boogie, was the most intricate and difficult puppet to create; "A living burlap bag of bugs, would present one of the greatest armature building challenge, standing twenty-four inches tall, he required 173 separate parts" (Cinefex No. 56)(Figs 3:7; 3:8). Although a majority of the puppets were painted, cloth costumes were required for the main characters. Sally's multi-patterned dress was handmade with each element etched or screened on a section at a time.

"One of the things that we've tried to do with this film is to push the limits as far as we possibly can and that means creating some spectacular puppets unlike any that movie audiences have ever seen before"(Variety, 08/11/93).

The film begins on a high musical note, with sweeping, panoramic camera work introducing us to the world of Halloween. In the film musical notation is used as expressively as dialogue. "The sophistication and variety on display wows the eyes even as the hyperactive soundtrack occasionally frets the ears" (Cashbox, 23/11/93 pg 27). Jack, the hero of the town, makes a dramatic entry. In awe and fear the town's friendly freaks chant "words of hail to the pumpkin king". Musically we enter into the next scene we discover that Jack, is disillusioned with life, "an emptiness has begun to grow, a longing that he has never known". Sally, the "mad professor's creation," makes her entry as she softly whispers words

of unrequited love for the completely oblivious Jack. Jack, bored with repetitious rituals such as Halloween and suffering from melancholy and dramatic depression begins a frenzied search through the forest for clarity of thought and "someplace new". Ironically, he finds his answer as he stumbles upon four trees, each representing a pathway into different worlds. Jack, drawn to the gleam of colour, chooses the door with the Christmas tree, enabling him to enter the unknown world of Christmas (Fig 3:9). He musically exclaims his surprise when "there's children throwing snowballs instead of heads", and the climax of this scene is his discovery of Santy Claus (Fig 3:10; 3:11). Jack returns to Halloween Town with news of an outside world, but he fails to translate the Yuletide festivities in a comprehensible manner for the guletide traditionalists. Jack undergoes a search for a logical, explanatory reason for Christmas. Meanwhile, Sally, (being a woman of the '90s) makes her affection known to the completely non-receptive Jack. She sends him a hamper of gifts "How thoughtful" this indirectly inspires Jack about the ethos of Christmas. "Just because I cannot see it does not mean I can't believe it" are his thoughts as he rushes to his window to exclaim, "Eureka! This year Christmas is ours". Thus commences the plot of the film, which is that Halloween town are planning to sabotage Christmas, the only clinch being that they never quite grasped the idea of Christmas in the first place. They capture santy and scare the local children with gifts of fear and horror (Fig 3:12;3:13). Jack on his arrival at Christmas Town in a coffin, to dispatch some rather goolish gift's "nearly ruins christmas". Alas it's Sally, the physic who saves the day as she tries to rescue Santy from the Oogie Boogie Man's insidious lair, a strange cauldron in which the Boogie man plays the dice of life (Fig 3:14). The film ends with Jack and Sally softly coeing words of passion in the moonlit graveyard, Eureka!

Technically, *Nightmare before Christmas* has raised the status of three-dimensional animation in the film and art world. This film has undoubtedly inspired and generated a whole new wave of interest in this genre of film making, yet its failings are many. Over elaborate, and over indulgent this film danced a frenzy of life on the screen yet never quite gave life. One failed to connect with the essence of this film, reminiscent of Jan Savankmajer's style yet never quiet loses the glossy flamboyency of Disney. The core plot behind this film is that Christmas and Halloween would form as one 'holiday'. The concept of merging two very opposite worlds was too distant and diverse, hence the plot of the film never really succeeded. The concept of Christmas and Halloween were too polar; there was never an understanding made between them(Fig 3: 13). The use of the music as narrative became increasingly laborious, the songs not really holding any strength quickly stifled any real entertainment that could have been salvaged.

CHAPTER 4: DOUGLAS WATSON, A SCULPTURAL DESIGN:

This chapter will consider the, Illustrator, designer, artist, sculptor and teacher Douglas Watson. Watson studied graphic art in Delford Technical College, in Edinburgh. After finishing Delford college, he joined an advertising agency for six months, but after a period of time he realised that his talents lay in a different direction. He entered Dundee Art College and began to study illustration, while still maintaining a strong interest in sculpture. In an interview with me, he spoke of the conflict that he experienced in Dundee Art College when he attempted to combine illustration and sculpture, both areas representing two fields of thought, design and fine art. In his final year of College he finally managed to combine illustration and sculpture, using three-dimensional models as an aid to his drawing. As he progressed, he discovered that his three-dimensional work was capable of standing alone as a visual, hence his style of illustration became a constructional, three-dimensional one. "Instead of paint my palette consists of objects, clay or anything at all".

In my opinion I would consider Watson to be an illustrator/designer with a very strong sculptural influence in his work. Similarities can be found between his work and that of Nick Parks[?] and Henry Selicks[?], not only does his work compare in subject matter but also in style. Watson manages to explore and advance upon the potential of found objects giving them a new sense of life (Figs 4:1; 4:2). Watson has never been involved in animation but his quality and style of work lends itself to animation. Watson's[?] work compares greatly with that of Nick Parks[?] in that they both have a certain peculiar, tactile dimension to them (Fig 4:2; 1:14). He spoke of being heavily influenced by "Aardman's *The Adventures of Morph*, *Spitting Image* and *Monty Python*". Even though Watson was enticed by animation, he was "never introduced or encouraged in the field of film and stage by my tutors in Dundee Art College".

The materials Watson uses are mainly modeling clay and a collection of found objects. These materials lend themselves to a very tactile, yet mechanical use of imagery. His use of image is diverse in the sense that he maintains two opposing qualities in his work, an innocent, childlike appeal and in contrast to this a technical and generated 'feel'. He uses both of these elements in his favour, for example, the poster for the *Childrens Hospital Campaign* and the image for *Aldus Photostyler* (Fig 4:3; 4:4), both appealing to two different senses one being very technical and the other being almost 'human'. The only similarities of this work being the use of the hand and the eye as expressive tools. In *Head Start* and *Childrens Hospital Campaign* and the wooden boy character (Fig 4:3; 4:5; 4:6) he illustrates an open hand gesture and a wide eyed expression. These are the qualities that are

so similar to Parks work this silent, yet expressive use of eyes and hand gestures as a means of communicating. The most distinctive quality about Watson's work is that he always uses his materials in a condensed, sparing manner, creating a more disciplined work. Like Park, out of this restrictive element he is able to prise a quality and a standard of work that reflects his ability as an artist and a designer. Watson spoke of the recent explosion of three-dimensional work in the field of art and communication, he described it as an area that is "quickly developing and becoming very fashionable". The difference with his style, he said was that he "always makes and constructs his work with clay or found objects". As a designer he is more than capable of applying sculpture and three-dimensional illustrations to an area of advertising. Watson claims that "my style is very tight and I work in a very efficient and precise manner", this being a strength and an essential in the area of advertising and design.

Watson has won many awards for his creative and visual use of imagery. He first embarked on this creative path when a tutor in Dundee advised him to "create a construction from within", not using the aid of a brief but to create freely and expressively. From this he created *Restricted* a "winged figure" bound up and captured with ropes, attached to a collection of objects that would seem to indicate printing and design, which Watson claims "was the starting point of his career" (Fig 4:7). *Restricted* seems to reflect his position, then as an artist, not fully able to express himself, bound and frustrated. Interestingly his present work seems much more expressive and free, as if he has escaped from these ropes of restriction and confinement. Watson, in my opinion is an artist who has successfully adapted and applied his art to the field of advertising. Watson seems to have created a niche within the advertising world to apply his work to, or maybe it's that the market is needing and responding to this genre of work. Watson's illustrations are mainly tactile and emotive, approaching advertising in a 'soft sell' manner, acting almost as a reaction to today's computer orientated society. Watson's work has also the potential to be very technical, as a result of the mechanical materials he uses, thus giving his illustrations a different appeal in advertising (Figs 4:3; 4:8; 4:12; 4:13).

He works alone in his "newly furnished", Edinburgh studio, teaching three days a week in Delford Technical College. He works mainly with design studios in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and studio's in Europe. When creating his pieces, he is not oblivious to the demands of design. He is constantly aware of how the implications of text, photography and visual composition will affect his work. Through experience he has acquired a knowledge of how to "survive and control" the creative decisions and direction of his work. His normal deadline for a "project is three weeks, during which time I research and

come up with visuals for the client". He finds that if the client places "too many boundaries and creative demands on me" that it kills any sense of originality and freedom of expression. Watson is confident that the essentials of his success lie in the client providing "a basic outline of an idea and creative space", thus allowing him to explore its potential. This development of design, communicating and understanding all the elements of a well-balanced composition are fully evident in the result of his work.

Watson has worked on a diverse and challenging range of commercial projects. The Bank of Scotland commissioned Watson to design a cover for a brochure that they launched to help promote their School Campaign (Figs 4:9; 4:10). The result was a three-dimensional professor driving a financially powered, potentially moving object. Pencils' keyboard keys, a golden star, a tennis ball, a globe, a splurge of paint, a paint brush, an equation, a book and an apple; one can only be impressed and slightly bemused by his use of material and attention to detail. Every element used in this image had a reference to 'school'. The use of pound notes instead of propellers indicates that money is an essential to the success of a school, hence saving with 'The Bank of Scotland is the best investment'. As a result of this brochure, 999 Design wanted Watson to design a similar construction for the poster for the exhibition Scottish Illustrators. The principle of this "idea machine" being that "good idea's entered this machine and generated good design", this being an essential to the design field (Fig 4:1). In the 'Festival Week' poster he designed a mixed media model based on the principle of Edinburgh Festival. The festival boy wears a coat of Eastern Bloc flags representing the opening up of these countries (Fig 4:11). Again, nothing is used that isn't significant to the idea behind it. For the *Printing Brochure* Watson was requested by a Glasgow design team to solve a problem they had with a mask. The agency had designed this mask as a design element for a double spread layout. They requested an illustration from Watson, to balance the layout, Watsons proposal was so effective and powerful that all previous suggestions of design were abandoned (Fig 4:12). More recently he was asked to design the first ever Design Awards for *The Entrepreneurial Exchange Awards*, (Richard Branson, and Lord McFaurnal were the recipients of these trophies). They consisted of bronze casted heads in which he had a time scale of five days to complete, "which normally would have taken four to five weeks to cast". One of the projects that he expressed dissatisfaction with was the cover for the *Edinburgh International Science Festival* brochure (Fig 4:13). Here he claims that the designer was "completely unsympathetic to the image and to my suggestions of type layout". The whole standard of work was lowered by "shoving the text in a box, in a corner". Another work suffering from this complaint, in my opinion, would be his cover for the *Children's Hospital Calendar 1992*. The text is barely

legible, the image being the domineering factor, overpowering any sort of balance between text and image(Fig 4:14).

Douglas Watson works alone, relatively unknown in the art or design world yet brilliantly talented. Speaking with him was a pleasure as he was completely passionate about his work, critical yet confident that his vision and his creative talents had created an individual style that "stood out from the rest". Watsons work reflects a combination and fusion of Art and Design. As a designer and artist he has successfully managed to separate his own 'artistic' indulgences from the requirements of his work on a design level. He applies his art and uses his talent of manipulation, to form peculiar, idiosyncratic images. Watsons illustrations are visually appealing and innovative, childish at times yet meticulously technical. Watsons work seems to appeal and reflect two opposing senses, one being sensual and tactile the other having almost a mechanical coldness about it. Maybe these two visual techniques represent two different sides of Watsons creativity. Maybe it's his view and interpretation of reality.

Watsons work which in my opinion is, potentially animated, yet it remains as a still. Watsons style of work is tight and dynamic. As innovative imagery it is suited to the world of layout and graphics. Through Watsons use of materials and three-dimensional objects, his characters and creations lend themselves to a world of movement and animation.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion I would like to draw comparisons with these artists; designers and animators. Nick Park, Henry Selick and Douglas Watson have many overlapping traits, yet, are also faithful to their individual style. To compare *Nightmare before Christmas* and *The Wrong Trousers*, technically these films are very similar but on an artistic and communication level they differ greatly. *Nightmare* was technically an achievement of the highest regard "inventive, witty, brilliantly designed, fantastically labour intensive and detailed, well past the point of obsession"(Buena Vista Pictures, Vol 10, 13/10/93, pg 16). *Nightmare* has brought three-dimensional animation to a higher field of production than ever before, yet in all the sensationalism it seems to have forgotten the essential of animation that being 'communication'. Dancing wildly, it creates a frenzy of movement on screen, so much so, that the viewer is carried away on a visual flight of fantasy. Evidently the visual impact doesn't hide the deficiencies of the production, in that it fails to grasp any emotive responses, "a technical achievement in search of a soul"(Buena Vista Pictures, Vol 11, 14/11/93, pg 25). One never quite grasps the essence of the film. The love story is a late developer; the climax of the film seems to pass you by as it rushes rapidly to the next scene. *Nightmare before Christmas* is essentially a musical, this constant use of music as a dialogue technique is irritating, and one bores easily due to its shallowness and overuse. The film's story line is weak, as a binding agent it fails, never uniting with any other aspects of the film, to become a life and a strength of its own. The film is a surface film. It's incapable of advancing beyond this level. Halloween Town, gaunted and ghoulish, fails to become a world that one can escape into; its characters are devoid of life, their complaint - "a lack of soul" (Buena Vista Pictures, Vol 10, 13/10/93, pg 16).

In comparison, Aardman and Nick Park have grasped the reality of animation; they have pursued a career based on humanity. Nick Park, gentle and humble seems to radiate, as a person, qualities reflected in his work. It holds in its existence everything that *Nightmare* denied itself. Human, small, quiet and shy "it speaks to you". This retreat from the 'over reactive' brings about a pensive, calming ease of performance. Expression and communication are its forte. The gestures, the eye contact, all of these qualities along with a fluidity of movement allows the viewer to freely enter and explore the Wallace and Gromit world. The characters go beyond a vocal and visual communication. They hold a presence, an aura; the connection is made between human and plasticene. They bestow and create a dimension of reality that allows us to escape into a world of creative fantasy. Comparing both films the success and appeal of *The Wrong Trousers* lies in its normality, in the

banality of everyday life. It's based on reality, allowing the viewer to relate and comprehend its existence. Once an understanding is established by the viewer, it allows Park to explore and "invent" the conventions of this plasticene society.

"The combination of verbal and visual discourse which produces the effect of 'reality' requires the most skilful and elaborate procedures of coding, mounting, linking and stitching elements together, working them into a system of narration or exposition which 'make's sense'"(Theories of Mass Communication)

On a commercial level it's this human quality that gives it its advantage and appeal. Its condensation, and restrictions imposed on its production are the qualities that lend it to being a suitable medium for advertising.

Douglas Watson is essentially an illustrator and works mainly in the area of advertising. It's his style and means of communication that are comparable to the work of Nick Park, his style being a three-dimensional, textural one. It's basic yet highly intricate; it pokes fun yet can communicate a definite message. This form of communication is more emotive than literal. You "feel" it; it reaches out in its innocence and touches you, quietly and softly. Similar to Nick Park's work, it's the reprisal, the shying away that catches our attention. In a society that is too used to being bombarded and accosted with images, messages, signals and airwaves, this reprisal is a stranger in our midst, hence its success. When a clay figure with pencil poked eyes and a bandage on his left foot smiles at you enchantingly, it has spoken to you, and when you glance again and you see the cry for "Help" on his T-shirt, that's when it has captured you. The message has been communicated and the advert has succeeded (Fig 4:2). Watson is essentially a sculptor with a flare for advertising. Through his work he manages to break the sometimes creatively restrictive rules of graphics. This work is time consuming, the average time scale for production being three weeks. It's also specific to its brief, not suitable to all forms of advertising but what it does do is add diversity, flare and creativity to a field that sometimes loses itself in financial gain and production lines.

That this form of film and art is employed for highly commercial purposes doesn't demean or alter its affiliation to the principles of the 'art world'. This is an 'applied art', the bread and butter of the artist. One of the main reasons for the present popularisation of this work is the support and commissioning of Channel Four, BBC and MTV. These institutions have managed to bring an art from which would normally circulate within artistic circles to the public. The reason for its commercial success is its immediate entertainment value, its speed at making points against limited time, and its ability to stand

up to repetition. This work approaches advertising in a 'soft sell' manner as opposed to the conventional 'hard sell' method. They produce in effect different kinds of a commercial. They are entertainment on the level of fantasy and generate "a good feeling immediately associated with the company or product"(Art in Movement. New directions in animation). As a graphic image or a television commercial, the message is communicated with clarity and creativity. This form of advertising although specific to the product or subject is an interjection of imagination into a media that can, through repetition, generate a staleness in style and approach.

We live in a post-modern world, technically known as 'Generation X'. In my opinion this 'Generation X' is now reacting to its own existence. The work of Watson and Park, I believe counteracts the 'communication traffic jam' of today's media. This tangible, sometimes textured three-dimensional interpretation of worlds created by artists and designers alike is responding to this communication problem. Here as a reaction, evolves a form of art, film and advertising. A communication process that counteracts the negativity, and the harshness of a visually overexposed society.

"The visual world of a large modern city, is badly orchestrated; in fact not orchestrated at all. The intensity of the street shatters our nerves and drives us crazy"(The Documents of 20th Century Art. Functions of Paintings).

Nick Park and Douglas Watson are artists and designers who have had a large impact of moving individuals to recognise the heartbeat of our time, to respond in an affirmative, creative way to the problems of today's social communications and, thus of creative vision.

In popular understanding, 'fantasy' is always opposed to 'reality'. Fantasy tends to be associated with areas of 'poetry' and visual representations. This collection of artists, represent a 'poetry in motion', "They are the painters' and poets' revenge" (The Documents of 20th Century Art. Functions of Paintings). The common thread linking these artists is their flight from this world into a one where fantasy and imagination run rampant. Returning from their voyages they offer us a visual world, a one they have created as an extension of this one. These gifts of visualisation allow us into another dimension of ourselves, the mind's eye opens, wonders and laughs at what is revealed. "Fantasy appropriates and incorporates social meaning, and forms the historically specific subjectives available" (Theories of Mass Communication). Animation has always been associated with fantasy and the exploration of the mind, yet this limitless quality is not necessarily the key to its success.

"Neither a physical law nor an idea inhibits animation; not even our usual concept of time, space or substance. It's just this aspect of total possibility which animation offers results visually in fear, initial uncertainty in not knowing how and where to go". (Art in Movement. New directions in animation).

The success of this work lies in its creative extension of reality rather than its departure. The reason that Park and Watson's work is so effective and communicable, stems from the discipline and restrictions that are imposed upon its potential freedom.

"Reality is dangerous, fantasy is dangerous. Art changes the imagination, and the person who imagines is dangerous indeed. As dangerous even as the person who thinks, though not as dangerous as the one who both thinks and imagines". (Amos Vogel, Film as a Subversive Art)

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Electricity Board Heat Electric, "Pablo", "Frank", "Vicky" 1990 dir. Nick Park

Electricity Board Cook Electric, "Penguins" 1 and 2, 1991 dir. Nick Park

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Inside the Wrong Trousers, BBC Interview with Nick Park

Institute Benjamenta, directed and animated by Quay Brothers

London Zoo, Introduction directed and animated by Nick Park

My Baby just Cares for Me, Aardman animations, Nina Simone

Sledgehammer, Peter Gabriel Aardman Animations

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The Reindeer, The Guinness Advertisement, Aardman Animations

The Sandman, directed by Paul Berry

The Wrong Trousers, directed and animated by Nick Park

Unstable Worlds, directed by the Quay Brothers

War Story, Aardman Animations Conversation Pieces dir Peter Lord

INTERVIEWS

Interview with director of Guinness Advertising Agency Angella Farrell December 10th
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OTHER

Attended the 3rd Irish Animation Festival, weekend of October 12th. 1995 in the
Irish Film Centre, Dublin:

Seminar: Animation in Advertising, speakers: Peter Dougherty , Creative Director of MTV
Europe; Hubert Montag, Computer Animation, Windmill Lane Studios; David
Murphy Mconnells Advertising; Jamie Helly, Dynamo Design Consultants;
Darren Walsh Animation Director.

Seminar: Clive Wally Retrospective, speaker Clive Wally.

Festival Included: MTV Presentation; Manga Presentation *Patlabor*; International Shorts
Programme One; International Shorts Programme Two; Adults Only; Irish
Showcase; *Institute Benjamenta*, Brothers Quay.

Visited the exhibition Scottish Illustrators in the National Library of Edinburgh,
Scotland, November 10th 1995. Viewed illustrations of Douglas Watsons work.