

What is Claymation

- Claymation® is a registered trademark of Vinton Studios
- call it:
 - Clay Animation, or
 - Model animation, or
 - Dimensional character animation
- Sometimes confused with any 3D stop motion animation



Our Definition

3 dimensional stop motion animation
using clay figures



History of Clay Animation

- Attributed to two technological developments:
- Invention of the single frame movie camera
- Invention of *plasticine* (modeling clay) by William Harbutt, 1890's, England



Plasticine

- Suspended clay and pigment, in a combination of wax and oil
- Soft, pliable, non-hardening; may be reworked over and over
- Developed as a medium for teaching (ref: publication “Arts of Writing, Drawing and Modeling in Educational Work”)



Plasticine, cont.

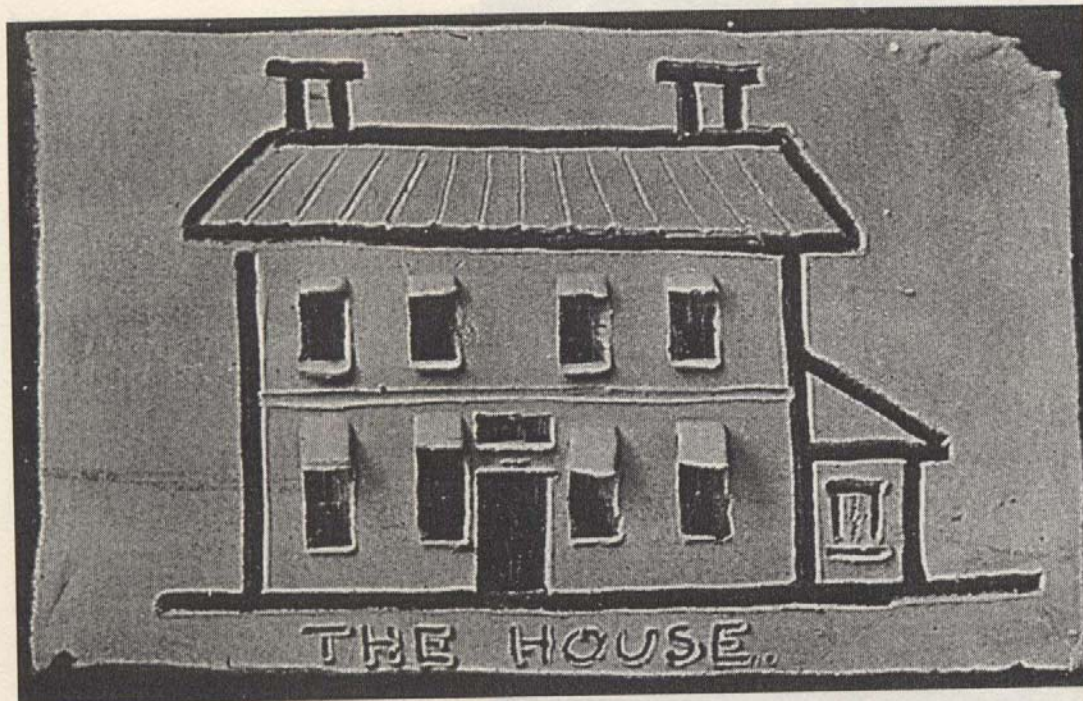


Figure 2.6 Plate 6 from *Harbutt's Plastic Method*.



First Clay Animation

- 1908, two films, “*A Sculptor’s Welsh Rarebit Dream*” (Edison, Feb. 1908) and “*The Sculptor’s Nightmare*” (Biograph, May 1908)
- Both films use clay animation as early “special effect” of clay that magically builds itself into a sculpture.



Clay animation in the early days of Cel (1910 – 1920's)

- Cel animation becoming dominant mode for creation of animated films
- Cel becoming process oriented; broken down into steps that can be divided among a number of individuals
- Use of transparent overlay's meant only having to animate the parts that change.
- Cels were washed clean and reused.
- Clay, continues to be a medium that resists division of labor; the set designer, animator and camera operator are usually one individual



So what was happening ?

- “*Miracles in Mud*”, Willie Hopkins (1915).
- “*Swat the Fly*” (1917)
- A “Topical Caricaturist”
- 1 to 2 minute shorts, included in news reels.
- Produced 100 minutes of screen material over 18 month period



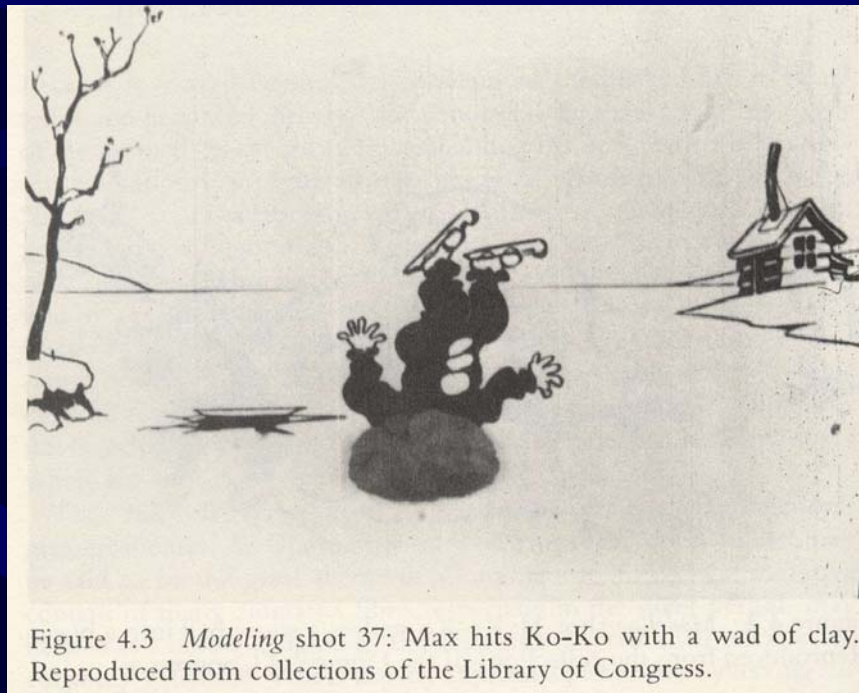
So what was happening ?

- “*Motion Picture Comedies in Clay*”, Helena Smith Dayton (1916)



So what else was happening ?

- “*Modeling*”, Fliescher (1921)
A series of clay animation gags as part of Ko-Ko the clown “*Out of the Inkwell*” shorts.



“*Monsters of the Past*”, Pathe Review (1928)

- Popular film using clay animation of dinosaurs



Figure 4.11 Flat staging in *Monsters of the Past*. Courtesy of International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House.



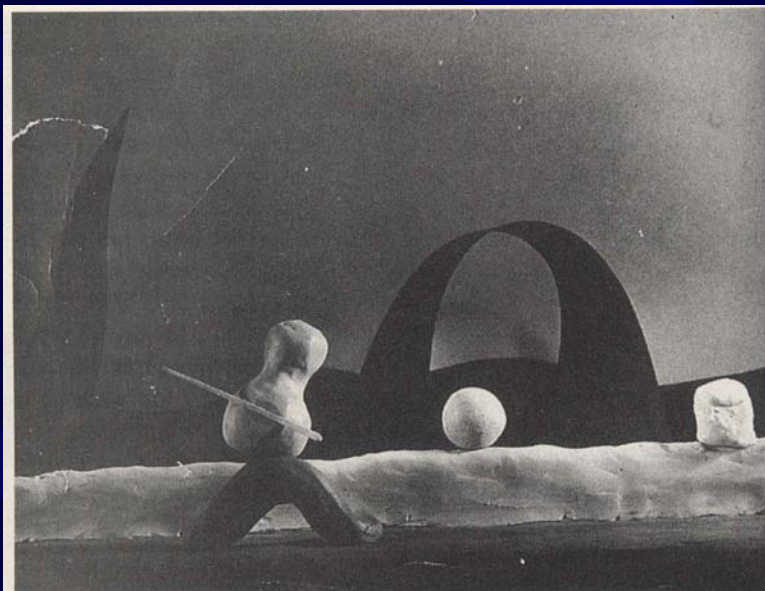
1930's and 40's

[not a whole lot]



1950's – Experimental Film movement

- “*No Credit*” (1948) and “*Proems*” (1949), Leonard Tregillus (PhD, Chemistry, UC Berkeley, 1950)
- Avant-garde ...



Clay animation and Television

- 1950's television brought the growth of children's programming
 - In close relation with toy manufacturers (advertising)
 - Recycled studio cartoons – created a market for new children's programming
 - Broadcasters wanted *any* programming provided “cost per thousand” was reasonable (price advertisers paid to buy 1000 viewers)
- Clay revival



Art Clokey

- As USC film student, created experimental film "*Gumbasia*" (1955)
- "Geometric and amorphous shapes made from modeling clay"
- Was tutoring child of Sam Engel of 20th Century-Fox who produced the *Gumby* pilot film (1954-55)
- Gumby was born



Gumby



Gumby ...

- First five episodes were aired in rotation on “The Howdy Doody Show”
- Given NBC Saturday morning time slot.
- Budget was \$650 per minute of animation (1/2 that of cel based such as Hanna-Barbera - Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound)
- Cancelled by NBC – Clockkey syndicated the show himself
- Lucrative agreement with Lakeside Toy Company



Gumby Revived

I'm Gumby Dammit !

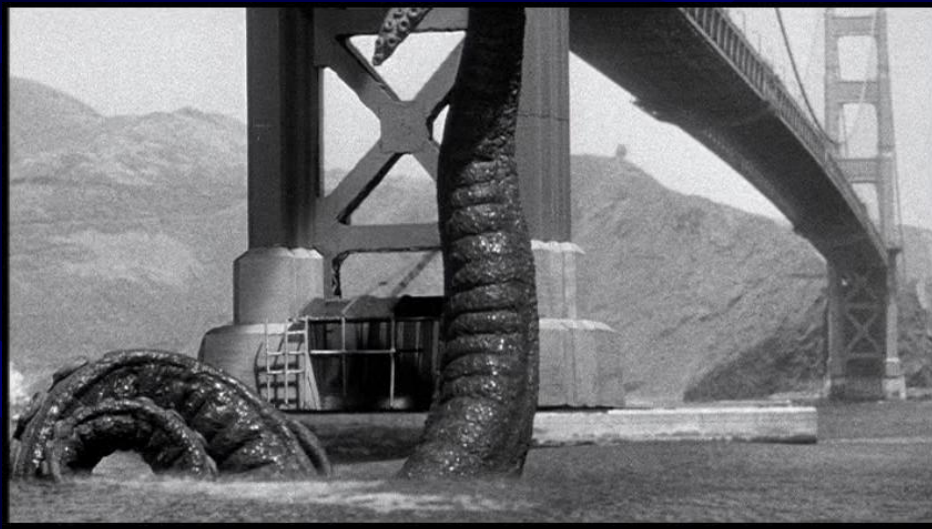


Clokey Studios contracted to produce 99 new six-minute episodes starting 1987



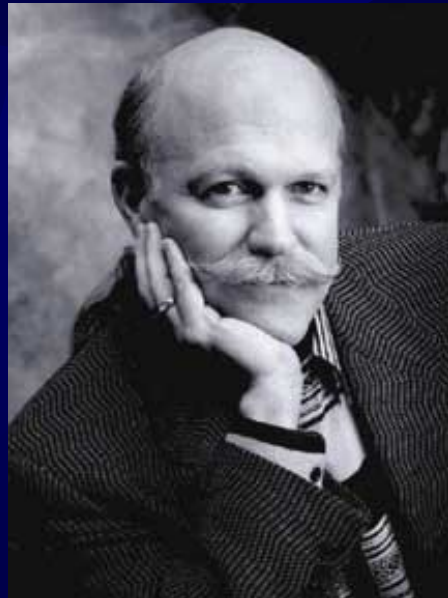
Diversion into special effects

- Stop Motion Model Animation (started with King Kong)
- Ray Harryhausen - 1950's
- *It Came From Beneath the Sea* (1955), use of stop motion in movie special effects



Will Vinton

- As UC Berkeley Architectural student, began making experimental films in the 1960's
- “*Closed Mondays*” shot by Vinton and Bob Gardiner in a basement over a 14-month period.
- Won Academy Award in 1974 for Best Animated Short.



Will Vinton, cont.

- Developed lip-sync dialogue, using clay “rotoscoping”
- Tended to be realistic, mostly human characters
- Sets constructed in clay, or clay covered
- Started Will Vinton Studios in Portland OR
- “*Martin the Cobbler*” (1976), “*Rip Van Winkle*” (1978), “*The Little Prince*” (1979)
- First full-length feature – “*Traveling with Mark Twain*” (1987)



Will Vinton Studios

- 1980's shifted toward commercial and special effects
- The California Raisin commercials (1986-1989)
- Filmed like “music videos”
- Featured caricatures of stars (Ray Charles, Michael Jackson)
- Claymation® trademarked by Will Vinton Studios
- Fired in 2002 by new owners Nike



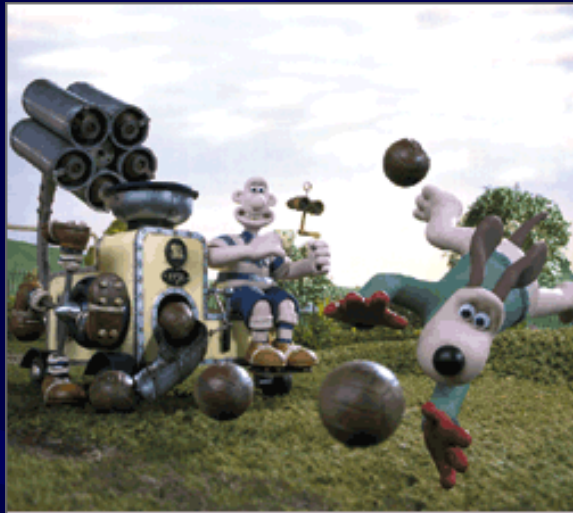
Bruce Bickford

- A little less mainstream ...
- Experimental (re: drug induced) clay animation in late 60's and 70's
- *"Baby Snakes"* (1979) for Frank Zappa
- *"The Amazing Mr. Bickford"* (1987)
- *"Dubroom Special"* (1984)



1990's to present

- Nick Park, Aardman Animations in U.K.
- “*Creature Comforts*” (1990) wins Academy Award“
- *Wallace and Grommet*” (1990's, continuing)



More Aardman Animation

- “Chicken Run” (2000), Nick Park, Peter Lord



Others of Note

- *The PJ's* (Vinton 1999-2001)
- Pingu

