



TRANSCRIPTION OF SOUNDTRACK

LEGO® Art – 31202
Disney's Mickey Mouse



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[Brian]: There have been so many views of what Mickey is. And so it seems that people have their own idea of what Mickey should be.

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[Jeff]: People try to draw this character and they don't really understand how complex he is, just to get this black and white color into his head and in his body.

0003 00:00:19:14 00:00:26:11

[David]: It's not easy to draw Mickey. He looks very simple, and because of that simplicity, he's difficult to draw.

0004 00:00:26:13 00:00:29:16

[Ron]: Yeah, he's... he's deceptively simple, we like to say.

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[David]: Exactly.

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[Fiorella]: The pressure was super real with this set, not going to lie. I mean, knowing that there are so many Disney fans and experts out there, I really had to do this set some justice.

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[Andrea]: Imagine crafting your own wall-art. Maybe it's a passion that fascinates you. Or maybe it's the promise of an immersive creative experience like no other. A piece of iconic art you can build for yourself. Relax and reconnect with your creative side.

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We've created unique soundtracks, curated around the world of art, animation, music and movies. And in this soundtrack, we're going into the work of Disney animation, and especially Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

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We'll hear from four incredibly talented Disney animators with a deep knowledge of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, from the early days all the way up till today. And also into the future.

0010 00:01:28:11 00:01:39:06

We'll also meet the LEGO® designer who created the LEGO® Art pictures of the two iconic characters and get a peak behind the curtain of what it's like working at the LEGO® Group.

0011 00:01:39:08 00:01:43:22

You can listen as you build, at your own pace and get the inside story.

0012 00:01:44:15 00:01:49:23

All right, ready to dive in?
I'm Andrea Collins, welcome to LEGO® Art.

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[Andrea]: Now we are joined by our first two guests. Principal Character Artist, Brian Blackmore and Senior Character Artist, Ron Cohee.

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So Ron, tell us about that moment when you realized you wanted to be a Disney artist and how did you get so interested in it?

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[Ron]: Oh, Gosh. It's a... It all happened for me... Well, I grew up in Southern California so Disneyland was always a big part of my life, especially once I was about 18 and managed to get an annual passport and started going about every week or so.

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I just fell in love with it all over again, because I loved it as a kid. And that all led to, you know, loving Disney,

seeing it on TV, of course, and in the movies.

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And I ended up falling in love with animation specifically at... about that same time as a teenager. Because when I was in Junior High, a lot of things kind of happened at the same time. Like, great films were coming out.

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And I got this book called The Illusion of Life which was by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston who were two of Walt's greatest animators.

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[Brian]: Great book.

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[Ron]: Yes, yeah.
[Brian]: It's a Bible.

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[Ron]: It is for Disney animation, it's like, it's the main book. That led me to find out more about it, there's a school right there that, I found out later, you know, Walt had started called California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California.

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And so, I ended up going there. I didn't get accepted the first year, but you know, worked at it and got accepted the second time. And basically that's how everything got rolling for me.

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[Andrea]: Wow. I'd like to hear more about that school in a bit, Ron. But let's also introduce Brian Blackmore. Now, you've been with Disney for around 30 years. As far as I understand, you knew very early on that you wanted to work for Disney?

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[Brian]: Well, it was at five years old...

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[Andrea]: Wow!

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[Brian]: ...that I decided I wanted to work for Disney. And I think that's the point in people's lives, prior to being five years of age, you're not really aware of the outside world.

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And I think it's at that time when people

become aware of things. And of course, Walt Disney was still alive at that time and he had The Wonderful World of Color.

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And so my folks and my brothers and sisters, and I had quite a few of them, eight.

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[Andrea]: Wow.

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[Brian]: We would make it that every Sunday, it was our thing to watch The Wonderful World of Color and of course you had your live action films and your nature films and things but what really piqued my curiosity was the cartoons, the animation and the stories and the characters.

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It was... It was a fancy world that was... I just loved, absolutely loved. That was kind of like my introduction to Disney and that's what I wanted to do. There was no other thing in my life... aside from maybe being an astronaut, but definitely Disney artist.

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[Andrea]: Now, Ron you mentioned California Institute of Art, CalArts, that Walt Disney co-founded in 1961. You said that you applied twice. It makes me kinda glad to know that even the best illustrators do not necessarily get into the fancy schools the first time around.

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[Ron]: Right and some of the best ones didn't even go. You know, to be perfectly honest, you know, it's not always a guarantee for anything and...

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It's great though. I mean that one specifically, it's one of many but that one for me was really great because I still keep in touch with everyone I went to school with, a lot of them.

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And also we had the benefit of people in the industry, in the animation industry were also teaching there, working at the same time. So you've got that benefit of, you know just the animators teaching there. So that was good.

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But there's plenty of really great schools around the country and the world that teach animation now.

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[Andrea]: Brian Blackmore and Ron Cohee, you're both based in Orlando, Florida and we'll get back to you in a bit, but now let's jump across the country, to the West Coast of the US.

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Character Artist Jeff Shelly, you started working for Disney all the way back in 1987 fresh out of art school. But before that, when you were a boy, you had a teacher that was a huge inspiration for you. Is that right?

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[Jeff]: Oh, my God, he was amazing. He came into our class and he goes up to the chalkboard and draws Donald Duck and said, "Look, guys, I was a Disney animator, back in the days I worked on Dumbo." And my eyes just lit up, and it was such an amazing experience to watch him draw.

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And I was learning from him, like, original Disney animator and he was teaching me to put, you know, a soul into these characters. And we would draw hands all day and turn them and twist them in animation.

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And he taught me the old way of drawing, you know, like he was taught back then at Disney.

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[Andrea]: Let's bring in our last Disney artist and a legend within the company and the world of animation. David Pacheco is Character Artist and Creative Director and has been with Disney for 40 years. David, I take it you also grew up a big Disney fan?

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[David]: Exactly. Absolutely loved these characters. They were, they were just so real to me. In fact, I had this major crush on Snow White.

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And it wasn't until my father explained to me what the process of animation was, that this was not a real person, but she was drawn and painted, that I thought, "My God, that's absolute magic."

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And we'd go to Disneyland and my father would buy me the little flip books and this is what animation is. It's just like,

this is what I wanna do for Disney when I grow up, I wanna make cartoons.

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So I went to school, very... Actually four schools at the same time because I wanted my education quickly. I didn't want to wait any longer than I had to.

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[Andrea]: Wow! That's efficient.

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[David]: I was very determined.

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[Andrea]: And that determination landed you a job at Hanna-Barbera where you got to work on characters like Fred Flintstone?

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[David]: Mmmh, and I was there for two years, always hoping that I would get to Disney. And that was everybody's dream because that's like the ultimate in terms of animation.

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So I was there for two years and I decided at one point, it was like, "Well, let me

just go try my, you know, send my portfolio out there." I drove out there and they... I didn't have an appointment and the guard took my portfolio.

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And I thought, "Well, you know, that's that, let's see what happens." And the next day they called me and two weeks later I was at Disney and that was, you know, forty years ago.

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[Andrea]: Wow!

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[David]: And it's been, it's been absolutely amazing. I worked on some tremendous, phenomenal projects in my forty years. I've been very pleased and very fortunate.

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[Andrea]: So everyone's grown up with Mickey Mouse. David, what's your story with Mickey?

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[David]: Hmm, I remember seeing... This is when I... I was told by my parents and my grandparents that when I would watch the

Mickey Mouse Club, I would actually get up and start dancing to it.

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I don't remember it but I can see that I probably would. In fact, even today, you know, it's like, "Oh yeah, I remember that song." And you know, it just kinda brings back memories.

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And then going to the Disney... seeing the Disney films, they were released every seven years for every new generation. So when Peter Pan would be re-released, we would go and see it, it was great and seeing Mary Poppins and seeing all these films.

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We would go to Disneyland and, you know, my parents would buy me the books and the little figurines and so forth. So we grew up with Disney, we had the Disney toys, and the Mickey comics and the Mickey books and the Mickey coloring books.

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This was what we grew up with. And it's such a part of my life.

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[Andrea]: Wow. Jeff, what's your childhood memories when it comes to Disney?

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[Jeff]: When I grew up, you know, my parents, we drove to Disney World when it opened. And I just remember going out in the park, I couldn't sleep the night before, and just seeing Mickey. And just growing up that way.

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And I always drew as a kid. And you know, my dad was always sketching, and he actually drew Mickey and Donald and that really inspired me, you know, as a kid. And I still have sketches of that...

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And now, I look at it, it's like,
"I need to do an overlay on this."

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[Andrea]: Yeah. Mickey has been described as both the easiest and most difficult cartoon character to draw. Would you guys agree on that? Let's start with you, Ron, do you find it difficult drawing him?

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[Ron]: Yes! Absolutely to this day. I...

He's very fun but sometimes I'll go over and over and over it until I get it right. Yes, he's deceptively simple, we like to say.

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[Brian]: And to really put a fine point on it, when it comes to drawing Mickey. I don't think anybody's ever actually totally satisfied with the way they draw Mickey.

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I know from my personal experiences, I can draw Mickey Mouse for something and I'll look at it and I'll say, "Ah, that's pretty good!" And then I'll go and get maybe a glass of water or I'll go to the printer to pick up a copy and I come back and I look at the drawing again and I go, "Eugh!" And want to redo it again.

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You know, it's funny, there's eight of us in our department. And you can take Mickey Mouse, each one of us can draw Mickey Mouse, and set it on a table. And each one of us can go through and say, "Oh, that's a Ron Cohee Mickey." Or, "That's an Alex Maher Mickey." Or, "That's a Mike Solomon Mickey." Or, "That's a Brian Mickey."

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You can't help but putting it in your own light. You add something to it that... I know it's like, I guess it's like drum players, you know, you get... Everybody plays the drums but they play it a little bit differently. Doesn't mean it's any worst or any best, it's... just differently.

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[Andrea and Ron]: Yeah.

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[Brian]: But only artists seem to notice that. Our guests don't seem to notice that.

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[Andrea]: So Mickey is deceptively simple to draw. Jeff, do you agree?

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[Jeff]: Yeah, I mean. I'd look back at my sketches... I mean, I seriously could stack up, like, reams of paper to the ceiling, like five times, of the amount of drawings I've done and I'm looking at these drawings and I'm going, "Oh, my! I need to redo this or this."

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'Cause you know, over time... At that point when you're drawing it, it looks great, you know. And the more you evolve and develop things, and then you look back at your old drawings and it's like, "Well, the ears need to be bigger, this needs to be bigger."

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So, he is so simple as a character, he's so graphic that he's so complicated. And people try to draw this character and they don't really understand how complex he is, just to get this black and white color into his head and in his body.

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[Andrea]: How tall is Mickey Mouse?

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[Brian]: Err, well, he's... Typically, he's three heads tall. That's what we go with, three heads. So if you're to take his head, just the circular part of it, and then move it down to beneath his neckline, and then, again, that's three heads tall, so that's how Mickey is.

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He has been two and a half heads tall, so you can see him where he's two and half heads tall in the older days.

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[Jeff and Andrea]: Hm-hmm.

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[Brian]: But typically when we draw him now, we think about him as being three heads.

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[Ron]: And the... If I can interject about that. As far as real life, if he were to be, you know, in real life as he's been represented in statues and also in, like, Roger Rabbit, for example, you know, what... what height would he be?

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Walt actually established that when he was recording his voice. I think back on The Pointer, was one of the films...

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[Brian]: The Pointer, yes, exactly.

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[Ron]: ...Where Mickey's talking to a bear and he's saying, "I'm Mickey Mouse, you know, Mickey Mouse?" You know, and he... "I hope you heard of me." And he holds his hand out to kinda show, like, his height,

you know, kind of like you're describing a kid or something.

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[Brian]: Yeah.

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[Ron]: And so, Walt did that and they actually animated basically the same movement on Mickey, but when he did that, that kind of defined what he, how tall he pictured Mickey.

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[Brian]: Yeah.

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[Ron]: Just like, what do you say, about three feet, something like that?

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[Brian]: And that's very true what Ron was saying, that Walt was in the recording studio and Frank Thomas, who was one of the pioneers of Disney Animation, saw that and, yeah.

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So he reflected it in the illustration, or the animation within the film, The

Pointer. Make note of that when Mickey says that. It's, it's pretty good.

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[Andrea]: Is it part of the job interview process at Disney that you can do a good Mickey Mouse impression like you just did a moment ago?

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[Ron]: That's just part of our... It's just individual passion.

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[Brian]: Our repertoire.

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[Andrea]: What is the recipe of drawing Mickey Mouse? Like, for those of us listening, if we wanted to try our shot at it, what are the pieces of the puzzle?

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[Ron]: As far of the... As far as designing or drawing Mickey, the simplest way, of course, is always to start with a circle. And this is true for most characters actually.

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[Jeff]: True.

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[Ron]: And you know, it depends on... You could, like, alter the shape of the circle and stuff, as long as it's... Basically, you're providing a volume. And you gotta remember, you're not drawing a line, you're, you're drawing, you know, a representation on paper of a three dimensional shape.

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So you gotta think in terms of volume, and that's something we're taught whether here or in animation, is... you're drawing in 3D.

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[Brian]: You're sculpting on paper.

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[Ron]: You are! You're sculpting on paper. You start with that circle and then, you just draw like a force of action, a line of action, a line that kind of goes down from the head, down through the spine, down to the bottom of the feet. Just a quick line.

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And showing what is basic poses, if he's pointing a finger, that line is shooting off that, you know, and...

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[Brian]: Yeah, a line of action. Absolutely.

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[Ron]: A line of action, it's sitting down. And then you flush out his, you know, his body, his feet, his hands. And sometimes, I'll just draw it where it's his head and then maybe his, you know, the sort of bean shape of his body real quick.

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And then his hands and feet. And then, add the arms and legs right after that 'cause it's... those are the most important parts. So you're basically dealing with these ovals and circles and then later, the cylinders.

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[Brian]: And putting them in a position that follows anatomy.

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[Ron]: Yes.

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[Brian]: Because even our own anatomy, when you look at it, if you can apply that to drawing the characters, then you can bring about a believability to the character.

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[Ron]: Yeah. Yeah.

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[Brian]: And how the legs, I'm meaning... And how the legs and the arms are connected to the body.

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[Andrea]: David, how was it for you drawing Mickey for real the first time officially at Disney? Did you feel any pressure?

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[David]: I'll tell you, it was very intimidating. That's when we were working on Mickey's Christmas Carol, which was the first time that Mickey was gonna back after 30 years. The last short that he did was, where he was in, was in 1953, The Simple Things.

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And you saw him occasionally on television, you know, as kind of a little interstitial or maybe in a commercial and so forth. But there was never really another theatrical short cartoon with him, so this was a special featurette that we were working on.

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And we were all required to go to class on how to draw Mickey because there are proportions. It's not easy to draw Mickey. He looks very simple, and because of that simplicity, he's difficult to draw.

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There are proportions that you have to remember. Yes, he starts with a circle, but there was a specific placement for the ears. The nose is below the central line. You have to think about that perspective. You have to think of Mickey's head as a three dimensional ball and how the eyes sit onto that and how they will curve.

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There's a slight angle to the eyes, there's a slight angle to the mouth. You know, how far is the black mask, you know, the black area of his head come down, it can't come down too far. If his ears are too low, then he looks like a little bear cub. If they're too high, it's too much.

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So, the instructor that we had he was probably... I believe he was 19 years old and he was just amazing and so facile at drawing Mickey, and we had people in the class that had been at Disney for 15-20 years of more, all learning from this very young kid on how to redraw Mickey.

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And it was just so intimidating but, wow, it was great to bring him back.

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[Andrea]: Coming up, we take a look at the history of Disney. How Mickey and Minnie came to be and the evolution of them as characters.

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[David]: Yeah, he didn't have gloves at first, then they realized that he needs gloves because if he moved his hand in front of his body, he would lose the hand. So they put gloves on them so you can actually see the hand against the body.

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[Andrea]: And then, we bring in Fiorella Groves, the LEGO® designer who was responsible for creating the LEGO® Art set

that you might be working on right now.

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[Fiorella]: And when the opportunity came up to work with Disney again for LEGO® Art, it was an absolute no brainer that it had to be classic Mickey and Minnie. They're the world's most beloved animated couple, so of course it had to be them.

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[Andrea]: And so much more. Stay with us.

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[Andrea]: Now, two things that are synonymous with childhood is Disney and LEGO® toys. And today, one of the reasons we're talking to you is because of the new LEGO® sets for adults featuring Mickey and Minnie.

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So, I'd like to go around the table with all four of you. Do you have any history playing with LEGO® bricks and sets? Let's start with you, Jeff.

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[Jeff]: Oh, yes, I do. The main one I... I got so many LEGO® sets when I was little. And even when I was... My cousin would get

LEGO® sets and I was in my teens, I would sit there and play with him. And you know, I love building models, I love just building, building, building.

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So, this with Mickey and Minnie will be a real fun thing.

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[Andrea]: For sure. David, any history playing with LEGO® bricks?

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[David]: Oh, yeah. In fact, when I was a kid, there was a little boy in our neighborhood, he was a couple years younger than I was. I was about six or seven, and we would go over to his house, my sister and I, and he would bring out... He didn't call them LEGO®s, he called them snapping toys.

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And I was fascinated by them. There was no theme, it was just a rectangular box with the bricks in it. And I loved playing with them. And he would just go off and play and it's like, I would go over by myself and say, "Hey, can I play with your snapping toys?"

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And I would sit at his dining room table and he'd be playing, you know, with this other kid, or doing whatever, and I would be at the dining room table building whatever it was that I was building. But I actually asked my father to buy me a set of LEGO® and I actually still have my very first LEGO® set.

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[Andrea]: That's amazing. And Brian and Ron, do you also have a history of playing with LEGO® sets?

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[Ron]: I certainly do. I've loved them since I was a kid, but also, my son, who's 15 now, but he still to this day loves LEGO®s.

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[Brian]: I used to just love how the bricks connected. And we tried to build a copy of the house that we lived in, in New England.

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[Andrea]: Did it look like it?

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[Brian]: No.

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It had... The house had a lot of gables in it. It was, it was an old house, it was over 150 years old and had all these little gables in it, so it made it kind of difficult. So we did the best we could.

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[Ron]: I think now, if you use the pieces that are available now, you'd be able to get it down to the smallest detail.

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[Brian]: Oh, yeah.

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[Ron]: It's amazing.

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[Brian]: Definitely.

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[Andrea]: It's pretty incredible.

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[Brian]: I know that when we go over to Disney Springs, I still love looking at

the giant LEGO® sea serpent out in the water there.

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[Ron]: Oh, yeah.

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[Brian]: It's really cool.

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[Ron]: Just in general, I, I... I'm amazed, constantly amazed that the sets that come out, you know, whether you're talking about the giant Death Star and things like that, you know, but every little thing, the smallest ones, the biggest ones, they're so elaborate and detailed.

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And the instructions are so clear, and they're just amazing. And I know that one of the directors at Pixar, Angus MacLane, is a huge LEGO® fan and he designed the WALL-E LEGO® set that I think was one of the Choice ones, or... I forgot what you call that.

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When people can submit ideas. And we have that one 'cause it's just so much fun.

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[Andrea]: Hm-hmm.

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[Brian]: And you know, it's funny that you should bring that up, Ron, because when I think about LEGO® and all the things that can be made from it, I'd like to know your... I mean, LEGO®'s approach when they select an item that they're gonna do, and how do they go about designing it, and then who do they get to do.

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I'd like to get to know that kind of part.

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[Andrea]: Hm-hmm, well funny you should say that, Brian, because now, I'd like to bring in our next guest, LEGO® designer Fiorella Groves. And this is something you can say a lot about.

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Can you start by introducing yourself and telling us how you ended up working at the LEGO® Group?

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[Fiorella]: Hello. My name is Fiorella and

I'd like to first say what an absolute pleasure it is to be joining you, even listening to you and hearing you talk about Mickey.

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Hmm, it's been, uh... Yeah, quite a journey kind of working on this... on this set, and so I've really been looking forward to meeting you. I guess, e-meeting you.

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But just to talk a little bit about me, to introduce myself, my name is Fiorella. I have a background in literature and graphic design. And I've actually been designing and art directing for a little over 15 years now.

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I've worked in lots of different industries in design. Prior to working at the LEGO® Group, I was a creative director for a Danish sportswear company and after about eight awesome years in the sports apparel industry, I really was looking for a bit of a change and, like a different challenge.

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And I still wanted to continue

working for brands with values that really matched my own. And... And it was just one of those where, you know, it was a lovely spring day that a friend of mine gave me a call and brought my attention to a job add on LEGO.com on their job page,

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and pointed me to a position that was available there, and I guess the rest, as they say, is history.

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[Andrea]: Cool. And is it true that this is the first product line you've worked on at the LEGO® Group?

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[Fiorella]: It really is, yeah. I'm super excited about this. I've actually been working at the LEGO® Group for about four and a half years now, but the past three and a half years has been really working even more behind the scenes at the LEGO® Group's design organization.

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So, previously, I was working across the design categories and creating strategies and working with the design leadership teams on the who, what and how of design at LEGO®.

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And so, you know, finally getting to work on an actual LEGO® product is a dream come true. I'm really, really chuffed to say the LEGO® Art is my first product line.

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[Andrea]: And what's it like working at the LEGO® Group?

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[Fiorella]: Oh, it's so fun. It's so fun. I mean, you know, it's a toy company, it's... it's just full of really fun, hmm, characters, actually, I have to say. But there are just so many talented people that we're so fortunate to be working with and from all around the world.

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So, it's a real sort of like... A real hot pot of, like, you know, fun, talented, passionate people. And everyone is just, you know, vibing off of this really lovely positivity, vibe around the office.

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And so, you know, and it's a toy company, as I said, so there's always something to play with. There's a nice energy around, which I really love.

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[Andrea]: So, traditional LEGO® building is three dimensional and this LEGO® Art is two dimensional, so how was this task different?

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[Fiorella]: Yeah, well it might seem like we have one dimension less to work with, but we do have a slightly bigger challenge in working with pixelated graphics with LEGO® and making sure that we get the color blending right in the LEGO® Art mosaic.

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So, this can be rather tricky when we're working with the bricks. We have, you know, a color palette that we work with and we have to make sure that everything is blending in in the right way.

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So, there are just so many small pieces to work with, with LEGO® Art, and depending on the content, a single round tile out of place can really throw a piece off track. So, it does take a little bit more attention. It does require a little bit more attention to detail to make a really, really nice piece.

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[Andrea]: Hmm. Can you tell us what the process is like from, "OK, this is the image we wanna use, now how do we create it as the LEGO® Art set?" Can you walk us through how that went?

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[Fiorella]: Yeah, sure. With the LEGO® Art sets being two dimensional, we do start doing quick doodles first on paper to roughly work out the composition and the content of the sets. And we then take these drawings onto the computer and work on them a little further.

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And since there are over, like, I think 2,304 tiles to cover an average LEGO® Art set, it would really be just far too time-consuming to start painting with the bricks first. So we really don't get to the bricks until we're about 80 percent happy with the design.

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I'd say we do maybe about 10 to 20 percent of it on sketch. At least, I do in my notebook first. And then we take it onto computer and to a graphic software to work on it and get the composition right, get the right amount of, you know, the colors in there, and then a lot of the finessing will happen when it's built in brick form.

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[Andrea]: What can you tell us about the finessing?

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[Fiorella]: Hmm, the finessing... I mean, with this particular set, I don't know if you can see, well, it's quite... As I said, you know, Mickey and Minnie are... They look very simple because they're two dimensional sort of graphic forms. They're very graphic and the colors are very strong and contrasted.

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But to do that on bricks just don't translate too well. Because also, when we're building with bricks, we want to create something that's really visually stunning, but also we want to create a really, really nice building experience out of it.

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So we can't just have, like, you know, black and white round tiles all over. When you look at the set, you'll see that we've tried to create some texture through using some tans, some browns, some grays, and different shades around certain areas to create a little lift and add a little dimension.

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And it's really subtle. It really is subtle 'cause we don't want to kind of make this version of Mickey and Minnie look too 3D, but it really is there to give them a little life because they are a dynamic duo and they...

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Like, I would like for people to look at this set and almost feel them moving. And that, you would get through, you know, just finessing by actually, like, taking... Like, literally once they're built, I'll then put it up and stand it on our stand and then, step back and then literally just kind of...

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I have a pair of plyers where I would just kind of pluck the tiles out that I need to take and replace it with the right colors, and then just keep doing this process until we're 100 percent happy with it.

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[Andrea]: Hmm. Sounds meditative and maddening.

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[Fiorella]: It was very meditative,

actually. Hmm, Yeah.

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[Andrea]: And in the booklet that comes with the LEGO® Art set, it says, "Relax and reconnect with your creative side." Can you tell us a bit more about that and why it's so appealing for us adults, now?

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[Fiorella]: Well, hmm... We do know from insights and understanding emerging attitudes from around the world that we've simply been spending too much time being busy and not spending enough quality me-time, really as adults.

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So, you know, we really need to dedicate... We want to encourage some dedication on our well-being. So, reconnecting with your creative side is an amazing way to exercise mindfulness and the LEGO® Art system of building can really offer a unique medium to channel your artistic side in a joyfully focused way.

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And you know... And at the end of it, you have a really stunning piece of wall art to show off, you know. How satisfying is that? It's really, really nice.

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[Andrea]: And you can meditate on your piece as you look at it on your wall.

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[Fiorella]: Exactly.

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[Andrea]: Why did you decide to recreate Mickey and Minnie in LEGO® bricks?

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[Fiorella]: Oh, well, Disney's been a fantastic partner for LEGO® for so many years now, and when the opportunity came up to work with Disney again for LEGO® Art, it was an absolute no brainer that it had to be classic Mickey and Minnie. They're the world's most beloved animated couple, so of course it had to be them.

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[Andrea]: What's your own relationship with Disney? Specifically Mickey and Minnie?

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[Fiorella]: I have a rather special relationship with Disney... Disney's Mickey and Minnie, actually, because my

mom is perhaps the biggest Disney fan I know. I grew up in Hong Kong, well, I spent part of my childhood in Hong Kong and Disney is pretty big over there.

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And I remember, growing up, you know, my first ever cinema experience, for example, was to see Disney's Cinderella and, you know, I still have the tiny glass slipper that my mom bought me after the movie.

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But hmm. But through her... She's really shared her love of the Disney brand with me through Mickey and Minnie toys, stories, animations, and you know. And ever since then, you know, I've really had developed this sort of emotional attachment to the Disney brand.

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And Mickey and Minnie in particular has always been her favorite Disney characters of all. She loves their love story and you know, and how they're just a wonderful team together, their relationship together.

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And so, you know, she still collects a lot of the Mickey and Minnie merchandise and sends them over as treats for me, or for her grandchildren, so hmm. Disney's Mickey and Minnie's always been a big part of my life growing up and even now.

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[Andrea]: She must be very excited that you're working on this.

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[Fiorella]: Ah! I can't tell her that I'm working on this. That's the thing.

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[Andrea]: Oh, right!

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[Fiorella]: So it's a big secret until it's out and launched.

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[Andrea]: What do you think her reaction will be?

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[Fiorella]: Oh, my Gosh! I... I don't know actually. I think she will just be so moved, so proud and, hmmm. Yeah. And to

think that, you know... For her to know that, you know, that her... her influence has actually worked, you know.

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'Cause I think at one point, you know, I think I would have had a bit of a Mickey and Minnie, like... You know, there was just an overdose of stuff.

0206 00:32:53:17 00:32:54:06

[Andrea]: Yeah.

0207 00:32:54:08 00:33:03:20

[Fiorella]: And I was like, "I want to see something else!". But, she's been quite persistent with it. So for her to see that I've worked on a Mickey and Minnie skeet for LEGO®, I think she'll be immensely proud and immensely...

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[Andrea]: Her persistence paid off.

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[Fiorella]: Yes, exactly.

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[Andrea]: I bet you've drawn Mickey Mouse many times while working on this. Do you

agree with what Disney artists said before, that it's super tough to get him just right?

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[Fiorella]: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, you know, the pressure was super real with this set, not going to lie. I mean, knowing that there are so many Disney fans and experts out there, I really had to do this set some justice.

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Hmm, and as Jeff says, you know, just... He's not as simple as he looks. You know, there's a certain symmetry with Mickey that you have to get right, and the balance in the proportions have to be just right. So, you know, not only did I have my mom in mind when building the set, but you know, it's...

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It's only Mickey and Minnie, like, the world's most famous and most beloved animated characters, so anything less than perfection, it wasn't gonna cut it. So, hmm, you know, just, just kind of getting those proportions right, we did a lot of different sketches.

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Actually on paper to get the composition right in the square format. But also, you know, on the brick... On the... The big brick-built item itself, to kind of really move some of the mosaics around just to kind of, like, take one out here, and then you change the proportion there.

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And take one out there, and then you perfect it over here. So, there was, there was a lot of finessing and squinting.

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[Andrea]: Yeah.

0217 00:34:39:04 00:34:41:12

[Fiorella]: Standing back and chin stroking involved.

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[Andrea]: I bet. So, Jeff, what do you think of the LEGO® Art set of Mickey and Minnie? Do you think Fiorella and her team did a good job?

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[Jeff]: Oh, it's awesome. Yeah, I don't need to do any directions class.

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[Fiorella]: I'm so pleased to hear that, Jeff.

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[Jeff]: You have my approval.

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[Fiorella]: Thank you! That's, that's really made my day. It's made my year to hear you say that.

0223 00:35:03:13 00:35:15:21

[Jeff]: And it was nice to hear that, how you worked on it and you did your homework and it... and like you said, it's, it's like, you have to really, like, focus on it to make it look right.

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[Andrea and Fiorella]: Hmm.

0225 00:35:17:04 00:35:18:22

[Andrea]: David, do you agree with Jeff?

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[David]: I think they did a great job because it's like pointillism, you can't see it up close, you have to really

step back to see it and to be able to create and replicate this character, or any image in... with all these colored tiles and these mosaics, it's just amazing to me. It's wonderful.

0227 00:35:38:14 00:35:39:14

[Andrea]: Ron and Brian?

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[Ron]: Oh, I think that's great.

0229 00:35:41:01 00:35:41:23

[Fiorella]: Oh, my Gosh.

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[Ron]: Brian chime in, of course, you know, that looks just like the models that you see of those characters at that time, coal-eyed...

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[Brian]: Yep.

0232 00:35:49:24 00:35:51:17

[Ron]: ...representations of them from the 30s.

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[David]: Exactly.

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[Ron]: It's very appealing.

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[Brian]: I have to tell you, the coal-eyed one, I find that probably the most appealing. Hmm, yes, the contemporary is fun, too, but I have this, like, Mickey the Brave Little Tailor, he's pie-eyed in that, I mean coal-eyed, and it's so cute.

0236 00:36:10:12 00:36:15:18

It really is. I'm right there with Ron. I really like the choice.

0237 00:36:15:20 00:36:16:05

[Andrea]: Hmm.

0238 00:36:16:07 00:36:19:14

[Ron]: Plus, you're trying to put a soul onto this character as well, so...

0239 00:36:19:16 00:36:20:16

[Fiorella]: Oh, absolutely.

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[Ron]: To make him not look so stiff and

he has a line of action going through him. Again, these characters were animated, so when you look at it, you still wanna feel like he's in motion and not just a stand up cardboard character that will fall over.

0241 00:36:34:24 00:36:51:05

[Fiorella]: Absolutely. He's, he's really... He's really tricky to get right, and I have the utmost appreciation for, you know, for what you've been doing over the years. I mean, just to get that right every single time, it's a, yeah, it's really quite a skill.

0242 00:36:54:16 00:37:07:22

[Andrea]: Let's go back in time and talk about the history of Walt Disney and how Mickey and Minnie came to be. I'm so glad we have David Pacheco with us for this. David, some of your colleagues refer to you as a Disney historian.

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[David]: Well, not so much a historian, just that I've been there for so long and I remember a lot.

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[Andrea]: Yeah, for sure. So, maybe you could tell us a bit about Walt Disney's

background, leading up to the creation of Mickey Mouse.

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[David]: Yes. Hmm, it was Mick... err, Mickey. Walt was born in Chicago in 1901 and his family moved, you know, occasionally, and he grew up in Marceline Missouri and then eventually, they moved to Kansas City, Missouri.

0246 00:37:34:09 00:37:47:13

And Walt always enjoyed art and drawing. He was always drawing as a kid, and in fact, there's one story where he was in grammar school and they had an art class and they were supposed to draw this, you know, bowl of flowers or whatever.

0247 00:37:47:15 00:38:07:02

So all the kids, drew it. You know, the teacher told them to submit their picture of the flowers and so forth, but Walt, he put faces on his flowers and gave them personalities and his teacher said, "That is not the assignment" and she reprimanded him a little bit because he did not follow the directions.

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Years later, in 1932, the very first color, technicolor cartoon was Flowers and Trees

where the flowers actually had faces and personality. So, he told her!

0249 00:38:19:08 00:38:41:20

Hmm, in about 1920, Walt met Ub Iwerks, who was a tremendous draftsman and together, they created a company called Laugh-O-gram and they created kind of little ads and short cartoons that you would see before the main feature in a theater. And this went on for about three years and eventually went bankrupt.

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In 1923, Walt moved to Hollywood with the idea that he was going to become a Hollywood director of live action films. But he couldn't get into the door, it just didn't work out for him.

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So with his brother Roy, they established the Disney Brothers Studio and they created the Alice Comedies. Now, the Alice Comedies were just short cartoons where they had a live little girl that lives in a cartoon world, kind of like Alice in Wonderland. And this went on for, you know, I think a few years, till about 1927.

0252 00:39:16:13 00:39:36:04

Alice just kind of wore itself out. And

in 1927, Walt created Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, and he and Ub Iwerks, but unfortunately, he lost it to the distributor Charles Mintz because he, Walt did not copyright or own the rights to this particular character

0253 00:39:36:06 00:39:36:18

[Andrea]: Hmm.

0254 00:39:36:20 00:39:52:17

[David]: So he lost them. In fact, Charles Mintz took all of his films and almost all of his animation staff. He just almost completely wiped Walt out, and Walt was devastated. And, hmm, that was then unfortunate, but something good came out of that.

0255 00:39:52:19 00:39:54:18

[Andrea]: And that's how Mickey Mouse came to be?

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[David]: Exactly. Walt and his wife were on the train back to Hollywood and he was coming up... Trying to come up with a replacement for Oswald and he came up with this idea of Mickey, because Walt at one time had a little pet mouse that he would keep on his desk.

0257 00:40:11:09 00:40:27:15

And Ub Iwerks actually did the original drawings of Mickey and helped with the original design, but it was Walt that helped give and establish the personality of Mickey Mouse. In fact, Mickey Mouse was kind of an extension of Walt's own personality, with his own morals and his own ideals.

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In fact, Walt was actually the voice of Mickey Mouse for many, many years. From the 20s up until the 40s. And Mickey's actual real name, his official name was Mortimer, but Walt's wife, Lillian, thought, "Oh, my God, that's way, way, way too pretentious."

0259 00:40:44:23 00:40:45:12

[Andrea]: Hm-hmm.

0260 00:40:45:14 00:40:52:05

[David]: "So let's cut it down, and just, let's just make him Mickey Mouse instead." And that's how he came to be born, on a train from New York to Hollywood.

0261 00:40:52:07 00:41:03:17

[Andrea]: Wow! And you mentioned Ub Iwerks. I've heard a lot of people refer

to him as the father of Mickey. At least, he was the other parent. What can you say about him and his collaboration with Walt?

0262 00:41:03:19 00:41:24:04

[David]: They were partners for years and years, and he was an... just a drawing machine. He was an absolutely phenomenal animator when animation was kind of still in its infancy. And he could do up to 700 drawings a day and, it's just, just amazing the output of work that he would do.

0263 00:41:24:06 00:41:41:24

And what he would do is, he would animate what we call 'straight-ahead', so he would start at drawing number 1, put a number 2, 3, 4, 5, all the way to the very end of the scene, and he was just phenomenal. He could just produce all these. In fact, the first three films were almost entirely animated by Ub himself.

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In the late 30s, they parted ways, so Ub created his own company and moved to Florida, and he had a series of cartoons called ComicColor, and they did very well, but they kind of lacked a lot of the personality that Walt was able to give to his characters.

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Walt was a... And Ub was a good animator, but Walt knew exactly the best way to tell a story, the... He was a master storyteller. He could just hone in on individual personalities of each character, and that's a little bit where, where Ub just kinda stood off to the side in regards to his product.

0266 00:42:18:08 00:42:18:18

[Andrea]: Hmm.

0267 00:42:18:20 00:42:30:01

[David]: And then later on, Ub was more of an inventor for studios, and he came up with... He won several Academy Awards for his technological achievements in film.

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So for example, in the movie The Birds, the Alfred Hitchcock movie The Birds, he did win an Academy Award for the special effects of the birds themselves and so forth.

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And then later on, he and Walt came back... they, you know, enjoyed their friendship again, you know, years later, but... He was an amazing person.

0270 00:42:47:13 00:42:53:00

[Andrea]: Wow. To be the person in charge of the birds in The Birds, that's quite something.

0271 00:42:53:16 00:42:55:01

[David]: Among many things, yes.

0272 00:42:55:03 00:43:05:11

[Andrea]: Yeah, exactly. So now, Walt and Ub Iwerks were creating the first Mickey shorts, but Walt wasn't able to find a distributor that would take a chance on the first two Mickey shorts.

0273 00:43:05:13 00:43:18:09

Walt refused to give up, so one day, when they were working on a third Mickey Mouse cartoon, Steamboat Willie, he said, "We'll make him over with sound!" It wasn't the first cartoon with sound, but this was different?

0274 00:43:18:11 00:43:24:11

[David]: It was the first cartoon with synchronized soundtrack to the movement of the character.

0275 00:43:24:13 00:43:26:08

[Andrea]: So this was a big deal?

0276 00:43:26:10 00:43:42:07

[David]: Oh, it was absolutely tremendous, because The Jazz Singer, with Al Jolson, was released in 1927 and that was the very first talking film ever, and Walt was always the innovator. He was always looking: What is the latest technology? What is the newest that we can do?

0277 00:43:42:09 00:43:59:00

And when he saw The Jazz Singer, he was like, "This is what I need to do. I need to add sound to this." And that was an innovation, for the very first time that Walt was able to bring to this, and you know, Walt had so many innovations throughout his career, he was... He was a phenomenal, phenomenal guy.

0278 00:43:59:02 00:44:06:14

[Andrea]: I bet Mickey and the soundtrack in synch with the animation on screen was very difficult at that time. How did they do it?

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[David]: Basically, they projected it in the home of one of the animators. They had the projector outside, shooting in from the window so they wouldn't hear the motor running from the projector.

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And it was projected on a sheet and they were behind the sheet, Walt and then the other animators making the sounds with the whistles and the little musical instruments and so forth.

0281 00:44:27:24 00:44:39:05

And they were watching this and they had a little metronome that went click, click, click, click, click, to give them the actual beat and so they could watch this over and over and over again until they got the synchronization right, and that's how they recorded it.

0282 00:44:39:07 00:44:46:07

It was very, very, very basic at the time and, but it was, it was the very first synchronized sound cartoon ever.

0283 00:44:46:09 00:44:48:15

[Andrea]: Wow. What a process.

0284 00:44:56:14 00:45:07:01

[Andrea]: Now, let's talk a bit about the different voices of Mickey Mouse. David, you mentioned it briefly before but let's circle back to that. Who's the first voice of Mickey?

0285 00:45:07:03 00:45:33:19

[David]: The first voice of Mickey was actually Walt himself and he voiced Mickey from 1929. The very first line was, "Hot dog!". Mickey was selling hot dogs at a carnival kid. And he would just do Mickey, it was just kind of him and his little falsetto. And he did the voice for many years up until the late 1940s when running the studio just got to be way way way too much for him.

0286 00:45:33:21 00:45:44:21

So then he passed it... the voice onto the head of sound effects, a man by the name of Jimmy MacDonald. And Jimmy did the voice up until he passed away.

0287 00:45:44:23 00:46:04:03

But his protégé in sound effects was Wayne Allwine and Jimmy taught Wayne how to recreate the voice of Mickey. And then Wayne did the voice of Mickey up until the time he passed away and now there's a new voice artist, Bret Iwan who does the voice of Mickey. So there have been four official voices of Mickey Mouse.

0288 00:46:04:05 00:46:21:23

[Andrea] A little fun fact. One of those official voices of Mickey Mouse was actually married to the official voice of Minnie Mouse. Mickey's voice from 1977 to 2009, Wayne Allwine

was married to Russi Taylor who did the voice of Minnie from '86 to 2019.

0289 00:46:28:03 00:46:42:02

The first Mickey short that was made was Plane Crazy. The first one the world saw was the one we just talked about Steamboat Willie. Mickey looked a bit different back then. Can you take us through how his look has evolved over time?

0290 00:46:42:04 00:46:50:02

[Brian] There have been so many views of what Mickey is and so, it seems that people had their own idea of what Mickey should be.

0291 00:46:50:04 00:47:04:23

[Roy]: Oh, yeah. Like you said, 1928, he'd already done a couple of shorts prior to Steamboat Willie where the sound was introduced, Gallopin' Gaucho and Plane Crazy. Within even ten years, less than that, of that time, you saw him change repeatedly.

0292 00:47:05:00 00:47:21:24

[David] Well, initially Mickey and Minnie were just black and white characters. They were pretty much in black ink on white board, pretty much like what you saw in the newspaper everyday, in the comics. They were just plain black and white, maybe on Sunday you might see them in color.

0293 00:47:22:01 00:47:28:05

[Jeff] They had to keep things very simple back then because they were knocking these cartoons out very quick.

0294 00:47:28:07 00:47:28:23

[Ron:] Oh, yeah

0295 00:47:29:00 00:47:51:15

[Jeff] He originally had suspenders but they got rid of that to save time. But the two buttons became the icon of his pants. And it's more like little boy shorts back then. Walt always wanted his characters to look cute. Like you're a kid in your parents' or grandparent's closet, putting shoes and walking around. Which brings it to this little cute factor.

0296 00:47:51:17 00:47:51:23

[Ron] Yeah.

0297 00:47:52:00 00:47:52:19

[Brian] Definitely.

0298 00:47:52:21 00:48:05:21

[David] Yeah, he didn't have gloves at first and then they realized he needs gloves, because if he moved his hand in front of his body, you would lose the hand. So they put gloves on him so you could actually see the

hand against the body which gave him a little bit more animation.

0299 00:48:05:23 00:48:29:10

[Jeff] If you have a character that's really cute and short and you have, like, four fingers and a thumb. We always said it looked like a bunch of bananas. So they eliminated one finger and you can still act with three fingers. And again, this was all about saving time. And it's still relevant today. You know, you look at all the cartoons and they have three fingers and a thumb.

0300 00:48:29:12 00:48:43:23

[Brian] When we talk about Mickey, there's three different identifications that we are making. That's pie-eyed, coal-eyed and the contemporary. And naturally when you talk about the pie-eyed, it's where a section of his pupil's cut out. Like a little piece of pie.

0301 00:48:44:00 00:48:44:23

[Ron]: Like a highlight.

0302 00:48:45:00 00:48:57:24

[Brian]: A highlight, yeah, really. And that's exactly... it's a highlight. But it looks like a little piece of pie so people would say, "Yeah, that's pie-eyed Mickey." And he was typically used for publications.

0303 00:48:58:01 00:49:08:18

[Ron]: You know, it's just an abbreviated version of showing a highlight on the eye to show that it's reflective. And the animation, most of the time if not all, it was just coal-eyed. It was the pupil...

0304 00:49:08:20 00:49:09:13

[Brian]: It was coal-eyed, yeah.

0305 00:49:09:15 00:49:13:18

[Ron]: ..within like a large goggle-sized sclera.

0306 00:49:13:20 00:49:18:23

[Andrea]: When you say 'contemporary Mickey', which iteration of Mickey is that?

0307 00:49:19:00 00:49:25:06

[Brian]: That would be Mickey with the eyes that you see now where he has the whites of his eyes and he has pupils.

0308 00:49:25:08 00:49:54:23

[Ron]: Yep. Just to be able to give him more means of expression. And basically what that allowed was now you have, basically that pupil became the entire eye. What used to be the white of eye before now just basically became part of his forehead and his face. And so that allows the animators to move that

pupil, smaller pupil, within that little eye shape and you can get more human expressions and emotions out of those eyes.

0309 00:49:55:00 00:50:19:03

[David] Exactly. To act even better, to express even more in realistic terms. Because now he was really acting. Because mice do not have whites of their eyes, they just have beady little black eyes. But now he had human eyes and that gave him, again, the ability to act and make him more believable. And this time his face color was more flesh-tone, so that made him more humanistic.

0310 00:50:19:05 00:50:38:21

[Brian]: And that took place actually... You know most people would say, "Oh, when was it that his eyes became what we see today?" Or as we coin the 'contemporary' eye. And that was in Fantasia. At least when you talk about being in a major film or bigger basis. It was really in that Fantasia.

0311 00:50:38:23 00:50:46:24

[Ron]: I think Fred Moore was the main guy that's recognized it's worth changing that. However I think Ron Campbell was also involved in that before, like in the late '30s.

0312 00:50:47:01 00:50:49:12

[Brian]: And these are animator legends, for

those who wanted to know.

0313 00:50:49:14 00:50:49:24

[Ron]: Yes.

0314 00:50:50:01 00:51:10:14

[David]: In the late 1940s, he kinda underwent a different stylization where he became more elongated. His ears actually moved in three dimensions. So there was an interior color as well as the black exterior color. But this was... it took more time, and after two years of this they abandoned that.

0315 00:51:10:16 00:51:11:05

[Ron]: Hm-mm.

0316 00:51:10:12 00:51:28:03

[David] And then in the 1950s, there was the Mickey Mouse Club. And he kind of adapted himself to the stylization of the 50s, or what we could call retro nowadays. He was a little bit squatter, he had a little shirt on now and a little long pants instead of the red shorts.

0317 00:51:28:05 00:51:51:00

It's a really fun, fun style. And then in the Mickey Mouse Club on television, there weren't too sure how Mickey Mouse would read on a small television screen. So they put a heavy black outline around each of the cells.

And that black outline was part of the stylization of Mickey that we see now in the 50s, which was really really beautiful.

0318 00:51:51:02 00:52:18:00

Then in the 60s his design just became a little more standard, kind of what we see today. In the 70s, Walt was gone by that time. And it was kind of the feeling that if it looks like Mickey then it must be Mickey. So the quality of the drawing of Mickey became a little stiff. So nowadays we brought him back in a combination of the 1940s Mickey and the 1935 Fred Moore Mickey. So that's what we use nowadays.

0319 00:52:21:09 00:52:37:01

[Andrea]: Now Steamboat Willie was also where Minnie Mouse was introduced for the first time and she's also a very interesting character. She's been on a huge journey like Mickey. What can we say about how her look has changed over time?

0320 00:52:37:03 00:53:12:07

[Jeff]: Well, Minnie, she was born the same day Mickey was. So back in Plane Crazy they needed a female character, so all Ub did was add eyelashes to Mickey and put a flapper dress on. So that was, that was the invention of Minnie. And you know, over time, they together have evolved. When I draw Minnie, you know, her snout is slightly a little

bit smaller. Basically it's Mickey with eyelashes and a bow. Well, it's Minnie.

0321 00:53:12:09 00:53:29:04

[Brian]: Well, she was topless at first and there are some model sheets where she did have what could be termed as pasties. But for the longest time, or at least those earlier parts of the films, she just had her little skirt and her bloomer panties on and her shoes.

0322 00:53:29:06 00:53:49:07

[David]: Her character was patterned after the image of the 1920s flapper shape. These very long eyelashes. And she had a little suggestion of the spit curls on the side. She had these very large heavy kind of smoky eyelids and she had those 1920s kind of pointed shoes with the very tapered heel. Kind of one of the signatures of Minnie is the very very large shoe.

0323 00:53:49:09 00:54:03:19

Initially she had very minimal accessories, she kind of vamped her way through several dozen of the black and white cartoons with Mickey. She had a little short skirt but she didn't have polka dots on the skirt in the films.

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The polka dots themselves I think were drawn in animation, would not have been stable. What we would have called boil. They would have been shimmering a little bit. So you really only saw her with polka dots in comic books and in story books because that was just the book illustration. Nowadays we can go in and add those polka dots and any details we can because of the computer. But back in the day, that would have just been way way way too much detail to add in and it would have been more distracting than a designed form.

0325 00:54:34:05 00:55:08:00

[Brian]: And then that changed. She evolved into wearing a dress and with the polka dots of course, and the bow. In her initial design she had a little pill hat, kind of like a pill hat with a flower that came out the top of it. But then again, it evolved into the bow and then there was a ribbon around her head with a bow, it was attached, then it became just a bow on the head, no ribbon that helped attach it to the head. And now if you look at the cartoon shorts, I think she's gone back to having no top and it's just the skirt.

0326 00:55:08:02 00:55:11:04

[Andrea]: Now what about her personality? How did that change over time?

0327 00:55:11:06 00:55:50:17

[Ron]: Oh, Gosh! She's funny. In the early films she was kind of mirroring vaudeville and the early silent films, like Chaplin, Buster Keaton and everything, and the female lead characters in those early ones. Varied, but for a lot of it the damsel in distress type of thing and all that. So she was just kind of mirroring the times of how that would be portrayed in film. And Mickey, like Brian said, was kind of the straight man character, he's the hero and all this, things would happen to him or to Minnie and he'd rescue her. Or sometimes vice-versa.

0328 00:55:50:19 00:56:19:16

And she would... She certainly, even from the earliest days though, she had such a huge personality where you could tell she's not gonna take any guff from him or anyone. As little and diminutive a character as she is, this little mouse, she would fight against Peg-Leg Pete or anybody like that that's trying to kidnap her or whatever it was. Even Mickey, she gave him a good hard slap sometimes, if he did the wrong thing or didn't do things the right way.

0329 00:56:19:18 00:56:58:00

And then of course, over the years, she evolved as well. Just as optimistic and carefree and fun as Mickey. But the trick in drawing both these characters and keeping their personalities alive is that you want to show the differences as much as you can.

Because they're different people. As similar as they are to each other, design-wise, they're so different. They have their own unique, individual personalities and we want to constantly show that whether it's just a hint of a different kind of pose that she's in or an attitude or something going on. You know, things like that.

0330 00:56:58:02 00:56:58:16

[Brian]: Very true.

0331 00:56:58:18 00:57:32:17

[David]: Yes, she evolved over time too. Again, you know, even with Mickey, it's the sign of the times as things move on. Back then everything was slapstick humor, it involved into, "Hey, we need to do stories now." Storyboards were invented. So the structure of just the cartoons itself evolved as well as people evolved watching these cartoons. They demanded more, they wanted to see more things. Minnie was always very independent.

0332 00:57:32:19 00:58:06:09

[Brian]: Exactly. She kind of really personifies the spirit of femininity. She's very kind, she's very caring. Even the way she moves, she speaks, it's very graceful. She has a very girlish charm. She's always polite, she's proper and always upbeat. She has a very upbeat personality, cheerful. And she enjoys

life to the fullest. But despite the fact that she can be a little shy, she still maintains an air of independence and self-worth. She's always feminine, she's delicate but she can take care of herself and she never hesitates to be assertive.

0333 00:58:06:11 00:58:15:15

We see her as intelligent and a very positive role model. And when she's together with Mickey, nowadays she's seen as an equal partner.

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[Andrea]: Love that.

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[Brian]: Exactly.

0336 00:58:17:19 00:58:25:13

[Andrea]: Now, Mickey and Minnie have been different characters. I mean, they're different personalities. So how does that come through in the way that they're drawn?

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[David]: It comes through in the animation. What is happening in the particular story that they're in. How is Mickey going to react given his personality? How is Minnie going to react given her personality? Again, you really have

to consider the specific personalities of each character that you're working on in animation. In the early days if Mickey was scared his ears might fly off his head. Later on he became a little bit more sanitized, just a little bit more the straight man compared to Donald Duck or Goofy. So he was there to kinda hold the two of them together.

0338 00:59:01:05 00:59:25:06

Minnie, as her persona developed, she became more independent. She could still flirt with Mickey but she was always very playful with Mickey. Again, it all depends on the story and what's happening in the individual scene. But it's just the use of animation techniques and the action that the animator is going to do from his head to his pencil onto the paper.

0339 00:59:25:08 00:59:32:17

[Andrea]: So, there's so many versions of Mickey and Minnie through the years. Fiorella, which era did you choose for the LEGO® set and why was that?

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[Fiorella]: Yeah, you're absolutely right. There are so many different versions and, you know, they've had such a wonderful transformation time through the years and how they've evolved. So it really wasn't easy to chose it all.

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But we really wanted to pick the most iconic version of Mickey and Minnie, to tap into the nostalgia of Mickey and Minnie. But we also had to balance this vision with something that would translate really well into mosaic as well. So when we're looking at the LEGO® mosaic, we also do have to look into... We're kind of working with a pixelated image so we really do need to see how much we can fit into the frame, how the proportions work and so on.

0342 01:00:18:03 01:00:48:13

So, looking at all the different variations of Mickey and Minnie, we ended up with Mickey and Minnie circa, I guess... and Jeff correct me if I'm wrong, from mid-1930s. Because not only do they look the most classic in these versions but also the shapes were a little bit more rounded, a little bit more geometric. And it lent itself really really well to the square format of the frame. So we can create this really nice sort of composition in there for the art piece.

0343 01:00:48:15 01:00:56:19

[Jeff]: Yeah and I feel like the era you picked was great. That's my favorite period of Mickey.

0344 01:00:56:21 01:00:58:13

[Fiorella]: Yay! It's mine too.

0345 01:00:58:15 01:01:23:11

[Jeff]: Yeah, for me that's the golden age of Mickey. So much happened in that time period. And I think, graphically, people love that look of Mickey. And we use that Mickey too for more high-end products we work on. The more contemporary Mickey has shifted more towards juvenile. Meaning the contemporary with the pupil eyes.

0346 01:01:28:19 01:01:42:17

[Andrea]: I'd like to ask all of you this question. Why do you think it is that Mickey Mouse can bring a smile to the face of a 90-year-old and a 2-year-old at the same time? What is it that makes Mickey Mouse so iconic?

0347 01:01:43:24 01:02:22:22

[David]: You know, when you look back at Mickey... The 90-year-olds, they're going back, looking back at how they felt when they probably first saw him in the theater. Or maybe had their first Mickey comic back in the 20s or the 30s when they were kids. And it brought back the memories of Mickey. You have to remember that when Mickey and Minnie were created, their optimism really embodied the spirit of the country at the time. They were going through the depression and audiences connected with them on a real emotional level, because they saw a reflection of their own selves on screen.

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Because Mickey and Minnie, they were like the everyday, ordinary couple. They were the people next door. They lived on a farm, they were not well-off. And then sometimes they actually struggled to make ends meet. But they were always content and happy. And, you know, that's how Mickey and Minnie have become a great part of the American heritage and icons for each decade, from the 20s till now. You know, my grandparents would buy me the Mickey toys because they knew I loved Disney, and the Disney books and so forth. They're sharing that with their children and they share that with their grandkids and they share that with their great-grandkids.

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And everybody is just building a memory based on this character that is just drawn and painted. It continues on, it's a tradition.

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[Jeff]: Well, I think, you know, as far as age difference, Mickey means a lot to different people depending on their age. Somebody in their nineties remembers him back when he was a kid. You have to remember back in 1928, '29, '30, the start of the depression was happening. Mickey really really helped people get through a tough time. They needed a break. All the other cartoons at the time weren't doing what Mickey was doing. Mickey was very immune to the depression. And Mickey really helped somebody back then get

through a tough time.

0351 01:03:51:05 01:04:05:21

So somebody in their nineties will remember that and bring a smile to their face. Where somebody like a 2-year-old will grow up watching Mickey Mouse Club House today and when they're adults they'll remember how they grew up.

0352 01:04:05:23 01:04:36:03

Then somebody in their fifties, like me, will be... I grew up in the 70s loving Mickey. Baby boomers will remember the Mickey Mouse Club on TV. So everybody has their own little thing. And even Walt Disney, he brings a smile to his face, because he always said Mickey means independence, because this was the character that really created his business and got him out of some tough times.

0353 01:04:36:05 01:05:03:06

[Fiorella]: Yeah, I have to agree. For me, what I see with Mickey is the... he brings a certain sense of positivity. As you say, he's helped a lot of people through some tough times because of the positivity that he brings. He is a very joyous character, you know. He's a problem-solver, he's creative.

0354 01:05:03:08 01:05:38:02

He has this bounce and the way he moves, it's almost melodic. It's very inspiring to see this kind of purity of positivity in a character. And I have to say for me growing up, watching Mickey Mouse cartoons, looking at all the different Mickey Mouse paraphernalia my mom would bring home, there is something soothing about his graphical form as well.

0355 01:05:38:04 01:05:46:04

There's this symmetry as well, that he brings. It's just very soothing and calming as well.

0356 01:05:46:06 01:06:21:08

[Brian]: I would say the fact that Mickey doesn't have any sharp corners, if you look at him in his basic structure, he's all circles. There are no sharp edges on him. And I would say probably, deep in our minds, he's viewed as being something harmless, because there are no sharp corners on him. And also, the colors that are used. The red, yellow and black, these are the basic colors, these are basic colors. And it just works really well with the way that Mickey is accepted by people.

0357 01:06:21:10 01:06:43:17

You know, it's funny, you can go to our parks, you'll see children that are obviously shy. Some of them are shy. I would say that, that's true.

But then when they see Mickey, all that shyness just melts away. Because they run up to him and they see that this is Mickey Mouse, he's one of the good guys.

0358 01:06:47:10 01:06:57:15

[Andrea]: Now, let's talk about Mickey and Minnie now and in the future. How do you ensure that Mickey Mouse is still a firm favorite with the next generation of kids?

0359 01:06:57:17 01:07:21:16

[Jeff]: Well, you know, today we have the Mickey Mouse shorts which is a stylized Mickey version. And this is all really story-driven and, you know, I'll sit and laugh at these cartoons. It's kind of fun, slapstick humor back and forth. And just the stories are fun. So this is kind of for this generation, people love it.

0360 01:07:21:18 01:07:43:09

[Ron]: I would think, as far as his resilience and his timelessness, future generations... I mean, he's proven himself for over, Gosh how many years now? Over 90 years. When you think of that, you think of all the changes that have happened, just throughout history. Not just here but around the world. There have been so many shifts.

0361 01:07:43:11 01:08:01:18

But certain things remain constant. And you hope that they would. Certain things, certain values... Certain things that Mickey has always represented. He changes over time so that people can relate to him but it's mostly exterior things: what kind of... If you see him with a phone... Obviously that's gonna change.

0362 01:08:01:20 01:08:19:12

You gotta keep them modern, you gotta keep them... Depending on what style you are drawing them in, of course. But the core attributes of these characters are so human. And there are certain things that have not changed, and hopefully will not change. And if they do, hopefully it's a subtle thing that is an improvement.

0363 01:08:19:22 01:08:46:20

[Jeff]: Again, it depends on how you grew up with Mickey, what you like. Some people like it all, some people like certain things. For me, I just love the whole history from back then till now. In the future, he'll evolve again and again. So it comes down to, "Ok, let's do something new." And that's the fun part with Mickey, he just keeps evolving with the times.

0364 01:08:46:22 01:09:22:04

[Ron]: I think they're innocent. They're optimistic, is my favorite thing about them.

They're optimistic. Walt was optimistic, Walt Disney. And that, I think, Mickey more than anything else is like Walt Disney. That's what everyone has always said, in all the books and stuff that you read. And I think as long as he keeps that, as long as he brings that, no matter how crazy things get in the world, that optimism is what people respond to and what cheers them up, and says, "Hey, look, Disney is about reassurance. Mickey is about optimism and reassurance."

0365 01:09:22:06 01:09:46:16

And they even say that about the theme parks, the buildings. When Disneyland opened someone said, "This architecture you're seeing here is amazing. It's all about the architecture of reassurance. You're reassuring people." "Hey look, things can get scary, that you can go on a ride and it'll be scary, but you know at the end of it, everything is gonna come out ok." And I think that's what Mickey and Minnie represent, and what we're trying to keep to.

0366 01:09:46:18 01:10:29:12

[David]: Well, they're gonna be seen in a lot of contemporary stories. There's a new stylization that was created a few years ago in TV animation. Very, very fun style. And the cartoons themselves are absolutely hysterically funny, I love them. And the stylization is very different. It took me a few moments to accept the design but it's really

wonderful. So we see him, both of them, in those cartoons. We also have new games, we have video games where they might be a little bit more edgy. Where you'll see them interacting with a lot of other characters. There's new books. We still have the traditional Mickey and Minnie storybooks.

0367 01:10:29:14 01:10:57:16

And then we also have more of the adventure books. There's a lot of new trendy product designs, with the use of new graphics and whatever colors and patterns that might be trending nowadays. So it's still gonna go on. We're bringing a lot of new designers, we look at new designers that can inspire us. And we see how can we adapt Mickey and Minnie in this particular look, or this particular style, this particular trend? What can we do to further that and to bring it up even higher?

0368 01:10:57:18 01:11:03:19

[Andrea]: So Mickey will still be in the hearts and mind of people hundred years from now. Just who knows and what medium that will be.

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[Jeff]: Exactly. Maybe hologram, who knows? But he will definitely be... He will always be there.

0370 01:11:10:23 01:11:38:09

[Andrea]: Thank you for listening to the story behind Mickey and Minnie Mouse. How's your piece of art coming along? Are you getting ready to hang it on the wall? Maybe you're ready to break it apart and build the other version. Or create your own. One final question for you, Fiorella. Walt Disney said, "It all started with a mouse." Is that the same when it comes to Disney characters in LEGO® Art? Can we expect to see more Disney character sets in the future?

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[Fiorella]: Oh, I can't give anything away. But what I can say is that Disney's been a fantastic format for LEGO® for so many years now. They have so many amazing characters and franchises that I'd really love the opportunity to work with them again. So, who knows? Watch this space!

0372 01:12:00:12 01:12:05:20

[Andrea]: Who knows? Jeff, what Disney characters would you like to see recreated in LEGO® Art?

0373 01:12:05:22 01:12:39:00

[Jeff]: Well, definitely Donald. That's talking about... I mean, people... worldwide, Donald is huge. He's just such a fun character. And again, I'm partial of Donald because that was the first character that I worked on and my teacher drew, it was part of that. And also,

Pluto. Pluto for me is really fun to draw. And the interactions between Mickey and Pluto are fun. And Goofy. You know what? You just need to do them all. Because everybody relates to each of these characters in a different way.

0374 01:12:39:02 01:12:42:00

[Fiorella]: Oh, you're giving me so many ideas, Jeff.

0375 01:12:42:18 01:12:50:20

[Andrea]: My name is Andrea Collins and this has been an original soundtrack for LEGO® Art.