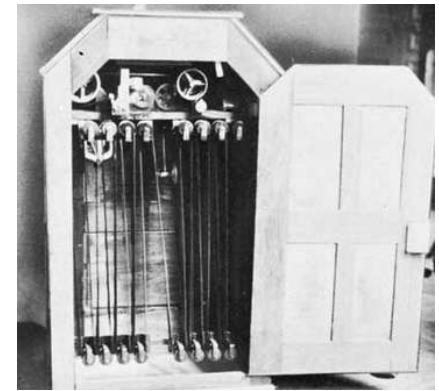


Animation History

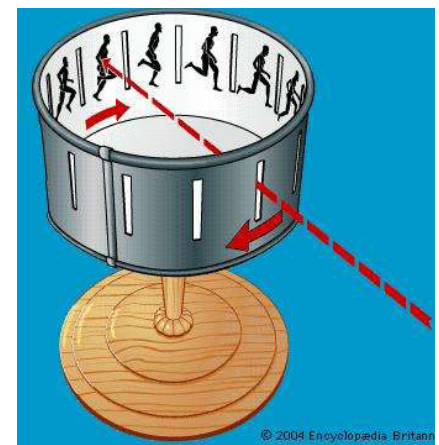
Animation, the art of making inanimate objects appear to move. Animation is an artistic impulse that long predates the movies. History's first recorded animator is Pygmalion of Greek and Roman mythology, a sculptor who created a figure of a woman so perfect that he fell in love with her and begged Venus to bring her to life. Some of the same sense of magic, mystery, and transgression still adheres to contemporary film animation, which has made it a primary vehicle for exploring the overwhelming, often bewildering emotions of childhood—feelings once dealt with by folktales.



Early History



The theory of the animated cartoon preceded the invention of the cinema by half a century. Early experimenters, working to create conversation pieces for Victorian parlours or new sensations for the touring magic-lantern shows, which were a popular form of entertainment, discovered the principle of persistence of vision. If drawings of the stages of an action were shown in fast succession, the human eye would perceive them as a continuous movement. One of the first commercially successful devices, invented by the Belgian Joseph Plateau in 1832, was the phenakistoscope, a spinning cardboard disk that created the illusion of movement when viewed in a mirror. In 1834 William George Horner invented the zoetrope, a rotating drum lined by a band of pictures that could be changed. The Frenchman Émile Reynaud in 1876 adapted the principle into a form that could be projected before a theatrical audience. Reynaud became not only animation's first entrepreneur but, with his gorgeously hand-painted ribbons of celluloid conveyed by a system of mirrors to a theatre screen, the first artist to give personality and warmth to his animated characters. With the invention of sprocket-driven film stock, animation was poised for a great leap forward.



Although “firsts” of any kind are never easy to establish, the first film-based animator appears to be J. Stuart Blackton, whose Humorous Phases of Funny Faces in 1906 launched a successful series of animated films for New York's pioneering Vitagraph Company. Later that year, Blackton also experimented with the stop-motion technique—in which objects are photographed, then repositioned and photographed again—for his short film Haunted Hotel. In France, Émile Cohl was developing a form of animation similar to Blackton's, though Cohl used relatively crude stick figures rather than Blackton's ambitious newspaper-style cartoons. Coinciding with the rise in popularity of the Sunday comic sections of the new tabloid newspapers, the nascent animation industry recruited the talents of many of the best-known artists, including Rube Goldberg, Bud Fisher (creator of Mutt and Jeff) and George Herriman (creator of Krazy Kat), but most soon tired of the fatiguing animation process and left the actual production work to others.

