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Ub Iwerks History Analysis

Looking at the many works produced by Ub Iwerks and Walt Disney over the years made me realize they both had this similar attitude when it came to adversity and problem solving. No matter what situation or problem seemed to arise, they would keep pushing forward with what they had and where they were, and they never seemed to stop coming up with new ideas and thinking outside the box. This idea is prevalent throughout the whole documentary and you could probably find a way to relate this to any event in Ub’s and Walt’s life.

In the very beginning of the documentary we see Ub and Walt working together at the Pesmen-Rubin Art studio, and before it even goes into detail with that it mentions that both Ub and Walt had rough upbringings in terms of their ambitions with art. Without supportive parents, they most likely didn’t have any easy opportunities to get involved in the art business. Despite that trouble, they began working in an art studio together at the young age of 18. After wanting to push their abilities further (and make a bit more money) they decided to even open their own studio. This section really stands out to me as a generally unskilled college student who hasn’t had a real job yet. I couldn’t even imagine starting a company at such an early age and having the confidence to just start making things. Even now after many years of experience learning from professors and having support from friends and family I don’t think I have the willpower to make that big of a step in my life, but I suppose that reflects the kind of ambition from Ub and Walt that I admire.

After starting their own studio and producing Laugh-O-Grams, Ub and Walt decided to get creative with the way their cartoons were produced and combined cartoons with a live action girl who went by the name of Alice. It seems they were almost a little TOO ambitious considering they went bankrupt shortly after. However, this didn’t stop them from moving forward. Walt, who only had about $40 and some copies of his work, traveled all the way to California to start a new life with his brother. Ub shortly joined them after. Putting myself in their shoes during these struggles, I’m not sure I would have any strength in me to not only start over, but to move to a completely different state and try it all again. Walt seemed to have very big plans and ideas sitting in the back of his head that he wanted to make a reality, and knowing Ub’s skills, he wanted to bring him along for the ride.

Not only were Walt and Ub able to withstand their hardships, but they innovated and moved the industry in a completely new direction. The two artists brainstormed a character design for Mickey Mouse that ended up becoming one of the most symbolic characters of all time. They used Mickey as a character that had personality, emotions, and continuity that wasn’t a common practice used in animation at the time, but Ub and Walt wanted to achieve something bigger and more thought-provoking in their cartoons. After Mickey’s initial public acceptance and popularity, the innovation train didn’t stop rolling there. Ub and Walt knew they needed to push themselves even further to “wow” the audience, and that led to the very first use of video and audio synchronization in cartoons.

Shortly after Ub left Walt Disney’s studio and started his own with Pat Powers, Ub wanted to improve the quality of the background movement and appearance that worked alongside the animated characters, so he came up with his own idea of a type of “3D camera” that took ideas from the vertical tower system and laid it out horizontally. He could then plan out how blurry the backgrounds should be (in terms of “focusing” on the characters), how fast they should move, and so on.

Later in life when Ub was looking for new opportunities, he was accepted back into Walt’s studio, and of course, the innovation doesn’t stop there. He became one of the head components in developing the special visual effects in their department and improved some of the things that Ub and Walt had previously worked on such as the live-action integration. He also developed the xerographic process that allowed drawings to be printed directly into cels, and eventually helped design some of the attractions that were featured in the Disney theme park.

Despite the many challenges Ub faced in his life, his desire to come up with new ideas and innovate never stopped. Many of the things he worked on years ago changed the animation industry. He inspires me because I hope to one day have the same drive and ambition he does while facing similar challenges every day. I believe that similar desire is what will help me improve my abilities and creativity as I keep improving myself every day.