

TLHLife

ANIMATION GENERATION

Campers thrilled to see their work 'come to life'



Keith Osborn guides a camper through the digital animation software. PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

Amanda Karioth Thompson Council on Culture & Arts

Working in a movie theater has its perks. Not only can you see all the films you want for free but sometimes they transform your life. That was true for Keith Osborn in 1991 as he watched "Beauty and the Beast," Disney's new release. "I left the theater with tears in my eyes. I was like, 'What just happened?' This movie took me on an emotional journey I wasn't prepared for and that charted my course from that point on."

He went on to earn a degree in computer animation from Ringling College of Art and Design and he now works as a freelance animator full-time. After giving a presentation to local middle school students, he realized young people are eager to learn these skills. So he teamed up with fellow animator Kristin Bass-Petersen and developed an animation summer camp.

"Animation is this amalgam of all these different art forms," Osborn explained. "You've got drawing, painting, drama, film, dance, sound, writing and editing. They all come together in a truly unique way," and he's sharing this rich diversity with interested teens. He developed a curriculum that focuses on the basic techniques of hand-drawn and digital animation with an emphasis on storytelling.

Campers learn to construct a story with a beginning, middle and an end and how to tell it concisely. "They've only got about five seconds. The stories have to be short enough so they can complete the time we have. They will be simple but they'll be their own."



Grace Wells and other campers learn principles like squash and stretch, exaggeration and timing to create compelling animation.

Campers pair what they've learned about storytelling with basic hand-drawing techniques and an understanding of the principles of animation which include concepts like squash and stretch, exaggeration, timing, anticipation and arc. "Those are kind of the mechanics of motion, how

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LIMELIGHT EXTRA



Tom Cruise plays super-spy Ethan Hunt in "Mission Impossible - Fallout," opening Friday. **PARAMOUNT/AP**

Welcome Tom Cruise, FAMU and 21 Blue

Get a jump on this weekend with a look ahead in Limelight Extra. Be sure to pick up Friday's Limelight

Mark Hinson Tallahassee Democrat
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Movies

GO AHEAD AND JUMP: On this his sixth outing, mega-spy Ethan Hunt (played by an indefatigable Tom Cruise, 56) goes globe-hopping from Belfast to Berlin to Paris to London to Eastern Europe to stop a madman who has a plot against the world in the latest action pic "Mission Impossible - Fallout." It's rated PG-13 and opens Friday at AMC 20, CMX, IMAX downtown and Governor's Square.

CARTOONIST IN A WHEELCHAIR: Based on the memoir, cartoonist John Callahan (Joaquin Phoenix) loses the use of his legs following a drunken car accident but it can't kill his lust for life and a talent for off-color jokes in the biopic "Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far On Foot." It's rated R and tentatively opens Friday at AMC 20.

IT HAPPENED IN OAKLAND: Just days away from ending his probation, a mover (Daveed Diggs) and his best buddy (Rafael Casal) witness a police shooting and their friendship is tested in the comedy-drama "Blindsighted." It's rated R and tentatively opens Friday at CMX.

UP ON THE BIG SCREEN: Superheroes who are let down over not having starred in a movie, attempt to rectify the situation by convincing a famed Hollywood director (voice of Kristen Bell) to develop one while the evil villain Slade (voice of Will Arnett) gets in their way in "Teen Titans Go! To The Movies." It's rated PG and opens Friday at AMC 20, CMX and Governor's Square.

SAY SO LONG TO TAB: Look for Edith Bunker (aka Jean Stapleton) and future Oscar-winner Bob Fosse when The Tallahassee Film Society properly marks Tab Hunter's death, he died at 86 this month, with a showing of the delightful musical "Damn Yankees" (1958). It is not rated and is being shown at 7 p.m. Wednesday at All Saints Cinema. Admission is \$5. Visit www.tallahassee.org

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Animation

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things move in an appealing way. They're fundamental to communicating your ideas. It's like learning a language," said Osborn.

The first challenge campers tackle is the bouncing ball exercise, a rite of passage for every animator. On separate pieces of paper, they hand-draw individual frames or images of a ball in motion. Using Stop Motion Studio, a downloadable app, the frames are recorded with a webcam that's oriented downward.

"They put down their sheet of paper, we take a picture of it, they put down their next sheet of paper, we take a picture of it, all the while it's on the big screen so everyone can see what's going on," Osborn explained. "They get to see it played back as soon as they're done. It takes all of seconds to make a movie. As soon as it starts playing, their eyes light up. They're seeing their work come to life for the first time. That, to me, is really exciting."

It's exciting to 17-year-old Grace Wells too. "The idea of making something, a story you can see, and then showing it to the world, there's a sense of pride in that," she said. Grace dreams of owning her own animation studio one day but until then, she's grateful to attend this camp. "Having access to something like this gives me an opportunity that I don't have at school. Most kids don't."

That's why Osborn is keen to push the envelope and show campers digital techniques as well. Using a scaffolding approach, campers build on their existing hand-drawing skills and move their attention to computer animation software called Maya. "The company that owns Maya has graciously offered the software to the students for free. We've installed it on their own laptops and they get to use it for three years," said Osborn.

"It's the same software that's used professionally in studios so it's incredibly deep but what's remarkable is the students get it. Two days into teaching the software, they're already creating animation and that's really rewarding."

Campers still start with pencil and paper to create storyboards or comic book style panels that lay out their narrative and imagery. They're simply reinterpreting those images with a different tool, one that gives them access into the digital world. "Some of



The bouncing ball exercise is a rite of passage for every animator. AMANDA THOMPSON

them are doing such advanced stuff, I didn't anticipate. They're really surprising me in that regard."

With a brother in the film industry, 17-year-old Maddy Beckham has more knowledge of the business than most teens. She enjoys film, storytelling and drawing so she couldn't pass up a chance to try her hand at animation. What attracts Maddy most is "the fact you can immerse yourself in the storylines and the problems the characters face and all the art and imagery. I can create these imaginary worlds and shape what happens in it. It gives me a sense of control."

It's that freedom to explore and experiment, be curious and whimsical that makes animation so magical. Now more than ever, emerging animators can share their creations with the world.

"Animation is such a compelling medium for storytelling because it doesn't put any limits on imagination and it's accessible to everyone, especially through platforms like YouTube," Osborn enthused. "Students can make their own animated films and publish them for everyone to see. I think it affords these tremendous opportunities for them to tell their stories in a very compelling way."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the Assistant Director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).