Vladimir

Tytla

Master Animator

Katonah Museum of Art

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September 18 – December 31, 1994

Guest Curator: John Canemaker

Foreword

The resurgent interest in animation and cartoon imagery has given new life to an enormous industry embraced by the film studios and television networks. This generation's young people are growing up with a myriad of newly created characters and stories that not only entertain, but deal with contemporary social, political, and economic issues as well. The foundation for today's animation were laid many years ago by pioneering, highly skilled creative artists who worked for the major motion picture studios. Vladimir Tytla has long been recognized among connoisseurs of animation as one of the most talented of these pioneers. The Museum is delighted to present *Vladimir Tytla: Master Animator,* which both examines the creative path of Tytla's life and illuminates the personalities of the characters he drew.

The Museum is grateful to our guest curator John Canemaker, whose knowledge of and passion for animation enabled him to bring together for the first time the most important work of Tytla's career. As Project Director, Nancy Wallach did a superb job in assisting with every aspect of the exhibition, and we thank her for her wonderful effort. The Museum appreciates the participation of all the lenders, with special thanks to Adrienne Tytla for her most generous loans, and the participation of Disney Art Productions. The Museum acknowledges the assistance and cooperation of its staff throughout the project. Lastly, we owe our deepest thanks to Vladimir Tytla for the memorable legacy he has left us—a legacy that will continue to delight audiences for generations to come.

George G. King
Executive Director

Acknowledgements

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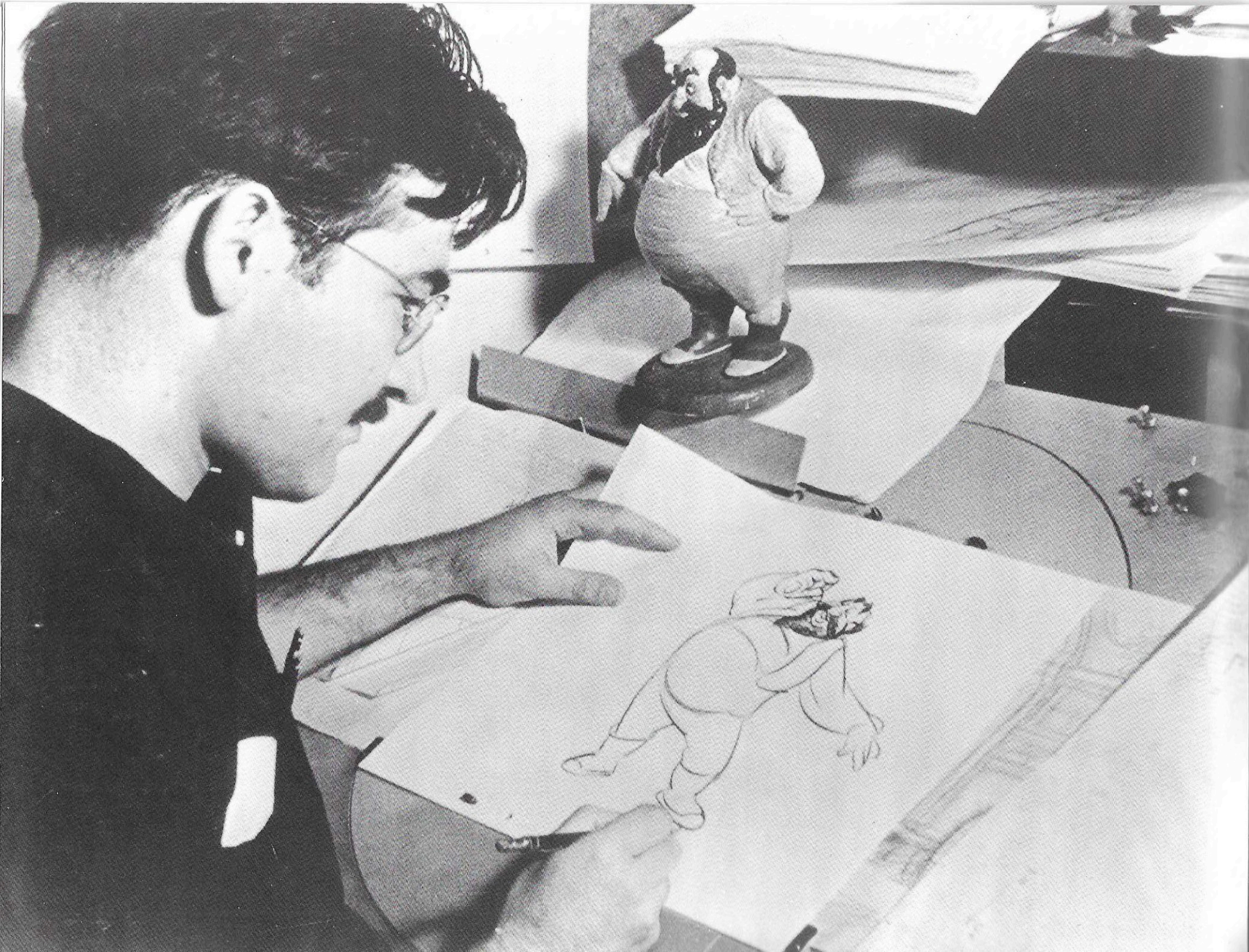
John Canemaker
Guest Curator

"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"
from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937,
cel with background and overlay, 11 3/4 x 20
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad



Vladimir Tytla: Master Animator

by John Canemaker

"The whole thing in animation, as in any of the arts, is the feeling and vitality you get into the work."

VLADIMIR TYTLA, 1937

A dwarf reluctantly reveals his love for a princess; a puppeteer murderously threatens a boy he has kidnapped; a giant devil cringes at the sound of church bells; a mother elephant caresses her baby with her trunk.

For more than fifty years, these movie scenes have drawn an emotional response from audiences around the world. But what makes moviegoers' reactions extraordinary is that the "actors" are not real—they are, in fact, animated *drawings* from four classic Walt Disney feature-length cartoons, respectively, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), and *Dumbo* (1941).

The above scenes were animated by Vladimir Tytla (1904-1968), one of the greatest innovators of a special type of cinema magic known as "personality animation." In personality animation, cartoon characters come alive as individuals who appear to think and solve problems and express emotions as believably as flesh-and-blood actors—in brief, they have souls.

This is a uniquely American contribution to the international art form of animation. Personality animation was pioneered by the great newspaper and film cartoonist Winsor McCay in the short films *How A Mosquito Operates* (1912) and *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), and was later explored by Otto Messmer in the *Felix the Cat* film series he directed in the 1920s.

But it was at the Walt Disney Studio during the 1930s that personality animation reached its full maturity and expressiveness. Thanks to Disney's innovative spirit, the animated cartoon found new life and powerful ways to communicate with audiences. This development was due in no small part to Vladimir Tytla's tenure at the Disney studio from 1934 to 1943.

Tytla's superb gifts as a draftsman, his years of art school studies here and abroad, and his unique ability to transfer human feelings into sequential drawings allowed him to bring *emotional* power to animation for the first time. The roles he "played," remarkable for their variety, remain supreme examples of the personality animator's art—benchmarks against which all other animation performances continue to be measured.

Vladimir Tytla's career mirrors the history of American studio animation. He learned his craft in the silent film era in New York City in the 1920s. During the Depression, he had the opportunity and the talent to expand significantly the art form at the Disney studio (a period now known as the "Golden Age" of the Hollywood cartoon). After leaving Disney in 1943, Tytla worked on theatrical shorts for other studios, and through the 1950s and 60s he directed television commercials.

Although he continued working for nearly a quarter of a century after leaving Disney, Tytla was never again so greatly challenged, nor did he reach comparable heights of achievement. At the time of his death in 1968, Tytla's fully animated, emotional portrayal was out of style. Even Disney's full-length cartoons were redundant in design and content and starred non-threatening comic villains and one-dimensional animals.

Critics and audiences were dazzled instead by the psychedelic graphics and limited animation of *Yellow Submarine* (1968). Dominating Saturday morning children's TV was "illustrated radio," as Chuck Jones derisively called limited "kid-vid" animation.

Tytla drawing Stromboli, *Pinocchio*, 1940

Now 25 years later, new technology and the love of a generation raised on vintage animation has resulted in enormously successful home video/laserdisk releases and theatrical re-releases of the seminal Disney features Tytla helped create. In addition, the box-office success of recent animated features such as *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and *Aladdin* (1992) have revived the personality animation Tytla defined.

Vladimir (Bill) Peter Tytla was born on October 25, 1904 in Yonkers, New York. His father Peter was born in Podhajce, Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was at one time an Ulan cavalryman in Emperor Franz Josef's army. Peter's father, an upper middle class Ukranian farmer and merchant, ran a cooperage.[1]

When Peter, a Greek Uniate Catholic, courted Mary Hataleka, daughter of a Polish Roman Catholic architect "claiming minor nobility," their impending union was strenuously opposed by both families—"inter-marriages even between Catholics were frowned upon."[2] This disapproval precipitated the couple's immigration in the late 1890s to the United States, where they married.

Peter, who dreamed of becoming a dancer and often referred to himself as "a gentleman's like I'm [sic]," grudgingly plied his father's trade. He made barrels for the Fulton Fish Market, and, although the job supported his wife, three sons, and daughter, he considered it beneath him. By 1925 he no longer worked at all; his eldest son Vladimir at age 21 was supporting most of the family with his earnings as an animator.[3]

"Bill was the only one of us who showed any talent for art," recalled his sister Anne. As a child, he copied "Buster Brown" and the "Katzenjammer Kids" from the Sunday funnies and drew panoramic cowboy and Indian fights at the kitchen table on butcher's paper. A nun at his parochial school encouraged Vladimir to develop his talent. When a chronic "fever," contracted from swimming in the polluted Hudson River, necessitated a year's absence from school, he drew constantly to pass the time.

In 1914 Vladimir's favorite uncle "Big Joe" took the 9-year-old to Manhattan to attend Winsor McCay's vaudeville act, *Gertie the Dinosaur,* in which the famous cartoonist interacted live on-stage with an animated film starring a child-like dinosaur. McCay's formidable draftsmanship created an illusion of realism; the detailed drawings and subtle animation amazingly prefigured the style and form of the mature work of the Walt Disney Studio. Nearly 20 years later, Tytla helped Disney transcend McCay's achievement.

Gertie, an early masterpiece of personality animation, inspired a generation of cartoonists, including Tytla, to enter the new field of animated cartoons. "He never forgot it," said Adrienne Tytla, his wife. "Even years later, he still spoke with the same naive awe and reverence he must have felt on its original impact. There was no doubt that *Gertie the Dinosaur* changed his life forever."[4]

Tytla soon enrolled in the New York Evening School of Industrial Design, commuting daily from Jersey City, where his family had moved from Yonkers. Each night his mother waited for her son's return from art classes to feed him a late meal. "How hungry I was," he once remembered. "I didn't eat anything before going to class because I was saving the money. But Mom didn't know it."[5] A listless and bored student, Tytla quit high school after one year of sporadic attendance. His truancy once landed him and his father in court. The judge, however, dismissed the charges, so impressed was he by young Vladimir's art school samples, which the boy autographed and presented to him.

By 1920 the 16-year-old Tytla was earning $1.50 per day, six days a week, lettering title cards at the Paramount animation studio in New York City, where he was nicknamed "Tytla the Titler."[6] Among the staff was Ben Sharpsteen, later Disney's first production manager, who answered the young man's many queries about animation with dramatic gestures. "He tore a page from a book on cartooning and gave it to me," said Tytla years later. "I never forgot it. It was one of the most thoughtful things anybody ever did for me."[7]

As film cartoons became more popular, new studios sprang up around New York, and Tytla quickly learned the craft of animation

on-the-job—uptown, on Mutt & Jeff shorts at Raoul Barre's in the Bronx, and downtown, on a *Joy and Gloom Phable* at John Terry's Greenwich Village studio.[8]

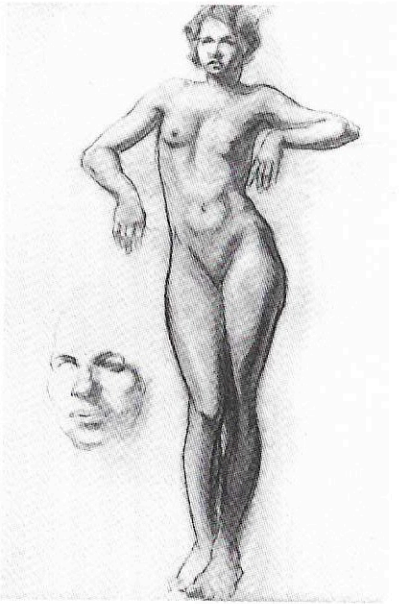
In March 1923, at the age of 19, Tytla was hired to work on the animation of a series of Aesop's Fables for John Terry's brother Paul.[9] Paul Terry employed a staff of twenty artists and in the decade from 1920 to 1929 produced over 460 one-reel Fables at the rate of one per week. Able to draw anything that was assigned him, Tytla quickly proved his value, turning out prodigious amounts of animation footage each week. John Terry advised him to ask Paul for a "100% increase" in salary; to the young animator's surprise the raise was granted without argument. Years later, according to *New Yorker* cartoonist and animator I. Klein, Paul Terry "said he would have given Bill even more money at that time if he had asked for it. William Tytla was a brilliant animator from the very start of his career."

Within three years, young Tytla "was earning a very fine salary as an animator." In order to look mature, he grew a moustache that filled out luxuriously over the years.[10] Now living on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, the Tytlas were a close-knit, emotionally demonstrative family to whom Vladimir would remain devoted. He felt, however, the need to distance himself from their restrictive Catholicism. "Evidently because of so much religion in the home," said animator Art Babbitt, his close friend, "Bill became an atheist."[11]

Tytla first moved to a walk-up on West 16th Street and then shared an apartment at the Kit Kat Club at 71 Seventh Avenue with two commercial artists, Maurice Rawson and Hank Berger. According to their downstairs neighbor I. Klein, Tytla "attended evening life sketch classes, did some painting and led a lively after-work young artist's life."

Colleagues often remark about Tytla's emotional volatility, his seeming always "ready to explode" or about to "pop out of his skin."[12]

Tytla (upper left) in Paramount Studio, New York City, c. 1921



Vladimir Tytla, *Nude Woman,* 1920s, red conte chalk on paper, 22 x 15
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Usually quiet and friendly though intense, Tytla could display "quite a Russian temper," according to Aesop's Fables animator Hicks Lokey, who once found himself on the receiving end of a metal wastebasket thrown by Tytla. Lokey deflected the object with his drawing board, and Tytla's anger immediately dissolved into tears of remorse. "Oh, my God. I could have killed you!"[13]

In November 1928, a struggling producer from the West Coast premiered a short cartoon with a creative synchronized soundtrack, starring a new character called Mickey Mouse. *Steamboat Willie* launched the mouse, firmly established Walt Disney, and led animation from silents to talkies as decisively as *The Jazz Singer* had done the previous year for live-action films.

That same November, Tytla began studies at the Art Students League on West 57th Street. He was making an easy living as a facile staff animator turning out Paul Terry's cheaply-produced silent cartoon Fables. So disinterested was Tytla in the animation industry in general that he had never heard of Walt Disney until he happened on one of his shorts in a Paris movie theatre in 1929. Tytla's attitude about his work at the time was reminiscent of his father's toward making barrels—it was beneath him. His real interest lay in the fine arts; he dreamed of becoming a master of painting and drawing. At the League, Tytla studied with an artist who inspired him and fanned the flames of his dream, Boardman Robinson (1876-1952). "I wanted to work with him," Tytla recalled.

> I heard he was really a tough guy...he looked like a man and talked like one, and he had a very fine subtle sense of humor....He glanced through...one drawing after the other, kind of casually, and turned to me and said, 'They're kind of clever, aren't they?' Then he got to work on me.[14]

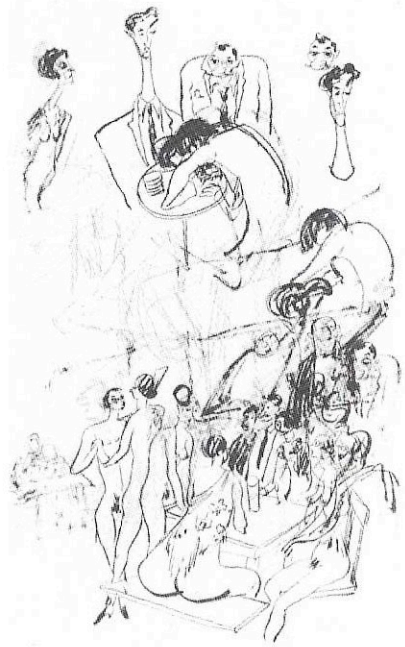
Robinson insisted Tytla draw with a new sharp-pointed pencil instead of a crayon, "so I would have to draw and no technique. Then he criticized the drawing. He asked where the neck line was. I had just a couple lines and a smudge...there was no drawing. It was just good commercial stuff...."

While his pupils sketched nude models, Robinson would elucidate on the principles of drawing, which Tytla absorbed and which reappeared in his best animation for Disney. Robinson urged his pupils:

> Get the kind of reality a camera can't get....Exaggerate and suppress within the character of the model so as to get the character more vividly....Justify distortion....Lines must symbolize form....Let your forms grow out of your rhythms....Get the gesture. It is the core of the thing that counts.[15]

"I picked up a lot from Boardman Robinson," said Tytla.[16]

Excited by his romantic dream of a life in the fine arts, Tytla sailed for Europe in the fall of 1929 with pals Rawson and Berger to



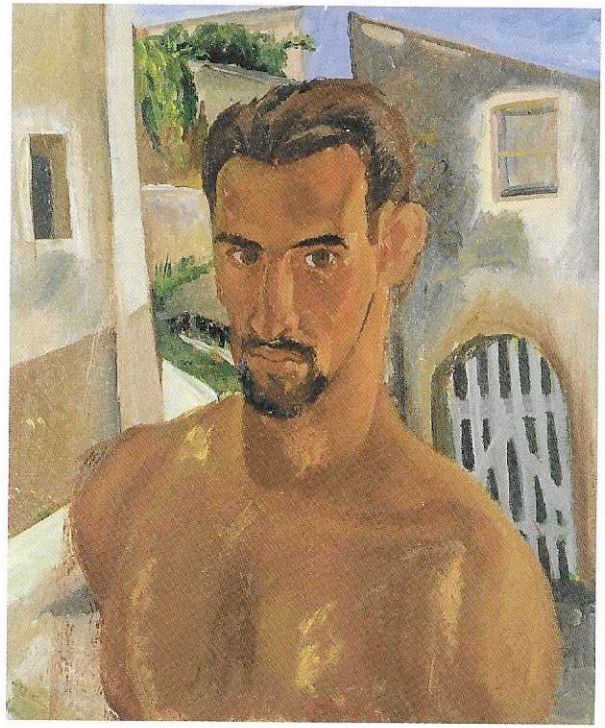
Vladimir Tytla, *Vladimir Tytla, Hank Berger, and Maurice Rawson; Nude Women Dancing with Each Other*, Paris, 1929, ink and pencil on paper, 17 1/2 x 11
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

study painting. "Paris was a base for branching out in all directions," he said of his exhilarating year and a half abroad.[17] The former altar boy and Boy Scout, who had worked since he was a child, let loose. Surviving caricatures tell of sensual pleasures enjoyed in cafes, clubs, and restaurants—drinking, dancing, and dating. Hank Berger recalled, "...Rawson and Bill met up with a couple of dames for a tour of Italy."[18]

Tytla's activities on the Continent included painting in a rented cottage near Nice, talking to the Russian Embassy in London about opening his own animation studio in Moscow, and leading Irish jumping horses through the streets of Bologna. Tytla also faithfully attended art classes in various academies. "Mornings [I study] paint-[ing] and afternoons I study modeling or sculpture. I've paid three months in advance," he wrote to his family soon after arriving in Paris in December. [19]

The weight and three-dimensionality of Tytla's later animation point to the significance of his study of sculpture with Charles Despiau (1874-1946).[20] Despiau, who worked with Rodin for seven years, told Tytla that his sculpture had a Daumier-like quality.[21] "He approached drawing like a sculptor," observed veteran animator Shamus Culhane who worked with Tytla on *Snow White*. "He saw a face that was fatter on one side than the other. Most people would think the two halves are the same. So using that principle in his drawing, he got a lot of emotion even in a figure that wasn't moving or emoting. He managed that inner turmoil. Nobody did that except Tytla. He was a unique animator."[22]

Able to view art he had only seen reproduced in books, Tytla spent hours in cathedrals, museums, and galleries. On his way to his father's homeland in Galicia, he visited the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna to see *A Country Wedding* (c. 1565) and other paintings by Pieter Bruegel, a favorite artist. "It was," said writer John Culhane, "his epiphany. He stayed in Vienna and went back and back. He said this is what I want to do, but I want to make them move. All those Bruegels—the figures explain the seven dwarfs."[23]



Vladimir Tytla, *Self-Portrait on the Riviera,* 1929,
oil on canvas, 18 x 15
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Indeed, Tytla's description of his handling of the design and animation of the seven dwarfs in *Snow White* to a group of novice Disney animators in 1936 readily conjurs up images of Bruegel's working and merrymaking peasants:

> The problem...is to try to get the feeling of various kinds of texture... of the flesh, the jowls on the dwarfs, the drawing into the eyes, the mouth, the texture of the hair and of old cloth, so it feels heavy, unwashed for a couple of hundred years, according to the story....Get some personality and character into the hands, hands that have a

> knuckle, that look a little aged, without looking repulsive...hands that look like old men's hands, not something that has been cleaned-up and manicured and polished...hands are the swellest things to draw, as far as I'm concerned. Like drawing a painting of a fellow with a broken nose or twisted cheek. So much more interesting than the perfect and smooth face, one side exactly like the other. That's the beauty of drawing the dwarfs.[24]

But the more masterpieces of European painting Tytla saw, the more he suffered a crisis of confidence in his own abilities. "Never one to settle for second best, he convinced himself that obviously he could never top them," said Adrienne Tytla. Soon after returning to the States, he destroyed most of his paintings and all of his sculptures because, according to Art Babbitt, "Bill just didn't think they were good enough. And that was his attitude toward all the work he ever did. He was never satisfied."

Tytla decided to remain in commercial art, specifically animation, the new 20th-century art form of which he was already a young master, and to find a way of incorporating into it the rich knowledge of art he had absorbed in Europe.

Proof of Tytla's value as an animator arrived in a letter from Paul Terry, who had entered the "talkie" film market with a series of "Terry-toons" musical shorts. He offered Tytla a job in New York, which Tytla accepted because America was in the throes of the Depression and he was running out of money. Also, the new challenge of sound cartoons revived his enthusiasm for animation.

Terry-toons production books from late 1930 through 1931 list Tytla as an animator (with others, including Babbitt) on eighteen shorts directed by Frank Moser, Terry's partner and Tytla's colleague at Paramount. Tytla's superior drawing ability was often utilized for "difficult" scenes or scenes where characters were required to dance. "If it was a personality thing," said Paul Terry, "why you'd give it to a fellow like Tytla. He was one of the best animators that ever lived....I remember a dancing girl [in *The Sultan's Cat* (1931)]. The dancing girl really made the picture....A beautiful piece of animation."[25]

Unfortunately, the quality of the new sound-synchronized Terry-toons was little better than the silent Aesop's Fables. Terry, a notorious penny-pincher, resisted suggestions for improvements. He refused, for example, to buy a moviola for the animators to test their work at a time when Disney's "pencil-testing" of animation—sometimes up to four times before approving a scene—was the talk (and envy) of the industry. Terry's attitude was: "When I hire a man to animate, I want him to know how!"

Tytla once told a Disney art class:

> They [Terry and Moser] were making a tremendous amount of money, but we had to hire [a model] ourselves. And of course, they wouldn't even consider engaging an instructor for us...the lead animators...couldn't do much if you took them off cats and mice....[They] couldn't animate girls, we would have to. Or if there was a dance sequence, you might go to a dancing school and ask for a couple of routine steps....It was just purely accidental that one or two of us liked drawing and went to art school because it was a lot of fun besides....Finally, we had to give [the models] up. The fellows would make wisecracks about the girls who posed for us....They said 'anyone who goes to art school is a homo Bolshevik!' They'd say, 'What the hell do you want to go to art school for? You're animating, aren't you?' Then when you countered with, 'Why do you give me this stuff, dancing girls, etc.? Why don't you do it yourself?' that was different.[26]

Fed up with conditions at the Terry studio, Babbitt left for Hollywood and was hired by Disney in July 1932. For two years, he and former New York animators Ted Sears and Norman Ferguson sang Tytla's praises to Walt Disney and his brother and business partner Roy. At the same time, Babbitt sent a stream of letters and telegrams to the cautious Tytla, hoping to entice him to come West. Frustrated though he was artistically at Terry's, Tytla was reluctant to leave a well-paying job during the Depression.

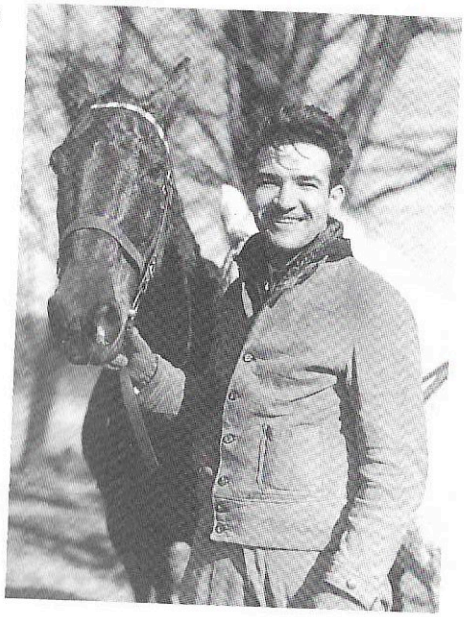
Babbitt touted southern California's weather and described the superior conditions at the Disney studio: a moviola in every animator's room, free evening art classes, challenging work on critically acclaimed

films. In a letter dated November 27, 1933, Babbitt revealed Disney's commitment, even at that early date, to produce a feature-length color cartoon (*Snow White* was released four years later). "Walt has promised me a big hunk of the picture," bragged Babbitt, who also issued Tytla a friendly warning:

> Listen, guy—Terry owes you a rest and besides it would be worth your time and money to investigate conditions here just to satisfy your own mind. It may sound strong but unless you start a cartoon of your own or make a change in a year or two, you will be a 'has-been' ...if you can possibly manage to get out here I'm going to make you like it so much you'll never want to go back.

In early 1934 Tytla finally flew to Hollywood. "Jesus, but I was impressed by the Disney studio!" he said years later. Disney offered him a job on a trial basis at $100 per week, a starting salary well below his Terry-toons wage. "If you are worth more we are willing to pay it," wrote Ben Sharpsteen, then Disney's production manager. "No contract is necessary. After you prove your ability we will be glad to talk future salary and contract."[27] Babbitt advised Tytla to ask for $150 because "Ben told me that Walt is hot for you and they both feel that they've made a fax paso [sic] by offering you so little money."[28]

Tytla, 1930s

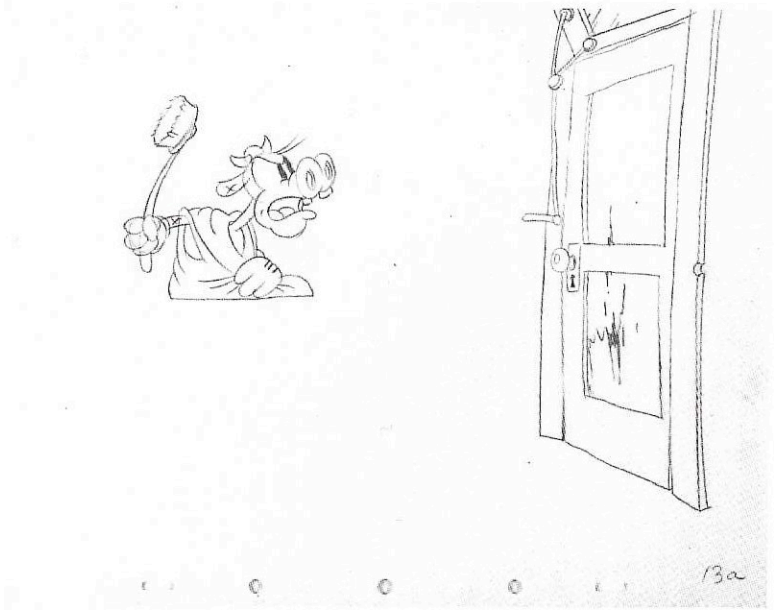


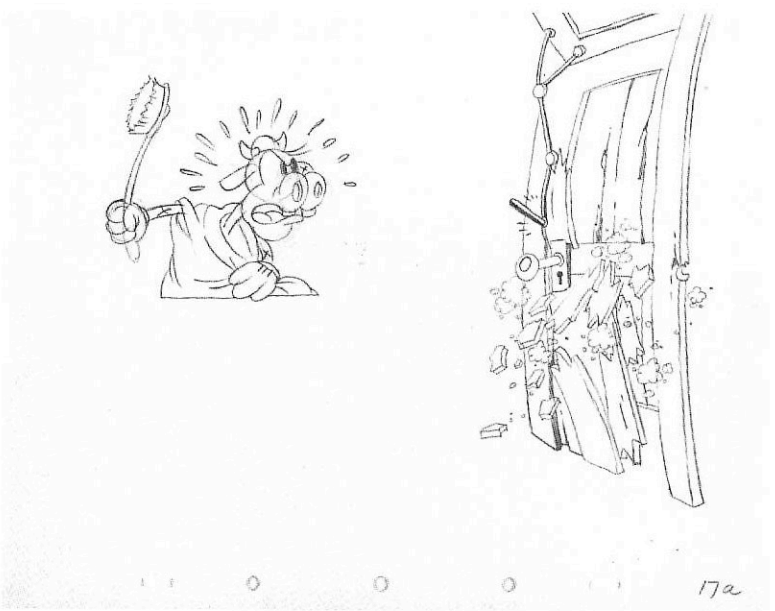
Tytla began at the Disney studio on November 15, 1934. Within a year, he was one of the first animators assigned to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.*

Tytla and Babbitt (who animated the Queen in *Snow White*) quickly became two of Disney's top-salaried artists, and, as in New York, they shared a residence—this time a Tuxedo Terrace house complete with a maid. Tytla enjoyed the Hollywood good life. He bought a new Plymouth sedan and indulged his love of horses by playing polo until 1935, when a pony rolled over on him and he was hospitalized with a cracked pelvis. Tytla continued to send money home and purchased for his family 150 acres of farmland in East Lyme, Connecticut.

At the Disney studio, Tytla eagerly participated in the after-hours "Action Analysis" classes taught by Donald Graham. "I fell for them like a ton of bricks," he said. "It was really a life saver for me. I was in a period between the old and the new stage of animation. Running [films] in slow motion was like lifting a curtain for me. Then sweatbox sessions [i.e., projection room critiques of pencil tests] were another revelation. After all, if you do a piece of animation and run it over enough times, you must see what is wrong with it. These things, plus all the art school training [in New York and Europe] influenced my approach to the work."[29]

During his "probationary" year, 1935, Tytla's animation of diverse characters showcased his versatility as an "actor." He created a broadly comic Clarabelle Cow in *Mickey's Fire Brigade*; a romantic gingerbread boy and girl, and raucous rival Angel Food and Devil's Food cakes in the Silly Symphony short, *The Cookie Carnival*; a lively (if now politically incorrect) pair of black dolls modeled on Step'n Fetchit and Aunt Jemima in *Broken Toys*; and the first of his "heavies," a bully rooster dancing the Carioca in *Cock O' the Walk.*



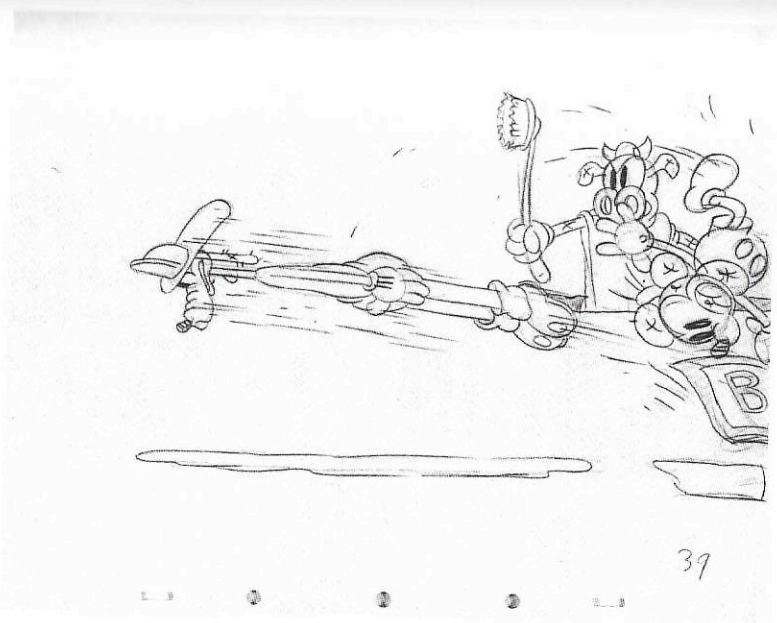


Vladimir Tytla, "Clarabelle Cow" from *Mickey's Fire Brigade,* 1935,
4 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 9½ x 12
From the Collection of Miriam and Stuart Reisbord

As with all fine actors, Tytla assumed the *feelings* of the character he was portraying, be it rooster or rag doll. With Mozartian directness, emotions flowed from his brain into his pencil and onto paper. "He had such a connection with the thing that he was doing, that it wasn't really a drawing," said animator George Bakes, Tytla's assistant in New York in the 1960s. "It was *Bill* that was coming out....He would feel it and struggle on the paper until it happened...that tremendous feeling that was *him.* And that's what sets his animation apart from anybody else's."[30]

"At work, Bill hovered over his drawing board like a giant vulture protecting a nest filled with golden eggs," observed Grim Natwick, who animated in a room next to Tytla at Disney's. "He was an intense worker—eager, nervous, absorbed....Key drawings were whittled out with impassioned pencil thrusts that tore holes in the animation paper."[31]

After each short was completed, Walt Disney sent his animators detailed memos severely criticizing their scenes and rating them with letter-grades. He rarely praised and usually pointed out missed opportunities for personality touches or a lack of specificity in staging an action. Yet, in a two-page memo nit-picking Tytla's work in *Cock O' the Walk,* Disney conceded that the animation was "a big step forward....As far as the dancing of the characters is concerned, a good result was obtained." Disney bestowed mostly "A" and a few "B-plus" ratings on Tytla's 15 scenes in the film; further, he noted that in one scene "something was started...which is what we are striving for. That is, doing things in the dance which humans are unable to do."[32]



Tytla was instinctively exaggerating his drawings to express emotions more convincingly and make characters come alive. "The function of animated cartoons, as far as I'm concerned," said Tytla, "is not to make the stuff look too damn naturalistic." This opinion was shared by Walt Disney who stated in a December 23, 1935 memo, "The first duty of the cartoon is not to picture or duplicate real action or things as they actually happen, but to give a caricature of life and action."

Tytla explained his technique this way:

> The point is that you are not merely swishing a pencil about, but you have weight in your forms and you do whatever you possibly can with that weight to convey sensation....It is a struggle for me and I am conscious of it all the time.

> You must phrase or force or define [animation drawings] so that the eye always follows. Very often you must do things you might call bad drawing in order to accent or force. On the screen it looks good, but that one drawing in itself doesn't mean anything...just a continuation of a vast whole...[you must] force or accent certain drawings in order to get a certain mood or reaction across. If you always try to keep perfect form you will not get the feeling across. It will be...without flavor....You can force or accent a hand and throw it way out and bring it back down....You can twist an eyebrow or a mouth... you can do something to the little character's shoulder and cheat, but it is a continuous flow and it always comes back to its original shape.... There isn't a caricaturist in this country who has as much liberty as an animator here of twisting and weaving his lines in and out and eventually having it all come out again. But I can't tell you how to do it. I wish I could.

"I get a kick out of the way Tytla will distort something—the forefinger of a hand, perhaps," commented Bill Shull, Tytla's main assistant on *Snow White*. "Stretch it out so that it looks almost silly. When you see it on the drawing you would swear it meant nothing, but on the screen these things seem to hold the scene together."[33]

Tytla and Fred Moore—an untrained draftsman but a natural animator whose drawings exude enormous charm—were responsible for the ultimate design and definitive personalities of the seven dwarfs in *Snow White*. In this film, all Tytla's knowledge of and instincts about animation came together.

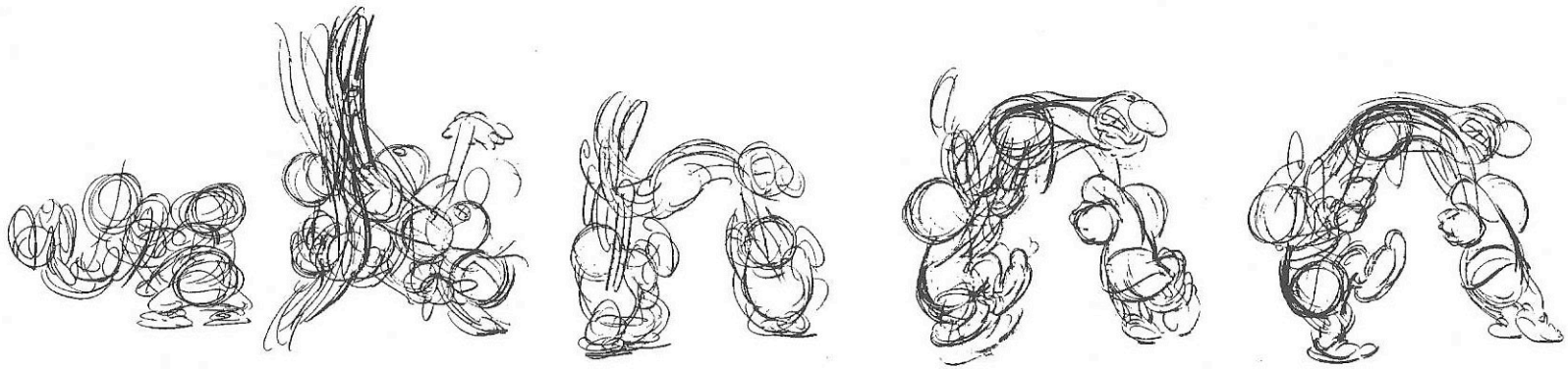
Donald Graham had high praise for Tytla's drawings of the dwarfs:

> Individually, they are full of movement, which results in a feeling of real vitality and personality in the character. They exemplify what to look for in drawing—the attention that should be paid to little things: how a mouth is drawn, the way the head is drawn, the hands, etcetera...there is a feeling of movement in the form...[the character] is alive. These drawings have almost a feeling of the oriental in them, the feeling of Japanese prints or Chinese paintings. This comes back to the rhythmic movement of line developed through necessity. If a few dozen of these drawings were put in frames and were sent to museums, letters from critics all over the world would pour in asking what had hit them. This stuff has vitality![34]

Graham found Tytla's approach to animation "a confirmation of all that the instructors have been trying to do here for four years in the drawing classes. It is the first time that those principles have been evident in animation....Tytla's work has been a revelation."[35]

Two *Snow White* sequences offer impressive examples of Tytla's art. In one, the dwarfs carry a violently protesting Grumpy to a bathtub. "In all my years of animation, [I] never had a problem like that come up," said Tytla, "because here were [sic] a group of characters that were rather alike and yet all different." He animated a veritable mob scene as a group of individuals—each dwarf performing according to his established personality. And Tytla was able (Bruegel-like) to organize—indeed, choreograph—the crowded, potentially confusing scene so that all actions read clearly.

In another sequence, woman-hating Grumpy is kissed by Snow White. As he brusquely walks away, an internal warmth generated by



Vladimir Tytla, "Dwarfs Carrying Grumpy to the Tub"
from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937,
5 rough animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12
Collection of Ollie Johnston

Vladimir Tytla, "Dopey, Doc, Sneezy, and Happy" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* 1937, pencil on paper, 12 x 10
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

the kiss gradually slows him, bringing a soft smile and a sigh to his lips, revealing his *true* feelings of love. In a personality animation tour de force, Grumpy's inner feelings are portrayed solely through pantomime—in his telling facial expressions, his body language, and the timing of his reactions.

Tytla brought a profound change to the melodramatic acting style Walt Disney expected from his animators, a style animator Ollie Johnston calls "cartoon emotion." Inspired by silent films and vaudeville performances, Disney emphasized *action* in defining a personality. "He had an intuitive feeling for what a character should do, and I would stress *doing,*" said animator Frank Thomas. "The depth of acting was not particularly emotional. Tytla was the first one who was able to animate characters who acted a certain way based on their

Vladimir Tytla, "Grumpy" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* 1937, pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

emotions. In story meetings Walt would talk about how Grumpy would say something's wrong because his corns hurt, little homey things like that. I don't recall him talking about how deeply Grumpy felt emotionally about Snow White. That's why Tytla's stuff made such an impact."[36]

One evening in 1936 in a Disney art class, a vibrant and beautiful 22-year-old actress and fashion model from Seattle named Adrienne le Clerc posed for the animators, including Tytla. "My temperament was as volcanic as his," admitted Adrienne. "But my glass was half-filled with enthusiasm, his often half-empty with self-doubts. We were, however, definitely yin and yang." Their thirty-year marriage began on April 21, 1938. Ten months later they had a son, Peter, and in 1949 a daughter, Tamara.[37]

"Here I am back on the job," wrote Tytla on November 2, 1937 to his parents and brothers on the farm in Connecticut, "and having a hard time of it, too—because I've got some very tough stuff to do." Tytla's difficult new assignment was Stromboli, an explosive puppeteer and kidnapper in *Pinocchio* (1940). Larger-than-life, a monster of mercurial moods—comic and menacing by turns—Stromboli is one of Disney's most three-dimensional and frightening villains. "[Tytla] suffered a lot," said Joe Grant, head of Disney's Character Model Department and Best Man at Tytla's wedding. "There was a Sisyphus thing with Bill, always pushing something uphill. He was in search of perfection and in many cases achieved it. When he got pregnant with an idea it was a long time coming, but when it did, it was really worth-while."[38]

Tytla told of suffering depression from a cryptic comment Walt Disney made about a Stromboli animation test:

> ...I gave it everything I had...[the other animators] all said 'Great!' or 'Nothing else needed'....Finally, the time came for Walt to see it. He was subdued and...said 'That was a helluva scene, but'—there's always that cruel 'but' in there—'If anyone else had animated it I would have passed it. But I expected something different from Bill!'
>
> Well, he sunk a ship with that remark...it took a couple of weeks before I could work again. I was crushed. But one day I took up my pencil and started to draw again, differently. It was as if something hit me and I started all over. This time I showed it to Walt, he said, 'Great! Just what I was expecting!' He never did explain what was wrong. It was as if by some magical way you would know.[39]

"Bill was powerful, muscular, high-strung and sensitive, with a tremendous ego," wrote veteran Disney animators Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston in their book *The Disney Villain*. "Everything was 'feelings' with Bill. Whatever he animated had the inner feelings of his characters expressed through very strong acting. He did not just get inside Stromboli, he *was* Stromboli and he lived the part."[40]

Animator Eric Larsen observed that Tytla was for "all-out sincerity. He'd act out a scene in his room and I thought the walls would fall in, especially when he was doing Stromboli. He was a bundle of nerves, he exploded in his normal life."[41]

Disney added to Tytla's self-doubt when he took him off animation of another *Pinocchio* monster—a gigantic whale aptly named Monstro. Tytla's acting talents, Disney reasoned, were wasted on a character whose sole focus was violent action; most of Monstro went to Wolfgang Reitherman, who later animated the battling dinosaurs in *Fantasia*.

In early 1938, Tytla animated the old magician in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* starring Mickey Mouse, a short with music by Paul Dukas that initiated the "concert feature" *Fantasia*. Silent screen actor Nigel de Brulier, gesticulating in a wig and false beard, was filmed to guide the animation. Tytla's rough sketches of the sorcerer reveal dynamic, animate-able shapes that *caricature* the live-action. This exploratory drawing is particularly beautiful in itself and reveals the creative processes of a great animator. So do the numerous rough animation drawings of another *Fantasia* character Tytla brought to unforgettable life: the gigantic devil, Chernobog, in the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence.

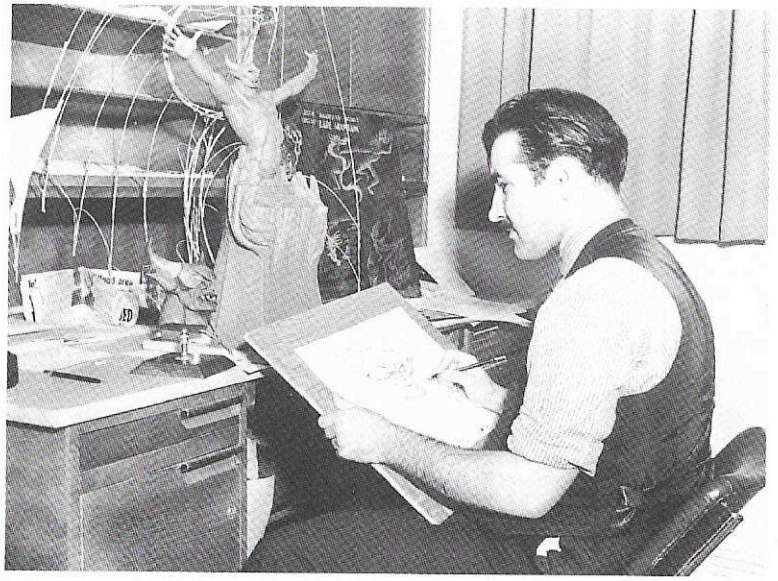
Film was shot of actor Bela Lugosi (of *Dracula* fame) to guide Tytla with the character of Chernobog, but "Bill had a pretty definite idea of just what he wanted to animate before we ever got to the live-action stage," said sequence director Wilfred Jackson. Lugosi assumed "he was there to give us *his* concept of the character....Bill came flat out and said, 'I don't like it. I like it better the way *we* went through it and I'm going to animate it that way. It would help me if you would get in front of the camera and go through it that way for me.' Well, with a first-rate animator like Bill Tytla, you know you'll get a better result if you let him do things his way....So, I took off my shirt and we shot film of me as the devil...."[42]

Again, Tytla went way beyond the reference footage. "I imagined I was as big as a mountain and made of rock and yet I was feeling and moving," he told John Culhane.[43]

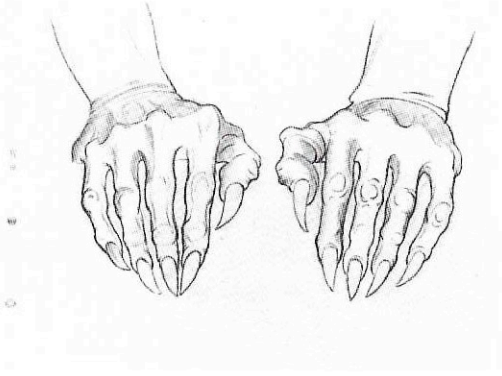
Through his superb dimensional drawing of the devil's figure

Vladimir Tytla, "Sorcerer" from *Fantasia,* 1940,
rough sketches, pencil on paper, 12½ x 15½
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Vladimir Tytla, "Devil," "Tower of Fire" pose from *Fantasia,* 1940,
animation drawing, pencil on paper, 12¼ x 15½
Collection of Adrienne Tytla



Tytla drawing Devil, *Fantasia,* 1940



Vladimir Tytla, "Devil's Hands" (detail)
from *Fantasia,* 1940,
pencil on paper, 15½ x 12¼
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

and hands, Tytla captured the feral quality of Chernobog—his immensity and his awesome power. In a nuanced performance, this god of evil believably displays an emotional range from unabashed glee to profound despair, expressing physical pain at the sound of church bells at dawn. Chernobog is Vladimir Tytla's supreme achievement in personality animation and marks the zenith of his career.

In a Mickey Mouse short released in 1938, *Brave Little Tailor,* Tytla had animated a giant who was as dumb as he was huge. The character "became the model for all giants throughout the industry from gags to personality," according to Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas, "even though no one else could match Bill's animation."

But by 1940 Tytla was weary of animating large, powerful characters. Ambitiously he sought to expand his acting range and versatility, and place himself above specialists such as Fred Moore, whom Disney had "type-cast" to work on small, cute characters. Tytla requested as his next assignment Dumbo, the baby elephant scorned and abused because of his big ears.

His reference this time came from his own infant son, Peter. "He was real high on this kid," said Frank Thomas. "He grabbed me by the arm one day," recalled Ollie Johnston. "He says, 'You gotta get married, you gotta have a kid. It makes you feel you're part of the moon, the sun, the whole cosmos.' He was pinching my arm till it was black and blue. It was exciting. He felt this so deeply. Everything he felt was like that."

"I don't know a damn thing about elephants," said Tytla in a *Time* story on *Dumbo* on December 29, 1941:

> I was thinking in terms of humans, and I saw a chance to do a character without using any cheap theatrics. Most of the expressions and mannerisms I got from my own kid. There's nothing theatrical about a two-year-old kid. They're real and sincere—like when they damn near wet their pants from excitement when you come home at night. I've bawled my kid out for pestering me when I'm reading or something and he doesn't know what to make of it. He'll just stand there and maybe grab my hand and cry....I tried to put all those things in Dumbo.

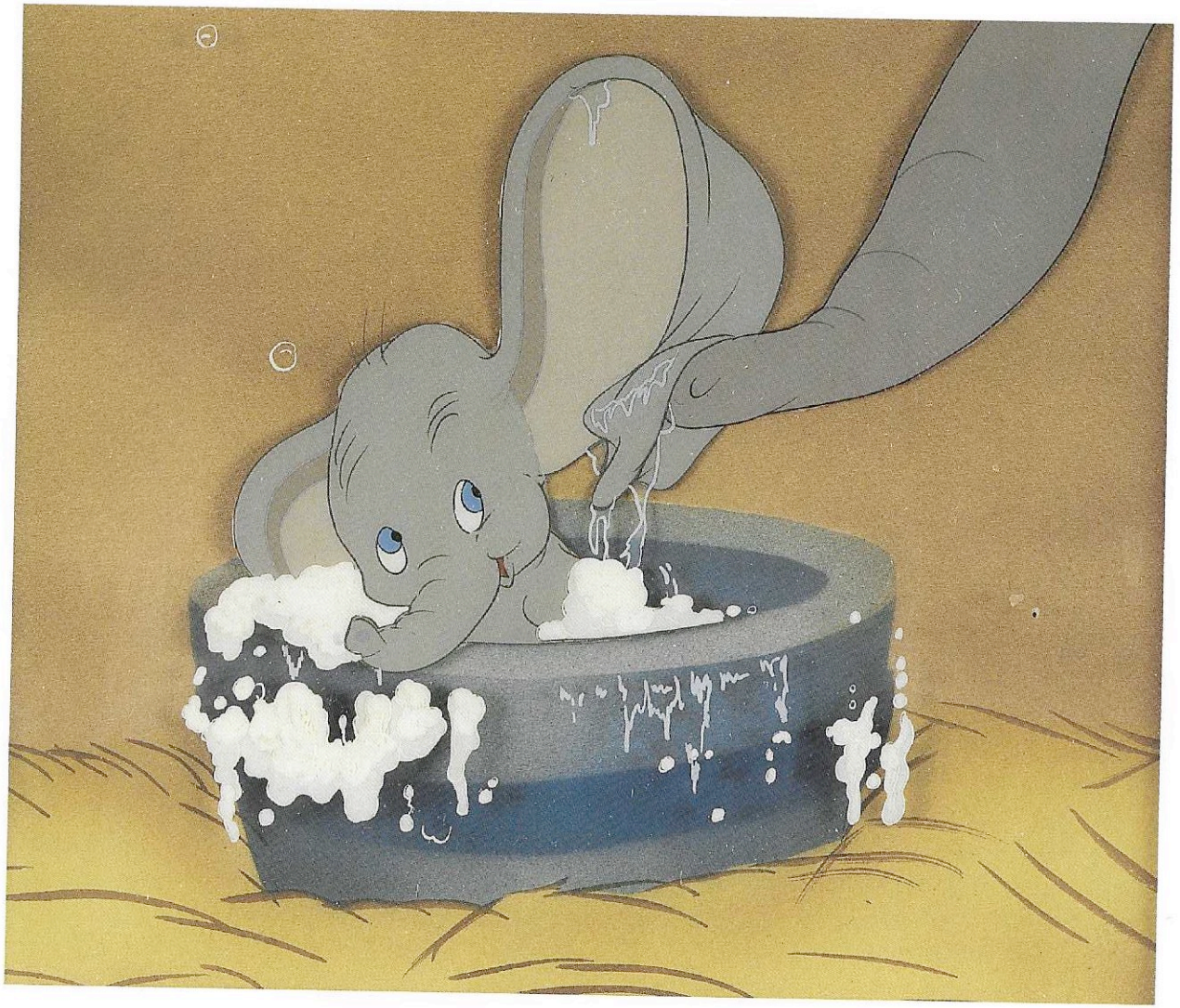
Vladimir Tytla, "Giant" from *Brave Little Tailor,* 1938,
animation drawing, pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

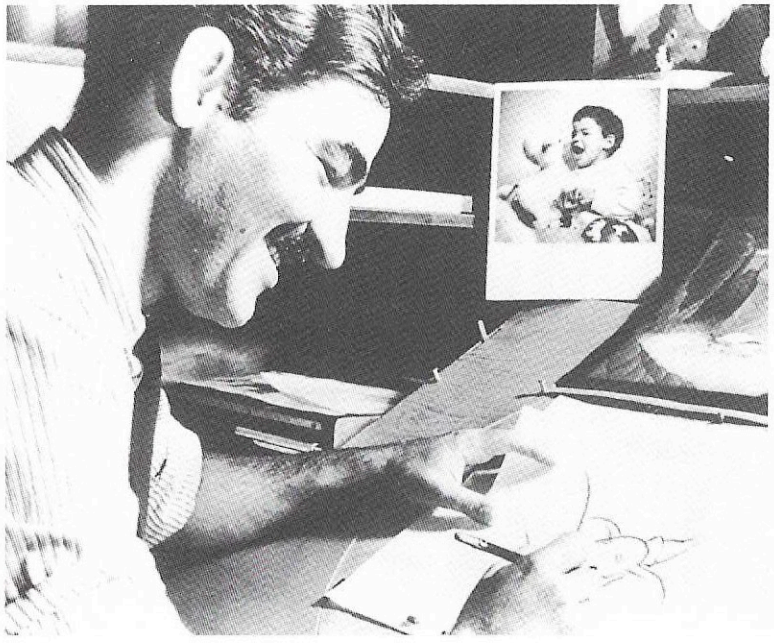
Splashing and blowing bubbles in a bathtub, silly with pleasure, or playing hide-and-seek between his mother's legs, Dumbo moves, acts, and reacts like a human child. This happy sequence contrasts with a later one in which Dumbo visits his mother in prison; she is chained and unable to communicate except by caressing her child with her trunk. Tytla invested this animation with an extraordinary depth of feeling. Original drawings suggest subtle changes in Dumbo's thoughts through the shape of his eyes, head, and body positions.

Climbing onto his mother's trunk, he shows a slight apprehension as she begins to swing him gently back and forth. He relaxes into the ride, yet his fear of the temporality of maternal solace is always there. The final parting—a slow reluctant pull of Dumbo's trunk away

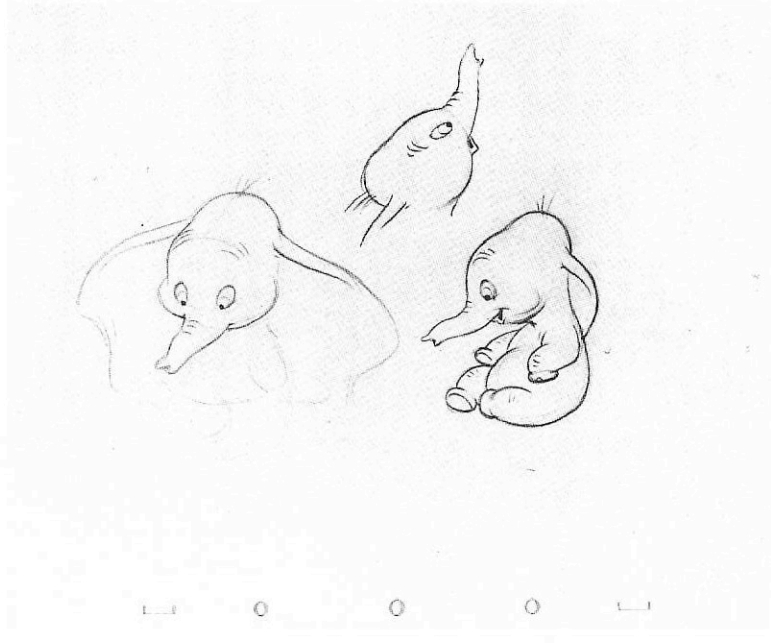
"Devil's Face with Spirits Flying" from *Fantasia,* 1940,
multi-level cel, 10 x 12
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

"Dumbo" from *Dumbo,* 1941,
cel and background, 7 x 8¼
Collection of Thomas A. Meyer





Tytla drawing Dumbo, *Dumbo,* 1941



Vladimir Tytla, "Dumbo" from *Dumbo,* 1941, pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

from his mother's—becomes a wrenching sight, capable of moving audiences to tears. "I cried my eyes out," wrote singer/actress Lotte Lenya to Kurt Weill, calling the embrace of the cartoon pachyderms "the most beautiful thing I've ever seen" and likening it to "a Botticelli Madonna. Just beyond words."[44] One writer compared the scene to "a reprise of the legendary 'homecoming' shot of Mae Marsh's arms stretched to the Little Colonel in Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)."[45]

Disney was now considering Tytla for major roles in animated versions of *Don Quixote, Wind in the Willows,* and *Peter Pan.* "Why do people work here?" a writer for *Atlantic Monthly* inquired about the Disney studio in December 1940. Tytla replied with a reference to a symbol of religious perfection, "You know, you and I have seen some outfits that had it. They had something. The thing here is like that—you know, you can't help feeling that you're going to grab that goddamn Holy Grail."[46]

But there were those who thought otherwise. On May 28, 1941, as *Dumbo* neared its final production stages, Art Babbitt (who had been fired the day before by Walt Disney for union activities) and layout artist David Hilberman led over 300 Disney studio employees in a strike, demanding union representation. Disney had been in financial trouble since 1939 when the war in Europe cut off 45% of its revenue, leading to staff layoffs and broken promises with regard to job security, raises and bonuses.

To Walt's surprise and dismay, Tytla joined the strike line. One of his highest paid animators (over $300 a week) was picketing outside the studio gates in Burbank, collaring company men for intense con-

versations, genial and otherwise. Joe Grant recalled that Tytla would "hold me up for an hour trying to convince me to come out," and animator Berny Wolf was "shocked" when Tytla cursed him. "This was a friend of mine talking to me this way," said Wolf.[47]

"I was for the company union, and I went on strike because my friends were on strike," said Tytla. "I was sympathetic with their views, but I never wanted to do anything against Walt." When he and Walt ran into each other at a lunch counter, they shook hands, and Tytla told him "the strike was foolish and unnecessary. He asked me to return to his office with him to work out a solution." The two men arranged an afternoon meeting, but it was cancelled. "Somebody got to him and told him not to work with me," recalled Tytla. "I wasn't an officer of the union and I really couldn't speak for anybody anyway."

The acrimonious strike lasted until mid-September and was so divisive that it profoundly altered the course of American character animation. Paternalistic Walt took the "disloyalty" of the strikers as a personal attack and soured on animation itself. "The spirit that played such an important part in the building of the cartoon medium has been destroyed," he said in an August 11, 1941 letter to columnist Westbrook Pegler. "I am thoroughly disgusted and would gladly quit and try to establish myself in another business if it were not for the loyal guys who believe in me." After the war, Disney *did* diversify his creative energies into live-action films, television, and theme parks.

Soon after the strike, however, America entered the war, and Disney survived only by producing hundreds of animated training and propaganda shorts, and "package" features—shorts linked thematically, i.e. the "Good Neighbor Policy" in *Saludos Amigos* (1943) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945). Tytla returned to the studio, but "there was too much tension and electricity in the air," according to Adrienne Tytla. With Vladimir, "everything was instinctive and intuitive, and now the vibes were all wrong."

His assignments were less challenging; instead of Sancho Panza, Don Quixote, or Captain Hook, Tytla now animated a baby airplane and a Brazilian parrot in *Saludos Amigos*. His small but juicy final portrayals at Disney were a witch and a Nazi teacher in the didactic short *Education for Death* (1943) and a climactic battle between a giant octopus and an American eagle in the feature *Victory Through Air Power* (1943).

Walt Disney openly loathed Art Babbitt; forced to rehire the animator, he never spoke to him again. As a "friendly witness" during the Hollywood House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearing on October 24, 1947, Disney took revenge on David Hilberman by labeling him a "Communist." But apparently he harbored no lasting animosity toward Tytla; in fact, when Tytla visited the studio in 1954, Walt posed with the animator for a photograph and autographed it.

Vladimir Tytla, "Hitler" from *Reason and Emotion,* 1943,
pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Vladimir Tytla, *Self-Caricature,* c. 1940,
pencil on paper, 9 1/2 x 11
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Tytla and Walt Disney, 1954

"In a sense Tytla locked himself out of the studio," said Joe Grant. "I think Walt had great admiration for him. It was talent that was important with him." Ben Sharpsteen, however, saw the relationship this way: "We used to have the expression [at the Studio] 'Walt never bought them.' Walt never bought Tytla. He recognized that he was a very good animator but he wasn't enthusiastic about him, the way he was some of the others."[48]

In 1943, Tytla was tormented by real and imagined problems: a perception that he was unwelcome at the Studio; a lack of interesting animation roles; his wife's three-year long illness with tuberculosis; fear that the Japanese army would bomb California; and a desire to live on his Connecticut farm. "He was the most displaced person I ever met," said Shamus Culhane. "He longed for his farm, every day, all day with anguish. He didn't like California."

Ever cautious, Tytla left Disney only after receiving a definite job offer back East. Paul Terry entered Tytla's life again, traveling to Hollywood to entice the great animator ("He wined us and dined us," recalled Adrienne) to return to Terrytoons, now located in New Rochelle, New York. Tytla resigned from the Disney studio on February 25, 1943, an action he regretted for the remaining twenty-five years of his life.

Vladimir Tytla, 2 pages from Terrytoons sketchbook, 1943-44, pencil on paper, each 8 3/4 x 11
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

Terry hadn't changed. "We worked on volume and price," recalled Terrytoons storyman James (Tommy) Morrison. "We would turn out like 26 cartoons a year with a staff that was maybe one-fifth the size of a Disney staff....We had a schedule. We had to knock out a story every two weeks. One story department."[49] "The cartoons generally were almost thrown in with the features because money-wise they meant so little in comparison with the features," said Terry. "They're sold like ribbons, you know?"

Tytla left within a year. In the fall of 1944 he joined Paramount/Famous Studios as a director of Popeye, Little Audrey, and Little Lulu theatrical shorts. Still he pined for Disney's. A June 14, 1946 letter from Walt Disney Productions' "casting director" J.K. (Ken) Peterson rejected Tytla's suggestion that Disney send him animation to be completed at his home in Connecticut. "It is important that we have the animators here on the lot," explained Peterson.

At Famous, Tytla worked with a staff of 175 people on West 45th Street, also known as New York's "Animation Alley" because a number of cartoon studios were housed there. Across the street, David Hilberman opened Tempo Productions in 1948, which quickly became the premiere producer of animated commercials for the new television market. Tytla moonlighted for his friend and former Disney colleague, and in 1950 he joined Tempo full-time as a director.

"Bill wasn't happy at Famous," said Hilberman. "Standards were low, so although he was under-challenged doing TV commercials, at least he was working with Disney-trained artists and we were striving for quality in concept, design and, most important to Bill, in animation."[50]

Hilberman encouraged experimentation; after the Disney strike, he was a founder of the innovative UPA animation studio in Hollywood. For a project at Tempo, Tytla once animated *puppets*

Vladimir Tytla, "Drunken Mouse," Terrytoons Studio, 1944,
pencil on paper, 9 1/2 x 11
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

frame-by-frame, which he greatly enjoyed, perhaps because it recalled his early interest in sculpting.

But he was often frustrated by the squared-off, stylized designs popular with advertisers in the 1950s. "At the time, animation was experiencing a change-over from the Disney style to a more modern style," explained Ray Favata, a Tempo layout artist. "When UPA's *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1950) won an Oscar, everything changed, especially in TV commercial animation. It was tough for Bill. The flat style eluded him altogether. He just had no feeling for it. He would often curse: 'Damn this modern shit!'" Nevertheless, Favata noted, Tytla "knew how to time things and his directorial skills were so strong he was able to work with an assistant to help with the drawings."[51]

Tempo closed abruptly in 1953 when *Counterattack,* a periodical exposing alleged communist influence in American corporations, smeared Hilberman and his partner William Pomerance, both Disney strike organizers who were painted "red" by Walt Disney before the HUAC. "At our Christmas party," related Hilberman, "the head of TV at a major agency showed up to advise us the agencies had agreed to blackball Tempo." After a "quick and desperate search," the studio was sold to Academy Pictures. Under its new name and management, Tempo's staff of 45, including Tytla, stayed on, and the studio continued to grow through the 1950s.

In 1954 Tytla was slated to direct (through Academy) a sequence in John Hubley's animated feature version of the Broadway musical *Finian's Rainbow.* Tytla attended meetings in Los Angeles, but the blacklist struck again. Production on *Finian's* terminated when Hubley, another Disney striker and one of UPA's most creative directors, refused to cooperate with the HUAC.

On the West Coast for the first time since his departure almost a dozen years earlier, Tytla visited the Disney studio and saw Walt and a number of his former colleagues. "What a helluva swell time I had," he wrote to animator Marc Davis on December 12, 1954. "It did me a world of good."

It also heightened his unhappiness about directing TV commercials in New York. Tytla lived alone in an apartment and on weekends commuted to his family and farm two-and-a-half hours away in East Lyme, Connecticut. "He had a powerful, mystical connection to this farm," commented Adrienne Tytla. He attempted to turn the property into a working dairy farm and spent over $50,000 preparing the land, erecting a barn, and buying a herd of Guernsey cattle. "It's a crying shame he couldn't have taken this morale-boosting trip five years ago," wrote Adrienne to her mother on December 18, 1954, after Tytla returned from L.A., "before he sank everything he earned up to and since then into the barn and cows and everything connected with them...."

In another letter she wrote, "We have no money for a trip. We

Post Sugar Crisp "Bear," 1950s,
black and white cel, 10¼ x 12½
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

have no time. Running a farm as a business takes everything we've got. And it's not a paying business by a long shot. We keep pouring everything we've got into it."[52]

When Tytla's part-time dairy farm finally failed in 1958, he was heading his own company in New York, William Tytla Productions Inc. David Hilberman was his silent partner, "out of sight and under cover [because] McCarthyism was yet rampant." From the start, the studio was on shaky ground. "Bill was not a salesman and I was frustrated in my role," said Hilberman. Tytla wanted to get "his teeth into something worthy and challenging," so while he directed commercials, Hilberman pursued more interesting projects, such as a musical version of Dicken's *A Christmas Carol,* to be designed by Ronald Searle. When that film went nowhere, the partners split.

Tytla continued on, but he "wasn't crisp about business matters," related Ray Favata. "He didn't argue about prices with the agencies. With his favorite animators, it didn't matter to him about prices. He hired a lot of the Famous Studio animators who were so old-fashioned." "Tytla was a terrible businessman when he had his own place," remarked Shamus Culhane. "He took on work for cheap. He didn't want to do animation. He gave it to people who were way inferior."

Tytla's TV commercial animation is, for the most part, an uncomfortable mix of Disney-like full animation and the angular, stylized character designs that were de rigueur in the 1950s and 60s. The spots are crisp and professional, but emotionally antiseptic; the warmth and life of the "old Tytla" is glimpsed only in a few "old style" characters such as the Post Sugar Crisp bears or the bird in a shampoo commercial.

Vladimir Tytla, "Mousethusala," 1960s,
pencil on paper, 10¼ x 12½
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

"Last time I saw Bill we were discussing modern animation," recalled Hank Berger. "He didn't like them [sic]. They had more sophistication and delicate humor than the slam-bang Disney stuff. We parted arguing and it left a bad taste."

TV commercial producer Al Kouzel noted that Tytla's "pluses —his sincere warmth, thoroughness, along with his fully justified dismay at having to deal with these advertising [agency] characters— appeared in context to be minuses. Sincerity equalled squareness, thoroughness equaled old-fashionedness, dismay equaled lack of inness."[53]

Tytla's last hurrah of full personality animation can be seen in the 1964 Warner Brothers feature *The Incredible Mr. Limpet,* starring Don Knotts as a fish. Tytla closed his studio and worked for a year in L.A. on the film. "Fine exploitation comedy...charmingly funny," said *The Hollywood Reporter* film reviewer (January 20, 1964):

> The animation sequences directed by Vladimir Tytla maintain the same spirit as the live-action portions. A triumph is the animator's art in approximating Knott's distinctive features. The blend of animation and live-action is good.

The last four years of Tytla's life found him in increasingly poor health. He went blind in his left eye, suffered "a myriad of small strokes," and became more and more disoriented. He struggled against his afflictions and continued seeking free-lance work that proved sadly elusive. "He was real deep-down scared inside," recalled Adrienne Tytla. "He had lost his touch and he knew it. He couldn't draw and spent torturous weeks after each stroke trying to recapture the elusive magic. Animation was at an all-time low nationally. Fickle advertisers were now demanding live-action commercials. In addition to Will's illness, he was undergoing the terrible disease of depression that came from rejection that came from no work...it was heart-breaking to see the wounded giant disintegrating in slow-motion, waiting for the final fade out."[54]

And yet "he was still filled with dogged, desperate determination." August 13, 1967, the opening night of the Montreal Expo's World Exhibition of Animation Cinema, featured a screening of *Dumbo* as part of an "Hommage Aux Pionniers." Tytla was invited but worried: "Do you think anybody'd know who I am?" John Culhane convinced him to attend and during the screening "Tytla choked up, got emotional, remembered everything, remembered Peter [his son]. When the film finished, they announced the presence of 'the great animator' and a spotlight went up to a box. But he was on the main floor and there was confusion." When the light finally found him, the audience erupted in "a huge outpouring of love. It may have been one of the great moments of his life," recalled Culhane.

"I would like to go back to Disney's to die," Tytla told Culhane privately, "and I think if I did go back I would die very fast." Culhane took his statement to mean that "he didn't have long and the place where he would spend his last days would be the place where he was happiest."

But Walt Disney, the man who appreciated Tytla's great gifts and knew how best to use them, had died the year before, on December 15, 1966. In the aftermath of his death, the studio became a ship without a rudder; it would take twenty years of floundering before Disney animation recaptured the spirit and vitality of its Golden Age with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989. In any case, Disney management was not inclined to rehire Tytla, a veteran of what must have seemed to them a long-ago chapter in the studio's history.

Nevertheless, Tytla kept trying to return to Disney. In a letter dated August 27, 1968, Disney productions vice president W.H. Anderson rejected his offer to do "trial animation," saying, "We really have only enough animation for our present staff." And as late as October 11, 1968, less than three months before Tytla's death, Disney director Wolfgang Reitherman responded to story material Tytla submitted starring a character called "Mousethusala, the World's Oldest Mouse," explaining, "...I'm sorry to say that your story ideas don't fit into our present program....We have not forgotten that you are anxious to animate here at the studio, but....So far, we can just barely

keep our present crew of animators busy...rest assured you have many friends here at the studio who are pulling for you."

Vladimir Tytla died on his farm on December 31, 1968. In the years that followed, according to his wife, his family "often talked about things he'd taken real pleasure in during his life. Most of them involved family, friends, animals and this farm. But he was never completely satisfied with his work. It could always, somehow, have been better, he felt."[54]

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Notes

For brevity, details of interviews are supplied only at the first citation; unless otherwise stated, subsequent quotations from the same source derive from the identical interview with that source.

1. Anne Tytla Gibb to John Canemaker, 18 February 1975.
2. Adrienne Tytla, *Disney Giant* (unpublished undated manuscript).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Vladimir Tytla to his father and brother John, 28 November 1938.
6. *The Herald Statesman,* Yonkers, N.Y., 6 December 1940.
7. George Sherman, *Cartoonist Profiles #7,* August 1970, pp.12-14.
8. I. Klein, "Golden Age Animator Vladimir (Bill) Tytla," *Cartoonist Profiles #7,* August 1970, pp.6-11.
9. Michael Barrier to JC, 1 August 1993.
10. I. Klein, *Cartoonist Profiles.*
11. Art Babbitt to JC, 18 March 1975.
12. Ollie Johnston to JC, 11 January 1994.
13. Hicks Lokey to Michael Barrier, 4 May 1990.
14. Tytla lecture, Disney Action Analysis class, 10 December 1936.
15. Albert Christ-Janer, *Boardman Robinson* (University of Chicago Press, 1946), p.59.
16. Tytla lecture, Disney Action Analysis class, 28 June 1937.
17. George Sherman, *Cartoonist Profiles.*
18. Hank Berger to JC, 1 May 1975.
19. Tytla to his family, 7 December 1929.
20. *The Herald Statesman.*
21. Art Babbitt to JC, 18 March 1975.
22. Shamus Culhane to JC, 20 September 1993.
23. John Culhane to JC, 18 October 1993.
24. Tytla lecture, Disney class, 10 December 1936.
25. Paul Terry to Harvey Deneroff, 20 December 1969/13 June 1970.
26. Tytla lecture, Disney class, 28 June 1937.
27. Ben Sharpsteen to Tytla, 2 December 1933.
28. Art Babbitt to Tytla, 12 February 1934.
29. Tytla lecture, Disney class, 28 June 1937.
30. George Bakes to JC, 11 March 1975.
31. Grim Natwick, "Animation," *Cartoonist Profiles,* December 1978.
32. Walt Disney to Tytla, 20 December 1935.
33. Donald Graham, Disney Action Analysis class, 7 June 1937.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston to JC, 11 January 1994.
37. Adrienne Tytla, *Disney Giant.*
38. Joe Grant to JC, 7 January 1994.
39. George Sherman, *Cartoonist Profiles.*
40. Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas, *The Disney Villain* (Hyperion, 1993), p.66.
41. Eric Larsen to Michael Barrier, 27 October 1976.
42. Wilfred Jackson to Ross Care, 21 January 1976.
43. John Culhane, *Walt Disney's FANTASIA* (Abrams, 1983), p.194.
44. Donald Spoto, *Lenya: A Life* (Little, Brown and Co., 1989), p.158.
45. Michael Wilmington, "Dumbo," *The American Animated Cartoon,* edited by Danny and Gerald Peary (E.P. Dutton, 1980), pp.77-78.
46. Paul Hollister, "Walt Disney, Genius at Work," *The Atlantic Monthly,* vol. 166 #6, December 1940, p.701.
47. Berny Wolf to Milt Gray, 8 April 1977.
48. Ben Sharpsteen to Michael Barrier, 23 October 1976.
49. James (Tommy) Morrison to Harvey Deneroff, 28 July 1970.
50. David Hilberman to JC, 5 December 1993.
51. Ray Favata to JC, 29 November 1993.
52. Adrienne Tytla to her mother Mimi, 4 August 1954.
53. Al Kouzel to Michael Barrier, 12 March 1975.
54. Adrienne Tytla, *Disney Giant.*

Checklist

Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width. All works are from the collection of Adrienne Tytla, except where otherwise indicated.

Portraits

Vladimir Tytla
Self-Portrait, 1920s
Oil on canvas, 25 x 21 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
Self-Portrait on the Riviera, 1929
Oil on canvas, 18 x 15

A. Battaglia
Caricature of Vladimir Tytla, 1930s
Ink on paper, 14 3/4 x 10 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
Caricature of Art Babbitt, 1930s
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
Self-Caricature Playing Polo, c. 1935
Pencil on paper, 10 x 8

A. Battaglia
Vladimir Tytla and New Son "Congratulations," 1939
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
Self-Caricature c. 1940
Pencil on paper, 9 1/2 x 11

A. Battaglia
Caricature of Vladimir Tytla, 1940s
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Early Years

Winsor McCay
Gertie the Dinosaur, 1914
6 animation drawings, ink on paper, each 6 1/2 x 8 1/2
John Canemaker Collection

Boardman Robinson
Nude Woman, 1925
Charcoal on paper, 20 x 6 3/4
Collection of The Art Students League of New York

Boardman Robinson
Woman with Cloak, 1927
Ink and wash on paper, 14 1/2 x 10
Collection of The Art Students League of New York

Vladimir Tytla
Nude Man, 1920s
Red conte chalk on paper, 22 x 15

Vladimir Tytla
Nude Woman, 1920s
Red conte chalk on paper, 22 x 15

Vladimir Tytla
Poker Table Cartoon Characters, 1920s
Pencil on paper, 13 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
Woman's Head, 1920s
Red conte crayon on paper, 17 x 11 3/4

Vladimir Tytla
Woman with Cloche Hat and Spaghetti Arms, 1920s
Pencil on paper, 8 1/2 x 11

Charles Despiau
Assia, after 1937
Bronze, first of 7 casts, h. 35
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Susan Vanderpoel Clark, 1967

Vladimir Tytla
Faceless Lounging Figures, Paris, 1929
Pencil on stationery from "US Students and Artists Club," 10 1/2 x 8

Vladimir Tytla
Nude Woman, Paris, 1929
Pencil on paper, 12 x 9 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
Vladimir Tytla, Hank Berger, and Maurice Rawson; Nude Women Dancing with Each Other, Paris, 1929
Ink and pencil on paper, 17 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
Vladimir Tytla, Woman, and Eiffel Tower, Paris, 1929
Pencil on paper, 8 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
Letter from Paris, December 3, 1929
8 1/2 x 10 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
Vladimir Tytla and Others with Beer Steins, Berlin, 1930
Ink and pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 8

Vladimir Tytla
5 Paul Terry sketchbooks (#29, 33, 42, 45, 47), 1931
Each 8 1/2 x 22 (open)
Museum of Modern Art, Department of Film, Special Collections

Western Union telegram from Art Babbitt to Bill Wytla [sic], April 20, 1933
6 1/2 x 8

Letter from Ben Sharpsteen to Bill Tytla, December 2, 1933
2 pages, each 11 x 8 1/2

Early Films for Disney

Vladimir Tytla
"Clarabelle Cow" from *Mickey's Fire Brigade,* 1935
4 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 9 1/2 x 12
From the Collection of Miriam and Stuart Reisbord

Vladimir Tytla
"Hen" from *Cock O' the Walk,* 1935
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

"Roosters in the Ring" from *Cock O' the Walk,* 1935
Cel with background, 10 x 12
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

Vladimir Tytla
"Giant" from *Brave Little Tailor,* 1938
2 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Giant" from *Brave Little Tailor,* 1938
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/2 x 15 1/2
Animation Research Library
Walt Disney Feature Animation

"Giant and Mickey" from *Brave Little Tailor,* 1938
Cel with background, 10 x 12
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

Story on *Brave Little Tailor, Look Magazine,* September 27, 1938
13 1/2 x 10 1/2

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Vladimir Tytla
"Doc and Happy," 1937
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Dopey, Doc, Sneezy, and Happy," 1937
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Dwarfs Carrying Grumpy to the Tub," 1937
5 rough animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12
Collection of Ollie Johnston

Vladimir Tytla
"Dwarfs Carrying Grumpy to the Tub," 1937
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12
Animation Research Library
Walt Disney Feature Animation

Vladimir Tytla
"Grumpy," 1937
2 sheets, pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Grumpy Looking over his Shoulder," 1937
14 animation drawings, pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of George and Sara Bakes

Vladimir Tytla
"Grumpy Walking," 1937
6 studies on one sheet, pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Happy" (rear view), 1937
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Happy Curtsying," 1937
Pencil on paper, 12 1/2 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Happy and Sneezy," 1937
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

"Dopey, Grumpy, and Doc," 1937
3 cels in one frame, 8 x 10

"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," 1937
Cel with background and overlay, 11 1/4 x 20
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1937
Theatrical poster, 41 x 27
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1937
Original program, 13 x 10 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
Self-Caricature at *Snow White* Premiere, Letter, December 12, 1937
Pencil on paper, 12 x 10

Disney inter-office communication re *Snow White,* February 4, 1939
5 1/2 x 8 1/2

Pinocchio

Vladimir Tytla
"Stromboli," 1940
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/2 x 15 1/2
Animation Research Library
Walt Disney Feature Animation

Sculpted model of "Stromboli," 1940
Painted plaster, h. 9 1/2
Collection of Jeff Lotman

"Color Shooting in Fairyland," *Popular Mechanics,* January, 1940
9 1/2 x 6 1/2

Pinocchio, 1940
Original program, 10 3/4 x 8 1/4

Fantasia

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil," 1940
Clean-up drawing, pencil on paper, 10 x 12
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil," 1940
Pencil on paper, 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil," "Tower of Fire" poses, 1940
8 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil's Face," 1940
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 15 1/2 x 12 1/4

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil's Hands," 1940
Pencil on paper, 15 1/2 x 12 1/4

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil Hearing Bells, Cringing, Covered with Wings," 1940
10 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil at Height of Glee and Revelry," 1940
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil Looking over the Mountain," 1940
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil Swaying and Beckoning," 1940
10 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Skeleton of Devil," 1940
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

"Devil's Face with Spirits Flying," 1940
Multi-level cel, 10 x 12

"Devil with Hand Up and Wings Back," 1940
Cel, 12 1/2 x 15 1/4

"Devil's Head," 1940
Multi-level cel, 10 x 12

"Devil Hiding his Face," 1940
Cel, 12 1/2 x 15 1/4

Vladimir Tytla
"Sorcerer," 1940
Concept sketch, pastel on paper, 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Sorcerer," 1940
Rough sketches, pencil on paper, 12 1/2 x 15 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Sorcerer," 1940
Clean-up drawing, pencil on paper, 10 x 12

Fantasia, 1940
Original program, 12 5/8 x 9 5/8

Dumbo

Vladimir Tytla
"Dumbo," 1941
5 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Dumbo in Mother's Trunk," 1941
5 animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12
Animation Research Library
Walt Disney Feature Animation

Vladimir Tytla
"Dumbo with Little Boy," 1941
Pencil on paper, 10 x 12

"Dumbo," 1941
Cel and background, 7 x 8 1/4
Collection of Thomas A. Meyer

Sculpted model of "Dumbo," 1941
Painted plaster, h. 7
Courtesy of Pam and Bob Martin of CEL-EBRATION! of Red Bank, New Jersey

Later Disney Works

Vladimir Tytla
"Toad and Badger" from *Wind in the Willows,* c. 1942
5 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Hitler" from *Reason and Emotion,* 1943
6 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Eagle" from *Victory through Air Power,* 1943
5 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Eagle" from *Victory through Air Power,* 1943
8 clean-up animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Vladimir Tytla
"Octopus" from *Victory through Air Power,* 1943
3 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 x 12

Victory through Air Power
Theatrical poster, 41 x 27
Collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad

New York 1943-50, Terrytoons and Famous Studios

Vladimir Tytla
Terrytoons sketchbook, 1943-44
11 1/4 x 21 (open)

Vladimir Tytla
"Mighty Mouse," Terrytoons Studio, 1943
3 sheets, pencil on paper, each 9 1/2 x 11
Collection of Jeff Lotman

Vladimir Tytla
"Drunken Mouse," Terrytoons Studio, 1944
3 sheets, pencil on paper, each 9 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
"Fox and Hunter," Terrytoons Studio, 1944
6 sheets, pencil on paper, each 11 x 9 1/2

Vladimir Tytla
"Little Audrey, Muggsie, et al," Famous Studio, 1940s
4 sheets, pencil on paper, each 8 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
"Little Lulu," Famous Studio, 1940s
Pencil on paper, 8 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
"Little Lulu with Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill," Famous Studio, 1940s
Pencil on paper, 8 1/2 x 11

"Little Lulu," Famous Studio, 1940s
Cel, 8 1/2 x 11

Vladimir Tytla
"Popeye, Olive Oyl, and Pluto," Famous Studio, 1940s
2 sheets, pencil on paper, each 8 1/2 x 11

Television Commercials

Vladimir Tytla
Post Sugar Crisp "Bear," 1950s
Pencil on paper, 10 1/4 x 12 1/2

Post Sugar Crisp "Bear," 1950s
Black and white cel, 10 1/4 x 12 1/2

Post Sugar Crisp background, 1950s
Gouache, 9 1/2 x 14

Vladimir Tytla
Post Sugar Crisp "Bear," 1950s
Color gouache painting, 11 1/2 x 9 1/2

Post Sugar Crisp advertisements, *Look Magazine,* March 23 and June 29, 1954
13 1/4 x 21 and 13 1/4 x 10 1/2

Post Sugar Crisp commercial, 1950s
2-page yellow exposure sheets, each 20 x 9 1/2

W. Tytla production list, c. 1959
2 pages, each 11 x 8

The Incredible Mr. Limpet

"Crusty Crab" model sheet stat, 1964
9 3/4 x 14

"Ladyfish" model sheet stat, 1964
11 x 14

"Ladyfish and Limpet" drawing stat, 1964
8 1/2 x 11

"Mr. Limpet, Crusty, and Ladyfish," 1964
Cel and background, 10 1/2 x 12 1/2
Aron Laiken, Filmart Galleries, Plainview, New York

Bound script for *The Incredible Mr. Limpet,* 1960s
11 1/2 x 8 1/2

Pink inter-office memo from Warners and xerox of "Mr. Limpet," 1960s
Memo: 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, xerox: 8 1/2 x 11

Story on *The Incredible Mr. Limpet, Life* Magazine, March 20, 1964
12 x 8 3/4

Late Work

Vladimir Tytla
"Mousethusala," 1960s
3 sheets, pencil on paper, each 10 1/4 x 12 1/2

Photographs of Vladimir Tytla
Tytla with his family, c. 1914
Tytla in Paramount Studio, New York City, c. 1921
Tytla with a horse, 1930s
Tytla working with director Wilfred Jackson and composer Frank Churchill on *Snow White,* 1937
Tytla drawing Stromboli, *Pinocchio,* 1940
Tytla drawing Devil, *Fantasia,* 1940
Tytla with a sculpted head of Devil, *Fantasia,* 1940
Tytla drawing Dumbo, *Dumbo,* 1941
Tytla and Walt Disney, 1954

Tytla's eyeglasses and case, 1930s

John Canemaker, an award-winning film animator and director, and the author of four books on animation history, is Associate Professor/ Chair of the animation program at NYU Tisch School of the Arts; in 1988 for the Katonah Museum of Art, he was curator of an exhibition of drawings by Winsor McCay.

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front and back covers:

Vladimir Tytla
"Devil" (details), 2 "Tower of Fire" poses from *Fantasia,* 1940,
animation drawings, pencil on paper, each 12 1/4 x 15 1/2
Collection of Adrienne Tytla

sequential drawings throughout catalogue in lower right corner:

Vladimir Tytla
"Stromboli" from *Pinocchio,* 1940
Animation Research Library
Walt Disney Feature Animation

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