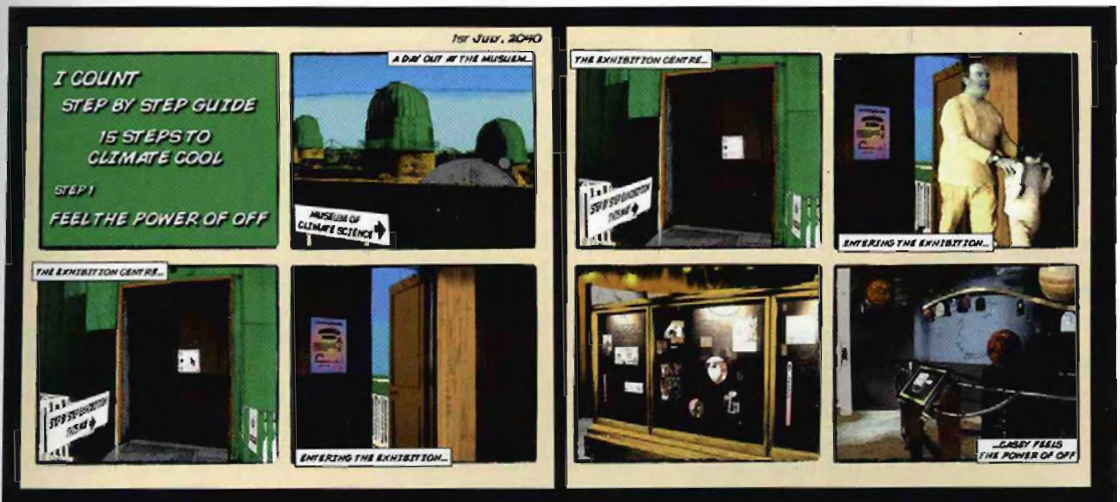


PLANNING

Synopsis

The process of first developing ideas and then realizing them as a finished piece of work is possibly the most challenging aspect of your work as a designer. The fear of failure at this point in the project can be so great that it can prevent you from succeeding. But never fear—many tried-and-tested-techniques are available that can streamline this process and release your mind from the shackles of creative blocks.

Figure 2.1 Animation. Here, the designer, George Hedges, decided to use a comic book style that he developed during the storyboard stage, making the character walk between the frames of the comic. © George Hedges, 2007.



In this chapter, we'll explore some ideas and methods that will help you to develop and maintain your creativity. I'll also give you practical advice on using tools like brainstorming, scheduling, storyboarding, and animatic production. Together, we'll look at some software tools that can help you during the planning process and keep you on track with your creative projects.

Inspiration

Over the years I have learned that if you are too conscious of other people's opinions, you will never truly be yourself. The key to pure creativity lies in expressing what's inside *you*. Unfortunately, that's sometimes easier said than done. If you're anything like me, you will probably be your own worst critic, constantly telling yourself you are not good enough. You probably started creating art because you felt inspired by seeing art that you loved. It's very hard to measure up to that. Quite often, what you create will not satisfy your own high standards, and that can be very disheartening. But you must persevere beyond your own technical shortcomings and keep practicing. You *will* get there.

I love music very much, and I am the biggest “frustrated musician” on the planet. I would love nothing more than to be able to play an instrument brilliantly—and, believe me, I've tried! When I was a child, I played the violin for a few years, then classical guitar, bass guitar, drums, banjo, harmonica—the list is endless! Sadly, I have never found the patience and persistence required to play as well as my musical heroes. I guess my expectations are just too high.

I'm sure if I'd been able to stop listening to my inner voice telling me I'd never be as good as the Beatles, I may have been able to master at least one of the instruments I tried and failed with. (Actually, I did persevere with the jaw harp, and I'm actually a pretty mean jaw harpist. Could this be due to the fact that I didn't have any famous jaw harp players to measure myself against?)

Ironically, it can be just as difficult to maintain quality work once you have achieved the standard that you were originally aiming for. How many times have you witnessed a musician bring out a brilliant album and then disappear into obscurity after disappointing subsequent albums. This can often happen, particularly if an artist believes his or her audience is fundamentally flawed for valuing their work, when they don't even believe it's any good themselves. Achieving critical success is obviously rewarding for any creative person, and part of what drives us to be creative is the hunger for acceptance and recognition. But critical success is not as satisfying as the true artistic success that happens when you feel truly replete with your own creative output. You can have the whole world

Figure 2.2 My instruments.
I just wish I could play better
them better!



thinking you're brilliant and lauding your work, but unless you truly believe it yourself, deep down in your soul, then all of the flattery in the world won't provide you with the artistic success you are striving for.

Achieving your goals, and therefore losing the motivation for "getting there," can be equally tricky as you no longer have a standard to aim for. In my life I have given up on things both because I felt I'd never be good enough and because I felt, "Okay, that's done, bored now, what's next?" (Patience is sadly not one of my virtues.) It can be hard to maintain focus throughout all of these different phases of your creative development, but if you manage it, the rewards are great. It's kind of like a long-term relationship: You go through highs and lows. You will probably be tempted and tested by alternatives when things get tough. But if you persevere and remain faithful, your confidence and commitment to your art will get stronger, and the rewards will be greater.

The Design Process

It's tempting for inexperienced digital media designers to start a project and dive straight into the software without developing a really clear idea of what it is they're intending to create. If you skimp on researching and planning your project, your results will suffer. Each stage in a project must be completed for it to be successful.

Preparation

Establish the brief: The requirements usually come from the client. At times this can be in the form of a comprehensive brief, but on other occasions you may be responsible for putting the brief together based on the client's input.

Do the research: visual, technical, and sketching ideas.

Development

1. Design the project: Develop ideas, brainstorm, create moodboards, and initiate some rough planning.
2. Respond to the brief: Negotiate ideas with the client, and present some initial ideas.
3. Design the project: Create the storyboard, source the core materials, source the images, and generate the assets.
4. Create the digital media product: Implement your designs and develop a working prototype.

Testing

Test the product: Evaluate, carry out technical checking, and conduct audience testing (this should also be done by people outside the development team).

Add the finishing touches: Make any last-minute changes, tweak the design, and get the project signed off.

Delivery

Deliver the final project, providing all required formats. Follow up: Get paid!

Agree to ongoing commitments such as maintenance (particularly for web projects).

The Preparation Stage

Remember that getting into the right frame of mind to produce creative work means you need to make time to inspire yourself, away from the studio. I always allow myself a little bit of time within a schedule for research. Even if the schedule is very tight, spending an hour or so looking through a book or a website can help to clear your mind and spark off some good ideas. Don't be afraid to let the pressure take a backseat for an hour or two.

You should also keep a notebook and pen by your side at all times for jotting down ideas and for the odd bit of doodling. It's important to record all of your ideas, even if you don't want to

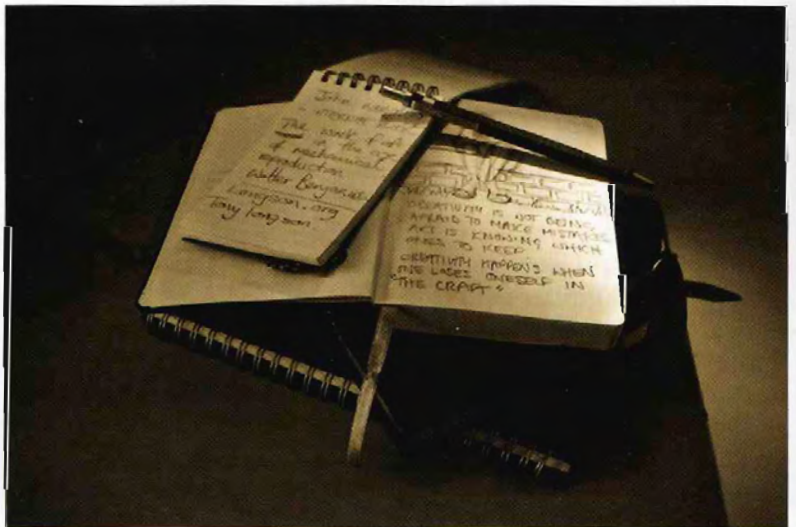


Figure 2.3 Sketchbooks.

© Angie Taylor, 2009.

use them right now. You can quickly store up a whole load of ideas for future reference. You never know—what may have seemed like a bad idea six months ago could be turned into something quite brilliant today.

Always keep your sketchbook close by, jotting down ideas and sketching layouts as you work. This is generally much faster than working things out on the computer. In my home-based studio, I have a few sketchbooks and pens dotted around, ensuring that one is always nearby. I even have one next to my bed and another in the bathroom. You never know when inspiration will hit you! I usually get great ideas in the middle of the night, scribble them down, and then look at them in the morning and think, “What on earth does that mean?” But I know not to worry; it usually comes back to me after my morning coffee. Everyone has his or her own way of tapping their creative side. It’s important to find yours and make time for it.

Your ideas may evolve throughout the course of a project. This is a good thing, so don’t worry too much about it. Don’t be too rigid, and be sure to work out lots of rough concepts before settling on your final idea. It’s also very important not to be too ambitious with your plans to begin with. Often, people who are new to motion graphic design are inspired to emulate advertisements on TV that include sophisticated special effects and animation that have taken teams of people months to create. Set realistic expectations for yourself. You need to learn to walk before you can run!

Remember, complicated doesn’t necessarily mean good. Some of the best designs I’ve seen are the simplest ones. You know the ones I mean—where you say to yourself, “Why didn’t I think of that?” Always begin with well-executed, simple ideas. This will also allow you to be more flexible with your projects as they develop.

Understanding the Brief

Most real-life projects begin with a brief that the client gives you. A brief can be a written document, an email, or even a spoken set of requirements for a specific project. It can include information about target audiences, preferred color schemes, fonts, logos, program information, and any identities or moods that the program-makers wish to convey. It’s always a good idea to get your clients’ requirements down on paper (or email), even when you get to the stage where the client is asking for small changes. It’s much easier to avoid misinterpretations when referring to a written document, and you can use it as proof later if a dispute arises.

When trying to come up with new ideas for future projects, I find that it helps to make up an imaginary brief for yourself. Let's look at an imaginary brief. The client in this job is a national cable TV station. They want a new identity for their regional evening news programs that are to be broadcast simultaneously across the country. The requirements are for the titles to be attention grabbing—showing current news items in an innovative way. The client also wants to be able to easily update the titles with current footage from the different regions. The key is to design one sequence that can be customized for each region but keeping the same look and feel throughout. The client has also asked for the titles to be relatively simple and clean, yet visually exciting. To be sure you understand the brief in the same way the client does, you need to first have a conversation, checking details, making sure you're "on the same page." You need to ask questions—for example, what do they mean by a "simple, clean font"? Their interpretation of the brief may be different from yours, so make sure to ask questions that will provide the answers you need. I find it helpful to read through the brief and jot down questions that pop into my head in preparation for the call. Once you have established what you think is required, you can start to create rough visual examples to present to the client at the next stage.

Establishing the Brief

The parameters of some projects are set before you come on board, and others are not. Details, such as the purpose, the target audience, the key message, the visual theme, the distribution plan, the timescale, the technological requirements, and so on may be outlined for you at the beginning of the project. In such a case, you simply have to understand the requirements and decide if you want to take on the project. Once these decisions are made, you can then move straight on to the research and the development of ideas. At the other end of the scale, a client may come to you with a problem that needs solving but with no specific solution in mind. It may be, for example, that their intended core audience isn't being reached by their current advertising. You will need to get to know the client, what they do, and what type of audience they appeal to. You can do this by asking them a lot of questions and looking closely at their particular area of work. You should also scrutinize their current advertising activities to understand what works and if there are any current problems that need to be addressed.

Research

The research you need to undertake falls under two categories: visual and technical.

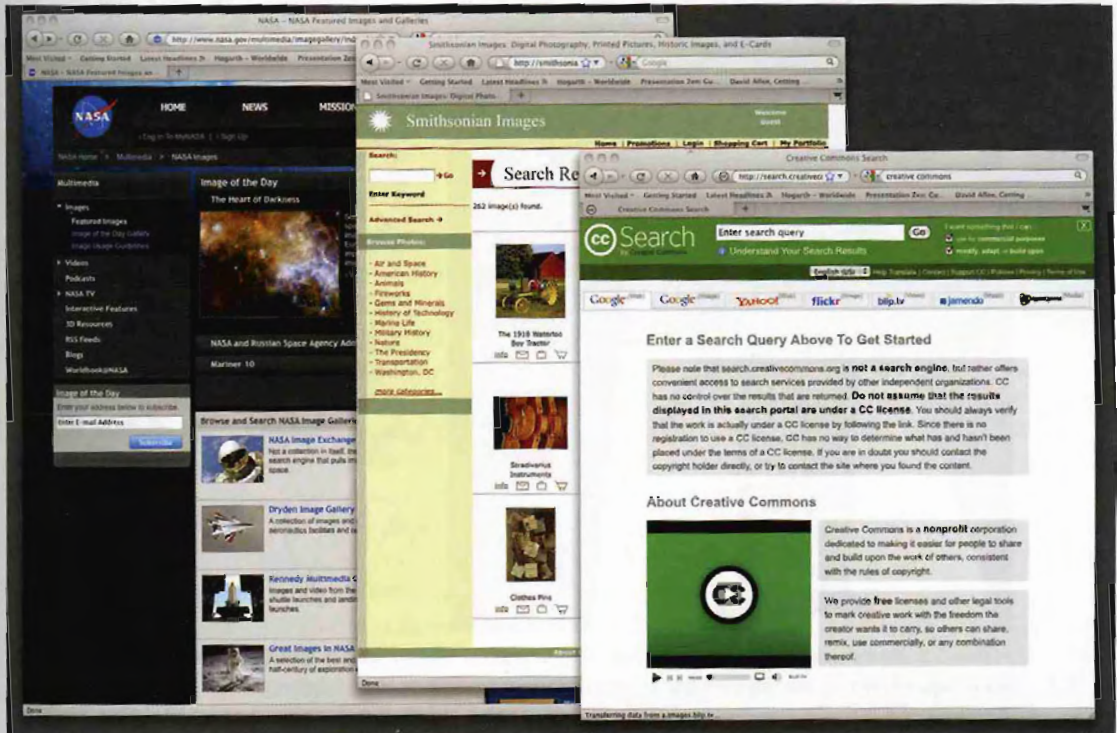


Figure 2.4 Online resources for researching images. The websites shown here can provide you with free images that you can use in your designs.

Visual Research

Visual research is extremely important as a foundation for developing the graphic style of your project. You need to research what's already out there and take notes on what you think works or doesn't work. Study magazines, books, TV ads, movies, artists, and designers that seem to fit the bill; basically you're trying to get into the "mood" of the brief.

No matter how tight a deadline is, always allow yourself time within the schedule for visual research. Doing this will help you generate concepts for design themes, gauge what is suitable for your target audience, avoid the most obvious and derivative ideas, and learn how the main players in the field present themselves.

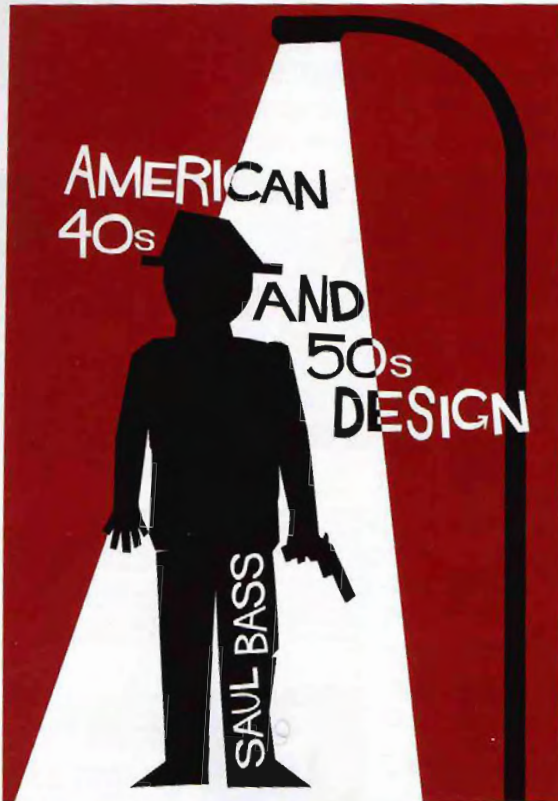
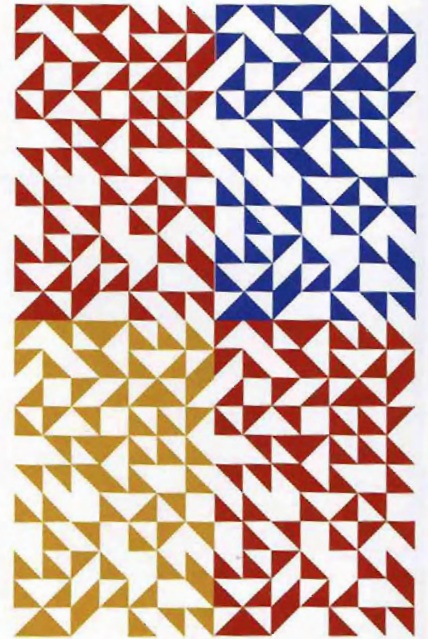


Figure 2.5 An example of visual research. Alister Buss was inspired by the famous Saul Bass title sequences for *Anatomy of a Murder*.



ANNI ALBERS

TEXTILE - PRINTMAKER - ARTIST



Figure 2.6 Another example of visual research influencing a design. Roarke Pearce was inspired by Anni Albers.

When deciding what kinds of imagery to explore in your visual research, think about why particular types of design evoke certain ideas and how this might work for your brief. For example, imagery inspired by Socialist Realism may help you to convey the idea of something revolutionary; psychedelic imagery could help suggest that something is experimental and freeform. Look at a broad range of images for inspiration when you're trying to develop your core concept.

A good exercise to help you discover what works is to create an experimental piece of work based on the work of an existing designer. This can help you to get into the mindset that they were in when they designed it by closely observing the design details. This is a good practical exercise for inspiration, but be careful not use a direct copy of someone else's artwork in your final design, since this could have legal ramifications.

Technical Research

Once you have decided on the content of your design, you must make sure that what you want to achieve is actually possible. Recently, a motion graphic designer I know made an ambitious film title sequence in the style of a video wall using Apple Motion. He offset the film playback in each instance so there was a different shot from the film in each of nearly one hundred individual frames. The camera moved around the video wall and zoomed in on a selected few shots. You can see a similar technique in Figure 2.7, where I've used a third-party plug-in called Trapcode Particular (www.redgiant.com) to create particles from video frames. The particles spell out the artist's name in this animation, which was for Beck's *Guero* DVD.

The designer wanted full quality at full screen as the camera zoomed into the shots, so he kept all of the footage at full, high-definition resolution. This is a brilliant concept, but it proved difficult to achieve technically. When the time came to render the piece, he discovered that the machine he was using did not have the power to render all of the frames in the time he had available. His solution was to re-render the source clips at a lower resolution and frame rate, except for clips that needed to be seen at full screen. This way his file size and rendering difficulties were overcome.

With some careful consideration of the technical problems and some strategic planning during the early stages of the project, this problem could have been identified and the designer could have saved himself a lot of time and trouble. It's very common for embarking professionals to get excited about the creative possibilities and ignore the technical restrictions in this way, so be aware of this and be really careful not to bite off more than you can chew.

Technical research may also involve learning new software techniques; designers and artists naturally love pushing their technical boundaries. Be careful to avoid solutions that require you to learn new techniques if you don't have the time to dedicate to learning them properly. When timescales are really tight, stick with what you're confident you already know. Remember that design solutions that do not involve new



Figure 2.7 Still of video wall taken from Beck's *Guero* DVD.

© D-Fuse, 2006; Angie Taylor worked as animator.

techniques can be just as creative and interesting; new doesn't always mean good. You need to make sure that you carefully research what will be needed to complete the project and check that you have the expertise, software, and processing power to achieve it.

Experimentation

The first process used in the development of all good design work is experimentation, which may not happen during the project itself. You may develop ideas while on a plane trip and then use them in a project six months down the line. But whenever it happens, the time-cost should be included in the job. Designers are pretty unique in that they tend to work 24 hours a day, thinking up new designs and ideas, taking photographs, writing, or sketching. There's really no such thing as an off-duty designer.

Experimentation is a vitally important part of the development of good ideas and techniques. When you experiment with materials and techniques, you can often lose yourself in the craft of what you are doing. I believe it's at this point that great ideas happen. Very few good ideas materialize when you sit staring at the screen, thinking to yourself, "I need a good idea." By losing yourself in what you are doing, you can tap into your subconscious and work more instinctively. It's also important to experiment when you are feeling relaxed. Everyone has a different method, but I find the best time is on a Saturday afternoon, in my garden, doodling in my sketchbook or pottering around with software features I haven't used before.

Sketchbooks and Scrapbooks

The sketchbook is the cornerstone, backbone, and lifeblood of every good designer or artist. It's your friend, confidante, punch bag, and counselor all rolled into one. Regular sketching can be very therapeutic, and I find it quite cathartic to use a sketchbook for purging all of my thoughts and ideas. Everything that passes through your brain can be deposited in some form into your sketchbook so you can let go of it and free yourself up to develop new ideas (Figure 2.8).

I've read several books and papers on creativity, and a surprising number of experts believe that madness and creativity are intrinsically linked. In William J. Cromie's *Harvard Gazette* article "Creativity Tied to Mental Illness," (October 23, 2003) he talks about the creative person's inability to "ignore the irrelevant." Experts refer to this as your "latent inhibition."

My head is pretty much always full of "stuff"—work, friends, family, relationships, ideas, inspirations, mundane tasks, creative



Figure 2.8 Pages from my sketchbook. © Angie Taylor, 2009.

ideas—all ricocheting around in my brain like flies trying to escape from a jar. My brain is never quiet, and it can be annoyingly hard to ignore. This can be difficult to deal with, not just for me but also for those around me!

I think of my sketching and doodling as a purging process, a way of clearing my mind and getting ideas out. You'll find that once you give your ideas a path to flow out of you, they will come out thick and fast. There won't be enough time in your life to realize all of them, so your sketchbook is a good place to deposit them. You can then go through a selection process, edit them, and work on the most promising ones (Figure 2.9).

Your sketchbook doesn't have to include only sketches. It can also have images cut from the pages of magazines or downloaded from the internet. It can include photographs you have taken, letterforms cut out of a newspaper, written text, equations, inspirational quotations, poetry, scraps of material, leaves, shells, grass, whatever—anything that inspires you and your work.

Remember that your sketchbook should not be looked upon as a chore; it is a pleasure for *you* and you alone. You should never worry about what you are putting into it. Think of it like a filter system: Just throw everything in, and the good stuff will shine through.



Figure 2.9 Another page from my sketchbook. © Angie Taylor, 2009.

Art college was a great experience, and I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to study art. But as with everything else in life, it had as many cons as pros. The worst thing that art college did for me was to make my sketchbook a marked requirement; it stopped being a private pleasure because I had to share it with my tutors. As a result, I started to think too much about what I was putting into it and avoided being honest with myself. It took me a long time to get over it and rediscover the essential privacy of my sketchbook. Your sketchbook is your practice ground for ideas, so it should include failures as well as successes. It's just as important to discover what doesn't work as what does.

When choosing a sketchbook, select an easy size to carry around with you. Make sure you take it everywhere you go because you never know when inspiration will hit you. A good tip to avoid the dreaded "fear of spoiling the first page syndrome" is to start in the middle of the sketchbook and work your way out, randomly selecting pages as you go. If you are concerned about showing it to your tutors or contemporaries, buy a sketchbook that is either spiral bound or has perforated edges so you can remove pages easily.

Brainstorming

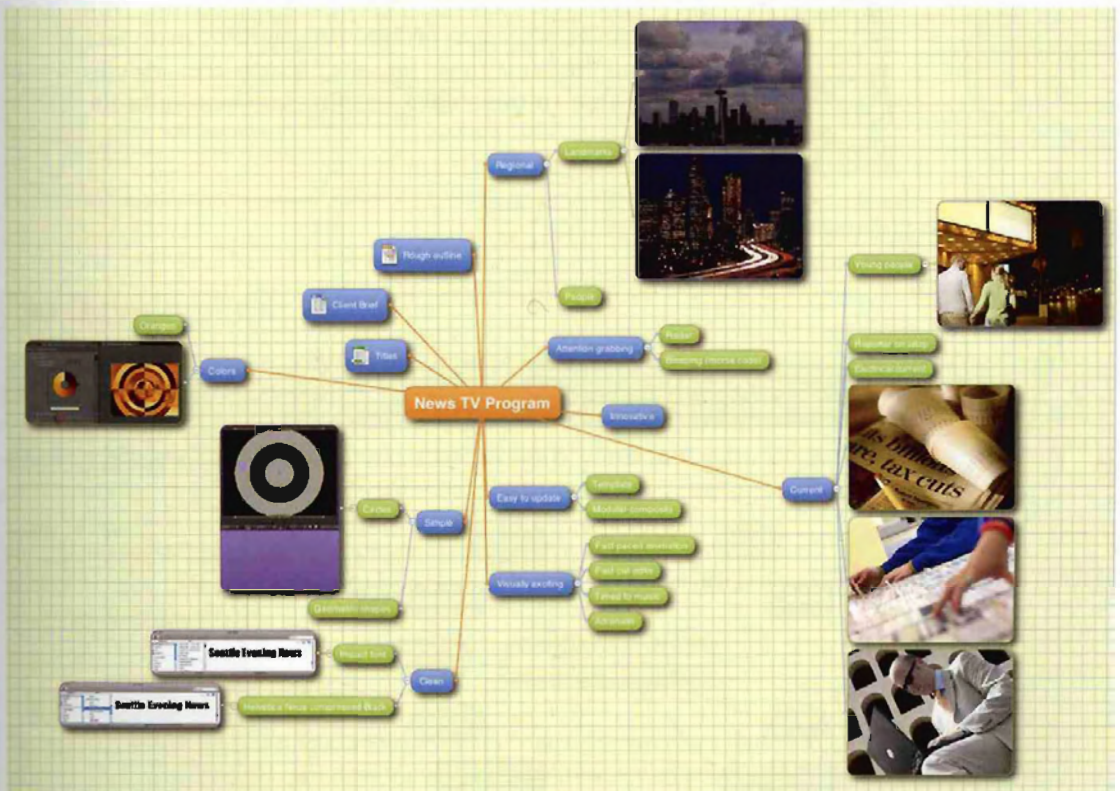
Another useful technique to aid the process of idea development is brainstorming. This involves getting a "stream of consciousness" down on paper, a whiteboard, computer, or any other surface you care to use so you can see the big picture. From here you can select promising "leads" to follow. Brainstorming is often used in business, particularly in the design industry. In this context it is often done collaboratively by large groups of people involved in the project. Some people enjoy this process and find they perform better within a team by feeding off the energy created by the group. It can help to have one person lead the discussion to make sure it remains constructive. It's important that you choose the right person to lead the group. It should be somebody dynamic, positive, and proactive who can keep the discussion on track but also allow enough slack for people to be comfortable and creative.

Although this can work with certain groups of people, I'm personally not very keen on group brainstorming because people can be made to feel pressured into agreeing or disagreeing with ideas. They might present their ideas or, even worse, not present them because of existing relationships or peer pressure rather than on their own gut instincts. In this context, or if the brainstorm is not managed properly, it can sometimes be a waste of time. I believe brainstorming can be much more productive when practiced in the first stage individually. Ideas generated from individual brainstorms can then be brought together in a

collaborative way. I'm not suggesting that you shouldn't work collaboratively. Brainstorms need to happen and can work quite well when you do them alone. In this case, the collaborative stage is the second stage in the design process.

There are many software applications that are good for brainstorming such as the fantastic Omni Group applications (www.omnigroup.com/) or my personal favorite, Zengobi's Curio (www.zengobi.com/products/curio/). This software makes it easy to create brainstorms like the one in Figure 2.10. Images, text, and so on can be dragged around, manipulated, and edited without having to redraw everything from scratch. You can even drag in image links from the web, retaining their URL information. It's a great tool for creating a live, adaptable brainstorm.

Figure 2.10 A screenshot from Zengobi's Curio.



If you don't have access to brainstorming software, then the next best method is to get a huge sheet of paper (or other preferred surface) and jot down whatever comes into your head, usually starting with keywords and concepts taken from the creative brief.

If you find it difficult to come up with any ideas, don't worry. Everybody has that problem, and you are no different. When this happens I usually go off and do something completely different: take my dog for a walk, go to a gallery or the library, watch some television, listen to music, surf the internet, go down to the pub (my personal favorite!). You won't achieve anything except lower back pain and eye strain by staring at a blank screen or an empty page (I'm speaking from experience here), so go and inspire yourself by taking your mind off it, even if only for an hour or so. When you come back to your brainstorm you'll find that your break will have sparked off some new developments.

My brainstorm may start looking something like Figure 2.11, taking keywords directly from the brief. I then focus on these words and add words that come to mind as a direct result of looking at these words. I recommend that you work instinctively with this and try not to "overthink" the process. In Figure 2.12, you can see the words that came from these central concepts. I've also attached the client proposal, rough outlines, and inspirational images, fonts, and movies. From these I was able to develop a design that was suitable for the piece.

Figure 2.11 My initial brainstorm.



BRAINSTORM ↓

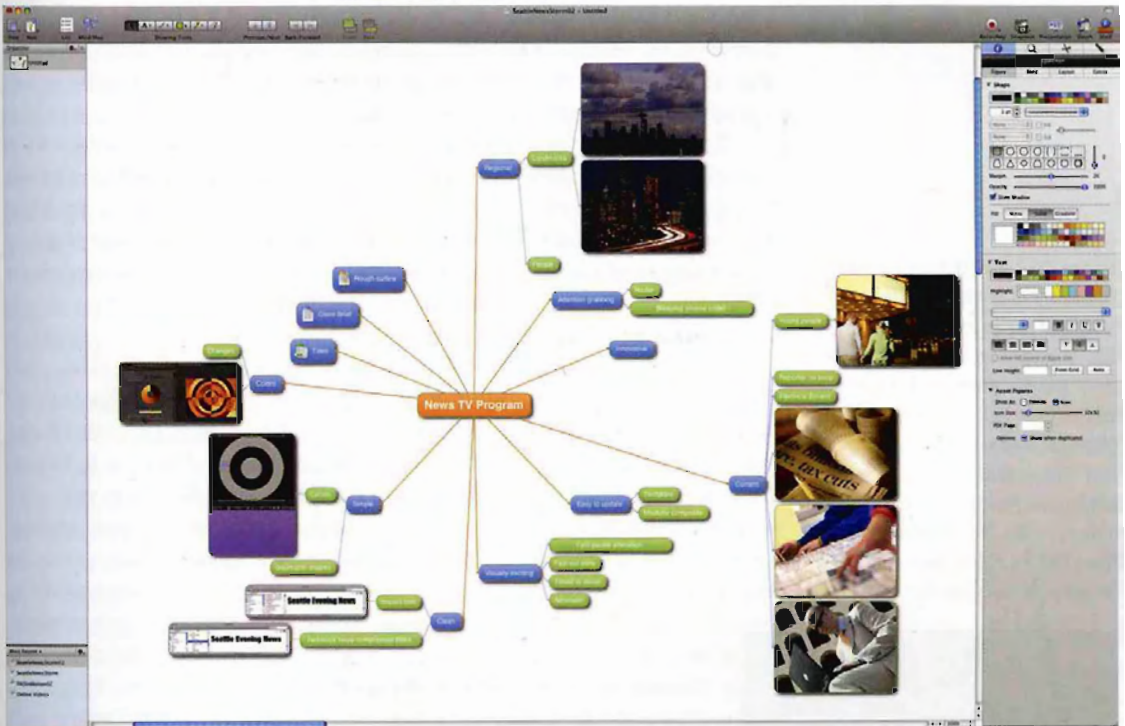


Figure 2.12 My expanded brainstorm.

The Development Stage

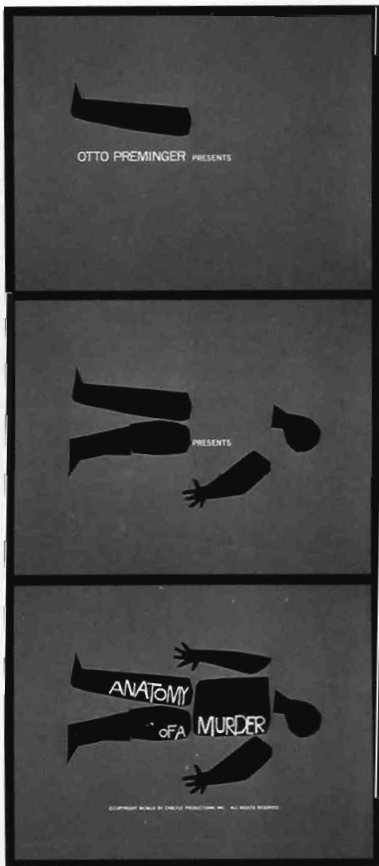
Once you have your brainstorm, the next stage is to filter it down, discard any ideas that don't work, and focus on the ones that do. This is where I find it useful to collaborate with others. It doesn't necessarily have to be with someone who's involved in the project; sometimes it's better to ask opinions of somebody who would fit the criteria of your proposed target audience. For example, if you're designing a kids' television program, get the opinions of your own kids or other children you know.

Moodboards

In most projects I like to create a mood board to refer to. This can be a physical board, such as a corkboard where I can pin the images and ideas that I've chosen to develop into the design. More often these days, I use Curio's idea spaces to deposit digital files I've created into a central space where I can shift them around and experiment further. Ideally you should pick the concepts from your brainstorm session that really jump off the page and generate the strongest responses from you and anyone else

→ Folder w/ images
 → page with pics
 → scrap book
 → powerpoint or Prezi

Figure 2.13 Stills from *Anatomy of a Murder*. This is one of my favorite opening title sequences by Saul Bass. Even the simplest-looking title sequences will have been planned, experimented with, and storyboarded before production begins. © 1959, renewed 1987, Otto Preminger Films, Ltd. All rights reserved. Courtesy of Columbia Pictures.



involved. Your moodboard is a common point of reference that you can use throughout the project to remind yourself of what you're trying to achieve. It can also help you to communicate ideas to your clients and coworkers.

After you've "edited" your ideas down and have created a moodboard for reference, the next stage is to put them in order and fine-tune them into a more cohesive form. This can be done in several ways, but since we are concentrating on the moving image, we will focus on the essential stage of storyboard creation.

Storyboards: A History

Storyboards have been essential tools to the production of some of the greatest films and animations of all time. All of the great directors have used them, including Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Ridley Scott, Tim Burton, Saul Bass, and Walt Disney.

Storyboarding was first developed in the animation industry as a way of "sketching out" ideas before money was spent on expensive film production of the animation. Animation is very expensive to produce, taking teams of people days, weeks, or even months to produce mere seconds of footage. This makes it a completely different creative process from the one used to create video and film, where several "takes" can be shot, and the best one is then selected during the editing process. In animation the shot must be decided and perfected before any production takes place.

Storyboards are very similar to comic strips, usually consisting of frames of the key moments (containing sketches of scenes and camera moves) and text explaining what cannot be illustrated. They allow the director and the designers to work together, finalizing the designs, camera angles, and action before moving into production. A storyboard can be changed easily to accommodate new ideas without costing the team vast amounts of time and money, leaving the production time devoted to perfecting the techniques needed to tell the story.

Why We Use Storyboards

As a creative person, you may come across producers and directors who are not as creative as you are or are creative in different ways. They may not be able to visualize your designs in the way that you can. Storyboards ensures that everyone is "thinking along the same lines," and they help to avoid any misinterpretations. It gives everyone on the production a common point of reference to work from.

Some people mistakenly think that storyboarding a project is a complete waste of time and money. Often storyboarding is the first thing to be cut from a production when there are issues with the budget, since it is commonly viewed as a non-essential stage in the production process. Sure, you can produce a piece without the aid of a storyboard, just as you can bake a cake without following a recipe. But only a very good, experienced cook can bake a perfect cake without following a recipe. It takes an utter genius to create a really compelling piece of film or animation without using a storyboard. It is probably the most important cost-saving stage of the production process.

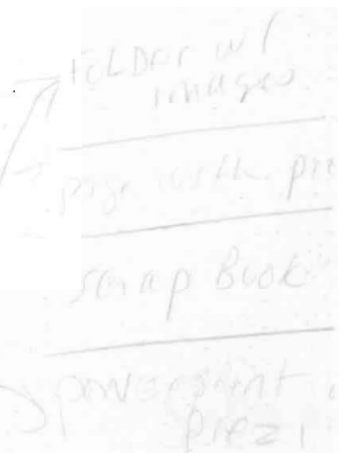
Anyone in film, TV, games, and even internet production who deals with multidisciplinary production teams needs a storyboard to work with. Besides being an important part of your own animation production process, storyboarding is a service that you can offer to others on a freelance basis. It can often be used as a way of funding your own creative work, while at the same time extending your existing skills.

Working alongside other producers, directors, camera operators, animators, and filmmakers can open your eyes to new ideas and possibilities. It's the kind of job where you continually learn new skills and techniques and are always pushing things forward. You need a good knowledge and understanding of all the jobs involved in the production in order to be a really good storyboard artist.

Often, good storyboard artists in the animation industry are in short supply, meaning there's usually plenty of work out there for the right person. The skills of a good storyboard artist are many. Ideally, you need to be a competent draughtsman and have a good understanding of camera angles and direction. You must be able to tell a good story and be able to work both independently or as part of a team.

A good storyboard artist should be able to take direction from others and also be prepared to make changes to his or her work, no matter how precious that work is to them. Being a good listener with lots of patience is also invaluable! Storyboard artists also require the ability to adapt to a wide range of styles, as well as to be able to follow established designs and produce consistent work.

Good software skills are often required, since mocking things up and changing things using software are usually easier and quicker than doing them with pencil and paper. You will also need to be prepared to put a lot of research into your work and to sketch most things from memory, particularly human poses. This is really important, since you'll be expected to make changes based upon direction from others. For example, it will

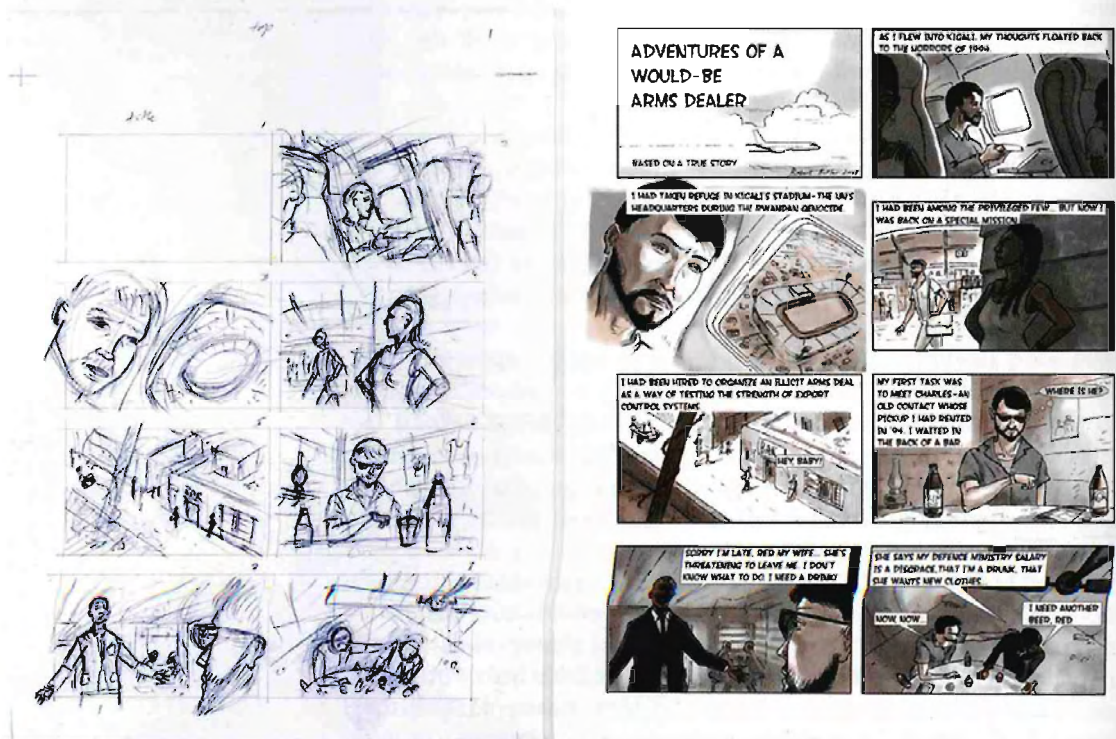


be embarrassing and unprofessional if you can't draw the pose a client requests when they ask for the main character to be reaching upward toward the camera while bending to tie his shoelace.

This is a wide range of skills to have, and many storyboard artists start off with only one or two of these skills, building the others as they develop their career. Storyboard artists come from all backgrounds: animators, artists, filmmakers, directors, and even comic book artists. This chapter introduces you to some of the aspects of storyboard production, including drawing, understanding camera angles, video editing, animation rules, and software skills.

It is good practice to look at comic books for ideas of how to put storyboards together. They illustrate a sequence of events in the same way that we want our storyboards to. Comics can give you some excellent ideas for camera angles and unusual compositions (Figure 2.14). The Marvel comics in particular use some fantastic perspective in their frames and should be studied.

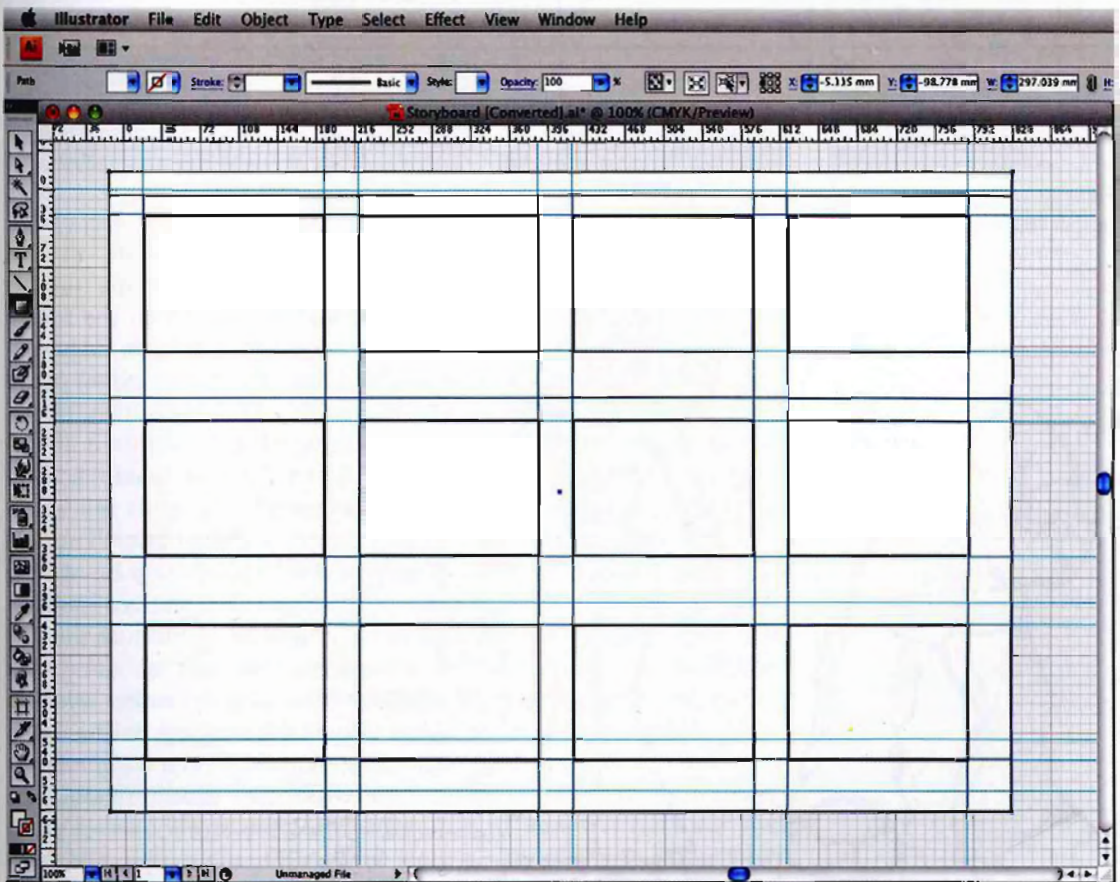
Figure 2.14 Storyboard page from *The Small Arms Survey, Geneva*. Storyboard artist Robert Butler has great comic-book skills. © Robert Butler, 2008.



Storyboarding Techniques

Once you've completed your brainstorm, developed it into a mood board, and have developed some solid ideas, it's time to start playing with them and pushing them in some different directions. This is the point where I would go off and sketch my storyboard. My method is to simply divide an A3 sheet of paper into twelve 4×3 rectangles with space above, underneath, and between each one for comments. Figure 2.15 shows an A4 storyboard template, which you can find at this book's website: www.motiondesignessentials.com. The file, Storyboard01.ai, is an illustrator file that can be resized to your chosen dimensions without losing resolution. Print out a copy so you can develop your own storyboard for your project.

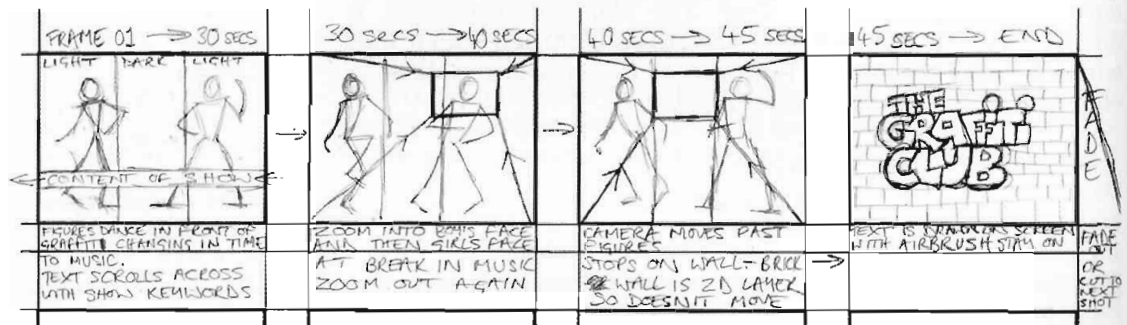
Figure 2.15 Adobe Illustrator storyboard template.



Real-World Examples

A storyboard does not need to be a work of art. The one illustrated in Figure 2.16 is pretty basic, using only four frames to tell the whole story; sometimes this is all that's needed. Stick figures are used here to represent the characters. As I said before, don't spend too long deliberating over your storyboard. It is supposed to be only a rough series of ideas that can be easily adjusted to suit your client's needs. Don't fuss with it too much.

Figure 2.16 A rough storyboard example.



A Quick and Rough Storyboard Example

Figure 2.16 is an example of a very simple storyboard. Notice that the timing of the animation is written along the top of each drawing, direction notes are underneath, and transitions are marked between the frames. In frame number two, see how a zoom into the screen is represented by direction lines running between the frame edges and a smaller frame. This is, in turn, targeting the zoomed area.

Figure 2.17 Main characters further realized.

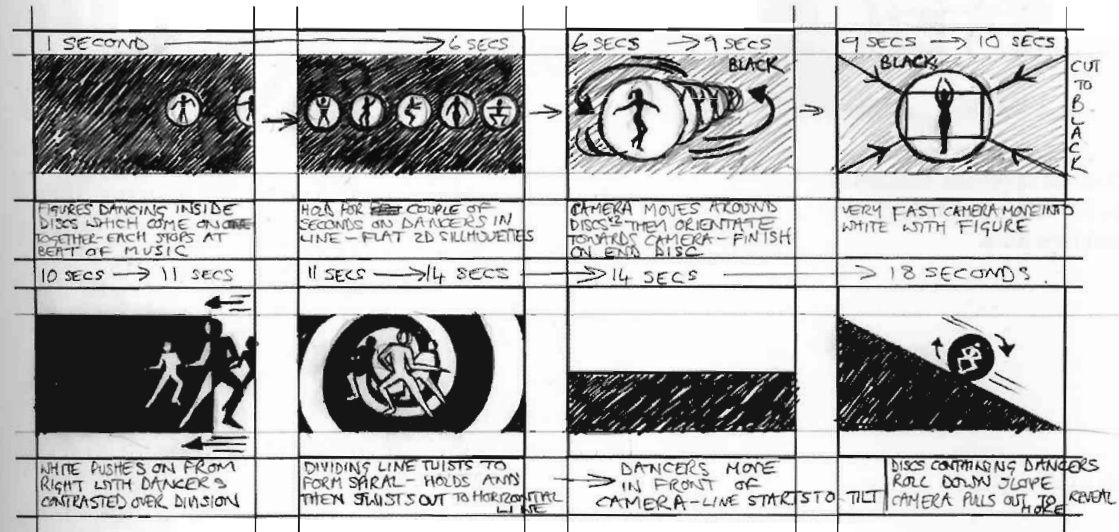


In this instance I would accompany the storyboard with my hand-drawn sketches of the main characters (Figure 2.17). These can be set up to approximate the final colors, textures, and overall quality of the finished piece. This can be done very easily by mocking up a few layers in After Effects, Photoshop, or Illustrator, ensuring that the producers get a clear idea of what the characters look like. In this case, the storyboard is really only for working out timing and camera moves, so don't spend too much time perfecting the details.

A Simple Storyboard Example

In the second example, we can see a slightly more detailed storyboard that shows the movement of the characters. Figure 2.18 shows some frames from a storyboard that I worked on for TV titles for *Pop Art*, which was a series of documentaries about design and music from the swinging '60s. So how did I develop this idea and then get it to the storyboard stage?

Figure 2.18 A simple storyboard example.



During the brainstorm process, I let my mind wander a little. When I think of the sixties, I think of Mary Quant's stark black-and-white designs, beatniks dancing in seedy nightclubs, and classic film titles like the brilliant James Bond 007 movie titles. I also think of Saul Bass and Pablo Ferrer's fantastic film titles, Blue Note cover art, Andy Warhol, the Pink Panther animations, Austin Powers, and, of course, the hippy culture (Figure 2.19). Now that's quite a lot of inspiration to fit into a minute of graphics, but I included it all into my brainstorm. From there, I singled out the most important elements and developed them into the next phase, using my moodboard. The next task was to figure out how to recombine them to build something new and exciting. It wasn't an easy job, but that's why we love our work: It's a challenge!

From the Bond titles I decided to use the idea of the circles moving onto the screen one after the other; this became the starting point of the titles. It is such a classically familiar film title that the viewer will immediately feel like they have been transported back to the sixties. I continued the circle theme



Figure 2.19 Stills from the finished sequence, influenced by the James Bond film titles and Saul Bass.

throughout the animation, which created a unifying theme and helped pull the design together. I incorporated dancing silhouettes inside the circles, transforming them into psychedelic spirals. I attempted to play Saul Bass-like tricks by moving from 2D space to 3D space and eventually ended the titles with one of the circles falling to form the letter “o” in the word *Pop*. This is the sort of project I relish: loads of inspiration with very few restraints. You can see the movie itself on the examples page of the book’s accompanying website at www.motiondesignessentials.com.

Figure 2.20 A more detailed storyboard for a music video.

The storyboard shown in Figure 2.18 was a little more detailed than the one in the first example. It needed to illustrate



clearly how one shot leads to another. Notice how in frame 3 and frame 8, I drew direction arrows to demonstrate the movement happening at this point in the animation of the characters and the camera.

More Detailed Storyboards

Figure 2.20 shows some frames from a music video storyboard. Notice that the drawings have a little more detail but are still fairly rough. These were drawn with 2B and 6B pencils. A music video usually has very quick edits, so I needed to make sure that my storyboard was detailed enough, incorporating all the important scenes.

The other storyboards have focused on camera moves and edits, so this sequence will be much more narrative than the others, telling a definite story from beginning to end. We must make sure that the sequence of events can be understood from the storyboard before we go ahead with the project. The figures will have to be more detailed in this example, and the faces need to have expressions. The whole video will be much more focused on people than the last two, which were more abstract.

You may be asking yourself how you'll know what level of detail is required from the storyboard. This will certainly come with experience, but several other factors must be considered, including budget, client expectations, deadlines, and so forth. Sometimes a client will not even ask for a storyboard because they don't want to pay for it. But you know it's an essential part of the production, so the choice is yours. Should you ask the client for more money to pay for a storyboard, or should you just swallow the cost and create one for your own benefit? I usually create a storyboard whether it's requested or not because I think it's part of my job to educate the clients to the best ways of achieving their objectives. They usually understand the benefit as soon as you sit down with them in front of it. So basically, you can decide on how much time, effort, and detail are required based upon your own assessment of the situation. The ideal scenario is a client who specifically asks for a storyboard and provides plenty of budget so you can really go to town with it.

The images in Figure 2.21 are from an eight-page comic strip *Adventures of a Would-Be Arms Dealer* that were produced for the book "*Small Arms Survey 2008—Risk and Resilience.*" Robert Butler, an artist, drew them, and the client was The Small Arms Survey, which was a project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, which monitors the spread and proliferation of small arms around the world. The comic strip was based on a true story involving the results of a journalistic investigation to find out how easy it is to buy and ship

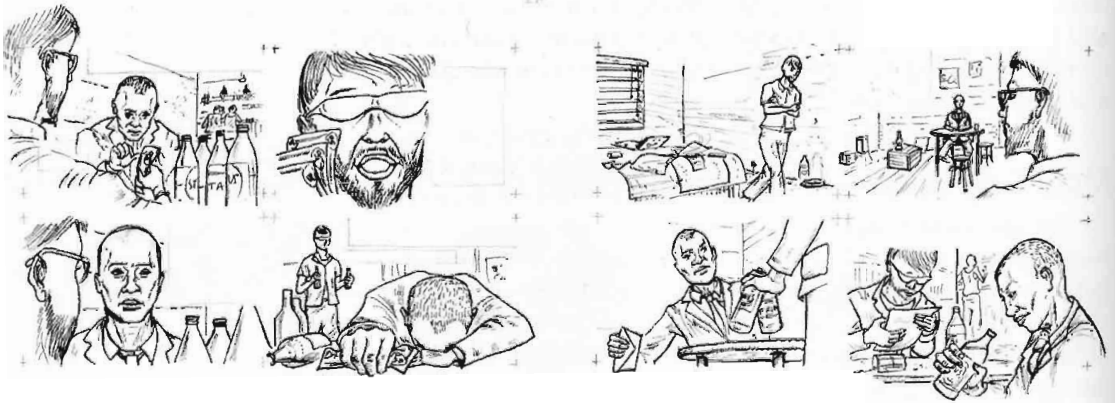


Figure 2.21 A beautifully drawn storyboard for *The Small Arms Survey*. This was a project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. These images were drawn by Robert Butler, an illustrator and storyboard artist.

arms illegally. Each year they publish the results as an academic book. They include an artistic section in the book to graphically convey some of the issues and problems.

Robert says of his work, “As it was based on true events, I tried to give it a filmic look, rather than a comic-book approach, using storyboard techniques to simulate camera shots. The strip had to fit into eight pages, with regular-sized frames, so it was important to make sure that all the text and simulated ‘paperwork’ would fit in, while still allowing the story to be told in a dynamic way. Some of the frames spill over or use *trompe l’oeil* to give depth. It was printed with two plates, as used throughout the whole book, allowing shades of gray and tints of red.”

Animatics

In many situations, a static storyboard may be enough for the production team to work with, but they will often require at least an idea of how the timing, action, and camera moves will look. This is when an animatic is required.

An animatic is an animated storyboard that is used to set the pacing of your project. There are several approaches to animatic production, usually dependent on what kind of production you are working on. 3D animated film animatics are often created using 3D software packages. Some very good 3D previsualization tools are available that allow you to create real 3D scenes fairly easily, complete with lights, cameras, props, and characters. These applications are being used increasingly in the production of animatics for feature films, music videos, and motion graphic designs. But in many cases, animatics are created in a more traditional way: by animating scenes from the storyboard. Sometimes your client will dictate the techniques to be used for