# Posing A Character

Clear Silhouettes:

From "The Art of Animation Drawing" by Don Bluth:

SILHOUETTE AND READABILITY

There is a difference between moving a character around and animating one. To animate implies giving your character a soul and a brain, ergo *life*. Your audience will want to see the character think and react. The discussion in the following pages deals with that challenge. As a character progresses from thought to thought or pose to pose, readability is essential. You must quickly get what he/she is doing. Often, the character's attitude is not as simple as an expression of the face, but also of the body language. Think silhouette. Blackening the interior lines of the pose will tell you if your design is strong. The silhouette should convey the attitude.
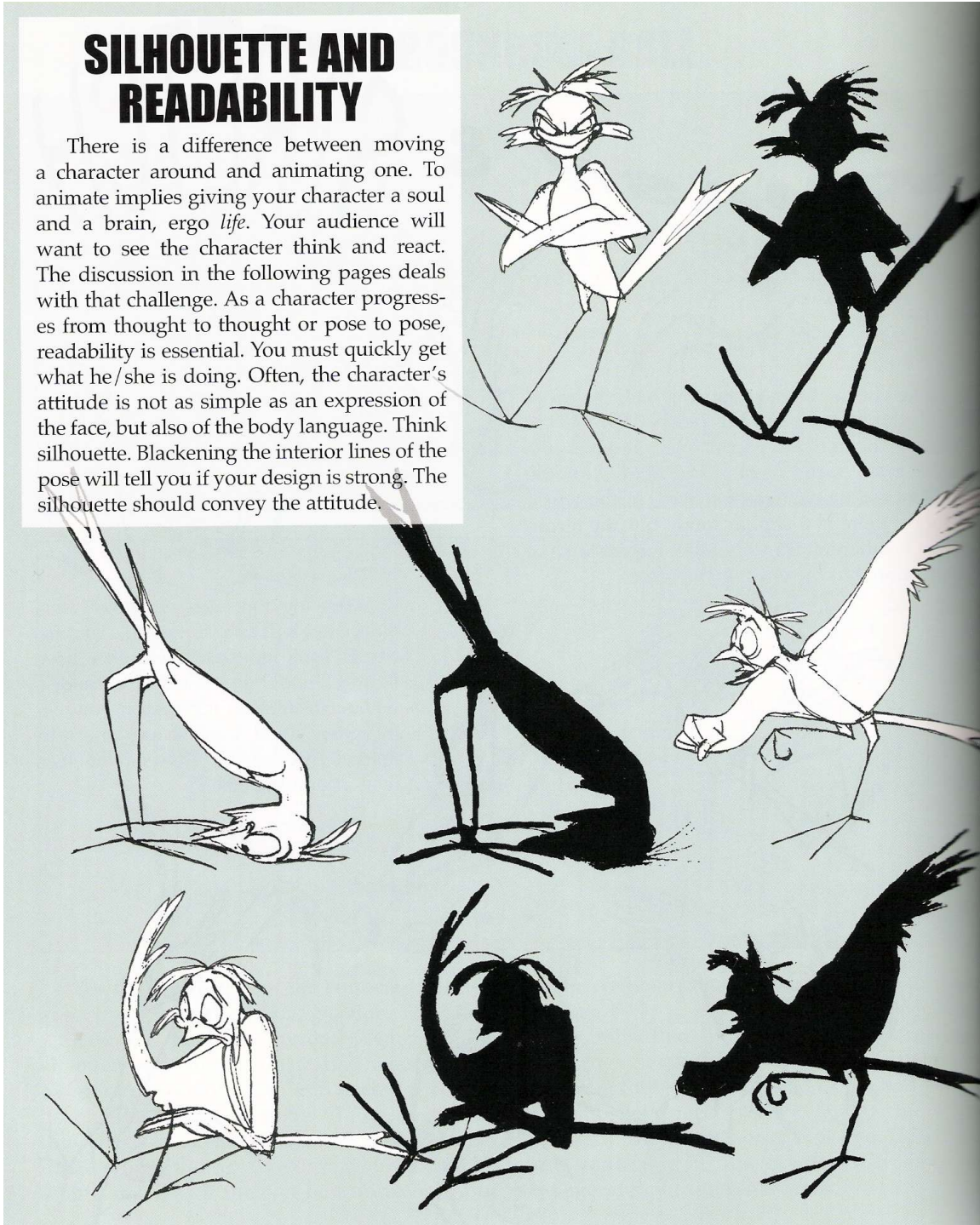
The animators had a special problem of their own. The characters were black and white, with no shades of gray to soften the contrast or delineate a form. Mickey's body was black, his arms and his hands – all black. There was no way to stage an action except in silhouette. How else could there be any clarity? A hand in front of the chest would simply disappear; black shoulders lifted against the black part of the head would negate a shrug, and the big, black ears kept getting tangled up with the rest of the action just when the other drawing problems seemed to be solved.

Actually, this limitation was more helpful than we realized: we learned that it is always better to show the action in silhouette. Chaplin maintained that if an actor knew his emotion thoroughly, he could show it in silhouette. Walt was more direct: "Work in silhouette so that everything can be seen clearly. Don't have a hand come over a face so that you can't see what's happening. Put it away from the face and make it clear." Constant redrawing, planning, and experimenting were required to make the action look natural and realistic while keeping a clear silhouette image. We had to find a pose that read with both definition and appeal.
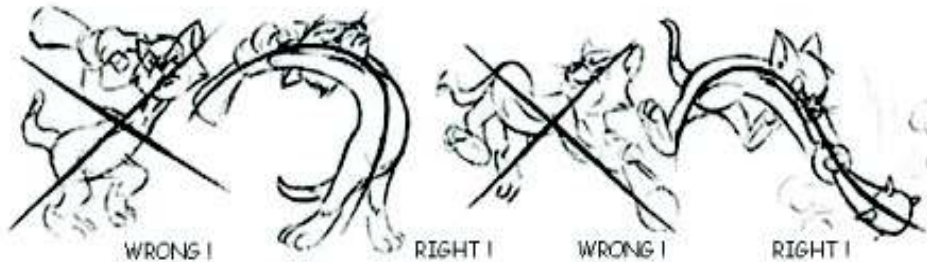
Strong Line of Action:

AN IMAGINARY LINE EXTENDING THROUGH THE MAIN ACTION OF THE FIGURE IS THE "LINE OF ACTION." PLAN YOUR FIGURE AND ITS DETAILS TO ACCENTUATE THIS LINE. BY DOING SO, YOU WILL STRENGTHEN THE DRAMATIC EFFECT. THE FIRST TO DRAW WHEN CONSTRUCTING A FIGURE IS THE LINE OF ACTION.
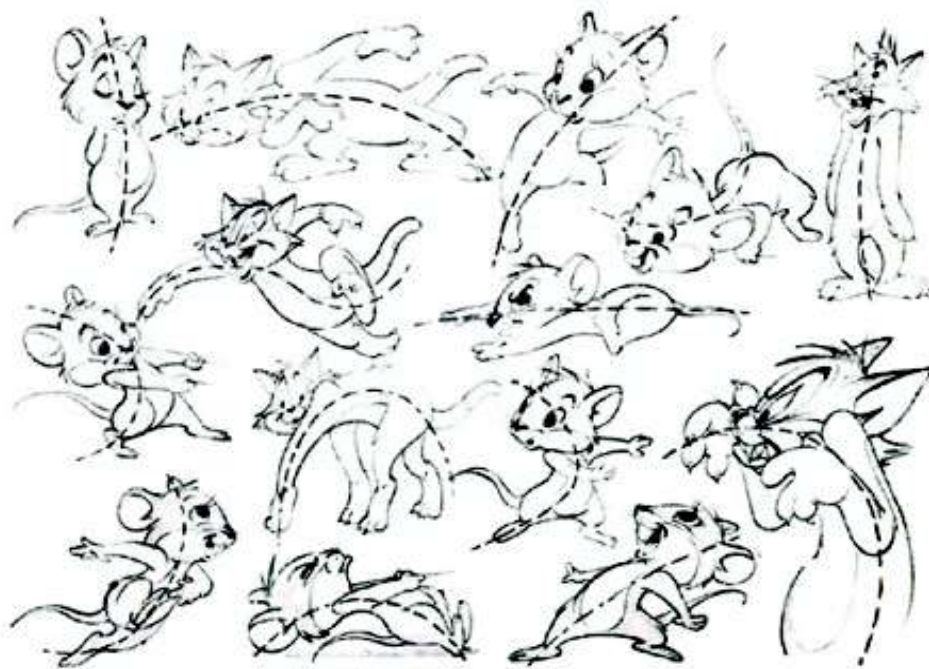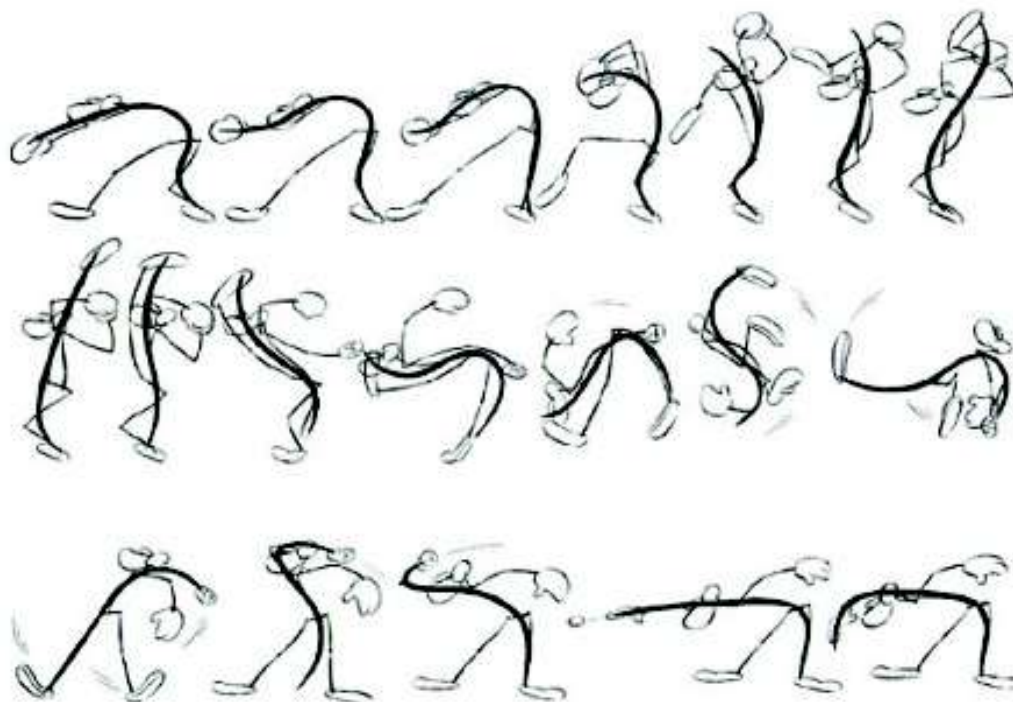
[left] WRONG ! THE LINES OF ACTION DO NOT FIT.

[right] CORRECT! THE LINES OF ACTION FIT AND ARE ACCENTUATED.

WRONG !   RIGHT !   WRONG !   RIGHT !

STUDY THESE DRAWINGS IN WHICH I'VE INDICATED THE LINE OF ACTION.

THE LINE OF ACTION IS THE BASIS FOR RHYTHM SIMPLICITY, AND DIRECTNESS IN ANIMATION. START YOUR ANIMATION WITH A LINE OF ACTION. THEN DRAW THE SKELETON AND THE DETAILS.

Avoid Twinning:

From "The Illusion of Life" by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston:

Another sign admonished us to watch out for "twins" in our drawings. This is the unfortunate situation where both arms or both legs are not only parallel but doing exactly the same thing. No one draws this way on purpose, and usually the artist is not even aware that he has done it. This affliction was not limited to the thirties, for again in the seventies young animator Ron Clements was annoyed to find "twins in his drawings no matter how hard he worked to keep them out. "It was one of the first drawing principles that I heard of at the studio. If you get into acting, you would never think of expressing an emotion with twins anywhere, but, somehow, in a drawing, if you're not thinking, it creeps in time and again."
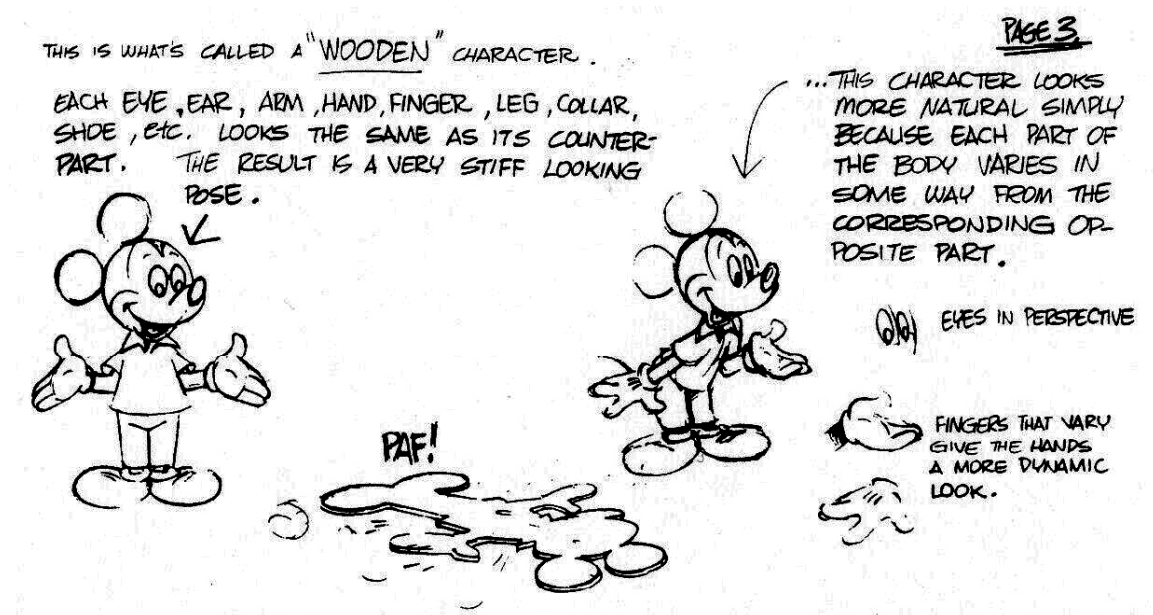
- The basic stuff like silhouette will help you started. Silhouette explains in part the concept of negative and positive space. Basically, imagine your own shadow in a wall. You have the white wall, and then a silhouette of yourself. Well, in there you are already playing with negative and positive space. What you do with your arms in relationship with your body, your head direction...your spine. If you experiment in just a wall with your shadow, you'll notice how certain poses where the arms are out, seem more clear than poses with the arms around the body. When too much of the action in the arms is around the body, you are playing with elements that can confuse one to the other. It starts to become more of a design/composition issue...but clarity should be number 1.

- Also, is the pose not as cliche? Is it a pose we can relate to nowadays? As animators, sometimes we get very influenced by old Disney films. Sometimes, the poses of some of those old characters worked those days, but some of the poses don't work these days. They become obsolete...and that's why it's important to pay attention to what people do TODAY. So that audiences can relate to what your character is doing. It's the difference between acting today and acting of a 50's Film Noir. The acting in some of those of films becomes old school or even cheesy very fast.

- Is the pose too busy? Then no. I don't want to do a busy pose. If I'm not holding that pose for a while, I only have a few frames to make sure this pose reads right away. So the less complex the better.

- Is the pose dynamic? When I say dynamic, I am also referring, is the pose interesting to watch? Stay away from anything default. And asymmetry will also help you. One arm in a different pose as the other arm, to break things up. Same thing applies to the spine and head. If we look at the spine and the head, we'll notice that there is an imaginary line that goes from your hips all the way to your head. Play with that line, and get some nice line of actions throughout the character that express emotion. Definitely try to get Emotion, mood and personality out of the character's pose. It's the number one thing.

- Does the pose have weight in itself? Are the different parts of the body working with each other?