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Disney/Pixar's  
Toy Story 2, and  
Disney's Fantasia 2000

Christopher Finch

# The Art of Walt Disney from Mickey Mouse to the Magic Kingdoms

Concise Edition



# The Art of Walt Disney

from Mickey Mouse to the Magic Kingdoms

*Concise Edition*

Christopher Finch

*Virgin*

*Project Manager:* Eric Himmel

*Editor:* Nicole Columbus

*Designer:* Judith Hudson

First published in Great Britain in 1999 by

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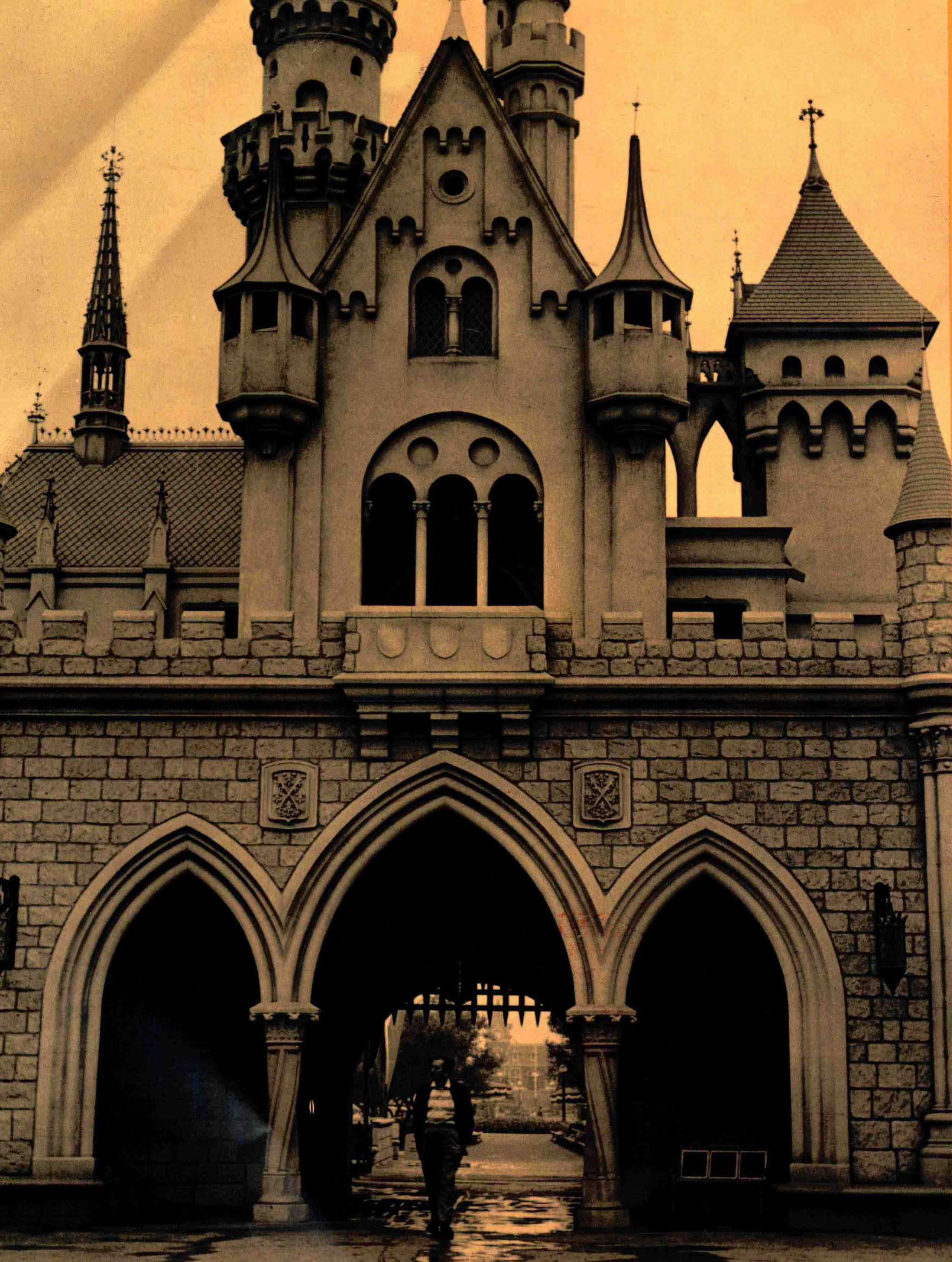
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## Foreword

I have a very clear memory of picking up Christopher Finch's wonderful book, *The Art of Walt Disney*, when it was first published in 1973, and thinking how long overdue it seemed. It was simply a beautiful book in every way: bright, articulate, and full of the whole panoply of emotions, from joy to terror to heartbreak to love, that are so integral a part of the Disney palette.

It seems clear that I was right about the book, because it has never been out of print since then, and it has even been updated during that span of years.

In 1973, Walt Disney had only been gone for a relatively few years, and the book might have seemed to be a kind of memorial. It is obviously much more than that, as its several revisions testify. It is a book about a living art, which has continued to grow and flourish through the years.

I'm sure I speak for all of us at the Disney Company, both now and in the future, when I say thanks, yet again, to Christopher Finch for this beautiful and timeless book.

*Roy E. Disney*







## Introduction

The Walt Disney Company occupies a unique place in the history of American popular culture. No other major entertainment corporation is so marked by the imagination and persona of its founder. Walt Disney gave the world Mickey Mouse, single-handedly developed the animated feature film, and invented the modern theme park. More than thirty years after his death, his influence is felt more strongly than ever.

In 1972, I had the good fortune to be invited to write a book about the history of the Disney studio. *The Art of Walt Disney* was published the following year and has remained in print ever since. A 1995 edition gave me the opportunity to update the original text in order to reflect the achievements of the company since 1973, especially under the leadership of Michael Eisner, who became chief executive officer in 1984.

For this concise edition of the book, I have attempted to preserve its character and to retain all the essential information. The reader will find here not just the bare facts, but also anecdotal memories told in the words of men and women who were present at the birth of *Snow White* and who helped plan Disneyland® and EPCOT® Center. In addition, I have used this occasion to update the text once again so that *Toy Story* and new theme park attractions have their place alongside Donald Duck and the Silly Symphonies.



## 1 Early Enterprises

Walter Elias Disney was born into a modest Chicago household on December 5, 1901. His father, Elias Disney, Canadian by birth, was a small-time building contractor. In 1888, he married the former Flora Call, a schoolteacher from Ohio. At the time of Walt's birth, there were already three children in the family – Herbert, Raymond, and Roy. Walt was to develop a close relationship with Roy, who was nearest to him in age. A daughter, Ruth, was born later.

Times were hard in the building trade and in 1906 Elias pulled up stakes and moved his family to a forty-eight-acre farm outside Marceline, Missouri. Then as now, small farms did not offer an easy route to prosperity. Herbert and Raymond, in their teens, soon returned to Chicago. Walt and Roy stayed behind and were, of course, expected to help perform their share of backbreaking chores, but Walt found the time to develop a fondness for drawing. Before long, the farm was in

financial trouble and in 1910 Elias sold the property and moved the family once again, this time to Kansas City, Missouri, where he bought a newspaper delivery business. Walt and Roy woke up at 3:30 every morning to meet the trucks of the *Kansas City Star* before beginning their rounds. Eight years older than Walt, Roy was soon in a position to escape this drudgery, but he stayed in close contact with his younger brother, offering good advice that included telling Walt he need no longer stand for the beatings Elias was in the habit of administering.

Walt's interest in drawing continued and he was allowed to enroll in Saturday morning classes at the Kansas City Art Institute. Along with a schoolfriend, Walt Pfeiffer, he also developed an interest in the theater, and "The Two Walts" made occasional amateur night appearances. Pfeiffer, who later became the Disney Studio manager, recalled that Elias disapproved strongly of anything theatrical so





Walt Disney's birthplace at 1249  
Tripp Avenue, Chicago, built by his  
father, Elias Disney.



Elias and Flora Disney in 1913



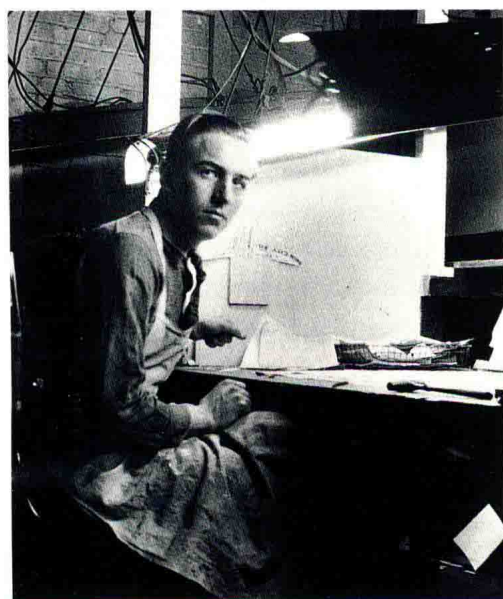
"The Two Walts": Walt Pfeiffer, left, and  
Walt Disney pose in costumes they  
devised for one of their amateur night  
performances, c. 1915.







Throughout the nineteenth century, scientists and inventors had intrigued the general public with a series of devices that could take a sequence of drawings and make them seem to move. All were rooted in the theory known as “the persistence of vision” first posited by the Anglo-Swiss doctor Peter Mark Roget, who also compiled the thesaurus. Most of these devices were variants upon a simple machine that had been conceived almost simultaneously by Dr. Joseph Antoine Plateau of the University of Ghent and Dr. Simon Ritter von Stampfer of Vienna. The Plateau-Stampfer device consisted of a drum mounted on a single shaft. The images to be viewed – they might portray an action such as a horse jumping a fence – were attached in chronological sequence as a strip along the inside rim of the drum. When this was rotated, an observer



Back to civilian life, Disney soon found work in a Kansas City commercial art studio



The staff of Kansas City Film Ad Service, with Disney seated on the right-hand brick post. Ub Iwerks is standing seventh from the right

looking through a slit cut in one side of the drum would perceive an illusion of movement. This system developed into the zoetrope, which remained a popular toy for many years.

It was not until 1906 that the first animated film was attempted, when J. Stuart Blackton conceived a little entertainment called *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*. The level of animation was rudimentary but it did demonstrate that it was possible to photograph drawings and make them appear to move, and this inspired other innovators. The greatest by far was Winsor McCay, who in 1908 put his comic strip character Little Nemo into an animated film. Later he toured the vaudeville circuit with a cartoon titled *Gertie the Dinosaur*, in which a very realistic dinosaur appeared to obey his commands. (He had chosen a dinosaur so that nobody could accuse him of tracing the image.)