

**BA Level 2 - Production Studies Workshop**  
**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012**  
**Workshop Tutor – Mary Murphy**



**Work produced by students on this module should clearly demonstrate the following:**

- An understanding of a range of production processes and paradigms;
- A working knowledge of the operational practices related to a given role within the production process; director, producer, designer etc.  
Engagement with a range of design and production processes and methodologies used to develop a chosen short animation production within a group environment;
- The development and resolution of concepts and ideas through the completion of a short animation project.
- Organisational skills relevant to the management and completion of a group project;

**Aims of this workshop**

- The initial aim of this session is to present essential design tools and approaches for under camera production, and to begin to highlight key technical and practical considerations such as scale, spatial relationships, “on camera” decision making.
- Within the context of the students chosen under-camera/stop motion production paradigm, (where possible) this workshop will focus on commonly used design tools and visual communication for a fabrication led producer/director, including design documentation and strategy key to fabrication, (scale drawings, maquettes and prototypes)
- Students will be introduced to a range of practical approaches to designing for a range of under camera approaches (Identified by their own pitched ideas in the previous week.)
- Each group will be asked to present a technical pitch (5 Minutes) and will participate in a discussion/seminar on developing a "design manifesto" for their film which complements the story being told (or message being communicated.)

**Objectives of this workshop**

- On attending this session, students should have a greater awareness of the importance of developing working designs at an early stage of production, and will have been given a standard approach (in the form of essential documentation and strategy) to designing and fabricating for stop motion production.
- At the end of this workshop, students will be set the task of completing a first draft set of design documentation to be completed by the next workshop timetabled in for the following Friday. This will include mood boards, a design Manefesto and a draft scale drawing.



## What is a mood board?

A mood board is a collection of drawings, images and textures that communicate a vital visual aspect of the film. They are often used to pin down key elements of colour, mood and tone. They can be done digitally, in sketchbook form, or as an actual arranged display of objects (This is most often the approach in traditional stop motion fabrication)



**What material qualities do I wish to use and how can they help to tell the story and appeal to my target audience?**

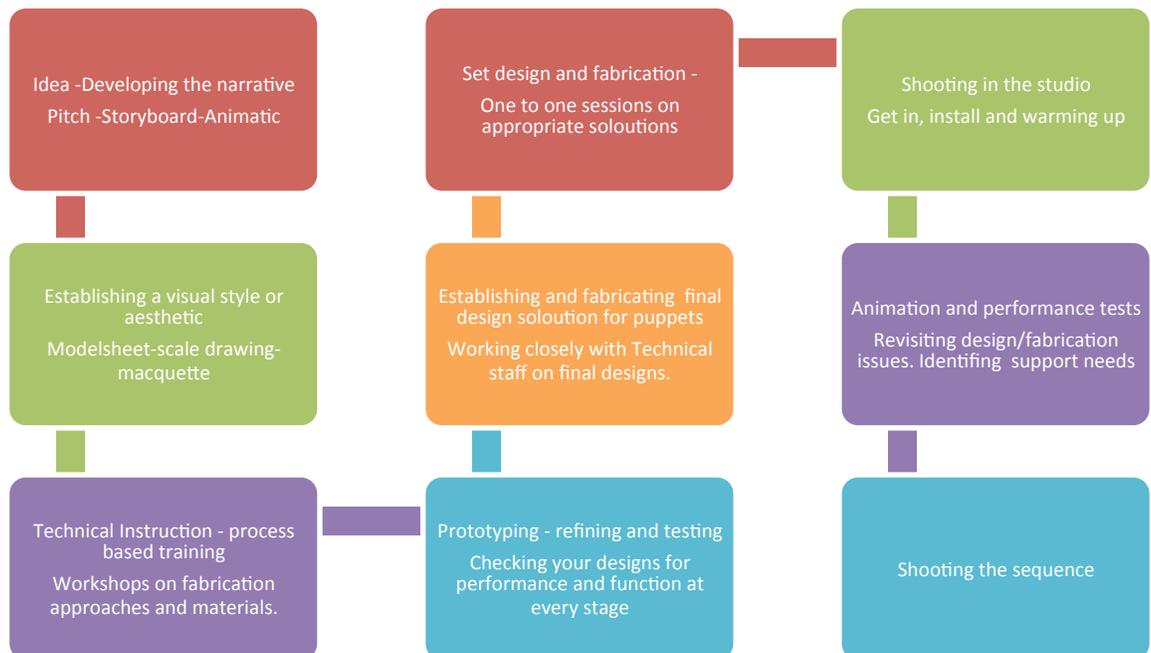
- When considering your choice of materials at the design stage, your primary inspiration should be the story you are telling. For example, an educational story aimed at very young viewers will usually use a different visual strategy than a dark comic piece aimed at young adults.
- For creative engaged in craft based productions the design phase is the point to begin to make connections between the story you are considering and the nature of the materials you will use.
- The tool/document you produce to communicate key aspects of these decisions to the team and the director/producer is a **mood board**

New software applications and networking sites such as "Pinterest" or "Corkulous" are useful ways to begin the task of creating mood boards for aspects of your production.

<http://pinterest.com/mollyrougeshop/steampunk-victorian-kink/>

## Making a scale drawing, model sheet and macquette. Design well first.....

Designing for stop motion is a complex activity, and one that varies wildly from project to project (and from designer to designer) Without a very clear design strategy the stop motion animator is always in very real danger of losing production time due to poor design or shoddy fabrication. In real and practical terms, every stage can and frequently does overlap other stages, and certain processes occur in tandem to other production activities. It is difficult to present the design and development cycle for stop motion production as a clearly defined series of activities which occur in a chronological or even linear fashion. However, without some form of map, or development cycle, it can be very difficult to navigate through the “process” of designing and making stop motion puppets in the context of teaching and learning, and to that end, let us attempt to define a design and development cycle in a bid to illustrate an ideal production schedule in these terms.



## **But we are just starting out, So where do we Begin?**

The fundamental point of reference should always be the narrative. In a conventional narrative, there is usually a recognisable character or series of characters to be designed.

What should the narrative tell us?

First, the narrative will identify what it is we need to design. Is my piece orthodox or abstract? Is it aimed at children or adults? What style does it appropriate?

### **For orthodox/conventional narrative**

An established "Story" with environments, characters etc

- Who is the character?
- What is the style mood and tone of the story you are telling?
- What emotions do you wish to convey?
- What message you want to communicate?
- What actions or performance is required of your character?

### **For Non conventional narrative**

(Abstract or experimental techniques such as sand or ink on glass, object pixilation etc) the "character" can be a more nebulous concept, and may be constantly shifting, morphing or may even be nonexistent. However, the spirit, tone and mood of the piece will still require careful consideration at the design stage in order to give your film impact and a clear direction. In this case, key design elements such as recurring visual patterns or motifs, composition and audio design will all play a vital role in giving your work meaning.

In your capacity as students who wish to learn more about the fabrication side of stop motion production getting stuck in to the making and process driven learning is key. We could simply have begun making in week one, but you would have had much less control over the final look of your puppet if you had not been given some time to think about the character you wish to make. It is very difficult to successfully fabricate something as complex as a stop motion puppet without a clear design statement or manifesto. Of course this will change slightly as you begin to explore materials and processes, but at your level as beginners a lack of experience in practical materials based fabrication should not lead to a conceptually weak or poorly designed character. It is often the case in industry that the design of a stop motion character is designed by an individual who has little or no understanding of how this character will be built. That is a very liberating position to take, and one that I recommend you try to adopt in the first two weeks of the course... one of total freedom to distort, develop and stylise your design to suit your own style and ambition. In this way, you are more likely to arrive at an innovative and fresh design well before you embark upon the fabrication process. If you have produced a good and appealing design in pre production, and you are committed in seeing that design through to completion, you will work harder at achieving an elegant design solution in fabrication, where you may find it necessary to adapt modify and adjust certain aspects of your design in response to unforeseen factors, such as how certain materials look and behave, or indeed, to your own lack of experience and skill as sculptors, engineers and fabricators. If your design is weak to begin with, you run the risk of allowing your lack of skill with certain processes to be the deciding factor in the look of the puppet. This leads to a very generic low process look that we can all recognise.



**There is a generic cartoony/realistic style with these puppets that just screams poor design concept. Why?**

A strong concept and an elegant design solution can not only raise the entire aesthetic of a film, but can also make the fabrication process easier. Styling a character can shorthand details which are tricky to create (Facial expressions, emotive response etc)

- Styling - to design something in a particular artistic style

Links to examples of character concepts which have successfully stylised the design.

<http://www.stephanehalleux.com/>

<http://www.jessicajoslin.com/jessica/index.html#>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEgftat01rs>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4VpC5VO\\_D4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4VpC5VO_D4)



Why do these designs appear more successful than the previous solutions?

A visually successful and appealing design is one that is simultaneously appropriate and sensitive to both the materials and the story it comes from. So how do we arrive at a strong and appropriate design concept?

### **concept art.**

As part of your early design development, you should produce a number of drawings/designs which will help you to reach a final design solution for your character. This is your opportunity to develop your concept, and to move it away from obvious early sketches to more carefully considered and developed concept work.

If you feel that your designs are not resolved, you will need to address this before moving on.

### **Modelmaker, learn the tools of your craft.**

These designs are key in your pre production decision making, but as you move into fabrication, they become less and less useful, and the tools that a model maker will require become vital.

- **Macquette.**
- **Scale Drawing**
- **Model Sheet**

The most important piece of concept art for the model maker's perspective is the macquette. Here are some examples

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maquette>

[http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://www.davidbellstudio.com/stopmotion/images/line-of-sculpts.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.davidbellstudio.com/stopmotion/illumin.html&usq=\\_\\_NGKARnCrbeaLciD1CpriTvRLfV0=&h=540&w=720&sz=127&hl=en&start=1&zoom=1&um=1&itbs=1&tbnid=ws17VaFv0dHIJM:&tbnh=105&tbnw=140&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsculpts%2Bfor%2Bstop%2Bmotion%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26rlz%3D1R2ADFA\\_enGB341%26tbs%3Disch:1](http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://www.davidbellstudio.com/stopmotion/images/line-of-sculpts.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.davidbellstudio.com/stopmotion/illumin.html&usq=__NGKARnCrbeaLciD1CpriTvRLfV0=&h=540&w=720&sz=127&hl=en&start=1&zoom=1&um=1&itbs=1&tbnid=ws17VaFv0dHIJM:&tbnh=105&tbnw=140&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dsculpts%2Bfor%2Bstop%2Bmotion%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26rlz%3D1R2ADFA_enGB341%26tbs%3Disch:1)

A macquette does not need to move, or to be flexible, light and durable. All of these issues can be shelved at this point, so that you can concentrate on important decisions/solutions which will impact on the aesthetic success of the character.

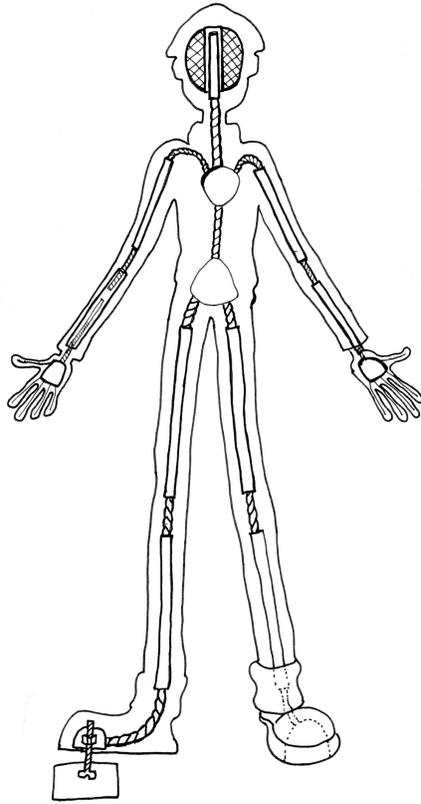
A macquette should endeavour to address and realise all of the key visual decision making.

- Size
- Proportion
- Design of the head/face
- Costume design and details
- Styling factors (Distortion/abstraction/etc,)





A scale drawing should be drawn to the full size of the finished puppet, and should reflect its shape and proportion as accurately as possible. Later in the course, we will be producing a scale drawing just detailing the head.



- Size and proportion
- Shape
- Where the puppet is flexible
- Where the rigid parts are
- Weight reduction
- Repair systems.
- Replacement systems.
- Tie down solutions
- Some external detail.

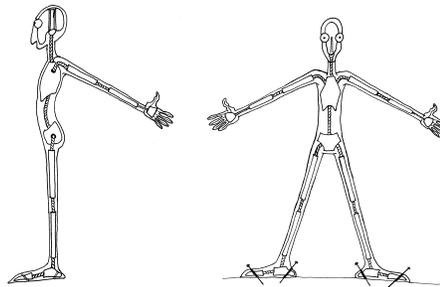
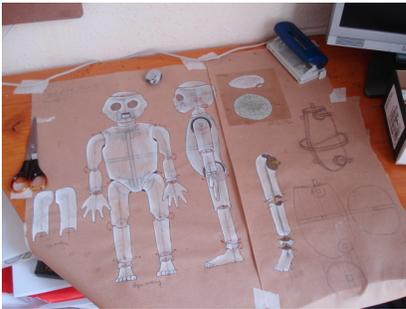
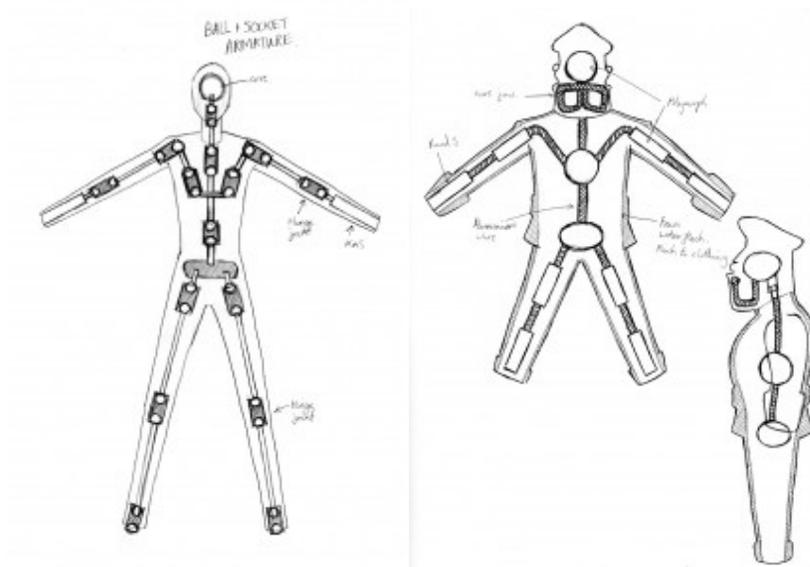
Note the stance of the puppet. It is displaying no character traits, nor is it in performance mode. This type of drawing is similar to diagrams of flat packed furniture in its nature. I have often described this process as “Pinning the Character out” as one would a butterfly, or a frog to be dissected. The annotations are business like and practical. They all address issues of construction, and design. It is inappropriate to annotate this type of drawing in terms of the personality of the puppet, or in terms of the narrative of the sequence.

It is to be recommended that you spend time on your scale drawing. Getting it right at this stage can save you having to begin again down the line. In terms of your own practice, this type of drawing makes an ideal illustration in evaluating your process.

Of course, if you have the skills, a drawing of this nature can be achieved digitally.

In week 2, I will be individually assisting you with producing a scale drawing to begin the armature in week 3, but at some point, you may want to design a second character, and it is much easier when you have built an armature, and know the materials and processes involved.

## Examples of scale drawings...



## Model sheet.

At the point where the narrative is sufficiently resolved to the point where you are moving to the fabrication phase, it is a really useful exercise to write up a mission statement, or "Brief" as a tool in assisting in making the puppet. Key details such as actions to be performed, the material "Look" of the character and its approximate size and proportions can all be pulled together and visually recorded into an annotated "model Sheet". This model sheet document is essentially a collection of annotated images filling in information not supplied by the scale drawing or Marquette. This is usually relating to the performance of the puppet, or how it will move.

**Examples of model sheets, and drawings from model sheets.**



A photograph of a macquette and a scale drawing can be incorporated into the model sheet, and it can take the form of a series of documents. A “Turnaround” is not necessary, but some information about how it will move is relevant, especially where that impacts on the shape proportions or construction of the character.

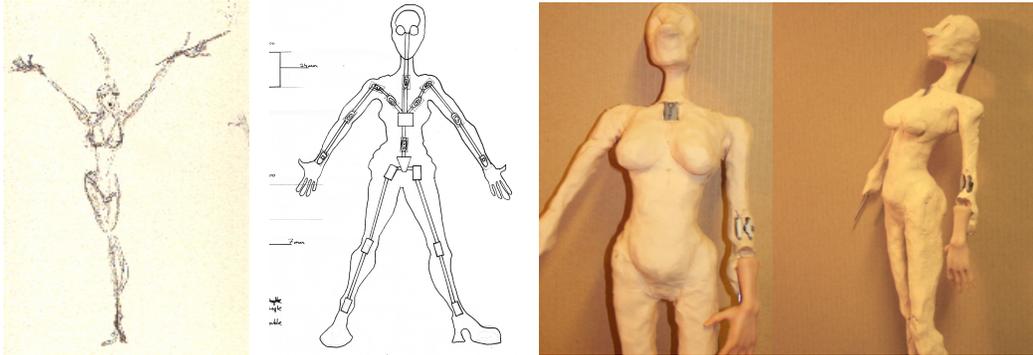
These three tools, the scale drawing, the macquette and the model sheet then forms the “Brief” for the model maker to begin the task of experimenting, exploring and developing physical tests on materials, techniques etc to help to reach a decision on the fabrication approach in terms of the aesthetic of the character..



**Getting started can often be the most difficult stage...especially if you have not made a stop motion film before. Take your time and think it through....**

- Unless you are making a puppet as a stand alone exercise, your starting point will always be your narrative. If your narrative is conceptually weak, and you are not sure what film you are working on, it is impossible to design and build an innovative and stylised character that successfully meets the mood and tone of the piece.
- It is, however, easy to design and build a generic and bland “everyman” type character conforming to every visual cliché in the book.
- It is vital therefore that you make some firm and sensible decisions now that you are happy with. You then formally establish a design phase, where you open up your mind, and innovate, experiment and research to find a distinctive and appropriate approach (Technically and conceptually/aesthetically) before you begin to fabricate a final design solution.

## Working towards your Design Manifesto



- **Who is your film aimed at?**

Your film must have an intended audience. Identifying an age bracket is a good start. A film for young adults will not appeal to pre school children.

- Pre school Children
- Older Children
- Young Adults
- Adults

**What is the nature of expected distribution of this piece?**

It is important to educate yourselves on the intended audience if it is directed at a specific forum or event (for example, a festival or competition)

- You and your friends
- Broadcast media
- Festivals
- Competitions
- Regional
- National
- International

**What is the intended Mood and Tone of the piece?**

Your starting point in a production should always focus on establishing the story you are telling, and making clear decisions about the visual style of the piece. What is the mood, spirit and tone of the film? It is not always a simple task to identify this, as a film can be comic/tragic, or a parody or pastiche.

- Happy
- sad,
- creepy
- Comic
- Informative
- Experimental
- Whimsical
- Tragic
- Black Humour
- Educational
- Moral

### **How is that reflected in the visual “Look” and choice of materials?**

When you come to make a series of mood boards, the mood and tone of the piece and the intended audience should give you a starting point when identifying a colour palette, and the key visual qualities of your intended piece.

- Faded Elegance
- Natural shapes and tones
- Bright and cheerful/manufactured looking
- Homemade and cheesy
- Highly stylish and sophisticated
- Creepy and surreal
- Post apocalyptic

### **Your “Design Manifesto”**

A design manifesto is a short written statement clearly and elegantly answering the above questions in the context of our design.

1. What story are we telling?
2. What is the tone and visual style of the piece?
3. Who is our Audience?

### **Do’s and Don’t’s**

- It **should** contain any information that is essential to the spirit of the piece.
- It is **not** a scene by scene account of the narrative, or a complex character analysis.
- It **should not** be a list of materials, or a version of the script.
- It **should be** a stand alone statement, illustrated with one or two drawings.

### **Examples of two design Manifestos from very different pieces.**

#### **Madame Tuttle Puttli**

- A vulnerable and elegant young woman finds herself on an increasingly surreal train journey full of bizarre and nightmarish characters. The design sensibility is highly realistic, with slightly elongated proportions. The costume and sets are stylised to have a 1920’s look and feel. The colour palette has a slightly washed out or faded quality, with a monochromatic and sepia feel, like an old photograph, and the sets are similarly realised in a range of “real” textures and surface treatments, with an art nouveau/art deco design approach appropriate to the time period that the film is set in. Aimed at adults, with sexual content and disturbing scenes of violence and gore.

#### **Purple and Brown.**

- Two friends share observations and experiences in a series of short visual jokes. The characters themselves are very simple shapes, vaguely figurative, with a recognisable head and torso only and simple cartoon like facial features. They communicate through non verbal sounds and simple expressions. The movement is minimal, limited to the basic squash and stretch and extreme distortion characterised by a classic claymation approach to fabrication animated through manipulation of the material and replacement techniques. The world they inhabit is a minimal white space, with the characters, props and set pieces standing out as bold and brightly coloured shapes. Aimed at pre school children, but would appeal to older children and adults due to sophisticated comic timing and innovative storytelling approach.

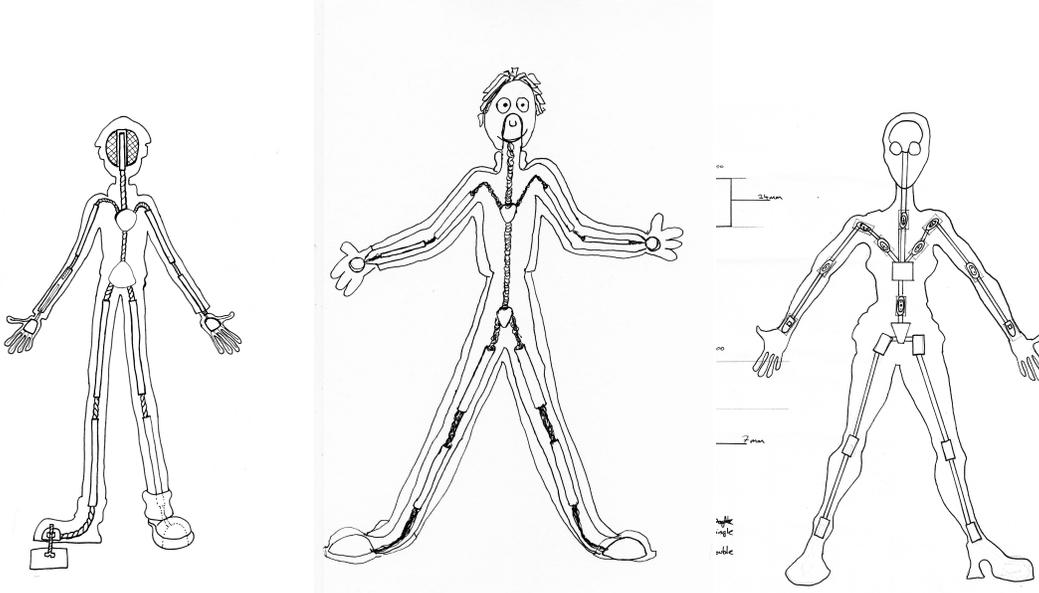
### Let us then assume...

That you have reached an exciting, surprising and innovative conclusion and written an elegant and gripping design manifesto...everyone is feeling happy and confident... You are now ready to enter into stage two of the design development cycle....producing a series of plans/artefacts/records/documents etc which enable you to begin to engage with specific aspects of your design challenge. The range and amount of design documentation varies wildly from project to project, and often from designer to designer. For students beginning a new design, it can be easily broken up into three separate tasks...each one dealing with one specific and key aspect of the character being designed.

- Your mood board and later on your model sheet showing details of the puppets costume, attitude, shape and surface treatment.
- Your scale drawing showing the internal details of the armature, tie downs and lightweight core.
- Your Marquette or prototype, showing the puppet or part of the puppet as a three dimensional but non functioning aesthetic object.
- **The Model Sheet** - This is the finalised design, drawn in the correct proportion, with certain details, such as shape, surface treatment, colour etc rendered as faithfully as possible. It should be annotated with information about how the character will perform, special notes about how it moves etc. (specific to the story being told and the mood of the piece) The details of the face and head should be addressed here.  
You can also add a mood board at this stage to supplement the information being detailed in the model sheet.



- **The scale drawing** – This should be drawn to scale and the correct proportions (If the puppet is to be six inches, the drawing should be six inches) and should detail the internal structure of the armature in relation to the external skin. It should also indicate weight reducing features, the position of tiedowns, and any replaceable elements such as hands and head.



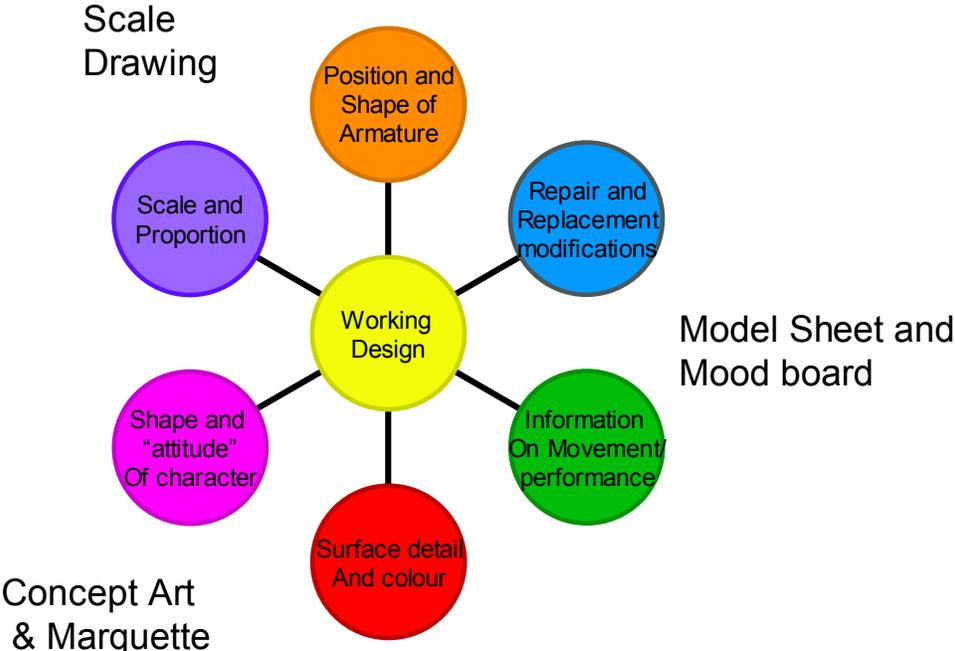
- **The Marquette**

A “Marquette” (sometimes spelled Macquette) is a mock up, or prototype of a design which has no function other than to describe some aspect of the puppets look or shape. A full macquette of the entire puppet is useful for the experienced puppet maker, but for the beginner, it is most useful when working out details of the puppets face, and head. It does not need to be made using the same process or material as the final puppet. You will be encouraged this week to make one or two macquettes of your characters face using a low grade polymer clay called “Sculpy”.





A successful set of design documents gives us a range of information about the puppets being designed. This is not a shopping list or mathematical formula. There will always be a certain amount of overlap, and where one document falls short, the information can be picked up or highlighted in a different manner.



## For class next Friday

### **Moodboards**

- 1) At least one well presented moodboard detailing key visual aspects of any character in your pitched piece. This is not a character design, more a collection of colours, textures, and objects that represent the colours, textures and mood and tone of your piece.
- 2) At least one well presented moodboard detailing key visual aspects of any set or environment in your pitched piece. This is not a set design, more a collection of colours, textures, and objects that represent the colours, textures and mood and tone of your piece.

### **Draft scale Drawing**

We will be going over the process of creating a scale drawing in Friday's class, but a draft drawing, (or first attempt) is really useful to help me to highlight any issues or obvious technical issues with the design. A rough pencil sketch is fine.

### **Macquette**

I would like to see at least one first attempt macquette made in an appropriate material (I will advise when I know more about your films)

Please bring these to class on Friday. I will give you a plan for the day when I know more about your chosen approach to fabrication/design.