

Ten kilos of ... a cartoon

Plasticine animated film about Bobruisk becomes latest in series

By Lyudmila Minakova

Many of us remember such wonderful animated films as *The Snows of Yesteryear Falling* and *The Plasticine Crow*: their humorous characters sculpted from modelling clay. Unfortunately, modern filmmakers rarely use this technique, since it's easier to use computer graphics than to shape each shot by hand. Even Belarusfilm rarely uses modelling clay and the prospect of creating a film was daunting, until Ruslan Sinkevich — a graduate of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts — came to the studio. The young director suggested an experiment, creating a short film for the popular project *Tale of Bygone Years*, using clay animation.

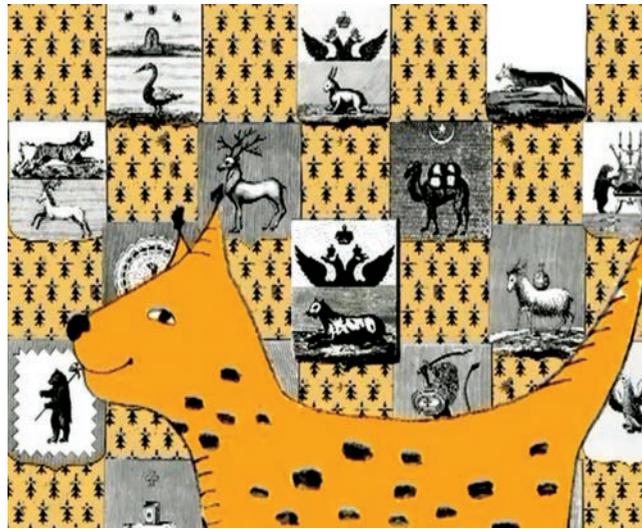
Plasticine Empress

Ruslan met us at the studio entrance, already stretching a piece of clay in his hands. "Do you always have plasticine in your hands," I asked. "Most of the time, as work on the animated film is in full swing. It's a good workout for the hands," he smiled, leading me to the studio-workshop, where the future cartoon is being born.

Several ready-made characters sat on the worktop: a gull, beaver and man in a fur hat, as well as the Empress in an elegant red dress. The

main heroes have been being sculpted for about a month, from ten kilos of special, Spanish clay, brought from Moscow. The clay doesn't melt under bright spotlights and is easy to manipulate without cracking.

"One month is assigned



Shots from previous episodes in *Tale of Bygone Years* film project

for shooting. Then we'll start gathering our materials in one complete unit with the help of a computer. In one minute and 45 seconds, using plasticine, we'll tell the audience about the history of the emblem of Bobruisk," explains Ruslan. "The story is quite prosaic. In 1796, Yekaterina II gave the city the emblem to thank its inhabitants for their hard work."

I indicate the grand lady in red, with ample curves and towering hairstyle. "Yes, this

is her," he smiles. "Bobruisk used to provide mast timber to the Baltic and the Black Sea fleets so the emblem was given for these achievements. As the story isn't particularly dynamic, we invented a backstory for two main characters: a beaver and a man. They tell

the history of Bobruisk from its foundation.

Hero from nowhere

The plasticine figures are flat on one side, and in relief on the other, making them come alive in a certain light. "In some cases, we create different phases of movement for the hero; in other cases, we change them during shooting. This is an advantage of clay; it allows us to do what we cannot with hand-drawn animation. We treat these

figures like puppets and can even make the hero appear out of nowhere. We use reverse shooting, first crushing a plasticine object and then, using a computer, restoring its image. The hero appears as if out of thin air."



Blue dog

Ruslan fell in love with the plasticine technique accidentally, discovering it while working in a hardware store. Five years ago, an opportunity arose. "When I heard the news on TV that the Academy of Art was running a course on 'Direction of Animated Films', at Oleg Belousov's Studio, I was very interested. Although I had never thought of becoming a director of animated films, I'd always loved cartoons and

often thought about how they were made. I drew well and those close to me gave me encouragement."

He continues, "In my fourth term of study, I entered the Russian State University of Cinematography summer school. One of our



Ruslan Sinkevich

already working in the 'Pilot' studio, specialising in clay animation, and inspired Ruslan to try the medium.

"In just twenty days, we created a film about Vladislav Starevich, the founder of puppet animation," notes the young director. "I returned to Belarus and realised that I wanted to continue with clay, so I persuaded my thesis partner, Marina Lukyanova, to try this technique. She supported the idea and our teachers, Mikhail Tumelya and Yelena Petkevich, approved. *Blue Dog* was the result, moulded by hand. Belarusfilm, of course, provided the studio, lighting and specialised equipment. They accepted the idea of clay animation at once, being keen to see it in action, having not taken that path before. Unexpectedly, Ruslan became a stage director. I'm a little timid but everything comes with experience."

The MT's reference:

The Bobruisk cartoon is the latest in a series describing the stories behind Belarusian heraldry: *The Tale of Bygone Years*. It features tales about Lelchitsy (director Ksenia Maryankova), Slutsk (Natalia Kostyuchenko), Pinsk (Alexander Lenkin), Lida (Mikhail Tumelya) and Gorodok (Yevgeny Nadochey). Over twenty Belarusian cities and towns have been included so far.

Space conquerors in Kosmonavtov Street



Ivan Misko continues his work on sculpting cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky

"Today, I'm finishing my sculptural portrait of Oleg Novitsky: the third Belarusian in space, travelling with the crew of the International Space Station. I'll try to complete it this year, or maybe next," Ivan Misko tells us.

Speaking at a press conference in Minsk, the People's Artist of Belarus detailed the nature of the new sculpture, which is destined for Kosmonavtov Street, and added, "We're making an avenue in which all the cosmonauts coming to Minsk can plant a tree. There are also plans to erect a bas-relief in honour of Piotr

Ivan Misko and his 'space' works

Klimuk, Vladimir Kovalenok and Oleg Novitsky."

He is preparing a great exhibition for Cosmonautics Day, on 12th April, 2014, admitting, "I really want this exhibition to visit Star City." Over the years, Mr. Misko has created sculptural portraits of Belarusian cosmonauts Piotr Klimuk and Vladimir Kovalenok, and commemorative plaques in honour of spacecraft designer Sergey Korolev and the first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin. Cosmonauts from Poland, Cuba, Romania, Mongolia, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Syria, Britain, Vietnam, Austria, Japan, Afghanistan, and India have also posed for Ivan Misko.

Programme for new season

Yanka Kupala Theatre to present three premieres in new season

The first premiere is Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, with rehearsals starting in autumn and the show opening in early 2014. The performance will involve almost every male member of the theatri-

cal company. Pavel Kharlanchuk will play Pan Tadeusz while Roman Podolyako will play the Duke; Yulia Shpilevskaya and Svetlana Anikei will play Telimena and Marta Golubeva and Kristina Kazak will play Zosya. The Theatre's Artistic Leader, Nikolay Piningin, will stage the performance.

Jean-Baptiste Molière's *Don Juan*, staged by Anatoly Pravdin, invited from St. Petersburg, and *The Quiet Rustle of Retreating Steps* by Dmitry Bogoslavsky, staged by Yekaterina Averkova, will follow.

As is traditional, the country's major drama stage will begin its 94th theatrical season with *Paulinka*.

Polesie's Grace could become Miss Supranational-2013

Veronika Chachina, 17, studying at Gomel's Belarusian State University of Transport, to represent Belarus at international beauty contest in Minsk

Since childhood, Veronika Chachina has loved painting, architecture and photography. She already has a reputation as a promising and talented model and, last year, took prizes at various contests: crowned *Miss Beauty and Grace at Miss Polesie-2013*, in Gomel, and winning several nominations at the *Banks of the Neva River International Beauty Festival*, in St. Petersburg. She also reached the final of *FotoART-2013*, in the photo model nomination (Gomel) and took

part in Belarus Fashion Week. Her beauty is matched by her intellect and creativity, having won national Olympiads for her knowledge of Belarusian language and history and having taken part in the international art competition *My Native Land*.

The organisers of *Miss Supranational-2013* feel that Veronika Chachina possesses the best qualities of a modern girl, working to make herself and others proud. Her greatest wish is that her parents be proud of her. The final of *Miss Supranational-2013* is to be held in Minsk on 6th September, at the Palace of Sports. Guests will enjoy not only a spectacular show but a very beautiful gala, featur-

ing several surprises, according to the top level production team. The show will be the most technologically advanced to date, bringing together beauties from all over the world. About 90 countries have applied to participate, bringing a record number of contestants to Minsk: more than ever before in the history of this contest.



Veronika Chachina