

DIGITISING THE CHFA

I'm Archive Manager at the Cosgrove Hall Films Archive. We are an animation archive operating out of Waterside Arts Centre in Sale, Trafford. Waterside are custodians of the Cosgrove Hall Films Archive. So this means that we look after all the assets left over from Cosgrove Hall Studios. This is everything from animation cels directly from shows like Dangermouse and Fantomcat. Then we've also got 3D assets, so puppets props and set materials as well.

Each Cosgrove Hall series had a really distinct look about it, so we do have a real range of materials that we're dealing with in house. On a daily basis we look after these assets, repacking anything that needs special attention and just raising awareness about the collection.

We're embarking on a digitisation project to preserve some of the most vulnerable materials in our collection and that covers a range of materials from silicone puppets, balsa wood puppets, resin puppets, but the most vulnerable material is foam latex. The great thing about foam latex, is that it captures a really high level of detail, which a lot of other materials don't. This is why animators loved to use it, but it does degrade way more than any of the other materials in our collection, and that has become evident.

We've been lucky to partner with a number of universities over the years. We've previously worked with Manchester Metropolitan University in 2019 and we were 3D scanning assets from our collection for the same purpose, to preserve the likeness Chelsea is digitising parts of our collection using a process of photogrammetry, which is mapping the object using a series of static images, that will create a 3D render of the object which can then be shared with members of the public. Chelsea is preserving the likeness of some of the most vulnerable work in our collection.

A lot of the assets - we don't have an (original) mould for as well, if we can record all the detail and texture of the skin, in the future we have that rendered in 3D and this would mean that we still have the likeness (which would enable us to recast the puppet's skin) and that's what's really important.

This is a special collection, each character, each series, has such a distinct feel about it and you can tell that the animators, the model-makers put a lot of time, detail and effort into each series. So it's a distinctive collection to have in house and share with the public. This process captures the charisma of some of the puppets in our collection. Animation is a playful and dynamic medium, people will be able to interact with the object, turn it round, have a closer look, and really get up close and personal with some of these assets.