The Story of the Ink and Paint Department

Emma Thielk
ethielk1112@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.uwyo.edu/honors_theses_17-18

Part of the American Popular Culture Commons, Museum Studies Commons, Other Film and Media Studies Commons, United States History Commons, Women's History Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://repository.uwyo.edu/honors_theses_17-18/42

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Honors Theses at Wyoming Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses AY 17/18 by an authorized administrator of Wyoming Scholars Repository. For more information, please contact scholcom@uwyo.edu.
The Story of the Ink and Paint Department

Honors College Project

Emma Thielk
5-10-2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How They Were Viewed in the Past</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Walt Disney Family Museum</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ink &amp; Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Animations such as *Silly Symphonies*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, the move to the current Burbank Studios, as well as many technological innovations defined the golden years of the Disney Studio. Innovations included the use of color in the first fully animated short, *Flowers and Trees*¹, followed by the first full length animated colored feature film, *Snow White*². To increase efficiency, the studio had departments that did the same job, like an assembly line. The Ink and Paint department was one such department which included making and mixing the paint colors used to ink and paint every cel photographed for the final film. This department, unlike others, was staffed and run only by females, which was very different from the cultural norms of 1920s-1940s. This department was huge, close to 100 girls working there at one point, and existed until the 60s or 70s when it was eliminated by the introduction of the Xerox machine³; not much was saved through documentation or artifacts for this time-period so there is not a lot known about this department. The Ink and Paint department has been mostly forgotten about in Disney history because it is obsolete for the work being done in present day and wasn’t as glamorous as the Animation department. Lately, the studio has been pushing a revival of the department with the publication of a book all about females in the Disney studio called *Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney Animation* by Mindy Johnson.

This project also reflects a larger societal and important concern in determining the biases that underline the truth about marginalized groups. These truths should be told through unbiased

---


sources which society is expected to believe and these entities then control how the public will perceive this department. Women during the 1920s through the 1940s faced the same historical events other members of society went through, and were taking equality into their own hands, especially with the suffragette movement. Women history is just as important as national history which is discussed in books like *Born for Liberty* by Sara M. Evans⁴ and *Women and the American Experience* by Nancy Woloch.⁵ This project fits into the larger dialogue about women’s history and who gets the privilege to tell their story. It is important to understand the cultural norms of women during this time. During the Great Depression, families had to move to find jobs and they thought California held agricultural jobs; this sentiment was expressed in popular culture such as John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*.⁶ Often, just fathers, husbands, or sons would move away leaving the women behind. It was these women, some with families, who would sit in employment offices for hours on end waiting for a job.⁷ There was discrimination in the relief services offered to men and women during the Great Depression, and there simply weren’t places for women to stay while moving from job to job, so they mostly sat in employment offices waiting for domestic jobs to appear.⁸ Even during a time of crisis, the socially acceptable jobs women could get were domestic in nature, which was a common theme for jobs during World War II as well. When men went off to war, many jobs opened that were marketed towards women because it was “patriotic” to take these jobs previously held by men.⁹

These were not intended to be permanent, once the war was over, married women were expected

---

⁸ Lesueur, Meridel. "Women on the Breadlines".
to go back to the domestic sphere while single girls were to get married and return to the house.\textsuperscript{10}

This was American culture during the 1920s through the 1940s and it certainly would have affected the way Walt Disney and the Disney Studio viewed the Ink and Paint department.

To think critically about the studio, there were many theories and methods used to accomplish this goal. One book that discusses how to look at a museum critically is discussed in “The Critical Museum Visitor” by Margaret Lindauer. Looking at a museum in this way will help the visitor distinguish the voice of the museum and then find the biases presented in the story told by the museum. The article discusses all the \textit{little} things that make up a museum that one must consider when viewing critically. This method includes looking at the “visual, written, and spatial features of an exhibition collectively implicate an ideal visitor”\textsuperscript{11}. This shows the scope of the museum, and how all these trivial things people do not consider have biases and implications to elevate the museum, which may not even be the truth. One must also consider what makes up a museum such as “design elements - wall color, lighting, font style, physical barriers between audience and artifacts, and spatial relationships of objects to one another – and note how these elements influence the way you move through the display”\textsuperscript{12}. I used all these concepts when I was at the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco, California to look at this museum critically, especially how they are presenting and literally displaying the Ink and Paint department.

To analyze the book Johnson wrote includes history theory in critically reading a secondary source. The main method I used examining the Ink and Paint book is through understanding historiography. I went into this mindset while reading the book, knowing the

\textsuperscript{10}May, Elaine Tyler. "Rosie the Riveter Gets Married." Pg. 128.


author will have her own biases that will make their way into the book. Acknowledging these biases through a critical analysis of this book gives an understanding to the way the department is presented to the public.

Along with the museum and history, I also used methods of analysis about the study of Disney and gender. I have taken many classes that taught me how to look at a source critically to understand the author, their biases, when and where the book, or media was published, the attended audience, and the impact of the source. This has been taken into consideration when selecting quotes. These quotes helped to understand the rhetoric used to describe the department, which in turn led to how the department was viewed in the past and present.

To understand how an aspect in history can be told through different lenses, different stories, and how people with the most power in the story can control the telling of the story is a complex problem 100 year in the making. This paper is broken up into three parts with each section building upon the other. Part one discusses how the Ink and Paint department was viewed in the past and contains analyses on two movies produced during this time-period, “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” and *The Reluctant Dragon*. Each film mentions the Ink and Paint department, and since the Walt Disney Studio produced and released these films, there will be undertones of how the studio viewed the Ink and Paint department throughout these films. To understand the revival story and determine if it is biased or not, there needs to be an understanding of the department while it was thriving. This knowledge will help determine where some biases came from. The second part focuses on galleries three, four, and six of the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco, California which fits within the scope of this project. One of the museum galleries contains a display dedicated to the Ink and Paint
department and throughout the museum there are other mentions of the department. Critically analyzing this museum including the display, labels, rhetoric, and artifacts, I am understanding how an unbiased institute viewed the Ink and Paint department and then portrayed this information to the public. A museum can act as a truth holder of knowledge and an unbiased source of information for the public. One must look at a museum critically to know what is being talked about and find the overall voice of the museum which controls the story about the department that influences the public’s perception. The third part is about *Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation* by Mindy Johnson. This is a vital part because it is the first book truly dedicated to the females who worked in the studio, including the Ink and Paint department, so looking at this book critically and analyzing it can deduce who has the privilege of telling the story about the department. Since this book is a supposed to revive the story about the department, it gets this privilege to do so because it is the first comprehensive account of the department. The book seems to come from an unbiased source, Johnson, because she is sold as a historian, however, everything talked about in the movies and in the museum can be found in this book which is a collaboration between the studio and an author who is supposed to be unbiased. Like the museum, this book portrays the Ink and Paint department though its rhetoric, historiography, pictures, and presents a specific story of the department to the public. The author does this with the layout and distinctive characteristics of the book which mimics a museum, especially The Walt Disney Family Museum.

---


The language I have chosen regarding the topic about gender has been seriously considered because language is powerful, especially with the discussion of gender. Certain words in our language hold implications that when spoken have biases around them such as women versus girl. This is a popular topic discussed in pop culture by actors such as Mayim Bialik, who created a whole video about what girl implies versus what women implies. The difference between these two words is also a powerful tool in rewriting history because the implications between the words can increase a person’s standing in history compared to how they were viewed in the past. This dichotomy between “girl versus women” is talked about in this project because the Disney Studio struggles with how to view these workers. In the past, the word “girl” was used to describe them, in the museum there is an omission of gender or both words were used, and Johnson mainly uses the word “women” in the book but even she struggles with this term. I will be mentioning this theme throughout this paper and will be clear when a source uses “women” versus “girl”, but when I discuss them I deliberately chose “girl” because for the most part they were on the younger side, early 20’s, and stopped working when they married. The workers in the department also viewed themselves as “girls” and when looking at interviews and firsthand accounts they used the word “girl”, so that is the word I am using because that is how they saw themselves.

17 Wall Text. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
Examining how the Disney Studios, The Walt Disney Family Museum, and *Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney Studios*, viewed the Ink and Paint department, I am understanding how our perception of the department can change over time. The Disney Studio did not view itself as progressive through the eyes of the Ink and Paint department but looking at these multiple facets the story changed from when the department was in use to the revival of this same department. The revival story encompasses different entities which worked together to tell an unbiased believable story to the public, but the story is biased in a way that makes the studio seem progressive when comparing the revival story to films produced during the golden age of Disney, The Walt Disney Family Museum, and *Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation*. 
How They Were Viewed in the Past

The Walt Disney Studios used film to promote themselves to the public and investors. These films and shorts were released to help bring in money as well as they were good promotional pieces for the studio. These clips highlight various parts of the studio, the film making process, and different departments. It is through these promotional pieces the viewer sees how the studio wanted to sell themselves and be viewed by the public in the 1930s and 1940s. Two of these promotional pieces are “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” from 1937 and *The Reluctant Dragon* from 1941. “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” was filmed to help RKO sell the finished product of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* by showing an inside look at the animation process.¹ *The Reluctant Dragon* also gives an inside look at the studio, but it was through the eyes of an outsider experiencing the wonders of animation. Examining both films with a focus on the Ink and Paint department, it can be determined that Disney was not progressive by hiring female workers for this department, but instead these female workers were a small cog in a large wheel.

“A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” is approximately 10 minutes long and opens with the theme song from the short “The Three Little Pigs”² which was very popular during this time-period, made the studio a large amount of money, and was liked by most people³; using this opening song, the studio is aware what the audience likes and reminds the marketers of past successful commodities produced by the studio. “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” begins

---

with an introduction of Walt Disney as “their creator Walt Disney... staff of 600 artists”. The intended audience of this film knew who Disney was, and knew of his accomplishments because he was the face of the studio; this attachment would help sell the product by placing a face to the name of the studio. Disney then gives an introduction of the film and explains its objective to raise additional money for *Snow White* and to show “the great amount of work involved in the creation”. Walt’s objective of this film is to show investors how difficult it is to make an animated film and to “help sell the product” (*Snow White*). This short goes through the film process beginning with an “interesting story” which is a reoccurring theme in other Disney promotional pieces. The short shows the hard work the men complete for the animation, which is how the studio saw the tasks the men did versus the Ink and Paint girls. The purpose of this film was to acquire money for the completion of *Snow White*, in order do that, the studio had to stress the hard work that needed to be funded, which was how the studio viewed male’s jobs.

The studio is aware of how the public views them as family entertainment, and the studio wants to keep up this image, so through this film the studio presents itself in a way the public would agree with while highlighting gender dynamics at the studio. The introduction of the film continues with a scene described as a “bustling studio” and shows a crowd of people walking, both male and female. This is one of the only shots of females seen in the studio until the Ink and Paint department discussion; this quick view of females is how the studio views them. The female workers are there, but not as important outside of the Ink and Paint department. The studio understood they had to show the Ink and Paint girls and couldn’t gloss over them, but they knew the audience wouldn’t care as much for these workers, or the work they were producing, so

---

4 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
5 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
6 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
7 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
since the audience was not interested, the studio wouldn’t bring attention to the Ink and Paint girls because they were not going to help bring in money to the studio. In this film, the studio focuses on the departments that will draw in the most money, in this case it was the work done by the men because their work was considered difficult.

The men workers have to encompass many different talents and skills in the studio. They must not only draw and animate, they act out the scenes, match the clips with music, and repeatedly review the clips. The studio is painting the men workers as jack of all trades which shows that if a man wants to work at the studio, he must be very talented, the best of the best, and cannot be specialized in just one area. Along with being multitalented, the narrator also makes the animators jobs more challenging saying, “these men will breathe life and movement into the characters”. Male artists are being equated the with literally bringing characters to life. The narrator describes the work as “purely creative”, so not only must one be talented, one must also use their imagination and creativity to make these characters believable. “Creative” also implies tones of work being fun, so not only do these men get to draw and play a god, they get to have fun while working. Along with how their jobs are described, words such as “artists”, “animators”, and “men” are used which holds tones of authority and prestige. The studio wants people to know that being a man in the studio is awesome, they get to be artists, animators, and play the role of a god to the character. Being a man at the studio is fun and they get all the hard-work in the studio which is what sells the product.

The Ink and Paint girls in the film are not mentioned until the 5 minute 30 second mark with the discussion of the Ink and Paint department and are shown for less than a minute.

---

8 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
9 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
10 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
main goal of this portion of the video is to simply address other work done in the studio, and that there are tasks meant just for the girls. The studio wants the public to view the girls like how Snow White was being represented, as a “sweet, natural, young girl… and graceful”.\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".} Equating the girls’ appearance to Snow White would enhance the image of the studio by portraying the Ink and Paint girls as characters themselves, and by relating the workers with a character, both entities are now marketable. A very different tone is taken by the narrator when speaking about the girls’ jobs in the Ink and Paint department. The first clip shows all the girls working, in stylish clothing, fashionable hairstyles, and all look young, very much like Snow White.\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".} The narrator describes their work conditions as “in a comfortable building of their own. Well-lighted and air-conditioned”.\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".} This comment addresses the audience putting focus on the building instead the girls’ work; it appears the studio wants to hide this department because it wasn’t as flashy or as cool as the animators’ department. The narrator then describes the workers as “120 girls take the animators pencil drawings trace them in ink and pieces of celluloid following exactly, every line of the original”.\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".} The narrator is taking away all creativity from the work of the department which indicates the studio did not see these girls as artists or creative individuals, instead they were good at making the men’s work look better. The information about tracing indicates their job was easier compared to the men because they are not playing a creator or trying to come up with the characters. Next comes the painting department described as “in the painting department, more girls take the celluloid… more than 15,000 celluloids must be hand colored in this way for a single Disney short subject”.\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".} During this portion, clips of girls

\footnote{Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".}
wearing gas masks and mixing paints can be seen while the narrator describes their role.

Focusing more on the numbers gives the audience concrete “facts” that can be sold to make the movie seem successful. The point of this promotional film was to give an exclusive look into the studio to help market *Snow White*; the Ink and Paint department was framed in a way to make *Snow White* more desirable as a film by using the Ink and Paint girls to contrast the hard work the males were doing in the studio and to make Snow White more real.

The narrator quickly moves away from the Ink and Paint department to focus on the background art that will be photographed with the cels. The narrator describes this part of the animating process as “most of the charm of the technicolor... lie in the background”. It is not the characters, but the backgrounds that required artistry. The backgrounds are completed by a man, while the inking and painting are done by the girls, but all the charm produced by the studio is work done by a man. Even though the girls bring the same color and “life” to the characters through painting, because it is not creative, the studio doesn’t give recognition to the females who worked in the studio. Female workers were used to complete the men’s jobs, but the studio still had a conservative discussion about the different gender workers. As indicated in the film “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” the Ink and Paint department is there to serve as a helper to the work the men were doing, and to sell a movie.

Disney produced *The Reluctant Dragon* in 1941, four years after “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” and during a very turbulent time in the studio’s history because of picketing, strikers, and a sense of betrayal Disney felt from his coworkers. However, it proves a valuable resource in understanding how the studio wanted society to perceive these girls and the Ink and Paint department. In this film, Robert Benchley is dropped off at the studio because his wife

---

16 Mousefiles. "A Trip through Walt Disney Studios".
17 Watts, Steven. *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney...* Pg. 98; 208.
wants him to pitch a story for a new film to Walt Disney. He arrives at the Burbank, California studio and immediately embarks on an adventure that takes him through the studio. Every place, person, and thing Robert encounters depicts the studio and movie-making process exactly the way Walt Disney wants it to be seen by society; the beginning of the film contains a playful warning: “this picture is made in answer to the many requests to show the backstage life of animated cartoons. P.S. Any resemblance to a regular motion picture is purely coincidental.”

As a movie about “animated cartoons,” *The Reluctant Dragon* focuses on the studio as an amazing “fun factory.” In this film, individual workers are simply part of the studio’s “fun factory,” so those workers, especially the girls in the Ink and Paint department, need to show viewers how fun and magical it is to work for Disney. The purpose of including the Ink and Paint department was to show how much fun and magical the studio was, to create a positive image, and this was accomplished through Doris and rhetoric of the Rainbow Room.

One of the only female characters in *The Reluctant Dragon* movie who gets any real screen time is Doris; critically analyzing Doris’s role, she represents the ideal female worker in the studio. As Robert makes his way around the studio, he first runs into an animation class followed by the sound department. Here he meets Doris who is providing the voice for the train whistle. As she was describing her job to Robert she said, “anyone can do it… see how easy it is”. Doris is acting as if her job is replaceable because it is so easy. She is minimizing the effort girls put into their jobs at the studio and by her saying that it was replaceable, means she is also replaceable. After Roberts interaction with Doris in the sound department, he sees her again.

---

19 "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
22 "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
helping with the multiplane camera. This causes confusion for him, because he had just encountered her in the sound department. Once again, she minimizes her work saying she is just “helping out” while the other train whistle took a day off.\textsuperscript{23} The audience of this movie believes females are working in all parts of the studio outside of secretarial jobs, which is how Disney wants them to be seen, even though these workers are sometimes actresses, like Doris, who is played by Frances Gifford.\textsuperscript{24} Doris’s role in the movie is not as a real worker, but instead she is part of the movie to act as a tour guide for Robert and to make sure he has a good time at the studio. Doris isn’t the only female who represents a tour guide, but as more girls get a little bit of screen time, they all act as helpers to the work the men are doing. It may seem like girls are helping with all parts of the production of a movie, but really it is just Doris, and even then, she doesn’t have a real job because she is a tour guide. Through Doris, the studio wants the audience to believe that females are part of everything in the studio, even though Doris is a made-up character.

After Doris finishes showing Robert the multiplane camera, they go into the “Rainbow Room”. The “Rainbow Room” is known as the room where the Ink and Paint department is held.\textsuperscript{25} Throughout the whole movie, this department is never called by its name, instead it is referred to only as “the Rainbow Room”.\textsuperscript{26} This use of “room” minimizes the importance of a whole department dedicated to the inking and painting of each individual cel which fits with society’s standard of female workers during this time. The studio is very aware of how the audience will react to a whole department of working girls, so they minimize their work to make

\textsuperscript{23} “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
\textsuperscript{24} Thompson, Kirsten. “Quick–Like a Bunny!” The Ink and Paint Machine, Female Labor and Color Production. PDF. Melbourne: Society for Animation Studies, February 3, 2014.
\textsuperscript{25} Thompson, Kirsten. “Quick–Like a Bunny!”.
\textsuperscript{26} “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
it seem like it was a fun factory which can be representative of how girls were viewed in the whole studio. Once Robert and Doris enter the department, she leads him around the room to look at all the colors being made and how the girls painted the cels. Since this is the last time we see Doris, the audience can assume she stays in the Ink and Paint department “working”.27 This implies the Ink and Paint department is the place where female workers belong in the studio. She fulfilled her role as a tour guide for Robert and will stay at her respected space in the Rainbow Room, so it doesn’t seem like she is working too hard. It can also be understood that she wants to be there, that she enjoys her work in the department, and enjoys being with the other girls. This understanding matches how the studio wants the viewer to understand the girls’ jobs are meant to be tour guides for visitors and for the viewer. The role of the Ink and Paint girls in the studio is to make it seem their jobs are replaceable, they are to help the men, and their work is not as important as the work men are completing.

The Reluctant Dragon is a promotional film, so the studio wants to paint themselves in the best light possible, and in the case of the Ink and Paint department that means focusing on the innovation of color instead of the work. In the Ink and Paint department scene, or the “Rainbow Room” scene, right away there are many similarities amongst the girls. They are all young, very pretty, and wearing similar outfits with their hair up and white lab coats.28 The studio sees these girls not as individuals, but each as a small machine in the bigger “fun factory”.29 There are minimal differences such as hair color, or their shoes, but these differences are hard to detect because all the workers look the same which equates them to being gears in the factory which takes away their individuality and creativity and minimizes the importance of their work when

27 “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
28 “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
29 Watts, Steven. The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney... Pg. 167.
being compared to the work of the animators. The studio emphasized the color that was being made and used and took away the creativity of the Ink and Paint girls in order to publicize how innovative their color was more than the work of the Ink and Paint girls.

The studio couldn’t ignore the girls and the work they were doing, so instead it viewed them more as cogs in a wheel for the creation and application of color. All the jobs the girls did in the studio through *The Reluctant Dragon* is mainly seen with color, and all other jobs were temporary because they were helping the men.\(^{30}\) There is a shift in the cinematography during the scene where Doris shows Robert how the paint is made. This scene contains close ups of the paint mills and pigments being mixed together.\(^{31}\) While the Ink and Paint girls are working, background music is playing with very uplifting, cheerful music. These instrumentals\(^{32}\) eventually turn into “Whose Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf” from *The Three Little Pigs*\(^ {33}\) and “High Ho”, a popular song from *Snow White*, and in this scene from *Snow White*, the dwarfs are happy and excited to go to work\(^ {34}\) and these same feelings are now placed on the Ink and Paint girls. Unlike the previous scenes where Doris’s full body is seen, during the creation scene the girls are shown as only body parts such as hands pouring in the paints, or a face wearing a mask.\(^ {35}\) The studio is more focused on the parts of the body than the actual work because the work they were doing was important to the creation of color, hands for mixing and eyes for seeing, so the studio cares more about the color then the people.\(^ {1}\) *The Reluctant Dragon* cannot totally ignore the role the Ink and Paint girls played in the creation of color for the animation, so instead they made the girls seem less like a person by focusing on specific body parts.

\(^{30}\) "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
\(^{31}\) "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
\(^{32}\) "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
\(^{33}\) *Three Little Pigs*. Directed by Walt Disney.
\(^{34}\) *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. By Walt Disney, David Hand, Perce Pearce, and Larry Morey. Performed by Adriana Caselotti, Lucille La Verne, Harry Stockwell.
\(^{35}\) "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie".
The studio focused on the work the Ink and Paint department produced in *The Reluctant Dragon*, but during this short portion, typical gender roles are emphasized. In the mixing of paint scene, when the girl’s hands being shown, they had perfectly manicured nails and some even had on a wedding ring which implies at least some of these girls were married. The inclusion of rings and the work with color still suggests these girls were practicing traditional gender roles. While Doris was showing Robert around the department, there are multiple comments about cooking. Cooking was typically a “women’s job” during this time-period. Robert mentions cooking saying “Rainbow room is right. Don’t tell me you cook all this yourself”. The rhetoric Robert is using describes the “cooking” of the paints which is a direct reference to how someone may cook in a kitchen. He is comparing the department to a kitchen with the girls being cooks and bakers. Doris also participates in this by saying “secret formulas and everything” in response to Robert’s comment, this can be compared to secret recipes families may have of their favorite dishes. Since Doris is representing all girls in the studio, and she is participating in this gender role, the studio makes it seem that all the Ink and Paint girls view themselves and the work they are doing in this way. The “Rainbow Room” could be an extension of a kitchen, which is how society would view the department as well. Instead of the studio be progressive by hiring females, it appears their work and their place of work is nothing more than still participating in typical gender roles. The girls enjoy the work they are doing, because they are glorified domestic workers in the “fun factory”.

36 "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie."
38 "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie."
39 "The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie."
The rhetoric used to describe the girls’ workers in *The Reluctant Dragon* indicates the studio wants the viewers to understand that to be an Ink and Paint girl in the studio, one must be attractive. Instead of having workers comment on the attractiveness level of the girls, Robert is representing everyone both in the studio and in society. One of the first times a comment is made on the appearance of the girls is when Robert calls Doris “cute”.40 “Cute” implies someone is on the younger side and is typically used to describe girls, not older females. Because Doris is supposed to represent all Ink and Paint girls at the studio, this implies that all girls in the studio must be “cute” indicting they are young and attractive. The studio also wants the viewer to understand that Robert represents the viewer because they are both outsiders, and as he gets acceptance from the studio, it is like the viewer is there with him as long as they believe the same thing the studio does. The studio wants acceptance from society to help improve the negative image they were receiving during the strike. The physical appearance of the Ink and Paint girls also extends to outside of the Ink and Paint department because during the background scene while Doris is holding up the background for Robert, he says to her “nothing wrong with the one I just saw”.41 Doris just smiles which encourages Robert to continue making these types of comments. The girls at the studio are just supposed to accept that men will make these comments to them and they supposed to smile and encourage them. No matter the work they are doing at the studio – inking, painting, or mixing the colors – everything will come back to their physical appearance and that matters just as much as the work they are producing. The girls in the department must be cognizant of how they look both in the studio and in society’s eyes because they want acceptance from them both. Through *The Reluctant Dragon*, the studio wants society to accept the female workers during a time when it was not common for girls to work; they get

---

40 “*The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie*”.  
41 “*The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie*”.  

acceptance from society by making sure that only the “best” “cutest” and “youngest” work at the studio.

Robert’s tour of the studio ends when he meets Walt Disney to pitch his idea for a movie. Robert gives Walt all the stuff he as gathered through his impromptu tour. He describes these as “things the girls worked on… just for fun”.

The girls are the only workers who gave him items throughout the tour. This shows that the “stuff” the girls worked on is not as important as what men worked on because the girl’s work is disposable and can be given away, even to an outsider. The females are there to serve the needs of the men, which in this case was making sure Robert had an enjoyable time at the studio. The girls can take time out of their day, whether it is making a reference model or painting a character on a cel, to make “gifts” for guests. The studio wants the viewer to see that the girls were not working as hard as the men and therefore their job wasn’t as challenging.

Analyzing “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” and The Reluctant Dragon, the girls of the Ink and Paint department appear in both films, even though their screen time was relatively very short. The inclusion of the Ink and Paint department was a way for the studio to acknowledge the existence of the Ink and Paint girls and the fact that they held jobs during a time in history when this wasn’t the norm. The studio viewed them in a way that fit with societal norms and undermined their work. “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” and The Reluctant Dragon were produced during two different time periods for Disney; the first was at the end of production for Snow White and the second was during the Disney strike, but the studio’s views of the girls stayed the same. Girls were dispensable, helpers to men, and had easy tasks with domestic undertones. This is seen through the rhetoric of the girls by the narrator, the types of clothes

---

42 “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
43 “The Reluctant Dragon 1941 Disney Movie”.
worn by the girls, the music that was playing, and the types of jobs the Ink and Paint girls performed. The studio did not view itself as progressive by having girls work in the Ink and Paint department, instead the girls helped to sell the creative and innovative qualities of the studio, and of Walt Disney himself.
The Walt Disney Family Museum

The Walt Disney Family Museum in the Presidio of San Francisco, California is made up of ten distinct galleries starting with Walt Disney’s birth through his death in 1966. Each gallery focuses on a different part of Disney’s life and significant events. Gallery One, from 1901 through 1923, is about Disney’s early life; the visitor then takes an elevator to the second floor to Gallery Two where the Disney Brothers Studio is discussed from 1923 to 1928. Gallery Three (“Exploring New Horizons”), Gallery Four (“The Transition into Features”), and the beginning of Gallery Six (“Patriotic Contributions”) will be the focus of this project. Gallery Three is about Walt Disney during 1928-1940 and contains a small display about the Ink and Paint department which discusses the invention of color.\(^1\) The next gallery, from 1936-1938, has a few mentions of the Ink and Paint department with the move to the Burbank studio and includes interviews with workers in this department\(^2\) and Gallery Six discusses the Disney Strike.\(^3\) Through analyzing galleries three, four, and six, there is an understanding on how the museum viewed the Ink and Paint department and therefore how Disney viewed this department since the museum is about his life. These galleries tells the story about the innovation of color, not a story of how Disney was a gender pioneer, because that is how Disney would have seen the most important part of the Ink and Paint department and the museum controls the story about the innovation of color.

Founded in 2009, the Walt Disney Family Museum describes, preserves, and tells the story of Walt Disney’s life. This museum was started by his daughter, Diane Disney Miller and

the Walt Disney Family Foundation, not The Walt Disney Studios. A goal Miller tried to accomplish was to tell a story about her father as a person, revealing he was more than just the Disney name. Diane chose a museum to tell the story of her father and his legacy which was an important choice because of the implication of the word “museum”. When the public hears about a “museum”, they assume artifacts will be on display, will be educational, and will be unbiased. These ideas combined indicates that the Walt Disney Family Museum will act as an unbiased source of information and give the public the true story about the man who was Walt Disney. To distant themselves even more from the studio, the museum is in San Francisco and not in Los Angeles, however, there is still collaboration between these two entities that can be seen in labels, artifacts, and the giftshop which tell an overall story about Walt Disney, not about gender equality, but about paint color.

All museums have a mission statement defining the purpose of the collections, the exhibits, acquisitions, deaccessions, and a “voice” for the museum. This voice will be the story told and a way information is presented to the public. The mission statement of the Walt Disney Family Museum is “The Walt Disney Family Museum presents an inspirational journey through the life of Walter Elias Disney. Our mission is two-fold: to inform present and future generations about the man and, through his story, to inspire them to heed their imagination and persevere in pursuing their goals”. Everything in the museum somehow relates to Walt Disney through the labels and artifacts and how he would have viewed these aspects of his life. The labels of the

---

5 Rothstein, Edward. "The Walt Disney Family Museum Opens in San Francisco".
6 Rothstein, Edward. "The Walt Disney Family Museum Opens in San Francisco".
museum will be in the eyes of Disney and how he viewed the Ink and Paint department to fit with the mission statement, so there are inherent biases with the information presented.

On the second floor in Gallery 3, themed as the 1930s, is a display dedicated to the Ink and Paint department. This display is very small in comparison to the size of the room. The visitor first sees the back of the display which is a wall designed with a scene from the short *Flower and Trees*. *Flower and Trees* was the first short created fully in color which also won an academy award. Interestingly, the Ink and Paint department had to paint the entire short twice, the first time in black and white, and then the department wiped off the white and black paint and redid the short with colored paint. The museum is not emphasizing *Flower and Trees*, but instead lets the visitor know that this short and the Ink and Paint department go hand in hand. A video playing on a loop on the backside of the display contains clips of girls working in the Ink and Paint department. These clips all come from *The Reluctant Dragon*, released in 1940, which doesn’t fit with the overall decade of this display. The clips show the Ink and Paint department in the best light, but this film hired actresses to pretend to be the workers in this department, so it is a fake documentary. The museum, by playing this video of clips, is indicating this video is real and a source of information, even though the actual film is fake. The museum is selling a fake documentary as the real deal for this department.

---

9 Display. Gallery 3; *Color*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
11 Artifact Label. Gallery 3; *Flowers and Trees Cel setup*.
On the same back of the Ink and Paint display, there are “holes” in the wall to create little caves which visitors can look through. This emphasizes the importance of color to the studio instead of the fact that girls were doing this work. Each hole had a different paint jar with the color name facing out. The most popular one was the jar labeled “Pluto” which is the actual paint jar used to color in Pluto’s fur. This display isn’t about the female workers in this department, rather, as this display suggests, the color is the real star of the show.

One of the highlights and promotional pieces from this display was on the other side of the Flowers and Trees sign, containing many rows of paint jars on shelves. These paint jars are artifacts the girls would have used daily at work which represents the invention of color. The story of the Ink and Paint girls is closely tied to color because the invention of color can have its own story and limelight because of how innovative it was, but the girls cannot have their own story without the mention of color. This appears that color is the real story of the Ink and Paint department not how progressive the studio was for hiring girls to work. This display is very striking making it one of the most recognizable and is the common thread that ties together the museum, *The Reluctant Dragon*, promotional pieces, and the Ink and Paint book. On the other side of this display, next to the shelves of paint jars, is a label titled “Color” with four separate sections to the label. The first section is a summary of technicolor, then the other three sections are quotes, two from

---

13 Display. Gallery 3; *Color.*
14 Wall Text. Gallery 3; *Color*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
Disney and one from his wife Lillian\textsuperscript{15}, which indicates this display only focuses on the invention of color, not the department. This relates to the main label that says “…was a breakthrough Walt had been waiting for”.\textsuperscript{16} The words used by the museum to describe the Ink and Paint department is about how Disney was inventive and creative with color. Other included quotes on the label are “I had a black-and-white picture in the works called Flowers and Trees. But I just felt that color could do so much more for the cartoon medium, that it was worth doing over”.\textsuperscript{17} The museum focuses on Flowers and Trees being the first animated color short\textsuperscript{18}, but it doesn’t mention anything about how the girls had to redo the entire short in color after first painting and inking in black and white. When looking at the labels for this display, it is told in Disney’s voice, so he is telling the story of how he saw the department, which was through the invention and creativity of color.

This omission of the Ink and Paint department in artifact labels just generalizes the work of the girls as simply being an artist instead of taking in the complex nature of their job. Underneath the main display of the paint jars is another exhibit case with additional artifacts that relate to the Ink and Paint department and all of the credit given to these artifacts go to “Disney Studio Artist”. One of the artifacts is a cel setup from Flowers and Trees\textsuperscript{19} and a color key drawing with paint chips; the labels that correspond to these artifacts give credit to “Disney Studio Artist”.\textsuperscript{20} The visitor can assume that it was the Ink and Paint department who did this work because this art is placed in the department display,

\textsuperscript{15} Wall Text. Gallery 3; Color.
\textsuperscript{16} Wall Text. Gallery 3; Color.
\textsuperscript{17} Wall Text. Gallery 3; Color.
\textsuperscript{18} Wall Text. Gallery 3; Color.
\textsuperscript{19} Display. Gallery 3; Color.
\textsuperscript{20} Display. Gallery 3; Color.
even though this is not suggested on the label. “Disney Studio Artist” shows up multiple times throughout the museum\textsuperscript{21}, but the visitor does not make the connection that the Ink and Paint department worked on this cel. There are artifacts from \textit{Snow White} that the Ink and Paint department would have used such as a complete set up of the different layers that would have been photographed. Like the cel set up in the ink and paint display, the Ink and Paint department does not get credit for painting and inking the cel of \textit{Snow White}. The label for the cel set up of \textit{Flowers and Trees} says “has already been filmed in black and white when Walt Disney and Roy Disney decided to make it over in Technicolor. For this new edition, the studio… As color production continued, the artists began to produce color keys: animation drawings annotated to show which colors would be used in each area of the scene”.\textsuperscript{22} The museum is equating the work done and the invention of color with Disney, which matches the mission statement, but when talking about the actual tasks being done, there is a lack of gender rhetoric in the label. This slight omission about gender implies that Walt Disney did not see the work the girls were doing as important as other jobs in the studio such as background art or the storyboard department. In the Walt Disney Family Museum, the label’s that correlate with the work completed by the Ink and Paint department focuses more on the use of color, and not the people doing the work.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[22] Artifact Label. Gallery 3; \textit{Flowers and Trees Cel setup}.
\end{footnotes}
On the side of display, a label discusses the Ink and Paint department with three sections under the header for the label; one section is a summary of their work and the other two sections are quotes from Ruthie Thompson and Betty Kimball who worked in the Ink and Paint department.\textsuperscript{23} The summary about the Ink and Paint department states “Inking and painting the cels (celluloid sheets) traced from the animator’s drawings, was already an established part of cartoon production. With the advent of color, it became an even more exacting process”.\textsuperscript{24} The story the museum is selling about the department is the history of color in animation, not about how the studio was progressive with gender equality. The quote from Ruthie Thompson “[Inkers have] got to have a flowing hand. So, after I splattered and broke two or three pen points going the wrong direction on the pen, it was obvious that I wasn’t going to be an inker. So, the next night the supervisor came up to me and she says, ‘You know, honey, I think we’ll put you in painting’”.\textsuperscript{25} Choosing this quote emphasizes the idea that the department was accommodating to the specific talents of each individual worker. It was a skill that could be learned, or improved on, while the department helped the female workers find their talent. Thompson views herself as a worker, being an “inker” or a “painter”, not as an artist. The museum identifies her as a “painter”\textsuperscript{26}, so, their job labels are of their job descriptions. They had a job and could perform that job, as indicated by another quote from Betty Kimball “[In the] color department, they ground their own paints, and mixed them with glycerin so that they would stay moist long enough to finish what you were painting. It made matching the colors a little harder than just darkening the white or

\textsuperscript{23} Wall Text. Gallery 3; \textit{Inking and Painting}, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
\textsuperscript{24} Wall Text. Gallery 3; \textit{Inking and Painting}.
\textsuperscript{25} Wall Text. Gallery 3; \textit{Inking and Painting}.
\textsuperscript{26} Wall Text. Gallery 3; \textit{Inking and Painting}.
lightening the white for different cel levels. – BETTY KIMBALL, painter”. Kimball, like Thompson, is identified as a painter, not as an artist, so the museum can label her because they know what type of work she completed. These quotes suggest their work was difficult, which eliminates the myth that they were just “tracing”. This interview contradicts other labels in the museum that suggest these girls were artists. In the same display case, the cel set-up that can be assumed was done by the Ink and Paint department lists the contributor as “Disney Studio Artist”. Not even the museum knows which words to use to best describe the Ink and Paint department. It is a small step the museum is taking to get the actual workers voices into the display, but the museum doesn’t not know how to identify these girls, as artists or as painters, but there still needs to be the inclusion of color to keep with Disney’s voice of the museum.

This same label is also interactive where visitors can listen to interviews from two people who worked in the department. These interviews are from Dodie Roberts and Betty Kimball and listening to their stories creates nostalgia for a better time. Dodie Roberts’ interview is called “Working in Ink and Paint”. In this interview she talks about every day duties, including making paints. She called the job “wonderful… I loved every minute”. She even discusses “tea time” where Disney would come in smiling and would tell the girls to stop working and take a break. This makes it seem as if the girls wanted to work hard and that they had to be encouraged to take breaks. The museum is also playing up the nostalgia aspect of a bygone era when females would have tea in the middle of the day. Roberts talks about Disney in her interview, which matches with the museum’s mission statement. She said that “it was beautiful.

27 Wall Text. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting.
28 Artifact Label. Gallery 3; Flowers and Trees Cel setup.
30 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Dodie Roberts...
31 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Dodie Roberts...
Seeing all the color… he loved that paint lab". This suggests Disney appreciated the work the girls were doing and enjoyed spending time in the department, but more importantly, the role of nostalgia in these interviews was to paint Disney in a light that would make the visitors wish they could have met him. Betty Kimball’s interview was titled “On Mixing Paint”. In this interview she said the department “was a fun place to work” and they “ground their own paint”. This is a common theme in the other interview as well, saying how much “fun” it was to work there. This seems to the visitor that the girls did not actually work hard, or that their job wasn’t stressful, but was just “fun”, like the “fun factory”. Kimball contradicts this by saying there was “lots of problems with the colors”, which takes away some of the “fun” and mindless tasks that working in this department implies, but instead the girls had to be creative to fix the problems. She is one of the few people to directly address the gender separation in her interview. She calls other workers “the girls” and they were not allowed to go into animation department unless for a specific job but this “made it kinda fun” because the girls would still socialize with the male animators during lunch or after work. Even though she mentions the divide, she says it was a good thing because they liked having their own space. It’s also important to note that she calls other worker “girls” – this is how they saw themselves as well, it was just the rhetoric used during that time, by both males and females. The interviews seem to address two different topics about the fun of the department, along with the work, but both interviews relied on nostalgia to

---

32 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Dodie Roberts…
34 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Betty Kimball…
36 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Betty Kimball…
37 Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Betty Kimball…
enhance Disney’s charm, and to emphasize how much fun it was to work in the department, which implies they were happy in that department and happy with their work.

There is a contradiction with the importance of the Ink and Paint department in this museum. In the same section of the 1930s gallery, is a display and video about *The Three Little Pigs*, another very popular short with an even more popular song.\(^{38}\) The video contained images of Walt Disney and other artists playing the song as a demo to see how it would sound. Walt Disney was so aware of the studio’s innovations, he documented everything he felt was going to be important, even something as small as the planning of a song. Disney knew the work he was doing and how he portrayed himself would be important in the present, as well as the future, which is why it seems he documented everything. Comparing the Ink and Paint display to *The Three Little Pigs* it is weird that the Ink and Paint display doesn’t have any real documentation besides *The Reluctant Dragon* which is passed as real facts. Looking at what is on display for the Ink and Paint display, the paint jars, this is what Disney thought of as important. There is an omission of information regarding the Ink and Paint department; Disney saw the department as not worth documenting compared to other projects being done. This lack of documentation though helps to tell the story of Disney though his eyes and words which has inherited biases.

After leaving the Ink and Paint department display, Gallery 4 discusses a new adventure Walt Disney partook in from 1936-1938,\(^{39}\) the creation and building of the Burbank Studio. This part of the museum has many different interactive aspects but mainly focuses on interviews and videos of workers talking about the studio. One of the big names who gave an interview was

---

\(^{38}\) Watts, Steven. *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney...* Pg. 79.

Betty Kimball, who is mentioned multiple times throughout the museum. This video interview is very similar to her interviews in other parts of the museum; in this gallery, when she appears on the screen, under her name is the title of “painter” unlike other identifiers as “artist” or “storyboard artist”. The museum sees Kimball only as a painter for the studio and all her time there can be qualified into one word “painter”. In this repeated video about the Burbank Studio, there are clips of *The Reluctant Dragon* to show the Ink and Paint department. Once again, *The Reluctant Dragon* clip is being used as fact to describe this department, even though it is not a real documentary. There is only so much information the museum has regarding the Ink and Paint department, so sometimes clips (of *The Reluctant Dragon* and the interview with Kimball) are repeated in different sections to make it seem there is more information documented about the Ink and Paint department than actually exists.

There is minimal mentions of the Ink and Paint department throughout the rest of the museum which makes it seem the Ink and Paint department only did work that mattered in the 1930s, the time-period of that display, although the department continued to work on films. One other time the department was mentioned was in a flowchart from 1943 produced by the studio.

---

41 Display. Gallery 4; *Burbank*.
42 Display. Gallery 4; *Burbank*. 
to describe the process of a movie, starting with Walt Disney and ending with the public.\textsuperscript{43} It consists of many different sections showing that making a movie is a lengthy process. There is a subsection on the map for the Ink and Paint department that include jobs of “INKING…PAINT LAB… PAINTING… COLOR MODELS… SPECIAL TECHNIQUES…INK CHECK”.\textsuperscript{44} This flow chart is still a biased source because it was created by The Walt Disney Studios, but at least they acknowledge the work and tasks that made up the Ink and Paint department, however, it is still not as flashy as other exhibits in the museum. This flow chart acknowledges the Ink and Paint department and is a representation of how the studio understood the Ink and Paint department as a part of the “fun factory”, not as artists, or that it was influential in the long run of the movie. Although the department lasted until the 70s, the innovation of color in the 1930s was more important than the department.

Gallery Six, 1941 to 1945, includes a very small display about the Disney strike in 1941. This display seemed even smaller than the Ink and Paint display since not many artifacts were saved from the strike because it was such a sore spot for the studio. The museum paints the story of the strike by including Ink and Paint girls and placing the blame on them. This part of the museum starts with a label containing quotes from Walt and Roy Disney under the title of “THE TOUGHEST PERIOD IN MY WHOLE LIFE”.\textsuperscript{45} Displaying the strike through quotes, the

\textsuperscript{43} Wall Label. Gallery 4; Flow Chart, The Ropes at Disney’s, 1943, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.  
\textsuperscript{44} Wall Label. Gallery 4; Flow Chart, The Ropes at Disney’s, 1943...  
museum is allowing both sides to “speak” about this event, without the museum taking sides, but the overall story is how Disney would have viewed this event. The museum also calls the strike a “crisis” but then talks about a hero story with the studio being “newly strengthened” after this difficult time.\textsuperscript{46} The strike is displayed with actual photos from the strike; the main part of the display contains reproductions of picket signs the strikers would have used.\textsuperscript{47} It is surprising the museum does not have the actual picket signs on display which indicates the studio did not agree with the strike and did not want to remember it through the preservation of these artifacts. The museum quickly discusses the end of the strike with a label saying “The studio, saddled with harsh terms imposed by the federal mediator… The strike would long be remembered as a painful crisis in the studio history, and it left bitter divisions among former friends that would not be forgotten for many years”.\textsuperscript{48} It seems as if the museum is taking an unbiased side, but the words chosen to describe the protestors suggests they are the bad guys of the strike which changed the workers and the public’s perception of the studio being a “fun factory”.\textsuperscript{49} One of the most popular photos from this time-period is Art Babbitt leading a protest with females around him.\textsuperscript{50} These females can be assumed to be workers from the studio, which reinforces his quote used in this display as “And what I was asking for was a symbolic raise for the inkers and painters, something like two bucks. And, oh, all hell broke loose”.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{46} Wall Label. Gallery 6; \textit{The Toughest Period In My Whole Life}.
\textsuperscript{47} Display. Gallery 6; \textit{The Strike}, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
\textsuperscript{48} Wall Text. Gallery 6; \textit{The Strike Ends}, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
\textsuperscript{49} Watts, Steven. \textit{The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney…} Pg. 167.
\textsuperscript{50} Wall Picture. Gallery 6; \textit{Art Babbitt leading strikers outside Disney studio gate, 1941}, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
\textsuperscript{51} Display Label. Gallery 6; \textit{Eyewitnesses}, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
museum seems to be taking an unbiased stance on the strike with the inclusion of this quote from pro-strike leader Art Babbitt, but the museum is placing blame on Babbitt and the Ink and Paint department, therefore, this is a biased view of the strike. This portrays the Ink and Paint department in a bad light, which goes against everything Kimball said in a previous label about everybody loved working there;\(^\text{52}\) if everybody loved working there – why was there a strike? The museum does not answer this question but instead tells the story of how Disney and his supporters, such as Kimball, would have viewed the strike. This indicates a tone for her other interviews regarding loyalty to the Disney company, so she is very biased, which makes all her interviews in the museum biased as well. The strike changed the studio because Disney describes this time as “I have a case of the DDS. Disappointment and Disillusionment”.\(^\text{53}\) The museum takes a biased point painting Disney in a positive light, while strikers placed the blame on the Ink and Paint department, workers who already had very little voice in the studio.

A design, organizational, and educational tactic the museum uses is having large labels introduce each new section of the museum (such as the strike era). The bottom of these labels contains the dates and historical events that correlate to the dates.\(^\text{54}\) These facts are not just about events that happened in the studio like “1941 – The Reluctant Dragon opens in June, Dumbo

---

\(^\text{52}\) Interview. Gallery 3; Inking and Painting: Betty Kimball…

\(^\text{53}\) Wall Text. Gallery 6; “I have a case of the DDS: Disappointment and Disillusionment.”.

\(^\text{54}\) Wall Label. Gallery 6; “The Toughest Period In My Whole Life”.
in October”\textsuperscript{55}, but also world events such as “1943 – Casablanca wins the Academy Award for Best Picture / 1944- Franklin D. Roosevelt is reelected for a fourth term as President”\textsuperscript{56}

Including facts about Hollywood and world history equates the importance of Disney history with the world history and how all three histories influence each other. These facts also educate the public in reminding the visitor of how influential the studio was, how much influence Disney had on the world history, and vice versa. This also help build trust between the museum and the visitor because by adding these known facts (such as FDR being reelected) makes it seem other facts the museum is presenting about Walt Disney are true since they are next to real historical facts. This eventually aids the visitor to believe the story the museum is presenting about Walt Disney and his life.

When a guest goes to any Disney resort – Disneyland, Walt Disney World, or one abroad – after waiting in line and riding an attraction, the visitor finally exits through a gift shop, and the Walt Disney Family Museum is no different. After walking through the exhibits that end in the death of Walt Disney, the visitor exits the galleries through the museum gift shop. There are multiple products sold in the museum gift shop related to the Ink and Paint department. One of these products is an item that looks like a paint brush, but on closer inspection it is really a pencil engraved with “Walt Disney Family Museum”. It is hard not to see the similarities between a paint brush and the Ink and Paint department, but with this product, the museum is not overtly selling the department, instead it is selling an idea about the Ink and Paint department by selling the “tools” these girls would have used. It relates to their work, what they did and where the work was completed, but the Ink and Paint girls are not getting credit for the work or being part

\textsuperscript{55} Wall Label. Gallery 6; “The Toughest Period In My Whole Life.”

\textsuperscript{56} Wall Label. Gallery 6; “The Toughest Period In My Whole Life.”
of the department. This is a common theme with the other products for sale such as the postcards.

There are two different postcards related to the Ink and Paint department. One has “The Walt Disney Family Museum” on it with an art pallet, splotches of color, and a paint brush; the other postcard is a picture of the paint jar display, but with no words. These postcards represent diverse views the museum has on selling the Ink and Paint department. Regarding the first postcard, the museum is selling the idea that they have exclusive information about the Ink and Paint department giving the sense that only the museum can sell products relating to the Ink and Paint department. It sells the “tools”\textsuperscript{57} or symbols of the “tools”\textsuperscript{58} the department would have used, however, there is no relationship between the workers and the merchandise being sold. The museum does not find it necessary to include their name on the other postcard because the display of the paint jars is something only the museum has; the museum knows that people will recognize the display and relate it to the museum. Elitism is at play with this postcard, not to make the department elite, instead the museum marks its ownership about the Ink and Paint department through the postcard, which indicates the museum now controls the story of the Ink and Paint department.

The last piece of merchandise one can only purchase at the museum is a shirt. The shirt has a picture of Mickey Mouse holding a paint brush and “THE INK AND PAINT

---


\textsuperscript{58} Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint: The Women…} Pg. 118.
DEPARTMENT” underneath Mickey and is the only item a person can buy which includes the words “Ink and Paint Department”. The symbolism of Mickey contradicts the story the museum is selling about the Ink and Paint department. Yes, Mickey is holding a paint brush, but to be more representative of the workers in the department, it should have been Minnie Mouse on the shirt because it was a woman dominated department. This depiction appears that males did the work because Mickey is a male mouse holding the paint brush. The department is now being related to Mickey Mouse, while “A Trip Through Walt Disney Studios” related the girls to Snow White. This shirt is sold “exclusively” at the Walt Disney Family Museum which makes it seem like the museum owns the story of the department, because the museum is the only place where people can buy merchandise related to the department; for the person wearing the shirt, it creates a sense of them belonging to the museum. One of the employees at the museum talked about this shirt saying she enjoys going to Disneyland and seeing people wear the Ink and Paint shirts because then she knows those people visited the museum at one point.59 This shirt creates an idea of exclusiveness for the people who visit the museum, and it is encouraged by the museum workers. This “exclusiveness” of the department belongs and is owned by the museum; not the studio nor the actual people who worked in the department, but with the museum selling the shirt that is exclusive to the museum, the museum owns the story about the Ink and Paint department.

Books published by the Disney Company on a variety of topics are also sold in the gift shop. These books were the only parts of the museum gift shop that is sold and created by the Disney company. The book *Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation* was being sold in multiple areas of the gift shop. This book was recently published in September 2017 and contains a lot of information about the museum in the book; the gift shop is not just selling the book, but the book is acting as a promotional piece for the museum as well. Other books written by Johnson, books about the 9 Old Men, Andreas Deja, and other topics relating to the studio are also sold in the museum.\(^6^0\) It seems the majority of these books were published by the Disney company, except books that are about the exhibits such as “The Walt Disney Family Museum: The Man, The Magic, The Memories”.\(^6^1\) This indicates the studio approves of the books being sold in the museum gift shop. Even though these books did not correlate to the Ink and Paint department, it does show that even though the museum wants to be separate from the Disney Company, the Disney Company still has influence over what stories the museum can tell. These books literally tell the stories the Disney Company wants to be told. The stories the museum is telling about Walt Disney is the same story the Disney Company also sells, and it is shown in the books sold in the museum gift shop.

There are four banners hanging from the ceiling in the gift shop, each banner is a bright color and a symbol with “The Walt Disney Family Museum” written underneath it. There are no other colors besides the main background color and only one other shade of that color to help create the design. The symbols on the banner are a portrait of Walt Disney, a silhouette of a Disney Castle (looks like Sleepy Beauty Castle from Disneyland), Mickey Mouse, and an ink jar.

\(^6^0\) Gift Shop, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
with a paint brush\textsuperscript{62} which represents the Ink and Paint department. The museum is owning the Ink and Paint department because of the banner, the symbol on the banner, and the name of the museum right under the picture. The museum wants people to know that to experience this department, one can only find it at the museum.

When looking at the merchandise in the gift shop and the symbols of the Ink and Paint department, there is not an equal correlation between the amount of merchandise in the gift shop in relation to the representation of the Ink and Paint department on display in the museum. It doesn’t make sense that there would be so much merchandise and promotional pieces that relate to the Ink and Paint department when overall it took up such a small area of the museum. The display in the gallery was small, and after the strike display the department isn’t mentioned anymore. Even though the proportion of merchandise versus size of display are not equal, the museum creates a sense that it is only at the museum where a person can experience the Ink and Paint department and to remember the department, the gift shop was the only place to buy merchandise related to the Ink and Paint department.

The Walt Disney Family Museum tries to present an unbiased account of Walt Disney’s life and to separate itself from The Walt Disney Studios. The museum tells the story though Walt Disney’s eyes, so the information being told to the public is biased because it is how Disney would have seen these events, such as the inclusion of quotes from Walt Disney spread throughout the displays and museum labels, however, when reading the labels, some artifacts are on loan from The Walt Disney Studios. This isn’t the only overlap between the museum and the studio because in the gift shop there are images of characters owned by the studio, as well as books published by the Disney publishing company. Looking at the galleries, labels, displays,

\textsuperscript{62} Gift Shop, The Walt Disney Family Museum.
and the gift shop, it seems like the museum has some agency in “owning” the Ink and Paint department, but this ownership also relates to the studio, so it is more of a collaboration between these two entities to tell the story of Walt Disney. The story told by the museum regarding the Ink and Paint department is not about how Disney was progressive with gender equality, instead it is a story about the work and color innovation that was produced by the department, not of the actual people doing the work.
Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation was released on September 5th, 2017 by author Mindy Johnson. The book tells the history of the “women” who worked in the Walt Disney Studios from the 1920s through the 1980s. The main goal of this book was to dispel myths surrounding the department such as: the work the Ink and Paint girls were doing was easy, there was no room for advancement in the studio, and that it was a discriminatory place to work. These may be the myths the book is trying to eliminate, but by dispelling the myths, it heightens Walt Disney’s image by being a “gender pioneer”, even though when examining the films and the Walt Disney Family Museum, this is a relative new part of the story being told. This project focuses on the 1920s through the 1940s due to the massive change in the studio caused by WWII and the strike; even then, this takes up half the contents of the book. To prepare for the release, many social media sites promoted the book such as the Walt Disney Family Museum, Disney Publishing, the Disney Company, as well as fans of Disney who also shared the book on their personal pages. This book uses its status as being the first comprehensible account of female workers in the studio to create the revival story about this department focused on Walt being a “gender pioneer” even though when analyzing the book, this story is biased.

The book was marketed extensively through multiple promotional avenues to help sell nostalgia about the Ink and Paint department. Disney Books Instagram pages announced one of the first by promoting the book on July 14, 2017. The picture consisted of the book cover, with three other books with the caption “These 📚 are first to market at the Disney Publishing Worldwide booth during #D23Expo!”.

page because it was promoted with other books, so it acted more as a “teaser” for what was about to be published, which helped to make the public aware of this department. The same Instagram account posted again about a month later with just the cover of the book and the caption of “Filled with art and soul. ✒️🎨🖌🎞 Throwback to the inspirational women in @disneyanimation history with the book Ink & Paint #tbt”. The rhetoric of the post claims the “women” in the book were “inspirational”, highlighting the people who worked in this department, not the actual department or the work they completed. The use of the “throwback” implies nostalgia for the department, being in the past, and this book is helping to bring awareness to this department. Nostalgia is the focus of this promotional piece, which implies the role of nostalgia will play heavily in the book. Promotion for the book done by the publishing house of the book itself focused more on the cover and the feeling a person may get when they read the book. The Disney Books Instagram page is claiming ownership on the feeling of nostalgia created from the book.

The Walt Disney Family Museum had promoted the book the most which helped creating the nostalgia, but the museum gives Johnson the credit for department and therefore she gets to be the “truth holder” for the department. Johnson completed some research for the book at the museum and there is definitely a relationship between the museum and Johnson because the author also gave a talk on the book at the museum. The museum first promoted the book on August 14, calling it a “landmark book” and “pulls back the celluloid curtain on the nearly vanished world of ink pens, paintbrushes, pigments, pencils and tea”. On September 18th, 2017,

---


3 disneybooks. “Filled with art and soul”.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BXx6d-ZgVWI/?hl=en&taken-by=wdfmuseum.
a second post sells the upcoming talk Johnson was giving at the museum as “The pioneering women who brought hand-rendered animated stories to vibrant, multicolored life at The Walt Disney Studios and beyond”\(^5\). These posts are based on the advertisement of the book on the Disney publishing website\(^6\) indicating the two corporations are working together to make sure the right story is told. The Disney Publishing Company owns the book, but the museum can use the same words as the company to sell the same story to the public. There is a slight difference between the two posts, but they still have the same meaning. The post and the advertisement has a bit of a shock factor to draw people in by listing the tools the workers used, but then ending with “tea” to remind the readers that this was a different time-period where girls could work in a department dedicated to them and have “tea time”. The posts emphasizes this to draw up wonder and anticipation about the book which will encourage people to buy and read it. Another post from the museum gave information on a “behind the scenes” look at the preservation techniques of the paint jars being cleaned before going back on display.\(^7\) This web post was done on July 11\(^{th}\), 2017, right about the same time as the D23 expo and the first promotion of the book; the publicity of the book by the museum is the same promotion by the Disney Publishing Company which gives ownership of the book to both the museum and the publishing company.

There was also publicity for the Ink and Paint department done by the studio. The coincidence of this department being publicized at the same time as the book was being promoted was planned to introduce this department and to give a teaser of the department, so when the book came out, the department was already on the conscience of the consumer.


United States Postal Service released a set of stamps in July 2017, at the D23 Disney convention that “will celebrate the rich legacy of the Walt Disney Studio’s Ink & Paint Department by dedicating a sheet of 20 Forever stamps featuring 10 classic Disney Villains”. The stamp information sheet continued with “The Disney Ink & Paint artists, who hand crafted the cels from which these stamps were produced… Disney’s Ink & Paint Department helped create classic animated films. Its artists brought life to countless memorable characters, including many iconic Disney Villains. One of the first groups of its kind, Disney’s Ink & Paint Department was yet another stop on the road to creating an animated film”. This informational sheet acted as a promotion for the whole book and places the department in a context outside the studio to make it seem influential for the studio. This bit of history about the department is getting potential buyers of the book interested in the material and gives a slight introduction to the department so when the book comes out, people have already heard about the department and what to know more. All these promotions that relate to the Ink and Paint department is not just promoting the book, instead it was selling an idea and the revival story about the Ink and Paint department.

One of the last promotional pieces that was put out by the Disney company and was used in posts, websites, and YouTube, was a video narrated by Mindy Johnson released on September 30, 2017. The video begins with Johnson introducing herself as the author of the book while old-school jazz music plays in the background. This puts the viewer in the mindset

---


9 United States Postal Service. "Disney Studio's Ink & Paint Department…“.


12 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)".
of the 1930s and 1940s which was the height of this department and starts the feeling of nostalgia for the viewer through music. As the video cuts away from Johnson, the viewer sees a picture of Walt Disney by himself which creates the tone of the video that the work of these girls would not have been if Walt wasn’t there. Johnson describes his involvement with the Ink and Paint department as “Walt wanted to push boundaries in the world of animation” which matches the usual rhetoric that surrounds Walt by calling him an “inventor” and an entrepreneur, but then the video switches to talking about the workers saying, “the women went to work with the idea of color”. This places the work and invention of color in animation in the girl’s hands, when truly it was Walt Disney who wanted color; the video makes it seem the girls invented the idea of color. The video also included clips from The Reluctant Dragon, a fake documentary, indicating this is tangible evidence and a real representation of the girl’s work. This promotional video is very similar to past promotional pieces the studio produced in the 30s and 40s; this video was produced by the studio, so the story is biased as well.

Johnson appears to be a credible source of information, and the “truth holder” for this department. In the video, Johnson talks about her personal experience regarding the topic saying “I underestimated this topic. I thought it would be a charming book about the women and their roles in animation because that is what I believed in. But I couldn’t have been further from the truth”. The music then changes from jazz to something slower and has a more serious tone. This puts the viewer in the mindset that this is a serious topic, and the change in music brings attention to what Johnson is saying trying to dispel myths people believe about the studio.

---

13 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)"
14 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)"
15 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)"
16 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)"
17 BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)"
Johnson’s change in her attitude can be representative of the studio’s changing idea of the Ink and Paint department, but implies this book is not biased because Johnson “uncovered the truth” about these workers. The rhetoric used by Johnson matches the pictures of the females working and mixing paints by calling them “extraordinary” and “artists” “broke extraordinary ground and accomplished a level of artistry”\(^{18}\) which makes the viewer think the girls did much more than just “ink” or “paint”, that they were on the same level as Walt, being an inventor. Johnson also talks about how she framed the book by writing “in their voices so you get the opportunity to hear their voices and marvel at the artistry they accomplished”.\(^{19}\) The video promotes the idea that this book is not biased and has the complete truth about the “invisible work” of these workers. In the video Johnson equates the importance of this book through “film history, world history, pop culture history”.\(^{20}\) The video includes a history component because it places the department on a larger scale of the importance with American history. The video not only promotes the book, but the idea of the book being unbiased, and the idea that Johnson is the “truth-holder” for the story about the Ink and Paint department, even though the video was made, published, and promoted by the studio.

The purpose of this book, according to Mindy Johnson, was to tell a story, which inherently does not mean the story is true.\(^{21}\) A story is embellished, unlike a time-line with just facts, to be interesting and to keep the reader engaged. While the story can be based on facts, some liberties might be taken to make the story exciting. To tell the story of these girls to the masses, and to fully understand the culture and how “progressive” the studio was, one must understand the history to fully situate these workers in the studio, both in the history of the studio

\(^{18}\) BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)".  
\(^{19}\) BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)".  
\(^{20}\) BooklistOnline. "Book Trailer - Ink & Paint by Mindy Johnson (Disney Editions)".  
\(^{21}\) “Mindy Johnson.” Interview by author. September 30, 2017. Personal interview done at the museum.
and American history. As much as this book gives recognition to this department, it also acted as a history book. Since this book is the sole provider of all the information about the Ink and Paint department, it can be viewed as a “traveling museum” which brings up the idea that a museum is supposed to be unbiased and therefore this book is an unbiased source of information. The book contains pictures of artifacts from the department, pictures from the Walt Disney Family Museum, and “never before seen pictures”\(^22\) (these pictures were also in her talk in which she said that they were exclusive to the book) which makes the knowledge about this department exclusive to the book. Along with being a history book, the book acts as a traveling museum so the story being presented about the department is not biased in order for the reader to believe the information presented in the book.

Along with the history being presented in the book as “truth”, it is the history the Disney Company wants the common man to know. Of course, it would be impossible to include everything that happened in the world during the decades discussed in the book, but the omission some historical events is the “Distory” of the world according to Stephen M. Fjellman.\(^23\) “Distory” is the history that the Disney company tries to sell that aligns with the theme of happily ever after.\(^24\) Not only this, but the quick history review makes no radical claims about history, so then the public will agree with what Johnson is saying about the Ink and Paint department as well. At the beginning of each chapter decade is a picture that is supposed to represent all of history in that decade, also included are 4 bullet points under each year such as “1933 / Adolf Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany / FDR launches the New Deal and survives an assassination attempt / the first Nazi camp is established / Prohibition ends in the

\(^{24}\) Fjellman, Stephen M. Vinyl Leaves …Pg. 61.
It is nearly impossible to account for everything that had happened in 365 days into four bullet points, so a lot of events are left out, but these are the overall points the studio wants the public to know regarding this particular year. What is even more interesting, in 40 bullet points of the 1930s only 8 of them relate to women’s history even though it is supposed to tell “herstory” in the book. There is a disconnect between the topic of the book and these historical bullet points because the book is supposed to be about females in the studio, but yet there are few historical facts relating to women. These bullet points also are very short, most of them not even complete sentences, very similar to what a museum would do providing short information on a label. The Walt Disney Family Museum also does this, which makes this comparison between this book and the museum stronger. Johnson is using these bullet points to emphasize the museum aspect of the book, but also equating that Disney history is just as important as these major milestones that happened around the world. It puts the history of the studio on the same caliber as world history.

Johnson used the book to write women into the history of animation to dispel myths about these workers. This is the surface level goal of this book, but by controlling this story, Johnson, along with the publishing company, has the power to rewrite history because they are now seen as the ultimate truth-holders for the Ink and Paint department. The common phrase of “the winners write history” plays an important role in the telling of the Ink and Paint department.

---

26 “Mindy Johnson.” Interview by author.
27 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 30.
because the people who contributed to the book, Mindy Johnson and the Disney publishing company, control the stories being presented.

This is a large coffee table style book with 384 pages of quotes, pictures, research, and history. There are three sections of the book: the beginning history of animation, the studio through decades, and ending with “Preservation: Retaining the Artistry”\(^{29}\). The first section of the book is called “Beginnings: An Invisible History; Celluloid Beginnings; The Women of Walt’s World”.\(^{30}\) This section tells the history of Disney and the world he grew up in to help drive home the point that what Walt was accomplishing in his studio was revolutionary and different. This also helps to set the stage for the decade introduction and acts as a museum guide, but actually Disney is acting as the museum guide through the studio’s history. The beginning of the book also includes an article written in 1949 by Disney called “What I know about Girls” which discusses what he has learned about girls after having daughters.\(^{31}\) This book also tries to sell itself as a history book, through the bullet points in the beginning of each section, author bias, and titles of each section. The beginning of the book is called “Beginnings” and is dedicated to the beginning of animation history, the world Walt Disney was going to change. These sections are titled “An Invisible History”, “Celluloid Beginnings”, and “The Women of Walt’s World”, setting up the book to be centered around Walt Disney.

The book wants to tell the story in the girl’s voices, but it starts with Disney’s voice to signify it is his story that is being told. The section of the book about the decades is like a museum similar to the layout of Walt Disney Family Museum by using quotes from Walt Disney in museum informational labels. The beginning of each chapter decade contains a two-page

\(\text{Johnson, Mindy. }\text{Ink & Paint… Pg. 5.}\)
\(\text{Johnson, Mindy. }\text{Ink & Paint… Pg. 10.}\)
\(\text{Johnson, Mindy. }\text{Ink & Paint… Pg. 8.}\)
spread with the decade on the left page along with “important” dates of historical events, not just at the studio.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink \& Paint}… Pg. 34.} This helps the reader transition into the new decade they are about to read. This is very similar to a large label a museum might use to transition the visitor at the museum, like what the Walt Disney Family Museum does.\footnote{Wall Label. Gallery 6; \textit{“The Toughest Period In My Whole Life”}.} Of course, more things happened during the world besides the events highlighted in the book, but the dates and historical events chosen show advancements made by women such as “1925: Performer Josephine Baker becomes a global sensation” or “1928: Amelia Earhart becomes the first women to fly across the Atlantic Ocean”.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink \& Paint}… Pg. 34.} Having the book separated by decades helps the reader physically move through history to see the supposed progress the Ink and Paint has made in history and in the studio.

The 1920s were a significant time in Disney history because that is when the company released the first Mickey Mouse short which set the foundation for the studio. The 1920s section is one of the shortest chapters with the titles “Kingswells Beginnings” and “Hyperion Horizons”.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink \& Paint}… Pg. 5.} Included are four bullet points of historical information for each year during the 1920s. Naturally, a lot of information is missing, and Johnson specifically chose these 40 points for a reason; however, only 10 deals with women in history and not all those points are positive. A few points are ‘Women vote in the United States for the first time” along with “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire kills 146 women and children”.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink \& Paint}… Pg. 34.} There seems to be a broad range of events and it appears Johnson is being unbiased and only reporting historical facts. These bullet points do not make any big statements about history, but it is the history that most people would know, so it is a way for Johnson to show her knowledge about history which makes the reader
trust her in the retelling of the story about the Ink and Paint department. The next page gives a little more information about the decade, especially women’s history, to set the time-period that is going to be talked about and ends with the very last sentence about an event at the studio such as “In 1923, a young Animator named Walt Disney made his way to California”. Instead of wondering about the history on a national level, the reader is placed into the mindset of Walt Disney, and his history, which goes against the idea that this book is about the women of the studio.

The chapter on the 1930s is the longest in the book with 5 different subsections, but still includes 40 points to recount everything that happened in worlds history during the 1930s. The subsections in this chapter includes titles of “Hyperion Heydays”, “Assembly Line Approach”, “World of Ink and Paint”, “The Fairest One of All”, and “Feature Film Expansion”. Looking at the table of contents, the 1930s was a busy time of the studio with a lot of new developments as discussed in the book. This helps to place females in the studio, instead of just being in the Ink and Paint department. Including every aspect of the studio during the 30s, it seems females were not only everywhere but had a part in everything as well. The 1930s were also known as “The Great Depression”, so one would think that the 40 bullet points would represent that tone, but this information is omitted. Information in the summary section of history includes events like “Amelia Earhart becomes the first women to fly solo across the Atlantic”, “Social Security is enacted in the United States”, and “The Berlin Olympics are held in Nazi Germany”. Many more things happened during this time, especially with the New Deal, but by only focusing on the positive events during this time-period, Johnson is portraying a “Distory” of this decade.

37 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 35.
38 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 5.
39 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 62.
40 Fjellman, Stephen M. Vinyl Leaves …Pg. 61.
Once again, the last sentence of this two-page, historical summary spread reads “in 1937, the animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* changed history”. This makes it seem like all the 40 points listed on the other page doesn’t matter as much as the film *Snow White* because that is something that changed the history of the studio and animation forever.

The 1940s have as many sections as many other decades represented in the book, along with the 40 bullet points about history and follows the same format as the prior two decades mentioned. The sections for the 1940s include titles of “Burbank Beginnings”, “The War Years”, and “Rebuilding”. At the end of the reviews of the 1940s, the summary states, “In 1941, the Walt Disney Studios went to war”. The briefness and directness of this statement suggests this was a serious time for the studio, including the war and the strike. The “war” can be thought of as World War II, but it also suggests the studio went to war on itself, meaning the strike. Even though there are many quotes about Walt saying this was the hardest and most challenging time of his life, there is still a tinge of hope in the titles. Interestingly, the strike does not get its own section even though this event drastically changed the studio. Like in the Walt Disney Family Museum, the strike is glossed over because it didn’t end the way Walt wanted it to, so this book tells history the way that the studio wants it told.

Past the preservation, and after the story is told, the final part of the book is six pages of headshots, 20 per page, of every single woman who worked in the studio from the beginning to the 1980s. The layout is simple which includes a picture, their name under the picture,

---

41 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 63.
42 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 63.
43 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 171.
44 Wall Label. Gallery 6; “The Toughest Period In My Whole Life”.

sometimes their full name under their name, the years they worked, and the jobs they held at the studio.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint}… Pg. 366.} There isn’t even an introduction page, or a label, besides in the top left corner with the simple word of “artists”. This is like a yearbook of sorts which suggests the idea that they needed to be taught, it was a school, and the idea of them being girls. Rewriting history with a women’s perspective gives the girls and the work they completed the recognition and acknowledgment of their presence in the studio. This contradicts other pictures in the parts of the book where the identity of the worker is unknown.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint}… Pg. 86.} This contradiction also sheds light that this compilation of workers may not be complete and is still growing to include an online database as more workers become known.\footnote{“Mindy Johnson.” Interview by author.} This part also seems unusual to the public because this section is more worried about showing everyone at the studio, and the impressive nature of how many females worked at the studio. Closely reading the information under the pictures, the reader learns they are not just inkers and painters, but photographers, voice actors, story artists, and secretaries who worked in the studio. Ending the book on this note indicates the book isn’t just about the Ink and Paint department, instead the words “ink and paint” is meant to encapsulate ALL females at the studio, instead of this one specific department.

The rhetoric used in the book enforces the idea that the girls themselves, just like the invention of color, were extraordinary. The quotes Johnson chose for this book indicate it is the girls using this rhetoric with the inclusion of some quotes, but Johnson explicitly chose these
quotes that matched the rhetoric of her book, which creates the story of innovation and expertise of the workers. At the beginning of the book, Johnson uses powerful words such as “extraordinary”, for example “as a result of this limited sense of history, the contributions of many extraordinary women have been generally overlooked, marginalized, or outright omitted from our collective history”. Choosing words of “extraordinary” and “contributions” puts the reader in the mindset of these women being important through their work and their presence in the studio which is how the reader will experience the story in the book. The book also includes quotes from people who worked in the department such as Grace Godino, who was a painter, and a live action model as well “even though as artists, we had to subdue individual talents for the work itself, we sort of felt like since we were cogs in this wheel, that it was worthwhile”. The words “artist” and “talent” complement each other and they are broad terms to describe all her coworkers, not just herself. Godino sees herself, and all workers in the department, as artists which goes against the idea that their work was simple. This is the opposite of another word commonly used before the invention of color which was “blackening”. Walt Disney used this word to describe the beginnings of the department “With the addition of many of his Kansas City ‘gang’ of Animators, Walt quickly expanded his ‘blackening’ forces”. This word was used before there was an Ink and Paint department, because the only colors these girls used on the cels were shades of grey, white, and black. Johnson uses this word to acknowledge the change in work they were doing was not because of their talent, or Walt Disney’s progressive nature, but this change happened because of color. The use of color had the power to take the job from

48 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 10.
49 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 309.
51 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 48.
52 Artifact Label. Gallery 3; *Flowers and Trees Cel setup*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.
something simple to something creative. The rhetoric not only tried to increase the status of the Ink and Paint girls from just “helpers” but equates the female’s success with the invention of color. The book places emphasis on the innovation of color, which would be something Walt Disney cared more about than being progressive, so the underlying talk in the book about the Ink and Paint department is not about the work the girls were doing in this department, but instead the power of color. When the book talks about the girl’s skill and talent, it’s with undertones alluding back to color, as if it is the color itself that gives the girls talent.

The pictures in the book provide a very useful tool in telling the story of the Ink and Paint department by making the story seem realistic, instead of Johnson’s own biases. These pictures come from a variety of sources – movies, promotional pieces, historical pictures, and artifacts. The reader can just look at the picture and understand the story being told. The pictures include the workers, what their day may look like, as well as the entire process of inking and painting for a film. They bring focus to the work the women were doing, not specifically the girls.\footnote{Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint…} Pg. 87.} It feels like the work is more important than the actual person doing the work. All the pictures play an important role in making the book act as a museum, as an unbiased source, even though Johnson hand-picked each of the photographs in this book to emphasize the story being told about these workers. The pictures on the dust jacket immediately sets the stage for how the reader is going to perceive the rest of the book. The front cover shows two female workers, one painting and one holding the paint containers, while
painting a sign to the studio, similar to other promotional pieces done for the studio seen on page 181\textsuperscript{54}, so the picture that is supposed to represent all of the Ink and Paint department isn’t even real. The impression this cover photograph conveys is that young, attractive, nice girls worked in this department making things pretty. Another interesting aspect of this photo is that it is in black and white, besides the paint jars that are being used. This brings focus to the actual color, not the work the girls are performing, which is a common theme throughout the book in how this department is presented. The back cover of the dust jacket depicts the paint jars from the Walt Disney Family Museum, showing how striking it is when all the colors are in order (ROY G BIV). Once again, the focus is on the color of the paint, not the workers. Also, since the very last picture is of a museum display, implies that this department, even though getting recognition now, is from the past and belongs in a museum. There are not many pictures from the department in the beginning of the book because the department was not developed, but also because it wasn’t seen as important.\textsuperscript{55} There is a hole in history that pictures cannot fill, and with the studio not documenting these workers, implies that the girls themselves weren’t important, instead their work was more important.

Throughout the book, the pictures helped tell the story of the Ink and Paint department, and much like a museum, some have labels describing the photograph. Page 68 has a picture of the

\textsuperscript{54} Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint}… Pg. 181.

\textsuperscript{55} Johnson, Mindy. \textit{Ink & Paint}… Pg. 55; 107.
workers of the department with the description “The studio’s Tracing and Painting department housed in the refurbished original Hyperion building, circa 1931”. The way that the photo was taken, as well as the label description, focuses on the work being done, not the actual workers. Identifying as “Tracing and Painting” also seems to diminish their work. The book was trying to get away from the stereotype and myth that the only thing these girls did was to trace someone else’s work, so by including this picture seems to support the myth. Another example where a photo focuses on the work instead of the woman is on page 70 with the label “Painter Dot Powers helps herself to the black, white, and gray paints needed to complete the Mickey Mouse short films created at Disney Studios in 1931. Note: her dress is made from Mickey and Minnie Mouse fabric”. The label is causing the reader to notice how she is dressed over the actual work she is doing, and even then, her work coincides with the paints she is using. This photo also seems very staged because of the amount of work it would require to take a photo during this time-period, the photo would have to act as multiple promotion pieces to make taking a picture worth the hassle. This one photo is selling the idea of hard work, girls in the department, Disney merchandise, and the idea that whoever worked at the studio loved that place and even want to wear representations on

56 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 68.
57 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 68.
58 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 70.
their backs. The girls, even in a promotional piece, must always be cognizant on how they look and how they represent the Disney brand. The label on page 86 describes the picture perfectly because it shows a woman in front of a door that said, “Inking and Painting Department” and the label is “Unidentified Ink and Paint artist at the entrance of Walt Disney Studios on Hyperion Avenue, 1936”. Johnson is attempting to give recognition to the people who worked in the studio, the picture contradicts the purpose of the book because the girl has no recognition of a name given to her. Instead all her recognition is based on her looks, so the picture is more focused on her looks now, instead of her name. The label for photograph found on page 118 “Various tools utilized by the Inkers and Painters at Disney Studio”. This is like a museum label because it is short and describes exactly what the viewer is seeing. The rhetoric of the word “tool” suggests the girls are greater than an artist. “Tools” seems to bring up connotations of a male dominated word, so by using it to describe what the girls would use on an everyday basis, emphasizes the fact that the girls are working in a male dominated world, but the Ink and Paint department had to adapt to a male dominated world and they were able to change up this world with their “feminine touch”. The labels used for the pictures in the book help emphasize the museum aspects in this book and the information on the labels is the ultimate truth about these pictures.

59 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 86.
60 Johnson, Mindy. *Ink & Paint*… Pg. 118.
The book also includes pictures of activities the girls would participate in during their work day. These pictures indicate this was part of their everyday life, and these activities were normal, but they are staged because in this time-period to capture a moment it had to be planned, so the pictures create and promote a feeling of nostalgia. One of the activities the book suggests all girls took a part in was buying ice-cream. The label of a picture of Kae Sumner reads “Ink and Paint girls enjoy ice-cream on a hot day… Kae Sumner purchases a cool treat from George, the ice cream man”.61 This creates nostalgia for the reader, wanting to partake in this fun activity during the work day. The use of the word “girls” also increases this nostalgia for the reader. Seeing this photo reminds us about our summer breaks, before we needed jobs, and deciding which flavor of ice cream we would eat was the hardest decision we had to make. The use of “girls” and “ice cream” makes us equate those past summertime feelings to this photo, which makes the reader think working in this department was no different than a summer break. Another activity the girls participated in outside of painting and inking was “tea time”.62 The idea of tea time is in the promotional paragraph and was one of the most talked about things in these promotional pieces because it has this feeling of nostalgia as well. Tea time is depicted in a two-page spread, with multiple pictures showing how this event would have looked. The label for this spread on page 124-125 is “Ink and Paint artists enjoyed Tea time twice a day at the studio. Occasionally, Hazel

---

61 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 82.
62 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 124.
Sewell invited the girls to swim in Walt’s pool at his Working Way home to celebrate the completion of a short film.”63 This photo spread is like a scrapbook because of the layout of the photos which creates a sense of nostalgia. Items preserved in scrapbooks are usually of happy, fun times, which is how Johnson is portraying tea time. The reader is looking at this department with nostalgia and the pictures and the layout promotes this idea, even though this feeling of nostalgia does not encompass the truth of this time-period.

Additionally, Johnson includes pictures that do not pertain to the workers of the Ink and Paint department, instead the pictures place the women in the larger context of history. Throughout the book, as an introduction to the new decade, there is a historical photograph that is recognizable to the reader such as the photograph of a mother during the depression holding her child64, which is one of the most recognizable photos during the 1930s, or women voting in the 1920s.65 Including a historical photograph to introduce the decade places the girls story in the department on a larger scale in history. It also makes it seem less biased and more like a museum because the book contains photos from history that did not occur in the studio. Along with these introductory photos, when a project was discussed, such as the film Snow White, the majority of the pictures in that section was of the actual work, the cels and the characters, not of the workers.66 This indicates the work the girls were doing was on a larger scale in the studio, and if they didn’t work, there wouldn’t be these final cels. These photographs in these sections are more focused

63Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint... Pg. 124-125.
64 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint... Pg. 35.
65 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint... Pg. 63.
66 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint... Pg. 133; 139.
on the actual product these girls produced, not on the workers themselves, which is a continued theme throughout this book.

To understand where these biases came from in the book, one must look to the author, made possible through her presentation at the Walt Disney Family Museum. Johnson said that she had worked for Disney for 20 years, but now does independent work to “dispel myths” about the studio. When she began this project, she didn’t have anything to prove writing about this forgotten department, instead she wanted to tell a story for the masses. To conduct her research, Johnson had access to and had contacts with the Animation Research Library and the Disney Archives, under the control of the studio. Johnson having access to exclusive parts of the studio, she had the approval from the studio to use the pictures, in both the book and the presentation to tell the story the studio agrees with. Although the book was written by a person who does not work for the Disney company, the company sought her out to see if she had any ideas for new book that could be published and sponsored by the company. This book prides itself on being the only comprehensible source of information about females in the studios, however when reading and analyzing this book, there are some biases which brings into question – is this even the real story about the department or is this the story that Disney wants to sell to the public. Like the museum where the labels are primarily quotes from Walt Disney, the story still belongs the company even though it seems to come from an unbiased source.

The Walt Disney Family Museum plans lectures that supports the mission statement of the museum, and one of these talks was given by Mindy Johnson about the Ink and Paint department. The studio does have control over the kind of talks the museum puts on and will even cancel events if the person giving the talk is not “authorized” by the Disney company. The

---

67 “Mindy Johnson.” Interview by author.
68 “Mindy Johnson.” Interview by author.
museum is not run by the Disney Company, however, because of their close relationship and with keeping the “Disney image” alive, the studio wants to control how the story (even about Walt Disney) is being told through authorized people. These people then become the sole holders, and they are the ones responsible of sharing the “truth” about Walt and the company, so by Johnson giving a talk at the museum, shows she is a member of this class of truth holders for the Disney company, and coincidentally this book holds the “truth” that the Disney company wants out in the world.

While waiting in line for the lecture, I spoke with a volunteer and she mentioned the talk was sold out, and some decedents of the Ink and Paint girls would be in the audience as well, like the nephew of Dot Smith (the head coordinator of the paint lab), so the talk was going to be a hit. As I was looking round, I noticed there was only 11 or 12 people in line, 2 of those people were wearing Ink and Paint shirts sold in the museum gift shop. This is another example of how the line between the museum and the studio is very blurry with the museum putting on the talk, people wearing the shirt the museum sells, but it is a presentation about the book published by the Disney Company which seems more of a collaboration between these two entities. Once inside the theater room, no pictures or videos were allowed which helped the audience feel they were “exclusive” and different from the public because they could see clips and pictures in the talk that no one had ever seen before. I was able to get one picture of the introductory slide with the title of the presentation, the author, and the cover of the book. The title of the presentation was “The WOMEN Who transformed Walt Disney’s Animation: With Author/Historian MINDY
The rhetoric of the title of the presentation gives an idea of what is approved by the studio. The studio, through Johnson, wants to stress the idea that women were influential and changers and that their voice mattered, both in the studio back then, but also now in present day. Even though it may not have seemed like it back then, the public can only appreciate this story once history has proven they were “transformative” and without girls, the studio wouldn’t have been the same.

After an introduction by the education coordinator, Johnson began her talk stating the Ink and Paint department was an “incredible story” and then went straight into talking about Walt being an “extraordinary gentlemen” and the goal of the project which was to balance history. It was not just a book, but by describing it as a “project” implies the topic and her book is far greater than what a book can contain, and that it will make a mark in “rewriting history”. Beginning the talk with the story, but more importantly Walt, places the whole presentation and what we are going to hear about the Ink and Paint department in the eyes of Walt. The talk followed very closely to the layout of the book beginning with “The Women of Walt’s World” which included his teacher and family members that led him to being “progressive” in his own studio and view of women; it’s not just a book about the department, but it is also about Walt Disney and how he was “progressive”. This is good promotion for the company and telling the story of Disney they want out to the public.

The talk continued with tasks that females were the first to complete in the studio. The presentation showed a photo of Sewell, the first women to oversee a department in animation, never seen by the public. This makes the public trust Johnson, because it is through her that we

69 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
70 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
71 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
72 Johnson, Mindy. Ink & Paint… Pg. 56.
may become members of this exclusive party that knows a little more about the Ink and Paint department, making us trust Johnson with the truth of the studio, because it seems like she is the absolute truth holder of this department. The audience’s reaction to the presentation also enabled this idea of Johnson being the ultimate truth holder because when Johnson was talking about Margret Winkler she said we “wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for her” and the audience gasped. The audience (representing the public) is trusting Johnson with knowing the facts of this department. Johnson doesn’t just talk about the Ink and Paint department, but instead focusses more on Walt’s life, his relationship with Lillian Bounds (his wife), “family lore” about Walt, and that the women of the department were loyal when other workers were leaving the studio. She is painting a picture of Walt Disney appearing he was a good guy and that the women enjoyed working for him and felt loyal to him as well, and without them there wouldn’t be Mickey Mouse. Johnson kept these influential moments of animation history in the talk to prove to the audience that the women had a lot of say in the studio, keeping with the theme that they “transformed” the studio under the guidance of Walt.

Another interesting part of the talk was how Minnie came to represent the females in the studio. Lillian wanted a female counterpart for Mickey Mouse which was why Minnie was created. Johnson, however, was using Lillian to represent all the women of the Ink and Paint department because Lillian started at the company as an Ink and Paint girl. Johnson said that without Minnie, Mickey wouldn’t have half his charm, and now Minnie represents the work the women in the studio did, making the work the men did look better, but they will never be the shining star. Very much like the work in Ink and Paint department, drawing was half of the job

---

73 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".  
74 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".  
75 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
credited to the animators, but it was the inkers and painters who made the drawings look good. Johnson is trying to rewrite the history of animating and the male influence by including a “women’s touch” anywhere she sees fit, which is helping her goal to rewrite history. On the other hand, she also contradicts herself with elevating Disney by saying he voiced Minnie at first. Johnson tries to argue that women were influential in the studio, but everything was controlled by Disney, and even though Minnie is female, she is still controlled by a man, very much like the Ink and Paint department.

Still continuing the theme of rewriting women into the big moments of history, she talked about the “strong presence of women” at the Hyperion Studio and the importance of *Flowers and Trees*. She discusses the main reason *Flowers and Trees* won an award was because of its color, and because women applied the color, it was more of a women’s award. Johnson is trying to give credit to the girls and make their work seem more important than the animating. Going off “big moments” that the women participated in, Johnson said the new studio at Burbank is state of the art because it was new in 1935, but these big moments needed a “women’s touch”. Johnson then talked about how many “firsts” happened at this building such as the first female story artist, and the first studio with a library, and other positions that girls filled in the studio. Even though this part of the presentation was supposed to be about how women contributed the “firsts” to a “feminine” studio, it really was about how Walt built a place so females could advance in this building. Once again, the women were not the focus, instead it was about how Disney was progressive. Along with a new studio and Walt’s progressiveness, Johnson equated the invention of color animation with this advancement as well, but it wasn’t just about color but

---

76 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
77 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
78 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
79 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
also the women who used the color. According to Johnson, a female worker studied to become a chemist and helped the studio create a “superior” paint that cannot be compared to other commercial paints.\(^80\) Even though Johnson didn’t directly say it, its implied that the paints were superior because of the woman chemist who created them. Likewise, highlighting a woman chemist goes back to the theme of the book and the presentation dispelling the myth that these women workers were more than just “tracers”.\(^81\) According to Johnson, the women who created the paint also designed formulas for the paint to be the same every time they created it “not Betty Crocker kitchen, but Marie Curie’s label”.\(^82\) It is interesting that Johnson made this comparison because referring to the kitchen is a direct reference to traditional gender roles these girls were expected to participate in during this time; comparing them to Marie Curie places their status to that of an inventor, not an artist. The idea of formulas is very similar to a recipe a person might use to make food. Johnson is trying to dispel myths of this place being progressive with gender, and how these jobs was supposed to elevate the status of the female workers; the underlying context is that these girls were workers, but their traditional gender roles were always present even in their work life.

The presentation then took a turn, going away from the idea of how great these girl workers were to a new status, the role of an inventor. There were multiple new techniques, supposedly designed by women (according to Johnson) and that it was through the roles of “inventor” that these women received prestige in the studio. All their inventing still had to be about color and color exploration to figure out the best way to make it work to elevate Disney’s name even larger than what it already was at the time. This exploration led to advancements in

\(^{80}\) Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
\(^{81}\) Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
\(^{82}\) Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
films such as a real-life complexion for Snow White, and a believable quality for the Blue Fairy in *Pinocchio*. These films were only testing the water with what color could do, and Johnson continued by saying that Fantasia was “truly a women’s film” because the translucent paint needed for the film was developed by “ladies”. This implied this movie would have been nothing without women, but Johnson didn’t really talk about the individual girls who created the techniques for the color but grouped them all together as one entity. This goes against the goal of Johnson’s book with bringing light to the individual girls, but instead highlighted the department and the innovations of the department. In addition to creating color, other innovations she claimed the girls created was a hand lotion so the cels would not be stained by the grease from commercial lotions. This is a combination of two very domestic roles, beauty and color, the girls were participating in. So even though Johnson was trying to highlight how the girls were inventors, one cannot separate how their inventions were also linked to gendered tasks.

The presentation continued the rest of the hour with slight mention of the Xerox machine during the 1960s and the 1970s, but at the end of the talk she stated, “we owe so much to Walt Disney” because he was “ahead of the curve”, “highly progressive”, “provided a safe and comfortable environment”, and “he sought out women”. Johnson started the presentation with mentioning Walt Disney and ended with Walt Disney, to make it seem like everything these women did was because of him, and he should get the credit overall for these accomplishments and allowing a place where these girls can be inventors. What was alarming though, was Johnson’s goal to tell “herstory” of animation by writing women into the history of animation.

---

83 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
84 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
85 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
86 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
87 Johnson, Mindy. "The Women Who Transformed Walt Disney's Animation".
by making it seem that Walt Disney was a gender pioneer because girls worked in the
department, and this is believable because of the way Johnson sells herself as a historian.

*Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney Animation* by Mindy Johnson is a coffee table
book that discusses the role of “women” in the Walt Disney Studios from the 1920s through the
1980s. Along the way she places this topic in the context of American history, world history, and
animation history trying to “dispel myths” of the studio, the Ink and Paint girls, other people in
the studio, and Walt himself. She sees the Ink and Paint department as a way to rewrite females
into the history that forgot them. This book was published by the Disney Publishing Company
which gave Johnson access to exclusive photos and interviews to tell the story of the
progressiveness of the studio by having girls work for the studio. This idea of Johnson being the
truth holder for the Ink and Paint department and stressing that she is a “historian” makes the
public believe what she is saying about the department. There are also similarities with this book
to a museum implying the idea that this book is an unbiased source of information. This is the
first book on the market about the Ink and Paint department, it is the story the studio helped to
shape and approved of told through an unbiased source, even though when looking at the
pictures, quotes, and who sponsored the book it is not unbiased at all. The book is rewriting
women into the Disney history and making the studio seem progressive during the 1920s-1940s,
and this story will continue to be the one told because it has the support of the studio and seems
believable though the “unbiased” eyes of the Walt Disney Family Museum and Johnson.
Conclusion

The Walt Disney Studios did not see itself as progressive during the 1920s through the 1940s even though this is the story being presented in modern day representing Walt Disney as a pioneer for gender equality. The films produced during the 1930s and the 1940s including “A Trip Through the Walt Disney Studios”, and The Reluctant Dragon tells the story of how the studio saw the Ink and Paint department as a commodity that could bring in money or recognition to the studio. The Walt Disney Family Museum can control the story about the Ink and Paint department because it controls the evidence, or artifacts, that were preserved from this time-period and are on display as education for the public. The public assumes the museum will be unbiased and truthful, because that is what a museum should be, but the Walt Disney Family Museum works closely with the Walt Disney Studio to tell a story about Walt Disney being an innovator during his life. The museum understands the Ink and Paint department through Walt’s eyes, which is how the public will perceive the “exclusive” story about the department presented in this museum. The final section of this project is about a book that tries to rewrite history in Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation. Once again, this book is attempting to retell history through biases. These three entities of this project all tell different stories about the Ink and Paint department; however, they work together to give a viewpoint on how the Disney Studio understood the Ink and Paint girls from the 1920s through the 1940s. The studio, and subsequently Walt Disney, didn’t regard themselves as progressive by hiring female workers, instead they cared more about the use of color and innovation in animation. It was the history of color that was more important to the Disney Studio, and the history of color can survive without the mention of the Ink and Paint girls, but the promotional pieces, the museum, and the book when looking at all three entities, implies that the girls work is closely tied to color.
This project just scratched the surface with the idea of who has access to knowing and rewriting history and how this leads to telling stories to the public. This project can be expanded to include later decades instead of stopping at the 1940s. The Walt Disney Family Museum time-period is through the 1960s, so it would have been interesting to include the war years and more about the shift in the Disney Studio. Like the book, this project can be expanded to the inclusion of other females in the studio such as Mary Blair or Retta Scott and compare their experiences to the Ink and Paint department. To include a more up-to-date comparison, expanding the time-period of the project to modern day depictions of the department will increase the scope of the project and that will include fan sites, additional articles on gender roles, history, or other departments in the studio, reviews of the book, and the public’s perception of the book. One thing that is missing from this project is a set of transcripts from people who worked in the Ink and Paint department. These transcripts are held at the University of California, Los Angeles. It would have cost $500 to get the transcripts, and an additional research trip was out of question for this project. I am assuming that some interviews will praise Walt Disney, but others may give a more realistic view of working in this department, however, Johnson would have only included the ones praising Walt Disney in her book. There is much work to be done to understand how stories, myths, and ideas get presented to the public and the issue of access to this information. Books are more accessible than museums, but both entities are entitled to their own interpretation and the people behind them get to pick and choose which information to present to the public. This is an important topic to understand the full story about a population that has been forgotten about, and subsequently being rewritten into history. As a person going into the field of museums, I will oversee making decision about the story, what is being displayed, and the
information to the public, so it is my job to make sure the information is accurate, and I realize my biases, so I do not perpetuate them to the public.

I loved this topic. It was so much fun to uncover the “hidden” story that is being omitted from public access, and Disney is still something I feel very passionately about, but I hope to never become a “drone” of Disney, just accepting everything at face value; instead, I will continue my investigation to understand the real story about the revival of the Ink and Paint department.
Bibliography

Artifact Label. Gallery 3; *Flowers and Trees Cel setup*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.


Display. Gallery 3; *Color*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.


Display. Gallery 6; *The Toughest Period In My Whole Life*”, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BqM8nU7-b8.


https://waltdisney.org/galleries#!


http://www.waltdisney.org/galleries#gallery01


"Museum Gift Shop." Interview by author. September 30, 2017. Personal interview done by talking to museum gift shop employees


http://waltdisney.org/about/mission


https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/01/arts/design/01disney.html

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. By Walt Disney, David Hand, Perce Pearce, and Larry Morey. Performed by Adriana Caselotti, Lucille La Verne, Harry Stockwell.


Wall Text. Gallery 3; *Color*, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.


Wall Text. Gallery 6; “I have a case of the DDS: Disappointment and Disillusionment.”, The Walt Disney Family Museum, San Francisco, California.


i This can also be seen in promotional pieces done for The Reluctant Dragon in Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney's Animation on page 181.

ii All pictures in the Walt Disney Family Museum section were taken by the author at the Walt Disney Family Museum.

iii Pictures in the Ink & Paint section were reproduced from Ink & Paint: The Women of Walt Disney’s Animation for the purpose of this project. Pictures on pages 49, 57, 63 were taken by the author.

iv Found this out while waiting in line and talking with some other people in line for the Mindy Johnson lecture.