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Depicting action: The “Fruitful moment” in Sequential and Narrative Art

When animators prepare their story-boards, they usually only sketch keyframes in the narrative. Intermediary scenes are added by other artists, a procedure sometimes known as “inbetweening”. In a way, the phenomenon of the key scene has been thoroughly discussed by G.E. Lessing in his *Laokoon* from 1766. He uses the concept of “fruitful moment”, and formulates at least two fundamental rules for its artistical use: Firstly, the chosen moment should not represent emotion in its highest state, and secondly, the moment should not be transitory. I intend to present and pre-modern and contemporary examples of “fruitful moments” in visual narratives, from Bernini to Franquin, from the fine arts to comics, along with some thoughts on the implications for visualizing actions and the ultimate problem of bringing adequate fictional form to the elusive arrow of time.