



Minds in motion

Patrick Watson talks to a pair of entertainers who bring children's ideas to life

SAY what you want about arts workers Fiona Bazley Hodges and Grant Hodges, but don't say they won't get their hands dirty.

For the past seven years the husband and wife duo have travelled the length and breadth of Queensland teaching children, special needs students and adults how to make short films with plasticine.

Part of this year's Powerkidz school holiday program, they promise to make a parade of plasticine characters come to life.

"We get lots of monsters and things that aren't ordinary in this world. Kids also like to make dragons, chickens, clowns and cats and dogs," Fiona says.

"People ask us why do we bother because it takes so long to make the films, but when animated characters suddenly appear, it's amazing."

At the end of their 90-minute workshops, children will be able to see a 30-second moving film of their plasticine creations.

The clay animators say it is a bit like the famous *Wallace and Gromit* films.

"It's slightly delayed," Grant says, "but characters can cartwheel, wave and jump. Kids ask how it moves, but

then see how the characters move themselves.

"We do three frames a second, as opposed to the 30 frames a second used professionally."

Their technique uses the stop button on a standard videocamera, which the Hodges say can be easily used at home.

"It amazes the children. They can't believe it when they play it back. They just don't understand how great it's going to be," Fiona says.

Asked how many plasticine parades they've made over the years and the Hodges go wobbly.

"We've hours and hours of animation videos. Considering we come out with 30 seconds (of film) in a workshop, that's a long time," Grant says.

Other activities in the Powerkidz program include a children's circus, puppet-making workshops, a playground made out of instruments, a Dorothy the Dinosaur Dance Party and an electric violin workshop. The Powerhouse offers a free day of activities on Saturday, September 17.

Powerkidz runs from September 14-25. Clay animation workshops are on September 18 and September 24. Info: 3358 8600 or www.brisbanepowerhouse.org



ACTION aptly... Fiona Bazley Hodges with the clay figures she uses to teach the art of animation.
Picture: Heather Faulkner