

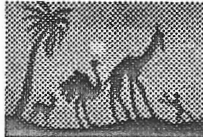
## MAP HISTORY

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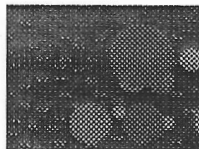
## AN INTRODUCTION

Hi! Welcome to a brief history of experimental animation.



DR. DOLITTLE  
AND HIS ANIMALS  
by Lotta Reiniger  
Primrose Film  
Productions Ltd.

You may well ask, "What is experimental animation?" In general, any film in which the animator tried to make something personal, exploring techniques to find exactly the right look to express it -- something new, fresh, imaginative, dealing with significant subject matter, made independently and often single-handedly -- that's the kind of film we're talking about.



OPTICAL POEM  
by Oskar Fischinger  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

This means that famous studio cartoons will not be heard from here. That doesn't mean we hate them or look down on them. They're simply a different genre, not in competition with experimental animation, just as poetry isn't in competition with prose, and jazz or rock isn't in competition with classical music or opera.



ALGORITHMS  
by Gabriel Neubauer  
Courtesy of the artist

Indeed Hans Fischerkoesen, one of the greatest animators of the 1930s and 1940s, isn't included in these pages.

He made thousands of charming advertising films, and when the Nazis demanded that he produce regular theatrical cartoons, he purposely introduced contradictory and subversive elements into the films as an act of resistance. But these wonderful, technically brilliant cartoons (WEATHER-BEATEN MELODY, THE SNOWMAN and SILLY GOOSE) remain precisely that -- cartoons, pinnacle achievements in that genre.



RHINOCEROS  
by Jan Lenica  
Courtesy of the artist

And Walt Disney's extravagant experiment FANTASIA appears only as it affected the lives of serious artists such as Jules Engel and Oskar Fischinger who worked for Disney, but made their own personal experimental animation. (And you may notice that experimental animators had already made films to several of the musical numbers in FANTASIA before the Disney film was made.)



THE STREET  
by Caroline Leaf  
© 1976 National Film  
Board of Canada

Many pieces of real experimental animation

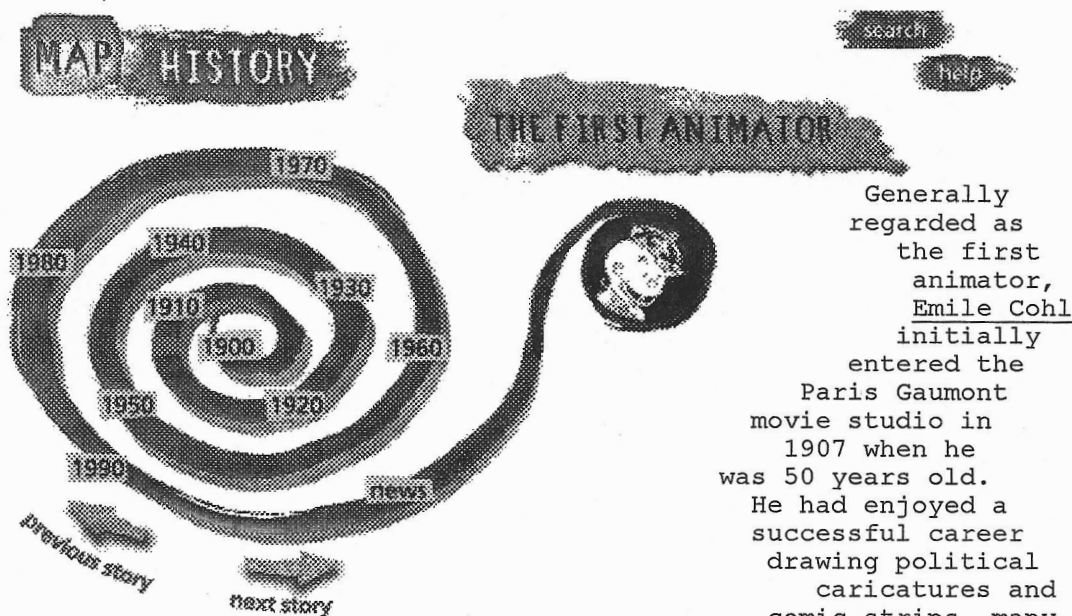
may be left out, and many  
contemporary filmmakers  
inadvertently slighted,  
but in this limited  
space, we couldn't cover everything.  
All the background biographies,  
dates and filmographies are on  
separate artist profile pages  
in this section, so don't  
forget to surf  
through those.

-- Dr. William Moritz



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Generally regarded as the first animator, Emile Cohl initially entered the Paris Gaumont movie studio in 1907 when he was 50 years old. He had enjoyed a successful career drawing political caricatures and comic strips, many of which involved bizarre transitions from panel to panel.



Courtesy of  
Pierre Courtet-Cohl

During the 1880s he had belonged to an art movement, the Incoherents, which pre-figured Dadaism and Surrealism, in that it aimed at parodying High Art and stuffy political and bourgeois conventions through odd juxtapositions and transformations of accepted styles and norms. Cohl carried this spirit with him into his animation work.

Cohl visited Gaumont because they had made a live-action short based on one of his cartoon strips without asking permission or paying him. Instead of offering compensation, Gaumont offered Cohl a job preparing scenarios for their live-action comedies. After a few months, he began making his own animation films.



Courtesy of  
Pierre Courtet-Cohl

Cohl's first film, FANTASMAGORIA, opened in theaters in August 1908. It consisted of more than 700 consecutive drawings, all made by Cohl over a light box and filmed by him as well. FANTASMAGORIA has no real story,

but rather follows a series of crazy incidents, which are linked together by metamorphoses (in one case, an elephant transforms into a house). In the opening scene, Cohl's own hand is seen drawing the main character, a naughty boy. Later, when the boy is decapitated, Cohl's live-action hand reaches in and glues his head back on.



HE LOVES TO  
BE AMUSED, 1913

Cohl explored many other animation techniques in his career, including the combination of live-action with drawn figures in the same frame, and the animation of jointed cut-out figures, puppets and objects such as matches, coins, bugs and furniture. More than mere technique, however, the distinguishing aspect of Cohl's work remains its personal wit and sense of wicked parody. Films such as THE NEO-IMPRESSIONIST PAINTER, THE AUTOMATIC CARICATURE MACHINE, and BRAINS REPAIRED bear the individual stamp of Cohl's Incoherent world view, puncturing the snob appeal of the art world, acceptable social types, and the very strain of reason that supposedly holds society together.

Although Cohl worked on some 250 films, only about 40 of them survive. In 1912, he went to America to set up an animation unit for the Eclair company, where he made a series of 13 cartoon shorts based on the newspaper comic strip THE NEWLYWEDS AND BABY SNOOKUMS. The series initiated the cartoon industry in America: Soon other companies produced series based on comics such as KRAZY KAT, KATZENJAMMER KIDS and MUTT & JEFF, and then on original characters.

MAP HISTORY

BEAST FABLES

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1970 1940 1930 1910 1900 1950 1920 1960 1980 1990 news

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Courtesy of  
L.B. Martin,  
Films de Starewitch

Ladislav  
Starewitch  
was making  
documentaries  
for a museum  
in Lithuania  
when he shot  
his first  
animated film,  
THE BATTLE OF THE  
STAG BEETLES (1910),



THE BATTLE OF THE  
STAG BEETLES  
Courtesy of  
Gosfilmofond of Russia

a recreation of the nocturnal  
mating rituals of this local  
species, which could not be  
filmed "live-action" in the dark.  
He used specimen beetles preserved in  
liquid and hence flexible,  
though still quite awkward.  
This inspired him to create puppets  
and to animate "beast fables."

For his first entertainment  
film, the 1910 FAIR LUCANIDA,  
Starewitch developed the basic  
technique he employed for the  
rest of his life: building the  
puppets from a jointed wooden  
frame, with parts such as fingers  
that needed to be flexible rendered  
in wire, and parts that didn't need  
to change cut from cork or modeled  
in plaster. His wife Anna, who came  
from a family of tailors, padded the  
puppets with cotton and sewed  
leather and cloth facial features,

hands and costumes. He designed all the characters and built the sets.



Courtesy of L. B. Martin  
Films de Starevitch

#### Starevitch's

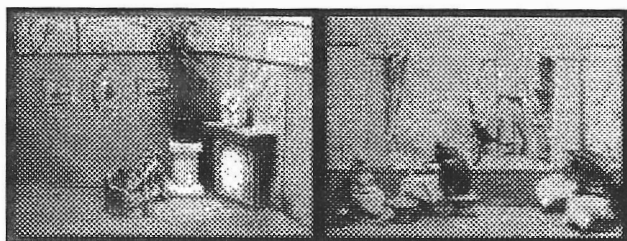
many Russian  
animations range  
from the impressively  
grim THE GRASSHOPPER  
AND THE ANT, in which  
the literalness of the  
insects reinforces the  
cruel message, to  
the enchanting THE  
INSECTS' CHRISTMAS.



GRASSHOPPER & THE ANT  
Courtesy of  
Gosfilmofond of Russia

His most astonishing  
early film, the 1911  
CAMERAMAN'S REVENGE,  
shows Mrs. Beetle  
having an affair  
with an artist-  
grasshopper,  
while Mr.  
Beetle  
carries  
on with  
a Dragonfly  
cabaret-artiste,  
whose previous lover,  
a grasshopper-cameraman,  
shoots movies of Mr. Beetle  
and Dragonfly making love at  
the Hotel D'Amour. The cameraman  
screens these at the local cinema  
when Mr. and Mrs. Beetle are present,  
and the resulting riot lands both Beetles  
in jail. This racy satire of human sexual  
foibles gains a biting edge from the  
ridiculousness of bugs enacting what  
humans consider their most serious  
passions -- the affectation of the  
grasshopper donning a beret and

cap to secure his "artiste"  
 image, or Mrs. Beetle  
 reclining like an  
 odalisque on the  
 divan awaiting  
 her lover's  
 absurd  
 embrace,  
 which  
 involves  
 twelve legs  
 and four  
 antennae in lascivious  
 motion. Little wonder Starewitch  
 was appointed "Royal Filmmaker to the Czar"!



THE CAMERAMAN'S REVENGE  
 Courtesy of Gosfilmofond of Russia

After he  
 settled in France  
 in 1920, Starewitch  
 made 24 films which  
 combine witty sophistication  
 and magical naivete, including  
 moral fables such as the splendid  
THE TOWN RAT AND THE COUNTRY RAT (the  
 city nightclub stars a charming nearly-nude  
 "Josephine Baker" rat), and the lovely VOICE OF  
THE NIGHTINGALE, as well as two features: the 1928  
 adventure epic THE MAGIC CLOCK, full of knights, fairies  
 and dragons, and the 1930/37 REYNARD THE FOX, which renders  
 the gestures and emotions of the animals (in sophisticated  
 period costumes) with great subtlety.



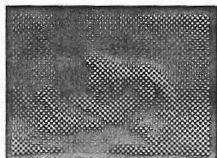
THE MAGIC CLOCK  
 Courtesy of  
 L.S. Martin, Films de Starewitch



REYNARD THE FOX  
 Courtesy of  
 L.S. Martin, Films de Starewitch

His 1933 masterpiece  
THE MASCOT begins  
 with a live-action  
 sequence starring  
 the Starewitch  
 daughters Irene  
 and Jeanne (who  
 assisted and  
 acted in most of  
 the films) as a  
 mother who supports

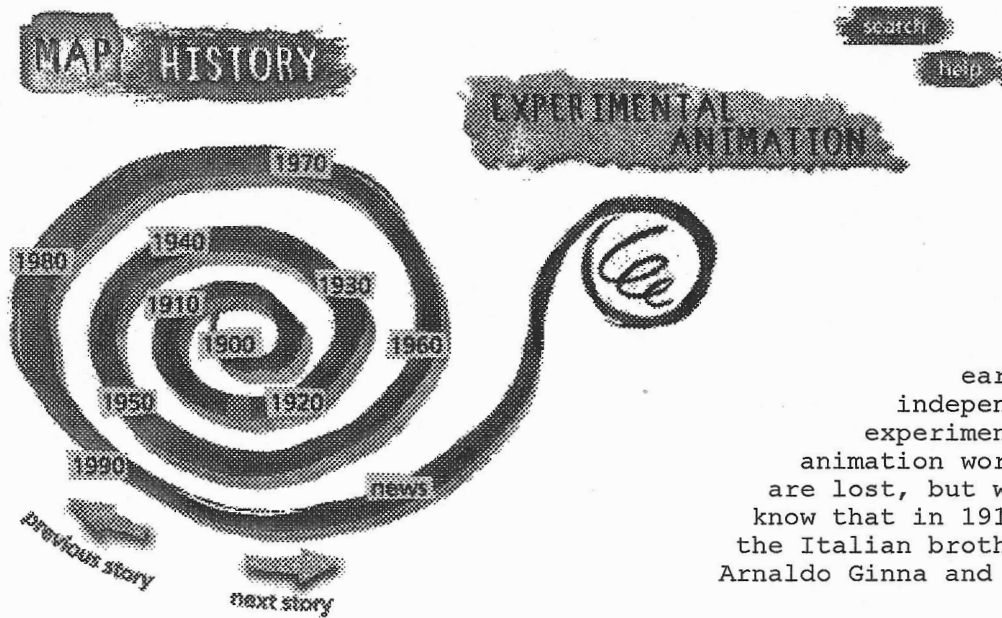
herself making  
 toys, and her  
 sick daughter who  
 longs for an orange.  
 A stuffed dog  
 tries to steal an  
 orange for the girl,  
 but gets caught at  
 the Devil's Ball,  
 where all the  
 garbage of Paris  
 comes to life in  
 a dissolute orgy  
 at which drunken  
 stemware suicidally  
 crash into each  
 other, and  
 re-assembled skeletons  
 of eaten fish  
 and chickens dance.



THE MASCOT  
 Courtesy of L.B. Martin  
 Films de Starewitch

When a pimp stabs  
 the Devil so his  
 stuffing leaks out,  
 the dog escapes  
 with the orange,  
 pursued home by  
 a motley gang of  
 torn-paper and  
 vegetable people,  
 dolls and animals.  
 Starewitch matches his brilliant  
 visual details (one character loses  
 his head in a car accident and replaces  
 it with a singing turnip, the "live"  
 dog hangs by his neck as an auto  
 ornament) with witty use  
 of sound, making the voices  
 of the dog and the Devil whining  
 musical instruments, or playing the  
 Devil's words backwards to sound  
 like unearthly gibberish. Six  
 subsequent shorts starring the  
 dog, though popular in France,  
 failed to reach the heights  
 of this grotesque whimsy.



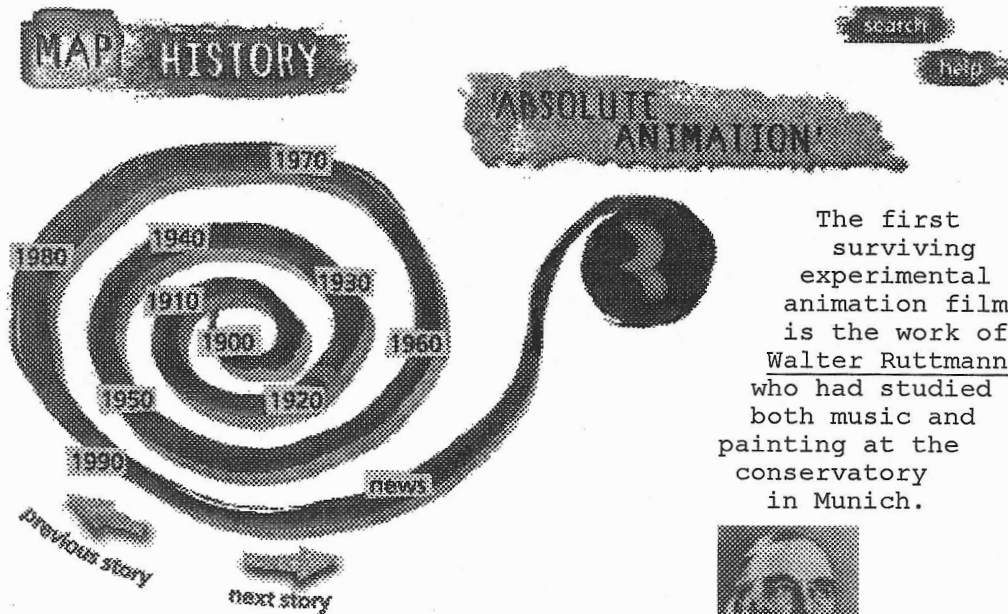


The  
earliest  
independent  
experimental  
animation works  
are lost, but we  
know that in 1911  
the Italian brothers  
Arnaldo Ginna and Bruno  
Corra

(later associated  
with the Futurists)  
painted at least  
six films (some  
as long as ten  
minutes) directly  
on clear film. At  
the same time in  
Germany the poet-  
philosopher  
Hans Stoltenberg  
also painted  
directly on filmstrip  
an abstract composition  
as part of his studies  
of synaesthesia.

In Paris in 1913, the  
Finnish (now French citizen)  
painter Léopold Survage  
(close friends with Pablo Picasso and  
Amadeo Modigliani) painted hundreds of  
sequential abstract images which he hoped  
to have filmed on a new color film  
process being pioneered by Gaumont.  
But the onset of World War I  
interrupted the project,  
and he gradually sold  
off many of the  
animation  
drawings.

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The first surviving experimental animation film is the work of Walter Ruttmann, who had studied both music and painting at the conservatory in Munich.



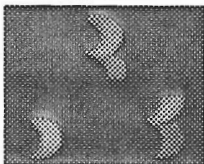
Courtesy of  
Eva Riehl

He was drafted into World War I, but was gassed by mistake when poisonous fumes meant for the enemy blew back in his face. The snafu led to his release from service on permanent disability (and ill health that would follow him the rest of his life). Ruttmann became dissatisfied with his abstract canvas painting,



OPUS I  
Courtesy of Eva Riehl

and decided cinema was the art form of the future anyway, so in 1919 he mastered the technology of filmmaking and began animating an abstract film. He painted on glass



OPUS I  
Courtesy of Eva Riehl

(with one new shot each time a new brush stroke was added), and also used geometric shapes cut from paper (which could be moved in a second layer of glass in front of or behind the painted image).



The images were shot  
on black-and-white film,  
but planned for color using  
three methods common at that time:  
tinting, toning, and hand-tinting.



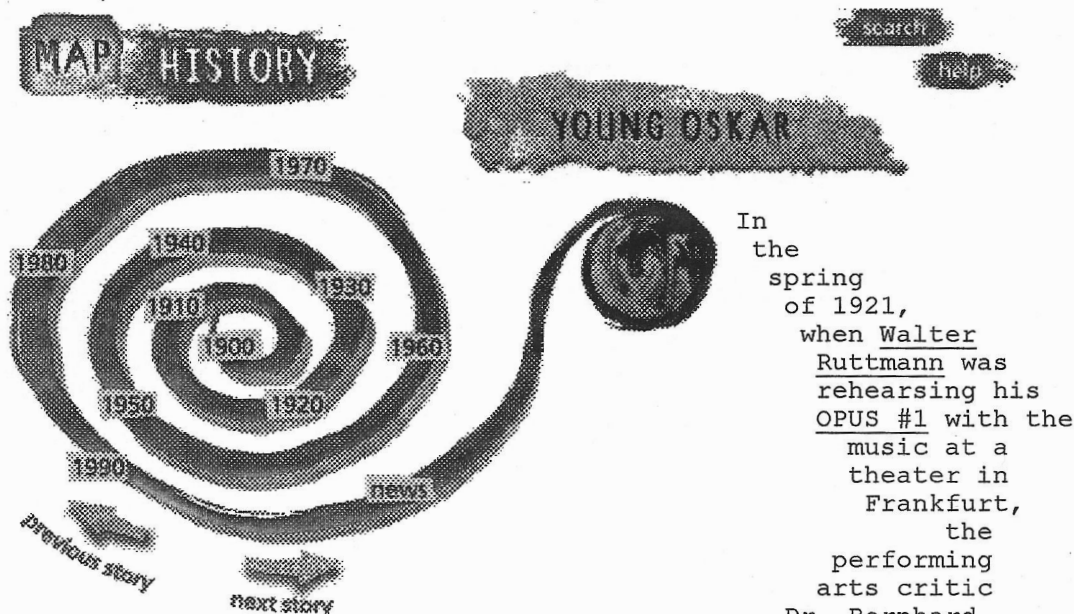
OPUS I  
Courtesy of Eva Riehl

Because of this coloration method,  
Ruttmann had to print each  
scene separately, and  
splice each  
print together  
from one hundred  
little pieces of film.  
He finished the film, which  
runs about 14 minutes,  
in 1920 and  
commissioned  
a musical  
score from Max  
Butting, a composer  
who had been his  
chum at the Munich  
conservatory.  
Butting's score  
is for  
a string  
quintet, and  
Ruttmann himself  
played the cello part  
at all of the performances.  
Ruttmann named the film  
LICHTSPIEL, OPUS NR. 1,

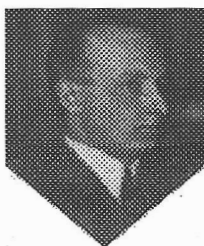


OPUS I  
Courtesy of  
Eva Riehl

using the word  
"Light-Play,"  
the common  
German expression  
for "movies," along with  
the kind of classical  
musical terminology  
that suggested the  
beginning of a  
series --  
which indeed it was,  
for Ruttmann would  
make three more  
OPUS films, which he  
preferred to call  
"Absolute" films.

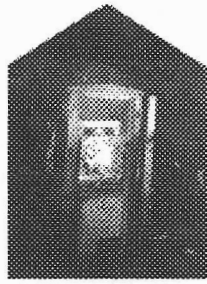


In the spring of 1921, when Walter Ruttmann was rehearsing his OPUS #1 with the music at a theater in Frankfurt, the performing arts critic Dr. Bernhard Diebold brought along a young man, Oskar Fischinger, who had studied music and graphic arts, but wanted to make some kind of synthesis. Fischinger had been drawing out graphic charts of the emotional dynamics of various plays, which Diebold insisted were abstract art works in their own right. When they saw Ruttmann's abstract film, they both knew immediately that the cinema was the art form of the future.



Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

Fischinger immediately began experimenting with animation techniques that would be completely different from Ruttmann's painterly images. He tried making three-dimensional models of geometric shapes out of wax, which could be modified either by re-modeling the shape between exposures, or substituting a sequence of similar shapes (getting larger or smaller, for example) for each shot. He also experimented with filming the fluid dynamics of different liquids swirling together.



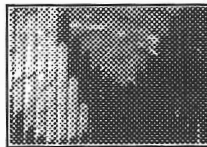
WACHSSCHNEIDMASCHINE  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

One  
day when  
Fischinger's  
sister was cleaning  
his room, she left the wax  
models on the window sill, and  
the sun melted them. As Fischinger tried to  
scrape the wax off the sill, he became fascinated  
with the different patterns that emerged each time he cut  
some away -- fluid patterns not unlike his liquids. He quickly  
began to devise a machine that would slice very thin layers  
from a prepared block of wax, with a camera synchronized  
to take one frame of the remaining surface of the  
block. Any kind of image could be built into  
the wax block -- a circle getting  
smaller would be  
a simple cone,  
for example.



WAX EXPERIMENTS  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

Fischinger  
moved to Munich  
to take advantage of  
the film industry there, and  
ended up supporting himself by making  
conventional cartoon shorts for Louis Seel's  
MUNICH ALBUM series. But he continued his abstract experiments,  
developing a modular imagery with parallel bars (cutouts from card-  
board) that could be easily moved up and down to create wave  
patterns, which he called "Orgelstabe" or Organ-rods  
(Fischinger had once worked for a man  
who built organs).



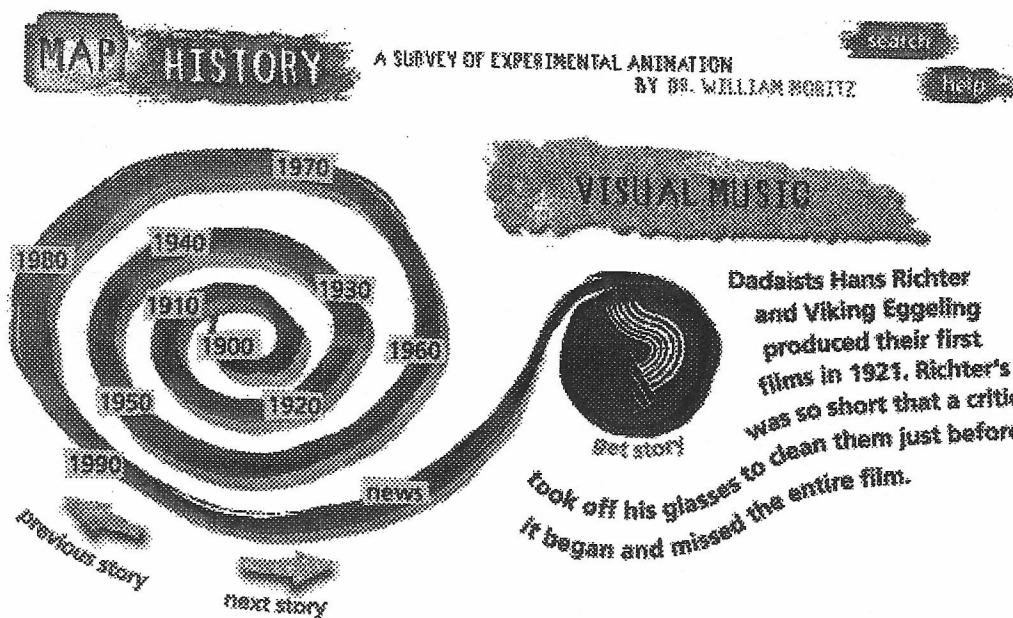
R-1, A FORM PLAY  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

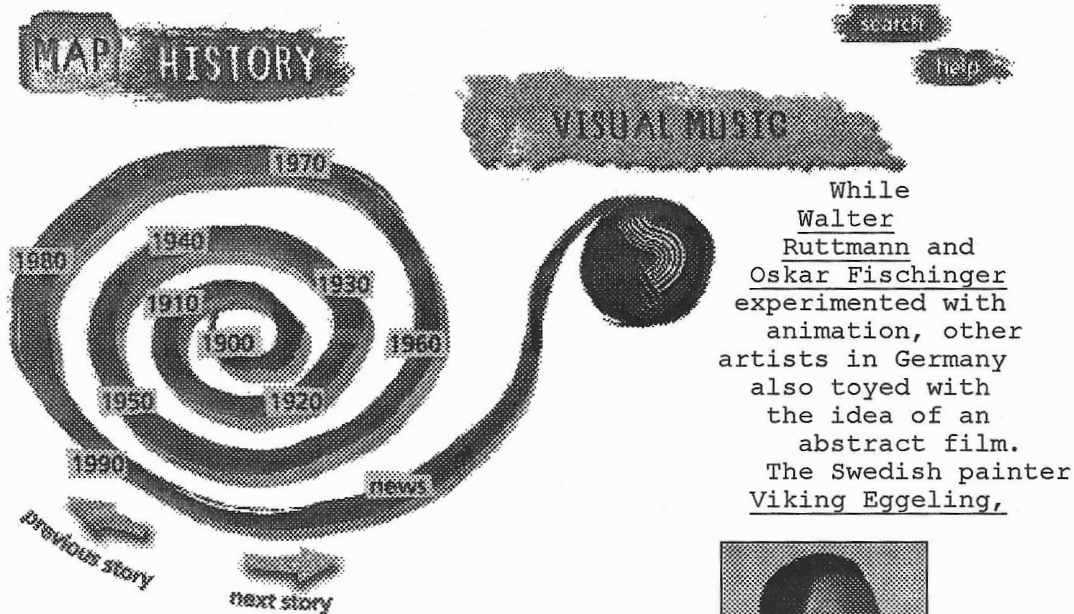
At  
first  
Fischinger  
did not have much  
success with his eccentric  
animation films. But in 1926 he collaborated  
on a project with the Hungarian composer Alexander  
Laszlo, who wanted dynamic abstract imagery to be performed  
in the concert hall during his piano recitals, called "Farblicht-  
musik" (Color-Light-Music). For the finale of this program, Fischinger  
designed a multiple-projector piece (using his "organ-rods"  
footage) with three side-by-side images; and for  
the climax, in full color, he had two more  
movie projectors overlap the other  
three, with colored slides  
also being shown  
above and  
below.

After  
Laszlo's  
concert tour ended,  
Fischinger successfully  
repeated his multiple-projection  
performances (now entitled R-1, A FORM-PLAY,)  
accompanied by a percussion ensemble and together with  
his other abstract experiments for a full Fischinger evening.



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While Walter Ruttmann and Oskar Fischinger experimented with animation, other artists in Germany also toyed with the idea of an abstract film. The Swedish painter Viking Eggeling,



Viking Eggeling  
Courtesy of the  
Swedish National  
Museum

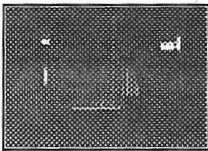
who had been a part of the Swiss Dada movement during the war years, began painting sequential images on long scrolls in hopes that they could be transferred to an animated film, and wrote theoretical texts about this "Horizontal Vertical Orchestra," as he called it. Hans Richter, also a



Hans Richter  
Courtesy of the  
Hans Richter Estate

Dada veteran, followed suit with similar scroll drawings. In 1921, he and Eggeling took their drawings to the UFA Studios and paid to have them filmed. But the results only lasted a few seconds and did not really give a good illusion of movement or transformation because the individual drawings were too different -- more like a storyboard than finished animation. Eggeling, very disappointed, went back to work on creating many more scroll drawings. Richter however entitled his little film fragment FILM

IS RHYTHM, and  
showed it  
quite  
a  
bit,  
once  
to a  
French  
critic,  
who took  
his glasses  
off to clean  
them just before  
the film began and  
put them back on only  
to realize that the  
film was already over.

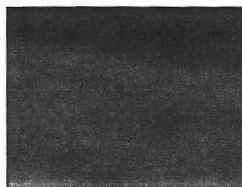


FILM IS RHYTHM  
Courtesy of the  
Hans Richter Estate

A number of Bauhaus  
students and faculty  
also tried to produce  
a visual music: Werner  
Graeff and Kurt Kranz  
with film (though they  
only painted storyboard  
sequences, without being able  
to film them at that time), and  
Kurt Schwerdtfeger and Ludwig  
Hirschfeld-Mack with  
a specially built  
projection instrument,  
Reflectorial  
Color  
Play,  
composed  
of numerous  
layers of panels  
which were moved by  
hand to create projections  
of geometric shapes in various  
colors according to a written score.

Two other Bauhaus students,  
Erna Niemeyer and Lore  
Luedesdorf, became  
friends with  
Eggeling  
and  
Ruttman  
respectively  
and worked on their  
films. By 1923 Eggeling, who  
was very poor and undernourished,  
had finished the scroll score  
for a film DIAGONAL SYMPHONY.

Niemeyer took on the task  
of duplicating each  
of his drawings  
by cutting  
out the  
figures  
from tin  
foil,  
so that  
she could  
make them  
appear and  
disappear by  
cutting away  
pieces and filming  
the animation either  
backwards or forwards.  
This animation process  
took more than a  
year, but the  
results of  
Niemeyer's  
careful,  
smooth  
work are  
spectacular,  
giving a sensuous,  
musical attack  
and decay to  
Eggeling's  
intricate geometric  
forms, which  
Eggeling had  
planned in  
solo, duet  
and orchestral  
complexity  
on a  
parallel  
to auditory  
music.

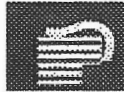


DIAGONAL SYMPHONY  
Courtesy of the  
Hans Richter Estate

Ruttman  
edited the film,  
and showed it  
5 November 1924 at an  
informal private premiere,  
after which Eggeling took  
a short trip to Paris  
to show the film  
to his friends there.  
He returned so ill he  
had to be hospitalized.  
The public premiere took  
place 3 May 1925 at the UFA



Theater on Kurfurstendamm  
in Berlin, as part of "THE  
ABSOLUTE FILM," a program  
which contained a "Color  
Sonatina" performed  
with Hirschfeld-Mack's  
instrument, Richter's  
30-second FILM IS  
RHYTHM,  
Ruttman's  
OPUS II, III,  
and IV, and  
two French  
live-action  
experimental  
films, BALLET  
MECANIQUE and  
ENTR'ACTE.  
Eggeling was  
not present;  
he died of septic  
angina two weeks later.



RHYTHM 23  
Courtesy of the  
Hans Richter Estate

Erna Niemeyer  
married Hans Richter  
in 1927 and made several  
films for him (including ones  
he later called RHYTHM 21 and  
RHYTHM 23 as if they had been  
made earlier). After they  
were divorced in 1929,  
Richter made no  
further  
animation.  
In 1936  
Niemeyer  
married  
the French  
Surrealist  
Philippe Soupault  
and lived  
until her death  
under the  
name  
Ré Soupault.

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MAP HISTORY

YOUNG OSKAR

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help



WALTER RUTTMANN  
(1898-1941)

A native of Frankfurt, Walter Ruttmann studied painting, engraving, architecture and music before devoting himself to abstract cinema, or what he called "painting with time." After his groundbreaking film LIGHT-PLAY OPUS I (LICHTSPIEL OPUS I) received widespread acclaim, he went on to produce OPUS II-IV. He provided special effects and backgrounds on Lotte Reiniger's feature film THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED, but moved away from abstractionism after that and focused on producing and editing more documentary-like films.

### Dr. Bill's Picks:    Distributor:



1921 -  
LIGHT-PLAY  
OPUS I  
(LICHTSPIEL  
OPUS I)

EmGee, CS



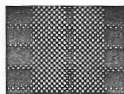
1922 -  
LIGHT-PLAY  
OPUS II  
(LICHTSPIEL OPUS  
II)

MOMA, CS



1922 -  
LIGHT-PLAY  
OPUS III  
(LICHTSPIEL OPUS  
III)

MOMA, CS



1925 -  
LIGHT-PLAY  
OPUS IV  
(LICHTSPIEL  
OPUS IV) - with  
Lore Leudesdorf

MOMA, CS

-Walter Ruttmann photo and films courtesy of Eva Riehl.

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SHADOW FILMS

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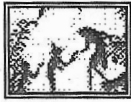
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LOTTE REINIGER  
(1899-1981)

German  
animator Lotte  
Reiniger made her first  
silhouette film ORNAMENT OF THE  
LOVING HEART in 1919. She spent three  
years (1923 to 1925) working on THE ADVENTURES  
OF PRINCE AHMED, the first feature-length animated film.  
Starting in the 1930s, she and her husband Carl Koch made films  
in London for John Grierson of the General Post Office Film Unit.  
They produced 26 shorts for Grierson, many of them based on myths  
and fairy tales. In 1950, Louis Hagen Jr. formed Primrose Film  
Productions, where Reiniger and her husband added 19 more films  
to her large body of work.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:     Distributor:**



1923-1925 - THE  
ADVENTURES  
OF PRINCE  
AHMED (DIE  
ABENTEUR DES  
PRINZEN  
ACHMED)

BFI, Facets  
HIT, Strobel



1926 - THE  
SEEMINGLY  
DEAD  
CHINAMAN (DER  
SCHEINTOTE  
CHINESE)

HIT, Strobel



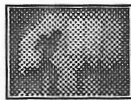
1928 - DR.  
DOLITTLE AND  
HIS ANIMALS  
(DOKTOR  
DOLITTLE UND  
SEINE TIERE)

HIT, Strobel



1933 - CARMEN

MOMA, BFI  
HIT, Strobel



1934 - THE  
STOLEN HEART  
(DAS  
GESTOHLENE  
HERZ)

MOMA  
HIT, Strobel



1935 - PAPAGENO  
-- scenes from  
Mozart's opera  
THE MAGIC  
FLUTE

BFI  
HIT, Strobel

Lotte Reiniger produced some 70 films.  
For a complete filmography, see "Lotte Reiniger,"  
by William Moritz, ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

-Photo and films courtesy of Primrose Film Productions, Ltd.



**MAP HISTORY**



**SHADOW FILMS**

search help

1980 1970 1940 1930 1910 1900 1950 1920 1990 news

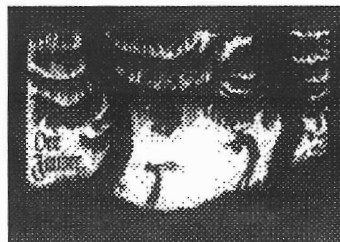
previous story next story

Lotte Reiniger cut silhouette pictures as a hobby, until German actor-director Paul Wegener noticed her skill

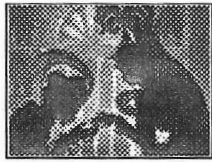
Prinrose Film Productions Ltd.

and hired her to create titles and special effects for his features. The Socialist Institute for Cultural Research then sponsored her to make her own shorts, and her first one, ORNAMENT OF THE LOVING HEART, appeared in the fall of 1919.



THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN  
Prinrose Film Productions Ltd.

Although many of her films are versions of fairy tales for children, all of them are cleverly adapted to the suggestiveness of the silhouette medium and often modified to reflect modern social concerns. The success of her first few shorts convinced banker Louis Hagen, Sr. to back her production of a feature-length animation, THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED, based on tales from THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.



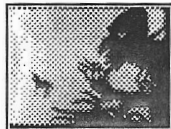
THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED  
Primrose Film Productions Ltd.

Reiniger spent nearly three years working on it, with a staff of five: her husband Carl Koch on camera, Walter Turck on backgrounds, Alex Kardan as detail checker, and Walter Ruttmann and Berthold Bartosch on special effects.



Primrose Film  
Productions Ltd.

Not only was PRINCE AHMED the first animated feature, but it was also a very good film, full of romance, suspense and action. Reiniger's silhouettes are unbelievably detailed and intricate, often involving several versions of the same character for closeups and long-shots (for example, an evil sorcerer can be seen sinisterly rolling his eyes and bending each joint of his grasping hands). Each moving part also had to be cut separately and joined to the others with fine wire.

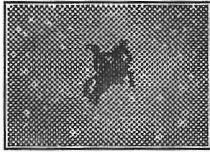


THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED  
Primrose Film Productions Ltd.

The spectacular special effects add immensely to the magic of the tale.

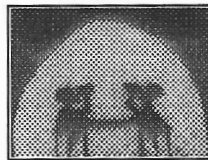
Ruttmann used Oskar Fischinger's wax-slicing machine to make the magic horse materialize between the sorcerer's hands, and painted dynamic force-fields that fly back and forth during the climactic duel between

the priestess and the evil  
 sorcerer. Bartosch created  
 the moving starscape behind  
 Prince Ahmed's flight and  
 the layered waves on the  
 ocean voyage. The variety  
 of mood and effect in  
 the film -- the erotic  
 playfulness of the harem  
 girls, the sorcerer's  
 sinister conjuring  
 with a hairball, the  
 violence of the final  
 battle -- dazzle as much  
 as the subtle detail of  
 the backgrounds and the  
 great variety of visual design.



THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED  
 Primrose Film Productions Ltd.

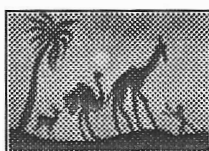
So successful was Prince  
 Ahmed that Fischinger was  
 inspired to make an astonishing  
 silhouette short, SPIRITUAL  
 CONSTRUCTIONS, which follows  
 the adventures of two drunk men  
 who fight in a bar and struggle  
 to get home. Fischinger created  
 the silhouettes not with cut-outs  
 but rather by spreading a  
 layer of wax and clay on  
 glass, thick enough to be  
 opaque and able to be  
 easily re-modeled or cut  
 away to change the shape  
 very fluidly -- something  
 quite necessary to  
Fischinger's vision of  
 the unstable,  
 drunk world.



SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTIONS  
 Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

Far away in Japan, Noburo Ofuji  
 also adapted traditional cut-paper  
 art into refined silhouette  
 films, treating both  
 lyrical subjects  
 (BANQUET BENEATH A FLOWERING  
 CHERRY, 1924) and  
 dynamic adventures  
 (THE WHALE, 1927).

Lotte Reiniger made  
a second feature,  
DR. DOLITTLE, based  
on three stories  
by Hugh Lofting.  
She also made  
several musical  
shorts, such as the  
feminist re-  
interpretation of  
the opera CARMEN, with  
the heroine clever  
and capable, ending  
up triumphant like a  
Cretan priestess riding  
the horns of the bull.



**DR. DOLITTLE AND HIS ANIMALS**  
Primrose Film Productions Ltd.

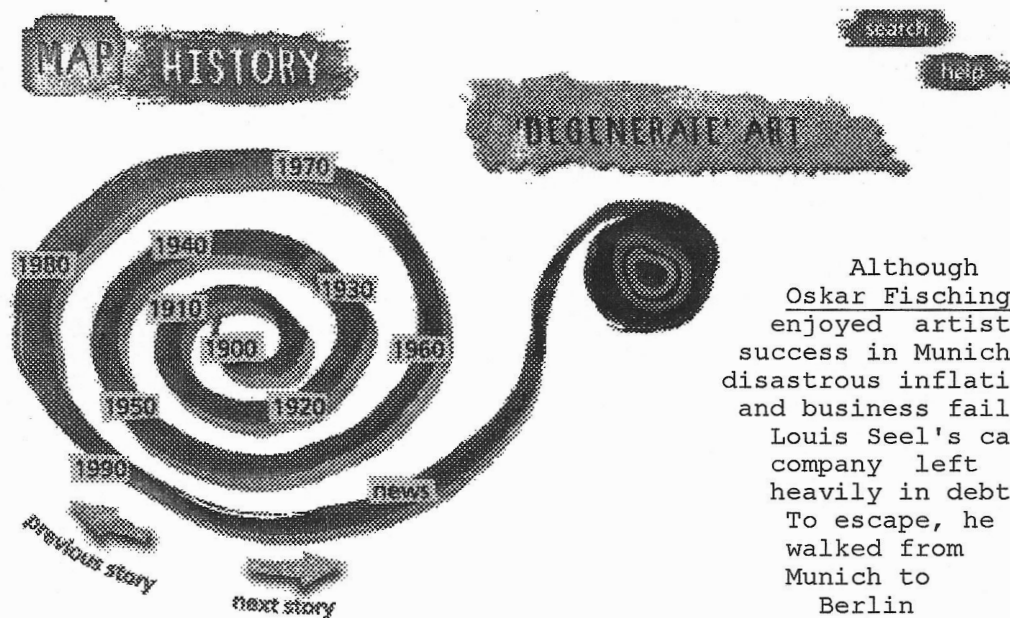
She and her husband  
fled Nazi Germany in  
1933, but could  
find no safe  
asylum and were forced  
to return to Germany  
in 1943. Soon after  
the war they settled  
in London. There, Reiniger  
produced 25 fairy-tale  
films, some with colored  
backgrounds for television.  
Most of these films were  
made with Louis E. Hagen,  
son of her original  
financier. Her last films,  
made when she was 76 and  
80, were produced in Canada.



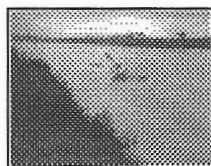
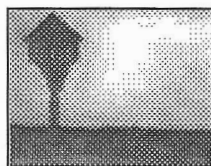
Primrose Film Productions Ltd.







Although Oskar Fischinger enjoyed artistic success in Munich, the disastrous inflation and business failure of Louis Seel's cartoon company left him heavily in debt. To escape, he walked from Munich to Berlin



WALKING FROM MUNICH TO BERLIN  
Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

over a month's time, taking single frames of landscapes and people as he went, to create a four-minute time-lapse of the trip.

In Berlin he quickly found work making special effects for feature films, including a documentary for the Socialist Party, YOUR FATE, urging people to vote Socialist rather than Communist or Nazi. In the film

Fischinger represented the Nazis as a human skull with a swastika painted on its forehead, greedily biting and gobbling everything in its path. He also created speeding rocketships, sky-writing, the moon surface and starscapes for Fritz Lang's science-fiction extravaganza THE WOMAN ON THE MOON.

During work on that assignment at the UFA studios, Fischinger tripped and broke his ankle. While in the hospital, a friend brought him charcoal and paper to continue his own designs

for abstract films.  
Fischinger hit upon  
 the idea of actually  
 making an entire  
 film of sequential  
 charcoal drawings,  
 for which the positive  
 image could be used  
 as the film negative,  
 making white shapes  
 move through a black void.



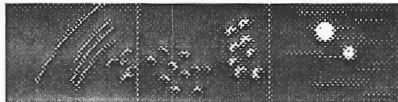
STUDY #6  
 Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

He quickly finished such a  
 STUDY, which played at a  
 small cinema that specialized  
 in "Art Films" (documentaries,  
 live-action experimental  
 films and foreign features),  
 and in which the house  
 organists provided music.



STUDY #7  
 Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

Fischinger made a deal with Electrola  
 Records to synchronize his further  
 STUDIES with Electrola's phono-  
 graph recordings and to include  
 an end title saying "You have heard  
 Electrola disk #1337, Vaya Veronika  
 -- Get it at your local record store!"  
 (a true predecessor of MTV videos).  
 Unfortunately, as the optical  
 sound-on-film process took over  
 in 1930, the music-rights situation  
 changed, and Fischinger had to pay for  
 his subsequent soundtracks.



STUDY #18  
 Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

The STUDIES proved  
 internationally popular  
 from Japan to South America.  
 STUDY NO. 5 was purchased  
 by Universal and shown  
 everywhere in the U.S.

Fischinger hired his brother Hans, his  
 future wife Elfriede and three other  
 women to work in his studio, and tried  
 to produce a new film each month, which  
 many theaters asked for. By 1933, he

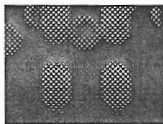
had made 12 STUDIES, with three more in production. But Nazi film regulations prohibited abstract art from being exhibited, condemning it as "degenerate," so Fischinger was not allowed to release his STUDY NO. 11, and gave up work on STUDY NO. 13 and STUDY NO. 14.

Bela Gaspar approached Fischinger to build a camera mechanism that could shoot his new three-color film (with three successive exposures for red, green and blue images that were combined by three layered emulsions on the film prints). Fischinger took advantage of the new process to shoot a color abstract film, CIRCLES, which could only be released as an advertising film (for the Tolirag Ad Agency), since censorship rules for ads were looser. The great success of CIRCLES led to dozens of other ad commissions, especially for cigarettes, which he made walk and perform in an Olympic Stadium in MURATTI GETS IN THE ACT.

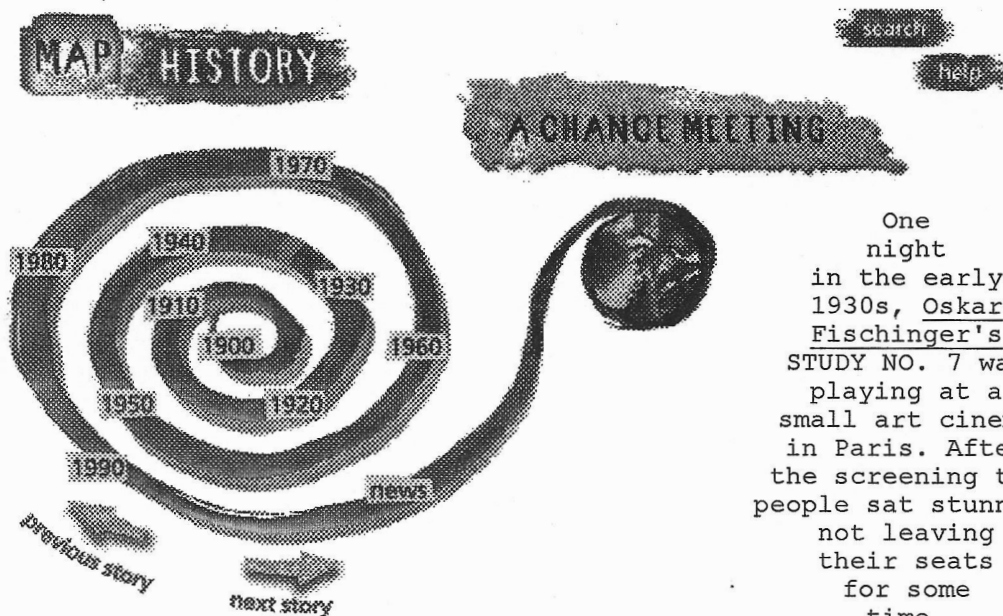


MURATTI GETS IN THE ACT  
Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

With money from these ads, Fischinger secretly made another pure abstract film, COMPOSITION IN BLUE, using 3-D models of geometric forms. Without the proper censorship papers, he showed the film as a "preview" in a major Berlin and Hamburg cinema and sent a print to the Venice Film Festival, where enthusiastic crowds cheered. This angered Nazi authorities; but fortunately, Paul Kohner had taken prints of the MURATTI ad and COMPOSITION IN BLUE to Hollywood, where Paramount quickly offered Fischinger a contract. He left Germany for Los Angeles in February 1936, never to return.



COMPOSITION IN BLUE  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive



One night in the early 1930s, Oskar Fischinger's STUDY NO. 7 was playing at a small art cinema in Paris. After the screening two people sat stunned, not leaving their seats for some time.



Alexeieff and Parker  
Courtesy of  
Svetlana Alexeieff Rockwell

They struck up a conversation about the exciting abstract film they had just seen and went to a nearby cafe. This chance meeting proved significant for both, for it was the first time Alexandre Alexeieff met Claire Parker.



Alexandre Alexeieff  
Courtesy of  
Svetlana Alexeieff Rockwell

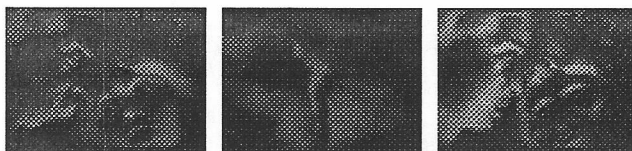
Alexeieff, a Russian emigre to Paris, had specialized in etched book illustrations, although he loved the cinema. Parker, an American living in Paris, had admired Alexeieff's style, with its sensitive

use of blacks and greys to establish mood and character, and coincidentally had written Alexeieff asking if he would consider taking her as a pupil.



Claire Parker  
With permission of  
the distributor, Cecile Starr

They both longed to make films like Fischinger's, and Alexeieff told Parker about his idea for a machine that could produce black-and-white images with the subtlety of fine etching. Parker helped Alyosha (as she called him) build this pinscreen, and they began a life-long partnership as collaborating artists.



NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN  
Courtesy of Svetlana Alexeieff Rockwell

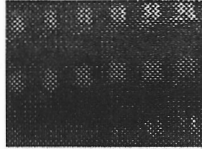
With Fischinger's tightly-synchronized images swimming in their minds, and with the help of their friend Berthold Bartosch, they spent 18 months making their first (and possibly finest) film, synchronized with Modest Mussorgsky's NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN.

But rather than using abstract forms, they followed the story of the witches' sabbath with a variety of images, some derived from Alyosha's memories of Russian folk customs and costumes, and others invented in the spirit of modern painting. For instance, one segment represents the changing seasons with a battle between two women, one young and naked, the other an ugly hag; yet as they fight, the hag becomes more vigorous and youthful while the young woman is gradually worn down to a haggard old woman. Most of the images in the film take full advantage of animation potential by developing in constant metamorphosis, often defying the laws of everyday reality (as in a horse rising from the dead, or in disembodied mouths laughing).



**NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN**  
Courtesy of Svetlana Alexeieff Rockwell

Although NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN was immediately recognized as a brilliant work of art, the income from the animated short hardly paid for itself, let alone for the living expenses of the two filmmakers. Like Fischinger, Alexeieff and Parker found themselves making about 20 advertising films, in a variety of techniques, including stop-motion animation of colored top hats and of walking cigarettes, in direct rivalry with Fischinger.



**PARADE des SOULES**  
Courtesy of Svetlana Alexeieff Rockwell



MAP HISTORY

A CHANCE MEETING

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ALEXANDRE ALEXEIEFF

(1901-1982)

CLAIRE PARKER

(1910-1980)

Alexandre Alexeieff was born in Russia and started out in stage design in Paris. He then began making engravings, woodcuts and lithographs for book illustrations, working closely with his first wife, illustrator and designer Alexandra Grinevsky. Claire Parker was a wealthy Bostonian who left home for Paris in the 1930s and became Alexeieff's assistant. With Alexeieff's idea for an animated film using a pinscreen and Parker's financial backing, they produced their first film A NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN in 1933. They married in 1941 and during World War II went to America, where they made PASSING BY for the NFB. After the war, they returned to Paris and continued to make films with the pinscreen.

## Dr. Bill's Picks: Distributor:



1933 - NIGHT ON  
BALD  
MOUNTAIN  
(NUIT SUR LE  
MONT CHAUVE)

BFI, CS,  
Arthouse



1934 - SLEEPING  
BEAUTY (LA  
BELLE AU BOIS  
DORMANT)

BFI



1943 - PASSING  
BY (EN  
PASSANT)

NFB, MOMA



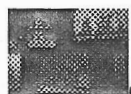
1963 - THE NOSE  
(LE NEZ)

CS,  
Arthouse



1972 - PICTURES  
AT AN  
EXHIBITION  
(TABLEAUX  
D'UNE  
EXPOSITION)

CS



1980 - THREE  
THEMES (TROIS  
THÈMES)

CS

For more on Parker, see Giannalberto Bendazzi's CLAIRE PARKER,  
AN APPRECIATION - in Animation World Magazine.

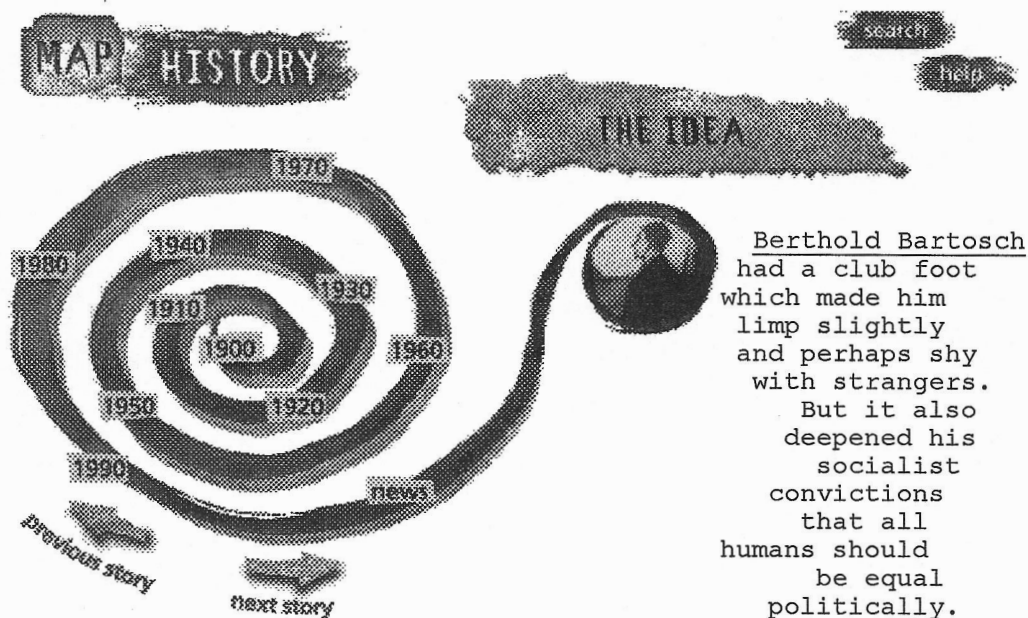
-Alexeieff photo, films 1,2,4,5,6 courtesy of Svetlana  
Alexeieff Rockwell.

-Film 3 © 1943 National Film Board of Canada

-Parker photo courtesy of the distributor, Cecile Starr.







Berthold Bartosch had a club foot which made him limp slightly and perhaps shy with strangers. But it also deepened his socialist convictions that all humans should be equal politically.



Berthold Bartosch  
Courtesy of  
William Moritz

He devoted his early years to making political animation films in Austria and, after 1919, in Berlin at the Institute for Cultural Research. In Berlin he met Lotte Reiniger, and began to contribute imaginative special effects (mostly nature: skies, storms, ocean waves) to her features THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED and DR. DOLITTLE.



THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE AHMED  
Primrose Film Productions Ltd.

In 1929, the publisher Kurt Wolff asked Bartosch if he would collaborate

with the Belgian  
artist Frans  
Masereel on making  
an animated film  
of one of Masereel's  
books of wood-cut  
prints, often called  
"NOVELS WITHOUT WORDS."  
After a few days,  
when Masereel found  
out how tedious and  
slow the frame-by-frame  
production of animation  
actually was, he bowed  
out of the project and  
simply signed over the  
rights to Bartosch,  
hoping Bartosch  
would finish it.

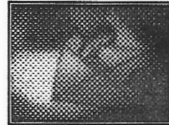
At that same  
time, a very  
beautiful woman  
fell in love with  
Bartosch, and  
they were married.  
Maria and Berthold  
feared the encroaching  
violence of the  
Nazi party in  
Germany and  
decided to  
move to Paris,  
where they  
became best  
friends with  
Alexandre Alexeieff  
(who remembered  
them looking  
like Vulcan  
and Venus).



Berthold Bartosch  
Courtesy of  
William Moritz

Bartosch  
rented a  
tiny room  
over the  
Vieux  
Colombier  
theatre,  
which  
had an  
attic

barely  
six-foot  
square.  
He set  
up his  
animation  
stand in  
the tiny  
attic and  
worked  
there daily  
for three  
years on his  
film THE IDEA.



THE IDEA  
With permission  
of the distributor, Cecile Starr

He preserved something  
of the wood-cut style  
of Masereel's figures  
in the jointed paper  
cut-outs he used (basically  
the same as Reiniger's  
silhouette figures, except  
with details drawn on  
the front to be seen).  
But he also transformed  
Masereel's story into a  
more universal and  
significant film by  
eliminating some of the  
satirical and ribald  
episodes in the book,  
and by establishing a  
cosmic grandeur for  
THE IDEA, a naked woman,  
who arises from a  
constellation and is  
followed by an ethereal  
glow. Bartosch created  
the glow by smearing soap  
on layers of glass in front  
of and behind the cut-out figure.



THE IDEA  
With permission  
of the distributor, Cecile Starr

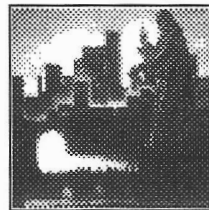
Bartosch also devised  
clear visual symbols,  
such as the confrontation

between THE IDEA (who is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity) and the capitalist for whom these words only mean the text on money.



THE IDEA  
With permission  
of the distributor, Cecile Starr

At 30 minutes length, THE IDEA is a monumental masterpiece, the first art film to use animation to express complex serious issues. It remains Bartosch's only surviving film. He shot a 15-minute color anti-war film ST. FRANCIS: DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES, and a short satirical film of Hitler, but both of these were destroyed during World War II, as was the original negative of THE IDEA, which fortunately was reconstructed from two surviving prints.



SAINT FRANCIS:  
NIGHTMARES AND DREAMS  
With permission of the  
distributor, Cecile Starr

Bartosch made some advertising films, including one for shoes, on which, Alexeieff said, Bartosch lavished extraordinary care because he appreciated the shoemaker's art so much (as he wore made-to-order prosthetic shoes). These, too, like the early political cartoons, seem to have disappeared. After the war, Bartosch worked for 20 years on a "film about the cosmos," a poem of light. But when he died in 1968,

no fragment of it could be found.



MAP HISTORY

JOIE DE VIVRE

search

help

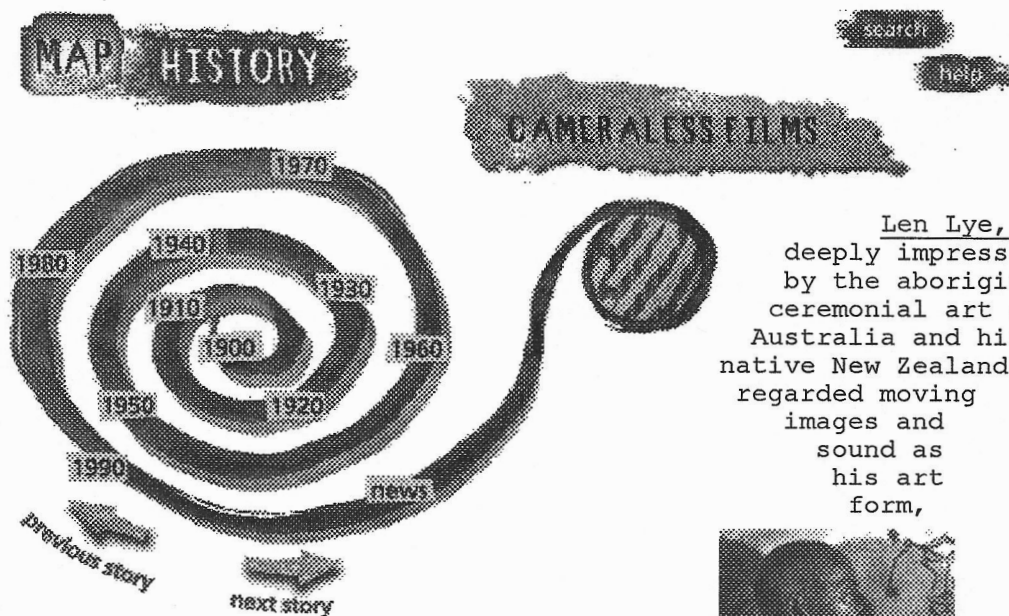
**ANTHONY GROSS**  
(1905-1984)

London native Anthony Gross began his career as a painter, drawing upon his extensive travels throughout Europe, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In the 1930s he married, settled in Paris and befriended Hector Hoppin, a wealthy American who joined forces with him to set up an animation studio. Influenced by Disney films and by figurative animators working in Paris at the time (Alexandre Alexeieff and Berthold Bartosch, for instance), Gross made a few inventive and lyrical films before the outbreak of World War II, when he became an official war artist and produced hundreds of watercolor paintings for the British government.

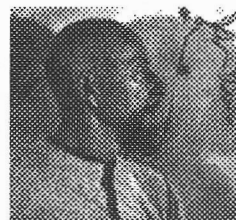
**Dr. Bill's Picks: Distributor:**1934 - JOIE DE  
VIVREMOMA, BFI1939 - AROUND  
THE WORLD IN  
EIGHTY DAYS  
(AN INDIAN  
FANTASY)BFI

Film 1 courtesy of Martin Fairfax-Jones & Associates/London.  
Film 2 and photo of Anthony Gross courtesy of Mrs. Mary West.

top



Len Lye, deeply impressed by the aboriginal ceremonial art of Australia and his native New Zealand, regarded moving images and sound as his art form,

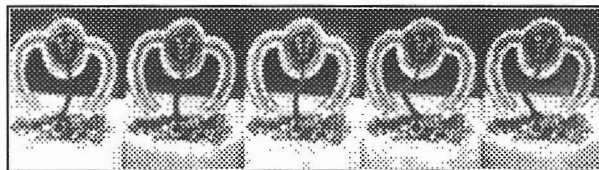


Copyright Len Lye Foundation 1996

which sometimes meant kinetic sculpture and sometimes meant animated films.

He experimented with painting directly on film in 1921 in Australia, but found the (silent) results quite unsatisfactory. In London, where he had joined up with Surrealists, he made an impressive ten-minute film based on a dream he had of aboriginal symbols, recreating the imagery with drawings and cut-outs.

TUSALAVA was funded by the London Film Society, which claimed to own the film, so Lye was never able to show it after 1929.



TUSALAVA  
Copyright Len Lye  
Foundation 1996

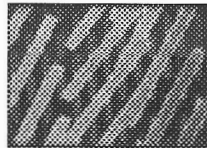
Lye went to work for the government film office in London, making advertising films for the Post Office and other public services. Since they gave him a free

hand artistically, he was able to paint directly on film in the 1936 COLOUR BOX with brilliant results. Some images were "batiked" so that one shape was taped off and others were painted around it, while other images were "doodled," drawn spontaneously with no pre-planning so that the subconscious (or Old Brain, as Lye called it) could speak directly.



COLOUR BOX  
Produced by the G.P.O.  
Film Unit. The British Post Office

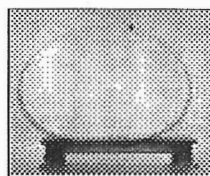
In RAINBOW DANCE and TRADE TATTOO Lye also exploited the possibilities of color printing, using the three-color-separations of Gasparcolor and Technicolor to assign separate images to each color, thus making complex layered images in which live-action figures could move through painted backgrounds or fields of drawn-on-film abstractions, prefiguring the complex optical printing of Hy Hirsh and Pat O'Neill.



TRADE TATTOO  
Produced by the G.P.O.  
Film Unit. The British Post Office

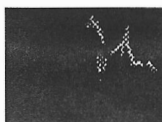
When Lye moved to America in 1944, he had much less opportunity to make films because they were expensive, even those made without a camera by painting directly on the film. He concentrated increasingly on making kinetic sculpture, in which mechanized metal parts twisted, flipped and vibrated to produce a refined musical voice simultaneously with a supple visual choreography.





THE UNIVERSE  
Copyright Len Lye  
Foundation 1996

In 1957 he created an exquisite film, FREE RADICALS, by scratching images on black film with a variety of tools, including a saw blade, to make parallel lines. The rough white lines dance in synchronization with ceremonial music of the African Bagirmi people, often in an uncanny visual approximation of bodily movements or tribal decorative designs, especially in the closing moments when broader scratches seem like swirled fly-whisks or head-dresses.



FREE RADICALS  
Copyright Len Lye  
Foundation 1996

FREE RADICALS won a major prize at the Brussels Festival in 1958. Lye's last two films, PARTICLES IN SPACE and TAL FARLOW are also scratched directly on black film.



MAP HISTORY

CAMERALESS FILMS

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**LEN LYE**  
(1901-1980)

Len Lye was born in New Zealand and studied animation in Australia. After a two-year hiatus in the Samoan Islands, he went to London, where he found work in the theater. Through the London Film Society, he made his first animated movie TUSALAVA in 1928. Under the direction of John Grierson of the Film Unit of the General Post Office, he produced several innovative films in the 1930s, including COLOUR BOX, the first cameraless film. Lye moved to the New York in 1944, where he mainly concentrated on his kinetic sculpture, although he did make five more films, most notably the award-winning FREE RADICALS.

**Dr. Bill's  
Picks:**

**Distributor:**



1928 -  
TUSALAVA

MOMA, BFI



1936 - COLOUR  
BOX

MOMA, LC, BFI



1936 - RAINBOW  
DANCE

LC



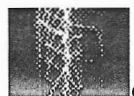
1937 - TRADE  
TATTOO

MOMA, LC



1952 - COLOR  
CRY

MOMA, LC  
CS, CC



1958 - FREE  
RADICALS  
(revised in 1979)

MOMA, LC  
CS, CC

A collection of Len Lye's sculptures, paintings, drawings, photographs and memorabilia along with many manuscripts and publications is housed at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

For more on Lye, contact the Len Lye Foundation:

c/o The Govett Brewster Art Gallery

Box 647

New Plymouth

New Zealand

Tel: (64-6) 7585149 Fax: (64-6) 7580390

(Principal sponsor: Technic Group Ltd, New Plymouth, New Zealand)

Also check out "Messiah of Motion," Lotti Golden's article about Lye.

-Photo of Len Lye ©1996 Len Lye Foundation.

-Films 1, 5, 6 © 1996 Len Lye Foundation.

-Films 2, 3, 4 Produced by the G.P.O. Film Unit. The British Post Office.

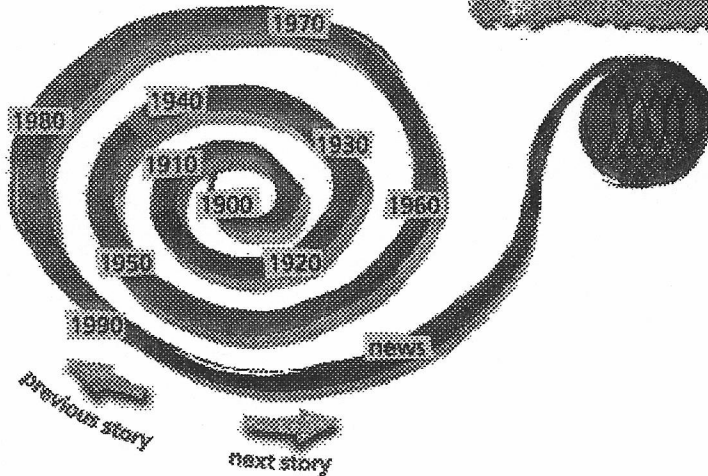


## MAP HISTORY

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## SEEING SOUND



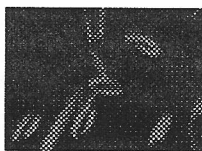
Mary  
Ellen  
Bute  
was a  
painter  
who  
longed  
to have  
her  
abstract  
color  
images  
move.



Photo by Ted Nemeth  
With permission of  
the distributor, Cecile Starr

She  
studied  
stage  
craft  
for  
lighting,  
learned  
music  
and  
electronics  
with  
Leo  
Theremin,  
and  
investigated  
Thomas  
Wilfred's  
"lunia"  
color-organ  
projections.

She turned to film  
in the early 1930s  
when musicologist  
Joseph Schillinger  
asked for her help  
animating an  
experimental film.  
Schillinger had  
developed a theory  
that reduced all  
music to a series  
of mathematical  
formulae, and he  
wanted to prove  
it by making a film  
that illustrated  
music with animated  
Kandinsky-like images.

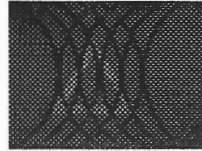


RHYTHM IN LIGHT  
Used by permission of the  
Yale University Film Study Center

After work on that  
film (which was never  
completed), Bute was  
convinced by Melville  
Webber, a director of  
live-action experimental  
films, that abstract  
effects could be  
produced by means  
other than drawing.  
He assisted her on  
her first completed  
film, the 1935 RHYTHM  
IN LIGHT, which used  
light and shadows  
reflected from cellophane,  
ping-pong balls,  
sparklers, egg  
beaters, bracelets  
and barber poles (all  
close-up, fragmented,  
distorted or out of  
focus so one never  
recognizes the source),  
along with bits  
of drawn animation  
-- all tightly synchronized  
to music by Edvard Grieg (she  
had seen Fischinger's  
STUDY NO.5 as part of  
the Universal newsreels).  
Her cameraman was always  
her husband, Ted Nemeth,  
who worked on documentaries  
and advertising films  
professionally.

Bute  
managed to  
rent her  
"Seeing  
Sound"  
films to  
theater  
owners  
and chains,  
and they  
played for  
months with  
first-run  
features  
across  
America.  
Millions  
saw her work

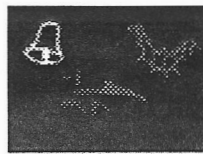
- many more than  
most other experi-  
mental animators -  
and the income  
from the screenings  
allowed Bute  
to make ten  
more abstract  
films over  
the next  
20 years.



ESCAPE  
With permission of  
the distributor, Cecile Starr

The 1939 ESCAPE,  
synchronized to  
the same Bach  
"Toccata" that  
Fischinger was  
working on  
simultaneously  
at the Disney  
Studios, was her  
first color film.

It was also her  
first use of some  
cel animation,  
along with mirror  
reflections of a  
comb and cut  
celluloid to  
suggest vaults  
and alleyways.



SPOOK SPORT  
With permission of  
the distributor, Cecile Starr

For the 1940 SPOOK  
SPORT she hired  
Norman McLaren to  
prepare drawn-on-film  
"characters" of ghosts  
and goblins and a  
crowing cock for  
the "Danse Macabre."  
Her finest film, the  
1941 TARANTELLA, uses  
Edwin Gerschefski's  
modernist music, for  
which she carefully  
drew her most exacting

animations, following  
the eccentric and  
dissonant turns of  
the dance with zigzags  
and irregular changes  
of direction. She  
also used cut-outs,  
some light effects  
and re-used some of  
McLaren's drawn-on-film  
effects.



TARANTELLA  
Used by permission of the  
Yale University Film Study Center

Her 1953  
PASTORALE is also  
very lovely,  
synchronizing moving  
colored lights in soft  
focus and amorphous  
flows of "vapors"  
with Bach's "Sheep  
May Safely Graze."



PASTORALE  
Used by permission of the  
Yale University Film Study Center

In 1954, Bute  
began using oscilloscope  
patterns to create her main  
"figures," although she  
surrounded them with drawn  
backgrounds and subtle  
lighting effects so they  
would be more exciting than  
the rather repetitive  
and primitive electronic  
shapes (which in fact were  
less interesting than  
those McLaren and Hy Hirsch  
had used). After 1956, she  
made live-action films,  
including a prize-winning  
feature of James Joyce's  
FINNEGANS WAKE.



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SEEKING SOUND

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MARY ELLEN BUTE  
(1906-1983)

Mary Ellen Bute grew up in Texas, where she studied painting. In the early 1930s, she was one of the first Americans to make abstract films, working for musician Joseph Schillinger on his 1934 film SYNCHRONIZATION and then producing her own film RHYTHM IN LIGHT in 1935. She went on to make ten more short films over the next 20 years. Although her works were initially screened throughout the U.S., they went unnoticed for years until feminists "re-discovered" them in the 1970s.

**Dr. Bill's  
Picks:**

**Distributor:**



1

1935 - RHYTHM  
IN LIGHT



2

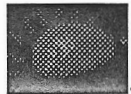
1940 - SPOOK  
SPORT - with  
animation by  
Norman McLaren

CS, CFS



3

1941 -  
TARANTELLA



4

1952 - POLKA  
GRAPH

CS, CFS



5

1953 -  
PASTORALE



6

1956 - MOOD  
CONTRASTS

CS, CFS



For more on Mary Ellen Bute, see William Moritz's article on her in Animation World Magazine.

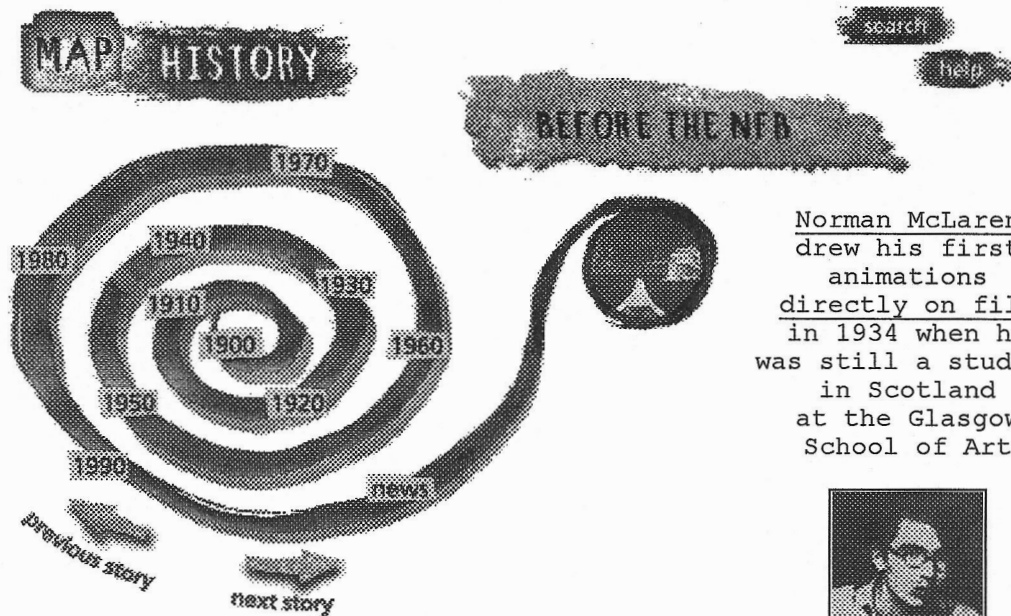
-Photo of Mary Ellen Bute courtesy of William Moritz.

-Films 1, 3 & 5 used by permission of Yale University Film Study Center.

-Films 2, 4 & 6 with permission of the distributor, Cecile Starr.



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Norman McLaren  
drew his first  
animations  
directly on film  
in 1934 when he  
was still a student  
in Scotland  
at the Glasgow  
School of Art.



© National Film  
Board of Canada

He also shot several live-action experimental films which used all the camera's potentials (slow motion, single frame, etc.) to express complex ideas, as in the anti-war film HELL UNLIMITED. One of these student films brought him to the attention of John Grierson, who offered him a job in London with the government GPO film-making unit. There he worked parallel with Len Lye on informational films, such as the witty surrealist LOVE ON THE WING, which encourages love letters with a flow of metamorphoses that enact complementary pairs.

GPO also sent McLaren to Spain as a cameraman for a documentary on their civil war. The bombing and fighting (which inspired Picasso's GUERNICA) proved so senselessly brutal and gruesome that McLaren's belief in pacifism became even stronger. When Germany invaded Poland, McLaren and his lover Guy Glover left Europe for America.



© National Film  
Board of Canada

In New York, McLaren continued to paint films directly on

filmstrips, some abstract  
(ALLEGRO, RHUMBA) and  
others, such as STARS  
AND STRIPES, designed to  
appeal to American producers  
and distributors. Unfortunately,  
only Mary Ellen Bute hired him to  
work on her film SPOOK SPORT.



STARS AND STRIPES  
© 1941 National Film Board of Canada

The Baroness Hilla von Rebay  
bought prints of several of  
his films for the Guggenheim  
collection, but ruined his  
only print of ALLEGRO (for  
which he had also drawn the  
soundtrack directly on the film)  
by repeated screenings. Glover also  
painted the abstract LIVING THE BLUES  
directly on film during this time.



© National Film  
Board of Canada

Finally in August 1941, John Grierson,  
who had helped establish the National  
Film Board of Canada, hired both Glover  
and McLaren to work there, where they  
would spend the rest of their lives.

After creating one spectacular abstract  
film, MARCHING THE COLOURS, Glover was  
transferred to the live-action unit as a  
producer and director. McLaren stayed  
in the animation unit, which was ideal  
since it allowed him to make a variety  
of films using whatever experimental  
technique intrigued him at the moment.



C'EST L'AVIRON  
© 1943 National Film Board of Canada

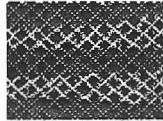
For a series of films illustrating  
Canadian folk songs, McLaren made  
the wonderful C'EST L'AVIRON (IT'S  
THE OAR), in which a cut-out of

the canoe's bow bobs hypnotically  
while drawn landscapes glide past.

He animated the art film A LITTLE  
PHANTASY ON A 19TH-CENTURY PAINTING

by subtly altering and extrapolating  
details of an Arnold Bocklin painting.

And he continued his abstract drawn-on-film  
experiments, culminating in 1949 with  
the brilliant BEGONE DULL CARE, a  
collaboration with Evelyn Lambart,  
in which backgrounds and foreground  
figures synchronize with  
Oscar Petersen jazz.



BEGONE DULL CARE  
© 1949 National Film Board of Canada

Also in 1949, McLaren  
traveled to China to  
teach animation workshops.  
On the way there and back,  
he stopped over in Los  
Angeles to visit  
Oskar Fischinger.



MAP HISTORY

BEFORE THE NFB

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**NORMAN McLAREN**  
(1914-1987)

Born in Scotland, Norman McLaren studied at the Glasgow School of Art and began painting directly on film when he was 19. In 1936, he was invited by John Grierson to work in London for the General Post Office's Film Unit. There he experimented with synthesized sound for the first time. In 1939 McLaren moved to New York, and two years later, he hooked up with Grierson again, this time at the National Film Board of Canada. McLaren made about 50 short films for the NFB and was instrumental in establishing its world-famous animation department.

### Dr. Bill's Picks: Distributor:



1943 - C'EST  
L'AVIRON (IT'S  
THE OAR)

NFB, BFI



1949 - BEGONE  
DULL CARE --  
with Evelyn  
Lambart

NFB, BFI, CFS  
MOMA, Facets



1952 -  
NEIGHBOURS\*

NFB, BFI, CFS  
MOMA



1965 - MOSAIC --  
with Evelyn  
Lambart

NFB, BFI, CFS  
MOMA



1967 - PAS DE  
DEUX

NFB, BFI, CFS  
MOMA, Facets



1971 -  
SYNCHROMY

NFB

\* Academy  
Award® winner.

Photograph of Norman McLaren © National Film Board of Canada.

Film 1 ©1943 National Film Board of Canada.

Film 2 ©1949 National Film Board of Canada.

Film 3 ©1952 National Film Board of Canada.

Film 4 ©1965 National Film Board of Canada.

MAP HISTORY

BEFORE THE NFB

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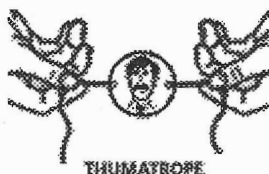
help



## CAMERALESS ANIMATION

Thumatrope, Phenakistoscope,  
Zoetrope, Flip-book, Scratch  
or Drawn On Film.

Animation has a history that goes back much further than celluloid film. In the 19th century, "animated" parlor toys were very popular, and some toys, like flip-books, zoetropes and phenakistoscopes, are still popular today.



THUMATROPE

The thumatrope is the simplest cameraless tool. It consists of a small disk attached to two pieces of string. There is a different image on each side of the disk, i.e., a face on one side and a mustache on the other. When one twirls the disk by twisting the string, the viewer sees a face with a mustache. This phenomenon is called "persistence of vision," the fundamental principle for making anything appear to move.

The phenakistoscope is a slotted disk with 8-12 consecutive images drawn around its perimeter. If one holds the toy up to a mirror (with the illustrated side facing the mirror) and spins the disk while looking through a slot, the images projected in the mirror will animate.



PHENAKISTOSCOPE



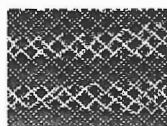
ZOETROPE

The zoetrope uses this same technique of looking through a slot at a sequence of drawn images. However, the drawn images are placed inside a slotted circular drum.

Flip-books are essentially hand-held short films. Each page in the flip-book has a slightly different drawing. When the pages are flipped, the images appear to move.



FLIP-BOOK

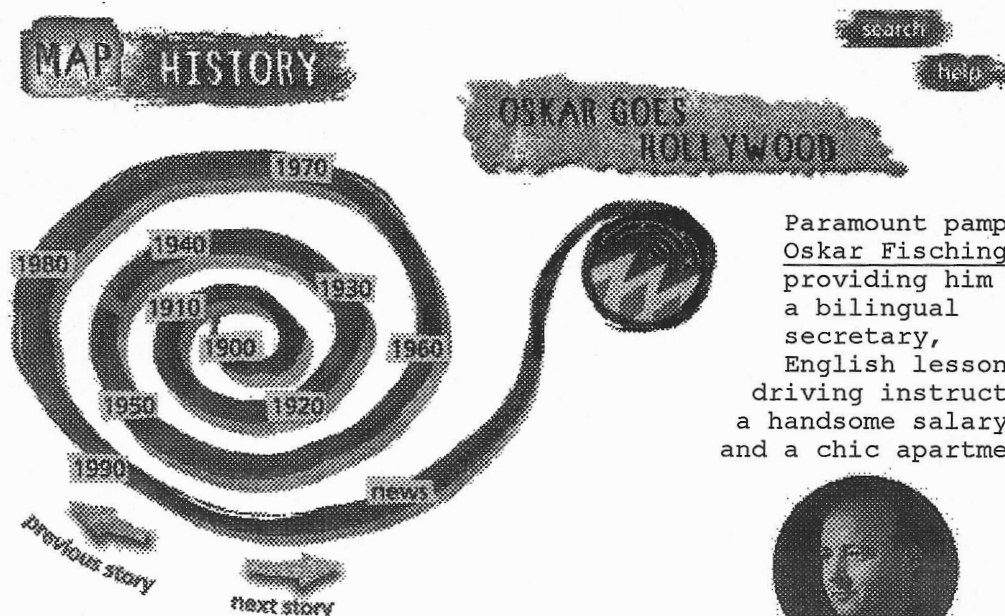


BEGONE BULL CARE  
by Norman McLaren  
and Evelyn Lambart  
© 1949 National Film  
Board of Canada

The most modern form of cameraless animation, developed in the 1930s, is done directly on a piece of celluloid film. Scratches made directly on black leader or marks made with pen or paint on clear leader have their own characteristic look when the filmstrip is projected. Some animators have developed intricate ways to create whole films scratched on black leader with dentist tools or stick pens, or drawn on clear leader with permanent markers or tiny handmade stamps. These films are complete as soon as the artwork is rendered, requiring no filming, developing or editing!



ALGORITHMS  
by Särbel Neubauer  
courtesy of the artist



Paramount pampered Oskar Fischinger, providing him with a bilingual secretary, English lessons, driving instructions, a handsome salary and a chic apartment.



Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

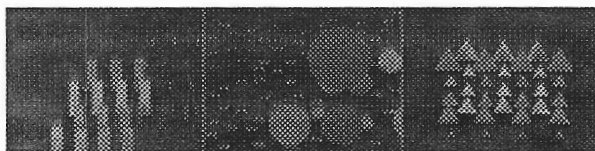
Dazzled by the dynamic art deco architecture of new buildings in New York and Hollywood, Fischinger designed a thrilling color short, full of concentric curves, exploding diamonds and dramatic angles. Unfortunately Paramount wanted to print the film in black-and-white, because the feature they wanted to use it in, BIG BROADCAST of 1937, was not in color. Fischinger quit, and his abstract segment (renamed ALLEGRETTO) was not seen until 1943, when he was able to buy it back from Paramount with a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation.



ALLEGRETTO

Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

Fischinger fared better at MGM. He produced AN OPTICAL POEM, which played in theaters during 1938 and 1939 as a short with prestige features. But since the film belonged to MGM, he received no royalties and earned only a few hundred dollars during the months he was actually animating.



OPTICAL POEM  
Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

Unable to afford his own studio as he had in Berlin, Fischinger went to New York, hoping for a commission for the World's Fair. He had two one-man shows of his paintings, and met Mary Ellen Bute and the Baroness Hilla von Rebay, Curator of the Guggenheim Foundation and Museum. But no commission materialized.



Baroness Hilla von Rebay  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

Because he could not really support his family, he returned to Hollywood and took a job at Disney on FANTASIA. He animated the opening Bach "Toccata and Fuge" sequence for that film, but all his designs were altered, both in color and form (mostly so that everything looked like something representational). Again, Fischinger quit in disgust.

Orson Welles hired him to work on a feature; and although that film was never finished, it allowed Fischinger to use the time and space to work on his own film RADIO DYNAMICS. Meanwhile when war broke out, Fischinger was officially labeled an "enemy



alien" and could not  
work in any media job.  
It was then that his  
earlier contact with  
the Baroness Rebay  
paid off. She offered  
him a series of grants  
from the Guggenheim  
Foundation to produce  
AN AMERICAN MARCH,  
ALLEGRETTO and a  
film synchronized to  
Bach's "Brandenburg  
Concerto No. 3."



**RADIO DYNAMICS**  
Courtesy of the Fischinger Archive

Since Fischinger used much  
of the money from these  
grants to support his  
family of five children  
(Alexander Laszlo quipped  
to Moholy-Nagy, "Our old  
friend Fischinger isn't  
doing too well in Hollywood:  
he's managed to make more  
babies than films."), he had  
to work out a cheap way to  
finish the Bach film. He  
finally decided to paint  
the images in oils on canvas  
and to record each brush  
stroke with a single frame  
of movie film -- thus  
costing only the price of  
paint and canvas (which he  
already had) and the film stock.



**MOTION PAINTING**  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

The resulting film,  
MOTION PAINTING NO.  
1, was greeted as  
a brilliant masterpiece  
by everyone except Hilla  
Rebay, who never offered  
Fischinger another grant.  
MOTION PAINTING received  
the Grand Prize at the  
Brussels Experimental  
Film Festival in 1949.  
But despite prizes and  
acclaim, and many dozens  
of proposals and applications,  
Fischinger never received funding

for a further film from any  
source. Although he painted  
several hundred more canvases  
during the last 20 years of  
his life, MOTION PAINTING  
remains his last film,  
except for a  
few commercials  
he made for TV  
in the early 1950s.

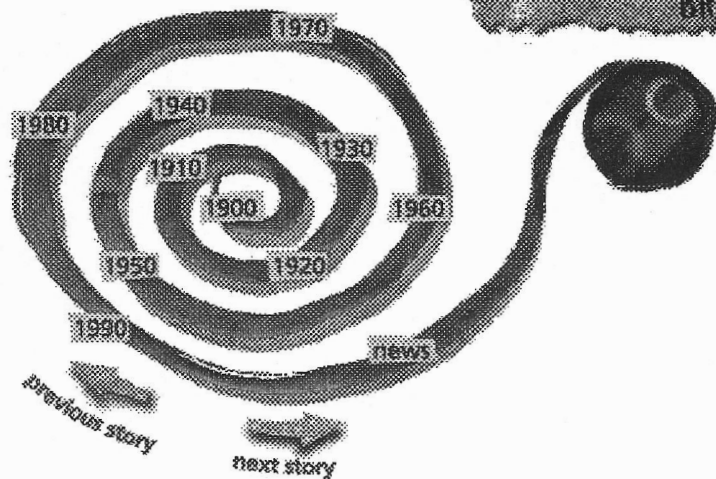


## MAP HISTORY

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## THE WHITNEY BROTHERS



When war broke out in Europe in September 1939, 17-year-old James Whitney was in England studying painting, while his 22-year-old brother John Whitney was in Paris studying new music with Rene Leibowitz.



James in England, 1939  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
Copyright © 1997  
All Rights Reserved

They came back to their hometown, Los Angeles, which turned out to be a lively intellectual center at the time due to the influx of European refugees, ranging from Man Ray to Arnold Schoenberg (Leibowitz's teacher). Picasso's GUERNICA was on display at the Stendhal Gallery, and a few weeks later Oskar Fischinger had a show of his abstract paintings and a screening of one of his films there.



James and John, 1946  
Photo by  
Edmund Teske  
Courtesy of  
John, Jr., Michael,  
Mark Whitney,  
Copyright © 1997  
All Rights Reserved

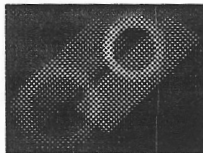
The Whitney brothers were excited by the technical brilliance of Fischinger's films, but somewhat disturbed by his use of symphonic music, which seemed old-fashioned to them.

John constructed an animation stand and other equipment in the apartment they shared in Pasadena. James designed geometric shapes on small index cards and created positive and negative stencils that could be painted or air-brushed onto the cards. They intended these modular elements to function like tones in Schoenberg's musical theories, and submitted them to musical permutations (such as inversions, counterpoints, chord clustering and retrogressions).



James Animating, 1944  
Photo by  
Edmund Teske  
Courtesy of  
John, Jr., Michael,  
Mark Whitney  
Copyright © 1997  
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John worked on inventing a mechanism to create sound, while James continued to make visual VARIATIONS, through hundreds of hours of hand animation. This work culminated in the 1942 VARIATIONS ON A CIRCLE, a film that achieves a truly musical beauty, ranging from dynamic flickers of contrasting colors to sinuous movements cutting through circular shapes.



VARIATIONS  
ON A CIRCLE  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney  
Copyright © 1997  
All Rights Reserved

The brothers never actually collaborated on a given film. In fact they hardly saw each other, since John worked a night shift in an aircraft factory, and James worked a day shift at the California Institute of Technology (or Cal Tech) drawing fine details of machine parts that were being invented there -- work he was assigned to do as a

conscientious objector to the war.

By 1942, John had developed a system of pendulums that could be carefully calibrated to swing at a certain frequency. Attached to the top, a variable slit exposed the precise vibration equivalent directly onto the soundtrack area of a film strip, thus creating music directly without instruments. This pioneer electronic music could produce pure tones, gliding chromatic glissandos and reverberating pulsations unknown to ordinary musical instruments.



John with pendulums,  
1949  
Photo by  
Lou Jacobs  
Courtesy of  
John, Jr., Michael,  
Mark Whitney,  
Copyright © 1987  
All Rights Reserved

John also constructed an optical printer and an animation stand that allowed them to film the pure direct light shining through openings in stencils rather than the reflected light from drawings. John made two films with this system, FILM EXERCISE NO. 1 and FILM EXERCISE NO. 5, while James made FILM EXERCISE No. 2 and 3 and the masterpiece FILM EXERCISE NO. 4, which during eight minutes develops not only a powerful visual sonata of violent fluctuations, glaring neon colors and cool nocturnal blues, but also a haunting musical composition that reflects the terrors of war.



EXERCISE #4  
Courtesy of  
John, Jr.,  
Michael,  
Mark Whitney,  
Copyright  
© 1987  
All Rights  
Reserved

James took the FILM EXERCISES to New York, where they were screened at the Guggenheim Museum. But during the screening the Baroness Hilla von Rebay screamed for the sound to be turned off, assuming that the projector was simply malfunctioning. Despite this setback, the FILM EXERCISES went on to receive the prize for best sound a few years later at the Brussels Experimental Film Festival.



Baroness Hilla von Rebay  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

At the end of the war, James was devastated to discover that at his Cal Tech job he had been drawing plans related to the atomic bomb project. He withdrew from filmmaking for several years while he came to terms with his feelings of guilt and responsibility.



MAP HISTORY

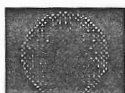
THE WHITNEY  
BROTHERS

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JAMES WHITNEY  
(1921-1982)

James Whitney lived all his life in the Los Angeles area. In the early 1940s, he collaborated with his brother John Whitney on a series of abstract films called FILM EXERCISES. James went on to make five more films reflecting his interests in Jungian philosophy, alchemy, yoga, Taoism and consciousness expansion. His last films were planned as a series about the four elements of the universe: fire (DWIJA), water (WU MING), air (KANG JING XIANG), and earth (LI). But James died before editing KANG JING XIANG and produced only a fragment of LI.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:    Distributor:**1944 - FILM  
EXERCISE  
NO. 41955 - YANTRA      BFI1963 - LAPIS      LC

1974 - DWIJA



1977 - WU MING

1982 - KANG JING  
XIANG - edited  
posthumously by  
James Whitney's  
nephew Mark and  
by William Moritz

All the works of James and John Whitney are in a collection at  
the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences:  
333 South La Cienega Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
USA  
Tel: (310) 247-3000

For more on James Whitney, contact his nephew Michael Whitney: [whitney@isdn.net](mailto:whitney@isdn.net).

Photo by William Moritz.

Films courtesy of John, Jr., Michael, Mark Whitney, copyright ©1997,  
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MAP HISTORY

THE WHITNEY  
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JOHN WHITNEY  
(1917-1995)

Los Angeles native John Whitney was a pioneer in technological art, kineticism and motion graphics. In the 1940s, after attending Pomona College in California and traveling abroad, he made a series of abstract films with his brother James Whitney. In 1960, John founded Motion Graphics Inc. and produced title sequences for television and film. Six years later, he received a three-year grant from IBM, with which he made PERMUTATIONS using a digital computer. John created some of the first techniques in "motion control" of camera, zoom and artwork, which paved the way for the development of the star gate slit-scan sequences in the films 2001 and STAR WARS. For this and other groundbreaking work, John was awarded the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences "Medal of Commendation for Cinematic Pioneering" in 1986.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:    Distributor:**



1944 - FILM  
EXERCISE # 5

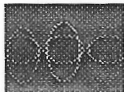


1970 - OSAKA  
1-2-3



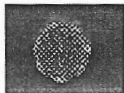
1972 - MATRIX III

MOMA, BFI  
CFS, PF



1975 -  
ARABESQUE

MOMA, PF



1991 -  
MOONDRUM

Mystic

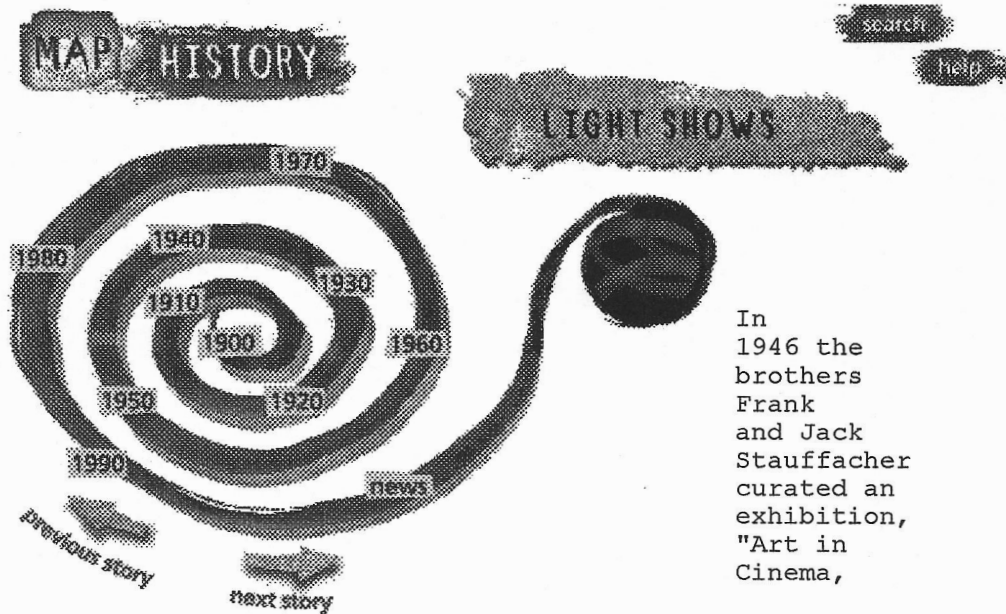
A collection of James and John Whitney's films is in the  
archives of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.  
333 South La Cienega Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
USA  
Tel: (310) 247-3000

For more on John Whitney, contact his son Michael Whitney: [whitney@isdn.net](mailto:whitney@isdn.net).

Also check out the 1984 videodisc THE WORLD OF JOHN WHITNEY,  
part of Pioneer Laserdisc's "Visual Pathfinders"  
series. Or check out these works by John Whitney:  
Digital Harmony. Petersborough, NH: McGraw-Hill, 1980.  
EXPERIMENTS IN MOTION GRAPHICS (Pyramid).  
A PERSONAL SEARCH: FOR THE COMPLIMENTARITY OF  
MUSIC AND VISUAL ART (Pyramid).

-Photo of John Whitney by Michael Whitney.  
-Photo and films courtesy of John, Jr., Michael, Mark Whitney,  
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In  
1946 the  
brothers  
Frank  
and Jack  
Stauffacher  
curated an  
exhibition,  
"Art in  
Cinema,

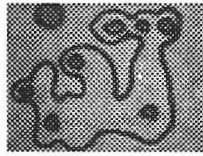
a Symposium on the  
Avantgarde Film," for the  
San Francisco Museum of Art.  
The festival showed classic live-  
action experimental films as well  
as recent works such as Maya  
Deren's PSYCHODRAMAS. To  
organize the festival, the  
Stauffacher brothers turned  
to local art students for  
help. Among them was  
Harry Smith.



Collection of  
Harry Smith Archives

Smith grew up in Oregon and  
Washington, with Theosophist  
parents and considerable  
contact with the Native  
Americans in that region.  
He had been wavering  
between art and anthropology  
in his college studies,  
until the Stauffachers sent  
him to Los Angeles to try  
to convince Oskar Fischinger and  
the Whitney brothers to travel to  
San Francisco for their programs.  
After meeting the filmmakers, Smith  
made a decision: He realized that  
Fischinger and James Whitney had  
found a vehicle that could combine  
mystical and artistic expressions;

and, lacking a camera, he began  
painting directly on film stock.



FILM #1  
 Courtesy and © 1996  
 Anthology Film Archives  
 and Harry Smith Archives

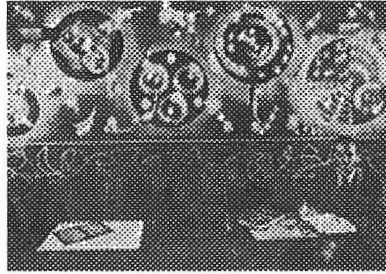
Since neither Len Lye  
 nor Norman McLaren were  
 screened at the Art in  
 Cinema, Smith had no idea  
 that other filmmakers  
 had already used this  
 technique. In any case,  
 his films had a very  
 different, personal  
 style. His first film  
 (FILM NO. 1) centered  
 on surrealist figures  
 drawn with a fine-  
 tipped pen, unlike  
McLaren's thicker  
 brushed lines. His  
 next films,  
FILM NO. 2 and  
FILM NO. 3  
 (he referred to them  
 only by number), used "batiking"  
 to animate large geometric  
 shapes, as in some Fischinger  
 films, but here with the  
 pulsing vibrations of the paint.



FILM #3  
 Courtesy and © 1996  
 Anthology Film Archives  
 and Harry Smith Archives

These films were shown at  
 the successive Art in Cinema  
 festivals (which occurred  
 yearly until the early 1950s)  
 accompanied by live jazz. Smith  
 also showed them at jazz clubs  
 like Bop City (where he also  
 painted large abstract murals)  
 as "LIGHT SHOWS" with musical  
 sets by performers like Dizzy  
 Gillespie and Thelonius Monk.  
 Although Smith never made sound  
 prints of the films, the images  
 are constructed on musical  
 principles that synchronize

easily with Gillespie's  
"Manteca" and "Guarachi  
Guaro," two of  
Smith's favorites.



Harry Smith in front of his murals  
Photo by Hy Hirsh  
Courtesy of Robert E. Johnson

On the strength of  
artistry in these  
first films, Smith  
received a grant  
from the Baroness  
Hilla von Rebay  
to produce  
further abstract  
films for the  
Guggenheim Museum.  
Smith moved to New  
York, where he began  
conventional animation  
of geometric forms on  
paper and cels, the  
first of which he  
called "CIRCULAR  
TENSIONS: HOMAGE  
TO OSKAR FISCHINGER."



FILM #5  
Courtesy and © 1996  
Anthology Film Archives  
and Harry Smith Archives

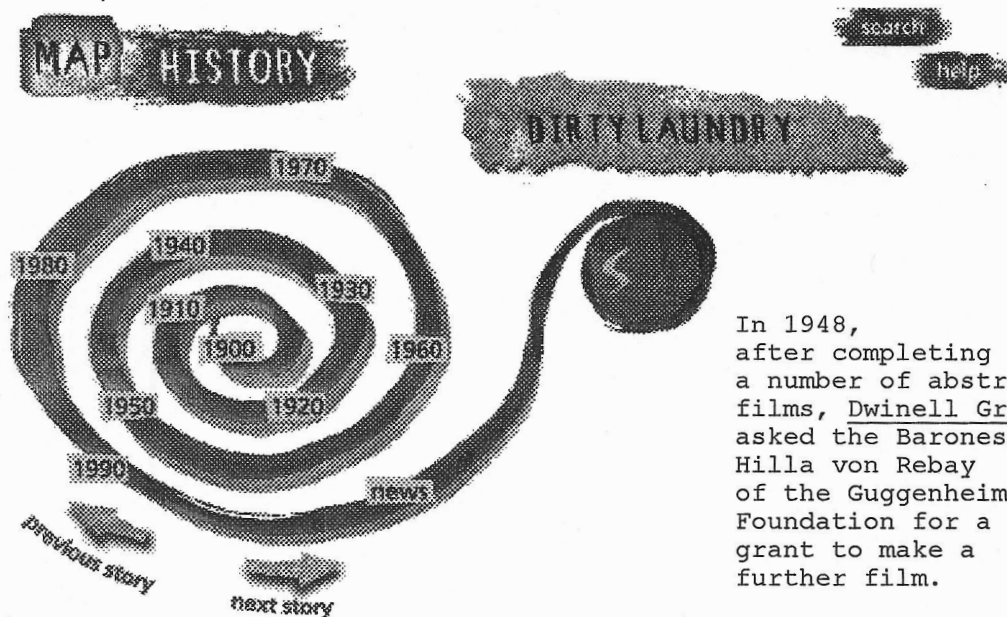
He began to combine  
the animated strips  
by using multiple  
projectors, both  
film and slide, and  
re-photographing the  
results from the screen.  
Using this technique,  
he prepared his  
masterpiece, FILM  
NO. 7 (COLOR  
STUDY), which  
rivals the  
complexity of  
Kandinsky's  
paintings  
and the

ingenious  
choreography  
of  
Fischinger's  
works.



FILM #7  
Courtesy and © 1996  
Anthology Film Archives  
and Harry Smith Archives





In 1948,  
after completing  
a number of abstract  
films, Dwinell Grant  
asked the Baroness  
Hilla von Rebay  
of the Guggenheim  
Foundation for a  
grant to make a  
further film.

The Baroness  
said she  
already  
had  
enough  
good  
filmmakers,  
but needed a  
critical theory  
for abstract  
animation comparable to  
Kandinsky's "Concerning the  
Spiritual in Art." Grant  
told her he was no writer  
or critic, but she remained  
adamant: a critical  
text or no grant.

Grant finally said he  
would try, and Rebay  
informed him that as a  
Fellow of the Guggenheim  
Foundation, he would have  
to appear in a suit at all  
times in public, and must  
live in a respectable apartment  
on Park Avenue near the Museum.  
A considerable chunk of his  
grant money went into  
these expenses.



Dwinell Grant  
Photo by Ray Whitman  
as it appears in  
Experimental Animation  
by Robert Russett  
and Cecile Starr



Baroness Hilla von Rebay  
Courtesy of the  
Fischinger Archive

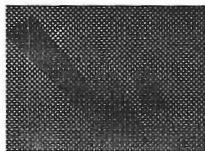
After reading Grant's text, Rebay summoned him to her office and angrily screamed at him that what he had written was complete nonsense, garbage, a waste of Guggenheim money. She told him he had to repay the grant immediately. "But I can't," he replied. "You had me spend much of it on clothing and rent." "Then you will have to work at the museum until you have paid off this debt," she said.

When the handsome Grant reluctantly agreed and asked what he could do, the Baroness smiled at him, raised an eyebrow, reached into a desk drawer and drew out a handful of lingerie. "Launder these!" she commanded. Grant took them to the men's restroom and washed them, then brought them back to Rebay's office (she was gone) and hung them on the desk, shelves and lamps. He left, never to return.

Dwinell Grant had started out as an abstract painter in Ohio, living in relative isolation from other abstract filmmakers in California and New York. He decided to make abstract films while teaching both art and theater production at a college. His first film, COMPOSITION 1 (THEMIS), uses theatrical lighting



to give geometric figures  
(made of paper, glass and  
wood) a mysterious presence  
 as they move about.



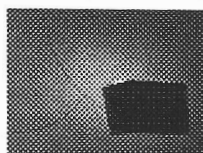
COMPOSITION 1  
 Copyright by Dwainell Grant

In 1941 he made

COMPOSITION 2  
 (CONTRATHEMIS)

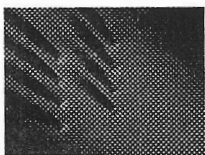
with conventional  
drawings on paper  
lit from beneath  
 and above with  
 dramatic effect.

Although Grant  
 did not know  
Fischinger's work,  
 the crescent  
 shapes swirling  
 around in some  
 scenes remarkably  
 parallel the forms  
Fischinger used in the  
STUDIES. Grant's  
 very original  
 (silent) design,  
 however, has a  
 sparser, more  
 constructivist  
 feel than the  
 romantic sensualism  
 of Fischinger's  
 visual music.



COMPOSITION 2  
 Copyright by Dwainell Grant

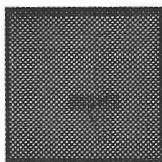
COMPOSITION 3 returned to  
stop-motion of wire, modeled  
clay and other solid objects  
 with moving light effects. In  
 1943 he made an experiment with  
 pure color flickers, COLOR  
SEQUENCE, but decided the results  
 were too disquieting and rarely  
 screened the film -- until the  
 1970s when experimental filmmakers  
 embraced it as a pioneer work.



COMPOSITION 3  
Copyright by Dwinell Grant

The 1945 COMPOSITION

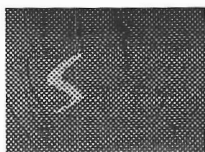
4, perhaps his most fascinating work, was composed for stereoscopic projection, with the viewer wearing polaroid glasses to see the depth effects -- years before the Hollywood 3-D craze. Grant's animation (some drawings, some paper cut-outs) plays with the antithesis between hard geometric shapes, mostly square, which push forward and pull back, and the slinky movements of a slender line which can curve like a snake around corners, behind and in front.



COMPOSITION 4  
Copyright by Dwinell Grant

Following his experience with the Baroness, Grant made COMPOSITION 5, but was dispirited and gave up abstract filmmaking.

With the publication of Cecile Starr's Experimental Animation in 1976, he was rediscovered, and his work screened internationally in the Film as Film Art Exhibition. Encouraged by the positive reception of his films by a young audience, he made COMPOSITION 6 in 1985.



COMPOSITION 5  
Copyright by Dwinell Grant

MAP HISTORY

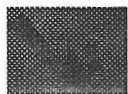
DIRTY LAUNDRY

search

help

**DWINELL GRANT**  
(1912 -1991)

Dwinell Grant graduated from the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio. Between 1935 and 1941, he taught art and drama at the Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. He was a renowned abstract painter, with exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad, before he turned to filmmaking and moved to New York City in the 1940s. After his fifth abstract COMPOSITION film, he devoted himself to making medical and educational films, co-founding a production company (Sturgis-Grant) in New York.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:      Distributor:**

1940 -  
COMPOSITION 1  
(THEMIS)



1941 -  
COMPOSITION 2  
(CONTRATHEMIS)

CS

1943 - COLOR  
SEQUENCE

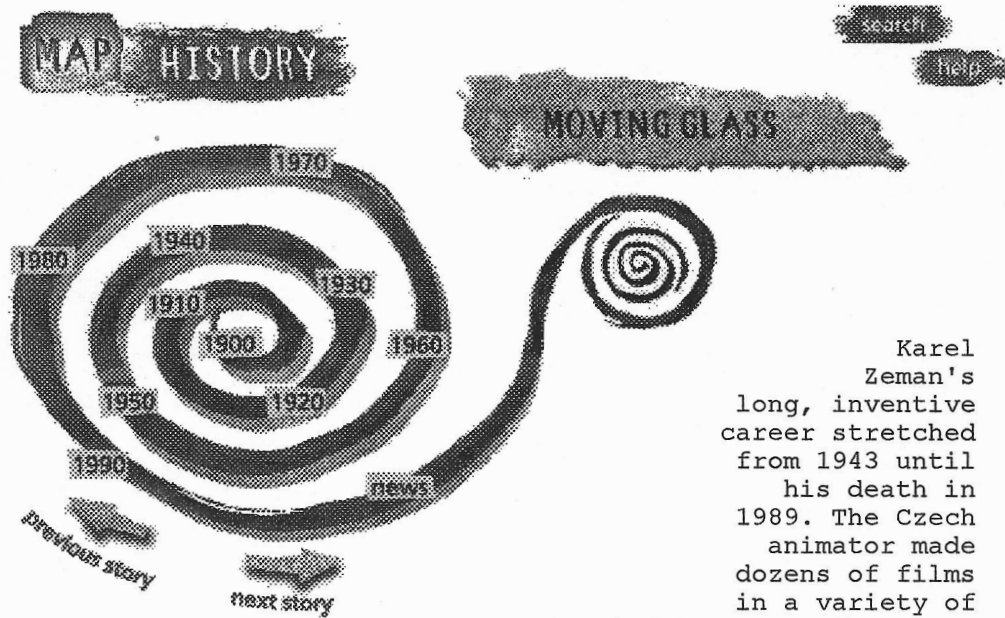
CS

1945 -  
COMPOSITION 4  
(THREE THEMES  
IN VARIATION)

CS

-Photograph and films copyright by Dwinell Grant.

top



Karel Zeman's long, inventive career stretched from 1943 until his death in 1989. The Czech animator made dozens of films in a variety of techniques including drawn, cut-out and puppet animation. Most of these are meant for children, but have a sophisticated wit and visual style that enchants adults as well.

His most wonderful film remains the 1948 short INSPIRATION, framed with a live-action sequence of a glass-blower staring out his window at

a fierce  
rainstorm,  
looking for  
inspiration  
for new glass  
designs. Cleverly  
blending the rain  
and the window  
to an enchanted  
realm of glass,  
Zeman plays  
out a fantasy  
of glass figurines  
moving supply  
through a glass  
landscape. Scenes  
include a Harlequin  
pursuing his  
Columbine, horses  
pulling a chariot  
and ripples in  
a mirror-lake.  
In the end, the  
fantasy resolves  
back to the  
glass-blower,  
who returns

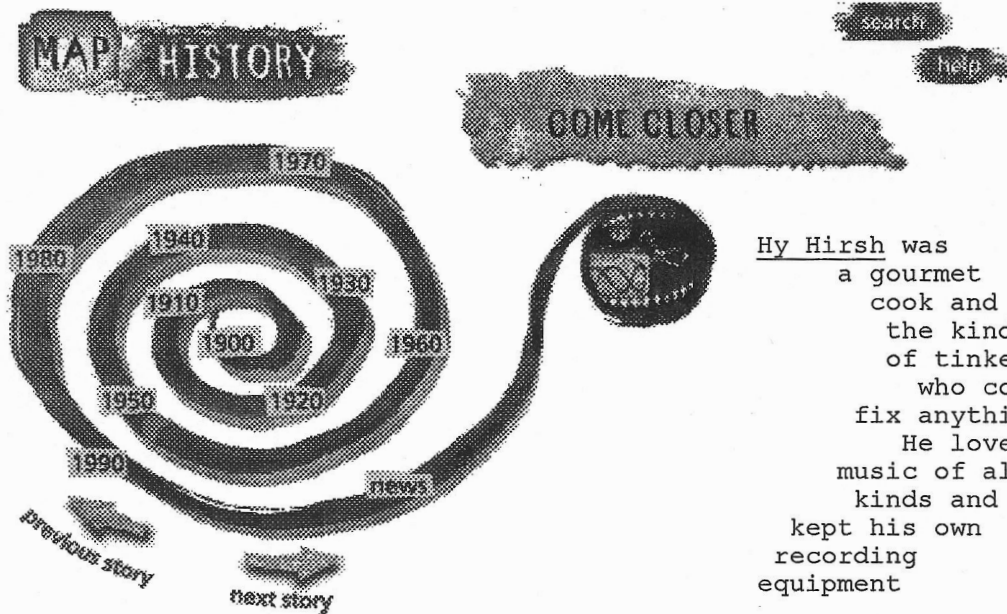
to his work  
with fresh  
ideas.

Zeman combines  
an astonishing  
technique -- in  
this case, the  
use of cycles  
of real glass  
figurines in  
slightly different  
positions, which  
animate remarkably  
smoothly -- with  
an exquisite sense  
of timing, movement  
and narrative structure.

Beginning in 1952,  
Zeman made a series  
of features that  
cleverly combined live  
actors, animation and  
special effects to tell  
such stories as A JOURNEY  
INTO PREHISTORY,

BARON MUNCHHAUSEN,  
and Jules Verne's  
THE DIABOLIC INVENTION  
(which warns of the  
dangers of technology  
run rampant).

Zeman used sets  
painted in the  
style of Victorian  
illustrations,  
which allows  
a remarkable  
blend of live  
actors seeming  
to wander through  
animated drawn  
settings. The  
great success of  
these science-  
fiction and  
fantasy features  
is tribute to  
Zeman's sense  
of humor and  
story-telling  
abilities as  
well as his  
technical  
originality.



Hy Hirsh was  
a gourmet  
cook and  
the kind  
of tinker  
who could  
fix anything.  
He loved  
music of all  
kinds and  
kept his own  
recording  
equipment



EVEN AS YOU AND I  
Courtesy of the  
Creative Film Society

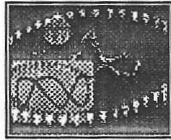
ready to  
document live  
performances,  
of which he had  
many. He had worked in  
Hollywood as a cameraman  
in the 1930s, and appeared  
in a 1937 experimental short  
EVEN AS YOU AND I. But he  
left L.A. for San Francisco to  
escape an unhappy marriage -- with  
his gentle, charming personality, women  
found Hirsh hopelessly attractive,  
and he himself was all too  
susceptible to  
the gorgeous  
women he  
filmed and shot  
for fashion spreads.  
In San Francisco,  
he worked partly for the  
San Francisco Museum of Art and  
partly freelance. He befriended  
Harry Smith and Jordan Belson and  
exposed them to film technology,  
including an optical printer that he had  
built (which allowed Smith to duplicate  
each frame of his drawn-on-filmstrip  
films so that the movement  
would be slightly steadier).



Courtesy of the  
Creative Film Society

Hirsh  
also shot  
live-action  
experimental  
films for Sidney  
Peterson, but never  
found time to do his  
own projects, until  
he became intrigued  
with three technological  
gimmicks: the oscilloscope  
pattern, stereo vision  
and the oil-wipe screen,  
which he conquered and  
used in several films.

Oscilloscope patterns form the main  
figures in ENERI and the 3-D COME  
CLOSER, for which he chose music  
from his extensive live archive --  
African drumming for ENERI



ENERI  
Courtesy of the Creative Film Society

(which is Irene, the name  
of his lover at the time,  
spelled backwards) and  
Caribbean steel drum  
carnival music for  
COME CLOSER.

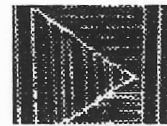


COME CLOSER  
Courtesy of the Creative Film Society

Using his optical printer,  
he could select parts of an  
oscilloscope pattern and  
deploy them in a certain  
color exactly where he  
wanted them in a film frame.  
He combined them with  
some backgrounds made with  
traditional drawn animation -- such as  
the rolling bars in ENERI which seem to  
make the sinuous oscilloscope lines rush

faster. The oil-wipe technique also created elements that Hirsh could color and choreograph.

Like Harry Smith,  
Hirsh cut together  
 collages of film  
 to be played live in  
 jazz clubs as a light show.  
 He continued to do this when  
 his magazine photo assignments  
 caused him to move to Amsterdam  
 and Paris. In his films he began  
 to create ever more complex layered  
 imagery (reminiscent of Len Lye's  
TRADE TATTOO). Live-action figures  
 might have animated circles or drawn  
 wavy patterns flying through them,  
 then, as in the brilliant SCRATCH PAD,



SCRATCH PAD  
 Courtesy of the  
 Creative Film Society

Hirsh might scratch  
 directly onto this  
 elaborately composite  
 image with rough jiggly lines  
 that followed imagined energy flows.  
 Two of Hirsh's films received prizes at  
 the Brussels Fair of 1958. About  
 the same time, Hirsh helped the  
 Polish animator Walerian Borowczyk  
 defect to Paris, where he lived in  
Hirsh's apartment building, and dedicated  
 a film RENAISSANCE to Hirsh's memory.



Courtesy of the Creative Film Society

Hy Hirsh died of a heart attack in 1961  
 while driving his car in the Place de  
 la Concorde in Paris; he simply  
 slumped over the wheel and the  
 car stopped. Because he traveled  
 a great deal internationally on photo  
 assignments, he usually carried his  
 hashish in film cans which were labeled  
 "exposed." When the police discovered  
 this, they impounded his entire  
 estate -- what was left after  
 friendly neighbors had pilfered  
 film cans for themselves. When  
 the police finally released  
Hirsh's property, several of  
 his films were missing entirely  
 and have never been found. At  
 his funeral some dozen women



appeared who mostly did not  
know each other,

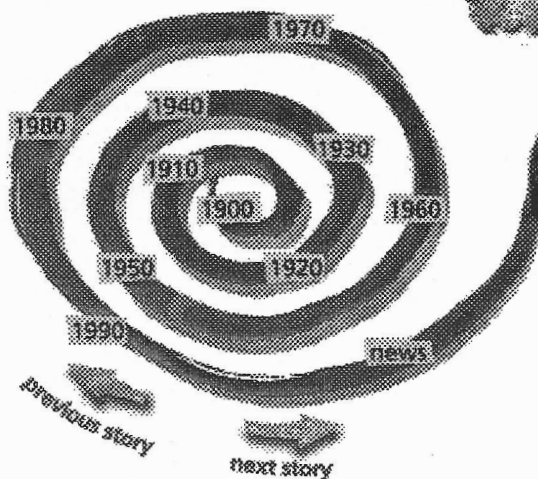


Courtesy of the  
Creative Film Society

but the  
memory of  
dear sensuous  
Hirsh was so sweet,  
they did not fight.

top

## MAP HISTORY



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help

## BEAT ZEN FILMS

No less than his friend Harry Smith, the abstract painter Jordan Belson was very excited by the films of Oskar Fischinger and James Whitney at the 1946 Art in Cinema Festival in San Francisco.



Self-Portrait ca. 1975  
Courtesy of Jordan Belson

Belson began working with conventional animation of drawings and cut-outs, and his

first film TRANSMUTATION was screened at the second Art in Cinema Festival in 1947.

Fischinger was so impressed with the sense of design and the dynamic structure of the black-and-white TRANSMUTATION that he wrote the Baroness Hilla von Rebay to recommend Belson for a Guggenheim Fellowship.



Belson's second film, the

1948 IMPROVISATION #1 (also black-and-white) confirmed his talent, and Rebay did give him a grant, which allowed him to travel to New York. There he

encountered not only the wonders of the Guggenheim Museum, but also the "Lumia" color-

light-phenomena of the Danish artist Thomas Wilfred. The Lumia produced supple polymorphous streams of changing colors

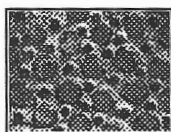
either projected on large surfaces by the Clavilux console panel or in self-contained Lumia boxes which resembled television sets.

The sense of non-geometric evolution of form and the incredibly lush color sensations in these Lumia projections inspired Belson.



MANDALA  
Courtesy of Jordan Belson

Back in San Francisco, he began creating color artwork on long scrolls, which contained not only sequential steps of movements, but also variations in textures from the repeated painting and air-brushing of similar shapes. His masterpiece of this technique, the 1953 MANDALA, synchronizes these images to Balinese gamelan music that perfectly matches the glistening pointillist discs of the visuals with its metallic reverberations.

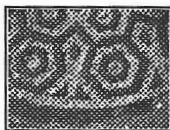


BOP SCOTCH  
Courtesy of Jordan Belson

At the same time Belson

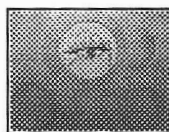
shot a brilliant film,  
 BOP SCOTCH, for which he  
 took single frames of  
 pavement, decorative  
 motifs, and textures  
 found on the streets  
     of San Francisco.  
     Synchronized with  
     lively bop music to  
     reinforce the notion  
     of a happy trip over  
     familiar ground, the

film contains an  
 intense vision in  
 which a studded  
 manhole cover becomes  
 a mandala -- the  
 quintessence of  
 the Beat Zen perception  
 of sudden revelation  
 in ordinary daily  
 experience.



**BOP SCOTCH**  
 Courtesy of Jordan Belson

Belson also animated two  
 films for the Australian  
 painter Patricia Marx, who  
 had emigrated to California  
 and had become good friends with  
Harry Smith. Using her painted  
 images, Belson created a sense  
     of motion by using the same  
     single-exposure method as  
     in BOP SCOTCH. In her film OBMARU,



**OBMARU**  
 Courtesy of the Creative Film Society

the images contain suggestions  
 of hands and faces among  
 abstractions, and give a  
 certain sense of a  
 Vodoun possession ritual.  
 Her film THINGS TO COME presents  
 a pure abstraction in which  
 the expressionist gestures  
 of New York painters have  
 been replaced with  
 genuine motion.

MAP HISTORY

BEAT ZEN FILMS

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help

**HARRY SMITH**  
**(1923-1991)**

Harry Smith was raised in Washington by parents with an interest in alchemy and occultism. In college, he worked for an anthropologist and lived for a period with a Native American tribe. Around 1945, he moved to San Francisco and became part of a circle of avant-garde artists. In addition to producing more than a dozen films, Smith was a painter, anthropologist, alchemist, and music archivist. His three-volume record collection FOLKWAYS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC was an important influence on such musicians as Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:    Distributor:**

1946 - FILM NO. 1  
(A STRANGE  
DREAM)

FC, MF  
AFA, Arthouse



1947-1949 - FILM  
NO. 3  
(INTERWOVEN)

FC, MF  
AFA, Arthouse



1952 - FILM NO. 7  
(COLOR STUDY)

FC, MF  
AFA, Arthouse



1957, 1962-1976 -  
FILM NO. 10  
(MIRROR  
ANIMATIONS)

FC, MF  
AFA, Arthouse



1957, 1962-1976 -  
FILM NO. 11  
(MIRROR  
ANIMATIONS)

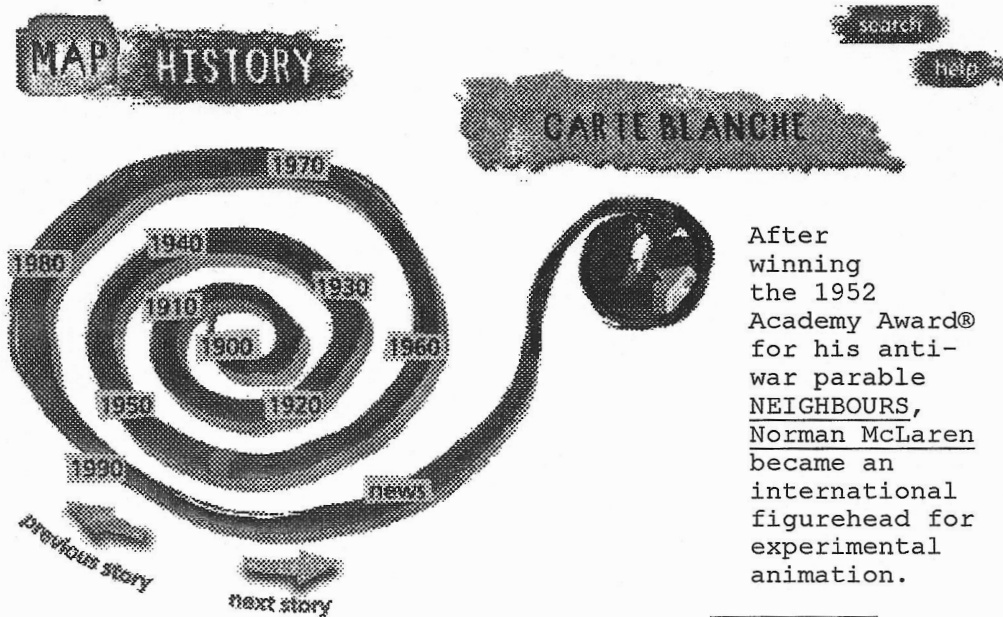
FC, MF  
AFA, Arthouse

For more on Harry Smith, contact Rani Singh at the  
Harry Smith Archives:

P.O. Box 1269  
Stuyvesant Station  
New York, NY 10009  
USA  
e-mail: [rani22@aol.com](mailto:rani22@aol.com)

- Photograph collection of Harry Smith Archives.
- All films courtesy and © 1996 Anthology Film Archives and  
Harry Smith Archives.





After winning the 1952 Academy Award® for his anti-war parable NEIGHBOURS, Norman McLaren became an international figurehead for experimental animation.



© National Film Board of Canada

The NFB gave him carte blanche to pursue his whims -- a trust he honored with more than 20 fine films over the next 30 years. NEIGHBOURS used live actors as if they were puppets, animated frame by frame in a technique McLaren called "pixillation." As usual, McLaren developed this technique because it expressed something essential about the subject of the film: two hopelessly stupid men fighting to the point of death over a flower growing on their property line. The men are absurd in their



NEIGHBOURS  
© 1952 National Film Board of Canada

posturing and escalating rivalry, and the pixillation gives them a jerkiness and a ludicrous haste in the end when they kill each other.



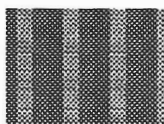
NEIGHBOURS  
© 1952 National Film Board of Canada

In his 1955 film, the exciting BLINKETY BLANK, McLaren extended his drawn-on-film technique into a new area by exploiting the single frame and its after-image effect to suggest overlapping combinations that do not strictly exist except in the viewer's mind. In his witty MOSAIC



MOSAIC  
© 1965 National Film Board of Canada

he created a new film by superimposing two previous works, LINES HORIZONTAL and LINES VERTICAL, so that only the points where lines intersect appear as tiny moving and flickering squares. In SYNCHROMY McLaren made the drawn soundtrack the main visual imagery, so that one sees precisely what one hears.



SYNCHROMY  
© 1971 National Film Board of Canada

For the lovely PAS DE DEUX, he used slow-motion footage of ballet dancers which he, with an animator's eye, optically printed so that one can see, all at once, 12 successive positions of an arm or leg in motion,



fragmenting and  
reassembling each  
gesture to emphasize  
its grace and sensuality.

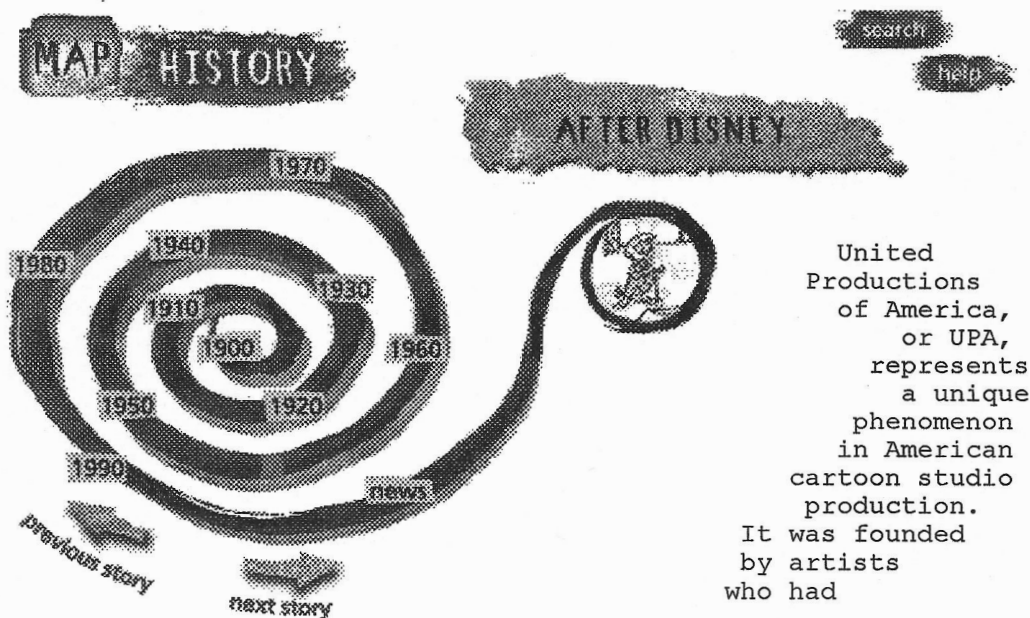


PAS de DEUX

© 1987 National Film Board of Canada

After McLaren's death in  
1987, Donald McWilliams  
made a fascinating 2-hour  
documentary, THE CREATIVE  
PROCESS, which demonstrates  
all of McLaren's experiments  
(including many unfinished  
or abandoned projects)  
with behind-the-  
scenes footage  
and photos.

top



United  
Productions  
of America,  
or UPA,  
represents  
a unique  
phenomenon  
in American  
cartoon studio  
production.  
It was founded  
by artists  
who had



John Hixley  
Courtesy of the  
Hixley Studio

worked at Disney  
on films like FANTASIA,  
but left during the strike  
that plagued Disney in the  
early 1940s. Though originally  
intended as an artist-owned  
cooperative, it became the property  
of Steve Bosustow when several  
people left to avoid the anti-  
communist witchhunts in Hollywood.  
Nonetheless, the studio  
did operate for about ten  
years (1948-1958) on a  
more democratic level  
than any other, with all  
departments and skills  
considered equally important,  
thus favoring better-balanced  
films marked by excellence  
in every aspect. The  
studio could also boast  
an extraordinary collection  
of artists on staff.  
For example, Jules Engel  
and Herb Klynn,



Jules Engel  
courtesy of the artist

two painters who had  
recently shared an  
abstract painting  
show with Oskar Fischinger,  
were responsible for  
UPA's design and color.  
UPA consistently  
aimed at a goal  
of using Modern Art  
and creating meaningful  
subject matter with  
victimless humor. They  
achieved success in a wide  
range of films, from the  
faithful visualization  
following the original  
illustrations of James  
Thurber's UNICORN IN  
THE GARDEN



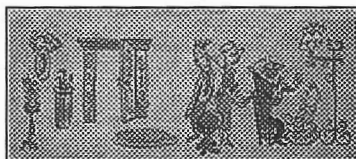
Original layout design  
from MADELINE  
courtesy of Jules Engel

(Bill Hurtz) or Ludwig  
Bemelmans' MADELINE  
(Bobe Cannon), to  
the biting satire  
of the legal system  
using the old ballad  
"Frankie and Johnny"  
(ROOTY TOOT TOOT,  
John Hubley),  
to the surrealistic  
treatment of Edgar  
Allen Poe's horror  
story TELL-TALE HEART  
(Ted Parmelee). Even the  
bread-and-butter MR. MAGOO  
cartoons that helped  
finance the studio  
featured imaginative  
design. The quin-  
tessential UPA film,  
the Academy Award-winning®  
GERALD McBOING BOING



Original layout design  
from GERALD McBOING BOING  
courtesy of Jules Engel

neatly demonstrates  
their accomplishment. The  
story by Dr. Seuss has a serious  
theme encouraging appreciation  
of handicapped people's special  
abilities; music by a serious  
composer Gail Kubik; design by  
Jules Engel who often let the  
characters float in pure  
carefully chosen background  
colors, from bright yellow to  
soft blues and purples, to  
express moods in various scenes;  
and animation by Bobe Cannon,  
who created stylized movements  
expressive of character and let  
figures remain still if they  
had nothing to do.

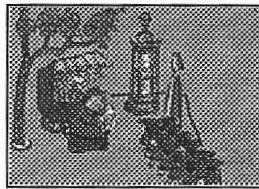


Original layout design  
from GERALD McBOING BOING  
courtesy of Jules Engel

In 1956 UPA produced a series  
of films introducing artists  
to children, ranging from  
the medieval Japanese woodblock  
printer Sharaku (DAY OF THE FOX,  
Alan Zaslove) to abstract  
expressionism (PERFORMING PAINTER,  
Ernie Pintoff and John Whitney).  
UPA also made animated titles for  
hit features such as THE FOURPOSTER,  
which reached an even  
wider audience.

The influence of  
UPA was enormous.  
Animators who worked  
there such as George  
Dunning and Gene Deitch  
also enjoyed long careers  
after their UPA experience.  
The UPA cartoons screened  
internationally, opening  
the eyes of many artists  
to the possibilities of  
imaginative animation.  
Grant Munro and  
Evelyn Lambart

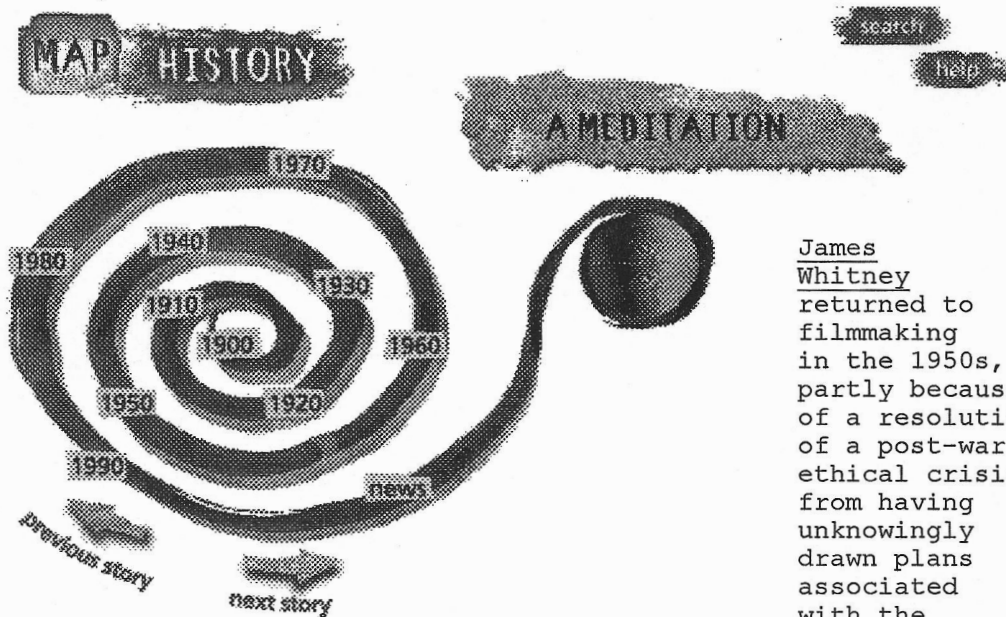
reminisced at an  
Ottawa festival  
about how often  
the whole NFB  
animation unit



Original layout design  
from MADÉLINE  
courtesy of Juliet Engel

would stand  
in line in the snow  
in front of cinemas  
waiting to get in just to  
see the UPA short -- and  
sometimes come back a second  
time the same evening. Animators  
in many Eastern European countries  
felt liberated by the UPA successes.  
The Zagreb school in particular  
was truly made possible by the  
imaginative simplicity of UPA shorts.

top



James Whitney returned to filmmaking in the 1950s, partly because of a resolution of a post-war ethical crisis from having unknowingly drawn plans associated with the atomic bomb project (see The Whitney Brothers),



Photo by Edmund Taske  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
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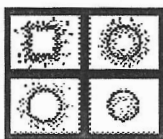
and partly because of his friendship with Jordan Belson, with whom he shared artistic and mystical interests. The Indian Sri Ramana Maharshi had repeatedly told Whitney that abstract films could be a significant spiritual vehicle for him, and so for several years, Whitney prepared elaborate richly colored paintings and drawings that charted trajectories of movements. The paintings and drawings were meant as choreography studies for a film, YANTRA, which was to have served as a vehicle for meditation.



**YANTRA**

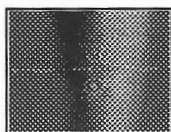
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
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The animation  
itself in YANTRA  
consists entirely of  
dots, painted by hand  
with black ink on 4" X 5"  
index cards. Some of these  
cards contain full-field  
dot patterns, repeated on  
hundreds of cards to produce  
a complex movement within the  
field, while others represent  
only a part of a geometric shape -  
- an outline of a circle or a cluster  
of dots twisting in a spiral.



INDEX CARDS  
USED IN YANTRA  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
Copyright © 1997  
All Rights Reserved

Whitney (always working at home)  
shot the cards on black-and-white  
film, which he then optically  
printed onto color film using a  
variety of color filters to give  
different hues to various  
configurations. He also  
developed the film  
in his bathtub so that  
he could "solarize"  
some scenes -  
- a technique  
of flashing the  
film to light  
during developing  
that he had learned  
from Edmund Teske,  
who used  
it in still  
photography  
to give an  
irregular,  
organic  
texture to  
images.

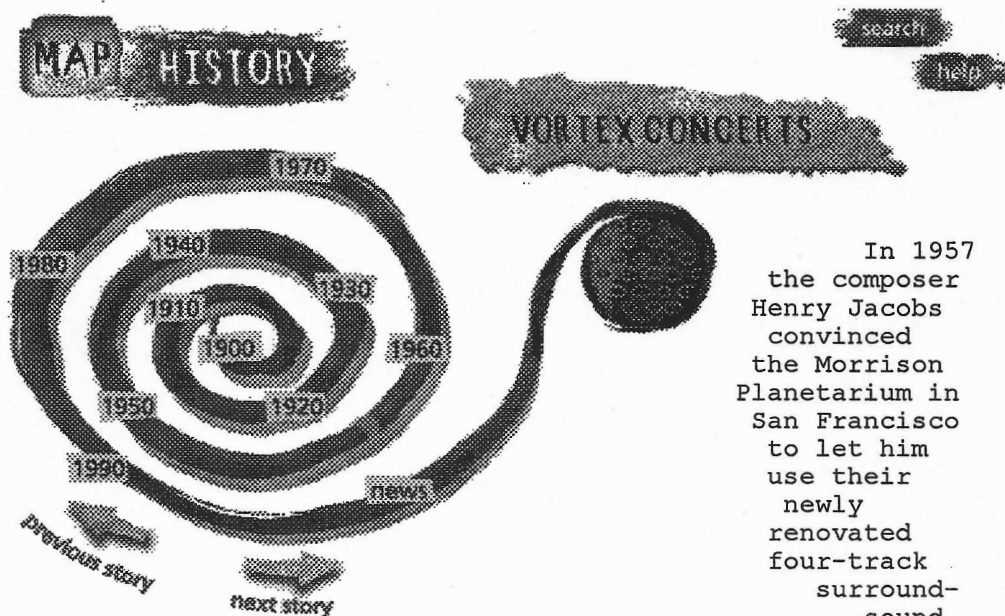


YANTRA  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
Copyright © 1997  
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Whitney finished  
the film in 1955,  
but did not know what  
to do with it, as there  
were not many distribution  
sources for experimental  
films -- and he rather  
liked it as a silent  
meditation piece,  
which made it even  
more "unsalable." This  
would change a few years  
later, however, thanks to  
Jordan Belson and the  
Vortex Concerts.





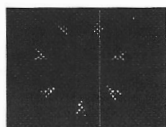


In 1957  
the composer  
Henry Jacobs  
convinced  
the Morrison  
Planetarium in  
San Francisco  
to let him  
use their  
newly  
renovated  
four-track  
surround-  
sound  
system for a  
series of  
concerts.

Jacobs commissioned  
new pieces of electronic music  
from international composers and  
asked Jordan Belson to prepare visual  
imagery that could be projected on the  
dome during each number.

Having access  
to the planetarium  
"starscape" projectors,  
as well as conventional  
film and slide projectors,  
opened for Belson the possibility  
of rivaling Thomas Wilfred's light  
projections, which had impressed  
him years earlier in New York. Belson  
used filmed footage of his own, as well  
as that of his friends Hy Hirsh and James  
Whitney and his wife at the time, Jane Conger.

Belson linked  
Whitney's film  
YANTRA to a  
composition by the  
Dutchman Henk Badings  
called "Cain and Abel,"  
and the match worked so  
well that Whitney had it printed  
on the film for distribution.  
Whitney also animated a short  
visual accompaniment to  
Pierre Henry's "High Voltage."



HIGH VOLTAGE  
Courtesy of John, Jr.,  
Michael, Mark Whitney,  
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Belson himself  
filmed long scroll  
paintings through a  
kaleidoscope to produce  
dazzling flows of richly  
textured imagery, some of  
which he issued separately  
as the film RAGA.



RAGA  
Courtesy of Jordan Belson

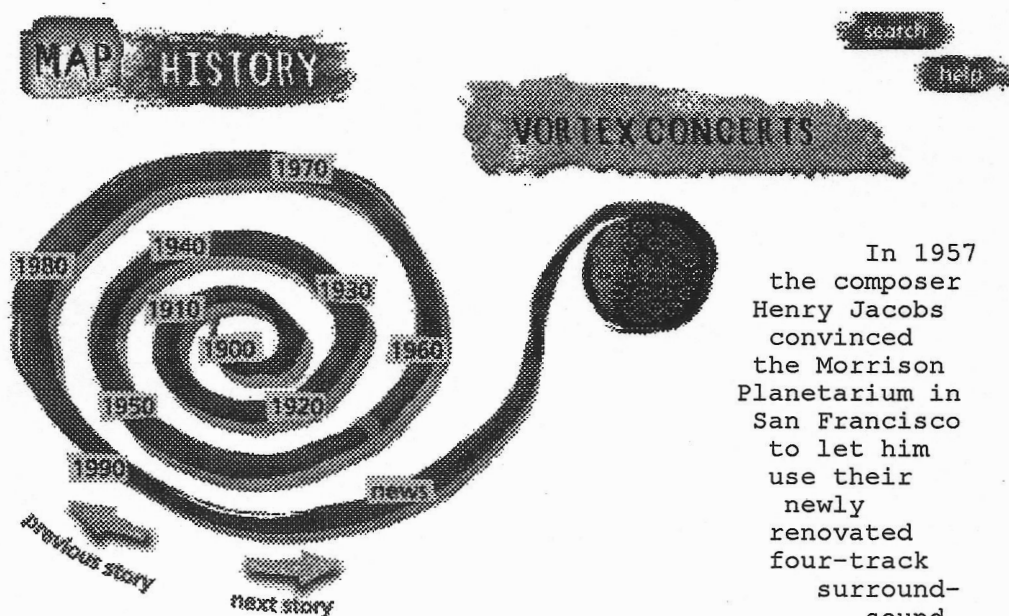
Conger's cut-out mandalas also  
formed the basis for a film  
for Henry Jacobs' music LOGOS.



LOGOS  
Courtesy of the Creative Film Society

These Vortex  
Concerts proved  
so successful that  
they continued for  
three years and  
traveled to the  
Brussels World Fair  
in 1958.





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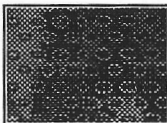
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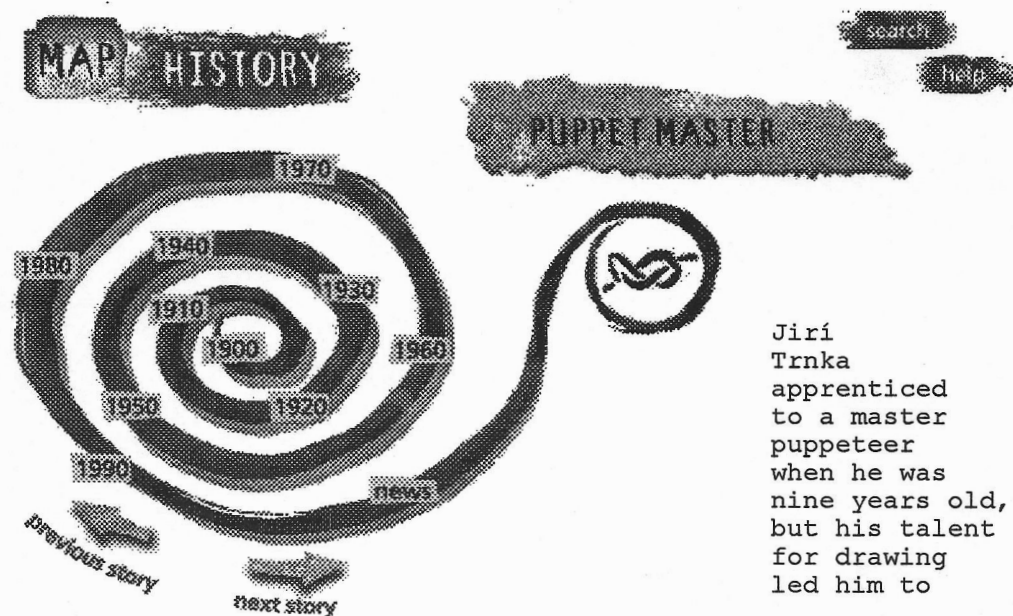
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Jirí  
Trnka  
apprenticed  
to a master  
puppeteer  
when he was  
nine years old,  
but his talent  
for drawing  
led him to

work in  
illustration,  
and he became  
famous in Czechoslovakia  
for his children's books  
during World War II. When  
the state animation studio  
opened after the war, Trnka  
worked on conventional  
drawn cartoons before  
making two groundbreaking  
stylized animations,  
THE GIFT and PERAK  
AND THE SS.

The 16-minute  
color film THE GIFT  
depicts a drunk writer  
trying to explain his  
oddly evolving script  
(satirical of bourgeois  
luxury) to a producer.  
Although the film  
seemed too radical  
at the time, it prefigured  
some of UPA's achievements  
and made a lasting impression  
on key Zagreb  
animators. The 14-minute  
black-and-white PERAK AND  
THE SS, with its more  
conventional story (a  
chimney sweep foils  
German SS guards with  
his nimble climbing  
skills), was much more  
successful, though the  
figure of Perak is  
an all-black  
abstraction,  
and the

design is quite  
unconventional  
in cartoon terms.

In  
1946,  
Trnka  
returned  
to his work with  
puppets, establishing  
a Czech puppet animation  
unit with 12 friends. There  
he produced 19 films (including  
six feature-length animations)  
and several commercials over the  
next 18 years. Many of these films  
give new expression to folk art  
and legends -- an important  
function of animation  
in smaller countries.  
Many are meant for  
children, but also  
contain ideas and  
satirical and lyrical  
touches that appeal to adults.  
As Trnka himself observed,  
"Unlike Disney, I do not have  
a child's soul; I do not  
suffer from any  
illusions."

The 22-minute  
SONG OF THE PRAIRIE  
is a wicked parody  
of American western  
film conventions.

The features THE  
EMPEROR'S NIGHTINGALE  
and MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S  
DREAM present exquisite,  
lush retellings of these  
well-known stories, with  
subtle nuances of expression  
derived from the movement and  
lighting of wooden figures.  
ARCHANGEL GABRIEL AND MRS. GOOSE  
uses a decidedly adult tale  
by Giovanni Boccaccio to  
levy satire against  
credulous trust  
in authority.

But Trnka's masterpiece,  
his last film THE HAND,  
achieves a powerful universal  
political statement against  
totalitarianism. While the  
inspiration and target may  
seem the Soviet-Russian  
domination of small Eastern

European countries (and indeed Trnka supported Czech resistance), Trnka carefully extended the parameters to cover other social ills. For instance, the animated Hand, which forces a potter (who only wants to make flowerpots) to sculpt a monument praising it, comes to represent Hitler's Nazi salute as well as the Statue of Liberty's raised torch. Again, with consummate artistry, Trnka manages to give the illusion of different expressions crossing the face of the potter (the carved wooden head remains the same, though lighting and position change), and it is hard not to identify with him.

THE HAND received instant international acclaim, winning an Academy Award in the US. But unfortunately in Czechoslovakia, Trnka fell into official disfavor because of it. He died four years later without making another film.

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MAP HISTORY

1970

1980

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THE ODD COUPLE

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The Grand Prize (\$10,000 cash!) at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair went to a remarkable film, HOME, made by two young Polish artists, Walerian Borowczyk and Jan Lenica.



**BOROWCZYK      LENICA**  
Borowczyk photo  
Courtesy of Walerian Borowczyk  
Lenica photo by Jeanloup Sieff, 1967  
Courtesy of Jan Lenica

They had both studied music and art before deciding to make films. They shared a sense of surrealistic absurdity and grotesquery, and got along well, although they were definitely complementary personalities: Borowczyk handsome, outgoing and witty; and Lenica smaller, quiet, almost shy, but observant and clever, with biting perceptions and lovable warmth.

They had collaborated on five animated films before HOME, three one-minute spots for newsreels, and two ten-minute satires, ONCE UPON A TIME and SENTIMENT REWARDED.

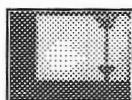




ONCE UPON A TIME

Courtesy of Lenka  
and Borowczyk

These show already  
the personalities  
of the two authors:  
Lenica's love of  
modifying old  
graphics with  
intricate details,  
and Borowczyk's use  
of rougher torn-paper  
figures made up of  
several parts that  
are not joined together  
and move in a loose cluster.



HOME

Courtesy of  
Lenka and  
Borowczyk

HOME represents  
an astonishing  
breakthrough  
structurally,  
not a linear  
plot development,  
but rather an  
"interactive" collection  
of highly charged images  
that force the viewer  
to make the connections.  
The coding of the imagery  
into obscure symbols may  
have been a device to elude  
censorship in the Soviet-controlled  
Poland, but in the hands of  
these artists, it also  
becomes a compelling  
way of exploring  
fundamental  
problems of  
human relationships  
in modern society.

The film begins  
and ends with the  
facade of an old  
apartment building  
under surveillance  
by a flickering,  
noisy object.

Inside the  
building we see a

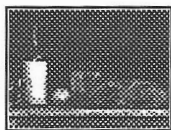
woman (played by  
Ligia Branice)



HOME  
Courtesy of Lenica  
and Borowczyk

seven times;  
at each sound  
of approaching  
footsteps, she  
looks up and  
listens expectantly.

The six episodes  
in between presumably  
picture her thoughts  
or fantasies: a mechanical  
tool scanning a room and  
brain (an extension of  
the outside surveillance?);  
a man or men performing  
some kind of dance or  
martial art (what is her  
absent husband doing?);



HOME  
Courtesy of Lenica  
and Borowczyk

a chilling "still life"  
in which a wig scavenges  
around a table top, chasing  
an orange, drinking milk  
from a bottle, breaking a  
glass, and scurrying away  
at the sound of the surveillance  
object (the woman's empty-headed  
existence?); in a repeated  
loop, a man coming in the  
door and hanging his hat  
on a hook, only to disappear  
and reappear again entering  
the door (homecoming anticipated,  
dehumanization to robot?); a  
lyrical sequence of old photographs  
of luxury vacations with tinted  
flowers (her memories or hopes?);  
and finally the woman (now live-  
action) approaching a man,  
but as she fondles and kisses  
him (with a scarlet-tinted  
flower in her hand), he  
becomes a hat-dummy  
and crumbles away  
under her touch.

The film impressively  
evokes moods, from  
paranoia to nostalgia,  
which play a significant  
role in the effect and meaning.

The variety of memorable  
imagery (it is tempting  
to see Lenica in the  
lithograph mechanisms  
and Borowczyk in the  
table-top objects) and  
the superb musical score  
of Wlodzimierz Kotonski  
(ranging from eerie electronic  
pulses to a toy piano accompanying  
the looped homecoming man) make  
the haunting puzzle fascinating  
even after repeated viewings.



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MAP HISTORY

THE ODD COUPLE

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help



WALERIAN BOROWCZYK  
(b. 1932)

Born in Wojnowice, Poland, Walerian Borowczyk studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow. In 1953, he won a national prize in Poland for his lithographic work. He designed posters for films starting in 1955, and two years later teamed up with Jan Lenica to make a handful of outstanding animation films. In 1958, he emigrated to France and embarked on his own filmmaking career. In the 1970s and 1980, he moved away from animation and focused on producing live-action films.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:     Distributor:**



1957 - ONCE  
UPON A  
TIME...(BYL  
SOBIE RAZ...) -  
with Jan Lenica

FP



1958 - HOME  
(DOM) - with Jan  
Lenica

FP



1963 -  
RENAISSANCE



1964 - GAME OF  
ANGELS (LES  
JEUX DES  
ANGES)



1965 - JOACHIM'S  
DICTIONARY (LE  
DICTIONNAIRE  
DE JOACHIM)



1967 - THEATER  
OF MR. AND  
MRS. KABAL  
(THEATRE DE M.  
ET MME KABAL)

- All films distributed by Walerian Borowczyk unless otherwise noted.
- Photo and films courtesy of Walerian Borowczyk.

Walerian Borowczyk  
Boite Postale 80  
78110 Le Vésinct  
France



MAP HISTORY

THE ODD COUPLE

search

help



**JAN LENICA**  
(b. 1928)

Jan Lenica was born in Poznan, Poland, the son of a renowned painter. As a young boy, he studied the piano, but later his interests shifted to architecture and fine arts. In the 1950s, he broke into the Polish film business by designing movie posters. He and Walerian Borowczyk teamed up in 1957 and collaborated on prize-winning animation films. Over the next several years, Lenica made more award-winning films in France, Germany, Poland and the United States. He lives today in Berlin.

**Dr. Bill's Picks:     Distributor:**



1957 - ONCE  
UPON A TIME...  
(BYL SOBIE  
RAZ...) - with  
Walerian  
Borowczyk



1958 - HOME  
(DOM) - with  
Walerian  
Borowczyk

CFS



1962 -  
LABYRINTH  
(LABYRINTHE)

CFS



1963 -  
RHINOCEROS

CFS



1964 - A

CFS

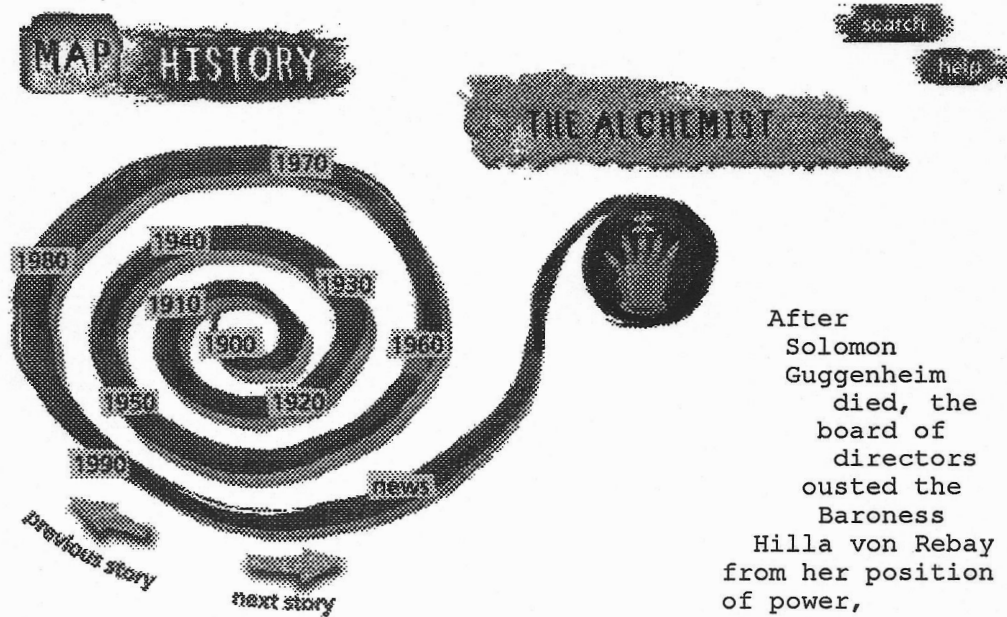


1972 - FANTORRO

-Photo of Jan Lenica by JeanLoup Sieff, 1967.

-Photo and films courtesy of Jan Lenica.





After Solomon Guggenheim died, the board of directors ousted the Baroness Hilla von Rebay from her position of power,



Harry & Birdie at the Breslin Hotel  
Photo and © by Robert Del Vecchio, 1988

and no further stipends were offered to abstract animators. Harry Smith decided to stay in New York anyway, and became a long-time resident of the Chelsea Hotel and an integral part of the arts scene. No longer obliged to work strictly in abstract imagery, Smith began planning a "Great Work," a feature-length film which would concern the mystical journeys of occult systems like Alchemy and Kabala as well as Asian religions.

He prepared four short films to perfect the style. FILM NO.8 and FILM NO. 9 are now lost, but FILM NO. 10 and FILM NO. 11

are two of the most wonderful films. Both use illustrations from Victorian textbooks and magazines, which are carefully colored and move through magical spaces, partly abstract and partly symbolic, such as a "theater of the mind" and the surface of the moon.





FILM #10  
Courtesy and © 1996  
Anthology Film Archives  
and Harry Smith Archives

FILM NO. 10 was originally silent, but Smith later combined it with Tibetan sacred music (he received a Grammy Award for his contribution to recording ethnic music). FILM NO. 11 is tightly synchronized with Thelonius Monk's "Mysterioso," adding a compelling flow to the action, which includes the shadow of an Indian bharat-natyam dancer performing its own dance, the singer Yvette Guilbert demonstrating all the possible emotions to display during a song, priests of various cults performing rituals, and an alchemical vessel undergoing the distillation cycle.



FILM #11  
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Smith used the same techniques and symbols in the black-and-white feature HEAVEN AND EARTH MAGIC, NO. 12. But unless you know a great deal about occult mysticism, it is hard to follow for 70 minutes, especially during the long journeys and repetitive rituals. It is nonetheless a remarkable work of animation skills and can reward repeated viewings or study.



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