

Panel A2

Sala delle Colonne 1

Women in Animation: The Contemporary International Context



Terry Wragg

Leeds Animation Workshop: A Women's Collective

Leeds Animation Workshop was founded in 1978 as a women's collective that would produce and distribute animated films on social issues, with a feminist agenda. Established at a time when an animated film directed by a woman was a rarity, the Workshop set out deliberately to confront sexism in the industry and in society as a whole. After 40 films, and almost four decades, it remains an independent, not-for-profit, organisation run by women.

The Workshop has made films about violence against women, imperialism, sexism, racism, equality at work, childcare, sexuality, and many other issues. The films have been shown all over the world and translated into several languages. Not only the subject-matter and content of its films, their imagery and methodology, but also the structure and working methods of the organisation itself have been influenced by the fact that it is run by women. Leeds Animation Workshop has been a pioneer in its field and remains unique today.

Works such as "Give Us A Smile" (1983), "Through the Glass Ceiling" (1994) "Did I Say Hairdressing? I Meant Astrophysics" (1998) and "They Call Us Maids: the Domestic Workers' Story" (2015) have given expression to feminist ideas developing over the years. Even in a film like "Council Matters," dealing with the subject of local democracy, or "Waste Watchers," about energy conservation, the Workshop's approach was never gender-neutral.

As a founder and current member of the Workshop, and one of its directors throughout its existence, I am able to give an insider's account of its history, and provide a case study of our ongoing attempts to document this history and associated archives.

Biography

Terry Wragg is a film-maker, who for almost four decades has been a director of Leeds Animation Workshop, the women's co-operative she helped to establish in the late 1970s. Set up to produce and distribute animated films on social issues, the Workshop remains an independent, not-for-profit co-operative run by women. In addition to its local and regional roles as a centre for film exhibition, education and training, it has produced over 40 animated films, to professional broadcast standard, most of which remain in distribution.

Subjects include violence against women, sexism, racism, equality at work; poverty and famine; climate change; parenting; child abuse; bereavement; prison; and support for people with learning disabilities. The films have been distributed throughout the UK and around the world. They are designed to raise awareness and promote positive messages in an engaging and accessible way.

