

Panel B2

Sala delle Colonne 1

Researching the History of Women in Animation

Caroline Ruddell

The Crafty Animator: 'Handmade' Animation and Cultural Value



In 1926 German animator Lotte Reiniger released a very early feature-length animated film; *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* was made over ten years prior to the release of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the film often incorrectly lauded as the first animated feature. The scissor artistry used by Lotte Reiniger in her fairy tale films creates an intricate, detailed aesthetic. Her method is usually considered as 'craft'; she is a 'goddess of the scissors' (Palfreyman, 2011, p. 16) producing 'pretty pretty cut outs' (*Financial Times*, 1936). This paper scrutinises the language used to describe Reiniger's work and comparatively examines whether similar language is used to describe other animators, such as Kara Walker, who create similar aesthetics. The paper also considers whether the language used to discuss filmmakers such as Lotte Reiniger, and/or scissor cut-out/silhouette or craft-based films, has a gendered bias. Historical analysis of the reception of Reiniger's work can be usefully linked to more recent online engagement with her films; within the broader contexts of craft and 'handmade' aesthetics, this cross-cultural project (German and English language publications are examined) takes into account scholarly reception, the press and public engagement with the aim of repositioning this female artist in the field.

The paper therefore considers important questions around gender and the media; what kinds of mediums are associated with women in contemporary society, and how are notions of a feminine aesthetic formed and how are they valued? This paper is based on a funded research project that is contributing to the wider study of gendered discourses as they might be applied, not just to film, but to arts, cultural production, and the creative industries in general.

Biography

caroline.ruddell@brunel.ac.uk

Caroline Ruddell is Lecturer in Film and TV Studies at Brunel University, London. She has published on witchcraft in television, anime, Rotoshop, and the representation of identity onscreen. Caroline is currently researching craft/handmade animation and cultural value. She is Associate Editor for the Sage publication *animation: an interdisciplinary journal* and sits on various Editorial Boards.