

Panel D1

Auditorium

Experimental Animation: Forms and Contexts

Chair: **Paul Ward**



This panel of four papers explores questions of experimentation in animation: how we define and delimit 'experimental animation' as a category or concept; how viewers engage with and decipher this diverse field; and some of the institutional and contextual factors at play in its history. In particular, the specificity of television as a site for the exhibition/broadcast of experimental forms of animation is examined in both British and US contexts. There would seem to be a contradiction at the heart of a putative category 'experimental television animation' because of TV's associations with the 'safety' of entertainment in a domestic setting, with nothing too challenging being shown. Yet, there are clear instances of animators experimenting with their craft on television, and with the medium of television using the mutable aesthetics of animation to explore what 'TV' means.

Alongside these medium-specific questions, the panel also explores how definitions and theoretical conceptualisations of experimental animation may have changed across history, and how it connects to related forms like visual music, synaesthetic film, computer games and animated installations. Central to the discussion, across all four papers in the panel, is the way in which notions of the 'experimental' might inform, intersect with, or challenge what is understood as the 'mainstream'. This is particularly the case with examples such as the MTV interstitials/channel idents – highly innovative animations used to brand that most mainstream and commodified of television channels – but applies equally to examples discussed in the other papers.

The panel therefore interrogates how we define experimental animation in terms of aesthetics, animation history, and media institutions and engages with a wide range of theoretical positions to come to a clearer, more nuanced understanding of this important field.

Biography

Dr. Paul Ward (Chair of Panel) is Professor of Animation Studies at the Arts University Bournemouth, UK, where he is Course Leader for the MA Animation Production course and co-ordinates PhD students in Animation. His research interests include animated documentary, TV animation and the relationship between animation theory, practice and pedagogy. He is the author of *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (2005) and a range of journal articles, published in *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* and *Animation Journal*.



Paul was the inaugural Fellow of the Holland Animated Film Festival (HAFF) in 2012, and has given invited and keynote presentations at conferences and festivals in Edinburgh (UK),

London (UK), Basel (Switzerland), Copenhagen (Denmark), Bucheon (South Korea) and Utrecht (Netherlands). He was a Visiting Professor in the Design School at the Politecnico di Milano in November 2013. His work has been translated into German, Czech, Korean, Farsi and Japanese. He was President of the Society for Animation Studies for five years from 2010-2014.

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