

## Panel D1

Auditorium

### Experimental Animation: Forms and Contexts

Paul Ward

#### Experimental animation on television in Britain



Definitions of ‘experimental’ animation can still appear to be bound up with the formalism of early-to-mid 20th century film art or, more recently, the digital turn and its impact. What is often overlooked is the specific relationship between experimental animation and television as an institution and medium.

The paper will therefore examine how we define and understand what is ‘experimental’ within television, with a focus on Britain in the 1980s-1990s. As Laura Mulvey (2007: 1) points out in the Introduction to the book *Experimental British Television*, the idea of experimentation clearly links to formal and stylistic innovation – “push[ing] at the medium’s conventions and boundaries” as she puts it – but it is also important to think through how such ‘pushing’ impacts on where such experiments ended up in the schedules.

Along with an overview of some examples of ‘experimental’ animation on British television in this period, I shall therefore look at questions of scheduling, ‘flow’ and the seemingly ephemeral nature of certain artefacts. Much animation on television, aside from ‘mainstream’ animated shows for children or adults, appears in adverts or interstitial materials – and these can be the site of formal experimentation. In the British television context, however, there have also been some examples of specifically scheduled strands that champion challenging and experimental approaches – for example, the films made under the Arts Council of England-funded *Animate!* scheme, or the Channel 4 *Animator in Residence* (AiR) scheme. Although some of these were broadcast in the proverbial graveyard slot in the schedules, C4 did also show some animations in the early evening (just after their flagship evening news programme) – though this is something that has long-since disappeared as the commissioning structures have changed. What this suggests is that ‘experimentation’ needs to be explained not only through formal and aesthetic analysis, but also through a deeper understanding of its institutional context(s), and its commissioning and broadcasting strategies.

#### Select bibliography

Cook, Benjamin and Thomas, Gary (eds) (2006). *The Animate! Book: Rethinking Animation*. Lux/Arts Council England.

Mulvey, Laura & Sexton, Jamie (eds) (2007). *Experimental British Television*. Manchester University Press.

## 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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