

Panel D4

Sala Emiciclo

Objects, Bodies, Gestures

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The Glory of Women through Silent Paper-cut Animation:

“Scissorhands” Lotte Reiniger’s Reflection through Body Language



This paper will examine the echo of the women artists “speaking” via cutting the images/shadows of male in Germany and using scissors and paper as their weapons. In 1919, the women dada artist Hannah Hoch used a kitchen knife as a weapon to cut through the imagery of beer and its association with masculinity via *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Through the First Epoch of the Weimar Beer-Belly Culture*. A German woman animator, Lotte Reiniger, also selected a male text, *One Thousand and One Nights*, as her object to cut and turned it into the first paper-cut feature animation *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926). As in *One Thousand and One Nights*, a female servant must use story to protect her from being killed by the cruel king.

Though James Stuart Blackton firstly partly experimented using paper-cut into a clown in his animation work *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* in 1906, paper-cut animation found fulfilled liveliness and attraction in “Scissorhands” by Reiniger. As one of the first feature animation films, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* is not only a classical silent film through the hands of Reiniger, it was also a miraculous moving reflection of the story *One Thousand and One Nights*, as well as Reiniger’s own gestures and performances.

From the time Reiniger was 15 years old, she had hoped to be an actor as she admired the performances directed by Paul Wegener. Paul Wegener was intrigued by Reiniger’s paper-cut gifts modeling his stage scenes and this formed the foundation of their future cooperation, mainly with regard to design and extra acting. In Reiniger’s 50 films over her whole life, the paper-cut characters fulfilled her dream about not only being a supporting actress. Actually in paper-cut animation, by cutting paper into pieces and reconstructing them, Reiniger could act as a variety of characters, from a Prince (*The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, 1926) to a Doctor (*Dr. Dolittle and His Animals*, 1928), from a magician boy (*Ten Minutes of Mozart*, 1930) to a bird hunter (*Papageno*, 1935), though these characters were male on the big screen, they were the transformed reflection of a pioneer women actor and artist.

Reiniger’s second silent feature film *Dr. Dolittle and His Animals* was criticized by the public as it had not evolved with the tide of sound film. This animation, inspired by Hugh Lofting’s novel of the same name, used the gestures of animated characters to vividly speak another kind of “sound”. While as the first several films of Reiniger were lost and damaged in the second world war, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* and *Dr. Dolittle and His Animals* were repaired by the British Film Institute according to Reiniger’s handbook from 1925. The pace and the whole running time are different from the original ones. We could only guess what Reiniger’s intended gestures and body language was from the seemingly fast-forwarded images. The memories of silent paper-cut animation need to be continually explored through the glory of “Scissorhands” by Lotte Reiniger.

Biography

Chunning (Maggie) Guo teaches New Media Art and Animation in the School of Fine Arts at Renmin University of China. In 2014, she was a visiting artist to the Master of Arts program in Character Animation at Central Saint Martins of the University of the Arts, London and she was also a resident artist at Centre Intermondes of La Rochelle in France. She holds a Master's Degree in Digital Media Design from China Central Academy of Fine Arts. She got PhD Degree in Aesthetics and her PhD paper is *The Experiments and Critics of Independent Animation*. Recently, she was invited to present her paper in SAS Conference 2016, International Aesthetics Conference 2016, Animafest Scanner II 2015, Scnner III 2016 in Zagreb of Croatia, and International Animated Film Conference in Poland, as well as 2015 BFX Conference in Bournemouth and APES 2015 in Newcastle of the UK.

From 2011 to 2012, she worked as a visiting scholar at Vancouver Film School. In addition, she visited and gave a workshop at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne in 2013. She is the author of three books: *Thinking Communication* (Renmin University Publishing) and *Digital Media Contextual Studies* (China Machine Press), as well as *Independent Animation Handbook* (ShangDong Fine Arts Press)

Her animated artwork has been exhibited and collected internationally by galleries and festivals including the White Rabbit Art Gallery in Australia, World Design Conference for Icoagrada IDA in Beijing, the L'abbaye de Fontevraud in France, and P.O.R.T's opening presented by Kan-Kan Media and KoKi Freiburg in Germany. She was the recipient of the Jury Award at the 11th annual Chinese Independent Film Festival in China, as well as NETPAC Award in 2015 Busan International Short Film Festival of South Korea.

Her collaborative work *Ketchup* was selected for several International Festivals, including the Stuttgart International Animation Festival, FANTOCHE International Animation Festival, Anima Mundi International Animation Festival, World Festival of Animated Film Zagreb, etc.

She is also academic curator of Image Power International Art Project, and she curated animation from China program in 2016 La Rochelle Chinese Film Festival. She co-curated Women Can Hold Half the Sky in the UK about Chinese women animation artists. She curated international panel in 2016 the 1st Animation Annual Conference in ChengDu. She is also the jury for the 11th 56 Moon Student Animation Festival in SouthWest Nationality University of China.

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Yuanbo Zhong is the president of SiChuan Animation Research Center. He is a professor of the School for Arts and Films at Chengdu University. He is also a member of ASIFA.

He holds the Master degree of aesthetics, Southwestern University. His main research direction is 3D animation and games. He had completed several individual projects and cooperated projects, including ShangShi(animation), The adventure of Yake(animation and comics), cooperated project with Tailand University Wal Rally(Travel App), and Ancient SiChuan Legend (2D game).

He also curated and organized some important conferences and forums, including 2015 Animation Academic Forum in South Provinces of China, and 2016 the 1st Animation Annual Conference in ChengDu of China.

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