

Panel E1

Auditorium

Making Animated Films

Damian Gascoigne

“Some of it I sampled, the rest of it I stole”



I have spent a year borrowing without asking. I cut a hole in the perimeter fence Of the Disney archive, the most fiercely protected collection of I.P. in existence, and helped myself. I then set about breaking down and reconstructing iconic scenes and characters, focusing on the Stromboli Caravan scene in Disney’s Pinocchio, in order to address a question- What form could a sampling and remixing culture for animation take?

As a maker of hand drawn animation for the past 25 years, I have inevitably experienced the digital disruption as it has applied to our discipline. Coming from a world of lightboxes, inbetweeners, and ink and paint crews, my practice was built upon materiality and mark making. This is something for which I am eternally grateful. Current research for my practice based PhD at RMIT Melbourne focuses on the primacy of the mark, and ideas around familiarity and recognition. This has led on to working with sampling and remixing, as I seek to turn the tables on the conventions of contemporary animation practice, and find ways to disrupt the digital.

There is a long established practice of sampling and remixing in music. Tom Moulton’s disco mixes from 1972 are often cited as the first real remixes, using multi track tape recorders to painstakingly build connections between different songs. This culture developed through the 1980’s as DJ’s began requesting the separate sub mix tracks from artists, so that they could alter and rebuild the original songs in new ways. Bringing it up to the present day, composer Moby recently released all the sub mixes for his album “Innocents” via Bit Torrent, encouraging people to freely remix the album as they pleased.

The acts of ‘borrowing from’ and ‘lending to’ are the key components of remix practice in music. In my quest to find an equivalent form for animation I have spent the past year looking at the idea of borrowing from and repurposing a piece of existing character animation. This has led to the body of work I wish to present.

Discussion will focus around a series of short animated pieces that have all been sampled and remixed in some way. Crucially, these hand drawn sequences have all emerged from a single source of animation material- Stromboli’s menacing performance in the iconic Caravan scene, animated by Bill Tytla. Stromboli is imbued with a visceral, unstable force, as he cajoles and threatens a terrified Pinocchio. The performance is recognised as a pinnacle of character animation, and my intention in using this source has been to explore ways in which traditional character animation can inform experimental practice.

For the purpose of this presentation I will be focusing on describing the multiple approaches I took to sampling and remixing the original animation material. I will delve into the propositions that motivated the tasks, the practical processes I used, and my findings on the resulting works.

According to media theorist Lev Manovich we live in an age of 'remixability and modularity'. Describing how we have become used to cutting and pasting imagery and text, using the tools of new media to modify content and send it on, he goes on to speculate how these norms of internet culture might be addressed by artists and designers through the creation of modular work-

"Will the separation between libraries of samples and "authentic" cultural works blur in the future? Will the future cultural forms be deliberately made from discrete samples designed to be copied and incorporated into other projects?" (Manovich 2005.4)

This leads me to the problem as I see it in relation to animation's relatively peripheral role in this process. How can animation makers fit into this paradigm? To date there has been little in the production of animation work that allows for free remixing. Existing practices such as VJ mashups are a crude proxy for music remix production, because the visual material is not separated into its constituent parts.

Given that we are in a remix era, I will argue that animation filmmakers need to be devising new ways in which to approach production, offering up layers of separated elements and allowing access to digital compositing files, in order to facilitate free and full remixing by fellow artists. If we are to engage with this exciting creative territory I also believe that existing properties should also be offered to others in this 'sub mix' form, so that we can all enjoy the opportunity to redefine and comment upon the rich history and variety of our discipline.

Biography

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Damian Gascoigne is an animation filmmaker and educator whose work has been exhibited in galleries and animation festivals around the world. His short films have been nominated in competition at many of the major animation festivals, such as Annecy, the British Animation Awards, Hiroshima Animation festival and Zagreb.

In a professional career spanning more than twenty-five years he has created a significant body of short films, animation for live performance, commercials, 3D projection mapping and installations for gallery spaces.

Damian works across the fine art and independent animation disciplines, fusing his distinctive hand drawn imagery with digital technology to create a uniquely personal aesthetic, keeping him at the forefront of contemporary practice.

His collaborators and clients include- Australia National Maritime Museum, the Australia Piano Quartet, composers Elena Kats-Chernin, Ben Park and Peter Hollo, BBC, Channel 4, WPP Advertising, The Guardian, Random House Publishing and McCann Erickson New York.

Damian is currently based in Australia, where he is Course Director for the new Bachelor of Design in Animation at the University of Technology in Sydney. His research into hand drawing in the digital age is being conducted through a creative practice PhD at RMIT Melbourne.