

Panel E4

Sala Emiciclo

Animation: Beyond Movement

Jack McGrath

The Movement Between The Frames: Limited animation and the un-scene between



We have known for well over a century that still images running in rapid succession trick the eye into seeing motion, in what has commonly been called the ‘persistence of vision’. This talk goes beyond the technical ‘persistence of vision’ – which has historically focused on the optical illusion that is animation –, and explores another important side of this concept. Namely, that ‘persistence of vision’ includes the creation of meaning that is attributed when one image or scene is viewed in relation to another.

Animation’s ability to subvert our perception of time and space is also a form of mental trickery: the order in which images appear and the accompanying sound will have us create mental bridges that then develop into a story: explaining why a character zips from one space and into another and attributing meaning to those jumps.

‘Limited Animation’ includes sophisticated social, political and existential ideas through the reduction of naturalistic movement. The animated work from the UPA studio was known for its limited approach to animation: using less detailed backgrounds and simplified facial expressions. Unlike the animated features from the ‘Disney Golden Age’ – which are remembered for their development and perfection of the craft of naturalistic movement in animation, UPA’s design expressed metaphysical ideas.

Chris Marker created the acclaimed *La Jetée* (1962), which explores ideas of temporality in cinema and its relationship with the photographic image. The time traveller in the film has become a definition of cinema as time travel: the protagonist jumps through time – past, present and future.

The ‘limited’ animation of Polish animaters such as Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczk suggest a world of *unlimited* possibilities for the animated short. In Chris Marker and Walerian Borowczk’s collaboration *Les Astronauts* (1959), the character is free from the bounds of the in-between frames: free to jump across space and time.

The limited photographic slides in *La Jetée* and the cut-out photo-montage surrealism of Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczk would go on to influence filmmakers and animators like Terry Gilliam, as evidenced in his *Monty Python* sketches and his feature length homage to *La Jette*, *12 Monkeys*.

This talk explores the invisible movement of animation and the language that has grown since the beginning of cinema; the semiotic imaginary friend between the audience and filmmaker.

Biography

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Jack McGrath has a background in Fine Arts from the University of Sydney and has lectured in film and animation for a number of years at the University of Sydney, Australian Film Television and Radio School and The University of Technology Sydney. McGrath's background in fine arts has led to a unique experimental style of animation, working and collaborating with other artists in different disciplines has given birth to a different perspective and aesthetic in animation. Working with glass artist Mark Elliott he has created a unique style of glass stop motion animation. He has written and directed a wide range of short films that have been screened around Australia and internationally, and is currently the Director of Conceptavision; a Sydney based production company that creates animation and video content for academic institutions, non for profit organisations and businesses.