

Panel G3

Sala Emiciclo

Animation Archives

James Walker

Great!!: Fragmented animation archives and forgotten collections



While large animation studios such as Disney have a history of storing and archiving the non-filmic materials of their production. This is often not the case for smaller studios and independent animators. This presents problems in terms of how the study and research of animation can develop in the future. In particular, while the animated film may offer the primary focus of debate, analysis and study it is the associated materiality of its production that often opens up new insights and understandings.

This is certainly the case with Bob Godfrey's Oscar winning animated short *Great*. The film represents a hybrid of animated forms and archival fragments drawn from different print and film forms. It uniquely includes an early piece of computer animation which until recently had not fully studied or discussed, in part due to the original production material for this sequence being lost. The rediscovery of the original elements of this sequence by Godfrey's grandson Tom Lowe during the filming of a documentary on the making of *Great*. Highlights an interesting and significant area of investigation within animation research and archiving animation, the animator as collector/archivist. In the context of British animation, the large number of small independent animation studios also lead to an equal number of freelance independent animators. It is these independents, who at times moving from one production to the other, collect elements of the films they worked on. These accidental collectors/archivists embody an 'archival impulse' (Foster 2004) which reconstructs a "matrix of citation and juxtaposition" (Foster 2004:5) that weaves through the narrative of their career.

The paper considers how the freelance/independent animator's personal collection may function as an unofficial archive of the studios they worked in. In turn that their desire to collect may help to restore and retrieve some of the lost heritage of these studios. As Roger Cardinal suggests:

"To collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of environment and history. Every acquisition, whether crucial or trivial, marks and unrepeatably conjuncture of subject, found object, place and moment. In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes and intimate narrative tracing...the continuous thread through which selfhood is sewn into the unfolding of a lifetime's experience." (Cardinal 1994:68)

This interweaving of social production, environment and history runs through the complex narrative of the animator collector/archivist. There is an urgent need to engage with this area of animation collection/archiving which has been started with a pilot project to study how contemporary animators store and archive their work. The findings of this will be discussed in relation to recent work on the diverse official and unofficial archive collections of Bob Godfrey's film *Great*.

Biography

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James Walker teaches visual theory on the illustration course at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and is associate editor for the *Journal of Illustration*. He founded the Animation Subject Area for the Popular Culture Association in 2007. He previously managed the Animation Archive at UCA. His research interest includes areas of propaganda, visual culture, terror and trauma, visual narrative and animation. He is the author of “A Terror Lexicon: Shadows, Places and Ghosts” in Coulter-Smith, Graham and Maurice Owen (2005) *Art in the Age of Terrorism* London: Holberton Publications. ‘The vernacular line: Adoption and transposition of the kitsch in illustration’, *Journal of Illustration* 1: 1, pp. 29–40. He has