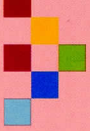


ccva



FRAME BY FRAME
ANIMATED AT HARVARD

JANUARY 28 - FEBRUARY 14, 2010

ELI NOYES

Clay or the Origin of Species

As for the origin of the film, it goes way back to 1964, the first year the Carpenter Center was functioning, and I was a senior at Harvard, obsessed by the films from the Film Board of Canada, and I had worked with Charles Eames in California.

I don't think I was the first person to animate clay. I had seen some stuff from Europe. But it all sort of happened by accident that I started playing around with a block of clay I bought at an art store in Cambridge, and shaped the experiments into a sort of narrative.

The surprise success of *Clay* made me think that filmmaking and animation were fun (and easy, Ha Ha) and set me on the course I am still on today after many bumps, halts, screeches and crashes.



ERIC MARTIN

How I came to make Flatland

The renowned animator John Hubley gave the first class in animation at Harvard. I was then a Junior Fellow (a 3-year fellowship) and decided I'd take the course, out of curiosity. John and Bob Gardner decided to have this first class make a film of the book *Flatland*, in retrospect an overly ambitious goal, though the class itself was great. I wound up completing the film the following year (since the class didn't get further than a script outline), i.e., I wrote the final script, recorded the voices in (it was fun directing Dudley Moore and a couple of other Brit satirists), created the art, and shot and edited the resulting film.

Animation is a fascinating art, and its origins in 19th-century pre-cinema toys is fully deserving of a (really good) film in itself, in which you would actually "see into" the significant illusions it is based on. The most commonly referred to is the persistence of vision—the fact that the retina retains the impression of frame X before it is replaced by frame X+1—which is the crucial factor in making a succession of individual still frames interrupted by brief moments of darkness as the frames are exchanged appear to be an uninterrupted flow of light.

Of much greater significance is the perceptual/conceptual phenomenon referred to as "beta movement," that is, the illusion that a frame showing a dot on the left side of the screen followed quickly by an image of a dot on the right side of the screen is interpreted by the viewer as a single dot moving from left to right. In other words, the viewer creates the 'meaning' without realizing it. The isolation of this phenomenon (and the related "phi phenomenon") was instrumental in launching the Gestalt psychology revolution, as well as the modern art of animation.

The unique creative opportunity suggested by the digital version of the medium is striking, though the industry seems to believe that this potential is best realized by an increasing ability to make things look 'real,' which is quite the opposite of the conceptual magic this new medium theoretically enables—a world, for instance, in which an entirely original set of physical or psychological laws may be the norm. In other words, "the higher the resolution, the more trivial the content" might be the admonition to consider, an admonition equally

applicable to most uses of Photoshop, in which the goal seems to be visual effect for its own sake. To me, this is the challenge in teaching animation—to expose, in fact to celebrate, the remarkable world of undiscovered content that the medium uniquely enables.

I worked on two later animation projects. One was with Ron Baecker, a PhD candidate at MIT, helping him create one of the very first computer animation programs (1969–71), at Lincoln Lab outside Boston. We later went to Xerox PARC (1974) and installed it in Alan Kay's fabled Dynabook project, the first real personal computer (later to evolve into the Macintosh). Another was a flip-book for Apple, how you could animate tool icons in Hypercard to illustrate their function.

CAROLINE LEAF

Leaf remembering Lamb

My strongest memory of Derek's animation class in the Carpenter Center basement, which I took nearly 40 years ago, is moving sand over a light table under one of the little 16mm cameras Derek had had fixed to the walls, and a lot of activity and good commotion going on behind me in the room. Derek was an enabler. Because we were from all disciplines in the university and drawing ability was not a prerequisite for the course, Derek encouraged everyone to concentrate on making animated movement, mostly with objects. Students with cameras were outdoors pixilating and doing stop-motion, gathering sound and footage for rotoscoping, looking at rushes on viewers, the film slung between reels on rewinds, splicing bits together, hotsplicing our negatives. The big Oxberry camera stand was not in constant demand, though people were also working with drawings on punched paper or with cutouts under the camera.

In my class I remember Lynn Smith, Adele Pressman, Mary Beams, Abigail Child. Frank Mouris was around. Derek remained a friend in the years after the Harvard animation class, and at one point moved back to the National Film Board of Canada in Montreal to be the executive producer of the English Animation department where I worked. Again he enabled a lot of innovative animation and hybrid animation films to be made. To bring money into the studio, he sought out government-sponsored educational films on subjects like energy saving in the home, and sexed up dry subject matter with good stories and sharp graphics. Derek was a great raconteur, and a lot of stories happened to him as he passed through life because he was always on the move. He also had a gentle singing voice and played guitar. I have a CD of Derek singing English World War II songs. He liked to draw quick cartoony ideas on paper napkins when we were having dinner together and I saved a few. He died much too young in 2005.

FRANK MOURIS

I was an architectural sciences major at harvard college in the 'sixties. it was the only 'visual' major, w/ only architectural history courses and no practical experience in building anything. calculus and physics were required. argh. saving grace: carpenter center had just opened, and we could take the basic 2- and 3-dimensional design classes (= drawing, inking, collaging, sculpting, etc.). however, almost no one could get into the very few "light & communications" courses in the basement: photography, film, animation. i took photography in the summer school... ..but animation wasn't offered; i never could get into derek lamb's revered animation class. but, robert gardner, longtime head of l&c, did however put on a series of excellent screenings open to everyone: we were exposed to avant-garde fare like hillary harris, stan vanderbeek, etc., and it was because of stan that i realized that i could do animation with my preferred medium: photo collage.

that was my undergraduate experience there. after three years in graphic design at yale art & architecture school (and a fabulous summer working in richard williams' soho square studio), i returned to harvard to help derek lamb (and then eric martin) teach the animation class. the synergy with the challenging students and the extraordinary l&c instructors helped me evolve and finish my yale - started animated autobiography. derek and eric were encouraging and inspirational. robert gardner supported me strongly. film teacher robert fulton opened my filmmaking to total experimental/zen filming: "after awhile, the film rushes start to tell you what kind of film it wants to be!" after 3 years there, i followed caroline [mouris] to new york city and its own stimulating soho area. there i met derek's sound genius hero, and the soundtrack for frank film came about from caroline and i collaborating.

the major collage work took me less than a year in total, but of course teaching and real life took up most of our three years at harvard (caroline worked in the fogg the first year, did an mba in finance at the business school the next two years). i shot tests of all the frank film artwork in 1's, studying them obsessively on the analyst projector, seeing how it would look in 2's (final choice), 3's, 1's, and so on. the very last week, during students' exam period, i shot the film in 16mm kodak ektachrome commercial reversal stock. seven days, 10 hours a day, start to finish, making one 1-frame mistake. in nyc, shot the primitive title card. had to do an a- and b-roll (my first) in nyc to get rid of the 1-frame mistake and add the title card. it took six months (and the help of a therapist, coaching me to be more assertive) to convince tony schwartz to do the soundtrack with us, but he did it gratis. my only regret is that our distributors refused to let all three of us share producer credit, so caroline and tony were gyped of their well-deserved oscars. i could not have done it without the two of them.



SUZAN PITT

I laid out the first backgrounds and cels on the table in the animation room and Bob Gardner looked carefully at everything, nodding his head in approval. He said, "Are you going to shoot in 35mm?" I had never considered this because of the additional cost. He offered a generous amount of funding to help with the film and processing and from this I was greatly encouraged and worked steadily forward on the film using the Harvard Oxberry. The scene where the woman is watching the garden pass by I remember particularly as I was only able to use the camera during the weekend and so had to do that animated pan with no cut in a long continuous shoot of 48 hours where I never slept or left the camera room. I remember sweeping up the bits and pieces from the floor at 6 am on Monday morning, feeling dizzy and weak. *Asparagus* mimes the creative process itself. The idea was to make a film which flowed slowly forward like a daydream, unfolding itself in a narrative circle, unwinding the cycles of search, discovery, expression, emptiness and search again.

STEVEN SUBOTNICK

I finished *Glass Crow* in 2004, while I was teaching animation at Harvard. The ideas came from reading histories of the 30 Years War, and in particular the Defenestration of Prague. In 1618, two catholic Imperial ministers were thrown out of a castle window by a group of Protestant Bohemian nobles, but the ministers were saved by a pile of waste in the moat. This tragic comic incident ignited the 30 Years War, in which Central Europe was devastated by war, hunger, and disease. Throughout the making of *Glass Crow*, I looked for histories, music, art, and literature of the time, and then made artwork and animation in response to my research. After I had created a critical mass of material, the structure of the film grew out of the process of editing and sound design. I worked with two composers. One was Alex Stoltmack-Ness, a Harvard music composition student, who wrote a tarantella for the sound track. The other composer was Joan La Barbara, who provided vocal music and sounds. The production was supported in part by a grant from the Film Study Center at Harvard.



HARVARD'S ANIMATION LEGACY

Animation at Harvard was born in 1963, when Robert Gardner invited animators John and Faith Hubley to teach as part of the new film program at the newly-built Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. They were the first in a long line of distinguished animators to teach and work at Harvard. This exhibition seeks to shed light on one of Harvard's best-kept secrets.

Cover: detail from Caroline Leaf, *Sand, or Peter and the Wolf*, 1969, 10 min.

Page 1: Eli Noyes, *Clay, or The Origin of Species*, 1965, 9 min.

Page 3: Caroline Leaf, *Sand, or Peter and the Wolf*, 1969, 10 min. Still courtesy of the Harvard Film Archive.

Above: Suzan Pitt, *Asparagus*, 1979, 20 min.

Back: Derek Lamb. Photo by Eric Masunaga © 2005



FILMS IN THE EXHIBITION

Harvard Past

- Amy Kravitz, *River Lethe*, 1985, 7 min.
Caroline Leaf, *Sand, or Peter and the Wolf*, 1969, 10 min.
Jan Lenica, *Landscape*, 1974, 8 min.
Eric Martin, *Flatland*, 1965, 11 min.
Frank Mouris, *Frank Film*, 1973, 9 min.
Eli Noyes, *Clay, or The Origin of Species*, 1965, 9 min.
Suzan Pitt, *Asparagus*, 1979, 20 min.
Steve Subotnick, *Glass Crow*, 2004, 7 min.

Harvard Present

- Dan Ashwood, *Fever Dreams*, 2006, 5:09 min; *Two Distractions*, 2008, 6:07 min.
Jared Bass, *Going Up*, 2007, 4:20 min.
Mariah Bush, *Stitch*, 2009, 1:20 min.
Yen-Ting Cho, *Kapsis*, 2009, 3:33 min.
Ariella Dagi, Djuneid Dullo, Andrea Koenker, Lorena Lama, Sorah Seong, Misha Tucker, Frank Washburn, *FALDASM LOOP 7x360 o/12*, 2007, 3 minutes, looped.
Maya Erdelyi-Perez, *Plume*, 2006, 1:52 min.
Lily Fang, *Replace*, 2009, 2:08 min, *Ossian Dreaming*, 2009, 1:03 min.
Daisy Ginsberg, *Antimaps*, 2007, 2:06 min.
Lisa Haber-Thomson, *Bootfly*, 2002, 4:35 min.
Tiffanie Hsu, *Three Beauties*, 2009, 3:20 min.
Becky James, *I hate you don't touch me or Bat and Hat*, 2007, 5:05 min.
Tessa Johung, *Rorschach*, 2006, 2:20 min.
Terah Maher, *Orgasm Loop*, 2009, 18 seconds, looped.
Sami Majadal, *Moebius Life*, 2008, 4:22 min.
Christen McDuffee, *Tracing*, 2009, 5:01 min.
Didi Mitova, *The Next Lesson*, 2007, 4:21 min.
Sarah Ngo, *Pop*, 2009, 1:28 min.
Tim Reckart, *Leftovers*, 2006, 3:40 min.; *The Spoiled Child*, 2007, 3:24 min;
The Token Hunchback, 2008, 6:21 min.
David Rice, *Do Rivers*, 2008, 6:26 min.
Nick Shearer, *Underground*, 2009, 6:20 min.
Jess Wheelock, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 2009, 2:27 min.
Katherine Woodman-Maynard, *The Space Inside*, 2008, 5:54 min.
Kristina Yee, *Alice*, 2008, 2:05 min.

Harvard Future

- Lily Fang, *Shapeshifter*, work-in-progress
Ruth Lingford, *Little Deaths*, work-in-progress
Lorelei Pepi, *Happy and Gay*, work-in-progress
Norah Solorzano, *Of Monorails and Megasaurs*, work-in-progress
Tim Szetela, *Romanji*, work-in-progress
Kristina Yee, *Fredrick's Frown*, work-in-progress