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| Hubley, John (1914-1977) and Faith Elliott (1924-2001) |
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| Animator John Hubley, born in Marinette, Wisconsin, served as creative head of UPA (United Productions of America) in its early years and originated their most popular character, near-sighted Mr. Magoo. He had previously worked on several Walt Disney animated features but left the studio during the 1941 strike. Hubley played a crucial role in UPA’s development. In 1944, he brought the fledgling company a United Auto Workers project promoting the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, which effectively turned them into an animation studio. He directed the first films UPA made for Columbia Pictures, which demonstrated the young studio’s ability to make successful theatrical cartoons and so secured a long-term distribution contract with Columbia. Besides creating Magoo, Hubley earned the studio three Oscar nominations in its first four years of production. His crowning achievement at UPA was *Rooty-Toot-Toot* (1951), a modern retelling of the popular ballad ‘Frankie and Johnny.’ The film could serve as a compendium of design features characteristic of UPA cartoons: very simple backgrounds; angularly rendered characters; and an extremely idiosyncratic use of colour, which includes unusual shading, unmotivated chromatic change, and spill over drawn outlines.  Hubleyleft UPA in 1952 because of the political temper of the times (the House on Un-American Activities Committee was investigating his Communist connections, and he refused to name names) and founded his own studio, Storyboard. Hubley hired film editor and script supervisor Faith Elliott (née Chestman) as his assistant in 1954 while working on an animated version of the stage musical, *Finian’s Rainbow.* The project foundered but the couple married in 1955. Their wedding vows included a commitment to make an independent film every year no matter what other projects they might have. Those films tended to deal with social and environmental issues and, later on, with gender issues. It seems Faith was the driving force behind Storyboard’s experimental impulses. Their first collaboration, *The Adventures of \** (1957), commissioned by the Simon R. Guggenheim Museum, was the first animated film produced and financed by an art museum. It sharply departs from standard commercial practice, with characters shifting between abstract forms (an asterisk) and representational shapes.  The Hubleys also took an avant-garde approach to their soundtracks, many of which had contemporary jazz scores (often supplied by Dizzy Gillespie). The dialogue was generally extemporaneous, supplied by their two sons in *Moonbird* (1959), their two daughters in *Windy Day* (1968), and by jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie in *The Hole* (1962) and *The Hat* (1964). They used a painterly style in *Moonbird*: characters lack traditional cartoon outlines and often merge with their backgrounds. The Hubleys also made commercials employing the design principles used in their other films. Most notable are the commercials for Maypo breakfast cereal, which featured the characters from *Moonbird*, again voiced by their children. After John’s death in 1977, Faith’s films became more reliant on aboriginal and surreal imagery. She continued with the commitment to an independent film a year. Selected Filmography *A Few Quick Facts about Fear* (1945)  *Flat-Hatting* (1946)  *Robin Hoodlum* (1948)  *The Magic Fluke* (1949)  *Ragtime Bear* (1949)  *Rooty Toot Toot* (1951)  *Moonbird* (1959)  *The Hole* (1962)  *The Hat* (1964)  *A Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass Double Feature* (1966)  *Windy Day* (1968)  *Of Men and Demons* (1969)  *Voyage to Next* (1974)  *The Doonesbury Special* (1977)  *Enter Life (1981)*  *The Cosmic Eye* (1986) |
| Further reading:  (Abraham)  (Amidi)  (Barrier)  (Hubley)  (Maltin) |