**Fischinger, Oskar (b. 22 June 1900,** Gelnhausen, Germany; d. 31 January, 1967, Los Angeles, USA**)**

Oskar Fischinger, born in Gelnhausen, Germany, was one of the most influential German abstract experimental animators and creators of visual music. As a youth he studied draughtsmanship and engineering. In 1922, he invented a machine that photographed sequential slices of wax blocks, producing an abstract film in a relatively short time. In Munich, he continued his experiments in creating visual equivalents to orchestral music while making animated cartoons and multi-projector light shows. In Berlin, he did special effects for Fritz Lang’s *Frau im Mond* [*Woman in the Moo*n, 1929], helped develop the three color Gasparcolor process, and made stop-motion commercials. In 1936, Fischinger emigrated to the United States. In 1937 he composed the abstract short *An Optical Poem* to Liszt’s “Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2” for MGM. He worked nine months on the “Toccata and Fugue” segment of Disney’s *Fantasia* (1940), but none of his original art appears in the film. He continued making abstract expressionist visual music films until 1947, culminating in his masterwork *Motion Painting No. 1*. Lack of funding subsequently restricted him to painting; around this time he invented a machine to generate artificial sounds. In 1955 he patented the “lumigraph”, which enabled its operator to create silent moving color compositions. Fischinger influenced a host of avant-garde animators including Norman McLaren, Jordan Belson, and Len Lye, as well as composer John Cage.

**References and Further Readings**

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**Filmography**

*Wax Experiments* (1921-26)

*Spirals* (1926)

*Studie Nr. 6*, (1930)

*Studie Nr. 7*, (1931)

*Kreise* [*Circles*] (1934)

*Ein Spiel in Farben* (*A Play in Colors*), 1934, color, sound; aka *Studie No. 11a*   
*Quadrate* [*Squares*], 1934, Gasparcolor, silent.  
*Muratti Greift Ein* [*Muratti Gets in the Act*], 1934, object animation cigarette commercial, color.

*Muratti Privat*, c.1935, object animation cigarette commercial, black and white.

*Komposition in Blau* (*Composition in Blue*, 1935)

*An Optical Poem* (1937) MGM. Music: Franz Liszt, *Second Hungarian Rhapsody.*

*An American March* (1941)

*RadioDynamics* (1942)

*Allegretto* (1943) ‘Late’ version

*Motion Painting No. 1* (1947). Oil on plexiglass; music: Johan Sebastian Bach, *Brandenburg concerto No. .*

[Several of the above can be found on the DVD *Oskar Fischinger: Ten Films* released by the Center for New Music.]

**Paratextual**

*An Optical Poem* YouTube courtesy of Turner Entertainment Company:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=they7m6YePo&list=TLfAm5Da5pNxtb3n8zPmvqjufWHJD_cjaW>

Still images: The Fischinger Trust at <http://www.oskarfischinger.org/>