

ELATHAN CINEMA

ASPECTS AND ANALYSIS OF SHORT FILMS

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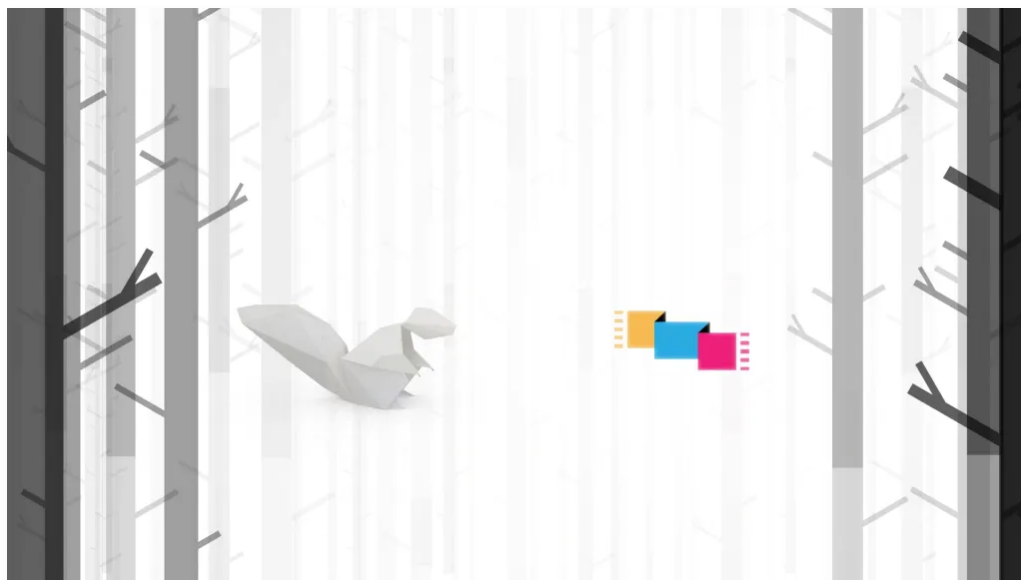
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The Missing Scarf (2013)

Posted on **November 21, 2017** by **Alby Darling, L. Dalrymple**

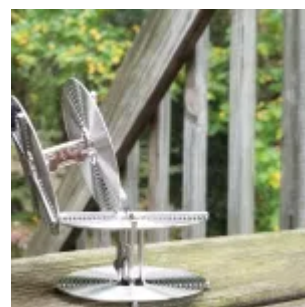
Written by **Alby Darling, L. Dalrymple**



Albert's Missing Scarf

The Missing Scarf is a 2013 animated short film about, well, a cardboard squirrel named Albert that has lost their scarf. This short is a winner of several animated awards in various film circuits from the Cork Film Festival to the Toronto Animation Fest, and was shortlisted for the Academy Awards in 2014. It is an adorable (though probably un-safe to watch if you have vision problems related to white/ black vertical lines) six minutes that ends on a bit of a banger.

Short Focus, Short Theory



Elathan Cinema aims to be a project focusing on film theory as it applies to short films, as well as news and developments (where applicable).

Over time, the hope is to both share the joy of film, as well as deconstruct some of what makes short films magic in a way a feature may not be able to accurately capture, or even be accurately discussed due to the longer nature of their content.

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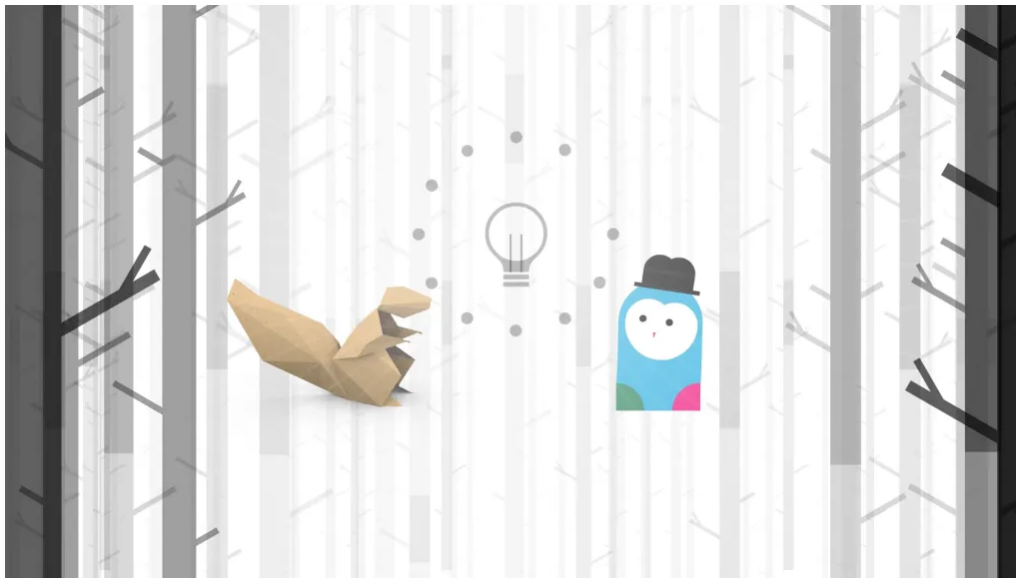
Teilifís Éireann, Belly Creative Ltd., and the Arts Council of Ireland.

The film follows the story of a squirrel named Albert (who is a missed opportunity at the name Abert, a type of squirrel) that takes on a very picture book tone and visual style that is heavy on color and geometric shapes, with the main action of the story always framed in the same middle pane of the screen as Albert runs across the forest meeting various animals, with their own problems on the way.

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*Note: The narration is provided by George Takei. However, there are still about a dozen other people involved in this project, so this article would like to be fair to them as much as possible in the light of recent news events.

Repetition and Screenwriting



Looking for Ideas and Solutions

As briefly mentioned, *The Missing Scarf* is heavy on the appearance of looking like a moving storyboard to a children's book. But the trick for the matter is – *how does it achieve this goal?* Nothing in the material itself suggests or even says the film is for children, yet it uses similar narrative mechanics to storybooks or picture books that can leave this suggestion without having to outright say that even on a rating card.

Certainly, some of the end content of the film is not the usual children's book fare, at least in an obvious way, but rather a lot of the content is.

The story follows a very familiar pattern. In that it gives a character a mission.

occur about once or twice a month as we have a tiny staff. Email is always open for suggestions on new short films to view, or questions on cinematic film theory.

Allowances may occur for major international or public holidays.

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If you would be interested in contributing to the project please check the Submissions page!

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about Eastman's *Are You My Mother?* Or even something like Rubin's *Dragons Love Tacos*, or Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!* There are keywords and phrases that get reused to effectively "break off" chunks of the story, and make it both easier to follow, and keep a sense of pace and movement in a story that might not otherwise have it with the actions of the characters themselves being short of details and background imagery or any additional information outside of very direct actions or words at all.

Storybooks use this technique to help children with reading comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and memorization. *The Missing Scarf* does this to build towards a plot twist.

Albert has no facial expressions, Albert has no internal dialogue, Albert only has words and vague animated actions that are mostly limited to running and twisting his tail or turning his head to use in order to get a personality and carry the plot across to the other animals and to the viewer.

So, what happens? Mostly a slow build, where the story slowly goes from Eastman territory, quickly through Dragon-town, and flies well past the depth of things Seuss probably meant to have people think on.

Albert's quest follows asking Cecil the owl, Conrad the Beaver, Edwin the Fox, and Frederick the Bear for the location of his scarf, and as he does it, his friend's problems go from the very basic, familiar fear of the dark, increasing in levels of stressful, until Frederick is having a full-on existential crisis and is in a borderline panic.

See, Fredrick the bear does not come with the fear of broken dams, or the dark, or even, the unknown knowledge of the forest, but of the state of non-existence. After which, is the longest pause of Albert's while speaking after any of the other previous animals, a pause only made longer after his own reply to the bear as the universe twists around the screen in a variety of shapes and textures (that again, if a viewer has vision problems, may not wish to partake in watching).

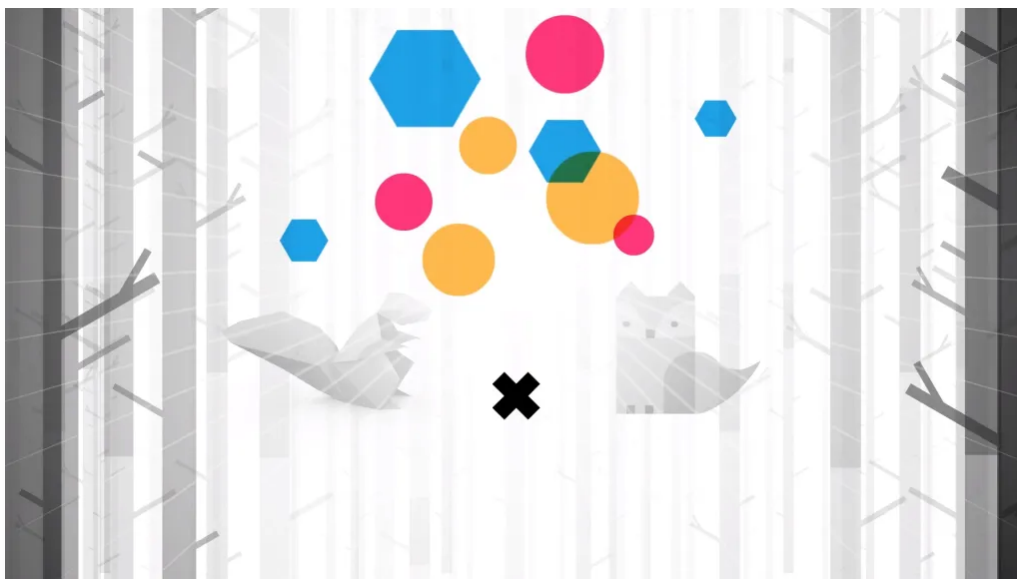
This has the effect of temporarily breaking the narration and challenging the viewer's perception of the film from that of a children's story to perhaps something more than might have been expected. Because Albert's pause does not follow the format of the previous narration and receptiveness of his replies.

This helps build suspense in a way that works within the narration format and still feels part of the story rather an apart from.

Locations in Time, Space, and History interlaced during *Others Will Follow* (2017)
Manipulating Perceptions and the Flow of Time in *The Golden Fish / Histoire d'un poisson rouge* (1959)

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A Color Pallet Sample

Now, as for the design of the film, it is presented in a way that also references children's media — simplistic shapes, a smaller pallet of colors, and a main character who is stylistically different than the rest of the world around them (think *The Ugly Duckling* or *The Rainbow Fish*). Albert is the only animal made of a textured material while the other animals are made of colorful geometric shapes, mostly in pink, blue, orange, or black.

In this situation, Albert might also be a sense of collective consciousness, as he has an assuring answer to all the other animal's problems, yet unlike the other animals, he has no face.

Due to the polygon overlays, we can assume Albert becomes part of a new planet, as the animation symbolism from the discussion with Fredrick about the end of the world is what flashes over the body of Albert as the world collapses into darkness over them.

Additionally (and spoiler alert), one of the last visuals over Albert the squirrel when he is running towards the end of the destruction is the image of the fractured, dead planet from his previous discussion with Fredrick the bear about now new planets will form, and perhaps it can be inferred from this that the mass of atoms that are Albert's body, created already with iron born in a distant star eons before his creation, will now become part of the life source of a new planet, and new, innumerable squirrels. And maybe they will find their missing scarves.

Likewise, the animals *themselves* reference this idea of "objects constructed from other parts, make new things" which comes in the fact that the flat shapes that make up the animals besides Albert are overlaid like Venn diagram circles to make their full structure. As if the animals themselves have

Albert of course is all one object, and he is styled after origami paper, which makes new shapes by taking a flat piece of paper, folding it into triangles or similar, and ending up with something much more complex than the starting sheet. It is a similar concept, and fits the theme of the pieces, but applied in an alternative way.

In all of this, there is also a strange sense in the narrator choice, as listening to the first Hikaru Sulu (if we can, as viewers, separate the *importance* of the first Sulu as a historically relevant television character in the diversity of science fiction from their actor) speak on the end of the universe somehow makes it seem less daunting, as if we are all just going to go on an endless, bold journey into space together and for eternity.

The film can be viewed* on Eion Duffy's website or on Vimeo [here](#) or below.

**Note: Elathan Cinema takes no medial responsibility if the viewer experiences a migraine, seizure, or related medical condition during or after watching this short. View at your own discretion.*



The Missing Scarf

from [Eoin Duffy](#)

06:35 |



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