

JOY BATCHELOR

(1914-1991 | English, Graphic Designer, Illustrator, Animator, Director and SCREENWRITER)

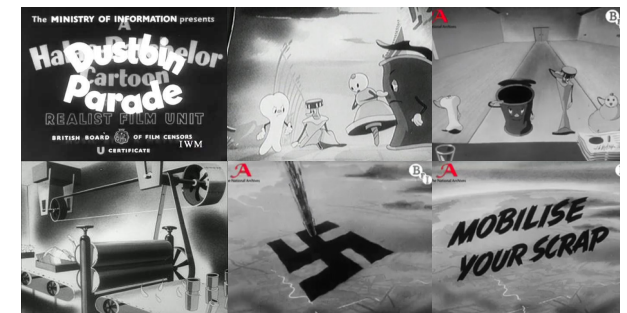
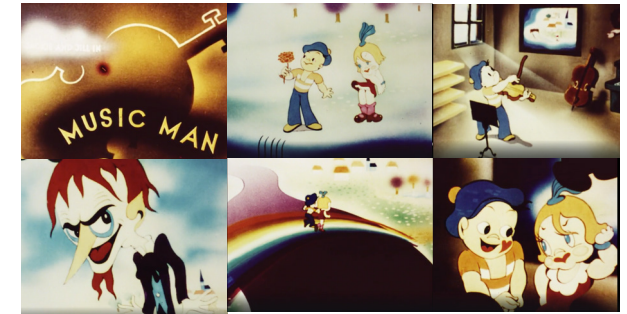
Joy Batchelor began her journey in animation back in 1935 at the age of 21. Out of Watford School of Art, Science and Commerce, no long before and when nation work was scarce, Joy flourished as a commercial artist, illustrating cookery books, magazines and even in gossip pages for the tabloids¹. Her collaboration in the Dennis Connelly's project "Billy and Tilly in Harem Scarem" resulted in this same context, a low budget enterprise that needed young and ambitious artist willing to participate for reasonable fee taking him twenty-five artist and four months to complete. For Joy, this was her first encounter with animation, as she recalled:

"The only other job on offer was in a newly opened animation studio with an Australian called Dennis Connelly. My first work consisted of in-betweening but within a week I was promoted to animation since I had noticed, and said, that the characters weren't moving properly. Of course, I didn't know how to move them but I found out".²

First as a in-betweener in the "Billy and Tilly in Harem Scarem" and despite not being the only woman animating in that period³, Joy was one of the only woman in British Animation that seemed to have everything going for her, especially since the beginning of her collaboration with John Halas and benefiting from the specifics of that time in terms of workforce⁴. Both, started their partnership in 1937 with the technicolor British Cartoon "The Music Man", a 5min short cartoon that explores the characters Jack and Jill in their quest against an evil music teacher, portraying a message of love and perseverance. The film was released a year after and gives a glimpse on what it will be Joy's forte, Educational and Public Information Films, leading to what will become Halas and Batchelor.

Their official partnership will be born in 1940, soon after Britain joining the second World War and profoundly influencing their work as one of the media producers for the Ministry of Information at the time. This can be noted as Halas and Batchelor released their first short for the Ministry of Information later in 1941 named "Dustbin Parade". A strong 5min short movie that explores the life of a group of commoners with no apparent purpose in life that are guided to help their country. A direct call towards the war effort in order to fight the natural scarcity that affected Britain during the War years. In this short, is clear their inspiration on American Cartoons and some style reminiscent of Eastern Europe, most likely John Halas upbringing and training under former Bauhaus tutors such as Lazslo Moholy-Nagy. The shadowy sheet, dramatic music, the yowling cat and the atmosphere of a film noir are an indication of his specific background.⁵

Dustbin Parade was not only their first piece of work under the name of Halas and Batchelor but will also serve as a philosophical template in "their" fight against the Axis. In 1941, "Filling the gap" was released followed by "Digging for victory" (1942); "The Fable of Fabrics" of the same year and the "Abu Series" a year later, a series of short propaganda



animated cartoons in Arabic, where Hitler is portrayed as an evil but unsuccessful Snake and Mussolini as a his submissive toad in an effort to build an specific image for both enemy leaders. Other releases under the Ministry of Information follow this agenda, “Handling Ships” (1945) as a request from the British Admiralty as training aid; “Water for Fire Fighting” (1948); “The Charley Series” (1946-48) as a new social security plans propaganda for the socialist chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps; “The Shoemaker and the Haffer” (1949) and “Think of the Future” (1953), related to the Marshall Plan and the recovery of Europe respectively.

This politicised approach is noticeable across their entire portfolio and the release in 1954 of “Animal Farm” is a corollary of this. The adaptation of George’s Orwell publication where he expresses his disillusionment with Soviet Communism and the ideological fight between east and west, resulted in a adult oriented piece with a clear ideological message, the triumph of the western ideology. Nonetheless, it’s worth acknowledging the involvement of the CIA in the funding of this film trough its producer Louis de Rochemont.⁶

Animal Farm recalls the great Disney pictures of the thirties and forties visual style and represents the long lasting struggle between Marxism and capitalism. It explores a Marxist theme where a privileged villain in control of the means of production and a middle class group are in tension and ready to fight in the name of ideology. A confrontation that will take place resulting in the end of the old regime and the “normal” struggle in the construction of a new one without the “rules” that were previously in place with vices like greed in the core of the message. With this, Joy Batchelor produced in collaboration with John Halas not only the Britain’s first animated feature film⁷ but a portfolio critical of their epoch and animations unusually oriented for the adult audiences manipulating very sensitive political issues.

1_in WALLS, Paul (2015); Nelmes, Jill; Salbo, Jule; eds. “Women Screewriters: An International guide.” UK: Palgrave, MacMillan pp 649-652.

2_in TORRE, Dan; Torre, Lienors (2018). “Australian Animation: An International History”. UK: Palgrave, MacMillan. pp 58-59

3_STEWART, Jez in “Joy Batchelor - An Animated Life: Discussion (Conference)” on 13 April 2014. Curated by Vivien Halas. Brian Sibley; Clare Kitson and Jez Stewart. Held at the Barbican, London.

4_Ibid.

5_CRANSTON, Ross in <https://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1410261/index.html>

6_in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_de_Rochemont

7_BROOKE, Michael in Ross in <https://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1410261/index.html>

Other references

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<https://www.halasandbatchelor.co.uk/history.asp?1=1>

<https://player.bfi.org.co.uk/free/film/watch-abu-and-the-poisoned-well-1943-online>

https://filmfreeway.com/Ode_to_Joy. (by Vivien Halas)

