

APPROVALS

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The Forgotten Women of Animation

Finding Feminism in Animation

Bringing Female Animators Recognition

(by order of preference)

TEASER TEXT Write this after you finish the story. All 3 must be different.

WEBSITE TEASER <i>This will appear in both the department newsletter and on their website.</i>	"The amount of wonderful independent, experimental animation made by women is immense!" Vanessa Cambier, PhD candidate in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature has dedicated her dissertation to female animators and their experimental films.
CLA FACEBOOK TEASER	Animated films go beyond just Disney and Pixar, and these women animators prove it. Vanessa Cambier, PhD candidate in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature brings these women the recognition they deserve.
CLA TWITTER TEASER <i>280 characters or fewer--URL and @/# count as characters</i>	Women animators have been using experimental animation to critique female representation for decades, yet they never get the recognition they deserve. PhD candidate in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature is bringing these women into the spotlight in her latest research.
DEPARTMENT FACEBOOK POST <i>This is not the same as the CLA teaser.</i>	Women animators are often overlooked and overshadowed by companies like Disney and Pixar. PhD candidate Vanessa Cambier brings justice to these women through her research @umncscl

DEPARTMENT TWITTER POST

280 characters or fewer--URL
and @/# count as characters

Women animators rarely get the recognition that they and their films deserve. Vanessa Cambier, PhD candidate, is battling that issue in her latest research @UMNCSCCL

By Lauren Borchart

[Insert image & caption here when ready. Standard caption: Photo by [photographer's name], CLAgency student]

When you think of animated films, which ones come to mind? *Frozen*? *The Lion King*? Often left out are the films of women animators, whose work has been overshadowed by that of Disney and Pixar.

Recognizing a hole in the history of animation, Vanessa Cambier, a PhD candidate in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, decided to dedicate her dissertation to researching early and contemporary female animated films. In her exploration, Cambier found that these are not your average Disney movies.

Bringing Recognition to Women

Cambier began developing her interest in feminist film topics in her undergraduate career at the University of Minnesota, majoring in cultural studies and minoring in studies in cinema and media culture, as well as gender studies. In 2015, she began a summer research project on women experimental filmmakers, and she found female experimental animators along the way, which she has now dedicated her research to. "Each semester, the project grew a bit more and ultimately became my dissertation topic," she says.

Her research focuses on early and modern female filmmakers who used experimental animation to critique gender politics. The early animators she studies, like Sally Cruikshank and Suzan Pitt, worked primarily in the 1970s and 1980s and used their animation to break into the avant-garde scene, which was male-dominated at the time. Cambier has found that their successors, contemporary animators like Kelly Gallagher and Lisa Hanawalt, are still battling for recognition in the film industry, 50 years later. "I argue that these films have been fundamentally misrecognized in both feminist film and animation scholarship."

Seeing a need to bring justice to these animators and their work, Cambier set off to get her hands on the films. She discovered that there is a huge amount of animation made by women, so she traveled around and interviewed animators in order to locate the materials, creating her own library of female-animated films in the process. "Bringing things together in this project is my own attempt at a type of 'archive'."

From viewing these films and looking at their representation in the media, Cambier found that these animated films are often pigeon-holed into broad categories like "women's animation", and not viewed seriously for their stylistic or thematic elements. "Scholarship about these films paints them with broad strokes and often focuses on general narrative themes such as 'female experience'." Cambier argues that those generalizations overlook the way these films use experimental animation to make a visual statement on stereotypical representations of women.

She hopes that her research will bring these films and their creators the recognition they deserve, and create deeper conversations about their work. "I want to foster reexaminations of how women are represented in animated films *and* how women represent both their ideas about gender and the world within animated films."

Cambier has found that her research is already breaking down people's preconceived notions about female-made films. "The shift is that people who read my work, hear a talk, or see these films begin to embrace the notion that women's animation is often much weirder, more imaginative, and darker than expected."

Introducing Audiences to Experimental Animation

"My goal is to get more people watching these films and knowing the names of more women animators." Cambier hopes her research will introduce more people to female-animated films, and she's doing this by holding screenings of the films she researches. "I have had the good fortune to screen groups of my case study films for audiences and the response is always surprising--and very positive!"

Cambier wants more people to watch experimental and independent films, she hopes these films will make viewers change the way they think of female filmmakers and their work. "I want to expand notions of feminism and feminist films--I especially want to encourage more popular audiences to engage with the history of feminist ideas, especially as they relate to film."

By bringing justice to these films, Cambier hopes that viewers will discover a whole new world of animation that they didn't know existed. "The amount of wonderful

independent, experimental animation made by women is immense!" To Cambier, this is more than just a dissertation, it's giving female animators and their messages the recognition they deserve.

This story was written by an undergraduate student in Backpack. [Meet the team.](#)