

= Little Nemo (1911 film) =

Little Nemo , also known as Winsor McCay , the Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and His Moving Comics , is a 1911 silent animated short film by American cartoonist Winsor McCay . One of the earliest animated films , it was McCay 's first , and featured characters from McCay 's comic strip Little Nemo in Slumberland . Its expressive character animation distinguished the film from the experiments of earlier animators .

Inspired by flip books his son brought home , McCay came to see the potential of the animated film medium . He claimed to be the first to make such films , though James Stuart Blackton and Émile Cohl were among those who preceded him . The short 's four thousand drawings on rice paper were shot at Vitagraph Studios under Blackton 's supervision . Most of the film 's running time is made up of a live @-@ action sequence in which McCay bets his colleagues that he can make drawings that move . He wins the bet with four minutes of animation in which the Little Nemo characters perform , interact , and metamorphose to McCay 's whim .

Little Nemo debuted in movie theaters on April 8 , 1911 , and four days later McCay began using it as part of his vaudeville act . Its good reception motivated him to hand @-@ color each of the animated frames of the originally black @-@ and @-@ white film . The film 's success led McCay to devote more time to animation . He followed up Little Nemo with How a Mosquito Operates in 1912 and his best @-@ known film , Gertie the Dinosaur , in 1914 .

= = Background = =

Winsor McCay (c . 1867 ? 71 ? 1934) had worked prolifically as a commercial artist and cartoonist by the time he started making newspaper comic strips such as Dream of the Rarebit Fiend (1904 ? 11) and his signature strip Little Nemo (1905 ? 14) . In 1906 , McCay began performing on the vaudeville circuit , doing chalk talks ? performances in which he drew before live audiences .

Inspired by flip books his son Robert brought home , McCay " came to see the possibility of making moving pictures " of his cartoons . McCay , then in his early forties , claimed he was " the first man in the world to make animated films " , but he was likely familiar with the earlier work of American James Stuart Blackton and the French Émile Cohl . In 1900 , Blackton produced The Enchanted Drawing , a trick film in which an artist interacts with a drawing on an easel . Blackton used chalk drawings in 1906 to animate the film Humorous Phases of Funny Faces , and used stop motion techniques to animate a scene in the 1907 film The Haunted Hotel . Cohl 's films , such as 1908 's Fantasmagorie , were dreamlike nonnarrative pieces in which characters and scenes continually changed shape . Cohl 's films were first distributed in the United States in 1909 , the year McCay said he first became interested in animation . According to McCay biographer John Canemaker , McCay combined the interactive qualities of Blackton 's films with the abstract , shapeshifting qualities of Cohl 's into his own films . In the films of all three , the artist interacts with the animation .

= = = Little Nemo = = =

Considered McCay 's masterpiece , Little Nemo in Slumberland debuted in October 1905 as a full @-@ page Sunday strip the New York Herald . Its child protagonist , whose appearance was based on McCay 's son Robert , had fabulous dreams that would be interrupted with his awakening in the last panel . McCay experimented with the form of the comics page , timing and pacing , the size and shape of panels , perspective , architectural and other details .

The strip has seen a number of other adaptations . An extravagant \$ 100 @,@ 000 Little Nemo stage show with score by Victor Herbert and lyrics by Harry B. Smith played to sold @-@ out audiences in 1907 . A joint American @-@ Japanese feature @-@ length film Little Nemo : Adventures in Slumberland appeared in 1989 , with contributions by Ray Bradbury , Chris Columbus and Moeblus . Little Nemo : The Dream Master was a 1990 side @-@ scrolling platform video game adaptation of the 1989 film .

= = Synopsis = =

Following credits proclaiming McCay as " The Famous Cartoonist of the New York Herald " and " the first artist to attempt drawing pictures that will move " , McCay sits in a restaurant with a group of colleagues , cartoonist George McManus , actor John Bunny and publisher Eugene V. Brewster among them . McCay bets the group that in one month he can make 4 @,@ 000 drawings move . The group laughs and gestures that he is drunk or crazy . McCay sets to work in a studio where he directs workers to move around bundles of paper and barrels of ink . A month later , McCay gathers his colleagues in front of a film projector . McCay rapidly sketches characters from the cast of his Little Nemo comic strip .

McCay places a drawing of the character Flip in a wooden slot in front of the camera . The words " Watch me move " appear above Flip 's head , and he begins to make gestures while smoking his cigar . Blocks fall from the sky and assemble themselves into the character Impie , and the pair 's figures distort , disappear , and reappear , before a fantastically @-@ dressed Little Nemo magically materializes . Nemo prevents the two others from fighting and takes control of their forms ? he stretches and squashes them with the raising and lowering of his arms . Nemo then draws the Princess and brings her to animated life . He gives her a rose which has suddenly grown nearby , just as a gigantic dragon appears . The pair seat themselves on a throne in the dragon 's mouth and wave to the audience as the dragon carries them away .

Flip and Impie attempt to follow the dragon in a jalopy , but the car explodes and sends them into the air . Doctor Pill arrives to help , but cannot find anyone until Flip and Impie land on him . The pair try to help the doctor to his feet when the animation freezes . The camera zooms out to reveal the serial number " No. 4000 " , and a thumb holding the drawing .

= = Production = =

By late 1910 , McCay had made the 4000 rice @-@ paper drawings for the animated portion of the film . Each was assigned a serial number , and marks were made in the top corners for registration . They were mounted on sheets of cardboard to make them easier to handle and photograph . Before he had them photographed , he tested them on a hand @-@ cranked 24 x 12 x 20 @-@ inch (61 x 30 x 51 cm) Mutoscope @-@ like machine to ensure the animation was fluid . Photography was done at the Vitagraph Studios under the supervision of Blackton . The animated portion took up about four minutes of the film 's total length . In only one sequence did McCay use an animation loop for a repeated action ; re @-@ used a series of seven drawings six times (three forward , three back) to have Flip move his cigar up and down in his mouth three times . McCay made more extensive use of this technique in his later films .

= = Style = =

McCay 's drawings are in the heavily outlined Art Nouveau style familiar to the readers of his comics . Its expressive character animation differentiated Little Nemo from the films of Blackton and Cohl . There are no backgrounds ; McCay 's first film with backgrounds was 1914 's Gertie the Dinosaur . McCay demonstrated his mastery of linear perspective in scenes such when the dragon disappears smoothly into the distance .

The film 's positive reception motivated McCay to hand @-@ color each of the 35mm frames of the originally black @-@ and @-@ white film . The dragon chariot that carries off Nemo and the Princess originally appeared in three episodes of Little Nemo in Slumberland in mid @-@ 1906 .

Academic Mark Winokur noted racial hierarchies in the Little Nemo strip and film . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Nemo is depicted as " most human " , while the Irish Flip is drawn as a minstrel caricature , and the mute African Impie is most grotesquely caricatured . Nemo , at the top of this hierarchy , exerts his authority over the other characters , as when he distorts them with magic .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Distributed by Vitagraph , the film debuted in theaters on April 8 , 1911 . McCay included the film as part of his vaudeville act beginning April 12 . Little Nemo was popular with audiences and earned positive reviews . Film magazine The Moving Picture World called Nemo " an admirable piece of work ... one of those films which have a natural advertising heritage in the great and wide popularity of its subject ? Little Nemo is known everywhere . " The Morning Telegraph called McCay 's new film @-@ enhanced act " even a greater go than his previous one " , and put McCay on its " Blue List " of vaudeville " Actors and Acts of the Highest Ratings " . In 1938 architect Claude Bragdon reminisced of the excitement he felt when he saw Little Nemo , saying he " had witnessed the birth of a new art " . Nemo appeared on stage and in theaters within the same week , but McCay postponed the theatrical releases of his next two films , How a Mosquito Operates (1912) and Gertie the Dinosaur (1914) , for some time after he used them in his stage show .

Animation historian Giannalberto Bendazzi saw the transforming series of images in the plotless Nemo serving as little more than a demonstration of the animation medium 's capabilities . Bendazzi wrote that McCay overcame this overt experimentalism in How a Mosquito Operates .

McCay 's working method was laborious , and animators developed a number of methods to reduce the workload and speed production to meet the demand for animated films . Within a few years of Nemo 's release , Canadian Raoul Barré 's registration pegs combined with American Earl Hurd 's cel technology became near @-@ universal methods in animation studios . In 1916 , McCay himself adopted the cel method , beginning with his fourth film The Sinking of the Lusitania (1918) .

In 2009 , Little Nemo was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being " culturally , historically , or aesthetically significant " .