

## EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION

### THE JOY OF MOVEMENT

Jules Engel, Founding Director of Cal Arts Experimental Animation Program

*"Art concerned with Movement through Space, and so with Time...has become the most important element in the Art of the 20th Century. It took till this Century to discover the Art of Movement."*

Len Lye

Experimental Animation is a personal vision -- a concrete record of an artist's discovery of himself.

My personal emphasis concentrates on the development of a visual dynamic language, independent of Literature and theatrical traditions, demonstrating that pure graphic choreography is capable of its own wordless truth. I do not look for any kind of narrative that would lend itself to graphic expression. I must convey ideas/feelings through movements that could not be put into words. Lines, Squares, Spots, Circles, varieties of Color -- sometimes difficult to comprehend -- provide the keys to our pictures. In film, natural movement does not give presence to any object to line: the filmmaker's talent gives movement an aesthetic expression.

*So we shall have an Art which is beyond static painting, beyond cinematographic representation, which we shall not take long to get familiar with -- which will have its own admirers particularly skilled in responding to movement, to colors, to mutual penetration of colors, brisk and leisurely transformations, flows of movement, convergence and contrast...*

-Guillaume Apollinaire

My first introduction to the art of movement came not from animated films but from my experience seeing the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo. There I discovered the art of movement of the dance world through the choreography of George Balanchine and their great dancers including Tamara Toumanova, Danilova, Baronova, David Lichine, and Leonide Massine.

Martha Graham opened another avenue for me, showing how a more contemporary art can bring visions in movement: Movement doesn't have to explain an emotional flow -- it can create a movement incident.

Movement is a universal expression. Further inspiration came to me from contemporary visual arts: Painters like Kandinsky and Mondrian, sculptors

like David Smith or Calder's always-moving mobiles, or the more recent Chillida.

I often get inspirational ideas about "Time," "Rhythm" and "Structure" -- and sometimes even "Conversational Rhythm", while watching a theatrical production of Chekhov's Uncle Vanya. Although ideas come from many sources, I do not rely on Music as a starting point; I prefer to do my graphic choreography from my own sense of timing. I prefer to call my films "Art in Motion" rather than "Visual Music."

My work is abstract, but it contains an organic element that brings people close to their inner feelings; it doesn't explain, but feeling provides an answer.

Experimental Animation is closer to Music, which can move away from any obvious image, and gives us an experience that can only be the property of Music.

In my work, Movement in itself is the expression that gives us both an aesthetic and an emotional experience.

"Movement is the content". Don't merely look at a movement, feel it: the movement should seem almost organic.

Movement should include "pause" and "silence".

Movement emerges, then disappears.

Movement is action.

Our responses to a movement may be determined by more than the purely kinetic qualities of the movement -- it may be affected by our own state of mind at a given moment.

*The articulation of movement, to me, is  
Rhythm. And Rhythm is "Articulated Time".*

*It's the same as Music. But in Film, I  
articulate Time visually, and in Music I  
articulate Time aurally.*

*– Hans Richter*

Experimental film has a splendid opportunity to exploit Space and Time choreography. Composing in space; composing for Space; infinite Space; expanding and diminishing forms; disintegration of forms; flow of movement; simultaneous rhythm; instant present; forms that interpenetrate; successive transformable and ephemeral forms to disappear and then reform in an infinite progression; arrested motion; slow motion; fragmented images; the surface of the screen; exterior rhythm; cubist composition...

I don't have a theory. I am aware of the shapes/forms that I work with: how they grow and develop inside film Space and Time, their action, which gives me the avenues to move on, to control, to develop, to finalize.