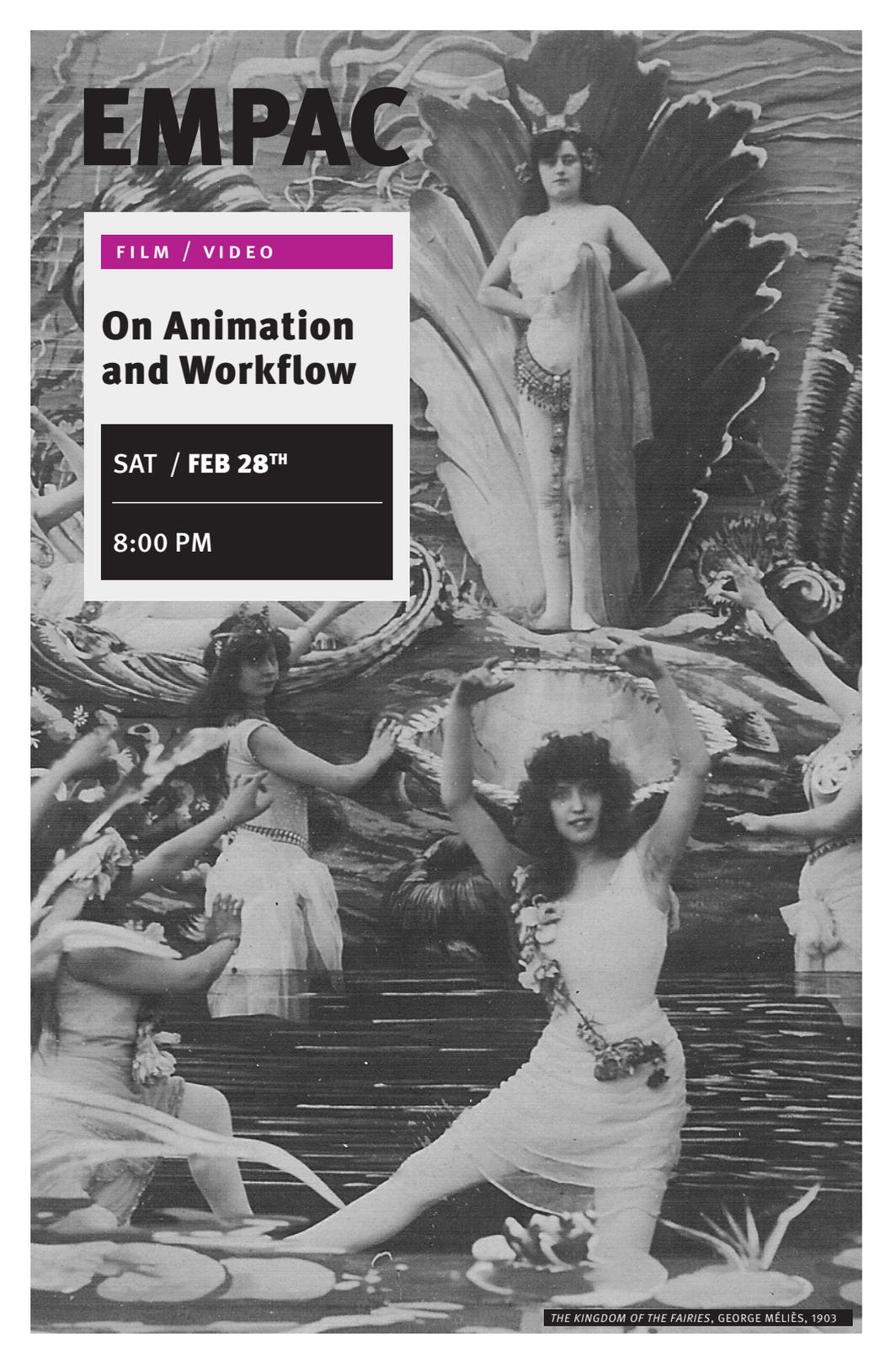


EMPAC



FILM / VIDEO

On Animation and Workflow

SAT / FEB 28TH

8:00 PM

THE KINGDOM OF THE FAIRIES, GEORGE MÉLIÈS, 1903



On Animation and Workflow

Jaffe Colloquium Screening

This screening program presents Georges Méliès' pre-digital compositing techniques at the turn of the 20th century, Karel Zeman's stop-motion animation, Norman McLaren's mid-century animated live action, along with the contemporary digital compositing of artist collective Flatform, and the industrial experiments with CG in Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim*. Looking back upon a century's worth of image production that combines live action with the animated, the program investigates the technical and aesthetic conditions that manifest through the processes of each film's construction.

CURATOR: VICTORIA BROOKS

Program

Georges Méliès *The Kingdom of the Fairies*

1903, 35mm transferred to digital video, 16 min, courtesy of Flicker Alley

Widely acknowledged as a pioneer of techniques such as the stop-trick, split-screen, double exposure, and dissolve in the late 1890s, Georges Méliès used cinematography to manipulate live action with the previously unprecedented use of special effects. His 1903 film *The Kingdom of the Fairies* was an adaptation of stage pantomime *Biche au Bois*, described by the *Los Angeles Times* at the time as “an interesting exhibit of the limits to which moving picture making can be carried in the hands of experts with time and money to carry out their devices.”

Méliès (1861–1938) was a French illusionist and filmmaker. Working first with the theater, as owner of the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, he not only directed and produced theatrical productions but also presented pre-cinema performances such as magic lantern shows, automaton performances, and developed special effects for the stage. Following the first Lumière brothers screening in 1895, he bought a Robert W. Paul Animatograph film projector in London to include screenings into this theater’s daily shows, and built his own film camera. A prolific filmmaker, Méliès shot his first film in 1896 and by 1913 had directed over five hundred, with a wide range of subject matter and style including documentary, comedy, drama, fantasy, and horror.

Karel Zeman *Inspirace*

1949, 35mm transferred to video, 11 min, courtesy of National Film Archive, Czech Republic

Czech director Karel Zeman used glass figurines and stop-motion to create his 1949 short film *Inspirace*. Well known for his inventive use of special effects, he combined live action with animated elements to create numerous shorts and feature films, although *Inspirace* was the only film in which he used glass. Zeman frames *Inspirace* with footage of himself through rain splattered glass, the camera slowly pulling out to reveal subsequent shots of rain-soaked leaves and then the miniature glass world of refracted light.

Zeman (1910–1989) was a Czech film director, screenwriter and production designer. Heavily influenced by Georges Méliès’ approach and technique, in turn he is a touchstone for many contemporary Hollywood filmmakers and artists alike. Zeman’s 1955 feature *Journey to the Beginning of Time* marked Zeman’s breakthrough, his first to combine live action, animation and puppetry. Four years later, *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* was immediately sold to 72 countries and became the most successful Czech film of all time.

Norman McLaren *Pas de deux*

1968, 16mm transferred to HD digital video, 15 min, courtesy of National Film Board of Canada

“Animation is not the art of drawings-that-move, but rather the art of movements-that-are-drawn. What happens between each frame is more important than what happens on each frame. Therefore, animation is the art of manipulating the invisible interstices between frames.”

—Norman McLaren

A 20th-century pioneer of experiments in animation techniques, Norman McLaren filmed the dancers in his BAFTA-award winning film *Pas de deux* in real-time with oblique back-lighting, superimposing multiple shots over the top of each other each with a delay of five frames to amplify the movement and form.

McLaren (1914–1987) was a Scottish-Canadian animator and film director. Continually experimenting with new filmmaking techniques, his films ranged from live action and optical printing effects, to hand-drawn animation, abstract film, pixilation and graphical sound. McLaren is best known for his work with National Film Board of Canada, where he worked from 1941. Previous to that he worked in the 1930s at the UK’s General Post Office Film Unit (GPO) before moving to New York on the eve of World War II with a grant from the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation. McLaren won numerous awards throughout his life, including an Oscar for Best Documentary in 1952, a Silver Bear for best documentary short in the 1956 Berlin International Film Festival, and a BAFTA award for best animated film in 1969 for *Pas de deux*.

Platform *Cannot be anything against the wind*

2010, HD digital video, 6 min, courtesy of the artists and Video Data Bank / vbd.org

Producing videos, and time-based installations, media-art collective Platform uses compositing and a variety of visual effects to create works that accelerate temporal perception. By digitally creating environmental effects that cut between day and night, and shift rapidly through seasons, they manipulate on-location footage. Through constructing what initially appear as “real” images, landscape, architecture, and people quickly become malleable objects that betray their means of production, and expose the processes and systems that build digital worlds.

Platform is a media-arts collective founded in 2006 and is based in Milan and Berlin. Works by Platform have been shown in many exhibitions at museums and institutions including, among others, the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio; the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France; MARCA Museum of Contemporary Art in Catanzaro, Italy; Kulturhuset in Stockholm, Sweden; Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow, Russia; Museu da Imagem e do Som in Sao Paulo, Brazil; and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), Spain. Festivals include Festival du Nouveau Cinema Montreal, Canada; LOOP Festival Barcelona, Spain; Melbourne Film Festival, Australia; International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Venice International Film Festival, Italy; Rio de Janeiro International Short Film Festival, Brazil, and Kurzfilmtage in Oberhausen. Awards include Screen Festival 2008, in Oslo; 25FPS 2009, in Zagreb; Lago Film Festival 2010, in Revine Lago; Festival International du Court-Métrage 2011, in Lille.

Guillermo del Toro *Pacific Rim*

2013, HD digital video, 132 min, courtesy of Swank Motion Pictures

Best known for his labyrinthine fantasies and complex visual effects, Del Toro's *Pacific Rim* is a science fiction monster film particularly acclaimed for its technical developments. Co-written by del Toro and Travis Beacham, the directors' production company Mirada Studios designed, shot, and edited over 80 visual effects for the prologue alone.

Del Toro (b. 1964, Mexico) is an acclaimed film director, producer and screenwriter based in Los Angeles. Del Toro has been making films since the 1980s, when he formed his own company, Necropia, whilst teaching and directing Mexican television programs. Dick Smith was an early influence, teaching him makeup and effects for film, and his 1993 film *Cronos* was his first international critical success, winning nine academy awards in Mexico and the International Critics Prize at Cannes. He went on to make Hollywood studio productions such as *Mimic*, *The Devils Backbone*, *Blade II*, *Hellboy*, and *Pans Labyrinth*. In 2010 he launched Mirada Studios with Matthew Cullen, Guillermo Navarro and Javier Jimenez as a multi-platform production company that combines narrative tradition with emerging technologies. His book *Cabinet of Curiosities* was published by Harper Collins in 2013.

This screening is part of the **Jaffe Colloquium: On Animation and Workflow**, which brings together a small group of artists, curators, visual effects specialists, engineers, and theorists to informally discuss ideas centered around the conditions of the long co-history of animation and workflow (the sequence of processes through which a piece of work passes from initiation to completion).

Of the major transformations in image production, one of the more significant involves the shift away from filming on naturalistic sets or on-location—filming live, so to speak. In this mode, which has been familiar for nearly a century, figures and surroundings are captured in the same shot; even significant processing and manipulation of the film does not alter that close bond. The last two decades, however, have seen the increasing dominance of moving image productions that rely almost exclusively on post-production. More shots are now digitally composited from various sources, some shot on green screen, some built from digital scratch. They are, for all intents and purposes, animations, in which each sequence renders a montage of disparate elements, produced at different times and often on different continents, into a single surface and flow of frames. In this situation, categories used to understand cinematic space and time that developed over a century of viewing and discourse have become increasingly inadequate, especially insofar as they reinforce a long-held divide between the filmed and the animated. To make better sense of these contemporary images, we have to instead read back through that history of the animated, constructed and built, and so too through the history of the technique and workflow from which it cannot be separated.

UPCOMING:

On Animation and Workflow Film Series

This ongoing series takes as its starting point the long co-history of animation and workflow, from early cinema to contemporary moving images, including art film and video, Hollywood productions, and video games.

March 31:

Parallel I-IV

Harun Farocki

A four-part cycle of essay-films made by the late filmmaker Harun Farocki between 2012–2014, *Parallel I–IV* delves into the techniques and technologies involved in the making of contemporary moving images. Charting the development of computer animation through video games, industrial cinema, and military imaging, Farocki discards the cinematic notion of the “real” to uncover the unseen labor invisibly rendered into these on-screen digital worlds.

STAFF

Johannes Goebel / Director
Geoff Abbas / Director for Stage Technologies
Eric Ameres / Senior Research Engineer
Argeo Ascani / Curator, Music
David Bebb / Senior System Administrator
Peter Bellamy / Senior Systems Programmer
Michael Bello / Video Engineer
Victoria Brooks / Curator, Time-Based Visual Arts
Eric Brucker / Lead Video Engineer
Ash Bulayev / Curator, Dance + Theater
Michele Cassaro / Guest Services Coordinator
John Cook / Box Office Manager
Roxanne De Hamel / Web Developer
David DeLaRosa / Production Technician
Zhenelle Falk / Artist Services Administrator
William Fritz / Master Carpenter
Kimberly Gardner / Manager, Administrative Operations
Ian Hamelin / Project Manager
Katie Hammon / Administrative Specialist
Ryan Jenkins / Senior Event Technician
Shannon Johnson / Design Director
Pamela Keenan / Production Technician
CathyJo Kile / Business Manager
Eileen Krywinski / Graphic Designer
Carl Lewandowski / Production Technician
Eric Chi-Yeh Lin / Lead Stage Technician
Stephen McLaughlin / Senior Event Technician
Josh Potter / Marketing and Communications Manager
Alena Samoray / Event Technician
Candice Sherman / Business Coordinator
Avery Stempel / Front of House Manager
Kim Strosahl / Acting Production Administrative Coordinator
Jeffrey Svatek / Audio Engineer
Dan Swalec / Master Electrician
Todd Vos / Lead Audio Engineer
Pete Wargo / Manager, Information Systems
Michael Wells / Production Technician



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