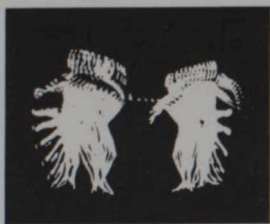


Exhibition of animated film to be held at Canada House



Dancers in Norman McLaren's *Pas de Deux*.

Photo: NFB

The new year will see an unusual event at Canada House, when the audio-visual department plays host to an Animated Film Exhibition.

The exhibition, prepared by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), will be a rare and valuable collection of original artwork from some 40 NFB animated films. Its appeal is that it will give visitors a glimpse of the hidden art of animation – multi-layered cutouts that create an illusion of depth; and figures that have been painstakingly drawn as many as 20 times to capture a single fleeting gesture or expression.

In addition, there will be screenings of some rare and often experimental animated films, as well as explanatory talks and lectures from professionals in the field.

Art form being ignored

What makes the exhibition unusual is the fact that animated film is an art form that is not widely studied or understood. There's little public awareness of the diverse – and sometimes astonishing – ways in which an image is made to move in close imitation of real life.

To a large extent, that's because a lot of people view animated film as being synonymous with cartoons – with children's entertainment – and that means many of the technical and aesthetic advances have gone unnoticed.

Also, mainstream film culture tends to revolve around the full-length feature, and in that milieu the animated 'short' can easily be treated as little more than a filler.

Reputation for high standards

To aficionados, that attitude is close to being sacrilegious – especially in the area of documentary and/or experimental animated films. That is an area that is particularly Canadian, since Canadian animators have long enjoyed international acclaim for their high standards of documentaries and for their willingness to experiment with new approaches.

Scene from the animated film *After life – Après la vie*.



Photo: National Film Board of Canada

Changes in film policy could help UK producers

Canadian government support for film production has a long history, and this year it has taken another step forward in a series of developments that should appeal to producers within the United Kingdom.

Public money in Canada has been set aside for film financing since before the 1920s – either through Motion Picture Bureaux or through direct financing of specific projects.

In 1939, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) was established, and in its 45-year history has produced some 5000 films. Then, in 1968, the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) was set up. It is another film-funding body, but with a slightly different emphasis: it is designed to stimulate feature-length films of a commercial nature.

Now, the CFDC has been transformed into Telefilm Canada, which has a mandate to provide funds for the production of quality films and television programmes for Canadian audiences. To carry out that mandate, Telefilm Canada has been put in charge of administering the Broadcast Fund – worth \$250 million (£156 million) over a five-year period.

What makes Telefilm Canada of interest to UK and other non-Canadian producers is the prospect of working on co-productions. Also, Telefilm Canada's mandate has already been extended to give it a more international outlook, and to that end it will soon be setting up offices in London.

In the meantime, enquiries about Telefilm Canada's activities – and its new mandate – will be handled by Canada House's audio-visual department.

In large part, that reputation is due to the NFB and its best-known animator, Norman McLaren. McLaren worked for the NFB for more than 40 years (retiring last year). Early on in his career, he pioneered a technique of camera-less, frame-less animation in which he drew or scratched images directly onto a celluloid strip. Later, in the 1950s, he experimented with another new technique, pixillation, which he used in what is probably his most famous film, *Neighbours*.

More recently, McLaren's passion for dance and harmony has drawn him towards increasingly more complex techniques, which involve optical manipulation of the kind he used in *Pas de Deux* and *Narcissus*.

Tribute to McLaren

It's partly in tribute to McLaren's work that the exhibition at Canada House will open with a selection of his films – plus a showing of some rarely seen films made by McLaren's colleague and mentor, Len Lye.

The exhibition opens at Canada House early in the new year. It will then tour Edinburgh, Bristol and Birmingham. Full details of times, dates and venues are available from Canada House, Trafalgar Square (see inside front cover for address and telephone number).