Brief Histories of World Animation

Although this book is laying out a version of the *global* history of animation, it is clear, at least until the explosion of Japanese anime split off on its own trajectory, that the American animation industry has been the driving force throughout most of that history; and that the history of animation is largely the history of American animation. So we begin this book with a brief overview of the development of the animation industry in North America.

However, if American animation is the sun around which all other animation has orbited, then it's also true that these other planets contain weird and wonderful life-forms and mutations of their own that are worth exploring. Western Europe led the way in the early days of cinema, and has been a fertile area for experimental and avant-garde animation. For many decades, Eastern European animation was funded by communist states, which meant that animators had more financial security than their Western counterparts, but also that they had less creative freedom. Although initially taking inspiration from America and Europe, Japanese animators soon developed their own distinctive traditions and styles, building a successful industry that has attracted devoted fans around the world.

A brief history of North American animation

Key figures

Tex Avery (USA)

Ralph Bakshi (USA)

Raoul Barré (Canada)

Don Bluth (USA)

Robert Breer (USA)

Tim Burton (USA)

Ed Catmull (USA)

Bob Clampett (USA)

Walt Disney (USA)

Max and Dave Fleischer (USA)

Matt Groening (USA)

Ray Harryhausen (USA)

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera (USA)

Don Hertzfeldt (USA)

John Hubley (USA)

Ub Iwerks (USA)

Chuck Jones (USA)

Chris Landreth (Canada)

Ryan Larkin (Canada)

John Lasseter (USA)

Winsor McCay (USA)

Norman McLaren (UK/Canada)

Grim Natwick (USA)

Willis O'Brien (USA)

Paul Terry (USA)

James Whitney (USA)

Walt Disney's "Nine Old Men"

Les Clark (USA)

Marc Davis (USA)

Ollie Johnston (USA)

Milt Kahl (USA)

Ward Kimball (USA)

Eric Larson (USA)

John Lounsbery (USA)

Wolfgang Reitherman (Germany/USA)

Frank Thomas (USA)

Key films

1914: Winsor McCay: Gertie the Dinosaur

1928: Disney: Steamboat Willie

1933: Willis O'Brien: King Kong

1937: Disney: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

1940: Disney: Pinocchio

1941: Disney: Fantasia

1941: Disney: Dumbo

1941: Fleischer Studios: Superman

1942: Disney: Bambi

1943: Tex Avery: Red Hot Riding Hood

1951: UPA: Gerald McBoing-Boing

1952: Norman McLaren: Neighbours

1953: Chuck Jones: Duck Amuck

1959: John and Faith Hubley: Moonbird

1961: Disney: One Hundred and One Dalmations

1967: Disney: The Jungle Book

1969: Ryan Larkin: Walking

1988: Disney: Who Framed Roger Rabbit

1989: Disney: The Little Mermaid

1991: Disney: Beauty and the Beast

1993: Tim Burton and Henry Selick: The Nightmare Before Christmas

1995: Pixar: Toy Story

2001: DreamWorks: Shrek

2009: Pixar: Up

2009: Disney: The Princess and the Frog

2009: Wes Anderson: Fantastic Mr Fox

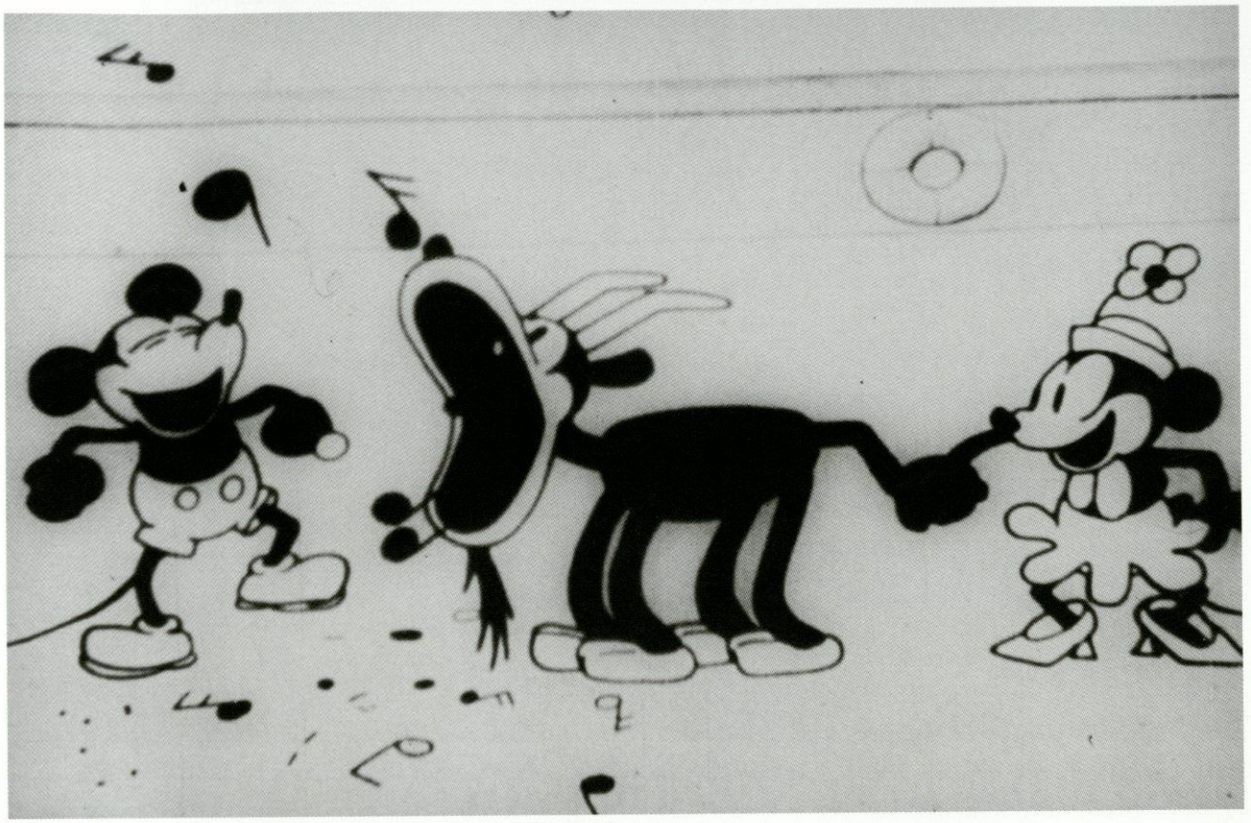
2010: Pixar: Toy Story 3

USA

Although many of the early pioneers of motion picture technology were European, it was in North America that the film industry, of which animation was an integral part, was really developed. The art of animation took a great leap forward with the refinements made by Winsor McCay around 1914, and at the same time, the industrialization of the animation industry was frantically establishing itself in New York. Canadian Raoul Barré and American Bill Nolan started the first commercial animation studio in The Bronx in 1914, and developed various animation techniques. John Randolph Bray was perhaps the most important figure in American animation in the years before World War I, establishing a studio and, somewhat unscrupulously at times, collecting, refining, and often patenting ideas such as cellulloid overlays (cel animation) and color cartoons. Other studios developed the industrial "Taylorization" of the animation process further, following Frederick Winslow Taylor's theories of "scientific management" and industrial efficiency. Along with the newspaper publishers who often owned the cartoon characters, figures like the producer Pat Sullivan created early models for the mass-market exploitation of intellectual property via merchandise.

Toward the end of the 1920s, Walt Disney perfected the art of sound cartoons. Building on his huge success with this, his studio studied everything that had gone before in animation, as well as many other areas of art and design, and refined and developed the techniques, concentrating on quality rather than ease of production. Soon, with competition from the Fleischer Studios, Disney was the market leader. This precipitated what has become known as the Golden Age of American Animation, which lasted until the early 1960s.

By 1930, following Disney, who had relocated from Kansas City, most of the East Coast studios had moved west to Los Angeles for proximity with the rest of the movie industry in Hollywood. In the early 1930s, Leon Schlesinger Productions started making shorts for Warner Bros., in 1935 Tex Avery was hired as a director, and by the early 1940s, the popularity of the crazy and extreme Warner Bros. characters, along with MGM's cartoons, was rivaling Disney's.



Steamboat Willie, Disney, 1928

Meanwhile Disney was keeping his lead on the pack by refining character animation to a fine art; his animators could now make their characters express emotion like real actors, and his company developed (although they did not invent) technical advances like the multiplane camera. To separate himself further from other cartoon companies, Disney imbued much of the new work with a detailed realism based on studies of live animals and landscapes. Armed with these new weapons, the Disney Studio moved into feature films in the late 1930s, a risky experiment that paid off handsomely with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), and a string of other acclaimed features following closely behind.

World War II shattered the world economy, and Disney's main competitor, Fleischer Studios, was forced to close. Like other studios, Disney survived the war by making government information and propaganda films, but the failure of some big projects and a strike at the studio by the animators Walt Disney considered to be his "family" had come as big blows.

United Productions of America (UPA) was founded during the war by former Disney animators. The studio began work making information films and theater shorts, rejecting Disney's realistic style by featuring modernist designs and simplified characters and animation. This new approach won favor with the critics and made Disney's cartoons seem somewhat old-fashioned in comparison. UPA were widely influential in their modernist aesthetic, which was taken up by Warner Bros. directors like Chuck Jones, and even eventually in watered-down form by Disney artists. A less positive result, however, was the way that their approach to "limited animation" was taken up by television producers from the mid-1950s onward, for cost-cutting rather than artistic reasons, driving down the production values and quality of most animation for the next 30 years. During this age of cheap television cartoons, the prominent producers were ex-MGM directors William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, whose company, Hanna-Barbera, became the biggest name in TV animation.

Until the late 1950s, experimental animation was mainly a European phenomenon. Perhaps a by-product of the neurosis that seemed an undercurrent of America's economic success, "underground" filmmakers emerged, influenced by the New American Cinema of Maya Deren, the European avant-garde, and the freeform creativity encouraged by the "beat generation." Loose groups formed, such as the West Coast experimentalists who congregated around the Art in Cinema screenings that

Ryan, Chris Landreth, 2004

took place between 1945 and 1954 at the San Francisco Museum of Art. During the 1960s and 1970s avant-garde filmmakers used primitive computers to produce abstract animation, and it was these artists, hippies working with technology originally developed for military use, who pioneered computer animation. Their work led to some commercial experiments in the 1980s, such as Disney's *Tron* (1982).

In the world of commercial features, a breakaway group of Disney artists led by Don Bluth, disillusioned by the company's cost-cutting animation production and lack of artistic ambition, formed new companies and made animation features with ambitions toward the old levels of artistry, with some success.

The animation revival of the early 1990s was spurred by a few Disney smash-hit animated features, created by a new generation of artists determined to restore former glories. A new wave of innovative television series were also produced by the TV networks devoted to animation. These generally went back to retrospective attitudes of investing care, intelligence, and innovation, and often retro designs. New companies were formed to make animated features, such as Don Bluth Productions and DreamWorks Animation. Many quality feature films were made in this period but, as is often the case, many jumped on the bandwagon with diminishing care, intelligence, and innovation, and hence diminishing returns.

Many of the movies from the early 1990s featured CGI backgrounds, but it was not until the mid-1990s that John Lasseter's films proved, as Disney had done in the 1930s with drawn animation, that CGI characters could express emotion and humor. Lasseter and his animators achieved this success by applying the same innovative spirit, creativity, and artistry that Walt Disney had used in his heyday, and they reaped the rewards. The huge success of Pixar's Disney-financed movies precipitated another rush for CG cartoon features that lifted and propelled the box office viability of animated features into the new century, with Pixar, DreamWorks Animation, and Blue Sky as the leading players.

The success of animated features in the 1990s also enabled the big studios to green light more unusual works, and the films of Tim Burton and Henry Selick established pure stop frame as a valid option for commercial animation. Meanwhile the commercial viability of traditional drawn animation was questioned after the poor box office returns of several movies, and the Hollywood production of traditional animation was effectively closed down, even, incredibly, at Disney.

At the same time, the new sophistication of computer effects and animation meant that the vast majority of special effects were now created digitally and computer animation became an integral part of the multiplex blockbuster "event"

film industry of the twenty-first century. The digital version of rotoscoping, motion or performance capture, was pushed as an alternative to the work of key frame animators, and a sequence of features were produced based on this technology, with mixed results.

In 2006, with their financing and distribution deal with Pixar coming to an end, The Walt Disney Company recognized that John Lasseter was the true modern day successor to Walt Disney's leadership, perhaps something they had been been missing since his death 40 years earlier. The corporation bought out Pixar and installed Lasseter as creative head of Disney. One of Lasseter's first acts in charge of the company was to reestablish the production of traditional drawn animation.

Canada

Canadian Raoul Barré was an important figure in the early animation industry, but aside from Barré's work in New York and the work of a few isolated individuals, such as Walter Swaffield, Harold Peberdy, and Bryant Fryer, Canadian animation did not really get going until the arrival of two men from Europe. John Grierson arrived from England in 1939 as the first director of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and in 1941 he appointed the Scot Norman McLaren to head the NFB's animation department. The original task of the NFB was to create wartime propaganda and, after some early collaboration with Disney in this area, the policy of animation production of the NFB moved away from mainstream cel animation. The NFB was inclined to explore more experimental forms in order to establish an identity for Canadian animation that differentiated it from the commercial mainstream of the USA. A huge success over the years, the NFB has won over 5,000 awards, including over 70 Academy Award® nominations, creating Canada's reputation as a world center of animation.

McLaren's pixillation classic *Neighbours* (1952) was a product of this NFB atmosphere of experimentation, winning an Oscar® (curiously, for best documentary). Another product of the policy was the innovative director George Dunning, who made a number of shorts for the NFB, including *Cadet Rouselle* (1946). Dunning worked briefly for UPA in New York before moving to London, where he directed *Yellow Submarine* (1968). Another Canadian animation star was Richard Williams, who also worked at UPA and, like Dunning, moved to London where he established a world class studio and famously directed animation for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). The first Canadian feature film, *Le village enchanté* (*The Enchanted Village*,1955) was made by NFB animators Marcel and Réal Racicot, and in 1966 the NFB split into two parts for French and English language work.

The television series *Rocket Robin Hood* (1966) was one of the first products of a slowly emerging Canadian animation industry proper; a forerunner of the TV animation boom of the 1970s, it was produced by TV impresario Al Guest and directed by American animator Ralph Bakshi. In 1971 animation giant Nelvana was formed in Toronto and successfully produces television animation to the present day, along with cult projects like *Rock & Rule* (1983), an ill-fated venture into feature films. In 1981 the French-speaking division of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation won the Oscar for *Crac* in 1981 and again for the *The Man Who Planted Trees* in 1987, both directed by German-born animator Frédéric Back.

In recent years Canada has established itself as a world leader in digital animation, its technology companies working with animators to create much of today's widely used animation software such as Alias Wavefront's Maya and Softimage XSI. The production company Mainframe produced some of the best known early CG animation, including the first 3D CG television series, *Reboot* (1994). Today, Canada remains at the technological cutting edge of animation while retaining its tradition of artistry and experimentation. Both of these national strengths can be seen in Chris Landreth's Oscar-winning short film *Ryan*, about the great Canadian animator, Ryan Larkin.

A brief history of Western European animation

While many of the early developments in animation were made in Europe, animation never really took off as an industry there, as it did in the USA, until the 1950s. And even then, only London really developed and maintained a major industry comparable with Los Angeles, New York, and later, Tokyo.

While the USA strode ahead industrially, Europe was a fertile area for the experimental and the avant-garde. In the first few decades of the twentieth century many of the most revolutionary ideas in abstract and modern art were coming out of Europe, ideas and philosophies that spread out into film and animation. This cutting-edge work would then seep into the wider culture, influencing artists working in the rest of the world, crossing into the work of advertisers, and finding echoes in the movies of mainstream Hollywood filmmakers.

As with other art forms, at various stages throughout the history of animation there have been hotspots of invention and creativity, attracting more like-minded individuals and accelerating the process of change. This pattern can be seen in the major countries of Western Europe, as centers of animation bloom and die down again over a decade or two before blossoming elsewhere.

Experiments occurred in Italy as early as 1910 with painting directly onto film and a futurist manifesto mapped a blueprint for experimental film and animation to come. In the two decades after this, important developments in art and design in Germany based around the Bauhaus movement led to a group of artists who pushed the boundaries of abstract animation and cast an influence that would still be felt almost a century later.

World War II created economic chaos as capital was tied up in the war effort and postwar rebuilding. In this climate, most commercial animation went into decline. However in the larger economies, governments set aside funding for propaganda and public information and animation was understood to be an ideal medium for communicating these simple messages.

Key figures

Alexandre Alexeieff (France/Russia)

Dick Arnall (UK)

Berthold Bartosch (France/Hungary)

Bruno Bozzetto (Italy)

Sylvain Chomet (France)

John Coates (UK)

Emile Cohl (France)

Paul Driessen (Netherlands)

Michael Dudok de Wit (Netherlands)

George Dunning (UK/Canada)

Anson Dyer (UK)

Oskar Fischinger (Germany)

Ginger Gibbons (UK)

Terry Gilliam (UK/USA)

Bob Godfrey (UK)

Michel Gondry (France)

John Grierson (UK)

Oscar Grillo (UK/Argentina)

Paul Grimault (France)

John Halas (UK/Hungary) and Joy Batchelor (UK)

Jerry Hibbert (UK)

Jonathan Hodgson (UK)

Tim Hope (UK)

Clare Kitson (UK)

Réne Laloux (France)

Bill Larkins (UK)

Len Lye (UK/New Zealand)

Uli Meyer (Germany/UK)

Phil Mulloy (UK)

Michel Ocelot (France)

Nick Park (UK)

Richard Purdom (UK)

Joanna Quinn (UK)

Lotte Reiniger (Germany)

Martin Rosen (UK)

Georges Schwizgebel (Switzerland)

Shynola (UK)

Richard Taylor (UK)

Richard Williams (UK/Canada)

The Man with the Beautiful Eyes, Jonathan Hodgson, 2000

With the advent of war in Europe, many artists found their way not only to the USA and Hollywood, but also to the relative safe haven and freedom of expression that London offered. The UK, being culturally halfway between Europe and the USA, balanced the European experimental nature with a hard-headed American pragmatism, making serious attempts to industrialize animation in the years just before and after World War II, although the industry remained small until the explosion of TV advertising in London in the 1950s and 1960s. In a more experimental vein, The Greater Post Office Film Unit (GPO) was established in London in 1933 producing exploratory documentary and animation films.

In the 1940s a small UK cottage industry of animators developed to deliver simple messages with striking design through public information films and wartime propaganda. The result was a group of creative animators who were well versed in the art of fast, efficient communication of ideas. It was these traditions that from the advent of independent television in the late 1950s until the present day made for a large and successful advertising industry in London. Halas & Batchelor was formed in 1940 and became one of Europe's biggest, longest lasting, and most influential studios. In the 1960s London became a world center of popular culture, with the energy of the pop music explosion feeding out into film and animation. In the 1980s and 1990s the UK's Channel 4 became one of the great supporters of animation, funding much work on the fringes as well as global mainstream hits, and supporting international as well as British animators. In the late 1990s the UK's instinct for invention put it at the forefront of the digital revolution as it become a world leader in video game, internet, and digital animation, producing CG animation for many Hollywood films. At the same time, Aardman Animations became one of the leading exponents of the traditional art of stop motion.

Since the pioneering days of Charles-Emile Reynaud, Georges Méliès, and Emile Cohl, France has maintained a passion for cinema, animation, and comic books. The world's foremost animation festival is held annually in Annecy and France is also home to many brilliant animators and directors, who are often the products of some of the best animation schools in the world. However, for many decades, this passion did not translate into a particularly successful animation industry, until the end of the twentieth century, when France seemed suddenly to come to life as a producer of animated

feature films. A string of independent movies were released by directors such as Michel Ocelot and Sylvain Chomet; wonderfully original and varied in tone and style, these films were all uniquely French in their sense of creativity.

In the late 1930s, around the end of the Spanish Civil War, a number of companies in Barcelona produced movie theater shorts in conjunction with popular published comics. The Baguna brothers' Hispano Grafic Films and Alejandro Fernandez de la Reguera's Dibonso Films were formed around the end of the 1940s, and a few years later merged into the larger studio Dibujos Animados Chamartín, which released three successful and long-lasting animated series. Estudios Moro was formed in 1955 in Madrid by the Moro brothers and became one of the biggest producers of animated commercials in Europe.

Like France, Italy has a tradition of popular adult comic books. A few isolated movies were made in the early years of animation and several Italian feature films were released postwar. In the 1950s the Italian Broadcasting Corporation started showing advertising, including a long-running advertising series called *Carosello*, almost single-handedly sustaining a small animation industry and allowing animators a surprising amount of freedom. In the 1960s one of the biggest animation studios in Europe was Gamma Film in Milan, specializing in advertising and occasional shorts. Bruno Bozzetto became a world-renowned animation director and auteur in the 1960s and 1970s with works such as *West and Soda* (1965) and *Allegro Non Troppo* (1976).

Until World War II, Germany had been home to several experimental animators, including Walther Ruttmann, Hans Richter, Lotte Reiniger, and Oskar Fischinger. When the Nazis came to power in the 1930s, they banned all "degenerate" art, which forced most of these animators to emigrate. The UFA studio became the Nazis' media corporation, often using animation in the propaganda they produced. The one outstanding animator producing work for UFA was Hans Fischerkösen, who managed to make charming children's animation, which seemed if anything to give out a message of freedom and tolerance rather than supposed racial superiority. Germany suffered an economic crash after the war, which set back the development of the animation industry. In 1962, 26 filmmakers signed "The Oberhausen Manifesto," a statement intended to sweep away the past, to be a new start for German cinema, and to create a new wave of modernist films, which included animation.

The Belvision studio was founded in Belgium in 1955 and, with TVA Dupois, for the next 20 years would specialize in making movies based on popular comic strips, such as Tintin, the Smurfs, and Asterix.

Hungarian emigré George Pal established a tradition of puppet animation in the Netherlands in the 1930s before moving to the USA, and Dutch studios carried on with Pal's stop-frame style throughout the next couple of decades. Other notable Dutch masters include Marten Toonder and Paul Driessen.

What we now call the Global Economy took shape over the last decades of the twentieth century, homogenizing the world's markets and dissolving trade barriers. Most animation is now designed for an international audience, the biggest market being the USA. European productions, especially features, are often made with American viewers in mind, while many American producers have made their US-aimed movies in Europe.
In the digital era the dramatic reduction of costs and increased ease of production has led to the fracturing of the animation industry worldwide. Once again, a large amount of smaller studios have appeared in competition with, or producing work for, the larger, more established studios.

The Western European countries have strong traditions of regularly producing internationally acclaimed live-action movies, and yet animation feature output has seemed in a sense inversely proportional to this. In contrast, Eastern European countries such as Croatia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, with little history of international live-action success, have often punched above their weight in animation. Around the end of the twentieth century however, Spain, the UK, and France, taking advantage of the continuing international success of animated feature films, produced several features of their own.

Les triplettes de Belleville (The Triplets of Belleville/ Belleville rende-vous), Sylvain Chomet, 2003.

Key films

1902: Georges Méliès: Le voyage dans la lune

1908: Emile Cohl: Fantasmagorie

1924: Fernand Léger: Ballet Mécanique

1924: Viking Eggeling: Symphonie Diagonale

1926: Lotte Reiniger: Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed

1933: Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker: Une nuit sur le mont chauve

1935: Oskar Fischinger: Komposition in Blau

1945: Arturo Moreno: Garbancito de la Mancha

1949: Nino Pagot: I Fratelli Dinamite

1949: Anton Domenighini: La Rosa di Baghdad

1954: Halas & Batchelor: Animal Farm

1968: George Dunning: Yellow Submarine

1973: Réne Laloux: La planète sauvage

1976: Bruno Bozzetto: Allegro Non Troppo

1980: Paul Grimault: Le roi et l'oiseau

1982: Dianne Jackson: The Snowman

1995: Aardman Animations: Wallace and Gromit: A Close Shave

1998: Michel Ocelot: Kirikou et la Sorcière

2003: Sylvain Chomet: Les triplettes de Belleville

2007: Vincent Parronaud: Persepolis

2009: H5: Logorama

2010: Sylvain Chomet: L'illusionniste

A brief history of Russian and Eastern European animation

Key figures

Walerian Borowcyzk (Poland/France)

Piotr Dumala (Poland)

Zlatko Grgic (Croatia)

Ivan Ivanov-vano (Russia)

Piotr Kamler (Poland)

Fyodor Khitruk (Russia)

Andrei Khrjanovsky (Russia)

Jerzy Kucia (Poland)

Yuri Norstein (Russia)

George Pal (Hungary/USA)

Priit Pärn (Estonia)

Aleksandr Petrov (Russia)

Aleksandr Ptushko (Russia)

Aleksandr Shiryayev (Russia)

Nina Shorina (Russia)

Ladislaw Starewicz (Russia/France)

Jan Svankmajer (Czech Republic)

Genndy Tartakovsky (Russia/USA)

Jiri Trnka (Czech Republic)

Dusan Vukotic (Croatia)

Karel Zeman (Czech Republic)

Key films

1910: Ladislaw Starewicz: Prekrasnaya Lyukanida

1929: Mikhail Tsekhanovsky: Pochta

1935: Aleksandr Ptushko: Novvy Gulliver

1947: Ivan Ivanov-vano: Konyok-gorbunok

1948: Jiri Trnka: Cisaruv slavik

1958: Karel Zeman: Vynález zkázy

1958: Zagreb Film: Samac

1961: Zagreb Film: Surogat

1962: Russia: Fyodor Khitruk: Istoriya odnogo prestupleniya

1966: Russia: Andrei Khrjanovsky: Zhil-byl Kozyavin

1967: Zagreb Film: Professor Balthazar

1979: Russia: Yuri Norstein: Skazka skazok

1982: Jan Svankmajer: Moznosti dialogu

1987: Priit Pärn: Eine murul

1988: Jan Svankmajer: Neco z Alenky

2000: Piotr Dumala: Zbrodnia i kara

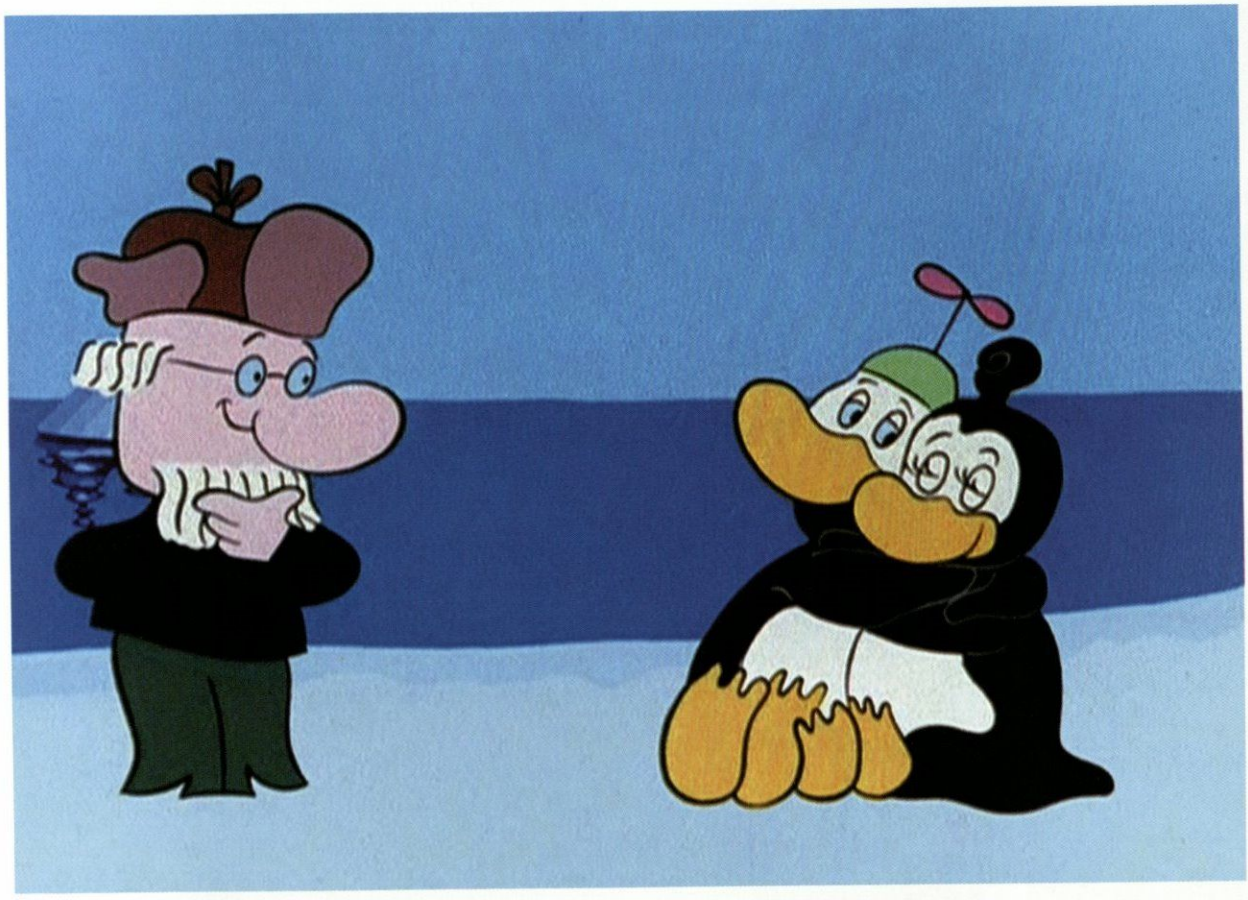
2000: Jerzy Kucia: Strojenie instrumentów

The large-scale development of animation in Russia, unlike in the USA, was driven by politics rather than economics. While American studios invested in animation for financial gain, soviet animation was primarily dictated by influences from within party ideology, as well as by a very differently-peopled landscape to the USA and Western Europe. Factors such as literacy levels, transport links, and the initial lack of electricity in many areas of the nation had as much impact on the art form in Russia as did the communist messages it was forced to contain.

Animation techniques were developed on a small scale in Russia before the turmoil of the revolution enveloped the nation. While Ladislaw Starewicz is usually hailed as Russia's first animator for his 1910 stop-motion work using dead insects, he was actually preceded by Aleksandr Shiryayev. A principal dancer and choreographer with the Imperial Russian Ballet, Shiryayev combined his love of movement with filmmaking. Between 1906 and 1909 he made animated ballet, first by drawing frame-by-frame dancers' positions, and then using puppets. Although he continued to work as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer in the Soviet Union until his death in 1941 (other than a short spell from 1909 to 1917 spent teaching in Europe), Shiryayev's animation was forgotten for almost a century until his films and drawings were rediscovered in 1995.

Starewicz's stop-motion films, although made a few years later than Shiryayev's, are still considered to mark the beginning of Russian animation proper. His work found favor with the Tsar, who loved the observations of middle-class life the films contained, but Starewicz did not care for the postrevolutionary regime and emigrated to France in 1919.

These achievements may seem insignificant compared with the work of the early animators in the USA and Western Europe, but they have to be put into technological context since the development of the animation industry in Russia was shaped as much by technological restrictions and political and social influences as by aesthetics and innovation. Before the revolution in 1917, Russia was still a largely underdeveloped and rural state, populated mainly by a peasant class and ruled over by Tsar Nicolas II. As in North America, railways had been established to link the vast country's disparate regions during



Professor Balthazar, Zagreb Film

the nineteenth century. Following World War I and the revolution, however, most of the network was destroyed or rendered unusable. Electricity did not come to most rural areas until long after the revolution. To improve this situation, Lenin set up a commission to oversee the electrification of Russia. While this strategy was motivated with an eye to industry, Lenin said at the time that such a project would also, "make it possible to raise the level of culture in the countryside and to overcome, even in the most remote corners of the land, backwardness, ignorance, poverty, disease, and barbarism." Lenin's statements and the undoubted achievement of electrifying the country were notably celebrated in the Soyuzmultfilm short directed by Ivan Aksenchuk, *Plyus Elektrifikatsiya* (*Plus Electrification*).

With the railway network repaired and electricity powering the country, animated film could now be distributed to its potentially vast, yet still mainly illiterate, audience. Like the plays of the medieval church, animation would be sent out as one of the cultural vehicles to convey ideology and doctrine to the people. Key to this program was the employment of not only library trains, but also train carriages set up as movie theaters. In this way, prior to World War II, soviet culture, including animation, was distributed across the country to pervade every facet of life.

While this rather cold approach might have brought a rigid style to the output of Russia's animators, in fact, their way of working in groups that were more like artists collectives than production units meant a great deal of experimentation was

possible. For this reason, the aesthetic of Russian animation initially drew heavily on, and was more akin to, art movements such as futurism, rather than a desire to achieve realism. Paid by the state irrespective of artistic success, animators experimented with not only different graphical styles, but also with different animation techniques.

Once into the Stalinist era, however, the nation underwent its own cultural revolution with artists, including animators, being compelled to work in the stultifying socialist realist tradition. This "realist" tradition was in fact more about communicating party propaganda than representing the reality of life in soviet Russia.

Russia's first feature-length animated film was Aleksandr Ptushko's *Novvy Gulliver* (*The New Gulliver*, 1936). Mixed with live action, the movie reworks Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* with a communist slant. The success of this film at home and abroad placed Ptushko in a prime position to head up what was to become Russia's preeminent animation studio: Soyuzmultfilm.

Initially called Soyuzdetmultfilm and focused on children's animation, the studio was set up in 1936. The name was soon changed, removing the emphasis that animation was purely for children. During World War II, animators at Soyuzmultfilm, who until then had worked in smaller workshops, were evacuated en masse to Samarkand, Uzbekistan, so that they could continue to produce inspiring films for a battling nation. Following the war, the messages they put in their films became more focused on promoting the personality of one man, Stalin, and the vilification of the USA and NATO.

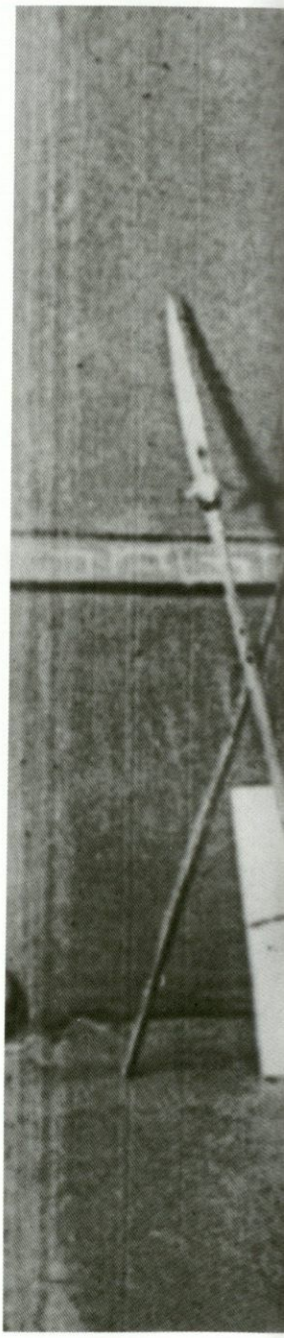
Not until 1953 and the slight thawing of the Cold War during the Kruschev era did Russian animation again take on the spirit and diversity that had been evident from its art-driven roots. This new dawn even survived the chill of the Brezhnev period despite the propagandist core of Russian animators still shaping the entertainment if not the aesthetics. In this way animators continued experimenting with techniques including puppet animation, painting on glass, cel, and cutouts. The results were such masterpieces as Fyodor Khitruk's *Istoriya odnogo prestupleniya* (*Story of One Crime*, 1962) and Yuri Norstein's *Yozhik v tumane* (*Hedgehog in the Fog*, 1975).

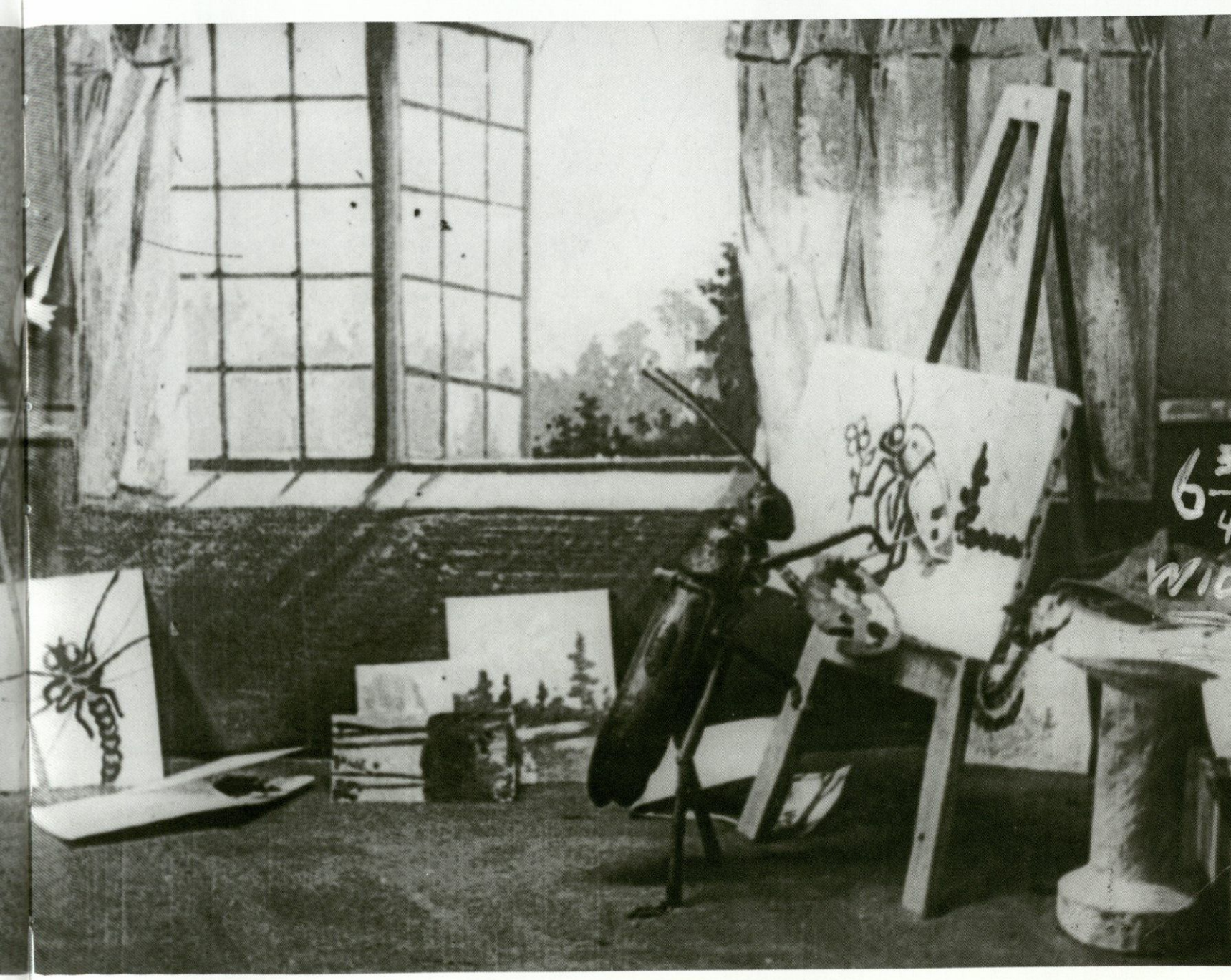
In the 1980s, as the Soviet Union opened up during Glasnost and then as it began to fall, animation turned to recording the new atmosphere just as, through most of the twentieth century, it had transmitted the desired ideologies of soviet leaders. For instance, *Seryy Volk end Krasnaya Shapochka* (*Grey Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood*, 1990) by Garri Bardin hinted at the collapse of communism to come.

What has been retained though in this new commercial age is the diversity, vision, creativity, and experimentation of noncommercial animation with international audiences now accessing and applauding Russian animation's eclectic styles and techniques.

In the rest of Eastern Europe, animation has also been shaped by politics. The animation industries of most of these regions have often been sustained by state funding at the expense of having to battle for their own heritage and identity during the various levels of an imposition of communism and its centralized cultural policies. Animators in these areas have endured the same battles to smuggle creativity, modernism, and any reflection on the hardships of life under the totalitarian regimes through the centrally imposed policies of socialist realism, often resulting in hidden, coded, and ambiguous meanings underlying the main narrative. When expression was allowed, the tendency was often for a general pessimism combined with a dark, sly, and often absurdist sense of humor.

Notable animators and studios in Eastern Europe include Croatia's Zagreb Film, which worked in the same kind of modernist style as America's UPA studio; Hungary's Pannonia Studio; the Czech surrealists Jan Svankmajer and Karel Zeman; and the "grotesque realism" of the Estonian Priit Pärn.





Mest Kinematograficheskogo Operatora (The Cameraman's Revenge), Ladislaw Starewicz, 1912

A brief history of Asian animation

Key figures

Michael Arias (USA/Japan)

Arnab Chaudhuri (India)

A Da (China)

Shin Dong Hung (South Korea)

G. K. Gokhale (India)

Yoshiaki Kawajiri (Japan)

Seitaro Kitayama (Japan)

Satoshi Kon (Japan)

Junichi Kouchi (Japan)

Ngo Manh Lan (Vietnam)

Hayao Miyazaki (Japan)

Ram Mohan (India)

Payut Ngaokrachang (Thailand)

Cyrus Oshidar (India)

Mamoru Oshii (Japan)

Katsuhiro Otomo (Japan)

Rintaro (Japan)

Narayan Shi (India)

Lee Sung-gang (South Korea)

Isao Takahata (Japan)

Osamu Tezuka (Japan)

The Wan brothers (China)

Clair Weeks (USA/India)

Key films

1917: Seitaro Kitayama: Saru Kani Kassen

1917: Junichi Kouchi: Namakura-gatana

1917: Dhundiraj Govind Phalke: Agkadyanchi Mouj

1927: Noboru Ofuji: Kujira

1941: Wan brothers: Tie Shan Gong Zhu

1943: Kenzo Masaoka: Kumo to Churippu

1961: Wan Laiming: Da nao tian gong

1963: Osamu Tezuka: Tetsuwan Atomu

1967: Dong-heon Shin: Hong Kil-dong

1972: Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita: Nippon Seizou

1978: Xu Jingda: Nezha nao hai

1984: Hayao Miyazaki: Kaze no tani no Naushika

1988: Katsuhiro Otomo: Akira

1988: Isao Takahata: Hotaru no haka

1988: Hayao Miyazaki: Tonari no Totoro

1995: Mamoru Oshii: Kokaku kidotai

1997: Hayao Miyazaki: Mononoke-hime

2001: Hayao Miyazaki: Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi

2001: Rintaro: Metropolis

2004: Katsuhiro Otomo: Steamboy

2006: Satoshi Kon: Paprika

2006: Michael Arias: Tekkon kinkuîto

2006: Jo Beom-Jin: Aachi and Ssipak

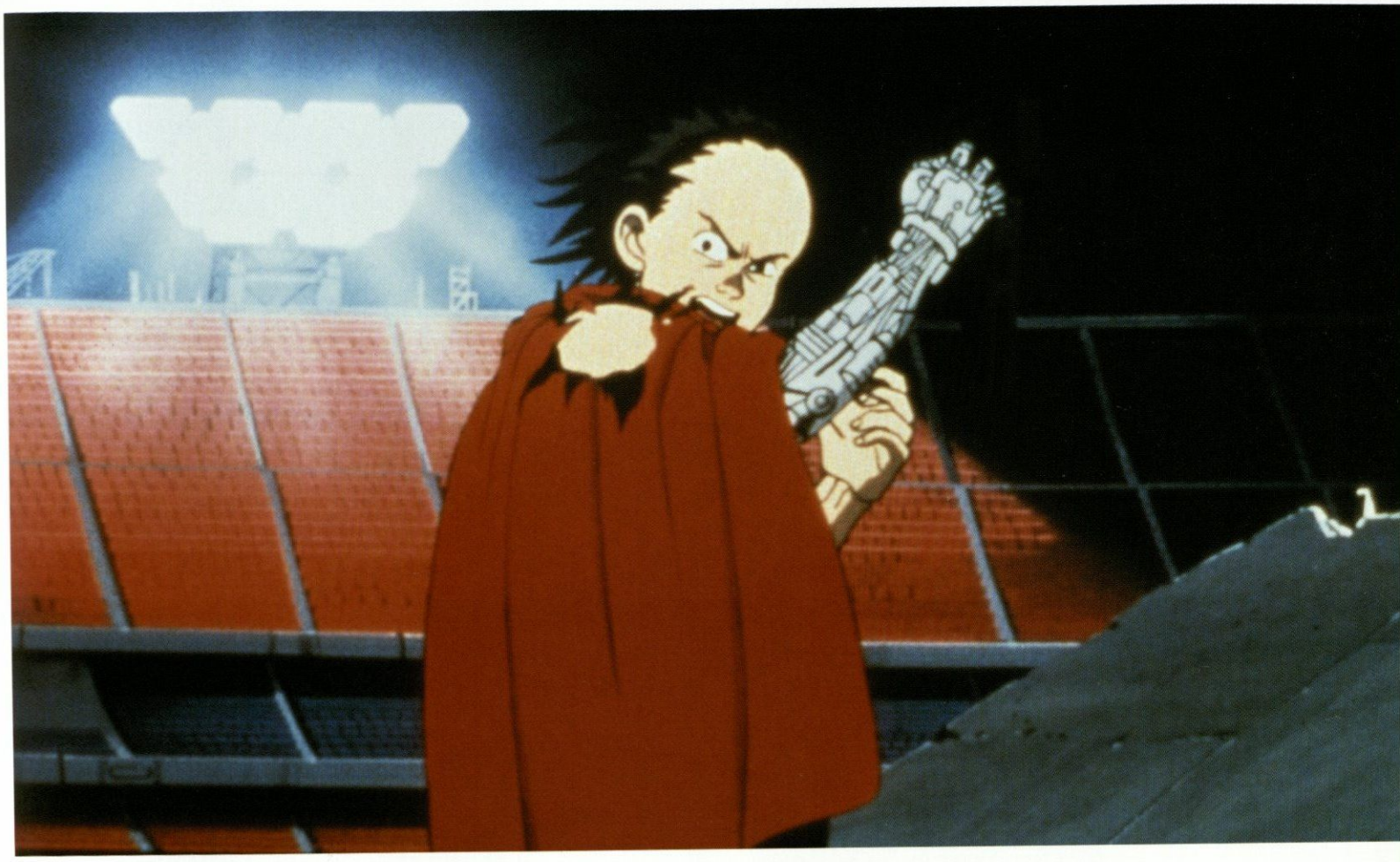
2008: Hayao Miyazaki: Ponyo

For the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese animation developed along a similar path to that of the West, influenced by the European and American pioneers, and, more significantly, by the development of the flourishing trade in manga comic strips. Taking their inspiration from historical stories and social commentary with flourishes of humor or fantasy, the early animation works pictorially resembled much of the output of the American cartoon industry. However, they also included particular flavors and elements of the draughtsmanship and illustration styles found in ukiyo-e and other art and craft styles that emerged in Japan during the late Meiji and early Showa periods.

After the Pacific War, hand-in-hand with the massive growth of the manga industry, animation in Japan began to branch away from the trends observed in the West, developing its own broad range of distinctive styles–ultimately giving rise to the style known as anime–and expanding into the large-scale animation industry that exists today, with several world renowned studios, multiple blockbuster movie franchises, and a plethora of television series serving a global audience of devoted fans.

Anime can be a complex world to understand from the perspective of the curious observer. In keeping with the relatively rigid segregation of Japanese cultural creative expression, it can be categorized into a bewildering array of genres and subgenres, made for different niche audiences; including Mecha, Giant Robots, Real and Super Robots, Martial Arts Super Heroes, Transforming Heroes, Magical Girls, and the erotic Hentai. These genres intertwine with the stereotypical sci-fi and comic fantasies as enjoyed by their obsessive fans, often termed "otaku." A major part of the industry in Japan revolves around "O.V.A.s", or films made for direct to video or DVD release, often without theatrical or television screenings.

The other Asian countries with significant animation industries and traditions are Korea, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and China. In the early years, their combined national output followed a similar, but more sporadic pattern to that of animation development in Japan, producing small numbers of animated shorts or features, often from studios financed by



Akira, Katsuhiro Otomo, 1988

investment from their respective governments. Rather than becoming centers of creative originality, the overwhelming trend in recent years for many Asian nations has been to expand in the area of animation production services, as companies in Japan and the West outsource their animation products. However, in most cases these countries are rapidly evolving into dynamic and creative animation powerhouses in their own right.

The first generation of Japanese animation largely consisted of isolated experiments influenced by the early Western shorts screened to enthusiasts in urban picture houses. Most of the earliest animated films were lost following the earthquake that hit Tokyo in 1923, though recently a few long-lost prints have been discovered, remastered, and screened in retrospectives. The prestigious title of Japan's "first animated film" is debatable, though it is often attributed to Seitaro Kitayama's *Saru Kani Kassen* (*The Crab Gets His Revenge on the Monkey*, c.1917), though there were several other shorts released in theaters over that summer. A later short animation, Kenzo Masaoka's *Chikara To Onna No Yononaka* (1932) was the first Japanese "talkie" animation with a prerecorded voice track.

Many of the second-generation Japanese animators developed their skills working at Kitayama's studio, although after the earthquake, the studio relocated to Kyoto and the former staff founded their own studios in the ruins of Tokyo. This emergent industry produced mainly cutout styles of animation, attempting approaches and methods similar to the use of cels, though overall these techniques proved costly to produce. These directors also faced increasing competition for their audience's interest from American movies. Through the 1930s and 1940s, the Japanese military government actively supported and endorsed the domestic animation industry by commissioning educational, information, and military films. The nature of these scripts turned their emphasis toward nationalistic themes, primarily made as propaganda, in the moral, ideological, and cultural battleground. The landmark film

of this period was Mitsuyo Seo's *Momotaro no umiwashi* (*Momotaro's Sea Eagles*, 1943), which, at 37 minutes long, is regarded as the first Japanese feature-length animated film.

Though Japan possessed the logistical, social, and production infrastructures to rival movies made elsewhere, the first feature-length animated film by an Asian studio was *Tie shan gong zhu* (*Princess Iron Fan*, 1941). Directed by the pioneering Wan brothers in Shanghai, the script is based on the classical Chinese tale *Journey To The West*, and would have a far-reaching influence on its audiences, resulting in multiple animated interpretations in the ensuing decades.

The 1950s saw manga emerge as a huge cultural and social phenomenon in Japan, with an appeal across all age groups, and the development of the animation industry followed suit accordingly. By 1956, the remaining stalwarts of the animation industry—who remained active in the postwar era as the Nihon Doga Eiga-sha studio—were bought out by entrepreneur Hiroshi Okawa, leading to the formation of Toei Animation. With the intention of producing films akin to those of Walt Disney, Okawa and the Toei team embarked on producing a slate of annual features, commencing in 1958 with the release of Japan's first full-length animated color feature, *Hakuja den* (*Legend of the White Snake*) directed by Taiji Yabushita. Through their commitment to producing impressive animated features, and alongside the efficient development of an authentically Japanese creative process, style of artwork, and storytelling, Toei Animation originated the now distinctive anime look by using mainly limited animation on the majority of shots, saving the main resources for creating a series of spectacular sequences.

By the late 1950s, the legendary, highly-regarded manga creator Osamu Tezuka entered the world of animation, collaborating on the art direction for several early Toei feature films, before forming his own studio, Mushi Productions. Through the enormous popularity of his imaginative stories and characters, Tezuka became one of the most influential figures in Japanese animation history. His simplistically rendered, big-eyed characters provided the template for later anime character design. Mushi created animated features, as well as serialized animations based on Tezuka's manga comics for the initial launch of the Japanese television industry, including *Tetsuwan Atomu* (1963). Bought by NBC for the US market, it was renamed *Astro Boy* and became the first Japanese animation to achieve significant success internationally.

In China, the Wan brothers were founding members of the government-funded Shanghai Animation Studio in 1950. Creating animation evolved from the traditional Chinese art of intricate paper silhouettes, they made the outstanding color feature, *Da nao tian gong* (*Havoc In Heaven*), a creative milestone in Asian animation. From 1967, Mao Zedong's cultural revolution appropriated the studio, and any animators seen as dissenters were sent away for "reeducation." China's progress in animation production in effect ceased for the next decade. By 1978 however, Shanghai Animation Studio had resumed production, releasing short films in its signature, traditional style.

With the rise of television through the 1960s, as elsewhere, the Japanese animation film industry downsized, while immensely popular genres such as Mecha were launched in television series from the late 1960s and on into the next decade. The popularity of material of this nature led to the rise of "otaku" culture—as observed and termed in the late 1980s—as well as a new wave of anime production. This period is seen as the Golden Age of Anime, with influences continuing to echo through the animation output produced in the present day.

Two influential Japanese studios rose to prominence during the 1980s: Studio Ghibli and Gainax. The huge demand for anime became such that films were made for growing tribes of fans, and released direct to video. Sharing futuristic themes and styling as imagined in the works of author William Gibson, as well as from director Ridley Scott's sci-fi movie *Blade Runner*, manga writers and anime directors like Katsuhiro Otomo began producing gritty sci-fi stories in the cyberpunk genre. Otomo's *Akira* (1988) and Mamoru Oshii's *Kokaku kidotai* (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995) were also popular cult hits internationally.

Da nao tian gong
(Havoc in Heaven),
Wan Laiming, 1965

Aachi and Ssipak, Jo Beom-jin, 2006

The Korean animation industry experienced a boom period through the 1990s, producing work for American television series such as *The Simpsons* and *Justice League Unlimited*, with the ensuing development of a new generation of skilled and talented animation artists across other parts of Asia.

Major 1990s television series in Japan included *Pokémon*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Sailor Moon*, each also popular with international audiences, and along with the Martial Arts Superhero and the Magical Girl anime genres, became increasingly dominant. Hayao Miyazaki's *Mononoke-hime* (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997) became simultaneously the most expensive anime and the highest grossing film ever at the Japanese box office. His next feature, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (*Spirited Away*, 2001) again broke box office records domestically, as well as scoring an international hit and winning an Academy Award® for best animated feature.

Other high profile Japanese animated features include Satoshi Kon's *Senen joyu* (*Millennium Actress*, 2001) and *Paprika* (2006), Michael Arias' *Tekkon kinkurito* (*Tekkon Kinkreet*, 2006), and, the most expensive of all, Otomo's *Steamboy* (2004). This set of movies were critically acclaimed by both domestic and international audiences, were beautifully realized in terms of their diversity of characters and storylines, and wonderfully represent the caliber of artistic visualization for which contemporary Japanese anime is renowned.

After some early experiments by film pioneer Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, the Indian animation industry truly began in 1956 with the establishment of the Cartoon Film Unit of the Ministry of Information. Disney animator Clair Weeks, who had grown up in India as the son of missionaries, along with Indian animation pioneer G.K. Gokhale, headed up the Unit. Ram Mohan began his career with this organization, where he was trained by Weeks. Mohan established his own company in 1972, producing films such as *Baap Re Baap* (1968). Over the course of a 50-year career, he made a significant contribution to Indian animation and trained and inspired a generation of animators.

In the 1990s, the Indian animation industry emerged as a center for outsourced Western television cartoons, and as a by-product of this, a few feature films were also produced. These movies included *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama* (1992), a coproduction between Mohan and Japanese director Yugo Sako, and the American coproduction *Sinbad: Beyond the Veil of Mists* (2000), which used motion capture effects.

Freedom Song, Narayan Shi, 2000

Animation around the world

Outside of the main regions, animation has developed in a more sporadic, haphazard fashion. In the past, the financial resources required to create animation has been a drawback for areas without a developed industry, but the rise of digital technology has seen a change in the global animation map.

Nordic animation

1919: Denmark. Sven Brasch: *A Rather Good Intention*

1920: Denmark. Robert Storm-Petersen: *A Duck Story*

1924: Finland. Karl Salen & Yrjo Nyberg: *Aito Sunnuntaimetsastaja*

1925: Norway. Walter Fyrst: *Teddy*

1949: Norway. Ivo Caprino: *Tim og Toffe* (*Tin of Toffee*)

1966: Denmark. Kaj Pindal: *What on Earth!*

1967: Finland. Seppo Suo Anttilla: *Impressario*

1969: Denmark. Jorgen Vestergaard: *Nattergalen* (*The Nightingale*)

1969: Sweden. Per Åhlin: *I huvet pa en gammal gubbe* (*Out of an Old Man's Head*)

1971: Denmark. Jannik Hastrup: *Benny's Badekar* (*Benny's Bathtub*)

1971: Norway. Trygve Rasmussen: *The Golden Coin*

1974: Sweden. Per Åhlin: *Dunderklumpen*

1974: Iceland. Jon Axel Egilsson: *The Pioneer*

1975: Norway. Ivo Caprino: *Flåklypa Grand Prix* (*Pinchcliffe Grand Prix*)

1976: Sweden. Stig Lasseby: *Agaton Sax och Byköpings gästabud* (*Agaton Sax and the Bykoebing Village Festival*)

1979: Finland. Riita Nelimarkka & Jaakko Seeck: *Seitseman Veljesta*

1980: Norway. Knut Eide: *The Tie*

1981: Sweden. Stig Lasseby: *Pelle Svanslös* (*Peter No Tail*)

1984: Denmark. Børge Ring: *Anna & Bella*

1984: Sweden. Per Ekholm & Gisela Friesen Ekholm: *It Was Year Zero*

1986: Denmark. Peter Madsen & Jeff Varab: *Valhalla*

1986: Finland/UK. Kari Leponiemi: *I'm Not a Feminist But...*

1988: Denmark. Lejf Marcussen: *Den offentlige røst* (*The Public Voice*)

1989: Iceland/UK. Inga Lisa Middleton: *Mummy, Daddy, Bobby and Debby*

1990: Denmark. Jannik Hastrup: *Fuglekrigen i Kanøfleskoven* (*War of the Birds*)

1995: Finland. Katarina Lillquist: *The Maiden and the Soldier*

1997: Denmark. Stefan Fjeldmark: *Når livet går sin vej* (*When Life Departs*)

1998: Norway. Pjotr Sapegin: *Salt Kvernen* (*The Salt Mill*)

1999: Norway. Torill Kove: *Min bestemor strøk kongens skjorter* (*My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts*)

2000: Denmark. Stefan Fjeldmark & Michael Hegner: *Hjælp, jeg er en fisk* (*Help! I'm a Fish*)

2002: Denmark/UK. Siri Melchior: *The Dog Who Was A Cat Inside*

2006: Sweden. Jonas Odell: *Aldrig som första gången!* (*Never like the First Time!*)

2006: Denmark. Anders Morgenthaler: *Princess*

2006: Norway. Christopher Nielsen: *Slipp Jimmy Fri* (*Free Jimmy*)

Australian and New Zealand animation

1914: Australia. Harry Julius: *Cartoons of the Moment*

1942: Australia. Eric Porter: Aeroplane Fruit Jellies commercials

1945: Australia. Will & Harry Owen: *First Victory Home Loan: Squander Bug*

1952: Australia. Eric Porter: *Bimbo's Auto*

1958: New Zealand. Fred O Neil: *Plastimania*

1962: Australia. Gus McLaren: *Freddo the Frog*

1962: New Zealand. Fred O Neil: *Hatupatu and the Bird Woman*

1970: Australia. Bruce Petty: *Australian History*

1972: Australia. *Eric Porter: Marco Polo Junior vs the Red Dragon*

1974: Australia. Bruce Petty: *Leisure*

1977: Australia. Yoram Gross: *Dot and the Kangaroo*

1978: Australia. Bruce Petty: *Karl Marx*

1978: New Zealand. Murray Freeth: *The Boy Who Bounced*

1984: New Zealand. Joe Wylie/Susan Wilson: *Te Rerenga Wairua*

1986: New Zealand. Murray Ball: *Footrot Flats, A Dog's Tale*

1986: New Zealand. Robert Stenhouse: *The Frog, the Dog and the Devil*

1992: Australia. Bill Kroyer: *Ferngully: The Last Rainforest*

1992: Australia. Yoram Gross: *Blinky Bill*

2001, 2002, 2003: New Zealand/USA. Peter Jackson: *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy

2003: Australia. Adam Elliott: *Harvie Krumpet*

2003: Australia. Peter Cornwell: *Ward 13*

2005: New Zealand/USA. Peter Jackson: *King Kong*

2006: Australia/USA. George Miller & Animal Logic: *Happy Feet*

2008: Australia. Tatia Rosenthal: *$9.99*

2010: Australia. Shaun Tan & Andrew Ruhemann: *The Lost Thing*

Latin American animation

1917: Brazil. Alvaro Marins: *O Kaiser*

1917: Argentina. Quirino Cristiani: *El Apóstol* (*The Apostle*)

1918: Brazil. Gilberto Rossi: *Aventuras de Bille e Bolle*

1918: Argentina. Quirino Cristiani: *Sin Dejar Rastros* (*Without a Trace*)

1929: Brazil. João Stamato & Luiz Seel: *Macaco Feio Macaco Bonito*

1931: Argentina. Quirino Cristiani: *Peludópolis*

1940: Argentina. Juan Oliva: *La Caza del Puma* (*Hunting the Puma*)

1942: Argentina. Dante Quinterno: *Upa en Apuros*

1953: Brazil. Anélio Lattini Filho: *Sinfonia Amazônica* (*Amazon Symphony*)

1957: Brazil. Roberto Miller: *Rumba*

1958: Argentina. Carlos Gonzalez Groppa: *Trio*

1959: Cuba. Jesus de Armas: *La Prensa Seria* (*The Serious Press*)

1961: Brazil. Lucchetti & Bassano Vaccarini: *Fantasmagoricas*

1962: Cuba. Jesus de Armas: *El Cowboy*

1965: Mexico. Fernando Ruiz: *El Musico*

1967: Brazil. João de Oliveira: *Negrinho de Pastoreiro*

1972: Brazil. Ypê Nakashima: *Piconzé*

1976: Mexico. Fernando Ruiz: *Los Tres Reyes Magos* (*The Three Wise Men*)

1976: Argentina. Simon Feldman: *Los Cuatro Secretes* (*The Four Secrets*)

1978: Columbia. Fernando Laverde: *La Pobre Viejecita*

1979: Cuba. Juan Padrón: *Elpidio Valdés*

1981: Brazil. Marcos Magalhães: *Meow*

1982: Brazil. Maurício de Sousa: *Aventuras da Turma da Monica*

1983: Cuba. Tulio Raggi: *El alma trémular y sola*

1983: Brazil. Maurício de Sousa: *A Princesa e o Robo*

1984: Cuba. Mario Rivas: *El Bohío*

1985: Brazil. Marcos Magalhães, Céu D'Ellia, Flávio Del Carlo: *Planeta Terra*

1985: Uruguay. Walter Tournier: *Nuestro Pequeño Paraíso*

1987: Argentina. Luis Palomares: *El escudo del cóndor*

1994: Brazil. Otto Guerra & Adão Iturrusgarai: *Rocky & Hudson*

1996: Brazil. Clovis Veira: *Cassiopeia*

2001: Brazil. Walbercy Camargo: *Grilo Feliz*

2008: Brazil. Ale Abreu: *Garoto Cósmico*

2009: Brazil. Kiko Mistrorigo & Célia Catunda: *Peixonauta*

2010: Brazil/Canada. Marcelo Fernandes de Moura & Jean Cullen: *Doggie Day School*

African animation

1936: Egypt. David & Shlomo Frenkel: *Mafish Fayda*

1962: Egypt. Ali Mohib: *The White Line*

1963: Algeria. Mohamed Aram: *La fete de l'arbre* (*The Tree Party*)

1963: Nigeria. Moustapha Alassane: *La mort du Gandji*

1966: Nigeria. Moustapha Alassane: *Bon voyage Sim*

1968: Egypt. Ihab Shaker: *The Flower and the Bottle*

1969: Egypt. Noshi Iskander: *One and Five*; *Is It True*; *Abd Al*; *Question*

1973: Ghana. John K. Ossei: *Annanse's Farm*

1974: Egypt. Noshi Iskander: *Where?*; *Room Number*; *Excellent*

1977: Nigeria. Moustapha Alassane: *Samba le grand*

1988: Egypt/USA. Mona Abou El Nasr: *Her Survival*

1989: Mali. Muambayi Coulibaly: *Segou Janjo, la Geste de Segou*

1989: South Africa. William Kentridge: *Johannesburg, 2nd Greatest City After Paris*

1991: Egypt. Radha Djubran: *The Lazy Sparrow*

1991: South Africa. William Kentridge: *Sobriety, Obesity and Growing Old*

1993: Burkina Faso. Cilia Sawadogo: *Birth*

1992: Republic of Congo. Jean Michel Kibushi: *The Toad Visits His Family*

1994: South Africa. William Kentridge: *Felix in Exile*

1996: Ivory Coast. Didier M. Aufort: *Grand Masque et les Junglos*

1996: Benjamin Ntabundi, Michel Castelain, Jacques Faton: *Carnet Noir*

1997: South Africa. William Kentridge: *Weighing and Wanting*

1997: Egypt. Zeinab Zamzam: *A Terra-cotta Dream*

1999: South Africa. William Kentridge: *Stereoscope*

2000: Nigeria. Moustapha Alassane: *Kokoa 2*

2000: Cameroon: Pierre Sauvalle: *The General Assembly of Diseases*

2003: Zimbabwe. Phil Cunningham & Roger Hawkins: *The Legend of the Sky Kingdom*

2004: Republic of Congo. Jean Michel Kibushi: *Prince Loseno*

2004: South Africa. Ancilla Berry: *Ummemo* (*The Echo*)

2005: Burkina Faso. Cilia Sawadogo: *The Tree of Spirits*

2005: Ethiopia. Shane Etzenhouser & Bruktawit Tigabu: *The Great Animal Run*

2006: South Africa. Justine Puren: *Mbulu's Bride*

2006: South Africa. The Blackheart Gang: *The Tale of How*

2009: South Africa. Laszlo Bene: *Kalahari*