

HANDMADE P/IXELS:

Handmade Pixels seeks to expose those aspects of the animation process that are often relegated to 'behind the scenes' archives, 'making-of' videos or even discarded as rubbish. It aims to celebrate the distinctive approach of artists who experiment with diverse methods and techniques.

Many of the items selected here are quite different from the works typically exhibited in art galleries. Process materials such as working sketches and storyboards are rarely displayed as works of art in their own right. They are often archived or disposed of once the final film has been completed. These materials should be exhibited – not least because they communicate the creative genius and idiosyncratic craftwork of an animator.

In contrast to the partial or pre-animated form, the complete or resolved animation engages us in different ways. This time-based sequence has the capacity to transport the viewer to other worlds, and the potential of animated movement to affect the body kinaesthetically. The gallery exhibits in Handmade Pixels are accompanied by screening extracts of the films on a monitor and within an associated cinema screening. These quite different exhibition contexts provide a small gesture of recognition that while animation is a form traditionally associated with the screen, it is also dynamically experienced via new-media and as an extracinematic

form that dates back to pre-cinematic optical toys. Handmade Pixels draws attention to these contrasts between the static and moving image, and between fragments of process and completed films.

New Zealand has a strong tradition of handmade animation, which can be traced back to the early animations of Len Lye. In Tusalava (1927–29), Lye utilised processes of metamorphosis and anthropomorphism, which gave life to his drawings, making their abstract form move like an Australian Witchetty Grub. The behavioral qualities of the abstract form in Tusalava have also been associated with that of a virus or macrophage gobbling up another cell.ⁱ This cellular interpretation of the film is in keeping with Lye's theory of 'old brain' memory,ⁱⁱ which explored the idea of creating art directly from the unconscious, and doing so by tapping into the memories stored in bodily cells and tissues.

Lye pioneered the process of direct animation, a method involving scratching, painting and stencilling onto the surface of film and then projecting this filmstrip directly onto a wall or screen.ⁱⁱⁱ For Lye, this technique involved a high degree of experimentation with materials, which is apparent in the items displayed here related to Swinging the Lambeth Walk (1939). In this film, the gestural quality of the mark-making itself can be associated with human gestural traits. Due to the direct filmmaking process, which bypasses the camera, the energy and expressive quality of

the mark-making is intensified as it is delivered 'directly' to the viewer. When viewing handmade imagery, there is a direct and explicit association with the imagery and energy of the hand that created the work. In Swinging the Lambeth Walk, the actual motion of the marks, lines and shapes can be associated with the twanging and reverberating tension of a guitar string. This anthropomorphic dance of abstract imagery can trigger bodily memories, such as that of the wriggling or gliding movement of the dancing human body.

There is a pervasive expectation that static and moving images should only be exhibited in a resolved or complete form. This idea is challenged by an experimental approach that views animation as a generative and open-ended practice, whereby exhibition and audience engagement are fundamental parts of the process. Such an approach was developed by Gene Youngblood in Expanded Cinema (1970)^{iv} and has supported the methodological rationale for those undertaking practice-based research. Rather than being viewed as a means to an end, process is understood here as an ongoing reciprocity of theoretical and practical enquiry. These debates about the value of process versus finished work help to contextualise the approach taken by some of the exhibitors, including Lye, as well as the curatorial decisions for Handmade Pixels.

Another curatorial objective was to explore the relation between handmade and digital animation. This relationship is emphasized by the juxtaposition of handmade and digital aesthetics across the range of works. While this visual contrast between some of the exhibits is deliberately highlighted, the intention was not to favour one form over the other, but to show the complexity of this relationship. Considering the works individually, even the most explicitly handmade animations involve digital processes of image capture, editing and sound design. Conversely, those animations that appear to be completely computer-generated have also been crafted by the hands of the animator.

This exhibition is not just about showing how to make an animation. Eschewing the expectation that works of art must be resolved and framed, Handmade Pixels celebrates the selected works as art-forms in the process of becoming. As such, these process materials are examples of living art. They are alive with latent motion and prescient suggestions of what they might become. Rather than being viewed as imperfect, partial or unresolved, visitors are invited to experience the essence of animation; the fecundity of the pre-animated form and the life-force imbued in the spaces between frames.

i/A full discussion about the context in which Tusalava was made can be found in Roger Horrocks, Len Lye: A Biography (Auckland University Press, 2001), pp. 90–95.

ii/For a discussion of Lye's theory of 'old brain memory', see; Roger Horrocks, Art That Moves: The Work of Len Lye (Auckland University Press, 2009), pp.114–118, and; Hanna Scott, 'Len Lye's Old Brain: Primitive or Prescient?' in Len Lye (The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Govett Brewster Art Gallery and Len Lye Foundation, 2001), pp. 21–24.

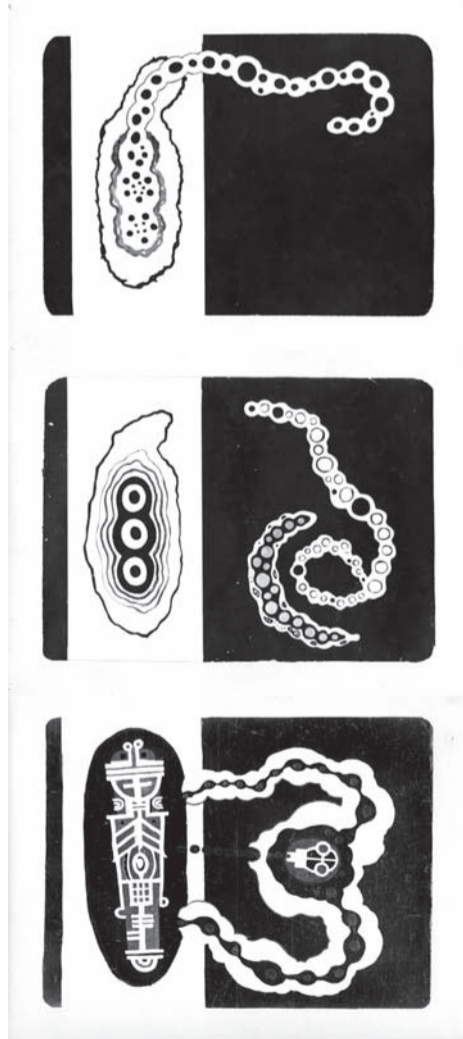
iii/Variations of this method can also be seen in the work of Dirk de Bruyn (Traum a Dream), Steven Woloshen (Babble on Palms) and Janine Randerson (Words and Bits), which are screened in the Handmade Pixels short film screening.

iv/Youngblood, Gene (1970), Expanded Cinema, USA, Buckminster Fuller

Dr Lisa Perrott is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, University of Waikato. Her research includes animation, visual music, documentary, and cultural memory. Having

completed her stopmotion film animaScope, Perrott has recently collaborated with musicians and dancers on cross-platform visual music and performance based projects.

Perrott curated the moving image show for the exhibition Mind Games: Surrealism in Aotearoa (2009) and, in conjunction with Handmade Pixels, she is director of the international symposium Animating Time-space (October, 2011): <http://animationwaikato.org/>



Stills from Len Lye's Tusalava (1927–29). Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and New Zealand Film Archive.

Curated by Lisa Perrott

HANDMADE P/IXELS:

EXPOSING THE ANIMATION PROCESS



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

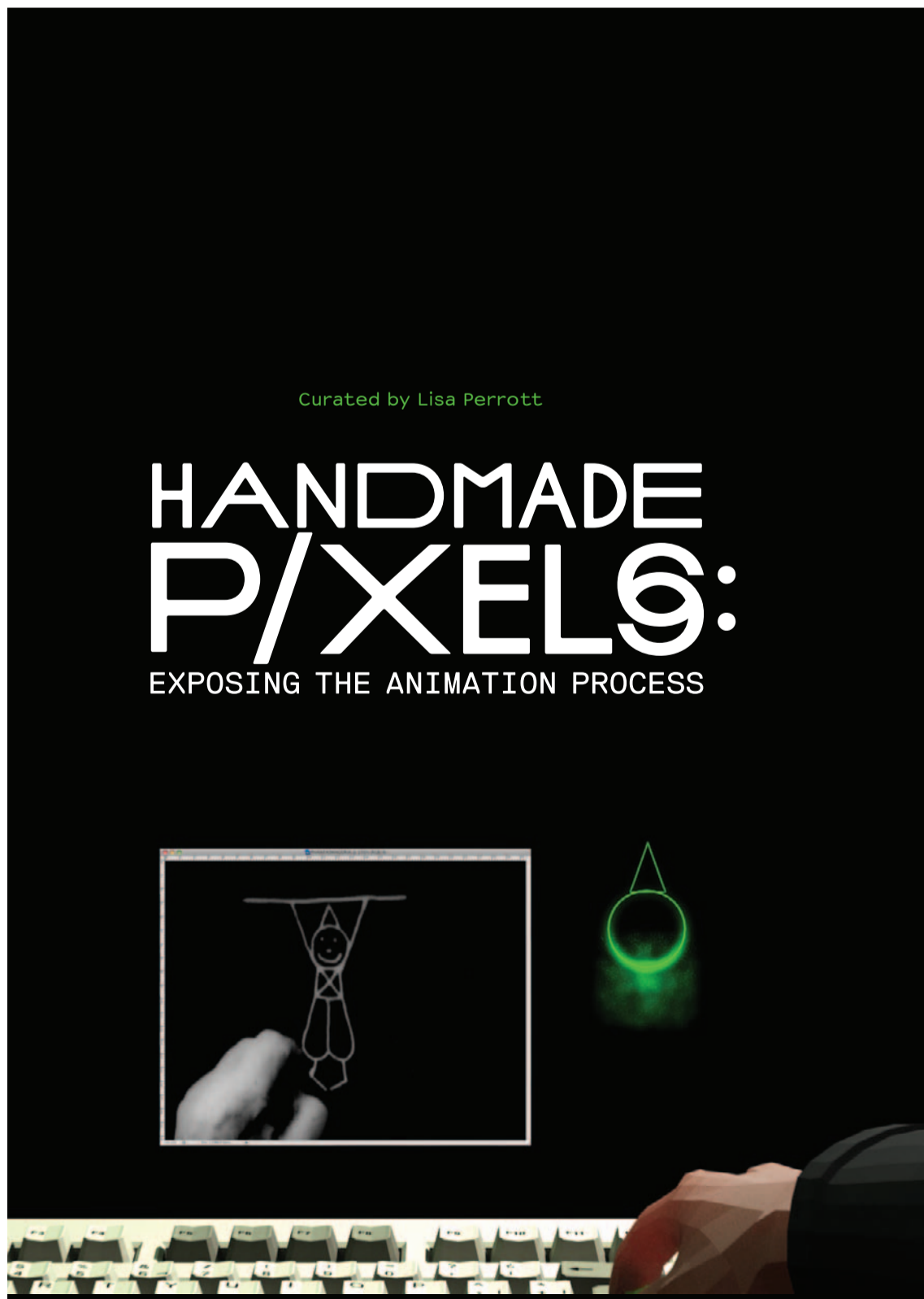
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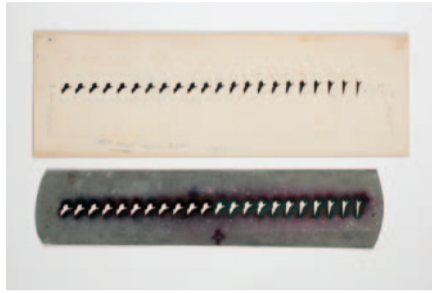


ANIMATING
TIME-SPACE
SYMPOSIUM
10TH SEPTEMBER
TO 2ND OCTOBER



This publication was produced on the occasion of the exhibition Handmade Pixels: Exposing the Animation Process, 1–30 October 2011 at the Calder & Lawson Gallery, University of Waikato. This project was part of the programme for the Animating Time-space Symposium, University of Waikato.





Artist: Len Lye
Animation: Tusalava
Year: 1927-29

Process: Hand drawn on paper

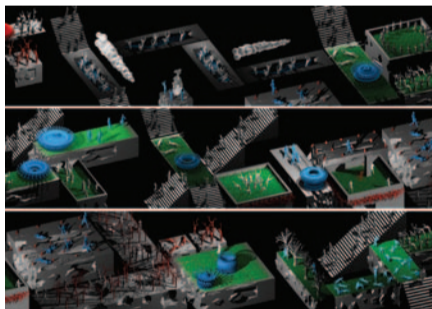
Artist: Len Lye
Animation: Swinging the Lambeth Walk
Year: 1939

Process: Direct film (camera-less animation): painting and stenciling onto celluloid. Various tools used for marking the film, including a plastic comb and shaving instrument



Artist: Dirk de Bruyn
Animation: Traum a Dream
Year: 2003

Process: Direct film, 16 mm film strip marked with scratches, paint, dyes, marker pens, stencils and letraset letters. Samples of found footage and sounds of the filmmaker's voice



Artist: Gregory Bennett
Animation: Utopia
Year: 2011

Process: Digitally generated and animated groups of figures. A generic animated figure is employed as a building block in the creation of a series of works, which assemble and reassemble the replicated figure into units of performed actions, loops and cycles, creating ongoing series of patterns of movement vocabulary



Artist: Rastko Ciric
Animation: Fantasmagorie 2008
Year: 2008
Collaborators: Director, editor:

Rastko Ciric, 3D animation and supervision, camera, editing:
Predrag Milosevic, Concept design:
Dusan Nestic, Music: Nebojsa Ignjatovic, Animation: Marina Kecman, Vojislav Djordjevic, Computer graphics, compositing and VFX:
Dusan Jovovic, Computer graphics:
Marijana Markoska, Sound: Slobodan Stankovic, Executive Producer:
Zorica Milosevic, Production:
RASTKO CIRIC and METAMORPH,
Belgrade, Realised at the FAA
Animation Studio, Faculty of Applied Arts, Belgrade and Digital Arts Group, University of Arts, Belgrade

Process: A computer 3-D retake of Emile Cohl's film Fantasmagorie (Paris, 1908), Computer generated animation, character based on hand drawn sketches by Rastko Ciric



Artists: Miriam Harris and Juliet Palmer
Animation: Soaring, Roaring, Diving
Year: 2008

Collaborators: Producer: Miriam Harris, Original Score: Juliet Palmer, Sound: Juliet Palmer, Jean Martin, Animators: Juliet Palmer, Jean Martin, Miriam Harris, Visuals: Miriam Harris, Cinematographer: Norman Harris

Process: Mixed-media, hand drawn on paper, uses collage, Super8 footage, 2D and 3D imagery, and composed and found sounds



Artist: Lonnie Hutchinson
Animation: Shangri La
Year: 2011

Collaborators: Artist, producer: Lonnie Hutchinson, Direction, design: Pete Lipponen (Virtuo), Animation, sound: Dan Mace (Remote), Digital binocular station, software: Eric Woods (Mind Space Solutions), Voices of the Taniwha: Sinalei & Losanna Tuiletufuga Hutchinson, Music: Anika Moa (Mushroom Records)

Process: Silhouette animation. Originally a sight-specific installation at Chews Lane, Wellington. The first virtual binocular experience installed outdoors in New Zealand



Artists: Rowan Wernham and James Robinson
Animation: X.O. Genesis
Year: 2010

Collaborators: Director, artist, drawing animation, models, writer, animator, compositor: James Robinson, Sound designer: Rowan Wernham, Producer: Thierry Jutel, Original music and sound design: Chris Knox

Process: Stop-motion, painted and hand drawn on paper, models



Artist: Emit Snake-beings
Animation: Death of an Orchestra
Year: 2006

Process: Stop-motion using reconstructed dolls and pixilation of filmmaker (conductor)



Artist: Jo Williams
Animation: Recent Date
Year: 2007
Collaborators: Director: Jo Williams, Editor: Emma Buckland, Armature construction: Ben Reid

Process: Stop-motion using puppets composed of stainless steel ball and socket armature encased in foam latex (created using a plaster mold)



Artist: Dawn Tuffery
Animation: Swing
Year: 2008

Process: Stop-motion using latex puppet and handmade set



Artists: Lisa Perrott and Amanda Ewing
Animation: animaScope
Year: 1997-2009
Collaborators: Director, animator and editor: Lisa Perrott, Art director, model maker and animator: Amanda Ewing, Original sound design: Jennifer Spark, Cinematographer: Anne Gummer, Producer: Bret Nichols

Process: Stop-motion using hand-made puppets, set and raw meat. Puppets composed of sculpted clay-fired heads and wire bodies covered in wax and fabric

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