

Oskar Fischinger

(1900 - 1967)

ABSTRACT | BIO

Abstract filmmaker, filmmaker and painter

Born on June 22, 1900 in Gelnhausen, Germany as the fourth of six children

Started painting at an early age due to influence by painters that would come to his town to paint its beautiful landscapes

Attended a trade school in Frankfurt and eventually earned an engineer's diploma

Started abstract filmmaking due to the encouragement of the theater critic Bernhard Diebold in 1921

Married his first cousin Elfriede Fischinger in 1932

Made over 50 short animated films and painted over 900 canvases

Died in January 31, 1967 after years of ill-health

BACKGROUND

Originally studied violin and organ building for mathematical harmonic theory

Made special effects (rockets, starships, planet surfaces) for Fritz Lang's *Frau Im Mond* (*Woman in the Moon*)

His series of black and white studies synchronized with music came to be in such demand that he had to bring in his entire family to work with him in his studio

Experimented with a three-color film process called GasparColor, which allowed him to create his first color film *Kreise*

Worked with Paramount (1936), MGM (1937), and Disney (1938-9), but was not satisfied with their limits and alterations

Frustrated with the film industry, he later took up oil painting and completed his final finished project, *Motion Painting No. 1* (1947)

DESCRIPTION

Abstract Film influenced by:

Walther Ruttmann's abstract film with musical score
(*Light-Play Opus No.1*) and Tibetan Buddhism toward
meditative mandala structures

Examples Made in Germany:

- (1927) - Seelische Konstruktionen (Spiritual Constructions)
- (1930) - Studie No. 6
- (1933) - Kreise (Circles)

Examples Made in America:

- (1937) - An Optical Poem (for MGM Studios)
- (1943) - Allegretto
- (1947) - Motion Painting No. 1
- (1952) - Muntz TV Commercial

DESCRIPTION

Characteristics of His Abstract Films:

- Uses movement of simple shapes to convey feeling
- Shapes are very synchronized with music (if there is any)
- Shapes move smooth and organically
- Transitions are smooth and seamless with the music and oftentimes shapes will merge with one another in a type of metamorphosis, which reinforces the organic movement
- Described as his feelings and moods in graphic expression

Achievements:

- Invented the Lumigraph in 1950 (a type of color organ)
- October 1935 King's Prize at the Brussels World Fair
- 1949 Grand Prix at the Brussels International Experimental Film Competition
- 1977 Winsor McCay Award
- 1984 Olympiad of Animation's list of the world's greatest films

ANALYSIS

Oscar Fischinger's work embraces a sense of simplicity, but at the same time the tight interplay of the music with the shapes and forms give Fischinger's work a timeless quality that still continues to be a source of inspiration for others.

In one of his essays about his work, Fischinger refers to his work as being very tied to his feelings and emotions. He also urges artists not to create based on the motive to "please the masses," but create from his/her Creative Spirit and trust that it will be the best he/she can offer. This may perhaps be why his work is so powerful in drawing emotion with or without music.

In this way, perhaps what many of us often miss is a sense of connection with our work. We are not perhaps as passionate or enlightened because we feel we are only completing someone else's demands rather than our own. Yet, just because we have certain restraints should not keep us from trying to merge our own interpretation and feeling into our work. Rather, we should strive to merge with our work and let it speak through us.

CONCLUSION

Even though Fischinger's work may seem outdated now with our world of special effects and virtual realities, I still see his work with a sense of marvel and appreciation. This is not only because he was able to accomplish so much with so little technology, but also because his passion is so visible in the work he completed. The synchronization of shape with sound is so entrancing because the shapes seem to take life and the viewer is drawn to want to be within that world rather than the world we live in because it seems to offer a life without fear, destruction or tragedy.

In many ways I wish I could have a similar approach of optimism, passion and creativity to complete the different assignments we are given in our classes, but somehow I know what no matter how hard I try, there will still be a sense of dread and fear within me because of that necessity to please teachers and get good grades. Yet, regardless, it is something that I feel I must constantly strive for and may someday reach.

REFERENCES

Video Links

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(1933) - Kreise (Circles)
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/clrlOrYsD2c/>

(1937) - An Optical Poem (MGM)
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/1b6wAr7knYw/>

(1943) - Allegretto
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/oOVOCJitAsQ/>

(1947) - Motion Painting No. 1
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/PvmbCzO1q48/>

(1952) - Muntz TV Commercial
<http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/E7nCZ3JOOYs/>

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