

**ON THE EDGE: Experimental Animation from
USC's John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts**

Filmmakers' Notes

1. *Blue Rain*, Hsin-Ping Pan, 2003, video, 9:00

A story about a little guy who saves a crying girl and a city in a flood.

"My inspiration for this film is from my own experience. I was sad and cried a lot at that time. So I thought it would be interesting to make a film about tears. At the same time, I saw the news about a big flood happening in Taiwan. Watching those people's homes got destroyed by the water, somehow I felt really related to their experience. So these two things inspire me to make "Blue Rain". I hope this film can bring a happy and peaceful feeling to the audience. So I used the hand painted texture to create a warm and organic look."

-Hsinping Pan

2. *Rural Daydream*, Ben Hendricks, 2004, video, 1:33

"Rural Daydream was inspired by a lifetime of going between red and blue states. I am interested and frightened when I see people treated as predictable commodities." –Ben Hendricks

3. *The Master of Harprass Ingenuity*, Sam Youseffian, 2003, video, 3:30

Inside the mind of a schizophrenic homeless man.

4. *Mission*, Rebecca Rogers, 1999, 35mm, 6:00

A metaphysical journey through space, female sexuality and the spiritual realm, inspired by the passing of the artists' mother.

"Inspired by the passing of the artist's mother, MISSION was born from a single sketch. Using no storyboards, the narrative evolved organically – attempting to channel an experience, tap into our collective unconscious and trust in whatever the end result is. The result: An optical fetish." –Rebecca Rogers

5. *Return*, by Katalin Nivelt Anguelov, 2003, 35mm, 3:15

A visual account of reprocessed memories.

“This film is an experimental reflection of the process of immigration – which has been a very painful and unforgiving progression for me. Immigration is indeed a voyage one can never turn back on. I have tried to represent the way I held onto things from my formal life with the physical procedure of creating the film. I digitalized video camera footage, which I then printed on paper and painted by hand using oil paints. I took the paintings and re-captured them on the 35mm oxberry camera. The outcome hardly resembled the original subject anymore. Just like how distant memories warp and usually cause a severe disappointment when one visits a long unseen place. The film is also homage to my father who was a very important figure in my life; he practically raised me after my mother’s death. Incidentally he died as I finished coloring the last drawings.”
- Kati Nivelv Anguelov

6. *America Missung*, Sandra Cheng, 2006, 35mm, 3:40

Three American women's lives are intertwined when a butterfly is set free in this karaoke film set to the tune of three patriotic songs.

“It is a karaoke sort of interactive film that invites people to sing along if we can manage. The words and music are a medley of three patriotic tunes, not set in any particular order. The images also seldom correspond directly to the music, but allude to a kind of ambiguous connection between three random characters who may not know each other, but still affect one another. The animated karaoke film is as experimental as America itself, with its own confusingly diverse communities who may or may not be willing to sing nor pledge any allegiance.”-Sandra Cheng

7. *Tell Me Everything*, Keren Albala, 2006, video, 1:44

A reckless spatchcock of animation techniques and stories from the minds of two lab mice in a jar.

“After futile attempts of finding a single story idea, I decided to just use them all.” –Keren Albala

8. *Heavy and Warm*, Mendi Menefee, 2005, video, 2:00

Use any kind of thoughts you care to...in order to imagine...that you are becoming...heavy and warm.

“The process for the film started with the soundtrack. I had found an audio cassette for "stress relief" that had a man's voice repeating the same hypnotic phrases over and over. It gave me the idea for a film

that was like the experience of a waking dream, or a dream that is being controlled by someone else. To create this experience for an audience, I used images that I thought would be both familiar and unfamiliar, symbolic and maybe not symbolic, depending on the person watching. The combination of the painted, charcoal, and cloth backgrounds, which move separately from the foreground "hands" video and hand-drawn animation, was designed to remove any notion of setting, or physical location, or direction. Like the dreams we have when we're almost awake, or almost asleep, I wanted "Heavy and Warm" to be an experience, rather than a coherent story; a nonlinear audio and visual representation of the way physical senses become confused with memory during semi-consciousness."
-Mendi Menefee

9. *Earth's Shadow*, Huckleberry Lain, 2007, video, 11:00

The record of a full earth day through many different mediums.

*"This piece follows in the theme of Christopher MacLaine's *The End* and Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*. A story of our world told orally oozing with tragic and apocalyptic themes, the mix of mediums and use of recycled images while not showing the story directly were elements I pulled out of these films. At the same time, I wanted to use animation to demonstrate something beyond our current existence, further then MacLaine and Baldwin were able to use in their films." - Huckleberry Lain*

10. *3:20*, By Liz Blazer, 2003, video, 3:29

A response to 9/11, *3:20* explores transience and loss of personal identity within a crowd.

"320 is a process oriented film. The goal was to explore ideas and techniques rather than create a totally finished work. The idea for the film came in response to 9/11. After living in NYC and commuting to Times Square I remembered often feeling like an aimless sheep moving with the heard. When I arrived to my cubicle, I often felt like a number anonymously working on the 32nd floor. The images of 9/11 survivors covered in dust brought to mind the feeling of transience and loss of personal identity many feel within a huge urban crowd." -Liz Blazer

11. *The Residual Artifacts of Communication*, Richard Sandoval, 1999, 6:29

The essences of common emotions and experiences, without language or representational imagery.

"I was inspired by, as far as film-makers are concerned, the isolation of "Solaris" by Andrei Tarkovsky, the etherealness of "Samedi" by Jordan Belson, the editing of "Five Film Poems" by Don Levy, and the patience of "Water and Power" by Pat O'neil. As for the subject matter, I was inspired by the inadequacy of written and verbal communication. Some feelings can only be expressed in non-verbal forms. I was trying to create a controlled experience that the audience could be manipulated on a purely sensory and emotional level. This film relies heavily on immersion and scale to complete the illusion of visual accommodation and transient aural cinema noise." –Richard Sandoval

12. Convenience, 2004, Ryan Kirkwood, 2005, 35mm, 6:30

A clinical look at chemical behavior modification in children.

"I was inspired by my experiences in school growing up, as well as growing trends in medication. I wanted to experiment with tone and subject matter. I used the candy colored world of commercial animation to illustrate the unreality of a medicated state of mind."
-Ryan Kirkwood

13. Crimenals, Gregory Araya, 2003, 35mm, 2:22

Film noir movies and detective comics get sliced up and stitched back together to form an absurdist collage.

"The thematic inspiration came from a series of "paste-ups" or collages done by American Pop Artist Burgess "Jess" Collins. They were called "Tricky Cad" (an anagram for "Dick Tracy",) and were compiled from the Chester Gould comic strips."-Greg Araya

14. Vaudeville, Chansoo Kim, 2005, video, 4:07

Loosely based on 1930s Korea, *Vaudeville* is a visual poem about people in despair wandering about an abandoned winter landscape in the midst of a series of surreal events.

15. Panoesthesia, Brad Schaider, 2007, video, 2:52

Panoesthesia (pan-o-es-these-ia): the overwhelming sensations brought on by fully immersible, visual environments.

16. That time, Melissa Bowman, 2007, video, 0:45

An interpretation of the monthly slap in the face.

"That Time is inspired by "menstrual madness." I am intrigued/plagued by the fact that the rational, biological process by which a woman's body prepares the womb for a baby is accompanied by irrational baggage that threatens my emotional stability on a monthly basis.

To express this phenomenon, I chose to experiment with a simple set of imagery to represent the cause/effect relationship of this monthly cycle. I wanted the piece to be light in overall tone, thus I played with a "Monty Python" approach using photo collage and replacement animation, breaking the fourth wall, and exaggerated expression. The piece was designed to be played either as "one pass" or a loop."

17. CARL 57, Ryan Chen, 2007, video, 3:09

In the final moments of Carl's life he recalls the 1950s nuclear testing in Nevada and how it resulted in the death of his American dream.

"The inspiration for the film initially came from spotting Michael Light's book 100 Suns in a bookstore. When I looked inside I saw photos of soldiers in trenches with radioactive debris raining on top of them. I decided to research the history of America's nuclear testing program by viewing declassified military footage of the tests, and reading a book called Atomic Soldiers which contains first hand accounts from participating soldiers. After learning about the reasons for the hazardous testing protocols, the soldier's indoctrination, and the extremely high number of cancer cases that developed in those who participated I felt compelled to attempt a short film that communicated the anger and betrayal of those 300,000 soldiers who were misled by the American government.

The film is experimental in my opinion due to it's ambiguity regarding the narrative's timeline, and the identity of the interviewer. The film goes back and forth between a cold and warm color scheme. I don't spell out the difference between the two tonalities but they function as both a separation of the past and present, and life and death. Depending on which interpretation the audience accepts, both routes contain a visual paradox that references the alternate. The goal of the film is to convey all the necessary historical points, touch on the personal tragedy of the individuals involved, and to communicate a message regarding the lesson learned without being preachy." –Ryan Chen

18. *The Red Shoes*, Glenda Wharton, 1998, 16mm, 8:00

A child puts on a pair of demonic shoes and is whirled into a nightmare world in this interpretation of the children's classic, "The Red Shoes".

19. *1 Minute Film*, Sirirat Thawilvejakul, 2003, 16mm, 1:28

Two kids struggle to watch a TV program that lasts only 1 minute.

"I got the inspiration as I watched television late at night. As all shows were finished and the TV signal appeared, I thought that it would be creepy if some unforeseen creatures appear on the screen. I also wanted to experiment with the awkwardness of people who are being watched. I imagined this world with crazy lines and movement. Hand drawn animation seems to be an efficient way to accomplish this idea. Later, I combined many layers, including prints of TV signal as background, cel drawings, color gels, and subtitles, and shot them under the traditional animation camera."- Sirirat Thawilvejakul