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ANIMATE TV DRAW A BRAVE NEW WORLD

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The experimental collective release a hand-picked selection from over 100 animated films

- Text by [Felicity Shaw](#)

A unique collection of experimental animated films has been released on DVD by AnimateTV, which has served as a platform for both emerging and established British artists and animators. The films have been handpicked from over 100 groundbreaking films, including works from such talent as Phil Mulloy, Semiconductor and Petra Freeman. Dazed took some time out with co-founder Gary Thomas to find out more about this exciting new release...

Dazed Digital: Could you tell us about the concept behind Animate TV?

Gary Thomas: AnimateTV was set up back in 1991 by Clare Kitson, who was commissioning editor for animation at Channel 4, and David Curtis, who was the Artists' Film and Video Officer at Arts Council England. Channel 4 had its remit to innovate, and for the Arts Council, it was a way to lever extra money so people could make relatively ambitious films, and get those films to a relatively huge audience.

DD: How did you become involved in the project?

Gary Thomas: I've been involved since very nearly the beginning – obviously I was a very small child then! The scheme used to run in-house by the Arts Council, and I was working in the Film Department. I was an assistant when I started, and one year Channel 4 did a little documentary about the scheme and the selection process, which featured me doing some photocopying, which I did very well! I clawed my way up to become Head of Moving Image - and Executive Producer of AnimateTV - that is, until the Arts Council lost interest in film and made me redundant in 2006. By then, AnimateTV had been run for several years by Dick Arnall, a really great bloke who was an animation producer – he had worked on *Yellow Submarine* and set up the Cambridge Animation Festival back in the 1960s. He was a real champion of risky creative stuff. After I left the Arts Council, I was doing some work for Dick, when he had a stroke, and died. It was terrible. Channel 4 and the Arts Council were ready to contract another round of commissions, so Animate Projects was set up – by me and Jacqui Davies - to look after the new films, and the films already in production. By this time, AnimateTV had commissioned about 100 films, and we put most of them online.

DD: How did you go about choosing the commissioned work?

Gary Thomas: Although there's been a bit of a hiatus, we're hopeful that Channel 4 and the Arts Council will decide to re-commission, so I don't like talking about it in the past tense! There's a UK wide open call for proposals, and a panel, including 'independent' people, would select a final

shortlist - based on the application and looking at examples of previous work, and then we'd do interviews. I think the open call is an important aspect. It's a small world, so I'll always know or have heard of lots of the people who apply, but we always discover 'new' talent. The guidelines use terms like 'experimental' and 'risk-taking', but it's impossible to say exactly what we're looking for, because we're hoping for things we haven't seen before. And you can't define an Animate-maker either - they are industry people making personal projects, graphics people, avant-garde filmmakers, gallery artists... And we want films that explore, invent and push techniques - we've got a very broad understanding of what 'animation' can be.

DD: Animation can often address controversial, confrontational and shocking issues. Why do you think the form lends itself to things like that?

Gary Thomas: It's a cliché that you can do 'anything' in animation, but I don't think animation is necessarily more successful at dealing with the confrontational than other art forms. In some ways I think animation is closer to literature or painting than conventional, 'live-action' film - because the animation itself is evidence of someone's thoughts and emotions. And people can have dark thoughts. In Run Wrake's Rabbit, two children slash open a lot of animals. That would be gross and repelling if it was live-action, but with animation, it's still shocking, but not literal - so it's the idea that's shocking.

DD: Why do you think animation as a medium is so popular with modern audiences?

Gary Thomas: Pixar! They produce animated films that grown-ups wanted to see. And I think their success filters across - I really do! So animation gets into the public consciousness. And audiences appreciate the work that goes into making a work - with films, or animation in galleries. It's that recognition that another human being has put a lot of effort into making something. Of course, you need ideas, and skills, and all that other stuff too, for audiences to engage with something. Animation can't be an end in itself.

Gary Thomas is co-director of Animate Projects. animateprojects.org

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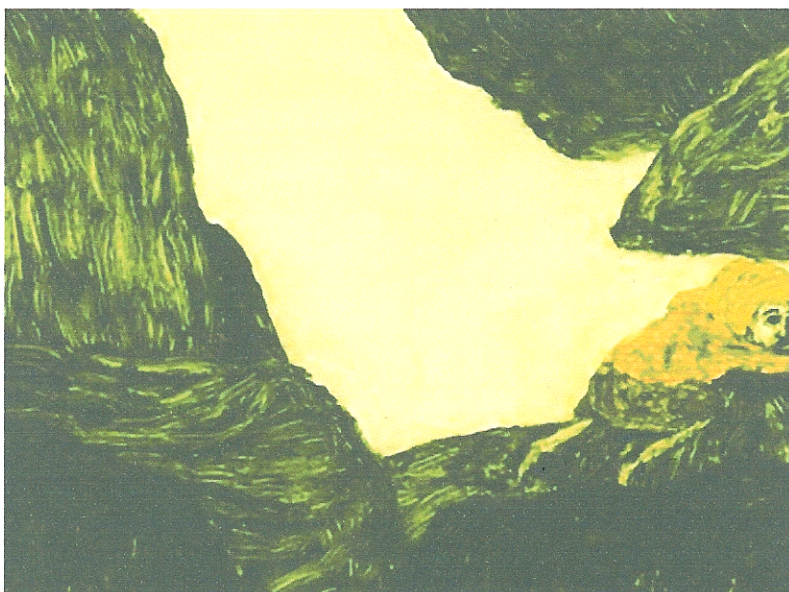
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