

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

Curated by Kathy Smith, Chair, and Lisa Mann, Exhibitions  
Director

Since its inception in 1995, the John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts (DADA) at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, has incorporated into its curriculum a theoretical and critical approach to the development and research of digital art forms as well as an historical understanding of how traditional media, drawing, painting, sculpture, video and installation art have transposed or been incorporated into animation or art in motion.

The program has constantly strived to merge new technologies with traditional practice and to encourage the study of the human form, organic media and gesture as a way to explore complex ideas and emotions across a temporal medium.

The 19 short works selected for this show provide a mere glimpse into the experimental tendencies of the program. Visual content ranges from the purely sensory, non-representational works inspired by ground-breaking experimental animators such as Len Lye and Oscar Fischinger, to the “reconstruction” of found footage and use of time lapse reminiscent in some ways to Pat O’Neill’s collaged, optically printed films. Other students were inspired by Terry Gilliam’s cut-out animation, Don Levy, and Craig Baldwin. Techniques span the gamut from the entirely hand-made, to the latest cutting edge 2D and 3D software. Cinematic structures include narrative—both linear and non-linear, personal essay, autobiography, and documentary.

Not surprisingly, the variety of subject matter is equally as diverse as the visual territory covered: Nightmares, metaphysical journeys, the body, schizophrenia, homelessness, chemical behavior modification for children, memory and consciousness, identity, anonymity, floods, parents, American patriotism, Film Noir, comic books, voyeurism, 1930 Korea, landscapes, 1950’s nuclear testing in Nevada, political propaganda, and earth meditation.

As an international and multi-cultural program we truly believe the art form of animation developed as a way to reflect our own physical and mental evolutionary process.

-Kathy Smith and Lisa Mann

Several of the filmmakers will be present after the show to take questions.