Arabesque
John Whitney
8’, 1975, cgi, color, 16 mm., Los Angeles-CA, USA

In Arabesque, Whitney used a combination of computer and oscillograph to create a series of transforming sine waves and parabolic curves that compliment Manoochelher Sadeghi’s exotic Persian Santur soundtrack. It’s notable the Whitney was influenced by patterns in Islamic architecture, their symmetry and modulation being analogous to temporal patterns in complex musical motifs.
-- Paul Prudence, Data Is Nature

Chasse des Touches | The Chase of Brushstrokes | Cacería de Pinceladas
Hy Hirsh
4’, 1959, color, drawing, 16 mm., Paris, France

Chasse des Touches is an abstract expression made by moving the fingers through a tray with layers of colored oil, set to Thelonious Monk’s cool jazz.
--Dr. William Moritz
Impasse
**Frank & Caroline Mouris**
10’ · stop-motion · color · 16 mm · 1978 · USA

One brief scene in our earliest collage film utilized Avery Labels, the self-stick geometric labels in simple, bright colors (same as those made by Dennsion). Years later, a fellow graphic designer casually remarked that one of his new clients was Avery Labels. This inspired a (successful) proposal to them that we would make an entire animated film out of any labels they wished to donate to the cause.

For months, Caroline and I, and two friends, stuck Avery Labels to cels in all the possible patterns I could think of. Then, fearing that this would be of interest only to those who liked abstract animation, we organized the ‘scenes’ we had come up with as a story about a persistent red arrow that was determined to rid itself of a little white dot, which had the morphing power to turn itself into any shape or color. This film would not have been possible without the Avery Label Company’s donation of thousands and thousands of labels, plus enough funds to pay for the week of filming on an Oxberry animation stand. The most difficult part was having to constantly use the air blowing hose to clean lint and specks off the cells, as the multiple stacks of cels were all filmed against a shiny black paper backdrop. The soundtrack was conceived and recorded after the entire film was shot.

-- Frank Mouris

Kitsch in Sync
**Adam Beckett**
4’30”, 1975, drawing, color, 16 mm., Los Angeles-CA, USA

This is an abstract animation that seems to get laughs. The soundtrack is why, mainly; it sounds like a large group of demented ducks enthusiastically and persistently seeking oneness with the all, via energetic chanting. BUBUBABU!!! The imagery is elaborate, brightly colored, and every single beat in the soundtrack has its own little bump.
**Train Landscape** | Paisaje de tren  
**Jules Engel**  
3’, 1974, drawing, color, 16 mm., USA

A passing landscape as seen through the window of a moving train...after the first minute or so, we forget the narrative as we become wholeheartedly involved with the energy of the optical statement being scrolled out before us.  
--Loretann Devlin-Gascard

**Scratch Pad** | Cuaderno borrador  
**Hy Hirsh**  
7’, 1960, op-art, scratch, 16 mm., Paris, France

*Scratch Pad* mixes graffiti on film stock and live-action, while *Gyromorphosis* frames the close-up of a metallic structure as a three-dimensional sculpture, and enriches it with superpositions.

**Shapes and Gestures**  
**Jules Engel**  
7’ · drawing · color · 16 mm · 1976 · USA

Begins as a whimsical piece with "sheets" of lines running down the screen, progressing into more and more complex geometric patterns but without deviating from the basic precepts of "dot and line" animation. Jazz piano on a lazy Sunday afternoon, and a spring color palette.  
-- *Stephanie Sapienza*
Sixteen 'objects', each consisting of one hundred points of light, perform a series of precisely choreographed rhythmic transformations. Accompanied by the sound of a Shakuhachi (the Japanese bamboo flute), the film is an exercise in the visual perception of motion and mathematical structure.

Algorithmically-generated choreography of geometric form. What's the relationship between mathematical structure, visual perception and music?

"I thought I was watching a transmission from another galaxy."

-- Jordan Belson

Two dimensional patterns, like the tile patterns of Islamic temples, are generated by performing a set of symmetry operations (translations, rotations, and reflections) upon a basic figure or tile.
Two Space consists of twelve such patterns produced using each of nine different animating figures ($12 \times 9 = 108$ total). Rendered in stark black and white, the patterns produce optical illusions of figure-ground reversal and afterimages of color. Gamelan music from the classical tradition of Java adds to the mesmerizing effect.

Authors’ Biographies

Adam Beckett
1950, Los Angeles, CA, USA - 1979, Los Angeles, CA, USA


Beckett's approach to animation was distinguished by his use of the optical printer in conjunction with the animation stand. Beckett favored the complex use of animated loops: each successive iteration accreted additional images so that the loops did not merely repeat but evolved, appearing at once the same and different. In addition to drawing, Beckett used the optical camera to re-shoot various cycles: offsetting the frames to create a phasing rhythm and changing the color or re-framing a portion of the drawing for select sequences.

In 1975, Beckett headed his own studio, "Infinite Animation" and was later recruited to head the Rotoscope and Animation Department on the ground-breaking science fiction film Star Wars.

-- Pamela Turner

Larry Cuba
1950, Atlanta, GA, USA

Larry Cuba works in the tradition known variously as abstract, absolute or concrete animation. His works are characterized by cascading designs, startling shifts of perspective and precise, mathematical structure. Cuba studied at Washington University and at Cal Arts, where he received his MFA. He has won both NEA and AFI Independent Filmmakers grants and his works have screened in many exhibitions, including Trickfilm/Chicago (1980) and the Best of Hiroshima '85. Cuba was also an artist-in-residence at the Institute for Visual Media of the ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany.

-- Gene Youngblood

Jules Engel
1909, Budapest, Hungary | + 2003, USA

Jules Engel is a pioneer in the field of animation as a visual art form. Born in Budapest in 1909, Engel grew up outside of Chicago and then moved to Los Angeles as a young man, where he successfully created dual careers as an abstract artist and experimental filmmaker. Engel's aesthetic is informed by the principle of abstraction, whether or not the work is representational, and regardless of purpose. Engel's contribution to two Disney films in particular, Fantasia and Bambi, contains a finely tuned visual aesthetic that Engel subsequently explored and developed into his work as a filmmaker and as an artist. Acknowledged as an early California
Modernist, Engel's extensive art exhibition record has paralleled his completion of more than thirty independent experimental and animated films. Engel has also been enormously influential as a teacher to international artists and filmmakers who have created a presence for their work from Harvard to Hollywood.

--Janeann Dill [excerpt]

**Hy Hirsh**

1911, Chicago-IL, USA | + 1960, Paris, France

Hy Hirsh worked at Columbia Studios as editor, cameraman and still photographer from 1930-1936 in order to support himself while developing a reputation as an art photographer. He worked as a WPA photographer from 1936-37, eventually becoming official photographer for the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco. During this time he presented numerous one-man photography exhibitions.

In 1955, Hirsh moved to Europe, working in Spain, Holland (at the puppet animation studio Dollywood), and France on advertising films, as well as producing photographs for Elle, Realities, Vanity Fair and other glossy magazines. When he died suddenly of a heart attack, police found hashish in his possession and commandeered his estate. His belongings were released three years later, with a number of his films missing, and some only preserved as single used projection copies. The presence of his films at the Creative Film Society in Los Angeles after 1965 proved a seminal influence on emerging filmmakers Pat O'Neill, William Moritz and Chick Strand.

**Caroline & Frank Mouris**

1945, Zürich, Switzerland & 1944, Key West-FL, USA

Caroline Ahlfors Mouris was raised outside Boston, and studied at Harvard. Frank Mouris was raised outside Boston, and studied at Harvard and Yale. Both attended classes at the American Film Institute.

Their first film, “Frank Film” (1973) won the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film. This was followed by a series of highly-acclaimed independent shorts including: “Coney” (1975), “Screentest” (1979), “Impasse” (1978), and “Frankly Caroline” (1999). In addition, they have done freelance collage animation for Children's Television Workshop, MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, HBO, and Disney, among many others.

In 1977 they completed a dramatic short, “And Then”, and in 1984 New World Pictures released their feature comedy, "Beginner's Luck". Their two documentaries, “Tennessee Sampler” and “LA LA, Making it in L.A.” were completed in 1973 and 1979, respectively.

**John Whitney**

1917, Los Angeles-CA, USA | + 1995, USA

From his earliest experiments with the medium of computer graphic systems, John Whitney Sr. has balanced a cutting edge use of technology with a strong sense of artistic control and integrity. Considered by many to be the "father of Computer Graphics", John Whitney -and the entire Whitney family- have successfully linked musical composition with experimental film and computer imaging. Since his recognized works in the first International Experimental Film Competition in Belgium, 1949, to his masterpiece Arabesque in 1975, John Whitney remained a true pioneer until his passing in 1996 at age 78.

--The John Whitney Sr. Biographical Website