

A CENTURY OF REPRODUCTION ON FILM

The Cabbage Fairy (*La fée aux choux*)

Alice Guy-Blaché, France, 1896, 1'

A 'demonstration film' intended to sell Gaumont cameras, *The Cabbage Fairy* adapts the birth announcement card and links the birth of cinema to the 'birth' of babies from the folkloric cabbage-patch womb. Its director, Alice Guy-Blaché, was one of the first female filmmakers.

Artistic Creation

Robert Paul, UK, 1901, 2'

Prolific and seminal early English filmmaker Robert W. Paul puts to screen the Victorian 'lightning sketch'. This music hall tradition of live, responsive, accelerated illustration was transformed by the birth of early animation, which used trick photography to produce ever-more-rapid creations: sometimes even living ones.

Spontaneous Generation

(*Génération spontanée*)

Émile Cohl, France, 1909, 4'

One of several alleged fathers of animation, Émile Cohl reliably lampooned the scientific and medical beliefs of the day, from microbiology to new surgical techniques. Here, he relates a popular understanding of 'spontaneous generation' – the idea that the inanimate can suddenly give way to animate life – via caricatures of familiar French types, from the concierge to the collector.

Peas and Cues

Mary Field and Frank Percy Smith, UK, 1930, 9'

In the first 'talkie' produced by British Instructional Films for the popular *Secrets of Nature* series (1922-33), pioneering microcinematographer Frank Percy Smith stages the lifecycle of the humble sweet pea—with astonishingly beautiful results.

Baby Bottleneck

Bob Clampett, USA, 1946, 7'

The post-war baby boom, per Looney Tunes, creates a baby bottleneck: storks are overworked, and newborns are not being delivered. Porky Pig and Daffy Duck are called in to 'streamline' the process and manage to throw a wrench into the works of an already-irrational system.

Window Water Baby Moving

Stan Brakhage, USA, 1959, 13'

Nearly too obscure for Kodak, and definitely too 'scientific' for Tarkovsky, *Window Water Baby Moving* documented the birth of Jane and Stan Brakhage's first child, Myrrenna. Groundbreaking in many ways, this avant-garde, intentionally silent film articulated a new kind of aesthetically-oriented language for birth. That this film found a place among a cadre of conventional medical training films is suggestive, however, of the indefatigable yet ineffable power of aesthetics to teach.

How Some Jellyfish Are Born
(Comment naissent les méduses)

Jean Painlevé, France, 1960, 14'

'At birth, these jellyfish are stacked like plates on top of each other. Who would have thought they would become so lovely.' So observed the surrealist documentarian Jean Painlevé, who here shows how jellyfish reproduce – and, self-reflexively, how to produce a film about jellyfish reproduction.

Family Planning

Les Clark, USA, 1968, 10'

Who better than Donald Duck to spread the news of overpopulation? Made at the behest of the Population Council, this film describes the plight of the 'common man' – with 'woman' at his side – and outlines 15 elementary points about how man must keep the family of man in balance. According to the Population Council, it was to be made available in: 'Spanish, Portuguese, French, Persian, Turkish, Cantonese Chinese, Taiwanese (Amoy), Indonesian, Tunisian Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, Malay, Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Thai, Korean, Swahili, and Pilippino (sic),' with more as needed.

World Population

Zero Population Growth/Population Connection, USA, 1972/2000, 8'

The 'Millennium Edition' of the first and most popular educational tool of Zero Population Growth, the activist group founded by Stanford biologist and doomsayer Paul Ehrlich in 1968, animates the 'population explosion' as dots on a world map multiplying to the ominously accelerating rhythm of a human heartbeat.

'Ave You Got A Male Assistant Please Miss?

Graham Jones and Jon Astley, UK, 1973, 4'

A 1967 Act of Parliament legalised abortion in Britain, but access remained patchy and contested. Six years later, the Family Planning Association sponsored Oxford Polytechnic to update and old argument that promoted contraception over teenage motherhood and abortion. The result features an electronic soundtrack and longhaired hippies straight out of Alex Comfort's *The Joy of Sex* (1972).

Helga: On the Origins of Human Life (Trailer)

Erich F. Bender, Germany, 1967, 2'

Alien (Trailer)

Ridley Scott, USA, 1979, 2'

'Mates Condoms' (Advertisement)

Simon Delaney, UK, 1990, 1'

Look Who's Talking (Trailer)

Amy Heckerling, USA, 1989, 2'

'Clear Blue Easy' (Commercial)

David Lynch, 1997, 1'

Little Otik (Trailer)

Jan Švankmajer, 2000, 2'

'Two Pink Lines' (Music video)

Peter Zavadil, USA, 2006, 4'

Promotional, reproductive ephemera from the late twentieth century.

Mammas: 'Toad', 'Cichlid Fish'

Isabella Rossellini, USA, 2013, 5'

Rossellini's follow-up to her successful web series of reproductive nature reenactments, *Green Porno*, this time focuses on maternity in the animal kingdom.

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