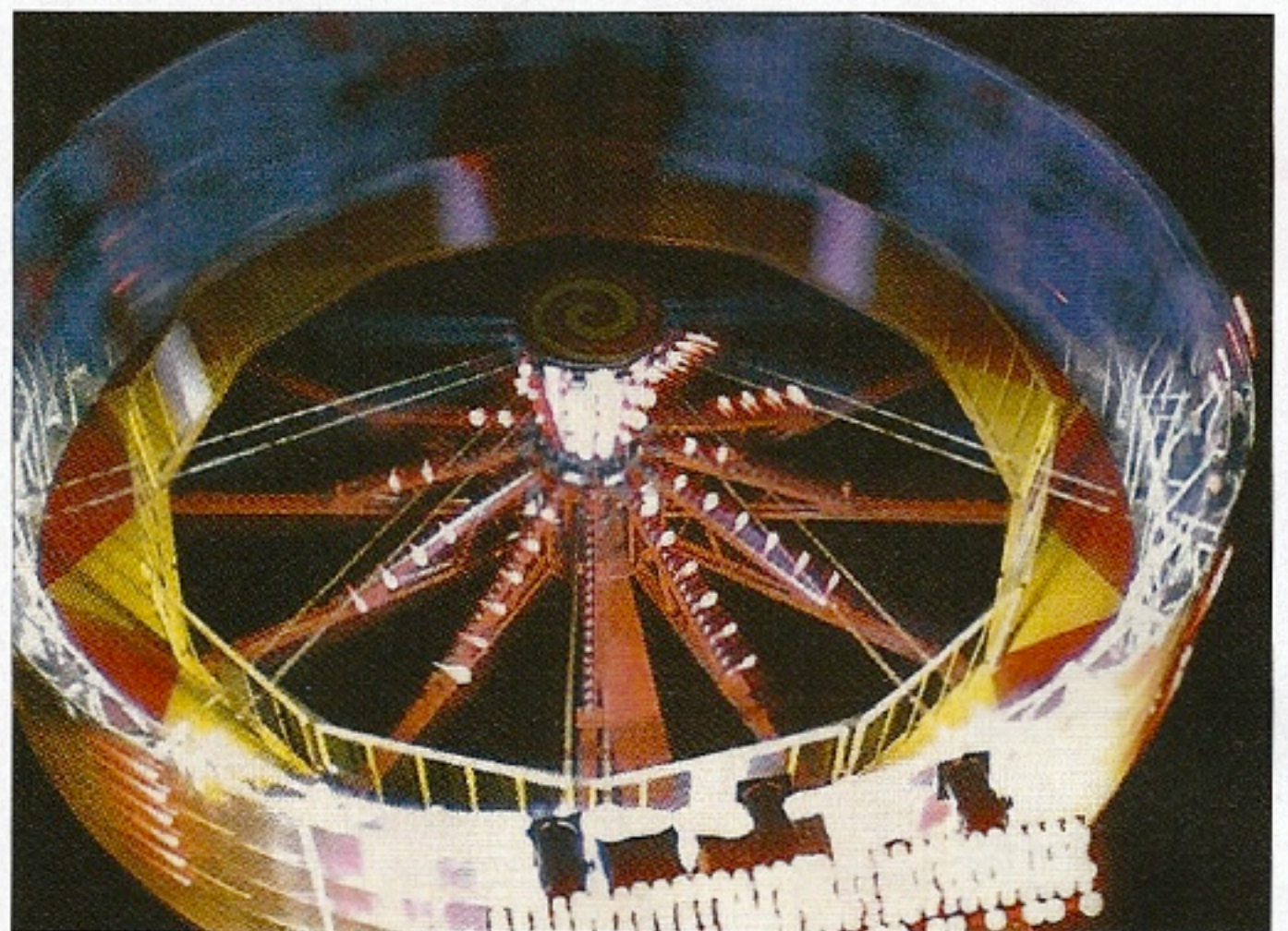
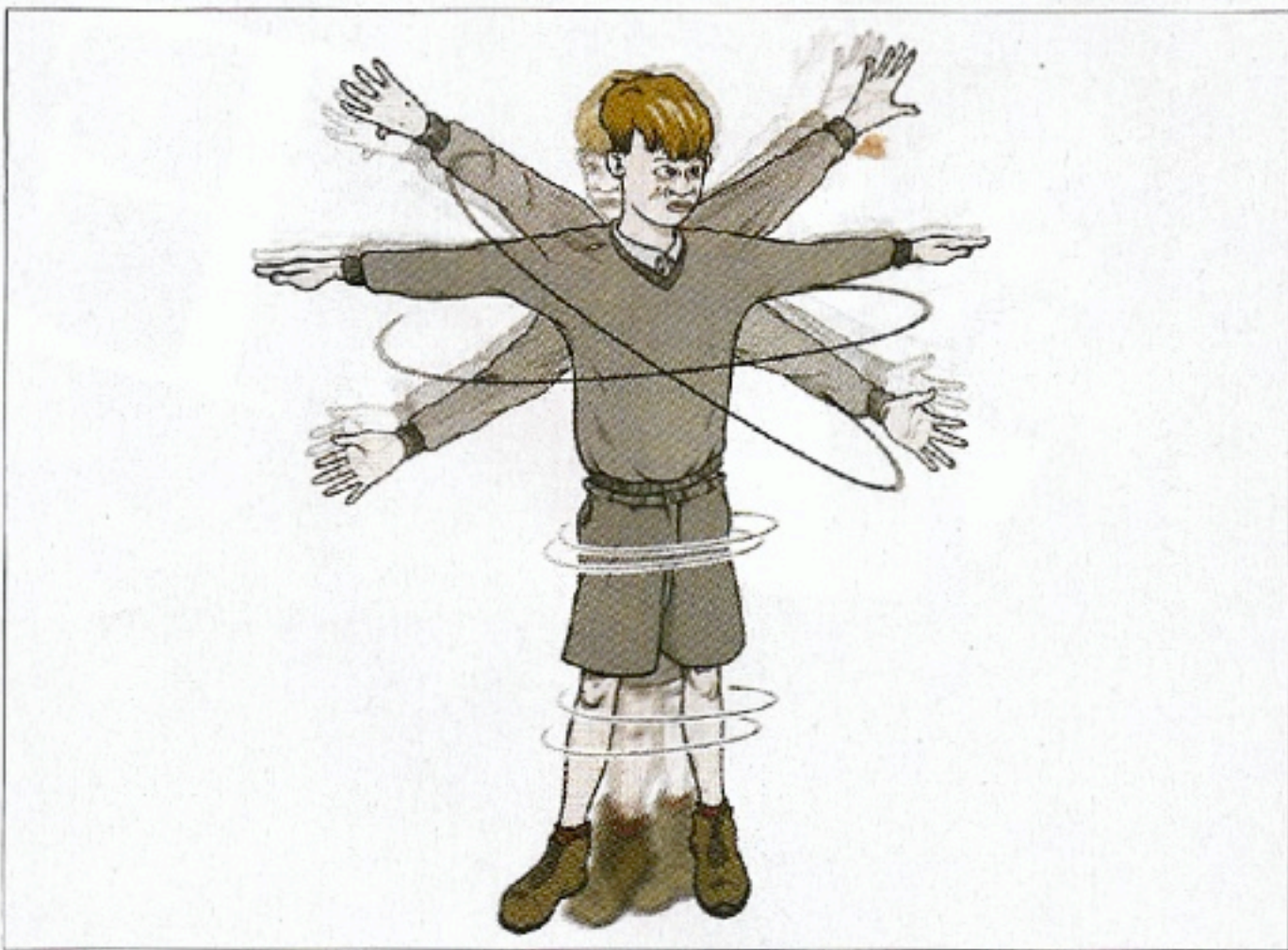
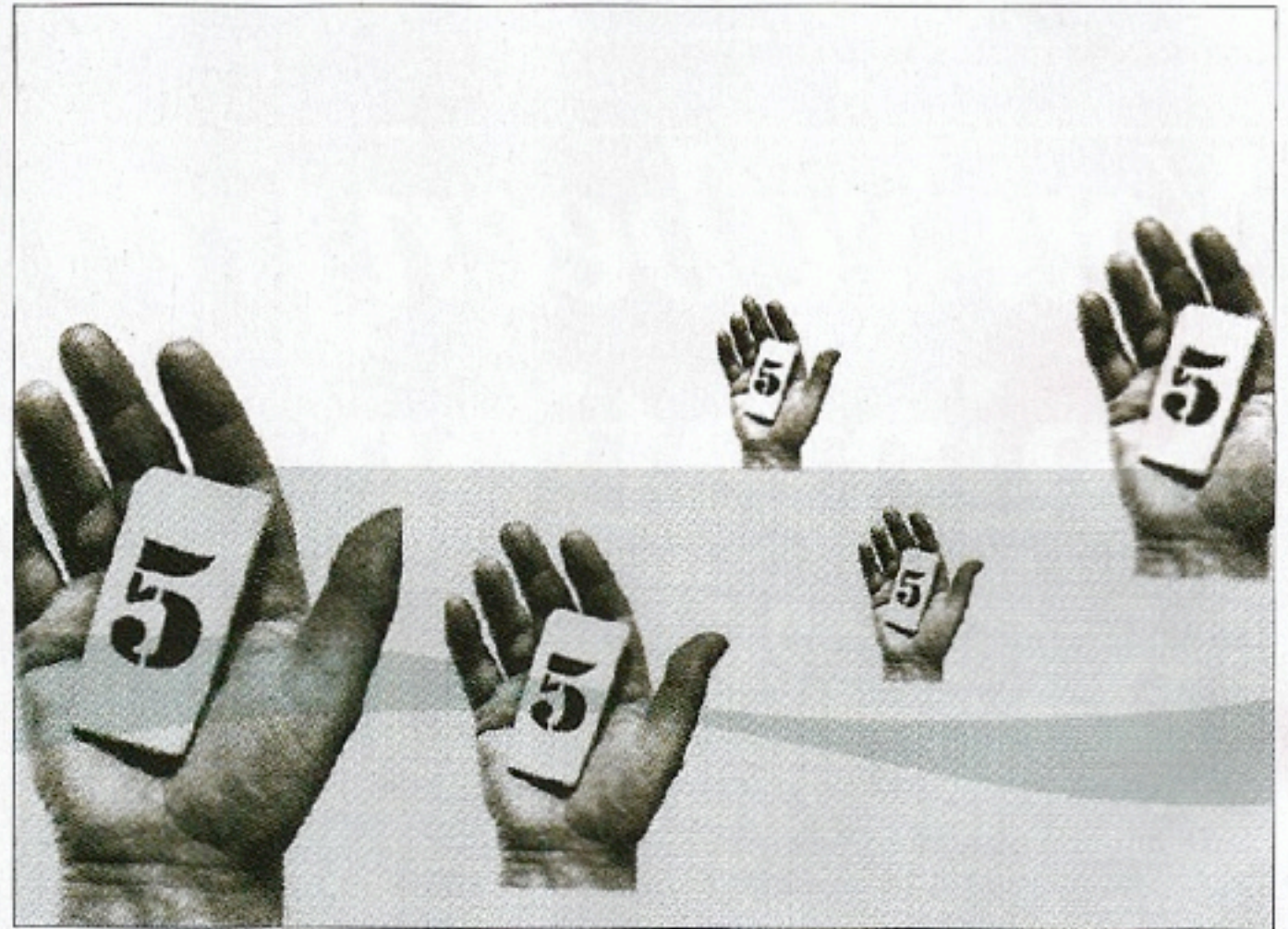
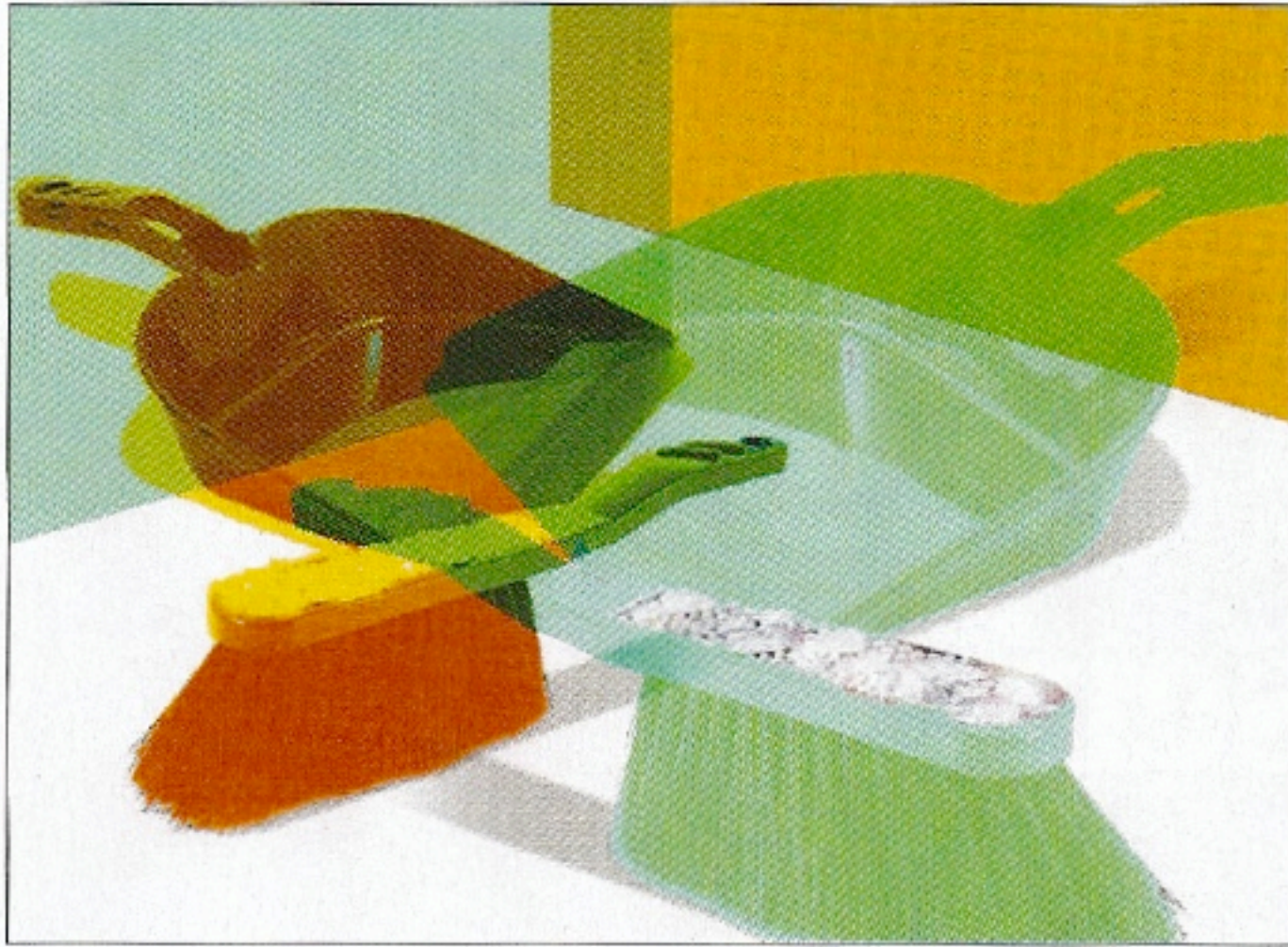


# Plugged In

Edited by **Gabriel Tate**



**Frame by frame** *Animate! TV's latest films are a glorious testament to the broad scope and enduring appeal of the medium*

## Animate! TV

**Sunday, 12am, C4**

More often a mere tool in the arsenal of slapstick comedians and clunky political satirists, animation comes into its own on Channel 4 this week.

'Animate! TV' is an hour-long programme showcasing six artists' attempts to push the medium to new levels and into the arena of the recognised 'visual arts'. Commissioned by agency Animate Projects as part of a scheme backed by Channel 4 and the Arts Council, the project will also feature an annual award and a series of premieres around the country, all dedicated to evangelising the enormous scope of this underrated genre.

'Diversity's really important to us,' comments co-director Jacqui Davies. 'We don't want to reflect a certain kind of style or a certain trend in particular. What Animate Projects is about is the connection between animation and the visual arts.'

Which makes for an extremely broad range of material. Alongside works such as 'Francis' – a brief account of the

creation of an animated character – which comes close to conforming to the conventional cartoon-ish notion of the medium, there are also projects such as 'The Lifesize Zoetrope'.

Working with one of the earliest methods of animation, artist Mark Simon Hewis attempts to create a zoetrope – a succession of still images viewed through a rotating drum – in life size, while recounting the tale of one man's entire life. Thirty-six people file in to a rotating fairground wheel, clutching flip-pads of animations as the mechanism starts and an aural collage of sound begins. A baby cries, and a chiming instrumental plays while a dispassionate West Country monologue takes us from birth to death via an emotionally powerful script containing lines such as: 'In my body, I can hear the muffled sound of the song of cancer destroying me.' And it's all filmed in a single shot, with the director communicating to the participants via a foghorn. It's strange to consider that this supposedly belongs to the same genre as, for example, 'The Simpsons'.

'The central ideas behind it ['The Lifesize Zoetrope'] were more about animation than a lot of the other projects,' counters Davies, 'because it was about the zoetrope and about the illusion of movement, which is what animation is all about. We have an incredibly broad notion of what animation is and it's really anything that's beyond pure live action. So we like to keep it as open as possible.'

Other projects featured in the programme see animators working with people from outside their field to produce collaborative pieces. In 'End Of The Street', ex-NME art director Andy Martin comes together with Ian McMillan, poet in residence at Barnsley Football Club, to produce a work based on a scale of measuring wind. 'They are the odd couple,' laughs Davies. Additionally, 'The Tongue Of The Hidden' sees David Alexander Anderson joining forces with Iranian-born calligrapher Jila Peacock to bring the works of thirteenth-century Persian metaphysical poet Hafez to life. Using only Hafez's letters and words, they

create an ethereal, shimmering landscape, with characters swaying like leaves on a tree and rising like smoke from a fire. One moment fronds of a weeping willow, letters just as quickly transform into fish food, plunged through a sea of Arabic writing, shedding bubbles of cobalt blue calligraphy. It's powerful stuff.

With the London premiere of the films taking place at Whitechapel Art Gallery on November 29 (see alt.cinema p91), and next year's set of films already commissioned, 'Animate! TV' is rolling on towards bigger and better things.

'We've commissioned five films which will premiere on television, and for the first time two which will premiere on the web,' explains Davies. 'We also have a fantastic residency project with Jane and Louise Wilson, two very reputable visual artists who are going to be working inside the Stanley Kubrick archive and responding to that.'

Sounds exciting. But don't expect to second guess what it'll involve. 'It could be anything,' laughs Davies, 'that's the point.' *Alexi Duggins*