

Press release: 28 January 2011

Arts Council England Axes Animate

Animate Projects, best known for its collaboration with Channel 4 and for supporting experimental animation production, will be forced to shut down at the end of March, following the decision by Arts Council England not to fund its programme for 2011.

Arts Council England has supported the Animate project continuously for 21 years, commissioning over 140 films by some of the UK's leading animators, that have been seen at festivals and exhibitions worldwide, and have won 11 British Animation Awards.

The website, animateprojects.org is a unique educational resource, with a substantial archive of experimental animation films, along with interviews, essays, and production materials related materials. Animate has pioneered the online presentation of artists' films.

Gary Thomas, Co-director of Animate, says, 'The Arts Council said it would not be "fair" to fund us through Grants for the Arts, but before we applied they told us that this was our only option, and it's how they've funded us since 2007. What makes us most angry is the attitude towards the artform, the artists and animators we work with, and our audiences.'

[More information, including quotes, follows..]

About Animate Projects:

Animate Projects explores animation and its concepts, operating at the intersection of the contemporary visual arts, animation, film and design. We offer artists a particular and supportive space to create new work and we enable a UK and international audience to engage with it via broadcast, gallery, cinema and online, and through critical debate.

animateprojects.org

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Animate Projects is the only UK organisation with a particular focus on the production and exhibition of experimental animation, and is at the forefront in the commission of artists' moving image for exhibition online.

AnimateTV was Channel 4's longest running animation scheme, and over its 21 years, Animate has supported many key figures in British animation, including Phil Mulloy, the Quay Brothers, 'time-slice' inventor Tim Macmillan, and Sarah Cox, now leading the Cultural Olympiad's Tate Movie project.

Films by Jonathan Hodgson, Run Wrake, Osbert Parker, Chris Shepherd and David Anderson were BAFTA nominated.

Animate films have won 11 British Animation Awards.

Semiconductor's Magnetic Movie has been watched online over a million times since 2007.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul's A Letter to Uncle Boonmee won the Grand Prix at Oberhausen Short Film Festival.

Animate Projects was set up in 2007 by Jacqui Davies and Gary Thomas, following the death of respected producer Dick Arnall, who previously ran the project. Animate developed its work to include online distribution and projects with galleries and cinema.

Recent commissions include A Letter to Uncle Boonmee by Cannes Palme d'Or winner **Apichatpong Weerasethakul**, Slow Action by **Ben Rivers**, and Unfolding the Aryan Papers, made by **Jane and Louise Wilson** in response to The Stanley Kubrick Archives.

Animate Projects had planned an ambitious programme for 2011, including a wide range of collaborative projects with a digital focus, including a large-scale practice based research project with a University, artist residencies in a research laboratory, artist collaborations with community groups, and a partnership to deliver moving image to healthcare sites nationwide.

Animate's website, animateprojects.org, is a unique online exhibition space, archive and resource, with over 140 films along with interviews, essays and background production materials, and receives 25,000 visitors a month.

Artist David Shrigley says: "Animate succeeded by Animate Projects has consistently facilitated cutting edge animation in the UK. This work has been widely celebrated throughout the world and has made the UK a focal point for animated filmmaking. The loss of this vital organisation will mean that animation in the UK will suffer hugely as a result."

Ruth Lingford, Professor of the Practice of Animation, Harvard University, says: 'Getting my first Animate grant was the key moment that opened up my career. It enabled me to develop my voice as an artist, and for my work to be seen in the context of experimental filmmaking. The second grant allowed me space to change and deepen my work. Without Animate, I would most certainly not now be in my current position at Harvard. And without Animate, British animation, and British art, would be the poorer.'

Filmmaker Andrew Kötting says: 'I was lucky enough to have been commissioned by Animate when I was at a critical stage in my artistic development and without their support (as with many of my contemporaries) I feel that I would never have been able to explore and develop a visual language or 'voice' that still informs and underpins much of my work.'

Artists AL and AL, winners of the Liverpool Art Prize 2009, currently working with Philip Glass, say: 'Working with Animate had an extraordinary impact upon our practice. Our film was broadcast on television in 57 countries and played in over 40 film festivals. Our Animate work was part of our exhibition at FACT for which we won the Liverpool Art Prize.'

Artists Semiconductor (Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt), say: 'We wouldn't have been able to make our film Magnetic Movie if it wasn't for Animate Projects, and it has contributed to our development as artists in a significant way. It won awards at film, science and animation festivals, is screened and exhibited at high profile festivals and exhibitions and galleries, and has been purchased by the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington USA. It has also caused quite a stir in other circles, as people discussed and shared it widely on the internet, with over a million views.'

Chris O'Reilly, founder of Nexus Productions, says: 'Animate has been a consistent reference point for innovation in animation and represents the high tide mark for the artist exploration of the medium. As we reach a moment when digital technology is changing animation, in terms of mode of production and increased interactivity with audiences, animation's future as a medium for artists could not be more exciting. Animate is uniquely placed to lead and channel that new breed of creativity.'

Clare Kitson, Channel 4 Commissioning Editor, Animation 1989 -1999, says: 'If the Arts Council can do without Animate, I wonder what they do think worth preserving. Will it mean the end of its long and distinguished history of supporting animation?'