

Lotte Reiniger

Survey of Animation and Visual Effects

LeeAnn Hoernig

Lotte Reiniger is a German animator, most famous for her film *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, which is considered to be one of the earliest animated films. Reiniger was not like other animators of her time, using silhouette animation instead of ink drawings. Reiniger's animations are amazing for their quality and fluency of movement, all done with cut out figures against a lit up screen.

Reiniger was known for being an independent filmmaker. Unlike the other films, such as in Hollywood, that had a huge team behind them, she kept relatively small team that consisted of her husband Carl Koch, Walter Ruttmann and Berthold Bartosch, all of whom had made their own famous short films as well (Liebenson). She also used silhouette animation, unlike the Hollywood cartoons of the time where the characters sprang "from inkwells and artists pens" (Osmond). She began her animating at around age eighteen and continued her work until well into her seventies and 1981 she died at the age of 82. Carl Koch, her husband, was of great help to her in animating her films. In fact he helped her films gain more depth by invention of a multi-plane camera (Liebenson).

Silhouette animation is a form of stop motion animation in which cut out figures with several moveable limbs are moved around on a screen and background that is lit from underneath by lights. Reiniger's backgrounds were usually color tinted.. *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* was amazing not only because of the background but because of the detailed figures, that despite being cut outs, still manage to come to life and have personalities of their own, this is believed to be because of the intricacies of the movements (Liebenson). Another interesting fact is

that *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* was done in 1926, before Disney's *Snow White* and was done by a female artist. Reiniger once commented on how she did her work in the journal *Sight and Sound* in 1936, stating that the figures were cut out of black cardboard and thin lead and then each limb was cut separately and joined by a wire hinge and then the figures were photographed movement by movement (Liebenson).

Some of Reiniger's earlier works were more fairy tales. While *Prince Achmed* was based off of the Arabian nights stories, she did fairytales that are more known to us, such as *Cinderella* in 1922. Of these Fairy tale stories, she made 19 of them into animated shorts that were made between 1953 and 1954. At this time she was living in England with her husband, which may have been what influenced her to create the fairy tale stories in silhouettes (Osmond). *Cinderella* was a more adult version of the tale, having an almost Grimm-like atmosphere in which one of the step sisters cuts off her toes in an effort to fit into *Cinderella's* slipper. The newer fairytales, placed in a collection called the Primrose collection, have a softer and more child-friendly feel to them. Osmond has this to say about them "The Primrose films are gentle and wholesome, with plenty of charming touches to appreciate on subsequent viewings."

Reiniger's works were amazing; because she was a woman, because the characters had so much character, and because they were nearly on par with what had been going on in Hollywood, while being completely different at the same time. She proved to have a more adult sense of a film, while also being able to appeal to children and make more family oriented animations. Best of all, she simply enjoyed.

Works Cited

LIEBENSON, DONALD. "Dazzling Gem of Animation Rediscovered; Video: The 1926 Shadow-Play 'Adventures of Prince Achmed,' by Lotte Reiniger, is Considered by Many to be the First Animated Feature." *Los Angeles Times. National Newspapers Premier*. Dec 10 2001. Web.
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/421660903?accountid=39053>>.

Osmond, Andrew. "Paper, Scissors." *Sight and Sound* 2009: 87,87,2.
ProQuest Research Library. Web.
<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/237118540?accountid=39053>>.